

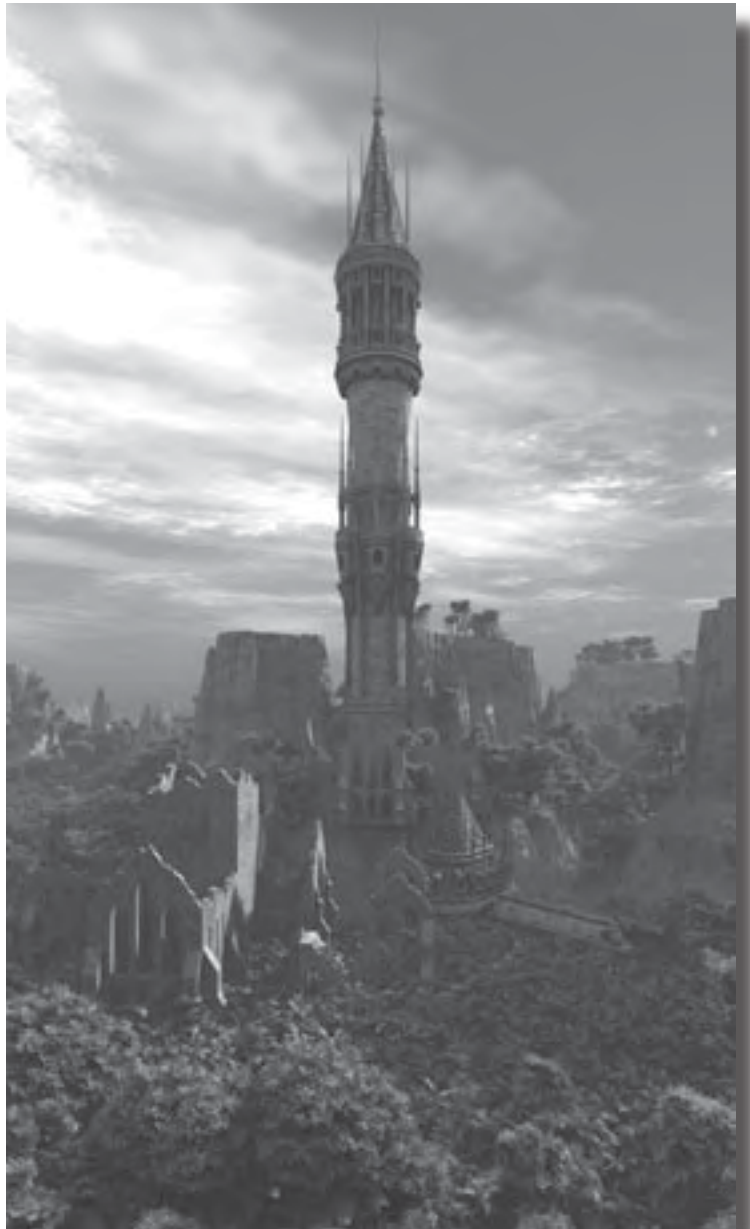
ED GREENWOOD'S  
**CASTLEMOURN**  
FANTASY CAMPAIGN SETTING

A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO CASTLEMOURN

ED GREENWOOD & JENNIFER BROZEK

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Some folks collect bowling trophies, some rebuild cars in their driveways, and some try not to miss a single televised moment of football.

I dream up fantasy worlds.

I started worldbuilding in my childhood, imagining what grew into The Forgotten Realms® (now a shared world that continues to grow through the dreamings of literally millions of readers and gamers). It was just the first of over a dozen 'worlds' I've played with since. This is one of them, and a particular favorite of mine.

Welcome to Castlemourn.

Or rather, welcome to the many petty baronies, merchant confederacies, and kingdoms that were once, before the Fall, the great and glorious land of Castlemourn. More than a dozen different, and often warring, territories crowded together between the mountains and the sea, plus nine isles that are all that's left undrowned of the lost southern half of Castlemourn. All of these areas are inhabited by Mournans who no longer know what lies beyond the mountains or across the seemingly endless sea in the world they call Umbrara.

Like the Realms, this is a shared world: within these pages and in the books to come, many designers and writers will dive into Umbrara, spinning new tales and revealing new color and details for us all. I'm delighted that my friends, the gaming veterans at Margaret Weis Productions, have given us all the chance to play in this new sandbox.

I've tried to make Castlemourn "feel real." In these pages, you'll find believable people living in a world full of mysteries, ancient magics, and lurking intrigues unfolding right now. It's an ideal home for fantasy roleplaying campaigns, with power groups, throne-strife, and scheming villains enough to keep things interesting for years, even to players whose characters elect to spend much of their time reclining on couches, flagons in hand, watching the world go by! As much as mere curved squiggles of ink on a page can make it, Castlemourn is alive.

It's also flexible. Via the *estemel* characters from other worlds can readily arrive in Castlemourn. Cities, fortresses, and 'dungeons' from other fantasy settings can easily be placed in the surrounding mountains or in the Mists to east and west of known Castlemourn. Magic from other places and other worlds can effortlessly be thrust into the castles of Tamrune. Substitute orcs, ogres, or hobgoblins for the golaunt or any really exotic race of creatures for the thaele—or make such creatures allies of those Mournan races, dwelling with them as guards and strike forces.

Castlemourn campaigns can focus on particular areas or kingdoms that offer different flavors of adventure, from piracy on Glamryn Bay to merchants' strivings in Dragonhead and Luuthaven, from the glittering high society of Asmrel to the haughty dukedoms and thundering knights of Lyonar—or from the deadly caverns of the Yarhoon to the sun-dappled farms of Jamandar, and from the mist-shrouded menace of Nighdal to the hardy mining and fishing life of the Iron Isles. From the beast-roamed woods of the Haunthills to the perilous mountains where larger, more numerous monsters prowl. From the life of an outlaw in...but my point is made: Castlemourn offers every style of campaign play. Detailed churches await players who want to play priest characters; Castlemourn is awash in wizard-riveting tales of old magics from before the Fall being unearthed in ruins. Thievery and outlawry are rife, and realm after realm is arming or covertly hiring adventurers to swing swords for them. This bright and pleasant land between the mountains is stirring; it's a time for heroes.

How swiftly—or even if—Castlemourn slides into widespread war will be different in every campaign. This book introduces a setting that, if general peace holds, can readily serve as a backdrop for long-term play concentrating on court intrigue, ruins exploration, or even building a mercantile empire along the caravan roads and from port to port along the Bay. No fantasy world should be all drawn swords, dragons toppling castles, grimly onrushing doom, and lurking peril. It should fascinate and soothe, too, offering people and places we want to know more about and visit. People and places we wish were real. People and places worth fighting for.

From princes trying to regain their rightful thrones to beggars just trying to survive, and from street peddlers to rich and ambitious would-be nobles trying to buy titles, Castlemourn holds many colorful characters for players to meet or even become. Guide your own characters to prominence among them, and dream your own dreams about them.

Dreams again. Yes. In an increasingly hectic real world, we all need a home for our dreams, an imaginary world to be our refuge and playground.

So turn the page, and step into our new sandbox.

Make Castlemourn your own.

Make Castlemourn your home.

# SEVENTEEN SHIELDS

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A CASTLEMOURN TALE  
BY ED GREENWOOD

I'm not getting any closer to her," the furious miller spat, "but I'm not letting her leave this place alive, neither! Rolun, fetch a lantern from the threshing-shed—and send Luth and Maalym out looking for the hunters. They can put an end to her with their bows."

Amid grim growls of agreement from the tense circle of men on the hillside, Rolun hastened down the sheep track toward the distant mill.

The wind promptly rose and howled—and more than one man glanced apprehensively at the lowering sun, fearing what the pale-faced woman standing quietly at the center of their ring of drawn swords might do as soon as night came.

"They say *these* can curse you by spitting on you or just touch—" one of them burst out, causing the miller to turn on him with a roar.

"Shut your jaws, Nalander! 'They' say a lot o' things, but I've never seen a thaele yet that could walk away with a dozen arrows through her—or as many good sharp swords, neither!"

"Oh?" The rich male trumpet of a voice from behind them, grand and cultured, was unfamiliar to any man of Ostal Rise—but then, few Ostal-folk traveled far, and there weren't more than eighty living Ostallans, all told. "And how many thaele have you seen?"

Astonished heads turned, but Halartus the miller flung his entire body around and snarled, "Don't take your eyes from her, lads! I'll deal with this!" Glaring at the source of the question, who stood on a low shoulder of rock on the brow of the hill, he thrust his head forward and lowered it a trifle at the same time, as if he were a boar measuring a foe for the charge. "An' who might *you* be?"

Halartus was facing a stranger—a fat man clad in a shirt of fine tansen, supple leather breeches and vest, and the finest boots the miller had ever seen. The stranger also wore a worn bent-feather cap and a half-cloak in the latest style. Gold rings gleamed on the man's pudgy fingers, and the hilts of his ornately scabbarded, curved longsword and matching pair of daggers were also gold.

He smiled at the miller. That smile floated in the beaming midst of the most foolish-looking moon face anyone in Ostal Rise had ever seen.

More than one astonished snicker rose from the ring of men as they cast swift glances over their shoulders at the stranger. Halartus said nothing to quell those reactions.

"I'm called Albaerth Malark," said the moon-faced dandy, "merchant of Jamandar . . . but more widely known, I'm afraid, as 'Longtongue.'"

"What?" the miller sneered. "Not 'Moonface'?"

"Not," the merchant replied mildly, half-drawing his longsword.

Secure in his height, rough strength, and the number of men standing with him, Halartus Carroehorn waved his own already drawn blade dismissively. "One against us eleven? Man, you *are* a fool."

"Quite possibly," the Jamandran replied, settling his blade into its scabbard again. "Yet as not all of the Seven smile upon lives thrown away needlessly, I should in all fairness warn you: the usual betting match on me, back in Windhollow Rise, is Malark against fourteen foes."

The miller's sneer widened. "Then why don't you go *back* to Windhollow Rise, where you an' your fellow coin-thieves can fix fights to your Seven-licking content?"

There were murmurs of both admiration and apprehension from the circle of Ostal men; these were strong words, even to a lone, fool-faced outlander. And one never knew when a stranger might have a dart gun—or a poisoned throwing-knife, for that matter.

"Oh, I intend to," the Jamandran merchant replied easily, "when I've finished this little trading-run. Right now, I'm interested in your captive, there."

"Oh?" Halartus snapped suspiciously. "Interested *how*?"

"Well, now. That would depend on how much you're asking for her."

"*Asking* for her? Man, the moment the hunters get here wi—what d'you mean, 'asking for her'?"

"You're planning on *killing* her? And missing out on . . . ahem, a handful of gold coins? Well, now, it seems *you're* the fools."

There were rumblings of fear and mistrust from the ring of Ostallans, but the miller held up a quelling hand and frowned at the Jamandran. "Sell her to you . . . as a slave," he said slowly, "for how much? An' on the condition you take her straight away from here, traveling all night, and never bring her back!"

"Oh," Longtongue replied, "times are hard just now, so I'd not want to go above twenty shields."

"Haelarr *bless!*" one Ostal man cursed amazedly, amid the gasps of his fellows. It was rare for an Ostallan farmer to have more than half a dozen gold coins in his hands at any one time, though most of them had rued-strings worth several shields each. Why, a good milk-cow wouldn't fetch—

"Thirty," the miller flung back, more out of habit than anything else.

The Jamandran grinned and replied, "Ten," his tone an exact mimicry of the voice of Halartus.

The miller bristled. "I don't much like—"

The moon-faced trader interrupted his widening smile with the swift words, "*Neither do I.* But I'm not such a fool as not to trade with you out of mere distaste, Halartus Carroehorn."

The miller stiffened then responded, a note of menace in his slow, soft tones. "I don't recall giving you my name, Moonface."

"You didn't have to. The word and worth of Halartus Carroehorn is well known in Jamandar."

The trader's words were soft fangs of sarcasm, and many of the listening men murmured under their breaths in anticipation of an explosion from Halartus. Like any

miller who lorded it over the farmers he lived among, he was more feared than loved in Ostal Rise.

Halartus had turned the ruby-red hue of ripe bressberries and visibly quivered, but his mouth was shut as tight as a moneylender's coffer, leaving his eyes—now flaring as bright as fresh hearth-flames—to do his speaking for him.

"Oh, yes," the Jamandran observed calmly, unimpressed by the miller's silent rage. "Let it be noted that I agree to your stated condition: an entire night's travel, to be sure. I'll balance it with one of my own: that I receive her no more harmed than she is right now."

"Twenty shields of Asmran minting," Halartus said at last, biting each word out of the air in slow, grim fury.

Longtongue waved a careless hand. "Twelve it is," he replied.

"Snake-tongued fat-faced *boar* of a—" the miller erupted then caught himself, breathed heavily for what seemed quite a long time, and replied carefully, "Eighteen."

"Fifteen."

"Seventeen."

"Done." The Jamandran pounced pleasantly. "Seventeen Asmran shields."

He started to draw his longsword.

One of the Ostal men gulped, "*Dung!*" and took to his heels.

Another waved his sword frantically at the captive woman and hissed, "Git! Go ye o'er there, with him! Get *gone!*"

The thaele stood as still as a statue, but the moon-faced Jamandran raised an inquiring eyebrow—and his blade flashed out.

The miller snarled, drawing a step back, but Longtongue gave him a 'hey, now, who's the fool?' look, upended his scabbard, and watched gold coins roll out across the rock.

When the count reached seventeen, he righted his scabbard again, slid his blade back home to the hilt, stepped back from the rock, and indicated the coins with a flourish.

"Here," one Ostallan farmer said slowly, "there's not room enough in yon weapon-sheath for so many coins *and* his battle-blade!"

"Magic!" someone else in the ring whispered heavily, and there were furtive movements back and away. Around the thaele, the ring of swords melted into a distant, gap-filled horseshoe, a wandering, wavering fence.

Halartus barely noticed. He strode forward to pounce on the nearest gold-glinting shield.

Taking it up, he peered at it suspiciously, bit it, ran his tongue along its one curved edge—and brightened. Then he hastily knelt and fisted as many coins as he could.

His swift, fumbling greed was interrupted by a quiet question from the man who called himself Longtongue.

"Has she any weapons on her?"

On his knees, the miller twisted around and snapped, "Strip. Get bare. *Now.*"

The pale-faced woman stared at him, still motionless—still silent.

She was tall but thin, her hair a long, dark fall of straight tresses, her light brown skin gone white about her fine-boned face—which made her large purple eyes stand out all the more. She wore long, flowing skirts and an overrobe that would have been thin enough to cling to her had their weave not been so creased and uneven. Certainly no eye could see the outline of anything beneath that might have been a weapon or its sheath. About her slim hips was a kirtle of knotted cord, not a belt, and she wore heavy, clumsy warrior's boots . . . the salvage from some battlefield.

Or taken from the corpse of a man who'd fallen prey to her. Thaele were witches, some said, who could slay men and children—and even chickens and horses—by mysterious, fell magic if such unfortunates strayed too close to one. Just the sight of them made most folk uneasy, and the men of Ostal were not at all pleased to discover one had wandered into their midst.

Not that she seemed sinister or even desperate-bladed now, with death so close around her. She stood sad and fearful, not defiant—and the farmers of Ostal, no strangers to death and dying, could see clearly that fear was rising to conquer her.



Face white, the thaele witch trembled. She looked slowly around at all the men on the windy hillside, eyes beseeching, as her hands went reluctantly to her kirtle.

Which was when Longtongue snapped, "You've taken my coin, Carroehorn—she's mine now."

He lifted his head a little and added in gentler tones, "Lady of the thaele! Hear not the order to disrobe, but answer me true: Have you any blade about you? Poison? Strangling-cord?"

She fixed grave purple eyes on him, bowed her head a little, and replied readily, "No, none of those things, merchant lord. I have no need of them nor skill in their use." She fell silent, and they measured each other through silent gaze for long enough for the wind-whistle to rise and fall ere she asked, "What is your will of me?"

"Come," he said simply, extending his hand to her.

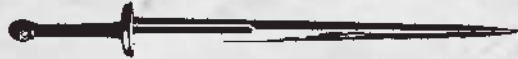
Not looking at any other man there, the witch walked slowly toward him—driving Halartus the miller to scramble hastily aside with a wordless snarl.

She did not take the Jamandran's offered hand but faced him from little more distance than the length of a sleep-sprawled man and promised quietly, "Upon my blood, I swear thus: I'll not run, merchant lord."

Longtongue nodded to her with a smile, turning with a sweep of his hand to indicate their route ahead, and they went down the hill in step, keeping well apart.

Silently, the men of Ostal watched them go.

Maalym was said to be the fastest runner of the Rise, and his pantings announced his



arrival then, at the head of the swiftest hunters. Keldorth was the eldest, and he peered at the two dwindling figures, bow in hand, and rumbled, "Shall I bring them both down?"

Halartus shook his head. "Not yet—not if the Jamandran has partners. If word spreads that we slew him, no trader from that land will ever come here again or send goods our way or along our road . . . and we'll starve."

He turned to two of the younger hunters. "Follow them, Brenthar, you and Gyrlmar. If you find the Jamandran fallen, mask yourselves, rob him of everything he has, and send him naked on his way. He'll be too weak to resist you, or even dead."

"What? Dead?"

Gyrlmar was swifter-witted. "Oh, you mean . . . the thaele witch will 'do' him?"

The miller smiled. "Yes. They always do." It was not a nice smile.

Longtongue stopped at the last beast in his tethered string of mules. It was large and scarred about the head, and it gave him an unwelcoming look.

"This," he told his new purchase, "is—well, we'll call him Halartus. He'll bear you. Mount up when you're ready, but watch sharp: he bites."

The mule swung its head around, and the Jamandran added, "Ah. He wants to know your name."

The thaele regarded him with cool eyes for a moment then said, "Call me Albaerth Malark."

Longtongue smiled. "Lady, I consider you no slave of mine, so you need not take my name. What may I call you?"

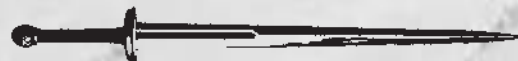
"Trader of Jamandar," she replied softly as the last long shadows of the day lengthened around them, "my answer to that depends on the fate you intend for me. May I know it?"

"Keeping the bargain I just made, in getting us both out of here. When we're safely out of reach of the men of Ostal Rise, I intend to make you a trading offer."

"And if I refuse?"

Longtongue shrugged. "Then I'm out seventeen shields."

"And you'll seek to take them out of my hide how, exactly?"



The Jamandran reached out a reassuring hand to her. "Lady, I've no such intention—" "Don't touch me!" she hissed fiercely, backing quickly away. "Know you not your peril?"

Longtongue's gaze was calm. "Yes, as a matter of fact, I do."

She regarded him with some surprise then waved a hand at the mule. "You realize you're condemning this beast of yours to death?"

He smiled a little ruefully. "Small loss." Holding its rope reins out toward her, he lifted his eyebrows and added, "So?"

"For now," she replied, as she took the reins to mount, keeping her hand carefully apart from his, "you may call me Duskra . . . oh Malark of Many Surprises."

The Jamandran smiled again. "Then let's ride, Duskra."

Thelseene was riding bright and high amid ragged clouds above when the last mule in Malark's train fell heavily.

The thaele sprang clear of it in a swirl of skirts and landed like a cat in the road. She stood well back, watching her former mount as it struggled to lift its head, kicked once or twice, and sagged back to the trampled weeds, its teeth bared and its eyes wide as it looked at her. By then, the Jamandran had hobbled his own mount and was striding back along the string.

"It's too weak to carry me," Duskra told him grimly as he came up to the fallen mule. "You'll soon rue your seventeen shields, Jamandran."

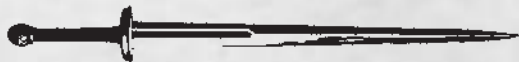
"Call me Longtongue," he replied amiably as he set about unbuckling packs. Other than glancing off into the scrub woods behind them once or twice, he didn't bother to keep watch over the thaele as he shifted packs to leave the next mule in line free of burden—then cut loose the fallen Halartus. His worst-tempered mule was alive but too weary to even snap at him as he rose and turned away from it for the last time.

His purchase stood as still as a statue in the moonlight, watching the trees for danger, but she moved obediently over to the next mule in the string the moment he indicated it. The ground was uneven, and lacking stirrups or even a proper saddle she struggled to get onto its back.

The moon-faced merchant was at her side in an instant, bending to take her booted foot and boost her up.

She stiffened, almost twisting out of his grasp, as she murmured, "Don't—"

"Can you keep your seat?" he asked sharply, stepping swiftly back.



Duskra caught at reins for a moment and shifted herself as the mule stamped and shook its head under her. "I . . . yes."

"Good," he said, heading back down the shortened line of mules. "We ride."

The gentle creak of leather arose as they started to move again. "You're a fool, Longtongue," the thaele murmured to herself, gazing along the bobbing line of mules at the Jamandran's feather-capped head.

"Well, *that's* not news to me," the merchant's quiet voice replied startlingly—from the night air right beside her ear.

Duskra swallowed her gasp of alarm, shook her head in his direction, and muttered, "Magic."

From the far end of the mule train, he turned and gave her a moon-faced grin.

As if the arrival of dawn was a horn-call that it had been waiting for, her third mule collapsed suddenly as the rolling farlands brightened, pitching Duskra over its head into the road.

By the time she'd stopped rolling in the dust, Longtongue was already off his mule and running back to her.

"Lady Duskra! Are you—?"

"Nothing broken," she hissed, rolling to her knees not far from the feebly kicking beast and trying not to see the terrified look it was giving her, "but—"

"But?"

"My *thighs*," she moaned, as the agonizing rawness and bone-ache defeated her attempts to get up and left her flailing with her arms for balance. Seven, how did folk ride all day? They must have legs and crotches of unfeeling stone!

She gave up trying to rise and announced, "I can ride no more!"

The merchant seemed more concerned than angry. "Can you walk?"

"I can try," she told him grimly. Two strong hands took her under the arms, plucking her to her feet.

Duskra clung to the man for a moment, hissing in pain—then pushed him away and staggered back, almost falling. "I—"

He was reaching for her again, stepping forward.

Wildly, she waved him away. "No. You must not . . ."

"Duskra," he said calmly, "be at ease. I know what you are and what touching you will do to me." He held his hands out to her so she could grab for them if she started to fall but didn't touch her. "Can you walk?"

She stumbled along the road in a little half-circle, wincing, then bent over to rest her hands on her thighs for a moment, her wrinkle-skirted behind toward him. Without



straightening, she replied grimly, "Yes. Yes, I can—but you need no longer worry that I'll try to flee."

"I never have," Longtongue told her as he finished cutting the exhausted mule out of the train and started back to take the reins of the one he'd been riding. There were only three beasts left in the string now. "I'll find us a stand of trees to rest out most of the day in."

Straightening, she turned her head to give him a surprised look.

"As I said, I know something of your nature, Lady, and your needs."

Her eyes narrowed. "I'm not sure I'm going to like your trading offer," she told him, her voice holding more weariness than anything else.

Longtongue grinned at her. "I've food enough for us to share a good feast before I make it. After you've eaten, we'll rest. Your mood'll be better then."

Duskra's face was unreadable as she came back from the stream and set her sand-scoured plate down on a clump of moss a careful four paces away from him. "Very good. My thanks to you, Longtongue."

The thaele went to a stout tree, sat down against it, and settled herself into as comfortable a position as she could find. Turning her head to catch the Jamandran's gaze, she extended her arms behind her, around either side of the tree, toward him.

When he didn't approach, she waggled her hands. "Well?"

"Well, what?"

"You're not going to bind me?"

Longtongue did not—quite—smile. "No. You'll not steal my life away while I sleep."

"And how," Duskra asked very softly, "do you know that?"

"You've not heard my offer yet, and your face tells me that you very much want to know what it is."

She cursed softly under her breath then smiled wryly and told him, "You *are* the Lord of Surprises."

"Modesty forbids any reply," Longtongue replied lightly, retrieving the plate. "Have you drunk this moon?"

Her head jerked up, and she stared at him, face unreadable again.

Patience he repeated the question, adding, "Blood, not water."

"Yes," the thaele whispered. "That's why . . . why they were going to . . ."

"Kill you," he supplied calmly. He yawned. Shaking his head to clear it, he buckled up his pack and found himself yawning again uncontrollably.

"I *must* sleep," he muttered. "Here!"

His words heralded the tossing of a dagger. Mutely the thaele watched it flash through the morning light and thud into the turf beside her. She made no move to take it but shot him a questioning look.

Wearily, Longtongue Malark strolled over to her, glancing here and there for the most comfortable-looking stretch of ground to lie down on. He espied a likely ridge of long grass in the lee of a tree and started toward it.

She called softly, "Jamandran, that's no way to treat good steel."

He turned back to her. "So take it into your hand. I'll not leave you unarmed. A prowling beast might happen along, or outlaws might see our mules as easy thefts—and I'll be tethered to *them*."

"Lord Longtongue," she told him, pulling off her boot heels to reveal that each one was the handle of a knife, wicked-looking blades emerging from sheaths in her soles, "There's no need. I have these."

Malark gazed down at her. "As I recall," he said pleasantly, "I asked if you were carrying any blades, earlier. You lied to me."

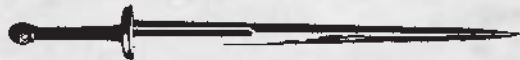
"I didn't know you then," she replied, fixing him with those great purple eyes. "Full truth, now: I carry one blade more—in a hidden sheath, here." She pointed to her crotch. "I have no poisons or strangling-cords."

Longtongue stood silently above her, his face impassive. She pointed again at the dagger he'd tossed to her, but he shook his head.

She crooked one eyebrow. "Still want to leave me untied?"

His smile was as brief as it was weary. "Yes," he replied, turning away.

A moment later, a cloak from one of the packs landed beside her. "Not much of a nightwrap," the Jamandran muttered, "but—" He hefted a second cloak to show her he'd



have no better bed then went to his chosen lying-place.

"This offer," she muttered, as Longtongue settled himself down, the lead-rein to the foremost mule looped about his arm, "had better be good."

"Oh, 'tis." Again his voice erupted from the empty air right beside her ear. "It *is*."

Duskra ground her teeth briefly then snapped, "Add to it, if you will, the promise never to do *that* again. I . . . are you thief-watching me *always*?"

"Have you any blade about you?" the disembodied voice asked her mildly.

She sighed then gave the brightening morning a rueful smile. "Fair dealing, merchant. I deserved that."

She received a faint rippling sound in reply.

Duskra cocked her head, listening hard, and it came again, very faintly. Albaerth Longtongue Malark was snoring.

There was no sign of the thaele when Longtongue awakened. Or the cloak he'd given her. Or the dagger.

He peered all around, a little surprised to find himself unharmed and—as far as he could tell—unrobbed. All three mules were very much as he'd left them, and their packs still hung in the trees where he'd strung them.

Seventeen shields. Ah, well . . .

He sighed, shook his head, and sought some bushes to relieve himself. At least he'd return to Windhollow Rise with three mules rather than staggering along under the weight of his trade-packs with none.

It wasn't that he mourned the loss of his coins so much as that he'd been mistaken in his judgment of the thaele. And a Jamandran merchant who can't read people rightly is soon a coinless failure—or dead.

Pah. To the Seven with such cheery thoughts, here with the day almost done and—

"Lord Longtongue!"

He spun around at the sound of Duskra's voice, hand going to his sword. "What—?" She was hastening toward him out of the deepest tangle of trees, holding the dagger he'd given her before.

It, the arm that held it, and the cloak wrapped around that arm were dark with sticky, mostly dried blood. She wasn't walking as if any of it was hers. In her other hand, the thaele held an arrow—or rather, a shaft missing its point.

Rather than filling the air with foolish questions, Malark waited for her arrival and answers.

Duskra came to a halt a careful three strides away, purple eyes afire. Lowering the knife and letting the cloak fall to the ground, she held up the arrow. "It seems," she announced grimly, "the miller of Ostal Rise isn't used to losing in trade-bargaining."

She pointed with the arrow, and he looked along it to its missing head, buried deep in the tree he'd slept beside. The arrow must have struck a handspan away from his head.

He shook his head in disbelief. "I slept through that?"

Duskra said nothing, and he shot her a hard look. "So should I be drawing blade? Are there—?"

She shook her head. "There were two bowmen. One fled like the wind. The other . . ." She gestured with her shoulder back at the trees she'd come from. "I left him back there."

"Dead." It was not a question, but she nodded anyway.

The man called Longtongue allowed himself a deep sigh. "Want to hear my offer now? Or shall we get ourselves another day's walk away from Ostal Rise?"

"Tell me now. Please." She tossed the bloody dagger to his feet. Her throw seemed almost lazy, but the steel spun, bit exactly midway between his boots, and stood straight up from the soil.

So she could use a knife well.

He lifted his gaze from the knife to her. "Why now?"

Calm purple eyes held no hint of challenge, malice, or mischief. "So we can take ourselves away from this place before that archer leads anyone back here but not have to be talking and so luring beasts and road-thieves, once it gets full dark."

"Well enough. First, Duskra, I say again: You're free to go your own way, either now or hereafter. You are no slave of mine." He made those last words firm and formal.

"I thank you, Albaerth Malark." She could be formal, too. Her tone might have belonged to a lord among merchants, confirming a trade pact worth thousands of shields.

Longtongue drew a deep breath then spoke, putting things more bluntly than was his wont—because this was a time and an audience for blunt truth.

"Hear then my offer: Fat am I, and moon-faced, but glib of tongue. I am a master of the blade and have enjoyed enough successes as a merchant to . . . enjoy a reputation in Jamandar. Just now, I'm down on my luck and face my share of foes, rivals, and creditors—with not much to wield against them but a large, rather bare-walled mansion in Windhollow Rise. I've no servants left to me and probably not much else besides if anyone has broken in to scour the house during my absence. I see a use for you."

He paused, unable to read anything in those calm purple eyes. Duskra kept silent but made an elaborate "say on" gesture to him, like an Asmran grandly giving a minstrel leave to begin.

So he did. "If I spread and enhance a few wild tales already making the rounds locally, I believe I can trick certain of my foes to seek the ancestral treasure hoard hidden in my house."

Duskra half-smiled. "A treasure that doesn't exist."

Longtongue nodded. "I see you know the essentials. Indeed. Moreover, it refuses to exist on the far side of a locked door at the end of a particular crawl-passage."

"And?"

"And persons attempting to pick that lock must need be only the thickness of the stone passage wall away from a chamber wherein you can lie and so drain them."

"If they force that lock?"

"Another awaits, beyond—also handy to your passage."

"And in the days and months and long seasons in which greedy fools *don't* happen to be dying in this no-doubt-haunted passage of yours?"

"The heart of my offer comes to bear." Malark drew a deep breath then said, "I'll keep you—as a resident of my house—supplied with food, firehearth warmth, clothing, and such diversions as I can procure, in return for your carrying on a discreet trade of benefit to us both: You'll be a healer for hire, and I your agent. I'll pay small retainers to servants in wealthy households to send word to me of heavy-coin folk who have diseases—then discreetly approach them with offers of healing. You do the cures . . . and I can stop dragging mules all over Mornra. Which itself is worth seventeen shields to me."

Duskra smiled—a real smile that lit her face as if a star had flashed in the darkening sky above them.

"Albaerth Malark! I, Eleduskra Taursyn, accept your offer!" she said eagerly. "You—you've given me a life to lead! *At last!*"

Impulsively she reached down, plucked up a fallen tree-branch that was as tall as she was, kissed its end tenderly, and extended that end to his cheek, which she stroked as gently as any lover.

"And for that, Longtongue," she whispered, the rays of the setting sun catching the unshed tears glimmering in her eyes, "thank you."

# A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO CASTLEMOURN

Greetings my fine farfarers! Welcome to Castlemourn. I am Master Tyheros, and it is my great pleasure to make your acquaintances. You must have just recently been whisked here through an estemel, so please allow me to serve as a guide and mentor, introducing you to this fine land and its peoples. As you can see quite plainly from my map, Castlemourn lies betwixt the Dawndar and Duskadar mountains and stretches from the monster-haunted crags of the Haelarr in the sarrind (north) to the salt-rimed, rocky isles along the Vaerath to the sekhovynd (south). There is much to tell you about this wondrous and dangerous land, and time is short. Aristero, my most efficient servant, keep a close eye on those Marrovian coinmasters while I give our new friends a whirlwind tour of this fine, but sometimes dangerous, land.

## THE WORLD OF CASTLEMOURN

Castlemourn is a land without a past. Its people do not know who they once were, where they came from, or what brought their world to its present, fractured state. There is much speculation, and it is generally agreed that centuries ago, Before the Castles Fell, there existed the "Other Realm," the Realm of Castles—whose relics and mystic artifacts are sought by modern-day adventurers, questors, and treasure hunters. Roughly three hundred sixty years ago, a great cataclysmic event occurred. During this cataclysm, the land was broken as well as the people. The earth surged and cracked, mountains were thrust up and other regions were plunged down and flooded as the seas rushed in. None of the survivors could remember what happened, and to this day, the catastrophe is shrouded in mystery. However everyone is certain that the event was tainted by magic in some way or another.

I have heard philosophers speculate that we were all mind-wiped in the Fall, our memories of the Other Realm erased, so we would not repeat the mistakes of the past. Others claim this forgetting was a collective amnesia, protecting us from some great shame. However, with every fell creature, haunted land, and unsolved mystery we encounter, we cannot forget that something great and terrible occurred. As such, ominous questions remain. *"Will this danger return?" "How many times will Mournra be plunged into destruction?" "Has it happened before, in the long distant past?"*

Castlemourn is a land to be explored. Regardless of the reason for our obscured memory, the people of today want to know of their past and of the things still hidden, lying in wait, on their lands. This knowledge of hidden danger and possible wealth has fractured our people as much as the destruction shattered the physical landscape.

If a questor traveled across Mournra from aerho (east) to luthsurl (west), she would encounter cursed forests, haunted lakes, an almost impenetrable ridge filled with monsters, impassible ravines, broken lands where even the golaunt cannot live, and a once viable realm in the west that was suddenly, and mysteriously, thrown down during the Time of the Swiftwing, some sixty years ago.

This does not even begin to account for the political differences between the various domains within Castlemourn. Some of the cities, such as Ghandalar and Asmrel in the Starhaven Reach, are in a mercantile rivalry akin to near-open warfare. Other realms have uneasy alliances, such as Baerent and Firelorn, born of grief or necessity much to the dismay of other allies. Some lands adjacent to each other have so much internal strife, mystery, and calamity that they simply do not have time to be bothered with border strife. They are too busy attempting to keep their people and lands safe. Such is the case in the so-called Debatable Lands, the realms of Ormscar, Lothran, and Tantanthar.

And yet, there is beauty, peace, and prosperity within our lands. Jamandar is an acknowledged paradise with bountiful harvests that grace the feast tables of most of Castlemourn. Far to the luthsurl, the crafters of Estorna are lauded for their beautiful and practical wares. The "Golden City," Asmrel, is legendary for its knowledgeable sages and worldly philosophers. Lyonar is hailed as one of the most peaceful and luxurious realms of Castlemourn. Baerent, now a protectorate of Firelorn, is known for the lush Larrode Forest with its plentiful game, while Dragonhead, sarrind of the Starhaven Reach, is one of the most infamous trademoots in all Castlemourn. There are even places suitable for those seeking to settle down, open shop, and raise a family.

For those seeking fortunes and reputations for themselves, there is no shortage of ancient ruins to explore, mysteries to solve, and villages to protect from raiding monsters. To do this, questors, hireswords, adventurers, and explorers are necessary and welcome. The question is not, "When will the next magical mystery arise?" It is where. That, my friends, is why I am here to inform, caution, and advise you. I speak true as a waymaster of Jamandar and former questor. I freely give you the knowledge gained from my own

experiences and those of my companion, Aristero—who has braved far more dangers than I.

## A CASTLEMOURN CAMPAIGN

For those of you seeking adventure, knowledge, and riches, be assured that Castlemourn has an abundance of danger, strife, and opportunity. Rife with scheming merchants, wily bandits, haunted forests, and monster-filled ruins, and badlands, you only need listen to rumors from passing merchants or tavern entertainers to find the nearest path to foolhardy adventure. Of course, some sense and discretion must be used. When traveling the tradeways, one hears many stories—some too outlandish not to be true. Others, I still question to this day. You, of course, are free to draw your own conclusions.

One lad warned me of the political maneuverings within the realm of Lyonar. The daughter of a noble family had been kidnapped by nobles from another duchy. These scheming nobles were then hired to get her back without alerting the authorities, without causing an incident, and without harming her kidnappers! Can you believe it? Naturally, time was also against them as the young lady was scheduled to be married within a fortnight. Of course, they succeeded. At least, that is what I was told.

Aristero related another tale to me. Once nothing but a dock rat from Ullscove, one of the port cities in Tantanthar, Aristero's acquaintance, known to me only as Urchin, first began working with one of the merchant leagues: the Red Casket, I believe. Apparently, he found a magical artifact within a ruined boat that he turned over to the Larthar Lord for an undisclosed price, and now suddenly, Urchin is one of the top men in the Casket—a merchant league that is suddenly giving the Swift Hand a run for their money. Of course, it could be only the drunken dreams of a wistful man.

A questor I once spent a winter with told me of her experience charting Mournra's mysterious stone circles—a dangerous path to be sure. It is generally believed that circles open in response to certain gemstones, transporting everything within the circle instantly elsewhere. She swore to me that while conducting her research, a stone circle near Old Stone Fang opened unexpectedly, and a being of light beckoned her in. Against all that is sane, she followed it and found herself just outside of the Mistcloak Forest! She swore in that instant

## Castlemourn Jargon

### Common Mournan Terms

Umbrara	the world of Castlemourn
Mournra	the lands that make up Castlemourn
Castlemourn	the lands and people of Mournra
Mourman	the folk of Castlemourn

### Points of the Compass

Sarrind	north
Anarrlith	northeast
Aerho	east
Uddursea	southeast
Sekhovynd	south
Broethsea	southwest
Luthsurl	west
Straeklith	northwest
An-	most; as in an-luthsurl (westernmost)

for teleportation, she was given the secret of stone circles. She would not tell me what it was, only smile and say I would know soon enough.

Be your interest in the discovering the secrets of the arcane, assisting (or hindering) in the political maneuverings of nobles, or whatever else strikes your fancy, the possibilities are endless. You only need look for them with open eyes. I shall hint at such opportunities as I take you through the lands of Castlemourn, but I can only show you the paths. It is up to you to choose one and follow where it leads.

## THE LANDS OF CASTLEMOURN

As the sun rises on Umbrara (what Mournans call their world) in the aerho and sets in the luthsurl, it is fitting to tour the lands of Castlemourn in the same manner. Our brief tour of Mournan lands begins in the luthsurl foothills of the Dawndar Mountains, a vast range of rugged peaks that form the aerho edge of Mournra. Unlike the pleasant, rolling hills surrounding some ranges, the Harrag is a series of rugged, torturous rocky ridges. This region of cracked and fissured stone, filled with desolate caves, dangerous quarries, and deadly monsters, descends into a vast westward sweep of green forests that are beautiful beyond words. The heavily forested valleys within the heart of the Harrag form the elven realm known by that same name.

## HARRAG

Nestled amongst the rugged foothills of the Dawndar Mountains, the Harrag is isolated from the rest of Castlemourn. Its insular people, the elves of the Harrag, are not the welcoming sort.



They defend their lands with patrols and poisoned arrows, quick to shoot first and not bother to ask questions if you are not elven. Many times, the patrols fire well-placed warning shots, knocking off hats or pinning cloaks or shirt sleeves to nearby tree trunks, but the elves do not hesitate to use deadly force when they feel it is warranted. Thus, little is known of the forested valleys at its heart. Even those cast out from the Harrag do not speak of their former homeland.

In recent years, ever more fell beasts and cave-dwelling creatures erupt from the forest at night to raid the lands surrounding the Harrag. Interestingly, when these same beasts are pursued to the edges of the forest, the creatures are allowed to escape beneath the eaves of the forest while their pursuit is “discouraged” by hails of elven arrows.

There is one possible bargaining chip you may use if you absolutely *must* enter into the Harrag. While it denizens do not employ arcane magic, they greatly prize all manner of magical artifacts, magical weapons in particular. An elven member of your party might buy safe-passage for the group with such a prize. This would be a small price to pay for someone to finally discover and map out what exists within the protected heart of the Harrag. Who knows what else may be discovered there?

## MISTCLOAK FOREST

“Beware the whispers of Lyx.” While many believe the stories of Lyx to be mere cautionary tales told to troublesome young children, this warning holds far more truth than falsehood. It is given with good reason. What foolhardy, young bravo would not immediately make his way to the cursed forest of the aerho, a forest rumored to be haunted by an ancient witch-queen who *geases* unwise travelers despite the fact that she is long since dead? What better place to seek fame and fortune? I can think of quite a few myself, but such is the impetuosity of youth.

This dark forestland closely borders the Harrag, only its an-luthsurl (westernmost) verges having felt the bite of foresters’ axes. While Lyx’s slyly advising, cruelly mocking voice, that insinuates itself into men’s minds as they sleep, is the best known inhabitant of the ominous wood, it is also home to some elven folk. Common sense tells us that fell monsters aplenty must dwell in such a dark, cursed forest as well.

However, as the Mistcloak Forest once housed the realm of our favorite witch-queen and her brutal darkhelm knights, there must be hoards of treasure and artifacts to be found if one can avoid being *geased* by the witch-queen, getting lost in uncharted territory, being eaten by monsters, and whatever other unknown dangers lurk, awaiting the unwary.

## FIRELORN

Named for the legendary dragon slain here long ago, Firelorn is most easily located by following the Mistcloak Forest sekhovynd. Here in the aerho-most lands of Castlemourn are rolling grasslands and numerous small, winding gorges that carry streams seaward. Their slopes are often cloaked in vineyards that divide the high meadows where sarthen (sheep) graze from the plentiful groves of olive trees.

There are three main settlements, though none truly of note. The largest is Darroke, a town (and the realm’s capital) located near the sekhovynd edge of the Larrode Forest. Darroke is home to Firelorn’s ruler, Aummunast Ghelkor—more about him in a moment—and the site of the Houses of Healing, a grand temple to Munedra. Then there are the fishing villages of Wathsembur and Anath’s Rock along the coast. Beyond the fruits of the lush olive groves, Firelorn’s main exports are fish and fish oil, though the realm does a brisk trade in wool and wine as well.

The lands of Firelorn are fertile and fair, but all is not well. The Lord Duke of Firelorn, a one-time hiresword turned longtime wagon trader, heavily taxes the fisherfolk of Wathsembur and Anath’s Rock and shopkeepers of Darroke while largely ignoring the farmers and ranchers. The fisherfolk, and many others, grumble at his rule—particularly when they hear stories (true or not) of luxurious stag hunting dalliances in the Larrode Forest and his costly courtship of “the Lady Dusking,” the lovely Nuthlore Baerenthur.

As Aristero is fond of reminding me, “those who live by the sword, die by it.” Given the unrest in Firelorn and heightening tensions between Firelornans and Hauntrans, I believe this saying will become all the more poignant in the coming days.

## BAERENT

Against the dark, haunted luthsurl eves of the Mistcloak Forest lies Baerent. Once an independent realm, it is now part of Firelorn in everything but name. They say it was grief that spurred the widowed Lady Nuthlore Baerenthur to accept Lord Duke Ghelkor’s offer of protection if Baerent joined his realm of Firelorn. While the enigmatic Lady Dusking accepted Ghelkor’s offer of aid, making Baerent a protectorate of Firelorn, she has thus far resisted his clumsy courting. Though his passing was nearly seven years ago, some still believe that she refuses Ghelkor out of love and respect for her departed husband, Nestarl. Others say she is simply wary and suspects the Lord Duke’s motives. As a result, Firelornans and Baerentaen are similarly civil, but guarded, in their dealings with each other.



There are many rumors about the Baerenthur-Ghelkor courtship. Much of it centers around rumors that, while the Lord Duke wants to claim the Baerenthur lands and wealth, he will not forcibly marry then slay the Lady because he fears her sorcery. There are also rumors that the good Lady has magical means of communicating swiftly and privately with her ally, Daeren Tarmor, the Lord of Haunthills. Of course, the stories disagree on her method of communication—most tales currently favor a floating skull that talks.

Whatever the rumors, the Baerent-Firelorn relationship bears watching. Pay close attention to the news coming from Warhorn Well, Owltree, and Glusgar—especially Warhorn Well.

## HAUNTHILLS

Lord Daeren Tarmor, a shrewd, ruthless, but ordinary-looking man, whose only appearance of formidability is his colorless eyes, rules the Haunthills as firmly as rulers having three times his coins and five times his warriors. He rules the Haunthills from Ormsgate near the Larrode Forest and the realm of his aerho ally, Lady Baerenthur. If there is anything more to this relationship, no one who knows is speaking—and that is as it should be.

The forests and the Raedranth, or “Marsh of Mists,” to the sekhovynd force Firelornan trade-wagons and others seeking to travel the Thaalride to pass through Ormsgate—ah, location is key. It is said that this is one of the primary reasons Lord

Tarmor chose this city as his throne town—it allows him to keep an eye on both the bustling Thaalride and the continued, but wary “peace” with Firelorn.

Of course, both Firelornans and Hauntrans, if speaking in unguarded or trusting moments, admit that this longstanding peace between the two realms seems to involve many stealthy stabbings and the disappearances of suspected agents of either Lord Ghelkor or Lord Tarmor. There is no doubt in my mind that this relationship will change should anything untoward happen to Lady Baerenthur. Perhaps this is why Tarmor keeps a small force of heavily armed warriors, his Skarnhelms, close to hand. His other “army” is not openly spoken of, but suffice it to say, they are everywhere.

## JAMANDAR

As I am from Jamandar, the jewel of all Mournra, I will attempt to contain my bias. Rest assured that I speak truthfully. Luthsurl of Haunthills and sarrind of Foreshore, Jamandar is a land of plentiful harvests and strong, healthy livestock. One would have to work hard to starve in Jamandar, and many Mournan tables feast from the bounty my homeland provides.

Some ignorantly deride Jamandrans as “fat, lazy, slack-witted farmers.” It is merely envy, of course. More apropos is the expression, “As deadly as a sword of Jamandar.” This phrase is used widely across Castlemourn when speaking of beasts,

people, and things truly dangerous. Heed it well. Those hard working waymasters (merchant traders) use their hard-earned coin to educate themselves and their kin in the true mastery of the blade.

The Lord Martial and the Lady of the Land, who are not husband and wife, rule the realm from Windhollow Rise. The Lady's is a hereditary title, belonging to the Glassfeather family. She oversees domestic justice, the health of the land, and the tending of crops, livestock, and people. The Lord Martial, officially her champion and equal, is the defender of the realm, in charge of enforcing its laws and defending the citizenry.

Beyond Windhollow Rise, the only other waymoots are Thaentree and Yarnar's Well. Otherwise my people live in small farms scattered across the realm, rather than clustering around mills or lanemoots.



## FORESHORE

The long, rocky cliffs of the Stoneshield form the southern boundary of Jamandar. It falls sharply six hundred feet or more to the rocky, inhospitable strip of coastland known as the Foreshore. The haunt of fisherfolk, outlaws, and merchant-traders, the Foreshore is no realm, but rather a collection of

independent and mostly lawless ports. Travelers will find a string of small fishing villages, each ruled by a council of elders, who name a 'headlord' to hire mercenaries for defense when needed. Collectively known as the Coves, these settlements are, from aerho to luthsurl: Warhorn Rock, Endeluth, Marag's Pool, Stormstay, and Maerlur.

Between Marag's Pool and Stormstay is Thamral. This independent city-state is currently the nominal capital of the Coves as well. It changes rulership often and with great violence. I would watch my back in such a place. Luthsurl of Maerlur sits the old, decrepit port city of Nighdal, rumored to be home to shapeshifters, necromancers, and numerous fell beasts.

The pack trails that ascend the Stoneshield from Foreshore are perilous at the best of times. However, Aristero informs me that the current Sealord of Thamral, a grumpy former sea captain turned wizard by the name Thusker Orlin, has worked to make those trails free of bandits and brigands. Be warned, if you should chance to meet Orlin, do not mention the haunted port of Nighdal to him. He has been known to fly into rages and spellslay those who persist in speaking of it in his presence. However, you should not let that stop you from exploring it for yourself.

## DEBATABLE LANDS

Sages, merchants, and waymasters have dubbed the three small, strife torn realms of Ormscar, Lothran and Tantanthar the "Debatable Lands" due to the seemingly constant conflict, mystery, and magic that plague them. All three lands are bordered to the luthsurl by the Yarhoon—a steep-sided, cavern-strewn plateau which nearly divides Mournra in half from sarrind to sekhovynd. To the aerho, they are bordered by the broad, meandering River Semphril.

Divided by the deep, cold Irdrakewater, Ormscar is the an-sarrind of the Debatable Lands, while Lothran sits to it sekhovynd. This lake is said to be too deep to measure and is home to foul creatures of legend from giant serpents to fair doppelgangers to creatures so hideous that to see one is to become mad. It is also said that on quiet, still nights, the sharp-eyed traveler can see lights in the lake's depths—mighty magics still glowing about the towers and turrets of sunken Orn Doalryn.

The infamous Stormstars Wood divides Lothran from the an-sekhovynd realm of the Debatable Lands, Tantanthar. This thick forest of old, gnarled blackleaf trees is said to be home to unquiet magic, fey creatures, and other lurking, hidden dangers. More than one unwary traveler has disappeared in its gloomy depths.

## TANTANTHAR

Tantanthar is a realm past its prime—little remains beyond it decrepit, moldering ports and small, insular farmholds. From aerho to luthsurl, the six shrinking ports of Lartharford, Ullscove, Sakyrmouth, Tel Harbor, Rulverjak, and Amrest still eke out a living through the efforts of the ruthless merchant leagues who rule with pragmatic brutality. The most notorious of these is the Swift Hand, but newly formed rivals, the Red Casket and the Urcantle, are challenging the Hand's twenty-year supremacy.

Gone are the forests of straight black thornbeams—ideal for ship masts—that made Tantanthar a ship-building center. Gone are the herds of swamp-larthar (moose) that roamed the lands and served as both steed and sustenance. Gone are the once bustling cities teeming with life, love, and luxury. What is left is but a shrunken shadow, a largely lawless land, catering to the strong and influential.

Belgarophaun Ensemmer, the Larthar Lord, rules this dubious collection of cities and farmsteads from Wrath Rise, his backland keep. A successful merchant, Ensemmer retired to Tantanthar from the intrigues of Marrovar, but he was not content to merely relax and enjoy his wealth. He rules by the weight of the swords of his loyal High Guard and his own more subtle manipulations that extend well-beyond Wrath Rise.

## LOTHRAN

Unlike its southern neighbor, Lothran is a large, wealthy realm. Bordered by the craggy Yarhoon to the luthsurl, the slow-moving River Semphril to the aerho, the mysterious depths of the Idrakewater to the sarrind, and the haunted eaves of Stormstars Wood to the sekhovynd, Lothrannen seem to enjoy their walls. This is even more apparent from the numerous walled estates containing whimsical faelorn (private mansions) which often house exiled rulers of other realms and retired adventurers.

Lothran is known for near constant throne-strife and unrest between the six hereditary dukedoms: the Houses of Cormithal, Landaen, Randathjet, Septrur, Telner, and Waern. This land epitomizes the expression, "Live by the sword, die by the sword." Any Duke (hereditary or self-proclaimed) who has the strength to take and hold the Greatkeep that towers over Four Thrones may proclaim himself the Grand Duke of Lothran. Though, there are caveats that go along with it—including the necessity of hunting down and slaying the former Grand Duke or forcing him to renounce his throne before the

two senior Houses, Cormithal and Randathjet, recognize the claim.

Lothran is a land of lush orchards and, more importantly, lucrative trade routes—the Thaalride and Raudar's Way meet in Zroas of Many Markets. These trade routes are well-guarded by the disciplined and organized patrols of the Grand Duke, Zorthsel Haramandras, a handsome man whose striking features and ornate, but functional, armor are readily recognized at a distance by all Lothrannen. He is said to be shrewd, fearless, and always vigilant for unfolding intrigues. I have not met the man myself, but I believe the stories I've heard. This Grand Duke will not be easily overthrown.

## ORMSCAR

Ormscar is a gray, rocky land of endless hills, sarthen (sheep) herds, rock-faces and quarries, miners and forgelords (smiths). This windswept land is home to hardy, independent folk who are generally gruff and unwelcoming—much like the land in which they live. Ormscar is lightly ruled by the Lord Imperial from the fortress city, Dauntcastle, supposedly built over the ruins of an ancient keep said to crawl with fell magic, speaking skulls, and a hidden pool that can resurrect the dead.

The current Lord Imperial, Imdurr "Longaxe" Toroth, is an Ironar dwarf (hailing from Ironfell, the dwarven realm below Ormscar). He is an unpopular, greedy ruler who thinks of little but accumulating more wealth. Toroth is the sort who would slay a trader for his money, if he could get away with it. As smart as he is greedy, he does not tax his people since the trade-coin flowing into Ormscar is enough to make the realm wealthy.

Toroth's greed makes him paranoid—with good reason. Were he to do anything rash, the usual trader-merchants might well shun Ormscar for a decade or two, leaving the dwarves of Ironfell little choice but to quickly and forcefully replace Toroth with someone more suited to rule. He knows his rule extends only as far as his Imperial Guard and pays them well to keep him safe. This may well become his fatal mistake, as all men can be bought for the right price.

## IRONFELL

While you will not find it on any map of Mournra, Ironfell is perhaps one of the largest realms in all of Castlemourn. This surprisingly civilized dwarf-realm of linked mines and caverns stretches for miles beneath Ormscar. After the Fall, which I'm told caused the collapse of great regions of the complex, the realm was splintered, and the great dwarven Houses fought fiercely for control of the caverns and resources. This strife led to the near



# The Duskadar

Paerol

Mount Tharclaw

The Winterwood

Maurkaune

The Hunt of Eagles

Sparrow

River Eosphandes

Dragonhead

Ornreth

The Thicket

Greatbellow

Hawkhand

Iron Barony

Chemmore

Wyrmswell

Rothsday

River Mias

Shields Hard

Thornar

Elalon

Hulagant

Ghandalar

Nenth

Harbridge

Glael

Caeth

Arhdahkaun

Estornia

Marrow

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

Dragonhead

# Glamryn Bay

Tarruno

Mearan  
Nuan  
Chalborn  
Stonewall  
Thunberg

West Mist

Roaringwater Strait

Nor Jumber

Nasmul  
Bhrilen

Arshroon

Meliska  
Damsore  
Downsyeen  
Roel  
Maruld

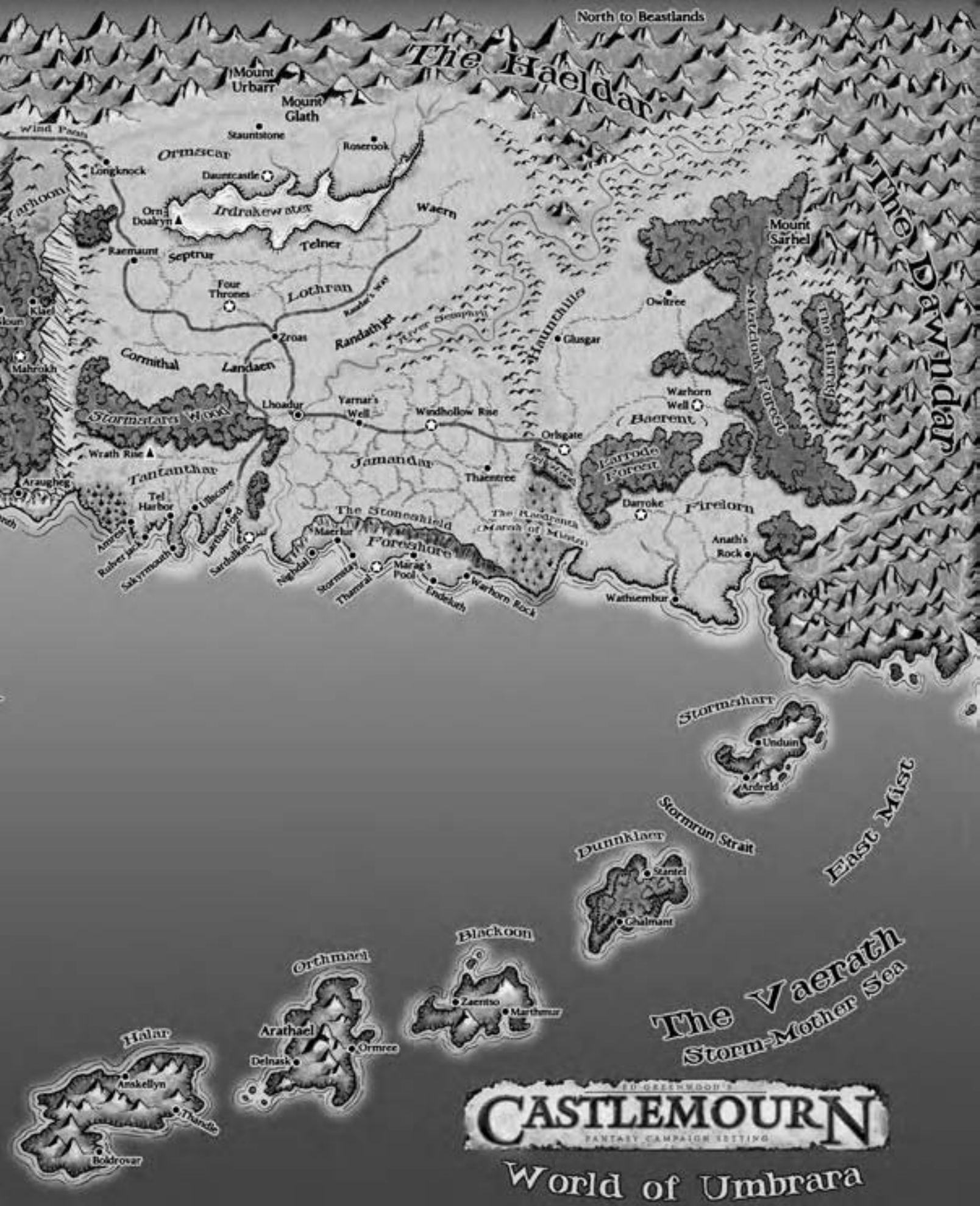
Bel's Sharth

Silver  
Larack  
Aumeth

The Deepwrath



0 miles 150



complete destruction of several dwarven Houses (Haurhammer, Jorlorth, and Mauroid). Now the realm is ruled by a governing council in Forgedeep composed of representatives from each of the major Houses (Arrandur, Bellowforge, Farront, Gelkorf, Kadaunth, Stonehammer, Toroth, and Yarraun). The council demands the Houses attempt diplomacy first, and if that fails they must use champions to settle disputes.

Though many old resentments, rivalries, and intrigues still simmer beneath the surface, the surviving artifact badges of the three shattered Houses serve as grim reminders of the cost of open House-strife. A handful of Haurhammers, Jorlorths, and Mauroids may still wanderer the great caverns of Ironfell, but their Houses are gone forever.

Why do I know so much about a subterranean dwarf-realm? The Ironar dwarves are master smiths, crafting much of the armor, weaponry, metal tools, and cookware seen throughout Castlemourn. The plumes of its great forges can be seen rising from the slopes of Mounts Glath and Urbarr on the sekhovynd edge of the Haeldar.

The Ironar trade primarily with Ormscar, or merchant-traders who stop over there, and keep a close eye on the political situation above them. It would be crippling to Ironfell's economy if something in Ormscar forced the merchant-traders who frequent the realm to go elsewhere.

## YARHOON

Luthsurl of the Debatable Lands, from the Haeldar to Glamryn Bay, Castlemourn is sundered by the Yarhoon, a towering ridge offering unimaginable wealth and danger. The golaunt, the most well-known danger of the Yarhoon, rule this region and constantly raid the surrounding lands. They call themselves the Aathur (meaning "foremost" in the ancient Crown Tongue) and ultimately are a matriarchal society ruled by the maeraedra, the "mothers of the realm." These withered crones pass their decrees to the orlhaulen (the overchief) who rules over the haulen, leaders of the main family groups known as horndyn. Like most golaunt leaders, Orlhaulen Gorog Kairagh Lokhlar is cunning and capable of iron self-control. An accomplished warleader, he ruthlessly dispatches any who show signs of defiance to his orders.

If you can get past the violence, you will see that it is all very organized—thus, the frequent raids into the Debatable Lands and Lyonar. These raids serve as scouting missions, supply runs, pre-emptive strikes, and warnings to all to not trespass on Aathur territory. They seem to believe these shows of force and prowess are necessary to dissuade adventurers and prospectors from seeking the large

gems and rich veins of precious metals that abound within the caverns riddling the Yarhoon.

The Yarhoon is an incredibly dangerous place, even without the golaunt. Its dense, steamy forests abound with dangerous plants and huge, ferocious lizards. The deep caverns are home to many subterranean monsters such as the darraudan (cloakers) and the tauroon or "slitherers" (troglodytes).

## LYONAR

Hailed by many as "the Golden Realm," Lyonar is considered to be one of the safest, happiest, and most luxurious realms in all of Castlemourn. This vast kingdom is bordered to the aerho by the Yarhoon and the Summerstar Hills to the luthsurl and stretches from the shores of Glamryn Bay to the sekhovynd edge of the Winter Wood. Having crossed Mournra many times, I have been to Lyonar and, on the surface, what they say is true. But, just as calm waters can hide vicious monsters, dangers also lurk beneath Lyonar's placid surface. It is good to watch well, hear much, and speak little.

Lyonar is divided into six dukedoms surrounding the central "Throne Lands," sometimes referred to as the "seventh dukedom"—for this same reason, Lyonar's king is known as the Sevenscrown Lord. Thirty-seventh in his line, the current Sevenscrown Lord is the much beloved Alsandyr Lyonar VI, who rules from mighty castle Sharlaunce in Stormgate. The six duchies are Greatbellow, Larancel, Marlstag, Norntree, Palandmar, and Raumarl. While the dukes of Greatbellow and Raumarl are devotedly loyal to King Alsandyr, the same cannot be said for the other dukes. The duke of Larancel is an ambitious, dangerous schemer, while Palandmar is torn with throne-strife as rival nephews position themselves to seize the throne on the death of their aging uncle (once a strong ruler, now languishing in the twilight of his days). It's duke having died recently in a hunting accident, Norntree is ruled by his beautiful daughter, whom Alsandyr is courting (oh, the potential for trouble there). And finally we come to Marlstag, who's hunt-loving duke is rumored to dabble in fell sorceries. Suffice it to say that all is not well beneath Lyonar's gleaming façade.

Despite these troubles, Lyonar is a prosperous, populous kingdom of rich farms, verdant forests, and good roads, all patrolled and kept safe by splendidly armored knights. It has much to offer the traveler and merchant, as well as profitable avenues to offer adventurers who know an opportunity when they see one.

## THE STARHAVEN REACH

The Starhaven Reach is a long, deepwater bay stretching far sarrind from the main waters of Glamryn Bay. Teeming with fish, folk from the Reach's three great independent cities (Asmrel, Ghandalar, and Luuthaven) ply it's cold waters constantly, sending tradegoods throughout Castlemourn and harvesting the Reach's great bounty. Only two islands provide any challenge to sailors on the Reach, Halagaunt and Mergaunt (known collectively as the Gauntrys). The Gauntrys are bare, rocky isles claimed by no one, serving as neutral ground for slavers, pirates, smugglers, and transactions best carried out away from the eyes of law enforcers and tax collectors.

Asmrel (to the aerho) and Ghandalar (to the luthsurl) compete fiercely to control trade on the Reach (bordering on open warfare). However, they have been kept in check by the oft-repeated promise of the merchants of Luuthaven to beggar either or both cities should open hostilities erupt.

Located at the mouth of the River Luuth, Luuthaven is a damp canal city located at the sarrind end of the Reach. Here the waters of the Rivers Luuth, Esplander, and Dreuline all spill into the cold bay, making this end of the Reach turbulent and silty. Some say the murky waters of the Luuth are but a reflection of the dark minds of those who dwell in Luuthaven, though I am not entirely certain what is meant by this.

### ASMREL

Known far and wide as "The Golden," glittering Asmrel considers itself the height of wealth and culture in all Umbrara (despite the fact that Asmrans, just as other Mournans, know nothing of wider Umbrara). This city of tall, narrow buildings and stone towers is home to many so-called "merchant princes." Even the Just Warrior Palandrin, ruler of Asmrel, epitomizes the essence of all things Asmran—style over substance.

Palandrin is a title taken as name by anyone ascending to Asmrel's Zamosarr Throne. By tradition, Palandrin is a mighty warrior-prince, tall and imposing, but many occupants of the Zamosarr Throne have never done anything more warlike than hold a sword grandly after assuming office. At least two Palandrins have been women employing magical disguises. Within the city, Palandrin's word is law, and he rules until death. Thus, many go missing when they have upset to many Asmran merchant princes or Lord Vraezers (the dozen advisors to the throne) or simply wish to return to a life of relative obscurity.

Life in the Golden centers around the pursuit of the latest fashions (dress, cuisine, manners, and diversions, of which the city offers an endless,

ever-changing parade) and private interests (or "sophistications")—anything from collecting the petrified dung of rare or extinct monsters to preparing "performances" of magically animated sculptures, living musicians, and spell-spun images and phantasms. Many sages, scholars, poets, and composers of note dwell in Asmrel, which prides itself on being the epitome of cultural achievement (bluntly expressed in the old Asmran saying: "Ours is best"). The rest of Castlemourn knows Asmrel through its reputation, witticisms, and by the fine goods produced by its many boot-makers, cobblers, "taylors" (tailors), and *swarashers* (makers of hats, cloaks, and gloves).

### GHANDALAR

Where Asmran's are a haughty, exclusive lot, Ghandalar's are a welcoming people, encouraging trade and importing goods from across Castlemourn. The denizens of the Coin-Cauldron, Ghandalar's more commonly used name, encourage trade of all types and quantity in order to ensure themselves a wider selection, better prices, and the highest quality available. Long-known for its haphazard layout, the city is a sprawling maze—an unwallied port of many docks, farms intermixing with clusters of warehouses, and more than a dozen city centers where merchant-traders and shopkeepers cluster together in commerce. Much like the city, tax collection appears haphazard at best. At random intervals, the mounted knights, who keep order in the streets, appear at merchants' doors without warning to collect taxes by proffering helm-sized pots with the royal command to "fill the cauldron."

One similarity between Asmrel and Ghandalar is the obfuscation surrounding the identities of their rulers. Instead of a faux warrior sitting on their Halark Throne, the Ghandalans have Four Princes (who are neither Princes nor even Princesses). These lovely courtesans are sponsored by wealthy merchants to champion their causes. The Four Princes arbitrate between merchants, entertain important envoys and visiting traders to the best of their abilities, and live lives of pampered revelry. Beloved by the citizens, these ladies have slowly been gaining some measure of true power.

All of this organized chaos and odd rulership encourages the Ghandalan way of life—which is, of course, the pursuit of the almighty coin—until it is time to purchase property elsewhere in order to retire in luxurious comfort.

### LUUTHAVEN

Luuthaven is a damp city of bridges, canals, confusing streets, and merchants willing to find and sell anything—anything at all—for a price. It is a city



at the center of many things. It sits at the apex of the Starhaven Reach and is equidistant from Asmrel and Ghandalar; it plays the two cities against each other to make certain that neither gains an advantage. While the two focus their rivalries on each other, the merchants of Luuthaven are free to focus their attention elsewhere.

The merchant leagues that unofficially rule the city—four strong, old organizations and two fledgling—maintain investments in ports all over Castlemourn (yes, in Asmrel and Ghandalar, too) and are well established and active all along the Thaalride and Shalantiir's Way. These ready trade resources mean that Luuthaven's merchant leagues could easily follow through on their threats to route trade around Asmrel and Ghandalar should they enter into open conflict, impoverishing both cities—an ambitious plan which would also greatly benefit the Lyonar port of Amruneth, something that the Lyonar Throne has already promised to support should the "necessity" arise.

The Master of Luuthaven, a largely-powerless spokesman for the city elected every summer, spends most of his time playing Asmrel and Ghandalar against each other by promising the aid of the leagues to one city or the other (which keeps the boldness of both in check). The rest of his time is spent in delicate maneuverings to keep the leagues similarly balanced.

## DRAGONHEAD

Imagine a trademoot where anything can be bought and sold and where all manner of outlaws, thieves, and swindlers meet to do business in relative peace and safety. A mysterious wizard guards the town and harshly punishes most open violence, vandalism, and deceit (and always punishes poisonings and arson)—causing the offender's head to explode without warning. This place, my friends, is called Dragonhead. It sits along the banks of the River Luuth and is named for a rocky tor, shaped like a gigantic dragon's head, that rises just straeclith (northwest) of the bustling trade-city.

Largrymm, Dragonhead's mysterious wizard "enforcer," is also known as the "Wizard of a Thousand Faces," as no one knows who he or she is; they assume "he." Largrymm lives (perhaps dwells is the better term, as current rumor holds he must be a lich, having been Dragonhead's self-appointed "law" for nigh on one hundred years) in a solitary, seemingly empty, tower on the tor. Otherwise, the trade-city has neither ruler, nor law enforcement, to interfere. Thanks to Largrymm, the worst a visitor might expect is a bit of pick-pocketing and some small exaggeration as to the value of goods.

Castlemourn's major trade routes, the Thaalride and Shalantiir's Way meet in Dragonhead, making the trade-city an ideal gathering place for new business partners, old enemies, people looking for "something," and people who specialize in finding those "somethings."

## SPARRUK

Luthsurl of Dragonhead lie the wild, rolling, monster-infested hills of Sparruk—which are, in a word, poor. Poor people live there, the soil is too poor to grow decent crops, and poor grazing is available for livestock—poor and dangerous. Sparruk's few inhabitants eke out meager existences, stockpiling everything they can and retreating into secure safeholds in the cold months when wolf packs dominate the land.

Why would I bother to bring this monster-haunted realm of crumbling stone ruins to your attention? Simple. Prospectors and adventurers dare the wilds of Sparruk seeking thaelstones—translucent blue gems that can be "awakened" to utter messages when touched and to remember messages when used properly. These rare gems easily fetch tens of thousands of gold shields. The promise of thaelstones is enough to encourage adventurers to brave the dangers and seek out ancient ruins and crumbling mines where the stones may be found.

It must be noted that the wolves of Sparruk are not its only danger. The Tharksun is line of wooded hills that runs sekhovynd out of Sparruk, forming the border between the coastal farms of Ghandalar and the luthsurl realms of Estorna and Khalandorn. Few are willing to travel deep into the forest out of fear of the wolves and the rumors of darker, fell creatures that dwell there.

## ESTORNA

Estorna, a rolling land of hills and quarries bordered by the River Lulace, is a melting pot of industrious artificers and skilled crafters who would rather create their wares than go to war. Many gnomes, halflings, half-breeds, and outcasts from other realms dwell there in peace. Your race is of no consequence as long as your work is skilled, your product sound, and you mind yourself and your opinions. Everything the Estornar create is beautiful and adorned, but not at the expense of functional use. "Beautiful and practical" is the Estornar way of life.

The people of Estorna have a subtle way of repulsing invaders. Three times they were conquered by Khalandorn to their sekhovynd. Each time, the earnest people of Estorna submitted docilely to Khalandornar rule, but then small things began to go awry—fastenings and water-

pipes broke, wine and perfumes were tainted, and accounts and records were found to be inaccurate or lost all together—much to the gentle confusion of the Estornar, who tried to serve their new masters to the best of their ability. Each time, baffled by ever-increasing calamities on all sides, the Khalandornar finally retreated, and the small domestic troubles ceased as abruptly and mysteriously as they had begun.

The Khalandornar seem to have learned their lesson regarding Estorna, but the Estornar now hire mercenaries to defend their realm. They only concern themselves with what makes them happy—creating simple but elegant ladles, storage-coffers, lanterns, and thousands of other small household wares and items that are seen all over the lands of Castlemourn.

## MARROVAR

The people of Marrovar are a strange lot. Marrovar is an independent port city, governed by a council of merchants, that stands on a small wedge of land between the Rivers Mar and Sundrin, the sekhovynd (southern) boundary of Estorna and the sarrind (northern) boundary of Khalandorn, respectively. A rather unattractive, austere city of stone walls, iron-barred gardens, cobbled streets, and busy shipyards, the Marrovians are as austere in their dress and manners as they are in their building and decorating.

Marrovian merchants, known as coinmasters, will deal with anyone—golaunt, pirate, or legitimate businessman—with equal respect if they deem the investment favorable in its overall effect on Castlemourn. However, Marrovar has strict laws and harsh penalties for lawlessness within the city—forced service on a Marrovian warship, hanging, or banishment—so coinmasters dealing in “darkwork” often travel to Luuthaven or Dragonhead to conduct their business.

The shrewd coinmasters of Marrovar are legendary for their ability to negotiate around and manipulate their business partners in order to aid, abet, or augment each other’s achievements and to attain results only the Marrovians could have foreseen. Rumor has it that the people of Marrovar (or, perhaps, just the coinmasters) have precognitive abilities that encourage them to work towards some unfathomable goal, making deals even if they do not appear to be immediately profitable. Amongst merchants and military strategists alike, it is a compliment to be told you “plan like a coinmaster of Marrovar.”

## KHALANDORN

Ah yes, the Khalandornar, what a wonderfully entertaining folk! Where else will you find fierce knights galloping hard to battle monsters and right wrongs, spouting all sorts of rubbish about personal worth, honor, and valor? These Knights of the Realm of the Flame strive to do something valorous, large or small, every day. And, as with all other vanities and passions, this can be easily used to one’s advantage if handled properly.

The common folk of Khalandorn live simple, practical lives tending livestock and walled gardens—which are stoutly-walled out of necessity due to all the hard-galloping knights. These people admire the knights, but think of them as rash children to be steered aside from potential disasters born of their reckless enthusiasm.

Oddly, this monster-troubled kingdom of hard-riding knights is a matriarchal society. In fact, women are encouraged to join the ranks of the Knights of the Realm of the Flame (though their numbers are still few). Shields Hard is the throne-town of the High Knight, who is always a woman elected by the other knights. Within the Realm of the Flame, her word is law. She is the chief arbiter amongst her people, acting as both the velvet glove of diplomacy and the iron fist of order—which is exactly what is needed to keep her well-meaning, but rash, knights in check.

Do not mistake me. The knights serve Khalandorn well. There is no shortage of danger for them to battle. Wolves and other beasts raid out of the Tharksun in such numbers that many folk in nearby lands believe that something of deep evil dwells within those cursed woods, and monsters from the Haunt of Eagles and the Broken Lands continually harry the straeklith reaches of the realm.

## HAUNT OF EAGLES

Running from Sparruk in the sarrind to Khalandorn in the sekhovynd, a knife-edged ridge (riddled with caverns and clefts) forms the western border of Khalandorn. The Haunt of Eagles is so high and rocky that only flying creatures—primarily eagles and vultures—can live there in comfort. The caverns house a great variety of monsters, known and unknown; so many that even the golaunt have never been able to establish a permanent presence there.

While foot trails and animal tracks criss-cross the ridge, there is only one truly viable pass through the Haunt for anything larger than a single pack animal. Located at the sekhovynd end of the ridge, the pass is guarded by the fortified Khalandornar city of Great Sword.

This town is filled with optimistic prospectors from all over Castlemourn who come in search of



two things: the treasures of Arhdahkaun and the precious gems found in occasional fistfuls within the veins of soft rock in the caves that fissure the southern end of the Haunt. As a frontier trade-town, Great Sword is prone to drunken rowdiness and disorder. To protect the valued trade route and maintain order, Great Sword is ruled by a Knight-Governor of Khalandorn who oversees city law enforcement and the knight patrols of the nearby trade way. This rough-and-tumble outpost has become a proving ground for young, reckless Knights of the Realm of the Flame.

### ARHDAHKAUN

Crowning the Haunt of Eagles like a great stone fang stabbing into the sky (earning it the moniker “Old Stone Fang” in many fireside tales), Arhdahkaun is one of the few surviving “great castles” from Before the Fall. Since the Fall, adventurers have sought the treasures of Arhdahkaun and made and lost fortunes in this legendary place. The vast castle-complex is an adventurer’s dream come true—or would be if it were not so hard to get to—visible for six days ride or more away.

Many treasure hunters have explored Arhdahkaun over the years and report that it is built of massive stone blocks that were somehow fused together and then sculpted. The great, empty rooms continue to surprise—for good or ill—as old spells expire and reveal hitherto-hidden chambers,

stairs, or passages. There is treasure yet within its walls, of that much I am certain. Whether it is hidden by magic or lies deeper within the castle’s cavernous dungeons, entombed within the depths of the Haunt, remains to be seen.

### BROKEN LANDS

Aristero tells me there is a common proverb amongst the outlaws and bandits who dwell within the inhabited lands luthsurl of the Haunt of Eagles, “It is better to die swiftly under an enemy’s sword than to risk the ravaging beast-jaws of the Broken Lands.” I do not know how he has come by this knowledge; nonetheless, I would heed these words well. The Broken Lands are not for the faint of heart, or, for that matter, those who value their lives in the least. You will find few, if any, folk in this land, but you will find death—a swift one if you are lucky.

The Broken Lands lie just luthsurl of the Haunt, an uninhabitable region of cliffs, ridges, rock outcrops, and breakneck ravines “where monsters are as plentiful as water.” They stretch sarrind to where the River Lulace divides the Haeldar from the Duskadar Mountains, and descend at last into the an-luthsurl (westernmost) realm of mainland Castlemourn, the Iron Barony.

Fortunately, the Broken Lands are not as complete a barrier as the Haunt and are passable. The wild beasts and monsters roaming the region frequently attack even heavily armed caravans

traversing the winding cart road between Great Sword and Ruthstay.

## IRON BARONY

While the Iron Barony is a large land bordered by the Broken Lands and the Duskadar Mountains, it is little more than a collection of villages and small fortified homes ruled by the Iron Baron in Chemmore, the Barony's only port town. The other villages are sekhovynd Ruthstay and Wyrmwel and sarrind Hawkhunt on the edge of the lost realm of Maurkaun.

Ruthstay is the main trademoot of the Iron Barony, and the Baron keeps more spies there than warriors. Wyrmwel is a village built around a purewater pool said to have magical properties and to be occasionally visited by wounded dragons. Hawkhunt is a base for furriers and adventurers exploring Hawklar Forest and seeking the lost riches of Maurkaun.

Maurkaun was a remote, sarrind realm ruled by the Gem Queen, Nurnlarra. One night sixty years ago, in mighty spell-battles that shattered every tower and left Maurkaun a smoldering ruin, Nurnlarra was slain by unknown foes. Nature, such as it is, has since reclaimed the land. Now, those who venture into Maurkaun from Hawkhunt report that spells are unreliable there, and some return changed, their eyes glowing with fierce flames and possessed of magical powers they lacked before. Recent discoveries of gems, potions, and other treasures have rekindled interest in this lost land. I have to wonder if these sudden discoveries are nothing more than bait set by some unknown enemy seeking to lure adventurers from near and far.

The Barony is rife with restless warriors who feel the Barony is perceived as a weak, backward realm and argue that a bold stroke or two would earn the Iron Host some respect. Fortunately, the Baron knows that if the Iron Host were to do any posturing whatsoever, it would alarm the Khalandornar into supporting some of the young, restless knights eager for conquest.

## IRON ISLES

Enclosing Glamryn Bay to the sekhovynd and aerho of the Iron Barony are the Iron Isles. Seven islands dot the Bay's sekhovynd edge, running from the luthsurl tip of the Duskadar Mountains at the Seamount to the sekhovynd edge of the Dawndar Mountains to the aerho. All of them are windy, salt-rimed, rocky lands where the sand and rocks are red with iron. Iron mines are everywhere, though they are often flooded by the unforgiving sea.

The Iron Islanders are fierce folk, swift to aid anyone in peril on the wave or shore, but always

armed and equally ready to defy troublesome outlanders. Iron is the only thing found in abundance on these islands; what grows here is said to be stunted, and the Islanders are eager to buy food stuffs from mainland Castlemourn in exchange for the iron the other realms desire.

In truth, little is known of these islands save their names and that iron and magic are abundant. Tales of hidden paradises butted up against bleak, wild lands persist. Are they lands without rule or lands ruled by tyrant wizards? Rumors abound, though, more often than not, they contradict or conflict with other rumors, giving little indication of what is truth or falsehood. That said, I know the existence of magic-shrouded Tamrune, the only island in the midst of Glamryn Bay, to be truth. Perhaps on that mysterious isle, hidden within the depths of one of the five haunted castles of old, lies the truth to the Fall of the Castles.

## BEYOND THE BORDERS OF CASTLEMOURN

Some inhospitable lands may lie within the borders of Castlemourn, but what lies beyond is far worse—impassible mountains, monsters of legendary malevolence, crumbling ruins, and storm-tossed seas. They surround us on all sides, imprisoning our fair lands.

To the aerho, the sun rises over the seemingly endless Dawndar Mountains, an unmapped savagery of jagged rock slopes studded with hidden valleys and smoking firepeaks (volcanoes). The anluthsurl firepeak is Mount Sarhel, more commonly known as "Mount Firetongue." Its towering cone is both a landmark and a source of portents for the folk of Castlemourn. It is believed to have marked the an-aerho edge of the "Old Realm," and its nigh-constant plume of smoke almost always blows sekhovynd towards the sea, forming the Aerho Mist, the boundary between Glamryn Bay and the unknown, perilous waters of the Vaerath. Somewhere to the aerho lies Tharlтар, land of sorcerers, though beyond that no one knows what lies beyond the Dawndar Mountains.

To the sarrind are the Haeldar Mountains, separated from the Dawndar by the deep gorge of the River Semphril. There are a few foolhardy prospectors and adventurers seeking riches along the an-sekhovynd edge of the mountains. Some questors seek the mythical "City of Dead Sages," said to hold "all the knowledge of the past," while others brave fierce predators and ravening monsters, searching for the treasures of long-lost Faerel. Sarrind of these mountains lie the Beastlands—a trackless expanse of near-endless, monster-haunted

mountains, icy lakes, and hidden valleys. In this savage land, dragons rule the skies and voracious monsters dwell aplenty, constantly breeding and making war on each other.

To the luthsurl, separated from the Haeldar by the River Lulace, lie the Duskadar Mountains—also called the Windhowl and, of old, the Vrauntdar. The sharp Duskadar peaks march far out into the sea, forming the great western arm of mountains sheltering Glamryn Bay. The range ends at the narrow, treacherous Roaringwater Strait that separates the Seamount from the closest of the Iron Isles, Nor Umber. This meeting point of sea and land is always shrouded in mist and fog, known as the Luth Mist.

To the sekhovynd, Glamryn Bay is enclosed by the Iron Isles, tumbling out of the Dawndar and Duskadar Mountain ranges. Beyond the Isles is the Vaerath or Storm-Mother Sea. Plagued by violent storms, immense sea monsters, waterspouts, and towering waves, no ship that has dared the fury of the Storm-Mother has ever returned to the relative shelter of Glamryn Bay. During the frequent violent storms that lash the Iron Isles, the winds turn the thick, spicy-hot smokes of the Dawndar firepeaks from their southerly course to blow luthsurl across Castlemourn, a sign that at least one of the Seven is unhappy with something mortals have done or are attempting.

## RELIGION & ASTROLOGY

Though cults of the so-called Secret Gods rise and fall with the passing seasons, all Mournans know and venerate the Sacred Seven: Amaunt, Araugh, Damantha, Haelarr, Larlasse, Munedra, and Ralaroar. Sometimes referred to as the Sleeping Seven, folk go through their days either calling on the gods for aid or trying to ward off divine disfavor.

All faiths preach that the actual “Coming” of their deity (to walk the lands of Mournra) is a wonderful thing, but the “Awakening,” when all Seven arise and the “Dire Time” begins, is a dread event to be greatly feared. It is no coincidence that the strongest Mournan oath is “Sleepers awake!”

The sky is the realm of the gods, and astrology is intricately linked to religion. Tsundarra (the sun), the ever-blazing, floating House of the Seven, dominates the sky during the day. However, the starry vault of the night reveals fourteen nightlanterns (constellations), all sacred to the Seven. Umbrara’s night sky also holds two moons: large, pale white-green Thelseene (the source of almost all moonlight) and small, baleful red, swiftly-speeding Amaunt. Thelseene’s movements affect the tides and most magic. Amaunt is little

understood by Mournans, racing along near the horizon, appearing only briefly and changing little. During its rare conjunctions with nightlanterns or Thelseene, when it strays from the horizon, Amaunt heralds war and is said to lend aid to those seeking vengeance.

## THE SEVEN

One cannot live within the Realms of Castlemourn and not acknowledge that the Seven exist and rule their respective domains. Even the most secular of Mournans pays homage to the Seven—if for no other reason than out of habit or fear. Religious groups can be of any size; hundreds of organized groups have established shrines and holy sites almost everywhere in Castlemourn, as well as the large, well-known temples. Some of the more devout worshippers avoid the large established groups, living as hermits or wandering waypriests, spreading news of the Seven and their miracles.

The elves favor Larlasse, Damantha, Munedra, and Ralaroar, making small appeasement-offerings to the other three. The dwarves look primarily to the Four Who Watch Over Us—Amaunt, Haelarr, Munedra, and Larlasse—considering the others the “Lesser Three.” To the golaunt, the Talon—Araugh, Amaunt, and Haelarr—are the most powerful of the gods and the only three worth worshipping. Meanwhile, humans, gnomes, and halflings worship the Seven as a whole.

If you adhere to the thought “*Might makes Right*,” then **Amaunt** is your god. Also known as the Great Fist, the Cold Sword, or the Allthrone, Amaunt is the god of war, rule, dominance, retribution, and justice. He is the epitome of order through force—for good or evil. Alignment does not matter as long as order is maintained. “*All chaos and lawlessness is weakness. Weakness unchecked leads to disaster.*” If blood must be shed, so be it. Rulers, governors, warriors, and those who wish justice (revenge/restitution) worship this heavy-handed god.

There is nothing like a violent and malevolent god to bring out the worshipper in all of us. This goes double for **Araugh**, also known as the Lord of Storms and Shadows, the Dark Wave, Conqueror of the Grave, and Lord Coldeye. Sailors and pirates worship him to appease his mercurial and evil nature. Golaunt, brigands, and joyfully destructive individuals also worship him, because they believe in his decrees. “*Nothing can stand against or rival Araugh. Strife and slaughter are the natural norm. True growth comes from death. There is a road beyond death.*” Araugh is malicious toward all save his own worshippers, and even they are expendable to further his aims.

**Damantha** is favored in rural areas, though largely ignored in urban centers, as she is best known as the goddess of farming, abundant yields, and quality of produce. However, she is also the goddess of civilized history, fellowship, and community. Perhaps this should not be so surprising, since the land is necessary to support cities and civilization. *"Despoil nothing, lest you be despoiled. Understand every living thing, so as to know what to tend or cherish."* This peaceful and joyful goddess is also known as Lady Harmony, Lady Greenleaf, Lady Purestar, and the Warmheart.

Those who seek knowledge and prosperity seek **Haelarr**. Also known as the Lord of Coins, the Wise One, Goldbrow, and the Maker, Haelarr values knowledge and wealth equally. At the same time, he enjoys tempting the good into evil and the evil into good as his decree cares nothing for chaos or order so long as knowledge and/or wealth is gained. *"Gold breeds gold. Spend wisely and enrich all. One's true worth is different from another's, but unknown value is always worth nothing. Seize opportunity or live unrewarded. Seek to know, and thus prosper."* Sages, rulers, inventors, and the ambitious all look to gain Haelarr's favor and, perhaps, a profitable vision.

**Larlasse**, the lady of luck and divination, is a beautiful goddess who encourages her faithful to explore new ways and take chances. Also known as the Mother of Hopes, the Laughing Dancer, and Lady Surefoot, this whimsical goddess does not always respond to those who pray and yet, she kindly guides unsuspecting mortals through dangers unknown and inspires those trapped within courtly intrigues to escape. She is beloved of travelers, explorers, and adventurers. As a devout worshipper, former questor, and waymaster, I live by her decrees for they are sound and sure. *"Give no false directions. Make and keep safe maps and directions. Know your home ground."*

*"Forgiveness and restoration achieve more than war. Purity is holiness. To heal is to trust. The healer is a true friend."* Though she must be invoked, **Munedra**, the goddess of healing, helps most all who call her, regardless of their behavior or intent. Also known as Allmother, the Hand of Healing, the Whitestar, and Lady Life, she cares for the sick, the diseased, the wounded, and those who must battle, or have contact with, the undead. This gentle goddess of healers manifests as moonglow (even if there is no moonlight) or as a floating, disembodied, glowing, silvery-white feminine right hand to heal all injuries including poison, disease, and other taints.

As the Lord of beasts, plants, and all wild living things, **Ralaroar** is master of the cycle of life from birth unto death. Those who work the land, hunt beasts, and venerate the seasons worship this chaotic force of nature. Neither good nor evil,

Ralaroar simply is. Also known as Lord Redclaw, Old Lord Memory, and Lord of the Green, the greatest sin against him and his is thoughtlessly causing wildfires. *"The power of the land is the greatest power. The power of the land is Ralaroar. One cannot hide from Ralaroar. Slay no wild thing needlessly. To know how crawling and flowering things live is to know their true worth."*

## NIGHTLANTERNS

The night skies of Castlemourn reveal fourteen *nightlanterns* (constellations) which are used to tell direction or as part of sacred rituals. Nine of these nightlanterns are "fixed," while the other five wander the night skies.

**Blackel, the Anvil.** Associated with ancient mysteries, this constellation is the remnant of the forge used by the One Who Came Before in shaping the Sacred Seven.

**Caladuth, the Claws.** Associated with Araugh, storms, attacks, disaster, and destruction, these claws are all that remain of the great Devourer-of-Dragons. Those born under Caladuth are destined to be great war-leaders, notorious outlaws or pirates, or bestial shapeshifters.

**Durblade, the Fallen Warrior.** Associated with Larlasse, heroism, success, and persistence, Durblade is a fabled hero from the "Time Before."

**Malavindor, the Lost Chariot.** Associated with Haelarr, failure, loss, and things hidden, it is the chariot left racing through the starry sky when Haelarr fell asleep and let go of its reins.

**Orluth, the Blind Bird.** Associated with Munedra, healing, daring, punishment, and failure to see consequences, Orluth the blind skorlvar (vulture) is Munedra's messenger.

**Paeragus, the Watcher.** Associated with Amaunt, justice, learning, and lore, its lights are the lanterns of five armored guards keeping careful watch over all of Castlemourn.

**Rauth, the Bloodboar.** Associated with Ralaroar, strength, terror, foes, and doom, the savage Rauth slew Durblade, impaling the warrior on his wicked tusks.

**Tree of Stars.** Associated with Damantha, fertility, rebirth, newness, and the future, it was grown from a seed hurled into the sky during the Fall, nurtured by clouds of magic rising from the destroyed castles.

**Viliyathar, the Sky Dragon.** Associated with Amaunt, danger, peril, glory, and high birth, Viliyathar was the greatest dragon who ever lived. The stars of the constellation are his remaining gems, held together by his fierce spirit.

The five wandering nightlanterns appear and disappear with the changing of the seasons.

**Aumounel, the Swift Arrow.** The only wandering nightlantern that is visible year-round, it was the last shot of a dying archer who cursed the Seven as he was cut down in battle.

**Quemenndur, the Old Owl.** Quemenndur was a lich who escaped destruction at the hands of powerful priests by transforming himself into a bone owl and flying up into the night sky.

**Ralanduth, the Sundering Sword.** This is the doomed sword Araugh used to wound each of his fellow Seven. They wrested it from him, hurling it far. Powerful spells, cast by Amaunt, prevent Araugh from ever wielding the sword again.

**Sarandar, the Watchful Shield.** The “shield of eyes” was crafted by Amaunt to observe the sins of Mournans, but it was snatched away and hurled across the sky by Larlasse to give all mortals the chance to err and strive for betterment.

**Vorth Urla, the Devouring Worm.** Once a powerful wizard, Vorth Urla was transformed during the Fall into a great worm destined to gnaw endlessly at the divine power of the Seven.

## STARMOOTS

The conjunction of a wandering nightlantern with one of the fixed nightlanterns is known as a starmoot. Each conjunction brings with it divine messages from the Seven or sometimes from the Secret Gods. These messages are meant to aid and guide mortals, though their meanings are difficult to interpret; every faith (and more than one temple within each faith) has its own approach to interpreting these omens. Most temples agree on “standard interpretations” for the most common starmoots—this conjunction always warns of war, that one of disease or plague, yon other one of new prosperity and so on—but only if certain conditions are met. If not, the starmoot can have any one of a dozen or more different interpretations. Temple officials record these conflicting ‘holy meanings’ and the circumstances surrounding the starmoot into secret books, continually expanding and clarifying (or muddling) the lore surrounding certain starmoots. Many notes also record visions experienced by priests after praying for divine guidance in regards to a particular starmoot.

There are fourteen more common starmoots based on the paths the wandering nightlanterns take, though many other (lesser understood) starmoots can and do occur, including moots between fixed nightlanterns and the Ruby Eye of Amaunt. Priests take careful note of events that may support or discount specific auguries and also note the positions of other “wanderers” or celestial bodies that might affect such meanings. As a result, each temple’s “secret book of signs” is ever-expanding and changing, as priests attempt to

cleave ever closer to fully understanding the divine intent.

It helps matters not that seemingly random celestial events such as longfires, the seven rarely seen comets, that occasionally cross the night sky affect the meaning of starmoots. In general, longfires herald the coming of good fortune or wealth and may blunt the ominous tidings of an inauspicious starmoot.

While some would rather not believe in such portents, starmoots *do* affect Castlemourn as a whole. Thus, when Quemenndur, the Old Owl, moots with Durblade, the Fallen Warrior, the undead will rise in greater numbers. When Ralanduth, the Sundering Sword, moots with Viliyathar, the Sky Dragon, a time of war and usurpation is upon us all. The mooting of Vorth Urla, the Devouring Worm, with the Tree of Stars heralds the birth of new spellcasters, the discovery of new sources of magic, and the creation of new spells. These things happen to believers and non-believers alike; it is simply part of life here in Castlemourn.

## MAGIC

Magic is a complicated subject these days. The magic of the Seven (divine magic) is as common, or more so, than it was Before the Fall. The Seven are quick to aid their servants’ with spells and knowledge, but arcane magic is another matter entirely. Questors and sages tell of the ancient days when arcane magic was commonplace and everyone knew some magic—whether it was merely a cantrip or a powerful, land transforming spell. It was part of everyday life; a tool used easily and often. As you can see, this is not the case today. So much knowledge was lost When the Castles Fell. Thus, hunting for spells and other magic has become a passion for adventurers everywhere. It is an easy path to unimaginable wealth and power. Ruins all across Castlemourn yield up scrolls of long-forgotten spells. This rare or hitherto unknown magic can be sold for fabulous sums to wealthy wizards and sorcerers.

Each time ancient knowledge is uncovered, it must be carefully guarded. If word gets out that you have uncovered a potent, new spell, your life may well be forfeit as unscrupulous individuals or powerful wizards try to take it from you. Literally hundreds of spells and magic artifacts uncovered each year remain complete mysteries to even the most astute Mournan scholars of magic because so much lore was lost during the Fall. All of that knowledge must be carefully rediscovered through painstakingly meticulous steps; otherwise, the magic often does more harm than good.

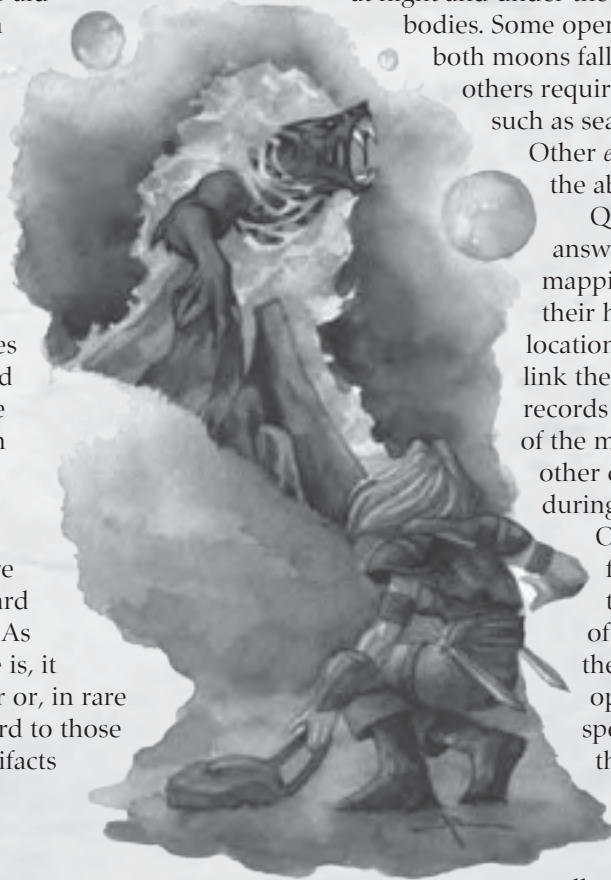
The other danger of arcane magic in today's world is that most folk cannot wield magic. Those who can are very limited in what they can do. The spells we see today are nothing in comparison to what they once were. The glimpses we see of arcane spells of old make the magically-talented hungry for more, frighten simple folk, and worry politicians and rulers. The rediscovery of magic cannot be stopped. Most likely, it cannot be controlled. The question now becomes, "Who will do what with the rediscovered power, and how will it affect current alliances?"

The most knowledgeable arcane scholars live in relative isolation on the Iron Isles, where I'm told the land itself seems to aid in the study of magic. Even the culture of the Iron Isles aids in the study of magic. Barter is the normal means of trade, and spells and magic items are often given in exchange for magical training and assistance. As a result, the sorcerers and wizards of the Iron Isles have developed or acquired many new spells, most rare or completely unknown on the mainland.

As a rule, those mages who have managed to rediscover or reinvent more powerful spells tend to guard their knowledge jealously. As precious as this knowledge is, it is sometimes used in barter or, in rare cases in the Isles, as a reward to those who retrieve additional artifacts and magical lore.

## ESTEMEL

Scattered throughout Castlemourn, though most commonly found near the ruins of ancient keeps, the *estemel* are thought to have existed since Before the Castles Fell. Normally quiescent, by the light of the moons Thelseene and Amaunt or by the light of one of the fourteen nightlanterns, these stone structure "open" onto other, far realms (thus the creatures passing through them are called felar or farfarers). During these times when the archways glow, pulsing with strange translucent swirls of scintillating color, the living can pass through them; however, no Mournan who has entered one of the *estemel* has ever returned, and no farfarer has ever been able to leave Mournra.



The *estemel* are one of Castlemourn's great mysteries. Many questors and scholars spend their lives studying them, and still no one is certain as to their origin or initial purpose. The most widely accepted theory is that these gates were created by long-forgotten wizards sometime Before the Castles Fell. Another popular theory holds that the *estemel* are the primary reason the Castles Fell, and they still pose a great danger to Umbrara because monsters can and do come through when the gates are active. Fortunately, most of these gates are located in extremely inhospitable or remote regions.

There appears to be little rhyme or reason as to when the *estemel* open, other than they only open at night and under the light of specific celestial bodies. Some open only when the light of both moons fall on a particular stone, while others require specific local conditions such as season or stellar conjunctions.

Other *estemel* appear to need all of the above or more to activate.

Questors who seek these answers often spend many years mapping out the *estemel* within their homeland. They map the locations of individual gates and link their histories to astronomical records regarding the positions of the moons, nightlanterns, and other celestial objects in the sky during each season and year.

Other questors focus on the farfarers who have come through, seeking knowledge of the celestial bodies and their positions when the gate opened for them or other specific conditions surrounding their arrival in Castlemourn.

Master questors attempt to link the research and records of the *estemel* from all over Castlemourn in an effort to find a logical pattern, hoping to one day to return the *estemel* to their original function. Some even go so far as to venture through, seeking what answers may lie beyond these strange portals.

Despite the danger associated with these mysterious stone structures, it is a marvel to see one of these *estemel* "awakened" and functioning. I was fortunate enough to witness this incredible phenomena, and even more fortunate that nothing came through the *estemel* that night.



## THE CALAUNTHRA

Known formally as the *Calauantha*, the Mournan calendar is referred to as the Telling in daily speech. The calendar consists of “Times” of a dozen years, each identified by the name of a creature. Individual years are termed “the First of the Gryphon,” “the Second of the Gryphon,” and so on. At the end of every Time is a single day, the *Haelhollow*. It’s not considered part of any year and is a day when wrongs can be righted, revenge taken, laws are considered suspended, married couples can seek new partners for one night, and violence and pranks govern. After *Haelhollow* passes, a new Time begins.

It is currently the Fourth of the Gryphon. The recent and soon to come Times are as follows (in chronological order):

The Time of the Huthbear  
 The Time of the Swiftwing  
 The Time of the Ornserpent  
 The Time of the Thantoad  
 The Time of the Khornalysk  
 The Time of the Drusthorn  
 The Time of the Gryphon (the current Time)  
 The Time of the Stormbird  
 The Time of the Winddragon  
 The Time of the Warserpent

### DAYS AND MONTHS

Each year is divided into twelve forty-day-long *taeloles* (months), which coincide with the lunar cycle of Thelseene. Taeloles are divided into four ten-day periods known as *rathren* (weeks). The four *rathren* are always named Rising Rathren, Green Rathren, High Rathren, and Withering Rathren.

The Mournan year begins with the first taelole of spring, *Adaunth* (equivalent to our March).

Adaunth (March)  
 Vaerryl  
 Maepranth  
 Nornee (June)  
 Wendthorn  
 Aumbril  
 Jalandth (September)  
 Orstara  
 Vrauntur  
 Darkhaunth (December)  
 Standrath  
 Orthenkho

### FEAST DAYS

Local rulers call feasts, day-long celebrations, to mark occasions of importance in local life, from battles to dragon-slayings to ascensions of thrones. However, there are a number of feasts observed by all Mournans—the Days of the Seven:

**Brightstar** (First Rising, *Adaunth*)—dedicated to *Larlasse*. Participants hope to win good fortune and clear choices in the year ahead.

**Coinrain** (Fourth Green, *Maepranth*)—dedicated to *Haelarr*. This holiday is celebrated in hopes of prosperity. Folk give coins to strangers, in hopes that when they are in need in the year ahead, “coins unlooked for” will come to them.

**Gentlehands** (Tenth High, *Nornnee*)—dedicated to *Munedra*. This day celebrates good health and avoiding disease, wounding, and heart-strife in the year to come.

**Fiercefend** (Sixth Green, *Wendthorn*)—dedicated to *Araugh*. Participants hope to avoid storms and watery peril in the year to come.

**Fangward** (Tenth High, *Wendthorn*)—dedicated to *Ralaroar*. The Beast Lord is appeased in hopes of avoiding animal and monster attacks. Great hunts and monster-slayings are re-enacted by costumed commoners, real beasts are set to fighting, and warriors wrestle bears for public entertainment.

**Swordfire** (Sixth High, *Aumbril*)—dedicated to *Amaunt*. This feast brings hope of avoiding misrule and false justice. Many pacts, agreements, and contracts are made on this day.

**Fullsheaf** (Tenth Green, *Jalandth*)—dedicated to *Damantha*. This day is observed in hopes that the harvest will be plentiful and the food wholesome. If such results seem unlikely, the people make livestock sacrifices in hopes that food comes to the hungry from somewhere in the lean days at the end of winter, when larders are bare.

### CURRENCY

Mournans use the usual copper-silver-gold-platinum scale familiar to many *felar*, with gems (most often moonstones or sard for 50 gp and pieces of amber and garnets for 100 gp) used for larger denominations. Many such stones are encased in chased silver or iron “edgebindings” to prevent their being chipped or shattered in everyday handling. Every realm does its own minting, with their own local names for the coins, but in the last century, *Asmrel*’s rise to wealth was aided by their minting of huge numbers of good coins, now circulated widely all over *Castlemourn* and accepted as a standard.

- the copper “rued” (a triangular coin punched in the center so it can be strung on rings)
- the silver “smiling eye” (an oval-shaped coin that bears a dragon’s eye on one side and an image of a fanged, scaled smile on the other, with the legend “I watch for trickery”)
- the golden “shield” (a shield-shaped coin)

- the rare, platinum “turret” (shaped like a squat, crenellated castle tower)

## A SHORT HISTORY OF CASTLEMOURN

It is a sad fact that our knowledge of the distant past may be nothing more than hearsay. It is little comfort to be forced to admit that this loose collection of information is the most accepted history we have. For those who have lost their past, perhaps a fable is better than nothing at all. If my words are proven false, based on your own travels and experiences, I charge you with the duty of passing along the your knowledge to as many rhymeswords, questors, sages, and historians as possible so that our history can be set straight.

More than three hundred years ago, the Realm of Castles thrived. It was a magical place of shining towers and unfathomable wonders. Arcane magic was commonplace and used for all circumstances and occasions. It was a Golden Age for Umbrara. Then, the Great War began. Again, we know little about when, where, or how it began. All we have are fanciful tales and snippets of old verse. We are fairly certain that Mournans fought against each other. We believe we also fought with, and against, fell creatures from “Otherwheres,” most likely brought to Mournra through the *estemel*. The end result of this Great War is known as “the Fall of the Castles” or simply “the Fall.” The period of time before this cataclysmic event is often referred to as “Before the Castles Fell” or “Before the Fall.” Modern history is frequently referred to as “After the Fall” if there is some question as to the timing of an event.

At best guess, roughly three hundred sixty years have passed since the Fall. The folk of Mournra have had significant time to rebuild, and realms have come and gone over the passing years. Today, many Mournans fear and distrust magic. Time and again, the use of magic seems to lead to death, tyranny, and destruction. The lost realm of Maurkaun is just one recent example. During the Time of the Swiftwing, Maurkaun was a vibrant straeclith (northwestern) realm ruled by the sorceress Nurnlarra, known far and wide as the Gem Queen. One night during the summer of the Fourth of the Swiftwing, she was slain as a horrific spell-battle ravaged her realm. When the next day dawned, every tower of Maurkaun lay shattered and not a living soul could be found in the fallen realm.

Just the past hundred years have seen significant changes across Castlemourn. The Faerel, once a vital sarrind realm, has simply vanished. None know what happened or exactly when, but what once marked a vibrant realm on maps is now a

barren wilderness, controlled by vicious predatory beasts and fell monsters.

The realm of Sparruk was a settled kingdom beset by beasts. Its king ruled from his saddle as he and his knights constantly rode from one side of the kingdom to the other battling monsters and protecting his small folk. That kingdom is vanished as well, leaving behind a sparsely populated wilderness of rolling hills stalked by wolves and worse.

And, of course, the rulership of each and every realm of Castlemourn has changed hands several times in the past hundred years—with the notable exception of Dragonhead, still under the control of Largrymm of the Many-Faces. And as always, throne-strife seems to run rampant. One new Grand Duke takes the throne after another in Lothran. Feskrrar “the Furious,” former Lord Imperial of Ormscar was slain and replaced by Imdurr “Longaxe” Toroth. Of course, there is the issue of the succession in Baerent to consider. With Lord Nestarl Baerenthur dead, the Baerentaen are anxious for Lady Nuthlore to remarry, so they can have a king to rule “properly” once again. And, it was fewer than ten years ago when the Ghandalan guildmasters incited the Coin-Cauldron’s citizens to rise against the tyrannical Baerlyn Morthar, who was butchered in the streets by a dozen merchants, and replaced him with the Four Princes.

## CREATING A CHARACTER FOR THE CASTLEMOURN CAMPAIGN

All of the standard races, with the exception of the half-orc, are available as character races for a Castlemourn campaign. In addition, Castlemourn is home to two new character races: the fell-blooded golaunt and the mysterious thaele. When choosing a race and class for your character, bear in mind that both golaunt and thaele are viewed with suspicion and distrust by many Mournans. In the section that follows, rules material is provided to allow you to create characters and begin a Castlemourn campaign using just this book and the Core Rulebooks. Full descriptions of the Mournan character races are included in the *Castlemourn Campaign Setting*.

### RACES

Mournans are generally tolerant of other races. Dozens of different intelligent races inhabit the lands, some friendly, some not so. By adulthood, even a Mournan who has led a sheltered life will have met or seen folk of many different races.

The primary sentient races of Castlemourn are as follows (names in quotations being what other races politely call them):

**Humans:** The most numerous race, the “Swift Tongues” are found almost everywhere and (aside from Ironfell, the Yarhoon, and the mountains) dominate most of Mournra. In addition to standard abilities, Mournan humans have the following racial benefits:

- **Adaptable:** A human’s ability scores are treated as if 2 points higher for the purpose of meeting feat prerequisites.
- **Automatic Languages:** Far Tongue. Bonus Languages: Any\*.

**Dwarves:** The realm of Ironfell is home to most Mournan dwarves, though a few of “the Strong” hail from the Iron Isles, and a sprinkling are scattered widely across the rest of Mournra. The following details show how Mournan dwarves differ from standard dwarves:

- +2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom, –2 Intelligence, –2 Charisma.
- **Life of Illusion:** Dwarves see all life as illusion and suffer a –4 racial penalty on saves against illusion spells and effects. While dwarves are susceptible to illusions, they are also extremely tolerant of them and are always allowed a save against the effects of an illusion (regardless of spell descriptions). Whenever a dwarf fails to save against the negative effects of an illusion, he only suffers half of its effect (either in damage or duration, whichever is applicable). Whenever he makes a successful save against an illusion, its effect is negated. In addition, a dwarf can choose to disbelieve the effects of one spell per day by making a successful Will save as if it were an illusion. He must declare he is using this ability prior to making his normal saving throw. For all intents and purposes, the designated spell is considered an illusion in regard to its effect on the dwarf.
- **Automatic Languages:** Dandarr and Far Tongue. Bonus Languages: Any\*.
- **Favored Class:** Monk. The combination of discipline, reflection, and contemplation along this path is consistent with dwarven culture and thought.
- Mournan dwarves do not gain the standard +2 racial bonus on saving throws against spells and spell-like effects or the +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids.

**Elves:** Most “Fair Folk” hail from Harrag and the Mistcloak Forest, where they prefer to be left alone, often cutting short the lives of those who enter their trees uninvited. Elves encountered outside the

Mistcloak are often outcasts, sent forth from their kin for transgressions. The following details show how Mournan elves differ from standard elves:

- **No Sleep:** Mournan elves do not need to sleep and are unaffected by *sleep* spells and effects; their daily trances aid their minds in resisting many enchantments.
- **Moonglow:** Mournan elves glow with a soft, white radiance that is barely perceptible in daylight, but in dark or dimly-lit conditions gives clear illumination in a 15-foot radius and shadowy illumination out to 30 feet distant. This effect makes it almost impossible for an elf to hide (–10 penalty).
- **Weapon Proficiency:** All elves are proficient in the following weapons—longsword, longbow and composite longbow, shortbow and composite shortbow, bolas, and net.
- +2 racial bonus to Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks.
- **Bonus Class Skill:** Concentration.
- **Automatic Languages:** Elven and Far Tongue. Bonus Languages: Crown Tongue, Gadroar, Gnoll, Gnome, and Sylvan.
- **Favored Class:** Druid or Ranger. At 1st level, an elf must choose either druid or ranger as her favored class. Once chosen, this favored class can never be changed.
- Mournan elves do not have low-light vision.

**Gnomes:** A majority of gnomes call Estorna home, but like the halflings, “the Quiet Folk” have settled widely elsewhere. The following details show how Mournan gnomes differ from standard gnomes:

- +2 Intelligence or +2 Charisma, –2 Strength.
- **Focused Caster:** Gnomes who choose to focus on a single school of magic gain a +1 racial bonus to their saving throw Difficulty Checks.
- +2 racial bonus on Listen and Perform checks.
- +2 racial bonus on Craft checks that involve a discriminating nose (such as alchemy, brewing, and cooking).
- **Great Focus:** In addition to his class skills, a gnome picks three additional skills related to his Great Task. These are always considered class skills, and a gnome can always Take 10 on these skills.
- **Automatic Languages:** Gnome and Far Tongue. Bonus Languages: Crown Tongue, Dandarr, Elven, Gadroar, and Giant. In addition, all gnomes have the innate ability to speak with burrowing mammals (badgers, foxes, rabbits, or the like).
- **Spell-Like Abilities:** 1/day—*Speak with animals* (burrowing mammal only). A gnome with a Charisma score of at least 10 also has the following spell-like abilities: 1/day—*mending*, *arcane mark*, *prestidigitation*; caster level 1st; save DC 10 + gnome’s Cha modifier + spell level.

- **Favored Class:** Bard or Wizard. When beginning play, a gnome must choose either bard or wizard as his favored class. Once chosen, his favored class can never be changed.

- Mournan gnomes do not receive the +2 bonus to saves against illusions, the automatic +1 bonus to the DC of their illusion spells, or the +4 dodge bonus to AC against giants.

**Golaunt:** The “Snarlers” are dominant in the Yarhoon, though small tribes can be found where humans are few throughout Mournra.

- +2 Strength, -2 Charisma.
- **Medium:** Golaunt are Medium creatures.
- Golaunt base land speed is 30 feet.
- Darkvision 60 feet.

- **Fell Blooded:** Golaunt are not considered human and aren’t subject to magical effects (such as spells or items) that specifically target humans. Instead, golaunt are fell humanoids and are subject to the full effects or benefits of magic items or spells that specifically target orcs, ogres, trolls, and creatures with the goblinoid subtype.

- **Strong Stature:** Golaunt are more resistant to bull rush, grapple, and trip attacks, being treated as one size larger. Golaunt can also use weapons designed for creatures one size larger without penalty; however, space and reach are still determined by the golaunt’s actual size.

- **Indomitable Spirit:** 1/day—A golaunt facing an opponent whose HD are two or more greater than the golaunt’s class level may receive a +2 morale bonus to any one attack roll, saving throw, skill check, or ability check. This ability is a free action which must be declared before the chosen roll is made.

- **Barbaric Literacy:** A golaunt who begins play as a barbarian is literate without having to spend skill points.

- **Automatic Languages:** Gdroar and Far Tongue. **Bonus Languages:** Abyssal, Crown Tongue, Giant, and Gnoll.

- **Favored Class:** Barbarian.

**Half-elves:** Half-elves are found in both human and elven settlements, though never within the borders of the Harrag. The following details show how Mournan half-elves differ from standard half-elves:

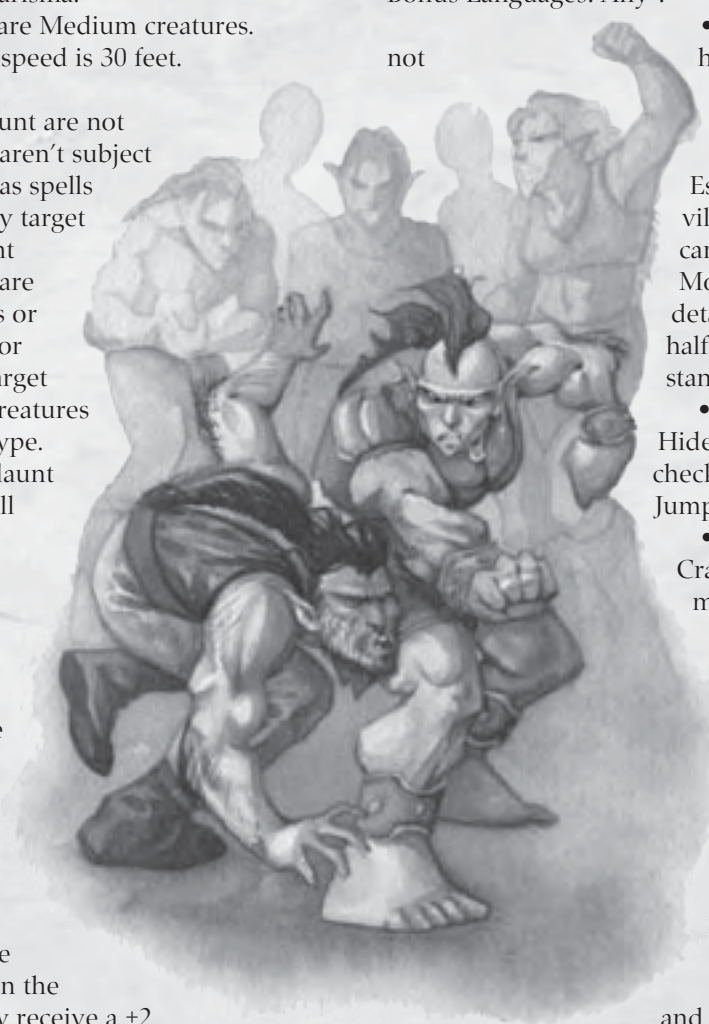
- **Moonglow:** Half-elves glow giving off clear illumination in a 5-foot radius and shadowy illumination in a 15-foot radius. This effect makes it hard for a half-elf to hide (-5 penalty).

- **Bonus Class Skills:** Concentration and Diplomacy.

- **Automatic Languages:** Far Tongue and Elven. **Bonus Languages:** Any\*.

not

- Mournan half-elves do have low-light vision.



**Halflings:** Most halflings hail from Estorna, though small villages of “Swifthands” can be found across Mournra. The following details show how Mournan halflings differ from standard halflings:

- +2 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks (but not Climb and Jump checks).

- +2 racial bonus to all Craft skill checks to create masterwork items.

- When creating magic items, halflings pay only 75% of the normal experience cost (round up).

This does not stack with other abilities that reduce the experience cost of magic item creation.

- **Automatic Languages:** Halfling and Far Tongue. **Bonus Languages:** Any\*.

- **Favored Class:** Bard or Rogue. The halfling character must choose either bard or rogue as his favored class. Once chosen, this favored class can never change.

**Thaele:** A mysterious, unsettling race of transients, the “Strange Folk” wander the lands seeking answers to Castlemourn’s many secrets, even as they protect their own. The intriguing and deadly thaele are fully detailed in the *Castlemourn Campaign Setting*.

- +2 Strength, -2 Charisma.
- Medium: Thaele are Medium creatures.
- Thaele base land speed is 30 feet.
- Low-Light Vision.
- Bonus Class Skills: Concentration and Heal.

- Automatic Language: Thaelen and Far Tongue.
- Bonus Languages: Any\*.
- Favored Class: Cleric.
- Other thaele racial abilities include Accursed Aura, Blood Thirst, Seasickness, and Silver Allergy.

\*Secret languages such as Druidic and Thaelen are not available as bonus languages.

## CLASSES

Just as golaunt and thaele are mistrusted by many, the powers wielded by wizards and sorcerers are feared by common folk. Fell wizards continue to use magic for dire ends, and rumors regarding the evil sorcerers of Tharltar circulate widely. The use of arcane magic is accepted everywhere, except within the bounds of the Harrag, but even so, those who use magic to bully or cajole may quickly find themselves faced with angry mobs.

All of the standard core classes are available, along with a new core class (the buccaneer) and six new prestige classes (the dusked, the faithless one, the rhymesword, servant of the Seven, Truesword Knight, and waymaster) presented in the *Castlemourn Campaign Setting*. The first three levels of the waymaster are included here for use in your campaign.

## WAYMASTER

The waymaster is a merchant who has studied at one of the many Jamandran fencing schools and graduated as a full-fledged waymaster. These individuals are able negotiators and skilled swordsmen. However, they aren't trained in the arts of warfare (strategy, tactics, supply, and the like), and so do not typically make good soldiers or military leaders. Nevertheless, only a fool underestimates a Jamandran merchant with a rapier at his belt.

Waymasters are expected to school others in their profession and, in the twilight of their careers, are expected to educate and sponsor apprentice merchants (one for every waymaster class level they possess), training them in skills that will eventually allow them to become waymasters.

Individuals who become waymasters usually have training as bards, fighters, rangers, or rogues, and all have some experience traveling across Mournra.

**Hit Die:** d8

## The Waymaster

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Merchant lore
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Canny defense
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Improved reaction +2

## REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a waymaster, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +4

**Skills:** Appraise 4 ranks, Bluff 4 ranks, Diplomacy 6 ranks, Profession (merchant) 6 ranks

**Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

## CLASS SKILLS

The waymaster's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (merchant) (Wis), Ride (Dex), and Sense Motive (Wis).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 6 + Int modifier

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the waymaster prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The waymaster is proficient with all simple and martial weapons and light armor, but not with shields.

**Merchant Lore:** Waymasters learn a great deal just by listening to local gossip and merchants' talk. As a result, a waymaster may make a Merchant Lore check upon arrival in a place with a bonus equal to his waymaster level + his Intelligence modifier. If the check succeeds, he knows some relevant information about local people or organizations, noteworthy items, or legendary locations. This check may not necessarily reveal true information as much of what the waymaster hears is rumor or exaggeration. The waymaster cannot take 10 or 20 on this check. The DM determines the Difficulty Class of the check by referring to the Merchant Knowledge Table (see below). If the waymaster also has bard levels, add those class levels when determining the bonus to his Merchant Lore or Bardic Knowledge checks. Waymasters with 8 or more ranks in Gather Information gain a +2 synergy bonus to Merchant Lore checks.

**Canny Defense (Ex):** When not wearing armor or using a shield, and while wielding a melee weapon, a waymaster may add 1 point of his Intelligence modifier (if any) per waymaster class level (up to her total Intelligence modifier) to his Armor Class, in addition to any other applicable bonuses.

**Improved Reaction (Ex):** At 3rd level, a waymaster gains a +2 bonus on initiative checks.

## BACKGROUND & EQUIPMENT

How and where a character is raised can be very important in a Castlemourn campaign. The Birthlands section discusses the importance of a character's connection to the land. Several of the races of Umbrara also have unique abilities, some of which are difficult for them to control. The *Castlemourn Campaign Setting* includes a handful of Racial Feats that allow characters to increase their control over these natural abilities. Of course, these Racial Feats always have a racial prerequisite.

Just as important as homeland and race, auspicious signs and portents in the heavens can play an important role in determining an individual's path. The campaign guide also includes ten new Starmoot Feats. Starmoot Feats represent a strong connection between the character and the dominant constellation at the time of her birth, which is determined based on the conjunction of the wandering constellation Aumounel with one of Mournra's nine fixed constellations. Unless stated otherwise, Starmoot Feats can only be taken during character creation. If you are beginning a Castlemourn campaign using just this book, you might want to talk to your DM about the possibility of exchanging one of your initial feats for a Starmoot Feat when the *Castlemourn Campaign Setting* becomes available.

The level of technology in Castlemourn is equivalent to the medieval period represented by the equipment available in the PHB. The Castlemourn campaign assumes the common gold standard (as noted in the Currency section), and all standard equipment is available to characters with enough coin. However, magic items that require arcane magic are more rare, and it will be nearly impossible for characters to hire wizards to cast spells or to purchase scrolls of higher than 4th-level.

## BIRTHLANDS

The lands of Mournra are enchanted with power infused into them centuries ago; power that permeates the body of every Mournan creature before its birthing, linking it to its birthland. Whenever Mournans drink the water or sleep on the ground of their birthplace, resonances arise within them, allowing them to be revitalized by the silently-surgng forces of the land. This link gives every being dwelling near its birthplace an almost psychic benefit. Life just seems better and easier when at home.

Each character has a *birthplace*, a 50-mile-radius area centered on the spot where he was born. Within this area, the character feels the power of the land. All characters pick three *birth skills* that are empowered while within their birthplace. Whenever a character fails a skill check with one of these skills, a reroll is granted, but the result of the second check is binding. An individual who leaves his birthplace for more than 48 hours loses this skill benefit. As soon as that individual returns, drinks of the water and rests for a full 8 hours within his birthplace, the birthland skill benefit is regained.

## Merchant Lore

DC	Type of Knowledge	Examples
10	Common, known by at least a substantial minority; common legends of the local population	A legend about a local ruin; a prominent lord's penchant for drink
20	Uncommon but available; known by only a few people; legends	A story about a place before the Fall of Castlemourn; the history of a powerful magic item
25	Obscure; known by few; hard to come by	The location of Tharlitar, fell city of sorcerers; an obscure pre-Fall legend
30	Extremely obscure; known by very few; possibly forgotten by most who once knew it; possibly known only by those who don't understand the significance of the knowledge	The true nature of the thaele; Sealord Thusker Orlin's first ship as a boy; something specific about Castlemourn's Fall

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## A LAND IN SEARCH OF ITS PAST

Its people are unaware of their origins, the greatness of their history, or what disaster brought about the dark age that engulfed the land. Some three hundred years before the current era, there existed a magical place of shining towers and marvelous wonders called the Realm of Castles. Legends tell of a great war against fell creatures that destroyed the realm, leaving scorched ruins and crumbling citadels. Whatever befell the realm was so terrible that the gods have isolated it from other lands.

No one is permitted to leave Castlemourn, and those who enter do so at their own peril, as adventurers, treasure hunters, and questors scour the land searching for relics, artifacts, and clues to the past.

Castlemourn is a post-apocalyptic fantasy setting where kingdoms fight for power through political intrigue and outright warfare; where the brave seek their fortunes in dangerous ruins, and where everyone fears the unspeakable evil that shadows the land.

*A Player's Guide to Castlemourn* is a 40-page introduction to the lands of Mourna. It will allow you to create and run a character with basic knowledge of the setting using current Third Edition rules. The *Guide* includes original fiction by Ed Greenwood!

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