



the CODE of the HARPERS

by Ed Greenwood



*My hatred burns for those who harp
They work against me at every turn
And when I hear them harp at twilight
My soul in me doth burn.*

— Tuth Malgul, Doompriest High of the Sun's Shadow Shrine of Mintar, from *Chants to the Glory of the Dark Sun*, Year of the Serpent

Threefold Dedication

To Chris Matthews and Lisa Fain—because Elminster values nothing more than he does good friends and true.

To Elaine Cunningham, for the information about Arilyn and for giving us Danilo.

Also, to all who have brought the Harpers to life, in novels, in play, and in their hearts. May we meet across a fire at twilight, somewhere in the Realms, its flames reflected back from harp-strings as they stir.

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THE CODE OF THE HARPERS

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We are the Harpers. We are the Lord Protectors of the Realms. Fools, all – but the Gods look down and smile glory upon us. Weep for us, watch for us, and hope in us. We shall not fail thee.

– Harper Chant (composed by Ailadrea Stars-in-mist, Bard of Neverwinter, Year of the Buckler)

A Harper is one of a company of those with similar interests-men, elves, and half-elves. Most bards and many rangers in the North are Harpers. More women than men are Harpers. We have no ranks, only varying degrees of personal influence. Our badge is a silver moon and a silver harp, upon a black or royal blue field. Many female mages, and most druids, are our allies, and we are generally accounted to be good folk. A Harper is one who tolerates many faiths and deeds, but who works against warfare, slavery, and wanton destruction of the plants and creatures of the land. We oppose those who would build empires by the sword or spilled blood, or who would work Art (magic) heedless of the consequences.

We see the arts and lore of fallen Myth Drannor as a high point in the history of all races. We work toward the careful preservation of history, crafts, and knowledge. We work toward that which made Myth Drannor great – the happy and willing sharing of life with all races.

We work against, and must often fight those of evil mind: the Zhentarim; the Cult of the Dragon – that plunders the lore and art of the Realms to enrich their revered dracoliches; the slavers of Thay; those who plunder and willfully destroy tombs and libraries everywhere; and those who would overturn peace and unleash fire and sword across the land to raise their own thrones.

We guard folk against these, when we can. We also guard books and their lore, precious instruments and their music, and Art and its good works. All these things serve hands and hearts yet unborn, those who will come after us.

We seek to keep kingdoms small, busy with trade and the problems of their people. Any ruler who grows too strong and seeks to take knowledge and



power from others is a threat. More precious knowledge is risked when his empire falls, as fall it must.

Only in tavern-tales are humans wholly evil or shinningly good. We do what we can for all and stand in the way of all who threaten knowledge. Who are we to decide who shall know or not know lore?

The gods have given us the freedom and the power to strive amongst ourselves. They have not laid down a strict order that compels each of us to do exactly thus and so. Who knows better than the gods what knowledge is good or bad, and who shall have it?

Harper bards always sing true tales of kings, as far as truth is known. They do not, for any reward, sing falsely the grand deeds of an usurper, or falsely portray as bad the nature and deeds of his vanquished predecessor. Even if such would make good tales and songs, a Harper cleaves to the truth. The truth-a thing slightly different for everyone-must be the rock that the castle of knowledge and achievement is built upon. Strong words, eh? I feel strongly. If you come to do so too, you will truly be Harpers. If



Prologue

one falls out of such belief, he or she should leave the struggle and our ranks.

I hope only that whether you walk with us or no, or join and then leave us thereafter, that you walk always together, and take joy in each other's company. It is through such love—or longing, when in lack of it—that much learning and celebration comes about. It adds to the culture that we strive to save and nurture.

Fight not always with blade or spell. The slower ways are the surer—did freely given, friendships and trust built. These things evil cannot abide. It shrinks away from what it cannot destroy with fire and blade.

— Storm Silverhand, Bard of Shadowdale, speaking to Shandril Shessair and Narm Tama-raith, Year of the Prince (These words are often quoted by Harpers who are asked what a Harper is or stands for, and have become well-known among minstrels throughout Faerûn.)

It is my duty as a Harper to die if necessary in the task of protecting others.

— Reisz Roudabush, Harper, to Krystin, a comrade-in-arms, shortly before dying in Harper service, Year of the Serpent

Listen! Ah...I hear the harp, crying for me. So sad, so sweet...I'm coming! Soon, soon. But help me up, friends. I must die on my feet, in battle, singing. Don't weep, lasses—look for me when you hear a harp at sunset, and I'll be there. Smiling. And why not? I've done good, laughed a lot in the doing, and can die content. Look for me at twilight, when the shades of Harpers walk.

— Naerthiyya Asuantlar, Harper, to her Harper companions before her death in Harper service, Year of the Turret

Working for good and maintaining balance are often matters of small degrees. If you wish to shape a bush you must prune it gently, not take a scythe to it.

— Danilo Thann, speaking to Master Harper Bran Skorlsun just before he was offered a Harper pin, Year of Maidens

Harpers live—and die—to keep the Balance.

— Harper saying (anonymous)

May your harp be unstrung, your dreams die, and all your songs be unsung.

— Harper curse (origin unknown)

Had I known quite how bad a harpist I'd turn out to be, I'd have chosen some other symbol. But by then, of course, it was too late. It almost always is.

— Elminster of Shadowdale, Address to the Lords' Alliance, Year of the Turret



What makes a Harper? Well, different folk'll tell ye a lot of high and grand things, but t'me it seems the only crucial talent – the one they all have-is the ability to turn up at the wrong time in a place where they're neither wanted nor expected, and plunge right into whatever trouble's afoot....

– Darblin Melorinrose, Master Merchant of Neverwinter, Year of the Leaping Dolphin

This is a book about Harpers, so it's fitting that it begin with a story Harken, then. The hour was late, but the feast wore on. Lord Tharlon was not a man to cross, and the revelers were here at his behest. Outside, the winds of a gathering storm howled through Westwood and whistled past the tall windows, but Tharlon merely ordered his harpist to play louder.

Yawns and heavy eyelids were seen aplenty across the hall by then, but the harpist merely bent her head in silence and did as she was bid. The Lord of Westwood ruled his village with a haughty hand; his hatred of certain nobles of Waterdeep for calling him "lord of the cabbage farms" was well known. As soon as he marked her obedience, Tharlon swung away, his grand robes rippling, and called for more wine.

The goblet, when it came, was borne by a man not seen in the hall before. Tharlon had taken his seat—and that saved his life. The blade that would have slid into his throat under cover of the proffered wine flashed for all to see. Before his armsmen and attendant lordlings could do more than gasp and snatch at their blades, a sudden shrill sung note rang out from the harpist—and the blade shattered into silvery dust in front of Tharlon's startled face.

The harpist cast her harp into the air. It played on, strings moving by themselves, as she leaped at the assassin. He cursed and kicked the Lord of Westwood hard, driving Tharlon back into his grand chair as he tried to stand up. Then the killer bent to snatch another blade from his boot—but by then the dark-eyed, firehaired harpist was upon him.

Hair stirred around her shoulders in time to

the harp's eerie music as she clamped one hand around the assassin's knife-wrist, and darted the other to his throat. Men were shouting and running by then, and blades rang and flashed out all over the hall. The assassin twisted and snarled, rising to his full height—a head taller than the harpist—and trying to shake off the woman. But steely fingers kept his dagger low and pointed to the floor, even as firm fingers choked the life from him.

He managed a thick, twisted sound as his struggles grew frantic. The harpist was shaken to and fro in front of the Lord's chair, but her grip did not loosen. By the time bared blades ringed them both around, the man's eyes glazed, and he fell limp and heavy to the stone.

The Lord of Westwood was still struggling for breath. "How—who—?"

His beautiful harpist snapped to the captain of the guards, "This was a Zhentarim. Cut that ring from his hand, or he may vanish. Beware worse magic." Then she calmly turned to face Tharlon. Her floating harp played on nearby.

"Arrogant and foolish you may be," she said, "but we find you strong when you must be, and needed." With slow fingers she drew open the front of her bodice—and the Lord's eyes bulged in astonishment as he saw the silver harp pendant winking there.

"When next you are moved to cruel pride, know that Those Who Harp are watching," she added softly "And know also that we watch far better men than thee."

This sourcebook tells what we could learn of the shadowy, mysterious Harpers of Faerûn. Who are they, really? Elminster says they are "folk who can't stand idly by and see the Realms destroyed around them—they are moved to meddle, trying to guide the general destruction into specific ways and ends that may enable all to see another dawn...."



The Code of the Harpers

What's a Harper? A good question, aye – and like most good questions, it has a lot of right answers. As many, in fact, as there are Harpers...and if that's too cute an observation for your liking, then you have my condolences. A mind so closed can only find life a small, sad cage.

– Tanthlin Starshann, Bard of Berdusk

Many definitions of the term “Harper” have been made down the ages. Some of them have even been printable.

Most folk in the Realms know what the Harpers stand for, more or less (which is about what most Harpers know), but there have always been rumors of a secret code of laws or rules that define Harper membership and behavior.

The truth is that there are and there aren't. (That phrase describes a lot of truths about the Harpers.) The disorganized and secretive nature of the fellowship of Those Who Harp makes it hard to define what a Harper is (and sometimes, who is and who is not a Harper), and what Harpers do and may not do. This is handy for Dungeon Masters trying to evade probing PC inquiries; it is normal for Harper work to involve deception, layers of misdirection, and lots of things that aren't what they seem.

Bearing that warning firmly in mind, who are the Harpers, anyway?

Who Wears the Silver Harp

Men and women of all ages and crafts are Harpers—as well as half-elves, elves, and a few halflings, gnomes, dwarves, and intelligent woodland beings (notably swanmays, dryads, and centaurs). The first three races named are the most numerous in the Harper ranks, and most of these Harpers are bards or rangers. Other classes are also well represented, from mages and thieves to priests. Most druids in the North of Faerûn are Harper allies rather than members, but clerics of many faiths (notably Azuth, Deneir, Eldath, Lliira, Mielikki, Milil, Mystra,

Oghma, Selune, Silvanus, Tymora, and the elven deities) wear the silver harp proudly. In some cases this causes tension between Harpers and higher-ranking clergy—but it never seems to cause tension between Harpers and the deities themselves, or among deities.

Lone wolves (misfits, solitary adventurers, the disfigured, or the brilliant but unbalanced) are tolerated in the ranks of the Harpers, perhaps even encouraged. This adds many crazies (or as they're known in the Realms, “moon-witted”) and difficult folk to the ranks of the Harpers, but it also brings some very powerful individuals into the fellowship, giving them friends and a direction in life.

The elusive, mysterious, and—for purposes of defining, describing, or fighting them—very difficult quality of the Harpers is their lack of organization. This has also been their strength, the flexibility that allows them to melt away before a powerful foe into nothingness (complete lack of organized activity, sometimes for many years) instead of standing strong as a visible army and being smashed by a Zhentarian (or Thayan, or Luskan, or Amnian, or Scardalean, or whomever the petty tyrant may be this season) attack.

The complete story of the Harpers may never be told, because it's not that sort: of organization. Nothing is clear, nothing is formal—and nothing is ever finished. Wise Harpers know this only too well. In the absence of armed might, it's all that's enabled them to survive as a group, in the face of Zhentarim assassins and the soldiers of a hundred rulers, great and small.

Harpers do not gather in large armies to do battle with evil in the glorious clash of arms. Instead, more often than not, single Harper agents slip into places that have fallen under the sway of various shadows—from the halls of kings to thieves' dens—and do all that one being can do to thwart the ruling evil. Not a few have given their lives. As the Harper Caledan put it, “Isn't that how the Harpers operate? They send one person to slip in and do a job where an army



couldn't go. If the agent fails, they've lost only one. But if the agent succeeds"

"I go into most places armed with my orders, my wits, and a little information about where I can find friends or weaknesses in the armor of the enemy," said the Harper agent Tarnshar Stormraven (a ranger of Sundabar). He added dryly, "So I go into most places very quietly."

Many Harpers are spies and serve to hide and aid active, adventuring Harper agents. The weaker such "weaponless Harpers" are, and the less they know, the less danger they're in (to prevent them being murdered if discovered, and to protect the fellowship if they fall afoul of magical interrogation).

When asked what sets Harpers apart from other secret societies (and self-interested cabals and brotherhoods who don't bother with secrecy) in the Realms, Elminster said that Harpers were the only such folk who habitually worried about the effects of their actions on others. This explains why most senior Harpers favor caution and temperance in the use of their influence on the world. As Khelben Blackstaff Arunsun once put it, "Do what is needful, but no more, lest the doing become more important than the deeds." That has become a Harper watchword, and such watchwords define the written Code (such as it is) of the Harpers.

What Do Harpers Do?

Harpers have been called "the meddlers of the Realms" (by many folk, notably the Calishite satrap Khalond Ssarvarr and the Thayan zulkir Szass Tam; in recent days, these words have become a favorite Zhent phrase for the Harpers) and "idealists to the point of lunacy" (by several folk, notably the bronze dragon Bethildritar of Stormsword Mountain—the southernmost peak of the Thunder Peaks range). Both those things are true. A lot of people in the Realms owe their lives to those twin truths.

Harpers spread rumors, aid merchants and common folk in many small ways, thwart the schemes—and sometimes end the lives—of

creatures who work evil ends, and try to manipulate the affairs of civilized races, both great and small, to keep kingdoms balanced and a general peace across Faerûn.

In the North, a typical village Harper might spend a morning cutting wood for elderly neighbors—in a spot that just happens to command a view of a nearby trade road, so as to watch the comings and goings below. After delivering the wood (and chatting with the neighbors, to pick up the latest gossip), the Harper strolls down to the local tavern for a tankard (concealed weapons ready) to see any newcomers face-to-face, comparing them with descriptions passed on by other Harpers of known agents of the Zhentarim, Thay, the Cult of the Dragon, and other evil interests. Whatever the Harper sees, he makes careful note of. He drops by the nearby inn stables to chat with his friend the stablemaster (a Harper friend) and learn what he can of goods carried, numbers of mounts, wagons, and caravan guards, as well as anything interesting or suspicious.

Then he goes off to check the traps on his trapline (leading any pursuit into a trap he constructed along the line long before), and collects any food for dinner. If there is none, he goes hunting. If his catch requires any skinning or butchering, he takes care of such chores, and then takes the result to a neighbor, who will cook it and share it with him, contributing vegetables. The Harper spends a while at the wines he's making, or tending the fires in his smokehouse, eats supper with the neighbor, and drifts back to the inn as it closes, to romance one of the chambermaids (another Harper friend). From her, he learns more about the guests spending the night. According to what he's learned and decided, he might then lurk about the woods near the inn to spy on the activities of guests who are foes or known evil agents. If he gets the right chance, he might ambush and try to slay an agent, but more often he'll just watch (and if the agent leaves a cache of something, he'll stake it out to see who shows up), trying to overhear what is said at any meetings



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with others. If such activities seem unlikely, the Harper may set his friend to doing as much spying as prudent, while he sets out to the next stop on the road, to leave word with the next Harper agent of the presence and doings of the evil travelers. More often, no traveler will be known to the Harpers, but noting what goods merchants are carrying and what lands travelers are from can be just as important. The Harper may spy on travelers he's suspicious of—and in this way sometimes uncovers a Harper, not an enemy.

From time to time, traveling Harpers will find this local Harper and pass on orders (sometimes written missives, but usually verbal messages) and warnings. And so his days pass, with the Harper content to play a small part in working for good in the Realms.

In sharp contrast to the pastoral Harper stand both the wandering adventurer (of which more later) and the city dweller. A typical city Harper may be a street rogue, courtesan, wealthy merchant—or all three. Whatever the urban Harper's identity, he is apt to be (or take on the persona of) someone who's outgoing, curious, quick to make friends and contacts, and always busy with half-a-dozen or more current interests, concerns, and matters of business. This gives him an excuse for going places on a whim, being found in unusual spots at strange times, and so on. The city dweller tied to a shop or a routine can make a good Harper friend or contact, but he stands out like a purple-flame torch when nightwork or stalking visitors must be done.

The most powerful Harpers are the experienced adventurers who travel about Faerun taking direct action. This is not always a matter of spells and blades; some of the most capable Harpers are courtesans and merchants who have mastered the art of skillful acting. They act to mislead or sway other folk in ways that will aid Harper causes and confound those of Harper enemies.

"Everything is a game to the Harpers. . . they manipulate folk like pieces on a gaming-board,

seeking ever to best us," said Whisper of the Zhentarim, once, before the Knights of Myth Drannor killed him (in a conflict brought about by Harper manipulation). It has been said that Manshoon once told a brutal Zhent warrior to learn to "act more like a Harper, and less like a brigand" in his diplomatic dealings outside Zhentil Keep. The skill of Harpers at manipulation is recognized even by their main competition in such behavior.

"One of the things so-called 'civilized' folk do often is manipulate their fellows. When a Harper seeks to sway others, it must always been done for good ends," runs the Harper watchword (coined by Elminster). Another watchword (also the work of the Old Mage) is linked to that one: "A Harper always tries to narrow the gap between good intentions and good results."

The largely behind-the-scenes method of Harper operation follows the watchword, "The subtle plan outstrips the bared blade" (sometimes rendered as "The soft caress moves more than the brutal fist").

If these generalizations define the way Harpers operate, how does one learn what goals they strive for? The Code of the Harpers sets forth the core of their beliefs (some even call it "the faith of the Harpers").

The Code of the Harpers ideals aren't set down in any book, but they do form large parts of the laws of Silvermoon, Everlund, Iriaebor, Berdusk, and Neverwinter, Harpers express them through watchwords. These sayings outline a code that new Harpers swear to follow, usually after their deeds have caused the Harpers to recognize them in their own right. (When a new Harper accomplishes his first worthwhile or notable task on his own, there is often a surprise gathering of several Harpers, who toast their new companion to bolster the fledgling Harper's morale and suggest a few goals or missions to strive for, as well as revealing themselves as contacts.)

Here are the most important watchwords.

- "Harpers work against villainy and wicked-



ness wherever they find it—but they work ever mindful of the consequences of what they do.”

This watchword is always said to a Harper during the ritual of recognition; in answer, the Harper swears, “I shall do no less.” Then the Harper is asked, “What do Harpers work toward and believe?” The correct answer is the next watchword:

- “All beings should walk free of fear, with the right to live their lives as they wish.”

This is the most passionate belief of the Harpers—that every individual has the right to forge his or her own way in the world. War and open strife banish freedom instantly, and so they are to be avoided whenever possible. With that in mind, tyrants, slavers, and oppressors of all sorts are to be restrained, destroyed, weakened, or transformed so that they do as little against the freedoms of others as possible.

- “The rule of law aids peace and fosters freedom, so long as the laws are just and those who enforce them lenient and understanding.”

In other words, Harpers aren’t anarchists.

They work against rulers and their administrations only to make laws and their enforcement fair and sensible—often spreading rumors or truths to the right ears, aiding honest soldiers and diplomats, or deceiving others into doing the right things for the wrong reasons.

For this reason, Harpers work to protect the cities of Faerûn from the ravages of all who would destroy them, from raiding orcs to dragons at play. Stable, prosperous kingdoms may attract attacks from those who enjoy pillaging, but if their defenses prevail, they offer the folk who live there a happier, safer, and more peaceful existence—with the opportunity to banish need and make ever more wealth. The propensity of some Harpers to rob the rich to give to the poor (and finance their own activities) is excused by the next watchword of the Code.

- “No extreme is good. For freedom to flourish, all must be in balance: the powers of realms, the reaches of the cities and the wilderlands into each other, and the influence of one being over another.”





The Code of the Harpers

Harpers like many weak rulers and small territories – kinglings likely to have too many daily concerns to pursue whims, fall into decadence, or have time to act on dreams of conquering vast lands. This is better than tyrants of great power, or realms always aggressively expanding or trying to run the affairs of other lands. Harpers work to establish checks and balances within the government of any realm, supporting nobles who stand in opposition to kings or overlords who want to sweep aside traditions, laws, and rights in the name of their own omnipotence. In rare cases where they view a ruler as good, wise, or receptive enough to respond properly to the news, Harpers have been known to reveal this to a ruler. Azoun of Cormyr is one such. He suspected as much before a Harper confirmed it. His response was to ask the Harpers what they'd like him to do to avoid the Crown of Cormyr and Those Who Harp coming into open conflict. The other realms or city-states whose laws reflect the Code of the Harpers are places ruled or dominated by Harpers.

Harpers help to maintain the balance between civilization and the wilderness whenever possible—not by aggressively stopping land-clearing, farming, and building expansion, but by replanting trees in abandoned farmsteads and fallen lands, planting hedgerows and woodlots in expanding communities (and trying to do most of the building themselves, so that they're in control). Most Harpers are gardeners of some sort or another, even if it's only a handful of plants in a window high in a city tower, or a plot in the wilderness they camp beside once or twice a season. Most—if they survive long enough—retire to someplace where they can tend a garden. As the headstone of the fallen Harper Jhaunsyr Sunderhelm, in the heart of the Royal Gardens he built in Suzail, says: “Why not here? I sleep in beauty and serve the highest goal any dead man can-enriching the soil, that life can flourish after I'm gone.” Many folk have read that verse, because Jhaunsyr carved it himself, before he died, on the back of

a stone bench where many courtiers pause to rest amid the flowers.

- “Whatever it takes, a Harper will do. Pride never rules the deeds of a true Harper.”

No task is beneath a Harper, no job too dirty or dangerous. When asked why he guarded items whose possession was dangerous, the Harper Ibn Engaruka—who runs a shop in Port Castigliar, in Chult—said simply, “Any Harper would do the same.” Harpers have been known to have to chop and burn the bodies of dead friends or loved ones, to dig through latrines or swim sewers, mutilate themselves, adopt demeaning roles as slaves, servants, and even undergo magic to age them, change their sex, or alter their abilities (with no guarantee that the changes can be reversed)—all in the name of Harper causes. This is offset by the next Harper belief.

- “Harpers can spare themselves less freedom than those they work to protect must have—but even a Harper must be free.”

In other words, Harpers can pursue their own interests and accomplish things in their own ways, so long as their deeds and manner don't endanger others. Harpers don't have uniforms, petty formalities, or clearcut ranks and fussy rituals. They can dress and speak as they please. There is a strong tradition of junior Harpers scolding or criticizing their Harper seniors. This is balanced by the next watchword.

- “Harpers police their own. A Harper who hears the call of personal power can no longer hear the sweet song of the harp. A Harper who seizes power, and holds it above all else, is a traitor to the harp. Traitors must die, for freedom to live.”

This is a warning that Harpers kill traitors in their midst. They also punish those who subvert Harper work (as opposed to merely failing, or resigning because of some weakness, change in heart, disaster, or prior calling—such as a noble inheriting a title or throne, a merchant being chosen master of a guild, or a priest being called to other duties by higher-ranking clergy).



Harpers make sure that Harper justice is seen to be done—as in the infamous trial of Finder Wyvernspur; it is only through such public fairness that the Harpers can win trust and support among common folk. The Harpers also ensure loyalty by sparing no effort in hunting down those who cheat them or who are traitors to the Code. They make sure that all Harpers know it; someone who cheats the Harpers and escapes can expect to be on the run for the rest of his (probably brief) life.

- “Without a past, no being can appreciate what they have, and where they may be going.”

Harpers record the stories of those who have passed before, usually by giving written accounts to the Heralds. They note dates, deeds and happenings, important beings and their ideas or sayings. They also record the legends, jokes, folktales, ballads, written works, and even plays that they see and hear in their lives and travels about Faerûn. To a Harper, written lore is as valuable as rare gems or powerful magic; destroying records is a crime.

The Cares of a Harper

Beyond the life-shaping directives of the Code, Harpers have many shared habits or approved ways of doing things. These aren't rules so much as they are an accepted style, which always changes with the local organization. Some of these guidelines are set down here.

- Harpers who have Harper pins carry them unless going into situations where the discovery of their identity would endanger their mission. Harpers wear their pins openly only as a recognition-signal to other Harpers, or at Harper gatherings.

- Harpers don't give up; they always work on unfinished missions, however much time has passed. (This has led to Harpers encountering foes years after they first started looking, and taking swift action—a habit that has given rise to the folk saying, “Harpers never forget.”)

- Harpers help other Harpers without hesitation or thought of personal cost or credit.

- Harpers do not conceal their own shortcomings or handicaps (such as disease, carried curses, and lycanthropy) from other Harpers.

- Harpers never stop listening and looking, no matter how tired, hurt, or affected by magic or wine. An awake Harper never relaxes. (As the sage Maldeth of Calimport once put it, “A Harper is always alert, living his life as if every hanging moment is his last. Soon enough, he's right about that.”)

- Harpers do not respect rank or power; Harpers do respect wisdom and good character. Harpers never discriminate on the basis of sex or race—but almost always take careful note of a being's religion and how loyal that being is to it. Strong religious belief can be a dangerous thing, if the deity's nature or commandments stand opposed to Harper ends.

- Harpers do the unexpected. Unless assuming a role so as to pass undetected by enemies, Harpers do not settle into a routine that invites easy attack or anticipation of their aims and activities.

The cumulative weight of the watchwords and habits listed here may seem to be a heavy, restrictive, limiting thing—but in practice, they're not. They represent a fairly simple approach to life, a way of doing things that rarely requires a Harper to engage in much inner (or verbal) moral debate; most Harpers argue or worry about tactics, not aims.

As Mari Al'maren of the Harpers put it, “I'm a Harper, and helping folk help themselves is what I do. People deserve to live in freedom. I'm not going to let the Zhentarim take that away from the people who live in this city.” She was speaking of Iriaebor; her simplicity of tone is typical of most Harpers. The deceptions and intrigues they engage in to achieve their ends may be both complex and subtle—but the aims themselves are fairly clear-cut.

The meddling, prying nature of Harpers will always make some neighbors uncomfortable, even when those folk aren't Harper foes. “Whisper something in a Harper ear, and all Faerûn'll



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know it before the moon passes,” goes one folk saying.

“Never undress in a room with a window,” Waterdhavian noble matrons tell their daughters. “A Harper may be near!”

“The trouble with Harpers . . . (is) . . . they’ll never stop talking, even when you desperately wish they would,” said Cormik, the corpulent proprietor of the Prince and Pauper gambling house in Iriaebor.

Of course, the traditional foes of the Harpers have more caustic things to say about Those Who Harp. Some such phrases have passed into common use, and may even be heard in public, as tavern-jokes or spoken by characters in satirical plays or minstrel lays.

In Thay, when the wealthy and powerful gather to play at dice, cards, or more exotic games, someone is almost sure to say, “No kicking under the table; it annoys the Harpers there.”

“Don’t think too much about your orders,” Zhent officers often tell their men. “A Harper may hear what you’re thinking.”

“Guard gold coins well until they are in the keeping of a Dead Dragon,” runs a Cult of the Dragon saying, “or they’ll turn into silver harps.”

Two Roads to the Same Gate

The Harper bard Alither of Telflamm once referred to the Harpers of today as: “Two roads taken to the same gate; one seen more often, the other never late.” He was speaking of the two major groups of Harpers and their differing approaches: The Order of the Silver Moon and Harp, based in Berdusk, and the Senior Harpers (sometimes called The Harpers In The Shadows because of their lower public profile, or the Master Harpers because of their power and experience— a term frowned on by most Harpers of both groups, because it confuses the status of individual Master Harpers everywhere), based in Shadowdale.

The Harpers of Berdusk (whose stronghold is

Twilight Hall) are the more organized branch of the fellowship, routinely recruiting and training new agents (often young, zealous adventurers) who are assigned increasingly more important and dangerous missions—such as stopping Zhentarim assassins. They believe in trial by fire. This group is presently led by Belhuar Thantarth.

The Harpers of Shadowdale value experience over recklessness. They are a more secretive and informal lot, and are led by Storm Silverhand, Bard of Shadowdale. These are the senior, more experienced and subtle Harpers. Elminster is usually (and correctly) seen as a member of this group, and Alustriel and Khelben (who both really belong to it) are frequent advisors to Twilight Hall, and tend to be seen as attached to Berdusk.

Both groups communicate with each other constantly; their goals and enemies are the same. Harpers who survive to grow old either go adventuring less frequently, or drift into closer ties with Shadowdale. The difference between the two branches was once succinctly drawn by the halfling Olive Ruskettle: “If a Harper leaps to obey every word of a letter from Twilight Hall, she’s part of the Berdusk crowd, all right. If she thinks first, shakes her head at the tone or suggested course of action, and ambles to accomplish the same end by wiser ways, she belongs with those of Shadowdale. This has nothing to do with where she is, or what branch of the Harpers she may think she’s in.”

How Harpers Communicate

Some Harpers can use magic to communicate with their colleagues. All Harpers can be briefed by any Herald (or the “all-knowing” Harpers Storm and Elminster in Shadowdale, or any of the three “informed” Harpers always on-duty in Twilight Hall, who study and discuss all Harper reports and try to keep track of what Harpers are where, and what of importance is going on at present, all across Faerûn—information they’ll share with any Harper).

Harper messages can also be left by spell or



written means at Harper refuges, or carried as letters by Harpers, Harper friends or allies, and even by hired merchant-messengers of no loyalty to or even knowledge of the Harpers. Such missives are often sent on wax-sealed parchment scrolls, sometimes in code or with magically-concealed writing under the visible script.

Herald strongholds serve Harpers as safe “mail drops” (as do most temples and shrines dedicated to the deities who blessed the Harper cause at The Dancing Place). Most local Harpers also develop their own hiding-places to pass on information. These tend to be clever variations on the obvious (such as a loose stone on the inside rampart of a village well, so a traveler drawing up a bucket to water his mount can feel and remove a message), rather than elaborate, more secure hiding-places that someone might be seen searching for or going to.

Harpers also employ a series of runes (commonly understood trail symbols). A selection of these runes is given in this sourcebook. One caution—if more than one dot is drawn within the outline of a Harper rune that is not normally part of that symbol, the Harper who drew it intended to mislead enemies; pay no attention to it, but look around nearby for another, true symbol.

Many senior Harpers have developed a silent code of gestures and expressions akin to the means of communication used by drow (but having a different language, which would make their movements incomprehensible to a drow spy), but this speech is not easily picked up, and few younger Harpers use or understand it.

General Harper Reactions

In general, Harpers work against anyone or anything that grows too strong and ambitious to maintain a balance with neighboring lands, folk, and businesses. They aid the weak and oppressed (helping by small words and deeds such folk as servants, a single woman trying to stand up to a man of higher rank, and so on), and they try to free slaves whenever this is prudent and practical.

Harpers may sing and joke, but they tend to say little of their true feelings and thoughts (except to another Harper). Someone they suspect of being a foe or an individual they're soon going to have to deal with will rarely sense their scrutiny or hostility.

If A Harper Is Slain

All too often a Harper dies from the blades or spells of foes, without a friend or colleague in sight. At other times, a Harper falls in battle or through misadventure in front of witnesses. If the fellowship knows that a Harper died at the hands of a foe, they will seek revenge—not always immediately, but they won't forget, and the force that eventually comes to grips with the Harper-slayer will be strong enough to make the revenge permanent.

If a Harper simply disappears, the swiftness of the response depends on the locale and the importance and nature of the Harper's mission; some Harpers don't report more than twice a year, at most.

The scouting follow-up to a Harper disappearance tends to be done by a force of at least three: a novice or Harper friend of any class and level (there to serve as eyes and ears unfamiliar to any enemy of the Harpers) and at least two Harper adventurer-agents. These adventurers will be expecting trouble (and be equipped accordingly), and both will be at least two experience levels higher than the missing Harper.

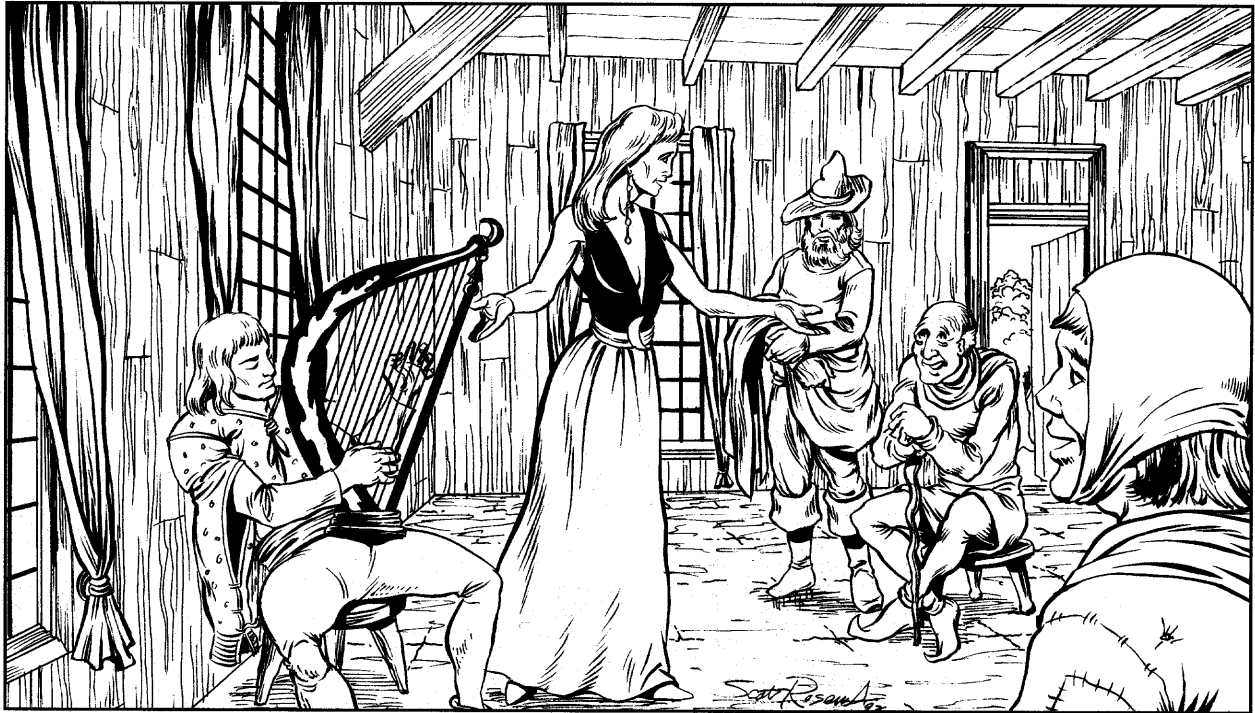
There is always the possibility, of course, of a furious Elminster or Khelben Blackstaff showing up in person, within minutes, to avenge the Harper they've been magically watching over! More often, these august personages will teleport another agent in to perform a rescue scant moments before a Harper funeral becomes necessary.

A Typical Harper's Year

Those contemplating undertaking the Harper life and DMs wanting to devise typical Harper missions can both benefit from a survey of the



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accomplishments of a Harper of middling level during the Year of the Prince (the year before The Time of Troubles, when the gods walked Faerûn, and the world was changed forever).

Mestrel Hawkmantle is a 5th-level bard who demonstrated luck and quick wits early in his Harper service—as well as seizing (from what was left of a Zhent military commander who attacked him) a *ring of protection* +3 and a *sword* +1, *flame tongue*. His superiors (notably the bard Tamshan, of the Harpers of Shadowdale) considered him capable of bigger things—such as surviving dangerous missions. So Mestrel saw the Realms far earlier, faster, and more thoroughly than he'd ever hoped to. In the Year of the Prince (1357 DR/-1 CR), Mestrel did the following (sometimes working on as many as three of the listed projects at once):

- Guarded a caravan carrying Harper messages and magical items among its more mundane cargo overland from Baldur's Gate to Iriaebor (via Elturel and Berdusk), fighting off

two brigand groups and a orc raiding band on the way.

- Located a known agent of Thay in Iriaebor, and in disguise took hire as a guard on the same caravan the agent traveled east on—into a “brigand” ambush that the Thayan spy had helped arrange. Mestrel escaped the slaughter and trailed the Thayan agent and the “brigands” (Thayan slavers) to their encampment in the Far Hills. While they were storing and arguing over the spoils seized from the caravan, Mestrel freed most of the slaves and in the confusion that followed stalked and slew many of the slavers. Then he trailed the fleeing Thayan agent east across country to Westgate, where he identified the superior that the agent contacted. He enlisted the aid of a Harper wizard from neighboring Suzail to learn as much about other Thayan agents from the superior's mind before killing him.

- Learned from the superior that a large slave shipment (consisting mainly of the idle young



of the prosperous merchant classes, smuggled out of Sembia in drugged slumber) was being assembled in tunnels under Westgate for shipment east to Thay. Mestrel let slip this information to a known spy for the Pirates of the Fallen Stars.

Then he hired his own ship and commanded the services of a handful of local novice Harper agents, bolstered by a group of down-on-their-luck adventurers (the Shining Shield Band) who were promised all the loot they could seize.

The slave ships set sail, the Thavian agent with them. Mestrel revealed evidence of the slave-trading to certain lords of Westgate, and left the superior to their swift, merciless justice (Mestrel also passed on all the information he'd gathered on the network of Thayan agents with the wizard). Then Mestrel set sail in his own ship, lurking behind the slavers.

As expected, the pirates attacked and took the ship, intending to sell both ship and slaves in Calaut. Mestrel's ship attacked the pirate vessel by night, as it turned north into the Dragon Reach, and slew the crew. Crossing to the slave-ship, they took the few surviving Thayan slavers (whom the pirates had chained among the slaves) back to the pirate ship, gave them weapons, and fought them to death. The Harpers left the corpses of Thayan slavers and pirates sprawled together all over the ship, plundered it, and let it drift for other pirates to find. They sailed the slave-ship to Yhaunn, where they set free the slaves and gave the ship and all the plundered goods to the Shining Shield Band, letting them claim the rewards heaped on them by Sembia (for returning its kidnapped citizens).

The Harpers hastily melted into the life of the city, in various disguises, and watched. When local Thayan and Cult of the Dragon agents moved to steal some of the riches from the adventurers, the Harpers took careful note of who the agents were, and trailed the survivors (the adventurers fought them off) to their homes and businesses.

Mestrel then sent the novice Harpers back to Westgate (via Shadowdale), carrying reports of what had been learned. Then he slew some of the Thayan agents, first taking note of who showed up to take their places.

- Rescued a priestess of Tymora from robbery on the roads in Sembia, and conducted her safely to the nearest temple of her goddess.

- Helped an elderly farmer fix his wagon and bring his grain in for milling.

- Beat up a local bully in one of the smaller, nameless villages of Sembia, and paid off the tavern debts of a one-legged veteran of the war of Scardale against Lashan there.

- Picked up messages from Harper agents in Battledale and Daerlun, and helped one of them spy on a suspected smuggler and slaver agent.

- Masqueraded as the long-lost husband of a farm widow in Saerb, to prevent the seizure of her farm by debtors. There he made contact with a local novice Harper, installing him as a farmhand to guard the widow against future harassment.

- Settled an argument between two local wizards and passed on some useful herb lore to one of them.

- Tended an old woman's garden, gave her his friendship, and took as a gift from her some seeds that are rare and prized highly in more westerly lands.

- Uncovered a caravan-thief on the road to Ordulin. He made a deal with the lass for her freedom—all the information she knew about the Cult of the Dragon.

- Slipped into the mansion of a Cult agent (a rich merchant) and set traps on his cache of magical items. Then he stole some coins (to fund his own ongoing activities) and set fire to the place, knowing the merchant would make haste to rescue his magic.

- Spread rumors that a skeletal dragon had been seen flying over Archendale, in places where he knew Cult agents would hear—and warned some traders from Archendale that the Cult of the Dragon was planning a raid into their dale in the next few days.



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- Located two Cult of the Dragon agents (whose identities he'd learned from the lady thief) in Ordulin, and drew them into a confrontation with a visiting wizard he recognized as an ambitious Zhentarim mageling (making sure the Zhent knew the Cult merchants were wealthy and in possession of some useful magic).

- Spied on the resulting battles, noting who fought in support of the mageling. Mestrel sent a report on these Zhent identities and activities to Shadowdale via a Harper friend (caravan-master Ormsel Eltunarr, a fast-wagon runner based in Mulhessen), and then attacked and slew the few Zhent agents he could surprise alone. When the others became frightened and withdrew, Mestrel tailed them to Essembra, where he drew them into conflict with local drunks. Slipping away from the resulting battle, Mestrel set out for Hillsfar.

- Found the encampment of a Cult of the Dragon-sponsored raiding party who were planning an expedition into Myth Drannor. Mestrel reported this to elves in the woods. Then he continued on to Hillsfar, where he identified several of the Zhentarim agents (who came in from Essembra after him, looking the worse for wear) to local authorities. Spying on Maalthiir's magically assisted interrogation of these Zhents, Mestrel learned all that the First Lord of Hillsfar did. Making contact with local Harpers (and picking up reports from them to take to Shadowdale), Mestrel discovered that the Harpers were known to Maalthiir's spies, and that he was now being followed. He led some of the spies into a battle with Zhentarim agents he'd recognized in the city. Under cover of the battle he slew whomever he could of both groups. Maalthiir appeared, hurling magic, and Mestrel fled from the city towards Elventree.

In the woods he met another Harper agent and told him to warn the Harpers in Hillsfar that their identities were known to Maalthiir.

- Continued east. Mestrel swam the Lis and indulged in a bit of hunting in the Flooded Forest. He rested and indulged in some needed

singing practice, polishing a few new ballads (poking fun at recent Zhentarim misadventures in Sembia) before setting out on the roads in the Vast, to make a few coins and see who seemed most annoyed at his antiZhent songs.

- Helped a farmer plough a newly-cleared field. Showed him how to plant hedgerows for shelter and winter berry yields.

- Heard of a marauding owlbear. Mestrel set out to track it—only to discover a local wizard's plot. The wizard, Rundleth Talhart, was using magic to force innocent villagers (who had moderate wealth, or whom he didn't like) into owlbear form, in hopes they'd be slain by their frightened neighbors. Talhart would steal what he could of their valuables while they were trapped in owlbear form. Rundleth also hoped that the reports would bring adventurers to the area—adventurers with wealth and magic that he could seize. Mestrel slew the wizard. Although Talhart had been an independent mage, linked to no group, Mestrel painted the badge of the Zhentarim on the chest of the body, for the villagers to find.

- Joined a few merchants on the road south. Mestrel found himself in a brigand attack. Routing the brigands with unexpected magic (seized from the rooms of Rundleth Talhart), he pursued them east, up the Fire River, hoping they'd lead him to their lair. Instead, the fleeing brigands were captured by slavers: men armed with elaborate capture nets and clubs.

Keeping out of sight, Mestrel followed the slavers to a cavern in the foothills of The Earthfast Mountains. There some 50 slaves were gathered, chained by the neck and wrists to large tree trunks. Mestrel noted that there was very little food. He concealed himself, expecting something to happen soon.

The next night, drow appeared, coming up into the caverns from subterranean passages below, and bargained for the slaves. Mestrel worked his way around them and down the passage, finding a waiting drow guard with some pack lizards (for carrying or dragging bound slaves). Slaying one of the guards by



stealth, Mestrel took his hand crossbow and set to work felling the other guards. When they were all dead, he took all their bows and darts, and came back up the passage, climbing to a high point in the slave-cavern and then calmly firing at drow and slavers.

A few fell, but the drow quickly realized what was happening and where their attacker must be. Spells were hurled, and the scrambling Mestrel was wounded – but the attack on him brought down some rocks, blocking the passage to the Realms Below. Ordering the slavers to deal with the attacker, the drow frantically started digging, to clear their way back home – and Mestrel took advantage of the situation by using all of the crossbow darts. When he was through, all of the slavers were down, affected by the poison the drow had treated the darts with, and several of the drow were dead. The survivors simply fled down the passage, and Mestrel hastily freed all the slaves he could.

When the furious drow reappeared, seeking revenge for their slain fellows, the slaves surged to attack them. The drow retreated again before their fury, and Mestrel took command of the slaves. The slavers were left chained to one of the logs as Mestrel led the men back westward, down the Fire River.

They were soon attacked by brigands. Although brigand arrows took a heavy toll of the freed slaves, Mestrel's force prevailed. Forcing a captured brigand to reveal the location of their lair (in exchange for survival), the freed slaves set off to raid it.

The lair, a defunct hill-mine, was well-guarded. There were very few ex-slaves left by the time they'd won control of the lair. Mestrel left the men to recover amid the brigand loot and food stores, warning them not to take up careers as brigands, in view of the drow nearby. He returned by stealth the next night (after scouting the area), and painted a drow mark, which he'd seen on the garments of the drow in the slave-cavern, on a rock near the entrance to the brigand lair. The Harper knew some of the slaves he'd freed would recognize

it, and probably flee the area before the drow came in force.

- Went south and west to Procampur. Mestrel made contact with a Harper friend there, exchanging news of Harper needs and the doings of such Harper foes as the agents of Thay and the Zhentarim. Following a hint picked up from this news, he took ship to Lyrabar, and there found an old Harper friend of his. He turned up, by the whim of Tymora, just when she needed some help in dealing with enemies of her own.

- Saw a merchant cheating several other tradesmen while Mestrel was lying low in Lyrabar. He took steps to ensure (without revealing his own presence) that they found out about it. In the ensuing violence, he stole what he could of the cheating merchant's ill-gotten gains and purchased a ship. Sailing it south and east to Aglarond with a cargo of mixed weapons (always popular in a realm continually at war with Thay), Mestrel made landfall at Corth.

- Made contact with a merchant he suspected of being a spy for Thay. Posing as one who gathered information for the Red Wizards, he gave her a cryptic warning to beware some magic being crafted in Spandeliyon, against the Red Wizards – some sort of super-spell involving nine archnages acting together.

This was all so much invention on his part, but Mestrel hoped the news would keep some Thayan spies busy in Spandeliyon for awhile – and perhaps reveal their identities to Aglarondan watchers, as they got a sudden urge to travel to Altumbel.

- Sailed along the coast to Telflamm. Mestrel sold his ship to a man he suspected of being a slaver – and decided to keep a stealthy watch on the man. His suspicions were confirmed when lots of chain was brought aboard and worked on belowdecks – for what other sort of ship needs many sets of manacles aboard?

Mestrel waited until the refitting was nearly complete, and then swam out to the ship and set a fire in her hold. She settled to the harbor bottom before the water put out the flames, and



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Mestrel got himself onto a rooftop with a crossbow in time to bring down the man he'd sold the ship to, hurrying down to the docks with several friends. The crossbow bolt that laid the man low bore the message: "Thus a Red Wizard rewards treachery." Mestrel waited while the city authorities prowled about, trying to track down all of the dead man's contacts, friends, and colleagues. He noted, as much as he could, who fled the city, shifted money around, or seemed scared. He left his observations with a known Harper friend (a ship captain just arrived in port).

- Hired on as a caravan-guard for a bold trading run north to Icelace Lake, and thence to Rashemen.

On the long, perilous trip, Mestrel avoided tricks and prying-playing the role of competent but lazy warrior as he watched and learned, becoming as familiar as he could with a part of the Realms he'd never seen before. Months passed before Mestrel found himself rescuing a tipsy lady of Rashemen from falling into a frigid creek late at night—and in return for his help found himself on the receiving end of reaming spells cast by various suspicious "witches."

Learning he was a Harper, the ladies questioned Mestrel closely, advised him not to act against them or Thay while in the vicinity, and then grinned as they told him of the nasty brigands certain Thayan interests were sponsoring in Almorel. Mestrel grinned back.

- Hired on in Almorel as a caravan-guard with one of the vast sheepdriving runs south from the grazing lands around the Lake of Mists to Murghom.

When the brigands attacked, Mestrel was ready. He was one of the first casualties, and lay as if dead while the fray passed him by. The body-strippers who came by a little later furnished him unwillingly with fresh horses. Mestrel trailed the brigands as they took over the sheep run of the men they'd slain and went on toward Murghom.

A few men had been spared. They were chained to a boulder in the middle of the waste,

given rocks to defend themselves against wolves, and left as slaves to be collected on the return trip to Almorel. Mestrel freed them, and together they hunted the brigands.

The brigands returned from Murghom with gold and trade-goods, rode into Mestrel's ambush, and died.

- Returned to Almorel with quite a reputation. Promptly hired to guard a wild gamble—a "long run" east along the Golden Way, toward fabled Kara-Tur.

After the caravan had been scattered by another brigand attack (led by a vampire), Mestrel wandered alone and came upon an ancient ruined city somewhere east of the Glittering Spires—a city inhabited only by ghouls and vultures. In a shattered hall he found magical treasures and a glowing, beckoning oval of radiance. Boldly he snatched up the magic and stepped into the cold embrace of the light, knowing he was entering a magical gate—but not knowing where it led. And so it was that as the year drew to a close, Mestrel the Harper disappeared.

Until he reports back, none of the other Harpers of Faerûn will know where the *gate* leads, either. Some of them have spent an even more exciting time, this year!



General Note: If any of these are drawn with extra "dots" within the symbol, they are false signs placed to mislead non-Harpers.

Follow This Path/ Continue in This Direction		Hidden Way/Entrance/Place Nearby		Harper Refuge Nearby	
Water Safe to Drink		Monster Lair (Here or Nearby)		Lookout (with cover) in This Direction	
Way/Path/Safe Route Turns Here (Look for Another Marker)		A Harper Fell Here		Message Cache Nearby (Look High; if drawn upside down—Look Low)	
Refuge/ Safe Haven		Hidden Cache		Grave and/or Place Not to Be Disturbed	
Dangerous Place: Be Alert		Warning: MagicWaits Here to Be Unleashed		Food and/or Water to Be Had Nearby	



The History of the Harpers

If there is no pressing reason otherwise, the best place to begin all tales is at the beginning. Make thyself comfortable, then – but try not to fall asleep, aye? This is important! Know, then, that...

– Ragefast the Sage, to an audience at Baldur's Gate, Year of the Turret

The history of the Harpers, like the so-called "organization" itself, is a confused and shadowy thing. Down the many years since the founding of their band, Those Who Harp have attempted countless missions—some so subtle (or fatal) that they've never been reported. Moreover, the Harper watchword "Harpers keep secrets" is actively followed; piecing together what Elminster calls "The Hidden Tale" is no easy thing.

Sages and adventurers in the Realms alike are eager to learn all they can of the Harpers, however; even in the shortened tale set forth hereafter is much that explains why things have befallen in the Realms as they have.

The Harpers At Twilight

The roots of the Harpers of today can be found in the beginnings of Myth Drannor, when the wise ruler of the elven realm of Cormanthor realized that humans were too numerous, adaptable, persistent, and skilled to ignore or defeat. He decided that welcoming them was the best policy for the elven race.

By the time the Mythal was laid and the city of Myth Drannor opened for dwarves, gnomes, halflings, humans, elves, and their various half-breeds to dwell together (DR 261, the Year of Soaring Stars), there was an active policy of promoting friendship between the races. Good people of all races worked against evil folk and rebels such as the Starym elven family, whose deeds might shatter the delicate peace between the races.

The most experienced elven generals, in consultation with the most trusted of the human rangers and druids they'd invited into their

realm, determined that a secret organization was needed to work for the causes of good. Not a band loyal to any ruler, for that way leads inevitably to oppression and self-interested intrigue, but a band of "friends of freedom" who could work secretly, outside laws and politics, to put down evil.

An idealistic and powerful elven mage, who took the name "Lady Steel," agreed to head this band, making decisions with the help of a council of elven elders and three humans, of whom one was a young adventuring mage known as Elminster.

Lady Steel's common name was Dathlue Mistwinter; she was the last living member of an old elven family whose symbol was a silver harp between the horns of a silver crescent moon, surrounded by a circle of stars, on a black background. The band of human, elven, and half-elven warriors, mages, rangers, druids, and even a few thieves took this badge as their own. Since they met at twilight in hidden places deep in the Elven Court wood, guided by the sounds of a lone harper once they'd drawn near a known landmark, they became known as "the Harpers at Twilight." From the very start, there were more female than male Harpers, and their ranks included folk from all walks of life. They shared a love of nature and freedom—and enough inner fire to fight for such things.

Orcs, cruel mages of all races who dabbled in experimentation on intelligent beings, brigands (especially those large and well-armed bands aided or led by elves unfriendly to humans), and slavers were the chief foes of the Harpers. There were many nasty encounters in the woods as the years passed and Myth Drannor grew in wealth and power, attracting the unscrupulous (mainly humans from the South, but also subterranean evil races such as the drow and illithids) to its vicinity.

Down the years, the Harpers fought on, growing fewer at the hands of their foes—but certain watching eyes approved of what they did. Their aims were essentially the same as those of the Harpers of today. They worked



against tyrants of all races and faiths, aiding those in need and even trying to settle local feuds and grudges, to foster peace among all. Then came the dark time of Myth Drannor's fall, when tanar'ri roamed the Dragonreach lands, thrones fell, and the rule of the sword returned as desperate folk fought each other for the crumbling remnants of shattered realms.

Lady Steel perished fighting Myth Drannor's attackers, torn apart limb from limb even as her spells claimed the lives of her slayers. Spell contingencies triggered by her death caused her body to destruct in a magical explosion that slew more of her enemies.

She was not the only Harper to die that day. Few survived the months that followed, fighting openly for the first time to protect the folk they'd watched over. The power of the elves was broken forever in Faerun. From this point on, their races were in a steady decline on the continent. At the same time, a new wave of human invasion and settlement came from the South. The lands around the Inner Sea (particularly the Vilhon Reach) have always been fertile and over-populated, sending forth periodic waves of explorers seeking their fortunes elsewhere in the Realms, as things become too crowded.

Unlike the orcs, who do the same thing in the North, sweeping south in vast raiding hordes whenever overcrowding makes them restless (usually about once a decade), these men came to settle. With them they brought all the concerns and doings of men in the Old Empires—including the cruel faiths of evil gods, often driven out of their warmer homelands by their fearful neighbors. These included those who worshipped Bane, Bhaal, Loviatar, and Myrkul, and these decadent faiths joined the followers of Malar, the Lord of the Hunt, in the ranks of "priesthoods that are violent" in the North.

These priesthoods moved swiftly to consolidate power in the developing Dragonreach. Their cruelties shocked the elves who'd not yet withdrawn westward to Evereska. They called together what they could of their folk and began training all their younglings in the arts of

war (notably in encampments around the shores of Lake Sember, and in the thickly wooded area known as "the Tangletrees"). They also founded a trading center—Elventree—where they could meet with other races. In an unprecedented act, they contacted certain other human priest-hoods, asking for a secret meeting.

At the Dancing Place

The meeting was convened in a remote spot that could be defended from attack—a wooded hill in the High Dale known as "the Dancing Place" because korreds had once dwelt there in numbers.

The human druids who lived there now were astonished when a score of dryads appeared from trees all over their hill. These bid the druids make welcome the priests of other faiths who would come. Dusk came early that day, and a moon rose bright and full and clear on a night when no moon should have shone. It was four nights before Midsummer in the Year of the Dawn Rose (720 DR).

The frightened druids saw a strange assortment of folk come to them, some riding winged horses, others stepping out of empty air, and still others trudging up the mountain passes with well-worn staves and weary feet.

When the assembly was complete, the druids of Silvanus saw that clergy of Deneir, Eldath, Lliira, Mielikki, Milil, Mystra, Oghma, Selune, Tymora and the elven gods had gathered on their hill. A certain irascible mage by the name of Elminster stepped out onto the height and spoke of why the elves had called for this parley. They wanted the support of the priests gathered here for "a shadowy band of heroes" that would work against those who served the Cruel Gods, before all lands were plunged into war and slavery and tyranny, and no man or elf would dare trust his neighbor. A band who would work against any realm that grew too large and proud to respect its neighbors, or tend the trees and the beasts they shared the land with. A band serving no one lord or god, but



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with the quiet support of many, so that those whose tastes did not run to armies and the lash of the tyrant could fight back against the rule of the sword.

None of the priests were much used to working with others, and none liked to give in on any matter without the direct guidance of their deities, for fear of displeasing those they worshiped. The debate began coldly, and soon grew hot. The mood of the gathering changed to awe, however, when manifestations made it clear to all that some of the deities represented on that hill were interested enough to take control of their followers, and speak directly through them. Before long, the frightened faces of mortals stared at each other in the moonlight as all the gods involved dealt with each other through them. The lips and hands of the priests moved to divine will.

Such a gathering of godly power has not been seen on the face of Faerûn in mortal memory since, even at the end of the Time of Troubles, in the air above Waterdeep. Some priests aged years that night from the powers that coursed through them. Not a few were changed utterly, or twisted in their wits, by the bald knowledge of what certain deities believed—or thought of their mortal servants.

In the end, the gathered gods agreed to support an organization that worked for all of them and served none of them. Each god gave of his or her divine power, that certain of these Harpers would be able to call on their divine blessing as a reward for work, and to enable them to accomplish greater tasks. (This is the origin of the special powers granted to Master Harpers, and why they are referred to as “blessings.”) The belief that sick creatures who sleep overnight in the Dancing Place will be healed—and given a mission or task by the gods to boot-dates from this time. (For beings who worship the deities listed, and woodland beings watched over by Mielikki and Silvanus, this legend is true). The meeting also encouraged the human settlement of the High Dale (cynics say control of the mountain passes played a

greater role, but Elminster merely smiled at that and murmured, “Harper control of the passes, please”). The High Dale’s badge is “the High Harp” because of this meeting, too. To preserve the safety of the folk of the dale, the Harpers have avoided locating agents or a stronghold there, preferring instead to establish concealed caches of food, gear, healing potions, and other magic in mountain caves nearby. (It is also likely that the treaty with Cormyr that keeps one war wizard always watching over the dale, with the promise of defending it in time of war, was arranged by a Harper agent in the Royal Court of Cormyr. As one of the oldest surviving treaties of the present ruling family of Cormyr, the terms of this agreement are proudly and diligently carried out, even today.)

The Long Years

The few “Old Harpers” who’d survived from earlier times (“more than a dozen,” Elminster says, “but not much more...”) took the blessing of the gods and the support of the priesthoods to establish a secretive, underground information-gathering service. This slowly and cautiously spread its reach throughout the North, from Neverwinter to Baldur’s Gate to Suzail, Sembia, and Aglarond. The Harpers also used the seclusion of the larger fortified monasteries and religious strongholds to train a handful of agents, and as places to rest and recover when wounded. When the priesthoods saw the usefulness of this silent news-gathering and messenger service—and saw that its agents were to be trusted, and weren’t brash enough to bring down open warfare with all who served evil in the North—their support became whole-hearted. Many years passed thus, with the Harpers growing very slowly in numbers over the generations and keeping as secret as possible. The active Harper agents (“we’d passed 40 in numbers by then—perhaps sixty if ye count all the young hopefuls, few of whom survived long,” Elminster says) perfected their technique of cultivating friends and allies who



did nothing more than watch and listen and learn. These allies would pass on all they'd gathered from time to time to a single agent (while doing little that could draw the attention of Harper foes to them, and knowing little of the greater doings of the Harpers and nothing of the identities of other Harpers). There were scores of these "Harper friends."

During this period, the offices of the Heralds of Faerûn were created (in the Year of the Watching Helm: 996 DR). Harper agents worked hard behind the scenes to influence the rulers who thought they'd come up with the idea themselves. The Harpers were supported by the same priesthoods who stood behind the Harpers. The Heralds fulfilled a real need for keeping accurate records, genealogies, and histories in the North. They also gave Harper agents cover identities for traveling and gathering written information openly. The Heralds presented themselves as strictly neutral in all dealings with folk of Faerûn. But active Harper agents used their livery and their strongholds. The folk saying "wound a Herald and ye'll find a bleeding Harper" dates from this time.

Where Harpers worked in subtle, secret ways, followers of the Dark Gods used the way of the sword, openly and brutally. Much of the early history of human exploration and life in the North is shaped and driven by the cruelty and greed of the followers of Bane. The worshippers of other evil creeds fell over each other in an effort to compete with the faithful of the Black Lord. The foes of the Harpers grew mighty, amassing wealth, armies, and influence—and growing increasingly aware of the shadowy organization that opposed them. The slavers of Thay sent agents into the North, and became open enemies of the Harpers. The clergy of Bane (under the ambitious man who was then the High Imperceptor, their titular head of all mortal clergy) moved to establish their own kingdom in the Moonsea North. Hunting Harpers became a popular sport among these evil brotherhoods—especially after the Harpers inadvertently attracted the attention of clergies

in the North by destroying the Wearers of the Skull, an elite circle of wizards sponsored by the priesthood of Myrkul, Lord of Bones.

The furious priesthood sent liches loyal to it to destroy the "upstart" Harpers. Other powers in the North opened their eyes in amazement when lich after lich was destroyed throughout the long, hot summer of the Year of The Howling Axe (1021 DR). Armies were then sent out after the Harpers, and the senior Harpers hastily took what they could of their organization into hiding.

Elminster and his friend and fellow archmage Khelben Blackstaff Arunsun agreed that the Harpers must change again, becoming "an underground army of adventurers."

The Tale of the Chosen

To understand why the Harpers became what they did, it is necessary to look back into the Long Years and learn about the Chosen. The reader is warned: These are secrets few in the Realms know; to speak of them in an unguarded manner is very dangerous. As wizards tell their apprentices: "Heed, if ye would live."

Elminster and Khelben were both Chosen of Mystra: members of the handful of mortals who all bear within them a part of the divine power ("the silver fire") of the Goddess of All Magic. This special status works changes on mortals that will be revealed more fully elsewhere, but one important one is longevity (perhaps immortality, if a Chosen escapes violent death). Few mortals are strong enough in spirit not to be corrupted by carrying such power. One early failure was Sammaster, a mage who acquired delusions of godhood and set himself up as a seer. His teachings started the Cult of the Dragon, which believes that in times to come "dead dragons shall rule the world entire." The cult set out to fulfill this prophecy (and gain favored status for themselves) by creating dracoliches and serving them by bringing them treasure—goods raided from everyone else around. The Harpers dealt with Sammaster and



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earned themselves another group of enemies.

It is not even certain that Elminster has survived his service to Mystra unscathed. Some of his early memories, recounted as fact here and in his accounts of Myth Drannor, may in fact belong to another, older wizard (such as Azuth), placed in the mind of Elminster later, to shape him into the wily, wise, hardened being Mystra needed.

Whatever the truth about Elminster's early years, Mystra soon saw how rare noble mages like Khelben or wily rogues like Elminster are. She took the breeding of Chosen into her own hands, possessing a certain half-elven woman and using her powers to seduce and take as her husband Dornal Silverhand, a noble of the Sword Coast North (a retired Harper who ruled over lands near Neverwinter). The couple had seven daughters in as many winters. Mystra's determination to breed fit Chosen killed the woman; the last birth was a dark disaster.

When the embittered father spurned and neglected his girl-children, Mystra used her influence to see that some of the more rebellious among them found their way into Elminster's care. There they were raised and trained in magic and the ways of the Realms. The Old Mage watched over Storm, Dove, and Laeral of the famous "Seven Sisters." All of the siblings grew taller than most men and had silver hair. All had a natural affinity for, and skill at, magic. Sylune and the sister who became known as the Simbul found their own ways to mastery of magic, and Alustriel remained with her father, under the tutelage of a Harper in her father's household. As the years passed, these long-lived women have grown in power and influence. Today, the Simbul is the "Witch-Queen" of Aglarond, her magical strength holding Thay at bay. Alustriel is High Lady of Silverymoon, ruling that city as a friendly refuge for Harpers. Sylune died defending Shadowdale from a dragon sent by the Cult of the Dragon (but she lives on as a spectral Harper). Laeral is Khelben's consort and senior apprentice in Waterdeep. Dove is wife to Florin Falconhand, of the Knights of

Myth Drannor adventuring band. Storm Silverhand, the Bard of Shadowdale, runs the senior branch of the Harpers.

At the time of the next chapter in the history of the Harpers ("The Founding"), the young ladies under Elminster's care had shown promise in the use of magic and a growing thirst for adventure. Their success in defeating local priests of Bhaal may have strongly influenced Elminster in his decision to go looking for an adventuring band to refound the Harpers.

The Founding

Elminster and Khelben spent most of the Year of the Wandering Wyvern (1022 DR; a name that would turn out to be a prophetic) searching for a suitable adventuring band to take up the mantle of the Harpers and provide the heart of the organization in the years to come.

They needed adventurers who were skilled in the ways of the wild and of battle, and who had the hearts and backbone to dedicate themselves to a cause—but they had to find heroes who hadn't yet dedicated themselves to one. All too often they found that corruption had outpaced them. The most promising adventurers were bowing to the cause of enriching themselves and seizing power.

Elminster finally found a band of adventurers in northern Cormyr that fit his exacting requirements. Due to the long, long arm of coincidence (or the dark humor of the gods), he came upon them in Espar, a place that was to be the cradle of another great adventuring group years later—the Knights of Myth Drannor.

A royal Cormyrean charter fresh in their hands, the nameless band of bards, druids, and rangers had begun exploring the deep central forests of Cormyr and the Stonelands, seeking to defeat brigands and win royal favor. They sometimes called themselves "the Wanderers of Espar," and were led by a bard of charm, confident arrogance, and skill, Finder Wyvernspur, and Ulzund Hawkshield, a grim ranger of great strength.



All of the Wanderers were young sons and daughters of noble or wealthy merchant families. All were desperate to prove themselves to their parents and peers. There were always at least ten Wanderers, and usually a dozen. From time to time one perished, or decided that adventuring was too dangerous and not glamorous enough, and left. Finder's charm attracted two restless, beautiful daughters of noble houses, musicians both, but despairing of any chance to see the world before they were married off to swaggering sons of local nobles. They slipped away from their grand houses to join the Wanderers. The key to swaying the band, Elminster decided, lay in luring these three young bards into his influence.

With Khelben's aid, the Wanderers were steered unwittingly into a meeting with an aging minstrel when they were tired and hurt (after a hard-fought escape from brigands too numerous for them). They were drifting, with no clear aim or purpose ahead for them. The

minstrel, old Gochall the Harper, was Elminster in magical disguise. He played his part with cunning, calling on all his experience. (He assumed a similar role much later, in the Time of Troubles.)

Within a month, the Wanderers had become the Harpers, and adopted the old minstrel's dream as their own—a dream of freedom for all, upheld by a shadowy band who fought for good across the North.

Certain eyes watched this and approved. Several of the rangers and druids in the Wanderers had private encounters with messengers or manifestations of their deities in the woods, bidding them follow and be true to the dream of the Harpers.

Gochall introduced these new Harpers to his "friends" (some of the surviving earlier Harpers) and got the two groups into the habit of working together. He guided the young adventuring Harpers into several successful missions in and about Cormyr (notably de-



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stroying a community of killers-for-hire dedicated to Bhaal, based in the Hullack Forest and operating into Sembia). He was soon satisfied that the young adventurers were capable and that the new Harpers and the old had been melded together into a working organization.

Gochall was then “killed” by agents of Bane. The young Harpers found the smoldering remains of his body, and they furiously set about taking revenge. The trail (carefully laid beforehand by Elminster) led into the Sword Coast North, and the Harpers followed it. Where they went, their foes rose against them, and the Harpers dealt death across the wilderlands. Those Who Harp had become a force to be reckoned with in the North.

The First Century

Satisfied, Elminster faded into the background, letting the organization grow in its own way. He and Khelben did not turn entirely to their own affairs, however. They continued to manipulate the growing ranks of Those Who Harp as subtly as the Harpers were later to operate in the wider Realms, drawing them into trade alliances and a recognition of the need to make enough money to support themselves. Caravan-running and merchant shipping was the route they chose, as it offered Harpers regular (and sometimes covert) transportation without saddling them with stationary business establishments and goods that enemies could readily attack.

Elminster and Khelben named certain Harpers as “Master Harpers.” Through Mystra, these individuals received the blessings the gods had promised long ago at the Dancing Place. They were also entrusted with the power to name others to their own ranks. Any Harper could sponsor a person to become a Harper; the dangerous tests soon revealed evil agents and those who lacked the will or skill to wear the sign of the silver harp. Khelben and Elminster together crafted harp pins with magical powers. They then sent dreams that led some of the Master Harpers to Gochall’s Tomb, where a

generous handful of the pins were found on the stone slab that covered his remains—actually those of a poor shepherd—arranged in the outline of a crescent moon). Dreams sent to the same Master Harpers after they found the pins told them three things: they were to call on the best wizards and smiths in time to come to make more pins of their own; all true Harpers—and only true Harpers—should bear the pins; and only Master Harpers could name a senior Harper to the ranks of Mastery.

In disguise, Elminster (and increasingly, the sisters Dove and Storm) went about the Realms as wandering minstrels, painting an attractive picture of the mystique and adventure of the Harpers to the bored and idle offspring of the nobility. Many younger sons and daughters of Waterdhavian noble families soon found themselves plunged into adventures far from home (even as Mourngrim Amcathra would at the behest of Khelben, years later; a road that led him to the lordship of Shadowdale). Their usual destination, when they went to find the Harpers, was an inn west of the Bridge of Fallen Men, on the edge of Tunland, an inn they’d heard sung about by wandering minstrels in hauntingly beautiful ballads—The Sign of the Silver Harp.

Eventually, an enemy of the Harpers decided to strike against them. The followers of Bane in Sembia contacted the wild baatezu Gargoth (who’d been summoned to Faerûn long ago, and preferred to wander, working evil in the Realms, to dwelling on his own plane) and enlisted his aid in an attack on the inn.

Elminster had been waiting for such an attack (though Gargoth was a surprise); he’d prepared the inn as a gigantic trap, with spell triggers everywhere. One released an enraged beholder from a magical vortex Elminster had imprisoned it in, long before. When the forces of Bane attacked, they found not frightened fops running about with swords and lutes while dream-witted maiden harpists screamed and fainted, but instead earth-shaking spells going off without warning or sources that could be



attacked, a rampaging beholder, and two archmages hurling spells in full fury.

Gargoth fled and the forces of Bane were routed, gaining the Harpers a dashing, dangerous reputation. The ruined inn remains a landmark today – though each time some enterprising merchant rebuilds it, clergy of Bane swiftly burn it to the ground again.

Shortly thereafter, Harper agents, following Cult of the Dragon raiders, found the lair of the dracolich Alglaudyx and managed to destroy the undead creature, seizing its hoard of treasure to swell Harper coffers. Khelben began a careful, covert process of investing such funds in valuable properties and businesses in cities up and down the Sword Coast, to ensure the Harpers of a permanent income (the Harpers are the largest “secret landlords” in Waterdeep today).

At this time, the followers of Malar, led by a fanatical human priest by the name of Belegoss Wolfwynd, began a rampage through the civilized lands. This was known as “the Great Hunt.” To the greater glory of Malar, they hunted the rich and powerful, rulers and wise councilors. They sought to plunge all the lands into lawlessness so that they could hunt at will and bring greater might to Malar (who then, as now, hated and feared the spread of roads, farms, and cities – which lead to fewer beasts, less hunting, and less power for the Beastlord). The Great Hunt began well in the cities on the southern coast of the Lake of Dragons, smashing their power permanently. It spread into Sembia, with the followers of Malar slaying and pillaging at will. Elminster was determined that none of the Hunters would survive the bloodshed they’d begun. He set his Harpers to stalking and slaying every follower of Malar involved in The Great Hunt. It took two winters, but in the end, Belegoss himself was slain. By then, folk all over the coastal lands of the Sea of Fallen Stars knew that the Harpers had delivered them from the killing madness of Malar’s faithful.

With the good, however, came bad. Finder

Wyvernspur, always arrogant, seemed to have turned to evil in his advancing age. Searching for a way to immortalize his songs, he dabbled in magic that brought about the deaths, of two of his apprentices. Appalled, local Harpers called a tribunal of three senior Harpers: Morala, priestess of Milil, Dundable Mistrin, a druid dedicated to Silvanus, and Muoreth Talanstar, a half-elven ranger who worshiped Mielikki. By their verdict, these judges made it clear to all that the Harpers would police their own. The Code of the Harpers was not empty words, but a creed that made Harpers different from brigands and thieves, that all who had dealings with them could rely on. Finder’s music and name were to be forgotten. Powerful spells stripped the memory of the man’s own name from him, and “the Nameless Bard” was exiled to a solitary existence on another plane—a sentence that would last almost 300 years.

Worse was soon to come. As Harpers smashed brigand strongholds on the long overland caravan routes linking the lands about the Sea of Fallen Stars with the Sword Coast, the Heralds broke with the organization. All of the influence senior Harpers (including Elminster and Khelben) could bring to bear was in vain. The Heralds were adamant. They saw their role as peaceful and neutral—they could not function as trusted Heralds if they were part of just another power group, striving to make its own way in the Realms, meddling in the affairs of others.

The archmages could see no way of keeping the Heralds in the ranks of Those Who Harp short of using spells to control their minds – and that was the first step on the swift road to becoming no better than the priesthood of Bane! They bent their efforts instead to bringing about a dignified and friendly parting, salvaging some usefulness from the split. It was agreed that the strongholds of the Heralds (notably the isolated Holdfast) would always be open to Harpers, as places to eat and rest and recover from wounds. In return, the Harpers agreed to continue to gather information for and take messages to and from the Heralds.





The priesthood of Bane and the Cult of the Dragon promptly began spreading rumors that the Harpers had turned so evil that the Heralds had left their ranks in disgust. Most folk hadn't known that most Heralds were Harpers, and they thought the whole tale a fabrication. Angered, the foes of the Harpers began to hunt for Harpers in earnest.

In Selgaunt, priests of Bane caught a Harper and tortured her to death in public. In retaliation, the Harpers unleashed all the agents and magic they could muster, and succeeded in killing the High Imperceptor of Bane—in an establishment he frequented in Tsurlagol. A many-layered spell that took four days to break emblazoned the body with a glowing silver harp symbol. Not only did this enhance the reputation of the Harpers, it turned the attention of the priesthood of the Black Lord away from the Harpers for a time, as the usual power struggle ensued to seize the vacant office of High Imperceptor.

The Second Century

The chaos enfolding the clergy of Bane was fortunate for the Harpers, who rapidly found themselves caught up in a war they hadn't anticipated. Their efforts to increase the safety of the trade-routes by exterminating brigands had hurt rich interests in Calimshan. These folk had made much gold over the years shipping goods from the Sea of Fallen Stars to the Sword Coast and back again via "the only safe route"—down the Vilhon to the Golden Road and thence to ports on the Lake of Steam (which was actually an arm of the sea). The ships that sailed from those ports belonged to Calishite interests. Some of them had even been sponsoring the brigands, who served the double benefit of making competing overland travel perilous and destroying or stealing items that could only be replaced by more trade with the South.

Certain Calishite merchants hired a circle of sorcerers to end this threat to their coffers. The MageLords of Mintar were a cabal of wizards interested in breeding monsters with domestic

servants and livestock, to provide ever-more-powerful beasts of burden and guards. The stock was expensive (the wizards couldn't just seize it without arousing the hostility of their neighbors), so the MageLords needed cash. The Harpers also offered an attractive source of beings to experiment on.

Harper agents also unwittingly trampled on other toes, earning themselves a war on another front at the same time. While trying to trace agents of Thay who were using the pirates of the Fallen Stars to ship slaves, they came upon slave-caravans going to tiny anchorages along the coast of Turmish. From there, the slaves were taken a short way to mines that seemed to produce very little ore. Harper investigators found the slaves weren't working the mines, but merely disappearing down into them in a steady stream. The delvings were really tunnels leading down to the Underdark, to a growing kingdom of drow! This dark realm was ruled by a drow queen, Nathglaryst, a powerful sorceress. When the Harpers tried to cut off her supply of slaves, she sent agents up to the surface world to slay the Harpers—or to hire folk who could. On some occasions, these hirelings were mistakenly captured or slain by the MageLords, but they did score some successes. The harried Harpers hired a mercenary army of their own to invade the drow realm. As this army drew near, the drow scrambled up to meet them—which was what the Harpers had intended them to do. Explosive spells cast by Elminster, Khelben, and the growing ranks of Harper wizards caused the mine to collapse, closing the surface linkages and literally crushing the drow queen's power.

The MageLords saw the hired Harper army as fodder gathered especially for their taking, and so they struck. Khelben had anticipated this, however; it was the reason he'd gathered all the wizards of the Harpers in one place. They challenged the MageLords directly, in a spell-battle that ravaged miles of the Turmish coast. Several Harpers perished in the fray, but the MageLords hadn't expected to ever find so



many wizards massed against them, and they had no inkling of the sheer magical power Elminster and Khelben commanded. Only two escaped, and they never dared cross spells with the Harpers again.

The Harpers were being drawn into ever-more-open conflicts, and their casualties were rising alarmingly. When talk began of founding a Harper kingdom, the Master Harpers were gathered in an urgent meeting called by Elminster and Khelben. They determined it was best if the Harpers “went underground” again. They moved swiftly.

Within a month, the senior Harpers had vanished from public life in Faerûn. Only the most junior Harpers continued meeting with the “friends” all over Faerûn who gathered information. The other Harpers were kept busy by the Masters mapping and establishing trails through the backlands, building and supplying storage caches and hidden cave-holds. They gave to the Heralds the most extensive and detailed wilderness maps of Faerûn ever made, over two decades of diligent work. Harpers with magical skill were set to devising new spells and crafting magical items. Others were established as covert agents within the important ruling courts across Faerûn. They worked through the established rulers to thwart the traditional foes of the Harpers, who were growing in strength again, unchecked by Harper missions sent against them.

The Cult of the Dragon and the priests of Bane set several traps, hoping to lure the Harpers into attacking them. Several Harpers, acting on their own, were taken and slain. “We all have the freedom to find foolishness enough in ourselves to be killed,” said one old Harper (the ranger Bedelve Grimnar, of Iriaebor) grimly, as he reluctantly held back from charging into a hopeless rescue. Many Harpers grew restive, hating their new “skulking and dying” role. Elminster diverted the most bloodthirsty among them into a new conflict: the Harpstars War.

Like many archmages who’ve grown old and successful, Elminster had taken to traveling

many worlds and planes, seeing them in all their diversity, and learning much.

In the opinion of some, too much. On a demiplane of shifting shadows dwelt a clan of shapechanging beings, the Malaugrym. They gloried in having power over others, in being master manipulators driving those they viewed as “lesser beings” to certain ends and situations, to amuse themselves.

Called Shadowmasters by some sages, these cruel beings had no love for anyone who challenged their freedom to walk many worlds, shaping each to their will. Elminster caught their attention, and one of them attacked him for sport. That one died.

Angered, others of the clan attacked. Elminster slew some, and fled back to Faerûn in haste, pursued by the Malaugrym. There he tricked them into attacking Blackstaff Tower, and with the aid of Khelben and the apprentices there (as well as certain wizards in Waterdeep at the time), hurled back the Malaugrym. He warned them never to enter Faerûn again, upon pain of destruction, but they replied with contempt and defiance.

Realizing the Malaugrym, with their great powers and demonstrated cruelty, were a threat to freedom everywhere on Faerûn, Elminster decided to unleash the more restless Harpers against them. His view was proven right when Harper agents in both Thay and Calimshan (countries that had the largest standing armies at the time) reported shapeshifters infiltrating the Red Wizards of one country and the senior satraps of the other.

Elminster created an enchanted bauble, the Harp of Stars, let word get about that it was an item of powerful magic precious to the Harper cause, and let the Malaugrym steal it. Then he asked the Harpers to get it back. When played, the Harp of Stars made shapeshifting easier, enabling the Malaugrym to take on larger and more powerful monster shapes when they went hunting (a favorite sport). It did this, however, by causing the life-forces that bind together the bodies of every living thing to rage at random—



giving short-term strength, but over time weakening the constitution of a being employing the Harp. Whatever forms the Malaugrym chose, as long as they used the Harp's aid, would be increasingly unstable.

The Harp also appeared to act as a magical beacon (Elminster expected the Malaugrym to check for this), but this power was easily turned off—the hidden cost being that most of the thoughts and memories in the mind of the being turning it off were recorded by the Harp at that moment. If the Harpers could regain the Harp, they would learn much of the history, habits, and plans of their mysterious, powerful foes. Many Harpers were eager for greater challenges, a hunger that most who survived later came to regret. Elminster and Khelben needed Harpers of power and experience to take over from them the hard role of repeatedly saving the Realms from evil tyranny. They also needed the Harpers to lie low for a time, seeming to diminish greatly in power. They wanted the younger Harpers to have a chance to learn the perils of following the code of the Harpers without relying on having more powerful colleagues nearby to rescue them whenever they blundered.

What came to be called “the Harpstars War” took care of all of that. Fought across many planes, in places most folk of Faerûn would flee from in fear, this long and vicious struggle ended with the Malaugrym reduced to a bitter, hardened handful. The Harpers involved were reduced to about two score veterans. The long war came to an end when Khelben managed a mighty magic that allowed him to blast the mind of a Shadowmaster and take over her body. In it, he infiltrated the remaining Malaugrym and helped to persuade them that to continue the struggle now would mean their certain destruction. Reluctantly, they agreed. Khelben used the female Malaugrym's body to take the Harp, ostensibly to hide it (really to bring it to a place where he could study the mind-secrets it had gathered). Another treacherous Malaugrym pursued the female Khelben was controlling

and destroyed her. Khelben only recovered his own wits through Elminster's prompt magical aid. The Harp was lost—presumably destroyed, but perhaps hidden somewhere in planes far from Faerûn.

The Third Century

As the Harpstars War ended with the Malaugrym withdrawing to their demiplane and walling it about with potent magic to prevent attack from their Harper foes, new powers were arising in Faerûn.

The Followers of the Scaly Way (the Cult of the Dragon) had grown strong again, this time through control of the new merchant organizations known as “casters” and by infiltrating local guilds in key cities throughout Calimshan and the Vilhon. Their activities upset traditional power balances in many cities. Thieves' Guilds began to appear in most of the affected centers. At the same time, a Harper bard of middling powers and great ambitions had decided to reshape the Harpers to his own ends. Rundorl Moonsklan had dreams of commanding a shadowy brotherhood that would rule all of the major kingdoms in the North from behind the throne, so that a Harper King dwelling in the woods somewhere (himself, of course) could “whisper something, and all the lords of the North would hear and obey.”

Rundorl believed Elminster, Khelben, and most of the senior Harpers were dead or retired. In his own short career with the Harpers, he'd never seen any of them, or heard of a Harper meeting or receiving direct word from them. It was time the skulking, drifting Harpers had a strong leader again.

Moonsklan needed some way to make himself rise in importance and influence within the Harpers. He happened to encounter a Red Wizard of Thay (one Szass Tam) who was also looking for a path to greater power. A dark bargain was struck, and the Harpers suddenly learned of great evil rising in Thay—a land traditionally beyond the areas they were most interested in,



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and largely left alone by Harper agents.

Those Who Harp corrected that neglect with a vengeance, slaying many zulkirs and Red Wizards whom they were led to believe were working on a great magic. Known as “the spell of Undeath,” this magic would enable its caster to transform whole cities of men instantly into undead servants, raising armies overnight to menace the entire Realms.

Rundorl Moonsklan, who’d “discovered” this danger, rose rapidly in influence within the Harpers. His information seemed always to be right, and his ability to anticipate enemy tactics seemed uncanny. Thay intended to enslave all of Faerûn, he said—or at least all who hadn’t been personally made immune to the spell. The only things holding the Red Wizards back, Rundorl said, were the inability of the Red Wizards to perfect the means of making themselves immune to the Undeath castings of a rival (experimentation was understandably risky)—and the Harpers.

Red Wizards who’d ignored goings-on in the “backward, savage” lands of the North suddenly woke to the threat of this reckless band of would-be Red Wizard assassins. They struck back. Thay worked its will in other lands; folk from other lands did not dare to work their own plans in Thay! Many and strange were the magically-transformed monsters hurled at the Harpers; terrible were the crawling magics unleashed. The schemes and tactics of the Red Wizards grew ever more convoluted and many-tentacled. Harpers died, now, far more often than the wizards they sought to destroy—until at last Rundorl reluctantly withdrew the remnants of the Harpers from Thay.

They were proud of the evil they’d slain—many Red Wizards were gone forever—but they’d made no great change in the power of Thay; ambitious new mages had merely risen to take the places of those who’d fallen. Rundorl then discovered the treachery of his secret Red Wizard ally. Agents of Thay had followed the exhausted Harpers back to the Dragonreach and were slaying them slowly and cruelly.

Someone or something then turned the dying Harpers into undead of unusual powers and forms, and set them to hunting down and slaying their former comrades. Harper after Harper fell. Frightened now, Rundorl looked for a way to divert this growing army of undead who were all too familiar with Harper ways and strongholds from continuing to strike down Harpers—or his own death would inevitably come soon.

Rundorl knew of a lich too powerful for the Harpers to overcome, who dwelt in the Thunder Peaks north of Daerlun, in a cave on the edge of the Vast Swamp. In desperation, he went to that undead lord to bargain, promising the unwitting service of the Harpers (and all the magic they’d seized from the Red Wizards and brought back from Thay) in return for the lich’s aid in intercepting the undead Harpers and wresting control of them away from Szass Tam. The lich would also gain a small band of capable undead servants in the process...what could be better?

The lich, one Thavverdasz, agreed. Already an ally of the Cult of the Dragon, it saw itself commanding the Harpers into wresting what it wanted from the lands around, through Rundorl. Taking over his mind, Thavverdasz was amused by Rundorl’s dreams of becoming a Harper King, and he assumed that title himself.

The Harper King quickly took control of all the undead Harpers (the hapless Rundorl joining their ranks) and set about finding their living comrades. The Cult of the Dragon unwittingly aided him, until he openly wrested away a great quantity of gems from them destined for the dracolich Khalahmongre.

The Cult gathered its forces and struck back. In Thay, Szass Tam, smarting at how easily Thavverdasz had broken his own control over the undead, had been waiting for a chance for revenge. He waited until the Cult armies had driven the Harpers back almost to the enlarged lair of Thavverdasz, now called “the Court of the Harper King.”

With battle raging in the swamp outside,



Szass Tam suddenly appeared in the Court and confronted Thavverdasz in his Great Spellchamber. The two liches hurled spells at each other, but the clever defenses set in place by Thavverdasz against any invasion of his Court diverted the magical attacks on him out into the swamp—destroying most of the Cult and Harper forces. His own spells did far more damage to his Court, for they were cast at a foe who wasn't really present. Szass Tam had perfected a magical image of himself that could cast spells and that had physical presence, but whose mind was elsewhere. Oblivious to pain or attempts to control its senses, this image was unaffected by the lich's spells until Thavverdasz destroyed it by using a powerful magical item. Its force drove Szass Tam's senses from him, back in Thay, and it was many years before the great Red Wizard recovered.

Thavverdasz stood in triumph over his fallen foe. By means of his magic he saw that the decimated Cult forces were in full flight, outside. Picking up the skull of a Harper he'd slain long ago, he told it proudly that victory was his now, and the rule of the Harper King secure.

"On the contrary," the skull told him, "your troubles have just begun—but they'll end soon enough." Then it twisted in his hand into the features of Elminster, and exploded.

The shattered lich was swiftly disposed of when Elminster arrived in the Court, returned from the Harpstars War. Transporting the injured Khelben and the other senior Harper survivors to a refuge in the woods near Elventree (where they were tended by the pacifist Sylune of the Seven Sisters and friendly elves), Elminster used spell triggers to make the Court of the Harper King a deadly series of traps, to await the next attack from the Cult of the Dragon. He then set about rebuilding the Harpers. The network of "friends" was intact and largely ignorant of the corruption that had grown at the heart of the organization, but the body of experienced Harpers of middling power that Elminster had hoped would lead Those Who Harp into the next century was

shattered. Grimly he set about recruiting and rebuilding, aided by the sisters Storm and Dove.

Those three seemed immortal (few in the Realms knew of the Chosen, as few know today), but the other senior Harpers were old indeed when the century passed. Those Who Harp regained their former reach—if not numbers and battlestrength—from the islands off the Sword Coast (notably Mintarn) to the borders of Thay. Elminster called in a long-standing debt owed him by the rulers of Rashemen (the "witches"), and they responded by raiding Thay with magic and slave-freeing missions, keeping the attention of that evil empire away from thoughts of taking any revenge on far-away Harpers. The heir of Aglarond, the Simbul, also worked against Thay, and she began a tentative friendship with the Old Mage. It was many years before Elminster realized her way of working behind the scenes, flitting about Faerûn in many shapes and disguises to guide and influence rather than to slay and compel, was modeled after his own deeds and manner.

The Fourth Century (Thus Far)

The near-destruction of the Harpers left them too weak to move openly against the fast-rising power of the Zhentarim. Elminster worked against the schemes of Manshoon alone, devoting most of his efforts to drawing the church of Bane into open battle with the Dark Network. The rich and powerful temple of Bane in Zhen-til Keep, under Fzoul Chembryl, had changed its name from "the Dark Shrine" to "the Black Altar" (not to be confused with "the Black Lord's Altar" in Mulmaster). It had broken from the authority of the increasingly decadent and corrupt church of Bane to join the Zhentarim. The renegade priests under Fzoul did not lose the spells and powers granted them by Bane, and they saw this as vindication of their defiance.

The High Imperceptor of Bane, head of the



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church, was a weak man (chosen as a figurehead by senior priests locked in bitter rivalries with each other). He did not wield the might of the church into any immediate attack on Zhentil Keep until it was too late. The Zhentarim had grown far too strong and easily defeated the tentative attacks mounted by the clergy of Bane.

Elminster set out to manipulate individual priests of Bane into launching their own small efforts against the Zhentarim, concentrating on the caravans the Zhentarim hoped to enrich themselves with. The Old Mage saw at once that the Zhentarim wizards intended to control the shortest and safest trade-route between the Moonsea North and the Sword Coast—an aim that has kept them busy to this day. The ongoing struggle between the rival followers of Bane kept both busy, so the lands around retained some freedom, and the Harpers could rebuild.

In the Sword Coast area, Khelben took over direction of the Harpers for a short time, supporting the senior Harper Cylyria Dragonbreast (a veteran of the Harpstars War who'd grown sick of battle and longed to establish a place of peace in the Realms for folk to dwell in) in her bid to become ruler of Berdusk. With the aid and protection of the Harpers and Waterdeep's friendship and financial support, Cylyria became High Lady of Berdusk. There she founded Twilight Hall. The Harpers were immediately called on to defeat brigand, Zhentarim (out of Darkhold), and mercenary (hired by Amnian merchant interests) attacks on Berdusk.

Thus founded in war, Twilight Hall became the base for a new breed of Harpers willing to fight for a peaceful haven. They were accustomed to authority, organized ranks, and clearly established responsibilities. Under Khelben's guidance, Cylyria drew up their code and ranks with an eye to preventing future abuse or tyranny, calling her formal organization "the Order of the Silver Moon and Harp."

Khelben withdrew abruptly from the affairs of the fledgling Twilight Hall when he learned that Laeral of the Seven Sisters, who had pur-

sued her own career in the North as the head of a powerful adventuring band known as the Nine, had fallen afoul of evil magic.

The Crown of Horns was a mighty item of magic created by the god Myrkul. It had been lost for many centuries in a crypt under Yulash in the Dalelands (the resting-place of a long-ago, outcast cabal of magicians). Its fell powers included a "ray of undeath" that closely resembled the imaginary threat Rundorl Moonsklan had set the Harpers against in prior years. Over time the item turned its wearer into a lich, while keeping him or her ever under the influence of Myrkul. (Many sages believe it was at work in the downfall of Netheril.)

Laeral had found and donned the crown; it turned her actions (which had often worked in accord with those of the Harpers down the years) to evil and shattered the Nine. Many former friends were attacked. Shocked Waterdhavian nobles turned to Khelben for help.

With Mystra's aid, Khelben succeeded in shattering the crown, ending its powers forever. This involved the sacrifice of some of his own power, and left him in custody of a wild-witted Laeral. To nurse her back to health (and to keep her from evil influences), the weakened Khelben took her back to Blackstaff Tower in Waterdeep, to be his apprentice.

Over the years, Laeral recovered and both she and Khelben grew in magical power. They came to love each other. Today, Laeral is Khelben's consort.

While Khelben was rescuing Laeral, her sister Alustriel was busy in the Sword Coast North. Fighting orcs and local Zhentarim agents (as well as the greater evil of Hellgate Keep), Alustriel led a band of rangers, druids, and half-elves of all sorts into local politics, rising to become High Lady of Silvermoon. Like Cylyria, she was interested in establishing a haven of peace amid dangerous lands.

Storm Silverhand led her senior Harpers in aiding Alustriel's rise to power and fledgling rule. This entailed scouting missions that led to the deaths of many orc and hired human spies,



the slaying of the wizard Shaloss Ethenfrost, who sought to raise his own rule over the area, and an open battle against a large orc raiding band. Known as the Battle of Tumbleskulls, this victory is famous in Silverymoon as the beginning of the city's pride and power. It was crucial to Alustriel in retaining power, and it succeeded because Storm's Harpers roused the warriors of Silverymoon (who were beginning to argue seriously among themselves about which of them should rule instead of Alustriel) against the orc threat. The Harpers lured the orc band into a narrow valley, where they fell on an "unprotected" human camp that turned out to be a trap. When they turned to flee, the only way back was through a narrow cleft held by the Harpers, who fired arrows and hurled spells at will, slaughtering the trapped orcs. Those who tried to scale the walls of the cleft were beheaded by the weakest of the Harpers, lying on the rocks with blades ready. The heads falling and rolling back into the fray gave

the battle its name.

After the defeat of the orcs, Storm established a hidden Harper stronghold in nearby Everlund. The Heralds looked on this local rise in civilization with great pleasure. They sent financial support to both communities, to help in fortifying them and improving roads linking them with the Holdfast and thence more southerly lands.

Elminster and Storm worked together to build friendships and lines of communication, so that the Harpers would grow slowly in power throughout Faerûn. In the Dales and the lands to the north and east, he preferred to encourage many small, independent adventuring bands that could stand between the Harpers and open involvement in local politics (and open confrontation with the Zhentarim, agents of Thay, and The Cult of the Dragon).

In contrast, the Harpers based in Twilight Hall, located on a long and dangerous overland trade route that was falling under increasing



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Zhentarim dominance, worked openly in Harper adventuring bands (and sponsored, aided or led other groups, such as the Riders with Red Cloaks of Asbravn). Belhuar Thantarh grew to lead them, becoming Master of Twilight Hall, while bards such as Obslin Minstrelwish and Caledan Caldorien gained experience and personal power in the service of Twilight Hall.

As the Harpers flourished, so did the need for them; interests and groups whose aims and methods were evil grew in strength and numbers all over the Realms. Evil rose and fell in the Moonshae Isles, prompting the Harpers to strengthen their presence there. Orcs and worse were on the move in the North, keeping Dove of the Seven Sisters and the senior Harpers Sharanralee and her half-elven consort Eaerlraun busy.

The Zhentarim grew mighty indeed, to the point where Khelben and Elminster regarded Storm and Sylune of the Sisters, dwelling in Shadowdale, to be in grave personal danger. Elminster openly settled (in a base he had often used before) in Shadowdale, to make the two Sisters less likely to be casually attacked by any ambitious Zhent underling who wanted to make a name for himself.

Elminster's work against evil all over Faerûn and on other planes kept him absent from the dale so often that Khelben sent a fledgling band of adventurers (who were to become famous as the Knights of Myth Drannor) to Shadowdale, to rule there and defend the dale against the Zhentarim.

The Cult of the Dragon and the Zhentarim had begun to act openly and often in the Dragonreach lands. Evidence also came to light in Cormyr that the "dead god" Moander the Dark-bringer was alive and stirring. Then the rare and awesome power of spellfire was revealed in the person of one Shandril Shessair. The Cult of the Dragon and the Zhentarim scrambled to gain control of this weapon. So did the forces loyal to the High Imperceptor of Bane—and the younger, more reckless Malaugrym (who'd taken to watching over events in Faerûn). The

Knights of Myth Drannor took Shandril to Shadowdale under their protection. Elminster—with the aid of the Simbul—protected her until she came to terms with her power. Storm offered her the protection of the Harpers, and she set out for Silverymoon, where Alustriel had agreed to train her consort, Narm Tamarai, in magic.

Love developed between Elminster and the Simbul. The Harpers were kept busy battling many forces for evil—only to find magic going wild. Then order and much of the Realms split asunder in the widespread chaos of the Time of Troubles. Many Harpers perished in the tumult of the Fall of the Gods, and in the brigandry and orc raids that followed.

In the days that followed, the senior Harpers again set about rebuilding their organization. The Nameless Bard (Finder Wyvernspur) reappeared in the Realms, freed from his otherplanar exile. Elminster, desperate to add some muscle and experience to the Harper cause, used his influence on Storm, Cylyria, and other senior Harpers to have Finder's sentence reviewed. Ultimately, the Harpers found themselves battling the awakened god Moander. The god was vanquished in the Realms, but his defeat cost the lives of several Harpers—including, it seemed, that of Finder Wyvernspur, whose name and music the Harpers restored. The Time of Troubles, with its widespread death and destruction, left much of the Realms lawless, in need, and restless. It was a time for adventurers, in which both the Harpers and their foes flourished. For the first time, folk traveled to Twilight Hall, to try and join the Harpers, in numbers. Despite the dangers of belonging, and of the treacheries of those would-be Harpers who were agents of the enemies of Those Who Harp, the ranks of the Harpers grew—and continue to do so.

The Realms had been reshaped. As the struggle began to build a new world, Harpers were determined to be a part of it.



What am I doing today? Ask me tomorrow – I can be sure of giving you the right answer then.

– Askarran of Selgaunt, Master Sage,
speaking to a curious merchant,
Year of the Helm

This sourcebook, like the revised FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting boxed set, is set at the end of The Year of the Shield (1367 in Dalereckoning). As the rather harsh winter of that year takes hold in Faerûn, the Harpers are engaged in the following major concerns and missions.

The Crown of Chessenta

The struggle to unite the city-states of Chessenta under one throne is as old as written human history in the Realms, but it seems closer to happening than ever before. Faced with ever-more-powerful brigand and slaver incursions, the growing influence of Thay, and continual immigration from the fertile Vilhon Reach (an annual rush of folk with their own ideas about how Chessenta should be run, and scant regard for established customs and authorities), the rulers of the city-states have met several times to discuss the establishment of a standing army, a “borderguard” and overall taxation system, and other schemes for fostering the security of Chessenta against an evil invasion or foreign tyranny. Though the Chessentans were for the first time willing to see themselves as allies, and to consider some shared elements of government, they were all adamant that any Overking could not be one of the existing city-rulers, who might put the interests of his own city over the weal of the other cities of Chessenta. Fierce argument ensued over how an Overking would be selected and who might be candidates.

Harper watchfulness detected attempts by Thay to promote their own agent as a fitting occupant of the New Throne. There were also moves by the Cult of the Dragon to establish a

Cult kingdom, supported by the Great Bone Wyrms of Dragonback Mountain (the northernmost peak of the Riders to the Sky range). That great dracolich is gathering young dragons to its lair there, in an open bid for power. Into the midst of all this, of course, the Harpers are determined to put their own candidate on the throne. Their first task is to find a half-dozen or so willing and suitable would-be Overkings. Their second is to keep at least one of them alive long enough to seize the New Throne. The third is to keep the new Overking free from corruption.

Shoundra’s Succession

In Mirabar, an enterprising wizardess has managed to set herself up as the ruler of the city. Styling herself Sceptrana of Mirabar, Shoundra has done this by devoting her magical skills to aiding local dwarven mining, gaining the trust and the support of several dwarven clans. They are willing to have her serve as an impartial intermediary between them, as the ruler of their trading-contact with the outside world. Shoundra’s bold rise has infuriated other interests in Mirabar, notably the undercover agents of Luskan and of Calimshan, certain Amnian shipping interests, and the local Cult of the Dragon agents (all of whom stand to lose influence – which in the Cult’s case means a steady rake-off of gems and trade-metal for the hoards of several dracoliches across the lands of the Savage Frontier).

The Harpers have to watch Shoundra carefully, to ensure that she doesn’t become another Manshoon – and to keep her from becoming the puppet of the Malaugrym, the Red Wizards, or another power group. At the same time, they have to support her rule against attacks by agents of the thwarted interests in the city, and try to bring Shoundra into the Lords’ Alliance.

If she is killed, chaos will come to Mirabar. All of the rival factions will rush in to try to seize power, and the result will be scarcity of metal and gems, sharply rising prices, and



hardship for the common folk of the Savage North. If Shoundra becomes a tyrant, the same high prices could well result—and the balance of power in the Sword Coast North could shift again. Like all wizards, Shoundra is interested in bettering her own mastery of magic—and the Harpers must try to prevent her from falling prey to trapped magic or covert influences from the Zhentarim and other magic-wielding power groups.

The Mark of the Cat

In Amn—and recently, in Tethyr and Calimshan, too—men and women have been found slain, with the shape of a cat burned into their foreheads, as if they'd been branded. Magical investigations of the killings are always foiled by magic that has destroyed any possibility of gaining an image of the killer or any details of the murder or the time leading up to it. The killings seem to be random—but the Harpers have to discover who the killer or killers are, why they are slaying, and why particular victims have been chosen. The killings are themselves (most Harpers believe) evil work and must be stopped.

Some Harpers fear that one of their old foes is behind this campaign of terror; others fear that a new foe—perhaps even a new priesthood, or a new credo for existing clergy—has arisen.

Raulyver's Fun

A hitherto unknown, reclusive archmage who dwells in upland Amn, one Raulyver, has announced that he's developed magical means of finding, moving, and opening existing magical gates—the permanent place-to-place teleports in Faerûn left behind by the magic-workers of ancient realms (such as Netheril).

His magical process (at least three new spells are involved, Harper spies believe) has allowed him to shift these portals into the strongholds of rival wizards, and send in captured monsters

and hired mercenaries in a long-term series of attacks. Some of the known *gates* from long ago link to outer planes inhabited by evil creatures; others can transport additional known dangers. Raulyver's process, if misused, could render every fortress, sacred place, and treasure vault in the Realms wide-open and vulnerable to all.

Unfortunately, Raulyver seems to be governed by a strong sense of mischief—or a capricious evil nature, insanity, or an evil influence imposed by magic. He has been shifting *gates* all over the Realms, delighting in disrupting life in monasteries, tranquil gardens held by nobles, busy city markets, royal courts, and the like. Out of his portals have come fell invading monsters—including the things known as “deepspawn,” which can generate and emit many other monsters—garbage, heaps of dung, stampeding beasts, blazing barrels of combustible materials, diseased beggars, and hurled spells.

The Harpers must stop Raulyver, destroy or keep from evil interests his gate-handling process, and destroy move, or at least find and control access to as many of the *gates* as they can. The Zhentarim, Red Wizards, Twisted Rune, and the Cult of the Dragon are all intensely interested in these gates—as, it seems, are half a hundred local wizards and lordlings dwelling near each known or newly-relocated *gate*.

The Phaerimm Challenge

The rare, nearly-legendary evil subterranean race known as the phaerimm has come to the surface lands (in Tun, Impiltur, and the Shining Plains). They are using hirelings and servitor monsters and humanoid mercenaries to carve out territories under their control.

The phaerimm are wielding magic never seen in Faerûn before, and there are signs of local alliances with beholders, evil dragons, and other powerful beings. They must be stopped and either destroyed or driven under again. The Harpers who do it must either wrest knowledge



of the new spells they wield from them, or at least keep it from the Zhentarim and other established evil interests.

The Blessings of Gond

Out of Lantan and other centers of worship to the God of Artifice have come important developments. Notable among them are stable flying rafts that incorporate “firesticks” (light bombs) and walls of force to shield the crew, and a ship or armored “worm” that can gnaw through rock, boring tunnels into the earth, through castle walls and city cellars, and the like.

The race to possess these mighty weapons of war is on across the Realms. The Harpers have to prevent their evil rivals from gaining access to them—as well as, if possible, destroying them forever, to keep as many folk across the Realms free from oppression, for such efficient machines of death lend themselves to use by

tyrants. Fortunately, many of the spells used in the making of these contraptions seem to war with each other, making the apparati inherently dangerous and short-lived (but also producing perilous localized wild magic). It seems the Land of Mages, Halruaa, is as alarmed by the appearance of these machines as the Harpers are. Their skyships have been seen in the skies all over the Realms, exploring; a war aloft, over Lantan and Halruaa, may come soon!

A DM can use any or all of these issues as forces in campaign play, relegate them to mere rumors or exaggerations of matters quickly resolved, or ignore them altogether. If they are to feature in campaign play (particularly if Harper PCs are involved), some advance consideration must be given to their effects on long-term play.



Master Harpers

Know ye, lad – some Harpers have powers granted 'em by-the gods, they do. Ye'd best kill them quick, before they can remember just what those powers are...

– Gurth Aglathlyn, Biting Blade of Thay
(tutor of the Hands [agents] of the zulkirs),
speech to a pupil, Year of the Adder

Harpers can be of just about any class and profession. Although they can sometimes rely on the direct aid of other Harpers or loans or gifts of healing spells and magical items, many Harpers begin their careers armed with their wits alone. A Harper who survives the dangers and tests of the Harper life (double agents secretly serving foes of the Harpers are soon weeded out) and serves capably, is eventually named a true Harper and given his own Harper pin (its powers are detailed in “Magical Items,” in this book).

A Harper who names another a true Harper and gives him or her a Harper pin is considered the newly-named Harper's sponsor. A sponsor is responsible for punishing (or bringing to Harper justice before a court of Master Harpers), slaying, and foiling the Harper he named, if that person betrays the Harpers or acts wrongly.

True Harpers who serve with distinction and rise to positions of seniority (and most importantly, demonstrate their own good judgment, in accordance with Harper aims) may be named Master Harpers by secret vote of the existing Master Harpers. (In practice, the approval of three or more senior Harpers is enough to carry any Master Harper vote.)

Master Harpers have no sponsors; any justice enacted against them is by a tribunal of Master Harpers—and by the gods, by the stripping away of the powers unique to Master Harpers.

Blessings of the Gods

Long ago, when they met at the Dancing Place and affirmed their approval for the Harpers (see the “History” chapter in this book), the gods conferred special powers on Master Harpers. Any-

one acquiring the title today gains these powers instantly (in addition to any powers they may already possess), but he may forfeit them later through disloyalty or craven performance.

A deity usually removes its blessing only temporarily, putting the Harper under probation, and heralds the removal of its favor by a manifestation. The Harper usually sees the god's sign before his or her eyes, as the power is removed, and receives a strong mental impression of disapproval and watching eyes. The feeling of continuously being watched fades away only very slowly (2d12 days later). It is very unusual to lose more than one blessing at a time. Deities extend their tolerance in exchange for long and faithful, or zealous, service. They are slower to become disapproving of a long-time Master than of one who's held the title only for a little while.

The benefits granted to Master Harpers are as follows (listed alphabetically by deity). Initially, all Master Harpers gain all of these powers. In all cases, the term “a day” = 24 hours = 144 turns.

- Deneir: When confronted with any warding glyph or runic symbol, the Master Harper can try to determine information about it. The Harper must pause near the image for 1 round and concentrate. If an Intelligence Check succeeds, the Harper identifies the type of being (race, sex, profession, and class) who created the image. If the Harper spends another round in study, and another Intelligence Check succeeds, he identifies the general meaning or message of the symbol (warning, way-marker, information given on food, shelter, water, or magic, and so on), though the precise detailed message remains unknown.

- Eldath: The Master Harper can sense the direction and approximate distance of the nearest drinking water, cave connected to the surface world, and Harper refuge. Each of these three things can be scanned for, once per day. The Harper can sense if anything is amiss—the water is tainted, the cave is unsafe or occupied, or the refuge has been damaged, occupied,



trapped, or laid watch over (for an ambush) by hostile beings.

- **Lliira:** The Master Harper is immune from magical or natural fear, despair, discord, hopelessness, rage, and terror. He may extend this immunity to another touched being (one being only, for only as long as direct flesh-to-flesh contact is maintained).

- **Mielikki:** The Master Harper can correctly identify any leaves and spoor (droppings, hair left behind, or tracks) of any forest creature. If the creature, leaf, or plant is or was magically disguised, altered, or created, this is revealed—along with some impression of when and where this was done, and the race and appearance of any beings involved (usable seven times a day).

- **Milil:** The Master Harper can identify (with 100% accuracy and certainty) the origin of a sound he hears. For example, did a brief, cut-off scream heard from ahead come from a human throat? Male? Female? Was the screamer afraid? In pain? Faking? Was magic involved in producing the sound? Milil's blessing enables the user to know, in detail (and is usable twice per day).

- **Mystra:** Any spell cast or read from a scroll by the Master Harper can, by stated request of the player, have full possible effects or damage. This request doesn't deny a target the usual saving throw or ability check, if any, to lessen or avoid the magic. Whether successful or not, the request can be made only once per day.

- **Oghma:** Regardless of class or level, the Master Harper can cast a *stone tell* spell once a day. By touching another being (one only), the Harper can share the images gained with that person—so that the Harper can show them directly to a local expert or official. The Master Harper can also perceive and pass through (without shattering them, sounding any alarm-unless other spells are involved-or receiving any harm) all wizard locks.

- **Selune:** The Master Harper is rendered immune to lycanthropy (or cured of it, if already afflicted). In addition, his bite (blood must be drawn) can cure others of lycanthropy. Once per day, the Master Harper (regardless of class)

can also, by means of a round of silent concentration, conjure up silvery-white moving moonlight (radiance that the Harper can move about at will for 9 rounds, until it flickers and then fades away). If this radiance is specifically wrapped around a weapon, undead struck by that weapon suffer an extra 1 point of damage per strike.

- **Silvanus:** When in a forest, the Master Harper always knows precisely in what direction he's facing or traveling. He can't be fooled by distance distortion or similar deceitful magic, seeing them always for what they are.

- **Tymora:** If a saving throw or ability check fails, the player can intone, "Tymora smiles" and re-roll. The results of the second roll are binding. This can be done on three separate occasions per day.

The Way of the Harp

Master Harpers who aren't bards can, if they wish to, acquire the class of a bard as a second class. They can do this at any time after gaining 10th level in their primary class—and they can become bards regardless of their ability scores. They then become dual-class characters, and all the usual restrictions apply.

All that is needed to begin "the Way of the Harp" is a tutor and at least three months of time to study and master a musical instrument (if the character already has a Musical Instrument proficiency, this requirement has already been met). Diligent practice gives the character the Musical Instrument proficiency, regardless of class (and in addition to the normally acquired proficiency slots), and begins his career as a bard.

Master Harpers following the Way of the Harp try to create at least one new bardic composition a year, to be given into the keeping of a Herald or a True Harper, preferably at a stronghold and in written form.



The Senior Harpers

Stand back, lads, if ye've any brains – the best and the brightest blades have arrived. Stand back, and mayhap we'll live, to tell our younglings how once we saw great deeds done by the famous....

- Guldark Orthorm, warrior of the Blacktalons mercenary company, to colleagues on a battlefield, Year of the Turret

To detail even currently active veteran Harpers would take a book many times the size of this one—what with their many spells, unique magical items, abodes, heraldic devices, schemes, relationships with other Harpers, and so on. Instead, this chapter presents brief character summaries to aid the DM in planning Harper activities in a campaign.

Running Senior Harpers

The most senior Harpers (Elminster of Shadowdale, Khelben Blackstaff Arunsun, Alustriel of Silverymoon, Storm Silverhand, and the like) are very powerful folk indeed. Full details of their capabilities and the magic they command is beyond the scope of this sourcebook. The best way for a DM to run them is to assume they are powerful enough to, by and large, accomplish whatever they want to do—but to always bear in mind that rushing to the rescue of every Harper is not what they want to do. Senior Harpers act behind the scenes, are often unavailable (at work elsewhere in Faerûn or on other planes of existence, untraceable and unreachable), and should be used sparingly in campaign play. It's hard to get excited when Elminster shows up for the 60th time, and if he's always doing it to rescue PCs, their accomplishments seem feeble indeed.

The levels and abilities of the most important senior Harpers are given here. These details are current as of the Year of the Shield; note that there are some changes from earlier published Realms material. These are the key political and organizational Harpers, not necessarily all of the eldest-serving or most powerful. DMs employing other veteran Harpers (such as the many

powerful druids, bards, and rangers not included here) can have them act more as lone agents than these folk can ever be. All of these individuals can, however, be considered True Harpers in every sense of the word. None of them can be compelled to betray the Harpers, or twist Harper work to their own ends—because they will never have ends that vary from those of the Harpers. All are Master Harpers (with all the blessings granted by the gods to such worthies).

Alustriel Silverhand: CG human female W24
Belhual Thantarth: CG human male B9
Cyliria Dragonbreast: LN half-elven female B26
Dove Falconhand: CG human female R14
Elminster: CG human male W29 (sage)
Khelben Arunsun: LN human male W27
Laeral Silverhand: CG human female W25
Obslin Minstrelwish: NG halfling male B7
Storm Silverhand: CG human female B22

• *Alustriel Silverhand*, the High Lady of Silverymoon, is secretly one of Mystra's Chosen (see the "History" chapter of this book), and is one of the Seven Sisters (Dove, Laeral, Storm, and the Harper ally the Simbul are four others). Like all of her kin, she is tall (about six feet tall), slim, shapely, and possessed of long, magnificent hair of silvery hue.

Alustriel is a stay-at-home ruler, not an adventuress. She rarely travels farther afield than Everlund, but she can often be seen in the streets of Silverymoon, chatting with her citizens—most of whom love her so much they would lay down their lives to defend her.

Soft-spoken, just, and kind, Alustriel uses her magic to protect and aid others. Her stern but fair justice is largely responsible for the transformation of the Sword Coast North from a place where the strength of the sword is the only law, to a place where widespread civilization might someday prevail. She usually wears simple white or grey robes (darker hues at parties, but always garments of simple cut and a single color). She is never without at least two wands (one of which is a *wand of magic missiles*),

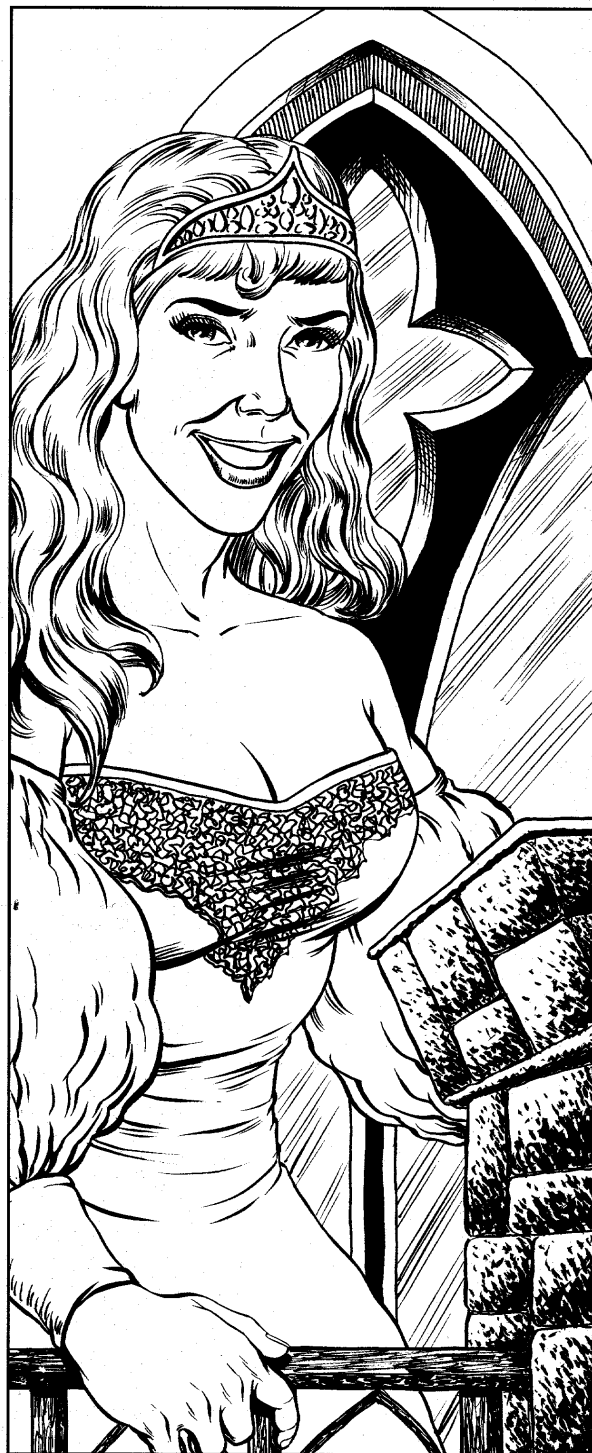


two magical rings (one a *teleport ring* akin to the one worn by her sister Storm, detailed below), and a rod or staff. If Alustriel bears a rod, it is 90% likely to be a *rod of absorption*, and 10% likely to be a *rod of passage* (both detailed in the *DMG*). If she is encountered carrying a staff, it is 70% likely to be a *staff of power* (detailed in the *DMG*), 29% likely to be a *staff of wanderers* (detailed in this book), and 1% likely to be another sort of magical staff. Alustriel has devised a few small spells of her own, but she prefers to stick to standard spells (including the Harper spells described in this sourcebook).

In Silverymoon, Alustriel can call on half a dozen attendant wizards at all times, from two W17 colleagues to 7th-level “palace wands.” There are usually another dozen Harper and her own apprentice mages near at hand, as well as another dozen or so Harpers—and almost the entire population of Silverymoon, who will leap to obey or aid her.

- *Belhuar Thantarth*, Master of Twilight Hall, is a stern but calm-spoken man. He has an uncanny knack of almost always being right in anticipating major efforts of the various groups the Harpers view as foes. He is a shrewd judge of folk (seeming almost to read minds at times) and has a talent for organization. Under the tutelage of Cylyria and working with other veteran Harpers, Belhuar has also become a good tactician. Rather than going adventuring, Belhuar spends most of his time in Twilight Hall, writing missives to Harpers, peering at maps, listening to reports, and trying to juggle his always-too-paltry Harper personnel to best work against the evils he is passionately dedicating to fighting. “I’m a spider in a web of my own spinning,” he said once, “so my task is to be the best spider the gods can look down on Faerûn and see.”

Belhuar is of average height and solid build. His hair is rapidly going prematurely gray, and he is at constant war with an ever-threatening paunch—which he battles with regular sword-play workouts and stints on a for-free Harper crew that repairs homes around Berdusk (for





The Senior Harpers

this work alone, the citizenry love the Harpers). At times affecting a moustache or a close-trimmed beard, Belhuar likes to use disguises and dreams of returning to a carefree life of adventuring. He is, however, a man of iron control and principles—and he never will leave.

It may take him years to advance beyond his present level, but Belhuar's control over the larger, more organized branch of the Harpers is unlikely to slip—unless a very fortunate enemy manages to cut short his life. Belhuar is known to own a *rod of lordly might* and habitually wears a *ring of the ram* and a *ring of shooting stars*. When armed, he bears a *luck blade +1* (all of these items are detailed in the *DMG*).

•*Cylyria Dragonbreast*, High Lady of Berdusk, is the longest-serving Harper to dwell in that city. She established Twilight Hall and has ruled Berdusk (lightly, working in the background as much as possible) for over 40 winters. Her people love her.

Cylyria (pronounced “Sil-EAR-ia”) was once famous from the Sea of Fallen Stars to the Sword Coast for her bell-like singing voice that could dip to warm, smoky low notes and soar ringing and clear to the heights. She has not performed outside Twilight Hall for years. Even in its innermost rooms, it is a rare, treat to hear her voice lifted in song. This retirement has given her the nickname “the Silent Lady.” Many folk believe this has come about because of some deep sorrow that Cylyria carries—the death of a loved one, most suspect. Cylyria is soft-spoken, gentle, and grave, with a slim, graceful beauty that has made more than a score of young male Harpers, each generation, follow her about in helpless admiration. Rarely, Cylyria is taken by merry, pranksome moods and will giggle, flirt, and caper about (if possible, the ever-watchful Obslin will throw a dance-and-feast in Twilight Hall to take advantage of this, showing a happy Cylyria off to her people and to her fellow Harpers).

Cylyria has a sizeable collection of magical harps (of all sorts), and wears a *ring of protection +6* on AC, +1 to saving throws and a *ring of*

wishes (three limited). She always carries her oldest magical item with her, in a sleeve- or boot-sheath: a *wand of paralyzation*. (All of these items are detailed in the *DMG*.)

Cylyria nurses sick or injured Harpers, and functions as a friend, confidant, and sage advisor to all of the Harpers who use Twilight Hall as their base (many of whom call her their “Second Mother”). She acts as a go-between in dealings between Harpers who don't want to confront each other, and she keeps Berdusk firmly in the Lords' Alliance.

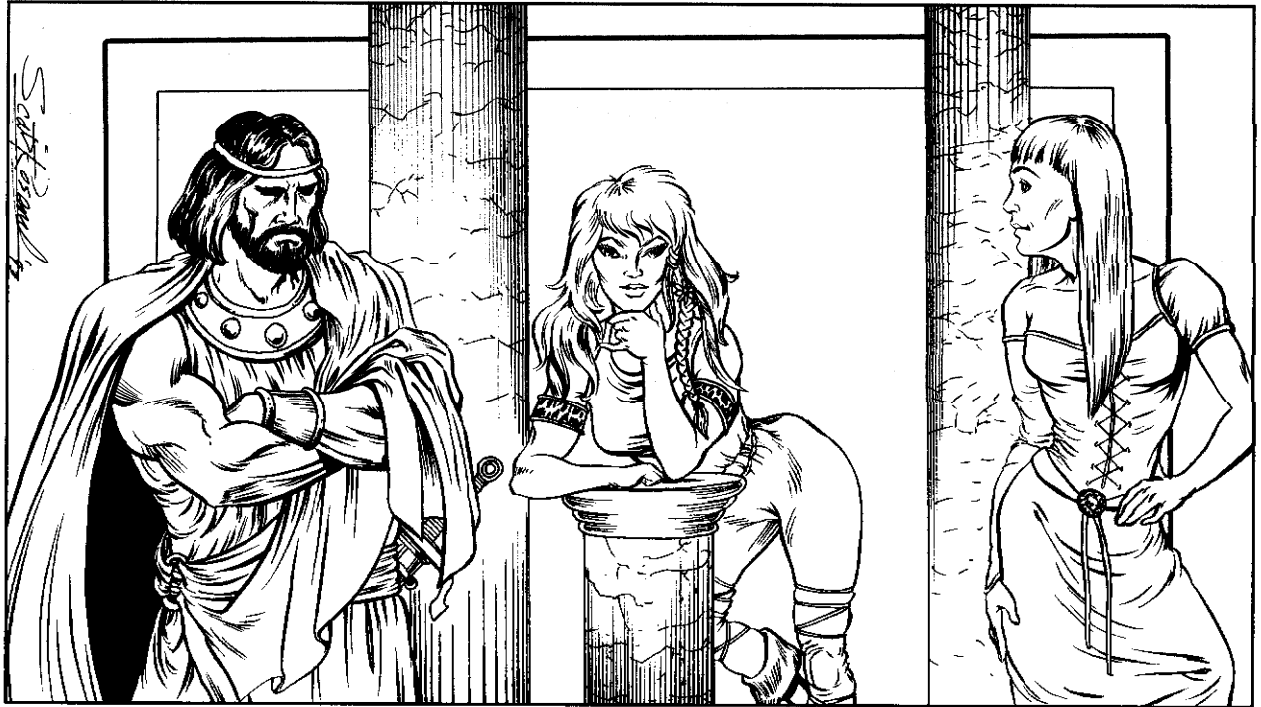
Cylyria is short and has long, very straight white hair, fine-boned features, and very large, dark eyes of deep emerald hue.

•*Dove Falconhand* is a Knight of Myth Drannor, wife to the ranger Florin Falconhand (also a member of that famous adventuring band). Secretly one of Mystra's Chosen, she is one of the Seven Sisters. Like all her kin, she is tall (about six feet tall), shapely, and has long, magnificent hair of silvery hue. She is the most muscled of the sisters, with shoulders almost as broad as a man of the same height. Graceful and quiet, Dove is kind, calm, and firm. She is apt to be shy about singing and dancing in public, but always respected by the guard of Shadowdale for her battle-prowess (she has trained many of them—and even more novice Harpers-in use of the longsword and thrown dagger).

Now a mother, Dove has spent much time in Evermeet, raising her child (son Azalar) in relative safety. She always carries a *rogue* stone—an enspelled gem that can whisk her back to Evermeet (a *teleport without error* device) when grasped and commanded.

Dove owns a magical harp of a rare type now named for her (its original Myth Drannan name now lost), a *luck blade +1* containing 2 wishes, and various minor items of magic. She usually wears nondescript leather armor and a *cloak* and *boots of elvenkind*, seldom dressing in formal female garb.

Dove's Harp (XP Value—500, GP Value—2,500): While this harp is playing, beings within 20 feet are temporarily freed from any insanity



afflicting them and are instantly and permanently freed from fear, despair, discord, rage, terror, and hopelessness of any sort. The harp music also lightens black moods and grief, and calms fretting and anger.

The music of Dove's harp also *cures light wounds* (1d8 hit points) once in any being within 20 feet who listens to it for 2 successive rounds. This healing works only once every nine days for a particular being. While such a harp is aiding any being, the harp and harpist radiate a faint white nimbus of faerie fire.

Dove is usually adventuring with the Knights of Myth Drannor, but she may appear in Shadowdale whenever needed. She acts as Storm's chief messenger and go-between, and as the most widely-traveled messenger and spokes-agent of the Harpers of Shadowdale.

- *Elminster*, the "Old Mage" and the Sage of Shadowdale (with expertise in many things, but sought out primarily for his deep knowledge of

human history and magical lore), is secretly one of Mystra's Chosen. His spells and magical items are far too numerous to detail here, but readers are directed to the *FORGOTTEN REALMS®* Adventures sourcebook for details of the key spells – *Elminster's Effulgent Epuration*, *Elminster's Evasion*, and *Worldwalk*. Many other spells in various Realms publications (including some of the spells in this sourcebook) were devised or modified by him; the history chapter in this book hints at the rich variety of his long career.

When using Elminster, bear in mind that although his mellifluous, cultured speech is customarily heavy with abundant occurrences of "ye" and "thy," he is the only Realms character (with the possible exceptions of the Simbul and Khelben, both of whom would never admit to it) to have visited our world. So he can unburden himself in modern American slang, catch-phrases, and famous quotations of our world, if a DM wants him to. He's always free with sardonic, sarcastic, acidic, and mocking



The Senior Harpers

comments, but underneath his crusty exterior lurks a golden heart of great kindness and a sneaking romanticism.

Always remember that Elminster has no pride. He can take on humiliating disguises or an “absent-minded old man” routine whenever it suits him. He has been everywhere and seen everything (and so is very hard to fool). He has forgotten more spells than most mages will ever learn, and he certainly has contingencies in place to prevent his swift death by any means. He also enjoys being mysterious. Elminster will not reveal direct information about his own age, parentage, childhood, youth, and past. He knew fabled, ruined Myth Drannor when it was bustling and splendid, and he is apt to come out with disconcerting memories of crumbling ruins whenever a DM wants him to (“As I recall, there were simply heaps of gems—king’s tears, if memory serves me aright after all these years—in that tower over there...hmmph; not much of it left now, eh?”). Elminster can produce just about any magical item on short notice (he simply teleports to wherever he’s hidden it) and the pipe he carries is itself a potent item of magic.

Elminster’s Eversmoking Pipe (XP Value—1,200; GP Value—9,000 (6,500 if not Elminster’s own)): A curving pipe smooth-carved of dark, lustrous felsul-root, developed by Elminster. He had the only one until he recently gave details of its making and construction to the wizard Sarghun of Silverymoon (a Harper ally), who enjoys a good pipe. Other mages have since gleaned pipe details from Sarghun in card games and other high-level, secretive meetings of solemn masters of magic.

The pipe is smoked in the normal fashion. Its smoke is thick and greenish-grey, laced with tiny winking sparks, and it keeps insects of normal size (even magically summoned or directed ones) at bay, clear of a ten-foot-radius area centered on the pipe.

If the smoker blows very hard through the pipe while deactivating it (see below; the user forcefully exhales the deactivation word down

the pipestem), it goes out but emits a single, spinning ball of flame. Like a Melf’s minute meteor, this fiery missile is under the mental control of the smoker, who can direct it at targets up to 90 feet distant by pointing (no verbal command required). Anything flammable struck by the ball must make a successful saving throw vs. magical fire or ignite. Beings hit suffer 1d4 points of damage (no saving throw).

An *eversmoking pipe* can be commanded to reproduce one of the effects of a *pyrotechnics* spell, once every three rounds. The smoker is immune to all such pipe effects even when companions are chokingly overcome. This protection can’t be extended to others.

By uttering a single secret word, an *eversmoking pipe* can be commanded to return to the hand of its owner, regardless of the distance between them, planar separation, or any barriers and protections, appearing 1d3 rounds after the word is spoken. This power can be used by any being that utters the summoning word, which can be changed by holding the pipe, flesh to wood, and speaking a certain rhyme that includes the new summoning word and cancels all others. If the cancellation is left out of this charm, previous words still work, and the pipe could end up flicking rapidly around the planes in an endless tug-of-war between rivals. This charm is a 7th-level conjuration/summoning wizard spell that only Elminster knows; other wizards must devise their own. It also prevents any being from magically tracing the owner via the pipe.

A wizard of 9th or higher level can shape the smoke from an *eversmoking pipe* into crude images, symbols, or directive arrows, and can vary smoke hue and brightness. Such displays can never trigger or substitute for magical symbols or runes, but they can convey messages to all who see them. They also can, with practice, be worked precisely enough to make the smoke-image recognizably resemble a specific being. Such images take 1d4+1 rounds to fully form, and last for another 1d4+1 rounds.

Elminster has added at least three more pow-



ers to his own pipe (or pipes, actually; he has several identical ones stashed in various places around Toril and Realmspace). When the pipe is lit and held in the lips, the smoker (only) is protected as if by a *protection from normal missiles* spell, and all magic missiles directed at the smoker are reflected back to their source, striking for their usual damage.

When immersed in water, the pipe instantly casts an *airy water* spell (of 12 turns duration). If the pipe is lit, it goes out and can't be reignited while it remains underwater.

When the pipe is held, its bearer can by silent force of will *dimension door* (up to 700 yards distant, moving up to 500 lbs. of non-living matter or 250 lbs. of living matter in contact with the bearer). This can be done once per round (unlike the spell, no "round of recovery" is needed between *dimension door* attempts), to a maximum of nine times per day.

Substances other than tobacco burned in such a pipe have some strange effects. Experimentation in this field continues, but several results are known. The use of lamp oil and other volatile liquid fuels causes sudden jets of flame to erupt for 1d4 rounds (reflected back on the smoker by the pipe's weather shield), followed by a 2d6-die explosion that destroys the pipe.

The use of wet green leaves produces a thick, black, choking smoke. Once this has begun, the smoker can leave the pipe to create a smoke-screen, to smoke insects or air-breathing creatures out of a confined space, and the like. This smoke-screen lasts until the pipe is destroyed, immersed in non-flammable liquid, or commanded to stop (the smoke will clear in only one round if there is a brisk wind). Smoke production doesn't depend on a constant supply of wet leaves, or anything in the bowl at all, once begun; the pipe's inherent magic creates the smoke.

A hot, white smoke (useful for smoking meats, concealing strong smells, and the like) of similar duration can be produced by using dry, dead, fallen leaves. Perfumed cloth, paper, or flower petals can be used to scent an area.

An *eversmoking pipe* is activated by the direct

touch (flesh to wood) of any being who says, "Flame!" or another single (usually cryptic) word chosen during the initial pipe enchantment. In like manner, "Out!" or another chosen single word, plus simultaneous direct touch, de-activates the pipe again.

When the pipe is activated, it lights itself, and its bowl is shielded from the elements by a miniature, hemispherical wall of force, allowing the user to keep the pipe lit even in rain, snow, gusts of wind or gale-force natural winds. The pipe's bowl is magically protected against overheating and burning during normal use. Tobacco is constantly replenished at the bottom of the bowl, teleported in from a known store (usually a large sack or barrel in the smoker's own keep). When the pipe is enchanted, the summons must, for safety reasons, be restricted in the type of substance (e.g., crushed tobacco) it will teleport in.

Making such a pipe requires any fire-producing magic and the spells *wall of force*, *Drawmij's instant summons*, and *permanency*.

The presence of a lit *eversmoking pipe* in the area of effect of a natural or magical dust storm or whirlwind of sand, a pyrotechnics not of the pipe's making, a cloudkill, or a stinking cloud, will cause the pipe to ignite a fiery 3d6 fireball burst, centered on itself.

The pipe is allowed an item saving throw vs. magical fire (it is "wood, thin," and gets a +3 bonus as a magical item with fire-related powers). If the throw fails, it is destroyed, and anyone in contact with it receives a penalty of -3 to their own saving throw against the fiery explosion. If the saving throw succeeds, the pipe goes out (losing all tobacco in it at the time, but being otherwise undamaged), and must be reactivated.

A successful saving throw against any *eversmoking pipe* means a victim receives half damage (shock effects but not heat or flame damage).

If the pipe is struck severely or dropped, its flame may momentarily curl out of the bowl, or lit tobacco may spill out of the bowl, slide down the shield, and ignite nearby flammables.



A *dispel magic* spell can extinguish an *eversmoking pipe*, but not drain it of magic or permanently affect it in any way.

An *eversmoking pipe* can be teleported or telekinised in an activated state—for example, into an occupied bedroom (as Storm Silverhand wryly tells), or onto a pile of scrolls, maps, or valuable documents.

Certain malicious mages have spread a rumor that Elminster is sufficiently addled to think of his pipe as a living thing, and that he often talks to it. The Simbul sometimes uses it as the focus of an audible sending-related spell, allowing her to talk back and forth with the Old Mage. About every third middle-aged or elderly mage of the Realms appears to have once been—however briefly—Elminster’s apprentice; particularly, it seems, those who were once very beautiful women of human, elven (even drow!), or half-elven stock.

• *Khelben “Blackstaff” Arunsun* is one of the noble do-gooders of the Realms. He is a not-so-secret (he never admits it, but everyone in Waterdeep suspects it) Lord of Waterdeep, and the best-known wizard in that city.

Like Elminster, Khelben spends much of his time flitting around the planes and worlds (such as Krynn and Oerth) righting wrongs and manipulating events for good ends more energetically than, say, Manshoon of the Zhentarim does for evil aims. Khelben has a temper, an arsenal of cached magical items that makes even Elminster’s seem paltry, and a helpful—and powerful—group of apprentices based in Blackstaff Tower. His personal code of honor is as restrictive as that of most paladins, and he works only awkwardly these days with “that amiable rogue” Elminster.

Like Elminster, Khelben is also far older than most folk suspect. The Khelben Arunsun born to Zelphar and Lhestyn Arunsun is not the Khelben who dwells in Blackstaff Tower today, though most Waterdhavians think them one and the same. The son of Zelphar and Lhestyn is actually a descendant of Khelben, named for

him, and became a mage of some power in his own right. Seeking to escape the shadow of his powerful ancestor (still very much alive and active), Khelben the Younger took to traveling the planes. He settled in another world (Oerth, Elminster suspects) to make his own life. Khelben the Older avoids queries about his age and past, and few dare to pry overmuch.

Khelben’s opponents see him as a scheming, cold-blooded plotter, and he has in the past often let his zeal for good ends carry him through some shady means. He commonly lets or pushes others (such as his lady Laeral) do things he deems necessary, but is unwilling to do himself.

Khelben should always be portrayed as the strict voice and might of authority, with inflexible principles—principles he realizes others (even his apprentices and consort) may not share, and shouldn’t be compelled to.

Khelben has devised his share of new spells, although he specializes in refining the earlier magic of others. The *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures* sourcebook includes two of his spells, *dismind* and *Khelben’s warding whip*, but his most famous spell (its use gave him his nickname) appears here.

Blackstaff (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 8

Range: 0

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

This spell causes any non-magical staff, club, piece of wood, or polearm held by the caster to shimmer with a black, crawling radiance. Such a *blackstaff* has the following (cumulative) properties:

- A *blackstaff* can never harm the caster or any other beings touching the staff during the spell-casting.



- It strikes as a +4 magical weapon (with an attack roll bonus but no damage bonus).

- Its touch drains 1 hp automatically (the target gets a saving throw vs. death magic to avoid this loss being permanent), plus 1d8 additional points of damage.

- Its touch acts as a *dispel magic* spell on all magical barriers, weapons, or effects (at all times; the wielder cannot turn this power off).

- Its touch causes mental damage as follows (roll percentile dice): 01-44, target unaffected; 45-65, target confused (as in the wizard spell *confusion*) for 1d4 rounds; 66-76, target stunned (effects as for a *symbol of stunning*) for 1d3 rounds; 77-87, target affected by fear (as the spell) for 1d2 rounds; 88-95, target affected as if by a *repulsion* spell; 96-00, target feebleminded.

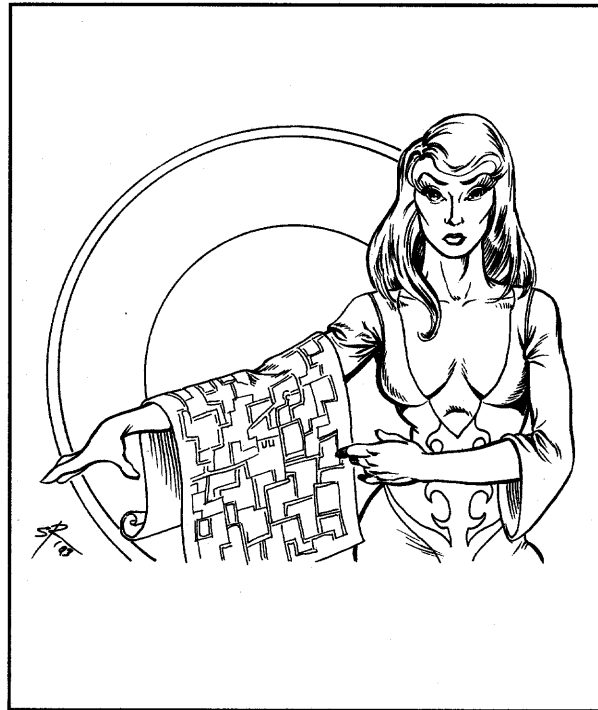
- Its touch causes any spellcasting being to forget one memorized spell or to be unable to use one natural spell-like power for two rounds (if choice exists, determine which spell randomly; a successful saving throw vs. paralysis is needed to avoid this effect entirely).

- The touch of a *blackstaff* causes psionically gifted beings to be psionically scrambled (unable to use any powers except defenses) for 1d4 rounds.

- A *blackstaff* absorbs magic cast upon it, and it is apparently unaffected by any magic (it can't be destroyed by *dispel magic* spells).

The *blackstaff* may be wielded by any creature able to use a polearm who can withstand (or is immune to) its effects. A *blackstaff* prevents spellcasting by any being who is in contact with it during a given round. It can therefore be used to ruin enemy spellcasting with a successful attack. (It can't be easily thrown, and it resists telekinesis and similar movements as it does all other magic.) At spell expiration, the material component (the staff) is instantly consumed.

- *Laeral Silverhand* ("Lady Arunsun"), Khelben's consort and chief apprentice, is less noble than Khelben himself. One of the Seven Sisters and Mystra's Chosen, Laeral is a former famous



adventress in her own right. She was leader of the adventuring band known as the Nine, who dwelt in a cavern stronghold on the banks of the Unicorn Run, until the fellowship was shattered by an item of powerful evil magic, from which Khelben rescued Laeral.

Now Laeral, a trifle less principled than her mate, helps Khelben deal with the seamier side of life in Waterdeep and the wider Realms. She is kind by nature, has a low, musical voice, and is the most beautiful of the sisters—which is to say, stunningly beautiful. She is tall (almost six feet tall), slim, has gently curling, long silver hair, and large eyes whose hue mirrors her mood, from bright blue to dark indigo (for anger), and even brown (sorrow).

Most Waterdhavians—and all folk who call at Blackstaff Tower to see Khelben when he's out-deal with Laeral. She serves as Khelben's major Harper contact, too. Her ready wit conceals an essentially shy nature. Laeral has devised many powerful magical items down



her long career, most of which bear her name. She normally carries only a ring that functions as a *wand of magic missiles* and a *ring of shooting stars*, however (both detailed in the *DMG*).

She has created fewer spells, preferring (like her sister Alustriel) to employ tried and true magic. One original spell, *Laeral's dancing dweomer*, appears in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures* sourcebook; another, created as part of her training under Khelben, appears here (because she seems fond of it and often memorizes it).

Laeral's Aqueous Column (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 4

Range: 10 feet/level

Components: V,S,M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Area of Effect: 10' diameter sphere, expanding 10' per level in a 10' diameter cylinder

Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, a mage can transmute the air in a particular area into water. A spherical volume of ten-foot diameter per level can be created. It will be pure water, either fresh or salt as the caster decrees in casting, and will circulate freely, drawing oxygen into itself as necessary to support marine life. The water is held within a cylindrical shape (ten feet across) by the spell *dweomer*, the cylinder expanding lengthwise with increasing areas of effect. Multiple spells (cast by the same being or by several spellcasters) can be used to extend the cylinder beyond the extent of one such spell. The column can run horizontally, vertically, at an angle, and make turns as desired in the casting—but once established, its location cannot change. Creatures and objects can pass freely into and out of the cylinder of water without spilling or spraying water or disturbing the stability of the column, but creatures not able to breathe in water are not empowered to do so by this spell.

This spell is often used to introduce marine creatures into a dry environment, for purposes of imprisonment, conferences, or transportation. The cylinders are usually vertical (hence the term “column” in the spell name) and may connect with other bodies of water, such as sewers beneath buildings or the sea beneath a ship. At spell expiration, the water simply vanishes; marine creatures can well be stranded. Varying water pressures are equalized by the magic so as to harm neither creatures in the column nor structures entered by the column (a column connected to the sea in a cellar will not cause the sea to flood the cellar).

The material components of this spell are a hair (from any sort of creature) and a drop of water, spittle, dew, juice, sap, or a tear.

• *Obslin Minstrelwish* works as Cylyria's ever-present and attentive strong right hand in Berdusk. The seneschal of Twilight Hall and of Cylyria's own abode, this tall (for a halfling), white-haired, close-mouthed Harper is everywhere in Twilight Hall, all the time—silently, diligently watchful.

Obslin's gift is that he remembers where things can be found or have been stored—anywhere in Faerûn! He knows where (and when, for the best prices) to procure goods, the detailed locales and disguises of a thousand Harper caches, what goods regions or cities are short of, have in over-abundance, or seem to be seeking. This makes him a master quartermaster for Berdusk, for Twilight Hall, and for the Harpers.

Harpers who need to know where to find a ceremonial transparent (*glassteel*) Calishite scimitar, or who might have a hidden siege engine in a particular area, or the best shop in Telflamm to buy lanterns need only ask Obslin (and a lot of them do).

Obslin is hopelessly in love with Cylyria, but he considers their working relationship too precious to ever reveal this to her. Of course, everyone who's been in Twilight Hall with eyes and ears open for a tenday or more is aware of it. It is a very rare thing for Obslin to leave Twilight



Hall. His closest friend is Belhuar Thantarh.

Obslin owns many fine instruments, including *pipes of haunting* and *pipes of sounding*. He has been given a special Harper pin by Cylyria that has all the usual powers, plus the ability to telekinese things (1,000 lb. weight limit, double the normal spell range) when touched and willed. He uses this to store and shift goods by himself-but he has also used it in battle, to dump half of a city gate atop brigand archers.

•*Storm Silverhand*, the Bard of Shadowdale, is a powerful force for good in the Realms, a pillar of strength for the Harpers, and the guardian of Shadowdale whenever Elminster and the Knights of Myth Drannor are busy or absent. This role, and her value to the Harpers as a trainer and source of lore (both Sammereza Sulphontis, the roving agent of Waterdeep, and the Simbul, ruler of Aglarond, reveal much of what they learn to her), keeps Storm at home in Shadowdale most of the time these days. In the past (a century or so ago) she was famous for composing moody, haunting tunes that still form a large part of minstrelry in the North today.

One of the Seven Sisters and Mystra's Chosen, Storm is tall and muscular (almost as brawny as her sister Dove). She customarily wears her long silver hair unbound, trailing behind her, cloak-like, to below her knees. Storm maintains a herb and vegetable farm in Shadowdale, working it largely alone (though the spirit of her dead sister Sylune lives on in her farmhouse; a pair of Harpers who had come to her for information were awakened one morning by the clash of arms, as Storm practiced at swords with an invisible opponent!).

She once roamed the Realms far more, as an adventuress, in the days when her man Maxan (a LG human male, F12) was alive. Storm is active as a midwife and physic of sorts. She remains athletic and active, a happy and respected farmer of Shadowdale. She should be portrayed as striking, fearless, and yet motherly, with a quick understanding and perception of others (she seems to instantly smell both





The Senior Harpers



magically disguised Zhentarim agents and the far smaller deceptions of common folk).

Storm can call on a considerable number of hidden magical items, including a *Methild's harp* (detailed in the "Magical Items" chapter in this sourcebook). She also wears a ring (a gift from Elminster) that can teleport her to various refuges around the Realms—including Elminster's Tower in Shadowdale, his little-known hideout in Realmspace, Blackstaff Tower in Waterdeep, a certain wooded dell in Evermeet, Twilight Hall, and Alustriel's palace in Silvermoon.

This ring is attuned to her (any other being who puts it on suffers 3d4 points of energy damage per round until it is removed, and can't make it function). When she is wearing it, it can power two trips a day and can either take one other living (and touched) being with her or by touch send one living being without her.

A contingency magic placed on the ring functions when Storm is rendered forcibly unconscious, her will is taken over by magic or

psionics, or she is reduced to 7 hp or less. Storm is teleported without error to a cavern hidden in Mount Waterdeep, into a stasis field, where she remains frozen until Elminster or Dove (alerted by a magical sending alarm that is also part of the contingency) comes to aid her. The stasis field is in an alcove at one end of a cavern whose floor has been worked into black-and-white checkerboard tiles, five across and seven deep. Access to the cavern is by a passage reaching this array at the center of one end, opposite from the stasis alcove. Any creature that tries to walk across the cavern by any route but the correct one (an "S" that curls along the right-hand wall of the cavern to the center row, runs across that row to the other wall, and then runs along the left-hand wall to curl around to the alcove) ends up in a stasis field of its own, on the square that entrapped it.

Storm can usually call on substantial nearby Harper aid, when at home or traveling in the Heartlands or the Sword Coast North regions.



A hero? Someone too foolish or stubborn to be a coward. Thank the gods we have 'em, though – these days, they're needed all too often.

– Zosker Anthalar, Sage of Escalant, speech to that city's Council, Year of the Shadows

Down the long, adventuresome history of the Harpers (outlined briefly in this book), there have been many Harper heroes. In a loosely organized band such as Those Who Harp, there are many opportunities to be a hero-and to die in the doing-but fewer chances to become famous. The folk called "heroes" here are not necessarily more (or less) capable or valorous than other Harpers; they are the Harpers featured thus far in published novels.

Some are now thought to be dead; others have been missing for some time. Elminster absolutely refused to give details of these individuals, deeming such matters vital to the security of "the free Realms." What appears here, then, is partly guesswork; consider character statistics approximate (and current as of the end of the novels in which the heroes appear). The heroes appear here alphabetically (using surnames where known).

- *Mari Al'maren* (NG? human female, B6 or F6?, specialization—longbow): A young and enthusiastic Harper, Mari has a fiery spirit and a zeal that borders on recklessness. She writes regular, diligent reports to Belhvar Thantarth ("a habit most of us soon grow out of," Caledan said with a grin). She is sufficiently skilled in the use of the longbow to cut ropes from a distance with her arrows. She also fights with a longsword and makes up for inexperience with a growing coolness in battle.

Mari has recently come to love the famous Harper Caledan Caldorien—a love that is, however roughly, returned with interest.

She is not pretty (her too-square jaw gives her a crooked smile), but her warm smile and dark, smoldering eyes betray keen intelligence and a strong, passionate nature. She has a husky

laugh and a quick temper—and can be as sarcastic as Caledan when angry.

Mari has dark auburn hair, and she usually wears breeches and boots of soft buckskin and jackets of forest green. This is her favorite color; she has a thick woolen traveling cloak of the same hue. She has been known to wear her Harper pin openly on her collar.

She likes to drink the sweet, pale wines of Amn and the Vilhon, enjoys traveling, and in the Harpers has found a lasting purpose in life. Orphaned by disease as a child in Elturel, Mari was raised by a retired Harper, Master Andros, now dead. She still plays his baliset—a very old and beautiful instrument, of rosewood inlaid with dark maple and red cherry.

- *Caledan Caldorien* (CG? human male, B9?): This veteran Harper adventurer is based in Iriaebor. His service to the Harpers is long and diligent, involving such successful missions as destroying the Cult of Bane's plan to seize the throne of the Empire of Amn, thwarting a Zhentarim attempt to assassinate the ruling Council of Four in Baldur's Gate, smashing a Zhentarim attempt to take Hluthvar, freeing an army enslaved by the magic of a blood-thirsty Calishite sorcerer, and rescuing hundreds of children kidnapped from Waterdeep and forced to work in the mines of a goblin prince.

Once part of the Fellowship of the Dreaming Dragon, Caledan dwelt at the inn of that name in Iriaebor. The death of his beloved Kera, on one last mission before they were to be married at Twilight Hall, turned him away from the Harpers in bitterness and despair—but the love of Mari Al'maren (see her entry in this chapter), the camaraderie of the temporarily reunited Fellowship, the defeat of Kera's killer (the sorceress Ravendas—Kera's sister), and the discovery of Caledan's son, Kellen (a serious lad who is already an accomplished musician), brought him back to the Way of the Harp. This tale is told in the novel *The Crypt of the Shadow King*.

From childhood, Caledan has possessed a very rare and little-understood power, known



as shadow magic. About all he knows of it is that he can shape shadows with the music of his pipes—but his potential power, as revealed by the ancient, evil Shadow King, is awesome.

Caledan prefers the rougher, simpler life of a Harper adventurer. Happiest when in the saddle of his bad-tempered pale gray mare, Mista, he is usually wearing a road-worn, patched and faded midnight blue wool traveling cloak over worn black traveling gear. He keeps a longsword at his hip and several knives—which he is adept at throwing—about his person (in boots, at belt, and probably sheathed up one forearm as well). He is also skilled in the use of the longbow.

The bard is skilled at playing reed pipes (at one time, he was considered the finest piper in the Realms) and the baliset; he carries a fine specimen of the latter, lute-like instrument, fashioned of maple and ash. Caledan looks like the battered, dangerous man he is—but his large, bony frame is surprisingly strong and quick. Innkeepers who see his angular, almost wolfish visage usually decide (swiftly) to treat him with respect. Caledan has green eyes, and dark hair. Indoors, he often wears a much-worn, favorite slate blue tunic.

- *Artus Cimber* (NG human male, B7?): This adventurer's tale is told in the novel *The Ring of Winter*. He is lauded throughout Faerûn as an explorer, historian, and seeker of adventures. A member of the Society of Stalwart Adventurers (based in Suzail), Artus was once a disciple of Oghma, though he lacked the discipline to become an instructor in the history and lore of Faerûn. He has been awarded a medal for contributions to the study of Cormyrean history by King Azoun and the Society of Stalwart Adventurers. Artus speaks Common and four other languages, plus a smattering of Tabaxi.

Artus was put into a school of Oghma by his father, a Cormyrean highwayman impressed by the polite and knowledgeable loremasters; he used money he'd stolen from a caravan of the church of Oghma to pay for the boy's schooling.

It has been a long road for Artus since then, covering much of the surface of known Faerûn over more 35 winters.

Artus is a Harper, but in recent years he has become absorbed by the troubles and achievements of the folk of Mezro, and less concerned with the daily troubles that the Harpers "meddle in" (to use his words) in the Realms. This attitude may be due to caution. Artus commands a powerful, unique item of magic—the *Ring of Winter*. It appears as a simple band of gold sparkling with frost. To command the ring, a being must wear it and have at least four continuous segments free from attack to concentrate.

The ring can alter the climate in large areas, plunging temperatures below freezing and creating large amounts of ice and snow. It can emit a triple-sized wall of ice in a round, raise a pillar of ice ten feet across that rises 40 feet upward per round, and spray paralyzing frost on all beings within a 60-foot-radius sphere (flight is impossible for affected beings, all movement in the area cut to a third of normal rate). The ring can also bring an ice sphere into being around an item or creature. This sphere transfers protective warmth to the interior, while emitting intense cold from its exterior (effects equal to a *cone of cold* on all beings within 10 feet of the outer surface. The sphere is AC 4 and will withstand 56 points of damage in one place before shattering; it suffers double damage from all heat and flame-related attacks).

The ring can also create ice spikes ten feet tall, heal its wielder, fashion animated, creature-like constructs of ice (including flying "birds" large enough to carry man-sized beings aloft in their claws), and emit large and powerful arms of ice that can grip or strike with the same power as a *Bigby's crushing hand*.

The ring can freeze even enchanted beings to brittle solidity (one blow will shatter and slay such a trapped creature) if it can envelop them in ice (the process takes 1d3+1 rounds, and if any magic strikes the ice during this time, it falls away and the process must begin again). The ring can shatter metal with its cold, or cre-



ate ice armor in precise areas and amounts, fashioning manacles, shields balanced to a particular user, or collars. The wielder of this ring can create a rapier, dagger, or other piercing weapon of ice (equal to the normal weapon, save that all damage is increased by 1d4 points due to chilling cold), and conjure icy gusts of wind that can pick up and hurl man-sized or smaller beings around. With some practice, the ring-wearer can fashion slippery ice sheets to aid in moving stone blocks, or create ice pillars, braces, and even stairs.

The ring serves only the powers of good – if used for evil ends, it twists its wielder's intent to bring disaster down upon him. It has the additional effect of augmenting the powers of all other magical items that remain within 20 feet of it for more than ten days. The longer the exposure, the more the powers increase.

Artus also has a dagger given to him by the centaurs of Tribe Pastilar in Lethyr Forest, as a reward for recovering the chieftain's sacred staff of judgment. The gem in the dagger's hilt can be commanded to give forth a perpetual soft radiance (continual light). It can also act as a compass: hold it flat in one's palm, speak the name of the centaur chieftain (we were unable to discover just what that name was), and the blade moves to point north. It can also control arachnids within a 90-foot radius. It can *dimension door* any single being holding it, once a day.

When augmented by the *Ring of Winter*, the dagger's ability to *dimension door* changes to the power to teleport its holder and up to five other beings to any location visualized by its holder (who must have been there at some previous time) on the same plane. Its radiance can also be made to glow as brightly as a star.

Artus dwells in two small attic rooms in Suzail (rented from a fletcher named Razor John, who owns the shop beneath), near the harbor. The place is crammed with books and relics of Artus's travels, and it is haunted from time to time by the ghostly presence of Sir Hydel Pontifax, a deceased friend of the Harper.

Artus also shares his rooms with his lady

Sanda, whom he met in the fabled city of Mezro, city of mazes and gold, in far-off Chult.

Sanda is Alisanda Rayburton (now a demipower; LG human female, F5?), daughter of Lord Dhalmass Rayburton of Cormyr and a Tabaxi woman. She is tall, has black hair worn in a dozen tight braids, green eyes that shine with wit and calm self-assurance, and a merry personality. Sanda looks 25 to 30 years of age, but is over 500 years old. She was created a *barae* (one of the seven guardians of the city of Mezro) by the god Ubtao (*barae* don't age unless they lose their status). All *barae* have a special power; Sanda's is an augmented animal friendship that allows her to possess any warm-blooded creature of 9 or less intelligence, bending its will to hers. Meeting the mind of the creature (which must be within 100 feet) takes her a round. If the creature fails a saving throw vs. breath weapon, Sanda seizes control of its body, perceiving as it does and using all body faculties as well as the creature normally does. The hue of its eyes changes to her own brilliant green.

Sanda can control even the largest known creatures, but those having more than 10 Hit Dice can be controlled only for a short period of time due to the mental strain (after eight rounds, the creature is allowed another breath weapon Saving throw each round, to break free of Sanda's control). While commanding a beast, Sanda's own body goes limp and helpless. The possessed beast can move more than 100 feet away from it without affecting her control. Sanda speaks Tabaxi and a dozen other languages, and is an expert on Tabaxi history.

- *Galvin* (N human male, D11?): This druid has studied the ways of nature for almost two decades. He has been active as a Harper for some years in and around Thesk, Aglarond, the Yuirwood, and vicinity.

Galvin hates and avoids cities, won't eat meat, and is a master of herbal lore and remedies. Born to thieves in Skuld, the City of Shadows (in Mulhorand), Galvin was orphaned at



the age of seven when his parents were caught and hung for their crimes.

He is at home in the wild. He readily shifts into many creature shapes to best get along in harmony with his surroundings as he goes through life. Favorite forms include Amnian hawk and wolf-shapes. In all his animal forms, Galvin's harper pin shows as crescent moon markings of silvery hair, fur, or feathers (just below the form's throat).

Galvin has long, blond hair, soft green eyes, high cheekbones, and a tanned, athletic body—usually clad in soft leather and olive-green fabric. He has few friends, and he prefers to walk alone. The novel *Red Magic* tells of his expedition (with Wynter the centaur and the wizardess Brenna Graycloak) into Thay, to investigate (and battle) certain Red Wizards.

- *Brenna Graycloak* (NG human female, W7?): A member of the ruling council of Aglarond and a sometime apprentice of the Simbul (see the "Harper Allies" chapter in this book), Brenna of Glarondar is a slender, graceful lady who is almost elfin in stature and features. Little more than five feet tall, she has dark red curly hair, earth-brown eyes, and an extensive wardrobe.

Able in battle, her expedition into Thay with Galvin and Wynter brought her into the grasp of Szass Tam, the Zulkir of Necromancy, a Red Wizard lich whose command of the undead brought horrors to Brenna worse than any she'd ever seen before—or was likely to see since.

At the bidding of Szass Tam, the three Harpers fought against the forces of Maligor, the Zulkir of Alteration, who'd been plotting to seize control of the rich gold mines of Thay. In the struggle, the mines were choked with fallen stone (harming the economy of the evil realm), there was much bloodshed (weakening the power of both zulkirs), and the Harpers managed to flee back to Aglarond. Galvin and Brenna had grown close, but neither could dwell where the other felt at home (Brenna became experienced in woodland travel during the events recounted in *Red Magic*, but she

greatly prefers the city), and so, reluctantly, they parted. Brenna has become a Harper. She fears she'll see the inner regions of Thay again, all too soon.

- *Lander* (NG? human male, R5?): This one-eyed Sembian warrior went alone into the great desert, Anauroch, to battle the Zhentarim (as told in the novel *The Parched Sea*). Unfortunately, his first Harper mission seems to have also been his last. He was slain—by Zhentarim poison, if rumors are true—in the heart of the desert, in the hour of his victory over Zhentarim attempts to overwhelm the last of the fiercely independent Bedine tribes.

Lander was about 25 when he went into the desert. His right eyesocket was covered by an eyepatch, but his left eye was "as blue as the desert sky," and he had long blond hair.

Armed only with a compass, some *potions of healing*, a few coins, a weapon or two, and his wits, he turned the Bedine against the Zhent threat, uniting them before all of the tribes were destroyed or subverted, one by one. Lander briefly became the lover of the Bedine "witch" (wizardess) Ruha, now a Harper ally.

The son of a wealthy Archenbridge merchant and a worshiper of Mielikki, Lander embraced the Way of the Harp, but he preferred the casual friendliness of the Harpers of Shadowdale, who accepted him as a member on the word of Dove Falconhand's husband Florin (a Knight of Myth Drannor) to the more formal ways of Twilight Hall.

- *Myrmeen Lhal* (NG human female, R12?)

This veteran politician and adventuress is the King's Lord of Arabel, serving Azoun IV of Cormyr as the "local lord" or administrator of the northerly Cormyrean city of Arabel. The novel *The Night Parade* tells of Myrmeen's quest to find her daughter—and of what else she found along the way. The vicious, bloody battle against the other-dimensional beings of *The Night Parade*, who secretly held Calimport in thrall, cost the lives of all of Myrmeen's Harper



companions except the youth Ord and his consort, Krystin (Myrmeen's adopted daughter). All three of them have since relocated to Arabel.

Myrmeen is 34 years of age, has a magnificent body covered with old scars—including a thick webwork of crisscrossed whip-marks on her back—and has eyes of deep blue in which bright slivers of yellow float, like "ships of gold adrift on a sea with no stars." Despite their blood differences, Krystin has similar eyes. She has adopted many of Myrmeen's mannerisms.

The lady who has risen to rule Arabel grew up in a poor district of Calimport. Her Harper career has taken her all over the Realms, including the elven realm of Evermeet. At age 20, she married a rogue named Dak, who sold their newborn child to the Night Parade, but told her that it died stillborn. Their marriage was soon dissolved, and Myrmeen then married Haver-Strom Lhal. Ten years ago, he died.

Myrmeen's skills impressed Azoun, and she rose in his service to become the garrison commander, and then lord, of the dangerously exposed city of Arabel, at that time beset by brigands and monsters from the Stonelands (secretly aided and abetted by the Zhentarim).

Myrmeen proved an able politician, if somewhat short-tempered. When Dak was brought to her for sentencing as a murderer, and revealed what he had done with her daughter, she beheaded him with one stroke of her blade. Then, with the aid of most of the Harpers she had adventured with, she set out to get her daughter back. She shattered the power of the misshapen outer-planar creatures of *The Night Parade*, but some of them undoubtedly escaped—and their strange powers make them both dangerous and in many cases undetectable among humans, if they are careful.

Myrmeen has become something of a philosopher since her loneliness was ended by her motherly relationship with Krystin. The length of her temper has grown, and she has become more forbearing and merciful, slower to draw her sword. She is working to change herself still further. As she says, "There are things in our

hearts that only we can dispel."

- *Arilyn Moonblade* (CG half-elven female, F12?, specialization—longsword): Arilyn is the only daughter of the human ranger Bran Skorlsun (see his entry in this chapter) and the moon-elven warrior-mage Princess Amnestria of Evermeet, who took the name Z'beryl of Evereska (after she was exiled for loving a human) and was slain when Arilyn was 14.

From her, Arilyn inherited the magical moonblade she bears. Arilyn probably took "Moonblade" as her last name because it was all she had left of her parents. She always wanted to be a warrior like her mother. Ironically, she was trained as a warrior by the gold elf Kymil Nimesin, who was secretly responsible for her mother's death. Arilyn became a hired killer (a challenger-to-combat, not an assassin) of the Harpers, and was widely reckoned as one of the best in all Faerûn. The novel *Elfshadow* tells of Arilyn's discovery of her parentage and the powers of her moonblade. Her father, Bran Skorlsun, sponsored her as a Harper (giving her his Harper pin) at the end of that adventure.

Arilyn has also done the following things for the Harpers: recover lost items, spy out secrets, lead quick-strike parties, and guard travelers. According to Khelben Arunsun, she is one of the best Harper agents. For a time, she was suspected of being the infamous "Harper Assassin," who caused the death of more than 20 Harpers—but their killer was the elfshadow spirit in her moonblade, controlled from afar by the villainous Kymil Nimesin.

Arilyn is also one of the most stubborn, hot-headed, and unreasonable people Khelben Arunsun has ever met. She was also a loner. Until she met with the annoyingly persistent Danilo, her motto was "I work alone; I walk alone." She takes a fierce pride in her ability to stand alone, without help from, or need for, another—but she still longs to be accepted in the haughty elven society.

Close friendships still do not come easily to her; her friendships are few and cautious. One



was the Harper Rafe Silverspur (a victim of the Harper Assassin; Arilyn wears a silver ring in his honor that she won from him at dice-it bears the unicorn symbol of Mielikki, patron of rangers, and is the only ring on her left hand); another is Myrin Silverspear, proprietor of the Halfway Inn (west of the Greycloak Hills, on the overland trail linking Evereska with Waterdeep; it's one of Arilyn's favorite stopovers). A third and fourth are the selkie Gestar and the sea half-elf Black Pearl, whose life Arilyn saved. Arilyn dislikes magic ("Where magic is concerned, I draw the line where the moonblade ends," she once said), in part because all of her companions in an adventuring band, the Hammerfell Seven, were once cooked to ash around her due to a miscast fireball. (Arilyn survived because of her moonblade.)

Arilyn generally doesn't drink tea and dislikes zzar, the almond-flavored fortified wine highly prized in Waterdeep. She also hates cooking and bats. Skilled with a bow (she hunts well enough to expect to live off the land on overland journeys), Arilyn also employs a variety of thiefling tricks. She has a crossbow that fires bolts coated with spider-sap, which trail cords of spun silk to allow her to climb to wherever she fires them. She keeps a dagger in one boot and owns a flask of distilled black dragon venom-corrosive acid that can cut through iron bars in seconds.

Arilyn also carries glass eye-lenses to turn her distinctive eyes to a sea-green shade when she's in disguise (the moonblade aids her in assuming disguises, but she has perfected three disguises by practicing the appropriate stance, movement, and voice for each). These three disguises are a human female Sembian courtesan, a human male street youth/laborer, and an elven female priestess of Mielikki.

Although she's almost 40 winters old, Arilyn retains the freshness of a 19-year-old. She is a rare and exceptional beauty; her curly raven-black hair frames a perfect oval face, with sharp, high cheekbones and delicate features. She has pale, creamy, almost white skin (tinged

with blue along her high, sharp cheekbones and pointed ears), and the large eyes and pointed ears common to the half-elven. Her eyes are her most extraordinary feature: they are almond-shaped and vividly green (flecked with gold). Arilyn stands just under six feet tall, is slender, and looks deceptively delicate. She has a clear, resonant alto voice.

On the trail, Arilyn wears comfortable, practical clothes: leather boots, dark trousers and cloak, and a simple blue tunic worn over a loose shirt.

Arilyn's Moonblade: The moonblades are an ancient elven artifact; magical swords that judge character. They reject those unfit to bear them, and they have been used to choose the moon-elven ruling family of Evermeet—the family able to possess and keep active the most moonblades deserved the throne. All active moonblades are death to anyone trying to wield them except their single chosen being (their touch unleashes an 8d6-point lightning bolt each round into anyone touching the hilt except the chosen bearer). That bearer can't be separated from an active, intact moonblade for long, or he or she will die. All moonblades bear elven runes (in archaic Espruar) denoting the magical properties that they possess; each bearer can add one ability to a blade (they pass by inheritance down elven blood family lines).

Arilyn's moonblade has nine runes, denoting the following powers:

- rapid strike (it strikes first in a round except against a *scimitar of speed* or *sword of quickness*)
- glows (a faint blue) to warn of coming danger to its wielder
- silently warns when danger is present (a silent humming or tingling only the wielder can sense)
- dreamwarning (can send either warning to its wielder when asleep)
- fire resistance (the bearer—who must be within 60 feet of the blade for this power to work—is totally immune to all flame, blast, and heat effects of any conflagration)
- can cast illusions over the wielder, actually



working a *change self* spell on itself (always remaining a metal, edged weapon, but of any size and type) and its bearer, simultaneously changing the appearance of all non-living items worn by, or carried on the person of, the bearer (to work this power, its hilt must be grasped as the wielder concentrates on the desired appearance)

- elfshadow (the phantom apparition of an elven spirit, which can slay by poison or weapons, coming out of the sword or wielding it; this shade was controlled by Kymil through an enspelled topaz he affixed to the blade in the years when its moonstone—the focal source of all its powers—was missing from it. This was the Harper Assassin; Arilyn wrested control over the moonblade from this spirit.)

- elfgate (used to open a magical *gate* or permanent two-way teleport portal between mainland Faerûn and Evermeet; can be used to move or close that *gate*)

- Arilyn lifted the killing restriction on who can bear the sword (at least for Danilo)

Arilyn swings the moonblade in a distinctive two-handed grip. It can't be used to shed innocent blood; if a wielder tries, his sword arm will go numb and the blade falls from his hand. A moonblade can cut through metal and bone "as if slicing a summermelon" (as Danilo Thann puts it).

- *Olive Ruskettle* (CG halfling female, T8?): Although this irrepressible, charismatic, short (even for a halfling at three feet), hazel-eyed, and red-headed bundle of trouble styles herself a "bard," she has never managed to find the time for any formal bardic training. Acquiring the name of a justly famous bard (one "Olav Ruskettle") in a game of dice, Olive has never looked back.

Unfortunately, her foresight isn't too good, either—it has landed her in many tight spots, such as in a cage in the lair of the red dragon Mist, the dungeons of the sorceress Cassana, and some nasty scrapes fighting at the side of Alias, Akabar Bel Akash, and the senior Harper Finder Wyvernspur. The latter gave her his

Harper pin (unbeknownst to both at the time, this was witnessed by Elminster), thereby handing the Harpers as much trouble as he'd done in the years leading up to his banishment (see his entry, in this chapter).

Olive wanders the Realms, always popping up where she's least expected—or wanted. She claims to be from Cormyr, but this—like much of her past—is a matter of conjecture, vague and unproven claims, and some controversy.

Always interested in food and drink (of which she can consume as much as any two large humans at a sitting) and in hearing songs and stories, Olive dreams of becoming a true bard. She is woefully unsuited for the task of making herself into one. Her glib tongue and zesty personality often beguile folk into going along with her plans; even veteran Harpers tend to learn too late that Olive's company invariably means a short trip into trouble.

When encountered, Olive always has a dagger (her weapon of choice) and a hidden but complete collection of thief lockpicks and tools. She also generally has a musical instrument (a lute, rebec, or pipes, most often) and several scrawled sets of lyrics near at hand, too.

- *Bran Skorlsun* (NG human male, R16?): The father of Arilyn Moonblade (see her entry in this chapter), this Master Harper is a rather grim loner who can be as difficult (stubborn, hotheaded, and unreasonable) as his daughter.

Known as "the Raven" (Bran means "raven" in an ancient tongue of the Moonshae Isles), Bran is very quick in battle. He is strong enough to lift a man off the ground with one hand. He is a tall man who moves with the silent grace of a cat. Past mid-life in age, his weathered features reflect the adventures he's had—but they sit well on a robust, square-jawed foundation. He comes of a long-lived family.

A Harper for many decades, Bran was in his youth a member of the Company of the Claw, a now-defunct adventuring band. Skilled with long bow (his arrow shafts bear a raven brand), dagger, long sword, and probably other



weapons as well, Bran dislikes having magic used on him. He is dedicated to keeping the ranks of the Harpers pure.

For almost 40 years, he's tracked false and renegade Harpers (mostly in the Moonshaes), and is one of the best rangers and trackers the Harpers have.

Bran dared to love the Princess Amnestria of Evermeet, and he fathered Arilyn Moonblade. The elves were upset at this interracial relationship, and they punished Amnestria by exiling her after she pledged to protect the elfgate created with her moonblade (linking Evermeet with mainland Faerûn, and therefore posing a great threat to the security of the elven nation). A tribunal of Evermeet elves and Harpers decreed that Bran Skorlsun must carry the moonstone (taken from the moonblade, it served as the control focus of the elfgate) for the rest of his days, but did not tell him why. This ensured that Amnestria could never meet with him again.

The novel *Elfshadow* tells of Bran's mission to track down the "Harper Assassin," and of how he was reconciled with his daughter.

- *Danilo Thann* (CC human male, F7?/W6? dual class; currently active as a mage; also has the musical aptitude and ability scores necessary to become a bard): This young nobleman of Waterdeep is widely known in the City of Splendors as a fashionplate of the first rank, fop and chatterbox. He is a "devoted dilettante" whose half-honed talents are devoted to both music (he styles himself "a gifted amateur bard") and magic (he works spells to entertain friends at parties; Loene of Waterdeep says these "drawing room tricks misfire more often than Shou rockets"). A favorite of the younger Waterdhavian nobles, he cultivates the image of a far-traveled man governed by his whimsical wit. Danilo always dresses richly in the latest fashions, bedecked with many gems and rings, and enjoys parties. A ridiculous wit, scorned by his family (the wealthy Thanns have far-flung merchant concerns, and own vast lands north of Water-

deep), Danilo is a nephew (and apprentice) of Khelben Blackstaff Arunsun. He is the sixth son of the current youthful Thann generation.

For years, he reveled in the role of "city idiot," playing a charming but ineffectual dandy, leading Arilyn Moonblade to characterize him thus: "one moment he's a canny fighter, the next an understanding friend, and the very next a worthless twit."

Behind this guise, Danilo was becoming a "more than capable" Harper agent (in Khelben's opinion), with a demonstrated talent for "separating women from their secrets." Khelben views Danilo as his probable successor in Blackstaff Tower, and he trusts Danilo with crucial missions and spellcasting.

The novel *Elfshadow* tells of Danilo's most important mission to date: investigating the mystery of the "Harper Assassin," and guarding Arilyn Moonblade (very much against her will). As the result of that adventure, he and Arilyn have become companions, and Arilyn's father, Bran Skorlsun, gave Danilo a Harper pin.

Danilo has not yet decided whether to drop his mask of idleness and serve the Harpers openly. He does not, however, ever intend to abandon his cheerful banter and teasing manner. He has little patience for the processes of law, order, and social propriety.

Danilo Thann is not quite 30 summers old, and he stands six feet tall. He has flaxen-hued hair (usually meticulously styled), gray eyes that are either kind or dancing mockingly, and a well-trained tenor voice. Even at the most serious of times, Danilo is given to a boyish sense of mischief. He has an excellent memory—even for details glimpsed only for a single tense and dangerous moment. Good with horses, he keeps a sword at his hip and a jeweled dagger in one boot. He usually wears a gold pendant that prominently displays his family symbol.

He also carries a green leather *bag of holding* at his waist. Its typical contents include several silk shirts, a velvet tunic, several pairs of trousers, some fur-lined gloves, stockings and undergarments, a snuffbox, three ornate silver



flasks (one of brandy, one of Rivengut, and one of Moonshae Moonshine), several pairs of dice, his spell book, three hats (one adorned with nodding peacock plumes), enough jewelry to bedeck the occupants of a fair-sized harim, sugar lumps to feed to horses and small animals, some hunters' snares, herbs, wine, and more.

•*Wynter* (NG centaur male, F7?): This seven-foot-tall centaur looks like a glossy black warhorse topped by the muscular torso of a man with inky-black hair (worn short, but with a braid hanging down to his shoulders at the back) and a close-trimmed black beard shot through with gray.

Born in Thay, Wynter has no love for the land or the malevolent politics of the Red Wizards who rule it. He prefers to roam the wilderlands of the lands west of it on Harper business. He is usually armed with a longbow, a staff (Wynter can swing a longer, heavier staff than a man on foot: consider cut wooden saplings to be Dmg 1d10 vs. S or M and 2d6 vs. L, SF 9, Size L, Type B, and the metal-shod, weighted-ended staff that is his favorite to be Dmg 1d12 and 2d8 vs. L), and a dagger. A farmer by trade, Wynter is not a good hunter. He joined the Harpers after Galvin helped to catch brigands who'd robbed him; he and Galvin (see the druid's entry in this chapter) are fast friends.

•*Finder Wyvernspur* (now a demipower; CN human male, B21?): Known as "The Nameless Bard" for many years, Finder Wyvernspur was one of the first great Harper disappointments. His sin was vanity: he wanted his songs to live forever-and not twisted by others, but sung as he sang them. His efforts to magically record his works led to his creation of the Finder's Stone (by altering an existing artifact). He then tried to create an immortal simulacrum of himself. This led to a disaster—during its creation, an explosion destroyed the simulacrum and one of Finder's apprentices. Another was so wounded that her voice was stilled; she later took her own life.

Finder was sentenced by a Harper tribunal to exile: his name and music were to be banished from the Realms. Their diligence in destroying writings and casting careful spells on the memories of minstrels and sages managed the second part of the sentence; the first part was accomplished by magically concealing Finder's knowledge of his own name from him, and transporting him to the Citadel of White Exile, in a border region of the Positive Material plane, to dwell in solitude—and (thanks to the nature of that place) effective immortality. During this time, he was known as the Nameless Bard, and held up to Harpers as an example of how willful pride can bring about one's fall—and of how the Harpers police their own.

Two centuries later, the Nameless Bard returned to Faerûn, freed and caught up in the struggle of the ancient and evil god, Moander the Darkbringer to return to power in the Realms. Considered a "dead" god by most folk of Faerûn, Moander still existed in the Abyss. By means of possessed human agents he sought to regain the lands he lusted to rule over.

The novel *Song of the Saurials* tells the tale of Finder's resentencing, his destruction of Moander, and something of the new powers he gained. The wisest sages of the Realms consider him now a demigod. His plans and present whereabouts are unknown; he is thought to be traveling the outer planes in search of a place to his liking, to make his domain.

When last seen by the Harpers, Finder was over 350 years of age, but he looked a slim and elegant 60 or so, his long hair and close-cropped beard shot through with grey and white hair. A true bard, Finder is skilled in the use of many instruments and surprisingly adept at magic. The colossal arrogance that led to his banishment has been tempered by his experiences since—but not much. His days as a Harper are probably behind him—but Elminster, at least, remains very interested in him. The Old Mage fears there may, one day soon—too soon—be another Harpstars War . . .



Some Selected Harpers

No organization is greater than the folk who make up its membership. Remember that, when next ye disagree with lord or high priest or tax-collector...it may cheer ye a little bit. Ah, a very little bit.

– Aber Olsiver, Sage of Myratma, speech to assembled merchants of the city, Year of the Struck Gong

This chapter presents a few Harpers as detailed non-player characters, for handy DM use.

The Harpers series of novels from TSR, Inc. describes the exploits of certain Harpers. Many FORGOTTEN REALMS® products detail one or more locally involved Harpers. Here we present a selection of lesser-known members of the fellowship of Those Who Harp. A variety of races, classes, and levels appears in this “Harpers Gallery.” In all cases, the entries for magic, possessions, and treasure refer only to what the NPC may be carrying on his or her person when encountered.

Sheenra “Shining Eyes” Duth

(Human Female Thief 14)

Str 12; Dex 17; Con 12; Int 17; Wis 16; Cha 18

Armor Class: 2

Move: 12

Hit Points: 41

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: By weapon type

THAC0: 14

Alignment: CG

Special Abilities: +2 on all missile attacks due to dexterity

Thieving Abilities: PP 70, OL 70, FT 80, MS 75, HS 60, DN 80, CW 80, RL 80

Weapon Proficiencies: Long Sword, Dagger, Dart, Hand Crossbow, Staff (Ambidextrous)

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind-fighting, Dancing, Direction Sense, Musical Instrument, Reading Lips, Riding (Land-based), Singing, Ventriloquism

Languages: Common, Elvish, and a few words of Orcish

Magical Items: *ring of spell turning*, +1 dagger,

potion of extra-healing, *ring of feather falling*, *ring of free action* (in a hollow left boot-heel that still has room for gems and the like)

Possessions: longsword, four stiletto-type daggers, two everyday gowns, rebec (lute-like instrument), fourpipes (recorder- and pan-pipes-like instrument), two splendid gowns, spare boots and dark, nondescript clothes, leather armor

Treasure: 28 pp (on money-sash customarily wound around right calf, under a filthy bandage); belt pouch holding 12 gp, 11 sp, 14 cp; leather anklet (left leg) that holds 1 sapphire (worth 1,100 gp), a garnet (330 gp), and 4 bloodstones (each worth 50 gp).

Age: 26, Ht: 5'10", Wt: 126 lbs.

Hair: Ash-blond, Eyes: Brown

Sheenra is that rarest of things: an experienced, traveled adventuress whose delight in being alive seems to grow with each passing year. Her smile and laughter are infectious; her joy shines from her eyes, and she has the knack of making a room full of strangers feel happy with only a few sentences or a joke or song.

She is good-looking (in a pert, bouncy sense), but it is her personality and manner that make her so arresting. This makes her far more noticeable than most thieves strive to be. She has become adept at taking in and remembering thousands of minute details as she walks, without seeming to. She can walk through a room full of laughing and talking Waterdhavian nobles without slowing down, but she has spotted hidden daggers in their costumes, whose underwear, needs washing (and who isn't wearing any), how heavy their purses are—and who's using money belts or necklace-pouches instead.

Sheenra was born in Athkatla, in Amn, and grew up surrounded by wealth and the bustle of commerce—and the cruel intrigues and trickery of unscrupulous competing merchants. Her father got into a dangerous rivalry and got the better of his rival—who responded by kidnapping Sheenra's mother, and in return for the stiff



ransom Sheenra's father scraped together, returned only her head. Then the rival merchant taunted Sheenra's father about it in the street the next day – and when the infuriated father attacked him, slew him “in self defense,” with a poisoned dagger in the belly.

Sheenra's father took a long, painful time to die – time that the rival merchant's men spent stripping his shop. Sheenra was in it at the time, so she was taken along “for later,” as one of the men put it. To scare her into submission, the laden thieves showed Sheenra her father, dying in the street. She fainted – but that night at the merchant's many-towered house, when they remembered her and came looking for a little fun, they found her gone – along with some coins and other things, including a dagger that reappeared the next morning in an eyeball of the night duty guard at the rival merchant's shop.

Many things were found to be missing from the shop, and the furious merchant summoned the authorities. They were searching the shambles when word came to the merchant that his house was afire. The merchant and the guardsmen both rushed out – whereupon Sheenra, who'd just returned to the shop yard from setting the fire at the merchant's house, slipped into the shop, took a few things she thought she'd need, and then set the shop afire.

Her one thought was to get out of Amn. She had money and a little food, but no idea of where to go or what awaited her in the lands outside the mountains that walled in Amn. She slipped out of Athkatla before any of the merchant's men could find her and set off down the road towards the next city, moving by night and sleeping in woodlots and hedges by day.

When her food ran out, Sheenra treated herself to a night at a roadside inn, where she was entranced by the taproom performance of a traveling minstrel. When he left the inn the next day, she followed him – for days and tendays and then months, despite his best attempts to give her the slip. In vain he threatened her with tales of the dangers of the road and his life (for he was a Harper). In desperation, he went to





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Berdusk and dumped her at Twilight Hall.

Under Harper tutelage, Sheenra blossomed into a good singer and a fair musician—despite her persistent, wide-eyed habit of volunteering for every mission or task she heard about, no matter how dangerous or delicate it was. Finally Cyliria took pity on her and gave her a minor pose-as-caravan-merchant-to-the-next-city-and-pick-up-news-from-a-minor-Harper-friend-there assignment.

Sheenra decided to play the role of an interested-in-everything innocent. She nearly drove the two Harpers with her out of their minds when she tried to seduce a gruff old merchant. The observant Sheenra noticed he had a map with him that he was trying to conceal but carry on his person at all times—and that he was on the watch for anyone who might take an interest in it.

So she contrived to get him drunk and very, very relaxed—and then peeked at the map: a detailed chart of what seemed to be storage caches, with notes on how to deal with the traps and guards on each. While the old merchant snored, Sheenra copied the map onto the ramshackle board top of her own wagon, arranged the weather-trap back over it, and returned the map to its proper place. The merchant turned out to have been a Zhentarim agent—and the map allowed the Harpers to identify and trace a good many Zhent agents for almost a season.

Sheenra's career was off and running. She enjoyed the company of a good many men who just happened to be working for the Zhentarim, and stole only the most valuable things, when there was little chance of the theft being connected with her.

Her joy at the various sensations and experiences of life is so convincing because it is honest: now that she's free to do what she wants, Sheenra really does take a delight in life.

She loves what she's doing, whether it's crawling through the mud of a pigsty to get to a good spot to eavesdrop on an interesting conversation or dancing on wine-soaked tables while fat, drunken Calishite women snarl at her and hurl goblets and the remnants of their

meals her way. Sheenra is a true adventurer, always eager to get on with it—no matter how dangerous or unpleasant it promises to be. As she put it once: she's lost everything she cared for, so what does it matter what happens to her now? The best way to get along from day to day is to enjoy the ride, so—wheee!

Mintiper Moonsilver

"The Lonely Harpist"

(Human Male Bard 19)

Str 17; Dex 18; Con 18; Int 15; Wis 17; Cha 15

Armor Class: -1 (dexterity bonus and bracers of defense AC 3; no armor customarily worn, but leather, base AC 8, owned)

Move: 12

Hit Points: 119

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: By weapon type (+1 due to strength) or spell

THAC0: 11

Alignment: CN (kind; tends toward good acts)

Special Abilities: Spells as 19th level wizard, roster by level: 4,4,4,4,3,2; +1 on attacks due to strength; +2 on missile attacks (dexterity bonus); special saving throw (see boxed text in character description)

Bard Abilities: CW 95%, DN 95%, PP 95%, RL 95% (all at maximum), can read written magic with 85% chance of accuracy

Weapon Proficiencies: Long Sword, Dagger, Dart, Hand Crossbow, Staff (Ambidextrous)

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient History, Blind-fighting, Direction Sense, Forgery, Musical Instrument, Reading Lips, Riding (Land-based), Set Snares, Singing, Swimming, Tumbling, Ventriloquism

Languages: Common, Elvish, and a smattering of Dwarvish, Gnomish, Centaur, and Orcish

Magical Items: *greenstone amulet* (detailed hereafter), *silver-bladed bastard sword* +2, *decanter of endless water*, 1d6 *potions of healing*, *cloak of elvenkind*, scrolls (1 spell each, 1 to a scroll) of *remove curse*, *teleport*, *wall of stone*, *contingency*, *stone to flesh*, spell book (all spells listed in character entry)

•*Greenstone Amulet* (XP Value: 5,000 GP)



Value: 30,000): A fist-sized, brittle (saves as glass; no harm to wearer if breakage occurs) green stone (on a neck chain, worn hidden under clothing) that glows when operating, this item provides the wearer protection equivalent to a *mind blank* spell, when worn next to the skin. It also confers immunity to spells and spell-like mental abilities as if the wearer had a wisdom score of 25 (see the *DMG*). The wearer is also made immune to *chaos*, *forget*, *geas*, *hold person*, *hypnotism* (but not *hypnotic pattern* or *fire charm*), *mass charm*, *quest*, *scare*, and *sleep*.

The wearer is also allowed a saving throw vs. *maze* spells and against *Otto's irresistible dance*, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*, and all other enchantment/charm spells for which no saving throw is normally allowed. Successful saving throws against these spells always cut the spell effects to half duration (round up). The wearer also gains a +4 bonus to all saving throws vs. *ray of enfeeblement* and *trip* spells.

The amulet is itself unaffected by magic. It functions for all races and classes of beings, and functions continuously and automatically, regardless of the wearer's intentions (one can't communicate telepathically even if he wants to).

All *greenstone amulets* have a limited capacity; this particular amulet can protect the wearer against 33 spell levels (*maze*, an 8th-level spell, would "use up" eight spell levels of this capacity; psionic attacks that duplicate spells use the same number of spell levels-for other psionic attacks, use the character class level total or hit dice total of the psionic attacker) before being exhausted. *Greenstone amulets* simply don't work for one turn when exhausted; they regain one spell level per turn after becoming exhausted. If a spell attack arrives that an amulet doesn't have the necessary capacity to negate, it does nothing; no partial protection occurs, and the spell has its normal chance of success. Imminent exhaustion of an amulet is felt as warmth and seen as a brighter green blaze than usual; when exhaustion occurs, the amulet blazes very brightly (no harm to viewers or wearer) for four segments, and then it fades to darkness. It gains

in brightness slowly as it regains its ability to protect against spells.

Possessions: 2 longswords, two daggers (throwing-knives, one in each boot), lute, handharp, reed-flute (recorder), spare boots and earth-tone nondescript clothes, leather armor

Treasure: money belt holding 34 gp; belt pouch holding 14 gp, 19 sp, 9 cp; hollow boot-heels, one holding 6 rubies (each worth 5,500 gp).

Age: 47(?), Ht: 6'2", Wt: 142 lbs.

Hair: Black, Eyes: Blue

Usual Spells Memorized (4,4,4,4,3,2): *change self identify*, *magic missile*, *unseen servant/ESP*, *fog cloud*, *locate object*, *web/dispel magic*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *wraithform/charm monster*, *Evard's black tentacles*, *minor creation*, *wizard eye/cone of cold*, *hold monster*, *telekinesis/anti-magic shell*, *chain lightning*

Mintiper Moonsilver is a famous traveler in the lands of the Sword Coast North. He is the only mercenary to have stormed the ghoulish hold of Hellgate Keep and lived to tell the tale. His band, the Moonlight Men, once plundered the treasure-vaults of Luskan, and their defense of Turnstone Pass against an orc horde has become part of the legends of the North.

Little is known of Mintiper's heritage or early life. Mirt the Moneylender of Waterdeep believes his father was a Waterdhavian and that his mother was a moon elf of Ardeepforest, but Mirt readily admits this is unconfirmed and could well be wrong. Mintiper once used the surname Silverhand, and could well be distantly (paternally) related to the famous Seven Sisters. It is known that at an early age Mintiper was on his own, making a living in the North by his wits and the skill of his sword.

Successful in treasure-hunting in the ruins of the North and astute in taking companions, Mintiper first came to public notice when he assembled one of the finest mercenary bands seen in the North since the days when Mirt of Waterdeep was known as "the Merciless." Mintiper's band, the Moonlight Men, roamed the North for eight splendid seasons before heroically defending Silverymoon and Everlund at



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Turnstone Pass. Only six of Mintiper's band survived that bloody victory, but in Everlund they say that the patrols counted well over 4,000 orc heads when they were building pyres to burn the fallen.

Mintiper plunged south into the High Forest, traversing its length (one of the few men living to do so). It is not known whether his fellow survivors perished during the journey or turned aside to leave the wood, but it is certain that Mintiper was alone when he met with the Wood-Riders of Turlang. The Wood-Riders were a band of human adventurers who took only the name of the age-old treant leader and his woods, raiding merchant caravans and other brigands in the rolling grasslands near Secomber, and visiting only the fringes of the forest, to hide from pursuers.

On one occasion, the Wood-Riders encountered a small adventuring band. Its leader, a woman of unusual height and strange magic, tried to fight them all even after transfixed by three swords. Her bravery and beauty caught Mintiper's eye, and he rescued her, deserting the Wood-Riders to do so.

And so it was that Mintiper met the dying spellsinger Alyniria. From her he learned the ancient Runetongue and the devastation of loss when she died. From Alyniria he gained the mark by which he can now be identified: the silver mark of her lips, burned indelibly into his left shoulder, when she died in his arms. In doing this, she spent her fading life force in a special *bless* magic, laid upon Mintiper. This special *dweomer* is permanent (perhaps beyond Mintiper's death): once every nine turns, if Mintiper fails a saving throw, a second saving throw is instantly allowed. This "spellsingers' luck" has been bestowed on others, but very rarely; its creation may require the death of the spellsinger. Mintiper is not aware that he bears this magic, and he cannot confer it (even temporarily) on another being.

After he had laid Alyniria to rest in a secret place, Mintiper came to the cities of the Sword Coast. An embittered and despairing man, he

began a life of thievery. His exploits soon won him fame; his recklessness carried him on to feats others dared not try. While plundering the tower of Iniarv the Manyhanded of 200 emerald lions, he was confronted by the great mage—and slew him, cutting down a wizard famous for his battle-spells (especially those that created multiple claws, akin to the spells that bear the name of the archmage of Oerth, Bigby, that could rend and grip foes and deflect their attacks—spells thought to be lost forever with Iniarv's death). The cities of Amn and Tethyr came to know Mintiper well, and he rose rapidly in wealth and reputation. Becoming briefly the companion of the evil sorcerer Morlaug, he was forced to flee from fell magic and hired killers sent by some of his victims, wealthy satraps of Calimshan.

Seizing a Calishite merchant ship in Port Kir, Mintiper sailed to the pirate isle of Skaug. There he took ship with the "Coast Wolf," Kesmer Red-Eyed. A storm soon wrecked Kesmer's ship, which broke on rocks. One pirate survived the wreck, thrown far from the rigging by the shock, clear of the rocks. He swears a great flame rose on the deck about Mintiper, flaring up and consuming Kesmer and his crew—and when it died away, Mintiper was gone.

Questioned about this, Mintiper once said he escaped the wreck by means of a green gem given to him long ago by his mother, Maralen. It teleported him to the headlands of the Purple Hills, consuming itself and the pirates in doing so. The origin of the gem, if it did indeed exist, is unknown.

Mintiper slipped south to Myratma, where he made a living for a time as a mercenary guide taking adventurers through the ruins and subterranean cities of the long-vanished Mourativi Teshu Mir, the First Kingdom. Growing weary of the trade, he later wandered north and east towards the High Forest. Joining a mercenary band along the way, Mintiper was swept into skirmishes between Amn-sponsored mercenaries and desert tribes raiding caravan trade that passed near Anauroch. The Company of the



Striking Hawk (Mintiper's new-found comrades) and the Company of the Blue Broadaxe battled the nomads along the edge of the Great Desert, until they found the camp of the desert chieftain Khytor Moramu near the Battle of Bones, fell upon it, and were attacked from all sides by desperate tribesmen. The battle was long and fastmoving, on horse- and pony-back among the endless hills; it was almost a season before three wounded veterans brought word back to Amn that Moramu had been slain and his riders destroyed, but only they had survived to bring back the tale.

Mintiper and his sword-partner in the Company, Tassoram, escaped northward from the battle, both wounded, but with the only loot brought back by any man from the Khytor's camp—three of his daughters, taken by Tassoram as hostages. Their journey through the wastes and ruins of the Fallen Lands along the Desert's Edge was long and hard; two of the girls and Tassoram died, one by one. One day

Mintiper found himself staggering through the Far Forests trailing blood, having just wrestled with and slain an owlbear with his dagger, the last of the Khytor's daughters on his back.

They both survived, somehow, and lived together for a time under the care and teachings of the druids of the Tall Trees. It was Noura, the last of the Khytor's daughters, who coaxed Mintiper to sing and learn to play the harp and pipes. He sang the ballads she and the druids taught him, and he made up songs describing his own adventures. He grew to like the harp and lute best, and his voice and skill attracted the attention of bards coming to visit the druids.

One was an old woman "who could make a harp sing," as Mintiper put it. She was Flamatanda Snowbow, a veteran Harper, and she impressed Mintiper mightily with her calm approach to the bitter side of life. Under her, he began tutelage as a bard—and was introduced to the aims and fellowship of Those Who Harp.

After a handful of years (in the North, this term



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means five seasons, one per digit of a human hand), Noura went insane, and no one Mintiper could find knew why or how to stop it. After her slow, quivering death, a heartbroken Mintiper took his lute and harp and went wandering again. Having lost all fear of death, Mintiper was often seen strolling casually through the depths of a dungeon, or sitting and harping while blithely ignoring nearby ghosts or banshees.

It was Mintiper who destroyed the Ghost of Berun's Hill, and gave a Calishite merchant six rubies the size of grapes in exchange for a slave girl. The slave girl, Asilther, is a sometime companion of his; he bought her, nursed her back to health, and freed her, but they became friends and then lovers, and often travel together.

Mintiper has blue eyes that grow very dark when he is angry, or shine luminously blue when he is excited or delighted. An old burn scar runs diagonally across the back of his right hand. In the Sword Coast North, Mintiper is known as a seasoned adventurer who's been around-survived a surprisingly long time walking in danger, finding his way almost everywhere and surviving tragedy after tragedy. He's known as the "Lonely Harpist," and accorded respect. Few elves, humans, or half-elves in the North would knowingly attack him; most fear he has some sort of unrevealed magic that has saved him so far, and may strike down those who attack him.

Mintiper is said to have some gold and many gems hidden in caches all over the Sword Coast North—and also to have, hidden somewhere, "The Gray Book of Mysteries," a spell book of some power.

Asilther Graelor

(Half-elven Female Thief 6)
Str 14; Dex 18; Con 17; Int 16; Wis 16; Cha 17
Armor Class: -2 (dexterity bonus and bracers of defense AC 2; no armor customarily worn, but leather, base AC 8, owned)
Move: 12
Hit Points: 36
Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: By weapon type

THACO: 18

Alignment: CN (tending slowly toward good)

Special Abilities: +2 on missile attacks due to dexterity, 60' infravision, half-elven chances of locating secret & concealed doors, 30% immunity to sleep and all charm-related spells

Thieving Abilities: PP 35, OL 55, FT 10, MS 85, HS 75, DN 15, CW 70, RL 0

Weapon Proficiencies: Long Sword, Dagger, Dart (Left-handed)

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind-fighting, Dancing, Riding (Land-based), Singing

Languages: Common, Elvish

Magical Items: 1 pouch of *dust of disappearance*, 2 *potions of invisibility*, 1d4 *potions of healing*, 1 *potion of flying*, *greenstone amulet* (for powers, see Mintiper's entry, above), *gauntlets of ogre power*, *carpet of flying*

Possessions: longsword, 4 darts daggers (at belt), 2 daggers (one in each boot), black cloak, half-mask, 2 splendid black gowns, spare boots and dark-hued peasant garb, leather armor, crowbar, 200 feet of black silken cord, and first-aid supplies

Treasure: belt pouch holding 36 gp, 8 ep, 16 sp, 4 cp; garter (worn under turned-down cuff of swash-topped boots; laces into place) that holds 5 emeralds (value 5,000 gp each) and a piece of amber (value 100 gp) in an attached leather bag; black pearl necklace (19 100-gp-value pearls); hollow right boot-heel containing two silver earrings (each worth 4 gp), a silver bracelet (worth 12 gp) and a silver chain-and-pendant (worth 26 gp)

Age: 22(?), Ht: 5'6", Wt: 100 lbs.

Hair: Silver-blond, Eyes: Green

Asilther was purchased from Calishite slavery by Mintiper Moonsilver, tended until she was healthy (she had been underfed, beaten, and whipped often), and then freed. Born in the forests of Tethyr, she cannot remember her kin, and she has no friends or family in the world except Mintiper, with whom she often travels. She delights in stealing from Calishites and

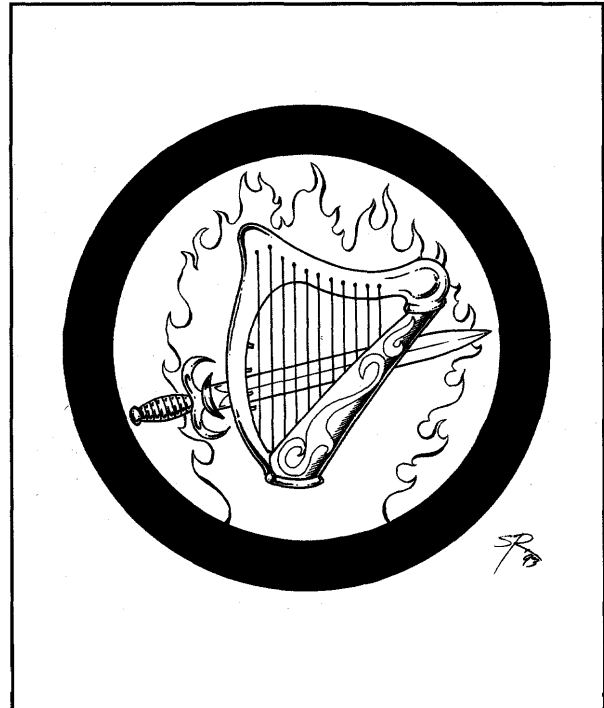


slavers of other nationalities, and prefers woodlands to cities. Soft-spoken and beautiful, Asilther is often courted or pursued by men she meets, but she prefers only Mintiper's company, and has surprised several over-amorous mercenaries with her agility and fighting prowess. Asilther has dancing green eyes, a gentle manner, and a graceful, "almost drifting" walk, as one rueful suitor put it, as he lay chin-down in the slop of a gutter watching her walk away.

She customarily dresses in tight-fitting black leather breeches and high boots, a black half-cloak, and a black half-mask. She often wears black gowns—set off with her silver jewelry—to formal occasions when visiting cities such as Silverymoon, Everlund, Neverwinter, and Waterdeep. Beneath her belt she wears a silken cord she can use to bind foes (or, in a pinch, as a garotte), and her lockpicks and other thiefling tools are concealed in her hair, boots, belt, and so on. Asilther is usually encountered walking in wilderness areas with Mintiper, whom she will fiercely aid and defend (as she sees it, she owes her life to him). If they are sore-pressed, she tries to escape on her *carpet of flying*—with Mintiper. She will flee alone only if she believes she can rescue Mintiper later, and if necessary she will lay down her life for him.

Asilther is said to have contacts with the Lords of Waterdeep. Many know she is friends with Alustriel, the High Lady of Silverymoon; fewer suspect she is a Harper. She rarely seems to retain what she steals, either giving it away or using it for some cause (in truth, she caches small amounts here and there—temple rooftops in Waterdeep and Silverymoon, for instance, or beneath certain trees in the forests of the North—for emergency use, and gives the rest to the Harpers).

Asilther undertakes many quiet missions for the Harpers, such as guiding or protecting certain persons, shadowing or kidnapping others, and slaying agents of Luskan or the Zhentarim. She delights in setting slaves free by raiding slave-caravans, and she is known to have a taste for good wine and gaudy, even sleazy apparel, often making off with Calishite slave-silks for



later wear at wild parties in Waterdeep.

Asilther is famous for her theft of much of the hoard of the huge adult black dragon Shammagar, who used to lair in the mountains north of Waterdeep—and has since moved every last coin of its treasure to one of the islands offshore, somewhere up and down the Sword Coast (exactly which one, surviving inquirers have not seen fit to reveal).

Shammagar has vowed revenge on Asilther, but since one of the Lords of Waterdeep (Mirt the Moneylender) learned Shammagar's secret name (used by the wyrm in its personal enchantments and contingencies) from the pre-eminent sage Elminster and gave it to Asilther, she has been able to defy the great dragon in their one direct confrontation since her theft. It is said in the taverns of the North that she made peace with the dragon by promising to restore its hoard, twofold, bit by bit, over the years.

This is the reason, some say, why Asilther seized a Luskan ship, running home



Some Selected Harpers

heavily-laden with treasure looted from Ruathym, forcing its crew into rowboats or early graves. She piloted the ship alone, or so the tale goes, to the dragon's isle, and ran it onto a beach there, alerting the dragon by singing to it after dark on the night of her landfall and then escaping on her *carpet of flying*. Asilther and Mintiper have been known to turn up unexpectedly to aid each other if either is alone and in peril. They may possess some magical or other (telepathic?) means of communication, able to pass on urgent need and present location. Certainly, those who work against one of this pair of companions can soon expect to face the other.

A Partial Roll of Harpers

To compile any list of currently active Harpers would be impossible (except perhaps for Elminster or a few other senior Harpers—and they would never endanger their colleagues by writing any such list down). In any case, unless one is a foe trying to slay Harpers, such a list is of limited usefulness—the most adventuresome Harpers (such as those featured in the Harpers series of novels) tend to be always on the move. Here we have recorded the names of some Harper agents who are relatively stationary—that is, likely to be where we say they are. The exceptions here are individuals who control or can provide transport to Harpers.

These folk are more than Harper friends—they are active Harper agents, adventurers who can be relied on to lend a helping hand (with their spell or weapon ready) to a fellow Harper in need. They are listed by dwelling-place, alphabetically.

It is to be stressed that this is a fragmentary list: not only are many places omitted altogether, but Harpers discussed elsewhere in this book are largely avoided.

Amphail: Tabara Graywinter (NG hf R7), guide and huntress, Graywinter House, Shadowtop Lane

Arabel: Joser Minstrelwish (CG halfling m T7),

shopkeeper, Minstrelwish Chains, Belts & Scabbards, Ongleth Lane

Ascore: Tracker (CG hf R14), masquerades as a man, dwells in a cellar in an abandoned village south of Ascore

Athkatla: Zonder Melaeyn (CG hm P6: Tymora), moneylender and priest, Lady Luck's Lending House, Street of the Six Sails

Baldur's Gate: Delthyr Iogh (LN hm F8), caravan-sponsor and moneylender, the Cup of Coins (shop), Bresind Street; Nathlin Glaragh (NG hm F6), shipcaptain; master of the Swimming Satyr, caravel

Boareskyr Bridge (actually the estate of Heartwing, due north of the Bridge, on the east bank of the Winding Water): Aluena Halacanter (N hf W9) (breeds & trains pegasi; cost 5,000 gp each)

Calaunt: Tanshiver "the Bard" Brynleaf (CG hm F4), sage (human folklore and music of the Dragonreach, is not a bard, despite the nickname), Tanshiver's Corner (office), Turncobble Street

Daerlun: Beldar Oberlee (CG hm R5), strong-guard and errand-runner for the House of Firehair (local temple of Sune), West Gatehouse, Temple Reach

Elturel: Maerpir Tchar (NG hm F6), tavernmaster, the Glowing Goblet, Baerth Lane

Elversult: Waevor Talaphin (CG half-e m B9), minstrel and cartographer, Talaphin's Maps & Music, Wandering Lane; Vaerana Hawklyn (CG hf R9), Lady Constable of Elversult, Moonstorm House (residence of Yanseldara, Lady Lord of Elversult), Moonstorm Lane

Everlund: Sharanralee Crownstar (CG hf F19) & Eaelraun Shadowlyn (CG half-e m R16), landowners (shops, carpentry-works, timber stands and sheep farms), Slumberstone Tower, Westing Lane

Hill's Edge: Daerthglara Shynd (N hf D8: Silvanus), the Forestfather's Grove

Hillsfar: Baldaster Thorn (LN hm F7), merchant, Thorn's Assorted Wares & Mongery, Shambles Lane

Iriaebor: Garstul Hathcancer (NG hm F11), caravan-master, the Hawk Gauntlets Trail-Trading Company, Andreth's Lane

Luskan: Seldemer Ironspur (LG hm R8), professional bodyguard (for visiting merchants), Shieldstar House, Sharan Lane

Marsember: Blentra Whaelbuckler (CG hf F9),



shipbuilder, Whaelbuckler's Fine Masts & Hulls, Starmouth Street

Melvaunt: Ulblyn Blackalbuck (CN halfling-m B6), merchant trader, Blackalbuck Sales & Swaps Shop, Manyshields Street

Mirabar: Merlara Talesspur (CG ef F7/W8), gem-cutter & jewelry-mounter & seller, Talesspur's Fine Gems, Stonemountain Lane

Mistledale: Mezrin Shundulk (NG hm F10), smith, Shundulk's Forge, the South Trail

Mulmaster: Chesslyn Onaubra (CG hf F9), specialization in longsword, according to Elminster, "a deadly blade-and probably the most expert longsword-hurler in all Faerûn" [consider her THAC0 12 up to 50 feet away with a thrown longsword, which hits for 1d6+1 points of damage], temple guard and agent, the Gate of Good Fortune (temple of Tymora), the East Ride

Nashkel: Loaber Plashdeep (NG halfling-m T5), horse-trader, -breeder, and -tamer; Plashdeep Stables, Windfields Road

Neverwinter: Fflindar "the Flame" Ormwynd (NG half-e m F7), warehouse-guard and guide, Ormwynd Vigilance & Trailmastery Narn's Lane

Ordulin: Jalyp Quizzinglas (NG halfling-m F5), merchant tailor, Quizzinglas Cloaks & Gloves, Aslanna's Street

Priapurl: Galzeth "Blackcloak" Orlynd (NG hm T5), merchant, Blackcloak's Fine Pottery, Dagh Street

Procampur: Opara Rendril (LN hf F6), master smith, famous for her bracelets and belt-daggers, also does long swords and helms, Rendril's Forge, Shards Street; Halthara Summergarth (NG halfling-f T4), shipowner and barrel and crate-maker, Summergarth Facilitations, Leaping Dolphin Lane

Proskur: Helmir Obersaer (CG hm F9), armorer, the House of the Sword, Seadusk Street

Riatavin: Furbelow Trundlestump (CG halfling-m F8), weaponsmaster (arms tutor) and sword-sharpener, the Ring of Arms (school), Redmorn Lane

Saerlun: Kythsara "the Silent" Steelwood (LN hf W15), Mage Arcane (one of four) of the Tower of Mysteries (temple to Mystra), the Tower of Mysteries, Threecorners Way; Juldin Stoutbottle (NG halfling-m T3), fleet-owner and merchant trader, Stoutbottle House, the Wharf Run

Scornubel: Baeraunt "the Blade" Osk (LN hm F8), caravan-master and outfitter, Oskryn, Trailmasters, and Partners (offices), Gabreth's Way

Secomber: Bhellobir Hill (CN halfling-m T8), trader and rug merchant, Hill's Hill of Exotic Riches from Afar, Dawnwatch Lane

Selgaunt: Orsar Foxwind (LN hm B8), temple guard and agent, the House of Song (temple to Milil), Dunsar's Lane; OelinBoldnose (NG gnome-m F6/T7), metalworker and locksmith, Boldnose Locks & Finework, Duskvale Street

Soubar: Honglyn Omblestaff (CN halfling-m F6), wheelwright and wagon-repairer, Omblestaff Carriageworks, Moondown Lane

Sundabar: Steeleye (NG hm P14: Mielikki [specialty priest; Elminster says he "knows more trails and wilderland ways in the Northlands of Faerûn than perhaps any other human alive"]), the Lady's Grove

Suzail: Ghaddarondas "Glaurmater" Rimmond (CG hm B12), music tutor & instrument-maker (glaur, lute, rebec, and hand-drum), Rimmond's Revels & Instruments, the Promenade

Tantras: Lightal Barnshyn (half-e f R7), caravan-sponsor and outfitter, Watchful Wheels Wagons & Gear, Seaspray Street

Teflamm: Arltan of the Silver Sword (CC hm R9), guide to hunters, Silver Sword Tower, the Eastrise

Teziir: Sladara Longquaff (CC halfling-f F6), shopkeeper (fence of stolen goods for pirates), Longquaff Realmsfar Horn of Plenty (shop), Six Skulls Lane

Tilverton: Albaeryl Tanthlyn (CC hf R6; a swan-may), hunter & hunting guide, the Old Oaks, Sander's Street

Triboar: Tonthiir Bloodhorns (LN hm F10), innkeeper, the Old Antlers Inn, Marask St.

Urmlaspyr: Ongalath Bristlebur (NG halfling-m F7), warehouse guard, Bristlebur & Ongamarra Secureswords Protection (office), Coinscatter Street

Waterdeep: Jhandess Millomyr (CG hf B7), harp-maker, Millomyr Harps (shop), Whaelgond Way; Bensyl Iyirivvin (CN half-e female W5), lady escort, the Blushing Mermaid, Net Street

The Way Inn: Khondal Boarsyr (NC hm R10), caravan and hunting guide

Waymoat: Liriel Nightstar (CG hf R7), Nightstar Guiding & Outfitters

Westgate: Audara "Starshoulder" Imryth (NG hf P6; Mystra), priestess and potionseller, Imryth Tower, Twoturrets Lane

Yhaunn: Mithrin Celentriar (CC half-e f F9/W11), head of temple guard, Moonshadow Hall (temple to Selune), Northrim Road



Fred Fields '91



Heralds? Well, if ye're noble, they keep score, lad – an' help ye remember your name, when one too many mace-blows has come down on the old helm. Oh, aye, they also keep track of which bedchambers the king went into, a hundred years ago...useful, eh?

– Garlandor Bloodshoulder, Hornmaster of the Hunt, to his nephew Belaerdros, in the hamlet of Sulduskoonar (Duchy of Dusk, eastern Tethyr), Year of the Black Wind

There are many heralds in the Realms, from fawning lackeys in Thay to the “banner-lords” of the nomads of the Shaar. Here we are concerned only with the oldest and most important heraldic officers in Faerûn: The High Heralds, who were once part of the Harpers and are still allies of Those Who Harp, Founded in the Year of the Watching Helm (992 DR) as “The Heralds of Faerûn,” these offices left the Harper ranks in the Year of the Empty Scabbard (1116 DR), but most of them still exist today.

It is strongly advised that DMs not allow PCs to join the ranks of the Heralds unless a player wishes to retire a senior, high-level character to a distinguished post. Heralds lead rather boring lives (from an adventurer’s viewpoint), and soon know far too much for good play balance.

Beginnings

Originally the idea of the Harper Aliost Oskrunnar, the offices of the High Heralds were created by the rulers of Baldur’s Gate, Sundabar, and Calimshan. Many of the heraldry of the mining settlements had begun to use heraldry strange to Calishite eyes (in their blazons, hues known as “metals,” such as silver and gold, could be placed one on top of the other—something forbidden in Calishite and other conventional blazonry; the unique rules of Sword Coast heraldry remain in existence today). There had been tragic cases of mistaken identity in battle, and several nasty disputes over ownership of an emblem: everyone agreed that rules had to be established, accurate records kept, and the

increasingly murky business of displaying heraldic arms administered.

Harper agents worked to influence the various rulers into establishing and funding the Heralds, supported by the priesthoods who stood behind the Harpers (who also agreed to help pay for the offices—on the condition that the Heralds be neutral, independent of individual crowns and territories). Nine High Heralds were named; the area they collectively administered was roughly from the northern border of Calimshan westward to all the known islands in the Sea of Swords, north as far as the known world went, and eastward to the Sea of Fallen Stars (their influence has since extended to the Vilhon, the Moonsea North, and the Dragonreach lands).

From the start, the Heralds fulfilled a real need for keeping accurate records, genealogies, and histories in the North. Several of the original office-holders were Harper agents, and they were free to sponsor local heralds or agents to travel the Realms for them, collecting data and proclaiming the judgments of the Heralds. Many of these heralds were also Harpers, although the Heralds presented themselves as strictly neutral in all dealings. A generation later, the Heralds were openly wearing the silver harp badge of the Harpers.

The first Herald to be proclaimed was Unicorn; it remains the oldest surviving office today. The other offices were Black Vizor, Crescentcoat, Old Night, Red Dragon, and four offices that have since disappeared—the Huntsman, Manyshields, Blue Blade, and Starscepter. For most of the existence of the Heralds of Faerûn, there were seven High Heralds—the first two vanished offices named above disappeared only recently, and the latter two failed soon after the establishment of the Heralds.

The Rise of the Heralds

From the beginning, the High Heralds were men (and, in a few cases, women) of integrity. When corruption touched an office so deeply that the



The High Heralds



incumbent had to be slain, the office died with him. That is the reason behind all of the vanished offices. Vacant Herald offices are normally filled by appointment of the High Heralds (after a secret vote of the surviving High Heralds, who all have the right to put forward candidates and to covertly investigate any candidate before the vote). All rulers and high priests dwelling within the area of Faerûn administered by the Heralds may also propose candidates for any new or vacant office, but only the High Heralds can make the appointment.

This integrity made the Heralds the important and respected force for stability in the Realms that they are today – and it also drove them out of the formal ranks of the Harpers.

As the Harpers began to openly fight forces and interests they opposed around Faerûn – with blades and spells, not just by manipulating folk and passing on information to where it will have best effect – the Heralds felt obliged to leave the ranks of the Harpers.

As the Unicorn of the day put it, “Whether or not we agree with what a given Harper is doing, in this or that place or affair, we simply can’t be openly part of any band that does things in the Realms. We are keepers of records, not wielders of swords. We shall retreat into our fortresses, learning of war and magic only what we need to defend ourselves and to properly understand local titles and traditions. The time has come for us to – with regret, but with clear justification – set aside our harps. Fare thee well, friends, and be welcome still in our homes, but please, come in by the back doors from now on.”

Elminster and Khelben argued with the seven High Heralds of the day, but all were adamant. Their role must be peaceful and neutral; they could not retain the trust of rulers and common folk across Faerûn if they were seen as just another power group, striving to make its own way in the Realms, meddling in the affairs of others.

The two archmages knew the Heralds were



right, and they could see no way of changing their minds without using magic, an act that if undertaken in such selfish circumstances was as evil as Zhentarim or Thayan tactics. Whatever happened, the Harpers had to remain better than their foes, or their whole reason for existing would be swept away.

Elminster and Khelben therefore emphasized the power and ability of the Harpers as an information-gathering, widely traveled force that could go to places too dangerous for the Heralds to reach. The Heralds have always been too few to risk—the natural talents are too rare and the training too long and expensive. In most cases, a fully-trained Herald has become too scholarly to defend himself.

In return for Harper legwork, the Heralds promised that their strongholds (notably the isolated Holdfast, a strategic stopover for travelers in the dangerous Savage Frontier lands) would always be open to Harpers, as places to eat and rest and recover from wounds.

The Heralds Today

Today, the Harpers still gather information for, and take messages to and from, Heralds and act as go-betweens in tense situations, standing with local nobility or authorities on one side, and the Heralds on the other.

There are three classes of Heralds. Within each class, Heralds are ranked both by their office and by their personal skills, influence, and seniority.

At the top are the five High Heralds (described individually later). The specific duties, importance, and prestige of these positions vary with the individuals filling them, but in general, it is widely (and correctly) understood among bards across the Realms that the most ancient office, Unicorn, is held to be the highest rank of all. Old Night is the most withdrawn and scholarly, keeping the library at the Herald's Holdfast and eschewing most formal ceremony. Black Vizer has been the most warlike and politically important position.

Crescentcoat (often an office held by a woman) has played "devil's advocate" in Herald debates. Red Dragon has been an office given to younger and more radical individuals.

Below the High Heralds are the Heralds Pursuivant-senior or gifted Heralds who are waiting for one of the High titles to become vacant. In the meantime, they act as the apprentices and personal assistants of the High Heralds, running the most secret and sensitive errands, and learning all of the complex rules, traditions, and lineages that each Herald must master. They take on names and devices of their own invention, which are discarded when they rise to High Heraldship; the design of the blazon of their offices is part of their training.

Beneath these are two short-term heraldic offices, whose service typically lasts from just before a Shieldmeet to just before the next Shieldmeet (four years). Terms may be (and often are) renewed. Known as Green Shield and Gauntlet, these are also described individually hereafter.

At the bottom of the heraldic hierarchy are the many local Heralds, who dwell all over Faerûn. In some cases these Heralds are subjects of the local crown (as in Cormyr) and in some cases they are independent foes or rivals of the authorities (as in present-day Hillsfar and traditionally in Amn). Local Heralds serve as scribes-clerks for census, tax, and genealogical purposes—designers and regulators of the use of armorial bearings, and criers at tournaments and festivals. They are usually trained, inspected, and chartered by the High Heralds. (If they are not—as happened in the case of the infamous "Dark Herald" of Tethyr, who set himself up as an authority after the fall of the royal family, and was killed a year later—the uniformity of standards, armorial bearings, and fees is threatened.) Even these local offices rapidly accumulate rich traditions and lore.

Some local offices and their locations are given here:

Bloodbanner (Hlath)
Blue Velvet (Ithmong)



The High Heralds



Bright Shield (Essembra)
Bronzespur (Arrabar)
Bucklebar (Luskan)
Curved Sword (Saerloon)
Dark Stag (Silverymoon)
Diadar (Amphail)
Dragonplume (Nimpeth)
Drawn Dagger (Hill's Edge)
Falconfree (Waterdeep)
Flailchains (Westgate)
Gold Saddle (Yartar)
Hawkfeather (Sundabar)
High Bow (Secomber)
Ironflower (Elturel)
Jhalvar (Mirabar)
Lazalar (Ordulin)
Moonsilver (Elventree)
Lone Tree (Ormath)
Morningstar (Berdusk)
Narlhelm (Baldur's Gate)
Oakenstaff (Iriaebor)
Purple Halberd (Elversult)
Red Sword (Beregost)
Sable (Crimmor)
Shimmaree (Hillsfar)
Shining Helm (Saradush)
Silver Scales (Neverwinter)
Stars (Athkatla)
Sundazzle (Teziir)
Swanmantle (Eshpurta)
Swordswreath (Zazesspur)
Tallboots (Murann)
Thorn Tree (Riatavin)

In Cormyr, Heralds are sponsored by the crown, and they bear as their title the name of the community they dwell in. The monarch can advance candidates for these posts, but they are formally filled by the Heralds. The current Cormyrean Heralds are as follows:

Arabel: Westar of the Gates (NG hm F8)

Dhedluk: Ildul Stonegiant (LN hf F1)

Espar: Gzelder "Yellow Hand" Yespar (NG hm B8)

Eveningstar: Tzin Tzumner (NG hm B7)

High Horn: Dhag Greybeard (LN hm R10)



Hilp: Baldask Delzantar (NG hm W5)
Immersea: Geldroon Culspier (CN h-e m F2)
Marsember: Bledryn Scoril (LG hm F9)
Suzail: Xrorn Hackhand (CG hm R14)
Tilverton: Cuthric Snow (NG hm F2)
Tyrluk: "Tooth" Nzal Tursa (LN hm F3)
Waymoot: Dhag Greybeard (also Herald for High Horn); under him is a herald-intraining, the recently retired—due to a crippling leg injury—adventuress Alatha Korduis (LN hf B6)
Wheloon: Elaerue Estspirit (CG half-e f R7)

How the Heralds Work

Heralds address each other as "Companion" (formal usage, or to those of lesser rank) or "Brother"/"Sister" (between equals or friends). A herald is properly addressed with his title (not his real name), and when being introduced to an assembly or addressed by commoners, as "Grand (title)." Heralds are more highly regarded by the common folk than by nobles, but the nobility see them as necessary referees in disputes of rank and title, thankfully autonomous from the monarch—but distressingly impervious to bribery and free of servile respect for high birth.

The right to display arms (a heraldic coat-of-arms, motto, banner, badge, crest, or even a simple shield charge; shop signs are exempt, but there is a 500-gp fine for duplicating or closely copying someone else's established blazon in a shop sign) costs a member of the nobility or gentry 1,000 gp to register with the Heralds, plus the limner's (artist's) fee (typically 25 gp per image, or 100 gp per banner, wall-tapestry, or "high hall" giant coat-of-arms).

This gives the bearer clear right to a unique personal display or device (a right that the Heralds will carefully protect), and recognition in all matters of inheritance, heritage (lineage and citizenship), and privilege (the right to titles, special powers of a title or office, the etiquette due to the title or office, and the punishments that can be demanded for ignoring it).

Changes to an existing grant of arms cost

5,000 gp or more (differencing of childrens' arms that follows the existing rules costs nothing), and in all cases the Heralds have absolute control over what may and may not be legally displayed. Those breaking the laws of heraldry are subject to demotion and/or heavy fines (500 gp and up), payable to the Harpers.

All Heralds serve as a diplomatic liaison between nobles within a realm, the governing powers of various kingdoms, and between sages and bards everywhere. Save a very few cases of particular individuals or political situations, the various bardic colleges support the Heralds. Any ranking (i.e., above local status) Herald can call on the aid and service of bards he encounters. The bards are not formally obligated to obey, and abuse of this power will result in its instant loss.

All Heralds hold their offices under charter from the High Heralds; only the High Heralds can issue such a document—or, if the High Heralds are ever all dead at the same time (something that has never occurred), the Scrivener of the Stars (highest ranking priest of Deneir in the Realms, currently based in Suldolphor). The charter sets forth the sigil of the office (known as its "sign").

The High Heralds are ranked by seniority in office, tempered by public feeling (a popular Herald wields more influence than a Companion senior to him but of lesser popularity). Upon the death, resignation, or casting out of one of their number, the High Heralds often change positions by agreement, so the office filled by a newcomer may not be the one earlier made vacant.

The High Heralds have served as war leaders or regents, particularly in times of civil war or when a succession was in doubt. But they are strictly forbidden to take the field against each other, or to command men to harm, capture, or wield arms against any Herald. This rule has been broken only three times, and each time the offending Herald has been cast out.

Heralds all bear curved, ornamented horns that bear enchantments that give them a distinctive note. The sound of a herald's horn is well



known throughout the Realms; it signals the beginning and end of formal combats, jousts, hunts, and trials-by-arms. During jousts, the herald displays (on a frame known as a jousting pole) the banners of the two competing knights.

Unicorn

The sign of the most highly ranked heraldic office is the famous beast of the same name. The rod of office is of ebony topped with a unicorn's horn. The rod is a +1 weapon, equivalent to a mace in battle, which permanently radiates *continual light* (the light can be temporarily negated by magic, but it can be dispelled only by destruction of the item).

Unicorn's decree has precedence in matters of judgment, but abuse of this power may lead to the other High Heralds overruling Unicorn (they can only do this by unanimous vote of a quorum, with Unicorn of course not voting).

Unicorn has the first right to adjudge and cry all single combats, and all ceremonial or ritual contests where creatures other than great cats or horses and their kin are used.

Unicorn also has keeping of the famous Rod of the Heralds, an unadorned black *rod of rulership* (its exact magical nature is unknown to all but the High Heralds; it has 26 charges left, to be used only in emergencies).

The current holder of this office is Alaghust Meldivver (LN hm F12), who resides at Swordsmere (see below).

Old Night

This office trains the Heralds Pursuivant and the "everchanging offices" (Green Shield and Gauntlet) at the Holdfast. It also maintains the main library of the Heralds there. This office carries with it the image of a mysterious, ancient scholar or wizard, benevolent and yet unpredictable—and of great power. Old Night maintains the heraldry of those woodland races that have dealings with men and even goblinkin—and some whisper that Old Night works to fur-

ther the wishes of those races.

Old Night is an office rarely shuffled from Herald to Herald, but usually held until death. Its most famous holder was the ranger Farsyr, and he was followed by Haemar the Old, who died only recently. Old Night's sign is an ancient, cracked bronze shield hanging on the broad trunk of an oak tree, framed about by the tree's leaves. The rod of office is a gnarled, twisted walking-stick of bronze, crushed into its present shape from the remnants of a broken bronze shield. Its magical powers are still kept secret, but they are known to include those of a *wand of paralyzation*.

The current holder of this office is Shalara Swordshigh (CG hf R9), who resides in the Herald's Holdfast.

Black Vizor

This office requires much traveling and (magically assisted, by a variety of items) communication. Black Vizor is deeply involved in current politics, keeping track of intrigues, changing attitudes, treaties, and shifting balances of power. He also keeps records of all formal declarations of war and peace treaties, and reports on their fulfillment to the Heralds, the Lords' Alliance, and the Merchants' League.

The symbol of this office is a huge black war-helm, preserved through the centuries by careful maintenance (the wearer of this crushingly heavy, gigantic and sinister piece of armor typically staggers under the weight, but he has true sight (a continual *true seeing* spell) while looking out of the helm's eyeslits). The office was once known as "Black Helm," and was later styled "Black Vizier;" its current title is the result of a clumsy attempt to reconcile the symbol with the duties.

The rod of office is a non-magical mace, of massive construction and a length of over four feet. The current holder of this office is Ghelimar Firefrostarr (NG hm F11), who resides in Black Helm Tower, in its own fortified compound near Daggerford.



Crescentcoat

This office requires constant hard work; its chief responsibilities lie in exploring every angle of all matters brought before the High Heralds for debate, and in training local Heralds. It is another office named for its regalia: a tabard covered with interlocked crescent moons worked in cloth-of-silver (which has the same magical powers as a *ring of shooting stars*).

Crescentcoat bears a ceremonial ivory rod of ancient make (actually a *rod of smiting* with 47 charges; its magic renders the ivory harder than adamantine).

The current holder of this office is Naernythra Thaloudyn (CG hf W11), who resides in Moonrise Towers, a fortified compound west of Elturel on the banks of the River Chionthar.

Red Dragon

The sign of this office is a rampant red dragon, of a striking, metallic fiery hue, wings spread and jaws agape. The herald himself bears a rod of fine wood topped by a carved dragon-head that can emit a flaming sphere once a turn. Spells make the rod itself fireproof. Red Dragon has traditionally been the office of young Heralds with new ideas and plans for the future. This has led to an important diplomatic role in arranged marriages amongst the nobility. Red Dragon also has the ceremonial duty of escorting supplicants in rituals of attaining or receiving a title, position, or honor.

Under the tenancies of the ladies Anaethe and Bluthba, the office acquired a reputation of lusty decadence, but the present (male) Red Dragon is either less promiscuous or more discreet.

The current holder of this office is Belym Glarsh (NG hm F9), who dwells in Dragonrise Keep, a fortified compound south of Easting, near the headwaters of the stream that becomes the southern feeder of the River Chionthar.





Green Shield

This office is usually filled by one of the Heralds Pursuivant; it can never be held by a current or former High Herald. This Herald presides over Shieldmeet, attending to the rituals, security, and diplomacy of the occasion while the High Heralds sit the Round together. (The Heralds' Round is a court held at each Shieldmeet to decide in public affairs of festival datings, genealogy, inheritance, heraldic trappings, and legitimacy. The High Heralds vote and speak before all who wish to hear, and therefore usually make their decisions in advance, as opposed to the freewheeling debates they have in private.) Many investitures and entitlements are proclaimed at each Shieldmeet; Green Shield must schedule these. After a Shieldmeet is past, Green Shield continues his office in consultation with the High Heralds, following up and disposing of business begun at the holiday.

The sign of the office is a featureless forest green shield; the rod of office is a metal scepter ending in a miniature shield at both ends (it has the powers of a *wand of negation* and a *rod of splendor*).

The current holder of this office is Naerlyn Phalpar (NG hm R8), who resides in Shield House, a fortified compound northeast of Castle Crag, just west of where the headwaters of the Immerflow divide.

Gauntlet

This Herald is regularly replaced for practical reasons, primarily out of a wish to keep the office impartial and free of corruption. Gauntlet's province is adventurers, mercenaries, and militias. He is responsible to the High Heralds for keeping track of the location, strength, performance, and current allegiance(s) and contacts of such groups.

Gauntlet also issues charters and letters of patent for such groups at a monarch's direction (keeping counterfeiting of such documents to a minimum), and maintains a Warriors' Code in certain areas (an agreement regarding treatment

of prisoners, care of wounded, crops and peasants gained, enforced by threat of excommunication from heraldic services and recognition).

The most famous Gauntlet, Esbras, was known for his establishment and use of a group of warriors who acted as a strike force, carrying out the wishes of the Heralds. This group never officially existed, and it is believed to have been dissolved under pressure from (and partially at the hands of) several rulers who'd grown tired of Heralds meddling in their affairs. Rumors persist of ongoing activities of this group; many in the Realms believe it still exists as a phantom secret society, working the will of the Heralds. (The truth is that certain Harpers have always worked covertly with Gauntlet, to do what Heralds dare not do openly, but most wish to have done. These silent works continue.)

This office is usually filled by one of the Heralds Pursuivant; more rarely, it may be a former local Herald or even a High Herald. It is rare for the same person to serve twice as Gauntlet (less so for Green Shield), but an individual is not allowed to serve two consecutive terms.

The current holder of this office is Rundolphyn Taerest (LN half-e m), who resides in Honorgard House, a fortified compound southwest of Murann, on the north shore of the Tethyr Peninsula.

Legends of the Heralds

The most famous of the many traditions that have accumulated around the Heralds is the tale of the Lost Herald, who is said to be heard after dusk on the eve of great battles, crying the names of dead fighting men. Those named would have taken the field leading those who hear the Herald's disembodied voice, if they still lived.

The presence of a Herald at a birth is said to ensure that the child will grow up to do great deeds and achieve political importance or fame at arms. If the Herald is allowed to freely name the child, its chances of greatness are increased.

A High Herald can call up the ghosts of the dead from their graves and speak to them. (This



belief is correct: As a blessing from Oghma, each High Herald can *speak with dead* thrice per day, for nine questions per time, merely by calling out the correct name, or part of the name, of a dead being while within 100 feet of its grave. This power works even if no remains are in the grave at the time. An image of the deceased appears, able to gesture and move about as it speaks.)

Herald Holds

The Heralds are rumored to maintain many hidden caches and hideaways all over the Realms—notably hidden rooms or cellars in many cities. Here we briefly introduce only the two major, fabled Herald strongholds.

Heralds' Hall: The ghosts or wraiths of some famous warriors are said to guard the Heralds' Hall at Swordsmere, where the Heralds preserve their banners and weaponry. These phantoms are actually equivalent to spectral harpists (a new type of undead detailed in this book) in all respects, except that they retain the hit points, saving throws, and THAC0 values they had in life.

Swordsmere is a hidden place. It is an eerie subterranean lake, cloaked with many concealing spells and magical traps, that lies beneath Mount Sklagarra, westernmost of the Troll Mountains (just east of due north from Eshpurta, in Amn). Magical *gates* in Athkatla, Murrann, Eshpurta, Baldur's Gate, and Beregost lead into and out of Swordsmere, helping to confuse many spies about its true location.

On an island in the center of the lake (whose black, still waters resemble a giant mirror and are said to be inhabited by fierce aquatic guardians of an unknown species) rises the Heralds' Hall, a luxurious abode that stands atop armories and treasure vaults that keep safe many famous and infamous weapons and relics of past battle-glories from all over the Realms.

Swordsmere includes a vast spellchamber for the use of mages, a room whose ceiling is enchanted to resemble the starry night sky. It also includes a feasting hall two levels high, ringed at the upper level by a promenade bal-

cony opening into many guest-bedrooms, and lit by a sea of floating, flickering scented torches.

Herald's Holdfast: The abode of Old Night lies a day's journey west of Silverymoon, in a dell north of the River Rauvin. It is an ancient, squat stone tower that stands hard against a cliff. It is so overgrown with mosses and clinging vines that it is likely to be found only by those who know just where to look for it.

The tower's door does not lock, and it opens into the Chamber of Man, a huge, high room that fills the entire hollow interior of the tower. Lit by a soft blue continual faerie fire, this room displays weapons and armor from every age of human civilization on the walls. The rafters are carved into the likenesses of heroes and heroines of the past, and from them hang the banners and arms of forgotten kingdoms, interspersed with tapestries depicting important scenes from human history. Strong preservative magic keeps the tower safe against the ravages of time and against almost all spells (which are snuffed out as soon as they are cast).

Other magic defends a wooden door in the Chamber that leads on into a subterranean complex carved out of the cliff. This magic also warns folk inside that intruders have come into the tower.

From the door, a corridor leads into the rock of the hill, lined with domed chambers, one devoted to each of the intelligent races (demi-human, humanoid, giantkind, and even races usually ignored, such as centaurs, satyrs, and korred). All resemble the Chamber of Man in contents.

The corridor ends in a formal dining room containing a huge, round, rune-covered table. Old Night's rooms, a kitchen, and guest apartments open off this room to either side, but if one travels on in the direction the corridor ran, a door in the dining room opens into a vast library—the greatest library of the North, its high walls lined with countless volumes. Many tables, stacked high with more books, fill the center of this room; a magical glowing globe light hovers over a reading-desk in one corner, kept clear for the uses of the moment.



No one loves or trusts you enough to stand beside you in battle? What good has your life been, then?

— Gothlinn Shalara of Baldur's Gate, speech to her kin, Year of the Bright Blade

The Harpers have many friends and allies across Faerûn, but most (for their own safety, and in order for them to remain effective and useful as friends and allies) must keep their service and relationship to the Harpers secret. Most are not heroes or adventurers in the way player characters are; they can be considered 1st-level fighters of varying hit points and skills.

Just about any shopkeeper, merchant, shepherd, or caravan-master can be a Harper friend or ally. Their identities are not known to all Harpers, but a Harper can find them by consulting a Harper operating in an area, or by following the Harper runes and interpreting cryptic notes left in some Harper refuges. These normal friendly folk are far too numerous to list here, but it is useful to briefly describe some powerful NPC adventurer-allies of the Harpers, for use in play when a DM wants to impress (or rescue) PCs. Full details of these folk are left to DMs to tailor for a given situation. All three of them wander the Realms, often appearing when unexpected (and a Harper needs timely aid).

• *The Simbul, Queen of Aglarond* (a title she never insists on or uses herself), is secretly one of Mystra's Chosen (see the "History" chapter of this guidebook). She is also one of the Seven Sisters (the Harpers Alustriel, Dove, Laeral, and Storm are some of the others). Like all of her kin, she is tall, slim, shapely, and possessed of long hair of silvery hue. The shortest of the sisters, the Simbul has the fiercest temper. She cares nothing for her appearance, often wearing ragged and torn old black robes. Her hair is always a tangled mess; when she is casting spells, it coils and stirs around her as if alive. The Simbul's eyes flame visibly when she is angry.

The Simbul keeps her proper names secret, so

they are not set down here. Her magical power is among the mightiest of mortals in all Faerûn; almost alone she has held the combined armies and sorcery of the land of Thay at bay for years, defending her realm of Aglarond. People fear her for her temper, her habit of flitting around the Realms in various bird and animal shapes (to appear when least expected or wanted), and for her awesome power. This has earned her the nickname "The Witch-Queen."

The Simbul is proud and willful, yet she can be kind to those in need, particularly other women. As she grows older, and her romance with Elminster of Shadowdale continues, her alignment is shifting steadily toward good. She is not as apt to take bloody, reckless revenge as she once was—now she may wait for the best occasion, or investigate to make sure she's not slaughtering innocent folk, where once she'd storm in and bring city walls crashing down, heedless of the deaths she caused. The best advice, however, is still, "Don't get her angry!" When roused, the Simbul can be a fury of angry magic; if PCs are terrified of her wrath, she is being handled properly! The Simbul works tirelessly to defend her realm against the machinations of the Red Wizards of Thay. Her many shapeshifting disguises include the favorite forms of black raven and swift, though she may also be something as innocent as a watchful rock, or a wandering butterfly. Any bush, field mouse, stump, or stone can suddenly twist into the form of the angry, mocking, jestingly aiding, or swift and deadly Simbul! She has access to a small arsenal of powerful cached magical items hidden all over the Realms (in refuges—caves and the like, often reachable only by someone who can fly—that have food, water, healing potions, clothes and mundane supplies, as well as powerful magic) that she has gathered or created.

The Simbul has also devised many spells. She has cast a chain of *contingency* spells on herself that protect her in the same way Storm Silverhand's ring protects the Bard of Shadowdale (as described in "The Senior Harpers" chapter of this sourcebook).



The Simbul is a CN human female W30, with access to unlimited magical items and a full roster of both strange and familiar spells. She is able to fell castle towers with her mighty spell blasts, but she rarely stays around to slay in leisurely spell-battle when she can disable an opponent with one or two earth-shaking spells, and then flit away, on about her business.

- *Tamper Tencoin* is a wily adventurer of sardonic humor and much experience, noted for his seemingly endless up-the-sleeves bag of tricks (he always has a *teleport ring*, *Quaal's feather token*, or similar handy magical item at the ready, and he wears little wristpouches of sand or stinging powder to hurl into the eyes of opponents). A battered-looking, mustachioed, burly man with laughing eyes, Tamper is famous as a practical joker and as a man who on many occasions has patiently waited a decade or more to exact revenge on someone who stole from him or wounded him in battle. A sometime mercenary warrior (once a member of the

Flaming Fist) and caravan-master (most active on runs from Amn to Westgate or up the Sword Coast as far as Neverwinter), Tamper is a lawless, wayward member of the Harpers.

He is famous for having owned the magical blade *Namarra* ("The Sword That Never Sleeps"), given to him on a battlefield by his dying commander, *Rivenhelm* (it was later stolen from him by a *Zhentarim* agent who poisoned him) and for helping the fledgling *Knights of Myth Drannor* defeat the *Zhentarim* mage *Whisper*. Tamper Tencoin is known to have traveled many planes in his career, and he is often accompanied by creatures strange to the Realms. His companion at the time he fought alongside the *Knights* was the *Nehwon* ghoulish *Lacheera* (an axe-wielding warrior-woman of a race from another plane), but more recently Tamper has been seen alone, strangling *Zhentilar* and *Zhentarim* in *Daggerdale* to aid *Randal Morn*.

Tamper is a CN human male F7/T14 (dual-classed; no longer active as a warrior). He



may have any magical items a DM desires, always carrying at least three about his person.

• *Beldara Laerune*, “The Wandering Minstrel of Melvaunt,” is a fiery-tempered, raven-haired bard of beauty and a truly awe-inspiring voice. Her warm, smoky voice is capable of both bird-like clear high notes and robust bass notes that shame many a male singer. Her long, far-flung travels are legendary. (She has sung from the Icewind Dale to Halruaa, and from Nimbral to Sossal.)

A tiny but feisty woman given to long drinking sessions and preferring the company of elves and dwarves to that of humans, Beldara is a poor cook but experienced at reading the countryside, finding water and her way, and avoiding bogs and predators.

She left her city when the Zhentarim rose to power in Zhentil Keep, preferring to wander less oppressive areas of the Realms seeking adventure, treasure, and inspiration for new songs. She found all three, and she is thought to bear on her person both valuable gems and

several useful items of magic, including some sort of magical harp. Beldara has not been seen of late, but a tale going around the taverns of Sembia holds that she went to Myth Drannor, found a surviving magical *gate* to other planes, and unhesitatingly stepped through it. Her fate is unknown.

Beldara is a NG human female B16. She stands just under five feet tall and weighs less than a hundred pounds. She has auburn hair and eyes of an unusual orange hue. She wears leather armor, but she always has several magnificent gowns in her large pack that she can change into when staying at an inn. Beldara also carries a *Tallar’s harp* and (in pouches on various parts of her person—one is known to be in a hollow boot heel) at least three of the strange enchanted gems known as *wandering stars*. She also wears a *Jkannyl’s wristlet* (all three of these items are detailed in the “Harper Magic” chapter of this sourcebook) and a *ring of feather falling* (described in the DMG).





The title of this chapter refers in a general sense to places frequented by the Harpers, but there are some literal “H Harper haunts” frequented by the phantoms of slain Harpers, or by Harpers who have become the special sort of undead known as spectral harpists (detailed at the end of this sourcebook).

Readers looking for detailed maps and floorplans of Harper strongholds and bases are going to be disappointed: for obvious reasons, the Harpers aren’t thrilled at the thought of everyone knowing just where the armories, secret passages, treasure caches, and spell-chambers are in each and every Harper hold. Most of what appears here is collected from various Harper accounts, and may be out of date, mistaken, or in some cases deliberately misleading or wrong.

Twilight Hall

Most powerful of the present Harper bases in Faerûn, this complex of low fieldstone buildings is all sweeping curves, turrets, and royal blue banners (each adorned with a random scattering of silvery stars) flapping against a background of the gray stone.

Officially part of Berdusk’s temple of Deneir (which is actually an inner sanctum of Twilight Hall known as the Inner Chamber, run by High Scrivener Althune Dembrar, a NG human female P14, a beautiful elderly lady who is an expert on the various runes and symbols used by mages or in magic; she commands 14 priests and 26 lay followers), the gates of Twilight Hall are two stone posts topped by carved eyes on which sit enchanted, everburning candles (attempts to remove a candle will result in its being destroyed in a 4d6 fireball explosion).

Although the plain stone buildings are beautifully carved in sweeping curves, they are not high or impressive; more of Twilight Hall is below ground than above. A number of interconnected buildings sprawl along the path in from the gates (which are ornamental, as is the wall surrounding the complex—a wave-shaped

stone barrier whose crests are about four feet high, and whose troughs are only two feet off the ground—in case of attack, a spell laid long ago causes transparent walls of force to augment the paltry stonework).

These structures enclose a number of small courtyards, planted with gardens or moss lawns to form small, secluded bowers or exercise, play, and weapon-practice areas. The temple includes a bakery, smokehouse, and kitchens. Most non-Harper visitors can smell these and see the courtyards—but they see no more of the interior of Twilight Hall than a small audience room opening directly off the path from the gates.

This room holds a simple wooden table and two chairs drawn up at it, facing each other. On the walls are detailed maps of Faerûn. The ceiling is lost in a magical darkness, in which wink tiny lights arranged as the stars of the night sky (and animated to mirror the movements in the real night sky, including lunar activity).

Any being touching the table and willing himself to rise activates a permanent levitate effect that lifts him up through the night sky illusion (and a ceiling hole that it conceals) into a trophy room above. This works as a reverse *feather fall* spell, and is a transport route used in several other places in Twilight Hall.

The trophy room holds many relics of Harper deeds, including a stuffed beholder, floating and magically-glowing swords and battle axes in their own cases, and a few lore books. Desks and lounge seats in the room allow its use as a daily inspiration and relaxation area. The trophy room leads into a large, woodpannelled conference hall (used by Belhvar and Cylyria for most of their meetings with other Harpers) with a hammer-beam ceiling.

It in turn opens onto a balcony, looking down into the largest room in Twilight Hall: the two-storey-high central hall. Oval (90 feet long and 40 feet wide at its widest point, with a magnificent fan-vaulted ceiling and arched openings leading off it to almost all of the other areas in Twilight Hall) and high (60 feet high at the



highest point), the central hall is a place of drifting, many-hued glowing globes (spheres of soft magical radiance), pillars that look like trees (as a result of many vines carefully twisted and trained to grow up around central stone columns; over the years, they have thickly covered every inch of stone, and provided nesting-places for birds who are allowed to fly freely in this chamber).

A stairway spirals down from the projecting conference room balcony to the floor of the hall, a stair of floating stones without rails or supports. This collection of freely floating steps isn't quite as dangerous as it looks: a *levitate* and *feather fall* effect, like the one in the audience room, surrounds it, so anyone falling from the stair can go up or down by thought alone. This also applies to folk who don't want to touch the stair at all, and all objects dropped or tossed into the stair vicinity. Harpers often transfer drink decanters, weapons, and other fragile or hazardous things from level to level by using the stair spells.

If one continues to rise past the top of the stair, beyond the balcony, one sees a shadowy door in the air, invisible to beings anywhere else in the chamber. Through this door lie the private apartments of Cylyria, Belhuar, Obslin, and four guest rooms for senior Harpers and guests who must be close-guarded. (This third floor, opening off the peak of the central hall, is the highest level in Twilight Hall. It is in turn linked to pegasi stables and a rooftop landing-meadow.) The central hall doubles as a feasting hall for any large dinners; except for special occasions, most Harpers usually trot down to the kitchens for a tray of hot dinner, and take it outside or to their rooms to dine.

Off the central hall open the kitchens, the armories, and the temple rooms, as well as windowed passages leading to other buildings in the Twilight Hall complex.

The faithful of Deneir reign supreme within the temple areas (which contain an extensive library of folios that preserve and identify symbols collected from several planes and worlds),

and those rooms function with all the powers of a Harper refuge (described later in this chapter) with Deneir as the sole empowering deity.

All other areas within the ornamental walls of Twilight Hall—except a deeply-buried spell-casting cavern—function with Harper refuge powers empowered cooperatively by all the elven deities, and the human divinities Deneir, Eldath, Lliira, Mielikki, Milil, Mystra, Oghma, Selune, Silvanus, and Tymora.

Twilight Hall is a beautiful place. Craftworkers have adorned it with many paintings, stained-glass windows, statues, illusory images, and other interesting things. Thefts are detected instantly by one of the several spectral harpists who watch over the rooms and passages. One silently appears in front of the thief, waggles a stern, disapproving finger, and points at the stolen item and its rightful place. They communicate the crime to living Harpers only if the thief doesn't promptly return the item. They follow to observe if a legitimate movement or use of an item is claimed.

Between these adornments, throughout Twilight Hall, the stone passage walls are worked into delicate, intricate carvings, of elves, half-elves, humans, halflings, gnomes, and halflings dancing, reclining, or making music amid a setting of lush growing things (heavy-laden fruit trees, flowers, tall grasses, and the like). If a singing form or sculpted instrument is touched by living flesh, enchantments cause appropriate music to be heard. Intruders are warned that some carvings have more dangerous magical powers, such as the abilities to emit one of the following spell effects on command: *blade barrier*, *Evard's black tentacles*, *guards and wards*, *Mordenkainen's faithful hound*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *wyvern watch*, and others (a given carving only casts one effect, not multiple effects).

Twilight Hall is known to have several moving walls-illusory stone walls and real partitions that can be erected in the space of a few breaths to block off or redirect passages. These are sometimes used to restrict the movements of guests or to confuse their knowledge of how



certain areas of Twilight Hall are laid out.

Another notable feature of the Hall is its phantom music. Customarily played in the galleries that open off the central hall and the passages linking it with other buildings, the intricate, hauntingly beautiful tunes are the result of modified, improved *ghost pipes* spells. Magical notes of light and real instruments are sometimes animated to dance along to the music.

Harper Hall

This is a small, graceful tower in Silverymoon, located on the eastern boundary of the Silverglen (a park-like, carefully-tended stand of trees in the eastern part of the main, older Northbank district of the city, sacred to Silvanus). The slim, dark stone of Harper Hall Tower faces Alustriel's Palace, and its uppermost windows offer both a splendid view over the city and a place for aerial steeds to land. Part of the wall, between two lamps lit whenever the sky is dusky or dark, is actually a permanent illusion, concealing a large landing-opening that pegasi, griffons, hippogriffs, and wind steeds (*asperii*) can all land in, and take off from, without difficulty. The tower is largely a granary (holding foodstuffs to meet emergency city needs in the event of a siege), with a few bare chambers available aloft for spellcasting practice. A dark-panelled meeting room is available for walk-in Harper use on the ground floor, but the true stronghold is in subterranean passages connected to Harper Hall, underlying the Silverglen.

This network of passages is guarded by at least two spectral harpists (beings described at the end of this sourcebook), features many secret doors, sliding panels, and blind end trap alleys to confuse intruders, and connects with the surface in various nondescript houses and shops across the city.

The best-known of these connections, to citizens of Silverymoon, is in the basements of the old Vault of the Sages library. The one most

familiar to visiting Harpers (because it's the only one customarily revealed in Twilight Hall briefings) is via a rather bawdy tavern, known as the Dancing Goat, on the northeast corner of the plaza just inside (north) of the Main Gate, or northern terminus of the Moonbridge.

Bright inquirers correctly deduce that there are connections with the local temples of Mystra and Selune—but no invader has ever found the rumored passage linking Harper Hall with Alustriel's Palace. This is because it doesn't exist: the link between the two is a permanent two-way *gate* or teleport between the topmost room of the hall's tower and a heavily guarded internal area in one of the palace towers, a magical passageway rumored among Harpers to have been created by divine Azuth himself.

Harper Hall is administered by an old centaur-mage by the name of Gglaerthus Irymm (LG centaur male, W15), assisted by several venerable but veteran Harper rangers and warriors. They can call on the many wizards of the palace, and the clergy of all the friendly temples in the city, in the event of a powerful attack or intrusion.

Moongleam Tower

Atop the highest knoll of the rolling hills on which Everlund is built stands a simple, stark tower of fire-blackened stone: the Harper stronghold built by Storm Silverhand and the builders she assembled after the Battle of Tumblekulls (see the "History" chapter in this book). Notable among those artisans was the dwarven master stoneworker Gwuildeth Throck, now thought to be carving out his own dwarven kingdom somewhere beneath the frozen High Ice of northern Anauroch, his much-knotted beard grown snow-white with age, and long enough for him to trip over. Gwuildeth designed this tower, and he was very proud of the everbright (magically corrosion-proof) silver-plated signalling-mirror atop the tower, shaped like a crescent moon. On clear nights, reflecting moonlight or the leaping



flames of a fire kindled in a roof-brazier, the flashes of this mirror can be seen a full day's travel distant (some 40 or so miles).

Any traveler can head for the steady gleam of the tower's mirror, or its regular flashes (which means that worse weather is known to be coming), but only Harpers, citizens of Everlund and Silverymoon, and veteran travelers in this region know the code of mirror-flashes used by the Harpers of Moongleam Tower. Its most common signals are given hereafter; note that special ones may be added for special occasions, with meanings known or agreed-upon by only a few individuals (usually Harpers).

- Two flashes, pause, prolonged or (if a fire is used) very bright flash, pause, then two flashes again. This cycle is used to convey the message: "Danger around Everlund. Foes are known to be near and active. Guard yourselves." This warning usually means that orc raiders have been seen in the area, but may also refer to powerful roaming monsters, strike forces from Hellgate Keep, or rarer menaces.

- Four flashes, a long pause, and then four flashes again: this means "Harpers are needed. Rally here." This cycle can be alternated with the preceding one, which usually means an orc horde or other powerful evil force is on the move, and Harpers must gather to fight it.

- Three flashes, a pause, two flashes, a pause, one flash, pause, two flashes, pause, and then three flashes again. This cycle means "Danger, stay away. Keep clear of Everlund." This rarely seen cycle signals a siege, magical battle, wild magic effect, or monster attack so severe that travelers are advised to come no closer to Everlund.

- Six flashes, a pause, four flashes, a pause, and then six flashes again. "Execute mission now...go ahead...begin the agreed-upon task or process." This signal means something only to Harpers who know about a plan made earlier (and usually conveyed to Harpers by briefings in Silverymoon, Everlund, or Twilight Hall). It allows them to act without coming any closer to the tower (and possible danger, or wastage of valuable time).

The tower itself is a massive fortress, with huge storage-caverns deep beneath it. It is surrounded by a moat; spell-driven pumps devised by six furiously arguing dwarven mastercrafters, long ago, allow the water to be pumped at high speed into and out of caves under the moat. Intruders trying to dig their way into the tower will encounter fastflowing water and drown. Intruders trying to swim the moat will be battered and then sucked down into water-filled caves, to suffer a similar fate. Harmful or phosphorescent substances can be introduced into the waters, to reveal or impede besiegers. Bathers in the tower can have an invigorating water-massage, plants within the tower can be misted and floors rinsed, and so on.

The tower has a standing Harper garrison of six wizards (four devotees of Mystra, NG hm W12 or greater, and two apprentices, of lesser level and any good alignment), priests of several faiths of those deities who blessed the Harpers (see the "History" chapter of this book), and 20 warriors (rangers and fighters of 3rd to 10th level). It can accommodate 60 additional defenders, and almost 1,000 folk and livestock crammed into the storage caverns beneath. A system of tunnels linked to the water-caverns surrounds these storage cellars. Intruders who tunnel up into the tower area from below are almost certain to get wet—and to be noticed by the defenders!

Storm Silverhand's House

In Shadowdale, the road running north from the Old Skull parallel to, and east of, the River Ashaba, leads to the northern dale farms. Most lie to the west of the road, but the second farm on the eastern side, as one goes north, belongs to the senior Harper Storm Silverhand.

Hedges cloak much of the plantings from the view of passersby on the road. Storm's holding runs between a cedar stump on the south to a line of bluewood trees reaching out from the woods (that lie to the east, enclosing the farm on three sides) to mark the northern boundary of her land.



Storm tends grapevines (from which she makes her own winter wine) and various herbs and vegetables here, working alone or with the invisible aid of her sister's spirit. Sylune, once known as the Witch of Shadowdale, lives on beyond death. Several Harpers have heard the two talking or seen the results of their working together—and more than one thieving Zhen-tarim, knowing Storm is elsewhere and sneaking into what he believes is a deserted farm, has been rudely attacked.

An avenue of ancient, twisted oaks leads from a break in the hedge to the home of the Bard of Shadowdale. An animated, speaking (but empty) suit of ornate full plate armor wanders among these trees, approaching most intruders (unless they are accompanied by guards in the livery of Shadowdale) and greeting them with various clever phrases. This pranksome apparatus has no true intellect and cannot fight; it serves only to scare off the curious. Known as the Mailed Hero, despite the

type of armor used, this construct was a gift to Storm from her now-dead man, Maxan, and she keeps it in his memory. The Mailed Hero can recognize Storm and accompany her if she wills it to, carrying what she gives it to hold (to the weight limit of a normal man), and releasing or giving her things on command. It can recognize living intruders, whether they move or not, and will approach (with a silent, drifting gait, its empty armored boots actually inches off the ground), saying phrases such as:

- "Well met...nice weather, as usual."
- "I cannot help but notice we're putting on a little weight, hmmm?"
- "Some are more welcome than others. I'd remember that, if I were you."
- "And who is this? I don't believe we've met..."
- "Swords, is it? A word to the wise: some folk around here find tongues even sharper."
- "I've seen much better spells than that. We've some proper wizards around here, you know."



- “Mind they don’t catch you at that, now.”

Sylune’s spirit can move the Mailed Hero as she desires, to accomplish delicate and exacting tasks and to speak precisely as she wills. The suit of armor need not be intact for it to follow her bidding or to speak in any case. She has used these powers to scare many an intruder who thinks he’s figured out that the armor is merely an unintelligent annoyance—and is suddenly shocked to find it addressing him by name, asking direct questions or answering him in detail.

Storm’s rambling fieldstone house has a large sleeping-loft over an even larger kitchen. Magical items are plentiful, but the only ones obvious to a visitor are the horn and harp. Harpers are welcome here, and many come seeking advice or training. When she’s not adventuring (surprisingly, she is the favorite traveling-companion of Elminster), Storm is glad to help. Spells laid upon her kitchen give Storm true seeing within its confines (she can see invisible or disguised intruders for what they truly are—including, as a priest does, alignment auras). The kitchen table can be lifted up—with the flagstones under it, in a huge trap door—to give access to a broad, smooth ramp leading down to large storage caverns under the farmhouse and the herb gardens immediately to the north of it. From time to time, this underground warehouse stores all manner of supplies for the Harpers, including caravan-wagons with unperishable cargoes, ready to be used on short notice by Harpers pretending to be traveling merchants. These caverns have several hidden crawl-tunnel and secret passage back-door entrances, linking it with hollow trees and other surface features in the woods around. One of them is reached by ducking underwater in the stream nearby, and up an opening concealed under the bank.

East of the farmhouse, a track leads down through a mossy rock garden that becomes a natural ravine, to meet the stream that flows through the farm. Here Storm has her bathing-pool; strong spells shield this place

from all magical scrying, and give it all the powers of the greatest Harper refuges.

The House of the Harp

In Elventree, in a small, tangled ravine where the woods meet the city, stands a small, sharp-peaked fieldstone hut whose earth-covered roof is surmounted by mosses, flowers, and a carved stone harp. This stone shelter is the outward horsestall porch of an extensive, dry cave-home that extends back through the solid rock underlying the forest for some distance, linking up with secret passages or storage cellars descending from several buildings in Elventree.

This abode is provided for the use of visiting Harpers, and it is watched over by a spectral harpist who can alert, and call on the aid of, a half-dozen or so Harpers who live nearby. The ghostly guardian is known as Shalaer, who was once a half-elven female bard of note. She likes to chat or sing with visiting Harpers, can pass on valuable information and advice to them, loves to rally the spirits of despairing or depressed Harpers, and is counted by many veterans as a true, loving friend. Shalaer is confined to Elventree, but not just to the House of the Harp. If she is unsure of the nature of visitors (suspecting spying enemies or thieves), she usually remains invisible until their deeds or words betray them—whereupon she will summon Harper aid, or suddenly appear very close in front of the leader or foremost intruder, with the soft, neutral words, “Welcome to the House of the Harp. May I help you?”

Several *wands of magic missiles* and *lightning* have been installed in the walls and roof of the abode, commanding its major rooms and the approach to its tall, arched wooden double doors. The wands are so enspelled that Shalaer can activate them, discharging them against unwanted intruders. She will never speak of their presence, but merely use them if verbal tactics fail to make the unwanted ones leave or stop whatever they’re doing. The inner caverns



and passages of the house have all the powers of a Harper refuge, and it is a place of power for Mystra. Her priests can function in it as if they were in the nearby temple to the goddess of all magic, casting all spells for full maximum damage, duration, or extent of effect (the caster chooses which of these three will occur).

Where Harpers Are Welcome

There are many homes, huts, and caverns across Faerûn where a known Harper is welcomed with open arms (by Harper friends or grateful folk the Harpers have aided). But there are a few places of note where any Harper is always welcome, and where they can receive any needed magical healing aid and concealment. These are listed hereafter.

- **Evereska:** Now the largest known elven settlement east of Evermeet, the verdant vale and walled city of Evereska is a safe haven for Harpers. Those Who Harp are the only group of humans (as opposed to individuals) who are welcome. The elven watchposts (and elven archers who ride giant eagles on patrol high above the elven lands) stop and challenge approaching folk who are not elves, or escorted by elves, but a Harper pin almost guarantees passage into the vale (unless carried by a blood-stained orc, lich, or other suspicious intruder).

Evereska is a cultured city of gardens, music, and elven artisans, boasting a college of magic and a warriors' school. Temples to all elven deities rise within its walls, and here the elves trade with those humans allowed to pass into the vale. Harpers who can afford it can find all manner of goods for sale here, as well as advice and training (the elves are not as adverse to training Harpers in the ways of sword and bow as they are to schooling other humans, who may return bearing arms against them in some future raid or invasion).

Among elves, Evereska is the place in Faerûn where the most powerful elven healers and clergy dwell, surpassed in might only by those of Evermeet. Harpers, Heralds, the Chosen of

Mystra, and human worshipers of the elven god Solonar Thelandira are the humans normally allowed to benefit from the elven healing available here.

Much of the ready-armed military strength of Evereska recently occupied the Greycloak Hills (previously known as the Tomb Hills) to expand the grazing land controlled by the elves and to establish fortified caves to which the folk of Evereska could retreat, in the event the city and vale are ever overrun. The disappearance of several ancient magical *gates* linking Evereska with Evermeet and other elven strongholds (such as Ardeepforest, near Waterdeep) has made defense of the walled city less crucial to the survival of the Fair Folk.

- **Greyshield:** In the Greycloak Hills, Harpers are among the rare humans who are welcome. The many hills are almost always cloaked in a concealing ring of mist, as a result of spells used by the elves who dwell there. The mists detect the presence of beings passing through them, revealing magical dweomers and alignment auras alike to the spellcasters. Elven patrols are always ready to intercept beings entering the mists (which form a ring 100 yards deep around the hills, although the elves can easily extend the mists to help an unwanted band of intruders become lost).

The grass-covered hills are numerous and look generally alike. Many contain old tombs. A few of these have secret doors at their innermost reaches that lead through guarded passages into hidden elven homes. Here in the heart of the hills dwell the elves of Greyhome (as they call their land), led by their Lord, Erlan Duirsar (now a NG F9/W11), Watcher Over the Hills. He controls a mist golem (created by his magic, and equal in powers to an iron golem, save that its body is "hard air," like a wall of force, not iron, and can't rust), known as the Walker in the Mists, that he can use to defend his land.

Small bands of human, halfling, half-elven, or elven intruders are met politely but warily by the swift-running elven patrols (usually 14 or 16



mail-clad archers on foot, accompanied by elven mages equipped with *rings of flying*, and *wands of lightning* or *magic missiles* or *paralyzation*).

Harpers are welcomed and taken to a long-empty tomb in the heart of a hill, reserved for the use of visitors. (Less trusted visitors are taken to one of the sheltered ravines between hills, where they can camp and be discreetly watched over.) This stone-lined home has its own spring, which streams from one wall across the floor in a series of pools and then runs out the entryway to loop and wind among the hills. The waters of this spring act as *sweet water* if taken from within the hill (inside Greyshield) only. The place is known as Greyshield, and the elves have been known to nurse sorely hurt Harpers back to health here, or hide them from pursuing foes.

Elven artisans in the Greycloak Hills (their names carefully kept secret) make pipes, harps, lutes, and various horns (called crumhorns, shawms, and duskorns by men) for sale through certain trusted human merchants and to the Harpers, who prize such noble instruments highly, and pay accordingly. A musical Harper of means, or one who has been named a Master Harper (and given some funds by senior Harpers), will go to the Greycloak Hills to buy just the right instrument.

A few old or sorely wounded Harpers come to the Hills to die, living out their last days in peace and good fellowship with the elves of the mists. More than one raiding orc band has found that such old wolves still have teeth—and blades and spells—to stand beside elven patrols, defending Greyhome.

Spellgard

Where the southern edge of the Fallen Lands meets the western edge of the great desert Anauroch, a serpentine ridge rises from the sands—a bare, rocky spur crowned by an old, once-mighty castle, Spellgard.

Once it was “Saharelgard,” the home of Lady

Saharel of the High Mages of Netheril (a ruling elite in that long-vanished kingdom of sorcery). Saharel’s home was rich in wealth, luxurious decor, and mighty magic.

Today it is a ruin, largely stripped of its riches by decay, the work of abundant mosses, molds, and fungi growing in its halls, and thievery. It is a vast, soaring bulk of many turrets, ornately-carved archways, and countless stairs, galleries, and chambers. The sweeping, thrusting curves of balconies adorn both exterior and interior walls. The outer ones—those that haven’t collapsed and fallen—are now overgrown gardens housing a variety of flying predators. The inner ones look down into interior, glass-roofed courtyards adorned with fountains and statuary. Where light reaches, plants grow thickly.

A few areas, such as the always-murmurous Fountain Hall, home to a dozen splendid sculpted waterspouts and plants that have now run riot under their spray, remain unspoiled and luxurious.

Spellgard sits atop its own spring. Ancient spells pump water through hundreds of fountains and pools, and in a one vast cellar room is a large well. The castle halls and chambers are predominantly cool, dim, and damp—ideal for fungal growth.

To desert folk and travelers parched enough to venture out of the sands, Spellgard is a popular destination; a source of water known to be both safe and abundant. It is also a strategic “last known watering-place” for outsiders heading into the desert. Saharelgard is still home to Lady Saharel, who became an archlich (a rare and powerful good-aligned type of lich-nee undead) long ago. The Sorceress of Saharelgard does not welcome intruders, and is not at all pleased to meet Zhentarim or any visitors who attack her on sight or despoil her halls. Elminster is an old friend, and his friends—and all Harpers and Heralds—are tolerated in Spellgard. Those who aid or deal with the Lady in respect and courtesy may receive her help or good advice in return. She commands much



powerful magic (as every stone of the castle radiates strong magic, adventurers will search in vain for her scrolls, spell books, and magical items—lying hidden behind hundreds of secret panels), and will use it to help those she befriends, but very rarely allows any item to leave Spellgard—and never herself ventures outside its walls.

A little known, one-way magical *gate* in a cellar-cavern of the High Castle, in the far-off High Dale (a valley that links Cormyr and Sembia through the Thunder Peaks, where the gods met long ago to bless the Harpers) leads to a grand inner hall of Spellgard. This route is reached by stepping out over a reeking cesspool at just the right place, and in just the right direction. A misstep means a very unpleasant submersion in the pool; the proper stride takes one instantly into Archmitre Hall, at the heart of Spellgard.

Archmitre Hall is tall, dark, and gloomy. Many archways gape in its walls, and moss hangs down in phosphorescent fingers from high stone balconies. The floor is an uneven tumble of marble, the stones punched upward as if by an angry giant from beneath. Cold breezes blow from somewhere unseen, swirling the thick airborne dust into dancing motes that sparkle in the moss-glow. The only furnishings are stone seats set into the walls, in ornamented niches.

Many adventurers have explored Spellgard in search of the great magic that rumor insists must lie hidden in it. If any have found powerful sorcery, no word has been whispered around the Realms of the finding. A few adventurers have told tales of large numbers of cunning, stealthy gargoyles hunting them around the castle, even as they hunted for treasure. Today, an intruder will find mushrooms and luminescent mosses growing here and there about the empty stone chambers. The torn, dusty cobwebs seem spun long ago, by now-vanished spiders. Yet there is a silent, watching feel to the place. Room after room holds only small heaps of collapsed wood, gilt, and stone, where furniture has collapsed into decay. Here and there

are the scars of long-ago battle—scorched, blackened areas on the walls and floor, shattered stone panels, and buckled flagstones. Mold, moss, dust, rot, and silence reign.

Harper Refuges

Across the Realms, human deities such as Silvanus, Mielikki, Eldath, and Selune, and elven deities such as Rillifane Rallathil and Solonar Thelandira, have supported the Harpers passively, by investing their power in woodland spots used by Harpers as refuges, campsites, or meeting-places. Most are in the North, from the deciduous forests of the Inner Sea and the Amnian midlands to the cold alpine forests north of Sundabar. Some may be found as far south as Nimbral and the jungle thickets of Mhair, Land of Monsters. Elminster would give no precise directions to any Harper refuges, but he did reveal the existence of certain refuge sites. One is in Ardeepforest, near Waterdeep. Another is in the woods just southwest of Eveningstar, in Cormyr. Still another is on the west bank of the Unicorn Run, not far inside the southern edge of the High Forest (some days travel north of Secomber). There are refuges in the woods northwest of both Silverymoon (in the Moonwood) and Everlund (in the Rauvin Wood); and Harpers' Hill in Shadowdale is a refuge. Researches hint at the existence of refuges in many other places (such as near Highmoon in Deepingdale, near High Horn in Cormyr, somewhere in the Westwood north of Waterdeep, east of Neverwinter, and so on), but only local Harpers know for sure where these refuges lie, and if they still exist.

The locations of most refuges are known only to a few local or senior Harpers, and such places are never marked on maps (except certain secret charts kept at Herald's Holdfast and at Twilight Hall) or clearly signed. They can be recognized by the broken, weathered harp hung or placed somewhere up high near the center of the protected area.

All Harper refuges contain a pool or spring



(which functions as *sweet water* within the refuge boundaries only). They tend to be secluded, wooded areas of 20 feet across or less, floored with deep moss. Harper refuges are akin to those secluded areas known as “sacred groves,” empowered by deities of nature in many places in Faerun. Like sacred groves, Harper refuges have some special properties that function within their confines at all times, regardless of the intent or powers of any non-divine creatures present. These are usually as follows:

- Only priests of the god(s) who empowered the refuge may successfully *call lightning* within the refuge. No other beings may cast or cause any magical lightning to operate in the refuge, or to pass into or out of it.
- All charms and mental compulsions of any sort (including psionic attacks) are forever broken, and can't be successfully established, on beings in a refuge.
- *Dig* spells never work in any part of a refuge.
- *Entangle* spells never work in any part of a refuge (*snares* spells work normally).
- All creatures are immune to fear while in a refuge.
- Harpers and beings accompanied by Harpers who rest or sleep in a refuge overnight heal wounds (by natural recuperation) at double the normal rate. Healing spells operate for full possible effect (unless the being to be healed fails a Wisdom Check), but not at double rate or efficacy.
- Any Harper or priest of a deity who has empowered a refuge can cause winds (and the noises that plants make in breezes, such as rustling leaves) to fall still and silent within the refuge, in three segments. Such silence is caused by act of will and can be held for up to one turn if the being who caused it concentrates on maintaining it. This is not a *silence* spell; the speech and movements of beings and sounds they cause (such as snapping twigs) are not masked. The Harper or priest must be within the grove to enact this power.

- Any Harper can cause a faerie fire radiance to come into being within a refuge where he or she is located. One round of concentration is required to create the light, which lasts for one turn per level of the character (without concentration), but can't be called up by the same being twice in the same day (or night). The radiance can be bright enough to read by, or fainter; once set, its intensity cannot be altered.

A priest of a deity who empowered a refuge can create a faerie fire radiance whose intensity can be controlled, from dampened out completely to bright (not blinding), and which can be moved about within the refuge at will. Only the priest can control the faerie fire, which ends abruptly if the priest leaves the refuge or is slain. It otherwise lasts for two turns per level of the priest, or until ended by the priest's will. A priest need not use a spell to call up such a radiance, but he can't end it and call it up again any more than a non-priest can. If a priest uses a *faerie fire* spell in a refuge, its duration is trebled to 12 rounds/level.

- Any Harper or priest of a deity who empowered a refuge can cause any stones found in the refuge to speak, as they do for a *stone tell* spell. No spell is necessary, but the stones answer questions for only three rounds (the DM should time questions and answers for three actual minutes, ending abruptly when time is up). This power can be used only once a day, regardless of how many beings try it. The power does not affect stones carried or flung into the refuge during the previous or present day.

A priest employing a *stone tell* spell in the usual way in a refuge finds it lasts for double the usual time.

- Any wizard employing a *protection from normal missiles* spell within a refuge finds that the magic, regardless of the caster's intent, expands—as a faintly shimmering, visible nimbus—to encircle the entire refuge. All creatures in the refuge are protected, from each other (i.e., from all missiles launched within the refuge) and from all attacks launched from outside the refuge. The protection is as the spell normally



offers, but its duration is doubled.

- Any Harper or priest of a deity who empowered a refuge may control temperature within the refuge, altering it by up to 30 degrees. The entire refuge is affected. This can help lightly clad travelers survive in freezing winter weather, although winds must also be stilled by concentration (see above) to make conditions in a refuge truly comfortable in a howling blizzard. If the temperature of the surroundings is very different, mist forms along the boundaries of the refuge, concealing those inside it unless strong winds blow steadily to clear the mist away. Items can be chilled or frozen (by a cooling alteration), and dried out, melted, or cooked on rocks (by a warmer change), but the change in heat alone will never cause objects to ignite. The duration of the change is one turn/level of the character (if more than one being tries to control the temperature, it will revert to normal until control is uncontested). Such control can be successfully attempted only once in every 24-hour period, and is ended instantly by the use of any control temperature spells (which have normal effects and duration).

- Lycanthropes who enter or are forced into a refuge revert to their human (or at least, non-animal) forms. In the case of true lycanthropes, this forced change takes two rounds, and lasts for one turn thereafter before they can change back again. In the case of creatures infected by lycanthropy, the change lasts until they leave the refuge. They are not cured (unless other magic is applied to them to bring about a cure) by being in the refuge, but they are prevented from bloodlust and their killing form, regardless of phases of the moon or other influences.

- A *tree* spell cast in a refuge allows the priest casting it to undergo the normal effects, or (if willed by the caster) vanish beneath the earth, as a wizard's *imprisonment* spell causes victims to vanish. Unlike the wizardly spell, the priest may release him- or herself whenever desired, reappearing at the exact spot at which the spell was cast. The caster is not in suspended animation while entombed, and he can rest, pray, and

perform other activities not requiring much room. Eating, breathing, and other bodily functions cease, and there is no time limit on the stay beneath the earth. In addition, the magic enables the priest to hear sounds on the surface just as though he or she were still standing in the glade. (This leaves the entombed priest vulnerable to some spoken spells.) A great danger of this effect is that priests often forget their worldly cares, and remain in prayer beneath a refuge forever. No creature other than the caster, living or dead, can be carried beneath the earth by such a spell.

- Undead cannot enter a Harper refuge, with two exceptions: undead able to use spells (such as lichs) can pass by the refuge boundary (this does not include undead with spell-like powers, such as vampires), and spectral harpists (a new form of undead, detailed in this sourcebook) can move freely into, out of, and within a Harper refuge. The abilities and attacks of all other undead cannot reach, be launched, or extend into the area of a refuge, but instead end abruptly at the invisible wall of the refuge boundaries.

- Any Harper or priest of a deity who empowered a refuge may know the alignment of other creatures within the refuge merely by concentration. The Harper or priest can discern the alignment of only one being (whom he or she has in plain view) per round. This ability doesn't require a spell and is infallible, penetrating even concealing magic, but it works only if the target creature remains in the refuge for the entire round of concentration (which precludes spellcasting).

- A handful of water taken from the spring or pool of a refuge within the last six turns can neutralize poison on any one being touched by it. The being must roll a successful saving throw vs. poison: if the saving throw fails, the water didn't work. (Note that this allows characters who have already failed a saving throw vs. poison a second saving throw.)

- A handful of refuge water, when splashed on or drunk by a being, may cure disease. The



being must roll a successful saving throw vs. spell; if successful, the water is effective in the round after contact. If the saving throw fails, the water has no effect, and is wasted.

Wild Magic Effects of a Refuge

If any polymorph or related magic is attempted within a Harper refuge (even by a Harper or allied spellcaster), it fails, and the caster suffers the same effects as victims of a *transforming tune* spell (random effect, not chosen by the caster; for details of this spell, see the “Spells” chapter in this book).

The long, echoing invocation came to a rolling end, and there was a heavy silence.

“Rise!” Balagaerus the Mighty roared, raising his hands high. There was a sudden flash of blue light, crawling over the form that lay on the table – and then the unliving stone moved.

“Rise!” Balagaerus commanded again, and light flashed anew. As his creation sat up stiffly, the wizard had a brief glimpse of dark, unfriendly eyes, antlers atop its head that shouldn’t have been there – and then blue lightning spat from those eyes, reaching for him! There was a sudden roaring in his ears, and he was falling....

Many wizards and priests who attain sufficient power attempt to build and enchant golems, gargoyles, and other constructed beings as guardians—once they have something to guard. If they try to do it within the confines of a Harper refuge, they may (if they don’t successfully roll a saving throw vs. spell, an Intelligence Check, and a Wisdom Check) suffer the effects described hereafter. (Note that these effects can create a construct more powerful than the creator could normally achieve.)

The DM should roll 1d6 and consult the following table:

1—Magical backlash burns the spellcaster’s brain; spellcaster loses one level. Magical components of intended construct are destroyed; construct is not successfully created.

2—Magical backlash rages through spellcaster’s body; spellcaster loses one attribute

point (determine randomly; such a loss should never disqualify a PC from class membership), but gains a random Chance Element (see below). Construct is not created, but components are unharmed (spellcaster can use them when trying construction process again).

3—Spellcaster permanently loses 1d4 hit points; construct is created. Roll any die. If the result is an even number, the construct has 1d4 extra hit points, and if it is damaged in the future, automatically regains 1d4 lost hit points every sunrise. If the result is an odd number, the construct has the usual number of hit points, but gains 1d2 Chance Elements.

4—Spellcaster gains two random Chance Elements, which remain invisible and undetectable until the caster calls upon them by silent act of will (limited to one use each, per day-or-24-hour period). Construct is not created, and its components are vaporized.

5—Spellcaster unaffected. Construct successfully created, but has 1d4 (randomly-chosen) Chance Elements in addition to its usual powers and properties.

6—Magical explosion occurs. All beings within 20 feet suffer 5d6 points of blast damage; construct components are destroyed. Possible fire and damage to surroundings, at DM’s option (saving throws may be required for fragile or magical items).

Chance Elements

To determine Chance Elements, roll 1d12 and consult the following information for the results (from time to time, a DM may wish to make up different or unique results, and substitute them for those given here; gills and/or twice-a-day water breathing or true seeing powers come to mind immediately). As these results can be conferred on both a construct and the spellcaster trying to create it, the word “being” is used here, to apply to both.

1—Antlers. They can be used to slash and gore for 1d4 points of damage per round (this is gained as an extra attack).



2—Arms. 1d4 extra limbs are gained. These can carry and manipulate with the being's normal strength. If the being normally has arm attacks or uses them to wield weapons, it gains an extra attack for each arm.

3—Body Spurs (pointed bone spines projecting from limbs, or along spine, or on torso). Armor Class improves by 2, being gains 2 points of damage to rolls made for all attacks dealt by its limbs, and it gains an additional 2d4 points of damage to any hug attacks (already allowed it; does not confer a hug attack where none is allowed before).

4—Displacer Beast Effect. Being's surface bends light, so it always appears to be three feet away from its actual position (attackers suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls, and the being gains a +2 bonus to all saving throws).

5—Immunity. To poison, or the effects of undead attacks that go beyond the purely physical (such as level draining), or all diseases (including lycanthropy and mummy rot), or all petrification and polymorph attacks. (Decide which immunity randomly; for the results given here, roll 1d4).

6—Invisible Vision. The being can see all invisible creatures and objects within 60 feet and can see (by a sparkling glow) if spells (as opposed to innate powers) have been used to create this invisibility. Being also gains a 2 in 6 chance of detecting "something odd" about the appearance of magically disguised or altered creatures or objects, without gaining any idea of their true form(s).

7—Special Attack. The being gains a special attack form selected or devised by the DM, or roll 1d6 and select from this table:

1: Acid spit. Up to three times a day, the being can spit acid (in a stream a few inches wide, to a distance of 10 feet). Successful attack rolls are required for mobile targets. Damage is 2d4+1, and it corrodes flesh and all items failing their saving throw (magical items gain a +1 bonus, or a bonus equal to the greatest plus they possess, whichever is higher). If a victim's face or head is attacked, there is 1 in 10 chance

that hearing, sight, or smell is permanently affected (a regeneration spell can fix such an affliction).

2: Charm. Once a day (any period of 24 hours, or 144 turns), the being can enact a *charm monster* on another being of equal or lesser Intelligence, by touch. A successful attack roll is required for mobile targets, and the intended victim gets its usual saving throw vs. the spell. The effect ends at once if the controlling being is killed or rendered senseless, and in any event can't be continued beyond a period of 10 turns per Intelligence point of the charming being; the DM should determine this duration and allow the charmed victim a saving throw to break free of the effect at the halfway point.

The charming being can have only one controlled victim at a time.

3: Energy Drain. Once per day, the being can, by touch and deliberate use of will, drain energy from a foe. A successful attack roll is required; the victim is allowed a saving throw vs. death magic. If successful, the victim loses 1 hit point, permanently. If failed, the victim loses one level of experience, falling to the midpoint of the level below. Changes in spell mastery, hit points, attack effectiveness, and other losses involved in the level change occur instantly (memorized spells now beyond a victim's comprehension are lost). A 1st-level victim who is energy drained in this manner is rendered helpless and unconscious, at 1 hit point, and must roll a successful system shock survival roll. If it fails, the victim dies and may rise three days later as a wight or lesser form of undead, not under the control of the draining being.

A drained monster loses a Hit Die. In all cases, experience can be regained by adventuring, or by use of a *restoration* spell (application of which can also restore a "permanently lost hit point" to a being who otherwise escaped loss of life energy; elapsed time has no effect on the effectiveness of the restoration in this regard). Drained life energy (including hp or spells lost by a victim) is not acquired by the draining being.



4: Paralysis. Four times per day, the being can, by touch and deliberate use of will, affect a single victim (living or undead) with paralysis. A saving throw is allowed, and mobile victims can be touched only via a successful attack roll.

The victim can't move from the spot, speak, or voluntarily move any limbs (so attacks and most spellcasting are impossible). This condition lasts for one day, unless ended earlier by the contact of any spell on the paralyzed victim, or by touch and will of the paralyzing being (this release doesn't count as one of the four daily uses of the paralyzing power).

5: Petrification. Once per day, the being can, by touch and deliberate use of will, turn a touched living (not undead) being to stone. A successful attack roll is required, and the being gets a saving throw to entirely avoid the effect.

Petrification is permanent, affecting a single victim and all worn or carried non-living materials, until undone by magic or by touch and will of the petrifying being (this undoing of

one's own work doesn't count as a use of this ability).

6: Spell Ability. The being gains the natural power to cast spells, to a maximum of three spells per 24-hour period, either one spell three times, three different spells once each, or a combination of these. Once cast, these spells are replenished by natural regeneration; no study or components are needed (casting time and effects are unchanged). Spells can only be of a type and level usable by the creating spellcaster, and can't be changed by anyone, once a being gains them.

A being can never gain more than one special attack.

8—Special Defense. Specific defenses can be chosen or devised by the DM, but only four sorts of defenses can be randomly selected:

1: Immunity to Normal Weapons. A magical weapon is needed to strike the being—either one with bonuses or just any normal weapon that has had a spell cast on it.



2: Defensive Spell Use. The being gains the power to use a single defensive spell (on self only) four times per day, or either one of two spells twice per day (as a 12th-level wizard, only one spell can be operative at a time, casting doesn't require material components). The DM can choose the spell, or it can be one of (roll 1d4):

1. *Armor*
2. *Blink*
3. *Duo-dimension*
4. *Wraithform*

3: Regeneration. The being naturally, regains 1d4 lost hit points at the end of each one-turn period, or regains 1 hit points at the end of every fourth round, or recovers 2 hit points at the end of every six rounds (DM should choose the rate; slower is better for game balance).

4: Spell Immunity. Roll 1d4 to determine which immunity is gained (if the latter, the DM should pick which specific spells the being is immune to—such immunity is never to all spells of a school, level, or related type), or roll 1d6 for wizard spells and 1d4 for priest spells, re-rolling with a 1d8 to find the level of each spell the being is immune to, and then choosing from the spell lists by any method desired). If the being normally has one of these immunities, it gains the other. In the rare case of a being already having both immunities, re-roll (if this result comes up again, the being gains nothing).

9—Tail. Roll again: even = lashing tail (extra attack gained, tail slap does 1d6 points of damage); odd = prehensile tail (can hold or carry things, including weapons—so being gains an extra attack—or can be used to hold being on a perch, ledge, tree limb, or other support, freeing other limbs to attack or perform other activities).

10—Roll again, twice, on this table. Being gains both Chance Elements (re-roll if necessary to prevent duplications).

11—Wings. Being gains both wings and the power of flight: MV Fl 2d10 (for Maneuverability Class, roll 1d4: 1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D) plus the ability to swoop or pounce from aloft (increase damage of any attacks, weapon or natural, by +2 per die, but being is on the ground for the round after the attack; if taking off again immediately, it cannot attack during that round).

12—If this result applies to a construct, it is created normally, but it is free of creator's control, and it attacks creator or other beings present.

If this result applies to a spellcaster trying to create a construct, the creation is successful and the construct has normal powers. The spellcaster gains any one property or attack (usable only once per day) that the construct has, and is freed of any enchantments (such as *geas* or *curse* spells) that control the caster's will, body, or actions—regardless of whether or not the caster wishes to be freed from such magic.

The Deadly Double

If any Chance Element is not desired by a DM, replace it with the Deadly Double: The construct is created normally—but unbeknownst to the spellcaster, two additional, identical constructs materialize somewhere else in the campaign world and begin to stalk the spellcaster. They have vague senses of the direction and distance the spellcaster is from them, and if they ever come within 90 feet of the caster and have a clear view of him, they recognize the caster even if disguised, and they attack.

These doubles exist only to destroy the caster: if the caster is killed, they crumble into dust (if the caster is later returned to life, the doubles do not re-form). This effect won't occur for undead spellcasters.



Never cross spells with gods, archmages, liches – or Harpers. Of all of these, Harpers are the most persistent and the most unpredictable.

– Gulden Thorlb, High Gnome of the Council of Amry, the Year of Blue Flame

Not all Harpers have or can use magic. Of those who do, many have only a few magical items to call on, or rely on modest magic known to most spellcasters (the core spells detailed in the *Player's Handbook*). As the ranks of the Harpers contain many odd or independent-in-character, widely traveled adventurers, the DM is free to give Harper NPCs any spells desired. Harper spells are as varied as the Harpers themselves.

DMs who have access to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures sourcebook are advised that the *gemjump* spell therein is very popular with Harper wizards. This chapter details a single powerful wizard spell, *the transforming tune*, that more than a few Harpers are known to employ.

Note that spells are by no means shared freely and quickly throughout the Harper network; many Harpers have never encountered the spell given here (though most senior Harpers will at least have heard of a Harper being able to bring about its spell effects).

Spellsingers

A rare few Harpers, down the ages, have been “spellsingers” – folk with the ability to cast spells entirely through dance or song (without material components). This ability is very rare today; no known Harpers have or will admit to possessing it, so it is not detailed here.

However, Harpers are warned that this power can be very dangerous, is part of their heritage, and that they may face it in battle at any time (for example, the cruel and capricious nomadic adventuress known as “The Singing Witch” is probably a spellsinger. Active in the North, she has been known to slay Harpers). A spellsinger performs a complicated dance and

song ritual when memorizing a spell-and to cast it, later, need only sing or play on an instrument, a key phrase or succession of musical notes, to release the magic.

Transforming Tune (Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 9

Range: 30 yards

Components: V,S

Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

This powerful spell can be cast on a musical instrument (or, by throat touch, on the voice of any being having vocal cords), to be released later by singing or playing. The releaser of the spell can choose its targets and effects, employing only one effect per round, but as many effects as desired until the spell expires (duration is determined by the caster's level, not that of the releaser). Targets and effects are selected by the will of the releaser. If a releaser doesn't know what effects are possible, the spell unleashes the effect closest to his desires of the moment-or, if the releaser maintains an open, neutral mind, a random effect will occur (random targets or target areas can also be “selected” in this way). All saving throws against a *transforming tune* are vs. spell, but with a -3 penalty. The maximum area any tune can affect is a sphere 60 feet across, whose center can't be more than 90 feet away from the source of the tune. This is the “area” referred to below, although the releaser can choose to make it smaller (to exclude certain beings or objects). The spherical area need not rest on the ground, and it ignores gravity—if a midair location is chosen, the sphere remains stationary. The releaser may choose to leave the area stationary, or move it at up to ten feet/round; it won't move out of range of the tune source, but only moves in accordance with tune source's movements if the releaser wills it to. Its effects are otherwise as described below, or for the spell named below.



Known *transforming tune* effects include the following (roll 2d12 for random determination):

2—Breaks all charms, holds, wizard locks, and psionic controls.

3—Breaks any one chosen lock, chain, or weapon (of metal only; all enspelled material, regardless of bonuses, gets a normal saving throw vs. spell, without a -3 penalty).

4—Breaks any *polymorph* or *shapechange* spells or conditions (on one item or being only).

5 — *Call woodland beings*.

6—Change any one not-yet-triggered spell (such as a *magic mouth*) cast on an area or object only, to another (random, not chosen by releaser) spell, to be triggered later, when the triggering conditions of the original spell are met (e.g., enter a certain room or area, spill blood, change shape, cast a spell, etc.). The nature of the original spell need not be known to the releaser; the precise nature of what spell it's turned into is made known to the releaser—but can't be selected by him.

7 — *Dimension door* (chosen recipient can be releaser).

8 — *Dispel magic*.

9—Instantly shatters all *entangle* and *Evard's black tentacles* spells in area (including not-yet-triggered ones, whether their precise existence and location is known or not).

10 — *Levitate*.

11 — *Polymorph other*.

12 — *Polymorph self* (releaser, and/or instrument that is the source of the tune, as the releaser desires).

13 — *Remove curse* (releaser can be recipient).

14 — *Repulsion* (effective only against all undead and all beings of Intelligence 6 or less).

15 —Stills any shriekers (in area), scrambles all harpy songs in area (songs can still be heard, but have no effect), and negates the effects of banshee wails, sphinx roars, and other auditory attacks in the area.

16 — *Stone tell*.

17— *Stone to flesh* (turns back to original shape, free of all magical constraints and enchantments).

18 — *Strength* (releaser can be recipient).

19 — *Telekinesis*.

20 — *Tenser's transformation* (chosen recipient can be releaser).

21 — *True seeing* (chosen recipient can be releaser).

22 —Lays a weird on any one chosen being (if being's saving throw fails). The weird can't be removed by *remove curse*, *dispel magic*, or any other means known at present. All the weird does is warn the tune releaser when the weirded being does a single specified thing (e.g., uses a magical item, casts a spell, goes to sleep, wakes up, kills, eats, and so on). The warning comes in the form of a snatch of the tune, heard faintly only by the releaser, as the weirded being does the specified act. A weird lasts one day per level of the tune caster (not releaser), and the releaser can change the specified act that it warns for once per day. Only one act can be warned against at a time.

23—Restores any one lost (cast or discharged) spell or magical item charge (for one being only; the loss must have occurred within a time of one turn per level of the tune caster; releaser is made aware if lost magic cannot be recovered and need not waste the time on a vain use of this effect).

24 — *Heal* on any one being. This also prevents the target taking any damage for the next two rounds (no hit point losses, energy drain level losses, system shock survival rolls, or anything of the sort). This does not mean the affected being will prevail in all attacks or other actions, just that he can't be directly harmed during this time.

Other Harper Spells

Elminster warns us all that individual Harpers command "the most varied, powerful, and interesting collection of spells in use anywhere on Toril today; no prizes for guessing which Harper wields what...save thy continued survival."

Magic? Aye; Harpers always seem to have some magic up their sleeves – even when they're not wearing sleeves....

– Taerth Shindlestar, Master of the Pride of Reddansyr Inn, Year of the Singing Skull

The Harpers are a varied group of folk; some are powerful mages, others are penniless hunters and rangers. Their familiarity with magic varies as greatly as their vocations; many a Harper has gone alone into great danger with no magic at all—to the disbelief of others hearing about it later. Common rumor holds that all Harpers always have some magical trickery at the ready (hence the quotation above), and this is largely true for the more powerful Harper adventurers. This chapter presents an assortment of magical items created, used, or popularized by Harpers. It is by no means complete; Harpers tend to keep secrets by their very nature. Unique items (such as the *Ring of Winter* featured in the novel of the same name) do not appear here. One of note is the witty, kindly, intelligent flying *longsword* +2 called “Lady Bluetip,” well known as a guide and fighting-ally among Harpers in the Sword Coast North for over 200 years. It goes its own way, aiding the Harpers in need it meets, but never staying with them for long. (The Lady has all the powers of a bard’s blade, detailed below, and can speak, fly, and detect undead within 90 feet, with other abilities left to the DM).

We begin with the item most important to Harpers (the silvery harp pin most folk in the Realms “know” Harpers carry), and then revert to the order established in the DMG for magical items. Of the items that appear therein, the following are perhaps most popular among living Harpers: *rings of protection*, *shooting stars*, and *the ram*, *boots of elvenkind* and *the north*, and *swords of dancing* and *luck blades*. *Longswords* and *daggers* tend to be the most popular forms of weapons among Harpers.

In the entries that follow, “XP Value” is experienced gained by an individual who makes

(enchants) an item, not merely one who comes to possess it. Note that the crafting of many of these items is secret, or has been lost with the passing years. “GP Value” is a guide for DMs trying to determine a typical market price for the item (to a wealthy buyer who does not sense the seller is desperate for cash). Keep these values secret from players; PCs in the Realms do not normally know the going market rate for any magical item. These items can be used by all beings able to manipulate, carry, and direct them, not just Harpers; many of them are popular with bards of all backgrounds and alignments. Although anyone can carry a Harper pin (usually hidden; even Harpers wear them openly only inside Harper strongholds such as Twilight Hall), anyone trying to sell a Harper pin invites immediate attack (or at least detention and a searching interview) if the buyer is a Harper or Harper ally, or word of the sale reaches a Harper. The value of these pins (to collectors, because of their rare availability; to Harpers, to prevent them falling into non-Harper hands; and to Harper foes, for use in deceptions) accounts for their inflated GP Value.

Harper Treasure Table

To randomly determine what treasure encountered Harpers (including corpses who haven’t been ransacked) carry, roll 4d6. The first even result denotes the presence of a Harper pin; for every additional even result, consult this table once; for every 6 rolled, consult the table twice. Roll 3d10 to determine table results. If duplications that don’t make sense occur, re-roll.

For Harper NPCs, choosing treasure is advisable to random determination, but treasure caches and other play situations may well dictate random Harper magic treasure determination from time to time.

Die Roll Result

3	<i>Scroll of xornform</i>
4	Consult Magical Harp subtable
5	<i>Ring of projection</i>
6	<i>Scroll of the Harpers</i>



- 7 *Shield of Shadows*
- 8 *Potions of extra-healing* (1d2; each heals 3d8+3 lost hp or provides three doses of 1d8 hp)
- 9 *Rod of grasping hands*
- 10 *Wand of weapons*
- 11 *Philter of timely invulnerability* (1d2 in number; usually in stainless steel vials)
- 12 Consult Magical Harp subtable
- 13 *Bard's blade* (2 in 6 chance of a dagger +1 also)
- 14 *Potions of extra-healing* (1d2; each heals 3d8+3 lost hp or provides three doses of 1d8 hp)
- 15 *Vest of shadows* (also, there's a 2 in 6 chance of a dagger +1)
- 16 Consult Magical Harp subtable
- 17 *Wandering stars* (1d4 in number)
- 18 *Jhanny's wristlet*
- 19 *Singing sword*
- 20 *Staff of wanderers*

- 21 *Pheljara's wand*
- 22 *Ring of twilight*
- 23 *Bard's blade* (2 in 6 chance of a dagger +1 also)
- 24 *Staff of wanderers*
- 25 *Ring of twilight*
- 26 *Potion of song*
- 27 *Scroll of xornform*
- 28 *Gaudle's rod of rings* (2 in 6 chance of 1d3 rings; each has a 50% chance of being magical; if not, they beargems for use as currency)
- 29 *Rod of raging battle*
- 30 Consult DMG tables

Magical Harp Subtable (Roll 1d12)

Die Roll	Result
1	<i>Azlaer's harp</i>
2	<i>Dove's harp</i>
3	<i>Dunzrin's harp</i>
4	<i>Esheen's harp</i>

- 5 *Janthra's harp*
- 6 *Jolora's harp*
- 7 *Methild's harp*
- 8 *Ninthalar's harp*
- 9 *Rhingalade's harp*
- 10 *Tallar's harp*
- 11 *Valarde's harp*
- 12 *Zunzalor's harp*

Dove's Harp is detailed in the "Senior Harpers" chapter of this book and in the *Ruins of Myth Drannor* boxed set; *Valarde's harp* appears only there. DMs lacking that set should re-roll if the dice choose *Valarde's harp*, or substitute either of the two magical harps that appear in the *DMG*.

Harper Pin

XP Value: 5,000 GP Value: 40,000

A Harper pin gives its wearer a +5 bonus to saving throws vs. all enchantment/charm spells (and equivalent psionic powers). It also confers absolute immunity to all detection, mind- and alignment-reading magic and psionics; the wearer simply "isn't there." (It does not prevent magical detection linked to specific objects carried by a Harper, however, except itself; a *locate object* spell used to find "a Harper pin" would fail, but one used to find a specific item that a Harper is known to be carrying—a particular crown, for instance—would find that item, but still not reveal the Harper carrying it.)

A Harper pin also absorbs all magic missile and lightning/electricity attacks into itself, protecting a bearer from all damage.

Harper pins are made by certain skilled (and secretive) smiths in Evermeet, Mintarn, Waterdeep, Neverwinter, Everlund, Silverymoon, Everska, High Horn, Shadowdale, Deepingdale, Lyrabar, and Starmantle. The smiths make and give pins only to specific senior Harpers known to them—not just to anyone who shows up on their doorstep asking for one.

Harper pins are never attuned to a specific being or wearer. They are of silver treated to be everbright (never tarnish) and as hard as adamantine. They are AC -2, have 9 hit points,

and suffer no damage from magical attacks. They gain a +5 bonus to all item saving throws.

Some Harper pins turn black in one round when worn by an evil-aligned being, and thereafter utter discordant jangling sounds, as if a metal-stringed harp was being savagely struck.

Potions

Philter of Timely Invulnerability

XP Value: 7,000 GP Value: 25,000

Imbibing this potion turns any living being into a ghostly, intangible state like that achieved by use of a *wraithform* spell. The affected being's eyes glow silver while this magic is in effect. With the exceptions noted hereafter, the imbiber's ghostly form is identical in all respects to the results of that spell.

Any hit points of physical damage inflicted upon the imbiber during this time (i.e., any attacks on the wraith-like being that would have harmed it in its normal tangible state) are gained by the imbiber as healing hit points. (Magical attacks cause their usual damage to the wraith-like imbiber.) Extra hit points gained in this way are retained as "phantom" hit points for the next turn; any damage suffered by the imbiber are first subtracted from these extra hit points. For every 9 hp gained over the imbiber's normal maximum, the imbiber temporarily gains 1 level for purposes of determining attack rolls and saving throws only. At the end of a turn after being gained, these hit points are lost.

The imbiber of a *philter of timely invulnerability* is protected as if by a *neutralize poison* spell throughout the philter's period of effect.

Trapped or cornered Harpers often use such potions to slip out of cells or to charge through groups of armed enemies or hails of arrows to make an escape.

Potion of Song

XP Value: 4,000 GP Value: 9,000

This powerful potion enables an imbiber to emit a beautiful singing voice (even if gagged, under magical silence, or even lacking vocal



cords or tongue due to injury or natural form). The pitch and timbre of the voice are as willed by the imbiber (from high, unearthly soprano to deep, reverberating bass) and can vary by imbiber's choice throughout the magic's duration.

The potion effects last for one turn, enabling the user to communicate messages through song lyrics, impress and enthrall all intelligent, non-deaf beings of 4 Hit Dice/levels or less (by means of such a magical draught, an unskilled singer could expect to earn good money in a marketplace or tavern for a strikingly moving or memorable performance). If the imbiber can sing to such beings for four consecutive uninterrupted rounds, the imbiber can attempt to influence them by vocal direction as if casting a *suggestion* spell on each hearer (i.e., a saving throw vs. spell to negate effects is allowed to each being in the audience; those unable to hear, lacking Intelligence, having 5 or more Hit Dice or levels, or being undead are unaffected; the imbiber can make only one suggestion—such as “attack the castle!” or “flee from us, right now!”—but he can make it to an unlimited number of creatures within hearing, up to half a mile distant if *projection* is used, or within about a 40-foot radius if it is not).

Speech produced with the aid of the potion can be projected to cross distances up to half a mile, fill noisy great halls or other large chambers, and be heard through howling winds or the din of battle. After a round of experimentation, the singer can modify the potion-aided song to still the sounds of shriekers or negate the song effects of harpies.

The potion imbiber is rendered immune to all sound-related attacks, such as a banshee's wail, harpy charm-song, and a sphinx's roar. The potion grants perfect mimicry of the voice tone of any being the imbiber has heard speak.

Scrolls

Scroll of the Harpers

Reading Time—2

XP Value: 2,000 GP Value: 8,000

This scroll displays the symbol of the Harpers (the crescent moon and harp inside four stars), encircled by 12 command words. If the moon or harp is touched while one of the words is spoken, the scroll takes effect. Any Harper pin(s) within 60 feet of the scroll are transformed into the form of a real, magical sort of harp for 2d12 rounds. The type of harp is determined by which word is read; each word corresponds to one of the ten magical harps that appear in this chapter, plus the two magical harps detailed in the *Ruins of Myth Drannor* boxed set (DMs lacking that source should substitute the two magical harps detailed in the *DMG*.)

Any Harper pins involved are not damaged by the magic, and return to their own forms upon expiration of the magic. If none are within range of the scroll, the magic does not work, but it is not wasted or discharged. Such a magical harp form has all of its usual powers, plus the power to function as a musical instrument of the finest make and tuning. It is weightless and will float, stationary, if released. While playing music (not chords or tunes that unleash magical attacks), it can be released by its player and left to play on by itself, repeating whatever tunes were played earlier (if none were, the music is the last tune played by the harp's activator, on anything, or sung) with minor variations. It plays on by itself until the player who released it touches it again, or the magic expires—whereupon it turns back into a pin and drops to the ground. (To make such a scroll, a wizard must be familiar with all of the magical harp types. Such mages—beyond the obvious ones such as Elminster, Khelben, Laeral, Alustriel, and Shambarin of Berdusk—are rare indeed. A wizard familiar with only a few of the harp types could make a scroll that permits transformation into only those fewer types with which he is familiar, which would have correspondingly lesser XP and GP Values.)

Scroll of Xornform

Reading Time—6

XP Value: 2,000 GP Value: 18,000

This scroll can be activated by whispering or mouthing its words silently; it need not be read aloud, full-voiced. It enables the reader, or another being touched by the reader and willed to be the magical recipient by the reader, during reading, to phase through stone and metal. This effect extends to any non-living items attached to, or carried by, a single living being (i.e., all clothes, weapons, gear, and carried treasure, even a carried corpse). It lasts for 1d4+12 rounds, and permits the affected being to pass through shackles, bars, chains, and stone walls (typically being used to escape prisons). Its name comes from the shadowy, xorn-like illusory form that the scroll's magic creates around the actual body of the affected being. The magic does not allow sight through stone, but it does allow MV 9 through rock, and the retention of a sense of direction (i.e., "the way I was heading, or that direction in which I intended to move when I entered the stone;" so that a prisoner in a cell could move upward to a higher floor, or down to a lower one, even though he had no room to move in that direction in the cell prior to use of the scroll).

A being still encased in stone when the magic expires is affected as if by an *imprisonment* spell. A being partially free of stone when the magic expires is ejected from the stone, but suffers 5d6 points of damage and must roll a successful system shock survival roll to remain alive. A *move earth* spell cast on the area in which the phasing being is located hurls him backward 30 feet through the rock and stuns him for one round. If a *passwall* spell is cast on the immediate volume of rock or metal that contains a phasing being, he is exposed by the magic (the rock or stone is shoved back from around him, allowing other attacks to reach him), and he suffers an immediate 1d10+10 points of damage. If the phasing being is struck by a *phase door* spell (direct touch contact is required; an attack roll is normally necessary), he is instantly slain.

Rings

Ring of Projection

XP Value: 1,000 GP Value: 4,500

This plain-looking brass ring enables the wearer to hurl any physical object he could normally throw (i.e., of throwable size, not large furniture or boulders) triple the normal distance. Missile weapons launched or fired by the wearer have their ranges tripled. Velocity is increased, so the objects gain a +3 bonus to all dice of impact damage, and they reach their destinations in the same time they would in non-augmented state. The wearer need not use this power when throwing (i.e., tossing a fruit to a friend won't result in their injury or in it ending up several fields away, if the ring-wearer doesn't want it to), but he doesn't need to do anything special to call it forth; some practice is usually necessary to learn to place hurled things where desired.

The ring's magic carries a small amount of surrounding air with the hurled object, which can thereby carry oxygen to submerged beings, or (if incendiary) remain lit during flight (i.e., a blazing torch or oil flask could be hurled over a high castle wall without going out).

The ring has one alternative use: if the wearer speaks a word graven on the inside of the band, he or another touched being can jump (as the spell) once. This power can be used as often as desired, but it affects only one living being at a time (plus all gear the being could normally carry, even a dead companion carried on his back). The ring's magic is always inactive for one round after each jump.

Ring of Twilight

XP Value: 4,500 GP Value: 10,000

This ring enables a wearer to cloak his form in dusky shadows. Features and clothing are disguised so that a viewer unfamiliar with the wearer's gait, speech, and habits would be unable to identify him (beyond perhaps, if the wearer is seen walking, recognizing an upright biped). In darkness or gloom, the wearer is 80%



likely to pass unnoticed. If shadows are present, the wearer can hide in shadows (as a thief does, even if not a thief) with a 70% chance of success. If seen and attacked, the shadowy figure has an Armor Class 2 better than it does when the wearer is not using the ring. The wearer of a *ring of twilight* can see in gloom or near-darkness as clearly as if in a strong light (maps and tiny inscriptions can be read, facial expressions and details noted, and so on). The wearer is also empowered to see wraith-like beings, including the undead creatures known as shadows, with crystal clarity. The shadows created by the ring are actually swirling patterns of energy; they can melt ice by prolonged contact. They reduce all damage suffered by the wearer and his clothing or gear due to exposure, cold (including undead chilling and magical cold, such as *chill touch* and *ice storm* spells) by 1 point per die, 1d4 per singledie-of-damage attack, or 1 point per contact (whichever best applies).

Rods

Gaudle's Rod of Rings

XP Value: 6,000 GP Value: 35,000

This rod normally takes the form of a black, smooth, wooden stick about as long as a large man's hand (and is commonly carried in a sheath inside a boot, or on a sword-scabbard). When grasped and willed to become active, it grows to typical rod size, and a ghostly human hand appears at one end of the rod. This hand can wear up to one ring per digit (thumb included), and such rings cannot be detected (or used) when the rod is in its smaller, inactive state. A ring encrusted with gems could not be detected when the hand wasn't visible; nor could the presence or powers of any magical rings.

These sorts of rods rarely come with any rings on the phantom hand; such must be found or created by the user and then added to the hand.

A being grasping a *rod of rings* is instantly mentally aware of any magical powers of the

rings worn by the hand. He can exercise one voluntary power of each ring per round (to a maximum of one power for every three experience levels or Hit Dice the character possesses, rounding down, but never below a minimum of one power) and any number of involuntary powers. (A *ring of feather falling* protects its user with an automatic or involuntary power, but a spark shower attack from a *ring of shooting stars* can be called forth only by the will of the wearer and is therefore a voluntary power). The rod's magic overrides the normal prohibition on using three or more rings (the rod-wielder can also directly wear and use up to two magical rings at the same time as wielding the rod).

The phantom hand is AC -7. A finger must be dealt 66 points of damage before its ring can be forcibly removed or cut away in battle; the rod-wielder can remove a ring at will, by speaking a secret word of release.

If a *rod of rings* has no rings, the wielder can use only its most basic powers. The phantom hand is intangible and can do no damage to anything, but its touch can identify any magical item or spell (including magical traps) without activating or triggering them. When touching a being, it can identify the presence and properties of any enchantments on the being. The phantom hand can glow with an eerie, undead-like bony gleam or faint glow, or provide light equivalent to a faerie fire (hue of the rod-wielder's choice). The hand can also adhere to a ceiling, wall, or any other solid surface (even if smooth, wet, oily, greasy, or icy) by touch and command, allowing the wielder to use it as a handhold or anchor where none would normally be possible. The grip lasts until the wielder speaks the word of release or until the rod is loaded (e.g., by use of a rope tied to it, and beings or treasure tied to that rope) with more than 3,000 pounds of weight. This has been used to let a Harper descend into a glacial crevasse on a line, shift cargo from one ship to another at sea by using one mast as a crane (a pulley lashed to the rod stuck to the mast, high up), and for various breathtaking rescues or



swinging-on-a-rope feats.

Use of attached rings drains no charges from the rod, but identification drains one charge per aura or item identified (even if unintentionally done, if more magic is present than the rod-user was aware of). Adhering to a surface costs one charge per use (or per turn of continued adhesion; if charges run out, so does the grip).

Rod of Grasping Hands

XP Value: 3,000 GP Value: 15,000

This rod emits ghostly hands upon command. One hand can be unleashed per round, at a cost of one charge each. Such hands are AC 5, MV Fl 24 (A), have 14 hit points each, suffer no damage from metallic physical attacks (enchanted metal weapons cause damage equal to their pluses), and strike twice per round, for 1d4+1 points of damage each. Once emitted, a hand exists until the rod-wielder wills it to vanish, it is destroyed by damage or target freedom (see below), or 24 hours (= 144 turns) pass.

Instead of striking, the hands can be commanded to grasp. They will prove ineffectual at this (the rod wielder is not made instantly aware of this ineffectiveness, but can learn it only through observation) until there is at least one grasping hand per level or Hit Die of the target creature. The moment this total is achieved, the target is slowed to half movement rate, has all spellcasting ruined, aims magical items or fired/hurled/missile weapons with a -3 penalty to all attack rolls, and launches direct attacks with a -2 penalty to attack rolls. Once this state is achieved, the foe is allowed a saving throw vs. spell each round to get free. The saving throw suffers a -5 penalty the first round, -4 the second round, -3 the third, and so on, up to +5 in the 11th round. When the saving throw succeeds, all of the hands in existence melt away instantly into nothingness, and the rod becomes inactive for 1d4 rounds.

The hands are not undead and cannot be mentally contacted or controlled. A rod can control 20 hands at once (but can never emit more than one per round, and all of them must

be directed against a single being, to either strike or grasp—not some hands to do one thing and others to do the other). Multiple rods cannot combine their hand effects against a single being; one set of hands negates the other, regardless of the intent of the rod-wielders.

Staves

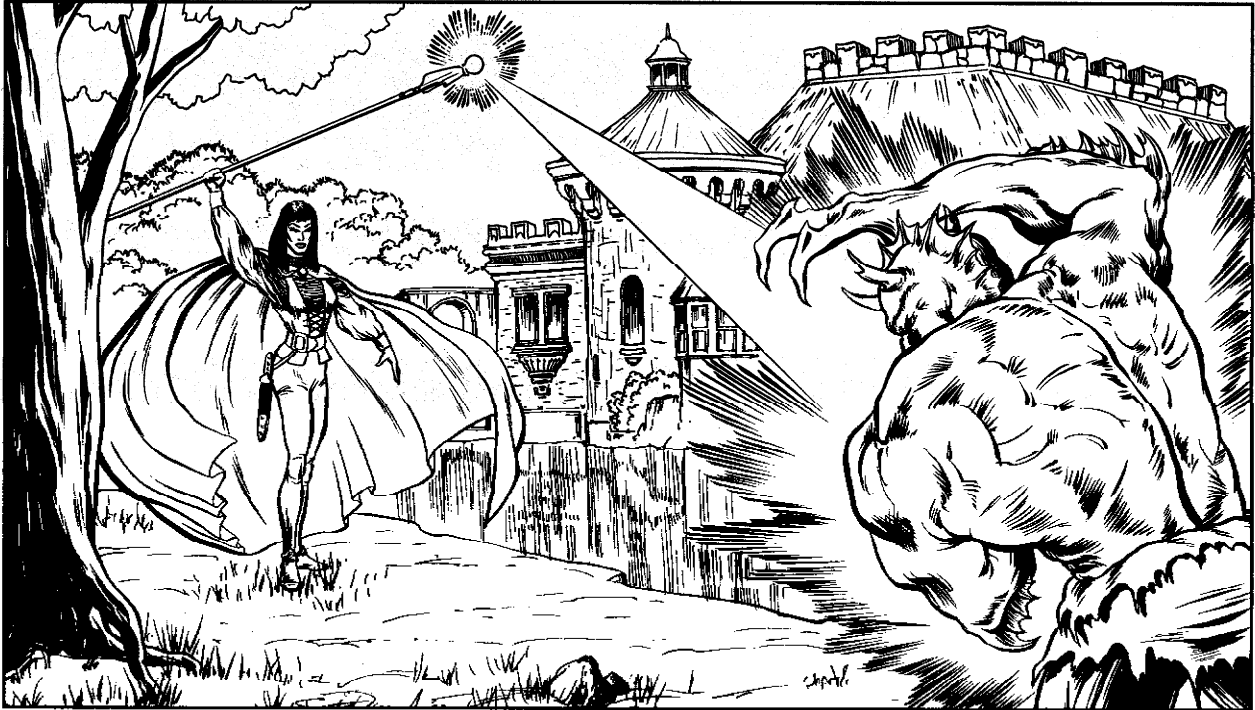
Staff of Raging Battle

XP Value: 15,000 GP Value: 50,000

This staff normally appears as a plain black staff of some dull wood. It is actually enchanted metal, a jet-black adamantite alloy of surpassing hardness; it is AC -6 and can suffer 99 points of physical damage before breaking (magic has no effect on it). When grasped and ordered, a *staff of raging battle* grows a glowing, mace-like ball of force at either end. Each of these is a +4 weapon; the wielder gets one unpenalized attack per round with each one, regardless of class, level, or weapon proficiency. Any attack roll for the staff that is a natural roll of 20 drains the item of one charge and inflicts triple damage—3d6+12. In any round in which one staff attack misses, the wielder can elect to drain two charges and get another attack in that same round; this additional attack has a +3 bonus, not +4, and can't be called forth if the staff has already lost charges in the same round, for any reason.

The staff wielder can also dimension door and levitate twice per day (at a cost of three charges for each such use). Whenever grasped, the staff renders the wielder immune to *reverse gravity*, *repulsion*, *trip*, and all *polymorph* spells. This automatic power operates in addition to other staff uses, draining one charge per magical attack thwarted. The staff also, without expending charges, always allows its wielder *feather fall* and *free action* protections. It causes any other magical item that comes within 70 feet of it to glow with a continuous purplish aura (these powers can't be turned off).

A *staff of raging battle* can be broken for a retributive strike (see *staff of the magi* in the DMG).



Such a staff cannot be recharged; when its last charge is exhausted, it bursts into shards, causing 4d4 points of shrapnel damage to all beings within ten feet (including its wielder). The shards rapidly collapse into useless dust.

Staff of Wanderers

XP Value: 15,000 GP Value: 45,000

This item appears to be a plain, stout wooden staff cut from a tree and left rough and misshapen. It has various powers, each equal to the spell of the same name, cast as if by a character of 6th level (except as noted below). It can be used by intelligent beings of any race, class, and level, who are able to grasp it and muster their wits to exert their will and unleash its powers. Harper centaurs and humans not of any adventuring class favor this item in the wooded wilderlands of the North.

The powers below cost one charge each:

- *animal friendship*
- *create water*

- *detect poison*
- *detect snares & pits*
- *endure heat/endure cold*
- *faerie fire*
- *invisibility to animals*
- *pass without trace*
- *purify food drink*

The following powers cost two charges each:

- *entangle*
- *hold animal*
- *spike growth*
- *starshine*
- *water breathing*
- *water walk*

The following powers cost three charges each (and function as if spells cast by a priest of 11th level):

- *air walk*
- *call woodland beings*
- *find the path*

- hold plant
- plant door

The following powers cost four charges each (and function as if spells cast by a priest of 12th level):

- anti-animal shell
- heal
- neutralize poison

A *staff of wanderers* can be broken for a retributive strike (see *staff of the magi* in the DMG). Such a staff cannot be recharged; as it is used, it rots, sheds bark, and otherwise visibly ages.

Wands

Pheljara's Wand

XP Value: 5,000 GP Value: 10,000

When activated by speaking a command word, this wand fires a sticky-ended, dull black cord from its tip. The wand's magic carries the cord in a straight line, regardless of gravity, winds, and any movement of the wand itself, outward in an absolutely straight path from the tip of the wand until the cord has traveled 190 feet or it strikes a solid object (a wall, roof, or even a passing bird). If no object is encountered, the cord remains stiff and attached to nothing except the wand, and may be laid across a gap or between two facing windows of adjacent structures; it may even be climbed straight up into the air, if the wand is wedged so the line can't fall over.

If the wand does strike a solid object, its end adheres to the object as strongly as does the discharge of a *wand of viscid globs*. The bond can be dissolved by alcohol, but it is otherwise so strong that stuck creatures will tear their joints apart if they try hard enough to pull free. The cord is non-reflective, even when wet, never becomes slippery or icy, and is rough (like suede or bark) to aid in easy traction or gripping. It is strong enough to bear 2,500 pounds, or the weight of ten armored human warriors of typical equipment and gear, without breaking. It is AC 1 and must be dealt 24 points of damage

in a single spot to be severed. The cord is immune to acid and other corrosive attacks, and resistant to fire (-2 points to all dice of fire damage, plus fire won't travel along the cord).

The cord fades away into nothingness, sticky end and all, when the magic expires (2d4 turns after activation), or when a being touches the wand and speaks a second command word.

This item is much favored by thieves and Harper agents who enter or leave places by stealth. It expends one charge per cord-firing.

Wand of Weapons

XP Value: 2,000 GP Value: 5,500

This wand enables the user to create weapons that appear in specific areas. The user must mentally choose a recipient being (who must be within sight) and a weapon, and then speak a command word.

A weapon of the sort visualized instantly appears in front of the chosen being and floats there. The being must roll a successful Dexterity Check to grasp and use the weapon in the same round, but he can always take hold of the weapon on the following round unless under physical constraint. In this case, the situation must permit a grasp, and a Dexterity Check must be successful, for the weapon to be taken.

Each weapon creation and delivery costs one charge. The weapon is a temporary magical construct; it fades into nothingness one turn after its creation. Until then, it functions as a weightless, unbreakable, magical weapon of the finest make and condition. It has no attack bonuses. It appears 1d4 feet away from the intended recipient's midsection, in whatever direction the being is facing. It can be grasped and used by another being, but the wand wielder can make it vanish instantly by act of will (and without any charge expenditure).

A *wand of weapons* can create one weapon per round, of one of the following types:

1. Dagger (1d4, 1d3 vs. L)
2. Footman's pick (1d6+1, 2d4 vs. L)
3. Warhammer (1d4+1, 1d4 vs. L)
4. Footman's flail (1d6+1, 2d4 vs. L)



5. Hand or throwing axe (1d6,1d4 vs.L)
6. Long sword (1d8,1d12 vs. L)
7. Footman's mace (1d6+1,1d6 vs. L)
8. Battle axe (1d8,1d8 vs. L)
9. Bastard sword, one-handed (1d8,1d12 vs. L)
10. Morning Star (2d4,1d6+1 vs. L)
11. Even: Two-handed sword (1d10,3d6 vs. L)
Odd: Bill (2d4,1d10 vs. L)
12. Even: Spear (1d6,1d8 vs. L)
Odd: Halberd (1d10,2d6 vs. L)

Some 15% of these wands create a random weapon type, not subject to the user's control. Roll 1d12 to determine what weapon appears whenever such wands are used (roll again to determine "even" or "odd" results, where applicable). A *wand of weapons* can never be recharged; when the last charge is gone, it crumbles to dust.

These wands are often used to arm prisoners or those who've had to go weaponless into danger. Any number of weapons can be sent to a single being; if none are taken, the being ends up ringed by floating weapons. They can be snatched and thrown by the recipient, but the wand cannot be used to fire weapons at a hostile creature.

Miscellaneous Magic

Harps

Magical harps lose their magical dweomers forever if their frames are broken, but loss or breakage of a string does not destroy or corrupt the magic permanently (the functioning of some powers may be temporarily impaired). All of these harps can be used to play music as normal instruments of the finest quality, and they have the added benefit of never going out of tune from cold or damp. A harp's magical powers cannot be activated in the same round in which the harpist activates another magical item or casts a spell.

If a magical power is described as "automatic," occurring whenever the harp's music

sounds (and not when triggered by the playing of specific strings or chords), any being able to move the strings can play the harp and awaken its power. He need not be a musician, or have any skill at all with a harp.

Azlaer's Harp

XP Value: 3,000 GP Value: 12,000

A harp devised in long-ago Myth Drannor, the strings of this instrument glow with a faint blue faerie fire as they are played. Their tones sooth natural and magically or psionically induced despair, fear, hopelessness, and rage, ending such conditions within a round of being heard. All charms and mental controls of any sort are blocked (held in abeyance, not ended) in creatures hearing the harp's music. No new charms, suggestions, or mental influences can be laid on beings listening to the harp (even by a bard trying to use the harp for this purpose). The maximum effective range of the harp is 80 feet in still air (and up to 140 feet downwind, or when sound is transmitted by cavern walls or enclosed spaces to adjacent areas).

Dunzrin's Harp

XP Value: 3,500 GP Value: 16,500

By silent will-force command of the last being to play it, this Harper-devised instrument can be made to record speech and other sounds (such as music) and play them back on command later. A non-harpist could pretend to play a beautiful tune on the harp (while actually playing back a tune recorded earlier), and a spying Harper could use the harp to preserve an incriminating conversation for hearing by others. Every such harp can preserve three different snatches of sound, each of up to two rounds in length. The being activating the harp's soundsnatching ability can instruct it to ignore any music it is playing at the time, so musical sounds won't mask something else it is recording. The fourth snatch of sound preserved automatically destroys the earliest preserved sound-snatch (even if of longer duration than the new soundsnatch, and regardless of the user's wishes).



Esheen's Harp

XP Value: 5,000 GP Value: 25,000

A harp devised in long-ago Myth Drannor, this instrument causes all glass and metal within 30 feet of its strings to ring and resonate when it is played, "singing along with" the harp's music, an eerie and attention-getting effect.

When the harp player plucks the lowest string, any glass or metal objects up to 30 feet distant from that the end of the harp's body is pointing at must roll a successful saving throw vs. crushing blow or instantly shatter into tiny shards. This power can be called on once every three rounds, and it affects all items within, or partially within, the one-foot-wide path of effect (the harp player cannot choose to spare some items and attack others).

The harp can shatter items that have successfully saved against its destructive magic earlier; the saving throws are not modified. Magical items (a container that holds a magical substance, such as a potion, is not itself magical unless an enchantment has been specifically placed on it) gain a bonus of +1 to all saving throws vs. the harp, or +1 per plus they may possess (whichever bonus is greater).

Janthra's Harp

XP Value: 5,000 GP Value: 25,000

This harp was created in long-ago Myth Drannor. Its special power can only be used after it has been played for at least one round; the harp player is mentally made aware of the power at that time. Whenever the harp player wills, he and up to three other living beings touching him are rendered invisible (even to animals and infravision), can pass without trace (as the spell), and move and speak cloaked in silence. The concealed beings can clearly hear and see each other.

This concealment lasts as long as the harp is continuously played (its own music can be clearly heard, but always sounds far-off and as though coming from all directions, and while playing, it cannot itself be located by any magical means). The harpist can move about while

playing, but he can't cast spells or activate other magical items without ending the harp's concealment.

Any creature who loses even momentary contact with the harpist instantly becomes audible and visible and can't regain concealment until the harp has been stilled and a new, later concealment begun. Touching the harpist again doesn't restore the protection (or reveal the harpist).

Whenever the harp is stilled, concealment cannot begin again until the end of the next round, even if the harpist starts playing immediately. Beings other than the harpist can cast spells while under the harp's concealment, but the instant the spell takes effect, concealment drops from the caster (only), even if he's still in contact with the harpist.

If an item is touched by this sort of harp while certain chords are played, the item is rendered invisible (completely undetectable except by touch; it doesn't radiate a dweomer and escapes even true seeing) until it is next touched by a living being. Note that undead could thus find and wield this invisible weapon; it won't appear until it successfully strikes a living being. Harpers usually use this harp power to hide useful items (such as daggers) in "plain view."

Jolora's Harp

XP Value: 4,000 GP Value: 30,000

This Harper-devised instrument has a special power that is only revealed when two dissonant chords are played in succession (i.e., the harpist makes a certain clashing key-change that would never be part of normal music).

The chords force all magical items within 50 feet (including the harp itself, and all magic on the person of the harpist except a Harper pin) to roll a successful saving throw vs. petrification (with a -4 penalty), or lose their magical powers for 1d6+1 rounds. Each item failing the initial saving throw must roll a second, unmodified saving throw vs. petrification; a second failure means it loses its magic permanently.



Methild's Harp

XP Value: 4,000 GP Value: 20,000

This harp was created in long-ago Myth Drannor. Its music constantly exhibits its power (the effect can't be turned off): this harp parts all webs, opens all locks, breaks all bonds, and unties all knots within ten feet of whenever it is playing.

Magical barriers, such as protective symbols and drawings, shields, walls of force, forcecages and the like that aren't designed to have an portal or opening permitting passage in and out, aren't affected by the harp. Magical knots and locks get a saving throw vs. breath weapon to avoid being affected (anything successfully saving is forever immune to the effects of that particular *Methild's harp*).

All things that the harp does successfully affect are outlined in an orange faerie fire radiance from the moment they're affected (at the end of the first round in which they're within range of the playing harp). A *rope of constriction*, *rope of entanglement*, or *rug of smothering* within ten feet of the playing harp ceases to function for 1d4 rounds, releasing any trapped creatures (note that a being entrapped by such an item couldn't play the harp to gain its freedom).

Ninthalar's Harp

XP Value: 2,500 GP Value: 12,500

A harp devised long ago in Myth Drannor for elven patrol use, this instrument's special power is automatic and affects only the player (and all items worn or carried by the harpist). Whenever the harp is played, and for as long as its music sounds, the player and all nonliving things on his person are affected as if by a *stone-skin* spell. Even fragile items are almost immune to physical attack. No other creatures can be affected by this condition, even if they touch the harpist.

In addition, a moving field of protective, invisible force exists about the harp and the player's arms, so that it is extremely difficult to physically prevent or hamper the harpist's playing (consider the player's arms and the



harp to be AC -9). Magical attacks aren't prevented by this field of force-and the harp's protection can be ended instantly by a *silence 15' radius* spell or a *hold person* spell cast on the harpist.

Rhingalade's Harp

XP Value: 2,000 GP Value: 12,000

This harp was devised in long-ago Myth Drannor. Whenever it is played, the harpist is made aware of its special power. At any time after one complete round of playing (except as noted below), the harpist can use the harp's magic.

By silent act of will, the harpist can blink (as in the spell) for as long as desired and the harp playing continues. In addition, 1d4 mirror images (as the spell) come into existence. These blink in the same manner as the harpist, but at slightly different times, so that the harpist (or at least, one image of the harpist) is always in view. These mirror images continue to exist



until struck by a physical attack or until the harp's music is stilled. The harpist can't cast spells, use magical items, or make weapon attacks without ending the harp playing. Whenever the harp's music is stilled, its special power can't be awakened again until three rounds have passed (even if the harpist starts playing again immediately).

Tallar's Harp

XP Value: 5,000 GP Value: 30,000

This Harper-devised instrument has two magical powers, both of which are mentally communicated to anyone who plays the harp.

When a certain chord is played, the harp will stun (effects identical to a wizard's *symbol* spell, when a *symbol of stunning* is used) any beings that fit the magic's limitations who are within 60 feet of the harp (the harp player is immune).

The harp can also temporarily enchant bladed weapons: If a particular tune is played as the harp is touched to a weapon, the blade gains an attack roll and damage bonus for 2d12 rounds. Roll 1d6: on a result of 1 through 5, the bonus is +1, but if a 6 is rolled, the weapon gains a +2 bonus. If the weapon already has a magical bonus, the harp's temporary bonus is added to it. Once a weapon is enchanted, its status continues until the randomly determined expiration or until a *dispel magic* spell is applied to the blade. The harp player has no special means of ending it early, even if the weapon is seized by an enemy.

Zunzalor's Harp

XP Value: 4,000 GP Value: 25,000

A harp devised in long-ago Myth Drannor, this instrument reveals magical things. While it is being played, a 30-foot-radius, pearly white *continual light* globe exists, centered on the harp. Within this area, the harp's powers are manifest as a continuous *dispel illusion*, *dispel invisibility*, and a *reveal glyph and symbol* effect. All magical or illusory runes, marks, or inscriptions (including writings hidden or made unreadable by

magic) are outlined in luminous blue light. They can be precisely located, or even (given expert knowledge or reference to a spell book or other source) tentatively identified or sketched for later study. The harp's revealing power doesn't activate them, however. It also doesn't prevent them from functioning normally, if triggered by touch or other preset conditions!

Intangible, magic-using, invisible, gaseous, wraith-like, and duo-planar creatures who contact the globe of radiance even momentarily are outlined in blue radiance for 1d4+1 rounds after last contact. This includes shadows, gaseous vampires, and all undead who drain energy because of their connections with the Negative Material plane, phase spiders (even if not phasing during contact), ethereal creatures, and mages using *duodimension* spells (who appear as thin vertical lines of blue radiance, in mid-air).

Jhannyl's Wristlet

XP Value: 4,000 GP Value: 9,500

This item appears as a dainty bracelet of silvery metal, decorated with filigree and dangling charms. Its abilities protect and affect only the wearer.

It gives a +1 bonus to all saving throws, except for saving throws vs. poison, polymorph, and petrification attacks, to which it confers a +2 bonus. These benefits, are cumulative to the bonuses and protections of all other known magical items and spells except multiple *Jhannyl's wristlets* (if more than one is worn, they cancel out each other's magic, conferring no protections on the wearer at all).

Such a bracelet also automatically casts *water breathing* on the wearer whenever he is submerged, casts a *feather fall* on him whenever he falls or is affected by reverse gravity magic, *cures disease* automatically (once per day) whenever the wearer is exposed to diseases, and casts *heal* on the wearer once per day whenever the wearer wills it to or reaches 6 hp, whichever happens first. (If the wearer customarily has 6 hp or less, this last function works only upon the wearer's mental command.)



Wandering Star

XP Value: 3,000 GP Value: 6,000

This strange item appears as a glowing (equivalent to dancing lights), sparkling skull-sized gem that flies about by itself, looping and darting about like a curious firefly, at MV Fl 24 (A). Despite this activity, it is not intelligent, and is in fact moving at random (able to sense and avoid only solid objects within ten feet) around an area up to 80 feet distant from the being it is linked to—the last individual to touch it.

A wandering star looks like a gem, but is a rubbery, amorphous cluster of energy; it drinks in heat and sunlight to power itself. It is AC -2 and has 77 hit points. It suffers damage from all magical and physical attacks, but it can't be affected by a spell attacks as a living being can (it has no mind to contact, cannot feel pain, and so on).

It is linked to a single being only in a tenuous way: the being it is linked to (often a Harper) can by silent act of will direct it to move in a particular direction, and at a specific rate. In other words, in a round in which the Harper isn't casting a spell or engaging in another activity requiring sustained concentration, he can direct a wandering star to travel where he wills. A star can knock on doors, break windows, and push open or batter through flimsy barriers by impact (sometimes suffering up to 1d4 points of damage in the process), but it can also swoop to smash fragile items (forcing crushing blow saving throws) and smite beings hostile to the Harper. A star can strike twice a round, for 1d4+2 points of impact damage. Its blows can ruin spellcasting, cause a target to fall (if the DM judges the situation to warrant such a result), and even deflect missiles it meets in midair (the DM must judge the likelihood of this).

Armor and Shields

Shield of Shadows

XP Value: 2,000 GP Value: 8,000

This is a wispy, translucent scrap of black silk cloth of ragged outlines and irregular shape; a

ring of black cord projects from its center. If a digit of a living being is put through this ring and its owner wills the shield to awaken, the wisp of cloth grows instantly into a translucent, weightless, silent (i.e., no metallic ringing at weapon strikes or if dropped), rigid shield-shaped, shadowy wall of force. It has the same properties as the spell of the same name, and it lasts until destroyed or willed to become inactive (whereupon it returns to cloth shape). The shield improves the user's Armor Class by 1, and can shrink or grow in size in response to the wearer's will while active, from buckler size (a seven-inch diameter domed or cupped circle) to a kite-shaped broadshield four feet tall and three feet across at its widest point. It remains weightless (no encumbrance value when movement rate is considered) regardless of size. It is rigid enough to be walked on, used to hold doors open, break windows, and the like; it can even be swung as a weapon for 1d3 points of buffeting damage. Against all fire attacks, a *shield of shadows* saves with a -2 penalty; otherwise, it saves as metal, with a +1 bonus.

This shield is often used by Harpers who must enter dangerous places where armor is not permitted.

Vest of Shadows

XP Value: 2,000 GP Value: 12,000

This is a vest, half-cloak, or halter-top of translucent black silk; it appears ragged and pierced by many small tears and holes. When put on looks like the rippling rags of a badly damaged garment. At all times, its presence enables the wearer to roll saving throws vs. all undead draining attacks (including a shadow's Strength drain and a lich's chilling touch) as well as psionic and magical equivalents, even if no saving throw is usually allowed. The saving throw is vs. spell (with a -1 penalty), to avoid all effects.

A *vest of shadows* suffers no damage from normal weapon attacks, but it also confers no protection against them. It gives a +3 bonus to all wearer saving throws vs. magical weapon and



spell attacks (and lessens by 1 point each die of damage done to the wearer by them). Any wearer of a *vest of shadows* who is not a thief is allowed a 15% chance to “hide in shadows,” under the same conditions that a thief can attempt this skill. A thief wearing a *vest of shadows* gains a bonus of +15% to hide in shadow attempts.

A *vest of shadows* suffers damage only from magical attacks, making item saving throws as “rock crystal.” If a saving throw fails, the vest suffers full hit point damage from the spell; if the saving throw succeeds, it receives only 1 point of damage. These sorts of vests have an Armor Class of 4 and can withstand 8d12 points of damage before disintegrating forever.

Magical Weapons

Bard's Blade

XP Value: 4,500 GP Value: 16,000

This weapon takes the form of a dagger, short-sword, or longsword. In any form, it gives a +2 bonus to all saving throws (+3 against all charm, sleep, hold, petrification, and polymorph attacks against wielder, when drawn only). The wielder is also allowed two rolls (best one counts) whenever such a blade is drawn.

A *bard's blade* also contains four spells: one each of *dimension door*, *limited wish*, *remove curse*, and *time stop*. The sword must be grasped by a single being who wills a specific power to occur, to unleash any of these; once used, the spell is gone until a wizard casts a replacement into the blade (it will accept only the same type and number of spells, though their precise strength and effects will vary with the levels of wizards involved in various blade rechargings).

The blade can also neutralize poison by touch and mental bidding, three times per day.

Singing Sword

XP Value: 1,600 GP Value: 10,000

This sort of weapon takes the form of a bastard sword with a silver-coated blade. Some are sentient and aligned to chaotic good, but most can be wielded by any being capable of lifting them. They count as magical weapons for purposes of what they can hit, but they inflict normal damage except when they are singing. Such swords sing constantly and rather loudly, whenever they are drawn! (The DM may wish to prepare lyric sheets of favored tunes before play begins, to simulate this endless and rapidly annoying serenade.)

A *singing sword* is a +3 weapon when its song can be heard; all magical effects can be negated by magical silence or by (from round to round) a bard or other skilled singer giving voice to a counter-harmony.

The song effects are as follows: the wielder is infused with confidence and excitement and never checks morale. The wielder is rendered immune to *charm*, *command*, *confusion*, *fear*, *forget*, *friends*, *repulsion*, *scare*, and *suggestion*. If *emotion* is cast on the wielder, the only result is “rage” (at the spellcaster).

The song can also still shriekers in one round and negate the song effects of harpies. It can, at the wielder's direction, entrance intelligent creatures of 2 Hit Dice or less (not including undead or beings from other planes). Such beings are slowed for 1d2 rounds after first hearing the song, and are then allowed a saving throw vs. spell. If this succeeds, they are freed from the song effects; if it fails, they are subject to a *suggestion* (as the spell, but not requiring any spell be cast) from the wielder, who is made aware of their state by the blade's magic.





Ye have enemies? Good, good – that means ye've stood up for something, sometime in thy life....

– Elminster of Shadowdale, speaking to a young Harper, Year of the Wyvern

Any group of meddling adventurers that tries to work their wills in the Realms is bound to brush against the interests of all the other power groups who are trying to expand their own influence over the Realms. It is not surprising that the Harpers have crossed swords, spells, words, and more with thousands of individuals, clerical brotherhoods, adventuring bands, secret societies, local interest groups, and rulers down the years. Not all of these enemies have survived. A complete list of these foes would be both pointless to the reader and impossible to compile (not all the Harpers who fought them survived to report what happened to others).

This chapter briefly introduces the major long-standing foes of the Harpers. The watchful eyes of their agents make many Harpers hide their Harper pins under their clothing (or slipped into pouches sewn onto the insides of *bracers* or boots; female Harpers also favor the inside surfaces of gloves, sashes, and various lace trims). The various organizations are listed in rough order of perceived importance or influence in Faerûn, according to the length of their reach and their sheer might.

- **The Zhentarim** are a large, shadowy brotherhood of evil mages and renegade priests of Bane. Manshoon of Zhentil Keep, with the backing of various beholders, has always led the wizards of this group.

The priests are led by Fzoul Chembryl, also of Zhentil Keep. They broke free of the clerical hierarchy to serve Bane in their own way (spurning the dictates of the High Imperceptor) before the downfall of Bane in the Time of Troubles. They now worship Cyric.

The Zhentarim's three traditional power bases are Zhentil Keep, the Citadel of the Raven, and Darkhold, but their tentacles extend across the Heartlands, from the Moonsea area to the

Sword Coast. One of their long-term goals is to control an exclusive overland trade route between the Sea of Swords and the Sea of Fallen Stars, so they can undercut all competitors, and ultimately enrich themselves.

Harpers encounter ambitious local Zhentarim everywhere. Whenever it seems that an important Zhent force or agent has been destroyed, another powerful replacement steps forth to fill the ranks. Many unscrupulous power-seekers see the Zhents as their fastest route to influence in the Realms. Harpers generally clash with Zhentarim agents who are attempting to rule this or that town or small area by right of arms, a reign of terror, or by systematic assassinations.

- **The Red Wizards of Thay** are the true rulers of that decadent slave-kingdom. These are scheming archmages whose feuds and endless vying for power devour much of the energies of Thay – and much freedom all over the Realms. Always on the lookout for new sources of ready slaves and new magic (either recent innovations or newly discovered remnants of the fallen glory of Netheril Myth Drannor, and other lost lands) to gain an edge over their rivals, each Red Wizard creates, sponsors, or compels agents to do his personal bidding outside the borders of Thay itself. These disorganized agents usually act alone, or in small hierarchical strings – with the agents of one Red Wizard avoiding those of another. Though the wizards are rivals, their agents rarely act openly against each other, unless one group gains powerful magic that another feels it can seize. Complicating the schemes of these folk are the agents or hirelings of the zulkirs, tharchions, and ambitious minor magelings of Thay, all of whom are trying to build up their own power despite the heavy hands of the Red Wizards.

These various Thayvian (or “Thayan,” either usage is correct) agents form a small but well-financed, ever-present spying presence throughout the Realms. They watch, slay, and steal as required to advance the various causes



and aims of their masters. They occasionally dabble in slave-gathering or local politics. All of their activities bring them into conflict with other slavers, wizards, and Harpers throughout Faerûn.

- **The Cult of the Dragon** is an evil sect of various folk who follow the teachings of Sammaster. They believe that, in times to come, all civilizations now holding sway in Faerûn will crumble, and “dead dragons shall rule the world entire.” They hope to survive the tumult by becoming the loyal, trusted servants of these dead dragons: the draco-undead known as dracoliches. The Followers of the Scaly Way (as they sometimes style themselves) spend their time spying out and acquiring treasure, by fair means or foul, and giving it as gifts to swell the hoards of dracoliches and known evil dragons (whom they hope to persuade and assist to become dracoliches). Traditionally based in Sembia and led by the Wearers of the Purple, a council headed by Naergoth Bladelord, the Dragon Cult numbers folk of all professions (classes), walks of life, and alignments in its ranks. Many merchants who would be horrified at the thought of actually doing evil pay tithes to the Cult, in the belief that they are buying themselves a place in the favor and protective shadow of the glorious great wyrms. Harpers run afoul of cultists who are stealing or seizing funds or goods to give to the Sacred Ones (dracoliches), and of those who pillage and desecrate tombs, elven ruins, and the like in search of good lairsites for newly-created dracoliches.

- **The Twisted Rune** is a little known but powerful group of evil mages seeking to establish themselves as the true rulers of eastern Calimshan, the Vilhon Reach, Tethyr, and ultimately, Amn and all of Calimshan.

The symbol of the Twisted Rune is a gnarled sigil that resembles two “3” numerals, linked together and turned points downward, like drooping claws, with the downstrokes at the left-hand end longer than those on the right.

The Twisted Rune numbers illithiliches (mind flayer liches), a few liches, beholders, and even the evil subterranean race known as the phaer-

imm in its ranks. They seek to control local rulers by means of magical might, blackmail, and intrigue. Some members of this group may once have been members or allies of the Night Parade, a powerful evil that flourished behind the scenes in Calimshan until shattered by the Harpers. The Twisted Rune views the Red Wizards of Thay as its true rivals, but it sees both the Harpers and the Cult of the Dragon as meddling nuisances who must be destroyed if the Rune is to rise to open power—or to sufficient strength to challenge the Red Wizards. At present, the Rune prefers to augment its collective sorcery in secret, employing hireling adventurers and mercenaries, conjured or controlled monsters, and thief-band agents to fend off Harpers and other would-be investigators of the Rune. The power of the Rune (so far) lies in closeknit cooperation and loyalty to each other. Rivalries are far more tightly controlled than the continual bloodletting that so disrupts the doings of the Zhentarim and the Red Wizards.

- **The Runderen** is a very old secret society of human merchants, more numerous in the Shining South, but with widespread adherents everywhere in Faerûn that the hand of man is strong—including such corners as Lantan, Mintarn, and the present prospective forays into Chult. The ranks are thousands strong, and their recognition-sign is the clenched fist (more formally, two clenched fists crossed at the wrists, held up in front of one’s chest).

They stand for the common gain of merchants who must travel and face perils, and rarely oppose the Harpers—except when the Harpers move to break up Runderen monopolies (such as they once held in the Tashalar ports), Runderen-sponsored piracy against rival merchants (as once occurred widely in the Lake of Steam, and still happens from time to time in the Nelanther), or Runderen slave-trading (still flourishing). Runderen with long memories and personal grudges against the Harpers have formed several anti-Harper adventuring bands over the years, including the Fist of Runderen, the Clenched Fist, and the Many Long Arms. These



Foes of the Harpers

all still exist, though they have all been smashed as effective forces by the Harpers, several times.

- **The Dark Dagger** is a whispered name of growing weight in dark alleys around the Inner Sea lands. These are drow who worship Vhaeraun, the drow god of thievery and the furthering of drow aims, interests, and power in the surface world. Individually powerful but few in number, Dagger agents habitually use poison (which they are largely immune to, thanks to lifelong incremental dosage-procedures).

Active in Skullport (in Undermountain, beneath Waterdeep), in Turmish and the Vilhon Reach, and to a lesser extent in Amn and Calimshan, the various "Points of the Dagger" are now beginning to infiltrate coastal cities all around the Sea of Fallen Stars. They like to take control of local thieving guilds and fellowships behind the scenes, hire skilled human and humanoid agents, and establish hidden temples to Vhaeraun. They recruit disaffected half-elves and humans to worship the Masked Lord (like the human god Mask, Vhaeraun's symbol is a black mask—a black silk over-the-eyes half-mask, to be precise).

- **The Eldreth Veluuthara** ("Victorious Blade of the People" in an ancient elven tongue), also known as the Uluuth Phlarenn ("Cleansing Blade"), is an old and very secretive fellowship of elves who are fanatical in viewing humans as unclean beasts. No habitual human contact is tolerated; Eldreth see humans as sickening degenerates. Half-elves are walking abominations, living embodiments of the sin of human-and-elven contact.

The Eldreth slay humans where they can (especially prospectors, explorers, trailblazers, and hardy but isolated adventurers), seeking to slow or block human expansion into all wooded areas. They slaughter half-elves whenever reprisals are unlikely. They are no friends of drow, but they will cooperate with them against humans. The Eldreth are few and keep their activities as well-hidden as possible. Many of them are elven mages who have experimented with slaying spells, trap magic, and various alternatives to



lichdom, seeking to prolong their own lives still further beyond the lengthy elven lifespan. They view Harpers as the most perceptive and practical—and hence, most dangerous—of human agents, and move against Those Who Harp when possible. The Eldreth are opposed to the withdrawal of elves from mainland Faerûn, and have no influence in Evermeet.

- *The Malaugrym* are a powerful shapeshifting, magic-using family or clan of near-immortal beings of great cruelty. They are known to almost none of the inhabitants of Faerûn—except sages (some of whom have called them the "Shadowmasters," after the shifting shadows of the demiplane where they dwell), the Heralds and Harpers (who remember the Harp-stars War), and various plane-hopping wizards and other powerful beings.

Their aims (beyond a hunger for more power and magic) have always been mysterious, but their hatred for Harpers and delight in manipulating all beings they can reach are well established.



Glad to have you, lad. The blades of our foes are always thirsty, and we old 'uns haven't blood enough to satisfy 'em all...heh-heh...

– Gadult Shorm, mercenary of the Red Raven company, to a new recruit, Year of the Wyvern

The Harpers are always looking for new members. Their standards are high and the life is hard. Few offer themselves, and fewer still measure up, or survive for long. As readers have seen, the Harpers need all classes of characters and types of aid, from the street urchin or shopkeeper who merely keeps eyes and ears open, and passes information on to someone else, to valiant adventurers willing to risk all in a bold attack on a Zhentarim fortress, the lair of a dracolich, or a stronghold of evil mages and assassins serving Thay.

Player characters wishing to join the Harpers could begin merely as friendly informants. All that is required is a willingness to work as Those Who Harp do, risking danger for a chosen cause, and a freedom from evil (in personal alignment). Unless they are fortunate to befriend one of the Harpers of Shadowdale, and work themselves into a position of aiding or working for one of the powerful, secretive senior Harpers there, PCs trying to join the Harpers must either go to Twilight Hall, or they'll be sent there.

In Berdusk, they'll typically be directed to spend the night at the Running Stag inn, and apply at Twilight Hall on the morrow.

At the Stag, several old, disabled veteran Harpers will "just happen" to be drinking the night away and sharing old memories (if the would-be Harper candidate chooses another inn, the Harpers have the personnel to stage this scene at any of them). They prove to be very friendly, drawing all guests into a free-wheeling discussion of adventuring. This will lead to Harper exploits, and what it is to be a Harper—and unbeknownst to the PC, Harper wizards employing *ESP*, *know alignment*, and similar spells are hidden behind partitions nearby, trying to learn the true intentions, alignment, and aims of the PC.

When the PC arrives at Twilight Hall, he or she is warmly welcomed, and led to a formal audience with Obslin or a grizzled Harper veteran. On the way, the PC usually hears hauntingly beautiful voices raised in song, sees a harpist or two playing, as well as some impressive weapon practice (daggers being thrown across a courtyard to skewer fruit off posts and into targets beyond, or a woman in mail carving through a metal shield with a hard sword-slash). The delicious smell of fresh-baked bread wafts past the PC as he is ushered into a small audience room. This contains a simple wooden table and two chairs drawn up at it, facing each other. On the walls around are detailed maps of Faerûn, from Tharsult north to the Spine of the World. The ceiling is lost in a magical darkness, in which wink tiny lights arranged as the stars of the night sky are. (If one sits there long enough, Selune will rise into view.)

Here Obslin or the veteran is sitting. He offers the PC wine (not drugged, and the taking or refusing of it is not a test), and asks some blunt questions about why the PC wants to become a Harper. This interview should be role-played to the full; the Harper questioner should be on the laconic, expressionless side, making the PC work a bit at answering without getting a response that tells him how well he's doing.

If satisfied, the Harper tells the PC what a great honor it is to be a Harper, wishes him the favor of the gods, and hopes aloud that the PC proves worthy of the honor of being a Harper. The Harper then asks the PC to accompany him, stands, and takes the PC's hand.

They then levitate straight upward into the "night sky" overhead, which proves to be a narrow layer concealing a circular opening up into a room above—a trophy hall containing a stuffed beholder, several floating, glowing swords and battle axes in their own cases, and a few lore-books. A stunningly handsome male Harper (if the PC is female) or a breathtakingly beautiful female Harper (if the PC is male) is studying one of these books at a desk. He or she looks up and greets the PC warmly, saluting the PC's Harper examiner, who guides the PC into another room.



Joining the Harpers

There is a brief audience with either Belhuar or Cylyria, who welcomes the recruit to the Harpers and gives him his first mission—something simple but involving danger, like a caravan-escort job, or finding and bringing in a wounded or harried Harper known to be trying to get to Berdusk with foes hot on his trail.

The PC is wished luck, and the original questioner takes him to a pleasant guest-quarters to prepare, telling him that “the first one’s always a bit of a test. Do as well as you can; make us proud.” The PC is given any food, gear, and weaponry needed (but no magic-no Harper pin, for example; if a PC requests it, he’ll be told, “Such a thing must be earned”), and sent off on the mission. He is accompanied by a Harper escort who spies on him, taking care to keep out of sight—unless the PC gets into such trouble that his death (or that of someone they’re supposed to contact, guard, or rescue) seems imminent, whereupon the Harpers charge in to the rescue.

Failure of the first mission does not mean the PC is denied membership; the test is of willingness and loyalty to the task, not competence. Refusal of a mission—if for good and honest reasons—is also tolerated. If a candidate changes his mind about joining, or is found seriously wanting (using poison to achieve a mission, stealing from anyone in Twilight Hall, or openly threatening or deriding the Harpers), he is politely shown to guest quarters for the night, and then asked to leave on the morrow (penitent PCs who ask to speak to a Harper and try to make amends during this time are sometimes allowed to stay).

As fledgling Harpers undertake more challenging missions, they join up with other Harpers; at least one veteran Harper is assigned to report on their conduct and competence, although all the Harpers along on the mission can venture an opinion. If a Harper candidate is suspicious, or shows signs of unusual ability, senior Harpers may spy on him or even disrupt his missions to see how he reacts. When he has earned it, a silver Harper pin is his.

Harpers who remain true and perform well are gradually eased into a role of greater consulting

and planning in the lamplit back rooms of Twilight Hall, until they become veteran Harpers themselves, and are acclaimed “true Harpers” (see the “History” and “Magical Items” chapters of this sourcebook for what that entails). As a general rule of thumb, a PC should gain at least three class experience levels while adventuring as an active Harper to be considered a veteran. At some point after that, most veterans are offered some sort of hidden test of loyalty as part of one of their missions. If they pass this, they are acclaimed true Harpers. If no opportunity to arrange such a test presents itself, the offer of true status does not come until the PC has gained at least two additional levels or performed some very important and valorous deed. From the ranks of true Harpers, the most capable and those who have survived deeds of great valor are named Master Harpers. They become the judges and guides of junior Harpers.

Although any class of character can join the Harpers, most outsiders think of it as a bardic fellowship. Indeed, it is one of the few places where these traditional loners gather in a group. If a DM uses PHBR6, *The Complete Bard’s Handbook* in his campaign, Harper bard NPCs are most likely to be:

True Bards *	Gallants
Blades *	Gypsy-bards
Heralds *	Jongleurs
Loremasters *	Thespians

An asterisk denotes a specially favored or applicable kit. Most encountered Harper bards are one of these.

In some cases, folk join the Harpers because a dying Harper gives them a Harper pin or charges them to complete a task left unfinished. Such folk are judged on their deeds and may be accepted as Harpers—pin and all—without any formality or testing. This is generally the case with folk who join the Harpers of Shadowdale. Those planning to do so to avoid testing and dangerous missions are advised to reconsider—being anywhere near Elminster of Shadowdale has never been a safe place to be!



*Harpers? Oh, they'll sing most anything – better
then you've ever heard it sung before*

– Arbleth Golhund, proprietor of the Bloody
Antlers Tavern in Redwater,
Year of the Dying Fire

Many ballads and tunes have been devised, modified, and made popular by Harpers down the years. The average veteran minstrel knows 300 or so songs well, and can call to mind snatches of another 200 or so). Space permits us only to set down a few lyrics here. Those wishing to play such tunes are advised to do as bards do all over the Realms: stretch the meter of the lines (or rewrite them to fit) to suit a favored tune, and sing away!

The Fireside Song of Old Adventurers

Swords once sharp now gather dust
Much oil and work fight creeping rust
Where once we had no time to care
Reaching for battle brave hands bare

Our lances shone back brighter sun
Our coffers groaned with treasure won
Proud names we held o'er many lands
Proud lords bowed to our commands

Then dragons raged and died fierce
As keener, sharper blades did pierce
Swung by bolder, stronger men
Wine and laughter both sweeter then

So long ago, in fading dreams
Sometimes fancy it all seems
But by this sword, 'tis all true!
Laugh? This old blade will answer you!

My old tired eyes no longer shine
My hands are weak; far too much wine
And little weaponwork – yet I'll fight
Old wolves can still, defiant, bite

And talk your talk not so loud

Foolish, blind, young and proud
Or I'll rise yet, and we shall see
If you'll ever live as long as me.

∞

The Shining Crown

A wise old man to me did frown
Asking: where is thy shining crown?
I see its rightful place upon thy hair
Where right now rests but empty air

Chorus:
Over the next hill
Over the ridge
Through deep forests
Across lonely bridge

Far afield waits a shining crown
Gleaming riches, great renown
There but to reach and take
If ye'll only stir and wake

(Chorus)

To horse! Mount and ride
With good shield and high pride
A little courage, a little luck
Grim slogging and pluck

(Chorus)

Better to have reached and lost
Hopes withered as by winter frost
To leap up again, high and far
Than to sit alone in a quiet bar

(Chorus)

So why not try? Strive and die
No disgrace the bards will cry
Ye just might win a shining crown
Bring the mighty crashing down

(Chorus)



It lies yonder, o'er far-off hill
It waits for those who boldly will
Come a-seeking with ready blade
A shining crown for heroes made.

∞

The Lonely Hunt

Don't look back
Just draw your blade
Down dark track
The kill is made

Don't shout out yet
Just follow the cries
Time enow to laugh and bet
After the foe snarls and dies

Run and wave blade blood-wet
Down the trail of dancing bone
To the place where death is met
We all rush-and come there alone

Don't, no don't look back
There's never time for that
Just add more meat to the sack
And grow old and wise and fat

Until the day the death is thine
And you face the gods alone
Few folk find enough time
To take their wanted throne

So raise now the sparkling wine
Drink it deep, while you can
Gods grant you smile at its shine
Remembering the hunt you ran

∞

In a Dark, Dark Wood

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago

Something lurked and pounced and stank
As it prowled to and fro

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Under the hanging tree
A lost man one morn did go

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Dropped the beast fangs agape
Upon the poor lost one below

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Teeth clashed and teeth slashed
One more skull a grave to show

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Came a young wizard lass
Spells to cast, Art to grow

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Sorceress and something darker met
And o'er both fear settled low

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Fangs sought the maiden's blood
She gasped out a spell none still know

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Crawled something dark and fanged
With a lady's face and a smile just so

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
It hunted with claws and jaws
Or spoke spells fast and low

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
The old sorceress built a tower



Beside the way the road did go

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Those who found her castle empty
Missed her, lurking in bones below

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Those who found the lady home
All her charms and graces did know

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Those who stayed with her too long
Saw her shape slip, and knew their foe

In a dark, dark wood
Oh so long ago
Many a traveler lost his way
And cried out in fear and woe

In a dark; dark wood
Oh so long ago
Would he meet smile or fang?
Beforehand, none of us e'er know.

∞

Raise Another Glass of Cheer

Chorus:
The night draws on and sleep is near
I draw another glass of wet cheer

If I close my eyes I dream of you
And see again the high hall
The kneeling knights, my proud throne
The vaults of gold, the bowls of gems

(Chorus)

The banners proud, the armies vast
Chambers of riches too many to count
All this my own, under my proud feet
Until the day we chanced to meet

(Chorus)

I gave it all up, I threw it all away
To win your love, your smile, your hand
But you left me in cold disarray
To wander hard roads until today

(Chorus)

If I close my eyes I dream of you
And betimes, when I've been good
I dream you love me as I do you
Your smile lights the dark night into day

(Chorus)

And then I fear I always wake
And find myself alone
If you are lost, forever gone
I'll sleep and know your love again

(Chorus twice, second time slow and grandly sad)

∞

The Wizards' Tune

Build a fire to harp at twilight
In a circle of old standing stones
Dance by the fire under watching moon
Call up the old and waiting bones

Draw a circle in a dusty old tomb
A circle of flame on cold grey stone
Talk to wizards dead and kings long gone
Lore to learn and spells to hone

Walk in shadows, in worlds so strange
The senses reel, the blood crawls
Hurl spells at twisted things of claws
Until the last one flees or falls

Raise a tower proud and high
Rule lands as hair goes gray



Write tomes of awesome might
Is it all worth it? Who can say?

Walk doddering into the last days
Weave the air into flowers or light
Try to remember more, fading spells
To make children laugh in delight

Hear them gasp, see them smile
Look into their dazzled eyes
Which will grow to wizardly might?
Smile, and never tell them it's all lies.

∞

The Bold Knight and the Terrible Wyrn

The dragon was old and its scales were gray
It snored and ached, and was heard to say,
"Where's my might, that now is gone?
What's the point in carrying on?"

The knight was young, his blade so bright
But at first dragonroar he shook in fright
And screamed, "So large! I never knew!
Hide me, spare me! My challenge I rue!"

The dragon yawned and said, "Down blade!
Toss away daggers and sit in the shade.
Did you bring cold and foaming beer?
Haven't had a good chat in many a year."

The knight's mouth fell open, and down went
he
Gabbling, "As it happens, I've a keg with me!"
So the sun went down behind the hill
And if they're not snoring, they're talking still.

(Repeat)

∞

Last Lament

My life goes on, down endless days
It's been too long since I've seen your smile

And now darkness around me doth close
Far off I can hear you singing

Death comes for me, with thirsty swords
It's been too long since I've seen your smile

No way out, doom comes to me
Far off I can hear you singing

If the gods would hear me, I'd cry out
It's been too long since I've seen your smile

I never meant to fall by you unseen
Far off I can hear you singing

It comes swiftly now, sweeping me away
It's been too long since I've seen your smile

Everything fades, and I am gone
Far off I can hear you singing

Mourn me not, my dear love, though
It's been too long since I've seen your smile

Far off I can hear you singing
Sing high, sing clear—and then listen, dear
You'll be hearing me, long after I'm gone
In your dreams, my voice will live on.

(Softly)
Far off I can hear you singing
Through my tunes, my voice lives on

∞

Harpers often play certain ballads to convey messages. You'll never hear *The Lonely Hunt* unless a Harper wants to warn fellow Harpers or allies who are present to expect danger, and be ready Harpers always listen closely when *In a Dark, Dark Wood* is performed. A Harper wanting to meet fellow Harpers will always change the line "by the hanging tree" to a desired meeting-place, and alter the line that follows to roughly indicate a time.

Spectral Harpist

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary (or guardian groups)
ACTIVE TIME:	Any
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	As in life
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1 (1-8)
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	12, Fl 14 (A)
HIT DICE:	9+9
THACO:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4/2d4 or by weapon
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Deathsong
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Wraithform, immunities
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	44%
SIZE:	M (average 6 ft. tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	9,000

Spectral harpists are intelligent undead who resemble ghosts or wraiths. They appear as translucent, shadowy forms that float or fly about. They are created when a Master Harper dies while engaged in Harper service that is left unfinished (a Harper slain while guarding a retreat has unfinished business—the survival and continued safety of those he was guarding).

Combat: Spectral harpists retain the blessings or powers they had in life as Master Harpers (see the relevant chapter of this sourcebook). They can be turned as “special” undead. In certain magicstrong areas (most Harper strongholds and refuges), spectral harpists can’t be turned at all. They can attack twice a round with a chilling touch that corrodes living flesh for 2d4 points of damage. They can also employ any weapons they could use in life for normal damage (chill damage is not transmitted to struck victims).

Once per day, a spectral harpist can also employ its *deathsong* attack, a hollow dirge that causes fear in all living beings within 90 feet (unless they roll a successful saving throw vs. spell). Affected beings flee for ten rounds and are 50% likely to drop any items they are carrying in their hands at the time. A spectral harpist that has just sung a *deathsong* is surrounded by a 10-foot-radius anti-magic field that acts against all enchantments for six rounds after the end of the song (neither the harpist or any known spells can stop or interrupt this effect). A *deathsong* can last from one to four rounds (harpist’s choice): Any physical attack made by a spectral harpist while emitting a *deathsong* does triple normal damage.

Against spell attacks, a spectral harpist has the standard undead immunities to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold* and the like, including all poison, petrification, polymorph, cold-based, and death magic attacks. It is also immune to cold- and electricity-based attacks. Against all other spells, a spectral harpist applies its magic resistance; if the spell wins out, the harpist suffers the normal effects. Holy water inflicts no damage to spectral harpists.

A harpist can by will cause all items within 60 feet that bear a magical aura to glow with a cold white radiance. This glow can be quelled by a *dispel magic* spell but will otherwise last 2d4 turns.

Spectral harpists can become wholly or partially insubstantial. In this state, they can cause no damage, but they also suffer none from purely physical attacks. Magical weapons passing through their wraith-like form inflict damage equal to twice normal damage bonuses—only bonuses, not damage dice (a magical weapon without any bonus causes its maximum possible damage).

In wraithform, harpists can pass through solid stone or earth. They can do this without pause and can attack or defend in the round in which they enter or leave solid ground. Many lurk in stone tomb or dungeon walls, only their heads protruding, to spy on intruders.

Habitat/Society: Harpists are usually found as guardians over a Harper stronghold or refuge. Sometimes they attach themselves to a living Harper individual, serving as a personal guardian for a time. Usually solitary, they can occasionally be met in small groups. Harpists may engage in sharp verbal exchanges with fellow spectral harpists, but they never willingly fight each other. They work together loyally and smoothly as guardians.

Retaining intelligence and judgment, spectral harpists can be given detailed and specific commands to follow. They can speak and sing as they did in life. They lose any capacity to cast spells they may have possessed in life, and they can’t gain any new memories.

Ecology: Spectral harpists consume nothing and have no offspring, but they slay adventurers, monsters, and other life of venturesome power and dominance. Other than to curb the numbers of these creatures, making carrion of them, spectral harpists serve no function in the food chains of their surroundings.

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