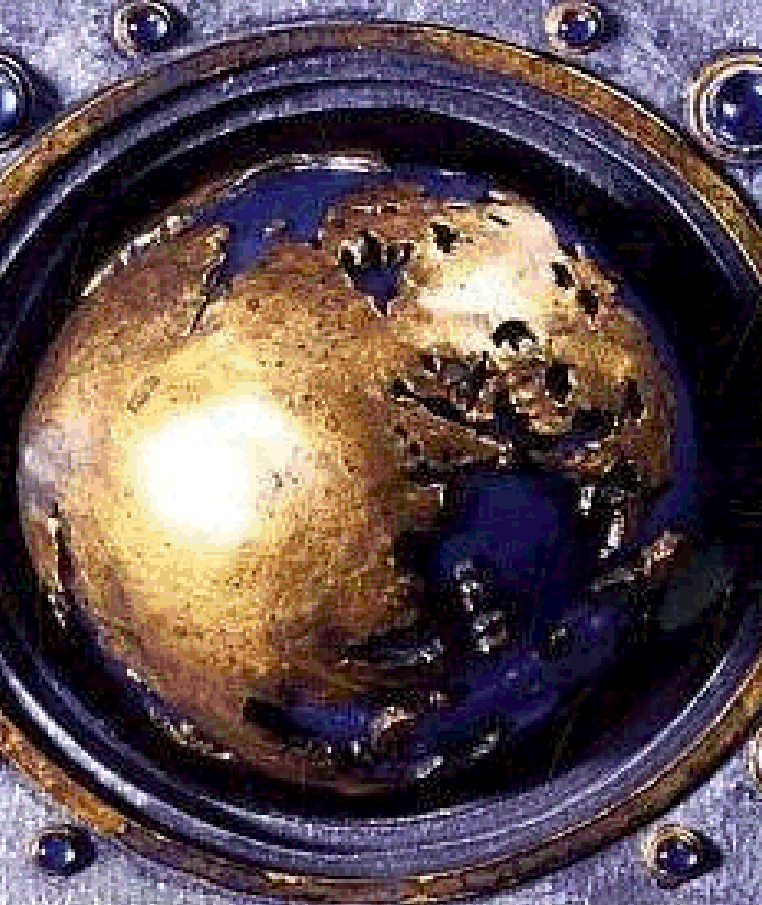




Le Monde autour de Laelith



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THE HEARTLANDS



THE DALELANDS (LES VAUX)

The heart of the Heartlands is the rural communities known as the Dalelands. Surrounding the edges of the old elven forest, Cormanthor, the Dales are home to both a tough, independent people and many dark secrets of the past. These small farming communities are also the homes of many retired adventurers. Teaching self-reliance and independence, the Dale communities produce a brave, strong, and free-willed race of women and men who are needed to challenge the forces of evil.

But the Dalelands themselves are defined by the great forest that they surround. This forest is the largest shard of what was once a great woods known as Cormanthor, which ran from the Moonsea to what is now the King's Forest in Cormyr. This largest remaining forest is known also as the Elven Court, for it was here that the last great elven kingdom on the Inner Sea lands held sway. To speak of one is to speak of the other, for the fates of the Dalesmen and the elven lords are interlinked.

CORMYR

A rising power under the command of King Azoun IV, Cormyr is an established nation under the rule of law, one of the handful of proper nations in the North. Cormyr straddles the land in the northeast region of the Sea of Fallen Stars between the Lake of Dragons and Anauroch. It was at one time a heavily wooded region, but is now a land of small forests and organized farms. The surviving woods are as thick and dangerous as Cormanthor, but these areas are now outnumbered by terrain cleared for use by the cities and landed lords of Cormyr.

Cormyr is also called the Forest Country and the Land of the Purple Dragon. It is a rich kingdom; its southern, eastern, and northwestern areas have many farms, offering abundant yield for trade. The central areas of the kingdom are still wooded; these woods, carefully husbanded by the forces of the king, still yield good timber and have plentiful game.

Cormyr is also strategically located on overland trade routes from the cities of the Moonsea to the northeast; the Dalelands to the east; the Inner Sea; and the lands to the west, northwest, and south - particularly the rich city-states and kingdoms of the Sword Coast.

SEMBIA (SEMBIE)

A kingdom of allied merchant cities on the coast of the Inner Sea, Sembia is a land of opportunity and treachery. Sembia is a wealthy merchant kingdom situated east of Cormyr on the western edge of the Sea of Fallen Stars. It is a land of rolling farms and rich plains dominated by a handful of large, wealthy cities. It is a well-run, organized nation that may in time rival the old kingdoms of the South and East. It is already one of the dominant powers in the region, something which makes its neighbors (particularly the Dalelands) very nervous.

The wealthy merchant kingdom of Sembia is a land of good farms, busy ports, skilled textile makers, and prosperity, with a vigilant army to keep it that way.

THE MOONSEA (LA MER DE LUNE)

The Moonsea is a deep natural lake located north of the Dalelands and connected to the Sea of Fallen Stars by the course of the River Lis. A cold, clear lake with deep waters bordered with independent city-states and their Vassals.

Trade is mostly over water in the Moonsea reaches, both between city-states in the region and to the south to Sembia and the Old Kingdoms. The Moonsea reaches are a hotbed of adventurer activity as there are many old tombs, lost kingdoms, and long-dead barons on the lake's shores. In addition, most of the local governments are harsh and oppressive, and though the people may have no intention of rising up against them, these governments provide excellent foes, unimpeded by moral quandaries.

But the Moonsea also promises death to the unwary and the unruly, the ones who know not when to fight another day. The dungeons of Zhentil Keep are filled with would-be duelists who challenged a member of the Black Network, and the harbor of Mulmaster is littered with the bones of those who challenged the High Blade of that city.

THE VAST (LE VASTE)

Situated on the far side of the Dragon Reach, the Vast is the gateway to the east. The region is centered in its greatest city, Ravens Bluff. Parts of the Vast were among the first settled in modern times by humans, yet the region still remains wild and unchallenged in many locations. It is a land of adventure and of daring.

The people of the Vast are a mixture of immigrants from the south and the west, and the region includes a strong strain of the same heritage that would grow in different directions to become that of the Cormyreans, the Sembians, and the Dalesmen. Small wonder that the natives of the Vast feel a



stronger kinship and heritage with their neighbors across the Dragon Reach than those to the East.

The Vast has always been an adventurer's territory, and only recently has begun to take on the trappings of a more civilized land. Some of its cities, such as Procampur, are extremely old, but the hinter- land has only been freed of orcish depredations in the past few generations (and some natives, their holds burning behind them, argue that point).

THE DRAGON COAST (LA COTE DES DRAGONS)

A wild region of pirates, rogues, and traders, the Dragon Coast includes the Pirate Isles of the Inner Sea. While one great supply of caravans swoops down through Cormyr from the Moonsea, another great wave comes across the Sea of Fallen Stars to the Dragon Coast ports, bypassing Cormyr and Sembia and moving directly into the Western Heartlands. These caravans carry rare spices (and mages) from Thay, strange balms (and gods) from the Old Kingdoms, and finely made weapons (and poisons) from the Vilhon Reach. In short, all that is profitable (and illegal) passes through the Dragon Coast.

The merchants rule along the Dragon Coast much as they do in Sembia. But unlike Sembia, on the Dragon Coast there is little drive toward cooperation on a larger goal that benefits all. Each merchant on the Coast seems to value his own property and his own hide above all. For this reason thieves' guilds, long banished from Cormyr and Waterdeep, have flourished along the coastline, and bandits are very active. Still, some shipborne merchants sneer at the idea of Cormyrean or Sembian officials pawing through their belongings and decide to take their chances with the type of bandit who uses a sword instead of a counting book.

Respectability and honesty are a keynotes in the lands of the Dragon Coast, but that does not mean that all should be respectable and honest, only that all should appear to be respectable and honest. Travelers are warned that when dealing with a Dragon Coast merchant (or worse, a noble), one should shake hands and then count one's rings, one's fingers, and one's remaining horses.

THE WESTERN HEARTLANDS

The Heartlands themselves are divided in two by Anauroch. On one side, Cormyr, Sembia, the Vast, the Moonsea, the Dales, and the Dragon Coast collectively comprise the Eastern Heartlands. The wide expanses between the Storm Horns and the Sword Coast are the Western Heartlands. A wild, wide open space of endless plains, haunted moors, and monsterinfested hills, the Western Heartlands is still an untamed frontier, waiting for the birth of new kingdoms and leaders.

The Western Heartlands have best been described by one sage as "Miles and miles of miles and miles." Theirs is a sweeping, open terrain, broken by arid and eroded badlands, rolling hills, and high, forbidding moors. The land is often an area one passes through on the way to other areas - traders heading for Cormyr or Waterdeep, adventurers heading for the Inner Sea or the Savage Frontier, or armies and mercenaries heading for Amn and Tethyr. Yet life and civilization flourish here in the form of a handful of small mercantile city-states and a scattering of walled towns.

THE ISLAND KINGDOMS

The western coast borders on a great ocean known as the Trackless Sea, though various small parts of it are also known as the Sea of Swords and the Shining Sea.

*The Trackless Sea is the home of a number of powerful, unique, and diverse island nations, ranging from the elven refuge of **Evermeet**, to the rapidly rising **Moonshaes**, to the kingdom of **Lantan** to the south.*

EVERMEET

Evermeet is a large island several thousand miles to the west of the Moonshaes, and is similar to those islands in size. Despite its great distance from the shores, the island of Evermeet is well-known to most of the knowledgeable of the Realms as the final home of the elven nations. It is a happy realm of deep, wondrous forests and much laughter, where the elves live in rich splendor.

The art, the music, and the magical research of Evermeet are far above what is seen in the lands of humankind. All elves, save the drow and half-elves, are welcome in Evermeet, and many sea elves live in the surrounding waters.

Many of the elven nations from the Realms have sought safe haven in Evermeet, and Evermeet's navy has aided in ensuring those nations that made their home on the Sword Coast received safe passage to the island. How elven nations far inland have made their way to Evermeet has not yet been revealed, for while the Elven Court has vanished from Cormanthor, there was no record of a mass migration of the elves.

LANTAN

Lantan is a southern nation some thousand miles south of the Moonshaes that is known for its merchant traders, found up and down the Sword Coast. Lantan itself is a land of lush jungle and rock pinnacles, atop which perch the turreted aerial homes of the Lantanna. The Lantanna carry on energetic independent sea trading in order to make enough money to enrich their homes with splendid ornamentation and new ideas or inventions, which they are always encouraging the experimentation with and implementation of. The Lantanna prefer to avoid conflict, viewing combat as wasteful and expensive.

Both islands of the nation, Lantan and Suj, are ruled from the capital of Sambar by the Ayrorch, a council of twelve

whose members serve for life and who themselves select replacements to their ranks.

Lantanna as a race favor shades of yellow in their clothing and have large green or black eyes, copper-colored hair, and skin the color of parchment or old ivory. They wear loose robes and large sun hats when at home on their islands, and anything practical when on ship or trading ashore elsewhere. The typical Lantanese merchant is a cleric, and usually is accompanied by a group of bodyguards (sometimes Lantanna, often local). Such merchants prefer a light touch in their dealings as opposed to brute force, though when such force is necessary, they hire adventurers to wield it.

MINTARN

Mintarn is a medium-sized island 400 miles southwest of Waterdeep. It is best known as a safe haven for those in flight from the authorities. This beautiful tree-cloaked island is a free port on the Sword Coast where no questions are asked and no one is turned away.

The island is a refuge for fugitives from justice, pirates, war refugees, mercenaries, and others who want to transact business (shady or otherwise), buy arms, or enjoy themselves away from the watchful eyes of foreign rulers and more proper authorities. Its wine taverns and festhalls are legendary up and down the Sword Coast for both their services and their danger.

Mintarn is ruled by a self-styled "tyrant" named Tarnheel Embuirhan. His Tyranny, despite his title, is known to be open-minded, open-eyed, and open-handed, and lets Mintarn tend to itself in most of its day-to-day dealings. Tarnheel does keep order (brutally if the occasion calls for it), keeps individuals from using force to gain their ends on his island, and acts to prevent pirates, other realms, or other scalawags from gaining control of Mintarn.

THE MOONSHAES (ILES MOONSHAE)

The Moonshaes are a large collection of islands well to the west of the Sword Coast, divided into a collection of more than a dozen small, petty kingdoms unified under one high queen. Much of the land is mountainous and rocky or low, flat bog. The coastlines are primarily rocky, and brutal winter storms sweep the islands during the winter months.

The kingdoms in the southern parts of the islands are held by the Ffolk, farmers and fishermen who were the original human inhabitants of the islands. The kingdoms of the Northmen are run by warlords (titled as kings) - strong and brutal people who have won their posts through a combination of might and cunning. The Northmen feel that

it is far more honorable to live a life of adventure than to farm - adventure that often leads them to pillage the nautical craft of other nations, the coastline of the North, and even the nonhuman-held lands of the Nelanther. The lands of the Ffolk are also broken into many small kingdoms. Unlike the Northmen, however, all of the kings of the Ffolk owe fealty to the high king or queen, who resides in his or her massive fortress at Caer Callidyrr, on the island of Alaron.

The Northmen worship a stormy aspect of Tempus, god of war, through their own shamans. In the recent past, clerics teaching the faiths of some of the other religions of the Realms have arrived in the kingdoms of the Moonshaes and have attempted to spread their own faiths. These clerics have generally met with death among the Northmen, and an attitude of amused disbelief among the Ffolk. The clerics of these new gods have made a few converts among the Ffolk, but they by and large remain true to their ancient beliefs. The Ffolk and the Northmen have struggled throughout their history, and only in the past 20 years has there been peace between them under the rulership of High King Tristan Kendrick of the Ffolk.

THE NELANTHER (ILES NELANTHERES)

The Nelanther comprises scattered islands that trail from the coast, jutting out from Amn into the Trackless Sea. Most of the islands are wild and almost waterless, uninhabited by humanity. Some are the home of the most brutal reavers and corsairs to be found.

The Nelanther are also called the Pirate Isles, which creates confusion between them and the islands of the same name in the Sea of Fallen Stars. However, the pirates of the Sword Coast are very different from their Inner Sea cousins. While the inhabitants of the Pirate Isles of the Heartlands are primarily humans, the Nelanther's peoples are seagoing members of various nonhuman races - lizard men, ogres, and minotaurs, with a minority of evil human mages and priests. In addition, the savagery of the Nelanther reavers far exceeds the worst atrocities of the Fallen Star pirates. The Nelanther reavers have no internal codes, no secret alliances, and no close relationship with any other nation for supplies.

The Nelanther tribes fight among themselves as much as with merchant ships (and the regular fleets that sail out of Evermeet, the Moonshaes, and Amn to deal with their threat). Of old, when Illefarn was in bloom, the Nelanther was said to be the home of a powerful nonhuman civilization. Each race claims that it was their species that commanded this culture, but the truth remains unknown. That the Nelanther was once occupied by an advanced race is incontestable; tall Sea Towers jut out of the isles

(and occasionally, the ocean) throughout the chain. The natives regard these as places of evil magic, and as such, avoid them.

ORLUMBOR

Orlumbor is a rocky, bare island just off the Sword Coast, 300 miles south of the city of Waterdeep. It is home to a few fishermen, some goatherds, and the most skilled shipwrights in the Realms. The finest ships of the North find their origins at the docks of Orlumbor. Of old the island of Orlumbor was covered with trees, though these have long since been cut down. Most of the ships that ply the Sword Coast have been built, or at least repaired, here.

Orlumbor has a good natural harbor on its landward side. It is within that harbor, cut into the living rock of the island itself, that the docks and homes of the shipwrights of the island are found. The homes are cave-like complexes connected by tunnels and stairs, and the construction docks are seldom empty or deserted.

Orlumbor is an independent nation that has several times retained its independence solely by having Waterdeep as a strong ally. That city-state of the Sword Coast has stepped in to aid Orlumbor in conflicts with Mintarn (before the advent of the "tyrant" there), then Baldur's Gate, and most recently, Amn. The Lords of Waterdeep see it in their best interests to keep the most important shipbuilding center of the Sword Coast independent of any of Waterdeep's strong rivals. Orlumbor is home to the mage Delshara Windhair, also called the Witch of the Waves, whose magics are reported to have hurled back ships from the Pirate Islands and from Luskan that were attacking Orlumbor.

RUATHYM

The home of raiders and pirates, Ruathym is a land of bold, proud humans and a seagoing breed of dwarves. Ruathym is also the ancestral home of the Northmen who settled in the Moonshaes. The island is a regular combatant with the coastal city of Luskan.

Ruathym is united under the iron grip of First Axe Aumark Lithyl, who consolidated four petty kingdoms on the island into a single unified nation during a war with Luskan.

Ruathym is a rocky, forbidding land, its coast riven with deep fjords and clear bays. The land itself has stands of magnificent pines that are protected from cutting by the authority of the First Axe, to prevent indiscriminate shipbuilding. The land is mostly civilized, with few wild creatures. Its greatest danger is the Northmen themselves, a lusty, violent people "two steps up from barbarians," in the words of one Waterdhavian mercenary recruiter.

THE SAVAGE NORTH

The North, known also as the Savage North, defined as the region north of the River Delimbiyr, is a wild, untamed, and dangerous land.

The North is a land of barbarians and goblin tribes, and is dotted by walled cities and ancient dwarven fastnesses. The highest mountains, the Spine of the World, form the North's uppermost border. Most of its forests are still virgin and untrammelled by human settlement.

BARBARIAN PEOPLES

When the first civilized humans emigrated into the Savage North, they found the land already inhabited by humans. These were a dark-haired, blue-eyed people, a large and hardy folk descended from savages, outcasts and refugees of Netheril, and early explorers. These people took their name from their legendary founder, Uthgar, and call themselves the Uthgardt.

The Uthgardt roam the North in the land between the citadels and fortress towns. Civilization is viewed as a weakness among these people, and magic - as opposed to priestly spells - a sin. They maintain a nomadic life, living by hunting (and among evil tribes, by plundering). Leathers and furs are common dress, and male warriors tattoo the image of their totem, the symbol of their tribe, on themselves.

The Uthgardt venerate Uthgar, their founder. However, the Beast Cults are also very strong within the Uthgardt tribes, such that each tribe has its own totem and individual quasi-power.

Relationships between the Uthgardt and the civilized towns vary according to season and whim. Civilized people and unprotected caravans are often considered fair game by the Uthgardt barbarians.

CITADEL ADBAR (CITADELLE D'ADBAR)

A large and powerful dwarven community in the North, Adbar is the last shard of the dead dwarven kingdom of Delzoun. Only the gate tower is visible above the surface, for this is an underground city, with miles of granite corridors snaking beneath the Ice Mountains.

Citadel Adbar is ruled by King Harbromm, son of Thalbromm, who has held his community together in the face of threats from the orcish tribes and the rising power of Hellgate Keep.

HIGH FOREST (HAUTE FORET)

The greatest forest in the North is the High Forest, and it has remained untouched by woodcutters' blades for centuries. It is the home of powerful druids, half-elves, and elven refugees. Treants dominate the northern quarter, known as the Woods of Turlang. Drow and orcs are said to dwell in the earth deep beneath the forest. Aarakocra nest in the high mountains at the center, which are known as the Star Mounts. A series of escarpments and gorges created by the flow of the Unicorn Run, called the Sisters, lies to the south of the Star Mounts.

The High Forest was part of the old elven kingdom of Eaerlann, but great stretches of it have never seen a ruler of any race. The woods are regarded as magical, and wizard weather is relatively common within their borders - blood-red snow, boiling rain, and explosive hailstones being not unknown occurrences. It is said that the Dire Wood, an enchanted section of the forest that once housed ruined Karse, is responsible for the destructive weather.

ICEWIND DALE (VALBISE)

The most northerly civilized area in the Realms, Icewind Dale is literally at the end of the earth, pressed hard against the Spine of the World and the Sea of Moving Ice. It comprises a collection of trading communities known as Ten Towns that trade with the northern barbarians and in local crafts. The Icewind Dale also has a reputation as a hide-out for those seeking to lose themselves or other pursuers. Each town is has its own government, but all look to Cassius as their spokesperson.

THE COLD LANDS

*The Cold Lands is a rough, loose grouping of territories that lie between Anauroch and the Tuigan Hordelands, and north of the Moonsea and the civilized nations of the Eastern Heartlands. The name speaks of its main feature, chilling cold, often because of greater altitude but most often due to the presence of the Great Glacier, that squats across this territory. **Thar** is within its borders, and **the Ride**, but also **Vaasa**, **Damara**, and far-flung Sossal itself.*

The Cold Lands are rife with monsters, often the descendents of tribes and clans pushed northward by the civilizing forces of humankind, elves and dwarves to the south. Here dragons rule supreme, commanding petty nations of nonhumans and human savages. Here ore hordes are formed to swoop down on softer, richer races to the south. And here are lost kingdoms and past glories, ancient cultures waiting to be discovered.

DAMARA (DAMARIE)

Damara is a region north of Impiltur and east of the Moonsea that consists of a large number of petty kingdoms and small rural communities similar to the Dales.

Until the most recent generation of humanity, Damara was a nation of the power and importance of Impiltur or Sembia. It maintained strong trade relations with other nations of the Moonsea and Inner Sea, and its trade banner and bloodstone trade bars were found throughout the Realms. In recent memory, however, Damara was invaded by a force from Vaasa, its northern neighbor. The war between these two nations lasted for 10 years, until the Witch-King of Vaasa and his forces defeated King Virdin of Damara, sweeping the last shreds of organized resistance from their path and slaying the cream of Damaran nobility.

The Vaasan invaders captured the northern quarter of the kingdoms, while the southern portion fell into small, squabbling baronies. Only the actions of Gareth Dragonsbane and other brave adventurers prevented the Witch-King of Vaasa from ruling the day. The Witch-King's power was broken, but most of the time since then Dragonsbane has had to spend rooting out the Vaasan land forces from Damaran terrain and rebuilding his shattered land. His most enterprising endeavor has been to create the Gates - two huge fortresses in Bloodstone Pass that will hold that land from invaders and protect the valuable mines.

The people of Damara are similar to those of the Dales in appearance and attitude. It is as though that the Damarans

and the Dalesmen sprung from the same wandering peoples. The faiths of the Damarans are similar to those found throughout the Heartlands, though they pay special attention to Ilmater, god of endurance and suffering, and in particular venerate the memory of a long-dead patriarch of that faith, St. Sellers the Twice-Martyred. The symbol of this sect of Ilmater's faith is either the bloodstained rack or Sollers's own symbol, the yellow rose.

THE GREAT GLACIER (LE GRAND GLACIER)

This huge icecap sits square in the center of the Cold Lands and is responsible for the inhospitable nature of the lands surrounding it. It, with Anauroch, is one of the great obvious features on maps of the Realms.

Like Anauroch, the Great Glacier has its own indigenous humans, in the form of the Ulutiuns, a short, primitive breed of humans who are perfectly adapted to the icy region where they make their homes.

NARFELL

Narfell is a dry, flat grassland at the foot of the Great Glacier, separated from it only by Icelace Lake. Only a few plinth-like rocks jut out at random from the grassy soil, scattered irregularly and sparsely about as if by a careless and lazy hand. It is the home of the Nars.

The Nars are horsemen, and their skill exceeds that of the barbarians of the Ride and may well equal that of the best riders of the Tuigan horde. Those Tuigan invaders who pressed the Nars did so after their defeat at the hands of Azoun and the death of their Khahan. Already badly mauled and without leadership, they were completely obliterated in Narfell, but this is not exactly a fair test of the two groups' abilities.

Some 20 major tribes of Nars dwell in Narfell. They consider the land their own, and will fight to maintain it and their herds. Lately, trade with the Nars has opened up with Impiltur and, in the wake of the Horde's defeat, with the rest of the Unapproachable East. Most trade occurs at a yearly trade fair in Bildoobaris.

THE RIDE (LA CHEVAUCHÉE)

The Ride is a wide, open steppeland that extends between Thar and the Border Forest. It is the home to proud and savage tribes of mounted barbarians. They may be related to the Tuigan horde, or be some people forced out by that eastern empire, or even be native to the land, but regardless of their origin they have made the Ride their own.

The barbarians of the Ride consider anyone and anything that crosses their land to be fair game, and while they fight among themselves they will band together to confront an outside foe.

THAR

The Great Grey Lands of Thar stretch northward from the Moonsea in a rising steppeland that ends at the Great Glacier. Thar is a desolate, uncivilized region untouched by the hand of settlers and farms. Instead, it is a land of nomad raiders and the home of the ogres and great bands of orcs.

Thar was of old an ogre kingdom. The ogres were both cunning and powerful, and have been credited with many foul deeds (including stirring up dragons and calling all the inhuman priests together to sink Northkeep). The ogres were ruled by a Tharkul (ogre king), who commanded their loyalty, along with that of yeti, trolls, and other fearsome and dangerous creatures. The last Tharkul was Maulog. Seventy winters ago, he was slain by the human Beldoran, who established human Thar. Now Beldoran is dead, and the ogres plan for the day when the Tharkul once again reigns.

Human activity through Thar is surprisingly common. There is great mineral wealth in the West Galena Mountains north of Thar, and every miner and dwarf knows that these are part of the same mountain range that offered up the bloodstones of Damara. Traders often find isolated communities of skilled dwarves who they can trade southern goods with for fine creations in stone and iron. And adventurers hear of lost, nonhuman kingdoms here, ruled by giants and orcs and ogres.

VAASA

Vaasa was for years the name of the unclaimed waste and wild land beyond the northern bounds of Damaran patrols, in much the same way that the land of Thar begins where the claims of the Moonsea cities end (and the monsters begin). It was (and for the most part remains) a cold, wintry, unpleasant land of rolling moors and tundra that becomes an impenetrable bog during the few weeks of high summer.

Twenty years ago, Zhengyi the Witch-King declared mastery over all the lands of Vaasa. Through strength of arms and treachery, Zhengyi defeated the Damaran armies. But through the actions of Gareth Dragonsbane and other heroes, Zhengyi was later defeated and his power drained from him. The land has since been returned to its original state - which is to say, a wasteland dominated by hostile nonhuman tribes.

ANAUROCH



Anauroch is a barren wasteland that dominates the North, a huge mass of steppeland, rocky wastes, and true desert that runs from the uttermost north almost to the Lake of Dragons.

The Great Desert was not always so huge, and has grown remarkably in the past millennium, driving savages, goblins, and other evil creatures farther south into the lands of humankind. Many human and elven kingdoms were swallowed by the wastes, and their ruins remain buried beneath the sands. Netheril, Asram, Hlondath, Anauria, the city of Orolin, and the great goblin kingdoms now all lie below its shifting dunes.

The area of the Great Desert is in fact a collection of different types of deserts, and includes hot sandy wastes similar to the Dust Desert of Raurin, rocky badlands with very sparse scrub and no available water, basins filled with salt flats and prickly cacti, windswept sandstone mountains carved by the breeze into bizarre shapes, and polar steppes and icy wastes in the north that rival those of Vaasa.

For the longest time, the wastes of the Great Sand Sea were considered to be totally uninhabited. However, Zhentarim activities along the desert's edge (including an attempt to create a cross-Anauroch trade route) have brought to light a number of intelligent people who make the desert their home. The human Bedine are a nomadic race of desert riders and sheikhs, and seem to be the Black Network's chief obstacle in their goals. The D'tarig are a quasi-human, quasi-dwarven race of thieves, spies, and bandits who are (sometimes) allies of the Zhentarim. Races are also said to live beneath the sands in their own Underdark: warrior lizards called laertis, lamias, beholders, illithids, and dark, magical creatures unseen in the South who sit on the buried thrones of the ancient Netheril cities.

THE UNAPPROACHABLE EAST

*Here lies **Impiltur**, almost a western country in the manner of Cormyr and Sembia. Yet here too sits scheming and exotic **Thay**, land of the Red Wizards. Here is the wooded land of **Aglarond**, under the wise rule of its magical queen, and yet also here are the rough and barren uplands of **Rashemen**, home of a proud, semibarbaric people.*

The East suffered most heavily during the Tuigan invasion, as the invading hordes moved through Rashemen and Thesk, only to be turned back by an allied army of Heartlands nations under the command of King Azoun IV. Many of the lands here are only now recovering from the devastating effects of that invasion.

AGLAROND

A small realm that keeps to itself, Aglarond exerts little influence in affairs of state beyond its borders. It is important in the overall strategic balance of the Inner Sea lands, however, simply because its continued existence prevents Thay from spilling out into the Sea of Fallen Stars. Aglarond's strength is its current ruler, a female archmage of fabled powers, known only as the Simbul.

Aglarond lies on the northern side of a peninsula jutting out into the eastern end of the Inner Sea. It is a sparsely inhabited, heavily wooded realm of few farms and no large cities. Jagged pinnacles of rock stand at its eastern end; to their east, these fall away into vast and treacherous marshes that largely isolate the Simbul's realm from the mainland. Travel in Aglarond is by griffon, ship, or forest trail. It trades lumber, gems, and some copper for glass, iron, cloth goods, and food when freetrader vessels come to port. Aglarond, however, sends out no trading ships of its own.

Little is known of the Simbul's aims and true strength, but she appears to constantly roam the northern Realms, working to influence all manner of events, operating in disguise or from behind the scenes. Such actions are presumably to better Aglarond's safety, although the Simbul is said to be a member (or at least an ally) of the group known as the Harpers, whose aims are more widespread.

IMPILTUR

Impiltur is a nation of united city-states rising in the area south of Damara on the shores of the Sea of Falling Stars, between the Earthfast Mountains and the finger of the Inner Sea called Easting Reach. Rich new copper, silver, and iron lodes have been found north of Lyrabar and near the

High Pass. Trade is increasing in the area and reaching out to Rashemen, Sembia, Procampur, and Bloodstone Pass.

Impiltur was formed when the independent cities of Lyrabar, Hiammach, Dilpur, and Sarshel were united by Imphras, war captain of Lyrabar, to face the menace of hobgoblin hordes advancing from the Giantspire Mountains, from whence they had only raided sporadically before. Imphras established his line as the royalty of Impiltur, a line that continues to this day. The current ruler is Queen Sambryl, the widow of Imphras IV, the founder's great-great-grandson.

Sambryl finds governing boring and tedious at best, unpleasant and insulting at worst. She prefers to travel her land, acting as a figurehead for the true rulers, a council of protectors known as the Lords of Imphras II. The Lords of Imphras II are the true protectors of the realms of Impiltur and number twelve. Their most powerful member is Kyrilraun, who is the Queen's most trusted advisor.

Impiltur today is a war-ready realm, still on the frontier of civilized lands, but largely at peace. It is friendly with its neighbors Telflamm, Rashemen, Aglarond, and the scattered states of Damara, and does not meddle in affairs beyond its borders. It did not suffer directly from the Tuigan Invasion, though it did offer troops to the alliance. The waves of refugees who flooded west during and after the invasion had a greater effect on the land than the Horde itself. There has been great disruption in Impiltur's cities, and only now are the lords and the queen returning them to their previous levels of peace and prosperity.

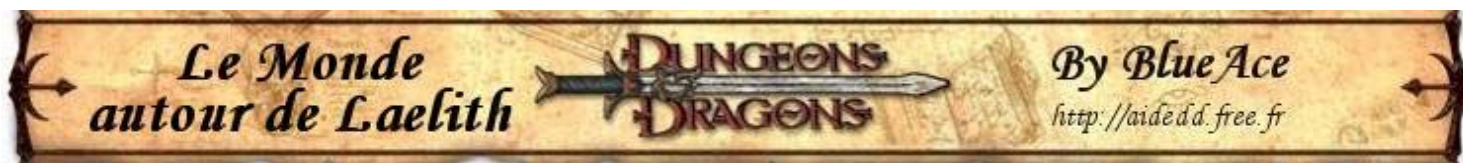
THE GREAT DALE (GRAND VAL)

To the north and east of Impiltur lies the Great Dale. It is similar to the Dales on a larger scale - a broad, expansive valley that is rich in soil and vegetation. Yet, save for a few trading outposts and hamlets, the Dale is empty.

Here dwells the Nentyarch, a mysterious mage of great power who rules grim people and strange beasts. He lives in peace in the forest north of the Dale, in a castle supposedly made of living trees. He seems to have little effect on the Dale that is placed (by others) under his command unless the wood is entered by those he has not invited. The uninvited guests simply vanish.

RASHEMEN (RASHÉMÉNIE)

Rashemen lies north of the mysterious land of Thay and is the easternmost of the established realms. To its east lie uncounted leagues of rocky, grassy wastelands, and the home of the Tuigan horde and (it is rumored) other dangerous peoples. The land of Rashemen is the home to



a race of short, muscular humans who are concerned primarily with their herds, and who are adept at carving bone and sculpting rock.

Rashemen is ruled by a Huhrong (senior war leader), whose steel-shod palace towers above the roofs of the city of Immilmar. The Huhrongs are chosen by the Witches of Rashemen, a group of female spellcasters who hold great power in the land. The continued existence of Rashemen, hard on the borders of Thay and in the path of the Tuigan horde, speaks greatly of the true power of the Witches' magic. The central haven for these Witches is the town of Urling. In their homeland, the Witches of Rashemen are venerated and respected. The penalty under Rashemen law for harming or disobeying a Witch is death.

The people of Rashemen are by nature a hardy, brawling race. Sages, merchants, and mercenary captains generally agree that Rashemen has no designs upon the lands around it. As with most nations that border Thay, its primary concern is survival in the face of an expansionistic, hostile neighbor, and with the aid of the Witches, it accomplishes that task quite well. Rashemen's warriors are fearless and feared, but they are rarely encountered outside their homeland, and do not have the reputation or expertise of the mercenary companies of the Sword Coast.

The elder kingdom that was located in the north was known as Raumathar, and is now only a collection of destroyed citadels. On the eastern border of Rashemen are the ruins of Castle Rashemen, destroyed by Yamun Khahan in the Tuigan Invasion. These ruins are reported to be infested with monsters.

THAY

Thay is a powerful, exotic, magical, and evil nation that lies in the eastern reaches of the Realms, bounded by Aglarond and Thesk in the west, Rashemen in the north, the Inner Sea in the south, and Sunrise Mountains and Endless Waste in the east. It is set upon a collection of tableland and mesas known as the Plateaus of Thay. The realm is best known for its rich prosperity, ancient heritage, byzantine government, and magic-based society.

Thay is controlled by a loose confederation of powerful spellcasters collectively called the Red Wizards of Thay who are evil and paranoid to the extreme, seeking to maintain their own power in their nation while undercutting the power of other realms that they perceive as dangerous to their existence. Other mages who are not of their cult (and in particular those mages who are involved in ruling rival nations) are viewed as threats to be eliminated. The total number of Red Wizards is unknown.

The collected Red Wizards are devoted to an expansionistic and imperialistic policy of swallowing neighbor states. This policy has been hampered by internal strife among various factions and personality cults among the Red Wizards, and by the fact the cult trusts neither mercenaries nor high-level adventurers that are not of themselves. Of the large number of invasions of Rashemen, three out of four have been led by some particular faction leader of the wizards seeking to expand his dominion at home by bringing home victories from the field. During the Tuigan Invasion, the Red Wizards fought the invaders to a draw, then politically redirected them toward the savage people of Rashemen. This is typical of Red Wizard tactics - a show of force and power, followed by crafty negotiations and advice.

THESK

Thesk has long benefitted from a rich trade route leading from Telflamm on the Sea of Fallen Stars to Rashemen and northern Thay. This advantage was turned into a disaster as the Tuigan horde used this trade route, the Golden Way, as a path to march into the heart of the Realms. Thesk is now a desolate land. Many of its smaller cities are in ruins as a result of Tuigan raids, and most of the population was sent fleeing to Impiltur, the Vilhon Reach, and the Vast. Trade still rules here, and Theskian and Impilturian merchants are seeking to reforge the links with the East.

Thesk is plagued by inhuman raiders throughout its hinterland, including a large and organized tribe of orcs. These orcs were originally sent from Thar by Zhentil Keep to serve in the united western army fighting the Horde, but they have remained, and continue to plague the Golden Way and its surrounding territories. In this way one group of evil wizards (the Black Network) has made life difficult for another group of evil wizards (the Red Wizards of Thay), while everyone else suffers. Thesk is ruled by an oligarchy of the merchant-mayors along the Golden Way. In the wake of the Horde, this has led to inter-city squabbles and threats.

THE OLD EMPIRES

*The common reference to the Old Empires refers to the lands of **Chessenta**, **Unther**, and **Mulhorand**, which were among the first nations on earth, and still survive to this day. They are weathered and beaten by their great age, but hold a majesty that pales all of the Heartlands and the North in comparison.*

The Old Empires are lands of god-kings and strange wizardry. They worship a mixture of common powers and deities unheard of in the rest of the Realms. They tend to be insular and self-contained, rarely reaching out beyond their borders to affect the surrounding Realms. They consider themselves to be the center of the universe, the most cultured nations, and they may be correct.

CHESENTA

Situated on the far side of Sea of Fallen Stars, Chessenta is the youngest of the Old Empires. It is said to be a rich, fertile land filled with wild, drunkenly crazy people.

Chessenta is a land of powerful city-states with only the faintest historical notion of a "national" government. The "nation" unified to throw out their Untherite oppressors only 400 years ago, under the command of the great war hero Tchazzar. With Tchazzar's death, the country fell apart, and it remains a kaleidoscope of rival city-states, each with its own customs, loyalties, rulers, and agendas. Mercenary work in the region of Chessenta is rich and rewarding for those who wish to dabble in its pliable, ever-changing politics.

MULHORAND (MULHORANDE)

Mulhorand is one of the great and ancient nations of the South, of which little truth and much rumor is known. It is situated at the far end of the Sea of Fallen Stars, in the region known as the Alamber Sea. Mulhorand is the oldest of the known nations on earth. Its capital, Skuld, was founded more than 3,500 years ago, and is the oldest continually inhabited human cities.

Mulhorand was once a much larger empire, its borders extending westward to far Semphar and northward into what is now Thay and Rashemen. Mulhorand is ruled by a pharaoh, the earthly incarnation of the Mulhorandi supreme deity. The true power lies with the various rival priesthods. When Horustep III ascended to the throne at age 11, the rivalry between the various faiths had increased to the point the countryside is on the verge of an internal holy war. Things have remained tense in the 10 years since then,

and sporadic bouts of violence break out frequently as the priesthods test each others' power and intentions.

UNTHER

Unther is an ancient kingdom only centuries younger than neighboring Mulhorand, and despite a few early conflicts, the two nations have existed in relative peace, Mulhorand's empire reaching north and west, and Unther spreading east and south. Chessenta was once part of Unther's empire, which stretched as far as the Eastern Shar.

Unther is ruled by a god-king, Gilgeam. Unlike the Mulhorandi pharaoh, Gilgeam is deeply involved in the major decisions of the land. The philosophy in Unther is, "Life is difficult and hard, but you are expected to do the bidding of your god because he is your god."

Unther's political structure is currently eroding. Parts of the empire have broken away over the years, but now the rot is reaching the heart. It may take a century or two, but revolution is coming to Unther.

THE HORDELANDS (LES TERRES DE LA HORDE)

Beyond the lands of Thay and Rashemen is a land of endless emptiness, paling with its vast openness even the Shaar to the south or the Fields of the Dead in the Western Heartlands. It is a treeless land occupied by barbarian herdsmen and raiders. It is called the Endless Waste in old texts. The moderns call it the Hordelands, for out of this land came the engine of destruction known as the Horde.

Years ago, the barbarian tribes of this land united and like a swarm of ants surged westward into the lands of Faerun. They conquered all that stood in their way, and even the Red Wizards of Thay paid kind words and hard tribute to their majesty. Under the leadership of Yamun Khahan, they boiled into the civilized lands of the Unapproachable East.

The Horde was turned back by the combined efforts of an alliance of western nations under the leadership of King Azoun IV of Cormyr. Yamun Khahan was slain and the Horde disbanded, some of its elements returning to their barren land, others settling on the lands of their newfound conquests.

THE VILHON REACH

The entrance to the Vilhon Reach, a long southern spur of the Sea of Fallen Stars, lies far to the south of the Pirate Isles, and its mouth is guarded by the island Ilighon. It is a fertile, rich land divided up into quarreling city-states and petty nations. Like neighboring Chessenta, the Vilhon is an excellent area for mercenary activity.

*The three important "nations" of the Reach are **Turmish**, **Chondath**, and **Sespech**. In addition, a large number of independent city-states and trumped up local authorities occupy the region.*

CHONDALWOOD (BOIS DE CHONDAL)

The Chondalwood is a large expanse of forest south of Chondath. Most of this land was abandoned, and the woods crept north, overtaking ruined cities and citadels. The Chondalwood is home to satyrs and centaurs, but also to various vegetative and fungal, who rule the magically rotted hearts of the wood. There are said to be druids within the heart of the Chondalwood, but they are savage, angry dervishes, as willing to attack paladins as orcs in their protection of a moral and ethical balance.

CHONDATH

To look on Chondath now, a scattering of allied city-states and towns, it is hard to believe that this is the same nation that produced the merchants who settled Sembia and established it as a major nation on the Sea of Fallen Stars. 500 years ago Chondath was one of the supreme trading empires on earth, and golden Arrabar was its capital. After that came a period of decline, and then disaster. Conflicts with the elves of Cormanthor convinced Chondath to abandon its northern territories. Then, a civil war erupted within Chondath between the coastal cities of Arrabar, Hlath, and Reth, and cities farther inland.

Chondath today is a strip of allied city-states under the nominal control of the lord of Arrabar, and ranges from Arrabar north to Hlath. Arrabar is a sleepy city, capital of a shrunken empire. Reth is an independent city-state. Rivalries among the various small communities between them are common, and mercenary forces can find ready employment all along the Chondathian coast. However, powerful magics are rabidly shunned in Chondath in favor of battling with the sword.

GULTHMERE (FORET DE GUTHMERE)

Gulthmere is a wide, tangled forest located in Turmish. It is a sprawl of rising uplands dotted with cedars and pines. Gulthmere is noted for rich loads of mineral-bearing rock throughout its length, particularly topazes and rubies. Prospectors and dwarven miners roam the wooded hills and challenge the native monsters and tribesmen for the riches within.

SESPECH

Sespech is a pocket barony at the lower reaches of Chondath. Since its independence it has been held by a number of rebels, occupying forces, adventurers, and compromise leaders.

The current leader of Sespech is Baron Thuragar Foeshasher, recently installed after a mysterious series of assassinations convinced the last baron to seek employment closer to the lord of Chondath's court in Arrabar. Thuragar has declared the barony an independent force, and is recruiting troops for "self-defense".

THE SHINING PLAINS (PLAINES ETINCELANTES)

The Shining Plains are a wide expanse west of the Vilhon that gains its name from the slick-looking grass that dominates the area. The grass reflects light as if it were recently rained on, creating a shimmering effect (like "a living mirror," in the words of one traveler). The Shining Plains are home to nomadic tribes of humans, centaurs, thri-kreen, and wemics. Wildlife abounds, including bison, wild horses, mammoths, predators and flightless birds.

TURMISH

The land of Turmish is a rich, fertile farming land of many small villages and a few larger city-states. It is a relatively peaceful and civilized location, well-managed and with few monsters raiding the countryside. It is a good place to be from, as its natives have an excellent reputation as fair traders, and they are welcome throughout the Inner Sea.

The people of Turmish are tall and beautiful, and the men of the trading classes have square, long beards. Alaghon is the capital of Turmish and its largest city. It is ruled by a freely elected council, with each citizen, regardless of race and social position, having a single vote. The chief speaker is chosen from the ranks of this Free Council. The duties of this chief speaker are few, the most dramatic being maintaining local and mercenary units for defense from pirates and other nations. Turmish does not start wars, unlike some local city-states - they are bad for business.

EMPIRES OF THE SANDS

*The Empires of the Sands are three kingdoms located directly south of the Western Heartlands, but whose influence is felt throughout the entire Realms. These kingdoms are **Calimshan**, **Tethyr**, and **Amn**, and collectively they are known as the Empires of the Sands.*

The Empires are traditionally extremely strong nations, and although the civil war that has all but destroyed Tethyr has become a regular feature in the tales of bards, Amn and Calimshan are both major forces in Realms politics. Amn, in particular, wishes to dominate all the lands that touch upon the Trackless Sea. The opinions of the other nations and cities on these shores about this are best left unstated.

AMN

Amn is the northernmost of the Empires of the Sands. It lies south of Beregost on the Trade Way. Its borders are considered to be the Cloud Peaks to the North, the Forest of Tethyr to the south, the Snowflake Mountains to the east, and the sea to the west. As a powerful merchant nation, however, the reach and influence of Amn is much greater. The land of Amn is called the Merchant Kingdom, and its citizens range far and wide in the Realms, more widely than those of any other land, save perhaps the natives of Rashemen.

Amn is ruled by a Council of Six. The Six are merchant-kings who are masters of intrigue and manipulation, and have more wealth than they can ever spend. This cabal of like-minded people has held control of Amn for over 30 winters. During this rule, four members of the Council have died, and replacements have been selected from Amn's wealthy merchants by the surviving Council members. Amnian policy has not changed in the slightest despite these changes in the Council. The preeminent member of the present Council is the Meisarch, who is never without at least 15 retainer/bodyguards (trained to lay down their lives to protect him). He is the oldest member of the Council, and a corrupt, jaded, and debauched individual. The remainder of the Council are more reclusive and almost never leave Amn itself.

Amn is the richest land on the Sword Coast, rivalling the city of Waterdeep itself. Amn and Waterdeep see themselves as the powerful trade rivals of the region, and agents from both sides are always abroad, gathering information about each other's activities and disrupting each other's trade. Amn has recently opened the True World of Maztica across the trackless sea, and a large number of Amnian adventurers and would-be conquerors

have left Amn for new opportunities, such that Amn has been in need of mercenary companies to maintain patrols on its borders. The nation is badly overextended, with interests in a half-dozen foreign lands. Should it be able to consolidate its power, it will become the economic leader of the Realms.

CALIMSHAN

Located south of Tethyr, the rich lands of Calimshan are a hotbed of merchant dealings and double-dealings. Established before Waterdeep and the cities of Amn, Calimshan would be one of the most powerful and wealthy nations on the western coast, casting Waterdeep and Amn into the gloom, if it were unified. In reality, the nation of Calimshan is a collection of squabbling city-states, each such city gripped by its own internal merchant factions and power struggles. All pay verbal obeisance to the pasha of Calimshan.

The largest of these city-states is Calimport, and it is here a sequestered pasha relaxes and debauches while his servants and bureaucratic underlings squabble about the kingdom. Outsiders tend to equate the two words, but not all Calishites are from Calimport. Calimshan considers both Amn and Waterdeep its economic rivals.

TETHYR

Tethyr lies between the borders of the Forest of Tethir and the gathered city-states of Calimshan. It is a land of large dominions and warring lords, and an ideal place for the mercenary and the spy.

This rich but troubled land is now a realm of changing rulers and uncertain power. Tethyr's former ruling family has been hunted into virtual extinction, and political chaos reigns. Nonhumans (given no power in the previous human regime) have formed their own independent states. Nobles (those who survived) vie for position and contend for power based on the slightest tint of royal blood. Double-crosses, treason, and ambush are all accepted political methods in modern Tethyr.

Tethyr is still a wealthy and historied feudal kingdom of many noble families, strong in arms and trade alike, yet until the situation stabilizes, travelers are warned of the dangers of rival factions and border patrols. Mercenaries and adventurers, however, are well aware of the opportunities available in Tethyr. Both the Council of Six (in Amn) and the pasha of Calimshan watch the endless war with interest, each thinking of the potential benefits of placing their own puppet on the throne.

THE SHINING SOUTH

It is known that the South is a strange and marvelous place. The South begins where the rest of the Realms ends. Most of what follows is half-truths and legend. Those seeking the full truth will have to go to the South themselves and separate the facts from the lies.

Laelith is part of this region.

THE GREAT RIFT

The entrance to Underhome, the largest known community of dwarves in the Deep Realms, the Great Rift is the spectacular home of the gold dwarves. It is a huge cleft carved into the Eastern Shaar, 300 miles in length and 80 miles across at its widest. The floor of the canyon is marked by buttes, temples, and mesas, and dominated by the Riftlake, a wide and pure inland sea.

The dwarves have made this beautiful and forbidding place their home, and here they thrive, having forced out the competing underground races. They are looking to spread still further. This is one location in the Realms where the dwarven peoples do not seem to be in retreat.

Better known than Underhome are Eartheart and Kholtar, the great human and dwarven cities that border the Rift. Here the dwarves meet with strangers to engage in trade and send rich orcs (and legends) up the Golden Road to the Inner Sea.

HALRUAA

The strange and magical land of Halruaa is a nation ruled by magic and mages. It is a place of palaces and great towers that defy logic and gravity. Its masters are wizards who are organized into great schools. What most people know of Halruaa are the legends.

JUNGLES OF CHULT

Dominated by a huge jungle, the land of Chult, located across the Shining Sea, is the home of dark rumors, ancient, fallen civilizations and gem mines, and elder gods and lost magic. What is known from those who have penetrated the edges of this verdant rain forest is that it is a place filled with great monsters, with dinosaurs and other prehistoric beasts.

LUIREN

The kingdom of the halflings, Luiren is a southern nation on the Great Sea. It is a nation of small communities without any centralized government or ruler. Its largest cities, or burrows, are great hills tunneled and retunneled by the families within, with a few buildings erected for the "tall people".

Travelers heading for Luiren are advised to make plans to go elsewhere, not because of any great danger, but because while one halfling may be a nuisance, a nation of them is a menace, particularly since they enjoy turning the tables on their larger guests. Be prepared for small chairs, low roofs, and being talked to loudly and slowly as if one were mentally impeded by one's great size.

RAURIN (LE DESERT DE POUSSIÈRE)

The near-mythical desert of Raurin is a massive, sandy waste that could swallow entire nations of the North. It is located in the farthest southeast, beyond the domains of Mulhorand. Unlike Anauroch, Raurin is a great sandy waste dotted by rare oases and dead kingdoms. It is also known as the Dust Desert and the Stone Desert. Great and magical kingdoms were said to rule this land, and it may have been their fall that first drove humanity to the lands of the Inner Sea and toward the Sword Coast. What lies in Raurin is as yet unrecorded, and its mysteries are held beneath a sandy shroud.

One arm of the Dust Desert surges north toward Mulhorand. Called the Plains of Purple Dust for its distinctive, blood-colored sand, this arm has an ill reputation as being the home of dark gods and evil creatures from the nether plains.

THE SHAAR

The Shaar is a most effective barrier between the Heartlands and the Shining South, effective through its own emptiness. The Shaar is dominated by miles upon miles of thick grassland, and peopled only by nomads, herdsmen, and raiders. Yet, strange temples and abandoned shrines to lost gods dot the lands, and some of the wanderers encountered wield great mystical powers. Mighty winds powerful enough to overturn wagons and lift mounts into the air are common.

The region known as Eastern Shaar is sparser, less green, and more of a wasteland. Larger than the Shaar in area and more arid, it is separated from the Shaar by a ridge known as the Landrise. The Eastern Shaar is free of any major features save for the huge chasm known as the Great Rift.