

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

GAZETTEER

OFFICIAL GAME ACCESSORY

The Five Shires

by Ed Greenwood

Alfheim

Malpnege Swan



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GAZETTEER

Player's Booklet

The Five Shires

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Dedication

This one's for Grandma and Aunt Clara. See? There still are magic kingdoms.

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Introduction

Welcome to the *Players Guide To The Five Shires*. This book contains information for both players and DMs, but unlike the larger DM's booklet, these pages will concentrate on information role-playing D&D® game players will need to bring a halfling player character to life.

The existing rules of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game cover the mechanics of creating a halfling player character. Follow them; except for a special subclass known as the Master, this booklet makes no changes to the existing rules. Instead, the culture and essential nature of halflings are explored.

For players who don't want to play a halfling character but do want to adventure in *The Five Shires*, your DM will tell you how hin treat non-hin (halflings call themselves hin). If your non-halfling character is going to begin play in the Shires, if he was born or raised there or has lived there for some years, read the rest of the book. Unless your character has some problem in perceiving the world or has lived a life of enforced isolation, most or all the information in the other sections of the book will have become apparent to your character just by living in the Shires.

Halflings who live or travel outside the Shires may not be able to celebrate all the customs of hin in the Shires, but all who play halflings should be aware of these customs; they are essentials to the nature of all halflings. As your DM reveals these customs, look for the philosophies that lie behind them. For example, the halfling custom of *The Dragging* isn't really about killing orcs, but about the desire to be free from oppression and help one's friends.

First and foremost, a player who wants to breathe life into a halfling character must put aside notions of cute little pipe smoking creatures who have quaint manners and think of halflings as *people*. As old hin say to the young, "Begin then and learn. When ye have the hang of learning, ye will know just how little ye have come to know and why it is good to learn. But never worry about not knowing things. When that makes sense to ye, it'll probably be too late, so don't worry

about it; just run off and have fun. When ye stop having fun, come home."

The People

The inhabitants of *The Five Shires* are almost entirely (96 percent) halfling. The remainder are humans, dwarves, and elves, mostly ambassadors and traders, and are almost always to be found in the large settlements of the Shires.

Humans are the most likely non-hin races to be found outside such settlements, either as solitary peddlers traveling the roads, or solitary mages living in towers. Such magic-users, *always* Lawful in alignment, are welcome by local hin clans if they live peacefully, have few visitors from outside the Shires, and aid local hin with their magic. In return, they receive the peace and protection of the hin in the beautiful countryside of the Shires.

The 'Hidden Side' of Halflings

Due to their stature and disposition, halflings are often thought of as childlike, unimportant in terms of international warfare and diplomacy, and mentally immature; happy, innocent, fun-loving, uncaring, and stupid.

Racial stereotypes are always false, but they are based on perceptions of common traits and may contain a kernel of truth. Whereas dwarves are thought of as dour, grim, and taciturn, halflings are thought of as having a merry spirit, and this is true. What is wrong is to think of hin as a lightheaded, unimportant, simple race, happy with their lot as pigs are happy in a mud-wallow. This view is incorrect, but halflings are not the type to go to war about it.

It is also wrong to view halflings as mischievous children. Halflings in general have none of the wide-eyed innocence of human children and are far more respectful of the property and dignity of others. Although it is true that many of those hin who go adventuring and travel outside *The Five Shires* enjoy both thieving and mischievously playing pranks, hin in the

Shires will only act stupid or innocent when performing plays in taverns or halls. Halflings are generally straightforward, honest folk.

Halflings are a proud people, but they are also sensitive to the needs of other creatures which share their land. They do not consider themselves superior to other races or to those who have different beliefs, unlike the human tribes of the Emirates of Ylaruam who distinguish between True Believers and Unbelievers. Halfling pride is not exhibited by being haughty, or quick to find insult, or by difficult behavior toward others.

Hin take pride in their own survival through centuries of persecution, and in their deeds and accomplishments. The history of hin society is recorded in the tapestries of the various hin clans.

Hin tend to be curious and inquisitive, though not in a pushy or very obvious manner. "All things pass the eyes of one who watches and blinks not with impatience," goes a very old hin saying. Hin are always interested in learning more about the world around them. In youth, all halflings go through "yallara," a time of finding themselves, an essential part of this learning. A hin will never be so set in his ways that he will be blind to possible trouble or resist new ways or inventions, regardless of age or station. The continual observation of the world around also makes a hin difficult to surprise or dupe, as many individuals of other races have discovered to their cost.

Morale

While standing on the soil of *The Five Shires*, all halflings gain +2 to their morale and a +2 bonus to Saving Throws against magical fear and similar magics that work upon the emotions. Hin are almost fearless in the defense of their own land and folk; they are very willing to die to protect their fellows. "Do what must be done; the clan will remember," runs an old hin proverb.

This does not mean that hin will foolishly throw their lives away when retreating to fight later would better protect their fellow halflings, but it does mean

that adventurers facing monsters can expect aid from halfling children and ancients alike, not a lot of screaming and flight.

Denial

Halflings of 5th level or higher have a special power known as "denial." A halfling can deny a single spell or magical item effect once every 24 hours simply by crying, "No!" and focusing his will into thwarting the attack. This power will only work within The Five Shires, as it draws on the inherent forces of the land.

When a hin *denies* something, he instantly suffers a 1 to 4 hit point loss. This occurs even if the threatened attack, such as a wand being raised, is not launched or was never intended. Hit points lost this way can be regained through normal rest. A hin who drains himself of hit points in this manner will perish but death does not affect the success or failure of the *denial*.

A hin can only *deny* magical things, not purely physical threats such as missiles or avalanches, and cannot *deny* things of which he is unaware. Surprise or hidden attacks cannot be *denied*. An act of *denial* takes all of a hin's attention in the round in which it is voiced, and is effective for that round and the following round only.

Denial Table

The DM must determine the effect of each *denial* attempt in accordance with the situation. The halfling's wisdom and intelligence added together give the DM a base for any *denial* attempted; add this to the roll of 1d20, and consult the table below:

Score	Result
less than 30	<i>denial</i> fails
30-35	effect robbed of either 1 round of duration or 1 die of damage
36-39	effect diverted 10'-30' in random direction, or robbed of 2 dice of damage, depending on what the hin using <i>denial</i> was attempting

40-45	effect diverted 30'-70' away from target, or robbed of 3 dice of damage, depending upon the intent of the <i>denying</i> hin
46-49	effect robbed of all but token effect (mainly visual); maximum possible damage dealt to all targets is 2 hit points
50-53	effect negated completely; charges still used, spells still lost
54 or more	effect hurled back upon caster or wielder, for full effect

Possible Modifiers To A Denial Score:

If the power being *denied* is that of an artifact: -5.

If the *denying* hin is defending his own individual home or clan stronghold, or a spot thoroughly familiar and special to him: +2.

If the *denying* hin is defending beings other than himself who are very dear to him or her: +4.

All of these Modifiers are cumulative, and nearly all could apply to a single Denial Score, given the right circumstances.

The slaying or wounding of a hin in the same round in which the hin is bending his or her will to a *denial* does not cause the *denial* to be ruined or wasted; it will have full effect with no alteration of the Score.

For example, assume NPC hin of unknown abilities who are attempting a *denial* to have scores of 14 in both Intelligence and Wisdom; their Score will be 1d20 + 28.

Denial attempts cannot be combined. If two or more hin all attempt to *deny* the same attack or effect, all will lose hit points, but only the most effective score is considered. The results are not cumulative.

A *denial* is a very personal thing; most hin will not speak of it. No hin can be compelled to use *denial*, even by a Keeper.

Magical item charges are drained and spells are lost even if they are utterly negated by *denial*. A hin never knows how effective his *denial* will be, before or during exercise of it; the DM will inform players of what occurs in every case.

A *denial* uttered within 30' of Blackflame does not involve a hit point loss; the Blackflame powers the *denial* (the Blackflame loses some power; this is described more fully in the Dungeon Master's booklet). Only Clanmasters, Keepers, Witnesses, and Masters of 4th level or greater will know this until other hin learn it by battlefield observation.

For an example of play involving *denial*, see **Bungo's Denial**. Players should remember that this isn't a miracle cure. Each halfling can only use it once per day and it is often ineffective.

Bungo's Denial

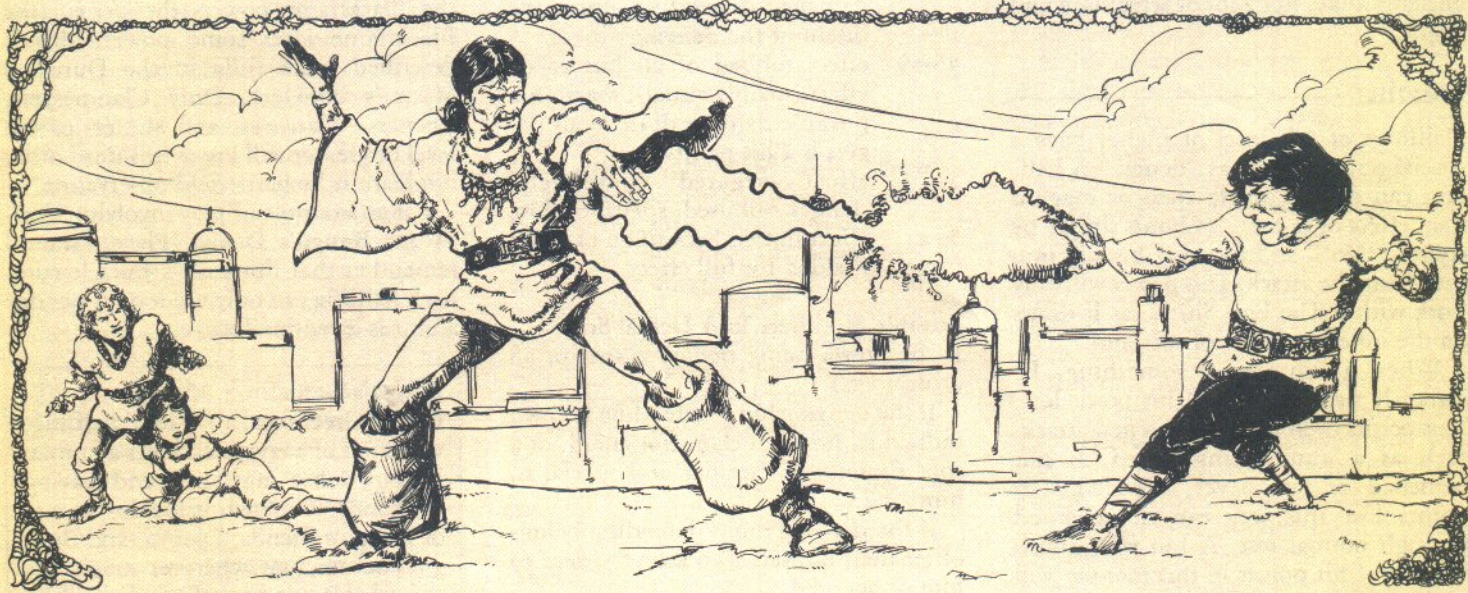
Bungo Greentoes, a 5th level halfling, walks out of a tavern and sees a human in dark robes muttering and waving his hands. The man is looking at one of Bungo's friends, Dlotho, and Bungo assumes that whatever magic the wizard is going to unleash, it will be bad for Dlotho.

(The player running Bungo informs the DM that Bungo will attempt to *deny* the spell; note that the player need not correctly guess what the spell is.) Bungo, who had begun to run forward while pulling at his belt-knife, stops and yells, "No!" hurling his will at the wizard. The act leaves him weak and trembling. Bungo sits down very suddenly on his well-padded fundamente. (Bungo loses 2 hit points for his *denial*, on the DM's roll of a d4.)

The spellcasting is completed. The wizard directs his spell, a *lightning bolt*, triumphantly at the unwitting Dlotho. Dlotho's current lady friend, Jatha, who is walking with him, hears the muttered end of the spell, turns her head, and sees the wizard. She, too, cries her *denial*.

(Bungo has 14 intelligence and 13 wisdom; the player rolls 1d20 for a score of 11; the combined total is 38. The NPC Jatha is assumed to have a 14 in both intelligence and wisdom, and the DM rolls a 5; her total is 33. Only Bungo's score—the higher one—takes effect. A modifier of +4 applies

Yallara



to both Jatha's score and Bungo's, because Dlotho is dear to them; Bungo's final score is 42.)

Bungo was attempting simply to negate whatever unknown spell the wizard was casting. Thus, the only result the DM can apply to the spell is robbing it of 3 dice of damage; the 11th level wizard's bolt does 8d6 damage, not 11d6. Jatha is not hit by the bolt, but her *denial* attempt drains her of a full 4 hp (on the DM's roll of 1d4); Bungo sees her moan and fall limply to the road. Dlotho, trailing smoke, follows her earthward. The round ends, with Bungo wondering if he can get off his behind and reach the wizard before the next spell slays him. We leave Bungo in suspense.

Yallara

This is perhaps the most important part of a halfling's life. The *yallara* or "wild time" is a restless period, usually begin-

ning in adolescence, when hin go through a process of finding themselves. Such *yallaren* halflings usually go on a rampage of adventure, doing anything "just for the fun of it," joining weird causes, societies, and clubs, and often traveling to the farthest reaches of the world. This is brought on by the essential nature of hin, not by clan or peer pressure or decree. *Yallara* ends only when a halfling discovers what he really wants to do in life. For some, this may take sixty years or more; for others, only three or four seasons.

Yallaren

Most adventurers and halflings traveling far from the Shires are *yallaren*. *Yallaren* are willing to try almost anything that doesn't seem likely to result in certain death. They are interested not only in trying many different lifestyles and professions themselves, but in observing others all around them. *Yallaren* are thus 'gung ho' adventurers, and the rich variety of experience they relate to their clans if

they survive and return to the Shires makes the halflings of that peaceful land surprisingly well-informed as to the nature, details, and happenings of the wide world.

A halfling encountered anywhere in the Known World, of any age and appearance, may as a result reveal an astonishing variety of knowledge and experience. Hin may also leap feet-first into somebody else's adventure without warning; player characters in a tight spot may well receive unexpected aid from a *yallaren*. Adventurers who survive such aid are full of colorful tales about the carefree, reckless enthusiasm of halflings, who will all too often attempt anything.

Social Standing

There is no social standing based upon wealth or birth in The Five Shires. Halflings vary in wealth and influence, and so do their clans, but every hin has his place within his clan and it is this standing that affects how a hin is treated by other hin. The Five Shires has no recognized nobili-

ty. There is also no slavery in The Five Shires, but there are clanless folk; hin who are outcast or orphaned or recent immigrants who know not their clan and have not been adopted by a hin clan.

By human standards, almost all halfplings of the Shires are commoners in that they work diligently at such professions as hunting, farming, and fishing. Almost all are comfortable; although the halfpling and his clan may not be rich in terms of coins, they do not suffer from want. Even poor hin tend to be adequately housed, clothed, and fed without stint or shortage, and most own weapons and some finery.

Land in the Five Shires is clan property or common property, although individual hin may own small areas at the pleasure of a Sheriff. Non-hin, such as human wizards may also be granted such rights—enough land for a walled keep and a small farm to support it, but rarely more.

How halfplings regard the social standings of others is a similar affair. A hin is utterly unimpressed by a title of Court Lord, Baron, or even Duke or King, unless the person bearing the title is personally impressive or his known deeds are worthy of respect. Battle ranks are somewhat different; a Captain or General of another nation will be obeyed or treated with deference by hin, depending on whether they are allies or foes, but this treatment is probationary; if said Captain or General turns out to be a weak or unscrupulous character, the respectful treatment accorded him will end forthwith.

Halfplings resident in other lands will respect the ranks, protocol, and authorities of those lands, but within the Five Shires such ranks are regarded with toleration, not awe.

Halfplings venerate elders but regard most religious behavior with headshaking bemusement. This bewilderment is particularly strong in cases such as in the Emirates of Ylaruam where such behavior involves cruelty to others, uneven hospitality, or treatment of folk simply because of belief. They also view with disdain hardships visited upon anyone in the name of a creed.

Faith, order, and clear aims are good things, but there should be limits to such beliefs. When others are hurt, deprived, enslaved, or compelled to direct their lives in certain strict manners because of one's religion, that line has been crossed. A halfpling will fearlessly tell even a cleric so; the support of some Immortal or other is no excuse for one's own excessive actions.

An outsider traveling in the Shires will be treated with good-natured politeness by most encountered hin because that is the nature of most hin. Bullies and braggarts will soon wear out this warm and easy welcome and will discover that halfplings are also open and direct of speech far more than humans are. Wasteful extravagance and ostentatious wealth perplex or disgust hin rather than impress. Visitors who insist on strange manners or who openly pass judgement upon individuals and conditions within the Shires will be looked down upon, not deferred to. Social standing in the Shires is earned, not conferred or held by right, although eccentricity is considered the right of all.

The social standings of clan members will be examined in the next section. All clans are considered social equals, although clans vary widely in wealth, size, and actual influence. There are many strong rivalries between clans but nowadays these are friendly contests between equals, not bitter feuds.

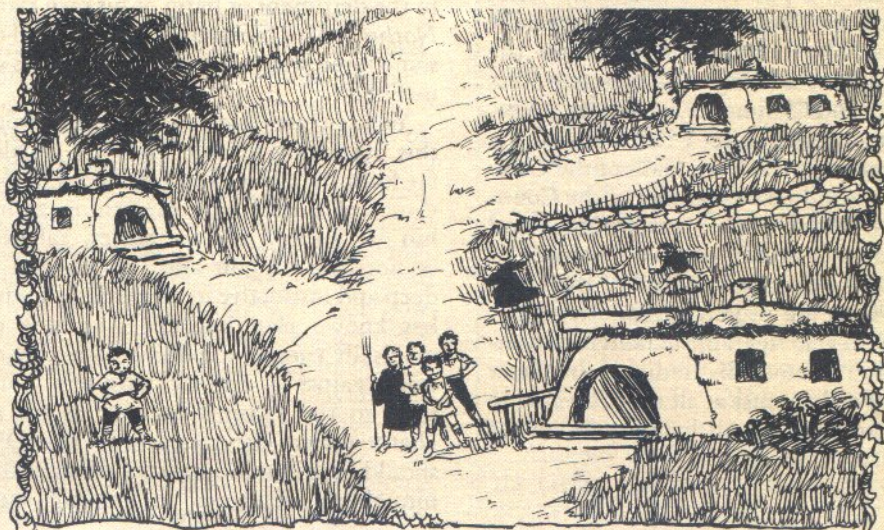
Clans

The central focus of hin life in the Shires is the clan. Clans tend to have up to 1,500 or so members, all of whom are related and have the same last name. Hin within a clan who also happen to have the same *first* name are distinguished by the use of nicknames, which are very common among halfplings. Hin also use "son of —" and "daughter of —" phrases, which most hin are used to having uttered with their own names from birth. For example, a halfpling who is known simply as "Rory" in Karameikos will be called "Rory Runnerguts-son-of-Dluth-Alehill" in the Shires.

Clan influence, and a halfpling's personal reputation as a successful and courageous adventurer, should have great bearing on whether the halfpling is considered for any of the military or civil offices of the Shires. A DM who carefully emphasizes and follows the importance of clans in halfpling life will succeed in making a halfpling PC something truly different from a "short human with special powers" in campaign play.

FOUNDING A CLAN

Clans are founded only rarely, usually by individuals of great fame and accomplishment who take a new clan name they have invented or have acquired during their adventures. This name cannot be



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the same as, or very similar to, the name of an existing clan. If a clan founder is not fecund, the clan will stay small for some generations and may well die out.

By tradition, there can be no more than a Hundred Clans; a player character halfling should not be able to found his or her own clan unless at least one of the present clans is wiped out. This extinction must be known and certain to at least two halfling Sheriffs — and of course the hin wishing to found a new clan must have had nothing to do with the fall of the clan that has disappeared.

Most clans have existed for centuries. When possible, clans tend to settle and remain in certain areas of the Shires. In the past this has not always been possible, due to the many invasions of The Five Shires, but left to their own devices, halflings move about little.

Clan Strongholds and Offices

Clan strongholds are usually small but defensively strong castles, surrounded by the farms and homes of the rest of the clan. At the center of each stronghold is a Chamber of the Ancestors. Within it are kept trophies (famous weapons and belongings) of dead clan members, and a Crucible of Blackflame. The crucible is tended by the Keeper and 2-8 Witnesses. The position of Keeper is hereditary, but Witness is a position awarded by secret vote of the Clan Elders to hin especially esteemed by their clan. In such votes, the two highest-ranking clan members, the Keeper and Clanmaster, each have a veto.

Surrounding the Chamber of the Ancestors are the High Halls of the Clan. These include the Chamber of the Council of Elders, the apartments and audience-chamber of the Clanmaster, and the Great Feasting Hall of the Clan. Such halls are usually great lofty chambers with galleries, able to hold nine hundred hin or more. By tradition the Great Hall of a clan must at all times be able to comfortably hold all living members of the clan.

Clan Tapestries

Around the walls of the Great Hall, and hanging in banners from its rafters, are tapestries depicting important events in the history of the clan and great deeds of clan members. Clan Seniors work on these tapestries constantly; they are carefully preserved and tended, but never altered or restored if damaged. The oldest tapestries may well hang in tatters, although the Seniors, carefully schooled by their grandparents as their grandparents were before them, can tell a visitor exactly what scenes are depicted in detail and at length on the now-vanished weaves.

Clan Loyalty

For players and DMs who wish to take advantage of it, the possibility of making halflings truly memorable as player characters lies in their deep devotion to, and involvement in the ongoing betterment of, their clans. A halfling of the Shires who draws his or her own clan rune (these runes appear in the clan summaries on the back of the main Shires map, each with its respective clan), even if it is only in a puddle of spilled beer on a tavern tabletop, does so with reverence. To a hin of The Five Shires, the clan is all that is important in life. Nothing short of magical compulsion or similar mental control will ever make any halfling knowingly act to the detriment or harm of his own clan. *Nothing*. This moral principle can lead to some interesting adventures if a DM is so inclined.

Yallaren are effectively exempt from this overriding loyalty. They are usually far from the Shires and are always in the throes of questioning everything about hin life, society, and the Shires. Yallaren or not, the support and love of clan is deep and instinctive in every halfling who has known clan kinship. Attempts to magically compel a halfling to betray or work against his clan are definitely “contrary to the victim’s nature” as far as *charm* magics are concerned. The DM should bear in mind the usefulness of the hin ability of *denial* in evading such

influences.

Halflings are taught when very young that defacing a clan rune, or using it without permission of the relevant Clanmaster, is a terrible crime. Non-hin visiting the Shires will have to learn this the hard way, if they lack sense.

Clan Advancement

In every clan there are differing ranks; clan advancement is more important to most post-yallara hin than anything else in life. Certainly almost all post-yallara hin living in The Five Shires will be of this opinion. Clan advancement is measured in points just as is character experience. The DM must keep track of such points (Influence Points) for all PC halflings, and should remember that NPC hin will rise within their clans as well. A halfling can rise within his clan by the achievement of greater *influence* or of *rank*, although the two are obviously connected.

Influence

Influence is gained as the result of the proper (wise, understanding, judicious, and kind) exercise of powers of rank, and the doing of good and great deeds. Good deeds include aiding others of your clan and, of lesser importance, other hin, and great deeds are high adventures outside The Five Shires which add to the glory, safety, or prosperity of hin. Influence may also be gained by experience in the military defence of the Shires, conducted within its borders.

Great influence allows a halfling to speak and act within his own clan as if one rank higher than he has achieved. Any deed may well result in the awarding of that rank, whereupon influence builds from the amount normal to the new rank upwards again.

Earning Influence

The player of a halfling should continually be reminded of the importance of the character’s clan to the character. Just as a character earns Experience Points, he also accumulates Influence Points in

dealings with the clan.

The DM should keep track of such points and keep the PC aware of the character's progress. The halfling's influence level will determine how much aid the clan will give the character and how much aid and service the character is expected to give to the clan.

In personal dealings not directed by clan members of higher rank or ceremonial duties or activities defined by law or custom, hin of the same clan and the same nominal clan rank will establish a pecking order based on influence within the clan. This is not a petty or malicious system, merely an instinctive social ordering. Hin seem to know when the hin they are addressing is of a higher influence than themselves, whether of their own clan or not, and behave accordingly. Exceptions are the very old, very young, deliberately clanless, or yallaren.

The judgement of the DM is crucial in awarding points that reflect the magnitude of, and true motives behind, a given deed. Competition between hin to rise faster than each other in the ranks of their shared clan is never a vicious or cutthroat matter; that would be contrary to the nature of halflings and their love of clan. Deeds done by a PC halfling merely to look good should be rewarded little. This should be particularly true if such deeds are reckless gambles that will harm clan or comrades if they go wrong.

The hin who puts clan and friends before self unhesitatingly, and without a lot of "look at the great sacrifice I'm making" moaning, should gain the most. Note that a properly roleplayed halfling is always generous in describing the deeds of other hin. A halfling PC who faces death to rescue a hin friend should never have to blow his own horn when the party returns to the clan. In fact, a PC who wishes hin friends or companions *not* to talk about shared adventures or grand deeds should have a hard time compelling them not to talk. It is the nature of hin to talk of such deeds to fellow clan members.

The Awarding of Influence Points

DMs should award points for influence according to how well-regarded and widely-known the deeds in question are, as well as for their motivational worth. Therefore a given act is worth not a set amount, but its worth is chosen by the DM from a range of points as follows:

Exercise of powers of rank (such as an Elder voting on a matter, or a Clanmaster deciding clan policy): 1-6 points (1d6)

Good Deed: 2-8 points (2d4)

Great Deed: 5-20 points (5d4)

The dice values are given for those situations in which the DM is unsure of how much fame a given act will bring; it is recommended that the DM choose a value rather than rolling dice whenever possible.

Please consult **Bungo's Bad Day** for an example of the handling of the gaining of influence points during play. A DM can make the awarding of such points as detailed as in Bungo's case, or leave everything until a session of play is finished, and reward only what he recalls of point-worthy acts. After all, influence is a measure of just such possibly incomplete or faulty recollection and esteem.

Competition between players to earn the most Influence Points for their characters should not dominate play, just as a scramble to earn more experience than the next character should not. A DM always has more senior NPC hin of a PC's clan at his disposal to sharply remind a vainglorious or wayward PC of "duty before zeal" and similar moral lessons, and to prevent a PC who rises a step in rank over other PCs from bullying or ordering them around.

Individual players and DMs will find the amount of preoccupation with influence comfortable to them in their campaigns; if it is entirely ignored, the DM should give some thought to just how clan offices and ranks are awarded. PCs should not find the acquisition of either a fast or easy process, or the players will soon run out of challenges within the Shires and become bored.

DMs may wish to establish some hotshot NPC adventurers who are members of the

same clan(s) as PCs, and whose exploits can always be related to players to remind them that there are other hin perhaps more deserving of any offices. It is recommended that such NPCs be largely unavailable as allies for the PCs, although a DM could use them to rescue PCs in peril.

Bungo's Bad Day

We last saw Bungo Greentoes, a 5th level halfling, sitting in a road contemplating his imminent death. The wizard who struck down his friend Dlotho with a *lightning bolt* has turned to look at Bungo with an unhealthy expression.

Bungo leaps to his feet as quickly as his weak knees allow and, drawing his belt knife, staggers forward into a charge. The wizard begins to cast another spell. Bungo runs closer, as fast as he can. He hears the excited shrieks of halfling children and one darts in front of him. Bungo looks wildly all about as he runs; hinlings everywhere!

"Throw stones at that wizard!" he bellows, "and then GET OUT OF HERE! Alert the Elders!" (Exercise of powers of rank: 1-6 points. Bungo has done the obvious thing, but did it mindful of the hinlings' safety. He gets a single influence point.)

Stones fly at the wizard, as does Bungo. The hinling who darted in front of Bungo was the only one to hit the wizard with a stone — too late. Casting complete, the wizard turns his hand toward the infant in anger. Bungo dives in front of the child, shielding her with his own body. Nearby, someone shouts, "No!" angrily.

(Bungo has just done a Good Deed; in protecting the child rather than striking the wizard, Bungo has knowingly aided another to his own greater danger. Because his act is quite likely to prove fatal, and Bungo knew that when he did it, the DM gives Bungo 7 influence points.)

Another hin who had come out of the tavern, the 6th level senior Barusz

CLANS

"the Herder," has just *denied* the wizard's second *lightning bolt*. Barusz, a "DM's Special" NPC, has 16 intelligence, 17 wisdom, and rolls a 10, for a Denial Score of 43. He recognized the spell being cast as a *lightning bolt*, and willed it to be diverted to one side. It is, and misses everyone. Barusz has just done a Good Deed, placing himself in danger. He now has no *denial* ability left for the day, and is facing a demonstrably hostile wizard, so he earns 5 Influence Points. Were he to promptly run away, the DM would probably lower that award to one or two Influence Points.

As the bolt crackles harmlessly to one side, Bungo roars, "Run!" at the child as he hauls her to her feet (no more Influence Points; he told the child to flee earlier and was awarded a point at the time). Then he charges the wizard. Barusz pulls a dart from his belt and runs closer.

The hinling plucks up another stone and throws it hard and accurately at the wizard (and earns three Influence Points for a somewhat-perilous Good Deed). The wizard staggers back, just as Bungo reaches him . . . and we must leave them all.

RANK

Rank within a clan can be achieved in many different ways as a hin advances: some by age, some by inheritance, some by vote. Clan ranks can be summarized as follows:

Young hin, also known as younglings or hinlings, are probationary members of the clan into which they are born. They wield no influence and are protected by the clan in return for service to the clan such as work in the fields, cleaning clan halls and stables, carrying food and water, loading and unloading goods sent away for sale or acquired by the clan, and similar menial tasks.

A step above hinlings are the yallaren, who are still probationary clan members and who wield no formal influence yet are allowed to speak and act freely. The

queries and criticisms of yallaren form an accepted opposition to established hin order. Yallaren are listened to in hopes that inefficiencies and clan mistakes may be uncovered.

When a halfling returns from yallara and settles down, he may apply for membership in a clan. Halflings who are not known to have murdered, tortured, raped, betrayed, or stolen substantially from other hin are always accepted. They become truly hin, the backbone of any clan, and full members of their clan.

A member can rise to the position of Senior through influence and respect gathered by long experience or outstanding service and performance. Seniors of a clan continually debate the merits of activities and business carried on by their clan, and they vote to raise one or more hin of their own rank to the ranks of the Elders of the clan when necessary.

Between Seniors and Elders in rank come the Witnesses of the clan, who assist the Keeper by learning some aspect of the Relic's powers. When acting for the Keeper, in the event of the latter's death or absence, a Witness rises above all Elders in influence and nominal rank, but remains clearly below the Clanmaster.

The Elders of a clan elect clan ambassadors and representatives in Shire government and in direct dealings with other clans. Such clan representatives carry a temporary rank equivalent to Elder. Each Elder has a single vote in these matters, as well as in deciding major clan business and policies.

Above Elders in rank and influence, but having a shade less than the Keeper and Clanmaster, come the mysterious Masters of the Shire. This class is presented later in this book; any halfling who becomes a Master renounces clan membership but attains rank in all clans with whom he has dealings.

Above all, at the head of a clan, are two individuals: the Keeper and the Clanmaster. The Keeper is venerated and wields the greatest influence, but the Clanmaster, traditionally the eldest living clan member who is competent to head the clan and wishes to do so, is first in rank. The two are thus in practice equal,

the actual daily working and balance of power determined by the personalities of the two individuals holding the offices.

A Keeper is often named to the office by his dying predecessor, in the case of a Keeper having no trained offspring at the time of death. Otherwise, the Elders and Clanmaster elect one of the Witnesses to be the new Keeper.

Many Clanmasters are frail or crippled due to their advanced ages. They often choose an Acting Clan Chief to serve as their mobile eyes and ears and to act as the clan's battle general. Such an individual holds the rank of Elder, but may be dismissed by vote of the Elders. A Clanmaster who becomes mentally unfit to lead the clan will resign if aware of his own deficiency, or he may be removed by agreement of the Keeper and a majority of the Elders. In either case, the Acting Clan Chief has no vote or say in the matter, although such an individual is sometimes considered as a replacement Clanmaster.

Any member of a clan may serve as Clanmaster if older members do not wish. In times of war, young hin warriors often lead their clans. An Acting Clan Chief can be dismissed instantly for proven misrepresentation of the Clanmaster's will either by inventing orders and giving them in the name of the Clanmaster or by altering the Clanmaster's words. Harder to detect is the allied crime of misinforming the Clanmaster of situations so that the wrong orders will be given; traditionally, Keepers try to ensure that aged Clanmasters are attended at all times by at least one Witness to prevent such abuses of power.

Most Clanmasters and Keepers consult with each other and with the Elders of the clan in complex or especially grave cases. In matters of great importance to the clan as a whole, they will often ask the Elders for a vote, retaining their vetoes over the result.

Above clan leadership in rank are the five Sheriffs of the Shires, but they deliberately hold themselves apart from clan government.

The chart that follows summarizes clan ranks. The names of these ranks, and their relative importance and numbers, may vary slightly from clan to clan.

Clan Ranks

Rank from lowest to highest	Influence Points	Powers and Rights
Hinling	0	service to clan in return for protection
Yallaren	0	to speak and act freely
Member (Hin)	1-3,000	full member of clan
Senior	3,001-17,000	experienced full member; can vote fellow members into the ranks of the Elders
Witness	10,001 17,000	assist Keeper; each learn some aspect of Relic's powers and properties; act for Keeper in his or her incapacity or absence
Elder	17,001-22,000 +	equal vote on major clan business and policy, elect clan ambassadors and representatives
Keeper	absolute: 25,000 +	sole keeper of Relic, <i>domination</i> of clan members as described in D&D® game Players Companion rulebook
Clanmaster	absolute: 25,000 +	(usually) eldest living clan member; <i>domination</i> authority over clan members (see "Keeper", above)

NON-HALFLING CLAN MEMBERS —

Clans can adopt non-hin as members. Elves and humans are sometimes accepted into hin clans. Even more rarely, hin of other clans are taken in as members, although they must renounce their prior clans.

Such members by choice are always highly regarded; they are not considered inferior to those who belong to a clan by right of birth. Only a Sheriff can officially belong to more than one clan at a time. Masters and, in a lesser sense, Keepers are always considered to belong to all clans.

Abusing Rank —

A halfling trying to falsely pull rank on other hin by assuming a rank or level of influence he does not really possess will be ignored by those hin once they realize what is going on. They will stop speaking and looking at the offending hin, simply avoiding him. They will provide food, water, and a place to sleep, but no more.

If attacked or hampered in their activities by the offender they will defend themselves, seeking to drive out or disable the offender without causing serious harm. Note that locking the offender in a cellar or knocking him cold is not seen as serious harm. An offending hin who is injured will be treated. Only upon the withdrawal or abject apology of the offending hin will the avoidance end.

If the offending conduct is seen as the

result of injury or magic, it will be readily forgiven and forgotten. If it is the result of drunkenness, it will be only slowly forgiven unless the offender is bereaved or yallaren.

Halfling Clans Outside The Shires —

Most halflings who choose to dwell outside The Five Shires are clanless, unless they reside nearby in Darokin, the western Grand Duchy, or the northern Ierendi isles since hin there are close enough to retain contact with their clans within the Shires. Clanless hin have renounced their clans, been cast out, or are the descendants of hin who reared them outside the Shires.

Such halflings may well have smaller families with less ritual and clearly remembered history and traditions, more akin to human families. These hin families tend to have names derived from family characteristics or professions, such as Winkeye and Sheepwatch. Such far-scattered hin by tradition give shelter to many weary traveling yallaren who usually entertain their hosts with tales and news of the Shires. As a result, hin outside the Shires are almost all aware of the existence and the doings of clans in the Shires related to them or with whom they share common names.

Hin outside the Shires have in the past suffered persecution when those who rule

the lands in which they dwell have feared hin clans provide a network of spies, smugglers, or even possible invaders across their borders. Therefore, most halflings outside the Shires tend to keep quiet about their clan ties or allegiances.

Not all hin know the names and runes of all the Hundred Clans, nor care.

GOVERNMENT & JUSTICE in the Shires —

Unlike most lands of men, The Five Shires have few formal laws or set sentences for given crimes. Justice in the Shires consists in practice of the judgement and decrees of Clanmasters, Keepers, and Sheriffs.

Within a clan, the code of accepted behavior is laid down and maintained by the Clanmaster and Keeper. In the rare event of the holders of both offices being slain, absent, or incapacitated, a council of seven Witnesses and Elders traditionally runs the clan and passes judgement in all disputes.

CRIMES —

Little formal law is written down because halflings know what is right and what decent folk do as a result of their clan upbringing and instruction. Halflings who witness or suspect misdeeds can bring complaints directly to their Clanmaster. Murder, betrayal of clan or Shire,

GOVERNMENT

rape, torture of hin, destruction of clan or hin property, slave-keeping or trading, firesetting; all these are the most serious sort of crime. Theft of all types, and non-fatal injury to a hin are lesser; damage of property and living things in the Shires are of the least of the punishable crimes.

PUNISHMENT

All crimes are rare among hin in the Shires, for they truly are law-abiding folk. Those who do not abide by the rules may be cast out by their clan or treated to deathly silence for a time as described under **Abusing Rank** in this book. Troublesome hin may be executed by the Sheriffs or sent upon a quest or service. The fulfillment of a quest or service will restore to the hin any rank or office which they have had stripped from them as part of their sentencing. Hin who cripple other hin intentionally must always bear the cost of any healing magics used to make their victim well and whole again.

SMUGGLING

The only crime in the shires that hin turn a blind eye to is the smuggling of goods in and out of the Shires in excess of the amounts approved by the Sheriffs.

The Sheriffs want to keep the prices of the finite resources of the Shires high in the Known World outside by rationing exports such as gems, gold, and precious metals mined in the Black Spires. The Sheriffs also fear that a gold rush or similar influx of undesirables seeking to grab what they can of the riches of the Shires will occur if the world around ever learns of the true plenty of the Shires.

Individual hin usually find such imported goods as silks, exotic fruits, perfume, and strong drink to be overpriced and in far too skimpy supply. The Shires are a small, out-of-the-way market considered unimportant by most human merchants except as a source of plentiful foodstuffs, so the hin trade for and bring in their own supplies usually by means of the halfling pirates. The pirates act as freebooters who are largely ignored by the Sheriffs to go-between merchants in

Darokin and Ierendi. Since the rise of the Black Baron, the illicit trade with Karamikos has dwindled considerably. Smuggling is widespread and persistent among hin, and is centered in the port of Tothmeer.

The Sheriffs

Each of The Five Shires is administered by a Sheriff; together, the five Sheriffs govern the Shires. They handle all disputes between or involving hin of several clans, and all disputes involving clanless hin and non-citizens of the Shires such as visitors and almost all non-hin within the borders of the Shires.

The Sheriffs will meet in council if a Sheriff feels a matter is too complex or too important to be resolved without all the Shires being involved. Hin are plain-speaking folk; most decisions are made in a matter of days and most Sheriffs are of the opinion that a wrong decision is better than no decision at all. As one Sheriff put it, "Those who wait for a problem to go away wake up in bed and find the problem coming through the door swinging a sword."

Sheriffs serve only as long as they wish, for their duties are heavy. A Sheriff may travel freely about the Shires, has a treasury of 10,000 pieces of gold each summer for personal use, and may commandeer whatever he or she wishes from any hin encountered. In practice, except to seize known stolen material or evidence, Sheriffs make such requests only of Clanmasters or, if Blackflame is needed, of Keepers. They ask for these goods seldom; to be a Sheriff is an honor not to be abused. All Sheriffs know that they are under the eyes of The High Heroes (halfling Immortals) at all times. A Sheriff who is unfit for office will be told so by a Keeper or Master who may have received a sign from an Immortal. Most Sheriffs who survive such meetings immediately renounce their offices and leave the Shires.

It is hard work, constantly traveling about one's Shire, inspecting conditions, settling disputes, anticipating upcoming troubles and 'leaning on' local Clanmas-

ters, Knight-Heroes, and others to head off such future catastrophes, and attending endless hin feasts to give and listen to interminable speeches. Unless the Shires are at war, a PC who becomes a Sheriff will effectively be retired from active adventuring while serving as Sheriff. (Alternatively, role-playing a serving sheriff could be a fascinating one-player-and-one-DM campaign, perhaps as a sideline to an ongoing D&D® game campaign of the more traditional sort. The life of a Sheriff is an endless web of protocol, intrigue, divining and uncovering deception, and anticipating possibilities and problems).

Four times a year the Sheriffs meet at some location, usually secret, and always different from that of the last feast, to decide Shires-wide policy. The five Sheriffs rarely disagree on matters, but if they do, they always vote and abide with iron loyalty to the result.

BECOMING A Sheriff

To become a Sheriff, a halfling must be of at least 8th level and have served with distinction as a Knight-Hero or Acting Clan-Chief. Any hin may propose any hin as a candidate for the Sheriff's Chair to the other Sheriffs, who covertly investigate all such candidates and then in private ask their chosen one to become a Sheriff of the Shires.

If the candidate accepts, the Sheriffs come before the candidate's clan and formally invite the candidate to become Sheriff. This is a cause for much clan pride and, usually, a gigantic feast. Most Sheriffs serve for six or seven years, although some have served for as long as twenty.

Leaving Office

A Sheriff may renounce his office freely at any time, before at least two other Sheriffs.

Ex-Sheriffs rejoin their clans as Knight-Heroes, or become Masters. Some few adventure outside the Shires, or serve the High Heroes in mysterious ways. To have served as Sheriff is a lasting honor.

KRONDAR

Each Sheriff can name up to two dozen deputies, or Krondar. These deputies serve as police, bailiffs, messengers for, and bodyguards of, the Sheriffs. Most are 8th level halflings, although they need not be so high in experience—or even be halflings. To identify themselves, all Krondar wear the rune of the Sheriffs upon their cloaks or the breasts of their tunics: a white sphere set within a single, vertically-reaching tongue of Blackflame, with a horizontal rod of office beneath it. All Krondar bear a magic rod identical to the one depicted in the rune — a *Rod of Justice*.

Rods of Justice

A *Rod of Justice* is an iron +2 rod that smites for 2-8 damage, and can upon command *hold person* by touch rather than doing damage, such immobility affecting only one target per round, lasting for 2-5 rounds, and being in all other respects like the clerical spell.

All Sheriffs have two such rods (only one normally carried upon the Sheriff's person), and they are allowed to retain one if they leave the office of Sheriff honorably and of their own will.

ARROWS OF JUSTICE

All Sheriffs carry 1-8 *arrows of justice* in their boots or thrust through their belts at all times. Such arrows remain inactive in the hands of a non-halfling. When cast by a halfling at a visible target, an *arrow of justice* will flash unerringly to strike the creature as a *magic missile* does, following it around obstructions and through changes in direction to any range, within 1 round.

The touch of an *arrow of justice* may deal 2-12 points of damage (save vs. Spells allows half damage), or merely root the being struck to the spot *held* for 2-5 rounds, with no save), as its hurler desires. It may be mentally commanded to cause both effects when it is released. If not commanded, it will always deal damage. If the target is an illusion, the *arrow* will simply fall from the caster's hand to

the ground, unused and unactivated. Upon striking a target, an *arrow of justice* vanishes forever.

A being struck by an *arrow of justice* will glow with a silvery radiance for 3-18 rounds. This effect will foil attempts to hide in shadows, mingle with other creatures, or use invisibility, but can readily be removed by a *dispel magic*.

Hin Masters and Keepers construct these items in secrecy under the guidance of certain human mages, and Sheriffs hide caches of replacements in handy places about the Shires. No hin would dare to move or take an *arrow of justice* he discovered, unless fellow hin are endangered and the *arrow* might aid them whereupon the hin would act and trust the wisdom and mercy of the Sheriffs to avoid any punishment.

SENTENCES

Sheriffs can order anyone slain, although they will usually carry out such sentences themselves. More often they banish offenders, demand payment of fines to the wronged, decree imprisonment or enforced labor or apply two or all three of these sentences at once.

A Sheriff may also call upon a High Hero or a human cleric to *quest* a being they have judged guilty to perform some dangerous or difficult service of benefit to the Shires.

Among non-hin, payment of fines and/or banishment are the sentences most often received. Non-hin adventurers may well find themselves upon an enforced *quest*. Sheriffs always consider the probable results of their sentences before decreeing punishment; they will not unleash an incompetent adventurer on a *quest* of delicacy and intrigue just to be rid of him.

Among hin, limited banishment or finite exile, usually of 2-5 seasons, is common. In the old days, hin convicts were sent to islands that are now part of Ierendi; these days they usually become pirates.

Halfling Respect of Government

Most hin are unshakably loyal to their

Sheriffs and hold them in high esteem. They are about as loved as rulers can expect to be, and no hin will be quick to betray or cross the wishes of a Sheriff. Indeed, hin will leap to aid or obey a Sheriff even if to do so they must face great personal danger. What greater honor can there be for a hin, save to be named a Sheriff oneself, than to serve a Sheriff?

Hin tell the tale of a Thyatian spy who came to the Shires years ago, in the days of Gunzuth, to incite the hin into rebellion. He escaped death only because the outraged hin he had approached told other hin why they had him by the throat, and he managed to flee into the mountains while they were all laughing at the idiocy of such a plan. He has never emerged. Perhaps he plots there still.

Language in the Five Shires

Halflings speak the tongue of humans common to all the surrounding lands. They use only a few surviving fragments of their own, older tongue. Keepers, Masters, and some Clanmasters preserve enough of this largely lost language to communicate with each other when they know they are being listened to and don't wish others to know what is being said. Few other halflings understand more than the words listed below. The language is called Lalor: "lal" = old + "or" = speech; "ora" = talk, conversation, discussion; "orag" = argument, dispute. Sentences always begin with the subject, then the details of what was said, then end with the verb. Some of the surviving words are:

bras	= moving water; river, stream, rapids or falls
bur	= hearty good spirit, rowdiness or jollity
galass	= luck, good fortune, a fair result or pleasing achievement
gusst	= a matter for weapons, a fight, or the assumption of an armed readiness expecting trouble
hin	= halfling, or of the halfling

LANGUAGE

people, or (as a prefix) property belonging to them

leerhar = mystery, puzzle, doubt, uncertainty, or apprehension

lurgh = cave(s), cellar(s), underground place or hideout

meirmeir = danger

nasz = state of cozy 'rightness,' peace, things 'right' and 'normal' with halfling life or people

ockle = joke, teasing or gently deriding conversation

rimbul = nobility, loyalty, virtue, grace under pressure, lightheartedness in the face of death

suldush = strangeness, unusual things, wonderment (good, as opposed to "leerhar," which is dangerous or bad)

teerteer = tragedy, death, martyrdom, savagery

zalvorn = heroism, great deeds, high adventure

Speaking among themselves, all halflings will use the words given here intermixed with the speech of humans. They call themselves 'hindul' (= 'halfling' + 'all', or 'the halfling people'), or merely 'hin' for short; 'halfling' is a human term.

Halflings are great story tellers and love jokes and puns; a few enjoy riddley and more difficult word-games. All enjoy songs and singing, and a few are even good at it. Over their evening meal and into the night at any tavern of the Shires, hin love to tell famous deeds of the past. They often tell the same ones, night after night in a manner that might drive non-hin to distraction, for they are lovers of tradition and comfortable, favorite things. Later, over extra tankards, there will be a 'hin sing' (see *Music of the Halflings*, later in this book).

HIN RUNES

In ancient days halflings relied on clan Seniors and Keepers, and the telling of tales, to preserve the history of their people. Little which may have been written has survived the Shires' many invasions and the recurring periods of slavery which

the hin suffered. Keepers carefully guard what little has come down and about all the average hin or non-hin can expect to see while exploring the Shires are old runes.

These runes are of great interest to adventurers for they mark the locations of traps and secret doors and give directions and warnings in the deep mines that can mean the difference between life and death for those who can read them. So old are these runes that their origins and much of

their meanings have been lost. A few have no known surviving meaning and new ones are being rediscovered all the time.

The runes presented herein, however, are known to all hin who have ever been instructed in childhood by a clan Elder or a parent who was in turn taught by a clan Elder. Hin will freely teach these runes to visiting adventurers, with many a chuckle and the invariable demand, "If ye come back, mind ye, I'll expect a good rousing tale of thy escapades, in return!"

The Known Runes

Rune	Rune Name	Meaning
✕	Abbairath	This is the way; you are on the right path
✕	Bungol	Danger; take care
⊃	Cullathas	Trap or pitfall ahead
≡	Dath	(Drinkable) water ahead
≡	Ellanath	Do not disturb
⊙	Fyrdol	Hidden door or way
⊕	Glaunthas	Look up
↻	Hurhur	Change in direction (of path or correct route)
⤴	Ingle	Climb here
⤵	Juth	Look down
↶	Klaun	Way out
⚡	Laddath	Treacherous footing or unsafe rope or construction
⌘	Maerdeth	Treasure; wealth or riches
⚡	Nol	Death; great danger
⊕	Olipur	Magic here
⊕	Pellasz	Lock or forbidden entry
⤵	Rozul	Descend here
⊕	Sashsash	Good place; fun or hospitable
≡	Tarth	Strong or safe
⊕	Uluth	Beware guardian creature or frequent monsters
≡	Unzle	Grave; burial place
⊕	Valas	Important site or sacred area or locale
⤴	Xabbas	Start here; beginning, or first step, or go here first
⊕	Yondul	Stop; turn back
⤵	Yukoul	Evil force or beings present or frequently encountered here

These runes are often used in combination. For example, Unzle and Ellanath together would mean: "Grave. Do not disturb." A crypt or coffin believed to contain undead would probably be marked with Nol, Ellanath, Yondul, Unzle, and Yukoul. Spell-guarded treasure is traditionally marked with Maerdeth, Nol or Bungol, and Olipur.

Such runes may be found painted or smoked onto rock walls underground or upon stones, or painted or graven in stone or upon trees. In buildings, they are either deeply graven in walls or floors, or, more often, laid out in mosaic tiles.

The most important rune in a grouping (such as Nol, Yondul, or Olipur) is usually circled or boxed, drawn larger than the rest, and placed in the center of a group of runes, or above the others.

Hin Names

Feel free to create any relatively simple name for a halfling character. Long or complex names tend to be drastically shortened by halflings. Any hin unfortunate enough to be known as "Delzarinfalinkar" would find himself called "Delz" or "Flink" in short order in the Shires.

Halflings who live in the Shires will always belong to the clan whose last name they have, although they may live or travel far from their clan stronghold. Clanless hin usually adopt a different surname of their own fancy; only outlaw hin of the mountains use no last names. It is recommended that PC halflings be named by the common agreement of DM and the player. The DM may wish to detail the rules and traditions of the specific clan chosen more fully before the character is introduced into play.

Nicknames

Many hin have the same first name as others within their own clan. To distinguish one hin from another, many nicknames have come into use in the Shires. Not all hin have or need such names; the DM only should bestow such names through the mouths of NPCs during play. Nicknames should be chosen deliberately from the table, not randomly. Certain nicknames have special meanings within the Five Shires, as follows:

Greatheart: usually reserved for monster slayers.

Keen-Eagle: a fanatical, hasty, or overly excited person is a keen-eagle.

Pipmouth: someone with a sharp tongue, quick wit, or sharp mouth.

Squintglass: usually applies to those who wear spectacles, or need to. Sometimes applied to the absent-minded or careless.

Another term added to one's middle name is a term of clan respect; a 'trusty' is a local veteran of battles against invaders of the Shires.

One should also note that these names may be applied cumulatively. A hin may be known as "Osca Bowlegs Farwalker the Younger Flintfoot." In this example, there is presumably an Osca Farwalker

who is older, within the same clan, and also known as "Bowlegs."

Of the Telling of Tales

One of the most important elements of halfling life is good fellowship; the friendly cheer of friendship in comfortable surroundings with good and plentiful food and drink and fun pursuits. These typically include singing, gaming, the telling of jests and news (not to mention gossip) and the spinning of yarns. Most halflings are good at telling tall tales, although non-hin listening in may soon be driven crazy by the repetition of a few well-worn favorites. The tale being told need not be new, for the enjoyment of halfling listeners lies in the manner and sound of the telling more than what happens. A few hin become very good storytellers indeed.

Not every DM will want to roleplay such fun, and not all players will want to sit through listening to it, either, but it can serve not only to add color and character to halflings and the Shires, but also as a source of information about hidden treasures, the whereabouts of dragons who may guard rich hoards, and the like. Halflings often preserve local lore in the form of ballads or tales, using puns, riddles, and rhyming slang to conceal information they wish to be hidden but not forgotten and lost forever.

A sample tall tale is included for the convenience of DMs needing to bring a tavern-full of hin to life, with their pipes and tankards and ready laughter, and for players whose characters are called upon for a tale in the same tavern. Hin are respectful, quiet listeners, although they may occasionally be asked by a tale-teller to join in, whereupon catcalls, funny-voiced responses and background noises such as howling wolves or winds will be heard as the story rolls along.

Opportunists should note that a merry tavern full of hin are not often so drunk or distracted as to be easy prey for a sudden attack, pickpocket or other robbery attempt, or cheating at games, although

they may seem so to non-hin.

The Summer of Leeches

"Now, I've heard some young hin hereabouts wagging tongues about the size of leeches around and about this summer, and how big they're getting. One young fella, three days' ride back that way, told me they had leeches so big that they lay out in the fields waiting for farmers to get too close to 'em; they'd nestle in among the melons and marrows and look just like one of the vegetables, only a little whiter and a little bigger. Then, when the poor farmer came up, stooping and hauling and stooping again—glurp! The leech would leap up and be down his throat before he could even gulp. If he was a little feller (the farmer, I mean), why, the leech'd be out his other end and after the ox pulling the cart!"

"That's nothing," the hin sitting next to him said; "out my way, we'd find herds of cattle dead in the fields, all in a row, still standing, each with a hole through its middle sideways, big enough that a hinling could jump through. All these holes were in a line so that one could stand and look right through forty or fifty cattle."

Nothing again, said another, and told us about "giant jumping leeches that would leap across seas from ship to ship and from the back of one whale to another, tunnelling away everything in their path and letting it all sink behind them."

"Well, you know, I've heard about enough. Giant jumping leeches, indeed! On my travels earlier this summer I met a leech or two, and these were little things, just about as long as a joint of your finger; the only size any here have ever seen, I reckon. Aye, just normal leeches. I was out riding on the road when the ale I'd had at the last inn caught me a mite short, and I tied my horse to a tree by the roadside, cart and six pack mules and all, and hopped over a little hill. I wasn't gone



for more than about three tunes, when I found my horse and six mules all gone. Three very fat leeches were lying there, amid the harness—I heard one belch. Well, I walked up, not quite believing it, and one leaped up at me like a hunting dog! Well, I hadn't but my long mule-whip to hand, but I got to it just in time. They hadn't left me more than the bones of my faithful Happyhoof and the mules, and I was forced to travel for two days and nights straight without sleep so I wouldn't get eaten, with the leeches pulling the cart and me, and all the mules' sacks piled up and lashed to their backs!

"I sweated blood out of those leech-

es, too. I had to sell most of my gear when I reached the next town because the leeches were back down to their normal size and were making slow going in the dirt of the road, covered by those big piles of sacks and all. But they didn't flag or fail; they went on to the end. I'll tell you all, if we can catch leeches and train them, when next the orcs come calling, we'll be mounted and ready. We shall fight them on the leeches and shores, fight them on the land and grounds that are ours; we shall never surrender! We shall prevail, my fellows of the Shires, if only you can be-leech! Ah, and I'm as thirsty as a leech now, too, with all this talk. Can anyone spare some ale?"

PC Storytelling

If a player character elects to tell a story to an audience of halflings during play, the DM can quickly gauge its relative success by using the storytelling rules introduced in *The Emirates of Ylaruam Gazetteer*.

This method, modified slightly to reflect the different society of the Shires, can be summarized as follows: the Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores of the storytelling character are added together; to this total, add the character's level. The result is the character's Storyteller Rating. Whenever a tale is told, the character rolls 3d6 and adds the result to his Storytelling Rating. The resulting total, or Score, is compared to this modified Storytelling Chart.

Music

Score	Story Quality	Audience Response
100	masterpiece	Unforgettable experience; teller acquires instant fame and will probably be called upon for a story whenever attending a party or spending an evening in a tavern or inn taproom in the Shires. He will be regarded as an honored guest; if at an inn, the bill may be reduced at the end of the stay; if a tavern, drinks may be on the house for the night; unless involved in a dispute or other unpleasantness, teller will be remembered as a "good fellow" and a friend; reputation will spread.
90	remarkable	Audience deeply moved; teller reckoned wise and worldly and a good friend to have; a small gift may be offered, or drinks and meals paid for; reputation may spread.
80	pleasurable	Audience enthusiastic; the teller earns great respect and will be regarded in a friendly manner. Drinks may be paid for, or hospitality offered.
70	interesting	Audience attentive and cordial; teller earns respect.
60	tedious	Audience bored; may be polite or may heckle.
50 or less	shameful	Audience offended; will catcall, boo, jeer, or drown out teller; an old hin will always tell a tale to "show how it's done."

Bonuses and Penalties to a Storytelling Score:

- +5 if based on true character experience
- +1 to +4 if tale involves good singing, mimicry of voices, acting
- +1 to +10 if tale enhanced with magical effects depending on subtlety; hin dislike trickery or overbold displays of magical power, but enjoy vocal or auditory storytelling effects, or touches which display great emotion. For example, when an oppressed hero finally lashes out in revenge or when sundered lovers or family are reunited after long days apart
- +1 to +4 if tale includes good and fresh one-liners or jests that hin can re-use later
- 1 if teller non-hin but elfen or human and appearing well traveled
- 2 to -10 if teller is foppish, arrogant or snobbish, is a foreigner of nondescript appearance, or is a known enemy (e.g. a dwarf, Glantrian, or citizen of the Black Eagle Barony)

Music of the Halflings –

Halflings sing—a lot. Any human merchant who has visited the Shires can tell you as much; often with rolling eyes and pained expressions. A tavern or inn taproom in the Shires is ringing with songs all evening. Hin sing loud and long and heartily, whether they can carry a tune or not. Talking loudly through a tavern-song, or stuffing one's ears with wadding, or wincing and looking pained throughout are all considered very bad manners and will make travelers unpopular indeed.

Hin songs are generally led by one or two strong-voiced and senior hin and are usually unaccompanied by instruments, although tankards, feet, and even pipes are often used to mark the time. Long ago, hin developed such instruments as the 'gockul' (carved wooden clapper-bells) and the 'titerbuk' (a shaken instrument, rather like a miniature tree, of tiny metal discs or cymbals set upon a branched wooden pole). These are rarely seen today.

Halflings enjoying a hearty song will not see it amiss if a piper or lutist joins in,

but long instrumentals, such as harpists are wont to indulge in, only make hin restless. Outside the Shires, all such hin behavior (except their lighthearted chattering, which they will continue in the face of battle itself) is muted; traveling hin will not tend to break into song unless invited to do so. But in the Shires, hin sing many well-worn ballads nightly, led by a good singer if no clan senior cares to lead. The lyrics of a few of the most popular hin ballads are included here. The traveler should note that although tunes vary from clan to clan in the Shires, individual singers harmonize at will, the words never vary and different or "wrong" words will *not* be well received.

The ballads included here are representative of the pride and common fellowship of hin and tell of events in the history of the Shires. *Sing Of A King* tells of the rule of the Five Shires by the evil dwarven king Loktal almost two thousand years ago. Finally, Loktal's kingdom was raided by one invading army after another until the dwarves were too weak to hold the riches the invaders sought and

the enslaved halflings rose and cast the dwarves out.

Halfling High is a happily defiant, table-thumping ballad celebrating halfling endurance. A hymn of pride in being a hin, it is much favored by younger hin and those who are very drunk.

The Ballad of Nob Nar is perhaps the most famous halfling song of all. It recounts the tragic love of the greatest hero of hin folklore, Nob Nar. The ballad is true; Nob Nar lived east of Wereskalot and loved Navrilstar, daughter of the mad Traladaran Baron Ulstagh of Halag, circa AC 612. The Nar clan has been extinct for three hundred years, the last falling about their clan standard (three talons of brown on a white field) in the Battle of Blackflame (AC 700). In that struggle, a great force of invading orcs was drawn into one great host by skillful hin retreats commanded by Bleth Nar (last clan-chief of the Nars), and utterly destroyed by massed hin magic (notably Blackflame).

Music



SING OF A KING

O minstrels sing of a dwarven king
who ruled a long, long time ago.
Before him were strong for many
years long

He held iron high, hin low.

Chorus:

His beard was long and his hands
were black

From mining gold so he'd not lack
Enough gold for him to swim and
roll around in.

From forests free he dragged the hin
The Shires five then all his lands
Hin in chains all cold dug deep for
gold

To weigh down greedy dwarven hands.
(Chorus)

So rich was he that from realms afar
Came orcs and worse to take his gold
Red war did spill o'er forest and hill
Many found graves rude and cold.
(Chorus)

Dwarves fell hard, but fall they did
Hin, unchained, rose in anger bright
Short but strong, of courage long
Dwarves and all were put to flight.
(Chorus)

O minstrels sing of a dwarven king

In a cold hall deep and dark
Far away from Shires today
Where his rule has left no mark.
(Chorus)

HALFLING HIGH

Far fewer than teeming men are we
Half as high—the right height to be!
Our castles small, our people free
Just the way we'd have it be

Chorus:

The hin marched in one by one
The foe just stood and laughed
But when the bloody fray was done
We laughed at the last.

Our pockets lighter far than most
Our armies but a smallish host
Ale aplenty, and lots to eat
Happy homes, good friends to greet
(Chorus)

Many came to take our lands:
Dwarven troops, human bands
Hordes of orcs; all we met
And stood our ground; we're here yet
(Chorus)

Where now those proud who did invade
Our Shires' depths, field and glade?
We sent them back; they went away
This is our home; here we'll stay
(Chorus)

We are the little people; we
live underground or under tree
We'll never leave our Five Shires
Here's everything hin heart desires!
(Chorus)

And when perchance your feet stray
Across lands and seas; far away
Remember your home, recall your clan
And stand tall, half as high as man!
(Chorus)

THE BALLAD OF NOB NAR

O, young Nob Nar was one of the best
Through all the Shires hin saw his crest
Save for his courage he rode quite alone
With a long knife, and a helm of
old bone.
So breezy his manner, a smile for
each scare
There ne'er was hin warrior like
young Nob Nar.

He quailed not at dragon; he turned
not for troll
Rode fearless through fell forest and
o'er goblin knoll;
But ere he fell dying at Everwake Way
His heart had broken, his smiles
fled away
For a human princess, fair Navrilstar
Though dead, was the love of hin
Nob Nar.

One day boldly he entered the
barony hall
Where sat his chosen, her father, and all
Then spoke the proud baron, hand on
his blade,
"Why come ye uncalled for, of man
but half made?
I hired no jesters, this proud day to mar
Get thee hence, infamous half-man
Nob Nar."

Up spoke the hero, gentle yet fearless
To the baron as an equal, as though
men were peerless;
"Here I am come, though the road be
yet far;

For I would be wed to the fair Navrilstar."

The hall rose in mirth, but the Baron grew black

And screamed, "For such insolence, ye shall know the rack!

"See not this brave knight that sits at my side?

This very day he makes my daughter his bride!

Ye are not even a man, ye are nothing here!

How dare you come into my hall without fear!

Guards! Seize me this halfling!" the Baron roared.

And bring for my daughter his famed magic sword!"

Nob Nar laughed then, in the face of the foe.

The hall fell silent, the charge 'pon him turned slow

For all the fine gallants and guardsmen there

Had heard of the mettle of the Nob who did dare

To steal a hoard from 'neath the very claws

Of that great elder dragon, Gaulthaumyrauz.

His blade it glowed with magical fire as Nob drew and brandished the Tooth of Highshire

"Who'll be first, then?" he laughed, eyes all bright

To taste my answer to this insult, and fight!

For no man yet has matched 'little' Nob Nar

And I will defy all to take Navrilstar."

"None?" the Baron in shrill madness did spit.

"Then I shall be first to make Nob Nar admit

That he can be beaten by the hand of a man!"

Then before all that company he swiftly ran

And slew his own daughter, with raised bloody blade

She that ne'er father's will in the slightest had stayed.

She sank to the rushes, her blood them did stain

Nob Nar cried in amazement, "Thou hast slain

Thy own daughter who never did thee ill!

I shall slay thee now, and any who will Stand to defend ye—or die in the trying,

And I see not enough here to manage my dying!"

But though then the Baron, raging, did command

His men to strike down the hin who did stand

So alone and so short, there in the hall None moved to strike him; they drew away, all

And raised sword in salute, as the grim Nob Nar

Did slay the Baron that slew Navrilstar.

Then he took up the lady he now ne'er would wed

And cried a little, and then sternly said,

"I will lay to rest my gentle Navrilstar At your peril stand now my way to bar To a fair place in the Shires I'll away And bury my lady at Everwake Way.

"For they say that some who sleep there

Will rise up some day, whole, strong, and fair

And I shall wait down all the long years

So go now, and tell all your peers

That one day your own fair Navrilstar Will ride by the side of the half-man, Nob Nar."

Of Pipesmoke

One of the most avidly pursued pastimes among older, less adventurous hin, par-

ticularly in rural areas of The Five Shires, is the making of specially formulated pipesmoke mixes. Halflings compete to grow and blend tobacco, various herbs, spices, aged wine, berry-juice, and other ingredients to produce tobacco of unusual tastes and aromas. A hin proud of his efforts in this field will always offer some of his or her blends to guests after the meal. It is not impolite to refuse to partake, but careful, reasoned criticism and polite enjoyment is expected of those who do. There is always a meal for guests, regardless of the time they arrive; ale, cheese, hot buttered biscuits, jelly, and cinnamon paste spread will be offered if guests arrive in the middle of the night or between main meals.

Most halfling pipesmokes tend to be spicy and savoury in scent and taste, rather than sweet or fruity. Guldaph Slowleaf of Shireton was famous for his own mixes, and for carrying samples of the mixes of other hin back and forth across the Shires in his travels. Since his death some twenty winters ago, no other hin has risen to such Shires-wide prominence in the field. The mixes of Thresk Alehill of Thantabbar are highly thought of by those hin who drop by his boot repair shop on Staddle Street. As a point of pride, hin do not sell their pipesmoke tobacco, but only give it away, although a desperate hin may trade it for needed objects of coin. Except in taverns, inns, and alehouses, it is considered an ill comment on the food to smoke during a meal, unless the first to smoke is also the cook.

Those hin who do smoke usually light up both before and after meals. Hin pipesmoke is often of strange hue as well as scent, and may well give off sparks or varicolored wisps of smoke.

HOME

The concept of a home is central to halfling culture. A hin's most prized possession is his home. Because home is more than just land and buildings, invasion or loss of a hin's home is not devastating so much as it is a cause of deep, tireless anger.

A hin will not be confused or dis-

MONEY & TRADE

traught if crops or houses are burned, vandalized, or pillaged. Instead, he will be furious. Angry hin growl or are coldly silent, not loud or brawling. If those who do the damage are within reach, they will be challenged to the death. Humanoids and dwarves are not accorded the dignity of a challenge, but are attacked without ceremony or delay.

Hin in such situations who face hopeless odds will not throw their lives away in doomed attacks, but rather will withdraw and plan revenge later. Hin grudges against non-hin may be passed from generation to generation until they can be paid off, but modern-day feuds with other hin always die with the individual involved.

The halfling home is inevitably linked, but not limited, to his clan. Hin feelings for home also arise out of a love of country and natural beauty and good fellowship and tasks well accomplished with others, rather than any feeling of obligation to relations or employers.

Hin see themselves as one gigantic family far more than other races do. If a pony gets free of its owner in a marketplace, or a stack of food-crates begins to topple, hin will come rushing to help without hesitation or thought of reward; it is simply the thing to do. Even non-hin visiting the Shires benefit from this cheerful helping and consideration. As a result, the Shires is one of the most peaceful and safe of the known lands, as well as one of the most beautiful.

The Typical Hin Home

The physical appearance of a typical halfling home is a low, massive building of at most two storeys in height. It has a thatch, sod, or sometimes shingle roof and walls of carefully-fitted fieldstone sealed inside with mud, baked hard with fire before the roof-beams are laid in place.

The peaked roof rises from cross-beams which lie in sockets prepared in the stone walls. Whole trees are usually used for the beams. The ridge-beam is supported by a central stone pillar.

The dirt or tile floor of a hin home is

usually below the level of the land around and almost always has extensive stonelined, low-ceilinged arched storage cellars beneath it, accessible by crawl-tunnels. Where flooding is a problem such cellars are small or non-existent, but elsewhere they are common, leaving the typical halfling home free of a lot of clutter. Ports tend to resemble human settlements more than others in the Shires.

Rural Hin Dwellings

Almost all of the Shires would be considered rural. In the country, most hin homes have a house, plenty of trees, a barn for messy work and the keeping of livestock, and a garden. There is *always* a garden, and it is always a vegetable garden, adorned with the flowers of the vegetable plants. Inedible flowering ornamental plants grow wild everywhere else in the Shires *except* in gardens.

A hin barn will be built mostly of wood, while his wealthier neighbor's barn stands proudly upon a fieldstone foundation and floor, with a fieldstone lower level. In a settlement of any size there is always at least one barn with a stone tower—three or four storeys high—for storing grain in winter and as a lookout over the surrounding countryside. "Dangerwatch" is an old name for such a tower. A social climber or self-important hin will be called a "Hightower" by other hin behind his back because of the tendency of newly wealthy hin to build a silo-tower right away, and to make it a bigger and better one than the neighboring towers.

Hin farms also usually have a smokehouse and, if they have a spring or other means of keeping things cool, a house for above ground cold storage. Hin homes are usually immaculate but often smell strongly of many good meals cooked within them and of the bunches of herbs that hang from the roof-beams everywhere. "Dark but cozy," one human merchant traveling in the Shires once put it, and to human eyes that sums most halfling homes up.

Urban Hin Dwellings

Those who think all hin live in the quaint little homes of the countryside are in for a nasty shock if they ever visit Shireton, Thantabbar, Tothmeer, or Ober's Mimbur, and see tall stone castles—small castles, to be sure, but castles nonetheless—rising up grey and graceful on all sides. As the Traladaran sage Wuenkol put it, "There's more to the land of the halflings than first meets the eye." Truly spoken, indeed.

Urban hin cities often have the misdirected, wandering streets common to cities across the Known World. Negotiating a city in the Five Shires is almost impossible without a map.

MONEY & TRADE

The trade-goods important in the Shires have already been mentioned in the section on Smuggling, but underlying the flows of these highly-priced goods is the basic prosperity of the Shires. The Five Shires include much of the richest agricultural land in the Known World. The peaceful patchwork of tiny, rolling hin farms feed many mouths in lands outside the Shires. The halflings are also self-sufficient; they have all the lumber, hides, milk, meat, metals, and plant foods they need. The rest of the Known World is always hungry for more metal and more food; the hin can trade these from a position of strength for the goods they cannot produce themselves: silks, many types of fruit, various drinkables, and the like. The standard of living in the Shires is very high; the clans ensure that none of their members go hungry or ill-equipped.

In a country so prosperous, money seems of little importance. Indeed, most hin carry little. Barter, particularly in rope, which always seems in short supply, lamp oil, finely-carved stools, window-shutters, and other small items of furniture are more common among hin than cash payments.

Coinage

The main unit of trade exchange is the gold piece, known in the Shires as the "little sun" or simply "a yellow." One side displays the rune of the Sheriffs, a circle within a tongue of Blackflame, a rod horizontal beneath all, the other says, "Gold of The Five Shires/Worth One Royal."

Between hin in the Shires more silver pieces change hands than do gold ones. The silver piece of the Shires is deliberately a little larger than the gold one to prevent mistaking one for the other in poor light, and to keep the trade-value of the easily-tarnished silver what it should be relative to the gold piece. To the hin such a coin is known as a "star" (the plural is "steel" for some unknown reason, not "stars"). On one side they bear the rune of the Sheriffs, and on the other, the words "Silver of The Five Shires/Worth One Crona."

Copper pieces in the Shires are flat and diamond-shaped in outline and are known as "sunsets" or "points." One side is the rune of the Sheriffs; on the other, the inscription "Copper of The Five Shires/Worth More Than A Kopec."

Trade-bars (particularly of silver) are used in 25 gp and 50 gp denominations within the Shires. Wealthy hin also use gems carried in little oval brass cases for large denominations. Platinum pieces are little used, but accepted as worth 10 gp.

The Economy

The Shires are in enviable financial shape. Largely self-sufficient, halflings won't be much hurt by a downturn in trade such as that caused by large-scale war in the vicinity. There is no state religion or heavy taxation to force a cash flow among the native hin, so in adverse times coins will simply get put away until outside trade picks up.

The Sheriffs do not openly engage in military or political alliances with other lands in the Known World, but they do not forbid individual hin from lending to or investing heavily in other lands, and much hin money flows back and forth

between the Shires and neighboring Darokin and Ierendi. Ierendi forces tolerate halfling pirates (who rarely molest shipping known to be Ierendi) largely because of heavy hin financial support of Ierendi's freight shipping. Substantial hin monetary investment in the businesses of Darokin similarly keeps the borders between the two lands open and easy-going regarding the passage of goods and wares.

High Level Halfling Characters

The Expert rulebook of the D&D® game gives the title of an 8th level halfling as Sheriff. Players are advised that a halfling PC who reaches 8th level does not automatically become a Sheriff, but only a foremost candidate for such a post if it falls vacant. Halflings of 8th level are known as Guardians of the Shires or Knight Heroes, and will be granted land and a crest by the Sheriffs if they do not have either already. Knight-Heroes can wander and adventure freely: they are not bound to remain within The Five Shires, despite their Guardian courtesy title.

Many 8th level halflings serve as Kron-dar (Sheriff's deputies), captain their own ships for a time, or serve for a time in the armed forces of the Shires (discussed in the Dungeon Master's Booklet). An 8th level halfling may also wish to become a Master, a special halfling sub-class described hereafter. This can be done by seeking out a Master and asking to be trained, or the 8th level halfling may be asked to become a Master by a Keeper or Clanmaster who wishes to increase the defenses of the local Shire. Would-be Masters are usually asked to perform a service or undertake a quest before beginning their training, and as a result usually begin as masters at 9th level.

The Players Companion D&D® game rulebook details additional abilities and powers gained by "experienced" halflings. Note that there Knight-Heroes with 3,000,000 XP and even more in the Shires; non-hin PCs who like to throw their weight around are warned that such

exalted halflings don't look any different from halflings of 7th level or so.

The Master: A Halfling Sub-Class

The Wise Ones Of The Woods

Masters was the term of respect used by hin to describe the elves, also known as 'the Gentle Folk,' who once inhabited the deep woods of what is now the Shires. The hin saw the elves as masters of the woodland life and ways.

Those particular elven folk are now believed to be extinct. The term Master now refers to a special class of halflings who have left their clans to protect and nurture the Shires as a whole, using what fragments of the lore of the land that hin have gained in the past from the elves, and what halflings have since discovered themselves.

This spell-using halfling character class resembles the human druid class, and is closely tied to The Five Shires. Player characters may become Masters if their players wish, but the life of a Master is a contemplative, gentle, largely solitary existence, not usually an adventuring career. Most Masters will not willingly leave the Shires, and Masters cannot regain their spells outside the borders of the halfling homeland.

Masters know that their powers come from "The High Heroes" (halfling Immortals) Nob Nar, Coberham Shadowgint, and Brindorhin. Like these halfling Heroes once did in mortal life, Masters are dedicated to preserving and protecting the land and people of the Shires. No Master is known to have betrayed this trust, although a Master may leave his calling to return to a more active social existence, although very few do so.

BECOMING A MASTER

Any 8th level halfling may seek out a Master and ask to be trained as a Master. Some hin are asked by Masters, Keepers, or Clanmasters to become Masters.

Typically, a hin who wants to become a Master accompanies a Master about the Shires, learning the ways of the woods, for

Characters

4-6 months. Then the prospective Master undertakes a 'great adventure' or difficult service under the direction of his tutor. Upon completing this task, the hin becomes a Master and gains the use of spells described hereafter. The Master's learning of the ways of nature has just begun; such an education ends only upon death.

Upon becoming a Master, the halfling retains his current hit points and abilities, and is not prohibited from using any of them. The new Master changes his or her name from, for example, "Jollyar Heatherfoot" to "Jollyar Heatherfoot Highshire," the latter name denoting the Shire in which the hin has lived.

Master Abilities

A Master's *denial* ability is based upon a *doubled* total of intelligence and wisdom. All Masters acquire *infravision* as a natural ability, by will of the High Heroes, as follows: none at 1st level, up to 10' range at 2nd level, 20' range at 3rd, 30' range at 4th, and so on.

A Master comes to know the living habits, including probable lair locations and warning signs or recognition calls, of wild beasts, birds, and even insects of the Shires. Masters do not hunt creatures for sport, although they will hunt for food. Masters will battle humanoids and many of the evil beings described as "Monsters of The Five Shires" in the DM's Booklet. A Master will do whatever is necessary and least harmful to all creatures concerned to protect halflings from the attacks of such creatures.

A Master can always find drinkable water anywhere in the Shires if it is there to be found. They will recognize animal tracks and trails on sight.

Masters tend to be quiet, soft spoken, and seldom seen. They work apart from hin as much as possible to avoid incurring resentment or making other hin dependent upon the aid of Masters and abandoning self-reliance. Masters tend to dress simply and have no distinctive uniform, speech, or rune. For an example of a Master, see the NPC Marintor Treeshadow Seashire in the DM's Booklet.

Leaving The Class

Masters who leave their calling lose all spells and special abilities such as the doubled *denial* and *infravision*, but retain their intimate knowledge of the land and its creatures. A Master who decided to travel outside the Shires to have adventures unless called upon to do so by a tutor, Sheriff, or a sign from the High Heroes would certainly be abandoning his calling, until he reaches attack rank I. If he should leave, one of the hin Immortals would covertly send agents

after the Master if the reason for the defection is something of vital importance to the safety and security of the Shires. A Master who leads hin to war outside the Shires when halflings are threatened or at war would not be leaving his calling.

Advancement As A Master

Masters do not gain Influence Points. They gain Experience Points in the normal manner, and advance and gain spells as follows:

Master Level	Special Notes	XP	Spells by Spell Level						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1		200,000	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
2		201,500	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
3		203,000	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
4		206,000	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
5		212,000	2	2	1	-	-	-	-
6		225,000	3	2	2	-	-	-	-
7		250,000	3	3	2	1	-	-	-
8	(1)	300,000	3	3	3	2	-	-	-
9		400,000	4	4	3	2	1	-	-
10		500,000	4	4	3	3	2	-	-
11	(2)	600,000	4	4	4	3	2	1	-
12		700,000	5	5	4	3	2	2	-
13		800,000	5	5	5	3	3	2	-
14	(3)	900,000	6	5	5	3	3	3	-
15		1,000,000	6	5	5	4	4	3	-
16		1,100,000	6	6	5	4	4	3	1
17	(4)	1,200,000	6	6	5	4	4	3	2
18		1,300,000	7	6	5	4	4	4	2
19		1,400,000	7	6	5	4	4	4	3
20	(5)	1,500,000	7	6	5	5	5	4	3
21		1,600,000	7	6	5	5	5	4	4
22		1,700,000	7	7	6	6	5	4	4
23	(6)	1,800,000	8	7	6	6	5	5	4
24		1,900,000	8	7	6	6	5	5	5
25		2,000,000	8	7	7	6	6	5	5
26	(7)	2,100,000	8	8	7	6	6	6	5
27		2,200,000	8	8	7	7	7	6	5
28		2,300,000	8	8	7	7	7	6	6
29	(8)	2,400,000	8	8	8	7	7	7	6
30	(9)	2,500,000	8	8	8	8	8	7	6
31		2,600,000	9	8	8	8	8	7	7
32	(10)	2,700,000	9	9	8	8	8	8	7
33		2,800,000	9	9	9	8	8	8	8
34		2,900,000	9	9	9	9	9	8	8
35	(11)	3,000,000	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

Notes

Masters gain 1 hit point upon reaching 1st level (200,000 XP), and 1 hit point per level achieved thereafter. They may use all weapons, armor, and items allowed to non-Master halflings. Masters can *turn undead* as a cleric of the same level (that is, an 8th level human cleric has the same chances of turning undead as an 8th level Master—who must be a halfling of at least 300,000 XP).

Special Notes

(1) = At this point, like non-Master him of the same experience, the Master goes from Attack Rank A to B, and automatically takes half damage from any damage-causing spell or spell-like effect (see the D&D® game Companion Players, and DMs rulebooks).

(2) = The master achieves Attack Rank C.

(3) = Attack Rank D is achieved. The Master gains the Combat Options for Fighters. Two attacks per round are possible at this level.

(4) = Attack Rank E is achieved.

(5) = Attack Rank F attained.

(6) = Attack Rank G is achieved.

(7) = Attack Rank H is attained. The Master now automatically takes half damage from any breath weapon $\frac{1}{4}$ damage if successful save made, where Saving Throw allowed.

(8) = Attack Rank I achieved.

(9) = Master becomes a Higher Master, and may freely travel and adventure including regaining spells outside the Shires.

(10) = Attack Rank J achieved. Higher Masters who wish to become Immortal and are judged suitable by the High Heroes may become candidates for Immortality, on the path of the Epic Hero and begin to fulfill the necessary tasks.

(11) = Attack Rank K achieved. Same as a human fighter of levels 22-24. Three attacks per round possible at this level.

Master Spells

Masters use a mixture of clerical, druidical, magic user, and unique spells gaining spells as a cleric does. The total number of spells a hin Master may carry is the same as for clerics of equivalent level. Masters may use the known reverse forms of all spells listed below. Masters may use all magical items usable by druids, clerics, or magic users, as well as those open to all classes.

FIRST LEVEL MASTER SPELLS

1. *Detect Evil* (cleric, BP 26)
2. *Detect Magic* (cleric, BP 26)
3. *Know Intent* (special; see below)
4. *Locate* (druid, CP 15)
5. *Predict Weather* (druid, CP 15)
6. *Purify Food and Water* (cleric, BP 27)
7. *Radiance* (special; see below)
8. *Resist Cold* (cleric, BP 27)
9. *Thornspear* (special; see below)

SECOND LEVEL MASTER SPELLS

1. *Cure Light Wounds* (cleric, BP 26)
2. *Hold Animal* (druid, CP 15)
3. *Obscure* (druid, CP 15)
4. *Remove Fear* (cleric, BP 27)
5. *Resist Fire* (cleric, EX 5)
6. *Sleep* (magic user, BP 40)
7. *Snake Charm* (cleric, EX 6)
8. *Speak with Animals* (cleric, EX 6)
9. *Water Walking* (special; see below)

THIRD LEVEL MASTER SPELLS

1. *Cure Blindness* (cleric, EX 6)
2. *Cure Disease* (cleric, EX 6)
3. *Find Traps* (cleric, EX 5)
4. *Growth of Animal* (cleric, EX 6)
5. *Hold Person* (cleric, EX 5)
6. *Locate Object* (cleric, EX 6)
7. *Produce Fire* (druid, CP 15; also, see below)
8. *Silence* (special; see below)
9. *Speak with Monsters* (cleric, EX 9)

FOURTH LEVEL MASTER SPELLS

1. *Call Lightning* (druid, CP 15)
2. *Control Winds* (druid, CP 16)

3. *Detect Invisible* (magic user, BP 41)
4. *Neutralize Poison* (cleric, EX 8)
5. *Remove Curse* (cleric, EX 6; also, see below)
6. *Repel Lightning* (special; see below)
7. *Speak with Plants* (cleric, EX 8)
8. *Summon Animals* (druid, MP 5)
9. *Water Breathing* (druid, CP 15)

FIFTH LEVEL MASTER SPELLS

1. *Charm Monster* (magic user, EX 13)
2. *Cure Serious Wounds* (cleric, EX 7)
3. *Dissolve* (druid, MP 5)
4. *Dispel Magic* (cleric, EX 8)
5. *Fly* (magic user, EX 12)
6. *Plant Door* (druid, CP 15)
7. *Repel Non Living Material* (special; see below)
8. *Summon Weather* (druid, CP 16)
9. *Web* (magic user, BP 42)

SIXTH LEVEL MASTER SPELLS

1. *Animate Objects* (cleric, EX 9)
2. *Anti-Animal Shell* (druid, CP 16)
3. *Barrier* (cleric, CP 12)
4. *Charm Plant* (magic user, CP 21)
5. *Insect Plague* (cleric, EX 8)
6. *Pass Plant* (druid, CP 16)
7. *Raise Dead* (cleric, EX 9 and CP 12)
8. *Shout* (special; see below)
9. *Turn Wood* (druid, MP 5)

SEVENTH LEVEL MASTER SPELLS

1. *Assume Animal Shape* (special; see below)
2. *Earthgrip* (special; see below)
3. *Feeblemind* (magic user, CP 20; also, see below)
4. *Metal to Wood* (druid, CP 16)
5. *Plant Fist* (special; see below)
6. *Raise Dead Fully* (cleric, CP 13)
7. *Restore* (cleric, CP 13)
8. *Survival* (cleric, MP 3)
9. *Weather Control* (druid, CP 16)

Spell Notes**Know Intent**

Level: 1

Range: 0 (Master only)

Duration: 1 round per level of the caster

Effect: Gives knowledge of immediate

Spells

intentions of a creature within 120'

This spell permits the Master to know the precise, immediate intentions of any mortal creature within range. Creatures of four or more hit dice or levels gain a saving throw to avoid; they must roll their level or less on a d20 to avoid reading of their intentions. One creature per round can be so scrutinized. Alignment is not specifically revealed by this spell, nor are specific thoughts accurately relayed to the Master; only the *intent* of creatures can be learned.

A creature saving against the spell (note that beings of high level will automatically save against it, as they outstrip a d20) will cause the Master to receive no impression, not a wrong impression. The only way to deceive a *know intent* is by casting its reverse *conceal intent*, a spell that protects only the caster, and makes the caster aware of all magical or magic-like mental scrutiny of his or her own thoughts, giving him or her the choice in every round of communicating a false intent or of blanking out the scrutiny to reveal nothing.

Radiance

Level: 1

Range: 140'

Duration: 6 turns

Effect: controls light intensity in a 40' diameter sphere

This spell, once cast, continues despite the departure, slumber or unconsciousness, or subsequent spellcasting of the Master casting it. It can be ended by a *dispel magic* or by the will of the caster, who can continue to manipulate light within the spell's area of effect after breaking off concentration to perform other activities, or continually alter conditions throughout the spell duration. The spell enables the Master to change the existing light level within its sphere of effect; to total darkness, to blinding light, or at any level in between. The light can be changed as often as the Master desires and can blind or stun creatures into a round of inactivity and 'to hit' penalties of up to -3 when blinded, and conceal or reveal things clearly. Creatures with infravision cannot be confused by such light alterations;

they will still be able to detect the positions of other creatures. *Radiance* created by this spell can be as strong as sunlight or of any hue and intensity desired.

Thornspear

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Duration: 2 rounds

Effect: Creates a temporary weapon

With this spell, a Master creates a shimmering, spear-shaped thorn or splinter of force, which can be wielded or thrown (normal 'to hit' chances apply) as a spear is wielded. It will vanish into nothingness at the end of two rounds, whether it has been used. It is solid and can be used by any creature. Its thrusting strike does 2-12 points of damage, and can pierce armor, stone, stout wood, and other normally impervious objects.

Water Walking

Level: 2

Range: 0 (Master or creature touched)

Duration: 1 round per level of caster

Effect: Enables one being to walk upon the surface of any liquid or thin ice

This spell enables a Master, or another creature deliberately touched during the spellcasting, to walk upon the surface of any liquid, and other semi-solid surfaces such as mud and ice. The spell actually supports the being on a cushion of force just above the liquid so that the being will not actually come into contact with the substance. The spell has no effect upon gases and does not guard against the effects of severe heat or cold. The Master will feel how much time he or she has left before the spell expires. Unless the Master tells a non-Master empowered by this spell to walk upon liquids how much time is left, the magic will end without warning. Rough and agitated liquids can be walked, run, or slid across without fear of submergence.

Produce Fire

Level: 3

Masters cast this spell as do druids (as explained in the D&D® Players Companion Book), but they can also cast a reverse of this spell (which must be determined

when the spell is meditated for, not upon casting). The reverse, *quench* fire, has the same duration as *produce fire*, but can affect a 40' diameter spherical area up to 60' distant from the Master. It may be mentally invoked or relaxed as many times as desired during the spell duration. Each switch from 'active' to 'inactive' involves a round of transition during which the magic is 'inactive,' but the active magic may be exercised any number of times without exhausting it; only expiration of the spell duration or a *dispel magic* will do that. *Quench fire* is usually used to instantly extinguish any fire, normal or magical, within its area of effect. Volume does not matter, although fires extending beyond effective spell range will only be put out within the spell's sphere. Heat and corrosive effects are not lessened by this spell, nor will it repair fiery damage. *Quench fire* may be invoked in an area and left active, to prevent fires of all sorts. A *fire ball*, for example, cast into a protected area would simply vanish without effect, doing no damage and being lost forever. The same spell cast into an inactive protected area would have full flame and blast effects, although if the *quench* was activated on the round following, any fires begun by the *fire ball*, even among paper, straw, or other highly flammable substances, would be instantly snuffed out.

Silence

Level: 3

Range: 120'

Duration: Special

Effect: One creature

This special sort of *silence* spell affects only one creature concentrated upon during casting by the Master. The creature is allowed a saving throw against the spell; if made, the *silence* never comes into being and the spell is wasted. If failed, the creature is utterly silenced, sounds cannot reach it or radiate from it it cannot speak, cast most spells, or use most magical items; nor does its movement make any sound.

Other creatures near the affected being, or even touching it, are unaffected by the magic. The *silenced* creature,

intelligent or not, gets an additional saving throw against the spell each round. After its initial save, +1 is added to each saving throw roll until one succeeds and the spell is broken. The Master need not remain present or concentrating upon the affected creature after the spell is cast and may well undertake other spellcasting.

Remove Curse

Level: 4

Masters use this spell, and its reverse, just as do clerics as detailed in the D&D® Expert rulebook. Included here are some typical Master *curses* cast upon creatures who have run afoul of them: the first blow struck by a *cursed* creature against a halfling will miss; any lie told to a halfling by the *cursed* creature will immediately be known by the halfling; any attempted theft of any halfling property by the *cursed* character will immediately be detected; any food eaten within the Shires by the *cursed* creature, for the rest of its life, will taste bad and cause indigestion and embarrassing flatulence.

Repel Lightning

Level: 4

Range: 120'

Duration: Instantaneous

Effect: Changes the area of any lightning strike

This spell can be invoked upon the approach of a natural or magical lightning discharge. It instantly deflects the 20'-diameter strike sphere of a descending bolt to a new location or changes the direction of the path of a magical bolt as follows: the Master-player rolls 1d10; a result of 1 means that the lightning is shifted 10' in a direction desired by the Master, a roll of 2 means a 20' deflection, and so on. Any result of 7 or more means that the Master can control the discharge so accurately as to place it precisely as desired within the range of the *repel*, including hurling it right back at its source. Anything struck on the way will take normal damage, but utterance of a *repel* always means that the Master is protected, therefore a Master could deflect a bolt away from other creatures nearby onto himself and suffer no damage.

Lightning has normal effects on objects where it strikes even after being deflected, and is not robbed of any of its power to damage. If two or more creatures attempt to control a lightning bolt in different directions, it will break up and dissipate without going anywhere (a rare occurrence).

Repel Non-Living Material

Level: 5

Range: 120'

Duration: 1 round per level of the caster

Effect: Repels non-living material of all types

This powerful magic affects undead and all non-living material, even once alive substances such as leather or corpses. It is usually directed against weapons or armor to repel creatures bearing them away from the Master to the limits of spell range, but it can also be used to scatter small objects such as coins or keys. Creatures can struggle against the repulsive force of the spell if they can gain traction aerial or levitating creatures are helpless until they reach the ground. Struggling creatures are allowed a saving throw against the spell. If successful, this allows them to remain stationary. If they save successfully on the next round, they can move toward the Master at half normal movement speed, but must save again on the following round and will be forced back if they fail at any time, rallying only when they save successfully again. The Master can end the repulsion by will but need not concentrate to maintain it and can even undertake other spellcasting while it continues. The velocity at which non living objects move varies with the level of the Master. A Master of 10th level can repel at a rate of 10' per round, and can move objects of up to 50 pounds weight; a Master of 11th level can repel at a rate of 12' per round, and shift objects of up to 60 pounds weight. A 12th level Master repels up to 70-pound objects at a rate of 14' per round, and so on. A cloud of coins or gems hurled by a Master at creatures by means of this spell could well do any creatures 2-8 points of damage. DMs must determine whether coins in pouches or worn on thongs can break free

or fall out of their containers when acted upon by this magic.

Shout

Level: 6

Range: 120'

Duration: Instantaneous

Effect: Special (varies)

This spell drains 1 hit point from the Master whenever used. The lost point may be regained by normal rest. The magic affects all nearby creatures. The Master cannot choose to exclude certain beings from the spell effect if they are within range. The Master-player rolls 1d6 and adds the Master's level (as a Master, not as a halfling) to arrive at the score for the *shout* spell just cast. This score is compared to the level or hit dice of all creatures within range to determine the effects of the spell on each creature as follows:

Creature's Score exceeds Shout score: no effect

Scores equal: creature *stunned* for 1 round, cannot attack, speak, move, or cast spells; ongoing creature spellcasting ruined.

Shout score 1-3 points greater: Creature *stunned* for 1-3 rounds, as above; all held weapons or items will be dropped. Creatures of 5 dice or less also *deafened* for 1-2 turns.

Shout score 4-6 points greater: Creature instantly unconscious; will collapse and cannot be revived for 2-8 rounds; will also be *deafened* for 2-5 turns. Creatures of 10 dice or greater allowed a Saving Throw vs. spell; if successful, they are not rendered unconscious but flee involuntarily out of spell range, dropping all held items. Spells and weapons cannot be used during flight. The flight cannot be ended by spell or opposed will until out of spell range. Once out of range, creatures are no longer affected and can turn and charge back at the Master if they wish. Both flight and return will be at normal movement rates.

Shout score 7 points or more greater: Creature rendered unconscious, and may not be revived for 3-12 rounds (no saving throw allowed). Revived creatures will be *deafened* for 3-12 turns, and *confused* (as

Spells

in the fourth level magic user spell *confusion*, detailed on page 13 of the D&D® game Expert rulebook) for 18 rounds.

Non-living objects and undead are unaffected by a *shout* spell.

Assume Animal Shape

Level: 7

Range: 0 (Master only)

Duration: Permanent until ended by will of caster

Effect: Changes Master into animal shape

This spell allows a Master to take the shape of any living creature. The Master retains his own alignment and intellect and instantly learns the capabilities of the new form without disorientation. If the assumed form can speak, spells may be cast while in it. No magical or spell-like natural powers of a monster form will be gained by a Master assuming it.

A Master need not be familiar with a form to assume it, but must have personally seen a living specimen of the creature. The Master is never forced to act as the new form would, but will realize how the creature would normally behave in any situation that arises.

A Master cannot be trapped in animal shape unless a *permanence* spell with that specific aim in mind is cast upon him while in animal form. A Master gains no additional hit points by taking animal shape, but may assume a form having as many as twice his own Hit Dice. Note that a "red dragon" shape could be taken, but a red dragon of a particular size and powers could not be chosen. Some Masters habitually remain in beast-shape; except for attacks from other creatures, a Master is not harmed in the slightest by being in animal form for years on end.

Earthgrip

Level: 7

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Effect: One creature is attacked by earth

This spell can only be used when the target is on the ground. The Master touches the creature ('to hit' required) and exerts his will to cast the spell. Both Master and target roll 1d12, and the spell effects are as follows:

Target score 3 or more greater than Master's: target completely unaffected. Spell lost.

Target score 2 or more greater than Master's: target *slowed* to half speed for 1-3 rounds.

Target Score 1 greater than Master's: target *held* at the spot touched (as in the clerical *hold person* spell, but any creature can be affected).

Scores equal: Earth rises up to strike target once, doing 5-20 points of damage. Target will be thrown down by the earth movement; Master will be unaffected.

Master's Score 1 greater than Target: target struck by a *fist of earth* that rises up to do the Master's bidding for 2-5 rounds (determine randomly), striking for 5-20 points per round at +2 to hit. Even if the *fist* misses, the target will be thrown to the ground by the convulsions of the earth underfoot, and target spellcasting will be impossible. Only creatures able to levitate or fly can escape the effects of moving earth—but the *fist* can reach up to 20' vertically to strike at them.

Master's Score 2 or more greater than Target's: crack opens in the earth beneath target, trapping it instantly as the fissure snaps shut again. Only the upper half of the target remains above ground; target is immobilized unless it can dig free, change its form to escape, or use magic to free itself. Immobilized targets can automatically be hit by others, twice per round.

Master's Score 3 or more greater than Target's: earth opens to swallow up target. Target takes 10-60 points of crushing damage, and must save vs. spells to avoid death by suffocation and crushing. A successful save results in the target being imprisoned within the earth, alive in stasis, helpless until freed by digging, natural forces, or a *dispel magic* cast on the spot.

A Master can always choose to have a lesser effect occur than the usual result of the compared scores. Earth elementals struck by an *earthgrip* spell are instantly sent back to their own plane, exhausting the spell.

Feeblemind

Level: 7

This spell is identical to the fifth level magic user spell of the same name (described on page 20 of the D&D® game Players Companion book), except that a Master may use it on all sorts of intelligent creatures. A Master will only use this spell on a halfling if there is a very important reason to do so. All creatures are allowed to save against a Master's *feeblemind* at only -3.

Plant Fist

Level: 7

Range: 140'

Duration: 1 round per level of caster

Effect: Animate and controls plants

This spell is rarely used by Masters because at its end the plants involved die. Plant-like monsters such as treants are not affected by this spell. The Master can cause 3 trees, 10 saplings or medium-sized bushes, 20 shrubs, or 36 small plants to animate and obey his will.

The plants can be made to entangle or whip a single target, preventing spellcasting, slowing movement to half rate, and causing all physical attacks by the target to be at -3 to hit and -1 on damage. The plants will bludgeon and constrict for 3-12 points of damage in any round in which the target creature does not directly fight them.

In each round of directly fighting the plants, a target lessens the damage it suffers to 1-4 points and has a chance to break free for 1 round. If a Saving Throw vs. Spells is successful, the target breaks free. The plants will re-entangle the target on the second round after freedom is gained. The Master can end the spell at will; once stopped, it cannot be started up again. He need not concentrate upon the plants to maintain it.

GAZETTEER

Dungeon Masters Booklet

The Five Shires

by Ed Greenwood

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Dedication

This one's for Grandma and Aunt Clara. See? There still are magic kingdoms.

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INTRODUCTION

The Gazetteer

This booklet is a reference work intended primarily for Dungeon Masters. If you are a player, please read only the Players Guide that accompanies this book. Your Dungeon Master will reveal information from this book appropriate to what your character knows before, and learns during, active play. From here onwards, this book is for the DM's eyes only.

The Five Shires is a complete campaign reference, one of a series of Gazetteers that together detail the D&D® game Known World. This Gazetteer presents the homeland and culture of the halfling race in great detail as an aid to all D&D game enthusiasts in enriching play. It is split into two booklets, one for Players and the other—this one—for DMs.

Well, sort of, as wise hin Elders are wont to say. A DM cannot run play in the Shires without first becoming thoroughly familiar with the material in the Players Guide. It has the basic information about halfling skills and society. This DM's Booklet presents more information about the land and provides the DM with a stable of NPCs useful in campaign play and in devising new adventures to challenge PCs. After the clans and places-of-upbringing of all PCs in the Shires (if any) are known, the DM should reveal information about the Shires from this Booklet that is appropriate. Remember that among themselves halflings are a simple, open people; there are few secrets or subtleties.

The closing section of this book presents many adventure ideas, each ranked by PC level: Basic for Basic-level characters, Expert for Expert-level characters, and so on. DMs can freely run characters of different levels than the ones printed herein through a given adventure, if the difficulty of challenges and monsters involved is adjusted so as to test but not overwhelm PCs.

Do It Your Way

First and foremost, play in The Five Shires should be fun. The Shires are green and beautiful and for the most part



peaceful, but that should not mean that play in the Shires is boring.

The very lush fertility and tranquil beauty of the Shires make them highly-sought-after lands. Covert forces are always at work in the Shires as well as in the lands seeking to gain influence over the Shires.

The folk of Darokin, to the north and west of the Shires, are the most friendly with the halflings. Darokin has never, whatever their true intentions, openly tried to dictate or manipulate halflings by threat of force. Others neighbors, such as the 'Black Eagle' Baron von Hendriks or the far-off Empire of Thyatis, are not so respectful of halfling freedoms.

Travelers in the Shires may well be used, unwittingly or for pay, as messengers or agents in other countries' games of intrigue. The Shires may have few treasure-laden crypts or ruins but there are monsters in plenty and food and wealth in abundance for those who aid the hin clans or who can seize what they will and somehow escape. There is a lot going on in the Shires beneath the peaceful exterior known to the world outside.

Characters of certain citizenship and

racess (such as the dwarves) are not exactly welcome—and no one loud and hasty about swinging blades and hurling magic will be too popular, either. The halfling people may seem quaint and droll to hardened human adventurers, but they are tough and wily and more shrewd than they look. No Dungeon Master should play halflings as cute, empty-headed dolls, or helpless midgets who run about shrieking the moment trouble erupts.

Clans vie endlessly for supremacy and individual hin strive to advance their own wealth or clan rank or both. Mysterious evil lurks in Shireton Port, and many seek to learn and control the secrets of *black-flame*. Pirates raid ships offshore, and orcs raid mining bands in the mountains. Things are never as peaceful as they appear.

Exactly what kind of play the Shires takes is up to you, the DM, and your players. Feel free to change anything in these pages to better entertain and engage the interest of your players. The Five Shires is yours to enjoy. Handle it with love and care and many hours of memorable play will be your reward.

The History of the Shires

The Early Days

Halflings came to what is now the Shires by ship. The hin named the cape where they landed Faerdinel ("faer" = hope + "dinel" = haven). The Coming of the Hin is the beginning of all halfling history and is little questioned.

The hin built a tower where they made landfall. Many magical treasures are said to still lie within its walls. Many yallaren eagerly search for Faerdinel Keep, but none has recently found it. The Keep long ago fell into the sea. No trace of it remains, even to those who can search beneath the waves. All its treasures lie buried or were lost to earlier searchers.

Beyond the headlands hin found rolling forest land of unusual richness and beauty that climbed to soaring mountains beyond. They spread out across it and soon met other folk: an isolated, dwindling race of elves.

The elves were called 'Masters' by the halflings—not masters of the hin, but masters of the land itself. Hin also call them the Gentle Folk for they refused to fight even when ravaged by vicious orc attacks. From the kindly elves halflings learned lore and magic of the woods; learning preserved today by hin Masters.

The Gentle Folk soon disappeared under orc and human attacks. There is no record of any strife between hin and the Folk, nor are they remembered by hin with anything but respect, admiration and sorrow. Legends persist in hin lore of a few Folk hiding in the darkest forest depths and of a 'Last Ride' of shining golden winged horses that carried the last splendid band of Gentle Folk away from the Deep Land.

Then hin called their new home The Deep Land because its woods were so vast and dense. It was not given a 'proper' halfling name because hin did not feel it belonged to them. They felt they were guests in the Forest of the Folk.

The Early Days are reckoned to have ended when the Gentle Folk could no longer be found by searching hin, who liked to bring the Folk great feasts of fish and sit and listen to beautiful elven music and tales late into many moonlit nights.

Halflings began to speak of the land of Hinhome or "Llora" (= 'ours').

Human raids on the coasts dwindled around the time of the elven disappearance. Gnolls invaded the Traldar lands in great numbers and humans had little time for perilous exploration westwards.

Orcs, however, became far bolder and more numerous (perhaps driven south by the gnolls), striking out of the mountains in large, brutal bands. The hin lacked the strength and numbers to withstand these attacks and soon became slaves of the orcs. The orcs fought among themselves until Othrong rose to prominence.

The Realm of Othrong

Othrong was able to rule the weak hin with only a small warrior-band to enforce his will. He put halflings to work clearing forests to establish farms and pastures on which food to feed the orcs was grown and herds of livestock seized by the orcs grazed. The strongest hin were set to work on a more dangerous (because of woodland predators) and physically punishing task: clearing roads through the deep woods to link the farms.

The Realm of Othrong was to be a land of plenty where orcs could enjoy a good life without the harsh cold and scarce food of the mountains. Othrong looked forward to a day when many peoples would serve the Orcs, and fat, happy orcs would remember him with fond pride and gratitude for the great kingdom he had founded.

Othrong, however, 'could see clearer in his dreams than beyond his nose,' as the hin saying has it. For thirty winters forests were cleared, many farms begun, and an astonishing reach of good roads laid down, but the realm of luxuriantly happy orcs was never to be. Hin youth began to steal away from farms and to slip away from road gangs during the worst storms when orcs could not easily recapture them.

The escaped hin ventured far across the Known World; the practice of *yallara* had begun. Some never returned and found happier homes elsewhere, but most met other hin in far places and shared their

anger, returning to Hinhome determined to overthrow the orcs. They mounted many raids, though they soon learned that to stand against Othrong's counter-attacks was to die.

Hin bands began to wander the southwest of Hinhome and east of the Cruth River, raiding often into the Realm of Othrong. The orcs grew more numerous and prosperous as years passed, but they no longer lorded it easily over passive, helpless slaves—they ruled in armed wariness over an increasingly truculent halfling servant-folk. As roads and farms expanded, hin communications improved. The lazy orcs depended on halflings to do so much that hin became increasingly strong and skilled in order to carry out required tasks. Othrong was doomed.

As events turned out, the Doom of Othrong fell not on Othrong, who died happily in an orgy of overeating at his citadel, Castle Bone, but upon his far stupider son, the monstrous and brutal Raurgh.

Raurgh was a giant—a bald, scarred orc of dull wits and crude humor who stood twenty feet tall and could find no horse to bear him. In foolish pride he decreed that no orc would ride when Raurgh could not, and from that moment his armies were doomed. Never able to catch the fleet raiding bands of hin, the orcs lost control of eastern Hinhome entirely, ruling much of the land only as far as their weapons reached.

Hin began to realize this as food-trains traveled the usual routes to feed orcs across the realm. Talk rose of overthrowing the hated orcs at last. The most warlike hin began to organize their fellows for an eventual rising.

The Rising

The Rising came one harsh winter when snow choked the roads. Food ran short in Castle Bone and other orc-holds and increasingly frantic orders to resupply the heart of the realm killed many hin in the harsh winter.

Little food got through, and hin after hin decided it would cost less in halfling

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blood to defy local orc overlords than to die carrying the orcs food and perish of cold or be torn apart by hungry monsters. The food stopped coming. Winter stretched on.

At last Raurch was forced to venture out of Castle Bone in search of provender. Hin sent their fastest running on ahead with word of his coming. Food was carried on before the orcs could reach it. Only the oldest, weakest hin stayed to fight and die, killing an orc here and an orc there. The stouter hin ran ahead until they made a stand at an orc-hold called Hin skulls.

The battle of Hin skulls was long and bitter. Halflings, working hard and only a little less hungry than their foes, were no match for desperate orcs. But they were more numerous and warmed by hatred. Fighting raged for days among the trees as the orcs slowly pushed east and more hin joined the fray. The Fall of Raurch came on a rocky height known today as Orcfall, as Raurch and all with him were slain by the sheer numbers of hin who went up against them.

The fierce winter raged on. A few hin went about in the teeth of its fury to flush out an orc-hold here or a stand of orcs there, but most of the realm did not know Raurch had fallen until spring.

The Spring Slaughter was savage but exultant. Orc bands coming down from the mountains were overwhelmed or chased back up into the heights. Many hin Heroes met to tear down Castle Bone, and there agreed to establish a rule of surviving halfling Elders. The realm of Hindon ("don" means 'land' in the hin tongue) was founded.

HINDON

The Elders came to be known for long-winded squabbles over the smallest details of government, but this didn't bother the new conquerors. Many younger hin Heroes were content to ride about the new won land slaying human bandits and orcs that had survived the Slaughter while their Elders argued in relative peace in the center of it all. These proud hin Heroes became The Fangs of the Shires.

Before long hin established trade with neighboring lands and ventured in strength into the mountains where new metal-rich ore deposits were found. Hindon remained a little-developed but fairly happy land as years passed.

To the east, the gnolls had begun to withdraw from the Traldar lands. Lawlessness and banditry were rife. Human and orc raids on Hindon, where food was plentiful, increased. Word spread of a land of great forests where there were rich farms and much iron, copper, silver and gold, protected only by 'little people.'

Ships began to arrive at Hindon's shores to trade cloth, cattle, ponies and beer for Hindon's metal and foodstuffs, and for its rarer and larger trees—timber that had grown scarce in Thyatis and other seafaring lands. Halflings prospered and multiplied; hin clans grew suddenly in pride and importance. Hin wealth and culture flourished.

The Fall of Hindon and the Dark Years

It was a time of swords, dark deeds, and raw might in the lands around Hindon. As news of the prosperity of the lightly-defended halfling land spread, greedy eyes began to turn Hindon's way. Human and orc raids increased.

Halfling smithy-work was small-scale, the armies of Hindon small and poorly equipped: enough to intercept raiding bandits but far too few to stop large and determined armies. Orc raids became almost continuous near the mountains; many fighting hin fell in the strife.

Dwarves made the long journey to Hindon, attracted by tales (and samples) of its metal rich ores. The more evil among them took careful note of the realm's failing military strength.

It was orcs, again, who swept away the last halfling defenders in the end, but it was not orcs who prevailed over the forest realm this time. The orc-chief Gaur burned the Elderhall one spring morning less than thirty summers after Hindon was founded, and the Fall of Hindon is considered to have occurred then.

In the years that followed, human,

dwarven, and orc bands roamed the land fighting viciously with each other. Hin hid underground or in the deepest tangles of the forest depths and let the battles rage around them. Those who did not swiftly perished.

In these Dark Years, the weather and bounty of the land were unusually fine—but there was no law but the law of the sword, and few blades indeed were wielded by hin. Human bands were largely interested in fast and easy plunder but the dwarves and orcs were determined to rule the land as their own. Battles between them grew larger and more fierce; large armies began to gather, reinforced by both races from beyond Hindon's borders. There were several pitched battles: the first, Bloody Sands, a narrow victory for the orcs; the second, Fireaxe Field, a great victory for the dwarves, who trapped and burned alive many orcs; and the third, the Hill of Cold Teeth, a chilly struggle in a raw winter blizzard where both the orc-chief Gaur and his chief orc rival Hurag were slain by the dwarves of Loktal Ironshield.

DWARVEN RULE

In the spring after Cold Teeth the armies of both sides were exhausted, but the dwarves held most of the forests. Loktal crowned himself king of the Glittering Land, naming his realm for many gems the dwarves had found in its rivers.

Loktal was a shrewd and grasping king. He maintained strict discipline among his warriors, never letting them forget they were at war with all non-dwarves in a hostile land and dare not relax. Captured halflings were enslaved and put to work mining. Toiling under heavy dwarven guard, they soon tunnelled deep into the mountains, meeting many orcs and fearsome monsters of the inner caverns.

Loktal spared no hin or dwarf in farming, but let the land slide back into a wild, overgrown state. Loktal kept only the roads open for his marching armies and wagon-trains of metal. The dwarves bought most of their food from outside the Glittering Land's borders.

Hin grew skilled at catching and eating

wild creatures on sight; game, untouched by the dwarves, remained plentiful. Unfortunately for Loktal, so too did orcs.

Orc raids became heavy again and greedy humans came to plunder as well as trade until Loktal found himself embattled as fiercely as Raurgh had forty winters earlier. War spread across the land again, while hin stayed hidden or mined deep in the mountains.

The Second Rising

Gnolls were seen in the northern hills of the Glittering Land one spring, and the orcs were stronger than before. A battle-weary Loktal led his warriors into the mountains and surprised a gathering horde of orcs at Brokenfang Falls, routing them. Thousands of orcs were pushed from a precipice in the fray when the dwarves charged them. This sight gave rise to the laconic hin expression “until it rains orcs again,” and won Loktal enough time to rush his dwarves north to meet the gnolls.

There Loktal found only a few scattered gnollish bands and destroyed them easily. He had more trouble with another gathering of orcs, but finally cornered and defeated them at the battle of Three Shields. Only then he discovered that the hin had quietly risen at his back: an enemy that refused to fight in the open but made him pay in dwarven blood for every step south along the forest roads. At one camp on a bare hilltop, Loktal found he had fewer than four hundred dwarves left. In the morning he quietly turned and marched north again, abandoning perhaps a thousand dwarves scattered across the mines and harbors of the land. Loktal was never heard from again in the land of the hin. Few dwarves survived their flight across the countryside to follow him.

Orcs came down from the mountains again, but when they entered the forests, they did not come out. One orc band made it back to the peaks but most died before they found the riches of the dwarves. Halflings ruled once more.

Shaerdon

This time the hardened, wiser hin let the few surviving Elders talk all they wanted at a distance somewhat greater than earshot from those who ruled. Hin who had commanded in battle continued to lead small but well-armed (from fallen dwarf and orc foes) hin armies, and also ruled the restored hin kingdom. They called themselves the Lords, governing by vote in council. One old female Elder, ‘Mother’ Jatha Manytoes, called and chaired the Council, but had no vote in its decisions. The Lords called the new kingdom Shaerdon (shaer = ‘home’; thus, ‘homeland’), and ruled the hin almost as ruthlessly as Loktal had.

Few hin rebelled because the Lords did all in the name of hin self-rule and strengthening the land so that hin might never be conquered again. Their armies grew in strength as the hin grew in numbers. New farms were established, and clans recovered wealth and pride as hin worked harder than ever.

Orc raiders came and were told to go away and come back without weapons and with something useful to trade. Hin who went yallaren were told to learn all they could of far lands and of magic to help the hin grow wiser and stronger.

Years passed and the hin grew strong. No invaders conquered and after a while they stopped trying. Shaerdon grew increasingly wealthy, the land tamed by busy halflings who worked its wood and its fields and delved ever deeper into the Black Spires.

Hin armies patrolled the borders, and after pirates began to seriously harm shipping, hin began to build small, wallowing ships and patrol the coast.

Shaerdon grew rich indeed, bellies within its borders fat and satisfied. A hundred winters of hin self-rule passed. The Lords grew proud and powerful indeed and began to use their wealth to dabble in magic and to work against rival Lords. Eventually they dragged their clans into these fierce rivalries.

The Clanstrife

Fierce arguments erupt among hin today over who started the Clanstrife, this hin Lord or that one. The wisest Elders do not try to name names but merely make grave observations like “one against another means a fight, perhaps a murder or even a feud—many must strive, and care not for the consequences, to cause a war,” and “the younger Lords had never known a time when hin were enslaved, and others ruled the land.”

Time has hidden precisely who did what but in the end hin raised blade against hin. Fighting spread swiftly across Shaerdon, clan against clan, no doubt fuelled by personal grudges and resentments. The country erupted in a wild bloodbath brought to an end by a harsh winter that closed the roads and cooled many tempers. In the spring that followed, many hin fled by ship: some never to return, some yallaren, and some because they were the last of their clan and knew they were prime targets.

A cold, armed peace that was no peace at all began. Hin eyed hin and kept daggers sharp. Tension grew and the mines fell idle as hin stayed on their farms or waited well-armed in their holds. The Lords of weaker clans formed untrusting alliances to better their own chances of survival. When the Elder who had followed ‘Mother’ Manytoes to the chair of the Council upon her death called a Council, no one came. The land was poisoned by hatred and mistrust.

The orcs of the mountains had watched and waited, and now came slinking in the night. Hin swords were ready, but they were also few. Before long, hordes of orcs gathered in the mines. The next spring, hin found their rich mines closed to them. While they were accusing each other and wetting daggers in each other’s backs, orcs poured down out of the mountains and fell on isolated clan strongholds.

Some Lords rallied together to fight the common foe, but it was too late. War raged up and down Shaerdon for years, but fighting hin had become too few to withstand the invaders. Some hin Lords

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stubbornly held their forces in their strongholds and refused to join the fray until the orcs stormed and overwhelmed them, one by one, and they fell.

The Time of Torment

Once again hin were enslaved, worked to death and then eaten. Their orc overlords were ruled by Thrail, a shrewd and patient orc who went nowhere without a strong bodyguard. He established strict discipline, a voice for all orcs in government, and a shadowy network of killers to dispose of serious rivals.

The wisdom and ruthlessness of Thrail made his kingdom stable and strong. It soon seemed to most hin, as they lived harsh and short lives of servitude, that orc rule would endure forever; the fair land of rolling farms and forests would never belong to hin again. Always with orcs, however, their ceaseless, jealous rivalries make their kingdoms only as strong as the leader. As the ruler falters, so do the stability of the land and adherence to law.

So it was with Thrail, who was laid low with disease not quite twenty winters after taking the throne. The orcs were fighting each other viciously for the crown even before Thrail breathed his last; Thrail's son Maerogh was one of the first slain.

A coldly ruthless old orc general prevailed over the bodies of many who had fancied themselves more important and influential, taking the crown by butchering rivals until none dared act against him. This king, Gogkhk, delighted in torture and wanton slaying, and hin suffered horribly under his rule. One of his favorite entertainments was to set one orc against five hin, all blindfolded and armed with daggers, in a small pit, while orcs watched and laughed and placed bets, throwing the bones from their meal—hin bones—down on the combatants. The orcs loved Gogkhk's temper and jovial spirit, and any bitterness over his ascension was quickly forgotten by his people who came to regard him as the greatest king the orcs had ever known. Luckily for the hin, Gogkhk was very old when he took the crown and had been

wounded often over the years. His innards were a mass of poorly healed, twisted scar tissue, and his life of gluttony soon killed him.

Gogkhk had wisely chosen his successor and equipped Furgh Oorr with plentiful quantities of poison. This ambitious orc wasted little time when Gogkhk's health failed. He poisoned the king and most of the court as well, crowning himself forthwith before any rivalries could develop. Furgh Oorr cared not a whit for the health or comfort of hin, but he disliked waste. And so, during his reign of over twenty winters, halflings were treated fairly well by their orc masters. It was expensive to feed infant hin in numbers great enough to replace hin losses if they were mistreated or made cruel sport of; it made sense to take good care of those one had. The essential hardiness of halflings allowed them to recover greatly under Furgh Oorr's rule. Clan ways were restored, and a covert information network formed.

'Wild' hin (those hiding deep in the woods, free from orc rule) were warned when orcs planned 'hin hunts' in their areas. Many hin babies were spirited away at birth to be raised by wild hin instead of being slain by orcs as a feast delicacy. Halflings began to plan for a day when they would rise again.

The Orcstrife

Orcs being orcs, the stability of the realm could not last forever. One day Furgh Oorr was slain by the arrows of a would-be usurper while riding along a forest road and the country erupted into fierce warfare almost before his corpse was cold.

Halflings tried to keep out of the way as orc swords found warm homes in orc bodies all across the land. Orc-holds burned and orc archers soon ran out of arrows.

Hin tales say wherever no trees stood the ground was thick with fallen orcs. Pestilence spread over the land and the orcs were much weakened. On several occasions orcs were slain by hin rising against them, but the wisest hin advised those who could to run to the deep

woods; all others should wait until there were not so many armed orcs running about the countryside.

The fighting dragged on through a mild winter and the next summer. Orc bands ravaged their fellows and looted indiscriminately. Bridges were burned and orc graves dug up in a search for buried plunder. A savage madness lay upon the land. Many hin fled from woods set to the torch and holds torn apart stone by stone to the mines. There they delved deeper, to hide until the strife ended.

Deep beneath the mountains, on the shores of an underground lake discovered when hin broke into older tunnels than their own, Blackflame was first found.

How Blackflame came to be and its precise nature are secrets known only to Keepers, and not lightly divulged. It is clear that the powers of Blackflame were little known or at least poorly understood at this time. It served more as a rallying-point for hin hopes for eventual freedom than as a practical weapon.

Hin withdrew to the southwestern end of the land in numbers enough to defend a few farms. There, they quietly set about feeding the hin hiding in the mountains as orcs went on wildly killing each other across the kingdom.

Clanmasters debated if it was time to take arms against the orcs yet. The older ones cautioned against haste and proved to be right. The talk was still going on when a hard winter came upon the land, frighteningly cold and with many raging storms. In spring, hungry hin coming down from the mountains found not an orc to bar their way in the southwest. Winter had taken a toll all across the land. Orcs fought little over an empty crown until most of the summer had passed and their bellies were again full. Halflings tried to avoid bloodshed and work more fields, building up foodstores in the mountains. The next winter was far milder, and orcs fought up and down the country again. This time, however, hin came down from the mountains ready and eager to fight.

The Third Rising

There was still no king among the orcs. Orc bands went about with ready weapons, clashing when each side thought it could manage a victory. Hin quietly followed such bands, whittling down their numbers by night, or when circumstances isolated an orc warrior.

Before summer ended only a few hundred orcs were left in the land who could bear arms. The hin were not to win back their realm so easily this time, though. Many human raiders began to appear along the coast. Hearing of the Orcstrife, they reasoned that orcs at war are only a little more dangerous than orcs at any other time and might be too busy, or too weak, or too intent on destroying each other to guard their mines as well as otherwise.

So men came, and hin fought them, and the orcs rallied. Gnolls appeared again, and some dwarves. The onetime Hinhome became a lawless land of roving bands and bloody skirmishes. Monsters roamed the woodlands, feeding on all combatants alike. Long years of sporadic warfare and banditry began. For the hin, it seemed a hopeless fight; but it was one they must win, or perish utterly.

The Time of Heroes

The lawless years dragged on, decade after decade, until it seemed the woods below the Black Spires had always been a land at war, ruled by no-one. Hin dwelt in the deepest woods using missile weapons to hunt and drive away foes, or retreated to deep places in the mountains where they fought several vicious little wars to prevent dwarves from moving in and slaying every halfling to be found.

Many hin ballads tell of the deeds of hin Heroes of this time—Nob Nar (perhaps the most famous hin of all), Brindorhin, and Coberham Shadowglint, to name a few. Amid the strife, many Heroes were overwhelmed far from any hin witnesses and thus were never seen to fall. This led to legends of this or that Hero put to sleep by magic (human explorers had brought far more magic

into the woods than the hin had ever seen before) and laid in an underhill tomb to rise and lead the hin in “The Fourth Rising” that might one day occur.

It was not by feats of arms that hin regained their land, however. The various invaders simply went on fighting each other until all were too weak to prevent the return of hin to farms and holds and harbors.

Clan after clan went back to the lands their Elders said they had held before the orcs came. Each hin clan cleared out whatever creatures with whom they did not want to share the land, rebuilt what they had to rebuild, destroyed what they could not abide, and got on with life. This slow rebuilding of the halfling land and people went on for nearly a decade before Elders began to speak of the restoration of Shaerdon.

In each clan stronghold there was now a sacred place where a Crucible of Black-flame was kept and when the Keepers spoke of a new ruler, hin listened. At last it was agreed that the Elders of each clan should gather at a ruined orc city in the south, the only place large enough to house them all together. The rebuilding of this city began; Shireton was born. It took several years to ready the city as outlying clans took their Elders toward it by easy stages, repairing roads as they went. A new spirit was awake in the land. Hin dared to hope again, but more warily and far better armed than before.

The Restoration

When the meeting-place was ready and the Elders gathered, a great Council was called. All Elders were allowed to speak as they saw fit. Days of talk resulted. Outside, younger hin quickly worked out a plan for defense of the land. The hin began to control their land, for the first time in almost two hundred years.

The debate raged on. Many Elders were adamant that no Clanmasters be allowed any direct say in government to prevent clan being set against clan ever again. Others were just as adamant that no single ruler should be installed—see what that had brought the orcs! Besides,

some hin were obviously unsuited for the duties of ruling, and woe betide the small, rich realm if such a one ever came to the throne.

Still others thought a system where many ruled—perhaps a Council of Elders—was the only way to avoid abuses of power and the rash thinking of younger hin. This group always came to bitter disagreement over which Elders should sit on the Council, and how future members would be chosen, and which clans or settlements should be represented and which not? It was obvious to all, as a summer passed while tongues wagged, that no government of all Elders would ever make decisions swiftly enough to safeguard the realm.

By winter, one of the younger war-leaders had heard quite enough. He went into the hall where the Elders were meeting—hastily built, its roof had begun to leak in the fall rains, and the Elders were arguing how best to repair it—and shouted them all to silence. Then he proposed a plan: they would name a Sheriff, a general and high justice combined, to see to the defense of the realm. Elders would see to the governing of their own clans by advising their Clanmasters; the Sheriff would govern the realm as a whole. Each clan would provide warriors to defend the land under the command of the Sheriff; the Sheriff would have no lands or men of his own. The Elders, by meeting in Council, could vote a Sheriff out of office; otherwise, he or she would serve for life or until resigning. The Sheriff would rule absolutely in all matters between clans, such as freedom of roads and mines for the use of all, boundary disputes, recognition of clans and Clanmasters, the establishment of laws and currency, and the sharing of food in hungry times.

The Sheriff would make up his own mind in all matters, with no one to forbid him but all hin and others accepted as neighbors in the land could speak freely to the Sheriff without fear of reprisal.

The war-leader, Gunzuth, was a hitherto quiet, ugly hin youth who had no known clan. He was no fool, however, and had quite run out of patience. The

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Elders would vote on his plan that same night, he told them—and he would serve as the first Sheriff. If they voted the plan down, he promised, one of his warriors would go to every clan across the land to tell what had occurred.

To the vast surprise of themselves and the warriors outside the hall, the Elders voted overwhelmingly in favor of the plan and Gunzuth became the First and Last Lone Sheriff of Shaerdon. He ruled long, lightly, and very well, winning the respect and support of all clans.

On his deathbed, Gunzuth ordered that Shaerdon be split into five Shires, for he had five sons and wished to avoid war. Each Shire was to be equal in law to the others, the land as a whole being governed by a Council of the five Sheriffs, each having one vote. It was done, and from that day to this The Five Shires have had five Sheriffs and have co-existed peacefully in an increasingly rich and happy land.

Many men and orcs have invaded over the years, but all have been turned back, notably at the battles of Blackflame and Fire Rock.

The last invasion occurred eleven years ago. Baron Ludwig von Hendriks of Karamaikos sent a small force, thinking little of halflings as warriors. The Baron's men were slain to the last man at Fools' Ford. Canny hin Clanmasters delivered the bodies of the fallen, neatly crated, to the docks of Fort Doom as "fresh meat for the Baron." The maddened Baron hurled two more expeditions into oblivion before he realized he could not subdue the Shires and cope with his enemies in the Grand Duchy at the same time.

The Shires today maintain strong armies to guard against the orcs of the mountains and the Black Eagle Barony. From the creation of the Five Shires to the present, halflings have ruled the land they came to so long ago; a rule they hope to continue for many years to come.

TIMELINE

3000 BC: The Great Rain of Fire; Blackmoor culture obliterated; planet shifts its axis, freezing the Blackmoor continent

and causing ice sheets to recede from regions of modern Known World.

2000 BC: Bronze and Iron Age cultures in D&D® game world.

circa 1300 BC: "The Early Days." The coming of halflings to Faerdinel and the building of Faerdinel Keep. Hin contact the Gentle Folk (failing elven race).

1000 BC: Elves disappear. Orcs invade the land and enslave the hin. The Realm of Othrong is founded. To the east, gnoll tribes invade Traldar territory and a great war begins (perhaps displacing the orcs who came to the halfling lands).

965-964 BC: The Rising. Halflings overthrow orc-king Raugh at the battles of Hinskulls (965), Orcfall (965), and in the Spring Slaughter (964). Rule of the Elders established (964); kingdom of Hindon founded.

938 BC: The Fall of Hindon; orcs burn the Elderhall. The Dark Years begin. Dwarves and orcs fight for control of the halfling land, in the battles of Bloody Sands (936), Fireaxe Field (932), and the Hill of Cold Teeth (930).

929 BC: Dwarven rule begins. Loktal Ironshield crowned King of the Glittering Land. Hin enslaved. Dwarven kingdom grows rich, attracting orc and human invasions that weaken the dwarves.

912 BC: The Second Rising. Loktal defeats orcs at Brokenfang Falls and rushes north to repel gnoll invaders, but is too weak to withstand a hin revolt. Halflings found the realm of Shaerdon, ruled by a Council of hin clan Lords.

811-802 BC: Corruption and rivalries of hin Lords erupt in the Clanstrife, marked by the Bloodletting (811) and the battles of Manycoats (809) and Bell Horse Ford (807). Orcs come down from the mountains in force (806), and slowly crush hin resistance.

801-784 BC: The Time of Torment; hin enslaved under the orc-king Thrail.

784-771 BC: Reign of Goghkh; torment of the hin continues.

770-748 BC: Reign of Furch Oorr; slavery continues, but hin are better treated.

747 BC: The Orcstrife. Furch Oorr slain, but no orc can hold the throne; war between orcs erupts across the country.

Pestilence. "Savage madness" governs the orcs; much bloodshed.

746 BC: Hin discover Blackflame deep under the mountains; Orcstrife continues.

744 BC: The Third Rising. Hin defeat the orcs but humans, gnolls, and dwarves invade the land; lawless times begin.

743-610 BC: The Time of Heroes. Hin warrior-adventurers flourish in the land, eventually reclaiming much of it from the invaders. Rebuilding of a hin kingdom begins.

609 BC: The Restoration. Elders proclaim Gunzuth the Clanless as First Sheriff of Shaerdon. He rules wisely and well. The land prospers.

572 BC: Death of Gunzuth; Shaerdon split into five Shires, each ruled by a Sheriff, the whole being ruled by a Council of the five Sheriffs. The Golden Years begin.

0 AC: Halfling shipmasters establish naval trade with most coastal nations. Elsewhere, the first Emperor of Thyatis is crowned.

575 AC: Ierendi islands used by hin as naval bases year-round for the first time. Hin build large numbers of small, stout rounded ships (nicknamed "wallowing turtles" by human sailors for their comical appearance in heavy seas) which prove astonishingly sturdy. Halfling seaborne trade flourishes.

586 AC: The Empire of Thyatis, at war with the Empire of Alpathia and needing ships and shipbuilding harbors urgently, seizes Ierendi islands from the halflings with all ships in harbor at the time. In retaliation, halflings begin piracy against Thyatian shipping, which continues to this day.

700 AC: Huge orc horde invades the northern Shires. The orcs are drawn skillfully into a trap and destroyed in the Battle of Blackflame.

944 AC: Halfling army surprises a gathering orc horde north of Wereskalot, routing them in the battle of Fire Rock.

989 AC: Large numbers of Traladarans fleeing the Black Eagle Barony prompt Baron von Hendriks to invade the Shires. Three successive expeditions from Fort Doom are annihilated by hin ere Hendriks turns his attention elsewhere.

1000 AC: Today. All D&D® Gazetteers are set at this period. Troubles have begun to stir in the Shires again; it is a time for adventurers.

1200 AC: The invasion of the Master of the Desert Nomads and the setting for adventures X4, X5, and X10.

Climate

The Five Shires are green and pleasant with rolling fields, dark woods, and little wasteland. This is due in part to the position of the Shires between mountains and sea. Moist air blowing inland cools and must leave its moisture behind as it rises over the peaks, making the Shires often wet and misty. The mountains also serve to shield the Shires, like a great wall, from the worst of the cold winter winds out of the north. The coastal breezes ensure that the weather of the Shires is changeable, serving to moderate the climate over the long run. All of these factors favor a land of comfort and plenty, but to know what it is really like to live in the Shires let us look at the passage of the seasons in a typical year.

Winter in the Shires can be wet, with many howling coastal storms bringing feet upon feet of snow. The roads of the northern Shires are often closed to all but the foolish, and certainly to wagons and carts, for Clabbass and parts of both Dauntil and Vuuldiir, even into Machin in bad years. Sleds are used when roads must be traveled in deep snow, but these are usually pulled by the hin themselves, not be draft animals. This is exhausting work, and not done merely for reasons of trade or tourism.

In Machin the Shires warm up quickly but the precipitation continues. Winter ends in a long period of rainstorms, fog, mud, and thawing, often referred to as "wet winter." By the end of Odelin, spring has truly arrived; green, growing shoots and buds are seen again.

As the days draw on into summer, the weather gets warmer and the rain less frequent. Summer in the Shires has been described by the human minstrel Albandan of Penhaligon as "golden days of happy warmth; not too hot, nor too dry,

but just right. As beautiful as any land may get, and with the pleasantest folk about to share it with, even if all the pretty maidens are only three feet tall."

Fall in the Shires is a long and steady drop in warmth and rise in dampness. Mud begins to conquer the roads well before frost ends the growing season and the ground hardens. Winter comes with hard freezing. This cold usually lasts for about three weeks in Tembiir and Dauntil, giving hin time to cut lots of deadwood for their winter fires and gather the last of the picked vegetables in from under the haypiles before the heavy snows of aptly-named "deep winter" come.

Winters seem to have been fiercer a thousand years ago and to be slowly shortening and warming up, but hin have paid too little attention over the years for records to be clear enough to tell an observer whether this is a continuing trend or merely an impression arising from the coincidence of the weather of the last decade or so.

The Shires are known to have stormy coasts which have protected hin pirates from zealous pursuit on many occasions. The uncertain weather of the coastal waters has also allowed experienced halfling shipmasters to dominate legitimate shipping between the Shires and other coastal lands. A hin going home is more likely to chance a stormy run than a captain from the Grand Duchy who is less familiar with the waters.

Agriculture

Most farmers in the Shires get two or even, in good years, three harvests. The Shires have become a granary for other lands, notably Darokin (and thence, Glantri), the Grand Duchy, and nearby Ierendi. The Shires produce far more food than its present halfling population could ever eat. Large quantities of food are stored in hidden underground stone-lined cellars throughout the Shires as well as in secret caverns in the Black Spires. In case of war across the Shires, hin troops could call upon almost two years-worth of stored food (although much of it—

turnips, for example—would be fairly uninteresting eating).

A halfling who can move and chew will never die of hunger in the Shires. Hin are famous for their vegetable crops, particularly peas, beans, radishes, mushrooms, carrots, onions, and asparagus.

Practically every sort of fruit, vegetable, and herb or flowering plant that can grow in anything except very hot, arid conditions flourishes in The Five Shires; parsley and garlic grow wild in many places. The rocky high country of the mountains (a region of slim forage in most lands) is cloaked with berry-bushes. Mushrooms are cultivated in cellars and caverns; mosses are gathered in the deep woods for dyes, perfumes, and eating; snails are harvested on the fringes of the Blight Swamp. There is little bounty in the Shires that halflings have not found and do not use; what makes the Shires different from most lands at present is that there is plenty to go around, and plenty left over. A halfling will pass over a dozen or so snails, for example, when snailing, "just to be sure there's some for next time," and if the next halfling along takes them, the first won't grow angry at the loss of "his" snails; the land has plenty for all—at least for now.

Topography

The Shires lie like a vast fringe running northeast along the base of the Black Spires mountain range, hooking due northward at their eastern end, and bounded to west and south by the sea. The easternmost tip of the Shires is an area of very high (6,000 feet) peaks from which the Cruth River flows. From its headwaters, the river drops down the awesome Mistmyr Falls (a fall so long and violent that spray always enshrouds the foot of the plunge in roiling mists) into the Cruth lowlands. These wilderness hills slope away southeast to the sea, from 1,500 feet above sea level steeply down into the Achelos Woods. Higher surrounding peaks and hills enclose these "lowlands" into a vast basin.

The Cruth River separates The Five Shires from the Grand Duchy of Kara-

The History of the Shires

meikos as it flows swiftly south into the Achelos Woods and the small but nasty Blight Swamp. Most overland travelers are forced to cross the Cruth lowlands in the vicinity of Riverfork Keep and Wereskalot, fording the icy Cruth where they can. In earlier times, before the Black Baron rose to power, caravans could be ferried across on barges. With the animosity shown by the Baron toward his hin neighbors, however, no one is too anxious to build new barges so travelers must now get wet.

Naval trade has largely replaced the overland caravans since Baron von Hendriks began his rule, but commerce between Karameikos and the Shires was once so extensive that most commoners of Karameikos know the name of Wereskalot and will recall it when the Shires are mentioned. Few have ever been there, and fewer still know anything more about the land of the halflings, but perhaps considering the beauty of the Shires, that's just as well.

An ancient road called the Everwake Way runs through the valley of Everwake northeast of Wereskalot. Around this grassy track the Cruth lowlands rise on both sides into bleak moors that are rather haunting by moonlight. These moors are home to some desperate human outlaws and a few lycanthropes who have fled or been driven out of Karameikos and have not dared to venture into civilized areas. A few very old Traladaran tombs have been found in the area over the years, some containing rich treasures looted from, or given by, the ancient Hutaakan race.

West of the moors lie the armed, fortified mining communities of Highshire, always alert against orc attacks. Armed patrols are frequent. Halflings here expect dwarves to sneak in seeking mineral wealth in the mountains if vigilance is relaxed for a moment.

A single major road connects northern Highshire, through alpine woods, to the rest of the lands of halflings. Visitors are

advised that this is an area of monsters, not the least dangerous of which are humans from other lands (particularly Karameikos) who have come in prospecting and whose law is a sharp and swift swordblade.

To the south of the moors lie the forests and farms of Eastshire, guarded by Rollstone Keep. The village of Rollstone was fortified only recently to guard against the Black Eagle Baron. Its catapults can hurl rocks, garbage, and such delights as dead horses far out over the Hingulf, the Blight Swamp, and nearby Eastshire.

Eastshire's rich farmlands provide much food for lands beyond the borders of the Shires, and Eastshire is probably the most heavily guarded and militarily alert of the Shires. Baron von Hendriks has attacked here several times in the past, and no doubt will do so again.

The broad waters of the Wardle River separate Eastshire from Seashire. Seashire is by far the most heavily populated of the Shires and the most "humanized" in its fashions and way of life. Trade and diplomacy from other lands influences the Shires most heavily here. Halfling navy ships patrol the Shirecoast (particularly the Hingulf between the Shires and Karameikos) heavily. No foreign ships pass through its waters to dock in the Shires without being boarded and inspected.

The Ithypool River runs down from Heartshire into Seashire. Landlocked Heartshire is seldom seen by non-hin, unless they are traders from Darokin. It is a region of dark woods, crags, and rolling hills. Most of the extensive natural caverns and hin-dug mines of the Shires lie beneath, or at least are entered from, this Shire. The newer, less explored ways beneath the mountains of neighboring Highshire promise to yield purer and more plentiful metallic ores in days to come. All of the present halfling population of the Shires could live in Heartshire's caverns if their country was for some reason lost to them.

Where mines have run out, some hin do live in the dark depths. Mushrooms of famous quality and size are grown in the dim caverns and emergency stores of food are maintained here by order of the Sheriffs.

At the southwestern end of the Shires lies Southshire, where much of the livestock of the Shires is tended. Largely open land, the hills of Southshire are home to far more sheep and shaggy hill-ponies than halflings. The busy port of Tothmeer serves not only legitimate overseas trade, but is home to many hin pirate vessels. Toth Isle, just off the coast near Tothmeer, is the only island of the Shires not considered part of Seashire.

The Shires also claim many rocks and islands in the sea south of those claimed by Ierendi. This area that hin patrol—in light force, but probably more thoroughly than any other peacetime nation—is known as "The Shirecoast," and is nominally part of Seashire.

The most important islands of The Shirecoast are Orlin Isle, Seawind Isle (which marks the Ierendi border and is open to all, notably pirates), Shipwreck Isle, and Harborlee Rock.

Harborlee Rock serves as a busy transfer point for illicit trade between certain Karameikan entrepreneurs and the folk of the Shires. Most of the other islands of The Shirecoast, not named here, are little more than rocks. They make the waters hazardous to shipcaptains who do not know them, and provide ready refuges and stopover points for hin naval and pirate ships.

To the visitor, the Shires will seem a gentle, pleasant land, dominated by farms and forests. Its surface is always gently rolling, not flat. It seems old and long-civilized, largely tamed, and yet it is also lightly-settled at present. In short, the Shires appear to be a nice place to live and visit, but probably a boring place for one seeking adventure (until, of course, a gently smiling DM sets to work).

The Defense of the Shires

The very beauty and rich resources of the tranquil Shires make them prime targets for anyone wishing to conquer or plunder. The continued tranquility of the "tiny, unimportant" Shires is due in very large measure to the demonstrated effectiveness of halflings in defending their homeland.

Wartime

The Grand Army of the Shires exists only in wartime and has not been raised since the first invasion of the Black Eagle Baron. All clans send some hin to the militia training camps to learn their war skills while patrolling the borders of the Shires. Whenever a hin force is raised, most of the halflings fighting in it will have some military experience and discipline because of these camps.

Regiments of 1,000 hin are usually commanded by Knight-Heroes (8th level halflings). Each Commander will be aided by a deputy, or "Yondar" (6th level), and by any Masters, Knight-Heroes, or human mages or fighting clergy who wish to assist. By tradition, hin who are led beyond the borders of the Shires to fight must volunteer for such duty, and hence any units of such an expeditionary force will be known as "Volunteer Regiments."

Calling up hin to arms is simple. Alarm horns bring hin in an area to readiness, weapons and gear are gathered, marching food gotten ready, valuables and necessities packed ready for quick hiding or travel, and so on. Masters, Knight-Heroes, and Krondar serve as messengers to Clanmasters who simply summon the clan together and decide who shall answer the call and how they shall be led and equipped. If a clan has an 'acting clan chief,' he always volunteers to lead the clan warriors into battle so that the Clanmaster will be more likely to survive and see to the safety and continuance of the clan.

'Fighting hin' or maximum militia strength is 60% of total clan population. In peacetime, 10-15% of a clan will be under arms for training, patrol or guard duty, or active Fang duty, at any one time. The militia never leaves the Shires.

The visitor to the wilderness areas of the Shires will likely encounter three different types of armed hin: Krondar (the deputies of a Sheriff, described in the *Players Guide*, who will be met while acting as police), "Fangs," and "Strikers."

FANGS

The 'Fangs of the Shires' are battle groups led by a Knight-Hero (8th level halfling), usually 40-60 hin strong, and are standing troops, ready in arms to answer any alarm sent by a militia patrol.

Patrols consist of 15-25 hin led by a halfling of not less than 4th level. Riders on small, hardy ponies exchange reports between patrols and the nearest Fang encampment at least once per day.

The Fangs will form the cores of hin regiments if war is declared; they ride about on light, fast ponies although they almost never fight on horseback, and are armed with daggers, shortswords, and light throwing spears of excellent make.

A Fang, however, prefers to rely on its slingers and archers (every fighting hin is one or the other; some are skilled at both), and it is the way of hin to keep to cover, *never* missing in the open. If cornered on open ground, they will set their spears up in menacing lines, ends driven into the ground so that the points form a wall against charging horses and warriors larger than halflings. The hin will crouch behind these as cover and sling away like fury.

The Shires are a beautiful and rich land desired by many. Hin must be ready—and seen to be ready—to defend it. At least one Fang will be ready, encamped in the open, somewhere in each Shire at any given time.

In War Machine terms, consider a typical Active Fang as follows: One 8th level leader, one 6th level deputy, eight 4th level sergeants, and 50 troops: 20 3rd level hin and 30 2nd level hin. They are active at least 10 months out of every year, their leaders are with them almost always, and they train for at least 16 weeks annually. A Fang fights orcs and other monsters almost weekly in the mountains, and almost all Fangs have good battle

records. Fang troops should be considered veterans who know the terrain and ways of the wilderness Shires well. They are lightly armored but are all equipped with not less than two weapons of "excellent" quality.

Many Fangs are accompanied by volunteer mages and clerics of low levels who wish to taste adventure, or by higher-level adventurers when a Fang is engaged in a specific mission of interest. Even without magical aid, however, any hin force can be formidable, considering its separate *denial* powers and morale. Fang leaders may well wield magical "Blackflame" weapons.

Type of Unit: Fang
Troop Class: Excellent; BR 150 (BFR 106)
MV: 30 miles/day (12 miles/day afoot, in mountains; 20 miles/day "forced march" in woods or open country)
Weapons: Bows, slings, spears, daggers, shortswords.

Militia

In contrast to most Fangs, a militia unit called up hastily—that is, one led by Clan Elders rather than one that has been formed around experienced Fang personnel as its officers—is typically: a 6th level leader and 4th level deputy ('captain') commanding 40 second level troops, equipped as the Clan can manage. All will have daggers, slings, and some form of shortsword. Bows will be used by 4%, 10% will carry spears, and another 10% will wield pikes. Twenty five such units (these small units are called 'Swords' if formed entirely of clan hin, and 'Shields' if formed around experienced Fang personnel) make up a Regiment. Within the Shires there is rarely time to assemble such large hosts; small, mobile groups are preferred by the hin.

Type of Unit: Militia 'Sword'
Troop Class: Fair; BR 74 (BFR 56)
MV: 24 miles/day (10 miles/day

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afoot, in mountains; 16 miles/day "forced march" in woods or open country)

Weapons: Slings, daggers, varied smallswords; 4% bows, 10% spears, 10% pikes

Type of Unit: Militia 'Shield'

Troop Class: Average; BR 104 (BFR 72)

MV: as 'Sword,' above

Weapons: as 'Sword,' above; Fang warriors use their "2 excellent weapons" usual fighting gear.

Strikers

The 'ready for war' reputation of the Shires, however, comes not from its militia troops or standing army but from its adventurers, the Strikers. To these bands all the bloodthirsty and adventuresome hin go when they are hungry for adventure and battle. If Player Characters plan to stay in or near the Shires and get in a lot of fighting, joining a Striker band is the best way to do it without running afoul of the authorities.

The Strikers are raiders, fierce warriors who delight in reckless butchery and mayhem. They vary wildly in numbers, skill, weaponry, and organization, but make up for any deficiencies with enthusiasm. Strikers mount raids almost continually against the lizard men and monsters of the Malpeggi Swamp, tangle with forces of the Black Eagle Barony in the Barony itself, usually striking boldly at marching troops from ambush, and conduct an endless series of "slaughters" of the orcs of the mountains. A soldier is on patrol or in a Fang because it's his duty and the right thing to do; a Striker is swinging a blade at an orc's head on some nameless mountain-side because it is what he wants.

Strikers are 'pirates of the land' who never prey on the Shires or legitimate trade overland near Riverfork Keep or Mar but raise bloody ruin everywhere else along the borders of the Shires whenever foes of the Shires stir.

Strikers are nominally outlaws, operat-

ing without the sanction and against the will of the lawful government of the Council of Sheriffs as complaining ambassadors will sorrowfully be told. In fact, the Sheriffs encourage, and in secret even limitedly direct, the Strikers actions. They consider Striker activities necessary for surrounding peoples and realms to respect the halflings and not to try to seize the verdant Shires simply because "no one there will even know one end of a sword from the other until it's too late."

Strikers are not above 'borrowing' occasional food and gear, but never molest staunch allies of the hin, such as travelers and merchants of Darokin and Alfheim.

Type of Unit: Striker Band

Troop Class: Good; BR 82 to Elite; BR 166 (usually "Good;" high likelihood of powerful Masters, Knight-Heroes, and 'maverick' non-hin magic users, with spells and magical weapons and items)

MV: 30 miles/day (10 miles/day afoot, in mountains; 18 miles/day "forced march" in woods or open country)

Weapons: Anything (majority will have bows or slings, and above average weapons)

Present Hin Leaders

The most experienced Fang leaders in the Shires at present are Hulborth Bloodyaxe Treeshadow in Highshire, and Dundol Xebel in Southshire.

Hulborth: 8th level, 375,000 XP (Attack Rank B; automatically takes 1/2 damage from any damage-causing spell or spell like effect), In 17, Wi 17, Co 18, Ch 16, has both *Armor* and a *Sword of Blackflame*.

Dundol: 8th level, 212,000 XP (Attack Rank A), St 17, In 16, Wi 18, Ch 16, wears *Armor of Blackflame*.

Strikers famous at present are Phassra Bloodyhands Fernshiver, who rarely brings her band down out of the Black Spires, and Black Bungo Gullybuck, a veteran active in the Cruth lowlands and

the mountains north of them along the Karameikan border.

DMs should devise statistics, magical items or allies, and band strengths for these and other Striker leaders in accordance with PC actions in individual campaigns.

The Navy of the Shires

The Shires has a small but vigilant navy. If there were no hin pirates, the navy would be too small to maintain the halfling claim to the Shirecoast waters. The hin navy is far too small to wage any aggressive naval warfare against any other nation, but as a defensive force, given the stormy, rock-studded waters and the hin pirates, it is adequate. Naval ports are Shireton itself, Shireton Port, Thantabbar, Tothmeer, and Rollstone Keep.

Commanded by experienced captains and crews loyal to the Sheriffs, the hin navy consists of 2 war galleys, 4 very old large galleys, 2 small galleys, and 12 small sailing ships. Another dozen or so old, battered sailing ships can be commandeered or hauled out of beached retirement in wartime, but no new ships are presently being built.

The war galleys each have a ship value of 10, and move 6 hexes (4-4 when damaged per round) when one uses the system introduced in *The Kingdom of Ierendi Gazetteer*. Each hex is 100 yards across.

The war galleys are equipped with rams and modern, top-of-the-line artillery. They are *The Hinwrath* and *The Pride of the Shires*, and they are usually at port: one in Thantabbar and one in Tothmeer, sailing only in response to clear threats.

The old large galleys have a ship value of 5 each, and move 6 hexes (2-3 when damaged). Their clumsiness and lack of hull armor is compensated for by loading them with catapults and ballistae. They are *The Tempest*, *The Shiresword*, *The Hin Storm* and *The Steel Wind*.

The small galleys are the *Barracuda* and the *Swordfish*. They have a ship value of 7, and move 7 hexes (3-4 when damaged).



Five of the small sailing ships have ship values of 4 (2 when damaged), and seven have ship values of 3 (1 when damaged). All move seven hexes (4 when damaged). The 4-7s are the *Sea Lion*, the *Shire Dragon*, the *Hin Trident*, the *Deep Serpent* and the *Black Shark*. The 3-7s are the *Dagger Octopus*, the *Scorpion Crab*, the *Toth Arrow*, the *Shireton Sword*, the *Shireshield*, the *Wave Striker*, and the *Flame Sword*.

Hin navy ships are known for their fearless seamanship in storms and their devastating archery, but the navy as a whole is laughably small in both ship size and numbers.

Relations With Specific Nations and Peoples

Darokin: Friendly trading relations exist between the Shires and Darokin. Goods pass between the two lands in a steady stream overland through Mar or by ship via the port of Athenos. Raw metals and food are exported by the Shires and finished goods, primarily cloth and fine

smithy-work, come from Darokin. No tariffs exist on such trade and halflings are welcome in Darokin just as humans of Darokin are welcome in the Shires.

Karameikos: Relations between the Shires and the Grand Duchy are close but somewhat strained. Hin grow weary of the constant attacks and trade disruptions of the Black Eagle Barony and expect Duke Stefan to do something about it. They are in a position to be heard, too, because the Grand Duchy can get food and metals from the Shires far more easily and cheaply than from its own interior areas and as the population of Karameikos grows, the food exported by the Shires will become increasingly important.

No open trade occurs between the Shires and the Black Eagle Barony, but seagoing merchants of both lands seem to encounter each other with surprising frequency on Harborlee Rock and on land near Riverfork Keep. Ships leave Shireton Port, Thantabbar, and Tothmeer almost daily for the coastal cities of eastern Karameikos. In terms of volume, Karameikos

is the chief trading partner of the Shires, narrowly topping Darokin.

Alfheim: Elves are welcome in the Shires, as halflings are welcome in Alfheim, but direct trade between the two nations is light. Much food and metal from the Shires finds its way to Alfheim by way of Darokin. Halfling and elven caravans are rarer than those of enterprising human merchants of other lands who act as 'go-betweens' to connect the Shires and Alfheim.

Ierendi: Traditionally good friends, the Shires and the Kingdom of Ierendi are naval neighbors who trade with each other heavily. The Ierendi bring the goods of far-off lands to the Shires in return for needed food, metal, and ship timbers. Individuals of both nations feud with individuals of the other land, particularly those who carry on piracy, but hin pirates rarely attack a ship known to be Ierendi.

Minrothad Guilds: Little direct contact occurs between the Shires and the Guilds; many goods change hands between the two lands via Karameikos and Ierendi. Relations are cordial but dis-

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tant; currently, several of the Sheriffs suspect certain Minrothad merchants who travel often in the Shires of spying for the Black Eagle Barony and Thyatis. For this reason, covert surveillance of Minrothad citizens in the Shires is maintained.

Guild merchants who reach the Shires regularly are among the most energetic, enterprising humans, and often employ human adventurers as guards and agents. **Glantri:** Citizens of Glantri are considered dangerous. This is not because they are often aggressively hostile when traveling in the Shires, but because they are known to use halflings in strange magical experiments. Most hin will be wary of anyone wielding strong magic.

Except for Glantrian elves, any known native of Glantri will be assumed to have awesome and possibly evil magical powers by a halfling in the Shires.

For a Glantrian, halfling trust must be earned by aiding hin with one's magic or dwelling amicably and peacefully in the Shires for a long time. This trust can be lost in an instant if one is suspected of treachery. Hin still tell vivid tales of cages of naked hin being flown by magic to Glantri, escorted by cruel mages armed with wands, who were riding horrible flying dragons or mechanical bird-things animated by magic.

Thyatis: There is little direct contact between the Empire and the Shires. Thyatians are viewed with suspicion; they are considered essentially decadent and dishonest. The long-ago Thyatian seizure of halfling ships and ports in what is now Ierendi is not forgotten. Thyatian merchants and ambassadors have often treated halflings as simpletons, cute little children who can be obviously duped and manipulated. Hin usually play along when so treated and have thereby discovered facile Thyatian treachery on several occasions, so the word of a Thyatian is considered false until proven otherwise. Hin naturally resent being considered no better than talking animals and so relations with Thyatis are not cordial.

Rockhome: Relations are cordial but distant between dwarves and halflings. Hin generally consider dwarves as decent, fair, and intelligent creatures who work hard

but who are incurably greedy when it comes to great mineral wealth. When they come to the Shires, dwarves regrettably cannot be trusted.

Dwarves who trade in the Shires are always suspected (probably correctly, in most cases) of being spies gathering information for a future attempt to regain control of The Glittering Land (the Shires)—or at least the mines of the Black Spires—once again.

Loktal Ironshield may have left the Shires nearly two thousand years ago, but hin do not forget. A dwarf who incurs the wrath of a hin can expect to be called "son of Loktal," or "kin to Loktal," and it is not meant as a compliment.

Dwarves who visit the Shires will be quietly watched and trusted only slowly. However, outside the Shires, halflings regard dwarves (and gnomes) as decent folk who are essentially trustworthy so long as one avoids any deals or activities involving gems or precious metals of any sort.

Emirates of Ylaruam: No direct trade occurs between the Shires and the desert folk. The hin think of them as harsh, warlike men who would be more welcome if they weren't so intolerant of those with other religious beliefs and didn't regard halflings quite so obviously as cute, precocious children. Most hin think that to treat someone else with condescension when one's own society has accomplished so little and often behaves so cruelly is the mark of a madman.

Religious intolerance, or any strong reliance on beliefs and tenets of faith instead of personal responsibility, thought, and decisions are also insane tendencies. Therefore, hin who meet natives of the Emirates are polite but wary. When one is dealing with someone who might not be sane, it is best not to provoke them or to let one's guard down for an instant.

Ethengar Khanate: Halflings of the Shires think of Ethengarians in much the same way as they regard Ylari; dangerous to be around. If one needn't associate with such folk, it is foolish to do so. No direct trade occurs between the Shires and the Khanate.

Alphatia: Little direct or diplomatic contact occurs between the Shires and the Alphatians, whom hin regard as far-off people who will never come here and if their decadence and magic make them anything like Glantrians, that's just fine. Agents and spies of Alphatia do visit the Shires, often, to keep tabs on the source of so many raw materials and the adopted home of many individual mages of power who have found conditions elsewhere oppressive or less than ideal.

Certain wizards of Alphatia are extremely interested in the mysterious *blackflame* and in discovering all they can about it. By means of several layers of go-betweens and hired know-nothing agents, such as merchants or adventurers traveling to the Shires for other reasons, they continually try to acquire samples of *blackflame* for experimental magical purposes.

Vestland, Soderfjord, and Ostland: Little or no diplomatic contact occurs between the Shires and these remote nations, although seafarers of both regard each other with respect and even affection. Both consider the others as blunt, honest, decent folk who fight when they must and make their own ways in the world and work hard—unlike subtler, more dishonest folk, and those who rely too heavily on magic or religion.

Atruaghin Clans, other lands not listed: No direct contact occurs between the Shires and these places except via hin pirates or hin on yallara. Hin who are not pirates or recent yallaren and who reside in the Shires will be curious about such places but will have no set opinions about them or their customs and doings. Older hin may have heard of such lands, and even traveled there as may individual hin pirates or yallaren, but the Shires hold no easily-accessible useful information on any of them, nor care overmuch.

Humanoids: Creatures of these races will be regarded with open hostility. Orcs will be attacked without hesitation unless a good reason not to exists. Any halfling fear of humanoids will never be stronger than their hatred and revulsion.

The Calendar

For trade convenience, the calendar of the Shires is in step with that of the neighboring Grand Duchy of Karameikos. It can be easily compared to the calendar in the Grand Duchy's Gazetteer as follows:

	Karameikan Month	Shires Month
<i>Winter</i>	Nuwmont	Clabbas
	Vatermont	Vuuldiir
	Thaumont	Maehin
<i>Spring</i>	Flaurmont	Odelin
	Yarthmont	Gondulrim
	Klarmont	Mithintle
<i>Summer</i>	Felmont	Goldaun
	Fyrmont	Fyrtal
	Aumbyr	Aumbyr
<i>Fall</i>	Sviftmont	Ssantiir
	Eirmont	Tembiir
	Kaldmont	Dauntil

Days of Splendor

Hin call their holidays and celebrations collectively the Days of Splendor because they mark or signify important achievements of the hin of the Shires.

Clabbas 1st: The Wintergifting

Halflings exchange gifts with their closest friends and go out into the snow to find and make a new friend on this day. The gifts are usually small, handmade, useful things such as a new cloak, toy, dagger or winter boots, or a new tool to replace a broken one. It is a day of little or no trade, a day for quiet good cheer, talking the old year over and looking ahead into the new one. The start of the New Year.

Odelin 16th: The Firstflowering Seeds gathered in early autumn are readied for planting or planted (weather permitting). Hin use all the magic and gardening craft at their command to coax some of the plants nurtured indoors throughout the winter into bloom.

Mithintle 22: The Unsheathing On this day, hundreds of years past, the halfling holdings in Ierendi were seized by the Empire of Thyatis. In remembrance of this event, no hin will trade with any Thy-

atian on this day in The Five Shires. All hin go about armed, and drink, and sing piratical songs. A new ship is always launched in Tothmeer on this day though it need not be, and usually is not, a pirate ship.

Contests and trials of arms are held, and first-blood duels are fought to settle feuds and disputes. Old hin tell tales of glories and battles past and old armor is polished bright and worn proudly. It is not a good day to launch any sort of attack upon The Five Shires.

Goldaun 15-28: Highsummer A week of feasting, betrothals, costumed dramas and "balladsing" nights. The Dragging (see below) is performed. Work and trade continues during this week, but in a very relaxed (humans would probably say lackadaisical or lazy) manner. Casks of aged wine are opened in taverns across the Shires, and old cheese is brought out to clan tables.

Fyrtal 1st: The Day of Heroes The tombs and battlefields of famous hin are respectfully visited and strewn with flowers and trophies taken up from the enemies of hin after a battle (usually orc-weapons). The deeds and lives of these Heroes, alive and dead, are retold and sung; it is a day off work, much loved by the young hin.

Aumbyr 1-12: The Fast and the Feast takes place (see below), with much hunting and much revelry. The Open Tables of The Long Feast are an eager attraction for all who can find any excuse to be in the Shires at this time; almost all are welcome. The Fast begins on the first day of fall.

Tembiir 22: The Reaping A great feast and time of slumber, swimming, lazing about and lovemaking. This follows upon the end of the frantic gathering of the harvests for the winter that has dominated the previous months.

Clans take stock of their wealth and make plans for the year ahead. Herds, roads, and homes are prepared for the deep winter to come.

The Dragging Once a year, during Highsummer (the last two weeks of Goldaun), halflings all over the Shires perform a ceremony known as The Dragging. By tradition, all settlements in the Shires must be involved, but the necessary components (a horse or two, a log, ropes, an orc corpse, a hin to guide it) may be singular, or there may be separate ones for each Shire, or even several in each Shire. The hin involved are usually yallaren (working hin can seldom spare the time required).

The orc must be slain by a halfling in single combat. Its corpse is bound to a log. The log is then dragged behind a horse all around the countryside. "Evil calls to evil," the old hin saying goes, and halflings believe that the corpse, of a race that is one of the halflings' oldest enemies, draws into itself all the misfortune, sickness, and hatred in the land.

When the corpse begins to disintegrate ("under the weight of evil," superstitious hin say), it is burned on a rocky height somewhere in the Shires. The locale changes over the years with the varying routes of the Draggings; with the burning of the corpse the Shires are cleansed of the gathering evils.

The Fast and the Feast Once each year at the end of summer (commencing on the first day of Aumbyr), all hin in the Shires fast, drinking only water for six days. During this time only non-hin guests and visitors, the sick, the infirm aged, and infants are fed. Hin cook as though possessed, however, since at the end of the fast, the feast begins.

For six days all within the Shires gorge themselves. Hin and non-hin alike may wander freely and dine anywhere and at as many clan or community tables as they can reach. Except in the most sparsely settled areas, the Open Tables are never in the homes of individual hin, but always in market halls, clan halls, and the like. Inns and taverns are closed during the feasting.

The Sacred Mysteries

Hidden away in the center of every halfling clan stronghold is a *Crucible of Blackflame*, the Sacred Relic of the clan. The D&D® game Companion rulebooks give some details of *Blackflame* (page 31 of the Players booklet, and page 22 of the Dungeon Masters tome). Most of the Sacred Mysteries of the halflings center upon Blackflame's nature, properties, and uses.

All hin know that the relic of their clan is Blackflame and that the life of the flame represents the life of the clan. All know that Blackflame, under the skilled direction of a Keeper, has magical properties. These bare facts are the lowest of the Sacred Mysteries. They are to be kept from non-hin whenever practical. If the clan will be harmed by concealment, or an ally of a clan is harmed aiding clan members and is in need of Blackflame's curative powers, hin will not hesitate to reveal the importance of Blackflame.

Hin avoid speaking of the Sacred Mysteries and usually try to deceive or deny the probings of non-hin. Despite this, many humans, elves and a few beings of other races have been healed or aided by Blackflame over the centuries. Many of these have learned or guessed the form of hin clan Relics. Fewer, however, have guessed the next highest rank of Mysteries: the precise properties of Blackflame—what it is, what it feeds upon, what specific uses it can be put to, how it can be harmed or augmented, and where it is naturally found.

Most hin do not know all of these things. Only a Keeper is fully a master of Blackflame. Witnesses each know fully only a small part of the Sacred Mysteries and a Clanmaster knows all that Blackflame can do, but not all of the hows, and not necessarily anything of the why.

The uppermost rank of the Sacred Mysteries is known fully only to Keepers, Masters, and Sheriffs. Some hin Heroes, Witnesses, and Clanmasters know or guess something of such matters.

Blackflame was originally found in caverns in the depths of the mountains of the Black Spires. Few know that the young halfling maiden who chanced upon Blackflame, Eiira Casplardaun,

found it burning upon amethyst veins in the rocks upon the shores of a subterranean lake—and touched it without harm.

Clan Blackflames

Most clan Keepers keep two or even three "back-up" Blackflames alight in hidden places away from the High Halls of the clan, usually underground. These are for use in the event of damage, theft, or deliberate destruction of the clan's Crucible of Blackflame. Each of these hidden Blackflames is revealed only to one Witness of the clan so that no one but the Keeper knows where they all are.

A halfling Keeper will usually set certain clan Elders, Seniors, and Witnesses to each gather some items—ashes, stones, and the like—each day to feed all of the Blackflame a clan possesses.

All Blackflames usually have a protective container. This is usually spired or spindle-shaped, pierced with air-holes and often has projecting carrying-handles. It is always large and rounded to conceal the shape and nature of the triangular wooden Crucible within. Such a container is used on the rare occasions when Blackflame must be transported outside the Chamber of the Ancestors and is usually of finely-worked wood with a frame of brass, obsidian, or stout, intricately-woven vines for strength and stability. Upon the wooden sides of this outer container are engraved the names of all known clan members, past and current. The underside of the base is engraved with the clan rune. Such a container is not an essential, merely something a successful and long-lived clan will take pride in.

Carrying Blackflame

Blackflame will never "burn" (inflict cold damage equal to the fiery damage of normal flames) those of full halfling blood. Hin, and only hin, are immune to its harmful effects. Hin can carry Blackflame without harm, hurl it (it burns rock, and thus stones alight with Blackflame serve as fiery missiles), and even

absorb Blackflame into their bodies for short periods.

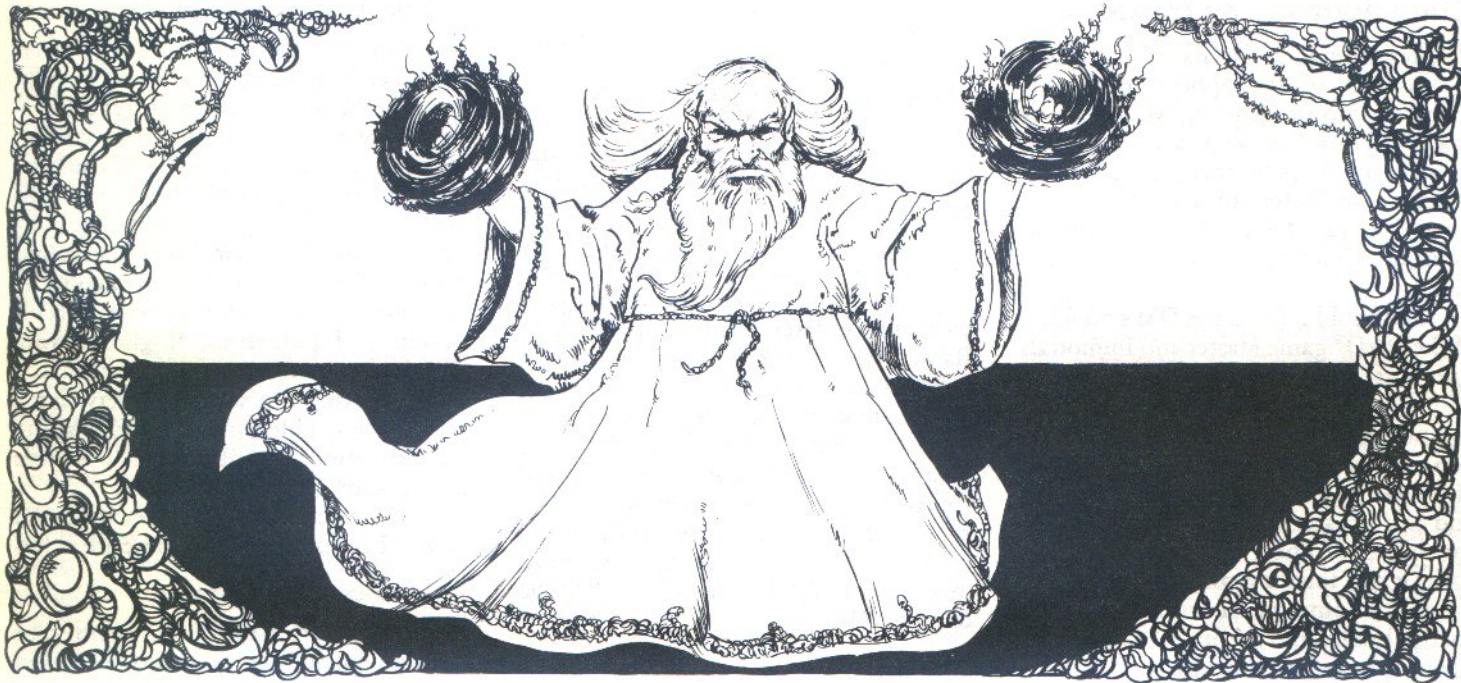
This latter ability is known only to Keepers, a few Masters, and by discovering it the hard way, a few Heroes. Absorption is by touch; a hin may take in any amount of Blackflame in a single round. A halfling containing Blackflame can *feel* it roiling about inside, absorbing 1 hp of his personal energy per turn (or part of a turn). The Blackflame feels chilling but does not hamper movement, spellcasting, or concentration, and it may be expelled later. A hin may vomit forth Blackflame as a rolling gout from the mouth or nose, or by will exude it from hands or arms.

The first sort of expulsion takes only a single round. Once begun it is involuntary and complete: all Blackflame leaves the body. The latter method can be a slower process so that a halfling willing to suffer the necessary internal damage can use his coldly flaming limbs as weapons. Normal weapons will burn if held by the hin at such a time (except for clubs and other wooden weapons).

A gout of Blackflame appears as a cone, 1' wide at the expelling hin and spreading to 20' wide at its furthest extent, which will be 20' to 30' away depending upon the intent and aim of the expelling hin. Its touch will do 4-32 (4d8) points of cold damage to all creatures not immune to such (no saving throws to avoid or halve damage allowed).

Slow expulsion of Blackflame takes 2-8 rounds, and typically scatters the Blackflame into many tiny flames, so it is only used in desperation. A blow from a flaming halfling limb does 3-9 (2d4+1) points of damage in addition to normal physical damage.

Once begun, the rate of expulsion cannot be altered or stopped, even by the death of the hin. The body expels all Blackflame once some part of it begins to leave.



Protecting Blackflame —

Normal heat and flames will diminish or even quench Blackflame. This seldom happens when a Keeper is near, for the Keeper will absorb some Blackflame into his own body to preserve it.

DMs should decide the rate at which Blackflame is so harmed by determining how much power a given Blackflame has when it is attacked.

*A **Large** blackflame (having full 360' effective range) has 72 hit points.

*A **Substantial** blackflame (having a range of 100' to 359') has 60 hit points.

*A **Smallish** Blackflame (having a current range of less than 100') has 48 hit points.

*A single tongue of Blackflame (such as an untended flame in a natural setting, or an almost exhausted clan Blackflame) can be extinguished by dealing it 24 hit points of heat or fiery damage.

Note that Blackflame damage can be cured by cold or ice magics or applications of actual ice or snow. Blackflame requires the presence of gases for combustion but not necessarily breathable air.

Protective Blackflame POWERS —

Blackflames vary in effective range depending upon available fuel and use of their powers, from 360' down to 0' (touch). In addition to the powers described on page 29 of the D&D® game Players Companion rulebook, Blackflame has some unique powers usable by halfling Keepers. Others who know how to command such powers can also use them.

In the event of simultaneous attempts by several beings to make a single Blackflame do different things, the 'home' Keeper will prevail over all other beings. If there is no 'home' Keeper present, the Keeper with the most experience will automatically prevail. If there are no Keepers present, the Witness with the most XP will prevail. If no Witnesses are present, the hin Master with the greatest experience will prevail. Otherwise, the halfling with the greatest experience will command the Blackflame. In all cases, a hin must know how to wield Blackflame

to have any influence over it at all. Only in very rare cases (01% chance per point of intelligence and wisdom over 14) will a hin instinctively know how to work with Blackflame without instruction.

A Keeper within active range of Blackflame is immune to the disabling effects of acute pain, nausea, natural or magical fear, and any form of *charm*, awe, or domination. A Keeper's mind cannot be controlled, influenced, read, stunned, or confused while within active range of Blackflame. Nor can the Keeper be successfully *cursed* or affected by *sleep* magics.

By direct physical contact, a Keeper can extend all such protections to other beings. Up to four creatures can be protected so long as they are continuously touching the Keeper. They may cast spells, hurl missiles, or fight and remain protected so long as contact is maintained. The Keeper need not concentrate to maintain the protection once it is begun, but by act of will can end it instantly without breaking physical contact.

The Highest Hin Mystery —

Very few mortals know that Blackflame is a substance of the Sphere of Energy. Released into the Known World in very few places (usually deep caverns, such as those in the Black Spires mountain range in The Five Shires) by the Hierarchy of Energy, it can be used by individuals aspiring to Immortality by the Path of the Paragon.

DMs should refer to the DM's booklets of the D&D® game Master and Immortals rules sets. Blackflame will aid in a Paragon's Trial by serving as the "impossible" component of the magical item the Paragon aspirant must create. Blackflame can also serve to identify Immortal Identities and artifacts acceptable to an Immortal of the Sphere of Energy. In the presence of such, it will form a glowing nimbus outlining the Immortal or artifact and then change briefly into normal flame as it dissipates harmlessly away into nothingness.

Hin who know this most Sacred Mystery know that Blackflame does these things, but not why. They know that an Immortal or Immortals placed Blackflame in The Five Shires, and that they were chosen to be its guardians to make Blackflame available and yet hidden, denying it to all but the most diligent and worthy seekers. Halflings are suited for this task because of their high natural resistance to magic and their own unlikeliness to seek Immortality through the Path of the Paragon.

"Magic Crafting" —

Who

All Keepers know how to call upon Blackflame to create items. Like other beings who have special knowledge or talents, some do this fairly often or specialize in what they create; others do it seldom. Most Keepers tutor their Witnesses in the making of certain items (usually one per Witness).

Certain Clanmasters, skilled Clan Elders who are smiths, weapon-makers, or gemcutters, and Masters also know how to create magical items by the use of

Blackflame. They do not tend to advertise their abilities; magical items are kept in clan halls and armories.

All Sheriffs are instructed in the process by which magical items are made upon assuming office. In most cases this remains bald theoretical knowledge; Sheriffs are most interested in just who knows how to do it, how long it takes, and where in the Shires new magical items are being made. If any halflings can create magical items without using Blackflame, it has been kept utterly secret. The methods of making *rods* and *arrows of justice* are known to very few hin.

Certain Knight-Heroes or PCs may learn something of how to create magical items through experimentation with Blackflame. For any "magic crafting" to be successful, the hin attempting it must be of at least 8th level and have 700,000 or more XP.

How

The crafting hin must sacrifice time and money in the creation of the physical item, and then enchant it. The enchantment costs time and something of the vitality of both the item's creator and the Blackflame. The Blackflame loses some power, and the halfling loses experience points. Such XP losses may be regained by further adventuring, but are otherwise permanent and are suffered whether or not the crafting process is successful. Few hin create magical items and almost no adventurer-hin have the time to do so unless they retire for a time.

To enchant an item, a hin must physically make it or, failing that, use it for a long time until it becomes familiar. Most hin adorn, modify and customize a found or provided item; familiarity with it is gained in the reworking of it.

After the item is familiar to the hin, it can be enchanted. The DM must judge what quality and type of item will satisfy a particular use. An item need not be gold encrusted with gems to be successfully enchanted, but a comb or toothpick makes a poor battering ram.

Enchantment

For a hin, enchantment is a long, exacting process. It can be interrupted without spoiling the project, but requires concentration and a painful physical contact between the item and the Blackflame through the halfling who holds or touches both to physically link them. The halfling wills the Blackflame to permeate and protect the item and then magically empower it to do or possess certain powers and properties. If glassblowing was done by power of will alone, then a magic-crafting hin would be very like a patient and skilled glassblower, shaping an enchantment in many steps to achieve an intricate and practical result.

Any hin enchantment takes time and power. Expressed as costs, these are as follows.

Time: 1 day for a Base Enchantment, plus 1 additional day per 'plus' and per special property of the item; two days per property if the property duplicates a magical spell or effect of 3rd level or greater. Count bonuses for 'to hit' and damage separately; a weapon that is +1 for both would require 2 days of enchantment for this twofold bonus as well as the Base Enchantment and the time required for any other properties the weapon has.

Example: A +2 dagger that allows the holder to become *invisible* for a limited period and *fly* once every 4 days is also non-reflective (dark and dull) and will not ring or clang when striking metal or stone. The Base Enchantment takes 1 day. Four days are added for the magical bonuses (two for 'to hit' of +2, and two for damage of +2), a day for the *invisibility*, 2 days for the *fly* power, and a day each for the non-reflective and non-metallic-sounding properties, for a total of 10 days.

Experience: Any halfling crafting a magical item loses 3,000 XP per day that the enchantment takes, plus 1,000-6,000 (roll 1d6) additional XP at random. Only one hin may act as a link between Blackflame and the item, and thus only one hin loses experience; the loss cannot be

shared. Such experience, and any levels and accompanying hit points, is lost forever although further adventuring may replace the losses. A hin who loses substantial XP through magic-crafting never loses clan rank unless deliberately stripped of it for unauthorized use or subversion of Blackflame magic.

XP losses occur each day of the enchantment, with the additional random loss on the final day. The enchantment can be left unfinished between days of crafting, for years if need be, but none of the magical powers of the item can be used until the enchantment is complete. A partially *enchanted* item will detect as magical. A hin discovering an item partially *enchanted* by another can complete the process, but must determine exactly what has been done first. This requires secluded, concentrated examination of the item: 1-4 (roll 1d4) days per day of *enchantment* the item has already received. Such examination time may be cut in half (rounding down) if the second hin has been *fully* instructed by the first *enchanter* of the item, either in person or through extensive written notes.

Example: The +2 dagger described above is made by the halfling smith and Knight-Hero Maeredin Greyshanks Longstride. The enchantment takes 10 days, and costs Maeredin 30,000 XP, plus 1,000-6,000 xP. The d6 roll is 4; Maeredin loses 4,000 more XP, for a total of 34,000 XP.

Blackflame: It is this sacred substance that powers an enchantment and renders it permanent without the use of a *permanence* spell like that employed by human wizards in the making of magical items. Every enchantment requires some drain of the essence of a Blackflame as well as an XP loss for the hin involved. Each day of the *enchanting* process requires the presence of Blackflame, and reduces the range of the Blackflame's radiated force by 10 feet per day of enchantment. If the Blackflame's powers are deliberately used for some other purpose during a 24-hour period, the effects of that day's *enchantment* are lost. Blackflame drain and XP loss will still occur. Blackflame reduced to

a range of 0' by magic-crafting will cease to exist; if a given day's drain would reduce a Blackflame to a negative range, that day's *enchantment* will fail.

Hin Magical Items

The high costs, uncertainty, and secrecy of magic-crafting make it a rare activity. Few hin, unless of very high experience levels, care to face the costs of experimentation. As a result, the magical items that halflings do create tend to be of certain standard types. Most hin clans create one or two magical items per year, perhaps four a year in dark and dangerous times. Such items are kept in the High Halls of the clan in the care of the Keeper and Witnesses. They are loaned to Knight-Heroes and other chosen clan members to aid in accomplishing specific perilous tasks or duties. The clanmaster usually owns and bears a *Sword of Blackflame*. Individuals who gain such items while adventuring are usually permitted to keep them; but outside their own clan territories they may face a lot of questions and close watching if they openly bear or use such items.

Rumors persist in the Shires of other, rarer magical items constructed in secrecy in the darkest depths of the woods and in deep caverns in the Black Spires. Old hin whisper of pirate ships that can fly, rods that can blast stone into nothingness, and walls that walk. DMs are advised to consider carefully the effects on campaign play of PCs gaining control of such powerful magic. It is likely that the Shires would use such items militarily if they were reliable and fairly safe to use. No sign or history of such use is apparent. It is recommended that any items of such power that PCs encounter be experimental and highly dangerous or random in their effects.

The more common sorts of halfling magic items are *Armor of Blackflame*, *Cloaks of Blackflame*, *Blackslings*, and *Swords and Daggers of Blackflame*.

Armor of Blackflame: Construction Cost 200,000 gp/Enchantment Time 10 days/XP cost 31,000-36,000 XP

This is the rarest and most special of hin magical items. It can be worn by any single being of halfling size or smaller, but cannot be worn over normal or magical armor, bulky backpacks or the like. It appears as a rigid but weightless suit of full plate armor of shimmering black hue when empty.

When donned, it becomes a vague, shifting aura of darkness rather than a solid garment. It confers no armor class protection, cannot be harmed and does not stop physical attacks. It does not encumber or blind its wearer, may be worn by any class, and its darkness conceals the features of the wearer even against magical scrutiny.

Armor of Blackflame can be worn as long as desired and breathed through freely. It cannot be removed unless the wearer does not resist, and can only be destroyed by a *disintegrate* spell, *wish* spell, or the touch of a *rod of cancellation* (no saving throw). If destroyed, the *Armor* will dissipate utterly; it cannot be repaired or magically restored.

Armor of Blackflame protects its wearer at all times from all natural and magical heat, flame, cold, and explosive attacks. A blast might hurl a wearer of *Armor of Blackflame* end over end, but no damage would be suffered. The *Armor's* weightlessness and total lack of encumbrance allows the wearer to swim, climb, and perform delicate manual tasks normally.

Cloak of Blackflame: 100,000 gp/6 days/19,000—24,000 XP

This magical cloak resembles a tangle of thick black cobwebs or black silk scraps when not worn. When examined, it will be revealed as an intact off-the-shoulder half-cloak. When donned it fastens by itself and alters to fit any wearer of up to giant size. Usable by beings of any race or class, it can be freely removed and worn as long as desired. Only one creature can wear and be protected by such a *cloak* at a time.

A *Cloak of Blackflame* makes its wearer immune to all energy level-draining attacks, whether they actually strike the garment or not. The wearer is also ren-

The Sacred Mysteries

dered immune to all attacks or effects that would ordinarily cause paralysis even in situations where no saving throw is usually allowed. Although such a *cloak* does not make its wearer invisible, it does foil infravision by shielding its wearer's infrared aura.

Cold attacks do not affect a *Cloak of Blackflame*, but all other sorts of attacks will affect it normally. A damaged *cloak* will confer full protection until it disintegrates utterly into smoky wisps of vapor. This occurs when a *cloak* suffers 14 hit points of damage. Damaged *cloaks* can be repaired by a Keeper or other skilled hin using Blackflame. A day's enchantment (at normal XP and 'flame-drain' costs) will restore 5-8 (1d4+4) lost points to a *cloak*; no physical repairs, and thus no gold piece expenditure, are necessary.

Blacksling: 90,000 gp/7 days/22,000-27,000 XP

This rare and powerful weapon appears as a light, wispy black sling, easily concealed amid or beneath clothing. Operating as a +3 'to hit' sling (no damage bonus), these devices feel slippery and slithery. They are hard to snatch or steal (add 2 points to all ability checks involved), and cannot be used to tie things or creatures.

Use of a *Blacksling* enables non-magical projectiles to strike targets that can normally be hit only by magical weapons. The sling's 'to hit' bonus is added to any bonus possessed by magical projectiles.

A *Blacksling* has an attached extra-dimensional space accessible only within the active radius of Blackflame. This 'arsenal' can hold up to 1d10+10 objects of any sort. The objects are restricted to a maximum size (each) of a halfling's fist. Nothing can be added to the arsenal, which is attached to the central 'cup' of the sling, except in the presence of Blackflame. Missiles and other objects placed in the arsenal, such as keys, coins, or gems, can be called out of the arsenal at any time by grasping the sling and whispering a secret command word. A maximum of 1 object will appear from the arsenal per round, into the center of the

sling. Objects appearing will be chosen randomly from the arsenal's contents; the wielder of the sling cannot choose to have a key appear out of an arsenal full of sling stones, except by luck.

Objects in a *Blacksling's* arsenal cannot be reached, detected by, or harmed by others. Physical destruction of the sling will cause the loss of the arsenal of objects onto another random plane. A *Blacksling* saves vs. fire and magical attacks at +3, and can suffer 14 hp of physical damage before being destroyed.

Many hin have devised glass globes filled with powder to irritate, blind, or mark targets. Globes are also often filled with oil or smoke-powders. Objects in a *Blacksling's* arsenal cannot be struck or otherwise broken, damaged, or stolen.

Sword of Blackflame: 275,000 gp/12 days/37,000-41,000 XP

Certain slim, rapier-like shortswords borne by hin are in reality *Swords of Blackflame*. These precious and powerful weapons can be identified by the appearance of their blades: shimmering, ever-shifting glossy black in hue, with white bubbles and cloudy mottlings within the metal that move about constantly. In shadows, darkness, and near-darkness such blades become *invisible*. They are undetectable by infravision and magic-detecting abilities and magics at all times.

A *Sword of Blackflame* is a +4 weapon. By mental command, anyone holding a drawn *Sword of Blackflame* can bring magical *silence* into being in a 20'-radius area centered on the blade's hilt. Such *silence* can be instantly ended by will of the wielder at any time, and can last for up to six continuous rounds. Up to four periods of *silence* can be created by a *Sword of Blackflame* in an hour. All creatures within the area of effect will be *silenced* with no saving throw allowed, including the blade-wielder.

A *Sword of Blackflame* can also *reflect* back at its origin one magical attack per round (additional attacks in a single round will have normal effects). This ability is automatic and will work only once per hour. This power affects spells,

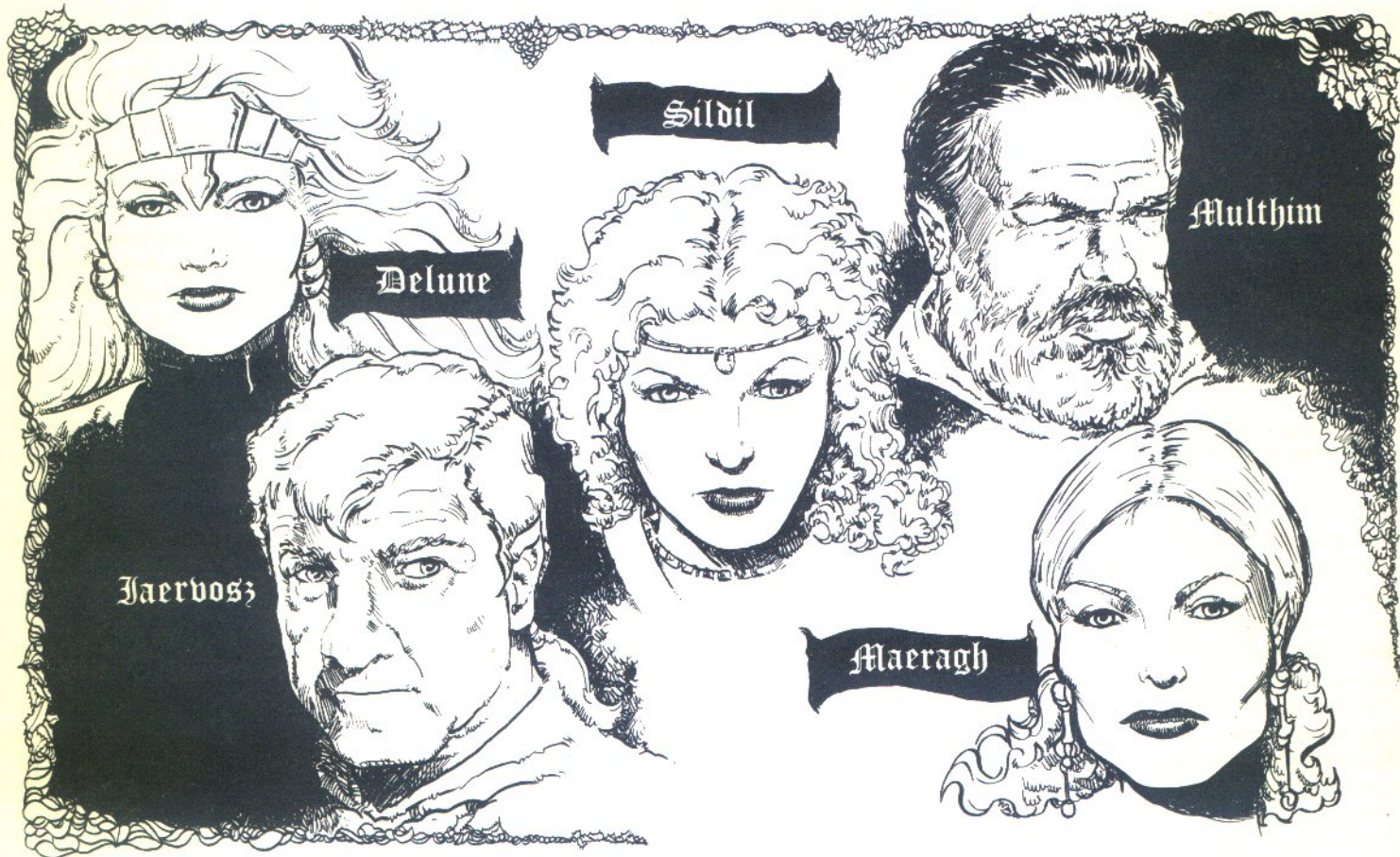
spell-like natural powers, and the effects of magical items. The *sword* will suck all of an area-effect magic (such as a *fire ball*) into itself, so that the attack does no damage to any creature within the area of effect. The attack will cast back in full upon its source in the following round. This *reflection* can be escaped only by leaving the plane the *sword* is on, in which case the *sword* will pulse to tell its bearer that this has occurred. The bearer can then discharge the magic wherever desired, with range and effects as originally cast or unleashed. This is the only case in which the blade-bearer can choose where to direct magic that the blade *reflects*. If no discharge is willed within the round, the *sword* will forever absorb the magic, silently and harmlessly.

Dagger of Blackflame: 175,000 gp/7 days/22,000-27,000 XP

This normal-appearing dagger has powers quite different from a *Sword of Blackflame*. It is a +2 dagger that can extinguish all flames it touches, affecting a 10'-radius spherical area per round. Flames caused by a continuing process, such as a lava flow, will reignite 6-11 (1d6+5) rounds after the *dagger's* touch. This automatic power will occur whenever an unsheathed *Dagger of Blackflame* comes into contact with flames.

The *dagger's* flame-quenching power allows safe passage through flames. Note that blast effects, intense heat, and hazards such as falling timbers can still harm creatures using the protection of such a weapon to pass through a burning building. Once every turn any absorbed flames can be released as a spurt of flames extending in a line up to 40' long from the *dagger's* tip, by the wielder's use of a command word. All absorbed fire will be released at once; none can be saved for later. If the release of fire is unleashed as part of a physical attack, all flames will strike the target (add to physical damage) and will not spurt beyond it. DMs should estimate the fiery damage absorbed (and released) as 1d6 per round of normal fire 10'-radius absorption, and 2d6 per round of magical fire absorption.

Halflings, Heroes and Highwayhin



The characters included here are for the DM's eyes only. PCs should discover the information herein only during the course of play. The DM should feel free to alter and 'flesh out' the details of characters given here to best suit the needs of ongoing play. The following abbreviations are used in the character listings:

F = Fighter
 T = Thief
 C = Cleric
 M = Magic-User
 St = Strength
 In = Intelligence
 Wi = Wisdom
 Dx = Dexterity
 Co = Constitution

Ch = Charisma
 H = Halfling
 E = Elf
 D = Dwarf
 m = male
 f = female
 AL = Alignment
 N = Neutral

Sheriffs

JAERVOSZ Dustyboots, Sheriff of Seashire (mH8, St 15, In 17, Wi 18, Dx 14, Co 16, Ch 15, AL Lawful)

A warrior of great reputation, Jaervosz is the longest-serving of the current Sheriffs. Famous for his skill with thrown hand-axes, Jaervosz serves as acting head

of the armies of the Shires. He spends much of his time riding about the Shires, noting weaknesses and repairs that need seeing to and inspecting the readiness of the hin military. Jaervosz has cleverly kept the soldiery of the Shires busy and alert by a succession of missions and training exercises during peacetime. He believes that fighting hin should know all areas of the Shires and be used to traveling about quickly and easily. Jaervosz is grey-haired, expressionless, and has strange butter-colored eyes that gleam golden when he is angry. He has iron self-control and is always alert for treachery and deceit.

MULTHIM Greybeard, Sheriff of Highshire (mH8, St 13, In 16, Wi 18, Dx 15, Co 14, Ch 14, AL Lawful)

Halflings, Heroes and Highwayhin

Eldest of the current Sheriffs, Multhim has charge of the security and development of mines and deep places. He is bearded (rare for a hin), dignified, and very shrewd. Carefully guarding the mines with side-tunnels, guardposts, and lookouts, Multhim has developed a strong hatred for orcs and monsters of the mountain deeps. He has also come to admire things of precious metal and gemstones and to understand the lust for such things that governs many a dwarf. Multhim is stout, soft-spoken, and wears many rings, one of which is a *ring of flying*. Despite his age, his hair is jet-black of hue.

MAERAGH Littlelaughs, Sheriff of Eastshire (fH8, St 12, In 17, Wi 16, Dx 17, Co 13, Ch 15, AL Lawful)

The stern and stone-faced Maeragh serves as chief justiciar of the Shires. Her judgements tend to be fair but severe. She hides her gentle humor behind measured words and drab clothing and manners. Maeragh is an archer of deadly accuracy (+2 to hit), who specializes in fighting in twilight by hearing and peering at where half-hidden foes must be. She loves the Shires deeply and intends to preserve its pastoral beauty at all costs. If hin must become pirates or fierce warriors to prevent invasion of the Shires, so be it. Maeragh will be ready and watchful. Non-hin visitors to the Shires who do not respect the peace of the Shires must be punished swiftly and surely as a deterrent to others.

DELUNE Darkeyes, Sheriff of Heartshire (fh8, St 13, In 16, Wi 15, Dx 17, Co 14, Ch 17, AL Lawful)

The beautiful, slim and graceful Sheriff of Heartshire is the youngest of the current Sheriffs. Much admired by male hin all over the Shires, Delune conceals a spirit of iron and fire beneath her gently demure manner. More rarely, a mischievous sense of humor is revealed to her fellow Sheriffs. Delune's chief interest is the maintenance of roads and replanting of forests within the Shires. She rides about the Shires tirelessly replanting and tending and has even been known to work knee-deep in a muddy stretch of road shifting stones with a pry-bar, a sight that

shamed local hin to frenzied road-work around her. Delune is never happy unless she is working, aiding, and serving, but she is thankfully free of any tendency to dictate how others should act. Delune has a clear, bell-like singing voice and can often be heard singing as she rides along the roads.

SILDIL Seaeyes, Sheriff of Southshire (fH8, St 15, In 17, Wi 16, Dx 16, Co 16, Ch 15, AL Lawful)

The curly-haired, fiery-tempered and tireless Sheriff of Southshire takes primary responsibility for the naval operations of the Shires. The navy, seacoast security and patrols, and a special watch over smuggling and piracy occupy more time than life allows her. Although she rarely sets foot on a deck, Sildil is constantly inspecting the navy and harbors of the Shires. She is spirited and fearless and has already directed the navy in several operations against Karameikan raiders sent by Baron von Hendriks. Jaervosz considers Sildil his successor as war-leader of the Shires; she is already a strong-spirited and energetic Sheriff.

Ambassadors

Donthiir, Lord Brin: (mF4, St 16, In 16, Wi 14, Dx 14, Co 12, Ch 15, AL N—Lord Ambassador of Darokin)

Lord Donthiir is a kindly, friendly man of easy good manners and warm, jovial dealings. He was chosen as Darokin's representative in the Shires because he is a shrewder judge of character than one might believe at first and because he genuinely enjoys the company of halflings. He delights in collecting colorful hin stories and one-liners to inflict on visiting countrymen and others.

Darokin is very friendly with the Shires and wishes to keep things that way. The hin are trustworthy, generous allies who share Darokin's love of freedom and democracy, and provide much food and metal that Darokin would have to pay far more dearly to pry from other sources.

Donthiir would be horrified by any suggestion that he betray or harm the Shires. If such a suggestion did not come from his superiors, he would immedi-

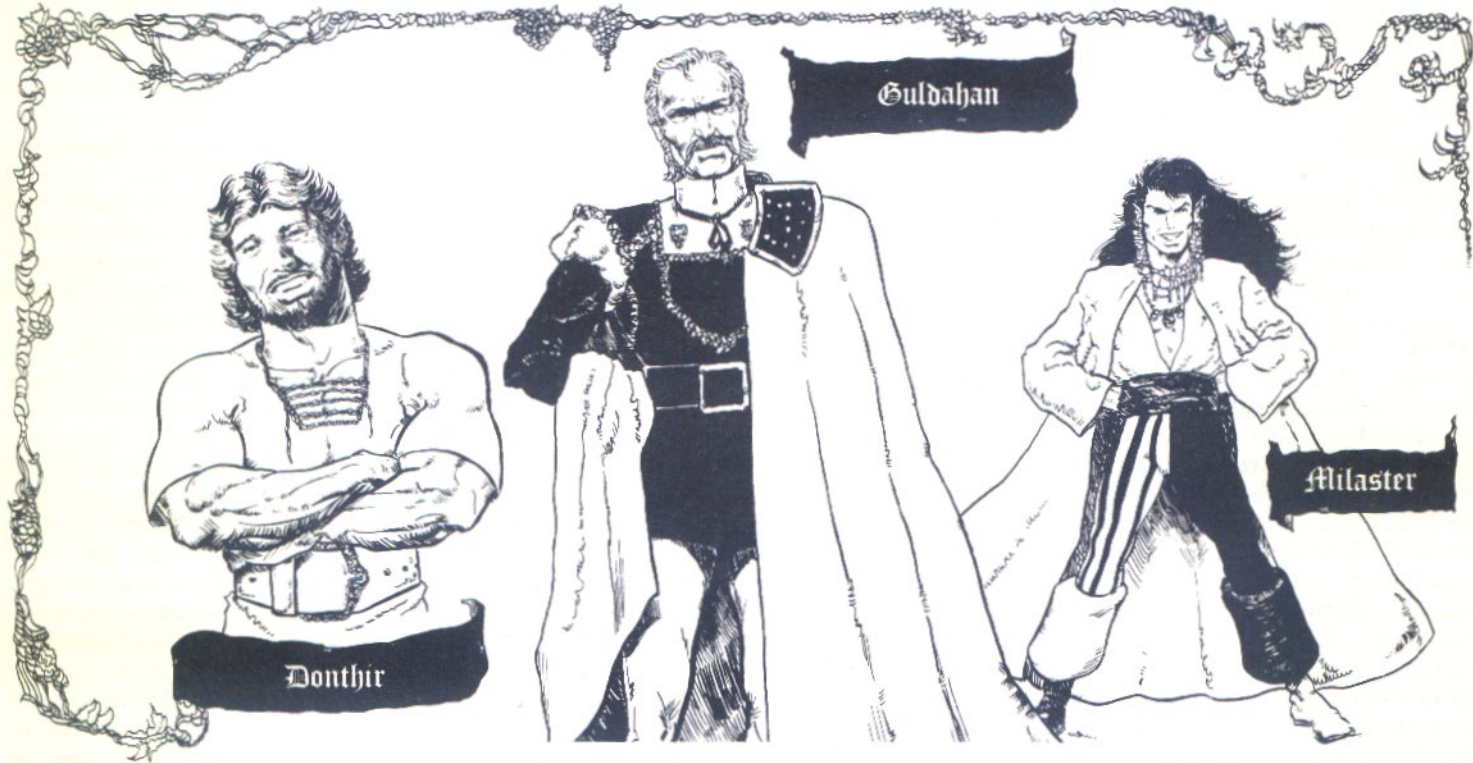
ately reveal it and the identity of the betrayer to the Sheriffs, as he has done several times in the past. Donthiir does not bother to maintain any agents in the Shires, preferring to gather information for himself. If he wants to know something relatively secret, he merely asks, knowing he will be freely told all that he could ever hope to uncover by means of spies. Donthiir spends the money given him by Darokin for cloak-and-dagger work on procuring rare imported wines to please his hin hosts when he goes to their parties.

The halflings like Donthiir very much and have quietly told him that if he ever runs into troubles at home, he is welcome as a citizen of the Shires, perhaps even as its representative in Shireton to meet with the ambassadors of other lands. The halflings wish more men—and particularly, more ambassadors—were like Donthiir; the Shires would be the better for it.

Appearance: Donthiir is burly, broad-shouldered, and of middle years. He has curly brown hair, which he wears short, with a close-trimmed beard. He wears no more jewelry than a few finger rings and prefers comfort to pomp in his dress, wearing fine cloaks and mantles over comfortable leather breeches and broad-laced tunics, and not caring overmuch if he gets food or wine spilled on them. He has a ready smile, a deep chuckle, and a sly wink and tries to conceal the fact that he's a very kindly romantic, easily moved to tears.

Cordelius, Sir Guldahan: (mF4, St 14, In 15, Wi 12, Dx 13, Co 14, Ch 14, AL N—Lord Ambassador of Karameikos)

Guldahan is a Thyatian follower of Duke Stefan Karameikos, and cousin to Bartran Cordelius, Minister of Trade for Karameikos. Guldahan is a solid, non-nonsense man who has been posted to the Shires to ensure that Karameikos will always be able to get all the food and metals it needs from the 'little folk,' and that the Shires will continue, despite its established merchant trade through Ierendi and elsewhere, to get many luxury items from lands east and south of the Grand Duchy through Karameikos at



prices just a shade higher than they should be.

Guldahan is not a bad-hearted sort, but he is neither subtle nor jolly; he likes parties but can't quite accept halflings as more than bright, noisy children, and the hin know it.

Recently Guldahan has been under pressure from the halflings to get Duke Stefan to deal with the aggressions of Baron von Hendriks. The Black Eagle Barony is a tricky problem that the Duke wants to solve in his own way and in his own time to lessen chances of things going wrong (such as a possible Traladaran uprising) when a confrontation comes. Guldahan has instructions to be polite and to assure the hin that steps are being taken and eventually the job will get done; in other words, to stall and try to avoid any halfling moves to cut off trade supplies unless something is done.

Guldahan is not stupid and has realized that he will cut more ice with his hosts if he joins in the parties of Shireton with less stiff humor and is friendlier to the halfling ladies. He's working at it,

but he can't yet hide his awkwardness at dancing, especially dancing with ladies less than three feet tall. Guldahan envies the easy camaraderie of Lord Donthiir of Darokin, but may never be able to match it. He feels no obligation nor particular friendship to halflings or the Shires and rather wishes his posting would end.

Appearance: Guldahan is a tall, weathered man with long sideburns and a wispy moustache. He is balding quickly, and his brown hair and pale blue eyes give him a rather washed-out appearance that his correct and dignified Karameikan finery only accentuate.

Guldahan is never less than richly dressed but is usually stiff and awkward, relaxing only when matters of trade and commerce are being discussed. He is a soldier at heart and would be more comfortable in plain leathers, but will never allow himself this relaxation. Most hin who take the trouble to get to know him feel sorry for him.

Milaster, Sire: (mE8, St 10, In 17, Wi 11, Dx 15, Co 11, Ch 16, AL N—Lord

Ambassador of Alheim)

Milaster is honest and open with smooth good manners and a ready smile. He has nothing to hide and enjoys the relaxed hospitality of the halflings of Shireton. Merry and kindly toward young hin, Milaster loves parties and the company of young hin ladies who are much smitten with his charm and good looks. Milaster has had a grand time in the Shires, aside from one uncomfortable interview with the Sheriffs Maeragh and Sildil who bluntly told him to behave himself among the young lady hin unless he had honorable intentions. He is afraid his superiors will realize that he really hasn't a lot to do here and will either give him a lot to do or recall him.

Milaster entertains himself by trying to learn all he can about Blackflame and the magic of the Shires, in a desultory, easy-going way that won't (he hopes) arouse any anger or consternation on the part of his halfling hosts. He has more personal magic than he lets anyone in the Shires know about (although some have their suspicions) and it takes care of any spying

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he feels necessary.

Milaster is young and rather bored and will be party to innocent fun, but he is neither foolish nor unperceptive and doesn't want to do anything that will upset or harm the Shires very much, particularly if it will mean his return to Alfheim where there might well be work waiting for him in between the parties and the gentle nights with elven maidens.

Appearance: Milaster is young, slim, and agile. He wears his dark hair long and flowing. He is clean-shaven and wears a lot of jewelry, particularly earrings. Milaster wears loose, flowing robes open down the chest to cummerbund-level, or tight dark breeches with dashing high boots and flowing, wide-sleeved open shirts. He is darkly handsome, and knows it. He has a ready, light laugh and a soft, husky voice that sends shivers down the spine of many a young hin maiden.

Milaster is always quick to join in dances or games; if his robes get in the way and they can be removed without offending anyone, off they will come in a trice to reveal some dark and daring costume beneath. Milaster takes mirth at his own expense with merry good grace and is generally respected—in a chuckling, head-shaking sort of way by most hin who know him.

Barburgh, Leethila: (fF5, St 12, In 13, Wi 13, Dx 14, Co 15, Ch 15, AL N—Ambassador of Ierendi)

The halflings love this slim, blonde, oft-nervous former adventuress and always address her as "Lady." Leethila was a competent merchant captain of Ierendi of Thyatian descent and hence not close to any of the powerful families of Ierendi. She was crippled some years ago when the mast of her small coastal runner broke in a storm and fell on her, crushing her left leg very close to her pelvis and ending her naval career and very nearly her life.

Leethila was a long time mending and still walks with a severe limp. Gaunt from almost a year in bed, Leethila has stayed that way despite the good and abundant food that has come her way since she was sent to this "safe" ambassadorial posting

by a kindly acquaintance highly placed in Ierendi.

Leethila was at first very bitter at her misfortune, but she has since fallen in love with the Shires and the kindly halfling folk who are quick to include her in outings and dances as well as parties. Even the elven ambassador, Milaster, gallantly squires her through the intricate steps of a dance she can now do no more than shuffle through. If Leethila sometimes drinks more than she should and falls very silent until her small and deferential staff help her home, the hin turn a blind eye and are warmly friendly upon her waking. Leethila is well-liked by the "ladies" that the hin pirates have retired ashore, who regard her as a kindred spirit. She is good-natured, sensible, and polite, which is all she needs to serve as a good ambassador for Ierendi in the friendly Shires. The halflings value Leethila's quiet kindness and honesty more than flashy good looks or flowery manners—and hin still speak of the time a horlagh charged a hin party riding on woodland trails near Moon Hill and Leethila drew her sword and fell out of her saddle to hastily get between it and a young hin riding ahead of her.

Appearance: Leethila is not yet thirty. Slim and fine-boned, she is curvaceous and wears her hair long. Never to be seen in make-up, Leethila has a few simple pieces of good jewelry which she wears to parties and hin weddings (to which she is always invited). She is known for giving small but thoughtful presents to hin couples and infants, such as blade-sharpening stones of the finest quality, magnifying lenses, small kits of fine steel needles, and the like. She is well liked for her kindness and eager friendliness.

Leethila wears fine but simple cloaks and gowns, preferring ordinary leathers and tunics whenever she can. If she took the trouble, she could be far more beautiful than she usually appears. She has begun to notice Lord Donthiir of Darokin, who is always kind and correct toward her, but doubts that any man could really love her crippled as she is. She will take care over her appearance if she knows Donthiir will see her at a func-

tion or ceremony; his feelings toward her are not yet known.

Malaric, Lord Caine: (mF4, St 16, In 14, Wi 14, Dx 14, Co 14, Ch 15, AL Chaotic—Lord High Ambassador of Thyatis)

Lord Caine is a smooth-tongued, formal man of utterly cold thoughts and diligent attention to duty. Too much the snake even for Thyatian courtiers, he was sent here some six winters ago to replace a predecessor who was invited to leave in disgrace after trying to bribe and poison some important hin clan Elders in a particularly clumsy fashion.

This was only the latest in a succession of Thyatian ambassadors who have been invited to leave by the Sheriffs. Starting from this known disadvantage, Lord Caine has been careful not to get caught. He has managed this, so far, by not doing anything of consequence and falsifying his reports home.

Caine is cruel and calculating and will often seize upon non-hin visitors to Shireton to work the occasional spying or mugging job for him or quietly interrogate someone. He will pay richly for such work, although his payment arrangements (always afterwards) will leave no connection to him if the hireswords muck up badly or babble about who hired them to do what.

Caine is a master of the smooth alibi and the courtly dance; he has even learned to enjoy the company of hin ladies, although the cold leer in his eye causes many to draw away.

Caine has no morals or principles. He has quietly sponsored several pirates in Shireton Port in order to enrich himself. They leave hin ships he invests in unmolested and delay others with chases and raids so that the cargoes Caine stands to make money with get to port first.

The Shierffs have their eyes upon Caine often and coldly and he knows it, so he is very careful in his dealings, however dark they may be.

Caine has limited quantities of a special drug in his possession; added to wine or beer, it makes a human or hin forget the events of up to six hours previously.

This has allowed Caine to enjoy questioning several hin, and the company of hin ladies for gentler pursuits, on several occasions. It is known as "twilight wine" and is spicy to the taste (a little will have no effect if one spits it out the moment one feels the salty spicy flavor) and smoky grey in hue. Caine would like to get more of it, but it is rare even in Thyatis; he will pay as much as 50 gp for a 6 dose vial. Twilight wine can be had in Glantri, Alphatia, and from certain Thyatian, Minrothad and Ierendi merchants, perhaps even in Karameikos, but Caine cannot presently reach any of the sources he knows.

Caine has almost limitless financial resources, a truly impressive wardrobe, and a staff of six (all the Sheriffs will allow him) that includes two thieves, a minor magic user, a cleric, and two aides who are discreet, handsome, quiet—and both 6th level fighters experienced in quiet, vicious rough-and-tumble in corridors and alleyways. The open, jolly hin of the Shires often perplex Caine; no folk can be *this* unambitious, honest, and law-abiding, but he is determined to quietly enrich himself and eventually acquire real power in the Shires.

Appearance: Caine is in his late thirties and physically fit, although his physique tends towards the sleek and solid rather than tough or bulging. He is darkly handsome with glossy black hair, a thin moustache, and dark brows. He wears expensive, tasteful jewelry, fine fur-trimmed cloaks over silk shirts and other garments that never quite cross the line into foppish over-decoration for he knows that this would not sit well with the hin, and he hates to be thought of as ridiculous. He always manage to outshine all of the other ambassadors in wealth and up-to-the-minute fashion. Caine is polite and courtly, but his green-grey eyes can turn very cold when he grows angry. He is a man with a long memory for insults and resistance to his own schemes and ways, and it shows when he is angry. Caine is very quick, and always armed although he prefers to keep his daggers and knuckle-bludgeons hidden and only wears a slim court rapier openly. Caine is

fond of deep purple and deep green garments of silk, and likes ruffs and lace.

Blackhammer, Thrildor: (mD8, St 16, In 12, Wi 12, Dx 13, Co 15, Ch 13, AL Lawful—Ambassador of Rockhome)

Thrildor is a good and honest dwarf; blunt and plain-spoken, polite, and obviously sincere. He has done much to make dwarves more well regarded in the Shires (or at least in Shireton) since his arrival some twelve summers back.

Rockhome would like to be on good terms with the Shires in order to get plentiful food through Darokin as much as for the gems and metals that its mines yield. Thrildor has been a wise choice as ambassador to the Shires; his obvious pleasure in playing with hin children at parties, rather than drinking and jesting with their elders, has done more to warm hin hearts toward him than forty courtly dwarves dancing at all the parties in Shireton could have accomplished. Hin have begun to believe that not all dwarves are cruel slavemasters like Loktal Ironshield was (or at least, is remembered to have been).

Thrildor is wise and shrewd. He has a genuine soft spot for young children of any race. He has a love of beauty, whether that of a finely-worked piece of jewelry or the fresh loveliness of a hin maiden. "After all," Thrildor thinks, "they're no so very much different than dwarven lasses, if ye ignore the fact they're a foot or so shorter. An' what's height in the world anyway, once ye've traveled in the lands of these great rambling giants of men and found them to be far more formless than ever a dwarf or a halfling ever thought o' being?"

Thrildor is tired of intrigue and bitterness and hard feelings and hopes to see more friendliness between Rockhome and the Shires in his lifetime. Already he has quietly informed the Sheriffs of several overtures made to him by Lord Caine Malaric of Thyatis, and won trust as much for his polite candor as for his snitching on another ambassador. Thrildor is known for the quiet, unstinting luxury of his parties and his personal lack of obvious greed when shown or offered things

of gold and gems for appraisal or for trade. He wants good friends and peace more than anything else and it shows. The hin of Shireton respect him for it.

The story is told affectionately in Shireton of the time when Thrildor toured Seashire with seven armed Krondar as guides. He took several hin children who wanted to see the Shire with him. Walking down a street in Leafkindle, he headed straight for some hin children playing marbles. Their parents hastened to draw weapons and hustle out to rescue their young ones, but ere Thrildor was threatened by anyone, the children he had brought along said scornfully, "Don't worry, he's quite safe. This isn't just a dwarf, it's *Thrildor!*" and pulled hin parents and children alike forward to meet the old dwarf. Thrildor charmed the villagers and Krondar alike by discussing marbles with seriousness and dignity with the children, and allowing his beard and great gnarled hands to be touched and pulled and commented on.

Those who think that Thrildor is just a kindly old soul, however, had best beware his iron-cold anger and ready hammer. If one isn't a child, Thrildor expects one to be sensible and honest and relatively polite. He has no time for the scheming and dishonest and he can still catch an unsuspecting human under the knee, pick him up, and hurl him into the nearest horse-trough or mud-patch in a trice. Thrildor is not allowed any dwarven servants but his hin staff love him dearly, and he is never without at least three Krondar who will leap to his defense as they would for any hin.

Appearance: Thrildor is very tall for a dwarf—almost five feet in height—with dark brown, gnarled skin. His beard is long, although save for a little snow-white hair behind his ears he is quite bald.

Thrildor is very old, with a beard of white tinged with silver and a deep, rumbling, yet almost lilting voice. His eyes are blue and very clear; he is broad and solid and still strong.

Thrildor dresses simply in a smith's leathers and bears a heavy stone hammer at his belt. On formal occasions he wears a

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simple black-and-grey breastplate worked with the Blackhammer sign. He is never without a pouch of gold coins and a small cloth bag of gems which he delights in tossing to beautiful hin ladies at parties, one gem to each, just to see their delighted faces.

Thrildor knows many good adventuring stories, both from his own career and from the deeds of others he has heard in his long life, but he is an even better *listener*. This is why he is often found in the early morning when a party is winding down surrounded by sleeping children, listening to the earnest wishes and dreams of a sleepy hin maiden or two, who have finally found someone to *talk* to who is older and experienced and yet takes them seriously and spares the time to take an interest in them. If Thrildor lives long enough, a generation of Shirefolk may grow up respecting and trusting dwarves rather than hating or distrusting them without much thought.

Other NPCs of the Shires —

Albrondur, Lathsyr: (mM9, St 14, In 17, Wi 11, Dx 14, Co 13, Ch 16, AL Lawful)

Lathsyr is a gentle and peace-loving human magic user who came to the Shires from Glantri. He grew up in Ierendi and later Thyatis and went in search of the “wonderful” land of magic and mages, but was shatteringly disillusioned by its intrigue and evil. Now he wanders the Shires.

Lathsyr has been welcomed by the Sheriffs (although they have the Krondar keep an eye on him) because he freely helps hin with his magic without charge or conditions. When he runs short of money, Lathsyr goes adventuring with like-minded hin or works on the docks of some port in the Shires, loading and unloading ships. He prefers Tothmeer and Bramlerose to the crowded, fractious Shireton Port or the busy, frequented-by-humans harbor of Than-tabbar.

A kind-hearted romantic who loves music and beauty in all things and lacks ambition, Lathsyr will readily cast spells for hire or join adventurers. He is quickly

sickened by cruelty, dishonesty, treachery, or wanton slaughter and may leave or turn on beings who behave in such ways.

Lathsyr will agree to tutor PC magic users, but his only magical items of value are a stone with *continual light* cast on it and another enspelled with *silence* which has been made *permanent*. He keeps his spellbooks hidden by some magical means.

There is elven blood in Lathsyr’s ancestry, and he is especially interested in the doings and customs of elves.

Araum, Biss: (mC8, St 15, In 12, Wi 17, Dx 13, Co 12, Ch 13, AL Neutral)

Araum is a wandering cleric of The Church of Universal Harmony, a tiny sect that preaches that all races should live together in peace, embracing common goals and interests, supported by certain Immortals of The Sphere of Thought. Araum is a human male of middle years and distinguished appearance. He travels about the Shires seeking to increase halfling acceptance of humans and dwarves.

Araum will cast spells (for fees) for any adventurers he meets, for he believes that adventurers, although ultimately dangerous to an established and stable society, are useful until such stability is achieved as a means of spreading the news and influences of far places and peoples about the Known World. He will not, however, accompany any party on adventures; to undertake such behavior himself would, he believes, be recklessly irresponsible.

Biss is a watchful, perceptive man who sees much but says little. He will readily betray outlaws, thieves, and vandals to the local Krondar, and report the activities of adventurers to them as well in the interests of order and safety within the Shires.

Astlar, Joam: (mH8, St 17, In 16, Wi 14, Dx 16, Co 14, Ch 15, AL Lawful)

This Knight-hero of the Shires has never served as an acting clan-chief or Sheriff of his Shire (Seashire) due to the continued presence of more senior and skilled holders of those offices. Joam is not bitter about this at all.

He loves adventure, and would be

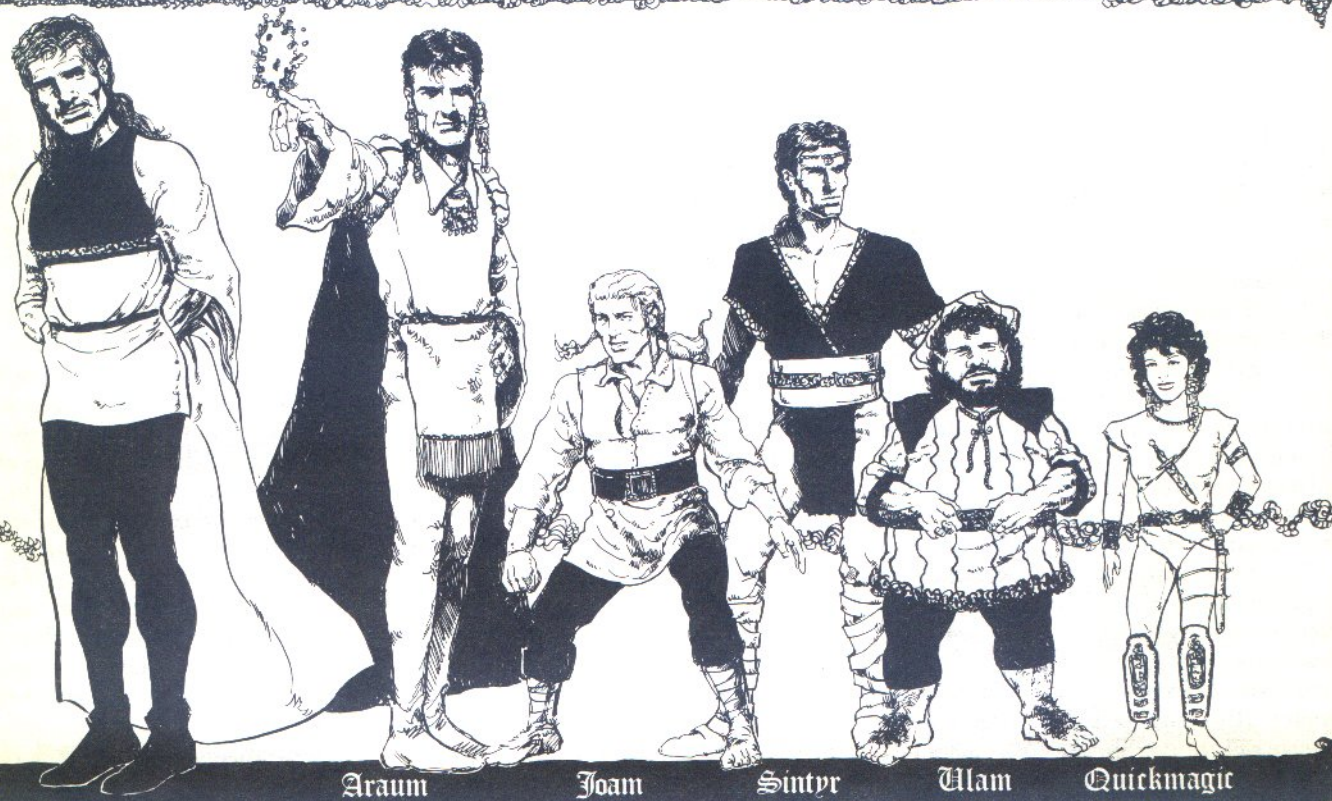
unhappy with any way of life that hampered the opportunity to just leap on a pony and ride off, weapons sharp and shiny, to explore some dark and desolate corner of the Shires he hasn’t yet seen. Of the Minstrelwish clan, Joam seldom visits Shireton or Shireton Port (where he might find a surprising amount of adventure lurking about in wait) because of his love of the wild country. He can often be found merrily battling horlugh or worse creatures which he will give to the nearest hin house or hold for a feast after he slays it. He will accompany adventurers who seem in need of assistance or have an interesting quest, plan, or destination, for a time. Joam never carries any treasure except for normal, serviceable hin weapons and plate mail of the finest quality and condition, and will turn angrily on any who betray him or seem to be acting in a manner that will harm good halflings or the Shires.

Joam is tall for a halfling (nearly four feet), and wears his long blonde hair in a ponytail. In hin society he can exhibit surprisingly courtly manners, a good singing voice, and skill at dancing and party games. He likes tales of adventure and rumors of danger and warlike activities, but dislikes personal or court intrigue; “the time-frittering clack of the small-minded,” as he calls it. Joam owns a stable of fine horses, ponies, and sturdy mules for his own use. Occasionally he will buy and sell likely-looking animals to better the quality of his stock. He has a hidden, magically-guarded treasure cellar somewhere in Moon Hill, which may contain magical treasure.

Belchiir, Ulam: (mH5, St 15, In 16, Wi 14, Dx 15, Co 12, Ch 13, AL Chaotic)

One of the most jovially and graspingly greedy of successful traveling hin traders, Ulam may be encountered on any road or settlement in the Shires. He is always wheeling and dealing in a crazy mixture of goods from one or more crammed wagons, and usually a jump or two ahead of angry hin he’s cheated or simply stolen from.

Fat and richly dressed, of smooth manners and a ready, hearty laugh, “the Bel-



cher" is always accompanied by two or more well-paid (and hence, loyal) henchmen or accomplices. These usually dress as merchants and stay within sight of Ulam but do not approach unless he stealthily signals them, and never openly travel with him although they may "by coincidence" choose the same table to drink at in a tavern of an evening. Ulam is always full of schemes and little ruses to separate travelers from their gear or horses for a short time, whereupon one or both will vanish and be spirited well away for sale or barter and Ulam will be nearby and obviously emptyhanded, and very sorry to hear of such misfortune.

Properly played, Ulam could well be a frequent encounter for PCs traveling in

the Shires. Unless they are alert or overly suspicious, they may well believe Ulam is a friendly and helpful merchant who always has rope or mules or food or whatever else they need to sell at fairly reasonable prices until they realize his true nature. Ulam never changes, and his intimate knowledge of local Krondar, hidey-holes, and escape routes, and the loyalty of equally shady henchmen around the Shires, has enabled him to survive in his chosen lifestyle for many years; he is not stupid or foolishly obvious in his thefts.

Ulam is fat, wears many largely valueless rings upon his stubby fingers (although one contains a sleep drug on a little scratch-barb; this drug can also be emptied into a drink on the sly, and Ulam

is never without a little vial to refill it), and has greasy, curly black hair and a short-trimmed beard. He dresses well and is apt to wear golden earrings except on lonely roads. He always carries a garrote, several daggers, and darts which he is extremely adept at throwing (+1 to hit on all such attacks). Ulam is also a terrible coward and will avoid combat if at all possible. He can move with great stealth if he desires, and can also run with astonishing speed for his bulk. He has a drawling, wheezy voice.

Bulorno, Sintyr: (mT4, St 15, In 13, Wi 11, Dx 17, Co 14, Ch 16, AL Chaotic)

One of the few human thieves to successfully operate in the Shires, Sintyr has

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elven blood in his past and has the height and general look (in poor light) of an elf. He runs a shipping business in Shireton and Shireton Port and is usually to be found in one place or the other. His hired thugs, "The Fingers," control much of Shireton's underways near the canal, including a key tunnel under the canal itself. This ancient route often floods but has enabled Sintyr's forces to outflank and attack rival groups of thieves and smugglers from the rear in several underground battles.

Sintyr also owns a tavern in Shireton, the *Thinsilver Seat*, and is quite wealthy. He is also insatiably greedy and sometimes slips out of the city and port to go after treasure he has learned of elsewhere in the Shires. He is quite good a robbing adventurers who come out of the mountains laden with riches and boasting loudly of their deeds.

Typically Sintyr moves overland by night, avoiding the roads and other spots frequented by Krondar. He uses the ready story that he is an elf sent from Alfheim with news of the death of such-and-such elf, to tell such-and-such another-elf in the Shires.

Sintyr is a master of the garotte and blackjack and will always try to get even with those who best or defeat him. He is a tireless, intelligent, and patient foe who will sometimes use the Fingers to wreak vengeance but usually likes to take a personal hand in it. If confronted in Shireton, he is never far from secret ways down under the city and from three or more of The Fingers whose armed aid he can call on. In Shireton Port, he is never without a watchful, nearby escort of at least ten Fingers.

Most of the Fingers are Chaotic halflings, although there are a few elves, humans, and even worse creatures among its ranks which number over thirty, but whose real strength is known only to Sintyr himself.

Sintyr is known to possess certain magical treasures which he will take with him when he goes into known or expected danger: *potions of ESP, gaseous form, and healing* (one of each, in steel vials sealed with wax); *a ring of animal control*

(used to quiet and avoid guard dogs); and *a ring of invisibility*. Sintyr always carries a *+1 dagger* in a sheath inside his right boot.

Coppertoos, Spiira Quickmagic: (fH8, St 14, In 16, Wi 15, Dx 17, Co 14, Ch 16, AL Neutral)

Quickmagic is a famous hin adventurer, now retired. Owner and operator of *The Murdered Princess* inn near Nob's Boots, Spiira gained her reputation largely from a single victory in Mar, over the border in Darokin. She encountered a Glantri wizard who had 'collected' several of Spiira's friends. She challenged him, to his great mirth, and he accepted in amusement. Spiira charged at him with only a dagger, into the very teeth of his spells, and managed to slay him before his magic could transform her. This gained her the nickname she now bears and the gratitude of the hin she freed, some of whom now help her in the inn. Spiira is happy at her inn and will not go off adventuring, but will tutor young adventurers and freely give advice and information about the Black Spires and the Cruth moors.

Dundershields, Ammagil: (fH7, St 14, In 14, Wi 13, Dx 14, Co 12, Ch 16, AL Lawful)

Ammagil is a clanless hin recently arrived in the Shires from an island under the sway of the Minrothad Guilds, where she was born. Her parents are now dead (of natural causes), and she sold all the family possessions to pay for passage to the fabled land of halflings her father once told her about. Ammagil had many adventures on her way to the Shires, in Thyatis, Karameikos, and Ierendi, and is skilled with her sword and sling.

Since landfall in the Shires Ammagil has been wandering the pastoral land wide-eyed, her money dwindling, wanting to see it all before she must find some job or other and settle down. She is lonely and would very much like to be accepted by a hin clan or a band of adventurers, for she has grown used to the wandering, somewhat carefree and exciting life of the adventurer. As long as she had someone

to share it with and could feel as if she *belonged* and was welcome, Ammagil would be perfectly happy as a lifelong adventurer in the Shires.

She will readily join non-hin or mixed-race adventuring parties and she is secretly searching for a suitable halfling mate. She has only just admitted this to herself and certainly won't fall head-over-heels for anyone. Cautious and careful throughout her travels, she will be just as slow and reasoned about setting her heart on anyone.

Ammagil is quick on her feet, level-headed, and almost fearless in a fight. She has the knack of holding herself mentally detached from the action so that she can act coolly and efficiently in the thick of a fray. When others run about shouting at an orc or pirate raid, she will calmly observe and consider how best to counter this foe, and what its strong points and weaknesses are or may be. If she ever finds herself in command of anything, the Shires may discover that they have acquired a first-rate tactician fully competent to lead any Fang or Regiment into battle.

Ammagil is polite and rather quiet, quite attractive, and possessed of good (non-magical) leather armor and weapons. She always has at least two bags of sling stones (each containing two dozen) on her person when traveling, and carries a coil of rope in her pack or on her saddle.

Duirmir, Armillian: (fM9, St 13, In 17, Wi 13, Dx 16, Co 12, Ch 16, AL Neutral)

An Ierendi by birth, Armillian escaped with some gems when a ship she was aboard was raided by pirates. She swam ashore to Karameikos with enough to pay her way by ship to Darokin, and thence to Glantri. There she studied at The Great School of Magic until her inexperienced dabbling in the politics of Glantri nearly led to her demise.

Forced to flee with her training not nearly complete, Armillian took revenge on certain enemies and tormentors (in particular, an older Glantrian lady with a taste for torturing young magic students with whips and hot coals) by stealing many books of magic. Pursued by an



invisible stalker, she found her way south into Darokin where she slew agents of Glantri whom she recognized following her. She then managed to destroy the stalker by mastering some of the hitherto unfamiliar magic she carried. Then she traded her fine but distinctive clothing for the rags of a peasant farmer and bought a mule just in time to join a caravan heading over the mountains to The Five Shires.

The caravan was attacked by orcs. In the confusion Armillian slipped away with her precious books and soon became lost in the mountains. She wandered until she found a cavern where an outlaw band lived. She slew the outlaws with magic as they returned to their lair, and

lived there happily until all the food they had stored was gone. An entire winter passed while she studied until she was forced to either eat orcs or venture down out of the mountains into the green, misty Shires below.

Assembling a compact traveling book of spells, Armillian buried her other books and came down into the Shires.

Armillian has been earning money here and there by casting spells and tutoring young would-be magic users, and has come to enjoy the happy life of the hin. She is tired of being a fugitive and desperately wants to relax and befriend and trust someone. But she cannot escape her past and is constantly looking over her shoulder for evil creatures or vengeful

agents sent out of Glantri to track her down and slay her. She hasn't recognized any yet, but she can't quite believe no one is looking for her.

Armillian is quite changed in appearance from younger, plumper, more light-hearted days in Glantri, when her tongue was quicker than her prudence and she had a taste for pretty clothes and perfumes—neither of which she likes or uses now. In Glantri, she had the sense to use a false name ("Chancel Reikos," a Karameikan name), and so can use her own name now without fear of discovery. But she will always fear someone in Glantri finding her by magic and taking some sort of hideous revenge.

Armillian would like friends more

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than anything else; preferably friends without magical powers or interests, so she need not fear betrayal or attack. She doesn't mind adventure but would like to make someplace in this pretty country her home. She will tutor or cast spells for hire but takes elaborate safeguards and makes mysterious arrangements. At the same time, she is fascinated by the little folk who live so happily in the Shires, and will impulsively unleash a spell or two to aid any she finds beset by monsters or natural peril, a habit that has begun to earn her a good reputation among halflings. Krondar watch her as she travels but the Sheriffs have found no reason to make her unwelcome in the Shires.

Elgenblot, Irmir: (mM7, St 11, In 16, Wi 12, Dx 14, Co 13, Ch 13, AL Lawful)

This good-natured, befuddled old man can never remember what day it is or just where he is. Just now, he's after the secret of Blackflame: its powers and magical uses. Irmir has come to the Shires from eastern Karameikos to learn this, but he's not the sort to steal Blackflame or try to trick or eavesdrop on a Keeper to learn what he wants to know.

He's seeking a human magic user living in the Shires (there must be some, after all; men have been curious about Blackflame for centuries) who might be willing to part with what he knows in return for a powerful magical item or two. Accordingly, Irmir has brought along a *ring of life protection*, *quill of copying*, and a *lesser talisman of water* (see "Talisman of Elemental Travel" in the D&D® DM's Companion book; all three of the special items Irmir carries are described in that rulebook). Irmir also has 300+ pieces of gold with him.

Irmir may appear as a befuddled old man, but when it comes to strangers long experience has made him suspicious and he has a keen nose for treachery. Unfortunately for those who would rob or dupe him, he can use all his magical items and carries a full and powerful complement of offensive and escape spells. The Sheriffs do not yet know of Irmir's mission or true powers. Unless he meets a rare being indeed (such as an Immortal willing to

talk), Irmir's mission is doomed to failure—although an enterprising player character who learns the secrets of Blackflame could earn themselves much magic from Irmir. DMs should have Irmir warn such intrepid souls that he will know if he is being told false information. Lying PCs should find Irmir chuckling and then attacking them with his magic, not meekly paying them for deceitful information about Blackflame.

No NPC halfling (not even unsavoury characters like Ulam Belchiir) will betray the secrets of Blackflame to a foreigner. Hin know that the survival of the halfling nation may depend on those secrets. Irmir knows this and won't ask any halfling. Note that any hin who hears of Irmir's quest will inform the local Krondar or a Sheriff immediately and probably tell his or her Clanmaster, too, and the hue and cry will begin in earnest. Irmir will definitely be carrying a *teleport any object* spell (detailed in the D&D® Players Companion rulebook) with which he can escape to his isolated keep in Karameikos if there's any sort of trouble.

Irmir is tall, thin, and clean-shaven, with a beaky nose and prominent chin. He has constantly-rumpled grey-white hair, and a kindly face and manners, but can be quite testy with those who make fun of him. Irmir wears nondescript robes, well-made but without ornamentation or stylish cut or fabric.

Hillhallow, Ogentyr: (mH6, St 13, In 17, Wi 16, Dx 16, Co 17, Ch 14, AL Neutral)

Ogentyr is a wandering seller and maker of medicines, philtres, and ointments. He is an unprincipled, dirty hin who is always clad in black, bespattered robes. About his person he generally has some sleep drugs, a few poisons, and 'smoke-bomb' vials. Ogentyr can concoct various non-magical potions to order (for expensive fees), with varying degrees of potency. The DM should determine randomly how effective a particular batch is; Ogentyr is erratic in his measurements. A given potion will almost always (88% of the time) do what Ogentyr claims it will; but for how long, and how

strongly it will affect imbibers, are unknown variables. Among other things, Ogentyr can make anaesthetics, aphrodisiacs, hallucinogens, 'truth-babble-drugs,' and substances that make one act very drunk, or delirious, or pallid and near death.

Ogentyr has steel vials containing a *potion of invisibility* and a *potion of flying* hidden upon his person to aid him in escaping danger, and at least one vial of 'knockout gas.' He has a long memory for faces, voices, and mannerisms, and is cautious, always looking for a way out or an alternative plan.

Jollybars, Meermeera: (fH4, St 9, In 14, Wi 12, Dx 16, Co 10, Ch 15, AL Lawful)

A fun-loving, merry hin on yallara, Meermeera was born in Karameikos. After much wandering around Thyatis and the Minrothad Guild lands, she has come to see the hin homeland. She loves the Shires, and is wandering about everywhere wide-eyed and delighted. She has no fear of anything in the Shires (she hasn't met any monsters, yet) and will try anything and join in any game or adventure without fear or hesitation. Meermeera always acts as though she knows exactly what she's doing. Unfortunately for anyone who trusts her, such calm experience is just that: an act. Meermeera is the hin who will steer a ship confidently onto the rocks, gaily untie a rope someone else is still climbing up, or joke loudly to a companion who is trying to slip into or out of someplace unheard and unobserved. Meermeera is well-meaning, not malicious, but she's still a klutz.

Her fast reflexes and intelligence usually rescue her from harm, but breakable things and other beings around her may not be so fortunate. She will swing into any dangerous adventure or activity with gusto, even glee, laughing and giggling in the face of danger and be totally and cheerfully unreliable when things go awry. In other words, Meermeera is a typical yallaren of the younger and more sheltered sort.

She can learn fast and will always make different mistakes than last time. She is also quick to make friends, will be loyal

and loving and even embarrassingly affectionate, particularly to good-looking young male hin, and will no doubt stay in the Shires and eventually settle down into a considerate and perceptive hin wife. Either she will be the partner of an adventurer or will join a clan and assume a quieter life of farming or some small hin business. It will require lasting patience and the recuperative powers of a powerful cleric to last that long in her company, however.

Meermeera is brown-haired, bouncy, and has a full figure and a twinkling, speedy walk. She knows many light jokes and snatches of songs, likes to mimic the voices of others and hear hin stories, and is quite capable of taking care of herself in a fight. She's just dangerous to friends and companions, that's all.

Juthindar, Sperren: (mC5, St 14, In 13, Wi 17, Dx 13, Co 14, Ch 13, AL Lawful)

An agent of the Church of Karameikos sent to The Five Shires by Alfric Oderbry to spread the faith among the folk of the neighboring land, Sperren is a young and vigorous man. Devout, he firmly believes that the Church must expand and that Patriarch Alfric is the right man to lead it; is, in fact, destined to lead it and will only be opposed (when Patriarch Jowett dies) by the foolish, the wicked, and the misguided.

Sperren is not above using his mission as a sightseeing holiday away from the continual intrigue of the Church and of Karameikos in general, but atones for this by aiding hin (for fees) with his spells. He rationalizes this as spreading the Church's influence by demonstrating how it can aid others. He will also aid non-hin to support himself and at the same time make a good name for the Church outside Karameikos.

His instructions from Patriarch Alfric included the admonition to be very observant and learn all it is possible to politely discern of the life, likes and dislikes of halflings. Halfling skills, political organization, and military preparedness are of interest, as are the personalities of the current Sheriffs, the loyalty of the people to them, and the success and gen-

eral reputation of the current ambassador of Karameikos in the Shires.

Alfric can't quite believe that halflings can exist without an organized faith. He is sure that either they must have some secret cult (the details of which he must learn, to aid in eventually destroying it and converting the hin) or that they are desperate for some sort of spiritual guidance and leadership, in which case a full-scale mission from the Church of Karameikos should be sent to the Shires immediately.

Sperren Juthindar's delicate task is to carry out all this poking and prying in a quiet enough manner that he is neither expelled by the Sheriffs nor creates enough of a stir that the Karameikan ambassador or Karameikan merchants hear of his mission and it gets back to the ears of Patriarch Jowett—or worse, Duke Stefan.

As a result, Sperren will befriend and try to hire any non-hin adventurers he meets to learn what he can from them and have them do the more indiscreet prying. Sperren's task is further complicated by the fact that Alfric Oderbry is not a patient man; results are expected within a season, at least.

Sperren also fears that his purpose is known to the rival Church of Traladara, who may have sent agents to the Shires to waylay or expose him. Any non-hin he meets may be such an agent. He will assure himself that they are not by the use of spells and 'tests' before hiring them.

Sperren carries little gold and no magical items. He is armed with a mace and a silver-plated war hammer and has a purse of 8 gold pieces and change, with another 20 gp hidden in the soles of his boots. Sperren has another 500 pieces of gold buried just outside the walls of Rollstone Keep, should he run short of funds. He will try not to use this if possible so that it can serve as start-up money for the future activities of the Church of Karameikos in the Shires.

Sperren confidently believes that the Shires will one day be united with Karameikos under one Church. If halflings are intractable to Church teachings, Karameikos (under a later Duke and with

Patriarch Alfric at the head of the Church), will have no choice but to invade—peacefully, if possible—and rule the childlike hin. Such a rich and pleasant land cannot be allowed to go to waste.

Lollos, Shandysar: (fH3, St 13, In 15, Wi 12, Dx 17, Co 16, Ch 16, AL Neutral)

A young hin pirate born in Ierendi and raised on ships wallowing in the seas off The Shirecoast, Shandysar was recently rescued by the hin Navy from a watery death, when the ship she was on foundered with all hands. She fell off the deck with a litter of empty wine-casks, and clung to one until rescued.

Quick with a cutlass or a crossbow, Shandysar is still learning the ways of the Shires. She was put ashore at Tothmeer to meet the local Sheriff and be settled in some sort of dock-work, but gave the Kronstar the slip and set out to see the Shires for herself. The Kronstar aren't too upset, figuring she would have been restless and sullen if she hadn't had the chance to make her own decisions. To simply set her free in the Shires without food or money, however, would invite her quick death or worse (Shandysar is very beautiful, in a wild sort of way), or force her into an outlaw life.

Shandysar has no idea what she wants to do or become. She hopes she'll find out as she journeys across the Shires. She is alert, agile, and alluring in an artless, uncaring way. Her clothes are ragged and sea-stained; the high boots and rugged leathers of a crewman not decked out in the lace and frippery of pirate plunder.

Shandysar still has her weapons and has fed herself several times by slaying woodland animals. She has also earned coins for dancing or spent a pleasant evening having drinks bought for her by young and ardent hin in taverns along her way.

Shandysar hates waste and will readily eat food that has been thrown away if it looks good to her, but she won't steal. The 'right' way, as she knows from pirate life, is to best someone at arms, blade to blade, and then take what you want of what they have. Crossbows are for dealing with those who try to sling stones or fire

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arrows at you without standing to fight. But she can't find anyone here in the Shires who will take her challenges seriously. The hin all laugh and run away, or make a great game of disarming her by swarming all over her at once, or buying her a drink instead.

Shandysar knows she's not grasped something about hin life yet. She doesn't press on until blood is spilled, but shakes her head in baffled frustration and pays attention, hoping she'll learn how things are done in this strange, happy, beautiful land. She is also very lonely, although she will only come to trust acquaintances slowly and warily. She sleeps with her blade in hand and awakens at the slightest nearby noise except the sounds of surf and boats riding the water.

Shandysar would quite willingly become a pirate or an adventurer but she wants to choose whom she fights and lives alongside. She will always shy away from anyone who offers a place in a band or crew, then follow them on the sly, eavesdropping and observing to learn what they're truly like. All kind, Lawful companions, hin or non-hin, who don't threaten her or tease her overmuch and don't press ardent attentions too boldly, will be considered fitting companions after being so investigated.

Longwinkle, Jalassa: (fH6, St 15, In 18, Wi 16, Dx 17, Co 16, Ch 16, AL Chaotic)

The buccaneer Jalassa of the Long Whip (few know her last name) is famous along the Shirecoast. She is supremely daring and is tall and thin for a halfling, looking very much like a young human girl of startling beauty.

She fights with a 20' long whip and a rapier-like shortsword. With her whip she can deftly knock a running man off his feet and hook him over the deckrail into the sea, or lash an arrow out of a bow being aimed at her from another ship racing alongside her own. With her daring she has pulled off such reckless victories as once sailing into Mirror Bay (in the capital of Karameikos) posing as a legitimate trader, spending a quiet night looting every other non-naval ship anchored in port, and somehow slipping out again.

She is rumored to be fabulously well-to-do. Men and hin alike up and down the coast speak of her with awe and lust and admiration. They also pray that if they put to sea they will not meet her, for she can be ruthless. She once slew a Thyatian captain who spat on her by flaying him with her whip until his skin was quite gone.

Jalassa's ship is known as *The Storm Bird* and is as large and elaborate as hin pirate ships get. It is a large sailing ship with a ram, three large catapults, two ballistae armed with fire-arrows, and it has an "Exceptional Crew" skilled in archery and boarding, for a total ship value of 7, and a move of 7 hexes; 3-4 when "Damaged."

Mellothrin, Arcathae: (fD11, St 14, In 14, Wi 17, Dx 14, Co 9, Ch 15, AL Neutral)

Arcathae is a wandering druid—an extremely rare breed. She is not wandering aimlessly: the druid who first initiated her into the study of nature and the Balance of All Things sent her to The Five Shires to see for herself how a busy and industrious people could live in harmony with the woodlands and natural things, harming much 'but not overmuch,' and replanting and preserving what they could.

She has come from far Thyatis on foot, striving to watch and remain as silent as possible and simply learn. Friendly and pleasant, she will aid anyone she meets who does not harm nature.

Mulgor, Loberlinn: (fH Master 32nd level, or "Higher Master," St 17, In 18, Wi 18, Dx 16, Co 17, Ch 17, AL Chaotic)

The most successful halfling pirate of the last two decades, Loberlinn is now a Higher Master. This legendary she-pirate was as beautiful and as feared as Jalassa in her day. Raven-haired now going silver-grey in streaks, the long-tressed and agile Loberlinn captained the *Bloodsail* around the mysterious rocks and isles that lie between the Shires and Ierendi, particularly in the area where the water is so studded with rocks that it was once known as 'The Broken Sea.' Loberlinn

was impishly good-humored as well as daring and rapacious, and once towed a stricken Karameikan ship into harbor in Karameikos after exchanging most of her provisions with the thirsty and starving Karameikans in return for their gold. Loberlinn is currently a candidate for Immortality on the path of the Epic Hero.

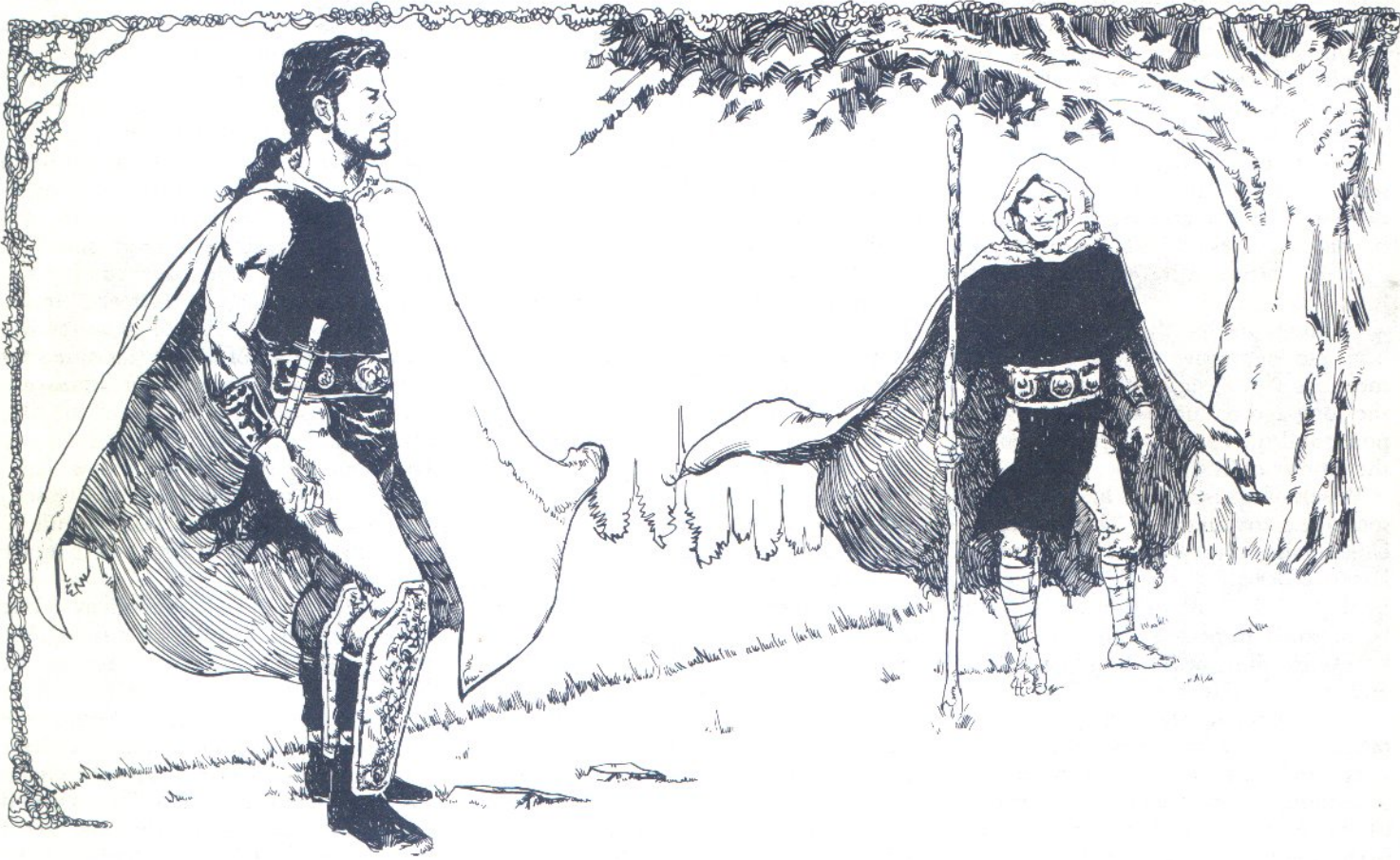
She may be encountered anywhere in the Shires. Few hin will recognize her and she will take a special interest in non-hin whom she meets who seem engaged in activities harmful to the Shires or interesting to an adventurer. Loberlinn may use any sort of weapon but is deadly with a crossbow (+2 to hit), a cutlass, or thrown daggers (she is +1 to hit with such, and always carries at least four on her person, some concealed).

Nildahar, Brace: (mF6, St 17, In 12, Wi 13, Dx 14, Co 15, Ch 13, AL Neutral)

Brace is an honest, open man of the sword. Born in Ierendi, he heard often of the beauty of the Shires in his youth, and of wild battles against orcs and worse in the mountains there from old hin who called in at the ports in Ierendi in pirate and merchant ships. He has come here after many adventures in far lands to see the Shires for himself. He can't believe any land can be so beautiful and largely unspoiled and at peace. He is wandering the Shires looking for adventure: there must be some to be had *somewhere* in this land. He is beginning to think he never wants to leave but he is running low on coins and getting bored and will gladly join any adventure going.

Honest and plain-spoken, apt to be silent, not a babler, Brace has no time for treachery or deception and may turn on companions who try either on him.

He is tall and dark-haired with a short-trimmed beard, level brown eyes, and broad shoulders. He dresses simply and wears leather armor under a nondescript travel cloak. He fights with broadsword and handaxe and has two daggers, one at his belt and one hidden out of sight in his left boot.



Seashire, Marintor Treeshadow: (mH Master 7, St 16, In 17, Wi 18, Dx 16, Co 15, Ch 14, AL Lawful)

Marintor 'the Soft' (so named for his gentle speech and stealth) is a wandering hin Master. Tall for a halfling and very thin, Marintor always goes about cloaked and hooded in brown leather so tattered as to be almost in rags. His eyes are very clear and cold blue, his brows black and scowling, but his smile is gentle. He does not smoke and seldom speaks. Marintor

has a *rod of the wylm*, and always carries a *staff of dispelling*. He is active all over the Shires, particularly in the woods of Seashire and Heartshire, and often uses the *wylm* created by his rod to fly about the Shires to deliver messages from one Master to another.

The Pirate Life

Halflings may be known to the folk of other lands as cute little child-like creatures, but to seafarers and coastal dwellers in the western Grand Duchy and the Empire of Thyatis, in particular, they have a darker reputation.

Halflings are cheerfully reckless sailors. The more evil or angry hin, those who seek revenge, or those on yallara who simply love the sea and crave adventure, become pirates. Halflings are bold pirates, daring pirates—and widely feared pirates.

Halflings reserve their special blood-lust and aggressive feelings for their meetings with Thyatian vessels because of the long-ago seizure of halfling lands, ports, and the halfling ships in them by the Empire of Thyatis.

Vessels of other nations have good reason to fear the pirates of The Shirecoast. Unless a ship approaching halfling waters is crewed by halflings or is closely escorted by ships of the Navy of the Shires, it will be narrowly inspected, probably several times, by tiny, swiftly-racing, battered and tattered pirate boats.

Most hin pirates are halflings of 2nd to 6th level. They are always armed with slings and carry 20 or so sling-stones. These are carried in a cloth bag so they can be easily let go if their owner ends up in the water. Such a bag does 1-4 points of damage as a blackjack-like weapon at close quarters.

Most hin pirates also bear 1-3 daggers which they are adept at throwing, and a curved cutlass.

All types of weapons a halfling can use will also be found throughout a typical pirate crew, right up to and including the occasional magic wand. Most pirates are adept at ramming, sailing in rough seas and rocky waters, and leaping from rail or rigging safely onto another ship. Many hin pirate ships carry rickety homemade catapults to hurl rocks, garbage, or even dead orc corpses onto the decks of ships they engage.

A halfling pirate crew will often include a scattering of humans, for the ranks of the halfling pirates are a refuge for outlaws and shady characters of all the coastal lands.

A pirate crew will also have at least one beautiful human or elven maiden. Sometimes these “ladies” are captives taken at sea, and sometimes they are prisoners rescued from the Black Eagle Barony or other captors. Some have come to join the pirates at an early age themselves. Whatever her origin, every self-respecting hin pirate crew will have its “lady.”

The pirates do not molest or mistreat their ladies; any pirate who does is immediately invited to swim to shore even if shore is two days of hard sailing away. They revere them and shower them with riches and attention, such as massages, perfumed baths, and careful hairstyling. The “Lady” of a crew is sort of a mascot; even if a bloodthirsty bladeswinger herself, she will slowly come to realize that the object of every halfling pirate crew is to find her a faithful mate with whom she can be happy, and set her up in wealth somewhere along the coast.

Shireton and the coastal settlements of the Shires are full of wealthy, earthy ladies of varying ages who have been “retired home ashore” by halfling pirate crews. Female player characters could well become pirate “ladies,” although it is a dangerous life. Many pirate ships simply disappear in storms or treacherous waters, or in encounters with The Teeth Of The Deep and other legendary sea monsters, cherished Lady and all.

Male player characters will find it harder to win a place in a pirate crew; hin are suspicious of non-hin in groups of three or more, thinking them spies or power-grabbers who will try to seize control of the pirate ship.

A halfling crew usually presents a most comical appearance. Their plundered finery rarely fits and is rarely worn properly. A hairy, bearded, fat male halfling may appear at the rail clad in the silk face-veil and coin-adorned brassiere of an Ylari dancer with a finely-embroidered noble’s vest from Thyatis. He may have a hat tied on with silk ribbons and beneath it the finest diaphanous white silk gown available in the Grand Duchy, all worn over leather shorts and high sea-boots, both studded with rusting and battered armor plates.

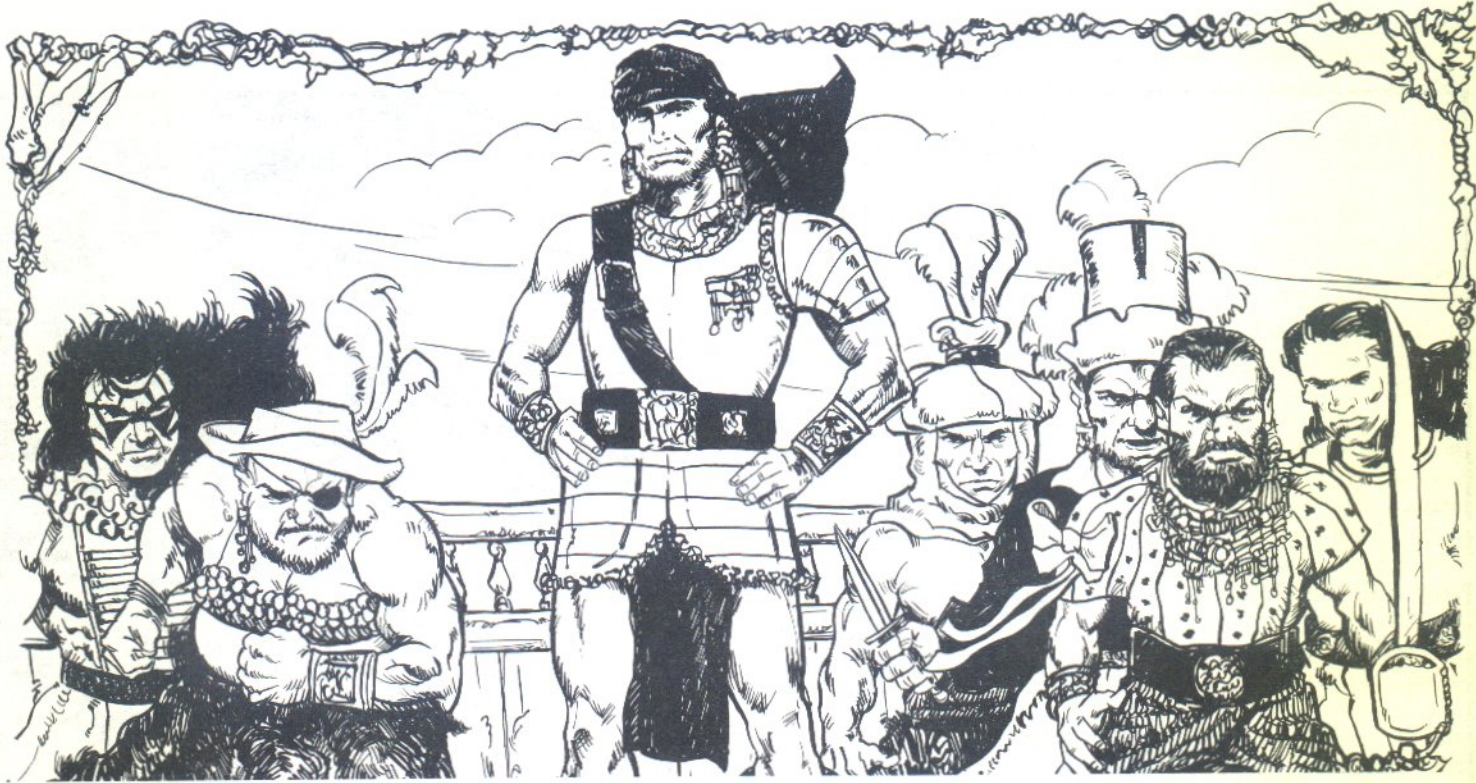
Many pirates bedeck themselves with so many gems and pieces of hanging or pinned-on jewelry that they jangle and chime with every step. Others use captured make-up to paint their faces in wild patterns or draw scary death’s heads or gruesome disease-like symptoms on themselves. Hin dislike tattoos but try to duplicate their effects with such make-up. In a word, hin pirates have fun.

Most halfling pirate ships are small sail ships. In terms of the naval combat system presented in the Gazetteer of Irenedi, they move up to 6 hexes at a time and have ship values of 3 or 4 (modified for Artillery and sometimes for an Exceptional Crew). Most pirate vessels are old, small, and battered. Pirates seizing a good ship (hin pirates prefer to board and plunder, not ram and burn other vessels) will often give their old, leaking hulk to the crew they defeated to try to nurse back to land.

There are 120 or so seaworthy pirate ships, with about a quarter of those constantly active. The most famous of the active pirate crews are those headed by Red Rory Hackskull, “the halfling as tall as a dwarf,” who sails out of Muldair’s Rock and has a secret refuge elsewhere; Crommor ‘the Hammer’ of Toth Isle; and the female halfling buccaneer Jalassa of the Long Whip. Jalassa is described in the NPC section of this book.

The legendary she-pirate Loberlinn (also described in the NPC section), now a Higher Master, was the most successful pirate of the last twenty winters; not only hin still speak of her. Before Loberlinn, the pirate Black Adder Swiftbrand was famous, but he perished with all his crew when Thyatian ships armed with fire-hurling catapults boxed him in and set his ship afire, although his blazing ship rammed and sank or set afire three others before it finally foundered.

Before Swiftbrand there was Jenkin Firebeard and the Nightstriker, Bross Lot-sotricks Hillhallow. Many are the exciting stories of bloody battles, daring raids, and long chases across the seas that the hin pirates of now-gone days have left behind in taverns of all the coastal lands. They’ve left lots of treasure; lost, hidden



and never reclaimed when they sailed away and met death, or just forgotten at some stopover rock or other. Human adventurers hoping to find quick riches sometimes risk a quick run to explore this or that remote rock off The Shirecoast, looking for buried treasure. And some have found it. Most searchers simply don't return; the storms, treacherous shoals, and the pirates, see to that.

DMs should locate any such surviving treasures in their own campaign in the smaller, more southerly rocks off the Shirecoast. These rocks are not shown on any map available to PCs but left for characters to discover, hopefully before pirates discover the PCs.

A typical halfling pirate crew will be 30-40 strong with perhaps 2-5 of their number non-hin (almost all of these will be human males). Magic users and clerics are rare on the seas although clerics willing to heal wounded pirates in return for rich offerings can be found at most of the ports that the pirates take refuge in.

Halfling ships are always crammed with casks of beer and drinking water and

lots of food so that they can stay at sea for long runs. Contraband must often be stored on deck to take its chances in heavy seas.

The use of fire-pots and fire-darts, as well as darts that carry fine cord to establish a line that pirates can swarm across to another ship, are fairly common. But most halfling pirates still depend on nimble sailing, savage swordwork, and accurate slinging to carry the day.

Most pirate crews take five or six prizes a year and may raid a Thyatian harbor or put ashore in the Black Eagle Barony for a little brigand-work once a summer as well.

The Sheriffs of the Shires simply pretend that there are no halfling pirates. The Navy of the Shires protects some legitimate vessels against attacks in waters claimed by the Shires. All pirate vessels are assumed to be crewed by desperate or evil foreigners under the sway of dastardly Karamaikan raiders serving Baron von Hendriks, or lawless renegade Ierendi sailors. Vessels crewed by hin must be legitimate shippers of one sort or another,

not pirates.

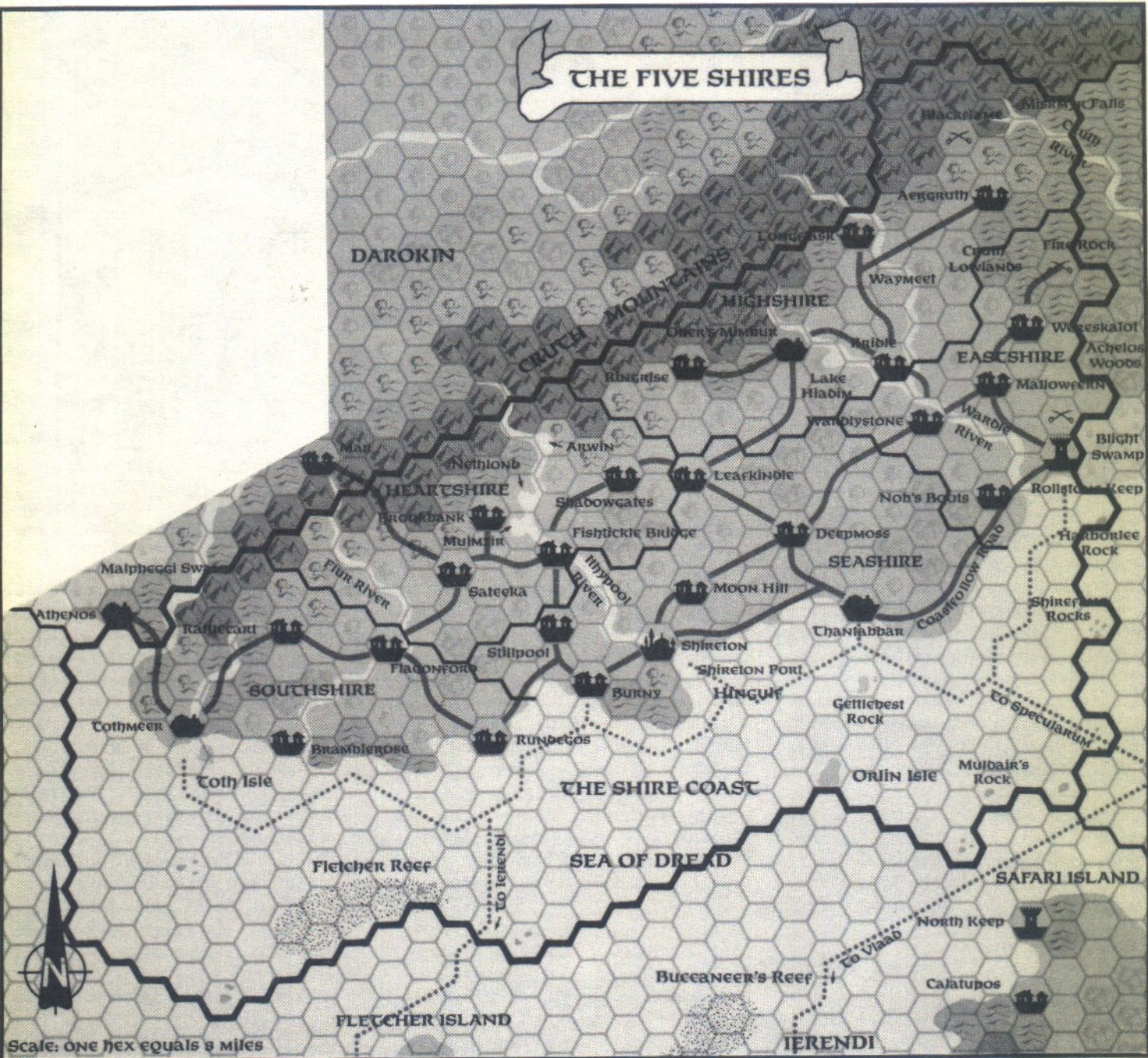
The Sheriffs know better, of course, but the existence of the hin pirates keep the Shires secure against naval attack or marine blockade or dominance by a rival nation, so the Sheriffs turn a blind eye to hin piracy. There are no laws against piracy.

If the evil growing in Shireton Port continues unchecked, or hin pirates begin to raid halfling ships or ports in the Shires, this easygoing policy may well have to change.

The Navy of the Shires will not support pirate vessels in attacks on foreign ships, but it often attacks unauthorized "foreign raiders" who happen to be in hot pursuit of a halfling pirate vessel that tried to bite off more than it could chew, or rescues hin from a foundering pirate ship or shipwreck.

Hin pirates are not strong enough to threaten nearby Kingdoms, but do hamper merchant-captains. Halfling pirates, in short, are no laughing matter—unless you're a halfling pirate.

THE FIVE SHIRES



Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

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A Visitor's Guide to the Five Shires

It would take a book many times thicker than this to map and describe all the Shires in detail. All that can be managed in these pages is a whirlwind tour of the countryside.

Details of the settlements not given here are left to the DM; many things will only be revealed in the course of play as player characters follow the trail of adventure and should be shaped by the DM according to the needs of such adventures.

First, please consult the Shire boundaries map. We shall begin in the northernmost end of the Shires and move to the southwest, Shire by Shire.

Highshire

The northernmost of the Shires is wild, largely unsettled country of rugged mountains, open rolling hills broken by scrub woodland and rocky pinnacles and deep woods.

Fangs patrol here heavily; it is dangerous country, much frequented by monsters and raiding orcs. The headwaters of the Cruth River and the depths of Darkwood are both places hin do not normally go for any reason. Only fools travel anywhere in Highshire unarmed, except within Bridle or Ober's Mimbur.

The Shireseat of Highshire is Ober's Mimbur. It is probably the dirtiest settlement in the Shires due to the litter associated with smelting and forging. The mines, extensive caverns that open out of the mountains around Ringrise, supply much metal of all types to the Shires. To the north, at Longflask, the newest mines have been opened, tapping lodes that promise to be the richest and most extensive found thus far in the Shires and, perhaps outside of Rockhome, in the entire Known World.

Lake Hindim, a widening of the Wardle River, is broad and shallow. It forms a gigantic pan in which the sun warms the chill waters of the upper Wardle to such an extent that the lake teems with fish. Enterprising hin net and sell the fish as far as Bridle, Ober's Mimbur, and upper Seashire.

Ober's Mimbur

Population: 7,000

Clan Holds: Fellwood, Gladsing, Longbuck, Lowbranch, Roaringbras, Tangleberry

Ober's Mimbur is named for a long-ago tale of the Shires. Ober was a farmer whose lands were where the town now stands. He was a very successful hin and he used his spare gold to build a conical stone tower, his "Mimbur." When he died, papers were found in the Mimbur with a cryptic message about rich treasure; amber, ivory, and jade, three chests of each, and "at least six hundred thousand" gold pieces hidden somewhere about the Mimbur. Hin soon tore the tower apart stone by stone looking for the treasure, but it has never been found.

In the meantime, the camp of the treasure-seekers had become a regular stopping place for carts and travelers, and when mines were opened in the mountains to the north, the town was inevitable.

Today, Ober's Mimbur is a rough, hard-working stone town with cobbled streets (heavily-laden ore wagons were forever getting stuck in the deep mud until the streets were laid down), and many a weary, sooty hin stepping out of a forge or foundry for a breath of cool air.

Bridle

Population: 850

Clan Holds: Trencherman

Bridle is a typical road-junction settlement of the Shires. It has a good inn, The Pixie's Pipe; two taverns of the shabby comfortable, reasonably-priced type, the Fernbottom Arms and The Leaking Tankard, and a guesthouse, Mother Trencherman's.

It has a stockyards, a smithy (Jobbar's), a well-stocked hardware store (Oldbole's), and a Market Hall used by farmers to sell fresh wares. Local industries include Olmyr's Fine Woodworking (carpentry and wagon repairs), Mallastyr's Pots & Casks, Lodo's Fine Cloth & Laces, Mallar's Fresh Fish, Osca Henn's Oddjob & Repairs, and Blesk Evershade's Moneylending & Changing. The Tren-

cherman Clan has its hall here and owns many farms, as well as the "Happy Nag" Stables (horses sold & traded).

Aercruth

Population: 450

Clan Holds: Swiftfeet, Zursannatch

Aercruth is a newer than most settlements in the Shires with many wooden buildings showing signs of repair after fires and haphazard expansion. Its streets are mud and corduroy with log sidewalks here and there. It is the center for Fang patrols and explorers (i.e. hin hunters and prospectors) in the area, and is most noted for its ready supplies of hot food and traveling gear. It boasts a fine weaponry, Olmar Haskin's, two roaring taverns, The Staggering Hin and The Dying Stag, and an indifferent inn, The Sixty Warm Beds. Aercruth is a rough-and-ready town where brawls and even armed fights are not uncommon, but it has no less than fourteen Krondar stationed in a fortified "Lock-up" in the center of the village and they maintain swift and strict discipline.

Aercruth is starved for entertainment and crowds gather to hear new tales and new songs, although they tend to be rather severe critics, hurling beer tankards at sources of less-than-enchanted entertainment. A brisk trade in hill-ponies, mules, and donkeys goes on constantly in Aercruth; newcomers are advised to beware of buying someone's overworked, lame animal well dosed with painkilling drugs and liniment for sale purposes, and useless shortly afterwards.

Ringrise

Population: 950

Clan Holds: Evershade, Sharpstone, Vermsquash, Wandershorn

Ringrise is named for an ancient ring of well-weathered standing stones that crowns a grassy hill in the center of the village. The origin of these stones are forgotten; they were old when The Gentle Folk were still flourishing ere the coming of the hin. Over the years treasure-seekers digging here (a practice now outlawed by the Sheriff of Highshire) turned up many

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bones but no treasure. The bones were a mix of elven, dwarven, orc, and human, and were so old that they usually crumbled to dust when disturbed. The hill may be largely composed of them.

Today, Ringrise is the busy center of the older mines of Highshire. Its broad, gravelled streets have been worn by the passing of many carts into deep channels below the level of the surrounding land; to lessen erosion, moss has been planted on the road-banks and trees encouraged to grow. Hence, Ringrise is a very beautiful place often shrouded in mists on cool mornings. Ringrise boasts an above-average, old and comfortable inn, The Old Stone Ring. Comfortable for hin, that is; the four foot thick stone walls enclose rooms five feet high or less, narrow dark stairs, and some doorways are as low as four feet in height. Taller visitors to Ringrise usually stay at the newer Fernbank Inn at the north end of the village. The best smiths in the Shires are said to work in Ringrise; certainly the best horseshoes come from Ringrise. Many tales are told in the taverns (The Weary Miner,

The Boots & Cat, The Thirsty Throat) of lost mines in the hills nearby and of the ghosts of dwarves and worse that haunt the upper Wardle west of the village. Every year some hin disappear in the mountains near the village, it is true—but far more vanish north of Aercruth each year, too, and it is little cause for comment.

Longflask _____

Population: 700
 Clan Holds: Fernshiver, Nixnoddle, Raggedleap

Longflask is a fairly new place; a busy village of rough stone buildings crammed into a high valley where new and very rich mines have been opened in the last thirty winters. Carts of stone rubble are constantly rumbling through the village and being tipped down the side of the winding road that leads out of the valley to form a huge stony waste.

Weary hin work long hours underground here and do little when they come up save sleep and drink. Every fourth day a hin must, by order of the Sheriff, rest

aboveground; most hin simply sleep their "fourthday" through. Medicine and care in Longflask is probably the best in the Shires; the three clans based here have no desire to lose all their best blood.

Hin who are too young or frail to work the mines are constantly scrambling around the nearby hills in search of new veins of ore rich enough to be delved into for a new mine; over the last dozen years, fourteen new pits have opened.

Mining has become something of a compulsion to hin in Longflask. Highshire draws all of the most ambitious and eager hin of the Shires; where a hard-working hin of Seashire might call it a day, the miner of Longflask will rub weary eyes with numb fingers and attack the rock with pick and hammer again for a few more hours.

Precious metal is plentiful in Longflask although gems are rarer here than further south. Thievery is low; few thieves can make off with a cartload of raw ore in their pockets undetected. What ore is refined here is heavily guarded by the clans; weapons are always at hand for this

is orc country. Dwarves are advised that the hin of Longflask tend to slay dwarves on sight, "just to be sure."

Longflask's only inn bears the curious name of The Walking Mushroom, having to do with a famous monster that early hin exploring the valley had to slay before they could safely start digging. Old hin say that these weird creatures (carnivorous, and very dangerous) are not extinct but have merely withdrawn westward into the mountains where they wait for unwary orcs and hin alike. The taverns of Longflask include The Black Rose, The Wagon Wheel, and The Old Hin's Footwarmer.

Waymeet

Population: Nil (see below)

Clan Holds: Quaeromore

Waymeet is not a settlement but merely the meeting-place of the roads from Longflask and Aercruth which join here for the long run south to Bridle and the rest of the Shires. The Waymeet Inn marks the junction; a fortified inn built in the roundhouse style popular in Wereskalo (see the entry for that village), and considered very good by hin and outlanders alike.

Near the inn lies the sprawling farms of the Quaeromore clan which stretch east of the road as far as the thick, nameless woods shown on the Shire map. Lycanthropy was prevalent in the area some years ago and the wood is said to be infested with worse monsters as well as the lost treasure of a rich dwarf-hold which lies underground somewhere beneath the wood.

Eastshire

This is the part of the Shires most seen by non-hin, who come by way of the hills north of the Achelos Woods to Wereskalo. The rolling, rather bleak hills north of this village give way to rich, gently-rolling farmland which covers almost all of this Shire except for some small forests east of Wardlystone. The hin heavily patrol all of Eastshire, not just the borders, to prevent non-hin visitors slipping

deeper into the Shires unobserved, although visitors are not forbidden to travel in the Shires. Non-hin who come in force, heavily armed and lacking a ready purpose or trade-goods, may well be challenged and find themselves in a stiff fight. Many hin patrols hereabouts are reinforced by hin Masters or friendly human mages hired for the purpose, as humans wielding magic have been a problem in the past. Eastshire's proximity to the Black Eagle Barony has earned it the recent nickname "the Blackwatch," and indeed hin here do keep a close watch on neighboring Karameikos.

Wereskalo

Population: 950

Clan Holds: Fastbuck, Watcheye

The Shireseat of Eastshire is located in this northerly village rather than in central Mallowfern or Rollstone Keep because of its traditional importance as a trade-center with the rest of the world and the attendant headaches that keep a Sheriff here often. This busy trading center deserves special attention because it is the settlement that most visitors to the Shires see, more even than Shireton and Shireton Port.

Wereskalo (the origin of the name is unknown; it may or may not have anything to do with lycanthropes) lies in a bowl-shaped valley surrounded by open grasslands; hin very long ago decided it would be best to confine much of their meetings with the outside world to a single trademoot that they could readily police, and Wereskalo is it.

Wereskalo's homes are slightly different than most in the Shires because of the village's longtime role; halflings live in slightly more secure dwellings than elsewhere in the Shires. The typical hin home in or near Wereskalo is a roundhouse of one story in height, made of mud brick and stone rubble, crowned by a three- or four-story stone tower, or 'watchtop.' Surrounding the house is a circular log palisade which encloses a strip of garden and a stables for mules, ponies, and donkeys. There is usually a well and a chicken coop. Hin storage cellars here are deep

and always have a well-hidden, hard-to-get-at (from the surface) 'back way out.'

Almost every watchtop has a little javelin-throwing ballista or catapult, and hin delight in surprising night intruders who scale palisades or gates with little 'spring gun'-style trap-bows. A typical bow of this type is mounted upon a well-oiled tripod and swivels with lightning speed and silence to fire when its tripwire is disturbed. Such a bow will be triggered by a wire just within the palisade or gate or along the top of the palisade and is usually set to fire four feet off the ground (above halfling height). One end of the trip-wire (which is usually waxed cord) is also connected to pieces of old, rusty metal so grouped that they will clang together as an alarm if the cord is cut or the bow is triggered. Over the years, most thieves have learned to cut their losses and try their trade elsewhere, but there's always one or two just in the process of learning.

Wereskalo has a large open Market Square in the center of the village for traveling merchants to set up stalls. It boasts two good inns and three taverns: The Shirewatch Inn and The Old Trees Inn; and The Flagon At Dawn, The Maiden's Kiss, and The Hunting Hin.

Wyril Watcheye, who has a shop in the village, sells ready-made weapons of good quality and is known far and wide for the excellent armor he crafts to fit clients. It's very expensive and can take as long as two months for full plate armor, which is lightning-fast, but can seem ages to the adventurer in a hurry.

Rollstone Keep

Population: 2,900 (maximum wartime capacity: 8,000)

Clan Holds: Journeyfoot

This stout-walled stone fortress now watches over the coast and the Blight Swamp, guarding against possible invasion from the east. It boasts large towers and a double ring of broad, high walls adorned with far-reaching catapults.

The former village of Rollstone was a fishing-port enlivened by trade with Karameikos. Much shipboard trade still

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goes on in a covert fashion but it goes through the ports farther south on The Shirecoast via transfer points at Harborlee Rock and elsewhere rather than here. Over half of the population of Rollstone Keep consists of the standing army of the Eastshire Fangs, known as "The Blackwatch Regiment." Most of the other hin in town are the Journeyfoot clan who lived here before the village was fortified and are still allowed to fish in their small, ramshackle boats out of the Keep's harbor. Fang officers regularly inspect such boats for contraband which has forced most Journeyfoot smugglers to make a side trip to the fishing-village of Nob's Boots to unload such cargo before returning to their home harbor.

Rollstone Keep is a quiet, fairly light-hearted place despite the frowning stone walls and the many troops. But non-hin will be challenged often and alertly; there is constant fear of some treachery on the part of the Black Eagle Baron. Horses are trained in Rollstone Keep for military use and most of the armor used by the troops of the Shires is made here. If you're half-

ling size, there are over 8,000 mail shirts stored here, well-oiled, for your personal use if you can get them out past the watchful eyes of the guards. The guards are very vigilant because there are also enough spears, arrows, and swords here to sink several merchant ships and enough food stored here to feed all the Shires for a month, even if most of it is in such unappetizing form as tons of raw turnips and parsnips. The food-store is constantly being replenished from all over the Shires by order of the Sheriffs, who pay for all this by shipping the food that has been stored the longest to Karamaikos or back to the Shires for sale and consumption.

The one inn in the Keep is run by the Fangs (so they can keep watch over who comes and goes). The inn is known as The Happy Fisherman. There are only five taverns in town so as to keep crowds of drinkers—mainly soldiers—small and controllable by the Krondar and senior Fang officers. They are the Rollstone Arms, The Tired Soldier, The Sleeping Spectre, The Groaning Cask, and The

Black Pit (listed in descending order of cleanliness and quality). The shops in the Keep are spartan but well-stocked.

The actual governor of the Keep, in everyday and practical fact if not in name, is the Commander of the Keep, the Knight-Hero and Fang General Jolthiir Battlebur (8th level, and the constant bearer of a sword *+1, flames on command*, a weapon detailed in the D&D® Expert rulebook). Jolthiir has a private store of *potions of healing* that he will use to aid himself or those who do service to the Shires or hin in the vicinity, and are laid low.

Mallowfern

Population: 800

Clan Holds: Boldnose, Hoefurrow, Rally-tongue

Mallowfern is a busy and prosperous cross-roads village where many hin merchants buy cargoes of fresh food to take out of the Shires via Nob's Boots for sale in Ierendi or Karamaikos, and many imported goods from Wereskalot change hands.

It is the halfling equivalent of Wereskalt's "trade-moot," and a center of 'crafts-hin.' There are many small shops here producing clothing, leather goods, ornamented furniture and even stained and patterned windows. Pottery, whittling, and embroidery flourish here, and many dice are carved here. Many marbles are fashioned here of dyed and specially-treated clay, finished with glazes containing secret and mysterious ingredients that give the marbles a certain shine, or feel, or ease of rolling. Exotic plants from other lands are nurtured here, and cuttings sold to traveling merchant hin for transport deeper into the Shires.

Mallowfern is a happy, bustling place of great beauty with many large trees remaining in the center of the settlement, some houses and shops even being built among their roots or lower branches. The famous "mallowferns" for which the village is named, which grow nowhere else in the Known World, have thick and squashy white roots that yield a fine perfumed oil used in lamps and in the making of scented ointments and laxatives. Mikkal Mallowfern's Fine Perfume Shop is the foremost supplier of finished mallowfern products, but almost everyone in the village dabbles in the use of the mallowfern.

The foremost inn in the village is The Wizard's Wand, run by the (human) Enchanter Berek Shindel who still practises magic for fees and is married to the halfling Ammagil Rallytongue. Travelers can also stay at Bluehollow, an inn dug out under the roots of a gigantic tree, "quite big enough for humans and elves," as its proprietor, Tetha Longtoes, assures everyone. They can dine and drink at the Mallowfern Mistypit tavern or at the slightly less grand watering-holes of The Way To Rollstone and The Wounded Wyvern.

Mallowfern is a damp, often misty place; travelers describe the predominant color of the place at such times as "misty blue." There is a fine stables in Mallowfern where horses can be bought and sold, and are also trained, bred, and doc-tored, run by the Hoefurrow clan.

Wardlystone

Population: 300

Clan Holds: Alehill, Quiverjump, Shindlewood, Stoneplow, Tumblebrook
This village is a center for milling; the mills up and down the Wardle in the vicinity (almost all on the river's east or northernmost bank) grind much of the flour used in the Shires. There are still two old sawmills here that supply cut lumber from the forests east of Wardlystone to the Shires all around.

The village is old, cobbled, and full of small, well-pruned trees and shrubs, irregular flagstone paving, and small stone houses with tiled or wood-shingled roofs. Many cats can be seen in the streets of Wardlystone; originally brought in from eastern lands to control the rats that fed in the mills, they have since risen to a better life of indolence and half-hearted bird-chasing. Wardlystone is also the place where wooden cages are fashioned, some of them quite ornate and beautiful.

There are many willows on the banks of the Wardle where trees that yield better lumber were long ago cut down. Wardlystone is a happy, if rather damp, home to fairly well-to-do hin but lacks the wealthy individual hin found in Mallowfern or Deepmoss, its two nearest neighbors on the Coastfollow Road.

The village's old stone inn is known (for forgotten reasons) as The Cleric's Cloak. There are also two small guest-houses on the main street: Sevelda's, run by Sevelda Silvertoes, a kindly old hin female who is deceptively tough in a tussle, and is 5th level, and The Fair View, which stands on a knoll and rises some four stors to overlook the Wardle. The Fair View is run by Chjoam Treeshadow, a crusty old hin who can relate almost all of the treasure-lore and spooky tales of all the Shires to those who sit patiently and keep him in drink.

The taverns in the village are quiet, orderly places, one on either side of the local Sheriffpost which boasts only four Krondar. They are The Trumpet Falls Tankard (named after a tiny rapids on the Wardle which disappeared long ago, with the building of the mills) and The

Wardlystone Witch, named for a long-dead human villager of mysterious magical powers.

The Wardlystone Witch came from Glantri and was found slain by unknown magic, presumably at the hands of someone—or *something*—that had followed her from Glantri and eventually tracked her down. The witch lived in a hut on the banks of the Wardle above the village. Old hin can show the place to travelers. PCs will have to dig extensively to find the *crystal ball*, wrapped in an *elven cloak* and buried in a chest deep beneath some willow saplings that is all that is left of the witch's worldly goods. The entire area radiates a faint magic due to many spells cast there by the witch and by others trying to find or eradicate any magic she may have left behind, so detection spells will be useless. Details of the witch's magical items will be found in the DM's Book of the Basic rules set.

There is said to be a *curse* on the witch's possessions that draws some horrible monster to them after they have been unearthed—but as no hin living in Wardlystone has ever found any of the witch's treasure or wanted to go looking for it, the truth of this rumor can only be verified the hard way.

Nob's Boots

Population: 150

Clan Holds: Trundlestump

This poor, ramshackle fishing village is small and lackluster. Often lashed by fierce storms blowing across the Gulf of Halag, it is a wet, cold place where everything not made of stone soon rots. The lone hin clan that lived here were almost the only inhabitants of the place until recently. The village still stinks of fish.

Partially repaired and rotted old fishing boats lie everywhere and nets are draped over these old hulks and on the sloping slate roofs of most of the houses to dry and for repairs.

The small harbor has a tiny pebble beach on which are drawn the fishing boats; some twenty-six or so currently in use. The boats are all small vessels that can be hauled ashore by a dozen or so

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hin. There is also a newer, stout stone wharf that partially shelters the old harbor and is always busy with ships loading or unloading cargo.

The small and shady smuggling trade between Karameikos and the Shires that is not handled by hin pirates also comes through Nob's Boots, now that Rollstone has been fortified and garrisoned by Fang soldiers. Nob's Boots sees little money by way of all this trade but it has grown in importance and seen its roads repaired and its harbor improved so that storm waters no longer blow up over the beach and right into the seaward houses.

The locals still spend their nights in the mist-shrouded Nob's Arms watching and listening for the creak and groan of the hin fishing boats coming in. When a boat does make the harbor, the whole tavern empties out onto the beach to haul it ashore, ply its crew with warm stew and ale, and empty its catch onto the beach where it is salted straightaway by lamp-light and stowed in covered carts. No one charges for this service; all the hin simply do it for each other and always have.

In recent years the tavern has opened some rooms for the night, but Nob's Boots still has no proper inn. It is a hardened, stony grey place with a character all its own and is named for a long-ago half-ling who was wrecked ashore here and lost his boots in the mud (they have never yet been found).

On the road between Nob's Boots and Rollstone Keep is an inn, The Murdered Princess; its name refers to the fair Navrilstar, whose passing is described in "The Ballad of Nob Nar" in the *Players Guide*. Nob Nar and the Nob the village was named for are no relation to each other. The "Princess" is run by the hin adventurer Spiira Quickmagic Coppertoos (described in the NPCs section of this book). The "Princess" is a luxurious, well-appointed place dug into a hillside, furnished with many ornate brass lamps and panelled in dark, glossy polished woods from the interior of the Shires. Some rooms in it are quite large enough to be comfortable for humans, but wizards from Glantri are not welcome.

Seashire

The richest and most heavily-populated of all the Shires is Seashire. Well over half the hin in the Shires live in Seashire, which has three ports and encompasses the outflows of two of the Shire's largest rivers, the Wardle and the Ithypool.

The promontory between Burny and the Hingulf rises into high, windswept hills that drop to the sea in sheer rock cliffs of up to five hundred feet in height. Much of the Shire is green and verdant pastureland and farm fields that slope gently toward the sea. There are thick woods left only east of Leafkindle and in the lee of the Burny Cliffs, but lighter forests remain north of Moon Hill, east of Thantabbar, and northeast of Stillpool. Woods once covered this whole area and yielded some of the finest ship-timber of the entire coastal kingdoms, as far east as Thyatis. Most of the tall, relatively straight trees are gone now, but some few remain; their cutting is carefully controlled by the Sheriffs and local Clanmasters.

Seashire is nicknamed 'Wetshire' because of the many rainstorms and fogs that blow in from the sea and often enshroud it in day-long cloaks of damp concealment. Unless a storm blows on through the night, however, the mist usually breaks in the dark hours and is moving when dawn comes. The sun tends to shine bright and hot after a storm and dries things out thoroughly. The best farms in Seashire all have proper irrigation and drainage to keep crops thriving during such rapidly-changeable conditions.

The capital of The Five Shires, Shireton, and the related Shireton Port, are described separately after this general tour of the Shires.

Thantabbar

Population: 10,000
Clan Holds: Leafshine, Quicksilver, Standfast, Stormhin
This calm, business-without-hassles port lies east of Shireton Port along the coast. Goods come to and from it along the Deepmoss Road and its crowded harbor

sees ships from all nearby coastal lands. Many non-hin live in Thantabbar, finding it pleasant, relatively clean, and quiet.

Thantabbar was half-heartedly fortified long ago. Walls and a fort still stand watchfully over the town's bustling commerce. Caravans arrive and leave daily, and the harbor never sleeps.

Thantabbar seems remarkably free of intrigue and hard feelings. This may be, however, due to the fact that lighthearted hin are having their usual fun and not mixing with the non-hin who may (quietly) be up to all sorts of doings of their own. The true state of affairs in Thantabbar is up to the DM; certainly it enjoys a reputation as one of the cleanest and safest ports anywhere in the Known World.

Four times a year Thantabbar hosts huge Festivals—quite apart from the traditional hin feast days—at which hin looking to buy or sell the rare and exotic gather to examine wares brought specially from the farthest reaches of the Known World. No doubt much covert business also takes place at these Festivals; the Krondar keep watch, but by and large they consider the Festivals a healthy outlet for lawless elements.

Thantabbar maintains a number of pleasant parks within its walls, each containing a pool. These pools are an emergency water supply as well as ornament, and by law there is a stiff fine for fouling the water by swimming, urinating or washing in it, or throwing litter into it. Travelers, you have been warned.

Notable features of Thantabbar include Fanghold (Thantabbar Castle), home to local hin military; the Sulshar Stables, a horse-trading establishment run by the hin Knight-Hero Bulzim Sulshar (8th level); Wolfwar Weaponry & Armor (Wolfwar is a very skilled human smith of 18 Strength and Dexterity, and is a 4th level fighter); and Shumbril Tower.

Shumbril Tower is home to the soft spoken, gentle Alace Shumbril, a 7th level human female magic user. She is rather reclusive, but owns and is protective of The Hins' Own Magic & Mysteries Shop, which sells potions and spell com-

ponents.

Thantabbar has almost 30 Krondar, which may account for its peaceful aspect.

DEEPMOSS

Population: 650

Clan Holds: Bristlebur, Streamford, Treeshadow

The pretty village of Deepmoss lies in a tree-cloaked hollow where two roads meet: the Coastfollow Road, from Shireton to Wardlystone in Eastshire; and the Deeps Road, which runs from Thantabbar into the interior of the Shires through Leafkindle. Deepmoss lies in the midst of what was once deep woods but is now rolling pastureland and cultivated fields. A quiet and prosperous community, it sees much traffic on the roads, lying as it does so close to both Thantabbar and Shireton.

To travelers Deepmoss is known for its shaded, mossy beauty; cool springs rise here to yield clear, cool drinking water for horses and hin alike. The old, large-timbered houses of the village lie mainly on the north or west side of the Coastfollow Road, dug into the hillside which rises at their backs.

In the middle of the town rises the stone-towered Sheriffpost (eight Krondar are stationed here; two for the village and six 'Krondar of the Road'), flanked on one side by the lone tavern in Deepmoss, and on the other by one of the two inns in town.

The tavern, The Silent Knight, is cozy, cheap, and dimly-lit. It is apt to be very crowded on hot summer nights. The inn is known as New Inn; it replaced an old one, the Green Vulture, which burnt down some years ago and stood on the same site. It is above-average in its prices but quite good in service and accommodations.

At the west end of the village, a long walk away from the tavern and the village pond, is the Deepdell Inn; a larger, colder, and less expensive inn that rambles up the hillside in a series of sloping wooden structures all joined together like the branches of some gigantic tree. It is a

charming place, but there is a great risk of fire so no candles, lamps, or the like are allowed except in the great hearthroom at the inn's entrance, which makes for a lot of stumbling and cursing in the dark among non-hin guests trying to find their own rooms on the stairs late at night. Glowing fungi are gathered and placed in the roof-beams to aid in reading room numbers and avoiding fellow guests in the halls, but these fungi are ambulatory and are apt to move away from where their illumination is wanted into warmer, cozier places, such as occupied beds. Nonetheless, the Deepdell is a favorite gathering-place of many old adventurers of the Known World who enjoy sitting in its gloom and talking of high deeds done long ago and the worsening state of the Known World in general.

LEAFKINDLE

Population: 200

Clan Holds: Belnose, Mouldwalk, Proudstride

Despite its name, which may bring to mind bonfire and burning, Leafkindle is a tranquil and beautiful forest village much loved by elves and hin who like to be close to woodlands. It stands within a grove of tall shade-trees with open farm fields all around. Leafkindle straddles a busy road that links Heartshire, Highshire, and Seashire together. Leafkindle is a popular way-stop, with an excellent inn and a bustling market for nearby farmers.

The inn, the White Wizard, is very old and is said to have been built by a Lawful human magic user. Certainly it was built for humans or other creatures taller than hin. In summer it houses non-hin who travel into the Shires to trade with hin, who come here to meet them.

Leafkindle is policed by eight Krondar; two for the village and six 'Krondar of the Road.' As well as keeping the peace, they are charged with observing the appearances of those who pass through Leafkindle so that movements of suspicious or wanted beings about the Shires can be traced.

Deep, old woods still stand beyond the farms east of Leafkindle. They are home

to some hin and a few elves and are quite safe. Six or more hin Masters are also said to dwell in these woods, notably Levalas Quickhand Heartshire. Several human magic users are also said to have retired from the intrigue of the lands of men to this area.

Leafkindle has a lone tavern, The Duskmoot, at the south end of the settlement. The first of its two guesthouses is run by the Proudstride clan and properly called Manygardens, but is more often known with tongue-in-cheek casualness as 'the Proud House.' The second guesthouse has a walled garden with much ivy and gnarled old trees and a pool, and is a favorite spot for adventuring bands and wealthy business associates to meet for private conferences. Known as The Crystal Helm, this house is operated by a half-living ex-adventurer, the Knight-Hero Bellothiir Yollersshield, and his human wife, the wizardess (9th L M-U, AL Lawful) Ashaera Synribbar.

Leafkindle is the place to buy fresh farm produce if you live within a day's ride of it, and it is also the spot where livestock and horses are traded or sold. Old hin who are interested in good stock come here in the summer months just to watch good animals change hands.

MOON HILL

Population: 100

Clan Holds: Fernscatter, Heatherfoot, Rummelmores, Stoutbottle, Xebel

This village has a well-deserved "fey" reputation as a place where magic is plentiful and halflings and elves live together in peace and merriment. Many ex-adventurers, hin and non-hin, make Moon Hill their home, and wealthy hin whose businesses lie in Shireton but who prefer a quiet, bucolic life have grand houses hidden away in the trees and beneath the ground here.

If the Shires were to be invaded and no army stood to bar the attackers, it is this place that would prove costliest to take, not the fortified cities of Shireton or Thantabbar or the fortress of Rollstone Keep. Adventurers and retired adventurers who dwell here command almost all

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magic known to man, from the Seven Secret Crafts of Glantri (see *The Principalities of Glantri Gazetteer*) to the little-known arts of the hin Masters.

Magical items galore lie hidden and well-guarded here, and those who learn of Moon Hill's reputation will find tutors here, for many a powerful mage has retired here and has the time to spare for teaching and demonstration. The dishonest and the opportunistic are warned, however, that the kindly next-door neighbor of a tutor one is planning to dupe or rob may indeed be the wise best friend of one's intended victim, with the spells of one perhaps twice as high in experience levels as one's tutor!

On the surface, this quiet little community is almost too quiet for a settlement this close to Shireton. The residents like it quiet and have the power to make and keep it that way. Undesirables may find themselves magically compelled or hurried onwards, or may become hopelessly lost in an open field with a clear view of known roads and countryside all around. A Thyatian ambassador of par-

ticularly reckless stupidity (several ambassadors before the present one) once learned of Moon Hill's reputation and sent a half dozen agents to gather some magical items. The agents, high-level thieves, were all delivered back to the ambassador's private chambers, one a night, to appear beside him hideously transformed by magic but otherwise unharmed.

Other hin whisper of dark non-hin forces from Shireton Port that mounted a midnight raid upon Moon Hill. The next morning, small and gory pieces of the raiders were found on a back street in the Port, neatly arranged amid the blood, to spell out the message: "DON'T BE SO FOOLISH AGAIN."

On the surface, Moon Hill is a sleepy little town with no inn, although it has a camping-grove with drinking-water watched over by two hin Masters who take care to keep hidden most of the time. It does have a tavern, run by a 30th level human fighter known as Corwin Longsword Bloodstar, who has a strict rule of

'no magic use inside the tavern or at the tavern or those within it.' The tavern is known as The Useless Unicorn and travelers are warned that anyone creating a nuisance may be told by some frail old man or other to "step outside, fancy-pants," where the aged patron will feel free to unleash his 30th level magic. Remember, you have been warned.

On the road south and east of Moon Hill, just before the Moon Hill Road joins the main Coastfollow Road between Shireton and Deepmoss, there is an inn for the use of those travelers who wish to go through Moon Hill but not stop there. It is a charming old place dug into a hillside so that only the white marble fountain of a nude hin and elf with water spouting from their mouths can be seen. It is run by a Knight Hero (8th L halfling) Simmera Oakhollow, and her longtime adventuring companions Orbold Eridanor (10th L human cleric) and Janszuth Irmpetiir (6th L human fighter, and former Ierendi pirate). The inn is named The Chime of Charms for reasons known only to the three companions, and is a

reasonable and very pleasant place to stay. Travelers who are in no hurry along the Coastfollow Road often stay there; those who use it to pass through Moon Hill without tarrying are advised that unless they and their beasts of burden are partial to night riding, they will have to make camp just inside Heartshire at the junction where the road linking Fishtickle Bridge and Leafkindle meets the Moon Hill Road.

Burny

Population: 250

Clan Holds: Quizzinglas, Vindlewalk, Woodwort

Burny is a small fishing-village perched partway up a rugged cliff, above a tiny, naturally-sheltered harbor. Like Nob's Boots, it has been revitalized in recent times by shipping trade that is avoiding a larger harbor nearby: Shireton Port in this case.

A good, fast road across sloping farmlands links Burny with Shireton, and it is to and from Shireton that most of Burny's overland trade comes. The balance of the goods goes to and from Heartshire by way of Stillpool and Sateeka so as to avoid the congestion of Shireton. Burny also ships fresh fish into Shireton and Stillpool, although both towns can get their own fish through Shireton Port and Rundegos.

So Burny remains a largely forgotten place, lashed by fierce winter sea-storms when ice can close the road and effectively seal Burny off from the rest of the Shires. Nonetheless, the farms above Burny are home to three hin clans, and Burny does have a good if impoverished inn, The Lanternglow.

It also has no less than three taverns: The Cliffhead, The Burny Bungoleir, and The Ship's Deck. All are cozy, well-worn places, where the villagers hoist a pint or two and talk of old, bad storms of the years past, and of pirates, and of where the hin came from when they sailed to the Shires out of the mysterious past. No one in Burny really knows where the hin came from, but they all like to think that they have some sort of link to the "ancient

days" (the hin actually came ashore far to the south of here, near the cape that juts south between Bramberose and Tothmeer, but don't try to tell that to anyone in Burny).

The Burny Bungoleir gets its name from its location on the road that curves inland and then southwest to Rundegos. The first road to follow that route was built by an ancient hin named Bungoleir, and old hin still refer to the stretch of road between Burny and Rundegos as "The Bungoleir Road."

Stillpool

Population: 380

Clan Holds: Battlebur, Brambleshun, Littleglade, Woodgrott

Stillpool is a farming village that lies, as its name implies, along the edges of a small spring-fed pool. Stillpool is much plagued by insects in the hottest weather; if a Master is near, he or she usually contrives to bring a breeze inland from the sea to keep the village pleasant. Stillpool's simple half-timbered homes and barns stand amid tall, very old, widely-spaced pines.

The northwestern edge of the community, where the roads from Sateeka and Rundegos meet, is a busy hive of activity where several small factories are located, among them a noted wheelwright's shop and a good smithy. The clans based in and near Stillpool strive to keep the community self-sufficient in terms of food so that it can profit from all else it produces.

Stillpool has one inn, The Running Hin, and two taverns: The Seven Swords and The Pineview. It is a peaceful place without a dark past or legends of treasure and such, and prefers to stay that way.

Heartshire

The traditional center of the mining activity in the Shires, the mines of Heartshire are now mostly worked-out and superceded by fresher, newer deposits being mined in the Black Spires in Highshire. Heartshire is for the most part rural, with hill-country and pockets of old, deep woods where there are no

farms. The upper reaches of the Ithypool River split Heartshire into two parts, connected by the bustling community of Fishtickle Bridge. Above "the Bridge", the Ithypool widens into the three pools for which it is named; in ascending order, they are Muimzir, Nethlond, and Arluin, rounded remnants of their long-ago elven names. The Ithypool rises in the mountains of Darokin and roars down through a series of gorges and cataracts into the Shires northwest of Arluin.

The Flur River does the same at the southwestern end of Heartshire; it also comes out of the mountains of Darokin and runs through Heartshire. The Flur is navigable from its mouth up only as far as Sateeka and is not used for trade; wicked rapids and its frighteningly fast, cold flow prevent it from being used further. The only road through the Black Spires, the road that connects the Shires with friendly Darokin, does use the valley cut by the Flur, following along beside it to pass through the first rank of peaks before perilously climbing over the second rank to descend into Darokin at the village of Mar.

Sateeka

Population: 990

Clan Holds: Elintel, Forestfar, Hairytoes, Kittledance, Lamintar, Whisperrun

The Shireseat of Heartshire is a forested village known across the Shires for its circular cedar-shingled houses. They cluster among the trees like giant mushrooms, looking comical and yet somehow right and fitting. Sateeka is definitely the most relaxed of all the Shireseats, seeming somehow sleepy and peaceful despite the considerable trade between the Shires and Darokin which passes through its streets.

To defend the pass through the mountains from orcs or other invaders, a Fang is permanently stationed at Sateeka although it usually, except in the severest winter weather, camps along the road northwest of the actual village. Almost 900 armed and trained hin can be mustered in this area within a day to face any threat.

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Sateeka itself is a place of woodcarvers and wagonmakers. Hin businesses here also produce candles, round wax-coated cheeses of sharp cheddar flavor and crumbly texture, and scented soaps and ointments. Once a busy smelting and refining center, Sateeka does comparatively little metal-work today, although the mines above Nethlond still produce silver and a little copper which are made in Sateeka into forge-bars for sale and transport elsewhere in the Known World.

Sateeka is a place much loved by its inhabitants, although even within the Shires it is considered something of a backwater. It has three inns, all with human-sized rooms for the convenience of traders from Darokin: The Miners' Rest, on the western edge of the village, The Hungry Hippogriff, in the center of the built-up area, and The Singing Minstrel; on the road east to Fishtickle Bridge. There are also two taverns, The Loaf And Plow and The Shirestone, both run down but comfortable.

There is a Sheriffpost with a large jail beneath it and a posting of 20 Krondar, four for the village and sixteen 'Krondar of the Road' who patrol east as far as Fishtickle Bridge, west as far as the Flur, and south to the borders of Heartshire.

Small, stone walled farms lie southeast of Sateeka, between the roads from Stillpool and Fishtickle Bridge. These grow corn and other grains for sale at the mills in Brookbank and Fishtickle Bridge.

Fishtickle Bridge

Population: 960

Clan Holds: Cindertoes, Deepdell, Gullybuck, Ilingall, Pytchplume, Summergarth

Fishtickle Bridge is as busy and growing as Sateeka is sleepy and laid-back. It sits at the junction of two roads in the center of settled Heartshire and spans the Ithypool River. A milling and market center, it is home to a surprising large number of hin clans and is a 'place with a future' that is eagerly looked forward to. Indeed, overly ambitious hin are sometimes referred to as "proper Fishtickles;" the term is not entirely derogatory but defin-

itely refers to someone who is pushy and impatient and in a hurry to improve their lot in life.

Named for a tiny, long-ago plank bridge where skillful hin used to "tickle" fish from the river (snatching them with a bare hand and closing a thumb and fingers suddenly into the gills), Fishtickle Bridge today is a noisy village of tall, steep-roofed houses and ardent gossip where the streets seldom grow quiet the clock around as wagons rumble through carrying goods to and from far places.

At least one well-known 'fence' (buyer of stolen or questionable property, no questions asked) is located here: the 6th level halfling Nordobo Flashfoot, who runs a "junk" shop at the east end of the village.

Fishtickle Bridge also has a lumberyard whose caring, skilled owner, Oldbuck Deepdell, specializes in custom cut woods while the customer waits; and Pelm Shedowhin, a jeweler and silversmith of distinction. Twelve Krondar (four for "the Bridge," the others 'Krondar of the Road') are stationed here in a Sheriffpost that stands right at the three-way junction of roads where the fresh produce market is held and village life is centered.

Also overlooking the market triangle is Fishtickle Bridge's only inn, the four-story, rather dilapidated Sundargun Inn, named for the dead human adventurer who founded it long ago. Now run by two 4th level halfling brothers, Nip and Horl Battlebur, it is worn but comfortable inside, provides meals for all who stay there and some first-class service, and charges accordingly. Regular guests swear by it; others consider its rates typically Fishticklian. "The Bridge" also has two taverns, The Downed Dwarf and The Dancing Orc and a restaurant, The Fish Under The Bridge. The restaurant is considered pricey but good, the taverns pricey but indifferent. Now and again on warm evenings, gigantic brawls between drunken taverngoers will erupt into the streets where the hin of Fishtickle Bridge have a habit of all joining in for a good "punch-up," slipping away adroitly when the Krondar arrive in force. Visitors

involved in such an altercation may find it harder to vanish afterwards.

Many mills can be found along the Ithypool both above and below the bridge of Fishtickle Bridge; rates are quite competitive, and the millers are skilled and well-equipped.

Shadowgate

Population: 660

Clan Holds: Dappleglade, Heartwood, Mistwalker

This village is another place where halflings and elves dwell peacefully together, although it is also a center of logging with farms being established as the forests are cut back further and further north and south of the village. The homes in Shadowgate tend to be half timbered and much decorated by carved wooden ornamentation; "gingerbread," as it is sometimes called.

Many skilled woodcarvers still practice their trade here; the travel-chests of Shadowgate, cleverly inlaid with the owner's name or a design or crest in woods of contrasting hues, are popular across the Shires and even among human merchants outside the lands of the hin, who find them beautifully made and both solid and decorative.

Shadowgate is home to a number of hin Masters, too, and at least two human magic users of note: Silverhair (Deleetha Arathim, once of Darokin, 7th level), and Junsable Miraeikos (once of Thyatis, 6th level), both of whom live alone in separate, remote towers in the trees.

A hin who dwells in Shadowgate, Rolof Heartwood (6th level halfling), is famous for the musical instruments he makes—flutes, harps, and titterbucs (see the *Players Guide* for a description of this latter instrument)—of exceptional quality. Rolof's prices are very high because he has over three seasons of outstanding orders from merchants as far away as Thyatis and doesn't like to hurry his work almost as much as he hates to keep people waiting, so anyone wishing to 'jump the queue' will have to pay handsomely.

Shadowgate lacks the Sheriff's Hall that Sateeka (the Shireseat) has, but its



Sheriffpost is almost identical in size to Sateeka's. It has only nine Krondar stationed within, however; two for the village and seven to patrol the uplands around Arluin and the upper Ithypool for monsters and the occasional outlaw that come out of the mountains or the upland woods.

The village itself is a peaceful place whose inhabitants all seem to share the habit of singing or whistling while they work. New and richly fertile farms have been established both north and south of Shadowgate, as the forest is cut back, and farmers here specialize in root crops and melons of various sorts, taking them to market in Fishtickle Bridge and Leafkindle.

There is also a newly-established winery in Shadowgate; hin across the Shires are proud to have another wine of their own available across the Known World but aren't quite sure of its lasting quality yet; the winery has only been in operation some seven summers. Its product is a dark, amber to brown-hued wine with a strong "woody" or "nutty" flavor, an

acquired taste that is favored by at least the Karamaikan and Thyatian ambassadors to the Shires among humans, and may come to be more widely accepted as the years pass. It remains to be seen if Lord Caine's preference for this wine is genuine or merely a fondness for its strong flavor that can readily mask drugs or poisons added to it.

Shadowgate has one inn, The Green Druid—old, and luxurious, run by the Mistwalker clan, and very reasonable—and two taverns, The Sword Held High and The Spitting Dragon, both old and cozy and pleasant, but undistinguished, with fairly cheap prices.

BROOKBANK

Population: 90
 Clan Holds: Barrowhin, Tallthicket
 The smallest, most rural of the settlements of The Five Shires is tiny Brookbank. It is a farming village located on the banks of The Dancing Water which rises in the deep woods (an unsafe place, local lore warns, whispering of

"dark beasts in the gnarly woods") to the west of the village and runs through Brookbank to empty into the lowest and largest of the three pools on the Ithypool River, Muimzir.

Brookbank has three Krondar stationed at its Sheriffpost; an old and run-down (but cheap) inn, the Golden Goat; a rowdy tavern of similar age and low prices, The Dragon's Death; several mills; and ten or so farms. It is a happy, sleepy place.

Southshire

Most southerly and westerly of The Five Shires, Southshire was where halflings first landed in what is now the Shires; the hand of the hin has been felt here on the land the longest. Hin have all but cleared the woods that once cloaked this area; small forests survive only along the coast and in the hills east of Rattlecart. Most of this Shire is old, well-worked farmland now declining in prosperity, grassy hills that serve as pasture to large herds of sheep, and soaring mountains. One large

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river, the Flur, cuts across Southshire to empty into the sea at Bramlerose; it is fast-flowing and cold, but navigable past busy Flagonford to Sateeka. Hin of this Shire (except for those of Tothmeer and perhaps Flagonford) tend to be quiet, conservative, and peace-loving; those who love the cut-and-thrust of adventure and of commerce have largely gone elsewhere in the Shires.

Tothmeer

Population: 11,600

Clan Holds: Hardflask, Idelwise, Knackknell, Nimblefoot, Nudgestone, Vailwash, Yollersshield

The oldest port of The Five Shires is today a cobbled, slate- and tile-roofed stone city that completely fills a natural valley at the head of an inlet that is sheltered by Toth Isle. Chief naval base, shipbuilding center, and pirate stronghold of the Shires, its bleak docks and walls hold and handle an incredible amount of trade-goods each year; it is the chief port-of-call in the Shires for ships of Darokin and Ierendi. Tothmeer is jealously guarded by both rakish pirate ships and large, trim vessels of the navy armed with projecting rams and a large battery of catapults, each navy ship having an extra mast that enables it to run up a large spinnaker sail for chasing down ships when it has a following wind. Toth Port is large and well laid-out so that battered ships limping into port can readily reach a drydock slip.

The city above the harbor is solidly-built and plain and buildings tend to rise five stories or more, although the streets slope so steeply in places that a building might be six stories tall on one side and only four on the other. In winter, ice makes many of the streets impassable except to small hin who love to slide; a stout net keeps them from shooting right out into the harbor.

There are many "streets of stairs" winding through the city, however, sheltered by buildings and even covered in places. These are known as "rises," and in winter much of Tothmeer's trade is bundled up and down these streets by strong, sweating hin who wear only breeches,

boots, and heavy gloves even in icy gales, because their work makes the sweat boil off them. When they grow chilled or weary, they duck into one of the buildings along the route for a mug of hot stew and a few minutes by the fire. Not a house in Tothmeer will turn away a wet or cold visitor in winter, be it orc, hin, or lizard man, so long as it is alone and leaves its weapons outside.

The hinlings of Tothmeer lead an enviable childhood, entertained not only by ice-slides in winter and jumping into piles of fish in the summer, but pirates who do well have a habit of giving old rusty daggers and bones and broken ship-gear and similar trophies to the young hin in the streets, and many a wide-eyed hin has borne home a jeweled but broken-bladed dagger to show his or her parents.

When pirates bring home cargoes of wood in winter, the whole city has ample to burn; when they capture cargoes of clothing or cloth, sudden fashions sweep the city. The naval hin turn a blind eye to all of this, and indeed often come to the aid of stricken pirate vessels, frantically shifting contraband cargo from a sinking vessel to their own side-by-side with the pirate crew, and retaining none of it when they reach the docks of Tothmeer. All of this sort of thing will be strenuously denied if a foreign ambassador complains about the subject, but it occurs nonetheless.

Tothmeer's chief industry is shipbuilding, although it does provide fish to Rattlecart and Flagonford. Some of the best halfling netmakers also reside in Tothmeer, and more pirates call Tothmeer home than any other place in the Shires. Tothmeer also has a Fang garrison of almost 1,000 for defense of Southshire, and is policed by twenty Kronstar who have two Sheriffposts and a separate Jail-hole as well as the Sheriff's Hall. It has no less than seven inns, and sixteen taverns.

Rundegos

Population: 800

Clan Holds: Plashdeep, Upplemiir, Winegullet

Rundegos is fairly typical in layout and

character of the smaller ports in the Shires. Used by smugglers and legitimate shippers lightly but steadily over the years, it remains primarily a fishing and farming community, busy and respectable and, on the surface, rather unexciting.

It has a famous hin restaurant, The Sizzling Skillet; an expensive but very good inn, The Black Cloak; expert sail, net, rope, and ship-repair services; and several interesting residents.

These interesting residents include a retired halfling Knight-Hero, Blasko Thirl, who dwells in "Swordblade Tower" and is reputed to have amassed much treasure in his long career; the Webmaster, a reclusive 6th level human magic user; Meltor "the Faithful," and Karst Plashdeep.

Meltor is a 4th level human cleric who has come to the Shires to live as a hermit. He will heal for fees in order to support himself, but will not go adventuring under any circumstances.

Karst Plashdeep makes a living as a shield-maker and by training those who can pay in the use of weapons. He is a 6th level halfling, old and cynical and much scarred. He is afraid of no one, snaps and snarls and makes sharp cracks constantly, is hairy and dirty and is a very skilled warrior well practiced in teaching human fighters. He charges very little (5 cp to 5 sp) for well-made, custom-sized shields. His specialty is the 1-gp razor-edged throwing shield which can be hurled by an inside handle like a child or hinling spins a top and slices for 2-8 damage when it hits.

Flagonford

Population: 900

Clan Holds: Foxfollow, Horsetail, Omblestaff, Pipesmoke, Zindlestone
This pleasant, tree-cloaked village lies just west of the Flur River at the juncture of the Coastfollow and Overland Roads where they both give way to the Tothmeer Road. Barges come upriver from Bramlerose to unload here; Flagonford is always crowded with coaches, carts, and stout overland wagons. The Horsetail

clan maintains a fleet of large sledges and sleighs here to aid in winter trade and transportation in the vicinity; they also raise many shaggy-coated dogs to pull them.

Flagonford may be primarily a village devoted to the shipping of goods, but the fast Flur river also supports several mills, including a sawmill that serves an excellent local furniture factory and coachworks. Tursk Omblestaff, a noted cooper, has his main barrel works here and floats great rafts of casks down the Flur to Bramlerose for use by the shippers there (3 cp a cask to the shippers, only).

Flagonford is a work-hard, play hard place with an excellent inn, The Five Gold Flagons, run by Unther Greatbelly Pipesmoke, (5th L). There are two taverns, The Glendar (cozy and luxuriously appointed; quiet, pricey, and good, run by Appla "the Winker" Hairytoes, 6th level, a master of most dice and card games), and The Flur Fish (run by Beldor Greybeard Zindlestone, an 8th level Knight-Hero retired here to watch the world go by and hear news of doings in the world beyond his doors from passing travelers).

Most of the local hin clans maintain large livestock herds and bring their animals to Flagonford or Rattlecart for slaughtering and curing ere they are shipped elsewhere for sale. In Flagonford, most go by wagon to Shireton or by barge to Bramlerose and thence by ship to Ierendi, Karameikos, and other lands.

Flagonford has a small Sheriffpost with four local Krondar and fourteen 'Kron-dar of the Road' who patrol the roads as far as Rattlecart and Rundegos and the countryside on the west side of the Flur as far as the Bramlerose Woods and the Toth Hills.

Flagonford is also home to a rather mysterious band of human and elven adventurers who spend much of their time in the Black Spires battling orcs and searching. This group is known as The Fireswords, and they have some sort of secret agreement or understanding with the Sheriffs for they are never hindered by the Kron-dar. On several occasions they have appeared out of nowhere to aid hin

beleaguered by orcs or lost and weakened by harsh winter weather. It is likely that they would confront and battle anyone defying the peace and laws of the Shires. The names and true powers of The Fireswords are not known, although they are said to include several fighters of strength, of both sexes, and at least two magic users. The true intentions of this group are left for the DM to decide; it is suggested that they be made at least four levels higher, on average, than any bands of player characters adventuring in the Shires.

Bramlerose

Population: 700

Clan Holds: Darkforest, Stormweather, Voluteye

This sprawling, busy port of stone buildings and small, high-hedged farms lies at the broad mouth of the Flur River and is kept bustling by a little fishing and a lot of shipping.

Many goods come here from the Shires to avoid the congestion of Shireton Port, Tothmeer, and the other large ports. Goods are eagerly taken aboard by ships of other lands; primarily Ierendi, but also Minrothad, Darokin, and Karameikos, who for the same reasons, have brought their goods here for transportation up the Flur to Flagonford to reach the interior of the Shires, or even, when the winter storms make sailing perilous, to be taken overland via Sateeka and Mar into Darokin.

The folk of Bramlerose, which, as its name implies, is much adorned by wild thorny roses which festoon its hedges and rocky places, do well by this trade not only because of their location but because they keep much poultry and sell literally tons of eggs to fast ships who rush them to Karameikos and Ierendi for quick profits. Bramlerose is a pleasant, sunny place with many rock gardens and the like. Despite its large size, its population is quite small; there is none of the crowding and built-up areas of larger ports in the Shires.

Bramlerose has two inns, The Landfall (large, spartan, but relatively cheap)

and The Rose (old, grandly furnished, and expensive); three taverns; and a rooming house where rooms can be rented by the month or season. The taverns are The Shipwrecked Sailor (old, ramshackle, popular, and noisy), The Dark Horse (luxurious, quiet, expensive), and The Pipe and Harp (large, rambling, cheap, and fairly quiet—a place to talk business and relax, not party). The rooming house is Mother Belabatha Himmer-sun's; she is a 4th level halfling of greying years who runs an immaculate house. She has no rules as to behavior as long as residents are relatively quiet and set no fires except in the fireplaces.

The Darkforest clan have built most of the upper roofs in the village, and they help repair the busy Stormweather and Voluteye clan fleets that operate out of Bramlerose. In short, Bramlerose is a prosperous and busy place that hasn't been spoiled by its success.

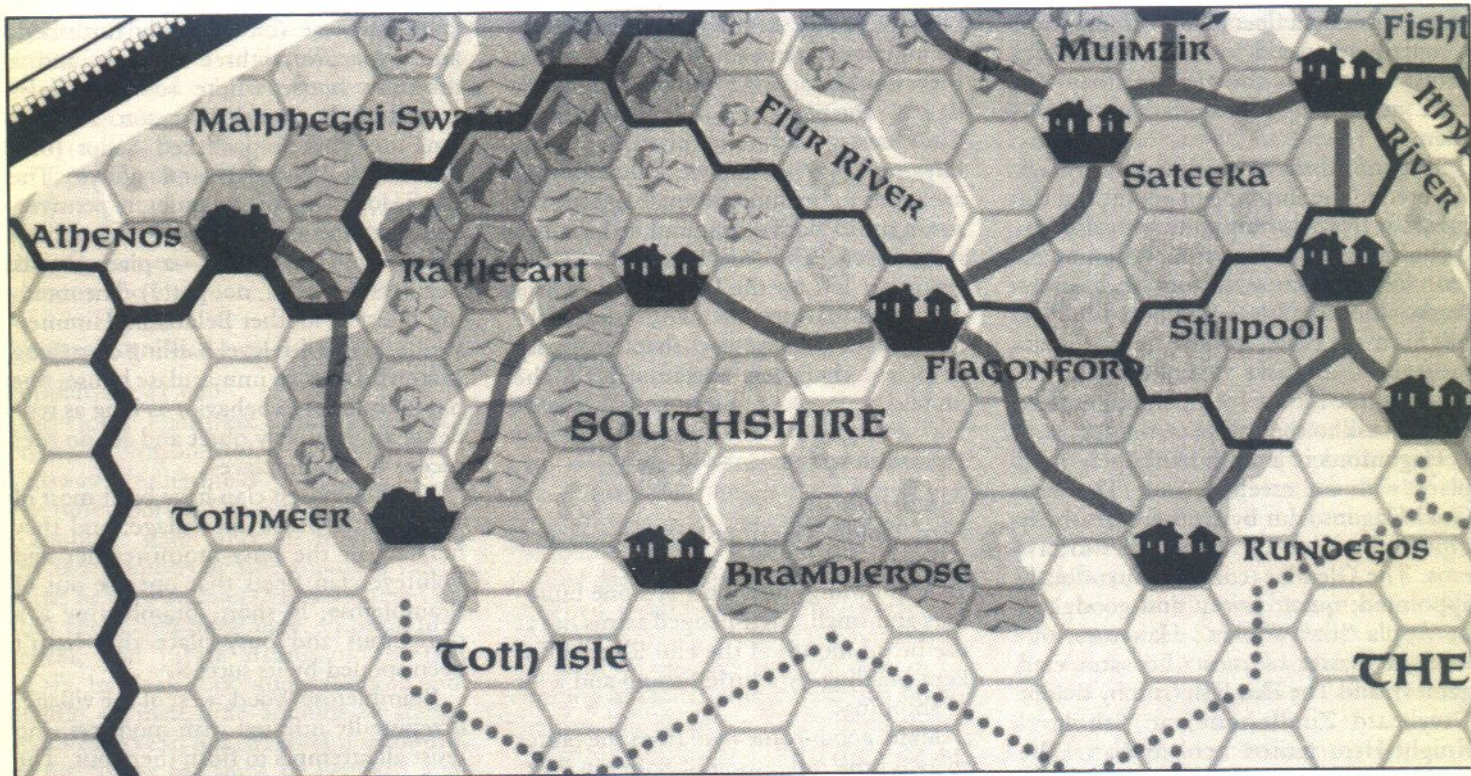
Bramlerose Wood, west of the village, is reputedly infested with monsters who resist all attempts to flush them out. The twelve Kron-dar mount regular patrols around the near edge of the trees and never go in smaller companies than eight strong. Some say devil swine are the problem; undead, others assert; none in Bramlerose know for sure. It is left to the DM to determine the truth to the persistent rumors of danger and lurking evil.

Rattlecart

Population: 400

Clan Holds: Ogglemurk, Wanderfence
The somewhat stark and windswept village of Rattlecart rises out of very flat farmland on the road between Tothmeer and Flagonford. Long ago it served as a mining center when hin were still struggling to work the small and relatively low-grade ore deposits of the southern end of the Black Spires. But those days are long gone; today it is mainly a market-moot and way-stop on the road. As its name implies, many carts rattle over its rutted streets, carrying goods from elsewhere to some other elsewhere; hin who live in Rattlecart really do see the world go by in endless procession.

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Sixteen Krondar are stationed at the Sheriffpost in Rattlecart, which boasts a large jail beneath it, but only two are for the village. The others are 'Krondar of the Road,' who patrol the road west to Tothmeer, the hills behind Rattlecart (a persistent refuge of hin outlaws), and the edges of the reputedly dangerous woods east of the village.

Rattlecart's role as a way-stop on the Tothmeer road has given it two large and excellent inns: The Trembling Troll, run by the Knight-Hero Jaorge One-Eye Wanderfence; and The Found Crown, run by the sharp-tongued, two-foot-tall hin Jalessa Spitfire Nobbleneer. Both are old and well-known; the Crown is slightly more expensive but also slightly more exclusive and quieter. There is also a wild tavern in the village, The Leaking Cup, and an excellent stable run by Oldor Ogglemurk.

Rattlecart is one of the few places in the Shires to have a curfew; unusual because halflings like to run about partying on warm summer nights. The curfew doesn't apply to road trade or the tavern,

but does apply to guests staying at either inn: the horses need their rest, as do the oxen and other beasts of burden that have struggled to pull wagons into Rattlecart during the day and are expected to haul them *out* again in the morning. The curfew is a somewhat flexible affair but rowdy guests will be severely told off and not welcomed back.

Clay pipes used by many city hin in the Shires (rural folk seem to prefer hand-carved wooden pipes of their own or local making) are made here in a secret manner by Abran Oldhill and his wife Tethega from clay dug from the banks of the Flur. Oldhill pipes remain somewhat flexible and malleable until they are smoked for the first time; thus breakage during their cart-trips across the Shires is lessened.

The Isles

The Shires lay claim to many small islands and rocks off The Shirecoast, but two are large enough to deserve mention here:

Toth Isle

Population: 400

This forested island off the mouth of Tothmeer's harbor is home to many retired hin and is the seasonal home of many more pirates and fishermen. Many small but luxurious homes are tunnelled into its steep slopes, largely hidden in the ferny banks and undergrowth of the forest that cloaks the island.

Toth Isle has no proper road, only tracks, but it does have two docks and several anchorages on its landward side. Much treasure is said to be hidden upon it, some buried and some kept within the houses of its owners. Much smuggling takes place to and from Toth Isle by ships not quite bold enough to run right into Tothmeer harbor under the eyes of the navy. Powerful hin and non-hin are said to live here, quite jealous of their privacy and with well-defended homes. Details of Toth Isle are left to the DM; it is suggested that Toth Isle be a very nice place to visit but a very hostile place to poke around.

Orlin Isle

Population: 270

No hin live on Orlin Isle except the shipwrecked (no more than half a dozen at any time) and pirates. Orlin Isle is therefore a lawless place ruled by the sword, yet it is surprisingly quiet, for hin like quiet and Orlin Isle is something of a refuge to hin pirates. Many use it as a base during the summer months for it does have some tiny farms and a few freshwater springs, but far more use it as a place they can limp to when nursing a battered ship home.

Orlin Isle is said to be riddled with the burial holes of treasures buried by many hin pirates over the years, many of whom will never come back to claim their own. Orlin Isle is also riddled with many adventurers, hin and non hin, who may object to people sailing up and digging holes in their front yard. This isolated setting is also left to the DM as an ideal spot to set a commercial module or other complete adventure, such as a lone wizard's keep or a hidden pirate stronghold. The reach of the Sheriffs extends here in name only; this is adventurers' country.

The waters around Orlin Isle are said to be a treacherous maze of rocks and shifting sandbars, and hence studded with the bones of many ships wrecked while heavily-laden with treasure.

Shireton

Population: 24,000

Clan Holds: Flintfoot, Jantobell, Longquaff, Nogknock, Plodmoor, Roughleap, Slowleaf

The vast and grand capital of The Five Shires rises from the banks of the Ithypool like many a proud city of men, with tall stone and timber buildings looming above narrow, crowded streets. Yet it is cleaner than most human cities of comparable size and dotted with many trees that are carefully tended. Where trees cannot grow, moss and creepers are encouraged, so much of the city is swathed in greenery for much of the year. The Ithypool runs down to the sea in a canal, connecting Shireton with Shireton Port. The City

and the Port almost meet, although the fortified walls of Shireton (a rebuilt orc hold) clearly mark where the capital ends and the straggling Port begins.

Shireton is the wealthiest city in the Shires as well as the largest, and here lurks the height of hin culture, fashion, and commerce. The ambassadors of other lands are all stationed here. Many of the most powerful hin in the land live here or at least maintain part time residences here. Life in Shireton is marked by an endless round of parties at which there is much dancing, eating, and drinking.

Beauty in all things is highly prized, and personal appearance, music, art, ornament of furniture and housewares, and architecture are all appreciated in Shireton.

Many of the buildings in the city rise into odd shapes: spires, horses' heads, snail-like shell shapes, and even spiny constructions like porcupines or sea urchins all dot the skyline.

More of the city lies underground than above, with a fantastic network of rooms, tunnels, and crawlways existing beneath the city. The tunnels are often flooded by the Ithypool or joined with the sewers and studded here and there with locked gratings of massive iron bars to prevent smugglers and thieves from using them as an underground highway.

No one knows all the twists and turns of the vast complex of many-layered subterranean ways. Much of it is unused and dangerous, inhabited by giant rats and worse. Parts of it are definitely used for smuggling. Certain of the garbage barges that shuttle between Shireton and Shireton Port bear hidden cargo from the tunnels, and there are sometimes vicious fights in the underground ways between rival groups who wish to solely control this or that area or this or that shady business. Details of this gigantic dungeon-like underworld are left to the DM. Certainly no very powerful evil inhabits it or the High Heroes would have become concerned and taken steps long ago. Of course, a band of evil smugglers can be 'not very powerful' and can still slay a hin or even a party of PCs.

Many citizens of Shireton never set foot

inside any of the underground ways, beyond perhaps a short passage that affords a back way in or out of their house, shop, or favorite tavern. The importance of Shireton's subterranean ways, their extent and possible treasures, and the adventures they can afford interested player characters should all be tailored by DMs to individual campaigns.

DMs running play within Shireton should bear in mind that in the city and neighboring Shireton Port all things can be had for a price and if one is prepared to wait long enough, and that all races, classes, and interests are represented.

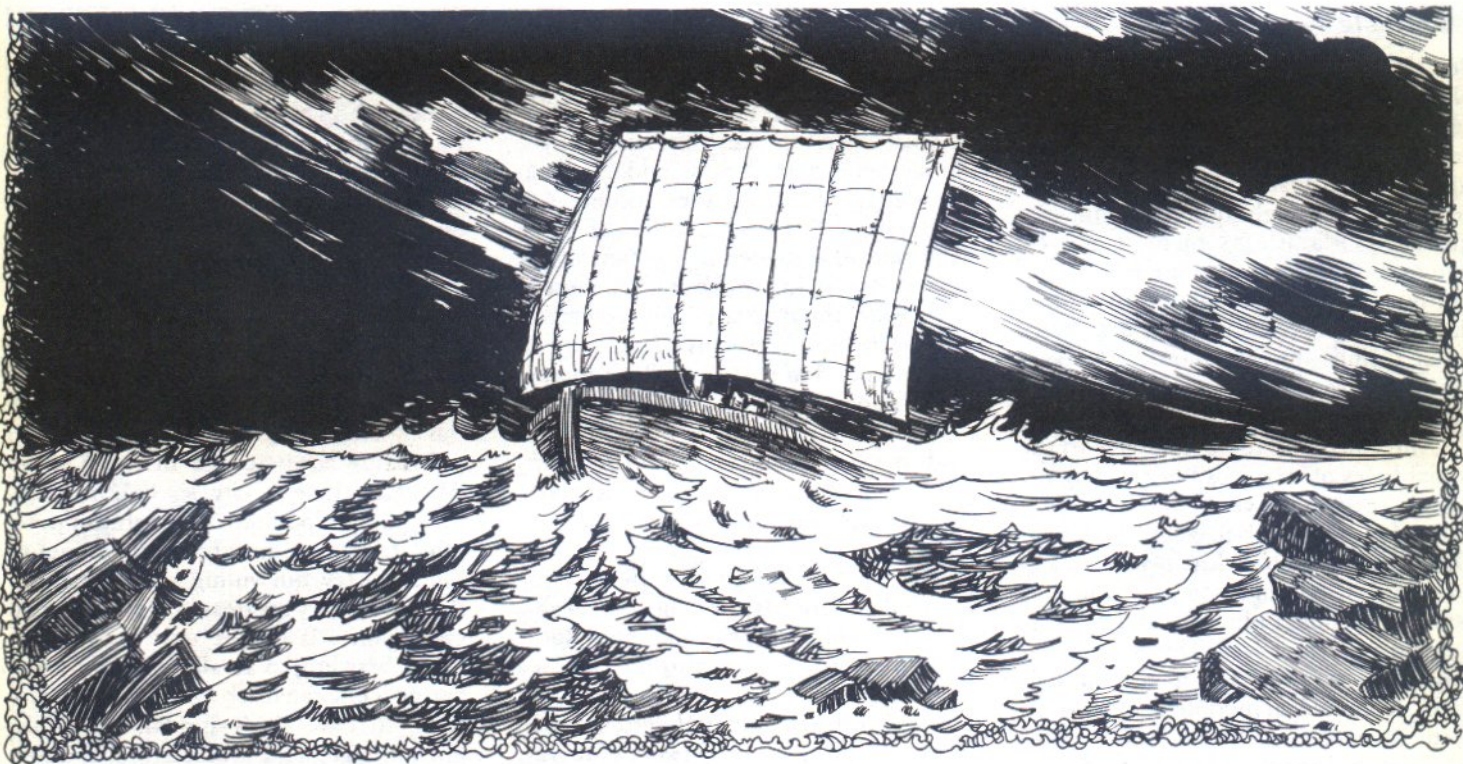
Perhaps nowhere else in the Known World is there a city so lighthearted. Intrigue, competition, one-upmanship: to other races these may be deathly serious, but to the few hin willing to participate in them at all they are treated as some sort of great game. It can be unnerving when one is brawling in an alleyway and wondering if one can reach a hidden dagger in time, to have one's assailant suddenly burst into great gusts of laughter and run away—but in Shireton it can and does happen. This is a hin city; humans should never feel quite at home here until they start to think and act as halflings do.

Features of the City

In Shireton stand many important buildings, from The Grand Hall of Sheriffs and The Locktower (the Shires' largest jail) to the grand residences of the ambassadors from other lands. The High House of Thyatis is unquestionably the grandest of these, although The House of Karamaikos runs a close second. The largest meeting place in all the Shires, the Clanmeet Hall, stands near the center of the city. Clanmeet Hall belongs to no clan and can be rented by anyone; it can seat almost 5,000 human-sized people. The great River Citadel guards the entry of the river into the city; Portgate guards its exit.

Most visitors to Shireton remember the city not for its important buildings but for the ornate spired bridges that span the river, such as Jumphin Bridge. The river itself splits into a busy harbor of canal

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inlets and docks just before it flows out under the city wall into Shireton Port, known as "The Manyways."

Parks

Shireton's parks are known as Greens, and it is rare to stand on a major street in the city and not be able to see the greenery of at least one park. The Unicorn Green is probably the largest and most beautiful of these carefully-tended Greens, but little bowers of great beauty, ideal for lovers' trysts and much shadier business, can be found in Spindleknoll Green, Coppergates Green, Oldoaks Green, and Brass Keys Green. Krondar patrol these parks closely, particularly Easthin Green, where many bodies have been found over the years. Most Greens are a mass of trees and rock garden banks enclosing a pool and several small lawns or borders. Riverbank Green contains a small stone pavilion used as a place of worship by many visiting clerics. Most Greens are home to many birds and squirrels; larger wildlife rarely survives

hungry 'nighthin' (thieves) for long.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Shireton City has many fine inns and guest houses to serve the many visitors. These include solid, unpretentious places like The Fireside and The Kippin' Grifon to truly excellent establishments such as the Bluefrost Inn and Turtletowers Inn. There are also very expensive places such as Yondel's House and exclusive, 'class' houses such as Shadowshaws House and Stonelions. There are also a few 'wild' places such as Scareskittle House, a fun, rowdy, offbeat place where sleep can be elusive indeed. All of these inns can accommodate human-sized patrons.

FOOD AND FUN

Visitors need not stay long in their rooms, even after the shops have closed and deep night has fallen. Shireton is famous for its restaurants, notably the 'mystic' decor of The Jade Hin and The Golden Goblin, and its roaring taverns.

One visitor said Shireton "has more

taverns than homes," and there are indeed many. A few are noted here: The Three Dwarves, The Bent Shield, (a wild dancing club tavern), the Slipsilver Cup, The Moonhunt, The Princess and Frog, the Thinsilver Seat, and The Singing Swan (known for its hired minstrels).

A good place to avoid unless one likes bloody brawls is the notorious dockside Blackbottom Tap tavern. The Winebucket tavern is as shabby and shady, but is policed by many bouncers to keep the damage down. Catchhalfing House is a gambling house and fence for stolen goods. Some of its regulars are said to sell drugs and poisons if approached with the proper discretion.

The Flame of Gold Gambling House and the many stalls of Tosscoin Square provide other ways for him to let go their coins in the pursuit of fun.

BUSINESS

Most visitors come to Shireton to conduct trade. Almost all goods and services can be had in the city, if one knows how to

find them. Animal doctors (such as Stinkyfingers Oldbole) can be found next door to hatters and wig merchants (such as Manyhats Janthobell). Famous establishments like Mirshim's Coachworks and The Sable Wind Stable compete with brasher concerns such as The Galloping Goodmount Stables and the Honest Hin's Bargain House. Fine gowns, tapestries, imported foods, and the like are sought here by hin from all over the Shires; they are especially fond of the shop of Helthar Hairytoes, where they enjoy Pipes & Exotic Pipe Mixes. The Old Dark Hin Brewery is also a popular destination for thirsty hin.

A dozen businesses that may be of special interest to adventurers are listed below:

- * Gullorax Sundpate (5th L Dwarf), Faraway Messengers Service
- * Touchgold Minstrelwish, Moneylending & Moneychanging
- * Dreamriddle Perfumes & Scents
- * The Whistling Wizard Wagonworks (proprietor: Verdrim, 5th L human magic user)
- * Firtrin Filandosz: Medicines, Potions, and Philtres
- * Pelbion Everswift, Fine Swords & Edged Weapons (6th L halfling)
- * Spiderblood & Maple, Fine Cartographers & Map Vendors (4th & 5th L female hin)
- * Longwalk Darkforest, Master Guide & Hunter (8th L Knight-Hero hin)
- * Black Spires Mining Consortium/Ores & Metals Sold
- * The Silverchain Gem & Jewelry Shop (Alterations & Rentals)
- * Rent-A-Hin Porters & Bearers (proprietor: Gulth Hairytoes, 6th L halfling)
- * The Black Anvil Smithy (proprietor: Baerthim Gnlock, gnome)

Other Sights

Many days can be spent just looking at all the shops and sights of Shireton. Many old and rich hin clans have offices within the city walls, and almost all hin clans have at least one representative here. All are given to throwing parties at any excuse. Life in the city is a whirlwind of

excitement and gaiety; hin who love to play pranks often come to Shireton to play their most outrageous (read: elaborate and dangerous) ones because that sort of fun is tolerated and expected. Masked balls are common; the hurling of scented smoke-bombs and street dancing is a nightly occurrence. It has been said that "the hardest thing to buy in Shireton is peace and quiet, or a good night's sleep," and that's probably true.

Interesting Inhabitants

Oddball folk seem attracted to Shireton. There can be found in Wyvernlock Tower one Elevos Sturn, tamer of wyverns. Elevos is a tall, bearded, haughty man who flies about on wyvern-back; he has a short temper and many wands with which to display it.

A hin pirate, Zaressa Shadowloop (she conceals her clan name), sleeps on the roof of The Cockatrice Comb restaurant by day and prowls the tunnels and docks by night, wheeling and dealing with privateers needing goods fenced and ropes and sails provided right away and with no questions asked.

The fat and jolly halfling Bungo Barrelmore, owner of a fine wine & liqueurs shop, is fond of dressing up (grotesquely) as a Thyatian lady of breeding and wealth and crashing parties, notably those attended or hosted by the Thyatian ambassador, who is reportedly unamused.

A tavern popular with young hin, The Lost Princess, is run by the eccentric Jasser Fullbellow, who has spent seventy years searching the city, high and low, for a lost elven princess whom he swears fled from far lands to here and is in hiding. PCs who are trying to hide something (perhaps just themselves) will no doubt have a heart-stopping encounter or two with Jasser; young hin looking for a fun evening enthusiastically help Jasser pounce on lovers in the Greens with torches lit, or break into warehouses, occupied inn rooms, and other places where the Princess might be hiding and pursue anyone hurrying down a dark street with a full hue & cry (after all, it might be THE

PRINCESS!).

DM's are encouraged to have fun, making Shireton an exhaustingly zany place. If hardened adventurer PCs blanch at the thought of visiting the capital of the tiny, pastoral Shires, the city's been handled right. Of course, there're always a few crazy PCs who *like* nonstop madhouses like this. . . .

Shireton Port

Population: 2,500(?)

Clan Holds: Minstrelwish, Moldgar, Owlhoot, Uvagulp

The sprawling, rather lawless port of Shireton lies on both sides of the Ithypool River where it empties into the Hingulf. Shireton Port is the place for DMs to put anything they wish to incorporate into their own campaign versions of the Shires that doesn't seem to fit elsewhere—everything can find a home in Shireton Port, from humans of all nationalities to monster collectors and mages of power. Most of the clerics found in the Five Shires are here, although a scattering may be found in Thantabbar, Tothmeer, and Shireton proper.

Shireton Port has no subterranean ways—flooding and wet clay soil see to that—but it has many apparently abandoned warehouses, smugglers, and secret agreements. If assassins of any sort are to be found in the Shires, it will be here. If kidnapers or pirates for hire are sought, they will be sought here, although they can also be found in Tothmeer.

Monsters of various intelligent races are said to live in hiding in the ramshackle, derelict buildings of older Shireton Port, working their wills in the Shires by means of hired hin. Some outlaw hin who fear to try to reach the mountains, or who have no love for piracy or the sea, come here. Kronstar patrol by the dozens, well-armed. It is a quiet, forboding place most of the time, not a wild and decadent place, but it is as dangerous a place as one can find in the Shires.

Along the dockfronts and canals, however, the Port is a busy and bustling place, clean and well-policed, where loaders and dock-carters go about their business

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with no fear of a knife in the back or theft of their cargoes.

Rats are kept down by periodic hunts, as are worse predators. Krondar like to conduct surprise raids by day, reinforced by hired magic users and clerics, to clean out specific trouble spots amid the maze of crumbling warehouses and disused factories. Their efforts keep the Coastfollow Road through Shireton Port safe and clear, and provide much tavern talk for the hin of Shireton.

A DM could base an entire campaign in the sinister surroundings of Shireton Port. Human PCs would be subject to constant challenges and searches within the Port and whenever they ventured out of the Port into the countryside of the

Shires. Those without good reason for being in the Port, particularly if they are carrying weapons, will be subject to instant expulsion from the Port—usually a working passage on the next ship out. Be warned that Clanmasters and other hin who hire foreigners always inform their local Krondar of who, how many, and when such foreigners will be present in the Shires.

Several mujina (see D&D® DM's Companion book) are said to lurk in Shireton Port; they have been there for years, assuming a variety of disguises, and know its hiding places and back ways well. They are said to have gathered formidable magic and to lay hold of any magical items that come near their grasp, dispos-

ing of the rightful owners in a trice if it proves necessary. They have developed a network of servants and informants.

There is a fairly safe area in the Port where most of the hin clans who make Shireton Port their home live. Most of the evil creatures who lurk about the Port are wise enough to avoid a major confrontation with the gathered hin of the Shires by leaving these halflings alone, so most hin think the Port's unsavory reputation is very much overblown. Few care to poke and pry about the Port at night to prove them wrong, especially when the mists close in and the unlit darkness becomes impenetrable, and the screams begin, here and there, faint and far-off or uncomfortably close. . . .

Campaigning in the Five Shires

Monster Encounters In The Shires

Truly random monster encounters are to be discouraged if one is promoting role-playing in a D&D® game campaign. Accordingly, no monster encounter tables are given here. Instead, an abbreviated guide to where certain creatures may be found in the Shires is presented. This list is *not* exhaustive, and DMs should feel free to alter monster dispositions to suit their own campaigns. As a general rule, almost all Prime Plane monsters from the D&D® rulebooks can be found in the Shires, although very few are frequently seen outside of the deepest woods, underground caverns, or in the mountains.

'Normal' monsters, such as bandits and normal rats and bats are not included in this list, but are present in numbers in the Shires.

Unknown or very, very rare in the Shires (located in deep caverns or remote mountains only) are such creatures as: beholders, centaurs, giants, ogres, pixies, purple worms, rock toads and snow apes.

Others are found only in wilderness areas, such as elk, giant lizards, rhagodesas, spectres, and giant weasels. Specific monster dispositions of note follow:

*Actaeon (Master Set): Rare; sent by the High Heroes to aid his Masters; woodlands everywhere in the Shires.

*Bat, Giant (Basic Set): Common along The Shirecoast, in the Blight Swamp, and in wooded hill country throughout the Shires.

*Bear (Basic Set): Black bears in all woodlands of the Shires; grizzly bears in mountains and foothills.

*Beetles, Giant (Basic Set): Fire beetles only in the mountains; oil and tiger beetles in uninhabited hill-country and all woodlands.

*Black Pudding (Expert Set): Mines, caverns, and subterranean passages only.

*Bugbear (Basic Set): Southwestern end of the Black Spires and northeastern end of Highshire only, near Mistmyr Falls and ranging down into the Cruth Lowlands to prey upon cross-border trade.

*Carrion Crawler (Basic Set): Mountain

caverns and disused ruins only.

*Cat, Great (Basic Set): Rare; found in the hills of northern Highshire only (mountain lions), and near Longflask.

*Deep Gaurant: A new monster detailed later in this book.

*Devil Swine (Expert Set): Rare, but can be encountered everywhere.

*Doppleganger (Basic Set): Uncommon, but can be found anywhere in the Shires.

*Dragon (Basic Set, Master Set): Rare; Green Dragons in the deepest woods only; Crystal, Onyx, Red, and Sapphire Dragons in the entire Black Spires range.

*Drake (Master Set): Woodrake only; rare, but may be found anywhere in the Shires.

*Dryad (Expert Set): Rare; deep woodlands in Southshire, Seashire, and Heartshire only.

*Ferret, Giant (Basic Set): Very rare; woodlands only.

*Feywing: A new monster detailed herein.

*Gargoyle (Basic Set): Very rare; as guardians or in the Highshire hills or mountain caverns.

*Ghoul (Basic Set): Very rare; Highshire and Eastshire only.

*Goblin (Basic Set): Rare; mountains and foothills of Highshire only.

*Grab Grass (Companion Set): Uncommon; swampy wilderness areas anywhere in the Shires and on many of the islands off The Shirecoast.

*Griffon (Expert Set): Rare; mountain lairs in the Black Spires only.

*Hag (Master Set): Very rare; black hags only.

*Haunts (Companion Set): Uncommon to rare. Banshees in the hills of Eastshire and Highshire; ghosts and poltergeists anywhere.

*Hobgoblin (Basic Set): Uncommon; Cruth Lowlands and the eastern Black Spires in Highshire only; sometimes attack near the Longflask mines.

*Lich (Master Set): Very rare; wilderness areas and ruins only.

*Lycanthrope (Basic Set): Wererats in Shireton's underways and Shireton Port only; werewolves and werebears in wilderness areas across the Shires; wereboars unknown.

*Manscorpion (Companion Set): Very rare; mountains and Heartshire hills only.

*Mujina (Companion Set): Rare; Shireton Port and deep woods and mountain caverns anywhere in the Shires; growing stronger and planning an eventual seizure of all or part of the Shires.

*Nightgleet: A new monster detailed in this book.

*Nightwing (Master Set): Unknown except in the Blight Swamp and nearby Eastshire.

*Orc (Basic Set): Common in all mountainous areas of the Shires and may be encountered raiding down from the mountains in Heartshire and Highshire; rarely reach Southshire or Eastshire; unknown in Seashire or offshore islands.

*Owl Bear (Basic Set): Rare; woodlands anywhere in the Shires.

*Robber Fly (Basic Set): Very rare; Blight Swamp and seacoast caves only.

*Rockfang: New monster, described herein.

*Seergar: New monster, described herein.

*Skeleton (Basic Set): Rare, but can occur anywhere except aboveground in cities.

*Snakes (Basic Set): Very rare, but can be found anywhere in the Shires.

*Spiders (Basic Set): Common in wilderness areas of the Shires, particularly on the offshore islands (exterminated on Toth Isle).

*Sprite (Basic Set): Unknown in the Shires except in the Cruth valley (i.e. mainly in Karameikos, but a few miles within Highshire).

*Stirge (Basic Set): Uncommon to "far too numerous" (according to patrolling Krondar); wooded areas only; mainly active by night.

*Unicorn (Expert Set): Uncommon; wooded areas only. Revered by him who do not hunt or capture them.

*Vampire (Expert Set): Very rare; Eastshire only.

*Vision (Companion Set): Uncommon; ruins, mountain caverns, and old battle-sites anywhere in the Shires.

*Wight (Basic Set): Very rare; wilderness areas only.

*Wolf, Normal (Basic Set): Uncommon; near mountains in Heartshire and High-

Campaigning in the Five Shires

shire only.

*Wychlamp: A new monster described later in this book.

*Zombie (Basic Set): Rare, but can be found anywhere in the Shires except aboveground within cities.

Adventures In The Five Shires

The land of halflings presents a unique challenge to Dungeon Masters: how does one make a beautiful, happy, pastoral land an exciting place to adventure without resulting to repetitious, heavyhanded ploys like "the orcs raid the place you're staying at again," or "and in this stand of trees there is indeed another monster; only this time it's not an owl bear, it's a —" (sigh), which will bring on player frustration in short order. In this section a series of short adventure plots is provided for DMs to elaborate upon, so that the end result will fit smoothly into a particular campaign (and so the sort of player who always reads "for-the-DM's-eyes-only" material and ruins the fun for everyone won't recognize the adventure until things are too far along to matter).

The format here is based on the system introduced in *The Principalities of Glantri* Gazetteer. Each adventure section contains the following entries:

Adventure Level: The experience level needed for the adventure and the rules (Basic, Expert, Companion or Masters). This assumes a party of six to eight characters.

Topic: The facet of life in the Shires dealt with in the adventure (a specific custom, place, or NPC).

Interesting Features: Elements of the adventure that provide fun and excitement (a specific magical item, a monster, a plot twist, and so on).

Campaign Hook: A way of connecting the particular adventure idea to a longer-lasting campaign in the Shires (usually interaction with NPCs, or important events caused or linked to the adventure).

1. Werescalot Watch

Adventure Level: 1-3, Basic

Topic: A simple skirmish in the dark, fighting among trap-bows and against magic-using foes.

Interesting Features: PCs are under suspicion and may be led directly into further adventures. Opponents may become long-term foes.

Campaign Hook: PCs will acquire a suspicious reputation (good or bad, depending on how things go) among Krondar in the Shires and will be watched. Bargle the Infamous of Karameikos (see *The Grand Duchy of Karameikos* Gazetteer) may become an enemy of the PCs, and actively work against them in the future.

A very successful thief or group of thieves suddenly begins operations in Werescalot. Halfling homes are burgled without their traps being set off or any alarm being raised. Magic is suspected. All visitors, hin and non-hin alike, fall under suspicion. Refer to the description of Werescalot in this book for details of a typical "roundhouse" home of the area.

A local Krondar approaches PCs with a plan: for an honorarium of 2 gp each per night, will the PCs stake out a particular home and try to capture anyone assaulting it? The PCs are promised a 25-gp bonus if they do successfully capture (alive) at least one of the thieves. It is made clear that if the party does not cooperate, they will be asked to leave the Shires (or, if hin, leave the vicinity of Werescalot) under a cloud of suspicion. If PCs do see or hear anything, they are to raise the alarm by sounding a horn which the Krondar gives them; otherwise they are not to dash around to any other house after dark, no matter what happens, but stay at their posts.

One of the PCs later hears the Krondar making an identical offer to another group of people. The PCs accept.

The thieves are evil magic users of low level (1st to 3rd), apprentices of Bargle the Infamous of the Black Eagle Barony in Karameikos. They are on a mission to weaken and stir up trouble in Werescalot and to prepare for another invasion of the Shires by the Black Eagle Barony. The

magic users do not know of the invasion plans.

They will employ a *ring of invisibility*, a *helm of teleportation*, and a *wand of illusion* which they will use to create illusions of the PCs running about the village on the night the PCs are guarding a house. This will draw the Krondar to attack or grab the PCs and the magic users will rifle the hin house that the PCs were guarding right under everyone's noses.

The magic users may, if the PCs are a strong party, be armed with daggers dipped in a sleep-inducing poison. PCs may track the magic users into the Barony, and have further adventures there.

2. Treasure Trail

Adventure Level: 1-3, Basic

Topic: Murder, thievery, and suspicion fall on the PCs.

Interesting Features: The PCs are given a quick moral choice to make and upon their decision hangs their future reputation in the Shires.

Campaign Hook: The Krondar will think the PCs are shady regardless of their decision to run, aid the Krondar, or fight; the DM should rush the PCs into deciding by roleplaying the shouting and sword-swinging, not allowing time for a big strategic or moral discussion on the part of the players.

PCs find a headless hin body, slain only a few days previously. Its purse has been cut away and taken but it retains a dagger and, if searched carefully, a scrap of linen on which a message has been written in juice or old blood: "Everwake Way. Two dead trees. Bring cart. Your share 400 gold."

Whether or not the PCs head for Everwake Way, other hin will find the body and track them. The Krondar have learned of the meeting at the two dead trees, and 3-6 Krondar will ride that way, coming up behind the PCs if the PCs go to the trees. Whenever the PCs arrive, they will be ambushed immediately by four chaotic hin led by two human fighters. "Give us the rubies!" the attackers will snarl. "Throw them down and we'll let you run!"

Of course, at this point the Krondar will arrive to arrest everyone, assuming the PCs are thieves as well, and the real thieves will attack the Krondar without hesitation. The PCs must decide whether to run, aid the Krondar, or fight both the Krondar and the thieves. One or more of the thieves should escape the fray, whatever happens.

The Krondar will suspect the PCs of thievery and perhaps murder; they may be found with the murdered hin's dagger on them. The thieves who did escape will be after them to get those rubies. It might take a while before the PCs capture one of their pursuers. The thieves will try to catch individual PCs when the party is asleep, hurt, weary, or split up.

If one of the real thieves is questioned, PCs will learn that a hin known as The Red Hand stole a chest of 2,000 rubies from a jeweler's strong-cellar in Longflask and rode into the wilderness of the Cruth Lowlands hotly pursued by hin and Krondar. The Hand's band split up, intending to bring a cart posthaste to Everwake Way to get the rubies over the border to waiting buyers in Karameikos (the two human fighters). This arrangement was made before everyone started double-crossing each other.

No one knows who The Red Hand is; he or she may well be shadowing the PCs to take revenge, followed in turn by tireless Krondar and angry hin from Longflask.

3. *The Old Sword*

Adventure Level: 1-3, Basic

Topic: An old legend of the Shires

Interesting Features: The DM can use the old hin to feed the party lots of useful information leading to further adventures in the Shires.

Campaign Hook: The DM can employ the Doppelganger, if its attack is successful, as a patient, biding-its-time traitor within the party.

The PCs encounter an old hin at an inn, tavern, or fireside where they camp for the night. He spins many tales of the Shires, perhaps imparting some useful information about life and current

events. After a bit he excuses himself to get a beer, promising to tell the PCs about "the lost sword" when he returns.

Return he does, strangely silent, and abruptly launches into a tale, chanted hurriedly in a croaking whisper quite unlike his earlier voice, about the Old Sword that a local hin hero once wielded. The sword was lost not a mile away at the foot of a certain tree. The tree is shaped like a cup, bent over along the ground before dipping down and back up again.

The sword could float in mid-air, strike magical creatures, and burst into flames on command. It was lost in a fight against a strange magic user who had the head of a serpent. The hin slew him but was himself mortally wounded and the strange serpent-wizard's dying curse made the sword vanish too.

Once in a while those who stand by the tree at night can see it, hanging in the moonlight. Only then can it be grasped and taken. Beware: the ghost of the hin hero is said to guard the place to protect his sword.

The old hin then bids the PCs good-night and wanders off. Whether or not they follow him, he will somehow elude them and simply vanish, not fleeing suspiciously but simply turning a corner and then not being there.

When the old hin went away the first time, he was slain by a Doppelganger (detailed in the Basic Set DM's book), who returns to substitute a different story (probably a lot of malarkey, but that is up to the DM) solely for the purpose of leading the PCs off to the tree. The tree is real, the "old hin" will point in its direction while telling the tale.

If one of the PCs tries to sneak off alone to get the sword, so much the better. The Doppelganger will try to take the entire party; it can dine on its kills later, knowing survivors won't be coming after it because there aren't any! It will try to do this on the sly, duplicating the forms of anyone in the party it slays, hiding the body, and then returning to the others, rather than getting into open fights with groups of PCs.

The sword story can be true with only the wrong location given so that PCs run

into the situation much later. The "ghost of the dead hin" can be any sort of undead; for extra chilling effect it can resemble the old hin storyteller exactly.

Local hin or Krondar can confront PCs with the news that a Doppelganger has been in the vicinity; have they seen or encountered anything suspicious? If the confrontation involves a hin Master or someone obviously able to use magic, the Doppelganger in the party may suddenly bolt and run. If the PCs escaped or slew the Doppelganger, one of their questioners could suddenly reveal themselves as the Doppelganger (or a second Doppelganger, perhaps the mate of the first) and attack! Double, double . . .

4. *The Bones Out Back*

Adventure Level: 4-6, Expert

Topic: Black Eagle Barony agents and a cursed treasure they have set as a trap.

Interesting Features: A cursed sword that forces the finder on a quest.

Campaign Hook: PCs get drawn into intrigue between kingdoms and may wind up considered enemies of the Shires. They may then be contacted to really become agents of the Black Baron and promptly sacrificed in a dangerous mission.

An elderly hin, Yuldo the Clanless, approaches PCs with a tale of strange goings on at his isolated hut in the woods. Lights and humans digging in the woods by night, waving lots of weapons about. The two places where they had been digging were filled up by morning and fresh human bones have been spread on the earth.

PCs who investigate the diggings will find that the bones are harmless and non-magical. They belong to humans recently killed by orcs while exploring in the mountains. Beneath the warning bones are several feet of earth containing a few fragile glass flasks that will shatter if struck by picks or shovels, to release an invisible, creeping gas that has a spicy odor. The gas is a potent coma-inducing knockout toxin; all within 20' of a shattered flask on the first round after it is broken, within 30' on the second round,

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and 50' on the third round will be affected; the gas reacts with air and will have dissipated into harmlessness by the fourth round after its release. Victims must save vs. poison at -3 or immediately fall asleep for 6-13 (1d8 + 5) rounds asleep from which they *cannot* be awakened by purely physical means.

Beneath the flasks is a thin layer of loose earth. Under it lie 6 animated skeletons in one pit and 4 skeletons in the other that will rise up to attack any living beings nearby when they are released. Under the skeletons are buried seven coffers (each containing 100 gp) in one hole, and a magical +2 sword in the other. The sword has a *curse* placed upon it; anyone laying hands on it will be *quested* (save vs. spells at -2 to avoid) to go to Shireton and attack the Karameikan ambassador. The diggers were agents of the Black Baron, trying to create unrest in the Shires on his orders. Their next move will be to *charm* a man of Darokin to attack one of the Sheriffs.

5. The Green Cloak

Adventure Level: 4-6, Expert

Topic: The crime-wave of a daring thief.

Interesting Features: Thief tries to cast suspicion on PCs.

Campaign Hook: If PCs get too close to uncovering the thief, he will try to hire the PCs to undertake some expedition into the mountains and then try to ambush them.

A daring thief, the Green Cloak, becomes known in the Shires. Jewelry is stolen from upper bedrooms where hin lie sleeping and coins, strongboxes, and the like vanish from cellars at night. A note of thanks is always left, scratched on the wall, floor, or ceiling (i.e. above a halfling's normal reach): "Thanks from the Green Cloak." The robberies remain small in scale but accumulate in value considerably. Clan chiefs are alerted, patrols begun, and traps laid, but the Cloak seems to know of and avoid these.

The robberies seem to always be near where the PCs are, wherever they go in the Shires, and this gets noticed. Suspicion grows. A close watch is set on the PCs

with possibly disastrous consequences if they are up to anything mischevious by night.

If the PCs are caught at anything, they will be told that their innocence will only be believed if they can catch the Green Cloak and bring him, her, or it to justice. Otherwise, have a clan chief ask the PCs to help find and catch the Green Cloak or make it a service required by a tutor as part-payment for PC training.

The Green Cloak is a Chaotic halfling, Emerel Joezz, who had *ESP* and *permanence* cast upon him while in Glantri (as part of an experiment). He managed to escape imprisonment in the laboratory one night and steal the formula and some samples of *potions of invisibility*. He has used these two magical abilities to escape from Glantri and to mount his crime wave, shadowing hin to learn their secret hiding places for valuables, and so on, and deliberately staying near the PCs to put suspicion on them.

6. The Harpooned Halflings Happenings

Adventure Level: 4-8, Expert

Topic: A Glantrian "hin-collecting expedition" into the Shires; a magic-fighting adventure for the PCs.

Interesting Features: A Glantrian magical device in poot shape; a battle with a time limit aboard it, and (if PCs desire it) a "who and why" mystery to be sorted out.

Campaign Hook: Marsheem and Black-mask can become foes of the PCs, as will any of the surviving low-level magic users. The authorities can also lead PCs into further tasks or adventures.

While PCs are traveling in a remote area, they hear a halfling scream. Then they briefly see a hin, apparently transfixed by some sort of giant silvery lance but still struggling, high in the air and rising rapidly upwards.

Regardless of what the PCs do, they should see no more at this point and should not be able to follow where the halfling has gone. The next day, somewhere in their doings, they will overhear halflings discussing how all sorts of hin are simply vanishing, and no one knows

how or why: "it's always when they're alone, but there're no tracks, nor any remains."

Later, at night, PCs will witness the attack of the lance again. This time the hin will be seen to be drawn up onto something floating just above the tree-tops. Suddenly a lady hin will confront the PCs, point out the vanishing hin sobbingly, and scream at the PCs to "Help! My Bolgor! My little fattykins! You *must* help me!"

Now Krondar will arrive, hearing the last of the mother's plea. The PCs are on the spot and should try to rescue Bolgor.

The magical flying platform is an old, rickety, and slippery contraption fitted with many cages upon which a permanent *silence* spell exists. The cages lock magically and will have to be smashed open (deal 4 hp damage around the locks). To prevent caged creatures from biting, wrenching, or sawing at their cages, the cages are magically charged to deal 1-6 points of electrical damage to any creature touching them directly or with anything (like a metal weapon) that can conduct electricity; therefore, to bash the cages open, the PCs will have to take some shock damage.

The flying raft is fitted with a long lance that splits into a ring near its tip and then joins together again to come to a point. It can be fired out of a sort of spring-gun up to 600' away on a wire cable, and then drawn back up to the raft. If there are pursuing creatures, the raft is usually raised into the sky, and the lance winched in later. If the lance comes within 20' of any living creatures during its cast, the largest creature will be drawn into the ring and magically *held* (as if by a 12th level magic user employing a *hold monster* spell with the usual chances to avoid the effect) as the harpoon is reeled up to the flying raft.

Aboard the raft are three low-level Chaotic human mages (3rd, 2nd, and 1st levels respectively), who have been promised admission into The Great School Of Magic by a red-robed caster of *fire balls* that they know only as Marsheem if they bring at least twenty living halflings to Glantri. The three have their daggers,

two long metal 'fending-off poles' which are very unwieldy (-2 to hit) but can clout someone for 3-12 points of damage if they do strike.

They have the aid of a 4th level human thief, the Blackmask (St 16, Dx 18, and armed with a +2 dagger and a *potion of gaseous form* which he will use to attempt an escape, if necessary). Blackmask, real name Gorliir Falthon, was also hired by Marsheem in Glantri City. Blackmask knows much of Glantrian politics and intrigue, but no more about Marsheem, except where the raft is to land.

Unfortunately for all concerned, any fight on the raft will cause it to go out of control. The controls, a steering wheel and a height lever, will shake loose and come off, leaving the magic users terrified and everyone else scrambling to stay alive.

The PCs can easily reach the raft by climbing up the harpoon cable, which will do them no harm unless they reach inside the ring that holds poor Bolgor whereupon they, too, will be affected by the *hold monster* effect. Once upon the raft, it will tilt and careen all over the sky with shouting Kronandar clinging helplessly to the harpoon cable (perhaps with one or more of the slower or more timid/prudent of the PCs with them) while the PCs battle the crew.

Lightning will begin to play all over the raft from the controls and from any cages the PCs attack, and Blackmask will use his *potion* to flee when he sees this unless the PCs somehow prevent him. The magic users will be so terrified that they may jump to the ground if the raft seems to dip low enough. The DM should keep in mind that all on the raft face possible damage as the raft strikes buildings, trees, hills, or mountainsides. Those who can't grab onto something may be flung free of the raft by such impacts to a perhaps fatal landing below.

In the end, the raft will head northward toward Glantri, but will tilt and dive toward obvious destruction against a rock face or other immovable natural feature ahead.

The PCs must get themselves and as many of the halflings as possible off the

raft before it hits the ground and explodes. It will hit and burst in a spectacular ball of lightning which will deal 7-42 (7d6) points of damage to all within 40' (save equals half damage), 7d4 damage to all within 41'-60' of the blast (save halves), and 'burns out' all magical items that fail a save vs. spells and are within 60'. The PCs may wind up as heroes, dead heroes, or bumbling goats.

The explosion and wild battle will give the PCs a perhaps unwanted reputation around the Shires. They will win either gratitude or hatred; perhaps some of each, depending on whether a hin's loved one or kin survived the battle and whether the result is seen as the PCs fault. The Kronandar involved will report to the relevant Sheriff; even if all on the raft perished, some will have survived on the ground. Their report will certainly gain the PCs some official attention, good or bad, and may well lead to PC punishment, reward, or requests for the PCs to help with this or that 'other little problem:' further adventures with troublesome orcs, pirates, outlaws, thieves in Shireton or a cleanout of Shireton Port . . . whatever the DM wants to lead the PCs right into.

Note that the DM should adjust the levels of the magic users and the thief to give the PCs a stiff challenge or the fight on the raft will be a swift anticlimax. One of the cages might contain a halfling who is really a hungry Doppelganger or other monster; tailor the adventure to the strength of the party.

7. The Wraith of Ringrise ———

Adventure Level: 6-8, Expert

Topic: A wraith and others around and about a rich lode or ore.

Interesting Features: A rich silver ore lode, old tavern-tales come true, and a pile-up of hostile beings in the old mine.

Campaign Hook: The brigands become recurring foes for PCs, and an ongoing struggle for control of the silver mine begins.

A band of miners is missing in the mountains near Ringrise. Their wagons are found, laden with incredibly rich, pure silver ore, but there is no sign of the

halflings.

They are (were?) a mixed clan group of adventurers who followed the directions of a very old hin, Malcrossz Manycoats, to the Haunted Mine. Malcrossz will tell PCs (if they buy or give him drinks and listen) about his younger days when he was an intrepid and successful miner until he dug into the cavern where a wraith laired and all his companions were slain by it. Malcrossz was crippled when the mine supports fell, imprisoning the wraith again, crushing his legs and hiding the richest lode he'd ever seen.

The missing band of hin had pestered Malcrossz, a month back, for directions to his lost mine. He gave them, so he thinks the hin found the lost lode. Then the wraith got them.

This is both true and false. The hin found the mine, worked it, fought off or turned the wraith, left, and were promptly attacked and slaughtered by brigands who'd lain in wait for them. The brigands then took the ore and were pursued and set upon by the wraith who chased and scattered them. It has since returned to the mine, and if PCs come looking, it will attack them at about the same time that the surviving brigands return in strength and with magic to destroy the wraith. The brigands will charge into the mine and take the PCs from the rear.

An orc band will also arrive, minutes later, on the trail of the hin brigands. They are hungry for hin flesh and treasure.

The DM should make the wraith of Ringrise special in some way. Perhaps it can wield magic, such as *telekinesis* or *levitation* of objects or beings, *dispel magic*, create *illusions*, or even cast *magic missiles*. The wraith will withdraw into the depths of the mine if faced with certain destruction, to fight another day.

8. Brigands In The Backlands —

Adventure Level: 6-8, Expert

Topic: Brigands and another plot of the Black Baron.

Interesting Features: PCs are accused of being brigands, after an attempt is made

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to rob PCs of magic and valuables.

Campaign Hook: Brozzart will become a long-term, elusive PC foe. The Black Baron's forces will continually try to cast his suspicion on the PCs.

A band of miners disappear in a brutal storm in the mountains. A Fang patrol sent to look for them also vanishes. Hin in the area report finding bodies of strangely-garbed men, obviously the losers in a battle of blades. They have been stripped of valuables and weapons, but neither mutilated nor eaten. The alarm is raised: brigands are active in the area again!

PCs will notice that they are being watched by traveling humans whenever they enter an inn or tavern or encounter others on the roads. If they confront and question such a watcher, they will always very reluctantly be told that the spy was to report their activities to a "man who wears green, called Brozzart."

Hin keep vanishing in the mountains. If the PCs investigate, they will be set upon by hooded men using nets, clubs, and sleep gas, who will attempt to steal any magic or weapons they carry and then get away.

Later, they will encounter a Fang patrol riding with a human who will point at the PCs and say, "They're the ones!" The Fang will attack the PCs, thinking they are brigands.

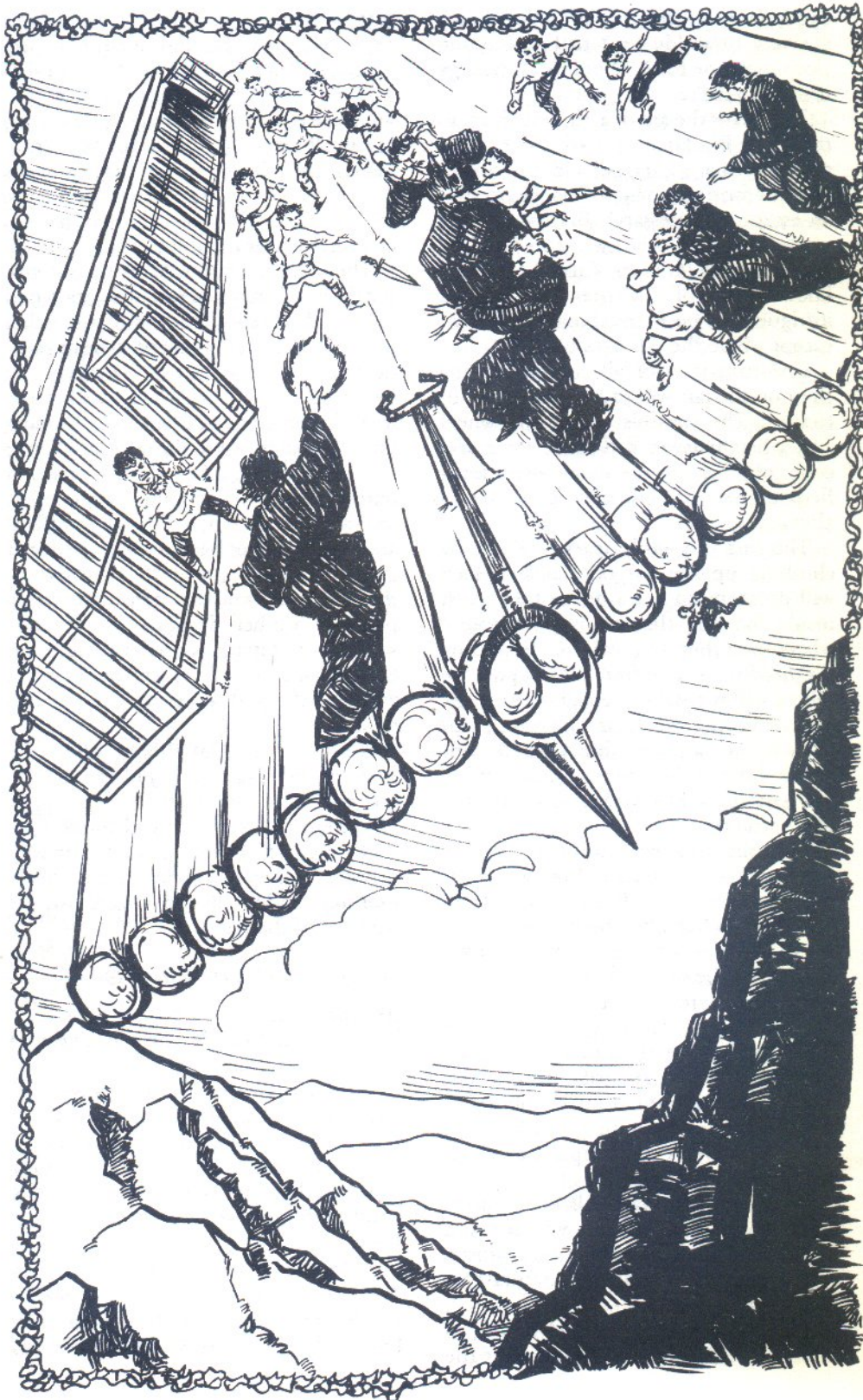
This is another of the Black Baron's schemes. Brozzart is a 3d level fighter who has been hiring traveling merchants to report on the doings of adventurers. There is a small force of raiders from the Black Eagle Barony who are robbing hin and non-hin adventurers alike of magic and valuables and spreading rumors of brigands, then posing as victims and identifying those they have robbed as brigands. Surviving PCs will have to convince sceptical Fang hin of their innocence or face hin justice.

9. The Wavestone

Adventure Level: 4-10, Expert

Topic: A pirates' search for a missing magical artifact.

Interesting Features: PCs may become



suspects as the pirates search for the *Wavestone*, and may themselves join the hunt for it.

Campaign Hook: The present whereabouts and owners of the *Wavestone* are left to the DM, who can use Jalassa's search to draw the PCs into other adventures (perhaps the Grand Glaurant—see "The Deep Mine" adventure later in this section).

Rumors spread in the Shires of winged lions flying low in small groups over the fields at dusk. Armed hlin ask in the coastal taverns if anyone's seen a stone that floats, black obsidian triangles, or a chest as big as four hlin standing in a line. Pirates board and search *all* ships sailing away from Shire waters, without exception; mages are with them, looking for something.

One evening PCs encounter five armed hlin who ask if they've seen a triangular piece of black obsidian "as long as a hlin's foot, flat and polished smooth." They offer a thousand pieces of gold for it, and a gold piece for any tips of its whereabouts. If PCs ask who the five hlin are or where this stone came from, they will be told only, "the lady from whom it was stolen is very anxious to recover it."

One of the PCs notices a mage watching them, having cast a spell (scanning the PCs for magical items).

The buccaneer Jalassa Longwinkle (described in the NPC section) is seeking an ancient artifact, *Selbrinor's Wavestone*. The *Wavestone*, rumored to protect ships in some way, is said to have been buried on an island somewhere off the Shirecoast. Consulting ancient, crumbling diaries long hidden in Ierendi, Jalassa learned that the hlin pirate Blackkann Dundros buried the magical stone in a chest of gems on a certain nameless isle. When she got there, she found that someone had *just* beaten her to it; the chest had hastily been dug up and dragged to a ship that was beating away from the island as Jalassa arrived.

Jalassa pursued the ship as soon as she discovered the fresh diggings. It headed for Bramlerose, landed the chest, and left hastily. There were two hlin and two humans in charge of the chest, all male,

known to the hlin captain only as "the Brothers." Jalassa interrogated the captain and crew before sinking their ship. When she reached Bramlerose, "the Brothers" were long gone. Since then she has been searching the Shires, her crew (1st to 3rd level halflings, well-armed but discreet) going about in bands of three to five.

Any crewmen who get into trouble or find suspicious folk (such as the PCs) can call on Jalassa's trained seergar. Seergar are rare winged lions (new monsters, described in this book). Jalassa has captured and trained eight such creatures. If crewmen sound a magical horn, it will be heard far away on Jalassa's ship, and one or two seergar will be released. They will arrive, 'homing in' on the horn, in 10 turns to one day depending on distance, and will attack according to the crew's directions. If the crew are all slain or not present, the seergar will attack anyone possessing the horn and attempt to seize it. If the battle goes against them, one seergar will always try to escape back to Jalassa's ship. When seergar return to the ship, Jalassa's 6th and 4th level magic users will use *ESP* magic to learn what the seergar have seen. More forces will be sent if necessary, up to a total of thirty hlin crewmen. Jalassa has two 4th level hlin as 'war-leaders'.

Selbrinor's Wavestone

This large, triangular piece of polished obsidian was imbued with powerful magic long ago. The wizard Selbrinor used spells now lost to give the *Wavestone* the following properties:

*No ship with the *Wavestone* aboard will ever sink, regardless of the damage it takes. Movement and steerage damage will have normal effect. If the *Wavestone* is removed from a stricken vessel, so is its protection. Exception: a ship that burns to the waterline will sink without the *Wavestone*.

*The *Wavestone* always floats, despite its weight and/or anyone or thing pulling at or weighing down on it.

*A ship with the *Wavestone* aboard cannot be damaged by wave action (storm winds and hitting rocks, yes, but pounding by waves or being swamped by high

seas, no).

*A ship bearing the *Wavestone* can be turned *invisible* with everyone and everything aboard at the will of any living creature touching the *Wavestone*. Once a crewmember leaves the ship, he is no longer invisible. When invoked, such *invisibility* lasts for 4 turns or until the ship strikes solid material, whichever happens first.

The DM should devise additional properties of the *Wavestone*, or alter those given here, to suit the individual campaign. The *Wavestone* could well be linked to an Immortal.

10. The Shireton Dragon

Adventure Level: Any (adjust numbers and levels of opponents)

Topic: A stolen box of wands and the attempts of many groups to gain the box.

Interesting Features: Many groups all chasing and trying to identify each other and hunting for the stolen wands. The DM can use this scenario to introduce new magic into a campaign.

Campaign Hook: PCs risk being declared outlaws and earning the enmity of Lord Caine, who will become a continuing foe who will try to frame the PCs for illicit activities of his own. If the magic user who stole the Box survives all the hunting and chasing, he too could become a long-term enemy.

A ship belonging to the navy of the Shires, *The Shireton Dragon*, recently set sail from Shireton Port. It was carrying payrolls of the Sheriffposts and Fang militia in Heartshire and Southshire, a total of 21,000 gold pieces, and 36 replacement horses for the Fang troops.

The *Dragon* went up the Ithypool River, poled and towed by horses on the riverbanks. Passing through the city of Shireton uneventfully, the ship arrived at Fishtickle Bridge at night, where it was unloaded and it was discovered that the gold was missing. So was an even more secret cargo, magic of some sort, known only as 'The Box,' that the local Kronandar seem almost frantic to recover.

If PCs investigate in Fishtickle Bridge by snooping or questioning, the Kronandar

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will hear of it and begin to tail *them*. So will the thieves; servants of a low-level human wizard who is now the proud owner of a box of magical wands. The rightful owners of the box, the Sheriffs, are anxious to recover it. Lord Caine, the ambassador of Thyatis, is also very interested in coming into possession of the box's contents. Mercenaries hired by him will try to ambush and rob the PCs; their actions will draw some powerful heroes working for the Sheriffs to the PCs. That in turn will draw the Krondar after the PCs, who should have interesting lives for a time. The actions of PCs 'under fire' will determine their future reputations in the Shires in the eyes of the authorities.

11. The Burning Ring

Adventure Level: 10-14, Expert

Topic: A ring that slays, its presence with arrows of justice, and its mysterious recovery.

Interesting Features: A long-term, continuing subplot for any campaign set in the Shires.

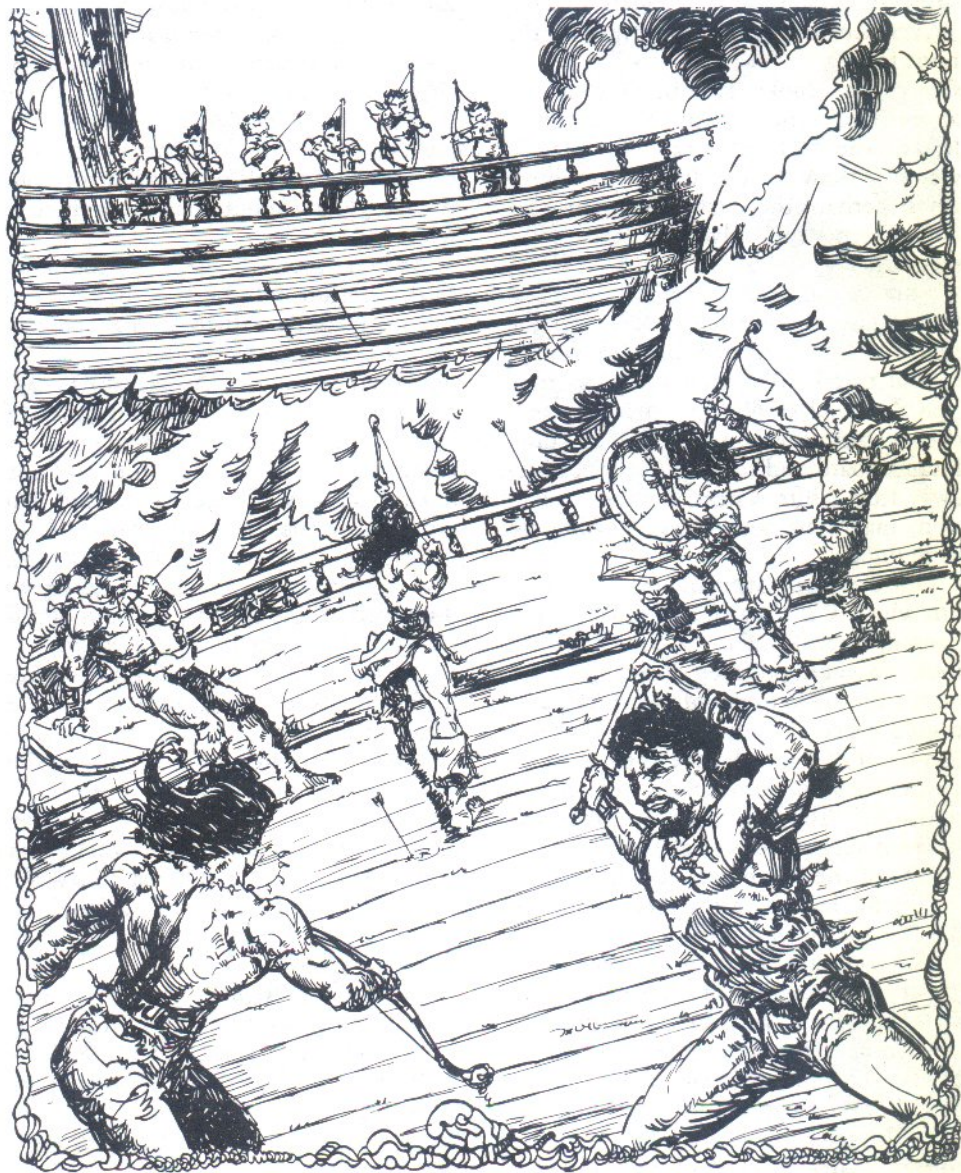
Campaign Hook: PCs may be suspected by both the Krondar and the mujina. Mujina could infiltrate the party.

The corpse of a hin, badly burned, is found on a street in Shireton Port. This otherwise unremarkable finding is of great interest to the Sheriffs because this body had an arrow of justice in either boot and wore a strange magical ring.

The Krondar who found the body foolishly tried on the ring and burst into flames on the spot. The ring then reappeared on the finger of the first corpse.

The corpse was taken to Shireton for examination, and stolen the next night in a daring raid by him led by men with strange features and vivid green flesh. There is talk of Krondar searching Shireton Port. If PCs enter the Port for any reason, they will be assumed to be looking for the ring and will be attacked.

Their attackers are Chaotic hin and humans led by mujina who will be looking different than the distinctive likenesses they assumed to lead the raid. The mujina are trying to infiltrate the Kron-



dar by isolating and slaying Krondar who enter the Port and assuming their shapes. To do this properly, they need to capture the Krondar alive and use magic and interrogation to learn of the Krondar's life, acquaintances, and mannerisms so as not to be detected. The mujina intend to isolate the Sheriffs by posing as Krondar and, one by one, impersonate them until they control the Shires.

PCs will be interrogated, if captured, in order to discover if they are agents of the Sheriffs who could serve as a faster,

easier route to one or more Sheriffs than the Krondar. The mujina will not reveal anything of their own nature or their plans unless forced. They have other magical devices (left to the DMs devising) besides the rings that burn.

12. Ulam's Hoard

Adventure Level: 15-20, Companion

Topic: Ulam's treasure hoard and guardians.

Interesting Features: A link to another plane, possible rich treasure to be won.

Campaign Hook: DMs can use the hoard and the *portable vortices* to shift campaign play to new settings or introduce new adventures by feeding PCs treasure maps and spell scrolls. Ulam may become a long-term PC foe.

Ulam Belchiir has a secret hideaway in the southwestern Black Spires near the Seacoast. He visits it only to hide extremely 'hot' or valuable treasures, and has arranged to have it well guarded. If PCs follow or keep a watch on Ulam, he will grow nervous and then make for his hoard by roundabout, zig-zagging ways, seeking to shake off any pursuit by the time he ducks into the hills southwest of Rattlecart.

Ulam's Hoard is a long, winding tunnel. In its mouth lair four feywings (see 'Monsters of the Shires' in this book), who will attack anyone approaching the valley where the tunnel lies. Ulam has trained them to 'buzz' but not attack him (or anyone looking like Ulam) or any creature in his immediate company.

Inside the tunnel is a set of tightly fitting, bronze-clad locked doors. If these are struck, broken open, or climbed (instead of the lock merely being picked), a carrion crawler that lairs within the doors will be alerted. Also within the doors are 6 Wychlamps (detailed in this book), in a long, twisting passage that is sealed some five hundred paces farther on by another set of locked doors identical to the first. A secret passage known only to Ulam leads around the section of passage between the sets of doors. Its concealed door can only be found on a 1 in 8 chance (1 in 10 for non-thieves and non-dwarves).

Beyond this second set of doors is Ulam's treasure hoard, or rather was Ulam's treasure hoard. Someone or something has opened a vortex into the passage from the Elemental Plane of Earth leaving behind six horde 'insectoid' monsters, detailed in the DM's Companion rulebook. (DMs should adjust the strength of these monsters to challenge but not overwhelm PCs.) Ulam's treasure is all gone.

These creatures are guarding a large chest that looks like one of Ulam's trea-

sure chests but is in reality a *portable vortex*; when its locked lid is raised it becomes a vortex to the Elemental Plane of Earth and more horde monsters will burst down the wormhole 'behind' the chest to attack the PCs. Once opened, the chest simply *cannot* be closed, spells and physical activities notwithstanding; the lid will detach itself, vanish, and reappear far down the wormhole, dwindling into the distance as it races to the other end.

To close the vortex, PCs must fight their way down the wormhole (DMs can arrange monster encounters therein as desired), where they will discover Ulam's treasure being carried off by horde creatures. New magic and riches can thereby be introduced into play.

If desired, play can be shifted to the Elemental Plane of Earth by destroying the wormhole behind the PCs. If the PCs try to close the wormhole themselves, they will find that they emerge from an identical, lidless chest at its far end. The lid from the first chest is lying on the ground nearby (guarded, of course, by horde creatures). If PCs try to move it to the chest, all horde creatures in the vicinity will rush to prevent this. When placed on the chest, the vortex in the Elemental Plane closes. When the Prime Plane is reached again, the lid of the second chest will have appeared on the ground beside the first chest, the vortex and the wormhole will pass out of existence, and both chests will vanish, moving at random to two different planes of the Multiverse. PCs may well be destroyed or trapped on remote planes if the lids are placed too soon.

If Ulam survives, the loss of his treasure will make him a fanatical enemy of those he considers responsible (the PCs, of course) and he will become their tireless behind-the-scenes foe.

13. The Deep Mine

Adventure Level: 20-30, Companion to Master

Topic: A monster invasion of the Shires by means of a vortex from other planes.

Interesting Features: Plenty of opportu-

nities for knee-deep, non-stop hacking and slashing (for players) and an opportunity to test PCs with bizarre monsters (for the DM).

Campaign Hook: The great glaurant could well become a personal foe of the PCs, and play could shift (via the vortex) to other planes, perhaps with PCs chasing the great glaurant or being hunted by it. New magic (e.g. to entice or entrap the monsters into the vortex used by the great glaurant) could be introduced into a campaign. DMs could explore the glaurant culture, perhaps spread across several planes.

Rumors begin to spread of a remote mine that seems to spawn monsters; hardly a month passes without some strange horror or other emerging into the peaks around. Many of these creatures have never been seen by him before; PCs could learn of this by being attacked by one and being told of the rumor later.

Many of these monsters roam the peaks (medusae and kryst from the Companion rulebook, for example; DMs can use any 'loner' creatures they wish). As PCs get closer to the mine, more and more monsters will appear, circling to cut off the PCs from any escape, so that PCs who are not familiar with the area will not realize they are being herded closer to the mine. Groups of monsters will gather or fly overhead until PCs who cannot escape by *teleport* magics will have no option but to enter the mine.

The mine is large and labyrinthine; many creatures roam its caverns and passages fighting among themselves. There is room for PCs to hide and travel about for days. DMs can whittle a party's magical power down steadily by repeated monster encounters and at the same time force PCs to go deeper into the mine.

As the PCs descend, they will encounter many deep glaurant (a new monster detailed in this book) who seem to be organized (sentry posts, patrols, etc.) and trying to keep everything away from a cavern that seems to be the source of the monsters. If the PCs fight their way to the cavern, they will find many deep glaurant and a great glaurant, which is a glaurant who is also a powerful magic user. Precise

Campaigning in the Five Shires

abilities for the great glaurant are left to the DM but it is suggested that it escape the PCs for use in later adventures.

The great glaurant has opened a magical vortex to another plane. PCs could try to destroy this link, or pass through it to other adventure settings. The deep glaurant are trying to take control of the mountains and all the mines beneath them. The DM can bring in his Strikers or Fangs to rescue PCs who really mess up, and should adjust the numbers and types of creatures encountered to provide a stiff challenge for PCs.

14. *The Black Eagle Swoops* —

Adventure Level: 20-30, Companion to Master

Topic: Open warfare in the Shires and possible new directions for a stale or stalled campaign. Drastic stuff.

Interesting Features: The DM can carefully build the conflict to really scare and challenge the PCs and use the war to sweep PCs into contact with many foes, friends, and acquaintances from earlier adventures. Anything about the nearby Known World—Karameikos, the Shires, even Ierendi or Darokin—as presented in this series of Gazetteers or in the DM's own campaign that the DM wants changed can be altered at one sweep; the 'new order' will simply be different.

Campaign Hook: PCs can establish their own stronghold in the Shires, or be named outlaws, or be forced into joining the Shires' armies; a DM can establish strong new directions for play in any campaign.

Baron von Hendriks, the Black Eagle,

gathers enough strength to invade the Shires. His forces drive straight across Eastshire and Highshire, north of Wereskalot, to seize the mines and Longflask, and then race south to take the smelters and smithies of Ringrise and Ober's Mimbur. Bargle the Infamous and his apprentices aid the war effort by *teleporting* here and there in the Shires to destroy key bridges, weapons stores, Clanmasters, Knight-Heroes, and the like.

The PCs are caught in the middle of this fight and may be assumed to be loyal to the Baron and attacked by him. The Thyatian ambassador takes advantage of the confusion to assassinate everyone he can in Shireton and seize what treasure he can to spirit it away for himself. The mujina in Shireton Port and the orcs in the Black Spires both seize the opportunity to attack halflings and take plunder of their own.

The country erupts into bloody war and the PCs must try to survive and act as they see best. Pirates will close The Shire-coast to prevent any naval invasion or escape by ship, and Darokin gathers its armies to prevent any spillover onto its own soil, so the PCs are trapped in the Shires.

Duke Stefan in Karameikos may decide to mobilize against The Black Eagle while the Baron's strength is committed in the Shires; if so, the Baron will either hastily return to Fort Doom or bring all his forces westwards into the northern Shires. He may be forced out of Karameikos.

Winter will be harsh and cold, bringing full-scale hostilities to a temporary halt. PCs will have time to try to orga-

nize, perhaps with a vastly changed Shires under their feet.

The DM must work out the political effects of this war across the Known World. It is recommended that hostilities be kept as small-scale as possible, perhaps with the Black Eagle hurrying back to protect Fort Doom soon after his invasion, using the magic of Bargle to prevent his reprisals. The threat of his return would then hang over an alert and mobilized Shires with all his suspicious and watchful of strangers and a doubled police presence bolstered by Knight-Heroes and Masters. The boringly peaceful Shires would suddenly be a tense and exciting place, perhaps for years to come.

Forces of the Black Eagle Barony

The forces that the Baron will commit to this war are as follows:

1st Lance of Doom: MV 4, BR 108, Personnel 996 (Average), Human cavalry, bows & swords

2nd Lance of Doom: MV 4, BR 108, Personnel 996 (Average), Human infantry, halberds & swords

Vileraider Bugbear Band: MV 5, BR 68, Personnel 600 (Fair), maces, spears, mixed weaponry

Blackstone Orcs: MV 4, BR 72, Personnel 700 (Average), mixed weaponry; will come from mountains northeast of Cruth River a week after Baron first invades the Shires. 20% chance of disobedience each time given orders by Baron; will disband and retreat if reduced to 250 orcs or less

Mages: Eleven Chaotic magic users, as follows: 1st level: 4; 2nd level: 3; 3rd level: 3; 4th level: 1; 15th level: 1 (Bargle)

MONSTERS of the Five Shires



Despite its tranquil beauty, the land of halflings is home to some dangerous creatures. DMs should note that all hin will know these creatures upon sight, and something about them because creatures common in areas in which were reared will have been fully explained to them by clan Elders. The unlucky may well find some of these creatures outside the Shires.

DEEP GLAURANT

Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 7*
Move: 90' (30')
Gliding: 120' (40')
Swimming: 90' (30')
Attacks: 4 claws/1 bite
Damage: 2-8/2-8/2-8/2-8/1-4
No. Appearing: 1-2 (1-2)
Save As: Fighter: 8
Morale: 10
Treasure Type: (N, O, magic weapons)
Alignment: Chaotic
XP value: 850

This thankfully rare race of evil predators inhabits caverns deep beneath the

Black Spires. A glaurant hunts anything and everything it sees for food. It will fight until seriously wounded or threatened with death, or until its opponent is slain whereupon it will immediately feed.

Deep glaurant are named for their strange gulping call, which they make deep in their throats when excited. If alone, or when creeping up on prey, they will be eerily silent.

Deep glaurant can cause magical *darkness* about themselves once every third round (such darkness lasting for the entire round) if they so desire, merely by silent effort of will. Glaurant have become deadly foes to all creatures who venture into deep places. They are intelligent enough to arrange rockfall traps and deadly ambushes, and will use magic gained from caches, tombs, and victims as weapons against foes or to trade when caught at a disadvantage.

Glaurant are massively muscled, scaled, and ochre to stony-grey in hue. Humanoid in form, they stand eight feet tall and their four limbs end in prehen-

sile, iron-strong, sharp-nailed claws which enable them to rake and rend flesh and climb stone with equal ease. They are capable diggers and have little wings, like broad webbed claws, protruding from their shoulders. These wings can be folded flat, or sculled with dextrous skill, and are used as aids in swimming, climbing, and turning falls into glides.

A favorite attack of a glaurant is to dive onto prey from high in silence and *darkness*. Glaurant can see up to 90' with infravision and are not bothered by normal or bright light. They have small, flexible horns on their heads which fold over their ears against dust and to help them feel along crevices, and therefore resemble death demons (detailed in AC9, the CREATURE CATALOGUE), but are unrelated to them.

Deep glaurant are rumored to have cities and a civilization far underground. Halflings who slay a deep glaurant will always try to behead it to gain a trophy to take back to the clan, for all hin know how hard one must fight to vanquish such a foe.

MONSTERS OF THE FIVE SHIRES

FEYWING

Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 7 + 1
Move: 60' (20')
Flying: 180' (60')
Attacks: 3 bites or 3 goring horns or a combination of these
Damage: 2-8 (bites) or 1-10 (horns)
No. Appearing: 1-2 (1-2)
Save As: Fighter: 7
Morale: 9
Treasure Type: B
Alignment: Chaotic
XP value: 450

Feywings are weird-looking reptilian creatures that have been hunted almost to extinction by the hin of the Shires. A feywing is scaled, dark red to blue-black in color, and has a bulbous, elastic body which is little more than a stomach. It sports weak, soft claws and a feeble prehensile tail with which it can stand upright, and has three long necks ending in snout-horned, many-toothed heads.

Its teeth and horns are razor-sharp and its necks are terrifically strong. Feywings are often mistaken for dragons from afar due to their size, bulk, and great, arching batlike wings. They are vicious predators, but unlike dragons have only physical means of attack.

They are intelligent enough to gather treasure as a lure and for bargaining if enemies prove too strong. They lair in ruins and dungeons as well as natural caverns and high, isolated valleys.

Feywings like to swoop down, impale cattle on their horns, and fly off, although they will take hin or smaller prey if there is no livestock to be had. Their eyes are hooded with horny membranes that deflect arrows and daggers 40% of the time, and they have no fear of combat, trusting to their scaly hide and lack of clearly vulnerable spots to protect them until they can slay or devour foes.

Feywings are eagerly sought after by wizards of Glantri for experimentation and for use as guardian creatures, once enchanted and trained.

NIGHTGLEET

Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 3*
Move: 60' (20')
Flying: 120' (40')
Attacks: 1 bite + sucks blood
Damage: 2-8 + 1-4 per round thereafter
No. Appearing: 1-4 (1-4)
Save As: Fighter: 3
Morale: 9
Treasure Type: (rings only, perhaps magical)
Alignment: Chaotic
XP value: 50

These horrid predators of The Five Shires hunt only at night or in subterranean darkness, although if confronted with bright light, they will only be angered, not disabled. Nightgleets are large (up to 12' long) winged eels who inhabit mountain caves and crevices, underground caverns, and coastal caves. They bite with large, gulping mouths lined with many sharp teeth and may fasten themselves to an opponent and drain blood. A nightgleet can end this draining instantly to fight on.

Nightgleets fly in a vertical position, looking around alertly, and have 90' infravision. Their smooth-skinned bodies are covered with a slime that makes them hard to hold, and their rubbery bodies are resistant (half damage only) to crushing blows. If cut or burned, their bodies spray a stinging, skunklike spray. The horrible odor of this secretion repels other creatures but attracts gleet. Water will lessen the odor but it must wear off slowly (1-4 days) unless ended at once by immersion in wine or another fluid containing alcohol.

Nightgleets are also found in the Blight Swamp and the Malpheggi Swamp, although their numbers are few due to determined hunting.

Nightgleets are quite intelligent and will flee when magical attacks are readied or victory seems impossible, only to attack from hiding again when previously escaped opponents are weak or at a disadvantage, often when engaged in fighting another foe.

Nightgleets have dark blue, mauve, or

black bodies and wings. Their eyes are glistening black with white pupils. They hiss when angry or hurt.

ROCKFANG

Armor Class: 2 (8 where exposed)
Hit Dice: 5 + 1
Move: 90' (30')
Attacks: 2 claws, 1 bite, 1 tail sting
Damage: 1-2/1-2/1-4/2-12
No. Appearing: 1-2 (1-2)
Save As: Fighter: 5
Morale: 7
Treasure Type: Nil
Alignment: Neutral
XP Value: 225

This strange creature of the Five Shires claims many unwitting victims. Solitary and utterly silent, the rubbery-bodied Rockfang resembles a gigantic tadpole in form. Its main body is amorphous and can grow temporary arms or probes to aid it in climbing and in grasping rocks. Its tail can also alter in length by being drawn up within its elastic body or fully extended. The tail ends in a saw-edged, pointed stabbing hook of bone, like a scorpion's sting, and the rockfang can wield this with great dexterity and enormous strength. A rockfang's 'fang' can pierce even armor plate and strikes with such blinding speed that a rockfang is allowed two strikes per round (for 2-12 damage each). Rockfangs will strike at foresters, miners, climbers, and other creatures who disturb them. They can also use their tails to climb and to dig.

Rockfangs live on carrion, certain roots and leaves, and creatures of all sizes that they can slay with their fangs or cause to fall over cliffs or into pits by attacking wildly with their fangs. A rockfang's fang is not poisonous.

Rockfangs are a mottled dun, ochre, and grey in color, the dominant hue varying from individual to individual. They may be found anywhere in the Shires, in any terrain, although they are rare in settled areas because halflings slay them on sight.

Rockfangs gained their name from their habit of drawing rocks onto their bodies with their tails and by burrowing

beneath, and then exuding a strong glue. This coats them with a rocky rubble which they can release at will, providing them with both camouflage and armor-like protection.

SEERGAR

Armor Class: 5
 Hit Dice: 5 + 5
 Move: 180' (60')
 Flying: 210' (70')
 Attacks: 4 claws, 1 bite
 Damage: 1-4/1-4/1-4/1-4/2-8
 No. Appearing: 0 (2-5)
 Save As: Fighter: 5
 Morale: 9
 Treasure Type: D
 Alignment: Neutral
 XP Value: 225

These thankfully rare winged lions lair only in the mountains of the Five Shires. They are named for the sound of their exultant screaming cry which they utter after making a kill or to attract fellows to attack prey they have just sighted. All of the races who have inhabited the Shires have hunted the seergar, although only the dwarves did so for sport, and the Seergar have returned the favor.

Seergar are large and powerful, with shaggy coats that are flame-red, russet, brown, dun, or even silky black in hue. They have bright green eyes, 190' infra-vision and long curving fangs. Only magical compulsion or food shortages such as those caused by severe winter weather will bring them down out of the mountains.

Seergar love to pounce from the air, beating their dark wings to drag a moving target to a standstill, raking with their claws and biting the head or neck, if they can get at it. Horses will run from the smell of seergar if they get the chance. Many tales speak of warriors and mages riding seergar, but none today will admit to knowing how to train them.

Seergar are fierce and often battle griffons and prey upon pegasi. They are sleek, agile, and fast in the air, unlike the clumsier and heavier manticores. Seergar meat is said to have a heavy 'smoky' taste, but to otherwise resemble beef.



MONSTERS OF THE FIVE SHIRES

WYCHLAMP

Armor Class: 2 or 0 (see below)

Hit Dice: 3 + 3**

Move: (levitating): 210' (70')

Attacks: 1 discharge

Damage: 2-5

No. Appearing: 1-3 (1-8)

Save As: Magic User: 3

Morale: 12

Treasure Type: Nil

Alignment: Neutral

XP value: 100

A wylamp is a small (up to 9" across) ball of glowing light. Wylamps are composed largely of energy, although they have wispy, spiderweb-like skeletons of geometrical symmetry and translucent to invisible aspect. These strange creatures wander aimlessly, drifting by natural *levitation*, and seem attracted to any use of magic within 70'. They are silent and seemingly unintelligent and come from planes dominated by the Sphere of Energy.

Much sought after by those who would slay mages, wylamps have the unusual property of causing any magic within 20'

of them to go awry.

*Aimed spells are 77% likely to be deflected in a random direction as are spell-like powers and magical item effects.

*Area-effect magics are altered as follows: roll 1d6, on a 1 or 2: doubled in area and halved in damage; 3 or 4: halved in area and doubled in damage; 5: completely nullified; 6: unaffected.

*Spells cast and magical item attacks launched within 20' of a wylamp are (roll 1d6), 1 or 2: directed back on the caster for full effect; 3 or 4: target and/or area of effect altered at random; 5: intensity (duration or damage) halved; 6: unaffected. Interpret any impossible results as complete nullification of the magic.

Magic directed at a wylamp, if it reaches the wylamp (e.g. by touch) will be reflected back 100% upon the caster or wielder of the magic. A Wylamp is never affected by magic.

Wylamps may be slain by physical attacks although they will bob and weave to avoid being struck after they are hit once, increasing their effective AC from 2

to 0, and they cannot pass through a gap of less than 6 inches wide and high. They can thus be netted; a ring of wylamps around a fighter is an effective defense against mages.

Wylamps can discharge their energies upon physical contact with a living creature in a lightning-like arc that does 2-5 damage, and *slows* a victim to half speed during the following round. They do this only 40% of the times they come into contact with a creature, seemingly at random rather than as an aggressive weapon.

Wylamps take no damage from fire, heat, cold, or lightning attacks; the latter sort (only) will restore lost hp to a wylamp; treat each hp of "damage" as a hp restored until all are accounted for or the wylamp is restored to full hp, whichever occurs first.

Any undead Energy Drain attack will destroy a wylamp, but not the spell that duplicates this ability; it will go awry if used against a wylamp.



Adapting Gazetteers to the AD&D® Game

Many of you may be avid players of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. For your convenience, we included this section to help you use this Gazetteer in your AD&D® campaign.

The differences between the D&D® game and the AD&D® game are small enough that adaptation should not be much of a problem. However, for those of you who are not familiar with the D&D game, there are a few details that need to be clarified.

Alignments: D&D game characters have only three alignments—Lawful, Neutral, or Chaotic. In AD&D games, assign Good, Neutral, or Evil alignments depending on the context.

Armor Class (AC): In the D&D game, the highest (worst) armor class is 9. In the AD&D game, the highest AC is 10.

Classes: In D&D games, elves, dwarves and halflings are actually character classes. D&D game elves correspond to AD&D game elven fighter/magic-users. D&D game dwarves and halflings are fighters. At high levels, D&D game demi-humans use Attack Ranks, which enable them to fight better. Ignore these in the AD&D game. Human fighters, clerics, magic-users, and thieves are unchanged.

Coins (cn): The cn abbreviation stands for coin and is a measure of weight equal to the AD&D game gp.

Dominions: They are lands under a character's rule, like AD&D game baronies. Rulers receive taxes from inhabitants as well as income from natural resources and services. D&D game dominion populations grow an average of 15% minus 5d10 people per month. At 50 inhabitants per square mile, the growth tops out at 1d5% minus 5d10 people. Use AD&D game taxation.

Equipment: The terminology in the D&D game is very similar to the AD&D game. Equipment cost, encumbrance, damage in combat, or AC protection are slightly different, but not enough to be worth mentioning. Use the AD&D game statistics.

Encumbrance: See Coins.

Experience: Total accumulated experience for characters is also different between the two games, but again, not enough to have a substantial effect on

play. Everybody understands the difference between a level 1 magic-user and a level 15 wizard . . . hopefully!

Immortals: These beings are equivalent to deities in the AD&D game. Immortals are often NPCs who advanced to 36th level and completed a heroic quest of some sort. Immortals belong to various "spheres," such as:

Matter: Usually related to lawful beings, fighter types, or the earth elements. Opposed to the Sphere of Time.

Energy: Usually related to Chaos, magic-users, or the element of fire. Opposed to the Sphere of Thought.

Time: Usually related to neutral beings, cleric types, or the element of water. Opposed to the Sphere of Matter.

Thought: Usually related to any alignment, thief types, or the element of air. Opposes the Sphere of Energy.

Entropy: Not related to anything except destruction, it opposes all other spheres. It corresponds to the AD&D game Lower Planes. Lords of Entropy are demons.

Morale: Whenever NPCs or monsters run into difficulties, especially during combat, there is a possibility they would surrender or flee. Use the AD&D game reaction/loyalty system.

Monsters: Some monsters mentioned in this supplement do not exist in the AD&D game. Simply replace them with another appropriate creature. Keep an eye on play balance; differences in HD and special abilities may occur at times, calling for adjustments.

Movement: Movement rates in the D&D game are given in feet/turn, and then in parentheses in feet/round. In D&D games, 100'/turn equals 10"/round in the AD&D game.

Ranges: All distances are expressed in feet, rather than inches. Assume 10 feet are equivalent to 1" in the AD&D game.

Rounds: Rounds and turns are used the same way in both games. The D&D game does not use segments. One D&D game round equals one minute; one D&D game turn equals 60 rounds—for more simplicity use the AD&D game equivalents, without converting.

Spells: Some D&D game spells have slight-

ly different names than their AD&D game counterparts. Modify the number of memorized spells listed for spell-casters, to match the AD&D game rules.

War Machine: This is a mass combat system developed in the D&D game which has no equivalent in the AD&D game. BR stands for Battle Rating and is only used for the War Machine. We suggest the BATTLESYSTEM™ Fantasy Combat Supplement which works for both games.

Weapon Mastery: Ignore details for D&D game weapon mastery and replace with the AD&D game equivalent.

Final Notes: Keep in mind when adapting your D&D adventures that AD&D game characters are slightly tougher at low level, but D&D game characters can deliver much more damage at mid- and high levels.

The game is designed to handle very high levels of play, up to a maximum of level 36. It is suggested that you keep the same levels of experience in the two games, up to level 20. Beyond that, assume that each two D&D game levels equal one level in the AD&D game, rounded up. Using this, a 36th level wizard would be a 28th level archmage in the AD&D game.

Gazetteer nations can now be set up in other game worlds, such as those described in the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ Campaign Set or the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® Fantasy Game Setting. This offers interesting alternative developments to regions not yet charted, allowing you to continue your campaign without having to switch to the other game. The best of two worlds could create the greatest campaign ever!

The Shires can be linked to other worlds by a hoop of *blackflame* that *gates* those who leap through it into the halfling lands of Luiren in the Forgotten Realms or The Green Fields in Greyhawk. Luiren is on the southern coast of Faerun; ships must sail around the jungles of Chult and eastward for many days to reach it. The Green Fields lie between Gran March and the Duchy of Ulek, around the headwaters of the Lort River. Only a few Keepers know how to create *Rings of Fire*; the only permanent one is hidden somewhere far beneath the Black Spires mountain range.

NON-HIN ADVENTURERS

There are non-hin living in the Shires, fully accepted as fellow citizens by the hin. One famous human, for example, Baeremos, runs The Battered Halfling Inn on the road west out of Wereskalot.

Few non-hin are welcomed to live on clan lands as opposed to visiting as guests, and so the non-hin permanent inhabitants of the Shires can almost all be found in the larger settlements where land is bought and sold in the same manner as in human lands. Wereskalot (where there are almost 700 non-hin), Shireton, and Shireton Port in particular are favored by non-hin. There are also large non-hin populations in Thantabbar, Tothmeer, Ober's Mimbur, and Sateeka.

Elves are well regarded in the Shires; hin tend to be friendly on sight to elves who are not obviously hostile, warlike, or threatening, when encountered.

Humans and gnomes tend to be regarded in a neutral, politely wary manner. Those who proclaim themselves by dress or speech to be of Glantri or the Black Eagle Barony of Karamaikos, or who are proudly and vocally Thyatian, will earn themselves a chilly initial reception.

Note the word "initial." In all meetings, halflings look to the character of the individual, rather than the race or uniform. Exceptions come when they see weapons out or face beings of the humanoid races.

Dwarves are disliked and treated with bare civility. Hin keep weapons near at hand, particularly near the mountains, for hin do not forget Loktal Ironshield. A dwarven visitor to the Shires who travels about the countryside will be closely watched. Near the mountains, a traveling dwarf will be continually challenged by Krondar, Fang patrols, and hin miners.

Orcs and lizard men are hated and will be attacked on sight. Gnolls are so rare that some halflings may not recognize one. If an Elder of a northern hin clan sees a gnoll, it will be recognized and an alarm raised. The gnoll had then better move quickly if it wishes to keep its hide intact.

Halflings treat young children and elders of all non-humanoid races with respect. Old folks get listened to first, served first, seated first, and given the best beds unless there are sick or injured hin present who will be given

precedence. Adventurers traveling in the Shires who try to order a meal or a room at an inn by barging past or outshouting older folk of any race will be ignored; if they persist, a hin will quietly explain their rudeness, as if to a slow-witted child.

NON-HIN PC Starting Location Table

Roll percentile dice and refer to the class of the starting character, or choose from the appropriate table without rolling. A result of "Other Settlement" always results in a location in the Shires chosen by the DM; usually the character will be one of only 1-3 non-hin families in a village. In contrast to this table, halfling PCs may begin play anywhere in the Shires, although the locale must match the clan (if any) chosen for the halfling.

Although non-hin may become clan members, it is rare for a starting PC to be a clan member. Clan membership may be earned during play; non-hin often willingly acquire a tattoo on their breasts to denote membership in a hin clan. Non-hin can be members of more than one hin clan, but this is very rare.

Non-hin in the Shires always have readily evident "honest jobs," or at least their families do. The DM should give some thought as to what job PCs may have, or have had, or helped parents with (i.e. what non-class skills a PC may have when beginning an adventuring career).

Die Roll Character starts in:

Die Roll	Character starts in:
Cleric	
01-25	Wereskalot
26-58	Shireton
59-68	Shireton Port
69-85	Thantabbar
86-96	Tothmeer
97-98	Ober's Mimbur
99-00	Other Settlement

Fighter

01-15	Wereskalot
16-25	Aercruth
26-40	Shireton
41-70	Shireton Port
71-80	Thantabbar
81-92	Tothmeer

93-96	Ober's Mimbur
97	Sateeka
98-00	Other Settlement

Magic-User

01-15	Wereskalot
16-18	Mallowfern
19-22	Bridle
23-27	Wardlystone
28-34	Ober's Mimbur
35-39	Ringrise
40-44	Moon Hill
45-49	Deepmoss
50-60	Thantabbar
61-74	Tothmeer
75-85	Shireton
86-94	Shireton Port
95-00	Other Settlement

Thief

01-08	Wereskalot
09-15	Ober's Mimbur
16-26	Thantabbar
27-47	Tothmeer
48-52	Rundegos
53-56	Rattlecart
57-70	Shireton Port
71-96	Shireton
97-00	Shireton Port

Dwarf

01-60	Shireton Port
61-79	Tothmeer
80-88	Shireton
89-95	Thantabbar
96-00	Other Settlement

Elf

01-06	Wereskalot
07-09	Bridle
10-14	Ober's Mimbur
15-20	Ringrise
21-24	Wardlystone
25-32	Leafkindle
33-40	Deepmoss
41-50	Moon Hill
51-59	Shadowgate
60-66	Stillpool
67-72	Sateeka
73-74	Brookbank
75-77	Bramblerose
78-84	Flagonford
85-90	Shireton
91-00	Other Settlement

What Everyone Knows About the Five Shires

Tavern Rumors From Other Lands

The People: “Halflings are like kids. Crazy kids, mind: all dreamy and full of plans and pranks. Innocents, most of ‘em, too, but sly little innocents. They’re apt to be quick with their fingers and other people’s coins, if you see what I mean. But kind? They’ve hearts of gold, most of ‘em. Rob you with one hand and give you their last crust with another. Don’t scare easy, either. They take a dagger and go looking for dragons— *dragons*, mind!—cool as can be, and not just to impress folk, either. They bear watching, those little ones. Some day they just might—well, you never know.”

The Land: “The Shires? Rolling hills and trees and the sun always shining. It’s the most beautiful place in the world if you like golden fields of everything else, and peace an’ quiet. Everyone’s kind and nice and easy-going, if you know what I mean. Not lazy, but no call for shouting and rushing about, either. The most beautiful place in the world, I’ve heard.”

Shireton: “Shireton’s a strange place. It’s all spires and crazy little tunnels and bridges and little parks. It’s like a festival, all year round; people partying and playing pranks and dancing. Everyone who can’t sing tries to, too, in the streets! It goes on all night; if it’s sleep you’re seeking, better to stay outside the walls. Good shopping, I hear. A strange place. They play a lot of games an’ all, but don’t seem to care if they win or lose. I was only there once, long ago. I wouldn’t mind seeing it again.”

Other Settlements: “Scarce worth the naming. Oh, they have ports on the coast, Thantabbar and Tothmeer, places like any port, anywhere, and there’s a bit of a fort on the coast next to the black Eagle Barony (and who wouldn’t put up some walls, next door to *him*?). They have markets, too, in Wereskalot; that’s where most humans go, and in a place called Leafkindle, if you want fresh greens and such. There’s one that supplies the miners, too; a weird name, it’s got: Ober’s—Ober’s Mimbur, that’s it. But halflings aren’t much for towns. Oh,

you can always find an inn with a pretty little village around it, like as not. But they don’t go in for cities or buildings much, if it comes to that. When I say little village, I mean ‘little’: they’re not much more than yav tall, and they built a lot of house below ground. So if you’re walking along and you see a sort of ridge with flowers or vines or tomato plants all over it, chances are you’re looking at some halfling family’s roof!”

How To Get Rich And Famous: “Get through all the farms somehow and find the mines. All through the mountains ‘twixt them and Darokin, they’ve tunneled. The Black Spires, they call those peaks, and under ‘em, let me tell you, there’s gold the like this world has never seen yet, hidden there in the dark. Silver they take out, and copper, too, but it’s the gold that drew the dwarves there, long ago. And the halflings drove ‘em out! Stood there with swords and fought until the dwarf who’d crowned himself king ran back home, with arrows in his backside! But that’s not all. I’ve heard that they find gems there, too, in the rivers. Emeralds and rubies, as big as your fist, some of ‘em! Fill a wagon or two with *those* and sneak out somehow, and if you can keep your maw shut as to where you got it all, you’ll be set for life!”

Hot Tips: “Don’t be quick to draw blade or open your mouth. Be quiet and gentle and smile a lot. They’re smarter than they look. Don’t treat them like little kids; they get mad at that. Old folks come first, then women and gals; he who barges in gets the last meat, and the coldest. Remember that.”

FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH A VETERAN ADVENTURER

The People: “Hin are the most fair-minded, kindly folk you’ll meet. But they aren’t scared of anything, and they’ll stand up to anyone. If I had to storm Fort Doom tomorrow, I’d like a hundred halflings with me before I’d take anyone else. And don’t ever make the mistake of thinking they’re stupid. Behave yourself in the Shires, and they’ll be kind and nice as your best friends, or nicer. Throw your

weight around, and you’ll wind up dead, no matter how peaceful it looks.”

The Land: “As pretty a land as you’ll lay eyes on in this world, no matter how far you travel. Small farms, quaint little villages, and lots of trees. Deep woods, too—and let me tell you, the woods, and the mountains, are both as dangerous as any lawless land you’ll find. Hin let live and don’t disturb things overmuch. Folk who tramp around the woods and old ruins and other places where you might look to find treasure—they disturb whatever’s there. And they’ve got some four-stiff-drinks beasts, let me tell you! There’s one with three heads that flies like a dragon! There’s a snakelike, eely thing that sucks blood. There’s also a thing like a ball of glowing light that sucks magic out of things, or so I’m told. I only saw one once, and the warriors I was with ran as fast as you’ll ever see anything move to get away from it. And these were men who waded hip-deep in orc blood one day and hunted dragons the next! Be warned; it’s not all as peaceful as all that.”

Shireton: “A port of thieves, as bad as any you’ll find anywhere. Only there, the thieves are all knee-high to you, and so are the tunnels and sewers they use. Not a place to get cornered. If you just want to have fun, go ahead; it’s one big party! Of course, pretty maids who come up just past your knee take a little getting used to, but after all, it’s adventure you’re after, isn’t it? A wild place, Shireton. The hin go there to have fun and shop and believe me, when hin loosen their crowns and belts, they *really* go wild! Everyone should see it at least once. Again, don’t be too quick to draw your sword; they’ve got some hin there that can put a copper coin up your left nostril from the other end of a long alley! Don’t believe me, eh? I’ll tell them that when they get your body back.”

Other Settlements: “Hin don’t live in cities, as we do; they favor small villages, usually clustered where a few clan holdings meet. They all look sleepy and peaceful, but don’t be deceived. Clan hin too old to work make themselves useful by watching passersby all day. From

What EVERYONE KNOWS About the Five Shires

some window you can't even see, hidden in tall grass below your knee; a grassy heap between two houses in a village is *not* a good place to flop down for a rest; it's probably the roof of someone's house. Unseen eyes will watch your every breath as you ride by. The old hin that owns them will be able to tell a Sheriff later how long it's been since you shaved, how old you are by the wrinkles around your eyes, and how clean your teeth and fingernails were at the time, and that's the truth. Be warned."

How To Get Rich And Famous: "Bring perfume and medicines and fine cloth to the Shires and trade them for gems and gold only. Be fair, keep your prices low, stay soft and polite and easy, never pushing anyone, and above all be open and honest. Help folk who need it, be polite to all, and don't mess in where you aren't needed. The hin will be so astonished to find someone who treats them as equals that they'll bring you all their trade. If you're lucky, you'll leave rich, and well-respected, and won't even have to draw your blade once in a whole trip. Try to steal some gems or gold and sneak out—

now *there's* a way to *die* rich and famous, and real soon."

Hot Tips: "You're always being watched, even if you don't know it. Behave accordingly. These folk are just as wise and skilled as humans, for all that they're three feet tall; get that into your head and *never* forget it. They value honesty above all things, square dealing and kindness. Give them that and you'll have no trouble. Let your sword speak for you if there's trouble; don't wave it about otherwise. You'll impress nobody but a thief who knows of a place to sell it."

Courtesy Tips For Strangers To The Shires —

A merchant of Ierendi to assistants as his ship sights Shireton Port:

"Be of good cheer, lads. We're heading for the most honest folk you'll meet anywhere across this world. Here you can deal honestly, and at ease, and you'll profit by it. You'll fall in love with the place; I did. But don't be fooled by the beauty, these little folk have hurled back orcs into the mountains time and time

again, and even fought the Black Eagle to a standstill.

"They're the most care-naught pirates you'll meet, too, as well as being uncommonly good thieves. So watch sharp. If you do it politely, without staring, you'll soon notice that they're *all* watching you. Your every move will be seen; don't try any money-sharp tricks here. Don't ever think they're idiots because they're shorter than us.

"You'll see humans in the streets, too, and elves. Watch the humans more warily than the halflings; they're either merchants or worse, or they're powerful wizards. Wizards seem to love this land; they settle here whenever they can and some of them you'll pass in the streets this day can lift the Coral Castle itself and stand it upside down in Mirror Bay, far off in Karameikos, without raising a sweat. So behave. And take a good look around; then you'll know why so many of us sail off this way when we need a bit of a break. You'll miss it, when we go."

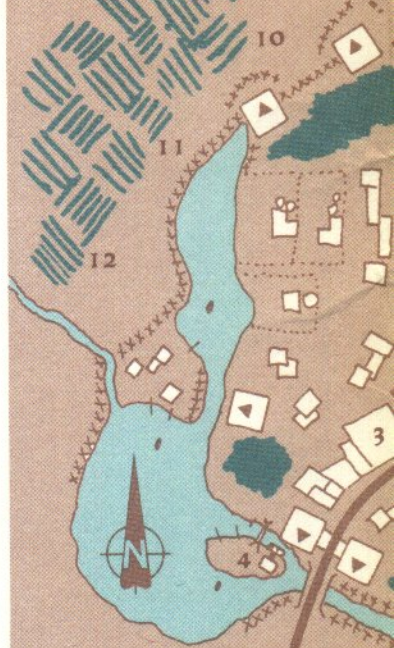


Village of Rundegos
Population: 800



Scale: One inch equals 200'

Village of Brookba
Population: 90






Scale: One inch equals 200'

Village of Bridle
Population: 850

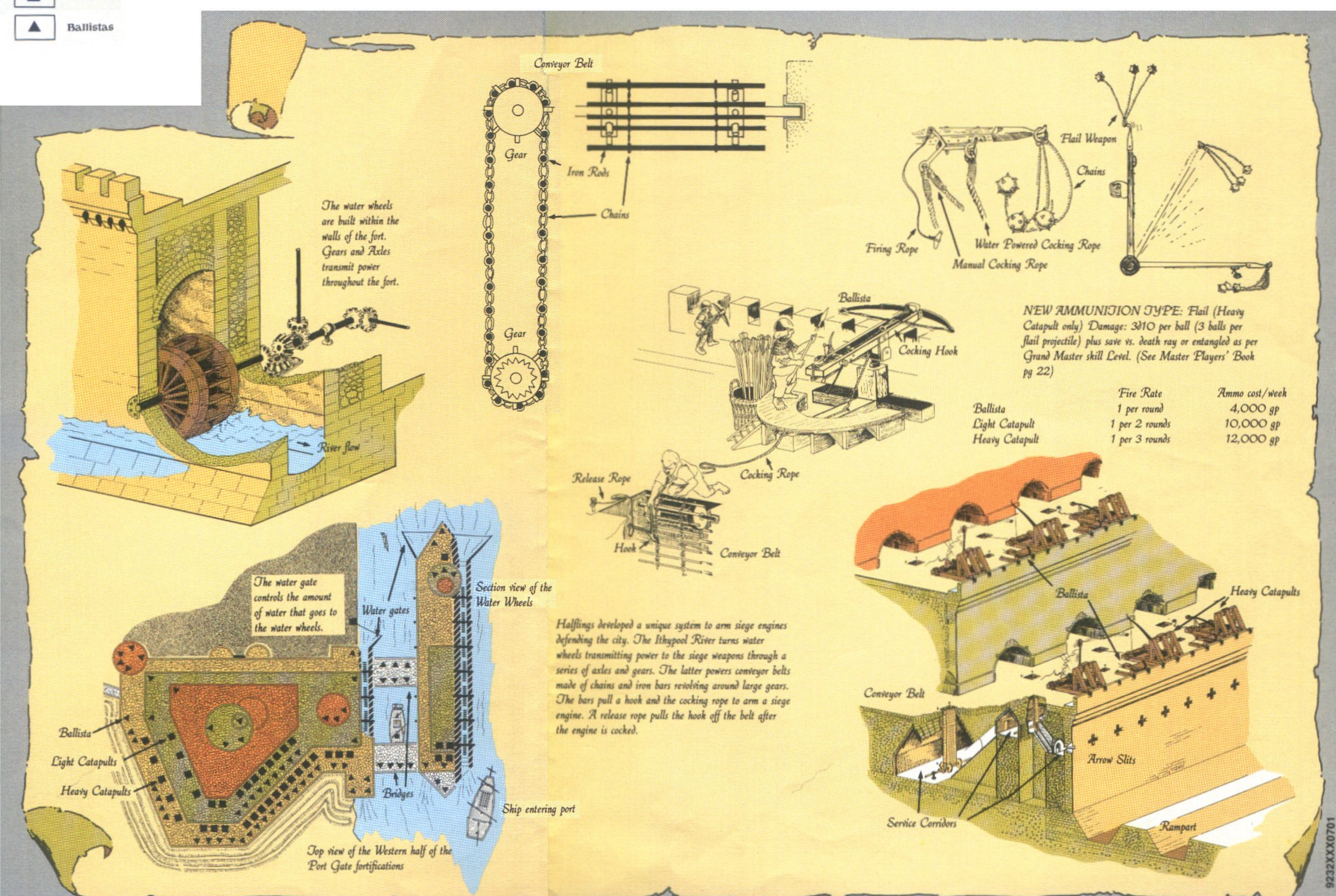
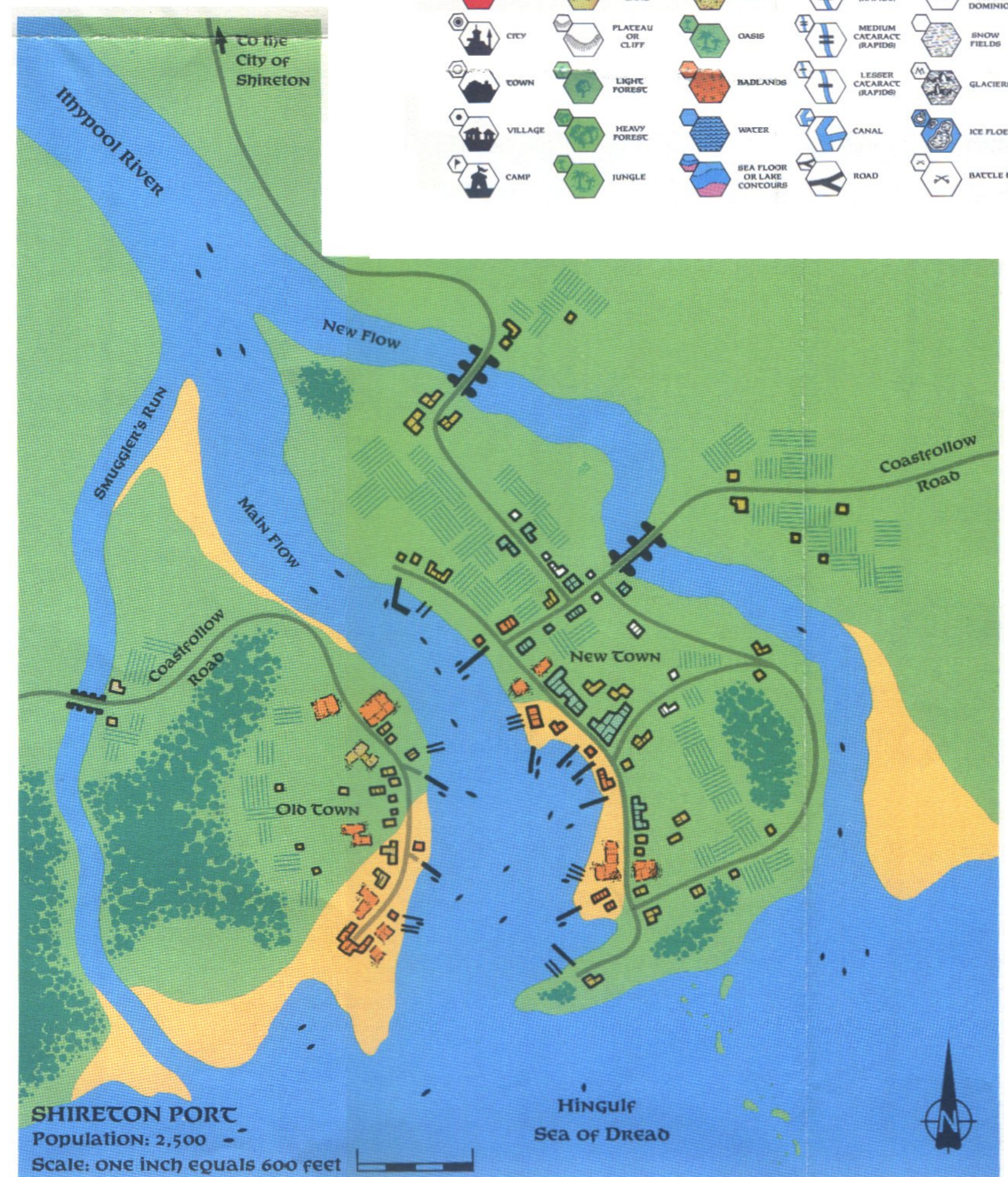
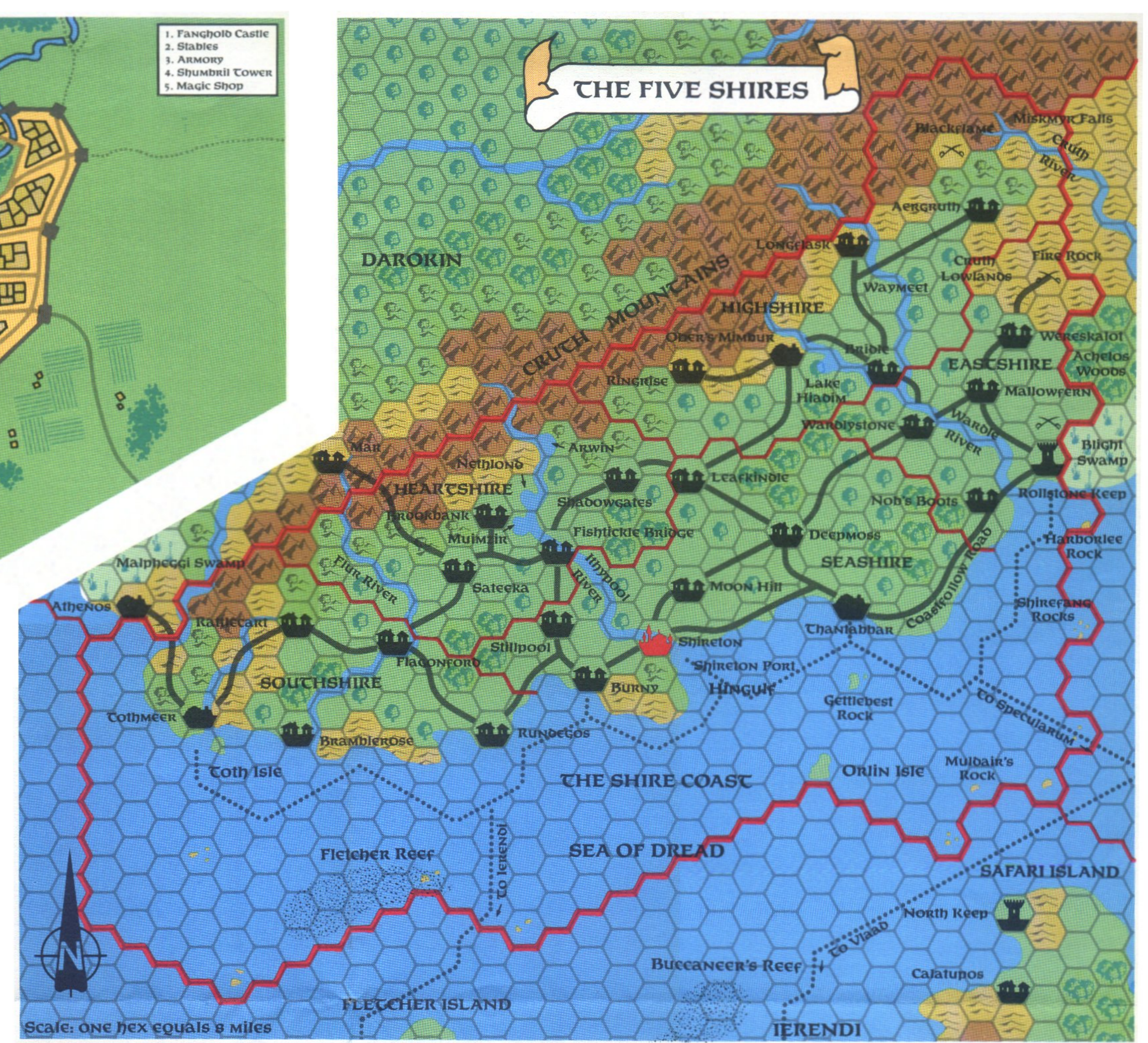
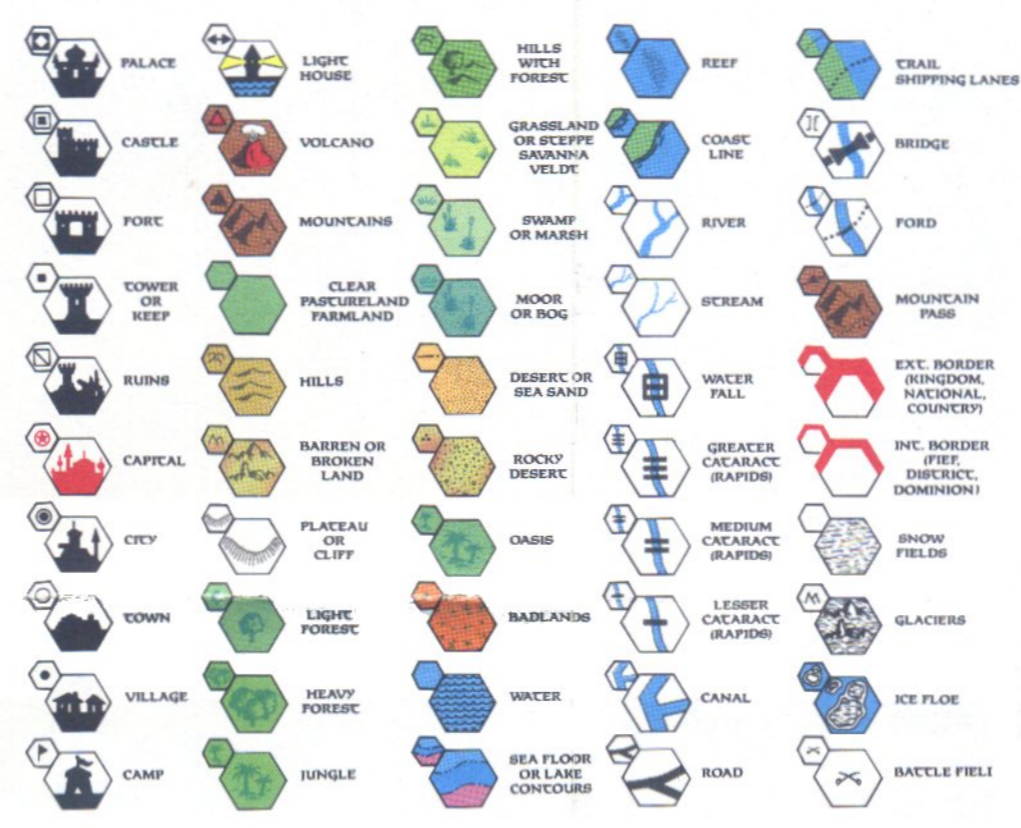


- 1. Sheriff Post
- 2. INN
- 3. CAVERN
- 4-7. MILLS
- 8-15. FARMS

- 1. Pixie's Pipe INN
- 2. Fernbottom Arms Tavern
- 3. Leaking Tankard Tavern
- 4. Mother Trencherman Guesthouse
- 5. Stockyards
- 6. Smithy
- 7. Hardware Store
- 8. Market Hall
- 9. Woodworker
- 10. Potter
- 11. Clothier
- 12. Fishmonger
- 13. Oddjob Man
- 14. Moneylender
- 15. Clan Hall
- 16. Stable

-  Boats
-  Catapults
-  Ballistas

Scale: One inch equals 200'



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by Ed Greenwood

HUMANS (AND OTHER RACES) call them "halflings," AND TEND NOT TO take the little folk too seriously. They look like children, so they get treated like children—distrusted, underestimated, or just plain ignored.

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