



FORGOTTEN REALMS

HAVENS OF MIVERITAR

A HISTORY OF THE DARK ELVES OF THE SAVAGE NORTH

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HAVENS OF MIYERITAR

The “dhaerow,” an elven term meaning “face of shadow,” “heart of night,” or “traitor,” have become the drow, fearsome inhabitants of Faerûn’s Underdark. In the tales of the surface elves, the drow are evil incarnate, cursed by the Seldarine and fully deserving of their fate thanks to their embrace of dark powers such as Ghaunadaur, also known as That Which Lurks, and Lolth the Spider Queen.

However, more knowledgeable scholars see more nuance in the history of the Fair Folk. The gold elves of Aryvandaar arguably matched the dark elves of Ilythiir in their cruelty, yet all the dark elves were swept up in the Descent of the Drow, while none of the gold elves suffered a comparable fate. Only recently has the history of other drow been studied, such as those descended from the peaceful dark elves of Miyeritar. Revealed here for the first time are the fates of these forgotten dark elf refugees of the Crown Wars and the havens created for them by the Fair Folk of Illefarn.

THE CROWN WARS

The elven Crown Wars (-12000 DR to -9000 DR) erupted more than thirteen millennia ago, pitting elf against elf for 3,000 years. At the time, the greatest elven nations included Aryvandaar (Modern: High Forest), dominated by gold elves; Eiellûr (Modern: Winterwood), dominated by green elves; Illefarn (Modern: west of the River Dessarin from Ardeep Forest to the Neverwinter Woods), dominated by moon elves and green elves; Ilythiir (Modern: Eastern Shaar), dominated by dark elves; Keltormir (Modern: Amn and Tethyr), dominated by moon elves and green elves; Miyeritar (Modern: High Moor), dominated by dark elves and green elves; Orishaar (Modern: The Shaar), dominated by moon elves; Shantel Othreier (Modern: Western Heartlands up to Misty Forest), dominated by moon and gold elves; Syôrpiir (Modern: Ankkwood and Chondalwood), dominated by green elves; and Thearnytaar (Modern: Thornwood), dominated by green elves.

The First Crown War (-12000 DR to -11300 DR) began with the rise of the Vyshaantar Empire. After centuries of fruitless diplomacy, House Vyshaan, the impatient, grasping rulers of Aryvandaar, attacked Miyeritar and began putting political pressure on Shantel Othreier to join them or suffer the same fate. Within two centuries, Aryvandaar had annexed Miyeritar, driving much of its population into exile. However, a number of Miyeritari clans and strongholds resisted and continued to fight, and Miyeritar was not fully conquered for another five hundred years. The First Crown War ended with Aryvandaar fully in control of Miyeritar, tenuous peace accords between the Vyshaantar Empire and Shantel Othreier, and Illefarn clinging to its precious neutrality.

The Second Crown War (-11700 DR to -11200 DR) erupted during the first, after the dark elves of Ilythiir attacked the moon elves of Orishaar (distant but major trading partners of Aryvandaar) to the west. Some claim the attack was in revenge for Aryvandaar’s assault on Miyeritar, while others claim the Ilythiir had descended into savagery, embracing dark powers like Ghaunadaur and following the dark whispers of the balor known as Wendonai. Orishaar fell quickly to the surprise attack, and Syôrpiir fell a century later (-11600 DR). By -11500 DR, Eiellûr and Thearnytaar had banded together against Ilythiir. In -11450 DR, the two realms counterattacked (with minimal support from Keltormir and Shantel Othreier), in a campaign known as the Sable Wars.

The Second Crown War ended with Ilythiir triumphant and Eiellûr and Thearnytaar in ruins.

The Third Crown War (-10900 DR to -10600 DR) saw conflict erupt between Aryvandaar and Shantel Othreier that ended with the destruction of the latter, with the exception of Ardeep, which continued to resist until -10460 DR. The Fourth Crown War (-10450 DR to -10000 DR) pitted Ilythiir against Keltormir and Aryvandaar and ended only with the intervention of the Seldarine. After Aryvandaar annexed Illefarn in -9900 DR, there were none to oppose them occupying all the elven realms except for Keltormir by -9800 DR. The Fifth (and final) Crown War (-9200 DR to -9000 DR) began with the First Proclamation of the Elven Court. As noble houses across the Vyshaantar Empire moved into open revolt, the Elven Court, the various Seldarine priesthoods, and long-hidden High Mages restored pockets of resistance and freedom across the entire Vyshantaar Empire, fragmenting Aryvandaar’s armies and loyal noble houses to limit their coordination. In the end, House Vyshaan was destroyed, and the entire Vyshantaar Empire crumbled away.

The two greatest events of the Crown Wars that still have impact in the Realms today are the Dark Disaster (in -10500 DR) and the Descent of the Drow (in -10000 DR). The Dark Disaster utterly destroyed the forest realm of Miyeritar, leaving the blasted wasteland that is now the High Moor. The Descent of the Drow (as it is known to the Fair Folk of the Realms Above) or the Curse of the Seldarine (as it was known to the dark elves of its time) transformed the dark elves of Faerûn into the drow.

HAVENS OF MIYERITAR

During the First Crown War (-12000 DR to -11300 DR), Illefarn remained neutral as Aryvandaar attacked Miyeritar. However, Iyilitar Narlatha “the Dragonqueen” Auglathla secretly sympathized with the fate of Miyeritari refugees driven from their homeland by the armies of Aryvandaar.

With the iyilitar’s secret blessing, the High Mages of Illefarn set about constructing a series of hidden safe havens for the refugees, cloaked by magic and natural features from the prying eyes of the diviners of Aryvandaar. Both Ascarle (Modern: off the coast of the island of Trisk) and Jhachalkhyn (Modern: the upper Northdark beneath the southeastern Neverwinter Woods) were created as safe havens as a result of Narlatha’s decision to secretly intervene, while repurposing the Citadels of Teurmaurael (Modern: Spine of the World near the headwaters of the River Surbrin) proved to be a flawed effort to do the same.

The Miyeritari safe havens were linked to Iilorivaedon, the northern capitol of Illefarn, via *song-paths* (*portal* chains accessed via song). Each *song-path* took multiple hops in hopes of deterring Aryvandaaran spies who might try to infiltrate Iilorivaedon and discover where the refugees had fled. For example, the *song-path* that linked Iilorivaedon to the safe haven of Ascarle began with a *portal* in the southeastern Neverwinter Woods (Modern: Agatha’s Lair) that linked to a cave on Asharlalu (Modern: Finback Island off the Whalebones, tallest of the chain). From there the same variable *portal* could be used to travel onwards to an isolated sea crag known as Torinthaar (Modern: small island off the eastern coast of Ruathym called “Inthaar” by some). The journey then required a short sea voyage to a third site on the eastern shore of the isle of Calamhael (Modern: Ruathym) known as Qyrinthaar (also

called “Inthar” by some), from whence the traveler could finally reach Ascarle via a third *portal*.

ASCARLE

The dark elf city of Ascarle began as a Miyeritari safe haven during the First Crown War in -11792 in the shallow waters off the isle of Trisk, western isle of the Purple Rocks, in the heart of the Trackless Sea buried beneath the Sea of Moving Ice. The site was selected for its hidden beauty, for the sea floor in the area was warmed by undersea vents, and the shallow waters surrounding Ascarle were rife with coral and sea life. The gleaming structures of Ascarle were magically constructed of red coral and crystal, giving rise to its moniker, the City of Fire and Ice.

MIYERITARI HAVEN (-11792 DR TO -9797 DR)

From the first arrival of the Fair Folk on Faerûn to the end of the Crown Wars, the Sea of Moving Ice extended farther south than it does today, enveloping the northern isles of Gundarlun, Tuern, the Ice Peak, the Purple Rocks, and Umukek in ice. It is thought by some scholars of Ostoria that this was due to the presence of Ulutiu and his enchanted necklace, ere he sailed for the Cold Sea, which later became the Great Glacier.

Ascarle was a most unusual city, for its initial inhabitants were dark elven refugees from Miyeritar who lived in air-filled caverns beneath the Trackless Sea. The most prominent Miyeritari clans to settle here were Colviis, Ildroun, Meirityn, Olirimm, Relnarath, Seithemmir, and Trathtaer. However, not unlike their kin in far-off Eiellûr and Syorpiir, the inhabitants of Ascarle employed High Magic to transform themselves into sea elves. (Unlike their blue-tinted Inner Sea cousins, the Great Sea Elves of Ascarle were radiant in different shades of deep greens, with irregular patches of brown striped through their bodies.) From their undersea capital, the sea elves of Ascarle spread out across the floor of the Trackless Sea and beyond, eventually founding such realms as Aumrauth (between Tharsult and the mouth of the River Scelptar), Iumathiashae (off the coast of Evermeet), Mlossae (amongst the Shipgrave Isles off the coast of Halruaa), and Nindrol (around Toaridge-at-the-Sun’s Setting in the Nelanther Isles).

In -9797 DR, in the wake of the Fourth Crown War and the Descent, the newly transformed drow of House Fey-Branche of Jhachalkhyn sacked Illefarn’s northern capitol city of Iilorivaedon, using the pretext of the Aryvandaaran occupation as justification for their assault on those who had given them sanctuary. During the assault, the drow captured Lady Raerintiira Auglathla, daughter of Iyilitar Niiraeth Auglathla, and tortured her until she revealed secrets of the *song-paths* leading to Ascarle and other safe havens (Lady Raerintiira Auglathla still exists, having arisen as a banshee, now known as Agatha, in despair over her betrayal of the refugees.)

Armed with this new information, House Fey-Branche sent scouts through the *song-path* to Ascarle to determine the fate of their kin. When the scouts reported back that the dark elven clans of Ascarle had escaped the same fate by becoming sea elves prior to the Curse of the Seldarine, Matriarch Elvraema Fey-Branche was filled with fury, and she dispatched her army of drow warriors through the *song-path* leading to the City of Fire and Ice. The sea elves of Ascarle were caught wholly unaware by the invading force and most of the population was slaughtered by drow blades. Only those Ascarleans who were away from the city survived, including scions of Houses Ildroun and Meirityn, fleeing south into warmer waters far from the reach of the drow.

WHISPERED SECRETS (-9797 DR TO -8921 DR)

In the centuries that followed, House Fey-Branche held ruined Ascarle and its treasures while exploring the Vast Deep. In the abyssal depths of the Trackless Sea (Modern: off the coast of Port Llast), they discovered Pyaray, the Whisperer of Impossible Secrets. This ancient primordial had long been imprisoned in the ocean depths, bound there by the bronze dragons of the Clanlands of Aujirkeskhesjing, who had ruled the Trackless Sea from circa -29900 DR until Ulutiu’s arrival in -25500 DR.



The symbol of House Fey-Branche

Pyaray spoke to the drow, promising them eldritch secrets in exchange for his freedom. Heeding the siren call of abyssal horrors that served him, House Fey-Branche agreed, and Pyaray was unleashed in -9200 DR through the use of a dark ritual akin to High Magic. Unbeknownst to the drow, the demon lord Dagon, Prince of the Darkened Depths, had been waiting an eternity for just this moment. As the Whisperer of Secrets was released, Dagon opened a *portal* to his realm in the Abyss on the ocean floor (a *portal* that continues to drain the Trackless Sea into the 89th layer of the Abyss even today). Pyaray was swept away into a prison of Dagon’s making, and House Fey-Branche found itself serving a new master.

The drow were forced to withdraw from Ascarle in -8921 DR when the melting ice of the surrounding seas revealed the city’s existence to the surface world and thus risked discovery by the Fair Folk of the Realms above. The last drow to leave was Matriarch Elvraema Fey-Branche, who was murdered by her eldest daughter during the decampment and left to guard the portal at Qyrinthar as a drow banshee.

GUARDIANS OF ASCARLE (-8896 DR TO -39 DR)

After the departure of House Fey-Branche, the ruins of Ascarle lay unguarded for several years. In -8896 DR, the ruined city was claimed by Urlhaummauthir, a bronze wyrm descended from the dragons of ancient Aujirkeskhesjing, as his lair. Having long ago discovered the *portal* to the Abyss opened by Dagon, Urlhaummauthir came to Ascarle to safeguard what the drow had wrought, as his line had pledged to do when the Whisperer of Secrets was first imprisoned.

For millennia thereafter, the Guardian of Ascarle and his heirs guarded the ruined City of Fire and Ice, keeping watch over the drow-built temple of Pyaray in the depths. Eventually, one of his line succumbed to the Whisperer of Secrets, whose madness-inducing voice could still be heard beneath the waves of Ascarle, even though he was locked away in Dagon's prison in the Abyss.

In the Year of the Abyssal Choir (-39 DR), Tauntzoth, last of the Guardians of Ascarle, became convinced that a mysterious overdragon she dubbed the "Unseen" because she could never find any trace of him, was stalking her, intending to enslave her and force her to bear his offspring—dragons who would be born alive and whole, and would eat and tear their ways out of her, killing her horribly. She abandoned Ascarle, leaving it unguarded for the first time in millennia, and relocated to the isle of Finback amongst the Whalebones.

RISE OF THE KRAKEN (244 DR TO PRESENT)

In the Year of the Elfsands (244 DR), the kraken Slarkrethel chanced upon the ruins of the ancient elven city of Ascarle in the Trackless Sea. The trove of lore buried within the City of Fire and Ice revealed many powerful secrets to the kraken, including legends of his race's past glories and subsequent decline.

Slarkrethel's studies kindled within him the desire to reclaim his heritage and the power due to one of his kind. He set about building an undersea empire and raising himself up to godhood.

In the centuries that followed, Slarkrethel slowly extended his tentacles through the depths of the Trackless Sea, creating a web of agents and informants that fed his insatiable hunger for knowledge. Those who did not join the kraken's empire, such as the sea elves, were driven forth from their ancient settlements beneath the waves into more southerly waters. Those who did, including koalinths, kapoacinths, merrow, sahuagin, and scrags, prospered as foot soldiers of the cephalopod tyrant.

In time, the eastern reaches of the kraken's influence extended into the shallows along the Sword Coast, and Slarkrethel, well aware of the value of lore plundered from the sunken ships of surface dwellers, set about extending his information network onto the land. The first surface-dwelling agents of the Kraken Society began to appear on shore in the Year of the Angry Sea (1148 DR). Previously thought lost at sea, these sailors were washed ashore after being rescued from sinking ships by the kraken's agents and

induced to join the Kraken Society. Those who declined or promised false fealty were enslaved deep beneath the waves, while those who accepted prospered as information brokers and rumormongers who counted themselves lucky to be alive.

The Kraken Society earned an unwanted adversary in the Year of Many Bones (1278 DR), when agents of the King of the Trackless Depths first discovered the location of legendary Gauntlgrym. An expedition was organized by the Kraken Society to plunder this lost subterranean city, and, in so doing, they chanced upon the mind flayers that dwelt in Gauntlgrym's depths. In an attempt to plunder the storehouse of lore contained within the illithid community's elder brain, the Krakenar only managed to injure the central consciousness, but they did make off with at least one illithid captive, Vestress.

In the Year of Shadows (1358 DR), the avatar of Umberlee encountered Slarkrethel in the waters off Ascarle. It is unknown what they discussed, but the Bitch Queen then claimed the kraken as her seraph, and Slarkrethel, now known as the Chosen of Umberlee, has counted her church as close allies ever since.

In the Year of Maidens (1361 DR), the Kraken Society's plots pitted the humans of Ruathym against the sea elves of the surrounding region, making each believe that the other was responsible for atrocities against their race. The Krakenar hoped to precipitate a disastrous conflict between the two, so as to allow Luskan to conquer Ruathym and the Kraken Society to dominate both, giving Slarkrethel's agents two bases of operation and putting many more resources at their disposal. The plot failed. The ancient *song-path* between Ascarle and Qyrinthar was sundered, and the Kraken Society was forced to retreat.

Today, the upper reaches of the City of Fire and Ice are ruled by Vestress, the illithid Regent of Ascarle, on behalf of Slarkrethel. The King of the Trackless Depths maintains a lair in the lower reaches of Ascarle, where the temple of Pyaray still stands. Umberlee's seraph has also built a *krakengate* in the waters of the ruin, allowing him to transport himself to similar krakengates in a hidden undersea cave beneath the Whalebones, on the sea floor sixty miles south of the Ice Peak, the Writhing Trench 150 miles off the coast west of Leilon, or to the Trench of Lopok in the depths of the Sea of Fallen Stars. The isles of Trisk and Utheraal are both ruled by King Selger of the Purple Rocks, who keeps interlopers away from the ruins.



Slarkrethel the Kraken

JHACHALKHYN

The drow city of Jhachalkhyn began as a Miyeritari safe haven, built during the First Crown War in -11788 DR in the Underdark deep beneath the southeastern Neverwinter Woods by Illefarni High Mages. Jhachalkhyn began as a sprawling subterranean grotto, suffused with faerzress. Lit by the twinkling of beljurils, which adorned the cavern roof like stars in the sky, and wizard fire, dancing sheets of dim light like the northern lights of the surface world, Jhachalkhyn became the City of Eternal Twilight.

MIYERITARI HAVEN (-11788 DR TO -10000 DR)

While the Crown Wars raged in the Realms Above, the Miyeritari refugees, including both dark elves and green elves, sought to recreate the beauty of their lost home, nurturing all manner of plant life beneath the twilight sky to create a forest of cave moss, *luurden* trees (also known as bloodfruit trees), *sussur* trees (also known as deeproots), and *zurkwood*. In addition to the dark elves, Rilor (as the subterranean Forest of Twilight was known in elvish) was home to various fey races, who had also sought refuge from the Dark Disaster, the ancestors of glouras found throughout the Underdark today.

Although the Fair Folk of Jhachalkhyn venerated the Seldarine like the rest of their surface cousins, their primary gods are little known today in the Realms Above. Araeth Letheranil, the Twilight Rider, was venerated as the elven god of twilight. Eilistraee, the Dark Maiden, was venerated as the elven goddess of song, beauty, dance, swordwork, hunting, and wizardfire. Tilvenar, the Lord of the Green Flame, was venerated as the elven god of earth and fire, tasked with watching over the subterranean lava flows that lay beneath the roots of Mount Hotenow. Vandria Gilmadrith was venerated as the elven goddess of war, grief, justice, and vigilance. And finally, Vhaeraun, the Shadow, was venerated as the patron of scouts, who explored the dark tunnels that led off into the Underdark and the unknown. (Eilistraee, Vandria, and Vhaeraun were said to be the offspring of Corellon Larethian, Creator of the Elves, and Araushnee, the Weaver.)

THE DESCENT (-10000 DR TO -8921 DR)

Jhachalkhyn thrived for nearly eighteen centuries, until events in the Realms Above shattered the life in the sylvan grotto forever. In -10000 DR, the Descent of the Drow transformed all dark elves into drow, regardless of whether they were Ilythiiri demon-worshippers, corrupted by the forked tongue of Wendonai, or Miyeritari refugees, living their lives in peaceful seclusion in the subterranean depths of the Northdark. Only those dark elves who had assumed another form prior to the Descent escaped the Curse of the Seldarine.

In the wake of the Descent, Jhachalkhyn society was thrown into tumult. Those who followed Tilvenar descended into madness, forming the murderous Cult of the Kyrashar (Dark Rose) who targeted green elves for horrific sacrifices. Those who followed Vhaeraun slunk off into the darkness, finding new homes in the depths. Meanwhile, those who clung to Araeth, Eilistraee, and Vandria attempted to defend what they had built over nearly two millennia.

The first spasm of open violence occurred when a subset of followers of Vandria embraced a schismatic heresy promulgated by Elvraema Fey, the matriarch of House Fey-Branche. She advocated vengeance against the Fair Folk of Aryvandaar, who, in their view, bore primary culpability for the Dark Disaster and the Descent.

In -9797 DR, Elvraema led a host of drow through an ancient *song-path* to Iilorivaedon, capital city of Illefarn. Using the pretext

of the Aryvandaaran occupation of Illefarn as justification, the drow of Jhachalkhyn unleashed a devastating attack on the Illefarni elves who had given them sanctuary during the First Crown War.

In the wake of Iilorivaedon's sacking, Elvraema's army continued on via the *song-path* to Ascarle, hoping to reconnect with their Miyeritari brethren in that second safe haven. To their surprise, they discovered the Fair Folk of Ascarle had escaped the Curse of the Seldarine, having previously transformed themselves into sea elves. Consumed with bitterness about their fate, Elvraema's army sacked Ascarle as well, killing all of the transformed Ascarleans who were not away from the city at that time and claiming it for the drow.

In the centuries that followed, Jhachalkhyn reclaimed some measure of its former beauty, but darkness was never far away. The Cult of Kyrashar continued a string of green elf murders that served as a form of debased worship of Tilvenar. Dark shadows increasingly stalked Rilor, spies sent by the exiled and increasingly misogynistic Church of Vhaeraun. The Church of Vandria grew increasingly grim and militant.

WAR OF WHISPERS (-8921 DR TO -8706 DR)

House Fey-Branche returned to Jhachalkhyn in -8921 DR, after the retreat of the Sea of Moving Ice exposed the hidden safe haven of Ascarle to the surface world. By that time, the drow noble houses of Jhachalkhyn had withdrawn into armed camps, and the resident green elves were little better than slaves. The city's temples were at war among themselves, as the faithful splintered into warring factions. Rumors quickly spread that House Fey-Branche had begun worshipping Pyaray, the Whisperer of Impossible Secrets, who dwelled in the depths of the Vast Deep during their centuries-long absence. Around this time, the last noble house of green elves, House Varalath, fled the city to the Realms Above.

In -8866 DR, a new cult emerged amongst this toxic brew of intrigue. The Cult of Araushnee promised to restore Jhachalkhyn's unity, quickly drawing adherents from the faiths of Eilistraee, Vandria, and Vhaeraun. Soon, Rilor was overrun with spiders, known as the Children of the Weaver, summoned by Araushnee's adherents to weave webs throughout Rilor. By -8842 DR, open warfare had broken out between the Cult of Pyaray and the Cult of Araushnee. Other faiths soon fell by the wayside, as the two factions absorbed nearly every other power base in the city. House Fey-Branche emerged as the preeminent noble house of the former alliance, while House Darborl'eth emerged to dominate the latter.

Within a century, the mask veiling both cults had been abandoned, revealing them to be the Cult of Dagon and the Cult of Lolth, respectively. Demons stalked the streets and Jhachalkhyn descended into near-anarchy. By -8706 DR, the green elf population had been wiped out, the Cult of Dagon was ascendant, and the Cult of Lolth was in apparent retreat. However, the climactic final battle between the two sects ended in an unexpected bloodbath, with the Cult of Lolth prevailing, due to the last-minute betrayal of the Whisperer of Secrets by Nathrae Fey, the matriarch of House Fey-Branche. As an offering to the Spider Queen, she unveiled the first shaedlings, transformed fey from Rilor pledged to serve Lolth.

WEAVING THE WEB (-8706 DR TO -3917 DR)

In the wake of the War of Whispers, the Church of Lolth organized the city under a Council of Matriarchs, with each of the eight members both a high priestess of the Spider Queen and the head of a noble house. The initial houses on the council (in ranked order) included Darborl'eth, Bilerith, Fey-Branche, Ustrantel, Xantam, Fyrintral, Yoranduis, and DeVir. House Fey-Branche was ranked

third of the surviving houses, having risen greatly in Lolth's favor due to their betrayal of her rival and their creation of the race of fey servitors of the Spider Queen.

Under the rule of the Council of Matriarchs, the City of Eternal Twilight remained relatively peaceful, compared to the era after the Descent, with internecine warfare between the noble houses ruthlessly suppressed. Worship of other gods was all but rooted out, until only the Church of Lolth was openly acknowledged. However, the establishment of the city of Sharandar in -8699 DR by several noble houses (including House Varalath), followed by the founding of Ilyanbruen in -8500 DR, marked the return of the hated moon and green elves to the Neverwinter Woods and the start of unending hostilities between Illefarn and Jhachalkhyn.



Matriarch Nathrae Fey

In the millennia that followed, the drow of Jhachalkhyn began a clandestine campaign of raids against their kin on the surface. Nominally, the goal of such attacks was to reclaim ancient Miyeritari treasure caches hidden within the Neverwinter Woods on behalf of the dark elven refugees by the Fair Folk of Illefarn during the Crown Wars. However, in practice, such raids simply allowed the drow to vent their fury over their unjust punishment by the Seldarine.

House Ustrantel, supported by House Fey-Branche, assumed responsibility for leading such attacks, but the Fair Folk of

Ilyanbruen more than held their own. Much of the actual fighting was left to their bugbear infiltrators, bred in fighting pits by House Ustrantel from quaggoth and snow goblin slaves. In time, both House Fey-Branche and House Ustrantel began to lose the Spider Queen's favor, so House Fey-Branche acted boldly to eliminate their allies in an attack both wholly unexpected and completely successful. To further prove their loyalty to the Spider Queen, House Fey-Branche then launched a campaign to root out worshippers of Ghaunadaur throughout the Northdark.

As House Ustrantel was the first member of the Council of Matriarchs to lose its position after being annihilated by a rival house, its destruction unleashed another round of internecine warfare among the drow. Such battle culminated in the destruction of House Fyrintral, House Yoranduis, and many lesser houses. By the end of this era, the Council of Matriarchs included (in ranked order) Houses Darborl'eth, Bilerith, Fey-Branche, Xantam, DeVir, Tilatharal, Eltarann, and Urbelgar.

ILYTHIIRI DIASPORA (-3917 DR TO -3717 DR)

In the wake of the collapse of the great cavern of Bhaeryndyn in -7600 DR, drow of Ilythiiri descent scattered throughout the Realms Below. Some migrated to Netherhowl, as the caverns beneath the Western Heartlands are known today, where, in -7513 DR, they founded the great drow city of Golothaer, deep beneath what is now Scornubel.

Drow merchant houses from Golothaer founded Eryndlyn beneath the High Moor in -6823 DR, seeking to reclaim the lost treasures of Miyeritar. Initially, worship of any drow deities was forcibly discouraged in Eryndlyn, but soon the faiths of Ghaunadaur, Lolth, and Vhaeraun were openly worshiped and the city became divided into three great factions.

Meanwhile, Golothaer became wracked with conflict between the followers of Lolth and the devotees of Ghaunadaur, resulting in the city's destruction in -3902 DR. Foreseeing the city's demise, Menzobarra the Kinless led seven noble families northward into the Northdark, into caverns not all that far east of Jhachalkhyn. Menzoberranzan, City of Spiders, was founded in -3917 DR beneath the southern Frost Hills. Ched Nasad, City of Shimmering Webs, was founded in -3843 DR beneath the northern Graypeak Mountains. Chaulssin, which later became the City of Wyrmsadows, was founded in -3718 DR beneath the northern tip of the Rauvin Mountains.

Following the establishment of Menzoberranzan, Jhachalkhyn could no longer remain wholly isolated from the rest of the drow race. Despite the ethnic tensions between the drow of Miyeritari and Ilythiiri heritage, trade between Menzoberranzan and Jhachalkhyn began to grow. Such trade relations expanded to include both Ched Nasad and Eryndlyn, and soon there was a burgeoning trade in Miyeritari antiquities and elven slaves between the Ilythiiri drow of Eryndlyn and the Miyeritari drow of Jhachalkhyn.

NORTHDAK WARS (-3717 DR TO -1350 DR)

After two centuries of growing wealth, Jhachalkhyn became enmeshed in a series of conflicts with the Stout Folk that came to be known as the Northdark Wars. The founding of two shield dwarf kingdoms in the Realms Above—Haunghdannar, established in 4974 DR along the Sword Coast north and west of the Sword Mountains, and Gharraghaur, a kingdom of shield dwarves established in 4819 DR in the Mirar river valley—eventually posed new threats to Jhachalkhyn's hegemony over the northwestern Northdark. By -4000 DR, the deepest mines of the Stout Folk reached down into tunnels long claimed by the drow. By -3717 DR,

that threat had spread to the Realms Below, with the arrival of the duergar, who followed their shield dwarven kin north to found Gracklstugh, City of Blades, on the shores of the Darklake to the east.

The Council of Matriarchs reacted to these incursions with alarm, setting in motion a centuries-long effort to undermine their enemies, each led by a separate drow noble house. House Bilerith instigated the attack on Gharraghaur to the north. The Bilerith matriarch dispatched envoys to the icespire ogres of Miraheim, employing a campaign of bribery and selective assassination to convince the Beast Folk to launch a surprise attack on the Vale of Khedrun and the lands surrounding the Iron Tower of Gharraghaur. In -3611 DR, an ogre-led horde of orcs erupted from the Spine of the World, overrunning the Realm of Glittering Gems as the drow had planned. This success also provided the drow of Jhachalkhyn with a new trading partner in newly expanded Miraheim, using enslaved bugbears as intermediaries.

House Xantam led the campaign against the Realm of Crashing Waves to the south, but with less success than their counterparts in House Bilerith. Early efforts to disrupt dwarven mining activities with small bands of bugbear skirmishers proved unsuccessful. Eventually, House Bilerith took charge of the effort, using bugbear emissaries to convince the icespire ogres of Miraheim to lead a ragtag horde of mountain orcs, trolls, and bugbears against Haunghdannar and Ilyanbrien. Although the Realm of Silent Songs survived with heavy losses, the Realm of Crashing Waves collapsed in -3389 DR under the weight of the Rabble Horde thanks to the unseen hand of the drow.

House DeVir took charge of efforts to dislodge the duergar from the shores of Darklake. However, the DeVir matriarch soon concluded that the duergar made for better trading partners than they did enemies, exchanging foodstuffs harvested from Rilfor for weapons and armor from the forges of the grey dwarves. In time, House DeVir's efforts led to the establishment of Mantol-Derith and a large presence in Menzoberranzan. They also contributed greatly to the spreading might of the Deepkingdom, proclaimed by King Horgar Steelshadow II in -3392 DR.

Despite the wealth such trade brought to Jhachalkhyn, the success of House DeVir undermined the authority of the Council of Matriarchs, who had collectively ordered Gracklstugh's destruction. Unwilling to accede to this implicit challenge to her authority, the matriarch of House Darborl'eth dispatched agents to Ursadunthar, who began instigating a series of raids by quaggoth warriors against duergar trading caravans. The grey dwarves reacted in a fury, crushing the quaggoth kingdom in -1803 DR in a pyrrhic victory. Reduced to a barbaric state and secretly egged on by the drow of House Darborl'eth, the quaggoths retaliated for generations by raiding the smaller duergar holdings. Overextended, the duergar retreated time and time again. By -1350 DR, the Deepkingdom was an empire in little more than name. However, House DeVir escaped the wrath of House Darborl'eth by petitioning the ruling council of the City of Spiders to admit them into the ranks of Menzoberranzan's nobility.

By the end of this era, Jhachalkhyn's Council of Matriarchs included (in ranked order) Houses Darborl'eth, Bilerith, Tilatharal, Eltarann, Urbelgar, Jairakaire, Xantam, and Fey-Branche. House Fey-Branche, which had suffered a tremendous loss of status as a result of their failures in -2532 DR during the War of Four Houses, had also established itself in among the nobility of Menzoberranzan by this time, but a smaller contingent of the original house clung to the remnants of its former power among Jhachalkhyn's Council of Matriarchs.

TUNNELS AND TRADE (-1350 DR TO 1368 DR)

In the wake of the Northdark Wars, an ascendent City of Eternal Twilight emerged as a great power in the Realms Below, unchallenged by any nearby rivals. Once again trade began to flow in earnest through the Realms Below, linking Jhachalkhyn to Chaulssin, Ched Nasad, Eryndlyn, Menzoberranzan, and drow cities further afield. The Jhachalkhynnar even resumed trade with a newly chastened Gracklstugh.

With increased trade came increased competition among the leading houses of Jhachalkhyn, as they jockeyed for wealth and status. House Jairakaire in particular hit upon a tactic of interfering with their rivals' trade routes. After quietly purchasing a small army of minotaurs in the slave markets of Menzoberranzan, the Jairakaire matriarch installed them in a region of largely unclaimed caverns in the limestone bedrock south and west of the Darklake. Her daughters then taught the bovine warriors to call upon the demon lord known as Baphomet, who rewarded them by transforming the region into a maze of tunnels that came to be known as the Labyrinth. With safe passage through the maze of tunnels assured, House Jairakaire rose rapidly in wealth and status but unknowingly drew the ire of Lolth, who disapproved of their calling on one of her rivals in the Abyss.

The Spider Queen revealed House Jairakaire's heresy to the matriarch of House Eltarann, who hit upon a fitting form of revenge. In the Year of Quiet Thunder (-598 DR), the drow of House Eltarann acquired a host of baphitaur slaves from the Selskar Order in the Tower of the Star, located amidst the ruins of Andalbriin near the southwestern tip of the Frost Hills. With the aid of drow scouts from House Eltarann, the baphitaurs launched a war of conquest against the minotaurs of the Labyrinth, quickly uniting the scattered clans into a unified army. The baphitaurs called their new empire Aurochaar. Soon thereafter, House Jairakaire sent a large merchant caravan guarded by many of their warriors through the Labyrinth, seeking to beat their rival houses to the markets of Eryndlyn. To their surprise, the armed might of Aurochaar attacked them out of nowhere, while House Eltarann launched a surprise attack back in Jhachalkhyn. Within a single night, House Jairakaire was no more, and House Eltarann had achieved great favor in the eyes of Lolth.

FALL OF JHACHALKHYN (1368 DR)

The Time of Trade ended abruptly in the Year of the Banner (1368 DR), when drow of Ascarlean descent invaded the City of Eternal Twilight via long-forgotten *song-paths* built by Illefarni High Mages. Almost overnight, the oldest surviving city of the drow was in ruins, its population put to the sword. However, the seeds of Jhachalkhyn's destruction were planted millennia before during the sacking of Ascarle.

The fall of the City of Eternal Twilight began in the Year of the Roiling Cauldron (874 DR) after Lady Maerala Meirityn, Clan Archmage of House Meirityn of the sea elf kingdom of Aumrauth in the depths of the far-off Shining Sea, recovered the legendary Orikiira. Plucked from the hold of a Calishite merchant ship en route to Manshaka from Sheirtalar during a nighttime raid by her house forces, the Orikiira was thought to have a recording of many High Magic rituals used during the First Crown War. By the Year of Unfettered Secrets (880 DR), the sea elf archmage had unlocked the ritual used to transform some of the Fair Folk of Eiellûr, Syorpiir, and Thearnytar into sea elves.

In the Year of the Curse (882 DR), in a bid to become the Lady Queen of Aumrauth, Lady Maerala cast a newly designed ritual to allow her supporters to alternate between sea elf form and their original dark elf



Lady Maerala Meirityn of Aumrath

ancestry. To her horror, the subjects of the ritual were restored to the dark elven form of their Miyeritari ancestors, only to immediately become drow due to the Curse of the Seldarine.

In the Year of Fell Pearls (887 DR), after being driven out of Aumrath, Lady Maerala Meirityn and her remaining supporters built a new city of drow in the Seadark west of Tharsult, which they named Maeralyn. They then set about trying to understand the root of their transformation, amidst the daily struggle to survive.

In the centuries that followed, Lady Maerala began researching the history of sea elves in the Outer Sea along the western coast of Faerûn. By the Year of the Dogged Search (1051 DR), Lady Maerala had traced the lineage of Aumrauthans back to lost Ascarle. In the Year of Frozen Kingdoms (1052 DR), Lady Maerala led an expedition north to the long-lost City of Fire and Ice, where she encountered Slarkrethel, founder of the Kraken Society. In exchange for pledging her loyalty to the ancient cephalopod, Lady Maerala learned that the sea elves of ancient Ascarle had once been dark elven refugees from Miyeritar who were slaughtered by drow from Jhachalkhyn.

Unable to reverse the Curse of the Seldarine, the drow of Maeralyn spent the next several centuries planning their revenge against the drow of Jhachalkhyn, while serving as Slarkrethel's eyes and ears in the Shining Sea. In the Year of the Banner (1368 DR), the Maeralynnar unleashed their long-planned attack by way of ancient Illefarni song-paths they had discovered with the kraken's assistance. The ensuing attack was both wholly unexpected and overwhelming. All but a handful of Jhachalkhynnar were slaughtered, leaving the City of Endless Twilight in ruins. The Maeralynnar returned to their isolated home newly enriched with plundered magics, including precious Miyeritari artifacts long guarded by the drow of Jhachalkhyn, albeit indebted to the great kraken lord of the Trackless Sea.

TIME OF RENEWAL (1368 DR TO PRESENT)

At the time of Jhachalkhyn's destruction, the Council of Matriarchs included (in ranked order) Houses Darborl'eth, Bilerith, Eltarann, Tilatharal, Urbelgar, Xantam, Kubarlash, and Wynarla. Of these eight, only four survived the attack by the drow of distant Maeralyn. The handful of survivors of Houses Bilerith, Tilatharal,

Urbelgar, and Wynarla jointly pledged to rebuild the City of Eternal Twilight for the glory of Lolth. Meanwhile, one former member of the Council, the Jhachalkhyn branch of House Fey-Branche, fled into exile, relocating to Dunultokllur under Yartar. Much reduced in strength, House Fey-Branche served as a conduit between the surviving Jhachalkhynnar and the outside world, providing them a steady supply of slaves to aid in the rebuilding of the City of Eternal Twilight.

Despite efforts of the drow to date, the ruins of Jhachalkhyn are still overrun with all manner of monsters and magical traps left by the Maeralynnar. The effort to clear such threats is going slowly, but the survivors are fueled by a cold fury against their distant kin and the promise of future vengeance, even if it takes centuries to exact.



The symbol of House Noquar

THE WAR OF FOUR HOUSES

The War of Four Houses was a long-simmering conflict between four elven noble houses that has flared in sudden bursts of violence over six millennia: the moon elves of House Riladorn (now extinct), the Lolth-worshipping drow of House Fey-Branche, the Ghaundaur-worshipping drow of House Noquar (now extinct), and the Eilistraee-worshipping dark elves of House Veladorn.

In -5992 DR, a chance encounter inextricably linked the destiny of Rilithar, one of the subkingdoms of Illefarn after its refounding, with the drow city of Jhachalkhyn, located deep beneath the Neverwinter Woods, precipitating the War of Four Houses. During a diplomatic mission from Fiirathal to Sharandar (Modern: forest headwaters of the Gibdraw in the Neverwinter Woods), capital of Iliyanbruen, Taniluer Riladorn, elaransum (heir) of Laranlor (ruler) Siltathaar Riladorn, came upon an elven maiden with jet black skin dancing naked and silently in the moonlight near a cave mouth in the Kerymnilath (Modern: Blade Hills). Although he had been raised with stories telling of the horrific drow assault on Ilorivaedon in -9797 DR, Taniluer was moved by the beauty of the maiden's dance and began to sing an ancient Illefarni battle-hymn in accompaniment, rather than immediately attacking. After the dark elf had finished her dance, accompanied by his soaring voice, the elaransum of House Riladorn introduced himself. He learned that the dark elven maiden's name was Quarra Velastarr, third daughter of House Velastarr of Jhachalkhyn, a drow city located deep beneath the southeastern Neverwinter Woods. She explained that she had come to the surface to honor a goddess unknown to the scion of House Riladorn named Eilistraee.

The unlikely pair spent a tenday together before their separate obligations forced them to part. At their leaving, Taniluer gave Quarra his blade, a singing sword known as *Haerakerym*, through which he recorded the songs he had taught her, in thanks for her instruction in the steps of ancient Miyeritari blade-dances. Neither knew at the time that they had also conceived a daughter. Taniluer went on to reestablish the art of bladesinging among the Fair Folk of Rilithar, building on the blade-dances he had learned from Quarra. Quarra's daughter, who she named Erésseae Veladorn in quiet acknowledgement of her parentage, went on to found House Veladorn, a minor house of Jhachalkhyn that secretly worshiped the Dark Maiden.

In -4722 DR, whispered reports began to spread throughout Rilithar of shapeshifting oozes emerging from the depths of the Sumer Hills, who then slaughtered and replaced the leaders of several Rilitharan noble families. In response, Laranlor Raertynthaar Riladorn led a great host of elven bladesingers into the depths. There the Rilitharan host discovered a dark temple of the Elder Elemental Eye, established by Ghaunadaur-worshipping drow of House Noquar from the city of Eryndlyn, located deep beneath the High Moor. After turning to That Which Lurks in a

bid to advance their status, House Noquar sought a place of power where they could practice their faith in secret.

In the ensuing battle, the forces of Rilithar might well have been overwhelmed by the drow-led host of sentient oozes and slimes, if not for the arrival of a wholly separate attacking force from below. By chance, an armed force from Jhachalkhyn, led by House Fey-Branche and supported by House DeVir and House Veladorn, had come up from the depths to attack the worshipers of That Which Lurks, whose very existence was an affront to Lolth, the Queen of Spiders, at the very same time.

The ensuing Battle of the Elder Elemental Eye saw the nigh-complete destruction of Ghaunadaur's followers (although a small number of drow from House Noquar escaped) and very nearly led to fighting between the drow of Jhachalkhyn and the Fair Folk of Rilithar. However, Quave Veladorn, leader of House Veladorn's contingent, brokered a temporary truce between the two factions, with the tactical support of House DeVir, who sought to undermine their higher-ranked rivals, much to the frustration of House Fey-Branche, whose leaders saw the opportunity to advance their house's standing in the eyes of Lolth by slaughtering surface elves. For his part, Laranlor Raertynthaar agreed to the truce after recognizing that his counterpart wielded *Haerakerym*, the long-vanished Rilitharan sword of state, seeing it as a sign of peace from the Seldarine.

In -2532 DR, the matron mother of House Fey-Branche made a bold move to advance the status of her house by executing a daring plot against the hated surface elves. Drow warriors launched a series of raids against the Fair Folk of Laerenrel from a redoubt constructed near the surface in the Caverns of Shadow. As planned, the drow forays drew a fearsome counterattack, led by Rilithar's daring laranlor, Ilythaarn Riladorn. As the surface elves charged in, the dark elves melted away into the shadows, causing the Fair Folk to blunder through a planar breach into the Shadowfell, where they quickly lost track of their location. House Fey-Branche's forces then unleashed a gloom of nightshades to destroy the surface elves in an orgy of destruction.

House Fey-Branche's strategy might well have worked if not for the intervention of House Veladorn, which had gotten wind of their rival's plot. Priestesses of the Dark Maiden reached the Caverns of Shadow soon after the battle had begun and called upon Eilistraee to create a shaft of moonlight amidst the planar breach before disappearing into the night. With the Dark Maiden's enduring light as their guide, the warriors of Rilithar managed to fight their way back to the planar breach and return to the Realms, although Ilythaarn and his three eldest sons sacrificed themselves to save their fellow elves. Enraged at the loss of their promised prey, the nightshades then turned on House Fey-Branche, inflicting mass casualties on their ranks.

In the wake of the Battle of the Moonshaft, House Fey-Branche suffered a tremendous loss of status in Jhachalkhyn, driving many members of the family into exile in the city of Menzoberranzan. Meanwhile House Veladorn rose in status in Jhachalkhyn, despite their hidden worship of the Dark Maiden, for the chaos caused by their treachery secretly pleased the Queen of Spiders.

In the Year of Glittering Coins (-582 DR), the last laranlor of Rilithar died in battle with a horde of orcs and trolls, marking the apparent end of House Riladorn. While the Realm of the Singing Sword continued under the Circle of Swordsongs, it quickly became apparent that Rilithar would fade away without an heir to the Lord of Leaves. In hopes of discovering a forgotten heir, Coronal Syglaeth Audark cast a powerful divination. To his surprise, his magic revealed a drow family directly descended from House Riladorn, one that had indirectly played a crucial role in safeguarding the Realm of Singing Swords in centuries past.

In the Year of Tolling (-207 DR), without alerting Rilithar's Circle of Swordsongs, Coronal Syglaeth created a powerful spellsong, one that would serve as both an invitation and a guide to the scions of Taniluer. He hoped it would lead a dark elven heir dedicated to the Dark Maiden to Fiirathal to be evaluated by the noble houses of Rilithar, who might otherwise dismiss such a candidate without consideration. While Syglaeth's spell was successful, Lolth caught wind of it and twisted it within her webs. Instead of reaching LiNeerlay Veladorn, the matron mother of House Veladorn, as intended, the chaos-loving Spider Queen ensured that the message was received instead by Felyndiira Fey, the matron mother of House Fey-Branche.

Sensing an opportunity to advance in Lolth's favor, Felyndiira was quick to follow the coronal's *song-path*, dispatching all of her children to Fiirathal in a lightning-quick assault in the Year of Elfsorrows (-206 DR). The fury of the dark elves was swift and brutal, leading to the death of Illefarn's last coronal and many of his attendants.

Among the many elven treasures stolen by scions of House Fey-Branche ere their return to Jhachalkhyn was the Audark tarlspira (crown of Illefarn), which they brought back to sacrifice to the Spider Queen. However, in so doing, they drew the attention of the matron mother of House Veladorn, as her blade *Haerakerym* was one of the nine swords linked to the Audark tarlspira at the coronation of Lady Nyanthaara Audark in -8500 DR. In a bold bid that amused the Spider Queen, House Veladorn ambushed the returning scions of House Fey-Branche, claiming the stolen *crown of Illefarn* before they could reach House Fey-Branche's compound and private shrine to Lolth. Once again, House Fey-Branche experienced a tremendous loss of status in the eyes of the Spider Queen. In the centuries that followed, LiNeerlay and her kin continued to maintain their Lolth-worshipping façade, while secretly venerating the Dark Maiden. However, LiNeerlay's eldest daughter and heir, Illyztara Veladorn, who personally guarded the Audark tarlspira, became increasingly consumed with a deep longing to return to the surface world.

After her mother's death in the Year of the Awakening Wyrms (767 DR), Illyztara became the matron mother of House Veladorn. As per custom, the ruling council summoned the newly chosen (and pregnant) matron mother of House Veladorn to their presence and demanded that she bend her knee in obedience to Lolth or be exiled. To their shock, Illyztara refused, choosing banishment for her house over continuing a life of endless deception.

The ensuing months were extremely difficult for House Veladorn, for Lolth's followers began hunting them as soon as they left Jhachalkhyn proper. Although Illyztara managed to keep most of the house alive as they searched for a new home, her unborn child did not survive. Instead, the goddesses Mystra and Eilistraee swapped the lifeless babe for the unborn child of Elué Silverhand, née Shundar, half-elven mother of six human daughters who would all become Chosen of Mystra.

In time, Illyztara and her followers arrived in a cavern lined with shimmering walls of silver beneath the northern Sword Mountains (due north of the dungeon of Southkrypt and due west of Wyvern Tor) which they named Buiyrandyn. There, Illyztara gave birth to Erésseae Qilué Veladorn, a dark elven child who would become the seventh of the Seven Sisters, Chosen of Mystra and Eilistraee, heir to the vacant throne of Rilithar, and wielder of *Haerakerym*.

Qilué and her playmates left Buiyrandyn in the Year of the Moaning Gorge (786 DR) for Undermountain. There they launched a daring attack on the Pit of Ghaunadaur, where the drow of House Noquar had established a second place of power after the fall of their temple beneath the Sumer Hills, using weapons and fighting techniques first tested in battle thirty-three centuries before.

In the meantime, the Jhachalkhyn branch of House Fey-Branche slowly clawed their way back into Lolth's favor. In the Year of Sudden Sorrows (941 DR), Ilvarra Fey, the newly elevated matron mother of House Fey-Branche, manipulated the illithids of Phanlinksal (located deep beneath the Lurkwood) into attacking Buiyrandyn. Although the illithids >suffered tremendous losses, the forces of House Veladorn were overwhelmed, and Buiyrandyn was lost. However, there must have been at least one survivor, for the Audark tarlspira disappeared during the fighting. House Fey-Branche advanced quickly in status, but the Spider Queen made clear that she still expected the *crown of Illefarn* as an offering.

In the Year of the Circling Vulture (942 DR), word reached Ilvarra Fey that the Audark tarlspira had been spotted somewhere along the Sword Coast in the Realms Above. Desperate to finally recover the artifact her family had long ago pledged to sacrifice to Lolth, the matron mother of House Fey-Branche launched a series of surface raids to recover the artifact. The most infamous raid led to the death of Devinarn Ironaxe, arcrown (king) of Dardath. Although the family acquired numerous slaves and many precious treasures from their attacks, they failed once again to acquire the Audark tarlspira, which had seemingly vanished without a trace.

Having lost the Spider Queen's favor yet again, House Fey-Branche fled into exile to plot their resurgence.

In recent years, the Jhachalkhyn branch of House Fey-Branche has established itself in the fallen dwarven stronghold of Dunultokllur (beneath Yartar), where they have built an extensive slave-trading operation. By fortuitous happenstance, their fall from grace enabled them to survive the surprise destruction of Jhachalkhyn in the Year of the Banner (1368 DR). Meanwhile, after centuries spent patrolling the passageways around the Pit of Ghaunadaur in Undermountain, the children of Buiyrandyn established the Promenade, a temple of Eilistraee, in the Year of the Harp (1355 DR), holding their own against a counterattack by House Noquar in the Year of the Banner (1368 DR) with the aid of Laeral Silverhand Arunsun. Finally, the *Audark tarlspira* remains lost, much to the frustration of the Spider Queen. However, the scions of House Veladorn and House Fey-Branche continue their hunt for the missing Illefarni regalia.

TEURMAURAEI

Teurmaurael was an isolated and tiny realm of gold elves built near the headwaters of the River Surbrin amidst a range of peaks that came to be known as the Moondark Mountains. After its brief but tragic history, it briefly became a safe haven for Miyeritari dark elves before being abandoned to its cursed legacy.

THE MOONDARKS (-25400 DR TO -25080 DR)

Millennia ago (circa -25400 DR), a small band of gold elves, led by the young prince Durothil and one moon elf, Sharlario Moonflower, fled the destruction of the island kingdom of Tintageer on their home world of Faerie following a cataclysmic battle that unleashed the power of the raging sea on their homeland. Bonnalurie, the island's only surviving priestess of Angharradh, cast a high magic ritual known as a Seeking to find a place of power similar to the one on which she stood. At the cost of her life, Bonnalurie opened a portal to another world, one that the Fair Folk named Faerûn, the One Land, at a place of power (Modern: The Glade of Life) in the shadow of a range of towering mountains (Modern: Star Mounts) that had been scorched by dragonfire.

Durothil's followers were not the first elves in this new world, for there had been other crossings from Faerie before them. Tribes of avariel, aquatic elves, green elves, dark elves, and lythari had already passed over and scattered across the One Land. The new arrivals soon found themselves in battle with the great red wyrm Mahatnartorian, known to the green elves as Master of the Mountains. Durothil was knocked out in the initial attack and vanished for many years (spent wandering with the lythari in the northern woods). Sharlario Moonflower was saved by avariel and then fought alongside the winged elves in their magical, hidden mountaintop Aerie to banish Mahatnartorian from the northern mountains for three centuries.

Sharlario was not alone in this endeavor, for his battle against the Master of the Mountains garnered the attention of Talaerlo "Moondark" Teurmaur, his consort Belaerrauna Teurmaur, and



The secret symbol of House Veladorn

four others who were among the original fifty elves who had crossed over from Tintageer. Talaerlo used magic to find Sharlario and the avariel, and the six gold elves travelled to Aerie to help them defeat the great red wyrm and banish him from their woodlands. But while Sharlario returned to the elves of Tintageer as a hero, Talaerlo and his followers decided not to return as they thought that becoming further enmeshed in the doings of Faerûn would ultimately lead to disaster. These six gold elves preferred to shut themselves away from the world, build their own society in the remote northern wilderness, and devote themselves to perfecting magic, so they could never be threatened again by fearsome foes such as the Master of the Mountains.

In -25395 DR, Talaerlo and his followers settled in amidst a dozen small peaks (Modern: Moondark Mountains) nestled amid much higher mountains (Modern: Spine of the World) at the headwaters of a great river (Modern: River Surbrin). They called their isolated realm Teurmaurael, after their charismatic leader, and built six great fortresses, the Citadels of Teurmaurael. Soon their numbers grew to sixteen, and the Teurmauraelen lived in contentment, growing strong in the Art and caring little for the doings of other elves.

In the years that followed, Tintageer's other gold elves mingled with the local green elves, growing in strength and number. While Sharlario wandered far and wide recruiting allies to fight against the great red wyrm upon his eventual return, the moon elf's descendants kept proudly to themselves and strove to plant the seeds of their magic, arts, and culture in the forest.

When Mahatnartorian's banishment ended circa 25100 DR, Sharlario and his son Cornaith Moonflower were away on a visit to the great southern city of Atornnash by the Bay of the Banshee. Durothil, who had by then returned from his long sojourn with the lythari, confronted the Master of Mountains alone. Using the power of Ghaunadaur to create a cube of viscous, green slime, the proud gold elf mage managed to bind the wings and claws of the great red wyrm and force him into submission again. However, rather than another period of banishment, the terms of the great red wyrm's subdual were Mahatnartorian's freedom and the sacrifice of the life of an elf—Sharlario Moonflower—to Ghaunadaur in exchange for a silver dragon egg stolen from the silver dragons to the north and twenty years of peace.

As Mahatnartorian flew north, the silver dragons of Norlornverthakal roused themselves from slumber to battle their ancient foe. First among them was Volaurace, Queen of the North

Wind, who had just given birth to a clutch of silver dragon eggs. After the Master of Mountains tore through the ranks of Clan Silverwing, the great silver wyrm rose up sluggishly to do battle. After an aerial battle that ranged the length and breadth of the northern mountains, Volaurace was left exhausted and unable to defend herself. Grabbing the great silver wyrm in his claws, still encrusted with the viscous green slime of Ghaunadaur, Mahatnartorian drove her downward, impaling his foe on the peak of a great mountain (Modern: Dalagar's Dagger).

Mahatnartorian would have surely dispatched the Queen of the North Wind, if not for the timely intervention of the Teurmauraelen, whose citadels transformed into skyships that rose up to confront the Master of Mountains. Instead of engaging with the elves and their aerial ships, Mahatnartorian flew off to Volaurace's lair, where he retrieved the promised egg (and destroyed the rest of the clutch). The great red wyrm then delivered Volaurace's egg to Durothil before heading south into twenty years of exile.

Over the next twenty years, Durothil and Sharlario worked together to raise the newly hatched silver dragon, who Durothil named Silverywing, after her clan name. However, when Mahatnartorian came to collect on his debt, Durothil killed the Master of Mountains by sacrificing himself instead (thus nominally fulfilling his pledge to Ghaunadaur), allowing Sharlario to survive and train the next generation of dragon riders, who recruited steeds from among the scattered silver dragons of Norlornverthakal.

During the same period, Talaerlo and Belaerrauna slowly nursed Volaurace back to health, although the lingering taint of Ghaunadaur's slime—transferred from Mahatnartorian's talons—never truly healed. While tending to Volaurace, Talaerlo became convinced and increasingly obsessed with what he saw as the destiny of superior elves—which was to breed with dragons, and so become mightier as a race (by acquiring the affinity for magic some dragons possess). Grateful for Talaerlo's ministrations, Volaurace reluctantly agreed to mate with him, both in elven and draconic form, thus intermingling their bloodlines.

All but one member of the Moondark community thought Talaerlo's obsession was both crazy and repugnant. Ultimately, circa -25080 DR, fourteen elves hastily departed in one of the six skyships, while Talaerlo Moondark was otherwise engaged with Volaurace and as his loyal consort, Belaerrauna Moondark, sobbingly tried to stop them.

TALAERLO'S SCIONS (-25080 DR TO -24464 DR)

In the wake of his kin's departure, Talaerlo and Volaurace moved forward with his attempts to breed a new race of "silver elves," while Talaerlo and Belaerrauna also had children of their own. However, while Volaurace's half-dragon offspring (conceived when the great silver wyrm was in elven form) did survive, all of the draconic progeny of Talaerlo and Volaurace (conceived when he was in draconic form using *shapechange* spells), were stillborn.

Unbeknownst to Tarlaerlo or Volaurace, the great silver wyrm's blood had been corrupted by Ghaunadaur, and the half-dragon elves born of Tarlaerlo's union with Volaurace were tainted, with many proving infertile. (Those who were infertile, yet skilled in the Art, often became baelnorns.) Neither Talaerlo nor Belaerrauna understood the corruption that hid within the blood of Volaurace's offspring, and thus when the fertile offspring of Volaurace cross-bred with Belaerrauna's children, the second generation of "silver elves" acquired "the Taint" to some degree as well.

Over time, Volaurace slowly descended into madness, whether due to the influence of That Which Lurks, despair over the loss of her eggs to Mahatnartorian, or remorse over the results of her

unions with Tarlaerlo. In -24464 DR, Volaurace abruptly turned on her elven lover while in congress, transforming into her natural form and blasting him with her icy breath. In desperation, Tarlaerlo managed to plunge a dagger into her heart by way of the old wound left by Mahatnartorian before the great silver wyrm crushed his body with her bulk.

Later that day, when Belaerrauna came to check on Tarlaerlo, the Queen of the North Wind had vanished, having arisen from death as an undead monster in the service of Ghaunadaur and then retreated into the depths, leaving his crushed, icebound corpse for his widow to find. In the months that followed, Belaerrauna descended into madness, forcing her offspring to place her in magical stasis in hopes of healing her mind. While the half-silver dragon baelnorns kept watch over their late father's wife, the children of Belaerrauna and Tarlaerlo and their "silver elf" progeny left Teurmaurael and made their way back to the newly founded cities of the moon and gold elves.

The Teurmaur bloodlines still run through the Fair Folk, so, even today, certain elves and half-elves, utterly ignorant of their heritage—called "the Taint" by some elves, and "wild talents" by certain human sages of the Art—may in moments of stress exhibit unreliable, unpredictable magical powers (examples include the *earth glide* and *submerge* powers of a xorn, although various tales claim a huge range of powers, from mighty spellcastings to ongoing *shapechanging*.)

BATTLE OF THE DARKENED MOON (-11796 DR)

In the millennia that followed, the five remaining Citadels of Teurmaurael stood undisturbed, guarded by baelnorns and monsters under their control. Gradually, the location of the Moondark Mountains was forgotten by the Fair Folk, and the site drifted into legend until -11796 DR when Teurmaurael was rediscovered by the divinations of the elves. The High Mages of Illefarn thought that the Citadels of Teurmaurael might well serve as an appropriate safe haven, and a large group of Miyeritari refugees was sent to the long-abandoned northern fortresses to establish a new home in secret just beyond the reach of Aryvandaar's armies. The new arrivals were welcomed by the baelnorn, and, following their directions, the Illefarni High Mages freed Belaerrauna Teurmaur from *stasis*, gradually restoring her sanity.

Later that year, disaster came quickly in the form of Aryvandaar's armies, whose troops were alerted by Aryvandaaran High Mages to the location of the Miyeritari refugees and dispatched to the northern mountains in order to capture the elven fugitives. The arrival of the hated gold elves precipitated a pitched battle—the Battle of the Darkened Moon—between the Aryvandaaran soldiers and the Miyeritari refugees, that involved the desperate use of one of the five skyships (which then crashed on a hilltop in the forest below (Modern: Skydown Crag).

Aryvandaar's armies would have undoubtedly prevailed with ease, if not for the wholly unexpected arrival of an undead great silver wyrm who burst forth from the field of battle to lay waste to all the combatants, especially the gold elves. The wrath of Volaurace was as quick as it was unexpected. Within a matter of hours, all the Fair Folk of Aryvandaar lay dead, killed by the Queen of the North Wind. Most of the Miyeritari refugees would have died as well, if not for the unexpected aid of silver dragons of Clan Silverwing from Versinhurth, a mountainous domain set in a beautiful vale in the heart of the Shaeradim (Modern: Evereska), who drove Volaurace back into the depths.

In the end, the few Miyeritari survivors returned to Illefarn before fleeing to other safe havens, and the silver dragons of Versinhurth returned to the Shaeradim, with Belaerrauna Teurmaur

VOLAUACE

Corrupted by the seed of Ghaunadaur, circa -25080 DR, the “Queen of the North Wind” (CE undead female great silver wyrm) has lurked beneath the Spine of the World for millennia as a fell, malicious undead dragon that can take dragon, elf, or human form at will. Rendered *Versveshmaekris Ar Norl Thraeguth* in draconic, the Queen of the North Wind endures as a wholly corrupted servitor of That Which Lurks, wandering the caverns beneath the Spine of the World observing, thinking, and plotting the downfall of all gold elves, wherever they may wander.

In the millennia since the Battle of the Darkened Moon, Volaurace is thought to have bent many orc and frost giant tribes to her will and bred scalamagdrions to act as guardians of her many hoards. She has silently manipulated generation upon generation of white dragons to serve her aims and ambitions. Today, she is the puppetmaster who pulls the strings of Arauthator and other white dragons of the Utter North. Creepily, she continues to experiment on captured elves who happen to fall within her grasp, most of whom are adventurers seeking to locate and explore the Moondark Mountains.

The Queen of the North Wind, as she still styles herself, has been so successful at hiding her existence, that few sages even suspect such an undead horror lurks at the heart of many strange goings-on in the Spine of the World. Perhaps the only currently living creature to have divined that someone or something is controlling many of the inhabitants of the northern mountains is Tulrun “the Tiger Mage,” and thus Volaurace is doing everything she can to have him eliminated, save for revealing her existence or identity to the world at large.

Tulrun unknowingly drew the undead dragon's ire when he killed Sneighfanglen and her brood, beginning in the Year of Cold Claws (940 DR). The Spawn of Auril, as Sneighfanglen was known, was an unwitting servant of Volaurace, and the Queen of the North Wind could not let that attack go unpunished. In the Year of the Snarling Dragon (1279 DR), Volaurace initiated an ongoing series of attacks against Tulrun, but the unintended consequence of her vendetta is that he has deduced that some fell power lurks behind the series of attacks on him.



Volaurace "the Queen of the North Wind"

in tow. The last of the Teurmauraelen buried her long-dead husband beneath the hill that now bears his name (Modern: Moondark Hill in Evereska), and then dwelt quietly alongside the silver dragons for a number of years before being snatched aloft one moonlit night by a great silver wyrm, never to be seen again. All that remains of Teurmaurael are four citadels guarded by half-silver dragon baelnorns, and the monsters they control.

RHYMANTHIIN

The City of Hope is also a haven for the last dark elves of Miyeritar, but it has no connection to the long-ago havens offered by Iyilitar Narlatha “the Dragonqueen” Auglathla of Illefarn. Rhymanthiin was constructed on the exact spot once occupied by the Miyeritari city of Faer'tel'miir, and the place were ninety dark elf wizards and a trio of High Mages of Miyeritar tried to fight the killing storm that created the Dark Disaster, ultimately transforming themselves into the elder sharn.

The tale of the City of Hope and its eventual rebirth is told by Steven E. Schend in the novel *Blackstaff*. Any further details regarding its history and status are left to that illustrious sage to reveal.



Sharn

This work is the result of yet more endless debate and discussion between Eric L. Boyd and George Krashos. Once again it was written by researching countless game products and novels, and trying to weave together many little tidbits of Realmslore. Thanks go to Steven Schend and Ed Greenwood for creating so much of the Realmslore tapestry that gave life to the dark elves of Faerûn.

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