

EXPLORE AIRSPUR

BRIGHTEST OF THE FALLEN STARS

By Matthew Sernett

*illustration by Adam Paquette, Empty Room Studio
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None who have seen it can think of Airspur without envisioning its heights. Its sun-baked streets wind switchback paths down the bright cliffs, its steep stairs cut nearly vertical ascents between buildings, and its suspension bridges arc between earthmotes high overhead. Titanic pillars of stone rise from the sea to the level of the land above, and gleaming elemental spires hang with crystalline clarity all throughout Airspur.

Those fortunate enough to have visited also remember Airspur as a city of colors and lights. The yellow cliffs tower above an astonishingly blue part of the Sea of Fallen Stars. Cobalt and golden roofs set off pale

sandstone structures with gaily painted doors and shutters. Genasi of different hues—each tattooed with glowing lines—promenade in vivid fashions and glittering jewelry. Monolithic crystals, the elemental spires that drift in the air, refract the sun's light during the hot and lazy days and shed colored glows over vibrant nights of wine and dance.

It's no wonder many consider Airspur the most beautiful city in all Faerûn, nor do they question how it earned its moniker as the Brightest of the Fallen Stars.



AIRSPUR'S STORY

Airspur existed as a city-state on the border of Chessenta and Chondath, sometimes allying itself with the other city-states of Chessenta and at other times siding with Chondath. While not initially threatened during the Year of Blue Fire, Airspur saw massive destruction in 1386 DR as the Toril's sibling world of Abeir replaced much of the nearby landscape. A huge crevasse opened in the city and the sea moved. Those who did not die fled.

Meanwhile, Abeir brought with it most of the genasi nation of Shyr. Long dominated by a primordial named Karshimis, the genasi were free to determine their own destiny. They founded the city of Brassune among the blended ruins of the Chondathan city of Rath and Shyr. An initial period of collaboration between the largest families led to nearly two decades of infighting. The Covenant of Monarchy finally resolved this conflict by causing the noble families to elect a line of royal succession.

The first king of Akanûl was a savvy windsoul genasi named Zavon. His reign ended in the cataclysmic assault of Brassune by the Abolthic Sovereignty 50 years ago. This left his daughter, Queen Cyndra, with the duty of repelling the aboleth threat and reforming the shattered nation. This she did in the shelter of the ruins of ancient Airspur, displacing the orcs and half-orcs who had come down from the mountains to reclaim the place.

Queen Cyndra then led her people through a renaissance of sorts. She gained the trust and support of the noble families by creating the Covenant of Stewardship and establishing the Court of Majesty. According to the Covenant of Stewardship, the king's or queen's power could be checked by the unanimous

vote of four stewards, who would be elected by the nobles every 10 years. These positions of stewardship in turn carry governmental and administrative responsibilities. Queen Cyndra gained popular support and propelled her state's economy by rapid adoption of new industries suitable to their new lands and the city's location.

Much-loved by her people, Queen Cyndra died of illness, leaving her only daughter to take up the scap-

ter and mantle of rulership as Queen Arathane. Due to her youth and lack of political experience, the first decade of Queen Arathane's rule met with resistance from the stewards and other nobles. Yet in the last 10 years, Arathane has shown that she is an intelligent and magnetic leader, causing even her most determined opponents to give her respect. Airspur today is famed for its beauty, wealth, and the lifestyle of its genasi citizens.

AIRSPUR

The vibrant capital of Akanûl, Airspur clings to the cliffs on the east side of a southern bay off the Sea of Fallen Stars

Population: 30,500; another 7,000 live in the nearby countryside. Most citizens are genasi descendants of refugees from Abeir, the majority being windsouls and stormsouls. Small populations of other races live in the city, particularly half-orcs who lived near the ruins of old Airspur before the genasi rebuilt it. Few dragonborn stay in the city for long due to tensions between Akanûl and Tymanther.

Government: Queen Arathane, a windsoul genasi, has ruled Airspur since the death of her long-lived mother. Four stewards control various aspects of the city, and together they can overrule the queen's edicts. Genasi occupy all important roles of power in Airspur. This is due to the political structure, traditions from Shyr in Abeir, and even outright prejudice (particularly against dragonborn who might be from Tymanther).

Defense: The Airspur defenses are divided between three corps: the Sky Guard, the Ground Defense League, and the Wave Riders. These profes-

sional soldiers form the core of its armies and the city watch during peacetime. The rest of Akanûl's military is conscripted from the population, although only a small number of nongenasi are included in the conscript catalogs.

Inns: Shadow of the Rock, Cliffwatch, Spireview Inn, Rang's Hostelry.

Taverns: Seven Stone Steps, The Hook and Eye, The Wind Clipper, The Drunken Gull.

Supplies: Thwaite's Tack and Gear, Gwind's Sundries, Seaside Provisioners.

Temples: None. The genasi of Airspur are uncertain about religion. The difference between gods and primordials or other powerful beings is not firmly established in their minds. Even so, religions of all kinds exist in the city. Priests of real gods and cults of false powers come to Airspur to gain converts, and some achieve results. As yet however, the steward of the Sea has blocked the construction of large temples that would take up land otherwise useful to the people or the state, and the Steward of Fire has the city watch occasionally check in on individuals of religious bent who might choose to follow a god's edicts instead of the city's laws.

KEY PERSONALITIES AND GROUPS

The beautiful capital of a young and robust nation, Airspur produces many influential individuals and organizations. Some of those important powers are presented here.

QUEEN ARATHANE

The common people of Akanûl consider Queen Arathane strong and fair. She is roundly praised for continuing her mother's policies of state support of descendants of the refugees of Shyr. Even the poorest among the genasi can expect shelter and food.

The nobility have a more complex relationship with their queen. Frequently opposed by the stewards early in her rule, she sometimes chafes under the Covenant of Stewardship and frequently seeks ways to achieve her ends without resorting to the Court of Majesty. The Firestorm Cabal represents one of these tactics.

These privateers are sworn to protect Akanûl, but the group is known to hold Arathane and the stewards in contempt. Arathane tacitly condones their presence and their occasional antics because of their usefulness as a supplement to the nation's defenses and as nongovernmental foil against other nations such as Tymanther. Arathane and a dashing deputy commander of the Firestorm Cabal even secretly pursue an on-again-off-again affair that would endanger both if it became known to the stewards or the leaders of the Cabal.

In addition to friction with the stewards, Queen Arathane finds herself besieged by suitors and potential matchmakers. The queen is approaching her

fourth decade of life, and the question of succession causes a great deal of gossip. Yet the iron-willed Arathane doesn't consider it to be a pressing issue since both her mother, Queen Cyndra, and her grandmother bore a child late in life.

Adventure Hook: Castan Thellis, a firesoul noble and member of the Firestorm Cabal, has started a rumor that Arathane cannot conceive an heir, and that a suitable replacement should be named immediately for the "good of the people." The player characters are drawn into this conspiracy when they witness a public rally (secretly orchestrated by Castan) calling for the queen to step down, which turns into an outright riot. After helping to quell the disturbance, the PCs are approached by an emissary of the queen, who asks their help in finding out who is behind the rumors. Success at the investigation might even lead the queen to ask the PCs to aid her in arranging a suitable match—a father to the future heir of Akanûl.

TRADREM KETHROD, STEWARD OF THE EARTH

The current Steward of the Earth is an earthsoul genasi, breaking the string of watersouls elected to the position. Until Tradrem, no earthsoul had aspired to a higher position than leadership in Akanûl's armies. Coming from a minor noble family, Tradrem feels he has much to prove, and the thoughts behind his earnest face constantly turn to the politics of any given situation.

Tradrem holds Stewardship of Earth, a position in charge of understanding the landscape—both literal and political—in which the genasi find themselves. He heads a group of informants and spies both within and outside Akanûl, and he commands the efforts

of surveyors and explorers. Only the monarchs of Akanûl and former Stewards of the Earth have a true understanding of the size, means, and goals of the organizations that the Steward of the Earth controls. The power this provides is nominally checked by the fact that the Steward of the Sky can prosecute any illegal activities, but the queen can overrule any prosecution. Stopping that edict requires the Steward of the Earth and the other stewards to vote to prevent it. In the few decades since the inception of the Covenant of Stewardship, this system has yet to be tested due to loyalty among the noble houses, but as Tradrem seeks to use his powers to their full extent, he might find that he and the queen have reason to exchange favors.

Adventure Hook: Tradrem is ambitious, even if he does put the security of Akanûl first in his thoughts and actions, and he recently sent a pair of spies into neighboring Tymanther. They were captured, unfortunately, but they hold intelligence that Tradrem considers vital to Akanûl's security. In addition, the two windsoul spies carried a new magic item said to allow its bearer to listen to distant conversations and translate them into Common. Tradrem wants his spies and their eavesdropping devices back, and he is willing to reward the PCs well for their service.

MAGNOL, STEWARD OF FIRE

Magnol, a powerfully built male firesoul, acts as Steward of Fire. This makes Magnol the second-in-command of all military efforts, with the queen being their ultimate leader. Yet peacetime causes his role to look something more like police chief because the armies of Akanûl serve as Airspur's city watch.

Akanûl's army has only a small core of professional soldiers. Most serve as city watch during times of peace, but some make trips to outlying settlements and watchtowers. In times of strife, Queen Arathane calls upon her people to serve as its military. Conscripts have traditionally been drawn only from all able-bodied genasi, but in recent years, Queen Arathane has encouraged the formation of small corps of citizens of other races

The city watch is divided between three corps: the Sky Guard, the Ground Defense League, and the Wave Riders. The Sky Guard flies throughout the city on the backs of war drakes. For obvious reasons of safety, most of the Sky Guard are windsoul genasi. The Ground Defense League guards entryways into the city, the Catacombs, the Cliff Prison, the palaces of nobles, and on the streets. Genasi of all types serve in the Ground Defense League, but watersouls and earthsouls are the most populous. The Wave Riders, made up mostly of watersoul genasi, act as the harbor guard during peacetime.

Magnol must work in close concert with the other stewards in his capacity as leader of the armies and city watch. He relies upon the Steward of Earth for intelligence and detective work, the Steward of the Sky for legal authority and prosecution, and the Steward of the Sea for his budget and for dealing with violations of trade and taxation without resorting to arrests and jail time.

The division of power and need for cooperation keeps the stewards in conflict. As they jockey for influence in their overlapping spheres, they go to the queen for arbitration. This gives her power because she can decide matters not just upon the legality or justice but upon political favors the stewards owe her.

This kind of politicking sets Magnol to seething. He considers the preservation and growth of Akanûl the highest duty of all its citizens, and it frustrates him that control of the means to assure that is divided among the stewards and the queen. Magnol would prefer if he or someone he trusts could command it all, but he can't see a way to achieve that end that wouldn't weaken Akanûl or throw it into chaos.

Adventure Hook: City militia seized a ship trying to enter Airspur's harbor without proper authority or paperwork. According to rumor, shortly after examining the cargo hold, a militia captain commandeered a war drake to fly directly to Magnol's office. The steward then came to inspect the vessel, just as agents of Myxofin seized it from the militia for improperly filed tax documents. The Steward of the Sea held the ship for no more than an hour, however, before the Steward of the Sky's people claimed the right to seize the ship, asserting that it held a wanted fugitive from justice. Not to be outdone, the earth steward's office also made a claim on the ship, claiming national security was at stake. Now the ship sits in the middle of the harbor, guarded from shore by members of all four stewards, who squabble continuously over its disposition. Shortly thereafter, the queen seized the vessel and stationed her own people aboard. Enter the PCs, who are approached by Magnol to sneak aboard the vessel and acquire a particular cask located under heavy lock and key in the hold. Shortly before they depart, agents of other stewards approach the char-

acters for the same purpose—to seize the mysterious chest. Of course, since they'll be dealing with members of the city militia, Magnol wants none of the guards on the ship hurt.

LEHAYA, STEWARD OF THE SKY

As Steward of the Sky, this windsoul genasi acts as Lawgiver of Airspur and all Akanûl. Her appointed judges try the cases, and the lawyers that argue them owe their employment to Lehaya. Although this grants Lehaya great power, she has no direct control over who is brought to trial. That's the domain of Magnol and the city watch. Additionally, Queen Arathane's judgment is the highest law, and she can overrule the courts' rulings (although she too can be overridden by a unified vote by the stewards).

In practice, Lehaya exercises only light influence. She avoids using the courts to punish enemies and instead offers leniency to those who can give her advantage. Since these individuals are nearly always nobles, she balances her image among the people of Akanûl by frequently pardoning commoners brought before the court for minor offenses. Her famous mercy has earned her the nickname "Mother Law."

Lehaya avoids making waves in politics and society to help cover her extracurricular interest: the Virushead. The Virushead, a creature that unleashes a dozen deadly diseases with each breath, is hidden away in an earthmote and held in magical stasis to prevent the release of contagion. The genasi captured it in the wilds of Akanûl at great cost, bringing it in stasis and in secret to Airspur under the rule of Queen Cyndra. At that time, it was agreed that the Virushead might be used as a weapon but that it was too dangerous to

free from stasis until needed—an opinion with which the current Steward of Fire firmly agrees.

Lehaya sees the Virushead as a powerful weapon against the Abolitic Sovereignty—assuming her mages learn how to control and focus its power. She seeks to develop a disease that affects aboleths and other creatures but leaves genasi unscathed. Yet due in large part to Magnol's security objections, Queen Arathane outlawed experimentation with the Virushead. The other stewards would not vote to overrule her, so Lehaya has resorted to secret projects. Her trusted agents even clandestinely offer rewards for captured creatures they then use in Virushead research.

Adventure Hook: The Virushead has disappeared from its prison, and Lehaya, through an intermediary, approaches the PCs to discover its whereabouts before the plague carrier is turned against the city. To make matters more complex, Lehaya wants the creature returned alive and intact, and failure to do so could earn the PCs the steward's wrath.

MYXOFIN, STEWARD OF THE SEA

Long roads out of Akanûl are few, and none promise safe passage due to bandits and monsters. Almost all business in Akanûl comes through Airspur's port. Farmers in the surrounding countryside send olive oil, wine, fruit, grains, animals, and other goods to the city, and everything else comes to Airspur from the Sea of Fallen Stars.

Myxofin, a male watersoul genasi, oversees the business of the realm as the Steward of the Sea. His agents deal with issues of taxation, gaining building rights for businesses, shipping permits, docking and

caravan fees, price fixing, and so on. If it has to do with money, the steward of the Sea is likely involved. This makes the position of Steward of the Sea coveted, and it takes significant investment of capital and promises to secure enough votes to gain the post. Fortunately, the roles of the other stewards as investigators, police, and prosecutors limits the corruption of that election to a level acceptable to the nobles and largely invisible to the common people.

Myxofin is as corrupt as the last three Stewards of the Sea combined, yet he's also smarter. He reaps profits through dummy business, the black market, and Airspur's guilds (both legal and illegal) while at the same time distancing himself as much as possible from their operations. Myxofin skims from the skimmers, and money rarely directly enters his hands.

Myxofin's plans have been so lucrative, in fact, that his success is starting to show. That's a liability that Myxofin can't afford. Also, Myxofin's term will soon end, and he eagerly anticipates enjoying his wealth—something that would be too conspicuous in Airspur. So of course, Myxofin has a plan. His agents have secretly engaged in negotiations with the ambassadors of the nations that currently have embassies within Airspur: Aglarond, Chessenta, High Imaskar, and Netheril. So far, the Shadovar have been the most receptive to his probes, and Myxofin is looking into acquiring a manse in Sakkors—under a pseudonym of course.

Adventure Hook: In his pursuit of property abroad, Myxofin has inadvertently given enemies of Akanûl access to the city. Now, Shadovar agents have struck twice at ships in Airspur's harbor, withdrawing before they can be caught. The attacks have shown an uncanny knowledge of the workings of harbor militia patrols, as well as the Steward of the Sea's own

people. The PCs are tasked by the steward's office to find out who is behind the attacks and how they are always at the right place at the right time. Meanwhile, Myxofin, who knows perfectly well who is behind the attacks, sends rival adventurers to thwart the PCs while he tries to clean up the Shadovar corruption.

FIRESTORM CABAL

The Firestorm Cabal is an organization of privateers pledged by their leaders to protecting Akanûl. These scouts, mercenaries, and freebooters sporadically guard the nation from all manner of threats on sea, land, and in air. Commoners think of them as champions of the people, but some leaders in the city consider them troublesome rogues, particularly the Stewards of Sky and Fire. In truth, members of the Firestorm Cabal act as both, with many acting more like villains than heroes.

Despite their obvious disrespect for her authority, Queen Arathane ostensibly permits their operations in Akanûl due to their popularity with her people and their ability to supplement the nation's defenses. In truth she secretly employs them in all manner of missions that further her political goals or the good of the nation. For example, the Firestorm Cabal engages in border protection, an activity that takes the form of cross-border raids and robbery of caravans from foreign lands. Queen Arathane sees to it that the stewards look the other way when such attacks benefit her, particularly those that affect Calimshan and Tymanter. The Cabal knows not to impinge on trade too much or to allow a conflict to provoke war. It can count on some protection while within the borders of Akanûl, but beyond it most nations consider the Cabal's members as being outlaws.

The Firestorm Cabal has many safehouses and bases around Akanûl. Airspur, as the most populous area in the country, hosts its Motherhouse. The Motherhouse is the logistical center of the Cabal. Its leaders meet there when not in the field, and the Motherhouse serves as an initial training ground for new recruits.

The Motherhouse hides an increasingly important resource for the Firestorm Cabal. In a secret location behind the cliffs of Airspur, Firestorm Cabal sorcerers study wild magic. Yet their practices don't merely pull from the Elemental Chaos as is the case for normal sorcery. Instead these mages take power from the wild magic caused by the Spellplague. Indeed, the Firestorm Cabal makes many excursions with the clandestine intent of seeking out areas and creatures affected by the Spellplague and studying them. This is an outlawed activity punished by a death penalty, and so the Firestorm Cabal takes great pains to hide their successes (and their failures even more so).

Adventure Hook: In their quest for new sources of magical power, the Firestorm Cabal inadvertently opened a rift to the Abyss. Worse still, a powerful demon on the other side stepped through and prevented the sorcerers who opened the portal from closing it. Now, packs of ravaging demons have begun attacking settlements near Airspur, as well as militia patrols near the city. As more and more powerful demons have come through the portal, the threat grows, and the PCs must enter the well-guarded Motherhouse, make their way past still-hostile Firestorm Cabal members, defeat the demons in the depths of the house, and seal the portal.

AIRSTEPPERS GUILD

The vertical nature of Airspur makes moving about the city something of a chore, but windsoul genasi can fly short distances and even float down from great heights without danger. The rapidity with which they can travel led to the formation of a league of couriers called the Airsteppers Guild. While each Airstepper is essentially a freelance messenger, they adhere to the codes of the Guild and wear its signature blue-and-white robes while working. Couriers use their windsoul powers to occasionally fly up levels, across gaps, or over obstacles, and they use them to descend distances safely. The competition to reach destinations swiftly, and the time it takes to renew their power of flight, created a culture of parkouring among the Airsteppers, which in turn has been adopted by the youth in the city. Now genasi of all types and even members of other races scale walls, leap between rooftops, or bound down the levels of the cliffs.

The stewards and the queen employ trusted Airsteppers, frequently hiring multiple Airsteppers to work together as guards or decoys to important messages. The Steward of Earth and the Steward of the Sea both have a great deal of interest in the information traffic of the city, but each has only a few corrupt Airsteppers in his employ. Most Airsteppers follow the Guild's rules assiduously—rules that include not examining the package or message carried.

ELEMENTAL SPIRES

Gleaming crystal spindles hang in the sky above the city and dip down into the cleft in the cliffs that Airspur occupies. These gemlike monoliths, known as elemental spires, came from Abeir when the worlds combined. Now they glitter in the sky all over Akanul, but a surprising number have collected over Airspur. Like earthmotes, they unfailingly float in the sky, but unlike earthmotes, they drift in small orbits, each moving around its own arbitrary point in space. During the day they dazzle the eye by refracting and reflecting sunlight, but as the light dims they glow of their own accord.

The elemental spires range in size from a dozen feet tall to nearly a hundred feet tall. There are three colors: yellow, orange, and blue. Each color corresponds to a specific energy, and the energy is the reason no one builds on an elemental spire. When a creature or object comes within a certain distance of a spire, it lashes out with the energy associated with its color: fire for orange, cold for blue, and lightning for yellow. The larger the spire, the greater the distance that it lashes out. The residents of Akanul are well aware of the spires' danger and know to give them a wide berth.

Instead of using specific mechanics for all levels of play, you can modify the danger of the spires based on the PCs' level so that the spires remain a threat in whatever adventure you're running. When running an encounter near an elemental spire, decide the distance at which a spire strikes, and roll initiative for the spire. All creatures within the range at the start of the spire's turn are attacked. Roll an attack against Reflex with a bonus to the attack roll equal to the PC's level + 5. Consult the Damage By Level chart on page 185 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*® and use the medium damage expression for the PC's level.

LOCATIONS

Buildings in Airspur stand in the coves at the base of the cliffs, climb the nearly sheer face of the rock along long inclined roads, stand tall atop earthmotes and pillars of stone, dot the cliffs' edges, and even burrow into the sides of the cleft in which the city resides. Genasi buildings utilize the ruins of Ancient Airspur and accentuate the natural environment in inventive ways, layering the genesis' Abeirian fancies onto the staid columns of old while at the same time highlighting the beauty of the area. What follows are some of the important areas that exist in this lovely setting.

1. COURT OF MAJESTY

The Court of Majesty is the royal court for Queen Arathane and her stewards. It convenes around the top of a small earthmote, with each of the five thronemotes floating just above it and around its edges. Those coming to court climb up from a central stair carved in the earthmote and accessed from below by a bridge from a lower earthmote upon which stands the Queen's Palace. The Court of Majesty is left open to the air, but in heat or inclement weather, poles and cloth shades are raised. Queen Cyndra set up this court to put the rule of Akanûl in plain view of the people (particularly the nobles). Queen Arathane would prefer to do without the formality, but the stewards oppose breaking with tradition because the open-air court puts their influence on full display.



2. STREET OF CERULEAN HUES

This long highway snakes along the top of a cliff south of the city that overlooks the Sea of Fallen Stars. It's famed for its breathtaking view and the breakneck fall to the rocky shore an unwary person can experience. The wide cobbled street owes its existence to old Airspur and the empire of Chessenta rather than the travel needs of Airspur's current residents. Although used by some farmers and merchants, the street is dominated by inns and the pleasant villas of the wealthy looking to have a little more room and a fine

view. The Steward of the Sea keeps a palatial second home along the road where he entertains and hosts important guests to the city.

3. DARKLED DEPTHS

Shaded by cliffs and a low-hanging earthmote, the dripping neighborhood known as the Darkled Depths gets little direct sunlight and acts as the industrial hub of the city. The earthmote above it wells with water that flows over its sides, and a cliff-top stream falls down toward the bay. The genasi harness the

force of both of these sources of water to fill aqueducts and power mills. Due to the noise, shadows, and dampness, the Darkled Depths serves as home to some of Airspur's poorest citizens. Many nongenasi live in and around this area due to subtle pressures of prejudice and suspicion.

Adventure Hook: A recent spate of burglaries targeting some of the city's wealthiest nobles have been tracked to the Darkled Depths. Captains in the city militia are hesitant to send their own troops into the city, so the PCs are hired to find out who has been terrorizing the city elite and put a stop to the robberies. Strangely, the poor residents of the Depths seem unwilling to cooperate. Is this thief a Robin Hood of sorts? Someone with a grudge against the nobility? Or someone with a darker agenda in need of funding?

4. PLAZA OF LEAPING FOUNTAINS

Located on an earthmote that serves one of the two causeways between the cliff sides, the Plaza of Leaping Fountains hovers several hundred feet above the bay in the most vibrant entertainment district in the city. The open square hosts many fountains that spout water over the walkways, arcing above the heads of revelers and filling the air with cooling mist. Named for the engineering of its fountains, the Plaza is famous for the shops, taverns, inns, and cafes that line it and the nearby streets. If something of note happens in the city, it frequently happens at the Plaza.

5. CATACOMBS

The collapse of ancient Airspur exposed buried caves and tunnels beneath the city, leaving them open to the air on the sides of the cliffs surrounding the bay. The genasi have repurposed nearly all these structures as they've built buildings along the cliffs. However, they left one series of caverns true to its purpose. These sprawling catacombs housed the Chessentan dead for centuries. Now they hold genasi bones.

The Catacombs remain lightly guarded at all times. Any Airspur citizen can enter them to honor the fallen, but others are discouraged. They have few visitors in any event.

The Catacombs' farthest reaches continue to be the domain of Chessenta's ancient dead. These tunnels were considered old when Airspur was under human rule. Genasi studiously avoid them, which makes the distant tunnels a perfect meeting place for criminals and dissidents to genasi rule—assuming the guards can be distracted or bought off.

The half-orcs and orcs Queen Cyndra displaced were not mere squatters; they were in fact the true heirs to Airspur. Before the Spellplague, almost a third of the Airspur's population consisted of half-orcs, and like the other citizens, they fled when destruction came. Unlike many of the other citizens, they had a place of relative safety to turn to: the Akanapeaks. In those mountains the half-orcs allied themselves with orc tribes, and they eventually returned to the city to see what remained. Those not killed in Queen Cyndra's purge and the attack by the Abolothic Sovereignty have now returned by way of distant caves that link to the catacombs. Many now live peacefully in the city, but others still bear a grudge.

The half-orc dissidents command too few to take the city by force, and their full-blooded orc allies can't enter the city. Thus, the half-orc's leaders are attempting to make subtle inquiries into how they might profit from their situation. Of course, they can sell goods gained from the buried dead, but assaults by undead have made them wary of too much grave robbery. Ideally, the half-orcs hope to connect with someone willing to take power in the city, selling themselves and their orcs as mercenaries and then using the chaos of battle to revenge themselves on those who wronged their elders.

Adventure Hook: A half-orc necromancer who calls himself Deadtusk has emerged from the Akanapeaks through the Catacombs, leading a small army of the undead. The half-orc has swayed a number of orc and half-orc dissidents to his cause, and he plans to lead his force into Airspur, slaughtering its citizens to bolster his own forces, and ostensibly retaking the city in the name of the displaced orcs. What his half-orc followers do not know is that he secretly seeks to create a new necropolis on the bones of dead Airspur, and his plans do not include a place for the living of any sort.

6. DRAKEYARDS

These stockyards and markets exist solely for the purpose of breeding, rearing, training, and selling drakes. The genasi brought a tradition of drake breeding with them from Abeir, and several unique species exist only in Akanûl (for now). Although hobbyists and boutique breeders do a small business in other areas of the city, the Drakeyards handle the bulk of the trade.

7. MOTHERHOUSE

The Firestorm Cabal Motherhouse consists of a structure built against the cliff and well-guarded tunnels beyond. Only the most trusted individuals enter the tunnels behind the Motherhouse.

8. AKANÛL COURTHOUSES AND VIRUSHEAD

This earthmote hides the Virushead deep below the Akanûl Courthouses. No one is supposed to tinker with the Virushead, so when the Steward of the Sky wants to bring in subjects for testing, she is forced to use cloak-and-dagger tactics—particularly for large monstrous creatures.

9. CLIFF PRISON

The Cliff Prison consists of old Chessentan dungeons in the cliffs near the Courthouses' earthmote. The genasi of Airspur despise the concept of slavery, and they seek to avoid the appearance of it by keeping the number of prisoners low and hiding those they have. Many terrible crimes are punished by death and many more are punished by banishment (with death being the sentence for return). Most individuals held in the Cliff Prison are awaiting their walk across the Bridge of Justice to their trials. Others have committed crimes small enough that a stay in prison and a fine were deemed sufficient future deterrence.

10. AKANAWATER FALLS

The Akanawater flows from the Akanapeaks and falls down in several splashing levels to the bay. In an already beautiful city, the falls present yet another stunning vista.

MORE ABOUT AIRSPUR

If you'd like to know more about Airspur, check out *Dragon* #378 when it comes out. This article is the first in a short series about the city, and you'll find the next installment in the August issue. Yet there's no reason to wait if you want to start in on adventures right away. You can get started with your own adventures immediately, or you can play the RPGA adventure "The Depths of Airspur," first of a number of adventures by RPGA members that takes place in the city. You might also want to read *The Restless Shore* by James P. Davis. It features a genasi character who grew up in Airspur.

About the Author

Matthew Sernett has been a pizza cook, an onion packer, and an assembly line worker in a spring factory—grueling work that was surprisingly good endurance training for being the editor-in-chief of *Dragon*® Magazine. After ceding that role to others with greater fortitude (keep it up, Chris!), he worked as D&D designer and helped to create 4th edition. He now happily splits his professional time between D&D design and world-building for Magic: The Gathering®.

