

BACKDROP: TARMALUNE

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Tarmalune, the wealthy, bustling, crossroads port city, is the cosmopolitan trading heart of its continent, serving Returned Abeir just as Waterdeep does the Sword Coast of Faerûn.

Self-governing and fiercely independent, yet lacking a standing army, Tarmalune is the largest, wealthiest, and most socially prominent of the Windrise Ports (the independent cities on the eastern shores of the Dragon Sea). Only Imdolphyn dares to declare itself “the equal of Tarmalune,” and not even the richest Imdarm merchant-lords truly believe that boast.

Tarmalune has around 70,000 permanent residents (called “Tarralune”), and it hosts a constantly changing population of many more short-term visitors as ships dock or sail, caravans arrive or depart, and a steady stream of peddlers, traders, and seekers-after-fortune pass through its gates. Of old, the city was rightly called “Tarmalune Great Port” since it rivals Waterdeep in wealth, mercantile ventures, tolerance, variety among citizens and outlanders, and constantly unfolding opportunities.

Tarmalune is not a welcoming home to those who favor stability over change, or who trust in traditions and “old ways.” Each new month brings changes in fashions, ways of making things or doing business, and new faces rising to the center of attention in society, or seizing real power among Tarralune investors and traders.



WHAT MEETS THE EYE

Tarmalune is a city of energetic activity, movement, and noise that grows muted in fogs and by night, but never really ceases.

Its cobbled streets are broad (enough to turn a coach or cart without unhitching its team) but are choked with wagons, carts, and folk mounted and afoot by day, and only a little less crowded by night. There are no sidewalks, and streets (rather than having a central “crown” to shed water to side gutters) slope gently down from the flanking buildings to a slimy open drainage trough running down the center of the street.

Most city houses are narrow, four-story-tall stone buildings with steeply sloped tile or slate roofs that bristle with dormers. (The fires in Tarmalune down the years have resulted in laws banning thatch or wooden shingle roofs.) Many have balconies on their third floor and higher, and several have exterior “back stairs” giving down into alleys. At the back of dwellings is a small stable. Street-level windows, and those on the floor above, are almost always equipped with stout shutters.

Shops in Tarmalune are rarely purpose-built. They occupy the ground floor of a former house, with rental “rooms” (apartment suites) above, or they share space with a building housing a cellar shop, another store at street level, and short-rent living “allrooms” (single-room dwellings) or offices above.

However, Tarmalune is a city of new ideas, and scattered throughout its wards (districts) are “different” buildings, from special shops and grand mansions to small stone towers that are nearly citadels, and architecturally strange experiments. “One can buy anything in Tarmalune,” as the Abeiran saying goes, and it appears one can also build anything—or try. Building collapses are no longer frequent, but every few months one still occurs.

Tarmalune merchants are swift to import anything that appears to be selling, and to copy (or try to deceive buyers with lookalike “glims” or deceitful somewhat-copies) any newly faddish item or any popular goods they can’t import. The city’s shops hold just about anything, but rare or intricate wares are expensive. Common goods (such as simple foodstuffs, cloaks, and rough pots) are plentiful and cheap, but expect to search and pay much for durable, comfortable, well-fitting boots.

Tarmalune is crowded and noisy, day and night. The reek of animal dung and the creaking and rumbling of carts is everpresent, the docks are always a center of shouting bustle as loading and unloading proceeds, and the streets just inland of the dock warehouses ring with smiths’ hammers and other loud noises of things being made or repaired, at all hours.

Surprisingly, the stinks of rotting fish, seaweed, or sewage are mild and seldom carried far from the green, opaque harbor waters. This is thanks to abundant “suckertails” (eels, with soft sucking mouths, that eat dung and rotting things) dwelling in the harbor. Unlike lampreys, they do not bite, and they suck blood only from drowned carrion; Tarmalune even keep suckertails in pools for private bathing, or plunge into the harbor to have “wild” suckertails clean them; short exposure to swarms of the sucking eels is said to be pleasant (and they drop off the moment a bather emerges from the water).

The only strong-smelling area of the city is the slum of Fishstink, where fish are sold (and gutted and cleaned for sale). Mongers hurl the innards out on the cobbles to attract shrieking, squawking gulls, which are promptly netted and clubbed or downed with hurled stones by poor children for home stewpots. This harvest that has little effect on the expanding gull population, but it cuts down on “thieving beaks” swooping at the fish stalls.

Tarmalune was once described as “jaws about to close around as much sea as they could swallow,” the sea being the harbor that lies in the center of the

city, serving as both its beating heart of commerce and a barrier to those seeking to cross it. The bridges over the four streams that empty into the harbor are constant crowded bottlenecks of carts, wagons, and dodging pedestrians.

A bewildering variety of small boats ferry Tarmalune and visitors in all directions across the harbor (for fees ranging from 2 cp per head per trip to as much as 5 gp for a known fugitive in a desperate hurry). Only by night, and in heavy fogs (of the sort that arise at most dawns), does traffic abate enough to let the eye gaze across large expanses of open water, or someone to cross a bridge at a steady, uninterrupted pace.

The laws of Tarmalune forbid visiting ships to anchor in the harbor for more than two nights at a time, but around sixty small, battered, leaky Tarmalune-owned vessels are found bobbing in its gentle swells. Their crews ply the crowded waters with fending-poles, oars, hunting horns, and curses, making the harbor noisy by day and much of the night.

In so much bustle, seeing landmarks can be a problem in parts of the city; locals use corner-site businesses (such as taverns) to navigate and to arrange meetings with others.

From huge shipbuilding sheds to the overblown “half-castles” of the wealthy, Tarmalune holds many striking buildings, but its major landmarks (aside from well-signed corner businesses, bridges, and the Raging Flame) are the two fountains located in open “squares” (spaces that are neither square in shape nor open, being crowded with unshuttered vendors’ wagons by day and night) north and south of the harbor. Fairwynd Plume is on the north, in Dawnside, and Duthsummer Plume to the south, in Arendermore.

These pumped waters jet to twice the height of a tall man, are used as baths by the poor, and have several free-public-use water pumps (hand-operated, bring your own bucket) around their bases. Reselling

city water drawn from these pumps is illegal, as is taking more than four buckets per person per day.

THE RAGING FLAME

The most striking sight in Tarmalune is the Raging Flame (the “Tongue of Fire” in more formal speech and to older Tarralune), a hundred-foot-tall pillar of tireless flames that burns constantly, in a cylinder that holds its shape even in gales, without fuel. Sailors use it as a beacon in the darkness or bad weather, since its light shines out to sea straight through the open (navigable) heart of the harbor. To Tarralune, it’s something “old, fell, and magical” that’s “always been there,” defying all attempts to extinguish it and seeming to know and strike out at persons who try (spitting gouts of flame for hundreds of feet that appear aimed at specific persons or buildings).

Hundreds of local tales, tall and otherwise, speak of this pillar of flame. Sometimes it features as an instrument of revenge, or it is portrayed as a fell monster harming those it dislikes and aiding those it favors. Some stories claim dueling wizards were transformed into it and are trapped within it even now; others insist it snatches and captures all manner of persons, transforming them into tormented flames and growing with each one it adds; and still other tales whisper that it’s used for sacrifices by dark cults who will one day rule all Tarmalune—cults perhaps based in Imdolphyn or other ports, who “seek to bring the Great Port down.”

There is almost universal agreement in the city that the fires that have broken out in the past are somehow the work of the Raging Flame, no matter how distant they were from the site of the fiery pillar. Most Tarralune also agree that without the watchful mages of the recently established Firequench Order keeping the Raging Flame in check, more fires would

have devastated Tarmalune, or “a greater evil would have erupted in our fair city.”

GETTING IN AND OUT OF TARMALUNE

Tarmalune lacked a city wall or gates until just two years previous, but there are no tolls for arriving in the city or departing it.

DOCKING IN THE HARBOR

There are, however, harbor docking fees. All non-city-registered vessels are subject to a 2 gp amount, paid to the “master” of that dock (a city official who will typically be waiting for the ship to “land”) promptly upon tying up at any city dock. Another 2 gp must be paid at dawn of every day thereafter that the ship remains docked. (Ship captains who seek to avoid payment by untying from the dock “stumps” (bollards) to let their ship drift will be charged a triple toll, thanks to the damage done in the past in harbor collisions.)

ROAD PATROLS

Although there are no formal restrictions on entry and departure by land, merchants who seek to ride or take carts or wagons into and out of Tarmalune after dark discover that all roads are watched by a dozen armed patrols of Vigilants (the city police; see “Power in the City,” hereafter), who question and perhaps search saddlebags and conveyances (to cut down on kidnappings, thievery, and the smuggling of weapons and large amounts of currency). Some patrol masters can be bribed to “forget” to search, but most cannot. Suspicious goods are seized and the persons carrying them jailed for questioning, and if the patrol finds nothing but remains suspicious, the travelers are

turned back and told to resume journeying “when the sun is high and clear.”

Similar patrols operate by day, of course, but the flood of traffic is so intense that only overtly suspicious travelers are stopped.



CARGO TAXES

The city does not tax shop sales or goods carried by wagon, afoot, or by pack-animal, but they do tax “landed” (unloaded) ship cargos. Black-uniformed dockside city inspectors (known as “ravens”) levy these taxes after they inspect the amount and type of goods and then issue paper chits to be presented at Haven Towers within seven days with payment (upon pain of seizure of other goods in lieu). The inspector retains an identical copy of every chit to make sure no issued chit is simply “forgotten.” To harm or hamper an inspector is to risk imprisonment, seizure of all goods and city properties, and exile from the city; also, if an inspector suffers an injury, an identical injury is done to the injurer.

CITY LIFE

Tarmalune is primarily a city where things are bought and sold (or traded), but it is secondarily a city where items are made or repaired, for sale or resale in new form.

Of old, as the city grew around a fine natural harbor, the primary industries were market selling, fishing, and shipbuilding. Although city markets, fishing, and shipbuilding (and ship refitting) remain as busy as ever, jobs in Tarmalune now center around shopkeeping (that is, sales in stores rather than outdoor markets) and craftwork, such as turning lumber into crates, barrels, wagons, and furniture, or turning metal bars into pots, locks, hasps, and nails.

The “rising tide” in local work and wealth right now is investment (“sponsorship” or “partnering in”), through which even a humble worker can hope for eventual wealth by partial ownership of a business concern. The word “company” is unknown in Tarmalune; the local equivalents are “tarneld” (for privately run businesses, which can

accept investments but admit no votes or control over their operations by investors) and (for partnerships) “skoun.” Increasingly, the largest and growing Tarralune businesses are skouns (pronounced “SKOONS”).

A PLACE TO LIVE

Throughout their lives, Tarralune “move lodgings” as they gain or lose wealth and prestige, but all prefer to own their homes rather than renting. (A local term for a successful citizen is one who “owns his own walls, not just the bed.” However, the dream of owning buildings is forever beyond many, especially since the council outlawed joint ownership. A specific individual, not several people or a tarneld or skoun, must own a building; agreements by others to provide coins for a building purchase must be now made in secret, since it has become an illegal practice.

Long-term (citizen, as opposed to visitor) tenants rent by the year, with their tenancies customarily ending in midsummer, and such rental rooms are always above shops or offices; only those who own their homes have the luxury of having everything contained within four walls all to themselves. Rental negotiations are entirely private, but any agreement made must be written down and taken to a clerk at Haven Towers (where the council meets) to be witnessed and copied (a copy is retained in the Towers; these records are regularly used by the Vigilant to try to track down specific persons).

Tarmalune is gaining new citizens every year, and this is making housing steadily scarcer and more expensive.

DAILY MEALS

Successful Tarralune employ maids, “hands” (servants who see to their horses, provide personal protection, and do minor repairs and “strong jobs” such as shifting furniture), and cooks. Only the wealthy have

all-hours, live-in servants; for Tarralune, their hired help arrives for part of a day to do their work and then moves on to the home or shop of another patron. It follows that the successful and wealthy can dine in clubs or “feasts” as guests at the homes of other successful Tarralune, or more often dine at home for the main evening meal (after dark, when “the shops are shut”).

Less successful Tarralune, and all citizens and visitors who are moving about the city in the course of their daily business, dine in the street from “simmer wagons” (wagons that serve hot and cold food and drink) or the serving windows of bake shops, taverns, and inns, or they duck inside taverns and inns for a sit-down meals.

Sausages, hard biscuits, and stews eaten over several days (added to between meals) are a staple of Tarralune who live alone, many of whom heat up a gravy or sauce to make such “familiar swallows” more palatable.

RIDING, CONVEYANCES, AND PETS

Most Tarralune hire coaches and “carry-wagons” (open-topped, high-sided cargo wagons) as needed. Due to the possibility of mistreatment, riding beasts and pack mules can’t be hired, and must be bought. A few buy and sell beasts often, owning them only for short-term tasks, but most Tarralune just hire the services of carriers as they need them.

Citizens and tenants who own mounts almost always have them stabled “out back” behind their lodgings, but almost everyone who owns a wagon have wagon and draft animals kept at a “safe stables” elsewhere that sees to the guarded storage and keep of such things. Pets are a rarity in Tarmalune except among the wealthy (who keep small, easily managed exotic creatures such as lizards), but Tarralune keep a few caged chickens in their lodgings for fresh eggs (when laying ceases, the fowl end up as a meal).

TARMALUNE

Scale in Feet 0 1000



- 1. Tarmkeep (jail, armory of the Vigilant)
- 2. Haven Towers (seat of civic government)
- 3. The Dragon's Shoulder
- 4. Duthsummer Plume (public fountain and pumps)
- 5. Dornitowers (mansion of Lord Speaker Dorn)
- 6. Gammurth Towers (mansion of Councilor Glarrak)
- 7. Windserpent House (mansion of Councilor Eldrake)
- 8. Stormgarde (mansion of Councilor Rathgar Malynd)
- 9. Halagothra's House (mansion of Halagothra the Healer)
- 10. Halorn House (mansion of Councilor Mhorauk)
- 11. Mistcloak Towers (mansion of Ildamar Yeskrel)
- 12. Garlgarde (mansion of "Lord" Cammas Lordlar)
- 13. Vaerungo's (darren)
- 14. Mralkyn's (inn)
- 15. Mokaer Morntarn's home (herbalist)
- 16. Anratha Harrowstorm's home (wizard)
- 17. Morntarn's Miracles (herbs & spices shop)
- 18. Harrowstorm Fine Gowns (shop)
- 19. Algluth's Tankard (tavern)
- 20. Elspurl Water (stream)
- 21. Rental lodgings of the wizard Haerocloak
- 22. Imprel's Water (stream)
- 23. The Raging Flame
- 24. Block of burned-out buildings
- 25. Citadel Firequench (Order of wizards)
- 26. The Black Boot (inn)
- 27. Morlund Kalguth's (butcher)
- 28. Berrek Wyvermerer's home (traveling trader)
- 29. Jozstar Gallowstern's home (traveling trader)
- 30. Blackhilt Water (stream)
- 31. Oraundo's Bench (tavern)
- 32. The "Tail" (harbor reach)
- 33. The Sarderstream (stream)
- 34. Askral Rheens's home (traveling trader)
- 35. Lothtar's Hearth (darren)
- 36. Fairwynd Plume (public fountain and pumps)
- 37. Halarskandur's Hearth (inn)
- 38. Galespur Towers (mansion of Glustan Belsturz)
- 39. Drakehawk House (mansion of Rionthas)
- 40. Scale Seeker House

INNS

Visitors discover that the city doesn't have all that many inns—and most are down by the docks (rough, shabby places for sailors) or just inside the city gates (quieter but still spartan accommodations). "Grand" inns are unknown, though there are two haughty and expensive ones: Halarskandur's Hearth on Slaerendever Street, and Mralkyn's on Inglespur Lane. The most notorious of the sailors' inns is probably The Black Boot.

TAVERNS

Taverns, however, are everywhere in Tarmalune (and they are always sited at street-moot corners, with bold thrusting-out-over-the-street signboards). They sport such names as Algluth's Tankard, and Oraundo's Bench, and they are more than mere drinking-holes. They double as all-day eateries and business offices for many of the less wealthy and successful Tarmalune entrepreneurs seeking to "hire or hire out." A tavern is the usual place to hire mercenaries or "street muscle" to "spy, defy, or use a blade."

DARREN

The important everyday meeting places for wealthy or up-and-

coming Tarmalune with coins to spend or invest are the countless "darren" or gambling clubs. These shift constantly in popularity, with the least desirable disappearing and then reopening with new names and sponsors, and hot new places ("varth" is "hot new" in local speech) springing up constantly. The few darren popular for more than a decade include Vaerungo's on Wyndragon Way and Lothtar's Hearth on Gellart Street.

The darren serve meals and drink, but their guests don't just dine and gamble; darren are where Tarmalune and visiting traders gossip, flirt, meet new business contacts ("scry new faces" is the local expression), and invest in various ventures put before them by "tarn-traders."

TARN-TRADERS

Tarn-traders are independent sponsors, brokers, and hucksters (often successful former merchants who have "sold up" and retired to this life of deals, rumors, and dupes). In local speech, "tarn" is an old word for "rising wealth."

Many tarn-traders hire youths as spies and "word-runners" (message and written-contract go-betweens), and they also hire visiting adventurers as bodyguards when things get dangerous.

Of old, tarn-traders were glib, smilingly dishonest young Tarmalune seeking to avoid shop drudgery or "hard hand work," or were visiting swindlers from elsewhere in Abeir, but increasingly citizens are trusting a new breed of tarn-traders: aging longtime citizens retired from shops or having sold successful tarnelds, who have coins, wisdom, and contacts enough to be successful in arranging mercantile deals for others—and who are unlikely to flee Tarmalune if things go bad, and who can therefore be held more accountable.

A few deceitful "old locals" have been murdered in recent years, and the rest have come to realize that

Tarralune have a low tolerance for being cheated by longtime neighbors.

POWER IN THE CITY

Tarmalune is (loosely) ruled by the Lord Speaker of the council, wily old **Hamminas Dorn**, a good-hearted, retired adventurer who used the backing of rich, aging Tarralune traders who'd become fed up with increasing city lawlessness (arson, thefts, vandalism, and back alley gang intimidations, done by "skulks" hired by merchants warring with merchant rivals) to establish a governing council and an armed police force, the Vigilant, headed by him.

Dorn wars endlessly against defiant merchants, the usual thieves and smugglers (merchant shippers who avoid various city taxes through deception, covering an incoming cargo of something highly taxed with a layer of something taxed at a far lower rate), and council members who believe he should be their mouthpiece and nothing more.

Most Tarralune grudgingly regard their Lord Speaker as both vitally necessary and competent. Dorn wisely has been training many of his eighty-some Vigilant "trusties" to replace him as Speaker, in case a slayer's dagger ever finds his throat.

Dorn is a tall, gaunt, weathered old man with flashing eyes, bristling brows, and a voice that can thunder or cajole. He appears never to grow tired or to stop thinking ahead, and he is a consummate actor. As a rueful citizen once described him: "He could have been the greatest tarn-trader ever."

THE COUNCIL OF TARMALUNE

The twenty-strong Council of Tarmalune is made up of merchants from a wide variety of trades. Both genders and most races are represented, but "old wealthy human males" (of two sorts: the stubborn old-money

families and the aggressive self-made wealthy merchants) predominate in numbers and attitude.

The council meets every seven nights in a central hall in Haven Towers (where all its clerks and inspectors are also based, the Lord Speaker has an office, the Vigilant are headquartered, and there are lodgings for "honored guests" of the city such as visiting envoys). This hall has chairs and tables for visitors to attend, both to make representations and listen, but in practice the council members have little tolerance for hecklers, and few councilors or the wider public bother to attend meetings. Majority votes decide city policy, and controversial matters might fill the chamber, resulting in rare daytime sessions before the next regular night meeting time. This sometimes causes absent councilors to be searched for and hounded to the hall by citizens.

Most of the time, however, the majority of citizens grumble about what goes on in Haven Towers, but don't bother to visit it, shrugging at the expected "inevitable" corruption and idiotic decisions, and instead get on with their own busy lives.

At least twelve assenting council votes (the Speaker can vote) are needed to pass laws and to enact new policies requiring a change in taxation, council powers, and the rights of shopkeepers, tarnelds, and skouns.

THE COURT OF THE COUNCIL

Only three out of four councilors must vote to convict someone or reach a verdict (which might require payments or actions by both sides in a dispute) in matters of law. In other words, only four councilors must be present to judge any legal dispute, but however many councilors show up to preside, three-quarters of them must agree on a verdict, or accused parties go free.

It is rare for the council to rule on disputes that are just between two or more Tarralune (and not between the city and an individual) without passing a law or rule for everyone to follow henceforth. The

council dislikes having to make such judgments, so city clerks, inspectors, and even individual Vigilant or councilors try to talk opposed sides into coming to an agreement without a court ruling, if at all possible.

Councilors don't hesitate, however, to adjudicate instances where someone is accused by the Vigilant of breaking a city law or failing to pay a required fee or tax.

No set penalties exist for any crime, and the payment of fines settles the vast majority of cases (though sometimes seizures of goods is preferred if an accused person is unable or unwilling to pay). However, imprisonment, exile, and even maiming (usually of someone who has been convicted of killing or maiming someone else) can also be "the word and will of the council." Sentences are uttered in public in the hall at Haven Towers, recorded by a city clerk, and declaimed in public at sunset of the same day by both of the city fountains. (Any citizen who wants to know any verdict rendered, no matter how long ago, can appear at Haven Towers to ask a clerk to bring out the written record; there are no restrictions or fees for this.)

No lawyers work in Tarralune, and accused persons who fail to appear in court are almost always convicted (persons in custody are brought to court by the Vigilant, because the Vigilant must take on the sentences of the accused if they prevent the accused from attending). However, a handful of "orators" hire themselves out to speak on behalf of shy, disorganized, confused, or frightened accused persons. Most of these are eloquent and are received well by councilors because they entertain and at the same time move proceedings along speedily. It is rare for orators to be hired by opposing sides and to argue against each other, and it is forbidden for the city or any councilor to hire one.

CITY LAWS

Tarmalune has a hodge-podge of lenient and limited laws that constantly increase in number, but thus far are limited in reach. City clerks avoid bringing matters before the Court of Council where they truly believe ignorance of the law played a part in an incident, and the Vigilant (the city police) are reminded to “let Tarralune be Tarralune” rather than trying to control them through enforcement. As one councilor put it: “Even when what is about to occur is obvious, there is no such thing as an anticipated crime. They must be breaking the law, or have clearly just broken it, for you to arrest them.”

THE VIGILANT

The police force of Tarmalune has become a model for similar forces in other Windrise Ports. It consists of at least six dozen veteran officers (“sternhelms” to all Tarralune) and an unknown number of trainees. On duty, all of them wear identical uniforms of black leather armor and boots with black metal helms, gorgets, breastplates, and backplates. In wet weather they add cloaks, and in winter, quilted cloaks.

Vigilants customarily carry short swords, belt and boot daggers, and cudgels, and they might have hidden knives, too. They are sometimes issued long wooden poles for crowd control. On the breasts of their armor, every Vigilant has emblazoned in silver the badge of the force, which is a single staring human eye surrounded by a backward “C” (points to the left rather than to the right). This symbolizes their watchfulness over the city, the reversed “C” being Tarmalune around its harbor. It is unlawful for non-Vigilants to use the badge or wear a Vigilant uniform, and exile from the city is part of any sentence for doing so.

Vigilants patrol city streets in groups of twelve (eighteen in Fishstink and dockside areas). A patrol might split into smaller groups if searching for some-

one or “showing watchfulness” in a busy market or during the unloading of valuable cargos, but rarely does a patrol split up in dark hours.

Vigilants begin as trainees and are covertly tested to see if they will take bribes or keep secrets from fellow Vigilants. If they “work out” after a year of street patrols with full-hire officers, they become trustswords, the basic Vigilant rank (equivalent to constable). Honest, level-headed trustswords who show leadership and are liked by their fellows are elevated to the rank of watcher (sergeant equivalent) when a vacancy becomes available. A typical street patrol is led by a senior watcher and includes a more junior watcher.

Above watchers are investigators (detective equivalents), who seldom patrol but instead command case-by-case “details” of watchers and trustswords to spy on criminals, investigate murders and mysteries, and report matters to their superiors, the wardswords.

Wardswords oversee city neighborhoods (typically four to a city ward), seeking to learn which citizens and visitors are engaged in shady pursuits, the whereabouts of all mercenaries and adventurers and what they’re doing, who belongs to which gang, and what links exist between businesses, gangs, and individual criminals.

Above the wardswords are shields and senior shields, who sometimes act almost as military commanders if riots or open battles break out. They also speak (and deal) on behalf of the Vigilant with councilors and prominent citizens, and hire outsiders to conduct undercover prying, including investigations of Vigilant officers.

The Vigilants maintain spartan offices and temporary holding cells in rented street-level shops in strategic spots around the city, but anyone who is arrested for a crime (as opposed to “detained” because they’re drunk, enraged and brawling, frightened and want police protection, or because officers want to question them in private) is taken to Tarm-

keep, the main jail, armory, and headquarters of the Vigilant.

Tarmkeep can be seen from all over Tarmalune; it’s the small, recently built fortress atop “the Dragon’s Shoulder,” the high, rocky ridge that runs to a point and shelters the harbor, forming the southern side of the harbor entrance. “Carted off to the Keep” is local parlance for being arrested; prisoner carts fitted with locked manacles frequently rumble to and from the Vigilant citadel.

The Vigilant ultimately report to the Lord Speaker, who is fiercely determined that they never become corrupt or seek to rule the city; he privately hires adventurers and shady Tarralune to spy on the police he founded, to make sure they “stay lawful.”

Thus far he has succeeded, but the Vigilant are far too few to see even half of what goes on in the city. Where witnesses don’t exist, clever and subtle criminals can readily get away with small or swift crimes.

THE HAVENERS

Lord Speaker Dorn is determined that city officials never become the true rulers of Tarmalune, and he takes care to shift duties from one person to another, ostensibly to make everyone experienced in procurement, handling funds, and administering the “fix carts” of city workers who replace cobbles, clear streets, and see to the running of Haven Towers. He’s really doing this, as everyone knows, to make sure no city official gets too friendly with criminals, councilors, or wealthy Tarralune looking to become wealthier.

Dorn has succeeded in building a staff of cordial, competent officials (mainly females, because he was swift to hire the educated but bored and jobless daughters of the wealthy) who quickly to report “every little suspicious thing” a fellow staffer does to either the Vigilant or better still Dorn, who has thus far concealed just how sick and tired he is of this behavior (because it has uncovered crimes in the past, and it

might well do so again). No Tarralune or outsider can meet privately with any city official and not have the Lord Speaker or councilors or a few senior Vigilant know about it, quickly.

At the same time, the city staff (known as “Haveners” to Tarralune) are ever more proud of the increasingly strong and efficient organization they belong to, and they work together quickly in emergencies and avoid bickering over authority or resources. Marauding adventurers, in particular, have discovered that if they try to threaten or bully Haveners or other Tarralune, or run amok with their weapons, the Haveners coordinate the Vigilant to contain and capture them—and emboldened city clerks, rather than cowering under desks, likely snatch up handy chairs or other improvised weapons to do battle, skirts flying!

POLITICS IN TARMALUNE

Outside Haven Towers in the wider city, many of the more unscrupulous traders are irked by the existence of the Vigilant and itch to rid Tarmalune of it, but Dorn enjoys the staunch support of Tarralune shopkeepers, and almost all the important workers in the city (such as the dockhands who do cargo handling between ship holds, the city docks, and the private warehouses that crowd the city). They rightfully see him as their only effective defense against citizens who have more wealth than they do.

As a result, the Vigilant remain strong (though merchants tirelessly try to corrupt the force, officer by officer), and Dorn thus far remains alive.

That does not stop councilors from working together to try to thwart the Lord Speaker’s goals, or depose him and take his seat themselves, or oppose him just to curb his ever-growing influence. Even those who hate Dorn grudgingly admit he has done good things and operates with good intentions—but they speak with fear of what might befall Tarmalune

if “someone evil” ever got to be Lord Speaker and wielded the power Dorn commands.

The council recently made its only universally popular decision thus far: establishing a “Firequench Order” of mages dedicated to swiftly dousing fires in the city, and controlling or eradicating the Raging Flame.

THE FIREQUENCH ORDER

Formally the Guild of Firewatchers but now known to all Tarralune as “the Firequench Order” (and more often just “the Order”), this increasingly secretive cabal of urban mystics is now headquartered in Citadel Firequench, a basalt fortress built by a long-ago local se lord (pirate baron), then home to a succession of wealthy Tarralune, and recently used as a city jail. It faces the Raging Flame across the blackened foundations of fire-ravaged, ruined buildings that the council has ordered “never rebuilt, as long as the Flame endures.”

The Order, originally a dozen named arcanists but now numbering almost twenty (including outlanders), go about cloaked and cowled in robes of purple; they wear masks beneath these outer coverings, and avoid giving their names.

To Tarralune they are heroes, because they arrive swiftly to magically extinguish fires anywhere in the city, and because they seek to quench the Raging Flame, trying spell after spell to try to tame and lessen it.

Thus far, however, their increasingly complicated rituals have been unsuccessful. The Order recently told the council privately that they have discovered the pillar of fire is sentient, is of awesome power that might be fed from elsewhere, and that they don’t yet understand it well enough to destroy it; they might not know how to do so for years.

Firequench Wizard		Level 6 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 250
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +6	
HP 71; Bloodied 35		
AC 16; Fortitude 17, Reflex 19, Will 18		
Speed 6		
⚔ Icy Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+11 vs. AC; 1d4 damage plus 1d4 cold damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the firequench wizard’s next turn.		
⚡ Ray of Frost (standard; at-will) ♦ Cold, Implement		
Ranged 10; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 cold damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 cold and is slowed, both until the end of the firequench wizard’s next turn.		
🔥 Douse (standard; recharge 2) ♦ Implement		
Area burst 2 within 10; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone. The area is difficult terrain until the end of the firequench wizard’s next turn. Normal fire is extinguished within the area. Magical conjurations and zones of fire are extinguished if the firequench mage hits with the following attack: +10 vs. the Will of the creator of the conjuration or zone.		
🛡 Fireproof (minor; daily; sustain minor) ♦ Implement		
The firequench wizard gains resist fire 10 until the end of his or her next turn. <i>Sustain Minor</i> : The resist fire 5 continues until the end of the firequench wizard’s next turn.		
Alignment Any	Languages Common, Primordial	
Skills Arcana +12		
Str 10 (+3)	Dex 10 (+3)	Wis 16 (+6)
Con 15 (+5)	Int 19 (+7)	Cha 12 (+4)
Equipment robes, dagger, orb		

CITY LORE

The following threads of lore are all largely true; it is up to the DM just which details are accurate.

Streetwise DC 25: In old times, the port of Tarmhaven (that grew into Tarmalune) had six ruling lords, and the descendants of these nobles still dwell in the city, most of them ignorant of their heritage but a few of them working together in secret to refound the

nobility and rise to rule Tarmalune like kings! They use the symbol of a sword thrust into the gaping jaws of a dragon, and so are called the Wyrmjaws. They are buying city buildings and councilors as swiftly as they can—and they poison all who discover too much about them.

Streetwise DC 30: Lonely old Lord Speaker Dorn has always craved love, and in vivid dreams sees a beautiful half-elf, with blue hair down to her knees, who dances in a forest glade and beckons him; he will

Onster Glarrak		Level 4 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 350
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +3	
HP 92; Bloodied 46		
AC 16; Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 17		
Resist 5 poison		
Speed 6		
Ⓣ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+11 vs. AC; 1d4 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).		
Ⓢ Spit Serpents (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison		
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 poison damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).		
⚡ Serpent Curse (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Illusion, Psychic		
Ranged 10; illusory snakes appear and attack the target; +9 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage and the target is slowed (save ends both).		
Snake's Quickness		
Onster makes two basic attacks. If the first is a melee attack and it hits, Onster can shift 1 square.		
Writhe (immediate reaction; usable when Onster is hit by a melee attack; recharges when first bloodied)		
Onster shifts 3 squares and takes half damage from melee and ranged attacks until the start of his next turn.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic	
Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Insight +8		
Str 12 (+3)	Dex 8 (+1)	Wis 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 15 (+4)	Cha 18 (+6)
Equipment leather armor, dagger		

do anything for someone promising to lead him to her.

Dungeoneering DC 15: Garlgarde, an old stone mansion in Arendermore, is shuttered and inhabited only by the crazy old merchant “Lord” Cammas Lordlar because it is haunted. Lordlar has lived for over a century because of the wraiths of Garlgarde, who keep him alive to help them guard a fabulous treasure hidden in the walls, long ago.

Rathgar Malynd		Level 12 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 1,400
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +7	
HP 240; Bloodied 120		
AC 28; Fortitude 26, Reflex 23, Will 24		
Speed 5		
Ⓣ Triple-Headed Flail (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 8 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Rathgar's next turn.		
Ⓣ Spiked Shield (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+19 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.		
⚡ Fell Spikes (standard; usable while wielding a triple-headed flail; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Weapon		
Close burst 1; targets enemies Rathgar can see; +17 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares. Rathgar can mark one of the targets he hits. If after being pushed the target is adjacent to one of Rathgar's allies, that ally can make a basic melee attack against the target as an immediate reaction. On a hit, the ally's basic melee attack deals 3 damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
Battle Hounds (free 1/round; usable when a target marked by Rathgar leaves a square adjacent to him; at-will)		
Rathgar or one of his allies can shift 2 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Primordial	
Skills History +14, Intimidate +15, Insight +12		
Str 22 (+12)	Dex 12 (+7)	Wis 12 (+7)
Con 16 (+9)	Int 16 (+9)	Cha 18 (+10)
Equipment plate armor, spiked shield, triple-headed flail		

Dungeoneering DC 30: The Raging Flame is alive and sentient; it is what remains of a powerful ancient entity called Achazar, who is asleep or magically bound. The Firequench Order isn't trying to destroy the Flame at all; they're seeking to awaken Achazar to rule over all!

KEY INHABITANTS

Tarmalune is a city of energetic entrepreneurs and capable, charismatic traders. The faces and names prominent today might be supplanted swiftly by new ones tomorrow, but a handful of individuals besides the Lord Speaker have remained well known.

Loud at council is **Onster Glarrak**, a fat, unlovely human man, and wealthy energetic investor who knows many things, thinks quickly, and can deliver a telling and forceful comment or argument. Another loud member is the goodly human wizard **Tammess Eldrake**, a champion of the poor and the “honest worker,” who views the doings of the Firequench Order with increasing suspicion, and the deeds and aims of a certain Rathgar Malynd (her onetime lover, who has tried to have her killed at least thrice since they parted) with cold rage.

Behind the blustering at council, much of the opposition to the authority of Lord Speaker Dorn coalesces around the powerful human warrior **Rathgar Malynd**, a “battlemaster” who runs his own mercenary company, the Battle Hounds, providing shop, home, and warehouse guards and personal security (bodyguards) to all paying Tarralune. Malynd is publicly critical of the competence of the Vigilant and the “meddling” of Dorn in what “should be what it achieved greatness through: a truly free city where no one lords it over any other, coin is king, and no one person seeks to be as grand as a dragon.”

Many Tarralune fear Malynd, who is known to be ruthless in dealings with trade rivals, but he gained

favor in the city when he gave a furnished, fortified mansion (with bodyguards and servants trained, paid, and controlled by him) free to the ailing, aging, and poor local healer Halagothra after her rescue from agents of the Empress Dragon a few years ago. (Halagothra's House stands in the center of a city block in Arendermore, not far from Malynd's own fortified mansion of Stormgarde).

Halagothra the Healer is famous human in Tarmalune, and most regard her with affection and awe. A wrinkled, crotchety old woman (formerly a cook and kitchen washing-maid) who can heal by laying on hands, she tries to heal everyone brought to her, and if successful she always demands services—such as rescuing someone—rather than coin for her healings. The source of her healing ability is unknown, even to her, and all Tarmalune will rise in wrath if she's threatened or kidnapped (this has been tried over a dozen times; those responsible have always been swiftly hunted down and slain).

Ildamar Yeskrel is a tall, sardonic, handsome head of an old-money Tarralune human family, who secretly believes Tarmalune should have a nobility—and that he should be the grandest among them, and rule the city. He sponsors the Wyrmjaws secret society (see “City Lore”) and tirelessly seeks to become the largest landlord in Arendermore and Dawnrise, buying at least influence over every building he can. His spies and politely, carefully trained personal trading agents are everywhere in the city, and he's not above manipulating criminals and angry merchants alike to sway the council to do things he wants them to do.

Morlgorn Rionthas is a semiretired human adventurer whose exploits won him wealth. Back in his native Tarmalune for over a decade, he now eloquently champions shopkeepers, struggling laborers, the poor, and “honest nimblehands.” He also seeks to form guilds or foster informal cooperation along less wealthy Tarralune, so as to prevent councilors from becoming nobles, or the wealthy from establishing a tyrannical rule.

CITY WARDS

The districts of Tarmalune are known as “wards” because a century ago each was separately governed by a warden. Today, they are merely neighborhoods, with formal boundaries that aren't visually apparent to the visitor. However, every Tarralune “knows” vividly what each ward is like—in local stereotypes that refuse to fade. (Despite this, almost every sort of citizen, building, and activity can be found in any ward.)

ARENDERMORE

This is the haughtiest city ward, where the “high-cloaks” live. (Tarmalune doesn't have any formal nobles—that is, persons titled and privileged by birth—but it does have old-money wealthy families and newly risen-to-wealth merchants who crave the reputations and fawning treatment Tarralune give to “old wealth.”) This district is named for the long-dead gnome builder Arender, who raised many of its magnificent turreted mansions. The descendants of his workers, who split into bitter rivals after his death, are the most skilled and busiest builders in the city today.

DAWNSIDE

Dawnside is home to trendy, young, newly wealthy (“new-coins”) Tarralune, and those desperately trying to stay young. This fashionable neighborhood is crowded with ostentatiously decorated mansions and ornate coaches, and any building not a mansion is likely to be a club for gambling, feasting, and revelry—where swindlings are frequent but gaiety and reputation-making and breaking is the order of the day. In contrast to Arendermore, where the exteriors of buildings change little but the interiors are transformed, Dawnside is where buildings are smashed down and replaced by newer, gaudier ones constantly.

COPPERSTREETS

This district is the abode of laborers, where most of the city's shops, shopkeepers, and “nimblehands” (craft-workers) live. It's the heart of workaday Tarmalune, where “the tumbling coins that roll us all through life” are made and spent every day. It's not a slum, but everything is patched or salvaged, washing hangs out from balconies, and ornamentation is considered “overly haughty.”

MAERHAVEL

Maerhavel is where most “successful” but not wealthy Tarralune live (such as owners of several shops, and citizens well-enough-off to retire). Many tarn-traders dwell in this ward, and it outwardly changes little. Conservative respectability and “quiet success” is the order of every day.

FISHSTINK

This slum is where the poorest Tarralune dwell, because only those lacking coins enough to afford more expensive lodgings elsewhere will tolerate the reek of rotting fishguts that lingers around the market stalls of the fishmongers who thrive around the outer edges of the ward. Tarralune who aren't “Stinkers” rarely dare to walk deeper into Fishstink; its interior is home to fugitives, misfits, runaways, and the maimed or shunned (those visibly monstrous or “other,” who go about cloaked and cowed) who work in gangs to seize or steal coins and food, or horses and wagons that had can be traded for meals and goods.

WARD BOUNDARIES

Arendermore consists of westernmost Tarmalune, from Tarmkeep to Duth Street, which forms its boundary with Maerhavel. In turn, Maerhavel stretches from Duth Street to the south bank of Imprel's Water (the

northernmost of the two streams entering the east side of the harbor). Fishstink then extends from the north bank of Imprel's Water to Lanternfall Lane and Drovers' Court, north of which lies Copperstreets. That ward extends west around the "Tail" (northeasternmost reach) of the harbor to the Sardarstream (westernmost of the two streams entering the north side of the harbor). Everything west of that, on the north side of the harbor, is Dawnside.

THE TARRALUNE VIEW

Everyone knows how Tarralune are envied and despised by folk of rival Windrise Ports—and even more fiercely by those of the Dusk Ports, who deride each other and everyone else in Abeir. Tarralune are called “those rich vipertongues,” or much worse, by other Abeirans,

However, even Tarralune themselves seldom stop to consider how they regard the rest of the world around them. Yet even unthinkingly, a complicated “Tarralune view” of the Realms exists.

Born and bred citizens of Tarmalune are ambitious individualists. Family wealth, blood ties and friendships, and family-firm trading ties are all tools to be exploited if one has them, but Tarralune believe in individual achievement, and that life is “striving, always striving; there is no winning, only trying to do better, get more, and gain more power every day—more than you had yesterday.”

Tarralune see the usefulness of small, secretive cabals and short-term trade alliances, and in inheritances and “family firms,” but strongly prefer the entrepreneur over the lawkeeper, and the schemer over the bureaucrat.

Guilds have been founded in Tarmalune many times, and they have been smashed or have fallen apart through internal strife or the inducements of opponents just as often.

Tarralune work hard to be shrewd rather than reckless investors and venturers, but they are restless, “let's get at it” folk who love to trade and to outdo mercantile rivals.

This governs how folk of Tarmalune view the rest of Returned Abeir, and the wider Realms beyond. Personal attitudes vary, of course, but in general Tarmalune regard outlanders as described in the “One Resident's View” sidebar (the words are those of one Tarralune trader, Askral Rheen, but they are typical of the city's opinions).

ONE RESIDENT'S VIEW

Folk of the Sword Lands and the Windrise Ports are essentially kin. They share similar values, so a Tarralune can readily understand them and ally with them. They're not as good at trade or as sophisticated as Tarralune, of course, but they're decent folk.

Those of the Dusk Ports, however, are dangerous. “Tainted in the head,” even. Oh, they can trade with them, and even make coin thereby—but never turn your back on one for the blink of an eye, or it's a knife in the back. Pirates trying to hide behind smiles—that's what they are.

Eskornar, now, are backcountry louts, little better than hunters in a wilderness. Eskorn's more a forest with game trails than a real realm. One could say its folk aren't much more than snarling bears with swords. Yet Eskorn is just the sort of land a shrewd Tarralune can make coin in, and the simple Eskornar are dealt with easily enough; see to their wants and they'll settle down content long enough for the timber and furs and monster carcasses to be brought out.

Relmaur's like Eskorn, but with mountains, moors, and cold instead of forests. Marauding monsters, orcs, dragonborn and prospecting dwarves everywhere, all of them wanting you urgently dead. A good place to steer clear of until they tame it a bit and the dwarves get to squabbling among themselves. Then pick the winning side, bring out the ore-bars and gems, and one's purse will burst! Heh; easier said than made truth, as they say.

Skelkor, now, is pure poison. Stay away! There's no coin to be had out of the Empress Dragon and her slaves—nothing but grief. Even attracting her attention is a fool's act; she reached out a claw to seize Halagothra! She hires more agents than Tarralune do, or even the smugglers of the Dusk Ports, so any smiling lass one meets might be one of her talons! No sane, decent trader, no matter what the lure, will have anything to do with that dark land.

Melabrauth, most say, is little better than Skelkor—just a different dragon, jungles, and overgrown ruins instead of slaves everywhere and dragons flying over one keeping watch. Yet the daring traders of Tarmalune are exploring it right now, seeking herbs and the like they can bring back to Tarmalune to get rich. Some even worship dragon scales and the like, brought out of Melabrauth, hoping to live forever or become as mighty as dragons. One might wonder and stand undecided, yet feel the lure; this could be the next big rush of riches for all Tarmalune! Or it could just be messy deaths for a lot of Tarralune.

Fimbrul; is that even a realm at all? Frigid mountains, avalanches of snow, no roads, and hungry giants eating any trader fool enough to go there. Oh, one hears of gems as big as mens' heads and more iron than the rest of the world holds, but those're just tales. Stay away until dwarves are crowing about their mines, then wait for the dwarves to feud, as with Relmaur.

Gontal, now, is the back pouch secret—the place to make coins when the easier riches to be had in the Sword Lands and Eskorn are all gone. They hate the Dusk Port pirates, so be the safer, smiling alternative, and your purse'll thank you for it! Oh, they have their little secrets, and bear watching, but it's clear trading for now!

So now to the lands across the Great Sea—Evermeet, and Faerûn beyond. Here's where the bolder Tarralune traders step apart from the shopkeepers and drudges, who trade all sorts of wild tales about the fabled Realms Across the Sea, but know little truth, and dare few coins if any, even when a ship captain offers them only a twelfth-share, or less, in a voyage. They might have heard what's said next, but are certain of not one word of it.

So, hearken. Evermeet's all elves and forest, and best avoided; they don't want anything from us but for us to steer well clear, and really don't want to yield up any timber. If one doesn't want to end up wearing more arrows than one can count, or swallowing strange slaying magic one has no defense against, sail on to Faerûn.

Some say that continent can't be larger than that of Tarmalune's, but it is, with coins and trade enough to make this one look small—until one wades right into it and swallows deals, traders, and the lot, and starts getting fat! The near shore is what they call the Sword Coast, and it's not worth sailing north beyond Waterdeep, which can remind one of Tarmalune but with more folk and with sneering, strutting lords. Overcrowded, decadent, and full of guilds and nobles and rabble all hungry to be at one another's throats. Ripe for the plucking!

Then, sailing south, there's Baldur's Gate and Athkatla, very much the same. Big ports and getting bigger, with coins beyond counting and complacent highnoses sitting atop the heaps not knowing how weak they're becoming and how soon they'll fall. Like granaries with the doors left wide open, just waiting to be plundered!

Rich lands lie south along the coast from them, too, but pass Calimshan by; it's hot desert ruled by genasi slavers who'll happily enslave just about anyone. Why pay or trade when one can take?

Yet that still leaves Tethyr, then a great bay they call the Shining Sea, with independent ports all around it called the Tashalar, and a trading isle, Tharsult, right in the middle. Shrewd traders there, mind. A good place to shun until more is learned, or one could find one's purses empty.

Oh, and there's Chult, this great wild jungle no one rules, endless plants and monsters and timber just sitting there for the taking!

PLOTS AND ADVENTURE SITES

Black Silk Traders: The last of these infamous smugglers died fighting the Vigilant years ago, but their largest cache of coins, gold bars, and silks was never found. Constant rumors abound about just where in (or under) the city it might be, and rival treasure-seeking gangs have fought at least two deadly battles in the storage cellars under Haven Towers. Recent tales by servants of dead old-money recluses locate the cache in the walls of a grand Arendermore mansion—and gangs have begun invading mansions to seek it.

Skelmur the Stalker: One of the most fearsome ghost stories of Tarmalune is the tale of the murdered pirate Skelmur, said to still roam the city as a pair of floating eyes. This murderous spirit does nothing but spy on clear nights, selecting victims—but in fog he materializes, and his victims are found drowned, often times far from any water. Witnesses claim to have seen only the old pirates gnarled hands clutching the victim for a moment, then the victim continues to choke and sputter on water. He has slain dozens recently, and whispers are rising that it's because his treasure has been found and taken. If his bones and treasure are brought together and reburied, the rumors run, he will rest and the slayings end. Or is this all a cover for a gang out to murder everyone who crosses it? Then again, it could be both. Perhaps someone is controlling the old ghost.

Narla's Vengeful Ladies: For years wealthy and haughty Tarmalune females have had their nastiest secrets told all over the city by this mysterious group (thought to be disgusted servants working with a wizard calling herself Narla, who uses spells to whisper messages into the back corners of many taverns). Now it seems someone is hunting Narla, because amid the gossip have been coded messages for members of a criminal gang, the Harbordark, who now



Skelmur the Stalker		Level 8 Elite Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)		XP 700
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +8; darkvision	
HP 99; Bloodied 49		
AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 20, Will 21		
Immune disease, poison; Resist insubstantial		
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing		
Ⓢ Spirit Touch (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic		
+12 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 3 necrotic damage.		
Ⓢ Skelmur's Eyes (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Fear, Gaze, Psychic		
Ranged 5; +12 vs. Will; 1d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Skelmur's next turn. This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.		
M Drowning Hands (standard; requires combat advantage against the target; recharges after Skelmur uses dematerialize; sustain minor) ♦ Necrotic		
+12 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 5 damage, ongoing 5 damage (save ends), and the target is dazed until the end of Skelmur's next turn. <i>Sustain Minor:</i> Skelmur can only sustain the effect on a target he hit with the above attack or following attack during his last turn. When he sustains the power, he repeats the attack on the target, dealing 5 damage (10 to an immobilized target).		
Dematerialize (standard; at-will)		
Skelmur reduces himself to a set of floating eyes, and he shifts 2 squares. He can make a Stealth check to hide if he has any sort of cover or concealment.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common	
Skills History +9, Stealth +13		
Str 14 (+6)	Dex 18 (+8)	Wis 8 (+3)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 20 (+9)

believe she has betrayed them to a rival group, the Drowned Ones, who are in turn hunting members of the Harbordark. Both gangs meet masked, since their membership is secret—but the murders are climbing higher and higher among the wealthy and prominent of Arendermore and Dawnside.

The Harbor Curse: A “taint” passes from person to person in Tarralune by direct touch, and it causes a bone to grow out of the forearm of an afflicted person

in the shape of a fishhook. This “marks” them as one who will lead “true Tarralune” to “cast out the coin-grasping outlander scum,” and they begin to hear voices of the dead whispering commands to them. Which is when the Vigilant start hunting them, to imprison them before certain Tarralune old-family “believers” start to gather to the Afflicted, obey them, and urge them to lead an uprising. The curse seldom affects more than one person at a time, but an Afflicted arises every two or three years.

The Sunsails Pact: For years Copperstreets shopkeepers imported wares at low prices, adorned them, then resold them in the city for higher amounts, doing well on the spread, because they belonged to the Sunsails Pact. This buying collective of ship captains and investors used their collective clout (promises of large orders) to obtain pots, mongery, and cloth in outland ports for low prices. Even Tarralune outside the Pact benefited from Sunsails deals that dragged down prices. Now the Pact has been shattered in a bitter power struggle, with the butcher Morlund Kalguth leading members into a new group who will vote on all decisions, renouncing the authoritarian longtime Pact leaders, the traveling traders Berrek Wyvernmere and Josztar Gallowstern. Accusations of treaty and contract thefts, funds seized at swordpoint, and double-dealing are flying back and forth, with many in the Fair New Pact accusing Wyvernmere and Gallowstern of secretly raking off “coins beyond counting” over the years. Knifings and at least one tavern brawl have come out of the split, and a Kalguth-owned rental house burned recently under mysterious circumstances that have the kin of those killed in the fire seeking vengeance and demanding a “full Vigilant hue and cry” after Wyvernmere and Gallowstern. The first of those men had disappeared, and Gallowstern has accused the Fair New Pact of murdering him, but Tarralune traders doing deals in other Windrise Ports claim to have met him there, trying to hire “adventurers formidable in a fray.” Talk across Tarralune is starting to take sides, fear and anger is rising,

and there are rumors of various councilors secretly being members of both Pacts.

Belsturk's Hope: A Tarralune-built, nearly new ship has apparently sunk in the harbor, silently at its moorings without anyone seeing it go down and without any of its crew escaping. It was fully loaded with a rich new cargo, and the owner, wealthy trader Glustan Belsturk, is enraged and trying to hire divers and wizards to help him search the harbor muck for his ship—even as suspicious city investors accuse him of scuttling the ship or concocting this tale “out of whole lying tongue.” *Someone* has been diving in the harbor, but only when fog is thick, and ferry folk even report hearing the clash of swords and cries of battle out on the waters!

Mhorauk's Mask: For months Councilor Tarlask Mhorauk has been acting strangely, murmuring nonsense and behaving as if he was elsewhere and seeing things not present. Now two councilors claim to have seen tentacles emerge from his mouth to strangle a would-be thief who accosted Mhorauk in a Dawnside alley late at night. Mhorauk has fiercely denied their tale—but has done so by a letter delivered to the Lord Speaker by a hired street youth, and he appears to have disappeared. His mansion is shuttered, but the Vigilant forced entry and discovered only terrified servants who claim not to have seen their master in recent days. Rumors are spreading about what sort of monster Mhorauk has become . . . or is he the victim of a hostile short-lived spell? Worse, has the councilor been this unknown creature all along?

Gasker Haerocloak: For some time rumors have stated that Gasker Haerocloak is a wizard to be avoided; those who cross him sicken and die. Now a servant who fled his employ (and then the city) has spread a tale that Haerocloak can by touch and spell cause the life-force of persons to be slowly drained away by magic he works later, if he desires it. It is true that rivals who feuded with Haerocloak have wasted away to their deaths. When the Vigilant sought to question him about this story, his landlady said he

had departed his lodgings to join the Firequench Order—but the Order has denied he is a member, despite witnesses claiming to have seen him entering and departing their citadel. Now three of the four Vigilants who are seeking him have fallen ill, two of them too weak to rise from their beds, and the fourth has gone to the Lord Speaker, who is said to be trying to hire those not of the Order to protect the Vigilant officer and to “get to the bottom of this.”

The Sewers: “Everyone knows” that sea water regularly rushes up the sewers of Tarmalune when storms drive ashore or tides rise, then flows back out again, somewhat cleansing them and make it impossible to have deep cellars—or any sort of under-

ground passages at all—in most of the city that will stay dry; such spaces are flooded daily. Yet now tales are rounding the taverns of “a thing of magic, a rod or scepter” that hurls back water and keeps it away. It sickens and repels humans who tarry near it for too long, since it works on the water within them, but wherever it is placed, that chamber or tunnel is kept dry. It’s said that smugglers are using this magic to store contraband where no one will think to seek it, and to tunnel to the walls of the mansions of the rich so as to breach those walls and steal.

Dragon Cults: Despite the grand words of Rathgar Malynd (that the ideal city is one where “no one person seeks to be as grand as a dragon”), there is

strong evidence that Tarmalune desire just that: to achieve the grandeur of dragons.

The city has dragon cults, and even an open “dragon trade.” Some dragonborn crave the ready food and abundant magic of their old slave existences, and they seek to get it, “by raid or by trade,” from the halflings and humans who are now the dragons’ slaves. Other humans also seek the magic (and sophisticated tools) of the dragons’ slaves in Skelkor, and they trade energetically with traders who have covert contact with the slave-towns of that empire.

THE FUTURE

The balance of power in Tarmalune rests on the life of one man; when the Lord Speaker dies, the manner of his passing and the nature of any power struggle that ensues will do much to shape the future of this rich, fast-growing city.

Tarmalune are ambitious and energetic, living for the dream of achieving great wealth. They “live hard,” delighting in revelry and daring, and the shops of Tarmalune sell all manner of wares.

Tarmalune Great Port is growing more crowded and wealthy by the day, despite steadily increasing prices. “One can buy anything in Tarmalune,” and folk do, daily. This makes it attractive to dragons and other wealth-seeking creatures of all sorts, including the merchants of not-so-distant Faerûn. They are converging, and the battle to possess that wealth and wield that power is just beginning.

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and even romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is still happiest churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. There are still a few rooms in his house with space left to pile up papers in . . .

DRAGON WORSHIP

A few Abeiran humans and dragonborn form secretive (and frowned-upon by most humans and dragonborn) cults that worship dragons. Tarmalune is home to one of the oldest, largest, and wealthiest of these cults, the Seekers of Scales.

Members include the human herbalist and alchemist **Mokaer Morntarn**, the raven-haired, strikingly handsome proprietor of Morntarn’s Miracles on Duth Street, and the tiefling **Anratha Harrowstorm**, the softly smiling, sinister owner and keeper of Harrowstorm Fine Gowns on Winterwood Way.

These cults seek to uncover the secrets of how to become dragons, and so ascend to power and eventually, following the Dreaming belief of dragons (which the cultists know about), achieve “oneness with” (a place among) the gods.

They seek to learn how to do this by using herbs (drugs) widely sold for other purposes. Cultists believe these substances temporarily allow a chewer or imbiber to “tune in” to the thoughts of a nearby dragon (a random wyrm, unless proximity selects only one) to learn secrets and therefore achieve power or

at least learn where dragon hoards are located.

Other Tarmalune dragon worship cults include the Followers of Wyrms Wisdom and the Doomhoods.

The Followers are a fledgling, blundering society of ambitious shopkeepers, who hope to work magic with dragon blood they’ve acquired, but who have nothing to proceed with but a few fragments of long-ago wizards’ work notes; they’re seeking a living wizard willing to work with them. Word can be left for them in Copperstreets taverns.

The Doomhoods are rich, aging merchants who believe dragon’s blood can give them youth and vigor. They pay well, and are hiring adventuring bands to hunt and fight dragons and bring them back wyrm blood and the hearts and brains of dragons. They work entirely through layers of go-betweens, protecting their identities carefully, but appear to be based in Arendermore.

Elsewhere in Abeir, other dragon worship cults have recently sprung up, such as the Hoods of Flame, in Sambral, and the Dreamers of Mreyelundur.