



SAREVOK WAS THE BHAALSPAWN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE IRON CRISIS.
HE SOUGHT TO INSTIGATE A WAR BETWEEN BALDUR'S GATE AND AMN.

Toril is a land of magic, adventure, and mystery. The planet is home to many sapient races, including humans, elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings. It also boasts an astounding variety of magical creatures, including some truly alien aberrations, such as the friendly flumphs and the malevolent beholders.

Below the surface of this world, which in many ways resembles our own, lies a vast complex of subterranean caverns. In this Underdark are the cities of the drow, duergar, and svirfneblin, as well as those of illithids, kuo-toa, and creatures even more bizarre.

Like Earth, Toril is the third of eight worlds orbiting a yellow sun, sometimes called Sol, with a single moon called Selûne. This solar system, known as Realspace (or the “Sea of Night” to inhabitants of Toril), floats inside an enormous crystal sphere. Many such spheres exist throughout this universe, but Realspace is believed to be among the oldest. Phlogiston, the primordial matter used to shape the multiverse, still permeates the roiling expanse between crystal spheres.

The gods are an active, everyday part of life on Toril. While some are mysterious and distant, others directly shape the lives of mortals and regularly grant magical abilities to their followers. The spellcasting abilities wielded by the faithful are collectively referred to as divine magic. By contrast, wizards (and other spellcasters who do not borrow their power from a deity) cast spells by drawing energy from a source of raw magic called the Weave.

Each god has a “portfolio” of concepts, creatures, and other things over which they have dominion. Many gods have overlapping portfolios, which usually results in some form of strong relationship, whether it be an amicable alliance or a bitter rivalry. All gods answer to Lord Ao, the Overgod and supreme power of the Realms.

The years in Faerûn are largely marked by Dalereckoning, or “DR.” The Dalereckoning calendar began with the erection of the Standing Stone, a symbol of peace and cooperation between the Cormanthyr elves and the humans of the Dalelands in north Faerûn. The adventure described by this book takes place between 1368 and 1369 DR.

FAERÛN

As one of the largest landmasses on Toril, Faerûn is home to a diverse array of lands, cultures, and climates. This makes it a convenient primary setting for stories set within the Forgotten Realms.

Humans are the dominant and most populous sapient species across Faerûn, with most of their nations having adopted a feudal system. These nations range from mighty empires, such as Calimshan, to smaller city-states, such as Baldur’s Gate. Faerûn largely consists of cosmopolitan cities along the coasts surrounded by stretches of forests and farmland. Great swaths of untamed wilderness remain across the continent.

One of Faerûn’s defining aspects is its many inland seas, most of which are connected by a vast network of waterways, which snake across the continent. These channels aid travel between the western and eastern sections of Faerûn. The most significant of these inland seas is the Sea of Fallen Stars, which is located

near the center of the continent and has shores bordering dozens of prominent nations. The Moonsea in north Faerûn, though smaller, is home to the key city-states of Hillsfar, Mulmaster, and Zhentil Keep. Other prominent nations in interior Faerûn include Cormyr, Chondath, Sembia, and the many city-states of the Shining Plains.

Northwest Faerûn, which is often called “the North,” is generally thought to be a savage land of icy wilderness. Despite its reputation, the North is home to two of Faerûn’s most important cosmopolitan cities: Neverwinter (also known as the City of Skilled Hands, or the Jewel of the North) and Waterdeep (called the City of Splendors, or the Crown of the North). By contrast, Icewind Dale at the arctic northernmost end of the Sword Coast more typifies the North’s infamous reputation, surrounded as it is by frozen wastelands. Likewise, the immense High Forest is a wild and perilous region where elves far outnumber the mere handful of human residents.

In central Faerûn, the rolling hills and verdant forests of the Dalelands comprise more than a dozen small countries, which are known as dales. Consisting mostly of farmlands, the Dalelands represent an important crossroads for trade, despite their reputation as a hopeless backwater. Notably, Shadowdale is the famous home of the legendary archmage Elminster Aumar. Central Faerûn is also the location of the Anauroch, the Great Sand Sea. The Anauroch is a vast desert and the former location of the ancient Netherese Empire.

Northeast Faerûn is dominated by great stretches of icy desolation. The Hordelands, also known as the Endless Wastes, exemplifies this region and is largely populated by nomadic peoples. However, the northeast is also home to powerful nations, such as Damara and the magocracy of Rashemen. Rashemen directly borders its bitterest enemy: Thay, a rival magocracy ruled by the infamous Red Wizards. Also in the east is a long stretch of dense forest known as the Chondalwood, wherein dwell many fey creatures and savage druids.

South Faerûn largely consists of tropical jungles and a vast desert. At this point in Faerûnian history, Chult is not yet an island continent but rather part of an expansive peninsula. Mezro, Chult’s largest and most populous city, recently revealed itself again to the outside world by lowering its magical defenses in 1363 DR. The magocracy of Halruaa, which represents the last vestiges of the Netherese, rests at the continent’s southern tip.

RECENT HISTORY

This adventure is set during the early years of the Era of Upheaval, more than 100 years before the current age of Faerûn. In the year 1368 DR, deities and mortals alike continue to adjust to the major changes brought on during the so-called “Time of Troubles,” a tumultuous event that marked the beginning of the Era of Upheaval a decade ago.

Also called the Godswar and the Avatar Crisis, the Time of Troubles began and ended in 1358 DR, the Year of Shadows. Its catalyst was when Bane, the god of tyranny, and Myrkul, the god of the dead, stole the Tablets of Fate from Lord Ao with the goal of rewriting reality. Enraged at what he considered the culmination

of centuries of shirked godly duties, Ao then stripped the gods of their immortality and forced them from their realms to walk Toril. There, they were tasked to search for and return the Tablets to their proper place. Lord Ao also decreed that any god who perished during their time on Toril would not be resurrected. Although they were now vulnerable to death, these so-called “avatars” of the gods still possessed immense powers, and the impact of their deeds were felt across Faerûn.

The Avatar Crisis instigated the deaths of many major Faerûnian gods and overturned the cosmology of the Realms. Certain ambitious mortals seized the opportunity to steal divine power from the avatars, taking their place in the pantheon as new gods. Bane and Myrkul paid for their crimes as two of the many casualties of the Godswar. Their costly gambit proved their downfall, as the Tablets of Fate gave them no power with which to challenge the dominion of Ao.

Although the demigod Torm died fighting Bane, Lord Ao later resurrected him as a lesser deity. He made this exception because Torm had died in service to his portfolio of duty and loyalty, a shining exemplar of what Ao believed a god should be—and one standing in stark contrast to the negligent, power-hungry behavior for which he had banished the gods.

The sole exception to the gods’ exile was Helm, the god of protection. Instead of stripping him of his divinity, Lord Ao charged Helm with guarding the Celestial Stairway and preventing the other gods from returning to their respective divine realms without the Tablets in tow. Over the course of fulfilling these duties, Helm slew Mystra, the goddess of magic, after she attempted to force her way past him. This act caused a rift between Helm and many other gods, as well as a decline in his worship among mortals.

A number of seers had prophesized the events of the Time of Troubles, either as a whole or in part. The most notable of these was Alaundo the Wise in the first century DR, whose as yet unfulfilled prophesies are continuously chanted in his old home of Candlekeep. Though often vague, these forewarnings spurred some gods into enacting plans that they hoped would preserve their powers and cheat death. To this end, Bhaal, the god of murder, chose to sire countless mortal children in the years leading up to the Avatar Crisis. With a mote of his divine essence in each of these Bhaalspawn, Bhaal hoped to return from death and reclaim his godhood. In the end, the Lord of Murder was slain by the psychopathic mercenary Cyric, who achieved apotheosis, assuming the portfolios of both Bane and Bhaal.

During the Time of Troubles, divine magic mostly vanished. Meanwhile, arcane magic grew wild and unpredictable, as Mystra no longer tended to the Weave. Although she eventually returned, wild and dead magic zones—areas on Toril where magic is erratic or fails to work altogether—still persist a decade later in places where the Weave was damaged or torn apart.

Although the Tablets of Fate were recovered, Lord Ao ultimately made the decision to destroy these artifacts, starting the Era of Upheaval in earnest. Rather than containing the Overgod’s power, as Bane and Myrkul

had believed, the Tablets instead maintained balance within the universe. Through them, Ao had set universal laws and inscribed in them the names and portfolios of all deities. The Tablets’ destruction signaled major changes to both divine and mortal Realms.

The continent of Faerûn, rarely a peaceful land to begin with, has seen increased political conflict and strife over the last decade. The reshuffling of the Faerûnian pantheon resulted in increased factionalism and many bloody wars.

Despite the destruction wrought by the Godswar and the conflicts that followed, the human civilizations of Faerûn have greatly expanded in the time since. In 1361 DR, Amnian explorers made contact with the previously legendary continent of Maztica. Both Amn and a handful of others have since cultivated trade with Maztica, maintaining various port cities along its coast. Such developments have led to a dramatic increase in wealth among the mercantile powers in west Faerûn, particularly the nation of Amn and its main rival, the city-state of Baldur’s Gate.

THE SWORD COAST

The Sword Coast is named for its many dangers, although some have speculated that the moniker derives from the jagged white cliffs that rise along its coastline. It runs along the western shore of Faerûn where the continent meets the Sea of Swords. The Sword Coast is comprised of a wilderness that stretches between the great city of Waterdeep in the north and the nation of Amn in the south. Further inland, the Sword Coast overlaps with the Western Heartlands, and the two regions are often referred to interchangeably.

Although the average Faerûnian still thinks of this region as being the “Empty Lands,” Baldur’s Gate has seen a recent rise in prosperity that is slowly changing this view. Being by far the biggest and most successful city along the Sword Coast, Baldur’s Gate stands as a beacon of civilization and safety from the dangerous wilds. The city has been built up around the port of Gray Harbor, fed by the River Chionthar, which flows from the Far Hills and empties into the Sea of Swords.

LOCATIONS ON THE SWORD COAST

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| 1. Baldur’s Gate | 18. Lighthouse |
| 2. Bear River | 19. Lower Chionthar Village |
| 3. Beregost | 20. Mutamin’s Garden |
| 4. Candlekeep | 21. Nashkell |
| 5. Cloakwood | 22. Nashkell Mines |
| 6. Cloudpeak Mountains | 23. River, Chionthar |
| 7. Druid Standing Stones | 24. Road, Trade Way |
| 8. Dryad Falls | 25. Road, Coast Way |
| 9. Durlag’s Tower | 26. Road, Lion’s Way |
| 10. Firewine Bridge | 27. Shipwreck Coast |
| 11. Friendly Arm Inn | 28. Song of the Morning Temple |
| 12. Gnoll Stronghold | 29. Upper Chionthar Village |
| 13. Great Lodge | 30. Wood of Sharp Teeth |
| 14. Great Shadow Tree | 31. Wyvern Hills |
| 15. Gullykin | 32. Wyrms’ Crossing Bridge |
| 16. High Hedge | |
| 17. Iron Throne Mines | |

The Sword Coast





Despite the growth of civilization in the area, myriad dangers remain and continue to dissuade expansion outside of existing strongholds. However, the same dangers that cause most Faerûnians to avoid the Sword Coast have also made it the setting for many grand adventures, including the one that unfolds within this book. Orcs, trolls, goblins, hobgoblins, ogres, kobolds, and gibberlings frequently attack travelers and those who wander off the main roads. The more intelligent and industrious of these monsters occasionally grow bold enough to raid smaller settlements directly. The region's many thick forests, such as the Cloakwood, are ideal hiding spots for humanoid camps and fell creatures. Likewise, the abundant game makes the area an attractive option for outcasts and fugitives looking to live off the land.

The dense Cloakwood Forest rises just south of where the Chionthar meets the Trackless Sea. At its western edge is one of the few sections of shoreline on the Sword Coast without treacherous cliffs—a tempting place for unwary sailors to put ashore. Wandering inland here has spelled doom for many, as the Cloakwood is home to numerous dangers. Malevolent fey creatures and monstrous spiders alike prey upon any brave—or foolish—enough to enter the forest. Hunters should be especially wary, as a Shadow Druid enclave operates within this forest. These militant protectors of nature believe that civilization is a blight that must be eradicated, and they violently rebuke anyone who encroaches into their domain. Unbeknownst to all but a select few, a rich deposit of iron ore hides beneath the Cloakwood. The Iron Throne has recently constructed a secret mine to exploit this resource.

Despite the Sword Coast's many dangers, brave men and women have set out over the years to claim

some part of this wilderness as their own, with middling success and frequent failures. The area is dotted with a number of towns and small settlements, such as Beregost, Nashkel, Candlekeep, and the Friendly Arm Inn, as well as many ruins of varying antiquity.

The lengthy Coast Way trade road runs north and south slightly inland from the Sword Coast, connecting Amn to Baldur's Gate. The respectably sized town of Beregost sits between Amn and Baldur's Gate along the Coast Way, where it serves as a popular rest stop for merchant caravans. Beregost is renowned in the region for its many inns and shops, offering travelers a surprisingly luxurious respite from the road.

The ancient fortress library of Candlekeep has stood near the coast for thousands of years. There, it is maintained by an order of monks dedicated to preserving knowledge within Faerûn. Candlekeep's most famous resident in ages past was Alaundo the Seer. He is now venerated there, and the Candlekeep monks continuously chant his yet unfulfilled prophecies.

RECENT HISTORY

Over the past few years, tensions have mounted between Baldur's Gate and its neighbor to the south, the nation of Amn. Although the two have historically been rivals in trade, the stresses of recent developments nearly led to open war. Prime among these developments was the major iron shortage along the Sword Coast, which was referred to as the Iron Crisis. This crisis came about due to the machinations of the organization known as the Iron Throne.

The Iron Throne is a merchant organization that rapidly rose to prominence across Faerûn some years ago. Greed motivated the Iron Throne in their orchestration