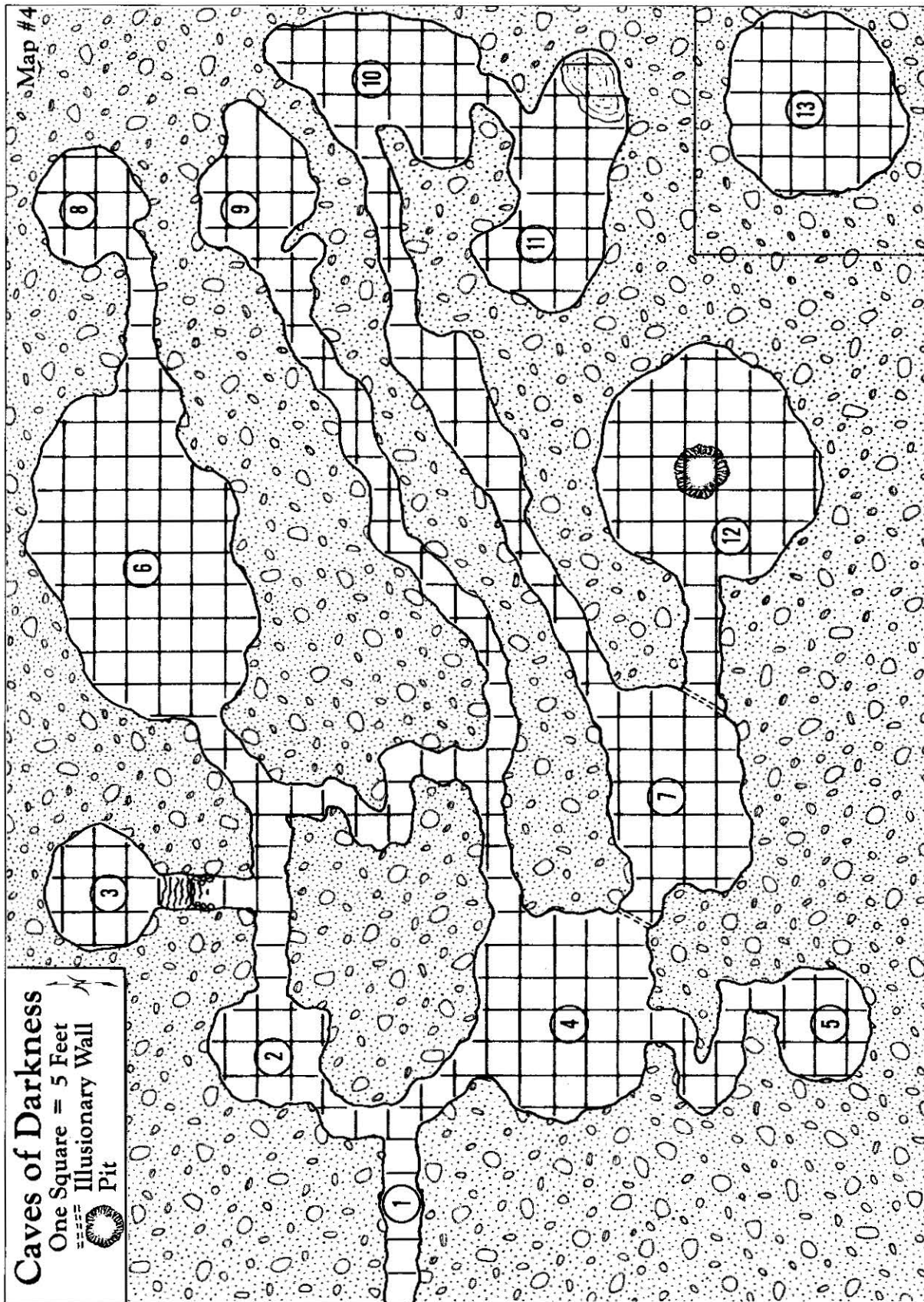


Caves of Darkness

One Square = 5 Feet

Illusionary Wall

Pit





mal, teeming with life, and healthy.

Despite the reduction in light, the walk is a pleasant one. The trail is not easily marked, but it is simple for an experienced group such as yourselves to find. Unfortunately, the trail is rather narrow, forcing your group to march in single file.

A successful Tracking Proficiency Check reveals the faded trail that winds its way through these woods. The trail branches off to the coastal cities of Walmish and Wayfold, but Alleran kept going through the Darkwoods.

Unfortunately, the trail does pass through the hunting range of a rather gruesome denizen of darkness. Alleran, traveling alone, was able to avoid the threat. The PCs may not be so lucky.

For the rest of the woods, DMs should roll for the chance of a random encounter for each four-hour period that the PCs are in the Darkwoods.

THE DARKNESS IN THE DARKWOODS

After the PCs pass the turnoff to Walmish, a voice begins to slowly manifest in everyone's head. It happens first to Tika, then Caramon, then Raistlin (if the latter two are in the party). The voice says the following:

"The one you seek lies within the caverns east of the path. His life is threatened. If you wish to see him alive, come with all due haste and be ready for battle! Hurry, heroes, if heroes you be!"

This of course is a lie. Alleran is not in the caves. But there is a horrendous entity, a foul offspring of Takhisis herself, which since the Dark Queen's defeat has taken to these caves. For the last six months, it has set up quite a nice arrangement for itself, luring any passersby to their destruction.

MAP 4: THE CAVES OF DARKNESS

1. The Entrance

The terrain in this part of the Darkwoods is hilly. The voice in your head gets stronger as you walk toward one particular rise. You see no evidence of an entrance.

The five-foot-high cave mouth is obscured by vegetation. A tracking proficiency check reveals numerous footprints, including many human and non-human tracks. If a PC's tracking proficiency is more than 6 greater than the roll, the PC notices that the non-human tracks go in and out, but the human tracks only go in. The human tracks are of various sizes, indicating different humanoid races, such as elves, dwarves, kender, and humans.

2. Illusion Chamber

This cavern is lit by numerous phosphorescent lichens on the rugged walls. Within the chamber, a group of six skeletal figures dressed in dragon armor turn to face you. You can hear the squeals of their rusted armor as the figures move. The skeletons pull out fiery swords and charge, saying:

"So, the Heroes of the Lance are come! We have waited long for you, to take our revenge! Prepare to die!"

The figures are illusions, spectral forces to be exact. They do not cast shadows in the chamber, a dead giveaway of their false nature. If the PCs wish to disbelieve the illusion (DMs should not prompt them to do so, let them figure it out on their own), the disbelievers get to roll a saving throw vs. spell. Success indicates that the illusion is dispelled (but only for those who successfully save).

If the PC who saves successfully informs the others of the illusion's presence, the others gain a +4 bonus to their attempts at disbelief. Note that each attempt takes one round.

The illusions have Armor Class 0 and THAC0 10. Their fiery swords appear to cause 2d4+1 points of damage. When a victim reaches 0 hit points, he collapses into unconsciousness and makes a system shock roll. Failure means that the PC dies. Success brings the PC to consciousness in 1d3 turns with all damage "healed," but with an enormous headache and mocking laughter echoing in his ears.

If all of the PCs are rendered unconscious, the hobgoblins from area 5 retrieve the bodies, strip them of all gear, then toss them into the prison pit in chamber nine.



3. Side Chamber

The tunnel turns into a series of descending steps, littered with stone fragments and shavings. At the foot of the stairs, a chamber opens up, its floor apparently covered with numerous bones.

The stairs leading down to this chamber appear to have been carved in the last few months. The chamber is filled with the discarded skeletal remains of kender, elves, dwarves, and humans. There is nothing of value here.

4. Chamber of the Balances

This large chamber is dominated by its sole contents: a ten-foot-high set of balance scales made of wood. The balances' central support shaft is bent askew, rendering the balances useless for honest measuring.

Malfesus had its slaves create this thing as a tribute to its father, Hiddukel.

A successful religion proficiency check identifies the broken scales as the preferred symbol of Hiddukel.

Any valuable item placed in either balance dish vanishes forever, an offering to Hiddukel. The balances have Armor Class -5 and require 50 points of damage to destroy. Attempts at destroying the scales cause a terrible racket, bringing the occupants of area 5 into the fray.

The southeastern passage is obscured by an illusory wall.

5. Hobgoblin Lair

A troop of 24 extra large hobgoblins, willing followers of Hiddukel, are here as guards of the broken scales.

These hobgoblins are also the chief errand runners/working staff of the creature that dwells here.

Their lair contains little more than their bedrolls and a single lantern with two flasks of oil and a tinderbox.





Hobgoblins (24): AC 5; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 18; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); 1d8 (spear); AL LE; ML 20; XP 65

Each hobgoblin is armed with a long sword and a spear and carries a purse with 1d4 sp. They fight with a religious mania and keep screaming "Usk-Do!" (the hobgoblin name for Hiddukel). Because of their mission to protect the scales, the hobgoblins' morale is fanatic.

6. Trophy Room

This room appears to be a waste disposal area, as its sandy floor is dotted with broken items.

This is where the inhabitants of the cave keep mementos of past victims. Rather than displaying them neatly, however, the relics are simply cast about like so much refuse on the sandy cavern floor. The PCs must enter the room and get closer to the objects in order to ascertain what they once were.

Among the relics are two hoopaks snapped in half, a battle-scarred suit of plate mail decorated with a crown (it is a suit of armor belonging to a Knight of Solamnia), a broken elven longbow, a *medallion of faith* formerly owned by a cleric of Habbakuk, a shattered long sword, and the remains of a spell book, with the spells *remove curse*, *item*, *phantom steed*, *fumble*, *clairvoyance*, and *cloudkill* still readable on its pages.

7. Kapak Draconian Chamber

This chamber is a guard station for a group of draconians that are under the thrall of Malfesus. Their orders are to fight to the death to defend Malfesus's chamber.

The southeastern passage is hidden by an illusionary wall.

Kapaks (8): AC 4; MV 6, GI 18; HD 3+3; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d4 (bite); SA bite requires saving throw vs. poison or victim is paralyzed for 2d6 turns; SD when slain, the body dissolves into a pool of acid ten feet in diameter, causing 1d8 points of damage per round to all within it; MR 20%; AL LE; ML 20 (they are being controlled); XP 650

8. Chamber of Deceit

This small cave is currently empty, but another passageway lies on the other side.

The far wall's passageway is an illusion, intended to lure intruders into the chamber. Once inside, the room begins to swirl around and a haze descends over the PCs' eyes. Each PC must roll a saving throw vs. spell with a -4 penalty.

Anyone who fails his saving throw sees the mist fade away. Instead of his comrades, the PC sees Kapak draconians, in numbers equal to those of the PC's comrades. The draconians appear to be making menacing gestures, as if they intend to attack. There is no sign of the PC's comrades.

Anyone who fails the saving throw can try to disbelieve this illusion (once again, only if he declares that he intends to do so—the DM should not prompt him). Disbelief attempts are with a -4 penalty to the saving throw vs. spell.

PCs who pass their initial saving throw are merely dazed and unable to act for 1d3 rounds.

9. The Prison Pit

The stench of rotting plants greets you as you walk into this area. The cave floor is sandy. The only other remarkable feature of this chamber is a large pit located in the center of the floor.

This chamber consists only of a pit 6 feet wide and 60 feet deep. The bottom is covered in rotting plant matter, meant to break the fall of any unfortunate who winds up inside here.

This is where all unconscious victims, minus their possessions, are deposited. As a rule of thumb, one hobgoblin guard is stationed here for every prisoner in the pit.

The walls are slimy; thus climbing attempts receive a -40% penalty. Climbing movement rate is $\frac{1}{4}$ the normal rate.

There are no prisoners in the pit.

10. Kapak lair

This large chamber, lit by several old lanterns, is where the Kapak draconians sleep and eat. The air stinks of draconian waste as well as rotting food.

A dozen Kapaks are always present here. These are in addition to the guards in chamber 7.

There is nothing of value in this room.

Kapaks (12): AC 4; MV 6, GI 18; HD 3+3; hp 24; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d4 (bite); SA bite requires saving throw vs. poison or victim is paralyzed for 2d6 turns; SD when slain, the body dissolves into a pool of acid ten feet in diameter, causing 1d8 points of damage per round to all within it; MR 20%; AL LE; ML 20 (they are being controlled); XP 650

11. Kapak Storage and Water Supply

This is a well-lit room, courtesy of torches stuck in the walls (the torches were obtained from the booty of past victims). The floor is sandy. The entire southeastern area of the chamber is dominated by a large pool.

The liquid in the pool is cool, clear water. This is the water supply for the entire complex. The fact that the water supply rests in the draconians' area is a source of irritation to the hobgoblins. The Kapaks, though they eventually do give the hobgoblins the water they need, enjoy tormenting the hobgoblins with needless delays. It is a testament to the inborn cruelty of the Kapaks that they can still play these games despite being mentally enslaved by Malfesus.

In the western corner of the room lie two locked wooden chests bound with iron bands. One contains the entire Kapak cash supply, which consists of 56 sp, 34 gp, and 12 stl.

The second chest contains some trinkets lifted from victims. These include a *potion of healing*, a small brass statue of a unicorn (2 gp value), a partially torn treasure map, an emerald worth 500 stl, and a knife sheath decorated with cheap fancy stones.

12. Antechamber

Unlike the other chambers, this one is lined with dressed stone blocks on the floor and walls. Four skulls mounted on iron rods and with *continual light* cast upon them give the room full illumination.

The walls are decorated with crude murals showing renditions of Takhisis, a broken scale, and a black egg with a single crack in it. The black egg is shown dripping some reddish-green substance.

In the center of the room is a hole ten feet in diameter.

Spiraling down along the sides of the shaft is a stone stairway two feet wide.

In each PC's mind, a voice sounds. The voice is a combination of a seductive whisper and a mocking sneer. Malfesus, a bit alarmed that the Heroes of the Lance are within striking range of its physical form, has decided that it would be better off by making them go away. The voice says something different to each PC, depending on the individual.

Tika: "You have come here searching for your father. But ask yourself, why do you search for him? Why did he never look for you? If he knew where you were, then why did he never come to see you?"

"And what of Caramon? Is he not what you truly desire? To be wed to him and have his children and settle down to a life of peace? Do you not deserve it?"

"It is not too late. Turn around and leave whence you came. Put behind you thoughts of the sword and take your rest. You have earned it."

Caramon: "Why have you come on this fool's errand? Because you love Tika, that is why! Well, there are better ways to show her that you love her. Turn around and take her from this place, marry her, and settle down."

"Or perhaps you come because it fills your need to be needed. Raistlin has always needed you, but that is rapidly coming to an end. All of the Heroes of the Lance are either dead or have returned to their normal lives. Do likewise, before you miss this chance. If Tika dies, then there will be no one who truly needs you anymore!"

Raistlin: "You came on this errand because Alleran was an old teacher of yours. But what does that matter to you now? You are far, far mightier than Alleran. Waylan could ever have been! You could crush him without effort!"

"Or maybe you have come in order to help Tika and Caramon. Bah! They do not need you, and you certainly do not need them! The only thing you need is more knowledge, more magic, more power! And you certainly will not find these things by mucking around in damp caves, looking for a second-rate con man!"

"Turn around and go back to the Towers of Sorcery, wizard! All of you have been deceived! Alleran is not here!"

Tanis: "Neither fully elven nor fully human, you strive to gain acceptance in both worlds. Then why are you here, looking for some con man, whose existence neither adds nor takes away from the moral balance of Ansalon?"

"Should you not be concerned with the elves?"





And what of Laurana? Is this how you earn her love?

"Then, there is always your past love, Kitiara. Where is she now? Are you really doing her any good by wandering about in dark caves looking for someone who cheats at cards? Wake up and grow up, Tanis! Leave here and set your mind on things that matter! This is a fool's errand!"

Tasslehoff: "Why are you here? There is nothing interesting here, and it is clear that Alleran Waylan is not here either! There are far more interesting places to go, with lots of interesting things to see and touch and handle. These caves are not frightening, just very dull."

For player-created PCs, the DM should improvise something consistent with the above. A good start is to play on any reservations that the PCs have voiced about coming into these caves or on the trip in general. Continue the speech by touching upon something that the particular PC desires in life.

If there are any Knights of Solamnia in the party, the voice preys upon the PC's desire to see the Knighthood regain its stature, which cannot be accomplished by wandering around looking for washed-out con men.

The speeches are intended to provoke the PCs into leaving the caves. Since it is doubtful that most parties will be swayed, the secondary intent is to merely fire up the PCs with the knowledge that someone or something knows their innermost feelings, and whatever it is, it is close by! DMs should build up the horror and suspense of this fact.

13. Malfesus's Chamber

Anyone who peeks down into the pit sees that the hole extends down at least 60 feet, then trails off into darkness. If someone has *continual light* or any other light source that goes beyond the conventional 60-foot range, the PCs can see that the pit extends a total of 150 feet. Nothing can be seen at the bottom of the pit. It simply ends in a floor of scattered rocks.

The stair winds into the pit, spiraling alongside the pit wall. A rancid smell of rotting organic matter rises and assails the PCs' noses.

If the group decides to go down, read the following aloud to the PCs:

Your footsteps echo on the narrow stone stairs as you descend into the pit. The stench worsens and the humidity rises. A cold clamminess sticks to your skin, worming its way around your clothes and armor. Your torches sputter in the oppressive air.

An evil presence creeps into your hearts. It starts as a vague feeling of uncertainty, then worsens into full-fledged dread the farther down you go. It feels almost as if you are descending into the lair of the Dark Queen herself, but that is ridiculous . . . isn't it?

When the group at last touches bottom, read the following:

Your feet touch bottom, though the uneven surface of the rocks makes your footing rather tenuous. The stink of carrion is even worse down here. The feeling of oppressive evil has reached such an intensity that every fibre of common sense within you screams that you should not be here, that you should run back up the stairs, leave the caves, and never return.

Unfortunately, you also sense that it is too late. From the shadows deep in the chamber, something stirs, knocking aside the occasional rock or bit of debris.

Three sets of twin glowing points of sickly green light shine from the darkness, until at last the creature shifts itself enough so that your light sources catch it.

Standing before you is a scaly creature with three serpent heads. The faces have some vague human features to them, particularly the mouths. The rest of the body is snake-like, except for the pair of powerful forelimbs, each tipped with a four-taloned claw.

"Welcome, fools, to the pit of Malfesus!" the thing hisses. "Welcome to the lair of the spawn of Takhisis and Hiddukel!"

"The one you seek is not here, though I sensed his presence as he walked by, and reached out to his mind. Unfortunately, it is hard to lie to a born liar, and he spurned my invitation and continued on his way.

"Fortunately, you are made of softer stuff, following the paths of Good and therefore succumbing to the pitfalls of morality! Your compassion and heroism are now your undoing!"

"She who bore me will be well pleased when I dispose of the likes of you! She who bore me is much aggrieved by your recent actions against her and her armies! When I feast on your entrails, she will grant me a place in the sky, with a constellation of my own! Come to me now, heroes! Come take your reward!"

Malfesus lunges with all three heads. This hideous union of Takhisis and Hiddukel has some very special abilities.

The first head can breathe fire in a 40-foot cone that is 20 feet wide at the base every round. The flame breath causes 6d6 points of damage. The second head can cast *suggestion* once every other round. The third head delivers a vicious bite for 4d8 points of damage.

The other two heads can also bite for 1d6 points of damage if not using their special powers.

Malfesus: AC -3; MV 6; HD 12; hp 90; THAC0 9; #AT 3; Dmg special; SD regenerates 2 hp/round; MR 45%; AL CE; ML 18; XP 8,000

In addition to the heads' abilities, Malfesus can cast *darkness 15' radius*, *detect invisibility*, *cause disease*, *cause serious wounds*, *confusion*, and *spectra/force*, each three times a day.

Malfesus also has the ability to use *ESP* at will. Once it reads someone's mind, it can communicate by *telepathy*. These abilities have a range of two miles. Usually, Malfesus uses *ESP* on passersby, picks up their surface thoughts, and communicates with them via *telepathy*, telling them that the thing they seek lies in the caves.

The nature of Malfesus's *ESP* is such that it can find out more about the subject the closer the subject gets to its lair. By the time the subject is in the chamber above (area 12), Malfesus knows the invader's identity, powers, goals, and desires.

Malfesus's pit contains the remains of past victims. Also scattered about are 2,134 stl, 4,987 gp, a *long sword +2*, three *potions of extra healing*, and a platinum charm bracelet worth 2,000 stl.

OBSTACLE TO LEMISH

Resuming travel on the footpath, the PCs eventually reach the walled city of Lemish, capital of the small nation of the same name. (See Map 5: Lemish.) This section of the nation is under the control of the blue Dragonarmies.

On the outskirts of the capital city of Lemish,

which is firmly occupied by the blue Dragonarmies, a major guard post of draconians oversees entry into the walled city. The PCs see the guard post before any guards see them.

Read them the following:

As the path turns, you are treated to the sight of the city of Lemish off in the distance. Barring the path between you and the city is a squat tower of gray stone blocks. Several figures patrol the parapets.

Several travelers, also apparently going into the city, are lined up at the tower. Several cloaked figures accept a coin from each traveler and give him some sort of token. The traveler then continues on his way toward the city gates.

The terrain is still woodlands, affording the PCs good cover and concealment. The guard post itself is a simple stone tower three stories (30 feet) high with a single door. The tower is crowned with parapets.

A total of 18 Sivak draconians man the tower. There are always ten of them on active duty. Each Sivak has a blue crystal whistle hanging around its neck on a leather thong. If the whistle is sounded, the city's resident blue dragon, ridden by the resident champion, rises from the city and enters the fray in 2d4 rounds.

Bear in mind that the PCs need not necessarily attack the draconians. The guard tower is here to regulate who comes into the city and why. It is a city under occupation, but it still has to keep up its commerce. As long as the PCs do not cause any trouble, they are merely harassed a bit and rudely questioned, but otherwise let into the city once they pay the one steel piece visitor's tax.

Obvious signs of troublemaking include PCs in Solamnic armor, White Robe wizards, good clerics with their *medallions of faith* prominently displayed, and full-blooded elves of any sort.

Each tax-paying PC is given a brilliant blue lozenge on a leather thong. This is the PC's city pass; it must be displayed at all times. Loss of this pass results in imprisonment, exile, or death, depending on the temperament of the arresting guards.

Though it may seem odd, these Sivaks actually know of Alleran Waylan. According to the draconians, the con man entered Lemish three weeks ago. He went to the largest inn that accommo-

