

PREFACE

HAIL AND WELL MET, TRAVELER! WELCOME to a world of magic and adventure. Originally created by Ed Greenwood, the Forgotten Realms setting has been home to Dungeons & Dragons stories and games for decades. Built for tales of swords and sorcery, the Realms initially grew and flourished in Ed's D&D campaign, which featured heroes like the Knights of Myth Drannor in the Dalelands. Ed also shared glimpses of the Realms in the pages of *Dragon* magazine, giving D&D players their first tales from the wizard Elminster, the old sage of Shadowdale, who occasionally found his way through a portal between Faerûn and our world and into Ed's living room.



When TSR, the company that owned D&D at the time, sought a new campaign world to expand the D&D multiverse, they chose the Forgotten Realms, and in 1987, the gates were flung wide for players and Dungeon Masters all over the world to come to Faerûn and create their own heroic tales. A year later, author R.A. Salvatore introduced readers to the adventures of the drow outcast Drizzt Do'Urden in his first novel, *The Crystal Shard*, establishing the Underdark as an essential part of the Realms.

In the years since, the Forgotten Realms have played host to a vast number of game products, novels, video games, and more, making it one of the most widely visited fantasy settings ever created. The lost portals to the Realms have returned and remained open in the depths of our imaginations and do so to this day, as more and more visitors find their way there.

It is no surprise, then, that the Forgotten Realms became the setting for the first adventures for fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons. Already, new heroes have accomplished great deeds and saved Faerûn from terrible evil and will continue to do so, as long as the flame of imagination draws them there.

This book is further fuel for the fire sparked by those adventures and the glimpses of the Realms you can find in the fifth edition *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. It gives you a broad look at the continent of Faerûn and the world of Toril in general, and the regions of the Sword Coast and the North in particular.

In these pages, you'll learn about the history, lands, and peoples of Faerûn, of the great city-states of the Sword Coast and the North, of the world's gods, and of the factions and forces that support and threaten civilization. Chapter 1 of this book gives an overview of the Sword Coast and nearby lands, its history, the role of magic, and its religions. Chapter 2 goes into detail about the cities and other locations of the Sword Coast. Chapter 3 gives history and some game material for various races and subraces, both common and uncommon, that can be met on the Sword Coast and in the North. Chapter 4 shows how the character options in the *Player's Handbook* fit into this region and presents new character class options specific to the Forgotten Realms. Chapter 5 gives backgrounds designed to link your characters to the great places, people, and events of Faerûn.

While the body of Realms lore is vast, and this book is only an introduction, the Forgotten Realms setting—like D&D itself—is yours, and has been ever since Ed opened that first portal and invited us to come and visit. The Realms are a place to create and tell your stories, about your adventurers and their deeds. The lands and peoples of Faerûn welcome you, traveler, for it is a place of peril sorely in need of the heroes you will bring forth.

Go now, through the portal of imagination and into vast and wonderful realms awaiting beyond.