

PREFACE

Well met, adventurer. You seem like a curious sort who enjoys the finer things. Permit me to thrust upon you my latest masterwork, years in the making. I think you'll find it well worth your time and money. First, a warning: here there be monsters!

No less a peerless font of sagacity as Elminster of Shadowdale¹ has attested that more worlds than this one teem with monsters. As a result, that "Here there be monsters" line has appeared on maps of worlds far from this one, and hidden from your modest² scribe. And who am I, you ask?

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, setting forth truths like the deep and ancient secrets whispered into my ears by the guardian spirits of the hidden tombs of fallen archmages now dust. Yes, in this very tome, I set forth divers details, never before gathered with such coherence³ in one place, of the creatures varied and strange that it pleases humans and most other civilized races to deem "monsters."

I cannot recommend the essential lore contained in this volume highly enough,⁴ and cry it to be "life-savingly necessary" to every adventurer and wayfarer in the wilderlands and the Underdark, be they prospector, miner, or merely seeking shelter in a cavern from prowling beasts or the claws of winter, over the world entire.⁵ And should you find it within yourself to complain that this or that entry is lacking in veracity or comprehensive completeness,⁶ let it be known that I, Volo, took no shortcuts, and stinted not in the depth of my probings⁷ or the courting of discomforts in gathering the most extensive and authoritative lore possible. At great personal risk, might I add!⁸

Betimes I used my not-inconsiderable⁹ magic to disguise myself as a tree, stone, or even a puddle, and so prepare the very best guide I possibly could. In the doing, I have seen the most wondrous vistas, from frosty high mountain peaks where giant castles drift past, to the deepest icy lakes beneath the earth, where nameless tentacled things stir and slither, and was awed anew at the beauty of the world that we all, monstrous or otherwise, share.¹⁰

If you find this tome of use, please tell your friends, business partners, and acquaintances met in passing in the street. Then perhaps I'll have the chance to pen an even more useful guide, in future.¹¹ And whatever befalls you or me in our unfolding lives, I remain your humble scribe and obedient servant, and am now (and if the gods grant, forever in lasting fame),

Volothamp Geddarm¹²



NOTES FROM ELMINSTER AUMAR, ARCHMAGE OF SHADOWDALE,
SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE OPEN LORD OF WATERDEEP:

1. LAY IT ON THICK, WILL YE?
2. IF THIS IS MODEST, I DARE NOT THINK WHAT PREENING BE.
3. COHERENCE, INDEED.¹ VOLO, THY CLARITY IS AS THE CHURNING SURFACE OF A LARGE CITY CESSPIT—WHEN TENTACLES ARE ABOUT TO ERUPT FROM BENEATH.¹
4. THE MODESTY IS BLINDING.¹ SUCH A PARAGON OF ELUCIDATION, SELFLESSLY SERVING ALL. OFTEN ON A PLATTER, WITH AN APPLE IN EVERY MOUTH.
5. EARPLUGS SOLD SEPARATELY.
6. HERE IT COMES. GET IN FIRST.¹ HEAD OFF THY LEGITIMATE CRITICS.
7. THE SANITY OF THOSE WHO BABBLE OF PROBES IS SELDOM HELD IN HIGH REGARD.
8. YE MAY, THOUGH YE'RE OBVIOUSLY UNAWARE, YOUNG VOLO, HOW OFTEN AND FOR HOW LONG I HAVE BEEN TELLING DRAGONS, MIND FLAYERS, AND EVEN GOBLINS HOW TRULY VILE VOLOTHAMPS TASTE, RAW OR COOKED. YE'RE WELCOME.
9. BETIMES VOLO MISCONSTRUES THE MEANING OF WORDS. HERE, FOR EXAMPLE, HE MEANS, "NONEXISTENT."
10. UNTIL WE KILL EACH OTHER, USING VOLO'S HANDY TIPS, BUNDLED UP NEATLY HEREIN.
11. VOLO'S GUIDE TO FLEEING ANGRY MOBS. I FORESEE A SHORT WORK, BUT A CLASSIC.
12. LET ME BE FAIR. THE LAD MEANS WELL AND HAS DONE WELL. BETTER THAN I EXPECTED. SOME OF WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK IS TRUE, AND CAN EVEN BE TRUSTED.