



# Magic in the Evening

by Ed Greenwood

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## The meeting of master mages: Elminster and Mordenkainen!

I was there when it all started.

My role wasn't glamorous: I spent an uncomfortable evening inside an old suit of armor, hanging from hooks on the wall as sweat ran down and dripped very slowly off the end of my nose. I didn't dare move an inch, and I nearly suffocated from the heat and thickening smoke in that little study, yet I stuck it out. I'd given Elminster my word to be silent, and I *did* want to live to see morning.

The Old Mage had been most insistent. The inside of the spell-shielded armor was the only place our powerful visitor wouldn't detect me in his first four breaths or so. We were in a cozy study in—well, I'm not allowed to tell you exactly where. Wizards are perhaps the most paranoid people alive—which, I suppose, is why some of them are still alive.

It began with our usual evening chat. After dining, Elminster blew smoke rings. I was watching, drowsing in the big armchair, when the Old Mage looked beyond me and asked calmly, "Are ye in the mood for some danger this night, friend scribe?"

I looked all around, but no one else had slipped into the room while I wasn't looking. He was talking to me. "Of course," I lied, then took a big gulp of cider.

Elminster waited, until it was just going down my gullet, and said, "Good. Ye have just time to set thy infernal recorders and get into the armor before his arrival. That way, ye *might* live to see the morn-but no promises, now." He watched me choke and sputter, and he grinned like the wizard he was.

Later, as I closed my eyes and sighed in the hollow darkness of the bolted-down helm, Elminster murmured, "No noise, if

ye would live." He strode across the room with agility surprising for his years, crooked a finger as he settled himself in my armchair—and a whole row of bottles rose from the cabinet across the room and followed him.

A wave of his hand extinguished the lights, leaving only the leaping glow of the fire. The Old Mage wiggled two fingers, and my best crystal glasses floated down over his shoulder. He studied the bottles, sighed, and made a "come hither" gesture. I heard the fridge door pop open and slam again—and wasn't surprised when a large, frosty bottle of cola drifted into view. He filled two glasses, and one obediently slid across the table toward the empty seat.

A moment later, it wasn't empty anymore. Without a sound or any warning flicker, burst of smoke, or dazzle of lights to herald his arrival, a middle-aged man with a wise, craggy face sat there, clad in high-collared but rather wrinkled gray robes. His face was alert and almost angry, like a hawk looking about for prey.

His beard was black, shot through with gray, close-trimmed and waxed—unlike Elminster's full, shaggy chin-mane. He nodded a greeting and reached for the glass in front of him. Little lights seemed to dance across the liquid for a moment, and he frowned faintly.

"What's this?" he asked in a deep, melodic voice.

"A carbonated, sugared drink popular in this place," Elminster replied. "Think of it as purified, sweetened water. Twill give ye gas in plenty, but no headache or worse. Well met, Morden."

Mordenkainen the Mage nodded and almost smiled. "Fair greeting, old man.

Khelben said you were oft found here."

"A place beyond the Realms of my cares," Elminster replied dryly, as the floating bottle silently refilled his glass. "As my days draw on, I increasingly feel a need to relax."

Mordenkainen snorted. "I've not noticed creeping old age slowing your works, as I walk the worlds, El. Here you are and there, always meddling."

Elminster shrugged. "I've been at it a day or two longer than thee."

Mordenkainen smiled. "One or two, perhaps." He held up his empty glass, and the bottle obediently started toward it. "Still battling the mighty evil ones?" he asked quietly, making a certain sign with two fingers.

Elminster waved a hand in reply. "This place is shielded against them. Ye may speak plainly. And, aye, the old struggle rolls along. I'd miss it, if one side or the other ever prevailed."

"Certes, were the winning side to be the other one," Mordenkainen returned dryly. "Good stuff, this." He belched suddenly, his brows drawing together in a dark frown. "Your warning was not lightly given." He looked around—and the flames of the fire were suddenly a shimmering violet.

Elminster nodded appreciatively, though to my eyes it made both mages look bone-white dead, and said, "I'll set thy curiosity at rest ere more time slides away beneath us, Lord Mage. Art grows ever wilder on both our worlds, and all the planes between. More than that; with each day that passes, we meet with more beings who wield Art, be they hedge-wizards, slithering tentacled things, or mighty mages hitherto hidden."

Mordenkainen nodded. "This is so," he agreed, gesturing for the Old Mage to continue. His glass seemed to have emptied itself again.

"Growing, too, are the numbers of those who have the power to walk the worlds, as we do, by Art, from plane to plane, and by sailing the stars. Things ever rush on faster—and ever they grow more linked, events that befall on Toril affecting ye in Oerth, what befalls on Krynn telling on both our worlds, and so on. Ye have seen it—there's no need to look well."

Mordenkainen nodded. "I follow your thoughts, El. This is the place where you tell that young lad all the secrets—and other things best left unsaid—of Faerun. I've seen the written results a time or two." He gestured meaningfully; a few modules and boxed sets on a high shelf shifted uneasily.

Elminster merely nodded. His pipe rose from the side table by the fireplace and drifted toward him.

Mordenkainen saw it and snapped his fingers; a slim, dark cigar was suddenly between them. As I watched, a spark leaped up from the fire and raced through the air to land upon its tip. He puffed and through the rising smoke said, "You think we'd both be better served, Old Mage, if we met from time to time and spoke of things on Oerth, Toril, and Krynn, and so laid bare small things and large befalling our worlds."

"Exactly," Elminster said, as the pipe settled gently in one corner of his mouth.

"A good idea," the Mage of Greyhawk went on. "I'm pleased that we can trust each other this far." He fell silent, and they stared levelly into each others' eyes for a long, cold moment.

Flames seemed to leap and whirl in Elminster's eyes, just for an instant. "Aye," he said. "Krynn . . . whom can we trust, to speak for that world? Mirthful old Fizban is gone, and we know now—too late—what he truly was."

"And young, damned Raistlin is gone, and we know him for what *he* was as well." Mordenkainen sighed deeply.

"There is another," said Elminster, "one who may yet prove to be as twisted and arrogant with Art as Raistlin, and perhaps as dangerous: young Dalamar. I know little more of him than that he has taken the place Raistlin held as head of the Order of Black Robes in the Conclave of Wizards. He has shown an exceptional interest in things beyond the reaches of Krynn—unusual for such an insular world."

Mordenkainen shrugged. "Over too many years, I have grown tired of turning back the clawing spells of young and arrogant boys and maids alike, filled to bursting with the little spells they've mastered, who think to prove their superiority over all the graybeards they can reach. Yet, no meeting in life is without risk. If this one can resist the temptation to try to impress us too much (and better yet, refrain from trying to wrest power from us), I am not

adverse to adding him to our gatherings of converse."

He frowned and added, "Mind you, three are always more trouble together than two. There's little to be gained if we merely set him a-scheming or rouse his ire enough to make of him an enemy whose interest or malice extends to meddling o'ermuch in the affairs of our worlds."

Elminster nodded, slowly. "I had given thought to such things, ere we met." His brow wrinkled, and I heard the fridge door pop open again. A second cola bottle then came into view. Elminster raised his own glass invitingly. "Here, then, to a dream: to the Wizards Three."

Mordenkainen snorted. "Hadn't we best save the toast until this Dalamar sits among us? Behaving himself, too."

Elminster smiled slowly. "His thirst for magic was enough that he abandoned his home and dark elven kin to serve under Raistlin. What greater lure could there be, to his coming—and his best behavior, at least at first—than two archmages with Art such as we command, who know the lore underlying what they wield?"

Mordenkainen matched the smile. "True. First, he'll want to impress us. Then . . ."

"Snatch all the Art he can, that which we let slip," Elminster finished the thought. "So we'll merely take some care with what we let slip, and steer him."

"A good thought, this idea of yours," Mordenkainen said, looking at the fire (which obediently returned to its normal hue, under his gaze), "especially if there's such a thing as popcorn around this place. Let's talk now of small and frivolous things as well as larger matters. I grow weary of pompous, saving-all-that-is pronouncements."

Elminster nodded. "So did I, back before Myth Drannor fell. They've started to grow a little more fun again, I must admit; 'tis all in how ye view them, I believe."

He stirred. "And aye, there's popcorn." Out in the kitchen, the squeaky cupboard door opened obediently. "We've a breath or three yet, before it's ready."

Mordenkainen nodded. "So speak. Prof-fer some tidbit of magic, some trifle of Realmslore. I'll trade you one in return, and perhaps we can go on from there."

Elminster nodded. "Where to begin? Ah—this'll interest ye. Last week, I chanced across Thundaerl of Tethyr. Ye remember him from Magefairs of old? The first archmage to earn coins in a king's court as a master chef?"

Mordenkainen nodded. "Ah, yes. We of the Circle paid him a visit once—cloaked with spells, of course—and he fed us most excellent pastries."

Elminster smiled. "He's made more money than most of us will ever see, these past dozen winters in Selgaunt, devising pastries, sauces, and delicacies for the finer palate and heavier purse. He proudly showed me his latest spell: his *universal taster*, he calls it. It's attuned to the one who casts it, revealing to his eyes—even in

the dark, and through sauces and even within meat—any substance that would be harmful in the quantities present for the caster to ingest."

"Taints, poisons?" Mordenkainen didn't seem overly impressed.

"Aye, but there's more. If ye be the server of the food, and such dangers are present, your food seems to change appearance, slim black serpents bursting up out of it to hiss and grin at ye. Illusory, of course—but an embarrassing tip-off that he knows thy game is up. Of course, the snakes give him clear excuse for destroying the tainted provender with a spell or two, without offending others at table."

Mordenkainen grinned. "That does sound amusing. If you can pry the incantation out of him. . ."

"Rest assured, I shall. No time promises, mind ye."

The Mage of Greyhawk looked thoughtful. "I've news of more import—to me, at least—but less specifics. Someone, it is certain, is trying to slay those of the Circle."

Elminster's brows knitted suddenly. "The Circle of Eight? Thy own Circle?"

Mordenkainen nodded soberly. "Tenser and Bigby have both been attacked—by magic, worked by someone strong enough to conceal his, her, or its identity; someone of Oerth, or who has studied our ways."

Elminster spread his hands. His pipe wagged expressively, from side to side. "That could be any astute mage who sailed in on the Flow or who walked the planes and laid low to look about."

"Dalamar again?" Mordenkainen's voice was quiet. Out in the kitchen, the fridge door was heard again. "Perhaps we wrong him," he added, more vigorously. "In affairs of magic, it is especially easy to find a single likely foe and blame everything on him."

Elminster nodded. "True indeed. Yet ye seem sure, at least, that ye face a mage or mages and not something else—say, an illithid, or one who uses the mind as we do Art, or one who walks in shadows."

The mage of Oerth calmly watched a fresh cola bottle fill his glass. "No—none of those would act as this foe has. Tenser, at least, is shrewd enough in the ways of adventurers to smell out any ruse. If one such was trying to make his attacks look like those of a mage of Oerth, he would see through it." He sipped cola and shrugged. "But enough of this matter. Our problems are our own."

"My thanks for thy warning," Elminster said, looking at his empty glass. The cola bottle obediently floated his way. "Perhaps I should tell thee of the doings of those who deem themselves important in Art, in Faerun."

"Such as the Zhentarim?" Mordenkainen smiled. "Such dolts—each tale of them is more amusing than the last." He looked at the cola left in his glass. "Do they still hunt spellfire?"

Elminster lowered his eyes. "That tale's end is yet unknown." He then looked

across the table; instead of their customary merry blue, his eyes seemed steel gray. "I would not speak of it, yet."

Mordenkainen merely inclined his head.

The Old Mage nodded in reply. "My thanks. I will say more, another time. No, I thought to tell ye of deeds in the desert, Anauroch, where the Zhentarim sought—nay, seek, I fear, as once a plan's in their stone heads, 'tis slow indeed to fade away—where they seek to slay or bribe their way through all the Bedine tribes and rule over all. One outcast 'witch' of the Bedine—Ruha, a sorceress of middling power, who wields wind and sand spells-raised tribes against them and hurled them back."

Mordenkainen regarded the last of his cola. "Word had reached me that thy Harpers had something to do with this Ruha's victory."

"Something," Elminster agreed. "Yet only one Harper was there, and he died in the doing. All he did was turn this Ruha to do what was already in her power, to resist the Zhentarim—she and the Bedine tribes who might otherwise have spurned her."

Mordenkainen raised his eyebrows. "What are these Bedine, that they can stand against Zhentarim magic? I'd heard them to be camel-riders, mere nomad savages—and that the Zhentarim sent lizard-warriors to swing more swords against them than the Bedine could raise."

Elminster smiled. "Thy information is good. In answer, consider ye the difference between these two statements: I have heard a Harper say, 'Life is a series of challenges—to be met and dealt with.' I have also heard a Bedine warrior of gray years say, 'Life is a series of battles, to be fought and won.'"

Mordenkainen smiled. "I see. The Zhents met a Bedine tribe and found a rampart of man-flesh that hurled their careless might of Art back and stood patiently waiting for more."

"Exactly." Elminster grinned at a memory. "I was in an tavern in Hill's Edge recently—The Banshee At Bay, 'tis called, and I especially recommend the baked stirge on toast. A Zhentarim mageling swaggered in, threatening everyone in the place and demanding the best food and wine in the same breath. The tavern master was an old Bedine with one leg, taken as a slave when young and too old now to fight the desert. He just listened, spat on the table when Lord High-and-Mighty was done, and went into the back room. When he came back, he was carrying a silver tray with a domed lid. He set it down in front of the Zhentarim. When the lad lifted the lid, everyone in the place saw the four old skulls on the tray. The old man told him that they were what was left of the last four Zhentarim wizards foolish enough to threaten him. Then one of the skulls grew an eyeball, and winked at the mageling. He ran."

The two archmages chuckled, together. "The Bedine's a wizard?"

Elminster shook his head. "Nay—his

daughter is, though; I saw her work the trick with a *wand of illusion*, behind a curtain."

"And the Zhent didn't come back that night, with a hand-count of hireswords, to work mischief?"

Elminster grinned. "He might well have done it. Aye, ye have the true measure of the Zhentarim. I probably persuaded him not to do so." He crooked a finger, and one of the other bottles on the table slid toward his empty glass. "I laid a little spell that kept a skull grinning at him, from just behind his shoulder, all that night. A floating skull, with two twinkling eyes, that never left him."

"An illusion?"

"Aye—a special one, that reflects back *dispel magic* spells at the caster."

Mordenkainen burst into open laughter.

"Another useful magic," he said when he was done. "I'll have to bring something comparable to trade, next time."

Elminster nodded. "See ye do; I've not collected a spell from Oerth for a long time, now."

Mordenkainen snapped his fingers.

"That reminds me—I've news of direct interest to you. Remember Ilphara?"

Elminster rolled his eyes. "I could hardly forget *her*. It's not every 'prentice who thinks herself powerful enough to charm *me* into mooning after a princess of Cormyr!"

Mordenkainen raised an eyebrow. "Did she succeed?" he asked his glass (which was nearly empty again).

Elminster grinned. "Oh, I pretended she had."

Mordenkainen laughed again. "Ah, it's rare to find such fun, these days, among the ambitious young magelings of Oerth. They're all so busy conquering the world." He shook his head. "But I was about to tell you what Ilphara's up to now." He beckoned, and a bottle slid his way. "Ilphara, the minx, has worked charms on at least seven merchants of the City of Greyhawk. Now they undercharge each other guilds and all be hanged, and work hand-in-hand to make her rich. She lies there in a silken-draped bed, growing fat and lazy, while they work themselves thin."

Elminster whistled. "Does she still have those jet-black eyes?"

Mordenkainen nodded. "As beautiful as ever, Old Mage. Fatter, though, as I said. But she's heading for a fall; some of the merchants got suspicious of these onetime rivals working such friendly trade, and they hired some spell-hurlers to find and knock down any *charms* or shady business. So sweet Ilphara hired some knife-in-the-backs to cut short a few wizardly careers."

Elminster looked at the ceiling. "And the Circle of Eight felt, ah, compelled to take action?"

Mordenkainen nodded. "Precisely. I've spent an enjoyable evening, before I came here, weaving *spelledreams* for the merchants. They'll be shown everything she's

done to them, as the spells slowly unravel her spells. When they're all broken at once, she won't know whom to face down first—particularly as she'll be too busy dealing with her own hired killers. I've made them think she's set them all up for the fatal sort of double-dealing. Moreover, though he doesn't know it, the best of them's wearing Samander's ring."

Mordenkainen drank, then answered the unspoken question. "The ring is a bauble I picked up a few years back. A waiting-spell will whisk it back to me before the wearer gets into too much trouble, and its own magicks prevent anyone from feeling it on his finger—or anyone else from detecting it, while it's there. All it does is counteract any order given to a *charmed* wearer, so if Ilphara tries to control him when he comes to slay her, her spell will work but he'll act as he pleases, probably contrary to any order she gives!"

Elminster grinned. "It sounds as if ye mean to give Ilphara exactly what she deserves. I did teach her that magical mischief always rebounds, if ye fall into lazy and cruel habits."

Mordenkainen stroked his beard. "You've unleashed many a mage on both our worlds, to follow or ignore your teachings. It's a credit to you that I hear of so few going wrong."

"Base flattery," Elminster reproved wryly. "I'm not so young as to need that sort of thing, ye know—or not to recognize it."

Mordenkainen chuckled, as another bottle floated his way. "Ah, I'm going to enjoy these gatherings. Have you such a thing about as the makings of a sandwich? In this world, once, I was introduced to something called 'mayo' that almost made up for the horribly transformed material they tried to pass off as meat in the same sandwich."

Elminster nodded. "I know just what ye mean" Out in the kitchen, there was a sudden tumult of opening and slamming drawers, crinkling wrappings, chopping knives, twirling jar lids, and the like. He looked apologetically in my direction, then went on, "My turn for news, I recall. Hmm . . . ah. Ye knew Tsunroon, did ye not?"

"Tsunroon the Traveler? The one who had a tower in the Drachensgrabs, and blasted it to dust when his apprentices tried to rob him, with them inside?"

"Aye. Ye know he went walking the worlds for a time, after that?"

Mordenkainen nodded. "He's back in the Flanaess now, around Niole Dra."

Elminster sucked on his pipe. "Aye. Not surprising he's scuttled for home. He ran afoul of the Alhoon in the Realms not long ago."

"The Alhoon?"

"Ye have never . . . Hmm. Well, look ye: They be at least nine, and all wear purple robes with red sashes. Methinks they came out of some far crystal sphere; at least, I never heard a whisper of them,

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until a few winters back in Faerun. Picture illithids—illithids who wield both Art and mind-powers, and who've mastered magic enough to attain lichdom."

Mordenkainen stared. "Mind-flayer liches?"

Elminster nodded. "We call them illithiliches; they call themselves the Alhoon. They're nigh impossible, gods know, to hunt down. They're worse to have as enemies, as ye might guess."

Mordenkainen nodded. "Should we be wary on Oerth?"

Elminster shrugged. "Now that ye know . . . tell the Circle, of course, and keep an eye open. They've not yet found Tsunroon's trail to Oerth, I'm sure—or none of this'd be news to ye, and it's the Traveler's gory death ye would be telling me of. Nay, they're too busy trying to slaughter all the local Zhentarim, so they can see their way clear to rule Faerun."

Mordenkainen snorted. "Do evil mages ever seek to do anything else? You'd think they'd have the imagination to find some other trail of interest to spend their lives exploring!"

Elminster spread his hands. "Recall, ye, that they and their kind give us something to do: saving the world from their various intended tyrannies!"

Mordenkainen smiled ruefully. "I suppose that's the best long view to take of it, El. Still. . . nevermind."

Elminster smiled back, then turned. "Ah, here come the sandwiches—I took the liberty of using something they call a 'microwave,' here. Ye haven't lived until ye have had hot cheese, and bacon—and even hot mayo—together!" He raised a hand as a floating tray glided gently to his elbow, bearing its steaming burden.

While they ate, Elminster continued, around mouthfuls. "I recently spent a night at the High House of Stars—a temple to Selune in Faerun, tucked away on a mountainside near Neverwinter. One of the priestesses is an old friend of mine, from when we were adventurers together—but that's another tale. She told me of Tsunroon dropping in on them recently. Teleported right into the midst of their moonrise service, scorched and smoking from fire-spell attacks, and collapsed on the spot.

"They nursed him, of course—after they'd raised a *moonweb* over him to foil any pursuit. Sure enough, one of the Alhoon had traced him somehow, and 'ported in after him a few breaths later. But one of the things a *moonweb* does is veil all sight of the place or person it's guarding. The other thing it does is hurl ye (and any spell ye hurl) right back where ye started from—with the magic ye used burned and gone."

Elminster regarded the crumbs on his empty tray thoughtfully. "Another thing a *moonweb* does is allow the caster a clear mind-picture of anyone—or anything—that tries to pass it. The Sisters of Selune all knew what he was running from. They

patched him up in a hurry and got him to a *gate* out in the wilderlands, where it wasn't likely anyone would be questing after him with seeking-spells. From there he obviously hurried to thy home ground."

Mordenkainen looked thoughtful. "These Alhoon sound like the sort of trouble that might just find a way to follow him. Once in Oerth, they'll swiftly be a problem needing my attention. My thanks, Old Mage."

Elminster grunted. "Twas not a problem."

Mordenkainen smiled again, visibly relaxed. "A good idea, this, El. I haven't enjoyed myself this much—nor felt so calmed for so long, gods take all—in years. It's a welcome change from always being alert and on stage, saving Oerth."

"Saving Oerth again," Elminster agreed, and they laughed together. Then, slowly, Mordenkainen's hand went out across the table.

Elminster regarded it for a moment, and then stretched out his own, to clasp it firmly. Things fell silent, except for the crackle of the fire, as two archmages nodded at each other.

"I'll be back—as often as we can both spare the time. There's a lot about Oerth I'd like to tell you," Mordenkainen said quietly.

Elminster's eyes twinkled. "So as to save having me wandering about in your back courtyard, rooting it out for myself?" He grinned and added softly, "We should have thought of this years ago."

## For your campaign

Readers familiar with events on Oerth will note that this meeting of archmages took place before the events of module WGA4 *Vecna Lives* or the GREYHAWK® Wars boxed set. Readers conversant with Toril are advised that the events involving the Bedine mentioned here are detailed in the Harpers novel *The Parched Sea*, by Troy Denning.

I have since wormed information enough out of Elminster to derive rules about the spells, magical item, and monster mentioned in his conversation with Mordenkainen.

## Wizard spells

### Curse of the grinning skull

(Illusion/Phantasm, Abjuration)

Level: 2

Components: V,S,M

Range: 20 yds.

CT: 1 round

Duration: 1 turn/lvl.

Save: Special

Area of Effect: One creature

This spell, also known as the *ever-watching skull*, creates the illusory image of a grinning human skull with twinkling eyes; it is visible to all. It floats at the shoulder of the victim, looking at him and seeming to react to his actions. It actually moves to always gaze into his eyes, responding to head and eye movements.

From time to time, it moves its jawbone in a soundless, laughing motion.

This image is nothing more than a nuisance. It can serve to scare off a known thief, mark a being so that he can easily be followed through crowds, or anger a wizard into wasting destructive spells on it.

A *grinning skull* reflects all *dispel magic* spells back upon the caster and is not affected by attacks or spells that deal physical damage. All *anti-magic shells* or related spells of fourth or higher level (such as a *minor globe of invulnerability*) will destroy it.

When the spell is cast, the target and the caster each roll 1d20 and add their level to the result. If the caster's total is higher, the skull appears—but if the victim's total is greater, the spell is lost, and a distorted skull appears only momentarily, flickers, and is gone. The spell's material components are a piece of human bone and a spark or flame.

### Thundaerl's universal taster

(Greater Divination, Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 2

Components: V,S,M

Range: 30'

CT: 2

Duration: 1 rd. +1 rd./lvl.

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell allows the caster (only) to look at foods and see any substance harmful to the caster outlined in luminous purple flames (in the quantities present). The magic penetrates darkness, sauces, and solid objects such as lids and layers of meat.

If a harmful substance is present, the caster can will the food to emit illusory, hissing black serpents visible to all. This can alert the provider of the material to the wizards awareness of the threat—or give the caster an excuse for destroying the tainted material along with the dangerous snakes! The material components of this spell are a berry from any poisonous plant (e.g., deadly nightshade) and a piece of snake skin.

### Lesser spelldream

(Invocation, Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 4

Components: V,S

Range: 0

CT: 1 turn

Duration: 1 turn/lvl.

Save: Special

Area of Effect: One touched creature

This spell is only effective against sleeping beings. It allows the caster to remove any spells of fourth level or less already in effect on the recipient (such as *charm person* or *change self*). The spell effects are unraveled slowly, without doing harm to the caster of the *spelldream* or the recipient, and without triggering any spell-traps or defensive effects. This occurs during an enforced slumber, which can be broken by any physical attack on the recipient (such an event will jolt the recipi-

ent into instant alertness). This enforced slumber is accompanied by dreams, and the caster of this spell can choose one image per level to feature in these dreams (typically, the caster shapes a sequence of images showing the recipient how they came to be enspelled, or why the caster has chosen to remove those spells).

While a *spelledream* is unfolding in the recipient's mind, his mind cannot be contacted or influenced by any other being. Thus, a wizard can pass information to a recipient who is under magical thought-surveillance without risk of the information being detected.

When the spell is cast, the recipient is allowed a save vs. spells with a -5 penalty. If the save succeeds, the spell is lost, and the intended recipient instantly awakens.

### **Greater spelledream** (Invocation, Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 6

Components: V,S

Range: 1 yd./lvl.

CT: 1 turn

Duration: 1 turn/lvl.

Save: Special

Area of Effect: One touched creature

This spell allows the caster to remove any spells of sixth level or less already in effect on a single chosen spell recipient, who must be visible to the caster or specifically named during spell-casting. Except for the differences noted here, this spell is identical in all respects to a *lesser spelledream*.

### **Priest spell**

#### **Moonweb** (Abjuration, Alteration)

Sphere: Guardian

Level: 5

Components: V,S,M

Range: 0

CT: 5

Duration: 2 turns/lvl.

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell is used by priests of Selune, the Faerun goddess of the moon and stars. It creates a web of glowing, shimmering strands of silvery light. This *moonweb* cannot be seen through (except by priests of Selune, the goddess herself, and the beings in a protected area), but it doesn't foil magical means of detecting or locating beings and objects.

Any being, weapon, or spell striking a *moonweb* is forced, violently and immediately, back to its source. This includes beings trying to circumvent such a barrier by means of *dimension door* or *teleportation* magicks (which are drained and ruined by the *moonweb*). Weapon attacks directed at or through a *moonweb* rebound for full damage on their wielders.

Before rebounding, magical weapons do a *moonweb* 1 hp damage for each "plus" possessed. A *moonweb* can be destroyed by inflicting 1 hp magical damage per level of its caster, or by the application of a *dispel magic* spell.

*Moonwebs* repel *globes of invulnerability* and other magical barriers, but any contact between a *moonweb* and an *anti-magic shell* or any *prismatic* magic will instantly destroy both spell effects in a spectacular burst of harmless blue sparks and crawling purple lightnings.

If the caster of a *moonweb* is on the same plane of existence as the *moonweb* whenever any being or thing destroys or tries to pass it, the caster gains a clear, vivid mental image of the offending object or being.

This spell affects one touched creature or opening (e.g., a doorway or window) with a surface area of up to one square foot per level. The material components of this spell are a piece of gray or silver hair from any source and a drop of holy water.

### **Magical item**

#### **Samander's ring**

Named for the wizard who devised it some 40 winters ago, this rare type of plain brass ring protects a single living being whose bare flesh must be in contact with it. It need not be worn on a finger to work (it can be hidden on one's person).

*Samander's ring* is enspelled to elude all means of magical detection, even when it bears another spell (such as *Drawmij's instant summons* or other *teleportation* magicks, a *magic mouth*, or *invisibility*). It does not interfere with the workings of magicks cast upon it.

*Samander's ring* has only one function: It absolutely prohibits any mental control, compulsion, or influence from affecting the mind of its bearer, such as psionic attacks (note that these can still do damage) or orders given to a *charmed* ring-bearer. The bearer is made aware of the details of all such attempts and can therefore pretend to be affected. The ring does not prevent a *charm*, *domination*, or similar enchantment/charm spell from being cast on the ring-bearer, so that the caster may well believe such a spell has succeeded. It has no effect on illusions (including *shadow monsters*). When functioning, *Samander's ring* turns invisible and intangible; it can't be felt, struck, or torn off by purely physical probing.  
XP Value: 2,000  
GP Value: 12,000 (typical market price in the Realms)

### **Monster**

**Alhoon (Illithilich):** #APP 1-4; INT Genius (18); AL NE; AC 12; MV 9; HD 8 +4; THAC0 13; #AT 4; Dmg 2d4 or by weapon; SA mind blast, spell use; MR 50%; SZ M (6' tall); ML 17-18; XP 7,000; *Menzoberranzan* boxed set. Treasure: S,T,V × 3 (× 6 in lair),X.

Alhoon are very rare, magic-using outcasts from mind-flayer society who have defied elder-brains to achieve lichdom, becoming "illithiliches." Alhoon look like living mind flayers (mauve-skinned,

octopus-headed humanoids with four mouth-tentacles and three-fingered hands), but their skins are dry and often wrinkled, never glistening with slime.

Alhoon attack with four (AC 7) tentacles, each about 2' long. If successful, each automatically does 1d4 hp damage/round as it bores into the victim. A tentacle dealt 5 or more hp damage in a round will pull out of the victim's body; it will then strike (attack roll required) at a new spot. Tentacles striking areas other than a victim's head can't reach the brain; they do damage for four rounds, then withdraw.

As in life, an illithilich is the equivalent of a 7th-level psionist, commanding three disciplines, four sciences, and 12 devotions. It has a Power Score of 18 and 1d100 +250 psionic strength points. It attacks with a *mind thrust* and always possess *astral projection*, *body equilibrium* (its only psychometabolic power), *control body*, *domination*, *ESP*, *levitation*, *posthypnotic suggestion*, *probability travel*, and *teleport*. Other abilities are usually present and vary from one individual to another (see PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*).

Illithiliches can also cast spells as 9th-level mages (spells: 4, 3, 3, 2, 1), using magicks seized from human mages or found in spell books from tombs. They avidly seek more spells, driven by a hunger for power. An Alhoon can use a spell (plus its tentacle attacks) during any round in which it does not use psionics.

Alhoon spells require material components, but these monsters often modify spells to remove the verbal component by altering the somatic component. Illithiliches can employ all magical items usable by wizards, as well as those open to all classes. Magical items, scrolls, and spell books are the treasures most valued by Alhoon. In the Underdark, they often use gems as currency. (Alhoon hate bright light but venture into the surface world by night or dwell there in caverns, gloomy woods, and ruins.)

Alhoon gain no undead attacks such as a normal lich's *chill touch*, but they do have "standard" undead immunities to *sleep* and *charm* magicks. They can't be turned or dispelled by priests and aren't harmed or impeded by holy water, cold iron, *protection from evil*, sunlight, or silver weapons. They are subject to the effects of magicks that specifically affect undead.

Alhoon have no need for sustenance, but their magic-resistant bodies adapt imperfectly to undead status; they are plagued by tissue desiccation. They counteract this by bathing or by drinking water, soup, alcohol, and other liquids. They need not ingest nutrients; absorbed poisons harm an alhoon but cannot "kill" it (it reaches a minimum of 6 hp from any poison damage, then takes no further damage). Their undead state neutralizes most poisons, healing all poison damage at a rate of 1 hp per round: Alhoon enjoy devouring brains just as they did in life, but need not do so to stay alive. ♀