



6 THE ART

We all know what brute force is. In the Realms, it tends to mean fleets of ships, marching armies, or the terrifying flood of a savage orc horde, and in such displays of force, amassing more soldiers than the foe likely means victory.

The Faerûnian counterbalance to the strong sword has always been magic—wonderful, awesome, terrible magic. Magic gives its users the ability to harness natural forces to do things that frustrate or counter brute force, awakening fear and respect in those who deal in force of arms, and serving as a deterrent that keeps them from lashing out at will and whim.

By deliberate design, there's a lot of magic in the Realms—too much for any one person to know, keep track of, or memorize all the rules and details of. It's supposed to take you unawares, or surprise you, or keep you guessing. It is supposed to impart a sense of wonder that occasionally rears into the spectacular. It is meant to give the weak and downtrodden some hope, by enabling them to see that chances lie ahead in their lives. Given that Mystra is opposed to tyranny, magic is not supposed to make every ruler a wizard-emperor, but rather bring about a world in which most arcane spell-hurlers are independent. Even

a humble farmer who gets surprised in his hayloft could burst forth with a wild talent—magic he might not even have known he possessed, until that frantic moment. Magic is truly everywhere.

Entire campaigns can be centered on the pursuit of magic. An ideal one-to-three-player Realms campaign could be built around magical research and wizardly roleplaying. Player characters could spend their time crafting and refining spells, magic items, and spell-ink formulae. Nonplayer characters could include alchemists and those who search out or provide magical components and ingredients—such as other adventurers and more powerful, rival wizards.

Alternatively, the characters in a campaign could be a “fetch and bring back” adventuring band for a wizard—or even for two or three rival wizards competing fiercely with each other. Mystara’s servants repeatedly “seed” tombs, ruins, and dungeons with spellbooks, spell scrolls, and other magic, so Faerûnians expect such places to hold magic. Of course, so do predatory monsters, who take this expectation into account when deciding where to lurk. Certain geysers and hot springs are perfect for the disposal of magically charged poisons, potions, and lesser magic items . . . as well as for untraceable burials of artifacts, relics, magic items of considerable power, and people. An adventuring band could forge an interesting career as “finders and disposers” for an archmage, a royal court, or an ambitious noble family.

Anyone in the Realms who is involved in magical matters soon learns about important elements of the Art and its wielding, such as the annual Magefairs, and the interest that many have in anyone who works magic publicly, seeks magic or portals, and tries to acquire magic. Some of the most interested parties include beholders, liches, alhoons (illithiliches), dracoliches and the Cult of the Dragon, the Harpers, the Chosen of Mystara, the Red Wizards, and the Zhentarim—just to name a few. Rulers like to know who in their lands can cast spells as well, and what intentions such spell-hurlers have.

Then there are the oddities of Faerûnian magic: The ancient helmed horrors and their many modern copies and variants. The deepspawn that disgorge duplicates of creatures they have devoured, flooding an area with monsters or livestock. And the wingless wonder, a comical, clumsy oddity that might really be a powerful

but imprisoned wizard—since it’s a shape many mages in the 800s DR through 1160s DR were magically forced into, after losing duels with rivals.

The Art is vast, ever-changing, and endlessly challenging.

HOW MAGICAL IS THE REALMS?

Very magical, in that a lot of magic (spells, magic items, and ongoing enchantments and wards) is always around, and that means a lot of wizards and sorcerers too. In addition, everyone has heard tales of magic, and most city folk see uses or results of magic daily, often in the form of glowstones and similar magical light sources.

However, the average common laborer, crafter, servant, farmer or shopkeeper has never felt magic cast on him or her, or handled anything bearing a *dweomer* or that could be called a magic item. (In the Realms, regardless of specific game meanings, most folk talk of “enchanted items” and “enchantments” rather than saying “magic items” or “There’s a spell on that chair.”) Moreover, the average person has never hired anyone to cast a spell or had such a person under command. Magic is dangerous and very expensive. Many common people have seen magic used, but usually at a distance, or in the form of the trickery spells of traveling hedge wizards who entertain. Most people are fascinated by it and will rush or creep to watch it in action, full of awe but also fear. To most folk of Faerûn, there’s nothing everyday or casual about magic; they don’t really think about how much it shapes their lives and societies.

Waterdhavian Attitudes toward Magic

Early on in his learning of magic, the long-dead and locally famous first Lord (revered in Waterdeep for his role in establishing the city as it is today) Ahghairon said, “I am no wizard. I am a dabbler but no master of magic; it seems no mastery burns within me.”

These are famous words in Waterdeep, still known by most Waterdhavian children and all adults, and are oft referenced, as in the dry