

A Preview of *The Tomb of Abysthor*

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Introduction

North of the city of Bard's Gate, in the hills of the Stoneheart Mountains, lie the ruins of twin shrines dedicated to Thyr and Muir—the God of Justice and the Goddess of Virtue and Paladinhood. Near the ruined shrines lies a series of catacombs used as burial halls for the followers of Thyr and Muir. The complex has come to be known as the Stoneheart Mountain Dungeon. Your group has been commissioned by the remaining priests of Thyr and Muir in Bard's Gate to seek out the Burial Halls and to locate within them the tomb of Alaric the Paladin and there recover the *Stone of Tircople*—a holy relic.

Setting out from the *Silver Serpent Inn* in Bard's Gate, your group traveled through the vale north of Bard's Gate towards the foothills of the Stoneheart Mountains and the hidden path to the valley of the shrines. Your party found the hidden path and—climbing the twisting and hidden stairs—you discovered a beautiful valley nestled within the foothills. In the valley you noticed two large structures—the once majestic shrines to Thyr and Muir—standing near a small lake of dark and polluted water. You skirted the ruined and fire-blackened shrines, following the map given to you by the priests of Thyr along a river and into a forest beyond. Now you stand in a small clearing. Before you stands the entrance to the Burial Halls of Thyr and Muir.

You have been told by the priests that the tomb of Alaric the paladin lies on the second level below the entrance level. The

priests have informed you that they believe the entrance level—which was a primary burial hall—to be corrupted by evil. They urge you to avoid the entrance level as much as possible and they tell you that you can access the first level below by a secret door on the left wall after the first room on the entrance level. They then tell you that their holy books indicate that the second level can be attained by entering a depression in a cavernous room and taking a rough tunnel that winds downwards. They relate to you that their tales indicate that the tomb of Alaric is near the entrance point of the second level and that the entrance to the tomb is magically hidden.


The entrance archway to the Burial Halls is flanked by what were once two white marble monoliths worked with silver-inlaid glyphs and holy symbols of Thyr and Muir. Those monoliths still stand, but have been desecrated and blackened by fire. The top has been knocked off each of the monoliths and the inlaid symbols have been rudely chipped away. The entranceway itself was once made of white marble and covered with symbols of Thyr and Muir. It, too, has been defiled and now bear evil symbols written in charcoal or blood. The archway opens to a small room beyond with a hallway leading north. The rest lies in shadows.

You check your weapons and utter prayers to your gods. The evil about the place is palpable. Each of you wonder if you will be able to recover the *Stone of Tircople*, or if you will join so many others in their final rest in the Stoneheart Mountain Dungeon.

Background

In ages past, two vast temples to Thyr and Muir were erected in Bard's Gate at the founding of that great city that still stand today. The priestly followers of these noble gods erected smaller duplicates of the twin temples in a small secluded valley to the





north of the city, adjacent to a lake of crystalline clarity. This valley became known as the Valley of the Shrines. In the nearby hills they also carved burial halls to house their fallen heroes and worshipers. For years the worship of Thyr and Muir thrived, producing heroes and paladins of legend, some of whom are entombed in the burial halls.

But new gods came, replacing the older gods. And the worship of Thyr and Muir—both demanding deities—waned in favor of the more liberal gods of song, craft and commerce. Unable to maintain both the twin temples in Bard's Gate and the complex in the Valley of the Shrines, the priests of Thyr and Muir sealed the northern shrines in the valley and returned their worship to the temples in the city. Abandoned, the burial halls still remained sacred places and small groups of pilgrims continued to make treks to the sealed temples to pay respect to their fallen predecessors and to peer into the crystalline lake.

As the years passed and the worship of Thyr and Muir declined further, the shrines in the northern valley fell further to disuse and ruin. Only a handful of devoted priests, led by the high-priest Abysthor, were left to continue the elaborate rituals of their gods. Even the great twin temples in Bard's Gate began to deteriorate. Despite Abysthor's devotion, his temple and the worship of his gods waned. In his final years, Abysthor spent many hours in the main temple in Bard's Gate in *commune* with his deity. Declaring he had received a great vision, he traveled alone—aged and infirm—to the Valley of the Shrines claiming he would return soon and that the glory of Thyr and Muir would be restored. Abysthor never returned. Some said he had gone there to die and that he had done so alone because no other priest could cast the spells necessary to consecrate him properly. Many groups of priests followed after him, though none could brave the corruption that

had infested the burial halls since they had been abandoned.

It has been some 20 years since Abysthor disappeared. Only a handful of lesser priests remain in the temples in Bard's Gate, their cavernous temples falling to ruin, empty of worshipers.

Thyr and Muir

Some familiarity with these twin deities will be helpful for you as player characters as you descend into the Burial Halls.

Thyr: Thyr is the god of wise and just rule. He is normally depicted as a wizened king seated on a great throne holding a rod of kingship in one hand and a chalice of peace in the other hand. His principles are Justice, Order and Peace. He represents proper and traditional rule and as such was once worshiped (at least with lip service) by all human royalty. He is the embodiment of the enlightened human caste system where each person fairly has their place in a lawfully ordered society aimed at the good of all people. His priests wear white robes trimmed with silver, purple or gold, the colors of kingship. His symbol is a silver cross on a white field, symbolizing the upturned cross-haft of his sister's sword, which he thrust into the earth to end the god's war. Upon seeing the blood of so many gods shed, Thyr foreswore the use of swords and his priests, for this reason, may not use bladed weapons. Many favor reinforced rods, similar to light maces, modeled after Thyr's own rod of kingship. The noble eagle and lion are his sacred creatures.

Deity: Thyr, God of Law and Justice

Alignment: Lawful Good

Domains: Law, Good, Healing, Knowledge, Protection

Typical Worshipers: Humans, Royalty

Favored Weapons: Light Mace



Muir: Muir is the sister of Thyr. Where he represents Law and Peace, she represents the martial valor necessary to make that peace a reality. As such, she is the goddess of paladins. She is often depicted as a dark-tressed maiden warrior in shining mail with an upraised (often bloodstained) sword. She is noble and single-minded of purpose. The tenets of her worship include Honor, Truth and Courage. A great order of paladins, known as the Justicars, are sworn to her service. She expects self-sacrifice, humility and charity as well as unswerving loyalty. Her standards are extreme and she quickly turns her back on any who fail to live up to them. Those who maintain her standards, however, may become Justicars—a prestige class of paladins dedicated to truth and imbued with even greater holiness. Her symbol is a blood-red uplifted sword on a white background, symbolizing her endless fight against evil. Her worshipers must be lawful good, and only clerics of Muir may ordain Justicars. The falcon is her sacred animal. She is the tireless foe of all evil creatures and undead, demons and devils in particular are her sworn enemy.

Deity: Muir, Goddess of Virtue and Paladinhood

Alignment: Lawful Good

Domains: Law, Good, Protection, War

Typical Worshipers: Humans, Paladins

Favored Weapons: Longsword or Bastardsword

Pregenerated Characters

Below is a list of characters. You will be allowed to select which character you wish to play based on a random selection process. You will then be given 15 minutes to select spells, finalize equipment and make any amendments and notes you wish to make. With DM approval you can change

the race of your character if you wish. The characters may be of any gender and you can modify the names of your character as you see fit. You are all presumed to be carrying standard equipment such as torches, food, flint and steel, backpacks, small sacks, and other such basic items. Characters are presumed to have the necessary equipment for their class—rogues have thieves tools, wizards have spell components, bards have harps or lutes, etc. If you wish to use your listed money (though not gems) to buy additional equipment, you may do so though keeping in mind that you only have 15 minutes to prepare your character. Do not forget to also note on your character sheet your race and class abilities (such as rogue's backstab abilities, etc).


Your character sheet is yours. You may share the information contained on it freely or you can keep it to yourself. Similarly, each character knows at least one rumor about the dungeon. You may share that rumor, modify that rumor or not share that rumor as you see fit. The rumors may or may not be true. It is presumed that all the characters are acquainted with each other and have adventured together before. You should choose one of your party as the person who dealt most directly with the priests of Thyr and Muir and who has the map they provided.

Also, when choosing from the list below, you should note that where a character has more than one class, the class that is of higher level is listed first. So if a person is described as a rogue and a wizard, that means they are a higher level rogue than wizard (or possibly the levels are equal). The average level of the characters is 3rd level.

Dotar: a cynical half-elf fighter who wields a wondrous greatsword and longbow, Dotar is a fierce warrior. His interests run to the roguish as well, having a few skills more common to that class.

Quariust: a strange elven wizard who wields





a two-bladed sword of impressive craftsmanship, Quariust is also known for his uncanny ability to pull a much needed potion out of his pouch at just the right time.

Serapha: this quiet halfling who is both a sorcerer and a druid is nevertheless extraordinarily popular with his fellow adventurers, particularly when his deadly accurate sling stones strike a foe or when he produces his magical wand of monster summoning.

Hruth: this human rogue and sorcerer is knowledgeable, cunning and crafty with man-made items, while his rapier and unbelievably sharp dagger deal death to his foes, while a shirt of the finest mesh protects him.

Belfar: this dwarf fighter and wizard has a grim demeanor and wields a wicked heavy flail which he relishes using in combat, commonly using the weapon to crush the shields of his opponents. A strange ring glitters on one of his fingers.

Ielesinu: an elf who is both wizard and warrior, Ielesinu wields a bastard sword and a strange crossbow. He is fleet of foot and possessed of a strange pearl which he wears on a fine chain.

Brottendd: a dwarf of many callings, Brotendd is a cleric, a rogue and a fighter—and he is well-suited to all his professions. He wears a suit of fine splint mail and carries a morningstar of unusual quality.

Meristral: this enigmatic human is a bard, a ranger and a sorcerer all at once! A master of shadows, Meristral strikes from afar with his wondrous javelins, or with his spells or songs. He seems to take a wicked pleasure in his actions. A shirt of chain links glitters from under his dark cloak and a plain gold ring rests on one hand.

Sigvar: a human sorcerer of great repute and master of strange languages, Sigvar wraps himself in his fine cloak and uses

both his wondrous shortspear and his spells to great effect.

Aniquin: an elf wizard as well as accomplished rogue, Aniquin's gleaming shortsword has brought a swift end to many a foe, particularly when aided by his prodigious and powerful selection of spells.

Alanthus: a stranger to this land, Alanthus the paladin traveled far to heed the call of the goddess, Muir. He wields his gleaming longsword in her service.

Gilbon: whether this ferocious dwarf fighter is wielding his deadly dwarven urgosh or his combination of longsword and shortsword, the blood of his enemies flows freely, normally covering his breastplate in gore. He takes a cruel pleasure in finishing his foes.

Welby: an affable rogue, this halfling has lightning quick hands and a dead eye. Bolts from his hand crossbow are as feared as are his skilled fingers—which would just as readily toss a deadly dagger as pilfer a valuable bauble.

Rachid: what this half-orc barbarian lacks in brains, he makes up for in sheer size and strength. Oh, and that real big axe doesn't hurt either...No complexities here.

Tabirt: a human cleric of Thyr, Tabirt desires to come along with the party to aid them in the Burial Halls. His devotion to his god of law—and the mace he carries that dispenses justice—are an asset to any group.

Thorgest: though a human, this monk is obviously from a far off land. He is quiet, but there is little need for him to speak when he is wielding both of his razor sharp kama at the same time, his strange cloak swirling around him as he deals death to his foes.

Drusin: a half-elf bard, Drusin is a man of great lore and spells. His wickedly sharp rapier is nearly as sharp as his biting wit.

Enjoy! And best of luck!

Clark Peterson

