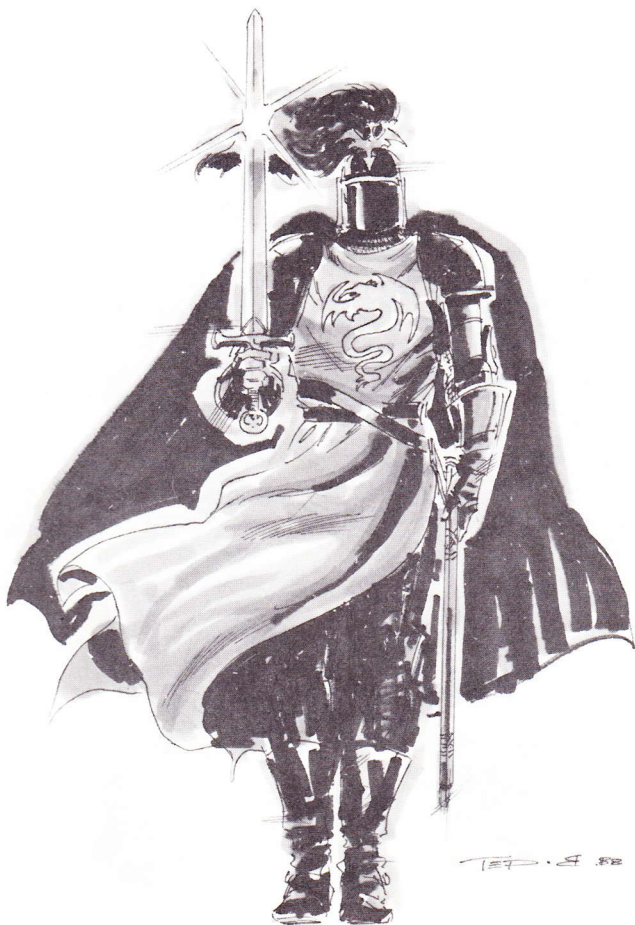


The Myths and Muses

of the Maelstrom

In Heart of the Maelstrom there are many fascinating folk. In your adventures, you may meet several of the individuals listed in these pages, yet there are many more which await you. Some are monsters to be defeated; others look forward to your conversation. All have something to offer.



Ironose

Ironose operates the local MazeMart. He can be found bartering his goods, buying others gems and battling an adventurer or two on level one of the Maelstrom. Boasting "the best dungeon prices," he may come in handy to adventurers in need.

Ironose determined that there was place for a "shop" in the Maze; that's where it all began. At first, business was slow. He sold only a few potions to Ice Phantoms and weapons to the Fighters. Gradually, through word of mouth and an intense graffiti effort, business picked up and remains prosperous today.

Ironose is also a well-trained fighter, but he's usually a friendly individual. After all, the customer is always right (well, most of the time)!



The Laughing Kettle

Believe it or not, there's actually a land where Kettles roam freely (if that's what Kettles do), the motherland of Fymia. As you may have guessed, it is the origin of The Laughing Kettle.

Back in his homeland, he was well-educated, respected and loved. However, tension eventually grew as the Kettle began to spout information no one understood time after time. His one-time friends talked behind his back; "He thinks he knows it all!" Actually, the Kettle was only trying to help them. The taunting continued, and he decided he had heard enough. It was time to leave this blessed soil to head for the Maelstrom... with a bang. And a bang it was! Granted, it wasn't the right thing to do. No one remained. He laughs today at this event, and likely will laugh tomorrow.

The Kettle has been around the Maelstrom for years, and despite his laughter, his wisdom is great. He's still your everyday "know-it-all."



Manfretti's

"Adventure getting you down? Combat's just not going as well as you had planned? Come to Manfretti's, the fun center of the Maelstrom." That's what the graffiti said. But there is more to Manfretti's, both in fun and in lore, than meets the eye.

There you'll find things to delight your senses, thrill your spirit, and warm your heart. It was all created for you by the magical Manfretti, a man who had a love for life and a first-rate sense of humor. He realized that once in awhile even the best needed a break, and so he and a group of his female associates carved from the rock within the Maze until he had created room for his fun center. It took the Manfretti and the five women years of work. When they had finished, Manfretti smiled at their achievements and planned for more.

Saying good-bye to the ladies, off he went in search of more "fun things to do." Time went by, but he never returned, and to this day, Manfretti's whereabouts are unknown. Yet the ladies he left behind continue on his dream; they keep the fun center alive, all the while hoping for his return. When you visit, and I am sure you will, you may meet one of them, and you *should* meet all.



Ye Dragon's Flagon

If only these walls could talk, what a story they would tell. From far and near, the weary, dwarf fighters who inhabit the Maze come to the Dragon's Flagon in search of the three R's: rest, relaxation and rye.

It's truly an interesting place. Somehow those little fighters have managed to disguise the bar. You won't find it... ever; it's their private reserve (with all profits channelled back to the five dwarfs in the Flagon's membership, of course). It was established in 674 b.m. (before Maelstrom) to honor the much beloved and huge Dragon of Bhjimo, who carried her likewise huge flagon everywhere. After her death at the hand of Yetteje, a robust samurai, the dwarf fighters dragged the flagon to its current, undisclosed location.

Should you happen upon this place, you can almost always find one of the dwarfs willing to talk if you've got the ear to listen. They have been around the maze, and might be able to offer something of value. But occasionally, adventure calls the dwarf fighters, so be prepared to make several return visits.



The Toga Llama

No one can pass up a gaze at this breathtaking creature. Imagine a llama in a toga. It's not an everyday sight, nor is this an everyday animal.

Many, many years ago a clan of llamas roamed the plains of Lytridickydo. The plains were sizzling hot, but the llamas had adapted to this environment fairly well. Then one day an adventurer by the name of Nalla Orman came along, bartering his goods.

"I have here the most wonderful item. It's something you need to stop that blasted heat. I'll sell you this exclusive designer toga for only 5000 gold pieces. You won't find another one like it anywhere!"

And so he went on... and on... and on. Eventually the llamas bought his story and his togas. Whether they did it just to shut him up, no one knows. Nonetheless, they followed him back to the Castle and into the dungeons where the air was cool and the living was easy. Hence is the story of the Toga Llama.



The Ruby Warlock

The lore of The Ruby Warlock goes back quite a ways. It seems he's been around forever. In his younger years, he was quite a gem. He practiced spells every day, and looked forward to the time when he, like those before him, could walk the lower levels proud and unafraid.

However, the spirits got to him. Bottled spirits, that is. He can be seen asking passers-by for a sip. Of course, the creatures of the Maze look upon The Ruby Warlock with pity, and help him when they can. He's not really a bad fellow, just a Warlock who fell by the wayside.

He still remains a fairly laid-back individual, unless provoked. As "Warlock" would imply, he is chock-full of magical power! So take care in your words and in your actions.



The Ghosts' Nest

So, you've never seen a ghost. You will likely see one of yourself if you're not careful. Yes, this is the legendary Ghosts' Nest, home to those who have refused to accept the fact that... well... they are dead.

The whereabouts of this dwelling are unknown, even to me. But I have been told on more than one occasion that it is not a place for the meek. Even the strongest, they say, will perish underneath the vapory fingers of its inhabitants. Unfortunately, it's likely that there is a ghost on duty at all times, so a "pleasure stroll" is out of the question.

I found once an old scroll in the dust of the Maze; I know not why I tell you. It may be of no matter. The parchment was badly soiled, and the words were nearly gone. I could decipher part of its tale: "Death awaits, gold comes, terror abounds... from the three, straight to thee..."



The Den of Thieves

Banned from virtually every corner of the Maelstrom is the troop of bandits who shelter at the Den of Thieves. The poor souls are misunderstood outcasts in their own Maze. They're really a nice crew (as long as you keep your stuff secure). However, they are a bit hard to find.

Throughout the years they've managed to assemble a lot of items stolen from various, fool-hearted adventurers. Swords, shields, bows, potions... you name it. Naturally, in order to protect themselves, they needed a good hiding spot. Three of the thieves were certain that a room deep within the caverns would be the perfect spot. However, another member of their guild reminded the ambitious members that monsters (and he meant *monsters*) lived in those depths. Finally, the wisest of them all announced his plan to the agreement of the rest. The Den was to be established in an area where no light shown. It was hoped you would never find the door.

Try hard, adventurer! For as they pick your pockets, you can pick their minds. As sneaky as they are, a word or two not meant for their ears may have been heard. Check in on them often for the latest gossip!



The Hurkle Beast

Lurking and stalking, working and talking are the traits of the infamous Hurkle Beast. He is the last of the Hurkeniskon species, all of whom "hurkle" often. If you should hear the chant while traversing the caverns, it's likely this chap is nearby.

A few brave adventurers of times past captured the Hurkle Beast and encaged him in a box. None thought his escape was possible. However, the box proved too weak for the creature, and his breakout was natural. In tatters, the cage still remains, but the Hurkle Beast roams free.

Unfortunately, the Hurkle Beast can't figure out how to leave the area to return to his homeland, Hurkazownia. So, here he remains.



The Snatch

The Snatch is a crafty little thief who hangs out at Manfretti's. As with most thieves, The Snatch has overheard many conversations. And, like those in his profession, he can't keep a secret very well.

The Snatch began his career rather slowly, but then inspiration struck. He applied for membership at the Den of Thieves. Virtually a novice in his profession, he hoped that the members would teach him a thing or two. If not, he'd simply take it. Within two weeks, his application had been unanimously denied. He passed none of the stealing tests and got caught three times attempting to steal information. Yet, he passed the important tests; that is, those tests important to The Snatch! He stole "The Thieves Handbook" from the Den, the member's ideas and their trade secrets to boot. He never wanted membership; he only wanted all they had to give.



Gwylion

They never intended to be the way they are. Not so long ago, they were friendly, light-hearted individuals. Now, they roam the Maze, bent on the revenge of an unknown cause. Everyone who greets them is subjected to attack and only rarely will they offer the party a truce.

The story of their transformation is unknown, but the Gwylions' change occurred shortly after it was declared that Manfretti was missing. Some speculate that the girls loved Manfretti; others, such as I, believe it was jealousy of those who enjoyed his company. When Manfretti was around, they would listen to his jokes and stories for hours on end. After his disappearance, their visits lessened, and gradually ended. They may still search for him today.

Feel sorrow for these poor beasts, but not enough to render yourself open to their attacks. Surely, they will show you no mercy.

