3RD AGE

UNDERDARK

ADVENTURE GUIDE

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®

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UNDERDARK
ADVENTURE GUIDE

The Underdark Adventure Guide is a world-neutral, standalone guide to adventuring in the strange, alien world of the underdark. The underdark is far more than just dungeons and caves. It is a veritable underground continent, populated by advanced civilizations, ancient ruins, sunless seas, alien magic, bizarre creatures, and the horrid denizens of the gloom. The standards of the surface world hold no sway in the underdark, and its mysteries, ferocity, and danger will challenge even the hardiest of adventurers.

Underdark adventures are easy to integrate with an existing campaign, as the very nature of the underdark lends itself to layering – simply arrange for the discovery of a subterranean portal, and the land beneath your existing campaign has a new life. The Underdark Adventure Guide includes everything you need to create a compelling underdark campaign:

- New character options for underdark explorers, ranging from new feats and adventuring gear to prestige classes specially tailored to the underdark races: drow, derro, duergar, svirfneblin, and troglodytes.
- More than a dozen new monsters native to the underdark, plus a variety of specialized plants and bizarre funguses.
- Extensive guidelines and world-building advice for constructing your own underdark region.
- A dozen fully developed points of interest. You can use these piecemeal as drop-in locations in your existing campaign, or use them together as a fully-developed, integrated underdark region.

The Underdark Adventure Guide is completely world-neutral and standalone.

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$ 27.00 USA

SKU GMG2003

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ISBN 0-9726241-5-5
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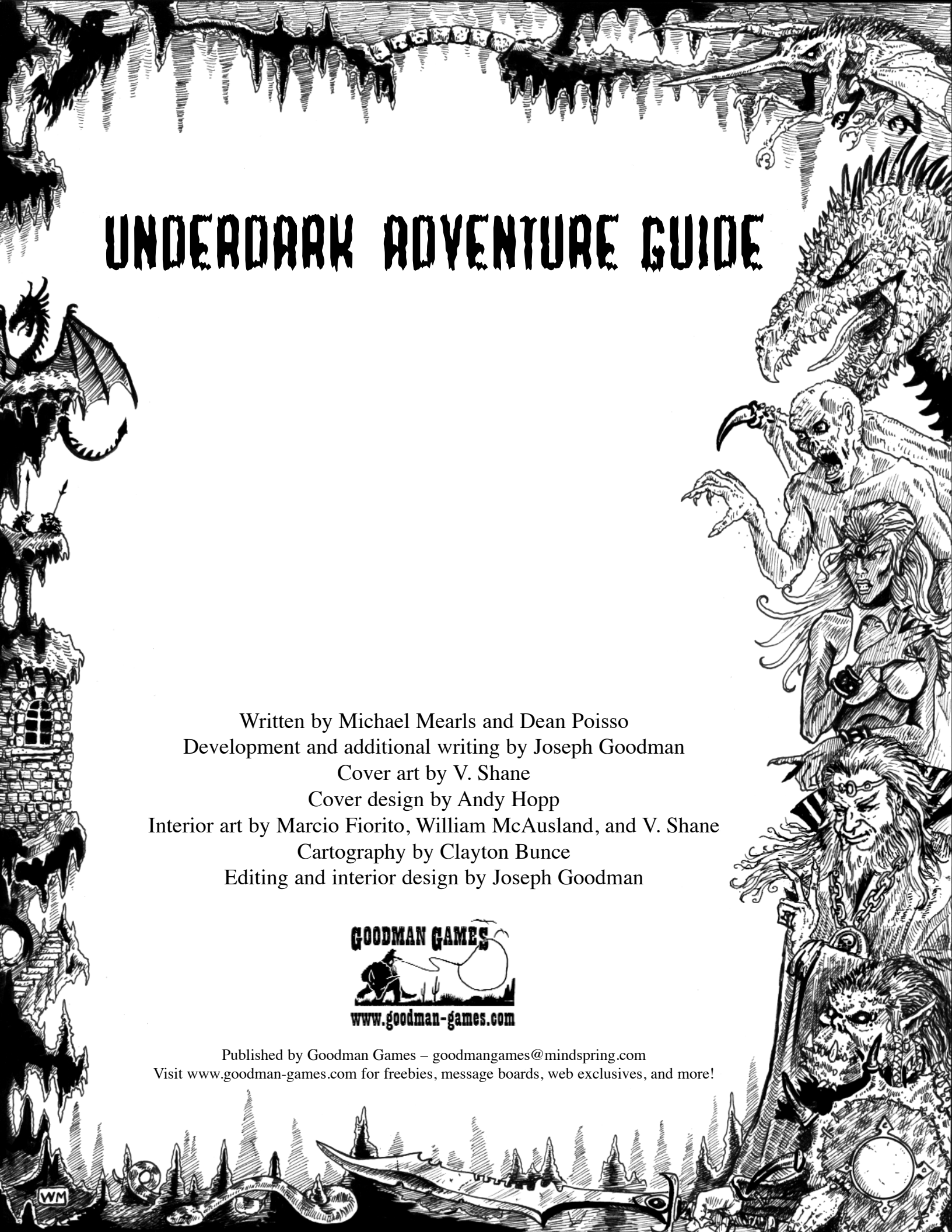

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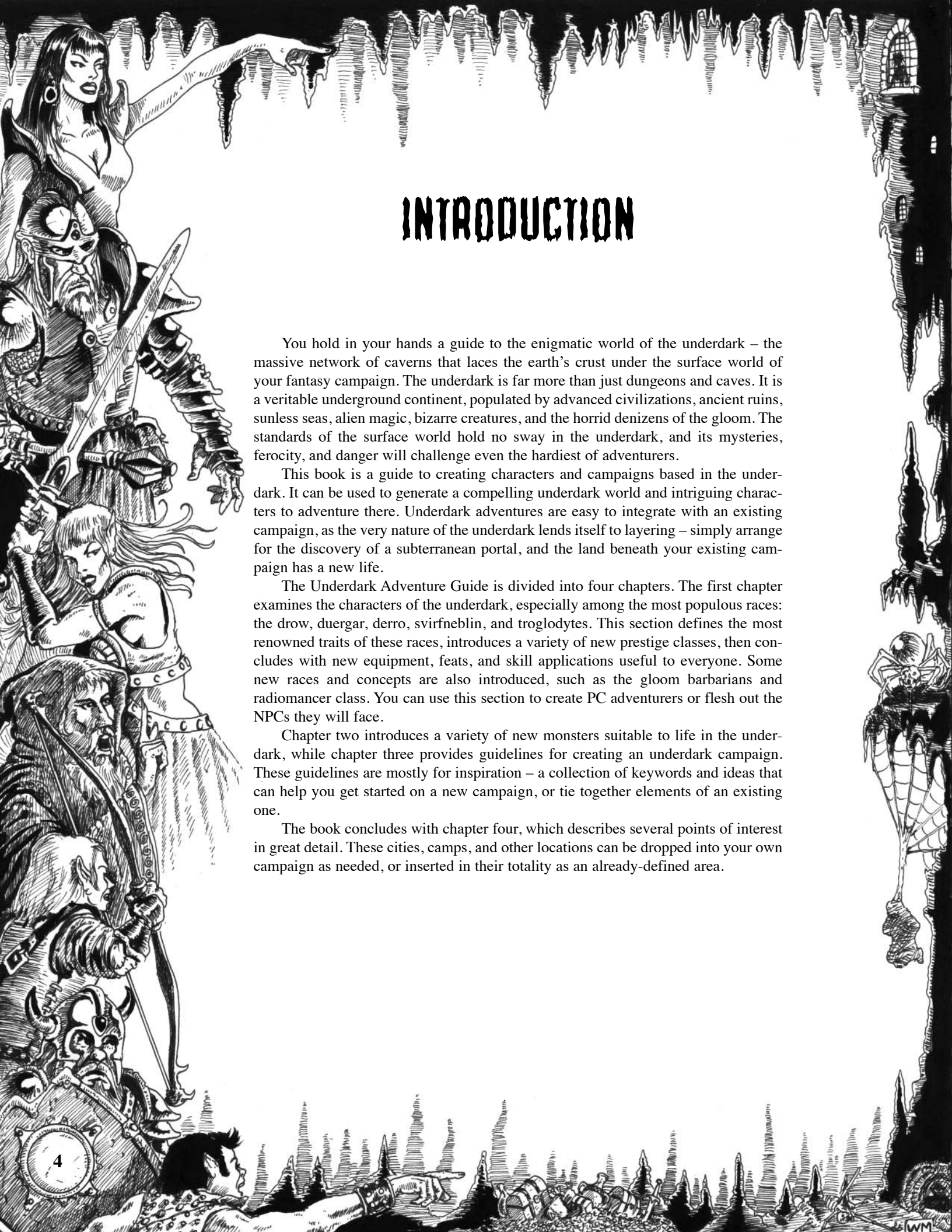

INTRODUCTION

You hold in your hands a guide to the enigmatic world of the underdark – the massive network of caverns that laces the earth's crust under the surface world of your fantasy campaign. The underdark is far more than just dungeons and caves. It is a veritable underground continent, populated by advanced civilizations, ancient ruins, sunless seas, alien magic, bizarre creatures, and the horrid denizens of the gloom. The standards of the surface world hold no sway in the underdark, and its mysteries, ferocity, and danger will challenge even the hardiest of adventurers.

This book is a guide to creating characters and campaigns based in the underdark. It can be used to generate a compelling underdark world and intriguing characters to adventure there. Underdark adventures are easy to integrate with an existing campaign, as the very nature of the underdark lends itself to layering – simply arrange for the discovery of a subterranean portal, and the land beneath your existing campaign has a new life.

The Underdark Adventure Guide is divided into four chapters. The first chapter examines the characters of the underdark, especially among the most populous races: the drow, duergar, derro, svirfneblin, and troglodytes. This section defines the most renowned traits of these races, introduces a variety of new prestige classes, then concludes with new equipment, feats, and skill applications useful to everyone. Some new races and concepts are also introduced, such as the gloom barbarians and radiomancer class. You can use this section to create PC adventurers or flesh out the NPCs they will face.

Chapter two introduces a variety of new monsters suitable to life in the underdark, while chapter three provides guidelines for creating an underdark campaign. These guidelines are mostly for inspiration – a collection of keywords and ideas that can help you get started on a new campaign, or tie together elements of an existing one.

The book concludes with chapter four, which describes several points of interest in great detail. These cities, camps, and other locations can be dropped into your own campaign as needed, or inserted in their totality as an already-defined area.

Chapter 1

Underdark Characters

Every fantasy campaign eventually encounters the underdark, though each knows it by a different name. To some, it is nothing more than the typical dungeon, where adventurers never question the source of the vibrant dark life living under cold stone ceilings. To others, it is the hell beneath the surface world, where the darkest, deepest dungeons break through to vast underground chasms. To still others, it is an alien landscape whose well-hidden secrets are worth their weight in gold.

But there's one aspect of the underdark that's understood by adventurers in all realm: evil and everything that comes with it. The sunless nether regions are full of cruelty and depredation unknown anywhere else. The vengeful drow, mad derro, and primal troglodytes inhabit a savage land. Every day is a fight for survival; every passing moment, an opportunity to kill or be killed. In the underdark, even the hunters are hunted.

This chapter looks at the characters who survive in such realms. Each of the common underdark races is described below for use as player characters or NPCs: the deep dwarves, derro, drow, duergar, gloom barbarians, half-drow, svirfneblin, and troglodytes.

Despite the evil lands in which they were molded, characters from these races need not be evil. In fact, they shouldn't be; adventuring is far more heroic with noble characters. To handle the possibility of characters whose backgrounds are radically different than the usual for their race, we present a new character concept called the racial template. Just as with a monster template, this is a tool for customizing a race to fit a specific role in your campaign. Each racial template gives a new spin to a character's racial background, replete with new abilities and opportunities, but with a cost.

The racial templates are described in detail on page 16. They are the exile (a character rejected by his race for his differences), the vindicator (a character caught in an eternal struggle with his own dark nature), the shadowkin (a character whose family ties and loyalty are too strong to break, but whose different worldview prevents him from ever being accepted), and the wolfbred (a character raised by a race other than the one that spawned him). All allow characters from evil races to be played with non-evil alignments.

But before we get to the templates, let's look at the races. The following racial descriptions apply to the typical members of the most common underdark races: the deep dwarves, derro, drow, duergar, gloom barbarians, half-drow, svirfneblin, and troglodytes.

New Races

Deep Dwarf

The "standard" dwarf is actually a subspecies known as the hill dwarf. The hill dwarf is closest to the surface and thus the most common type encountered by surface dwellers. As one descends deeper into the underdark, many other kinds of dwarves become common. The mountain dwarves live deeper under the mountains than hill dwarves and are smaller and lighter in appearance, but retain the same basic traits. Still further underground, in the underdark proper, are the deep dwarves and their evil cousins, the gray dwarves or duergar. Still one more variety of dwarf, the mad, degenerate corruption of the base dwarven stock known as the derro, can also be found deep underground.

Of all the underdark dwarf subraces, the deep dwarves are most like their surface cousins. Physically, they are the same height and only slightly leaner. Their large eyes are washed out in appearance, and their hair tends be brighter, including shades of red and blonde. The biggest differences are in fact cultural rather than physical; the deep dwarves are isolationist and standoffish toward non-dwarves. Their main contact with the outside world comes from trade with their mountain and hill dwarf cousins, who in turn ferry goods to other races.

Someone playing a dwarven character in an