



Greyhawk's Circle of Eight

BY ERIK MONA AND GARY HOLIAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SAM WOOD

Perhaps no organization of wizards is as recognized by DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® players as GREYHAWK'S Circle of Eight. Some Circle members were active in Gary Gygax and Rob Kuntz's original Greyhawk Campaign, and are as old as the game itself. Many of the spells and items in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide* bear their historic names. The contributions of the Circle of Eight are woven into the fabric of D&D campaigns everywhere.

Much has changed since the organization was first detailed, in *The City of Greyhawk* boxed set. The Flanaess has suffered years of continental war, and the face of this pivotal group has changed forever.

In the current era of the RPGA Network's LIVING GREYHAWK™ campaign, the Circle of Eight is needed more than ever to counter the forces that threaten to upset Oerth's delicate balance of power.

A Balance is Struck

The Circle of Eight's reputation spans the breadth of

the Flanaess. Its name (if not its exact demeanor) is common currency among noblemen and villagers alike.

Despite this, the Circle's full membership has never been known to those outside the organization.

The group has not always been so reclusive. Its precursor, the Citadel of Eight, was a known opponent of darkness in its many guises. Its members stood, and fell, protecting the balance and defending Oerth from the influence of malign beings and, rarely, benevolent interlopers, as well.

The Citadel

The series of alliances that would evolve into the Circle of Eight began simply, over a meal of venison and Celenese nectarwine in a posh inn near the shores of the Wild Coast. At that table, nearly thirty years ago, Mordenkainen debated with his young apprentice, Bigby, the merits of taking an active hand in maintaining the celestial balance of power. Thereafter, the two struck upon a plan to gather a group of like-minded individuals that would act to hinder advances by those who would

There are those on both sides of the eternal struggle between good and evil who would see one side topple the other; to make their philosophy, their dominion, absolute. In this respect, there is little difference between the Hierarchs of the Horned Society, or the Council of the Nine in Wintershiren. Both would change the world to suit their own agenda, and would thus upset the scales of balance that preserve this world and the multiverse.

Evil has its champions in the courts of decadent Aerdy. So too does Good field its forces in the form of the Knights of the Heart, or the all too meddling priests of St. Renthbert. Ever does one side strive against the other, changing faces and names, but never purposes. What has given me reason to fear of late, however, is that there are too few to preserve the equilibrium of everything; to keep one power from upsetting all. The world need not be, nor cannot be swallowed by the Abyss or drawn into the Heavens. In so doing, its destruction is assured. Oerth is Oerth, a place for all and any, and there are but few who can act to assure that it remains so. I resolve to be one of them.

Excerpted from the Codex of Mordenkainen, Sunsebb, 551 CY

dominate the Flanaess. That their expected exploits would impart upon the mages no small amount of lost magical lore only served to hasten the alliance.

Within months, Mordenkainen had brought the renowned warrior Robilar to his cause, as well as the cleric Riggby, and his zealous assistant, Yrag. From the shores of the Nyr Dyv, Mordenkainen recruited the righteous Tenser, who in turn introduced the dim-witted though well-meaning Serten to the assembly. Finally, the young woodsman, Otis, rounded out the group.

They called themselves the Citadel of Eight, taking the name from Mordenkainen's renowned Obsidian Citadel, in the Yatil Mountains. In the years that followed, their adventures focused on Greyhawk and the Selintan valley, and the crags of the Cairn Hills and depths of the Suss Forest were opened to their prying vision.

In the years of their companionship, both Robilar and Yrag were ennobled by Greyhawk, and Riggby was promoted speedily within the church of Boccob in Verbobonc. Tenser, Bigby, and Mordenkainen likewise advanced in their own wizardly ways, gaining arcane knowledge and power.

For a group that so decisively defeated its enemies, there remained several problems. Robilar never quite bought into Mordenkainen's philosophy, and he and Tenser often bickered over matters of morality. Serten, though seen as useful, was never truly respected and Otis, tired of underground excursions and forays into urban territories, left the group, decrying his friends as cave-dwellers and treasure seekers blind to the real problems of the world.

Over the years, the Citadel played home to such luminaries as Prince Melf Brightflame, of the Olvenfolk, the half-orc Quij, Felnorith, Robilar's brother Terik, and even, at one point, the Quasi-Deity Murlynd, in disguise.

Nearly a decade after the Citadel's formation, Otis' critical words took on the air of prophecy. In 569 CY, when the first arrow flew at Emridy Meadows, the Citadel was noticeably absent. Whether investigating magical secrets far to the west or unearthing lost passages in Urnst's Maure Castle, these self-absorbed celebrities were too preoccupied to influence one of the century's most critical battles. All were absent save Serten, who fought valiantly at the side of Prince Thrommel against the hordes of Elemental Evil. When Serten fell, none of his friends stood at his side. Though most attended his ostentatious funeral service in Verbobonc, a crucial rift had been torn in the organization. The Citadel was crumbling.

Tenser blamed Mordenkainen for the death of his friend, and retired inward to his castle. Terik and Yrag vanished, some said to the anonymity of the Bandit Kingdoms. Even the loyal Bigby left the side of his one-time master and returned to Oldridge, where he adventured for a time with a band of boyhood friends. Mordenkainen, the man who had brought the Citadel together, simply shrugged and returned, with cold eyes, to his studies.

In examining the brittle pages of the Tome of the Black Heart, I have lost the innocence that accompanies ignorance. The threat to Perth is worse than I had ever, ever imagined. Evil long thought bound out of mind awaits impatiently at the borders of the multiverse, reaching out to us still. I write of the Dark One, of course. The Biophage. He whom the ancients texts call: Thariglum. His eventual return is as certain today as it was when all acted in opposition to his sendings and the chaos and destruction they engendered before the Age of Glory. This is the power of evil united, a force to which it seems there can be no equal.

I had thought, in my own optimistic way, that I could change the nature of Perth's struggle from without. My pawns worked against both sides, making small gains and checking the onward march of larger, more significant pieces. The error was in the approach. To truly block the return of He who would devour all that is, it has become necessary to introduce a new player, one who can act from the side of darkness itself to consume it from within.

With the gift of a single sword, an inevitable series of events has been initiated. There can be no atonement for the action I have now taken. I pray to the Archimage that I have seen true.

*Excerpted from the Codex of Mordenkainen,
Codexen, 570 C 13*

Formation of the Circle

The chaos surrounding the return to power of the demigod, Iuz, in CY 570 prompted Mordenkainen to consider a new paradigm. Though the Old One worked to check the growing power of the Horned Society, and kept Fyryondy's eyes on its northern borders, Mordenkainen knew well that the situation would not last. The dissolution of the Citadel left Mordenkainen without a tool to shape events as he would and though he hardly admitted it to himself, he longed return to a life of adventure.

The Citadel's primary failure, he surmised, had been its inclusive philosophy. As its founding concept had been arcane, he had been foolish to assume that men like Robilar or Riggby would rally to his cause without subtly working against it for reasons personal, spiritual or political. Men of intellect and sorcerous skill, whose primary interests were more than material, would replace them. Thus was born the Circle of Eight.

Over the next year, Mordenkainen invited some of the most prominent magi in the Flanaess to join him. By the first month of 571 CY, he had gathered eight mages to his cause, among them Bigby, Otto, Rary, Nystul, Drawmij, and the affable Bucknard.

The Circle in those early days worked to check the power of influential beings in Eastern Oerik. When they could not directly intervene, they sponsored groups of adventurers, as in the sacking of Iggitwil's former haunt at the Tsojcanth Caverns in the mid-570's. Whether or not those agents always knew who set them upon their quests is a matter of some debate.

Privately, members of the Circle explored fantastic corners of Oerth, including the strange and foreboding City of the Gods, near Blackmoor, further depths of Castle Greyhawk, and even the manifold layers of the infernal Abyss. More importantly, through their own adventurers and the exploits of those related to them, the Circle began to formulate what soon would become one of the most impressive networks of informers and agents the Flanaess has ever known.

The Circle Completed

The membership of the Circle changed little in the years between its inception and 574 CY, when Tenser, still bitter over the dissolution of the Citadel, sought membership. After one of the founding mages of the group abandoned Oerth to explore other planes of existence, the petition was granted, and Tenser brought his unique, if less-than-subtle, ambition to the ideology of the group.

Two years later, with the addition of the mage Otiluke, the Circle solidified its reputation as a political power in the Central Flanaess. As president of the Society of Magi, Otiluke brought with him a seat on Greyhawk's Directing Oligarchy, and the group initiated its long-anticipated drive to influence the policies of temporal leaders throughout the Marklands. Jallarzi Sallavarian was invited to join in 581 CY, replacing the much esteemed Bucknard, who had mysteriously vanished two years earlier. The final week of

her six-month trial membership was to be a baptism by fire.

The Return of Vecna

Alerted to a rising evil in the Flanaess, the Circle hastily gathered for a nearly unprecedented field operation in 581 CY. A new power sought to join Oerth's vast pantheon, and its efforts threatened to corrupt the magical order of the known world.

The Circle traveled to the hills south of Verbobonc, where they investigated the tomb of a long-dead Oeridian tyrant who was thought to have possessed the awesome artifacts known as the *Hand and Eye of Vecna*. Finding the tyrant alive, after a fashion, and completely controlled by the Whispered One, the ill-prepared Circle of Eight panicked, and was defeated.

Vecna destroyed the entire Circle, save Mordenkainen, who had elected to remain in Greyhawk as a safeguard against just such an occurrence. When news reached the archmage, he mobilized the Circle's allies, and a small cadre of apprentice wizards, former companions, and long-time confidantes embarked on a nearly hopeless bid to thwart Vecna's apotheosis (see TSR9309 "Vecna Lives!").

Somehow (it is whispered that they employed the aid of Iuz, who stood to lose much under the deification of the Lich Lord), the intrepid adventurers managed to banish the Maimed God at the strange stone circles known as the Tovag Baragu, and Oerth returned to relative normalcy, save for the absence of the Circle of Eight.

Shattered Circle

Mordenkainen addressed this absence by recovering what was left of his fallen comrades and cloning them. This endeavor consumed time that otherwise might have seen him addressing the reports of the Circle's allies in the North, who warned of alarming developments in Stonefist and the Barbarian Lands. When those events spiraled into the first conflicts of the Greyhawk Wars, the Circle's clones remained undeveloped and half-aware. By the time the clones reached full maturation, the Circle of Eight had been forced to take a reactive stance to the tumultuous events unfolding before them.

Though the Circle never acted concertedly during the Greyhawk Wars, certain "hotspots" received a good deal of their attention. Mordenkainen Bigby and Otto fought against the Old One's army at the infamous Battle of Critwall Bridge, and Drawmij was instrumental in organizing the flood of refugees from the Lost Lands to fastnesses in the Good Hills. Nystul worked primarily alone in besieged Tenh, while Otto and Bigby left Mordenkainen in the Vesve Forest to do what they could for the Iron League. Citing pressing personal needs, Rary retreated to his tower in Lopolla and refused to come to the aid of his companions.

When the political rumblings that signaled the end to the conflict reached the Free City of Greyhawk, the entire Circle was on hand to ensure a favorable outcome

to the peace process. Their network of agents researched the backgrounds of key diplomats and participants in the proceedings, and magical divinations were conducted to unmask any would-be saboteurs. Never did the view of those scrying crystals turn inward, however, toward the plans of the single individual who could do the most harm to the delegates' cause.

Rary's treachery that day killed Tenser and Otiluke, and gained the Archmage of Ket everlasting infamy. Spurned from his family by his brother and banned from Greyhawk itself by Mordenkainen, Rary fled to the Bright Desert, to uncover its secrets and inaugurate an empire.

Coming Full Circle

Since the war, the Circle has admitted three new members, rounding out their number. From the far reaches of the ancient lands of the Baklunish, they courted Alhamazad the Wise. Theodain Eriason, the Circle's first true demihuman member, came from the Yeomanry. The first post-war addition, however, was the most obvious. Warnes Starcoat, Counselor to the Courts of Urnst, had already dignified himself by helping the Circle recover the powerful *Crook of Rao* from the clutches of the Mother of All Witches, Iggywlv. Canon Hazen's heroic use of that artifact in 586 CY validated Starcoat's inclusion, as did the archmage's crucial role in the horrific circumstances surrounding Tenser's return from the realm of the dead (see TSR9576 "The Return of the Eight").

In the years since the close of the Greyhawk Wars, much has been done to restabilize the Flanaess' balance of power. Much work remains, however, and Mordenkainen and the Circle have resolved to ensure that it is completed.

Personalities

The following are profiles of the individual mages comprising the Circle of Eight as of late Spring, Common Year 591.

The Circle is in fact a much larger organization than implied by its nine mages, and an enterprising DM should develop retainers, apprentices, allies and agents as possible aides and foils for her players.

Full statistics and equipment lists have not been provided. Members of the Circle can act as mentors or foils, but should not be set up as actual opponents of the PCs at any time. The Circle controls a wide network of agents. Should an adventurer come into conflict with the organization, she must deal with mid-level intermediaries far before encountering one of the puppetmasters. Members of the Circle of Eight have access to a wide variety of magical items, including several that modify attributes (especially Dexterity and Intelligence). Such items are not reflected in the baseline statistics provided below.

Alhamazad the Wise, Wiz19: HP 54, AL LN. Str 7, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Though he now calls the great city of Zeif his home, Alhamazad the Wise was born in the Ekbiiri port of Kofeh nearly a century ago. When he came of age, his family sent him away to Ekbiir for training in the civil service, and Alhamazad came to serve at the court of the

caliph, where his aptitude for the mystical arts was recognized immediately. Alhamazad's magical training was conducted at the magical school known as the Zashassar of Ekbiir, under the unforgiving Masters of the Elements. A hot-headed lad, he rebelled against the strictures of the place and emerged on his own as a free mage before his education was complete.

As a young wizard, Alhamazad traveled throughout his homeland, gaining knowledge and experience with the multiplicity of Baklunish cultures and peoples, from the Tiger Nomads in the north to the southern valleys of Ull. He explored the Yatils to pierce the secrets of the Mounds of Dawn with freebooting compatriots and sailed the warm waters of the Dramidj to lands only spoken of in myths. Years of attendant service in the courts of many local emirs and pashas alike wore heavily on the mage, and Alhamazad found himself increasingly drawn to the tenets of the Lady of Fate. After a foray to the Pinnacles of Azor'alq that resulted in a fall that broke his leg in 553 CY, he retired to the city of Zeif, where he became an unofficial advisor to the court of the sultan. He has remained there ever since, gaining a reputation as a wizened old sage of Baklunish history. While he still travels broadly, he does so primarily in secret.

Alhamazad's appearance is elderly: he is thin, frail, and walks with a pronounced limp. The mage sports a decorated beard and typically wears the plain robes of a Baklunish mendicant, donning a simple turban atop his shaved pate. He supports himself with a staff and avoids melee at all costs. Alhamazad speaks the common tongue with a thick accent, but is fluent in a dozen languages. He is shy and retiring in the company of others, particularly foreigners such as easterners, whom he finds clamorous. Alhamazad is a known expert in the fields of summoning and elemental magicks. He is known to associate with noble elementals and is an expert on geniekind.

Mordenkainen met Alhamazad almost 20 years ago, when a crisis in Zeif drew the Archmage of Greyhawk to the assistance of the old mage. The affair ended with the departure of Alhamazad's traitorous apprentice, Kermin Mind-Bender. Mordenkainen and Alhamazad have been fast allies ever since. Alhamazad's primary interest is in maintaining Baklunish culture, influence and power. As such protection often requires defeating the plots of evil mages, cults, and extra-planar menaces, he has found common cause with the Circle of Eight.

Alhamazad the Wise is new to the Circle and its politics and as such has kept his distance from the other mages. He is wary of Drawmij, though the two share many common interests. Alhamazad has displayed antipathy for Warnes Starcoat, though there appears to be no obvious explanation for the cause of his feelings.

Bigby, Wiz19: HP 89, AL N. Str 9, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 21, Wis 15, Cha 12.

The name Bigby is famous within sorcerous circles across the Flanaess—ironic, considering the shy, ascetic nature of the mage who bears it, whose penchant for manipulating the world around him from a distance is legend. Before the wars, Bigby had been the most reclusive member of the Circle of Eight, attending group meetings, but rarely accompanying the Circle on adventures or missions. The treachery of Rary, against which he was the only survivor, has changed all of that. Once timid and cautious, Bigby now acts as an ambassador for the Circle, traveling the Flanaess in search of new contacts or information.

Bigby hails from the Great Kingdom, where he was born in the town of Oldridge nearly 58 years ago. His features are Oeridian, with light brown hair and dark brown eyes. His skin is pale, and his exceedingly picky diet has resulted in an almost unhealthy gauntness.

Early in life, Bigby's travels found him in the Wild Coast, where he eventually gained the notice of Mordenkainen. Bigby is known to be a member of Aerdy's House Cranden, and rumors have long placed Mordenkainen as a distant scion of the same bloodline. For that reason, and because of their shared experiences and adventures, Bigby and Mordenkainen share a friendship unique among the members of the Circle.

When intrigue with Ivid's Court Wizard, Xaene, forced Bigby from his tower in Oldridge in 573 CY, it was to Onnwal's port of Scant that he turned his attention. There, he posed as a merchant specializing in rare commodities, all the while building important alliances within the Iron League. These connections are especially strong in Irongate, where he has the friendship of Cobb Darg and the counsel of the city's artificers, the crafty Elayne Mystica chief among them.

Still the ever-thoughtful mage of years past, Bigby has seen that extreme amounts of caution often lead to inaction, which does little good for anyone. His recent travels have brought him into increased contact with the forces of the Scarlet Brotherhood and, though he now resides in Mitrik, his love for the Brotherhood-occupied town of Scant has never faltered.

Drawmij, Wiz18: HP 81, AL N. Str 7, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 22, Wis 17, Cha 9.

Drawmij is 63 years old, though he appears in his late twenties or early thirties. His hair is sandy blond, his eyes blue, nearing purple. There is an unsettling quality to his features, and more than a few acquaintances have noticed that something about him seems different each time they are in his presence—the shade of his eyes, his height, or even the thickness and curl of his hair. Still, the mage is affable, and given his profession, little attention is paid to what Rary once termed “troubling inconsistencies.”

Drawmij spends as little time in Greyhawk as possible, finding the place stifling and distasteful. He

prefers the cultured antiquity of southern Keoland, and his private undersea demesne to that. His only regular terrestrial haunt is the Keoish city of Gradsul, at the mouth of the Sheldomar River.

Drawmij has a close connection to Duke Luschan of Gradsul, a distant cousin to the King of Keoland. The two may be kin, even close family. Reportedly, Drawmij also consorts with the Hierophant Sverdras Meno, a powerful being who oversees the vast Azure Sea. Meno is thought to be a member of the mysterious Cabal, a congregation of the Old Faith even more enigmatic than the Circle of Eight. Few know that it is the one-time fastness of the hierophant that Drawmij has made into his private residence.

The mage speaks of contacts within the realm of Celene, and offers the weave of his fine robes and various artifacts displayed about his home as proof of his olven connections. Whether for reasons of politics or something more sinister, however, few in Enstad admit to any sort of relationship with the man. Somehow, though Drawmij has few known agents, he manages to report ably to the circle on matters involving Keoland and its client states.

In the last ten years, Drawmij has focused his magical study upon the science of travel and, more specifically, upon theories of the manipulation of time. Though he has not admitted to ultimate success, there can be no denying that Drawmij, once merely enigmatic, has grown quite eccentric of late, perhaps as a reaction to an experiment gone awry. Jallarzi put as much forward to the assembled Circle in their most recent meeting, but she received only a cool smile from the mage and a harsh reprimand from Mordenkainen.

Drawmij met the news of the treachery of Rary with classic dispassion. Indeed, the nascent archmage appears to have been the Circle member least affected by the events of the Greyhawk Wars and Reconstruction. He only grudgingly agreed to the addition of Warnes and Alhamazed, and argued steadfastly against expanding the purview of the Circle to include non-human members. Finding Nystul his only ally in the matter, however, he has since treated the olve Theodain Eriason with bland acceptance.

Jallarzi Sallavarian, Wiz15: HP 47, AL NG. Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 19, Wis 17, Cha 17.

Jallarzi, at 42, is the Circle's youngest member, and its only female. Born into minor nobility in the Duchy of Urnst, she studied magic as a teen under the mysterious Seer of Urnst and the redoubtable Warnes Starcoat. Later travels brought her to Greyhawk. There, under the tutelage of Tenser, she became the youngest mage ever inducted into the Society of Magi.

Often considered soft-spoken, her demeanor has hardened noticeably since she was the first to discover the devastation on the Day of Great Signing six years ago. She has sworn vengeance against Rary, though she has not taken any public action against her one-time comrade. The treachery of one so even-mannered as the former

Archmage of Ket has triggered paranoia throughout the Circle, and these feelings have affected even Jallarzi.

Since Tenser was probably her closest ally in the Circle, she now spends less time with her companions than before the wars, preferring instead to conduct her research and Circle business alone. She has retained her villa in Greyhawk, and rumors suggest that it is perhaps the most heavily magicked building in the city, outside of the guildhall itself. She still spends a great deal of time with her friends Derider Fanshen and Matriarch Sarana, and the dark times have bolstered her faith in Pelor.

Jallarzi is an extremely busy woman; the last year has seen her travel the Flanaess from Loftwick to Rel Mord. She avoids the lands of the old Great Kingdom, but urges her political friends to support both Nyrond and the Urnst States against the tyranny to the east.

Regardless of her increased responsibilities, however, Jallarzi still takes time to encourage younger mages. She often is sought out for training purposes. She prefers the coin of Greyhawk in exchange for training, but she also fancies magical wands, and any addition to her considerable collection would be greatly rewarded.

Jallarzi is a tall (5 ft. 7 in.) woman of striking features. She is nearly purebred Suel, and her pale skin and curly, honey-blond hair have turned the head of more than one novice in the corridors of the guildhall. She prefers to dress comfortably in silks and satins imported from the Far West, and though the material would seem to belie an opulent lifestyle, she prefers function over style in clothing, often eschewing the flowing skirts so popular in the Garden Quarter for simple breeches.

Jallarzi rarely travels alone, for the pseudodragon, Edwina, constantly flutters at her side, occasionally acting as a messenger in times of need. The creature is fiercely loyal, and the few attempts that have been made to abduct it have met with dismal failure and, given Jallarzi's extensive contacts in the City Watch, unusually harsh sentences.

Jallarzi remains dedicated to her duty as a liaison between the Circle and other powerful mages in Nyrond, and the new leadership of King Lynwerd has given her reason to hope for that embattled nation. The Flanaess remains factionalized, however, and few are more aware of this than Jallarzi. Her greatest fear is that by choosing a single enemy, the Circle opens itself to several more. The Greyhawk Wars and their aftermath have frozen everything in a kind of limbo. It is her belief that the best course of action is to wait, and see what starts to thaw.

Mordenkainen, Wiz20+: HP 106, AL N. Str 10, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 23, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Mordenkainen is one of the most feared and respected living mages in the Flanaess. Once a resident of the Wild Coast, Greyhawk, and Highfolk, respectively, he has traveled to the reaches of the exotic Far West and ventured extensively across the Flanaess, from the lands of the Northmen to the shores of the Amedio Jungle. There is scarcely a mage who has not heard of his exploits or recognized his skill and knowledge of matters both magical and political.

Mordenkainen stands 5 ft. 11 in. tall, and appears half again younger than his true 82 years of age. He wears a dark beard trimmed to a point, and usually favors black satin coats, lined in red, over traditional robes. Two years ago, Mordenkainen shaved his head, and he has remained bald by choice ever since. His most impressive physical features are his penetrating eyes. It is said that they hold hints of genius tinged with madness, a volatile combination that usually gets Mordenkainen what he wants from the easily persuaded. He revels in the art of debate, though his emotions can overcome him if he fears defeat. Luckily for him, this is a rare occurrence (though allegedly the spike that tore a rift in his once-strong friendship with Rary).

Little is known about Mordenkainen's origins, particularly the place of his birth. Rumors place him as Oeridian, perhaps Aerdi. Some even say he is of the line of Ganz Yragerne, making him distantly related to such notables as Zagig Yragerne and Heward. He has few friends, and no one in whom he completely confides. His greatest passions are for his Art.

Perhaps no individual in all Oerik sees himself as embodying the spirit of Balance as does Mordenkainen the Archmage. His philosophies are almost entirely one-sided on the matter, and many a worthy cause has gone unanswered by the mage's private army, the Obsidian Citadel (sharing the name of his hidden fortress home) because of his neutral-minded convictions.

Mordenkainen's view of balance is no tit-for-tat equality, but a highly detailed and extremely theoretical philosophy derived from decades of arcane research. He has fought ardently for the forces of good (most recently during the Greyhawk Wars), but just as often he has been known to work as a shadow player for malevolence. In all things, Mordenkainen prefers to maneuver behind the scenes, subtly manipulating events to ensure that no side gains the upper hand. As a result, the archmage is trusted little, even among the likewise-neutral Hierophants of the Cabal, who find his vision of Balance wholly self-centered and somewhat arbitrary.

This philosophy has gained the archmage a virtual army of enemies, not a few of whom once considered him a good friend. Among these last can be counted Evard the Black, Terik and, of course, Rary. Iuz and his underlings, particularly Kermin Mind-Bender, have hated Mordenkainen from their first meeting.

In recent years, Mordenkainen has turned his full attention to his position as leader of the Circle of Eight. The events of the Greyhawk Wars and their aftermath strike him as prophetic of the dark times revealed in the *Tome of the Black Heart*, discovered so very long ago beneath Maure Castle. For decades, he has been collecting his thoughts in a work known as the *Codex of Mordenkainen*. Archmages across the Flanaess would give anything to peruse its pages.

Nystul, Wiz17: HP 76, AL N. Str 7, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 22, Wis 17, Cha 15. Note: Nystul is protected by a permanent *protection from evil* spell.

The mage Nystul is a rare sort. A man of allegedly comical appearance, he uses obfuscating magicks to alter his appearance to something suitable for any given situation. Beneath the illusion, his features are atypically Flan, with an olive complexion more common in Oeridians and a tall, spindling form that towers over six and a half feet high. His intellect is keen and his insight piercing. Subterfuge and intrigue are his fortes. Mordenkainen often notes that Nystul seems sometimes to lack a well-grounded, rational temperament. Nystul is not as well-known as Mordenkainen, Bigby, or the others, even in his native Tenh, where prior to the Great Wars he was seen as an aloof and eccentric mage from Redspan, of passing interest to Ehych or his court.

Nystul was born in Tenh 53 years ago to a family of well-connected nobles in Nevond Nevnd who unfortunately were ambitious and faced with better-connected enemies. Despite a good reputation among many fellow nobles, they could not prevent their downfall when an intrigue with the court of Duke Pet'yeu saw the proud clan brought low on charges of sedition and insurgency.

The nobles of Nystul's House were tried for treason, and the House was disbanded. Nystul was taken away from his parents by servants and raised in a small monastery bordering the Pale. There he was taken in by a small sect of pacifist Pholtan monks living near the Phostwood.

The monks raised Nystul well, and encouraged the oft-mischievous student's talent for magic, particularly that of illusions. He was given rudimentary instruction by a wily old cleric named Friar Nemonicus, himself obsessed with the powers inherent to light and darkness. Nystul's permanent *protection from evil* spell was in fact a gift from Nemonicus.

Eventually, the monks raised sufficient monies to send Nystul south to a proper magic school at Radigast City's well-regarded Sorcerous Union. There he befriended a young Otto, resting from one of his occasional sojourns to the Nyr Dyv. Despite the arduous experiences of his youth, Nystul managed to come away from them with a deep concern for his homeland, and it was to Tenh that he eventually returned when he consumed his wanderlust. He constructed a home in Redspan and took on young apprentices. It was not long before his exploits brought the attention of Mordenkainen and an offer of membership in the Circle of Eight in 571 CY.

When the Wars came to Tenh, Nystul did his best to evacuate Redspaners to Urnst as well as to arm his kinsfolk against the surprising onslaught from the north and east. His visibility rose considerably during this time, even as Ehych and the court made a hasty retreat to Radigast City and the protection of Countess Belissica. Nystul already had allied himself with a little-known organization calling themselves the Keepers of the Flan, comprising mages, druids, and the archaic loremasters of the clans, most of whom escaped Iuz and the barbarians to the Rakers or the Phostwood. Nystul has been working to recover his homeland ever since.

Alone among the other members of the Circle of Eight, Nystul holds the belief that Rary's so-called traitorship is

nothing but a ruse perpetrated either by the Archmage of Ket himself or some greater enemy of the Circle, with the archmage as a dupe. To this end, he has contacted Rary's old companion, Torik Redaxesson of Highfolk, who has been pushing for an investigation into the cause of the archmage's alleged corruption.

Nystul perceives the Old One and his diabolical retinue as the Circle's true enemy, and he is eager to increase the Circle's number, beyond eight if need be, to combat this menace. The tide of evil and tyranny must be turned, and he believes it should begin where it first began last time, in Tenh.

Otto, Clr3(Boccob)/Wiz15: HP 78, AL N. Str 16, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Otto has been involved in the affairs of the Circle of Eight since before the group's existence. In 570, with Robilar's part in the release of Iuz revealed, Mordenkainen sought to keep tabs on the noble's activities. Since Lord Robilar was said to have the ability to discover magical scryes placed upon him, it was necessary to plant a spy within his sizable host. Having found Robilar's servant, the euroz Quij, wholly incorruptible (insofar as loyalty to his master was concerned), the Archmage of Greyhawk set upon a more mundane plan. Working through contacts in the Prelacy of Almor, he drafted an aspiring magic-wielding priest of Boccob as his mole. So it was that Otto worked his way into Robilar's organization, and onto the path of events that would see him as a founding member of the Circle of Eight.

Otto is a rotund 53 year-old Oeridian with long hair, dyed light orange and worn in curls. At first glance, he appears foppish, as suggested by the intricately designed silk and satin robes that round out his voluminous wardrobe. Further study, however, reveals that he is possessed of the sharpest of minds, tinged only slightly by eccentricity. At times, he acts like the very image of Zagyg, and some have suggested that the attention of that demipower aided greatly in his rapid advancement in the field of arcane study.

The mage's first calling was to the clergy of the Uncaring One, and it was as a Loremaster, in the vaunted temple of Boccob in Chathold, that he spent most of his life prior to being drafted by Mordenkainen. For this reason, he is a good friend of both Ravel Dasinder of Greyhawk and Riggby, who has long since retired from his position of eminence in Verbobonc.

Otto loves traveling. Before the wars, he boasted of having visited every civilized nation in the Flanaess (and some considerably less civilized, for good measure). He claims that his adventures are due to his love of seeing new and exciting things. Those who know him well explain that, more than the sights, Otto travels to exotic lands for the *tastes* that might be discovered there. In fact, the mage has a specially enchanted cornucopia that will reproduce any one meal once per year, with the exception that it must be a meal that Otto has ingested in the last 360 days. Otto cherishes this item, and often will brave hazards both magical and mundane to experience some new culinary delight. Such travels have brought him further west than any

other member of the Circle save Mordenkainen, and dark secrets learned there have caused him at times to wonder at the true drive of the Circle's founder.

Ultimately, Otto's studies have remained close to the roots he followed before the Greyhawk Wars. He is obsessed with the structure of magic on Oerth, but, unlike Mordenkainen, he takes the unorthodox opinion that the form of magic and the form of music have some telling similarities. His first experiments in this arena involved mixing musical effects with mundane magical spells, but he has, of late, taken to composing chilling arias, such as his *Aestrella*, which produce stunning magical effects when sung to perfection. His latest endeavor is a piece for a chamber orchestra that, when played correctly, will open a visual-only gate depicting the wild forests of Arborea. It is slow work, but the commission paid by the Greyhawk Opera House has allowed him to continue in lieu of actual adventuring or any other form of income.

Theodain Eriason, Wiz17: HP 79, AL CN. Str 15, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 22, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Theodain Eriason is the first demihuman ever to join the Circle of Eight, though close associations have been maintained by the organization with Prince Brightflame and the Knights of Luna, as well as the leadership of the Fairdells.

Eriason is a tall, gaunt high elf with long black hair streaked with silver. His complexion is typically pale and his dress conspicuous, comprised of a suit of black and silver cloth embroidered with magical runes. His manner is cold and his mood is often described as disagreeable, even baneful. This appearance masks a keen intellect and a passionate desire to protect his homeland and the rest of the Sheldomar Valley. His recollection of people and events over the last two centuries is considered encyclopedic.

Theodain was born in the western verges of the Dreadwood almost three centuries ago. When the Yeomanry League withdrew from Keoland during their wars of aggression and declared its independence, his family crossed the Javan and settled near Loftwick. Theodain began life as a warrior and spent much of his youth patrolling the Jotens and Little Hills for incessant incursions. His father became a Grosspokeman of the league, and it was not until the elder Eriason's death in 470 CY that Theodain took up magecraft. He learned at the feet of the elven wizards of the Dreadwood and spent some time at the magical school in Gradsul before embarking on an adventuring career that would span decades. While based for some time in the independent town of Melkot in the Tors, Theodain explored the Hellfurnces, defeated the plots of assassin's guilds and elemental cults in the Hool Marshes, and even was among the first to explore the Lost Passage of the Suloise when it was discovered in 576 CY.

Theodain has taken to the affairs of the Circle with avid enthusiasm. He finds Drawmij, Nystul, Otto, and Jallarzi particularly to his liking, and he has enjoyed his infrequent visits to the Free City. He has treated coolly with Alhamazad the

Wise and Warnes Starcoat, whom he views with suspicion (they, in turn, consider him a firebrand who all-too-often resorts to morally questionable methods). In his short time with the Circle of Eight, Theodain has shown a tendency to openly question Mordenkainen's leadership, suggesting alternatives and sarcastically pointing out perceived weaknesses, much to the irritation of the elder mage. Theodain pushes for the Circle of Eight and their allies to take a more active role in managing conflicts in the Flanaess, particularly in the Sheldomar where he supports action in Geoff and Sterich, as well as intervention in the Scarlet Brotherhood-created chaos enveloping the region of the Hool Marshes. Bigby has often joked that in taking in Theodain they have replaced one Tenser with another.

Warnes Starcoat, Wiz20: HP 86, AL N. Str 14, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 24, Wis 17, Cha 17.

The man who would become Warnes Starcoat was born 57 years ago in the city of Leukish to merchant parents of moderate wealth and influence. When he came of age, being the third son of four and showing some inclination toward scholarly pursuits rather than matters mercantile, Warnes was sent south to the old city of Seltaren. There his education began in earnest at the Wizardholme of Urnst, a small magical society and school founded by wandering Suel mages many centuries ago. Warnes progressed quickly, becoming a well-regarded generalist wizard before his thirtieth winter.

This recognition soon brought him an appointment as a junior assistant to the Chief Magical Councilor of the Duke, an enigmatic figure known only as the Seer of Urnst. The two quickly came at odds (it is said that the latter practiced dark, forbidden rites) and Warnes left Urnst for the Flanaess and adventure, coming to live in the Free City of Greyhawk for some time.

Warnes came to real prominence in CY 575, after defeating the plots of a certain mysterious magus, known only as the Weird of Gnatmarsh. This sorceress and her cult had grown wicked and powerful over the previous few years, espousing the worship of various depraved, croaking powers of the swamp. Her grotesque retinue plagued the surrounding territory, killing and maiming men, dwarves, and elves, even delving into the Celadon. When her final outrage, absolute control of the mouth of Nesser, proceeded unchallenged after her destruction of a royal squadron, Warnes and a company of allies went after her. In what has become a legendary magical duel, he defeated the Weird in personal combat, sinking her perverse tower into the swamp in a display of crackling energy that drew Warnes into the Astral Plane. There, in an adventure he has yet to speak of, he gained his most prized possession and his namesake, the *Starcoat*.

In 576, Warnes was appointed Chief Sorcerous Councilor to Duke Karl, filling a vacuum left open a few years earlier by the mysterious disappearance of the Seer of Urnst. Six months later, he was welcomed in Countess Belissica's court as well.

Warnes appears as a gentleman of great refinement. His typically Suel complexion is tanned from many years spent outdoors. He wears a short, well-trimmed beard and a fine black hat with a dark blue stripe. His magical coat is black as midnight, and glimmers like the sky on a cloudless night.