

The Lands of Robilar

Mysterious Places

by Paul Looby and Creighton Broadhurst

There are few personages in the Flanaess so synonymous with treachery and infamy than the archmage Rary and his ally Lord Robilar. Since their heinous murder of the archmages Tenser and Otiluke at the end of the Greyhawk Wars, the traitors have loomed large in the fears of the goodly folk of the lands around the Nyr Dyv.

While Rary's past is well-known and much debated among the learned, Robilar's origins are clouded in rumour and mystery. Many claim that he is a native of the Wild Coast. Others insist that Robilar is a scion of one of the Celestial Houses of Aerdy (the exact house varies with each telling, though Cranden, Rax and Naelax are most commonly mentioned). A few even whisper that he is Mordenkainen's bastard son.

A few facts are beyond doubt, however. Robilar first rose to common notice in the 560s as a companion of Mordenkainen and a member of a company of heroes called the Citadel of Eight. In 565 CY, Robilar, aided by his companion-in-arms, Yrag, brought the notorious child-murderer, Sir Bluto Sans Pite, to justice. As a reward, the pair were granted noble titles and estates from the grateful Directing Oligarchy of the Free City of Greyhawk and settled near the city.

The newly made Lord Robilar established himself in a fortified manor west of Greyhawk City, some 20 miles north-west of Zagyg's Bridge. The grant gave him ownership of a swathe of territory on the southern fringes of the Cairn Hills that also bordered the ruins of the famous Castle Greyhawk. In years to come, many would come to rue this unfortunate proximity.

In 570 CY, while on one of his many forays into Castle Greyhawk, the dweomers on Robilar's famous sword, the *Blade of Black Ice*, sundered the magical fetters imprisoning the demigod Iuz the Evil, apparently accidentally. Though Robilar attempted to make good his mistake by assailing the foul godling, Iuz fled to reclaim his Throne of Skulls in Dorakaa. It is not unfair to say that this single act, more than any other, led to the slaughter of the Greyhawk Wars over a decade later.

Robilar's part in the now infamous betrayal on the Day of the Great Signing was to lead his elite cohort of followers in lightning assaults on the strongholds of Tenser and Otiluke, destroying the clones that the archmages had prepared to guard against disaster. A few among the wise — notably, the archmage Nystul — have wondered how, if Tenser and Otiluke accidentally stumbled upon Rary's plot, Robilar's assaults on their strongholds were so well coordinated and devastatingly effective.

It was clear that Robilar was well prepared for the events that followed. When a large force of Greyhawk Militia marched on his estates, they found Robilar's manor abandoned and empty. The traitor lord had already fled with his followers to the Bright Desert, taking with him the hoard of treasure and magical items that he had accumulated over his long career as an adventurer. Only the dungeons under the manor were warded against intruders. After boobytraps killed a score of Militia and two mages from the Greyhawk Guild of Wizardry, the Directing Oligarchy ordered the dungeons sealed and warded. Leaving Robilar's manor blazing behind them, the vengeful Greyhawk Militia marched for home.

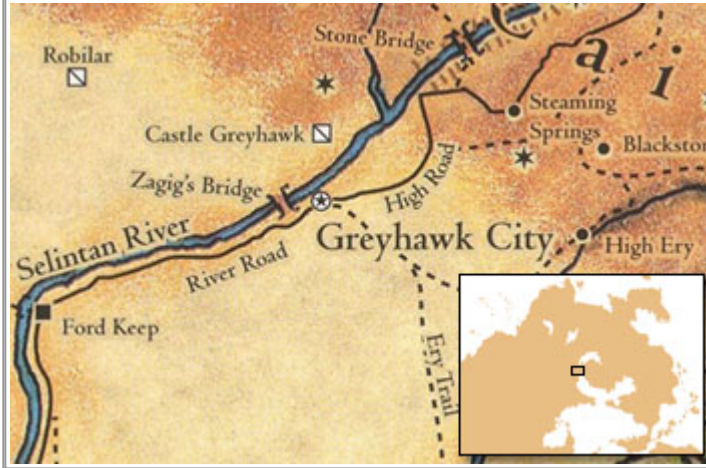
Robilar's Lands Today

Over a decade has passed since Robilar fled to the Bright Lands. The trail that leads from Zagyg's Bridge to the traitor lord's estates is now little used, except by farmers from the local hamlets bringing their produce to market in Greyhawk City on the high festivals.

The gutted and overgrown ruins of Robilar's fortified manor stand in a shallow valley. A moat still surrounds the walls, though now the stagnant water is choked with reeds and water lilies. The charred remnants of the drawbridge jut out of the brackish water like the bones of some great aquatic beast. Consequently, those wishing to explore the ruins must be prepared to get their feet wet or use magic or cunning to cross this sodden barrier.

The manor itself is set in a square around a central courtyard. The buildings on the east and southern sides of the courtyard were once the barracks and stables for Robilar's small army of followers. Though the strong outer

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walls are largely intact, in many places the inner walls have collapsed. The roofs and internal floors were completely consumed in the fire, leaving naught but a blackened shell.

The Great Hall - with its ornate carving of a rampant green dragon - stands on the west side of the courtyard, open to the sky, its roof now but a collection of blackened timbers strewn amid the weeds and small saplings that grow now where once Robilar and his men toasted their many exploits.

Robilar's private chambers and a square tower occupied the northern side of the courtyard. The traitor's quarters had been emptied of anything of value even before the Greyhawk Militia plundered anything else they could carry away. Like much of the rest of the surface levels of the stronghold, the chambers are now a tangle of rotting, half-burned timbers, brambles and saplings.

Though gutted by fire, the tower is largely intact. The bottom two floors are of stone, and so have survived, though the ruins have long since been picked clean of anything of value. The top floor, once the solar, was destroyed in the fire. A spiral stone staircase winds its way up a corner turret to the narrow parapet that still runs around the top of the tower, affording fine views over the surrounding countryside. It is the cellar of the tower that attracts most interest, however. Here stands the stout iron door leading to the manor's dungeons. To their cost, the Greyhawk Militia found that a multitude of lethal magical traps — three *prismatic walls* — warded the winding stair beyond the door. Before departing with shattered bodies of their fallen comrades, the mages from the Greyhawk Guild of Wizardry sealed the iron door with number of wards and traps of their own so that no other explorers suffer a similar fate. This concentration of killing magics has not deterred a succession of treasure hunters who have come looking to plunder whatever it is that Robilar took such great pains to protect.

Though many have come seeking their fortune, none seem to have found it thus far. Most return alive and mostly in one piece, daunted by the numerous and obviously lethal magical wards. The more persistent tend to return in several smouldering pieces, if they return at all. The more daring inhabitants of the nearby hamlet of Furzehill have made something of a cottage industry from recovering (and looting) the bodies of foolhardy adventurers.

Furzehill

Adventurers come to Furzehill on their way to Robilar's stronghold not just because of its proximity to the ruin. Many come to see Jornyra, the formidable village headwoman. Jornyra was once one of Robilar's followers but retired after marrying a local man. Robilar himself gave Jornyra a dweomered axe named *Wightbane* as a wedding gift, which she bears still.

Since Robilar's betrayal though, the axe and her connection to the traitor lord have been the bane of Jornyra's life. Many outsiders assumed that since she was once in Robilar's employ, Jornyra must still be in league with him. Others assume that she knows the secrets of the dungeons beneath the ruin (she claims not to). Still others come to wrest *Wightbane* from her, for gold or glory. Skill and the help of her neighbours have seen off all of these threats, but not without great cost. Jornyra's husband was killed nearly ten years ago by a Dyverese gloryseeker.

Unsurprisingly, Jornyra is suspicious of outsiders, especially those asking about Robilar's stronghold. Though slow to trust, she is good-hearted and generous. However, one should not mistake her kind nature for weakness. Though past her prime, she still wields *Wightbane* with lethal skill and reacts with the ferocity of a mother-bear if her two grown-up daughters or her six grandchildren are threatened.

Another inhabitant of Furzehill cuts a more enigmatic figure. Kelerenn lives in a small hut near the edge of the village, on a slope overlooking the trail towards Robilar's manor. He arrived in village about ten years ago and has lived there ever since. It is common knowledge in Furzehill that Kelerenn is a mage of some sort and he occasionally drops hints about powerful friends in the Free City and beyond. Occasionally, when in his cups, he waxes lyrical about his homeland of Nyrond. The conventional wisdom around the village is that he is a spy for some archmage or other — perhaps Tenser or the Circle of Eight. As a result, he is treated with a measure of awe and the locals are happy to provide him with such food and aid as he needs. Kelerenn laughs off the villagers' tales about him, but at the same time does nothing to dispel them.

Whispers and Rumours

Rumours and wild conjecture have whirled around Lord Robilar since he released luz in 570 CY. Since his betrayal of the Circle of Eight during the Greyhawk Wars he has come to be a much reviled figure and the whispers of his exploits and motivations have taken a darker aspect. Many now insist that the warrior's release of luz was no accident, but that it fed into some grand design. Others wonder aloud why Robilar went to such lengths to secure the dungeons under his manor before fleeing to the Bright Lands. What is hidden in the lightless depths of his demesne?

Some gossipmongers believe that whatever lies below the castle is effectively immobile and cannot be moved — even by magic. The most popular rumour circulating the inns and taverns of Greyhawk City is that a large part of the traitor's great hoard still lies beneath the manor, left behind in his panicked flight to the Bright Lands. Others speculate that some great artefact of power taken from the ruins of Castle Greyhawk lies within the dungeon. A few even say that Robilar himself lies concealed beneath the manor — either plotting the

capture of Greyhawk City or slumbering in a cursed sleep, depending on the tallness of the tale. A few deluded fools even believe that Robilar prepared the manor's dungeons as a final redoubt against the wrath of Iuz — the warrior did, after all, try to kill the demi-god immediately upon his release.

Persistent rumours — no doubt spread by the Guild of Cartographers — make mention of massive, incredibly detailed maps painted upon the walls of huge, deep-delving caverns depicting the dungeons below Castle Greyhawk. While such maps are almost certainly out of date — an earthquake damaged portions of the dungeons a decade or so ago, for example — they are still likely to depict hitherto unknown areas not explored since Robilar himself discovered them. Such maps would be a treasure beyond value for those seeking to seriously investigate the ruins of Castle Greyhawk. Wild stories also tell of a green dragon lairing beneath the manor. Apparently, Robilar met and bested the beast many years ago and, breaking it to his will, used it as a final, deadly guardian for his wealth.

Robilar was a cautious man and it would be unthinkable for him not to have provided himself with some means of fleeing his stronghold in the event of an attack of overwhelming force. While some of these means almost certainly involve powerful magics — something that Robilar as a friend and co-conspirator of Rary have access to — others are probably far more mundane in nature. A deeply buried (and torturously trapped) escape tunnel is the favourite theory. So persuasive is this thought — and so great the prize for those finding it — that on some days more than one group of adventurers can be seen in the area of the ruined manor bearing picks and shovels. Indeed, in some particularly favoured spots pits and tunnels made by treasure-hungry explorers pockmark the land.

Some of the villagers of Furzehill have recently reported seeing a tall, middle-aged, bearded warrior poking about the ruins of Robilar's manor. Always encountered alone, the man is friendly enough to those who approach him but has eschewed all offers of assistance. He is also evidently a skilled warrior, as a group of unfortunate black-hearted adventurers discovered to their cost a few months ago. The warrior's true interest in the ruins remains unknown.

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