

ASVARD of the Bear Tribe

Human, Cleric (War Domain), Uthgardt Tribe Member

I grew up in Icewind Dale. My tribe (Bear) was heavily involved with trade with the dwarves and human settlements of Ten Towns. My mother was an apothecary and a wise woman for our tribe, and I learned the healing arts from her. One summer, I spent traveling and trading with my father, I picked up the dwarven and elvish languages. Even though my tribe was less aggressive than others of the frozen plains, we were still a warlike people. Joining battles through alliances and in protection of our homes and goods. It was during my first battle that I heard the drums of the war god Tempus. They were beating in my heart and in my ears, and I came to realize that I had been chosen by the Lord of Battle to act as his representative in the world. As I said, my tribe was not as aggressive as others in the region, but we were allied with tribes that were. Eventually, the screaming frontal assaults that were the entirety of those tribes battle strategy lead to our decimation. With the completion of the final campaign I left the frozen wastes to find my own way. As a cleric of the Foehammer (and a tribal barbarian), there was no "formal" training in the priesthood. I simply knew what was required of me. I painted the Sign of Tempus on my shield (now a Holy Symbol) and set out to do my lords work.



Asvard headed towards Bryn Shander, the trade hub of the Ten Towns region. There, he made the acquaintance of a halfling name Ander Underbrush. He was a small time merchant (he only one cart and a single mule). He had come bringing trade goods from Neverwinter, looking to trade for knuckle-head trout skulls. (Scrimshaw was all the rage in Neverwinter, and the skulls of the knuckle-head trout were highly sought after). As Asvard happened by, Ander was being harassed by some of the big local troublemakers. Asvard instantly identified with the little merchant (coming from a trading family), and seeing him getting knocked about by the large idiots did not sit well with the young cleric. He waded into the fray and with a few good cracks from his war-hammer, drove the ruffians off. Ander was most thankful, and soon the two were boon companions and came to an easy arraignment. Asvard would accompany Ander on his trip back south though Hundelstone, Luskan and onto Neverwinter.



Though they could have made the trip faster alone, they instead waited and joined a caravan heading in that direction. The protection of traveling with the caravan gave Asvard lots of time to hunt and forage along the way. Soon the small cart was heaped with pelts, cured meats, wild produce, and rare delicacies like truffles and hard to procure plants (Ander was quick to point these out to the barbarian, who did not know that people would pay for things you could just go get from the forest). In Hundelstone they traded their surplus for rock hare pelts and claimed a dozen bounties for the heads of the monsters that they killed along the route (Ander having acquired a hunter's license on his way north).

The pair continued with the caravan south to Luskan, after filling the cart with products from Hundelstone had high demand in Luskan. Again, Asvard's hunting and foraging added to thier haul. Ander pushed to get out of Luskan as fast as possible (they had a lot of valuables trade goods and money), since Luskan could be a rough town. Ander asked Asvard to spend the day with Berem (the mule) and the cart while he traded with the local merchants. Asvard trusted Ander, and did as he was asked. The pair left early the next morning, and ran the final leg of the journey onto Neverwinter. It turns out that Ander was right to push on, as the weather turned cold shortly after leaving, and they raced south to beat the coming winter.

In Neverwinter, the pair went to his Ander's family store. Winter was setting in, and Ander invited Asvard to stay until spring which Asvard accepted thankfully. The items that the pair brought were in high demand and soon Underbrush Trading was filled with patrons and craftsmen looking for the good the pair brought back. Asvard worked in the store, helping the Underbrush family and spent his free time hunting in the fields outside of Neverwinter. On the night of the winter festival known as Simril, Ander gave Asvard a gift. It was a custom made silver holy symbol of Tempus (see right) with red and orange mosaic semi-



precious stones. Asvard hung the pendant from his bear claw necklace and thanked his friend.

In the spring, Ander planned to return to Bryn Shander for another run at the knuckle-head skulls, but Asvard felt drawn to the south towards Waterdeep. The friends parted with great sadness, but both were pursuing their destiny as they felt it was laid before them.



On his way south, Asvard was staying at a way-house one evening and the Monsters Inc. Mercenary party came in. Monsters Inc was completely comprised of non-human "monstrous" race members (Lizardfold, Dragonborn, Turtles, Yuan-Ti. Etc). They were pretty banged up having just spent three days skirmishing with group of ogres. They had been hired to clear out the ogres, and found them on the road robbing a caravan. They had been chasing them ever since. In the dark and rainy night, the party rogue snuck off to follow the ogres while the rest came to the way-house for a rest. They were pretty spent, but their leader made it clear that they were to return to the ogre's lair at dawn. If the ogre's were not cleaned out by sundown of the following day, they would lose their agreed price. The party's cleric Pietr, did all he could to heal up the party, but he was clearly exhausted and all his magic was spent. He saw Asvard's holy symbol and begged the young cleric to help them. The leader, a cocky dragonborn said that any money for Asvard would have to come from the cleric's share ("The MIM does not employ . . . humans!"). The cleric agreed, and again asked Asvard to assist, which Asvard agreed.

The next morning, the party followed the rogue to the woods and into rocky country. The path followed along a deep gorge with a raging river at the bottom. For almost two miles, until it came to an arching stone bridge that spanned the gorge. After the bridge, the path followed the gorge back almost the same distance before turning into the stony hills. We they got to the ogre's cave, the leader called for a charge headlong into the ogres. The battle was bloody and costly and several members of the party were killed. Asvard was taking stock of the situation and he realized that there was an ogre body missing. The party didn't believe him, saying he was wrong and began to sack up all the treasure that they found. They began to dig a pit for the fallen (under Pietr's direction). Pietr asked Asvard to cast a Detect Magic. Asvard performed the ritual, and identified several minor items and a magical sword in the gathered spoils. The leader took the sword, and as Asvard walked around still concentrating on his spell, he identified two other sources of magic. One was on the cleric, a stole that he



wore around his neck, and the other was illusion magic coming from behind the cleric. It was an invisible Oni (who was the missing ogre that Asvard had identified earlier). He stabbed the cleric through the back with his glaive. As the party scrambled up in surprise, the Oni blasted several party members with a cone of cold. The rest of the party attacked and after another short battle, the Oni disappeared in a puff of smoke.



The rest of the party gathered up the loot and began to head out. The dragonborn pointed at the cleric and to Asvard said "Since he didn't make it, he doesn't get a share. And since you get paid out of his share, you get nothing!" The party walked out of the cave laughing, abandoning the burial of their friends. Asvard couldn't do anything. There were too many of them to fight but he did take the magic Stole and hid it in his pack. Asvard stayed and buried the dead, raising a cairn over them.

Walking back down the trail, Asvard heard the sounds of battle. Across the fifty foot gorge, he saw that the oni was still alive (at the time Asvard did not know they could assume gaseous form). The oni had ambushed the rest of the party on the far side of the gorge and several party members had already been pushed over. Only the dragonborn leader was left. Asvard fired a Guiding Bolt and hit the oni in the left side. He staggered but was able to thrust this glaive through the chest of the dragonborn, and went to push him off the cliff. With a final desperate act, the dragonborn stuck the sword up into the oni's chest and dragged the giant off the cliff. They crashed into rocks all during the fall, ending in the river that washed them away.

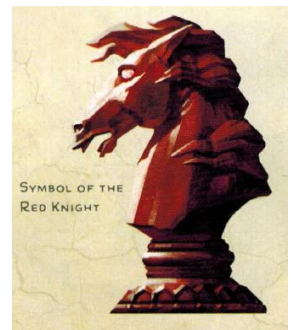
Asvard entered Waterdeep and found the Temple of the Red Knight (exarch of Tempus). There, he met with the high priest and told his tales. The high priest invited Asvard to stay and learn the doctrines of the Red Knight and Tempus. Asvard agreed and his education as a priest was formalized and completed. In late summer, Asvard set out again following the call of fate. He was following a lesser used road, when the fog began to roll in. The fog got thicker and thicker as he moved forward, until he could not see anything. He eventually came upon a pair of gates, and decided to wait out the fog. He sat down with his back to the wall and rested. A group of people then came through the gates (the Breakfast Club) and Asvard joined with them on his current adventure.

THE RED KNIGHT

The Lady of Strategy, the Crimson General, the Grandmaster of the Lanceboard

The Red Knight is the goddess of planning and strategy. Those who favor her call themselves the Red Fellowship. They believe wars are won by the best planning, strategy, and tactics. The worship of the Red Knight is filled with doctrine about strategy (see below)

Worship of the Red Knight arose among a hero-venerating monastic order of Tempus in Tethyr shortly after the Time of Troubles. The Red Knight has since grown in popularity because of what her followers call the Great Stratagem: for decades, her priests have been traveling to places of warfare to educate generals and kings in the arts of strategy and battlefield tactics. Many of the leaders they approached turned them away at first, but it soon became apparent that those who accepted the counsel of the Crimson General's followers gained a distinct benefit. Grateful victors built temples to the Lady of Strategy, and gradually her faith spread.



Today, followers of the Red Knight can be found in nearly any land that has seen warfare in the past century. Worshipers of the Red Knight are rare in the general population, but those who revere her can frequently be found among high-ranking commanders of armies, instructors in colleges of war, quartermasters, and the authors of tomes of strategy. Each temple to the Red Knight includes an altar dedicated to Tempus, and so such a place is likely to be frequented by mercenaries and soldiers. A temple is surrounded by a vast pavilion and courtyard, which can be rented by companies of soldiers and mercenaries for practice and training. Her priests believe that drilling one's troops in a temple courtyard is a form of propitiation that the Red Knight looks upon with special favor.

- Every war is a series of battles. Losing one doesn't mean losing the war
- In war, plan for peace. In peace, plan for war
- Seek allies among your enemy's enemies
- Anger may in time change to gladness; Vexation may be succeeded by content. But a kingdom that has once been destroyed can never come again into being; nor can the dead ever be brought back to life.
- If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.
- All warfare is based on deception. When able to attack, you must seem unable; when using your forces, you must appear inactive; when near, make the enemy believe you are far away; when far away, we must make him believe you are near.
- Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.
- The general who wins the battle makes many calculations before the battle is fought. The general who loses makes few
- Do not engage an enemy more powerful than you. If it is unavoidable and you do have to engage, make sure you engage it on your terms, not on theirs.
- The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy
- The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable.

TEMPUS

The Foehammer, the Lord of Battles

Tempus is a war god concerned with brave conduct during war, using force of arms over talk for settling disputes, and encouraging bloodshed. The god of war is random in his favors, meaning that his chaotic nature favors all sides equally. Lord Tempus might be an army's ally one day, and its enemy the next. He might seem to manifest before a battle, appearing to one side or the other. If he is seen riding a white mare (Veiros), then the army will succeed. If he rides a black stallion (Deiros), then defeat is certain. Most often he appears to be riding with one foot in each mount's stirrup, signifying the unpredictable nature of battle. In such visions, Tempus is always a powerfully built warrior dressed for battle in the style of those who envision him.

Tempus's favor might be randomly distributed, but over the centuries his priests have made an effort to spread and enforce a common code of warfare—to make war a thing of rules, respect for reputations, and professional behavior. This code, called Tempus's Honor, has the purpose of making conflicts brief, decisive, and as safe as possible for those not directly involved. The rules in the code include the following:

- arm anyone who has need of a weapon
- disparage no foe
- acquit oneself with bravery
- train all for battle
- don't engage in feuds
- Retreat from hopeless fights but never avoid battle.
- Slay one foe decisively and halt a battle quickly rather than rely upon slow attrition
- Remember the dead that fell before you
- Defend what you believe in, lest it be swept away
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Those who poison wells, taint fields, kill noncombatants, or engage in torture in the name of war are all considered sinners.

Worshippers of Tempus are legion, and his name is often on the lips of soldiers. His priests are tacticians, often skilled in the art of war. Many of his ordained don't serve in temples, but as battlefield chaplains with armies and mercenary companies, encouraging their fellow soldiers with both word and blade. Priests of Tempus teach that war conducted properly is fair in that it oppresses all sides equally, and that in any given battle a mortal might be slain or might become a great leader among his or her companions. Mortals shouldn't fear war but should see it as a natural force, the storm that civilization brings about by its very existence.