



### **Monastery of the Yellow Rose:**

*“To be suffering with another is to be the other; losing oneself, and the distinction that any suffering is not our own, is our truth.” –Etched on wall next to the gates to the monastery.*

The Monks of the Yellow Rose, also known as the Disciples of Saint Sollars dwell in their solitary monastery high atop the Earthspur Mountains. They are known for their loyalty to their allies and destruction to its enemies. Greatly respected on matters of truth and diplomacy, the monks’ work hard to survive in their remote sanctuary. The monks often travel with Ilmataran paladins, particularly from the Order of the Golden Cup. It is considered a high honor to be chosen to join the ranks of the Yellow Rose. Kane, its leader, personally chooses each disciple within its walls.

#### **Location:**

The monastery is on the southeastern edge of the Glacier of the White Worm, high in the peaks of the Earthspur Mountains. Few visit this place casually, for the trails are not easily found or followed. The last half-mile of the trail is paved in worked stones, each bearing the name of a monk of the Yellow Rose that has passed on.

#### **Architecture:**

Built on the stony side of a jagged mountain peak, the enormous fortress monastery overlooks the Glacier of the White Worm and houses as many as 750 monks. Each generation of monks add new structures and digs out deeper chambers. About half of the rooms look out into daylight, the other half are underground chambers dug right into the mountain. The interior is a spectacular museum, with every room exhibiting artwork and architecture reflecting the supreme discipline of the order. It is a monument to the ages, an ever-growing tribute to the painstaking stubbornness that has allowed mankind to rise to dominance in Faerun.

Extensive catacombs twist through the mountain under the monastery, threefold in purpose. Some sections serve as burial vaults for deceased monks. In another wing, a vast cellar holds vats of wine that the monks make from blueberries they collect. Finally the catacombs house the most complete archives of the Bloodstone lands found anywhere.

### **History:**

Nearly 600 years ago, Saint Dionysus was given a vision by Ilmater, he told his followers a monastery should be built in the Bloodstone lands and be dedicated to Saint Sollars. The monastery should be a place of learning, politically isolated, that would keep the true histories of men's lives uncorrupted by outside influences. Now also known as the Citadel of the White Worm, the Monastery of the Yellow Rose was founded in the Year of the Yellow Rose (1236 DR) by followers of Dionysus.

### **Hierarchy:**

*Abbot:* Kane, Revered Father of the House of Saint Sollars. This enigmatic hero of the Bloodstone Wars runs the monastery with a quiet dignity and grace that inspires all that know him.

*Prior/Prioress:* Revered Sister Amela. This ancient woman is filled with cheer and a burning inner strength that never seems to run out. She travels on important diplomatic missions for the abbot and runs the monastery in the absence of the Revered Father.

*Cellarer:* Revered Brother Velos is in charge of food, storage, and preparation in the monastery.

The other members of the monastery are divided into three different circles:

#### *Circle of the*

*Ascetics:* This group devotes themselves to spiritual hardship and aggressively seeking those in need to help them with no regards to themselves. Of all the circles, this group has the most casters, though it does have a fair number of restrictions on its members. This circle is led by Revered Brother Sanno.

#### *Circle of the*

*Chronicle:* These are the scholars, historians and genealogist of the monastery. This circle has the least restrictions on its members in order to allow them to conduct their studies completely. This circle is led by Revered Brother Uther.

#### *Circle of the*

*Vow:* These are the holy warriors of Ilmater, fiercely defending the suffering. This circle tends to have the most restrictions and hardships on its members. Revered Brother Yung Wei Tsola, whom traveled many years ago from Kara-Tur to join the order, leads this circle.

### **Membership:**

Membership to the Monastery of the Yellow Rose is by invitation only. The monastery may only have 761 living members at any one time, one for each of the Demalous Martyrs. If a monk of the Yellow Rose has passed on, a slot becomes available in the monastery for a new initiate.

## **Training:**

When an initiate is accepted to the monastery, he is stripped of all worldly possessions and given nothing but a loincloth. He is then interviewed rigorously, given no food, drink or a place to sleep. The Initiate Courtyard will have to suffice for resting. In the morning, the student is visited by the Abbot, who shares a few words of wisdom, drink and a bit of food. The student is then directed to his first teacher inside the Gate of Charity, also known as the First Gate.

Within the Gate of Charity the initiate still has to sleep in the open, though the courtyard has a brackish well at its center and stale bread is left in the morning for the student. The next five through fifteen days are spent in meditation and prayer studies with the Master of the Charity, or in various cleaning duties. The First Gate is based around the discipline of the spirit and at the end of this training the student is given a bowl. This unique bowl, as with all items given during training, belonged to the deceased monk that the initiate is replacing. The student may then pass to the Gate of Humility.

Once within the Second Gate, the initiate is assigned an empty stone cell for rest, prayer and meditation. He is given no food or water, these must be begged for from the Master of Humility or anyone in the courtyard. The next ten through twenty days are spent in intensive study of morality and ethics. The Gate of Humility is based around the core principals of helping and defending any who are hurt, perseverance in taking on the suffering of others, challenging injustice, and allowing the spirit to overcome the body, knowing that Ilmater will guide you through all your trials. At the end of this training the student is given a drab gray robe. The initiate may then pass to the Gate of Piety.

At the Third Gate the initiate is given a new stone cell and must now diligently work for his sustenance. The next fifteen through thirty days are spent in intense study of politics, geography, history, genealogy, calligraphy, poetry, literature, and art taught by the Master of Piety. When not in study the initiate must spend his time assisting librarians, scribing, and other tedious duties. The goal of the Gate of Piety is to teach that being true to the integrity of an academic subject is necessary to be able to benefit themselves and society intelligently. When the initiate's tenure in the Third Gate is over, he is given a small blank book with worn wooden covers. This is to be the initiate's prayer book, which he has only one day to copy from the master prayer book. Once that is complete the student may pass to the Gate of Suffering.

At the Fourth Gate the student is assigned to tiny stone cell facing the courtyard where he'll spend a torturous twenty through forty days. The Master of Suffering only rarely gives food and water to the pleading initiate who must begin his training with a series of punishing tests. These are conducted to show that the spirit is able to overcome the flesh. Once the initiate has begun shedding the limitations of his corporeal body he is taught how to use it as a weapon to fiercely champion those that cannot defend themselves and to right injustice wherever it is found. This arduous training will extend to all matters martial. The core principal of the Gate of Suffering is that the depth of darkness to which you can descend and still live is an exact measure of the height to which you can aspire to reach. Life begins on the other side of despair; personality is born of it. It is the fire hidden within the flint. When the initiate has completed training at the Gate of Suffering his hands are bound with red cords behind his back and he is brought through the Gate of Compassion.

Still bound, the initiate enters the Fifth Gate where he is cleansed, fed, sheltered, and his wounds tended to by the Master of Compassion. Five through ten days are spent still bound in the red cords, but in quiet contemplation as the Master of Compassion teaches Ilmatari religious rites and how to use the newfound disciplines of the mind and spirit. The Gate of Compassion's primary purpose is to forge the spirit of the initiate anew and demonstrate how compassion can change the very soul of our world. Compassion is the truest essence of good, an all-giving essence that brings hope and love. At the end of this training the initiate is released from his bonds and must make the Vow of the Passing. This is a vow that the Passing ritual will be performed upon his death. This ritual is celebrated at the first dusk after the death of a devout Ilmatari follower. It is a solemn chanting service that commends the passage of the departed soul to Ilmater's embrace. No Ilmatari cleric who receives this rite can be brought back to life on Faerun, unless Ilmater himself sends him back. If the vow is made the initiate is given a silk veil, usually white. This veil is used upon the death of the monk, placed over his face.

Once the Vow of the Passing is taken, the Masters gather and perform the Ritual of Renewal, where they charge the initiate with:

*“Persevere in the face of pain. Heal the sick, the wounded, and the diseased. Comfort the dying, the grief stricken, and the heartsick. Take on the burdens and the pain of others. Champion the causes of the oppressed and the unjustly treated, and give shelter and kind counsel to the lonely, the lost, and the ruined. Pursue the service of Ilmater, and he will provide... leave gross riches and the acquisition of all but medicines to others. Take up the task no others dare.”*

With that, the initiate is given the rank of Adorned Brother and may begin his duties and continued training in the monastery. As the Adorned rises in ranking there will come a time when he'll have to endure one of the toughest tests of skill and courage in Faerun, riding the remorhaz. Yet no monk at the monastery who had earned enough experience has ever refused to attempt the challenge. Most monks will try their skills at least once, even if they are much less experienced. Many younger masters ride the remorhaz on a regular basis, sometimes as often as once a week! For the monks, this is more than a test. To them, the white worm symbolizes the courage and determination that marks their order. Conquering the beast, riding inches away from death or serious injury, is a statement of their devotion to Saint Sollars the Twice Martyred.

#### **Duties:**

The Monks of the Yellow Rose specialize in genealogical studies. Each year, mid ranking monks lead expeditions down the mountain to gather data in the cities of Damara, Impiltur, and even Vaasa and Narfell. They concern themselves with news of local births and deaths, travelers passing through and newcomers settling in the region. It is no wonder that Gareth Dragonsbane asked the Monastery of the Yellow Rose to verify the lineage of Helmont the 15<sup>th</sup>, Duke of Carmathan.

#### **Daily Life:**

The monks of the Yellow Rose are ascetic and simple, but they are determined to create beauty in hardship. Their toils are matched by their stamina, and both seem boundless. No monk works less than a total of sixteen hours every day, though they are allowed respite every four hours for prayer and meditation. The lower initiates are responsible for the bare necessities of survival. They labor in the meager gardens, haul ice melted for water, or forage on the bleak mountainsides. Their efforts enable their more skilled superiors time to concentrate on creating sculptures and tapestries.

**Commodities:**

The monks Sculptures, tapestries, and blueberry wine.

**Influential Saints:**

Saint Sollars and Saint Dionysus are the two most important saints to the monks of the Yellow Rose. Saint Dinoysus is most influential, though the monastery itself is named in honor of Saint Sollars as was requested by Saint Dinoysus himself.

*Saint Sollars the Twice Martyred:*

Saint Sollars first appeared in Shoon Imperium, a historical text dating after the fall of Netheril. It was mentioned in the Codex Spirita that Sollars was a worshipper of Ilmater and that he had wandered through Faerun before arriving in the southwest. It is written he was not a native of Faerun and his bald and pale appearance suggested this.

Sollars claimed to have come from another distant world, where he was a noble who forewent his station after receiving a vision which guided him to help the poor and suffering of the land. In this kingdom such aid was punishable by death on the rack. When he was brought before the king for his sentence, he begged to be put to death in some other manner since he was unworthy of dying on his god's symbol of faith. The king gleefully fulfilled his wish by torturing him on the rack, but not killing him, then hanging him until he was half-dead and at last drawing and quartering him. Sollars claimed that Ilmater had restored him to life without anyone else's supplication and had given him a vision of Faerun.

After traveling many parts of Faerun, Sollars ran afoul of Bhaelros (an alias for Talos), who viewed Ilmater as a deific intruder in his rightful domain. Bhaelros wanted to hurt Ilmater by crushing his favored servant. He sent his three most powerful minions to capture and break Sollars. Sollars not only survived the physical punishment but the mental anguish as well. He finally died a second martyr's death on the rack in the Temple of Divine Truth in Calimport, however, the date of his death is uncertain. The confusion is due in part to the fact that the Ilmatari did not keep accurate records then, and that the ensuing riot over the manifestation of Ilmater's avatar wreaked much havoc on the city.

It is also believed by Candlekeep scholars that this event occurred simultaneously and coincidentally with another major catastrophe that rocked Calimport. After this setback, Bhaelros decided to ignore the Ilmatari and focus his efforts elsewhere.

Saint Sollars' symbol is the yellow rose. All church manuscripts of his faction include an illuminated yellow rose next to his name. All church sites dedicated to him use the yellow rose in their motifs. Also, yellow rose bushes are commonly planted at all Ilmatari sites.

*Saint Dionysus:*

Saint Dionysus was born a peasant near the city-state of Lyrabar in the first kingdom of Impiltur over 600 years ago. As he grew to adulthood Dionysus joined the militia, serving for nearly a decade. His military experiences made him respect the power of nobility and learning.

While searching for an escaped slaver, he entered an overgrown shrine in the foothills of the Earthspur Mountains. He was given visions of Ilmater's glory and immediately was consecrated by the Broken God as one of his clerics. Dionysus found a poorly handwritten account of Ilmater's dogma that he kept ever after. This ancient text is called Dionysus' Chapbook, although Dionysus did not actually pen it himself.

After resigning his commission, he proselytized to the peoples of the Impilturian city-states and beyond into the Unapproachable East. Quickly, he rose to prominence and developed a devout following that he organized into walled and defended cloisters, unlike the other faithful of Ilmater. While still caring for the downtrodden and sick, his followers also could defend themselves against those who wished to harm their charges and themselves. It was one thing to die a martyr's death; it was another to be slain for herb lore and coppers or by wild beasts.

Dionysus also stressed reading and writing among his flock, preaching that the passing on of dogma or lore orally, was not adequate to give the faith its necessary pillars. He formed a loose alliance with the clerics of Deneir in Impiltur and was often permitted to visit the secret Masters Library beneath Iron Dragon Mountain in the Earthfasts. At the Council of Keltar in the Year of the Alarmed Merchants (828 DR), Dionysus brought forth his ideas of defense and literacy to the Faerunian church. Since this time, the Ilmatari have kept accurate records and learned medicinal lore. They teach reading, writing, and weapons training as a rule now rather than as an exception.

Dionysus was still a soldier at heart. He stressed that the Ilmatari owed fealty to their rightful lords as long as the nobles fulfilled their obligations to their folk. He argued that the Ilmatari should be spiritual aids and advisors, helping rulers to make the right decisions. The Ilmatari paladin Lords of Imphras II govern Impiltur to this date, as does the Ilmatari paladin King Gareth of Damara.

After defeating powerful servants of Auril who had stolen a globe from Uluti's Necklace, Dionysus was given a sign by Ilmater. As a result of the vision, Dionysus told his followers a monastery one day should be built in the Bloodstone lands and be dedicated to Saint Sollars. Here, Dionysus said, the monks should specialize in genealogical studies. Dionysus thought that such a place of learning, politically isolated, would keep the true histories of men's lives uncorrupted by outside influences. This was due in part to his fascination with nobility and in part to his wish to maintain stable ruling structures by taking the conflict out of succession processes.

In the Year of the Wondrous Sea (863 DR), a small island was discovered in the middle of Easting Reach. The first explorers who went to the island never returned, but nothing else of note occurred for a season. When a tower appeared overnight on the island, Impiltur began to worry. Still, nothing happened. A group of Thayan Red Wizards, with hired Impilturian servants, landed on the island. The servants were sent to explore the mysterious island. Only two returned; they said all the others had perished in magical traps or at the hands of extraplanar and undead horrors, though they had secreted a bloodstone-encrusted crown that was sitting on a waterlogged seat cushion. The two Impilturian survivors fled when a bloated monstrosity hurling black bolts of lightning attacked the Red Wizards.

Within days, lacedons, zombies, and skeletons began to attack Impilturian coastal settlements and water elementals destroyed ships on the Easting Reach. The rulers of all the cities received a message on tattooed human skin that simply read: "Return What is Mine". It was signed Sevanoq, Master of the Tower Aquiarum, Archmage of the Circle of Narfell.

Searches were conducted for the two survivors of the island expedition and the bloodstone crown they had stolen. The men's bodies were found in an alley in Sarshel, but there was no trace of the bloodstone crown. When creatures began to attack, the rulers called upon Dionysus to aid them. He mustered a formidable force of warriors and clerics to deal with the menaces. They landed on the island and fought through waves of undead and charmed pirates to the base of the tower itself. Sevanoq and another lich appeared to do battle with Dionysus. For an hour, Dionysus sustained grievous wounds as he dealt punishment to the physical forms of the liches. Dionysus knew he

was dying. He called upon Ilmater to protect the people he had failed. At the same moment, the other lich brought its magic to bear as Dionysus' last blow hit Sevanoq.

Those coming to the aid of the dying patriarch heard Sevanoq gasp part of a word, "Zen!" before Sevanoq dissolved into a foul puddle. The other lich vanished leaving the survivors to collect their dead and dying. Dionysus told his men to leave him where he lay; explaining that he had more tasks only he could perform. As his followers sailed westward, a localized earthquake rocked the island, causing Sevanoq's tower to collapse. The island itself then began to sink below the waves.

The departing ships saw a flock of white doves appear and circle the site, as a stream of white light struck the water. On that spot a celestial that wept yellow roses was seen floating over the waves, before it left skyward. Those witnessing the events felt their weariness vanish and their wounds to be less painful. Since that day, many have searched for the remains of the Tower Aquiarum to no avail and Impilturian parents still use the tale of the water demon to bring unruly children in line.

Dionysus' death technically was not a martyr's death, but he did sacrifice himself to ensure the destruction of a great evil. His work in life and his valiant death sowed the seeds of light and good in this region. Followers of Dionysus founded the Monastery of the Yellow Rose high in the Earthspur Mountains in the Year of the Yellow Rose (1236 DR), fulfilling one of the saint's own long unrealized goals. After the fall of Impiltur's first kingdom, Dionysus' example served as the catalyst for the proclamation of Impiltur's second kingdom as a stable regime in a chaotic and dangerous area of Faerun. Damara too has been freed from the yoke of Zhengyi the Witch King and again is under the sway of Ilmater and his faithful.

Saint Dionysus was very fond of the poppies that grew in the fields of the Great Dale and Impiltur, and after his death the red poppy became the flower associated with him. Since poppy juice can be used as a pain reliever, this is a good choice for an Ilmatari saint.

#### **Relics of Ilmater:**

There are a number of religious relics housed within the monastery; among them is the Chapbook of Saint Dionysus. This relic is a small prayer book that has become more powerful over the centuries since Saint Dionysus found it. The chapbook originally was a poorly hand-written account of an unknown Painbearer. Saint Dionysus imbued it with many protective magics, and his faith turned it into an item of some power. It is immune to fire, water damage, and insects that eat paper. It radiates good, healing, and abjuration magic. It allows its possessor, if good aligned, to cast all healing magics at maximum efficacy. Evil clerics cannot benefit from this item. It can also be used to cast Bless, Endure Elements\*, Aid or Sanctuary up to three times/day at 12th level. Any attempt to destroy this item immediately summons a celestial to take it.

#### **Relationship to the Church of Ilmater:**

This is the only order of monks that exists in the Bloodstone lands. The monks have a close bond with the Order of the Golden Cup, which is dedicated to healing and protecting the sick, innocent, and weak, rather than seeking out evil to destroy.

Within the church as a whole the Monks of the Yellow Rose, along with most Ilmatari in the Bloodstone lands are Traditionalists. Although they acknowledge the importance of saints, they tend to focus their worship on Ilmater with only a nod to his saints. They believe that one should strive to live as those that have been beatified, but not be worshipped instead of Ilmater. The only saints' days they worship are All Saints, Saint Sollars, and Saint Dionysus. This rule is not hard

and fast because they believe that rules should guide, not bind. They are annoyed by the attempts of the Orthodox Ilmatari, but harbor no lasting resentment (which infuriates the Orthodox even more). To the Traditionalist, this is another thing to persevere over to attain communion with Ilmater.

**Visiting Pilgrims:**

A source of revenue for the monastery during the summer is pilgrims. Those that arrive at the monastery may buy the insignia of Saint Sollars, lodging, and other commodities. If the pilgrim is in need he will always be taken in and cared for without cost.

**Neighbors:**

Generally, the monks of the Yellow Rose do not try to force their beliefs on anyone and receive the greatest respect wherever they travel, even among the Nars in Narfell.