The Eminence of Araunt is a far-flung kingdom of the dead whose citizens across Returned Abeir (and now, Faerûn) are linked not by geography, but by a common ideal. The Eminence believes that every royal crypt and every forgotten corner of the world where undead yet serve masters long gone is actually a principality of Araunt. Sometimes tomb robbers notice the Eminence’s symbol (three vertical slashes) and wonder what it signifies, but few ever discover the truth.

**Eminence of Araunt Lore**

A character knows the following information with a successful skill check.

**History DC 30:** More than five hundred years have elapsed since an undead creature named Lod “founded” Araunt’s first principality in an Eskornar dragon’s tomb. Lod, a bone naga, recorded a tract on stone tablets called the *Codex of Araunt* in which it prophesied the expansion of its kingdom over the slow creep of centuries.

**Arcana DC 35:** Rituals inscribed in the *Codex of Araunt* can link widely separated gravesites and mausoleums, creating a portal pathway invisible to those not sworn to the cause. The *Codex* contains other rituals to create undead from the spirits of dead warriors, to free a guardian undead of its binding, and to empower undead with useful abilities. Unknown rituals are whispered to both grant boons to the undead and lay blights on the living.

**Streetwise DC 30:** Guardian undead creatures hold positions of authority in the Eminence of Araunt. A direhelm or a doomsept almost certainly serves the secret kingdom of the dead.

**Streetwise DC 35:** The Eminence of Araunt has lately begun to co-opt living humanoids in Returned Abeir. Resembling the floating upper half of an empty suit of plate armor, a direhelm glides about through the air, brandishing its weapons in deadly silence.

**Streetwise DC 40:** The Eminence is not friendly with other groups, cults, or nations of undead. It was ascendant in Abeir but has made contact during the last decade with Faerûn. Now Araunt is aware of such groups as the Twisted Rune, the Cult of the Dragon, and Thay. Since then, the secret kingdom has begun a slow campaign to bring all of these, even Thay, into Araunt. More than one skirmish has already been fought.

**Organization**

The mysterious Eminence of Araunt exists through its network of portal pathways, called deathways, hidden to all but undead that have pledged themselves to the kingdom. Few of the living are even aware of the organization, though some who are pledged to Araunt can be led through these portals. The Eminence spreads invisibly like a disease through cemeteries and tombs, then follows up with planned advances and raids.

**Leader:** The Eminence believes that all members are equals. But even among equals, some citizens stand out, such as Lod himself, as well as Meremoth (an undead lamia).

**Headquarters:** The Eminence hides in plain sight, in the catacombs of Nornglast in Eskorn (see page 206). Nornglast already possesses a reputation for being “ruled by ghosts,” though those who speak lightly of this possibility don’t know how right they are.

Within Nornglast’s catacombs, Lod and Meremoth hold court in a boneyard hundreds of feet wide, at the crossroads of several dozen deathways.

**Hierarchy:** Despite the equality of members, some within Araunt are clearly the servants of the others. Direhelms are bound to the kingdom through the ritual of their creation, and they are dedicated to guarding its deathways and scattered principalities.

**Members:** Those true to the Eminence of Araunt include most undead, especially direhelms and doomsepts. Egotistical and strong-willed undead, especially vampires and liches, rarely join or remain in the Eminence. Those who do retain membership generally seek to control the secret kingdom for their own purposes, and when such activity is discovered, it is culled.

**Direhelm**

Direhelms are undead guardians found in a wide variety of empty, ruined places in Returned Abeir. Resembling the floating upper half of an empty suit of plate armor, a direhelm glides about through the air, brandishing its weapons in deadly silence.

**Direhelm Lore**

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

**DC 30:** Direhelms are created through a ritual from the *Codex of Araunt*, involving grave dirt from the tombs of warriors fallen in battle. Direhelms created with this ritual are automatically bound to the Eminence of Araunt and to the goals of the secret kingdom.
Direhelm

Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 1,200

Initiative +14  Senses Perception +8; see also piercing vision
HP 148; Bloodied 74; see also grave strike
AC 31; Fortitude 29, Reflex 27, Will 24
Immune disease, poison; Resist 15 necrotic; Vulnerable 10 radiant

Speed fly 6 (hover)

✦ Longsword (standard; at-will)  + Weapon
+22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage.

< Grave Strike (standard; recharges when first bloodied)  ✦ Necrotic, Weapon
Close burst 1; +22 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 necrotic damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Piercing Vision (minor; recharge ⚁ ⚄ ⚅)
The direhelm gains true sight 10 and ignores concealment until the end of its current turn.

Alignment Evil  Languages —
Str 25 (+14)  Dex 20 (+12)  Wis 13 (+8)
Con 20 (+12)  Int 9 (+6)  Cha 15 (+9)

Equipment 2 longswords

Direhelm Tactics
A direhelm fights in a straightforward manner. It closes to melee range and uses grave strike as soon as it is adjacent to several enemies. Then it strikes at the nearest prone target, attacking until that enemy is out of action before turning to another. It fights to the death, using grave strike again once bloodied.

Doomsept

A doomsept is a spectral, glowing undead being composed of several spirits. It appears as a silent, chillingly cold, translucent image of human warriors holding wraithlike weapons in flickering, diverse poses.

Doomsept Lore
A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 30: A doomsept is a sevenfold spirit, created by one of the rituals in the Codex of Araunt. Each spirit provides some small, unique ability to the overall creature.

DC 35: Legends say that if the name of one or more of its contributing spirits is called, a doomsept ceases any activity. The named spirit rises to the surface and answers questions as if affected by the Speak with Dead ritual (the questioner must make an Arcana check as though performing the ritual). Once all questions are answered, the spirit sinks again into the doomsept, which attacks its questioner with redoubled fury.

Doomsept Tactics
A doomsept flits through enemies, striking and moving through their forms, never staying in one place. It uses manifold strike as soon as it has the opportunity, adjusting its position for maximum benefit and flanking whenever possible.

Doomsept

Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 1,400

Initiative +17  Senses Perception +10; darkvision
HP 108; Bloodied 54
AC 28; Fortitude 28, Reflex 29, Will 24
Immune disease, poison; Resist 15 necrotic, insubstantial; Vulnerable 10 radiant

Speed fly 7 (hover); phasing

✦ Ephemeral Sword (standard; at-will)  + Weapon
+21 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage.

< Manifold Strike (standard; recharge ⚁)  + Weapon
Close burst 3; targets three enemies in area; +20 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage. The doomsept shifts 2 squares for each successful attack.

Alignment Evil  Languages —
Str 22 (+14)  Dex 24 (+15)  Wis 14 (+10)
Con 18 (+12)  Int 12 (+9)  Cha 15 (+10)

Encounter Groups
A raiding party of the Eminence of Araunt includes one or more intelligent undead leaders, supported by direhelms or doomsepts. Occasionally a living commander leads a party.

Level 16 Encounter (XP 7,000)
✦ 2 direhelms (level 15 soldier)
✦ 1 doomsept (level 16 skirmisher)
✦ 1 human fighter death knight (level 17 elite soldier)