



*Dwarves*

*The chamber was dark, barely bathed in a dim red glow by the faint light of the embers of the forge fire, but as the Dwarf donned his thick leather gloves and gave but a single mighty push to the great bellows beside the sleeping oven, light blasted from the furnace to fill the whole room. Summoned by the bellows, the fire stood ready to serve its smithy master, and he was already in motion preparing his latest piece. Into the belly of the flames he stabbed a metal strip, and as the fire wreathed the iron and breathed heat upon it, its mountainous gray was forsaken for a brilliant orange hue. Pulling it from the inferno, the Dwarf set the iron upon his anvil, and the heavy clangs of his hammer upon the metal rang through the workshop as he began his art. The hammer struck again and again, each crushing strike sculpting the metal like a sculptor shapes clay. Sparks flew in all directions as he beat the anvil, and soon the blade's edge took shape.*

*Even as he lifted his hammer another time, something made the Dwarf pause. He could hear a faint metallic ringing, though it was unlike that of the ring of hammer on iron that he had just been producing. It was the tolling of the bell atop the city gate, and as each clang met his ears, his fists tightened in anger, for the sound could only mean one thing: the gates were under attack! Setting aside both hammer and unfinished sword, the Dwarf seized a shield and war hammer from a pair of hanging hooks beside the door before rushing out into the subterranean city to join his fellows in arms against those who stood against the realm of the Dwarves.*

*Making his way quickly through the roads lined with stone dwellings, it was not long before he could see his comrades locked in combat with monstrous, coppery-brown lizards. The fury that the bell had bestowed upon him was amplified tenfold at the sight of the beasts, and he felt no remorse as the heavy head of his war hammer crashed into the ribs of one of them. Turning from its original target, the reptile snarled in rage as it faced him, teeth and claws bared, but the Dwarf was not frightened in the least.*

*Deflecting the lizard's attacks with his shield, the Dwarf struck ruthlessly with his hammer again and again as if the hide of the monster was the hot iron atop his anvil back home. Dark green blood was spattered across the ground as he wounded the beast, scorching gouges into the floor with its acidic properties, but for all the effect the acid had upon his hammer, it might as well have been water. His people had long struggled with the burning blood of their foe, and long ago had his people perfected the art of weapons that would resist it. Even as claws evaded his shield and slashed at his body, the metal plates of his armor protected him, and with one last crushing smash of the fine hammer, the lizard lay dead and still before his feet.*

*The other warriors around him were having similar victories, and as each felled one of the beasts and moved on to assist the others, the monsters' numbers were dwindling fast. Hissing and spitting, the few remaining lizards began to fall back, crawling dejectedly back to the dark depths of the earth in which they dwelled. A grand shout of victory echoed through the city as the warriors watched the monsters flee, and just as the bell had signaled the commencement of battle, this roar of joy signaled the end. Each warrior had triumphed for their family, their clan, their city, and their people, and as the commotion finally died down, the Dwarf decided he would head back to finish the craft he started before enjoying a fine evening with an even finer mug of drink.*

With their origins in isolated mountain areas separated from the other races, Dwarves have a huge respect for their families, clans, and other such groups, always doing their best to assist and honor such groups. Dwarves feel that everything they do reflects the reputation of their clan, with this motivating most Dwarves to do their best in order to not tarnish their groups' good name. It has been said that a Dwarf's clan or even race as a whole is similar to that of the Familia of the Gypsies in many ways, with all Dwarves going out of their way to ensure the well-being of their own kind, though their amount of cooperation with the other races varies by clan from helpful to extremely standoffish. Those who commit dire crimes or show themselves to be utter cowards in the face of danger bring significant dishonor to their clans, and despite the Dwarves' innate respect for members of their race, some clans have been known to disown dishonorable Dwarves, leaving them to a life of exile and isolation.

During their upbringing, almost every Dwarf undergoes a certain amount of battle training, for all Dwarves believe that victory in battle is the primary means to gain honor for one's clan or family. However, this is not to say that Dwarves are brutish war-mongers, always challenging people to fights for the sake of fighting or just attacking strangers out of the blue; they are brave and stalwart soldiers, fighting when necessary to defend their allies and push back their foes. Glory

in battle is something at all Dwarves respect and strive for, and they often spend spare time practicing weapon maneuvers by themselves or sparring with a few comrades in order to hone their skills. The majority of Dwarves tend to favor a more defensive fighting style, using a shield or a second weapon to deflect enemy blows whilst striking strong when the opportunity arises rather than a charging strike, though fighting styles do vary depending on the clan in question. With such an emphasis on glory and victory, one would think that death in battle would be shameful to a Dwarf, but that cannot be more wrong. Fallen warriors are honored in their society as those who gave their life to their battle, and whether or not they resurrect in such a fall, it is not uncommon for Dwarves to raise a glass in their honor next meal.

One would think that a focus on battle would not be necessary in everyday life, but such a belief is quite mistaken. Dwarves have a number of foes that they despise above all others, constantly in battle with these savage races both in their homeland and abroad, so non-institutional combat is frequent. The enemy that tops this list is that of the Blade Eater, given their direct involvement being responsible for the destruction of the old Dwarven kingdoms and countless works of precious Dwarven crafts. No Dwarf ever has any misgivings about attacking these copper-scaled giant lizards, and many do not care in the slightest if their weapon is melted by the creatures' blood if the Blade Eaters end up dead in the end. Similarly, Dwarves have an ancestral enemy in the trolls, for they were a strong thorn in the Dwarven society's side even before the diaspora, and many Dwarven Celestialists focus their casting styles specifically for slaying members of the troll race. Monstrous orcs and monstrous ogres also greatly irritate Dwarves, though given that these foes are far more easily dispatched than the hardy trolls and numerous Blade Eaters, they present far less of an issue.

Dwarves have an innate love for crafting and creation, with blacksmithing being the primary racial art because metal and Dwarves get along like bread and butter. All Dwarves, even those with only rudimentary smithing knowledge, have a keen interest in finely-crafted weapons or other metal items, always willing to take a minute to admire their own or others' handiwork. Many Dwarves devote extensive time and effort to excelling as smiths, meticulously working to create some of the finest pieces in all of the Sheltered Lands, and several nobles of Gaden and Roskaria seek out Dwarves or Dwarf advice on a regular basis when looking to have fine items made. With such a value upon creation in the hearts of Dwarves, they are enthralled easily by valuable metals and gems, though the strange ore known as metheran is what has piqued their interest most over the last several centuries. Metheran possesses peculiar magical and magic-warping properties that vary depending on the usage and amount, though because it is extremely rare and usually only uncovered in minuscule pieces, many Dwarves make it a priority to obtain when it can be found even at a significant cost.

## Naming

To a Dwarf, a name must be strong and firm-sounding, for they believe that granting a child a strong name will make the child grow to be a strong and capable adult. Hard consonant sounds feature prominently, with passive or "weak" sounds being used rarely if ever. Dwarven parents often name their children after ancestors that accomplished great deeds, though rarely is this done within one generation; a father and son practically never share the same name, though a grandfather and his grandson sharing a name is completely common. Pieces from the ancient Dwarf language are often used as first names as well, using what few words they can discover from the minimal records of the old texts that remain (not that most people will know the word's meaning in the common tongue, since the ancient Dwarven language has long become a dead language).

Dwarven surnames almost always consist of two words (a prefix and suffix) that have been combined into a single title. These names often contain words that reference the land, crafting, and other such crucial aspects of Dwarven society. Like first names, these names are often carried down through generations, referencing the great deeds or creation of an ancestor, though it is not uncommon for these surnames to be bestowed upon a dwarf for his or her personal triumphs. Not all dwarves have surnames following this path, however. Many have words of the ancient Dwarf language serving as their last name as well as their first name, choosing loosely-translated words that represent them as a person.

## Clothing

Given that many dwarves live and work busy lives in rocky or even subterranean homes, most dwarves choose to wear simple, functional clothing that befits their mountainous home. Deep, earthy colors, including, but not limited to, shades of brown, gray, beige, and black are extremely prevalent in the base layers of dwarven garb, and when designs are utilized, Dwarves have a habit of using angular, geometric designs instead of the fluid, curving lines of other races. This base layer rarely is highly colorful, and Dwarves dressed in a lot of loud colors are often regarded as a little odd. Their base clothing tends to be fairly simple, serving for function more than aesthetics, and often will correspond to the line of work the wearer belongs to. On top of this base layer is where the majority of Dwarves begin to display their ornamental nature, adding accents that represent their family, clan, or city, using their colors or even the clan symbols themselves to proudly show off their allegiances. With the Dwarves ever willing to show off their craftsmanship, the usage of jewelry accents is prevalent (especially in the use of trinkets woven into braids of their beards), and even when not threatened by battle, many Dwarves choose to wear a bit of armor if only to display their handiwork.

## History

Dwarves can spend hours upon hours recounting tales of their ancestors' work and triumphs, going over famous battles and stories of legendary artifacts time and time again, but in the modern day, the records and knowledge of the ancient Dwarves and their civilizations are far from complete, with most of the true history having been almost entirely lost to time. Whilst the Dwarves have done their best to keep their oldest heritage alive, stories have lost their purity of truth long ago. Veins of legend and myth now run through Dwarven history like veins of iron through a mine, though some stories have become so proliferated through writing, carving, and storytelling that they are believed to be the closest thing to fact Dwarven history has to offer. Among these mostly-true stories, three notable legends to the Dwarven people as a whole comprise the foundation of the race's history, entitled Lombandror, Bolmaran and Parrangar in the old dwarven tongue. In the common language, the three tales loosely translate to The Calm, The Deep War and The Diaspora:

An age ago, when the world was far less old and grim, the Dwarves were a far more plentiful race, spanning the great ranges of the Northeast as artisans of unmatched prowess. Many Dwarves would argue that this remains true to this day, but the skill of the modern Dwarves pales in comparison to what once their race was once capable of. To all the races of the Sheltered Lands, their craft was legend, with metal and gems seeming to bend to their very will rather than the strikes of their hammers, and lords and masters of all different races would send for creations smelt from the wondrous forges of the Northeastern Range. Magnificent halls ran all through the mountains and cities of stone rivaled the civilization of anywhere in the Sheltered Lands, glimmering with the light of a million reflected gems. It is expected that much of this is proud hyperbole, for many of these supposed marvels of architecture have never been discovered nor accounted for, let alone even named. However, the fact still remains that the Dwarves truly were a glamorous people with an abundance of wealth in metal, stone, and ability.

Such a grand society stood as a network of dozens of individual clans and groups, led by a legendary king that watched over people of the city-states dispersed throughout the range as if each of his race was a child of his own. Under the rule of the king, the Dwarves prospered, delving deeper and deeper into the earth and expanding their royal kingdom far beneath the surface of the earth with the wealth they mined from the darkness. But unbeknownst to the king, with each new mile of tunnel his people chipped away for the growth of his kingdom, the end of Lombandror drew ever closer, and the doom of their homeland drew ever closer as the result of their king's keen ambition.

The miners plowed ever deeper towards the heart of the mountains, reaching caverns of mysterious crystal hitherto unseen by any of their race, but such a discovery came with a heavy cost. The smell of copper wafted through the tunnels of the deep, a beckoning call to the Dwarves seeking more of the resource, and the Dwarves obeyed its summons in their blind desire. It is not known when the Dwarves began to struggle with the reptilians that spewed from the caverns like water from a hole in a bucket, but even as they struck back, the creatures they named "Blade Eaters" continued to lash at them for their intrusion into the deep. It was as if nature had devised a creature specifically to defeat the Dwarves: the Blade Eaters were strong of claw and tough of scale, though it was their burning saliva and blood that made the Dwarves cry out in rage, for all the masterful weapons and armor it touched were melted to slag in seconds.

Having focused so heavily on their creation over their battle strength for so long, the Dwarves were rusty in combat, despite the gleaming edges upon their fine blades. They were forced to pull back into their subterranean fortresses against the onslaught of rust-colored lizards, and as the Dwarves trained within their safe citadels, the Blade Eaters continued to consume the vast undefended wealth of the Dwarves. The king declared a state of emergency, calling all his people to arms against this seemingly endless threat from the deep and leading the army into the tunnels to confront the beasts head-on. Unfortunately, the reptiles fought back with just as much force as was struck upon them, and the advantage of the beasts' acidic blood and spit was enough to slay the great king and win the day.

With the death of the king, the Deep War continued for ages and even continues to hold to a lesser extent to this day, but the tale transitions from Bolmaran to Parrangar as the people of the mountains fled from the threat of the deep. It was here that the Dwarven people, beaten and low from their loss, decided that their kingdom in the Northeastern Range was broken, and it was not long before whispers of an exodus began to circulate through the remaining cities. Over the next years, the Dwarves pulled back more and more, fighting defensively and training all the time to combat their foe, but all around them the grandeur of their old kingdom crumbled away into legend.

Soon about half of the Dwarven population had departed the Northeastern Ridge, though it is important to say that they were not necessarily retreating in cowardice or failure. The Dwarves that left their ancestral halls during the diaspora saw the losses against the Blade Eaters to be mere losses of battles in a larger war, with victory in said war to belong to the Dwarves upon a restrengthening and refocusing of their race. As masses of Dwarves departed the Ridge for the mountains of Gaden, Roskaria, and Pratorak, all of the Dwarves now across the Sheltered Lands knew that they would return and reclaim their homeland someday, when the time was right and their race was at its peak. Those that remained in the Ridge vowed to their travelling brethren to maintain the glory and power of the ancient cities until such a time as their race would all come home, though to this day, that time has yet to come.

#### The Kutorian

*"We have held back our enemy for centuries through our own strength and our own craft while all the other races lean on each other in their times of struggle. We are people of the Ridge, and we can and will keep our ancestral home alive without the petty aid of others."* - Ganton Deepcrest, a Kutorian Lord

Those of the Kutorian are the eldest and arguably the most powerful of the remaining Dwarven bloodlines, being descendants of the Dwarves that remained in the Northeastern Ridge to defend their homeland from the Blade Eaters. Sometimes bordering on arrogance, the Kutorian pride themselves on being the "truest" Dwarves in the Sheltered Lands. This is not to say that they look down on the other bloodlines of the Dwarves for leaving their race's homeland, but they definitely hold a special place of honor for themselves when viewing the current situation of all the Dwarves and even among the other races as well. This belief often leads to an aura of self-sufficiency, for they are certainly the most unsociable of the bloodlines and rarely make contact or allies with other races. Many Kutorian believe that they have done just fine without the company of non-dwarves, choosing to keep to their realm rather than reach out to the lands beyond and the people that dwell there, with those few that choose to venture away being more accepting of other races but still rather standoffish.

The Kutorian have probably accomplished the most when compared to the other major bloodlines, for they have diligently fought single-handedly for years against the Blade Eater threat to maintain a strong hold on the ancient Dwarf cities, and during this time they have obviously become highly acclaimed warriors in order to do so. After their losses centuries ago, the Kutorian vowed to train and grow to beat their enemies on the field of battle, and this rigorous weapon training is ongoing to this day. It is unheard of for a Kutorian to not be skilled with a weapon, even if he or she is a scholar or craftsman, for all Kutorian are expected to be able to join in a battle to protect their families, clans, cities, and people as a whole. This being said, military involvement is crucial in Kutorian society even more than usual for Dwarves, regardless of whether it is on a clan scale or larger, and it is common for Kutorian to be called to ready for combat in a moment's notice. Kutorian are constantly yearning to prove themselves in battle, often spending spare time practicing weapon maneuvers by themselves or sparring with a few comrades.

Given their extensive battling with Blade Eaters, Kutorian have striven to create new forms of weapons, shields, and armor that can resist the destructively acidic blood and saliva of their enemy, resulting in some of the most durable items the Sheltered Lands has ever seen. Exceptionally well-crafted, Kutorian weapons are usually of very high value and rightly so, being virtually indestructible and more often than not quite beautiful. The methods of creation of such weapons are held as a closely-guarded secret by the most skilled of the Kutorian smiths, and other races' attempts at copy the work through examination have proven fruitless due to it being so rare to encounter a true Kutorian weapon outside of the Northeastern Ridge, let alone finding such a weapon in the hands of a Dwarf that would allow it to be borrowed.

### The Regarion

*"Of course we'll go back someday! When the time comes, we'll return to our homeland just like all the other clans that went away, but until then, we might as well integrate ourselves into the rest of the Sheltered Lands rather than brood away from the other races."* - Mantimor Copperfoot, a Regarion merchant

Able to be encountered somewhat often, the Regarion are the descendants of those Dwarves that departed the Northeastern Ridge and moved out to Gaden and Roskaria. In the years after the diaspora, the Regarion wandered in merchant caravans before setting up small communities in central Gaden or migrating to larger cities to find their fortune there, ready to mingle with the citizens and start their new life away from the mountains. Over the centuries, the Regarion have come to be regarded as the most sociable of the Dwarven groups, with more reserved clans frequently raising a skeptical eyebrow to the way the Regarion will interact with and join other races.

In a general sense, the Regarion are a far more easy-going group; they have less to do with leading dangerous battles and more to do with a pleasant, comfortable life complete with some good crafts and good food. Of course, the Regarion still hold the respect for battle and honorable victory that all Dwarves possess and will still go into battle when it arises, but they are typically more content to allow other Dwarven groups to take up the mantle as defenders of their race and their homeland whilst they earn a decent living as merchants. Among those Regarion that do take up a more battle-oriented lifestyle are a number of scholars of Earth or Celestial focus, though more of the former given their race's difficulty in taking up Celestial magic. Fighters and other martially-inclined professions do exist among the Regarion, with such individuals usually helping guard merchant operations or being merchants themselves as well.

Choosing to keep the crafting traditions of their ancestors alive rather than constantly train for battle, the Regarion are the most mercantile of the major Dwarf bloodlines, serving as distinguished craftsman and traders of wares from throughout the Sheltered Lands. Though not quite as powerful an economic force as the Hobblings, Regarion certainly do their best to have a notable share of the market, selling finely-crafted goods in exchange for raw supplies with which to continue crafting. Even more so than the other groups, the Regarion seek out precious or unusual crafting materials and are almost always willing to bargain for them, eager to try crafting with them or even just adding a sample to some kind of "rare material" collection.

### The Mirunican

*"Let's keep moving, men! Our true life awaits us upon the road, not holed up in a hot stone box making swords."* - Carn Barric, a Mirunican mercenary

The least seen of the greater Dwarven bloodlines in the modern era, the Mirunican are the descendants of the Dwarves that ventured to Pratorak upon departing the Northeastern Ridge. Whilst their numbers are indeed lower than the other two major groups of Dwarves, the primary reason that Mirunican are uncommon to come across is their tendency to migrate in moving caravans instead of making more long-term settlements. Many Mirunican are firm believers in the notion that rooting one's life in just one place can lead to excesses of plenty, comfort, and leisure, believing that these three seemingly pleasant-sounding factors were those that caused the losses of the Dwarven people against the Blade Eaters centuries ago. Therefore, the Mirunican are far less material-oriented than others of their race, typically focusing on possessions that have direct effective use rather than things that are purely ornamental or unnecessary.

With a lowered enthusiasm for possessions, Mirunican are the least enthralled by the ancestral crafting practices of the Dwarves. Whilst many will learn rudimentary blacksmithing skills, most of these have little to no interest in furthering their crafting knowledge or prowess and use their skills mostly to patch up their armor when it is breached in battle. Blacksmithing forges are practically never purchased by Mirunican, given their migratory lifestyle. In exchange for this seemingly uncharacteristic disinterest in creation, Mirunican choose to focus extensively upon their skills in combat, likely equaling the Kutorian with their abilities. Contrasting with the Kutorian, however, Mirunican most frequently serve as mercenaries for other races, offering their skill as warriors in exchange for necessary goods and services. The majority of Mirunican have come into deals with the Monolithic Council of Pratorak, assisting the High Orc legions as they fight the Corrupt, though there are still many non-Council-employed Mirunican around Pratorak and the Valley of Solace.

Whilst they may not pride themselves with their craftsmanship, the Mirunican are said to be the hardiest of the Dwarves when it comes to their innate racial resistances. In their battle training, Mirunican work tirelessly to fortify themselves against poisons and the powers of the elements, and many say that it is almost fruitless to try to take down a Mirunican warrior using alchemy or elemental spells because they work very hard to resist them. This being said, it is rare to encounter a Mirunican that has not purchased at least one of each of the Resist Poison and Resist Element racial skills, and some elder Mirunican have been rumored to be able to withstand numerous attacks of these kinds without harm.

## Politics

With the crumbling of the greatest Dwarf kingdom more than an age ago and many of the Dwarves now scattered across the Sheltered Lands, much of the old political structure of the race has been fallen out of practice. The only semblances of real Dwarven nations and politics exist in the remains of the Northeastern Ridge and are mostly followed by the Kutorian that dwell there. Rather than the great network kingdom of the past, now the Dwarven lands are comprised of relatively self-sufficient, typically subterranean city-states. Each of these city-states is typically ruled over by a dominant clan or family, with a primary lord or lady serving as the head of the region. The entire area's economic and military situation are often in the hands of this ruler, with many of these rulers holding the lost Dwarven-tongue title of Garask in addition.

With Garask as an ancient Dwarven word translating roughly to "True," it is obviously a title of significance and honor for those who bear it, and they are regarded with the utmost respect by Dwarven society. Garasks are recognizable in Dwarven society by the sash of woven gold thread they wear, though since they do not wear the typical signs of nobility found in the rest of the Sheltered Lands, they are typically far less recognized by foreign governments and countries. Most non-Dwarves who encounter a Garask fail to show proper respect, though many Garasks are willing to overlook this ignorance the first time, and even when they are recognized, they are more often equated to travelling dignitaries for Dwarven lands than their appropriate rank of nobility. The Garasks stand as their own level of the Dwarven society apart from the rest, having earned their rank in a similar manner to how people of Gaden undergo the process of attaining knighthood, though their station is more equatable to a Baron or Baroness than a Knight when compared to Gaden. However, unlike Gaden's Barons and Baronesses, a Garask's knowledge and resources are what set him or her apart from the rest rather than his or her land holdings.

When Garasks gain their title, they are granted dominion over a supply of some mineral or metal resource in the region as their domain, along with the ancestral knowledge that pertains to that craft. Obviously, such knowledge and insight can be beyond price in Dwarven society, depending on the material in question. The hierarchy of different Garasks in relation to one another usually relates to this material, with fine resources (such as metheran and diamond) being granted to the greatest Garasks and lesser resources (such as copper) being granted to the less worthy Garasks. This resource is included in the Garask's title, such as a "Garask of Diamond" or a "Garask of Silver," and some notable Garasks are granted dominion over multiple materials, using all of them in their title.

The path to becoming a Garask involves studying and learning under an existing Garask in a squire-like position called a Darmir, an ancient Dwarf word for "Student," with honorable Dwarves typically being chosen specifically by the Garask and granted a silver sash for the duration of their time as a Darmir. The process of going from a Darmir to a Garask is not truly defined and varies for each Garask's Darmir, though it is said to revolve around the Garask testing the Darmir

to see if they understand all the virtues of a Garask and the Dwarven race. Needless to say, such a task is not particularly easy and is not undergone lightly, with few Darmirs being granted the honor of swapping out their silver sash for the gold one of the Garasks.

### Creating a Dwarf Character

There are a couple of things you must take into consideration when playing a Dwarf character:

All Dwarves have notable beards, regardless of whether they are male or female. Fake beards can be found at a variety of costume stores or online. If you have a beard, you must braid it in some manner to distinguish yourself from just being a bearded human. If your beard isn't long enough to braid, you must wear a fake beard over your real one or attach fake beard extensions.

Dwarves have a multi-century lifespan, but when creating a Dwarf character, you should be no more than 50-100 years old at the most. Remember that people grow in skill and wisdom the older they are, so having a very old Dwarf character come in for the first time that has few abilities or knowledge of the world is not something we are going for.

Most Dwarves in the Sheltered Lands are descendants of one of the three greater groups described above (Kutorian, Regarion, or Mirunican). Dwarves have a strong sense of family and/or clan loyalty, so remember to have some kind of clan in mind when you start. Your clan need not be a direct Kutorian, Regarion, or Mirunican group per se, but it should at least be descended from one of these and thus have some traits in common with one.