



## **Elves: Relics of Ancient Nature**

*A lowly mouse stood atop his favorite log, gazing out upon the woodland night before his beady eyes: the pale gibbous moon shone overhead, its serene light cascading down through the canopy of trees in beautiful streaks of white against the shadow of the forest below, and forest was silent, save for the light brush of the wind and the chirping of the crickets. The day had ended, and the forest had gone to sleep...*

*But wait, the forest was not yet truly asleep this night! The mouse's large ears perked up at a sound rustling through the woodland grass. Cowering back within the hollow log and straining to hear the paws of the dastardly fox or even the great wolf, the mouse could hear steps coming closer all the time, though they were not of any predator he had ever heard. The steps were calm and smooth like the fox's, but in a comforting manner rather than the predatory skulk of the mouse's fiery-furred foe; a graceful step that announced a midnight stroll rather than a nocturnal hunt.*

*Poking his tiny head out through a hole in the log, the mouse stared in wonder at the creature that stood in the moonlight before him. Dressed in a coat of green like the leaves above was a girl like the humans that came through to hunt on occasion, but the girl's ears came to a graceful point rather than the rounded curve of the huntsmen's ears. However, it was not the biped's ears that made the mouse pause, for it was the way the girl was looking at the forest around her that fascinated the little rodent.*

*Her eyes, deep and beautiful, were gazing through the trees in a manner that the mouse had never seen before. The girl did not look to be hunting for animals to capture and eat, nor scrounging the ground for trinkets or coin that travelers dropped as they passed through the woods venturing to the next town; the girl was simply looking at the forest itself, taking in its quiet majesty in the glow of the gentle moon above. Her young face was filled with a subtle joy, and as the mouse crawled further out of the log to move closer to the girl, he could tell that she understood the life of the forest just as much as the animals and plants that dwelt there.*

*The mouse, creeping ever closer to the mysteriously wondrous girl, stepped his tiny paw upon a twig that shifted and cracked in the still night air. Even as the rodent froze in terror, the girl's ear twitched, her face turning to face the petrified creature staring up into her woodland-loving eyes. But her face was not of hunger or fear, and even with the sleek sword mounted at the girl's belt that showed her to be as much a warrior as any of the brutish huntsmen, the mouse felt strangely secure, and as the girl reached out a hand to the ground, he knew it was safe to step atop.*

*With the fuzzy animal safely held before her, the girl began to speak aloud to him and walk through the night, the soft crunch of fallen leaves rustling underfoot. The mouse could not understand the words of the creature's tongue, but he knew from their tone that they were words of the forest, words that echoed with an ancient love and proved a true devotion for the natural world around them. There was a promise in the words and the way the creature looked around the woods, and as the mouse drifted off to cozy sleep in the palm of the mysteriously pointed-eared creature, he knew at last what this girl must be: One of the Elves, the graceful protectors of the natural world.*

*Never had the mouse slept so soundly than the night he was protected by the Elf and her undying love of the forest around her.*

All elves, regardless of their ancestral bloodline, have a keen love of the natural world and its beauty. The sun, moon, and earth all hold places of high esteem in elven beliefs, but even the mundane whisper of wind through a forest or the slow rush of a drifting creek grip the heart of an elf. This being true, elves of the Sheltered Lands are highly indignant toward the wanton destruction of nature's inherent purity, and most elves will only take from the land what is necessary to survive, rather than pillaging nature to excess. This being said, the Corrupt and their constant destruction of the land is an unforgivable crime to the elves, and it is this more so than the loss of many lives that fuels their great hatred of the Corrupt.

The elves of the Sheltered Lands still have personal traces of the grandeur once held by the lost empires, and this greatly influences the way many elves of the modern day act on a regular basis. Personal honor and loyalty grips an elf's conscious, whether they are aware of it or not. This is not to say that all elves are upstanding, law-abiding citizens, but rather that each elf has some aspect of their life to which they regard as uncompromising, whether it be family, a bloodline, a friendship, a love, a certain location, a creed, or other such thing. Often calm in demeanor, when this sacred aspect is brought in danger, elves will move quickly to position, willing to do all in their power to confront a change for the worse.

Often regarded as prudent or egotistical by other races (especially by the more savage races), the majority of the elves see themselves as more advanced in some way than other races by principle, and most elves express this superiority differently, such as being more articulate with words, swifter on foot, or other such traits. However, despite their inherent superiority and comments they make regarding it, elves are rarely rude to others regarding their "deficiencies": For example, an elf could boast about how his or her hearing is greater than that of a human, but the elf will rarely, if ever, tell the human that his hearing is actually bad. In short, elves embrace the idea that other races are good at things, but that elves are just usually better.

## **Naming**

First names within elven society are taken with careful consideration, and, mirroring the race's taste for slight superiority and a refined nature, tend to be somewhat ornate in nature. The practice of naming newborn elven children after their ancestors (usually parents and grandparents, as long as the individual in question was reputable) is not uncommon, though it is not a typical practice to name an elven child's first name after one of his or her parents; a parent's name is more likely to be chosen for a middle name, with older ancestors being more prominent for a first name. When children are not named after their family, they are most often granted a title corresponding to the land itself, usually translated to a fragment of the ancient elven tongue once spoken in the forgotten elven empires. Often, elven surnames are often more simple sounding than elven first names, though the reason for this practice is not entirely known and not always followed.

## **Costuming**

Elven dress varies greatly, but it tends to gravitate towards one of two types:

*Earthy, natural clothing:* Given that many elven societies still choose to dwell in the natural world instead of cramming into bustling metropolises, many elves dress in clothing that befits their grassland or woodland surroundings. Natural colors, including, but not limited to, shades of brown, beige, green, and black are extremely prevalent in this type of clothing. Their clothing tends to be fairly simple, serving for function more than aesthetics, though designs relating to the natural world, such as leaf designs sewn along the edge of a coat, are very common.

*Ornate, semi-formal clothing:* Rather than wearing simple garments of the woodlands, many elves embrace the grandeur of their race and wear more ornate clothing that lets them "stand out" above other races. These garments can vary widely in style and color, though unlike gypsy cultures, elves will rarely bombard their ensemble with contrasting colors or bizarre fashions, choosing to make themselves appear "elegantly superior", rather than overly gaudy.

### **The Ancient Elves**

*"Our people live and grow for many hundreds, nay, thousands of years! How can we be certain that some of our most ancient ancestors do not still live and grow alongside us today?"* – Jilkir Pelunica, a Kam-Alua Loremaster

With the three primary bloodlines of the elven people described below coming into being during the forgotten exodus from the old elven lands, little is recorded or even known about the elves that lived in the Sheltered Lands prior to that time or their doings, even by some of the elder elves alive today. They are shrouded in mystery, steadily becoming more myth than fact, but there have long been rumors circulating that a group of the ancient elves still exists in the modern Sheltered Lands. Where these supposed elves are and what they may be doing is unknown, however, and the vast majority of living elves believe these ancient elves to be nothing more than hoaxes or stories of the past.

### **The Sagitari**

*"These woods have stood for hundreds of years, untarnished by the rigors of time and the destruction of this land's dwellers. But not all land is as blessed as this; the purity of the earth has been torn throughout these lands, and much of the beauty that once stood strong as these trees around us now lays in ruin as a relic of the past's mistakes."* – Durillion Willowbranch, a Sagitari Elder

Whilst many of the details of the incident are shrouded in mystery and known only to a few elders, it is no secret that in the wake of the great exodus from the Elven lands centuries ago, the Sagitari felt burdened and somewhat responsible for the massive destruction of a large portion of land. The events that occurred, whether they are even known to modern Sagitari, disgust them, with a vast number of Sagitari being devoted to the preservation and regrowth of the natural world, even more so than what is typically expected of an Elf. Rather than shaping the land through their life, Sagitari prefer to shape their life by the land, striving to save and accommodate the environment as they go about their tasks. Whereas a human may cut down a tree to clear a space for building a house, a Sagitari might make his house in the tree, or perhaps build his house around the tree and have the tree stick out of the middle. More often than not, however, Sagitari do not construct permanent dwellings, favoring to travel in mobile communities throughout the Sheltered Lands. Sagitari groups are most commonly found traversing the more forested portions of Gaden, Roskaria, and the Western Wilds, with their presence in Pratorak, the Grasslands, and the Wastes being far less prominent.

Of course, wanton destruction of land is typically considered a vile crime to a Sagitari Elf. To them, defiling the land is like burning a priceless painting: something unique and beautiful that can now never be returned in just the same way it once was. They are typically quick to investigate, weapon in hand, if they see a trickle of smoke rising from the forest canopy in the distance or hear the echoing sounds of axes hacking down trees, and can be quite forward and stubborn when it comes to stopping the destruction. Sagitari still understand the necessity of taking resources from the land, but whilst they will typically allow this, they will be watchful to ensure that it does not go too far, and often their idea of "too far" is a lot shorter than most other people's. Often seen

as the thriftiest of elves, Sagitari will often go to great lengths to avoid using more materials from the land, making do with what they already possess instead of using natural materials to make more. It is common practice for a Sagitari to seek strengthened or indestructible bows, for these treatments will prolong the bow's life and forestall the time when wood will have to be taken from a tree to fashion a new bow. Crafting arts, especially blacksmithing, are still regularly practiced, though they are always done in such a way so as not to waste materials.

Another large facet of the Sagitari line is that of their impressive martial prowess, which rivals that of the other old Elven bloodlines. Honing their skills through extensive hunting practices as they travel, Sagitari have become renowned as skillful fighters and, especially, archers. Given that the Sagitari are arguably the finest archers in the Sheltered Lands, the longbow holds a special place in the hearts of the Sagitari community, but this is not to say that every Sagitari is a master of archery. However, whilst there are many Sagitari that are not well-practiced with bows, it is extremely uncommon to find a Sagitari that is not reasonably competent with some other kind of weapon. Sagitari are often willing to serve as mercenaries, selling out their service as skilled fighters for brief stints during their ongoing travels, and it is indeed in this role that most people encounter Sagitari outside of their traveling groups.

Due to their typically forest-dwelling habits and focus on their martial skills more so than scholarly arts, descendants of the Sagitari are the least likely of the elven bloodlines in the Sheltered Lands to know how to read, but the chance of coming across a Sagitari that cannot read is still less than the chance of encountering another race that cannot.

With the forest playing such a fundamental part of Sagitari elves' lives, it is not surprising to learn that many of their divining practices have to deal with the trees. The health of the forest and the falling of the leaves speak greatly to a Sagitari, and these elves often examine trees and leaves in an attempt to gain insight into the wellbeing of a place. A traditional practice that is widely scoffed at for being ridiculous by the other elven bloodlines (though it is praised and reinforced by many Dryads) includes the climbing of a tree and the careful writing of a subject or topic upon a leaf before waiting for the leaf to fall. When the leaf lands and is collected, if the writing still faces upward, it is seen as a positive sign regarding the written subject, with a negative sign being if the writing faces the ground. This practice is rarely employed by modern Sagitari, if ever, but the outcome of these "oracle leaves" when they actually do pop up can have a profound effect upon a Sagitari, who might be willing to change his or her mind about a situation depending on the result.

Against the Corrupt, the Sagitari show absolutely no mercy, with many Sagitari specifically training and honing their skills to face them. As the Corrupt's movement and attacks wither the landscape, Sagitari are determined to force them back into their own disgusting terrain and away from the untarnished land that they work so hard to maintain.

### **The Kam-Alua**

*"An age ago, what was not sufficient was engineered to be improved and perfected through sheer will to create. But that age has long come and gone... It is time for that era to return, and with proper effort, we can restore the grandeur of the past, wiping off the dust and bringing it back to proper glory!"* – Jilkir Pelunica, a Kam-Alua Loremaster

The Kam-Alua of the distant past were known for their extensive and fabulous mastery of machinery, including everything from mechanical golems to massive siege weapons with the force to decimate fortress walls in seconds. The magic of rituals and runes were not ignored by the Kam-Alua in favor of these incredible works of machinery, but built into

them gracefully. The creation processes for these machines were long, complex, difficult, and immensely costly, and the Kam-Alua were deeply respected for their efforts spent on these machines, even if some were more trouble than they were actually worth as a completed product.

However, these extensive and magnificent creations have been lost over the last centuries, leaving modern Kam-Alua to sift through the ruins of history to uncover the methods to their ancestors' greatness. Throughout the last centuries, most Kam-Alua have come to reside in the Wastes to the southwest of Gaden, for it is here that many remnants of the old creations and societies can be discovered, hidden beneath the ever-shifting sands.

With all of this being said, elves descended from a Kam-Alua bloodline are very knowledge and creation focused. Many of the Sheltered Lands' finest crafter elves are indeed Kam-Alua. Blacksmiths, trap makers, alchemists, treasure hunters, loremasters, and engineers are prevalent, and it is extremely uncommon to find a Kam-Alua elf that does not have some kind of crafting knowledge, even if it is just rudimentary. However, whilst crafting is common, the sheer number of Kam-Alua that devote themselves to magical practices is distinctly low. Magic, in the eyes of many Kam-Alua, is a "phony shortcut" method to achieving the true greatness that is achieved through ingenious creation. Of course, Kam-Alua still respect those who practice magic, and it is not unheard of for Kam-Alua to cast magic or use magical items either, but this distinct view of magic often makes it a rarer art amongst the bloodline.

Compared to the other bloodlines, Kam-Alua elves are the least interested in the natural world around them. They still appreciate the beauty of the moon or the way that the sun comes down in picturesque streams through a forest canopy, but they just do not have the same fascination as the other elves. There is an old saying that a Kam-Alua would rather spend hours in a workshop than go on a ten-minute walk through the forest, and whilst this expression may be a slight exaggeration, the sentiment that a Kam-Alua's preference for creation and worked materials rivals the natural world is quite correct. A fine work of metal holds more lure than an ancient tree, and Kam-Alua are jokingly called "Dwarf-Elves" from time to time for this reason.

The Corrupt, unable to cross the Great River into the Wastes, have virtually no presence in the Wastes, leading the many Kam-Alua that dwell there to be somewhat unconcerned with the Corrupt threat. However, those Kam-Alua that have strayed from the Wastes and into Gaden are, as most people, distinctly opposed to the Corrupt, and routinely use their engineering, blacksmithing, and trap making knowledge to do what they can against the oncoming tide.

### **The Quelie**

*"Magic is not something that you see or find; magic is something you feel. The song of the wind through the trees, the patterns of the eternal stars above us, the touch of the pure land beneath your bare toes, and the true sound of silence in an empty glade... those are true magic."* – Message decoded from a discovered Quelie scroll

Whilst the many races of the Sheltered Lands all have members of their kind who excel at the casting of Earth or Celestial magics, the Quelie elves are perhaps the most accomplished when it comes to these arts. Renowned throughout the Sheltered Lands for their skills, the eldest of Quelie elves are seen as the arguable paragons of magic when it comes to the common races, and many aspire to someday have their magical power grow to that of an elder Quelie. However, in the modern era, it is virtually impossible to find a true Quelie Elf. Several elves hold traces of Quelie in their bloodline, but few, if any, pure Quelie remain in the Sheltered Lands today.

Naturally, the casting of magic comes easily to Quelie-descended elves, given their long bloodlines of casters going back generations, and it is extremely rare to find a Quelie-descended elf that cannot cast some form of magic. To most Quelie, magic is the main form of attack, with weapons used more for desperate situations or defense more than as a primary form of attack, and even those Quelie that know how to use a weapon frequently do not carry one of these weapons with them when they travel. However, this is not to say that there are not Quelie who do not practice martial skills, and those that do tend to be very effective at combining their weapon prowess with their magical abilities.

With the lost Quelie having such a powerful attunement to the magical arts, it is no surprise that many ancient Quelie enchantments and rituals prove to be extremely potent and even unique in their effects. Whilst many believe them to be simply myth, the existence of these Quelie-crafted rituals is actually true, for it has been confirmed that several have been discovered and even cast in the modern era. However, these powerful ritual scrolls of arcane energies are extremely rare and unbelievably valuable. Quelie scrolls have been responsible in past for such feats of magic including conjuring massive armies of constructs, changing the weather, and even sailing the river of time, so it is understandable to expect the cost of these scrolls to often be multiple hundreds of gold coins at the least. The art of such magic's creation is a highly-kept secret by the eldest of the Quelie that no longer walk the Sheltered Lands, so most of these great scrolls and magics have been lost over the last age, with those that have not been lost are securely protected by their holders.

However, despite its greatness, this is not to say that the magic of the Quelie is perfect. Their proficiency with magic and their manipulation of it is so potent that large Quelie presences in a place can actually drain magical potential from a place, creating peculiar "dead zones" where magic itself is inhibited or warped. These dead zones are strangely uncomfortable places to be, and often seem eerily silent or muffled, as if the air itself is missing something. Circles of Power where Quelie rituals have been cast have been known to be drastically weakened by the Quelie magical manipulation, and whilst it is rare that a Permanent Circle of Power will lose its power of Resurrection or Identification, the barrier boundaries of such Circles of Power have been seen to drop significantly in durability and even lose other properties. In some cases, the potent casting of a Quelie or a Quelie ritual has destroyed Circles of Power entirely, leaving nothing but a blackened ring of scorched ash where the magic of the Circle once stood.

The drainage of magic from places and Circles of Power drives groups of Quelie to relocate frequently and settle down again in a place with more latent magic flowing through it until it has been drained out, and current Quelie can be found throughout Gaden, Roskaria, Pratorak, the Western Wilds, the Grasslands, and the Wastes. This drain-and-move-on style of migration promotes a strong internal struggle in the hearts of most Quelie, given the punishment inflicted on the environment from their magic: Pursue the path of magic, or preserve the natural world. This being said, many Quelie attempt to balance their castings with the flow of nature, and many are careful when casting the more potent magics to gauge the wellbeing of the area before, during, and after such a casting. The greater castings of the past, that drew from the land ruthlessly have largely been abandoned, although some still exists and there are those that believe the knowledge is not forever lost.

In the struggles against the Corrupt, Quelie-descended casters have proven very useful, with the Earth casters functioning as powerful healers and the Celestial casters functioning as powerful magical artillery on the field. Quelie elves are just as opposed to the Corrupt as most other races, though it is not uncommon to find a Quelie that is

interested in the Corrupt's manipulation of different magical energies, hoping to unravel the mysteries of them and possibly rework that magic and cast it themselves.

### **Creating an Elf Character**

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

All elves have pointed ears and must wear some form of pointed ear prosthetic. These can be found at many costume shops and on the internet, and are affixed to your ears using adhesives like spirit gum or liquid latex. Note that these ear prosthetics must be worn even when they cannot be seen; you cannot wear a hood or bandana over your ears as an excuse for not wearing elf ears.

Elves age at a similar rate as humans until their late teens, at which point they begin to age significantly slower. Elves can live very long natural lifespans, but when creating an Elf character, you should be no more than 100 years old at the most. Remember that people grow in skill and wisdom the older they are, so having a very old elf character come in for the first time that has few abilities or knowledge of the world is not something we are going for.

Most Elves in the Sheltered Lands are descendants of one of the three bloodlines described above (Sagitari, Kam-Alua, or Quelie). Your family or bloodline need not be directly one of these groups, but it should at least share some traits in common with one of the greater bloodlines. The most prominent bloodline of descent is the Sagitari, so if you are unsure of what group you might belong to, it is most likely some branch of the Sagitari. Remember that the true Quelie, meaning those with the significant magical power mentioned above, are virtually lost to the world, and whilst you can play a Quelie-descended character and can research the ancient secrets of the Quelie, you cannot directly play one of these powerfully arcane Elves.

Remember also when picking a tribe of Elves to descend from that they are all one people in the end, and Elves from one tribe can join another if they feel their talents or desires do not fit with their parents. The transition is usually made at early adulthood and is never viewed negatively; it is simply accepted that the Elf has found his or her place in the world, even though it might differ from his or her parents. For instance, this means Quelie Elves that "just hate magic" do not really exist, as they will simply begin to identify as a Kam-Alua or Sagitari once they realize how they feel.