

The Dwarves

Crom stood before the forge--its flames burning hotter than any other than he had ever allowed. Rather than reaching for the bronze that was his craft's traditional material, he reached for the strange gray metal that he had made. He heated it until it glowed red, then began to pound it into shape. As he did so, he allowed the energies of the conduit to flow through him, enchanting his creation. He worked for 9 days without rest, and when he was finished, six pairs of folk, each in his own image, stood before him. And he named them Daku (or Dwarf), after the insult that had been spat his way for millennium before.

Introduction

Dwarves are a proud and sturdy race, created by Crom Quendisi in the last years of the Age of Darkness. They were created with two noble purposes in mind--to first drive forth the darkness, and then to bring wisdom and form to the world. And in that, they succeeded admirably for over a thousand years. However, when Crom himself was slain by the greater Tuathan (also known as the Elders), they lost their greatest patron, and became much less significant.¹

Dwarven Characteristics

In modern times, Dwarves still possess the strength and sense of purpose that was built into their very being. They are tireless, able to go without sleep for days on end, and those few that die of old age never do so in less than two centuries (with records of some living four centuries or more.) And a single dwarf will still challenge (and often defeat) a superior number of its ancient foes. Dwarves are incredibly stubborn and resistant to damage; any attack that challenges the strength of its victim is much more likely to fail against dwarves. In addition, their very substance renders them resistant to modern magic and all but immune to the ancient elvish magics.

The physical appearance of dwarves varies significantly from one to the other. Their stature runs between 4'3" and 5', and they normally weigh between 140 and 220 lbs. They are typically light-skinned, though the tone may vary between brown, gray and pinkish between the different tribes and living conditions. Contrary to the common belief, not all dwarves have beards. Many do, though, out of reverence for their ancient creator and benefactor.

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1. Less significant does not imply less powerful. The united tribes tracked down and killed virtually every one of the traitorous self-proclaimed "gods" with ruthless efficiency.

Another misconception about dwarves is that they are greedy. In fact, they are quite generous in the right circumstances. However, they are also creatures who were created to be self-sufficient warriors, and as such feel that each possession taken from them is ultimately a robbery of the greater dwarven war chest. Also, their affinity for items of quality causes them to become attached to items, dwarvish or not, that are of lasting value.

Their love of quality is often irksome to other races, because they will never rush anything which can be made better with time. Although their swords, armor and other "tradable goods" are of superior quality, they do not turn them out in the numbers that the rest of the world would wish--even when time seems to be of the essence. (One related philosophy that others don't understand is that any dwarf would be willing and even eager to work on a great project, even if they themselves will never see the finished product in their own lifetime.)

What is least understood about dwarves is their sense of culture. Others tend to view them as humorless, single-minded earth diggers who have a penchant for taking out orcs. In fact, some of the most beautiful instruments, the most stirring stories and the most moving pieces of art come from the hands of dwarves. In fact, because most dwarves do not

dream in the same sense that the other races do, they are obliged to foster their creativity in other ways. Their culture is even less understood because few are allowed to see any but the most peripheral aspects of it.

If dwarves have a weakness, it is their stubbornness. If they are gravely insulted, robbed or a trust is broken, they will go to the ends of the earth to extract their revenge. The need for revenge is often passed on to others as well, which can lead to tribe-wide crusades for the blood of a single person. It is important when dealing with dwarves, that if one happens to become Dakusi (“dwarf friend”) is both a great honor and responsibility. Failure to live up to the responsibilities can lead to becoming Dakudisi (“smallest among the dwarves”) which is a mark of utter shame and disgrace, and often leads to death.

Dwarven Society

In all, there are six tribes of dwarves, each with their own abilities and strengths. They are loyal to their tribe ahead of almost everything else. In fact, aside from their joined love of crafts and joined hatred of things dark, they are a very diverse people. The Saga of DreamDeath emphasizes this in its description of Crom’s challenge to his people.

“Go forth”, Crom did charge
“to the places I show you
To the mountains and hill-
sides
That border the earth.

And live there apart,
Speaking none to the other
That your weakness and
strength
Are not seen by the foe.

There build and protect;
Cause your numbers to grow
And practice the skills
That I teach you today

Hold quiet the secret
‘Til such is the time
That you come forth as
heroes
Of quendi and sun.

And your strength shall be
joined
On the morn of the battle
When you and your kin
Come together again

And the blood of the darkness
Shall run in the valleys
When separate but joined
You will take back the day.²

Almost every dwarf lives in a holding--a small village of no more than 100 dwarves, and usually closer to 50. A group of villages may exist in a central location, however, called a *steading*. A *steading* is normally a very private place, guarded by a *Sondak*, roughly translated “place where items of value are traded for baubles” (or “trading post” in the more traditional sense.) The *Sondak* is a holding in which non-dwarf races may come and trade, seek shelter or otherwise interact with the dwarves. Most holdings are self sufficient, growing food, and making their own clothes and supplies. There will be non-essential things that they trade for, but they do not like being in a position where they have to rely on others for their survival.

The exception to this is a military holding (or *steading*) called a *Bin-tor*, where the primary output of

the installation is soldiers and war equipment. Such installations rely almost entirely on other steadings for their sustenance. Humans would simply call such things a supply line, but to a dwarf it is a form of great trust.

In addition, there are six locations around the world known as “forges.” These are huge by dwarvish standards: up to 5000 dwarves may inhabit the forge, and to do so is a position of great responsibility and honor--each forge is the original homes of one of the six tribes. They are also items of greatest power, to be used only by the most worthy.

The forges represent the true homes of each of the tribes, and dwarves make an effort to travel there at some point during their lives, even when they are born on the opposite side of the earth from their home forge. Returning to the home forge provides the dwarf with strength and added power and a sense of purpose. Many is the dwarf who was in danger of giving into the temptations and vices of the modern world, only to become refocused upon making a journey to the home forge. (Note that although the general location of the six forges is known, or suspected, by academics and enemies the actual location of each forge the greatest of secrets, and every bit of dwarvish guile and strength goes into keeping the location both secret and safe. Those who pursue the subject too closely tend to meet with an accident.

2. From *The DreamDeath Saga*, the 845NA Serian translation by Yahn De Kasta of Arden.

The six forges are as follows:

Forge Name	Location	Inhabitants
The forge that is fallen ^a	Southland mountains	XXX
The Sea Forge	XXX Island (stone boats)	XXX
The Forge of Ice and Fire	North Region	XXX
The Hidden Forge	Near Maglen	XXX
The First Forge	West Region, near the western empire	XXX
The Forge of Dawn	Eastern Mountains	XXX

Table 1: Dwarven Forges

- a. This was once known as the “Forge of hottest iron.” It fell during the destruction of the enemies of Crom.

Abilities and Skills

Additional Comments