

FRIEND & FOE: THE ELVES AND BUGBEARS OF TELLENE

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introduction

WHY THE KINGDOMS OF KALAMAR® CAMPAIGN SETTING?

The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting describes the world of Tellene, a vibrant world alive with rich characters, imminent danger, complex intrigue and exciting adventure, all awaiting your shaping hand. This robust world consists of many detailed lands and cultures, both human and humanoid, that are rife with adventure possibilities. On Tellene, fantastic creatures roam the wilderness, evil clerics worship evil deities hell-bent on destruction and the dead rise again to spread terror throughout the world. Complex political alliances mix with marauding bands of humanoids and medieval technology and culture come face to face with magic and the fantastic. Tellene combines the best of a realistic medieval world with all the elements of fantasy you have come to enjoy. While nearly any campaign setting suffices for a single adventure, your characters will find the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting to be an engaging game world to explore long after the novelty of the "tourist bazaars" has worn thin.

The underlying strength of the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting comes from its geo-historical basis. The maps feel right because they are right, at least from a standpoint of verisimilitude. The continents, lakes, rivers, forests and other geographical features all follow examples from the real world. This attention to detail clearly shows a setting built from the ground up, from the direction of the prevailing winds to the plate tectonics. No glaciers lie in the middle of warm lakes nor huge jungles in temperate latitudes. The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting becomes the invisible backdrop for the real action: you.

The player character becomes the real hero of any D&D game. You rescue the princess and you recover the stolen Whatzit for Lord So-and-So. You shape the campaign world through your actions, not the other way around. Tellene, like few other campaign settings before it, offers you the opportunity to be a world-shaper. Life in Tellene grows from ordinary men and women with extraordinary courage and resolve. This setting gives you the information you need to allow your players to become one of those people. But fear not, for all the detail and background history that this setting provides add depth to your adventures without confining them. The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting allows you to be the author of your own destiny by providing the scenery but not the story.

Of course, player characters cannot be everywhere at once. The world continues moving even when they spend weeks exploring long forgotten ruins or dark forests somewhere. Evil cults spread their influence throughout a small town. A village succumbs to a mysterious disease. A band of humanoids halts merchant routes between two cities. Villains even kidnap princesses when heroes are not around to do anything about it.

What happens then? Well, sometimes the princess escapes, but more often the Vicelord has his way with her. For the NPCs of Tellene are not inept, else they would not be worthy (or successful) villains. A world full of morons is no place to live. The good, the bad and even the so-so must transpire in the campaign in order to make the party's heroic deeds exceptional. After all, if every person on the block is a superhero, nobody stands out.

The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting is designed to enhance your D&D experience by providing a realistic backdrop for your character. Every type of person you could imagine lives somewhere on Tellene. In fact, that's one of the reasons the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting is such an enjoyable world to play in: it is tremendously versatile. No matter what type of character you choose to play, you should feel confident that he or she will have an important place in the world of Tellene.

The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting also provides a realistic, dynamic world for your character. Every sort of adventure can be found on the continent of Tellene. Whether you dream of finding great riches in the bellies of mountains or ridding the desert of undead abominations, the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting provides the where and the how, all the while maintaining a commitment to realism that lets you experience your character's adventures in the most satisfying ways.

In the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting, your character has a chance to stand out. In fact, you have a chance to be the greatest character in the campaign world. But greatness is different for every individual. While you may dream of conquering the continent and bringing peace and prosperity to its people, others may wish for the ultimate in scholarly or magical achievement. What sets the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting apart is its ability to give you the opportunity to do all this and more without sacrificing continuity or common sense. Here you are presented with the opportunity to become great. Realizing that opportunity, however, requires skill, effort and a little bit of luck.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Few scholars argue that elves are one of the oldest standard races on Tellene. Existing for unknown thousands of years, their culture is one of personal expression combined with a love for all things of beauty. It is both ephemeral and temporal, transgressing human understanding on many levels, and yet being instantly recognizable in others.

Yet, the elves are not the only race with culture. Even the monstrous bugbears have some kind of civilization of their own. What follows is an in-depth look at both races, organized as follows:

ELVES

Elves have always been a part of Dungeons & Dragons, and their unique blend of sorcery and combative arts makes them a popular character choice for countless players. This supplement serves as a player's guide to elves, with a wealth of background information enabling you to bring your characters to life in a unique culture, as well providing new rules, including feats and prestige classes.

The elf section is broken down into several chapters, one for each subrace. As the high elves most closely resemble the standard elven race in the *D&D Player's Handbook*, and because the high elves are the race most commonly encountered by the humans of Tellene, they are treated as the standard elven race. The differences between subraces highlighted in the other chapters, each of which is broken down into several sections covering various aspects of elf daily life.

Chapter One details the history of the elven race

Chapter Two discusses the high elves, the most commonly encountered elven race.

Chapter Three presents the gray elves, studious and haughty creatures who live in stone cities and do not consider other races their equals.

Chapter Four details the wild elves, a reclusive and belligerent subrace of communal hunter/gatherers that favor freedom over all else.

Chapter Five includes the wood elves, protectors of the forests with a strong love of nature.

Chapter Six details the half-elf and tel-amthothlan (half-elf/half-orc) races.

Chapter Seven presents the player with everything he needs to know about playing any breed of elf, as well as new feats and prestige classes suited to the various races.

The Appendices (A and C) cover the elven glossary and bestiary, respectively. Appendix E includes some notes for the Dungeon Master on elven adventures.

While the word "elf" appears frequently throughout this work, the reader should remember that this book deals with all the surface elf subraces. Which sort of elf it refers to depends solely on which section you are reading.

The stereotypical elf is an aloof nature-lover, skilled with bow and sword, highly talented in magic, and enemy of all things

evil. While there is nothing wrong with this view, it is only a glimpse at the surface of a fascinating culture. Within these pages is an in-depth study of all aspects of surface elf culture. High, wood, wild, and gray elves are all covered in detail, with explanations of their society, culture, religion, and methods of warfare. The mysterious underground drow and twilight elves are covered separately, in *Blood and Shadows: the Dark Elves of Tellene*.

What this book is not, however, is a definitive guide to every elf community on the surface of Tellene. Elves living in different territories have unique customs, brought about by centuries of contact with other races. There is not the space to detail every single custom and oddity shared by this diverse race. Instead, we present the common view; the base template of all elves on Tellene.

BUGBEARS

Bugbears, too, have been spotted in fantasy campaigns for many years, but serve mostly as growling, snarling beasts with no real society of their own. This supplement changes that, providing DMs (and players) with ways to bring a bugbear character to life! Here you learn about their physical and mental strengths and weaknesses, social structure, culture, warfare, religion, and more.

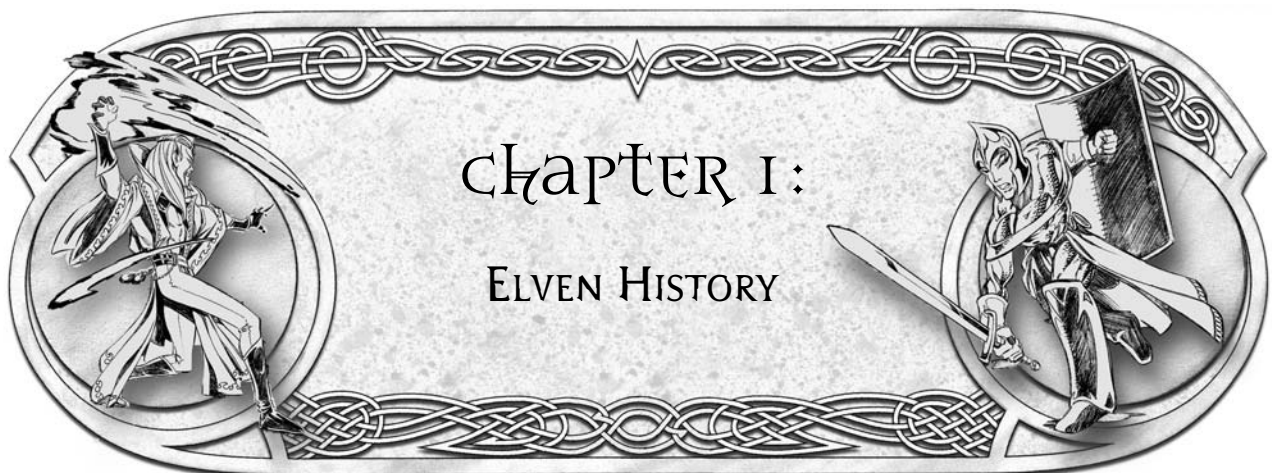
Chapter Eight details the monstrous bugbear race, along with the arctic and desert subraces, and the bugbear mage.

Chapter Nine gives details on playing a bugbear, along with new rules information pertaining to bugbears, such as prestige classes and alchemical mixtures.

The Appendices (B and D) detail the bugbear glossary and bestiary, respectively. Appendix E includes some notes for the Dungeon Master on bugbear adventures.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

This campaign resource assumes that you have access to the three core rulebooks of the Dungeons & Dragons game: the *Player's Handbook* (PHB), the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG) and the *Monster Manual* (MM). This product uses updated material from the v.3.5 revision of the D&D rules. As this book is compatible with the Kingdoms of Kalamar fantasy campaign setting, it is also useful to have the *Kingdoms of Kalamar campaign setting sourcebook* and the *Kingdoms of Kalamar Player's Guide*.



The rank stench of stale air, mingled with human excrement, struck the robed figure like a blow to the face as he entered the cramped chamber. Pausing for a moment, he gazed around his subterranean domain. The air was smoky, as usual, for poor ventilation helped keep the screams unheard outside of the chamber. Flagstones lined the floor, covered with an insubstantial layer of moldy straw and rat droppings.

Instruments of torture stood around the room - a rack, an iron maiden, branding irons, thumbscrews, and other, more insidious tools of pain. None were currently in use.

He walked forward, the sounds of his boots on the flagstones echoing through the confined space. Absently he ran a gloved hand along the rack as he passed by, a gentle caress from loving master to loyal servant. Reaching a low door at the rear of the room, he pushed firmly, entering the room beyond without breaking stride. There were two men already in the room; only one of them reacted to the new presence.

"My Lord!" The figure near the door jumped slightly as the cell door crashed against the wall. "I was not expecting you so soon."

The robed figure ignored the jailer, focusing his attention on the creature manacled to the wall beyond. Its wrists were bloody and swollen where the manacles had rubbed, and small rivulets of dried blood ran down each arm toward his chest. Severe bruising on the ribcage indicated where several ribs had been broken, while long gouges, caused by tools invented by men with no concept of compassion or pity, crisscrossed his stomach and groin. His left leg was obviously broken at the shin, and the toes on his right foot crushed to pulp.

The stench of stale sweat and dried blood clung to the prisoner like a damp cloak. Ignoring the affront to his senses, the robed figure lifted the prisoner's head up by his lank, golden hair, studying the elegance of the bruised and bloodied face. He stared into the prisoner's vacant eyes for a brief moment before speaking.

"He is dead." It was a simple statement of fact. He relaxed his grip; the prisoner's head flopped forward.

The jailer nervously shifted his weight from foot to foot. "He died but a short while ago, lordship. I would have informed you immediately, but you said that you..."

"A pity," said the robed man, ignoring the jailer's babblings. "I would like to have witnessed his final moments. I have never seen one of his race die. Did he finish?"

"Yes, my lord," said the jailer hurriedly. "The scribe has gone to write the last of his notes. He said he would have them finished by midnight, your lordship."

Behind his mask, the robed man allowed himself a brief smile. This was the information he had been waiting for. He spun on his heel and walked toward the door, his hands clasped firmly behind his back, his pace quicker than when he entered.

"Dispose of the body," he said, not waiting for a reply. "I want no evidence that this elf was ever here."

IN THE BEGINNING...

It is said that the mists of time grow thicker the further back one tries to see into the past. Though most humanoids have long racial histories, stretching back into times of legend and myth, only the elves, whether through arrogance or a genuine heritage, claim to have been around since the very dawn of time. Indeed, the gray elves claim that the elven race was the first sentient form sculpted by the Creator. Other elves are less inclined to make such boasts, though their myths do spring from shortly after this time.

Though elven claims to be the first race to inhabit Tellene are unlikely, as stories of ancient giant and titan kingdoms are also found in several creation myths, there is little doubt that their history stretches back long before that of the race of man. According to popular legend, the first humans to step foot on the mainland asked if the elves had been there long. The answer, no doubt given by a gray elf judging by its mocking tone, shocked the humans.

"Our people played in yonder mountains when they were but small hills, barely ripples in the earth. We fished in what are now great deserts, and we planted the great forests of this land when the others withered with age. Have we been here long? We have always been here, and we always will be."

Though elves keep few written records (or if they do, they show them to no one), dwarven texts date back many thousands of years. Regarded by many as the second oldest race on Tellene (even humans believe that elves are older), dwarven historical texts from the earliest civilizations make mention of elves, but they make no specific references to their origins, referring to elves only as the “woodland folk.” The descriptions of these early elves lack many specific details, and some sages hypothesize that the “woodland folk” were actually fey, not elves.

In all likelihood, the truth will ever be known. Elves maintain their story of ancient lines, demonstrating commonality of myths and legends across the breeds. Their most ancient texts, written in High Elven, have never been translated into another tongue, and it is even more unlikely they ever will.

THE FOUR AGES

According to the elves, history is broken down into “ages,” a term used to describe an unknown length of time, starting shortly after the creation (sometimes known as the “Dawn of Time,” or “Dawn of the World”) and ending at some distant point in the future. Elves refer to these ages as seasons, part of some immense cycle that surpasses concepts such as years or centuries.

The first age, the Age of Spring, begins with the arrival of elves on Tellene. Other races sometimes refer to it as the Mythic Age, for nothing can be dated with any accuracy and the deeds of elven heroes are too fantastical to be accepted as fact. After spring came the Age of Summer, the current epoch. When summer does end, it heralds the start of the Age of Fall, when events take a turn for the worse. Though there is much speculation among elves as to what the age brings, there is little doubt that it marks the beginning of the end. Typical prophecies claim that the world shall be wracked by great wars, that some of the gods will be destroyed, and that further rifts will push the elven races even further apart. The final epoch is the Age of Winter, the end of the world. Few creatures survive the cataclysm, but all is not without hope, for it is said that the Creator returns when the world is on the brink of total annihilation.

THE AGE OF SPRING

Virtually every religion on Tellene has forgotten about or now ignores the existence of the Creator. Without her, however, there would be no world, no stars, no life and no gods. The entire universe was her plaything, yet like so many wonders, it became boring after a while, for there was no growth. Things were always as they were and would always remain that way. Though many religions speak of the Creator forming life through her hands, the elves hold fast to their belief that she created life through her song, the echoes of which still reverberate through the universe today.

First came the gods, of which there were fifty-four. Each god portrayed one or more parts of the Creator. Life and destruction, honesty and deceit, all were part of the Creator who gave

DISCIPLES OF THE CREATOR

Few races now have any knowledge of the Creator, for her god-children are said to have eradicated all her temples and followers after her disappearance. Today, the Disciples of the Creator are the descendants of those ancient followers, practicing their religion in secret and waiting for the Creator's return. Whether any of these descendants are of elven blood is unknown, but at least in public, the elves rarely pay homage to the Creator, for in doing so they risk attracting unwanted attention from the dark gods.

them existence. The gods were granted control over many planes, but not the plane of which Tellene lies. That would remain her plaything.

Next came the world of Tellene, populated with plants and animals of unimaginable variety. With song she shaped seas and continents, lakes and mountains, giving birth to forests and grassy plains. Back then there were no deserts or swamps, for such things were not pleasing to the Creator. Truly omnipotent, the Creator still had to pay attention to her children, for each was appointed tasks to complete in accordance with her whims. To maintain Tellene while she wandered among her children, the Creator fabricated elves, the first born of the races.

Back then, so the elves claim, there were no racial divisions, and the elves were unified in their beliefs. (Arguments over which subrace was the first continues to this day.) These elves were charged with guardianship over the new world, to maintain the balances that the Creator put in place and nurture



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all life that grew on the garden paradise. This early world was something of a utopia, for elves had no enemies, nor did they die of old age or disease, nor starvation or thirst. The universe was timeless and so were elves. There were no seasons to speak of, for it was always spring, and life bloomed without boundaries. The elves spent their early days wandering the world, marveling at the glories that they beheld, and tending the trees and animals.

THE WAR OF THE GODS

The gods, while undoubtedly highly intelligent, were also little more than adolescents at heart and grew indignant toward the authority of the Creator and the limits she placed on them. Why was it that they were not allowed to create things like the elves? Why should they not create their own world? Why should they perform meaningless tasks when there was a whole world for them to play with? Resentment grew, especially among the chaotic gods, who felt most constrained by their maker. A small faction, lead by the Confuser of Ways, gathered in secret and hatched a plan that would reshape the universe - they would remove the Creator from creation... permanently.

Of course, one does become the Supreme Being without a modicum of intelligence. Soon the Creator learned of these plans, for nothing in creation was secret to her. For the first time ever she was intrigued by the gods' actions, and allowed them to continue with their plan. When the gods put their plan into action, the Creator created the illusion of her demise by allowing her essence to be trapped in a crystal shard.

The usurpers would have destroyed the shard were it not for the voice of reason of the elves, who beseeched them to see wisdom. Surely, they cried, creation would be unmade if the Creator died. Everything would end, including the gods. Seeing wisdom in the words of the Creator's favorite race, the usurpers hid the shard on a distant plane, where it would remain for eternity.

The gods now turned their attention to Tellene. Each god followed his own plans for the world, shaped by his own limited control, for none of them had the true omnipotence of their creator. Mountains were raised and lowered as rivals fought over what to do with the surface of the world, sea and land fought for supremacy over each other, and even the sun and moon battled to light the wonders of the Creator's vision. Through all of this the elves remained quiet, for none of the gods yet turned their attention to them.

What began as arguments soon spiraled out of control, for no one god was greater than the other. War shook the heavens as law fought chaos, good fought evil, and neutrality tried in vain to hold the cosmos together. Eleven deities died in the mayhem. The elves claim to know the names of these deities, but have never revealed them to anyone despite constant enquiries.

Note: elven mythology does not include the framing of the Overlord by the Corrupter and Confuser of Ways as described in

the creation myth in the Kingdoms of Kalamar campaign setting sourcebook. The war was fought not as one of justice but as petty bickering by children wanting to rival the works of their parent.

THE TEMPTING

Regardless of the elves' apparent refusal to get involved in the War of the Gods, their presence did not go unnoticed for long. Seemingly as one, the gods turned their attention to this quiet race of gardeners, and a single thought crossed their collective minds - let the elves decide who should be the victors and the vanquished.

The gods came in turn to the elves, who were fearful of their presence. Much had changed since the war began, for each god now wished to shape Tellene with his own powers, and brought many new things into being. Death came to the elves, for now there was time, which withered their bodies, and hunger and starvation, which wasted them. Though the elves had no wish to traffic with the gods, they knew that they needed protectors from these new forces.

Each in turn spoke to the elves, promising them many gifts in return for their worship. Some, like the Knight of the Gods, were rejected out of hand, for his rules were too binding to the light-hearted elves. Others, like the Coddler, offered things of which the elves had no knowledge, for they did not sleep and knew nothing of the dreams of which he spoke.

The dark gods were rejected out of hand, even those that came in fair form, for they spoke of death and destruction, trickery and enslavement. These were early days, and the elves held true to the Creator's vision for their race. Denied worshippers among the elves, the only sentient race on the planet, these spoilt children vowed revenge on the elves. But the elves did not worry, for they had chosen their gods.

Raconteur taught the elves how to dance, at which they excelled, for it suited their spirits, while the Guardian promised to watch over the elves, promising to keep them free from oppression. The Eye Opener gave words of wisdom, allowing the elves to learn and grow, and the Lord of Silver Linings taught them healing songs, which until now had not been needed. The Great Huntress taught them how to use bows for hunting, for they needed to eat the flesh of beasts, and the Raiser taught them how to harvest food from nature and use songs to tend the plants.

Of the other gods the elves did not choose as their major deities, many were worshipped in lesser roles, which suited them, for any worshippers were better than none, and their influence over Tellene grew accordingly. Many of these lesser gods found plentiful worshippers later, when the new races arose.

Note: There is some discrepancy in this version of events, for elves of different breeds do not favor the same gods. Wood elves, for example, follow the Bear, whereas high and gray elves do not. They have faith in the Eye Opener, which neither wood nor wild

elves hold in great esteem. It seems likely that gods are admitted or omitted from this legend depending on the breed of the historian, which naturally makes its veracity more unbelievable.

AWAKENING

Yet, the gods still bickered amongst themselves, only pausing in their conflict when one of the gods, (the Powermaster, according to the elves) tried to create a new weapon from the rock of Tellene and inadvertently gave life to the first dwarves. Of course, dwarves repudiate this claim, stating that the elves have no true knowledge of dwarven origins. At best the elven claims are a slur; at worst a dire insult.

It soon became obvious to the other gods that the Creator's absence had somehow imparted the gift of creation.

They too could create new life. Slowly but surely, the war in the heavens moved to the surface of Tellene. Rather than risk their own existence, the gods would contest for supremacy and settle old scores through the races they spawned. Worship rather than warfare was the battle cry, for a god without worshippers is powerless against his rivals, and so it was that clerics came unto Tellene. In return for divine powers, these elite would gather worshippers and lead ceremonies of praise to their deity.

Gods worked together to create new races to win this contest, and soon there were many dwarves, gnomes and halflings on the side of good, and multitudinous hosts of goblins, orcs, hobgoblins and bugbears on the side of evil. The gods of neutrality, wishing to play no part in the great game, created all manner of new beasts to populate Tellene.

For the first time, elves had other races with which to share the Creator's vision, though few chose to listen, believing instead the words of their own gods. The elves collectively called these races the Great Races, for none were destructive and all could work magic, as was the way of elves.

Yet, war soon came to the surface of Tellene, for the evil races created vast hosts of inferior beings. From lairs deep within the depths of the earth they came, descending onto the great races like a plague of locusts, their hearts filled with hatred, their war cries calling out for total destruction.

Countless lives were lost before the elves struck back. From their gods they learned to forge swords and to wield blade and bow in combat. Magic was turned from creativity to death

dealing, and few races could stand against their mighty spellcasters. Yet warfare was not the elven way, and they only defended themselves, rarely taking the battle to their enemies. Had they been more aggressive, maybe the monstrous plagues that haunt Tellene today would never have existed.

SCHISM

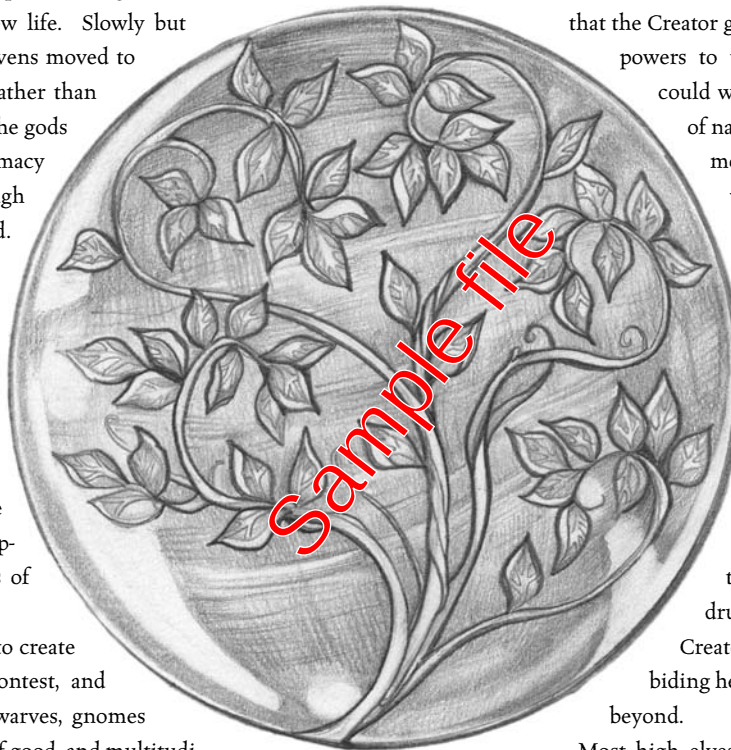
The type of arcane magicks used by these early elves varies, depending upon which elven legend you hear. The wild elves state that everything, including the air, fire, waters, and the mountains contained a spirit, through which shamen invoked magic. This was, so the wild elves say, the first magic and the most pure, for it resulted from the creation itself.

Wood elves, and to a lesser extent high elves, believe that the Creator gifted the tiniest fraction of her powers to those known as druids, who could work magic to shape all aspects of nature. Druidic magic was much more powerful in this epoch, but was more a religious calling, for their powers were granted through the Creator's benevolence to those that honored her most. Since her apparent demise, druidic magic became much less spectacular and is little different from that of clerics, gifted by gods of nature. Many elves argue that the continued practice of druidic magic is proof that the Creator is not dead, but is merely biding her time before she returns from beyond.

Most high elves claim that the ancient elves adopted the arcane magic of Riftmaster, seeing in it a new art form, though few were willing to dispense with the old ways completely. Gray elves, ever the arrogant ones, state that true magic came from within, and through force of will elves learned how to shape the magical threads that bound creation together.

Regardless of right or wrong, each faction stayed true to their beliefs, while differences began to manifest in other ways. Gray elves sought to control nature rather than live in unison with it, using their magic to bend trees into the first houses. Wild elves refused to settle in these new cities, claiming that their task was to travel the wilds and end all civilized parts of Tellene. High and wood elves, to varying degrees, saw wisdom in both these ways and tried to adopt a dual-lifestyle involving civilization and nature.

These divisions saw groups of elves with similar beliefs evolving in different directions, to live their lives how they saw best, as was their right. As time passed and the races settled into



their new lifestyles, so physical and mental differences became apparent, each race adjusting to its new lifestyle.

Gray elves became taller, perhaps to match their arrogant belief that they were the true keepers of elven lore. They grew more intelligent as they shaped their lands through arcane magic, but their bodies became frailer, for they were not exposed to the rigors of outdoor life. They came to look down on the other races as lost children, but made no moves to teach them the error of their ways.

High elves, who still lived among nature to a greater degree than their gray cousins, became nimble and light of foot, yet also lost much of the stamina their race once possessed, for they too relied on magic. They claimed that their way was best, for it partook both of natural magic and arcane magic, of wilderness and civilization, but none listened to their words.

Wood elves shut their eyes to what was happening in the outside world and withdrew to the forests, losing much of the innocent charm that was the elven race. Their skin became colored like that of the bark of the trees. They also grew suspicious of the other races, including other elves, and began learning their languages to spy on them.

Wild elves retreated deeper into the hearts of the forests, where things were as they were shortly after the creation. Here they maintained their migratory ways, keeping in contact with the spirits, and living off the land without magic. Their skin too grew dark and they became more dexterous, but what they gained in physical agility they lost in mental acuity, for they would not consider learning new ways, preferring to maintain the old.

Another faction, the twilight elves (from whom came the dark elves), removed themselves to the highest mountains, forming plans to dominate Tellene on behalf of elvenkind. They saw the elves as the rightful rulers of the planet, and cut themselves off from friendly interaction with the young races that the other elven factions adopted as pupils. (See below, as well as *Blood and Shadow: the Dark Elves of Tellene*, for more information on these subterranean elves.)

One cannot guess how long the Schism took to complete, but its effects echo down the ages to the present day. Though all races claim to maintain something of the true elven heritage,

the gray and wild elves are the strongest advocates of their lifestyle, though which is right cannot be determined. The wild elves may live the way elves have always done, but the potency of the gray elf wizards lends credence to their claim that wizardry is the true magic of Tellene. Regardless, it was the elves that taught arcane magic to humans, and we remain forever lagging in their footsteps.

THE AGE OF SUMMER

This current age marks the maturity of elves and the growth of other races, such as dwarves and orcs. Although the early period is still shrouded in myth, later events can be dated with reasonable veracity. Elves are divided as to when the age began, and indeed when it will end. Many claim that the age is already drawing to a close, while others state that another millennia or two must first pass. Scholars of elven history call this epoch the "Historical Age," for legends begin to become historical fact, echoed in the legends of other races.

YEALAN BATANIA AND THE NINE SAINTS

The first spellsingers on Tellene, so say the elves, were direct descendants of the gray elf Yealen Batania, who first created the precious metal mithral to fight diabolic followers of Blacksoul. This evil god was not content with the actions of his evil humanoids, for elves proved far superior in matters of warfare and magic. In a bid to destroy the elves once and for all, an action that he thought would remove the final evidence of the Creator's existence, he created a rift to his own plane, through which he sent demons and devils to plague Tellene. Yealen, even though still an adolescent, armed his nine saints with mithral-tipped spears and slew the devils faster than Blacksoul could summon them.

The spellsinger sealed the gate Blacksoul created to bring in the outsiders, and then sang a song of hope for his saints. Blacksoul devoured seven of the saints before Caregiver, Raconteur, or the Eternal Lantern (the tale varies by teller) intervened and protected Yealen. Some accounts (usually told by gray elves) state that Yealen reversed the summoning gate and himself sent Blacksoul away, though most right-thinking folk find this version simply preposterous.

Most wood elves claim that Yealen was a cleric, for the gods obviously answered his prayer song. Gray elves scoff at such nonsense, stating that Yealen's magic was powerful enough to bend the gods to his will. Wood elves hold that the gods acted independently of Yealen's song, which was nothing more than a powerful *protection* spell. Whatever the outcome, at least one deity actively intervened, an event rarely recorded since.

As for the Nine Saints, there is great debate as to who they were. Gray elves claim that they were Yealen's students, while wild elves insist that he summoned powerful spirits to his side, and high and wood elves argue over whether they were formidable elven heroes or simply warriors that answered his call for

MITHRAL

Contrary to elven belief, dwarves knew of mithral long before elves, for they discovered it when digging their deep tunnels. They did not shape it into weapons or armor, however, finding it too light for their tastes. Instead, finding it easy to work, they created jewelry and statues of their gods.

However, Yealan is said to be the first creature to actually craft mithral into a tool of war, realizing its potential for the creation of weapons of reduced weight and exceptional beauty. When dwarves began using mithral to craft armaments is not recorded in elven legends.

assistance. As with most matters relating to elves, the answer depends upon which race you ask.

THE TREACHERY OF THE TWILIGHT ELVES

The dark elves were once known as the twilight elves, as beautiful as the first stars of the night, with alabaster skin and golden hair. They stood taller than the gray elves, and built great castles high in the Elenon Mountains. They were capable crafters of stone and metal, but knew nothing of mithral, nor were they skilled magicians, for they had turned their ambitions to more earthly pursuits, such as the quest for power. They sat in their tall towers, glaring down at the wonders of the gray elves and the simple existence of the woodland folk, from which path they had strayed so willingly. Their envy grew, and they became hostile to other elves, seeking to learn their secrets for their own devices.

The Schism, though it split the elves, was a peaceful affair, and the elves were closer than they are today. Yet dark clouds were forming high in the mountains, and the threat of kin strife loomed large. War among the elves could not be considered part of the Creator's divine plan, and so the leaders of the gray and high elves sought to make peace with their lofty cousins.

The solution was simple, yet ingenious; a marriage between the royal house of the high elves, who were the most numerous with that of the twilight elf royal house. Solethius, prince of Lathlanian was chosen as the groom, and from the twilight elves, Joleriel, an attractive maiden of young age. Little did the high elves know that she was blessed with the tongue of a viper, the mind of a fox, and a heart of darkness. Joleriel's family, the House of Halibeth, claimed that the blood of Lady Love flowed in their veins, but such claims were surely mere boasts, designed to increase their standing. They were a proud family, and even the bride had to be forced into the marriage, for she did not wish to soil her bloodline with so-called lesser elves.

It was agreed that the wedding ceremony would take place in Leucaunth, a small town of little importance, but one that was close to both kingdoms. Dignitaries from all the major houses met to celebrate the joining a full two weeks in advance, dining on rich food, drinking the finest wines, and reveling in song and dance. Only the families of the bride and groom brought guards, though they were an honor guard and not a military force. Peace between elves had never been broken, but this was soon to change.

Joleriel, the Witch of the Mountains as she is called today, apparently planned treachery from the start. The forest folk had no idea what plans she laid until, stricken with anguish, she burst into the temple where the ceremony was to be held and accused the lowland elves of murdering her family and kin. Unwilling to allow Prince Solethius a chance to investigate these vile lies, she drew a small dagger and plunged it into the breast of her bridegroom-to-be, killing him instantly.

Her guards, who smuggled in weapons forbidden under the marriage pact, set upon the forest elves without mercy, slaying

all that stood before them. Few escaped, and those that did watched in horror as the twilight elves burnt the town to the ground. Few accurate figures are available, but the death toll is reckoned to be in the thousands.

Word soon reached the high elven city of Lathlanian of the murderous rampages of the twilight elves, and the high elves were sickened to their spirits by the news. There could be only one answer - total war. Humans judge wars in months, seasons, or sometimes even years, but the War of Twilight lasted many decades, though in truth accurate records no longer exist. The high elves rallied their gray, wood, and wild kin, for none, it seemed, were safe now that this she-devil ruled the twilight lands.

The battles were fierce, for the twilight elves had long been planning this war, and crafted many weapons and magical devices of war. Driven by righteousness and a desire for revenge they had never felt before, even against the vile orcs, the elves formed a coalition. On all fronts the coalition drove forward, crushing the traitors under their armored boots, until, after much bloodshed, they forced the twilight elves back to their fortress city and laid siege.

Eventually, the outer walls fell to the prolonged magic of the mighty woodland elves, and the victorious armies burst through, only to find a deserted city. It took the elves some time to discover that the twilight elves retreated far into the bowels of the earth, where dwelt great evils. The tunnels they had used to escape were sealed with powerful magic wards and the twilight elves were left to rot in the depths of the underworld.

THE FIRST HUMAN ARRIVAL

Though elves refer to the First Human Arrival in their annals as a specific event, it seems that the Deji have always lived on the continent. These early humans and elves had first contact long millennia ago, and from all accounts the contact was peaceful and beneficial to both sides, with the elves trading knowledge for finished products and raw materials.

The similarities between the gray elf belief in a final war, in which the dead would return to life, is echoed in early Deji culture, though no scholar can say for sure which culture had the idea first. Putting gray elf arrogance aside, it seems quite, likely that the idea grew from a merging of both cultures religious ideals. There was no transference of after-death rituals, for the gray elves do not mummify their dead through organ removal and desiccation of the flesh, though it may well be that the Deji attempted to mimic the elves' magical preservation through more mundane means.

As the elves watched, the disparate Deji began to coalesce into two great empires. Sadly, these seemingly utopian empires of human ideals did not last long, at least as is reckoned by elves. The elves do not speak of what events took place during this time, but it is known that eventually the two empires warred on a scale never seen before, or indeed since, destroying

Friend & Foe: The Elves and Bugbears of Tellene

themselves in the process. Now only ruins, and their nomadic descendents, remain to mark their passing.

THE SECOND HUMAN ARRIVAL

Following the fall of the great Deji empires, its refugees devolved into a more primitive way of life, turning to the elves for help. Many of the elves were happy to accept their wayward pupils back into the fold, and taught the survivors how to live off the land, how to respect nature, and how to defend themselves against the humanoids that stalked the dark recesses of the earth. For many years, the Deji and elves lived in peace, but that peace would not last long (at least in elven terms).

Humans speak of a struggle between the gods, and the raising and lowering of a land bridge from the Isle of Svimohzia to the mainland, yet elves tell a slightly different version. Their version tells of a battle not between the Traveler and the Storm Lord, but between the Peacemaker and the Creator of Strife. Peacemaker sought to maintain the balance that now existed on Tellene, whereas the Creator of Strife planned to introduce more humans to the main continent. As history has shown, this is what occurred, for though the land bridge was sunk beneath the waves, four tribes of humans successfully migrated from Svimohzia.

The exact migratory paths of these humans are unknown to the elves, but within a few centuries they had spread across the face of the continent. Initial contact was friendly and the elves were treated with great reverence, for they had long known of the arts of combat, magic, shipbuilding, and metalworking.

FIRST CONTACTS

The Brandobians crossed the Elenon Mountains, entering the lands not far to the north of the Lendelwood, said to be larger in those days than it is today. The elves had long kept the humanoids in check, and the Brandobians were little troubled as they settled and formed villages and towns. These were happier times, and elves held many positions of importance and power within the fledgling kingdom, even instructing the humans in the art of magic. Soon, the Brandobians explored further afield, and eventually their wanderings awoke the attentions of the orcs of the Odril Hills. Without warning, a vast army of orcs poured from the Krond Heights, sensing prey that would easily fall to their might. The orcs won many battles, driving the humans further toward the coast. In the darkest hour of Brandobian history, their race seemed doomed, until a force of troops skilled in elvish combat techniques and magic stemmed the tide, driving off the army and saving their race. The elves were impressed, for the humans had shown great courage in the face of near certain extinction. Sadly, as will be seen later, their faith in humans was misplaced. Along with defeating the orcs, the elves taught the Brandobians shipbuilding and seamanship. Within a few short decades, the Brandobians were conquering and colonizing nearby islands. To say that the elves raised their eyebrows at this misuse of their

gift is an understatement. Seers gazed into the void, and brought back only warnings of treachery and death.

The Kalamarans were bent on conquest from the moment they arrived on Tellene, and little contact was made with the warmongers. This inaction allowed the Kalamarans to expand and consolidate their lands, and before the elves realized what was happening, a vast empire surrounded them. The Kalamarans developed shipbuilding, probably through contact with the Brandobians or Reanaarese, and saw the elven forests as a great source of wood. As the Kingdom slipped into decadence, the logging of trees became more prevalent and old truces were broken. At first the elves fought back with small raids, seeking to disrupt the activity of the loggers, but the murder of numerous fey saw an escalation into a guerilla war, which still continues today. The Kalamaran army makes periodic attempts to secure the forests, but they are always driven back.

The Fhokki did little to warrant elven attention, for they were a simple people content to live by hunting and fishing. Though the Fhokki built houses from wood, they were not rapacious and took only what they needed. The elves living in woods that bordered the Fhokki lands watched with interest as the first Fhokki towns were erected and made peaceful contact, trading both ideas and goods with the fledgling nations. Even to this day, contact is still peaceful, though more sporadic than it once was.

The elves had little contact with the Reanaarians, who settled a narrow strip of land to the east of the Ka'Asa Mountains, until a group of elves sailing the world stopped at the curious little coast. These elves taught the Reanaarians how to build ships and sail them with skill, and many of those with elven blood can trace their lineage back to these early encounters. Interestingly, some claim that the elves that visited Reanaaria Bay were not the high elves of Tellene, but are *loatha lathanos* ("distant kin") from another continent. What little that is known is vague, though elves hold these mysterious mariners in high regard, always referring to them with reverence.

BRANDOBIAN TREACHERY

By the sixth century of the Brandobian calendar, the Brandobians had grown and, in a bizarre mirroring of elven beliefs, thought themselves superior to humanoids. Their history was rewritten to show that the elves were not the teachers of magic, but mere pupils to the Brandobian mages, whose power far surpassed those of the woodland folk. Humanoids were removed from office, and eventually persecutions of all non-Brandobians became the norm.

The elves, unwilling to fight the Brandobians over their beliefs, quietly retreated to their woods, content to let the humans die out in their own good time. The Brandobians, however, had other ideas. They were not content with simply forcing the elves into the forests; they wanted them out of Brandobia altogether.

The might of the Brandobian army, a force several thousand strong, marched on the Lendelwood. For all the tutoring the Brandobians had received in elven tactics, they could not overcome their arrogance, and marched straight into the forest. The wood elves refer to the events that followed as the War of Many Arrows, for their troops, who fought against orcs and other humanoids for countless millennia, launched a series of devastating ambushes. Brandobian propaganda has the body count as minimal, barely 10% of the troops being killed; elven records place it much higher. Even today, forest gnome farmers uncover rusted fragments of weapons and armor, not to mention bones.

Humiliated by the defeat of his troops, the Brandobian king took to insulting the elves, mocking their beliefs, and seeking to defame their ruler. The elven king merely laughed at the hollow words, blessing (though human historians say "cursing") the Brandobian king with fruitful loins. As history has revealed, the three sons of the king were responsible for the shattering of the once great empire into several countries. The elven king, however, was later known to the elves of the Lendelwood as "the Father of Modern Brandobia."

Since that day, for the battle lasted but a few hours, relations between the elves and the Brandobians have been strained, but the fractured nature of Brandobia provides some security to the elven nation. For now, the humans have learned their lesson, but for how long they remain that way is yet to be seen.

THE GREAT MOUNTAIN WARS

In 956 Y.K. (Year of the King), the elves of Cilorealon and the dwarves of Draska warred against each other. Known across Tellene as the Great Mountain Wars, the elves refer to the war as the "Unnecessary War."

The biggest question asked of this period is always, without fail, "Who started the war?" As one might expect, the answer depends on to whom you speak. The elves blame the dwarves, who had acquired two of their sacred relics long ago and who refused to return them when their existence was discovered, quite by accident, by an elven merchant. The dwarves, of course, point to open elven aggression and a jealous lust for their own magical treasures.

The term "wars" is used because there was no single great battle. Instead, a series of elven raids and dwarven retaliations tore across the landscape. Both sides employed devastating weapons, both mundane and magic, and the body count rose steadily. The biggest battle, recounted in the elven epic poem "The Slaying of Braleon," took place in the early spring of 957 Y.K. An elven army of some 1,500 infantry and 300 cavalry was en route to the frontline (if such could truly be said to exist in a fluid war) and trapped in a narrow valley by a force of 900 dwarven warriors.

In the poem is to be believed, the dwarves formed a shield wall, advancing on the elves with pikes thrust forward. The brave defenders (so the story goes) rained down arrows on the dwarven army in such numbers that the sun was hidden for over an hour. Though more likely to be poetic license, the dwarven records do mention the deadly rain of arrows that "fell like tears from the gods." The relentless march of the dwarves could not be halted and panic threatened to rout the elves before a sword had been drawn. Braleon, a junior officer from a poor household, drew his sword and called upon the elves, in a speech still remembered even today:

*The light of Brindonwood may lie hidden yonder
But the warmth of its glow fills our hearts still
Are we to run into shadow or advance toward the light?
Do not let the distance to home nor the wall of dwarven metal
Cloak the radiant light of the Brindonwood
If we fall without fighting, then the light of our home will be forever
lost to us
But if we fight and die, then its light will forever be our guide in the
next world
Remember your ancestors, who fought the great darkness
Had they faltered our race would have died
Let their sacrifice be noble!
Let their names be honored!
Let our names join with theirs!*

Whether or not Braleon's speech is factual, the elven force did indeed rally, and broke through the dwarf ranks. Out of 1,800 elves, barely 500 survived to reach their homeland. Neither side could claim a victory, for the dwarves lost near two-thirds of their number, either to arrow, sword or spell. As one may



deduce from the name of the poem, Braleon never saw his homeland again. After the war, both sides buried their dead together, erecting a stone monument to the futility of the war.

Although many elves died in the wars, the greatest loss to the elves was the fabled Twin Eggs of the Wyvern (known to the elves as the *Baltherimhoy Diadolai*, or "Daughters of Diadolai"). If these were the trigger for the war, then it may be said that the elves won nothing, for they were lost only months later. Although many legends exist regarding these treasures, all that is known of their loss is that a tiny carrack, crowded with elven refugees, sank in a storm, sending its precious cargo to the bottom of the frigid depths. Several legends state that the elves were planning to head to an eastern continent, though for what purpose has yet to be discovered.

The war ended after the natural death of the dwarven king, who was succeeded by his son, Norbaren. Though both rulers sought peace, there was pressure from within their respective kingdoms to continue the war. Fortunately, peace won out. Relations between the kingdoms are cool, but there has been no significant violence between the races for the better part of a century.

THE AGE OF AUTUMN

The elves are powerless to halt the natural cycle of Tellene, and summer will turn to fall, bringing with it new problems and dangers. There is much speculation among the elves as to what events will herald the dawning of this new age. Some argue that it is already here, as evidenced by the increase in wars and oppression. Others say that the days are far off, and will be signaled by a fiery mountain plunging from the stars. Whatever starts the age of autumn, it marks the beginning of the end for life on Tellene.

Wars will escalate until they encompass the known world. They will start small, as mere skirmishes over borders or resources, but their influence spreads, drawing in neighbors like a magnet attracts iron filings. Alliances form as nobles seek to consolidate their powerbase, forcing other factions to do the same. Ambition and greed force these alliances to expand, taking by force what they cannot secure by guile or corruption. Border skirmishes develop into battles, and battles into wars. Country after country is forced to commit troops to secure its own safety, until the whole of Tellene is at war.

This mortal conflict is echoed in the heavens, for the elves believe that a new War of the Gods will come, each deity seeking to secure complete control over Tellene for its own worshippers. This second heavenly conflict will begin in the mortal realm, however. As each nation rises to war, so the various churches begin seeking power for themselves, subverting the course of the war to fulfill their own god's wishes.

As worshippers turn on worshippers, their hatred and rage is felt in the stars. Gods, fearful of losing their position, take an even more active interest in events, using their divine powers to directly affect the battles fought by mortals. According to

prophecy, seven deities will die during this Age, though their identities are unknown to the elven seers.

THE AGE OF WINTER

The final epoch is the Age of Winter - the end of the world. Unable to halt the rapid spiral of destruction brought about during the preceding age, the races turn on each other without mercy, seeking to destroy those that stand against them. Even the elves will be affected, and elf will turn on elf, forgetting the common bonds that link them.

The heavenly war reaches its climax during this age, resulting in the death of all but a handful of gods. Those gods that survive are weakened beyond hope. Unable to reach their followers and draw energy from their worship, they are condemned to a tortured existence, mere fragments of their former glory. The dead gods fall to earth, swathed in fire, to wreak terrible destruction. Few creatures survive the cataclysm, but all is not without hope, for it is said that the Creator will return when the world is on the brink of total annihilation.

She will rekindle the flame of creation from the ashes of destruction, creating with it a new Age of Spring, one that never turns into Summer. All will be at peace, for there will be no evil, no war, no suffering. Elves, as the Creator's chosen race, are reunited in their beliefs and assume the position as the Creator's favorite, basking in the everlasting radiance of her creation, as once did their ancestors. The other races, created as they were by lesser gods, will be swept from the face of the planet and condemned to oblivion. All will be as the Creator envisaged, and the elves will rule untroubled.

Each elven race has its own views on exactly which set of beliefs the Creator intends to make them follow. Each breed strongly believes that it follows the correct path as laid down by the Creator, and refuses to accept that things could be any different. It may be that none of these views are correct, but until the Age of Winter ends, none know the truth of what lies ahead.

Human scholars refer to these latter stages as the "Age of Prophecy," for nothing in the future is carved in stone.

ELVES TODAY

In many respects, the Schism never ended, for the elven subraces still maintain that their way is best and refuse to contemplate a joint way forward as a unified race.

Wild elves still see themselves as closest to the original elves, following the truest traditions of the Creator. They see high and gray elves as imposing order on creation through their foreign magic, rather than moving with it and using the magic of the spirits to maintain the balance. Wild elves have sealed themselves away, closing their eyes to the destruction wrought across Tellene.

Wood elves see themselves as having moved away from the primitive nature of the early elves to a more refined status. Their path is to maintain what territory they have left, biding their

time until the world is ready for them to emerge and reclaim Tellene for elvenkind. They hold true to the druidic faith and have not adopted arcane magic in large numbers.

High elves consider themselves as the balance, however, keeping true to the old ways yet embracing the magic that bonds creation together. They are the most open with the other races and have been responsible for passing much elven knowledge to humans. Though this knowledge has been used against elvenkind on more than one occasion, the high elves still hope that their benevolent gift will bear fruit.

The gray elves view themselves as moving Tellene along, teaching that only through an understanding of magic can elves reclaim what is rightfully theirs. They view the elven race as being incomplete before arcane magic was harnessed, though to the other races this is heretical thinking, for it means that the Creator was imperfect. The gray elves are indeed moving away from the Creator, forming a belief in a unified magic theory that will replace the need for gods.

The world of Tellene is changing.

If the elves are to survive, they may have to change as well.

EPILOGUE

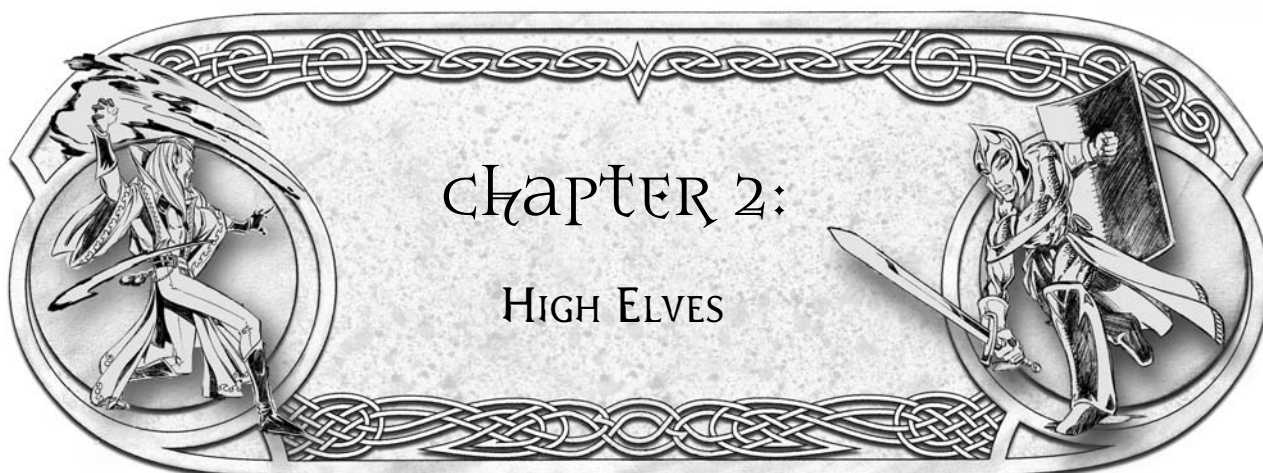
The hooded figure closed the book. The oil in his lamp was almost gone and the sky began to lighten at the approach of another day. For a moment he sat there, staring at the cover, his fingers absently tracing the runes that adorned the fine leather. He had waited years for this opportunity to study the history of the elves.

He drummed his fingers on the cover, then stood, taking up the book with a gloved hand and strolling casually to the fireplace in the corner of the large room. He threw more wood onto the hot embers, watching as the fire sprang back to life, the wood crackling as it caught light.

With a quick motion he threw the open book onto the flames. Fire licked at the edges of the pages, turning them black, the leather hissing in defiance as it bubbled and blistered in the heat. Long minutes passed. The glow of the fire grew brighter, casting flickering shadows along the walls. Finally convinced that the book was beyond salvage, the hooded man turned and walked back to his desk, thinking.

The elf creature survived for two years. Two years of constant pain, two years of slowly revealing the history of his race, two years of living hell. The hooded man had to admit that in some ways he admired its courage, for it had not once begged for mercy. Lesser creatures would have broken within a month. Still, the elf had eventually told him exactly what he wanted to hear.

That was the problem.



Elves are friendly? Ha! You want to know about elves? I can tell you a thing or two. Take a seat, buy me a drink, and listen carefully."

- GRARG STONESKULL, HALF-ORC ADVENTURER AND SELF-PROCLAIMED "SAGE OF THE PEOPLE"

Asked to envisage an elf, images of tall, blond haired waifs in green leather immediately spring to mind. In truth, surface elves come in many forms, few of which fit the stereotypical image. They may share common physical features, but their physiology and mental makeup are vastly different. This section takes a look at the anatomy of high elves, often viewed as the "standard" elf.

The high elf name for a member of their own species is *lathlani*, a Low Elven term meaning "eternal ones." Ignorant scholars claim this name refers to their seeming immortality from aging. In truth, it refers to the indestructible essence of their race, the racial memories, and the passing on of wisdom through the ages.

PHYSIOLOGY

Lathlani are shorter than humans, averaging only a little over 5 feet tall. Body mass is a lithe 95 to 135 pounds, roughly half that of an adult human. Among elves, there is little difference in physical form, with females being only marginally lighter and shorter.

One of the most notable features of elves is their physical frame, which many races describe as childlike. They are extremely slender, looking as if their frail forms would break in a strong wind. Less hardy than humans, they are more prone to disease and illness, one of many reasons why contact with other races is limited. Though better skilled, their warriors cannot often take the same physical punishments as humans and other similar races, and injuries can prove more deadly.

As befits their physical form, they are graceful almost beyond belief. Every movement seems to be a well-rehearsed and choreographed dance step. It is a rare elf that seems clumsy compared to a human, though such actions may be clearly visible to others of his race. Elves are also light on their feet, seemingly able to glide effortlessly across

surfaces. Many humans claim that elves do not leave footprints and can walk on fresh snow without sinking, but though elves may be light-footed, they are not miracle workers. Elves also move no faster than a human, though their reactions are quicker.

Lathlani skin is pale and of smooth texture. Skin blemishes are unusual, and even elder elves show little sign of aging. This is another reason why humans believe elves to be immortal. Elves have fine, straight hair, normally brown or dark-brown in



HIGH ELF RACIAL TRAITS

+2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution. High elves are fragile, but quite dextrous. This makes stealth and Dexterity-based activities a natural part of a high elf's being.

Medium. High elves receive no special size-related bonuses or penalties.

High elf base land speed is 30 feet.

High elves are immune to magic sleep effects, and receive a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects.

Low-light vision: In poor illumination, a high elf can see twice as far as a human.

Weapon Proficiency: High elves receive a bonus Martial Weapon Proficiency feat for the longsword, rapier and leaf blade, and a bonus Martial Weapon Proficiency feat for both the longbow and shortbow (including composite versions of either).

+2 racial bonus to Listen, Search and Spot checks. A high elf can pass within 5 feet of a hidden portal or door and make a Search check to notice it, even though he may not have been looking for it.

Automatic languages: Elven (both High and Low) and Merchant's Tongue. Bonus Languages: Draconic, Dwarven, Gnomish, Goblin, Halfling, Orc, Sylvan, and any human language.

Favored Class: Wizard. When deciding whether a high elf suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing, his wizard class does not apply.

color. Males wear their hair to their shoulder; females of status grow theirs to reach their ankles. As an elf ages, hair begins to show tinges of light brown rather than gray or white as in humans.

An elf's face is also longer and thinner than a human's. Their eyes are almond-shaped; their noses long and pointed, with thin lips, and pointed ears. Their facial features, like their agility, are almost unearthly in their beauty. *Lathlani* generally have deep green eyes that shine in low light conditions. Their eyes are actually adapted to working very well in starlight or moonlight, a time when many elves seek recreational pursuits. Their eyes are also keen and are able to discern small details. An elf's ability to locate secret panels is legendary, and unique - almost a sixth sense.

An elf's ears have almost twice the surface area of a human's and are noticeably tapered. As a result, their hearing is more acute than many other races, extending into both higher and lower scales. Legends speak that elves only ever speak in

whispers. It is true that elves rarely raise their voices, but this is not solely for physical reasons.

Much talk is made of an elf's ability to avoid sleep. While elves do not truly sleep, their bodies and minds do require daily rest. Rather than sleep, they enter a meditative state known as *truanosbrast* ("mirrored thought"). Other races often translate this as "trance." An elf in this state needs only four hours of rest a day, giving rise to their seeming ability to run for days without stopping. While meditating elves dream, though these are not the random images common to other races. Each dream is a mental exercise, designed to stimulate the mind. Through continued practice, they become reflexive. As with races that sleep, some elves are light meditators, others heavy. They never suffer from "sleepy eyes" in the morning and can be fully awake within seconds of finishing their *truanosbrast*.

Lathlani may live as long as 700 years, but they are not immortal. Given their long lifespan, it is perhaps not surprising that humans do not see them age. A human that knows an elf from birth detects very little change in the elf even after a century. At that time, the human grows from childhood to adulthood and extreme old age. A single elf, however, may outlive as many as fifteen generations of a human family.

PSYCHOLOGY

Elves live for centuries, and their mental state reflects this. Petty matters seem insignificant to them, mere ripples in the ocean of life. As such, they remain calm in situations that warrant a reaction in other races. Why get angry and shout? Listening, not shouting, solves problems. Why worry about not eating today? There is always tomorrow.

Humans are strange creatures to elves, rushing round at a frantic pace trying to accomplish minor goals as if their very lives depended on the outcome. Elves have little understanding of short-lived races, for their own long existences make them immune to petty worries and deadlines. An elf may practice dancing every day for a decade, but no human can afford such an extravagant waste of time (save perhaps Basiran dancers). A day, a week, a year, what does it matter? There is always more time. Time, however, is a luxury few humans have.

Elves know that their life is long and do not rush to make friends or enemies. Grudges against other races may last a century or more, but sooner or later the other party dies of old age. This does not mean that elves are friendly creatures who forgive and forget. Petty insults are treated with disdain, for life is too long to worry about ill-thought slurs, but dire insults are not so easily forgotten. An elf may wait decades to enact revenge, but you can rest assured he strikes back.

When it comes to friends, an elf that can overcome his race's natural view of other races is still unlikely to form a close bond. An elf may have temporary allies or close acquaintances, but these fade and die before the elf's eyes. The tie of close friendship runs deep, and an elf that gives away his favor too easily feels the sting of grief many times in his lifetime. To protect

themselves from these painful feelings, friendship is rarely given, but when it is, you can guarantee that it is for life.

High elves are aloof by nature, though not to the extreme of their gray elf cousins. They are tired of dealing with the younger races, whose constant jockeying for status leads them to acts of destruction or whose minds are focused solely on the here and now. An elf's mind focuses on higher ideals, and the meaningless chatter of non-elf companions bears absolutely no relevance to their life. Elves often seem to be in a world of their own, though their senses remain fixed in the mundane world.

High elves are not and never have been bullies. When humans first appeared, the elves took them under their wing, educating them and passing on ancient wisdom. They had the strength and magical power to dominate humans; something that had it happened would have made Tellene a very different place, but not the desire. Even when their gifts were turned against them, elves fought only to protect their lands and interests, not to conquer or subdue. Could the elves stop human expansion? Probably, but they will not act to do so. Other races are free to act as they please, so long as they respect the elves' borders.

Lathlani are immune to the effects of *sleep* spells and can resist enchantments better than most races. This is not a physical strength, but a mental one. Although their *tranuosbras* does provide some resistance to *sleep* spells, most of their inner strength comes from their strong belief that no one can force them how to act. This love of freedom is so strong that many can resist powerful spells designed to control their will.

High elves are often labeled as nature lovers or guardians of the forest. An elf's love for nature goes beyond "hugging trees," however. Nature is the work of the Creator and is a thing of beauty. The earth, the animals, the trees, and the sky are all part of her vision. To ignore this beauty and elegance is to miss out on the true wonder of life. For this reason, elves find beauty in simplicity as well as elegance, natural as well as artificial. A simple ring of twisted metal strands is as much a work of art as a diamond clustered four-string necklace; a single flower can be more beautiful than a finely sculpted statue.

Elves especially hate races that purposefully destroy without reason, such as orcs or bugbears. That a certain amount of destruction must occur to promote new life is not in doubt, but the burning of entire forests and wholesale slaughter of animals is abhorrent. Any creature displaying such traits is guaranteed a swift death.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

"You've never heard of the Supreme High Elf King? Peasant!"

- GRARG STONESKULL, HALF-ORC ADVENTURER
AND SELF-PROCLAIMED "SAGE OF THE PEOPLE"

Lathlani society prides itself on independence and freedom. Though there are kings and nobles, their leadership is more guidance than dictation. For the most part, an individual elf is free to act as he or she wish, so long as no one within the

kingdom suffers as a result. When kings do speak, elves listen, for what he says is of importance to all his subjects.

Lathlani society is egalitarian; females and males hold equal social positions and are not restricted in their choice of profession. To elves, sexual inequality is a form of domination, preventing an individual from expressing his or her potential. An elven warrior is as likely to be female as a weaver is male.

Elven lineage is broken down into kingdoms, clans and families. An elf actually holds loyalty to the reverse order, putting blood relatives before clansmen, and clansmen before feudal peers. This is not to imply that elves are uncaring for distant kin. Far from it - a threat to one elf community is likely to draw many clans together to handle the problem. Elves from outside of the kingdom are treated as allies, even friends, but the provision of support is a matter for nobles and diplomats to decide.

Most high elf communities are small villages, housing only one or two clans. Large gatherings of high elves, such as the city of Cilorealon in the Young Kingdoms and the settlements within the depths of Brindonwood, are centers of major political, military and magical power, and are unique to each elven kingdom.

A single clan typically numbers only 300 adult individuals, but may comprise as many as twenty families. Within the clan, leaders account for less than 5%, wizards 10%, clerics 5%, artisans 30%, military 10%, woodmen 10%, workers 25%, and others around 6%. Children increase the clan size by a further 15%, the elderly or infirm by 5%. Since all adult *lathlani* are capable warriors, the percentage for the military only accounts for full-time, professional soldiers. In times of war, the entire clan becomes a single military force. Likewise, the percentage of wizards applies only to those whose sole profession or trade is magic. Many elves study the magical arts.

The break down of professions can also be misleading, for these are not castes or social stratum. High elves have only two social strata, as detailed below.

Highborn

Greatest among the high elves are the noble families, whose political and magical power lasts for millennia. There are two tiers within this social stratum.

At the top are the *reniorvedenos* ("highest-born"), the hereditary rulers of high elf society on Tellene. Humans long ago labeled these elves with titles such as king or princess, though these are not truly accurate. A *reniorvedenos* is not an absolute monarch, but a spokesman and guide, a ruler that listens to his people and is in turn guided by them.

Few in number, and with their bloodline diluted with each successive generation, these elves are shadows of their forefathers, though by human standards they are exceptionally powerful creatures. The eldest child is groomed for the mantle of leadership and receives a lifelong education in etiquette and magic. They carry the title *demion renvedenosior* ("fated highest-

born”), which humans often translate as prince or princess. Few have chance to study any class other than aristocrat or wizard.

Younger children are freer to act as they wish. All are born as aristocrats, though many have seen service with the priesthood or military before assuming positions of responsibility. Almost all are accomplished wizards, for the ancestry of magic is strong in their veins and its song is hard to ignore. They carry the title *cwanairvedenai* (“favored birth”) throughout their lives, though humans prefer “duke.” Recent generations are dropping the noble title and adopting one from their chosen profession, wishing to be dealt with on their own merits.

Beneath the royalty are the nobles, normally the leaders of clans. Equivalent to the barons and counts of human cultures, clan rulers are called *renvedenos*, or “high-born.” They are responsible for the welfare of their entire clan, ensuring justice is dealt, enemies are punished, and lives are protected. As with kings, their rule is one of limited partnership. Once, royalty only married royalty, but as numbers shrink members of the nobility also find themselves tied to royal blood. As a result, many *renvedenos* are distant relatives of the high elf kings and queens, and as such hold increased political power.

Again, most members begin life as aristocrats. Those planning on inheriting power may pursue the wizard or cleric classes to gain knowledge of subjects that may prove useful later in life, and to keep family traditions. Lower ranking children, known as *nanorthbrin* (“noble child”), lead relatively pampered lives, and are free to explore other professions. Many join the ranks of wizards or clerics, if only for a short time. Others prefer the outdoor life and may become rangers or druids. Those with a flair for art take up the mantle of fighter, Basiran dancer, or even bard. Making the most of their high social status, many end up serving as advisors in the king’s court or as leaders in their chosen profession.

Lowborn

All elves not highborn, which is around 95% of the population, are, by default, lowborn. The elven term for this stratum is *nenrillvedenai*, which actually means “blessed” as well as “low birth.” The name dates back to the Age of Spring, when elves first appeared on Tellene. Those who did not choose to lead became lowborn, still elves of pure blood but not in positions of leadership and responsibility.

One should not mistake *nenrillvedenai* for peasants or serfs; elves have no true lower classes. A *nenrillvedenai* can become a cleric, wizard, or captain just as easily as a highborn. They also have ready access to the nobles, who rule only with their compliance.

Occupations are more varied among the lowborn than their rulers, but there is less expected of them as well. Covering everything from scholars to artisans and fighters to foragers, they are the cogs that keep elf society running smoothly. Some



of the greatest elven smiths, bravest warriors, and most powerful wizards are lowborn.

All lowborn are equal. One might have more power because of one’s occupation, but not because of his bloodline. Any respect or power a lowborn earns is by his own merits, not a by-product of privileged parents. Of course, there is no such thing as a perfect society, and those in higher positions tend to look down on their less well-off neighbors, but in times of need the community forgets such petty differences and acts as a unified whole.

In ancient days, intermarriage between the two social classes was rare. In recent millennia, however, there is more sharing of blood. As a result, few highborns can claim a pure lineage back to the Age of Spring. Those that can claim such a heritage tend to be more arrogant and old-fashioned, preferring that things remained the way they were in the “good old days.” A lowborn that marries well is referred to as a *yrosvedenos* (“reborn”).

CLASSES

“I’ve never met a high elf that wasn’t a wizard.”

- GRARG STONESKULL, HALF-ORC ADVENTURER
AND SELF-PROCLAIMED “SAGE OF THE PEOPLE”

Elves across the social classes are free to take any profession they want without prejudice. All candidates are based on their individual merits and a prince may find himself serving his

apprenticeship along a lowborn. Not all classes are equally represented in elf society. The descriptions below should be taken as guidelines rather than firm and fast rules.

Adept

Religion is very important to high elves, and much of their history is transmitted on in the form of sacred dances and songs, passed from generation to generation in an unbroken line. Although *lathlani* have clerics and temples, private worship is also part of their core beliefs. As such, many elves have experience in the adept class, either working alongside the clerics or through their devotion to their patron deity.

Adepts are not seen as witchdoctors or miracle workers, but as disciples of the god. Many healers and magicsmiths are actually adepts rather than true clerics or wizards, practicing their craft for the good of the clan. The generic term for an adept is *efallion*, or “devoted.”

Aristocrat

The aristocrat class is restricted to highborns, for only they possess the hereditary power to claim this title. Unlike nobles in other cultures, *lathlani* aristocrats do not own vast tracts of land populated and worked by serfs. Their holdings are typically larger than those of a lowborn and they may have servants, but these are hired, not indentured.

Most *nanorthbrin*, the second or third children of a noble, actually leave this class and take up another role in society. As befits their birth, they are free to return to this class to assume positions as courtiers at the courts. There is no generic term for an aristocrat. Individual titles are used instead.

Barbarian

Barbarian high elves are almost unknown. Whereas wild elves revel in this class, the more refined *lathlani* see it as a throwback to olden times that is best swept under the proverbial carpet. To live as a barbarian is to lower oneself to the level of goblinoids, seeking destruction rather than creativity, death rather than life. Any *lathlani* that assumes this role is likely to be made an outcast. Barbarians are referred to as *rianoybaran* (“one without control”).

Bard

Bards are less traveling minstrel and more lorekeeper among the *lathlani*. They are prized for their knowledge of things ancient and modern, and, along with clerics, are responsible for teaching younger generations through song and dance. Many *lathlani* view them as an offshoot of spellsingers, who choose to work their art through other media. Bards devoted to Raconteur follow the more standard image of this class, and are entertainers as well as teachers, though most of the entertainment contains hidden meaning. Bards, or at least ex-bards, run most *lathlani* schools. Bards are known as *wastora*, which best translates as “teacher.”

Basiran Dancer

Lathlani have followed the Basiran dancer profession since its creation, and were only too pleased to adopt this class, seeing in humans a glimmer of the knowledge they had passed on generations before. Their natural grace and appreciation of beauty makes them some of the leading exponents of this class.

Many temples have Basiran dancers among their clergy, leading the numerous ceremonies that fill the religious calendar. As with bards, they are also teachers, but prefer to concentrate solely on the transmission of knowledge through dance rather than spoken word. Fighters wishing to improve their art have been known to take this class, turning their art of warfare into a deadly dance. Members of this class are known as *hedtuseinlamone* (“entrancing mover”).

Brigand

One does not necessarily think of the brigand class when one thinks of elves, but their numbers are growing. The majority are outlaws, expelled from elven society for heinous crimes. They are normally bitter and resentful and attack lone hunters and rangers in acts of petty revenge.

Others are militant elves that refuse to accept their race's place in the new world of humans. Formed into guerilla bands loyal to a charismatic leader, they openly wage war on humans, and sometimes other races as well, in the name of elven supremacy. Their actions are not condoned by most elves, for enraging humans is rarely a wise move. Outlaw brigands are referred to *yaanithlaomas* (“lost blood”), whereas guerillas are called *rianiyaban* (“one who will not live in peace”).

Cleric

Clerics are common among the *lathlani*, serving the gods in the same manner as elves living in the Spring so many eons ago. They are as much responsible for maintaining the ancient customs as are bards and Basiran dancers, and many are skilled dancers in their own right. It is not unusual to find a cleric that has served in either of these classes at some point in his long life. High elves do not put their faith in written scripture, and a cleric must store huge amounts of knowledge in his head. A cleric of any faith may be known as *lorstonezamad*, or “keeper of the traditions.”

Commoner

Those that do not earn a living through a trade are members of the commoner class. Given that high elves live for centuries, there are actually very few commoners in their clans. Even elves that make a living by farming or serving nobles are generally experts, masters of plant or etiquette, or proponents of other classes. An unskilled elf is a rare creature and one that opted to live an unproductive life. Commoners are referred to as *noyel-lelora* (“unproductive”).

Druid

Lathlani have never forgotten their origin as guardians of nature and druids are still as much a part of their culture as they are among wood or wild elves. *Lathlani* druids are closer to nature than other members of their race and pass on their ancient knowledge of the natural world in the same manner of clerics. Indeed, many elves see them as clerics of the Creator, for all of nature is theirs to work with. They maintain the sacred groves, the original centers of elven religious worship, care for the welfare of the plants and animals of the forest, and maintain the age old pacts of friendship with the fey, the elves' most ancient allies. They are known as *rialorseffulmor*, or "ones who maintain the Age of Spring."

Expert

Crafters make up the largest percentage of workers in a *lathlani* community. Practicing everything from weaving to armoring and pottery to masonry, they spend their days creating works of beauty with their hands or with magic, for many are trained wizards, using their magical arts to augment their mundane one. Elf crafters do not mass-produce; every finished item is an individual piece containing something of the crafter's very essence. Dwarves are the most renowned metalworkers on Tellene, but elves claim to have first shaped mithral, a fact the dwarves were allowed to forget. The generic term for a crafter is *ellelisonhedma* ("creator of beauty"), though different trades have specific names.

Fighter

High elves make exceptional fighters, and not just because of their skill with swords and bows. To elves, combat is as much an art as magic. Over their long lives they can learn many fighting styles, merging them together to create unique styles. Elves have also endured humanoid incursions into their lands for millennia, and there are few elves that cannot serve in battle.

Whereas experts generally have levels in warrior, it is not unusual for clerics and wizards to have a few levels of fighter under their belt, making them deadly with spell or sword. The generic term for a fighter is *riavrimhoyouno*, or "one who dances with death."

Gladiator

A *lathlani* gladiator living among his own people is a most unusual sight. Most high elves detest the thought of killing for sport, especially other sentients, though they make very good gladiators; their natural skill with longswords, combined with their agile movements and quick reflexes, are guaranteed crowd pleasers. Those that do enter the arena are normally there as slaves or as thrill-seekers. The word *riayouthosbeca* ("one who kills for a living") defines the elven view of gladiators, regardless of their reasons for adopting the class.

Infiltrator

Elves were one of the first civilized races to adopt the infiltrator class, having suffered at the hands of humanoid infiltrators for centuries, though high elves have fewer than their rustic cousins. As well as appealing to natural affinity with the wilds, the class also serves as a highly effective tool for fighting orcs and other foes. A handful of infiltrators can wreak as much havoc as an army, assassinating leaders, poisoning food supplies, or butchering humanoids while they sleep. Infiltrators also serve communities as scouts and sentries. The term for an infiltrator is *rialamhosnetpresti*, which best translates as "one who moves without being seen."

Monk

Non-materialistic with a strong spiritual and aesthetic outlook, one might think that elven monks are commonplace. Though many older elves do learn the art, keeping their bodies and minds fit, younger elves prefer to spend their lives working with nature or pursuing knowledge of the magical arts. Only the largest elven cities have monasteries, but elven monks can be found scattered across Tellene. Monks are referred to as *riavrimhosimjallil* ("one who dances to his own rhythm").

Paladin

Paladins are, in many respects, the antithesis of elven religious beliefs. Elves worship through dance and song, not the sword. They follow the gods as they see fit, worshipping in their own unique way. The cold, rigid code of the paladin grates against their need to act freely and with passion. This is not to say that *lathlani* never become paladins; they are just exceedingly rare. *Lathlani* refer to a paladin as *riacesathiyonavrimin* ("one who serves without swaying"), a reference to the strict code and lack of dance-worship found in most paladins.

Ranger

Elves and rangers are virtually the same thing to many races. In fact, high elven rangers are some of the best exponents of the class, possessing a closeness to nature not found in any other race save perhaps forest gnomes. They serve as warriors, scouts, and protectors of sacred groves, acting as bodyguards for druids. Trespassers in *lathlani* lands are likely to encounter a ranger, or at least his arrows. *Lathlani* call rangers *riavalhosanvoi* ("one who walks as nature").

Rogue

The word rogue often conjures up images of thieves skulking in the night or highwaymen waiting to pounce on an unsuspecting passerby. While elves do follow the unlawful aspect of this class, they are less materialistic than other races. Instead, they practice it for more practical purposes, such as setting traps to ward off intruders, disarming traps laid by humanoids, or for