

MIDNIGHT™

HAMMER AND SHADOW™



The War for the Kaladrans

GRAVATO



Hammer and Shadow

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Introduction

In the deep holdfast, the pounding of hammers never ceased. The constant rhythmic beating was the life's blood of the dwarves. The entire city was a perfectly oiled machine. Another sharpened axe, another sturdy shield, another ready warrior. These weapons and armor were tools. The soldiers were craftsmen. And their craft was war.

In the caves beyond, drums sounded low and steady. A constant, primal reassurance to the orcs. A sound in the dark stone like the earliest memories of their mothers' heartbeats, like the fierce nightmares of Izrador's first whispers. More than 1,000 of them would die this day, and they believed their souls would follow that heavy beat back to their mothers' hearts. They believed they would bring with them into the afterlife the tongues and teeth of those they killed, the better to fill the chambers of their mothers' hearts and the marrows of their mothers' bones. And so they wished for death as much as life, and demanded of their leaders only the chance to take the lives of these terrible fey that hid in their dark holes of stone.

A scant hundred dwarves donned their armor and sharpened their weapons. Things looked grim, but then they always did. The dwarves fought a battle that would never end, and each day they lived was a testament to their mastery of the greatest of all crafts, of warfare. They would do their ancestors proud before they found their places in the barrows beside them. They would win one last day.

Each orc drew his vardatch in salute to his commander. Each orc learned of his part in the attack, and each orc stared proudly back at the legate that blessed him in his dark father's name. This was the day when the minions of the Shadow would finally break this nest of bearded cowards. They could not fail.

The dwarves exchanged glances as they prepared for the coming onslaught, and they could not help but smile. The orcs would not be prepared for the new traps constructed during the last lull. They were cunning, even genius, and would take many of their enemies. Deadfalls, natural vents of steaming sulfur, hundreds of poisoned quarrels; all lay waiting for the hated odrendor. The minions of the Shadow would fail.

The orcs lined up and prepared to pour forth into the darkness that spawned them, the safety of the pit forgotten for the glory of war. They were bred to fight. To kill. It was all they were. It was what their flesh-fathers were and their flesh-fathers before them, all the way back to the beginning.

The dwarves took their positions behind their traps and fortifications. Countless orcs would fall before the dwarves even lifted their axes, but lift their axes they would. Each steeled himself for the coming battle, just as his parents had and their parents before them, all the way back to the beginning.

How to Use this Book

Hammer and Shadow is a setting supplement meant to add richness to any MIDNIGHT campaign, but will be particularly useful to DMs whose storylines focus on the war in the Kaladrans. Players may also find the information herein useful, particularly **Chapter Six: New Rules**, but should check with their DMs before reading the rest of the book to ensure that they do not learn any secrets that may be used in their campaign.

This book is split into roughly three sections: background information, regional information, and rules information. The first two chapters present an overview of the dwarves and their culture, as well as the history that has shaped them into what they are today.

Chapters three through five offer a more detailed look at the war in the Kaladrans as it stands today, ranging from the Icewalls and northern Kaladrans to the central Kaladrans and finally down the Spinewall Range to the southern Kaladrans. These chapters include an overview of the Shadow and dwarf forces in those areas, as well as details on the forces' tactics, NPCs, and locations of note.

Finally, chapter six presents new options for players and DMs alike, including feats, prestige classes, traps and equipment, new crafting options for weapons, armor, and tools, and new rules for fighting in tunnels and other cramped spaces.

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CHAPTER 1

Born of Stone



Llian walked through the barrow chamber, her eyes adjusting to the lack of light. It was quiet. She was alone.

This was her clan's history. Her history. Lleyngon the Grim, who died waste-deep in orcs in the last days of the Icewall keeps. Herion, seventh Stone of the Thedron clan, who led half the clan to honorable and noble deaths against a temple of Shadow. That temple did not stand. Brunin, daughter of Briant, who slew a dozen giant-men before they rent her limb from limb. Heroes all. Heroes like she would someday be. Must someday be.

Llian let her hand drag across the stones that covered Brunin's last rest, and admired the delicate carvings that told the stories of her life craft, her death battle. Someday this would be hers. Others would stand, and read, and remember. They would share the stories of Llian the Orcslayer, or Llian the Battle Maiden, and she would watch on from her comfortable and reassuring bed of cold stone. Her childhood friend Druth already had a place here. She tried not to be jealous of him. He had killed three orcs before he met his end. The elders said that one never knew if the orc one faced was an unblooded pup or a mighty champion of his kind. Thus any dwarf who killed even a single orc has earned his honor. Perhaps Druth's three kills were such as these. But Llian knew, champion or no, that she would do far better than three before her time ended.

Her father wanted her to sew leathers, or to manipulate and tailor the fine mechanics that the clan used in their ingenious traps. Her mother agreed in word, but Llian saw the hunger for vengeance, for blood, in her mother's eyes, and knew what she truly wanted for her daughter. Llian knew that she would practice a craft . . . but her tools would be her axe and dagger, her product would be death.

Her father still thought her a small child, not ready for anything but dolls and games, but she would prove him wrong. Prove them all wrong. She had the heart of a warrior. Orcs would fear her. The Shadow's legates would crumble before her axe. The war was life. It was all she had ever known. It was her destiny. She was ready.

She was twelve.

KNIGHTS '05



Though the history of any culture may be punctuated by war, the chronicles of Aryth's dwarves are filled with it. The stout folk have known blood and conflict for millennia, since the first of Izrador's twisted creations came shrieking from the north with weapons in hand. As the years passed into decades, and the decades passed into centuries, the fighting in which the dwarves were embroiled became a ceaseless affair, a never-ending series of skirmishes, sieges, raids, and battles. This omnipresent atmosphere of conflict has irrevocably shaped the dwarves, and its effects can be seen in nearly every aspect of their culture.

Despite the various differences between the clan dwarves and their Kurgun cousins, they share many cultural traditions and their languages bear strong similarities. After all, it is only recently, with the self-imposed isolation of the besieged mountain clans and the continued encroachment of the Shadow's armies, that the two cultures have been pulled apart. In their own way, each group looks upon its kinsmen as a reminder of a better age, one that is now lost to the realities of a world ignited by war.

The Dwarven Way

To outsiders, dwarves appear to be emotionless in their day-to-day dealings with the other races and even with each other. The gnomes call them "as cold as the stone they're born of." They are also renowned for their potential for great fury, especially in battle, and those who see them stand against their orcish enemies proclaim that they can survive on ferocity alone. The gentler side of dwarven expression is rarely seen by non-dwarves. Such tender and affable displays are reserved for the relative comfort and security of holdfast, home, and hearth, when both physical and mental defenses can be lowered with little risk.

It is undeniable that dwarves are stubborn to a fault. This obstinacy is driven by their strong sense of honor as opposed to mere pig-headedness or blind inflexibility. To the casual observer, it is often hard to tell the difference between the two, and dwarves are rarely obliged to explain the reasons for their actions. This intractable demeanor aside, dwarves make stout and dependable allies. They are exceedingly loyal to folk who earn their trust, and they treat their closest friends as if they were members of their clan.

This latter comparison is saying quite a bit, as a dwarf holds his clan dear beyond all else. While family ties are important in all cultures, to one degree or another, they are nigh intrinsic to dwarven psychology. This extended family is the core of his being, and a dwarf without a clan is to be both pitied and feared. A dwarf's clan defines his long- and short-term goals, his dreams, and his day-to-day outlook. His own ambitions are coupled with those of his kinfolk, and in most cases it is impossible to separate the two.

Though a dwarf may not love each and every member of his clan, he would nonetheless give his life for any of them.

Even those for whom he harbors resentment or hatred are always give the familial respect they deserve. Part of this respect is a dwarf's willingness to do anything for his kin if he is asked to do so. To refuse to oblige a member of one's clan if asked to do so is a grave dishonor, unless sufficient reason can be given for the denial.

However, requests for aid within a clan are highly formalized affairs that are never given or taken lightly. A dwarf only asks his family for help when he has exhausted all other options. To do otherwise is to admit that he is not capable of solving his own problems, and this will color his clan's opinion of him.

Furthermore, dwarves never request help from anyone outside their clans, including other dwarves. Offers of aid or service can be readily accepted without loss of face, but a dwarf will never, under any circumstances, reveal that he is in need of an outsider's help. Death and failure are preferable to appearing weak or incompetent.

This system of honor is designed to promote strength and competence, both within individual dwarves and entire clans. It works well between dwarves, as they understand one another, but outsiders of other races are often stymied by the fact that dwarves are so insistent on being self-reliant. While an elf or a human has no compunctions about requesting aid in times of need, a dwarf would never dishonor himself or his clan by doing the same. Conversely, a dwarf will gladly accept assistance should his friends or allies offer it in a respectful fashion.

This system of honor, though it has forged capable warriors, may be at the root of many of the dwarven race's problems in the Last Age. Perhaps if they had requested aid from Erethor in repelling the orcs earlier on, for instance, they would now be in a better position to help the forest fey in their battle against the Shadow. The clans throughout the ages did not even consider asking their human, elf, or gnome allies for aid, however. They called the mountains of the north their homes, and the orcs have simply always been part of living in that home. They would no more expect aid from others in the matter than they would expect a plains rider to ask a dwarf to train his horse, or an elf to help him weed his garden.

Even this ingrained habit might have been overlooked, however, and aid asked for, if not for the shadow of doubt that lived in every dwarf's heart: that these monstrosities from the north were of their own blood. They could not bear the shame of this thought, and resolved that they and they alone would be responsible for the abominations' destruction. Thus, the dwarves faced their enemies stoically, capably, but alone.

In the end, they were too proud to admit that the tide of war had finally moved against them. Because nearly every clan faced its own enemies, few were able to extend offers of assistance to the other clans. The result was that the dwarves retreated farther into their strongholds with each passing century, fighting delaying actions against a brutal and ever more plentiful enemy.

War and Honor

From their earliest days, dwarves have been some of the mightiest combatants in all of Aryth. Prior to the Year of Colder Stone, when the first skirmish between dwarves and orcs was recorded, dwarven clans fought one another for control of valuable mines, prestige, and powerful artifacts. Wars between feuding clans could last for centuries, but they were never of the scale or constancy that the dwarves have become accustomed to in their struggles against Izrador's minions. Such disputes were rarely driven by hatred, nor did they feature the brutality, cruelty, or despair that fan the flames of the current conflict. Even after they encountered the orcs, they considered them for many centuries to be just another hazard of the north; they were seen as mere predators, albeit ones armed with iron and walking on two legs. Over time, however, they became more determined and worked their way farther south, founding communities and creating warfronts. By the Second Age, the horrors of war that are seen all too often in the Last Age had begun.

Since the miners of Clan Modrun first spilled orcish blood, dwarven warcraft has evolved into an art form of sorts, rivaled only by the dwarves' skill with metal and stone. Dwarves are ever vigilant and disciplined, expecting attack from all sides and at any time. Skirmishes, raids, and extended sieges are now daily occurrences in the dwarven clanholds. Dwarves utilize the rare periods of peace to regroup, train, and repair their fortifications in preparation for the next big assault, but there is never an illusion that peace will last.

Though it was not always so, any tactic is fair game to a *dor* (literally, the "stone," the title given to a clan's leader) of a dwarven clans. The methods used to kill the enemy are limited only by the imaginations of the soldiers on the front lines and the engineers who aid them. From the simple brutality of a frontal assault to the elegant lethality of a well-crafted trap or an engineered cave-in, Izrador's minions face countless perils when they seek to invade the sovereign territory of their dwarven enemies. So many tunnels and bolt holes have been worked into the stone of the mountains that not even the dwarves themselves, let alone their orcish enemies, know them all. Ambushes are a constant threat in the cramped confines of the mountain caverns.

The Kogah

All dwarves are driven by the dual motivations of honor and loyalty, the first to themselves and the second to their clans. Just as a dwarf would rather fall than ask for aid, he would rather die than see his clan defeated by an enemy. Just as they have developed formal methods for the requesting and granting of aid, the mountain fey have developed a system for the honorable resolution of combat. This system, called the *Kogah*, may only be used when facing honorable foes, called *khul*.



The core tenet of the Kogah requires that a dwarf offer mercy to a foe who is sure to be defeated or killed. A dwarf is not expected to stop in mid-stroke during a killing blow, or offer to spare his enemy in the midst of a mass melee. However, if a lull in the battle allows for the offering of terms or if an enemy is so overwhelmed that quarter may be given without danger to the dwarf's own forces, it must be done. Whether or not the foe accepts his offer is irrelevant, so long as he makes the attempt.

If a foe rejects the offer of surrender, it is akin to requesting a merciful death at the dwarf's hands. In such an instance the dwarf and his allies are honorbound to slaughter the entire enemy force, including any noncombatants they defend. If the foe accepts, he and his kin become the dwarf's prisoners.

Dwarven Glossary

- Dor:** “Stone.” The title given to a dwarven clan chieftain.
- Dormut:** “Council of stone.” A body of advisors chosen by a dor to assist him in making decisions.
- Dorogin:** “Spirit of the Rock.” An earth spirit that is sometimes revered by the dwarves.
- Dorthane:** “Lesser stone.” The title given to a dwarven leader who answers to the clan dor.
- Ghuradur:** “One with the stones.” The dwarven term for death, but pertaining only to an honorable demise. Those dwarves who die without honor, either working for the enemy or in a cowardly or dishonorable fashion, are not even spoken of. Their names are forgotten, as if they had never existed.
- Hamfael:** “Anvil.” The largest effective combat unit fielded by clan dwarves, usually consisting of between 200 and 350 dwarves.
- Kogah:** “The denial of victory.” The customs of honorable surrender used by dwarves between themselves and those of their enemies who are deemed worthy.
- Khul:** “Enemy of worth.” A term that is extended to honorable enemies, whom a dwarf might consider his equals. This term is never applied to orcs or members of the goblinoid races.
- Oghralik:** “Giant-skinner.” A type of bearded long-axe used by the dwarves of the Icewalls.
- Sorok:** “Clanless.” A term for dwarves whose clans have been annihilated. A variation, *sorokhul*, is one who was exiled from his clan for committing some crime.
- Tabla:** “Pebble.” A reference and term of endearment that dwarves use for their children, though it only applies to those who have not yet reached adolescence. The word is also used as an insult for immature or cowardly adults.
- Takhun:** “Item of fortune.” A lucky charm, often carried into battle by dwarven warriors.
- Tohle:** “Shield.” Aside from being an item of defense, a tohle is also the word for a dwarven military unit that is composed of between 2 and 5 zuhrs.
- Zuhr:** “Brace.” The smallest unit in the armies of the clan dwarves, ranging from 6 to 18 soldiers.

of war until such time as the conflict is adequately resolved or the dwarf believes that they have earned their freedom.

The Kogah was originally designed for use between feuding dwarven clans as a way of preventing conflicts from escalating to the point of the total destruction of one clan or the other. Through use of the Kogah, a defeated clan can be assured of retaining its honor, as well as minimal holdings, even when it has been soundly vanquished by its enemies. The alternative is fighting to the death; while surely an honorable course of action, it is a path that can only lead to the weakening of the dwarven race as a whole.

Use of the Kogah is traditionally restricted to dwarves alone. Well-respected enemies have, at times, been offered the use of the Kogah’s strictures as a sign of admiration. Most non-dwarves are ignorant of the Kogah’s intended purpose, however, and reactions have been historically mixed. What the dwarves see as an act of honor, the slaughtering of their foes and their kin to the last, may be seen by outsiders as an act of pure barbarism and brutality.

Other dwarves, fey, or humans have been considered khul, but only a dwarf who has lost his reason would name orcs, goblin-kin, or any other servant of the Shadow as khul. Those who serve the Shadow are seen as monsters, not people, and as such deserve neither mercy nor honor.

Language

The language of the dwarven people is known as Old Dwarven. In relation to Eredane’s other languages, Old Dwarven is a grating and guttural tongue. Syllables are often stretched, and hard consonants sound like a series of low-throated growls. In the days when it was spoken by all dwarves, regardless of clan, the language was an aspect of dwarf culture that united the race as a whole. As the centuries have passed and the clans have become more and more isolated from one another, Old Dwarven is often replaced entirely by individual clan dialects. Thus, on the rare occasions when they are able to come together, the likelihood of clear and amicable communication between dwarves of different clans is low.

Dwarves of neighboring clans usually have little trouble communicating with one another, so long as they speak and listen carefully. The farther one travels along the Kaladrans, however, the more pronounced the differences between dialects. Dwarves of the Icewalls rarely see or speak to the Kurgun, for example, and their languages have diverged widely from their mother tongue in the intervening years.

The clan dialects of the dwarves have also been known to adopt words, phrases, and terminology from the language and speech of their neighbors. For example, the Kurgun of the southern Kaladrans have added pieces of the Sarcosan Colonial speech to their own dialects, while many of the northern clans have implemented some aspects of Norther to theirs. Likewise, bits and pieces of Old Dwarven make up the core of gnomish speech, which has become the Trader’s



Tongue. Though the dwarves would never admit it, there are even elements of Orcish that relate linguistically to Old Dwarven. This connection is diluted, however, by the fact that Orcish speech has likewise acquired aspects of many of Eredane's other languages.

Governance

No organizational body unites the dwarves of the Last Age, and they have never held to any manner of centralized government. The moots of the past, where disparate clans would gather to discuss news and settle disputes, are lost to the memories of all but the eldest of the dwarves. At the core of the dwarven political structure is the clan, and there is little else beyond that. Each clan is an autonomous entity unto itself, formed from allied groups of extended families. Most clan dwarves are at least distantly related to every member of their clan. Over the millennia, dwarves have devised complex systems that dictate procedures for everything from marriage to entertaining guests, all depending on their blood kinship or lack thereof. These customs vary from clan to clan, but their complexity and precision are universal features.

Each clan is ruled by a dor, a father figure of sorts who holds supreme sway over his clan. He is aided in his duties by the dorthanes, clan nobles who control individual clanholds. These positions are not hereditary, though clan leaders often choose one of their kin to succeed them if such a course is

required. Though these leaders hold much of the authority in the clanholds, they are oftentimes assisted by a group of advisers known as a *dormut*, or "council of stone." These councils can consist of as many as a dozen individuals or as few as a single trusted adviser, depending on the style and requirements of the individual dor.

While a dor or dorthane's authority is unquestioned, and all beneath him pay him the utmost respect, his position is by no means guaranteed. A rite of formal challenge can be issued for his title by any member of his clan, so long as they have come of age and have been blooded in battle. The challenge is always martial in nature, requiring a trial by combat. A challenge is traditionally fought unarmored, with axes, and to the death. If the dor or his champion wins, he retains his title. If the challenger succeeds, he becomes the new stone. Either the dor or his challenger may choose a champion to represent him in the trial, in which manner an older and wiser dwarf may maintain his position long into his twilight years. Despite the potential for chaos due to constant challenges, the dwarves live so close to death at all times that they rarely fall to infighting within a clan. If a dor serves well and ably, no right-thinking dwarf would challenge, especially not just for glory. Plenty of honor and glory is to be had on the field of battle, and any dor knows that allowing brave and strong soldiers to rise to positions of command is the surest way to avoid unnecessary challenges.



Religion

Considering the grim prospects facing dwarves in the Last Age, it is little surprise that they are largely atheistic. Since the Sundering, the only dwarf priests who are able to call on divine power are those who sell their souls to Izrador. The little dwarven mysticism that remains is spiritual in nature, with some rare clans revering a kind of earth spirit called the Drogin. Ever practical, the dwarves forsook their sundered deities millennia ago, for they could see no point in serving a higher power if it could not return the favor. Although the dwarves quietly hope for the return of the old gods just as the other races do, they are pragmatic about the situation.

Many dwarven parables and fables are based on the tales of Father Sun and Mother Moon. These legends date back to the Time of Years, when the dwarves lived upon the surface of Aryth like the other races. They are often educational, humorous, or both. Father Sun is said to be a great and fiery warrior, while Mother Moon is a calm practitioner of magic and healing. The couple are said to be estranged from one another, which is why they are rarely seen in the sky together. On the rare occasion that the two are seen together, typically during the course of an eclipse, it is commonly held that Father Sun and Mother Moon are coupling in the heavens. These times are marked with feasts and celebration, when marriages are arranged and fertility is said to be at its highest point.

Aside from the few spiritualists and loremasters within their ranks, the dwarves are all too happy to avoid consorting with the arcane. Magic and sorcery are mistrusted as tools of the enemy, and the use of such power can easily attract the attention of the Shadow and his minions. Despite their atheistic bent, the dwarves are a superstitious people who take no chances when calculating the odds against them. Nearly every dwarven soldier carries a takhun, or lucky charm. Each takhun is an item of personal value that a warrior carries into battle. A takhun can be anything that a dwarf considers to be lucky: a weapon, an article of clothing, or a piece of jewelry. To be without his takhun, especially in battle, is an ill omen. But again, the dwarves' practicality shines through in this behavior as in all others: If a takhun is lost, a warrior quickly adopts a new one.

Trade and Craft

While they were once masters of gold, silver, and gems, the dwarves have all but stopped practicing crafts that do not provide an immediate benefit in their constant war against the Shadow. The armor and weapons crafted by the dwarves are starkly functional, brutally effective, and are rarely created with extravagant features. On the rare occasion that weapons are worked with gems and pre-



cious metals, they are as functional as they are deadly. Such items are always created with a purpose in mind, and are gifted to champions or powerful dor, or are presented to the leaders of other races as tokens of trust and alliance. The arts of peacetime are likewise rarely practiced in the clanholds during the Last Age, and are entertained only insofar as they promote morale. If a mural is crafted, it is done to illustrate a strategic concept. If a song is written, it is employed as a marching round or a battle dirge.

The few clans that are able to barter with their neighbors have taken to trading arms and armor in return for food, livestock, and other goods that are difficult to maintain in their subterranean lairs. The trafficking of weapons and other accessories of battle is a dangerous proposition for those who do not have the mountains to protect them, however. If they could, the dwarves would provide weapons to the enemies of the Shadow at a cost of next-to-nothing, but few have the courage or the knowledge necessary to find the dwarves in their clanholds.

Dwarven Tools of War

In the forgotten past, during the Time of Years, the dwarves turned their tools of industry to martial use. The weapons that evolved from these tools are functional and brutally simple, and most dwarves have some ability with at least one of them. The foremost of these tools of war, specifically the hammer, pick, and axe, are now hallmarks of dwarven military strength all across Eredane.

The axe, which consists of a broad chopping blade mounted at the end of a wooden haft, has long been employed by dwarf warriors during times of war. The clan dwarves' ancestors used variants of battleaxes and greataxes to fell lumber for use in crafting homes and making tunnel supports. It is little surprise that these stout dwarven axes, given their effectiveness at shearing through tough wood and felling massive trees, were employed for shearing through tough armor and felling massive orcs. The favored weapon of the Kurgun, the urutuk hatchet, is descended from the smaller and more flexible hand axes that the Kurgun used to clear brush and saplings from their farmland.

Hammers also play a prominent role in dwarven military training. Once, the sounds of falling hammers rang like bells within the vast halls and smithies of the clan dwarves. Though the origin of the hammer's use lies in the heat of the forge and the pounding of spikes and nails, the hammers used by dwarves at war are not the simple tools from which they are descended. Reinforced by Sarcosan steel to aid in parrying, the hafts of dwarven hammers are attached to heads of varying sizes. Many mount backward-facing spikes, allowing for excellent penetration against armored foes. While some dwarven hammers feature flat pounding surfaces, most are equipped with short studs that can easily crush flesh or shatter bone. From the smallest ball mallet to the largest mattock, it is a strong tradition for dwarven warriors to wield hammers in battle. Even those dwarves that prefer to wield other types

of weapons often carry a light hammer or mace as a secondary weapon.

Finally, there comes the pick, long used by miners to chip away at the living rock of the mountains or to loosen clay and earth. When the first orc was slain by one of Clan Modrun's nameless miners, the weapon he used was doubtless a stout dwarven pick. Most picks are simple wooden hafts that mount a head with a single sharp spike. Another style, which is closely related to the traditional pick-axe, is used by the Kurgun. These two-handed weapons feature a narrow axe blade which is mounted opposite a thick, impaling point. No matter the specific design, picks have proven effective in penetrating heavy orcish armor. Smaller styles are preferred for use in the cramped tunnels that are a common battleground in the Kaladrans.

Dwarves and Gender

Gender plays a strong role in dwarven culture. Though the sexes are treated more or less equally under dwarven law and custom, female dwarves are far less likely to receive the extensive martial training of their male kin. The reasons for this imbalance are rooted in the ancient history of the dwarven race, and they have much to do with the rarity of dwarven females. Even in the best of times, the ratio of male dwarves to females is often as high as four to one. To allow women, as scarce as they are, to take great risks on the front lines of any conflict is considered to be at best imprudent and at worst sacrilege. As a result, dwarven military positions are customarily held by males. Dwarven women are instead expected to excel at roles that directly support front-line combat units, as well as administrative tasks and logistics. Due to their knack for organization and leadership, many females become dorthane and even dor.

Nonetheless, all dwarves, females included, receive some manner of martial training. Women are most often given simple defensive training and equipped to act as the last lines of defense for their clanhold. As the fate of the clans has become more desperate under the weight of the Shadow's onslaught, more dwarven women have gravitated toward military roles that were once exclusive to males. At one time, it was nigh unthinkable to the men of the clans that they would be accompanied, and occasionally supplanted, by women on the front lines of their subterranean war. Nevertheless, female dwarves have fought just as valiantly as their male counterparts in recent decades, and their involvement in day-to-day operations has increased tenfold.

In matters of matrimony, the lack of dwarven females has resulted in unusual practices amongst the stout folk. Women are permitted to take multiple husbands, while dwarf males may only keep one wife at a time. If he wishes to marry another, or merely desires to leave his marital obligations behind, a dwarf must first gain his wife's permission in order to do so. Lacking his wife's consent, a dwarf must shoulder his commitment to her until such time as death takes him and

Clan Military Structure

Each dwarf is assigned to a military platoon, called a zuhr (“brace”), once he has come of age. The specific zuhr to which the dwarf is appointed depends on a number of factors. The current size of the zuhr in question, the dwarf’s perceived ability at arms or at a specific vocation, and portents from the spirits or the clan’s loremasters all play a part in this decision. A dwarf outside his clanhold rarely goes anywhere unless accompanied by one or more of his fellows. Because of this, dwarves are rarely found alone except in under-staffed zuhrs or in clans whose ranks have been sorely reduced by the war against Izrador.

The size of a traditional zuhr was between 12 and 24 dwarves, though zuhr in the Last Age are usually closer to 6 to 12 dwarves strong. Zuhr are formed together into a company, referred to as a tohlele (“shield”). Each tohlele is composed of between two and five zuhr, and each zuhr in a tohlele supports the others as needed. It is rare for a clan to field more than one tohlele side-by-side, though it has happened in the past. A formation of three tohlele is called a hamfael (“anvil”). A full-strength hamfael, which can consist of up to 350 dwarves, has not been put to field since the second rise of Izrador.

he becomes one with the stones, or she changes her mind. A dwarf will never dishonor his obligations to his wife, regardless of how strained their relationship may be.

Despite the matriarchal leaning of their marriage customs, dwarves trace their lineages along their paternal sides. This allows a dwarf to retain a sense of identity and distinction despite the likelihood of many of his clansmen being born from the same mother. Tracing one’s line through the male parent ensures that one’s sense of self is formulated in large part based on the father’s status and deeds, which in turn encourages that parent to attain a worthy status and perform courageous acts, the better to leave his sons with a legacy to be proud of. Hereditary titles and honors are passed along this line, as well.

Clan Dwarves

Most of the dwarves of the Kaladrans and Icewalls are called clan dwarves by outsiders. Thus named because of their strict adherence to clan custom and structure, the major-

ity of the clan dwarves have been isolated from the other free races of Aryth since the second rise of Izrador. At one time there were nearly 600 distinct clans living both above and below the rocky heights of the Kaladrans. In the Last Age, the number of different clans has dwindled to nearly 200, and this total is constantly diminished as the armies of the Shadow encroach ever more upon their clanholds. The clan dwarves were once the preeminent city builders amongst the fey, their stone cities spreading throughout mountain valleys and their towers rising to equal the loftiest peaks, but the clan dwarves long ago abandoned these vulnerable settlements for the relative security of their subterranean clanholds and fortresses.

Of the great cities built by the clans, the most famous was Calador. The halls and domiciles of this vast metropolis were carved from the living rock of Cardred Mountain. The spectacle, engineering, and stark beauty of the place made it a famous stopping point for traders from all across Eredane. Its surface has since been abandoned to the orcs, who lay siege to the lower holds in an attempt to break the spirits of the defenders below.

Clan Culture

The clan dwarves are a culture built on military principles. They have been under siege for hundreds of years, and so war has shaped everything they do. From the time that he can walk, each dwarf is trained in the fundamental techniques of combat. This training extends to play time, as well, and groups of juvenile dwarves at play resemble little more than a confused and jumbled melee. Tactics and techniques that are effective against the long-time foes of the dwarves, the orcs, and the use of traditional weapons, hammer and axe, are stressed. Young dwarves are expected to think like their adversaries do, so as to predict the movements and strategies of their enemies.

Pit fights, ever more common in the Last Age, are used as proving grounds for young dwarves. In order to complete his coming of age ritual, a juvenile dwarf must first defeat an enemy in his clanhold’s fighting arena. Though the foes that these dwarves face are rarely more dangerous than a wounded orc or a pair of goblin skirmishers, deaths in these pit fights are not uncommon. Clan elders feel that untested youths who meet their ends in the pits are better off, as they will not endanger their peers if they are instead put to war on the front lines.

Along with their upbringing and martial training, all clan dwarves hold a rank within their clan. The details of these ranks depend on a number of different variables, including an individual’s age, experience, mastered crafts, and ability at arms. Ranks are even bestowed upon dwarves who do not fight, especially ones who exhibit other talents or abilities. There are dozens of different ranks within this complex hierarchy, each with a varying degree of authority within the clan. Promotions are decided through a combination of meritorious reward and acclimation. Insignia are rarely worn, except by



the clan's highest-ranking officers. Each dwarf is expected to know his clan's pecking order, as well as where he falls within it.

Kurgun Dwarves

The dwarves of the Kurgun are set apart from their clan cousins by several factors, most notably their preference for building their settlements and strongholds above ground. Before the Shadow rose to cover most of Eredane, the Kurgun built stout houses of stone and sod in the lower Kaladrans. Their villages and towns acted as economic centers for human merchants and clan dwarf traders. They gathered wealth as the hosts of both sides, charging intermediary fees to the traveling merchants and trading foodstuffs and animal products to their cousins from below.

While the dwarves of the clans are noteworthy miners, builders, and smiths, the Kurgun are known instead for their agrarian prowess. In years long past, the Kurgun prided themselves on reaping the bounty of the earth from their plowed fields and plentiful herds. There is still pride in such endeavors in the Last Age, but the amount of land required for successful farming is prohibited by the Shadow's reach. Thriving Kurgun communities, like those of all the fey races, have been stifled by Izrador's minions. Now the surface dwarves are hunted like animals by orcs, goblins, and the legates of the Shadow.

In their hearts, the Kurgun are lovers of peace. It is said that their ancestors descended to the lower elevations and more southern climes to escape the constant feuding of their kin. Even the wars fought against Izrador by the free peoples in ages past rarely affected the Kurgun, and only a token few of their number chose to oppose the Shadow's advances. They preferred the labors of the land to the struggles of the battlefield. Hoes, spades, and rakes were their favored weapons, and stout iron plows were their preferred engines of war. Their chosen enemies were common pests, such as the stocky hares of the lower Kaladrans, ravenous crows, and weeds that leached the nutrients from the soil in which their crops were grown.

With the coming of Last Age, all that has changed. In the span of half a generation the Kurgun beheld the decimation of their race. With neither stone nor high elevation nor a history of war to protect them, the Kurgun losses in the first decade of the Shadow's occupation were catastrophic. Perhaps it was this sudden and brutal loss of everything they held dear that made the Kurgun what they are today: predators. Those adult Kurgun who survived the Shadow's coming saw their parents and siblings murdered, raped, and tortured, and a thirst for vengeance now defines much of the race as a whole. Some of the younger and older Kurgun do not share this passion, being either too young to remember the Shadow's coming or too old to have retained their strength during the transition to war, but they are in the minority.

Kurgun Culture

In the Last Age, those Kurgun tribes that remain live a semi-nomadic life, always ready to pick up and move at the first sign of the Shadow. Unlike their clanhold kin, they value the continued existence of their families over a continued claim to a piece of land. They farm where they are able, scavenge where they are not; spy and fight when necessary, flee when they can; trade and make pacts with the other races, but rarely offer hands of friendship. However, there are two factions whose goals diverge from the mainstream: the Aggressors, who propose more active assaults against Izrador, and the Fatalists, who have resigned themselves to his eventual domination of Aryth.

The Fatalist camp is the larger of these two Kurgun groups. The typical Fatalist is, by and large, in his later years, and lives in seeming security within a secluded agrarian community in the southern Kaladrans. Hard work and toil are the hallmarks of the Fatalist, who sees open resistance of the Shadow as an invitation for orcs and other horrors to destroy all that he has worked to build. As with all dwarves, family and clan ties are important to Fatalists. They seek to remain beneath the notice of Izrador's minions, thus preserving a tenuous and illusory hold on the peace that they have enjoyed for centuries.

Attempting to ignore the Shadow has had mixed results for the Kurgun Fatalists. Many communities of these peaceable dwarves have been wiped out by marauding orcs without so much as a struggle, while others have been ignored or overlooked by passing columns of orcs or patrolling goblins. A few Kurgun villages have been occupied, their occupants enslaved, and their skills with plant and beast put to good use feeding Izrador's soldiers. Many more Kurgun villages remain undiscovered, carefully hidden in secluded vales between the slopes of the Kaladrans or on the mountainsides facing east toward the White Desert.

Unlike their more conservative brothers, the Aggressors are often young and idealistic. They look upon the past with longing, for they recognize that it has been lost to the minions of Shadow. To the Aggressors, hiding in the mountains like frightened orts is akin to accepting their race's decline and inevitable death. They feel that it is far wiser to sacrifice their own peace and perceived security so that their kin, as well as the other races of Aryth, can see triumph over the depredations of the Shadow and his minions. Living by the examples set by their clan cousins, as well as the legends of the Brothers Kurgun, the Aggressors seek out the Shadow's minions. They bring the fight to them where they are able, despite the fact that such attacks tend to be suicidal or even endanger the Kurgun villages from which they originate.

While rare, communities dominated by Aggressors can be found in the Kaladrans. These settlements are all defensible, protected by both natural terrain and walls of fashioned stone. The largest are capable of withstanding sustained sieges, and are connected to subterranean holdfasts where



residents can flee in the event that their outer defenses are overrun. Allies of the Kurgun tribes can often find succor in these places, so long as they do not lead Izrador's minions to the settlement gates. The Kurgun closely guard the locations of these communities, lest the Shadow learn of them.

Usually, however, the Kurgun dwarves who seek to take the war to the Shadow often turn their backs on their homes, venturing into the west in an attempt to integrate themselves into one of the many resistance movements across Eredane. They are selfless fighters, seeking to lend help where they can while hindering the goals of orcs, legates, and the other foul servants of Izrador. Many of these dwarves foster closer relationships to non-dwarven races than they do towards their own kinsmen. Despite their seeming resoluteness, these Kurgun are painfully torn between their ancient loyalty to their besieged kinsmen and their desire to aid the other races in their battle against the Shadow's tyranny.

Halfbreeds

Two of Eredane's halfbreed races, the dwarrow and the dworgs, have dwarven blood running through their veins. Despite this commonality, these two races are as different from one another as sky and stone, and both are perceived quite differently by their dwarven kin.

Dwarrow

Dwarrow are the product of dwarven and gnomish relations. Though once common throughout Eredane, dwarrow are seen rarely in the Last Age as the dwarves dig deeper within their mountain clanholds. Those dwarrow who are born into the world often take up life with their gnomish relations, as they lack the fortitude to survive in the harsh world of the Kaladrans. The gnomes welcome dwarrow for their strength and stature, which is useful for everything from helping move cargo to standing against bullying orcs or goblins. Dwarrow that manage to survive in the clanholds usually do so thanks to wits and guile, and such are likely to become advisers to their dor or dorthane.

The dwarrow view their dwarven kin with a distant and melancholy eye. The powerful and evil forces that have driven the dwarves underground have also managed to separate them from their ancient allies, the gnomes. Even as the dwarves have been forced to retreat into the depths of the Kaladrans, the gnomes, too, have been forced to adapt as best as they can. Whether they act as smugglers under the watchful eyes of Izrador's legates, or pay the Shadow lip service as they ferry orcish troops across the Sea of Pelluria and beyond, the gnomes have suffered beneath the weight of the northern invasion. The dwarves, especially those of the clans, often perceive the gnomes' actions as treachery, which further isolates the two races from one another.

Due to the seclusion of the clan dwarves from the rest of Aryth, dwarrow are more often born of unions between the

Kurgun dwarves and gnomes. The Kurgun are more accepting of their half-kin than the clan dwarves are, and are willing to accept a dwarrow who chooses to live with them among the mountains, though they will not offer him any more of a crutch than any other dwarf. Such is not the case with the clan dwarves, who almost universally send their dwarrow children to live with their gnomish families. They view these half-breeds as a liability, and despite their ancient bonds, the dwarves find the gnomes flighty and difficult to understand, traits that ultimately carry over into the personalities of the dwarrow.

Even though dwarves do not despise the dwarrow in the same fashion that they despise the dworgs, they are still reluctant to fully accept them unless they can prove themselves capable of withstanding the rigors of life and warfare within the mountains. A dwarrow that chooses to stay with his dwarven parent is treated no differently than other dwarves his age, and he must complete his coming of age ritual in the fighting pits just as they must. It is these final tests that often defeat the dwarrow, for though they are strong-willed and tenacious, they lack the constitutions and stone-like skin of their dwarven brothers.

Dworgs

It is perhaps a tragedy that dworgs have managed to survive at all. They are, to the last, the bastard children of marauding orcs and the dwarven women who suffered from their depraved cruelty. Hated by their dwarven and orcish kin, dworgs must be strong in both body and mind in order to eke out an existence in a world that has completely forsaken them. Given the disgust that dwarves feel for dworgs, it is unsurprising that many dworg infants are killed at birth. This is seen as a mercy, both to the mother as well as to the child. To let such an abomination live is nearly unthinkable, and since many who bear dworgs die during childbirth, there are rarely any who would care for the child in any case.

Yet such abominations, whatever the reasons, do manage to survive their births. Those dworgs that remain with the clans suffer constant loathing and abuse by their dwarven peers, and often find themselves doing the lion's share of their clan's menial labor. Dwarves constantly pick fights with the dworgs who live among them, and the dworgs, eager to prove their worth and having inherited dwarven pride, often allow themselves to be baited. Even victory in such a fight leads to defeat, however, for the larger and stronger dworgs sometimes kill their kin by accident, a crime punishable by exile or death. A few of these outcasts have managed to find acceptance with the Durgis Clan, and some of that clan's most loyal members are dworgs who could not find succor anywhere else.

Most dwarves harbor an almost instinctual hatred of dworgs. Not only does each dworg represent the savage violation of a dwarven woman, but he also acts as a reminder that dwarves and orcs are not as different as they may out-



wardly appear. Though such sentiments are rarely spoken of aloud, they simmer just below the surface of each dwarf's conscious thoughts.

Dworgs usually return the hatred of their dwarven kin, if only because of the treatment they have received at dwarves' hands. Their hatred for their orcish parents, on the other hand, is a completely instinctual emotion uninfluenced by their past experiences. It is a hatred born of blood, not rejection. They hate their fathers' race simply for allowing them to exist.

Lay of the Land

The Kaladrún Mountains are a massive chain of rocky peaks that stretches nearly 4,000 miles from the orc-infested Icewall Mountains in the north to the Horse Plains of Erenland in the far south. At their widest point, the Kaladrúns are over twelve hundred miles wide. At their narrowest, they are still a formidable 125 miles across. They begin as gently rolling foothills in the western plains but rise rapidly to form jagged, knife-like peaks. As they approach the White Desert in the east, the crags sharply give way to barren, sandy wastes before the Pale Ocean overtakes the land.

Even in the south some peaks of the Kaladrúns are capped in snow year-round. The lower mountain elevations exhibit much more diverse climates, depending on how far north or south they are situated. Heavy rains during the spring and winter months cause dangerous flash floods in the western Kaladrúns, even as they provide moisture for the lush growth of evergreen and fur trees. Conversely, the severe eastern slopes rarely see any sort of rain, even as they are scoured by the westward winds that whip up the sands of the White Desert.

Despite the enormity of the Kaladrún chain, it is not as impenetrable as might first be thought. There are countless passes through the mountains, yet only a handful are reliable and safe. Most of the known passes are only navigable during the high summer, when the snows have melted and the ways are open to man, beast, and wagon alike. With the proper guidance travel within the mountains is also possible, albeit dangerous, during the spring and autumn. Attempting to cross the range during the winter without magical aid, regardless of one's guide, is suicidal.

The dwarves have left their indelible mark upon the Kaladrúns in the form of tunnels and extensive subterranean avenues that circumvent the mountain passes and weather entirely. In past ages, gaining access to and safe passage along these underground byways was a simple matter. Following the second rise of Izrador and the continued encroachment of orcs from the Icewall Mountains, travel along these roads became more and more dangerous. In the Last Age, few of the larger tunnels remain, having been collapsed by the dwarven clans in an effort to keep their enemies at bay. Those few passages that remain tie the ruins of dwarven settlements together like tarnished beads strung upon a fraying thread.

Dwarven Settlements

The cities of the dwarves once dotted the slopes of the Kaladrúns. Though these settlements delved into the mountains, they were not as deep, nor exclusively subterranean, as the dwarven clanholds have become in the Last Age. As can be seen in the ruins of Calador, the dwarves were not always confined to the depths of Eredane's mountains. Their settlements were jewels that crowned mountain peaks, and the lights of their lofty halls could be seen for leagues without end.

Most of the old settlements were chosen by the dwarves for their proximity to dense veins of ore. The miners carved into the hills and mountainsides, exploiting natural caverns when they could and creating their own where necessary. Readily available sources of food and water were also important to the early dwarves. Agriculture, overseen by the forebears of the Kurgan dwarves, was confined to the lower altitudes, and both crops and beasts were raised in broad mountain valleys.

Few, if any, of these ancient clanholds remain as they once were. Most have been destroyed in the endless fighting or were overrun and are now used as staging points for further incursions by the Shadow's armies. The dwarves continue to burrow deeper into the mountains, even as the orcs send endless waves of troops against the upper deeps of their strongholds. The numerous tunnels and caverns that riddle the mountains are patrolled incessantly by orcs and their dwarven quarry.

Bodrun

The dwarven city of Bodrun hearkens back to the days of the First and Second Ages, before Izrador's presence in Eredane was as acutely defined as it is in the Last Age. Situated in the southern Kaladrúns, Bodrun is located on the southern slope of one of the great peaks of the south that make up the White Hand, a range of mountains that are snow-clad all year. While Bodrun's north is protected by these impassible stone sentries, it has natural defenses to the south and west as well. To approach it from the plains requires passage through the Forest of the Sahi, a dark and dismal wood with tenacious undergrowth and a rugged stone foundation. Clearing the forest would be difficult, and even then traveling through it with anything other than infantry would be impossible without first building a road. Meanwhile, the slopes to the south of Bodrun consist of loose scree punctuated by weathered gullies, once-great mountains that have collapsed into unnavigable heaps. Only the eastern approach is possible for anything approximating an army, and that can only be reached via the White Desert or through the vaunted Pass of Eagles.

The dwarves of Gorand Clan, the masters of Bodrun, are a mixture of both Kurgun and clan dwarves. Terraces carved from the mountainside take advantage of the mild climate to



allow for the cultivation of crops. The squat stone houses of the Kurgun dwarves mesh smoothly with the mountain villas of their clan kinsmen. Because of its natural defenses, Bodrun and its client villages are rarely threatened from the north. Although orcish raids out of Drumlen do take place, they are scattered and ill-supported. The citizens of Bodrun fear that it is only a matter of time, however, before the Shadow's minions can make concerted attacks upon their walls. For the first half of the Last Age, they were content to await their fate as they traded with the humans and gnomes of southern Erenland and with the people of Landfall. The forces of the Shadow have always known that Bodrun was there, however, and the wheels have finally been set in motion that will cause its fall. For the past 20 years the dor of Gorand Clan has felt the motion of those wheels turning in the mountains to the north, and he is determined to make his people ready.

Calador

The seat of Thedron Clan's power is Calador, once known throughout Eredane as Caladale. Calador lies beneath Cardred Mountain, in the northern reaches of the Kaladrin Mountains just south of Falter Pass. It has fallen far from the splendor it once knew, as the abandoned surface city and upper deeps are held almost exclusively by orcs and other foul creatures. A constant state of siege is kept, and Izrador's forces continue to ferret out the city's dwarven defenders. Consequently, the dwarves of Thedron Clan have burrowed deep into Cardred Mountain, creating a massive holdfast beneath the skin of the mountain that is nearly impenetrable. Though the orcs have made progress during the decades-long siege, they have paid dearly for every foot of ground to which they have laid claim.

Over 10,000 dwarves call Calador their home, and each one is willing to defend its halls unto death. Though they are truly isolated from the rest of Eredane, Thedron Clan occasionally sends scouts and envoys into the west in search of news. These scouts, and they alone, still know a few passes and tunnels that are safe from the depredations of the orcs. For the sake of security, not even the dor and his generals are told where these paths lie.

Drumlen

North of Bodrun, the ruined city of Drumlen is garrisoned by orcs and their slaves. The dwarves that once inhabited the surface city have burrowed miles deep beneath their holdfast. Eventually they fled so far below that the orcs simply stopped following them, and are so contained now that they pose little threat to the orcs above. The ruined city is now little more than a village of slaves, the inhabitants of which are forced to excavate the dwarven ruins in search of lost artifacts while their orcish masters half-heartedly attempt to flush out the dwarves beneath them. No contact has been made between the dwarves of Drumlen and their kinsmen for over 40 years.

Garol

The mountains to the southeast of Kardoling are home to the half-dead settlement of Garol. Centuries ago, Garol was a bustling trade village where dwarves, humans, gnomes, and halflings traded their wares to one another. With the coming of Izrador and the continued isolation of the dwarves from the rest of Eredane, Garol slowly became part ghost town, part disguised military outpost. Crumbling stone buildings and monuments mark the place, and few dwarven soldiers call it their home for any length of time.

In the years of the Last Age, Garol still sees use as a mustering point for the dwarves of the Spinewall Range who seek to march north to war against the Shadow's armies. These gatherings are less common than they once were, yet they still occur when the clans of the southern Kaladrins come together to make forays against the orcish supply trains from the north. Non-dwarves also come to Garol, which lies along one of the more reliable east-to-west passes through the Spinewall. The orcs are aware of Garol's significance, and they regularly scout the area around it looking for signs of resistance.

Idenor

Idenor represents a great dwarven tragedy. Once the greatest city of Fodrin Clan, it has since been destroyed. Its end came not via the forces of Izrador, as one might guess, but by a violent earthquake. The circumstances of this tremor are uncertain, though it was felt from one end of the mountain chain to the other. The great halls of Idenor collapsed, the deeps of the clanhold crashing down upon themselves like a house of cards crushed by a great avalanche of earth and stone.

In the 80 years since the quake, no sign of Fodrin Clan have been found. They have seemingly vanished to the last, presumably buried alive. Though no explorers have found even the least sign of survivors, some channelers claim that a dark and ominous power seeps up from the flooded depths of the city like a poison. Few have dared to explore Idenor's ruins, and even the Shadow's forces seem reluctant to trespass there unless their need is great.

Lardun

Serving as a garrison for orcs fresh from the north, Lardun guards the entrance to both an east-west pass and the northern route towards Caradul. Its nearest neighbor is the conquered Dornish city of Low Rock, and caravans of arms, ore, and slaves between the two are frequent. The defiled halls of the once-mighty dwarven city are thick with orcish filth, and troops from Low Rock are processed there before they are sent out to patrol the Spinewall. The only living dwarves in Lardun are either slaves who have been taken in battle or those few pariahs who have betrayed their people. The latter are usually exiles, dwarves who by definition have no homelands at all, though some may be Black Bloods.



Non-Dwarven Settlements

Though the Kaladrin Mountains are home to primarily dwarves, several non-dwarf settlements have sprung up in and around the mountains that have, at one time or another, affected the stout folk. The majority of these villages and towns are (or were) populated by men, and few have been unaffected by the Shadow's encroachment on Eredane.

Falter Pass

Falter Pass was once a settlement formed by the families of human soldiers who were sent to staff the Fortress Wall. The dwarves of the northern Kaladrins regularly sent trading parties there, bringing much-needed news and goods from the south. As the Fortress Wall crumbled into disuse and the dwarves retreated further into isolationism, the families of Falter Pass suffered under the constant threat of the Shadow. Though the village still remains, it is mostly in ruins, and acts as nothing more than a stopping point for orcish columns heading south.

The Fortress Wall

Though the dwarven presence upon the Fortress Wall was never massive, several clans did send troops to support the defense of the northern frontier during the Second Age. Many of the keeps and strongholds along the Fortress Wall's eastern quarter were constructed, at least in part, by skilled dwarf engineers. The fact that many remain standing after centuries of disuse is testament to the quality of their work. The strongest of these citadels are now occupied by the forces of Izrador, their once-noble purpose corrupted and turned against the brave defenders who patrolled their turrets and walls.

High Road

The village of High Road was a Dornish settlement at the foot of the northern Kaladrin Mountains. In times of peace it served as a stopping point for human and dwarven merchants who were either traveling to the great city of Calador or who were coming down from the mountains to sell goods in the west. The Last Battle found High Road as a strategic choke point. Its taking in the early days of the conflict by orcs was the first step in cutting off the dwarves of the Icewalls and the northern Kaladrins from the rest of Eredane. In the Last Age, High Road is still kept secure by a small orcish garrison.

Landfall

In the centuries since the first Sarcosan invaders came ashore at Landfall, what was once a small fishing village has been transformed into a center of relative economic stability. Landfall represents a safe harbor for the time being, drifting

in a limbo between the Pale Ocean and the southern Kaladrins, untouched and seemingly ignored by the armies of the Shadow. There are rumors that agents of Izrador maintain a quiet vigil in Landfall, their eyes cast to the eastern ocean in search of sails from Pelluria.

The dwarves of the southern Kaladrins have always come to Landfall to trade with the folk who live there. In the Last Age, the only clan that still makes regular journeys to the town is Gorand Clan of Bodrun. If it were not for these occasional dwarven merchants, Landfall would have no exposure to western Erenland at all. Landfall retains a significant dwarven population, numbering near 300 all told. Most of these dwarves are Kurgun, and many of them have taken to marine trades in an effort to support the community as a whole.

Low Rock

The Dorns of House Orin once traded with the dwarves of the Kaladrins from their home in Low Rock. Fine weapons and armor of dwarven manufacture ensured that House Orin's troops were some of the best-equipped soldiers in all of northern Erenland. During the Last Battle House Orin, along with a handful of dwarven defenders, held a desperate holding action against the tide of orcs and goblins from the north. Their efforts were ultimately futile, and Low Rock became a possession of Izrador.

In the Last Age Low Rock is home to a significant orcish garrison and is a staging point for incursions upon the dwarven clanholds. Once considered to be an unimportant post, the city is slated to soon become home to a large host of fresh troops from Erenhead. Its mission will be a final massive invasion of the mountain holds, chief among them Calador. Once the dwarves have been crushed, Low Rock will doubtless lose the momentary significance that it now enjoys under the command of the veteran warlord Gaalak and his tribe, the Black Spears.

White Province

White Province was once an important trade center on the border of the northern wastes of the White Desert. After Falter Pass fell to the Shadow, commerce came to a standstill as desert nomads and fishermen retreated to their wasteland homes. The merchants that were left behind found themselves ground beneath the heels of Izrador's followers, and they were put to use in a logistical role. In the Last Age, White Province is once again an important settlement, but for entirely different reasons. It is the easternmost community to have fallen to the Shadow, a sign that his reach can and will eventually overtake all of Eredane.

CHAPTER 2

A History of War



The orcs had breached the outer defenses. Murin ran. It was his duty. The hold-fast must be warned, the call to arms be raised. Still, his body yearned to turn back to the sound of fighting. His heart called him coward. His lungs screamed with the effort of his dash. He turned a corner too sharply, and his knee cracked against stone. He did not slow.

His patrol had been swapping stories, rumbling songs. Then Corrick the Bloodcaller, keen of ear and hearty of voice, heard it. A scuffle, nothing more. But he knew. He drained his horn of ale, slowly stood, and hefted his massive battleaxe. He nodded, once, to Gwold and Eryn. As he turned to stomp into the corridor, he said two words over his shoulder to Murin. "Run, lad."

He imagined he could hear Corrick still chanting his battle dirge as he came to the first checkpoint. Five heavily armored dwarves sat behind gated barricades watching his approach, crossbows at the ready in case pursuers should be close behind. It was not until his momentum carried him hard into the gate, and still no orcs appeared, that the gate warden called for the locks to be undone.

"Orcs! They've breached the outer defenses. From their weapons and wear, it's no scouting party. I think I smelled trolls. Three stayed to hold them. I give them 10 taps, maybe 12, no more." Murin made his report in gasps, earnest, but kneeling and fighting for air. As the gate warden began to ring the bell, Murin made ready to rise. "To the other outposts. To spread the word." The pain on Murin's face was clear. He wished to stay. To fight. The warden grunted once, and before Murin could rise, another dwarf, young, fast, shucked his mail and took off down the tunnel.

"You've done well, son, and ran hard," the warden clasped Murin by the wrist and pulled him to his feet. "Soon's time for rest. All the time you'll want." The officer gestured to the replacement runner's doffed mail and handed Murin an axe from a nearby rack. "But I need those legs strong and lungs hale for a little while more." As the mail settled upon Murin's shoulders, the pain left his legs. As the dwarves around him began to chant their battle song, Murin's voice found strength once more. His heart lifted with a grim passion he had never known before, and the voices of the five dwarves sounded to his ears like 500. Like the voices of their ancestors, joining them in battle, and he heard Corrick's voice say to him, "Fight, lad."



Overview

Though their beginnings were relatively peaceful, the dwarves of Eredane have had little time to rest since the earliest conflicts during the Time of Years. Before the orcs came, the stout folk were content to work their stone and metal, and they crafted majestic beauty from the living rock of the Kaladrún Mountains. The first clans were plentiful, branching out and settling the mountains that had given birth to their ancestors. They lay claim to underground caverns, fashioning them into halls that are still marveled at in the Last Age. Ore of iron, gold, and silver was reaped from the mines of these clanholds, and was fashioned into wonderful things that glittered and sparkled in the eyes of dwarven craftsmen.

Trade between the fey races in those days was common. None of the petty rivalries of the later years had yet to surface, and the elves, gnomes, and halflings of Eredane kept close ties with the dwarves. Dwarven craftsmanship was envied by all, and the creations of their master smiths were sought by any who could afford their quality. The trading centers of the dwarves, Caladale foremost amongst them, attracted thousands of visitors, and the commerce made the stout folk rich. If Izrador had not awakened, there is little doubt that the dwarves would be a much different people than they have been forced to become.

The earliest conflicts fought by the dwarves were, sadly, against their own kinsman. Clan feuds were all too common among the dwarves in the Time of Years. The same pride and obstinacy that drove them to create such amazing works ensured that individual clans would never back down from any insult or challenge to their hard-won territory. Perhaps it was these early disputes that drove the Kurgun to live apart from their kindred.

The first skirmishes between dwarf and orc were savage and arbitrary, brought about by chance rather than design. When the orcs began to come en masse, however, the battles that rang through the Kaladrúns made the earlier clan feuds look like play fighting. The mountain passages and the caves beneath them ran crimson with blood. The orcish hatred for their dwarven enemies was matched in equal measure by an instinctual loathing by the dwarves for the orcs. Quick to breed and driven by their dark god, goaded by pride and eager to test their savagery against capable foes, the orcs pushed slowly farther into the Kaladrúns in an effort to unseat the dwarf clans. If dwarven warcraft was born in internecine conflict, it was perfected in the struggle against the orcish invaders.

The first Age

In time, humans came to Eredane. The Dorns, a warlike culture from across the Pale Ocean, landed their longboats in the south and began a northward migration, conquering as they came. It was inevitable that their spears and crudely forged blades clashed with the axes and hammers of the

dwarves, and the two races developed a grudging respect for one another. By the time the Dorns finally made peace with Eredane's fey races, Izrador's power had waxed full. His first invasion of the southlands culminated in the Battle of Three Kingdoms, when elf, dwarf, and human forces combined to stem his malevolent tide.

The Second Age

With Izrador's initial defeat, the First Age gave way to the Second. It was in this time that the Fortress Wall was built. Brick by brick and stone by stone, this network of defensive fortifications grew to span the entirety of the continent. Dwarven masons played no small part in the construction of the keeps and watchtowers that comprised the Fortress Wall, especially those that stood at the northern end of the Icewalls. The strongest of these bastions remain as sturdy in the Last Age as they were the day they were first consecrated by the blood of their defenders.

Peace reigned over the lands until the Sarcosan invasion of southern Erenland. The horsemen of Sarcosa, who had originally driven the Dorns out of their homeland across the sea, came to Erenland in search of riches and new conquest. Within two short decades they had raised the ire of the elves of eastern Erethor, and the Elven War was ignited. Though the Dorns in the north reneged on the alliance they had sworn with the elves after the Battle of Three Kingdoms, the dwarves offered both weapons and stalwart soldiers to the forest fey.

The Elven War against the Sarcosan invaders was to last 70 years, and dwarves served bravely in the defense of their elven cousins. In that time, the newcomers learned to keep their distance from the stout warriors; when those same riders beheld the dwarves in their preferred terrain during tentative raids into the Kaladrúns, they knew that no good could come of conflict with them. After a few minor skirmishes, the Sarcosans withdrew from the Kaladrúns and continued their northward expansion into the lands of the Dornish houses.

As the Sarcosan armies massed upon the southern shores of the Sea of Pelluria in preparation for the Dornish War to come, the dwarves maintained their vigil in the Kaladrúns. They paid little heed to the movements of the Sarcosans and their Dornish enemies, especially since the latter had refused to offer aid to the elves when that aid had been honorably requested. In the years of this brief conflict, the dwarves were more than content to watch from afar as the human races fought a bitter war against their own kind. With the end of the Dornish War and the surrender of Hedgreg the Red at Fallport, a new and lasting peace settled over much of the continent. The dwarves, however, continued to thrust and parry in their long war of attrition with the northern orc tribes.

Over the next 800 years, the races of Eredane slowly learned to live with one another. The dwarves found the Sarcosans to be shrewd merchants, especially in regards to steel. The Sarcosans made items from base steel that had quality the dwarves could only equal with mithral. They paid



the Sarcosan merchants well for such items so that they might learn the secret of their manufacture, then paid the craftsmen themselves to come into the mountains and teach their ways. In time the dwarven apprentices, excellent pupils with a natural knack for the work, exceeded their Sarcosan teachers. Dwarven weapons and armor, now made of steel that was countlessly folded and perfectly tempered, increased the effectiveness of the clans' militaries by five-fold. The steady tug of war between dwarf and orc began to show progress as the invaders were driven back from clanholds that they had come to occupy. Now armored in full plate and wielding weapons that were all but invulnerable to the orcs' sundering blades, the dwarves fielded massive armies and used shield wall tactics to drive their foes from the mountain slopes.

The Third Age

The peace could not last, however, and Izrador stirred once more in the north. The Shadow's forces made probing forays against the Fortress Wall, seeking to test the defenders for weakness. As the Second Age drew to its end, armies of the Shadow's minions poured southward past the Wall. For 30 years the war raged across several fronts. The dwarves endured as they always had, but were ultimately forced to give ground against the overwhelming northern assault. Dwarven armies such as had not been seen since the Battle of Three Kingdoms took to the field of battle, but they faced worse than orcs: The Shadow's commanders sent most of their shadowspawn and giants into the mountains, where they could wreak destruction in the narrow passes without fear of elven channelers, human horsemen, and the long-range archers of both races. With nothing but weapons of steel and indomitable spirits, the dwarves served valiantly and paid dearly to turn back the forces of the Shadow.

Even after the war had ended and the scholars began to count the days of the Third Age, the dwarves continued to fight their long-time enemies from their mountain holdfasts. Precious ground had been lost to them during Izrador's second rise, and almost 100 clans had been slaughtered to the last, both at home and far afield. The other races, weary of war and drained of strength, returned to their homes to nurse their wounds. Promises to aid one another were renewed . . . as soon as all had had time to recover, of course. The dwarves did not have that luxury, and the fights against the orcs began again almost immediately.

As the years passed, despite the best efforts of Aradil to keep the people of Eredane of one mind in the event of Izrador's inevitable return, the old alliances were given only lip service by Sarcosan, Dornish, and dwarven emissaries. Due to their own isolationist tendencies, the dwarves were even less involved in keeping the towers and keeps along the Fortress Wall in working order than were the reluctant Erenlanders. Civil war tore the human nations apart, and the elves kept their own council as the Dornish houses seceded from Erenland and took to squabbling amongst themselves. The dwarves, still rooting out wicked creatures in their own

homelands, could not be bothered to pay any great heed to the condition of the human nations.

The Last Age

Darkness came a third time, and this time it would not be overcome. Weakened as they were, the human kingdoms were swept away in a tide of dark fury. The numbers of orcs assaulting the dwarves doubled, then doubled again, and dwarven losses began to mount. Clanholds that had fallen into isolation after Izrador's second rise were stamped out like the dying embers of a once-great bonfire by orcish marauders. Though remotely aware of the declining situation across Eredane, the dwarven clans that remained were more concerned with their own tenuous survival than with supporting their allies of old. Like an ever-increasing flood, the minions of Shadow continued their steady march southward through the Kaladrums, laying siege to those clanholds that they could not conquer outright.

Such is the state of Aryth for the dwarven clans that still remain in Eredane, and every day their numbers dwindle . . .

History

War in the Time of Years

It came to be known as the Year of Colder Stone, for the rock of the Icewall Mountains possessed an unnatural chill that crept through the soles of one's boots. The mines of Modrun Clan had been extending farther and farther north with each passing year. The discovery of mithral in the Modrun mines had ignited a lust for the silvery metal within the heart of each of the clan's miners. Mithral was said to be gifted to the dwarves by Mother Moon, and it was perhaps their most valued commodity. So greedy were they for the ore that the dwarves would never speak of it in the presence of outsiders. Not even the gnomes who they had come to call their kin through marriage and the birth of half-blooded dwarf were permitted to know the source of the silvery metal.

Such greed drove them to mine ever northward, into the depths of the Icewall Mountains and beyond. The dwarves soon realized that they were not alone in the mines that they had carved from these mountain depths. Several breaches were made into worked caverns that had existed there for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The Modrun Clan miners took stock of the stonework, rough as it was, and proclaimed that no dwarf had been responsible for such a shoddy job. Even so, the tunnels were old, and there was no sign of the race that had fashioned them. "It was the elder fey," they whispered to one another, stroking their beards and making signs of warding. They knew of nothing else that might have been here before they came in their search for the silver of the moon.

The search of Modrun Clan persisted, even into the existing tunnels that they had discovered. Little mithral was found in the weeks that followed, but even that small amount was enough to keep the miners interested. Their prospecting was tireless, and they covered much ground in their exploration. Deeper they went, driven ever northward by their longing for the silvery ore. Each new tunnel was further proof that another civilization had been there before them, yet they ignored the signs until it was too late. The air of the caverns grew staler and more oppressive with each passing day. The blank stone of the tunnel walls was sometimes punctuated with disturbing markings and crude paintings. None of the Modrun could guess what the depictions meant, but each felt a distinct foreboding that was only exacerbated by the foulness in the air.

When at last the truth was revealed, the miners of Modrun Clan took up their picks and met their enemies as only brave dwarves can. There was little chance that they would survive the ordeal, given their distance from the nearest clanhold. Should they have been taken alive, the dwarves would surely have been consigned to a terrible fate at the claws of the creatures they now faced. None wished for such a thing to pass, and so they fought like demons and took a great many lives in the process. The first orcish blood ever to be drawn by dwarven hands stained the tunnels of the Icewall Mountains black, yet it mingled freely with the blood of the dwarves who had spilled it.

The surviving orcs followed the miners' trail southward to the Modrun clanhold. They killed indiscriminately as they came, their fury fed by the trespass of the dwarves who had defiled their shadowy sanctuary. All the while, a dark voice whispered into the ears of the orc priestesses: "To the south you will find them. Enemies ancient. Enemies hated. Enemies to be slaughtered and consumed to the last." So they went, crashing against the gates of Modrun Clan's holds like a furious maelstrom. Despite their losses, the orcs wiped out that clan in the span of a year, and took the lives of hundreds of other dwarves before their advance was put to rest by sturdy warriors from the neighboring holds.

The dwarves had been introduced to a new breed of warfare, one where hatred and ideology were the instigators as opposed to pride or, at worst, greed. Though the clans had fought one another for centuries, the old feuds were all but forgotten as the coming of orcs to the Kaladrans turned from a trickle to a flood. The clashes that were recorded in detail by dwarven scribes, such as the Siege of Timrack Hold and the Battle of Golien Peak, are still told of by loresingers in the darkness of the Last Age. The heroism of the dwarves that fought and defeated the orcs is unquestioned, and these earliest battles were instrumental in transforming the dwarves into the formidable warriors they are today.



The Battle of Golien Peak

The craggy and jagged peak known as *Golien* ("the Fang," in Old Dwarven) was the site of the first major battle between the dwarves of the Kaladrans and the orcs of the Icewalls. Not long after Modrun Clan was obliterated, orcs had started to spread throughout the northern mountains in search of other dwarven cities. The orcish method of warfare was primitive, even in comparison to the early tactics used by their dwarven enemies. While the dwarves utilized a system of files and ranks to organize their troops, the orcs tended to rush blindly into the fray, vardatches in hand. While it was the orcs' frenzied rushes and speed that made them such frightening enemies, their chaotic tactics were also their greatest liability when they set themselves upon an organized foe.

The dwarves, numbering nearly seven full hamfael in strength, took to field in an icy valley within the shadow of Golien Peak. While engineers constructed makeshift breastworks and fortifications, a small detachment of lightly armored skirmishers was sent to flush out the orcish marauders. The orcs were reported to number in the low hundreds, but when the skirmishers finally returned with the orcs in furious pursuit, it was discovered that the enemy instead numbered in the low thousands. The dwarves, who were dug in and prepared for a fight, girded themselves for the orcish onslaught.



The battle raged for nearly 10 hours, with wave after wave of ravening orcs smashing against the dwarvish defenses. Though the dwarves experienced heavy losses, each attack was repulsed. The defenders maintained their lines and did not withdraw, even as the orcs became more desperate in their attacks. When the final push came, the dwarven lines buckled, but did not break. With a single, furious cry, the orcs lost all spirit in the conflict. Thousands of the creatures lay dead, their corpses frozen and covered with crimson snow. As they routed, the dwarven defenders stood and gave pursuit, cutting their enemies down as they ran.

Even with this victory, the dwarves had as much reason to mourn as to rejoice. As victors, they set to burning the orcish dead. Their own slain were tended to quickly and entombed in the ruins of a nearby clanhold that had fallen to the orcs mere weeks before. Even in the Last Age, the voices of those who lost their lives at Golien Peak can be heard upon the winds that blow through the valley below the mountain.

The Siege of Timrack Hold

During the Year of Screams, the great dwarven city of Timrack Hold was besieged by a massed army of orcs and goblins. Timrack Hold, which is now only spoken of by loresingers in somber chants, was one of the northernmost dwarven colonies in the Kaladrums. Following the Battle of Golien Peak, orcish incursions upon the dwarven clanholds became less common. Despite this respite, Hollis Clan, the masters of Timrack Hold, experienced a constant influx of orcish scouts and skirmishers. The dwarves of Hollis Clan were necessarily vigilant, and always prepared for battle.

Yet the defenders of Timrack were not prepared for the size of the orcish force to fall upon them. The size of the enemy horde was larger than any that had been seen up to that fateful day, and the combined power of their kurasatch udareen and brutish shock troops shattered the hold's main gates. As the defenses collapsed beneath the weight of the assault, the defenders retreated to their subterranean holdfast. The inner gates were ordered closed too late, and the orcs poured in before they could be shut and barred. The guards and gatekeepers were slaughtered where they stood, and orcs and goblins spread throughout the hold. Brutal room-to-room combat continued for nearly two weeks, until the dwarves were eventually exterminated.

Hollis Clan was destroyed to the last, and Timrack Hold was sacked. In revenge for their loss at Golien Peak, the orc victors severed the heads of each dwarven child and strung them about the hold's gates like obscene pearls. No dwarves had escaped nor messengers sent, so it took several months for news of the tragedy to reach the neighboring clans. When scouts came to see for themselves they found the twisted and burnt-out corridors of Timrack Hold to be empty of orcs, but rife with defiled dwarven corpses. They sealed the gates of Timrack Hold and left a single stone monument, etched with dwarven runes of grief, as a sole memorial to the dwarves of Hollis Clan.

War in the First Age

The First Age was riddled with constant orcish incursions from the north. The orcs became more formidable foes and adapted their tactics to match those of the dwarves they sought to supplant. Battles between the two races tended less toward the massed conflicts of the Time of Years, and instead took the form of skirmishes between patrols and probing strikes against dwarven mining operations and agriculture. This is not to say that large formations of dwarves and orcs never met one another in battle during the First Age; such conflicts did happen, and they serve as pivotal and memorable exceptions to the rule.

The fighting in the First Age served the dwarves well, allowing them to perfect their tactics and defensive strategies. Because the dwarven populations were never as high as those of the orcs, the stout folk rarely set themselves to the offensive. Their war was one of defense, deflection, and occasionally successful attempts to stem the tide of orcs from their northern warrens. The dwarves almost came to enjoy the constant fighting, viewing orcs and their allies as sport. For the most part, the dwarves remained secure, and few dwarf holds fell to invaders during the First Age. Still, the conflict simmered constantly, and peace was kept only through intense vigilance.

One change to Eredane during the First Age that did affect the dwarves was the arrival of the Dorns from across the Pale Ocean in 3951 FA. The Dorns were a warlike human culture that had been driven from their homeland and forced to seek succor in Eredane. They brought with them their hunger for land and conquest, and sought to make up for their losses in Pelluria. The fey races were unprepared for such an enemy, the elves and small folk because they had never known war and the dwarves because their focus had ever been on the northern wastes. The initial assaults upon the southern dwarves by the Dorns ended in the stout folks' defeat. The orcs were savage enemies when compared to the Dorns, but the southern dwarves were not as prepared for war as were their northern cousins.

In time, the Dorns moved farther north. The conflict between the humans and the fey lasted more than three centuries. It would die down from time to time, only to flare up again like a raging inferno. The Dorns took to slaying the gnomes on the Eren River, and the dwarves came to the defense of their diminutive cousins on several occasions. Combined armies of elf and dwarf were rare, given that the land between the two races was occupied by their mutual enemy, but many dwarven weapons and a few dwarven tactical advisors were sent to supplement the elves' mostly inexperienced commanders.

In 4410 FA, a lasting peace was established with the Dorns by elven emissaries. The Dornish people had come to respect their enemies, both elven and dwarven, and viewed them as equals. With the lands that they had gained, they felt little need to continue the bloody struggle. Commerce between the humans and the fey was far more profitable than war had been, and the Dorns benefited greatly from gradual



access to dwarven craftsmanship. Though it would take centuries more for the Dorns to earn the trust of the dwarven clans, not to mention their elven allies, it did come to pass. Peace reigned in Eredane once more, until Izrador's rise in 5133 FA resulted in the epic Battle of Three Kingdoms.

Stander's Ford

Of the battles between the dwarves and the Dorns, the skirmish at Stander's Ford in 4391 FA is perhaps the most well known. The Dorns of House Chander had moved to the north in search of plunder, targeting dwarven caravans that regularly set out from the majestic halls of Caladale. At a much-used river crossing known as Stander's Ford, the Dornish invaders set upon a seemingly vulnerable dwarven caravan. Little did the Dorns realize that the caravan was transporting hardened dwarven mercenaries to the aid of the elves of the Veradeen. The elves were embroiled in their own battles against orcs as well as other, less savory creatures, and they had negotiated with the dwarves for military aid.

Lines were drawn as the initial Dornish rush was violently repulsed by the dwarven defenders. Chander's troops pulled back and took stock of the situation. In their pride, the Dorns would not allow themselves to be defeated so easily. Camps were raised, and word was sent to Chander that a great dwarven force had been encountered at Stander's Ford. Dornish reinforcements were dispatched, and the Dorns attacked the dwarves in force on the morning of the third day. The dwarves had made excellent use of the time between the initial attack and the final Dornish assault. Defensive fortifications had been erected in the meantime, and their defense was far superior to the attack that the Dorns of Chander had mustered.

With more than half their number wiped out, the Dorns retreated to their own roughshod camp to clean their wounds. The dwarves, who had prepared for the retreat of their enemy, launched a counterattack. Crossing the river, they surrounded the Dornish camp. They offered terms of surrender using the dwarven Kodah as their guideline. The bravery of the large humans was not lost upon the dwarven mercenaries; though the Dorns were their foes, the dwarves saw them as khul, or enemies of worth. The Dorns, unaware of the honor they had been accorded in dwarven terms, utterly rejected the offer. In accordance with the Kogah, the dwarves launched their final assault almost immediately, slaughtering the Dorns to the last man.

If anything was gained from the slaughter at Stander's Ford, it was knowledge of a new threat: the Fell. The bodies of some of the dead returned to a semblance of life on the following day, even as the dwarves were preparing them for their funeral rites. Such a horror had never been witnessed before, and little could be done but to cut the undead down as they rose, lest they consume the living that remained. The situation was seen as an isolated incident, each party involved assuming that a curse or some sort of dark magics had been

worked by the other side. It would still be two years before the Witch Queen's court understood the widespread nature of the Fell, but Stander's Ford is often considered to be the first reliable account of the undead menace that would soon come to haunt the choked battlefields of Eredane.

War in the Second Age

After Izrador's defeat at the Battle of Three Kingdoms, the dwarves and their allies were necessarily wary of the Shadow's presence in the north. Attacks by orcs in the mountains following that pivotal battle ceased almost entirely. A period of peace lasting an unprecedented 79 years passed quickly in the Kaladrans. The dwarves took advantage of the brief lull to train new warriors and reinforce their mountain defenses. Unsurprisingly, the orcish attacks eventually began again. At first they were intermittent, but the incursions became more persistent until they once again reached their former intensity in 156 SA. The dwarves dug in and renewed their previous style of existence.

The arrival of the Sarcosan Fleet in 230 SA signified a new enemy, as well as renewed potential for war. The dwarven clans of the southern Kaladrans, who had been hard-pressed to contain the Dornish invasion nearly 1400 years prior, found the Sarcosans to be formidable foes. They had never encountered anything like the cavalry tactics of the Sarcosan military, yet they learned to improvise in order to mount a suitable defense against them. The Sarcosans, unwilling to waste valuable resources on an invasion of the eastern mountains, took up arms against the elves instead.

Aided by dwarven mercenaries, the elves of Erethor fought Sarcosan invaders to a standstill, eventually forging a lasting peace with them. The Dornish houses, who had failed to act in the elves' defense against the Sarcosans, were suddenly alone. Even as the Sarcosan forces pressed northward in preparation to conquer their old Dornish enemies, their merchants were sharing the secrets of steel with their new dwarven friends. Dwarven warcraft, already formidable, became even more effective with the addition of Sarcosan steel.

Of the tragedies that were to befall the dwarves in the Second Age, perhaps none is more painful than the fall of Dorin Clan in 1696 SA. The entire clan, which has come to be known as the *Odrud* ("Black Blood") Clan, descended into darkness. To the last, they were subjugated by the subversive power of the Shadow, and the Odrud are despised by their kinsmen as no others are. Though few battles were fought between the Odrud and the dwarves of the Kaladrans during the Second Age, the dwarves of the Black Blood have obviously benefited greatly from the power given to them by their dark master.

In 1920 SA, Izrador rose once more in the north and turned his efforts to conquering Eredane. Yet again the elves, dwarves, and humans, both Dorn and Sarcosan, joined together to conquer the Shadow and his armies. The war was terrible, and unlike anything that had ever been seen in



Eredane. Millions died in the conflict's 28-year span, and when the darkness had finally been driven back, no nation remained untouched by the carnage. Because their culture had long been inured to the horrors of warfare, the dwarves that survived Izrador's second rise were better able to withstand the blight that they had witnessed. While humans and elves were numbed and broken by the terrible results of the Shadow's campaign, the dwarves returned to the eternal defense of their clanholds with their characteristic stoicism and resolve.

War in the Third Age

With Izrador's second defeat, the dwarves returned to their ages-old battle against the orcs in the Kaladrans. Unlike the previous victory over the Shadow, this one offered no respite for the dwarven warriors. The pressure of orc attacks continued, intensifying with each passing decade. It was as if the Shadow had merely retreated from central Eredane and was focusing his attention upon the dwarves alone. Aradil the Witch-Queen offered what succor she could, but a shipment of supplies or contingent of elven channelers took months to cross the continent, and by the time they arrived the dwarves' needs had often changed. Compounding this problem was the fact that the dwarves had suffered terribly at the hands of shadowspawn, creatures with vicious supernatural and spell-like abilities. Their already distrustful view of magic had deepened into near hatred and paranoia, and thus the greatest weapon that the elves had to offer the dwarves, their skill at magic, was often rebuked.

The Dorns, meanwhile, felt that they were also beleaguered. The Fortress Wall had been badly damaged, many of its keeps shattered, and they had difficulty keeping order among their populace, much less patrolling the vast expanses of the north. There was simply no aid to spare for the dwarves in the east.

Of all their allies, the Sarcosans were the most able to aid the dwarves, given their relative security and the continued strength of their economy. But while they may have won the battles of the flesh against Izrador, those complex people had lost the battle of the mind. To them, warfare had always been a noble, valiant thing, a test of tactics and steel between civilized races. The things they saw done to their fellow soldiers and to the innocent noncombatants who resided in the north left them scarred. Even the knowledge that there were such horrors as were sent against them was a blow to many soldiers' sanities. These wounds and more they took back with them to their people. And along with these doubts, exploiting and encouraging them, came the spies and corruptors of the Order of Shadow. As they sunk their dark roots deep within Sarcosan culture, they made sure to kill in its womb any movement that might result in aid being sent to the dwarves.

While the other races forsook their allies after the war, devoting their time of rest to rebuilding, the dwarves never had a chance to dishonor themselves in that way. There never

was a time "after the war." For them, it simply continued. Perhaps the tide of foes was less steady, and the worst of the horrors already killed, but the orcs bred quickly. The giants and shadowspawn, no longer chained by their masters, roamed wild and became dangers throughout the mountains. Abandoned by their allies and doubting what little assistance was given, the war-weary dwarves withdrew deeper into the only safety and comfort offered them: that of cold hard stone.

If the previous ages had caused dwarven smiths and artisans to lessen the amount of time spent on the more peaceful trades and crafts, the onslaught that they faced in the Third Age required that they forgo them entirely. War was the trade of choice for the dwarven clans now, and the finer points of aesthetics were ignored in lieu of pure functionality. Beauty of any kind became incidental to dwarven architecture or crafts in the Third Age, a set of priorities that continues to this day.

The cities and surface settlements of the dwarven clans, once proud and wondrous to see, were largely abandoned during the early years of the Third Age. Subterranean holdfasts and fortresses, once only retreats of last resort, became the staple communities of the dwarves. As the attacks of the orcs became more tenacious and sieges of dwarven cities became more common, the clanholds began to expand ever downward. Occupied surface layers were abandoned to the enemy while new, more defensible deeps were added below. Dwarven life became a series of holding actions and brief offensives that were designed to give their miners enough time to excavate a new refuge.

When Izrador arose a third time in 897 TA and waged the Last Battle against Eredane, none could withstand his might. The dwarves, isolated in the Kaladrans, offered little in the way of help to the elves and humans. Still, some clans did contribute to the doomed defense that was fought in vain upon the coast of the Sea of Pelluria. The haunted eyes of these few dwarves beheld the final battle with awe, and they went bravely to their ancestors as they were swept aside by the dark sorcery of the Shadow. Few survived the final days, nor did they wish to. Meanwhile, the clans that remained trapped in their mountain holdfasts were only dimly aware of the fate that had befallen the world outside of their own wretched existence. The Last Age had finally come, and the rest of Eredane began to experience what had already been inflicted upon the dwarves for centuries.

The Fall of Caladale

When the Shadow came to Calador in the Last Age, the dwarves of Thedron Clan had already consigned themselves to a life of resistance in the caverns and holdfasts beneath Cardred Mountain. Still, their pride was such that they would not relinquish their control of Calador's surface settlements without first taking payment in orcish blood. Their defense was brutal and effective, and thousands of orcs gave their lives for minor gains in territory. The fighting was intense and constant, ranging from room to room and house to house.

Calador had been built with defense in mind, and Thedron Clan made few unnecessary sacrifices as they slowly gave ground to their oppressors.

The final battle of Calador was fought on what came to be known as the Crimson Stair, a winding and treacherous staircase that spirals down an immense and seemingly endless shaft. The narrow stairway was carved with the dwarven defenders in mind. The steps that make up the Crimson Stair are a mere five feet in width, and each one is stained red with the blood of the dwarves and orcs who gave their lives upon its precarious expanse. They wind counter-clockwise for thousands of feet before reaching a cavern that is littered with the yellowed bones of countless dwarves, orcs, ogres, and goblins. The legend among the orc warriors that continue to besiege Calador in the Last Age is that the stairs remain slippery to the touch, even after hundreds of years. Indeed, if one were to lay his hands upon the steps, they would come away bloody. Such is the haunting legacy of the bitter fighting that raged up and down the Crimson Stair.

It took the orcs a century to finally claim the surface of Calador, now known by the Shadow forces and dwarves alike as the *Dor Gradil*, or "Stone Death." The number of lives lost in the effort have never been fully counted. Even in the Last Age, the heights of the metropolis that was once called the Stone City are dark and forbidding. The shades of the dwarven defenders are said to maintain a vigil in the winding passages that the forces of Izrador now occupy. Every so often, an orc will vanish without a trace, seemingly a victim of ancient dwarven wrath. As such, the conquerors of Calador rarely travel its byways alone unless their need is great. Still, the true city of Calador, the under-city, remains. It is said to be populated by more than 10,000 dwarves, all of them willing and able to fight to the death. The access tunnel at the bottom of the Crimson Stair was long ago sealed by both armies, preventing the Shadow from scouting below or the dwarves from raiding above. Today there are instead countless subterranean fronts, strongholds, weak points, and choke areas, with both sides constantly digging new tunnels or collapsing old ones, each trying to outflank, out-think, and outslaughter the other.

War in the Last Age

In the hundred years since Izrador claimed his final victory, the dwarven race has continued to hold out against all odds. With little resistance from the humans of Erenland, the Shadow's armies have turned their primary attention to the elves and dwarves who remain. Aside from a few disparate bands of human and halfling rebels on the southern plains, resolute freeriders in the northlands, and insurgents hiding like rats in the fallen cities of Erenland, there are no other enemies to distract Izrador from his ultimate goal: the total destruction of the remaining fey races.

Only the strongest and most tenacious of the dwarven clans in the path of the Shadow's forces have managed to

survive, however. As the attacks of the orcs have become more brazen, their weapons and allies more dangerous, the dwarves have turned their engineering skill towards the creation of unmanned defenses. Now, steel-clad dwarven defenders are not the only thing that the orcs and their servants face in the depths of the Kaladrin Mountains. Traps are met with as much fear as are the bearded wardens and soldiers of the clan holdfasts. These snares are not only designed to kill those who would dare to attack the dwarven clans; in many cases, they are designed to maim and cripple the orcs that set them off, making them worthless in combat. Orcs wounded in such a way are often taken for food by their own kind, lest they go to waste, and their deaths are among the least honorable an orc could hope for. They do as much damage to orcish morale as to orcish troop numbers.

The Shadow's generals have long preached the impending end of the dwarven resistance, but their speeches and exhortations ring hollow in the ears of the orcish soldiers who continue to risk their lives to ferret out the stout folk. After nearly a century, few definitive or decisive victories are being won. The Shadow's forces have distilled the dwarven folk, killing off those who would easily fall and now facing only the most hardened, bitter, and resilient of them. For all the losses the dwarves have suffered, the price in orcish lives is even more staggering. Though the destruction of the dwarves is surely inexorable, the events of the past century have proved that it will be neither an easy nor a rapid victory, unless something changes on either side of the conflict.



CHAPTER 3

The War of Ice



The dwarf warrior, Aurynn, stands in a snowy, stormy landscape. She is wearing dark, layered armor with a circular emblem on the chest and fur-trimmed gauntlets. Her hair is dark and windswept. In the background, a large, ornate metal emblem resembling a stylized bird or a pair of hands is visible against a dark, stormy sky.

The dwarves forced their way through the howling winds and piling snow. So loud was the raging storm that each was lost in his or her thoughts, unable to hear the others without shouting. Aurynn pulled her cloak closer about her shoulders, remembering when her mother first gave her the mantle made from an ort's winter fur.

They had gone out in the snow to play a game. Her mother played the orc spy while she and her brothers got to be the dwarven hunters. Mother led them on a merry chase that day, until they finally ran her to ground. When they returned home they found that her brother Buldak had frostbite, but he never once complained. Mother was so proud of them all that they were rewarded with warm pie for their efforts at catching the orc that day. The reward at the end of this journey would be sweeter. This time, they hunted real orcs.

To her left, she noticed a depression in a nearby drift; snow-covered tracks. She raised a hand to halt the column and pointed. The others nodded, seeing the trail for themselves. Changing direction, they moved on through the storm. Normally they would not have left their holdfast on a punitive raid, but the orcs they hunted had taken captives during their last attack. They had then fled into the storm, hoping the snow would deter pursuit until they could return home with their prizes.

They were wrong. One of the warriors they took had carried Essence, one of the axes of her ancestors, a weapon of legend in her holdfast. The stories said that Essence was forged at the clan's founding, and it held a powerful magic that gave its wielder unparalleled strength and endurance. They could hear it calling to them across the wind. They would not stop, it would not stop, until the captives were free and the snow was awash in red.

In the Last Age the Icewalls are deathly quiet. The sounds of hammer on anvil and the industry of tens of thousands of dwarves are long gone. Clanholds in their dozens lie ruined or claimed by the forces of the Shadow. Shattered fortifications, discarded weapons, and scorched walls mar the former grandeur of the dwarven halls. It is clear that no quarter was given and that the dwarves made the Shadow's children pay dearly for their victories. The great monuments of dwarven civilization are covered in a thick dust, a harbinger of the future of their race.

The War of Ice encompasses the entire Icewall Mountain chain and the Kaladrin Mountains north of Falter Pass. These mountains are ancient and honeycombed with caverns, some natural and some carved by dwarves and orcs. The

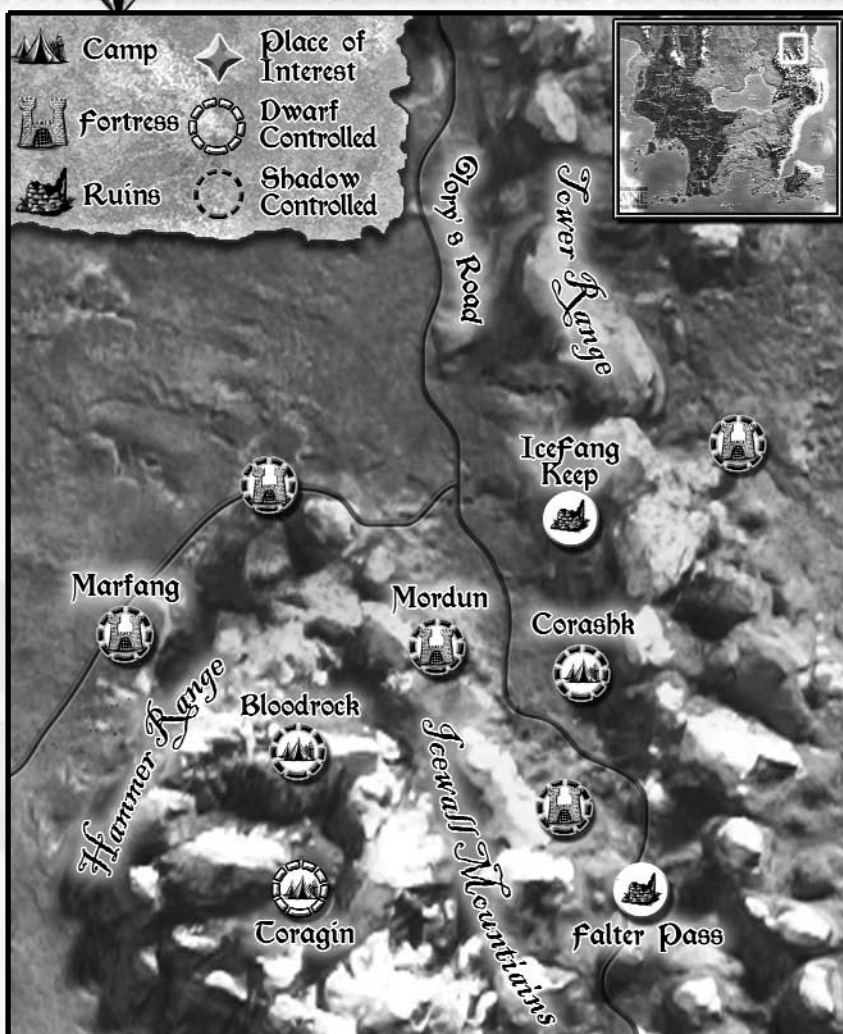
mountains are predominantly dark gray granite, the same stone used in the Fortress Wall keeps that withstood centuries of siege. Natural vents bring the Shadowsbreath, the name given by the dwarves to the cold and biting air of the north, into even the deepest caverns. Food is scarce and travel is difficult. Settlements are therefore widely dispersed, built around the rare sources of unfrozen water and good hunting grounds. The distance between clanholds and the vast numbers of undiscovered caverns and passageways are the best defenses of the dwarven clanholds of the north, and the only reasons they are not all destroyed.

Shadow forces

More than 80,000 orcs infest the Icewalls, and each arc more arrive from the cold wastes of the Northern Marches. The Feral Mothers and their offshoots are the strongest tribe, accounting for almost half of the population. The remaining orcs come from smaller tribes out of the frozen wastes who are only nominally under the control of the Feral Mothers. The orcs occupy a score of dwarven holds, the fortifications rebuilt by a vast army of goblins and slaves who now work the subterranean farms and mines that provide much of the food and materials for the ever-hungry army to the south. Little remains to mark those who built these ancient clanholds. The austere yet beautiful murals and carvings have been defaced and ruined, and the halls of the dwarven heroes have been defiled or destroyed. These lands belong to the odrendor now.

Like the war in Erethor, the fighting in the Icewall and Kaladrin Mountains is brutal and the rewards are few. Stronger tribes and those more closely aligned with the Night King Jahzir have had their pick of the richer human lands. The Feral Mothers and their allied tribes are left to seize what they can from the well-armed and deadly dwarves. The prize is Calador, the closest thing to a capital the dwarves have ever had. The Feral Mothers also know, however, that despite the difficulty of survival in the lands they assault, there are benefits to claiming the icy heights. When the conquering is done and the great tribes begin to openly war amongst themselves once more, the Feral Mothers will have strong positions from which to fight off their brethren.

The virtually complete victory over the dwarves in the north and the continuing offensive against Calador have drawn most of the Feral Mother warbands to the southern reaches of the Icewalls. They have left behind only enough troops to secure the clanholds and passes they have taken. The rooting out of the remaining dwarven holds in the north, meanwhile, has fallen to smaller tribes. They seek new homes



for their people and hope to seize the scraps left behind by the first wave of conquerors. Without the strong leadership of the Feral Mother orcs to keep them in check, long-standing rivalries and disputes over territory, food, and slaves have led to much infighting. In many places all-out war, albeit among small tribes and including only a few hundred orc warriors on each side, has broken out amidst the hunt for the remaining dwarves.

Warfare in the Icewalls is far less organized than at the siege of Calador. The orcs gather in tribal warbands that can number anywhere from 50 to 500 warriors. Most warbands are supplemented by allied goblin-kin and ogres. The more powerful giant-kin and even the capable and dangerous oruks are rare here, due both to need and to circumstances. On the one hand, the Shadow's most dangerous creatures are needed farther south in the Kaladrins. On the other hand, it is hard enough for the orcs to feed themselves, much less fill the monstrous bellies of trolls and giants.

Goblins are used as skirmishers, trackers, and sappers. Ogres wade into the heart of battle to break dwarven formations and spread fear through the dwarven defenders. The warbands' equipment varies in both type and quality depend-



ing on the tribe. Due to often tightly enclosed spaces, the orcs frequently carry short-hafted axes, maces, or broad-bladed short swords instead of the traditional vardatch. Most also carry a sap in an attempt to take at least a few dwarves alive. Some orc warbands allow wounded dwarves to flee in the hopes that they will lead the orcs to their clanhold. This tactic has not proven very successful, as wounded dwarves are more likely to choose to bleed to death or lead foes away if there is any risk that they might be followed back to their clanholds.

Shadow Tactics

The war is over in the Icewalls. There is no organized resistance. The dwarves seek only to survive, and that survival is based on avoiding the orcs rather than engaging them. Fell and other predators that haunt the dark passageways are a greater threat to the orcs. With the passing of the dwarves, the orcs have now become easier prey.

The most common level of organization within a warband is that of the hunting party. These number between 30 and 60 orcs and goblin-kin. The hunting parties seek to locate signs of dwarven patrols, subterranean farms, and ultimately clanholds. When they encounter a dwarven patrol, combat is usually brutal and quick. The orcs attempt to overwhelm or overpower the dwarves, taking captives if possible. Once the fight has ended, runners are sent to alert the warband that a

clanhold is nearby. Prisoners are tortured for information while the full strength of the warband gathers. When the clanhold is located, the orcs' first goal is to seal off all entrances, denying the dwarves their food supplies, access to water, or the possibility to escape. Once assured that all the dwarven boltholes have been sealed, goblin sappers are sent forward to breach the defenses.

NPCs

Dershak

To the remaining free dwarves, one figure in the Icewalls stands out as the most dangerous. He is Dershak (Oruk, Bar3/Ftr8), a warband leader of the Feral Mother tribe. Dershak is an aging but still exceedingly dangerous Oruk who has uncovered and destroyed three dwarven clanholds over the last two years. He scours the western Icewalls, ferreting out the few remaining dwarven clans. He is determined to exterminate his ancestral enemy in territory the Feral Mother orcs have claimed by right of conquest. Dershak's success in finding the well-hidden dwarven holds rests with his "hound," a mentally broken dwarf that was once an honored scout and warrior. He keeps the dwarf on a leash and treats him like a favored hunting dog, rewarding him when he finds signs of the free dwarves. The hound can no longer speak or pose a threat to his master, though he retains his skills as a tracker and knows many of the secrets dwarves use to conceal their holds and caverns. While Dershak and his warband are dangerous, the hound is the greatest threat to the remaining free dwarves.

Locations

Corashk

Warren of the Feral Mother Orcs

To support the offensive against Calador, the Feral Mother orcs have occupied several former dwarven clanholds along the main route to the besieged city. The largest of these clanholds is now a thriving orc warren known as Corashk. The clanhold has been expanded and is home to over 2,500 orcs and their slaves. The warren is tasked with keeping the road clear and the supplies moving to the Feral Mother army in the south. Regular patrols are sent as far north as the ruined Fortress Wall to escort food shipments and ensure that the fresh warbands coming from the frozen north move quickly.

Unknown to the orcs, Corashk has a deadly secret: A flesh-clad spirit lurks in the clanhold's mines (see *Minions of the Shadow*, pg. 6). The spirit had been trapped under the mountains for centuries until the last dwarven defenders tried to tunnel out of their besieged clanhold. The dwarves broke

through the walls of the spirit's prison and were quickly consumed. The spirit fears the orcs that were chasing the dwarves, however, and will not travel higher into the warren. Instead, it has slowly built its strength by consuming goblin and slave miners, waiting until it is strong enough to escape the orcs above or powerful enough to offer itself as a potential ally.

Bloodrock

Hold of the Black Blood Dwarves

Dorin Clan once held a place of honor amongst the dwarven people as brave defenders of the Northern Icewall Mountains. Some dwarves can even still recall the names of Dorin Clan heroes who stood firm against the Shadow; but now the dwarves curse the clan and the misery it has brought to the people of Eredane. They fell to corruption near the end of the Second Age, and are now completely given over to the Shadow.

Dorin Clan was never a numerous people. At its height, it boasted 1,500 warriors. The constant waves of orcs and the culling of those who did not serve the dark god reduced the clan to 400 malevolent souls by the time they were taken by the Shadow. Since the orc conquest of the Icewalls, the clan has slowly regained some of its past strength, both through natural growth and by accepting dwarves of other clans who have turned to the dark glory of Izrador. Today there are 600 clansmen in its main clanhold of Bloodrock while approximately 50 supervise the mining operations and smelting at Steel Hill.

The clanhold is built around a series of great forges kept constantly fired by emaciated and scarred dwarven slaves. The Black Blood allow no orcs or goblin-kin in their clanhold, and demand fresh dwarven slaves to replace those who fall to malnutrition or abuse. They treat their slaves as vermin, not worthy of notice, but even they are preferable to the despicable shadowspawn. Most of the dwarven slaves have their tongues burned from their mouths so as not to disturb their masters. They are forced to haul metal and stoke the fires while their dark-souled kin forge ever more weapons to destroy Calador and the remaining free dwarves.

The Night King Jahzir is determined to break the siege on the lower levels of Calador before the snows of winter have melted, and has tasked the Dorin Clan to build a weapon that will aid him in doing so. The air in the clanhold crackles as sorcerous energy is added to dark steel being forged in the white hot fires. The weapon is only partially complete, yet it already fills half the cooling hall. Calador can ill afford to let the weapon be completed, for it may be the doom of the city and the dwarven people.

feral Dwarves

As the defenses of the northern dwarves collapsed, refugees tried to flee the fighting and reach safe haven with clans in the central and southern Kaladrin Mountains. Most were captured or killed by orcs or the goblin-kin that roamed ahead of the orc armies. Without the protection of their warriors or the safety of a clanhold, the refugees were forced to remain constantly on the move, finding food and shelter wherever they could. The Icewalls, however, are a harsh land, and food is scarce there. The starving refugees were forced to eat their own dead to survive. As their numbers declined, desperation drove them to attack small orc patrols and goblin work parties, eating those they killed. The once civilized dwarves have now lapsed into a feral state.

Feral dwarves frequent those clanholds too barren and ruined for even the orc forces to inhabit. They scavenge for what few scraps of goods or food remain, and stalk small parties of orcs or goblin-kin when they wander near their territory. Though savage, the feral dwarves are canny; they attack only when they are sure they can overwhelm their prey and leave nothing but bones behind. The orcs cannot imagine that dwarves are responsible for the savaged bodies they've found, and thus believe that some dangerous predators are responsible for the loss of their patrols. They assume that they make their lairs in the ruined clanholds, and thus avoid them when possible.

In the more isolated portions of the Icewalls, feral dwarves are rumored to have attacked other dwarves. A small clanhold was found ravaged and destroyed, its residents half-eaten, and the neighboring dwarves wonder if it was the Fell or the ferals. Regardless of their actual level of danger to other dwarves, the feral dwarves conjure a specter of fear for their surviving kin. They know that as their food runs out they may be forced to walk the same path as the feral dwarves . . . a path that leads to madness.

Dwarven Forces

Fewer than 20 dwarven clans, at best 8,000 souls, still hide in the Icewalls. Many will not survive the coming year. The strongest clans live in the extreme northeast along the Tower Range, manning holds and keeps bypassed by the orc offensive. They are too remote and strategically insignificant to pose a threat to the orcs' dominance of the Icewalls. The other surviving clans are in the west, buried deep in the earth or subsisting among the glaciers and crevasses of the highest elevations. Some have been forced to leave the shelter of the

mountains and hide in abandoned Dornish villages in the Kaladrún foothills. Regardless of their method of hiding, all of the clans are broken in both strength and spirit. Honor has fled, leaving nothing but survival as a goal. They know that their fate and the fate of their race has already been written, and that the end of their days is approaching. Nonetheless, these dwarves will resist the orcs with every breath in their bodies.

Dwarven Tactics

The dwarves of the north can no longer stand against the orcs. Their only hope is to avoid detection. They use hidden watch posts and small, long-range scouting parties to monitor the orcs. Combat occurs only if the dwarves are surprised or can't flee without revealing the passage to their clanhold. If engaged, scouting parties attempt to lure the orcs away from their clan and toward dangerous areas. These bait parties lead the orcs onto sheer slopes or unstable ice, hoping that their pursuers will be swept off the mountain or fall into a crevasse before they can capture the fleeing dwarves. If this trick does not work, the scouts use their knowledge of the caverns and

peaks to pick the best locations to make their stands, ensuring that they can use their heavy crossbows and natural cover to limit the orcs' advantage in size and numbers. Combat is the last resort; the dwarves can not afford casualties, as every warrior lost is irreplaceable.

Dwarven scouting and hunting parties are small, usually no more than a dozen warriors. They move carefully through the caverns, ensuring that they leave no evidence of their passage. No bolt, waterskin, or broken leather strap is ever left behind. They avoid the surface, where tracks are left in snow, sound travels great distances, and an unwary party can be spotted from leagues away. Dwarves killed while hunting are carried back to the hold if possible, or dropped into a deep crevasse if not. The dwarves have learned to respect the abilities of the goblin sniffers, who are the first targets when the dwarves are forced to fight.

The warriors that remain among the Icewall dwarves are equipped with the finest arms and armor their people can craft. Most favor medium armor, large shields, war picks, hammers, and heavy crossbows. Every dwarf, from the youngest to the most decrepit, carries a weapon at all times. When making a last stand, the dwarves in the western Icewalls sometimes coat their weapons in pitch and set them on fire before engaging in combat. Flaming pitch is also poured through murder holes and used with missile weapons. The fire of such weapons not only burns their foes, its telltale black smoke also marks the end of a clanhold in case there are any nearby clans to see it and make use of the warning.

The Ritual of Cleansing Fire

The Ritual of the Cleansing Fire is based on a legend passed down from the dawn of the dwarven people. According to the legend, creatures from the bowels of the earth threatened to destroy the children of the elthedar. One of the last remaining true elthedar sent his children from the mountains and, sacrificing his life, summoned the fires from the depths to destroy those who would kill his children. The legends state that the fires coursed through the mountains, burning away what remained of the elthedar civilization and killing the creatures of darkness.

Mesagan has devoted the last 40 years of his life to duplicating the ritual described in the legend. He is very close to determining the ritual's final steps. To his shame, he has hidden a great secret from his apprentices and his clan: He does not have the power to fuel the ritual. The only way to generate the necessary power is to sacrifice dozens of innocent souls. Unlike the elthedar in the legend, he will need to feed his children to the magic rather than save them with it. Mesagan is willing to pay that price to call forth the cleansing fires.

NPCs

Mesagan

Clan Fedrol in the western Icewall Mountains is amongst the deepest delving of the dwarven clans. Before the Third Age they dug deep into the mountains, seeking the fire beneath the earth to power their forges and purify their metals. Their loremasters mastered the heat from below to serve their clans' crafts and defenses. Even as late as the Third Age, loremasters from throughout the Icewalls traveled to the Fedrol clanhold to apprentice there.

When the orcs breached the Fortress Wall, however, the clan was forced to channel its lava source upward and outward, surrounding themselves in a sea of fire to keep the orcs at bay. Along with Fedrol's scions, many of the already few channelers among the other clanholds were trapped there as well. Today the clan has over 30 channelers, all under the command of Mesagan, the Master of Fires (Clan dwarf, Channeler 15).

Mesagan is an ancient dwarf who has seen his people fall from glory. He knows that they are doomed, and becomes bitter with rage when he imagines the orcs reigning over the ruins of his people's civilization. He has therefore spent the waning years of his life researching a ritual to raise the fires of the earth and flood the Icewalls with molten lava, destroy-



ing both the orcs and the few remaining dwarves they hunt. He is close to completing his research and keeps his failing body alive through sheer force of will so he will be able to perform the ritual when the time comes.

Locations

Abandoned Holds

As the darkness gathered around the clanholds in the Icewalls, the dwarves were determined not to allow their forges and mines to be used by the Shadow. In their final days weapons that could not be wielded were destroyed, mines collapsed, and farms sown with salt or fouled with molten lead. What could not be easily destroyed was layered with traps designed with an ingenuity bred from desperation. Food was laced with subtle poison that was designed to kill very slowly, its victims not feeling the first symptoms for days or even weeks. The dwarven dead were coated with the same poison or left to rise as Fell. Sulfur and camphor were hidden beneath the coals in the forges so that when fired they would destroy themselves and all who were near them. Mine supports were weakened, destined to trap or crush miners. Reservoirs were fouled with mercury, offal, or dead animals, making the water undrinkable. The trapped clanholds have exacted a terrible punishment on their defilers, and the lost dwarven spirits can gain some peace from knowing that their ancestral enemies gain nothing from their victories.

Toragin's Hold

In 82 Last Age, the Toragin clanhold was discovered by the Cloven Skulls, a large orc tribe allied with the Feral Mothers. Toragin Clan survived almost five arcs of the resulting siege and assault. Hundreds of orcs and goblin-kin were killed trying to breach the hold's outer defenses. The hold withstood every attack . . . until the giant-man called the Breaker of Holds arrived (see page 33). Clan Toragin was unprepared for the speed and ferocity with which the creature ripped away their defenses. They launched a suicidal sortie against the behemoth, injuring him severely but not killing him, before the orcs counterattacked. With the most hardened defenders slain in the sortie and the fortifications breached, the clanhold could not repel a final assault. Though the women and children gathered up their fallen mens' weapons and arms and fought like demons in the clan's central hall, eventually they too were all cut down.

The fury and the raw courage of the clan survived well after their bodies expired, however.

One moon after the last defender was killed, when the Cloven Skull tribe had comfortably settled in amidst the slaughter, a mist began to rise around the hold. It slowly moved inward toward the central hall where the orcs were feasting. Inside the mist were voices screaming in agony and rage, and the twisted shapes of the combined souls of dwarven women and children. The Cloven Skull garrison struck at the phantoms to no avail, and were killed one by one as their life forces were drunk by the greedy, vengeful mist. Two hundred heavily armed orcs died in less than an hour. Since that night, no orc scouting party sent to the hold has returned.

CHAPTER 4

The War of Steel



It would not be long now. They would come soon. Griar glanced over at Beulis. His companion looked no better than he had an hour ago. He bled from more than a dozen wounds, many of which would fester. They would have been fatal given time.

But there would not be time. Rather than fret, Beulis merely sat, stoically sharpening his axe, pausing to occasionally test the blade's edge on one of the dozens of orc corpses that surrounded them.

Griar was proud of the chance to go to his death with such a brave companion.

They had been on a routine patrol, sent along with four others to check the deadfalls built into the ventilation system. The deadfalls were set to respond to weight. The kind of weight that you got when you put iron on an already hulking orc. Every orc squad had a heavy. Every orc squad carried a trap trigger with them, and were glad of the huge and strong warrior, glad of the ferocity they thought he would bring them. These cows, as the dwarves called them, brought them only death. Best of all, they traveled in the middle of the pack, so the traps got more than just the scouts in front.

Sometimes, though, a nosy, too-fat ort set a deadfall off before the orcs managed to worm their way to them. Those had to be reset. But the orcs had been learning. They nearly starved their warriors, and fed their human slaves well. They pretended to let the humans go, and jogged after them down the corridors, a healthy distance behind. Healthy for the orcs, that is. Waiting for the slam of rock on rock, the flesh caught as an afterthought between them.

Griar and his patrol saw the crushed and mangled hand emerging from beneath the deadfall. A human hand. They saw that hand and knew their deaths had come to meet them. The bolts and javelins flew at them. Dagrid fell instantly. A lucky shot had found his eye. The rest gave better than they got. But not enough. Now the others were dead and both Griar and Beulis were too injured to climb back out, and the trap had been destroyed. The orc scouts had orders that, if they got hit by dwarven sentries, one of their brutes was to hammer at the mechanisms, to crush them so they couldn't be re-used. This scouting party had done that, and quite completely. The gears and pulleys that set off the deadfall were shattered beyond repair, and the pressure-sensitive plate would not release the stone block again.

Not that stone, anyway. But a sharp axe, with a few good strokes, could cleave through the support beam that held up this entire section of cave. The support beam by which Beulis sat, the tunnel to which Griar guarded.



Griar rested his head against his upright warhammer as he waited. He didn't want to pass out from loss of blood and not be able to see the looks on their faces when it all came down. Clomping boot steps echoed from down the shaft. They were coming. He wouldn't have to wait after all. Buelis continued to sharpen his axe.

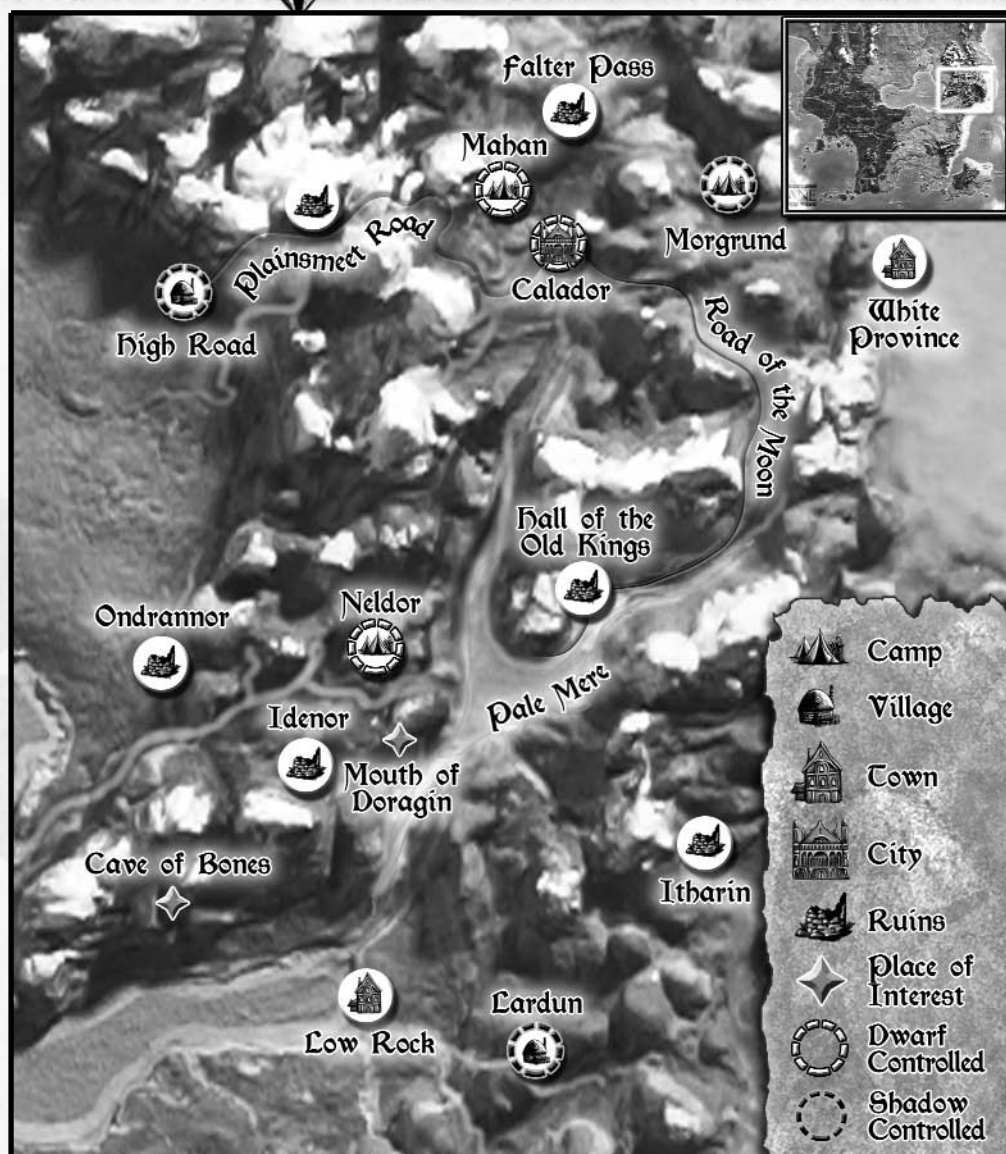
The Icewalls are lost. Over 100,000 dwarves have died trying to hold back the Shadow's armies in the last century. Defenses that had protected the Kaladrans for millennia have been breached and the odrendor have overrun the top levels of the dwarves' greatest city, Calador. For the past 10 years the middle levels of the city have withstood every orc assault and have become the final beacon of hope in what may be the last years of the dwarven race. While the strongest dwarven army remains locked behind Calador's walls, the odrendor attack unfettered throughout the northern Kaladrans, slowly crushing the remaining clanholds, bringing them Izrador's gifts: war, famine, pestilence, and death.

The War of Steel encompasses the traditional heartland of the dwarven people, from the blistering heat of the White Desert in the east to the storm-washed shores of the Sea of Pelluria in the west, north to besieged Calador, and south to the lost and lamented Idenor. These mountains are Eredane's bones, massive peaks that have stood undiminished against the ravages of nature, time, and war. Only the dwarves have been able to master this harsh landscape, carving terraces into the mountains' granite walls and hauling silt from the riverbeds up thousands of feet of sheer rock to build their farms. Most of their clanholds are virtually unreachable above ground. Only the High Road and the Road of the Moon provide access to the central valleys, and then only from late spring to early fall. The natural barriers of the Kaladrans have long protected the dwarves, but have also isolated them, and it is this latter effect that has spelled their ultimate doom. In a time when evil reigns above and below, the dwarves might have come together to share information, tactics, and resources, as the elves have learned to do. Trapped as they are

and separated from one another by leagues of stone and hordes of orcs, however, the clans remain apart. Each clan waits in silence and darkness for its destruction, with no dwarf knowing the fate of his kin.

Shadow forces

Three Shadow armies have driven deep into the dwarven heartland, isolating the clans and then crushing them one by one. The largest of these, a monstrous host of over 70,000 orcs, giant-men, and goblin-kin, is led by Torgut (Oruk, Bar11), warlord of the Feral Mothers. Torgut's sole task, assigned to him a decade ago, is the destruction of the dwarven city of Calador. The top levels of the city were abandoned late in the Third Age, this siege long having been prepared for by the dwarves. The surface is now completely taken by the orcs and their allies.





Despite being abandoned as a living city, Upper Calador was not without defenses. Suicide defense squads, devious traps, weakened architecture, and hit-and-run raiders have plagued the orcs since their siege of the city proper began in earnest 30 years ago. Ten years ago, Torgut's army destroyed the last of the upper city's hidden defenders and ferreted out even the smallest of their bolt-holes and tunnels, forcing the dwarves to collapse and seal every point of access leading to the deeps. For ten years the orc warriors have dug, and smashed, and destroyed, attempting to carve a tunnel through to the dwarves below. But for all the strength of the orcs and their giants, for all the cleverness of their goblin sappers, this is one thing at which they can never outdo the dwarves. The stone-dwellers' mastery of engineering and tunnel craft is unsurpassed, and every attempt by the attackers to tunnel downward is countered. Their diggers are crushed in dwarven-engineered rockslides, their tunnels are flooded by rerouted underground rivers, their paths are blocked by flows of lava or veins of unbreakable ore and gemstone.

In truth, Lower Calador is connected to its mirror city above in name only. One of the most well-kept and carefully guarded secrets of the dwarves is that Upper Calador is a front, a mirage. Despite the thousands of lives lost defending it, it has never been a viable path to Lower Calador. The lower city is several miles removed from the upper city's location, both in terms of depth and overland distance.

Unfortunately for the dwarves, the Feral Mothers have recently given up attempting to penetrate to Lower Calador via the surface city, instead spreading out to destroy the clanholds that protect the approaches to Lower Calador beneath the surface. Their new plan is to create a subterranean perimeter and, once that is established, slowly tighten the noose. Their current focus is the destruction of the Mahan clanhold, guardians of the northwestern approach beneath Calador. Torgut knows that he battles against time, however, and he watches the growing army at Erenhead with anger and unease. He sees the army there as a threat, not an ally. His tribe has battered at Lower Calador's defenses for 10 years, buying every foot of ground with Feral Mother blood. Torgut will not allow another tribe to gain the glory of taking the city. He has sent word north to the kurasatch udareen of his tribe, calling for fresh warbands to bolster his forces. He hopes to make a final devastating assault on the lower city within the year, wishing to take it before the Erenhead army arrives.

West of Calador, 30,000 orcs under the command of Magak (Orc, Bar6/Exp2/Rog3), warlord of the Razor Spine tribe, are attacking clanholds south the High Road. Magak is a master of siege warfare and has crushed a dozen clanholds over the past ten years. His army currently has six clanholds under siege and at least two should fall before the turn of winter. While his army is successful, Magak knows that the true prize is Calador. The tribe that takes Calador will take control of the richest mines and gain the favor of the Night King Jahzir. Magak believes he should lead the siege, as he has

proven himself far more capable than Torgut. The Razor Spine warlord does nothing to support Torgut's army and for the past two years has led his troops farther west, ignoring clanholds immediately to the south and west of Calador and allowing dwarven supplies to trickle into the city.

East of Calador in the mountains bordering the White Desert, 25,000 orcs and goblin-kin under the command of Shamuk (Orc, Ftr9), warlord of the Dead Mother tribe, struggle against the dwarves and their human allies. Shamuk's army was fairly successful at the beginning of his leadership, but he lost his most capable warriors to a resupply of troops demanded by Torgut. He now has to make do with fairly unblooded warriors against well-supplied clanholds, and seems to have achieved little over the past three years. Adding to the army's ineffectiveness is Shamuk's erratic leadership. The warlord does little for arcs at a time and then suddenly launches bloody assaults into the teeth of the dwarven defenses. His poor leadership has led to three leadership challenges in past year. Shamuk was badly wounded in the last combat and it's likely that he won't survive the next challenge.

Shadow Tactics

The Shadow's armies fight three very different battles in the War of Steel. In the west Magak's army fights against isolated clanholds, most with fewer than 500 defenders. He follows tactics that have proven their worth in the Icewalls: He isolates each clanhold, cutting off its supplies of food, water, and fresh defenders, and once the dwarves have been sufficiently weakened, directly assaults the clanhold itself, overwhelming the defenders with superior numbers. These are set piece battles whose outcome is never in doubt. Once encircled, a clanhold will fall; it is only a matter of time and a question of how many orc lives will be expended.

Among the central and eastern peaks, Kurgun and Dornish refugees fight a mobile war in some of the most difficult terrain in Eredane. The orcs face an enemy that takes every advantage from the landscape, attacking suddenly and then fading back into hidden caves and dense pine forests. Large-scale battles are exceedingly rare. When they occur, they are fought for key passes, sources of fresh water, and control of grazing lands that are critical to the survival of the humans and Kurgun. With such a mobile enemy, the orcs have been forced to garrison captured villages, high ground, and entrances into the mountains. From these fortified locations, heavily armed patrols of orcs and worg riders scour the valleys and eastern foothills, seeking to drive their enemies south into the waiting teeth of larger warbands and east into the open ground of the White Desert.

Finally, at Calador, the orcs are conducting the greatest siege in the history of Eredane. They face an enemy that has had over 100 years to prepare and has learned hard lessons from the loss of the Icewalls. Water and food have been stockpiled and the city will not be starved into submission. The orcs must find a weakness in the extensive dwarven

defenses and pay the butcher's bill to force entry into the lower city. Torgut is constantly probing the dwarves' subterranean battlements, attacking their fortifications, trying to weave new tunnels into their midst, and searching for dwarven sally ports. Fighting isn't limited to assaults on the fortified gates beneath the city, but rather is spread over hundreds of square miles of caverns. Meanwhile, the orcs must defend against dwarven raiding parties that attack their supply trains, poison their water supplies, and assassinate their leaders. The most critical battleground is down in the deepest depths, however, as thousands of goblin miners fight the dwarves in dank and narrow tunnels that seek to bypass the virtually impregnable dwarven defenses.

NPCs

Shamuk

The Shadow's army in the eastern Kaladrums is on the verge of collapse. Shamuk, Warlord of the Blighted Mother tribe, tenuously holds on to leadership of the army. He is a hulking orc that bears many scars from both axe and vardatch. He has fought the dwarves for 20 years, bringing glory and honor to his tribe, rising to lead the Shadow's army in the eastern Kaladrums. Three years ago, Shamuk began to change, showing little interest in strategy or the number of orcs killed in poorly orchestrated attacks on the dwarves. As the losses have continued to mount, his control over the army and his tribe have weakened. Shamuk now sees the other warband leaders as enemies and purposefully wastes their warriors in attacks on the strongest dwarven fortifications. His actions have led to two leadership challenges from outside his tribe, and in the last arc he faced a challenge from a member of his own tribe. Shamuk has killed all three challengers, but he was seriously injured in the last fight. His remaining rivals are sharpening their vardatches and he knows that his time is short.

Three years ago, Shamuk was leading an assault on an occupied dwarven clanhold. However, a degenerate servitor of the ancient race known as the darguul erupted from the depths of the dwarves' lower caverns just before the assault, slaughtering the dwarves to the last. When the orcs invaded, they quickly followed their intended prey into death. All but one.

A puppeteer, a creature that also once served the darguul, had been hiding within the bodies of one of the dwarves, waiting for its time to strike in the name of Izrador. When it beheld the degenerate servitor, however, it knew that its old masters might still exist. It stayed the monstrosity's final strike, the one that would have slain Shamuk, and possessed the orc warlord. Together, the two alien creatures hatched a plan, and the puppeteer has spent the past three years in possession of Shamuk's body, seeking a means of freeing its masters and preparing the Kaladrums for their return. Its pres-

Stirs in the Dark



An ancient evil has awoken and stalks the dark winding passages and abandoned mines of the Kaladrums, feeding on goblin miners, orc patrols, and the weakened dwarven clans. The killer leaves no tracks, just the grizzly remains of its eviscerated victims. The orcs have strengthened their patrols and mining parties have been under constant guard, but the killings continue and the death toll is mounting rapidly. If the killings are not stopped, the fear that is taking hold in the Shadow's army might turn to panic.

The ancient evil that has awoken are the degenerate darguul, guardians of a city that has lain hidden at the roots of the Kaladrums from before the age of the elthedar. The city and its guardians had remained dormant until Izrador's black mirrors and Mesagan's attempts to rouse the fires of Ayrth weakened the magic that held these horrors in stasis. Four degenerate darguul are now awake and exploring their former domain. They haunt the caverns and the mines east of Calador, carefully picking their prey and gaining strength. They have encountered another of their master's former servants, a puppeteer. Together they are seeking a means of awakening their former masters. The true darguul, not merely their degenerate servitors, still sleep in their city; if they are awakened, the mountains will be awash in dwarf and orc blood.

ence is responsible for Shamuk's failing leadership, as his seemingly random decisions weaken his army and spread carnage through the eastern Kaladrans. The puppeteer sees the orcs as the greatest threat to its masters and is purposefully weakening them. It has spread its infection through the army's leadership, and once Shamuk is dead it will seek to split the army along tribal lines. With the army collapsed, the puppeteer and its degenerate darguul allies will have free reign to search the eastern Kaladrans for a way to awaken their masters.

Lannas

The dwarves on the front lines of Calador's defenses reserve their strongest hatred for the legate Lannas (Dorn, Leg 13, Keeper of Obsidian). Lannas is leader of the legates supporting Torgut's army and is the master of Fort Morgrund's young black mirror. The leader of Izrador's most faithful is an aging Dorn whose face appears frozen and expressionless. He is always wrapped in dark, voluminous robes to hide the difficulties he has walking and mask the spasms that wrack the left side of his body. Most consider him a cripple until they look into his eyes, which burn with rage and power.

The legate's injuries came at the hands of a dwarven assassin, whose crossbow bolt was tipped with a poison distilled from Fell blood. Lannas was able to stem the spread of the poison, but not before it claimed a terrible toll on his mor-

tal frame. The legate has no control over the left side of his body. No healing or ritual has been able to repair the damage. Lannas believes that Izrador is testing his devotion and will only restore him to full health once the dwarves of Calador are sacrificed on the dark god's altar.

Lannas is one of Torgut's closest allies, using all his powers to help break the dwarves. In return, Torgut provides him with dwarven prisoners to satisfy his need to inflict pain. The legate is a master of torture who revels in the screams of his dwarven captives as he slowly cripples them, making them pay for what the assassin did to him. He is creative in his tortures, often spending days with a single victim, keeping him barely alive but always able to feel pain. Once their blood and souls are given to the zordrafin corith over which he watches, he has their broken bodies impaled on pikes atop Upper Calador's highest towers.

Breaker of Holds

The third notable figure of the War of Steel is a grossly deformed giant-man known as the Breaker of Holds (advanced [+6 HD, size Huge] hill giant). He is a crude caricature of a giant, with a bloated and twisted back that forces him in a permanent hunch so severe that his heavily muscled arms brush the ground as he walks. The giant-man's deformities have added to his already prodigious strength. He could easily rip an orc in half with his bare hands. More importantly, however, the Breaker has learned to use his strength to break through dwarven defenses and unblock passages sealed by the dwarves. His arms are fully encased in black steel armor that also covers his shoulders. The fingers of his gauntlets end in razor-sharp claws, allowing the Breaker to get a grip between the mortared seams of a clanhold's walls. Once his metallic claws find purchase upon a wall, it is only a matter of time before it is rent asunder by the giant-man's strength.

Locations

Morgrund

The Feral Mothers have built a headquarters for their army in the ruins of the Bergolt clanhold. Clan Bergolt was the northern gatekeeper of Calador and their clanhold was the first of Calador's five subterranean gates to fall to the orcs. Torgut led the final assault, killing the dor himself and feasting on his heart. The clanhold has since been rebuilt, its forges restored and its mines filled with goblins. They voraciously gather ore to fuel the army's need for armor and weapons. The warren is critical to the success of the siege of Calador, controlling the distribution of warbands, weapons, and food for the widely dispersed army. Over 5,000 Feral Mother orcs live in the clanhold, which has been renamed Morgrund, after the warlord who breached the first Fortress Wall keep.





Buried deep in the labyrinthine mines under Morgrund is one of the greatest threats to Calador, a dark mirror that has been fed with the blood of hundreds of captured dwarves. The corith leeches power from the Kaladrans themselves, spreading its malign influence to the very walls of Calador. The few dwarven channelers can already feel its effects and their runesingers lament the death of the spirits in the rock. Fully half of the dwarves captured in the siege are brought to Morgrund to feed the mirror's insatiable hunger. The warren may house dozens of captured dwarves at any time, all awaiting sacrifice or destined for the fighting pits to amuse their captors.

Unknown to the orcs, the Bergolt clan built hidden paths out of the mines that are now used by Calador's defenders to gather information critical to the survival of the city. The spies have been forced to let their captured kin be sacrificed, lest they reveal their access to the orc assault plans. As the siege tightens and the black mirror's influence reaches ever deeper into Calador, the dwarves are considering attacking the corith and destroying the warren. Even using the secret paths, it would take at least 100 warriors to have any chance of reaching and destroying the corith. That is 100 warriors more than Calador can afford to lose.

Dwarven forces

The dwarven heartland has shuddered under the orc offensive, but has not broken. The dwarves have met vardatch with axe and hammer and have made the orcs pay dearly for every clanhold. Unlike the war in the Icewalls, the orcs have only a small advantage in numbers here, as there are just over 110,000 dwarves in the northern Kaladrans. In this Last Age every dwarf, from the youngest to the most infirm, carries a weapon and fights to defend his home. It is not the dwarves' lack of courage, skill, or will to fight that is losing the war, it is the inability of a single leader to unite the clans against the orc armies. This separation allows the orcs to mass their warbands against a single clan, gaining a temporarily overwhelming advantage in numbers and making the outcome of any siege inevitable.

The northern Kaladrans are the home to the largest and most ancient of the dwarven clans. The greatest and most influential of the 84 clans that remain here is Thedron Clan, whose leaders are the masters of the city of Calador. Thedron Clan leads an alliance of three major and twelve minor clans, almost 30,000 dwarves, in the defense of Calador and the clanholds to the south and east of the city. The fact that Calador still stands only highlights what the disunity of the dwarves has cost their people. If 30,000 dwarves could hold for so long against a much larger orc army, what could over 100,000 dwarves have accomplished?

The clanholds north of Calador are all but destroyed, having fallen like their kin in the Icewalls to the steady onslaught of their foes. To the west of Calador, the scattered clans fight individually or in small alliances built on ties of

blood and tradition. There is no clan with enough influence to duplicate what Thedron Clan has done near Calador. At best, three to four clans may unite to defend a critical cavern or, more rarely, abandon their own holds to join their kinsmen in a more defensible location. Without a bulwark like Calador, the clans have no means of preventing the orcs from encircling their clanholds. There is no retreat for them. The Icewalls to the north are crawling with orcs and goblin-kin, and what dwarven clans remain there are far too weak to supply aid. To the south is ruined Idenor and a lurking fear that whatever destroyed that city remains, waiting to feed on any who dare to enter its realm. To the west are lands held by the Dornish traitor prince Gregor Chander, who would hunt them down like dogs.

To the east and south of Calador, the clans have been more successful against the invading orcs. These clans have a tentative alliance with the human tribes and nomads that call the Kaladrun foothills their home, and make good use of the hunting grounds and resources offered by the Highwood. Food is relatively plentiful and the mountains too vast for the questing warbands to surround them; additionally, what advances the enemy had made over the past few decades have been all but lost due to Ghorug's inept leadership as of late.

However, this opportunity to regroup and rest may not be completely positive. With their recent victories, these isolated dwarven clans have fallen to arguing amongst themselves once more. Each clan's pride in its own holdfast burns bright once more, and none wish to evacuate their own homes to create a stronger defensive front. Only the loss of a major clanhold could begin to bridge the gulf separating the clans, but by then it may be too late.

Dwarven Tactics

With the exception of the defense of Calador, dwarven tactics have evolved little over the past 100 years. The clans all build defensive positions around critical sources of food and water and along the main approaches to their clanholds. The larger clans can build more layered defenses that allow their warriors to slowly retreat, forcing the orcs to take horrific losses for each wall they assault. One lesson the clans have learned from the battles in the Icewalls is to leave nothing behind for the orcs to use. The specters of starvation and dehydration create a double-edged sword that affects the besieger as much as it does the besieged. Outside of the clanholds, food and clean water are very hard to find.

While the dwarves rely on their fortifications as their main line of defense, they do not cower behind their walls. Small units of dwarves, typically no more than a dozen, use carefully hidden sally ports to attack orc supply trains, poison food, and seek information on where and when the next orc assault will occur. A main target of these small patrols are the goblin miners who threaten to dig past the dwarven defenses or weaken their tunnels. Killing the miners, destroying mining equipment, burning wooden bracings, and collapsing

existing tunnels are critical to the survival of a clanhold. Each attack is carefully planned and executed, as the dwarves can no more afford to lose warriors than they can risk being tracked to their sally ports.

The tactics used in the defense of Calador are similar to those used farther afield, but on a much larger scale. The city has a true dwarven army, allowing the dor to launch sorties of hundreds of heavily armed dwarves against orc warbands that have been bloodied and battered in their assault on Calador's many subterranean gates. The city's defensive works are much stronger than those of surrounding clanholds, as well, and magic is far more prevalent in the city's defense. While most clans have very limited access to magic, Thedron Clan has over 150 channelers to strengthen walls, craft magical weapons for their warriors, and, most importantly, provide critically needed healing to the never-ending stream of wounded.

NPCs

Vodan

The most important leader under the mountains is Vodan (Dwarf, Ftr 16), dor of Thedron Clan, ruler of Calador. Vodan has led a masterful defense of the city since the sieges began, holding against impossible odds and galvanizing his warriors into the most effective army the dwarves have fielded since

the end of the First Age. The dor is a master strategist, anticipating where the orcs will attack and shifting his forces to meet them. He has taken a dispirited people and given them a purpose and a means to survive under terrible conditions. If any dwarf were fit to rule his race in this time of war, it would be Vodan.

Physically, the dor is unremarkable. He has carried the weight of leadership well. He bears the scars of years of fighting, but his eyes still shine bright and his booming laugh brings joy to his people. When he enters a room or approaches a battle line, it is clear that he is the one who will lead the clan to victory. This public facade masks Vodan's true feelings: He knows that his people are doomed and that all he can give them is a chance to die with honor. His attempts to ally with additional clans have failed, the routes to the surface are all but closed, and a new orc army is forming to the south, an area he can afford to defend only lightly. The dor is careful not to reveal his fears, even to his family and closest friends. He realizes that if he were to show despair, it would have a devastating effect on his people's will to fight.

Mannun the Clanless

Haunting the fringes of the Feral Mother army is a gaunt dwarven warrior in patched leather armor. The warrior, Mannun the Clanless (Ftr2/Wildlander6), preys on lone orc sentries and small parties of goblins. He makes no attempt to escape the orc army and find refuge with a dwarven clan, since none would accept him. One look at his face would be enough to deny him entrance; Mannun's face is mutilated with the brands for "murderer" clearly visible on both of his cheeks and across the bridge of his nose. He is forced to live kinless and alone, living off the scraps of the orc army or what he can take from those he kills. He has survived this way for over a year, a tribute to his skill and determination.

Mannun was once a deputy patrol leader for Neldor Clan. Just over a year ago, several fists of orcs surprised his patrol. The dwarves fought a running battle over the next three days, trying to elude their pursuers without leading them back to the Neldor clanhold. The patrol leader, Aenir, a son of the dor, ordered three of the wounded to stay behind because they were slowing the patrol's escape. Mannun objected and refused to leave the wounded, saying that Aenir was letting them die to save his own life. Aenir drew his blade on Mannun, but he was no match for the seasoned warrior. Mannun left Aenir's body and brought the rest of the patrol, including the wounded, safely back to the Neldor clanhold. Once there, the dor condemned Mannun for violating his son's orders, had him branded as a murderer, and cast him from the clanhold.

Despite Mannun's treatment, he has not lost his honor or the love of his clan. He will aid anyone who opposes Torgut's army. Mannun has, however, learned to





be careful, as there are traitors among his race who freely serve the Shadow. He will cautiously observe any humans and dwarves that move through the caverns near Calador to be sure of their intentions before approaching. He can offer a strong arm, extensive knowledge of Torgut's army, and the ability to find food and water. Unfortunately, any who accept his help will lose the trust of the dwarves for associating with a branded outcast.

Locations

Calador

Though clearly diminished, Calador remains the greatest of the dwarven cities. Before the Third Age, Calador was one of the largest cities in Eredane, home to 40,000 dwarves and the center of dwarven culture and commerce. No dwarven settlement could match Calador, and the influence of Thedron Clan reached from the northernmost keeps in the Icewalls to the southern city of Bodrun. The dwarves' rare clanmoots were held in the city's central hall, reinforcing the primacy of Calador and Thedron Clan. The city began to decline after the devastation of the wars at the end of the Second Age and the withering of trade with the Kingdom of Erenland. By the end of the Third Age the city's population had been cut in half, and a century of warfare since then has reduced it to just under 13,000 souls.

Upper Calador was traditionally devoted to merchants, government officials, priests, and the visitors from afar who wished to interact with such personages. The lower city was the home of miners, craftsmen, and smiths, all living close to the stone and ore that were their livelihoods. Just as Upper Calador was built on the slopes and spires of Mount Cardred, Lower Calador was built around a broad natural cavern at its center, a pocket with towering crystalline stalagmites and clear blue icy springs. Thedron Clan left much of the natural beauty untouched, using their craft to build a settlement that enhanced what the gods had created. As the upper city fell into disuse and the lower city expanded, the clan built concentric rings around the central cavern. Over time four multi-tiered rings were built to house the growing population. The center ring was home to merchants and nobles. The second ring, the ring of fire, was given over to forges and armories. The third and largest ring housed over half the city's population. The outermost ring was a narrow band that housed the city's soldiers, miners, and warehouses. With the advent of the orcs' siege the residences of the outer two rings have been abandoned, leaving behind layers of defensive points, deadfalls, and ready-rooms where squads of defenders can hole up for an arc or more.

Beyond these rings, however, the city's defenses are spread over 400 square miles. The outermost layer of defenses are formed from the city's five traditional "gateholds," allied clanholds that guard key access routes into the city. The five clanholds are spread roughly in a star-shaped pattern

around the city, each nearly 20 deadly miles from Calador proper. Two of the five clanholds have already fallen to the orcs, and another is under siege; only the two southern gateholds have yet to come under serious attack. The road to Calador past these gates is heavily trapped and includes many reinforced defensive positions for crossbowmen and skirmishers. The most threatened section of the lower city is in the north, where the Feral Mothers have controlled the northern gate for nearly a year. They launch an almost continuous assault on the slowly crumbling defenses of Lower Calador from that direction, and are halfway between the gate and the outer ring. The dor has already evacuated his warriors from the north road, turning it into a deathtrap for Torgut's army. Traps both magical and mundane line the tunnels, including a ready-to-be-diverted magma flow that could decimate an entire warband. Most important of all, no dwarves will die setting these traps off: Vodan has enlisted the aid of the Trapped, and dozens of earth and fire elementals mean to make the orcs pay for their cruel treatment of Aryth's flesh.

The Mouth of Doragin

North of ruined Idenor is a vaulted cavern where the dwarves believe the spirit of the mountains, Doragin, speaks to those with the wit and patience to listen. The cavern is filled with sound, at times so soft it can barely be heard but sometimes suddenly booming with a deafening roar. When the subterranean winds blow through the cavern at full force the chamber echoes with a cacophony of voices, as if hundreds of people are speaking at the same time in a language that seems familiar to dwarven listeners, stirring some long suppressed racial memory. In this Last Age, dwarven loremasters risk the dangerous journey to the cavern seeking to discern Doragin's message in the hopes of saving their people.

The Mouth of Doragin draws on the powers of the subterranean winds, channeling their energy and focusing it into sound. For the past two Ages, the dwarves have harnessed the nexus's power to create extraordinary weapons that roar as they strike, stunning their foes. Amongst the most storied of weapons created here was the hammer of the dwarven hero Gredgol, who single-handedly held the broken battlements of Icefang Keep in the battles at the end of the Second Age.

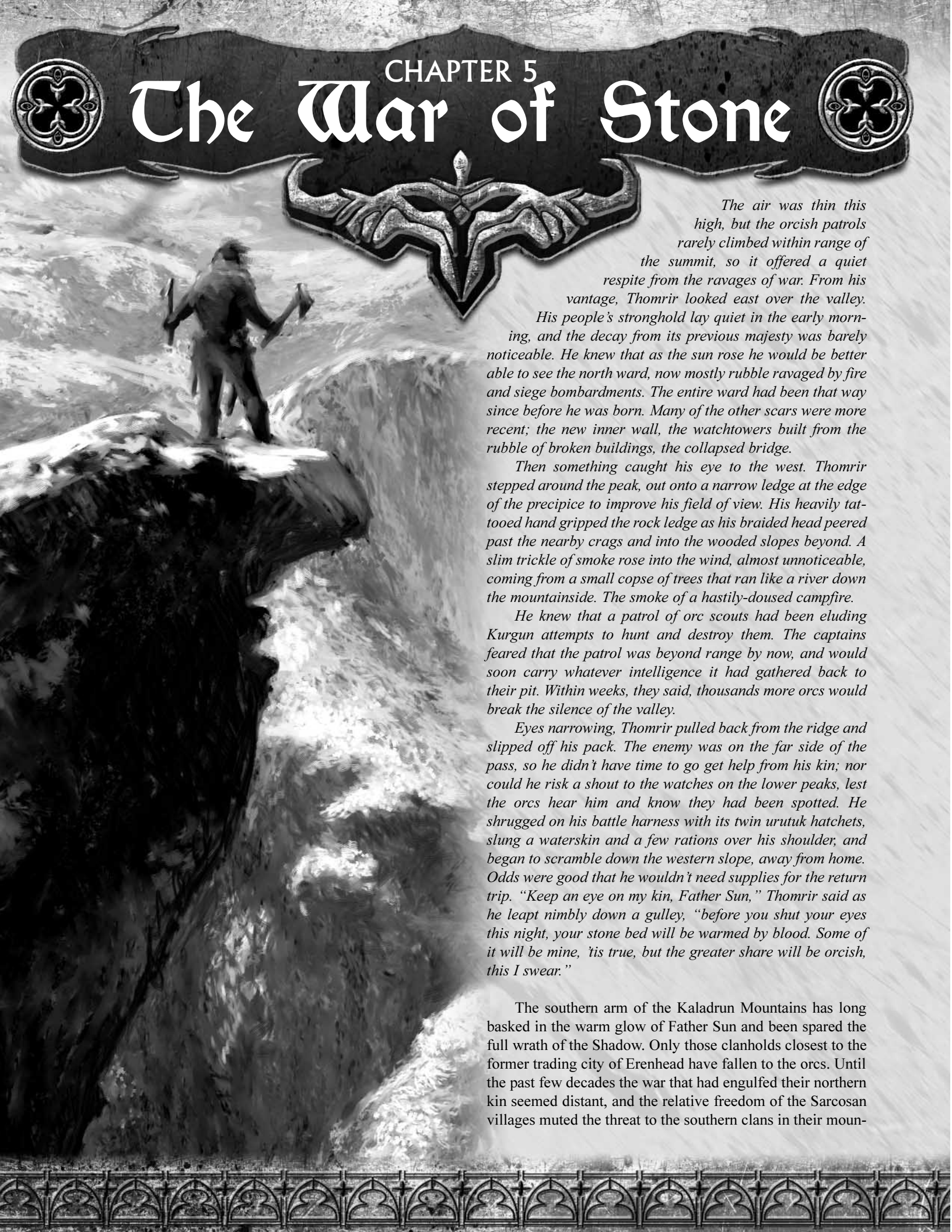
Mouth of Doragin

Spell Energy: 40

Feats Allowed: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Spell Talisman, Craft Greater Spell Talisman, Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item

Affinity: Air 2, Sonic 4

Recovery: 5



CHAPTER 5

The War of Stone

The air was thin this high, but the orcish patrols rarely climbed within range of the summit, so it offered a quiet respite from the ravages of war. From his vantage, Thomrir looked east over the valley. His people's stronghold lay quiet in the early morning, and the decay from its previous majesty was barely noticeable. He knew that as the sun rose he would be better able to see the north ward, now mostly rubble ravaged by fire and siege bombardments. The entire ward had been that way since before he was born. Many of the other scars were more recent; the new inner wall, the watchtowers built from the rubble of broken buildings, the collapsed bridge.

Then something caught his eye to the west. Thomrir stepped around the peak, out onto a narrow ledge at the edge of the precipice to improve his field of view. His heavily tattooed hand gripped the rock ledge as his braided head peered past the nearby crags and into the wooded slopes beyond. A slim trickle of smoke rose into the wind, almost unnoticeable, coming from a small copse of trees that ran like a river down the mountainside. The smoke of a hastily-doused campfire.

He knew that a patrol of orc scouts had been eluding Kurgun attempts to hunt and destroy them. The captains feared that the patrol was beyond range by now, and would soon carry whatever intelligence it had gathered back to their pit. Within weeks, they said, thousands more orcs would break the silence of the valley.

Eyes narrowing, Thomrir pulled back from the ridge and slipped off his pack. The enemy was on the far side of the pass, so he didn't have time to go get help from his kin; nor could he risk a shout to the watches on the lower peaks, lest the orcs hear him and know they had been spotted. He shrugged on his battle harness with its twin urutuk hatchets, slung a waterskin and a few rations over his shoulder, and began to scramble down the western slope, away from home. Odds were good that he wouldn't need supplies for the return trip. "Keep an eye on my kin, Father Sun," Thomrir said as he leapt nimbly down a gulley, "before you shut your eyes this night, your stone bed will be warmed by blood. Some of it will be mine, 'tis true, but the greater share will be orcish, this I swear."

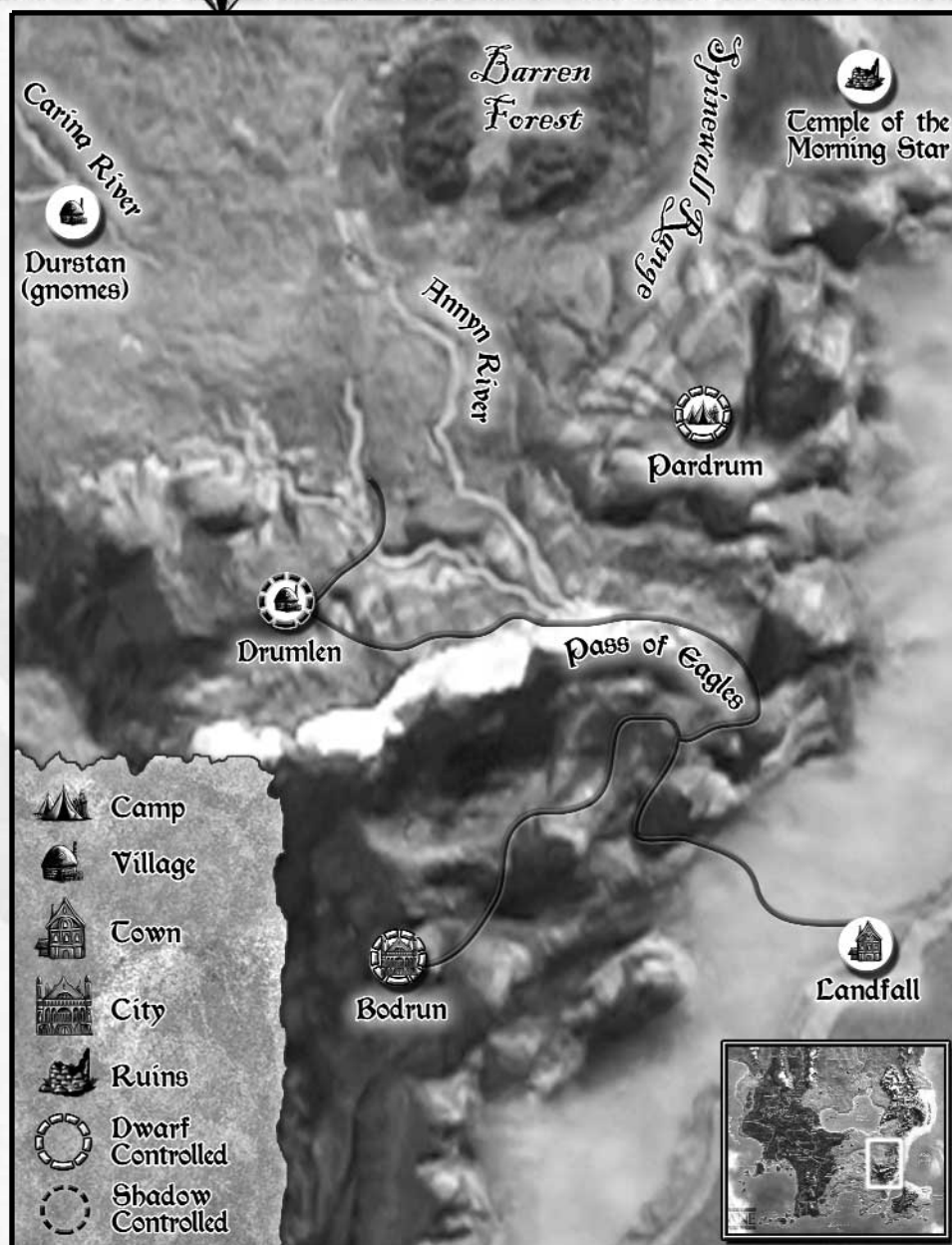
The southern arm of the Kaladrin Mountains has long basked in the warm glow of Father Sun and been spared the full wrath of the Shadow. Only those clanholds closest to the former trading city of Erenhead have fallen to the orcs. Until the past few decades the war that had engulfed their northern kin seemed distant, and the relative freedom of the Sarcosan villages muted the threat to the southern clans in their moun-

tain strongholds. Their safety was an illusion; the Shadow had not forgotten the southern Kaladrans. In 99 Last Age, orc warbands gather in Erenhead to prepare for a final offensive against the dwarves. This offensive will bring fire and vardatch into every clanhold and village in the south. War like none the southern clans have ever seen is coming.

The War of Stone encompasses the Kaladrin Mountain chain south of Kardoling and includes Kurgun and human villages in the Kaladrin foothills, Barren Forest, and White Desert. The southern Kaladrins seem older and more worn than the northern Kaladrins. Some aspects of life are easier here: The slopes are gentler, the forests more abundant, the water more plentiful, and the rock takes easier to the pick.

However, the southern mountains remain treacherous to the unwary. The slopes slough away when loosened by weather and wear, covering the mountainsides with loose rock and scree. The earthen tunnels are prone to giving way, and the valleys are easily flooded. Also hiding behind this tranquil facade are deadly predators, both natural and unnatural, that prefer the more bountiful prey of the south to the spartan pickings of the north. Packs of shadowspawn roam the foothills, Fell are as plentiful here as elsewhere, and even Trapped spirits are occasionally encountered, having retreated to the southern mountains in search of privacy and peace. The dwarves of the southern Kaladrins, many of them Kurgun, have faced and adapted to these various threats. But things will soon change, and they will have to fight as they never have before.

The mountains are home to more than just the dwarves and their enemies. Thousands of human refugees have fled into the Kaladrins seeking to escape the Shadow's tightening grip on the Kingdom of Erenland, including the remnants of the Dornish house of Orin who were forced south into the Spinewall Range after the Last Battle. Along the Horse Plains, Sarcosan nomads find shelter and a measure of safety in the foothills, trading food and leather for good dwarven steel. However, to the dwarves, the most important of the mountains' inhabitants are the gnomes, who travel along forgotten tributaries of the Carina and Annyn Rivers, bringing both news of orc movements and critical supplies to isolated clanholds.



Shadow forces

From the ruins of Kardoling, 12,000 orcs patrol the passes leading north toward Low Rock, cutting the southern clans off from besieged Calador. The orcs have spent the last four arcs searching for Kurgun and human refugee villages. They've located the major route through the southern Kaladrins, the Pass of Eagles, and have fortified its northern end in anticipation of the upcoming offensive. If the dwarves were opposing just the orcs at Kardoling and Drumlen, there is little doubt that they could hold. The Shadow minions there are just the forward vanguard, however, for a much larger orc offensive. Over 120,000 orcs, goblin-kin, and even a few detachments of humans serving in the name of the Traitor

Princes are gathered at the port city of Erenhead, with more arriving every arc. Half of these will be traveling northward up the Torbrun to participate in the final siege of Calador, while the rest will seep slowly southward. The Night King Jahzir is determined to break the fey resistance within the next decade, and he has mustered all of his resources to punish the dwarves for their defiance.

The dwarves will be facing more than just vardatch and sword. Over 500 legates travel with the army. The majority are Sword Brothers, deadly warriors in their own right, but also able to tap the power of their dark master. Accompanying the legates are foully perverted beasts, kept caged until such time as they can be released to terrorize the dwarves. By far the most powerful and dangerous being in the Shadow army is the dragon Arynix. This horribly scarred dragon is consumed by rage and seeks to turn the southern Kaladrans from Kardoling to Bodrun into a pyre, reducing the dwarven civilization to ashes.

The Erenhead army has been trained and equipped to fight against three very different enemies: the fortified dwarven clanholds, Kurgun villages in sheltered mountain valleys, and human refugees and nomads that roam the Kaladrunk foothills and the White Desert. Unlike the armies in the Icewalls and northern Kaladrans, the southern assault force will have cavalry comprised of several hundred Sarcosan

scouts, horse archers, and lancers. Despite the danger of arming these humans and the conflict inherent in their mingling with the Shadow's other minions, their skill and loyalty are beyond doubt. They have been battle-tested against their own kin and have proven themselves as brutal murderers all. Goblin worg riders supplement the human mercenaries and act as shock troops. The goblins also act as scouts, skirmishers, and sappers, responsible for locating, pinning down, and ultimately penetrating dwarven defenses. Rounding out the army are over 1,000 hobgoblin archers to provide cover fire while more heavily armed and armored orcs attempt to close with their enemies.

The only weakness of the southern army is its lack of leadership. While Jahzir himself will lead the new army against Calador to the north, he has not yet decided who will lead the offensive through the Pass of Eagles. For now, he waits and watches as the various tribes of the assault force battle for prestige and control. The loser will accompany him north to act as the hammer to the Feral Mothers' anvil, while the victor will be rewarded with the leadership of the southern campaign.

Shadow Tactics

The offensive in the southern Kaladrans requires the orcs to fight a mobile adversary over a wide variety of terrain. The elimination of the Kurgun villages to the southeast of Kardoling is the first priority, which will require the orcs to seize the loosely defended but sprawling Garol. Once it is taken, the army's more mobile units will sweep south along the foothills of the Spinewall Range to destroy or drive off the human refugees that provide food and fodder for the dwarves. Although they cannot confirm that gnomes are helping the southern dwarves, they are to capture and commandeer any gnome caravans they find along the way. At the same time, heavily armed shock troops will travel under the mountains, locating and isolating dwarven holds. The Shadow forces plan to take away the southern dwarves' most important advantages: their unity and their allies. If they isolate the Kurgun and clan dwarves of the Spinewall Range, they believe they can keep them contained with minimal troop commitment while the main force continues south to sack Bodrun.

NPCs

Arynix

The most feared member of the Shadow's army in the Kaladrans is Arynix, the Fire in the Night. Arynix was one of the first dragons to be seduced by Izrador's whispered promises, and his devotion to the dark god has grown absolute. Arynix is massive, even amongst his own kind. Of all the dragons that serve the Shadow, only the insane Zardrix is larger, and as such it was Arynix who faced that queen of the dragons in the battle at the end of the Second Age. His direc-

Traitors and Thieves

Throughout Erenland there are humans who freely serve in the Shadow's armies, inflicting misery on their neighbors and kinsmen. Some have sold their honor for coin to feed their families, others serve from a need to dominate, and finally there are those who revel in inflicting pain. Most of these serve directly under the Traitor Princes and False Sussars, but they can occasionally be found serving in the wars against the fey. These mercenary bands attract the worst of human society and rarely survive as a unit for more than one campaign. This is thanks to their inability to work together, their tendency toward cowardice and desertion, and their leaders' preference for using them as fodder. The exception to this rule can be seen in the few mercenary bands of Sarcosan horsemen, making them as rare as they are valued. The trustworthiness of their oaths of loyalty make them distinctly reliable, and the limited amount of cavalry in the Shadow's armies mean that their mobility is in high demand. Although these warriors are well paid for their efforts, the painful death that awaits them if captured by Sarcosan insurgents is equal to any evil perpetrated by the Shadow's minions.

tions from his dark god were specific: to draw Zardrix away from her kin, but not to kill her. In so doing he had to let himself be brutally wounded, time and again, by the larger and more powerful dragon, until eventually one of his wings and much of his back were slashed to ribbons. Yet, in the end, he was successful: Zardrix was drawn into a trap and, with the aid of legates and channelers, laid low. Arynix limped off to lick his wounds, awaiting the reward promised by his dark god.

That reward was to be deposed as the greatest of Izrador's drakes, making way for the demi-god of wrath that Zardrix had become. Arynix remains horribly scarred from the battle, and even to this day does not receive magical healing. The reasons are unknown; perhaps Izrador believes him to be more useful as a hating, twisted mockery of his former self, or perhaps Arynix knows in some primal way that Zardrix would kill him if she saw him as a threat to her status.

Regardless, Arynix is now a twisted, bestial creature. Though in his earlier existence he might have schemed for vengeance upon Zardrix, he now cannot even remember the source of his rage. He knows only that he hates all that live.

While Zardrix destroyed the fleets of the Sea of Pelluria in the Last Battle, it was Arynix who led the assault on the keeps of the dwarven Fortress Wall. Though not capable of such widespread destruction as the Wrath of Shadow, Arynix's breath weapon during the battle was so intense that it incinerated even the dwarven defenders who were protected by feet of rock, so powerful that it cracked stone that had withstood thousands of years of siege. Having proven himself to be an effective killer of the dwarves, Arynix has since been assigned to Jahzir to use as he sees fit in the siege against the Kaladrans. The Night King believes the dragon to be too unpredictable to be an effective part of the siege of Calador, and perhaps does not wish to share the glory of his future victory with a creature so similar to Zardrix. He has therefore commanded Arynix to act as a mainstay of the assault on the Pass of Eagles. The dragon relishes every battle, though his refusal (or inability) to accept divine healing means that he is diminished after each fight. His scales are scored by the marks of claws and axes alike, and his right wing has never recovered from his fight with Zardrix, making flight difficult and painful for the beast. That limitation may delay the Kurguns' destruction, as Arynix will only take flight when assured that he will be able to land quickly soon after.

Arynix, the Fire in the Night

Male, Dragon: CR 21; Gargantuan dragon; HD 31d12+248; hp 367 (449 max); Init +2; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (clumsy)*; AC 28 (–2 Dex, –4 size, +12 natural), touch 4, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +31; Grp +56; Atk +40 melee (4d8+14, bite); Full Atk +40 melee (4d8+14, bite); +38 melee (4d6+12, 2 claws), +38 (2d8+12, 2 wings), +38 melee



(4d6+12, tail slap); Space/Reach 20ft./15ft. (20 ft. with bite); SA Breath weapon, crush, frightful presence, spell-like abilities, tail sweep; SQ Tremorsense 60 ft., damage reduction 10/magic*, darkvision 120 ft., immunity to fire, mind-affecting spells, *sleep*, and paralysis, lowlight vision, scion's reckoning, SR 31; AL CE; SV Fort +25, Ref +15, Will +19; Str 37, Dex 6, Con 27, Int 22, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +22, Concentration +20, Diplomacy +8, Hide -18, Intimidate +30, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (nature) +20, Listen +28, Move Silently +10, Search +26, Sense Motive +15, Spot +28.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Fly-by Attack, Hover, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Power Attack, Sunder, Wingover.

*Due to Arynix's injuries, his speed and flight maneuverability are permanently reduced. He must make a Fortitude save each round that he flies, with a DC equal to 25 + the number of rounds he has been airborne, or land immediately due to the intense pain. If he cannot land, he stalls in mid-flight and begins to fall. Also, Arynix refuses to accept magical healing, so he is often at lower than maximum hit points.

Breath Weapon (Su): Arynix lost the ability to breathe flame after his fight with Zardrix, but still has a dauntingly powerful breath weapon. He can breathe a cone of incredible heat born from his hatred of all life, hotter even than the lava in the deepest Kaladrans. While very limited in range (it is a 30-ft. cone instead of the 60-ft. cone normal for a dragon of his size), it is very efficient as a weapon against the dwarves. Anything caught within the cone, even stone and metal, is instantly cracked and burned from the heat, suffering 22d4 points of damage (DC 32 Fortitude save for half damage). Hiding behind full cover offers some protection, but the heat still penetrates through it. For every foot of intervening material, the damage is lessened by 1 die per point of hardness of that material. For instance, if two dwarven warriors take cover from Arynix's breath behind a foot-thick steel door (hardness 10), they suffer 12d4 damage instead of 22d4.

However, the material used as cover suffers from the extreme heat; for every die by which the breath weapon was lessened, all intervening cover loses that amount of hardness. Likewise, unattended objects do not suffer half damage from the breath as is normally the case with fire.

Continuing the example above, as soon as the steel door is exposed to the heat and blocks 10 dice of heat damage, it also loses 10 hardness. The remaining 12d4 is not only applied to the dwarves, it is also applied to the door in front of them. Even if the doors still stand afterwards, they have become warped and melted, and won't last long against a battering ram or a pack of vardatch-wielding orcs.

Finally, the area subjected to Arynix's breath does not cool immediately, but instead becomes an oven of heat and death. On Arynix's next turn, any creatures still within the 30-ft.-cone take continual damage from the super-heated air; this damage is 2d4 less than the damage originally dealt, and again can be halved with a DC 32 Fortitude save. Each round

the damage dealt by the air lessens by 2d4 until it returns to normal.

Concluding the tale of the pair of brave dwarven warriors, it is now Arynix's next turn. Still standing after the first wave of heat, the dwarves elect to remain where they are to give their allies time to flee. As the orcs hack away at the door from the other side, the dwarves take damage again. This time they suffer 10d4 damage (2d4 less than the original 12d4 that area was subjected to during the initial attack) unless they make a successful Fortitude save for half damage.

Crush (Ex): Due to his injuries, Arynix rarely uses his crush attack. Opponents subject to this attack must make a DC 26 Reflex save to avoid being pinned. Pinned opponents take 4d6+14 points of damage each round that they are under the dragon. The dragon's grapple bonus is +56.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Arynix is the most dangerous creature in the Kaladrans, and his mere presence breeds fear. This ability takes effect whenever he attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures within 240 feet of Arynix are subject to fear if they have fewer than 31 HD. A potentially affected creature that succeeds at a DC 31 Will save remains immune to his frightful presence for one day. On a failure, creatures with four or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with five or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Other dragons are immune to this effect. Save DC is Charisma-based.

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*darkness*, *endure elements*; 3/day—*suggestion* (DC 31), *locate object*, *waves of fatigue* (DC 31); 1/day—*waves of exhaustion* (DC 31), *horrid wilting* (DC 31). Save DCs are Charisma-based.

The Devout

The arrival of several hundred Devout legates at the camp of the southern Kaladrans armies was both unexpected and unwanted. The legates, gathered from temples in Cambrial, Sharuun, and Hallisport, are loyal to the Night King Sunulael. Their arrival is yet another attempt by the Voice of the Shadow to usurp control of the offensives against the fey. These legates have refused to be integrated into the structure of the army, keeping their own council and not participating in the planning for the upcoming offensive. They've attempted to influence the tribes to pick a leader for the army that is loyal to the legates and Sunulael. Their efforts, so far unsuccessful, have only added to the growing divisions in the army. This may in fact be their ultimate goal; if the offensive fails, the Night King Jahzir will stand in judgment before the dark god.

The competition between the two Night Kings may mask a deeper and longer-reaching goal. The legates that accompanied the tribes from the north are mostly loyal to the Cabal. Sunulael may be attempting to limit the Cabal's influence among the tribes, and may go so far as to encourage his followers to make sure that only the Devout among the legates survive the upcoming offensive. Alternatively, Sunulael may be more concerned with geographical control than with influ-

ence among the orcs. He has been slowly but effectively spreading his influence throughout southern Erenland, and he may see the Spinewall Range and all of the Kaladrans south of it as falling within that purview. The final possible reason for his contribution to the assault, and potentially the most dangerous to the resistance, is that there may be something under the mountains that the Night King desperately wants . . . something that is worth risking Jahzir's wrath and suspicion to attain.

Locations

Temple of the Morning Star

Halfway down the Spinewall Range, at the very summit of Mount Tedra, is the ruined Sarcosan temple called the Morning Star. The temple was built in the later half of the Second Age by an obscure sect of the Sarcosan's priests and sages, the Sahi, who called themselves the *Shehan*, or "Lightbringers." With the help of the dwarves, the temple was built at the very entrance to heaven, above the low-lying winter clouds where only the hardiest trees could survive. Its main purpose was to allow the Sahi scholars and star readers to observe the movements of the sun, the Morning Star. In Courtier, the sun is called *Nor Sheha*, the First Lightbringer. It is not officially seen as a member of the Sarcosan pantheon known as the Riding Host, but rather is considered more of a primal force of nature. As such, Nor Sheha does not teach or give wisdom, but rather illuminates. It is simply truth, and it shows all that is true. While the evening is a time for contemplation beneath the stars, the day is a time for acting upon the truths and wisdom gained during the night.

The temple endured for over 1,000 years, though over time many of the sussars who supplied the templars and scholars with supplies began to weary of supporting the out-of-sight ascetics. When the battle was joined in the Last Age, Sarcosan and Shadow alike ignored the temple in favor of more important targets. The last scholars here were finally slaughtered as an afterthought in 12 LA by an orc and giant raiding party. What little of the temple structure that survived the assault was left to the mercy of the elements.

The temple was forgotten until just recently, when orcs from Kardoling moved east to build fortified positions overlooking routes into Kurgun territory. One patrol discovered the ruins and would have passed them by if the legate accompanying the patrol had not sensed power emanating from the temple grounds. The power he sensed was elusive, not concentrated in a single area or item. Unable to locate the power, the legate sent word to his master, Sunulael, who sent additional legates with more skill at ferreting out lost power. For the past two arcs the legates have scoured the temple to no avail. Their astiraxes sense the power growing slowly during the day and fading as darkness creeps into the temple grounds, but none can determine how to unlock it.

The legates believe that solving the secret of the Temple of the Morning Star may be vital to the upcoming battles against the fey. They hope that the mystery's answer is in the shattered artwork and worn engraved words of the long lost Sahi priests. To assist them in their research, they have brought Sarcosan artisans from Alvedara and Sahi priests from throughout the south to the ruins. Their duty, encouraged by wealth or enforced by whip, is to attempt the restoration of the shattered columns, engraved star charts, and once-magnificent murals. The only question is whether enough of the writings and murals have survived to provide the clues the legates seek.

What the legates sense is an exceedingly rare type of power nexus, one that focuses Aryth's power only when the light of the morning star is visible. As the morning star crests the horizon several hours before dawn, Aryth's power is drawn to the temple, slowly gathering until the star fades into the brightness of noon. Without the light of the star, the power seeps back into the rock, unreachable until the morning star is once again visible in the sky. In the later Second Age and early Third Age Sahi priests learned to master this power and used it to aid in their divinations. The most talented channelers could also use this power to *scry* any region touched by the light of the morning star at the same time it touched the temple, essentially the entire Kaladrin range.



If the Shadow's servants could learn how to tap these powers, it would give them a formidable advantage in the war against the fey.

Temple of the Morning Star

Spell Energy: 0

Feats Allowed: Craft Spell Talisman, Craft Wondrous Item

Affinity: Divination 4

Recovery: Gains one spell energy for every two hours the morning star is visible (daylight hours) and loses one spell energy per hour the morning star is not visible (night/overcast skies).

Special: If a forgotten ritual (counts as a 7th level spell with a casting cost of 500 xp) is discovered and performed at the temple at sunrise on the summer solstice, the main ritual caster thereafter gains the ability to cast *clairaudience/clairvoyance* at the nexus (visual version only) with a special effect. If the spell is cast during daylight hours, the range for the spell increases to include anywhere that felt the touch of the morning sun at the same time as the temple; in other words, nearly anywhere within the Kaladrin range.

Dwarven Forces

The Shadow's dark hand has yet to reach the most populous areas of the Southern Kaladrins. Just 70,000 dwarves, almost half of what is left of their race, share the southern mountains with 20,000 human refugees. They are all hardened by the struggle to survive in the Last Age, and when the war comes to their mountains all but the very young will wield a weapon. Unlike their kin in the north, the southern clans have not been bled white by constant fighting, and their strongest warriors have not been sacrificed to slow the orc advance. The southern dwarves also have the advantage of allies who provide valuable sword arms, much-needed supply runners, and spies who can infiltrate the Shadow-occupied villages in the lowlands and monitor the movements of the orc patrols. What the army lacks is tempering. They have yet to be seriously tested in battle. Some of the dwarven elders secretly fear that the allied army will break when attacked with the full fury of the Shadow.

The southern dwarves have another advantage that their northern kin did not: time, dearly purchased with the blood of Calador. The most militant clan of the Spinewall Range, Fedrol Clan, used this time to evacuate to the south and unite most, but not all, of the dwarves along the way into one army. Their most important unification was with Gorand Clan, the largest single clan remaining among the dwarves. These "soft southerners" and "surface lovers," as the northern clans sometimes call them, include most of the southern Kurgun. While as yet untested in battle, they are the most connected of all the dwarves in dealing with humans and gnomes. With

Gorand's resources and Fedrol's veteran warriors and determination, the Host of the Southern Sun, as it has been dubbed, is a force to be reckoned with.

Now unified, the army has been steadily moving north to meet the orc host as it moves south from Kardoling, ensuring that the battles against the orcs are fought far from the major clanholds. The allied clans have also used the precious time to improve their fortifications, stockpile food, and evacuate clanholds that could not hold. A series of defensive positions have been built to allow a measured withdrawal and to channel the orc offensive away from the remaining clanholds.

Dwarven Tactics

The southern dwarves are preparing to fight a dual campaign both above and below the surface of the Kaladrins. On the surface, the Kurgun have fortified the major passes and moved as many of their people and the human villagers as possible to sheltered valleys in the far south. They have riddled the passes through the mountains with deadfalls, hidden tinder amongst the trees to allow them to fire the woods as they retreat, and carefully concealed firing positions for archers in the cliff walls. Heavier weapons, including ballistae and catapults, have been built at the major passes to provide long-range fire and offer some defense against Arynix.

Bolart, the new dor of Gorand Clan, visited Calador before the siege entered its final stages and has sat on that city's war councils. One essential lesson was burned into his mind from that experience: that tying your army to the defense of one position, one hold, is foolish and fatal. Calador's defenses are impressive and have held for the past decade, but the orcs now have their prey boxed in. While the dwarven army remains in one place and is eaten away, the orc army surrounding them only grows. The dor will not allow that to happen to his forces. The Spinewall Range and the southern Kaladrins are sparsely populated, so he can give ground without endangering his people. He has already evacuated the holds near Kardoling and he will defend the now-empty northern holds only as long as it serves his purposes. He can afford to let the orcs take a half-dozen empty holds, spreading out their forces, before he attacks.

The key to Bolart's plan is to lure the orcs toward the hidden dwarven stronghold at Pardrum, rapidly giving ground to allow the orcs to think that the clans are in disarray. Once the orcs are scattered through the southern Kaladrins, he will attempt to cut off individual warbands in isolated valleys and show them what it means to be outnumbered by one's enemy. Bolart will ensure that he has overwhelming numbers to quickly eliminate the warband. If he's successful, he can blunt if not crush the orc offensive. He knows he has one good chance to surprise the orcs and will have to do as much damage as possible before they can react. Once the orcs learn the size and whereabouts of his army and the locations of his key withdrawal points, their tactics will change and most of his advantage will be lost.

Allies

While Gorand Clan may have once separated itself from the other dwarves of the Kaladrans, it did so while forging alliances with its gnomish kin. No other clan boasts a higher population of dwarrow, both in their holdfasts and fostered among the river folk of the Eren. These courageous and stalwart warriors are able to pass for gnomes while on scouting missions in occupied territory, yet have the stature to command the respect of dwarven soldiers and the resilience to fight alongside them. The half-blood dwarrow also act as liaisons to the full-blooded gnomes. With unparalleled ability to travel unmolested through occupied lands, seemingly limitless connections, and a mastery of smuggling and evasion, the gnomes provide an invaluable lifeblood of both information and supplies to their dwarven cousins. It remains to be seen if they will be able and willing to continue their aid during all-out war in the south.

Additionally, the fey are not alone. Over 7,000 Dorns and Erenlanders are prepared to fight with the Kurgun and also use their ability to enter the lowlands to conduct hit and run attacks on orc supply trains traveling through the foothills. Weapons have been hidden near the major roads, and agents have entered Shadow-controlled villages seeking men willing to fight against the orcs. They hope that the offer of good dwarven weapons and arms, as well as a chance to strike back against their oppressors, will rally the young men to their cause. Farther to the south, a contingent of over 100 Sarcosan riders on sturdy mountain horses act as long-range scouts and harriers to ensure that the orcs do not flank the main dwarf army and strike directly at Bodrun. All of the dwarves' allies are equipped with the finest weapons and armor they can make. The orcs have not faced such well-equipped humans since the fall of the Kingdom of Erenland.

Finally, there are the allies who are neither human nor fey. The presence of the dragon patriarch Xirxix and his two companions and guards, Estherix and Agammon, are a wild card in this war.

Risen Heroes



A new cult has arisen among the dwarven clans of the southern Kaladrans: the Restorers. The cult was formed in the ruins of the Itharin Clanhold northeast of Low Rock. In 87 Last Age, the clanhold was breached and the strongest of the defenders were dead or dying. Driven back, the clan tried to hold the lower halls long enough for the women and children to escape. As they fought near the clan's Hall of Heroes, a youth, no more than 14 winters, entered the shrine, seeking to save his grandfather's axe. Once the axe was in his hands, the youth became an engine of destruction, fighting with amazing skill and purpose. The boy shattered the first wave of orc attackers and led the rearguard action that allowed most of the clan to escape. He radiated authority and spoke to the clan's elders as if they were old friends. It was clear that the boy was possessed by the spirit of his grandfather.

Word of the boy's possession quickly spread. Clans desperate to survive began to attempt to recall the spirits of their heroes. The Cult of the Restorers was formed to pool any knowledge that might assist in this endeavor, as well as to find willing hosts for these spirits of the Lost. As the orc offensive looms ever closer, the Restorers have had no shortage of volunteers to act as hosts. Success has been limited, however; in 12 years only two other hosts have been possessed by ancestral spirits. The Restorers now believe that ties of blood, an artifact of the Lost, and proximity to the place where the spirit left its mortal shell are all critical to a successful possession. Loregivers are studying the records of their greatest heroes, tracing their lineages in search of suitable hosts and even defiling graves in search of artifacts that might draw the Lost back to fight once more for their clan. While dissenters at first condemned the process as unnatural and disrespectful, the needs of the war have silenced their doubts.



The dragons have hidden in the Kaladrans for almost 1,000 years, and know that the time for running is over. They are careful about when and where they engage the enemy to ensure that knowledge of their existence does not reach the dark god. Their presence, once known, would bring Zardrix and others of their kind that still serve the Shadow, ensuring the death of those they would seek to protect. Singly they are no match for Arynix, but together they stand a good chance of killing him. Doing so would eliminate the Shadow's greatest advantage in the fight against the Kurgun.

As of yet, the dragons have not revealed themselves to the dwarves, fearing that the Shadow's interrogators or spies would learn of their existence. Instead, the two younger dragons have used magic to move among the dwarves in altered forms. Estherix can assume the form of a dwarven maid, and poses as a servant to the army's leaders so she may best determine where the dwarves need aid. Agammon's disguise is less versatile but still useful: He can take the form of a savage, nearly feral mountain hound that seems to have adopted Kirgard, grandson of Bolart, dor of Gorand Clan. The young warrior is a brave fighter and one of Bolart's most trusted lieutenants, and is well liked by the veterans of Fedrol Clan. For the sake of the army's morale and the dwarves' continued unity, Agammon stays near Kirgard's side at all times, protecting him from harm on the battlefield.

NPCs

Bolart

Dor of Gorand Clan

One leader holds the dwarven army together: Bolart, dor of Gorand Clan (Ftr 13). Bolart has spent his entire life preparing for war to come to his mountains. As a youth, disgusted by his clan's isolation from the other clans and knowing that this state would leave them with too few allies in war, he journeyed alone to the north. There he demanded that the dor of Fedrol Clan foster him and teach him in the ways of war. The gruff and bitter leader of Fedrol Clan was at first disgusted, then amazed, then impressed. When he returned, Bolart not only successfully challenged Gorand's older, more passive dor, he also began to force a new way of life upon his people. Through sheer force of will, he has compelled the southern clans to put aside thousands of years of tradition and finally unite against a common enemy. He has welcomed Durgis Clan as allies, using their example and at times their raw strength to overcome prejudice against humans and even dworgs. He has opened his clanhold to refugees from the north, and he has stripped the defenses of all non-essential clanholds in the south. The result of all of this effort is an army, an army that may be the last hope of the dwarven people. His efforts have not come without a physical cost; he is stooped as if he carries the weight of mountains on his back,

and his face is heavily creased from the strain of the last two decades. War, when it comes, may be a relief, as he will finally be able to put aside the squabbling between clans and the endless battle with logistics, and concentrate instead on simply killing orcs.

Bolart, even though he looks as if he is well past his prime, is still a dangerous warrior. He bears two ancient symbols of Gorand Clan: the Hearer of Mountains, a mithral warhammer that shatters its targets' armor plates as if they were crockery, and the Bulwark, an oaken tower shield that has protected the dor of Gorand Clan since the First Age. During battle the dor places himself in the center of the front line, anchoring it and rallying his kinsmen. He knows, especially in the early battles, that his alliance could collapse under the pressure of the orc assault. If he is not at the forefront, morale may fail and all he has worked for could collapse, bringing doom to his clan and his race.

Dalian Jorgansen

The dwarves have found a steadfast ally in Dalian Jorgansen (Dorn, Wildlander 9), the heir of House Orin and second in command of the defense of the Pass of Eagles. Dalian leads the Dornish and Erenlander refugees that lived in the Spinewall Range. He has fought with the Kurgun for the past 10 years, guarding the passes and raiding into Shadow-occupied lands to free slaves and smuggle his clansmen to safety in the mountains. Dalian is a man with the stature of one of the Old Kings, a true scion of the Dorns. He has taken a dispirited people and given them a sense of hope and the determination to stand against the Shadow.

Locations

The Pass of Eagles

The mountains south of Kardoling, called the Spinewall Range, are relatively narrow, treacherous, and steep. There are no passes wide enough for an army to travel amidst them, making it an ideal ground for the guerilla fighting preferred by the Kurgun. South of the Barren Forest, as the Kaladrans widen once more, only one pass allows for efficient southerly travel by a large force: the Pass of Eagles. It crosses to the east of the White Hand, a series of five towering mountains that run east to west and all but bisect the southern Kaladrans. Since the end of the First Age, the pass has been the major trade route through the southern mountains. The Kurgun clan settled along its length and their villages continue to provide refuge and ready markets for goods. With the influx of human refugees, new villages have been constructed in sheltered valleys that can only be accessed from the pass. Both the orcs and the dwarves know that whoever controls the Pass of Eagles will rule the southern Kaladrans.



According to legend, the pass gained its name from the first Kurgun settlers to attempt to cross the White Hand. They claimed that only eagles could cross those heights . . . so those that made it past them, albeit by going around, called themselves eagles and named the pass as their own. The pass begins at 4,200 feet above the sea east of Drumlen, immediately rising sharply into the clouds above. The pass then weaves drunkenly through the mountains, climbing to where the air gets thin and lungs burn with every step. Adding to the difficulties of traveling through the pass is the weather, which is capricious even in the summer months. In winter and during the spring rains, only the desperate or foolish travel its length.

The first major battles of the southern orc offensive will be fought here. The dwarves and their allies have fortified sections of the pass, determined to make the orcs pay in blood for every foot. Traps have been placed, weapons stockpiled, and every warrior able to carry sword or urutuk has moved into forward positions overlooking the orc camp at Drumlen. Defenses are both above and below ground. The arrival of the dragon Arynix means that large surface fortifications will become a deathtrap, so the dwarves have abandoned most of them and instead rely on more easily abandoned natural terrain as their defensive positions. Arynix has already destroyed watch posts at the northern end of the pass and the dragon will no doubt lead the orc assault wherever major opposition is expected.

Following Bolart's suggestion, the independent Kurgun camps throughout the Spinewall Range and along the Pass of Eagles have evacuated most their villages. One of them, however, the largest village on the western side of the pass, has been left occupied . . . as bait. It is a trap for Arynix. The most elderly among the Kurgun have volunteered to remain in the village to make it appear occupied. They fire the hearths and tend the fields, all in an attempt to draw the dread dragon's wrath. Hidden in the homes and sheltered under the dense trees are ballistae, giant nets, and cables that can be quickly anchored to drive the dragon to ground. Over 200 human and Kurgun warriors wait outside the village with bows, spears, and axes to attack the dragon once it is trapped. If Arynix attacks, the village, its elderly inhabitants, and most of the warriors will die, but if the dragon can be killed or crippled, it will be worth the cost in lives.

CHAPTER 6

New Rules



Loremaster Thael slowly chiseled another rune upon the tunnel wall, his steady scraping answered by more frantic blows from the other side. Each reverberation, muted by feet of solid stone, served to remind him of his duty. He suspected that he had little time before the next offensive began and the orcs again tried to breach the clanhold, but his runes would give them a surprise. A deadly surprise. After months of pouring through the old texts in the Hall of Heroes, Thael had finally learned the ancient skill of the loremasters. Now his magical power would add to the cunning mechanical traps that already protected the approaches to his people's home. Thael felt a surge of pride as he finished roughing out the shape that he would soon enchant.

Snarag crouched in the shadows, watching the frail dwarf chisel away at the stone. The dwarves were always makers, whiling away time with their crafts when they could be fighting. That was why they were weak. His anger at the dwarf nearly overcame his reason, but the orc restrained himself, simmering in the darkness, and continued to observe. Then the dwarf began to chant . . . his hands glowing? Magic! This was unexpected. The dwarves rarely used any magic beyond that needed to enchant blades or armor. What did it mean?

Thael began the delicate movements of hand that reflected the complex patterns visualized in his mind's eye. He opened himself to the energy of Aryth, let himself become a willing vessel. The rune engraved upon the wall began to glow briefly before the light cooled and faded. There, it was done. Now any orc that came within a javelin's throw of the wall would find itself the target of an arc of flame as hot as any forge. That would certainly give the defenders an advantage.

Suddenly there was a blast of light and heat. Fire gushed from the wall, nearly roasting Thael alive in the process. He watched in shock as the flame leapt past him and illuminated the body of a stunted, wily orc bearing the arms and armor of scout. Seconds later, the light and heat were gone, and what was once Snarag lay smoldering in the niche in which he had been hiding. Thael guffawed, thanking the stone and his ancestors for his luck . . . then sighed. The rune had been used. Hefting hammer and chisel, the dwarf began again.

Feats

The subterranean war between the dwarves and the orcs has led to a whole class of new fighting styles and feats specific to their underground ways. Few young dwarves learn any new skills that are not focused on killing orcs or defending the clanhold, and they rarely leave their homes to teach anything they do know to outsiders. These abilities are therefore rarely seen outside of the Kaladrins, but may be available to players at the DM's discretion.

Dwarvencraft

You have learned the secret techniques of the dwarven smiths.

Prerequisites: 4 ranks in Craft (armorsmithing), Craft (blacksmithing), or Craft (weaponsmithing).

Benefit: You may learn dwarvencraft techniques. For every 4 ranks possessed in the Craft (armorsmithing), Craft (blacksmithing), or Craft (weaponsmithing) skills, you know one dwarvencraft technique (see page 50). That technique may only be applied to the appropriate items; for instance, if you qualify for a technique due to ranks in Craft (weaponsmithing), then you may only apply that technique when crafting weapons. As you gain more ranks in the Craft skill, you automatically master more techniques.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time you take the feat after the first, you gain an additional dwarvencraft technique.

Powerful Throw

You are skilled at throwing axes and hammers farther than normal.

Prerequisites: Str 13, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (light hammer, throwing axe, or urutuk hatchet).

Benefit: Increase the range increment of any hammer or axe with a range (light hammer, throwing axe, or urutuk hatchet) by 10 ft. You may add your Strength bonus instead of your Dexterity bonus to ranged attack rolls with these weapons.

Shield Mate

You are trained to protect others at the expense of your own attacks' accuracy.

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Shield Proficiency.

Benefit: While using a shield and either fighting defensively or taking a penalty of at least -2 with Combat Expertise, allies adjacent to you gain a +2 cover bonus to AC. This bonus to AC only applies against foes that threaten both you and the ally in question.

Touched by Magic

Whether it is due to your unique bloodline or the circumstances of your upbringing, you have overcome your race's natural resistance to magic.

Prerequisites: Dwarf or orc, must be taken at character creation.

Benefit: You start with the normal amount of spell energy for a character of your level, but you do not possess the +2 racial bonus to saving throws versus spells and spell-like abilities normally granted to your race.

Normal: Dwarves and orcs normally start with two fewer points of spell energy, but gain a +2 racial bonus to saving throws versus spells and spell-like abilities.

Trapsmith

You have a natural aptitude for building and disarming traps.

Benefit: You get a +2 bonus on all Craft (trapmaking) checks, Disable Device checks, and Search checks made to find traps.

Tunnel Fighting

You have practiced fighting in confined spaces.

Benefit: You take no penalty to your Armor Class while squeezing, and you take no penalty on attack rolls while squeezing if you are wielding a one-handed or light weapon.

Normal: You take a -4 penalty to Armor Class and attacks rolls while squeezing.



Dwarvencraft Techniques

The dwarven smiths have been refining the techniques used for crafting weapons and armor for more than 1,000 years, and in that time have developed methods not found anywhere else on Aryth. Items made using a dwarvencraft technique are so rare outside of dwarven holdfasts as to be virtually unheard of, though they might be found in the hands of orcs who have taken them as spoils.

To learn any of these techniques, the smith must have the Dwarvencraft feat, and some techniques have additional prerequisites. A character may know one technique for every 4 ranks in the Craft (armorsmithing), Craft (blacksmithing), or Craft (weaponsmithing) skill he has. Alternatively, additional techniques may be learned beyond this maximum for each additional time the Dwarvencraft feat is taken.

In addition to selecting the Dwarvencraft feat and finding someone to train him (any PC or NPC that knows the appropriate Dwarvencraft technique), a character must spend one month and an amount of XP for the training as shown in the table below. The character spends this XP much like a spellcaster spends XP to create a magic item. A character can never spend so much XP on a Dwarvencraft technique that he loses a level. However, upon gaining enough XP to attain a new level, he can immediately expend XP on learning a Dwarvencraft technique rather than keeping the XP to advance a level.

Technique	XP Cost
1st	50
2nd	150
3rd	300
4th	500
5th	750
6th	1,050
7th	1,400
8th	1,800
9th	2,250
10th	2,750

These techniques can only be used on items made mostly of metal. An axe or a steel shield would be appropriate, but a spear or a wooden shield would not. The masterwork techniques may be used with alternative materials, like mithral, but the other techniques cannot. Unless otherwise noted, these techniques are useful for melee or thrown weapons, but not for missile weapons. Many of these techniques can be combined; an individual weapon can be crafted using one technique from each grouping of techniques on the table on page 51. For instance, a battleaxe could be improved masterwork, reinforced, and quick-cooled; it could not, however, be reinforced and clouded.

Improved Masterwork: The smith is a master craftsman and may create weapons that are nearly supernatural in their perfection.

—Improved masterwork weapons provide a +1 enhancement bonus to hit and damage, and cost an additional 600 vp. The enhancement bonus granted by an improved masterwork weapon doesn't stack with the enhancement bonus provided by the weapon's magic, if any.

—Improved masterwork armor or shields are likewise impressive works: In addition to armor check penalties one lower than normal, their maximum Dex bonuses are increased by 1. Improved masterwork armor and shields cost an additional 300 vp.

—Improved masterwork items that are not weapons, armor, or shields increase any DC associated with them by +2 (such the DC to open a lock) and possess an additional 10 hp. Such items cost an additional 50 vp.

Greater Masterwork: The smith has learned to craft items with legendary skill; he is among the greatest craftsmen his race has ever produced. Greater masterwork items possess all the abilities and costs:

—Greater masterwork weapons provide a +2 enhancement bonus to attack rolls and a +1 enhancement bonus to damage rolls, and cost an additional 1,200 vp.

—As with improved masterwork armor, greater masterwork armor has an armor check penalty one lower than normal and a maximum Dex bonus one higher than normal. In addition, greater masterwork armor can be donned, donned hastily, and removed in half the normal time, and medium greater masterwork armor can be slept in without causing fatigue. Greater masterwork light shields, meanwhile, can be used with missile weapons and off-hand or two-handed weapons as if they were bucklers, while greater masterwork heavy shields can be used as if they were light shields. Both armor and shields have arcane spell failure chances 5% lower than normal and cost an additional 600 vp.

—Greater masterwork items that are not weapons, armor, or shields increase any DC associated with them by +4 (such the DC to open a lock) and possess an additional 20 hp. Greater masterwork items that are not weapons, armor, or shields cost an additional 100 vp.

Reinforcing: You have learned to work with denser alloys and band your creations with stronger materials. Reinforced items possess an additional 5 hp but cost an additional 100 vp and weight one-third more than normal. Light weapons crafted with this method tend to be off-balance, causing a –1 penalty to attack rolls, and the targets of any thrown reinforced weapons are considered to be one range increment farther away than they are.

The reinforce technique cannot be used with the clouding technique. Reinforced items cost an additional 100 vp.

Clouding: You have learned the secret of forging a less dense steel alloy. Steel armor, steel shields, and steel weapons (including blades and metal-hafted weapons, but not including wooden-hafted weapons) that are crafted with this technique weigh half their normal weight without sacrificing

Dwarvencraft Smithing

Dwarvencraft Technique	Prerequisite	Cost
Improved Masterwork Greater Masterwork	Dwarvencraft feat, Craft 8 ranks Improved Masterwork technique	+600 vp weapon, +300 armor +1,200 vp weapon, +600 armor
Reinforcing Clouding	Dwarvencraft feat Dwarvencraft feat	+100 vp +100 vp
Advanced Tempering Tempering (Quick-cooled) Tempering (Icebound) Tempering (Fireforged)	Dwarvencraft feat Advanced Tempering technique Advanced Tempering technique Advanced Tempering technique	Cost x 1.5 Cost x 1.5 Cost x 2 Cost x 2

hardness or hit points. Likewise, the amount of raw material needed to craft the weapon is halved, which can be an important factor when the crafter is cut off from the necessary supplies of metal. The range increments for such weapons, if they can be thrown, are increased by 10 ft.

Alternatively, this technique allows a smith to use steel instead of wood to craft what are normally wood-hafted weapons or wooden shields. Items made of clouded steel instead of wood have the same hardness as their wooden counterparts but have hit points equal to the steel versions.

The clouding technique cannot be used with the reinforce technique. Clouded items cost an additional 100 vp.

Advanced Tempering: You have learned to improve the hardness of your weapon, armor, or other metal item using careful measurements of temperature and timing in the crafting process. Tempering an item improves its hardness by one-fifth (from 10 to 12 or from five to six) but increases the cost by one-half after all other factors are added. For example, a masterwork greatsword normally costs 350 vp and has a hardness of 10, but an advanced tempered masterwork greatsword would cost 525 vp and have a hardness of 12.

No tempering technique can be used with any other tempering technique.

Tempering (Quick-cooled): You have learned alchemical techniques that fast cool metals to increase their hardness at the expense of becoming more brittle. Quick-cooling an item improves its hardness by two-fifths (from 10 to 14 or from five to seven) but lowers its hit points by an amount equal to twice the increase to hardness. This process also increases the cost by one-half after all other factors are added.

Tempering (Fireforged): Fireforged iron is forged using lava channeled from the depths of the Kaladrums. Such items are particularly resistant to their namesake, taking no damage from fire attacks. Armor forged with this technique also grants the wearer fire resistance dependent on the type of armor: fire resistance 2 for light armor, fire resistance 3 for medium armor, and fire resistance 4 for heavy armor. Items forged using this technique have double the normal cost after all other factors are added.

Tempering (Icebound): Icebound iron is quenched by the touch of ice brought down from the top of the tallest peaks in the Kaladrums. Items forged with this technique take no damage from cold attacks, and armor forged with this technique also grants the wearer cold resistance dependent on the type of armor: cold resistance 2 for light armor, cold resistance 3 for medium armor, and cold resistance 4 for heavy armor. Items forged using this technique have double the normal cost, after all other factors are added.

Tunnel Craft

Dwarven society is centered around constant warfare, and as such it is no surprise that it has developed unique equipment and devious traps not seen elsewhere. While new technological innovations are common in dwarven communities, they are inevitably centered on the never-ending war against the Shadow.

Communication

Given their subterranean existence, dwarves cannot rely on the common methods of communication. Yet quickly conveyed information regarding troop movements can mean the difference between a free clanhold and a slaughtered one. In place of messenger animals, fire signals, and horns, the dwarves of the Kaladrums use whisper holes and stone speak.

Whisper Holes

The dwarves of some holdfasts have used magic and special acids to develop a network of diminutive tunnels with astounding acoustics that carry sound over great distances. The message is shouted from within 5 ft. of the tube at one end, and requires a listener to be within 5 ft. at the other end. This communication system can be used to carry more complicated messages than might otherwise be sent with drums,



gongs, or horns. To correctly understand the message, the listener must succeed at a DC 10 Listen check. The DC is increased by 1 for every 50 feet the message must travel. If the check succeeds, the listener correctly understands the message. If it fails by 4 or less, the listener has failed to make sense of the message but can try again as long as someone on the other end repeats the message. If the listener fails by 5 or more, he misinterprets the message.

Stone Speak

The dwarves have long understood which types of stone best carry sound, and a tapping code has existed among them for centuries. This code, called Stone Speak, can be learned as a bonus language by any clan dwarf. It is a simple language, no more complex than the Erunsils' Patrol Sign, and used to discuss much the same things: troop numbers, types, and armaments, enemy position, direction, and speed, and so on. Because of its simplicity, Stone Speak can only be used at pidgin competence. Stone Speak is a restricted language.

Usually, Stone Speak is only useful for several hundred feet, at most. Listeners must make a Listen check with a DC equal to 1 per 10 ft. of stone through which the Stone Speak taps must travel. If the check succeeds, the listener correctly understands the message. If it fails by 4 or less, the listener has failed to make sense of the message but can try again as long as someone on the other end repeats the message. If the listener fails by 5 or more, he misinterprets the message.

However, the dwarves of the northern Kaladrans have located veins of stone and metal that are highly conductive to sound, and have stationed their watch posts and listening posts near them when possible. When using Stone Speak along such a vein, the DC is 1 per 100 ft. rather than per 10 ft. The dwarves of the southern Kaladrans, given the greater amount of time they have had to ready their defenses, have begun creating their own such veins, using everything from alchemical processes to small summoned earth elementals to ensure that good Stone Speak veins lead directly to and from their most important outposts.

Transport

Dwarves are often slower than the longer-legged and more lightly armored orcs they must fight, and their fewer numbers mean that they must often rush to fill breached lines or hurry to intercept their foes rather than simply wait for them to come.

While a dwarf's own two legs serve for most purposes, the mountain fey have developed several unique engineering solutions to the problem of rapid transportation. Of particular note are the methods used to traverse different elevations. The war in the Kaladrans is as three-dimensional as any aerial battle: While clan dwarves must often retreat lower and deeper into the mountains, the Kurgun must often deploy rap-

idly from the surface to subterranean breaches from which their foes boil up.

Drop Shaft

In order to travel quickly to fights from which they do not need to immediately return, whether because the fight will not be won or because there will be time to regroup afterwards, the dwarves have developed drop shafts. These nearly frictionless slides allow the user to move downwards at a rapid 80 feet per round until just before the destination is reached, at which point the slide levels out. The user is then deposited onto a flat surface in a guardroom or other safe place near the fight. Proper use of a drop shaft requires a full-round action. The user must make a DC 10 Balance, Jump, or Tumble check (dwarves may add their +4 racial stability bonus to this check). Success means that the user lands on his feet, unharmed and possibly able to take a 5-ft. step. Failure means that the user suffers 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the fall and lands prone at the bottom of the slide. It is nearly impossible to climb back up a steep drop shaft (DC 30 Climb), but stout, trapped hatches guard the tops nonetheless.

Rapid Lift

Drop shafts are useful for descending, but there are times when whole squads of dwarves may need to move upward in rapid succession, whether to retreat or to fight off invaders closer to the surface. Thus the invention of the rapid lift: an elevator that can be winched upward or downward by hand at a rate of 10 feet per round, but can also rise rapidly by simply cutting loose the line that holds a heavy stone counterweight. When the counterweight is at the top of the shaft and is released, it plummets downward, launching the platform up at a speed of 50 feet per round. Doing so shatters the counterweight and chain mechanism when it strikes the bottom, however, meaning that the system must be reset and repaired before it can be used again as a rapid lift.

The user must take a full-round action to release the counterweight, which can be done at the top or bottom of the lift. Any passengers that have not taken a standard action to secure themselves to the lift's railings take 2d6 points of damage per round as they are thrown about, although a successful Balance check with a DC of 10 + 1 per 10 ft. the lift rises will halve the damage.

Traps

The dwarves have built a number of wicked traps to deter the approach of their orc enemies. While some do need to be reset, those that are most valued are those that are able to reset themselves or function several times before needing care, alleviating the need for a dwarven trapsmith to put himself in harm's way to maintain the defenses. Of particular

note is that, for many magical versions of traps, the dwarves have invented a mechanical trap of similar quality and effect.

Crushing Roller

The crushing roller works best in worked tunnels that are sloped. A pressure plate is placed in the tunnel floor that, when triggered, allows the ceiling to loose a huge 1000-pound stone cylinder that rolls toward the enemy, crushing them. The cylinder is generally crafted to be the width and height of the corridor, so those that succeed in a Reflex saving throw manage to stay pushed ahead of the roller, but can never get behind it. The roller begins with a speed of 20 and on an average grade accelerates by 5 feet per round until it strikes a wall, turn, or some obstacle it cannot crush and move past. Those who are trampled by the roller are knocked prone as the roller moves over them.

Crushing Roller: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 25, Open Lock DC 30); 10-ft. wide trample 6d6 (DC 24 Reflex save avoids for one round); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 22; Market value 6,800 vp.

Flame Jet

A mixture of oil and alchemist's fire is hidden within a wall behind an aperture. A bellows connected to the alchemical mixture is placed underneath a pressure plate, such that when depressed the mixture is sprayed onto the victim and ignites.

Flame Jet (single): CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset (5 charges); Atk +10 ranged touch (2d6 fire, DC 15 Reflex save to avoid catching fire for 3 rounds (1d6 dmg/round); Search DC 19; Disable Device DC 20; Market value 1,500 vp.

Flame Jet (triggers every space in a 100-ft.-long corridor): CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +10 ranged touch (2d6 fire, DC 15 Reflex save to avoid catching fire for 3 rounds (1d6 dmg/round); Search DC 19; Disable Device DC 20; Market value 3,750 vp.

Masters of the Elements

Over the past century, the dwarves have harnessed the power of air, earth, fire, and water, the four basic elements of life, to defend their clanholds. Each element has been carefully woven into the clanhold defenses; without them the dwarves would have already fallen to the Shadow. All four elements have also been turned into effective and deadly weapons against the hated orcs. Their use is so prevalent that it appears as if the Kaladrin Mountains are alive and actively protecting the dwarves, striking out at those who would hurt their children.

Air is the most basic need of those who struggle under the mountain. Dwarven miners know all too well the dangers of unclean air. Sulfurous vapors run throughout the Kaladrins, seeping through the rock and incapacitating or killing the unwary. The dwarves have channeled the natural flow of the vapor, creating caverns where no air-breathing creatures can survive. Such caverns need no defenders, as they are impassable to nearly all of the Shadow's minions, so they allow desperately needed warriors to be moved to more threatened areas. They have also constructed traps that seal caverns so tightly that no air can seep in. Once those trapped are dead, the dwarves break the seal, letting the Fell rise amongst the asphyxiated corpses to wreak carnage in the orc army.

Earth is the basis of the dwarven defenses. Dense, iron-reinforced stone is what has allowed them to hold against an enemy that is stronger and far more numerous. The ground and tunnel floors near clanhold gates have been broken and carved into razor sharp spikes to slow the orc assaults. Stone barriers drop from hidden portals, cutting off attackers and denying the orcs the advantage of numbers. Caverns have been designed to collapse, support beams weakened, pits and deadfall traps litter the routes to dwarven clanholds, and massive stone juggernauts have been unleashed, crushing all in their path. The orcs have learned to dread the rumbling of the ground, knowing that the very stone around them could spell their doom.

Fire is an ever-present danger to both the dwarves and the orcs. In the deeper mines rivers of lava, Aryth's blood, flow up from the depths, creating walls of blistering heat. In the western Kaladrins most of the deep-delving clanholds are built around these lava flows. Throughout the mountains, dark tar and viscous oils congeal into toxic and highly flammable pools. The dwarves use trenches of flaming oil and pitch to channel attackers into killing grounds and to cover their withdrawal if forced to retreat. Offensively, giant billows stream out flaming pitch and ballistae fire missiles carrying oil that bursts into flame on impact.

Water is the most basic requirement of both the fey and the odrendor. Huge quantities of clean water are needed to support the clanholds and the orc armies. The dwarves have fouled or poisoned the water supply as they've been forced to retreat, spreading disease through the Shadow's armies. Where possible, they have diverted the water's natural flow as well, denying water to the orcs and forcing the Shadow to haul water from more secure areas of the Kaladrins. With the growing number of goblin miners seeking to bypass dwarven defenses, water has been diverted into dwarven mines, flooding them and building a natural barrier underneath their fortifications. Meanwhile, the dwarves have built giant cisterns and dams to store water, whether for drinking or for use as a desperate weapon. The pent-up water can be released into caverns in a rushing torrent, destroying siege equipment and drowning the heavily armored orcs.

Why Axes and Hammers?

The traditional dwarven weapons have been the axe and hammer for as long as any can remember. The most likely reason for this is that dwarves have always been Aryth's craftsmen. In the Time of Years it was said that their axes could chop through solid rock, allowing them to quarry stone by hand, and that they wielded hammers blessed by the gods, which could rejoin rock by the sheer force of their blows as easily as they could shatter it. Despite the mythical quality of these tales, they may hold a kernel of truth. Though the axes used to cut wood or the hammers used to chisel stone are different in detail from those used against the orcs, the two types remain similar in principal. Everything from the familiarity of the strokes used, to the proportional heft and balance, to the simple fact of their similar appearances endears the weapon versions of these tools to the dwarven folk.

Of course, the necessities of the dwarves' war of attrition against the orcs have encouraged them to diversify their weapon use. For instance, spears require less room to wield, are easy to craft and repair, and are excellent defensive weapons, and as such have increased in popularity. Whether for throwing, for quiet work, or for defending against a grappling orc, daggers have become universal. However, axes and hammers remain popular for pragmatic as well as cultural reasons. Why not swords in their various shapes and styles, arguably the most popular melee weapons among humans and elves? First of all, the dwarves are lower to the ground and have shorter arm lengths than their orc foes, meaning that they do not have the reach and flexibility necessary to wield swords as effectively. Those same anatomical disadvantages provide a benefit, however, by giving dwarves the torque and stability necessary to swing hafted weapons with unparalleled strength and accuracy.

Additionally, swords are more difficult and time-consuming to craft and to maintain than hafted weapons; while the ore to make them is plentiful, scavenged weapons from fallen foes mean that the hafts for axes and hammers are nearly as easy to come by. Axes and hammers can be crafted for throwing, making them useful for taking down fleeing enemies with longer strides. This is also convenient because dwarves tend to wield shields in their off hands, making switching to a two-handed ranged weapon unwieldy. Given the short ranges at which missile combat takes place in the depths, the accuracy of projectile weapons is seldom missed.

Finally, the warriors in the narrow quarters of the Kaladrans' tunnels can choke up on their weapons, their lead hands held close to the striking head to reduce the space needed to swing. Even if the weapon does accidentally strike a tunnel wall, it is less likely to blunt or shatter than a sword.

Takhun

Takhun are not magical, but some may be empowered by their owners' beliefs that they are somehow consecrated. The longer a dwarf keeps a takhun, the more powerful it becomes due to his inherent belief that it has somehow prevented misfortune from befalling him. Not every dwarf keeps a takhun, considering them to be crutches for the weak and fearful. In this regard, it is not required that a dwarf keep a takhun, but such an individual would be considered unusual in the dark years of the Last Age.

A dwarf can declare any personal item that he owns to be his takhun. From that point forward, he must keep the takhun with him at all times, especially when venturing into battle. If he survives a number of combats equal to his character level, his takhun becomes invested. A dwarf may only keep one takhun at a time. The first time a dwarf goes into battle without his takhun, either because it is lost, destroyed, or forgotten, he suffers a -1 morale penalty to Armor Class and to all saving throws.

An invested takhun provides a sacred bonus once per day to a single saving throw or to the owner's Armor Class for a single round. Activation of the takhun is a swift action, meaning that it can be done at any time, even when it is not its owner's turn. The activation must be declared before any saving throws or attack rolls have been resolved. The bonus provided by a takhun depends on the character's class level (see below). A character that loses his takhun may choose a new one, but the rules for declaring a new takhun apply as usual. A takhun never works for anyone but the dwarf who declared and invested it.

Takhun Benefits

Character Level	Takhun Bonus
1st – 4th	+1
5th – 8th	+2
9th – 12th	+3
13th – 16th	+4
17th – 20th	+5

Non-Dwarves and Takhun

Though many races are fond of employing charms, takhun are unique to dwarves. Perhaps the powers they grant fill the void where spell energy exists for other races, or maybe they replaced the spiritual vacuum left by the absence of their ancient gods. Regardless, only dwarves, dworgs, and dwarrow may employ takhun.



Alternate Rules

The +1 racial bonus to attacks with axes and hammers reflects both the dwarves' predilection for and training with those weapons from a young age as well as the dwarves' aforementioned anatomical advantage when using them. If you wish your game play to further reflect the minutiae of the appropriateness of these weapons for fights in the tunnels of the Kaladrans, consider the following optional rules.

Tunnel Impact

On a roll of a natural "1" on an attack roll with a slashing weapon while adjacent to unyielding surfaces in three dimensions, the attacker not only misses his target but strikes his weapon against the surface, usually a cavern wall. Roll damage as normal, including strength bonuses, enhancement bonuses, and the like, but apply the damage to the attacker's own weapon as though it were a sunder attempt.

For instance, a dwarven warrior in a 5-ft.-wide, 5-ft.-high corridor attacking an orc in melee would be subject to this rule because he is adjacent to four unyielding surfaces: a wall on either side, a stone floor, and a stone ceiling. Likewise, an orc backed into the corner of a 20-ft.-high room would be subject to the rule because he is adjacent to three unyielding surfaces: the two walls that make up the corner and the stone floor. A combatant against only one wall might be subject to the rule or might not be, depending on the height of the cor-

ridor. If the ceiling is higher than the combatant's space, he would only be adjacent to two surfaces, the floor and the wall, and therefore would not be subject to the tunnel impact rule. On the other hand, if the ceiling is only as high as the combatant's space (a Medium humanoid in a room with a 5-ft.-high ceiling), he is subject to the rule because he is adjacent to three surfaces: the floor, the ceiling, and one wall.

Weapon Maintenance

When using these optional rules, non-hafted slashing or piercing weapons (such as most swords, but also including daggers) damaged in this manner receive a cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls for each tunnel impact. All damage to the weapon must be repaired before this penalty to damage is removed. Regardless of whether weapon damage is caused by tunnel impact or simply by sundering, repairing such non-hafted slashing and piercing weapons is time-consuming, requiring that they be reforged (if the Craft skill is used to repair them), or uses up valuable resources in the case of spells like *mending* or *make whole*.

Hafted weapons, on the other hand, such as axes or hammers, are more easily repaired. When they are damaged or destroyed, their hafts are what splinter and break. Such weapons can be repaired in one minute with a DC 15 Craft (weaponsmithing) skill check. For every five points by which the skill check exceeds the DC, the time to perform the repair is shortened by one round. Replacing a broken haft provokes an attack of opportunity.

Fighting in Cramped Spaces

Encounters that occur in the confined tunnels that surround dwarven holdfasts may sometimes lead to fights in very restrictive places. In those cases where the combatants must do battle in spaces smaller than would require more than squeezing, the DM might consider these variant rules.

Compressed Squeezing

Normally, a creature suffers a -4 penalty to attack rolls and AC while squeezing. However, in those cases where the space is so low that the combatant must crawl while squeezing or otherwise has extremely limited mobility (beyond just squeezing), there are additional penalties. The combatant loses any Dexterity bonus to AC and suffers a -8 penalty to attack rolls with melee weapons. Missile weapons other than crossbows cannot be used.

Optimal Weapons

This optional rule presents three classes of weapons that are affected by the amount of space available: optimal, average, and unwieldy. Optimal weapons allow the user to attack with only half the normal penalty to his attack rolls due to squeezing, while unwieldy weapons cause the user to suffer half again the normal penalty to attack rolls due to squeezing.

Optimal weapons include: light melee weapons, one-handed piercing melee weapons, and crossbows.

Average weapons include: one-handed non-piercing melee weapons, and two-handed piercing melee weapons.

Unwieldy weapons include: two-handed non-piercing melee weapon, and any thrown weapon or bow.

Disadvantage

Rather than keeping track of all of the various modifiers for being prone, entangled, squeezing, and the like, one can simply use the following rules. They are most useful and appropriate when characters are engaged in tunnel fighting or other situations in which such modifiers come up often.

When using the disadvantage optional rule, rather than applying static penalties, characters simply have disadvantages. For each level of disadvantage a character has, he suffers a -1 to all rolls (including weapon damage rolls), a -1 to AC, and he loses 5 ft. of movement from his base speed (minimum base speed of 5 ft.). Additionally, if a character has a disadvantage penalty of -3 or higher, he loses his Dexterity bonus to AC. See the Disadvantage sidebar to the right for details on the level of disadvantage caused by various conditions.

While the numbers don't work out exactly the same as in the base d20 system, this variant rule can work for "fast-and-loose" combat scenes in which you don't want to be bogged down with ability modifiers, precise movement rules, and the like. It can also be useful for guessing the likely result of large groups of low-level combatants.

The true benefit to this system comes into play when two combatants are directly opposing one another. To determine the total bonus or penalty one combatant has when attacking or defending against another, simply compare the two combatants' levels of disadvantage; for each level of advantage a character has over another, he gains a $+1$ bonus to all rolls (including damage rolls) against that character, a $+1$ to AC against that character, and a $+1$ to saving throws against that character's special attacks. For each level of disadvantage a character has against another character, he suffers the normal penalties described above.

For instance, if one character is suffering from one disadvantage due to environmental effects while his target is suffering from three disadvantages, the attacker has a total of 2 levels of advantage over his target: a $+2$ to attack rolls against him, a $+2$ to AC against him, and a $+2$ to saving throws against his special attacks. Meanwhile, the disadvantaged character, though he suffers a -3 to all rolls and to AC against other opponents, has a somewhat easier time defending against his similarly disadvantaged foe: he suffers only a -2 to all rolls and AC against his attacker.

Optional Rule: Disadvantages

Tabbed effects below are more extreme states of the effect above them; the levels of disadvantage for such effects supersede the previous disadvantage. Otherwise, all disadvantage levels stack.

Effect	Level of Disadvantage
Dazed*	0
Dazzled	1
Entangled	2
Fatigued	1
Exhausted	3
Kneeling/Sitting	2
Limited Visibility	2
Blinded†	4
Prone	4
Sickened	2
Nauseated‡	0
Squeezing (normal)	2
Squeezing (tight)†	4
Stunned*†	3

* The character can take no actions.

‡ The character can take only one move action.

† The character loses his Dexterity bonus to AC.

The Ancestral foe

	Base				
Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	

Special

Know thy enemy +1, primal foe, savvy hunter
Tunnel fighting
Hunter's strike 1/day
Know thy enemy +2
Impervious mind
Hunter's strike 2/day
Know thy enemy +3
Rage of vengeance
Hunter's strike 3/day
Know thy enemy +4

On the other hand, if both combatants are suffering from the same disadvantage (they are both entangled by mud, for instance), neither one has a disadvantage relative to the other. Though they may have penalties to attacks against characters outside the mud pit, relative to one another they are on equal footing, and so needn't calculate any modifications to their rolls or AC.

Regardless of a character's level of disadvantage relative to another character, the movement penalties and penalties to unopposed skill checks caused by disadvantages do not change.

Prestige Classes

Ancestral foe

The orcs and dwarves have been fighting one another under the Kaladrums for 10,000 years or more. In that time, they have become especially adept at killing each other. Those who have trained to kill their hated racial enemies above all others walk the path of the ancestral foe. Ancestral foes are dangerous warriors, but as killers of their racial enemies their skills are unparalleled.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify to become an ancestral foe, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Dwarf or orc.

Base Attack Bonus: +6.

Skills: Knowledge (dungeoneering) 2 ranks.

Feats: Diehard.

Special: Master hunter wildlander trait (Orcs must have selected dwarf, dwarves must have selected orc). Must speak both dwarven and orcish at basic competence level.

Class Skills

The ancestral foe's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (local), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Speak Language (n/a), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the ancestral foe prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Ancestral foes gain proficiency with all simple and martial weapons, all types of armor, and shields (but not tower shields).

Primal Foe: An ancestral foe may never associate with a member of his racial enemy's race, even if that person is only a half-blood (such as a dworg or a dwarrow). If he suffers a member of his racial enemy to travel with him for any length of time or interacts with the enemy for any reason other than to torture, interrogate, maim, or kill him, he loses all class abilities while the foe is present and continues to live. If the ancestral foe cannot kill that enemy (because the foe escapes, for instance), the ancestral foe does not regain his class abilities until he delivers the killing blow to a number of his racial enemies equal to the number of days he spent in that enemy's company.

Know Thy Enemy (Ex): The first step toward becoming an ancestral foe is to devote one's entire existence to the destruction of the enemy. At 1st level, the ancestral foe's

bonus to damage and skill checks from the master hunter trait (against his racial enemy only) increase by +1. Additionally, the ancestral foe's knowledge of his ancestral enemy's fighting techniques has translated from just offense to defense as well. He receives a +1 dodge bonus to AC against attacks made by his ancestral enemy. The bonus to damage, skill checks, and AC increase by an additional +1 every three levels thereafter (at 4th, 7th, and 10th level).

Savvy Hunter (Ex): Though he is filled with undying rage for his racial enemy, the ancestral foe is still a canny and calculating hunter. At the beginning of his turn each turn, the ancestral foe may subtract up to one-half of his bonus to damage against his racial enemy, applying that number as a bonus to his attack rolls against members of his racial enemy instead. The ancestral foe may switch this number around as often as he likes, but may only do so at the beginning of his turn. Doing so is a free action.

Tunnel Fighting: At 2nd level the ancestral foe gains the Tunnel Fighting feat as a bonus feat.

Hunter's Strike (Ex): At 3rd level, the ancestral foe may use a hunter's strike (as per the wildlander ability) against his racial enemy once per day. If he already has this ability via the wildlander class, he gains one additional use of the ability per day, but it may only be used against his racial enemy. He may use this ability one additional time per day at 6th and 9th level.

Impervious Mind (Ex): At 5th level the ancestral foe's hatred of his racial enemy is so intense that not even magic can stop him. If at the beginning of his turn the ancestral foe is the victim of any mind-affecting effect that prevents him from attacking a member of his racial enemy, the effect is immediately dispelled. Effects that cause penalties to attack rolls, such as *doom* or *crushing despair*, are not dispelled, though *cause fear* or a *suggestion* that the ancestral foe depart the scene of battle would be dispelled.

Rage of Vengeance (Ex): At 8th level the ancestral foe uses his hatred of his racial enemy to become a killing machine when in their midst. Any time the ancestral foe or one of his allies within 30 ft. suffers damage from an attack caused by one of his racial enemies, there is a percentage chance equal to the amount of damage dealt that the ancestral foe will enter a rage of vengeance. The ancestral foe gains a +2 bonus to Strength, a +2 bonus to Constitution, and a +1 morale bonus on Will saves, but he takes a –2 penalty to Armor Class and cannot use any skill or feat normally unavailable during a rage. In addition, the ancestral foe does an additional 1d6 points of damage against his ancestral enemy and gains the benefit of the Great Cleave feat, whether he meets the requirements or not, as long as any additional attacks are made against an ancestral enemy. The rage of vengeance lasts until all present racial enemies are dead, and may not be ended prematurely. Normally an ancestral foe is fatigued at the end of a rage of vengeance, but if all racial enemies have been killed before a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's (newly improved) Constitution modifier

have elapsed, he suffers no penalty for the rage ending. On the other hand, if an ancestral foe is forced to flee from racial enemies during a rage of vengeance, he becomes exhausted upon the rage ending. Either condition can be removed after 10 minutes of complete rest.

The rage of vengeance stacks with barbarian rage and other forms of rage or frenzy.

Dwarven Loremaster

Loremasters are key members of any dwarven community, lending magical strength to clanhold defenses, keeping the clan's history, and offering advice on new construction. Those that become loremasters take a sacred vow to record the clan's history so that every clan member always knows what went before. Once, dwarven loremasters were common, but with the casualties of the constant struggle, few remain.

Hit Die: d6.

Requirements

To qualify to become a dwarven loremaster, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Dwarf.

Skills: Craft (any) 5 ranks, Knowledge (any two) 5 ranks, Knowledge (history) 9 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Feats: Magecraft, Touched by Magic, one item creation feat, one spellcasting feat.

Special: Must be trained by another dwarven loremaster.

Class Skills

The ancestral foe's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Speak Language (n/a), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the dwarven loremaster prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Dwarven loremasters gain no proficiency with any weapons or armor.

Improved Spellcasting: Dwarven loremaster levels grant similar abilities as channeler levels with regards to the art of magic, bonus spells, and bonus spell energy. This means that dwarven loremaster levels stack with channeler levels for the purposes of determining the highest-level spells the character can cast. A character with more dwarven loremaster and channeler levels than levels in other classes adds +1 to her character level to determine the highest-level spells she can cast. Additionally, each time the character receives a new dwarven loremaster level, she gains one new spell of any level and school she can cast (according to her new level). A

The Dwarven Loremaster

	Base			
Class	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will
Level	Bonus	Save	Save	Save
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7

Special

Improved spellcasting, literacy, lorebook
 Recharge nexus, rune magic (1st level)
 Bonus feat, rune magic (2nd level)
 Rune magic (3rd level)
 Rune magic (4th level)
 Recharge nexus (improved), rune magic (5th level)
 Bonus feat, rune magic (6th level)
 Rune magic (7th level)
 Rune magic (8th level)
 Bonus feat, rune magic (9th level)

dwarven loremaster can learn additional spells according to the normal rules for learning spells. Finally, the character's maximum spell energy increases by one point for every level of dwarven loremaster she gains.

Literacy: At 1st level, the dwarven loremaster gains literacy in both Old Dwarven and in her clan dialect.

Lorebook (Su): At 1st level, the dwarven loremaster gains the lorebook class ability of a hermetic channeler. If the dwarven loremaster already has this class ability, she may take an additional lorebook power. The dwarven loremaster adds her class level to her hermetic channeler class level when making lorebook checks.

Recharge Nexus (Su): At 2nd level, the dwarven loremaster has learned a great deal about the power nexuses found at the center of many clanholds. The dwarven loremaster gains the ability to recharge a power nexus by channeling spell energy. The dwarven loremaster must stand in the exact center of the power nexus for 10 minutes to activate this ability. For every three points of spell energy expended by the dwarven loremaster, the power nexus regenerates one point of spell energy. At 6th level, the dwarven loremaster's ability to form a connection to a power nexus improves: She must expend only two points of spell energy per one point recharged.

Rune Magic (Su): Beginning at 2nd level, the dwarven loremaster may carve runes that store spells onto stationary objects such as walls or large rocks. Such runes do not detect as magic until triggered, though they are large enough that they tend to be visible and legible at a distance of 60 feet. To be effective, a rune must always be placed in plain sight and in a prominent location. As a default, the spell stored in the rune is triggered whenever a

creature does one or more of the following, as the dwarven loremaster selects: looks at the rune, reads the rune, touches the rune, passes over the rune, or passes through a portal bearing the rune. Regardless of the trigger method or methods chosen, a creature more than 60 feet from a rune can't trigger it. Once the rune is inscribed, its triggering conditions cannot be changed.





The dwarven loremaster can also set special triggering limitations which can be as simple or elaborate as she desires. Special conditions for triggering a rune can be based on a creature's name, race, or alignment, but otherwise must be based on observable actions or qualities. Intangibles such as level, class, Hit Dice, and hit points don't qualify. Any variables, such as targets of the spell, must be chosen at the time the rune is inscribed. When scribing a rune, she can specify a password or phrase that prevents a creature using it from triggering the effect. Any creature using the password does not trigger that rune so long as it remains within 60 feet of the rune. If the creature leaves the radius and returns later, it must use the password again. A rune otherwise acts as a scroll for purposes of reading or dispelling its effect.

She can create a rune of any spell that she knows, up to a maximum spell level equal to her dwarven loremaster level -1. Spells with area effects originate at the center of the rune, while those that require a touch or ranged touch attack can only target creatures that touch, pass over, or pass through a portal bearing the rune. All other spells, such as those that tar-

get a number of creatures in an area, start with creatures closest to the center of the rune and work their way outward toward its edges. Spells inscribed in a rune default at the lowest caster level required to inscribe the rune, though they may be inscribed at a higher level if the loremaster wishes.

Inscribing a rune takes one day for each 1,000 gp in its base price. The base price of a rune is its spell level x its caster level x 25 gp. To scribe a rune, the loremaster must spend 1/25 of this base price in XP; as normal in *MIDNIGHT*, she need not expend any gp to create this magic item so long as she has the base materials on hand (in this case a chisel, hammer, and appropriate surface). Any rune that stores a spell with a costly material component or an XP cost also carries a commensurate cost, and the loremaster must expend the material component or pay the XP when scribing the rune.

Bonus Feat: At 3rd, 7th, and 10th level the dwarven loremaster gains a bonus feat. At each such opportunity, the dwarven loremaster may choose a metamagic feat or an item creation feat.

Appendix: The Siege of Shadow

As the Shadow marks its first century of dominance over the Kingdom of Erenland, the fey in the Kaladrin Mountains and Erethor still struggle to retain their freedom. In the dark recesses of the Vale of Tears, the broken god rages at the inability of his chosen to break the fey and grant access to the power he needs to restore his godhood and escape from this mortal prison. His viceroys, the four Night Kings, have felt his rage and know they must destroy the fey no matter the cost. If they fail, what remains of their souls will be sacrificed to feed the dark god.

The call for warriors spreads like a raging fire across the Northern Marches. Unblooded orcs fill the warholds and scream in pain and victory in the fighting pits. Grizzled veterans of the wars put vardatch to grindstone, sharpening their weapons for the upcoming campaign. Slaves and warriors crippled in training are bound and readied for sacrifice to please the dark god, traded for his blessing upon the new warriors. Come the spring of 100 LA, tens of thousands of freshly armed and equipped warriors will travel south and east to join the war against the enemies of their blood.

The great tribes are stirring, watching the Feral Mothers with covetous eyes. They gather like carrion crows, sensing the impending fall of Calador. They seek to steal the glory from the Feral Mothers and claim the city for their own. In the depths of winter, alliances are made between the tribes as each seeks to gain command of a portion of the host at Erenhead. While fresh warbands are formed and trained, the battles under the mountain continue unabated as the Feral Mothers seek to end the siege of Calador before others can steal what has been earned with their blood.

The next year could decide the fate of Calador and the dwarven people. Not since the battles at the end of the Third Age have the dwarves faced such a host. Izrador has gathered all his might for a final offensive against the mountain fey. If that offensive fails, the fey will have bought valuable time for themselves and their allies, as well as mauled the core of the Shadow's army.

This chapter portrays a possible outcome of the Shadow's offensive and is provided to show how the campaign could unfold.

Arcs of Hanud, Hisha, and Sutara (Winter of 99 LA)

In the northern breeding grounds, the Feral Mothers have called to their allies for fresh warbands to launch the final assault on Calador. The Frozen Barrens are stripped of warriors, with only veterans who have seen too many winters left behind to protect the warrens and the eldest of the kurasatch udareen. In a bold move unprecedented in the history of the orcish hosts, the young mother-wives as well as those in their prime march with their soldiers, separate from but always watching them. They foretell that now is the time of the end of all things, and the kurasatch udareen go to lend their aid to the warriors they have birthed. Across the Northern Marches, tribes that have answered the call to arms start the long cold march toward the Ishensa River and ultimately Erenhead.

On the southern shores of the Pelluria, 3,000 orcs are sent to reinforce the garrison at Kardoling, near the northern edge of the Spinewall Range. Over the past arc, the Kurgun



and their human allies have ambushed three orc supply trains. Now reinforced, the orcs have doubled their guards and have announced that for every wagon the Kurgun destroy one local village will be burned to the ground. To the northeast, heavily armed patrols are sent for from Low Rock beneath the mountains. Their mission is to search for any undiscovered dwarven clanholds that could interrupt the main force's march to Calador, as well as to map out potential tunnel routes for that force. They are 1,000 strong.

Arc of Shareel (Spring, 100 LA)

Most of the warbands arrive at Gasterfang with the first hint of spring, where they slaughter herds of boro and caribou to provide meat for their long march to Erenhead. Warbands from over 40 tribes gather in Blood Mother territory before heading south. As the arc comes to a close, ominous rumbles shake the western Icewall Mountains as a long-dormant volcano belches smoke and ash. Though felt far into the Kaladrans, the tremors do not slow the assault on Calador. The fighting is bloody but inconclusive; the Feral Mothers can find no weakness in the dwarven defenses. To the south, the patrols from Low Rock find a heavily fortified southern road to Calador and lose over 200 warriors in the first futile assault.

In southern Erenland, the orcs at Drumlen capture dwarven watch posts at the entrance to the Pass of Eagles and begin constructing forts to support the launch of the summer offensive. Kurgun raids on the supply trains continue, and the orcs set fire to the village of Durstan. The inhabitants, many of whom are dwarrow, are burned alive.

Arc of Doshram (Planting)

The Frozen Barrens disgorge the last of their culled warbands, the result of scouring every corner of every warren. The Feral Mother reinforcements march south through the Icewalls. The few remaining dwarven clanholds watch helplessly as the dark tide heads south toward Calador. With reinforcements less than an arc away, the core Feral Mother army renews the assault on Calador's outer defenses. The dwarves repulse the attacks, but casualties are heavy on both sides.

In Erenhead, the competition for leadership of the southern army has ended. Jahzir has chosen Ubrakh, warlord of the Burnt Mother tribe, to lead the assault on the Kurgun clans and Bodrun. Gaalak of the Black Spears tribe, disgraced and with a crushed rib cage after his duel with Ferak, is chosen as Jahzir's second-in-command in the attack on Calador from the south. The army splits into two groups of roughly 100,000 each, one heading for Drumlen via river barge while the other marches northeast to Low Rock.

Arc of Sahaad (End of Spring)

In a devastating blow to the dwarves, the Mahan clanhold falls after a three-year siege. The loss of the clanhold opens a route south of Calador, threatening the last safe path for supplies into the besieged city. The heads of Mahan's defenders are carried by astirax-possessed raven deep into Calador's halls and left in corners, on shelves, and beneath beds to rot, a warning both of what is to come and to insinuate that the Shadow can enter the dwarves' homes whenever it wishes. The newly reinforced Feral Mother army expands its siege to the west of Calador, forcing the dwarves to redeploy and weakening their already desperately undermanned defenses.

The successes in the north are not matched in the south. The gnomes sabotage and abandon the orc troop transports on the river, while the Kurgun's human allies set brush fires to drive away the boro herds and to delay the orcs once they leave the barges to begin their march east to Drumlen. The delays in moving the army to Drumlen have allowed the dwarves more time to fortify their positions. Meanwhile, the Kurgun of the foothills have destroyed both their farms and those of their human neighbors, slaughtering or driving away the herd animals necessary to feed the Drumlen garrison. In retaliation, Ubrakh sends the vanguard of his army into the Pass of Eagles, attempting to drive the Kurgun south. The Kurgun have had months to prepare and they give ground slowly, inflicting heavy casualties on the orcs. By the end of the arc, the orcs have advanced just 10 miles and have still not cleared Kurgun raiding parties from the northern portion of the pass. With the arrival of the core of Ubrakh's army, the southern dwarves rally under the dor of the Gorand clan and move north to meet the orcs.

Arc of Sennach (Arc of Battle)

The noose tightens on Calador as the southern orc army, under the leadership of Jahzir, pushes steadily north, crushing the dwarven fortifications. In desperation, the dwarves collapse the last remaining tunnels in the south and west to slow the orc advance. Like the Night King himself, though, the forces he leads are slow but implacable. To the north, the Feral Mothers press their assault all along the dwarven line with fresh warbands from the Frozen Barrens. The screams of the dying, the crackle of burning pitch, and the thunderous sound of siege weapons being pulled forward echo through the caverns.

The full weight of the Burnt Mother army moves against the Kurgun in the Pass of Eagles and the allied dwarven army beneath the mountains. The dragon Arynix leads the assault against the Kurgun, shattering stone and turning the wooded portions of the pass into an inferno. The Kurgun are forced to withdraw, but not before leaving almost 4,000 dead orcs in the smoke-filled pass. Under the mountains, the orcs gain little ground. When they do finally break through the barricades



and traps, they discover that the dwarves have abandoned most of their clanholds north of the White Hand.

Arc of Halail (High Summer)

The two dwarven clans that act as the southern gatekeepers to Calador successfully seal the primary road south to Low Rock with landslides and tunnel collapses, preventing the Feral Mother army and Jahzir's army from merging. The temporary reprieve in the south allows the dwarves to reinforce their northern and western defenses, but this also means that the last escape route out of Calador is closed. While the orcs keep constant pressure on the dwarven fortifications, the main battles are fought in dank mines underneath Calador as goblin sappers attempt to tunnel beneath the dwarven barricades. Unable to close off all the goblin mines, dwarven engineers divert a portion of the underground river that flows through Calador into the city's lower halls, killing countless goblins and building a barrier of water underneath the city's defenses.

In the southern Kaladrums, battles rage both above and below the surface. Bolart, the dor of Gorand Clan, crushes two orc warbands that he lures away from the main orc army. Arynix is all that keeps the orc army moving forward, and even with the dragon's aid they are dying in droves. To this point the orcs have lost 20% of their numbers, while the southern dwarves have lost less than 5%. However, Arynix is yet unfaced. Anywhere the dragon goes, the dwarves must eventually withdraw. Not wishing to push his luck, Bolart pulls his army back to new defensive positions farther to the south.

Arc of Zimra (Harvest)

A weakness is finally found in Calador's northern defenses. Wave after wave of orcs assault the dwarven line, which cracks after almost eight days of constant fighting. The dwarves light trenches of burning pitch to cover their retreat and pull back to a new defensive line. Fresh warbands are rushed forward to punch through the new defensive line and force their way into the dwarven city.

In the Pass of Eagles, the dwarven defenses continue to give way under Arynix's almost constant attacks. To buy time to regroup and build new fighting positions, Kurgun wildlanders trigger landslides, destroying the road and burying hundreds of orcs as well as the dozens of brave dwarves that volunteered to act as bait. With the Kurgun retreat, the allied dwarven army gives ground to prevent being stretched too thin. The orc warlord Ubrakh, commander of the southern orc army, is forced to slow his offensive to rebuild his shattered warbands. The garrisons at Kardoling and Drumlen are halved to help make up some of the army's losses.

Arc of Obares (End of Autumn)

The rise of Obares marks the extermination of two entire dwarven clans; the defenders of southern Calador are finally crushed by the Black Spears. Only the gateholds now stand between Calador and the Black Spears army. While the Feral Mothers are being bled white, the Black Spears are feasting on the weakened dwarves. To open a path between the two orc armies, hordes of goblins are sent to rebuild miles of collapsed tunnels.

The war in the south goes poorly for the orcs. The Pass of Eagles remains blocked, and the looming winter months will make combat at that altitude impossible. Knowing that time is short, Ubrakh empties the human villages of the plains and foothills south of the Barren Forest and sends them to clear the pass. Meanwhile, the warlord tries to force the dwarves into a decisive battle beneath the mountain. If he cannot push through on the surface, he is determined to make his way below. However, the tunnels are too narrow for Arynix to aid the orcs. Bolart seizes his opportunity, revealing the true strength of his army. Ubrakh himself and nearly a fifth of his remaining army are cut off from aid and routed. Ubrakh's battalion flees deeper into the caves beneath the mountains, hoping to find a place to hole up and lick their wounds. The rest of the Burnt Mother army pulls out of the caves and, lacking strong leadership, submits to the will of Sunulael's legates. These beastmasters and necromancers seal packs of Fell and shadowspawn in the tunnels with the dwarves, hoping that they will inflict severe losses over the winter.

Arc of Hanud (Arc of the Dead)

True to its name, the death toll increases during the Arc of Hanud. The Feral Mothers exploit the weakness in the dwarven defenses and penetrate into the outer halls of Calador. The outer halls have been sealed for years and are a death trap for the orcs. Thousands die before they are forced to retreat. Though it means they must share their prize, the Feral Mothers dig in, waiting for the Black Spears to reach them before braving the inner fane of Calador's main entry.

Deep beneath the Kaladrums, Ubrakh encounters one of the Trapped and makes a deal with it, offering the souls of his entire battalion in exchange for being led to safety. The spirit makes good on the deal and begins to guide Ubrakh back to his troops . . . or so it seems. Meanwhile, with Ubrakh absent, there is no warlord with enough power to claim leadership. Sunulael's legates, whatever their initial purpose, have disappeared. The army begins to fragment along tribal lines. The southern offensive has been a disaster for the Shadow.

Arc of Hisha (Arc of Winter)

Even with their heavy losses, the Feral Mothers and their allies do not relent on the siege of Calador. Outside Calador, a new threat has arisen, stalking the goblin miners and slaughtering well-armed orc patrols. Some whisper that the darguul have awoken, and that they are hungry. Jahzir, frustrated by the slow progress of the Black Spears, hand-picks several orcs and oruks and proceeds with a vanguard to the southern walls of Calador. None of those who oppose them live to tell the tale.

In the midst of a winter storm the kurasatch udareen of the Mother of Bone tribe arrive amidst the southern orc army. In a foul ritual, the surviving warlords of the Burnt Mother tribe are forced to kneel before these matrons in the snow and are killed, then granted undeath and sent back to their troops. These become the *Gor Yallin*, the Sons of Night, and do the Mother of Bone's bidding.

Arynix, uncontrollable in his rage and without orc support, attacks Kurgun villages and refugees east of the White Hand. His prey is too dispersed for him to cause much real damage, but his rampage of terror reminds the dwarves that their fight is far from over.

Arc of Sutara (End of Winter)

The brief respite for the dwarves of Calador has been a godsend, allowing them to strengthen fortifications and give their exhausted warriors a chance to rest and regain strength for the inevitable return of the orc assaults. That return comes in the dawning days of this arc, as Jahzir and his bodyguard arrive in the Feral Mother camp through an unknown pass. Hundreds of orcs, their rage revived by his presence, stream into the inner fane of Lower Calador's main gate . . . and none emerge. Jahzir himself enters and does battle with a terrible defender within, a Trapped outsider honorbound to defend the city. Three days later, the way is cleared. The orcs begin to trickle down into the heart of Calador, brutally exterminating everything they see. The goblins reopen a path northward, allowing fresh Black Spear warbands to reinforce the Feral Mothers.

In Drumlen, the kurasatch udareen order the Sons of Night to execute an entire battalion that failed to take a dwarven strongpoint. If any doubted their leadership and command of the army, that doubt ends here. The dwarves will face a far more competent enemy in the spring. Arynix's rampages are answered not by heroes or hidden dragons but by common folk and brave hunters: The dragon is critically, if not mortally wounded, when it springs a trap designed specifically to kill it. The bait for this trap is an entire Kurgun village, and its residents as well as the Kurgun and human wildlanders who lead them are incinerated to the last man and dwarf. Their deaths are not in vain, however, as dozens of ballista bolts, hundreds of spears and arrows, and countless

stones and boulders penetrate the dragon's thick hide. Hours later, Bolart's scouts find the aftermath. The dragon is gone, but huge puddles of its blood are left behind.

The Aftermath

The dwarves have survived the orc offensive, leaving tens of thousands of orcs dead or crippled. Calador is all but lost, and there is no word of its thousands of residents. Did they find an escape route? Have they dispersed among the caves and vaults of their city to fight a guerilla war against Calador's occupiers? Regardless, it will be many months before the city can be truly claimed, and its fall was not without glory. The Feral Mothers have been gutted, and the next year will determine if they can hold their place as leader of the tribes assaulting Calador or if the Black Spears or one of the major tribes will sweep them aside and take Calador. In the southern Kaladrans, the southern orc army has lost nearly half its warriors, but it has gained a new leadership in the form of the mother-wives of the Mother of Bone tribe. The warlords of the other tribes under their command dare not question them, the legates cannot equal the sway they have over the orcish troops, and Jahzir is pleased that they serve themselves rather than any of his Night King peers. In short, they are the perfect commanders of a disgraced and suicidal band of warriors who have no purpose but to sell their lives in the completion of their mission. Come the spring, the dwarven army will be hard pressed to hold back this well-organized and determined force.

For the dwarves, the year has been bittersweet. They survived against almost impossible odds and dealt a serious blow to the Shadow's armies. That victory came at a heavy cost, though. The largest remaining dwarven clanhold has fallen. Entire clans have been exterminated. The Shadow now controls the Kaladrans from the Icewalls as far south as Garol, and can freely move troops along the passes to weed out the remaining guerilla warriors there. Time favors the Shadow, not the dwarves. Only in the southern Kaladrans is there a clear victory. The clans have united to meet the orcs and pushed them back. The Kurgun-human alliance proved its mettle in battle and dread Arynix may no longer be a threat. Feralk is missing, and the non-orcs among the southern army distrust their new kurasatch udareen leaders. Tales of the dwarves' victories have reached the Sarcosan riders, the halfling nomads, and even the urban insurgents of Alvedara, Sharuun, and Hallisport. The southern Kaladrans may become a rallying point and a stronghold for the resistance of southern Erenland, and the rebels there may attempt more daring raids and acts of defiance with the knowledge that there is somewhere to which they can retreat.

While the southern Kaladrans may be the last stand of the dwarven folk, they also have the potential to become the fortress of the united resistance of southern Erenland.

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