

**The Harbingers
Ascension Elf
OFFICIAL ASCENSION RACE PACKET**

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Listen now to the words of a liar, and know the truth.

The other races will talk of what they sacrificed for the Proscribe. The single element that made them who they were, or so they would claim. Yet, here they are - changed, certainly, but still mostly themselves.

They gave, yes - but they gave merely a single thing.

We Harbingers? We gave everything.

It was we who had first warned them of the dangers of the Vreech, leaving our own lands to warn these strangers of the doom at hand. It was we who watched as they failed to heed us, spurning our advice until their precious flying cities tumbled and burned. It was we who had discovered the weaknesses in the plan: how the Proscribe would not protect us as expected; that it would buy us precious little time, a brief respite at best; how the Vreech would circumvent this supposed "last, best hope" and wipe everything from existence. Those who rode the sky, the so-called Dark Elves, would rather trust to optimism and blind luck than meticulous planning.

We made the only choice we could. Victory over the Vreech needed to be complete; anything less, any compromise, would only lead to our utter destruction. The Proscribe was not the way, and then was not the time.

Our refusing the Proscribe was not the betrayal the others took it as, not the self-serving cowardice that some would claim. It was simply another step in a lengthy and grueling campaign against the Vreech where nothing - not the other races, not our honor nor our dignity, not even our own lives and the lives of our people - was considered too sacred to sacrifice.

We stood back while they tore through the defenses, as we knew they would. We Stalwarts knelt when they came to us, greeted them with open arms and faked smiles and offers of our

service, so that we would be in place to carry out our plans. We crafted magics to feed them when times were lean, so that they would not look too close, nor hunt too well for the things we'd hidden away.

Others of our kind, the Defiant, evacuated the remnants of the Protectorate to the Cairns, to prepare them for their role in the grand Plan. We suffered every indignity, every act of hatred from the other races - from those strangers we had fought for - and accepted their scorn and their attacks, so that we could remain in place, subvert the Vreech's plans and enact our own. We waited for the right moment to reveal ourselves, so that our revenge could be complete, our victory total.

Our time is now.

-Roharis Dawnsky, Harbinger Stalwart

Elf Racial Basics

While physically similar to the Elves of the Protectorate, the Harbingers have a much different history, coming from another land. Long ago, the Harbingers had unlocked the secrets of ley-line magic, wielding immense magical energies that etched glowing lines of power into their very flesh.

When the Vreech swarmed the Harbinger's homeland, they bound themselves to the swarm, offering themselves up to save others. The Harbingers would serve and feed the Vreech, in return for the Vreech stopping their rampage. However, the Vreech broke their deal, leaving the Harbingers with a burning determination to stop them. Dividing their kind into two groups, the Stalwarts and the Defiant, they seek to slow the Vreech and find their weaknesses, while warning others and rallying forces to unite against them. They walk a dangerous path, and have sacrificed their homes, their lives, and everything that they need to, in pursuit of their singular goal.

Elf History

Once rulers of a different land, the Harbinger's long history there changed the day the Vreech arrived. Quickly realizing that the Vreech could simply consume the powers the Harbingers would use to defend themselves, they made a fateful decision: where power and strength could not save them, cunning and patience would. They surrendered to the Vreech, offering themselves up as a bargain. They would serve their new insectoid overlords, using their abilities to shape magics for the Vreech to feed upon. In turn, the Vreech would stay their hand, spare the Harbinger's home, and cease their rampage. Against all odds, the Vreech agreed, and the Harbingers, relieved, took up their servitude, all the while hoping to discover weaknesses that would allow them to later overthrow the Vreech.

It was an arrangement doomed to fail. The Vreech's all-consuming hunger could not be slaked, even with the Harbinger's talents. Their restraint abandoned, they returned to the hunt.

The Harbingers were again faced with a difficult decision. They had not yet discovered critical flaws that would allow them to overcome the Vreech, but they could not allow other worlds to suffer and be destroyed. They deliberated, and set a new course.

Many, the Stalwarts, would stay as they were, slowing the Vreech's advance, working from the inside, searching for gaps in the Vreech's defenses. The rest of the Harbingers, the Defiant, would scatter, warning other lands, coordinating with other peoples, ensuring that the Vreech would not find easy prey.

Thusly did they encounter the Protectorate. Their first contact was with the Sylvanborn explorers, who recognized a similarly ley-touched race. The Harbingers' tales swayed the Sylvanborn, who brought the Harbingers back to warn the Protectorate.

The Protectorate listened, but was arrogant in their power, overconfident in their own strength. They did not understand the threat that they faced, did not heed the advice the Harbingers offered. Countless fell at the beginning of the invasion, their strengths the very things that drew the Vreech to them, more liability than asset.

After the first of the floating cities fell, the Protectorate realized their mistake. Working with the Dragons, they created a daring plan - each of the races would make a supreme sacrifice to fuel a Proscribe to keep the Vreech away, to preserve the world. The Celestial Chorus, masters of Elven magic, would sing the spells. To tie it all together, and extend the magic, the Selunari would craft huge crystal obelisks to anchor the spell and act as a monument to the effort. It was, many would say, a textbook example of an Elven solution: bold, brilliant, and distinctly magical.

The Harbingers knew that the Proscribe was not the correct solution, could only be a temporary fix. They rejected the ritual, continuing the search for a long-term solution that required nothing short of total victory.

In the wake of failure of the ritual, the Defiant helped the Protectorate survivors retreat to the Cairn. The other races heaped scorn and contempt upon them, viewing the Harbingers as traitors and cowards. They were named the Fallen, and were isolated, hated, tasked with the worst duties - the unpleasant, the dangerous, the demeaning. The Harbingers took this in stride, knowing that this too was as it needed to be. This was necessary to defeat the Vreech, and they would not fail in their goal.

No one can get the better of an Elf...unless they let you.

Recent History

Quentin Icebriar reined in the Vrox and looked around, trying to spot where he'd left the last trigger, within sight of the now-ruined pier. The Vrox's right head tilted back and let out a bellowing roar, and he felt a momentary envy - he'd much rather be screaming out his rage, but

he needed to focus. He absently patted it's neck, trying to calm the beast, eyes tracing the remnants of the ley-line until he found where it crossed a second. There wasn't much power left; the long years locked away in the Mists had slowed the flow to a trickle, and splitting that between powering defenses and feeding his captives meant that there was not enough for either.

Somehow, adventurers had found their way into the prison, and had unwittingly disrupted the delicate balance. Berating them for their carelessness had been a balm for his anger, but did little else. He'd followed his protocols, calling for reinforcements...but got no response. How long had he been cut off? Were the others even out there? Was he the last of his kind, the last guardian of the Plan?

If so, there was only one thing left to do. Perhaps his people had failed. Perhaps the Harbingers had fallen. Perhaps the Vreech had overrun world after world until there was nothing left except this tiny vestige. But if that was the case, he was going to make sure that he took a few of them out with him.

He slid off the Vrox's back, ducking to the side as it devoured a pair of lobster-cows that had tried to defend their territory. Reaching the node, he grabbed the trigger, and started to initiate the self-destruct before he could regret his decision.

Things seem to be coming to a head for the Elves. The situation within the Cairn has gotten more dire, forcing the Cairn-dwellers to range even further to scrounge and gather more materials. This, they expect, will eventually lead them out of the Cairns, which in turn will expose them to the Vreech, which threatens the Plan. However, the Elven elders have been making comments about the Plan nearly ready to come to fruition, so there may be some end in sight - but what is "soon" for an Elf might still be a long ways off for other races.

Elf Culture

The arrival of the Vreech to the Harbingers' homeland shattered and reforged their culture. Art, history, music, learning... so much was lost in their transition, sacrificed for the greater good of defeating the undefeatable.

When they arrived to the shining, gleaming culture of the Protectorate, they felt a pang of homesickness - here was a people so much like their own, and it was right in the path of the oncoming horde. They embraced the Protectorate, vowing to defend it as best as they could.

The Fall gave a serious beating to the Protectorate, and the tarnished remnant of what remains is a pale imitation of what it once was. Elves maintain a proud exterior, despite their loss of standing and the tremendous scorn heaped upon them. Their need to preserve, protect, and advance the Plan has lead the Elves to create a distance between themselves and non-Elves, seeming secretive and inscrutable, despite the new position they've been thrust into, forced to deal with menial tasks.

Amongst themselves, Elves push to maintain the beauty and accomplishments that they had lost. They view themselves as the last hope of this world, and their past actions as the necessary actions to carry that out. For the Harbingers, the ends truly do justify the means - with the ends being the utter eradication of the Vreech. They will be elaborate, they will be meticulous, but most of all, they will be successful.

While this approach may seem somewhat grim for many, this does not mean that Elves are all stoic or stolid. In many cases, Elves attempt to embrace beauty as they can, sometimes elevating even minor things in an attempt to maintain what has been lost.

The Stalwarts

The Stalwart Harbingers who stayed to serve the Vreech walk a very dangerous path. To some extent, they are a delaying tactic, providing some small magics to the Vreech to slow them down, while other elements of the Plan are put into place. That said, serving the Vreech, especially if you are several generations away from the creation of the Plan, can put one in a very delicate position. Balancing the line between not betraying the Elves while not getting caught doing anything obviously against the Vreech is a dangerous and trying task. Players who wish to play one of the Stalwart Harbinger Elves who serve the Vreech (or who has escaped from that) require Plot approval to do so.

The Plan

Simply put, Elves refer to their ultimate plan to rid the world of the Vreech as the Plan. Perfect secrecy is drilled into each Elf; there is no discussion of the plan with other races, or even if there is a possibility that a member of another race might be in hearing range. Not only must the details be preserved intact, the Vreech must never even suspect that there could even be a Plan that the Elves are considering. Most Elves are not entrusted with the details of the Plan, in an attempt to protect them from disclosure, but if an Elf is asked to carry out a task for the Plan, they do.

Elf Holidays & Celebrations

Publicly, the Harbingers Elves have no celebrations, and are quiet and withdrawn on former holidays. Among their own enclaves, they hold hidden celebrations, often marked with silent, formalized dancing (such as waltzes, etc), and quietly-told tales of their history. The Elves hold such celebrations quarterly.

Elf Names

Elves typically have given names and family names. Given names can be somewhat lengthy; 3- and 4- syllable names are not uncommon. For Elves with longer given names, nicknames are commonly used in non-formal situations. Elven given names include Roharis, Lathlaeril, and

Adzariah. Family names are typically descriptive in some manner, such as Dawnsky, Farwind, and Witherwood.

Elf Racial Notes

Due to their drive and their ability to sacrifice to reach their goals, Elves have forged an iron will. (Resist Command; 4 XP) Due to ancient proficiency with the bow, Elves also are natural archers. (Archery is half XP cost for Elves).

Elf Dress

Due to their station in the Cairn, most Harbingers are dressed in poor-quality clothing, as their access to anything of quality is severely limited. Anything fancy that an Elf comes into possession of is most likely jealously guarded. The Harbingers, first and foremost, are alien to this world, and they find interest in the mundane and the surreal. It is very common for them to take a liking to a certain trophy, adornment or trinket. These things tend to be out of the ordinary, like a fossilized hand or a bit of machinery from days long past that is geometric. These “Tokens”, as they call them, may seem eccentric, but it is their appreciation of these things that many find endearing. Why they feel as they do is often closely guarded, but for many, it is enough simply that they do.

Elf Racial Makeup

All Elves are marked by their pointed ears. There is no social meaning to the length of an Elf's ears, so size of the ears is up to the player. These ears can be found online or in costume or Halloween stores, and are normally attached with spirit gum. Some players use makeup to match the prosthetics to their skin tone. Some (but not all) of the Harbingers wear elaborate tattoos on their faces, arms, or even upper bodies. These can be angular, geometric, even almost runic, and are a result of the connection with the ley-lines that the original Harbingers had. Some players opt to use materials that are glow-in-the-dark or UV/blacklight reactive, such as specialty makeup or highlighter markers. (Please note to keep these away from eyes, and to be aware of the effects of sweat on these markings. Also note that highlighters, while effective, do take some extra scrubbing to remove.)

Interactions with Other Races

“How...disgusting.” Keryth Blackheart mentally groaned as he heard the voice behind him. It was going to be this game again. He continued his pushups and tried to ignore Ruehnar, hoping the Dark Elf would go away. A towel thrown at his head confirmed it wasn't going to happen. “Didn't you hear me, Fallen?” she spat. “You've gotten your sweat all over the floor. It's a hazard. Mop it up.”

Keryth paused his workout, taking his towel, dabbing at the dampness on the floor, not bothering to point out that this space had been set aside specifically as a workout space. He

knew it would do little good. He schooled his expression to be blank, and looked on her mildly. "Better?" he asked.

Ruehnar looked down her nose and snorted. "Passable. But it reeks of your stench in here. I'll come back later when it doesn't smell." She smirked and stalked off, and Keryth wished for the tenth time this week he could just punch her in the face and get it over with.

The Elves' relationships with other races can be summarily described as "poor", due to the events of the Fall and the need to stay somewhat aloof to help protect the Plan. Their relationship with the Dark Elves is the worst, as many Dark Elves (including those born post-Fall) show utter disgust and open hostility towards the Fallen. For their part, the Harbingers don't have much use for their overly idealistic brethren either, given that the Dark Elf faction had been the ones who insisted upon the idea of the Proscribe in the first place - so, in the Elves' eyes, they brought all of this upon themselves.

The Sylvanborn have been more than kind to the Harbingers, and have shown a level of understanding many have not. Some have remarked that the Sylvanborn act almost as older siblings would - perhaps not what many would call close, but acting with an understanding of the position that the Harbingers are in.

The Null are beings that the Harbingers have connected with the most. They are both outsiders and, without knowing it, these beings have furthered the great Plan more than most. It is common to see them in one another's company, with the Harbinger encouraging or coaching the Null towards their goals.