

**The Marad'Unn
Ascension Dwarves
OFFICIAL ASCENSION RACE PACKET**

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This race packet contains information intended to be used only by those who are playing a character of this race in Alliance Ascension. It should not be shared with other players without approval from Alliance Ascension Head of Plot under any circumstances. The information here is race specific, and there is a great deal of other information many or all residents would also know in the Alliance Ascension Player's Guide.

The dreams of the High King had been troubled lately. He could feel a prediction coming, and was almost afraid of it, waking before the foretelling began. He knew that he must see. He must open himself to the foretelling. Something this deep, this resonant, will shake the world to the core. He could feel it coming. Today, he made sure to tire himself, and just minutes ago he drank some concoction that dulled even his mighty senses. The King of the Mighty Marad'unn, the "Shield of All," lay back in his massive stone carved bed, the feathered mattress below his over 14 ft long length stuffed full. It would not be long now... The psychedelic root he took should hit him soo.....

EXPLOSIONS rocked the bed chamber. The High King Dunburaugh scrambled to his feet and ran to the chamber door. His bare feet slapped on the stone tiles as the halls shook again. He could hear screams from the other side.

As his hand met the door and opened it, the world around him changed. He saw a battlefield. Tens of thousands dead. Every race. Every being. All in a circle around a shattered dome of magic. Alien, insectoid creatures clambered over the bodies, feeding on some, while hulking monstrosities lumbered away on the horizon. Here now, all was deathly quiet. He saw that the people here had been trapped. What they tried, failed. They had no place to hide. They had no plan for escape. Lucidly, he realized this was one of the visions he had dreaded, and did all he could to drink in every detail. Changing the future was dangerous and difficult, but the Marad'unn were the Shield of All, and he would find a way.

The High King's eyes snapped open, and his face set in determination as he sat up in his bed. Sliding to the side of it, and then sitting on the edge, he bellowed, "CHAMBERLAIN! GET ME THE ENGINEERS!"

Dwarf Racial Basics

Dwarves, or the Marad'Unn as they are called in the lands of Ascension, are an old race. Marad'Unn, in their old tongue, means "The Shield of All." Before the Fall, the Dwarves were the only race to truly see it all coming. Gifted with the power of foretelling, they received visions and hints of what was to come. They used this knowledge to guide the other races, providing subtle redirections to the Protectorate to bring them success.

These good people were giants before, standing on average of 14 feet tall. Their huge halls were well known for amazing iconography and intricate architecture. When the Fall came, the Marad'Unn they lost their height and the strength that came from it. They also lost the foretelling, though they now get a myriad of dreams that may or may not be true. Due to their self-deprecating humor, the Marad'Unn have called themselves Dwarves now, despite being as tall as most other races. Their great halls still show signs of who they had been. Dwarves often find significance in their dreams. They tend to stash things in their beards or long braided hair that they feel they will need.

Dwarf History

Before the Fall, the Marad'Unn were architects, and used their foretelling to guide the Protectorate in making safe choices. When High King Dunburaugh dreamed of the Vreech invasion, and the subsequent Fall, the Marad'Unn leapt into action. While they did not know when their assistance would be needed, they were able to tell what was needed: a safe redoubt, a secure location that the survivors could retreat to, hide in, survive. Thus began the construction of the Cairns, massive underground bunkers with the space, resources, and devices to allow refugees to survive indefinitely. They worked in secret, knowing that the others would not understand what was going on, and would either consider it madness, or would demand answers that the Marad'Unn simply did not have.

Various dreams and visions over the course of the construction helped guide the Dwarves, and confirmed for them that they were on the right course. Generation after generation dedicated untold hours, toiling away on a project that they hoped would never be used in their lifetime.

When the invasion came, 315 years later, the Marad'Unn were one of the first races to recognize the danger they faced. Heeding the warning of the Harbingers and the Sylvanborn, they began the final preparations, abandoning long-term projects to get what last-minute supplies they could safely stored away. As the Elves and the Dragons became preparations for the Ritual, the Marad'Unn finalized evacuation routes, said their goodbyes, and steelled themselves for the worst.

Even their visions could not completely prepare the Marad'Unn for the events that happened. The disorientation of their physical changes. The ferocity of the Vreech. The sheer, overwhelming amount of death.

Staggered, the Dwarves lead the survivors to the Cairns, ushering them inside and sealing the doors behind them. They did not need their now-lost foresight to tell them what would happen to any that were left outside. Though they had sacrificed their visions, their actions were enough to ensure that they continued to be the Shield of All.

Recent History

Dwarves have long been the custodians of the Cairns, working with the other races to keep things running smoothly. They are aware that the Cairns are starting to run low on supplies, and that expeditions into the unused sections are likely the best hope for the surviving populace... but they know better than any other that those sections likely contain untold dangers.

Dwarf Culture

Dorna spun around, each of her hands clad in a gauntlet covered in ichor. In deep arcs, she swung one hand, the rising blade catching the Troll's shield and raising it, as the other axe sunk deep into the Troll's chest. She felt the axe bite deep into bone, parting ribs as it sunk through lungs and into its heart. As it dropped, Fellorras plunged her torch into the gaping wound, the fire denying the beast's chance to regenerate as she ensured a killing blow. Nodding to her fellow, Doma scanned the rest of the cavern. The hole here was new and jagged. The Trolls must have just busted through; it'd serve as a perfect bottleneck for a while.

"The next scout squad won't come along for some time. But we will hold it. I...dreamt it." Fellorras said. As they did, they touched their beard. Unseen by her clan mate, Doma nodded and touched her braid in response.

The dreams happen sometimes, a hint of the fortellings they used to have. It had become a survival trait to pay attention. Like others, she has taken to secreting away on her person something that may help her survive, or to solve a problem. She had placed what she needed in her long ornate braided beard when she packed for this mission. Let's hope the dream was wrong. It seemed an age before the Trolls followed up on their fellow. The bottleneck made that small entrance to the tunnel a butcher's yard. Soon enough, they ran out of torches... and they could hear it coming. A troll that seemed bred for breaking this sort of position, the type they had come to call "Siege Trolls".

"You hear that, caster? It breaks through, they are gonna pour out," Doma said as she turned a moment and saw distant lights. The next patrol, a thousand yards or so away. If that troll gets in, the others would follow and pour in. Fellorras nodded and reached into their beard, bringing out two vials. "I only can call upon a storm yet. My other spells are used, and my body is weary."

Doma flashed a grin and, putting both handles in one grip, she smiled, drawing two vials from her braid as well. Wordlessly, she took a position at the entrance the Trolls were using. She made sure it allowed her a maximum swing and would limit the Trolls reach. Then she popped a vial lid off, and coated the ground in front of her planted her feet. She could feel them adhere to

the rocky floor. She drank a second potion, and an intangible barrier against spells surrounded her like a shield. Behind her, she could hear Fellorras doing the exact same. Both of them had the same dream..the same vials.... This would be a good story.

She heard behind her the spell caster prepare their spell, the incantations allowing them to launch volleys of potent fire into the entrance before them, striking down the now glowing eyes they saw in the dark. They felt and heard the roar from the Troll that shattered their magic shields, trying to repel them back from the entrance.

Doma nodded and grinned as her axes wove a wall of steel and death, fire launching over her. They just had to hold a bit longer...they would be the shield for now. Dwarves are broken down in a kingdom system, and each kingdom had been assigned a Cairn. The most respected and powerful lived the deepest within it. Their rulers commanded for life, or until they chose to retire, at which time the most influential families would elect a new leader. This changed a bit with their induction into the Protectorate. When the Protectorate introduced the Paragons, the role was offered to them first to choose.

Dwarf Holidays & Celebrations

Dwarves have a myriad of celebrations. Since the Fall, their favorite, without question, are SURPRISE PARTIES. From a race who often always had a hint something was coming, to now being like most of us, this shine has still not rubbed off. They often like to surprise others, however other races may not always as good-natured as the dwarf with the surprise. They celebrate at points of creation: any new birth, when a smith makes their first masterpiece, when a Circle-born appears, etc. They rival the Sylvanborn with their readiness to celebrate.

Common gifts for Dwarves are one-of-a-kind, hand-made things and containers. Bags, boxes, holders, and other things with pockets; Dwarves love pockets, as they allow them to be better prepared.

Dwarf Names

Dwarves all hail from different influential families or clans. They have one name that is theirs, and a clan name that they share with relatives. They all add a moniker for what they or their clan are known for. If there is a marriage, the two joining will decide the names they take; most times this is a political choice.

Dwarf Racial Notes

Dwarves are a very hardy people, and are able to shrug off things in their environment that other races would succumb to. Dwarves can purchase Resist Element (3 XP) and Resist Poison (4 XP), and have a reduced cost for Hardy (1 less XP). Dwarves are also natural smiths, and have a reduced cost for Blacksmith (1 less XP).

Dwarf Dress

Dwarves are a hardy race, and their clothing is often stout and functional. They are well known for having a myriad of pockets or places to conceal tools or items, etc - a side effect of no longer being able to foretell the future, manifesting as a new need to over-prepare for things.

Dwarf Racial Makeup

Dwarves all have beards of which they are fiercely proud, although female Dwarves sometimes prefer a long goatee. Players either need to wear a prosthetic beard, or, if they have a beard of their own, they need to braid it so that they are clearly a Dwarf. Ascension Dwarves are also encouraged to "stow" things in their beards and let plot know of Friday what Phys Rep is in there. As such the beard should be large enough for the item. No polearm for example. For female dwarves we request Ascension female dwarves have braided hair thick enough for the same as the female dwarves may have a goatee etc too small to hide something.

Interactions with Other Races

The Marad'Unn consider themselves in many ways hosts within the Cairns. As such, their hospitality is shown to every race. However, they do have a few they get on better with than others. First and foremost are the Hobblings. Their work ethic and engineering prowess, along with their ability to solve and understand problems, impressed the Dwarves daily. Many projects within the Cairn saw the Dwarves seeking out the Hobblings specifically. The Dwarves knew they were coming. They know what was sacrificed by the Harbingers, and they know they are a key to victory - they just don't know how. The Harbingers did not bring about any threat; they had been trying to save us all from it, and in the process, have been taken by it. They...they will rise, and the Marad'Unn will help. The Dwarves aren't certain why the ritual had to happen, why it had to fail, and why soon we will have to fight our greatest battles. They do know, however, the Harbingers are a key to it.