

**The Selunari
Ascension Selunari
OFFICIAL ASCENSION RACE PACKET**

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Crystals are fascinating things.

Cut and shaped correctly, they can provide a wealth of applications: prisms, lenses - and let's not forget simply for display, pretty baubles and jewels. But they can do more, far, far more.

Elves were indeed the first to discover that crystals could be used to enhance magic, either to help focus a spell, or disperse it, depending on the crystal. But their understanding ended where it began, so simplistic.

We Selunari saw the potential, built upon it, explored and learned and mastered the secrets of crystals. We learned to find them, shape them, establish their purpose... crystals that absorbed ambient energy, crystals that focused and redirected it, crystals that functioned as permanent spells.

Elves took what we made, and crafted beautiful, wondrous, amazing things: floating cities, skyships, everburning torches... but we were the ones responsible for it. We alone knew how the crystals worked, how to tame them to a purpose. We became the critical element, the single thing that everyone wanted, everyone needed.

And we became filthy rich because of it.

Those of us who wanted could afford estates in the Elven floating cities. And beach houses, and chalets in the mountains...staying in one place was boring, something meant for the plebians. We wore silks and cloth-of-gold, feasted on succulent fruits and exotic meats.... Simply put, the Elves may have been effectively the rulers of the world, but we were effectively the owners. We had whatever we wanted, whenever we wanted.

Life was good.

Until the Vreech attacked. At first, we were untroubled, working with the Elves to craft crystal-based weapons that should have destroyed the invaders. Instead, they merely seemed to feed the Vreech. Concern gave way to fear, fear gave way to panic. When the Elves proposed a massive Proscribe, we were the first to sign up. We bent all of our considerable skills and resources to creating massive crystal pillars that would serve to focus and power the ritual, something that would draw in and power a spell the likes of which this world had never seen. Helping fuel the Proscribe, each race gave up that which defined them, and we gave the most crucial thing we had, our knowledge of the crystal lore. This would be our swan song, the pillars that saved us the last great work.

We failed.

The why of it is unknown - the Dark Elves blame the newcomers, Harbinger Elves, claiming that their refusal to sacrifice for the spell, but I fear that it goes deeper, that the ritual itself was flawed, that the casters somehow made a mistake. No matter the reason, the result was the same: the crystal pillars cracked, and - as we rushed towards them, using every last ounce of our fading understanding to preserve them - shattered.

Those of us who survived did so with shards of crystals embedded in us, pieces that could not be removed. They mocked us, both for our failure, and for our new ignorance of their use. At first, we thought that it was just something that marked those of us who survived the failed ritual, but as the years went by in the Cairn, new Selunari were born with crystals on their foreheads.

We were marked, but we would not let that stop us.

Selunari Racial Basics

Before the Fall, the Selunari were the upper-crust of society, masterminds of the crystals necessary to magitech, artisans of the highest order, wealthy patrons of the arts and learning. In some cases, a few rare examples could be termed "mad scientists", though most dismissed that as mere tales told by the jealous.

Post-Fall, bearing shards of the now-lost crystals on their brows, Selunari struggle to regain their ancient glory. Guardians of the life engine that allows resurrections within the Cairn, Selunari try to maintain society, hoping to keep their role as much as possible.

Each Selunari bears at least one crystal on their face, and most Selunari can trace their lineage back to a particular shade, effectively marking a "family stone". (This has, in a few scandalous instances, awkwardly revealed some hidden assignations.)

As a whole, Selunari are outgoing, artistic, always hungering for new experiences and new travels. Fiercely loyal to others of their kind, Selunari are the architects of a renewed society, and their associated return to grandeur.

Selunari History

For countless generations, Selunari had established themselves as the upper class, the overlords of the most vital resource of magitech, the crystals that made possible the floating cities, the skyships, the servitor golems. They organized themselves into nearly dynastic families, sharing an understanding with other Selunari that their position in society was the result of mutual cooperation and exclusive control of the crystals.

When the Vreech attacked, the Selunari's world crumbled. The invaders cared little for gold or fancy estates, paused not for any of the art or scholarship that they'd fostered. Much was lost, either overrun by the Vreech or sacrificed in a vain attempt to slow the enemy.

What could be easily moved, was. Caravans brought the Selunari to the ritual site for the Proscribe, crystalline servitor golems pulling the carts and tending to their master's needs. When the ritual failed, and the Pillars shattered, those golems gathered the survivors, readied the caravans, and started the final retreat to the Cairn.

It was, inadvertently, those caravans that saved what survived of civilization. Accustomed to a certain level of luxury, those caravans were well-stocked for a Selunari on the go. Not only did this mean a variety of clothing, books, and distractions, there were countless golems, and a portable life engine; not content to use an Earth circle should an accident happen, the Selunari had created a crystal-powered device that could perform resurrections. As the Vreech invaded, and devoured Earth circles in their wake, the life engine rapidly became the only way of returning a spirit to bodily form.

Once the shock wore off, and everyone had settled into the Cairn, it became very clear that the Selunari's position in the world had altered. Gold was no longer the currency of the world, and with their knowledge of crystals sacrificed (and the Vreech outside the Cairn), there was little chance of reclaiming their former glory.

What they did retain, however, were a number of servitor golems, and the life engine. The golems provided some initial muscle (both for physical tasks such as building and mining, as well as for protection), but their usage was strictly limited; being within the Cairn, their lifespan was limited, so every use drained what little power was left. As the years went by, the golems were seen less and less, as their power sources either drained, or were removed to power the life engine. Eventually, they became simply reminders of the past, inert statues that remained in the Selunari's quarters.

Still, they accomplished their goal, to help secure the Selunari's role in the new Cairn society. As custodians of the life engine, the Selunari held a primary role, enough to allow them to lay claim to the best quarters within the Cairn. (Truth be told, this was a very relative qualification, but appearances do matter.) When the wanderlust of the Selunari caused them to chafe at underground living, they came up with a remedy: the various families would, once a year, swap living quarters, doing their best to mitigate their hunger for new experiences and change.

Recent History

Life within the Cairn has gotten slowly and progressively worse for the Selunari. The long years have stripped away most of the luxuries that their ancestors had become accustomed to. The servitor golems have all long since gone silent. And the power crystals for the life engine are becoming perilously few, though the Selunari are not willing to let that secret out to the other races just yet.

Whatever the future brings, the Selunari know that they are running out of time, and need to be ready to make changes to make things work.

Selunari Culture

According to stories passed down through the ages, the Selunari's proficiency with the crystals came from their artistic spirit; that, somehow, somewhere along the line, they discovered those secrets because of how they viewed the world. While they have always encouraged the art in many forms - pre-Fall histories tell of amazing works of art, elaborate public gardens, or intricate studies of higher learning, all funded by Selunari families - this artistic pursuit has taken a new meaning after the Fall. The Selunari not only seek to retain what elements of culture they can, maintaining society and moral in the process, but also seek a way back to their former understanding.

This has lead many Selunari to adopt larger-than-life personalities, outgoing, perhaps even boisterous. They are constantly seeking, constantly learning, always on the move, hungering for new experiences. Somewhere, there is a set of experiences that will lead them back to the knowledge of the crystals... and in the meanwhile, there's so many other things to learn and do and embrace. Almost every Selunari feels this driving need to maintain momentum, a physical and mental wanderlust that sweeps everything along in its wave.

While this has led some Selunari to seem almost diva-like, it has led others to being philanthropists, patrons of the arts and learning, people with the ability to influence culture in excess of what a single person normally would. While this may seem as "being famous for being famous", it has positioned the Selunari as active leaders in the post-Fall society.

Throughout this all, though, is a bond that outsiders cannot breach; for those marked by the crystals, there is an understanding that, no matter how close they may be with outsiders, Selunari come first. Perhaps this is simply due to their shared experiences, or perhaps it is some trick of the crystals they bear, but on a visceral level, all Selunari understand this.

That is not to say that disagreements between Selunari do not happen; the dynastic families that they organize themselves in frequently disagree, but family heads often take the roles of mediators, keeping the peace between Selunari so that they can act as shepherds of the non-Selunari. Each family might have a different code of conduct, but they all follow the same core concept of Selunari first.

Selunari Holidays & Celebrations

Traditionally, most Selunari celebrations were not tied to a specific date, but were galas and fetes to honor certain artisans or scholars who had just released a masterpiece. Modern versions of these events still occur, though are far more rare and far more sedate.

More common were the periodic Salons - smaller, less-formal gatherings for lesser displays of expertise. All families were expected to routinely host Salons, and the tradition continues as best they can to this day.

Once a year is a Selunari-only gathering, Basitra, typically in the middle of summer. In ancient times, Basitra was marked by a mass day of leisure, consisting of day-long drunken feasts and time in the sun. Any coastal destination that could host such a gathering vied for the honor. Since the Fall, Basitra is marked with a retreat to Selunari-held spaces, wherein the participants play games or pursue other recreation.

The Salons

In a world where skills are essential to survival and exploration, as well as dealing with deep trolls and goblins, the ability to calm yourself and recover the mental acuity and physical strength to execute abilities - commonly known as "meditating" - is essential. None have built better spaces than the Selunari and their Hobling employees. These places of respite are often comfortable and safe, with delicious food provided by the Hoblings, and entertainment and music from the Selunari. These have become integral in society, and the Collegium itself encourages their use. These Salons have become famous for elegant parties, and the Hoblings are said to have the best of their best offerings of rare delicacies at such gatherings.

Selunari Names

For Selunari, their family or dynasty name is nearly as important as their given name, with many Selunari able to recite their lineage and cite any famous ancestors and their accomplishments. Selunari given names include Elizamendi, Martzelo, Konstante, and Venixama. Dynasty names are drawn from the first name of their dynasty's founder, and include Arakne, Hargin, Qorrino, Velondiz.

A Selunari without a famous dynasty name is often pitied, as it reflects poorly on their ancestors. A Selunari who chooses to start a new dynasty (named after themselves) can be viewed as either bold, or brash - all depending on whether or not they can back up that sort of claim by performing something worthy of starting a dynasty.

Selunari Racial Notes

While they have long since lost their ability to work with magical crystals, their long exposure to them have left the Selunari with a talent for resisting certain types of magical impediments (Resist Curse; 4 Build).

Selunari Dress

Traditionally, Selunari dressed in the highest of fashion - colorful fabrics, pleasing fabrics, brilliant jewelry. While long years in the Cairn has put a damper on this tradition, Selunari still tend towards well-tailored clothing, often in multiple layers.

Selunari Racial Makeup

All Selunari have large gems (at least the size of a US penny) that grow out of their foreheads. Only one is required, but some Selunari have multiple gems. The color of the gem has no inherent meaning, but members of the same family tend to have gems of the same color. If your character has multiple gem colors it may mean they have mixed heritages.

Selunari Dynasties

The Amethenians (Gem Color: Purple) The Amethenians are well regarded as the greatest hosts of any party. Even at ones they attend, they are often found at the center. Food, song, and a good story are the lifeblood of this Dynasty. No matter the social circle, they will change to suit and have been often known as shrewd negotiators. More than even other families, they also love to travel, and to appreciate and embrace new experiences. Many Amethenians have been known to travel the mysts in times before the Fall, and even now tales of ancient cousins and long remembered adventurers are still spread. Who knows - maybe others would finally return home?

The Peridotians (Gem Color: Green) There are no greater experimenters, or more knowledgeable of the crystals, than the Peridotians. Members of this Dynasty are constantly seeking ancient knowledge. There is seldom a design that's missed their eyes, nor a rumor they haven't pursued. While, like most Selunari, they are well appointed and sociable, they are prone to being obsessive in their conversation. Many view them as absent-minded, but in reality, their minds are always working. There are few better engineers of any race above the Peridotians. Many inventions have come from the Peridotians, and when tested (and the testers survive), those devices have helped the people greatly.

The Garnetians (Gem Color: Red) Passion rules the Garnetians. They are playwrights, musicians, and artists, as well as artisans. Rumors are that, before the Fall, those that would become members of this Dynasty would have played grand halls and done breathtaking works. This family is actually very close to what are commonly called Stone Elves, due to the latter's history as musicians. They will do private concerts and custom art for their friends. It is sad that the Garnetians tend to be the poorer of the Dynasties, as there are seldom those that can truly afford to sponsor such artists and dreamers. Garnetians have been noted to also be far more eager to talk out resolutions than fight for one. They are the most likely of the Dynasties to reach out to other races and work with other families.

The Zirconates (Gem Color: Blue) Adventurous and bold, the Zirconates Dynasty are at the fore of most expeditions. They get along very well with the Star-Touched, and are ready with a laugh or a joke. Members of this Dynasty are organizers as well. While normally the first to step

forward for a deed, there is a surprisingly high mortality rate for them. Rumors abound that this is because they are somehow cursed from times before the Fall. Members of the family seldom talk about it.

The Jetan (Gem Color: Black) Not so much a formal Dynasty as much as a rarely seen variant, Jetans have served as protectors of the allied races, and some say they were forming members of the "Obscura Lance" - a secret group policing and punishing actions of those that would disturb the peace of the Cairn. Others have been rumored to be employed as assassins.

The Goshenitians (Gem Color: Clear/White) Swindlers, saviors, and merchants extraordinaire, these Selunari have a price for everything - and of course can give you a deal or make one. While some may see this as a negative trait, they have instead been integral to the Cairn and it's various peoples surviving. They navigate the black market like few others, and their merchants set the values and standards for most trade within the Cairn. The artisans of this family have been known to have close ties to the Hoblings, and usually use them to gain goods or act on their behalf.

Interactions with Other Races

The guiding principle that steers all Selunari relations with other races is simple and straightforward: Selunari first. Taking the long-view, this typically results in pleasant, politician-like bland pleasantries with many others. That does not imply that individual Selunari are obligated to milquetoast reactions towards those who they dislike; more than one person has found themselves cut on the sharp edges of Selunari disdain. However, as a whole, Selunari lean towards diplomacy as a first course of action, whether they are benevolent or malevolent.

Dark Elves and Stone Elves stand out as races that the Selunari cultivate a closer relationship with; partly in deference to their ancient bonds, and partly because those two races still maintain a reasonable amount of influence within the Cairn. Fallen Elves are dealt with in a manner perhaps more compassionate than other races would treat them - while the commonly accepted story is that the Harbingers caused the Fall, the Selunari are not entirely certain that the fault rests entirely there. Such leniency is passed off as the good nature of the Selunari, of course.

The other race that stands out as having a bond with the Selunari is the Hoblings. The Hobling's natural talent with maintaining and repairing what remains of the magi-tech that survived to the Cairn has allowed the Selunari to stay in power. Occasionally, there's some disagreements - the Selunari are in charge, after all, and the Hoblings are the workers - but eventually such things get worked out, since a harmonious relationship is beneficial to both sides.

Of the rest of the races, as said before, the Selunari maintain good relationships, though the High Orcs and the Selunari seem simply to not understand each other's approach towards life.