

**The Wardens
Ascension Oathsworn
OFFICIAL ASCENSION RACE PACKET**

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Arulis crouched and made sure the dull light of the luminescent moss didn't shine off of her spear head. She had been tracking these cave trolls for some time. They had ambushed her party in the old passages, and if they continued, would have a back way into the Warrens where the Collegium taught the children. They had left her for dead, but she was a Warden. Hers were the people who had sworn to protect the citizens of the Protectorate and keep this realm safe from invaders. They had failed once, and wouldn't do so again.

She could see their forms obscuring the light from the moss around the corner from the outcropping where she waited. This part of the tunnels was from an area long ago collapsed. Many tunnels in the Cairn were unused, either from plagues and quarantine, or from the simple need to expand and move on. They had gone into this one to explore rumors the deep trolls had burrowed into it. The rumors had been confirmed, and at the cost of four battle brethren. If it wasn't for quick thinking of a Circle-born, she would have been dead as well. Arulis would not let that final sacrifice of the Ogre be wasted.

She crept behind the Trolls until she found a weak point in the ceiling, where she could collapse the roof on the them. It looked like it may seal her in as well, and that thought made her smile. Six of them and one of her. They might almost have a chance. She roared her oaths to the land and to the people, and then her personal oath. Her blade struck up and shattered a support beam, and the ceiling fell, sealing off the entrance back to the Cairn. In the dim light of the tunnel, as the dust settled, the trolls now could see her - and her broad full grin - as Arulis Deeptroll strode forward to earn her Oathname again.

Oathsworn Racial Basics

Always at the forefront of any conflict, the Wardens were the warrior caste of the Elves before the Fall. Their ears weren't as long as other Elves and their tips weren't as pronounced. It frankly just did not suit to have such ears when they would don helmets for battles.

Oathsworn History

Since the forming of the Protectorate, the Wardens had stood as both a military and policing force of the aligned races, charged with keeping the peace and ensuring any issues - internal or external - were handled swiftly and with extreme prejudice. Their actions were so deft and complete that any issue that arose, like random piracy or some warlord trying to make a claim, were beaten down with little effort. Most of the time, these Elves were seldom seen outside their holdfasts and fortress cities. The phalanxes of warriors and casters would be dispatched to locations all over the Protectorate at a moments notice, and their martial dominance was absolute.

That is, of course, until the Vreech came. By the time the invaders had made plane-fall, the Wardens were arrogant in their ways, and ignored the threat until it was too late. When things finally came to a head, they poured their resources and people into every effort. No matter what the leadership of the Protectorate chose, the Wardens were there to see it done. Time and time again, they failed.

It was the Wardens who made up the bulk of the fighting force at the great ritual of the Fall. A squadron stood with each of the great dragons. Their units were a roving force of death to their enemies and protection to their allies. It was they who pitched the battle to the better, their cohorts, in well practiced and disciplined motion, pressing or defending where need be. They became overzealous, however, and pressed too deep, overconfident that the dragon of Earth and protection would lead them to victory. That all ended when a Vreech tore its way through the mass of their Dragon leader.

It was in that moment, with its dying breath, that the Dragon bound them. Its blood showered them, melding them with itself in the earth itself as they stood in butchery of battle, and in a tongue long-forgotten, it made an offer to the very spirit of the Wardens. It would give them the means to fight the threats to their people, and even these invaders, if they would give their word that for all time they would protect those who cannot protect themselves. As one, the very spirits of the Wardens sang out. At the same time, the great ritual collapsed. They felt themselves lose the precision and sense of unity, as well as the Elven heritage their warrior caste had claimed. In their place, the Warden's skin and bodies grew stronger, and plates of stone replaced some bone and sinew, with stone ridges presenting themselves in their forms and faces. They were now bonded with this plane. They had sworn the oath with their very spirits, and they could not stop. Their people needed them. They would do what they must to achieve survival, and in time, victory.

Recent History

The life in the Cairn had changed little for the Oathsworn in terms of what was expected of them. Their culture, however, changed greatly. The Oathsworn are fighting a war. Yes, they have lost battles - but they are not yet done. They grow their numbers. They train and hold to their battle doctrines. They learn of their enemies and how to overcome them. They grow their

repertoire of gear and tactics. They become the weapons they need. A warden is an army unto themselves. It is said that even a skinny Oathsworn child had been known to knock down a Dwarf who took advantage of a beggar. Oathsworn still find themselves regularly in guard or policing roles. They even teach at the Collegium, and regularly lead raids into abandoned tunnels or after deep trolls and goblins.

Oathsworn Culture

The Wardens have a culture based on the military units that moved into the Cairn. They have a hierarchy much like military rank, with leader positions from everything from head cook to a combat general. The Wardens know that lack of organization is folly.

Oathsworn rarely, if ever, lie. They see that as a massive insult, and their brooding and intense stares tend to make others wary of crossing them. When a Warden has achieved sufficient prestige, they are given the chance to choose a blood name. Every Warden is a soldier in this battle, and each will become a specialist. They choose one enemy, and are the experts of this foe. Once chosen, the Oathsworn takes on that name as their surname, and they do all they can to fight that part of the war. For example, a noted war leader Ayana Deeptroll had found more weaknesses and been responsible for pushing the deep trolls back than anyone before her.

The Oathsworn take immense pride in their armor and adornments. Their military mind of keeping themselves well-equipped and in a solid state of repair has not been lost. An Oathsworn is more likely to spend their pay on better gauntlets and a nicer whetstone than trinkets and baubles. Some would even do so before food.

Not all Wardens fall in line as the masses do. Like with any races, there are those that stand apart: the Ruin. These are most commonly Wardens who, through no fault of their own, had to break a vow, or who had lost so many of their units that they were deemed "unfit". The Ruin are very fierce in combat and often possess knowledge (gained through their struggles and individual exploits) that some may deem dangerous. Still, there have been many stories of people trapped in the mines or ensnared in a goblin ambush, and they thought all was lost until an Oathsworn with a blackened bladed weapon left from the shadows to save them. Far too often, by the time those that were saved could look back, there was no living signs of who had helped them.

Oathsworn Holidays & Celebrations

The wardens celebrate very few holidays, though they will join others. The time when one gains a Blood name is deemed to be a time for celebration, as is a death of a friend. No one does a funeral like a Warden. They see themselves as the defenders of the spirit, and will openly challenge others while speaking of their friends. They will tell stories to make people weep for their kindness, and extol every depth of the character of their friend - and will do so loudly. That way, when that spirit finds its way to the next world, they will only find friends and no strangers.

Oathsworn Names

Wardens have one name and a rank. They may also introduce themselves if they are in a certain unit or adventuring party, as explained above. They may also earn Blood names, as deemed by their superiors. An example of a full name could be: Liana Vreechspawn, 1st Blade of the Eternal Hammers. Their single names are normally elegant, but simple - things that can be shouted during combat and easily understood.

Oathsworn Racial Notes

Oathsworn are a sturdy people, with bodies built for combat. They can take more punishment than many (Oathsworn can purchase Hardy with a -1 XP cost), and can shrug off blows that would fell others (Racial Resolute; 2 XP). Oathsworn are also resistant to elemental magics (Resist Element; 3 XP). Due to their history with the Vreech, the Wardens have a mistrust, almost to the point of hatred, of extraplanar creatures.

Oathsworn Dress

The Wardens tend for earth tones, in styles that are all combat ready. Their gear is the best they can afford, and may have souvenirs pinned or attached to it. They enjoy form and function. It is very common for a Warden to be in full combat regalia, even at a political function, as they stand ever ready. That being said, they spend so much time in the armor that they tend to have a great deal of comfortable items, boots etc.

Oathsworn are particularly proud of the Oaths that they have taken, and will wear an Oathring to symbolize this, and the endless war that they fight. Many will display their Oathring for all to see on the outside of their clothing. Oathrings can be made of any material, but must be circular in design and at least 2" in diameter.

Oathsworn Racial Makeup

The Oathsworn are tied to the Prime Material Plane, and are so grounded that they have the stones of the earth protruding from their skin on their faces and foreheads. Players may attach foam or other prosthetics which would be stone protuberances. These may not be horns, but can be slate-like ridges or shards.

The stone protrusions can resemble mohawks or cranial ridges. Even as simple as ridges on the forehead etc. The stone type varies by Warden. It tends to blend in with their personality. A smooth and dangerous Warden may have slate or shale. A Warden who observes and takes things in may be like stone etc. We encourage you to make this dynamic and very much a part of your character.

Interactions with Other Races

The Oathsworn are protective of all of the races of the Protectorate, and deal with most on a very even keel. The exception is the Circle-born. The Wardens see them as the spirits of everyone they could not save, as the people who were birthed due to their arrogance and failure, given life by the Earth itself. (It did, however, take some time for the Wardens to realize exactly who the yellow-skinned arrivals in the Cairn were, and had initially greeted them with drawn weapons and harsh questions.) The Wardens consider the Circle-born family, and rever their advice as that of ancestors - and yet treat them with care, as you would a child who has not been exposed to some horrors of the world.