

## True Elf

True Elves are perhaps the most ancient of all races. Their history and legends extend back for millennia. Because of this long and bright history, they view themselves as the most civilized race. To them, all other cultures are crude and unenlightened. True Elves have an unusual aptitude for use of magic. They claim it is because they have evolved into a higher state of consciousness. Other people just think they're arrogant.

The nomenclature "True Elves" is relatively new to the race. Prior to the discovery of the new continent, and hence the discovery of the so-called "Wild Elves", they were simply called "the Elves". Even after the emergence of the Dark Elves some 1500 years ago, they were referred to as "Elves". After the discovery of yet another, different race of elves on the new continent, the race felt a need to set themselves apart from their "primitive" and "malevolent" cousins: the Wild and Dark Elves respectively. Today, most True Elves are easily insulted if they are referred to as "an Elf".

True Elves are rather fortunate, from a historical perspective. They are able to look at their own records and identify a definite point when their society began. They have detailed records, which date back more than 5000 years to a great leader named Japhlaron. All True Elves know his name and revere him as the father of their culture. They have even canonized him as a saint in the church of Diakonoff. The True Elves guard the details of his story jealously, with the specifics only entrusted to the eldest of the race. His journals, however, are reputed to still exist in the True Elven capital of FirstSpire and are guarded as holy relics.

The general legend of Japhlaron is well known amongst the True Elves, however, as it was he who preached the benefits of harnessing the powers of magic. Legend has it that he used his powers to design and construct the first of the Elven towers on the shores of the Phokocian Sea. It was this tower, which can still be seen for many miles up and down the coast, which acted as a beacon to draw the first Elves together. Once he gathered all the Elves in the world to this site, he laid out the plans for a great civilization; a civilization based on several basic axioms. First, cooperation holds the key to survival; Second, equal responsibility for the welfare of your neighbor; and third, the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. These theories were reinforced with the practice of magic rituals, which made the Elves a powerful force in the ancient world. These rituals forged a sense of unity among the Elves, which few other races can even come close to exhibiting. A Dark Age for the Elves ended, and an era of prosperity began. The sick and weak were cared for. The hungry were fed. And the homeless were sheltered. The True Elves still enjoy this prosperity today.

The True Elves live in rather large, fairy-tale looking cities that are mostly located on the northern and eastern shore of Merdensa. This has made them the prime target for Orcish raids over the centuries. The cities themselves tend to be centered around tall spires, which were originally created as centers for magic and education. These "Vamdrenel", or literally "people's life", also took on a very important secondary function. The tall towers next to the ocean provided the True Elves with advanced warning of Orcish raiding fleets. Although in recent years the raids have become less common, they still occur. The Orcs have learned, however, that the Elves are not as easy a target that they once were. Still, you would be hard pressed to find a True Elf who feels comfortable around the brutes, if he doesn't outright hate them.

When a typical Elven settlement is first started, tradition dictates that the settlers first

begin temporary housing for everyone involved with the construction. Once all families are cared for, the construction of the Vamdrenel begins. Because True Elven society teaches that people individually make up their civilization as a whole, these new-found settlements include people from a wide cross section of society; not just the workers who will participate in the physical construction. It is highly probable that one of these new communities could be picked up, en mass, and be plopped down in the center of any land, anywhere, and still grow into a strong, striving city.

Most Vamdrenel are very slender and delicate looking, and many other races have remarked that there must be magic holding the structures upright. Indeed this is not too far from the truth. On the day that construction of the Vamdrenel begins, everyone in the new settlement gathers and a special ritual begins. The Ritual involves subtle and fragile magic that is carefully spun together by a SpellWeaver. The magic is so refined and elegant that most Mages can barely even notice it, and no one who is not Elvenborn and a SpellWeaver can discern its true purpose. When pressed about it, True Elves will simply state that the Ritual ensures prosperity and protection of the denizens of the settlement. This Ritual is also important and unique in that there is an occasional “update” to it as the Vamdrenel grows. The community will again gather and the SpellWeaver will alter and change the existing spell. This is one of the most extraordinary abilities of the SpellWeavers, and has never been duplicated by any other mage, or arch-mage, ever.

SpellWeavers, as might be imagined, are very important and respected in True Elven society. Nearly every community can claim at least one SpellWeaver, and usually two: A learned one, and his student. Being a SpellWeaver is both an honor and a burden. SpellWeavers are usually dedicated to a community for life, and leave only on the rarest of occasions. There is little doubt that SpellWeavers number some of the most proficient mages in existence, but are almost never mentioned as being Arch-Mages. It can be said, with relative accuracy, that all SpellWeavers are extremely adept at rituals, and are very skilled at the manipulation of Artifacts.

While it is true that SpellWeavers are very important to True Elven society, they by no means hold much power in a political sense. In fact no one really does. Every community has a council called a Soldrenel. Soldrenel translates loosely as “the people’s will”. While any one is free to sit in on, and have a vote in the Soldrenel, it is most common for the eldest 10 percent or so of a community to attend on a regular basis. The SpellWeaver of the town loosely directs the monthly meetings, but holds no real technical power over the assembly. Traditionally, however, the more meetings that one attends, the more carefully a participant’s words are measured. Thereby, age and time in a community count very much towards how much merit an individual carries in the Soldrenel. Since SpellWeavers almost never live anywhere other than their appointed communities, they are almost always one of the most respected voices in the Soldrenel.

Political power does not exist in any real sense in the True Elven Kingdom. In fact, even though the Soldrenel locally governs communities, the Elven Kingdom as a whole is actually a monarchy. The Elven Queen rules from FirstSpire, the True Elven capital. The Queen rules absolutely, but traditionally invokes her powers only in times of crisis or emergency, such as war or plague. During times of peace, the True Elves

often take weeks or months to decide things of seemingly minor importance. Weighty matters can even take years. For example, about 1600 years ago, the succession to the throne was left unclear after the reigning King Ustrek was assassinated. Ustrek was young when he gained the throne, a mere 67, and was unmarried and without an heir. The contention was whether his cousin Tamic was the rightful heir, or his niece Aglindel was the proper successor. For three years the Elves discussed the matter and debated about who would lead them. In the end, the matter was brought to an end when Orcish raids forced a decision. Aglindel, a warrior of considerable prominence, took the only action that made sense: She rallied an army and drove the invaders from the Elven shores. After that, Aglindel had the popular support, and was named Queen. Her line has ruled ever since, and has protected the True Elven kingdom with their blood, as well as the blood of their sons and daughters.

One of the most significant events in True Elven history is the emergence of the Dark Elves, almost 1600 years ago. There is quite a bit of debate amongst True Elves whether or not Dark Elves are even a sub-race of Elves, or a completely different race spawned by demons in mockery of themselves. Many True Elves think that, just as the gods favor their race above all others, demons and other powers of Darkness favor the Dark Elves. To scorn the True Elves they made the Dark Elves as distorted mimics. A True Elf will usually refer to the race as the "Dark Ones". Where exactly they came from is not known, although they seem to have come from the badlands somewhere near the Free Cities. Their agenda as a race is a mystery, but death and destruction is sure to follow whenever the Dark Ones are involved. It is undeniable that the Dark Ones have general contempt for all other races, but they seem to hate the True Elves a little more than they hate everyone else.

The race that has most greatly affected the True Elves is undoubtedly the Orcs. The earliest records of the Orcs have shown them to be little more than animals, and the True Elves have easily suffered at their hands far more than any other race has. The Orcs' continuous and brutal raids have caused the True Elves endless amounts of grief. The Orcs' destructive nature has destroyed settlements time and time again. It is True Elven nature, however to rebuild and begin anew each time, for to give up is to surrender to the chaos and evil that the Orcs represent. True Elves have very good reason to hate the Orcs. Their raids have taken more True Elven lives than all other wars, famines and plagues put together.

True Elves have lacked the ability to muster much naval power, because of the constant raids, and even if they had, it is unlikely that they would have waged war across the open ocean. True Elves are not very war-like and consider war to be the last resort. Do not mistake this for weakness in any way, though. The Orcs and Dwarves can provide testament that the True Elves are extremely fierce in the protection of their homes and families.

Speaking of Dwarves, another major event in True Elven history is The Dwarven War. It is unclear what exactly occurred to precipitate the war, but the Dwarves are still very upset about it. The True Elves, for their part, feel that the Dwarves most likely over reacted. The Dwarves undoubtedly felt that whatever disagreement there was, could only be settled with brute force. They paid the price for their violent ways, however. While it is well documented that both sides suffered greatly during the war, records show that the Elves were clear victors. The True Elves have put the past behind them and forgiven the Dwarves for their transgressions, but until the establishment of the Peace Council, the relationship between the two races has been tentative and uneasy, if

not out-right hostile.

The True Elves find the new continent to be something of an enigma. While being very curious about what may be discovered in the new world, they are very cautious as to what may be uncovered. The Elders of the race warn all who travel to Feregothe, that evils long banished from Merdensa may still lurk there. The Wild Elves are most likely long lost cousins from forgotten expeditions across the sea but their feral and uncivilized nature make many True Elves somewhat nervous. True Elves, for the most part, are willing to accept their brethren back into the fold, but there seems to be some resistance on the part of the Wild Elves. This has led to greater speculation on whether or not the Wild Elves may be a part of some greater plot to destroy the True Elves, and then the rest of the world.

Humans are viewed as a race with great potential, if they could overcome their violent nature. Oelytes are considered to near equals in a lot of ways, but have to focus on the present a lot more; they are too often caught-up in their intellectual and theoretical world. Barbarians have little hope, but share the planet, so they must be endured. The Sethen are creatures of high moral integrity and undoubtedly have high spirituality. The problem with the Sethen is that they are smug in their self-righteousness. Dwarves, as mentioned before, are not the most respected race, as they tend to be very loud and obnoxious. Many centuries have proven that they do not have much of anything to offer the rest of the world, except possibly as builders and craftsmen. As long as the Dwarves remain focused and dedicated to peace, True Elves will endure their presence, and treat them with some small amount of respect.

In all, the world has great need for the True Elves. The less developed races need guidance in a harsh world that they are only beginning to explore. Mysteries and horrors await them and it is well that they have allies as powerful as the True Elves.