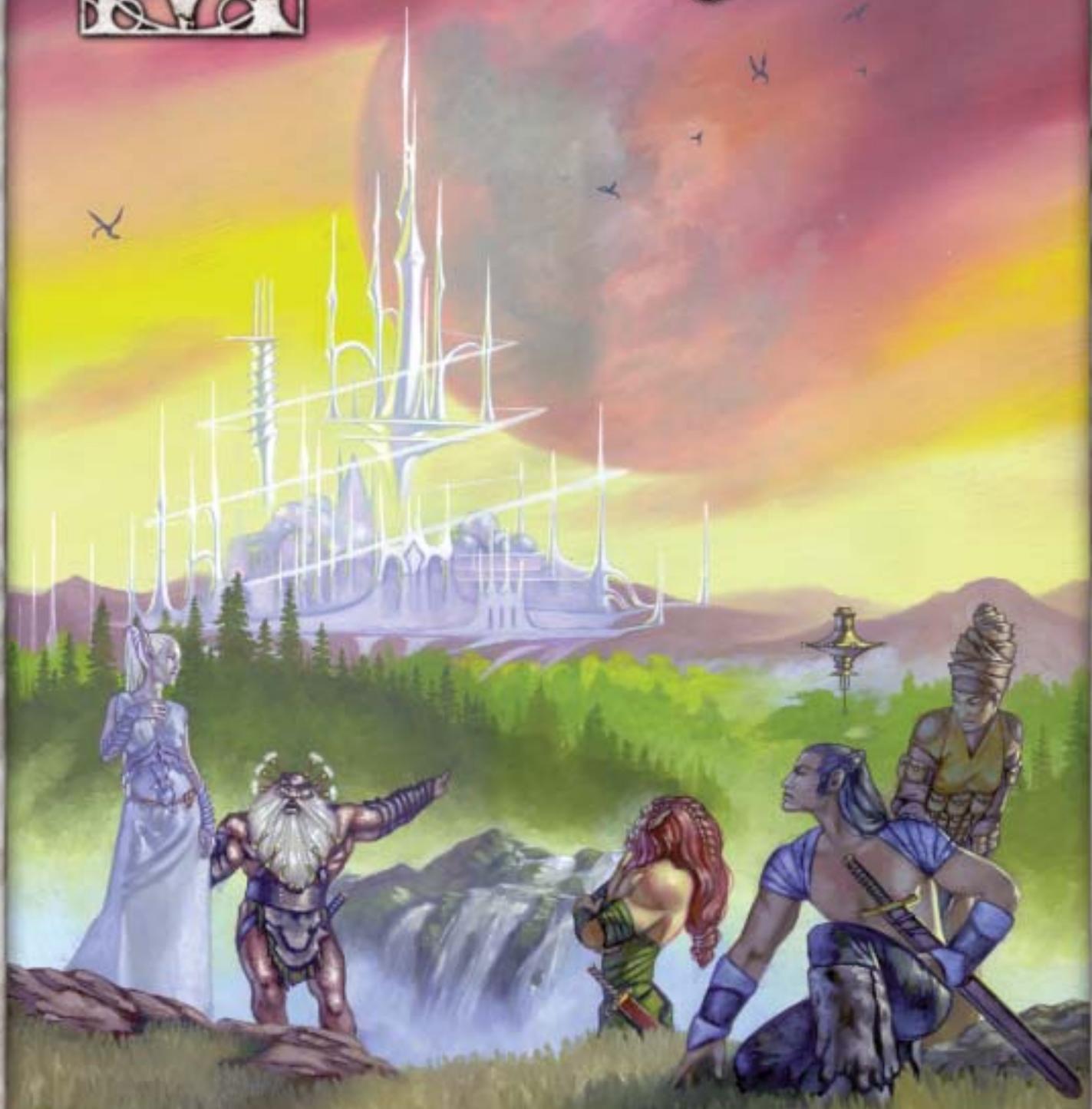




# Morningstar



Fantasy Campaign Setting

Setting Search Semi-Finalist



# orningstar

By R. Scott Kennan

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Be sure to look for supplemental Morningstar material in the EN World Player's Journal.

On the cover: Our heroes come within sight of a crystal city of the elves. From left to right: a crown elf sorceress, a clay dwarf rogue, a thull ranger, a human eidolon, and a human artificer. The moon, Arril, hangs low in the sky.

## Dedication

For Tammy and Ethan with love. Thank you for believing in me, and putting up with the odd hours I've kept over the past year. This is the first of many good things to come for our family.

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THE KEY IS EPHEMERAL, LIKE A SHADOW CAST BY THE MOON.

## Chapter I

# Age of Majesty

## An Introduction to Thraxis

You hold in your hands the gateway to Thraxis, the world of Morningstar. On the other side lies a world of eldritch magic, primeval races, and diverse imperial cultures at the height of their achievements, where a dark Prophecy has begun to uncoil. This is a world that never fell from grace and that continues to meet its highest potential. Immortal elves have retained their fey natures; the dwarves maintain a flourishing empire, wielding powers over earth and stone. These and other races are still vital; humanity has not yet pushed them into retreat. There are spirits in the land, water and sky. Places of power are everywhere, regions where certain magics have greater or lesser effect, which can be exploited to create workings impossible anywhere else. Wondrous treasures wait to be won from the gods in legend-making adventures, and heroes perform mythic deeds in the name of glory... in the name of Empire.

### Fantastic Achievements

The world is awash in magic, but its nature is such that it promotes large-scale undertakings in addition to personal power. The nine empires are virile, and everything is being discovered for the first time. Great and daring undertakings are funded, trade is strong, and the exchange of ideas creates prosperity for all concerned.

Art and culture are at their peak. Nine empires coexist in relative peace except for minor skirmishes that are not officially recognized. They trade with one another for mutual benefit. This prosperity has allowed for the construction of universities, monuments, and religious and civic buildings of breathtaking grandiosity, and for the development of an astounding way of life. Though far from idyllic, a citizen's life is reasonably stable. It is an age of wonders, where anything can be done for the right price, though this price is not always monetary.

Magic is the force that drives civilization toward its greatest potential in Morningstar. It is a fantastic time to be alive. The spirit of magical exploration pervades this world and the limits of possibility know no bounds. In the Brendirian province of Triskatariot, the creation of constructs has been raised to a high art. Olive groves are tended by golems, ornithopters wheel in the sky, and construct-vehicles carry troops on land and sea to battle. Ijamvians gain the element of surprise with ingenious and deadly mechanisms, such as the spring-loaded viper clamp, used as a grapnel in close combat. Sacred hot air balloons carry paying supplicants from Haseth closer to their gods, while Latoman gliders wheel in the skies of Quetapan.

Thraxis is a world of grandeur and beauty, both natural and architectural. Civilization seeks to match the beauty of creation in its own works, harnessing the magic of the world to erect monuments built to stand forever. In Brendir, columns and arches tower over the people, holding up multi-tiered temples and civic buildings. In Kenabu, giant turtles ferry citizens along the banks of obelisk-lined waterways. The gnomes of Gimmun Gibuldigapp display their technical mastery with an entire city that rotates, whirs, and chimes with clock-like precision.

### Places of Power

Magic is a living energy on Thraxis, the result of planar emanations that attract, repel, and destroy one another. These planar emanations suffuse the land and its life forms. These flows concentrate in certain places of power, creating areas tied to the phenomena of the plane or planes from which the energies derive. These areas range in size from a single plot of land to entire empires. These places of power are self-reinforcing; they are created by large congregations of similar beings, and when formed they strengthen those beings, causing more of the same types of creatures to seek them out, for the easy life they

## Technology in Morningstar

In addition to the construct vehicles and other magnificent innovations that have been discussed so far, the artificer traditions of the world have improved the lot of the common man with numerous mundane endeavors. The study of the properties of water alone has led to plumbing in all civilized areas of the nine empires, labor-powered water pumps that pull up groundwater for irrigation in arid lands, the lifting of heavy blocks of stone to great heights atop rafts that are raised upon columns of water allowing for ever taller monuments proclaiming the glory of the empires, and even the diversion of waterways to routes that are more beneficial to civilization. Precision tools have been developed: astrolabes for navigation, lenses for vision magnification over distances long and short, clocks and watches for timekeeping, and scales of exquisite tolerances that allow for greater precision in mercantile transactions. Wind-power is a burgeoning field as well, and windmills are cropping up in various frontiers where man or golem power is in short supply.

Magically implemented technologies have also left an indelible mark upon society, causing moves in directions different from that our own world took. Stone-cutter fortified roads and strongholds have rendered concrete a minor development, since few structures even require mortar. Fireballs and lightning bolts have kept the various explosive powders that alchemists have developed off of the battlefield, relegating it to celebratory uses in holiday displays of fireworks. Mechanical efficiency is almost a non-issue when a spirit can be bound into a vessel and perform its duty perpetually, needing no fuel, rest, or pay for those who can afford to bind them.

offer. This is why Brendir is lawfully inclined and positively charged, and Zeikrus, the draconic empire, is chaotic and in a state of eternal civil war. Smaller pockets are usually much more concentrated than those of the larger area they lie within. The shrine at Nepri, in Hasem-Bura, where desire becomes matter, is one such place. Spellcasters find some of their spells are more powerful, or weaker, in the most strongly-aligned areas. Great acts of daring that would be foolhardy in some areas are a matter of course in others. In the Triskatarriot region of Brendir, machines rarely break down inconveniently, while they are much more prone to collapse in the primeval forests of Ynnidon.

## Those Who Seek Power

Malevolent forces are stirring, hoping to tame the energies that have raised Thraxis so high, and to recast her in their own perverse images. Chaos is growing, and beings from the odd angles of reality are invading, bringing their eternal wars with them. A bizarre race of outsiders has recently come to the world, called by interested parties. Known only as the Strangers, these sophisticated beings are helping to undermine the fabric of society and to create strife between nations.

Gods can be forged here, and beings from all over the multiverse are becoming aware of that fact. Strange cults rise and fall, as these and other gods lay their claims in the hearts and mind of the peoples of Thraxis.

Men and gods struggle with fate, locked in a battle for the fate of Morningstar. At stake is the key to all the power in the cosmos. Thraxis attracts planar power, concentrating it to a strength that is not even possible on its plane of origin. The newcomers are learning a valuable, and potentially deadly lesson: he who controls Thraxis, controls the multiverse.

## The Canticle

On Thraxis, magic made a perfect world. Almost. There is a price for everything, and it is becoming apparent that the abuse of magic on Thraxis cannot be sustained indefinitely. A dark Prophecy, called the Canticle of the Morning Star, is unfolding. It speaks of the end of the great civilizations, and the prices each must pay for their arrogance. Its verses number in the tens of thousands, and each time it is thwarted, it adapts. Verses restructure themselves in the unholy texts, and a new route to destruction is plotted. None know its origin, but all respect its predictions, whether they seek to prevent them or to enable them. It is not entirely certain whether the Canticle seeks to bring the end about, or merely serves as a warning. One thing is certain; Thraxis is under siege from every direction, and by an inscrutable and faceless foe.

The world itself is a threat to the existence of civilization. Thraxis and her massive terraqueous moon have long existed in a state of perfect balance. Now, Arril's orbit is disturbed, creating great tides and earthquakes. Most of the time, the world's many tectonic plates disperse the stress, but with certain eccentricities of orbit come devastating earthquakes. Fierce elemental storms sometimes ravage the land as Thraxis seeks to fight the cancer that is springing up within her.

Deep underground lurk great and terrible civilizations as old as the world, which resent the encroachments of surface folk. Conflict so far has been mostly attrition, but with the increased mining that prosperity brings, full-scale war can't be far off. While most of the underground realms are bolstered with magic and centered within the established tectonic plates, with the most extreme upheavals deep-dwelling creatures can be forced to escape to the surface.

These and other threats are larger than any one person, but

there is always a chance to make an indelible mark on history. Morningstar is a world of heroes, villains, and conflicts writ large across the pages of a history that is still being made, where there is still a chance to make a difference. Thraxis has all the makings of a gilded paradise, or of the darkest hell. Which it becomes depends on the bold people of the world, who dare to take the reins of fate and wrestle them into submission. The need for heroes is becoming dire. Will you be counted among them?

## A New Beginning

Morningstar is a versatile setting, filled with possibility for any style of campaign. There's a lot to explore, since campaigns can be set in any part of the nine empires with varying degrees of effort. Morningstar is a setting that allows for adventures and stories that could happen nowhere else.

From the oppressive silence of the sand-swept temples of Kula Kor (home of the iguana-priests) to the abandoned sacrificial altars of Quetapan (soaked with the ancient blood of kings who wait for a chance at revenge), there are lost areas ripe for exploration by those willing to forgo the safety of civilized life. Even city life is filled to overflowing with the possibility for adventure: the commotion of the crime-ridden port city of Klephas, or the city of dementia in Xiangur. Soar with dragons in the endless blue sky of Zeikrus, a place of brutality and chaos. Find your destiny in the Hall of Moments, deep within the jungles of Western Min Geng. Find intrigue and mystery in the Brendirian senate. Become a general, an archmage, or hero of legend, command fanciful machines into battle, or become the first Emperor of Brendir. The world is yours to shape, and to remake in your own image. Wield this responsibility wisely.

## A Different World

### A Different Path

Morningstar is based upon the paradigm of an ancient world that met its highest potential. Its great empires never fell, never encountered feudalism, and never suffered an age of darkness. It is in the process of continuing through to what would be the renaissance on a medieval-styled world. You won't find kings and queens, peasants and chivalrous knights. Instead, there are Emperors and Empresses, humble citizens, and bold heroes.

### Different Dragons

Thraxian dragons each have their own colorations, and individual appearances, so it is not possible to tell from mere appearance what type of dragon one faces. The power descriptions and types from the MM still apply, tied to habitat, behavior, and alignment, so it is still useful to describe these dragons by the terms "metallic" and "chromatic." For the sake of easy

## Monsters of Morningstar

Morningstar is home to all manner of unique monsters, ranging from exotic magical beasts tamed by the advanced civilization of Brendir to horrid aberrations unleashed by the depths of Hrum Vaat. Some of the most fantastic creatures include these:

**Capricorn, Thraxian:** Covered in scintillating scales from head to tail, with foreparts that superficially resemble a goat and the hindquarters of a powerful fish, capricorns are in common use as beasts of burden.

**Gedge:** Relatives of the Lreans, the gedge perform much of the grunt work that is required in Hrum Vaat. Not possessing skeletons, they resemble nothing so much as flabby yet muscle-bound humanoid worms.

**Guch Hir:** Guch hir are hexapod insectivores that share a common ancestor with dragons. They are exceptionally stable creatures tamed as beasts of burden all across the Root of the World. Their flying cousins, the guch hin, are quite rare.

**Lrean:** Lreans are gifted artificers who create biological armor to protect their frail, wormlike bodies. The Lreans are the masterminds behind the subterranean realm of Hrum Vaat. Despite their inherent weakness, or perhaps because of it, they enjoy causing pain in others, glorying in power and strength that they do not truly possess.

**Mogrekx:** Mogrekhs are massive ruminant beasts with a taste for blood. The rams of the species are favored as war mounts by the dwarves of Kharkon.

**Pit Leech:** Three-legged, lamprey-mouthed humanoid aberrations. They are a particularly devout race, for as intelligent as they are, they worship those they feed upon for any length of time. A particularly large or resilient beast could conceivably become a godling given enough time with the suckling pit leeches.

**Tanin:** Tanin resemble a luminous cross between giant whales of various types and great serpents. They gracefully patrol the seas, fighting to protect the weak. Their home plane is the Spanless Seas, a great celestial ocean, clear and pristine, and they bring its influences to Thraxis.

**Vadoghol:** Vadoghol are creatures created from human stock. They have the distorted features of a man and the shape of some beast. Sometimes called "sundermen," they are used as slaves and beasts of burden in Ijamvuh. Hrum Vaat uses them for these things as well as food. They are tortured beings, with just enough humanity remaining to realize that they should not be. There are dozens of types, each bred for a specific purpose.



reference, all references to dragons in this and future Morningstar materials will also use the dragon types listed in the MM when describing the stats of a particular dragon. Keep in mind, however, that a red-colored dragon is not always a “red dragon” on Thraxis.

### **Different Faith**

There is no single unifying pantheon on this world. Each culture has its own religion and pantheons, whose gods are usually beyond the reach of mere mortals, dwelling not on another plane or some pseudophysical realm. They are what they should be – gods. Characters are less likely to follow the standard fantasy model which assumes the character worships and promotes the ideals of a single god. Instead, most people of the world follow a religion of several gods, more so than being vassals of a single deity or set of ideals. Of course there are cults, sects and orders that revere a single god, but these also exist within the framework of a culture and religion. Their myths and values are reflected in their daily life.

## The Sisters: The Worlds of Morningstar

*No one knows how long ago the world was forged. But it is certainly older than the immortal elves, older even than the gods themselves. Nature spirits were the first inhabitants of the world, and they arose at the same time the World Soul did. These primordial spirits don't think in terms of season or year, but they have revealed that for a long time the world was dead, and land and sea were barren and hot. Fierce weather battered the world, and the several races of mortal beings that found their way to this world during this time were wiped out by the inhospitable environment.*

*At some point, Thraxis moved too close to another world, and they fell into orbit around each other. Thraxis had gained her moon: Arril. The appearance of this moon stabilized Thraxis' orbit around the sun, and the world began to cool. A strange metaphysical reaction took place, creating a vortex of planar energy, drawing more than a fair share of magic to both worlds. The alignment of these two worlds served as a lens or prism that focused this energy, and burned a hole in the prime material plane, leading to a plane of absolute nothingness. This tear began to actively draw magic, increasing the already heightened flow to a torrent, casting the magic into nonexistence after it had passed through the two worlds. Soon the magic was being destroyed as fast as it flowed across Thraxis, without having a chance to concentrate. Ironically, the immense flow of power effectively made Thraxis a world without magic. This hidden sinkhole also threatened to gradually leech all magic from the rest of reality. The World Soul grew weak and began to die. Many of the early spirits were swept into oblivion. A fortunate side-effect of the great potential energy crossing this world was the sparking of physical life. At first life was a nondescript goo that coated the rocks and floated upon the seas, but this was enough to create a drastic change in the flow. The World Soul discovered that life acted as a mesh, capturing magic and holding it — at least for a while. Magic levels slowly crept back towards the place they had been before, and the world healed. The spirit of the world resolved that it would ensure that life thrived on Thraxis.*

*Suddenly (on the spirits' time scale), the seas were teeming with fish and plants. Eventually, life moved to land, and the world was filled with activity. A sentient aspect of the World Soul called The Mother experimented greatly with the new life forms, making mistakes and learning from them. Her early attempts at creating a sustained ecosystem failed almost without exception. The world went through a series of spectacularly violent and improbable ages, all culminating in apocalypse, until she had learned enough. There was a brief geological moment of peace, as The Mother reflected. She had learned the lesson of balance.*

— Jasperio Treatise on History

Thraxis has a large, terraqueous moon called Arril. More than a moon, it is a world unto itself, and it shares an orbit with Thraxis. Scholars speculate that two living, magic-drawing worlds in such close proximity create stresses upon the fabric of this plane, allowing other planes to bleed their energies across the surface of Thraxis. These energies attract, repel, and destroy one another, but on the surface of the world, a tenuous equilibrium is found. Life itself draws magic to Thraxis, and sentience gives it order.

### Thraxis

Thraxis has a circumference of about 60,000 miles. Arril is smaller, at 18,110 miles. This book focuses on the area of Thraxis known as the Root of the World. Anyone who isn't a sage of the Nine Empires refers to The Root of the World simply as "the World." The Root of the World spans a distance of roughly 20,000 miles. Beyond this cluster of continents to the east and west are trackless miles of open sea, scattered with islands. No one who has ventured into the distant seas has returned, and it is unknown whether there are other continents on the other side of the world. It is known, however, that travel into these areas is fraught with peril, as the seas grow deeper, housing ever stranger and more powerful creatures. Scrying or teleporting around the curvature of the world has not been possible because of the Wheel, a magical vortex that drains dweomers and prevents long-range spells from working.

Thraxis is a warm world, with a climate that ranges from sweltering tropical regions at the equators, to cool temperate near the poles. Shallow seas around the Root of the World regulate heat flow, keeping polar caps from forming, and creating a very moist environment on most areas of the continents. The world is very fertile as a rule, with diverse and exotic life forms. Environments can be found to house any type of creature, even those who prefer hostile planar environments, because of the adaptive and reflective nature of magic on this verdant world.

### Natural Hazards

#### Upheavals

Thraxis is a tectonically active world, prone to massive earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. This also means that great tsunamis can crash upon the battered shores of the world. Tides, too, are extreme, making it necessary for many shoreside settlements to take drastic measures, such as incredibly long piers, or other contrivances. The citizens of the Brendirian city of Panphatas solved the problem by building their city in levels, supported by pillars.

## Comets and Asteroids

The close proximity of Arril and Thraxis draws numerous asteroids and comets into the general area. The sky is alive with wanderers, delighting viewers on clear nights and occasionally giving ground dwellers an unfortunate closer look. One such impact in recorded history was the early strike with what is now the empire of Ijamvhul. The energies released in that impact created the first ice age, early in the history of mankind, and set up the Primal signature that has become a hallmark of the Ijamvian subcontinent and persists even to this day. If not for the purification efforts of the air elementals at the behest of the Mother, the dust cloud that spewed forth could have ended most life on Thraxis at that geological moment. The Horn of Valtu is the site of the initial impact, jutting out into the sea. Bits of this meteor are powerful aids in the creation of destructive magical items.

## Timekeeping

### The Brendirian Calendar

The Brendirian calendar is the most simple and widely used calendar in the world. There are 16 lunar months in a year. Each month has five 6-day weeks and is 30 days long, for a total of 480 days in a year. Each day is 21 hours long, separated into seven-hour third-days. Standard Brendirian clocks show all 21 hours on their face, while Triskatar clocks show only seven hours, with multiple hands recessed under the 7 on the face. The hands emerge to stack upon one another, changing color and growing thicker in three stages throughout the course of a day. At the equinoxes, these colors are blue for midnight to dawn, gold for dawn to dusk, and magenta for dusk to midnight. It is common parlance to refer to the time by hour and color for clarification. "The thull accosted me at around half past 2 magenta last night..."

This method of timekeeping alters spell durations and time dependent magical effects, but not the rate at which a spellcaster receives his daily spells. Characters still need 8 hours of rest per day, and healing is unaffected.

The months of the year are named after various Brendirian gods:

#### *Winter Months*

Lamilo  
Jenuno  
Folin  
Teses

#### *Spring Months*

Anellin  
Zisis  
Marbew  
Psed

#### *Summer Months*

Dalvaro  
Kana  
Tordel  
Ganou

#### *Autumn Months*

Gret  
Kolto  
Herew  
Dust

The Brendirian days of the week are named for the business commonly conducted on that day. The names below are not the only ones used for these days throughout the world, or even throughout the Brendirian empire. Brendis itself uses these names, as do any official outposts. Local names may vary slightly or greatly by ancient tradition.

The Brendirian days of the week are:

**Toil Day:** This is the return to reality for many plebeians, the beginning of the standard work week.

**Wash Day:** Traditionally the day when clothing is washed, now more of a convenient name than anything else.

**Drudge Day:** As the day before many people's work is completed for the week, long hours are often worked today. It is also the commonly accepted pay day.

**Market Day:** The busiest shopping day, this is the traditional preparation day before feast day.

**Feast Day:** A weekly feast that is held after work is done for the day. Most entertaining is done on feast day, and guests are urged to arrange their arrival on this day. The government does no unnecessary work today.

**Games Day:** A weekly holiday when shops work short or no hours, and people do their weekly errands, and often take in entertainment. The government avoids almost all work today. Only town or city guards and critical bureaucrats work at all. All major holidays are set to fall on Games Day, with few notable exceptions.

## Chapter II

# Heroes of Morningstar

## The Characters

### Racial Options

Many Morningstar races are of a higher power level than the ones outlined in the PHB. This book gives two options for using them. The first and default option is that these powerful races are treated as classes that can be leveled in and out of at the player's whim. The second option is the standard rule – that powerful races are given a level adjustment. Unless otherwise noted, all of these special races receive the abilities listed under their base racial description in the PHB. For example, unless specifically stated otherwise all dwarves receive the stonemasonry ability.

#### **Option 1: "Powerful Races as Classes" (default Morningstar assumption)**

In order to properly evoke the flavor and power of the primal races of Thraxis, the default assumption is that the more powerful races are treated as classes. The reason for this is not merely to be contrary, but to allow for the full potential of these races to be realized. It is primarily a balance consideration, to allow GMs to include these races in campaigns that begin with all characters starting at first level. When this option is used, the character must choose to take the racial class from first level, but may multiclass freely thereafter. For example, a party of three characters might start out as a 1st level flayed dwarf, a 1st level stream elf, and a 1st level human fighter. At 2nd level, the flayed dwarf may take another level of its racial class, while the stream elf could take a level of bard and the human advances to the next level of fighter.

**Pros:** This option allows for a player to choose a high-powered race as a first level character, while preserving game balance. The high-powered races will not tend to fall behind other characters of the same level as quickly, or even at all. This

option avoids the apparently arbitrary penalties to high-powered races, while preventing them from overshadowing powerful characters of lower-powered races. It evokes the feel of Morningstar very strongly.

**Cons:** This option deviates from the standard treatment of high powered character races in 3E. The races are very specific in their roles and abilities, and characters will need to multiclass to continue developing, possibly weakening their characters relative to single-classed characters of the same level.

**Note:** The Morningstar races are geared towards very specific ideals, and as such it may not be wise to take a racial class for all five levels before multiclassing. Your character will likely end up being very powerful in a very specific area, and far too weak in others. Keep this in mind while leveling up.

#### **Option 2: Level Adjustment (standard d20 assumption)**

To play a character with a level adjustment, you add the appropriate adjustment to any class levels your character has to determine the total character level. For this reason it is important to decide as a referee and as a group whether to start the characters at higher than first level. This decision will impact the campaign in several ways. If you decide to allow it, the mix of races available to the players grows, and play will tend towards higher fantasy. If you decide against it, you effectively disallow the more exotic races (at least for starting characters), and set them aside to serve as NPCs. There is nothing wrong with this decision, and some gamemasters may find that it helps to keep these races "special." When this option is used, a character begins with all special abilities, as if they had taken the race as a class to fifth level. No other features (hit dice, saves, and BAB) of the described racial class are assumed.

**Pros:** This option works within the standard d20 rules as they are currently written.

**Cons:** The players are effectively prevented from playing

certain races unless the GM allows higher level starting characters. The power level of the races is limited, in order to make the race available under the rules. A campaign will be that much shorter, since characters will likely reach 20th level faster if they start at higher than 1st level.

### Language Slots: "Imperial Common"

One of the differences between creating a Morningstar character and a standard character using only the PHB is the difference in how languages are handled. There is no "Common" language per se on Thraxis; instead this language slot is replaced with "Imperial Common." Each empire has its own common tongue (the official language of the empire), and a language for each region or province within that empire. "Imperial Common" means the common language within a given empire or unaffiliated nation, and is not a language unto itself. For example, a character from Xiangur would put Xiangurese in the "Imperial Common" slot. The Imperial Languages are: Brendirian, Hasethan, Ijamvian, Kenabu, Kharkonoi, Quetapanii, Xiangurese, Ynnidonian, and Zeikrusian.

The nonhuman races are more unified than humanity. Thus, they retain their racial languages, but sometimes develop their own regional languages in addition to their common racial tongues.

## Races in Morningstar

The races that follow are the most prolific PC races found in the Brendirian Republic. Other empires have their own local races that are suitable as PCs, but because of space limitations, they can not be discussed here. Future supplements will detail these other races of Thraxis.

### The Empress

The Empress is the Goddess of the Fey. She is quite mad. She is embodied, but her mind transcends the physical. She is in one place, but she sees everything within her realm. She can instantly read the motivations of any elves in her presence, and can manifest anywhere with the Fey signature (see chapter III: Mystic Forces) at will. She is not benevolent, nor does she have the best interests of Thraxis at heart. Ever pragmatic, even in her madness, she realizes that her goals are expedited by protecting nature and by demanding that her servants comport themselves in a generally benevolent way. Most elves are not fully aware of her true nature, and would likely rebel against her if they ever found out. They believe her when she says that her various aggressive acts throughout history were strictly necessary for the protection of nature.

## Elder Races: Dwarves and Elves

*In the time before the appearance of the elder races, the world was primal and free. Wild and fantastic beasts of every description roamed unhindered, each acting within its nature. Virgin forests and plains stretched across the world, wild rivers and streams wound through them. Magic lived in everything, as it does today, but it was raw, and without direction. The bounty of life drew even more magic into the world. The spirits flitted across this world, but could only interact with it in the most limited ways. They longed for a way to touch the beauty that they witnessed.*

### The First Invasion

*Thraxis was now sending out subtle ripples across the multiverse. One being in particular took notice. A powerful spirit, persecuted in her own realm and exiled to an ethereal prison by her own kind, found a portal that led to Thraxis. After untold eons of seclusion, she leapt at the opportunity to escape. When she was thrust upon this strange world, she found that it was even richer in magic than her home realm. As soon as she arrived, the energies in the area around her shifted, reflecting her own personality. This shocked and amazed her. Here, she could become a goddess, and here she could plan for her revenge. She set about learning how to best exploit the incredible resources of this world.*

*At first she found the multitude of chattering spirits that flocked to her a nuisance. Over time, however, she came to realize that if they could be tamed, they could be used. They wanted guidance, and they clamored for a chance to serve her. She obliged in exchange for a piece of each of their souls which would be incorporated into her own being. Being an ingenious tactician, she realized that not all of these spirits would help her cause. She made it clear that only those entities who vowed to preserve life and to channel the energies of this world to her ends would receive her aid. She gave them physical vessels, and the first fey were born. They sold her their souls, and she became their Empress.*

*The World Soul is slow to perceive, and experiences time at such a slow rate that it didn't notice the new developments until it was almost too late. The Empress and her legions of fairies, elves, and spirit folk had nearly conquered the entire world, and had changed the signatures of most regions to Fey. Their brand of sentient life was more effective at harnessing magic than the indigenous flora and fauna. A power struggle began between the Empress and Thraxis herself. The first thing Thraxis did was to differentiate itself more. The Mother split away, becoming an individual goddess, where she had once been merely an aspect of the total persona. As a consequence of the shift in balance, a counterpart, the Father, also split away from the core. Away from the World Soul, they were not as slow to respond to threats. Meanwhile the Empress was in reach of her goal of total world domination, which she deemed would give her the power necessary to conquer those who had exiled her.*

*In one of their last bastions of power, the region that is now Kharkon, the Father and the Mother appealed to the spirits there, those that had either forgone a pact with the Empress, or had been rejected. Those that agreed to help became the first dwarves, little more than organic fighting machines with enough low cunning to follow directions and use tactics. The first step was to teach these new beings how to survive. The next step was war.*

### The First Wars

*Unlike the Empress, the Mother was capable of creating new souls,*

so these protodwarves multiplied with abandon. After a time, the new earthen warriors of the Mother and Father were ready to fulfill their purpose. With the voices of the Mother and Father in their ears, they burrowed through her body, and attacked the elves from below. Many thousands of elven villages literally fell to the unified assault. Sometimes entire elven cities were simply swallowed by the earth. Many of these sunken cities remain to be found, filled with the corpses of ancient dead, and potent elven artifacts and weapons that never had a chance to wreak the destruction they were designed for.

The Empress quickly marshaled her forces. The elves retaliated, by entering the tunnels and driving the dwarves to the surface. Many years of outright attrition ensued. The dwarves had the numbers, but slain elves could reenter the world almost as fast as they left it. As the dwarves were killed, new dwarves were born, and grew to maturity over the course of a few years. The Empress gave the souls of all slain elves new bodies, and sent them out to fight, after a short period of acclimation. A given elven soul may have suffered death hundreds of times, but mercifully, it never remembered, marching on towards death again and again. No members of the original elven races are believed to exist to this day, having died many times in the First Wars.

— Jasperio Treatise on History

## The Dwarves

The souls of the dwarves of Thraxis are joined with the earth. Only humans and halflings are found in more places than the dwarves. In Kenabu, there are hairless stonecutter dwarves with skin of cracked obsidian. Xiangur has its own specialized varieties of dwarves, as do Quetapan and Ijamvuh. All over the world, there are dwarves, a highly resilient and adaptable race.

Dwarves rule the empire called Kharkon, which once sprawled across the entire continent of the same name. Over the years, they depleted their mines in the south after most of these areas lost their Terran signatures, driving the boundaries of Kharkon northward and eastward. Now threatened by Hrum Vaat, they face a new battle, for many of the same places that make great mines also make great nests for aberrations. If they fail to retain the Terran signatures in these areas, it will only be a matter of centuries before these areas are depleted as well, and the dwarves will be forced to migrate or die.

## DAVRINHAI

### Stonecutter Dwarves

Stonecutter dwarves have strong defensive capabilities and are considered cowardly by dwarven standards. This reputation is largely false, since they are not afraid to fight, just disinclined to do so. When danger strikes, the Davrinhai thwart it with ingenuity rather than force. Their skin is imbedded with mineral dust and even small stones. They are the most peaceful of the dwarves, and are the ultimate craftsmen and builders.

**Personality:** Davrinhai are solemn and worrisome folk. While they inherited an advanced form of natural dwarven endurance, they also inherited an advanced form of dwarven fatalism. Davrinhai are always prepared for the worst, but hope, if only secretly, for the best. The Canticle has only proven what these folk have always believed; the day will come when there is nothing left to mine, and the stonecutters will fade away. Davrinhai do not know what to do with themselves if they cannot work. For this reason, many races have enslaved the Davrinhai over the eons.

**Physical Description:** Stonecutter dwarves are sturdy, thick-limbed beings, with rocky, cracked skin. They usually possess wiry, metallic hair and beards, though some groups are entirely bald, usually in hot climates. Their eyes are entirely shielded by their mineral casing, and stonecutters resemble nothing so much as stout animate statues. They wear loose-fitting minimalist clothing, and often have metal clasps and head-dresses that arrange their beards and hair.

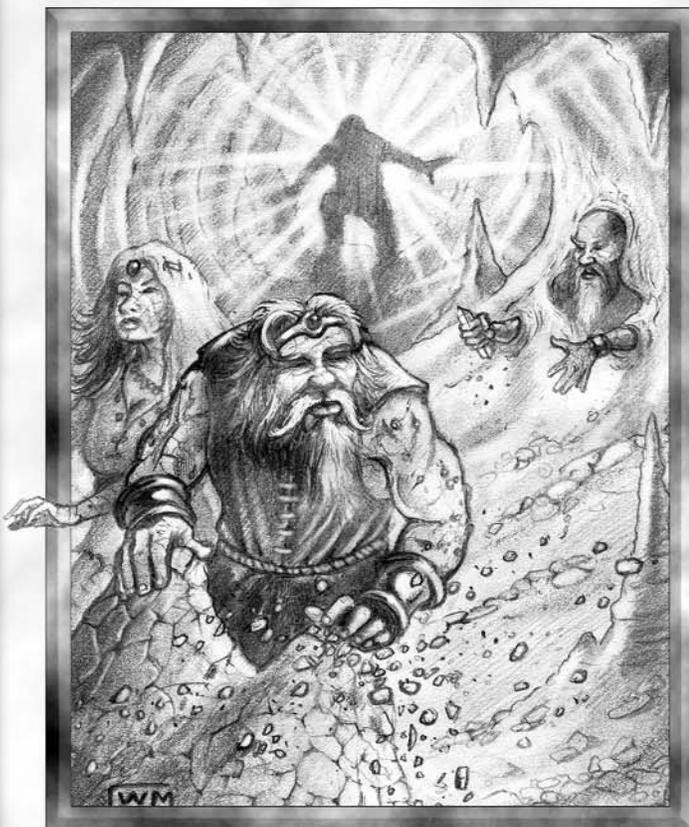
**Relations:** In most of dwarven society, Davrinhai occupy the bottom rung of society. Only the clay dwarves who betrayed Kharkon to the humans get less respect. They are still higher than non-dwarves, and are rarely mocked, but they are not given the same honor as the military castes, the Garhai, and the Kharak. The Garhai are intelligent and thoughtful enough to respect the necessity of a working caste, but the Kharak look upon Davrinhai with veiled scorn.

**Alignment:** Usually lawful neutral.

**Stonecutter Lands:** They favor underground realms, and are generally slightly phobic of open spaces. If they must dwell out in the open for some reason, their homes are set into the

Table 1-1: Davrinhai - Stonecutter Dwarf

| Level | Base         | Saves |     |      | Special                        |
|-------|--------------|-------|-----|------|--------------------------------|
|       | Attack Bonus | Fort  | Ref | Will |                                |
| 1     | +0           | +0    | +0  | +1   | Quarry, Mason's Touch 1/Day    |
| 2     | +1           | +0    | +0  | +1   | Mason's Touch 2/Day            |
| 3     | +2           | +1    | +1  | +2   | Mason's Touch 3/Day            |
| 4     | +3           | +1    | +1  | +2   | Mason's Touch 4/Day            |
| 5     | +3           | +1    | +1  | +3   | Mason's Touch 5/Day, Stonedive |



ground, with little more than their roofs extending above the surface. They never use mortar in their constructions. In tectonically active regions, they favor fitted stonework which has the ability to disperse vibration, but otherwise their buildings are entirely seamless, as if carved from a single block of stone.

One day is much the same as the last in the subterranean realms, and that is how the Davrinhai like it. Most are content to work long, repetitive hours every day until they lay their head upon their stone pillows and pass into the earth one final time. Some special few see that life can be more than endless and often meaningless toil, and seek out a life of greater excitement as heroes. Even fewer rebel completely, and seek only self-gratification, becoming villains or ne'er-do-wells.

Work isn't the only thing stonecutters do, but they frame all of their other activities around it. A stonecutter society is divided into work crews. These crews are tightly bound social units, serving as military units during conflicts, and extended families during peace. Members of a society may be members of several crews, moving between them throughout their highly structured days, for different purposes. There are temple crews that assemble to worship while they work, crews where young students are given lessons, and social crews for dwarves seeking mates.

Young stonecutters are put to work as soon as they can walk, joining their parents' work crew until they move out on their own (around the age of 30), receiving training on the job, and usually taking one of their parents' trades, in addition to the mining and building responsibilities that all Davrinhai have. They use their Mason's Touch and other abilities as much as they can for one day, and when there is no more productive

building or mining work for them to do that day, they perform their trade for another 10 hours or so, and finally retire to their homes or a gathering place. Even here, they work, doing chores or performing favors for others.

Their society is surprisingly egalitarian for one based on labor. Everyone has their place, and none are better or worse than the others. All citizens are valued, and no one wants for anything, even if they cannot work because of injury or infirmity. Unneeded wealth is voluntarily spread around for the greater good, but no one begrudges the wealthy, and each aspires to see his labor bring his family prosperity. The rich toil with everyone else, but they may be able to hire and outfit their own crew with the finest tools to make their work more efficient.

Upon their death, stonecutters sink into the stone, and become one with it. It is believed that the hardest workers become precious minerals that will enrich future generations.

**Religion:** Davrinhai worship Andrak and Hoene above all others, though, as with all Kharkonoi dwarves, the entire Gejjurik pantheon is revered.

**Names:** Stonecutter naming conventions do not favor the fierce gutturals and violent appellations of other dwarves. Instead, a stonecutter is named after tools, ores, or his family trade.

**Male Names:** Tobb (mallet), Benjur (rust), Denjur (dust), Gatch (mushroom), Vaidel (chisel), Wid (wedge).

**Female Names:** Dastra (luminescence), Kaster (priestess), Kress (rope), Regana (pick), Towtiss (cave moss).

**Surnames:** Eifer (rubble comber), Gatcher (mushroom farmer), Hang (outcropping), Thegger (ratcatcher), Zaiz (smith).

**Adventurers:** A rare few stonecutters decide that the simple and predictable life within the mines and quarries is not for them. They apply their supernatural abilities to a life of adventure, becoming master thieves, able to break into many places that others are barred from.

**Regions:** The primary stronghold of the stonecutters is Ulnq. Even so they are found all over the world, with a high concentration in the Umbekti province of Kenabu.

**Level Adjustment Option:** +2. Stonecutter dwarves are more powerful than the standard races, and are considered two levels higher for purposes of advancement. Thus a 1st level stonecutter character is in fact a 3rd level character overall.

**Racial Abilities:** Except as noted below, all stonecutter abilities are the same as the standard dwarf from the PHB.

**Favored Class:** Rogue. Stealth comes naturally to the stonecutters, so they can freely multiclass into rogue, even if the "Races as Classes" option is used. The Expert NPC class also incurs no penalty.

### Stonecutter Dwarf Racial Class

**Hit Die:** d6

**Class Skills and Weapon and Armor Proficiencies:** As a rogue.

**Quarry:** Stone becomes softer under the hands of the stonecutter dwarf. By putting his hand upon an unworked min-

eral surface, he can choose to lower its hardness rating by up to 2 points per level per round for as long as contact is maintained. Once the hardness has been lowered to zero, this reduction overflows into the substance's hit points on a one-for-one basis. Eventually, as the dwarf grows in power, such stone or mineral may crumble at the stonemason's very touch. This is very useful in mining, because different metals have different hardness ratings, allowing the stonemason to simultaneously remove useless metals and separate out valuable ores. Any weapon or tool strikes benefit from this reduced structural strength. This ability affects a 5 foot section at a time, and may not be used on mineral based creatures. At a sufficiently advanced level, this ability may be used simultaneously with Mason's Touch to cover a stonemason's passage.

**Mason's Touch:** As a spell-like ability, a stonemason dwarf may join and shape stone or mineral matter with his bare hands, for a number of rounds equaling his Wisdom bonus, for a minimum of 1 round. With this ability, solid walls of stone may be erected, metal tools and weapons may be repaired, and tools may be crafted. A full-round action joins 5 cubic feet of pre-stacked stones into a wall, or a single piece of metal of no larger than 1 cubic inch to another. Anything built in this way may not have any moving parts. Stone structures created with Mason's Touch do not count as worked structures for the purposes of a stonemason's Quarry or Stonedive abilities.

**Stonedive:** A Davrinhai who has advanced to 5th level as a stonemason gains the ability to dive into dirt and stone as a protective measure. Once per day per 5 character levels, for as long as he can hold his breath, he and all of his equipment may pass into unworked earth or stone, but he cannot see, and may only hear while within one foot of a surface of the stone. He may move around within the wall and may exit at a different point than he entered. He may travel through stone as if it were water, moving in any direction he wishes, even vertically. He may stick his head out to look around or listen, but may not take a breath. To do so means ejection as described below. If the five foot cubic section of stone he currently occupies takes any damage that overcomes its hardness, the stonemason must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + the amount of damage) or be ejected, taking 1d6 damage in the process.

## GARHAI

### Flayed Dwarves

Gruesome and fatalistic, flayed dwarves inure themselves to pain to become the perfect warriors. They make excellent generals and in mixed communities they usually serve in some position of authority. Calling themselves Garhai, they consider it their duty to guard the sunlit lands from the foul abominations that pull themselves from the bowels of the earth. The typical flayed dwarf has little sense of humor and superficially flat emotions. They expect and give no quarter, either on the battlefields or the training grounds.

**Personality:** From a young age, flayed dwarves are allowed to show no weakness, and their rites of passage involve a weeks-long "tempering," in which the dwarven youth goes into isolation, carving his body with runes and deep mystical furrows, subsisting on whole grain and water. A hallucinogenic fungus called "thukarukh" or "breaker of the spine of thought" is consumed and applied to the wounds, ensuring gruesome scarification and producing hellish waking nightmares. A pinch of precious gem dust is then applied to the open wounds, creating a sparkling tattoo when healed. This latter part of the ritual follows many Garhai for the rest of their lives, with new tattoos being built upon any fresh wounds that resemble significant dwarven runes or symbols. The saga of a flayed dwarf's greatest battles can often be read upon his hide. In their declining years, many a flayed dwarf finally breaks, as the psychic walls they have built up over the centuries crumble. They become the objects of pity or scorn, as the younger dwarves struggle with respect for their elders and disdain for the weakness they show. In extreme cases a disruptive elder may be banished or leave by his or her own free will, seeking one last adventure or a measure of peace.

The Garhai are grim, but there is depth to their personae. Beneath the stoic exterior lies a maelstrom of emotion. The flayed ones can sometimes find themselves feeling natural emotions such as compassion, love, or even fear, and wondering if they are they are the only ones of their kind to feel this way. Such feelings are quickly stifled and dismissed as momentary weakness. The flayed dwarves' truest feelings are often expressed in their art, which extends past scarification, and can

Table 1-2: Garhai - Flayed Dwarf

| Level | Base         | Saves |     |      | Special            |
|-------|--------------|-------|-----|------|--------------------|
|       | Attack Bonus | Fort  | Ref | Will |                    |
| 1     | +1           | +1    | +0  | +1   | Poisoned Flesh     |
| 2     | +2           | +1    | +0  | +1   | Demented Gaze      |
| 3     | +3           | +2    | +1  | +2   | Instill Fanaticism |
| 4     | +4           | +2    | +1  | +2   | Death March        |
| 5     | +5           | +3    | +2  | +3   | Boiling Blood      |



include etchings, mosaics, sculpture, or any other craft. The flayed dwarves do not sing or make music in any way. Young dwarves are scolded if they attempt such, and learn an aversion for these types of self-expression. They may, however, be moved by the music of others, but would never let on.

**Physical Description:** Flayed dwarves are much more stout than the standard dwarf, with muscular limbs of equal thickness, ribbed with veins and crossed with scar tissue.

**Relations:** The flayed dwarves do not get along well with nonlawful beings, with the exception of the Kharak. They treat everyone as either an ally, or an enemy. Elves are largely hated, and humanity's role shifts as treaties are made and broken. The general attitude is one of mistrust towards outsiders, until proven otherwise.

**Alignment:** Usually lawful neutral. Good and evil aren't as important to the Garhai as discipline and loyalty.

**Flayed Dwarf Lands:** The typical flayed dwarven hold is located partially on the surface, and partially underground. They favor monolithic and foreboding architecture, designed to send the message that the Garhai are not to be trifled with. Their buildings sprawl, and lie low to the ground. Towers and domes are usually very broad, sometimes broader than they are tall.

Unmixed flayed dwarf societies are extremely rigid and militaristic, even oppressive. Duty is of utmost importance, and banishment or even corporal punishment is applied to those who routinely shirk them. Like the stonecutters, the Garhai have a very acute focus on schedules, and everyone is expected to be in their place at the right time. Society operates very efficiently, with a minimum of bureaucracy. Everyone is ranked

according to their value and tenure in society, and the highest ranked citizen available makes any required decisions.

Flayed dwarves prefer to leave farming, smithing and other labor to the stonecutters, trading protection and acquired goods for these things, but when they must do these things for themselves they go about the labor with a sullen efficiency, taking no joy in the work. Though they are capable in any of these pursuits, they quietly resent having to perform them. This is why these tasks are reserved for disciplining young troops.

**Religion:** Flayed Dwarves worship the Gejjurik pantheon, which is described in chapter VI, Faith and Worship. They favor Kroschleth in their ceremonies.

**Names:** Flayed dwarves tend to be named by adjectives that describe them at birth, or circumstances that their parents wish them to live under. Garhai last names come from the race's spiritual sacraments, or phrases from popular myths or legends.

**Male Names:** Gidreg (Centered), Kifeer (Wisdom), Dowdrik (Burning-Rain), Henger (Hunger), Kolmol (Merciless), Bivved (Bled)

**Female Names:** Jolna (Grief), Patolki (Milk-wine), Inmag (Fortified), Jil (Scorn), Pidre (Strongblood), Findra (Wonder)

**Surnames:** Hikrel (Sight-of-'Hik'), Geneded (Keeper-of-Gem-Blood), Olnimem (Bringer-of-Terror-Dreams), Maal (Deathbringer), Milgur (Keeper-of-Steel), Zengerin (Arrow-in-its-Back), Trosthithek (Wisdom-from-Pain), Thukarukh (Breaker-of-the-Spine-of-Thought)

**Adventurers:** Flayed dwarves are great party leaders, and usually fail in positions of subordination to other races. They adventure to discover the mysteries of battle, and to master their fears. Treasure is a badge of honor, desired more for the prestige it represents than any monetary value.

**Regions:** Flayed dwarf outposts are found all over Kharkon, the underworld, and small pockets across the world in other places that have been reached through subterranean migration.

**Level Adjustment Option:** +2. Flayed dwarves are more powerful than the standard races, and are considered two levels higher for purposes of advancement. Thus a 1st level Garhai character is in fact a 3rd level character overall.

**Racial Abilities:** Except as noted below, flayed dwarves have all of the abilities listed under the dwarf entry in the PHB.

**Favored Class:** Fighter. In addition to the flayed dwarf class, Garhai may freely multiclass as a fighter after first level.

### Flayed Dwarf Racial Class

**Hit Die:** d10

**Class Skills and Weapon and Armor Proficiencies:** As a fighter.

**Poisoned Flesh (Ex):** Flayed dwarves partake in a great many mind-altering substances as part of their spirituality. Any creature that digests food, and succeeds in a bite attack, must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + the dwarf's level) or be affected by trace poisons in the flayed dwarf's flesh. If affected, the monster will thereafter suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to all rolls for 1d4 rounds. This penalty stacks with itself if the creature continues to use a bite attack. Even after the primary effect has

ended, the creature will feel the effects for up to a day, having nightmares the following night (if it is capable of dreaming).

**Demented Gaze (Ex):** The flayed dwarf gets a +4 racial bonus to Intimidate checks. In addition, he has the ability to unnerve friends and foes alike, demanding respect. This extraordinary ability allows the dwarf to command (as per the spell) any creatures subject to fear effects to perform one action unless the target makes a Will save (DC 10 + the flayed dwarf's level). Demented Gaze may be used as often as desired, but if it fails may not be used on the same target for one day.

**Instill Fanaticism (Su):** At 3rd level, the Garhai has even more power to command respect. A group of creatures with up to 10 HD per character level may willingly swear to follow the flayed dwarf into battle, and benefit from his inner strength. Any creatures who do so gain a +2 morale bonus to all combat actions, but they may not break from the fray, even to aid fallen allies, until the flayed dwarf calls a retreat or all enemies are defeated. To attempt to do so requires a Will save (DC 15 + the flayed dwarf's level), and 1d10 damage is incurred either way. This ability stacks with other morale boosting effects (but not other uses of Instill Fanaticism), as long as the group remains under the flayed dwarf's sway. It should be noted that a general can command an army with this ability, keeping other flayed dwarves under his own power, who in turn command others.

**Death March (Ex):** Upon reaching 4th level, the flayed dwarf will never unwillingly fall unconscious from damage while a battle rages, and can fight on, taking no noncombat or non-escape actions, after reaching 0 hp. Other than this restriction, treat this ability as the Hard to Kill feat (see page 57). If the dwarf actually purchases the Diehard feat, he may act in any way he wishes at 0 or negative hp, not even suffering as a disabled character. Upon reaching -10 hp, the dwarf dies normally. Now, in truth, he may never be taken alive.

**Boiling Blood (Su):** At 5th level, a flayed dwarf's blood becomes caustic. Any successful piercing or slashing attacks delivered to the flayed dwarf cause a spray of blood to jet out into an adjacent square in the direction of the attack, delivering 1 point of acid damage to anyone in that adjacent square for every 5 points dealt to the dwarf (Reflex save, DC 15 for half).

## KANIN

### Clay Dwarves

Clay dwarves have strayed farthest from the stony places most other dwarves call home. They are the dwarves most often found among humans outside of Kharkon, the dwarven empire. Clay dwarves have coloration and features similar to the humans that they share their lands with.

Seventeen thousand years ago, the clay dwarves had a falling out with the rest of their kind, over whether to trade with and aid humans. This resulted in many of them leaving the traditional dwarven lands in what is now Brendir. To prevent a war, the clay dwarves fought their fears of water, and built arks – exceptionally sturdy sailing vessels, spreading out across the world. Many were lost in this “first dwarven diaspora.” When they arrived on



various distant shores, most vowed never to sail again. They and their offshoots are now found on every continent.

Tensions have died down over the ages, and some members of the new generation of clay dwarves are making their way back to Kharkon. There they are allowed reentry for the sake of dwarven solidarity, but they are untrusted and often unwanted.

**Racial Abilities:** Clay dwarves are treated as standard dwarves as listed in Chapter 2 of the PHB. Thus, they are suitable as first-level characters.

## KHARAK

### Storm Dwarves

The storm dwarves are a barely civilized people. They wander the lands, never staying in one place for very long. They are wild and hedonistic, enjoying all aspects of life.

Storm dwarves often serve in volunteer armies when the flayed dwarves make the call to war, but are too chaotic to serve full time in the military. Their wanderlust brings them all over the continent, except for Ynnidon, where even they are wary to tread. They are found in great numbers all across Kharkon and Brendir, but there is no specific concentration of them anywhere.

**Personality:** The Kharak are a passionate and violent people. They live life in broad strokes, reveling in the more overt pleasures of existence. They love the heat of battle more than anything, but they make the most of peacetime. Wild and



uncouth, the Kharak are considered loose cannons by other dwarves, and have been called Gej-Garneg, or “earthquakes given form” in the dwarven tongue. Though technically a derogatory statement, the storm dwarves wear this name with pride.

They are fairly easy to get along with, but the true respect of the Kharak is not given lightly, and is only bestowed upon those who are considered formidable enough to warrant it. Anyone in a leadership position can be questioned or even challenged, and the storm dwarf feels that it is the leader’s duty to constantly prove his worth. For this reason, storm dwarves can seem duplicitous, since the agreements of the past have little bearing on the present. This is a widely known trait of the storm dwarves, and most who would deal with them tolerate it.

Individuality is prized above all else. Lifelong friendships and family ties are less important than personal freedom. The only exception to this categorical denial of responsibility of the Kharak is when it comes to their children. Children are the greatest treasure of the Kharak, and are treated with otherwise

uncharacteristic gentleness.

**Physical Description:** Storm dwarves are the same general size and build as those in the PHB. Their irises are gray or black like a storm cloud, and usually have green, blue or red streaks that radiate like lightning from the pupil. In some members, these glow and flicker unsettlingly when the dwarf is enraged. They are grizzled, with skin reddened by the elements. Males wear wild beards, and all have thick, wiry hair, which can stand nearly straight out from their heads. Though chaotic, they care for their appearances. They often dye their hair in unusual colors, shave their heads, or otherwise modify their appearances. Those accoutrements that make them seem fiercer are preferred. Many have piercings all over their bodies, sometimes with bells or chimes strung from them.

**Relations:** Kharak are patriotic to the extreme. Generally, they do not hate or dislike any of the civilized races as a whole. Nonetheless, those deemed enemies of the dwarves are gladly warred upon. They secretly fear the elves somewhat, and hate giantkind with a passion. They are amused by the stonemason dwarves, and often harass them, but tend to defer to the flayed dwarves, who they respect. In fact, only the influence of the more civilized races keeps them from abandoning the dwarven strongholds and becoming barbarians.

**Alignment:** Kharak always have a chaotic element to their alignments.

**Storm Dwarf Lands:** Storm dwarves are generally too unfocused to build great cities. Instead, they build small frontier settlements which are easily abandoned when the mood strikes. Many of these settlements are constructed of wood, and a “town burning” before moving on to new territory is the cause of celebration. The typical storm dwarven settlement has a life span of about five years. Kharak may choose to live among other dwarven civilizations, until they are thrown out for the disruptions they tend to cause after long periods of boredom, especially during the long, hard winters of the region. Bands of storm dwarves rove the land, picking up and exchanging members and dropping off others at the whim of individuals.

**Religion:** Storm dwarves usually worship the gods of the dwarves, but they don’t put much work into it. They are irreverent, no matter which gods they worship. They are cavalier in the face of divine might, but may be cowed by extreme shows of power. They are rarely powerful clerics, for these reasons.

**Table 1-3: Kharak - Storm Dwarf**

| Level | Base         | Saves |     |      | Special                           |
|-------|--------------|-------|-----|------|-----------------------------------|
|       | Attack Bonus | Fort  | Ref | Will |                                   |
| 1     | +1           | +1    | +0  | +0   | Troll Skin: Damage Reduction 1/+1 |
| 2     | +2           | +1    | +0  | +0   | Troll Skin: Damage Reduction 2/+1 |
| 3     | +3           | +2    | +1  | +1   | Troll Skin: Damage Reduction 3/+2 |
| 4     | +4           | +2    | +1  | +1   | Troll Skin: Damage Reduction 4/+2 |
| 5     | +5           | +3    | +1  | +1   | Troll Skin: Damage Reduction 5/+3 |

**Male Names:** Enger (Rage), Chasolm (Pit), Mikrah (Shattered), Gelvel (Warhammer), Panner (Bleeding), Kinter (Spine)

**Female Names:** Bastra (Beasty), Olimee (Flame-Eyes), Kess (Rended), Dundra (Thunder), Lililk (Festering), Numnu (Wickedness)

**Surnames:** Storm dwarves are more irreverent than most dwarves, and thus do not often take last names.

**Adventurers:** Storm dwarves adventure to keep themselves entertained, and to revel in the glory of battle. They are reckless, fearless, and, unless they have a strong lawful influence in the party to rein them in, often short-lived. They know the need for stealth at times, but prolonged periods of quiet will grate on them. Those who adventure with them for long learn that their value to a mission depends upon how straightforward it is.

**Regions:** Kharakhai are found anywhere in Kharkon, and scattered across Brendir. Large concentrations are found in Kobolsund, Zrevold, and the treaty lands.

**Level Adjustment Option:** +2. Storm dwarves are more powerful than the standard races, and are considered two levels higher for purposes of advancement. Thus a 1st level storm dwarf character with all special abilities is in fact a 3rd level character overall.

**Racial Abilities:** Except as noted below, all storm dwarf abilities are the same as the standard dwarf from the PHB.

**Favored Class:** Barbarian.

### Storm Dwarf Racial Class

**Hit Die:** d10

**Class Skills and Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** As a barbarian.

**Troll Skin (Su):** Through continued conflict and generations of contact with the Fierce signature, the Kharak have developed an inherent damage reduction. Each level, the storm dwarf receives a +1 to this damage reduction, ending at +5.

## The Fey

Elves in Morningstar are the physical embodiment of nature spirits from distant realms. Before incarnation into flesh, these spirits make a pact with the Empress, the living mother of the fey. They must pledge to serve as her guardians, and to help her maintain ecological balance, and to promote the Fey signature. The Empress is rather demanding, and the group of hopeful spirits is not infinite. A very small percentage actually meet her expectations. The rest strive endlessly through a host of bodies. When an elf is killed through violence, her spirit returns to the Empress's realm to wait for its next turn at life. Sometimes a spirit will be found wanting or choose not to be reincarnated. This is the primary reason the elves are not as common as they once were.

True elves on Thraxis are not usually the product of the physical union between a male and female, though such reproduction is possible. Instead, two parents engage in a ritual of prayer and homage to the Empress, and provide the conduit for

a waiting spirit to enter this world. At the end of this ritual the female is with child, and the male has contributed a small piece of his soul to spark the metaphysical reaction. Nine months later, an elven child is born, with no memories of his prior existence.

Some elves abandon the Empress while staying true to their natures. They escape the curse of becoming muryans (forsaken elves, described on page 29), and the Empress allows them to live as long as they continue to keep their basic pact with her. Her goals are not foiled by simple betrayal, and she grants them amnesty, as long as it serves her plan for Thraxis. Should they ever become muryans through betrayal of their natures, however, she may send her minions to hunt them down.

## The Fey Nature

With the exception of the muryans, the elves of Morningstar retain the "fey nature" that was lost to the elves of most worlds long ago. The fey nature bestows immortality, and ties the elves to nature. Plants grow better among the elves, and the soil beneath their feet is always fertile. Aberrations and undead receive a -1 circumstance penalty to all rolls while in the presence of elves, and the ecology around their homes is always in perfect balance. Unless otherwise noted, all fey and subracial elven abilities are considered supernatural. All true elves have the following traits bestowed by the fey nature:

**Fey:** Elves are of the fey monster type.

**Eternal:** The fey elves are immortal, barring violence. They can voluntarily arrest, reinstate, or reverse their own aging process at any time. Without interference, they age at the same rate as humans, and age reversal takes as long as forward aging. Eternal is an extraordinary ability; age reversal and forward aging are supernatural. Effects that would dispel the age modulation ability simply prevent it from occurring, but do not cancel the effects of a previous change.

**Sustained:** True elves need no sleep or trance whatsoever, though eight total hours of relative inactivity are required before a spellcaster can regain spells for the day. This time need not be uninterrupted. They never require food or water when traveling in rich wilderness, instead gleaned nourishment from the land itself. In cities, the elf generally has a harder time, and may procure food (animal or vegetable matter, including those not commonly considered "food"), which is then drained of its nutritional value, leaving it rotten, gray and tasteless, worthless even as fertilizer. The nutritional value and flavor of a food is colloquially known as foyson or "goodness." Unless the food is being observed, there is often no sign that an elf is feeding, and it may be done at a range of up to 5 feet. Elves can taste the difference between foods, just like a human, and develop preferences for certain types of sustenance. Their feeding practices are the bane of many a rural farmer, whose buckets of milk are made sour overnight by an elf that has developed a taste for the stuff.

**Waters of Oblivion:** Immortality has its price. An elf's oldest memories are constantly being forgotten, to make way

for new ones. Facts and faces become hazy, and are eventually forgotten as the centuries pass. An elf can reliably remember a number of years into his own past equal to 50 times his Intelligence score. Anything further is considered to be in the process of being forgotten, and remembering it requires an Intelligence check (DC 10 + 1 for each 20 years of memory searched). If the elf kept and has access to any kind of a journal or chronicle of his own life, the DC can be reduced to as low as the base score of 10, at the GM's discretion. Class levels can be lost this way, if any of these levels were gained in a year that is currently being forgotten. Once per game year, on a day chosen by the GM, any levels gained in the year that is currently being forgotten become negative levels. The drained character may attempt a Fortitude save after 24 hours to prevent the negative level from being made permanent (DC 20). If the races as classes option is used, subtype class levels are never lost, since the powers granted by them are not "lessons learned" as much as "power gained."

**Bane of the Unnatural:** True elves are creatures of life. As such, they disrupt the negative energy that undead rely upon. They are also creatures of nature, and aberrations find elven spiritual emanations very distracting. Undead and aberrations receive a -1 circumstance penalty to all actions in the presence of true elves to a range of 50 feet. All Thraxian fey (dryads, pixies, etc.) have this effect on undead and aberrations.

**Faerie Honor (also Fey Honor):** The fey elves of this world are bound to keep any promise that they make without coercion. They are allowed to lie to those who wish them ill, but if they offer an oath they must keep it, even if the threat of violence looms over their heads. A fey may use tricky interpretations of wording to get out of an unfavorable or undesirable oath. The punishment for failure to keep an honest oath is to become a muryan (see "The Dwindling," below). Conversely, if a deal is made involving another party, that party is responsible for keeping their end of the deal. If they fail, the elf is relieved of all responsibility. If that elf has already delivered on his promise, he may smite the offender 3 times as a paladin's smite evil ability. The fey oath is not to be entered into lightly by either party. The GM has the final say as to whether the oath has been broken, and whether it can be rectified.

**Dementia:** Nature can be unstable, and the elves reflect that. It isn't easy for the flesh to contain such primal energies as the elves wield, nor is it easy to cope with immortality in a world of death and rebirth. The psyches of the elves are structured in such a way as to allow for the release of such tensions. Every so often, an elf will release this stress with periods of dementia. The way this "break" manifests varies in accord with the elf's type, and from individual to individual. Once per month of adventuring, every time an elf witnesses needless death firsthand, and whenever they encounter another trigger as listed under the elven subracial description, they must make a Will save (DC 10). If they fail, they take 1d4 temporary Wisdom damage, and must make another Will save or have a break. If they fail their Will save vs. Wisdom damage, but make their save vs. the actual break, they retain the lowered Wisdom score, which heals normally, but need not make another check until they once again encounter a trigger or another month has

passed. If they do have a break, they are under the effects of their dementia (as described in each elven subtype below) until they make a Will save. Wisdom damage may not be healed naturally while an elf is demented. They may attempt a Will save every hour of in-game time and at the logical completion of an adventure. At the end of every 24 hours from the time of the onset of dementia, they may make a Will save at +10 to end the dementia.

**The Dwindling:** Sometimes an elf cannot keep the pact it has with the earth. Such elves become muryans. See the muryan racial description below for an explanation of the effects of losing the fey nature.

## A Note on Terminology

The following terms are used in the elven subracial descriptions.

**Trigger:** A trigger is an event that causes the elf to check for dementia, or, if engaged, results in the elf becoming a muryan.

**Dementia:** These are the effects that a given type of elf must contend with while suffering from dementia.

**Failure:** These are the criteria for failure that result in an elf becoming a muryan.

## CAIRN

### Bone Elves

Bone elves are mystic furnaces burning with the forces of life. They seek out the dying places of the world, to nourish them back to health. Recognizing the unique nature of magic on Thraxis, they try to draw the living energies that they attract to the places that need them most. While they might restore a choked swamp or wasteland to a verdant paradise, sometimes they can't help but be corrupted by the entropic energies they seek to banish. The effects of this corruption include an emaciated, often skeletal appearance, which has earned them their name.

**Personality:** Bone elves are martyrs to be sure. But more than that, they are truly sensitive beings. They often keep their emotions to themselves, maintaining a cold, indifferent facade, especially when the matter at hand means a great deal to them. They rarely relax enough to simply enjoy themselves, but when they do, they show no signs of awkwardness. They have had to deal with too many meadow elves in their long years to be at a loss in times of celebration. Business is business, fun is fun.

They feel most alive in the autumns of the northerly temperate zone, enjoying the vibrant foliage and chill air that foretells the time of rest and rejuvenation that is winter. The fact that the seasons change little anywhere but the far north is part of the reason for the bone elves' reputation for humorlessness.

**Triggers:** Destroying the fertility of the land to make way for stone constructions; sanitizing or capturing nature (such as by building parks and zoos); the creation or spawning of undead or aberrations.

**Dementia:** Sorrow. The bone elf becomes listless and possibly catatonic. He will plod along but will ignore most stimuli and will not go out of his way to search chests or foes, or to pay attention to subtle details. The elf will still be able to react to immediate threats, albeit with a -2 penalty to all actions. He cannot handle failure during this time, and even the most minor failed skill check, saving throw, or attack roll will leave him in the depth of despair. If such a situation arises, the GM may call for a Will save (DC 10). If the bone elf fails, he will involuntarily release a shrill keening sound that deals 1d4 temporary Wisdom damage to all other living creatures who hear it with no save.

**Failure:** Cairn become muryans if they ever ignore or contribute to the destruction of a wilderness area, such as by poisoning a water supply, building stone homes, or causing a forest fire. There are many ways this can happen unexpectedly; one famous bone elf became a muryan by his own misguided actions: he caused a devastating flood by damaging the Canali.

**Physical Description:** Bone elves are tall and gaunt, with washed-out skin that otherwise falls in hues similar to the local humans, and often sunken features, even deep wrinkles. Their hair is naturally black or white, and often tied into tight geometric rows of buns held close to their skull with clasps. They appear frail, but often very regal, with ears that come to sharp points well above their heads. Their eyes range from black or dull gray to vibrant blue, indigo, or even yellow. Some are so pale as to display veins close to the surface of their parchment-like skin. It is considered dishonorable for a bone elf to appear too healthy, since it announces to others of its kind and the world that the Cairn is not doing its job. Their clothing is tattered, often by design.

**Relations:** The bone elves get along well with briar elves, and slightly disdain the crown elves for the admittedly ecologically sound cities that they build. They often rightfully feel that they do the harder work for Ynnidon, but that the crown elves get to reap the rewards. Meadow elves are greatly beloved, bringing wistful joy to the burdened bone elves, and they are indifferent towards stream elves.

Dwarves are the most hated foes of the bone elves, but they can grudgingly accept working with them, as long as they don't get out of line. Humans are rarely beloved by the bone elves, though individuals are not necessarily punished for the crimes of the many. Thull are respected when they act within their natures and don't try to fit in too hard.

**Alignment:** Usually neutral.

**Bone Elf Lands:** The Cairn are by nature nomadic. They move into an area, change its spectrum, and are often relieved by crown elves, whereupon they continue their travels to new lands. They travel in caravans drawn by trained shamblers or other specially bred plant creatures. Cairn are the most nomadic of all elves, and can be found all across the world. Of all elves, the bone elves are least likely to be found within Ynnidon, since their job was completed there long ago. Many live on the borders just outside of Ynnidon, attempting to expand the boundaries of the elven homelands.

**Religion:** As with all true elves, the Cairn worship the Empress, though without the fervor of some of the other elven races. Their duties on this world are more important than feed-



ing the ego of a deity they recognize to be power-hungry.

**Male Names:** Issidrim, Tollil, Pentafet, Oberis, Wallinles, Justeren, Yezhenlis.

**Female Names:** Relea, Yosindra, Olinne, Meleferia, Polidryea, Qualintroi

**Adventurers:** Bone elves most frequently adventure to further their purpose of spreading the Fey signature to every corner of Thraxis. They are never far from this goal, and everything they do is caged in the context of their people's mission. As adventurers, they will often report back to Ynnidon, via scrying or messenger, to let their people know when they have cleared a new area.

**Regions:** Bone elf caravans are found everywhere on the continent of Kharkonia, as well as select pockets of Taelusia. While they have a purpose to fulfill, they have immortality on their sides, so some will actually live at the edges of human settlements, gathering information and biding their time. Taelusian bone elves are found mostly within Haseth. In that area, there are a few syndicates of rogue bone elves, who no longer serve the Empress but continue to embody the core of their purpose. These Cairn do not travel with the same frequency of the others of their race; they hold the lands they win, and defend them. They never call the crown elves to take them, and the Empress is too busy to slap them down.

**Level Adjustment Option:** +3. Bone elves are more powerful than the standard races, and are considered three levels higher for purposes of advancement. Thus a 1st level bone elf character with all special abilities is in fact a 4th level character overall.

**Racial Abilities:** Except as noted, all bone elf abilities are the same as the standard elf from the PHB.

**Favored Class:** Druid. In addition to their racial class, a bone elf may freely multiclass as a druid.

### Bone Elf Racial Class

**Hit Die:** d8

**Class Skills and Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** As a druid.

**Personal Signature (Su):** Bone elves are less affected by an area's signature, and actually have their own Fey signature that they carry with them wherever they go. The level of a bone

elf's personal signature equals his level. The bone elf may choose to ignore an area's countersignature up to this level, or effectively reduce it by this amount, as it benefits his spellcasting. This is a unique case of spectrum mechanics, and the signature does not extend beyond the elf's person and any spells he may cast.

For the purposes of changing an area's spectrum through passive influence (see page 75), a bone elf counts as half of his level squared. Additionally, bone elves do not average their levels or hit dice to determine the spectrum strength of an area. Only the highest level member of a group of Cairn counts toward the average. Other members merely contribute numbers to widen the area.

**Minions of Decay (Su):** A bone elf may command or rebuke non-undead and non-aberrant creatures whose primary purpose is to break down organic matter as a cleric of the same level commands or rebukes undead. This ability applies to monsters like many plant creatures, fungus-based creatures, many oozes, and carrion feeders.

**Healing Essence (Su):** A bone elf may heal an amount of damage done to themselves or another, equal to his Wisdom bonus times his bone elf level. He may do this a number of times per day equal to his Cairn level.

**Render Fruitful (Su):** Bone elves can restore lost or used fertility to 1 square mile of earth, or a single creature, by expending 1d4 hp. Each additional expenditure of 1d4 hp doubles the level of fertility, using the standard d20 doubling rule (e.g.,  $x2 + x2 = x3$ ). Thus, a field could be made to yield many times its usual crop, or a barren woman could become pregnant after a single use of this ability, or bear twins with two uses. Creatures will go into heat outside of mating season. A field that would otherwise lay fallow for a year between uses can be replanted, or a region befouled by undead or aberrations can be restored to balance. Used as a touch attack, this ability may also deal damage to undead and aberrations at the rate of 2d4 per 1d4 hp expended, by cleansing the impurities from their system. When used on plant creatures, this ability heals 2d10 hp for every 1d4 damage the elf takes.

**Autumn's Haste (Su):** Autumn speeds the decay that will bring renewal in the spring. The Cairn may now deal 1d4 damage to a single undead or aberration for every hit point he sacrifices to a maximum of 5d4 per round. He must sacrifice the

Table 1-4: Cairn - Bone Elf

| Level | Base<br>Attack Bonus | Saves |     |      | Special                           |
|-------|----------------------|-------|-----|------|-----------------------------------|
|       |                      | Fort  | Ref | Will |                                   |
| 1     | +2                   | +0    | +0  | +1   | Personal Signature                |
| 2     | +3                   | +0    | +0  | +1   | Minions of Decay, Healing Essence |
| 3     | +3                   | +1    | +1  | +2   | Render Fruitful                   |
| 4     | +4                   | +1    | +1  | +2   | Autumn's Haste                    |
| 5     | +4                   | +1    | +1  | +3   | Burst of Vitality                 |

hit point and succeed in a touch attack to do so, and if he misses the expended hit points are still lost. Creatures targeted receive attacks of opportunity.

**Burst of Vitality (Su):** Once per day, a bone elf may concentrate to call upon and radiate accelerated life energies. The energies fill a sphere 30 feet across, centered on the elf, which speeds up natural life processes. Decaying matter disintegrates, and plants grow to full bloom within a single round. This ability deals 1d6 damage per round to all undead within and heals everyone within the area of effect (including the bone elf) for 1d6 hp per round. This die is rolled once per round, and the same result is applied to all creatures, for either damage or healing. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to the bone elf's Wisdom bonus, for a minimum of one round. During the time that this power is being used, the 30 foot area is considered to be of the Fey signature, at a strength equal to the elf's level +1. The area will have no countersignature.

## NENIR

### Briar Elves

The briar elves are the eager defenders of the elven realms. These are the warriors and hunters of the elven lands. The briar elves have affinities for forest predators, and can call aspects of their spirits into themselves. They represent the good that natural predation does for an ecosystem. Many briar elves hunt down muryans as pleases the Empress, coldly dispatching the traitors, since they no longer serve a purpose in the greater scheme.

More so than rangers or druids, the briar elf racial class is active in the cycle of nature. When the numbers of prey grow higher than the ecosystem's ability to support them, they hunt for the welfare of all creatures in the area. They can receive limited shapechange abilities. Like all true elves, they loathe undead and aberrations, and their abilities against them are strong.

**Personality:** The briar elves have impish, prickly personalities, as their name suggests. They are almost feral in their demeanor, but have the capability to function in civilized society when necessary. Unlike most other elves, they have no problem with death, even of sentient beings, as long as a species is not threatened with extinction. In fact, most believe that the world would be better off without so many sentients. The Nenir do not mourn dead individuals, even friends, believing that there is a pattern that is greater than any one being.

Goods and magical items are not often hoarded by the Nenir, and they usually carry only what is strictly necessary for the mission at hand.

**Triggers:** Destroying an entire breeding population of a creature in one area (such as the queen of a hive of giant insects); hunting without purpose; leaving a corpse to rot unless the slain creature posed a serious threat to the local ecology; witnessing the destruction of an environment (such as cutting down a forest).

**Dementia:** Alienation. Briar elves suffering from a break will seek to isolate themselves from their allies, and ruthlessly

