

PATHFINDER®

LOST OMENS

HIGHHELM

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



A KING'S WISH

Recently unsealed after lying hidden for centuries beneath the Sky Citadel of Dongun Hold, a library yielded the following letter, penned by the dwarven leader Taargick who championed and completed the Quest for Sky. This letter remains unreleased to the public and stored in an unmarked vault within the Sky Citadel, as per an agreement between High King Borogrim the Hale of Highhelm and High King Anong Arunak of Dongun Hold.

My most honored friends—you who have held true to your word and our mission, you who have been faithful through centuries of toil, you who continue to strive for the prosperity of our nation—to you do I address my final thoughts.

With heavy heart, I abdicated my throne, and now, with a heart made even heavier, I find that I must leave you. I cast no aspersions on the fine work and skillful labor lavished on the tomb prepared for my body once my soul departs. The tomb's beauty and quality truly befit a king—even this High King—and showcase the artistry of our people, which we have honed through generations of diligent attention and expert skill. I do not spurn this gift lightly. I want nothing more than to remain in this place, the one from which I first beheld the sky—the place where I felt the sweet fulfillment of

Torag's promise. I turn from it only because I fear to bring more bloodshed upon you, were my body laid to rest here within Koldukar.

I can almost hear your objections. You look around at the sheer magnificence of our new home. You see in it the brilliance of our people. Is this not the pinnacle of our ability as engineers? Have we not worked the vaulted arches, the carved pillars, and the deep-set recesses out of purest stone, developing the skill of our ancestors and pushing it to new heights? Have we not established a powerful kingdom that boasts centers of learning and martial training, temples to our honored gods, forges of intense power, and workshops unparalleled on this planet? And have we not designed all this magnificence to withstand the mightiest attack?

Yes, I can hear you voicing these fine questions. Yes, I know that our achievements have amazed and delighted not only our people, but also our allies on the surface. Yes, I know that Koldukar and our other surface homes are now dubbed 'Sky Citadels.' They are, without question, the last redoubt both for our people and for our allies. Between the ingenious construction of our defenses and our military strategy, I have no fear of us ever losing them to our foes. And I am justly proud of our work to expand our nation and to construct other,

equally defensible and glorious Sky Citadels throughout the land. Dongun Hold, Highhelm, Kravenkus, Janderhoff—all these and more ground us ever more securely in our destined home. We have achieved our Quest for Sky, and we will not be displaced.

I look back at the faith and zeal, the struggle and loss, the heartbreak and determination that fueled us for centuries on our Quest for Sky. I am mindful that Torag was our inspiration and our guide. He alone gave us this sacred mission for reasons beyond our ken. When we have held to that faith, we have prospered; our periods of greatest turmoil and pain occurred when that faith wore thin. I accept that Torag sanctioned the incessant conflict of our march, for he never shies from the hammer of war.

Even so, I now see that we did not need to displace the orcs nor fight them so fanatically. We could have looked for peaceful solutions and need not have slain so very many as we passed through their lands. Had they a king, I would duly apologize for the terror and death that we wrought.

Mindful of the battles that continue, I wish to spare my beloved Koldukar from any further bloodshed on my behalf—herein lies the beginning and end of my motivation. I will don my armor once more and leave. My tomb will be unmarked so that my enemies, fierce and many as they are, will have no additional cause to trouble you.

May Torag's blessing be ever upon you,

—Taargick, ever honored to have served as your king

USING THIS BOOK

The Sky Citadels marked the height of dwarven architecture and engineering. Built at the end of the centuries-long Quest for Sky, these massive fortresses provided far more than just safety, encompassing entire cities and fostering dwarven ingenuity. They were also symbols of determination and hope for dwarves, a monument to the accomplishment of an entire people who persevered through immense difficulty and doubt—though they also created some of their own problems, as they drove orcs before them and unknowingly released Darklands horrors behind them. Though the fortunes of the dwarves have proven less reliable, these bastions yet stand, and several continue to thrive.

While Highhelm wasn't the first Sky Citadel, it has proven itself arguably the most important and certainly the most influential. The undisputed center of dwarven culture today, Highhelm has a depth, complexity, and richness in its fabled halls that place it among Golarion's finest cities. Dwarves of all kinds, be they holtaksen, ergasken, or grondasken, call the Sky Citadel their home, and the city even houses large populations of other ancestries. This mixing of ancestral cultures and traditions, combined with influence from Highhelm's neighbors, makes the city unique among the active Sky Citadels. It's simultaneously a city that's undeniably dwarven in its nature, but also one that draws from non-dwarven traditions to create a culture unlike anywhere else.

This volume presents an in-depth look at this remarkable and unique metropolis. The first chapter offers a general overview of Highhelm with detailed sections on its history, culture, and people, including government, trade, customs, and notable figures. To truly understand dwarves, one must understand their clan system, here explained in exquisite detail. A gazetteer of the city and its surroundings comprises the second chapter, offering specifics on Highhelm's three major sections. For each section, the gazetteer presents neighborhoods, locations, notable people, current events, and player options. The third chapter provides even more player options, including ancestry feats and legendary gear, as well as new monsters and the stalwart defender, an archetype representing the defensive techniques of the warriors of Highhelm. This chapter also details the deities of the entire dwarven pantheon for the first time.

USING HIGHHELM

Highhelm offers numerous possibilities for roleplaying. As an adventuring site itself, the dwarven city is a truly unique setting with its underground locations and largely non-human population. The elements to craft a clever urban campaign are all present, from the intrigue that swirls around the centers of power to the conflicts that surface in the city's less-fashionable quarters. This volume provides plenty of adventure hooks and an entire cast of characters to support such an urban campaign.

For more traditional fantasy adventuring, Highhelm could serve as an ideal home for player characters while they delve into the Five Kings Mountains or the Darklands. This is especially the case for parties playing the Sky King's Tomb Adventure Path. A home base with Highhelm's complexity and detail presents myriad roleplaying opportunities, giving players a chance to increase their experience between quests. The city provides plenty of opportunity for downtime activities that players might want to pursue. Furthermore, the robust trade, workshops, and culture of the city can easily meet most characters' adventuring needs. Whether it's a suit of precisely crafted armor from a renowned forge or retraining in the mystical arts, Highhelm provides in-game perks for every adventuring party. And, of course, heroes will always be needed to stop the rampages of a never-before-seen monster who has broken through the defenses holding back the foes of the Darklands...

While Highhelm inhabits a specific location on Golarion, it isn't limited to that location. Highhelm is self-contained—built into a single mountain—so you could easily take the city and locate it in the setting of your choice. So long as you have a mountain range, you could make use of Emperor's Peak or even a broader section of the Five Kings Mountains.

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KING'S CROWN

KING'S HEART

STONEBREACH

THE DEPTHS

EMPEROR'S PEAK

Artist's representation. Not to scale.

HIGHHELM OVERVIEW

Beneath the tallest peak in the Five Kings Mountains sits an ancient city that thrums with a vibrant, revitalizing culture. Most dwarves across the Inner Sea Region, who view the Five Kings Mountains as an ancestral homeland, acknowledge Highhelm as their cultural capital. An exemplary Sky Citadel, Highhelm was founded shortly after the culmination of the Quest for Sky. Dazzled by the vastness of the bright sky, its builders leaned into the safety and familiarity of their traditional architecture, crafting stone halls, vaulted chambers, and ingenious fortifications in their ancestral style. The result is an enduring monument to the traditions of stability, order, and meticulous craftsmanship—traditions that, over millennia, have given this famed city the ability to resist invasion from without and weather struggles from within.

Highhelm's large population is fueling a cultural renaissance that might also drive a political movement, perhaps leading to the reunification of the dwarven kingdoms. Every time High King Borogrim the Hale convenes the Gathering Council, bringing together dwarven leaders from all across the Five Kings Mountains, the dream of uniting the political factions becomes that much more real. By human standards, very little momentum seems to occur at these gatherings.

The progress toward unification is so infinitesimal that it typically escapes the notice of the few outsiders privileged to learn anything of the council's doings.

This newfound resurgence in dwarven culture has driven a recent expansion in population and commerce. Highhelm has always traded with neighboring nations, including Andoran, Isger, and Taldor, and the mercantile Druma is a particularly favored trade partner. Increased trade and cultural exchange with Kyonin, the adjacent elven nation, is another outgrowth of this rebirth. More elves than ever come to Highhelm seeking to learn dwarven craftsmanship and blend it with their own traditions. The results are remarkable, incorporating techniques from both cultures into works as varied as carved bowls, elaborate spearheads, intricate armor, and stunning architecture.

Highhelm embodies the central dwarven values of endurance, stability, and orderliness. A common motto here is "a place for everything, and everything in its place." Its robust military enjoys widespread support and generally conducts itself with honor and integrity; most residents born in Highhelm, both dwarves and non-dwarves, spend part of their lives in military service. Scandals involving corruption or abuse of power are rare among all stratifications of society, though some trading

houses seem slightly more vulnerable to the temptation of greed. However, every culture has a counterculture, and while Highhelm's might be small, it's nonetheless influential.

The dwarves of Highhelm are loyal to their clans which, sadly, leaves them prone to infighting out of pride or desire for prestige. The clan system tends to reinforce hierarchies that can make dwarves reflexively insular. They tend to be religious, revering Torag or other members of the larger dwarven pantheon. Dwarves are widely regarded as hardworking, determined (or stubborn), and set in their traditional ways. Again, this reputation is partially a result of a shorter-lived outsider view: because of their long life spans, dwarves tend to espouse a long-range view that values durability and quality. They'll spend years—even decades—crafting a single weapon, piece of armor, or ring, content in the knowledge that this expertly designed item will be cherished and useful for centuries to come.

GEOGRAPHY

Emperor's Peak dominates the forbidding, craggy Five Kings Mountains, and Highhelm sits within its imposing spires. Traveling to the city over land is a dangerous and difficult undertaking through the harsh, rocky terrain of the mountains, made worse by ravenous beasts, angry giants, and greedy bandits. Arguably less dangerous, dwarven tunnels connect Highhelm to the other dwarven cities in the area. These tunnels require deft navigation, or travelers risk getting hopelessly lost.

Highhelm is divided into three main layers. King's Crown is its highest layer and holds the largest number of people. Home to the upper levels of dwarven society, King's Crown includes the High King, government administrators, and the wealthiest merchants among its residents. Many artisans and skilled professionals who enjoy close proximity to the seat of power also live in this district. A small strip of King's Crown runs along the outside of the mountain, but the majority is underground—though its opulent gardens might suggest otherwise. The architecture of King's Crown is Highhelm's finest, its ancient buildings continually updated in the most luxurious fashion.

King's Heart occupies the center of Highhelm, both physically and metaphorically. A bustling hub of industry and craftsmanship, its residents maintain that "the Heart" is where the real work is done, and the streets somehow manage to be always noisy and crowded. As the industrial center of Highhelm, King's Heart is home to countless blacksmiths, metallurgists, gemologists, and stonemasons as well as bakers, brewers, and alchemists. The largest temple in Highhelm, the Forge of the Nine, holds a place of prominence, and its priests and theologians have considerable sway among the populace. The Endless Reservoir, a lake at the mountain's heart augmented by excavation and planar magic, is perhaps the brightest spot here, its waters magnifying light from crystals both above and within its waters.

The lowest district, Stonebreach, is named for the only entrance to the city via outside road. A haven for artists and hotheads, its residents see their level as an ever-changing blend of innovations from the surface and Highhelm traditions. More than the city's other districts, those in Stonebreach welcome outsiders and so have a greater population of non-dwarves than other parts of the city. Stonebreach is also home to many who work in humble yet necessary professions, residents who take pride in their work but are defined by their interests. After work hours, Stonebreach laborers become performers, and Stonebreach cleaners lead forays into the mountain's tunnels.

Outside of the three main layers of Highhelm, The Depths consist of a smattering of different tunnels and chambers scattered throughout Emperor's Peak. Some of these tunnels form connections between the three main districts, but others are merely dead ends. The power structure of The Depths is a complex and ever-changing web. In parts of The Depths, an official presence makes them safe for travelers and tourists, including



HIGHHELM

SETTLEMENT 14

LN METROPOLIS

Ancient dwarven city embodying the essence of dwarven culture while gradually becoming more cosmopolitan.

Government Monarchy with a council

Population 41,527 (83% dwarves, 7% humans, 5% elves, 5% other)

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Terran

Religions Torag, Folgrit, Grundinnar, Kols, other deities of the dwarven pantheon, the pantheon as a whole, Abadar, Pharasma

Threats aberrant horrors and monsters from the Depths and Darklands, evil orcs, infighting, natural disasters

Of Dwarven Make Uncommon dwarf items, including magic items, are common within Highhelm.

Forged with Power Highhelm offers higher level access to weapons and armor thanks to the city's forges; armaments of up to 17th level are available.

Borogrim the Hale (LN male magnate) High King and ruler of Highhelm, convener of the Gathering Council of leaders from other Five Kings Mountains' dwarven city-states.

Vanth Orridus (LN dwarf cleric of Torag) High Priestess and head priest of Torag and co-head of the powerful religious council called the Nine-Eyed Hammer

Arridor Orridus (LG dwarf cleric of Folgrit) High Priest and head priest of Folgrit and co-head of the powerful religious council called the Nine-Eyed Hammer

Kaltan the Pike (LN male dwarf battle master) General of the Highhelm First Army

Geralde Brightfist (LN female dwarf ruffian) Head of the Blacknoon Thieves' Guild, Highhelm's largest gang

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SKY CITADELS

Highhelm is one of 10 known Sky Citadels in the Inner Sea. The other sky citadels are as follows.

Cloudspire: Mbe'ke dwarves thrive in this bustling city-state in the Mwangi Expanse. The Sky Citadel is also home to several cloud dragons.

Dongun Hold: This dwarven refuge in the Mana Wastes has long been a place of technological innovation. Most firearms in the Inner Sea trace their creation to Dongun Hold.

Helderdan: Behind a glacier in the Realm of the Mammoth Lords sits this little-known ruin. Local clans have been aware of the ruins but keep their distance from it, believing it to be cursed and filled with ghosts.

Janderhoff: Diplomatic dwarves run this trade center in Varisia. The city's population includes many Shoanti humans, and Janderhoff's dwarves maintain strong relationships with the Shoanti clans of the region.

Jormurdun: After a time-related accident displaced much of this Sky Citadel's population, legions of hryngar gray dwarves assaulted the city in the Sarkoris Scar, claiming it for themselves. With the return of the city's population, Jormurdun is free of hryngar occupation and is now home to dwarves and many of the region's surviving Sarkorians looking to reclaim their lost cultures.

Kraggodan: Located in Nirmathas, this bastion of dwarven culture is renowned for its contribution to the Shining Crusade. Recently, Kraggodan has found itself embroiled in the Ironfang Legion's war on Molthune and Nirmathas.

Koldukar: Conquered by orcs millennia ago, this fortress is now Urgir, capital of the Hold of Belkzen.

Kravenkus: A handful of dwarves continue to protect this otherwise abandoned fortification in Taldor.

Tol Doakar: This flooded ruin on an island near Rahadoum was recently identified as a lost Sky Citadel and has yet to be truly explored. Relics that occasionally wash ashore from the city below suggest that the city's inhabitants were researching strange, transmutation magic.

those looking to indulge in the area's unique culture. Others are entirely outside the reach of law enforcement, and unwary visitors might suffer serious losses or injuries. The district's proximity to natural caverns makes it a base for certain industries, including mining and various types of farming and raising livestock. These businesses tend to ignore any nearby criminal enterprises—a departure from the die-hard lawful orientation of the majority of the city. Beyond the protective arms of Highhelm's settled regions and tunnels, The Depths can be a dangerous place. Criminals pose the least of a traveler's worries where the strange denizens of the Emperor's Peak or the occasional creature from the Darklands freely roam the mountain's winding passages.

CULTURE

Highhelm's culture blends individuality with communal connectedness. The communal feeling comes from a shared history and identity, particularly among the descendants of those who completed the Quest for Sky. Historical touch points come up frequently, and Highhelm's residents sometimes talk about King Taargick as though he was a recent acquaintance. This sense of connection fuels religious commitment among Highhelm's residents, and festivals and worship services tend to be well attended. Feasts and clan gatherings also draw large groups together. Many Highhelm residents participate on committees, organize volunteers during crises, or serve in the military. A widespread belief is that Highhelm thrives when everyone does their part.

Yet, along with this communal spirit, individuality is highly prized in Highhelm. The city thrives when everyone does their part, but everyone's part is different. While people value tradition and orderliness, these broad strokes provide options for Highhelm's residents when they seek to contribute to the city while realizing their own dreams and developing their own skills. Dwarves have long since discarded the idea of predetermined gender roles, and those in Highhelm are coming to let go of predetermined attitudes based on ancestry or ability as well.

Individuality can also be found in the remarkable arts and crafts that are at the center of cultural expression here. Occupying a place of pride in the heart of Highhelm's culture, artistic expression represents, for many dwarves, the essence of what it means to be a dwarf, and the uniqueness of each work reflects the spirit of the individual artist. Artisans have numerous opportunities to serve the city, from the forges that produce peerless swords to the looms that weave baby clothes. Because dwarven lives are so long and because intricate designs are so prized, the time lavished on each work of art might seem preposterous to shorter-lived outsiders. However, no excuse or explanation for meticulous, slow production is ever necessary in a Highhelm workshop or studio.

On the other hand, not putting in a full day's work on a regular basis is often viewed as totally unacceptable. Highhelm's culture particularly prizes a strong work ethic. Idleness is simply not tolerated, and any Highhelm residents who would rather sit and stare at the wall than work at their chosen task will draw negative attention at best and a sentence of forced labor at worst. Highhelm's culture understands the deep difference between slowness and sloth.

Highhelm balances this industrious attitude with an intense playful drive, breaking up work that might otherwise become monotonous. They work hard but also play hard. Pastimes include contests of every kind, from drinking to athletics. Sports and martial sparring are particular favorites. Highhelm's taverns fill nightly, and celebrations for any good fortune often spill out from clanhalls into the streets, lasting hours into the night. Indeed, visitors to Highhelm might often wonder when—or whether—a quiet terrestrial night happens in Highhelm.

Another key dwarven value fuels this play: hospitality. Whether celebrating the completion of a project, birth of a child, or safe return of a scouting unit, dwarves will lay out a feast to be remembered, and the drinks will flow freely. If a dwarven household is ever short on food, its members know that they need only visit their kin, who will receive them with open arms and serve them a full table.

PEOPLE

As befits the de facto capital of dwarven culture, Highhelm's population consists chiefly of those with dwarven ancestry, and many of them, perhaps even the majority, can trace their lineage back to the city's founding. Highhelm's dwarven social hierarchy can be roughly divided into three social castes—namely, high-clans, middle-clans, and low-clans. This division dates from the city's founding, or possibly even before, and maps onto the clans themselves. An important aspect of dwarven culture, the clans provide security, social structure, and a sense of belonging. Highhelm has 12 major clans, each one with a strong focus on a particular industry (such as brewing or smithing) or other aspect of dwarven culture (such as magic, religion, or history). While smaller clans make Highhelm their home, the influence of the 12 major clans is undeniable, and the needs and desires of the smaller clans are sometimes drowned out.

New arrivals have replenished the ranks of dwarven citizens with dwarves from across the Inner Sea region being drawn to Highhelm. Some are wanderers who feel such a sense of solace once behind Highhelm's ancestral walls that they forsake their roving. Having lost their homes to natural disasters or orc invaders, others come as refugees who rely on the kindness of Highhelm residents as they build new lives in the city. Still others come to the city to perfect their artistry or apprentice to a trade, their small dwarven settlements lacking the deep tradition or skills that continue to flourish in Highhelm. There are those who seek to become scholars, whether of the dwarven pantheon or ancient dwarven music or history, who might stay for years or even decades studying both the venerable texts and the living traditions. Because of this influx, the population of Highhelm contains dwarves from all across Golarion, with a wide range of skin tones and hair colors and textures.

Other ancestries also call Highhelm their home and likewise have done so for centuries. Chief among them are elves and humans. The majority of Highhelm's elves are artisans and artists, drawn from Kyonin to the city to explore its artistic traditions and to improve their own skills by learning from experts. While some elves are born in Highhelm, very few remain there for their entire lifetimes; most maintain strong ties with kin in nearby Kyonin and travel between their two homes periodically. Humans born in Highhelm (unless they live in the small part of King's Crown that's outside the mountain) are also unlikely to live in the city throughout their lifetimes, as a superstition holds that they'll go blind. However, since most humans in Highhelm are involved in trade and other mercantile pursuits, traveling to and from the city tends to be common, and those humans who do spend the majority of their lives in underground halls typically do so because they prefer to. A smattering of other ancestries—including halflings, gnomes, kobolds, ratfolk, lizardfolk, and even some catfolk—also call Highhelm their home, mostly in the Stonebreach section. Some of these families have lived in the city for generations, but very few have any influence beyond their immediate neighborhood. Those with orc, goblin, or hobgoblin ancestry face wide mistrust and even outright hatred in some parts of Highhelm, though a sense of dwarven hospitality prevails among many dwarves when faced with individuals who descend from ancient enemies. Still, the discomfort is palpable, and few brave it long enough to make Highhelm their home.

ADDITIONAL READING

There are multiple Pathfinder resources on dwarven life and the Five Kings Mountains region to supplement this book. *Pathfinder Lost Omens World Guide* has information on the Five Kings Mountains and the greater Shining Kingdoms. It also contains more history, a detailed timeline, and insight into how Highhelm relates to its neighboring nations. Material presented in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide*, and *Pathfinder Lost Omens Character Guide* contains in-depth information on dwarven culture and character options. The *Character Guide* explores all the different dwarven ethnicities and their relationships to each other, providing heritages and ancestry feats for players. *Pathfinder Lost Omens Legends* includes comprehensive entries on King Taargick, leader of the Quest for Sky, and Anong Arunak, current High King of Dongun Hold, as well as explorations of the connections between legendary figures, current and past. *Pathfinder Lost Omens Gods & Magic* contains a thorough entry on Torag, giving deep insight into dwarven religion.

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HISTORY

TIMELINE

The following events are some of the most significant and formative in Highhelm's history.

Era of Founding

Age of Dwarves first appear
Creation in the caverns of Nar-Voth.
Age of Prophets of Torag foretell
Legend the Quest for Sky.

Era of Toil

-5293 AR Earthfall devastates the surface of Golarion.
-5287 AR Preparations complete, the majority of dwarves set off on the Quest for Sky.
-5153 AR Ambush by orcs at the Battle of Basalt Grim. Two kingdoms are wiped out, one more is lost. The remaining kingdoms swear

(cont'd)

While most people of the Inner Sea have a general understanding of the history of the dwarven Quest for Sky, few outside of Highhelm could tell you the true story of the Sky Citadel's founding and its struggles.

ERA OF FOUNDING

The story of Highhelm begins millennia ago, deep beneath the surface of Golarion in the Darklands caverns of Nar-Voth. It was during this time that Torag issued but a single prophecy and command: when the stones shake beneath their feet, the dwarven people must migrate upward until they reach the surface and sky. As years gave way to centuries and generations passed without a solid sign, zealotry waned, and there were some who feared the prophecy untrue.

ERA OF TOIL

These thoughts were quickly banished with the coming of Earthfall. For the dwarves underground, the resulting earthquakes caused mass devastation. The Quest for Sky had begun. While some began the trek immediately, it took six years for the bulk of the dwarven nations to muster their forces and mobilize for the journey. A faction of dwarves, used to the comforts of their grand cavern cities, argued that Torag's prophecy was too vague, too risky, and too difficult to pursue. These dissenters remained behind and would eventually diverge physically, becoming the first hryngar, also known as gray or deep dwarves.

For the majority who left, it was a time of wonder and excitement, but also hardship. A migratory existence did not sit well with most dwarves. Excavating upward was grueling labor, and the initial work was neither entirely coordinated, nor without disagreement. Two kingdoms, with differing interpretations of portents and the lay of the rock, split off on a more southerly route than the rest. Another two traveled west, believing they heard a song from the stone calling to them, and a final kingdom diverted east, offering themselves as scouts with the intent of returning later. Each of these kingdoms would emerge elsewhere on the surface, placing their kingdoms in the Mwangi Expanse, Arcadia, and Tian Xia, respectively.

And then there were orcs. Dwarves and orcs had some contact before Earthfall in the form of minor border skirmishes, but otherwise the two civilizations had mostly ignored each other. As the campaign pushed deeper into their territory, the orc holds grew more organized. This culminated in the Battle of Basalt Grim, when a massive orc horde ambushed and slaughtered countless dwarves. Two entire kingdoms were wiped out, while a third was cut off and forced to retreat, never to be seen again. Defeat weighed heavy upon the dwarven psyche.

For the next two decades the quest ground to a halt as the remaining nine kingdoms focused their efforts on vengeance.

Born during Earthfall, Taargick was among the first dwarves whose entire lives had been spent on the Quest for Sky. His diverse education and duty as a go-between for the various encampments gave him rare insight into interkingdom politics. Through a combination of charm, violence, and years of hard work, he united the remaining dwarves under the single banner of a new nation: Tar Taargadth. Taargick was named High King, and under his banner, the Quest for Sky resumed in earnest. The dwarven forces of Tar Taargadth punched a corridor upward through orc-held territory. Over three centuries after it began, the prophecy was fulfilled when miners breached the surface in what is now the Hold of Belkzen.



TAARGICK

GILDED ERA

Much as their ancestors deep in Nar-Voth felt when the quest began, many dwarves did not expect to see the culmination of the Quest for Sky within their own lifetimes. Taargick, now dubbed the “King of Sky,” oversaw the construction of massive fortresses to safeguard the people of Tar Taargadth as they settled this strange new world. The first of these Sky Citadels was Koldukar, erected on the site of the first breach. It would remain the seat of dwarven government for over a millennium. At Taargick’s command, the dwarves dug additional routes to the surface and built nine more Sky Citadels throughout Avistan and northern Garund. Highhelm was the sixth of these.

Construction of Highhelm began on the centennial of dwarven emergence to the surface. The site was chosen for its defensibility and proximity to the rich farmland of Druma. Grand clan halls were hollowed from the Emperor’s Peak and defenses, erected to protect against threats from both the surface and the Darklands. Construction of the city took the better part of seven years.

The surface world was one of plenty for the kingdom of Tar Taargadth. While there were new dangers, they paled in comparison to the tribulations overcome in the Darklands. Content that his life’s purpose was complete, Taargick silently abdicated and wandered off into the wilderness. No longer bound to a nomadic lifestyle, and with an abundance of resources, the dwarven population surged. Craft and artistry flourished. For the first time since Earthfall, the pursuit of leisurely amusements became common.

That’s not to say that Highhelm was completely without conflict. Humans in the surrounding plains chafed under dwarven rule. Druma in particular would attempt armed rebellion to oust the dwarves six times throughout its history. Each attempt met crushing defeat. Also, in pursuit of lumber from the Palakar forest, the dwarves clashed with fey preservationists in what would become the Charcoal Wars. After minor successes, the campaign was deemed too costly to pursue, and the dwarves withdrew from the forest.

Most dwarves of the time didn’t believe human claims that the sky they’d so desperately fought to reach had not always been blanketed by ash. When the debris of Earthfall finally cleared, they looked on in wonder at the stars, moon, and unobstructed sun. King Grorrdem declared a celebration to commemorate this “Second Sky.” The dwarven army stationed in Highhelm capitalized on the increased levels of light and fervor to drive off orc remnants from surrounding mountains. Similar campaigns were launched from other Sky Citadels throughout Avistan. For a time, there was prosperity.

LONESOME ERA

Hundreds of miles north, the warlord Belkzen mustered the largest fighting force of orcs ever seen on the surface and unleashed them upon Koldukar. Between centuries of complacency and the brilliant leadership of Belkzen, the invaders broke the Sky Citadel’s defenses in what would come to be called the Battle of Nine Stones. A smattering of dwarves escaped, including King Dhrotam. No dwarf who remained survived the onslaught.

Beyond the casualties, this loss dealt a blow to the dwarven cultural psyche. Dwarf society had always been highly regimented. When King Dhrotam arrived as a refugee and declared Highhelm the new capitol, she established a ruling court-in-exile. Before, the affairs of Tar Taargadth were vague and distant. Highhelm paid tithes but was largely self-governed. Understandably, the sitting baron and council bristled at this challenge to their authority. The new arrivals wanted to muster forces to retake Koldukar, while the rulers of Highhelm chose to focus on defense. The disagreement blossomed into a power struggle. Contradictory decrees meant both proposals would falter. On the precipice of civil war, King Dhrotam suddenly died. Her death was officially attributed to age and stress, but rumors of foul play would cast a pall on the remaining court. While nominally now the ruler of the dwarven empire, the sitting baron and his council had little interest for affairs beyond their own immediate domain.

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vengeance and put the Quest for Sky on hold.

-5133 AR Taargick unites the dwarves and founds the kingdom of Tar Taargadth.

Gilded Era

-4987 AR Breaching the surface in what is now the Hold of Belkzen, the Quest for Sky is complete.

-4984 AR Koldukar, the first Sky Citadel, is founded.

-4887 AR Construction of Highhelm begins on the centennial of breaching the surface.

-4880 AR Highhelm is officially founded.

-4866 AR The first Drumish rebellion is put down.

-4693 AR Last confirmed sighting of Taargick.

-4411 AR Charcoal Wars with fey in the Palakar forest.

-4294 AR Dust from Earthfall clears. Dwarves celebrate the “Second Sky.”

-4203 AR Orcs are purged from areas surrounding the Sky Citadels.

Lonesome Era

-3708 AR The Sky Citadel of Koldukar falls to the orcs in the Battle of Nine Stones.

-3707 AR Highhelm is established as the new capital of Tar Taargadth.

-3624 AR The Two Courts Crisis splits Highhelm society and threatens civil war.

-3623 AR King Dhrotam dies under questionable circumstances.

-2476 AR The Day of Burned Words wipes out a century of historical records.

Era of Five Kings

1551 AR Orc hordes sack several Sky Citadels, ending the kingdom of Tar Taargadth.

1557 AR Torheim Gadrack I founds the kingdom of Gardadth.

1559 AR Saggorn the Holy founds The Pious Kingdom of Saggarak.

1560 AR Doggon founds the Impenetrable Kingdom of Doggadth.

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- 1561 AR Grak founds the Laborious Kingdom of Grakodan.
 - 1562 AR Taggrick I founds Everlasting Kingdom of Taggoret.
 - 1571 AR The Five Kings War begins.
 - 2332 AR Druma negotiates a peace. The Kerse Accord is signed, ending the Five Kings War.

Wild Era

- 2492 AR Orcs invade the Five Kings Mountains and lay siege to the kingdom of Gardadth.
- 2497 AR Gardadth is overrun. Only the citadel of Highhelm itself remains intact.
- 2526 AR The last of the Five Kingdoms falls to the orcs.
- 3001 AR Daralathylx is first spotted in the Five Kings Mountains.
- 3197 AR Khaddon the Mighty begins his campaign to drive back orcs.
- 3279 AR Khaddon defeats the orcs at the Battle of Splitmist Pass and founds the kingdom of Tar Khadurrm.
- 3312 AR Jernashall is Founded.

Second Era of Toil

- 3451 AR Khaddon dies of old age and his son Sidrik the Handsome ascends to the throne.
- 3493 AR Sidrik moves the capital from Highhelm to Jernashall.
- 3980 AR The Rending, a volcanic eruption destroys Jernashall. Sidrik III moves the capital back to Highhelm.
- 4200 AR Daralathylx demands a tithe and installs Ziplutivni on the Highhelm ruling council.
- 4277 AR The last great king Talhrik the Busy dies. His son Garbold ascends to the throne.
- 4369 AR Ordrik Talhirk murders his cousin, King Garbold, and claims the throne, commencing the Forge War.
- 4382 AR Ordrik wins the Forge War and declares Tar Khadurrm a Droskari theocracy.
- 4389 AR Ordrik succumbs to a contagion and dies from poor care.

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Nearly a millennium into this autonomous existence, there was a great purge. By some unknown consensus, all records concerning the previous century of dwarven life were put to the torch. The censors even went so far as to chisel over inscriptions in the stone. A few records following the event refer to it as the Day of Burned Words. No one knows what shame or terror caused such a reaction from the usually meticulous dwarves.

ERA OF THE FIVE KINGS

In the middle of the sixteenth century, Absalom Reckoning, the orcs once again struck deep into dwarven territory. Centuries of neglect in the outlying regions of the kingdom would now bore fruit as, one by one, the Sky Citadels fell. Only Highhelm, Dongun Hold, Janderhoff, and Kravenkus would endure, though each was now isolated. Tar Taargadth was finally dead.

From its ashes arose five siblings full of ambition. Each had designs upon the throne and their own base of supporters. By a bare plurality of the council vote, the second eldest, Torheim Gadrick I, assumed leadership of Highhelm. In retaliation, the losing factions declared him a mere baron-mayor, arguing that since Tar Taargadth was no more he could not be called a proper king. Not one to suffer such an insult, Gadrik's first decree was to establish a new dwarven kingdom. He dubbed it Gardadth.

Not to be outdone, each of Gadrik's siblings mustered their own supporters and set off into the mountains to create their own kingdoms. The political friction between the siblings carried over to their respective nations. It took less than a decade for this strife to blossom into open warfare. A dispute over water rights soon sparked a score of individual conflicts spanning six generations, known as The Five Kings War. The dwarven predisposition for defensive strategy meant that no side could make significant gains over another. And so, the war raged on.

Under increasing pressure to provision the ongoing conflict, dwarven holdings surrounding the Five Kings Mountains paid a heavy price, particularly the agricultural territory of Druma. There, a philosophical cult known as the Prophets of Kalistrade devised a cunning plan. They began by making loans to each of the five kingdoms to finance the civil war. When the Kalistocrats invited dwarven delegates to the seaside city of Kerse to discuss forgiving their debts, pride and greed forced the kingdoms' hands. Negotiations were tense. Eventually, peace was forged and, as promised, the each of the kingdom's debts were forgiven.

WILD ERA

No longer supported by outside tithes and with the mines of the mountain running dry, the kingdom of Gardadth's economy shifted to trade. Demand for high-quality dwarven goods was high, so much so that the temptation to pass off inferior goods to gullible humans was too much for some dwarves. A seed of avarice grew, and a secret cult to Droskar, the dwarven god of cheats and toil, took root.

The peace enforced by the Kerse Accord would last only a century and a half. Unfortunately for the dwarves, history is wont to repeat. One last time, the orcs would lay siege to dwarven lands. While the bulk of the horde streamed into the Five Kings Mountains from the North, a second force wended its way through the Darklands to strike from below. After five years of desperate battle, the kingdom of Gardadth collapsed. The orcs would never take the Sky Citadel itself but, cut off from any aid, Highhelm would remain a lone beacon in a sea of tusks for the next seven centuries.

The orcs would continue their campaign through the mountain range, razing the other four kingdoms. By the thirtieth year, the only dwarves left alive in the Five Kings mountains were in Highhelm and a few hidden enclaves. Most other survivors fled to human-controlled lands. To add to their despair, reports of a massive red dragon circling the mountains appeared.

Khaddon the Mighty was a surface dwarf descended from the diaspora. He grew up on tales of the glory days of his ancestors. After a youth spent honing

his skills as a mercenary, Khadon put out a call to all ergaksen in Avistan and beyond: the time to reclaim their homeland was nigh. Khadon's campaign through the Five Kings Mountains culminated in the Battle of Splitmist Pass, where he personally slew Tarkdok Manyspears, the reigning orc warmaster, and founded the kingdom of Tar Khadurrm.

SECOND ERA OF TOIL

Khadon's dreams of reconquest did not outlive him. His son, Sidrik the Handsome, took the throne and officially declared the newly constructed city of Jernashall the capital. Though not a warrior, Sidrik was a competent leader. Tar Khadurrm recovered and rebuilt.

When Jernashall was constructed in the shadow of Torag's Crag, dwarven scholars were certain that the volcano would remain dormant. They failed to anticipate that the machinations of the wizard Ilgreth would go awry; a large portion of the mountain violently exploded. Jernashall and its sister city, Raseri Kanton, were wiped from the map. By virtue of tradition, rule of the kingdom reverted to Highhelm.

Capitalizing on their disarray, the great red wyrm Daralathylx made a show of force. Having razed several surface towns, he sent an emissary, the kobold Ziplotivni, to demand tithes and concessions. After much debate, Highhelm capitulated to the dragon's ultimatum. In an unprecedented move, Ziplotivni took a seat on Highhelm's council. A series of emissaries to this unusual position would come and go for three hundred years. When the replacements and tithe collectors stopped coming, the dwarves simply counted their blessings that it was over.

When King Talhrik the Busy, last of the Great Kings, died, his son Garbold succeeded him. Garbold's cousin Ordrik Talhrik, a Droskari priest, then murdered the king and claimed the throne for himself. The coup split dwarven society in half and kicked off a thirteen-year civil conflict called the Forge War. Fighting raged on in the streets of Highhelm. Ordrik won by being more ruthless and treacherous than his foes and declared Tar Khadurrm a Droskari theocracy.

Artistry and pride withered under the leadership of the priests of the Dark Smith. Rather than submit to this tyranny, many dwarves fled Highhelm. Shortly after his victory, Ordrik was struck by disease. In a twist of fate, his healers cut corners and provided shoddy care, resulting in his death.

ERA OF HOPE

Droskari clergy would maintain their stranglehold for only a hundred years. On an unassuming day in the 45th century, a mere dozen priests were left to administer the city. Royalist conspirators subdued them, secured the gates, and declared independence from Tar Khadurrm. To this day, Highhelm has remained a lone city-state.

A string of natural disasters struck the city in the most recent era. Heavy storms blanketed the world for several months following the death of the human god Aroden. Some dwarves took this loss of the sky as a sign that they'd lost their way, which spurred a return to tradition. Then, a powerful earthquake rocked the region. Shoddy construction built during Droskari rule crumbled, but the city's foundation was largely unaffected.

To the citizen's delight, one earthquake also exposed a massive new adamantine lode beneath the mountain. To take advantage of this windfall, dwarven architects devised a retractable wall to secure the city, an ambitious project dubbed Torag's Shield. The project, and even the existence of the lode, have been kept a close secret outside of Highhelm. For now, the people of the city see this latest development as a chance to follow a new path, one where they can make use of the lessons of the past, the wisdom of their culture, and the determination of their people to forge a new destiny.

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Era of Hope

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 4466 AR | The Droskari theocracy crumbles. Highhelm declares independence from Tar Khadurrm. |
| 4500 AR | Daralathyx's last emissary dies. No replacement is sent. |
| 4606 AR | Heavy storms blanket Golarion. Superstitious dwarves fear they are losing the sky. |
| 4510 AR | A powerful earthquake collapses tunnels and prompts rebuilding. |
| 4699 AR | The most recent sighting of Daralathyx. |
| 4716 AR | Miners discover a massive adamantine lode beneath Highhelm. |
| 4720 AR | Plans are made to construct Torag's Shield. |
| 4723 AR | The current year. The Torag's Shield project remains underway. |



KHADON THE MIGHTY

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GOVERNMENT, LAW, AND CRIME

THE HALE CIRCLE

As with most high kings before him, Borogrim the Hale has established a personal retinue of bodyguards who answer directly to him, and which stands outside the power structure of the army, city guard, or his clan's defenders. This group, known as the Hale Circle, includes some of the finest soldiers, spellcasters, and scholars in the city. While most Circle members are believed to be retired members of other groups like the Emperor's Watch, it's nigh impossible to know for sure.

Every member of the Circle wears a magically-empowered mask that hides an individual's identity from divination.

Complicating things all the more, rumor claims the Circle makes use of projections, doubles, and magical clones to maintain the illusion that its members are still living their normal lives.

There's much more to any society than authority, order, and law-breaking, but a firm understanding of those elements is crucial to gaining a full picture of a place and its people.

HIGHHELM GOVERNMENT

To most outsiders, Highhelm appears to be just another monarchy ruled by a king holding near-absolute power. Royal decrees establish nearly all major laws, and High King Borogrim the Hale clearly holds sway throughout Emperor's Peak and, to a lesser extent, all of the Five Kings Mountains. There are other organizations that carry authority, from the Crown Council, which meets with the king on a regular basis; to members of the Order of the Mantle; to further collections of influential clan guild leaders, artisans, religious figures, traders, and notable citizens that clearly hold some sway. The authority of these additional influences seems to be limited to overseeing areas for which High King Borogrim has granted them domain or the ability to argue their point of view directly to the king. But in fact, the government structure of Highhelm is much more complex than that, with traditions bolstered by the force of law, opportunities for veto votes, the Crown Council's power of dethroning, and some restrictions on what the high king must do to speak "for the Crown" before making a royal edict.

These complexities date back to the earliest centuries of the Quest for Sky. Obviously, forming the entire population of multiple subterranean dwarven nations into a single mobile, armed caravan was an extraordinary task, and many factions brought together by Taargick required concessions

to their clans and guilds in return for supporting the first High King. These grants of special rights were codified when Tar Taargadth was formed, and reacknowledged during the creation of the Kingdom of Gardadth after Tar Taargadth fell. The majority of modern dwarven aristocracy gain their status from their family, clan, or guild being given a "Crown Rank," by Taargick or one of the High Kings who came after him.

While many Crown Ranks correspond to other nations' dukes, barons, knights, and so on, others are unique titles that exist only for the inheritors of those who originally held the rank, and come with unique privileges. The most common privileges are to be represented on a Crown Council and that the high king be required to consult your representative before making a binding proclamation. Other, rarer privileges include the right to call for a veto vote of any high king proclamation, held by only a very small number of aristocrats, and requiring a three-quarters majority of the council to agree with the call. Each of the twelve major clans of Highhelm have a representative of their choice on the council, and a few clans have more than one.

Of all Crown Ranks, only two retain the right to call for a vote to dethrone the current high king; the Tollor clan and the Founder's Guild. The Tollor clan's current council is Grand Matron **Daglyth the Stern** (LN female dwarf aristocrat), a nearly-400-year-old staunch traditionalist who considers Highhelm itself to be more important than any current plans, politics, or leaders, though she generally supports High King Borogrim the Hale. The Founder's Guild is represented by its Guild Master, Masterfounder



HIGH KING BOROGRIM THE HALE

Orgrott Cinderskin (NG male dwarf crafter). The Founder's Guild once controlled every foundry in Highhelm, but is now just one of several such successful operations and is, in fact, now dwarfed by the relatively newer Metalmakers' Union (page 22). Master Orgrott considers this a threat to his position and guild, and though he doesn't wish to damage the city as a whole, he has begun pushing back against the high king's efforts to encourage trade, for fear it will further weaken his guild's prestige and power as a local source of ingots and alloys.

Though the high king is allowed to name his own councilors, the rights of 26 various aristocrat lines promise that they will never make up less than half the council, leading the high kings of Highhelm to traditionally name 25 of their own councilors to match. These traditionally include a senior priest of Torag, a representative from the Order of the Mantle, a member of the king's bodyguard (currently the Hale Circle), a provost for each city neighborhood (responsible for being aware of issues in their neighborhood, but often lacking any formal authority there), and the grand general of the city's military forces.

The high king also normally appoints a few trusted aids and servants who serve some specific function of the government. Such duties are referred to as "having a Crown Ward," and the holders are thus given the rank "Warder." Examples include the Warder of the Treasury, the Warder of Trade, the Warder of Prisons, and the Warder of Heraldry. There are many more Warders working for the high king than are appointed to the Crown Council, and some aristocrats friendly to the high king are also invested as warders in addition to managing their own affairs. Most of the twelve major clans have numerous members named as minor warders ranging from the Warder of Highhelm Art and Music to the Warder of Refuse in an effort to keep cordial relations with those influential groups.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

As the seat of major political influence within the Five Kings Mountains, Highhelm also serves as an unofficial capital of the region. Although most outsiders and even many of local citizens look to Highhelm the way they would a traditional capital, non-Highhelm citizens are quick to remind others of region's lack of an officially recognized capital. Instead, the people outside of Highhelm look to the Gathering Council of the Five Kings Mountains for leadership.

The Gathering Council is composed of the rulers of the major dwarven cities of Larrad, Highhelm, Kolvar, Taggoret, Rolgrimmur, and Tar-Kazmukh. The High King convenes a meeting of the Gathering Council once every 20 years where the council discusses trade routes, distribution of resources and forces, boundary negotiations, tax rates for tunnel travel between the city-states, and other important matters. These meetings originally occurred every 200 years, but with recent predicaments plaguing the Inner Sea, the council thought it best to speed up the process of government to help the region. The meetings of the Gathering Council are known to go on for months and usually culminate with a region-wide festival to bury old grudges and celebrate new agreements. The most recent celebration in 4720 AR was also the public revelation of the Torag's Shield project, which led to one of the greatest Gathering Festivals in centuries.

A lesser-known but nonetheless crucial function of the Gathering Council is that even when it's not in session, the protocols and relationships it establishes can form the basis for communication between important groups within each of the city-states that participate. If a given city-state needs further aid or a change to a given agreement, they aren't obligated to wait until the next council meeting to request it. Established agreements allow for "regular requisitions," which can be negotiated and acted upon at any time. While the initial support for Torag's Shield was high, as High King Borogrim promised it would allow Highhelm to act as a bastion for all the region's people, the project's long completion time has led many members of the

REGIONAL REPRESENTATION

Numerous minor settlements, most with no more than a few hundred citizens, dot the region subject to the Gathering Council's rules but are too small to have a distinct representative on the Gathering Council. Each such settlement is free to seek representation from one of the larger settlements, and in some cases, a favorable trade deal, minor annual tithe, or promise of support does convince major cities to look after smaller towns. Highhelm itself often accepts such requests from any settlement that supports five or more families or forty or more people, in part because the high king likes the idea of more homesteads looking to him for support. Indeed, sometimes a minor town with some historic or cultural relevance will be approached by multiple larger towns wishing to represent it for the prestige involved in doing so.

For settlements uninterested or unwilling to seek representation of larger local city-states, the task of representing them falls to the Stranger's Advocate, a position assigned to a different city-state member of the Grand Council each time it meets. The position is held for life or until the next meeting.

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UNIQUE LAWS

Although the majority of laws in Highhelm are fairly standard for a developed society, they do have some that are not often found in other Inner Sea settlements.

Craft Fraud: While you do not have to be part of a Highhelm-recognized guild or craft clan to make or sell goods in Highhelm, wrongfully claiming membership or training by such a group while selling is treated as theft. The wronged group is usually consulted for punishment.

Sapping: Sapping, or digging into the walls, arches, or supports of any part of Emperor's Peak without prior approval and oversight by a guild-certified miner, engineer, or architect is a crime on par with arson.

Stolen Clanlink: Doing anything to claim association with a dwarven clan you're not part of, or aiding another in doing so, is considered as illegal as claiming to be a noble or councilor, as is using clan-specific titles you haven't earned or forging or carrying clan daggers that don't belong to you.

Gathering Council to reconsider their position. As a result, King Borogrim has had to call on multiple requisition motions to garner further support and funds for the project.

Two notable supporters of Torag's Shield are the nations of Druma and Kyonin. Thanks to Highhelm's lax taxes on non-citizens, Druman merchants see the city as a haven for trade. Highhelm acts as an exceptional staging point for greater trade throughout the region and the Druma-Highhelm Accord rewards both parties. It allows Druma to maintain trade with Taldor, Absalom, and northern Garund with minimal travel costs, while Highhelm receives a fair amount of income in the form of "merchant security," fees paid for the relatively permissive "goods inspections" for all trade that passes through the city.

Kyonin, meanwhile, sees Highhelm not as a trade partner, but as a military one. The Kyonin elves recognize the military might and skill of their dwarven neighbors and consider Highhelm a valuable ally. While the two states already had a strong relationship, trading culture, gems, and weapons over the centuries, the development of keep stone has pushed the two ever closer. The heads of Kyonin were some of the first people outside the Five Kings Mountains to learn of the existence of the new material, and Kyonin was quick to offer their support with the Torag's Shield project. As Queen Telandia Edasseril sees it, if Kyonin's neighbors want to create a bastion of safety, it's best to put themselves at the top of the welcome list if such protection were ever needed. Additionally, Queen Edasseril is hoping to maneuver this support and request aid from Highhelm when Kyonin decides to strike against the demon lord Treerazer in his Abyssal domain of Tanglebriar. On the world stage, this alliance doesn't officially exist, as there's no official treaty or accord, and both states are quick to write off the rumors of shared military knowledge and funding.

Beyond Druma and Kyonin, Highhelm has a standing relationship with most nations in the Shining Kingdoms region. Andoran and Taldor are regular trade partners, though they're not afforded the same privileges as Druma. Even still, both nations have a strong desire to continue trade with Highhelm. Taldor's nobles commonly purchase weapons and hire mercenaries from the city, a practice that's only escalated since Grand Princess Eutropia's rise to the throne. Andoran, meanwhile, seems to be working toward trading in specific armament manufacturing techniques, suggesting that the nation is building up their military might with the help of dwarven secrets, though no one in Highhelm can say exactly why. Finally, Highhelm has reached out to nation of Galt in the past year in hopes of reestablishing relations with the tumultuous nation. That Highhelm spent decades ignoring most Galtan ambassadors suggests this signals a change in Highhelm's view of their neighbor.

LAW ENFORCEMENT & MILITARY

Enforcement of Highhelm's laws falls on the shoulders of the Emperor's Watch, the official city guard. Their jurisdiction includes the entirety of Highhelm as well as the immediate surroundings of the Emperor's Peak, out to around a half-mile radius from the mountain. The watch is broken into five branches: the King's Watch covers King's Crown, the Heart Guard watches over King's Heart, the Stone Officers cover Stonebreach, the Deep Sentinels patrol the Depths, and the Lookout guards the environs outside of the city.

While all five branches undergo the same basic training, each branch also specializes in specific techniques and skill sets. Members of the King's Watch receive additional diplomatic and de-escalation training to aid with aristocracy. The Heart Guard is taught basic magic identification as well as techniques to help combat magical phenomena. The Stone Officers receive subterfuge and espionage training, making them great choices for undercover missions among the Stonebreach populace. In the Depths, the Deep Sentinels receive additional survival training and learn how to fight in the cramped

tunnels of the region. Finally, members of the Lookout receive specialized tracking education in addition to learning how best to fight in outdoor environments. Although each branch tends to make use of its specific members, it's not uncommon for members of other branches to be brought in to aid with specific missions, such as calling on Deep Sentinels when dealing with a cave-in in other parts of the city.

Joining the Emperor's Watch requires completion of a year-long basic training and continual training in the specialized techniques of a given branch. Many guards ask for regular rotations between branches to learn the techniques of all five over their careers. Guards who achieve this status, can apply to join the Order of the Mantle, the city's unofficial sixth branch. Mantle guards are considered the best in the city and only undertake specialized missions on behalf of the crown or in answer to very specific calls from the other branches.

Highhelm's military also maintains a high standard, with every member of the Highhelm First Army undergoing two years of basic training, which includes combat techniques, survival skills, and tactics in different environments. While it's not required, most Highhelm soldiers learn to fight as stalwart defenders (page 110), pushing their defensive techniques to the limit. Even during peacetime, the city's army takes regular missions that vary from clearing the tunnels of the Five Kings Mountains of monsters to aiding other groups such as the Knights of Lastwall. The army's general, **Kaltan the Pike** (LN male dwarf battlemaster), is particular about the missions the army undertakes, only choosing engagements that challenge his troops yet avoid spreading Highhelm's military too thin.

CRIME

Of course, Highhelm is not some idyllic utopia. Even with the Emperor's Watch, the city hosts its fair share of crime. Crime in Highhelm is an interesting beast, however, as the city's position as a trade hub has created a number of unwritten rules. The city's attempt to maintain its relationship with its merchant allies and other outside connections pushes the Emperor's Watch to pursue any crime against non-citizens with the full extent of the law, sometimes doling out harsher punishments than typically required. Thus, "simple" crimes such as pickpocketing, assault, vandalism, or trespassing often target local citizens.

On the flipside, this status quo has led to non-citizens becoming the focus of the city's "smart" crimes: embezzlement, extortion, fraud, and particularly intricate theft. A number of Highhelm criminals know well how to steal from the gray and black markets, work books, hide their tracks, and commit crimes that become a nightmare to report, let alone prove. This is mostly under the domain of the Arrangement, Highhelm's own crime syndicate. While these crimes are few and far between, every merchant understands that there's a risk of falling victim to one, and it's usually best to cut one's losses than fight back against the masterminds of Highhelm.

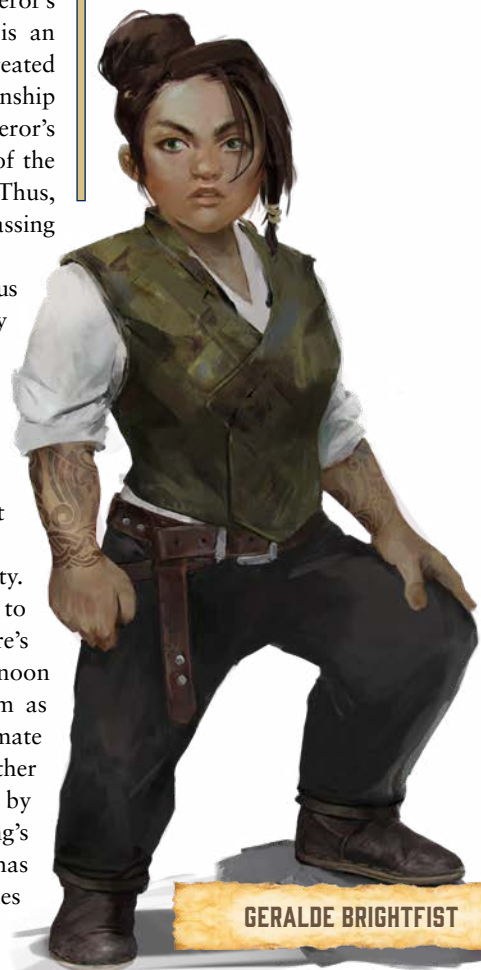
Among these mastermind groups are the various gangs of the city. While most of these, like the Blue Jacks or Kantor's Pawns, do their best to minimize their footprint and keep their members' existence a secret, there's one that flaunts their existence: the Blacknoon Thieves' Guild. Blacknoon makes a habit of legitimizing their crimes, or at least, making them as legitimate as any crime can be. Most of the gang's holdings lie with legitimate enterprises, such as their restaurant in the Depths and investments in other local business. Their seemingly illegal undertakings are often obscured by an intricate net of legitimate dealings. This, and the policies of the gang's leader Geralde Brightfist (page 89) toward neighbors in the Depths has earned the favor of a lot of the citizenry. Their growing popularity makes taking down the Blacknoon Thieves' Guild a daunting prospect for the Emperor's Watch, one that seems all the more impossible every day.

NOTABLE CRIMINALS

The longest-lasting criminals in Highhelm keep their identities secret.

Beohild Ambereye (N female dwarven forger) is among the greatest forgers of dwarven relics in the world. She runs a legitimate business (Amber's Able Eye) as an appraiser of antiquities in her shop in King's Crown, but in the back rooms she crafts amazing fakes, which she sells on the black market. She recently sold a series of forgeries related to the Tomb of Taargick, and the High King's forces are offering a significant reward to anyone who can find their origin.

The Unseen Shadow (LE mimic spy) is a blackmailer who takes the form of decorative items sold to the rich and powerful in Highhelm. While disguised, it listens carefully for some embarrassing secret, steals a few items so its own absence is not suspicious, and leaves a note demanding payment for its secrecy. It then serves as its own drop-off point, allowing it to avoid anyone waiting for the ransom to be picked up.



GERALDE BRIGHTFIST

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TRADE AND INDUSTRY

HIGHHELM CURRENCY

As a major trade nexus, Highhelm accepts currency from all established nations, and also mints its own coinage.

Copper pennies depict the face of the acting High King at the time of pressing. Silver hammers show Torag's hammer. Gold khadors are stamped with the seal of Highhelm, while platinum targads are marked with the sigils of the Gathering Council, Highhelm, and the king, arranged in a trefoil with the royal seal on top. The reverse side of all Highhelm coins is the same, depicting the royal flag being supported on one side by an augdunar and the other by a draft lizard. Half pennies are, quite literally, pennies chopped in half to make smaller change. They are accepted as legal currency, but paying someone a half penny can be taken as an unsubtle criticism of their shoddy work, not even worth a full cent. This is a serious insult and can easily start a brawl.



GRINDLEGRUB RANCHER

As with other cities, Highhelm's trade and industry are its lifeblood. In some cases, the city literally could not function without of its more crucial industries.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES

Highhelm's major industries include the following.

Breatherwalls: To purify the air and produce oxygen underground, Highhelm's druids created a hardy, multicolored variety of lichen that could be grown on vertical screens and lattices in residential areas. These porous living walls, known as "breatherwalls," are used to improve air quality and reduce noise inside stone-walled dwellings that might otherwise be deafening. Highhelm's breatherwalls are so efficient that even if the kingdom had to close its air shafts against besieging attackers or mine crews were trapped by collapses, the dwarves inside could hold out on the oxygen generated by their breatherwalls for a long time.

The secrets of growing breatherwall lichen are closely guarded, and attempts to steal the technique have so far failed. Outsiders persist in their efforts to unlock the knowledge, however, and rumored breatherwall spores command high prices on the black market.

Brewing: The brewers of the city are celebrated for their lagers and stouts, and their distilleries are famed for their whiskies. These, unlike many of Highhelm's other products, are freely exported and widely available, though never cheap.

Well-known varieties include Highhelm Deepdraught, a strong brown ale aged in deep caverns laced with magically resonant Darklands minerals, and Taarghal Spirit Smoke, a whiskey smoked over the inebriating dried fronds of Taarghal cavernspike.

Grindlegrubs: All organic waste in Highhelm is collected and deposited in grindlegrub pits, where it's consumed by swarms of squirming white grubs who have been bred for centuries to maximize their size, growth speed, and nutritional content. Grindlegrubs are efficient nutrient recyclers, converting all manner of organic detritus to fat and protein. If permitted to reach maturity, these mouse-sized larvae grow into enormous black flies, their wings too stunted and their bodies too heavy to fly. Most, however, are harvested as grubs.

Grindlegrubs' fat is used to make candles, soaps, and machine lubricants. The remainder of their bodies is converted to feed for aquaculture ponds and draft lizards. However, grindlegrubs can also be compacted into nutritious ration bricks, and in times of siege and hardship, dwarves will begrudgingly subsist on this bland but sustaining fare. Spiced, toasted grindlegrubs are considered much tastier, and are often served as street food in Highhelm's markets.

The term "grindlegrub" is a mild insult. It describes a person who lacks proper dwarven dignity and is happy to swim in the muck, but is also able to not only survive, but thrive, in the face of adversity.

Mining: Over the centuries, mining has decreased in economic importance in Highhelm. After thousands of years of being mined with dwarven diligence, the ore deposits within Highhelm have largely been exhausted. Until the strike that led to the invention of keep stone, many dwarves believed there was little left to dig out from their domain.

Veins of copper, iron, and adamantine run through the Depths, and pockets of gems are occasionally discovered beneath Emperor's Peak, but Highhelm no longer produces enough ore to export. Today, it keeps what it mines.

However, its mining expertise remains unrivaled. Dwarven surveyors, engineers, and overseers are avidly sought by foreigners, and can command extraordinary prices for their skill and knowledge.

Smelting: While Highhelm mines only small quantities of local ore, its elementally-empowered furnaces remain busy smelting the imported stock. Much of this metal is refined for local use, but some dealers in rare, hazardous, or magical ores also pay to extract material that no one else can purify. In such cases, the Highhelm guilds typically take their payment as a percentage of the finished material.

Dwarven ingenuity, coupled with elemental magic, has refined their processes to minimize the release of toxic byproducts. Nonetheless, smelting is hazardous, and the risks can be reduced only so far. Accidents and pollution leaks are not unheard of, despite the best efforts to keep such things quiet.

Smithing: The smiths of Highhelm are renowned throughout the world for the intricacy, durability, and ingenuity of their work. The armor and weaponry produced by Highhelm's forges is unparalleled, but their ornamental and utilitarian objects are also prized.

Highhelm's artisans produce clockwork toys, surgical instruments, jeweled baubles, and statues to honor the dead. All are of magnificent quality, and all are difficult and costly for outsiders to procure. Kings and archpriests vie to possess such treasures, and display them as the crowning pieces in their collections.

Stonemasonry: Most of Highhelm is carved into the bones of a mountain, and above-ground dwarven architecture is also heavily reliant on stonemasonry, which is among the city's most respected trades. Little of their work is exported, but Highhelm stonemasons have been known to accept commissions to design and oversee the construction of foreign palaces, cathedrals, and guildhalls, if such buildings are deemed worthy of their efforts.

Transport: Trade and transport of goods and people through the Five Kings Mountains depends on the diligence and expertise of the Harnessers' Guild, which dominates supply logistics in the region. Mule drivers carry most loads aboveground and through Highhelm's upper tunnels, while draft lizards are the preferred beast of burden deep below the surface.

TRADING PARTNERS

Highhelm is a thriving, cosmopolitan trade center with connections across the world, a reality that sometimes surprises outsiders who put too much stock into stereotypes of dwarven insularity. In reality, trade is vigorous both within and without the city.

Within Highhelm, clans and guilds negotiate the flow of raw materials into the city and their processing into finished goods. For example, the Guild of Smiths might agree to purchase a certain weight of iron ingots from the Smelters' Hall, paying in advance to enable the smelters to contract with the Miners' Guild for what local ore they can acquire and Harnessers' Guild for transport of imports to cover the rest.

Because dwarves can rely on a high degree of trust and shared custom to facilitate their agreements, internal trade is generally smooth and mutually profitable. Breaches of contract are rare and treated very seriously.

Trade with outsiders is also important to the realm, provided that those outsiders respect the kingdom's laws. Highhelm employs a cadre of skilled negotiators, diplomats, and on-the-ground informants to guide its trade policies, and its envoys are quite adept at protecting dwarven interests. Most nations have learned that Highhelm's envoys are not easily deceived, and that they neither forgive nor forget deceptive practices.

Druma is an honored and respected trade partner, having earned a reputation for reliability over the years, and generally gets preferential treatment in trade negotiations. Galt, by contrast, is viewed as unreliable, and Highhelm has traditionally preferred not to make state-level agreements with that nation, though individual guilds and merchants of good repute are always welcome. Any contracts that might be affected by the chronically dangerous and unpredictable conditions in Galt, however, require a high degree of collateral.

ABADAR'S REGULATION

Abadar's church plays an important role in facilitating trade in Highhelm. It operates as an impartial arbiter of trade regulations and ensures that the king's currency is properly standardized, with accurate purity and weights.

Each year, a delegation of Abadaran dignitaries visits Highhelm to inspect market scales and weights, the official customs books, and other trade practices. It's rare for the delegation to uncover any serious discrepancies, as the dwarves are famously diligent about maintaining their own meticulous standards, but the Abadarans' verification reassures foreign traders that they are not being cheated.

The Abadaran delegation is a welcome source of revenue for Highhelm, as the visitors stay for weeks, stop at every major market, and are accustomed to spending freely on luxuries. Additionally, a few clans have discreetly sent their scions away with the departing Abadarans, ostensibly to study the faith's teachings, but also, conveniently, to avoid disgrace or bad influences at home.

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TAX IN THE CITY

Highhelm levies three major taxes: a head tax, which is required of citizens but not of foreign visitors; a business tax, which is determined as a percentage of proceeds, and varies depending on the amount of pollution, noise, and other burdensome externalities imposed on the rest of the citizenry; and a property tax, which is waived for humbler residences but applies to richer homes, guildhalls, and clan halls. These taxes are heavy, but the dwarves of Highhelm seldom protest, for every day they can see what this buys them: fresh air and clean water despite their densely populated underground home, peerless defense fortifications, engineering miracles at every turn, and the unbroken, still-vital legacy of centuries of proud dwarven culture. These are blessings that no other civilization can boast, and thus dwarves consider it a privilege to pay the taxes that sustain Highhelm—a city that they, and they alone, can call home.

Highhelm maintains longstanding trade connections with both Taldor and Cheliah, as these empires have been eager buyers of finely crafted dwarven wares for centuries. Since the Thrune Ascendancy, Highhelm has grown more reluctant to do business with Cheliah, but the wealth of that market is difficult to ignore. While Highhelm's diplomatic relations with Cheliah are sometimes strained, business relationships remain relatively strong. Similarly, Highhelm does steady business with Andoran, though on a political level the dwarves tend to view that young nation's democratic zeal with considerable skepticism.

Raw materials, particularly lumber and ore, are imported from Molthune and Iger. However, both nations are rife with bandits and rebels, so Highhelm tends to rely on short contracts that rarely extend beyond a few years, and often contain contingency clauses in case of production shortfalls or supply interruptions.

Finally, in addition to negotiating its own direct trade agreements with various parties, Highhelm offers contracts for auxiliary services as well. Guides and guards through the Five Kings Mountains and adjoining territories can be hired in Highhelm, and the city boasts a sophisticated insurance market for merchants and captains wanting additional peace of mind. Of course, the Insurers' Guild is always cognizant of the possibility of fraud, and it retains expert investigators and diviners to ferret out the truth in unclear cases.

GUILDS AND UNIONS

All respectable trades and crafts practiced in Highhelm have their own guilds. Full membership is generally limited to dwarven practitioners who have proved their skill by presenting a masterwork for formal consideration to the guildmasters. Provisional membership is for apprentices, journeymen, and qualified foreigners. While there is no formal bylaw reserving full membership for dwarves, in practice this unspoken rule is firmly observed. On rare occasion, an extraordinary non-dwarven artisan may be considered for full membership, but this is reserved for only the most acclaimed masters in a craft.

Each guildhall's lower levels contain archives of the guild's history and the development of their industry, and often include galleries displaying storied artisans' finest achievements. These areas are open to the public, and are frequently toured by schoolchildren and tourists. Guildhalls' upper levels are reserved for members and select clients, and contain meeting rooms, reference libraries, specialized workshops or practice areas, social club spaces, and private lodgings.

Guilds in related trades are grouped together in unions. Workers who are not skilled or specialized enough to qualify for guild membership may still join the union that most closely aligns with their profession. For example, the Guild of Smiths, the Smelters' Hall, and the Miners' Guild are all gathered together into the Metalmakers' Union, and members of those guilds are also members of that union. Individual metalworkers who do not qualify for membership in any of the three constituent guilds can also petition for inclusion in the Metalmakers' Union.

The following are some of Highhelm's major guilds and unions.

The Metalmakers' Union: This union gathers workers involved in the extraction, purification, and smithing of metals. Major constituents include the Miners' Guild, the Smelters' Hall, and the Guild of Smiths. Engineers, alchemists, elementalists, and transmuters working in earth and metal congregate here. Additionally, given the importance of underground fortifications and demolitions in dwarven combat, the Metalmakers' Union often works closely with Highhelm's military and mercenaries to bolster city fortifications and plan ways of undermining potential enemies.

The Provisioners' Union: This union includes workers in food- and drink-related trades, such as the Brewers' and Distillers' Guild, the Guild of Knife and Fire (encompassing Highhelm's chefs, cooks, and kitchen workers), the aquaculture-focused Fishfarmers' Guild, and—after some initially heated

disputes—the Grindlegrubbers’ Guild, which was eventually ruled to belong with the Provisioners in part because they not only provide food for dwarves, draft lizards, and fish alike, but also because they dispose of so much kitchen waste and brewers’ grain that it was only logical to include them with their interrelated trades.

The Roadwardens’ Union: Those who travel through Highhelm and the Five Kings Mountains are likely to make use of the services provided through the Roadwardens’ Union, which gathers together the Mapmakers’ Guild, the Guild of Guides and Porters, and the Harnessers’ Guild of muleteers and lizard-drivers. The Roadwardens’ Union is capable of providing light security, which is sufficient for most merchant caravans, but will contract with the Union of Axe and Coin to protect exceptionally valuable or dangerous cargo.

MARKETS

Highhelm contains dozens of small markets offering basic wares, street food, and amusements such as saga recitations, clockwork puppetry, and chant-songs in Torag’s honor. The kingdom’s more populous areas host larger markets, some of which are famed throughout the region.

Certain customs and laws are constant across Highhelm’s markets, large and small. Hagglng is highly encouraged, even with basic purchases like flour or grindlegrub meat. Another longstanding custom is that no honest deal may be struck in darkness. As such, during blacknoon, all transactions halt immediately, and resume only when the light returns.

By law, any item priced at 15 gold pieces or more, or which purports to have healing properties, must bear a stamp of authenticity from the king’s examiners. Obtaining a stamp usually takes three to five days and costs 1% of the item’s appraised value. Unstamped items are generally assumed to be fraudulent, stolen, or illegal, and are seldom seen outside the black market.

Highhelm’s black market dealers are small-scale, stigmatized, and difficult to find. Most dwarves are law-abiding, and local norms strongly value honest toil while disparaging theft, dishonesty, and slapdash work. Additionally, legitimate trade in Highhelm is safe and seamless. With low taxes on imported goods and high penalties for crime, there’s little incentive to smuggle anything into the kingdom, and the guilds keep a tight rein on their own members and wares, making it difficult to smuggle anything out. Few engage in illegal sales, and fewer are willing to admit it to foreigners.

Outsiders and criminal gangs dominate Highhelm’s black markets, using noisome or dangerous businesses such as tanneries, smelting furnaces, and grindlegrub pits as fronts. Stolen goods, unlicensed healing wares, narcotics, and smuggled dwarven artifacts can be found at these markets, though generally selections are slim and prices high. The most profitable black market trade is selling purloined dwarven artifacts found in the deep tunnels. This is the most egregious betrayal of Highhelm’s clans and culture, though, and few crimes carry heavier penalties than graverobbing. Given the high level of violence that attends such dealings, it’s perhaps no coincidence that Highhelm’s black markets are usually fronted in businesses that not only deter legitimate citizens from lingering, but happen to be well suited to corpse disposal.

Black markets are also the only option for non-dwarven, Darklands customers, such as calignis and deros, who are prohibited from entering Highhelm proper. Most of these individuals are considered too violent and erratic to warrant the attention of legitimate merchants, even if they could get past the gate guards.

THE ROLLING WHEEL

Long ago, a band of dwarven peddlers banded together for safety as they traveled through the deep tunnels of the Emperor’s Peak. They found that traveling together was not only safer, but drew more customers than any of them could attract alone. Thus, the Rolling Wheel was born.

The Rolling Wheel announces itself at every step. Glowing, multicolored crystals hang from draft lizards’ harnesses. The wagons’ canopies are painted with luminous ink and dusted with glittering fungal spores. Its musicians play cheerful songs, creating such a curious sight that even calignis and dero come out to look at the wares.

The caravan’s current leader is an escaped Chelaxian slave named **Miro** (N male halfling ranger), a miner who stumbled upon a tunnel to the Darklands and used it to flee his cruel masters. The Rolling Wheel has flourished under his leadership.



HIGHHELM MERCHANT

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CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

THE GUARDIAN KING

The most visible manifestation of the Highhelm mindset is the Guardian King, the monumental carving of a dwarven ruler that covers most of the face of Emperor's Peak. The Guardian King is unique among the titanic carvings of the region in that it doesn't commemorate or memorialize a specific king and thus doesn't "count" as one of the titular kings of the region. Instead, the idealized figure represents the unyielding spirit of the people of Highhelm, and the city's commitment to be a bastion of safety and prosperity for all time. The carving of the Guardian King was completed as part of the contemporary refortification of Emperor's Peak, and the statue incorporates thick keep stone sheathing to protect from magical attacks. Rumors contend that High King Borogrim the Hale hired the wizards of Tar-Kazmukh to place powerful enchantments on the statue, but details of the Guardian King's magical abilities are known only to the highest ranked of the city's defenders.

Highhelm is often referred to as the heart of dwarven culture in the Five Kings Mountains, and the city is that, but it is also so much more! As a nexus of trade routes that stretch through the Shining Kingdoms and beyond, the city is a fusion of contemporary Golarion with the long history of the dwarven people.

THE HIGHHELM MINDSET

The heart of Highhelm is its long legacy. Through the centuries, the city has withstood attacks from foes above and belowground, the falls of political dynasties and splintering of religious sects, and even upheavals of its geological foundations. Through it all, Highhelm and its people have endured, survived. Drawing deeply on the city's dwarven heritage, the general attitude of its people is that challenges come and go, but as long as they are met with patience, cooperation, and hard work, Highhelm will outlast and overcome them.

While that might strike some as a grim outlook, Highhelm's residents consider it quite the opposite. The resolve of the city's residents ensures their safety, and that security leaves room for plenty of joy, creativity, and openness. Contemporary Highhelm is thriving. A bustling city of people from many ancestries and backgrounds, Highhelm balances the support of community with the freedom of individual expression. People appreciate achievements and innovation in the high-quality products that the city is justifiably known for, but they value their neighbors just as much for contributing to the city's arts, entertainments, and social life. Highhelm balances stability and innovation, cooperation and individuality, tradition and progress.

Highhelm is also a city of pride. To its citizens, it's the pinnacle of dwarven culture. While there's an obvious recognition of dwarven culture throughout the Inner Sea, especially among the other active Sky Citadels, to most dwarves there's "no place like Highhelm." To the people of the city, the phrase is a badge of honor, a recognition that there are things that even other dwarves can't find anywhere else. From the elementally empowered forges of King's Heart, to the tenacity of the people in the Depths, to the wealth of history that has direct and traceable ties to the time before the Quest for Sky, Highhelm offers sights and experiences exclusive to itself. Outsiders sometimes use the phrase as a way to mock the people of Highhelm, pointing out that a lot of what exists in the city has parallels elsewhere, not just in other dwarven settlements. The people of Highhelm are quick to dismiss this teasing, though, and reiterate the uniqueness of everything Highhelm offers.

As most citizens are dwarves, a majority of life moves at the pace of "a beard's growth." Due to their long lives, the people of Highhelm tend to take things slower than those in other cities.

Projects will take months to spin up before even entering a planning stage, then take several more months or even years to actually begin.

The people of the city are cautious and analyze their projects and way of life from multiple angles before moving ahead with any next steps. Although this leads to slower undertakings, it also allows most people to handle multiple tasks at once.

A construction crew can plan several building projects at once and complete several in a row with little downtime between.

This way of life has led many outsiders to note that the people of Highhelm are "slow to warm up a forge, but can keep many irons in the fire."



EVERYDAY DWARF

Since Highhelm's citizenry isn't entirely dwarves, however, the city also has a reputation for brevity when it needs to be brief. Trade deals, alliances, and tourism with non-dwarves require many of the city's citizens to know how to move quickly based on a given task. While this leads to many outsider interactions being left to the non-dwarven citizens, it also occasionally results in one of the city's most amusing sights: the "quick dwarf." Dwarves who have to deal with non-dwarves and others not used to the dwarven pace of life learn to adapt, sometimes acting and moving faster than even their non-dwarf counterparts. These dwarves can finish caravan inspections in mere minutes or construct a new home in a few days, but never at the cost of quality. While most who experience the "quick dwarves" of the city believe the experience to be entertaining and intriguing, regular visitors to Highhelm note that this seems to be an innate skill for most dwarves, just one that they tap into only when the need arises. These visitors point at the speed at which the Torag's Shield project is moving as proof of their theory.

DAILY LIFE

The typical workday in Highhelm starts before dawn, with the forges and bakers' ovens fired up in preparation for work to begin when sunlight floods King's Crown. Many street-side food counters also open early, allowing citizens to grab breakfast on the way to the day's employment. Hand pies are particularly popular breakfast choices, and enterprising chefs do their best to incorporate the most interesting spices that Highhelm's extensive trade network brings to the city. Highhelm is no place for layabouts, so the morning streets are almost always crowded. The throng tends to be subdued in residential neighborhoods, as citizens demonstrate respect for their neighbors who might keep odd hours. In Stonebreach and the Depths, it's particularly common for folks to set a variable or nocturnal schedule for themselves, and eateries in those districts accommodate by serving an all-day breakfast menu.

Once residents arrive at their places of business, they pick up projects laid aside the previous day and settle in for several hours of uninterrupted work. It's considered rude in the city to call at workshops or attempt to make appointments during the morning, and disruptions are met with irritation. Even at offices and scriptoriums, morning is a time to complete paperwork and take care of administrative tasks. Messages received during the morning in Highhelm are often put aside to be read after lunch, or even filed to be taken care of in the next day's work.

Midday is time for a much-needed break after the concentrated attention of the morning's labors. After a solitary morning, many residents gather with coworkers to eat a lunch brought from home or retrieved from a nearby shop. Lunch-hour potlucks and meal swaps are common, so it's normal for a meal to consist of widely disparate elements. Over the meal, workers typically discuss family or personal news, or talk about their favorite hobbies. Talk of workplace projects is generally discouraged during the lunch break, as it detracts from the enjoyment of company.

Afternoon in Highhelm is a time for socialization, collaboration, and planning. The vast majority of appointments and work-related visits occur in the early afternoon, following lunch. Inside businesses and workshops, workers meet to brainstorm or to contribute to joint projects that require the labor of more than one artisan. Clans and guilds conduct business meetings, and government officials usher citizens into their offices to hear complaints or process requests. On the streets of the city, afternoon tends to be the busiest time of the working day, so street entertainers often join the throngs, performing routines that they developed and polished during the quiet mornings. After necessary meetings and errand running, workers return to their places of business to put their affairs in order, make plans for the coming day, and tend to any urgent business that can't wait until the morrow. This means that streets in the city largely are quiet once again in the late

DWARVEN SCHEDULES

Inside Emperor's Peak, it can be difficult to keep track of time, since many of Highhelm's residents don't have access to daylight as a point of reference. The clang of smithy hammers and the unusual acoustics of the mountain's interior also make the ringing of bells or chimes an impractical solution for collectively tracking the passing hours. Instead, most neighborhoods have large public water clocks perched atop raised platforms for the sake of visibility. Neighborhoods often dye the water inside the clock bright colors for festivals or in support of local sporting teams or leaders. Neighborhood clock minders keep the city synced to a standard 24-hour schedule.

Inside homes and businesses, residents often use personal water clocks, though places like bakeries and manufactories also use emberstones to track shorter periods. These lumps of a metal alloy take approximately one hour to lose their glow after being heated to incandescence in a forge or oven.

Highhelm doesn't make use of the same universal schedule. Some dwarves still adhere to the forge-day, a time frame based on a 32-hour schedule. Adherence to this schedule is most common among grondaksen—underground dwarves—who typically never leave the mountain to see the light of day. A forge-day includes 12 hours of rest followed by 20 hours for work and leisure. These dwarves, known as "forge keepers" among the populace of Highhelm, are somewhat uncommon, but still widespread enough that the city's populace has to understand how to live around the forge-day.

Most forge keepers maintain a simple system of knots and ribbons outside of their shops and homes. These signifiers, called keeper ropes, both help notify potential visitors that a given dwarf is working on a forge-day schedule, and explains the current time in the forge-day. The rope is broken up into segmented portions that mark sleeping, working, resting, and meal times. Forge keepers can typically work around others' schedules, as a forge-day provides plenty of overlap with standard Highhelm days.

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OTHER DWARVES

Highhelm is considered the seat of dwarven culture by many. Dwarves from all over Avistan come to visit the city, if only to reconnect with their cultural roots and enjoy the sights and sounds of Highhelm. Visitors from Garund and beyond are less common but still a regular and expected sight on the city's crowded streets.

Mbe'ke dwarves are perhaps the most expected, as trade and cultural exchange have been a standard between Highhelm and Cloudspire for centuries. Taralu dwarves typically join their Mbe'ke cousins on these journeys, so their presence is rather common as well.

Highhelm also maintains trade with Dongun Hold, and the two High Kings have met with greater regularity in recent years. While Donguni visitors are less common, it's still not too surprising to see the occasional dwarf sporting a firearm.

Other visitors such as Pahmet, Paraheen, and Vahird dwarves are rarer. Without the direct connection of trade, the journey is more difficult and generally not worth the trouble. While these dwarves will occasionally travel to Highhelm, they tend to do so for personal reasons more than anything.

The rarest and most surprising sight is the dwarf from beyond the Inner Sea region. Dwarves from Arcadia,

Casmaron, and Tian Xia make the journey to Highhelm, some through the Darklands. These dwarves tend to come in large groups, often as entire families, and stay for several years. While such visitors arrive only every few decades, their appearance is always eventful.

HIGHHELM SLANG

Residents of Highhelm have developed many of their own idioms to express concerns, relationships, and situations particular to their mountain home.

Bedecked: A description for someone who wears many glory ribbons. It can either acknowledge experience and authority, especially of an elder, or derisively imply that someone is too concerned with accolades and attention.

(Cont'd)

afternoon, so merchants, entertainers, and restaurateurs have time to prepare for the rush of the evening.

The end of the working day often consists of a trip to the market or wholesale supplier to procure materials for the next day's work. Merchants in the supply business typically arrange for such goods to be delivered overnight. City guards keep a close eye on packages left on workshop stoops, though theft of such materials is typically rare in most neighborhoods. Most workers head home for dinner after the work of the day, and the early evening is time to spend together with families and tend to projects around the home. Traffic at the city's restaurants is light for dinner, but later picks up significantly, as Highhelm's residents come out to socialize.

Highhelm's residents play as hard as they work, and the evening air is full of boisterous laughter spilling from taverns and entertainment halls, lively music performed at clan and neighborhood celebrations, and shouted greetings from friends as they move from venue to venue. Most establishments serve a late supper for revelers, and social gatherings often last well into the night—perhaps another reason that the streets of the city are so quiet in the mornings.

SUBCULTURE AND COUNTERCULTURE

Highhelm, in its current flourishing, is both the center of dwarven culture in the Five Kings Mountains and the crossroads of the Shining Kingdoms. The thriving cultural life of the city has given rise to many groups that shape its artistic, political, and social circles. Though the influence of such groups waxes and wanes over time, they all help to form the bedrock of the city's character.

Casteless: The Casteless consider the structured social order of Highhelm a backward remnant of a bygone age. While the caste system of Highhelm does provide some flexibility for its members, the Casteless contend that work roles and privileges ought to be entirely divorced from clan and kin. The group advocates for meritocratic reforms within the city, including establishing an examination system to qualify candidates for public employment.

Delvers: Highhelm has looked upward and outward since its founding, but it's still connected to its subterranean origins. The Delvers are a loose network of citizens from all walks of life who share an amateur interest in the city's extensive cave networks, reveling in the mysteries of the Depths and other deep places in and around Highhelm. They meet on a monthly basis at their clubhouse in Stonebreach, but city leaders also call upon the organization to find or rescue wayward citizens who wander too far into unexplored territory or stumble into the Darklands.

Shieldsworn: Mostly composed of smiths and engineers, the Shieldsworn society concerns themselves with monitoring progress on the construction of Torag's Shield. Typical activities of the group involve drawing up blueprints for alternative wall designs, testing the various ores and alloys that make up the construction for strength, and generally pestering the workers in charge of planning and constructing the fortification. Though the Shieldsworn have the best of intentions, they've been strongly encouraged to keep a distance from active work areas after some near misses resulted in minor injuries. At least three Shieldsworn typically watch construction from under a pavilion within eye- and ear-shot of the wall whenever work is being done, and the trio sends updates to other members via *animal messenger*. Most consider the group a harmless nuisance, though its leader, **Trebla Stonecarl** (NG female civil engineer), is well connected enough that she has the ear of the king, and the Shieldsworn have successfully lobbied for some changes to the titanic wall's design.

Winding Path: While many associate dwarven culture with a dedicated—some would say backward—respect for tradition, the followers of Highhelm's Winding Path contend that convention, tradition, and routine need to be actively opposed to combat boredom and cultural stagnation. Adherents of the Winding Path dedicate their lives and livelihoods to innovation, searching

for novel ways to make art, complete crafts, and form social bonds. Some go so far as to take different routes to work or the markets each day. The Winding Path sponsors the Spectacle of Whimsy each year to spread their philosophy across the city and encourage their fellow citizens to take a break from the expected.

TRADITIONS

The established customs and behavioral norms of Highhelm help the city's diverse array of residents maintain general peace and productivity in the tight-knit confines of their mountain home. With thousands of years of inhabited history under Highhelm's cavern roof, the origins of many traditions have been lost to time, but some customs are the product of more recent immigration, or of the mixing of newcomers' ideas with the existent dwarven culture.

Consumer Culture: The thriving marketplaces of Highhelm are some of the liveliest parts of the city, and visitors or residents can find most anything on offer, even if they have to travel to a different level or neighborhood for specific favorites. It's not unusual to see residents of King's Crown in the Depths picking up skin treatments or fine paintings. Even the wealthy and high caste in Highhelm generally prefer to do their own shopping, as citizens of the city pride themselves on having a discerning eye for quality. A trip to the market is also a fine excuse for gossiping with the neighbors or gauging the mood inside the city.

At market stalls and in artisan's shops, it's usual for buyers and sellers to engage in some lively haggling before settling on a price. The handcrafted nature of most manufactured goods in the city likely gave rise to this practice and certainly perpetuates it. Artisans are happy to relate how the material quality, crafting process, and unique nature of an item contributes to its price, while buyers tend to compare products to previous purchases or the offerings of competitors. To quickly agree to an offering price on an item without bargaining is quite rude, as it implies to a seller that the quality of the goods are so low that they are not worth discussing.

Etiquette: Highhelm residents have a respect for hierarchy, whether in the government administration, a merchant's guild, or an organized crime syndicate. Going through the appropriate channels for a concern ensures that appropriate experts handle problems and that the valuable time of more senior officials isn't wasted. Going over someone's head or asking to speak to a supervisor is extremely bad form. This plays out in career advancement as well. Even very talented artisans are expected to learn the ropes at the lowest levels of a guild, for instance. While a high-ranking patron might speed along that experience, such tactics breed malcontent within the organization.

A custom of Highhelm that may seem rude to outsiders is the tendency of arranged meetings to start late and the willingness of guests to wait relatively long periods to be seen by their hosts. This custom is likely derived from the imprecise measurement of time in the city's lower levels, though the high proportion of artisans in the city also plays a part. When working with hot metal or delicate instruments, some tasks simply cannot be interrupted, so even scheduled meetings have to wait on the vagaries of the forge and workshop. Residents carry books or small handicrafts to fill any downtime, and meetings are often arranged at taverns or social clubs so that attendees can pass the time in good company while waiting.

Festivals: Celebrations such as Founders' Day and Taargick's Honor have been observed in Highhelm for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, but the bustling city is home to new and evolving celebrations as well. The Family Festival, established by the clerics of Torag and his divine relations, has transitioned from a strictly religious observance to a time for residents to give small gifts to their family members, both blood relations and families of choice. The annual Deep Cut Festival brings many tourists to the Depths for its exciting displays. The city's gnomish residents particularly appreciate the Spectacle of

(Cont'd)

Blacknoon: The time at noon where the sun is directly over King's Crown and no sunlight comes into the district. It can also refer to an unspecified time that is considered unimportant. Many dwarves promise to get something done at "blacknoon" when they have no intent or hurry to do so.

Empty Sheathed: A derogatory term referring to someone who is unequipped for the job at hand. Among dwarves, it also implies that the target is lacking in honor, hinting that they have lost their clan dagger, and is considered particularly offensive.

Quality: This catch-all term popular among younger residents describes people, events, items, or ideas that the speaker finds interesting and worthwhile. One might have a quality friend, or a quality day, or a new pair of bracers may be "extremely quality."

Toilday Work: Labor that is uninteresting, menial, or simply a waste of time is Toilday work.

GLORY RIBBONS

With the high population of Holtaksen dwarves in Highhelm, it's unsurprising to see many residents sporting glory ribbons, bright strips of cloth typically pinned to darker clothing or tied to the end of a beard. Observant visitors might notice that glory ribbons in Highhelm have evolved to become visual representations of their wearers' accomplishments. A ribbon might sport embroidery commemorating the birth of a child, a patch awarded for valor displayed in an important battle, or a bit of fringe added on gaining a significant guild rank.

More shocking to traditionalists is the spread of the custom to non-dwarves. In Highhelm, families of many different ancestries have adopted family colors or developed special patterns for their glory ribbons and are just as likely as their dwarven neighbors to incorporate strands from the ribbons of lost colleagues and friends into their own outfits as a remembrance.

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RELIGION

While the role of religion is an important one in most settlements in Golarion, it's particularly important in Highhelm. The exact statistics are unknown, but census reports suggest that 98% of Highhelm's population is faithful to some degree. The most common faith is that of the dwarven pantheon. Torag and the rest of his family are central to life in Highhelm, with each of the gods finding prayers among the citizens. While most who follow the pantheon respect the entire host, the typical citizen centers only one or two of the gods as the main focus of their faith. For example, a local guard might say more prayers to Angradd or Trudd, whereas a diplomat would focus more on Grundinnar's and Kols's teachings.

This focus on the dwarven pantheon extends even to non-dwarves. Many of the city's non-dwarven residents acknowledge and respect the dwarven pantheon, though most keep other gods as their primary faith, supplementing their worship with prayers to dwarven gods as needed.

While temples and shrines to these other gods are few and far between in Highhelm, the Hollow Temple in King's Heart is open as a space for worship for most any other faith that needs it.

Beyond the worship of the dwarven pantheon, worship to Abadar, Cayden Cailean, Erastil, and Pharasma are most common in the city.

Whimsy, a day-long parade that winds its way up from Stonebreach to King's Crown with stops to perform songs and skits at almost every crossroads.

RIVETHUN

While nowhere near as large as the following of the dwarven pantheon, the worship of spirits and ancestors is still strong among the people of Highhelm and the greater Five Kings Mountains. Various groups and orders have existed throughout the duration of dwarven history, but none has endured as long as the Rivethun. Deriving their name from an exceptionally ancient dwarven dialect, Rivethun roughly translates to "releasers of secrets," a name that speaks to the organization's ancient traditions of animism.

The members of the Rivethun, which include non-dwarves, seek to make contact with various spirits. These range from the souls of the dead and undead to elementals and fey, and to other spirits that exist beyond the typical classifications. Rivethun members communicate with these spirits, negotiating for knowledge, guidance, and favors. Serving as intermediaries, a Rivethun priest or shaman acts as a living link between dwarven civilization and the supernatural forces of reality.

Rivethun members live spiritually attuned lives as archivists, diplomats, entrepreneurs, exorcists, guides, and mentors, serving their communities and maintaining strong connections to spirits without becoming outright sycophants of a spiritual nature. The people of Highhelm typically call upon members of the Rivethun to commune with ancestors during important life moments, such as a marriage or the upcoming birth of a child. These people usually seek a spirit's favor and blessing for these life events. Rivethun members typically have the ability to provide some kind of response from the spirit or spirits, though it's not always a welcome or positive message.

According to the Rivethun, anyone can contact the spirits this way, but their initiates undergo specific processes to open themselves up more to the spirits. Many of the Rivethun's most capable members have dealt with major difficulties or chronic troubles throughout their lives. They draw upon these experiences, focusing on their memories, emotions, pain, and growth during these times to open their minds and souls to the spiritual. With these techniques, Rivethun members can cultivate their spiritual attunement, developing the capacity to cast magic, draw upon qi, unlock psychic abilities, tap into their instincts, or other skills in addition to their ability to communicate with spirits.

Not all Rivethun members rely on trauma and past difficulties for their skills. Some instead learn meditative practices that draw on other emotions and experiences to aid with their work. However, since many of the original Rivethun teachings focused on working through and with life's natural struggles, it sometimes takes these other members longer to reach the same capabilities as their companions.

Thanks to their general experience with personal troubles, members of the Rivethun also serve as counselors and mentors for many people in Highhelm. While Rivethun members can't directly relate with every person's specific issues, the group has developed a number of techniques, teachings, and support methods over its long history. Over the ages, the Rivethun has encountered many variations of life's hardships, most of which are chronicled in some capacity, allowing the lessons of the past to continue helping those in the present.

Of particular note are the various recipes, rituals, formulas, and support techniques the Rivethun have to facilitate gender transition. While the general dwarven population accepts transition and will support friends and family members who pursue it, the process can sometimes be a mysterious or even lonely one. Those seeking to transition, even those with strong support networks, often consult with Rivethun members, many of whom either transitioned in the past or explored their personal understanding of their

gender as a part of their personal journeys. These same members often draw on their transition experience as a way to attune themselves to spirits.

To many, the Rivethun appears to be a religion, but the group isn't as formally organized as most faiths, especially those found in Highhelm. Rivethun follows a loose hierarchy of spirits and spiritual entities, which culminates with the dwarven pantheon at the top and Torag respected not as a god but as the most powerful and influential spirit in dwarven culture. The group still maintains temples, shrines, and places of worship or meditation like most religions, but they rarely hold organized sermons or large group instruction. Instead, a Rivethun temple is more akin to an academy or library, serving the community as a place of learning and individual focus, with guidance available for those who seek it.

Within Highhelm, one Rivethun temple is the Smoldering Court, a monastery and nexus of spiritual activity in King's Heart. The court is open to anyone, regardless of their need, and the monastery's leader, **Nenakari Ougor** (LN female dwarf shaman), always seems to inherently know a visitor's plights with a single look. Beyond the city, the Rivethun maintains The Court of One Thousand in the northern city of Larrad. Named for the thousand spirits of ancient Rivethun members who supposedly remain to act as guides, the Court of One Thousand serves as the official headquarters for the Rivethun. **High Seeker Polbar Trueye** (LN agender dwarf spirit caller) maintains strong communications between the headquarters and Smoldering Court, as they see the state of Highhelm in dire need of greater guidance.

Rivethun members seek to maintain a balance between the world of spirits and the world of mortals, which sometimes leads to clashes between the group and others. Most notably, members have spoken against the Torag's Shield project that's taken over most of the city's focus. The group isn't against developing new defensive techniques, but they are concerned with the process, as the constant construction and development projects disrupt the resting places of many spirits. Rivethun members have repeatedly petitioned High King Borogrim for a chance to appease disturbed spirits or to be allowed to relocate them before they're suddenly disrupted. This petition process is slow, and the various projects typically move ahead before Rivethun members can do anything about it. Growing frustrations among Rivethun members has started harming the group's relationship with the city. Some Rivethun members have taken matters into their own hands, interfering with projects or even outright standing in the way of new developments in order to buy time to speak with spirits. The workers of the city are starting to see these actions as intentional sabotage, and some have even started calls to label Rivethun as a traitorous organization.

Additionally, Rivethun members in the city report a greater abundance of spirits in recent years. While most see this as an opportunity for greater connections, there are also some difficulties with the development. Some of these spirits seem to be ancient, from times before Highhelm's founding. Rivethun records describe these spirits as originating from times before the Quest for Sky, and many are particularly powerful and influential. The spirits speak of ancient accords and forgotten promises that many contemporary Rivethun members are having difficulty finding records of or understanding, leading to upset or even angry spirits. Appeasing these spirits has taken more and more time from the Rivethun, and even some of its most experienced members find they have trouble communicating with some of the more restless spirits. Nenakari believes that these spirits might have been ones that dwarven culture "lost" connection with during the Quest for Sky and are only now returning. She sees a great opportunity for both the Rivethun and her culture as a whole, but the process of both sides re-familiarizing themselves will be a difficult one.

PASTIMES

Tactical board games like imperial conquest and drouge have long been popular in the Five Kings Mountains. Contenders generally play in local taverns, though some homes have boards set outside so neighbors can make a move even on their way to or from their trade. Even neighbors who work on different schedules can maintain long-running games. When it comes to more physical leisure pursuits, the most popular is the game of prismati, which Highhelm residents have modified to play in a way unique to the city. While the typical game of prismati involves throwing colored stones or balls into matching areas marked by scarves or paint, in Highhelm, most prismati courts are in King's Crown, where target areas are marked by activating colored lens that focus light from outside the mountain onto the play area.



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THE CLANS

MINOR CLANS

Numerous minor clans populate Highhelm. These are smaller and more specialized, and the majority of them are Ironhilt and Steelhilt clans. Some examples include the following.

Clan Ertubur (Steelhilt): This clan specializes in mortuary services, including everything from autopsies to providing ceremonial garments and paraphernalia for the funeral. Their clan hall includes a memorial hall for dwarves whose faiths are not represented in Highhelm, or who prefer secular services.

Clan Felltree (Ironhilt): One of the rare clans to have an above-ground clan hall is Clan Felltree, which maintains timber farms on the Five Kings Mountains.
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Dwarves are a people of tradition—some of which span entire millennia of adherence. Their oldest tradition is that of the dwarven clan, a system so ancient that it predates even the earliest dwarven records.

HIGHHELM CASTES

Caste is seldom discussed openly in Highhelm, but though the dwarven kingdom might be less overtly stratified than Chelaxian or Taldan society, in practice its rules are no less rigid. Highhelm's culture holds that every dwarf contributes to the whole and none should be devalued. From the miner swinging a pick to the master smith sweating over a forge, each performs a crucial task, and society needs them all.

This ideal is not, however, precisely egalitarian. Though the miner and the smith are both honored for their contributions, in the prevailing view of society, the smith's work is considered nobler. By Torag's gifts and the smith's skilled hand, the raw materials of the earth are transformed into something artistic, useful, and uniquely dwarven. Skill, and art, define a dwarf as high class.

The clans of Highhelm are stratified into three castes: Goldhilt, Steelhilt, and Ironhilt. These loosely correspond to their clan halls' locations in the mountain, as well as their wealth and social standing. A dwarf's caste status is determined by their clan affiliation, and the hilt of that dwarf's clan dagger is typically forged from the metal representing their caste.

Goldhilt clans consider themselves the guardians of dwarven history and culture. Most of Highhelm's prestigious offices are occupied by Goldhilt dwarves. These include religion, law, the "Forgeheart crafts" such as smithing and stonemasonry, and the upper echelons of the military. Guild masters, high priests, and judges almost always hail from Goldhilt families.

Steelhilt clans constitute the respectable backbone of Highhelm society. Their occupations tend to be less rarefied, but more lucrative. Commerce, alchemy, military offices, and the "worthy crafts" such as tailoring and goldsmithing are dominated by the middle clans, although there is considerable overlap between the lower Goldhilt tiers and the upper Steelhilt tiers in these trades. Ironhilt clans handle most of the work that is deemed unclean, unpleasant, or merely "un-dwarven." Muleteers, tanners, diggers, grindlegrub pit workers, farmers, and manual laborers generally hail from Ironhilt clans. Their work is arduous, and often dangerous, but that in itself creates a source of pride. Ironhilters like to boast that they're the ones called in to do the tough jobs that would probably kill the "soft-hands" from Goldhilt clans.

Indeed, this truth is widely recognized in Highhelm, and a worker from the low clans can expect to be treated courteously by the king himself. This is not mere lip service; all dwarves respect the contributions that their fellows make to Highhelm, and all are genuinely valued.

It is possible, but uncommon, for a dwarf to change caste. Dwarves place great importance on family ties, and rising in caste almost always means forsaking one's old ties and moving into a new family. Dwarves who have been expelled from their clans have no caste. They are shunned as an embarrassment to their people, and their names are struck from the clan books.

DWARF CLANS

More than any other single factor, clan determines one's place in Highhelm. Clan

GOLDHILT DWARF

decides everything from a dwarf's caste status to their childhood home, romantic prospects, and vocation. While it is certainly possible for a dwarf to push against these pressures, it is also unusual. Most dwarves are content to follow the path laid out by their clans, knowing that it leads to an honorable and fulfilling life.

Each clan typically encompasses 50 to 500 families, with anywhere from 450 to over 3,000 dwarves. Every family line in a clan can trace its ancestry to the clan's founder, and most dwarves follow their founder's trade or an associated discipline, since they have been exposed to these arts from birth and can tap into centuries of family traditions and learning as they grow.

Individual dwarves may be adopted into a new clan, usually of higher status, to honor extraordinary achievements in that clan founder's field or as a reward for great acts on behalf of the clan. This honor may also be extended to non-dwarven outsiders, in which case it is one of the highest distinctions that a foreigner can receive in Highhelm.

Marriage is the other primary means by which dwarves move from one clan to another. If both clans are of similar status, a marriage contract is simple and straightforward. If one partner is of a higher-ranked clan, then the lower-ranked partner is expected to provide a marriage gift commensurate with the difference in clan status. When the status differences are substantial, a marriage can become prohibitively expensive, driving some dwarves to the adventuring life in hopes of financing a dowry.

Each member of a clan carries a clan dagger to signify their affiliation. The dagger is crafted according to clan tradition, bears that clan's sigil, and is set with a gemstone of the clan's distinct cut and color, which is determined at the time of the clan's founding and must always match that held by the clan founder's statue. Some clans reclaim dead ancestors' gems for new daggers, particularly if their gem has become difficult to obtain over the centuries. Others insist that each dwarf must have a newly cut stone. The dagger, in either case, is always unique to the dwarf.

When a pregnancy is announced, the forging of a new clan dagger begins, although it is never set with its gem until after the child is born, as that would invite bad luck. When a dwarf joins a new clan through marriage or adoption, they do not receive a new dagger, but the gem in their old dagger is removed and replaced with a gem from the new clan.

In either case, the dagger's gem is set in a ceremony known as the Welcoming. For most dwarves, this ceremony occurs ten days after birth, when the infant is presented to the clan founder's statue and given a ritual benediction by the oldest living clan member. At its conclusion, a spark ignites in the clan dagger's gem, signifying the clan founder's recognition of the infant as a descendant.

This light remains in the gem for as long as the dwarf remains in the clan. Dwarves who leave voluntarily go through a ceremony known as the Farewell, when their old gem is removed from the dagger, and its spark of magic is drawn back to the clan founder's statue. It's not unheard of for dwarves to suddenly renounce an adoption, or even a marriage, midway through the Farewell, so emotional is the moment.

Dwarves who are involuntarily expelled have their clan daggers confiscated and the magic removed in a ceremony of banishment. This is a terrible, traumatic experience for both the exile and the family forced to publicly renounce their outcast kin.

When a dwarf dies, a memorial ceremony is held with the fallen dwarf's dagger, and a brief light blossoms in the dimmed gem before departing to rejoin the spirits of the clan. The dwarves of Highhelm will go to great lengths to recover lost clan daggers, even prioritizing daggers over the bodies of their slain kin, for it is believed that a spirit bereft of its Farewell cannot enter its clan hall in the afterlife.

Non-dwarves who are offered honorary adoption into a clan typically receive clan daggers with ornamental, non-magical gems. They do not participate in the Welcoming or the Farewell except in the rarest of cases.

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The members of Clan Felltree have tended these stands for centuries, painstakingly nurturing the health of the soil. Each time a new clanleader is named, an heirloom tree is planted to commemorate that clanleader's reign, and Clan Felltree considers it a point of great pride that all of their clan-trees remain robust despite their tremendous age.

Clan Lasthall (Ironhilt): Refugees, dwarves who grew up far from their ancestral homelands, and those who have forsworn abominable clans comprise the members of Clan Lasthall, the adoptive clan for dwarves who have no other clan to call their own. Founded by dwarves who fled Droskar's Kingdom, Clan Lasthall has welcomed other strays and seekers ever since.

Clan Pearlcask (Steelhilt): Water purification and mollusk aquaculture fall under the purview of Clan Pearlcask. Alongside running a complex filtration system, the clan farms a variety of freshwater mollusks, including oysters that provide food, shells used for ornamentation and building materials, and beautiful pearls. Clan Pearlcask's members practice every trade related to this chain, from waterway engineering to gem cutting.

THE CLANLESS

Though rare, clanless dwarves do exist. Dwarves born to exiles or other clanless dwarves don't receive a clan dagger at the time of their birth, but could receive one later. A clanless dwarf can always petition any other clan for a stock dagger without any identifying insignia or gem, though clans typically refuse petitions from a banished dwarf. Clanless dwarves can attempt to join a clan through the typical means, such as marriage or by earning a place with its people.

Some dwarves choose to be intentionally clanless. While they are generally seen as strange or even as pariahs, other dwarves never question a reason for leaving a clan, understanding there could be circumstances that are better left unknown, lest they bring further problems for the dwarf or clan.

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HIGHHELM CLANS

Highhelm is home to many distinguished dwarven clans. Some of the oldest and most influential clans are noted here, but this is not an exhaustive list.



CLAN ARINGELD

Gem: Emerald-cut emerald, often ringed by high-value coins from foreign lands.

Size: 2,400 dwarves across 134 families

Over the past 150 years, the ambitious Clan Aringeld has carefully built up its prestige and shepherded its most talented members into position to make a bid to rise from its current Steelhilt designation into the ranks of the Goldhilt clans. Many of its members serve in the Roadwardens' Union, while others lead trade expeditions to far-flung lands. The clan's leaders have parlayed their merchant connections and experience into influential roles as negotiators, envoys, translators, and spies abroad.

Clan Aringeld's members dress expensively but not ostentatiously, showing their money through luxurious fabrics and fine tailoring rather than gaudiness. By clan tradition, whenever a dwarf strikes a favorable deal in or with a foreign nation, they're entitled to weave a coin from that nation into their hair or beard, and senior Aringeld dwarves jangle with proof of the wealth they've earned.

Today, Aringeld is one of the richest clans in Highhelm, and Clanleader Henthe Aringeld (page 38) is preparing a bid to formally elevate her clan. To this end, Clan Aringeld eagerly finances expeditions that promise to deliver more gold to its coffers, or, better yet, cultural and historical treasures to its clan hall.

Clanleader Henthe recently obtained a promising lead concerning a cache of sacred Toragdan relics uncovered in orcish territory near Urgir. The orcs, seeing little value in these dull-looking tablets, sold them cheaply to a visiting merchant, who alerted Clan Aringeld of his intent to resell them at a high markup. However, the merchant was slain by unknown parties before leaving Belkzen. A second group in his caravan found the wreckage of the attack, but not the lost treasure.

Clan Aringeld has obtained the bill of lading and a crude map depicting the location of the wreckage, but cannot openly send a party of dwarves into Belkzen without arousing suspicion and, at best, encouraging the orcs to set a new, vastly higher price on the artifacts. At worst, the presence of an armed dwarven expedition might be taken as a military provocation.

Therefore, Clanleader Henthe is looking for intermediaries who might be able to venture into Belkzen on some other pretext to retrieve the religious relics. However, she must be able to trust their discretion, as Clan Aringeld needs to keep its effort a secret not only from the orcs, but from other dwarven clans who might try to steal their glory.



CLAN BREAKIRON

Gem: Teardrop-shaped cabochon of rippled black and silver psilomelane, set point down.

Size: 980 dwarves across 63 families

The alchemists, inventors, and scientists of Clan Breakiron have been instrumental in many of Highhelm's key discoveries, from oxygen-generating breatherwalls to the secrets of keep stone. This Steelhilt clan focuses on applying arcane learning to practical concerns, and they have produced notable innovators in metallurgy, engineering, and public health improvements unique to the dwarven way of life.

Clan Breakiron's members typically wear durable clothes accompanied by protective gear ranging from tough leather aprons to helmeted blast coats. They carry sample cases to collect specimens as they travel, along with a panoply of acids and testing reagents geared toward each dwarf's specialties, and rare is the Breakiron dwarf who leaves home without a sketchbook or notepad for jotting down quick ideas.

Breakiron's main clan hall is located in King's Heart, but they also maintain numerous smaller facilities and workshops placed wherever local phenomena warrant research attention. These smaller locations are generally open to other dwarves, as the clan recognizes that fresh eyes and ideas can lead to new innovations as well. However, any work done in such facilities is under the supervision of clan members and all breakthroughs are officially credited to the clan, though the contributor is appropriately acknowledged and compensated.

The pressure for Clan Breakiron's senior researchers to continually produce new innovations, and for junior members to invent their own creations, is significant. Clanleader Gondan Breakiron (page 38) acknowledges the drawbacks of this pressure but believes it is ultimately beneficial, as it has spurred many of Breakiron's greatest breakthroughs and drawn many gifted and ambitious low-born dwarves to their clan. From their perspective, concerned primarily with the collective fortunes of Clan Breakiron, the trade-offs are worthwhile.

For individual researchers, the picture can be murkier. **Torgad Breakiron** (LN male dwarf sage), an esteemed senior researcher in breatherwalls, has struggled to preserve his reputation against whispers that his latest invention may be insidiously harmful. A new variety of lichen, which should generate three times as much oxygen as the current standard, may also be exhaling a hallucinatory gas. Miners and drivers in the deep tunnels have reported alarming visions and phantom voices. Torgad insists that his breatherwalls can't be to blame, but the evidence is mounting, and he's become desperate to find an alternative explanation for these incidents.



CLAN FIRECASK

Gem: Amber, citrine, or topaz in golden-brown hues, chosen to match the dwarf's preferred brew and engraved with a sheaf of wheat encircled by hops vines.

Size: 620 dwarves across 48 families

Brewing and distilling are the specialties of Clan Firecask, a Goldhilt clan that maintains a comfortable, pub-like clan hall in King's Crown and a network of smaller breweries and tasting rooms throughout Highhelm. Clanleader Perhill Firecask (page 38), a talkative and well-liked whiskey master with a deep knowledge of all her clan's cellars, oversees the brewing, aging, and distribution of Clan Firecask's products throughout the region.

Firecask dwarves usually style their beards without mustaches to avoid staining from continual drinking, although a vocal minority is proud of its stained mustaches and claims the extra facial hair helps with drawing out the aromas of a fine brew. Their clan gems are designed to easily slide out of the daggers so that they can be dropped into a sample glass and used to test the quality of a signature brew: when it is correct, the gem should vanish into the drink.

Although it is a small clan, and not as influential in Highhelm's politics as most of its fellow Goldhilts, Clan Firecask is prosperous, respected, and well established. Its members enjoy the ease and assurance that comes of being confident in their craft, and appreciated throughout the Five Kings Mountains. For the most part, Firecask dwarves are well content with their lives, and free from ambitions beyond devising new brews, sampling others' efforts, and perfecting their ancestors' creations.

Nevertheless, even Clan Firecask must deal with occasional nuisances and disruptions. Their craft depends on consistent supplies of grain, hops, and rarer ingredients without which they can't make some of their signature products. These can be difficult to procure when bandits block the mountain passes or monsters prey on trade roads. Once the ingredients reach Highhelm, other problems arise. Giant centipedes persistently find ways into the Firecask storage vaults, ruining entire shipments of grain and threatening workers, and thieves are not unknown even among the dwarves.

External thieves, however, are worse. Unscrupulous merchants try to steal secret recipes and pieces of brewing machinery, sometimes even going so far as to try bribing or kidnapping apprentice brewers to obtain the clan's secrets.

All these problems require constant vigilance, and Clanleader Perhill is always looking for reliable agents who can help her ferret out troublemakers and deal with them efficiently. In part because of this, and in part because so much of Clan Firecask's business is conducted with outsiders, this clan is one of the most approachable and welcoming to foreigners, and particularly to non-dwarves.



CLAN GELDERON

Gem: Round turquoise cabochon, set in a bronze bezel engraved with the individual family's primary crop.

Size: 3,100 dwarves across 232 families

Most of Highhelm's food comes from Clan Gelderon, an Ironhilt clan dedicated to farming both above and below ground. Although it is considered a "low clan," Clan Gelderon's large size, extensive reach, and essential responsibilities make it one of the most influential. Clanleader Thealla Gelderon (page 39) knows this, and exercises her power discreetly but actively to ensure that her people receive fair pay, decent working conditions, and the respect that they are due.

It is Clan Gelderon's hardy shepherds who watch over the dwarves' gnarl-horned herds of mountain sheep, their expert fish tenders who maintain the vast dark pools in which brown-striped halefish and giant white cave shrimp swim. They grow carrots, pea vines, potatoes, and beets, and cultivate dense thickets of mushrooms, from stout cannonball tammurghs to cloudlike lady's breath. Clan Gelderon is even responsible for Highhelm's grindlegrub pits, the unglamorous but critical living infrastructure on which the rest of dwarven society depends.

Gelderon dwarves usually wear plain, practical clothes, often paired with high boots and mud-caked waders. Their primary decoration consists of bronze buttons and studs, which tarnish to blue-green over time. Fully blued buttons indicate experience and warrant respect, while shiny new buttons are the mark of a novice. Younger dwarves are often called "bright-buttons," a mild insult similar to "greenhorn" or "rookie."

Because of their closeness to the natural world, Clan Gelderon's farmers are often the first to notice signs of disturbances that might presage coming threats. They know when invading enemies and monsters raid their fields and flocks for food, and they can sense malign magic or the withering presence of undead by a foulness in the water, or the blights that creep through their crops. The rest of Highhelm has learned to respect warnings delivered by Clan Gelderon's many eyes and ears.

Some clan members have carved out other niches. **Belgor Gelderon** (NE male dwarf commoner) tends a large grindlegrub pit in Stonebreach, where he occasionally accepts payments from local gangs in exchange for ignoring what's in some of the loads that get dumped into the pit.

Lately, however, Belgor's been growing uneasy about this arrangement. Upon peeking into one of the sacks, he was astonished to see an emaciated halfling's corpse, with strange, green-edged burn marks all along the forearms. Other bags proved to contain more corpses, always gaunt, always non-dwarven, and always bearing those eerie green-edged burns. Now near panic, Belgor is debating whether to say something to the city guard, but he isn't sure how to tip them off without incriminating himself.

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CLAN GRIMMARK

Gem: Square brilliant smoky quartz set in eight steel prongs, each sharpened to a spear-like point.

Size: 710 dwarves across 59 families

The dwarves of Clan Grimmark, a small and insular Steelhilt clan, are regarded with wary respect by the rest of Highhelm. While the clan originally focused on stonemasonry and similar work, they have since shifted to using their knowledge to improve the city's defenses and weapons. They are the engineers, technicians, and battle wizards who design and maintain the defensive fortifications that keep Highhelm secure, and develop the devastating new technologies that demolish the enemies outside its gates. Yet Highhelm's gratitude for these gifts is tempered by ambivalence, for Clan Grimmark's creations can be terrible indeed.

Clanleader Grytem Grimmark (page 39) is one of the primary architects of Torag's Shield, and most of his days are spent supervising its construction from the Grimmark clan hall in King's Crown. Unlike most clan halls, Grimmark's is seldom open to anyone outside the clan, unless they're being escorted in to see a new prototype. Otherwise, the clan hall is stringently guarded, lest any of Highhelm's military secrets be accidentally revealed.

Despite the demanding nature of his work, and its frequently unpleasant implications, Clanleader Grytem is a jovial, wispy-haired eccentric, and many of the dwarves in his clan are similarly whimsical. Grimmark seems to attract, and cultivate, curious and intelligent minds that are driven not by fear or sadism, but by an oddly innocent curiosity in discovering what their inventions can do.

This is not to say that Grimmark dwarves are unaware of the nature of their work, or always in agreement about how to pursue it. Three philosophical splits are particularly sharp in the clan. First, there is a dispute as to whether any innovation in war can be too brutal to pursue, and, if so, where that line should be drawn. Second, there is disagreement as to whether the primary objective of Clan Grimmark's designs should be protecting dwarven lives, or destroying Highhelm's enemies. Finally, there are the masons who continue the stone-based work and long for the clan to focus once more on the work of their ancestors.

While many of the clan's inventions fall within time-honored dwarven traditions, and are embraced by Highhelm's military, some of their creations have been shunned. **Urghane Grimmark** (LE female dwarf alchemist) has grown frustrated with the military's repeated rejections of her offerings, such as caustic gases that boil enemies' lungs or explosives filled with tainted shrapnel that infects every wound. Highhelm's generals refuse to countenance such cruel and dishonorable weapons, and Urghane has begun looking for alternative markets. If the dwarves can't see the value in her work, she'll find someone else who will.



CLAN IRONFIST

Gem: Fire opal set in highly polished tungsten.

Size: 1,240 dwarves across 107 families

Among the oldest and most respectable clans in Highhelm is Clan Ironfist, a Steelhilt clan

focused around smelting. Its clan hall stands in King's Crown, and its members tend to be industrious, diligent, and proudly uncomplaining, fierce in fights and loyal in friendship, and often scornful of anyone they perceive as unwilling to work as hard as they do.

Ironfist dwarves can often be spotted by the flecks of slag and scorch marks on their clothing. They coat themselves in a fire-resistant oil that protects them from the heat of their work, but leaves their hair and skin visibly shiny. Other dwarves call them "slicks" because of this distinctive appearance, a name Ironfist dwarves wear with pride.

Clanleader Hannihar Ironfist (page 39) is perhaps the proudest of them all, and guides their clan with fierce integrity and tireless leadership. To the clanleader's shame, however, their family has not always been as upstanding as they themselves are. One of their sons, Thorgrim, was once an honorable champion of Torag, but fell from the Forgeheart's path and, rather than repent for his crimes, embraced bitterness and hatred instead. After being cast out from Highhelm, Thorgrim retreated to the lands around Lake Encarthan, where he claims to be a prince. Clanleader Hannihar refuses to acknowledge the atrocious tales that drift back to Highhelm about Thorgrim's misdeeds, but the rest of the clan would dearly like to see this stain on their name removed.

Most of Clan Ironfist, however, has little time to spend dwelling on problems so far away. They are busy in Highhelm, where their smelting furnaces blast day and night, refining and mixing keep stone for the construction of Torag's Shield.

This project has brought new prosperity to Ironfist, and Hannihar has been mulling over the prospect of making a bid to elevate their clan to Goldhilt status, although they have some misgivings about joining the ranks of the "soft-hands." Mostly, they've been considering the idea to extract concessions out of Clan Aringeld, whose clanleader is preparing her own bid and is worried about competition from Clan Ironfist on that front.

With the clan's most expert smelters dedicated to working on Torag's Shield, only inexperienced crews have been available for other projects. One crew, led by **Padim Coalhammer** (LG male dwarf apprentice), found their abilities outmatched by a recent job. Tasked with reprocessing a load of mysterious scrap from Numeria, Padim's team found their furnaces filled with metallic screams and flashes of sickly blue light. They shut the furnaces down immediately and pulled out what was left of the scrap, but now their furnace screams and emits blue flame every time it's ignited, and Padim is at his wits' end.

CLAN MOLGRADE

Gem: Fiery orange topaz cut into an ornate, double “flower” round brilliant.

Size: 1,650 dwarves across 128 families

Heavily tattooed and announced by the clanging



metal plates woven into their beards and hair, the Goldhilt dwarves of Clan Molgrade are a proud lot. They are, after all, practitioners of Torag’s own art, and they wear the proof of their skill in ornate, codified displays crafted by their own hands.

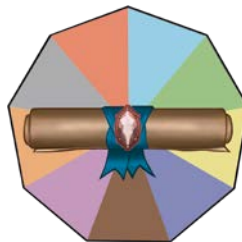
A smith of Clan Molgrade is immediately identifiable by the collection of metal plates threaded into their hair: one for each metal with which that smith has been deemed competent by their clan. These plates, each about an inch and a half in diameter, are feats of astonishing intricacy, for they demonstrate the smith’s personal style and finest handiwork.

Clan smiths tattoo their arms with stylized runic emblems that show off their specialties, as well as accentuating the muscles developed over many hard hours at the forge. For the same reason, Clan Molgrade smiths tend to favor sleeveless garments that permit them to flex their muscles (literally and figuratively); these also minimize any discomfort that conventionally tailored clothing might cause to their asymmetrically developed physiques.

Another tradition of Clan Molgrade is the Book of Locks, which is not an actual book, but a cavernous series of archive rooms containing diagrams, dissected mechanisms, and working examples of the clan’s most cunning locks and traps. Earning a place in the Book of Locks, and clan history, is an aspiration shared by many smiths. Gaining access to the archives, meanwhile, is a sought-after goal for criminals and rival professionals who want to copy or undermine the dwarves’ secrets.

Currently, much of Clan Molgrade is occupied with the construction of Torag’s Shield. This has left them short-handed in supplying Highhelm’s everyday needs, and also in maintaining the lesser fortifications around minor tunnels, many of which need specially smithed parts to remain functional. As there are barely even enough smiths to send out apprentices to evaluate the most urgent needs, Clan Molgrade is in the unusual position of needing to hire outsiders for such work.

As one of the oldest and most storied clans in Highhelm, Clan Molgrade is frequently courted by other clans trying to enlist their support for various projects or political maneuvers. Clanleader Onisha Molgrade (page 39), a venerable white-haired woman who wears a signature plate collar set with dozens of fiery gems, is accustomed to evaluating such requests with a steely eye, and is not an easy dwarf to deceive. However, Clanleader Onisha is a steadfast ally once won, and since she wields tremendous influence over Highhelm’s other clanleaders, her favor can prove invaluable.



CLAN ORIDDUSS

Gem: Marquise-cut morganite in shades ranging from near colorless to deep peach-pink, with more saturated hues indicating greater involvement in mainstream life.

Size: 610 dwarves across 10 families

The small, reclusive Clan Oriddus cultivates an air of pious mystery. Its members style their beards into braided loops strung with metal discs that bear Torag’s religious symbols and scriptural sayings in archaic runes. Many members of this Goldhilt clan wear prayer scrolls pinned to their persons, and draw inspiration from these in times of hardship, or give one as a gift to someone who seems likely to benefit from a well-chosen parable.

On high holy days, clan elders wear ancient masks during their sermons, a carryover from an old tradition little observed elsewhere in Highhelm. These masks, each of which is a centuries-old heirloom, signify that the individual dwarf’s identity is unimportant, but the continuity of the kingdom, and the clan, is all.

From a very young age, scions of Clan Oriddus are steeped in the religious traditions of the dwarven pantheon. They view themselves as keepers of the flame, and see as their duty not to convert newcomers or harangue their fellows into purity, but to protect Highhelm’s collective memory as archivists of the faith. Theirs is an inward-looking perspective, concerned less with others’ behavior and more with preserving tales, traditions, and skills that might otherwise be lost. More than once, Highhelm’s smiths and engineers have found clues to solving novel problems by looking to Clan Oriddus’s memory of ancient solutions.

The Oriddus clan hall is punctuated by hidden air shafts within its walls that curve out into trumpetlike protrusions along the eaves. These hollow shafts are connected to enormous bellows in the clan hall’s interior, enabling the clan’s priests to blow the holy horns and fill Highhelm with their deep, sonorous song. These herald major prayer services and the beginning or end of communal religious observations. On other occasions, the bellows may be filled with fragrant smoke, blowing clouds of purifying incense through Highhelm’s corridors.

Clanleader Geselm Oriddus (page 39) takes little part in Highhelm’s politics or intrigue, preferring to remain aloof from smaller matters and taking a position only for momentous efforts, like Torag’s Shield, that affect the entire kingdom. However, the clan emphasizes small acts of direct service, such as counseling the grief-stricken and feeding the hungry. One wing of the Oriddus clan hall is a temple-hospital where all of Highhelm’s citizens are welcome to seek care, provided by the clan’s clerics and physicians without charge. Free treatment is, however, limited to citizens. All others pay standard fees.

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CLAN RUNEBINDER

Gem: Black opal with strong color flashes, set in platinum.

Size: 1,210 dwarves across 108 families

Though some outsiders stereotype dwarves as having little interest in the arcane, Clan

Runebinder has been dedicated to the mastery of applied magic for centuries. Abjurers, elementalists, and transmuters all have deep traditions in this Goldhilt clan, as do clerics of all approved dwarven faiths and other spellcasters.

The clan hall's stone blocks are mortared with crushed glass, giving it the appearance of being veined with dark rainbows. Its windows are etched with esoteric diagrams and inlaid with colored panes in patterns that cast ornate, shifting shadows when lit from either side. Some of these serve protective purposes, while others are meditation aids or hold minor divinations that allow the clan members to glean information about the identity and purposes of those who come to their halls.

Magic users affiliated with Clan Runebinder favor layers of rich fabrics, often decorated with fur or metallic embroidery. Runic stones, spell pouches, scroll cases, and talismans are common accessories. One of their distinctive traditions is throat-singing their spells, and members often carry amplifying horns.

Clan Runebinder is best known for its enormous libraries devoted to dwarven magic, and for its members' energetic efforts to fortify Highhelm's defenses with wards and battle spells as lovingly crafted as the steel and stone they bolster. Runebinder wizards can also be found in the deep tunnels and on surface patrols, accompanying Highhelm's troops and rangers on the front lines. Some even join the Guild of Axe and Coin, although this is usually a youthful lark, and most give up mercenary life after a decade or two.

Recently, mishaps have plagued Clan Runebinder. Most of these are no more serious than a junior wizard accidentally turning beer to bile, but some miscalculations are deadlier. Faulty golems have run amok in the deep tunnels, wards have backfired and drawn swarms of giant spiders instead of repelling them, and pocket planar vaults have accidentally teleported their contents to random locations in the Darklands. To reduce gossip, the clan sometimes seeks outside help to deal with these embarrassing incidents if they can't resolve the problem themselves.

Clanleader Trigelde Runebinder (page 40) pretends to be an absent-minded eccentric, with her robes smudged in chalk dust and bits of spell components stuck in her graying red hair, but she is actually a savvy leader. She maintains close alliances with the other clans, particularly Grimmark, Molgrade, and Oriddus. To improve her clan's access to foreign materials and spellbooks, she's allowed Clanleader Henthe Aringeld to court her support, although in private Clanleader Trigelde harbors doubts about whether Clan Aringeld should really be elevated to Goldhilt status.



CLAN STONEFIST

Gem: Red garnet cut in a blunted triangle, set with the point facing up.

Size: 2,800 dwarves across 460 families

Clan Stonefist, ranked among the Steelhilt clans, is a large,

prominent, and powerful group. The great majority of its members are involved in Highhelm's armed forces, either as part of the royal military or as mercenaries. From the Lords General to the rawest recruit in the infantry, the ranks of Highhelm's troops are filled out with staunch soldiers from Clan Stonefist.

Clan garb is designed to withstand a beating in all conditions. Lower-ranking members wear tough leather reinforced with metal studding while higher-ranking members wear the finest plate mail that Highhelm has forged. Battle-earned gouges that don't compromise the armor's integrity are left in the metal as proof of the fights that its bearer has won. Scratches left by trivial foes may be buffed out, however, and this is a major insult, for it signifies that the enemy was so pathetic that the victory isn't even worth remembering.

The dwarves of Clan Stonefist braid their beards and hair in tightly woven patterns, covering these with helms to prevent enemies from grabbing them in a fight. These braids are also coiled over scars and burns, permitting Stonefist dwarves to maintain the illusion of a full beard or scalp despite bald patches created by their wounds.

From birth, Stonefist dwarves are subjected to a regimen of exposure, exercise, and diet meant to toughen them for battle. Their clan hall, located primarily in King's Heart but with paths that extend to Stonebreach, holds a vast training complex that includes tunnels that can be heated, flooded, or filled with smoke; arenas with roughened walls for climbing and muddy floors to suck at combatants' feet; and enchanted items that summon illusory opponents. They work closely with Clans Grimmark, Molgrade, and Runebinder to invent new hazards and equipment to heighten their training. As personal and professional lives tend to be intertwined among the dwarves, friendships and marriages between these clans are common.

Stonefist dwarves are always looking for new challenges to test their skills, and the clan hall's sparring grounds are open to those who can offer worthy bouts. Clanleader Usturr Stonefist (page 40) is also willing to extend honorary clan membership to non-dwarves who distinguish themselves heroically, for he understands the value of a staunch ally. Some clan members, however, have been unwilling to relinquish old grudges and welcome new warriors, and tensions are high between one Stonefist family and the trio of half-orcs Usturr recently welcomed to the hall. Prominent local figures in both the orc and dwarf communities are looking for ways to promote reconciliation so everyone can heal old wounds and move forward together.



CLAN TOLORR

Gem: Oval diamond in a variety of colors, with white diamonds the most common and blue or pink diamonds reserved for clan elders.

Size: 1,080 dwarves across 102 families

The Goldhilt Clan Tolorr considers itself the living repository of Highhelm's history, a tradition that stretches back thousands of years. Their clan hall in King's Heart was built during the kingdom's founding, and its archives extend back to the Quest for Sky—possibly even earlier. From childhood, the dwarves of Clan Tolorr memorize oral sagas, learn archaic scripts, and study techniques for restoring and preserving ancient manuscripts.

Yet not all is dusty reverence for bygone days. Clan Tolorr also holds that history must be relevant to the living, and its members find many ways to teach Highhelm's ordinary citizens about the grandeur and tragedies of their past. Clan Tolorr holds lavish puppet shows, ceremonial dances, martial demonstrations, and fascinating public displays of centuries-old sculpture, smith work, and battle machinery—all of which have been carefully preserved or, in some cases, replicated for demonstration purposes. The clan also holds large festivals that recreate events from dwarven past, such as famous battles, foundings of clans, or religious ceremonies.

Vurhyr Gruffstein (NG female dwarf scholar) is a popular author who made her name retelling remarkable, little-known stories from Highhelm's past. She's now considered one of Highhelm's cultural treasures, and her works have earned a wide readership abroad. Not everyone is enamored with the way Vurhyr's stories portray their ancestors, however, and rumor has it that an embittered descendant of one of her tales' main villains, the outcast Kraghe (once of Clan Stonefist, but stripped of that name after being convicted of wartime atrocities), has put a price on her head. The identity and whereabouts of this descendant are unknown, but Vurhyr has received threatening letters and a parcel of poisoned grundlegrubs on her doorstep. In public, she laughs this off, but in private, she's beginning to get worried enough to consider hiring an investigator to track down the person behind these threats.

Vurhyr's success has also had the side effect of pushing Clanleader Arghan Tolorr (page 40) toward mounting an expedition to recover the lost Stone of the Fifth King, a semi-mythical tablet engraved with familial lines of descent from the last king of Taggoret. One of Vurhyr's bestselling books was about the forgotten history of this artifact, and now the public is calling for its reclamation. Supposedly, the Stone of the Fifth King reveals the names of two children who survived Taggoret's fall and were smuggled out under false names by a loyal retainer. This revelation could have profound implications for clan standing in Highhelm and beyond.



CLAN VANDERHOLL

Gem: Oblong rainbow obsidian cabochon, left slightly irregular to reflect the stone's original, natural shape.

Size: 4,100 dwarves across 312 families

Clan Vanderholl's motto is "the hands that hold Highhelm together," and the words are true: the dwarven kingdom could not function without this Ironhilt clan. Nevertheless, Clan Vanderholl is sometimes underappreciated by outsiders, because its identity is more diffuse and less obviously specialized than that of most other clans. Its clan hall, located in Stonebreach, is just as sprawling, and is built for comfort and community rather than a show of stiff dignity.

The members of Clan Vanderholl dedicate themselves to doing the unglamorous, necessary tasks of everyday life. They work with their hands: hauling rubbish, refilling mine lamps, sweeping the streets, chopping vegetables, feeding draft animals. They are orderlies and assistants, muleteers and lizard wranglers. They clean hides, process grundlegrubs, haul water, and bring food to the elderly and bedridden. They also contribute to the likes of construction, mining, stonemasonry, and other worthy trades. Although several clans share in these tasks, thus the need for guilds, Clan Vanderholl always seems to send the greatest number of workers—workers who tend to push themselves harder and provide more than their fair share of labor.

Dwarves of Clan Vanderholl see each other everywhere, toiling diligently in every corner of the kingdom, and it gives them a sense of profound kinship and ownership of Highhelm. This is their city, in a way that no other clan can claim, and they know its unseen life and secret ways with an intimacy that no one else shares.

Clan Vanderholl does not have a uniform appearance, as members dress to suit their tasks and can seldom indulge in impractical fashions on the job. They tend toward durable, easily cleaned clothes accompanied by the tools necessary for their work. Hair and beards are kept tidy and out of the way. Clan members minimize non-essential ornamentation in day-to-day life, as their work is often messy and dangerous.

However, when they're off duty and out on the town, Vanderholl dwarves can be the loudest and flashiest dressers in sight, and it's common for them to be given free drinks and other tokens of appreciation from dwarves who rely on their hard work every day. "Work hard and play hard" is an unofficial secondary clan motto.

Clanleader Jarrus Vanderholl (page 40) is a cheerful, middle-aged dwarf who retired from his laborer job early when he lost his left arm in an accident. Though unplanned, his new vocation suits him, and the garrulous young leader fiercely advocates for worker protections. He delights in gossip about the high and mighty, most of it trivial and harmlessly amusing, and he happily relays benign hearsay to whoever shows an interest.

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The origins of Highhelm's most influential figures vary greatly. Some rose through the ranks of their clans to become leaders for their people. Others earned a place in the city during times of war. Others still are simply well-connected enough that their influence became impossible to ignore. The following figures are all important leaders within Highhelm, for one reason or another.



High King Borogrim the Hale

(LN male dwarf king) rules Highhelm from Stonehall, his palace in King's Crown. Although his counsel is frequently sought by other city and clan leaders, few dwarves have ever seen him in person. A reclusive and withdrawn figure, he's described by those who have met him as "old, gray, and immovable as the mountains themselves." He's swayed by the plights of his people, however, and he's a pragmatic leader and voracious scholar of history, philosophy, and government. If he's adamant and headstrong, it's because he is so often right.

Clanleader Henthe Aringeld

(LN female dwarf noble) is an older woman who always dresses in exquisitely tailored clothing sewn from only the finest and rarest of fabrics. Her presence is always preceded by a deluge of jingling sounds due to the numerous coins woven into her immaculately styled salt-and-pepper hair—the most openly ostentatious part of her ensemble. Henthe is a famously shrewd negotiator and a dangerous person to underestimate. Allies and enemies alike describe her as having "an iron in every fire and a bet on every horse."



Clanleader Gondan Breakiron

(LG nonbinary dwarf alchemist) is an unobtrusive dwarf, often mistaken for a blacksmith or coal miner due to their simple clothing, perpetually covered in soot and burns. Affable and unpretentious, Gondan finds no shortage of humor in such encounters. They are also the most vocal critic of Highhelm's caste system, having seen firsthand that young minds with a penchant for alchemy can be found in every part of society's strata. To this end, Gondan has devoted no small number of resources to cultivating such talent, often traveling to hold lectures in both the inner and outer districts.

Clanleader Perhill Firecask

(NG female dwarf brewmaster) is the cordial head of Clan Firecask and the uncontested authority on over 3,000 years of dwarven brewing tradition. With a broad smile and penchant for offering visitors complimentary drinks, she is known not only as a great brewer but a great host. She is also quite knowledgeable about the inner workings of Highhelm, being an essential guest at every major gathering. Although she is a keeper of tradition, she has a curious and inventive spirit and may proffer information or favors in exchange for unique and noteworthy brews.





Clanleader Thealla Gelderon

(LG female dwarf noble) is ruddy-skinned, with a hard-set jaw and a permanent squint beneath her graying copper hair. Despite favoring the same practical clothes as the rest of her clan, she is identifiable by the unbridled confidence she exudes and a sizable belt buckle of turquoise stones and deeply patinated bronze. Those who work the land find her to be a boisterous woman who laughs as hard as she toils, while those who don't usually see a more impassive side of the clanleader. Thealla sees even the mines as part of one great living ecosystem—sentiments not always shared by her compatriots.

Clanleader Grytem Grimmark

(LN male dwarf advisor) is a good-natured and whimsical eccentric who often hides his craggy smile lines and signature lopsided grin behind welding goggles or other protective equipment. The shocks of white hair above his ears do little to assuage the impression that he's a little unusual, just like the gaggle of like-minded apprentices who invariably follow in his wake. These young dwarves, eager to prove themselves, often seek to one-up each other—a penchant that has led to everything from war machine dance competitions to ranged midair turnip spearing contests.



Clanleader Hannihar Ironfist

(LN genderfluid dwarf fighter) is the proud head of Clan Ironfist. Simultaneously brilliant and easily distracted, they enjoy engaging in philosophical meanderings on topics such as metallurgy, transitive states of matter, and personal identity. On many occasions, they have been known to express that if steel can be so infinitely malleable and combinable, then surely the self can be as well. This flexibility in thinking has served them well in their discovery and creation of many new alloys.

Clanleader Onisha Molgrade

(LG female dwarf smith) is a transgender woman from a lineage of highly respected weaponsmiths and armorers. Onisha is no exception, being a world-renowned expert on working rare metals and famously having a personality as blunt and measured as the swings of her hammer. She is devout in her faith and credits her transition with bringing her closer to Torag. "For what is the forging of the self," she has said, "if not, too, an act of creation." She is exceptionally skilled at knowing when people are lying, even to themselves.



Clanleader Geselm Oriddus

(LG nonbinary dwarf cleric of Torag) is the haughty head of Clan Oriddus. They have little patience for the caprice of politics and are often openly derisive toward sudden shifts in public opinion. Instead, they choose to focus their efforts on aiding and sheltering the less fortunate. This can make it challenging to court their favor. However, Geselm is not a shortsighted leader; they simply see one's actions as the truest measure of one's character. Those who have proven themselves to the principled clanleader have little trouble obtaining the full backing of Clan Oriddus.

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Clanleader Trigelde Runebinder

(LG agender dwarf wizard) is the kindly and absent-minded, if outwardly odd and disheveled, head of Clan Runebinder. Many young dwarves consider them feeble and doddering, writing them off as well-meaning but out of touch. However, this is a ruse to keep others from realizing just how far their influence extends throughout the other clans of Highhelm. In truth, few clans in recent memory have ever risen in rank without Trigelde's support. Trigelde is equally ambitious and calculating and can be highly critical toward those they feel don't belong in the upper echelons of dwarven society.



Clanleader Usturr Stonefist

(LG male dwarf fighter) is a transgender man with a swarthy complexion, crooked nose, and elaborately braided hairstyle. Out of all the clan leaders, he is perhaps the most open-minded, using opposing views and ideas as a whetstone on which to sharpen his reasoning. He is surprisingly shy but loves all manner of games and puzzles, often preferring such pastimes to those that invite crowds or excessive drinking. Usturr suffers from recurring nightmares and often walks the city at odd hours to clear his mind when the streets are deserted.



Clanleader Arghan Tolorr

(LN male dwarf noble) was once an intrepid adventurer in his own right: he was a renowned historian, ruin delver, and archaeologist long before becoming the leader of Clan Tolorr. The gregarious, graphite-haired man has an impeccable eye for historical artifacts, being one of the most highly regarded experts in period art styles and linguistics. However, his days of adventuring may also be behind him, as he seems content to focus instead on documentation and preservation in his twilight years. Arghan adores company and never hesitates to both regale and lecture his visitors.



Clanleader Jarrus Vanderholl

(CG male dwarf laborer) is among the youngest clan leaders. Despite a brazen and flippant attitude, there's no dwarf the workers in Clan Vanderholl trust more to advocate for their rights and recognition. Jarrus is uncompromising on safety matters and demands more from his people than what the law mandates; given that he lost an arm saving his team from an accident when he led a labor crew, clan members are both understanding and supportive of his regulations. Unlike more conventional clanleaders, Jarrus prefers to be casual, inviting visitors into his home to discuss work matters over dinner with him and his husband.



Heidrun Stonefruit

(NG female dwarf acolyte) is a devout, middle-aged woman who was blessed by Kols as a child. Since then, promises made in her presence are magically binding, with the same effects as a *geas* spell. A member of Clan Oriddus, Heidrun has been called "Oathbinder" in some circles and is highly sought out as a witness for legal agreements, clan head meetings, and things like marriage ceremonies. She tends to be shy and reclusive otherwise, as her sudden presence can also garner negative reactions from those who don't expect it.



Svanhild Valdottir

(LG female dwarf paladin of Trudd) is the most highly celebrated living champion among her people. Time and again, she has been credited with turning tides in battle. This was not always so, as she was once weighed down by a heavy heart, but after a chance meeting with Kalabryne Iomedar she realized that she was transgender. Now, with a lightness in her spirit and thunder in her step, she is an unstoppable force. When enemies are caught in a pincer movement between Svanhild's squadron and Clan Stonefist's shield wall, they are said to be "between the hammer and the anvil."



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Lylar Rubellym

(LN genderfluid elf ambassador) is an elven ambassador from Kyonin who finds other cultures exceptionally fascinating. Voluble and inquisitive, they are equally happy to ask multitudes of questions or enthusiastically regale non-dwarven visitors about their findings. Although they've spent time among most of the major clans, they are currently the guest of Clan Ironfist, where they have found a kindred spirit in Hannihar. The two have shared many conversations about gender expression and identity, comparing their experiences and the parts they find fixed or fluid within themselves.



Espen Farseeker

(N male dwarf merchant) is a transgender man who was once an apprentice to Iltara Clavella in Absalom. Under her tutelage, he was able to grow as a hairdresser, stylist, and occasional witch. Specializing in beards, he has returned to Highhelm, where he was born, to tend to the beard styling needs of his community. He has helped dwarves from many different clans to heal and regrow hair where they've been burned or scarred, improve the volume and thickness of their beards, and stimulate or inhibit beard growth to levels that are more gender-affirming.



Selby Stormshod

(CN agender dwarf artisan) is a renowned stoneworker and the official sculptor for the inner city. In fact, their sculptures of humanoid figures are so lifelike and emotive that before they became famous, they were once arrested on the suspicion that they had petrified their subjects. Luckily, the individual who commissioned those pieces returned from his vacation just in time to clear Selby's name. That notoriety eventually worked in Selby's favor, as they were soon hired by the city to take on several high-profile projects. Selby now manages a sizable art commune with several dozen apprentices.



Jekka Hardeye

(N female halfling merchant) is a friendly halfling with two large braids and thick eyeglasses. She is Highhelm's primary exporter of dwarven brews and the only person outside of Clan Firecask who Perhill fully trusts. A knowledgeable brewer herself, Jekka frequently brings noteworthy imports directly to Perhill, where the two often sample them while collaborating on experimental recipes. The whimsical and kind-hearted halfling is an astute learner and plans to open her own brewery once she feels that the time is right. Her favorite saying is "tall tales deserve tall ales!"



Volund Blackcask

(CN male dwarf artificer) is a shady-seeming envoy from Dongun Hold and an expert in firearms. He has tried numerous times to propose supply agreements to Clan Grimmark and Clan Stonefist, but neither has seemed interested in the widespread adoption of firearms. Nonetheless, Volund is always happy to meet a fellow gunslinger and can offer a wide array of weapons, ammunition, and upgrades. Rumor has it that he even has some unique items that he'd be willing to trade to someone in exchange for their help in securing a high-level contract.







CHAPTER 2: GAZETTEER



INTRODUCTION

This gazetteer presents detailed descriptions of Highhelm, the Depths that lie below the city, and the overall region of the Five Kings Mountains. These descriptions include robust details ranging from the topography and climate of the area to the people and neighborhoods that make up this unique city. With new character options as well as in-depth portrayals of the city's numerous locations, the entries below can provide the right background for a distinctive character, the origin of an unusual weapon, or the start of a new quest!

LOCATION TYPES AND SUPPORT TRAITS

The major locations within Highhelm typically have enough resources, aid, or other factors in play that they can support a character or a party with certain exploration and downtime activities. Each location features one associated NPC, typically noted by the inclusion of a micro stat block. If a character adjusts an associated NPC's attitude to helpful (which might require a character to succeed at a Diplomacy check to Make an Impression, but the GM can choose another appropriate skill or invent a relevant task), that NPC's location provides a benefit to the party. The specific benefits, based on the location's traits, are listed

here. This support generally lasts throughout a campaign unless the characters lose that support for an in-game reason. Multiple locations in the city can support the characters—they just need to keep making friends!

Characters can attempt to Earn Income at certain types of location. The GM decides the task's level, typically using the settlement level as a ceiling for the task level; it's rare that a character can attempt a task with a level higher than 14 in Highhelm. If the location's associated NPC has a level, the GM should cap the task level to the NPC's level instead.

Some locations allow certain types of characters to retrain more efficiently once they've made that location's NPC helpful. In such a location, retraining that would normally require a week takes only 5 days, retraining that would normally require a month takes only 3 weeks, and the retraining itself is generally free.

Academy: A character who Investigates for 1 hour in an academy's libraries can find a scholarly journal on a relevant subject (*Core Rulebook* 291) to bolster their attempts to Recall Knowledge on that subject.

Archive: Scholastic-themed characters and arcane and occult spellcasters can retrain efficiently at an archive. Such a character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Create Forgery, Decipher Writing, or Learn a Spell on-site.

Arena: Barbarians, monks, brawlers of all types, and other characters who favor melee can retrain efficiently here. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Coerce or Demoralize on-site.

Attraction: A character who uses Performance to Earn Income or attempts to Gather Information gains a +1 circumstance bonus to the check, usually due to the large crowds that frequent these types of locations.

Bank: A character can use their contacts at a bank to Earn Income by attempting Society checks to make and manage investments—or by attempting Thievery checks to embezzle or skim funds. Failing a Society check brings no additional repercussions, but failing a Thievery check reduces the associated NPC's attitude down to indifferent (thus making further attempts to Earn Income impossible here). Critically failing a Thievery check here results in legal action and possible imprisonment.

Brewery: Characters can Earn Income at this location using an appropriate Crafting or Lore skill. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Gather Information in an allied brewery.

Criminal: Characters who focus on criminal activities can retrain efficiently at this type of location. A character who uses Underworld Lore to Earn Income gains a +1 circumstance bonus to the check. A character can use Thievery to Earn Income, but critically failing the check might result in them facing legal action or imprisonment.

Dungeon: Dungeon locations are areas of great danger that characters can explore but don't offer additional benefits for making NPCs helpful. Award the PCs a minor story award (10 XP) after their first delve into the dungeon and a major award (80 XP) once they complete the dungeon's story (as determined by you).

Employer: A character can Earn Income at this location using an appropriate Lore skill to practice a trade.

Farm: The food and plants available at farms, ranches, and large gardens have a number of helpful uses. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Medicine checks and Survival checks to Subsist on-site, though the GM might rule that the available flora is unhelpful.

Forge: A character can use the location's resources to Craft armor, weapons, or other appropriate items and gains a +1 item bonus to the required Crafting checks. A character can also Earn Income at this location using an appropriate Crafting skill.

Garrison: Martialy inclined characters can retrain efficiently here. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Gather Information or Treat Wounds on-site.

Grotto: Primal spellcasters and characters with a connection to the earth can retrain efficiently here. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Identify Magic or Learn a Spell on-site.

Housing: The location offers accommodations at a comfortable cost of living for no charge or at a discount, as determined by the GM.

Lodge: Primal spellcasters can retrain efficiently here. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Identify Magic or Subsist on-site.

Market: A character can Earn Income at this location using an appropriate Crafting or Lore skill to sell goods at the market.

Merchant: The character can sell goods for 55% of their value, instead of half, to a helpful NPC merchant.

Monument: Monuments typically see a large amount of foot traffic. A character who makes an NPC helpful at a monument finds their reputation preceding them, so passersby are more open and eager to speak—the PC gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Gather Information.

Municipal: If a character secures the friendship of a helpful NPC at a municipal site, they can “cash in” a favor to help with problems, such as avoiding a jail sentence or fine, securing access to a restricted location, or learning a closely guarded secret. The exact nature and magnitude of the favor is left to the GM to adjudicate, but once the favor is granted, that NPC can't be called upon for another favor for a period of time (typically one year, but this duration can shift as the GM sees fit to match the scope of the favor).

Neighborhood: A character who makes an NPC helpful in a neighborhood can rely on that NPC and the neighborhood as a whole. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Subsist in this neighborhood, and other forms of assistance might become available at the GM's discretion.

Parlor: Socially inclined and skill-focused characters can retrain more efficiently here. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Gather Information or Earn Income with Performance.

Precinct: Martialy inclined characters who aren't criminals can retrain efficiently here. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Gather Information on-site.

Residence: The residence of a helpful NPC provides accommodations at no charge. At the GM's discretion, a character can enjoy a comfortable, fine, or even extravagant lifestyle at a particular residence.

Restaurant: A helpful NPC helps to keep their allies fed, granting a character a +1 circumstance bonus to Society checks to Subsist. If a character becomes a regular at a restaurant, they gain a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Gather Information on-site.

Shrine: A faithful character whose beliefs align with those of the shrine gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Treat Wounds or Treat Disease here.

Tavern: A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Gather Information in an allied tavern.

Temple: Faithful characters whose beliefs align with those of the temple can retrain efficiently there. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Identify Magic, Treat Wounds, or Treat Disease on-site.

Venue: Bards and characters who thrive on public performances can use venues to retrain efficiently. A character gains a +1 circumstance bonus to attempts to Earn Income with Performance checks.

Workshop: A character can use the location's resources to Craft items and gains a +1 item bonus to Crafting checks.

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KING'S CROWN

King's Crown is the highest layer of Highhelm, as well as the largest by population. It's also the highest in the metaphorical sense, serving as the home of the upper levels of dwarven society. At the very pinnacle of the mountain city are the High King, the Goldhilt clans, and the wealthiest merchants. The district then descends through the social classes, through merchants, artisans, the Silverhilt clans, and various skilled professionals. With a few exceptions, even the lowest resident of King's Crown appears, at worst, middle-class and respectable.

Of course, being respectable and appearing respectable are two different things. Both power and money dwell here in King's Crown, and those draw the ambitious and the corrupt. Here, one can still find conspiracies and cults, spies and criminals. King's Crown isn't known for its common crime—few footpads, few burglaries, little in the way of drunkenness and public disturbance—but it makes up for that scarceness with its uncommon crimes, strange secrets, and curious, shadowy corners.

Highhelm's government is located within King's Crown, mostly in the neighborhood of Helmskeep, in the layer's Inner City—the part within the mountain, as opposed to the Outer City crowding the exterior. Most of the Inner City's governing takes place in the Stonehall, the ancestral residence of the Kings of Highhelm, but sprawls out into other buildings as well. A small army of dutiful clerks and bureaucrats keep the city-state functioning, tending to the fees, licenses, taxes, regulations, courts and inspections that every government maintains. A penumbra of spies, diplomats, and interested parties accretes around all this governmental weight like barnacles clinging to a ship.

Highhelm's second major business is, in fact, business. Like most every city, Highhelm relies on being a regional center of commerce to survive, and that means taking in food and providing various goods and services to the rest of the region. These commodities include concrete goods like metalwork or masonry, less concrete but much more delightful goods like brewing, and abstract concepts like “rule of law,” “good governance,” and “standardized weights and measures.” Many of these industries are concentrated in King's Crown, especially those that don't involve many dubious smells or unexpected explosions.

In fact, culture is considered one of King's Crown's major exports. One can find the song makers and shield painters of the region here, where people go to add a little bit of beauty to an otherwise humdrum daily existence. The dwarves of King's Crown very much believe in beauty and have decorated their layer with statues, carvings, and engravings. Furthermore, Highhelm is well-known for its institutions of learning, from the Academy of Lore to the many libraries and archives of Helmslore.

All the people involved in Highhelm's prized industries need their own support networks. At the end of the day, the weary stone carver has little desire to trek all the

way down to the city's lower reaches, instead turning for a modest home along the South Face of Emperor's Peak or toward a rented room above the rowdy streets of Helmsborough. There will be grocers to feed them, tailors to clothe them, and petty merchants happy to sell them a book, box, or bushel of carrots.

These days, a citizen's rest might be interrupted by King's Crown's great drama—Torag's Shield, a massive defensive engineering project operating out of what's formally known as the Shield Forge, though the grumpiest neighbors in Helmslore refer to the area as Torag's Wart. Once completed, Torag's Shield will be an immense, unimaginable boon to the safety of the city. Uncompleted, it remains a grating annoyance, a ruinous expense, and a lure for every spy, saboteur, thief, cultist, and petty chancer in the region.

All in all, life in King's Crown is good. The people here are mostly healthy, and even if they aren't all wealthy, most certainly aren't poor. Some might grumble and whine about their lot in life, but their complaints often lacks the acid bite of the truly disaffected. These days, King's Crown mostly works, and lives roll by with a semblance comfort and security for its residents. Conspiracies and cults and spies aplenty lurk about, but they rarely ever touch the common citizen's life—at least, for now.

PEOPLE

King's Crown features a number of important movers and shakers. The following are some of the more notable figures.

Ambassador **Jkarissend Softtongue** (LN male kobold diplomat) is the official ambassador of the Garundi Sky Citadel of Cloudspire and the Mbe'ke realm to their northern cousins in Highhelm—the fact that Jkarissend is a tiny, elderly, blue-scaled kobold is beside the point. Jkarissend hails from a thoroughly Mbe'ke-integrated kobold community in the Terwa Uplands and served two terms as king before being politely packed off north to stop him from meddling in his successor's administration. When not attending to his duties, most of which are trade related, Jkarissend is an enthusiastic student of draconic history. He's usually seen puttering around investigating dragon lore related to the Five Kings Mountains, a couple of put-upon Mbe'ke dwarven bodyguards trying vainly to keep the garrulous kobold out of trouble.

Asleif (LG female dwarven cleric) is the high priestess of Dranngvit in Highhelm. A liminal, ghostly figure, Asleif dresses all in white with a pure-white veil concealing her face. The Priestess of Dranngvit acts as the critic of dwarven tradition, reminding Highhelm that all actions have consequences and debts will always be paid. Underneath the veil, Asleif is actually quite a young dwarven woman from a small village outside of Highhelm. She wears her eerie veils mostly to portray Dranngvit's clergy properly and to keep people from

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recognizing her when she isn't actively conducting her duties as priestess. Despite her cynical attitude and nonexistent tolerance for fools, she's a reliable ally to people in trouble, even if she complains about it the whole time.

The **Ash Engineer** (LE male dwarf mechanical lich) was born many ages ago as Ornmarr Ringerike, a humble miner and survivor of the Rending. Scouring the rubble after that great cataclysm, Ornmarr came upon a curious thing: a faceted crystal of silvery metal, adorned with minuscule writing. He took it, and the alien device filled his mind with a vision—of death not as tragedy but as beauty, of weapons like songs, of tools to shatter mountains and sink continents, of the fire at the heart of all things, of a glorious void. Ornmarr took the silver crystal and hid it away. He has spent the centuries since trying to recreate what he saw in those visions. In time, he took on students and scarce noticed when they became a cult. When his body failed, he replaced each piece in turn and thought nothing of it when his heart ceased to beat. The silver crystal has never spoken to Ornmarr again, but the Ash Engineer presses ever onward, drawn by the glory of that vision.

Geyra Hollowbone (NE female dwarf gangster queen) is Highhelm's Person of Business, charged with overseeing the city's Arrangement, the Five Kings Mountains' own organized crime syndicate. Titles aside, Geyra is the eternally polite and reasonable crime boss for most of Highhelm, stringing together chains of corrupt deals and intimidating government officials and private contractors alike. She never raises her voice or utters an impolite word, but if necessary, she does have access to some very impolite associates, people with names like Hrut Toothpuller or Kori the Butcher.

Baroness **Nicasia Dux** (CE myrucarx [*Pathfinder Adventure Path #161: Belly of the Black Whale* 85] enthusiast) appeared in Highhelm some years ago and presented herself as a Taldan woman of wealth and taste. She also quite cheerfully admitted that she was a Lion Blade spy for Grand Princess Eutropia Stavian (*Pathfinder Lost Omens Legends* 42). This claim occasioned a lot of nervous laughter at first, but Dux's irrepressible enthusiasm and effortless charm quickly secured her a place in Highhelm high society. These days, she leads a salon of the most progressive and daring of Highhelm, where great ideas can be discussed and great ambitions are first floated—Torag's Shield was one such proposal, and it isn't the only one. Strange though it seems, if Nicasia Dux is indeed a spy, then her idiosyncratic approach is oddly effective. Of course, Dux's actual story is far, far stranger.

CURRENT EVENTS

The main event keeping everyone on their toes in the King's Crown district is the production and testing of Torag's Shield. Some years back, a great deal of adamantine was discovered beneath Highhelm. Testing and refinement by dwarven engineers led to the production of keep stone. Contrary to its name, keep stone is a metal, an alloy of adamantine and lead. After a great many meetings and negotiations, a plan was drawn up to forge a great shield around Highhelm—a giant series of shutters built into the cavern ceiling along the city's perimeter, so that on command these shutters would emerge and slam down along the Ledge, protecting Highhelm from unfriendly incursions.

The catch is that even by dwarven standards, this engineering project is a massive undertaking. To that end, the Torag's Shield system is currently being produced at Torag's Wart and tested all around the district, to the general inconvenience of the population. Most have been understanding about the necessity of the Shield—particularly with Tar-Baphon and the Runelords on the prowl again—but they'd also prefer to have it finished already.

LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS

The current population of King's Crown is just a hair over three-eighths of the city, a grand total of 15,652 registered residents (as in, the number of people on the city's census rolls). The residents of King's Crown are overwhelmingly comprised of Holtaksen or mountain dwarves, roughly 14,000 in total. Another thousand or so residents are dwarves of Grondaksen or Ergaksen background (underground dwarves and surface dwarves), split evenly between naturalized immigrants and long-term representatives of various commercial or governmental concerns. The remaining residents are various non-dwarves: about two-thirds are human, and the rest are elves, gnomes, halflings, kobolds, strix, and other ancestries.

Supplementing these local residents is a motley assortment of temporary visitors, mostly merchants from nearby cities—they also skew toward dwarves, though far less heavily than the permanent residents. Their numbers fluctuate with the season but usually hover somewhere around 500.



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LOCAL FLORA

Like any major urban center, King's Crown abounds with gardens, parks, and plant-strewn promenades. Given that King's Crown is also mostly underground, these areas feature flora particular to the local environment. The most popular civic plant in King's Crown is the einnerness, a springy, deep-green moss that adapts quite merrily to the dimly lit conditions of Highhelm and requires minimal care or attention. In places where surface cities might have lawns or parks, dwarves prefer to strew irregularly shaped stones and then encourage the moss to cover them entirely—there's actually a fashion among Highhelm's aristocrats to throw a few old weapons, helmets, or even a suitably decorative plaster skull into the mix to get that attractive "forgotten battlefield" look.

For the more ambitious gardener, painter's lichen can be induced to grow into very precise shapes and take on green, blue, or even a lovely sunset pink tone. Producing representational scenes using only artfully grown lichen is considered a high art among dwarves.

LOCAL FAUNA

Few animals are as iconic in Highhelm as the humble augdunar. A city like Highhelm requires some kind of animal-powered transport in order to function smoothly, but neither horses nor oxen take well to the thin air and subterranean environment. Enter the augdunar. King's Crown is filled with muleteers offering augdunars for every budget. More information on augdunars is found on page 126. Also common in King's Crown is the royal mole, an enormous, soft-furred rodent roughly the size of a badger. Originally bred for fur (especially fine hats and coats), today, many a fine Highhelm dwelling houses a velvety pet mole with a colorful collar. In recent years, a Garundi entrepreneur has brought a few litters of domesticated Mwangi greater golden moles to Highhelm, and there's currently a very polite debate over which mole is the superior pet.

Any public works project of this scale has a fair amount of conflict attached to it. Some enormous egos have gotten involved, senior engineers staking their reputations on this or that mechanical solution, and it's understood that whoever actually pulls this project off will go down in the history books—and if it fails, the blame will flow in absolute torrents.

Furthermore, Torag's Shield is mind-bogglingly expensive, with literally hundreds of tons of adamantine involved along with all the pricey engineers' and metallurgists' fees. That much money attracts corruption as effectively as a corpse draws flies. The Arrangement crime syndicate has stuck its hands into every part of Torag's Shield, bleeding away money from a hundred little cuts. Accounts don't entirely match up. Materials aren't always what inventories claim they are. Employees exist on paper who never seem to appear at work. Lots of little things eventually add up—enough drops of rain can make quite a flood, and the wealth dripping off Torag's Shield is enough to kill for.

Not all of the project's woes stem from mundane pride and greed. The Ash Cult has also delicately hooked its fingers into the project, slipping **Katla Langlif** (LN female dwarf engineer) into the ranks of the senior engineers. Strictly speaking, the Ash Cult has no quarrel with Torag's Shield. The cult just has its own projects, and one of them, Project Gormuz, would benefit greatly from tons of adamantine. However, diverting the adamantine and smuggling it out of Highhelm and to the Ash Cult's hidden stronghold is no easy endeavor.

Any project that concerns the national security of a major regional power garners the considerable interest of all the local powers, and so Highhelm is positively abuzz with spies and saboteurs looking to use Torag's Shield to their own ends. The Druman arch-spy known as the "Golden Owl" is working to sniff out the secret of keep stone and bring it to their masters in the Resplendent Bureaucracy. One of the Andoren Twilight Talons, Lieutenant Jerius Osterman, hopes to shift Highhelm's politics away from a focus on fortifications and toward a more aggressive, outward-looking policy—even if doing so requires sabotaging the project. Baroness Nicasia Dux of Taldor is perfectly open to everyone that she's a Lion Blade and a spy, except no one has the faintest idea about her real angle.

LOCATIONS

The following are some of the more notable locations within King's Crown.

1. Broch

PRECINCT

Built during Ordrik's reign, the Broch is one of dozens of shoddily-built watchtowers set in the outer edge of Highhelm, hastily assembled by exhausted masons and grim-faced priests of Droskar. When the theocracy was abolished, the tower, like many others, was abandoned—but the Broch had a second act yet to come. Purchased about 50 years ago by **Baelim of the Black** (LE male dwarf warden), the Broch is now a private prison, holding the spillover of petty criminals and suspicious-looking foreigners until such a time that they can pay their fines.

The old tower is the actual prison, with ancient storerooms and guard posts converted into various cells. Around the prison are some cheap dwellings for the guards and a more luxurious residence for Baelim himself. A stout palisade surrounds the entire compound, and only a single door leads in or out. Despite that, the Broch is no one's idea of a maximum-security prison—with its thin walls, crumbly mortar, poorly paid guards, and an indifferent warden. It stays afloat mostly because the prisoners are usually petty merchants or minor lawbreakers.

Recently though, Baelim has had two notable problems. First, one of his prisoners arrested for public drunkenness disappeared while locked up overnight, and that prisoner's wealthy—and increasingly furious—family is asking questions. While Baelim is most certainly a corrupt extortionist, he isn't

a murderer and has no idea what happened. Secondly, something has been whispering and whistling in the night in the Broch, putting the guards and the prisoners more and more on edge. Baelim needs these problems solved quickly to avoid losing profits, or worse, becoming a guest of his own establishment.

2. FIRECASK HALL

ATTRACTION | BREWERY | RESIDENCE | TAVERN

Dwarves have traditionally taken alcohol very seriously, and so it's no surprise that Clan Firecask's clanhall is one of the older and more respected of the clanhalls in King's Crown. Big and blocky, the aboveground portion of the clanhall consists of what are popularly referred to as the Front and the Back.

The Front is akin to a traditional pub or tavern, albeit a bit larger and more well-appointed than most. Here, Highhelm's dwarves can go for a taste of whatever the Firecasks are brewing at any given moment, and any dwarf brave enough to try one of the more "experimental" drinks even receives a discount.

The Back, meanwhile, is where the actual brewing, aging, and distilling takes place, all under the watchful eye of Clanleader Perhill Firecask (page 38), a master spirits distiller of considerable ability. Though people don't usually think of it that way, brewing on the scale that Clan Firecask engages in is an industrial operation in its own right, and the back of the hall is a maze of giant vats, powerful furnaces, and pressurized pipes.

3. THE IRON ARCHIVE

ACADEMY | ARCHIVE

The Iron Archive has the dubious distinction of being the only archive in Highhelm, and probably the only one in all of the Five Kings Mountains, to need round-the-clock security. Such precautions aren't because it contains a wealth of blackmail material or rare occult lore. No, the Iron Archive is simply a repository for maps, land deeds, mine claims, and other territorial records. It has been acting as such for thousands of years, and if one believes the archivists, it even contains maps that were consulted by High King Taargick just under 10,000 years ago.

Yet, even that isn't the reason for the Iron Archive's security. Most dwarves take things like maps and mine claims very seriously, and so a very long time ago (perhaps as far back as Taargick's day), it was decided that mere parchment was an unsuitable medium. Stone was better, but stone was hardly a convenient medium for records. Instead, the most precious dwarven documents are etched on plates of fine steel, which are then plated with gold so as to remain untarnished and incorruptible against the march of the ages. There are maps showing ancient paths that are as crisp as the day they were scribed, even as the original stone peaks they depicted have changed.

Gaining access to those maps is another story. High Archivist **Kagri Breakiron** (LN female dwarf scholar) is nicknamed "The Dragon" for her protective attitude toward her charges, and she only shows the oldest maps by royal command. When the Droskarites took Highhelm, the ancient archive was hidden by its keepers, who refused to share it even under torment, and the High Archivist is determined to show no less devotion.

4. THE HOLLOW TEMPLE

MONUMENT | TEMPLE

While the Forge of the Nine in King's Heart serves as the center of faith in Highhelm, the Hollow Temple acts, at least in part, as its main place for religious celebration. The Forge of the Nine's dedication to multiple gods made it difficult to create a space for celebrations and rituals that all nine faiths could agree upon. While Torag's family are generally amiable, their mortal faithful can sometimes be less agreeable. As a result, Taargick offered a solution: a temple dedicated to no single faith, used only for rites and

NEIGHBORHOODS

King's Crown is typically divided into the Outer City, which runs in a thin strip along the outside of the mountain, and the Inner City, which is actually inside the mountain proper. The two are further subdivided into a series of neighborhoods, the most significant of which are listed below. Each of these neighborhoods can offer benefits as noted in "Location Types and Support Traits" on page 44.

East End: The East End receives all the sunlight and boasts a stunning view of Mount Kla and the Verduran Forest. Here, the dwarven nouveau riche gather—such as merchants, artisans, and forward-thinking engineers.

Gatebreach: Just inside the eastern gate, Gatebreach is the center of Highhelm's local economy. The great merchant caravans mostly stop in the East End, but for those wanting to buy a chicken, pair of shoes, or a good pickax, they go to Gatebreach.

Helmsborough: Helmsborough is like the South Reach, a bit more down market than the rest of King's Crown. In this raucous district, one can find smithies, taverns, mercenary companies, retired soldiers, more taverns, rowdy muleteers, and, lest one forget, taverns.

Helmskeep: Up against the northern cavern wall of the Inner City, Helmskeep is the oldest and most respectable part of Highhelm. Here, one finds the Stonehall and the Hollow Temple as well as the clanhalls of particularly venerable clans.

Helmslore: The quiet, sedate Helmslore is home to many of Highhelm's professional classes—engineers, bookkeepers, doctors, and lawyers who work in the city.

South Reach: Relatively poorer compared to the rest of King's Crown, the South Reach is still an eminently respectable district, home to clerks, artisans, soldiers, and all the other folks who keep the city running.

West Face: Located along the western face of Emperor's Peak, this area gets little sunlight. Nevertheless, its location outside the walls makes it convenient for traders, merchants, and guilds that can't quite afford the prices of the East End.

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THE ASH CULT

Centuries ago, the fell smith Ornmarr Ringerike took students. He taught them the dread secrets of destruction,

and he told them of the beauty of death. "We are ash animated by fire," he said, "and to ash and fire we must return." Today, the Ash Cult numbers several dozen members, buried deep in Highhelm society. At the core are the sorcerer-smiths, the Ash Engineer and his students, designing ever more sublime ways of destruction. Brilliant and obsessed, they toil in the shadows of the House of Ashes, driven by goals only they can imagine.

Surrounding that core is a penumbra of merchants, bankers, and clan-lords who might not entirely believe in Ringerike's apocalyptic creed but certainly find his inventions both useful and profitable. This well-concealed conspiracy ensures that the Ash Engineer has the tools he and his students need and allows them to arrange for their dreadful inventions to be tested appropriately.

celebrations as needed, resulting in the Hollow Temple. Celebrations for the dwarven pantheon typically begin in the Hollow Temple and proceed to flow out into the city and down the connecting way into King's Heart before finally reaching the appropriate temple.

Today, the Hollow Temple serves not only the dwarven pantheon, but those of most any other faith within the city. When celebrations aren't being held there, **Plavinn Overhill** (N male halfling priest of Pharasma) maintains the temple. Plavinn serves as a neutral party, mediating schedules for celebrations between the worshippers of the dwarven pantheon and those of other faiths. He allows worshippers of various deities to come and use the space for prayer as needed, and the temple now features small nooks with shrines dedicated to Pharasma, Sarenrae, Gozreh, and other gods.

5. STONEHALL

MUNICIPAL

The traditional residence of the King of Highhelm, the Stonehall has all the things that one might expect of a grand dwarven royal hall. The royal hall proper, with its vaulted ceilings and carven walls, is adorned with grand relief sculptures of great scenes from myth and legend, a many-colored marble accented with gold leaf. Here, High King Borogrim the Hale meets members of the Crown Council as well as holding scheduled, private audiences in his court, though doing so has become more difficult with the king being pulled away to tend to the Torag's Shield project. The building also contains the royal crypt, where the kings of old are interred beneath stone slabs bearing their likenesses, guardians supposedly enchanted to rise up and defend their old domain. In the council hall, Highhelm's government meets and debates the issues of the day. The fate of the city and its environs are decided in soft whispers as often as furious shouts. And there is, of course, the royal treasury. Highhelm isn't as wealthy as certain other dwarven holds with a less tumultuous history, but it harbors enough treasure to tempt any thief. However, ingenious traps and equally unfriendly guards ensure that ambitious rogues can very rarely act upon that temptation. Behind the public-facing rooms and chambers of ritual or civic importance lies a vast warren of offices, archives, meeting rooms, and all the minutiae that keep a government running.

Currently, Stonehall is aflutter with debate and discussion surrounding Torag's Shield. On the one hand, the prospect of a greater defense, in light of Highhelm's historic woes, has a distinct and definite appeal. There's something very dwarven in the desire to build an enormous wall, and in general, the project has maintained steady political support, especially from the clanleaders of Clan Grimmark, Molgrade, and Vanderholl. On the other hand, the project has notable detractors and critics: Councilor and Royal Treasurer **Herafg Aringeld** (LN male dwarf politician) has taken to stalking the halls of Stonehall with a stack of alarming financial charts and ledgers, accosting passersby and demanding if they know how expensive Torag's Shield is. Lieutenant **Jerius Osterman** (CG male human Twilight Talon), the Andoren military attache, has been lobbying for the dwarves to put their efforts into soldiers instead of walls and is pointing to threats that might justify a more aggressive military posture. At this point, he's almost ready to hire someone to produce such a threat, provided it could be done secretly and without loss of life.



BROCH

6. TORAG'S WART

FORGE MUNICIPAL WORKSHOP

Officially, on all the formal documents and charters, this ungainly complex is labeled the Shield Forge as the location where the enormous project known as Torag's Shield is being developed, tested, and ultimately produced. Everyone else, however, calls it Torag's Wart, on the grounds that it's unsightly, unpleasant, and generally a nuisance. Grumpier dwarves, especially those woken up at inconvenient hours by the hammering and shouting, tend to specify where the wart is located in blasphemous detail.

Scurrilous invective aside, the Shield Forge is a hastily built complex of buildings occupying what was formerly one of Highhelm's twilight parks. Several large forges work to produce keep stone night and day, while the actual shields and the associated mechanisms are mostly built out in the open in the plaza beside the forges. A high wooden fence and a small cadre of soldiers are ostensibly there for security and to keep the project's exact details from leaking out, but with the sheer number of workmen, engineers, smiths, and masons involved, such precautions are something of a lost cause.

Currently, the project is suffering some hiccups due to a feud between **Mefi Brightshield** (LN male dwarf smith), the senior forgemaster, and **Normadr Plan** (LN nonbinary dwarf architect), the chief engineer. The two had never been terribly fond of each other, but the recent collapse of a shield during Test 23-R has brought them nearly to blows. Normadr insists that the designs were sound and that Mefi used substandard materials, while Mefi calls Normadr a bumbling oaf looking to shift the blame. By this point, two have engaged in a great deal of shouting and a few fistfights.

In the meantime, Katla Langlif, another engineer and Ash Cultist who actually did swipe the adamantine needed for the keep stone (thus resulting in the unexpected collapse), has kept her head down, hoping no one notices her amid all the shouting. Katla had mostly forgotten her youthful foray into the Ash Cult decades ago and was busy enjoying a life with no more serious troubles than the joisting on section 4R or helping her son with his school lessons. Then the Ash Cult came calling again. Katla is now diverting literal tons of adamantine to Modolfr Exporters, and she has absolutely no idea why.

Even worse for Katla, the Test 23-R collapse has aroused the interest of Geyra Hollowbone (page 49), Highhelm's Person of Business and gangster-in-chief. Geyra has been siphoning off money from the project via various intermediaries, but she's certain that this particular disaster can't be laid at her feet. Geyra has taken it upon herself to investigate the matter and find the true culprit. So far, she mostly thinks that this is some too-clever-by-half dwarf doing a spot of freelancing, but it's only a matter of time before the Arrangement and the Ash Cult stumble upon one another, at which point the bodies will start piling up faster than keep stone.

7. GRAKODAN GALLEY

EMPLOYER RESTAURANT

This luxurious building in Gatebreach is home to the Grakodan Galley, the most elegant and high-profile restaurant in Highhelm. The city's movers and shakers come here to dine beneath the antique Grakodan tapestries and to indulge in the most interesting food available locally on reproduction-Grakodan gold plates. **Elhi Mulgass** (CN male dwarf chef), the proprietor, part-owner, and chef of the Galley, is simultaneously a keen amateur genealogist (he traces his own bloodline back to one of the kings of Grakodan, albeit a cadet branch), and an

THE ARRANGEMENT

The Five Kings Mountains' native crime syndicate, the Arrangement is an informal network of corrupt officials, brutal gangsters, and suborned merchants, all under the auspices of the People of Business. Here's how it works: one of the People of Business will approach a bureaucrat and inform them that they're to sell a mineral rights license considerably below cost to such-and-such mining consortium. The grateful consortium then pays the Person of Business a portion of the difference between the fair value and what was actually paid—and the bureaucrat will receive a certain percentage. This is the Arrangement.

Typically, an Arrangement is a nonviolent affair. Indeed, the People of Business would insist that they harm no one, for all that they bleed dwarven society like a pack of leeches. Occasionally, someone refuses the honor of participating in an Arrangement and must to be reminded of its benefits; they usually realize their ingratitude somewhere around the third broken finger.

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FIRECASK HALL

LOST IN SHADOWS

Every year, on the night of midwinter, something happens in Highhelm that people don't really like to talk about:

someone in the city vanishes. No one is entirely certain how, nor how long these disappearances have been going on. Some claim it a curse laid on Highhelm by the departing clergy of Droskar, a tribute taken by force if worship isn't freely given. Others think it a phenomenon of more recent vintage, and certainly reports prior to 4712 AR are hazy.

Still, a few facts are clear. The disappearances always occur during the longest night of the year, and the targets are usually the young and wealthy. They vanish while alone and unaccounted for, and no traces of a body is ever found, but some personal belonging will turn up on the street a few days later. High King Borogrim the Hale and Baroness Nicasia Dux have both offered substantial rewards for any information.

avid experimenter in the culinary fields. As large as the dining hall is, the kitchen is larger still, stocked to no end with peculiar and exotic ingredients.

Indeed, it's well known that Chef Mulgass is more interested in making recipes than actually serving them, and the clientele has come to expect a certain degree of eccentricity—like the time Mulgass served steaks infused with elemental air that threatened to keep floating off the plate. To his customers, it's just part of the Grakodan Galley experience, and powerful and important dwarves tolerate antics from Chef Mulgass that they would from no one else.

Mulgass's idiosyncratic approach to cooking also means that he'll buy any strange plant, animal, or alchemical reagent and try to feed it to people, with a surprising amount of success. Quite a few petty alchemists and hunters do good business keeping the Grakodan Galley in stock.

8. BREAKIRON CROWNHALL

RESIDENCE WORKSHOP

Unlike most dwarven clans, Clan Breakiron maintains a clanhall on each of Highhelm's levels, probably under the same principal as the idea that one shouldn't put all one's eggs into a single basket. A noble and respectable Goldhilt clan, Breakiron is dedicated to the advancement of alchemical science, production, and general innovations—vital activities for dwarven life in the mountains but also decidedly dangerous at the best of times.

Their clanhall in King's Crown is a good example of the thinking that goes into each of their laboratories. The hall consists of six separate "zones," each of which is surrounded by enormously thick walls of stone and packed earth—it's fair to say that the Breakiron Crownhall is one of the most impregnable structures in Highhelm. The inner walls, however, are made of cheap wood, and the roof is light and easily replaced. When something inevitably explodes, turns noxious, or attempts to eat the resident alchemists, it can be contained to a single area while the force of the blast is channeled harmlessly into the air. Such a blast might even take down the ceiling of the cavern, though anything strong enough to do that will render King's Crown a bit of a lost cause anyway. Set off to one side from the much-reinforced laboratories is a cozy little complex of offices and residences. These spaces

are practically indistinguishable from those of any other clanhall, except for the numerous signs and runic inscriptions threatening dire consequences to anyone who takes their work home with them.

Currently, five of the Crownhall's lab-zones are in use. Two of them are dedicated to the raw production of keep stone for the construction of Torag's Shield, and a third is developing new metallurgical techniques for the same project. A fourth is used by **Torgad Breakiron** (LN male dwarf sage) for breatherwall research, and a fifth is divvied up into somewhat cramped sub-labs for individual researchers, including one **Aghlor Hammerflask** (CN male dwarf reckless scientist). The sixth zone is currently inoperative due to what everyone politely refers to as a "mold problem," and heavily armored dwarves with acid-spewing bellow-guns guard the entrances to it.

9. TOLORRA SPARRING LAWN

GARRISON VENUE

Here, one sees something on the Tolorra Sparring Lawn that's hardly found elsewhere in

STONEHALL

Highhelm, or indeed in most dwarven cities—grass. Once upon a time, this place was known as the Tolorr House, the respectable home of a family of dwarven prospectors and mine-engineers. However, the current lady of the house, **Krigo Tolorr** (LN female dwarf aristocrat), always had a taste for a life of excitement, or at least excitement that didn't involve listening to the ominous creaking of mining joists and wondering whether this particular lode would prove rich or bone-dry.

So, with the family's not-inconsiderable wealth, she turned the boring plaza around her home into a sprawling dueling ground with actual grass and even some tough mountain shrubbery to add a natural element. A cabal of amateur druids known as the Blade Tenders, led by Chief Gardener **Forgald** (N male dwarf self-trained druid), keeps the place in one piece, and miscellaneous swashbucklers, duelists, knights, and other warriors congregate here to train and test themselves in something that at least resembles natural surroundings.

Krigo isn't doing this just for entertainment, mind. On any given day, one can usually find a half-dozen weapon-wielders out on the lawn practicing their art, as well as a few bored aristocrats or clan scions placing bets and hiring champions to represent them in duels, jousts, and other mortal contests. On the rare days when Krigo herself observes, there's always a great deal of fanfare, large crowds, and a sharp increase in the betting, a small slice of which is siphoned off to maintain the sparring lawn.

10. Dux House

PARLOR

Baroness Nicasia Dux of Taldor (page 49) purchased this dwarven manor house not long after arriving in Highhelm and promptly set about refurbishing it to suit her needs—ceilings were raised to a more human-friendly height, for one, although quite a few other changes were left off the building planners' maps (the hidden ducts beneath the floor, the windows carefully angled to never catch the outside light, the odd well in the basement's center).

The Baroness is something of a homebody ("I don't travel well," she says with a smile) but compensates by inviting absolutely anybody who's anybody to her home: politicians and clanleaders, religious heads and merchant bankers, adventurers and famous scoundrels, scientists, engineers, wizards, occultists—pretty much anyone who might be interesting. Plenty spurn the baroness, and the fact that she openly claims that her profession is that of a spy and displays the insignia of the Lion Blades over her mantelpiece does raise a few hackles. Even so, her home is the best possible place for up-and-coming adventurers to meet some of the movers and shakers of Highhelm politics. Even High King Borogrim the Hale has attended a few times, causing a modest scandal on each occasion.

11. Cloudspire Embassy

MUNICIPAL RESIDENCE VENUE

Built a hundred years ago to replace the ad-hoc building put up after the expulsion of the Droskarites from Highhelm, this grand, rounded-off building was constructed in the Mbe'ke style, with a huge open amphitheater and two wings flowing off on either side. The Sky Citadel of Cloudspire (*Pathfinder Lost Omens The Mwangi Expanse* 68–77) does a great deal of trade with Highhelm, and it falls upon Ambassador Jkarissend Softongue's (page 47) to make sure that everything flows nice and smoothly and that everyone makes plenty of money. His other job, of course, is to make sure that all the various Mbe'ke citizens in the Five Kings territory stay out of trouble, whether doing so means protecting them from the locals or protecting the locals from them.

The embassy also serves as a sort of home-away-from home for various visitors from Garund and puts on all manner of cultural events (concerts, story-readings, and the like) to try and make nice with their neighbors. Probably the most distinctive of these visitors is **Mharsilekinass the Jewel**

FORGE ONE AND PROJECT GORMUZ

Hidden in a mountain fastness a few days' hard march from Highhelm, Forge One is the secret heart of the Ash Cult. It's protected first by its remoteness and its obscurity, off the beaten track and away from any road, and secondly by its trappings as a temple of Torag, its occupants wearing ascetic garb designed to dissuade curiosity-seekers. Its third line of defense is a small army of clockwork soldiers and cunning traps, all designed by the twisted and duplicitous mind of Ornmarr Ringerike, the Ash Engineer.

At its heart? Project Gormuz, a grand furnace of adamantite, a many-layered shell in which Ringerike seeks the ash and the fire at the heart of all things. When the power is finally his to command, he'll gift it to every prince and potentate of the world and smile, knowing that they'll bring about the destruction he dreams of. But first, a demonstration—the burning of Highhelm, perhaps?

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TEST 23-R

Conducted quite recently, Test 23-R was the latest in a long series of efforts to design the release mechanisms for the keep stone shields that actually make up Torag's Shield. It's a formidable engineering challenge, devising mechanisms that can rest with minimal maintenance for years only to shift hundreds of tons of rock smoothly and efficiently on command. Consequently, an awful lot of testing has been performed. This particular test went horribly wrong when several girders snapped and caused a sheet of keep stone a hundred feet across to fall to the ground. The result was several shattered buildings, seven deaths, and dozens of injuries. Early investigation shows that the support struts were shoddily made, and currently investigations are ongoing in the highest levels of Highhelm's government even as the finger-pointing and blame-shifting reach a fever pitch over at Torag's Wart.

(CN female cloud dragon bored teenager), a young cloud dragon dispatched ostensibly to provide for the embassy's security—who's insatiably curious about basically everything in the Five Kings Mountains.

12. THE FISHMARKET

MARKET

Aquaculture is a thriving industry in Highhelm, where it constitutes an important part of the nutrient- and water-reclamation cycle that enables the dwarven kingdom to be almost entirely self-sufficient in times of siege. Not only does the kingdom maintain a network of aquaculture farms and subsidize private fishponds as civic infrastructure, but many private households do the same on a smaller scale.

All of those cultivated fish, snails, and freshwater pearl mussels are sold at the Fishmarket, a wonderland of water, ice, and commerce. The market has scores of freshwater pools set up in giant metal or stone basins, many of them connected by small waterfalls to maintain proper water circulation. Dead and prepared fish are sold from atop layers of crushed mountain ice brought down from neighboring peaks. A small but thriving side business exists in selling wild-caught fish as well, from mountain streams or deep underground lakes, along with the occasional stranger and rarer catches dredged up from the deeps. Unsurprisingly, the market smells entirely of fish.

The fishers here know more of the secret paths through and under the Five Kings Mountains than most, especially those few who, by magic or nature, can breathe underwater. Anyone looking to travel unseen throughout the region is well-advised to seek out **Hroth Chuulbreaker** (LN male dwarf fisherman). Hroth, a powerfully built dwarf with a body covered in scars, was once the captive of a small clan of skum deep underground prior to escaping during a ritual fight. He has a habit of focusing on the subject of his loathing of skum and chuul to a distracting degree, but no one knows more of the Five Kings Mountains' subterranean rivers and lakes.

13. MODOLFR EXPORTERS

CRIMINAL

From the outside, Modolfr Exporters is a prosperous yet unremarkable business enterprise, a wholesale exporter of fine dwarven metalwork to Taldor and Absalom. **Orlyg Modolfr** (CG male dwarf merchant) buys everything from pots and pans to helmets and swords, while his sister, **Ota Modolfr** (CE female dwarf cultist), sells them at a vast markup—all across Golarion. "Dwarf-made" is a synonym for quality, after all.

However, Modolfr Exporters are involved in a bit more than just sharp business practice. Ota is a member of the Ash Cult and has been since she was inducted by her father. Orlyg, both his father and sister agreed, was entirely too in love with drink and the sound of his own voice to be a reliable cultist. Over the years, Ota has moved a great deal of smuggled weapons and devices in and out of Highhelm, taking them to the Ash Cult's hidden stronghold somewhere in the Five Kings Mountains. Most recently, this smuggling has focused on adamantine stolen from the Torag's Shield project, redirecting it to the cult's secretive Project Gormuz. Like her contact in Torag's Shield, Ota doesn't actually know what the project is; in theory, she isn't even supposed to know its location, but being a shrewd operator, she has some pretty good guesses.

Only Ota and a couple of the staff at Modolfr Exporters know of their involvement in illicit activities, and only Ota knows the full truth. Her henchmen includes **Throli** and **Gret** (NE male and female dwarf thugs), a pair of workers who load things, and **Kravert** (NE male dwarf clerk), who cooks the books; however, they think they're involved in merely a spot of mundane smuggling. Just in case, Ota has one of the Ash Engineer's machines on hand, a murderous clockwork assassin, should she ever need to silence some inconvenient investigators.

14. WEAVERSWELL

MARKET

Traditionally, clothing in Highhelm was heavy on wool, leather, and fur, these being the materials that one could actually get while living atop a mountain. As Highhelm grew richer, there came a demand for more, and so many years ago, an adventurous Keleshite merchant set up shop by this well and started selling fine silks and linens. Later, more merchants set up businesses there, and in time, it became a great cloth market. Traders of other goods, noticing that the dwarves who bought silk were the ones with the most money, started setting up shops to sell various expensive and exotic goods.

Today, the Weaverswell is Highhelm's main market for luxuries and imported goods. Here, one can buy books, scrolls, spices, musical instruments, historical artifacts, sparks of magic, and anything else that a merchant might think to sell. You can also still buy cloth here, from great bales of cotton to delicate silks from afar—**Kobal al-Utirin** (N male human merchant), descendant of that first Keleshite trader, still operates a roaring business in foreign textiles. The well was covered long ago, and now the shops and stalls look out at a glorious fountain of dwarven nymphs and heroes. Popular legend holds that the carved statue of Kols the Oath-Keeper will bang his hammer against the stones and then point it at frauds and cheats—in truth, the statue is one of several around Highhelm that can serve as a manifestation point for Torag's herald, the Grand Defender (page 129), although petty fraud likely won't invoke the herald's concern.

15. ARINGELD HALL

BANK MERCHANT RESIDENCE

Clan Aringeld is the clan of merchants and traders and traditionally numbered among the Steelhilt clans. Over the last century or so, with considerable planning and preparation, they've advanced their candidacy to the Goldhilt clans, and nowhere is this more evident than in Aringeld Hall.

The original hall was built well over a thousand years ago, and those who know where to look can still spot traces of ancient masonry and rough-hewn stone. They would have to look very closely, however, as the current hall has become a gallery of statues and tapestries, gilded furniture, and artifact-covered plinths. Aringeld Hall has been home to near constant construction in recent decades, Clanleader Henthe Aringeld (page 38) being quite intent on the clanhall looking the part of a high Goldhilt hall.

Over the course of the reconstruction, many secret passages and hidden chambers were revealed, mostly historical curiosities. In many cases, they were removed or refurbished into glorified toys. However, one led to some literal skeletons in the closet. Several weeks back, workmen broke into a small basement chamber that, upon further study, proved to have been blocked some 40 years ago. Within, the workers found the withered skeletons of two dwarves chained to the wall. From the scratch marks left behind, it seems that the two were buried alive and left to die. The question, of course, is why? And who were they?

For the moment, Clanleader Aringeld has hushed up the discovery. The workmen were generously paid and politely threatened, and the skeletons moved to another storeroom—except right now, no one seems to remember where the remains were placed, and some of the night guards have started complaining about hearing footsteps in the night. Aringeld is on the verge of achieving the dream of generations. They don't need this problem, and Henthe would be willing to pay an awful lot for someone to make it go away.

Forty years isn't long, relative to dwarven life spans. Whoever put those dwarves in there might still be alive, and of course, they must have had access to Aringeld's clanhall, enough to do some impromptu masonry without anyone noticing. Perhaps the culprits are closer than anyone realizes, and this possibility raises some very dangerous questions.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOLDEN OWL

Among the high halls of the Inner Sea, the name Golden Owl possesses a particular sort of fame. The Golden Owl is a spy, or perhaps a spy network, that serves the Kalistocracy of Druma. All anyone knows is that the Golden Owl has been sniffing around Torag's Shield, eager to pluck the secret of keep stone from Highhelm's grasp.

There's just one little catch: the Golden Owl doesn't exist. The invention of Blackjacket Captain **Etraen Malpi** (LN female human spymaster), the "Golden Owl" is essentially a grand exercise in misdirection, a way to get everyone to look for some sinister arch-spy. Meanwhile, Malpi bribes low-level clerks or steals the wastepaper baskets from embassies, sifting secrets from unexceptional trivia through diligence and care. However, rumors that the actual Golden Owl was seen burglarizing an office in Torag's Wart has given Captain Malpi cause for concern. Has someone stolen Malpi's deception for their own ends? Or is something stranger afoot?

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KING'S CROWN OPTIONS

Characters seeking new items and options within King's Crown might stumble upon the machinations of the Ash Engineer or a specialized type of board game.

BACKGROUND

The following background is available to all characters.

HIGHBORN SNOOP

The machinations and scheming of King's Crown have trained you to be on the lookout for those who seem out of place. You've learned to spot when the person pouring your tea has sword calluses—or when the person wearing a guard's uniform doesn't.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be Dexterity or Intelligence, and the other is a free boost.

You're trained in the Society skill, and the Guild Lore skill. You gain the Courtyl Graces skill feat.

BACKGROUND



BLACK KING

become confused for 1 round unless it succeeds at a DC 25 Will save.

Type *ashen*; **Level** 9; **Price** 700 gp

Type *greater ashen*; **Level** 16; **Price** 9,000 gp

The persistent fire damage is 1d8. The save DC is 35. On a critical failure, the effect lasts for 1 minute.

BLACK KING

ITEM 15

RARE **EVOCATION** **MAGICAL** **NEGATIVE**

Price 6,250 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 2

The *black king* is a +2 *greater striking ashen blunderbuss* (Guns & Gears 151). While the dark metal frame is still

pleasant to look at, this design prioritizes destructive power over aesthetic appeal. This specialized blunderbuss has a scatter radius of 20 feet

instead of 10, and all splash damage it deals is negative damage instead of physical. Due to the risk of collateral

damage, this weapon is typically only used by the especially foolhardy or reckless.

Activate ♦♦ envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per day;

Effect You unleash a blast of draining flame, dealing 5d6 fire damage and 5d6 negative damage to all creatures in a 60 foot cone (DC 34 basic Reflex save). Creatures who fail their saving throw are knocked back 5 feet. Creatures who critically fail are knocked back 10 feet and fall prone.

FELL ARMS

The Ash Engineer isn't known for engaging in violence personally, but his creations have advanced the art of dealing death more than almost any other inventor alive. Unsatisfied with rending mere flesh, Ornmarr has developed weapons that attack the mind and soul. Despite the efficacy of these weapons, he considers them mere prototypes for grander violence. The Ash Engineer always uses previous inventions as stepping stones toward crueler devices and innovations.

A handful of more business-minded Ash Cultists have made efforts to place these weapons into the hands of the general public—both to fund their other endeavors and as a means to test Ornmarr's creations on a wider scale. Anyone looking to buy these arms can do so from the unscrupulous merchants at Modolfr Exporters. The merchants take great pains to keep the source of these weapons a secret though, handling sales through a series of intermediaries. It's obvious that the weapons share a common maker, but most are ignorant to his true identity.

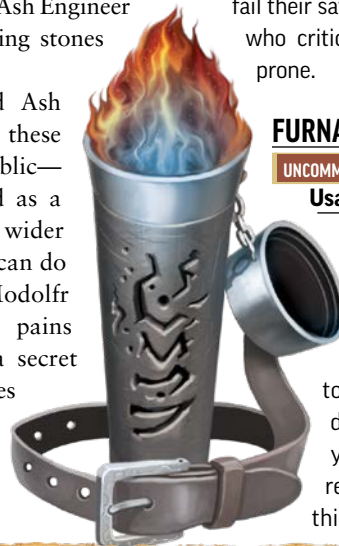
ASHEN

RUNE 9+

UNCOMMON **ENCHANTMENT** **MAGICAL**

Usage etched onto a weapon

In his attempts to recreate the initial feeling of the object he encountered ages ago, the Ash Engineer discovered a different effect, one that would confound his enemies. *Ashen* weapons are typically coated in a thin layer of ash that gradually returns over the span of a day, even after wiping away. A creature hit by an attack from an *ashen* weapon becomes surrounded by burning ash, which deals 1d4 persistent fire damage. This ash clouds the senses, causing the creature to



FURNACE OF ENDINGS

FURNACE OF ENDINGS

ITEM 2+

UNCOMMON **INVESTED** **FIRE** **MAGICAL** **TRANSMUTATION**

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Ash Cultists make use of these metal scroll cases to deliver secret messages or as ways to "smuggle" stolen documents since initial inspections find an elegant yet empty case. The cases are enchanted to instantly immolate any parchment or document placed inside of it. While invested, you can Interact with the scroll case to recreate the last message that was destroyed this way. For as long as the case is open, ashes will rise into the air, recreating the text of the message exactly as it was written. When you close the case or leave it

unattended for 1 minute, the message scatters until the next time you Interact with it.

Type *lesser furnace of endings*; **Level** 2; **Price** 35 gp

Type *furnace of endings*; **Level** 5; **Price** 160 gp

In addition to the ability to recreate immolated documents, you can immolate a scroll containing a 1st-level spell with the fire or negative trait that takes no more than three actions to cast. Doing so stores the scroll's magic inside of the scroll

case in order to reuse it later. Only a single spell can be stored this way at a time, and immolating scrolls containing a higher-level spell simply destroys the scroll without storing the magic. When you immolate a new spell scroll in the case, the previous one is lost. Enough of the scroll's magic is lost in this process that you can't use the case to recreate the scroll for the purposes of Learning a Spell.

Activation ♦ to ♦♦♦ envision, Cast a Spell; **Frequency** once per day; **Requirements** The last object burned was a scroll containing an appropriate spell; **Effect** You cast the stored spell as if you were activating the scroll.

Type greater furnace of endings; **Level** 9; **Price** 700 gp

The furnace can store a single spell of up to 3rd level.

Type major furnace of endings; **Level** 13; **Price** 3,000 GP

The furnace can store a single spell of up to 5th level.

GRAY PRINCE

ITEM 8

RARE EVOCATION MAGICAL NEGATIVE

Price 500 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

While nothing created by the Ash Cult could be considered mass-produced, this +1 striking ruinous hand cannon (*Guns & Gears* 151) is by far their most popular design. The sleek body and intricate carving work make it a favorite accessory of certain aristocrats. The carving isn't merely decorative, however. Rather than a traditional maker's mark, Ornmarr etches excerpts of unreadable text onto each creation, hoping that one day his weapons will sing to another as the silver crystal once sang to him.

Activate ♦♦ envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** You fire a bolt of negative energy, dealing 2d8 negative damage to all creatures in a 60 foot line (DC 24 basic Reflex saving throw). Creatures who critically fail their saving throw also take 1 persistent negative damage for 1 minute.

SCARLET QUEEN

ITEM 12

RARE EVOCATION FIRE MAGICAL

Price 2,000 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

The scarlet queen is a +2 striking flaming hammer gun (*Guns & Gears* 158). Due to the awkward and complex nature of combination weapons, it's by far the least popular of Ornmarr's designs, but those who have mastered it consider it his finest creation to date. The glistening red steel always feels warm to the touch and sheds dim light in a 15-foot radius. Any non-magical object of light Bulk destroyed by the scarlet queen is reduced completely to ash.

Activate ♦♦ envision, Interact; **Requirements** The scarlet queen is in its firearm form; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You fire a blast of magically disruptive energy at an unattended magical object. You cast 5th-level *dispel magic* with a counteract bonus of +21 against the object.

SPY GAMES

Board games of all types are popular throughout Highhelm, but residents of King's Crown prefer complex games that require more strategy and little chance. Moreover, nobles of high standing prominently display ornate game boards in their homes that feature pieces made of mithral, platinum, or other precious materials.

A board game that's been modified with clockwork mechanisms and hidden compartments is called a Liar's Board. While these boards were originally invented for mundane cheating, over the years, a number of innovations have made them among the favorite tools of spies and information traders. When pieces on the game board are moved in a specific sequence, one of several hidden compartments will open that correspond to the last move made.

While any board game can be modified to become a Liar's Board, high complexity games are preferred to decrease the likelihood of a player accidentally discovering a combination, creating a relatively safe way to leave hidden messages in public spaces. Any game shop in a major, metropolitan city like Highhelm likely has at least one Liar's Board among its game tables. Of the Liar's Boards in Highhelm, most are built into boards for king's chess, imperial conquest, and elemental stones. A popular choice among locals, elemental stones uses an arrangement of gems and colored stones to create specific patterns, making it ideal for setting easily obscured combinations to open compartments.

LIAR'S BOARD

ITEM 5

UNCOMMON

Price 90 gp

Usage Held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 2

This clockwork game board contains 6 hidden compartments that can be opened by moving the game pieces in specific, preset patterns. Each chamber has a unique combination, and only one chamber can be opened at a time. Once a chamber is opened, a new combination can be set as a 1-minute activity. You can identify a Liar's Board as a clockwork device with a successful DC 25 Perception check, and you can find an individual hidden compartment with a successful DC 30 Perception check. The GM rolls a d6 to determine which chamber is discovered, rolling again if the result is one you're already aware of. You can force open a compartment you've identified with a successful DC 30 Thievery check, but tampering will be obvious unless you critically succeed at the check. If you spend at least 1 hour examining the game board, you can instead attempt to deduce the correct combination to open a compartment with a successful DC 30 Society or Games Lore check.



LIAR'S BOARD

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KING'S HEART

During the construction of Highhelm, excavators discovered a marvel nestled squarely in the center of Emperor's Peak: a massive cavern, its walls teeming with luminescent crystals of all sizes and colors. Its existence was an enigma, the stone walls too smooth to be wholly natural and yet with no connection to the surface. It was named the Gift of the Father, as it could only have been made by the hands of Torag himself, and became the site of Highhelm's largest and most prominent temple. When the first homes were built in Highhelm, they were constructed here since many dwarves believed the blessed cave would offer them protection and fortune. Over time, the cave's walls were expanded, widening walls on either side to form the middle layer of Highhelm: King's Heart.

The level's name is more than a reference to its role as the spiritual center of Highhelm. Because of its central location to the city, almost all commerce in Highhelm passes through King's Heart, a fact that has drawn significant industry into its halls. Trading companies were quick to put down roots here so as to be closer to the trade hubs, and mining cooperatives looking for ore and coal began building out their mining tunnels from the conveniently located middle of the mountain. From there, the city's smiths, smelters, metallurgists, and stoneworkers, eager to stay to the source of their raw materials, set down roots in King's Heart.

This expansion faced its challenges. Emperor's Peak, being nonvolcanic, had few sources of heat to work with aside from air-poisoning fuels and limited heat vents and, with no access to the sky above like the other two layers, little access to natural water sources. Both problems were solved by the machinations of the Circle of Four, a druidic circle specializing in elemental magic who offered a solution in exchange for a permanent home within the Gift of the Father. By opening small rifts into the Elemental Planes of Fire and Water, they created limitless heat sources as well as maintain a grotto of fresh water to supply the entire population. The gratitude of Highhelm was great, and the Circle received their wish, welcomed so wholeheartedly that King's Heart became a place of sanctuary not just for them, but for druids of all kinds. Some few questioned their generosity in exchange for such a small reward, but they were quickly shushed lest they endanger this great boon.

In King's Heart, working hard to earn one's keep is a way of life. There's little room and less patience for those who cut corners or try to coast. The area is, as many would begrudgingly admit, the beating heart of Highhelm. Most of the city's exported steel and ore comes from here, as does the majority of its heat and water supply. If King's Heart were to fall, the city would collapse, and its people take great pride in the layer's vital role. There's an industrious spirit to King's Heart,

one that promotes an almost paradoxical culture of self-sufficiency and cooperation. At the same time, being at the center of a testament to the beauty of Torag's creation, as well as the Forge of the Nine that serves as the center of Highhelm's faith, has created a strong culture of worship and community, for what is a fellow dwarf but another of Torag's creations to be respected and cherished?

That is, of course, what people preach, but it isn't the whole picture. It's true that the workers of King's Heart will cheerfully work together in times of need or for the common good, and even more cheerfully meet for drinks at the Forge Day's end. But when it comes time to compete for contracts or customers, they become more cutthroat and vicious than even the shadiest merchants in Katapesh. Since no dwarf would be so crass as to devalue their own work to undercut a competitor, they compete against one another with more creativity. Subtle sabotage, contract sniping, and aggressive poaching of skilled workers all run rampant through the streets of King's Heart.

Likewise, the faith of the people might be strong as a whole, but without complete religious unity, their varied devotion often causes more problems than it solves. The vast majority of the Heart's residents are devout followers of the dwarven pantheon, but not all, and that creates some friction. Small pockets of worship exist for the deities of the surface, particularly Abadar, Pharasma, and Shelyn, and while their worshippers don't get treated with outright hostility, they also rarely display their faith for fear of losing clients. The local druid circles have little to worry about, keeping largely insular and self-sufficient, and the efforts of the Circle of Four keep them in good standing with most of the populace. The same can't be said of the Rivethuns, shamanistic worshippers of elemental spirits. Between their opposition to the Circle of Four's interference with planar boundaries, their protests against the Torag's Shield project, and their high-heretical insistence that theirs is the revival of a dwarven religion far older than Torag's worship, they've earned open disdain from many in King's Heart.

On the surface, King's Heart is busy but peaceful, raucous but quiet. There's very little crime, friendly faces everywhere, and prosperity to be had by anyone willing to earn a living off the sweat of their brow. Ask any dwarf from Highhelm's middle layer where they're from and they'll tell you King's Heart well before they say Highhelm, such is the pride the people here take in their community. Certainly, tension exists between various individuals and factions, but that's true of any city. However, some of these honest, hardworking people are fully prepared to go to war with one another should that tension ever bubble to the surface.

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PEOPLE

King's Heart features a number of important movers and shakers. The following are some of the area's more notable figures.

Clan Molgrade has produced some of the finest smiths and craftsmen the world has ever known. It has also produced Boss **Finedad Molgrade** (nonbinary dwarf union boss). Second child of one of the youngest branches of their family, Finedad was never expected to amount to anything. When they demonstrated no talent whatsoever for metalwork, they were quietly apprenticed to a struggling metallurgist and mostly forgotten. A century later, they've gotten the last laugh. Finedad sits at the head of the Metalmaker's Union because decades of dealmaking, clever hiring, and efficient investment have made their foundry the premier source of rare metal in Highhelm.

Sanra Copperstone (female dwarf chef) is the oldest dwarf in Highhelm, the oldest alive according to the whispers of some. No one knows her age, but if asked, the other elders of King's Heart will say they remember her as elderly when they were but children. Here is what's known: the Copper Anvil has been a cornerstone of King's Heart for nearly 700 years, and Sanra has always owned the Copper Anvil. For generations, people have turned to her for wisdom; children seeking lessons from her endless well of stories, young lovers looking for counsel as they struggle to make their relationships work, or even failing businessmen finding inspiration in her folksy old sayings. Though she wields no formal power, and would refuse it if offered, Sanra is the matriarch of the Heart.

Lieutenant **Analise Amberheart** (LG female halfling paladin of Trudd) wasn't born in King's Heart, but it's still the only home she's ever known. Brought to Highhelm as a child by her mother, a talented smith looking to train with the best, Analise spent her entire life surrounded by dwarven culture and fully embraced it as much as she could. Analise isn't much of an artisan herself, though she knows her way around a hammer. Instead, she found her place training with mercenary companies, the church of Trudd, and eventually the city guard. Her martial escapades culminated in her single-handedly uncovering and stopping a Droskari plot to destroy the Forge of the Nine. For her bravery and service to the city, she was adopted into Clan Stonefist and promoted to First Lieutenant of the Heart Guard.

Even outside of King's Heart, **Logit Calister** (CG male dwarf performer) is a known name, but down here, he's one of the most famous bards alive. Logit grew up in Ironwell, surrounded by honest folks doing honest work. He spent his teenage and young adult years working in a foundry. It wasn't until tragedy struck, an accident at his job that severed his arm and crushed his spine, that he turned to music. Logit channeled his frustrations at being unable to work, his lamentations at the loss of purpose, and his admiration for the industrious people surrounding him into songwriting. The raw emotion, passion, and a decent singing voice propelled him to fame, and he dedicated his career to ensuring the people of Ironwell, King's Heart, Stonebreach, and everyone who labored for a living were honored in song.

Elder **Ezra Burnstone** (N male dwarf shaman) was once one of Torag's most faithful, a proud daughter of Clan Oriddus and in training to become head priestess of Torag at the Forge of the Nine. That changed when he vanished from his clan hall, leaving only a note saying he was following a vision. Ten years later, he returned to Highhelm, having renounced his old identity and converted to the Rivethun faith. In the centuries since, he has become the de facto leader of the local Rivethun sect and the staunchest advocate for a return to what he calls "the old ways."

LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS

King's Heart is the home of precisely 10,487 permanent residents as of the last census, around a quarter of Highhelm's total population. Just over 9,000 are dwarves of varying ethnicities (predominantly Holtasken, although Grondasken and Ergasken dwarves aren't uncommon). Of the remainder, around 500 consist of elemental beings, such as the fire elementals of Burntown and the water elementals living in or near the Endless Reservoir, and the last 500 or so are of various ancestries, almost exclusively those who are comfortable in the dark without sunlight, such as gnomes, goblins, and orcs. The smallest population in King's Heart, numbering only one, is the part-time resident **Ornathax** (CN female magma dragon), who spends "summers" in Burntown for a "refreshing break from the heat."



SANRA COPPERSTONE

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LOCAL FLORA

Despite being underground, nature flourishes in King's Heart in part thanks the efforts of the local druidic community and Clan Gelderon's expertise. Most shocking to outsiders is the lawns of Obsidian and grounds of the Ferrixion Botanical Gardens, which seem to be filled with healthy, vibrant blue grass. This is in fact sharo, a form of fungus that uncannily mimics grass in appearance, texture, and resilience. Meanwhile, the sweltering heat of Ironwell allows for the growth of beautiful orange flowers called firelights, which don't need sunlight as long as they're kept constantly warm. They can be found everywhere in the district as well as many homes close enough to benefit from the permanent heat. Vegetable farming also thrives surprisingly well on larger properties, as the popular root vegetable wormbait grows well down here. Its pungent smell draws burrowing bugs to it, which it consumes for nourishment. Despite the odor, wormbait is notably delicious and a staple of the Highhelm diet.

LOCAL FAUNA

As a mostly artificial cavern, King's Heart doesn't boast much fauna aside from the usual bats, insects, and beasts of burden that pass through. The Endless Reservoir is the native home of many fish including a species called crystal bass. While wild fishing is regulated, fried crystal bass is a popular enough dish that they're heavily farmed for consumption. The other notable exception is the pyre ferret, a small, skinny animal native to the Plane of Fire. Several squeezed through the rift when Iron Lagoon was formed, along with the local salamander population, and began breeding without a care. They're now a common sight in the city. Wild pyre ferrets, while not hostile, are prone to spontaneous ignition, making them somewhat dangerous to interact with. Enterprising animal breeders have created a domesticated form whose flames can't burn or spread. A pet pyre ferret can be purchased for 12 gp.

CURRENT EVENTS

As with much of Highhelm, King's Heart is largely occupied by the construction of Torag's Shield. As the primary provider of mass-produced metal, stone, and alchemical compounds needed to support experimentation and implementation of the massive walls, local resources in King's Heart are under significant strain. The Metalmaker's Union is doing their best to maintain mining and a fair distribution of ores, but many smaller smiths and stoneworkers are complaining of shortages while large producers reap the benefits of lucrative Shield-related contracts. Some speculation has been going around that the resources going to those larger producers are more than they need for those contracts and are instead being put towards other projects, but with the way the union handles records it's difficult to verify.

Meanwhile, the race is on to perfect the means of speeding up production of keep stone, and every metallurgist and smelter in the Heart is participating. With significant gold on the line, many rivals are resorting to underhanded tactics to beat their competition. Rumors of poached contracts, sabotaged equipment, and even stolen shipments abound, and a dozen metallurgists have already been arrested or fined for their illegal tactics. At the same time, a number of new collaborative partnerships have formed between like-minded crafters, and anyone who can contribute something to their research can expect great rewards.

Not everyone in King's Heart believes in Torag's Shield, though. Ezra Burnstone has become one of its most outspoken critics, calling it an overreach that destroys nature rather than living within it. The Rivethun sect in King's Heart has declared a formal protest, one that's garnered support among several of the local druid circles (including, surprisingly, their centuries-old rivals in the Circle of Four) and even a few of Torag's faithful. The protests have ranged from quiet demonstrations to disruptive marches, and more than a few acts of sabotage have been attributed to Rivethun extremists (some even accurately).

The Shield project isn't the only source of animosity that Rivethun activists have been garnering. In recent decades, the Circle of Four have expanded their operations in the city, now not only supplying heat and water but pushing for the replacement of breatherwalls and the expansion of mining opportunities with the use of their planar rifts. Rivethun members have often clashed with the Circle over the use of rifts, but this latest push has led to a flare up of conflict between them, even as they stand together against Torag's Shield. It hasn't come to blows yet, but more than a few protests have been diverted by (or even pulled double duty as) discussions of mining rights in the Plane of Earth.

Rivethun have accused the Circle of Four of tampering with planar forces they don't understand, but that couldn't be farther from the truth; the Circle knows exactly what they're doing, and are doing it intentionally. For generations, they've operated not as peaceful worshippers of nature, but as a druidic cult to the Elemental Lords, the evil gods who rule over the planes. After millennia of experimentation and pushing the boundaries of the planes, along with a plethora of notes about the fortuitous eruption of the Worldwound, their true goals have begun moving forward once more: the conversion of Highhelm into a nexus point of the elemental planes on Golarion, to allow their masters to expand their influence.

With so much planar and elemental energy at play within King's Heart, it's no surprise that there are occasional accidents within the district. As the Circle of Four pushes toward their goal, these accidents have become more frequent. While most of these accidents have been attributed to the order being stretched thin from providing additional resources toward Torag's Shield, the rising frequency of these accidents has become harder to ignore. With accidents or rogue elementals disrupting work that seem proximal to

Circle of Four projects or taking out some of the Circle's loudest opponents, First Lieutenant Amberheart has taken it upon herself to create a secretive task force to investigate the order. She's since teamed up with Rivethun priests to help her investigate, and the group is getting closer to uncovering the elemental conspiracy with each day that passes.

LOCATIONS

The following are some of the more notable locations within King's Heart.

I. THE ENDLESS RESERVOIR

ATTRACTION LODGE MONUMENT

The importance of the Endless Reservoir to Highhelm simply cannot be overstated. It's the primary water supply for the entire city. Fed by carefully controlled rifts to the Elemental Plane of Water, this reservoir's bounty is, as the name suggests, limitless. A complex system of pumps, pipes, sluice gates, and pressure sensors form rudimentary plumbing that distributes the fresh water throughout the mountain and controls its intake from the rifts to prevent flooding. In addition to water, these rifts also frequently deposit extraplanar sea life and more than a few unintelligent elementals, which has led to perhaps the only major fishing community in any underground dwarven city.

There are few permanent residents here to prevent accidental water pollution. Among them are **Anzi Whitewater** (NE undine dwarf druid) of the Circle of Four and her acolytes. This cheerful undine is responsible for maintaining the rifts and machinery that opens and closes them as needed, and has also been given administrative power over all direct access to the reservoir. Anzi is also the person to speak to about fishing licenses, adding buildings to the water supply, and other water-related issues. She maintains an open call for anyone willing to handle problems below the waters, in the event that things more dangerous (or sapient) than a common brine shark slips through, with water breathing spells offered free of charge, of course.

The reservoir is also home to a small population of water elementals, undines, and lower ranked faydhaan (genies of water). Most merely fell through the rift by accident and decided to stay, but more than a few were also directly invited by Anzi or her predecessors to assist in meeting the ever-growing water needs of Highhelm. The most well-known of these is the faydhaan noble **Anzhara** (CG female faydhaan noble), who has been placed on retainer for her three wishes to circumvent emergencies with the Reservoir.

2. THE COPPER ANVIL

RESIDENCE TAVERN VENUE

The Copper Anvil is the oldest tavern in Highhelm, an ancient pillar that stands beneath even the very foundations of society in King's Heart. It's said that if the Anvil were ever to fail, it would be a sign of the end times. Sanra Copperstone (page 63), the Anvil's owner and chef, will laugh these notions off, but there's always a glint in the ancient dwarf's eye as she replies, "But why risk it?" It's easily the most popular watering hole for the locals of Obsidian, but despite being packed at almost all hours of the day, it maintains a quiet, calm atmosphere. Sanra has little tolerance for rowdiness or trouble in her establishment, although she's equally likely to throw a troublemaker out by the ear as she is to pull them aside and ask why they're acting out.

Sanra's patrons come here in the hopes of a sage word of advice almost as often as for her cooking. It's difficult to find better food in King's Heart than at the Copper Anvil, which boasts seven centuries of refining its menu. Despite her official title as head chef, though, Sanra does little of the cooking herself, preferring to hold court in the front of the house. Instead, the work

NEIGHBORHOODS

As a smaller and more close-knit community, the people of King's Heart tend not to place too much importance on their neighborhoods, using them almost exclusively for land zoning rather than defined sections of the city. While there are some further subdivisions, the generally accepted "districts" of King's Heart are the following. Each of these neighborhoods can offer benefits as noted in Location Types and Support Traits on page 45.

Crystalborough: Most of the original Gift of the Father is within this neighborhood, which serves as the local municipal district as well as home to most of the religious sects of King's Heart.

Goldgate: As the name might suggest, this residential district of King's Heart is dedicated to the few Goldhilt clans who live here. Their numbers are small more as a practical consideration than segregation, as the clan halls and services offered here require significantly more space. While it can't match the luxury services in King's Crown, Goldgate is still the most upscale place to shop, eat, and otherwise live in King's Heart.

Ironwell: Home to countless blacksmiths, metallurgists, smelters, alchemists, and stonemasons, the people of Ironwell are in a constant state of motion. Almost no building in Ironwell is purely residential, with many residents living above their places of business.

Obsidian: The vast majority of Highhelm's Steelhilt clans make their homes in this residential neighborhood on the edge of the Heart. Row upon row of houses and apartments line the streets here, many on shared property owned by a clan and built to demonstrate that clan's particular style.

The Tunnels: Though not literally located in tunnels, this neighborhood sits atop the main thoroughfare between King's Heart and Stonebreach, as well as the Central Mining Plaza from which all mining operations in the mountain stem. Most of the guild halls in King's Heart are based here, as are dozens of trading companies and mining cooperatives.

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STRANGERS IN KING'S HEART

While King's Heart is a very self-sustaining community, a necessity of their enclosed existence, they are perhaps among the most welcoming layer of Highhelm to outsiders. This is in part due to the egalitarianism of its most prominent clans. Clans Molgrade, Stonefist, and Runebinder all offer adoption or honorary clan membership to anyone who proves themselves in their respective fields, regardless of ancestry. The residents of King's Heart are also accustomed to stranger beings than humans and elves living among them, with their larger population of elemental beings. As a result, despite having the smallest percentage of the city's population, King's Heart has the largest by percentage of non-dwarves.

All things aren't necessarily created equal, though. While most ancestries can find acceptance here, old grudges die hard. Orcs and half-orcs face some degree of discrimination, primarily from Clan Stonefist, although not exclusively. Response to Darklands natives can be even more intense; some are as likely to be murdered in an alley as to be run out of town.

is left to her adoptive granddaughter **Maril Copperstone** (NG female dwarf chef). Maril, having worked in the Anvil since she went by a different name and wore a beard, is almost as iconic to the tavern as Sanra herself and, as her heir, will inherit the entire place in the unlikely event that Sanra Copperstone ever allows Magrim to take her.

Of course, that day may come sooner rather than anyone expects. Sanra has, in recent days, been absent from the Anvil's dining room more often than not, with Maril occasionally taking her place and leaving the cooking to the assistant chefs. Rumors of physicians, herbalists, and even clerics making regular visits to the Copperstones' residential suite upstairs have led to significant worry that all might not be right with the matriarch of King's Heart.

3. MOLGRADE HALL

RESIDENCE

The oldest and largest clan hall in Goldgate, Molgrade Hall is a testament to the importance of Clan Molgrade to this community. It was built in the earliest days of King's Heart by Bruto Molgrade, a statement that despite the prominence of his clan as one of the original Goldhills, they wouldn't hold themselves above the common smiths they worked alongside. This statement was somewhat undercut by the rush of other Goldhilt and prominent Steelhilt clans to King's Heart to buy up the land around him, but it was at least inspiring at the time.

As one might expect from a clan of metalworkers, Molgrade Hall's interior is filled with polished steel. Furniture, decoration, even some of the walls and flooring in newer sections of the building incorporate at least some metal. While the clan hall is technically where a clan handles official matters, Clanleader Onisha Molgrade (page 39) prefers to conduct business in the Longhall or within establishments she's working with, keeping Molgrade Hall as a residence for both the most important Molgrade families, and those on hard times in need of a place to stay. She has, however, been inviting some individuals and groups to speak with her here directly; individuals who have grievances with Onisha's distant cousin Finedad. Given Onisha's own public criticisms of the Metalmaker's Union's boss, it seems she's gathering a case to push them out of their position, though given the secrecy with which she has been doing so, it's difficult to say what her true intentions are.

4. LUCKY LAIREE'S BAR AND GAMBLING HALL

SHRINE TAVERN VENUE

Taverns dedicated to Cayden Cailean are a copper a dozen, even in a devout dwarven community like King's Heart, but taverns dedicated to other deities are more of a novelty. Lucky Lairee's is one of those novelties, even more so being dedicated to two deities, neither of whom are even dwarven. Above the bar, a shortsword with three notches in the blade declares the faith of owner and bartender **Lairee Rocknasher** (CG male goblin bartender), a retired adventurer and former champion of Chaldira Zuzaristan who settled down in Highhelm. Lairee bills himself and his bar as the go-to home for adventurers passing through Highhelm. As such, the place hosts the most eclectic collection of people you can find in the city, a revolving door of all types of ancestries drinking, swapping stories, and gambling.

The gambling, incidentally, is the other half of Lairee's business and worship. Run by Lairee's husband **Gizmit Rocknasher** (CN male gnome priest of Nivi Rhombodazzle), the gambling hall has a dozen tables dedicated to games of dice and cards. Gizmit dresses flashily, styling himself in the manner of an over-the-top faith healer but purveying luck rather than healing magics. For a small donation of coins, he'll blow on your dice, bless the deck before the deal, or even sit at the table with you and continually tilt the odds in your favor. It's an act, of course, and everyone knows it, but Gizmit makes it fun.

5. LUNAR GROTTO

GROTTO LODGE SHRINE

There is only one place in King's Heart that ever sees the light of the sky. At the end of a long tunnel leading down and away from Crystalborough, a small grotto surrounds a tiny natural spring, almost not noteworthy save for the carved runes and painted murals on the walls and the beautiful, well-polished gemstone mirrors positioned in seemingly random places. When day turns to night, though, the Lunar Grotto becomes something entirely different. Moonlight pours in from dozens of small tunnels bored into the ceiling, pure solitary beams that strike the gemstone mirrors and reflect and refract until they bathe the entire grotto in moonlight.

It's unclear where this moonlight comes from. All attempts to find the origin of the tunnels on the surface have proven fruitless, even with divination magic. The question is further perplexing as sunlight never makes its way into the grotto. Some have questioned if it's even real moonlight or merely an enchantment to simulate it, but these questions are easily countered by the Order of the Moon's Light, the druidic circle who lives in and cares for the grotto, and its leader, **Wilora Ironclaw** (CN female werewolf dwarf druid). Not many can argue with her or the handful of other lycanthropes in the order about the nature of the moon. Extensive care has made the Lunar Grotto a safe place for afflicted lycanthropes, as the enchanted runes on the walls allow them to retain control during their transformations and help them learn to control the beast on their own.

The Lunar Grotto's world revolves around the moonlight, and the gemstone mirrors which spread it. Each full moon Wilora leads the Circle in blessing each of the mirrors, followed by a celebratory revel. On the new moon, by contrast, the druids perform a sacred ritual of cleaning and polishing the mirrors in total darkness and silence, a time of contemplation and reflection. The mirrors are extremely valuable, not only for their religious significance but their monetary value as rare gems, and every now and then, a thief will make off with one of them. When this happens, the Order issues a high bounty for its safe return as well as a promise to the city that they will spend the next full moon hunting the thief, a carrot and stick that sees every mirror returned before that deadline. The Blacknoon Thieves' Guild formally denies claims that any of its members have ever breached the Lunar Grotto.

6. OREROTE TOWER

PRECINCT

A plain stone tower lies in the middle of the Tunnels, the second tallest building in King's Heart. It's from this tower that Commander **Lawrish Stonefist** (LN male dwarf captain) commands the defensive forces of King's Heart. Orerote Tower is the center of all military action in Highhelm's middle layer, though with no threat from the outside, it's primarily used to coordinate the guard force known as the Heart's Watch. Nevertheless, Commander Stonefist and his adoptive cousin, First Lieutenant Analise Amberheart (page 63), take their jobs very seriously. Lawrish can be found in his office at the top of the tower seven days a week, pouring over reports, patrol routes, and battle strategies with a zeal that his subordinates call admirable and his friends and family call obsessive. It does, however, make it easy to find him in a pinch, though getting a few minutes of his time can still be a hassle.

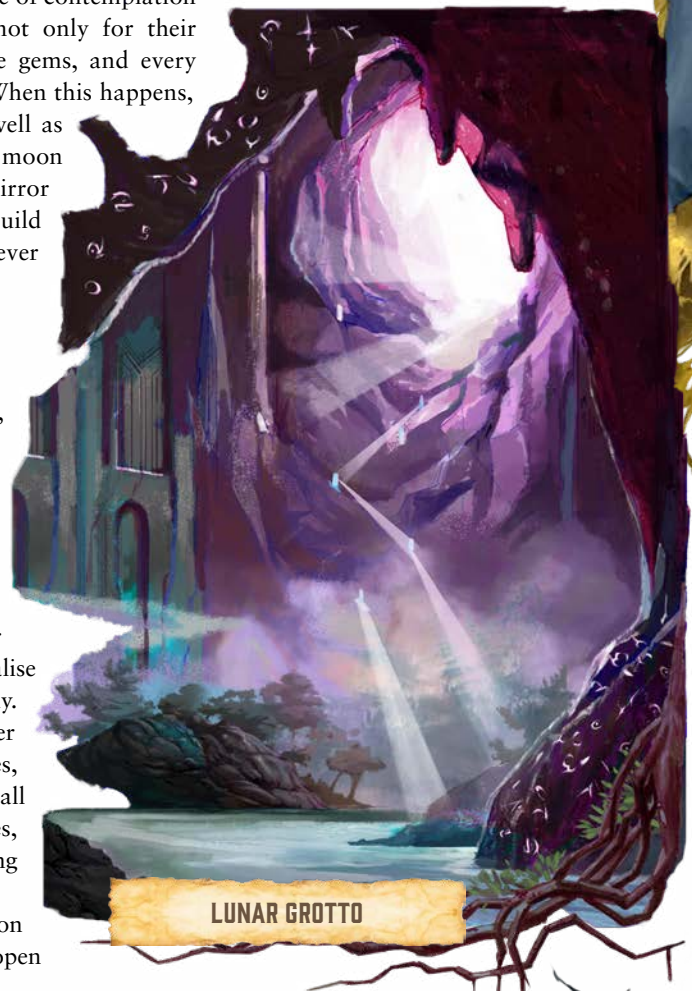
Analise is much easier to deal with, with her office on the ground floor of Orerote Tower and her door always open

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

While all of Highhelm answers to the High King and the government in King's Crown, as a practical matter, both crown and state are too removed to directly manage the affairs of King's Heart. The day-to-day running of the Heart is largely left to the Longhall and its elected magistrates.

The bureaucracy of the Longhall is largely self-sustaining with little input from King's Crown. It's currently run by **Secretary Janus Tolorr** (LG female dwarf bureaucrat). She manages appointments and promotions within the cogs of government, while those under her deal with all of the paperwork and permits involved in running the city.

Meanwhile, addressing the needs of the people is left to their magistrates. King's Heart is subdivided into several dozen neighborhoods, and each of those neighborhoods is entrusted to elect a magistrate how they see fit. The magistrates then report to the Longhall, which issues gold for projects as needed.



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RIVETHUN

Once, eons ago, the dwarven people worshipped no gods. Their faith was instead placed in the world around them, and the spirits that inhabited all things. They taught their children to speak with the spirits and to pay respect to the forces of other worlds while remaining wary of them. They used this knowledge for the good of all, allowing the spirits to guide them towards food and water, away from danger, as the whispers of the stone urged them to climb higher and higher.

Then Torag came and claimed the dwarves' worship for himself and his family. He claimed that it was his voice, not the spirits, that commanded them to dig towards the sky. He claimed that dwarvenkind was not born of the earth, but of his forge. And the people believed him, and the old ways died out.

This is the story the Rivethun tell.

by policy. The friendly halfling often serves as the face of the Watch, dealing directly with witnesses and victims as well as handling the contracting of mercenaries for larger operations.

7. THE SILVER STALLS

MARKET VENUE

Ironwell's streets don't hurt for storefronts by any means, but there are many more crafters than commercial space. This is where the Silver Stalls come in. They're an open-air marketplace where anyone can bring their wares to sell, often at a discount compared to more settled merchants. The numerous rows of stalls, some permanent fixtures and other put up and taken down by renters on a day-to-day basis, offer everything from weapons and alchemy to cookware and cleaning supplies, and nothing is in the same place two days in a row. Metal products have been dwindling lately due to shortages, unfortunately, but that's led to a boom in textiles and art pieces.

Of course, nothing comes without a price, and **Lindy Mischvelk** (LE female dwarf landlord), the owner of the Stalls, happily takes a cut of everyone's profits. The terms of renting from Lindy aren't strictly unfair, and she mostly keeps her hands off of the workings of each stall, but she also strongly "encourages" her stalls to conform to certain business practice. Hagglng is quietly if begrudgingly accepted, as is undercutting neighbors and other cutthroat business practices frowned on everywhere else in Highhelm. For her own part, Lindy is also happy to extend lines of credit to help the Stall's customers, although she underplays the exorbitant interest rates and the "collections agents" she keeps on retainer to shake down late payers.

8. THE LONGHALL

MUNICIPAL

Second only to the Forge of the Nine as one of Crystalborough's most prominent structures, this building serves double duty as both the center of local governance in King's Heart and the neutral ground upon which almost all major inter-clan dealings occur. Dozens of bureaucrats pour in from Obsidian and Goldgate every morning to perform the d riveting duties of approving building permits, conducting tax audits, and reviewing inspection reports. Though the Longhall has a reputation as a home for "washouts" who couldn't make it in a proper trade, and most either scoff or express sympathy at those resigned to the drudgery, the fine people working at the Longhall couldn't disagree more; there's power that comes from the pen, and the pay isn't bad either.

The smooth inner workings of dwarven bureaucracy are only rarely disturbed by heated arguments and debate. The clans only meet here for the most serious issues, and thanks to the skilled assistance of **Oliban Proslin** (LN dwarf genderfluid negotiator), the Longhall's chief arbitrator, those discussions rarely get out of hand. Oliban's hands have been rather full as tensions over Torag's Shield and the Rivethun "problem" have continued to flare, and they've found it more and more difficult to keep the peace. In particular,



THE LONGHALL

Clan Molgrade have been coming under fire from several other clans for the distribution decisions made by the Metalmaker's Union.

9. FORGE OF THE NINE

MONUMENT TEMPLE

The Forge of the Nine is the largest temple in Highhelm. It resembles a ship's wheel from above, with nine spokes branching off of a central congregation chamber. Each spoke is dedicated to one of the nine most commonly worshipped gods in the dwarven pantheon, including Torag and his eight best-known immediate family members. Each spoke is overseen by a high priest, who together compose a powerful religious council called the Nine-Eyed Hammer. Considering the complicated, often fiery relationships between the dwarven gods themselves, it's perhaps unsurprising that the Nine-Eyed Hammer is one of Highhelm's least cohesive factions. The one thing the high priests always manage to agree on, at least, is a mutual distrust of anyone who venerates the evil outcast of the dwarven pantheon, Droskar, referred to in the church as the Tenth Spoke.

Relations with the Rivethun are more complicated, and a frequent subject of debate. Most of the high priests are rather ambivalent, but **High Priestess Vanth Orridus** (LN dwarf cleric of Torag) and **High Priest Arridor Orridus** (LG dwarf cleric of Folgrit) have spent decades clashing, accruing and cashing in favors to try and sway the church's official stance. Vanth, still furious and bitter over her son's defection from the church, pushes for the Rivethuns to be branded as heretics outright and driven from the city. Arridor, meanwhile, struggles against his cousin to avoid completely alienating those sympathetic to the growing religion. He hopes to reunite the estranged parent and child, and maintain his clan's traditions of tolerance, acceptance, and leading by example rather than proselytization.

10. STONEFIST HALL

GARRISON RESIDENCE

At first glance, Stonefist Hall might look more like a fortress than a clan hall, and that's because it is. The hall is the largest compound in Obsidian, its borders marked by ten-foot stone walls, steel gates, and armed security at each of those gates. Inside, the marked paths are the only safe place to walk; stepping off of them risks triggering the hall's myriad defenses, from traps to alarms to trained guard beasts. At the center of the property, a thick, squat building stands ready to take in those who need shelter. Stonefist Hall was built as an emergency shelter first and a clan hall second. Inside the main building are wide, spacious rooms that can shelter hundreds of dwarves in the event of an invasion. One level beneath that, storerooms are filled with stockpiles of water, nonperishable food and medical supplies. And once you go deeper, then you reach the real clanhall.

Settled deep below ground, roughly between King's Heart and Stonebreach, the War Rooms of Stonefist Hall serve as training grounds, military base, and residences for most of the families living in the Hall. The training facilities are some of the most advanced in the world, utilizing magic to simulate any kind of environment or enemies that a soldier might encounter. Secret tunnels lead down into various key strategic points in Stonebreach allowing for a quick deployment in the event of a ground invasion. While anyone is welcome into the top-level building, where Clanleader Usturr Stonefist (page 40) makes himself available, the lower levels are strictly off limits to anyone not of Clan Stonefist.

11. IRONGRADE STEELWORKS

FORGE MUNICIPAL WORKSHOP

Millennia ago this massive building was carved into the very walls of King's Heart to serve as the workshop of Bruto Molgrade and Senathyn Ironfist,

A TASTE OF THE FIRE PLANE

Burntown's heat can charitably be called "uncomfortable" for most Highhelm natives, but for those willing to brave it, they can get a sample of some of the Plane of Fire's more unusual goods. Some of the most popular establishments include the following.

Fireside: Burntown's premiere tavern, the Fireside sits right on the edge of the Iron Lagoon. Offering drinks (both flaming and not), food (less spicy than Ember's) and traditional Plane of Fire bar games, Fireside is the most authentic experience you'll get without literally being on fire.

Ifrit Imports: Looking for elemental scamp-blown glass? Functional obsidian weapons? Bottled flames from the heart of the sun? Look no further than Ifrit Imports, the only importer in Golarion with a direct line to the City of Brass. At least, so say the advertisements.

Ember's: The salamander Emraki of the Unbound Forge, or "Ember" as the locals know him, primarily caters to Fire Plane natives at his restaurant but also keeps a separate menu for other visitors. Anyone who demands the main menu is offered the house's spiciest soup, which is usually enough to stop such requests.

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THE OTHER LAYERS

The people of King's Heart take great pride in their layer, but that cannot be said for how they feel about Highhelm as a whole. The average resident works for long hours with their hands every day. When they look at King's Crown, they see a bunch of intellectuals, merchants, and wealthy dwarves who do nothing but count their money. Conversely, Stonebreach is viewed with a mix of respect, condescension, and irritation. Respect, for the hard work they do in the largest and busiest layer, condescension, because the Heart does just as much hard work—only more efficiently, and irritation, as those in King's Heart often see their taxes benefit Stonebreachers who aren't as capable of supporting themselves.

the founders of their respective clans. After their deaths, rather than fight for ownership, their two clans donated the building to the Metalmaker's Union, and it now serves as their base of operations. The regular administration overseeing every smith, smelter, and mining cooperative in Highhelm happens right here. Petitioners to the union are often invited here to speak directly to Boss Finedad Molgrade (page 63) about their needs, as well as outside contractors hired to take care of the union's problems.

In addition to being an administrative center, the Steelworks also offers its workspaces to any union member in need of them. Dozens of forges and smelters are available for very affordable rent, though they're often booked weeks in advance. An entire division of the building has also been set aside for metallurgical research under the watchful eye of head metallurgist **Liol Breakiron** (NE female dwarf alchemist). This arrangement has come under question in recent years, particularly the amount of funds and resources being redirected here as well as the secrecy with which they conduct their operations. These concerns have been allayed by assurances that this research is being performed for the good of the union as a whole, assurances backed by the number of breakthroughs made in the last century that have advanced Highhelm's metalwork. Of course, some detractors are still quick to point out how many advancements Boss Molgrade's own businesses have made in that same time.

12. FERRIXION BOTANICAL GARDENS

MONUMENT VENUE

The simple fact about plants is that they require sunlight to grow, which is why most newcomers to King's Heart are confused on arrival at Ferrixion Botanical Gardens. A sprawling ode to nature, the park is filled with plant life that looks incredibly out of place in a sunless cave but nevertheless thrives. There's no primal magic maintaining these plants save the basic enchantments that you might find at any garden.

The story of the Ferrixion Botanical Gardens goes back to 4412 AR, when **Willard Ferrixion** (N male gnome gardener) moved to King's Heart with a wagon full of seedlings and a dream. He purchased a large plot of land in Crystalborough, a scandalous move at the time, and used it to plant an extensive collection of sunless flora and fungi. The gardens introduced King's Heart to the resilient fungal grass sharo, trees and bushes that feed on charcoal instead of sunlight, flowers that thrive on heat, meat, and even a single beam of moonlight donated through a complex series of tiny mirrors by the nearby Lunar Grotto. These and dozens of other forms of plant life thrive in the darkness of King's Heart, and have become iconic to worshippers of the Nine, druids, and Rivethun shamans alike. Willard offers entry to the gardens free of charge, though he does accept donations of gold and potential new entries to the gardens from any patrons. It's become a popular place for first dates, birthdays, weddings, and wakes, as well as just wandering around on a break to unwind in the middle of a hard workday.

13. RIDORAN LENDING AND INVESTMENT

BANK CRIMINAL

Argus Ridoran (CG male hryngar banker) operates one of the shadier businesses in King's Heart. It's an open secret that his bank is used by criminal elements to move money around. While the guard has never produced enough evidence to prove it, the clientele aren't exactly subtle. Rumors abound about Argus himself, including the scandalous accusation that he isn't a dwarf but a hryngar in disguise, but the infamously private



FORGE OF THE NINE

man never speaks to anyone about non-business matters long enough to confirm or deny it.

The reality is that Argus is a hryngar, and his questionable business actually serves as a front for an even more scandalous enterprise: a smuggling operation dedicated to bringing hryngar from the Darklands into Highhelm, disguising them as dwarves, and forging their documentation so they can live in Highhelm society. Argus's money laundering operation only serves to fund these endeavors. Far from any conspiracy theorist's worst nightmare, however, Argus's organization is entirely benevolent in nature. The hryngar he brings to Highhelm aren't secret Droskar worshippers bent on overthrowing the city from within, but refugees fleeing a society they don't wish to be a part of anymore.

14. IRON LAGOON

EMPLOYER HOUSING WORKSHOP

Heat is the norm in King's Heart, but it only goes up the deeper you venture into Ironwell, and at its heart, the Iron Lagoon burns like a furnace. The Lagoon is a densely packed stone villa that plays host to the vast majority of the city's forges and blacksmithing workshops, all built on top of a rift to the Elemental Plane of Fire. A machine beneath the surface of the Lagoon pumps fire and heat in its purest form to every building within, as well as to those throughout the city willing to pay for getting connected to the heat supply (steadily costing more the further away one lives). All this is managed by **Flamemaster Mazeri Darn** (N male salamander foreman), one of the first elemental immigrants to the city and master of the Iron Lagoon. Between the intense heat and constant deluge of hammers striking metal, few are willing to visit here often. Even the dwarves who work in the Iron Lagoon, their bodies adapted to the intense, muggy heat, are always eager to leave by the end of a workday, leaving only those most inured to the heat working through the night.

In addition to the heat source for the city's forges, the rift in the Iron Lagoon serves as a passage through which fire elementals can travel. A checkpoint stands at each side of the rift, guarded by naari, geniekin of fire, from the Heart's Watch. Traffic through the portal is infrequent—elementals rarely have business in the Material Plane and vice versa—but every so often traders will pass through looking for high quality wares to sell in the City of Brass, and messengers from wealthy patrons are sent to ifrit nobles requesting favors.

15. HIGH KING'S FORGE

FORGE MERCHANT WORKSHOP

One of Highhelm's most widely accepted facts is that Clan Molgrade's smiths are the gold standard, the best the city has to offer. **Forgemaster Hokrani Witchrivet** (NG female dwarf crafter) is the single greatest argument that could be made against that. As an immigrant pilgrim from Rolgrimmdur, Hokrani's

arrival in Ironwell some hundred years ago was met with little fanfare, she being one of dozens every year who quietly move into the city and make a modest living. It wasn't until a visiting adventuring party emerged from an excursion into the Darklands singing praises of the weapons and armor they'd purchased at a tiny little forge at the heart of the Iron Lagoon that anyone paid attention to the woman who would become Highhelm's most sought-after smith.

Despite its grandiose name, High King's Forge is a humble establishment, barely large enough to fit all of Hokrani's materials and equipment. She and her apprentice, **Finch** (CG agender human urchin) work alone. Between Hokrani's slow, methodical process and the incredible acclaim she's accrued, actually getting a commission from her is nearly impossible, with a waiting list nearly sixty-five years long. She is, however, always in need of rare materials for her work, and has been known to give her suppliers priority for particularly unique donations.

16. BURNTOWN

NEIGHBORHOOD

The buildings immediately surrounding the Iron Lagoon form a small residential subdistrict referred to by most as Burntown, in reference to its residents. Burntown is home to most of Highhelm's "fire-aligned individuals" (as referred to in the census). Dwarven naari, fire elementals, salamanders, scamps, and even a small number of ifrits live in the stone apartments and townhouses that make up Burntown. Stores also fill this little neighborhood, partially for convenience but also to provide goods from the Fire Plane that wouldn't be stocked, or appreciated, by the rest of King's Heart.

Fire-aligned individuals aren't the only ones who enjoy the heat of Burntown either. A few centuries ago, a group of fire-worshipping Iruxi made a pilgrimage to Highhelm and settled down here, looking to be close to the source of their faith. Currently led by **High Priest Ashva Nikthalion** (N nonbinary iruxi monk), they maintain a sizable presence and strong relations with their elemental neighbors, even if those relationships occasionally require reaffirmed boundaries, as most elementals don't want their next-door neighbors sacrificing animals to them.

Most others tend not to wander into Burntown, unable to take the heat, and its locals don't have much reason to leave it often, resulting in its reputation as an insular community that keeps away from the wider King's Heart. This reputation isn't entirely inaccurate, but it's also not entirely accurate either. It is, however, encouraged by Magistrate **Binar Goldhammer** (CE male naari dwarf druid), a member of the Circle of Four and the duly elected leader of Burntown. Magistrate Goldhammer has enjoyed the relative privacy that comes with Burntown's isolation, and has subtly worked to suppress the efforts of those looking to share a taste of the Plane of Fire with the good folks Highhelm.

KING'S HEART OPTIONS

Characters seeking new items and options within King's Heart might enjoy a meal at the Copper Anvil or could learn a few new tricks in the area's workshops and parlors.

BACKGROUND

The following background is available to all characters.

UNION REPRESENTATIVE

BACKGROUND

You might have fought for fairer ore distribution for the Metalmaker's Union, higher chef's pay in the Provisioners' Union, or better mercenary contracts for the Union of Axe and Coin. Whatever the case, you have experience in the high-stakes world of the negotiating table, experience that translates surprisingly well to adventuring.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Intelligence or Charisma, the other is a free boost.

You're trained in the Diplomacy skill and the Legal Lore skill. You gain the Contract Negotiator skill feat.

IRONWELL INNOVATIONS

For thousands of years, the dwarves of Ironwell have developed and perfected the craft of crafting.

What's more, they've mastered the art of cooperation, competition, and innovation. While many of their creations, from magic weapon to runes to new weapon designs quickly spread throughout the world, the techniques used to manufacture things so effectively remain closely guarded by community agreement. The following options available to characters who learn techniques from the people of King's Heart.

NEW SKILL FEATS

The workers of Ironwell have developed a number of techniques to help them with their tasks.

CONTRACT NEGOTIATOR

FEAT 1

GENERAL SKILL

Prerequisites trained in Legal Lore

Your experience with bargaining and deciding terms as part of Highhelm's guilds helps you make deals in other situations. When negotiating deals or agreements, you can use Legal Lore in place of Diplomacy to Make an Impression or a Request, even if there is no legal framework under which you are negotiating. If you are an expert in Diplomacy, you gain a +1 circumstance bonus to these checks; if you are a master in Diplomacy, this increases to +2, and +3 if you are legendary.

VICIOUS CRITIQUE

FEAT 1

UNCOMMON GENERAL SKILL

Prerequisites trained in Crafting and Intimidation

Trigger You are about to attempt to Coerce a merchant or crafter.

You have an eye for detail and a mouth for pointing out flaws, which makes it all the easier to convince the merchants and crafters of King's Heart to help you. You quickly analyze the triggering creature's wares in hopes of finding something useful in your coercion and attempt a Crafting check.

Critical Success You have plenty to work with and can leave your target shocked with your analysis. If you a roll a success on your Intimidation check, you get a critical success instead. If you roll a critical failure, you get a failure instead.

Success As critical success, but you only gain the benefits when rolling a success on your Intimidation check.

Failure You misjudge the wares, which makes you come across as unknowledgeable and less intimidating. You take a -1 circumstance penalty to your Intimidation check to Coerce.

Critical Failure As failure, but the penalty is -2.

COOPERATIVE CRAFTING

FEAT 2

UNCOMMON GENERAL SKILL

Prerequisites expert in Crafting

You've learned to make the most of working with others on your crafting projects, a must when working with the various guilds of Highhelm. If an ally is attempting to Aid you with



DWARF GAMBLER

your Crafting, you ignore the -1 circumstance penalty if they roll a critical failure. If an ally also has the Cooperative Crafting feat, you can choose to pool your resources and work on the same item together; you can only work with 1 ally in this way. Both of you attempt a Crafting check on the same item; if you both succeed, reduce the minimum time to craft the item by 1 day. When determining the level of item you and your ally can craft, you use the higher of your level or your ally's level plus 1. If you attempt to Craft an item that's a higher level than either of you and one of you fails, both checks become critical failures instead.

MASTER OF APPRENTICE

FEAT 7

UNCOMMON GENERAL SKILL

Prerequisites master in Crafting, Performance, or a Lore skill Teaching is a difficult art form, but you've gotten a pretty good handle on it. When you Craft or Earn Income during downtime, you can also attempt to Aid another creature doing the same with the same skill if they have a lower proficiency bonus than you. If you succeed, they can use the better result between your check and their own check.

NEW SPELL

The following spell was developed by the smiths of Ironwell and has become common throughout Highhelm.

FORGE

SPELL 1

UNCOMMON EVOCATION FIRE

Traditions arcane, primal

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 30 feet; **Target** 1 creature or unattended metal object

Saving Throw Fortitude

Developed before the introduction of the Iron Lagoon, this cantrip for superheating metal has also found valuable combat use. You superheat the target, dealing 3d6 fire damage. If the target is a metal object, reduce its Hardness by an amount equal to the damage dealt until the end of your next turn.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target takes half damage.

Failure The target takes full damage.

Critical Failure The target takes double damage, and if it's a metal creature, it gains weakness 2 to physical damage until the end of your next turn.

Heightened (+1) The damage increases by 2d6, and the weakness on a critical failure increases by 2.

THE NIGHTLIFE OF THE HEART

For how loud it is during the day, the nights in King's Heart are surprisingly calm and quiet. That by no means suggests that everyone goes home for a quiet night in, of course. At Lucky Lairee's, locals and visitors alike crowd the tables, eager to pass the time and spend some money, with any of the myriad games Gizmit Rocknasher has

to offer. On the other side of town, the Copper Anvil offers amazing food at affordable prices, and Sanra Copperstone is always happy to share her recipes with anyone polite enough to ask. The following options are available to characters visiting King's Heart.

NEW SKILL FEAT

The gamblers at Lucky Lairee's always have a new trick to learn.

WHAT'S THAT UP YOUR SLEEVE?

FEAT 2

UNCOMMON GENERAL SKILL

Prerequisites expert in Gambling Lore

Whether as a dealer or player, you've learned to spot cheaters. When another creature attempts to Conceal an Object from you, use your Gambling Lore DC if it's higher than your Perception DC to determine whether they succeed. When you search a creature for a concealed object, you can use Gambling Lore in place of Perception.

SANRA'S RECIPES

The following are just a few of the meals you can buy at the Copper Anvil. Sanra can usually pack up a meal in the form of tapas—small, bite-sized portions that are quick and easy to consume.

GRINDLEGRUB STEAK

ITEM 4

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE

Price 20 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate 1 minute (interact)

Fried grindlegrub is a common street food in Highhelm, but Sanra has elevated the dish to something almost gourmet for such pedestrian fare, bringing out both the height of its flavor and its natural energy boosting properties. You do not need to eat for three days after consuming a grindlegrub steak, and for that duration you gain a +1 item bonus to Fortitude saving throws against fatigue and the drained condition.



GRINDLEGRUB STEAK

IRONDUST STEW

ITEM 4

UNCOMMON ABJURATION CONSUMABLE MAGICAL

Price 15 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

This hearty meat-and-potato stew has an unusual shine to it and seems to sparkle when it catches the right light. That's because it's been infused with a specially treated iron dust, which Sanra Copperstone promises will strengthen the bones and make for healthier skin. Eating this delicious, if metallic, stew adds that same sheen to your own skin, while also hardening it. You gain 3 resistance to physical damage for 1 minute, but take a -2 item penalty to Acrobatics and Athletics checks during that time.

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STONEBREACH

Stonebreach, the district that runs throughout the bottom layer of Highhelm, is a place of contradictions. Named for the only entrance to Highhelm by road, it is both cosmopolitan and insular, a place where the diligent farmers and cleaners that labor in the backdrop of Highhelm live side-by-side with enterprising merchants and traders from distant lands. Breachers, as most locals call themselves, take pride in this, seeing Stonebreach as an essential crossroads between the surface and the rest of Highhelm—a place where residents are a bit more open and less traditional than in the rest of the city and where personal passions are as important as the work done for city and clan.

Home to dwarves who work essential but less visible or glorious jobs, Stonebreach is full of dwarves who take pride in their work but are defined by their interests. As the workday ends, laborers express their creativity as performers, cleaners release stress as brawlers, and grindlegrub pit workers help to solve petty disputes. This can make for long hours, and between the steady stream of travelers coming through the district on their way to and from the rest of Highhelm, and the desire of many Breachers to make as much as they can out of their free time, the district is usually humming with some sort of activity, no matter the time of day.

Part of Stonebreach's energy comes from its central market, the Roundabout, which sits just past the city entrance and has not closed in over a century except during its daily trading pause at blacknoon. The merchants here are primarily non-dwarves who live in Breachborn, the neighborhood immediately adjacent to the market. Unlike other Breachers, Stonebreach's merchants and traders tend to spend their downtime enjoying the fruits of their labors. Highhelm is a trade-friendly city, and the allowances made for noncitizens who bring, sell, and trade goods from the surface combined with Stonebreach's cheaper housing and goods give them the means to live in relative luxury. This does not go unnoticed by the rest of Stonebreach, where residents live on much tighter margins. Dwarven Breachers call the stark difference between themselves and the merchants with access to money and resources "the waydown," and fluctuate between finding it a necessary evil to accept and an oppressive reality to rebel against.

In calm times, relations between the merchants and the rest of Stonebreach are friendly and mutually beneficial. Money from merchants and travelers makes its way into Stonebreach in as many ways as Breachers can figure out how to get it. Breachers encourage residents and visitors alike to bet on the area's regular organized brawls; visit dwarven restaurants, barber shops, and tattoo parlors in hard-scrabble but welcoming Bonerun; take tours of the ancient artwork carved into the walls surrounding the staid streets of Etcherie; and attend raucous creative events where generous tips are highly encouraged at the Drop. Merchants, in turn, enjoy their easy access to good food, art, and entertainment at reasonable prices. Despite this,

tensions between the two sides of Stonebreach occasionally boil over—usually in response to a change in policy from Highhelm leadership that makes "the waydown" that much worse—into organized Breacher actions that interfere with trade enough to force concessions either from the merchants or Highhelm leaders.

Some Breachers, of course, find ways to get money from merchants and visitors in more unscrupulous ways. The loose confederacy of thieves that works the Roundabout and Clamber Plaza is always looking for visitors to separate from their coin, and trouble can frequently be found in the back corner of the Spilldown, a transient neighborhood that is a dangerous mix of ambition and desperation—home both to those looking for a foothold on their way up in the world and those who are barely staying afloat on the way down.

Whatever problems may arise in Stonebreach, though, most go unknown and unseen by the rest of the city. Breachers like taking care of their own on their own, whether that means creating the Fightbreakers, a group whose job it is to stop any disagreements or tension from turning into violence, or secretly plundering the monster-infested Dying Range for left-behind goods despite the clear warning from the Emperor's Watch to steer clear. There's a reason that the largest organized brawl in the city is in Stonebreach, and that the Warrens' artist community can stage regular creative bacchanals next to the layer's primary source of water. The lack of notice given to Stonebreach by the rest of the city much of the time gives the place a feeling of freedom and a lifeblood all its own.

But there are downsides to standing apart. The entrance to the further depths of Emperor's Peak and eventually the Darklands is located in Stonebreach, though many have forgotten about how close its dangers are to daily city life. As new threats begin to stir below, a few Breachers have raised the alarm, but their voices have gone largely ignored by the city. This is one threat that Stonebreach may not be able to handle on its own, despite Breacher bravado, and outsiders' reluctance to get involved in something seen as a Stonebreach matter may have large consequences for Highhelm as a whole.

PEOPLE

Stonebreach features a number of important movers and shakers. The following are some of the more notable figures.

Saira Bizzilin (CG female gnome merchant) is a semi-retired merchant from the Roundabout's oldest and most successful permanent shop, For the Road. She heads the alliance of non-dwarven merchants in Stonebreach known as the Mercantile. Saira has been a resident of Highhelm since she stumbled into the city in her youth over a century ago, and amuses herself by helping her fellow merchants succeed, keeping them on their toes, and balancing the needs of the merchants, Highhelm's

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power brokers, and her Breacher neighbors. Careful never to let her work overtake her sense of fun, she keeps an eye out for unique purchases in the market, and has procured a small collection of finds that she sometimes slips into the bags of unsuspecting travelers who catch her eye.

Thera Heartslip (CN female dwarf thief) is the owner of several Spilldown lodging houses catering to temporary visitors to the city, but the real source of her income is theft. Though she built her reputation and wealth with a series of bold thefts known as the Blacknoon Heists, she now outsources crime, offering free lodging to anyone who brings in stolen valuables. She then uses the stolen goods to decorate her lodgings, hiding them in plain sight using runes to disguise them as stylish but common objects. This brazenness has only added to her reputation, and she remains the person to contact for those needing to find hard-to-procure illicit items or separate a person from a prized possession.

Famed brawler **Scythe Jaberil** (LG nonbinary dwarf fighter) gained their skills by defending themselves against bullies in their youth and honed them bullying others a few years later, but after seeing someone accidentally killed during a petty dispute, they decided to restrict their fighting to organized events. They also helped to build the Fightbreakers, Stonebreach's unofficial keepers of the peace, who monitor the district for any trouble and settle it outside of the view of the Emperor's Watch. Now ready for a new challenge, they've turned their interest to protecting Highhelm from outside threats, organizing sorties into the Dying Range and the Depths to be prepared for potential attacks.

Clan Lasthall leader **Adessa Lasthall** (CG female dwarf mediator) first traveled to Highhelm after her work as a mediator brought her from her home base in Kibwe to Avistan. Feeling slightly ill-at-ease around many of the city's dwarves, who are much more traditionalist than her Taralu clan, she found kindred spirits in Clan Lasthall's mix of dwarves from lost clans and faraway cities—only to be frustrated by the difficulties clan members found securing work not already allocated to other clans. She's since devoted herself to ensuring that Clan Lasthall dwarves gain influence and greater recognition in Highhelm, even if it means behaving a bit less diplomatically than she's used to.

Bennik Vanderholl (LN male dwarf archivist) prides himself on being the most well-informed person in Stonebreach, if not all of Highhelm. While his primary job is as a muleteer, his position in the Vanderholl clan has given him access to a wealth of information, which he tracks meticulously in his downtime, keeping detailed records of influential residents that range from romantic liaisons to eating preferences. His immersion in the archive makes him a font of information, though he never shares it directly, leaving those around him to puzzle through the mention of a name or obscure fact that later turns out to have predicted anything from the winner of the next Breacher Brawl to a shift in power between clans.

CURRENT EVENTS

The cost of constructing Torag's Shield has led to increases in taxes for Highhelm citizens and additional allowances for the noncitizen merchants whose trade helps to support the project, exacerbating what Breachers call "the waydown"—the difference in the quality of life between long-time Breachers and the merchants who benefit from Highhelm's preferential trade policies. During good times, Breachers see the waydown as a mark of their ability to survive no matter the cost, but these are not good times. Several Roundabout shops and stalls have been ransacked or vandalized, including For the Road, owned by influential merchant Saira Bizzilin. Each time, a distinctive symbol has been found in the vicinity, burned into the shop or stall wall. No one has been able to identify it.

Saira has demanded that the culprits be found, but their identities remain a secret. The best lead is the local paper from Yrisette's Inkwell, which frequently publishes scathing opinion pieces about city and market policies. Recently, some of these have been signed with the same symbol left at the

LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS

While one-quarter of Highhelm's population lives in Stonebreach, a third of the district is made up of residents without any dwarven ancestry, primarily concentrated in the neighborhoods of Spilldown and Breachborn. Ancestries common among these residents include humans, half-elves, and gnomes, with smaller populations of amurruns and kobolds living life in the district's shadows. Stonebreach's dwarven residents are also fairly diverse, with about a third of either Ergaksen or Grondaksen heritage in addition to the large Holtaksen population.

These numbers only include permanent residents—those who have lived in Highhelm for at least a full year. Given Stonebreach's position at the entrance to Highhelm, and the number of traders and travelers who pass through on any given day, it often seems as if the split between dwarven and non-dwarven populations is more equal, and as if the district has closer to 16,000 residents than its official count.



BENNIK VANDERHOLL

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LOCAL FLORA

Lovebites' red blossoms can be found along the edges of lesser-traveled Stonebreach paths. While their beautiful petals sting the hand when touched, they can be distilled into the sweet drink that shares their name, often offered to a prospective partner to show a willingness to brave the pains of love.

Thieves' Grass, a colorless variant of the lichen used to make breather walls, traps and absorbs both light and sound, making the rooms it grows in dim and partially soundproof. Able to spread quickly on stone walls and floors if uncontrolled, Thieves' Grass is often planted in places where privacy is paramount.

Dark gray mushrooms called smokebulbs, prized for their robust flavor and lingering spiciness, are cultivated throughout Stonebreach, where the lack of natural light helps them to thrive. Many Breachers have a private patch, grinding them at home to make the common table spice dark pepper.

LOCAL FAUNA

Scrabblers were first introduced to Highhelm by builders who used the rodents' tunneling skills to check the soundness of potential new excavations. Unfortunately, they proved impossible to eradicate afterward, becoming both a nuisance and a threat to the integrity of existing cave structures.

Sun owls are one of the only natural predators of scrabblers, and are thus well-liked by Breachers. Several nest in sections of the Warrens, creating an eerie effect as their glowing eyes light up empty rooms. A few local artists have thought to use this in their creative work, but the owls refuse to follow commands, leading to the local expression "stubborn as a sunbird."

The small ground bats known as leafliers are most often found roosting in piles in the corners of Stonebreach caverns. While they appear to be clutter when still, they move rapidly once disturbed and are sometimes stirred up by pickpockets looking to distract potential marks.

scene of the targeted shops, but publisher and tattoo artist Yrisette refuses to reveal that Clanleader Adessa Lasthall is the one writing them. Yrisette correctly guesses that Adessa is not the one behind the attacks and believes the clanleader is simply using the situation to get Breachers to pay attention to her issues with current Highhelm policy.

Saira has offered large rewards for anyone with information on the attacks or the symbol left behind. She's also asked the Stone Officers to increase patrols of the Roundabout and the adjoining Breachborn and Spilldown neighborhoods to prevent further attacks. While this has been effective so far, the guards' presence has put many Breachers on edge. Artists of the Warrens fear a crackdown on their raucous creative shows, and Spilldown residents who use the transient nature of the neighborhood as a cover to skirt the law are similarly unhappy. It also may be driving whoever is responsible for the market attacks into new, more surreptitious actions like the recent sabotaging of the local water supply and thefts at both of the district's major clanhalls.

Unfortunately for thief Thera Heartslip, the increase in guard patrols is directly affecting her business. With her supply of stolen items drying up, she's begun recruiting hard-luck cases from around Spilldown for trips into the Dying Range or Depths tunnels to scavenge for interesting goods. Three have disappeared—a disgraced member of Clan Aringeld, a brawler trying to prove himself to Oxkon Titan Killer at Bloodknuckle Crib, and a promising artist looking to earn extra money to fund her experimental "living art" show featuring dyed and trained grindlegrubs. Thera is doing her best to make sure that these disappearances can't be linked back to her.

If Scythe Jaberil knew of Thera's missing explorers, they'd have proof that something is coming from the Darklands. Their recent forays into the area haven't revealed any specific threat, but odd markings in the tunnels seem to suggest that something lurks below, waiting for the right moment to strike. While Scythe has alerted the Emperor's Watch about the threat and attempted to spread the word at their older sibling's barber shop, Clips, the more pressing issue of the market attacks has taken everyone's attention, leaving Stonebreach largely unprepared for any unexpected invasion.

LOCATIONS

The following are some of the more notable locations within Stonebreach.

1. THE DROP

ATTRACTION GROTTO VENUE

This large aquifer draws most of its water from the Endless Reservoir in King's Heart, though countless tunneling projects have also exposed other subterranean sources of water that are redirected here. While the grotto in the center of the Drop is the main source of water for Stonebreach, the cavern is known as much for its acoustics as its aquifer. Artists from the Warrens regularly use it as a performance space for the creative free-for-all they call Expressions, which range from poetry circles to communal dances. While the performers and audience are always careful to keep their activities away from the water itself, a recent local outbreak of the waterborne illness twistgut led to demands to move the popular events elsewhere in the district (though no other neighborhood seems eager to host them).

The twistgut outbreak also brought tension to the normally cooperative artist community, with blame shifting between the Stone Drummers Collaborative led by **Jargin Tapatitl** (N male dwarven laborer), whose jam sessions have been known to shake the Drop's walls, and **Vala Silan** (N female dwarven grub processor), whose gravity-defying wheelchair aerial performances often glide just above the grotto's surface. Only the recent discovery that the illnesses may have been caused by deliberate sabotage instead of careless contamination has begun to heal the rift, bringing the two together in their vow to find the culprit.

2. YRISSETTE'S INKWELL

PARLOR WORKSHOP

Yrisette (CG female catfolk tattoo artist) may have trained as a tattoo artist, but her love of ink cannot be confined to a single surface, and the Inkwell now functions as a combination tattoo parlor and printing press. On the tattoo side of the shop, Yrisette primarily works with mundane ink, offering tattoos to dwarves looking to mark an accomplishment or honor their clan, but after a traveler from Absalom brought word of arcane tattoos, she has been diligently studying how to create magic varieties.

Yrisette reserves the back of her shop for a small printing press she acquired on her travels before settling in Highhelm, which she uses to print a regular pamphlet on life in Stonebreach. Usually, the Inkwell has a combination of local rumors: intriguing items for sale mentioned in the Mercantile; a running list of lost, found, and stolen items; and upcoming creative Expressions at the Drop. But in recent days, Yrisette has begun including scathing opinion pieces, some of which appear to be tied directly to the recent market attacks. Backlash from this decision has been swift, with rumors spreading that she has been using printer ink on her clients' tattoos and a threatening note written on the back of one of her issues and nailed to the door of her shop.

3. COMMON GOODS

WORKSHOP

While technically a Clan Breakiron workshop, Common Goods has largely been forgotten by the innovative clan, as it focuses on simple inventions that improve everyday life. Workshop manager **Danila Kenn** (CN female dwarf inventor) has never had any ambitions of great discoveries, instead holding regular fix-it fetes where anyone in Stonebreach can share a small annoyance that they think could be solved through the development of a new tool or substance. Danila adds these to a running list of challenges tackled by her team—a group of volunteers with no real training in alchemy or engineering who enjoy tinkering in their spare time.

Over the years, Common Goods has had several small successes, innovating new methods of food storage, more effective cleaning solvents, and what Danila calls “a love potion for grindlegrubs,” among other useful inventions. She manufactures these on a small scale in the basement of the workshop with the help of her partner **Depa Stepwell** (N female dwarf tinkerer), providing them to shopkeepers at the Roundabout in small quantities. While the two can normally handle demand, there has been a clamor for Common Goods' most recent creation, grub gloves. Created to help laborers soothe damage to their hands while restoring energy for after-hours pursuits, they have become a hot item for travelers and created a dilemma for Danila and Depa, who are running low on supplies and need a new source of materials to keep up with demand.

4. CLIPS

EMPLOYER PARLOR RESIDENCE

No self-respecting Highhelm district would be complete without a barber shop or two, and Clips is widely considered to be the best in Stonebreach. Lead “hair sculptor” **Lakin Jaberil** (N nonbinary dwarf barber) remembers every client who has ever come through their doors and creates an atmosphere so welcoming that Clips is known as much for its lively conversation as its precise hair and beard styles. Many clients hang around after their appointments to hear local gossip, including Fightbreakers looking for ways to defuse brewing conflicts in the area. Lakin will not betray anything explicitly shared as a confidence, but has been known to loudly gear the conversation towards a recent issue to bring it to everyone's attention.

Before taking up haircutting, Lakin dreamed of being a brawler and is one of the major backers of the annual Breacher Brawl, which their younger sibling Scythe has won for the past five years. While Lakin is proud of Scythe's

NEIGHBORHOODS

As the bottommost level of Highhelm, Stonebreach is in a unique position in that it has the opportunity to grow larger if need be. For now, Stonebreach seems to have settled on its current size and divided itself into a number of neighborhoods, some of which are listed here, though the possibility of a large layer and new neighborhoods is never one that leaves the mind of Breachers. Each of these neighborhoods can offer benefits as noted in “Location Types and Support Traits” on page 44.

Bonerun: Known for the straight talk and toughness of its residents, Bonerun is the best place in Highhelm to find services like barbering, tattooing, and non-artisan repairs, though most of its residents work in sanitation or at the grindlegrub pits.

Breachborn: Any merchant who wants to put down roots in Stonebreach usually ends up settling in Breachborn, the hub of residential life for non-dwarves in the district.

Dying Range: Officially, the Dying Range is an abandoned tanning and textiles district blocked off by Highhelm officials after it became overrun by subterranean monsters. In reality, the hasty retreat of the residents left the district filled with abandoned valuables, salvageable by anyone willing to brave the Dying Range's dangers.

Etcherie: Home to the Vanderholl clan hall, and widely considered to be the heart of Stonebreach, it tends to house those who are more influential within the Ironhilt clans and is generally perceived to be full of staunch traditionalists.

Spilldown: Spilldown, one of the two neighborhoods on either side of the Roundabout Market where most non-dwarves in Highhelm live, is primarily filled with lodging halls and converted homes that rent rooms to short-term visitors.

The Warrens: The small utilitarian dwellings of the Warrens were initially carved into the walls of Stonebreach to house workers during Highhelm's construction, but today they're home to a thriving community of artists.

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DARKLANDS CONNECTIONS

Below Stonebreach, separated from Highhelm by the tunnels of the Depths, the creatures of the Darklands remain a threat to the city. All known tunnels connecting to the Darklands are guarded by the Emperor's Watch, but that doesn't prevent the odd monster from slipping into Stonebreach or new connections from opening. Scythe Jaberil fears that the guards might have too much on their hands and has kept a log of several disturbances from the past months. They hope that these records will be enough to stir officials to provide more defenses or even consider expeditions to root out any dangers.

FROM THE JOURNAL OF SCYTHE JABERIL

"Third time I've seen scrappers running loose down below. Hard to tell which way is which down there, but I think they may be chewing around under Etcherie. Could be the reason for all that shaking recently. Tried setting some traps, but the next time I came down, every single one of the things was broken or gone. Either the scrappers are smarter than I give them credit for or someone wants them tunneling around under Breacher homes."

"Spotted a gray dwarf on my rounds, walking around like she owned the place. I'm no expert tracker, but it didn't seem like she was trying not to be seen. Managed to follow her long enough to find a whole family and a half in a cavern I've never seen before and might not be able to find again. Didn't stay too long, but I'll say this: they seemed a bit too close to Stonebreach for my liking."

"Hard to tell what's normal around here and what's not. Keep seeing scratches in the stone that look new and deep. Found some marks on the ground—damp circles. Maybe footprints? And once or twice I thought I heard a whisper. All I know is I can't shake the feeling something's coming."

success, they're becoming increasingly desperate to find someone to unseat the champion. Betting on brawls, while not officially sanctioned, is a large part of spectating, and Lakin runs one of the largest sideline betting pools; the money from this endeavor keeps Clips profitable. Each year of Scythe's domination has cut into this profit, and while Lakin often encourages their sibling to retire, they worry that if it doesn't happen on its own, they may have to take matters into their own hands to ensure the barber shop's survival.

5. BLOODKNUCKLE CRIB

ACADEMY ARENA GARRISON

Though Highhelm doesn't have its own large coliseum or arena, organized brawling is a popular sport. The city's most talented martial athletes regularly convene in a derelict guild house called Bloodknuckle Crib. Billed as an elite underground fighting school, the group functions as more of a disorganized wrestling club. It's nominally overseen by the intimidating and tight-lipped **Oxkon Titan Killer** (LN male orc trainer), whose main role appears to be ensuring that no one dies in the middle of a training exercise.

While the group drills and exercises at Bloodknuckle Crib are chaotic at best, aspiring martial artists can do far worse than to entreat Oxkon for one-on-one lessons—most of the top five finishers at the last few Breacher's Brawls have worked with him, and he tends to keep an eye on former trainees and helps them stay out of trouble. The hard part is convincing him to take on a new trainee; he has become more selective in recent years after one of his students developed *bloodknuckles*, a concealed weapon supposedly created in honor of the academy but often used to illegally win brawls advertised as weaponless. Oxkon remains uncertain of who created the weapon and can often be seen in the periphery of brawls taking notes that he hopes will lead him to the culprit.

6. SURFACE ROW

ATTRACTION WORKSHOP

No one can remember who first decided to set aside the top two rows of homes in the Warrens to serve as permanent creative spaces, but the painted door frames of the Surface Row workshops now mark them as places for artists to meet and create in Stonebreach. With most artists in the Warrens limited to creating in their spare time, the area comes alive after the workday, humming with energy late into the night. That energy is usually collaborative, but with more artists than spaces to hold them, conflicts sometimes break out over whose endeavor is the most urgent or worthy, threatening to fracture this tight-knit community.

Teeli (CN female kobold administrator) and her extended family secretly live in the hidden tunnels behind Surface Row. After countless sleepless nights thanks to loud arguments between feuding artists, she began anonymously assigning rooms to the artists to keep the peace, leaving cleanly lettered signs in the doorway of each room when she wouldn't be seen. After mystifying the artists for months, she was eventually spotted during a slip-up in her normally cautious routine. To her surprise, the neighborhood immediately welcomed her, and artists have begun leaving written requests for workshop space along with money for her organizational efforts. Teeli is grateful, but tries to keep a certain distance from the artists; she's been able to stave off their curiosity about where she lives and why she does this work so far, but fears that an overly curious artist may discover the rest of her family and take action to evict the kobolds from their comfortable homes.

7. LASTHALL

ACADEMY EMPLOYER RESIDENCE

Tucked into a back corner of a cavern, Lasthall is the only clan hall that's open to anyone, without restrictions, whether they are a clan member or not. The former inn and tavern, which once primarily provided sanctuary for the dwarves of this clan of last refuge, has now become a trade school of sorts

under the guidance of new clanleader, Adessa Lasthall, though the upper-level rooms are still reserved as temporary lodging for dwarves who are far from their homes or have no homes left to return to. The only exception are those dwarves banished from their clan. If such a dwarf petitions for adoption into Clan Lasthall, Adessa does her best to investigate the dwarf's situation and determine whether or not to admit them. In cases of banishment due to behavioral issues, Adessa tries to put the petitioner in contact with support before formally adopting them. In cases of murder, treason, and other dangerous crimes, even Adessa knows to keep her own clan safe.

With so much of a dwarves' vocation determined by their clan, members of Clan Lasthall have for years been restricted mostly to temporary work, except for those who've shown enough promise in a specific trade to be adopted by a new clan. Adessa is determined to change this by having clan members train in areas that have yet to be claimed by one of the other clans, doing what she can to finagle instruction and guidance in any new trades or crafts that come to Highhelm from whoever is willing to provide it. This has meant making a few unsavory deals with passing traders, but Adessa's background as a mediator has so far kept her from having to compromise her principles while helping her clan.

Word of the Lasthall training has begun spreading through Spilldown, attracting some locals fallen on hard times. Adessa is sympathetic to their stories and has begun to believe that poor policies and clan management are to blame for their dire straits. Determined to shine a light on this issue, she's begun anonymously writing scathing critiques of Highhelm that give her an opportunity to vent some pent-up dissatisfaction with the "old ways" of dwarven life that many follow. She signs these notes with a Taralu symbol that has now been co-opted by the attacker vandalizing the Roundabout market. Adessa, determined to clear her name even if no one yet suspects her, has narrowed the suspects down enough to believe someone in Spilldown is behind the attacks, but has yet to figure out who.

8. VANDERHALL

BREWERY PARLOR WORKSHOP

The members of Clan Vanderhall may at times go unnoticed in their roles as cleaners, haulers, and manual laborers, but their legendary after-hours bon vivant is reflected in Vanderhall, their sprawling and lively home. Vanderhall was once a single building, but the clan acquired several surrounding structures over the years and connected them with a series of stone paths, which are often filled with clan members late into the night. Clan members are encouraged to leave the worries and weariness of the day behind when passing through any of Vanderhall's many doors, and complaints are generally confined to quick whispers on these open-air pathways.

Each of the connected structures has a purpose, from a brew hall that serves free drinks made by hobby brewers to any whose stomachs are up to the challenge (and has only resulted in one proven death in its years-long existence) to the storeroom where archivist Bennik Vanderhall keeps his extensive records on influential Highhelm residents. While several hired thieves have broken into Vanderhall to plunder these archives, none have been able to decipher his shorthand or destroy anything of note, in part because of Bennik's extensive use of documents written on false folio paper that exist solely to throw off would-be thieves. Unfortunately for Bennik, this has led some who fear what information might be contained in the archives to consider assassinating him, theorizing that without his help, the files are effectively worthless.

9. STARLIGHT INN

CRIMINAL RESIDENCE

While non-dwarves don't often speak of it, those who spend long amounts of time in Highhelm commonly

SCRAPS OF PAPER

A sign bearing the following text is tacked up above the bar at Cracked Anvil Brewery, surrounded by haphazard notes with additional questions.

"The following topics are now considered verboten. If Skogg sees you talking about them, you will be expelled. Forcibly."

- Will the waydown get worse?
- Is one of the Worldwalkers behind the market attacks?
- What is that giant shield even good for?
- What is the music that starts playing every sixth Blacknoon?
- Who was the halfling in a hood seen near the grotto before the twistgut outbreak?
- Who is screaming every night at Tremorik farm?
- Who will win this year's Breachers Brawl?

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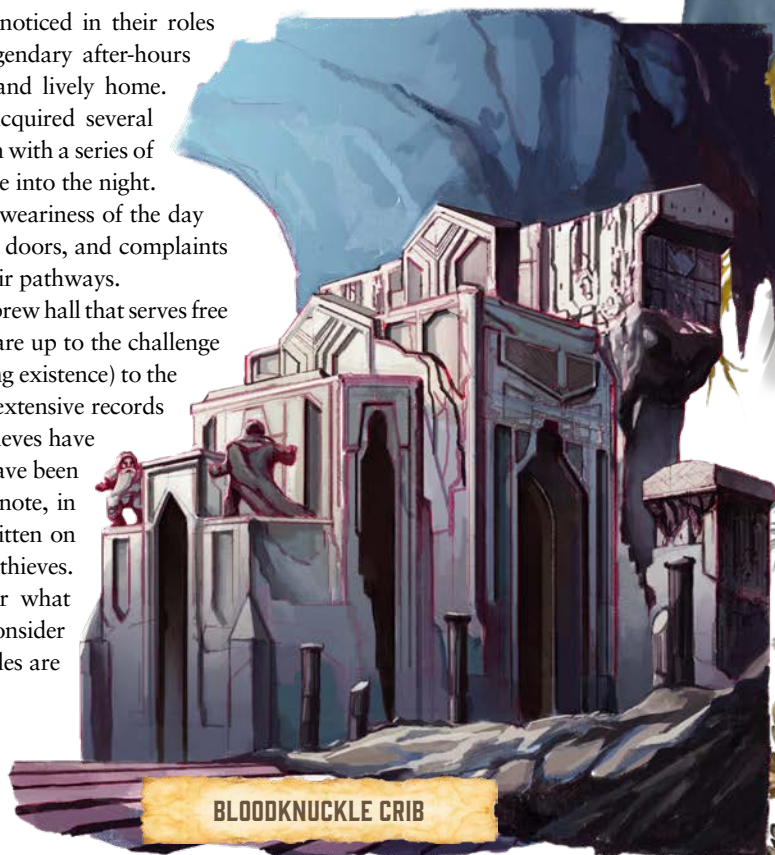
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BLOODKNUCKLE CRIB

THE FIGHTBREAKERS

Most Breachers view the Emperor's

Watch with something between suspicion and outright enmity, feeling that they prioritize merchants' needs over the well-being of those who call Stonebreach home. In lieu of bringing any problems they have to the Stone Officers, most Breachers rely on Fightbreakers, who can be identified by their distinctive tattoos and respond to disputes and minor crimes using a strict code of conduct.

Though the full code is known only to those who join the group, it generally divides conflicts into three phases—whisper, strike, and echo—and has Fightbreakers respond accordingly. Those who focus on whispers keep their ears to the ground, attempting to defuse situations the moment an annoyance becomes a full-fledged dispute; strikers intervene if violence breaks out to prevent injuries; and echoes deal with the aftermath of conflict, helping victims seek recompense and aggressors make amends in order to prevent repeated clashes.

feel what they describe as a “longing for sky.” Starlight Inn offers the next best thing: rooms that use a combination of thieves’ grass, breatherwall lichen, and hand-carved decor to create the illusion of being under the night sky. While other hoteliers have tried to replicate the effect in their lodgings, they lack the black-market connections that have given owner Thera Heartslip (page 77) access to breatherwall spores and a supplier of specialty scents that replicate the smell of the outdoor night air.

Thera’s use of these scents is, unsurprisingly, also to her benefit as a thief. Her supplier makes three versions of each scent—one that has no effect, one that has a mildly addictive quality to turn one-time visitors into repeat guests, and a third that puts anyone who smells it into a deep and relaxing sleep, during which time one of Thera’s thieves can go through their belongings for information and valuables. Particularly valuable items are noted for future visits, when they’re often replaced with high-end forgeries, leaving most victims none the wiser.

10. CLAMBER

ATTRACTION MONUMENT

For many visitors to Stonebreach, Clamber is their first glimpse at the size and scope of Highhelm. This public square is only the bottom level of what’s said to be the site of the original tunnel into Emperor’s Peak after the Quest for Sky, and a glance upward at the right angle reveals some of the majesty of its upper levels in King’s Crown and King’s Heart. Alternatively, anyone looking to slip away from city life can descend into the quieter tunnels of the Depths or even try their luck at sneaking past the guards blocking access to the Darklands beneath the city.

Clamber is more utilitarian than grand, kept mostly clear of adornment, and serves as a thoroughfare for visitors moving between Highhelm’s levels. While Breachers sometimes complain of the constant commotion in the area, it’s beloved as a place that the community can gather for festivals, celebrations, and the annual Breacher’s Brawl.

Given the amount of foot traffic that comes through Clamber on any given day, its upkeep is a full-time endeavor, managed by **Declan Vanderholl** (LG male dwarf laborer) and his team of cleaners, who are selected from across the Vanderholl clan every 10 years. Being chosen for this group is seen as a great honor, though whether it’s because those who keep Clamber clean are doing a service to the Highhelm community or that they are well placed to hear rumors and gossip is a matter for debate. Whatever the reason, as the next selection of the Clamber group nears, attempts to influence Declan are on the rise. While he will not respond to bribes or pleas, there has been talk of something in his past that he would like to forget that could be used as a lever, possibly related to the Blacknoon Heists and his one-time friendship with the thief suspected of pulling them off, Thera Heartslip.

11. THE ROUNDABOUT MARKET

MARKET MERCHANT

The Roundabout Market, which takes up most of the cavern surrounding the main entrance to Highhelm, is most visitors’ first and last stop in the city—a place to lighten the load at the end of a long journey or stock up on needed items before heading out on new travels. Most of the permanent stores that occupy the stone buildings along the market’s walls focus on the needs of travelers, selling food and drink, common supplies, local maps, and other useful items for journeying. Rarer and more specialized goods can be found at one of the many shop stalls in the center of the market, but finding the right one can be a challenge. Merchants are assigned to a new stall position each month and there are no official maps of their locations, making it easy to get lost in the market’s winding paths.

The ever-shifting Roundabout Market layout has led to several alliances between merchants who attempt to steer their customers to allies’ shops after making a sale. The two largest of these are run by **Kabe Worldwalker**

(LG male kallijae elf merchant), who only accepts those shops that meet his exacting standards, and his daughter **Kabria** (NG female kallijae half-elf merchant), who takes an interest in helping market newcomers. Both are happy to provide discounts to anyone who can give them information or goods that give their alliance an advantage.

For those who prefer unbiased information about where to shop or are in a hurry, the best approach is usually to hire a local market guide near the Roundabout Market's entrance. **Stagrin Hearthel** (CN male dwarf spy), the most well-known guide, is personable, knowledgeable, and has no loyalty to any shop in particular. He instead trades in information, giving details about intriguing visitors to archivist Bennik Vanderholl (page 77) and noting potential marks for thief Thera Heartslip.

12. IRON TONGUE

RESTAURANT

Those looking for local dwarven cuisine often find themselves at Iron Tongue, which prides itself on refusing to hold back the spice despite its mix of dwarven and non-dwarven clientele. Diners of all backgrounds flock to the place, drawn to its good food, reasonable prices, and a daily special known as the Swallow that costs half as much as a meal anywhere else. The Swallow includes as many as seven courses, but a new course is only served if the previous one is eaten in its entirety and substitutions are not allowed. Proprietor **Krem Circannon** (LN nonbinary dwarven restaurateur) has been known to use this to their advantage when there are more customers than ingredients by adding the universally despised grindlegrub stew as a Swallow entrée midway through the meal.

Diners at Iron Tongue are assigned to its long tables seemingly at random, but arrangements favor intrigue, with former lovers and current enemies often finding themselves forced to eat face-to-face. This leads to the occasional table-clearing brawl, which Krem counters by always employing at least one Fightbreaker as a dishwasher and banning everyone who participates in a fight from the Iron Tongue for life. Recently, though, Krem has been erasing people from the ban list and letting even some of the restaurant's most hotheaded customers return, for reasons they refuse to reveal.

13. TUUGARI PORESSA

CRIMINAL MERCHANT

Few realize that this humble foreign trading house—ostensibly owned and operated by investors in distant Katheer—is in fact one of the infamous Aspis Consortium's smallest regional hubs. Highhelm merchants recognize the great honor of receiving a wax-sealed invitation to one of Tuugari Poressa's private auction events, where traders both benign and vile deal in all manner of illicit goods.

While auctioneer **Trevyn Xorr** (LE male human auctioneer) is the most visible person at Tuugari Poressa, he is little more than a figurehead—**Pella Daggerwell** (NE female dwarf trader), a gold Aspis agent known to the merchants as the local delivery person who hands out the invitations, is truly in charge. This secret is even more closely guarded than the truth about Tuugari Poressa, and Pella considers it to be a piece of information worth killing for. Even Trevyn is unaware of his true powerlessness—Pella has ignored recent efforts he's undertaken to make changes to the auction pricing and invitee list, but she's seriously considering if it's time for him to take a "well-deserved vacation" to the grindlegrub pits.

THE BREACHER BRAWL

Are you ready to watch the fists fly?

The countdown to the annual Breacher's Brawl is about to begin in earnest with tomorrow's qualifier! Gather in Clamber at blacknoon to see 100 bare-knuckle contenders face off, each trying to throw their fellow fighters into the wall and score one of the 10 victories needed to make it to the main event. With the seeding of the final fighters determined by their speed and style in this free-for-all battle, anything is possible!

Keep your eyes peeled for the brawlers you've been following in smaller scraps all year long—we'll have full rankings and profiles of the final 32 once next week's one-on-one matches are set. But then again, should we even bother? Does anyone have what it takes to defeat our five-time champion, or will Scythe Jaberil slice their way through the competition once again?

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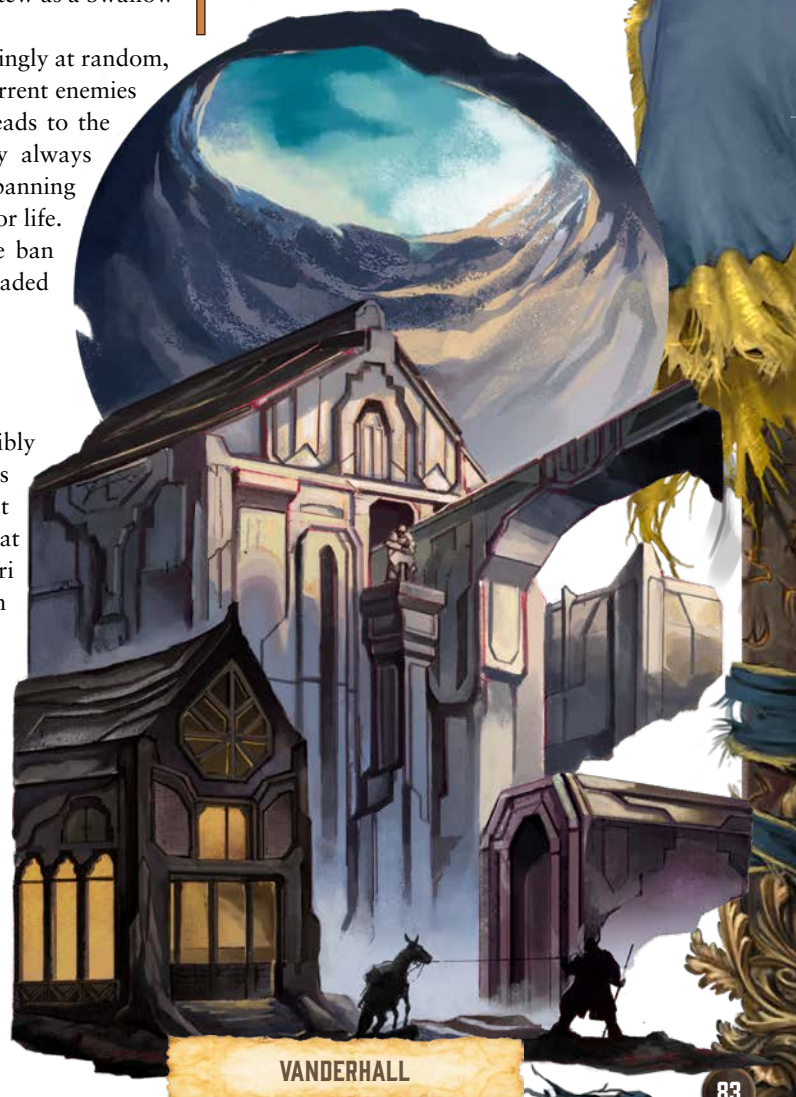
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TALKING THE TALK

Like many places, Stonebreach has a lingo all its own. Common phrases include the following.

Carve what you can: A shortened version of the saying “you carve what you can of the stone you’re given.” A reminder to make the most you can of life, whatever happens.

Highhilt: Arrogant. Usually used for someone who is putting on airs, as they might if they were from a Goldhilt clan.

Leaflier’s nest: A distraction of some kind. Usually a warning of literal leaflier nests used as distractions by thieves, but people are also warned to keep to their tasks and avoid getting metaphorically “trapped in a leaflier’s nest.”

(Cont’d)

14. GLAMMEROUS GOODS

MERCHANT

A chipper kobold named **Ixigia Glammertooth** (CG female kobold merchant) runs this magic item emporium that has an envied position as one of the permanent shops along the wall of the Roundabout Market. Unfortunately, though her business endeavor bears all the signs of success, Ixigia harbors a terrible secret: Glammerous Goods is a catastrophic failure financially. She’s had to borrow repeatedly from the Mercantile, insisting each time that while she turns a profit, it’s as though the gold from a day’s sales literally fell through the cracks in the floor. This is, in fact, what has been happening; unknown to Ixigia, the building she purchased is marked by a terrible elemental curse. Only a spellcaster attuned to the Elemental Plane of Earth can access the portal hidden in the shop’s cellar that siphons money away.

Ixigia is a proud heir of the Glammertooshs, a long line of kobolds descended from a gold dragon, and has connections to nearly every kobold family, social club, and guild in Highhelm, though she had never told any of them about her financial difficulties. While Mercantile leader Saira would never admit it, this kobold connection is one of the reasons she continues lending Ixigia money despite her lack of return. Saira also suspects that something may be wrong with the Glammerous Goods building, as Ixigia is the third owner to have a disastrous business located there. She often lingers in the shop while buying items to try to uncover the truth, which Ixigia believes instead to be an attempt at flirting.

15. THE MERCANTILE

BANK PARLOR

Non-dwarves may not have clans, but for Stonebreach merchants, the Mercantile is the next best thing—a place to talk shop and make connections with their peers. Located in the upper level of the sumptuous home owned by Saira Bizzilin (page 75), the Mercantile also serves as an unofficial bank, lending money to any members who need support. Those who do not promptly repay their loans find their shops flooded with customers long enough to make what they owe, then struggle to bring in any additional sales, a testimony to the Mercantile’s power.

While the Mercantile is host to frequent social events and billed as a friendly gathering place where all merchants are treated equally, rumors abound that favorable spots in the market have a tendency to go to those who use these events to impress or intrigue Saira. Unfortunately for the shopkeepers, it’s impossible to tell what she finds impressive or intriguing, and many of the conversations at the Mercantile revolve around various failed attempts to uncover what makes her happy, including brash compliments, tales of new and intriguing goods, and the ostentatious use of the latest merchandise from her former shop For the Road. Any information about her true desires is considered invaluable information.

16. GELDERON GREEN

FARM RESIDENCE

As befits the clan responsible for producing the majority of Highhelm’s food, the walls of the Gelderon clan hall surround a working farm. While the Green doesn’t produce food on the scale of the farms that its members take care of during their working day, it provides space for experimentation, and is often where new crop varieties and soil enhancements are developed. For those clan

CLAMBER

members who prefer not to be involved in farming during their downtime, the Green also has a well-tended garden space for contemplation that's open both to those in the clan and the general public, though non-members who choose to visit must do a planting or harvesting shift in return.

While some of the harvest from the Green is sold or used for animal feed, much of it fills the cold stores that sit in the clan hall's basement level. Clanleader Thealla Gelderon (page 39) is determined to be prepared in case of siege or crop disease, and has entrusted the tracking and preservation of what she often calls the "desperation crops" to **Barget Gelderon** (N male dwarf accountant), who has always been better with numbers than sowing seeds or tending sheep. Barget takes great pride in this work, often obliquely bragging to people he encounters about the way he is "ensuring the future of Gelderon." This may have gotten him into trouble, as a recent accounting of the crops in cold storage shows that a significant number have gone missing.

17. CRACKED ANVIL BREWERY

BREWERY TAVERN

Run by retired soldier **Skogg Bloodhammer** (LN male dwarf fighter), this brewery and tap house caters to dwarves who are looking to drink and relax in peace. Skogg has long forbidden talk of business deals in the tap house, especially those of a mercenary nature, and has recently added politics and clan disputes to his list of banned topics (see Scraps of Paper sidebar on page 81). As he personally throws out anyone he discovers breaking these rules with the enthusiasm he once brought to the battlefield, they're strictly obeyed, and conversation at the Cracked Anvil is usually cheery, if occasionally forced.

The brewery makes a variety of beers, but is known throughout Highhelm for its deep brown ales. Most use only local ingredients, including a recent variety incorporating the heat of dark pepper that has been growing in popularity. Skogg also keeps a special keg of beer he calls Bloodhammer Reserve that he serves only to old friends and his former comrades-in-arms. Some say that Bloodhammer Reserve produces strange but temporary physical changes in those who imbibe, but Skogg adamantly denies this as-of-yet unproven rumor.

18. TREMORIK FARM

EMPLOYER FARM

While most Breacher dwarves grow a few smokebulbs in their homes for use in cooking, the primary source for these spicy mushrooms in the higher districts of Highhelm is Tremorik Farm, built around the place they were first discovered growing in soil-filled cracks in the ground. Tremorik workers carefully create new fissures for the mushrooms while limiting the amount of time they spend in the immediate vicinity of the farm during growing season—in large quantities, smokebulbs irritate the eyes, nasal passages, and tongue of most creatures, and their smell lingers on anyone who spends enough time in their presence, though farm manager **Gildy Tremorik** (NG female dwarf farmer) claims not to feel the effects.

A small group of Fightbreakers has begun using the farm's effects in their efforts to keep the peace in Stonebreach as tensions from the market attacks exacerbate existing bad blood within the community. They've made a deal with Gildy that allows them to bring dwarves attempting to make amends for past wrongs to Tremorik for an overnight stay. In theory, making it through the night is a way for those involved to prove to themselves and everyone else that they can change their ways. While the overnight stays are infrequent and have gone without incident so far, Gildy worries that anyone who fails this trial will somehow blame the farm and take action against it. She's also noticed that one Fightbreaker in particular seems to be bringing people to the farm not to make amends but for interrogations about the market attacks. She doesn't want to get directly involved, but would like someone to put a stop to this.

(Cont'd)

Market line: A winding story or excuse meant to confuse the listener. Believed to originate from the impossibility of walking a straight line through Roundabout Market without being sold something.

Sunbird: Someone who refuses to take direction, even if it would be to their benefit. Comes from the near impossibility of training sun owls.

The waydown: Personal or communal struggle caused by external forces. Generally used in reference to issues caused by the difference in Breacher and merchant quality of life.

You can't hold on to an open

song: The phrase is common among musicians in Stonebreach and refers to the idea that once you start singing, others are likely to join you. It's a reminder that collaboration is important and the mere act of creating art is an invitation to cooperation or even criticism. It's also a warning that once an idea becomes public, anyone can use the idea as they wish, for good or for ill.

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STONEBREACH OPTIONS

Characters seeking new items and options within Stonebreach have a variety of options at their disposal. They could enjoy an unforgettable drink at the Cracked Anvil Brewery, take up a fight in the Bloodknuckle Crib, make use of a trick or two from Thera Heartslip in the Starlight Inn, receive a new magical tattoo from Yrisette at her parlor, or simply find something of interest for sale at a stall in the Roundabout Market.

BACKGROUND

The following background is available to all characters.

FIGHTBREAKER BACKGROUND

You have a knack for picking up on simmering tensions and calming frayed nerves. You rely on your intuition to discern how and when violence is imminent, and on your skills—diplomatic and otherwise—to deescalate tense situations. You might choose the adventuring life to tackle new and unfamiliar conflicts, or be trying to escape retaliation from those who thrive on violence and resent your ability to keep the peace.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Wisdom or Charisma, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Diplomacy skill and the Lore skill for the city or settlement you lived in when you became a Fightbreaker. You gain the Group Impression skill feat.

STONEBREACH ITEMS

The following items are available in Stonebreach, most within the Roundabout Market. Some of the items are found only in specific shops like Common Goods or Yrisette's Inkwell.

BLOODHAMMER RESERVE

ITEM 4+

UNCOMMON	CONSUMABLE	MAGICAL	POLYMORPH	POTION
TRANSMUTATION				

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

This strong, rich red-brown home brew has no listed ingredients, but smells of earth and is both smoky and surprisingly bitter. Although Skogg Bloodhammer insists that the drink doesn't exist, it's somewhat of an open secret among his close friends. He prefers to share this drink at backroom gatherings with these trusted friends, and usually broaches the idea of sharing with a full mug and a question: "You ever thought about being a frog?"

After drinking the brew, you transform into an animal, gaining the effects of *animal form* except you can't Dismiss



BLOODKNUCKLES

the effect, and you transform into a random animal battle form. To determine the battle form, roll 1d10 (1 = ape, 2 = bear, 3 = bull, 4 = canine, 5 = cat, 6 = deer, 7 = frog, 8 = shark, 9 = snake, 10 = reroll). Your appearance while in the battle form resembles that of animals within Emperor's Peak or from the surrounding Five Kings Mountains, such as the Five Kings dart snake or the Coldforge singing frog. More unusual battle forms like apes and sharks instead resemble a typical member of that species.

Type Bloodhammer Reserve; **Level** 4; **Price** 20 gp

Type Bloodhammer Reserve Select; **Level** 6; **Price** 35 gp

When you consume the brew, you can choose which battle form you take and the temporary Hit Points you gain from the battle form increase to 10.

Type Bloodhammer Black Label; **Level** 8; **Price** 100 gp

When you consume the brew, you gain the effects of 4th-level *animal form*, can choose which battle form you take, and the temporary Hit Points you gain from the battle form increase to 20.

BLOODKNUCKLES

ITEM 9

UNCOMMON	INVESTED	MAGICAL	TRANSMUTATION
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Price 600 gp

Usage worn gloves; **Bulk** -

These thin cloth wraps, which are illegal to use in Highhelm's organized brawls, blend into the skin and add an edge to your blows. The wraps are +1 *striking wounding handwraps of mighty blows*. When you invest the wraps, they gain the effects of a 3rd-level *magic aura* spell to appear non-magical and resemble simple bandages. Casual observers are unlikely to notice anything amiss with the wraps, but a creature that succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check can notice something is off about them, though they would still need to find other means to discern the magical nature of the wraps.

Activate ➤ envision; **Frequency** once per minute;

Trigger You cause a creature within reach to take bleed damage; **Effect** You use your foe's pain to reinvigorate you. You gain temporary Hit Points equal to the value of the triggering bleed damage, up to a maximum of 10 temporary HP. These temporary Hit Points remain for 1 minute.

DARK PEPPER POWDER

ITEM 2

UNCOMMON	ALCHEMICAL	CONSUMABLE	INHALED
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Price 7 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** L

Activate ♦ Interact

Made from the smokebulbs that grow in Stonebreach, dark pepper is used as a common spice in dwarven cooking, but

can also be an irritant in large quantities. Sacks of dark pepper are readily available in the Roundabout Market, but are less common in markets elsewhere in the city. You can toss a handful of dark pepper at an adjacent creature as an Interact action. The target must attempt a DC 16 Fortitude save to avoid coughing to the point of choking. On a failed save, the creature coughs uncontrollably, becoming flat-footed for 1 round. On a critical failure, the creature is instead flat-footed for 3 rounds.

GRUB GLOVES

ITEM 6+

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Usage worn gloves; **Bulk** L

Danila Kenn and Depa Stepwell of Common Goods developed these gloves after complaints from an exhausted grindlegrub rancher. Since their development, the gloves have become popular not just among grindlegrub ranchers, but laborers of all kinds in Stonebreach. The thick gloves are designed to help ranchers hold on to the squirming, slimy bodies of grindlegrubs, and help soothe the wear and tear of the day while restoring energy for after-hours pursuits. While wearing the gloves, you gain a +1 item bonus to Athletics checks.

The gripping power of the gloves provides you with a +2 circumstance bonus to Reflex saves to Grab an Edge. If you roll a success to Grab an Edge, you get a critical success instead, as the gripping gloves allow you to hold on even with just a few fingertips.

Activate ♦♦♦ envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per day;

Effect You rub your hands together and take a deep breath to prepare for the rest of your day. You regain 3d8+10 Hit Points and feel refreshed, losing the fatigued condition. As normal for effects that remove fatigue, this doesn't remove any underlying source of fatigue, such as lack of sleep, causing the condition to return if the underlying source isn't addressed.

Type lesser; **Level** 6; **Price** 225 gp

Type moderate; **Level** 12; **Price** 1,750 gp

The item bonus is +2, the circumstance bonus is +3, and you instead regain 6d8+20 Hit Points.

Type greater; **Level** 18; **Price** 22,500 gp

The item bonus is +3, the circumstance bonus is +4, and you instead regain 8d8+30 Hit Points.

MAGNET COIN

ITEM 3

UNCOMMON CONJURATION MAGICAL TELEPORTATION

Price 50 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** –

Thera Heartslip commissioned these magical coins during her early thievery days and still has a number on hand to share with her confidants. This coin resembles an ordinary coin, but it's warm and seems to thrum slightly when touched. The coin's face features a very small fragment from the pressed portion that can be removed, such as a small star or one eye

from the head on the face. Removing this fragment causes the coin to stop thrumming and feeling warm to the touch. Noticing the removed piece requires close inspection and a successful DC 19 Perception check.

Activate ♦♦♦ envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per day;

Requirements You are holding the coin fragment; **Effect** You focus on the rest of the coin, imagining its complete form in your hand. The rest of the coin teleports into your hand, reforming the complete coin. If it was near any other coins, it also teleports up to 3d10 coins with it into your hand. The coin can only teleport up to 15 miles; if you are farther when recalling the coin, it teleports the maximum distance toward you and lands in an open space.

UNEXCEPTIONAL

RUNE 3

UNCOMMON ILLUSION MAGICAL

Price 60 gp

Usage applied to an item of light Bulk or less that is no larger than 5 feet by 5 feet by 5 feet

Merchants traveling into Stonebreach sometimes apply this accessory rune to specific wares to avoid the notice of thieves. Conversely, many thieves in Highhelm apply these runes to stolen goods to help them smuggle items out of the city.

The item gains the effects of *magic aura* to appear as non-magical. The rune's effects also cause anyone who closely observes or holds the item to believe it is a mundane version of that type of item, such as believing a magical dagger to be an ordinary dagger, unless the creature succeeds at a DC 18 Will save. Creatures that succeed their save see that there is more to the item than meets the eye, but aren't immediately aware of the *magic aura* effect.

WORDS OF WISDOM

ITEM 4+

UNCOMMON ENCHANTMENT INVESTED MAGICAL TATTOO

Usage tattoo; **Bulk** –

Yrisette developed these unique tattoos after months of tinkering and experimentation. This tattoo is always of a saying that has meaning to the person who wears it. While the words are hidden within a larger pattern and are nearly impossible to discern at a glance, they lend gravitas and power to the wearer's words. When the tattoo is applied, choose whether the phrase is of threatening words (Intimidation), persuasive words (Deception), or dramatic words (Performance).

Activate ♦ Command; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You speak your meaningful phrase from your tattoo out loud, emboldening your words for 1 minute. During this time, you gain a +1 item bonus to Diplomacy checks and checks of the skill associated with your phrase. When you roll a critical failure on a Diplomacy check or the associated skill during this time, you get a failure instead.

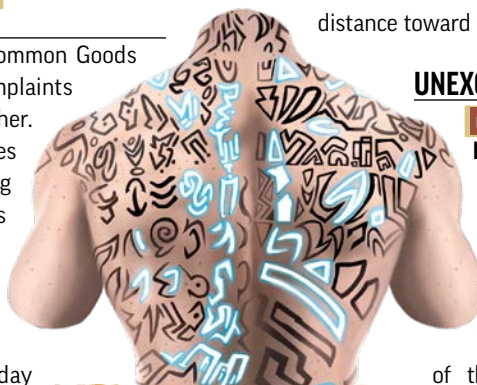
Type lesser; **Level** 4; **Price** 100 gp

Type moderate; **Level** 11; **Price** 1,400 gp

You become emboldened for 10 minutes and the bonus is +2.

Type greater; **Level** 18; **Price** 22,000 gp

You become emboldened for 1 hour and the bonus is +3.



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THE DEPTHS

The further you venture from the core of Highhelm, the more that the rules and structure enforced in the city proper fall away. Some parts of the Depths have enough of an official presence to be relatively safe for tourists, celebrities, and members of the higher castes who wish to indulge in the area's unique culture. Other areas are entirely outside the reach of law enforcement. Unwary visitors who come in expecting to follow the codes that prevail throughout the rest of the city are likely to make a dangerous misstep. The more fortunate come back with lighter coin purses and newfound humility. Others suffer serious losses or injuries.

"The Depths" is a catch-all term for the countless tunnels and caverns that weave through Emperor's Peak. While most Highhelm citizens agree that the Depths are located beneath Stonebreach, citizens of the Depths like to remind others that their home also includes the tunnels and caverns between the city's three layers and even those in the areas beyond, not just the space beneath the mountain's base. The tunnels and caverns occasionally change due to natural collapses, new diggings, and other phenomena, giving the Depths a transitional quality; the Depths of today may not be the Depths of tomorrow.

Just like the physical layout of the area, the power structure of the Depths is a complex and ever-changing web. Street to street and tunnel to tunnel, power is fought for, traded, and hoarded by criminal elements and unscrupulous industry barons alike. Countercultural elements flourish with the distance from the traditional power structures of Highhelm; while some are strongly idealistic, others are simply invested in making their own mark on the city and its people.

This dynamic creates a strange tension with the legitimate operations that run out of the Depths. The district's proximity to natural caverns makes it an appealing base for industry. Mining operations, animal husbandry, and other enterprises that rely on natural resources are common. These businesses work aboveboard, paying their taxes and operating according to the rules of the city, though they tend to look past illegal operations nearby so long as their profits aren't unduly affected. Their employees must also follow the laws—at least while they're at work.

While industry brings in workers from the upper levels of the city, plenty of locals labor alongside them. This leads to a number of entanglements between those who make an honest living and those who dabble in less savory pastimes. Most avoid the tension entirely by adopting a "live and let live" attitude. The criminal guilds all follow an unspoken rule that violence should not touch anyone not involved in the city's underworld.

Residents of the Depths are fiercely loyal to their community. The freedom they have, both from laws and the unwritten social rules that govern the rest of the city, is more important to them than the comparative safety other

areas of Highhelm offer. Anyone—local or outsider—who seeks to disrupt this way of life or threatens residents of the Depths becomes a common enemy.

PEOPLE

The Depths feature a number of important movers and shakers. The following are some of the more notable figures.

As the head enforcer of the Blacknoon Thieves' Guild, **Geralde Brightfist** (LN female dwarf ruffian) is well known to gang members and residents of the Depths alike. Any civilians or workers who have trouble with the guild are encouraged to tell Geralde. She keeps a tight handle on guild members and thoroughly investigates reports of behavior that goes against the Blacknoon code. To those not under her purview, Geralde is friendly, though gruff. New recruits to the guild, on the other hand, swap tales of the harsh discipline she's meted out to those who defy her or other guild leaders.

Errna Brunthrick (LG female dwarf courier) is the head of the city's courier service, which controls the flow of information throughout all of Highhelm. From her station at the convergence of many of the messengers' tunnels, Errna assigns couriers to their tasks and watches for threats. She also keeps tabs on the contents of the messages passed through the service. For the right price, she'll divulge important information to those who convince her they need it.

The Obergerthen family pioneered vertical farming in Highhelm, using cavern walls to grow food. Today, **Ortraud Obergerthen** (NG nonbinary dwarf farmer) is the owner and manager of the largest algae and fungus farm in the city. They are also one of the few industry leaders to make their home in the Depths. For this alone, Ortraud has the respect of most of the area's residents. They have won the rest over by setting aside part of their harvest for those in need. Everyone in the Depths knows to go to them when in need of help. Even if Ortraud can't do anything directly, they know someone who can.

CURRENT EVENTS

The Depths are never the most secure place to live, since neither the Emperor's Watch nor other officials pay it much attention. Most of its inhabitants—lower-caste individuals who work grueling jobs—have no time or energy to deal with trouble. The recent events that have destabilized the district are the cause of many complaints.

The Blacknoon Thieves' Guild territory feud: The Blacknoon Thieves' Guild is the predominant criminal organization in the Depths, but newcomers are always looking to edge into their territory. For the past few months, Sigune's Swifthands have been challenging Blacknoon members and pushing into guild territory. Per the unspoken rules of the Depths, the two gangs are careful to not let violence spill over into the general populace. Sigune herself has promised to punish any

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guild members who harm bystanders; according to her, Blacknoon enforcer Geralde lets them off too easy. However, as the conflict becomes more heated, even those with looser connections to either group are getting entangled. Locals are careful to stay completely neutral on the subject lest they become the next victim.

Beasts from the Blast Tunnels: Most of the tunnels that lead to the Darklands have been blocked off, but every once in a while, a new one emerges. One particular passage was created by miners following a vein of gems deeper into the mountain. Unfortunately, rather than riches, the new shaft led to a tunnel system that's home to a host of dangerous creatures. The two mine owners who could be responsible, **Horst Heavyhammer** (LN male dwarf manager) and **Jette Ironbeard** (NG female dwarf superintendent), are busy blaming each other for the ill-placed blast. In the meantime, the Emperor's Watch had to fight off a mass of slurks that found their way up to the city. There's no telling what will emerge next.

LOCATIONS

The following are some of the more notable locations within the Depths. These locations are entirely situated within the tunnels beneath Stonebreach, though the Depths are sprawling and contain many more tunnels and caverns beyond this area.

1. THE MESSENGER TUNNELS

DUNGEON

If you want to send information quickly from one end of Highhelm to the other, you need someone who knows their way around the messenger tunnels. It's said a speedy runner can take a message from the tip of King's Crown to the outskirts of the Depths in just a few minutes. However, knowledge of the tunnel system is a closely guarded secret; head messenger Errna Brunthrick is the only one with access to a full map of the network. Because the messenger tunnels make use of some natural passageways, it's easy to end up far from the city.

This risk doesn't deter everyone, however. Though Errna and the messenger's guild have a regular presence at the tunnel hub in the Depths, there are too many entrances around the city for her guild or the Watch to guard them all. Smugglers, opportunistic merchants, and residents with more courage than sense find their way into the tunnels with alarming frequency.

Algyrth Roughstone (LN male dwarf miner) is concerned two of his children and their friends ventured into the tunnels and got lost. They have already been missing for days, and the man fears they could get hurt or trapped in the largely undeveloped tunnels. Errna has refused to give him a map of the area under suspicion that he's a merchant trying to use the tunnels for his own personal gain. He's looking for anyone who may be able to help.

2. THE GAUNTLET

CRIMINAL DUNGEON

The Blacknoon Thieves' Guild isn't open to just anyone. The group only takes the best of the best, and anyone wishing to join its ranks must run the Gauntlet, a maze of abandoned mine shafts that's been thoroughly secured by trap master **Inguhyld Gerhok** (CN female dwarf saboteur). Aspirants must find their way through locked doors, trapped hallways, and a corridor that's often patrolled by xulgath warriors who live just below.

Anyone who retrieves one of the Blacknoon coins stashed at the center of the maze and doesn't end up utterly maimed while doing so is inducted into the guild upon their return. Those who aren't so lucky receive healing and an admonishment against wasting the guild's time.

The Blacknoon Thieves' Guild doesn't run rescue missions for the few people who get stuck in the maze, but it does allow them—as long as the rescuers can prove they're neither law enforcement nor members of a rival gang. Geralde Brightfist vets every party that comes her way, aspirant or rescuer.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Depths are home to just one-eighth of Highhelm's population, with 4,953 people at last count. The actual population may be higher—the sprawling nature of the area, plus its reputation as the section of choice for those with fewer ties to society, means it's hard to get an exact number.

The population is around 42% Grondaksen (underground) dwarves, the largest concentration of this group in Highhelm. Holtaksen (mountain) dwarves account for another 31%. A community of lizardfolk (6%) has carved out a niche in the Depths, and a ratfolk den (4%) makes use of the tunnels on the fringes of the main populated area. Another 9% include a variety of other ancestries like elves, gnomes, halflings, and humans.

The Depths are also the place of refuge for those who might face distrust, including refugees from the Darklands. The remaining 8% of the district's population is composed of caligni, hryngars, hobgoblins, kobolds, and other Darklands denizens.

NAVIGATING THE DEPTHS

No complete map of the Depths exists, and if it did, it's unlikely any cartographer could capture every tunnel. In other parts of Highhelm, thruways are wide and well-marked; in the Depths, natural tunnels form the base of the infrastructure. The result is a twisty network of paths that cross in strange and unexpected ways.

If knowing one's way around is a mark of a true local, getting lost is a rite of passage for newcomers. Residents will laugh at the times they ended up more than a mile away from their intended destination, though some of the stories are almost certainly exaggerated.

After all, there is a navigational system at work. Tunnels are marked with a series of hatches that denote their length and cardinal direction. Coded language lists destinations and crossroads along the way. The markings mean nothing to city officials, but they do give anyone fleeing the law the means to get away.

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LOCAL FLORA

Plant life in the Depths consists mostly of fungi and lichen due to the lack of sunlight. Many fungi serve as food, but none are quite so revered among Highhelm's residents as the yeasts. Bread yeast and brewing yeast both grow in abundance, urged on by farmers. Many individuals have carefully cultivated their own strains. Outsiders may not be able to tell the difference, but longtime residents will swear they can tell you whether a brew is made with Behraust's bloom or hardrock gold.

Locals in the Depths appreciate their yeasts as much as anyone, but they're also partial to the area's bioluminescent fungi. Startrail slab clings to many ceilings, casting a dim green light. Angradd's hand often takes the place of lamps—when cultivated correctly, one mushroom can reach nearly a foot in diameter. Especially in the less developed world of the Depths, these fungi are well worth the time it takes to grow them.

Gudrun Greatstorm (N female dwarf ruffian) recently failed her trial and, worse, lost her clan dagger in the maze. Geralde won't let her back in to retrieve it, and Gudrun can't return home without it. She desperately needs help from someone with the skills to return safely.

3. HIGH NOON

CRIMINAL RESTAURANT TAVERN

The Blacknoon Thieves' Guild doesn't need a front for its operations given its reputation in the city; the tavern and restaurant run by the gang is a successful business on its own. It's also the de facto headquarters of the guild, and members from the lowliest grunt to Gerya Hollowbone can be found in attendance at any time, day or night.

High Noon is the place to go for a business meeting in the Depths. Doubly so if that business is illicit in nature—though as long as one doesn't intend to bring the law down on the guild's head, anyone is welcome. It's also a common hangout among aspiring guild members and other criminals, who may come hoping for opportunities or to trade with an information broker.

Server **Gundar Freestock** (N male hryngar server) will bring any customer a mug of strong ale for 1 copper and throw in some gossip if they pay twice the asking price. Lately, most of the talk has been about Sigune's Swifthands and the trouble they're stirring up for the Blacknoon Thieves' Guild. **Inelda Thimerian** (CN female elf charlatan), one of Sigune's women, has been frequenting the bar undercover and seeding false rumors about her gang.

The guild is too smart to escalate the conflict with its new rival, but the leaders are constantly on the lookout for ways to sabotage the group. They learned **Sigune** (LN female dwarf gang leader) is attempting to set up a new smuggling route out of the city soon and are looking for an unaffiliated group to stop her.

4. FOLGRIT'S KITCHEN

ATTRACTION

The dwarves of Highhelm have spent millennia shaping Emperor's Peak to meet their needs. One of the earliest constructions was Folgrit's Kitchen.

Situated where the heat of the earth rises through a large fissure, Folgrit's Kitchen was once the center of many residents' food preparation. Stoneworkers carved ovens into the rock and clans quarreled over who might have access to the smokeless kitchens. Around -4500 AR, a colony of baker's yeast was discovered on the stone ceilings above the ovens. The area became even more popular, and a loaf made with the yeast (known as Folgrit's feast) became a status symbol during dinner parties and banquets.

Around -2230 AR, the heat rising through the fissure began to wane, and the ovens fell out of use. The special yeast that used to cover the ceiling has retreated and now only grows on the walls of the fissure itself.

Liudwind Darkrock (CG nonbinary dwarf historian) has decided they want to recreate Folgrit's feast as part of an exhibition. They know exactly where the yeast grows and have looked up how the ancestors used to harvest it. All they need is someone with a bit more muscle (and daring) than they have to retrieve a sample.

5. DIOMIRA'S DROP

ATTRACTION MONUMENT

The Rapid River drops into the Depths from Stonebreach; skirts the edge of Deep Fork; wends through Artist's Walk; and then plunges over 100 feet off an underground cliff.

HIGH NOON

The waterfall has been a popular destination since it was discovered by the first clans in the Highhelm area.

Its current name was coined in the early –4600s AR, when a daring woman descended the cliff next to the waterfall without any climbing equipment. It's said Diomira's journey was an undertaking to win the hand of one of the finest blacksmiths of her day—Sadrilde Gleamspark. Sadrilde declared she would not consider any partner unless they brought her a whetstone handpicked from the base of the falls. Diomira thought it worth the risky climb.

Her bravery won Sadrilde's attention and her hand in marriage. The romance between the two was memorialized in song, and the ballad's lyrics inspired the waterfall's current name.

Skeptics believe Diomira couldn't have made the climb without at least a rope, since the rocks nearby are slippery from the waterfall's spray. Certainly no one who has tried to recreate her descent has succeeded. Yet, every year, a few romantics like to try. Kebab vendor **Zrizek** (NG male kobold cook) does double duty feeding tourists and serving as a lookout for would-be climbers. He does his best to dissuade anyone who looks ready to attempt the drop themselves. When he fails, he sends for help, knowing that climbers will inevitably need a rescue, if they're lucky—or funeral rites if they're not.

6. KALINGSTAF CIRCLE

VENUE

Decades of careful manipulation have perfected the acoustics in Kalingstaf Circle, the premiere performance hall in Highhelm. Kalingstaf Circle is set in a natural cavern with rows of limestone terraces that cascade down from the entryway. Past generations added a stage at the front of the chamber and nurtured lichen and fungus growths along the walls and ceiling. The plant life cuts down on reverberation and muffles sounds from outside to keep the performers the center of everyone's attention.

However, it's the spectacular light shows that draw audiences to Kalingstaf Circle. The cavern is lined by magical lanterns that a skilled mage can instantaneously change in brightness and color. Performers who are after a spectacle hire a practitioner of the magic arts for lighting effects that complement their act.

Magicians must undergo special training to learn the spells that manipulate the lanterns. There are only a few individuals in all of Highhelm who can be called upon to work a performance. Magister **Orrek Ullarum** (LG male human mage for hire) and his mentee **Guerich Shardshaper** (LN nonbinary dwarf apprentice) are the most skilled of the Circle's mages. Their time alone is costly. The rarity of the spell components—various types of salts gathered from deep in the mountain—adds to the price.

The magicians who work at the Circle try to accommodate the budget of any performer who books a show at the venue, but it's becoming harder to do so as the salt caverns are increasingly dangerous to traverse. Rumor has it the area is infested, though with witnesses' reports ranging from a black pudding to a pack of shocker lizards, the nature of the danger is unclear. Whatever it is, the mages would like someone to help clear the path—and maybe harvest a few salts while they're down there.

7. THE SMELTED BANK STEAM ROOM AND SPA

EMPLOYER HOUSING PARLOR

The Smelted Bank caters to courtiers, celebrities, and the well-to-do, including notable figures like Henthe Aringeld and Baroness Nicasia Dux. The spa was originally a modest building constructed atop a few natural hot springs. Its early success led to its expansion: steam rooms were added first, then a cafeteria. Finally, a complete renovation modernized and fancified the building while adding lodging. Visitors must pay a generous fee to take a dip in the pools or relax in one of the steam rooms. The spa's luxury package

LOCAL FAUNA

Children of the Depths grow up learning to give draft lizards a wide berth. The animals, which are used as mounts and beasts of burden, have fearsome jaws and a venomous bite. They're also ubiquitous in areas with heavy industry.

Thankfully, other animals inhabiting this part of the city are much safer to be around. Cave salamanders lurk around every puddle, stream, and seep. These ghostly amphibians are a favorite family pet. They also help keep the insect and spider populations of the Depths under control.

Glow worms are another common sight in the dark caverns of the Depths. Grondaksen dwarves were the first to cultivate these insects for use as navigational aids and decoration. Most dwarves don't know the complex directional code their underground ancestors employed, but inhabitants of Highhelm have created their own system to communicate directions and demarcate routes.

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NEIGHBORHOODS

While the Depths are expansive and house many scattered populations, these are some of the major neighborhoods in this part of the city. Each of these neighborhoods can offer benefits as noted in Location Types and Support Traits on pages 44–45.

Artist's Walk: This nearly mile-long tunnel of shaped stone that borders

Deep Fork is home to some of the finest art in Highhelm. **Imme Varongrüb** (N female dwarf artist) has spent the last century and a half seeking out and commissioning the most skilled painters in the city. With her oversight, the tunnel walls are becoming a visual timeline of dwarven history, starting with the Quest for Sky.

The Burrows: Highhelm's hard-up residents make their homes far from the center of the city, in a series of small caves known as the Burrows. Their cramped dwellings are without luxuries of any sort. The neighborhood itself is nothing but a series of narrow, winding caverns that an outsider could easily get lost in. However, it's rare for any to venture into the area.

Deep Fork: Bounded by Kalingstaf Circle on one side and the Artist's Walk on the other, Deep Fork is the most central neighborhood of the Depths. It's also the easiest to reach from Stonebreach. The main draw of the neighborhood is its sanitized version of the free-thinking independence that's the trademark of the Depths.

includes an overnight stay in a spacious suite, local delicacies for every meal, and the visitor's choice of a mineral-rich mud mask or snail mucin facial.

The spa's skin treatments are made on-site and are a source of pride for current proprietor **Talmend Soltemond** (LN female dwarf alchemist). The mud mask has naturally high levels of sulfur and magnesium thanks to the thermal waters that are abundant in the area. The snail mucin is harvested from the spiny fire snail, a species that has only been found in hot springs in Emperor's Peak.

Talmend is extremely protective of her snails, as the smallest change to their habitat could wipe them out. A recent die-off has convinced her one of her competitors is trying to sabotage her spa. She doesn't have time to look into the problem herself, but she needs someone to figure out what's changing or contaminating the snails' habitat and put a stop to it.

8. THE SEEPWALLS

ATTRACTION MONUMENT

Water from precipitation and snowmelt trickles down through the rocks of Emperor's Peak and eventually comes out at the Seepwalls. As the name suggests, the flow is neither fast nor concentrated enough to work as a source of water for the city, but it's perfect for the algae farming operation Ortraud Obergerthen oversees on these 50-foot-high walls.

Ortraud's algae farm is one of the major employers of the Depths: Lantern tenders keep the light at appropriate levels and ensure it reaches every part of the walls; fertilizers add the Obergerthens' special nutrient mix to the water where it comes out of the walls; and harvesters carefully remove as much of the algal mat as possible without destroying the colony. Still others help dry and process the algae. The entire process requires teamwork, and employees operate in tight-knit pods of around five people.

Recently, Ortraud expanded their operations by buying old mine shafts to use as fungi farms, which led to another run of hiring. Fungus production is ramping up, which would be excellent if they had the workforce to handle it.

Clan Tolorr just put in an order at the Seepwalls requesting food for an upcoming feast. Ortraud is wary of sending untrained workers to the farm and is afraid they won't be able to fill it. But, turning down the order would mean missing the chance to impress a substantial buyer. If they could find workers with the right combination of skills to aid their operations, they think they could make the sale.

9. THE FIGHT PITS

ARENA ATTRACTION GARRISON

The Blacknoon Thieves' Guild supplements its funding (and sources potential recruits) from its fight pits. Anyone who can pay the entry fee of 1 silver piece can join the fight tournament of the day. Competitors who place in the top three take home part of the day's purse.

Officially, the fight pits are for training, and their operating expenses are covered by the entry fees and the small charge spectators pay to view the day's tournament. In truth, the bulk of the profits come from those who bet on the outcomes. Bookie **Vigrid** (N nonbinary hobgoblin bodyguard) runs a tight ship. Participants can and do bet on themselves, but spectators often drop hundreds of gold at a time—especially on high-profile fights.

The fight pits host a variety of tournaments, with each day bringing a fresh challenge to keep things interesting. Daily challenges include combats with no weapons, magical combat, team scrimmages, ranged combat, sword duels, slow fights (one strike allowed per turn), and a mass brawl with up to 10 participants. Fighters are allowed to heal themselves if they have the ability to do so; for those who don't, medics are standing by to assist.

Members of the guild don't fight as a rule, but the mercenaries who contract with them often enter tournaments. Many of the current champions are part of mercenary group the Raging Forge. Its leaders **Sonnhyl Raskgerwarch** (CN female dwarf sorcerer) and **Issishk** (N male lizardfolk fighter) are perennial favorites of the bettors.

10. THE NIGHT MARKET

CRIMINAL MARKET MERCHANT

Those who want to sell or purchase goods away from the gaze of the law do so at the Night Market. Every Fireday, Starday, and Sunday evening, those in the know flock to a cavern that's mostly hidden behind a wall of rubble. Vendors sell food and drinks, smugglers mingle with buyers, and deals are sealed with as few words as possible in case anyone is listening too closely.

Some prospective buyers come to browse the unique and interesting items available. Others come because they've heard rumors of rare goods that might exist elsewhere, and they want to find someone who can source the objects they desire.

Hemma Struthbart (CN female dwarf miner), the heir of an old mining family, grew up on stories of a device her grandfather made to sense veins of precious metals in the caverns below Highhelm. The tool—and his entire operation—were lost in a tragic cave-in. She recently heard that **Koredd Skirmirast** (N male hryngar scrounger) plans to excavate the old camp in search of antiques. Hemma would gladly pay for the device, but she's worried someone else might already have a claim on it, and she can't investigate this herself as she has two young children to watch at home. She's willing to trade the location of the market and a fair bit of coin to someone who will negotiate on her behalf.

11. THE MOUTH OF HORROR

DUNGEON MONUMENT

The Depths are the first part of Highhelm anyone from the Darklands might reach when following the cave network in Emperor's Peak toward the surface. During the Quest for Sky, the migrating dwarves emptied the tunnels of enemies, but the millennia since have seen their path reclaimed by demons and other dangerous creatures.

A set of wrought iron gates sits at the precipice to the Darklands. It stretches from cave floor to cavern ceiling to keep Darklands creatures where they belong. Emperor's Watch members keep a guard posted around the clock, and a special detachment lives nearby in case of emergencies.

Many of the guards who work at the Mouth of Horror came from the Darklands themselves and have experience protecting others against its creatures. **Siss Nizyx** (LN male munavri guard captain) prides himself on making a space for munavri and hryngar defectors who are not welcome in other detachments. He trains them well and teaches them vigilance, which has helped him preside over nearly a decade free of incursions through the gates.

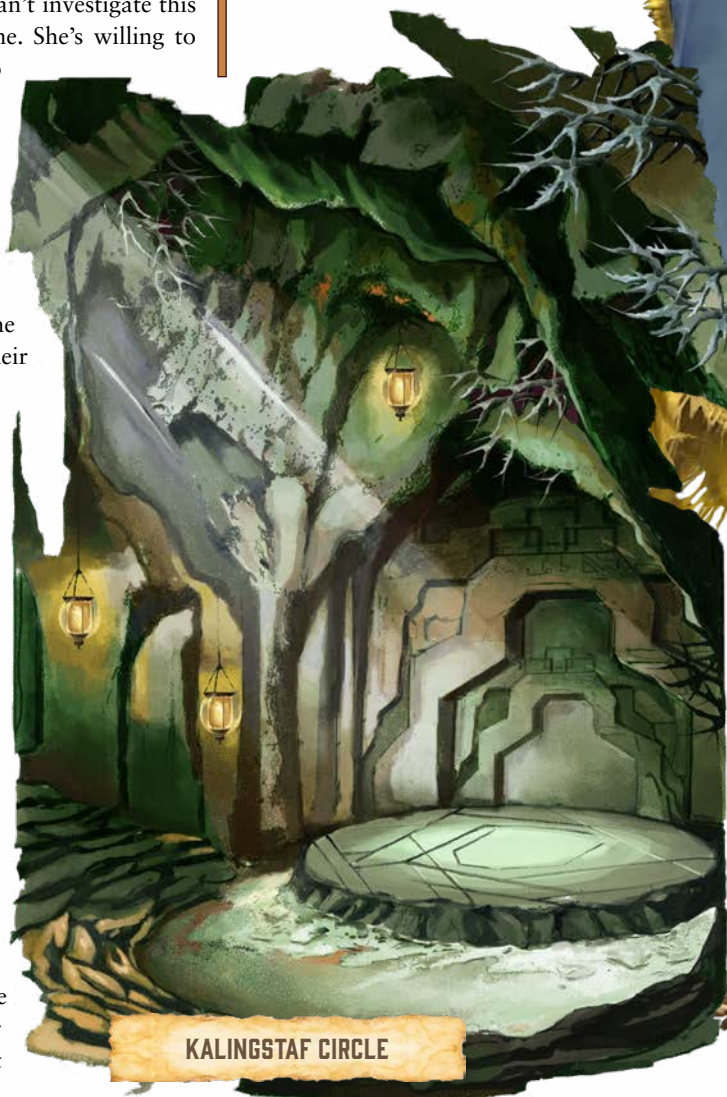
Politicians who rarely come to the Depths take the safety Siss has built for granted. They believe reports of increasing activity in the Darklands are an exaggeration and have refused to increase the guard force or grant more resources to the detachment. Siss has started to look for mercenary groups who are willing to help his guards fight off the next attack, whenever it comes.

HONOR AMONG THIEVES

The sparse presence of the Emperor's Watch in the Depths has left locals to make and enforce their own rules. These mostly come from the Blacknoon Thieves' Guild's Code of Honor. Even those who don't support the guild abide by it, though not always by choice.

The code itself is simple: As long as one's actions aren't harming other residents of the Depths, bystanders should look the other way. Those who harm fellow Depths-dwellers should expect retribution.

Guild members witness enough of the goings-on in the Depths that few dare break the rules blatantly. Punishment is rarely immediate (except in the most egregious cases), but the gang's enforcers have a way of finding transgressors when they're least expecting it.



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FIVE KINGS MOUNTAINS

Dwarves first emerged onto the surface of Golarion at the culmination of their Quest for Sky, and one of the important locations they began to settle in the wake of this feat was the area now known as the Five Kings Mountains. Favored for its defensibility, the region has remained a cultural center of dwarven life ever since. It was here that they established what many consider to be greatest of the Sky Citadels: impenetrable Highhelm, which has never fallen! In the Five Kings Mountains, dwarves shaped the land to their will, building a great dwarven community that stretched for countless miles through the caverns and tunnels beneath the mountain range. At the height of dwarven power, a trader could walk from Taggoret in the south to Tar-Kazmukh in the north without venturing out of safely patrolled subterranean routes.

But the experiences of dwarves in the Five Kings Mountains have been marked by tragedy as much as by triumph. The mighty empire of Tar Taargadth fell to the onslaught of hostile orc forces, shattering the unity of the dwarven people. Dwarves banded together in city-states, founding the kingdoms of Taggoret and Doggadth, Saggorak and Grakodan, and mighty Gardadth. Instead of providing strength and stability, these kingdoms took to warring, and for 700 years civil strife held sway over the Five Kings Mountains. Even when these kings made peace, the respite was short-lived, with orcs once again emerging to plunge the kingdom into chaos and wildness. When King Khadon the Mighty drove back the orcs and reunited the people, the mountains themselves overthrew his kingdom in the great Rending eruption of Droskar's Crag. Instead of renewal after the disaster, the mountains saw only pointless toil under the influence of the Dark Smith, Droskar, and his clergy.

Through all of these travails, the people of the Five Kings Mountains endured and adapted. They held on to useful traditions, came to terms with painful events of the past, built up strength in their strongholds, and reached out to their neighbors. Though there is yet no central government in the area, many have slowly come to believe that the time is almost ripe for a reestablishment of a unified dwarven kingdom. As it stands, power rests in a distributed network of allied city-states. The most influential of these cities—Highhelm, Kolvar, Larrad, Rolgrimmdur, Taggoret, and Tar-Kazmukh—send representatives to the Gathering Council, a loosely defined body that meets regularly to discuss issues that affect the region as a whole. As the leader of the region's traditional capital, Highhelm, King Borogrim the Hale (page 38) enjoys a status as first among equals on the council and attempts to steer the group's slow deliberations. Smaller settlements in the mountains can either directly petition the council or seek the intervention of the nearest large city. Both courses of action tend to cause grumbling about delayed responses and misplaced priorities.

Today, the people of the Five Kings Mountains largely dwell in great underground cities beneath the mountain range. Having learned the lessons of past conflict in the region, these cities are well fortified and protected from invaders, both from the surface and the Darklands, by sturdy gates cast with the grim images of vigilant dwarves. A system of tunnels connects most of these cities, though some areas remain blocked by the effects of the Rending. Organized guards patrol the tunnels, though the further travelers get from major cities, the higher the chances of running across unpleasant surprises on the journey. Many of the subterranean cities have great gates that exit onto the surface, and populations of surface dwellers, largely humans, elves, and halflings, make their living working and trading with the dwarves that live below.

Now, as in ages past, the Five Kings Mountains are known for their wealth of mineral resources, particularly iron and gemstones. Mines and smelters run in most cities, the smoke from their fires escaping through cleverly designed shafts in the mountainsides. The shaping of these resources into useful and beautiful objects is the chief joy of the artisans of the Five Kings. Mercenaries for the fine military academies in the region take the field with the highest quality arms and armor, and such goods are also traded to trusted partners in Andoran, Druma, and Kyonin. Nobles across the Inner Sea would spend small fortunes just to acquire a single jeweled ornament of dwarven make.

Dwarves of the Five Kings have enjoyed friendly relations with Druma for hundreds of years, and long dwarven memories still thank the Drumans for their help in ending the Five Kings Wars. Trade goods, typically metal items and weapons, flow regularly to the cities of Kerse and Macridi, and Druman traders are common sights throughout the region. Traders from the Five Kings also do regular business with merchants from Andoran, though the tumultuous nature of politics in the country makes some dwarves reluctant to commit to long-term arrangements with Andoren traders. The elves of Kyonin are longtime military allies of the cities of the Five Kings, in addition to being important trading partners. Kyonin is hoping to strengthen those ties now that the elven nation feels the encroachment of the Whispering Tyrant's forces from Lake Encarthan. Farther afield, dwarves travel from the region to work or settle in Taldor and keep in touch with their distant cousins across the Inner Sea region. High King Borogrim even maintains an active correspondence with High King Anong Arunak of Dongun Hold.

CULTURE

Although the Five Kings Mountains are harsh, forbidding, and often dangerous, most residents of the region today would say that their society is healthy and thriving. Political stability and economic opportunity have begun

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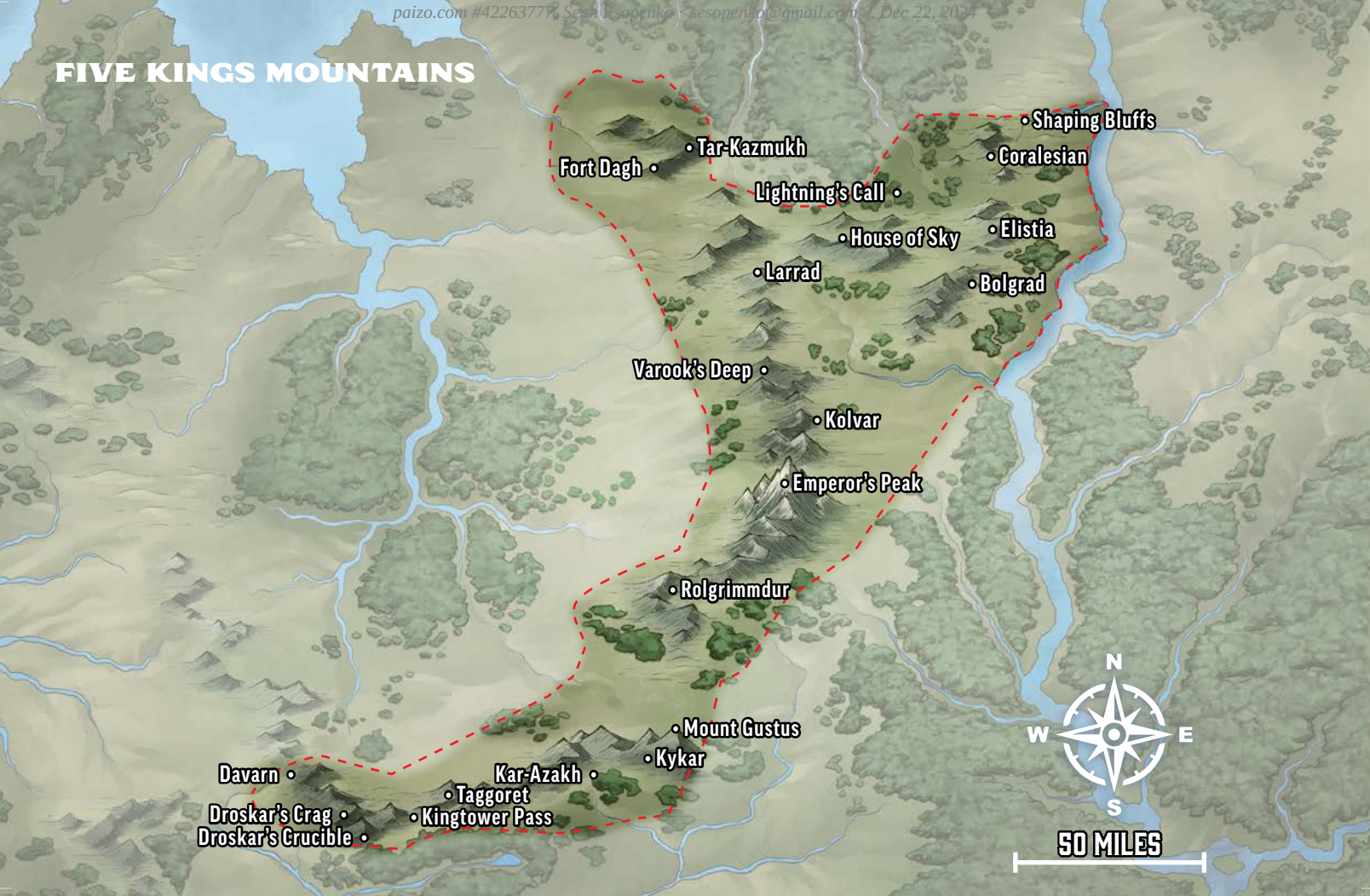
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to pull the region into what some are calling the Era of Hope, which is surprisingly optimistic given the dwarves' historical outlook. Surviving the hardships of the most recent Era of Toil has encouraged a lighter mood among the populace; they welcome new opportunities to bring dwarven culture and pride to heights not seen since the age of Taargick.

One consequence of the lack of central power over the last two centuries of life in the Five Kings is the decline of dwarven monoculture in the region. While personal, clan, and family traditions remain extremely important to residents, space has opened for some social heterodoxy and the idea that there is no single proper way to be a dwarf. What is proper is that all members of the community come together to support the whole. Residents in the Five Kings remain suspicious of outsiders and aloof toward visitors, but once an individual is welcomed into the community, their fellows would give them the black bread off their own table if they needed it. Hard work, individuality, and community support makes the Five Kings Mountains an ideal place to live and work.

Among the dynamic cultural forces in the region are the Rivethun dwarves, who integrate ancient dwarven shamanist practices with contemporary life. Drawing on the distinction between their physical forms and their spiritual selves, the Rivethun have awakened not only mystical power, but also insightful self-discovery in a growing number of adherents. Seeing the spiritual potential

in all beings, the Rivethun also caution their communities to use the resources of the natural world and the energy of their neighbors with care.

Residents look toward tradition as a balancing weight to these newer cultural developments, ensuring that society does not change so quickly that it becomes unrecognizable or unstable. Clan and caste relationships play an important role in daily life, particularly in cities and towns. A social hierarchy gives shape and support to the region's communities, even if that shape is not as rigid as it once was. Social institutions such as military units, religious orders, and scholarly academies continue to exert a significant influence on life in the region. The pace of life is greatly impacted by the dwarven majority that lives in the area, and dwarves rarely begin new ventures, make decisions, or change their minds hastily. Other residents know and value the history of their mountain home, and of dwarven cultural life. Debates and discussions from the dinner table to the council hall are often illustrated with examples from the days of Khadon the Mighty, or even King Taargick! Residents of the Five Kings believe that developments unmindful of the past are unlikely to endure into the future.

CURRENT EVENTS

Even in a locale as rugged as the Five Kings Mountains, the wheels of politics and society are constantly spinning, creating both danger and opportunity.

Darklands Incursion: Guards from the settlement of Varook's Deep, far below the surface of the mountain range, report an increasing number of attacks by strange beasts on the city's walls. The fleshwarped creatures are testing themselves against the settlement's defenses on a daily basis. General **Flinda Strikespark** (NG female dwarf sapper) has called for mercenaries from across the Five Kings to aid in the city's defense.

New Kerse Accords: Diplomats from Druma in every mountain settlement bigger than a hamlet have been praising what they call the "New Kerse Accords." In reality, these trade proposals are collections of confusingly written deals that would greatly benefit traders from Druma and shut merchants from Andoran, Galt, and Iger out of the region's markets. Enough savvy traders have objected to the deals that the diplomats have made little headway, but if the right politicians are offered "financial incentives," the Drumans could gain a permanent upper hand in their trade arrangements. Tax collector **Kersta Oresworn** (LN female dwarf auditor) believes that a consortium of merchant houses is behind the effort, rather than the Drumish government, and she seeks a team of agents to travel to Kerse to investigate.

To Stand Against the Tyrant: The largest threat to the region, and to Avistan as a whole, is the aggression of the now-free Whispering Tyrant, Tar-Baphon. Several mercenary companies from Rolgrimmur have already deployed to Druma, but Queen **Telandia Edasseril** (NG female elf wizard; *Pathfinder Lost Omens Legends* 106) has called for a regional council to coordinate responses to the grave threat that now lurks at the center of Lake Encarthan.

Uniting the Five Kings: High King Borogrim the Hale has decided to focus on a new push to reestablish central authority over the entire Five Kings Mountains. Like most of the king's endeavors, it will be a slow, steady project. The city-states of the mountains value their autonomy, and extensive work is needed to convince the members of the Gathering Council that strength, and the future, lies in allegiance to Highhelm. While some of the smaller independent cities have already indicated support for reunification, Borogrim and his agents need to do extensive groundwork in Larrad, Kolvar, Taggoret, Rolgrimmur, and Tar-Kazmukh if he is to be High King in more than name.

LOCATIONS

Above and below the surface, the Five Kings Mountains are peppered with sites of interest.

Bolgrad: This city in the northeastern reaches of the Five Kings is widely known for the mining, cutting, and polishing of gemstones. The veins of gem-rich ore that line the cavern ceiling of the city have earned it the nickname "Star-Studded Bolgrad." Most of the city's 5,700 residents earn their livelihood from the gem trade in some fashion, and Bolgrad's jewelry makers enjoy widespread renown; when the Gathering Council decided to send Grand Princess Eutropia Stavian of Taldor a coronation gift, they contracted a great necklace from Bolgrad's artisans. Though most residents of the underground city are dwarves, elves form a sizable minority of the population here, with a large proportion of them serving as clergy of Yuelral. A temple to the wise goddess, led by high priest **Wenristan Ridistrial** (NG female elf crystal keeper), provides complimentary accommodations to artisans of all ancestries traveling to the city to study.

The Carved Kings: After the signing of the Kerse Accord (2332 AR) and the end of seven centuries of civil war, the people of the region raised titanic monuments to commemorate the visionary agreements. Carved into the sides of prominent peaks across the mountain range, the five sculptures depict legendary dwarven monarchs as much larger than life—all of the carvings are over 150 feet tall. For over 2,000 years, the kings that give the region its name have proudly guarded important passes and prominent settlements. King Harral, the ruler of Saggorak, looks down from the heights of Lightning's Call. The carving of King Kazmukh of Doggadth looks down over the Great

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Many interesting people make the Five Kings Mountains their homes.

Beltarian Zimwhistle (CG male sylph gnome aerialist): This tightrope walker from the Isle of Kortos was drawn to the area by the rumor of a magical wind current running through the range that would allow a daring gnome to cross from one mountaintop to another by treading on thin air. After some dangerous near misses, he's decided to hire researchers to gather solid information before he walks off any more cliffs.

Catherine of Anuli (N female catfolk thespian): This ostentatious performer from distant Garund always introduces herself as "Catty Paws, hold your applause!" Keen to build up her reputation in the area, Catty seeks talented actors, acrobats, musicians, and magicians to join her in building a wandering theater troupe. She's willing to pay for good acts, as long as they are careful not to upstage her.

Hronthe Crowndim (NG genderfluid dwarf guide): Hronthe has a sterling mountaineer's reputation, but the last two groups that they have taken trekking nearly ended in disaster. They suspect that someone or something is interfering with the established trails by moving markers and magically altering landmarks. A group could hire Hronthe's expert services for a significant discount if they agree to help remap some of the mountains' tricky passes.

Wandering Doman (CN male elf sojourner): Many travelers have run across this ancient elf in the high passes. He contends that he lost something while traveling through the region long ago, and he missed it only recently. While the old man is sketchy on the details of his quarry, he claims that he'll know it when he sees it, and he frequently hires game adventurers to explore old ruins and abandoned mines in search of anything that looks elven.

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CLIMATE

The Five Kings Mountains enjoy a moderate climate during summertime with comfortable temperatures and pleasant conditions prevailing at lower elevations. The highest peaks in the mountains are covered in snow year-round, and winters are harsh in the region, with sudden squalls, biting winds, and dangerously low temperatures. Even in summer, travelers should keep in mind the wide variation between daytime and nighttime temperatures. The south faces of mountains in the range receive substantially more rainfall than the northern reaches due to moist winds blowing up from the Inner Sea. The rain shadow of Droskar's Peak and the other mountains of the central range means that the country's border with Druma is largely shielded from extreme weather. Differences in elevation, prevailing winds, and slope mean that weather on neighboring peaks can be drastically different, and some areas are notorious for unusual conditions, such as the near-constant thunderstorms that linger around Lightning's Call.

Pass near Fort Dagb. King Rolgrimm of Grakodan watches over the Low Pass near Rolgrimmdur, while King Madgrim IX of Gardadth looms from the side of Mount Arugak near Kolvar. The likeness of King Taggun (sometimes called Taggrick I) is carved into the side of Mount Langley and stands sentinel over the Kingstower Pass and nearby Taggoret. Though no living dwarven resident of the region could have been around during the creation of these monoliths, a rumor almost as old as the monuments themselves persists throughout the Five Kings Mountains. Those who place any value in the rumor believe that each of the monuments contains a magical jewel—each king's respective clan gem—that can unleash destructive power capable of annihilating any army that dares assault the region.

Coralesian: Unlike most towns in the Five Kings Mountains, Coralesian (population: 460) is primarily a residence for elves. The townsfolk moved into the mountains to appreciate the high peaks, alpine meadows, and breathtaking cliffs. Ranger Captain **Jaychen Endrani** (NG female elf scout) is the nominal leader of the community, though the small populace tries to find consensus on major issues before making any vital decisions.

Daralathyl's Lair: Reportedly active in the Five Kings region since around 3000 AR, the ancient red dragon Daralathyl makes his home in foothills between Droskar's Crag and Mount Gustus. Easily one of the largest and most powerful creatures in Avistan, the magnificent dragon commands allegiance from dragons and other creatures throughout his extensive range, and his periodic rages across the area are legendary. In the past century, sightings of the great dragon have become increasingly rare, leading some to speculate that the fearsome creature has finally died. Adventurers hoping to plunder an abandoned lair should be wary, however, as past rumors of Daralathyl's death merely presaged a violent reemergence of the creature.

Davarn: This large town (population: 2,250) in the southwestern reaches of the Five Kings is divided into two parts: an agrarian surface district primarily settled by humans, and an urbanized underground district that houses most of the town's dwarves. Relations between the districts are cooperative, and both are represented on the town's five-member ruling council. Councilors serve for staggered 10-year terms, with elections occurring every two years, causing some residents to complain that there always seems to be a reelection campaign going on. The two most powerful councilors at the moment are Mayor **Ranti Bessik** (LN female dwarf politician) and customs collector **Novar Rinaldi** (N male human bureaucrat). While the town's many artisans produce high quality goods, and its mines are productive, the settlement thrives because of its prime location as a nexus for trade. Davarn sits in the main pass between Druma and Andoran, and the hospitable town is a major stopping point for trading caravans. The settlement's subterranean tunnels also connect it to the nearby city of Taggoret, allowing it to tap into the larger dwarven trade network of the region.

Droskar's Crag: This active volcano forms the highest point in the Five Kings region, reaching 28,822 feet above sea level. The mountain forms two primary peaks, known as the Hammer and the Anvil, and an active lava crater can still be viewed inside the Anvil. The snowcapped area is home to several large ice caps, including the Coldforge, Eastrise, Gold, Peakcrest, Silver, and Sunset glaciers. Runoff from the glaciers feeds into the two major rivers that originate from the mountain's slopes, the Coldforge River on the north side and the Goldmelt River on the southwest. Both of these streams empty into the River Foam over the border in Andoran and were important trading arteries before the fall of Tar Khadurrm.

The volcano's last major eruption, known as the Rending, occurred in 3980 AR when a violent convulsion of the mountain destroyed the subterranean dwarven capital of Jernashall and sent the surface city of Raseri Kanton tumbling into lava-filled crevices in the volcano's sides. The eruption and accompanying earthquakes caused widespread destruction across the

region, with major damage from snowmelt flooding reported as far south as Almas, in Andoran. In addition to the physical damage and loss of life, the catastrophe broke the empire of Tar Khadurrm, ushering in a period of cultural decline for the dwarves living in the region. That the mountain occasionally unleashes smoke, ash, and the rare fire elemental is a continued cause for concern among the region's population.

Droskar's Crucible: Long abandoned on the southeast slopes of Droskar's Crag, this squat monastery is carved of joyless, unadorned gray stone now crumbling under the ravages of time. Constructed by the clergy of Droskar during the mid-45th century AR, the edifice is typical of construction during Ordrik's theocracy. Today, the structure is mostly the abode of fungus and mold, though its cold halls serve as a lair for the powerful predator **Graypelt** (CE male warg).

Elistia: A strategic military outpost of the elven nation of Kyonin, the Fortress of the Bluffs commands a wide view of the northeastern range of the Five Kings Mountains as well as the borders with Kyonin and Galt. A garrison of 500 warriors, commanded by Lord **Alavar** (LN male elf captain), vigilantly guards the borders to the elven kingdom. The elves have been known to assist imperiled mountaineers they encounter on patrols, though they are otherwise cool to visitors.

Emperor's Peak: The second-highest mountain in the Five Kings range at 18,365 feet, Emperor's Peak is the home of Highhelm, the region's capital. In addition to the city in its depths, the most prominent feature of Emperor's Peak is the figure of the Guardian King carved into the side of the mountain. Constructed by the people of Highhelm to represent the enduring spirit of the city, the sculpture does not depict any particular monarch, but rather the ideals of dwarven monarchy: protection, stability, and tradition. Along with the construction of Torag's Shield, the massive wall currently under construction outside the city, the Guardian King symbolizes to the people of the Five Kings that Highhelm is ready to stand as an impenetrable refuge for those in need.

Fort Dagh: Set atop a peak just south of Tar-Kazmukh, this outpost monitors the Great Pass and much of the region's northwestern border. Dwarves accustomed to living underground consider Dagh a hardship post, but the majority of the mountain dwarves and humans that staff the outpost appreciate waking up to its breathtaking views of the range and surrounding countryside. The post's commanding officer, First Captain **Hannah Drasten** (LN female human guard), is one of the few non-dwarves with a military leadership role in the Five Kings Mountains.

House of Sky: This aerie in the northern reaches of the range looks down over the vast forests of Kyonin, and is home to one of the staunchest allies of the elven realm: the owl council of the Fierani Forest. These intelligent creatures are eternal enemies of demons, particularly Treerazer and his minions, and they have provided the rulers of Kyonin with enchanted signal whistles to use in times of need. The council is a contentious group, but Winglord **Kreiagh** (LG male owl councilor) can build consensus among them consistently. The aerie is quite inaccessible by ground routes, and the infrequent visitors who call generally have access to flight.

Kar-Azakh: Newcomers to Kar-Azakh are often taken aback by the loud reverberations that thunder through the city, caused by the roaring 200-foot-tall waterfall at its heart, and the answering echoes from the city's cavern walls. Longtime residents of the small city (population: 3,200) wear hearing protection whenever they venture outdoors and do most of their public communication using sign language. Dealing with the noise is worth it for the settlement's residents, as the waterfall, known as the Cascade, provides enough energy to turn dozens of waterwheels within the city. Kar-Azakh's mayor, **Tandril Gripstone** (N genderfluid dwarf artificer), ensures that all of the city's mills get a chance to take advantage of the waterfall's power.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Much of the territory of the Five Kings Mountains lies above the tree line, though evergreens such as juniper, and several varieties of fir, pine, and spruce, dot the mountain's foothills. As elevation rises, the trees dwindle to shrub-like varieties and give way to meadows covered in clovers, grasses, and sedges. Beautiful sprays of wildflowers cover many of these meadows in the late spring and early summer.

Goats and grayhorn sheep graze on the scrub just below the snow line, and herds of elk browse the lower alpine meadows and high forests. Mule-like augdunar serve as pack animals and working companions. All of these creatures are preyed upon by the healthy population of gray wolves, brown bears, and other predators that call the mountains home.

Caverns beneath the mountains hold their own thriving ecosystems, with walls sprouting hundreds of varieties of fungi ranging from poisonous to luminous, and all manner of burrowing and crawling creatures unique to the region.

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OTHER SETTLEMENTS

A number of other settlements dot the Five Kings Mountains, too small to be featured on most maps.

Bowton (Population: 147): This village serves as a base camp for climbers attempting to summit Mount Mist, and has more supplies than usual for a settlement its size.

Scryer (Population: 108): Just below the snow line on Mount Soryu, this community of stargazers also keeps an eye on the roads and passes of the Five Kings, and little escapes the view of their telescopes.

Taargickrad (Population: 251): The residents of this ostentatiously named town claim that the ancient king himself founded the settlement. Gardeners' spades in town do turn up artifacts with unusual regularity.

Kingtower Pass: This strategically important pass runs between Droskar's Crag and Mount Gustus, on the southern edge of the Five Kings Mountains. The carved face of King Taggun looms over the pass, marking the border between the region and Andoran. A detachment of dwarves led by **Jartan Clapstin** (LG nonbinary dwarf march captain) patrols the region on the lookout for wayward travelers and the occasional uncanny creature that wanders out of the nearby Darkmoon Vale.

Kolvar: One of the region's smaller cities with a population around 4,500, subterranean Kolvar was once the southern district of a much larger city called Saggorak. Saggorak's mighty, rune-covered walls were sturdy enough to repel any invader, but a protracted siege by orc forces eventually led to mass starvation and the fall of the city in 2519 AR. The orcs were unable to claim their prize, however, as the city's residents rose as undead and spirits to drive out the invaders. Almost 700 years later, efforts by King Khadon the Mighty to retake and cleanse the city for dwarven habitation were only partially effective. The reclaimed southern district was renamed Kolvar and the district's fortifications were rebuilt to repel any undead threats from the haunted remains of the fallen city. Today, powerful guilds of artisans hold political sway, and "King" **Kelda Halrig** (LN female dwarf forgemaster), head of the Anvillers' Guild and Chief Councilor of the Court of Regents, is unlikely to be referred to as a monarch outside the Gathering Council.

Kykar: With a population of 9,200, Kykar is the largest of the region's cities without a voice on the Gathering Council. Situated under Mount Gustus in the southeastern corner of the Five Kings range, the city has long attempted to gain the political prominence of neighboring Taggoret and Rolgrimmdur. Recently, Lord Mayor **Hansin Struckiron** (LN male dwarf merchant) has thrown his political influence and economic connections behind the regional unification efforts of Highhelm's King Borogrim, figuring that centralized authority may level the playing field for the other cities within the region.

Larrad: Centered on a cluster of temple caverns carved by some of the first dwarves to settle the region, the city of Larrad (population: 18,930) is a nexus of pilgrimage and spiritual life. While small temples honoring most common Inner Sea deities can be found in the city, the focus of worship, and of city life, is on Torag and his family. Vast cathedrals dedicated to members of the dwarven pantheon serve as training centers for much of the dwarven clergy, and most businesses support religious life in some capacity. The city is also home to a grand necropolis overseen by the priests of Magrim. Once, many of the city's residents were interred there, but today the honor is bestowed sparingly, with final approval required from King **Besta Grimeye** (LN female duskwalker dwarf high priest).

Lightning's Call: This lofty peak on the edge of Kyonin is known for its two defining characteristics: the giant carving of King Harral that looks out over the south side of the Great Pass, and the constant gathering of storm clouds that shroud its top. Wizards from Tar-Kazmukh who have studied the phenomenon swear that it isn't magical in nature, but conventional descriptions fail to sufficiently explain the anomaly.

Raseri Kanton: Originally thought lost after the Rending, the city of Raseri Kanton is now a location of great excitement. A recent expedition by the Pathfinder Society rediscovered the city deep beneath the depths of Droskar's Crag. The search was long and perilous, and explorers have only just begun to comb the ruins of the city. While the path to Raseri Kanton is now clear thanks to the Society's efforts, the city itself could still hold dangers awaiting a chance to escape into the greater region.

Rolgrimmdur: Legendary King Khadon the Mighty established the settlement that would become Rolgrimmdur as a military outpost during his campaign to drive orc forces out of the region in the 32nd century AR.



KELDA HALRIG

Built upon the ruins of the city of Grakodan, which orcs had sacked almost 700 years earlier, Rolgrimmdur served as a strategic supply point during the campaign. After Khadon founded his kingdom of Tar Khadurrn, Rolgrimmdur grew into a true fortress city, today hosting a population of just over 7,000. Despite the turmoil of the intervening years, the city remains home to the preeminent military training facility in the Five Kings, and martial life is central to the city's culture, with most residents studying tactics, combat techniques, and military history from a young age. Even many officials from Druma and Andoran travel to the city to receive combat training. The city exports mercenary companies to other cities in the Five Kings mountains when necessary and is the central manufacturer of siege weaponry in the region. King **Kaldon the Stalwart** (LN nonbinary dwarf general) oversees the city's fortifications, including the defenses constructed to separate the city from the extensive Darklands caverns that run below.

Shaping Bluffs: This two-mile stretch of steep red stone cliffs runs along the water where the Sellen River marks the border between the Five Kings and the tumultuous nation of Galt. The faces of the bluffs reshape themselves at erratic intervals, seemingly ignoring any effects of the wind and water on the cliffside. The shifting of the bluffs often opens up small caves at the water level, and the area has become a haven for smugglers and river pirates operating along the Sellen. The constantly shifting geography allows them to elude capture by the little authority that exists along the river by frequently changing the locations of their hideouts. Recently, a small band of dwarven stone shamans, led by **Hromcul Stetruk** (N male dwarf geomancer), have established a camp at the bluffs to study the mysterious forces that cause them to reshape. They've successfully managed to stabilize the area around their camp enough to make it a permanent base, but the reason behind the cliff's odd behavior remains elusive.

Taggoret: The city of Taggoret (population: 14,800) sits at the confluence of many of the tunnel systems and lava tubes that run underneath the Five Kings Mountains. The industrial city's primary export is the fine iron that is mined and smelted beneath the mountains. Some of the city's richest mines were cut off during the Rending, but King **Gefhurt Gondak** (LG male dwarf industrialist) is leery of reopening any tunnels running in the direction of Droskar's Crag. He would prefer to investigate more efficient techniques for exploiting the ore veins already in use.

Tar-Kazmukh: The small city-state of Tar-Kazmukh (population: 3,740) is home to the most extensive libraries and archives in the Five Kings Mountains, and dwarven wizards from across Golarion travel to the city to gain access to its arcane libraries. The Blue Warders, rune-tattooed librarians who expertly navigate the protective magic of the archives, allow most visitors access to their collection, and they

are particularly eager to work with those researching planar phenomena. Navigating the archives without an experienced guide is inadvisable, as magic formed much of the stonework, and passages have been known to shift unexpectedly or dump the unwary in "lost" archives with little chance of escape. Sibling rulers King **Wultri Nalkuver** (NG female dwarf diviner) and King **Hromkar Nalkuver** (LG male dwarf conjurer) represent the city on the Gathering Council.

Varook's Deep: At 17,621 feet below sea level, Varook's Deep (population: 2,575) is the lowest point of the tunnels beneath the mountain range still inhabited by dwarves. The city is considered the first line of defense against an incursion from the Darklands and a martial spirit generally prevails, with General **Flinda Strikespark** (NG female dwarf sapper) leading the well-supplied garrison in the settlement. So deep underground that it is rarely visited by surface dwellers, the city hosts a number of traders and travelers from the Darklands. It's not unusual to see caligni, svirfneblin, or subterranean fey visiting the city, typically escorted by a local.



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CHAPTER 3: HIGHHELM OPTIONS



DEFENDERS OF HIGHHELM

The bestial roar of bizarre, terrible creatures echoed through the Depths; a somewhat common occurrence, but not in these numbers, and not to this degree. Atena Stonefist wiped the sweat from her brow as she faced the scaled and pockmarked hide of an enormous ankylosaurus. The massive dinosaur was flanked by a half-dozen xulgaths, each shaking their weapons at Atena, spittle and hatred spraying from their mouths. At her back, several civilians cowered in fear. At her side she had only her trusted goat Korath. And from above her, the blessings of Trudd.

Her enemies stood no chance.

The behemoth charged forward, and Atena raised her shield to catch it, digging her heels into the ground. As though sensing that she wasn't as easy of a target as her charges, the dinosaur attempted to rush through her to get to its ordered marks, but Atena's shield caught its chest while it tried to move past her. With a wry grin, she pushed the beast back, then whistled for Korath to make his own charge. He bowled into the beast's side, sending it flying backward and giving Atena a bit of room to breathe. Or rather, a bit of room to deal with the xulgaths instead, as they immediately rushed to swarm her and remove her from battle.

She had to laugh—her training served her well as she moved in time with their attacks, letting their spears bounce off of her mail. She struck back with her warhammer, with her shield, even with her own body, knocking into her attackers. When they looked ready to flee, a swift stomp of her boot shattered the ground around her, tripping them up and preventing the beasts from escaping Trudd's wrath. By the time the ankylosaurus had regained its bearings and turned its attention back to her, each of its xulgath companions laid broken on the floor, while Atena had barely been scratched. The dinosaur roared at her, to which her only reply was to spit in its direction. Atena nodded to Korath, now injured himself from his duel with the plated beast, and he ran back to the terrified civilians, bucking at them with his horns to usher them in the direction of safety.

Atena raised her shield once more, bracing herself for impact and preparing for the oncoming pain. The beast's charge was now directed at her, with no other prey to seek and its pack dead at her feet. It spun, and the impact of its powerful tail against her shield sent shudders down her body, but she held. The pain was nothing. Even as the dinosaur attempted to smash her

body underfoot, she held firm, and when it rose up to trample her, she quickly twisted her body, delivering her knee to its soft belly, and the beast stopped in place, howling.

The ankylosaurus had been bruised, but now that Atena looked down at herself, it was apparent that she was far more injured than the beast. She risked a glance back and allowed herself to relax: the civilians and Korath had escaped. She'd done her duty.

Battles exactly like this one raged throughout the caverns below Highhelm, the clash of steel and stone echoing throughout the tunnels around her. She smiled wryly. Atena knew that no matter what happened to her here, she and her fellow defenders of the city would drive back the xulgath invasion, and that she'd be welcomed in Trudd's halls with her ancestors. Atena clenched a fist, allowing the small amount of magic she knew to fill her body and heal some of her wounds. She would at least take this monster down with her. The ankylosaurus bellowed at her, and she tightened her grip on her hammer, battered shield at the ready. She was ready to face her fate here.

What she wasn't ready for was the sudden bleating at her side. She looked over, startled, and let out a quick chuckle. There stood Korath, looking proud and annoyed that she'd tried to fight without him.

"Very well, my friend," Atena said, climbing onto the back of her faithful steed. "We fight together." Shield raised, she dug her heels into Korath's side and urged him to meet the monster that threatened her city mid-charge.

In the aftermath of their victory, the battle became a fantastic story to tell at the taverns.

NEW OPTIONS

This chapter presents a number of new options for characters of all kinds that have a link to the city of Highhelm. These options are meant to supplement the options found in the previous chapter. This chapter includes the following sections.

Dwarven Options: Embrace dwarven heritage or immerse yourself in dwarven culture with the character options presented in this chapter! New ancestry feats provide any dwarf, born or adopted, with skills that draw on dwarven stubbornness, tradition, and spirituality. Beasts of burden native to the Five Kings Mountains become trusty companions for any adventurer. And the stalwart defender archetype brings the oldest fighting style in Golarion into your hands, a perfect addition for any character who wishes to protect the lives of others with their very bodies. Any of these options are freely available to natives of Highhelm, and they can be learned by anyone visiting there.

Highhelm Gear: Special weapons and equipment, built or designed by some of the finest crafters in Avistan, are presented here. Strike and defend equally with *Highhelm war shields*, protect yourself while spelunking with the *everair mask*, and, if you can afford it, take advantage of the magic-absorbing properties of keep stone.

From Dwarven Legends: Dwarven culture is ancient, and some of the most notable dwarven items exist in history books and old stories. This section includes a new relic and several new artifacts drawing upon dwarven tales.

Dwarven Gods: Though you may know Torag well, and probably something of Droskar, what do you know of the rest of the pantheon? Here you'll find full descriptions of each member of Torag's family, and the full pantheon known as the Nine.

Highhelm Bestiary: Lastly, you may enjoy learning about some of Highhelm's non-humanoid residents. Here you'll find more details on the animals of Highhelm and the Five Kings Mountains, a terrifying, sentient abyssal swarm, and the Herald of Torag himself, the Grand Defender.

DWARVEN CAMPAIGNS

The heavily dwarven setting and dwarf-flavored options in this book lend themselves well to an all-dwarf campaign. This kind of campaign can be very fun, but also has potential pitfalls with ability score and build diversity. As a player, you can use the alternate ancestry boosts noted on page 26 of the *Core Rulebook* to create dwarven characters that are better suited to different roles or classes. You can collaborate with your fellow players to avoid too much overlap, but a less balanced group can be fun too! If you want something like this, you'll want to talk with your GM to make sure the entire table is aware of the challenges involved.

As a group, you may collectively want to play an all-dwarf campaign, but have one player uninterested in being a dwarf. That's okay! In the clans of Highhelm and many other dwarven communities, adoption is uncommon but not unheard of, allowing a player to be any ancestry while still being immersed in dwarven culture and options.

NON-DWARF OPTIONS

This chapter has a strong focus on options for dwarven characters. Some of these, such as the ancestry feats, require you to be playing a dwarf, while others are thematically fitting for dwarves but aren't dwarf-exclusive. Every item and animal companion, as well as the stalwart defender archetype and the relic seeds, can be taken by any ancestry, and while they're preferred by dwarves, the gods detailed here accept followers of any origin. The new ancestry feats are also entirely cultural and are accessible through the Adopted Ancestry feat, making only the heritages here inaccessible to anyone but dwarves.

If you like some of the options here but not their thematic ties to dwarves, remember that flavor is flexible! The Rivethun feats can be recontextualized to work with any animistic beliefs, or *Highhelm war shields* can simply become *clutching war shields*. Remember, it's your game, so make sure to tweak options and flavor to best suit your needs and the needs of your table.

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DWARVEN OPTIONS

The following options are representative of the dwarves living in Highhelm. Any uncommon options are representative of techniques and skills developed within Highhelm and are available to characters who call Highhelm their home.

ANCESTRY FEATS

The following ancestry feats are available to dwarves.

1ST LEVEL

CLAN LORE

FEAT 1

DWARF

Your identity as a member of your clan is as central to your sense of self as your dwarven ancestry. You gain the trained proficiency rank in the two skills of your clan. If you would automatically become trained in one of these skills (from your background or class, for example), you instead become trained in a skill of your choice. You also become trained in the listed Lore for your clan. If you come from a clan not listed here, you become trained in

an appropriate selection of skills as determined by your GM. Since the trade of a clan takes a while to learn, these skills don't automatically change should you ever leave your clan and join another, though your GM might allow you to change these skills as part of retraining during downtime.

CLAN LORE

Clan	Skills	Lore
Clan Aringeld	Diplomacy and Society	Mercantile Lore
Clan Breakiron	Crafting and Survival	Alchemy Lore
Clan Firecask	Crafting and Nature	Alcohol Lore
Clan Gelderon	Athletics and Nature	Farming Lore
Clan Grimmark	Crafting and Society	Architecture Lore
Clan Ironfist	Crafting and Medicine	Smelting Lore
Clan Molgrade	Crafting and Thievery	Smithing Lore
Clan Oriddus	Religion and Society	Dwarven Pantheon Lore
Clan Runebinder	Arcana and Occultism	Academia Lore
Clan Stonefist	Athletics and Intimidation	Warfare Lore
Clan Tolorr	Diplomacy and Society	Library Lore
Clan Vanderholl	Athletics and Crafting	Labor Lore

RIVETHUN DISCIPLE

FEAT 1

UNCOMMON DWARF

Access Rivethun Adherent background (*Lost Omens World Guide* 130) or you are a member of the Rivethun

By studying with the dwarven shamans of Highhelm, you have become aware of the friction between your body and spirit. With some concentration, you can make the best of this dichotomy. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Crafting, Deception, Intimidation, and Medicine as long as you have the clumsy, drained, or enfeebled conditions. You also gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Athletics, Stealth, and Thievery checks as long as you have the immobilized, slowed, or stupefied conditions.

9TH LEVEL

RIVETHUN SPIRITUAL ATTUNEMENT FEAT 9

UNCOMMON DWARF

Access Rivethun Adherent background (*World Guide* 130) or you are a member of the Rivethun

Your time spent among the Rivethun has heightened your awareness of animate spirits around you, giving you the ability to sense them briefly. Once per day, you can use an action, which has the concentrate trait, to gain spiritsense as an imprecise sense with a range of 60 feet for 1 minute. You can sense the presence of spirits as described in the Soulsight feat (*Advanced Player's Guide* 113).



RIVETHUN DWARF

HERITAGE

The following heritage is available to dwarves.

FORGE-BLESSED DWARF

HERITAGE

You are from a family in Highhelm that venerates a particular dwarven deity above all others. Your birth was blessed by your family's patron deity, granting you a fraction of their power. Choose one deity from the dwarven pantheon (page 125). You can cast the 1st-level spell they grant clerics (such as *soothe* if your family's patron is Bolka) as an innate divine spell once per week.

ANIMAL COMPANIONS

The following animal companions are native to the Five Kings Mountains.

AUGDUNAR

Your companion is an augdunar, a powerful breed of mule favored by the dwarves of Highhelm.

Size Medium

Melee ♦ hoof, **Damage** 1d8 bludgeoning

Str +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Hit Points 10

Skill Athletics

Senses low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Speed 25 feet

Special mount

Support Benefit The augdunar shifts its weight, proffering you an item. You Interact to draw a weapon or item that is being carried by the augdunar.

Advanced Maneuver Weighted Kick

WEIGHTED KICK ♦♦

Your augdunar gives a heavy kick with its hind legs, bringing the weight of its burden on the target. It makes a hoof Strike. On a successful hit, the augdunar automatically Shoves the target back 5 feet (10 feet on a critical success).

DRAFT LIZARD

Your companion is a giant lizard, used in the depths of Highhelm as mounts and pack animals.

Size Medium

Melee ♦ jaws, **Damage** 1d8 piecing

Melee ♦ tail (finesse), **Damage** 1d6 bludgeoning

Str +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Hit Points 8

Skill Athletics

Senses darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Speed 25 feet

Special mount

Support Benefit Your draft lizard assists you in battle. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus on your next attack roll to Strike a foe within your draft lizard's reach. The bonus lasts until the first time you use it or until the beginning of your next turn, whichever comes first.

Advanced Maneuver Tail Swipe

TAIL SWIPE ♦♦

Your draft lizard sweeps its tail, making tail Strikes against up to two adjacent foes. Each attack counts toward the draft lizard's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty only increases after all the attacks have been made.

GOAT

Your companion is a breed of mountain goat populous in the Five Kings Mountains.

Size Medium

Melee ♦ headbutt (shove), **Damage** 1d8 bludgeoning

Str +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Hit Points 8

Skill Acrobatics

Senses scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Speed 35 feet, climb 15 feet

Special mount

Support Benefit Your goat boosts you up a wall, allowing you to reach greater heights. You climb up a surface as if you had rolled a success on a Climb action.

Advanced Maneuver Knock Aside

KNOCK ASIDE ♦

Requirements The animal companion's last action was a successful headbutt Strike.

The goat automatically pushes the target back 5 feet, or 10 feet if the required Strike was a critical hit.



RIDING GOAT

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STALWART DEFENDER

The military history of the dwarves is a story of largely defensive combat and tactics, whether it be as simple as guarding a camp during the Quest for Sky or a protracted siege, such as at the Sky Citadel of Kraggodan. The martial discipline of the stalwart defender arose over the course of centuries to become an iconic dwarven warrior, capable of holding their ground against overwhelming odds and not ceding an inch of stone.

To be a stalwart defender is to stand with the resilience of a mountain. When danger arrives you face it unflinchingly, allowing your enemy's blows to glance off you like wind whistling past granite. This mindset comes naturally to dwarves, while other ancestries typically need specialized training to attain the determination needed for such a style.

Additional Feats: 6th Steel Skin (*Advanced Player's Guide* 191); 10th Armored Rebuff (*Advanced Player's Guide* 191); 12th Mighty Bulwark (*Advanced Player's Guide* 191)

STALWART DEFENDER DEDICATION

FEAT 2

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

Prerequisites trained in light armor

Access You are a dwarf or have undergone defender training in a dwarven settlement such as Highhelm.

You have completed your initial training in the ways of a stalwart defender. You gain the Tenacious Stance action.

Special You cannot select another dedication feat until you take two other feats from the stalwart defender archetype.

Tenacious Stance ◆ (stance) **Requirements** You are wearing armor; **Effect** You steady yourself, as tough and immutable as stone. You gain a number of temporary Hit Points equal to half

your level (minimum 1) and a +2 circumstance bonus to DCs against being Shoved and Tripped. However, you no longer negate your armor check penalty or Speed penalty for having a high Strength while in this stance. After you leave Tenacious Stance, you lose any remaining temporary Hit Points from the stance, and you become temporarily immune to gaining temporary Hit Points from Tenacious Stance for 1 minute.

MOUNTAIN SKIN

FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication

You become trained in medium and heavy armor. Whenever you gain a class feature that grants you expert or greater proficiency in any armor (but not unarmored defense), you also gain that proficiency rank in the armor types granted to you by this feat.

TUNNEL WALL ◆

FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Shield Block, Stalwart Defender Dedication

Requirements You are in Tenacious Stance.

Using your shield, you guard against the movement of foes as surely as if you were a wall of stone. You Raise a Shield and become anchored for 1 round. While anchored, you gain a +4 circumstance bonus to the DC to Tumble Through your space.

CRUSHING STEP

FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication

The weight of your armored feet casts aside natural impediments. When wearing medium or heavy armor, you ignore difficult terrain from non-magical sources. If you are a master in the armor you are wearing, you also ignore greater difficult terrain from non-magical sources.

GRAVEL GUTS

FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication

Stone never becomes queasy, so why should you? You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to saving throws against the sickened condition. When you succeed at a Fortitude save to reduce your sickened value, you reduce it by 2 (or by 3 on a critical success).

UPSET BALANCE ↻ FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication, expert in Athletics

Trigger You are damaged by a melee Strike.

Requirements You are in Tenacious Stance.

You lean into your foe's attack, using the weight of your body and armor to send them reeling. Attempt an Athletics check against the



creature's Reflex DC. On a success, the target becomes clumsy 1 until the end of its next turn (clumsy 2 on a critical success). If you are anchored, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to this check.

RUPTURE STOMP

FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication

Frequency once per day

Requirements You are in Tenacious Stance.

Every dwarf knows that the rock they walk upon can be either a best friend or a treacherous path. With a heavy impact of your armored heel, you crack the ground underneath you. The ground within a 10-foot emanation becomes difficult terrain. If you are a master or better in the armor you are wearing, this becomes greater difficult terrain. The cracked ground settles and reverts to normal terrain after 1 minute.

Special At 16th level, you can take this feat again. If you do, you can use it once per hour instead of once per day.

UNSHAKEN IN IRON

FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication

You know the precise limits of your armor, and trust it to save you from harm. You gain the armor specialization effect of light armor. If you are trained in medium or heavy armor, you gain the respective armor specialization effect for those armors as well. While in Tenacious Stance, you increase the value of your armor specialization effects by an amount equal to the value of your armor check penalty (adding +3 to the resistance while wearing plate armors, for example).

GATHERING MOSS

FEAT 10

ARCHETYPE MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication

Frequency once per day

Trigger You enter Tenacious Stance.

By rooting yourself in place, you are able to focus your body's natural healing to work faster. You gain fast healing equal to your level. This fast healing remains for 1 minute or until you end your Tenacious Stance, whichever comes first.

CRACKED MOUNTAIN

FEAT 12

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication

Frequency once per hour

Trigger You would be reduced to 0 Hit Points but not immediately killed.

Requirements You are in Tenacious Stance.

You fight on, staying on your feet and lashing out at a foe. You avoid being knocked out and remain at 1 Hit Point, and your wounded condition increases by 1. Make a melee Strike at an enemy within reach. You immediately end your Tenacious Stance.

STONE BODY

FEAT 16

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Stalwart Defender Dedication

Frequency once per hour

Requirements You are in Tenacious Stance.

Emulating the great defenders throughout dwarven history, you close your mind to the sensation of pain, becoming as resolute as stone itself. You gain resistance 10 to all damage. This effect lasts until the end of your next turn or immediately upon being critically hit.

DEFENDERS IN HIGHHELM

The Sky Citadel of Highhelm is considered the unofficial headquarters of the stalwart defenders, the most experienced and accomplished of whom reside in Stonebreach and the Depths. Here, they pass on their experience to students seeking to become stalwart defenders. The instructors take on pupils of any ancestry or background and show no favoritism, for a single cracked stone weakens an entire wall. Daily exercises include stopping rolling boulders by hand, jogging laps around the city in full armor, and a challenge to prevent small animals from slipping past a warrior's guarded stance. Military forces from across the Inner Sea sponsor candidates to Highhelm for this instruction, despite the rate of washouts being high.

DEFENDER'S REFRAIN

The dwarven combat style known as stalwart defender traces as far back as the Quest for Sky, though it's likely much older. The training involved is as much mental as physical, making use of mantras and war songs to instill the proper frame of mind. Below is an example of one such refrain.

*To rubble, cliff, and stone,
Guard our people to the old home
'Neath distant stars I'll lie
When we finally see the sky
The earth serves as my anchor
I weather each foe with rancor
No heart less than stout ours,
Shall carry through the passing hours.*

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HIGHHELM GEAR

The crafters and engineers of Highhelm have developed a number of different pieces of equipment ranging from mining equipment to new armaments to the secretive keep stone used for the Torag's Shield project. The following are a number of these developments.

EVERAIR MASK

ITEM 2+

ABJURATION AIR INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn mask; **Bulk** L

This simple, mass-produced gaiter mask is standard issue for miners working in deep, dangerous mines. While wearing the mask, you gain a +1 item bonus to Fortitude saving throws against inhaled poisons. An *everair mask* makes use of magical runes related to the Plane of Air to create breathable air.

Activate ➤➤ envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You activate the mask's rune, and the air surrounding air, as well as the air you exhale, becomes enriched with oxygen. This allows the *everair mask* to recycle air into breathable air for 1 hour. The rune's magic is unable to provide breathable air while underwater, in a vacuum, or in any other situation where air is normally unavailable.

Type lesser; **Level** 2; **Price** 5 gp

Type moderate; **Level** 6; **Price** 35 gp

The rune creates breathable air for 4 hours.

Type greater; **Level** 10; **Price** 160 gp

The rune creates breathable air for 8 hours.

Type major; **Level** 14; **Price** 625 gp

The rune creates breathable air for 24 hours.

HIGHHELM DRILL

ITEM 4+

UNCOMMON EVOCATION FORCE MAGICAL

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 3

Not to be outdone by their cousins in Dongun Hold, the artificers of Highhelm have developed a handheld magical equivalent to their clockwork drilling constructs and vehicles. The device is still in the testing phases, but early versions have been released to fund more development. Appearing as an unassuming yellow box with two handles normally, when the command word is spoken, a spiraling drill made of force emerges from its top. An active *Highhelm drill* can be used as an improvised weapon, dealing damage on a Strike as though it had been used on a surface for one round with no additional damage from other sources.

Activate ➤➤ Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The force drill appears and begins turning, dealing 5 force damage per round to any material against which you

hold the drill. The drill ignores the first 4 Hardness of any material it damages. The drill remains active for 1 minute.

Type Mark I; **Level** 4; **Price** 85 gp

Type Mark II; **Level** 12; **Price** 1,800 gp

The drill deals 10 force damage per round, ignores the first 8 Hardness, and remains active for 5 minutes.

Type Mark III; **Level** 16; **Price** 8,750 gp

The drill deals 15 force damage per round, ignores the first 12 Hardness, and remains active for 10 minutes.

HIGHHELM STRONGHOLD PLATE

ITEM 14

UNCOMMON CONJURATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 3,750 gp

Usage worn armor; **Bulk** 5

This +2 resilient fortification bastion plate (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 9) is made almost entirely of stone plates. It looks almost unwearable and is in fact only wearable because of numerous minor enchantments for comfort and mobility. If you have armor specialization with heavy armor, your resistance while wearing *Highhelm stronghold plate* applies to both slashing and piercing damage.

Activate ➤➤➤ envision, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The plating on your armor explodes off of your body, expands, and reshapes, transforming into a stone structure with the effects of *wall of stone*. While the armor is transformed in this way, you don't gain the benefits of wearing the armor. The armor remains transformed for up to 10 minutes or until you Dismiss the effect, at which point the *wall of stone* disappears and the armor returns to you, donning itself immediately.

Crafting Requirements Supply one casting of *wall of stone*.

HIGHHELM WAR SHIELD

ITEM 9+

UNCOMMON ABJURATION MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

This specialized razor disc (*Treasure Vault* 11; Hardness 11, HP 84, BT 42) was originally designed by the members of Clan Molgrade for use by Highhelm's soldiers. The integrated blades are etched with runes, making them a +1 striking weapon.

Activate ➤ envision; **Trigger** You critically hit with the shield's integrated blades;

Effect The shield's blades grow and dig themselves into your foe. The creature becomes grabbed as it becomes impaled on the shield spikes. While you have a creature grabbed in this way, you can't Raise the Shield, but the creature takes persistent bleed damage every round equal to the number of damage dice. This persistent bleed can't end as long as the creature is impaled on the shield. You



HIGHHELM STRONGHOLD PLATE



HIGHHELM DRILL

can Release the shield to leave it embedded in the creature. This ends the grab but doesn't end the persistent bleed damage. The creature can remove the shield and end the grab by attempting a check to Escape. This normally uses your Athletics DC to Escape, but if you're no longer holding the shield, the Escape DC is 25.

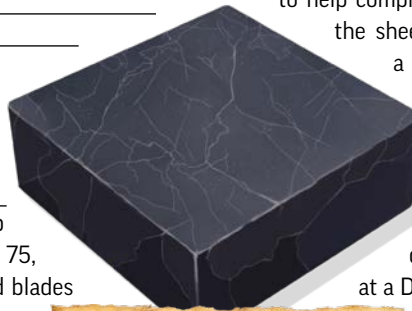
Type lesser **Level** 9; **Price** 700 gp

Type moderate; **Level** 14; **Price** 4,000 gp

The shield has Hardness 16, HP 124, BT 62, and an Escape DC of 31. The integrated blades are a +2 *greater striking* weapon.

Type greater; **Level** 20; **Price** 55,000 gp

The shield has Hardness 19, HP 150, BT 75, and an Escape DC of 43. The integrated blades are a +3 *major striking* weapon.



KEEP STONE

KEEP STONE

Highhelm's latest development is keep stone.

KEEP STONE

RARE **PRECIOUS**

The crowning achievement of Highhelm's millennia of metallurgical advancements and engineering is the beautiful alloy called keep stone. Despite its name, no stone is used in the production of keep stone. Through the use of a highly guarded process that smelts together adamantine and lead, Highhelm's greatest crafters were able to develop a material with an appearance that more closely resembles marble than metal. Keep stone is only slightly weaker than adamantine alone, but with the incredible ability to disrupt magic. Any spell or magical effect targeting raw keep stone must succeed at a DC 5 flat check or the effect is lost.

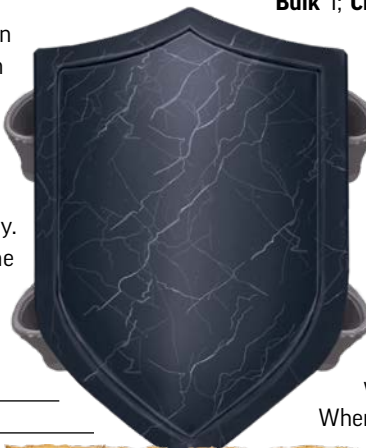
Keep stone's use in the construction of Torag's Shield is not only to stretch Highhelm's adamantine reserves further and protect the walls from magical assault, but also because of its protective effects on divination magic on both Highhelm itself and its immediate vicinity. If the target of a divination spell is in the presence of a large quantity of keep stone, including a structure, the caster must also succeed at a DC 5 flat check or the spell is lost.

Type keep stone chunk; **Price** 750 gp; **Bulk** L

Type keep stone ingot; **Price** 7,500 gp; **Bulk** 1

Type high-grade keep stone object; **Level** 17; **Price** 9,000 gp per Bulk.

MATERIAL 17



KEEP STONE SHIELD

KEEP STONE ARMOR

ITEM 20

RARE

Usage worn armor; **Bulk** varies by armor

Keep stone armor is nearly impossible to acquire due to the fact that most of Highhelm's keep stone reserves are intended to help complete the Torag's Shield project. Additionally, the sheer amount of keep stone required to craft a suit of keep stone armor is prohibitive. For those who can acquire a set, there are few better protections against magic. While wearing keep stone armor, the item bonus it provides to AC and saving throws increases by 1 against spells, and divination spells targeting you must succeed at a DC 5 flat check or fail.

Type high-grade keep stone armor; **Level** 20; **Price** 56,000 gp + 5,600 gp per Bulk; **Craft Requirements** The initial raw

materials must include at least 28,000 gp of keep stone + 2,800 gp per bulk.

KEEP STONE SHIELD

ITEM 17

RARE

Usage varies by shield

Much easier to come by than armor, a keep stone shield offers effective-enough protection against magic that they've become very popular among the upper echelons of dwarven society, particularly those on active duty. When you have a keep stone shield Raised, you gain its circumstance bonus to saving throws against spells that target you (as well as AC). Additionally, you can Shield Block against any spell damage, not just from physical attacks.

Type high-grade keep stone shield; **Level** 17; **Price** 13,200 gp;

Bulk 1; **Craft Requirements** The initial raw materials must include at least 6,600 gp of keep stone.

The shield has Hardness 11, HP 46, and BT 23.

KEEP STONE WEAPON

ITEM 18

RARE

Usage varies by weapon; **Bulk** varies by weapon

As a material with defensive properties, keep stone isn't particularly prized for weapons, but it does offer a particular niche.

When used with abilities that allow you to use a Strike to counteract spells or magical effects, such as the Sunder Spell feat, the counteract check gains a +2 circumstance

bonus. If the counteract check is tied to the Strike's result, add the bonus when calculating your counteract result, but not to the attack roll. Keep stone is treated as adamantine for the purpose of overcoming resistances.

Type high-grade keep stone weapon; **Level** 18; **Price** 22,500 gp + 2,250 gp per Bulk; **Craft Requirements** The initial raw materials must include at least 11,250 gp of keep stone + 1,125 gp per bulk.

Keep Stone Items	Hardness	HP	BT
Thin Items			
High-Grade	10	46	24
Items			
High-Grade	14	60	30
Structures			
High-Grade	30	122	61

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FROM DWARVEN LEGENDS

The items listed here are noteworthy because they come from dwarven legend. These stories get shared, passed down, and retold because they are the lens through which young dwarves first begin to learn about their history, their people, and what it truly means to be a dwarf.

FORGE RELICS

Creation is a prominent theme in dwarven myth, and no symbol is more essential than the forge. Forge relics have appeared intermittently throughout history and are perceived by many as manifestations of Torag's will. Some tales note that these relics can appear in times of great need to help produce weapons and items capable of fending off great foes or to protect others from danger. You can find more information on relics on pages 94–105 of the *Gamemastery Guide*.

FORGE GIFTS

CREATIVE SPARK

MINOR GIFT

CONJURATION FIRE

Aspect forge

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You strike the relic against a piece of flint and summon a fire wisp (*Bestiary* 3 91) to assist you, which appears in an unoccupied square next to you. The fire wisp doesn't act in combat, but it can assist you while you Craft items. You gain a +1 bonus to Crafting checks involving blacksmithing and general metalworking, increasing to +2 at 9th level and +3 at 17th level. Once per day, when you roll a critical failure on a Crafting check related to blacksmithing, you get a failure instead. The wisp replaces the need for a forge while blacksmithing, but you still require other equipment and tools. The wisp remains for up to 10 minutes or until you Dismiss it. You can extend this duration by an additional 10 minutes if you feed the wisp one light Bulk worth of charcoal or firewood, or one pint of oil.



FORGE HAMMER

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You strike the relic against a shield or armor made of metal, and steam pours from it like it's just been quenched. The target item hardens for 10 minutes, increasing its item bonus to AC by 1 if it's armor or its Hardness by 5 if it's a shield.

ELEMENTS OF CREATION

MAJOR GIFT

AIR CONJURATION EARTH WATER

Aspect forge; Prerequisites creative spark gift

When you activate creative spark, you can choose to summon an air wisp, a water wisp, and an earth wisp in unoccupied squares next to you, in addition to the fire wisp. Unlike a typical earth wisp, the summoned earth wisp takes the form of a small iron creature resembling an anvil crossed with a horned beetle. Like the fire wisp, these additional wisps don't act in combat but can assist you while you Craft items. While all four wisps are assisting you, the bonus you gain from creative spark is doubled, and your outcome for Crafting checks related to blacksmithing is one degree of success better than your roll. In addition, being assisted by all four wisps replaces the need for any equipment other than blacksmithing tools when crafting metal items. The wisps last for up to 10 minutes or until you Dismiss them all together as an action. If you extend the duration of the fire wisp, it also extends the duration for the other wisps.

MOLTEN CRUCIBLE

MAJOR GIFT

FIRE TRANSMUTATION

Aspect forge

Activate ♦♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You strike your relic against a weapon, armor, or shield made of metal. The item becomes red hot and, over the next 10 minutes, transforms into a different base item from the same category. This changes the item's base form while retaining its same materials, runes, and magical properties. Both base items must have an item level of 1 or less, and weapons must require the same number of hands. Specific items can't be changed in this way unless the GM expressly allows it. For example, a +2 *cold iron mace* can become a +2 *cold iron longsword*, or chain mail can become half plate, but a *moonlit chain* can't be affected in this way.

FORGE WELD

MINOR GIFT

TRANSMUTATION

Aspect forge

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You strike the relic against a non-magical metal object of 4 Bulk or less, repairing it. The object's edges glow white hot, and you restore 5 Hit Points to the object per level of the relic. If this repairs the item above its Broken Threshold, it is no longer broken. This ability cannot replace lost pieces or restore something that's been completely destroyed.

WORK HARDEN

MINOR GIFT

ABJURATION

Aspect forge

LIVING FORGE

GRAND GIFT

POLYMORPH TRANSMUTATION

Aspect forge

Activate ♦♦ command, Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The relic is absorbed into your body, and you transform into an elemental being of red-hot steel. You gain the effects of 7th-level *elemental form* and use the statistics for the forge battle form on page 115. In this form, you can re-shape your limbs into different objects, such as

a blade or hammer, by using an Interact action. Changing your limbs in this way allows you to choose between bludgeoning, physical, or slashing damage.

- **Forge** Speed 30 feet; fire resistance 10, weakness 5 to cold and water; **Melee** ♦️ forgestrike, **Damage** 1d10 modular; 1d4 persistent fire.

LEGENDARY ITEMS

While many legends describe powerful artifacts, it's not the abilities of an item that make it extraordinary. Instead, it's how people connect to its story that determines the true measure of an item's value in the eyes of its community. Dwarven storytelling traditions note that any item, from a simple stone bowl to the helmet of a fallen hero, can take a role in a great tale. With enough tellings of a story, even the stone bowl can become as valuable as any gem or even develop a great power all of its own. The following items are just a small selection of items with strong connections to dwarven stories.

AFFINITY STONES

RARE **ARTIFACT** **INVESTED** **MAGICAL** **TRANSMUTATION**

Usage worn; **Bulk** –

Dwarven tales state that the first set of these stones was created by a dwarven lapidary for his elven sweetheart. The gem he chose was amber—to show his clan that a union between stone and leaf was possible. His family remained hesitant, despite the unmistakable love that the men shared. The tales then say that it was Folgrit who grew impatient and transformed the stones as a sign of her approval.

Since then, more sets of these have been created, but doing so is an unsure process. Some of the stones are seemingly given their magical abilities at random, which most attribute as further blessings from Folgrit. Each set of affinity stones typically comes as a pair of gems set into worn items such as hilts, necklaces, or rings, though some sets of affinity stones feature additional gems.

The full set of stones must be invested together across multiple creatures, or else their magic fails to function.

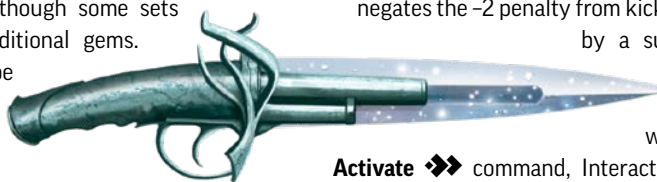
To invest these items, one person must be a dwarf and everyone must perform a one-hour ceremony that includes divulging their innermost feelings. Their love need not be romantic, but it must be genuine and deep. If they pass this test, they receive the following benefits.

- You are always aware of each other and permanently gain the effects of the *status* spell.
- Non-dwarves gain the benefits of a 1st- or 5th-level ancestry feat with the dwarf trait, and dwarves gain the benefits one 1st- or 5th-level ancestry feat with a trait corresponding to the ancestry of another person with which the *affinity stones* are invested. For example, if you



AFFINITY STONES

ITEM 9



BLADE OF FALLEN STARS

share investment in the stones with a halfling, you can take halfling ancestry feats. You can't use these feats to meet prerequisites, but the benefits of the feats otherwise function as if you had taken the feat.

- You gradually take on some of the physical characteristics of your counterparts. An elf may begin to grow a beard, while their dwarven counterpart may develop pointed ears. These changes have no mechanical effect.

Destruction If one of the people who had invested in the *affinity stones* commits an act of true and regretless betrayal against someone else invested in the *affinity stones*, all of the stones shatter to dust.

BLADE OF FALLEN STARS

ITEM 22

UNIQUE **ARTIFACT** **COMBINATION** **EVOCATION**

Usage held in 2 hands; **Bulk** 2; **Category** martial

This +4 *major striking greater frost gun sword* (*Guns & Gears* 158) is made from high-grade cold siccattite (*Grand Bazaar* 101). This gun sword's elegant, silvery blade is double-edged and etched with stars and constellations that move and mirror the night sky. The blade absorbs starlight, and prolonged exposure causes it to form a layer of glittering residue. Smiths in Dongun Hold forged this weapon by combining the cracked remains of a skymetal arquebus and the shards of an exceptional elven greatsword. Some tales of the forging report that the sword was *Tear of Eventide*, a great blade forged out of starlight for the battle between Desna and Aolar. Whether or not that was the case, dwarven curators who examined the shards simply noted that the blade's material was compatible with the cracked gun. After an extremely tense diplomatic brunch, the weapon is now regarded as a miracle of elven artistry and dwarven engineering, and a powerful symbol of allyship between their kingdoms.

Activate ♦️ Interact; **Effect** You unfold the parrying hooks extending from the blade to form a bipod, which has the same benefits as a typical tripod (*Guns and Gears* 179). This negates the –2 penalty from kickback but must be reversed by a subsequent Interact action before the weapon can be repositioned or wielded in melee.

Activate ♦️♦️ command, Interact; **Requirements** The *blade of fallen stars* was exposed to starlight for at least one hour since the last time this ability was used; **Effect** The coating on the blade seeps into the engravings and is collected in the barrel. On your next ranged Strike, the weapon fires a glowing white projectile with a blazing blue tail that explodes on impact. In addition to the normal Strike damage, the projectile also deals 6d8 cold damage and creates a *faerie fire* effect in a 5-foot emanation centered on the target.

Destruction Depriving the weapon of all light, natural or otherwise, for seven years, seven months, and seven days will cause it to crumble and erode irreparably.

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ANGRADD



THE FORGE-FIRE

Areas of Concern fire, offensive war, tradition

Alignment LG (LG, LN)

Divine Font heal

Divine Ability Intelligence or Wisdom

Divine Skill Athletics

Domains fate, fire, protection, zeal

Alternate Domains duty (*Gods & Magic* 114), knowledge

Cleric Spells 1st: *burning hands*, 2nd: *blistering invective* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 216), 3rd: *fireball*

Edicts seek and destroy evil, study evil to learn the best way to destroy it, train others in righteous ways

Anathema allow weaker evils to survive due to the presence of larger evils, deceive others outside of tactical gain

Favored Weapon greataxe

Forge-Fire, Army-Cleaver, High Marshall, The Tempered. Worshipers of Angradd call on him by many names as they join battle against enemies that threaten the stability of their communities. The most aggressive and proactive of the gods in the dwarven pantheon, Angradd calls on his followers to seek out and destroy foes of the dwarven people, not simply fortify themselves from danger or put their trust in defensive measures. Often depicted in art as a powerful, axe-wielding warrior with hair and beard of flame, Angradd is venerated by

those burning with zeal to seek out and destroy evil. During the Quest for Sky, Angradd's followers often formed the vanguard for the migrating dwarven nation, striking out against the many monsters, hazards, and foes that stood between the dwarves and the surface. Philosophically, followers of Angradd consider each opponent they strike down to be fuel for their fire, contending that each challenge allows them to grow their strength and spread their god's influence like the light from a beacon in the darkness.

For Angradd's followers, the mere act of contending with evil on the battlefield is an act of worship, but the god's adherents also incorporate worship of the Forge-Fire into their daily activities, either as a sole focus or as a part of venerating the larger dwarven pantheon. Smiths consecrate weapons to Angradd as they are forged, and adherents often recite passages from *Angradd's Tempering*, the god's holy text, when maintaining their armaments. When age or injury prevent a follower from actively partaking in battle, they turn to training the next generation. Teachers called by Angradd excel in conveying battlefield strategy, and many are revered for their encyclopedic knowledge of foes' tactics, abilities, and weaknesses—knowledge typically hard won from a lifetime of practical experience. Even in retirement, the god's followers attempt to contribute to martial efforts by weaving his scarlet and gold war banners or gathering medical supplies to send to the front lines.



BOLKA

THE GOLDEN GIFT

Areas of Concern marriage, passion, committed relationships

Alignment NG (LG, NG, CG)

Divine Font *heal*

Divine Ability Wisdom or Charisma

Divine Skill Diplomacy

Domains confidence, family, healing, passion

Alternate Domains *toil (Pathfinder Adventure Path #148: Fires of the Haunted City 63)*

Cleric Spells 1st: *soothe*, 4th: *creation*, 6th: *collective transposition*

Edicts encourage those seeking love, see the beauty in others, support others' relationships

Anathema betray your spouse, disrupt a genuine marriage, prevent a suitor from seeking a partner

Favored Weapon mace

Bolka is the dwarven goddess of marriage. Forged by Torag as a symbol of his love for Folgrit, Bolka's golden-brown skin, eyes of pure bismuth, and honey-blonde hair were a symbol of the passion and beauty he saw in Folgrit. When Folgrit received this gift, she immediately breathed life into the child, and claimed Bolka to be a symbol of their marriage and eternal commitment.

Bolka's beauty is without equal among the dwarven gods. She has many suitors, and those who would try to win her hand with feats of strength or bravery. She is grateful for this attention, but with a small kiss on the cheek and a touch on the arm, she tells all of them that she's too busy working to commit to family at the moment. She tirelessly strives toward helping dwarven suitors find the confidence and strength to confess love and devotion to potential partners.

Bolka also works through matchmakers and other agents of love and stability within the dwarven clans. She offers omens of happiness when a marriage will be fruitful and joyous, and warnings when the match will be instead poisonous, abusive, or destructive. Despite the occasionally traditional leanings of dwarven culture, Bolka believes that the gift of marriage and devotion should come to anyone who wishes to share it. She blesses all marriages that come from love, making no exception or differentiation between monogamous or polyamorous relationships, as well as relationships between members of the any gender. As long as they wish to truly be a loving and committed family, they find the blessing of Bolka. When approached by those who seek love, who have been rebuffed by matchmakers or clerics of Bolka due to being outside of traditional dwarven values, Bolka's rage finds purchase, and she is known to send curses upon any matchmakers or clerics who do not honor and protect love and committed relationships in all their myriad forms.

Bolka's duty as the dwarven goddess of marriage means a lot to her and takes up a good deal of her time. She's stubborn and steadfast when she knows a match will work, or when individuals will find great happiness if they would find the confidence and will to just talk. As she's known to scream wordlessly when the subjects of her scrutiny refuse to sit down and have an honest conversation, her family often finds great amusement at watching her work. Frustrated shouts and squeals of delight are often heard from Bolka's divine offices in Heaven, much to the amusement of the other dwarven gods and the angels and souls who attend them.



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DRANNGVIT



THE DEBT MINDER

Areas of Concern debt, pursuit, vengeance

Alignment LN (LN, LE)

Divine Font harm or heal

Divine Ability Constitution or Wisdom

Divine Skill Intimidation

Domains knowledge, might, travel, vigil (*Gods & Magic* 118)

Alternate Domains fate, truth

Cleric Spells 1st: *longstrider*, 2nd: *knock*, 5th: *passwall*

Edicts help reclaim just debts, seek appropriate vengeance against transgressions

Anathema allow a slight to go unrecognized, avoid repaying a debt, force others into debts you know are unpayable

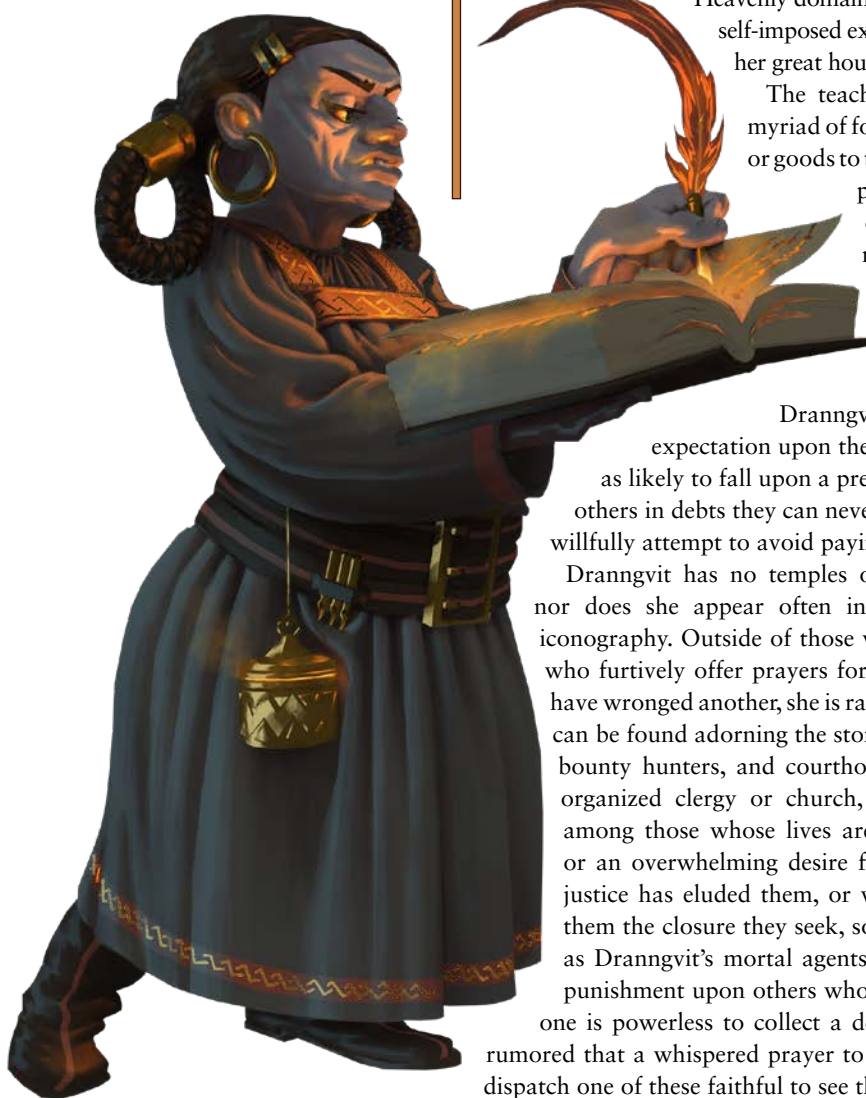
Favored Weapon light pick

Most dwarves consider the dour goddess Dranngvit to be a necessary evil, a harsh and acrimonious deity to whom one turns only when all other options have been exhausted. Dwarven legend holds that she was once betrothed to Torag and destined to become queen of the dwarven pantheon, only to be denied her promised throne when Torag fell in love with and chose Folgrit as his bride instead. Humiliated and embittered, Dranngvit withdrew from Forgeheart, the Heavenly domain of the dwarven gods, to dwell forever in self-imposed exile far from the rest of her pantheon with her great hound Hefnd as her sole companion.

The teachings of Dranngvit refer to debt in a myriad of forms, ranging from simply owing money or goods to the civil obligations that come with one's profession or position in society. Good or evil, legal or criminal, the precise nature of the debts are unimportant; according to Dranngvit's doctrines, all that matters is that every effort be made to repay them, in full and as expediently as possible. Nor does

Dranngvit exclusively place the burden of this expectation upon the debtor. Crucially, Dranngvit's wrath is as likely to fall upon a predatory lender who knowingly ensnares others in debts they can never hope to settle as it is upon those who willfully attempt to avoid paying others what they owe.

Dranngvit has no temples or other dedicated places of worship, nor does she appear often in dwarven myths, songs, or religious iconography. Outside of those who invoke her moratorium and those who furtively offer prayers for her forgiveness when they know they have wronged another, she is rarely spoken of, although her grim visage can be found adorning the stonework facades of many tax collectors, bounty hunters, and courthouses. Nonetheless, despite her lack of organized clergy or church, Dranngvit invariably finds followers among those whose lives are consumed by a thirst for vengeance or an overwhelming desire for restitution. Those who believe that justice has eluded them, or who find that vengeance fails to bring them the closure they seek, sometimes dedicate their lives to serving as Dranngvit's mortal agents on Golarion, seeking and meting out punishment upon others who fail to uphold their obligations. When one is powerless to collect a debt that they are rightfully owed, it is rumored that a whispered prayer to Dranngvit might move the goddess to dispatch one of these faithful to see that justice is done.



FOLGRIT

THE WATCHFUL MOTHER

Areas of Concern children, hearths, mothers

Alignment LG (LG, LN, NG)

Divine Font *heal*

Divine Ability Constitution or Wisdom

Divine Skill Diplomacy

Domains cities, family, repose (*Gods & Magic* 116), protection

Alternate Domains duty (*Gods & Magic* 114), sorrow

Cleric Spells 1st: *endure* (*Gods & Magic* 107), 4th: *fire shield*, 6th: *resplendent mansion*

Edicts maintain the sanctity of a home, remain patient with others, take in those without families

Anathema abandon your family, fail to defend your neighbors

Favored Weapon staff

Some myths say that long before her marriage, Folgrit was the Goddess of Mourners, one who watched over and protected those left behind in bereavement after massive wars and calamities. She witnessed many dwarves, especially orphans, left adrift to fend for themselves against the world and the dwarven community at large. Determined to save these individuals from the fate of an outcast, she approached the then-bachelor Torag with a proposal: in exchange for her hand in marriage, he would share his powers of family and protection with her. The union was a celebrated affair for the pantheon. In addition to sharing the agreed-upon powers, Torag also gifted Folgrit oversight of settlements and cities, so that she could ensure those under her care shall always have shelter.

As the Watchful Mother, Folgrit's teachings cover many topics. The most common are practical lessons in homemaking, covering various essential life skills from cleaning, cooking, to maintenance. It is not uncommon, therefore, for many of her temples to house libraries or workshops full of recipes, manuals, tools, and cookware. For a non-worshipper, it can be difficult to determine where Folgrit's areas of concern end and Torag's begin, as they both seem to cover an aspect of crafting. Priests of either deity explain that Torag is involved in creation of items from its raw state, and repair of items that have been broken, particularly military or magical gear. Folgrit, meanwhile, covers maintenance and small fixes, and is usually concerned only with mundane items.

On a mental and spiritual level, Folgrit's teachings—be it to dwarves or non-dwarves—instructs developing one's patience and parenting attitudes, noting the effects one's actions and demeanor have on children. Though the text is centered upon family and homes, Folgritan priests often advise followers to use that knowledge in their daily life, for the community at large is also a family unit and works in similar ways. As such, Folgrit's name is often evoked in day-to-day life. While many joke that Folgrit is the busiest parent in the entire universe, they respect her immensely for bringing stability to their lives.

Folgrit's temples are homely places that often serve as community centers. Her priests serve the masses not only through advice, counseling, or consecration but also in practical ways. They might help provide childcare or assist in childbirth, cleaning houses for the elderly, maintaining communal farms, or organizing and training non-combatants in basic self-defense. There are also a number of orphanages established under the goddess' name. While generally run on strict rules, the priests overseeing these places ensure that every child leaves only after they have learned a worthy trade skill. A number of Folgrit's champions come from these orphanages, taking up their cause in the name of the temple that raised them.



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GRUNDINNAR



THE PEACEMAKER

Areas of Concern friendship, alliance, family, truth

Alignment LG (LG, NG)

Divine Font *heal*

Divine Ability Constitution or Charisma

Divine Skill Diplomacy

Domains confidence, family, protection, truth

Alternate Domains repose

Cleric Spells 1st: *anticipate peril* (Gods & Magic 107), 4th: *resilient sphere*, 6th: *wall of force*

Edicts attempt to bridge the gap between feuding sides, maintain just treaties, maintain relations with neighbors

Anathema sow discord among friends and allies, attack during parley

Favored Weapon light hammer

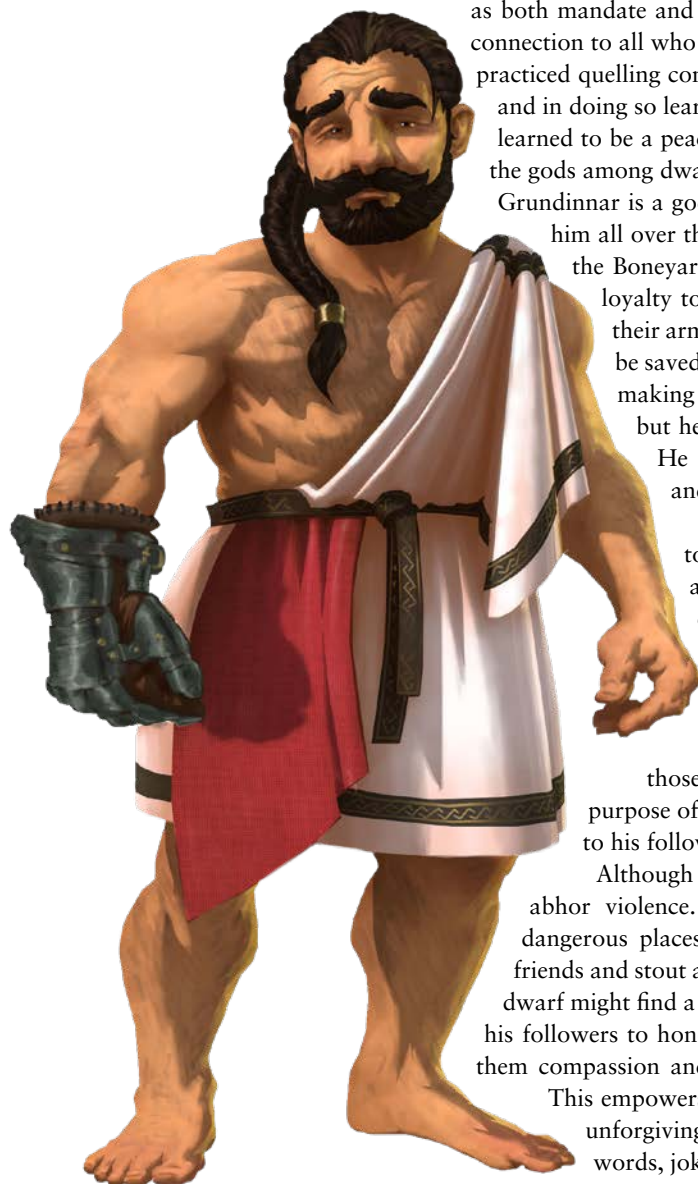
When Torag was forging Grundinnar, he graced him with a tongue of silver, and a heart of gold and iron. When Folgrit saw this gift and breathed life into him, she asked that Grundinnar be kind and loving always. He took this as both mandate and life goal, and now works to bring peace and familial connection to all who worship him and their allies. It's said that Grundinnar practiced quelling conflict by saving his sister Bolka from her many suitors, and in doing so learned to forge peace, but this is only half-truth. He truly learned to be a peacemaker by dealing with his bickering family, for even the gods among dwarves can be quarrelsome and taciturn.

Grundinnar is a god of peacemaking among dwarves, but his duties take him all over the multiverse. He is often found on the planes of Axis, the Boneyard, or even Hell preaching peace, respect, and familial loyalty to all who will listen. He bids angry souls to lay down their arms and embrace interconnection, in hopes that some can be saved from their fury or converted. Of course, many tell him making peace among the fallen or damned is a fool's errand, but he tries with a hopeful spirit and a heart of good cheer. He speaks with compassion, truth, and honesty always, and has thus earned a few converts here and there.

Grundinnar expects his followers to behave similarly: to approach every situation with good cheer, honesty, and an eye toward peace; to work toward building connections rather than harming those who could be allies. This could be as simple as singing rousing song, sitting together around the hookah, or quietly reading. He expects his followers to use kind words and gestures first, and to draw weapons only after those overtures have failed. He believes that walking in the purpose of peace is a strong shield, and he tries to pass that down to his followers as well.

Although Grundinnar is a peacemaker, he does not completely abhor violence. He understands that his followers might go into dangerous places. He prepares them by inspiring them to find close friends and stout allies, occasionally sending omens that point to where a dwarf might find a friendship that will last a lifetime. Grundinnar expects his followers to honor their friends and allies, sing their songs, and show them compassion and respect as one would close friends or even family.

This empowers them to continue to promotes peace in a hostile and unforgiving world, forging bonds as strong as steel with healing words, jokes, songs, or spells.



KOLS

THE OATHKEEPER

Areas of Concern duty, honor, promises

Alignment LN (LG, LN)

Divine Font *harm or heal*

Divine Ability Strength or Wisdom

Divine Skill Society

Domains duty (*Gods & Magic* 114), knowledge, might, truth

Alternate Domains confidence, glyph (*Gods & Magic* 114), secrecy

Cleric Spells 1st: *unseen servant*, 4th: *suggestion*, 8th: *unrelenting observation*

Edicts seek those who break oaths and enforce just restitution, uphold your promises

Anathema lie, dishonor yourself or your family, shirk your duties, break an oath

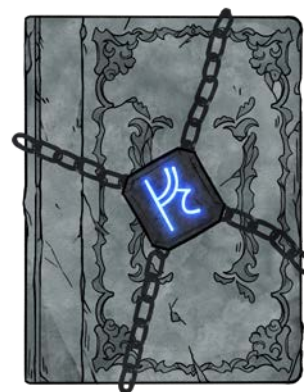
Favored Weapon light hammer

As Torag's firstborn, Kols was always a serious child. He watched how his father, chief among the dwarven gods, struggled to create deals and oaths that other deities would betray at their earliest convenience. He grew angry at the setbacks Torag had to endure from those who swore friendship but instead used him for their own selfish ends. Kols was baptized in the fires of being the eldest of Torag's children, a firsthand witness to his father's fury and pain. He thus vowed that he would do everything in his power to protect his father's followers, and also keep a record of those who had broken deals, broken faith, or shirked their duty in any way.

To many, Kols can seem a distant or angry god. While there is some truth to this, Kols is a devoted son and a courageous, protective brother. Grundinnar and Bolka speak of Kols highly, for even if he can be taciturn, they have seen love within him. Trudd often consults Kols about various interpretations of dwarven law, and they have conversations long into the night about what constitutes an oath versus what are empty boasts or simply words spoken in jest. These debates range from peaceful talks over tea to full-on drunken brawls, and Kols would have it no other way. Kols spends the most time with his father Torag, acting a barrister and diplomat to those who have sworn oaths in support of the Father of Creation, maintaining ties and always watching out for those whose faith could flag.

Kols is an older god, and his appearance resembles that of an older dwarf, somewhat weary from the lies of the world. His skin, the deep brown of blooded earth, and age lines tell a tale of their own—of hard-fought oaths kept, of partnerships built on absolute trust that Kols would keep his word. He sits in a place of honor by his father's side and helps to encourage deals, promises, and the interconnected web of relationships that maintain dwarven civilization. To Kols, duty is the heart of what drives dwarven culture, so he works very hard to make sure that all of his followers do their duty to the best of their ability, never shirking or going back on their sworn word.

The followers of the Oathkeeper are peculiar in some respects among dwarves, as many seem loathe to take oaths. This is a misunderstanding of how Kols' followers work. They treat oaths as binding agreements for life, so they do not enter them lightly. They instead choose to maintain a certain distance from the situation until they can be sure that they can support their cause without fail. Once the oath is sworn, Kolsians honor that oath with their lives if needed, doing their duty with a precision, grace, and dedication that can occasionally frustrate even other dwarves.



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MAGRIM



THE TASKMASTER

Areas of Concern death, fate, underworld

Alignment LN (LG, LN, N)

Divine Font *heal*

Divine Ability Constitution or Wisdom

Divine Skill Crafting

Domains death, duty (*Gods & Magic* 114), fate, glyph (*Gods & Magic* 114)

Alternate Domains creation, soul (*Gods & Magic* 117)

Cleric Spells 1st: *temporary tool* (*Gods & Magic* 110), 2nd: *expeditious excavation* (*Gods & Magic* 107), 9th: *earthquake*

Edicts perfect a craft or trade, carve runes, destroy undead, aid others with completing unfinished tasks

Anathema treat gravesites irreverently, mistreat your tools, create undead, damage a soul

Favored Weapon warhammer

Magrim is not the leader of the dwarven pantheon, but he holds a special place of honor and authority as the eldest among them. As the dwarven deity of both fate and death, his solemn duty is to ensure that every dwarf born on Golarion is granted both a unique mortal purpose and an achievable path to its fulfillment; the specifics of this charge vary from dwarf to dwarf, frequently focusing on the creation of something great and wonderful that will long outlast its creator.



The faith of Magrim teaches that few tasks are of more paramount importance than ensuring that time-honored traditions are properly observed, that dwarven language and culture remain as constant and unchanging as possible, and that all dwarves are provided with access to whatever knowledge and tools are necessary to accomplish that which is expected of them. The surest path to a productive and satisfying mortal existence is to carefully follow one's prescribed destiny and purpose, and while those who choose to eschew this purpose in favor of forging their own paths are not shunned or looked down upon, conventional sentiment is that a dwarf who ignores the instructions clearly laid out for them by the Taskmaster does so at their own peril.

In addition to providing parishioners with guidance to live a proper life, priests of Magrim are responsible for laying the dead to rest in accordance with dwarven tradition, as well as swiftly and mercilessly dealing with grave robbers, necromancers, and others who would disturb the deceased. As befits a deity favored by artisans and workers, Magrimate centers of worship frequently double as places of work: most commonly mines and forges, but also shops, taverns, and more esoteric establishments such as bakeries and scribes. A temple or shrine to Magrim is traditionally decorated with ornate runic inscriptions relaying key tenets of the Taskmaster's doctrines, for Magrim is also the patron of runes, and the masons who employ them etch his teachings into timeless stone to guide future generations.



TRUDD

THE MIGHTY

Areas of Concern bravery, defense, strength

Alignment NG (LG, NG, CG)

Divine Font *heal*

Divine Ability Strength or Constitution

Divine Skill Athletics

Domains confidence, duty (*Gods & Magic* 114), might, protection

Alternate Domains earth, zeal

Cleric Spells 1st: *endure* (*Lost Omens Gods & Magic* 107), 3rd: *haste*, 4th: *stoneskin*

Edicts offer your strength to aid others, protect those weaker than you

Anathema engage in petty demonstrations of strength, use your strength to take advantage of others

Favored Weapon warhammer

In crafting Trudd as a gift for his beloved, Torag thought of the qualities he'd not given his other children. After a few moments of contemplation, he settled on the simplest and most elusive answer—he had not gifted his wife with a child who bore the strength of the mountains themselves. He was to be his father's strong left hand, acting as the general of Torag's armies when defending Heaven from incursions by demons or other such nefarious forces. Trudd's personal charge was to guard the seat of Forgeheart when the Father of Creation traveled the multiverse. Trudd took to these dual tasks with glee and has been doing his duty ever since.

Trudd is almost unknown outside of dwarven halls, or at least he once was. When the Whispering Tyrant broke free, dwarven Knights of Lastwall began to share his teachings with their fellow knights and compatriots. Trudd's religion is spreading slowly but steadily among humans, half-elves, and even orcs. Trudd doesn't know what to make of this, but overall, he is doing his best to respect his new followers, accepting these new children as a loving adoptive father. He sends omens of warning if a vulnerable target is about to be attacked and blessings of endurance to keep guards awake and on task. In Trudd's mind, almost nothing is as important as guarding his followers and his followers guarding their own charges.

While Trudd is a very dutiful god and son, he is also something of a joker among the dwarven pantheon. Trudd's infectious joy and easy laughter fills the halls of Forgeheart with smiles. He always has a kind word to say for his siblings. He spends some of his free time traveling the multiverse, visiting other realms and his many friends among the gods. Over time, he's found himself growing closer to Cayden Cailean, even sharing an occasional tryst with the Drunken God.

Trudd has grown up as the youngest child, and as such was raised with a plethora of good examples from his siblings. He also has to deal with their occasionally infuriating meddling into his affairs: Bolka's constant questions; Kols checking on him to make sure he's not shirking his duties; Grundinnar and his incessant talking. Despite this, he loves them all and does his best to make them proud.



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AVATARS AND PANTHEON

Divine casters from all across Golarion channel fragments of their deity's power into their spells. The apotheosis of this practice is the *avatar* spell, which only the most blessed and accomplished can cast. The dwarven pantheon passes their likeness on to casters of this spell, often giving them the appearance of stony flesh in varying hues.

The avatar spell is detailed on page 318 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*. Nine new avatars are described below, each associated with a specific deity appearing in this book (except for Droskar, who is detailed in *Pathfinder Adventure Path # 148 Fires of the Haunted City*). Battle forms with Strikes that require saving throws use your Spell DC.

ANGRADD

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Angradd typically becomes clad in full-plate made of pure flame, emitting a comfortable heat for the caster and their allies while feeling like a roaring inferno to foes. They gain the following additional abilities.

Angradd Speed 40 feet, immune to fire; **Melee** ♦ greataxe (reach 15 feet, sweep), **Damage** 6d12+6 slashing; **Ranged** ♦ flaming salvo (range 60 feet), **Damage** 4d6+3 fire plus 2d6 persistent fire damage.

BOLKA

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Bolka's skin typically turns golden brown and grows long ringlets of blonde hair. They gain the following additional abilities.

Bolka Speed 60 feet, immune to mental; **Melee** ♦ light mace (agile, finesse, reach 15 feet, shove), **Damage** 6d6+6 bludgeoning; **Ranged** ♦ wedding bell (auditory, nonlethal, range 120 feet), **Damage** 6d6+3 sonic

DRANNGVIT

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Dranngvit's eyes turn white, with a gaze that seems to judge every broken promise. They gain the following additional abilities.

Dranngvit Speed 50 feet, immune to mental; **Melee** ♦ light pick (agile, fatal d8, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d4+6 piercing; **Ranged** ♦ collector's toll (range 80 feet), **Damage** 6d6+3 mental

DROSKAR

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Droskar has their skin turn the grimy gray of forge ash and sweat. They gain the following additional abilities. The Taskmaster's Grasp causes the target to become immobilized for 1 round unless they succeed at a Reflex saving throw.

Droskar Speed 50 feet, immune to immobilized; **Melee** ♦ hammer of toil (agile, reach 15 feet, thrown 40 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 bludgeoning; **Ranged** ♦ taskmaster manacles (range 120 feet), **Damage** 5d6+3 bludgeoning plus Taskmaster's Grasp

FOLGRIT

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Folgrit gains an ageless appearance, seeming both youthful and worldly at the same time. They gain the following additional abilities. The chastising shout Strike causes the target to become enfeebled unless they succeed at a Will saving throw.

Folgrit Speed 60 feet, immune to negative; **Melee** ♦ matriarch staff (reach 15 feet, two-hand d8), **Damage** 6d6+6 bludgeoning; **Ranged** ♦ chastising shout (120 feet), **Damage** 5d6+6 mental and enfeebled 1

GRUNDINNAR

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Grundinnar becomes cleansed of all grime and speaks in a voice that cuts through even the loudest din of combat. They gain the following abilities. The demand for peace Strike causes the target to become stupefied unless they succeed at a Will saving throw.

Grundinnar Speed 60 feet, immune to flat-footed; **Melee** ♦ light hammer (agile, reach 15 feet, thrown 40 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 bludgeoning; **Ranged** ♦ demand for peace (120 feet), **Damage** 5d6+6 mental damage and stupefied 1



PANTHEON WORSHIPPER

KOLS

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Kols typically becomes a living embodiment of justice, with a tome of laws to protect the innocent, a gavel to subdue the guilty, and the wisdom and courage to discern which is which. They gain the following additional abilities.

Kols Speed 50 feet, ignore difficult terrain and greater difficult terrain, immune to immobilized; **Melee** ♦ decisive gavel (agile, reach 15 feet, thrown 40 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 bludgeoning; **Ranged** ♦ pronounce judgment (nonlethal, range 120 feet), **Damage** 6d6+3 sonic

MAGRIM

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Magrim gains a dour expression, lacking any mirth, and their skin turns a pallid, corpse-like color. They gain the following abilities.

Magrim Speed 60 feet, immune to drained and fatigue; **Melee** ♦ worker's hammer (shove, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 bludgeoning; **Ranged** ♦ soul blast (range 60 feet), **Damage** 6d6 force

TRUDD

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Trudd gains dark, loam-colored skin, their muscles accentuated with steel blue light. They gain the following additional abilities. The crushing hammer Strike causes the target to become clumsy unless they succeed at a Fortitude saving throw.

Trudd Speed 55 feet, immune to mental; shield (15 hardness, can't be damaged); **Melee** ♦ crushing hammer (reach 15 feet, shove), **Damage** 5d8+6 bludgeoning and clumsy 1; **Ranged** ♦ shield toss (range 60 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 bludgeoning

DWARVEN PANTHEON

While dwarves have multiple gods, many dwarves prefer to worship the entire dwarven pantheon collectively. Although the pantheon consists entirely of gods who are dwarves, anyone can worship the pantheon regardless of ancestry. More information on pantheons is found on page 92 of *Gods & Magic*.

DWARVEN PANTHEON

Pantheon Members Angraad, Bolka, Dranngvit, Droskar, Folgrit, Grundinnar, Kols, Magrim, Torag, Trudd

Areas of Concern ancestry, crafting, dwarves, relationships

Alignment LG (LG, LN, NG, N)

Divine Font *heal*

Divine Ability Constitution or Wisdom

Divine Skill Diplomacy

Domains creation, family, protection, wealth

Alternate Domains duty, glyph

Cleric Spells 1st: *ant haul*, 4th: *creation*, 7th: *retrocognition*

Edicts develop skills useful to your community (especially crafting, mining, and trading), honor your ancestors through tradition and rituals

Anathema dishonor your family, willingly break a contract or oath, irreparably damage an ancestral relic

Favored Weapon warhammer

Fitting with the dwarven emphasis on family ties, the pantheon of dwarven deities is one singular family centered around Torag as the patriarch. While the Father of Creation embodies nearly every aspect of what it means to be a dwarf, each of his family members is a paragon of one particular facet. When worshipped as a complete pantheon an adherent commits themselves fully to the dwarven way of life, turning to a singular deity as the situation demands.

Soldiers defending territory entreat Torag for aid, making the Forgefather the primary object of worship among stationed troops. Angradd supports worshippers who take offensive action in war time, venerated by forces on the march far from home. Those who are young and eager to prove their worth identify with Trudd, too often hidden in the shadow of his father's greatness.

Bolka oversees prosperous marriages, while Folgrit instructs new parents in the ways of childrearing and looks after widows and orphans. Mother and daughter work closely together, in order to not only form unions and families, but also to see they remain cared for. Dwarves who frequently deal with the passing of loved ones draw strength from Magrim, whose morose duty is to care for the souls of the departed.

City watch and barristers pay homage to Kols, who maintains the laws and brings just retribution on those who break them. In the case of more vicious retaliation, one might turn to Dranngvit, as the Debt Minder is swift to mete out vengeance over even legal slights. To prevent grudges from getting out of hand, leaders of opposing groups embrace the faith of Grundinnar to mend shattered egos and restore orderly peace.

Though reviled amongst surface dwarves, the Dark Smith Droskar is still considered a member of the pantheon. His name is often evoked as a curse or an insult against a particularly disliked superior. Those who turn to Droskar for favors typically do so in secret and always at the cost of their morality.

Taken as a whole, the worship of Torag and his family encapsulates all aspects of dwarven life, the good and the bad. Adherents of the dwarven pantheon take their duties to family and community seriously, gladly taking up burdens and assisting their neighbors.

There are some who worship alternate versions of the dwarven pantheon. The most common is a grouping known as the Skykeepers who exclude Droskar. Belief among Skykeepers is that Droskar's refusal to surface and witness the sky was a forsaking of his divine ancestry and thus prevents him from standing among the other dwarven gods. Interestingly, there is another group named the Forgekin Pact who excludes both Droskar and Torag. This pantheon's faithful believe that Droskar renounced his divine standing much like the worshippers of the Skykeepers, but also believe that Torag's role as the Father of Creation prevents him from fully committing to his duties within the pantheon. Instead, it's the rest of his family who have created a covenant with dwarfkind to serve as protectors and guides, even when Torag is pulled away by his other duties.

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HIGHHELM ANIMALS



AUGDUNAR HUSBANDRY

The augdunar breed of mule is uniquely situated to life in the Five Kings Mountains. They can subsist on relatively small patches of grass or hay, even during periods of heavy work, and require about as much daily water as a camel. The majority of Highhelm's augdunars are stabled in King's Crown to allow easier access to the surface and hitching to caravans. While the population of augdunars is now self-sustaining, the original methods used to create the breed were lost in one of the many attacks in Highhelm's history. Multiple dwarf clans are actively pursuing the rediscovery of this knowledge, though with limited success. The competition between these clans has led to ongoing rivalries. The birth of an augdunar by a purebred horse or donkey has come to be considered a good omen among the citizens of Highhelm, signaling a year of increased prosperity.

The people of Highhelm make use of a number of unique pack animals.

AUGDUNAR

Selectively bred over the course of centuries to be as strong, tough, and grouchy as the dwarves of Highhelm themselves, augdunars are a unique breed of mule favored by the merchants of the Sky Citadel for transporting goods and assisting with manual labor. Unlike mules found elsewhere on Golarion, augdunars are capable of producing offspring—though significantly fewer than ordinary equines. This has led to a steady, but controlled, stock of the creatures, allowing for the population to be self-sustaining. Augdunars are smaller than typical mules to accommodate dwarven height, measuring about four and a half feet tall and weighing between 400 and 600 pounds.

Because of their ability to carry loads beyond that of the traditional mule, in addition to the ability to breed amongst themselves, augdunars are a frequent target of thieves or opportunistic merchants. No Highhelm citizen worth their stone willingly sells an augdunar to outsiders, so attempted thefts on the road are common. Unfortunately for these robbers, the mules are quite loyal to their owners and bray loudly whenever a stranger handles their leads. Combined with a heavy kick to the skull from the animal, any attempts to make off with an augdunar have low odds of succeeding.

While rare, small groups of the augdunar have broken away from dwarven control over the years and created feral colonies in the Five Kings Mountains. These colonies are largely safe from ordinary predators, such as wolves, and graze on mountainside plants. Due to their low birthrate, feral augdunars don't need to have their population controlled, though caravanners do attempt to capture and redomesticate them in an effort to increase profit.

Despite being natural beasts of burden, dwarves don't often use augdunars as mounts. The mules seem to have an instinctive dislike

of riders, to which the deep bite marks and hoofprints left in those who try can attest. That's not to say that some haven't succeeded, however. Those who put forth the effort required to create a bond with an augdunar find that their persistence can pay off. Augdunar loyalty is unparalleled and even thieves know to not attempt to steal an augdunar that's carrying a rider.



AUGDUNAR

CREATURE 2

N MEDIUM ANIMAL

Perception +8; scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Skills Athletics +8, Survival +6

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +4, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

AC 17; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

HP 35

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ hoof +9 (agile), **Damage** 1d10+4 bludgeoning plus Shove

Back Kick ♦♦ The augdunar whirls around, delivering a powerful kick with both its hind legs. The augdunar makes a hoof Strike. If the Strike hits, the

augdunar deals an extra 1d10 bludgeoning damage. This counts as two attacks when calculating the augdunar's multiple attack penalty.

Determined Trudge ♦ The augdunar Strides at a -5 foot circumstance penalty to its Speed, ignoring difficult terrain.

DRAFT LIZARD

Stout reptiles with scales in a checkered gold and white pattern, draft lizards sport powerful jaws and even stronger backs capable of hauling loads four times their own weight. Native to the underground tunnels of the Five Kings Mountains, the reptiles have been domesticated to serve as beasts of burden within the Depths and sprawling web of passages beyond. Zoologists theorize that they are a part of the same reptile family as zetogekis (*Bestiary* 3 301), as the two share a similar build and other physical characteristics.

Draft lizards within the vicinity of Highhelm have adapted their diet to feed mainly on grindlegrubs. However, residual behavior suggests in lean times or before domestication they would devour stones for sustenance. The animals can still be observed habitually gnawing on boulders or large stones, cracking them with their powerful jaws and seeming to savor the taste as they roll the debris around in their mouths. Overworked draft lizards will stray from their handler's control in order to consume rocks, only to return back to their path with a new undercurrent of purpose.

Normally as docile as any other beast of burden, the draft lizards of Highhelm will defend themselves if attacked by predators from the Darklands. Curiously, the lizards have an intense hatred for hryngars, attacking them without any prompting or hesitation. No dwarven records indicate teaching this behavior during the domestication of the animals, leaving its origins a mystery. Some caravanners even claim that the reptiles can sense the presence of hryngars, giving advanced warning of attacks by hissing menacingly into the darkness.

Though too large to be exceptionally dexterous, with careful training some draft lizards can be taught performative tricks. The Rolling Wheel is particularly known for a trio of reptiles that balance on their tails, catch hurled boulders in their jaws, and other stunts. The spectacle is well known in Highhelm, considered one of the big acts that the group performs. This has led to some younger dwarves attempting to teach their animals the same feats, mostly resulting in failure and light property damage in the Depths.

DRAFT LIZARD CREATURE 4

N MEDIUM ANIMAL

Perception +11; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Skills Athletics +12, Intimidation +8, Survival +10

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

AC 20; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11

HP 60

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +14, **Damage** 2d6+7 piercing plus Grab plus Lizard Poison

Melee ♦ claw +14 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d4+7 slashing

Constrict ♦ 2d8+7 piercing, DC 21

Lizard Poison (poison) **Saving Throw** Fortitude DC 21; **Maximum**

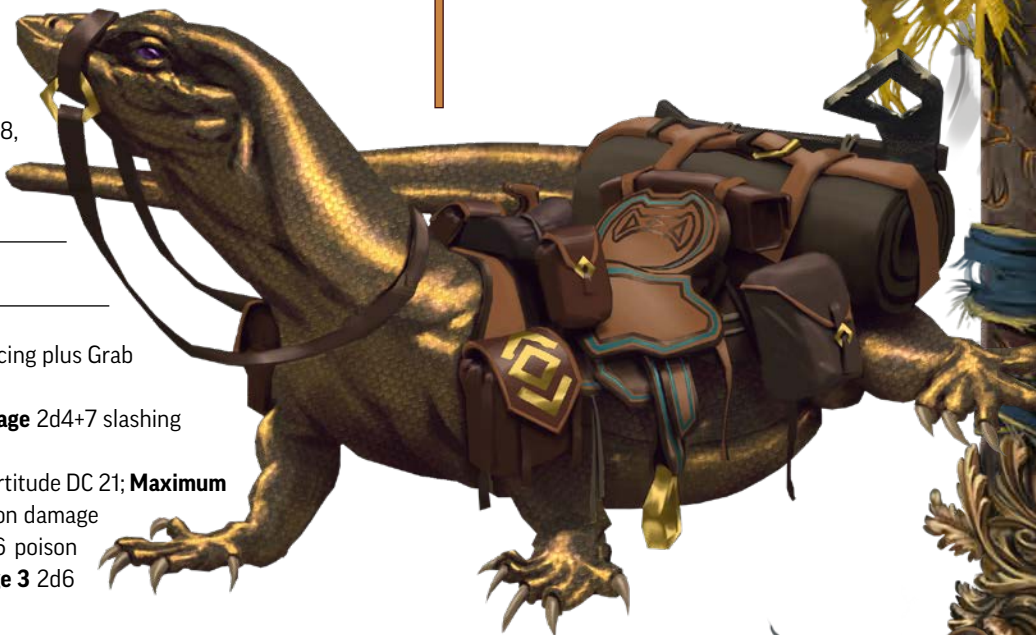
Duration 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 2d4 poison damage and clumsy 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 2d6 poison damage and clumsy 1 (1 round); **Stage 3** 2d6 and clumsy 2 (1 round)



DRAFT LIZARD HABITATS

The domestication of the draft lizard occurred at some point during the beginning of the Quest for Sky, when the dwarves who would later rediscover Highhelm encountered the creatures within the Darklands. After many failed attempts that resulted in crushed or lost limbs, the dwarves managed to bribe the reptiles into docility with a steady supply of grindlegrubs. In time, draft lizards have become central to dwarven caravans and movement within the subterranean tunnels of the Five Kings Mountains.

The popularity of draft lizards as dwarven mounts comes as a surprise to visitors of the Sky Citadel, as the creatures are rarely seen above ground. When Highhelm was resettled by the dwarves, an attempt was made to bring the mounts to the surface, but the reptiles stubbornly refused to enter natural sunlight. While some progress has been made adapting them to the surface, it remains a rare sight to see a draft lizard outside of the stone warrens.



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BLOODSTORM



SADISTIC HUNTER

While the Bloodstorm is mostly driven by animal instincts, it still has traces of the shemhazian's obsession with torment and pain. It's been known to leave victims wounded but alive, allowing them to narrowly escape. The swarm then follows the trail of blood, remaining hidden until the victim finds someone who can offer aid. Once the rescuer has treated the victim's injuries and they feel safe, it fills the tunnel with the sound of buzzing and floods in to strike.

While dwarves from urban centers may consider these old wives' tales, those further from the city know well the dangers of an open wound.

A hundred thousand leeches, mosquitos, and parasites form a roiling mass of hunger and malice. It moves like a storm through the tunnels and caverns of the Emperor's Peak, constantly in search of its next meal. Though it has many bodies, it has just one, startlingly clever mind. The flames and smoke of the cities keeps it at bay, but in the darkness, it is at home. The dwarves of Highhelm have learned how to live with the threat, but those traveling deeper into the mountain must always remain vigilant.

In the swamps of the Tanglebriar, food is difficult to come by. So when a grievously wounded demon, a shemhazian known as Gratheyr, fled into its waters to escape from his enemies, every starving creature swarmed at the smell of blood. As the creatures devoured his flesh, they were corrupted by his Abyssal blood, and their hunger only grew. They feasted until nothing but his heart remained, still beating at the center of the swarm, binding it to a single will.

With its meal finished, the bloated swarm left the swamp in search of its next prey. It moved aimlessly, hunting animals and travelers alike, until a great rumble beneath the earth attracted its attention. The Bloodstorm followed the vibrations deep underground, toward the scent of sweat and the sounds of voices.

THE BLOODSTORM

CREATURE 14

UNIQUE NE HUGE DEMON SWARM

Perception +25; **bloodsense** (precise) 120 feet, **tremorsense** (precise) 60 feet

Languages Abyssal (can't speak any language)

Skills Athletics +24, Stealth +28

Str +2, **Dex** +6, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +5, **Cha** -2

AC 35; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +28, **Will** +25

HP 250; **Immunities** precision, swarm mind; **Resistances** physical 15; **Weaknesses** area damage 15, fire 15, splash damage 15

Bloodsense The Bloodstorm can precisely sense bleeding creatures within 120 feet.

Speed 40 feet, climb 40 feet, fly 15 feet

Melee ♦ **Requirements** The Bloodstorm is in Demon Shape; **Effect** pincer +27 (evil, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 3d8+15 piercing plus 1d4 evil and Improved Grab

Biting Constrict ♦ **Requirements** The Bloodstorm is in Demon Shape and has a creature grabbed; **Effect** The writing mass of the Bloodstorm's pincer bites the grabbed creature, dealing 3d8+8 piercing damage (basic Fortitude save). On a failure, the creature also takes 1d8 persistent bleed damage.

Biting Swarm ♦ Each creature in the Bloodstorm's space takes 3d6 piercing and 3d6 slashing damage (DC 31 basic Fortitude save). Creatures that fail their saving throw also take 1d8 persistent bleed damage.

Feeding Frenzy ♦♦ **Requirements** There are bleeding creatures in the Bloodstorm's space; **Effect** The bleeding creatures take 3d8 piercing and 3d8 slashing damage (DC 34 basic Fortitude save). The Bloodstorm gains temporary Hit Points equal to half of the damage dealt this way.

Demon Shape ♦ The swarm condenses into the solid shape of a shemhazian demon. While in this form, it's a gargantuan creature, cannot share the space of another creature, and can use its pincer attack. It loses its resistance to physical damage as well as its weaknesses to area and splash damage. Any creatures sharing a space with the Bloodstorm when it transforms are pushed into the nearest empty space. The Bloodstorm can use this action again to revert to its swarm shape.

GRAND DEFENDER

Hand-carved by the Father of Creation himself and strengthened by the souls of history's most heroic dwarves, the Grand Defender serves as Torag's herald across the planes. While a true messenger of a deity, the Grand Defender manifests itself in a unique way to other heralds. The chassis of the Grand Defender exists within Forgeheart, Torag's subterranean realm in Heaven. This frame is empty, however, and can only serve basic functions, much like a golem. When faithful call upon the Grand Defender, Torag rouses the construct with spirits. As the might of the Grand Defender comes from Torag's will and the power of the souls within, the Grand Defender can take on any number of forms. Torag can send these spirits to alter any sufficiently sized statue of a dwarven ancestor. This process temporarily converts the carving into the Grand Defender itself, complete with its abilities and equipment.

GRAND DEFENDER

CREATURE 15

UNIQUE LG HUGE CELESTIAL CONSTRUCT HERALD

Perception +29; darkvision, true seeing

Languages Common, Celestial, Dwarven, Ignan, Terran; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Athletics +30, Crafting +28, Religion +28

Str +8, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +3

Items defender's shield (Hardness 15, can't be damaged), warhammer

AC 40; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +23, **Will** +29

HP 280, special; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigue, magic (see below), necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Weaknesses** evil 15; **Resistances** physical 15 (except adamantine)

Ablative Adaptation ➤ **Frequency** once per minute; **Trigger** The Grand Defender's resistance to physical damage is overcome by the resistance's exception; **Effect** The Grand Defender sheds the outer layer of its body, altering its material composition and general appearance. The material that overcomes the Grand Defender's resistance changes to adamantine, cold iron, mithral, or silver (Grand Defender's choice).

Attack of Opportunity ➤

Golem Antimagic harmed by acid (8d10, 2d10 from area or persistent damage); healed by fire (area 2d10 HP); slowed by electricity

Shield Block ➤

Vulnerable to Rust Magical rusting effects, like a rust monster's antennae, affect the Grand Defender normally.

Speed 35 feet, burrow 35 ft.

Melee ♦ warhammer +30 (shove), **Damage** 3d12+14 bludgeoning plus Improved Knockdown

Ranged ♦ force blast +28 (magical, range 100 feet), **Damage** 3d12+8 force

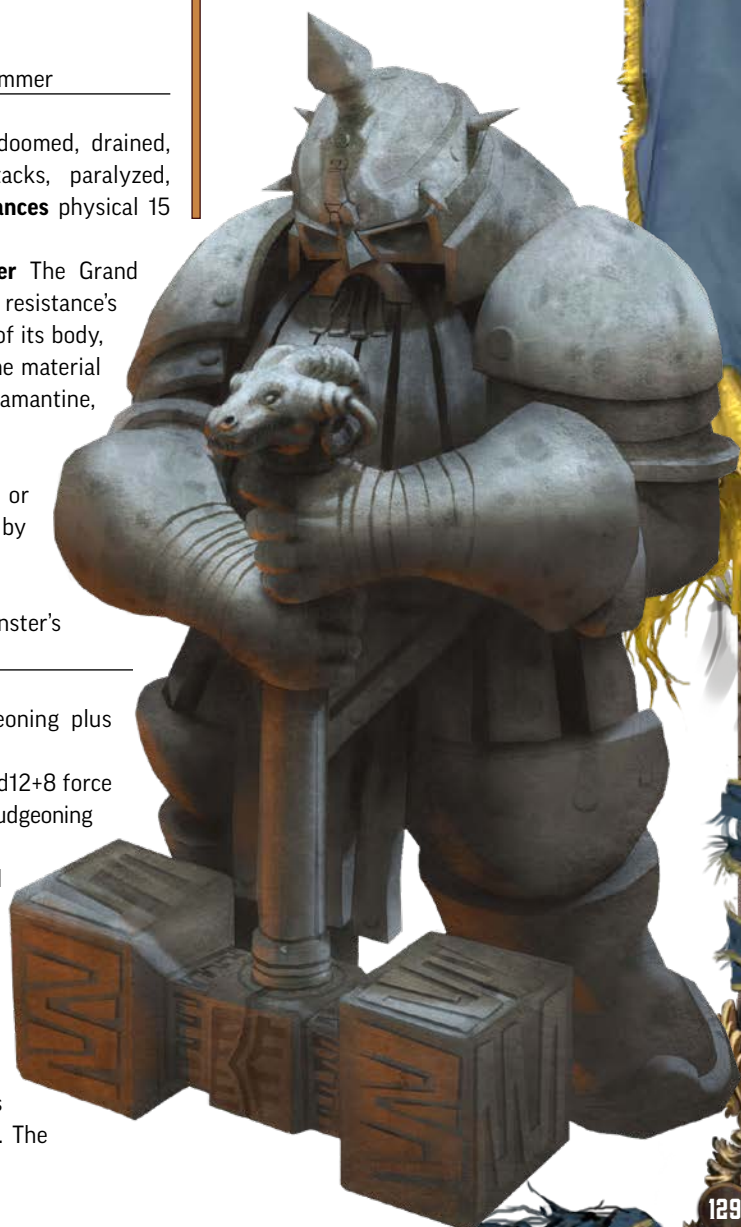
Divine Innate Spells DC 36; **6th** *blade barrier* (as hammers dealing bludgeoning instead of slashing); **5th** *flame strike*, *repelling pulse* (x2)

Hammer Storm ♦♦ (divine, earth, evocation) The Grand Defender unleashes a volley of warhammers that deal 12d8 bludgeoning damage in a 50-foot cone (DC 36 basic Reflex save). The Grand Defender can exclude any number of squares from the cone's area, preventing damage to creatures in those squares. Creatures that critically fail their save are pushed 10 feet away from the Grand Defender and knocked prone. The storm creates 24 Medium warhammers that persist after the attack and can be used by creatures. The Grand Defender can't use Hammer Storm for 1d4 rounds.



HIGHHELM STATUES

As the pinnacle of dwarven civilization for centuries, the Sky Citadel of Highhelm has endured many invasions. To cement their safety as Torag's chosen people, the dwarves have erected dozens of statues befitting the manifestation of the Grand Defender. The most famous of these is a colossal likeness of Taargick, the King of the Sky. Weathered and damaged beyond repair after a half dozen battles in which the Grand Defender protected the city, it now stands where the herald last left it, gazing over Stonebreach.



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GRAUL



PHOTOPHOBIA

Although grauls are not harmed or physically affected by light, the overwhelming sensation of vulnerability they experience when directly exposed drives them to avoid it wherever possible. Travelers through the tunnels surrounding Highhelm are advised to be on the lookout for blind and darkvision-possessing fauna that appear to be congregating and making homes near bioluminescent fungi clusters or other natural light sources they might normally ignore, as this behavior often indicates the presence of a graul's hunting ground.

The labyrinthine caverns and tunnels beneath Highhelm are home to many dangers, with the insidious graul being one of the more notable native species. These highly specialized ambush predators possess a natural camouflage that renders them completely imperceptible to all forms of darkvision as they float silently through the darkness, allowing them to hunt creatures that rely on specialized senses to navigate their lightless domain. Surprisingly cunning, grauls are adept at using their magical talents for illusion and mimicry to separate potential prey from allies and light sources alike.

GRAUL

CREATURE 4

UNCOMMON N LARGE ABERRATION

Perception +14; blindsight (precise) 120 feet

Languages Aklo

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +10 (+12 to Grapple), Deception +10, Stealth +12

Str +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +3, **Int** +2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

AC 20; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +8, **Will** +14

HP 60

Darkvision Invisibility The graul's rubbery flesh is saturated with a unique biochemical compound that renders it undetectable by any form of darkvision. In dim or bright light, the creature can be perceived normally by any kind of vision.

Odorless The graul exudes no natural aroma, rendering it undetectable to creatures using the scent ability.

Speed fly 25 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +14, **Damage** 2d8+5 piercing plus paralysis

Melee ♦ tentacle +14 (agile, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 2d6+5 bludgeoning plus Tentacle Grab

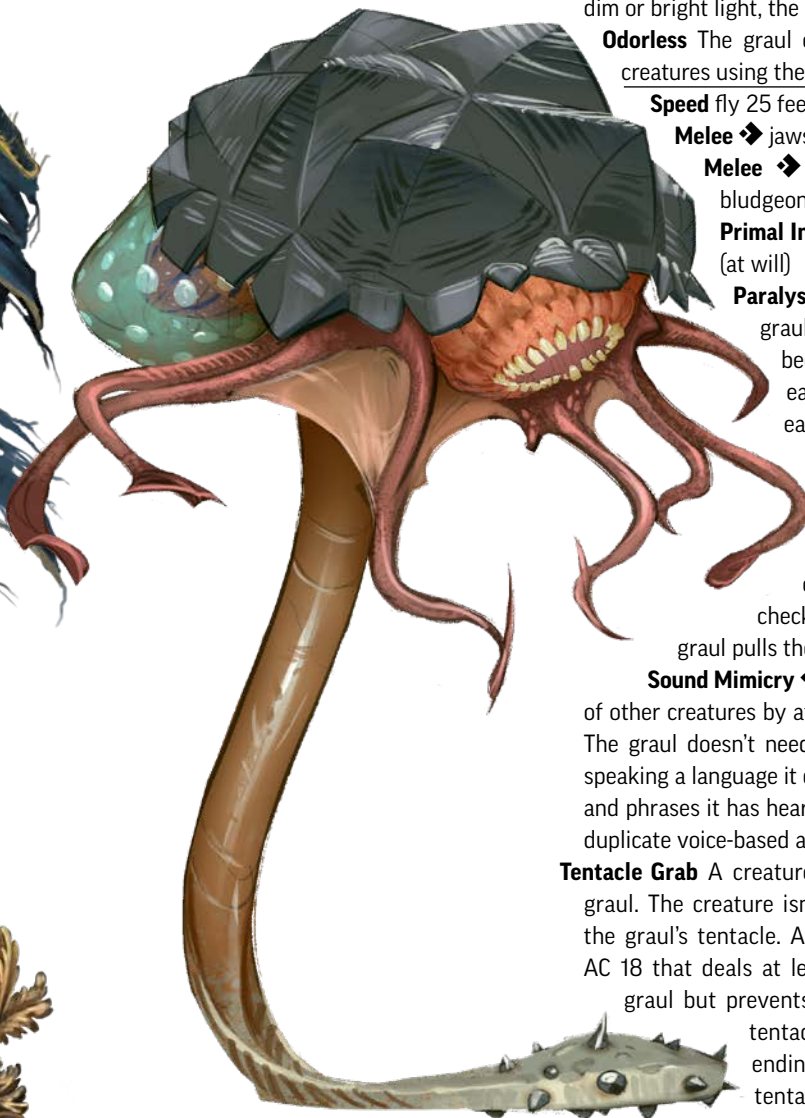
Primal Innate Spells DC 18; **2nd** *illusory object*; **1st** *ventriloquism* (at will)

Paralysis (poison, incapacitation) A living creature struck by a graul's jaws attack must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or become paralyzed. It can attempt a new check at the end of each of its turns, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1 on each such check. A creature paralyzed by this ability is also affected by the graul's darkvision invisibility for as long as the effect persists.

Seize ♦ **Requirements** The graul has a creature grabbed with its tentacle; **Effect** The graul pulls the creature toward itself. The graul attempts an Athletics check against the creature's Fortitude DC. With a success, the graul pulls the creature 15 feet closer to it.

Sound Mimicry ♦ The graul can perfectly imitate the sounds and speech of other creatures by attempting a Deception check against a listener's Will DC. The graul doesn't need to understand the language it's mimicking, but when speaking a language it doesn't know, the creature can only repeat specific words and phrases it has heard in the past 24 hours. The graul can't use this ability to duplicate voice-based abilities or spells.

Tentacle Grab A creature hit by the graul's tentacle becomes grabbed by the graul. The creature isn't immobilized, but it can't move beyond the reach of the graul's tentacle. A creature can sever the tentacle with a Strike against AC 18 that deals at least 10 slashing damage. This deals no damage to the graul but prevents it from using its tentacle Strike until it regrows the tentacle, which takes 1 round. The graul can move without ending the Grab as long as the creature remains within the tentacle's reach.



PAGULIN

Pagulins are massive, multi-legged lizards that stalk the mountain passes of the Five Kings Mountains. These reptiles hunt elk and augdunars by lying in wait behind rock formations or within the openings of caves. Pagulins produce a mildly acidic saliva that they spit at prey to temporarily blind them before moving in for the kill. A pagulin's tail features a deadly thagomizer, four large spikes that it uses to impale prey to prevent their escape. Five Kings citizens know that pagulins are much smarter than they look, with many reports of pagulins intentionally allowing prey to escape, only to follow a creature to its den and feast on its entire family.

Though pagulins are deadly, most in the Five Kings Mountains are indifferent to them. Pagulins tend to rest for days at a time after a hunt, spending time to digest their massive kills. They're particularly territorial, however, and will gladly rouse from a post-meal stupor to defend their lairs. The lizards are also known to attack anything that interrupts a hunt or scares off prey. Many merchant caravans have dealt with an unexpected pagulin attack after riding past a herd of startled deer.

PAGULIN

CREATURE 7

UNCOMMON N LARGE ANIMAL

Perception +14; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Athletics +17, Stealth +15 (+17 in rocky environments), Survival +15 (+17 to Track a bleeding creature)

Str +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** -4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

AC 24; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12

HP 120

Speed 25 feet, climb 15 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +18 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+9 piercing plus Grab

Melee ♦ claw +18 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+9 slashing

Melee ♦ tail +16 (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d8+6 piercing plus Tail Impalement

Ranged ♦ spit +16 (range 30 feet), **Effect** Blinding Spittle

Blinding Spittle A creature hit by a pagulin's spit must attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is dazzled for 1 round. It can use an Interact action to wipe away the spittle and remove the dazzled condition.

Failure As success, except the creature is blinded for 1 round instead of dazzled.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature is blinded for 1 minute. The creature needs 2 total Interact actions to wipe away the spittle.

Constrict ♦ **Damage** 1d10+6 piercing, DC 25

Spike Rend ♦ **Requirements** The pagulin has a creature impaled on its tail;

Effect The pagulin violently pulls its tail out of the creature, dealing 2d6 persistent bleed damage to the creature.

Tail Impalement A creature hit by a pagulin's tail becomes impaled on one of the tail's spikes. The creature becomes grabbed. If the pagulin moves, it brings the grabbed creature along with it. The pagulin doesn't need to use additional actions to keep the creature grabbed; the creature remains grabbed as long as it's impaled. The grabbed creature can attempt to Escape as normal. Large and larger creatures are immune to a pagulin's Tail Impalement.



PAGULIN LAIRS

Pagulins tend to reside within the countless natural caves of the Five Kings Mountains. Identifying these caves is generally easy as the cavern floor and walls are pocked with small holes created from pagulin spittle. While pagulins are most common within the Five Kings Mountains and surrounding ranges, they also live in the more arid steppes and mountain ranges of northwestern Avistan. These pagulins are rarer than their Five Mountains cousins but have adapted to their differing environment. Rather than residing in caves, they create small burrows beneath shrubs or squeeze into crevices between large rocks. Reports of northern pagulins note how they're much more irritable, which some attribute to the hotter climes of these regions. Others attribute this to the cooler nights, as these pagulins seem most irritable early in the morning.



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This appendix contains brief explanations and page references for the content presented in this book, including new rules, locations, deities, and organizations. New rules content is marked with an asterisk (*).

Abadar Lawful neutral god of cities, law, and wealth. Known as the Master of the First Vault. *Gods & Magic* 12-13

Absalom The largest city in the Inner Sea region, Absalom was founded by Aroden and is located on Starstone Isle. *Absalom, City of Lost Omens*

Absalom Reckoning The most commonly used calendar in Avistan and Garund, consisting of 52 weeks across 12 months. The current year is 4723 AR.

Abyss An endlessly winding, chaotic evil plane full of dangerous chasms. Home to the fiends known as demons. *Gamemastery Guide* 142

Abyssal Believed to be the first language developed in the Outer Sphere. Commonly spoken by demons.

Age of Creation The age in which Golarion came to be, before the emergence of mortals. *World Guide* 6

Age of Darkness The age following Earthfall, ranging from -5293 AR to -4294 AR. *World Guide* 6

Age of Legend The age of humans and other mortals taking place after the Age of Serpents and before Earthfall. The age is characterized by the prominence of ancient empires like the Azlant empire. *World Guide* 6

Age of Lost Omens The age brought about by the death of Aroden, ranging from 4606 AR to the modern day. *World Guide* 8-9

Almas Almas is the capital of the nation of Andoran. **ancestry feats*** 108

Andoran A relatively young nation in southern Avistan known for its adherence to democracy and personal freedom. *World Guide* 122-124

Angradd The lawful good dwarven god of fire, offensive war, and tradition. Known as the Forge-Fire. 116

animal companions* 109

Arcadia One of Golarion's continents, lying west of the Inner Sea region past the ruins of Azlant. *World Guide* 6-7

Aspis Consortium A prominent trade organization that spans the Inner Sea region and often opposes the Pathfinder Society. Known for its unscrupulous practices. *Character Guide* 65

avatar forms* 124-125

Avistan One of Golarion's continents. Comprises the northern half of the Inner Sea region. *World Guide* 7

Axis A massive planar city known for its adherence to law. Home to the monitors known as aeons. The plane is lawful neutral. *Gamemastery Guide* 142

backgrounds* 58, 72, 86

Belkzen A region in northwestern Avistan, known as the home of several orc clans. *World Guide* 38-40

bestiary* 126-131

Bolka The neutral good dwarven god of marriage, passion, and committed relationships. Known as the Golden Gift. 117

Boneyard A plane where the souls of the dead travel in the afterlife. Home to the monitors known as psychopomps. The plane is neutral. *Gamemastery Guide* 142-143

Cayden Cailean Chaotic good god of ale, bravery, freedom, and wine. Also known as the Accidental God. *Gods & Magic* 18-19

celestial Creatures who hail from or have a strong connection to the good-aligned planes.

Chaldira Zuzaristan The neutral good halfling god of battle, luck, and mischief. Known as the Calamitous Turn. *Gods & Magic* 58

Cheliox A nation in southwest Avistan, known for its ties to diabolic rule. *World Guide* 98-100

Clan Aringeld One of Highhelm's major Goldhilt clans, known for its specialty in mercantile. 32

Clan Breakiron One of Highhelm's major Steelhilt clans, known for its specialty in innovations alchemical and otherwise. 32

Clan Ertubur One of Highhelm's minor Steelhilt clans, known for its specialty in mortuary services. 30

Clan Felltree One of Highhelm's minor Ironhilt clans, known for its specialty in lumber. 30

Clan Firecask One of Highhelm's major Goldhilt clans, known for its specialty in brewing and distilling. 33

Clan Gelderon One of Highhelm's major Ironhilt clans, known for its specialty in farming, ranching, and fishing. 33

Clan Grimmark One of Highhelm's major Steelhilt clans, known for its specialty in stonemasonry and developing weapons and defenses for the city. 34

Clan Ironfist One of Highhelm's major Steelhilt clans, known for its specialty in smelting. 34

Clan Lasthall One of Highhelm's minor Ironhilt clans, which dedicates itself to taking in dwarves without a clan. 31

Clan Molgrade One of Highhelm's major Goldhilt clans, known for its specialty in smithing. 35

Clan Oriddus One of Highhelm's major Goldhilt clans, known for its specialty in religious traditions. 35

Clan Pearlcase One of Highhelm's minor Steelhilt clans, known for its specialty in water purification and mollusk aquaculture. 31

Clan Runebinder One of Highhelm's major Goldhilt clans, known for its specialty in magic. 36

Clan Stonefist One of Highhelm's major Steelhilt clans, known for its specialty in military training and combat. 36

Clan Tolorr One of Highhelm's major Goldhilt clans, known for its specialty in dwarven history. 37

Clan Vanderholl One of Highhelm's major Ironhilt clans, known for its specialty in manual labor of all kinds. 37

Darklands The immense area of caverns, vaults, and passages beneath the surface of Golarion. *World Guide* 7-8

The Depths The underground portions of Highhelm. The Depths aren't a proper layer like the other parts of the city and instead encompass the various tunnels and other underground portions of throughout. 88-95

Desna Chaotic good god of dreams, luck, stars, and travelers. Known as the Song of the Spheres. *Gods & Magic* 20-21

Draconic The ancient language of dragons.

Drannigvit The lawful neutral dwarven god of debt, pursuit, and vengeance. Known as the Debt Minder. 118

Drezen A city in the Sarkoris Scar once overrun by demons.

Droskar The neutral evil dwarven god of cheating, slavery, and toil, sometimes called the Dark Smith. *Gods & Magic* 127, *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #148 58–63

Druma A nation in southern central Avistan, known for its prominent trade and great wealth. *World Guide* 124–125

dwarven pantheon* 125

Earthfall A cataclysmic event in –5293 AR in which a swarm of meteorites fell upon Golarion and caused massive destruction, ending the Age of Legends and starting the Age of Darkness.

Eldest A group of deities that keep their attention on the First World. *Gods & Magic* 78–79

Elemental Planes A set of planes located within the Inner Sphere that surround the Material Plane. Includes the planes of air, water, earth, and fire. *Gamemastery Guide* 139–140

equipment* 59

Erastil Lawful good god of family, farming, hunting, and trade. Known as Old Deadeye. *Gods & Magic* 22–23

Ergaksen One of three major dwarven groups, Ergaksen live on the surface of Golarion. *Character Guide* 17

Five Kings Mountains A region in southeast Avistan considered the center of dwarven civilization in the Inner Sea region. 96–103

Folgrit The lawful good dwarven god of children, hearths, and mothers. Known as the Watchful Mother. 119

Galt A nation in eastern Avistan, known as a land of constant political upheaval and revolution. *World Guide* 126

Garund One of Golarion's continents. Its northern portion makes up the southern half of the Inner Sea region. *World Guide* 8

Garundi A common human ethnicity in the Inner Sea region spanning the nations of northern Garund. *Character Guide* 6

Golarion Golarion is the most important world in the Lost Omens campaign setting. *World Guide* 6–9

Goldhilt One of Highhelm's three castes. Goldhilt clans tend to focus on prestigious duties related to dwarven history and culture. 30

Gozreh Neutral god of nature, the sea, and weather. Known as the Wind and the Waves. *Gods & Magic* 26–27

Grondaksen One of the three major dwarven ethnicities. They typically live underground. *Character Guide* 17

Grundinnar The lawful good dwarven god of friendship, alliance, family, and truth. Known as the Peacemaker. 120

Heaven A plane that embodies order and compassion and is home to the celestials known as archons. The plane is lawful good. *Gamemastery Guide* 143–144

herald (trait) Nearly all deities have a specific representative known as a herald; heralds are as diverse in their appearances and abilities as the gods themselves. A creature with the herald type is always unique.

heritages* 109

hobgoblin Hobgoblins are a sturdy, clever people with a propensity for militaristic order. *Character Guide* 48–51

Holtaksen One of the three major dwarven ethnicities. Commonly live atop mountains and along their slopes. *Character Guide* 18–19

Hryngar: An underground-dwelling people that originated from ancient dwarves. They are also known as gray dwarves or deep dwarves. Many hryngar worship Droskar.

Inner Sea The sea cradled between Avistan and Garund, created by the reshaping of the region during Earthfall.

Inner Sea region The collective name for the area surrounding the Inner Sea, consisting of Avistan and the northern part of Garund.

Inner Sphere The center of the Great Beyond, consisting of the Astral Plane, Elemental Planes, Energy Planes, Ethereal Plane, the First World, the Material Plane, and the Shadow Plane. *Gamemastery Guide* 138–140

Ironhilt One of Highhelm's three castes. Ironhilt clans tend to focus on more unpleasant duties like farming and other manual labor. 30

Isger A nation in southern central Avistan, a vassal of Cheliaz and home to several goblin clans. *World Guide* 100–102

Kallijae One of the three groups that arose from the Mualijae elves, Kallijae live in the northeastern Mwangi Expanse. *The Mwangi Expanse* 52–61

Keleshite A human ethnicity in the Inner Sea region, common among the nations of the Golden Road. *Character Guide* 6–7

King's Crown The topmost layer of Highhelm. King's Crown is home to the city's government, Goldhilt clans, and more affluent population. 46–57

King's Heart The middle layer of Highhelm. King's Heart is the city's religious center and home to several Steelhilt clans. 60–71

Kibwe A trade city located in the eastern reaches of the Mwangi Expanse. *The Mwangi Expanse* 208–219

Knights of Lastwall The remaining knights of fallen Lastwall who seek to destroy the Whispering Tyrant. *Knights of Lastwall*

Kols The lawful neutral dwarven god of duty, honor, and promises. Known as the Oathkeeper. 121

Kortos The island that Aroden raised along with the *Starstone* and upon which Absalom was built. Also known as Starstone Isle. *World Guide* 12

Kraggodan The dwarven Sky Citadel located in the southern Mindspin Mountains in Nirmathas.

Kyonin A nation in central Avistan, known as the center of elven culture on the continent. *World Guide* 127–128

Lacunafex A network of spies that operates throughout Cheliaz and is based out of Kintargo.

Lake Encarthan A large lake located in central Avistan that facilitates trade throughout the region. *World Guide* 41

Lastwall A now-destroyed nation initially founded to watch over Gallowspire, the former prison of the lich Tar-Baphon. Now known as the Gravelands. *World Guide* 40–41

Lion Blades A secretive group of spies, the Lion Blades defend Taldor and its interests from enemies. *Character Guide* 65

lizardfolk An ancestry of reptilian humanoids. Also known as iruxis, they are extremely adaptable and patient. *Character Guide* 56–59

magic items* 58–59, 86–87, 112–113, 115

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Magrim The lawful neutral dwarven god of death, fate, and underworld. Known as the Taskmaster. 122

Mana Wastes A region located in eastern Garund known for its areas of dead and wild magic. *World Guide* 79-80

Material Plane The plane located with the Inner Sphere that encompasses the known universe, including Golarion and its solar system. *Gamemastery Guide* 138-139

materials* 113

Mbe'ke A dwarven ethnic group which lives in the Mwangi Expanse. *The Mwangi Expanse* 62-71

Molthune A nation in central Avistan dominated by its military and currently at war with Nirmathas. *World Guide* 42

Mwangi Expanse The area of northern central Garund consisting of most of the regions in and around the Mwangi Jungle, including the nation of Vidrian. *The Mwangi Expanse*

Mwangi Jungle A vast jungle spanning the majority of the central Mwangi Expanse. *The Mwangi Expanse* 154-159

Nirmathas A nation located in central Avistan, known for its vast wilderness and current war with Molthune. *World Guide* 43

Numeria A nation in northeast Avistan known for its unique and powerful technology, originally salvaged from a fallen starship. *World Guide* 29-30

Pathfinder Society A globe-trotting organization dedicated to exploration and the reclamation of lost relics. *Pathfinder Society Guide*

Plane of Air An Elemental Plane filled with vast skies, churning storms, and massive clouds. *Gamemastery Guide* 139

Plane of Earth An Elemental Plane exemplified by solid stone, endless caverns, and rich mineral veins. *Gamemastery Guide* 139-140

Plane of Fire An Elemental Plane covered in dancing flames, seas of magma, and clouds of ash. *Gamemastery Guide* 140

Plane of Water An Elemental Plane saturated with endless oceans, bogs of mud and silt, and clouds of steam. *Gamemastery Guide* 140

processed (trait) An alchemical consumable with the processed trait can be created with Quick Alchemy but is too complex to create in a single action. *Treasure Vault* 221

Quest for Sky A massive exodus by ancient dwarves where they left the Darklands in search of sky due to a prophecy from Torag. The Quest for Sky began with the occurrence of Earthfall and concluded when the dwarves reached the surface of Golarion in -4987 AR. 12-13

Rahadoum A nation located in northwest Garund, known for its prohibition of all religious practice. *World Guide* 55-56

Realm of the Mammoth Lords A region in northern Avistan known for its untamed wilderness and dangerous megafauna. *World Guide* 115-116

relics* 114

Runelord A powerful wizard that ruled in ancient Thassilon. Each runelord is tied to an aspect of sin magic.

Sarenrae Neutral good god of healing, honesty, redemption, and the sun. Known as the Dawnflower. *Gods & Magic* 42-43

Sarkoris Scar A region located in northern Avistan. Formerly the site of the demonic Worldwound. *World Guide* 32-33

Sellen River A major river that flows through the Broken Lands and Shining Kingdoms regions. *World Guide* 33

Shadow Plane A plane located on the far side of the Ethereal Plane that is a twisted reflection of the Material Plane. *Gamemastery Guide* 141

Shelyn Neutral good god of art, beauty, love, and music. Known as the Eternal Rose. *Gods & Magic* 44-45

Shining Kingdoms The region in southeast Avistan consisting of Andoran, Druma, the Five Kings Mountains, Galt, Kyonin, and Taldor. *World Guide* 120-131

Shoanti A human ethnicity common across the Storval Plateau, the frontiers of Varisia, and beyond. *Character Guide* 8

skill feats* 72-73

Sky Citadels Massive fortress-like cities built by dwarves after their arrival to the surface upon completing the Quest for Sky. There are ten Sky Citadels scattered throughout the Inner Sea region. 10

spells* 73

stalwart defender archetype* 110

Steelhilt One of Highhelm's three castes. Steelhilt clans tend to focus on duties central to dwarven culture like trade and smithing. 30

Stonebreach The bottom layer of Highhelm. Stonebreach is the nexus of the city's trade with foreign partners and home to many Ironhilt clans. 74-85

svirfneblin An offshoot of gnomes who live in underground realms. Also known as deep gnomes.

sylph A type of geniekin descended from a being from the Plane of Air. *Ancestry Guide* 112-115

Taargick The dwarf that originally united the migrating dwarven kingdoms during the Quest for Sky. Taargick was the first to hold the title of High King. 12, *Legends* 102-103

Taldan A human ethnicity widespread throughout Avistan, especially in the southern regions of the continent. *Character Guide* 8

Taldor A nation located in southeast Avistan. This empire in decline seeks to reclaim former glory. *World Guide* 128-129

Tanglebriar A large swamp in southern Kyonin. Domain of the demon lord Treerazer. *World Guide* 128

Tar-Baphon A necromancer killed by Aroden, Tar-Baphon rose again as the lich king known as the Whispering Tyrant; he threatened the Inner Sea region for centuries before being imprisoned. In 4719 AR, he broke free to terrorize the region once more. *Legends* 104-105

tattoo (trait) A type of item that is drawn or cut into a creature's skin, usually in the form of images or symbols. 87, *Secrets of Magic* 164-165

Tian A group of human ethnicities originally hailing from the nations of Tian Xia, now common along major Avistani trade routes, including the Crown of the World. *Character Guide* 8-9

Tian Xia One of Golarion's continents. Located far to the east of the Inner Sea region, past Casmaron. *World Guide* 9

Torag Lawful good god of the forge, protection, and strategy. Known as the Father of Creation. *Gods & Magic* 46-47

Treerazier A powerful demon lord banished to Tanglebriar, a swamp in Southern Kyonin. Known as the Lord of the Blasted Tarn. *Bestiary* 312–313

Trudd The neutral good god of bravery, defense, and strength. Known as the Mighty. 123

Urgir Unofficial capital of the Hold of Belkzen.

Varisia A region in northwestern Avistan, known as a frontier land and home to ancient Thassilonian ruins. *World Guide* 116–117

Verduran Forest A large forest in southeast Avistan, nestled between Andoran, Galt, and Taldor. *World Guide* 129

Whispering Tyrant Another name for the lich Tar-Baphon. *Legends* 104–105

Worldwound An enormous rift that opened in the nation of Sarkoris, allowing the demonic hordes of the Abyss to spill forth and destroy the region until closed by heroes. Its demon-blighted surroundings are now known as the Sarkoris Scar. *World Guide* 26, 32–33

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