

The Halkut Mountains

This is the land of the Dwarfs. Wait, that's not quite right. This is the land of those who would live underground. This is a smart idea. Above ground has monsters and cold. Underground has monsters and warmth. Sometimes.

The caverns of these mountains have taken centuries to carve out. Their heat-stone, that precious substance, has taken decades to grow. It has to be carefully cultivated, cared for by Heat-smiths who are the only reason these caverns are still around. Heat-stone looks like orange quartz, but pulses with a comforting orange light.

We are the dwarfs. We live here. You may find pretenders out at sea, but they are not pure dwarves. We built them their ships. Centuries ago. They left when the sun still burned. They think not of us, and have failed to attend the ceremony of thanks for almost five thousand years. Ungrateful bastards. We do not fight them. We ignore them. We don't sail down the Klat-shalth (Clan Road) anymore, for if we do we shall meet the impure. We have built our empire, down here in the dark. Each of us belongs to a family, and each family to a clan. There are 9 clans. I shall call them here, along with their callings:

The Stone Clans:

Myrkolt: The smiths. They have the finest weapons, the finest history of blades. They do not excel at using them, but they make them. Of course, the members of this clan are not all smiths. The clan itself is. Do not confuse the two, or your dwarfish history will be much harder to understand.

Kyvun: The stone crafters. They built the first clan-ships which carry the salt-kin to this day, and they built the homes.

Grynkol: The miners. They are perhaps the greatest, for they are blessed with the greatest stone sense out of all of us. They can feel gems from miles away.

Brykut: The scribes. The ones who recorded Vothgult's word first, and still hold the tablets on which it was first recorded. Quick witted and logical.

The Salt Clans

Wulfong: The cursed brethren. Their name-sake was raised by wolves, and thus they are like the wolves. Bestial and uncultured, they are full to the brim with beserkers and shamans.

Skithut: The sea-riders. The first to flee from Vothgult's guidance, they fled towards the sea on the stone ships. They are the greatest of the sailors.

Jorung: The ragers. They are violent and angry, skilled in a thousand arts of war. The greatest of the rage-smiths came from them. Do not anger them.

Glotten: The first and least. Crafted by Vothgult as an attempt to create a species in his image, they crumbled and fell weak. They were the first to find this home underground, to hide from a light they could not stand. From them, all of dwarvish weakness springs. When given a chance, the cowards ran to the sea.

WE DO NOT SPEAK THE LASTS NAME

From an outsider's perspective, most mountain dwarves appear serious, xenophobic, hardworking, and (often) drunk. While many dismiss this as dwarves being dwarves, it is actually the product of an aggressive culture which does its best to quash individuality and creativity. Fascist to the extreme, mountain dwarven families will often execute their own members for crimes that others would consider minor at best. A classic example of this: many families will kill their

members for singing songs in their workplace. Music, the clan laws say, belongs only to the drunks.

Alcohol

Dwarves hold a strange sort of reverence for alcohol. Many dwarven mountain traditions hold a drunken dwarf to be an entirely different person from the same dwarf, sober. Many things that surface dwellers would consider normal are completely illegal for normal dwarves, but legal for drunks, so dwarves craving freedom often spend their free time trying to get as drunk as is physically possible.

War

The only other liberating thing in a dwarf's life is battle.

Mountain dwarves have two main forms of war:

Gottendamuroth and Jorvault. Gottendamuroth is when tunnel fighting in close quarters. Dwarves move single or double file, filling the tunnel or cave from wall to wall. A solid bastion of glowing shields is arrayed at the front of each host, spears bristling from over and between the shield wall. They clash, the frontline is almost entirely killed, and the warriors go hand to hand with stabbing knives in some of the most brutal combat ever envisioned. Jorvault is more refined. First, a dwarf strips themselves naked, so the brush of fabric on fabric does not give them away. Then, taking up a pair of hand weapons, the dwarf creeps through the darkness of a large cavern, sometimes pausing for endless moments to listen to the flow of air. Many, many other dwarves might be creeping with him, there in the dark. The winner of each sudden, silent combat is the one who is made aware of the others presence first. Sometimes a practitioner of Jorvault goes against a Gottendamuroth army. The practitioner hides on the ceiling, or sulks in a shadow, or crams himself into a crevice. Then, as the army passes by, he drops, or sulks, or springs, his way into the center of the army. He kills all around him before they realize he is there. Sometimes they kill the practitioner, and pass along.

Gender

Mountain dwarves acknowledge that there is some difference between genders, but don't much care beyond that. The default pronoun in dwarvish is the same regardless of gender, and translates most effectively to "he" in kharnate. This has

led many of those who have minimal contact with dwarves to assume that all dwarves are men.