

Hammer and Shadow

Credits

LEAD DEVELOPER

ROBERT VAUGHN

WRITING

GARY ASTLEFORD, GREG MARKS,

ERIC OLSON

EDITING

JAMES TORR, ROBERT VAUGHN

GRAPHIC DESIGN

ANDREW NAVARO

ART DIRECTION

DARRELL HARDY, ROBERT VAUGHN

COVER ILLUSTRATION

JOHN GRAVATO

INTERIOR ILLUSTRATION

FERGUS DUGGAN, DAVID KENDALL,

CHRISTOPHE SWAL, JARREAU

WIMBERLY

CARTOGRAPHY

ROBERT LAZZERATTI

LAYOUT

ROBERT VAUGHN

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPER

GREG BENAGE

PUBLISHER

CHRISTIAN T. PETERSEN

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Introduction

In the deep holdfast, the pounding of hammers never ceased. The constant rhythmic beating was the life's blood of the dwarves. The entire city was a perfectly oiled machine. Another sharpened axe, another sturdy shield, another ready warrior. These weapons and armor were tools. The soldiers were craftsmen. And their craft was war.

In the caves beyond, drums sounded low and steady. A constant, primal reassurance to the orcs. A sound in the dark stone like the earliest memories of their mothers' heartbeats, like the fierce nightmares of Izrador's first whispers. More than 1,000 of them would die this day, and they believed their souls would follow that heavy beat back to their mothers' hearts. They believed they would bring with them into the afterlife the tongues and teeth of those they killed, the better to fill the chambers of their mothers' hearts and the marrows of their mothers' bones. And so they wished for death as much as life, and demanded of their leaders only the chance to take the lives of these terrible fey that hid in their dark holes of stone.

A scant hundred dwarves donned their armor and sharpened their weapons. Things looked grim, but then they always did. The dwarves fought a battle that would never end, and each day they lived was a testament to their mastery of the greatest of all crafts, of warfare. They would do their ancestors proud before they found their places in the barrows beside them. They would win one last day.

Each orc drew his vardatch in salute to his commander. Each orc learned of his part in the attack, and each orc stared proudly back at the legate that blessed him in his dark father's name. This was the day when the minions of the Shadow would finally break this nest of bearded cowards. They could not fail.

The dwarves exchanged glances as they prepared for the coming onslaught, and they could not help but smile. The orcs would not be prepared for the new traps constructed during the last lull. They were cunning, even genius, and would take many of their enemies. Deadfalls, natural vents of steaming sulfur, hundreds of poisoned quarrels; all lay waiting for the hated odrendor. The minions of the Shadow would fail.

The orcs lined up and prepared to pour forth into the darkness that spawned them, the safety of the pit forgotten for the glory of war. They were bred to fight. To kill. It was all they were. It was what their flesh-fathers were and their flesh-fathers before them, all the way back to the beginning.

The dwarves took their positions behind their traps and fortifications. Countless orcs would fall before the dwarves even lifted their axes, but lift their axes they would. Each steeled himself for the coming battle, just as his parents had and their parents before them, all the way back to the beginning.

How to Use this Book

Hammer and Shadow is a setting supplement meant to add richness to any MIDNIGHT campaign, but will be particularly useful to DMs whose storylines focus on the war in the Kaladrans. Players may also find the information herein useful, particularly **Chapter Six: New Rules**, but should check with their DMs before reading the rest of the book to ensure that they do not learn any secrets that may be used in their campaign.

This book is split into roughly three sections: background information, regional information, and rules information. The first two chapters present an overview of the dwarves and their culture, as well as the history that has shaped them into what they are today.

Chapters three through five offer a more detailed look at the war in the Kaladrans as it stands today, ranging from the Icewalls and northern Kaladrans to the central Kaladrans and finally down the Spinewall Range to the southern Kaladrans. These chapters include an overview of the Shadow and dwarf forces in those areas, as well as details on the forces' tactics, NPCs, and locations of note.

Finally, chapter six presents new options for players and DMs alike, including feats, prestige classes, traps and equipment, new crafting options for weapons, armor, and tools, and new rules for fighting in tunnels and other cramped spaces.

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Born of Stone



Llian walked through the barrow chamber, her eyes adjusting to the lack of light. It was quiet. She was alone.

This was her clan's history. Her history.

Lleyngon the Grim, who died waste-deep in orcs in the last days of the Icewall keeps. Herion, seventh Stone of the Thedron clan, who led half the clan to honorable and noble deaths against a temple of Shadow. That temple did not stand. Brunin, daughter of Briant, who slew a dozen giant-men before they rent her limb from limb. Heroes all. Heroes like she would someday be. Must someday be.

Llian let her hand drag across the stones that covered Brunin's last rest, and admired the delicate carvings that told the stories of her life craft, her death battle. Someday this would be hers. Others would stand, would read, and remember. They would share the stories of Llian the Orcslayer, or Llian the Battle Maiden, and she would watch on from her comfortable and reassuring bed of cold stone. Her childhood friend Druth already had a place here. She tried not to be jealous of him. He had killed three orcs before he met his end. The elders said that one never knew if the orc one faced was an unblooded pup or a mighty champion of his kind. Thus any dwarf who killed even a single orc has earned his honor. Perhaps Druth's three kills were such as these. But Llian knew, champion or no, that she would do far better than three before her time ended.


Her father wanted her to sew leathers, or to manipulate and tailor the fine mechanics that the clan used in their ingenious traps. Her mother agreed in word, but Llian saw the hunger for vengeance, for blood, in her mother's eyes, and knew what she truly wanted for her daughter. Llian knew that she would practice a craft . . . but her tools would be her axe and dagger, her product would be death.

Her father still thought her a small child, not ready for anything but dolls and games, but she would prove him wrong. Prove them all wrong. She had the heart of a warrior. Orcs would fear her. The Shadow's legates would crumble before her axe. The war was life. It was all she had ever known. It was her destiny. She was ready.

She was twelve.

Sample file

KNIGHTS '05



Though the history of any culture may be punctuated by war, the chronicles of Aryth's dwarves are filled with it. The stout folk have known blood and conflict for millennia, since the first of Izrador's twisted creations came shrieking from the north with weapons in hand. As the years passed into decades, and the decades passed into centuries, the fighting in which the dwarves were embroiled became a ceaseless affair, a never-ending series of skirmishes, sieges, raids, and battles. This omnipresent atmosphere of conflict has irrevocably shaped the dwarves, and its effects can be seen in nearly every aspect of their culture.

Despite the various differences between the clan dwarves and their Kurgun cousins, they share many cultural traditions and their languages bear strong similarities. After all, it is only recently, with the self-imposed isolation of the besieged mountain clans and the continued encroachment of the Shadow's armies, that the two cultures have been pulled apart. In their own way, each group looks upon its kinsmen as a reminder of a better age, one that is now lost to the realities of a world ignited by war.

The Dwarven Way

To outsiders, dwarves appear to be emotionless in their day-to-day dealings with the other races and even with each other. The gnomes call them "as cold as the stone they're born of." They are also renowned for their potential for great fury, especially in battle, and those who see them roaring against their orcish enemies proclaim that they can survive on ferocity alone. The gentler side of dwarven expression is rarely seen by non-dwarves. Such tender and affable displays are reserved for the relative comfort and security of a holdfast, home, and hearth, when both physical and mental defenses can be lowered with little risk.

It is undeniable that dwarves are stubborn to a fault. This obstinacy is driven by their strong sense of honor as opposed to mere pig-headedness or blind inflexibility. To the casual observer, it is often hard to tell the difference between the two, and dwarves are rarely obliged to explain the reasons for their actions. This intractable demeanor aside, dwarves make stout and dependable allies. They are exceedingly loyal to folk who earn their trust, and they treat their closest friends as if they were members of their clan.

This latter comparison is saying quite a bit, as a dwarf holds his clan dear beyond all else. While family ties are important in all cultures, to one degree or another, they are high intrinsic to dwarven psychology. This extended family is the core of his being, and a dwarf without a clan is to be both pitied and feared. A dwarf's clan defines his long- and short-term goals, his dreams, and his day-to-day outlook. His own ambitions are coupled with those of his kinfolk, and in most cases it is impossible to separate the two.

Though a dwarf may not love each and every member of his clan, he would nonetheless give his life for any of them. Even those for whom he harbors resentment or hatred are

always give the familial respect they deserve. Part of this respect is a dwarf's willingness to do anything for his kin if he is asked to do so. To refuse to oblige a member of one's clan if asked to do so is a grave dishonor, unless sufficient reason can be given for the denial.

However, requests for aid within a clan are highly formalized affairs that are never given or taken lightly. A dwarf only asks his family for help when he has exhausted all other options. To do otherwise is to admit that he is not capable of solving his own problems, and this will color his clan's opinion of him.

Furthermore, dwarves never request help from anyone outside their clans, including other dwarves. Offers of aid or service can be readily accepted without loss of face, but a dwarf will never, under any circumstances, reveal that he is in need of an outsider's help. Death and failure are preferable to appearing weak or incompetent.

This system of honor is designed to promote strength and competence, both within individual dwarves and entire clans. It works well between dwarves, as they understand one another, but outsiders of other races are often stymied by the fact that dwarves are so insistent on being self-reliant. While an elf or a human has no compunctions about requesting aid in times of need, a dwarf would never dishonor himself or his clan by doing the same. Conversely, a dwarf will gladly accept assistance should his friends or allies offer it in a respectful fashion.

This system of honor, though it has forged capable warriors, may be at the root of many of the dwarven race's problems in the Last Age. Perhaps if they had requested aid from Erethor in repelling the orcs earlier on, for instance, they would now be in a better position to help the forest fey in their battle against the Shadow. The clans throughout the ages did not even consider asking their human, elf, or gnome allies for aid, however. They called the mountains of the north their homes, and the orcs have simply always been part of living in that home. They would no more expect aid from others in the matter than they would expect a plains rider to ask a dwarf to train his horse, or an elf to help him weed his garden.

Even this ingrained habit might have been overlooked, however, and aid asked for, if not for the shadow of doubt that lived in every dwarf's heart: that these monstrosities from the north were of their own blood. They could not bear the shame of this thought, and resolved that they and they alone would be responsible for the abominations' destruction. Thus, the dwarves faced their enemies stoically, capably, but alone.

In the end, they were too proud to admit that the tide of war had finally moved against them. Because nearly every clan faced its own enemies, few were able to extend offers of assistance to the other clans. The result was that the dwarves retreated farther into their strongholds with each passing century, fighting delaying actions against a brutal and ever more plentiful enemy.

War and Honor

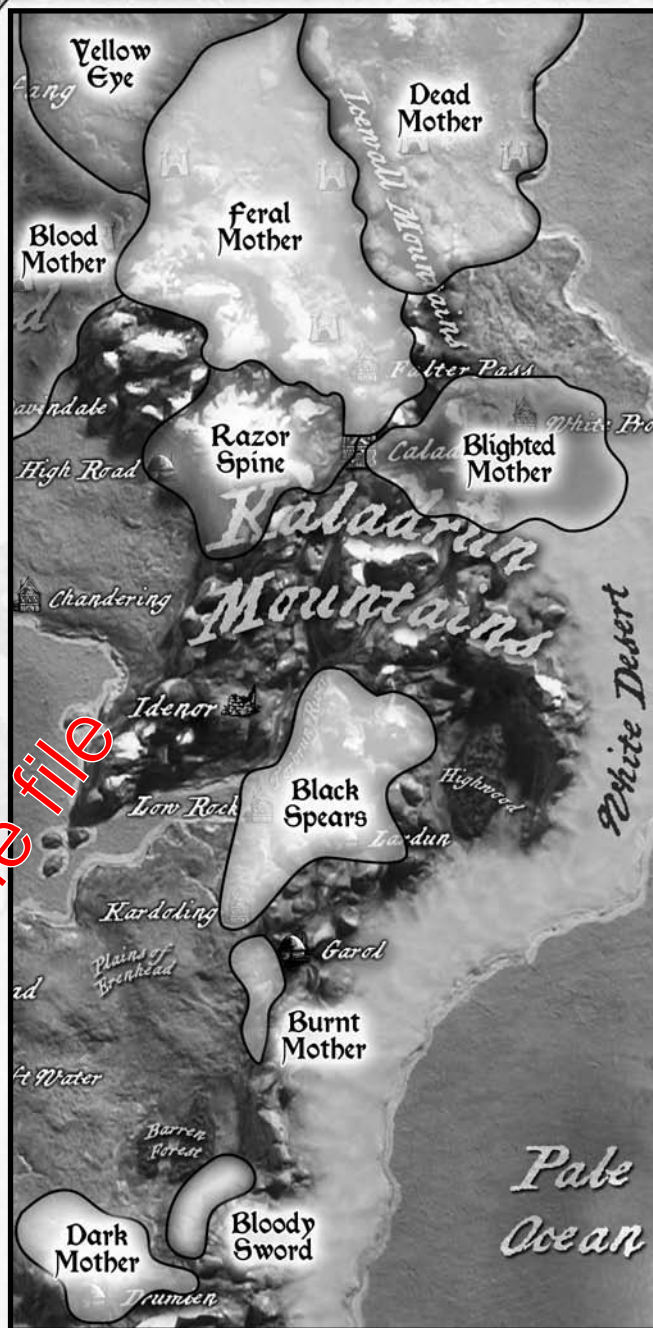
From their earliest days, dwarves have been some of the mightiest combatants in all of Aryth. Prior to the Year of Colder Stone, when the first skirmish between dwarves and orcs was recorded, dwarven clans fought one another for control of valuable mines, prestige, and powerful artifacts. Wars between feuding clans could last for centuries, but they were never of the scale or constancy that the dwarves have become accustomed to in their struggles against Izrador's minions. Such disputes were rarely driven by hatred, nor did they feature the brutality, cruelty, or despair that fan the flames of the current conflict. Even after they encountered the orcs, they considered them for many centuries to be just another hazard of the north; they were seen as mere predators, albeit ones armed with iron and walking on two legs. Over time, however, they became more determined and worked their way farther south, founding communities and creating warfronts. By the Second Age, the horrors of war that are seen all too often in the Last Age had begun.

Since the miners of Clan Modrun first spilled orcish blood, dwarven warcraft has evolved into an art form of sorts, rivaled only by the dwarves' skill with metal and stone. Dwarves are ever vigilant and disciplined, expecting attack from all sides and at any time. Skirmishes, raids, and extended sieges are now daily occurrences in the dwarven clanholds. Dwarves utilize the rare periods of peace to regroup, train, and repair their fortifications in preparation for the next big assault, but there is never an illusion that peace will last.

Though it was not always so, any tactic is fair game to a *dor* (literally, the "stone," the title given to a clan's center) of a dwarven clans. The methods used to kill the enemy are limited only by the imaginations of the soldiers on the front lines and the engineers who aid them. From the simple brutality of a frontal assault to the elegant lethality of a well-crafted trap or an engineered cave-in, Izrador's minions face countless perils when they seek to invade the sovereign territory of their dwarven enemies. So many tunnels and bolt holes have been worked into the stone of the mountains that not even the dwarves themselves, let alone their orcish enemies, know them all. Ambushes are a constant threat in the cramped confines of the mountain caverns.

The Kogah

All dwarves are driven by the dual motivations of honor and loyalty, the first to themselves and the second to their clans. Just as a dwarf would rather fall than ask for aid, he would rather die than see his clan defeated by an enemy. Just as they have developed formal methods for the requesting and granting of aid, the mountain fey have developed a system for the honorable resolution of combat. This system, called the *Kogah*, may only be used when facing honorable foes, called *khul*.



The core tenet of the Kogah requires that a dwarf offer mercy to a foe who is sure to be defeated or killed. A dwarf is not expected to stop in mid-stroke during a killing blow, or offer to spare his enemy in the midst of a mass melee. However, if a lull in the battle allows for the offering of terms or if an enemy is so overwhelmed that quarter may be given without danger to the dwarf's own forces, it must be done. Whether or not the foe accepts his offer is irrelevant, so long as he makes the attempt.

If a foe rejects the offer of surrender, it is akin to requesting a merciful death at the dwarf's hands. In such an instance the dwarf and his allies are honorbound to slaughter the entire enemy force, including any noncombatants they defend. If the foe accepts, he and his kin become the dwarf's prisoners.

Dwarven Glossary

- Dor:** "Stone." The title given to a dwarven clan chieftain.
- Dormut:** "Council of stone." A body of advisors chosen by a dor to assist him in making decisions.
- Dorogin:** "Spirit of the Rock." An earth spirit that is sometimes revered by the dwarves.
- Dorthane:** "Lesser stone." The title given to a dwarven leader who answers to the clan dor.
- Ghuradur:** "One with the stones." The dwarven term for death, but pertaining only to an honorable demise. Those dwarves who die without honor, either working for the enemy or in a cowardly or dishonorable fashion, are not even spoken of. Their names are forgotten, as if they had never existed.
- Hamfael:** "Anvil." The largest effective combat unit fielded by clan dwarves, usually consisting of between 200 and 350 dwarves.
- Kogah:** "The denial of victory." The customs of honorable surrender used by dwarves between themselves and those of their enemies who are deemed worthy.
- Khul:** "Enemy of worth." A term that is extended to honorable enemies, whom a dwarf might consider his equals. This term is never applied to orcs or members of the goblinoid races.
- Oghralik:** "Giant-skiner." A type of bearded long-axe used by the dwarves of the Icewalls.
- Sorok:** "Clanless." A term for dwarves whose clans have been annihilated. A variation, *sorokhul*, is one who was exiled from his clan for committing some crime.
- Tahla:** "Pebble." A reference and term of endearment that dwarves use for their children, though it only applies to those who have not yet reached adolescence. The word is also used as an insult for immature or cowardly adults.
- Takhun:** "Item of fortune." A lucky charm, often carried into battle by dwarven warriors.
- Tohle:** "Shield." Aside from being an item of defense, a tohle is also the word for a dwarven military unit that is composed of between 2 and 5 zuhrs.
- Zuhr:** "Brace." The smallest unit in the armies of the clan dwarves, ranging from 6 to 18 soldiers.

of war until such time as the conflict is adequately resolved or the dwarf believes that they have earned their freedom.

The Kogah was originally designed for use between feuding dwarven clans as a way of preventing conflicts from escalating to the point of the total destruction of one clan or the other. Through use of the Kogah, a defeated clan can be assured of retaining its honor, as well as minimal holdings, even when it has been soundly vanquished by its enemies. The alternative is fighting to the death; while surely an honorable course of action, it is a path that can only lead to the weakening of the dwarven race as a whole.

Use of the Kogah is traditionally restricted to dwarves alone. Well-respected enemies have, at times, been offered the use of the Kogah's strictures as a sign of admiration. Most non-dwarves are ignorant of the Kogah's intended purpose, however, and reactions have been historically mixed. What the dwarves see as an act of honor, the slaughtering of their foes and their kin to the last, may be seen by outsiders as an act of pure barbarism and brutality.

Other dwarves, fey, or humans have been considered khul, but only a dwarf who has lost his reason would name orcs, goblin-kin, or any other servant of the Shadow as khul. Those who serve the Shadow are seen as monsters, not people, and as such deserve neither mercy nor honor.

Language

The language of the dwarven people is known as Old Dwarven. In relation to Eredane's other languages, Old Dwarven is a grating and guttural tongue. Syllables are often stretched, and hard consonants sound like a series of low-throated growls. In the days when it was spoken by all dwarves, regardless of clan, the language was an aspect of dwarf culture that united the race as a whole. As the centuries have passed and the clans have become more and more isolated from one another, Old Dwarven is often replaced entirely by individual clan dialects. Thus, on the rare occasions when they are able to come together, the likelihood of clear and amicable communication between dwarves of different clans is low.

Dwarves of neighboring clans usually have little trouble communicating with one another, so long as they speak and listen carefully. The farther one travels along the Kaladrums, however, the more pronounced the differences between dialects. Dwarves of the Icewalls rarely see or speak to the Kurgun, for example, and their languages have diverged widely from their mother tongue in the intervening years.

The clan dialects of the dwarves have also been known to adopt words, phrases, and terminology from the language and speech of their neighbors. For example, the Kurgun of the southern Kaladrums have added pieces of the Sarcosan Colonial speech to their own dialects, while many of the northern clans have implemented some aspects of Norther to theirs. Likewise, bits and pieces of Old Dwarven make up the core of gnomish speech, which has become the Trader's