

Elf



Areathel surveyed the rock face serenely, calloused but lithe hands resting on her hips. Several other elves lounged nearby on the grass; they seemed content to wait, and watch her contemplation. Spread on a fine-woven linen blanket were stone marking and cutting tools, each one decorated with little carvings on the wooden handles, but worn into their own individual beauty through years of use.

Garien approached the group, hands folded behind him as if he were merely taking an easy stroll across the green. He stopped about ten feet behind Areathel, and simply stood there, as content as the others to observe a while.

After a time, Areathel glanced over her shoulder and winked at him. "It is good to see you, Garien, although I imagine your visit to your home is a short one as usual." Her voice held no condemnation for this, merely good-natured fact.

Garien grinned, and shrugged. The other elves nearby watched the conversation now, seemingly content to follow whatever process was occurring in this spot. "Maybe I'll stay ten or so years. But the wandering life always calls, you know."

She nodded, but her attention seemed distracted. This was to be expected, for clearly the artist was preparing a new work.

"What are you working on now, Areathel?" He asked, gesturing to the pale, flat expanse of natural marble. Of course it was going to be a stone carving, that much need not be asked. It was the topic that interested him.

"Our Queen commissioned it for the autumn equinox festival. She wants to celebrate our long-lasting peace. Her only request: 'Show us what it is to be elven.' Which is a large request, you know."

Garien laughed, more heartily than Areathel expected. "A large request! Larger than you know. I do not think anyone knows the boundaries of our race, and the more I see in my travels, the more I realize I know very little indeed."

Areathel ran her strong fingers through her short hair, pushing loose strands behind her pointed ears. Her expression slipped easily into her familiar wryness. "So, tell me what you have seen. It is more than my experience outside this land, I can be certain of that." The other elves nodded in assent, but said nothing, in the manner of observers to a play who do not wish to interrupt the entertainers.

Garien paused. He had much to say on this subject, and the opportunity seemed ripe for a telling of the epic chant he had composed on his travels and the sights he had seen thus far. It was an unfinished epic, of course, but it would already take weeks to perform properly. There was nothing wrong with doing so, but

Areathel was going to need to start work right away if she was going to be finished in time. He considered this for several minutes, while the elves listened and waited with unruffled patience.

"I will tell you briefly, so that you can decide what to create in the stone. But once you begin your work, I will recite the Chant of the Peregrine and tell it properly." Murmurs of assent followed his words, and the watching elves grinned. It would be a wonderful way to spend the time before the festival, and more than they had bargained for; watching one artist at work was a pleasure in itself; two was a rarer gift.

Areathel beamed in delight, and motioned gently for him to continue. So, he did his best to condense years of knowledge into few words; it could never do them justice, but that would be made up for in the weeks to come. So, with little preamble, he began.

"Now, there are many sorts of elves. Here, we only know a few.

The wild elves, the forest elves, the river elves. We know how distinctive each one is, and though we have the same blood, we seem different people."

"What about the dark elves?" Areathel's mouth twitched as she said this; Garien knew by this that she was baiting him.

"They are not of our blood. Everyone knows that. They follow a different pattern, and their very minds and bodies do not work like ours. Though they resemble us in some ways, they are not Elves." Areathel nodded to his response. She had already known this.

"But," he continued, "there are so many ways that our kind will follow. As many as the ways of the land, the water, the skies. I have seen elves that live forever on the sea in boats; those who dance in the desert storms; elves who live in the air suspended

above the mountain cliffs; those who build cities of ice. If you can imagine any part of the world, I have seen elves to match it. And match they do; from their clothing and homes to the color of their skins, one might think them a different race on the surface. But beneath beats one heart, and lives one mind. We understand each other even if the languages change. I suppose..." here he paused, not for dramatic effect, but to be certain his words matched his thoughts. "The more I have seen of the outward seeming differences in our ways and features, the more I see what we have in common. I see our spirit in our many faces."

Areathel nodded, and after a long silence in which everyone absorbed the words, spoke simply. "Then I had better get started. Those are a lot of faces to carve into rock. But the image will not be complete without them all. Tell me of each one you have seen."

With that, she picked up her tracing tools and began her art, while Garien began his, and the two were woven into one.



RACIAL BASICS

Elves are incredibly varied people, much like the humans. Their skin tone, hair and eye color, and build have the same range as humans – although the occasional odd color such as violet eyes might emerge.

The many varieties of Elves vary in their cultures and traditions, but not in how their bodies and minds work nor in their abilities. Dark Elves are a separate race, although they resemble elves, and therefore have different abilities.

Elves are one of the oldest races on Fortannis. Whether their local legends state that they traveled to Fortannis or were its earliest natural people, elvish histories go back for thousands of



years. Their beliefs about their origins vary from group to group enough for any outside observer to realize that some completely contradict each other. It may be that no elves truly know their origins, as much as they have faith in their beliefs.

There are some aspects of elves that are consistent from group to group, no matter how much their other customs have changed.

Mainly, elves are very interested in the natural patterns of life. Whether they live on mountains, in swamps, sail the seas, or wander the deserts, they are very aware of natural events and pattern their celebrations and lives around them. Solstices, equinoxes, phases of the moon, harvests, seasons, and the like are carefully noted by elves and given special attention in their culture.

Related to this is the seemingly unflagging need of elves to celebrate. The form their celebrations take vary a great deal, but often are related to the natural patterns they have observed, as well as the social patterns of the elves themselves. If there is some excuse to have a cultural ritual or a celebration, elves will rarely pass it by.

An elven tribe or group's 'atmosphere' will depend heavily on the natural features surrounding it. They are less likely to force nature to do their bidding as they are to bend and conform to nature. Sea elves are *very* involved in life on the ocean, not just living near it the way humans might, for example. They will weave their personal identity completely with life on the sea.

Elves also have very long lifespans. They mature more slowly than humans, then remain in maturity for many years. An elf that appears old is very old indeed. The actual ranges of their lifespan is unknown; it seems to be effected by the life the different elves lead. Groups that live in very harsh environments may only live two or three times as long as humans; others seem to go on forever unless they are actually slain.

Player character elves should not start with an age older than 150, because it makes little sense for them to be unskilled after such a long life.

Due to their long lifespans, elves live at a different pace than humans do. They are less likely to hurry, unless it is necessary, taking the time to savor and enjoy everything that happens. The human drive to achieve greatness quickly and pass it on to their family is much less common among elves, who feel (rightfully so) that they have all the time in the world to achieve their goals. Those elves who harbor a desire for power or other machinations will create very long term plans, often beyond the comprehension of the shorter-lived races. This leads to a subtlety that is difficult for the other races to counteract or foresee.

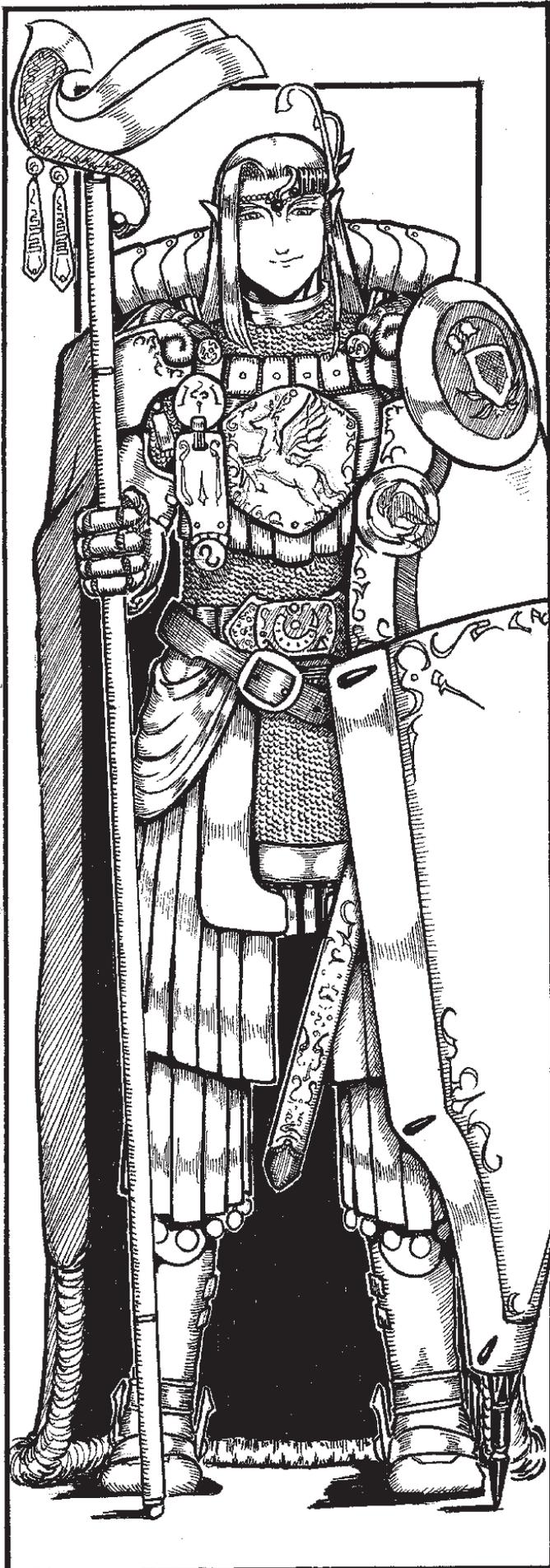
However, elves can often appear lazy or frivolous due to their relaxed concept of time and achievement.

Due to these long lifespans, elves typically have two ways of bonding in marriage. These include some form of temporary partnership, and a permanent bonding. The latter is obviously invoked more rarely due to the fact that elves know they will live a very long time, and circumstances (and people) change. They are typically more likely to accept an arrangement that allows for this change.

Elves will mingle fairly often with the other races, but generally feel that these people cannot really understand elves. This often leads other races to perceive that elves keep a benign distance at best, and cold disinterest at worst. Most elven groups discourage marriage with non-elves due to the heartbreak of losing a much shorter-lived spouse.

COSTUME REQUIREMENTS

Elves absolutely must have pointed ears. If a headscarf is tied over the ears, the pointed ears must still be worn underneath.



This means it is not acceptable to just hide the ears and not apply the prosthetics with the idea that they won't be seen. If the ears aren't pointed, the character is not an elf.

There are many companies that make latex eartips. There are usually two types: small tips, and full ears. Small tips often don't work as well, because they only add the very point of the ear, and will tend to fold down with any pressure. The larger varieties that start lower on the ear are anchored better, and will stand up under pressure.

Ears are usually adhered to the skin with spirit gum or liquid latex. Special removers are made for these substances, and it is recommended to use them rather than spend days after the game with bits of adhesive stuck to your ears.

Pale latex ears are often a bit too ghostly when compared to actual skin tones. A good waterbased paint can make the color match better. If possible, use thin washes of color, so that light can still pass through the latex the way light passes through real ears. Opaque painting jobs tend to only look right under certain light, and odd at other times. People with very dark skin tone can find brown ear tips with most prosthetic companies, and do not have to worry about keeping the translucent quality of the ears when painting them to match.

When matching ear color, be aware that ears and fingertips are redder and darker than the skin in other areas. Painting the darker spots of the crevices and rim of the ears to match your actual ear tone will go a long way in making the prosthetics look real. Be sure not to paint the entire ear prosthetic the same color!

For those who are not satisfied with just ears for makeup, there are other ways to enhance the inhuman appearance of elves. Colored contacts in unusual shades, hair extensions and wigs with intricate braids, subtle skin glitter, and so on, will enhance the image of most elves.

ROLEPLAYING TIPS

Do not be satisfied with acting like a human with pointed ears! Learn your local elven history and groups. Make their rituals and celebrations part of your character.

If you can, tailor your clothing and armor to reflect your elf's culture and home environment. The daily clothing of wild elves from the forest should look very different than the daily clothing of elves from a lost desert city. Of course it is not required to dress in this fashion, but it certainly adds to the roleplay of an elven character.

Try to consider everything on two levels; the very very long term, and the Here and Now. Elves plan many years down the line, but enjoy the day-to-day things that many people overlook, such as the first flowers of the year, an unusual bird, the sensation of being around someone they like.

Not everything has to be done for the purpose of achieving a goal; some things are to be enjoyed for their own sake. A long life that is not made enjoyable and beautiful in some way is a long, hard, drudgery.

If your local culture has an elven language, learn it, and use it at every opportunity.

One final piece of advice: try to imagine, truly imagine, what it would be like to know that you will live pretty close to as long as you want to live. Imagine how this would affect your character's goals, friendships, and loves. Imagine what you have been doing for the last fifty or a hundred years of your life.

Imagine that it is an alien concept to consider a hundred years as a really long time.

If you are roleplaying these things to the hilt, players of other races will find you somehow different from themselves on a level they might not be able to explain. If this happens to you, congratulations, you play an excellent elf!