



The Realms of Kowlen

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Kowlen, once divided into the caverns that held the dark spaces of the womb of the world, and the bright open spaces above. Until The Blinding came and the sky fell. In that terrible time the people of the surface looked to the caverns and those that lived there for salvation. Now they eek out an existence mostly clinging to the dim light of the Dwarven holds and to small communities they have managed to build. Some pray for a day that the blinding will end and the

open skies of the surface will call to them, but most have resigned themselves to this new life here in the darkness.

The new life most have settled into is in the crude camps erected outside the walls of the holds. Waiting for food and looking for ways to make life better, either for all or for themselves. Factions and rivalries foment among the refugees and high behind their walls the dwarves struggle to provide and to keep peace. But of course there are those who argue that the nations of the surface somehow brought this calamity down on the world and that they should face the consequences without the aid of the dwarves.

Some even venture out from the relative safety of the camps and holds and venture down into the depths. Most are never seen again but occasionally they will return with tales of danger and death and rarer still with treasure. But then there have always been those who cannot stand still and to them the darkness below will always call.

The Blinding

It began with a glow in the northern sky. An orange colored light that hung on the horizon. Night after night it grew brighter, until even in the day it dominated the sky, and the sun paled in comparison. The priests prayed for guidance on this omen, but the gods were silent. And then came the rains, strange and luminescent the rain covered the land with a glowing sheen of green, blending in sickeningly with the orange sky. And with the rains came the sickness: first the vision would dim, then fail entirely, the skin would burst with pustules and fever would wrack the afflicted. Those that died early were considered the lucky ones, as the disease progressed it led to days of pain lingering on until the suffering of the victim finally ended with the acidification of their blood burning them from the inside out. Again the priests tried to save as many as they could but a prayer of healing was as likely to work as not, and the gods remained silent.

It was three months from the time the light first appeared in the sky that the people of Braden turned their gaze to the Stone Fall Peaks and finally sought refuge in the dark comfort of the Dwarven Hold (Krath'Dormin) there.

Nations of The World

It is generally speaking difficult to break up the world of the womb into neat geographical and political nations, as the nature of the dark caverns means that the city-state is the default. While the various Dwarven strongholds are aligned and swear fealty to the High King in Ber Modrina they operate independently, occasionally trading with only the closest neighbors as the winding dark and dangerous tunnels between them are as effective at separation as any ocean.

Deeper still in the Depths and the Mantle of the world enormous caverns house cities of Drow, Duergar, Myconids and others. Some openly hostile but none particularly friendly. It is a fool who ventures into the cities of the Duergar or the Drow though some have stumbled their way there and told tales of the sweeping spires of the Drow or the squat walled cities of the Duergar.

There are also small communities starting to form in the Depths, crude villages formed by those who did not wish to live under the shadow and laws of the Dwarven cities. These places tend to be harsh and distrustful of strangers.

On the surface what nations once stood have largely disintegrated. There are still a loose collection of people but the cohesion and authority that bound them into nations is gone. Just outside of Stone Fall Hold the lands of men was called the Kingdom of Arloriest. Many who live in the camps hailed from that nation.

The Camps

The camps are built outside the walls of the cities, either in open caverns near the city in a space the Dwarven armies can protect or in old mines, again to make them as secure as possible. Once in the camp people are allowed to move about freely in the caverns and lower depths but to move into the city or spend any amount of time there requires a job or a sponsor. From time to time a refugee may earn (or steal or find) enough gold to purchase a place in the city but this is exceedingly rare.

Krath Dormin, (Stone Fall Hold) is the center of the starting point of the game, and the camps that are organized in the caverns outside the walls are largely made up of the people from the nearby Kingdom of Arloriest, particularly the city of Braden which sat along the shores of Lake Thile South of the Fallen Woods and just at the eastern base of the Stone Fall Peaks.

The camps themselves are relatively safe from attack and the Dwarves do what they can to keep the peace, but they are not comfortable and for the most part are not built as permanent (although work towards this has started in some ways.)

Weekly a Caravan will move down from the city carrying rations for the people in the camps.

Food and water are distributed and Gnome accountants keeping detailed ledgers of each family: how much they receive as well as pay due them for work their family members may have done. The entire ration and pay is given to the head of the family (as per the law and tradition of the dwarves) and they are expected to provide for their family. This does not always work and a small black market has sprung up fueled by the less scrupulous. Those with coin can get into the markets of the city and there use the markets, though it is common knowledge that prices are higher for the refugees.

The one thing the camps are not, however, is dirty. The dwarves insist that the camps are kept clean and orderly, crews move waste and debris into pits far from the camp or the cities. Camps that are not clean and orderly do not receive rations. In this way those who do not do the work to keep the camp clean soon find themselves excluded or worse...

The Law

Those who dwell in and around the keeps are expected to follow the laws of the Dwarves, these are complicated and formal laws kept by the temple of Eris. These laws require that people work for the betterment of the whole as long as one is able, as a result the Dwarves will assign work to be accomplished by the refugee camps as a matter of course. Many refugees are glad for the work but others chafe under what they feel is an arbitrary system.

Beyond this it is very easy for a refugee ignorant of the code of law to fall astray and find themselves being punished for an infraction they did not even know they had made. This does tend to sew resentment amongst the more free-spirited of the refugees, but in general breeds caution and quiet amongst the camps.

Which is not to say that crime is not rampant in the camps, and truth be told people disappearing into the Depths is all to common.

Religion

When the blinding came the people of the open world called to the gods to save them, but were met with silence. The high priests and clerics of the gods spoke that the people had sinned: allowing mages, witches and sorcerers to lead the people away from the path of light! Only when this abomination was purged would the terrible blight raining down on the people stop.

The violence and terror that followed, however, did little to stop the calamity that was falling from the skies. But many wizards escaped and many people believe that until those few are hunted down and destroyed the gods will continue to punish the world... the gods themselves remain silent on the subject.

Here in the womb of the earth the following gods hold sway:

Gods of the Dwarves

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Burmira, god of the forge and creation	LG	Life, Knowledge, Forge	Hammer and Anvil
Hondral, god of miners and the earth	LG	Nature	Pickaxe on a black circle
Eris, goddess of the Family, Clan and Law	LN	Life	Scales in Balance
Durinn, god of battle and War	LN	War	Crossed axe and Hammer

Gods of the Elves

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
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Nerris, goddess of the Moons and Magic	CG	Light, Life	Two Crescent Moons
Lathlan, god of the woods	CG	Nature, Life	Oak Leaf
Bel Lir, goddess of the Fey and wilderness	CN	Trickery	A White Stag
Lolth, drow goddess of spiders	CE	Trickery	Spider

Gods of the Gnomes

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Ariryn, god of mechanisms	CG	Knowledge	Gear
Selniana, goddess of enchantment	CG	Knowledge	Four stars
Rasser, god of traps	CN	Trickery	Spring and Spike

Gods of the Humans

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Drazial, god of Fire and Light	CG	Light, War	Single Flame
Krostel, god of Darkness and Death	LN	Death, Nature, Grave	Seven Pointed Star
Ceris, goddess of Fate, Paths and Journeys	LN	Trickery	Willow Tree
Maire, goddess of the Spring, Fertility and Birth	LG	Life	Dandelion seed
Mintrek, goddess of Summer and Healing	LG	Life, Light	Sun
Bandra, god of the Harvest and Autumn	CG	Life, Nature	Acorn
Nestak, god of Winter	CN	Tempest	Snowflake
Gesh, god of Craftsmen	LN	Knowledge, Forge	Hammer and Tongs
Menith, goddess of Magic and Secrets	CG	Knowledge	Open Eye
Denas, god of the Dead and Dying	LE	Death	Skull
Centith, goddess of the sea	CN	Tempest	Wave in Circle
Elgren, god of Merchants and Traders	CG	Trickery	Three Coins in a triangle
Old Blind Jo, god of Luck	CN	Trickery	Black Circle
Velin, god of Sailors	CG	Knowledge	Ships wheel
Hassip, god of Unity under Law	LN	Knowledge	Eagle

Gods of the Orcs

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Kurdan, god of war	CE	War	Axe
Yolmar, god of Death	CE	Death	Orc Skull
Urzoth, god of vengeance	CN	Trickery	Dagger and heart

Gods of the Dragonborn

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol
Kelmach the Fire Lord, creator of dragonkind	CN	Tempest, War	Egg in flame
Mezach the Gold, god of good dragonkind	LG	Life, War	Dragon Head in Profile
Gelrach the Hidden, god of secrets	CN	Trickery	Two red slashes across a blue field
Venach, goddess of evil dragonkind	CE	Trickery, War	Five Dragons in a circle of fire

Magic

When the blinding came mages were the first to be blamed as priests and angry people rose up towers toppled and libraries burned. The great seats of learning were destroyed in an attempt to appease the gods. Rare is the mage of power and rarer still is the mage willing to reveal themselves or share their secrets. There are rumors of secret sects of magic users amongst the refugees but they do not reveal themselves if they do exist. Open spell casting in the camps is considered to be a dangerous act. Priestly magics, of course, do not suffer this stigma.

The Dwarves and Gnomes continue to practice but mostly this is relegated to the enchantment of items, although there are the rare wizard amongst them. And in the larger cities the Gnomish Arcanists have conclaves. But these are protected by the law and tradition of the Dwarves so they have little fear.

Races

Human

Always adaptable humans are the most numerous of the refugees, many have started to build more permanent structures here, settling in for the long haul, teaching themselves to work the stone in the way of the dwarves. Seeking out ways to farm the fungus and lichen that grows here in the dark.

A typical Human is between 5 and 6 feet in height, skin tones can range from deep brown to pale white.

Elf

The Elves were the last to seek refuge, their homes were in the wilds and the woods and the thought of being trapped beneath the earth was anathema. Even now as the Blinding drags on Elves look wistfully upwards and many of them disappear never to be seen again, most people think they simply cannot remain away from their woods for long.

A typical elf is between 7 and 8 feet in height, skin tones tend towards pale and iridescent, hair tends towards metallic colors. Unless They are Drow in which case skin tones shift from deep purple to midnight blue and black, hair ranges from pure white to silver and occasionally black.

Tieflings

It is rare to find a Tiefling in the camps but in the depths they are more common. Either hiding alone or in small communities. As is often the case their infernal appearance can frighten people especially since the Blinding came. Some will look upon them as something to be stamped out to please the gods.

A typical Tiefling stands between 5 and 6 feet in height skin tones vary wildly depending on the ancestry of the individual.

Half-Elf

It is fairly common to find Half-Elves in the camps with their dark vision they are helpful as scouts and workers for the camp as a whole.

A typical Half-Elf tends to stand between 6 and 7 feet in height skin tones tend to range towards the pale end of the human parents spectrum with hair tending to favor the Elven parent.

Dwarf

Dwarves tend to live inside the walls of the cities, generally most dwarves will only venture down into the camps if they are on a work detail that requires that they do so: Guards, Foreman of a project, Judge, etc. Views on the refugees can vary pretty widely amongst the Dwarves but in general they are at least seen as an annoyance. Even the most kind hearted Dwarf will pray for the end of the Blinding and the return of these people to the Open Skies

A typical Dwarf stand between 4 and 5 feet in height, skin tones tend to range from dark umber to almost red clay tones. They tend to have darker hair colors in the brown and red range.

Gnome

As the enchanters, engineers, accountants and planners of the dwarves the Gnomes secured their place in the society of the holds long ago. Now they tend to work on improving the cities infrastructure providing systems for bringing in fresh water and moving sewage out. They also tend to find work as administrators and accountants. Keeping detailed ledgers and schedules for the complex operation of the society.

A typical gnome stands between 2 and 3 feet in height, skin tones tend towards the pale while hair tends towards the darker black and browns

Half-Orc

Fairly rare in the camps as their Orcish blood can often be seen as an impurity and a potential source of ire to the gods... Half orcs tend to keep to themselves and their families or wander out into the Depths.

A typical Half-Orc stands between 6 and 7 feet in height, skin tones tend towards darker green shades but can get almost rose or brown, Hair tends towards dark brown and green colors as well.

Halfling

Halflings are the second most common race in the camps. They tend to help the humans with the day to day work and often interface with the Dwarves on behalf of the community. Of all the surface races Halflings seem most at home here in the bones of the earth.

Halflings tend to stand between 3 and 4 feet in height, skin tones vary widely from pale whites to deep browns. Hair tends towards lighter colors and wavy curls.

Dragonborn

Only metallic scaled Dragonborn are welcome in the camps, those with chromatic coloration are considered evil (regardless of the truth of the matter) and shunned or worse. Even then it is extremely rare to find any Dragonborn at all in the camps or even in the Depths. There are rumors of large communities of them in a distant cavern but no one seems to know where that might be.

Dragonborn tend to stand between 7 and 8 feet in height and can range in color amongst all the dragon types. Though be aware that a chromatic coloration will make life very difficult for any Dragonborn.

Calendar

Living below the surface lends a simpler view on the passage of time. Without the rising or falling of the sun and the passing of the moons and their phases the Dwarves found a much more logical and reasonable way to judge time. there is a perfect volume of steel called a chord, it is the volume that half a ton of properly smelted steel occupies. By filling the mold that is used to pour a chord sized billet of steel with a controlled flow of water, a very accurate clock is made. The typical clock is four such molds one above the other where the first is filled and drains into the next to indicate the four parts of each day the Four Chords: **Forgelight**, the hours that are generally reserved for sleeping, waking and preparing to start the working day. **Forgefire**, the hours that are generally consumed with work before the mid day meal. **Temper** the end of the work day before the evening meal. **Quench**, the hours after work reserved for leisure before the end of the day starting with the evening meal. Chords are divided into eight parts making a day 32 hours, common parlance divides the hours into two hour chunks for each quarter chord.

With no sky or weather, things like harvest and spring and winter have very little meaning. A year is divided into a very sensible two hundred days and five months forty days each with ten days in a week. with two 'seasons' Updraft and Downdraft indicated by the flow of air back and forth between the upper caverns and the deep tunnels. When they first arrived the surface races attempted to hold on to their old calendars but as the days slipped by with no sun and the lights of the dwarven holds tied to the Chords, it was inevitable that they would adapt to this calendar. A year in the caverns is slightly shorter than one on the surface.

The months are named for stone: **Shale, Granite, Basalt, Diorite, and Quartz.** The Days of the week are named for metals: **Lead, Brass, Iron, Copper, Tin, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Steel, Mithril.** Holidays are few and far between for the Dwarves, every 10 years on the 20th Day of the Month of Shale the High Holiday of Drandrin is celebrated. The Surface races however have brought in their love of holidays keeping as close as they can with their religious observances. While feasts are not a common occurrence a family might save rations for weeks to have a larger meal during a festival.

Commerce

Gold is the vehicle for trade among the Dwarves which is not much of a change for anyone, but as it is more common here under the surface, coins are larger and heavier, rather than the typical 1 ounce coin, a standard Crowned Hammer gold coin weighs 6 ounces. Called colloquially a Crown (the Heads side shows the crown of the High King) or Gold Hammer, (the Tails side shows two crossed hammers one a forge hammer and one a warhammer.) There are coins from the old surface kingdoms that are sometimes seen in circulation, these one ounce coins are called feathers and take 6 to one Hammer.

Coins are as follows:

Copper - Penny

Silver - Gate = 100 Copper Pennies

Gold - Crown or Hammer = 10 Silver Gates

Platinum - Dragon = 10 Gold Crowned Hammers

People of Note

Dwarves:

Hold Master Barian - Leader of the Hold, proxy to the High King in Stone Fall Hold

High Barister Ketch - Judge assigned to the camps

Captain Genech - Guard Captain assigned to keep peace and manage distribution of goods to the camp.

Gnomes:

Wenich Clestian - Accountant supervisor and food distribution manager

Disanz Valment - Arcanist and Evoker in Stone Fall Hold

Refugees:

Thelin Martil - Leader of the "Braden ward" - Humans from the fallen city of Braden

Krestle Velinent - Leader of the Elven population in camp and the river ward

Durigan Widwillan - Leader of the Halfling population in Camp and the gates ward

Otho Mintrekhammer - Leader of the outer ward, briefly an adventurer for the council

Rupert Lombard - Leader of the inner ward, briefly an adventurer for the council

Quinn Ballard - Agent for Thelin

Arund HighCliff - supervisor of warehouse

Banain GoldenBranch - teamster supervisor

Map of the Camp and Cavern District

