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Notes

This PDF contains an overview of the following races from Legends of Ardeas:

Elves

Faeries

Orcs

These overviews are copied directly from the Legends of Ardeas core rulebooks of the same names, each of which is a complete, self-contained RPG, with roughly 400 pages of rules. As these books are all still works in progress, all information that follows is subject to change.

Plus, of course, eventually these will feature better formatting, illustrations, all that good stuff.

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An Overview of Elves

ELVEN PHYSIOLOGY

The average elf is a pale skinned humanoid, with an unusually elongated frame, and ears that come to pronounced points. They are completely lacking in body hair, safe for the tops of their head. This hair is usually kept quiet long, and comes in a variety of colors. In decreasing order of commonality, elven hair tends to be pure white, silver, blond, light brown, pale orange, pale lavender, pale green, and pure black. Elves are quite tall compared to most humanoids, standing at an average height of 24 dm, with a light frame.

Their is very little deviation from this description, as elves are far less prone than other races to spread children about the world encouraging diversity. On rare occasion, an elf may be born with light brown skin, ears of unusual length or shape, or some sort of unusual bone structure, but this is quite rare.

It should also be noted that elves are slightly magical in nature. This protects them from the ravages of age, renders them immune to nearly all diseases, and aids their spindly bones slightly in supporting their weight. If elves were somehow exposed to conditions where magic did not function, they would immediately begin to feel rather ill

from the shock of the situation, catch any diseases in the area due to their lack of natural immunities, and would likely die if they remained in this state for a period of more than 20 years.

HOW OTHERS VIEW ELVES

In the eyes of most races, elves are aloof, self-obsessed perfectionists, with blatant contempt for all other races, but who put on a big show of humility if you have something they want.

HOW ELVES VIEW OTHERS

For the most part, elves view other races with a mixture of pity and contempt, as they are almost always lacking in dedication to any given ideal. On the occasion when an elf runs across individuals from other races whose lives are focused and dedicated to a specific cause however, they view this with deep respect, and will treat them as equals.

THE REALITIES OF ELVEN CULTURE

Due perhaps to their staggering lifespans, with death only coming through accidents and violence, elven culture places immense value on commitment and perfection. There is no term in the elven language for a casual interest. When an elf chooses to learn a new skill, he will pursue it with every fiber of his being, allowing nothing to distract him until he has reached a point at which he feels further improvement is impossible. The ultimate goal in life for any elf is to reach a state of perfection in every art that exists.

Elves consider the number five to be of deep significance, and attempt to break down all aspects of life and nature accordingly. There are five extremities on the elven body (two legs, two arms, and a head). The elven calendar recognizes five seasons. Elven compasses recognize five cardinal directions. They define nature with five elements. Their art and architecture are ruled by the pentagon. Most importantly, there are five arts all elves must master, each of which requires one to follow the five Ways to enlightenment they govern.

Edexalwe- The Art of War, governing the Ways of the staff, bow, siege, knife, and hand.

Balinnalwe- The Art of Magic, governing the Ways of the flame, water, wind, tree, and whole.

Thenaphalwe- The Art of Creation, governing the Ways of the forge, branch,

cloth, stone, and flesh.

Eelilalwe- The Art of Expression, governing the Ways of the dance, song, word, reed, and string.

Ilausalwe- The Art of Preservation, governing the Ways of the judge, mend, watch, shine, and tongue.

ELVEN SOCIETY

Contrary to what one might assume given their phenomenal health and life spans, elven cities tend to boast far smaller populations than those of most other races. There are however several reasons why this is the case. First and foremost, elves feel very little urge to have children. Other races see children as a means of preserving their legacies, knowing that their time in the world is finite. Elves face no such pressure. The perfection sought by elves is also a strong factor. Marriage and child rearing require the same single minded attention from an elf as the study of the arts, and thus elves tend to put this off until achieving mastery of all they can. Even then, they are not inclined to raise more than one child at a time, taking time between to ensure their skills have not waned.

Another factor is the simple fact that elves are less reliant on others than most. Not having to deal with aging or illness, and having craftsmen of unparalleled skill, a far smaller number of citizens is needed to meet all the needs of a community.

Finally, there is the issue of safety. Other races feel the need to build large cities to en-

close their cultural treasures, and amass expansive armies to defend them. Elves meanwhile take pride in the skills of their warriors, and thus build small cities in the depths of the wilderness, where they are less likely to be found, and where a small number of highly skilled warriors are at far less risk of being overwhelmed by massive armies as they would on open ground.

The social hierarchy of elves meanwhile is a reflection of their quest for self perfection. As any sort of organization based on age, birthright, or even chosen profession bears no meaning in a society of near-immortals who wish to master every walk of life eventually, the chain of command in any elven society is based solely on one's mastery of the arts.

The most inexperienced elves are given the title of Slanachal, Master of Nothing. They have no voice in society whatsoever. This term is only used to describe elves, as it is a recognized fact that members of other races are generally unwilling or unable to achieve the sort of perfection elves strive for.

Next come those elves who have mastered at least one of the Ways. They are no longer referred to with the completely dismissive title of Slanachal, and instead are given titles based on their accomplishments. For instance, a master of the Way of the Hand (Llbanthae), would bear the title of Llbanthaechal. Such elves are still generally considered young and inexperienced, but have at least proven that they can see some small thing through to the end.

Titles such as these are no longer tallied once one has attained mastery over an entire art. Special ceremonies of such events are

held, wherein new masters prove to those who have already attained such titles that they are indeed worthy, through a series of tests and demonstrations. After this, ornate, jewel-encrusted mythrils rings are custom-crafted around wrists, legs, or necks, to display these achievements. A master of the Art of Magic (or Balinnalwechal) receives such a ring around the neck. War the left wrist, Craft the right. Masters of Expression and Preservation the left and right ankles respectively.

In any situation which requires an arbitrator, the elf with the loftiest title in the area has the final word. In elven cities, this is typically a small council (never more than five) of elves who have mastered all of these arts, and thus bear the title of Elvalwechal, which very roughly translates as Master of All the Arts. Should more than five elves bear this title in a given city, it is considered a sign that the city has grown too large, and the newest Elvalwechal will select a number of citizens to help build a new city elsewhere.

ELVEN MEN

Several other races are fond of joking about the feminine appearance of male elves. They lack the facial hair and larger frames found in some other races, and have no strong differences in the styles of their clothing and hair from females. This is of course, all true, but elven males typically respond that their women don't need the extra hints to recognize them.

OTHER RACES IN ELVEN SOCIETY

Elves, for the most part, prefer to keep to themselves. The frequent presence of outsiders would be something of a distraction, and a basic degree of secrecy is a major factor in the defense of elven cities. However, assuming they seem fairly trustworthy and amiable, elves will usually allow visitors from other races, trade goods and services, particularly dwarf-mined mythril, and will even offer to teach their arts to outsiders, provided they have the discipline to see the training through.

ELVES IN THE SOCIETIES OF OTHERS

There are a few instances when an elf might chose to spend an extended period of time living with members of another race. Some seek to hone their skills while travelling around the world. Others, having already mastered all of the elven arts, seek to perfect the skills not generally taught in elven society by studying abroad. Still others are rebellious young elves who disagree with the philosophies of their societies, and wish for a more relaxed way of life.

Sidebar to be Added Later

This is just a placeholder, now shoo.

An Overview of Faeries

FAERIE PHYSIOLOGY

Faeries are one of the most easily recognizable races in existence, although one could easily make the mistake of treating different groups of faeries as separate groups of creatures.

All faeries are extremely tiny humanoids, standing at a height of only 2 dm, with light wispy frames. All faeries also sport a pair of insect like wings, growing from between their shoulder blades. Beyond these traits however, the appearance of any given faerie depends entirely on the local environment. Each faerie is bound in some way to a local natural feature, such as a particular species of tree or flower. Their coloration, skin texture, and even the angles of their faces and bodies will always reflect that to which they are bound, even changing colors to match the changing of seasons. Typically, faeries have hair only on the top of their heads, but there are some notable exceptions to this. A faerie bound to a patch of moss for instance may be covered from head to toe in a pale green fuzz, while a faerie bound to a frozen lake may be completely bald (and highly transparent as well).

Obviously, faeries are extremely magical in nature, requiring its influence for their very survival, and even to explain their physiol-

ogy. To deprive a faerie of the influences of magic would have a similar effect to depriving a member of another race of food, water, sleep, and clothing, while subjecting them to moderate physical torture, with death resulting in a matter of days, if not hours. In such a situation that a faerie was forced into a form not reliant on magic (as can happen in certain remote lands, far from where they are usually found), the most notable effects would be an extreme reduction of intelligence, due to the size of the brain, and shifts in the structure of bones and wings to accommodate more traditional methods of flight.

HOW OTHERS VIEW FAERIES

Public perception of the faerie race is largely a question of one's personal taste. The more serious minded will generally treat them as a horrible nuisance to be avoided whenever possible, while those of a more playful nature (children in particular) are likely to find them highly amusing and seek out their company if possible.

HOW FAERIES VIEW OTHERS

How much faeries appreciate the company of other races is almost entirely a matter of whether these other creatures find the faeries amusing. It is in the nature of faeries to seek out laughter. One who laughs at a group of faeries may find them traveling with him until the jokes get old. The exception to this rule of thumb is that faeries typically wish to avoid larger populations, and will rarely venture into civilized areas for more than a quick visit.

THE REALITIES OF FAERIE LIFE

The reason faeries are so apt to seek the laughter of others is not so much a function of their personalities as it is a survival technique. Faeries have no need for food or water, although they often eat and drink simply to enjoy the flavor. Instead, faeries take sustenance from hearing laughter. While this can come from other faeries, or even oneself, it is most common for faeries to seek the laughter of strangers, if only because it's easier than coming up with new material. It is difficult to determine exactly how much laughter a faerie needs to hear in order to survive, as they are, for the most part, quite gluttonous in this regard. Faeries will usually take laughs anywhere they can get them.

In addition to sustaining their lives, hearing laughter has a profound effect on the per-

sonality of faeries. Each time a faerie hears a laugh, there is a shift in her personality based on the intent behind it. Hearing the innocent laughter of children taking joy in life will cause the faerie to drift more towards a mirthful bubbly personality. Hearing mean spirited laughter at another's expense meanwhile will gradually drive a faerie towards a cruel and vicious nature.

At birth, each faerie instinctively selects a nearby plant, fungus, or body of water to bond itself to. This bonding affects the appearance of the faerie, and guarantees perfect health, so long as there is at least one healthy example within five kilometers. A faerie bound to a dandelion for example will sport a head of bushy yellow hair (turning to globe of thin white strands as the flowers shed their seeds), and remain in perfect health in any area where dandelions are found. A faerie bound to a lake meanwhile requires the presence of clean water from that lake. This does not limit their mobility as much as one might think however. A container of water with volume greater than that of the faerie (perhaps carried by a larger ally) will suffice, barring contamination or evaporation. Once a year, at the start of spring, this bond can be remade with a new host, requiring a full day of contact and meditation.

Becoming separated from that to which they are bound, or a mass drop-off in health, such as diseased plant life, forest fires, or extensive pollution, will cause the health of the faerie to be similarly afflicted. These afflictions are never fatal, but can leave the faerie markedly sluggish and ghastly in appearance until the issue is remedied. Because of this,

most faeries strive to protect their environment and encourage it to thrive.

FAERIE SOCIETY

Faeries typically reside alongside well travelled forest trails, the shores of lakes and rivers, and wooded areas near the settlements of other races. This allows them easy access to victims for pranks, and audiences for jokes, while allowing them to remain near the features to which they are bound. Due to their unique magical nature, faeries have no real need for shelter, farmland, or clothing. They will however typically wear clothes made from spider's silk, fallen leaves, and old flower petals for the sake of aesthetics, and often hide stashes of tools in areas they are particularly fond of. Such stashes are generally considered communal property, as they tend to be of little value, and the faerie concept of ownership is vague at best.

One will not usually find more than two dozen faeries in a given area, nor multiple groups of faeries in close proximity. This is largely a survival tactic, as truly large gatherings of faeries would almost certainly lead to such a display of chaos as to cause someone to call for the extermination of the whole lot of them.

Social hierarchies aren't much of an issue for faeries. It is so rare that a faerie seeks the responsibility of community leadership that the title of Faerie Queen is almost never contested, and many gatherings of faeries won't bother having any sort of leadership at all. Even if two faeries in the same area wish to

be called Queen, no conflict arises, as the title is really ceremonial at best. Some speculate the very notion of a Faerie Queen is simply a running gag resulting from an ancient request once made to a speak with a faerie's leader.

FAERIE REPRODUCTION

As faeries look so similar to other humanoid races, size aside, and appear to have both males and females, one would likely assume they use the same methods to propagate their race. This is quite untrue, and while there may appear to be both male and female faeries, the race is actually completely asexual, and these are merely cosmetic variations.

New faeries are created by means of a special ritual dance, performed by groups of six or more faeries in the spring should they wish to increase their numbers. All the faeries involved clasp hands, fly over a flowering plant, a circular formation of small stones, or a similar feature, dancing and spinning in mid-air for several hours. In late fall, should the plant or circle still be there, one new faerie for each involved in the dance will suddenly appear out of nowhere, typically sitting in a circle about the dance site.

These new faeries will appear to be full adults, and never show any effects of aging. Because of this, faeries come to understand the concepts of children and the elderly only through observations of other races, and often fail to take these notions into account when dealing with other races, treating chil-

dren as adults or vice versa. While a careful faerie could, being ageless, live for thousands of years in theory, in practical terms, it is almost unheard of for any faerie to live more than 40 or 50 years before poor judgment leads to a fatal mishap.

OTHER RACES IN FAERIE SOCIETY

Faeries will always welcome anyone who wishes to live amongst them for any length of time. However, it is a very rare person who can tolerate the "hospitality" of faeries for more than a few hours, as they will constantly use such visitors as an audience for jokes, and target for pranks. Matters aren't helped much by the fact that faeries do not construct or harvest the various things most races require to live comfortably. Although adults have the common sense to leave when things grow too uncomfortable, young children have been known to live amongst faeries for days or months at a time, to the great distress of their parents.

FAERIES IN THE SOCIETIES OF OTHERS

Although they are not inclined to spend large periods of time within civilized areas, it is fairly common for a faerie to latch onto a group of travelers, such as a merchant caravan or a band of entertainers. This is usually a mutually beneficial situation, granting

the faerie access to broad crowds to entertain, and her companions the novelty of a rare magical creature to capture the attention of those they deal with.

Faerie Communication

Faeries, while fully capable of speech, have no real language of their own. Faeries are born with an astounding knack for understanding the intents of any living creature. The most obvious benefits of this are knowing if larger creatures consider them a source of food, and granting an uncanny ability to tell when they are being lied to, this gives faeries the ability to learn new languages incredibly quickly. Tell a faerie that you are hungry, and they will instantly understand the meaning of the phrase.

While a given group of faeries will most likely know the languages of all other races living in the same region, and speak them amongst each other to express more abstract thoughts, language barriers still arise from time to time. The faerie solution to this problem is typically to start up a game of charades with those whose language they do not know. While informative, this is often distressing for the other party, as the faerie version of charades frequently involves the casting of a wide variety of spells.

An Overview of Orcs

ORCISH PHYSIOLOGY

The average orc is a hairless, stocky, green skinned humanoid, with two large tusks jutting up from a prominent lower jaw. Orcs are slightly larger than most humanoids, standing at an average height of 20 dm, with a heavysset frame.

Not all orcs fit this description it should be noted. Some isolated tribes in desert regions may sport skin in various shades of brown or grey, and when forced to live in arctic regions for several generations, the occasional tribe may be found sporting head and body hair similar to that of humans and dwarves.

HOW OTHERS VIEW ORCS

In the eyes of most races, orcs are mindless bloodthirsty savages, pouring forth from fetid swamps and burnt-out wastelands bent on the senseless slaughter of the innocent. Unreasoning brutes that know only violence, and reek of an ungodly stench.

HOW ORCS VIEW OTHERS

To an orc, those of other races are generally considered weak, cowardly fools who waste their lives on pointless frivolities, or fellow warriors placed on the world to test the strength of the orcish hordes.

THE REALITIES OF ORCISH CULTURE

All aspects of orcish life revolve around a central belief in warfare and honor. To an orc, the ultimate goal in life is to kill as many of the most skilled warriors as possible before he dies, in the most personal way possible. Orcs, contrary to popular belief, hold great respect for strength, courage, and nobility, and prize these characteristics above all others. Anyone who exhibits non-violent tendencies to an orc will likely be killed on the spot, to spare him the misery of a life free of battle. Those who fight with passion however are greatly admired by orcs. In fact, in the rare instance that an orcish raiding party encounters a person who can stand his ground and fend them off, he will be invited to join them. Such offers are however rarely accepted.

When not actively engaged in combat, orcs are still focused on it. Relaxation for an orc comes either in the form of honing their skills for the upcoming melee, or exchanging stories of battles past. Orcs will never be found playing card games, reading books, or studying mathematics. This is not, as many believe, because they lack the intelligence to comprehend the printed word. They simply believe that such things are an inexcusable waste of time that could otherwise be spent honing their skills.

On the more spiritual side of things, orcs have what most would consider a surprisingly strong respect for the natural world. Orcs draw less of a line between beast and man than almost any other race in the world. Predatory animals are considered spiritual kin to orcs, and when encountered, often trained to fight alongside them in combat. While other races will domesticate the occasional docile beast to aid in farm work, or be used as transportation, orcs will raise packs of wolves, fierce jungle cats, giant lizards, and all manner of other strange exotic beasts. They accomplish this not by subduing, but rather encouraging their violent natures.

Orcs are aptly deemed unhygienic as a general rule, as they often paint their bodies with mud, and put no effort into bathing and personal grooming. This is not due to laziness, but rather it is a matter of pride and battle tactics. To an orc, it is dishonorable to the dead to wash off the blood and gore splattered on them as they slaughter their enemies, and the stench of sweat blood and filth simply adds to their ability to intimidate foes. A typical orc will not even clean his wounds,

using cauterization as an exclusive means of keeping injuries from growing infected. The nasty scars left by this make it easier for orcs to recall the tales of past battles, and thus are worn with pride.

ORCISH SOCIETY

Orcs, as a general rule, are not city dwellers. There is no central orcish government, nor even a scattering of orcish city states. Instead, orcs live in small nomadic tribes, roaming the world in search of new foes to slay. Occasionally, several of these tribes, perhaps even dozens, will join forces to lay siege to a large, well defended city. There is very little organization behind such partnerships however. The various tribes simply run across each other, give a brief nod, and charge when they see others charging. Once the enemy is vanquished, a large celebration is typically held, and the various tribes roam off again to seek new foes.

The organization of these tribes tends to be fairly simple, with three main divisions. The bulk of the population are warriors, ready to charge off into battle at any time. The strongest warrior in the tribe is automatically deemed chieftain, and is followed by all without question. There is rarely any debate over who should be chieftain, as orcs are always attentive of one's battle prowess, and always view those stronger than them with respect, never jealousy. Despite this lack of conflict however, the leadership of orcish tribes frequently changes. Orcish chieftains will never sit at the rear of a raiding party giving orders.

If a group of orcish warriors is charging into battle, it can be guaranteed that the furthest orc to the fore is the chieftain. In some cases, an orcish chieftain will go as far as to charge into battle alone, insisting the other warriors hold back until he is overwhelmed. Additionally, in the rare event that a chieftain lives to old age, he will typically lose his rank to a younger warrior as aging leaves him less fit for battle.

The next highest group on the social ladder is the shamans. While orcs tend not to put much thought into matters of spirit, they acknowledge the benefits of the spirit world. Those orcs who aren't fit for battle, due to age, crippling injury, or birth defects, will often become shamans. While orcs have no real religion in the traditional sense, any given tribe will have a wide variety of superstitions they practice for luck in battle, and it is the duty of shamans to remember them all, as well as devise new ones. Shamans are also the bearers of orcish magic. While even shamans lack the drive to learn to read the magical tomes of other races, and they have no gods to pray to, they will occasionally pick up some of the gestures and magic words used by priests and mages of other races. Usually just before these unwilling teachers die. Much as the chieftain of a tribe is simply the strongest orc present, the high shaman is the orc who can best keep track of the most rituals and spells, and is often deferred to on matters of the spirit. It should be noted of course that to an orc, the most spiritual question ever asked tends to be "How do we kill these spirits? Our axes go right through them."

Finally, the bottom rung of the orcish so-

cial is the peon. These are the orcs both too weak to fight, and too stupid to be shamans. They are given no respect by other members of the tribe, often kicked and spit upon, and used for tasks warriors deem beneath them, such as caring for children, feeding animals, and foraging for food when supplies run low. In charge of the peons is the taskmaster. Typically, this is an orc who is too physically weak to fight on the front lines, but with the strength of character needed to inspire fear in the peons. The taskmaster is only given slightly more respect than other peons, but typically, what little respect he is given yields more than enough encouragement.

ORCISH WOMEN

There is often much speculation amongst other races about the apparent lack of female orcs. Some believe that don't exist, and that orcs reproduce asexually, or by impregnating the women of other races. The reality of the situation is simply that the differences between male and female orcs are so slight as not to be noticed by other races. Orcish females have the exact same duties in society, are prized for strength rather than beauty. Moreover, unlike many races, they do not nurse their young. While orcs have no problem recognizing each other's sex, the usual clues other races go by simply do not apply. Matters are further confused by the fact that orcs have no gender-specific pronouns in their language, and thus don't object when referred to improperly in the languages of others.

OTHER RACES IN ORCISH SOCIETY

It is not uncommon for a tribe of orcs to include one or two members of another race. Anyone who proves himself to have the same warrior spirit as an orc will be readily accepted into the tribe, provided of course they survive their initial encounter. Trolls in particular are often found in orcish tribes, finding the battle loving orcs good company, and their victims an ample source of food. Goblins are also a common sight, as orcs find their enthusiasm refreshing, and their ingenuity often helpful. While fully accepted into the tribe, such honorary orcs are never made chieftain, as orcs as a rule refuse to allow non-orcs to lead them.

ORCS IN THE SOCIETIES OF OTHERS

While prone to remaining with their own kind, occasionally an orc will find himself adrift, and forced to live amongst other races. Such orcs almost always seek work as mercenaries, as their love for battle prevents them from more sociable occupations, and their racial pride from direct military service.

Orcish Language

The language of orcs sounds to most like a series of grunts, glottal noises, and pronounced groans, and has surprisingly little regional variation. Orcs take great care to avoid lingual drift, so as to ensure complete understanding when sharing war stories with members of other tribes. Learning the orcish language is a relatively easy task for most races, although native speakers are generally not inclined to give lessons.

The vocabulary of the orcish language is geared largely towards the description of battle. There are for example more than a dozen orcish words for decapitation, denoting the subtle differences in the angle of the slice, the cleanliness of the cut, and how much blood squirted up from the neck before the body collapsed to the ground. Meanwhile, orcs have only a single word for describing books, paintings, sculptures, and pacifists, whose best translation is roughly "useless."

The written language of orcs, which is seldom used in favor of the oral tradition, consists of simple, easily understandable pictographs, usually found drawn in blood or ash on the remaining walls of a ransacked town, with a message indicating the name of the tribe responsible, and the general direction in which they left, should any survivors wish to follow seeking vengeance.