History and lore

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Origins of the Dalaichin Nomads

Originally, they were like any other Drow from the Deep Dark. Centuries ago, they were cursed by Lloth, losing all access to the power of magic. Seen as heretics, their Lloth-favoured cousins chased them out. Finding themselves in a harsh tundra, a surface world which saw them with an equal unkindness as their former brethren, and without the aid of magic, they set about making their way in this new world. They were led by 3 sisters: Sejanus, Garviel, and Tarvitz.

Each inhabited place they came to saw them as enemies, and without magic to speak a common tongue, they were unable to make more than passing attempts at diplomacy. In those dark early days, they were night raiders on the small gatherings of Human and Orc wildlings which make their home in the north. It was not until a bold (or foolish) attempted raid on a Dwarven hold that their fortunes turned.

The Dwarves of Kharad Norn kept watch over the tunnels that led to their home from below, but they almost always expected attacks from the surface. After yet another failed Orcish raid, they sang to victory in their mead hall. When the alarm was raised yet again, it was with surprise that they encountered a poorly armed, near-starving group of Drow. Being on the border of the Deep Dark, they spoke Deep Common. Despite the cultural enmity of their people, Tarvitz was desperate enough to beg mercy and aid, and the Dwarves, both recently cheered by victory and sensing opportunity (the enemy of my enemy), provided.

In the next months, the Nornish Dwarves and the Outcast Drow pooled their knowledge, seeing mutual benefit. The Drow taught the Dwarves about the Deeper Dark and how to plumb its resources safely. The Dwarves taught the Drow of Runic Magic. Sejanus was particularly keen on this new magic. Effectively alchemy, but with a solid product rather than a liquid, it allowed the Drow to create minor magical items. The Dwarves also let the Drow make use of their forges, and their proficiency in metalwork expanded. Garviel set to work creating hunting tools such that she and the others would be able to provide for themselves.

When the time came for the Drow to depart, they did so as friends. This cemented a part of the identity of this fledgling culture, differentiating them from their Deep Dark cousins: a willingness to earnestly and honestly cooperate with others. They also learned a version of the common tongue to better work with those they would find on this surface world.

The Drow struck out into the cold north in Spring, hoping to use their new tools to make a better home. The sunlight still stung their eyes, but they kept looking. More and more, they were fashioning new tools, clothes, and equipment from the animals they hunted and the places they camped. Still, most others did not trust them, so they did not move toward the Kingdom of Eusia to

the south. Instead, they moved from place to place, following an Auroch herd and taking kills from it whenever they could manage.

One hunting day in the autumn of the same year saw an immense opportunity. With the crush of winter threatening any day now, the Exiles sought to take as many aurochs as they could. The opportunity was a simple one: a glacier with a massive cleft. If they could force a portion of the herd over the edge, they could trap them, harvesting those who died in the fall and potentially capturing any who survived.

As they lay in wait to spring their ambush, they felt the glacier shift slightly. Concerned but unable to notice any difference, they proceeded to enact their plan. Rune Magic clappers and spark throwers startled the aurochs in the right direction, when suddenly the glacier burst open, a huge ice elemental standing menacingly between the Drow and the herd. For a tense moment, they waited for it to attack, but no assault came.

Unwilling to charge the huge elemental and risk any of their meagre number, the Drow watched achingly as their quarry slipped away. The elemental spoke to them, saying that they had already taken enough from this herd. Garviel proclaimed that without the aid of meat, bone, and hide from these beasts, her people would not survive the winter. The elemental agreed; without aid, they would perish, and then simply vanished.

Dismayed, the hunters returned to camp, prepared to share news of their impending doom. Instead, they found the fire stoked higher than ever, a roaring bonfire, around which human shamans danced. Fire elementals danced in the flame, air elementals ran through the trees, water elementals melted snow into clean water, and earth elementals formed sturdy, low huts around the fire.

Tarik explained to the hunters that these shamans had seen them depart toward the herd, and knew from the fashioned equipment that these Drow had respect for the nature they were living in. He went further, saying how these shamans had agreed to teach the Drow how to survive the winter by working with the elements if they agreed to leave the beasts of the land alone. Seeing no other way forward, Garviel agreed. Sejanus was easy to sway, as working with elementals meant new ways to interact with the magic she so desperately missed.

By the end of the winter, the Drow had learned much about the elementals of the land and came to form close ties with the shamans. It was the head Shaman Falkus who, in passing, gave a new name to these Drow. He had remarked how easily they sailed through this harsh winter, but in his people's private tongue. The word he had called them, Dalaichin, stuck.

The following winter, Garviel's son, Loken, dishonoured his mother. Finding himself old enough now to provide for the Nomads, he sought to procure a rare treat for them all: meat. He struck down an auroch with his javelins and spear, and hauled the beast back on his own, no small task. At the sight of the slain beast, the three sisters knew that the elementals of this land would not heed their call any longer, for the accord had been broken. Loken did not apologize, and instead proclaimed that this way of living on the surface was not possible. Lloth had damned them, and they would all surely perish.

Knowing that they would not survive in this land without elemental aid, too far from the dwarf hold to ask for refuge, and knowing that the south would not accept them, the brothers moved their people to the only place they could: the coast. With the accord already broken, they took as many large animals' lives as they could, fashioning what they needed from their bodies. By the time they reached the ocean, the crafty Nomads had what they needed to get started.

A great Runic ritual was constructed. Without any magical ability among them, it was all based on alchemy and runic magic. To power it, they would have to make a sacrifice of great magnitude. Though Garviel protested dearly, her sisters took their nephew into the ritual, and pleading with the elemental spirits, they sacrificed him. His blood bound a great water elemental and several earth elementals. Together, they formed a tightly knit fleet of vessels wrought of living stone barely large enough to hold all the elves. In her grief, Garviel could not join them, and the last of her that any Dalaichin saw was on that black sand beach in freezing winter holding the still warm body of her boy.

That winter was immensely difficult. On a frozen sea with little cover from the elements, they hunted seals, whales, and fish. Little by little, they expanded their vessels, adding structure and facilities. As if the salt and ice of the sea came together with elemental magic, the stone vessels began to change from stone to crystal.

By the time summer had arrived, life was a little easier. Sejanus tended to the runic devices, carving new runes when needed and iterating on them little by little. Tarvitz coaxed the earth elemental into transmuting animal parts into paltry quantities of metal, which she was eventually able to make into tools. Little by little, piece by piece, the first ship of the Dalaichin Nomads took shape.

Years later, the vessel was no longer made of stone, but of metal and crystal. The buildings upon it were small but efficient, and a proper economy of food, clothes, weapons, tools and the like had formed. Smaller boats were common, and it was common for the Dalaichin to venture forth into the ocean in search of goods to bring back to the ship. With their exotic goods, they often found good trade with Human vessels when they happened upon them. The Humans, for their part, found it difficult to believe that a Drow in furs on a boat in the ocean could be a spy from the Deep Dark, and so were more trusting.

The troubles were not over, however. The water elemental they had bound had demanded a price for its continued service: fresh sacrifices. At first, it was a single soul on the anniversary of Loken's death. Then a soul at each solstice. And then also the equinox. Then it was two each time. The elemental's hunger grew and grew, but without its power, the ship would plummet into the ocean, and they would all perish.

After years of this terrible bargain, Sejanus made a breakthrough. Perhaps because they were so far away from any other people, and none amongst them were using the magic in the area to cast spells, the place around their ship was always engorged with mana. Using runic magic, as well as a prototype cobbled together by Tarvitz, she was able to capture mana from the very air and condense it into a tiny crystal. The crystal grew as mana agglutinated to it. It would prove to be revolutionary for Dalaichin culture.

The crystals grew fast enough to appease the elemental's hunger and accumulate a small supply of the valuable resource. Eventually, Sejanus found a way to summon a new elemental using only the crystals, and the Devourer was sent back to the plane of Water, full of the energy of a hundred souls.

It is from there that the story goes. After centuries of expansion, the original vessel remains in the North Ocean, home to Five thousand elves. This Mother Ship serves as the base for all the other Crystal Ships, of which there are 3 known to the world, each holding one thousand souls. They still fish and hunt, but their days of survival by the skin of their teeth are behind them. Shrewd in the ways of Runic Magic, Elemental bargaining, and the art of crafting, they sell their wares and make a good profit doing so.

Minotaur

Minotaurs are a rare humanoid race found in the [[Kingdom of Eusia]]. Legend holds that they once rules over the whole continent and built great maze-like cities, maximizing the potential of any given space (and acting as a natural defense against would be invaders.) They have an issue of breeding: when a Minotaur breeds with a non-Minotaur, only 1 in 1000 of the children are born as Minotaur. A non-Minotaur with Minotaur heredity cannot sire a Minotaur unless they breed with a Minotaur, which runs into the same 1 in 1000 problem. To compound the issue, Minotaurs breeding with other Minotaurs face incredible difficulty in conceiving. At the height of the ancient civilization, this meant that every new baby was a prize, but careful management meant stability and slow growth. These days, the race hangs on by a thread.

Zodiac Signs

The stars are said to play a great role in the outcome of people's lives, especially those stars most tied to them. At the moment of birth, a person's Sign is determined by the most notable celestial event occurring at the moment. If there is no single, clear event, the most visible unique star defines their Sign. If there is still uncertainty about what Sign is indicated, a priest of [[Ex Mortia/Gods and Greater Powers/Neutral/Orikan]] will be called to make an interpretation.

At times where no single sign is dominant, it is sometimes said that a person is in possession of a "negative sign." They are seen as the inverse of the previously dominant sign. This is seen as a fell omen, and more than one unlucky child has been the victim of superstition-fueled bullying as a result of this rare occurrence.

Signs are named after their most prominent star, not necessarily their brightest.

Drakon, The Dragon

This constellation is a long chain of stars that is said to take the form of a twisting serpent by some, while others proclaim it to be the long neck and tail of a dragon. During times of conflict, war, or great change, the space between and around these stars glows red, the intensity of the glow dictated by the intensity of the event which spurred it. Some say that it is not the event spurring "the dragon's flame" but instead the flame which spurs the event.

Those born under the Sign of Drakon are said to be ambitious, determined, proud, and driven to leave their mark upon the world. They rarely settle for mediocrity and possess an intense inner fire.

Wandelin, The Roaming Star

Those untrained in the ways of the heavens will often mistake this group of stars as being slow comets or a fast moving planet with many moons. However, close study, especially with a telescope, show that this constellation is indeed a group of stars which appear to move across the sky as a unit. Their shape is often seen as a chariot without a horse or a rider, though other interpretations say that the constellation takes the form of a crawling child. It is not uncommon for this sign to vanish from the sky for weeks before reappearing in another place, seemingly at random. It is also believed that when Wandelin disappears from the sky in one region of the world, it appears in another region's sky.

It is hard to make an exact correlation between the appearance of this constellation and worldly events, but some interpretations claim that Wendelin appears when possibilities abound, times where small choices may have big consequences. Others claim that the start of great journeys brings about Wendelin.

Those born under the Sign of Wandelin are said to be carefree, adventurous, spontaneous, and impulsive. They chase new experiences, dislike routine, and often trust instinct over careful planning.

Gemel, The Twin Star

Gemel is unique in that the constellation is comprised of only two stars. Most of the time, they are so close to each other so as to be indistinguishable from a single star. However, in the time leading up to a powerful connection being formed, the twin stars will move apart from each other, and their individual sheen will grow; one blue, one red. It is said that when the connection occurs, Gemel comes back together at great speed, glowing brightly in the sky with both red and blue auras. These connections can be romantic, diplomatic, or sometimes even conspiratorial.

Those born under the Sign of Gemel are said to be adaptable and multifaceted. They form relationships of great strength quickly, both as friends and as rivals. Those with the twin sign are also oft said to have a soul mate also born under the sign, and that destiny will bring the two together.

Aclo, The Dark Star

Aclo is most often a wide constellation that takes the shape of a forest filling a large portion of the sky with loose columns of stars. It is in desperate times that Aclo becomes active, such as deep winter with little food, or when a beloved ruler fights an illness. These times of waiting where tenacity and patience become necessary bring out the dominant form of The Dark Star, usually starting at it's base. One by one, the stars will dim until they are not visible, and that dimness will spread. In time, if Aclo fully rises, the whole constellation becomes a void in the sky, with no stars or planets shining in it's influence. When the moon passes over a fully dominant Aclo, it becomes faint and dim, visible but not shining.

Some scholars portent that a dominant Aclo precedes a dominant Drakon, though there is hardly a fixed correlation.

Those born under the Sign of Aclo are said to be calm, disciplined, introspective, and reserved. They are patient observers, often carrying a brooding demeanor while possessing remarkable self-control.

Solis, The Dawn Star

Solis is a grand constellation who's shape is said to be a regal lion or perhaps a looming cyclops. It's most prominent star is also it's brightest, taking it's place as the crown of the lion's mane or the eye of the cyclops. Said to be a companion of the Sun, Solis is known to shine brightly in times where a beacon of guidance is needed, whether literally for navigation or spiritually. Solis is a guardian, and it's dominance often accompanies an individual or small group's journey. When this constellation is dominant, the night sky grows bright. It is not just the intensity of Solis, but the whole of the heavens grows, allowing previously dim stars to shine brightly, making the whole of the night sky into a colorful veil of light. At those times, even the deepest night is dimly lit rather than fully dark.

Those born under the Sign of Solis are said to be energetic, compassionate, optimistic, and deeply empathetic. They naturally inspire others and often place the needs of others before their own.

Nurkle, The Stagnant Star

A small constellation that takes the form of a ship's wheel or perhaps a weathered stone, Nurkle behaves oddly in that it does not move. The heavens wheel around this circular shape, and some say it is the origin of all stars. Nurkle becomes dominant when traditions take root and ways of being resist change. When the Wheel is dominant, each of it's 9 stars glow brightly in sequence, flowing in a counter-clockwise pattern over the course of a night.

Those born under the Sign of Nurkle are said to be resolute, steadfast, and dependable, but often stubborn. Once they have chosen a path, changing their minds is nearly impossible.

Arcanis, The Arcane Star

The constellation Arcanis is difficult to assign with a shape, as it's stars are known to move about within the sphere of influence of the primary star. Each star in the constellation, which some have attempted to correlate to the wind or waves, shines in different colours as it moves around the center, becoming violet, magenta, and blue in their travels. It has long been understood that Arcanis is involved with the raw stuff of magic, and becomes dominant when great magical works are underway. When the constellation becomes dominant, it's stars move more quickly than ever, and glow with such an intensity that it may appear that the Aurora Borealis is forming around them. There is a special occurrence, known as the Mage's Moon, where the full moon passes in front of a dominant Arcanis, giving the moon a regal crown of dyer colours. The greatest magical works of all time have been said to occur under a Mage's Moon, though it is sometimes generations

between occurrences.

Those born under the Sign of Arcanis are said to be curious, imaginative, intelligent, and naturally drawn toward magic and mystery. Their minds constantly seek knowledge beyond the ordinary.

Noxis, The Fractured Star

Noxis is known as the Fractured Star because of it's appearance when dominant. While dormant, it is simply a cluster of stars that shine in a pale white light. When dominant, the pale light reaches to the others in the constellation, forming jagged lines in the sky that look very much like cracks. It is a dire sign, as Noxis seems to rise when great destruction and undoing abounds. When war results in the failing of both the attacker and defender and none claim victory, Noxis rises. When those braving a great and terrible hardship crack and relent to the pressure, Noxis rises. Noxis is the failure of bravery and the beginning of hard times which do not promise a set end.

Those born under the Sign of Noxis are said to be resilient, unconventional, and quietly enduring, perhaps because they have to be. They often carry emotional scars yet find strength through hardship, seeing beauty where others see only ruin.