

C.J. Wilson, reworked by Project Director (Blade)

9/20/2019

## **A Blacksmith's Quest**

### **Initial Lore Write-up/Proposition**

#### **Geography**

So, for the purposes of both gameplay and storytelling, I'm currently thinking that the major groups—Dwarves, Elves, and Humans, have a fair degree of geographic separation, which would account for any lack of intermixing between them. Some of this geographic separation may not be due to distance, but to geographic barriers—wide rivers, high mountains, deserts, that sort of thing. But, where the story begins, we may be seeing the beginnings of softer territorial spread on the part of all three (in other words, villages and commoners allowing towns to expand as opposed to established nations funding colonial expansion), which has come with some friction.

#### **Project Director Comments:**

I like the fact that they're separated geographically. This is what I envisioned and fits with the general group separation we talked about before.

I'm thinking that the Dwarves are likely the most advanced nation with the greatest spread of land, just to account for the increased importance and emphasis given to them. Their capital is enormous, spread across a mountain range that seems to pop sharply out of some rather fertile hills and plains.

#### **Project Director Comments:**

Dwarves shouldn't have any special advantages. I'm OK with the later mentioned resource rich zones where they built, but generally the "kingdoms" should have their own standards of riches and don't want to mix with other groups. Mixed groups should be seen as something bad generally.

I don't mind the capital being large, but structures like these will have to be modeled too, at some point. Keep that in mind. (although I don't have any plans right now to create giant cities)

I think it might be wise to base the environment (as a start) after something like the Sierra Nevada mountains and adjoining valley in California. It's a rougher, but highly mountainous and varied environment that would allow for a lot of gameplay and story flexibility, and whose combination of fertility and harshness/intensity fits dwarves quite nicely (I might be biased; I grew up in the area and always found its vibe extremely underutilized)[See pictures below].



The big geographic feature separating them from the rest of the world is a big river, which I'll be mentioning again in a second. While the river itself isn't too wide in every spot and has a couple of bridges, it's rough in the winter. Plus, the dwarves have so many other more fertile, productive areas to explore that they don't really feel the need to go beyond the river.

#### Project Director Comments:

I like the mountain range you suggested, we can pull a lot of inspiration from it. We'll have to introduce you to the geothermal separations of the continent we designed, so you better understand the spread of the biomes etc.

I love the idea of the river, gives a global location every group knows about and allows to mention them without thinking too hard about which river you mentioned.

I don't see the need of making dwarves more powerful than others, I think it'd be best to just have the type of power differ. For example, Dwarves are known for their ingenuity, craftsmanship and high adaptability. Elves for their deep connection to nature, their druidism (druid stuff) and their deep understanding of magic, although

they're not quite as social as humans. Humans are the most diverse one, jack of all trades as they're aren't bad at anything, but generally really don't excel at anything. They are known to be greedy though, so they are the most likely to engage in a war against other groups. And finally, a group no one mentioned yet, the beastmen group. Half animal, half human in appearance, they're the most physically strong group, but live more similar to the asian countryside as opposed to humans and dwarves, being closer to late medieval times.

I'll touch on the other two groups more briefly. Combined, their territories have just a little more land than the Dwarves, and they're much closer to each other than either is to the Dwarves. Likewise, their territories are less geographically/ecologically diverse. We can explore options for them later down the road, but I'll put in a vote for making the elves more akin to enlightened forest/swamp elves, as they'll serve as a nice contrast with the super-advanced, industrial Dwarves. But, due to their closeness, there's been a bit of interbreeding that resulted in halflings, which kind of wound up occupying some of the Midlands.

#### Project Director Comments:

The **four** kingdoms are more or less the same side, with a couple "free" places, in regions like the desert zone. Kingdoms generally aren't too friendly and look down to each other. While not being explicitly aggressive, they aren't exactly friendly either.

The kingdoms *will* be diverse. I'm not quite sure in which way yet, but seeing as Dwarves are underground dwellers, Elves preferring to stay on trees, and Beastmen and Humans staying as per usual on the ground, but with cultural differences, this should spread every group into their own little zone.

As mentioned, Elves will stay in trees, but neither those light forests, nor swamps. Rather this hot and humid jungle like zone.

Again, Dwarves will be quite the tinkerers and be more steampunky than others, but "super-advanced" is a bit much.

Mixed breeds, or halflings as you called them, will be pretty rare and result in unique characters. There probably won't be "useless" NPCs which are mixed breeds. Mixed breeds would then often end up as adventurers and/or travelers.

As for the location the player inhabits, I figure it'll be in a fairly temperate zone *past* that river, and near a fairly thin, moderate stretch of it [see below].





We can “squeeze” the geography a bit, here, and fit in some “fingers” of the mountain range that runs over this area (which would account for this thin stretch of the river), some wetlands, and some drier areas in the mountain’s rain shadow. Such an area would also allow Argon to have a whole range of resources at his disposal [See Below].



Project Director Comments:

Again I'll have to show you the map, to give you a better idea, it seems that you don't have access to the previous chat messages, so we'll make sure to update you on these things.

Likewise, given Blade's desire to have Argon create a progressive town for all groups, I think this place should be at a crossroads. It's near-ish to a river's bridge, and is infrequently passed by both elves and humans on their way to each other's domains, or to the Dwarves.

Project Director Comments:

I like the idea of a crossroad, maybe even the border to all four groups, while Argon's place is at a piece of partially unclaimed land. Again, we'll have to show you the map.

**History and Culture**

So, world history's gonna be brief to start with. I'm thinking that each group had a fair amount of land to itself, and while they've had their spats and fights, and their times of peace and prosperity, they've had less interaction with each other than, say, the ancient nations of Europe did.

They've been aware of each other for a long time, of course, and have exchanged goods, but inter-nation war was a (relatively) rare occasion. More often, each group fought amongst itself.

Project Director Comments:

I agree with that, group-based war shouldn't be this big thing, although there should still be some tension between the groups.

In general, however, none have ever fared well against the Dwarves.

Project Director Comments:

Yeah, no. Let's be honest, no one wants to fight against the guys who're advanced enough to make rocket launchers. (Let's face it, if they can make grenades, stuff like grenade or rocket launchers aren't too far fetched)

Again, groups should be more or less indifferent to each other

Their fertile homeland gave them superiority in food (except in rare droughts or floods), and their mountains had plenty of metals, both practical and precious. But, these resources—useful as they were—weren't always easy to utilize. As a result, they had to get inventive and industrious early on, and they never really lost their attachment to the value of hard, practical work. Even their artistic movements have shown a penchant for displaying one's ability to be diligent and precise, favoring things like arabesque and geometric art. [See



below].



Project Director Comments:

I can see where you're going with this, but seeing the map, you'll understand the food will be more or less spread equally. Metals will only be wanted by humans, beastmen, and of course dwarves. And while dwarves do hold the major share of



metals due to them literally living on a mountain (maybe extinguished volcano?) full of them, the other groups have *just enough* to do what they need to, and can trade for more, which explains the technological diversity.

Argon will adapt towards the human's logic of mixing magic and machinery, making him one of the few blacksmiths who can make enchanted weapons.

Technologically, the Dwarves are arguably more advanced than either of the other groups in metalwork, agriculture, architecture, and exploration-focused sciences like astronomy and mapmaking.

Project Director Comments:

The dwarves should be mechanically talented, their technology there can be relatively advanced, yes, but as for agriculture and architecture, they're making due with what they've got. They're tinkers, not farmers. I can see them doing mapmaking, although that's more of a beastmen thing, which are quite invested into art. As for astronomy, that's clearly something for the elves.

Their military strategy could likely use some work, however, and their water-craft is probably none too hot. If "magic stones" are fueled by particular gems/minerals, then they likely have the upper hand on that, too.

Project Director Comments:

I don't quite see dwarves being the war waging ones, so I can agree on that part. As for water related things, they'd just drink water from a source, and probably would rarely boil it.

Most dwarves won't use magic or magic stones. If they were to find some, they'd sell them. For the exact reasoning, it's up to you, but generally, I was thinking something along the lines of magic stones being seen as cursed, unholy, or dangerous by the dwarves. The later one making most sense, seeing as they'd be a group that'd blow themselves up trying to tinker with them.

As mentioned earlier, recent years have shown a spread in populations of all kinds. There's a lot more interaction going on... much of it on the commoner level, rather than the kingdom.

This is a source of anxiety for much of the landed classes, as they're beginning to see that the common folk are quickly outnumbering them and developing their own organized, self-sufficient structures. The spread has come with some friction between commoners, but the overall trend on the outskirts seems to be away from "kingdoms" and towards things like commonwealths.

Project Director Comments:

Naaa, just na.

Life is still very king-centered closer to the capitals, however, and the city-folk are beginning to see a greater and greater cultural divide between themselves and the “bumpkins,” while the “bumpkins” are beginning to think about the city folk less and less. But, tension is brewing as these spreading populations get closer and closer to putting people from different groups and kingdoms less than a day’s walk away from each other, and people are getting anxious.

Project Director Comments:

I think it’d be better to have each group prefer to be closer to the capital rather than the borders. This would allow us to explain why Argon’s so secluded.

“What will happen when a hardworking dwarf lives but a stone’s (or axe’s) throw from a lazy elf?” wrote a contemporary scholar known as “The Traveler.” “With luck, the Dwarf will finally take a break and the elf will finally get something done. In any case, it’s bound to be interesting.”

Well, what about Argon and the Dwarves? As I mentioned before, the Dwarves have a lot of power, a lot of resources, and a respect for hard work. As a result, they’ve grown a touch... lax, as far as innovation and change goes. Expansion efforts have slowed, and national energy has turned inwards towards stasis and consolidation, rather than towards change, and what was once a single kingdom with a mighty head has gradually morphed into a multi-sectioned beast, with much power held amongst bankers and generals and heads of craftsmans’ guilds. While the king still ruled all of this in name, people had begun to question the necessity and inherent power of a king.

It was into this environment that King Argon was born. From the first, Argon was curious and innovative. As a boy, he was more apt to find more efficient or creative ways to craft daggers than he was to sit there and practice by hammering out copies of the same knife. He explored the caverns of the capital, then consulted the records and maps left by old explorers to find dark corners and unknown bends. He’d be missing for days at a time as he explored these places. Where his father at this age was learning statecraft, military action, economic policy, and everything else that went into running a country, Argon didn’t need to. These things were handled by now-self-sufficient branches of government.

And those that absolutely needed the presence of royal blood relied upon his uncle, General-King Karnoss.

Project Director Comments:

I like this name!

Karnoss had been the older brother of Argon’s father and went off to suppress uprisings amongst the outer dwarven states as a youth. In his absence, his father died. Argon’s father assumed the domestic duties of kingship in his absence and showed an aptitude for the station. Karnoss was gone for more than a decade, and when he returned it was clear that



the throne was as good as his brother's. He accepted the role of General-King, but rarely spoke to his little brother.

#### Project Director Comments:

This part doesn't make sense to me.

As Argon grew, he *did* attend to his more kingly duties. And when his father died, he assumed the full-time role. He was a good king, but more interested in his own ideas for innovation (as well as satisfying his own curiosity) than maintaining the status quo or placating the bankers and architects that held more power now than ever before.

"Why, indeed," Karnoss asked the other powers at a meeting. He fomented an open rebellion. What was once a lack of respect for their king became resentment, and Karnoss ensured it grew to hate. Argon saw the growing dissatisfaction and did everything in his power to become a better king, while hating himself for having been so childish. But, soon enough, the day came. The heads of state, led by General-King Karnoss, declared the throne obsolete. They replaced the kingship with a council... led, of course, by Karnoss.

But not without a final snipe. Several articles of office, proof of the heritage of the Dwarven King, disappeared along with him. There was no doubt that Argon snuck them out of the country. Among them was a map of the "Veins of the World" (a semi-mythical cave system that the dwarves believed connected the entire world and ran deep down into its core), and the Signet Ring worn by the King.

#### The Player Character- Argon

**Group:** Dwarf

**Age:** Old, for a Dwarf. Likely in his 180's.

Well, we've already covered Argon's history. Karnoss's betrayal and the realization that it was, in part, due to his own inadequacies as king, left Argon bitter and angry. He's no longer the same optimistic boy who scurried through the caves of the Dwarven Capital. He traveled the Dwarven lands for almost a decade before going past the river and exploring other lands. He learned a lot in his time, hoping that he could find something—a discovery, maybe—to vindicate himself, to restore his lost confidence. All he's found is a conviction that he prefers moping and tinkering in solitude to interacting with people and waiting for inevitable, uncomfortable questioning.

A couple years ago, he settled on his current location as a suitable place to tinker and explore. He's just put the finishing touches on his house/workshop. Meanwhile, as a hobby, he's been exploring the area, charting and mapping it. The inciting incident for this game and story will be his finding of an old, suspicious mine that seems to line up too conveniently with that map of "The Veins of the World." In conjunction with that, a road has been built near-ish to where he's been staying, bringing travelers that occasionally stop by.

These days, Argon is surly and a bit short tempered, but good-hearted. The kind of guy to help a passing traveler, but probably without talking to them, unless it seemed they needed someone to talk to. His curious, adventurous spirit hasn't faded in the slightest (though he doesn't advertise it), nor has his tendency to neglect duty in favor of indulging his curiosity. He moved out here partly to be somewhere he has little in the way of responsibility, but has found himself daydreaming about what he'd do if he had a second chance to lead, and wondering what makes for a good ruler.

### **The Traveling Merchant- Zaid Moro**

**Group:** Half-Elf, but it's not revealed much in the game—he looks like he could be human, an odd-looking elf, or a halfling, and he has a knack for dodging the question.

**Age:** In his 40's/50's, but looks like a human in his late 20's/early 30's

The first thing anyone'll notice about Zaid is his smile. The second is that he's *relentlessly* friendly and optimistic. So much so that trying to hate him would feel like a full-time job. This impenetrable amicability *does* distance some people from him, but every so often he slips in a nugget of real talk, or little hints at his own past or his opinions on the world. When he does, it becomes clear that he's *far* more knowledgeable and intelligent than he lets on.

In reality, Zaid is a learned man, a scholar and historian who is working on the world's first comprehensive historical text. It's part of the reason he sticks around with the Alchemist. He's spoken to kings, generals, and philosophers... which is impressive, given that he started as a gutter rat with a curious streak, who used to break into libraries or steal books to pass the time. He's likely killed, before, too.

He publishes and spreads leaflets under the name: "The Traveler."

Zaid is hardworking, with a weakness for historical trinkets. He's also uncannily perceptive when it comes to other people. He's gutsy enough to ask complicated, dangerous questions when he thinks he can get away with it, but smart enough to know when it's going to shut a source down, completely.

Zaid first meets Argon after the road near his home is built. He camped out by it and wound up seeing Argon heading from the road to his little hut about a mile off and followed. It's very likely that Zaid, soon after meeting Argon, realizes who he is. It's part of the reason he comes to town so often and decides to settle there. But, he has no intention of letting out Argon's secret, or prying into it. Argon will eventually realize that Zaid knows and is keeping it under wraps, and what was once tolerance and amusement morphs into genuine friendship and respect.

### **The Alchemist- Nathaniel Davy**

Make that "Nathanaël", it's a biblical name and makes him seem more relevant

**Group:** Human

**Age:** 50 or 60, but he looks like he's friggin' 80.

There are some people who love science more than anything else in the world. They spend their lives in labs, and they know the sound of clinking beakers better than the sound of their own voice. They live behind a pair of eyeglasses, a result of straining their vision so much by staring at minute compounds and jumping away from steaming chemicals just a little too slowly.

The Alchemist calls these people "hobbyists."

This upsets them, and they yell for him to stand up and say that to their face, and he tells them that he gladly will if they help him up. "After all," he says. "There is a reason I'm in this chair."

The Alchemist, like Zaid, was a scholar. He had a strong interest in magic and the chemical sciences, and alchemy seemed like the best of both worlds. In particular, he was curious about how certain compounds and spells interacted with biological organisms. When his university told him he couldn't run experiments on living things, he decided to start testing them on himself.

It was eight years before the university found out and expelled him, but by then he'd made so much off of his experiments that he could afford to continue on his own. The experiments got more and more severe, with more and more deleterious effects on him. This wasn't without reward. He helped discover the toxin limits of the human body, and several medicines besides. To many, he's the uncredited forbear of Medicinal Alchemy, a highly specialized subset of Alchemy that has almost single-handedly helped raise the human lifespan.

Of course, his eccentricity eventually got to be too much for people, and they conveniently "forgot" who helped make their work possible in the first place. For his part, Nathaniel bored of their judgment and the limited resources available in his city, and went out to explore and try new things. Eventually, he met Zaid, and their shared curiosity, combined with their expertise in separate disciplines, allowing them to educate each other, made them fast friends.

Good thing, too. Soon after, an experiment lost Nathaniel the use of his legs. Zaid, almost without hesitation, offered to carry him from place to place whenever he bored of one. "Send me a letter anytime," he said.

To which Nathaniel responded: "Certainly! That is, if I don't regain the use of my legs on my own. That's what happened last time."

In personality, Nathaniel is decidedly eccentric, and without any of the social groups of Zaid. He seems constantly self-interested and concerned solely with academic matters, though in Zaid's presence he can occasionally seem to earn a connection to the world of regular people.



He is, however, appreciative of Argon's stoic, straightforward attitude, and respects his hardworking nature. Argon, likewise, respects Nathaniel's dedication to his work... but definitely sees him as crazy. And would be very happy if Nathaniel would stop asking to test some new concoction on him.