

LOST TO ANTIQUITY

I was blessed to see the strength of my clan prevail, yet I find myself cursed to be the witness of its fall, and with it the race of Dwarves on Ashkelon.

I am Angus Skeldheim, last chieftain of the Dwarven clans. I sit in a vacant hall of a once glorious citadel. There are five, maybe six other Dwarves that occupy this empty, vacant stronghold with me. They are older than I am, and their final days are few and numbered, just as mine are.

We endured the wars waged by prideful heroes and vainglorious wizards. We defeated demons and dragons. Yet, after all the triumph we succored on the battlefield, we will ultimately lose the most basic of wars: the war of survival.

My beard was once red and thick; it is now white and thin. Our halls are empty of the mirth and song that once filled it nightly. The wars on Ashkelon have taken their toll on my people, and a generation was lost as parents outlived their children. This would be the omen of our downfall that was not from the sword or to dragon fire, but from the passage of time.

We grew older and our numbers grew fewer with no Dwarven children. The only children seen these in the last generation were that of the human warrior Deianara when she took refuge with us. She and her family would eventually leave to return to her people after the deaths of the five archmages.

We foolishly allowed our youth to die, and in so doing, the Dwarven lineage on Ashkelon will end with me. While it's possible to have half-Dwarven/half-human children, there isn't enough gold in all the Dwarven citadels combined to make human women of childbearing age come here to sire them with a handful of wizened Dwarves.

These stone citadels of my forefathers were built to last generations. Shamefully, they and the golden trinkets within them shall outlive our race.