

Rygg



Summary

Rygg, commonly - and mistakenly - called “Cave Dwarves” by almost all other races, are in fact not Dwarves at all. Although they share a love of stone, earthen dwelling, and craftsmanship, Rygg interact considerably less with surface races, living nearly their entire life in the extensive cave systems under the land. As varied in form as Humans, Rygg are easily distinguished by a ridged nasal bridge. Their traditional attire consists of dark, saturated colors and shades of grey and black, accented by gold and gem-encrusted accessories. They are very private people, with candid and straightforward approaches to all aspects of life, and place high value in hard work and restoration of broken and worn objects. Still considered an Allied race, many surface races remember their pivotal contributions during the Third War against the Drow.

Costume Requirements

Note: In order to play a Rygg, a player at Lands of Exile must follow a few costuming requirements. Optional costuming is NOT required to play the race, but rather a suggestion based on how Rygg look in this world.

Required Costuming:

- ♦ Noseridge Prosthetic, in the style of the Aradani “Deep Space” nose ridge - [Aradani Product Link](#)

Optional Costuming:

- ♦ Chunky metallic jewelry and accessories featuring woven wire, gems and precious stones are a notable aesthetic of the Rygg.

Physical Description

Average Life Span: 200-300 years

The most distinctive physical attribute of a Rygg is the bat-like feature on their nose bridge, called the Lokus (Pronounced: 'LOW-kuss'). If the Lokus is hidden by a scarf or hood, Rygg are nearly indistinguishable from Humans. Some cultural historians claim the Lokus enhances sense of smell, while many common folk say the Lokus is a feature grown to represent their sour mood. Those few who have spoken with a Rygg personally know that the organ is highly sensitive, and aids perception of their surroundings.

Ryggan attire constitutes simple, utilitarian garments, with intricate details and blocky flourishes. Outer garments tend to be varying shades of gray and black, with inner layers, linings, and trims in deep, saturated hues - like gems flashing in a cave. Chunky, metallic, gemmed jewelry is chosen deliberately, although it may look completely decorative to an unfamiliar observer. Ear cuffs of precious metals and gems are a common way to display personal aesthetic, and can hold deep significance. Gemstone types have very specific meanings to individual Rygg, though some properties are culturally universal (See Extras for more info). Kierna factors heavily into design aesthetic, though it is often embellished to the point where an untrained eye can no longer see the connection. Rygg generally avoid wood in their attire and homes, due to its rarity underground. Any wood obtained in trade is used for weaponry.

Rygg have a peculiar relationship with wear and tear. While fastidiously clean in their personal hygiene, damage, dirt and grunge acquired in the course of hard work is viewed as a sort of badge of honor. Whether a miner covered in soot, or a scribe with ink stains to their elbows, each is given a respectful nod of approval in Ryggan society. This custom extends to personal property as well; Rygg will continuously and artfully repair possessions over their lifetime, giving each item its own personality. This also applies to fighters- if one sustains an impressive wound in battle, they may opt to keep the resulting bloodstain as a symbol of their glorious victory... or a constant reminder of a mistake.

TEMPERAMENT

In general, Rygg are quiet, purposeful, and independent folk. No surface race has any idea how deeply and densely their cave systems run. This type of work takes a special kind of determination, of which Rygg have in excess. Families are scattered, often spread over hundreds of miles, due to the way their culture determines land ownership. This leads to a tendency for closest bonds being formed with those in proximity, rather than by blood.

For all their fondness for jewels, Rygg are not fans of decorative or flowery language. If you're trying to use a clever turn of phrase, they most likely will not understand it; if you're trying to soften a verbal blow, they'll think you're insulting them. All resources are precious to the Rygg, but time above the rest - get to the point, or get out of the way. There are many reasons one rarely encounters a Rygg above ground, but a large part is that Rygg go out of their way to avoid unnecessary encounters.

Their stubbornness and loyalty match that of the Mountain Dwarves, but it is much more difficult to know where you stand with a Rygg. Typically, if you regularly interact with a Rygg, for better or for worse, they are in some way amenable to your company.

Due to the sensitivity of their nasal ridge (called the Lokus), it is an intimate gesture to touch a Rygg's face. More than one unfortunate foreigner has found themselves short several teeth for overstepping their bounds in such a way. Their steady, purposeful nature often belies a ferocity of principles, for which they are not afraid to fight.

CURRENT & PRESSING CONCERNS

Rygg remained isolated from the surface until the Dragonfire began affecting their nigh-impenetrable homes. Most Rygg attempted to retreat even deeper underground, hoping to escape the flames. But for some, collapsed tunnels and the uncertainty of what was happening forced them to the surface, and then onto the Exiled Lands. Constantly at arms with the Drow due to the need to defend their tunnels, the Rygg who survived the treacherous journey across the sea have had mixed reactions to the continued threat of the Drow; some are dismayed to find their age-old enemy in a new land, while others find a macabre

sort of comfort in the familiar menace. The only Rygg who regularly visited the surface are at least 20 years old.

Younger Rygg that were forced to evacuate had possibly never even seen the sun. Those few who have made it to the Exiled Lands suffer more in social aspects than physical. A Rygg without the safety, solitude, and familiarity of their caves can be quite a volatile creature. Although they may seem like loners, Rygg desire strong relationships built on transparency and trust. Due to the near-constant scheming ways of many of the surface races, most Rygg are reluctant to join up with established settlements in the Exiled Lands.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

There are at least five known cities that could be classified as cultural centers of Ryggan society. These centers operate in relatively the same way, with each one having their own governor-like position. This position, sometimes elected, sometimes appointed by committee, oversees not only their city, but the cave systems stemming from their city as well. As a tunnel system branches, the governor's power becomes lessened, though that has little effect on the overall efficiency of society.

Ryggan cave systems are expansive. If the High Elven Empire truly had an idea of how far the systems ran, they might feel threatened enough by the sheer number of access points around the kingdom. However, it has never been an issue in living memory, as the Rygg are extremely meticulous about protecting these tunnels, and was arguably one of the key assets in winning the Third War. They have permanent residences stationed every few thousand feet along the runs, with hundreds of small settlements dotted along them.

Although nearly three-fourths of all Rygg are spread throughout the cave systems, movement and transfer of goods and knowledge around the tunnels is almost constant. Messages and news are brought through from the main city in the area with each traveler.

Land ownership might seem odd for a cave-dwelling society to deal in. Yet, Rygg have a very complex system that influences both economy and propriety. In simple terms, a family line owns and cares for a cave system. As children are born, Rygg that live in that area will carve new tunnel branches, depending on the amount of help available and the desired type of tunnel. As the tunnels

grow, family members are given the privilege of being the caretaker of a stretch of cave. The longer stretch of cave system you maintain, the more respected you can become. Because of this, Rygg will interact with travellers more frequently than their own family, creating strong bonds with those who pass regularly. Rygg who do not maintain cave systems will move on to find another purpose in life, many becoming cavern defenders, transporting goods through the tunnels, or becoming craftspeople and settling in Nodhes.

Nodhes (pronounced: 'nod') are settlement areas, similar to a surface town, that are created wherever three or more tunnels intersect. Larger Nodhes are noted by the intersection of more than 6, and in some cases over 20, cave systems. Before the First War, regulations were put in place about how many cave branches can stem from a single point for cavern integrity reasons. Due to this limit, there is somewhat of an unspoken homage and respect towards the families of tunnels that are linked to the largest Nodhes.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Kierna is most prominent in Ryggan cultural designs and homage. The Rygg believe that they were created by Kierna for the purpose of bringing life to the dark underground, and base their lives on doing so. In contrast to many surface cultures, Ryggan worship is quiet, dutiful, and ubiquitous. Many of their traditional aesthetic designs are based on Kierna's symbol, although they have morphed throughout the generations, and influences seem to be only peripheral. The Rygg consider themselves children of Kierna, and their reverence for is more akin to that of a parent, than of a zealot. Often, one will find small shrines or reliefs carved in tunnel walls, giving simple thanks to Kierna.

The Rygg practice of repairing objects (See Legends and Cultural Practices for more) is rooted in their desire to give life and persistence to items they create, which they do as an emulation of Kierna's principles.

Inner Ryggan life revolves around structure, discipline, and knowledge; therefore Ordin is the personal deity of most. Learning new skills and improving on current ones is seen as the best way to honor Ordin.

LEGENDS & CULTURAL PRACTICES

Common folklore claims that Rygg never come to the surface, and many bedtime stories told in Elven cities will speak of naughty children who are swallowed underground by something akin to a Rygg. However, in reality, Rygg quite often travel to the surface to trade and harvest resources that are unavailable in their tunnels. They are very thorough, and maintain solid, no-nonsense mercantile connections, which keeps their surface business quick and efficient. Only the most experienced Rygg are permitted to venture out, however. They do not become surface-trained until they are at least 20 years old, and even then only the merchant-class does so regularly.

Rygg find value in broken and repaired items, often choosing methods of mending items in ways that beautify and highlight the repair rather than concealing it. While many other races take their greatest pride in brand new, pristine crafts, Rygg regard repair and renewal as the highest form of art. The re-formed creation becomes an amalgamation of experiences and techniques from all success and failure, seen as a kind of totemic wisdom that one can learn from. One of the most famous Ryggan monuments is a simple, stone wagon, repaired countless times over many generations. It was formally retired from use after the Second War, and is most likely the oldest, functional, mortal-made item on this plane.

Anonymous gifts are somewhat of a regular occurrence in Ryggan society. Leaving small tokens of food or supplies for whomever may happen past is a common Ryggan practice when they travel.

Due to their complex and varied social interests, an outsider wouldn't expect the Rygg to have a militaristic culture. However, nearly every aspect has its origins in militarism, as the development of Ryggan culture and society has been wrought with Drow conflicts since the beginning of their history. In contrast to Mountain Dwarves and Wylde Elves, who relish the thrill and glory of battle, Rygg regard war with a somber sense of duty. Culturally, they do not dwell on war, and prefer a peaceful existence, but continue to maintain a large standing army for defense of tunnel entrances from the Drow and the occasional unfortunate Troll. Rygg encourage development of other skills alongside martial ones. Craftsmen, scholars, and caregivers are seen as equally necessary to creating a safe and comfortable life underground.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Most surface races confuse Rygg and Mountain Dwarves, to the chagrin of both. However, between the two, relations are relatively peaceful. Although they do compete for resources when mining and tunnelling, the Rygg typically keep to the flatlands, while Mountain Dwarves are primarily a highlands dwelling population. When claim to a vein or rich mining area does become contested, and efforts at diplomacy fail, the ensuing battle for territory is typically quick, brutal, and decisive. Neither race is known to hold a grudge against the other for these occurrences, as they do tend to be rare.

Relations with other races than Mountain Dwarves are not well known. Until the Exodus, Rygg were rarely seen or spoken to outside of brief trade negotiations, and those that kept trade with a Rygg may not even have been aware of their heritage. Due to the way many Rygg dug deeper to attempt to avoid the dragon fire, they may be the rarest race to encounter in the Exiled Lands. Although "Cave Dwarf" persists as High Elven slang for Rygg, it's become less popular in recent generations.

Generally, Rygg are insular, because they can afford to be. Their gruff nature and relative emotional unavailability can cause rejection from the more homogenous settlements in the Exiled Lands. A Rygg may not find a welcoming community among Elven-centric, and sometimes even Human groups. However, their resourcefulness and determination allows them to gain respect and acceptance from almost all races in times of hardship, and are typically welcomed in mixed company.

The Rygg themselves accept most others in fellowship, given the new acquaintances are not manipulators or schemers - which actually makes their options for permanent settlement very slim. Rygg have little tolerance for indecision and sleight of hand, and will often accidentally reveal hidden motives of others, even friends, by asking too many questions in the pursuit of clarity. This trait makes the more disreputable types become anxious when in the company of a Rygg.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Common universal gems and their cultural meanings:

- ♦ **Amethyst** - A soft purple hue, this gem is often gifted to children from their parents, or gifted to others of importance throughout life. A Rygg will know exactly when and where they were given each Amethyst they carry.
- ♦ **Ruby** - A deep red gem, sometimes so dark it can look black. A Ruby is one of the most common self-decorations, because this stone glimmers radiantly in firelight.
- ♦ **Emerald** - Green stone, often with white or grey inclusions. This is a common stone, given to others in a gesture of support.
- ♦ **Citrine** - A yellowish, clear crystal. This is thought to exemplify one's attribute for hard work.
- ♦ **Blue Quartz** - Relatively uncommon to find, blue quartz is typically used when dealing with something of great personal value.

Lands of Exile