

ELF WARFARE

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INTRODUCTION

Elves, like many common creatures in fantasy fiction, have their roots in our myths. They feature in stories that go back a couple of thousand years at least and are present to a greater or lesser degree in all the Germanic mythologies. While some such creatures maintain a fairly cohesive identity over time, elves have changed substantially through the ages. They may have been gods originally but if so, they were demoted from that lofty status. They were still magical beings though and were associated with beauty and sometimes sex (though rarely the fun kind). Sometimes they were called demons. Later elves became associated with the fae, and often conflated with various types of faerie. They also shrank alarmingly in this period, becoming tiny creatures in stories and songs. The Victorians gave elves pointed ears and stocking caps, and this led to the form most familiar to modern children: the Christmas elf. All the supernatural and sexual threats of previous elves were gone, replaced by tinkers who make toys for Santa Claus. In America elves were reduced even further to makers of sugary cookies.

Elves owe the restoration of their dignity to fantasy fiction. Starting with Lord Dunsany in 1924 in *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, things began to look up for elves. In *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien brought them closer to their mythological roots but made them his own as well. Tolkien's elves were ultimately tragic, doomed by their own passions to ages of suffering before abandoning the world all together. With the monumental success of his work, Tolkien's interpretation was widely influential in the field of fantasy and beyond. Now elves – tiny no longer – inhabit hundreds of worlds in fiction and in games.

Elf Warfare is the third in the Osprey Adventures series that started with *Orc Warfare* and continued with *Dwarf Warfare*. The goal here is the same: provide a military and cultural analysis of a favorite fantasy race. You'll find concepts and themes that are familiar but some that are different as well. You can enjoy *Elf Warfare* as a work of fantasy in its own right, or a source of ideas for your roleplaying or miniatures game campaigns. The book is broken down into four chapters.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ELVES

This chapter introduces the elf race. It discusses their origins, gods, and magic, and the destructive war that tore the elf kindred apart. It then delves into the organization of the elven military and the arms and equipment it uses.

CHAPTER TWO: ELF TROOP TYPES

The five elven kindred field a great variety of troops, from core units like archers and spearmen to exotic units like tree runners and moon elf infiltrators. This chapter looks at each in turn, discussing its battlefield role and typical equipment.

CHAPTER THREE: ELF STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Elves have been fighting from time immemorial and they have developed many stratagems. This chapter looks at the way that elves win wars. Battlefield tactics, naval tactics, and siege tactics are all looked at in turn.

CHAPTER FOUR: ELF VICTORIES

Finally Elf Warfare takes a detailed look at five famous victories of elven arms. There is one battle for each of the kindred, showcasing how the various types of elf have been able to win important victories. This chapter also provides some concrete examples of how the myriad of troop types were used in practice.

THE ELVES

Since the first sunrise, we have been here. We have lived in the forests and the glens, in the plains and in the mountains, on the sea and under the earth. We are the five kindred. Fire, earth, metal, wood, and water live in us. We are the elements and the seasons. We are nature's beauty and also its wrath. Stand with us and you will prosper. Stand against us and you will be destroyed.

Inscription, Great Temple of the Sun Queen

Elves are a proud and ancient race with a history that stretches back into the mists of time. Their chroniclers claim that elves were there at the world's first sunrise. Dragons might dispute that the elven race is quite that old. Scholars, however, are not rushing off to dragon lairs to ask them their opinion. Suffice to say that elves emerged well before the beginning of recorded history. And they should know – they were the ones who began recording it.

There are five kindred of elves, but they all share common physical characteristics. They are lithe and tall, with an average height of 6 feet. Elves are agile and dexterous, with excellent vision that can pierce the darkness and even better hearing. Their most famous physical characteristic is, of course, their pointed ears. They are a comely race that others often find hauntingly beautiful.

Yet elves seem tinged with sadness.

Perhaps it is because they live so much longer than other races. Elves live through more heartbreak and tragedy than any human ever could. They can live up to 300 years if their lives are not cut short by violence or calamity. It is a rare elf that lives a full lifespan, however, for the world around them is ugly and brutish. Elves do not always seek war, but too often it finds them.

