

Garreth Palegold's Backstory

If you were to sit in a certain tavern in Whillip one evening, you could perhaps meet a certain unusual Duergar. He's known to the others there as a regular, but perhaps not to the level of a friend. His want is to come in, slap down a few silver before the barkeep, and drink until it runs out.

He more often than not sits in a corner, if it's open. If it's not, he'll usually huff and act grumpy and then sit close to it, hoping to grab it if it opens up.

He stands maybe four feet tall, with his form that kind of stout girth that all dwarves seem to carry. That is where most of the 'usual' things you'd expect end. For a Duergar, he is quite unusual. First, with his mere presence so far from the Underdark. Second, with his long, gray beard tied in a rather surface dwarf braid. Third, with that braid having a bright streak of what could pass as spun gold tracing one of the braids of it, spiraling downward. And fourth, and most unusual of all, that he has hair on his expected-to-be-bald Duergar head, again adorned with a brilliant yellow streak starting at his right temple, an inch in width, that extends to the back of his head and down to his mid back.

On his first drink, none come to him. Nor his second. Nor his third. But if you were to come to him while he is deep in his cups, you could perhaps jostle a conversation out of him.

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Gruff, but not mean-spirited in manner. A polished stone that fell and was covered in grit could be an apt comparison.

Stay yet longer, past his bawdiness and bravado, his ramblings about what he could do with but a handful of noble dwarves at his side, or his poor attempts at poetry (Rest your shields, lean on stones, listen and always remember, long are the arms and legs of men, yet still longer, the Dwarven members!) and you could get him in a more reflective state and hear the tale recounted below.

Though one would be cautioned to maybe apply a hearty cup of disbelief to some of the more hyperbolic aspects of his tale.

"...aye, my Da was a smith. The greatest to ever be found, beneath stone or sky! He could make a' anvil sing a song as never been heard before! Like a symphony! A true master, my Da.

I worked with him, aye. Was born and watching in the forge before me beard even grew. As I got older, I tried to help, to learn. If only I'd known how things would go...it didn't last very long, though memories I still hold dearly to me heart.

The lads in the forge, they were the same as my Ma and my brudders and sisters. We were as a family in those days. All my friends, all watching out for the wee ball of chaos I was. And then...this.

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This fookin' streak of gold. Ruined a good damn thing. The Lords of the Darklands where we lived in Dunspeirrin...my Da didn't think they'd take kindly to it. Not sure why. But my da was a wise man I thought, he knows best. He knows best. Heh. Stupid kid I was then. But I'm jumpin ahead.

My Da, he decided we had to get out of there. To leave me home, me family, everything that I knew. Only me mother was havin none of it. She and the others, they weren't leaving, and she told her Da.

I don't remember much then. Just being woken in the night, tossed in a sack, and then the beatin thumps of riding jostling me around till I passed out. When I woke, I was alone with me da, campin in some cavern off the beaten path. But slopin up. Up? I didn't know what my da was doin, nor would he say anything beyond a 'quiet' and a good whallop on me head.

My beard was maybe, oooh, an inch or so by then. Dwarven peach fuzz you sunners would call it. I was maybe 19. I dun rightly recollect. But up we went. And up some more.

Sometimes we'd hide a bit, sometimes run. I never saw much, bein in a bloody bag, but I felt it - best believe I felt when we sped up, harhar.

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A few times I heard my da talking. Not to other dwarf voices. Maybe some of the spidey elves - never did care for them - or the little dwarves...yeah, the gnomes...but I didn't see. Don't think it was a gnome..voice was too...lilty. Hells, too beautiful for one of the elves either. Something else.

But I never saw't. Too busy being acquainted with me bag. But I thought about it alot. Still do. And then after...oh fuck, I dunno...a week? Maybe three? We were at the surface. But just me and me da. No body to the voice.

That sun. The first time I saw it I wanted to crawl back in me bag and never leave! Not so bad now, but those first two decades topside. It was a rough patch.

Rougher still that we got picked up by some fuckin slaver scumfucks in the cloth of a healer as we were just gettin our wits. Caged us right quick, took us to Hillsfar. Aye, that shitehole.

I bear no love to the slavers and their masters, those who revel in the blood of those who can't stop what's pushed on them in that arena, but I'd be lyin to say I didn't have it good there.

My da, when they realized he was a smith, a dwarven smith, a GREAT dwarven smith, they put him in a nice little house surrounded by walls and guards.

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Kept in workin in a forge from sunup to sundown. But a 'nice' one as if t'would excuse the rest. Maybe it did to him. I nary know. But I had the days to meself. And the nights. Books. Took a bit to get the hang of common, but once I got it, was me favorite tool. Readin' any book I could get me hands on, that they deemed 'appropriate' for me to have.

But bein in me da's house, we got more than any other was like to get. 'Spose if I had stayed, I'd be workin a bellows there too by now. But the books. Everything. History, the gods, the mysteries of the world - I love it.

A good tale sustained me fuller than a slave meal ever did. Knowin' there's an outside. Knowin' I'd get there. That we'd get there. We. Heh. My fookin da. Suppose I woulda known what his weapons were for if I ever thought about it. But I didn't. Why would I?

My da'd always say "Look how good ye have it compared to the slave'ens out dere - we're fortunate by the arm of a smith, boy." 'Fortunate.' Funny way of sayin livin off da blood of innocents. Because we were. Those weapons went to the arena, givin the nobles their right proper ration o' bloodshed so they didn't get too cranky.

Gods forbid they not see some nonhuman die at least once a fortnight or they'd get right ornery I think.

First time I saw the fights was the last time I saw the fights. Last time I was in Hillsfar. Last time I saw my da.

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He knew what he was doin, didn't fight it. Maybe he'll say he did it for me, but don't believe his shite. He did it for his ego. Because he was a smith, and a smith has to smith.

Couldn't take a stand. No, no - couldn't do that. So I ran. Escaped. Maybe they looked for me, but I never saw hide nor hair of it.

Now? Wandered a bit, city here, caravan there. Worked as a smith, aye. Or a mason. Or a laborer. Wasn't picky. Just gettin to the next place I'm goin to figure out the next place I was gon' go.

Home? What's home? Underdark? Better to walk a dark tunnel.

Hillsfar? Already gone down that shaft, not doin that again. Wound up here maybe...five years ago? Somethin like that? Met ole Bryce. Nice as a human goes. Gave me meals, made me better.

Somethin nice in me core when I swing a hammer. I understand that at least about my da. It pays enough. That and gettin fights here for a bit of coin. That's a fun too. Not too chatty are ye? Eh, it's fine. I'll chat enough for us both..."