Draconspire Dwarfholds

While the face of Tharstelding is ruled by humans in their mighty cities, the depths are ruled by the Dwarf Lords in their massive halls. While these nations under nations are not as well traveled or sung as the surface lands, they are no less rich in adventure, culture, plot and intrigue. Below is a short summary of each major Dwarfhold as cataloged and sworn recent by Bork the Beardless.

Below the Heman Dal Mountains is the mighty realm of Ikstall where King Cul Frostfold rules from Kylmantol (Metropolis 40,708).

By far the most populous of the dwarven centers throughout Draconspire, King Cul's people are stalwart and strong, but considered by many to be harsh and unforgiving. But that is only because of where they live. In some places of the world, especially as deep as Kylmantol and its mines, only the strongest and the hardest may survive, and the dwarves of the Heman Dal have learned to flourish. Each dwarven family remains closely knit; often many generations of an extended family will work a single mine together. Children are raised not only by their parents, but by all the members of the family. Very often they will live for a time with uncles or aunts, graybeards or rock-kin, to learn their names and their part of the family tree. In this patriarchic society, when a woman marries a man, she must first live with his family (and yes, all the various members thereof) for a year, until she can recite the primary roll-call and integrate their lineage with that of her family's. Then they are married. It is not uncommon that she will become large with child during this time, and in some cases the patronage of the child is questioned, but the Heman Dal dwarves do not condone adultery, and if it can be shown that she has got the child from anyone but her fiancé, she is put to death.

The warriors of the Heman Dal spend much of their time in battle with the "trial" for which the mountains are nicknamed: the constant threat from monsters and aberrations that live deep within the stones. It is said that other creatures, fouler and more dangerous than the common beholder or illithid, surface occasionally; dark terrors from an older time, when dwarves were cruel and vicious in their fight for survival against the dragon lords of the surface world.

Below the Thunderpeaks lay the twelve clans of Qnarr.
Many long years ago, the thriving nation of dwarves underneath the land of Pax Thallos lived a rich and full life that was not always underground. But one day there was a terrible rumbling from the surface. The earth shook and the sky became revealed to them. A great city once stood above their home, but in that terrible day the city fell in upon them. Those that witnessed it told stories of what they saw, and those stories turned to legend—a mage of great power battled a dragon—a dragon greater than any had seen. One of the elder wyrms they thought him to be, from the time before times—one of the sires of the land. In the horrible days that followed, many of the mines were caved in. The stones were hewn by powerful magics; the earth spewed forth its issue in protest to the battle that raged. And in all of this, the dwarves fled deeper and deeper, struggling desperately to find shelter. In the aftermath of all that had happened, the dwarves were scattered throughout the holdfasts of the underdark—small families and groups struggling to survive on what they could find in the rubble. Caves they once knew were no more, and they found themselves trapped in the dark. And so they began to dig, and dig, and generation followed generation as upward, ever upward they dug. One family found another, and they in turn found a third. By the time they broke through to the surface, twelve families had survived the ordeal. They looked out onto a land they no longer recognized, for where once stood the mighty capital of Pax Thallos, a broad range of sharp rocked mountains now stood. They were buffeted by great storms where once there had been only gentle rains and warming sun. They retreated back into the holdfasts of their mines, and swore a pact (Qnarr, in the dwarf tongue) that they would guard their homes against any such danger that could destroy their world as it had once before. For generations thereafter, the dwarves of the twelve tribes guarded their homes and made them beautiful, and occasionally braved the storms of the high peaks to tend the resting places of the ghosts of Servio's ancient kingdom. Now, though they little remember why, the dwarves still tend the graves of Servio's empire, keeping the ghosts at peace.

Below The Spine sleeps the ruined empire of Aaeriock Bor.
No greater empire existed on or in Draconspire like that of Aaeriock Bor. The eldest of the eldest, the first dwarves, the empire of Aaeriock Bor maintained the annals of their people back to the very beginning, even unto the days of their creation and the flight from the dragons. But a terrible evil befell them—an evil, some say, that could be even more perilous than the dragons that hunted them in olden times. In the wake of the desolation, nothing remained of the great empire except for hollow halls and gutted homes, whispering of the greatness that once was. Haunted they are, and full of pain and sorrow. Some say they're full of immense wealth as well. The fabled halls glittering with polished diamonds like massive fields of stars survive in tales and legends spread by surface-dwelling bards. Few of the adventurers return, but t hose that do return do not try to belie the bards' tales. But there are some now that say the ancient empire was not destroyed—that it but sleeps. Not entirely annihilated, small splinter-groups are growing strong again, and seeking to delve back to their ancient homes. Fostered by an oral tradition harkening glorious tales of might and majesty, they remember what they once were, and sing during birthing vigils of the return of an Aaeriock heir to the mithral throne.

Below the Calemil Mountains King Tarnisk Stonecrown rules from his Ironclad fortress Dull'marr (Large City 10,601)
Dull'marr is the hub of a mighty wheel of industry deep below the northwestern borders of Xar Zanth. Some of the finest of dwarven craftsmanship flows out of the Calemil mountains on a daily basis to be shipped all over Draconspire. It is rumored that the open trade has afforded Tarnisk's dwarves vast amounts of wealth. But it can only be conjecture, as the dwarves of the Calemils are reluctant to allow visitors within their halls. The secrets of their craftsmanship must be maintained, after all.
Of late, the four nations of Draconspire have grown pensive. Trade out of the Calemils has dwindled to a mere trickle, and it is said that King Tarnisk is plotting something within the confines of his stone crown. No one knows what could be happening, but when trade is so affected, everyone suffers. Quieter and more anxious rumor speaks of a dark evil growing under the Calemils—a darkness against which King Tarnisk must pit his people. The same rumors doubt his success in this upcoming venture, and whisper of the doom that destroyed the halls of King Myylith.

Below the Golden Hills are the broken halls of King Myylith.
The Wind has shadows, some say; a shadow that can take form and hungers for the living things deep below. Bah! What childish tripe, you say, surely you do not believe in such tales. Certainly King Myylith did not, nor his happy folk that dwelled under the Golden Hills. A mighty dwarven empire there once was, that delved deeply into the earth for the precious gold that formed there. But something flowed from the dark places—something that moved on the air. There is no wind in the dwarf mines but what wind the dwarves make, it is said. Did the dwarves make the shadow wind that took them and laid waste to their great nation, or was it simply lying in wait? Was it a sickness, and not this fell wind that legend has made it? Did corruption cause the dwarven nation to eat itself alive? Questions remain unanswered, for the dwarf halls were closed off and the dwarves moved above ground. They fear the holdfasts of their ancestors, because, they say, the wind has shadows in the deep places.