

ALLIES & ADVERSARIES

GOLDENSCALE

HOST

IN ANY WAR-TORN LAND, the Goldenscale Host sells their services as a disciplined, fearsome mercenary company. Their fighting force is composed solely of dragonborn, though their non-combatant support staff includes other races. In the course of a campaign, the Goldenscale Host might be allies, foes, or both at different times. To their friends, they are bold and capable; to enemies, they are implacable but honorable.



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COMMAND STRUCTURE

The Host's command structure includes four significant grades. From highest to lowest, these are the Host-Captain, ten Lieutenants, forty Sergeants, and typically around 800 recruits. At the start of major contracts, the Host may grow to as many as 1,200 recruits under arms. In recent memory, its numbers following a shattering defeat fell as low as 188.

Outside the fighting forces, the Host has one support staff member for each recruit, and two for each higher-ranked member. Around a third of these are detached from the Host to manage its supply chain, contract negotiations, accountancy, and the like. Dragonborn are about 40% of the support staff, while the rest of their number belong to whatever local race is easy to recruit.

Centuries ago, the Host's traditions forbade dragonborn of any ancestry other than gold from becoming a lieutenant or host-captain. In crisis following a defeat, the host-captain of the day elevated dragonborn of the other metallic ancestries to the lieutenancy, and designated one of them as his successor. Still later, a long war in a region that held only chromatic dragonborn forced the Host to open its officer ranks to them. At present, it is still impossible for non-dragonborn to enlist or advance, but they can fight alongside the Host for pay as auxiliary forces. It is entirely possible that future need could change the Host's bylaws once again.

PERSONALITIES

The following characters showcase different perspectives within the Goldenscale Host. Each includes two story hooks, one for when the Host is friendly toward the PCs' cause and one for

Player Characters as Goldenscales

Dragonborn characters with a military background might be former members of the Goldenscale Host who mustered out after their contracts expired, or current members detached from the force but still answering to the host-captain. Present the PC with conflicting loyalties, or allow them to call upon the Host for support, in keeping with their background's feature. To strengthen these ties further, use one of the personalities below as a Bond for the character.

when they are opposed. Host soldiers seldom hold grudges for long: yesterday's enemy might well be tomorrow's comrade-in-arms.

HOST-CAPTAIN MYRRA PRISKESHAI

(Pronounced MEE-ruh PRIS-kuh-shy)

As the first host-captain of red dragon ancestry, Myrra Priskeshai is under pressure to prove to the metallic dragonborn of the Host that she is neither avaricious nor tyrannical, and can be as wise and enlightened as any gold dragonborn. The Host ignored generations of petty, corrupt host-captains of gold and other metallic ancestries, but for some of them, elevating a red to the highest position of command may be a bridge too far.

- ▶ **Traits.** I hoard words like coins, never spending one when a gesture would suffice. I make plans that extend beyond my own expected lifespan.
- ▶ **Ideal.** Independence. I will lead the Host to greatness even if the metallics are against me. (Chaotic)
- ▶ **Bond.** I will prove to everyone that I am as good as any gold dragonborn, no matter the cost.
- ▶ **Flaw.** I hesitate and overthink decisions, especially at times of crisis.

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Ally Story Hook

Following a victory, the Goldenscale Host is accused of looting and pillaging the civilian populace without permission from their employer. Myrra's reputation is on the line, and she turns to the PCs to find out who committed these crimes. Perhaps the trail leads to a group of enemy partisans, or to a corrupt senior lieutenant of the Goldenscale Host.

Adversary Story Hook

Myrra is not above convincing a prospective employer that war is in their best interests. As part of a broader conflict, the PCs must persuade a neutral noble to join the war on their side, or at least stay out of it. When they arrive, however, the noble is in the last day of negotiations with Myrra to hire the Host and enter the war on the other side. Can the PCs change the noble's mind, or even convince the Host-Captain to switch sides?

SERGEANT INSHEY THE MUSE

As one of the more senior sergeants of the Host, Inshey represents institutional memory and the morale of the rank and file. She cultivates the traits expected of her brass ancestry: she is inquisitive and affable. Her career is nearing its end, however, and she grows desperate to fill in the gaps in her lore of the Host's history.

- ▶ **Traits.** I form strong emotional bonds through any stimulating intellectual conversation. I speak fondly of long-dead dragons, as humans would of beloved aunts and uncles.
- ▶ **Ideal.** Greed. I think of myself as a completionist. (Evil)
- ▶ **Bond.** My life's work is a series of volumes on the history of the Goldenscale Host.
- ▶ **Flaw.** I recklessly endanger others to achieve my goals.

Ally Story Hook

There's no better member of the Host to hire PCs to explore a ruin, as long as there's any reason to suspect that they might find a tidbit of the lost

history of the Goldenscale Host. She could also hire the PCs to negotiate for information from a creature old enough to remember that history firsthand, such as a dragon, fey, or fiend.

Adversary Story Hook

The PCs acquire a book of dreadful secrets and dire prophecies as part of another adventure. When Inshey gets wind of it, she fears that they will do as adventurers so often do, destroying it before she can scour it for details of the Host's history. She takes steps to wrest it from them, or punish them if they have acted precipitously. If they simply give it to her, the tome's dark power takes control, forcing the PCs to stop her.

RECRUIT JORATHAR "JOR" ANNIGOVA

A blue dragonborn with a bold, devil-may-care attitude, Jor is forever getting into and out of mortal peril. He could not care less about advancing through the ranks—he wants plunder, good friends, and prodigious volumes of ale, in no particular order. Underneath that exterior, he knows that he won't live to old age as a career foot soldier, and wants his death to have some deeper meaning.

- ▶ **Traits.** I've never abandoned a friend in need. I don't get too clever with plans—the direct way is usually best.
- ▶ **Ideal.** Freedom. Mercenaries live fast and die young, so let's have a good time doing it. (Chaotic)
- ▶ **Bond.** I seek a cause worth dying for, and fear I might not live long enough to find it.
- ▶ **Flaw.** My gambling habits will get me in real trouble one of these days.

Ally Story Hook

Jor invites the PCs out for an evening of carousing, but things take a turn for the worse when another gambler accuses Jor of cheating, pulls a knife, and gets killed as Jor defends himself. The gambler had ties to local organized crime, and the trouble falls on Jor and the PCs alike. Will they throw him to the dogs, or stand by him?



Adversary Story Hook

When Jor's commanders play by the rules, he assumes they wish they didn't have to, and want someone to take care of their problems boldly. If it costs him his life, at least it would be glorious. When a new truce offers hope for a war's end, Jor and his friends try to take out the opposing leadership, so that their employer can bargain from a stronger position.

SUPPORT STAFF TAIZELL "STONY" BRIDGER

Stony Bridger is one of the minority of humans in the Host's support staff. At need, she might be a medic, courier, smith, brewer, scrounger, or diplomatic envoy. No matter the task, she completes it with speed and skill. She joined the Host after running away from a terrible family situation, signing on for anything that would take her far away.

- ▶ **Traits.** Anything worth doing is worth doing right, even if it takes twice as long. Hagglng is my favorite kind of game.
- ▶ **Ideal.** People. When I choose between real,

live people and ephemeral ideals, people win every time. (Neutral)

- ▶ **Bond.** I owe the Host a debt for giving me a way out of the place I was born.
- ▶ **Flaw.** I'm sufficiently overworked that I'm impatient and rude to others.

Ally Story Hook

When her superior officers decide against paying protection money to the local syndicate just to keep their supply lines open, Stony looks to the PCs to go outside the law. The Host has a lot of mouths to feed; she doesn't care if the PCs scare off the syndicate or "requisition" the food from elsewhere, as long as it reaches the recruits.

Adversary Story Hook

Stony maintains a network of contacts even through enemy lines. The merchants who sell to her under the table get caught. When they're killed in their cells awaiting trial, the local magistrate asks the PCs to investigate. Is Stony ruthlessly protecting a deeper conspiracy, or is there greater motive or connection between them?

NEW CREATURES

Goldenscale Recruit

Medium humanoid (dragonborn), any alignment

Armor Class 15 (scale mail)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Athletics +6, Perception +2

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison (by ancestry)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Draconic Ancestry. The recruit belongs to one of the ten dragonborn ancestries, which determines the color of their scales and the shape, energy type, and saving throw of their breath weapon.

Pike Hedge. When armed with a reach weapon and adjacent to another Goldenscale recruit or officer armed with a reach weapon, the Goldenscale recruit can make an opportunity attack against any creature that enters its reach. When the Goldenscale recruit hits with a pike attack as part of a readied action, they deal an additional 1d10 piercing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Goldenscale recruit makes two pike attacks.

Pike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Handaxe. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/60, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The Goldenscale recruit exhales its breath weapon, determined by its Draconic Ancestry. The saving throw DC of the breath weapon is 12, and it deals 3d6 damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.

Goldenscale Officer

Medium humanoid (dragonborn), any alignment

Armor Class 15 (scale mail)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison (by ancestry)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Draconic Ancestry. The Goldenscale Officer belongs to one of the ten dragonborn ancestries, which determines the color of their scales and the shape, energy type, and saving throw of their breath weapon.

Pike Hedge. When armed with a reach weapon and adjacent to another Goldenscale recruit or officer armed with a reach weapon, the Goldenscale officer can make an opportunity attack against any creature that enters its reach. When the Goldenscale officer hits with a pike attack as part of a readied action, it deals an additional 1d10 piercing damage.

Forward! (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action, the Goldenscale officer chooses one friendly creature that can see or hear it. That creature can spend its reaction to move up to half its speed and make an attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Goldenscale officer makes two pike attacks.

Pike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Handaxe. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The Goldenscale officer exhales its breath weapon, determined by its Draconic Ancestry. The saving throw DC of the breath weapon is 12, and it deals 3d6 damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success. 