



# a DOZEN GOBLINS AND ORCS

BY PHILIP REED

As a gamemaster, you've no doubt already made use of both goblins and orcs many, many times in your game sessions. These ubiquitous humanoid monsters are the go-to monsters for many of us (I know I'm guilty of dragging them out quite frequently in all sorts of RPG planning), and that means we can never have enough new ideas for how to use the beasts in an adventure.

Within these pages are a dozen different goblin and orc encounters. These encounter ideas should prove useful if goblins and orcs are as common in your world as they are in most fantasy campaigns.

As with many of the entries in the *A Dozen . . .* series, *A Dozen Goblins and Orcs* exists for one reason: To inspire you, the GM, either when planning for a game session or when you find that the players have strayed from your carefully-crafted adventure.

**NOTE:** As roleplaying has branched from its origin point over the last few decades, everyone has developed their own look and feel for these classic monsters. From terrifying to bumbling and kinda silly, both goblins and orcs can fill as many different roles as any "human" or PC race. The best suggestion I can make is that you treat goblins and orcs as best fits your personal tastes.


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# ANATOMY OF a CREATURE

1. The orc or goblin's classification.
2. Each creature includes a single illustration.
3. An opening block of text that may be used as read aloud text when introducing the creature to the player characters..
4. The creature/event description, that is freeform and very open to interpretation. My goal with each and every creature described within these pages is to provide you, the GM, with an idea that you can expand to suit your campaign.

**NOTE:** Goblin vs goblinoid. The two are interchangeable; something that is a goblin is – for the purposes of this text – also identified as goblinoid or a goblinoid.



**1** **Goblin Delver**

**2**

**3** As you enter the dungeon for treasures, you come across a fellow adventurer – a goblin – who is digging in a small chamber. The goblin turns to you and raises a finger to its lips. “Look in its eyes causing you to halt in your tracks. “You’ll wake it,” the goblin says to you. It points to a dark shape in the distant corner and then returns to digging the hole for what purpose you do not know.

The goblin introduces himself as Glob Blozz and says that he is a dungeoneer, an adventurer who has dedicated his life to exploring the tombs, labyrinths, and subterranean lairs of the known and unknown world. Blozz is experienced, having visited a few dozen different dungeons in his many years as a delver.

**4** The goblin motions again to the corner where the party can see a sleeping creature made of stone. Those who possess knowledge of monsters and elemental beasts recognize the sleeping monster as a xorn, a powerful monster that can move swiftly through solid earth and stone. The planar monsters are an uncommon sight, and it is unknown what could have brought it to this particular dungeon.

“The thing is asleep, but it takes only one wrong move to bring disaster down on us all,” Blozz says as he continues digging into the rocky soil of the passageway. The goblin treasure hunter has followed leads to this spot and is certain that a chest of gold is buried several feet below the surface. “You help me get this out, and deal with that thing if it wakes,” the goblin says, “and I’ll share the riches with you. Even split for us all.”

The monster will, of course, awaken long before the goblin manages to recover the treasure chest. He will yell for the heroes to fight off the monster, insisting that he has almost reached the chest. Blozz is a liar, though, and the instant he grasps the chest he will do his best to escape and abandon the adventurers.

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## USING THE CREATURES

The dozen orc and goblin descriptions that follow are each more an encounter idea than they are a detailed non-player character. At times, the orcs and goblins have been named, but the most important part of each is the story ideas that the gamemaster should take as inspiration when preparing an encounter to throw at the players.

As with all of the entries in the **A Dozen . . .** series, the pages of this PDF exist for one reason: to spark the gamemaster's imagination and to give the GM just enough of an idea to make it something new and different during the session. The last thing I would ever want to do is force a GM to follow anything exactly as I have written it. Please always take my ideas and change them to fit your needs.

When sitting down to craft an encounter, regardless if it is inspired by one of these pages or an idea of your own, you will need tools to both inspire you and to record your planned encounter. The various PDFs in the A Dozen . . . series are, I hope, the tools that inspire you. As to those tools to help in recording your planned encounter, you may use a notebook, index cards, a computer file, or anything that works best for your needs.

If you're in search of somewhere to record your encounter ideas when designing a dungeon, I'd like to direct you to one of my own books: the **Dungeon Crafter's Sketch Book** is a collection of blank graph pages that also includes several random tables to give you ideas. The book is available in two editions – hexes and squares – and in PDF and print-on-demand. Please check it out!



# ORC SCOUT

*You encounter the orc far from its companions as you and the creature are both walking through the desert. It stops and waits for you, waving a friendly greeting as you close the distance. "It is dangerous to travel these wastelands alone," the orc says. "Would you mind if I join you in the trek across the desert?"*

*"I am Gulm Noradd, scout and warrior of Clan Noradd. My people are dying, falling prey to the magical sickness of Mage Rot, and I now journey to Fort Dragonteeth to bring back a cure before the arcane illness kills my tribe. I do not wish to fight. I only desire to safely traverse this desert and return swiftly to my people with the cure that will save them all."*

If pressed, Noradd explains that his people were subjected to the sickness after they opened a sealed dungeon chamber. The orcs failed to heed the warning that was inscribed on the door that they smashed open, and within moments the magical sickness had infected those orc explorers who were there.

Within hours of the group of orcs returning to their village, Mage Rot had infected the majority of the orcs. The sickness weakens those affected by its magic, reducing all statistics by roughly half and stripping them of the ability to do much more than moan, cry, and suffer in extreme agony.

Gulm Naradd was away from the village when the sickness swept through it, and on his return he managed to learn of the plague without falling to its magical power. He now races to Fort Dragonteeth to buy healing potions that will eradicate the sickness and restore the health of his people. Will the adventurers help him in his mission, or will they see him only as another orc?

# GOBLINOID assassin



*You're certain that something has been following you for the last few hours, a creature unknown sticking to the shadows and hiding behind the rocks and cavernous twists and turns of the labyrinth. Working as a team, you and your fellow adventurers manage to outwit your stalker and catch a glimpse of the goblinoid before it hides.*

Armed with a hand crossbow, several daggers, and carrying a few healing potions, you and your companions gain the initiative on a creature calling itself Geets Stord when exploring the dungeon.

*"Hired to murder you I have been,"* the goblin proclaims when pressured. *"Murder you I will,"* the beast screams as it struggles to escape. The goblin is fast and dangerous, clearly having been through terrible events in the past; you notice that it has a prosthetic leg under its robes and the thing is capable of moving quickly and silently. Whatever you and your friends do, you must not allow Stord to escape or the goblin will find a way to perform its assignment and kill each member of the party. The goblin is alone and will do anything it can to escape.

*"The master demands your death, scum, and Geets will do all that he can to please the master."*

The goblin is insane, having been left alone in the subterranean world for so long that it no longer knows what the upper world looks like. The player characters aren't even the target of the assassin; Geets Stord failed in his mission several years ago and has since then trailed any who enter the dungeon. Stord has killed a handful of adventurers over the years, each time certain that these are the ones he has been tasked with murdering. If the party uses magic to search the monster's mind, they find only that the goblin was brainwashed a decade ago and spells cast long ago have erased what memories the beast may have once had.



# GOBLINOID BRUTE

*Your night of rest is interrupted when a large, angry beast rushes from the woods and attacks. It's a goblinoid of some sort, but not one that you or your companions recognize. Almost as if a goblin were bred with a giant. Whatever it is, it may be slow and stupid, but it is obviously strong and a threat that must be handled.*

The goblinoid brute stands over ten-feet tall and is a screaming, snarling monster of a beast with an extremely low intelligence. The brute is manipulated by pure goblins who teach the brute from an early age that it is a lesser form of creature that exists only to serve and protect those true goblins who are better than it.

A goblinoid brute is a fighter more skilled with fists, clubs, and makeshift weapons than it is any form of crafted weapon. Brutes wear little or no armor and they have been trained to fight until they collapse; the brute wants nothing more than kindness from those goblins it has lived with its entire life and will do anything to earn pleasant words and encouragement.

A goblinoid brute is rarely alone, often part of a larger group of goblins that are on a raid or otherwise planning to kill someone. The brute follows the others without question, attacking when told to attack.

If the adventurers encounter a goblinoid brute on its own, the creature will seem shy and nervous, too scared of strangers to react with anything but fear. If the party of heroes shows the beast kindness and treats it well, they may be able to convince the monster to trust them.

A goblinoid brute on its own has likely been abandoned by its family of goblins. The nasty little beasts enjoy taking a brute that has disappointed them into the forest and leaving it to die without them. Goblins are cruel, twisted monsters.

The goblinoid brute will never fit in with society, though such beasts can be cared for and nurtured by those gentle and patient enough to help an abandoned brute. The brute's memory and intelligence are limited, though, and the beast may forget its friends and companions if it is separated from them by more than a few weeks of time.



# ORC WARRIOR

*The orc spots you at the same time that you see it, but you haven't chance for more than a shout of warning before the creature runs toward you and the others. Axes swinging wildly, the orc attacks without even taking a second to ask itself whether or not it is skilled enough to take on an experienced group of heroes.*

Towering and threatening, the orc warrior is afraid of nothing and will put everything it has into killing the party of adventurers when it encounters them. The orc is part of a larger force and there's a chance that the sounds of battle will attract other orcs to the fight. If the PCs do not defeat the monster within 2d3+1 rounds, another 3d6 orcs join in the fight.

An orc warrior is taller, stronger, and more dangerous than the typical orc the party may have confronted in the past. These monsters wear heavy armor and strike out with the twin axes that they carry, each one of which would be a two-handed weapon for your average human or dwarven warrior. The orc keeps the blades of the axes sharpened and ready at all times, and a small number of the monsters use magic axes in battle.

Unlike some other orcs, who may be willing to talk and negotiate with the heroes, the orc warrior is driven to kill all who it meets and the monsters will rarely engage in conversation. If the group does manage to convince the warrior to talk, it will be grumpy and mean, and the slightest offense will push the orc to drop all of its resistance to its desire to kill everyone in the group.

Those who study the culture and history of orcs say that warriors are a special bloodline of the orc race. Their ancestor, the great orc king Ushnar Olodagh, was cursed and always in a bloodthirsty rage to the point he sometimes killed other orcs if no suitable opponents were nearby. That rage courses through the blood of the orc warriors that live today, and they are proud to continue the battle of Olodagh to all they meet to this day.

# GOBLIN DELVER



*As you search the dungeon for treasures, you come across a fellow adventurer – a goblin - who is digging in a small chamber. The goblin turns to you and raises a finger to its lips, the look in its eyes causing you to halt in your tracks. “You’ll wake it,” the goblin says to you. It points to a dark shape in the distant corner and then returns to digging the hole for what purpose you do not know.*

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# ORC CAVALRYMAN

*“Death to you and your kin!” The creature’s shout is your first sign that the day is about to get interesting. A charging warboar, with orc rider, approaches fast and you have only seconds to prepare for the monster’s assault.*

A skilled and experienced fighter, Wrug Farfu has spent years with his warboar, Grunt. The pair share an arcane bond, a connection that allows them to communicate through telepathy which makes the pair far more dangerous than the usual orc cavalrman.

This magic bond exists for one reason: Farfu’s earrings have been joined to Grunt’s mind through sorcery, and for as long as the orc wears the earrings, the two know each others every thought. This makes them effective in battle, allowing the two to operate as one.

In game terms, the link grants Farfu bonuses to attack and defense when mounted, as the warboar moves quickly to adapt to the orc’s every thought.

When traveling across the plains, the group accidentally comes to close to an orc encampment which leads the orcs to send out their cavalrymen. The 1d4+2 orcs – all on warboars – are led by Farfu, who screams orders at those beneath his command while doing all he can to slaughter the interlopers.

Farfu and his orcish underlings have no interest in taking captives; they wish only to kill those who would dare to approach the orc camp without permission.

If the party defeats Farfu and his group, the orc’s earrings may be claimed by one of the PCs. The earrings detect as magical, but uncovering the power of the earrings will require research and careful study of the item.



# GOBLIN CATAPULT



*On the road far from town, you come across a group of goblins who are trying to push a catapult out of a hole of thick, nasty mud. The beasts are so wrapped up in their task that they fail to notice you or your friends, which gives all of you time to carefully study the situation and to act as you feel best fits your needs.*

The goblins, 3d3+1 in number, are clearly not strong enough to easily move the catapult on their own. Observant adventurers will notice the thick straps dangling from the front of the war machine, each broken and useless. Once, perhaps recently, these straps clearly connected to a beast of some sort that was no doubt pulling the catapult.

How the goblins respond will depend entirely on how the party engages with the situation.

## **Combat Encounter**

If they choose to attack the goblins, the heroes gain the surprise and may each attack once before the action shifts to standard combat rounds.

The goblins are armed with short swords, daggers, slings and stones, and wearing leather and padded armor. The creatures are goblin soldiers with some experience in battle, but they are not the most-skilled or the bravest of fighters. If one of their number is killed, the other goblins will seek to escape.

## **Non-Combat Encounter**

A group of heroes who attempts talking, rather than fighting, will find that the goblins are receptive to trading information. The group is hauling the catapult to a nearby town to trade it for food and medicine for their people. Their home, a goblin village a few days' ride away, has been stricken by illness and the goblins wish only to help their people.



# ORC ARCHER

*An arrow strikes the tree directly in front of you, followed by a second that almost rips through your skull, the narrow miss whistling in your ears. You drop to the ground, grabbing your weapon and scanning the tree line for any sign of the source of the attack. In the distance, you spot the orc as it draws a third arrow from its quiver.*

*"You won't escape," the orc screams at you as it fires a third arrow. "You've terrorized us long enough, and I'm going to show the others that you are no match for us. We will put an end to your abusive ways and free ourselves from the evil hold you have on us!"*

The orc continues screaming as it fires arrow after arrow, the beast constantly talking about how it will do all that it can to free the orcs from some unknown power.

If the party chooses to fight, the orc will be easily slaughtered since it has no companions. Searching the body they find bow and arrows, a few bits of jewelry, and a letter demanding the orc go to Castle Clawshank.

If the group tries to talk with the orc, they learn that its name is Zugarod Ortguth and the creature thinks that they are from Castle Clawshank, a nearby fortress that grew from the rocky soil overnight several months ago. The orc's yells as it keeps firing suggest that the castle appeared magically and that those within the castle have been forcing the orc and its people to work in the mines beneath the castle.

Can the party convince the orc that they are wanderers and not from the castle? And if they do convince the orc, will the adventurers investigate the situation and seek to free the orcs from whatever masters rule this strange, magical fortress from another world?



# GOBLINOID TERROR

*The monster rises from its haunches from the cavern floor and screams, tossing a half-eaten head to the side as it grabs its spear. The beast is a goblinoid of some sorts, though you do not recognize it . . . and there's no time to chat with your companions and compare notes as the terror lashes out with the spear.*

The goblinoid terror is unnatural, created by the dark magic of goblin warlocks who force their victim to submit to the will of a cosmic power of unimaginable power. The goblin warlock who creates a goblinoid terror gains complete and total mastery of the wicked, strange monster that must obey every mental command of their new master. What the cosmic horror that executes the transformation of the victim gains is unknown, though some sages speculate that the strange, otherworldly power wants only to inflict as much suffering on the universe as possible. If this is true, the transformation of a victim – which can be goblin, human, elf, or any intelligent race – into a goblinoid terror must bring the cosmic being great joy.

Goblin warlocks who control such terrors use them as guards, ordering the monsters to stand watch and prevent any intruders from entering the warlock's domain. If the party encounters a goblinoid terror, they can be certain that a goblin warlock is close by.

In battle, the terror is unwilling to back down. Even if the creature's limbs are hacked from its body, it will thrash and lash out, trying with every ounce of strength that remains to attack the intruders who threaten its master.

The transformation cannot be undone by anything short of the will of a god or goddess. It is better to kill a terror and release it from misery than to let it live.



# GOBLIN SLASHER

*Its sword dripping with blood as it turns to face you, the monster kicks the body of the slain elf out of its way and raises its sword in a threatening gesture. It is a goblin of some kind, yes, but one that is taller and looks far more aggressive than those you have encountered before.*

Goblin wizards and sorcerers manipulate the unborn creature when it is in its mother's womb, using their twisted spells and rituals to transform the soon-to-be goblin into something taller, stronger, and more dangerous than the typical goblin fighter or warrior. From birth, the goblin slasher is trained by the tribe's best warriors and those that survive the training grow to be as tall as elves, as sturdy as dwarves, and as dangerous as the most violent of orcs and ogres.

Sages estimate that only one in every hundred or so attempts by the goblins to bring a slasher into existence succeeds. All of the failures – either when the pre-birth rituals go wrong or the beast dies in training – are a small price to pay, the goblins say, to allow the few slashers that do exist to join the tribe.

The goblin slasher, in addition to being faster and stronger than most goblins, also possesses an intelligence greater than all but the most powerful of goblin spellcasters. The monsters use this intelligence in battle; slashers make excellent tacticians and are sometimes ordered to lead others of their tribe into battle.

A very small number of goblin slashers – maybe one in every hundred or so – reject their tribe and choose to live the life of an adventurer. Such slashers have a hard time fighting off their training and conditioning, easily falling into a battle rage when provoked. Slashers who have left their tribe find it hard to fit in anywhere, moving from city to city in search of a better life. Eventually, such creatures often return to their life of evil, frustrated that the world never accepted and welcomed them.



# ORC SHOCKSWORD

*You and your companions are traveling across the land, your minds on your destination and daydreams consuming your thoughts when you encounter a band of orcs. The monsters are transporting chests, a handful of them drawing a small cart and under the command of one larger, taller orc.*

Hoknuk Bog has dedicated his life to commanding squads of orc warriors in battle. As a shocksword, Bog spent years of his life as a gladiator, working the arenas of the above and below ground cities that allow the barbaric and violent gladiatorial sport to exist within their boundaries. Only the most evil and cruel of city states allow gladiatorial arenas these days, and Bog is recognized as a champion in many of them.

The adventurers accidentally encounter Bog and his troops when they are on a transport assignment, moving the orc tribe's meager treasures to a new hiding place as far from the towns and villages of man as they can manage. Though the encounter may be an accident, Bog sees it as a threat and reacts instantly.

There are 2d6+2 orc warriors under the shocksword's command, each one of which was trained by Bog and loyal to their commander. Bog orders two of them to stay with the cart, and leads the others to intercept and attack the PCs who, he believes, are after the tribe's riches.

Can the party convince the orcs that they have no interest in the chests and that the encounter was purely accidental, or will they be forced to fight the orcs? If they do engage the orcs in battle, Bog is the equal of any three orc warriors and carries a magical two-handed sword – that he is strong enough to use with one hand – that grants him a +2 to attack and damage rolls. His shield is also magical, acting as a healing device that instantly heals him by 1d4 points every round he is in battle.



# MUTATED GOBLINOID

*The monstrosity before you is a warped, grotesque beast unlike anything you have ever seen before. The creature turns to you, sorrowful eyes staring at you, unblinking and piercing. It opens its mouth, showing yellowed and jagged teeth, no sound escaping its lips as it tries to speak.*

This strange, twisted monstrosity was created during a planar accident several years ago when seven different goblins were melded into one as they tried to activate a magic portal in the dungeon. The goblins, unskilled in the ways of magic and planar gates, were unfortunately smashed together into the walking, breathing thing that now lives in the dungeon and cannot escape.

The beast has little intelligence, unable to do much more than sleep, eat, and wander the passages of the dungeon where it is trapped.

The planar energies that created the thing prevent it from leaving; the mutated goblinoid feels itself growing weaker and weaker every step it takes from the gate. It now stays as close to the planar gate as it can, traveling away from the portal only to find food. If the PCs encounter the beast, the gate cannot be far away.

The planar gate is a well in the center of a large chamber in the dungeon. The well, clearly crafted and not natural, is filled with a black, thick liquid that is harmless to touch, but anyone foolish enough to drink the strange liquid will grow very sick.

The portal connects this world to a demiplane where the black liquid covers the majority of the flat, unusual world. Small islands – each only a few square miles in size – dot the landscape which itself is no more than a hundred or so square miles in size. The demiplane is circular in shape, with all of the edges touching the infinite depth of space.

The mutated goblinoid is a danger only because it is an unintelligent monster that attacks anything it considers to be either a threat or food. The party will have to destroy the monster if it spots them.