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SLAYER'S
GUIDE

d20
system

COMPENDIUM

Volume I



The Slayer's Guide Compendium

Volume 1

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*Filius Torinium
Scribe of Ages*



*SULLIVAN
2001*

The Slayer's Guide To Hobgoblins

The goblinoid races of goblin, hobgoblin and bugbear have been a staple fodder for Player Characters since the dawn of roleplaying. Individually they are seen as weak and Games Masters are eminently willing to use them in large numbers, the better to challenge their players. So-called heroes have slaughtered millions of the wretched creatures over the years on their way to tackling more deadly monsters, gaining the rewards that come from successive victories.

That is about to change. Goblinoids have their own perspective of the world, their own society, beliefs and desires. Their purpose is not to simply populate the nearest ruin or cavern, awaiting the next party of adventurers to find them. These races have their own plans and motives – and woe betide any civilisation if such ambitions are ever realised.

Towering over their smaller cousin, the goblin, and only a little shorter in stature than the largest goblinoid of all, the bugbear, hobgoblins are a martial race, dedicated to warfare. Eschewing many of the traits found in the other goblinoid species, they adopt many of the military characteristics of civilised races and this alone can make them exceptionally dangerous. Coupled with a hatred of any race but their own and the ability to bully large numbers of orcs and goblins into coherent fighting forces, hobgoblins represent a threat to all intelligent life when a tribe moves into a new region.

Far from being just another critter for adventurers to hack apart whilst in some underground dungeon, you will soon discover why hobgoblins truly are dangerous.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 game systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare thoroughly. Typically, these will be the sorts of races often all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who view them as little better than cannon fodder.

This outlook just has to be wrong. An entire race does not just suddenly materialise in the campaign world and there are very few who exist solely to wage war.

What are they doing when the Player Characters are not around?

HOBGOBLINS – A WORTHY FOE

Each *Slayer's Guide* features one race, in this case the hobgoblins. Within these pages, you will find discussions on hobgoblin physiology, habitat and society, giving you a fundamental understanding of how this interesting and unique race operates. Their (very efficient) battle tactics are explained, in terms of what a party of adventurers may encounter and within huge land battles that may alter the course of history itself. Games Masters are given guidelines on how to play hobgoblins in the game and an inspirational list of detailed scenario ideas is presented so they can be integrated into existing campaigns with minimal effort. Players are even given the chance to try their roleplaying skills with hobgoblin characters.

Finally, a complete hobgoblin lair is detailed to be used either as an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios or even just an illustration of what hobgoblins are capable of, given enough time.

As a player, you will gain a new respect for an old and familiar race. As a Games Master, you will know you are playing hobgoblins well when experienced parties start to retreat from cunningly prepared ambushes and lightning fast raids.



The barbed arrow whipped through the air, missing Kerron's head by a mere inch as he jerked back behind the rock, blood thumping through his veins in response to the threat.

'By the gods, that was close!'

The hobgoblins' methodical advance across the darkened cave was audible to the whole party, the goblinoid leader all the while barking commands to his warriors as arrows continued to fly overhead. Kerron glanced down at Krystallia the elf and her worried look confirmed his fears. They were in serious trouble. After two and a half years adventuring with everyone in the party, he just could not believe they were about to die at the hands of mere hobgoblins.

The wizard, Abner, lay over twenty feet away in open ground, three arrow shafts standing erect from his chest. So far, no one had been able to give him any aid, fighting for their own lives as they were. The ambush had been perfect and complete, with not even Krystallia realising how long the hobgoblins had been tracking them until the first arrows flew amongst the party. Abner could be dead by now for all Kerron knew.

Their ranger, Rolf, had disappeared for what seemed an eternity, determined to find a safer path through the caverns. Kerron tried to glance above the rock once more to see the progress the hobgoblins had thus made, or to catch a glimpse of the ranger, but the seemingly inexhaustible arrow stream continued, forcing him to squat back down almost immediately. Krystallia was becoming rigid with fear, he could see. This was no place for a successful rogue like himself to get caught.

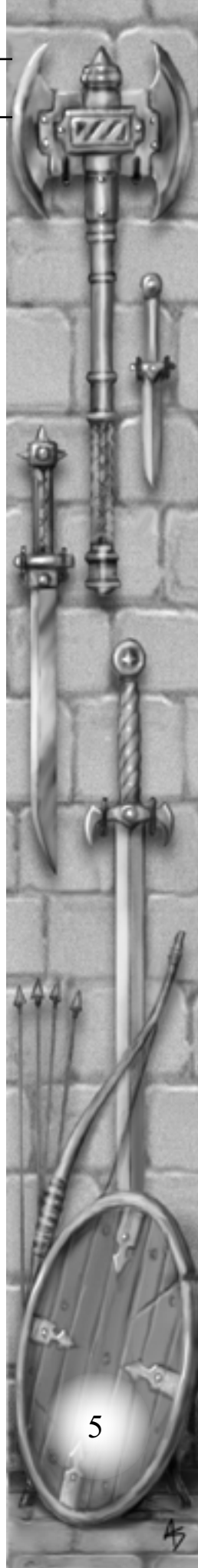
Still no Rolf. Where was the damned ranger? Saving himself? Difficult to believe. Kerron knew Rolf had more honour in his little finger than he himself would ever know. Dead then? Hobgoblins would be everywhere by now. The arrow salvos above suddenly stopped, much to Kerron's surprise and he considered the risks of glancing over the rock again. A harsh, guttural voice rang out through the still air. Kerron heard the heavily accented common, amazed any backward hobgoblin had bothered to master the language.

'Give us the elf!'

Krystallia shrieked with terror, the piercing sound soon followed by the rolling laughter of hobgoblins. Far too many hobgoblins. Kerron winced as Krystallia's nails dug hard into his thigh as she grabbed at him for support. He could see she was seconds away from complete hysteria.

'Give us the elf and you can go free!'

Kerron closed his eyes. He could hear the hobgoblins move about once more, taking new positions, beginning to flank them. He had to assume Rolf had been found and killed. Half the party was gone and Krystallia was heading far beyond rational thought. Reaching down to his belt pouch, Kerron closed his fingers around a small vial he knew to contain a heady but reliable potion of gaseous form.



HOBGOBLIN PHYSIOLOGY

The average hobgoblin warrior is a creature sure to strike fear into the heart of any normal man, dwarf or elf. Standing between six and seven feet tall, hobgoblins have well developed muscles born from a lifetime of warfare and are surprisingly agile for their stature. Their flattened noses, pointed ears and almost feline faces mark them unmistakably as one of the goblinoid races, but an observer not running in fear of his life might notice some important differences in comparison to goblins and bugbears. A hobgoblin's weapons and armour would seem to be unusually well looked after, even polished, for what is supposed to be a primitive warrior. Far from adopting a goblinoid's traditional stealth, hobgoblins fight in rigid and disciplined formations, easily a match for any unit from one of the more civilised races.

Despite being nearer in size and mass to bugbears, hobgoblins are physically closer in form to the smaller goblins. However, they are much stronger and tougher than their diminutive cousins and have a very different outlook on the world. In the few studies that have been performed on the goblinoid races, beyond mere adventurer boast and banter, there has been no evidence that hobgoblins are any more intelligent. It is their natural aggressiveness and innate discipline that allows them to accomplish far more, to the extent a tribe is able to dominate all manner of creatures, even those physically stronger.

Their highly developed senses are a legacy from their goblinoid origins and are far superior to those of any human, approaching the sensitivity of an elf. A hobgoblin's finely attuned hearing seems to be able to not only detect the faintest of noises in relative silence but also has the ability to pick out and filter individual sounds from a multitude of sources, even during pitched battle. It has been theorised that far from being a natural talent, this capability is hammered into hobgoblins from an early age,

as goblins and bugbears do not seem to demonstrate anything similar, though their own hearing is at least as good. The benefits of hearing your unit leader's voice barking commands in the midst of deafening combat are obvious.

Size, weight and muscle power aside, the defining difference between hobgoblins and related races, physiologically speaking, is their relative lack of stealth. Goblins and bugbears demonstrate a consummate ability to utilise any shadow or terrain feature to mask their approach upon an enemy and even when fully armed for battle, they are able to make near soundless passage. It is apparent that somewhere along their history, hobgoblins lost much of this capability and though some few individuals are adept at stealth tactics in combat situations, as a race they are noticeably inferior when performing such careful actions. It is this one deficiency alone that may permit many goblins to live freely and not be part of an entirely enslaved race, subservient to hobgoblins everywhere.

OF ORIGINS

Placed squarely between goblins and bugbears on a physical basis, hobgoblins have often posed scholars and other students with interesting questions and



speculations concerning the origin of the species. It is often presumed that goblins and their kin have existed in the world for at least as long as dwarfs and elves. There are certainly very old histories and legends telling of their existence and they are well situated within the myths of most civilised races. Their proliferation throughout the world attests to both their long and tumultuous history, as well as their stubborn refusal to be wiped out by the likes of man and dwarf. Given this, it seems a likely assumption that hobgoblins should be the most successful and prolific of all their kin. Adventurers and scholars alike deem the hobgoblin to be the strongest goblinoid race, not least because they exhibit so many human-like characteristics. Texts have been written about the likelihood of hobgoblins someday creating an entire nation of their own in the mould of the civilised races, clearly surpassing any such predictions for orcs who are often, and incorrectly, viewed as a goblinoid race. So, the question must be raised; if hobgoblins are so capable, respond readily to discipline and easily dominate other races, why are they not more common? Indeed, why are the civilised races not constantly engaged in full scale warfare against large and self-sustaining hobgoblin empires?

The pervading misconception is, of course, that being mere monsters, hobgoblins have neither the wit nor the will to succeed as man, dwarf and elf has. To any who have made the most cursory study of the hobgoblin race, this reasoning is utter folly, perhaps dangerously so. There are far too many recorded incidents throughout history of hobgoblins destroying powerful armies and breaking immense fortresses for them to be dismissed in this way.

Many scholars, loremasters and other deep-thinkers believe instead that, given the hobgoblins' racial supremacy amongst others of their kind, their relative rarity demonstrates that they are in fact a newer race, opening up the debate of how they actually came into being. Such men are also strong advocates for the culling or even methodical genocide of the entire race, living as they do in fear of eventual hobgoblin mastery across the entire world. Needless to say, such raised concerns are often ridiculed. With the wilderness full of orcs, dragons, legions of the dead and other foulness, hobgoblins are normally regarded as but one threat amongst many.

Discussions on the specific origins of hobgoblins are varied, but they all tend to follow a common theme in that the race is derived from goblins directly. Some tell of an ancient sorcerer, quite mad, who attempted

to create a warrior race in order to overcome his rivals who commonly used unaugmented goblins to further their plans. Others presume hobgoblins were indeed artificially created but dismiss the use of magic, citing instead a process of selective breeding such as that used to produce stronger and more aggressive war horses. Yet others pronounce that the creation of an entire race for war is an insane and time-consuming venture and propose that hobgoblins developed naturally from goblins and further, that bugbears developed from hobgoblins. This prompts speculation of a race even more powerful than the towering bugbears.

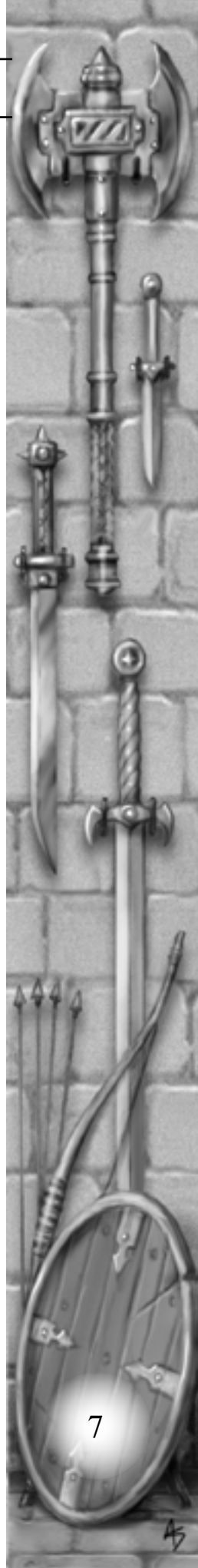
For their part, hobgoblins rarely, if ever, speculate on their own origins and are content to leave such thoughts in the hands of their god, The Mighty One, and his adepts. The lesson is clear though. Any race as aggressive and capable as the hobgoblins is likely to have a profound impact upon any others it meets.

DIET AND RELATED MATTERS

Goblinoids are noted for their ability to subsist for long periods of time on just about any organic matter they scavenge and this, more than anything else, points to a racial stubbornness to exist within habitats that any civilised race would shy away from. Hobgoblins seem to be a little more refined in their preferred tastes and, where possible, exist solely on meat and water. Horse flesh is a favourite and raiding parties seeking to steal all manner of livestock from other nearby races provide the primary source of food for a tribe. However, where meat is scarce, hobgoblins are perfectly capable of digesting an incredible array of material, even turning their hands to farming on occasion. The only foods they seem to avoid at all costs are carrion and, interestingly, cannibalism, the latter of which they absolutely shun though it is a common practice amongst other goblinoids.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE HOBGOBLIN

The life of a hobgoblin revolves around just three things; eating, making war and achieving a greater standing within the dominance hierarchy of the tribe. Individuals are expected to work towards the good of the tribe and are rewarded for successful results. Of interest is that whilst young are protected and seen as embodying the future of the tribe, the role of motherhood is not assigned any great standing. A female hobgoblin may be respected as a warrior in her own right, but her duty





HOBGOBLIN PHYSIOLOGY

to provide the tribe with new potential warriors, whilst expected, will never be rewarded.

Physically, female hobgoblins look very similar to their male counterparts, particularly when dressed in full armour, to the extent that a member of any other race may have great difficulty distinguishing sexes. They are certainly capable of becoming as good a warrior as any of the males, though the female will rarely attain any position of true authority within the tribe's structure. Whilst carrying young, her fighting ability, and thus her tribal standing, all but disappear. In common with other goblinoids, hobgoblins have no concept of long term relationships between sexes and though an especially weak female may be considered the property of a strong male, in general she will be fully capable of choosing her own mate for breeding purposes.

The gestation period of a hobgoblin female is six months and she will typically bear two or three young, though life in a hobgoblin tribe is often harsh, if not brutal, and it is rare for more than one of the young to mature as an adult. Hobgoblin young develop fast and are capable of rigorous combat at the age of six, easily able to defeat any non-fighting member of the civilised races. They are considered adults within the tribe around the age of eleven or twelve, when they will join the other warriors.

A hobgoblin may die of old age between sixty and sixty-five years, though it is exceedingly rare for any to reach this age. Most will die much sooner through battle or disease and only the adepts and clerics of a tribe have any real chance of attaining such great ages, as they are afforded greater levels of protection by the other tribal members.

PHYSICAL VARIATIONS

Hobgoblins tend to exhibit the same types of physical variation within the species as the other goblinoid races do in terms of hair, skin and eye colour. Commonly, skin colour is dark or red/orange, whilst the hair that covers all parts of their body bar hands, feet and face is typically dark red/brown or grey. Of more note is that such colour variations tend to breed true within a tribe so that each member is more or less identical in terms of colour. Exceptions can arise, however, and are often treated as figures of ridicule or as being *Drafer*, 'not of the tribe.' Needless to say, the life expectancy of any who are different is drastically reduced from the norm.

The combination of dark skin and red eyes seems to be exceedingly rare and, rather than being subjected to vilification, such hobgoblins are usually accorded greater status within the tribal structure. Hobgoblins often portray their patron deity, referred to as The Mighty One, as bearing these colours and so it is natural to assume that such hobgoblins are seen as having been touched by the god and that he watches over their destiny. These individuals often become adepts or even clerics within the tribe.

Exceptionally large males are often seen with their pale noses developing either a blue or red shade, the colour again dependant upon the tribe they were born into. The exact purpose of this colour change and the process of its development is not known, though it is certainly a natural phenomenon rather than being artificially applied. It is often presumed that such colourations, which become bolder as the male develops physically, make him somehow more attractive to hobgoblin females and thus increase his chances of mating.

PSYCHOLOGY

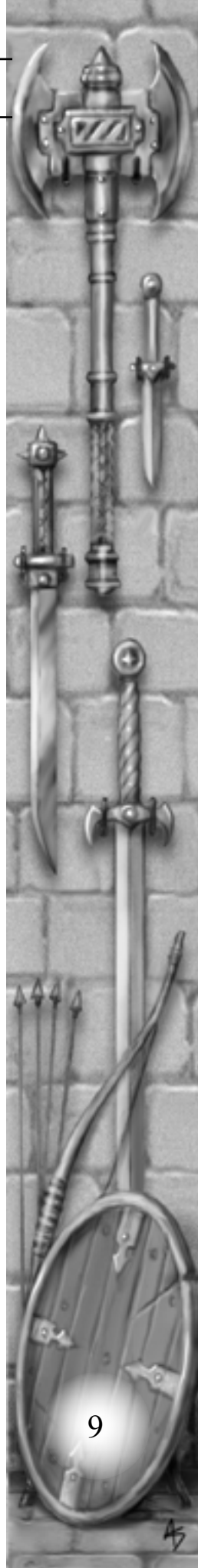
A hobgoblin's life is one of constant conflict, not just against every race it meets, but also within itself. On the one hand, a hobgoblin shares many traits with the other goblinoids. It is merciless in nature, uncaring of other sentient beings and utterly dedicated towards its own personal advancement. From the earliest age, however, a hobgoblin is taught that the tribe as a whole is of all-importance and that true strength and power are bestowed by its underlying order. Manifesting as a strong adherence to discipline that sets hobgoblins apart from every other related race, hobgoblins are relatively easy for their leaders to control and their belief in the strength of their own tribe is paramount. However, a hobgoblin is unlikely to be willing to lay down its life for others, merely that any personal advancement will take place through actions that benefit the entire tribe and are thus amply rewarded.

An example of this can be found in the hobgoblins' attitude towards their young. Though capable of fighting at an early age, their young are kept far from any potential combat unless the tribal lair itself is actually being overrun by enemies. This is not out of any maternal or paternal feeling towards the young, merely that they represent the future of the tribe.

All goblinoids display a hatred for any race other than their own, but hobgoblins have developed an aggression

that far outweighs that of their cousins. They vigorously pursue war and conflict as a way of day-to-day survival, gleefully attacking other races at any opportunity. Differing tribes of hobgoblins will readily battle one another and these other tribes are usually regarded as being no better than members of a different race. Of special animosity to a hobgoblin are the elves, a race that, in myth at least, dealt a murderous defeat to all goblinoids. This hatred permeates the entire race and hobgoblins have been witnessed in battle dispensing with their renowned discipline and actually bypassing several enemy units in order to strike at a sighted elf.

Where a race is not wiped out by hobgoblins, it will be enslaved and dominated. Nowhere is this more true than with orcs and goblins. Entire tribes may be rounded up and moved to the hobgoblin's own lair, where they will be turned into slave labour or used as cannon fodder in future battles. Hobgoblins operate a brutal regime for any captive, viewing them no differently than beasts of burden, though it is said that hobgoblins treat their horses better than they do their slaves. Even bugbears may be subjugated in this manner, if the hobgoblins are given the chance.



HABITAT

In common with the scourge that is the goblinoid races, hobgoblins can be found in practically any environment all over the world. However, as well as being a little less prolific than their goblin cousins, they are also wary of more extreme climates, being all too aware of the additional and often unnecessary dangers that can be posed by a harsh desert or frigid glacier. Whilst an adventurer may well find hobgoblin tribes in such regions, they are likely to be present only through the most dire of circumstances.

In general, hobgoblins prefer more temperate areas, with forests and low mountains being particular favourites. Open grasslands, as tribal areas, are usually shunned, though they may be found in such places, travelling from one lair to another. They are very cautious when determining a region for a tribal lair and by preference will choose an area that provides a great many hiding places or is extremely difficult for an enemy to reach, hence the number found in forests and mountains. Where this is not possible, hobgoblins look for defence when creating a lair. Ruined forts and underground cavern complexes or tunnel systems are popular choices.

Though not generally nomadic by nature, hobgoblin tribes have been known to move from area to area in search of more prosperous lands. There are two circumstances that can cause this to happen. Firstly, a tribe's lair may simply be located in an area that has become too dangerous to remain in, whether through a natural catastrophe or a determined resistance to the tribe's constant raiding. A more powerful goblinoid tribe moving into the area may also cause a move, if they survive the initial battles. Secondly, and more commonly, a hobgoblin tribe may eventually exhaust all readily available resources and be forced to find a more bounteous area.

Unless disaster is imminent, a tribal chieftain will never risk his entire tribe by simply striking out into the unknown. Instead, small bands of scouts, numbering no more than five or ten of the tribe's best warriors will be dispatched to locate and report on possible sites for a new lair. Such bands will take steps to avoid direct combat, concentrating instead on finding a new lair in an area that can support the entire tribe.

There are several key factors hobgoblins will consider when searching for a new home. Most importantly,

the surrounding area must be able to support the tribe in terms of both food and supplies. As the largest hobgoblin tribes can number well over three hundred warriors alone, with nearly twice as many young, this is no easy task to accomplish. The scouts will be looking for numerous weakly defended farmsteads and villages, abundant natural resources or several smaller goblinoid tribes the hobgoblins can begin to dominate and enslave. They will also attempt to get a sense of the balance of power in the new region. Though hobgoblins live to make war, they are by no means foolish and will avoid stronger tribes or civilised areas with professional standing armies. The defence of the lair itself is of prime concern so the scouts will be searching to identify areas that could be made to be impregnable against anything short of a direct, and very costly, assault by any sizeable army.

Once a suitable site has been found, a warband, often led by the tribal chieftain himself, will be sent to take the new lair and clear out any current inhabitants. More scouts will be used to locate food sources and the construction of defences, ranging from simple ditches to full blown repairs on ruined fortress walls, will commence. This is done with all speed, for it is at this time the tribe is at its most vulnerable, with neither the new lair nor the old fully defended. It will be the chieftain's primary concern to bring the rest of the tribe to the new lair as quickly as possible and so the warband will work fast, taking no more than two or three days to complete the preliminary defences.

Aside from a few warriors in the original warband, every warrior of the tribe will be used to protect the movement of the tribe's young and possessions as they make the journey to the new lair. Generally, a tribal chieftain will go no further than fifty or sixty miles when moving in this way and so the task of relocating the entire tribe from the initial scouting to the abandonment of the old lair will take little more than a week. Being a critical time for the tribe, stragglers are not tolerated and any hobgoblin falling behind will simply be left to fend for itself.

Once installed within the new lair, any neighbouring races will instantly notice the new arrivals' presence. Raiding parties are immediately mounted and begin to prey on neighbours and their resources. These raids are the hobgoblins' primary means of sufficiency and as food reserves are likely to be low after the relocation, the hobgoblins will be vigorous in their attempts to replenish stocks, with horses and other livestock being

their main targets. The defences protecting the lair will also be reworked and built upon, becoming ever more elaborate and, by goblinoid standards, sophisticated, with initially even the young being drafted in to assist. Walls, watchtowers and often small engines of war will be constructed to prevent any attack from forcing the hobgoblins to move on once more.

After a tribe has established itself in a new area, a constant process of war and raiding will begin, with just two aims in mind – the continued existence of the tribe and the utter destruction or domination of all intelligent life other than hobgoblin.

It was with some fascination that I discovered the Plague of War tribe of hobgoblins had taken residence within Fallyrn Forest. Long since a haven for orcs and their foul kin, I could barely wait to see what effect the hobgoblins would have and so, at great personal risk to myself, I entered Fallyrn with my manservant Luis to record this so far unseen process.

The Plague of War had already moved into its lair, a well known complex of caves at the heart of Fallyrn, before we arrived and had destroyed the incumbent Red Axe orcs. This must have, incredibly, taken mere days. From several very well hidden retreats, we were able to track much of the hobgoblins' movements from this point forward.

The first move we were able to observe was an all out attack against the nearby Hammer Tribe orcs, following a day's worth of scouting by small units of just a few hobgoblin warriors. The assault was launched at night and I missed much for the orcs began fleeing in all directions and it was paramount for me to be able to later relate what I was learning. However, come morning, over one hundred orcs were being led back to the Plague of War's lair.

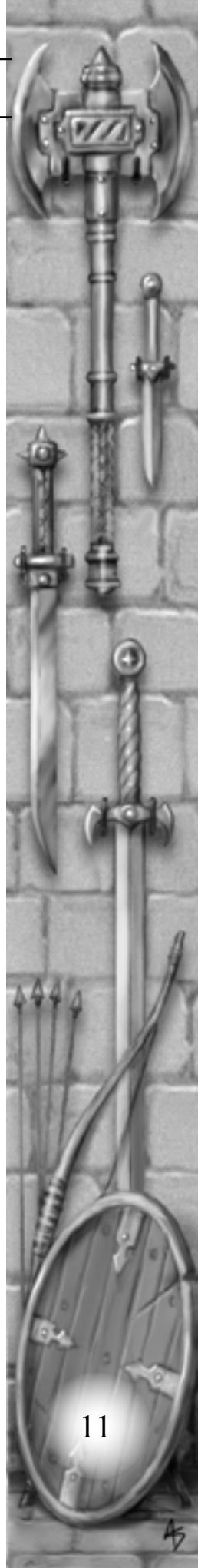
Two days later, the hobgoblins were on the attack once more, this time against the orcs of the Dark Slayers. However, in this battle I saw the Hammer Tribe orcs attacking as part of the hobgoblin force! I was astounded. How had the hobgoblins managed to subjugate these fiercely independent orcs so quickly? Heavily outnumbered by the hobgoblins and their new allies, the orcs' defeat was predictable but instead of being moved to the Plague of War's caves, a number of burly-looking hobgoblins were left in the Dark Slayers' simple stockade, presumably to govern the orcs in accordance with their chieftain's wishes.

We left a few days after as yet another attack was being launched, against the Splintered Tooth orcs. Mixed orc and hobgoblin patrols through the forest were becoming more frequent and more thorough. As much as I had enjoyed this study, I had to return to civilisation lest I myself be captured.

My conclusions are self-evident. In little more than a week, the Plague of War hobgoblins managed to move into orc-held territory and began to take over one tribe after another. At this rate, the entire Fallyrn will be under their complete domination within a month. The obvious danger here is that instead of facing a few scattered orc attacks, the three nearby towns may have to contend with a large, malignant and disciplined army of humanoids led by the hobgoblins, stationed just a few miles from their boundaries.

No doubt Archduke Suunar-Laker will send his army into the Fallyrn soon. I must endeavour to gain his permission to accompany that force, for I am anxious to see just what the hobgoblins have achieved in this time.

Fillius Torinium, Scribe of Ages



HOBGOBLIN SOCIETY

The vast majority of hobgoblins live as members of tribes, though independent mercenary companies are also common. Tribes steadily grow in prosperous times with each hobgoblin having its own specific tasks to fulfil, though every mature adult is considered first and foremost a warrior. A typical tribe will average around one hundred and fifty warriors or so, though it can grow to over twice that size in areas with many diverse resources or when two tribes fight and are eventually amalgamated by the victors into one. There will also be a great many non-combatants in the form of the injured, young and pregnant females, perhaps tripling the size of the entire tribe in numbers.

Though there can be infinite variation between tribes in terms of lair, equipment, specific culture and resources, all form a dominance hierarchy led by an overall tribal chieftain who is recognised as the greatest warrior of all and who likely attained his position through sheer force of arms. All authority within the tribe is derived directly from the chieftain and he (for there have been no recorded instances of females becoming chieftains) will maintain an iron grip on the order of the hobgoblins beneath him.

Directly beneath the chieftain in terms of both rank and authority are his overlords, the most capable warriors of the tribe who act as unit leaders and bodyguards. There will generally be between four and twenty such overlords, depending on the size of the tribe, and they are noticeably better equipped than the bulk of the hobgoblins they lead. The chieftain personally selects warriors himself for this duty, usually after some great achievement in battle, though a scout consistently finding wealthy resources for the tribe to plunder may also be granted such status.

Whilst hobgoblins have only the most tenuous grasp of a martial honour system, they do acknowledge that the laws of the tribe must come first in all things. When a chieftain dies for any reason, his successor will come from within the elite group of overlords who are already considered to be far superior to the average warrior of the tribe. Very rarely, the overlords may reach a consensus as to who the natural leader should be, especially if one of the overlords is considerably wealthier than the others. To a hobgoblin, excess wealth can only mean a large

number of victories in battle and so it follows that the wealthiest have the best skill in arms. However, this is not the usual course of action as chieftains generally take great care to keep their overlords more or less equal to one another. Instead challenges, known as *Surka* will be issued to determine who has the right to lead the tribe.

SURKA – THE TRIBAL CHALLENGE

It is this system of challenges that forms one of the more remarkable aspects of hobgoblin society and something that distances them yet further from their goblinoid cousins. Any disputes in the tribe, from the ownership of a horse to the rightful leadership of the tribe will be resolved in one of two ways. Either the chieftain will arbitrate important issues with no room for argument or more commonly, a challenge may be issued, if the hobgoblin in question is so permitted;

- † No hobgoblin who is not considered a full warrior may challenge one who is (indeed, a hobgoblin who cannot fight for any reason will not have many rights at all within the structure of the tribe).
- † Only an overlord may challenge the chieftain and then only as a direct result of a claim to lead the entire tribe himself.
- † No hobgoblin may challenge an adept.
- † Adepts are held to exist beyond the authority of the tribe and are thus forbidden themselves to issue challenges.

There are always witnesses to a call for *Surka*, indeed it is likely to draw a substantial crowd from tribal members, and any melee weapons or armour owned by the protagonists may be used. *Surka* always ends when one combatant yields to his opponent. Thereafter, the matter in dispute is considered permanently resolved. The amount of damage a hobgoblin sustains in such a challenge is purely down to his own discretion and there is no loss of face for being forced to yield to a superior warrior. To the hobgoblin mindset, the fact that there is always a victor and a vanquished in battle is in perfect accordance with the natural order of their way of life. On a practical level, this system of challenges ensures any disputes within the tribe can be resolved quickly and easily and yet do so in such a way that needless and wasteful loss of life is avoided. After all, no tribe is served by having its members slaughter one another.

The only exception to this is when an overlord makes a direct challenge for the leadership of the tribe and this is something no hobgoblin will consider lightly. Overlords and adepts are the only members of the tribe permitted to advise the chieftain and question his orders, though it is understood that the chieftain's final decision is just that – final. There are several circumstances, however, where an overlord may decide to take extreme measures against his chieftain and make an attempt for the highest position in the tribe. He may sincerely believe a chieftain's orders will irreparably harm the tribe or he may have become powerful enough to believe he can overcome his leader. Nevertheless, this form of *Surka* is always fought to the death and the whole tribe is summoned to watch. This is done primarily so that the chieftain, whomsoever it may be after the combat, is undisputed in his claims to rule the tribe as the ultimate embodiment of their combined strength.

Because of this, assassinations or any form of foul play outside of *Surka* (in which any number of dirty tricks may be employed so long as others are there to witness it) are exceedingly rare in hobgoblin society. Without the outward display of martial prowess, there might always be some element of doubt in a new chieftain's ability to rule the tribe correctly and in a manner that will benefit all. As a chieftain's own power flows from his position at the head of the tribe, this is the last thing he will want.

DIVISION OF WEALTH

Through the processes of raiding and racial subjugation, it is possible for a hobgoblin tribe to amass a large amount of wealth in a relatively short period of time. Hobgoblins, however, are very much a pragmatic race and material goods such as horses, weapons and armour are afforded greater worth than such abstract concepts as currency. That said, barter and exchange of items for coinage is possible between warriors and a great many silver and gold coins may find their way into the decorations of a warrior's armour.

It is the task of the chieftain to personally divide any plunder taken during a raid and hand a portion to each warrior who took part. The chieftain himself will claim around a quarter to a half of the total haul, depending on how successful the raid was considered to be. However, he is also expected to support the tribe with his own amassed wealth in lean times and also grant additional rewards to any warrior who performs exceptionally well in battle. Many chieftains may grumble at such

expense but they know all too well their position relies on the continued unity of the tribe, with no room for dissension.

Adepts and overlords all receive shares that are more or less even and will be between three and four times greater than that of an ordinary warrior. Those who cannot fight will never receive anything of their own.

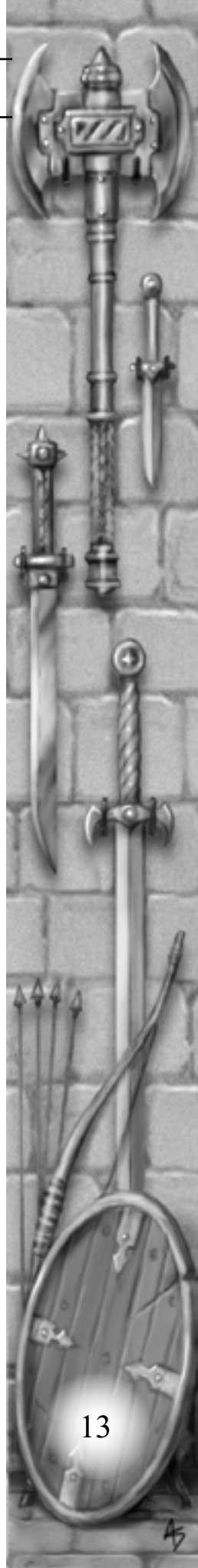
TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRY

The preferred method of a tribe's sufficiency is the raid. After all, what hobgoblin would want to toil in hard labour when they can simply fight and take anything they need or desire? Failing likely targets for such piratical activities, a hobgoblin's next choice will be to take the role of overseer. Having subjugated another goblinoid tribe, the hapless slaves will be forced to toil in forests and roughly cultivated land to provide for a tribe's sustenance, though chieftains rarely permit such a state of affairs to last long as their slaves are always easier to control in battle than when farming.

If these two methods fail to support a tribe, hobgoblins certainly have the wit and intelligence to turn their own hands to the more fundamental means of survival. If the situation warrants such measures, blacksmiths, farmers and even shepherds can arise from the ranks of the warriors. These duties are allocated by the chieftain who will likely spend his own time searching for new raiding targets as few hobgoblins are likely to tolerate this labour for long. He may well only have a matter of weeks before he begins to face a succession of *Surka* challenges from his overlords.

Very large tribes, which can number upwards of a thousand hobgoblins, can begin to suffer with so many mouths to feed and there are few areas that can support a tribe of this size through raiding alone. In these cases, tribes may be forced to turn to agriculture simply to supply enough food. Wise chieftains always try to rotate warriors used in this labour and the cleverer ones may use it as a punishment detail that will cause no argument or possible recrimination.

All warriors are capable of adjusting and repairing their own weapons and armour, which usually come from plunder taken in raids and they are, in fact, taught to do so from a very early age. The maintenance of one's own arms is considered an important duty within the tribe and failure to do so will bring the immediate, and



HOBGOBLIN SOCIETY

usually unwelcome, attentions of the tribal chieftain. This is another mark that distinguishes the race from other goblinoids, as goblins and bugbears can be noted by their shabby armour and rusting weaponry, whereas a hobgoblin's will likely be polished and shining. Taking into account their stature, units of hobgoblins have been mistaken for human soldiers at range, a fact that talented chieftains have used in the past to great effect.

Hobgoblin tribes are also skilled in the construction of simple but effective defences for their lairs. Any hobgoblin lair, whatever its location, is likely to have a very large array of traps, ditches, grounded spikes and even primitive engines of war such as catapults and ballistae. Given time and a ready source of materials, a hobgoblin tribe may even attempt large scale stonework though, as a rule, they much prefer to work with wood for speed and simplicity.

THE TRIBE AT WAR

In open battle, hobgoblins form disciplined units led by an overlord that can rival the capabilities of any similar formation of humans, dwarves or elves. Where several units are engaged in combat simultaneously, mature young on the verge of adulthood will often be employed as runners, ferrying orders to each unit directly from the chieftain who will be fighting with a bodyguard of his most trusted overlords. The tribe will rarely engage in combat without the forward planning of the chieftain and every warrior will be instructed with precisely what he is expected to accomplish. This method of warfare, far from being rigid, makes a hobgoblin tribe a very potent force that is difficult to overcome unless the enemy is able to achieve superiority either in quality of soldier or sheer numbers.

It is not unusual for a tribal lair itself to come under attack, for as soon as the hobgoblins begin to prey on other goblinoids or civilised settlements, it can only be a matter of time before an army of some sort is raised to destroy them. When defending their own

lair, hobgoblins are at their most dangerous. As well as the large number of defences tribes prepare, chieftains also use a system that humans and dwarves may define as standing orders. Each warrior is given long term instructions of where to go and what to do in the event of attack so when the alarm is sounded, the entire tribe can be mobilised and ready to fight within minutes. With sentries permanently in place, often in hobgoblin-built watchtowers, surprise is nearly impossible to achieve.

Every hobgoblin tribe has its own banner that is considered a prized possession of the chieftain. The design is usually a stylised icon that will reflect the name of the tribe and may also be found on the shields of some of the warriors. The tribal banner is normally kept safe within the chieftain's own living space in the lair and only brought out in large-scale battles where the majority of the warriors will be fighting. It will be carried within the chieftain's own bodyguard unit by a warrior the chieftain has personally selected either for special honour or great punishment, depending on how



much the tribe actually reveres their banner. However, it tends to be the law of most tribes that if the warrior loses the banner, he is not expected to return to the tribe alive.

As a final note with regards to tribes and warfare, the most common cause of *Surka* against a chieftain is a serious defeat in battle. This is one likely reason that chieftains plan their battles so well and in such detail – another indication that the hobgoblins are, at their core, a very pragmatic race.

MERCENARY WARBANDS

Outside the common tribal structure, there are a few hobgoblins who form warrior bands of their own, searching for ever larger battles and ever greater victories. They doubtless consider the fact they get paid for waging war a mere bonus.

Hobgoblin mercenary warbands typically have between twenty and one hundred skilled warriors, with no place for young and those seriously injured. They usually form either from surviving warriors who manage to escape the shattered remnants of a broken tribe or a group of hobgoblins who have grown dissatisfied with their chieftain. Unable or unwilling to challenge him, they will simply leave, striking out for the unknown but determined to survive by their warrior skills. To the other members of the tribe, an action that weakens them to such a degree is an unforgivable betrayal. Systematic searches will be mounted to locate the absconding

warriors and if any are caught, they will be subjected to a protracted and painful death.

Mercenaries will be willing to fight for almost anyone, with other goblinoid or orc tribes being the most common employers, though humans with few scruples have seen the value of the hobgoblins' disciplined approach to war. Many come to regret such a warband in or near their settlements, however, as hobgoblins may demonstrate difficulty in adjusting to more civilised societies for however brief a time. When hobgoblin mercenaries are used in predominantly human armies, their warlike nature and love of horse flesh can create an uncontrollable friction with other fighting units.

Hobgoblin mercenaries themselves have no such prejudices with who employs them and will literally fight for any who can pay. They can adapt well to life beyond the strict confines of their original tribe and quickly come to understand the values of both gold and reputation. It is relatively rare, for example, for a hobgoblin mercenary warband to intentionally betray its current employer, if for no other reason than they realise their chances of successive employment would likely disappear thereafter. With steady service and skilful fighting, hobgoblins amass more gold, which is in turn spent on weapons, armour and horses, which remain their true passions.

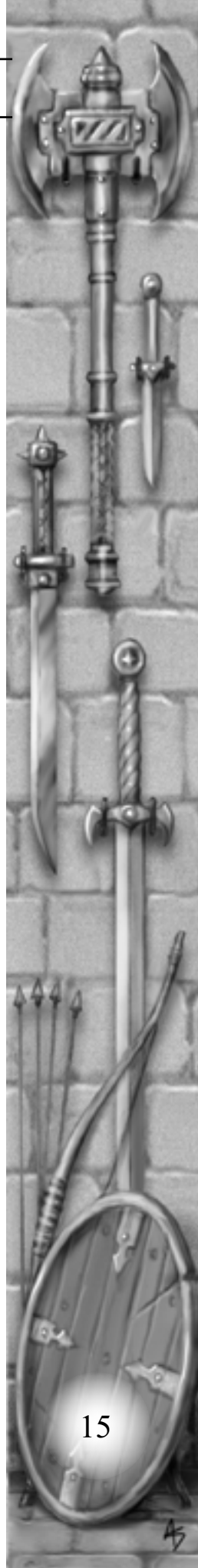
The structure of a warband follows similar lines to that of a tribe, with the overall captain (who may well term himself warlord after several successful engagements)

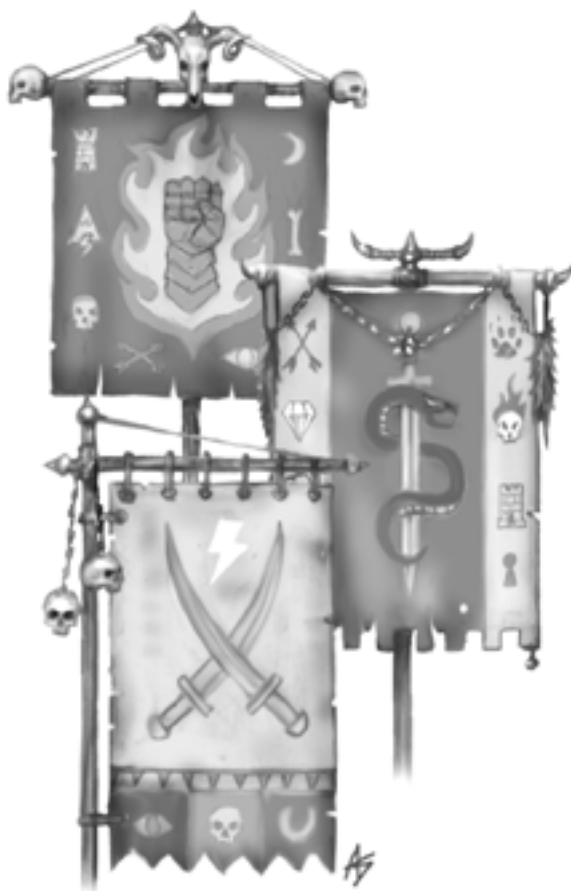
As with tribes, mercenary warbands also have a collective identity, though such terms relate to what the warband can actually do, or what it is capable of, rather than what the hobgoblins consider themselves to be. I have theorised, though some slower-witted scholars have in the past disagreed, that hobgoblin mercenary captains liken this name to an advertisement, proclaiming to prospective employers what they have achieved in past battles.

*Kin-Slayers
Gold Takers
Quick Death Company
Lords of Battle
Warriors of the Tunnels
Scorched Lands*

*Ravagers
Despoilers
Smashed Lances
The Mighty Horde
Life Stealers
Pain Bringers*

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commanding several sergeants of his own choosing, who in turn have authority over the regular warriors. Payment and plunder are also shared out in similar ways, with the captain taking up to half of each, though he is expected to arm and equip all his warriors regardless of circumstances. The more adventurous captains may even go to the expense of mounting their entire warband on horses rather than just having them eaten, once he understands how much more cavalry units can get paid. In fact, horse-riding hobgoblins are far more common in mercenary warbands than they are within tribes.

Each warband will carry a banner into battle and a much greater significance is placed on this than within tribes. To a hobgoblin mercenary, the entire pride of the warband is bound into the banner and they will fight fiercely if it is ever captured by an enemy in combat. In addition to the warband's icon, again based on their name, there will also be stylised depictions of their greatest victories and thus their banner is a direct

measure of their achievement and worth. When courting new employers, a captain will always bring his banner to negotiations, born by a powerful and intimidating warrior, as proof of what his warband has accomplished in its history.

It is an inevitable fact that any hobgoblin mercenary warband is doomed from the moment of its initial formation. Its members will never retire from the joy they find on the battlefield and their hostility towards outsiders, even other hobgoblins, means they will never hire reinforcements. It is the fate of every mercenary hobgoblin to one day be destroyed by his pursuit of war.

RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL MATTERS

Hobgoblins are not religious by any measure and though they are nominally bound together under the goblinoid deity known as The Mighty One, they rarely pay the god anything more than lip service until a real disaster strikes the tribe. Even then it may only take the form of blaming The Mighty One for their misfortune.

Not every tribe will have adepts to service what few spiritual needs the hobgoblins may have and those that do rarely have more than half a dozen. Adepts tend to function outside of the chain of authority that runs through the tribe and they are considered inviolate when it comes to *Surka* and punishment – even the most irreverent of chieftains will be unwilling to court danger by harming a hobgoblin who is granted any amount of supernatural power directly from The Mighty One. Instead, adepts are primarily used in two ways by the tribe. When posed with a particularly difficult problem, a chieftain may go to his adepts and consult with them for advice, though he may place no special value in what they say and will be under no compulsion to obey their words. Secondly, all adepts are expected to use their supernatural powers for the good of the tribe, either in battle or in the normal day-to-day life of hobgoblins by overcoming trials and obstacles that might otherwise be laboured over.

For their part, hobgoblin adepts make relatively poor worshippers of The Mighty One themselves and some may even secretly suspect the powers they wield come from within themselves rather than being channelled from any god. However, they are always keen to

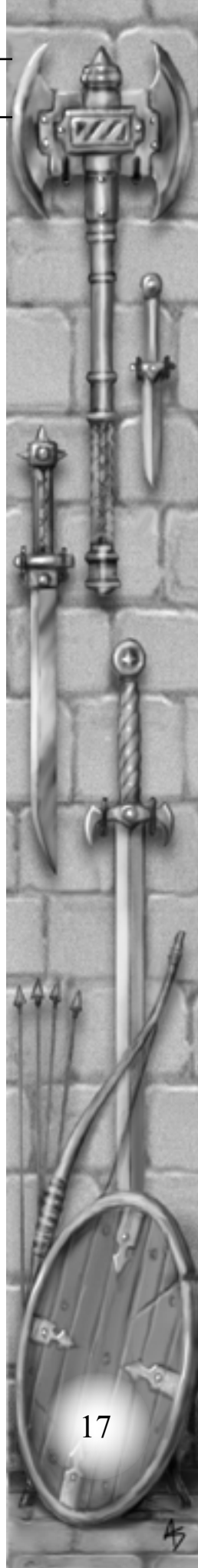
capitalise on their status within the tribe as it grants immediate power and will always keep them far from any physical labour. This lack of duty towards The Mighty One seems to go unpunished by the god as hobgoblin adepts are no less skilled than their goblin counterparts. It can only be presumed that, by their very existence, hobgoblins continue to further The Mighty One's grand scheme for all goblinoids.

All adepts within a tribe are considered of equal standing, regardless of their relative skills. Power struggles between them are rare but can occur, especially if the chieftain is foolish enough to demonstrate any particular favouritism. Such struggles are usually ignored by the rest of the tribe but if other hobgoblins are brought in to aid one adept or another, the chieftain is likely to step in and resolve matters with his own undisputed authority.

Clerics are exceedingly rare in any hobgoblin tribe, with perhaps one in twenty having a cleric of any real power. Along with far greater skills and powers than a mere adept, hobgoblin clerics are fanatical followers of The Mighty One and it is possible the one goes in hand with the other. The cleric's self-declared mandate to follow

The Mighty One's most minor wish can easily lead to direct confrontations with the tribal chieftain. Any adepts in the tribe will likely consider themselves in the service of the cleric rather than the chieftain and this can create a powerful faction that can destabilise the entire structure of a tribe. Though not regarded as being part of the law of any tribe, a very powerful cleric may call *Surka* against the chieftain if he believes the leader to be weak and, if successful, will become chieftain himself. This is not a common occurrence though as many clerics believe the running of a tribe is beneath their concerns and will only do so if they need to directly control every hobgoblin, or if they believe it is the demand of The Mighty One that they do so.

It is rarer still for a hobgoblin cleric to follow any other deity than The Mighty One, though it has been known to happen. Such clerics tend to be the most fanatical hobgoblins an adventurer will be unfortunate enough to meet, with their blood-crazed rages in battle a true phenomenon to witness. They are likely to have taken over the leadership of their tribe with a very specific purpose in mind, in accordance with their god's wishes. This can lead to tribes of hobgoblins acting in very unhobgoblinlike ways.



As impious as they are, the majority of hobgoblins will nevertheless at least acknowledge The Mighty One as their patron deity. They consider themselves the chosen of The Mighty One, as he is seen as both a war god and a great general, qualities with which hobgoblins can readily identify and that they believe they fulfil far better than mere goblins. The god, who is always portrayed by his adepts as an unusually large and muscular hobgoblin with flaming red eyes, sharp fangs and wickedly clawed hands, is said to command huge armies of goblinoid spirits. However, the only way a hobgoblin may join this mighty force after he dies is to be slain on the field of battle and this is generally as far as their religion goes.

However, members of tribes commonly retell stories from the time when The Mighty One walked the world, crushing all in his path, especially after they have fought a successful battle themselves. It is said that during his time in the material world, The Mighty One led the greatest force of hobgoblins ever seen, for they were always his favoured people. Many battles were fought against the other races and, for a long time, The Mighty One remained undefeated at the head of his horde. The complete domination of the world was his for the taking with only the elves, led by their own forest god, standing in the way. Marching to war, The Mighty One led every hobgoblin in the world into a massed battle to decide which was the greater race. Numberless hordes of hobgoblins poured into the assembled ranks of elves, heedless of the casualties caused by the elven bows as the massacre commenced, whilst The Mighty One sought out the elven god for single combat. The Mighty One towered over the elven god and time and again, he charged his enemy who, every time, simply dodged and twisted out of the way.

The Mighty One became enraged at his cowardly enemy, wildly swinging his huge axe at the elusive figure. All around him, hobgoblins slaughtered every elf they could reach, but he could not land a single blow against his own enemy. Again he charged and again the forest god dodged, but this time, the fine sliver of the elf deity's thin sword lunged forward under The Mighty One's guard, striking him cleanly through the heart and banishing him from the realms of mortals forever.

Hobgoblins recount the Fall of The Mighty One with bitterness and injured pride, for they know who was winning the battle before their god was banished and that the elves could only win through trickery and deceit. The rightful victory was denied to the hobgoblins who, if it were not for that, could be masters of the entire world in current times. This denial is ingrained into every hobgoblin and manifests itself as an utter hatred of the elven race. Many times in battle, hobgoblins have been seen ignoring some enemy units in favour of attacking any elf present.

As to the truth behind this tale, obviously I cannot judge, but it is maybe true in form, if not in fact. I find it hard to credit that The Mighty One ever walked this world, though I know some elves believe their own god once did. To my mind it is far more likely that, many centuries ago, a particularly renowned hobgoblin chieftain perhaps had the strength of will to unite several tribes, forming a mighty army that threatened elven lands. The defeat of this army somehow left an impression on the entire hobgoblin race through to this day. Now, my supposition may be no more correct than that of the hobgoblins themselves, but it is, I believe, far easier to give credence to.

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METHODS OF WARFARE

Though both hobgoblin tribes and mercenary warbands tend to be judged purely by the number of warriors they contain, this is often a false measure as these warriors are capable of fulfilling a variety of roles on the battlefield. Though dedicated in the main to raids and ambushes, any large group of hobgoblins is capable of conducting disciplined manoeuvres on an open battlefield that make them comparable to well-drilled human soldiers in terms of effectiveness and flexibility. Ultimately, this race can turn its hand to almost any military action with at least a reasonable degree of success.

WARRIORS

The regular hobgoblin warrior most will meet in battle will be formed up into units with other tribal members, numbering anything between twenty and one hundred overall, led by an overlord. The majority will be clad in studded leather armour, bearing a large shield and a longsword, with javelins being a common addition for many. However, it is possible to find a great deal of variation in the way hobgoblins are armed and armoured, even between warriors belonging to the same unit. Longswords may be replaced by spears or battleaxes, or the shield may be discarded altogether so a greatsword or greataxe may be wielded. Tribes who have been successful in many raids and particularly wealthy mercenary warbands are likely to have large proportions of their warriors sporting chainmail. Breastplates and helmets are also popular choices amongst hobgoblins.

ARCHERS

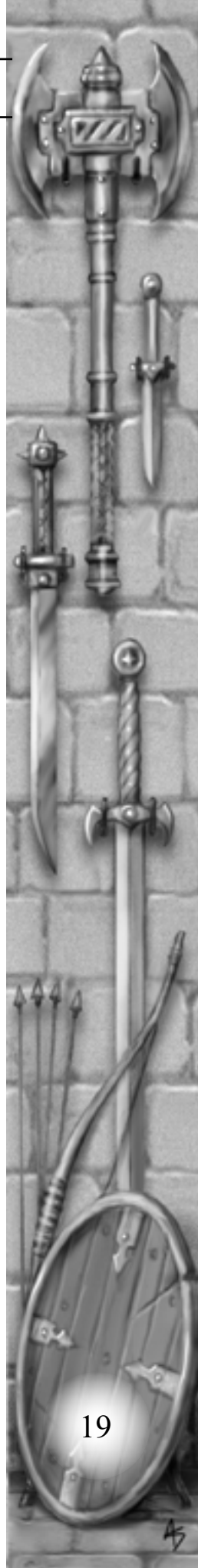
Many tribes will have the resources to arm their warriors with longbows but, given the hobgoblin penchant for destroying enemies at close quarters, they tend to be employed only in the defence of a lair or for specific and well-defined tasks. A chieftain may decide, for example, that an enemy needs to be thinned out before he orders an attack or that the use of longbows would make a superior diversionary action possible. Whilst no hobgoblin could compete with an elf for marksmanship, when used en masse, a volley of arrows can prove devastating to an opposing unit.

CAVALRY

Hobgoblins have been known to use cavalry to supplement their attacks, though this is far more common within mercenary warbands than with tribes. However, some tribal chieftains do see the value in such units, particularly if the terrain around their lair suits mounted warriors or if they have been defeated in the past by a charge of cavalry. Horses are the preferred mount of hobgoblins but given their dietary tastes, it can be very difficult keeping such a unit active for any great amount of time.

SCOUTS

Every fighting group of hobgoblins will maintain a select number of warriors whose battle skills are beyond reproach and who specialise in stealth tactics. These scouts are primarily used to locate and report back on settlements for future raids and attacks or for tracking ambush targets as they near the main hobgoblin force. In battle, the scouts may join regular warrior units or operate in small groups, infiltrating enemy positions to create disruption and havoc, chasing down fleeing units or simply harrying an enemy as they attempt to close on the hobgoblins' front line. Whilst their abilities to hide and move silently may even rival those of other goblinoids, such skills are always considered secondary to their strength in battle. Even these hobgoblins are warriors, first and foremost. They tend to opt for lighter



armour than the traditional warrior, the better to aid in their stealthy missions, and ranged weapons such as longbows and slings are very common.

CHIEFTAIN'S RETINUE

The most potent unit in a hobgoblin tribe, however, will always be led by the chieftain and is comprised of his most favoured overlords. These hobgoblins represent the very finest warriors of the entire tribe and, concentrated into one solid block, they are a very powerful force on any battlefield. There will be a huge variation in their weapons and armour but it will be of a distinctly higher quality than that of any other warrior and it is here any magical weapons the tribe has in its possession will be found. This retinue is also likely to include a warrior who will hold the tribal standard aloft to be used as a focus and rallying point for the entire fighting force and also to mark the position of the chieftain at all times. If the tribe has one or more adepts, it is also likely that the banner will be magically charged with spells unique to hobgoblins and thus become a powerful weapon of war in its own right. The chieftain and his retinue are expected to lead by example and so can always be found at the forefront of any large hobgoblin assault, using their incredible martial skills to literally smash through enemy opposition and allow the rest of their force to sweep through broken and demoralised lines with catastrophic results.

OF RAIDS AND AMBUSHES

Unless a target for a raid or ambush has a particularly formidable defence, it will be unlikely that even the majority of a tribe's warriors will ever be utilised at once. Even whilst the important business of war goes on, lairs still need to be watched and guarded, new raiding areas have to be scouted and even stronger defences constructed.

A chieftain will always judge what size of force is required to win a battle based upon the verbal reports of his scouts, and hobgoblins tend to be uncannily accurate when estimating their enemies. The tribe's scouts will have scoured the terrain for miles in every direction, often working alone, seeking weak victims that can provide food and resources for the tribe. These scouts are very capable in what they do, able

to gather preliminary information on an enemy in less than an hour, though they usually spend two to three days evaluating any one target, stealthily keeping their distance whilst memorising all they can about their unsuspecting prey. In the main, they will search for lightly defended farmsteads and villages, main caravan routes and other goblinoid tribes, keeping far away from larger towns and fortresses until the tribe has drained every other resource in the immediate area.

Their reconnaissance complete, they journey back to the lair, where the chieftain will decide which of the targets his scouts have presented will be attacked first, as well as how many warriors will be committed. Plans of battle will also be made, taking into account an enemy's defences as well as the surrounding terrain, and the chieftain's overlords will often take part in this process, volunteering to lead raids and even making suggestions to their leader. On rare occasions where the chieftain is less sure of what lies outside the lair, the tribe's adepts may also be consulted.

With plans set, the overlords then instruct each of their warriors in what they are expected to achieve in the coming battle. Strict objectives will be defined and adhered to. If the tribe is seeking horse flesh, for example, no hobgoblin will engage in wanton slaughter for the sheer joy of it unless he is welcoming of a chieftain's punishment. That said, it is just as likely that a tribe's objective *is* the slaughter of every sentient being they can find. It could be said that orders for murder and destruction on this scale could be given to test the warriors' mettle or to hone their fighting skills but, truth be told, hobgoblins often engage in such random slaughter simply because they enjoy it. They sincerely believe no other race but theirs has the right to exist in the world.

Hobgoblins, as a race, are well suited to the following of well defined orders without variation and are more than capable of carrying out some of the more complex commands their chieftains may sometimes demand. The patience required in waiting for the right time to strike, the blood thirsty charge followed by the immediate breaking off of combat and the accurate timing of diversionary attacks are all well within the grasp of the most average of hobgoblin warriors.

With their highly developed darkvision, hobgoblins prefer to attack at night, but they are equally suited

to daylight battles, just as they are no less capable of subterranean warfare as they are on the surface of the world. They are well aware of how many other races suffer in darkness and have even been known to make intelligent use of fire in such battles. Tactics such as blinding their opponents and destroying their night vision or employing scouts to create large fires that silhouette targets for archers have both been witnessed in some raids.

It is in the largest of battles, where the majority of a tribe's warriors are brought out to fight, that the hobgoblins' cunning tactics and disciplined resolution to orders can impress even the most seasoned of generals. This is, thankfully for civilised peoples, a rare occurrence and usually only happens when a large town is being attacked or when a chieftain makes the decision to face an approaching enemy away from the lair. When hobgoblins fight in such numbers, they are unlikely to intentionally leave any survivors, be they trained soldiers or non-combatants.

Tribeless Hobgoblins

Hobgoblins without a tribe, if they do not become mercenaries, will often locate a goblin or orc tribe and simply usurp control. They will seek to remove and destroy any existing tribal leader, along with his most skilled warriors and set themselves up in his place. Once in this position, they rule through methods of dominance and total fear, demonstrating a callous disregard for the well-being of their new followers. Any dissent is immediately and cruelly put down by the sword for the hobgoblins will be eminently willing to leave and find another such tribe if their current home becomes too weak as a result of their merciless rule.

FACING THE TRIBE

Imagine, for a moment, that you are the commander of an ad hoc army ready to fight off a large hobgoblin attack with the few meagre resources you have managed to pull together. An entire populated village is depending on your victory as the enemy approaches.

If you were unusually observant, the first you may see of the hobgoblins' approach may be a few scattered scouts, though they will likely be using their superior

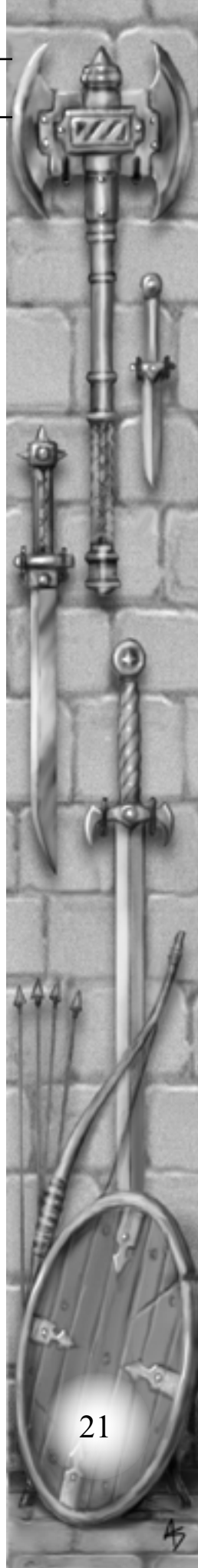
skills to stay hidden as they move into position, ready to carry out their chieftain's orders. The solid warrior units appear soon after, marching in tight formation and ready to support one another when battle is joined. With their weapons shining in any available light, some previous victims have in the past made the mistake of assuming the army was their own reinforcements. Such thoughts may be quickly forgotten, as the chieftain is spotted in the centre of the army, surrounded by the largest hobgoblins of the entire tribe. Next to him is a warrior, hoisting the crude-looking tribal banner high into the air, proclaiming to all that the hobgoblins have now arrived.

As your own infantry move forward to engage, desperate to keep the hobgoblins away from the village, the warrior units on the flanks peel off and adopt far looser formations. Unslinging their previously hidden longbows, your infantry is now subjected to volley after volley of arrow fire. The hobgoblins then charge, led by the chieftain's own retinue and a loud crash echoes across the battlefield as opposing shield lines clash violently. The chieftain uses the weight of his charge to smash the infantry units in front of him, creating a hole in your battle line that the nearest units of hobgoblin warriors rush to fill. Arrow fire continues to rain down on any infantry that have yet to engage the enemy and hobgoblin scouts begin rising from their hiding places to attack your units in the flank and rear, or to finish off the injured who by now are falling to the ground in huge numbers. Then, at a signal from the chieftain, hobgoblins mounted on horseback and armed with wickedly barbed spears rush from nearby woodland that your own huntsmen had previously claimed was clear. One by one, your units begin to turn and rout as the cavalry plough into their rear, only to be hacked down by blood-thirsty warriors. And the hobgoblin tribe wins yet another battle.

Moving forwards, the hobgoblins proceed to raze the village, slaughtering all they can find and stealing anything of value that can be carried back to the lair. The smoke rising high into the sky from the village is likely the last you will ever see of the settlement as you make a very hasty retreat from the disaster.

TACTICAL VARIETY

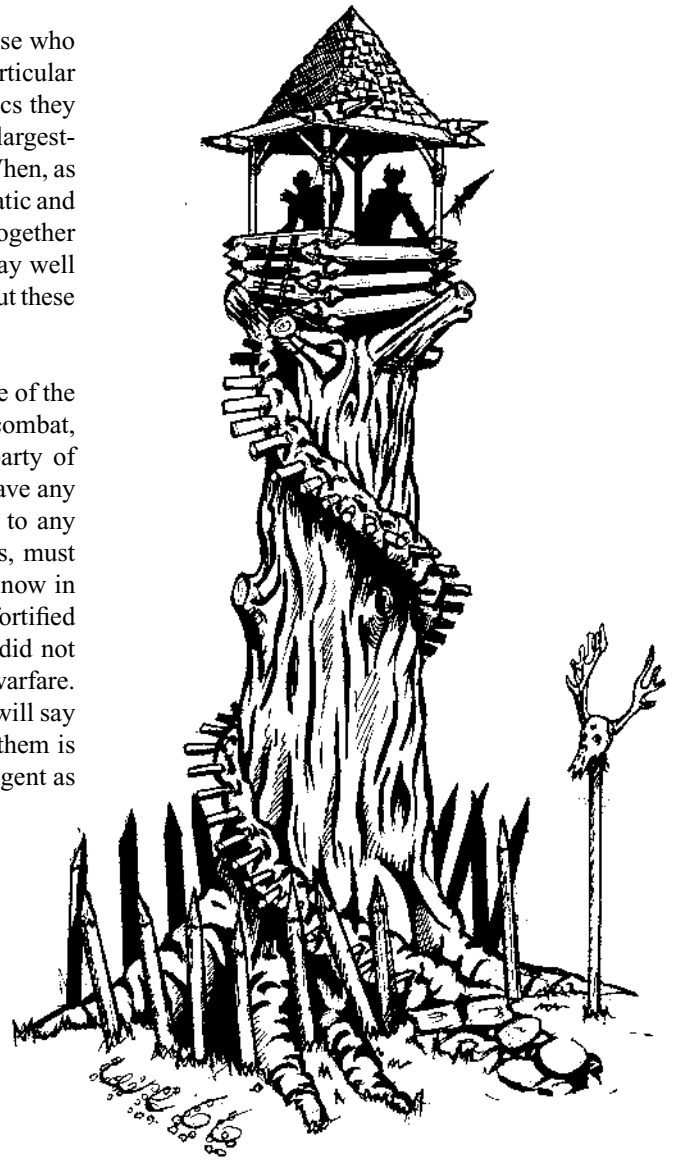
The example above is neither typical nor unusual of a massed hobgoblin attack, as every chieftain has his own



METHODS OF WARFARE

methods for defeating his enemies. Indeed, those who pursue such tribes can sometimes identify a particular raiding party of hobgoblins, simply by the tactics they employ. Such battles though, are generally the largest-scale in which hobgoblins are willing to fight. When, as has happened several times in history, a charismatic and powerful leader starts binding goblinoid tribes together to form a nation-defeating force, hobgoblins may well become a part of it and be used as shock troops, but these are exceptional circumstances.

What has been portrayed in this chapter is a taste of the variety of tactics that any hobgoblin may use in combat, whether it is in razing a village or facing a party of brave adventurers. They may not necessarily have any 'set' tactics, but will be able to quickly adjust to any new situation they find themselves in and, thus, must never be underestimated. There are fortresses now in hobgoblin hands, for example, being used as fortified lairs simply because the previous commander did not believe that hobgoblins were capable of siege warfare. Anyone who has previously fought hobgoblins will say that the best method to approach combat with them is to always assume that they are *at least* as intelligent as a human is.



Though I have concentrated primarily on traditional tribes and mercenary warbands, hobgoblins, like any intelligent humanoids, are not bound by any fixed set of rules. Adventurers travelling as far and wide as I have over this world may encounter this race in the strangest of places and doing decidedly un-hobgoblinlike things. For example, I have seen with my own eyes the Enflamed Arrows of the far-away steppes who, like the humans of the region, adopt the life of wide-ranging nomads, constantly herding an incredible number of horses to new areas of grazing. I have heard of, but not seen, the Blood Drinkers of the southern seas, by all accounts a rapacious and battle hungry group of hobgoblin pirates who have managed to amass a veritable fleet over recent years. And there are always dark rumours of hobgoblins being valued members of many thieves and assassins guilds throughout several cities, though this is harder to credit. It is clear, however, that hobgoblins, for all their deficiencies when compared to us, are an extremely capable race that may forever pose a threat to decent peoples.

Fillius Torinium, Scribe of Ages

ROLEPLAYING WITH HOBGOBLINS

In this chapter, we will look at how hobgoblins can be integrated into an existing campaign and, more importantly, how a Games Master should endeavour to portray them when they encounter the Player Characters. Up to this point, you have learnt about every aspect of hobgoblin life, from their disciplined martial skills to the physical traits that enhance their ability to survive in a world eager to wipe them out. Now it is time to put all of that information into practice. There is one golden rule you must never forget in your games:

Hobgoblins are not stupid!

The average hobgoblin is as smart as the average human and whilst they do not have the same civilised societies that spread all over the world, they more than make up for this with sheer cunning.

Too many Games Masters in the past have treated hobgoblins merely as critters for players to vanquish at the earliest opportunity. But every tribe and warband has a history and no hobgoblin will have survived long enough to even meet the players if they had simply flung themselves into every available combat.

At their core, hobgoblins are highly disciplined and very efficient warriors. Even with their overlord or chieftain slain, they will instinctively know when to push an advantage in combat and when to retreat from under an onslaught. In an attack, such as a raid or ambush, hobgoblins are likely to have planned the battle in advance, using secondary waves, diversionary forces and withering bow and javelin fire as and when required. Players should find that hobgoblins have an uncanny knack of manoeuvring units into positions where they will do the most damage. If, despite this forward planning, the players manage to start defeating their enemy, the hobgoblins will not wait around to be slaughtered. Instead, they will retreat behind a dedicated rearguard, regroup a good distance away and then strike back, this time having taken into account the strengths and weaknesses of the players.

If you fancy a memorable evening of gaming and wish to challenge your players to their very limits, you could do a lot worse than have them attempt an attack on a hobgoblin lair. It is here, in defence, that the hobgoblins can demonstrate their true mettle and even relatively high level characters may find themselves seriously challenged by ‘mere goblinoids.’

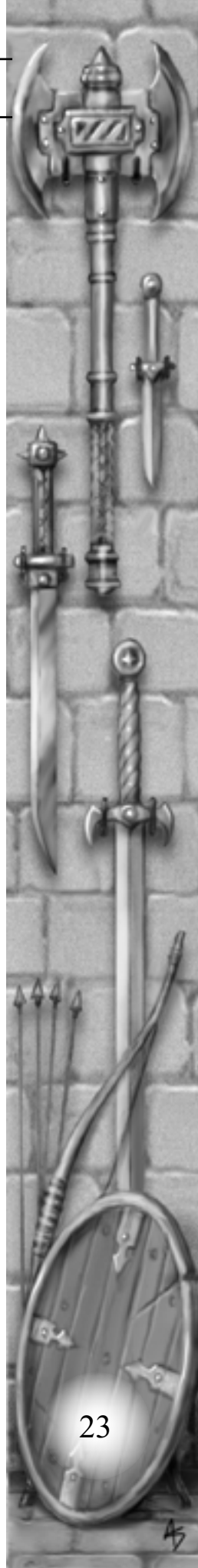
Imagine a typical lair for a moment. There are defences and traps for at least a couple of hundred yards in every direction. There are watchtowers, sentries and active patrols stretching much further away. Catapults, ballistae and stations for longbow armed hobgoblins cover every conceivable approach. For perhaps months the chieftain, a formidable warrior in his own right, has constantly drilled the tribe in what to do in the event of an attack and this is one very important point to remember – within a few short minutes of the alarm being sounded, *every* hobgoblin in the tribe will be armed, in position and ready to fight. Most Player Characters are likely to need a small army to help them overcome such an obstacle and losses will be high.

On very rare occasions, the players may meet a few ‘stray’ hobgoblins and have fun defeating them in short order. This is fine. You can then put them up against the resources of an entire tribe where they will soon develop a very strong respect for a race that has both numbers and martial prowess on its side. No longer mere monsters, hobgoblins have the potential to be the nemesis of every Player Character in the game.

Hobgoblin Names

Unlikely though it may be, it *is* possible that Player Characters could open a dialogue with a hobgoblin, if only they can delay its murderous tendencies long enough (keep any elves far out of sight!). More likely, a Games Master will want to name the prominent hobgoblins of a tribe or warband out of a sense of completeness or in the event that a chieftain gains a great deal of renown in any one area. In general, their names can seem harsh to human and elf ears, but not as hard or short as those of orcs. Provided here are some examples of hobgoblin names.

Tallarak	Terreck	Gruushavak
Kilmark	Mogosatik	Takarna
Chabosh	Defanma	Makara



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Hobgoblins provide the Games Master with a wealth of opportunities to use as adversaries against the players. Characters of all levels may be challenged by the intelligent and militarily forward-thinking hobgoblins, to the extent that any party foolish enough to dismiss them as mere goblinoids may quickly find themselves in real trouble.

Presented here is a short jump-off list of scenario hooks and ideas that a Games Master may use to introduce hobgoblins into an existing campaign.

MERCHANT CONVOY

A well-traversed caravan route through the wildlands has suffered greatly in recent months, with entire trains of wagons disappearing without trace. The players are hired to escort the next caravan to discover what is happening and, if possible, put a stop to it. The Games Master can have plenty of fun with this type of scenario, planning ambushes and using the hobgoblins' advanced grasp of tactics to hinder the players' attempts to remove them.

ASSASSINS!

A large force of goblins and orcs has been detected nearly sixty miles away from a civilised settlement and appears to be approaching fast. Scouts and huntsmen have estimated that the oncoming horde will easily crush the meagre defences of the settlement and so the players are drafted in to attempt a reckless plan. A small group of hobgoblins have been spotted leading the force and it is supposed that their deaths will cause the orc and goblin army to fall apart through infighting. The players must stealthily enter the enemy camp and destroy the hobgoblin presence without bringing huge numbers of other goblinoids down on their heads.

THE SIEGE

A nearby fort has recently fallen to a surprise hobgoblin attack. The defenders have all been slain and the

hobgoblins are now in sole possession of the fort. The rest of their tribe cannot be far behind and once they arrive, the fort may prove to be all but impregnable and the entire region will then fall under the domination of the hobgoblins. The players are hired to lead a small unit of militia to take back the fort and then hold it against the rest of the tribe when it arrives. The hobgoblins will try a direct assault at first but if this fails, they will begin to lay siege, trying successively more sophisticated and imaginative methods of attack. The Games Master is welcome to relieve the players with a larger army after a set amount of days. Or he could just leave them stranded. . .

SWEEP AND CLEAR

After a particularly gruesome battle, a combined force of goblinoids was finally shattered after plaguing the region for so long. However, a mercenary warband of hobgoblins became separated from the bulk of the force during the battle and managed to escape slaughter. Now hiding in the wilderness, they are conducting successive raids on the surrounding area and have already claimed many innocent lives. It is the task of the players to track the hobgoblin mercenaries down and destroy them. They will soon find, however, that these hobgoblins are veterans of many battles and know how to survive on their own whilst avoiding direct combat.

SCOUT HUNTERS

The players are spending time in a village, possibly for rest and re-supply between adventures, when an alarm is raised – a hobgoblin has been spotted on the far outskirts of the settlement. It is known that there is a hobgoblin lair around sixty miles away to the west and they have been an unholy terror on the farms of the area. Up to this time, however, they have never come as far east as to attack this village. The presence of a lone hobgoblin could signal their intentions to start raiding further away from their lair. At all costs, the scout must be captured or killed before he can alert his tribe as to the position and defences of the village. The players must hunt and track down this scout as the hobgoblin races back to his lair, eager to tell his chieftain of the rich plunder the village may yield.

VENDETTA

It is possible that, in one of the scenario ideas presented above, the players may have done a great deal of serious damage to a hobgoblin tribe and yet left some survivors.

Such hobgoblins, the only remains of a broken tribe, may well take a keen interest in the future actions of the players, tracking them down and then attempting to bring about their premature deaths. A strong hobgoblin warrior with rogue skills leading a dedicated warband could cause even high level characters some problems.



'regular' adventuring sessions, with the party seeking to amass fame and fortune as mercenaries, or climbing up the dominance hierarchy of a tribe until they are capable of challenging the chieftain themselves.

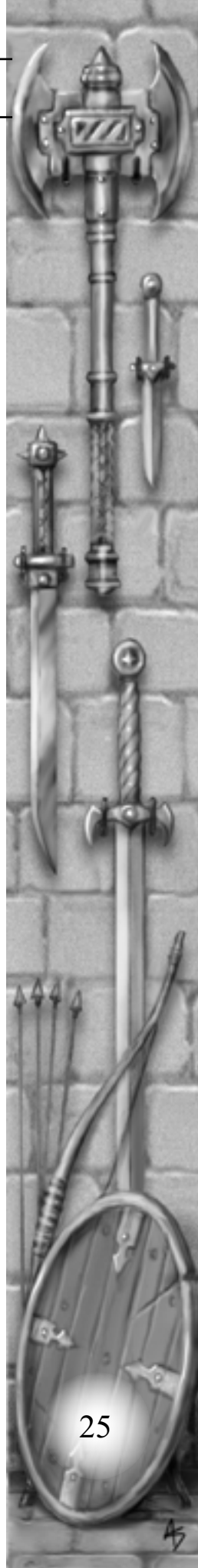
It is recommended that Player Character hobgoblins restrict themselves to fighter, rogue and cleric classes though, as always, a player's creativity should never be bound by any rulebook. If a suitable rationale is created for an unusual hobgoblin character, the Games Master is urged to indulge his player. As always, it is assumed that Player Character hobgoblins are above average when compared to other members of their race.

HOBGOBLIN RACIAL TRAITS

- † +2 Dexterity, +2 Constitution: Hobgoblins are superior warriors.
- † Medium: As Medium creatures, hobgoblins have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- † Hobgoblin base speed is 30 feet.
- † Darkvision: Hobgoblins can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only but is otherwise like normal sight and hobgoblins can function just as well with no light at all.
- † +4 racial bonus on Move Silently checks. Hobgoblins retain some of the stealth of their goblinoid cousins.
- † Automatic Languages: Common and Goblin. Bonus Languages: Draconic, Dwarven, Infernal, Orc.
- † Favoured Class: Fighter. A multiclass hobgoblin's fighter class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. To a hobgoblin, warrior skills are paramount and are taught from an early age.
- † Level Adjustment +1: Hobgoblins are slightly more powerful than the standard races.

HOBGOBLINS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Hobgoblins have a tremendous scope to be used as Player Characters within the game, though caution is urged when introducing them as part of a regular party line-up alongside humans, elves (especially elves!) and the other races. The hobgoblin personality is one dedicated to war and the domination of every race not of their own. Though the idea of a hobgoblin gaining a conscience and working to atone for the crimes of his race may appeal to some, it is highly unlikely. This must be left to the discretion of the individual Games Master and his players. However, a hobgoblin-only campaign may have a great deal of length to it, whether the Player Characters are part of a tribe, have left for some reason or have formed a mercenary company. Such a campaign is likely to be military in nature and can provide a good break from



GRAVEN HILL BORDER FORT

The Graven Hill border fort is provided as an example of a hobgoblin lair. Whilst there is a great deal of variation between the specifics of such lairs, it does give an indication as to the level of organisation a tribe can possess, as well as the extent the hobgoblins may develop their defences. Enough information has been given for Games Masters to use Graven Hill as an extended encounter for their players, or even as the basis of several full-blown adventures, possibly utilising some of the ideas given in the Scenario Hooks And Ideas chapter.

Graven Hill is typical of the many border fortresses that safeguard the lands of men from predators and invaders. Constructed nearly a century ago from locally quarried stone, it has remained a bulwark against the wild for all the human and halfling farmsteads and villages in the immediate area, with few enemies willing to launch any sort of attack simply because of its presence. However, such safeguards can breed a lax attitude and the forty or so soldiers stationed at Graven Hill began to grow disinterested in their preparations of defences and sentry duties. Even the walls began to crumble with little done to halt the process by the fort's commander. When the Black Drake hobgoblin tribe attacked in the dead of one night, Graven Hill was overcome within an hour and no human was left alive inside its stone walls.

THE TAKING OF GRAVEN HILL

The Black Drake tribe had been forced to relocate its lair after the dwarves of the south finally moved against the hobgoblins in retaliation for months of successive raiding attacks on dwarven settlements. Faced with complete eradication at the hands of the vengeful dwarves, Mokvara, the tribal chieftain of the Black Drakes, had little choice to evacuate the cavern complex the hobgoblins had occupied, or be destroyed. The scouts of the tribe immediately began ranging ahead of the main body of hobgoblins, for Mokvara knew this was a critical period and feared that his tribe would be caught and annihilated by a dwarven force at any time. Never before had the Black Drakes been this vulnerable. Without a lair, nearly four hundred hobgoblins could

not be easily hidden and, if attacked, they might all die fighting.

So it was with no small amount of relief that the scouts soon reported to Mokvara that a human fort had been found three days' march to the north-west and, moreover, it seemed lightly defended enough for the tribe to conquer. Leaving the tribe to the leadership of one of the overlords, Lokandat, the chieftain led a large force of warriors to gain possession of Graven Hill.

By the time Mokvara gained sight of Graven Hill, more scouts had already moved into the area and having spent three days watching the fort, the human defenders blissfully unaware, they had discovered exactly how many men were inside and how relatively poor the defences were. Mokvara studied his foe carefully, keeping his army away from the fort and his plans began to formulate. His tribe would take longer to reach Graven Hill than he did and so he could perhaps expect their arrival in five days time. This effectively gave him nearly a week to breach the fort and wipe out its defenders with the minimum of cost on the part of his warriors. With time on his side, he consulted with his scouts as to which was the weakest wall of Graven Hill, whilst he ordered his warriors to begin the construction of two large catapults, using materials scavenged in nearby woodland.

On the fourth night since their arrival, the hobgoblins attacked, whilst most of the humans slept. They managed to move their catapults into position and actually start firing at the weak east wall before any alarm was raised inside Graven Hill. Confusion reigned inside the fort, with archers firing blindly into the dark against an enemy all too aware of their presence. Longbow-equipped warriors closed range with the east wall, their superior darkvision allowing them to pick off many of the archers on the wall whilst themselves remaining hidden by the veil of night. After little more than half an hour's bombardment, the dilapidated east wall finally gave way to the hobgoblins assault, and the centre section half collapsed. The catapult fire ceased and Mokvara led the attack himself into the newly created breach. The slaughter began very quickly. Though every human in the fort was now armed for battle, many were still unsure as to the direction of the hobgoblin attack when the east wall was breached. Outnumbered by the hobgoblins, with many still terrified by the sudden night attack, they were cut down with merciless efficiency. Not one human

was spared and the hobgoblins lost only half a dozen of their warriors in the subsequent fighting.

A NEW HOME

The rest of the Black Drakes tribe arrived in the following day and Mokvara immediately set his hobgoblins to work, eager to fortify Graven Hill and make it more suitable for the goblinoid way of life. The chieftain was well aware how lax the humans had been in the upkeep of their fort and he had no intention of making the same mistakes. First, the two large catapults used to take the fort were disassembled and moved to the towers that stood either side of the breach they had made. Then began a dedicated and systematic rebuilding of Graven Hill's defences which, in the end, made it a far stronger position than it had ever been in its history.

The breach in the east wall was repaired first, using thick wooden ramparts and supports. Whilst obviously not as strong as stone, the two catapults dominating a wide area in front of the wall would make any attack on the quarter difficult and Mokvara had plans to make it harder still. Two ballistae were hastily built to arm the western towers, wicked wooden spikes were placed at the foot of the walls and digging began on deep ditches that would almost completely surround Graven Hill and make it nearly impossible for an enemy to find easy progress. Three watchtowers were built away from the fort and more digging took place beyond the ditches, creating huge numbers of small potholes that would entrap any approaching cavalry and slow down those on foot. Only the main track leading from the gatehouse was left clear of these potholes. For its part, the gatehouse was given a wooden portcullis, where none had been before, and large rocks were balanced on a series of ramps, ready to be sent crashing down on to the heads of any who tried to assault the gates. Only when all this was done, did work begin on the housing for the tribe as a whole. Whilst Mokvara and the tribe's adept, Foriar, had taken outhouses within Graven Hill for their quarters, the rest of the tribe started to build wooden huts for themselves in the centre of the courtyard, creating a kind of village within the walls of the fort.

Whilst this renovating of Graven Hill was taking place, raids were established, but Mokvara was careful only to take what his tribe needed to survive and no more, knowing that if an enemy was provoked into attacking whilst the hobgoblins were still working on the defences, then the chances were the whole tribe may perish. With the defences as strong as the Black Drakes had made them, Mokvara felt confident enough to re-dedicate his

warriors to raiding attacks and soon the whole region around Graven Hill began to feel the presence of the fort's new masters.

THE BLACK DRAKES

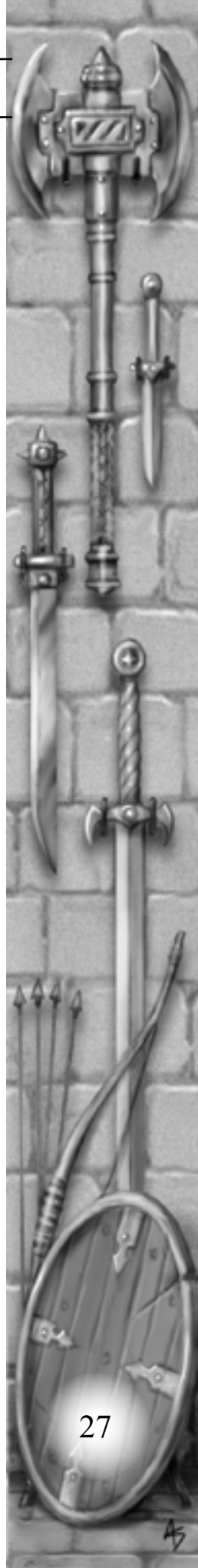
The Black Drake tribe of hobgoblins has managed to strengthen the defences of Graven Hill fort to the point where it will take a major, dedicated assault by a large professional army to force them out. It is possible that Mokvara may become a little too reliant on the strength of his new lair and thus over extend his tribe when conducting raiding attacks, but he is constantly drilling his warriors in the defence of the fort and, as shown below, the Black Drakes have the resources to make a direct attack on Graven Hill a very costly process for anyone.

Tribal Structure

Mokvara, Tribal Chieftain
 3 Dire Wolves, Mokvara's own 'pets'
 Foriar, Tribal Adept
 8 Overlords
 135 Warriors, all of which can be armed with longbows
 11 Scouts
 Approx. 200 Young and other non-combatants
 26 horses not kept for food and used as cavalry in raids
 2 Ballistae
 2 Large Catapults

Pothole defences

The hobgoblins of Graven Hill have dug many potholes surrounding the fort, each around a foot deep and covered with grass and twigs. As such, it takes a wary eye to find them (Search Check, DC 20). The potholes themselves have been designed to slow men and cavalry, and they can cause injuries such as sprains and broken legs. If characters are caught unawares in an area of potholes, they must make a Reflex save, DC 15 or take d3 damage. Running through an area filled with potholes makes the chances of hurting oneself greater (Reflex save, DC 20). Horses and other mounts stepping into a pothole area will automatically suffer the same type of injury and their riders may be thrown (Riding check, DC 15, 20 if moving faster than a walk). Once detected, potholes have no effect on those walking at their base speed through the area.



Mokvara, Hobgoblin Tribal Chieftain**Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)****8th Level Fighter****Hit Dice:** 8d10+16 (60 hp)**Initiative:** +5**Speed:** 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)**AC:** 18 (+1 Dex, +7 +2 *chainmail*), touch 11, flat-footed 17**Base Attack/Grapple:** +8/+11**Attack:** Greatsword +12 melee (2d6+6/17-20) or composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2/x3)**Full Attack:** Greatsword +12/+7 melee (2d6+6/17-20) or composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9/+4 ranged (1d8+2/x3)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +4**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12**Skills:** Hide +4, Listen +8, Move Silently +6, Spot +8**Feats:** Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialisation (greatsword)**Challenge Rating:** 8**Treasure:** +2 *chainmail*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *potion of cure serious wounds***Alignment:** Lawful evil**Lokandat, Hobgoblin Overlord****Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)****4th Level Fighter****Hit Dice:** 4d10+4 (26 hp)**Initiative:** +5**Speed:** 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)**AC:** 18 (+1 Dex, +4 *scalemail*, +1 *heavy steel shield*), touch 11, flat-footed 17**Base Attack/Grapple:** +4/+6**Attack:** Longsword +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20); or longbow +5 ranged (1d8/x3)**Full Attack:** Longsword +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20); or longbow +5 ranged (1d8/x3)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +1**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10**Skills:** Hide -2, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Spot +4**Feats:** Alertness, Blind Fight, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)**Challenge Rating:** 4**Treasure:** +1 *heavy steel shield***Alignment:** Neutral evil**Foriar, Hobgoblin Adept****Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)****2nd Level Adept****Hit Dice:** 2d6+2 (9 hp)**Initiative:** +1**Speed:** 30 ft.**AC:** 14 (+2 Dex, +2 *leather*), touch 12, flat-footed 12**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/+1**Attack:** Club +1 melee (1d6), or light crossbow +3 ranged (1d8/19-20)**Full Attack:** Club +1 melee (1d6), or light crossbow +3 ranged (1d8/19-20)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Attacks:** Spells**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 11**Skills:** Alchemy +5, Handle Animal +5, Heal +6, Hide +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4, Survival +4**Feats:** Alertness**Adept Spells Per Day:** 3/2.**Challenge Rating:** 1**Treasure:** *Potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of gaseous form***Alignment:** Lawful evil

THE BLACK DRAKES TODAY

The Black Drakes tribe has now occupied Graven Hill for over nine months and has spread its area of domination to all the human and halfling settlements within a forty mile radius. Many of the closer villages and farms have been razed to the ground and others live under the perpetual fear of raiding attacks and murder. Three militia armies have been raised to destroy the hobgoblin threat, but all have been bloodily repulsed by the now superior defences of Graven Hill. A number of larger towns lie outside of the Black Drakes' area of control and their peoples look on in fear of what the tribe may do next. Mokvara's main problem is that, despite the virtually impregnable nature of his lair, he lacks the numbers of

warriors to attack such well defended settlements, but it can only be a matter of time as the tribe continues to prosper and grow that such plans come to the chieftain's mind more frequently.

That it will be a major undertaking to reclaim Graven Hill for human hands is without question, for the hobgoblins guard their lair with eagle eyes and grow stronger with each passing raid. It is likely that only a protracted siege, completely cutting the tribe off from their food sources, will enable a force to sufficiently weaken the hobgoblins to allow an assault to take place, for with so many mouths to feed in such a relatively small area, the tribe is unable to keep a large amount of stores for such an eventuality.

The townsfolk who live near this ominous threat have received word recently that the Stone Maulers tribe of ogres has also moved into the area. Though their low numbers has yet to make a significant impact on any settlements, many hope that they will soon encounter the Black Drakes and that any battle fought between them will sufficiently weaken both tribes to the point where they may finally be combated effectively. Others, however, secretly dread what may occur next if the Stone Maulers and Black Drakes are somehow able to co-operate and join forces, for the ogres could represent the increase in his army that would

allow Mokvara to finally attempt a major assault upon one of the towns. If that were to happen, no human or halfling within a hundred miles of Graven Hill could consider themselves safe.

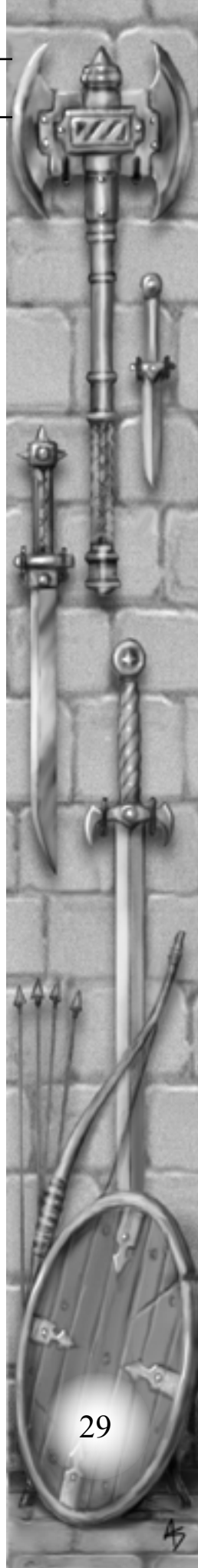
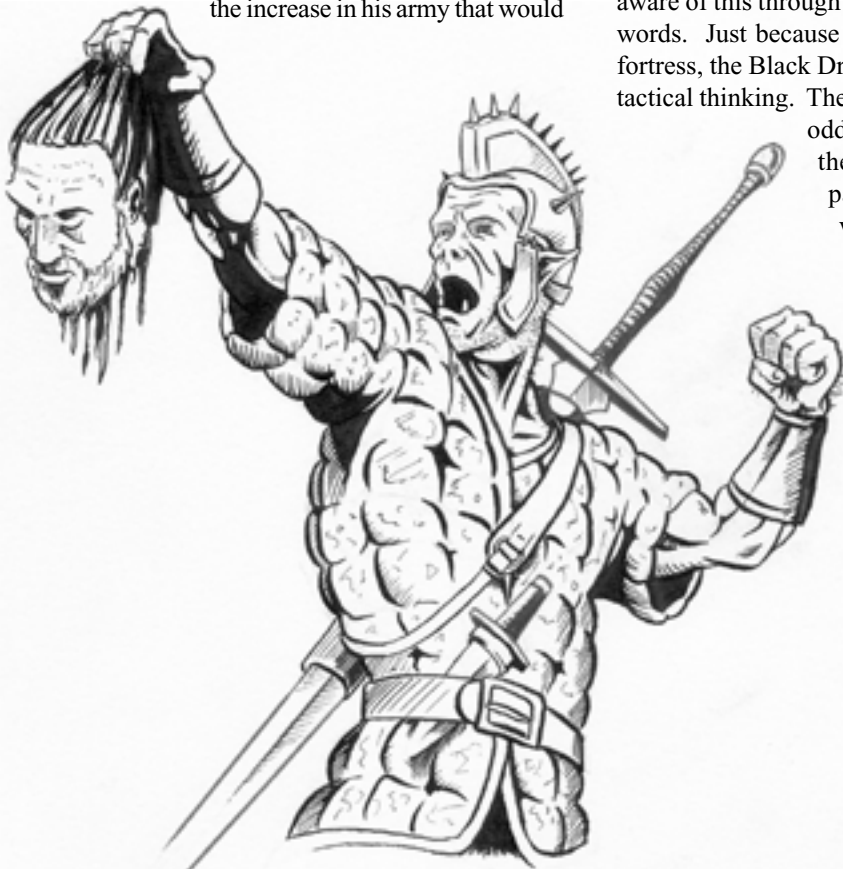
USING GRAVEN HILL

Though hobgoblins are individually fairly weak, Graven Hill has been designed from the outset to be as nigh impregnable as the Black Drakes are able to make it. Whole armies could literally smash themselves against its walls whilst leaving the tribe relatively unharmed. A party without even a small militia to back them up is going to have to be of quite high level if they are to survive Graven Hill.

There is, however, one glaring weakness the Black Drakes have so far yet to contend with – magic. They have little in the way of magical defence beyond their thick walls and a party with access to particularly destructive spells will have a far easier time than most.

When playing the hobgoblins of Graven Hill, Games Masters are urged to pay attention to the Roleplaying With Hobgoblins chapter of this supplement. Militarily, hobgoblins are highly advanced when compared to other goblinoids and you should make sure the party is aware of this through their actions rather than your own words. Just because the tribe is behind the walls of a fortress, the Black Drakes will be no less active in their tactical thinking. They will watch their enemies, weigh odds and launch attacks only when they believe they can win. If the party demonstrate any significant weaknesses within the defences the hobgoblins have constructed around Graven Hill, the tribe will move fast to build new, more effective ones.

As a final word, if your players also own the *Slayer's Guide to Hobgoblins*, you have our permission to be absolutely merciless to them – your players should know what to expect from intelligent and highly disciplined goblinoids after all!



HOBGOBLIN REFERENCE LIST

Whilst it is a truism that there is no such thing as an average hobgoblin, the following are provided as a quick and easy reference for you to use on short notice. However, Games Masters are encouraged to use the following entries as examples to build upon when creating truly unique adversaries for their players.

Hobgoblin Tribal Chieftain

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

7th Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 7d8+17 (48 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)

AC: 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail), touch 11, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+10

Attack: Greatsword +10 melee (2d6+4/19-20) or mighty composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +8 ranged (1d8+2/x3)

Full Attack: Greatsword +10/+5 melee (2d6+4/19-20) or mighty composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +8/+3 ranged (1d8+2/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Hide +1, Intimidate +7, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3

Feats: Alertness, Toughness, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Standard x3

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Hobgoblin Overlord

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

3rd Level Warrior/1st Level Rogue

Hit Dice: 3d8+1d6+4 (24 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)

AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 scalemail), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+4

Attack: Greataxe +4 melee (1d12+1/x3) or longbow +4 ranged (1d8/x3)

Full Attack: Greataxe +4 melee (1d12+1/x3) or longbow +4 ranged (1d8/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +1d6

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Hide +5, Intimidate +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Ride +6, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Standard x2

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Hobgoblin Adept

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

3rd Level Adept

Hit Dice: 3d6+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather), touch 12, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+1

Attack: Club +1 melee (1d6) or light crossbow +3 ranged (1d8/19-20)

Full Attack: Club +1 melee (1d6) or light crossbow +3 ranged (1d8/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spells

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 11

Skills: Handle Animal +5, Hide +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4, Survival +7

Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: Standard, +1d3 potions

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Hobgoblin Warrior

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 light wooden shield), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+1

Attack: Longsword +1 melee (1d8/19-20); or javelin +2 ranged (1d6)

Full Attack: Longsword +1 melee (1d8/19-20); or javelin +2 ranged (1d6)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Spot +3

Feats: Alertness

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Hobgoblin Spells

Adventurers have often reported hobgoblin adepts and clerics casting spells of a divine nature that are completely beyond the experience of other races. Such spells are few in nature but most hobgoblin spell-casters seem at least familiar in their use. They tend to be concentrated around the use of a tribe's or warband's banner and enhance its effect in battle, making it not only a rallying point for units but a potent weapon of war in its own right.

The two spells listed below may only be used by hobgoblin adepts and clerics who worship the Mighty One. Spell-casters of other races or other faiths may not use them under any circumstances.

Fortitude

Conjuration (Healing)

Level: Adp 2/Clr 2

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Area: 25 ft. radius emanation from focus

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Cast directly onto a tribal or warband banner, this spell spreads its effect to all nearby hobgoblins. The banner is the focus of the spell and is not consumed by the casting. Every hobgoblin within 25 feet of the banner will automatically be healed one hit point in every round it sustains any damage, for the duration of the spell. If a hobgoblin sustains no damage in a round, no hit points will be healed, regardless of the health of the hobgoblin. This spell will have no effect on hobgoblins from a different tribe or warband to that of the banner's.

Focus: Tribal or warband banner.

Vengeance of the Mighty One

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-affecting, Evil]

Level: Adp 3/Clr 3

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 20 minutes

Range: Touch

Area: 25 ft. radius emanation from focus

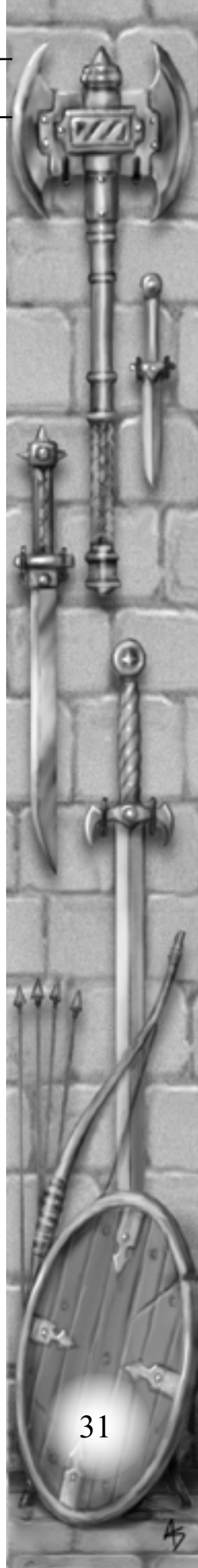
Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Cast directly onto a tribal or warband banner, this spell spreads its effect to all nearby hobgoblins. The banner is the focus of the spell and is not consumed by the casting. Every hobgoblin within 25 feet of the banner will automatically receive a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. This spell will have no effect on hobgoblins from a different tribe or warband to that of the banner's.

Focus: Tribal or warband banner.







*Benela-Kar Surfette
Royal Scholar of the Tallud*

*Shallan
2001*



The Slayer's Guide To Gnolls

Gnolls are a vicious race of hyena-like humanoids, cruel in nature and hateful of all life but their own. They are typically used by Games Masters against players who have progressed beyond mere orcs and goblins as the 'standard' horde-type creature and now seek a slightly greater challenge. With their superior strength and combat abilities, gnolls have certainly been able to give players a good hammering in the past. With the coming of *The Slayer's Guide to Gnolls*, this race becomes just a little more dangerous.

Gnolls have their own customs, habits and tactics that make them a potentially lethal force when used against an unprepared party of adventurers. Whilst your average barbarian may have little appreciation for the more subtle nuances of gnoll culture, he will certainly feel the effects of it when a battleaxe gets embedded in his back after seriously under-estimating this race. Many players and, indeed, Games Masters often assume gnolls are but few, scattered here and there across the campaign world to provide fodder for adventurers. This is far from the truth as you are about to discover. There are regions of the world infested with gnolls that nothing short of a full blown crusade will eradicate. More importantly, the gnolls have a reason for being there that has the potential to become an integral part of any campaign.

The knowledge within these pages has been collated by the scholars, loremasters and warriors of many worlds and represents the most detailed information resource on this evil race. Games Masters can delight in reintroducing an old monster in a new fashion within their campaigns, whilst players are urged to pay particular attention to the collected wisdom of this supplement – it may just save their lives.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 games systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these will be the races all but ignored by Games Masters

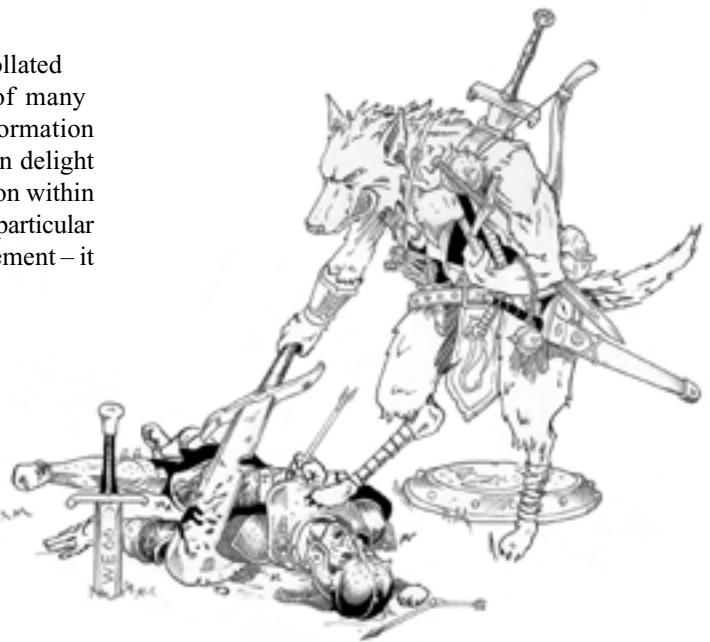
and players alike who view them as little better than cannon fodder.

This outlook just has to be wrong. An entire race does not just suddenly materialise in the campaign world and there are very few who exist solely to wage war. What are they doing when the Player Characters are not around?

GNOLLS – VICIOUS SCAVENGERS

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race, in this case the gnoll. You will find a colossal amount of information on gnoll physiology, habitat and society, giving you a fundamental level of understanding on how this race exists and interacts with the rest of the world. Players can learn the sort of combat tactics the gnolls are likely to employ against them and Games Masters are presented with guidelines on how to introduce this race into their existing campaigns. They will also benefit from material showing how to actually portray gnolls to the players who are in turn given the chance to try gnoll characters for themselves. Finally, a complete lair is featured to be used as either an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios or even just an example of what gnolls are capable of.

After reading *The Slayer's Guide to Gnolls*, you may never view this monster race in quite the same way again.



My name is Cephir Al-alladin ibn Kasham ibn Neylar and this is my story.

It was the first season of the year when Captain Kaishalla came to us with the contract. We had been engaged by the potentate of Sashmir to investigate raids on the northern villages. The Captain was confident that we, the Band of Iron, would have no difficulty finding and putting an end to those responsible.

After a journey of near a fortnight, we arrived at the first village. The infantry of the Band quartered the scorched ruins while the outriders, Fayam, Moresha and my humble self ringed the town on our swift horses looking for traces. Alas, The Divine was not kind for we found clear signs of the raiders retreating to the north. At the time, we rejoiced.

The trail led north then east and Captain Kaishalla followed it eagerly. Those of us who were mounted ranged ahead as scouts and we followed the trail until it dipped into a deep chasm between the hills, edged in shattered stone and long dead acacias. Here we would have halted but the Captain drove us on, eager to have his pay and plunder.

The rift was less a valley and more nearly a cave, so close were the walls overhead, and soon it was as dark as night. The Band of Iron moved slowly four wide, their heavy chain and great shields glinting in the deep shadows. Moresha and Fayam were on point whilst I brought up the rear on my stallion, Scirocco.

We had been moving for some hours when one of the men cried a warning. As if the cry were a signal a great beast - half man and half jackal - arose with the howl of a wolf and we were set upon!

From both sides of the chasm wall, from behind boulders and in the shadows of the crevasse, the creatures rushed at us. They wore rotting armor of leather and steel and bore weapons covered in the stains of old blood. Each was more jackal than man but went on two legs and were taller than the greatest of us, coming near to my short ribs whilst I was mounted. A few arrows hummed through our ranks as some of the creatures fired small bows a single time - then dropped them to charge with the others.

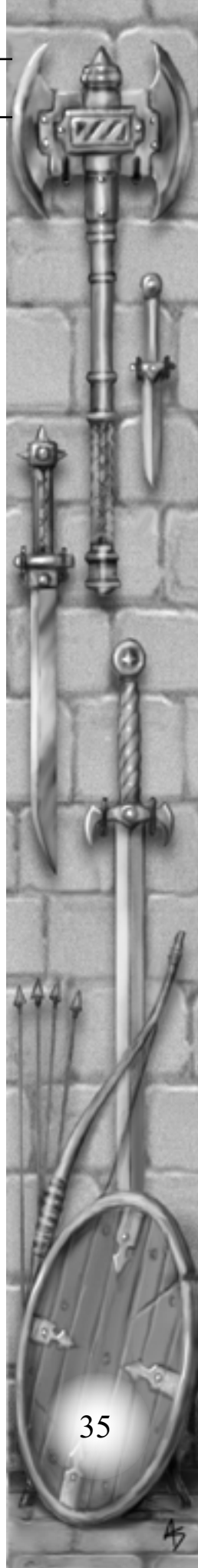
The men of the Band tried to form but the beasts were close and quick. Some of the men managed small squares while others were hacked down as they tried to react - their heavy armor availing them little against the fierce blows of the monsters.

Then I too was set upon and was forced to defend myself as two creatures attacked. I spurred Scirocco to rearing at the nearest as I struck at the other with my scimitar, destroying much of its foul head with the blade's razor edge. I saw Fayam swept from his mount and sent my stallion into a leap which bowled over his assailant with a sound of shattering bones. As I hacked left and right I called to him but could see the life go out of his eyes as he lay below, his torn throat leaking his life's blood.

The creatures closed in on me again and I lifted Scirocco into a capriole which dropped two and gave me the room to break free of the press. Back down the crevasse I turned, ready to attack again. An arrow struck my thigh, penetrating the mail there but I did not hesitate and drew my horn bow from its case at the side of my saddle.

The bulk of the creatures were now engaged and I watched as the Iron Band, outnumbered more than three to one, began to fall under the attack. I fired arrow after arrow into the great jackal things - slaying several more before the last infantryman fell and they turned to race up the chasm at me. With my knees I told Scirocco to flee and I fired at them until all my shafts were spent. I rode like the wind toward the open wood beyond the chasm's edge.

Out there, where my mount gave me the advantage and was not pinned in by walls and stone, they refused to pursue. Cowardly creatures, but smart. Smart enough to lay an ambush perfectly for the Captain of the Band of Iron - may The Divine welcome him into paradise.



GNOLL

PHYSIOLOGY

When confronted by a gnoll for the very first time, an adventurer may experience no little trepidation. At seven-and-a-half feet tall, the gnoll is likely to stand at least a head higher than the largest of human warriors and its great strength will be immediately apparent from the consummate ease with which it swings its crude but heavy battleaxe.

Gnolls have heavy-set dog-like faces surrounded by a large mane running all the way down the back to their almost constantly active tails. Thick fur, which seems almost impervious to dust, covers the rest of their muscular bodies and is a usually dirty yellow in colour. Their manes have a great many dark red/grey spots, which slowly fade as the gnoll matures. The oldest of gnolls will either have very faint spots, or they may disappear altogether. This thick fur, as well as keeping a gnoll's skin free of dirt and infection, also provides some small measure of protection against weaker blows but any gnoll engaging in serious combat will always augment this natural defence with layers of metal and leather. A very small proportion of gnoll family groups feature stripes instead of spots and dark brown fur instead of the more usual yellow. This sort of variation, rather than marking such gnolls out as being different and therefore subject to prejudice from others of their race, is all but ignored. No special attachment, for good or ill, is given to such differences in hide markings.

Amongst the civilised races, gnolls have a reputation for being very strong and for having a markedly low intelligence. Despite a strong element of truth, gnolls are very instinctive creatures, able to apply their considerable natural talents to the best effect in most situations. They are also often regarded as being a cowardly race but, as the *Slayer's Guide to Gnolls* will demonstrate, this is simply not the case. Any adventurer relying on a gnoll turning tail and fleeing after a display of strength is likely to end his career prematurely.

SHARPENED SENSES

Gnolls are primarily nocturnal creatures but whilst they dislike any bright light and will, under normal circumstances, seek to avoid the source, it does them no actual harm. They can certainly tolerate such interference

during combat. Their senses, in general, are very highly developed and they use a combination of sight, sound and smell to track down their prey. A gnoll's eyesight, in particular, is very sharp and their darkvision capabilities easily match those of a dwarf. On the rare occasions they deign to post alert sentries around their lairs, it can be incredibly difficult to approach them unawares.

The gnoll senses of sound and smell are similarly well developed, with their nasal passages having a much sharper definition than those of the civilised races. A gnoll's hearing is capable of extending much further down the scale of sound than most other creatures can sense. There are documented cases of particularly sensitive elves detecting a series of very low sounds from groups of gnolls. Whilst this may be an irrelevant trait as far as most adventurers are concerned, if it were possible to create a deep bass sound far below the range of human hearing, it may just cause a degree of confusion or even distress amongst an attacking group of gnolls. On the other hand, it may simply summon every gnoll within a range of four or five miles, all intent on destroying the source of the sound. It still remains for a brave party of adventurers to actually test this supposition.

Notice to Games Masters

So, if your players manage to create a deep, continual bass sound, how will gnolls react? Well, we are going to leave this little detail up to you. Perhaps gnolls will shy away from such an irritating source or maybe they will arrive in droves from the surrounding areas, angered and determined to silence the source. We suggest you pick one reaction and then stick to it for the duration of your campaign. If nothing else, this will keep your players guessing whilst at the same time giving them another possible weapon to use against any gnoll packs they encounter.

It has been demonstrated that gnolls use all their senses when tracking and hunting prey and they seem capable of picking up the merest of scents upon a breeze. A far more fascinating conjecture is that gnolls are able to determine far more about creatures by their scent other than mere position and species. Just as canines and many other carnivores can 'smell' the fear of an enemy, it is possible that gnolls can too. There have been oft told tales of gnolls launching an ambush, then attacking with redoubled fury when they discover non-combatants present with the warriors. Some point out, however, that this may just be another indication of gnoll cruelty and

that they are simply eager to attack intelligent beings who are unable to fight back. If this hypothesis proves correct though, gnolls may well be able to sense a whole range of emotions through smell and, further, if they can generate various scents themselves at will, this could pervade their whole society. It would effectively reveal a whole new facet of gnoll life that has remained unseen for centuries. It would point to gnolls using scent as a form of communication, passing air-borne silent messages on the wind, though they would no doubt be very basic in nature. This is likely to remain a theory, however, as other races seem unable to detect any such scents emanating from the gnolls, with adventurers merely remarking that they smell ‘very bad.’

‘I just hacked that gnoll’s nose off!’

‘How will he smell?’

‘Terrible!’

Popular, if rather old, dwarven joke

Regardless, more credence is given to the idea that as well as a spoken tongue, gnolls have an unwritten language that takes the form of signalling with their tails, ears and manes, the latter of which can be made to stand erect from their skin. Whilst much of this is clearly an involuntary response to whatever emotions hold them at any one time, it is apparent gnolls are able to combine such signals with sub-vocal grunts and whines to give virtually inaudible commands to one another. This racial trait alone gives their prepared ambushes a lethal advantage.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Gnolls are primarily carnivores, preferring live or just killed creatures above all else. It is a common view that gnolls have an additional preference for intelligent creatures if only because they scream more whilst being consumed. Whilst it is true that gnolls often begin eating the limbs of any prey before anything else, learned scholars tend to believe instead that any preference for intelligent races is one born of simple taste rather than an impractical and cruel desire to cause pain. This is often likened to some wild animals that, once having tasted human flesh, strive to seek it out above all else.

During night hours, those searching for gnolls are far more likely to locate them in their hunting areas than in the pack lair. Any temperate or warm wilderness area that has a great proportion of feral herd animals is a good place to start, as are lonely farmsteads and villages. Well-travelled trade routes are popular sites of ambush for any gnoll pack, provided they are a good distance from civilisation and not heavily traversed by armed soldiers.

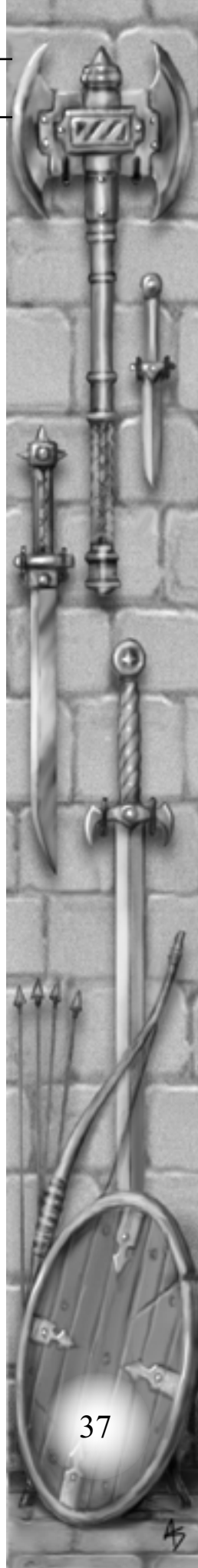
When consumed with hunger, gnolls are willing to eat just about every part of their prey, to the extent they can often be seen gnawing on the bones of victims to obtain the marrow therein. Their highly developed jaws are incredibly strong, easily capable of breaking through the thickest leg bones of most creatures.

From time to time, hunts will fail and provide no prey for the gnolls and in these circumstances, they will eat practically anything. A diet of roots, fruits and eggs may give them cause for complaint, but it will keep a gnoll alive and in fighting strength for months. Hungry adult males will commonly consume any live young present in the lair, if they can make their way past the females. The gnolls’ young are always the first victims of the males’ appetites when food becomes scarce. There is no stigma attached to this cannibalism and gnolls regard it as an accepted practice in lean times.

THE GNOLL’S LIFECYCLE

Female gnolls gestate for a period of four months and tend to be prolific breeders. However, they generally only produce one or two young in each litter, who have an extremely high mortality rate. Ostensibly, the young will remain with their mothers for anything up to eighteen months before taking their place within the rest of the pack but disease, starvation and the predations of both invaders of the lair and adult male gnolls can drastically cut short their average life expectancy. The thick fur characteristic of adult gnolls does not fully grow on the young until around the ages of five or six, making them much more vulnerable to outside infections. Instead, they are covered with a soft down, though the spots of their final coat will be present even then.

During this period, the young will never leave the safer parts of the lair and often create their own smaller burrows in which to hide if harm comes their way. They will show signs of rapidly approaching maturity at three years of age but even taking into account their incredible growth rate, the young will not achieve full adult size



until around nine years of age. At this point, they are more than capable of looking after themselves.

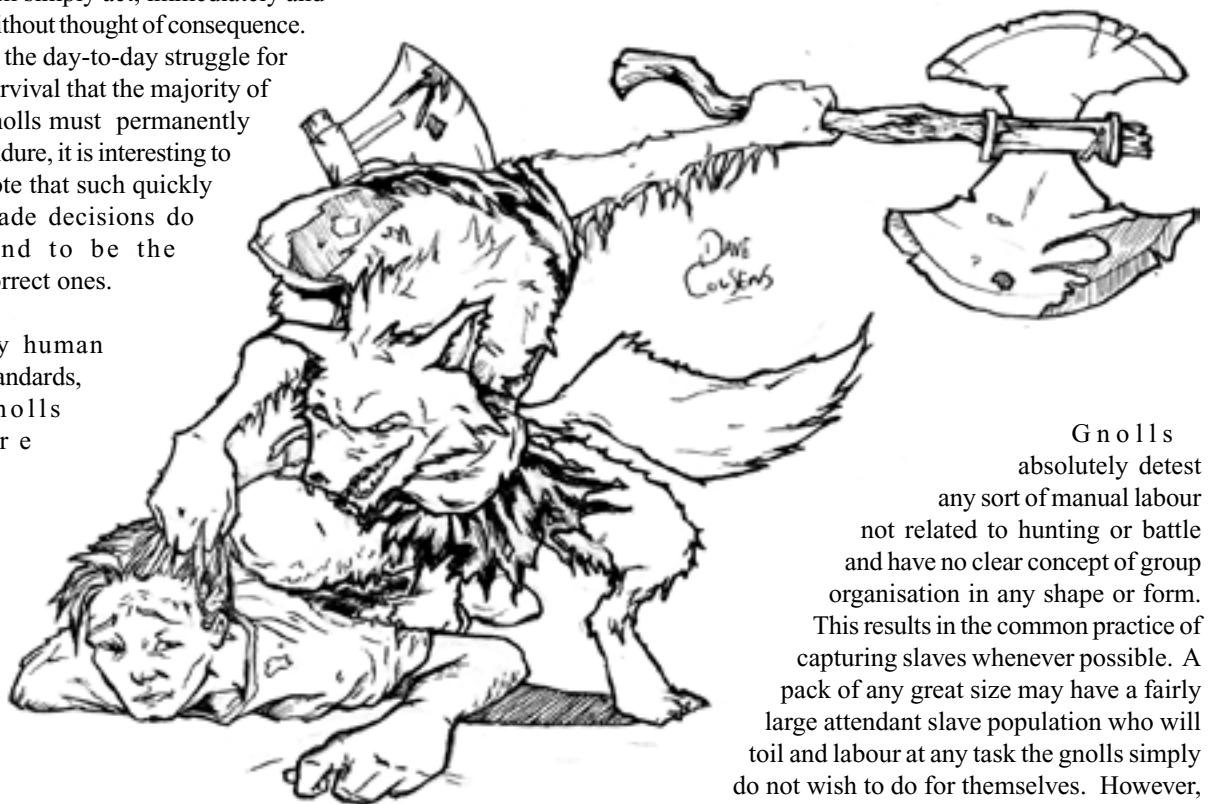
The natural lifespan of a gnoll is around thirty years, but the brutal nature of their lives results in very few ever achieving anything near such an age.

THE GNOLL MINDSET

Individual gnolls tend to be very instinctive creatures with a great degree of low cunning, something that spreads through their entire society. Whereas a human may pause to consider any potential problem, weighing up the benefits and disadvantages of his choices, a gnoll will simply act, immediately and without thought of consequence.

In the day-to-day struggle for survival that the majority of gnolls must permanently endure, it is interesting to note that such quickly made decisions do tend to be the correct ones.

By human standards, gnolls are



utterly selfish, interested only in their own survival, above and beyond even that of the members of their own family group. Again, this is indicative of their harsh lifestyle but the majority will carry this much further, delighting in the cruellest acts imaginable upon other races. This is, perhaps, the result of some degree of intelligence combined with pure animalistic tendencies. However, it is not just other races a gnoll will be willing

to torment and destroy. Gnolls are more than capable of turning upon one another if they believe they may overcome their enemy and gain something from the struggle.

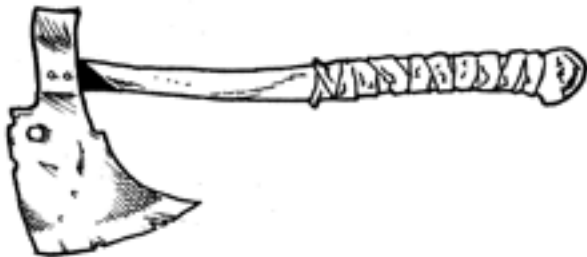
Despite all of this, they are at least capable of forming alliances with other races, usually humanoids such as ogres, orcs and hobgoblins. Any agreement though, tends to be short-lived as the mere presence of gnolls often guarantees conflict with others and matters only become worse when food becomes scarce, given the gnolls' dietary tastes.

Gnolls absolutely detest any sort of manual labour not related to hunting or battle and have no clear concept of group organisation in any shape or form. This results in the common practice of capturing slaves whenever possible. A pack of any great size may have a fairly large attendant slave population who will toil and labour at any task the gnolls simply do not wish to do for themselves. However, given the gnoll tendency to think primarily with their stomachs, such slaves usually have a shorter life expectancy than gnoll young, even whilst other food sources remain plentiful.

HABITAT

Adventurers actively seeking gnolls in the wilderness will immediately note that, as a race, they are far less prolific than orcs or any of the goblinoid races. Whilst physically more powerful and dominating, the relatively primitive society of the gnolls has a heavy impact upon their numbers. However, those who purposefully search for gnolls packs may happen across them sooner or later, providing it is known where to look.

In general, gnolls prefer warm or temperate areas and will readily relocate if environmental conditions change. Their keen senses and natural instincts often allow them to predict any such variations as storms, floods or droughts and packs may be found moving out of troubled areas before disaster strikes. They have even been known to sense impending earthquakes of a natural origin, though their intuition does not stretch to magical causes. Deserts and mountains are openly avoided, though gnolls are willing to take over subterranean living spaces, so long as they are far enough beneath the surface to isolate the pack from any harsh conditions. Ready food sources are also a concern for gnolls but given their ability to subsist on almost any material, this tends to only be a factor in the most sterile of locales.



Wild areas exist in the world that have plentiful food sources. In such places, many packs can gather. Though these packs are just as likely to fight each other as any other sentient being, a region filled with gnoll hunting parties is a lethal place for all intelligent life. So long as food is present and easily available to every pack, gnoll numbers will grow to dangerously large proportions. In the past, crusades have been launched against such gatherings of packs with the determination to wipe out all gnoll life, but these military actions are always costly, given the basic fighting capabilities of even the

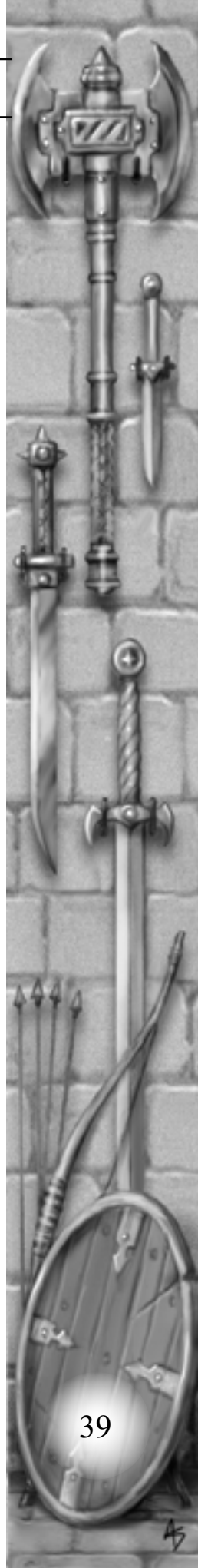
weakest adult. Others may decide to simply let the gnolls continue to exist and grow for, sooner or later, the food sources will be insufficient to support such burgeoning numbers. It is an inevitable consequence that the gnolls will begin to turn upon themselves, tearing the heart out of their packs as they prey upon one another.

LAIRS

Gnoll lairs are almost always burrows or tunnel complexes created by other creatures such as ankhegs, dire badgers or even intelligent races such as kobolds. It is only under the most extraordinary of circumstances that gnolls will voluntarily build or dig their own lairs. When a gnoll pack relocates, for whatever reason, it will search for a likely burrow or something similar and will usually make claim to the first that presents itself, regardless of whether the original inhabitants are still in residence or not. Unwilling to travel further once a new home has been found, only the stiffest resistance or an especially powerful monster living in the burrow will force them to reconsider.

Once installed within the new lair, the gnoll pack will set about its normal day to day tasks of hunting, feeding and breeding, and nothing else will be done to expand the lair in any way until slaves begin to be captured. These slaves, enduring miserably short lives, will usually be forced to extend the burrow system to make way for expanding or newly arrived family groups. They are also often utilised in the construction of surface emplacements around the lair's entrances, improving the defensibility of the gnoll pack. These constructions, however, are rarely sophisticated by any measure and may be easily overcome by dedicated military or magical force.

On failing to locate a suitable burrow, gnolls are willing enough to accept other living areas, once again providing local sources of food are plentiful. Underground caverns are popular secondary choices, so long as they are warm, as are substantial ruins. More primitive cultures have in the past, much to their distress and consternation, found their burial mounds inhabited by gnoll invaders, who are often keen to gnaw on the bones of the recently deceased.



GNOLL SOCIETY

The society of gnolls is structured around two basic units; the family group (*Teenogur*, in gnollish) and the pack (*Kuunalla*). Family groups number anything between fifteen and thirty gnolls of varying ages, though around half will be combat-capable adults. These gnolls will all be related in some way, with the young descending from the dominant males. Packs, often incorrectly called tribes, are simply collections of family groups living in the same lair for more or less mutual benefit. Whilst many lone family groups do exist in the world, the vast majority of gnolls are to be found within packs, which may number anything up to perhaps fifteen separate family groups.

The structure of packs and, indeed, individual family groups, is disorganised to say the least, with only the strongest and fittest of gnolls achieving any sort of maturity. It has been said the collective purpose of any gnoll pack is simply to feed.

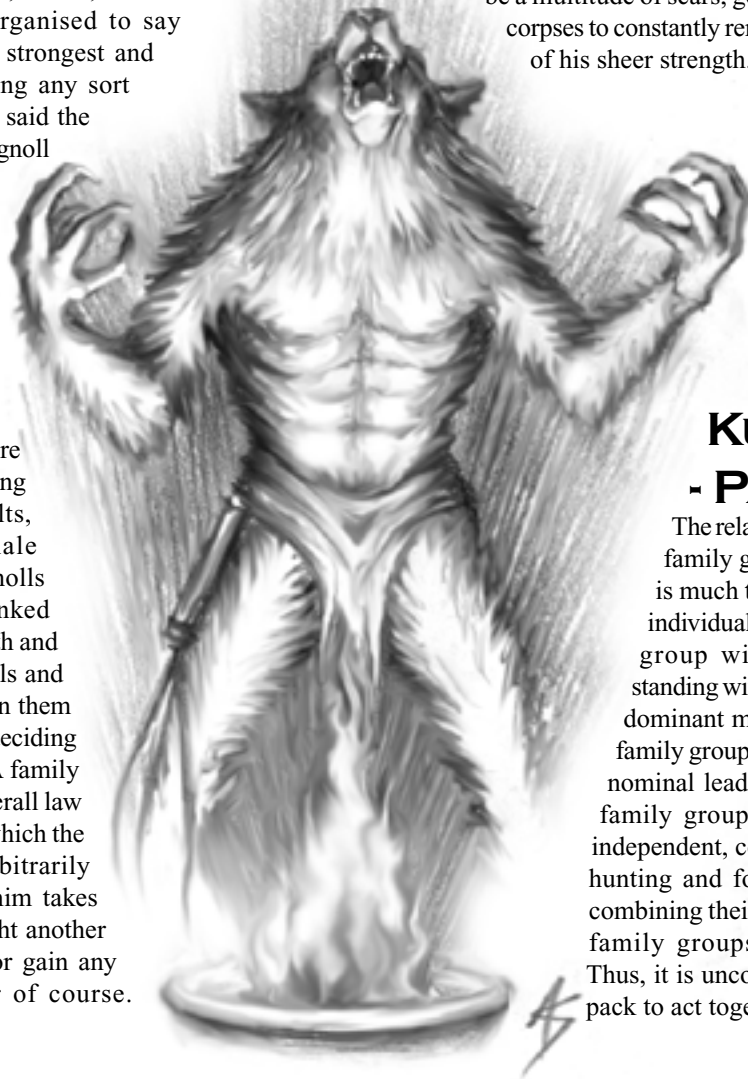
TEENOGUR — FAMILY GROUPS

Within family groups, there is a sharply defined pecking order amongst the adults, with one dominant male ruling over all. The gnolls beneath him are all ranked according to their strength and skill in battle, with brawls and full-blown fights between them being the most common deciding factor to establish this. A family group has no sense of overall law or order other than that which the dominant male may arbitrarily decide as mood and whim takes him. Any gnoll may fight another to resolve any dispute or gain any advantage as a matter of course.

This is not considered as a 'right' amongst gnolls, it is simply a part of their everyday struggle for survival. Females, for instance, breed to any male capable of overwhelming them, whilst the males themselves will regularly fight over which females they will lay claim to. After a successful attack against, perhaps, a human soldier patrol, each gnoll will claim a varying amount of booty. However, when it is taken back to their lair, one gnoll may freely take any number of items from another. If the original owner wishes to retain possession of his prize, he must be prepared to fight for it.

Such fights are rarely fatal, though there will be no remorse if death does occur. A gnoll that is plainly beaten will usually turn tail and run if he is able to, avoiding the victor as much as possible in subsequent days. Presiding over this chaotic way of life is the dominant male who will take anything from the other members of the family group he desires.

Fights to defy him are uncommon, as there will be a multitude of scars, gouged eyes and even corpses to constantly remind the other gnolls of his sheer strength.



KUUNALLA - PACKS

The relationships of different family groups within a pack is much the same as between individual gnolls. Each family group will have a defined standing within the pack with the dominant male of the dominant family group considered to be the nominal leader of all. However, family groups tend to be fairly independent, conducting their own hunting and foraging alone, only combining their strength with other family groups when necessary. Thus, it is uncommon for an entire pack to act together unless they are

all directly threatened or the pack leader decides they are strong enough to attack larger targets, such as small towns.

Family groups come and go from the pack at will as there is certainly no oath of fealty or anything similar towards the pack leader. Groups may disperse as food becomes rare, particularly if they have a low standing overall as it may become increasingly likely that they themselves will provide the next meal for the pack. Wandering family groups may join a pack at any time and when this occurs, a great deal of fighting will commence. This is not out of any ill-feeling towards the newcomers, but simply a mechanism to decide their standing within the pack as a whole. It normally takes a couple of days for a family group to 'settle in' to the structure of the pack and after this, their overall standing will be known to every gnoll. Packs have also been known to amalgamate upon crossing paths, greatly increasing their strengths but this will only happen where food sources can support both simultaneously. It takes far longer for two packs to mesh together than it does for a single family group as the two pecking orders of the original packs must be resolved into one, a process only completed through a great deal of bloodshed. In rare cases, the hierarchical order may prove to be unresolvable by this simple method. When this occurs, packs can break down completely, with family groups dissipating from the main body either alone or in some numbers, forming several different packs each going their own way.

Gnolls are survivalist by nature and it is certainly possible for weaker adults to survive and prosper, despite the strength of others in their family group and pack. Such gnolls may become adept at avoiding direct confrontation and instead gain that which they desire through theft or straight-forward assassination. Such activities are not frowned upon within the pack and it is commonly held that any warrior foolish enough to succumb to a stab in the back was not much of a warrior to begin with. At its heart, gnoll society is based around strength and possession – any gnoll that lacks the strength to hold on to his possessions will also lose his standing within the pack and his family group, if not his life.

THE SLAVE ECONOMY

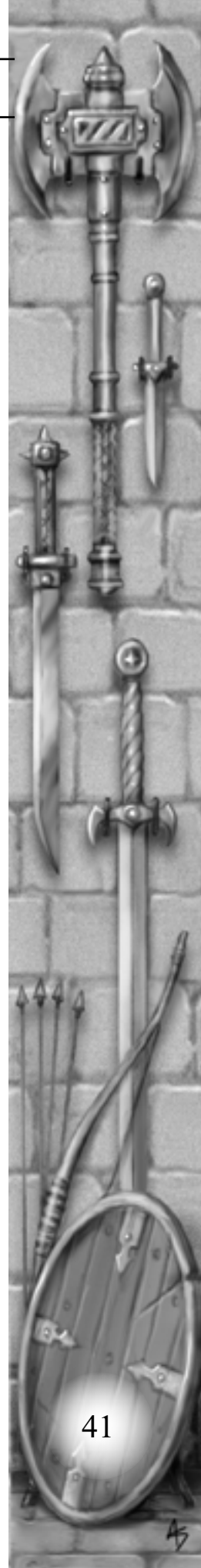
A pack has little to no sense of monetary values and treats such things as coin and gems as mere trinkets, however attractive they may be. After all, a strong gnoll may claim anything he desires, so what would he buy? Aside from such plundered items that have little real

practical value, almost every gnoll will own weapons, armour and other tools but unless they have been recently taken from another race, they will always be in very poor condition.

Gnolls favour heavy weapons that have the ability to crush or cleave their enemies, with axes being a common choice. Armour tends to be leather-based, usually with attached metal plates of varying sizes, giving a crude appearance of scalemail which it also tends to match in effectiveness. Shields are often little more than hammered pieces of metal held on to a gnoll's arm by leather straps. Left to its own devices, a gnoll will quite happily let its armour rust and its axe blade dull until both can be replaced from the spoils of a raid against another race. This does not diminish a pack's combat capability to any great degree, as a gnoll's natural strength and toughness more than overcome any shortfall in their equipment, to the point where a blunt axe will be wielded in a manner more consistent with a hammer. Given the power a gnoll can put into each swing, such a weapon will still be more than capable of battering an enemy to death.

This state of affairs tends to reverse quite rapidly once a pack starts to gain a slave population. As well as food and weapons, gnolls will always seek to capture slaves of practically any race, though humans and orcs are the most common, during their constant raids and attacks. Gnolls simply detest physical labour of any sort if it is not related to hunting or killing. When they are not engaged in these activities, gnolls are typically found exploring their surroundings, fighting mock combats (where limb loss and even death is not unusual) or even just sunning themselves, a worthwhile pursuit for any gnoll during daylight hours. Even dominant males and pack leaders will find they cannot force another gnoll to sweat and toil for more than a few hours. Thus for a pack to get anything done beyond simple survival, slaves are a necessity.

The largest packs may have up to thirty or forty slaves at any one time, but require constant replacement. Life inside a gnoll lair is harsh, brutal and short. Slaves are not considered the property of any one gnoll and may be commanded to perform any task by any adult. More worrying for the unfortunate slaves, they are free to be eaten by any gnoll that lays a claim to them and this is something that happens with alarming regularity. Few slaves survive for more than a month after they have been brought into the lair, where they will be constantly underfed and overworked. Some gnoll packs will expect



'We were given nothing. Whatever clothes were on your back when you were captured were what you wore until you died. . . Or until someone else did and you took theirs. Sometimes we wouldn't eat or drink for days, maybe longer. We only ate what we could sneak away from them when we prepared or served their meals. Some of us were better at stealing food than others, so we would share. We tried to help each other survive. I remember thinking the world had gone mad, that somehow everything had just gone crazy and no one had thought to stop it. After the first few days I began to think perhaps I was the one who was insane, maybe I was asleep and this was just a depraved nightmare. There's an old wives' tale that says if you think you are dreaming, you should pinch yourself to see if you wake up. I pinched myself so hard I bled, but I never woke up. It was real. Not that sleep was ever really a possibility whilst I was their slave. It was too dangerous to sleep.

'If we weren't awake before them, they would kick us across the room to rouse us. Those slaves too sick to get up and work, and there were many, were beaten with the flat of an axe blade until they were unconscious. Over half of those awoke to find themselves being gnawed upon or bound and being carved like a haunch of meat by one of the other slaves. The lucky ones never woke up. Imagine wielding the knife as the main course pleads with you for mercy. I saw more than one slave who had been ordered to 'prepare' the meal meet the same terrifying end after refusing to go on or even trying to help the poor soul already on the menu. Those of us who had been there a while just went numb from pain or hunger or the things we had seen or sickness or any number of other things. Once you get to that point, survival is the only thing that seems important or real. At that point, the will to survive is the only thing in the world.

'Sometimes, you wouldn't do anything wrong but you would find yourself being beaten or being made to stand in the coals of the fire or beat one of the other slaves just because the Leader was bored or hungry or angry, or anything. Fiends in the darkest hells would shudder at what we had to do to ourselves and to each other. But we did it. I did it because I knew that if my survival was to continue, I *had* to. Remaining alive for one more turn of the glass, or even a fraction of that amount of time, was worth enduring the blackest torture of mind, body or soul. I knew that if I could just string enough moments of living together, I would see my wife again. People ask me what happened to my legs. Usually I lie and tell them some story about a glorious battle because the truth would be too much for civilised folk to bear. Those sharp-eared, gods-forsaken animals heard one of the other men and I trying to organise an escape. They broke me when they decided I didn't need legs to make armour and that I was just food from the knees down. The other man ended up as a full meal, at least most of him. They put his head on a spike in our tiny little chamber as a reminder. His face was the one I saw when I looked at my wife - before she left. At least I lived to see her. . .

'You can't change what happened, nor can I. I watched two score men and women go down the gullets of those beasts in just under two months. Part of those forty formed my meals too when I couldn't steal anything else or there was no other food to be had. Now I hoard bread under my cot, because in the shadows of my dreams those creatures are hiding, waiting to take me back. This time, I'll be prepared.'

their slaves to literally feed off one another. When a slave dies it is often a mercy, be it from a gnoll beating him to death, through starvation and lack of water or, worst of all, becoming a gnoll's next meal. All too often a slave's last moments consist of watching two gnolls fight for the right to eat him, then being slowly consumed, feet first, by the victor.

The slaves of a lair will work and toil constantly for the gnolls, extending the burrow complex, repairing or making armour and weapons, or constructing surface emplacements around a lair. The labour is back-breaking

and soul-destroying but by no means sophisticated in nature. Gnoll lairs will rarely have more in the way of defences than a wooden stockade wall, with any sort of trap or engine of war being virtually unheard of.

OTHER RACES

The society of gnolls is generally considered to be driven by one thing alone – food. The gnolls' perceptions of other races are somewhat coloured, as they are perfectly willing to consider any member of any intelligent race as a potential meal. They are not necessarily hateful of other races or even of each other. Gnolls merely consider



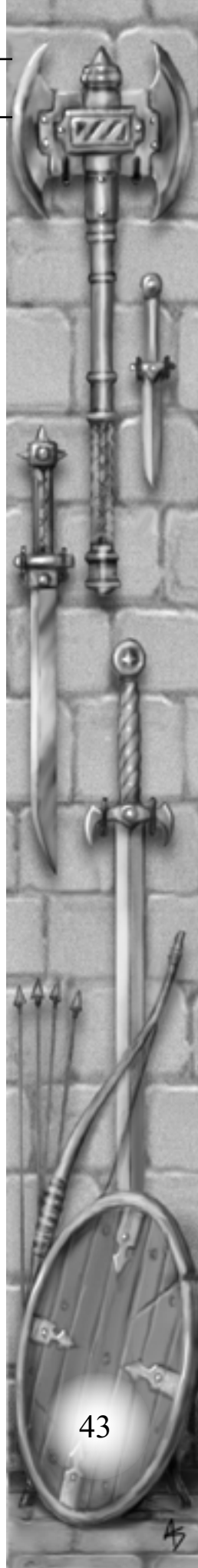
it part of their very existence to be at odds with literally everything in the world.

That said, gnolls do sometimes form alliances, usually with the likes of ogres and hobgoblins where they consider the other races as being an extended part of the pack. However, such alliances tend to be precarious in the extreme. Gnolls will only join with another race in this way if they, naturally, have something to gain in the way of food, equipment or protection from a greater threat. If long term goals are planned by the gathering, gnolls tend to lose focus of any objectives, being more concerned with immediate hunting and feeding. The greatest cause of any break in such alliances is one of food or rather, a lack of it. Once gnolls begin to get hungry, they will quickly start to prey upon any supposed ally, tearing apart the whole alliance from the inside. It also has to be noted here that alliances where gnolls are in the majority simply do not work. It is inevitable that, sooner or later, the minority will end up in the stomachs' of the packs.

For similar reasons, gnolls tend to make very poor mercenaries, despite their incredible fighting strength.

It is a common misconception amongst those prepared to hire such units of humanoids that one merely needs to keep gnolls well fed to maintain order. The fault in this thinking lies in the fact that any group of gnolls, large or small, will never be completely satisfied with their lot, however good the circumstances. Even when supplied with a constant source of food and new weaponry, there will always be something to tempt a gnoll warrior. It may be a desire to own an axe belonging to another mercenary or something as base as the instinct to hunt and kill. Gnolls, by their very nature, are disruptive and breed friction amongst any they are forced to mix with. Failing that, and given complete segregation, they are likely to turn upon themselves as the instinct to breed becomes increasingly paramount, or as adult males decide to readjust their position within the family group or pack.

It is easy to understand why many in the past have attempted to bring gnolls into their fighting forces. The brute strength of gnolls is legendary amongst such races as goblins and orcs, surpassed only by the likes of ogres and trolls. On the face of it, they are also cheap, requiring only armour, weapons and a great deal of raw meat as



payment. Most mercenary leaders, however, come to regret such a choice of soldier and rapidly come to think that gnolls are just not worth the effort or trouble.

It must be noted that gnolls never seem to ally with giants and are openly hostile to the smaller species, actively seeking to drive them away from shared territory. For the larger races of giants, packs will do all they can to avoid any sort of contact, to the point where they will actually evacuate lairs if any great numbers of giantkind enter the region.

The reasons for this animosity, it has to be said, are not fully understood, but proponents of gnoll cowardice are quick to suggest that the giant races represent some of the few intelligent beings that they are unable to dominate either through strength or numbers. There may, however, be more practical reasons, such as the fact that any sizeable group of giants will have a severe impact on food resources in any area they inhabit and thus the gnolls are forced to either leave or drive them off. There may even be some deep-rooted religious edict or long-borne racial memory that brings intolerance to the fore. Whatever the specific reasoning, it is abundantly clear that gnolls and giants simply do not mix.

ON RELIGION

Primarily, gnolls revere force, power and little else. As such, they are not noted for being a particularly religious race and dedicated clerics are rare in the extreme, with adventurers being lucky (or unfortunate, depending on your point of view) to find one within a hundred packs.

However, virtually all gatherings of gnolls, from the largest amalgamated packs to the smallest family groups, demonstrate a reverence for the cycles of the moon. Whilst it is fairly common knowledge that the patron deity of all gnolls is a Demon Lord, it is less well known that gnoll culture (such as it is) depicts the moon as this being's prime creation, having fashioned it millennia ago. Such thinking may prove laughable to any from the civilised races but it must be remembered that gnolls are, essentially, pagan in their beliefs. Even with this in mind though, the fanatical devotion all gnolls exhibit in their moon worship is puzzling, given the general lack of religious conviction throughout the rest of their lives. It has been postulated that gnolls, despite their beliefs of the moon's creation, are naturally drawn to the shining disc at night, much in the same way as wolves are said to howl at the moon. On the other hand, it must be

warned that too great a parallel can be drawn between ordinary canines and gnolls, who resemble dogs and related animals in appearance only.

There are two main celebrations in the gnolls' calendar, taking place at every full and new moon. On both occasions the entire pack, bar the young, will leave the burrows of their lair and gather together under the night sky. It is important to note they will continue to assemble if the moon is obscured by cloud and even when such overcast conditions last for days or weeks, their timing of the phases is faultless. The worship normally takes the form of feasting, hunting and fighting, all taken to far greater excesses than in the gnolls' everyday life. No one gnoll leads these celebrations or commands their start. The collective actions of all present are completely spontaneous.

It is not uncommon for any slaves to suffer dreadfully in either celebration, but it is during the night of the full moon that the gnolls become absolutely wild, losing any last semblance of self-control. Starting as soon as night falls, gnolls will arise from their lair and begin quickly building themselves into an utter frenzy of wanton destruction. Fights break out between adult males with frightening regularity as a blood-lust permeates every member of the pack and they soon turn upon their slaves, literally tearing them apart in an orgy of slaughter. With no other prey in easy reach, the gnolls disperse in large groups, intent on sweeping through the surrounding area in a brutal series of barbaric attacks. These reigns of terror, perfectly timed with every full moon, can be the bane of any life, intelligent or otherwise, in regions where packs become dominant. This can often lead to organised militia being raised to destroy the threat the pack represents, whereas simple gnoll ambushes may be tolerated, looked upon as just another danger in a wilderness full of enemies.

When pictorially represented, the Demon Lord is depicted as a tall, thin and very gaunt gnoll, though he rarely appears in any design a gnoll may have created. Far more common on shields and the walls of stockades is his symbol, a three-headed flail that the demon is said to carry into battle, with each head reputed to have its own devastating effect upon his enemies. The first is capable of taking the head of even an ogre off with one swing, whilst the second is laced with a potent poison that can paralyse any living creature. The last is said to be magically charged and will bewilder any creature it brushes against, leaving them almost defenceless for the Demon Lord's next set of blows. Beyond the worship of

the cycle of the moon, gnolls do not appear to venerate the Demon Lord at all and there have never been any recorded instances of adepts within family groups and packs.

GNOLL CLERICS

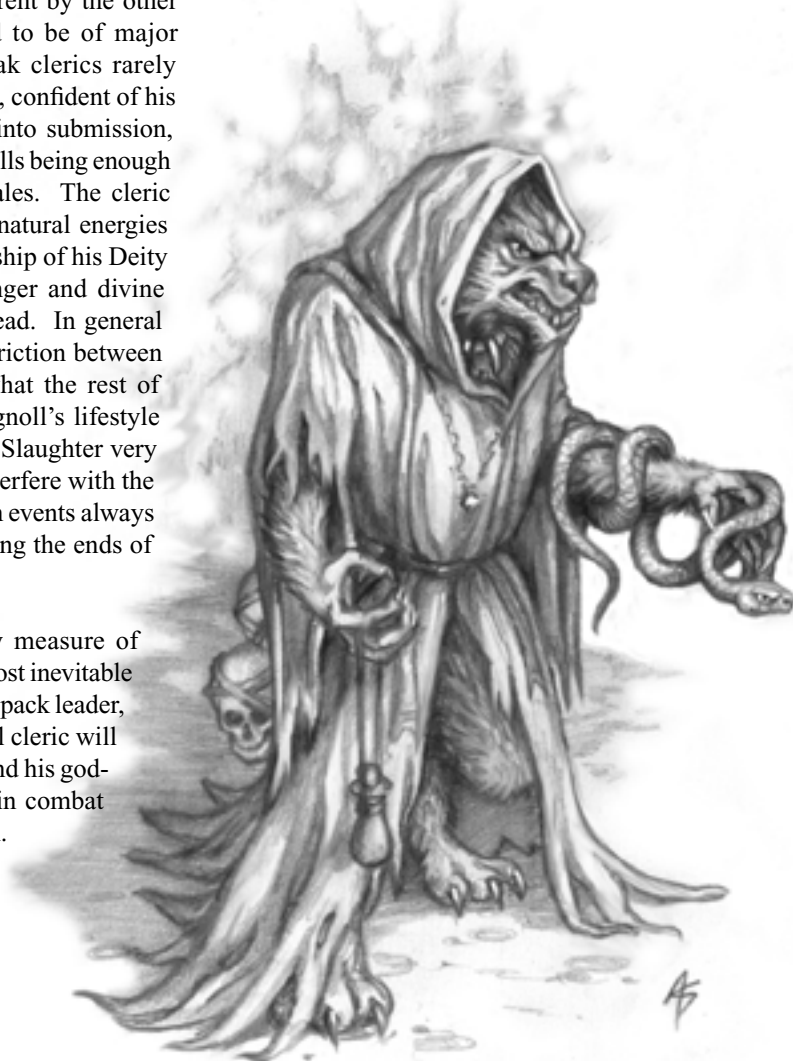
Rare as they are, gnoll clerics have been found in the past, but it is interesting to note that they do not advocate the following of the Demon Lord at all. Instead, the majority are worshippers of Deities of Slaughter. The presumption to be made here is that the Demon Lord simply does not have the power to grant any supernatural abilities to his followers and thus Deities of Slaughter become far more suitable patrons to any gnoll with a spiritual bent.

A weak cleric may suffer very badly within the hierarchical order of the pack, as they are likely to demonstrate little interest in the traditional moon worship and will therefore be marked as different by the other gnolls. As intolerant as gnolls tend to be of major differences amongst themselves, weak clerics rarely survive long. However, a strong cleric, confident of his powers, can easily cow other gnolls into submission, with physical displays of his deity's spells being enough to dominate even the strongest of males. The cleric will use such manifestations of supernatural energies to compel his pack into the active worship of his Deity of Slaughter, promising the god's anger and divine retribution if they do not follow his lead. In general though, there is unlikely to be much friction between that which the cleric believes and what the rest of the gnolls want. After all, a typical gnoll's lifestyle tends to match the creed of Deities of Slaughter very well. The cleric is even unlikely to interfere with the regular veneration of the moon, as such events always end in copious bloodshed, yet furthering the ends of his god.

Once a cleric manages to attain any measure of standing amongst other gnolls, it is almost inevitable that, sooner or later, he will become the pack leader, displacing all dominant males. A gnoll cleric will be no weaker than any of his kindred and his god-given powers can grant him an edge in combat that few other gnolls are able to match.

GNOLL DRUIDS

As uncommon as gnoll clerics are known to be, rarer still are the feared gnoll druids. Solitary by choice, these malignant practitioners eschew contact with any others of their kind and are said to be the most evil and twisted of those who follow the druidic path. Bearing no love even for their wild surroundings, these rapacious druids pervert and control the forces of nature to their own selfish ends. They tend to be utterly despised by many other druids who often seek them out to destroy the harmful effect they have upon the world. Even other druids of a diabolical bent treat them with extreme suspicion and distrust, all too aware of how capricious gnolls can be, especially if they discover any weakness within another.



METHODS OF WARFARE

There are no well-defined troop types within a gnoll force and diversity is the norm. In open warfare, many consider them to be unsophisticated shock troops, but this belies other capabilities that can make any number a powerful force.

Gnolls from the same family group will demonstrate a great deal of variation in weapons, armour and preferred tactics, and an attack from a whole pack can seem chaotic in the extreme. Adult gnolls of all sizes will be seen fighting, from the largest and strongest of males to barely matured females. Equipment tends to rise in quality with the size of the gnoll, as the more powerful simply take whatever they desire from those who are weaker. Family groups and packs who have existed in a region for a long period of time will also be significantly better equipped, as they will likely have a large number of slaves imprisoned within their lair, working to fashion weapons and armour.

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

The preferred weapon of any gnoll is one that is heavy, can be wielded in a single hand (not a problem for the largest males) and will be capable of utilising their great strength to best effect, crushing or cleaving any enemy. Axes, combining all these qualities and being relatively simple to construct are thus very common, with large warhammers being a popular second choice. Packs with a diminished access to metal equipment will be perfectly happy using great spiked clubs, but gnolls seem universally wary of wielding swords of any nature. It has been supposed there is something within the gnoll psyche that the intricacy of swordplay simply eludes, though it is perhaps more likely that the satisfying swing a gnoll gets from an axe or hammer completely overrides any desire to learn to use more complicated weaponry.

When hunting or setting ambushes, many gnolls will also carry a shortbow to battle and for a race that tends to rely on brute strength and maddened rushes to win combat, they are often quite accurate shots. Whilst a gnoll's size and massive strength would lead many to believe they would be far more suited to longbows, it must be remembered that gnolls consider archery to be

secondary to close combat. They never deploy dedicated units of archers to bombard an enemy with arrow fire but instead use them as a prelude to ambush and in the bringing down of elusive prey during a hunt. Even when fully equipped for battle, no gnoll will be encumbered by the addition of a shortbow and so the weapon fulfils their requirements perfectly.

Like their weapons, gnolls' armour is usually in an advanced state of disrepair, even if they have a great many slaves within their lair. Whilst this manpower may be freely available, gnolls are rarely interested in quality of workmanship and slaves quickly learn any extra effort on their part will never be appreciated by their cruel masters and will not lessen their torment by the slightest degree. Most young adult gnolls will start out with hardened leather armour that covers little more than their torsos but as time goes on, they will have slaves begin to attach metal plates to every available surface, forming a crude type of scalemail. Combined with their dense fur, this is usually all the protection a gnoll requires in combat for they have the ability to ignore a great deal of non life-threatening pain. However, larger males will



often take suits of chainmail, helmets and breastplates they have won in battle and force their slaves to attempt to fit them on to the gnolls' out-sized frames. The result can look faintly comical, but the added protection these layers of metal grant a gnoll warrior is rarely found amusing by those who have to fight them.

The last addition almost every gnoll can be seen with in combat is an oversized shield. Some gnolls will use the larger shields of other races, wrested from enemies during raids and ambushes, but these rarely last long in the harsh gnoll lifestyle. Shields of wood will not survive more than a few days and even the finest metal ones will quickly be bent and twisted out of shape to the point where they become useless. It has to be kept in mind that the majority of fights gnolls engage in will be against other gnolls during the regular combats within a family group or pack. There are few shields crafted by the civilised races that will endure successive strikes from a gnoll axe without need for constant repair.

The ideal shield, to a gnoll's mind, is one made by slaves out of the largest plate of thick metal that can be lifted by one arm. Simple leather or rope straps will be threaded through the plate, allowing use in battle. This type of design makes gnolls look very crude and primitive in appearance but it is also strong, durable and incredibly resistant to blows from other gnolls, the essential qualities this race looks for.

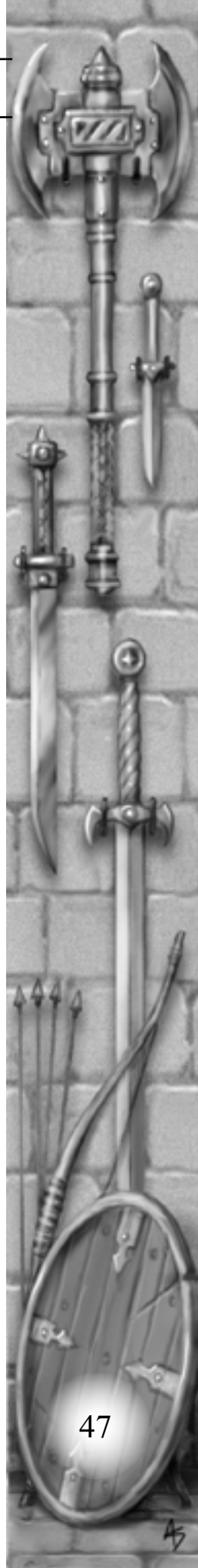
AMBUSH

The most common method of attack for a gnoll will always be the ambush. Despite their strength and superior combat skills, gnolls remain an instinctive race of low cunning and will always seek to turn odds in their favour at every opportunity. Given their size and heavy equipment, however, gnolls can find it incredibly difficult to hide effectively. To offset such a disadvantage, gnolls have become tremendously adept at picking ideal locations for ambushes and will actively seek to avoid places that provide too little cover to conceal their numbers. If only a few scattered rocks and bushes are present, then gnolls will *not* attempt to set an ambush unless it is absolutely necessary. Instead, they will seek darkened areas of great shadow, dense foliage and maze-like sections of underground caverns. It is a sad tale of fate that adventurers often find themselves thinking 'this is the perfect place for an ambush,' just as the hidden gnolls launch their attack. . .



Being primarily nocturnal creatures, the majority of gnoll attacks take place at night. Gnolls love any advantage they have over others and are well aware their innate darkvision gives them an immense superiority over such races as humans. However, whilst they are aware that other races share this ability, they are unlikely to know exactly which ones. This is rarely a factor though, as gnolls quickly learn if the inhabitants of the region they lair in have this capability or not. If they do indeed lack darkvision, even a small family group on the outskirts of a territory can prove lethal to the unwary traveller. That said, it must be pointed out that adventurers who also have darkvision may be able to take advantage of this kind of presumption on the part of the gnolls.

As an ambush is launched, gnolls will seek to engage their enemies in hand-to-hand combat as quickly as they can throw themselves forward. Such ambushes are meticulously well-timed, as individual gnolls keep in contact with one another as they lay in wait, using their unspoken sign language to warn of approaching enemies and their numbers. The largest male present will give the order to launch the attack, usually by springing from cover, bellowing a guttural war cry. The other gnolls will be quick to follow him, though the youngest



present may be commanded to instead shower targets with arrow fire rather than engage directly. Again, such a decision will be made in perfect silence by the largest male before the ambush is launched with a quick series of tail and ear twitches.

Gnolls enjoy close combat above all else bar feeding but as they wait in ambush, their instincts take over and even the youngest amongst them can remain motionless and alert for many hours, waiting for the perfect time to strike. Such patience may seem contrary to usual gnoll nature but, taking an objective view, it can be seen to be within perfect accord with their lifestyle. After all, gnolls greatly detest physical labour and so will be unwilling to make mistakes in an ambush if it means they have to work harder for their prey.

An adventurer suddenly confronted by a gnoll ambush will have precious little time to react before he is engaged in combat. Arrows may be streaking down amongst his party members, causing injury and disrupting the casting of retaliatory spells, though the latter is likely to be purely unintentional. After having faced gnolls, many adventurers speak of a kind of battle rage that most gnolls seem to be able to fade in to and out of at will. A gnoll will often literally pounce on an enemy, almost completely disregarding its own safety as it launches a truly savage attack. A quick-witted adventurer may be able to take advantage of this with a well-aimed sword thrust, though great caution is advised. If such a blow does not prove fatal to the gnoll, it will likely tear apart its enemy within seconds.

As a last note, it should be mentioned that the majority of ambushes are launched to the rear of a target, that is, after it has already passed the gnolls' position. Races such as orcs often make the mistake of launching their attacks far too soon, but gnolls tend to entrust to their ability to lay superior ambushes and thus be able to charge straight into the rear of an enemy. It should go without saying that such a tactic, when used against an unprepared party, can prove devastating in the extreme.

OPEN WARFARE

It has to be remarked that finding gnolls engaged in open battle is an extremely rare occurrence and any such event is worthy of note and a good tale back at the tavern. This method of warfare just goes so completely against a gnoll's basic nature that most will not even consider it.

Large scale confrontations have been known to happen in the past, usually when a pack grows to such a size that

hunting and ambushes alone can no longer support them. In such an instance, a pack leader will be compelled to look elsewhere for supplies and villages or small towns are obvious targets. Gnolls engage in battle primarily with horde tactics and this is where they have gained their reputation as shock troops. There are few units of soldiers in the world that can withstand a direct charge from a similar number of gnolls and even sustained bouts of missile fire do little to slow them down, much less actually slay them. It is readily evident in these attacks that gnolls are unable to maintain any great amount of discipline, even when dominant males and pack leaders are present. They are thus unable to react to great changes on a battlefield with any speed, but they do seem able to maintain a degree of unit coherency, no doubt due to a powerful pack mentality.

The guiding principle over whether gnolls are willing to engage in open battle is one of simple numbers. Constantly looking for every advantage available, gnolls tend to judge their enemies purely by respective numbers. Essentially, if they can see they outnumber an enemy, they will attack. If not, they avoid battle, an outlook that has given rise, in part, to their reputation for being cowards. It is important to remember that, in the gnoll mindset, factors such as archers or spellcasters are not just disregarded, they are not even given the briefest thought. Gnolls will watch on the outskirts of a village, weighing up the odds in terms of fighting men and women, but will not give the slightest consideration to the two ballistae being wheeled into position to defend against the impending attack. As the average gnoll is fully capable of ripping apart three or more human warriors in straight combat, such oversights are often the salvation of isolated settlements.

This is generally as sophisticated as gnolls become in warfare. A pack will never lay siege to a fortress, though it may ambush travellers going to and from such a place. They will never co-ordinate attacks with any allies, though others may take advantage of their maddened rush. A gnoll's primary reason for fighting is the simple acquisition of food and slaves. Even the capture of new equipment and treasure are secondary concerns. Those seeking to utilise gnolls in their battle plans will be constantly thwarted by a complete lack of understanding of the most basic of developed tactics. Whilst gnolls do indeed make superior shock troops, no one will ever have a great amount of control over them, on or off the battlefield. It is often a case of simply unleashing them upon the enemy and watching them go.

‘I require sustenance.’

It was the third time today the hated sword Morne had hissed its deadly mantra. If they did not find some hapless creature for the sword to draw strength from soon, the enchanted weapon would quickly turn upon the party, Ipslore knew. It had happened once before and only the timely and skilled use of his magic had prevented a possessed Jerek from slaying them all. It was not as if the sword could be safely removed for neither force nor spells could prize it from Jerek’s side. Ipslore cursed the day the halfling warrior had wrested the weapon from the dead grip of the orc warlord.

Morne was getting worse. Hungrier. Ipslore had seen Jerek’s grimace from the corner of his eye as the halfling’s hand flew to the hilt of his sword. It seemed he was, for now, able to resist the blade’s persistent urgings and Morne remained sheathed. He had been forced to ride twenty paces ahead. If Jerek were to turn suddenly, the party would at least have a little time to react.

A renting cry drew their attention to a pack of creatures cresting the top of the hill the party was skirting. As Ipslore squinted up he spied the dog-like features of the humanoids - gnolls. Morne’s shrieking challenge answered them as the sword was unsheathed and the foul creatures charged down the hillside. Jerek spurred his diminutive pony and raced towards them, Morne in hand. Joshua, the guide, seemed content to leave the creatures to the halfling – there was no way that a mere dozen gnolls could overpower Jerek whilst he wielded Morne. But something born of weeks crossing the desolate wilderness with that malevolent sword snapped inside Ipslore. He quickly reached inside a small pouch under his red robes, gathering together a small pinch of his treasured fire-bat guano.

‘Only a dozen gnolls, Morne,’ he sneered. ‘Watch this.’ The wizard weaved his hands in a complicated movement of arcane gestures, drawing the magical energy to his control, and threw his arms forward to the distant gnolls. A seething fireball of intense, blistering heat raced for the ragged line of creatures and a gigantic explosion ripped through the still morning air. When the roiling smoke finally cleared, only a few tattered scraps of clothing and charred bone remained of their erstwhile attackers.

Jerek returned to the group slowly, his face set like stone. The tension in the air was palpable. Ipslore expected some kind of remonstrance but it was the sword that spoke.

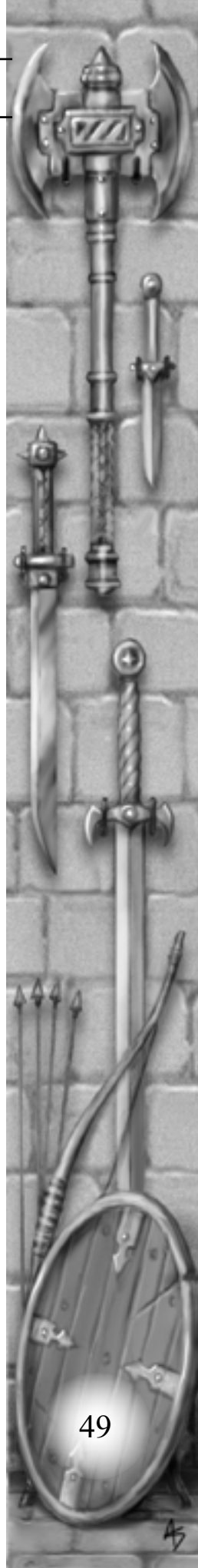
‘That was a grievous error on your part, wizard. What happens next will be upon your head alone.’

Jerek resumed his place at the head of the column as they proceeded on with their long journey. Ipslore considered twenty paces was perhaps not enough of a head start.

IN DEFENCE OF THE LAIR

The lairs of gnolls tend to be extremely simple affairs with their size being the chief factor governing the number of family groups within a pack. Unless there is a substantial slave population present, lairs will never be anything more than the captured burrows or mines of other creatures. The use of slaves can add various surface emplacements and defences, all designed to protect the entrance of the burrow. Wooden fences and stockades

are common and larger packs may even go to the extent of adding ramparts to such structures. Gates through the walls of the stockade may or may not be added at a whim and such things are not automatically built as they would be by most other races. Many gnoll stockades simply have a single open entrance through their walls. Towers are almost unheard of and defences such as ditches or traps never seem to cross the minds of gnolls, even if they have seen them used by an enemy.



It is interesting to see that when a lair is attacked by a substantial force, adult gnolls seek to escape the threat and dissipate in scattered groups throughout the surrounding area. This can seem utterly alien to civilised races for, in doing so, the gnolls demonstrate they are eminently willing to leave their young behind to face whatever danger may enter the lair. Whilst it is true the young create their own, much smaller, burrows in which to hide and protect themselves, there seems to be absolutely no parental care whatsoever. Given that adult males are often compelled to actually consume the young this should not, perhaps, be so much of a surprise.

Almost abhorring open battle, gnolls whose lairs are under threat will rarely even attempt a wide-scale defence if outnumbered by their attackers. On the whole, they far prefer to operate in dispersed groups, attacking invaders as they approach by way of ambush, or by seeking to enter the burrows of a lair after the enemy has disappeared inside. From there, the gnolls will utilise their knowledge of the burrow complex to launch successive attacks until the invaders have been wiped out. Despite the unorthodox nature of such a defence, it can prove highly effective, especially against small parties of adventurers who are powerful enough to force the adult gnolls to flee in the first place.

ROLEPLAYING WITH GNOLLS

Through reading the *Slayer's Guide to Gnolls*, you will have learnt about every aspect of the lives of this truly unique race. The past chapters have taken a look at the primitive society of the gnolls, their religion, the factors that motivate their ambitions and their tactics in battle. Now it is time to put all of this into practice.

In the past, more than one Games Master has been guilty of simply putting a group of gnolls in some convenient underground chamber or room in order to give his players a tough combat before they can proceed with the rest of the adventure. And why not? Gnolls are noticeably tougher than orcs and goblins and so make the players work harder to overcome them, an especially important factor as the party begins to rise in level.

The intention of this book is, in part, to demonstrate that whilst gnolls certainly can be used in this fashion, a Games Master can make the very easy mistake of presenting all his monsters in an identical way – they use the same tactics, go for the same party members, with only their attacks and spells having any degree of variation. With the *Slayer's Guide to Gnolls*, Games Masters now have the information they need to portray races of monsters so they actually 'feel' different to the players that meet them, rather than just being another critter to hack apart. Any campaign will be enhanced enormously if every monster race operates in its own distinctive manner, the world automatically being given a far greater depth than before.

GNOLLS IN YOUR GAMES

In straight combat, the two main facets of gnoll life that Games Masters must endeavour to portray are instinct and chaos.

For instinct, a Games Master should look first towards setting superior ambushes against the players. A gnoll's finely tuned senses should allow it to be aware of the players long before the party recognise the evil presence and rather than forcing a direct confrontation, the gnolls will retreat and make ready their ambush. It is important to remember the ambush is the gnolls' principle method for launching any attack and, despite their large size, they are very good at it. After all, they have been practising for all their lives. Only the most observant of party members should perceive a threat before the gnolls charge.

Instinct can also be demonstrated in a far more general sense. Gnolls are adept at finding prey and will tend to select the very best areas along, say, a trade route from which to launch their raids. Weak targets will be selected, heavily armed resistance avoided whenever possible.

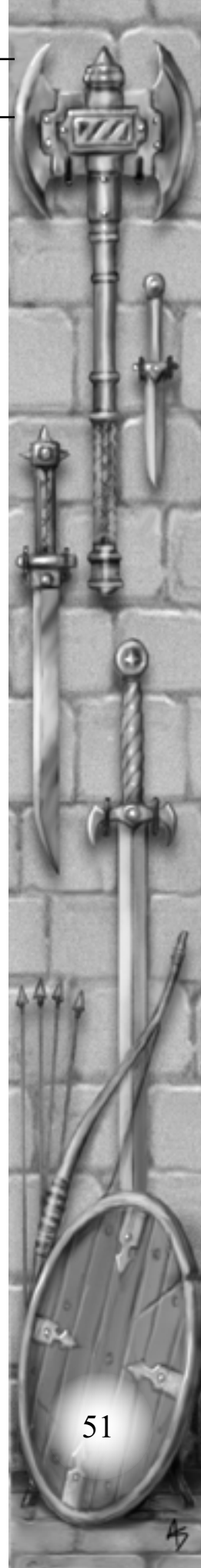
The chaotic nature of gnolls is best portrayed, visually at least, in combat. An ambush will be launched with absolute synchronicity but after that, it is every gnoll for himself. The Games Master should attempt to convey a feeling of wild, heedless savagery. Let the gnolls charge from all directions, each making a beeline for their chosen target, regardless of the actions of the others in the pack. When engaged in hand-to-hand struggles, make frequent use of their innate Power Attack feat, combining it with shield bashes to demonstrate their raw ferocity. Have some gnolls begin to feed before the combat has finished. Your players will get the idea soon enough.



BUILDING LAIRS

When creating a lair with which to populate with gnolls, think disorganisation, filth and brutality. No gnoll will do anything it does not want to and even bullying slaves to do the labour can seem a chore to the dominant males. Thus, their lairs are dirty, smelly places, often featuring structures and tunnels that are only half-completed. Their treatment of slaves and any other sentient beings they come into contact with should be accentuated to show the players just how mean, nasty and cruel gnolls are in their everyday lives. They will be more than willing to torture and maim another living creature just to hear screams of pain. Woe betide any player who gets captured by a pack. . .

As a last word, it should be noted that, for all their strength, cunning and instinct, gnolls do have disadvantages stemming directly from their low intelligence and aversion to physical labour. The example lair in this book has several built-in weaknesses for players to exploit and this is a characteristic a Games Master should make common to gnolls everywhere. Their lax attitude can very well be their downfall. Any party taking the time and trouble to actually study a gnoll pack before launching a raid should be well rewarded with a multitude of options based around incomplete patrols, lazy eyes in watchtowers and every gnoll within the lair itself being completely distracted by whatever minor concerns fill their lives.



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Gnolls are best used against parties of around 3rd-6th level, with the amount of combat within a scenario being a major deciding factor. They tend to be very aggressive fighters and will just as soon attack a party member as look at him but a Games Master can set large numbers of gnolls against a relatively low level party if the players are prepared to use their brains more than their swords. What follows is a series of hooks and ideas for scenarios that a Games Master can use in his gaming sessions to demonstrate the unique characteristics of this race and thus lend his games far greater depth than if gnolls were simply another monster for Player Characters to hack apart.

POOR BABY

A shepherd in a far-flung and remote village approaches the players as they pass through. She found a gnoll infant in the hills and, feeling sorry for the poor creature, brought it home to take care of it. However, she suspects the gnolls will come to claim what is theirs and begs the players to defend her. The players, of course, may either agree or simply think she is utterly mad! A more interesting variation for roleplaying groups is for the players to be the ones who locate the defenceless gnoll infant, exposed to the elements and clearly fated to die without their intervention. Assuming they do not simply put the creature out of its misery or they do not try to return it to distinctly ungrateful parents, this then raises a pertinent question. Can the gnoll be 'civilised' or would it just revert to its baser instincts? We would tend to go for the latter, but it is ultimately the Games Master's choice. . .

GOLD IN THE HILLS

Prospectors in a small wilderness settlement have been disappearing with alarming regularity of late. The players are asked to find out why. The gnoll pack in the hills responsible for the disappearances simply cannot believe that these humans *keep* coming into the hills and thus provide them with a steady supply of food and slaves. As the party adventures into the hills, the Games Master will have the chance to spring a variety

of ambushes upon them, using terrain the gnolls know well. By the way, if the players think to make a quick killing by prospecting for gold themselves, we suggest you introduce them to the life of the typical prospector. There will be lots of work and very little reward. We would start them finding, perhaps, five gold pieces worth a month and then let it become steadily worse until they get bored and set off for more exciting adventures.

IN THE DEFENCE OF

Gnoll ambushes have become increasingly common around a marble quarry and many workers have been taken, presumably to be used as slaves or for other, more repugnant, reasons. The players are asked for assistance, for the few warriors amongst the quarry workers were quickly killed as they tried to defend against the initial attacks. Though an entire pack is obviously making its lair nearby, the exact location is unknown. The players must first defend the quarry workers against gnoll attacks, track them back to the lair and then finally destroy the threat once and for all.

STARVE 'EM OUT

A combined army of hobgoblins, orcs and gnolls has been moving up a series of valleys, razing to the ground every village they find. The next settlement the evil army will reach is a major town. Whilst the militia and defences of the town probably will hold out against the horde, losses likely to be sustained are unconscionable. The players are asked to help. If they can cut off this roving army from its sources of food, the gnolls are likely to turn upon their erstwhile allies, greatly reducing the overall strength of the army.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

There are many wilderness areas where the civilised races exist only in small scattered settlements, scratching a living in dangerous conditions. Wild creatures and tribes of malignant humanoids are considered daily and common threats. However, as such tribes are just as likely to attack one another as any settlement a kind of uneasy balance can develop in the wilder regions of the world. A large pack of powerful gnolls moving into the area could destabilise everything as they begin to prey upon settlements and tribes alike. The players are asked to destroy this pack or otherwise drive them off so as to restore the 'order' of the past. They may even find allies,

GNOLLS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Gnolls are a very difficult race to roleplay well, as they are utterly hateful of most other races and have very few redeeming qualities. However, players may like to experiment with such characters, most likely within the context of a gnoll-only campaign. Such a campaign could revolve around an entire family group initially fleeing from disaster, or perhaps the Player Characters are separated somehow from gnoll society and are struggling to survive in a world that would just as soon eradicate them. Having gnolls within a standard party line up of the 'civilised' races will be problematic at best, as no gnoll is likely to leave its vicious temperament behind in favour of joining the society of humans, dwarves and elves. This must be left to the discretion of each individual Games Master and his players.

It is recommended that Player Character gnolls restrict themselves to fighter, ranger and cleric classes though, as always, a player's creativity should never be bound by any rulebook. If a suitable rationale is created for an unusual gnoll character, the Games Master is urged to indulge his player. As always, it is assumed that player character gnolls are above average when compared to other members of their race.

It is possible, and more consistent with gnolls as they are presented in *core rulebook III*, for a Games Master to start characters at second level, whatever class a player chooses. However, this can make them over-powered when compared to other, non-gnoll, party members. This optional rule is best left to Games Masters who know their own campaigns far better than we do. A Games Master could judge, for instance, that as a gnoll will tend to create disharmony and friction wherever he goes and reactions against him will generally be negative, the character has penalties enough already and so starting at second level may go some way to balancing this out.

GNOLL RACIAL TRAITS

- † +4 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Intelligence, -2 Charisma: Gnolls are a strong, brutish race, but lack almost any form of wit or refinement.

- † Medium: As Medium creatures, gnolls have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

- † Gnoll base speed is 30 feet.

- † Darkvision: Gnolls can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only but is otherwise like normal sight and gnolls can function just as well with no light at all.

- † Racial Hit Dice: A gnoll begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 hit points, one feat, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3, Ref +0 and Will +0.

- † Racial Skills: A gnoll's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 5 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Listen and Spot.

- † +1 natural armour bonus. Gnolls have a thick hairy hide that can absorb soft blows

- † Automatic Languages: Gnoll. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

- † Favoured Class: Ranger. A multiclass gnoll's ranger class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. To a gnoll, ranger skills are of primary importance and are taught from an early age.

- † Level Adjustment +1: Gnolls are slightly more powerful than the standard races.



Gnoll names often tend to be difficult for humans to pronounce correctly but, ironically, elves seem to pick up the intonations naturally. Because of this, the names gnolls use for themselves are sometimes described as sounding elven but with an added 'hard' edge. Gnolls only ever have a single name and never seem to title either their individual family groups or packs. To a gnoll, such gatherings of their people simply 'are.' A sample of gnollish names is listed here for convenience;

Eenoga	Turbulata	Turneeva
Slagawuf	Bassacop	Moonakka
Howlarek	Sindionaa	Vekannar

EDENDALE

Two years ago, down the quiet road leading to the peaceful village of Edendale, the gnolls came. No one lives there now. They stayed only a few hours but when they left, the community that had existed for centuries was dead.

The day the gnolls came, the people were herded together into the lone village chapel. A few of the stronger men resolved to fight the invaders but were quickly overcome. The women and children bore witness to the brutality of the gnolls as the feasting of their men took place in front of their eyes. Within a short space of time, they too were slaughtered. Abandoning the now lifeless village to ruin, the gnolls soon found a series of burrows just a mile away from Edendale. It is here the pack stayed and made their own home. Though far from civilisation, the gnolls have proved highly effective at capturing slaves from the few scattered farmsteads, passing merchant caravans and even parties of adventurers who have strayed far too close.

The gnolls within this burrow are comprised of only seven family groups, making them a relatively small pack by usual standards. There are nearly one hundred and twenty adult gnolls capable of fighting, of varying size and strength and around half this number again of non-combatant young. A slave population of more than thirty demonstrates this pack's ability of not only acquiring captives on a regular basis, but also of keeping them from escaping by virtue of being held deep within the bowels of the lair. This is a situation partly of the slaves' own making as over a period of a year, successive captives have been forced to extend the lair further down into the ground, as well as construct a simple stockade around the lair's main entrance. The original burrow may have perhaps belonged to creatures such as dire badgers but the resident gnolls have forced their slaves to not just extend existing tunnels, but to actually add a whole new level beneath the first for the use of the stronger family groups. It is here, in the pits of Edendale, that the slaves are housed when not serving their cruel masters. Any slave attempting to escape would have to literally pass every family group just to exit the burrow, making such a bid virtually impossible, especially considering the strength-sapping conditions the gnolls' victims have to endure.

The present pack leader is a vicious male gnoll named Eenoga. Even amongst his own kind, Eenoga is large and possesses exceptional strength to the point where he

has not had to face any challenge from the other males since the pack relocated to this lair. His mere presence is enough to quell nearby disputes between others, lest he decide he wants to join a developing fight. Eenoga's commanding presence allows him to take ownership of any item of worth in the lair without question and, unusually for any gnoll, he freely takes females from any of the other family groups as he desires. There is simply no other male in the pack who has the strength to challenge his superiority.

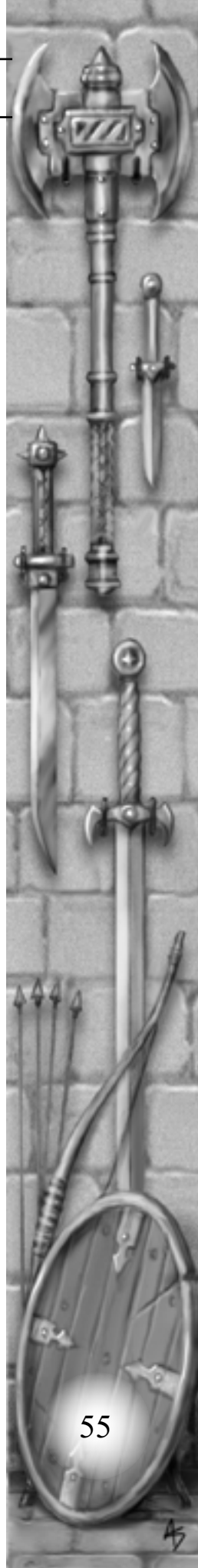
Far from forcing the other family groups away from the pack, Eenoga's rod of iron rule and sheer physical power provide the rest with a measure of protection in the wilderness. Whether it is against marauding ogre tribes or organised merchant soldiers, his own family group is always the first into any battle and prove their right to stay at the top of the pack through a combination of victory and brutality. It can be said all the other gnolls are, to an extent, parasitic on Eenoga's successes and each must weigh the price of his brutal control of their family groups against the huge amount of food and slaves he manages to bring back from every fight, even if they will be denied the best pickings themselves.

The pack as a whole, when not fighting amongst itself, roves over the surrounding wilderness in family groups, hunting the native animal life and always on the watch for intelligent races travelling into the region. The gnolls have already destroyed the nearest farmsteads in their attacks over the past year, forcing them to quest further for a constant supply of slaves but two major trade routes run near Edendale. Whilst caravans are these days much more heavily armed than in the past, due in the main to the gnolls' previous successes, they are still somewhat vulnerable to the well-laid ambushes of the stronger family groups. Though several attempts have been made by adventurers in the past to locate the lair, it lies just far enough from the trade routes to make this a difficult, not to say hazardous, task. Once found, a standing

Pack Strength

The total fighting strength of Eenoga's pack is listed below, though it must be remembered that both young and slaves are a permanent presence in the lair despite the fact that neither will take part in any battle.

Eenoga, Pack Leader
 12 Dominant Males
 103 Adult Gnolls
 6 Dire Lions



army will likely have little difficulty in overcoming the gnolls' meagre defences, but even merchants who rely on the trade routes are unwilling to go to the expense of dispatching such a force if the whereabouts of the lair is unknown.

EDENDALE

From the outside, the lair of Eenoga's pack is typical of the work of many gnolls and by day, adventurers may well be able to venture quite close without gaining unwanted attention. Daytime activity of the gnolls is infrequent to say the least, though there are usually at least a few within the stockade watching over the work of slaves, as well as ever-prowling dire lions. At night though, the lair becomes far more active, with bands of gnolls constantly hunting throughout the immediate area and even well-accomplished adventurers may be well advised to stay far away during the full moon.

The tunnels of the lair are generally between five to six feet high, causing most gnolls to stoop though this causes them little trouble. The smell emanating from every part of the burrow complex is foul to the nose of any civilised race, though half-orcs may feel a nostalgic twinge. The two separate entrances to the outside world provide ventilation through the passages of the first level, but they do little for individual chambers or the level below. All is dark within the lair, for the gnolls use no artificial lighting of their own and so any brought in by invaders will be almost immediately noticed.

1. The Stockade

The slave-built wooden stockade surrounding the lair is a crude construction of mismatched trunks and hastily repaired sections. A single entrance leads into a courtyard of sorts, dominated by a wooden building that covers the entrance to the burrow and the lair proper. The ground is strewn with debris, usually broken and cracked bones, as well as pieces of rusting or rotting equipment the gnolls have no use for, relics from a year's worth of savagery. During the night, the stockade is usually a hive of activity, with gnoll family groups constantly leaving for the hunt or coming back with the spoils of a successful night.

By day, the gnolls rarely venture to the surface, the few present likely to be young adults tasked with mastery of slaves as they are forced to work on the stockade. More common is the pride of six dire lions who have chosen to share a home with Eenoga's gnolls. Whilst the gnolls do not actively care for these huge creatures,

they are allowed to feed on left-over scraps and the occasional careless slave which ensures the lions' constant presence. The dire lions rarely attack any gnoll unless provoked but they are likely to pounce upon any unknown intruder they find within the surrounding area of the stockade, providing Eenoga with a highly effective guard system.

2. Wooden Housing and Main Entrance

This is another simple slave-built construct, with a ladder attached to its rear facing allowing gnolls to climb up on to the roof, thus serving as a crude watchtower or archer station. However, the gnolls will rarely keep any sort of permanent watch unless they are expecting trouble and even then they will find themselves constantly distracted, greatly reducing the effectiveness of any possible alert.

The housing itself covers the entrance to the burrow complex, an eight foot wide hole in the ground and it is obvious from the huge amount of tracks in the soft ground that it is well-used. More debris of the type inside the stockade can be found here, pushed against the walls of the structure but the area around the burrow entrance is kept clear. A single door allows entry into the housing, which was itself constructed as a means of defending the burrow and as a method of stopping the very occasional rain from running inside the lair. In both objectives, it proves more or less adequate.

3. Concealed Entrance

The construction of a concealed entrance to allow the gnolls to enter and leave the lair unseen was something of a leap in logic for Eenoga and is highly unusual for this race to consider such a thing. Being gnolls though, the entrance is concealed by nothing more than dry brush arranged in a very haphazard fashion. Any ranger or druid will immediately spot this entrance by the out of place vegetation if they circle around the stockade to its rear. Other characters will spot the discrepancy by making a Survival check at DC 15.

4. Tunnel to Second Level

This well traversed tunnel is around eight feet in height, allowing the gnolls to move up and down between the two levels of the lair without stooping. The tunnel gently slopes down from one level to the other and has a three foot off-shoot that dead-ends halfway along its length. This is where the slaves who were forced to build the tunnel attempted to burrow directly under sections of the first level, hoping to bring about their collapse. Unfortunately, Eenoga has proved unusually observant

of his slaves' activities and slaughtered them all himself before they could get anywhere near achieving their goal.

5-11. Family Groups

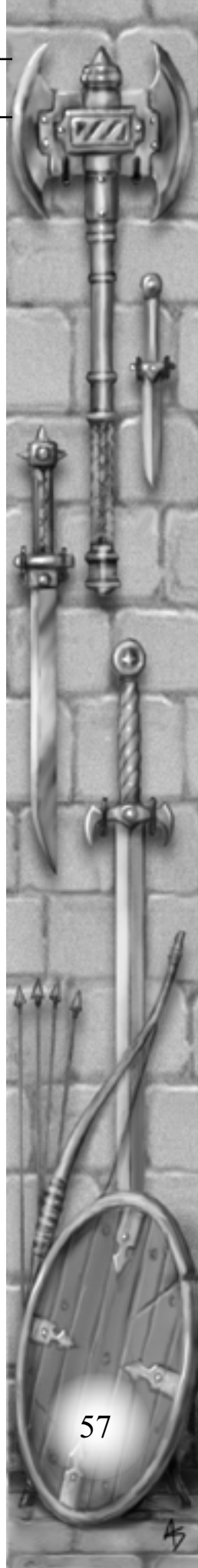
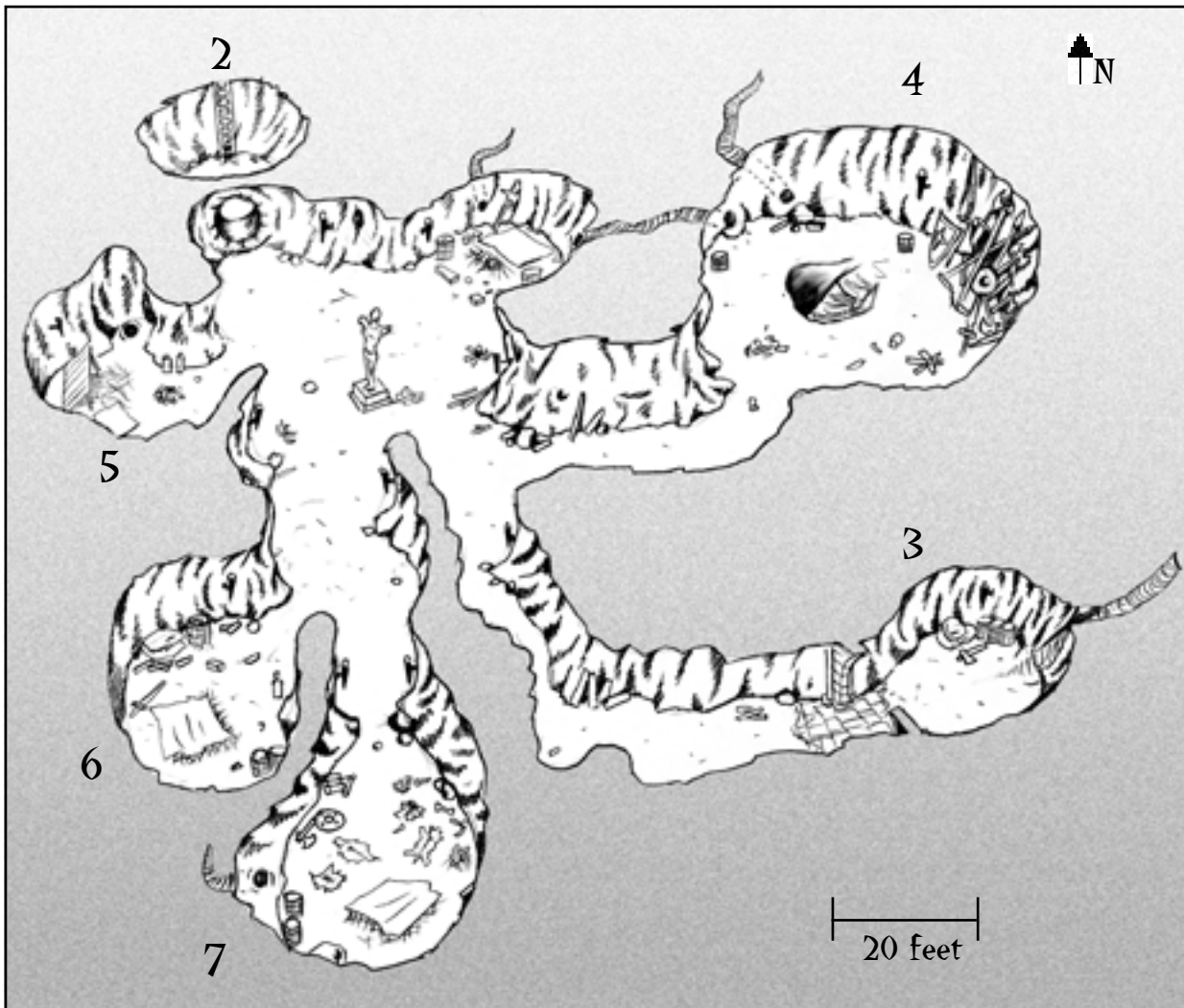
Each of the main chambers of the burrow houses a complete family group, with the weakest living near the main entrance, the strongest deep underground on the second level. Each chamber is a filthy place with a stench that will make most civilised people retch violently (note to Games Masters: you may want to force a particularly weak wizard or loremaster to make a Fortitude Check, but most adventurers should be made of sterner stuff!). Carcasses and bones cover the floors of the chambers from wall to wall, with individual gnolls sometimes making their own nests within the rotting flesh. Small holes of between a foot to three feet in diameter line the walls at floor level. These are the entrances to the tiny

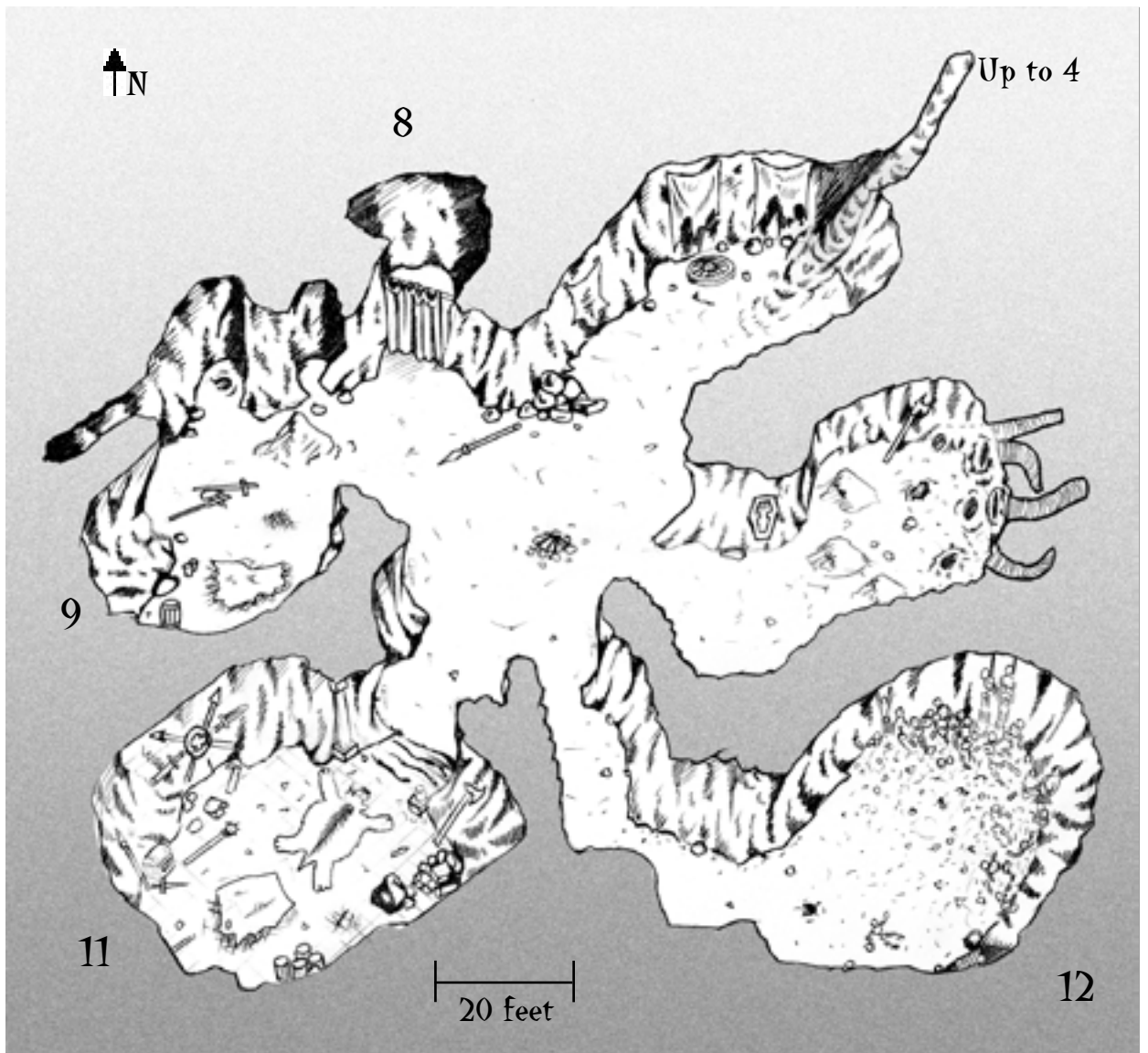
burrows the gnoll young make themselves to avoid the predatory attentions of adult males.

Eenoga's family makes its home in chamber 11, vastly larger than that of any other family group. Sensitive adventurers may well detect a palpable aura of utter fear permeating this section of the burrow and it is a place few other gnolls will approach willingly. The other members of Eenoga's family group enjoy a privileged position amongst the other gnolls, but themselves are terrified by their pack leader as they all know first hand of his cruel fury.

12. Slave Chamber

All the slaves of the pack are kept within the same chamber, only being released when the gnolls have work for them. Conditions inside the chamber are utterly repugnant and far worse than any the gnolls inhabit,





with foul waste and the dead strewn across the floor, rotting without attention. This is a breeding place for disease and even plague, though the gnolls themselves seem immune. For their part, the slaves rarely have time to succumb to such dangers as they are unfortunate enough to be housed alongside Eenoga's own chamber. Whether it is time for the full moon or not, Eenoga has a tendency to sate his frequent rages with a trip to the chamber, a visit that always results in outright butchery of the slowest and weakest slaves.

USING EDENDALE

This lair may be placed in any temperate or warm wilderness region within your existing campaign and can

Perils of the Slave Chamber

Any character spending any amount of time in the slave chamber runs a very real risk of contracting a variety of unpleasant diseases. For every day or part of that is spent in the chamber, a Fortitude Check (DC14) must be made. Failure results in a number of infections and diseases being contracted, their combined effects incubating for a single day and causing damage of 1d3 Strength and 1d3 Constitution.

The infection type of these diseases is not relevant as simply being in the chamber is enough to risk contracting them, such is the level of filth and decay.

EENOQA, PACK LEADER

Medium-Size Humanoid (Gnoll)

7th Level Fighter

Hit Dice: 2d8+7d10+18 (66 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 19 (+1 natural, +4 chain shirt, +2 heavy steel shield, +2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+12

Attack: Battleaxe +13 (1d8+6/x3) melee or shortbow +10 ranged (1d6/x3)

Full Attack: Battleaxe +13/+8 (1d8+6/x3) melee or shortbow +10/+5 ranged (1d6/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 9

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6, Intimidate +9, Climb +4, Search +6, Survival +3

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Power

Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialisation (battleaxe)

Challenge Rating: 8

Alignment: Chaotic evil



be used either as a simple extended encounter or as the basis of several linked scenarios. A quick consultation of the Scenario Hooks and Ideas chapter will provide many possible adventures you can embark the players upon. In this way, a Games Master can take relatively low-level characters and set them against gnoll ambushes and raids, perhaps upon the nearby trade routes or farmsteads. Gradually, as the players gain levels and power, they can attempt an attack on the lair itself, though one hundred and sixteen fighting gnolls is no easy proposition even for a mid-level party. However, several 'loop-holes' have been built into the gnolls' defences, giving most parties a more even chance, especially when you combine them with a typical gnoll's lax behaviour when it comes to anything beyond fighting and eating.

The ultimate challenge of this lair would be to task a low-level party with rescuing one or more of the slaves. Unable to face the whole pack in straight combat and

with a full moon fast approaching, the party would be under a severe time constraint and must use their brains to come up with a plan that will hopefully allow both themselves and the slaves to live.



GNOLL REFERENCE LIST

The following are provided for simple ease of use. A Games Master may confront his players with any of the gnolls listed below at a moment's notice but for prepared scenarios, it is suggested he simply use them as a basis for his own unique adversaries. Whilst gnolls may not have a huge amount in the way of magical items, they will demonstrate a great variation in their own choice of weapons and battle skills.

Gnoll Pack Leader

Medium Humanoid (Gnoll)

6th Level Ranger

Hit Dice: 8d8+14 (58 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 natural, +4 chain shirt, +2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+10

Attack: Battleaxe +10 melee (1d8+3/x3) or shortbow +9 ranged (1d6/x3)

Full Attack: 2 battleaxes +6/+1 melee (1d8+3/x3) or shortbow +9/+4 ranged (1d6/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Animal companion, combat style (two-weapon combat), darkvision 60 ft., favoured enemy x 2 (usually humans +4 and orcs +2), improved combat style (two-weapon combat), wild empathy

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +3

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 11

Skills: Climb +4, Craft (weaponsmith) +4, Heal +9, Intimidate +5, Listen +10, Search +6, Spot +10, Survival +10

Feats: Cleave, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting*, Power Attack, Track, Two-weapon Fighting*,

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Gnoll Cleric

Medium Humanoid (Gnoll)

4th Level Cleric

Hit Dice: 6d8+5 (32 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 natural, +3 studded leather, +2 heavy steel shield, +1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+6

Attack: Battleaxe +6 melee (1d8+2/x3) or shortbow +5 ranged (1d6/x3)

Full Attack: Battleaxe +6 melee (1d8+2/x3) or shortbow +5 ranged (1d6/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Rebuke undead 3/day, spells

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +6

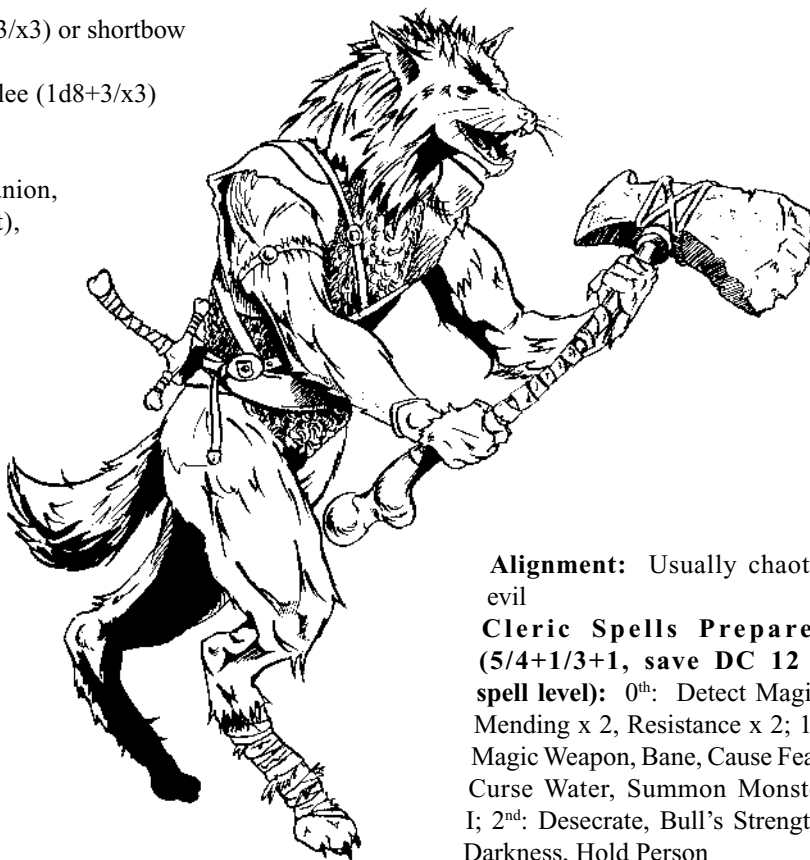
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10

Skills: Concentration +3, Heal +4, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Listen +7, Spot +7,

Feats: Brew Potion, Dodge, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard



Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/3+1, save DC 12 + spell level): 0th: Detect Magic, Mending x 2, Resistance x 2; 1st: Magic Weapon, Bane, Cause Fear, Curse Water, Summon Monster I; 2nd: Desecrate, Bull's Strength, Darkness, Hold Person

Gnoll Dominant Male**Medium Humanoid (Gnoll)****3rd Level Fighter****Hit Dice:** 2d8+3d10+8 (34 hp)**Initiative:** +4**Speed:** 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)**AC:** 17 (+1 natural, +4 scale mail, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 10, flat-footed 17**Base Attack/Grapple:** +4/+7**Attack:** Battleaxe +7 melee (1d8+3/x3) or shortbow +4 ranged (1d6/x3)**Full Attack:** Battleaxe +7 melee (1d8+3/x3) or shortbow +4 ranged (1d6/x3)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +1**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 8**Skills:** Intimidate +2, Listen +2, Spot +3**Feats:** Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness**Challenge Rating:** 4**Treasure:** Standard**Alignment:** Usually chaotic evil**Gnoll Warrior****Medium Humanoid (Gnoll)****Hit Dice:** 2d8+2 (11 hp)**Initiative:** +0**Speed:** 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)**AC:** 17 (+1 natural, +4 scale mail, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 10, flat-footed 17**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/+3**Attack:** Battleaxe +3 melee (1d8+2/x3) or shortbow +1 ranged (1d6/x3)**Full Attack:** Battleaxe +3 melee (1d8+2/x3) or shortbow +1 ranged (1d6/x3)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8**Skills:** Listen +2, Spot +3**Feats:** Power Attack**Challenge Rating:** 1**Treasure:** Standard**Alignment:** Usually chaotic evil

There it was, a slight movement in the darkness of the narrow ravine. The backward twitch of the leader's left ear he had been waiting for. The Prey was almost at hand. An errant breeze brought the slightly metallic scent of anticipation to his sensitive nostrils along with something else; the annoying stench of distilled flowers. There must be a female with the Prey. Rayk fought back the urge to howl with joy for scented women always screamed the loudest.

Soon the Prey was in sight. Five armed humans flanked a palanquin borne by four more men as the procession wound its way through the narrow pass. Soft light within the curtained litter showed the outlines of at least two others. Eleven Prey total, and only five of those armed. Rayk began to swish his tail slightly, signalling his readiness. His sharp eyes caught twelve other tails lashing in the darkness. He gripped his axe and waited for the signal to attack.

Scant heartbeats after the Prey had passed his position, a snarling howl pierced the night as the leader leapt from the boulder he had been perched upon and landed on top of the palanquin. He watched as the litter toppled to the ground on the broken shoulders of its bearers amidst screams of pain, shouts of surprise and the heady fragrance of fear. He rushed from his position, voicing a series of fast whoops as he charged toward the rearmost warrior.

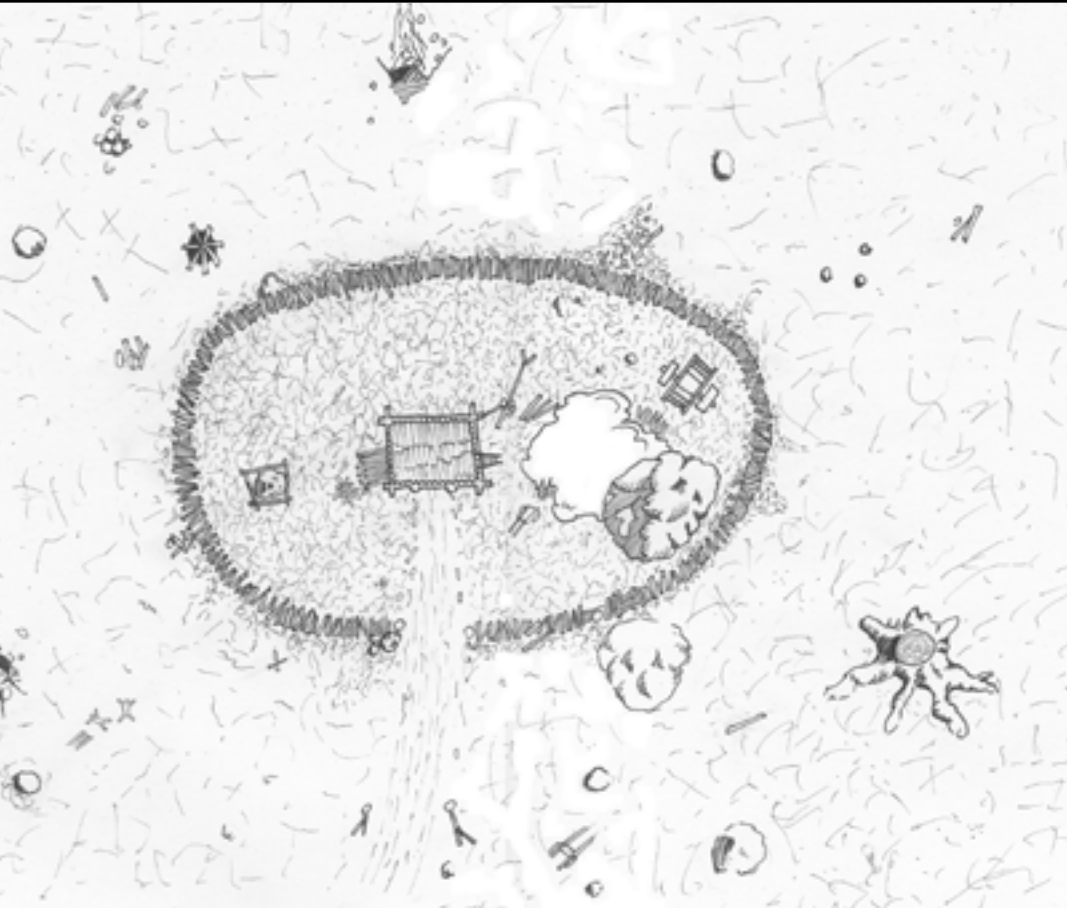
Rayk grunted loudly several times and swung his battleaxe over his head in a huge circle. The human warrior set himself for the oncoming gnoll's charge, completely ignoring the younger gnoll approaching from behind. A shout of surprise sounded from the human's throat as a heavy warhammer glanced from his armour. The human whirled to face his immediate attacker, ignoring Rayk for a vital moment as he fought for his life against the smaller gnoll.

Rayk grinned savagely at the effectiveness of the manoeuvre and slowed his charge to approach from a more advantageous angle, skirting round the human's unguarded back. The younger attacker giggled maniacally as the human landed several solid blows. Rayk trotted faster, realising that the younger male needed assistance.

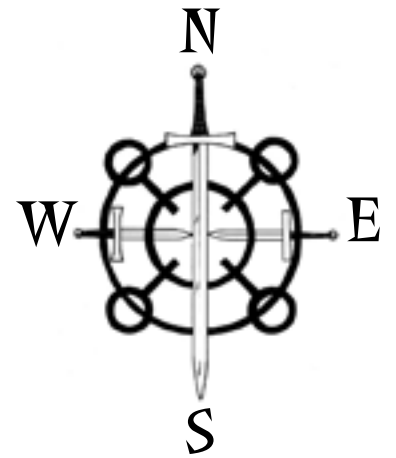
Just as Rayk arrived to join the fight the human clouted the young gnoll with his shield, knocking him unconscious. The lieutenant saw his opportunity and attacked the human's unprotected flank. Scales clattered on the ground, ripped from the human's armour by the force of the gnoll's blow. The lieutenant raised himself to his full height, fully three heads taller than the human, and howled with triumph.

Rayk grinned as the face of the warrior in front of him drained of colour. The human had incapacitated the younger gnoll only two breaths before Rayk attacked and he was still off balance. The gnoll could smell surprise and anxiety emanating from the human in waves. He snarled and raised his hackles as he swung his battle-axe in a low, one-handed arc that caught the smaller combatant in the ribs, caving them in with the satisfyingly wet crunch of bone and armour. With a flick of his wrist, he dislodged his axe from the corpse of the fighter and moved to the palanquin, stepping over bodies of human and gnoll.

He ripped the thin curtain aside with one bloody hand and sneezed involuntarily as the scent of flowers assaulted his sensitive nose. Rayk shook his head and snorted which kept him from dodging the silvered serving tray swung at his head. A slight gonging sound rang in the confines of the palanquin. He glared at the slim woman wielding the tray, ignoring the other occupant cowering amongst the cushions. Though she glared back, her brave stance and perfume could not mask the terror in her eyes or the heady musk of fear that surrounded the spirited young noblewoman. Rayk's chuckle rumbled deep in his chest as he knocked the tray from her hands and grabbed her by the waist, throwing her over his shoulder. Small fists pounded ineffectively at his mane as he lifted her from the litter. It would be great fun to make this one scream. He would take his time.



Edendale







Barthos Mevelen

Pursuivant of Mors Archagos

The Slayer's Guide To Troglodytes

Troglodytes are a thoroughly foul reptilian race, walking upright like a man but with all the chill mercilessness and cruelty of a cold-blooded snake. Many sages consider them to be as evil as the most loathsome of demons and they may not be wrong in this assumption. Troglodytes are often found in the underdeep of the world for they are creatures of the dark, but may sometimes inhabit the rocky peaks and passes of desolate mountains. Those few tribes who live near the surface wage a constant war on nearby settlements on cold, moonless nights.

In the past, many Games Masters have simply used troglodytes as just one more form of bipedal sword fodder for adventuring parties. Their skill with javelins, foul scent glands and chameleon ambush abilities combined with relatively large numbers make them tough opponents, even when confronted by experienced groups of adventurers. Despite this, they have rarely been treated with the depth and detail such a race deserves and have been relegated to the rather dull role of simple bad guys. With this book, that changes. Troglodytes, as you will soon discover, are not anything like humans would like them to be at all. Indeed, to comfortably imagine them as simple man-like fiends is to ignore not only their potential, but also the antediluvian evil they actually represent.

This inhuman race has truly been misunderstood. By browsing the pages of this *Slayer's Guide* you will open the door on an ancient evil that predates mankind's arrogant footsteps on the surface of the world.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 games systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these will be the sorts of races often all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who pay them little heed as countless thousands get slaughtered during the acquisition of new levels and magic items.

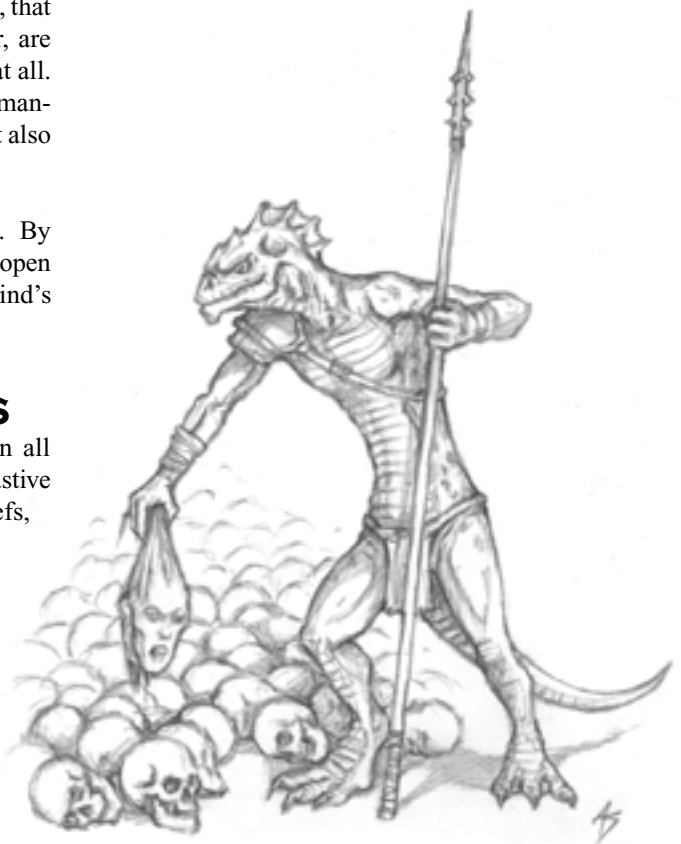
This outlook just has to be wrong. An entire race does not just suddenly materialise in the campaign world and there are very few who

exist solely to make war. What are they doing when the Player Characters are not around?

TROGLODYTES – A SEETHING EVIL

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race, in this case the troglodytes. Within these pages you will find a colossal amount of information on troglodyte physiology, habitat and society, giving you a fundamental level of understanding on how this race exists and interacts with the rest of the world. Games Masters are given guidelines on how to introduce troglodytes into their existing campaigns, portraying them as a terrible menace of old, whilst players can begin to comprehend this most ancient of evils. Finally, a complete troglodyte lair is presented to be used as either an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios or even just as an example of what the troglodytes are capable of.

After reading *The Slayer's Guide to Troglodytes*, you will never view this monster race in quite the same way again.



Bartolo tugged at his cuffs to straighten them before speaking. 'Let me make sure I understand what you are saying. You want us to go into the mountains, capture one of these lizard things-'

'Troglodytes,' the shaven-pated man sitting opposite Bartolo and his companions interrupted. 'They are called troglodytes.'

'-right, one of these *troglydytes*. Alive if possible, but dead is acceptable, and bring it back to you so you can cut it open and see what's inside. For this, you are going to pay us one hundred gold sovereigns.'

'It is as simple as that.' The old sage leaned back in his chair and templed his fingers under his chin.

Bartolo nodded and accepted another glass of wine, seemingly satisfied with his understanding of the offer and its fairness. Concerned looks and thick silence marked his companion's continuing scepticism. After long moments filled with only the sounds of the crackling fire, Thurisaz, the towering warrior woman standing behind Bartolo, spoke.

'Why did you choose us?'

The sage smiled, 'One of the duties of the acolytes of this institution is to gather information. One such acolyte overheard your associate describing an encounter with a bi-pedal 'lizard man' and reported back to me. After listening to the account, I was sure it was a troglodyte you encountered and I asked for this meeting.' The scholar gestured widely, 'Our institution is one of learning, study and knowledge, not bloody-handed adventure. We must rely on others more. . . *capable* in that arena. So little is known about these elusive creatures that to find information as to their whereabouts is a rare opportunity that must be immediately grasped.' The old man leaned back once more in his chair, slightly winded from the intensity of his speech.

Thurisaz's face was inscrutable as she glared at Bartolo's back. She snorted and grumbled under her breath. Her quiet comment drew a short bark of laughter from a darkened corner of the room and curious looks from Bartolo and the sage who did not understand the language of her homeland. The creak and jingle of an armoured man moving incautiously preceded Durin's appearance in the firelight.

'My sword-sister thinks perhaps the trogs may not be there, that they may have 'migrated' since the brave Bartolo had his run-in with them.' The fighter winked at Thurisaz as she handed him a glass of the sage's wine. 'Do you think they are still there?'

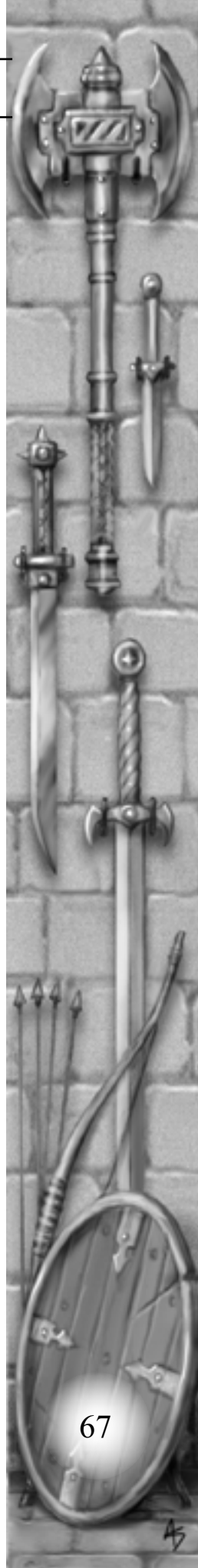
The sage looked mildly surprised, 'Ah, yes, a very good observation, young lady, but there have been scattered reports of ambushes on travellers in the far passes. I was going to suggest you begin your search there.'

'Have you ever smelled a trog, scholar?' Durin arched a brow at the sage. 'I would imagine not, since you are only offering one hundred gold. The price is one hundred gold for each of us, double if we bring it back alive, half of the base wage in advance or we don't go on your fool's errand at all.'

Three heartbeats of silence preceded the sage's answer. 'Done.'

Scant moments after the sage spoke an acolyte appeared with three pouches, which he distributed to Bartolo, Durin and Thurisaz. With an itching between her shoulder blades, the warrior woman recognised the acolyte as one of the urchins that haunted the alleyways of the Maul. She would guard her speech more carefully in the future knowing the darkness had such keen ears.

After they were safely out of the monastery, Thurisaz turned on Bartolo, picking the bard up by the front of his doublet with one calloused hand, 'One of these days, your bragging is going to get one of us killed. I will come back from the deepest vats of hell and haunt you to madness if it is me.'



TROGLODYTE PHYSIOLOGY

Ah the lowly troglodyte! The sword fodder of the underdeep, a primitive lizardlike race that seems to exist only in an adventurer's tales during the seduction of some barroom wench. The reassuring tales men invent for that which they do not wish to truly understand. . . Standing a mere five-foot high on average, though some are much larger, troglodytes are a reptilian race that walk upright. They have a chameleonic ability to shift the colour of their skin and foul scent glands that will nauseate most other races. They are truly repulsive and horrid without one single redeeming feature. Is it any wonder we revile them so?

But let us look deeper than these tales and actually consider the creatures. Troglodytes, as their name implies, live an almost exclusively subterranean existence and, despite the wild tales, are only seldom encountered by the races of the surface world. The few troglodytes that have any contact with the surface world are likely found in high mountain passes and deep valleys of shattered rock where there are plenty of caves in which to dwell. Certainly, these are not areas generally considered of value to mankind unless the pass is used for trade or the valley holds the possibility of precious ore. Indeed, for both men and dwarves, it is most commonly mining activities that bring contact with this enigmatic and, if we are to admit the real truth, virtually unknown race.

A CLOSER VIEW

Examinations of corpses reveal the vast majority of troglodytes are within a few inches of the five-foot mark, with some rare specimens reaching as tall as seven feet. Reports discuss them moving with a steady and stealthy pace interrupted by bursts of great speed. The tail is not used as a counterbalance as one might expect from an upright reptilian. Instead it drags on the ground behind the creature leaving a most distinctive trail that, coupled with their oversized clawed feet, make a troglodyte relatively easy to track on soft ground. Troglodytes have no concept of hygiene of any kind and the residual effects of their musk glands, even when not excreting, combine to give the creature a stench that drives off most carrion eaters. There is an old adage that says the reason troglodytes do not attempt ambushes in

the surface world is that their stench would give them away from miles off. Like so many other old wives' tales, it is completely wrong but perhaps adventurers may take some comfort in it - at least until the javelins begin to find their mark.

Judging from their dentition and the condition of their lairs, sages assume troglodytes are carnivores as well as eaters of carrion. Their dietary habits have never been observed by surface dwellers so this speculation is all that is likely to be available should a group of adventurers enquire.

PHYSIOLOGY

Slender but wiry, a troglodyte's muscles are dense and powerful for their size. A crest runs from the center of the head, starting just between the eyes, to about halfway down their necks. The face is predominantly reptilian with large round eyes and a resemblance to many common snakes or lizards. A troglodyte's centre of gravity is low, with the chest being well muscled but slender and the arms almost skinny. This makes them hard to knock down and gives them an advantage in grappling which is often thought to be why many troglodytes go unarmed. They have a longer torso than one might expect from a humanoid, which ends in a thickened abdomen containing the musk glands and supporting short but powerful legs. These terminate in very large clawed feet. A heavily muscled tail as long as the torso completes the creature. All recorded troglodyte corpses encountered have been male. Nothing is commonly known of the females or young physiologically - to surface dwellers, they are a complete mystery.

Tracking Troglodytes

Characters attempting to track a troglodyte trail gain a +2 circumstance bonus on their Tracking checks. This bonus only applies if the trail is over soft or very soft ground.

Grappling Troglodytes

Troglodytes gain a +2 competence bonus on all Grapple checks. This bonus does not apply to hatchlings or females.

Troglodyte Mating

In truth, troglodytes are extremely alien creatures and if the facts of their life cycle were more common knowledge this might be better understood. Troglodytes exhibit some of the most extreme sexual dimorphism of any sentient species. Indeed, records of adventurers who have scoured the lairs of these creatures and yet never encountered a female should raise questions. Where are the females? Where are the young?

The answer, of course, is that they were there all along. The reason for their apparent lack of presence illustrates how the troglodytes are far more alien than any adventurer or sage has yet dreamed.

Troglodyte females are significantly smaller than the males of the species, only reaching about four and a half feet in length normally, and they walk on all fours. Whilst they share the chameleon and musk glands of the larger males, their intellect is not shared. Generally, they and their young are often mistaken by adventurers for a separate species of pet or guard beast. Female troglodytes are only of animal intelligence and operate exclusively on two instincts, mating and survival. They are always in heat, although not always fertile, ready to mate the instant a male reaches for them. In between matings they scavenge for food in the lair, mostly the leavings of the males or food thrown to them by the leaders, and care for the egg clutches in the narrow hatching chambers.

Matings are always initiated by the male. Eating to their fill, a rare thing for a troglodyte, triggers a completely instinctual mating frenzy in which the satiated male goes into passionate throes, coupling with as many females as he can reach before the fit subsides. Some of these females will likely be in a fertile cycle and eventually crawl off to a small, secluded area of the lair to lay their clutch of eggs. This mating frenzy on the part of the male is most likely an involuntary but natural reaction. Since the most successful males in troglodyte society gain the greatest share of the food, such an instinctive response on the part of a sated male helps to ensure future generations of troglodytes remain strong and fit. When not in a food-triggered mating frenzy, males have no sexual drive at all and virtually ignore the females.

Shadows in the Dark

Whilst it is well known that troglodytes can change the coloration of their skins, in death they revert to their natural hue. Such colours are normally mottled

grey, brown or green with a lighter underside that would likely be pale grey or white were it not always so filthy.

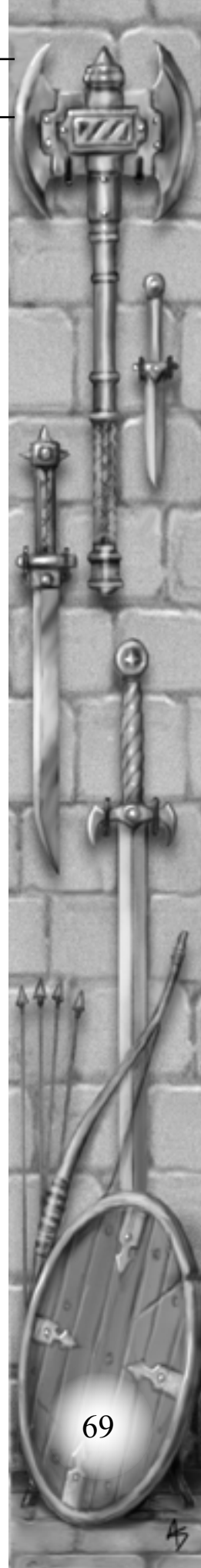
The ability of a troglodyte to alter its colour to match its surroundings can be startling. Even while moving at speed their colouring can shift with incredible rapidity. While this cannot be favourably compared with arcane methods of concealment, it does make them extremely difficult to spot, particularly in the darkness of their preferred habitat. Troglodytes will use this ability to attack from ambush and are sufficiently clever to utilise wind and air currents to hide their stench when so doing. Their chameleonic ability is not limited to caverns, stone and rock or darkness but they are far easier to spot if an area is well lit. Such an ability makes the troglodytes excellent proponents of ambush.

A Foul Stench

In addition to their chameleon-like skin, troglodytes have another weapon in their physiological arsenal. All troglodytes have musk glands in their lower abdomens that secrete a foul-smelling oil which is nauseating to virtually every creature that is not a troglodyte. Most sages believe this is an unconscious reaction based on the creature being either angry or afraid, though this is sheer supposition. This stench is so powerful that even a single troglodyte may effect combatants up to thirty feet away. Savvy adventurers may try to rig some kind of cloth over the mouth and nose and these can sometimes help if soaked in wine or brandy. The downside, of course, is that airflow is reduced, thereby making breathing nearly as difficult, although somewhat more pleasant. Because of this, and combined with other aspects of troglodyte hygiene, many adventurer groups and mercenaries are loath to take up battle against a tribe and will charge more than if battling some other enemy. There is no glory in fighting against troglodytes, merely dirty, nauseating, disgusting and damned dangerous work.

TECHNOLOGY

Aside from belts and straps from which to hang tools, weapons, provisions and trophies, the majority of troglodytes wear nothing. Some, particularly the larger ones, may have some crude attempt at jewellery and decoration but this is rare. A few have been encountered wearing captured armour modified to their twisted frames. These creatures make up only a tiny proportion of troglodytes and some surmise these are the leaders. Other troglodytes wear no harness of any kind. These



usually fight with their bare claws and fangs and would be all but indistinguishable from beasts if encountered alone. On occasions when this occurs, it is often only their distinctive stench that leaves surface dwellers certain they have been attacked by troglodytes and not by some other kind of subterranean reptilian pack.

LIFECYCLE

The lifecycle of a troglodyte is another aspect that makes them extremely alien creatures and has a dramatic impact upon all aspects of their life, society and existence. Troglodytes are all nearly uniform in potential at hatching with only the usual range of ability, strength and intellect one sees in more ordinary races. Despite this, we commonly see troglodytes ranging from five feet to over seven feet in height with the larger sizes becoming increasingly less common. We also encounter all levels of tool use, from bare hands, claws and teeth to stone axes, through awesome javelins to fully armoured creatures in mail. Why this great range of variation? The answer is that their potential remains locked within their bodies until certain conditions are met. The key to unlocking the potential of a troglodyte, allowing it to grow in both size and intellect is one of the basic building blocks of survival for any creature - food.

Troglodyte eggs gestate for a period of roughly two months and a single mating between a male and fertile female will produce between five and nine eggs, each about the size of a human fist. When they hatch, the young troglodytes will immediately begin scavenging for food. They will devour almost anything they might encounter, up to and including the egg they just

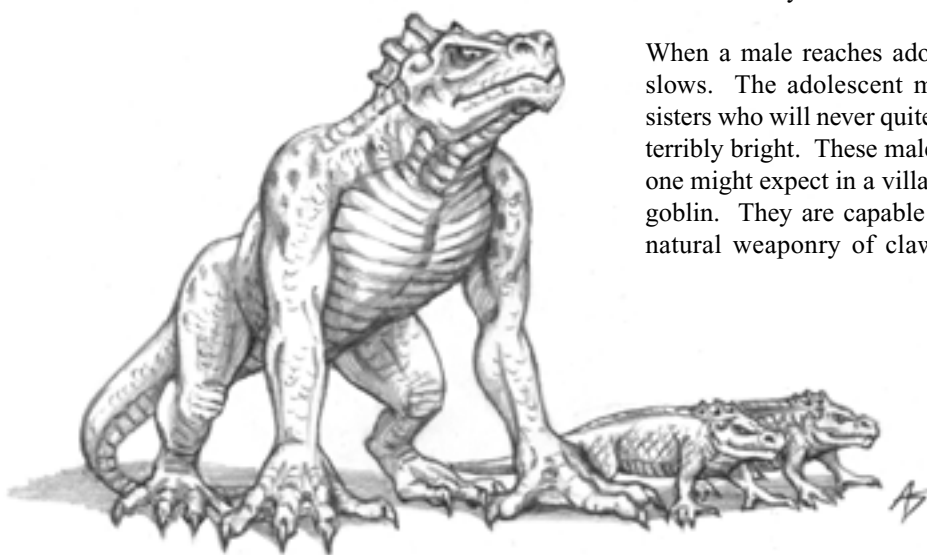
hatched from or those of others nearby. Females on hand will protect the eggs and drive the young from the hatching area and into the rest of the lair where the small reptiles will set about voraciously eating anything they can reach. In lean times, they may even devour one another.

Troglodyte growth is linked directly to diet, as is the case with many smaller reptiles. Well-fed creatures will grow both faster and larger than starvelings. This biological fact has a resounding impact on all areas of troglodyte life.

As a troglodyte grows physically, they also increase in intelligence. While this is the norm with most races the difference is, again, one of potential. A troglodyte with unlimited food supply would reach the size of a typical troglodyte chieftain (over seven feet tall) in about five years and would be many times more intelligent than an adolescent warrior. If sufficiently well fed, all troglodytes would reach this potential size but natural competition within troglodyte society prevents this from occurring. In practice, only a very few will ever reach their full potential, the others being stunted in their development by constant hunger.

Even leaving the egg, male hatchlings are about a third again larger than the females and the division is usually about four males for every female. Given the size of the males, they manage to acquire the greater share of available food and grow far more quickly than the females, eventually reaching their adolescent warrior size of around five feet within a year and a half. After this, their growth and development slows dramatically. Females, starting at a detriment in size and strength, never really catch up and take almost three years to reach maturity.

When a male reaches adolescence, its development slows. The adolescent male is sentient, unlike his sisters who will never quite achieve that, but still is not terribly bright. These males have the raw intelligence one might expect in a village idiot or a somewhat dull goblin. They are capable of fighting only with their natural weaponry of claws and teeth and have not



'Like the backside of beyond. That's what it stank like. I was in this cave, see? Just mindin' me own business. Couldn't even tell 'e was there. Probably would've skinned me an' all, if the wind hadn't changed. Made me eyes water, so it did. Smelt like a herd of trolls 'ad dumped all over the floor. Then I put me hand in some gooey muck. Dripped off me like a great lump of snot. But that wasn't the worst of it. Then I *saw* the bugger. Came out of the wall so 'e did. Height of an elf, but with a head like a cross between a snake and a lizard. Had a tail and clawed feet, but that wasn't what made me run. Oh no - it was the smell of the stuff dripping down 'is legs that got me a'running.'

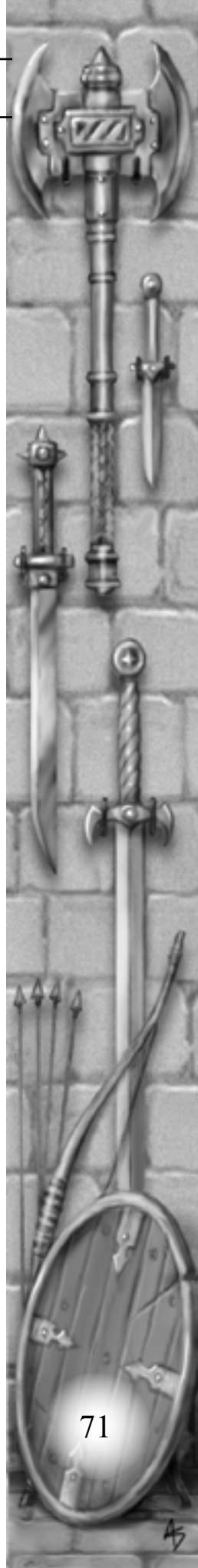
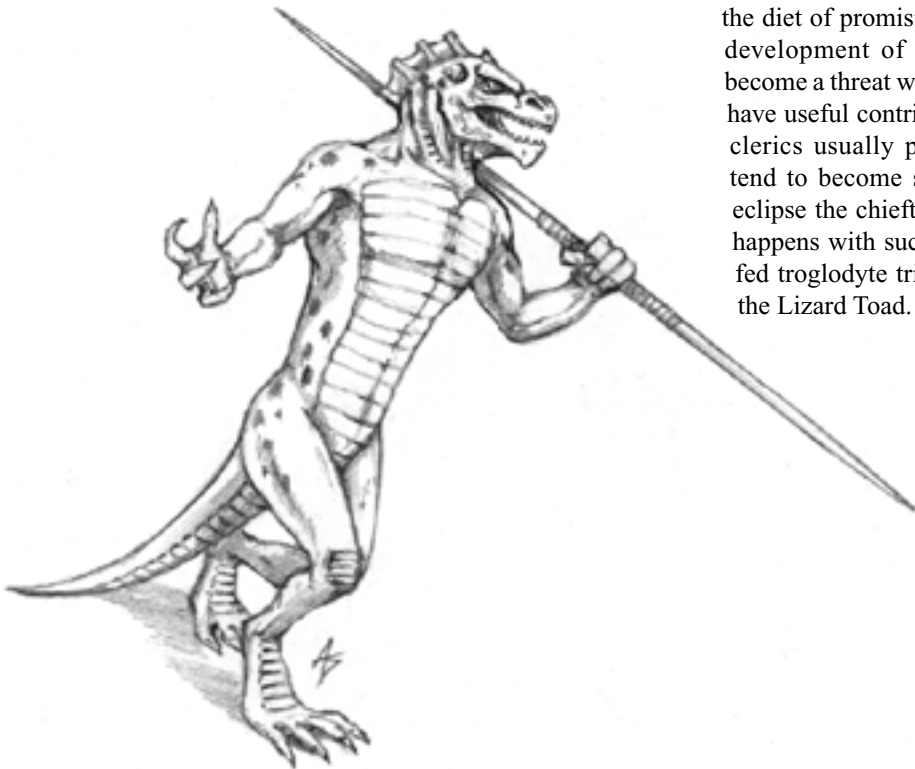
Alfric the Huntsman, to anybody prepared to listen.

yet developed far enough to understand the concept or utility of a harness. What makes them extremely dangerous though, is their tribal instinct.

As time passes, the adolescent slowly advances to adulthood. This normally takes several years but will be defined by food supply. If food is plentiful, the troglodyte will progress faster and may reach adult intellect in as little as a few months – if sustenance is less easy to come by, they may never progress beyond adolescence. In areas where famine is the rule, entire tribes might be stunted and never reach their full development. Such troglodytes are only one small step above beasts and will have no leaders, clerics or crafters, as they will not have the food supply to allow any troglodyte to develop sufficient intellect to reach such lofty heights. These stunted tribes will also not be

able to utilise weapons other than those nature equipped them with. Even captured equipment will be ignored, as the troglodytes simply will not understand it.

Under normal circumstances, warriors will eventually reach the tool-using adult stage and most tribes stabilise at an even ratio of warriors and unarmed adolescents. In such tribes there will be a leader for every ten warriors and adolescents. This will be an older, smarter and stronger troglodyte who has managed, by guile or strength, to consume more through life and thus has advanced more towards his full potential. If the tribe is large enough, there will be a steady progression of these larger troglodytes, each rank becoming bigger, stronger, faster, with more authority and intellect than those beneath. If the tribe grows large enough, some of these will be specifically 'bred' by the leaders to form specialised sub-classes such as the crafters and clerics. This breeding is conducted by simply adjusting the diet of promising troglodytes – stalling the development of those who may eventually become a threat whilst boosting those who may have useful contributions or talents. Breeding clerics usually proves a mistake, as priests tend to become so powerful they eventually eclipse the chieftain and take his place. This happens with such regularity that many well-fed troglodyte tribes are led by the priests of the Lizard Toad.



TROGLODYTE MINDSET

Another factor making troglodytes so very strange is their way of thought, which is truly incomprehensible to humanoids. To troglodyte leaders, the adolescents are not really thought of as part of the same race so much as resources to be used and expended as needed. The admittedly rather stupid warriors are really only half a notch higher on the food chain. They are still not viewed as members of the tribe so much as slightly more valuable resources to be expended with a little more care.

If this seems brutally heartless, then you indeed have an accurate picture of troglodyte society. Sages are not entirely wrong when describing them as cruel and evil as the denizens of the infernal planes. Part of this is likely due to their brutal and cut-throat early years. Only the most vicious will be able to achieve sentience in such conditions and that marks their psyches with an iron-reinforced mentality of 'survival of the fittest' which for them is, quite literally, true.

However, their alien mindset goes deeper than this. One thing adventurers have found with troglodytes is that they do not rout from battle. They may choose to retreat in order to cut their losses or they may stay and fight to the last creature but they never seem to break and run. For the warriors and adolescents it simply is not within them. Connected to this is the strange and almost perfect timing of troglodyte attacks. While troglodyte

warriors do not fight in organised formations, they always launch assaults simultaneously, retreat as one and, in general, act like an army of berserkers steadily controlled by a single mind.

The reason for this is another critical facet of the troglodyte mindset - tribal instinct. On some level, the less intelligent troglodytes are not truly individuals, as a human might understand it. Somehow, the leaders have the ability to impress their will upon the entire group in stressful situations, causing the tribe to fight and act as one. Whilst this is not a true hivemind effect, it is certainly some form of gestalt subconscious.

Some sages who have bothered to study the troglodyte have speculated this talent may be psionic. Others, seeing the lack of such an ability in other areas, believe this to be unlikely. In fact, given that it primarily manifests during combat and related activities, a very few have approached the truth in surmising that it could very well be directly linked to the troglodyte musk glands which make superb transmitters for such basic gestalt commands.

In reality, the gestalt is indeed transmitted by scent. The troglodyte's cranial crest is actually a specialised organ devoted to scent, carrying command musks directly into the brain, all but overriding the conscious mind. This only seems to work with the less intelligent troglodytes. The smarter ones can just ignore such outside impulses if they so choose.



HABITAT

As their very name implies, troglodytes are very much an underground race. Indeed, no troglodyte settlement has ever been recorded above ground. Some exist in the very bones of the earth whilst others lie nearer the surface, but all are universally subterranean. As underground creatures unused to temperature change, troglodytes prefer to avoid extreme climates. They always seek areas with access to bounteous food supplies but are seldom seen anywhere other than the very fringes of the civilised surface world, and almost always in rocky valleys or mountains. Wind and rain do not seem to bother them but they will not tolerate extreme drought or winter weather such as snow and ice.

THE UNDERDEEPS

Down in the bones of the earth where drow, aboleths and worse creatures rule, troglodytes may also be found. Against such powerful opponents as these, most troglodyte tribes are hopelessly outmatched. Some become vassal groups paying tribute in homage or service but these are rare. More commonly, the troglodytes live on the fringes of such civilisations, only rarely rising to prominence when blessed with an excellent food supply, allowing their numbers to grow vastly. Once this happens, these creatures sometimes manage to carve out a small empire which will last as long as the food supply is reasonably constant.

On occasion, a troglodyte tribe may be forced to move by any of a variety of factors. These may range from exhausting the local food supply to being driven out by a more powerful race which has grown weary of the troglodytes' constant raids. When this occurs, the troglodytes are sometimes driven into seldom used tunnels and may establish themselves in a ruin or cave complex with links to the surface. Nearby locals will soon discover their new neighbours as the troglodytes immediately begin foraging for food. Raids on moonless nights become common and survivors of successful attacks are rare.

MOUNTAIN

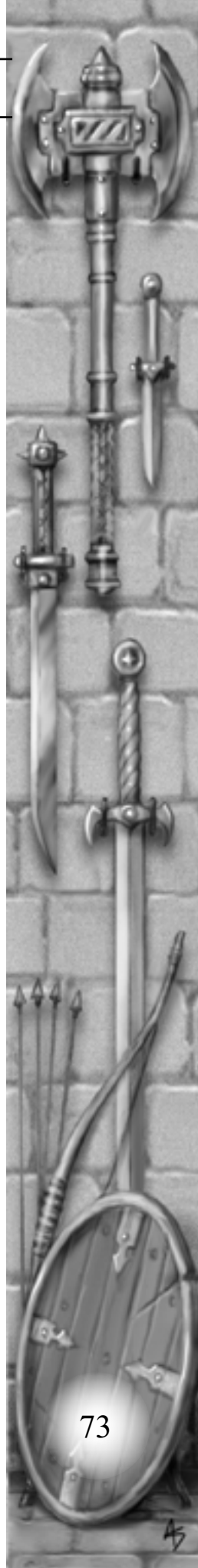
TROGLODYTES

Whilst troglodytes are found in the depths, very few adventurers ever journey to the underdeep and even fewer return. Though rare, troglodytes will usually be encountered in the mountains and valleys at the edges of civilised society. Even the most advanced civilisations, dwarves excepted, primarily use the mountains only as borders and sources of ore, thus allowing troglodytes to live relatively unmolested. Alpine villages and distant mine heads are at constant risk from such tribes, however, for the troglodytes are a fierce and aggressive race motivated almost purely by hunger. Naturally, tribes living in the mountains near dwarven strongholds come into regular and aggressive contact with them. Dwarves have no tolerance for troglodyte raids and will extinguish them with extreme prejudice wherever they are encountered.

WATER & SUSTENANCE

A source of water is required for drinking and many troglodyte lairs are partially submerged. Troglodytes are excellent swimmers, their large feet and long tail allowing them to move through water with speed and agility. Troglodytes cannot hold their breath for any significant length of time, so any flooded portions of the lair will be used as passages only. It has been known for the females to hide the hatching area in a dry cavern accessible only by water, thus invaders scouring the lair may find their efforts in vain when the tribe rises from the ashes of its destruction again and again.

Food is a primary concern for any troglodyte tribe. Being predators and carrion eaters, there must be a constant source of meat nearby to provide sustenance. While some more advanced troglodyte groups raise giant lizards both as mounts and as food, such methods can only properly supply a very small troglodyte tribe. In general, a tribe will need a regular source of prey. This may be animal or sentient, though the hateful creatures seem to prefer civilised beings.



TROGLODYTE SOCIETY

Understanding troglodyte society is not a task truly meant for those of us who choose to live on the surface. While it is possible to have passionate discourse in front of a warm fire in the safety of a great city, it is something else to actually confront one of those. . . *creatures*. To do so is to encounter a thing that no sane human will properly comprehend. There is a feeling of ancient horror when faced by a troglodyte not easily put into words. Brave adventurers and soldiers play them down as simple monsters to be killed for fun and profit but the truth is something more chilling. Behind those glassy inhuman eyes lies an alien sentience to whom all human concerns are irrelevant. Love, fear, hope, death – none of these things mean anything to a troglodyte. When it looks upon you it sees nothing of honour or courage. It sees only food. An upstart soft skinned race whose only purpose is to form another meal.

Karthos Mevellen - Pursuivant of Mors Derkagos

Troglodyte groups are organised into tribes with smaller groups being referred to as clutches, squads and bands by many adventurers. Tribes without access to sufficient food resources will be quite primitive – possibly having only a single leader or two intelligent enough to understand basic tool use. Even in larger communities where leaders, warriors and crafters are present, technological sophistication is very low with most tools and weapons being made of chipped flint, obsidian and other such stones. Only small amounts of metal will be in use, even in the most advanced of tribes.

Troglodyte tribes tend to be fairly uniform in size, depending on their level of advancement. Primitive groups may only reach a maximum size of around thirty, including hatchlings and young. More advanced tribes may reach over a hundred members. In areas near the surface, larger tribes are virtually unheard of due to the vast food requirements to support such a large group of carnivores, whilst in the underdeep some legends speak of entire cities of troglodytes, although where

they would find enough food to support such numbers is a mystery.

CAVERN LAIRS

Troglodytes are very territorial. Depending on the level of advancement of a given tribe, traps and ambush points will either be selected or constructed to defend their lair. One interesting trap used by advanced troglodytes is a simple earth-floored section of corridor - fragile flasks filled with troglodyte musk are buried beneath the earth and shatter when weight is placed upon them releasing the foul stench of troglodyte musk. The scent will not only weaken and nauseate attackers but will also ensure every troglodyte in the lair is alerted to the presence of intruders and will be armed and ready in ambush positions when the adventurers finally reach the lair proper.

Troglodyte lairs are not sanitary places. The troglodytes have no qualms about living in their own filth and old bones, pieces of rotting flesh, treasure and other trinkets are piled everywhere, mixed together as if in a great refuse heap. Troglodytes have little need for possessions and, indeed, less advanced tribes will not even understand such things. There is no storage area of any kind save, perhaps, a larder for live food. The only areas that may have organisation of any kind are the crafter's chamber and the Temple of the Lizard Toad. Even these areas will be filthy with carrion and refuse shoved out of the way against the walls but the actual usage areas for either work or worship will be surprisingly well organised and reasonably neat.

THE HUNGER

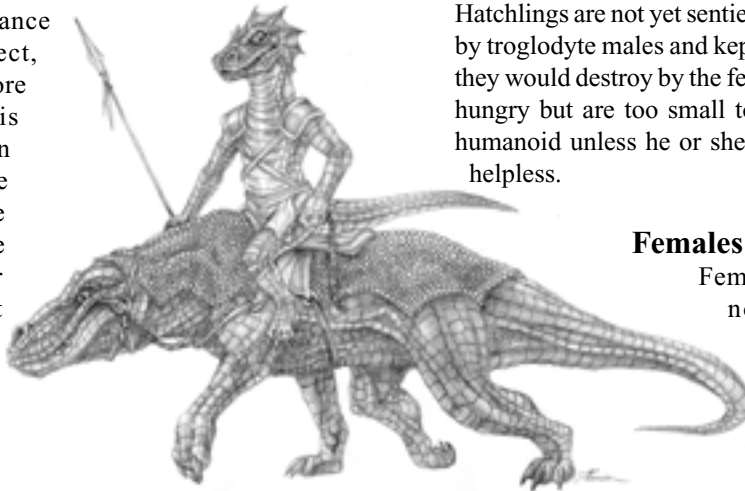
Any discussion of troglodyte society cannot be embarked upon without an examination of the main driving force of troglodyte culture, which is inextricably linked to their biology. Food.

Troglodytes are always hungry. On the few occasions that an individual has enough food to satisfy themselves, they go into a furious, energy-burning mating frenzy. When they recover, the pangs of a new hunger are already beginning to twinge. The racial reason for this is clear. As long as a troglodyte is hungry, he will continue to seek food, eat, and continue his development toward his full potential. Only the great and rare troglodyte chieftains are not completely enslaved by this all-consuming hunger, their potential having been reached and their need for food reduced.

Advancement toward their potential also raises the intellect of the troglodyte and allows them to retain some free will in the face of the musk-borne tribal instinct. Left unchecked, all troglodytes would eventually become chieftains but two things prevent this. First is food supply, which would have to be tremendous for even a small group of troglodytes to reach chieftain potential. Second is their own culture.

With the development of all aspects of the tribe directly linked to food supply, how much a troglodyte tribe has to eat is of vital importance. As troglodytes advance toward their maximum potential, the leaders begin to lose control over the wills of the lesser members of the tribe. They evolve from non-tool using adolescents, through dim warriors to intellectually advanced crafters and priests and then on to chieftains – and with each step they grow more difficult for the leaders to control. As troglodytes advance and gain intellect, they become more ambitious. This does not begin until a troglodyte advances past the adult warrior stage for it is only after this its intellect can support ambition, realise self worth and consider action that may be used to further its own position. In short, only those more advanced than a normal troglodyte warrior can really be said to begin comprehension of ‘I think, therefore I am.’

To maintain control over their tribal resources, chieftains carefully manage food supply. Raids are carried out to keep the adolescents, warriors and the non-combatants fed but most gathered food is either stored in larders or goes into the gullets of the higher ranking members of troglodyte society. The senior troglodytes will even limit the food resources of the advanced crafters and priests so as to keep them from reaching greater potential. In this way, rivalry is negated and members of these castes are usually smart enough to realise that their own survival is dependant upon following instructions from the more powerful chieftain. Priests, however, will sometimes make a bid to replace a non-religious



chieftain through the divine powers at their disposal and often succeed, which is why priests control many advanced troglodyte groups.

THE POTENTIAL CASTE SYSTEM

In effect, the troglodytes have the ultimate caste system. Each troglodyte is limited to his place by the available food supply but, in theory at least, has unlimited potential with which to rise as chieftain of the tribe. In practice, those smarter and stronger, at any level, will be the most successful in achieving their potential. Troglodyte society is a dominance hierarchy at its most powerful and visible.

Hatchlings

Hatchlings are not yet sentient. They are all but ignored by troglodyte males and kept away from the hatcheries they would destroy by the females. They are constantly hungry but are too small to really injure a full sized humanoid unless he or she is restrained or otherwise helpless.

Females

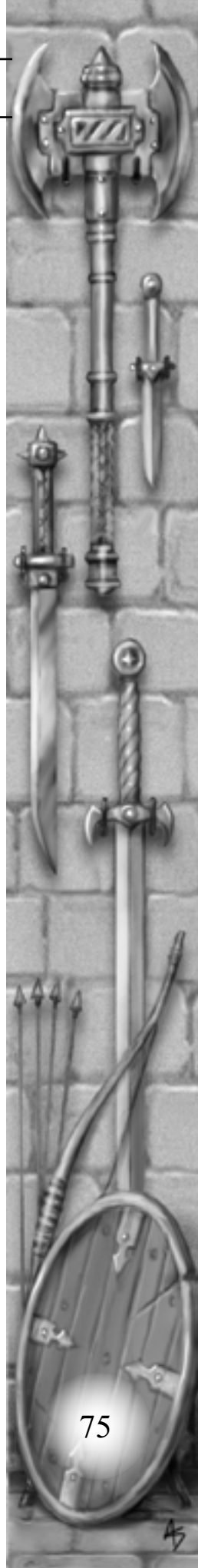
Female Troglodytes are also non-sentient. The male leaders will occasionally remember to toss them some food so they do not starve but that is about as much attention they receive unless a male is in the throes of a mating frenzy.

Adolescents

Even though these have reached the end of their first growth spurt, adolescents are still only barely sentient. They can look after themselves but are still not intelligent enough for even basic tool use. About half of a typical troglodyte tribe will be made up of adolescents. They are viewed, and used as, sword fodder against attackers in the most cruel and heartless fashion. Extremely primitive troglodyte tribes may only have one or two members that are not at this level due to lack of food.

Warriors

These individuals are physically much the same as adolescents and most adventurers will have no idea of



TROGLODYTE SOCIETY

any difference. They are, however, more intelligent. Warriors are tool users and will wear harnesses, carry possessions and make use of more 'sophisticated' weaponry and tactics in combat.

Crafters

At near average human intellect, the crafters are the first of the non-expendable castes. Crafters are fed just enough to raise them above warrior level due to their relatively high intelligence. Crafters handle all the skilled work of the tribe, whether it is the forging of weapons, design of traps, breeding of lizards and so on. Priests can be considered a subset of the crafter.

Leaders

The larger, more powerful troglodytes are the leaders of troglodyte society. As intelligent as any normal human, they form the 'nobility' of the tribe and are the most likely to take over if their chieftain is slain. Some of these leaders will also be former crafters and priests of some considerable power.

Chieftain

There will normally only be one chieftain in a tribe although it is theoretically possible more could exist. These are huge troglodytes, approaching 7 feet in height, with the full intellect of any human. This is a troglodyte who has reached its full potential.

Given the nature of musk glands and the way troglodytes react to them, it must be remembered that each and every troglodyte tribe is, literally, an extension of the chieftain's own personality. Domination rules the upper castes. Lower castes obey simply because it never occurs to them there is any other option.

STEEL

For some strange and seemingly incomprehensible reason troglodytes value steel above all else. Even the moronic adolescents will pick up steel objects when given the chance, despite their complete inability to comprehend its true purpose. Precisely why this is, none can really say but whilst gold, brass, silver and gems are ignorantly tossed into rubbish heaps along with both arcana and the bones of their former owners, steel is kept as a valued prize. Only senior troglodytes will bear any amount of steel as ornaments and even this use of the precious metal is rare. More commonly, the chieftain, leaders, crafters and priests will bear weapons of steel. In

very wealthy tribes, even the warriors may be permitted to carry a captured sword or dagger. Troglodytes will always make use of such wealth and weapons of steel will never be found lying amongst the garbage of a troglodyte lair unless there is no troglodyte present who can comprehend their function. Other steel objects such as armour and tools will usually be given to the crafters, who re-fashion such equipment into the heads and shafts of the troglodytes' most famed weapon, the vaned javelin.

THE CRAFTERS

The caste of the crafters is a specialised one. These individuals will normally only be found in the most advanced troglodyte tribes as only then can the chieftain afford both the food to spare and the risk of rivalry that comes with such high caste members. Some will be charged with the care, feeding and breeding of giant lizards to enhance the tribe, not only in battle but also



in a carrying and transport capacity which allows the tribe to gather food from further afield. Others will have dominion over the architecture of the lair, designing traps and ambush sites whilst others become priests or weaponsmiths.

The latter will be amongst the most respected troglodytes in the entire tribe. Alone amongst its kin, the troglodyte crafter enjoys the secrets of forging weapons, tools and even has a base knowledge of metallurgy. They alone have the wisdom of fire, smelting, and fashioning steel, the most precious material in the world to a troglodyte. All items produced by troglodyte tribes are created by crafters. Crafters, of all the members of this society, are deemed too valuable to be wasted in battle, their knowledge being too precious to risk. However, when intruders threaten the lair, the crafters may indeed be called upon to fight. They will do so with javelins from the rearmost ranks of the fighting and, in addition, are permitted to wear captured armour modified to fit their frames in order to provide protection from stray missiles or attackers breaking through the lines. Such an incredible allocation of precious steel is evidence enough of the high regard in which the crafter's value as a tribal resource is held.

TROGLODYTE CRUELTY

It should come as no surprise that the troglodytes' reputation as a vile, cruel and evil race is well deserved. Any species that considers members of its own society to be mere expendable minions should not be expected to have empathy for others. Indeed, troglodytes are the ultimate in vicious cruelty for the sake of vicious cruelty. No mercy can be expected from a troglodyte captor – to him the captive is merely short-lived entertainment soon to become another meal. One of the very few activities that even the stupidest of troglodytes is known to enjoy is torment and cruelty. It is almost as if a streak of evil has been bred into their very souls and now has the firmest of holds.

THE CULT OF THE LIZARD TOAD

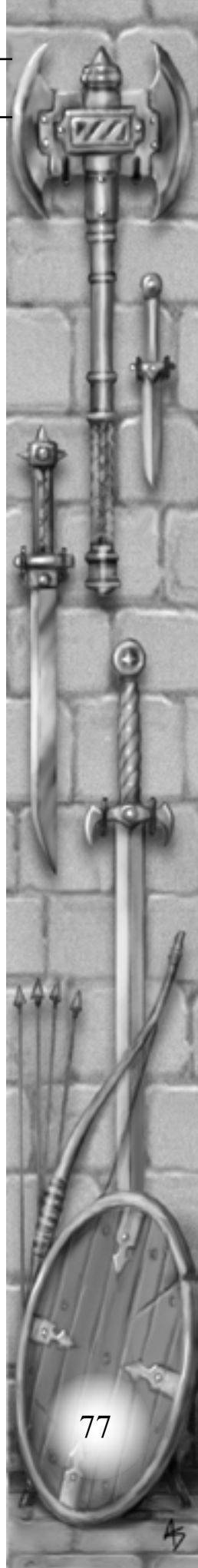
One visible offshoot of this vicious demeanour is found in the religion of the troglodytes. All troglodytes of sufficient intellect worship a horrid creature whose crudely carved statues depict a cross between a reptile and a toad. No one knows what the troglodytes call

this foul thing and surface dwelling races have many different names for it. Worship of the Lizard Toad is conducted through the auspices of the priests, a variant of the crafter caste. As such, religious practices are only found in the more advanced troglodyte tribes and such a presence commonly results in the tribe being taken over and controlled by the high priest of the cult. When this occurs, the entire tribe rapidly becomes a brutal theocracy with but one goal; pleasing the Lizard Toad in the name of its high priest. Like everything else in troglodyte society, religion is only about personal aggrandisement, an attitude the deity seems to approve of, given the powers granted to the priests.

Troglodyte temples are not grand edifices nor well kept impressive sanctuaries. Typically for this horrible race, they are rough, filthy and they stink. The main chamber will be just large enough to hold all warriors and adolescents and will be enlarged or moved if necessary to accommodate a larger number. Some very large tribes with limited living space may have two or three temples each led by its own priest. This is a particularly desirable arrangement if the chieftain is not a cleric himself, as it is a perfect method to balance the powers of priests against one another.

Regardless of whether there is one or more temples, all will have essentially the same layout. The worship area will consist of a simple open space arranged in front of the nave. This is a large alcove with walls of seven facets, each representing one of the troglodyte castes. Centred in this area is a huge, crude carving of the Lizard Toad. In keeping with troglodyte tastes, decorations added by wealthy tribes will be of steel which is thought to please the god. This may mean anything from a stone statue with steel eyes, teeth and tongue, all the way to a statue of solid hammered steel.

In front of the idol is a large altar, normally coated in dried blood which the troglodytes will never bother to scour. In some cases this accretion has been reported to be so extreme that details of the altar carvings and even its shape has been obscured. On either side of this altar are pits, used for sacrifice. The angles and shapes of the Idol of the Lizard Toad are disturbing in the extreme to rational surface dwellers. Eyes will slide off the surface in odd ways, always winding up deep in the sacrificial pits or upon the blood soaked altar. The combined effect is to both nauseate physically as



well as bring up deep wellsprings of hopelessness and despair. The entire atmosphere of a troglodyte temple radiates pain, misery and a sense of the primitive that will reach into a surface dweller's soul. Standing on such terrible ground leaves one feeling watched by something more ancient than the primal ancestors of man, elf or dwarf.

There do not seem to be very many regular religious celebrations associated with the troglodytes. The only ones positively identified are two devotional masses which were interrupted by adventurers and recorded.

One has been called 'The Hatching.' Its actual meaning to the troglodytes is uncertain but it adequately illustrates their approach to religion. First, the troglodytes in attendance begin hissing rhythmically in a surprisingly melodious reptilian chant. As the chanting reaches a crescendo, a sacrifice is brought forth. For this ceremony, the troglodytes used a young and helpless humanoid of pre-adolescent age. The child was stripped and bound before being handed from troglodyte to troglodyte, over their heads. Some of the more bold creatures would lick the sacrifice or even daringly take tiny bites from its flesh. The sacrifice arrived at the altar bloodied but alive. The sacrifice was then bound to the altar and the troglodyte high priest stood before the idol, chanting what were assumed to be devotions. Finally, the creature turned to the altar and raised an obsidian knife for the blessing of the Lizard Toad. Moving quickly, the priest made a pair of incisions into the torso of the captive. Into each of these it placed a fully gestated troglodyte egg. Its assistants then sewed up the incisions, as the rest of the troglodytes chanted faster and faster, led by their priest. Finally, their chants were joined by the screams of the victim as the eggs hatched and the young troglodytes began to gnaw their way to freedom.

The second ceremony is dubbed 'The Feeding.' In this ceremony, captives were ceremonially tied to posts in the sacrifice pits. As the priest led the attending troglodytes in a series of ecstatic chants, small lizards (hatchlings, unknown to those witnessing the ceremony) were driven into the pits and began to devour the captives. As the proceedings reached their peak of agony and terror, other captives were brought out and stretched across the altar. To the screams of the dying sacrifices and the chants of the frenzied troglodytes, these captives were quartered alive with a steel axe and the pieces flung to the crowd by the priests.

How these ceremonies end is unknown, as in both cases furious adventurers stormed into the temples and interrupted them. In neither case was the assault successful – the information reached sages only by word of mouth from the few survivors. It can be assumed failed adventurers have either become part of the next troglodyte meal or were 'guests' at the next ceremony.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RACES

As a rule, troglodytes have only the most negative and antagonistic associations with all other living creatures. The only real exception to this are the giant lizards advanced tribes use for beasts of burden, war mounts and, occasionally, dietary supplements, bred and raised by crafters. These specialists, where they exist, have every bit as much success with their lizards as a human ostler might expect to have with horses. The creatures can be bred to the saddle or as beasts of burden and because they are omnivorous and of poor temperament, they also make reasonably good guard beasts. Adventurers may take advantage when they are used as guards, for they are readily distracted or ensorcelled and will accept food even from an invader, making them easy to drug or poison.

The only other positive relationship, if one can call it such, that bears examination is where the troglodytes are forced into a tribute relationship with a stronger power. How these races (usually drow or aboleths) can even begin to bargain with such creatures, much less come to an agreement with them is often a puzzle to outsiders. Usually it involves judicious use of threat and sorcery, together with a very watchful eye as troglodytes are likely to strike out at their hated masters at the very first opportunity or sign of weakness. Overall, troglodytes are not allies one would want to look to for assistance, as they will inevitably view this as the opportune time to avenge their hated subservience and make their former masters the next gift to the Lizard Toad.

METHODS OF WARFARE

Ambush is a common tactic for monstrous creatures but let there be no doubt that, in their own environment, troglodyte ambushes are unparalleled, so much so that their mode of attack may be fairly described as a kind of mobile ambush. Troglodytes strike with a timing exceeding that of gnolls and an ability to hide that verges on the arcane due to their incredible chameleonic ability. Whilst they do not have the militaristic unity of hobgoblins, they seem to attain a strange instinct to seek out and exploit weaknesses, and their ambush tactics always appear precisely planned.

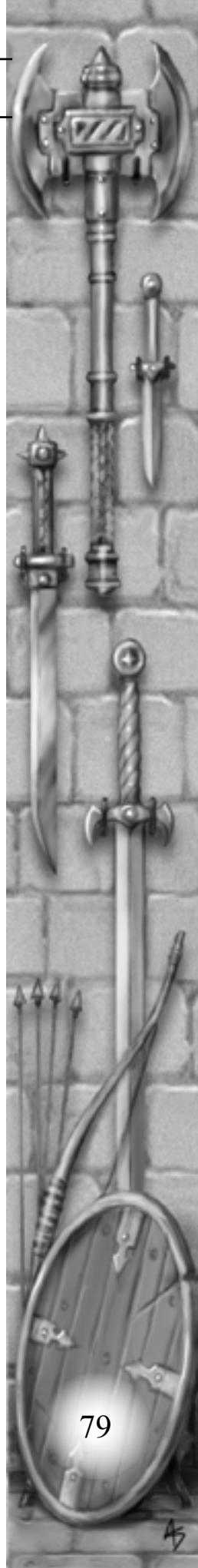
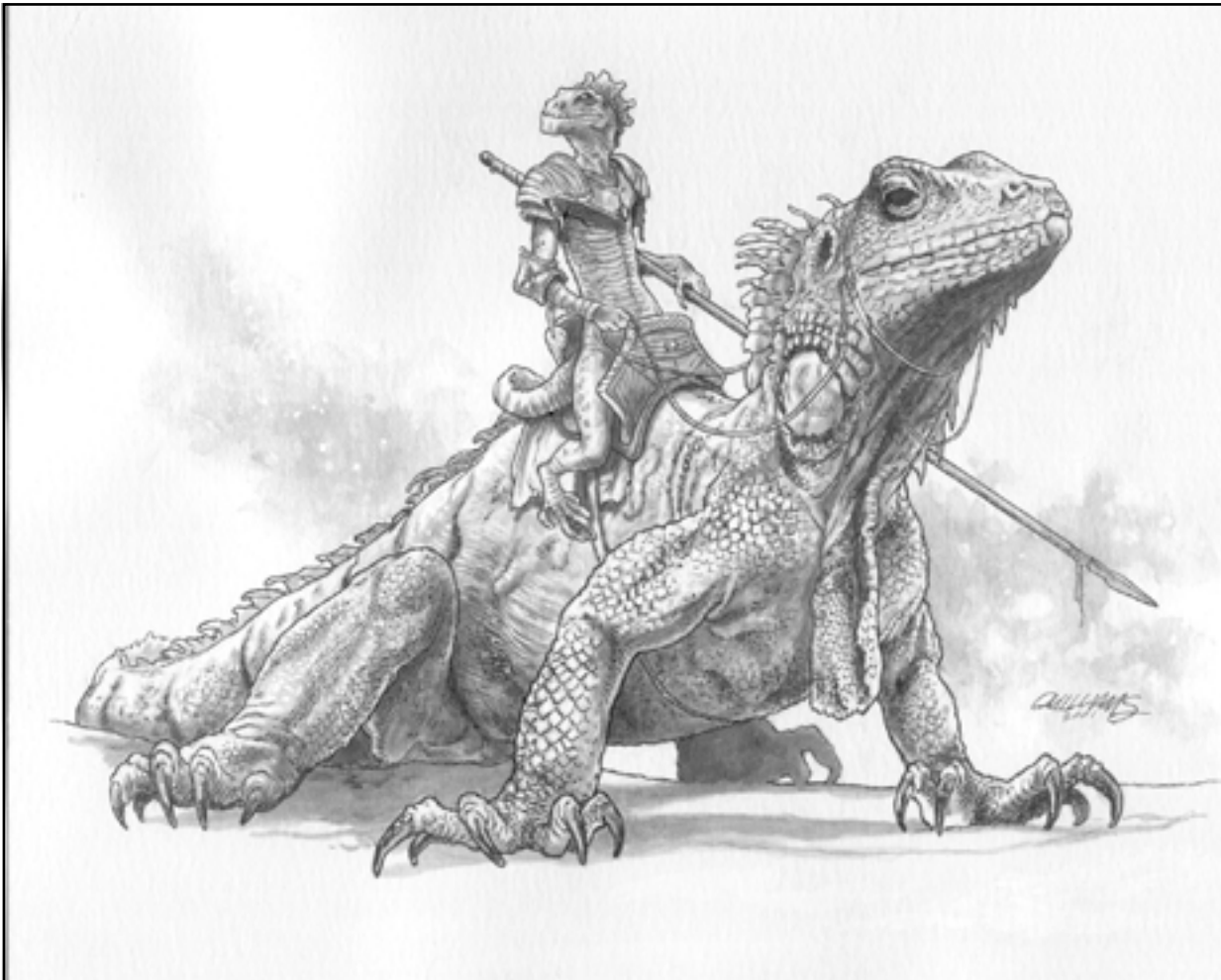
Troglodytes commonly fall into three types of troop when engaging in battle. This is an average, as primitive tribes will not have all resources at their disposal.

Troop types are fixed along caste lines with adolescents as shock troops, warriors acting as both support and reserve, with leaders in command. Very occasionally, a small group of priests using divine clerical magic may also be present.

Troglodytes are feared for their skill and accuracy with the javelin and use of these long, vaned throwing spears makes up a significant percentage of their fighting capability. They will also make full use of their natural abilities including musk, the ability to see in the dark and their chameleonic hides.

ARMS AND EQUIPMENT

The most significant, and feared, of all troglodyte weapons are their javelins. Construction varies from tribe to tribe and with their level of advancement but regardless of construction, the warriors who carry them are deadly. Many of these weapons will have characteristic heads mounted with large wing-like vanes



that allow them to fly straighter and truer. Warriors not carrying javelins will be armed with a mix of captured equipment and weapons constructed by the crafters. While a few of these native-built weapons may be of metal, the bulk will be of stone, with flint and obsidian being preferred for weapon construction. Near the surface, javelins, axes and the like may have wooden hafts but in the underdeep, metal is usually used for javelin shafts whilst bone is a common material for the hafts of axes and clubs. Where materials are available, long spears may be popular especially if warriors are mounted upon giant lizards.

Aside from the crafters, troglodytes never wear armour. Natural instinct causes them to rely on their chameleon skin when dealing with enemies and any sort of armour renders this useless. Also, since steel is extremely valuable, it cannot usually be spared for such trivialities as protecting a troglodyte. Chieftains or priests may wear the occasional armoured plate taken from an enemy but these are more tokens and a show of wealth than an attempt at protection. Only crafters are deemed sufficiently important to protect with precious steel and other troglodytes look upon them with both disdain and envy because of this practice. Shields are unheard of in any level of troglodyte society.

Adolescents never use weapons of any sort but are quite deadly at close range with fangs and teeth.

TROGLODYTES ON THE ATTACK

Troglodytes are aggressive carnivores, viewing the entire world as a food chain. There are those creatures they can eat and those that will eat them, their worldview falling into kill or be killed. As such, troglodytes will launch attacks on any nearby food sources that are available. It matters not whether that means hunting deer, rustling cattle or raiding the population of a tiny farming town. It is all the same to them.

Troglodyte leaders are fully aware of their strengths and will use each and every one to full advantage. When fighting above ground, troglodytes will always strike on black, moonless or overcast nights. Since troglodytes can see perfectly well in the dark, the attack will occur when it is as dark as possible. Javelins will be used from range to pick off targets either more heavily

armoured or who appear to be spellcasters. Any priests involved in the attack will begin their participation by countering any *light* spell or natural fires with their own spells of *darkness* to preserve the troglodytes' advantage. Extremely advanced troglodyte groups may also have a leader, priest or other high caste troglodyte equipped with a sling. This will be used to throw vials of troglodyte musk into the enemy, further weakening defenders.

When the leaders judge the time is right, the adolescents will attack. During the distraction of the javelin barrage, they will have been working their way closer, being certain to stay downwind of the target to avoid their scent giving them away. Their ability to change colour is invaluable, particularly in darkness. At least one leader will normally lead this force to ensure order and provide his own fighting power against any enemy that might prove difficult. When the order is given, the adolescents will strike, again concentrating on the most dangerous targets, including spellcasters. As they hit, any warriors who have run out of javelins will move up to form another wave directed by the leader. Those with long spears will attack from behind the adolescents where they can strike but not easily be struck in return.

Troglodyte attacks are strange to observe or experience. Large groups of troglodytes move with perfect precision, as though part of the same body, but individuals fight with berserk fury and seem to care little for their own safety. It is an eclectic mix of order and chaos. Troglodytes never fight in close, definable units, nor do individuals go the aid of others unless a leader calls for help. Once combat is joined, each effectively fights alone in the resulting melee, but one can always count on battle to begin in a fashion even the precision-minded hobgoblins may envy.

SPEARS IN THE ROCKS

On the defence the troglodytes will pick their ground and ready themselves for the approach of attackers. The ground will be carefully prepared, if there is time, with concealed pits, buried flasks of musk, stakes driven into the ground to falter cavalry attacks and such like. If defending their own lair, they will have cul-de-sacs and bottlenecks, deadfall traps and even sections of corridor that can be brought down on the heads of intruders. Attacking a troglodyte lair is never the stuff of legends. It is more the stuff of nightmares.

Kolvarg looked at the young dwarf, the candlelight flickering in his one remaining eye. 'Is that all you can say, boy? Just going to kill a few troglodytes are ye? Just a walk in the mine gallery is it? Youth! What the hell would you know of it?'

'Come on, Kolvarg. They're just toads. How bad can it be? You talk as though they were a real threat to the hold.'

The old warrior grabbed Stenor's beard and yanked him close with a brutality that left the young miner speechless. 'Young idiot! Who taught you to fight? Who taught yer grandfather how to fight?'

'You did, sir,' Stenor gasped past the pain of the pull of his facial hair.

'Damn right I did. Damn right. And as old as I am I can still take you down without needing my armour. You don't know troglodytes, boy. I do. You've never fought 'em. I have. And let me tell you there is nothing nastier than a toad lair! I've seen whole ceilings that look solid fall without warning killing a dozen stout dwarves. I've smelt their foul stink and choked on it. I've taken four javelins from them the hard way and I tell you now – if you value your life, don't underestimate the troglodytes! You understand, boy?'

The young dwarf nodded as much as he could with his beard clamped in Kolvarg's iron grip.

'Good. So don't get cocky and pass the word on.' He released the younger dwarf with a shove backwards that sent him toward the exit. Stenor made a beeline for it.

'Stenor,' the old dwarf roared as the miner reached the doorway.

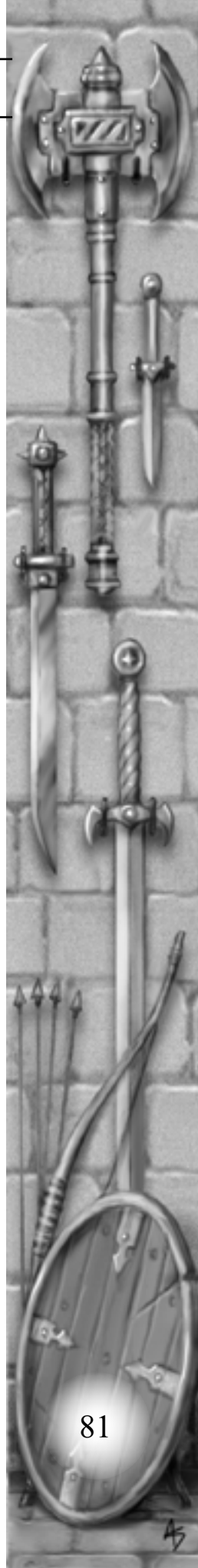
'Yes, Kolvarg?'

'Kill a couple for me would you? In payment for my lost eye.'

Situation and terrain allowing, groups of warriors and adolescents will loop in behind the targets, cutting off any possible retreat before combat has even begun. In addition, no delay will be necessary to allow the adolescents to creep up. They will already be in position, as will the warriors, spellcasters and leaders. The counter attack will start in darkness, with the priests using *darkness* spells and a rain of javelins will begin, concentrating on enemy spellcasters. Should the targets take cover, the missile attack will continue as more troglodytes encircle them. The troglodytes will be perfectly happy to use javelins to destroy a helpless opponent if it means victory without risk. If the victims launch an attack themselves, troglodytes to

their front will resist them as those in back charge in to assault their rear.

Crafters will only fight if the lair is at risk and even then will remain to the rear unless absolutely needed. Conversely, the great leaders of the tribe will wade in behind the warriors, revelling in their chance to do harm to an enemy. Priests will restrict themselves to offensive spellcasting as much as they can as the javelin armed warriors attempt to cast every missile available before entering melee. In short, leaders will use every resource as frugally as possible so as to destroy enemies with minimal risk.



ROLEPLAYING WITH TROGLODYTES

Through reading the *Slayer's Guide to Troglodytes*, you will learn about every aspect of the lives of this very alien race. In past chapters, we have taken a look at the strange caste society of the troglodytes, their religion, the strange hungers and ambitions that motivate their activities, as well as tactics in battle. Now it is time to put all of that information into practice.

No matter how much your players may try to 'humanise' this race, thinking of them as simply primitive cave creatures with foul odours and disgusting eating habits, the truth is far different. As an example, troglodyte adolescents will never provide a party useful information, even under the most heinous torment or powerful spell. They simply do not know anything and are only really intelligent enough to gabble a few simple words in their own strange dialect of draconic. The most they might be able to reveal would be the location of their lair but whilst magic may force such a disclosure, torture never will.

The only troglodytes that have anything even remotely sentient in their make-up will be the higher castes. Roleplaying interaction with them could be most amusing for the Games Master and incredibly frustrating for the players. Even if the players can make themselves understood, there is no motivation for the high caste troglodyte to speak with them. Do you speak to a cow before eating it? Even the troglodytes beneath it are mere things to be used and cast away. A member of another race will not even be that well regarded. Fear will not enter into matters either. While a troglodyte may be motivated to save its own life for selfish reasons, this is not fear as we know it. Their motivation is completely alien and not something even you, as the Games Master, or I as the author of this treatise can really comprehend. We are only human and as such, beneath the notice of troglodytes except in that we may be either a threat, a meal, or both. Whilst we may be able to predict their actions, we will never truly be able to understand them.

TROGLODYTES IN YOUR GAMES

In combat, the main aspect of troglodyte life you should seek to convey is their strangeness. Troglodyte actions will always be synchronised, perfectly timed and co-ordinated as if they were controlled by a single mind which, for all intents and purposes, they are. They will attack in unison, retreat in unison, even choose targets in unison should the leader so desire. *Silence* spells will have no effect upon their communication, which can only be disrupted by somehow dissipating the stink of their musk. The gestalt of their tribal instinct should be played up and players made to realise this is not simply the Game Master 'fudging' results but the way such creatures actually behave.

One way to demonstrate this might be if a player uses a spell such as *gust of wind* to try to reduce the effects of the troglodyte musk. While his or her intent may be to negate the effects of the stench, it could also very well cut a group of attackers off from their leader's tribal instinct control. This one group, as long as the spell is in effect, will fight out of co-ordination with other members of the tribe. Their attacks will become more bestial and the targeting of even the more intelligent warriors will become less controlled. Their natural instincts are still very aggressive, however, so they are unlikely to break off the fight unless clearly losing.

The most common encounters adventurers are likely to have with troglodytes are either with a raiding party or while attempting to scour a troglodyte lair. In either case, they will find their opponents to be implacable foes without an ounce of pity or compassion. While it may be possible to drive a group off or for a party to retreat after doing enough damage that the troglodytes are unwilling to take the risk of pursuing, there will be no question of flight or surrender.

Troglodytes are completely subsurface in nature and will never be found in the daylight world. The sun causes great discomfort and removes many of their innate advantages so troglodyte raids are always performed during the darkest of nights, the balance of time spent below the surface. In regions where conflict may be expected, the tribe may put out pickets and patrols at night, whose goal is to spot the campfires of approaching enemies. These patrols will destroy intruders if they are

close or weak enough, otherwise they will carry an alert back to the tribe. During the day, however, no troglodyte will be found above ground unless in a structure which has been completely sealed against the light.

Troglodytes are not normally found in small groups, the tribe being so central to their way of life. If a smaller group is encountered, it will usually be a patrol for a nearby tribe or, very rarely, the scattered remnants of a tribe trying to escape an attack that destroyed their community.

TROGLODYTE COMMUNITIES

When creating a troglodyte community, you need to answer a number of questions before beginning. How advanced a tribe is it? How large? Do they have a caste of crafters? Are there priests? Do the priests rule the tribe? What is the tribe's primary source of food and can it believably support the size of tribe you want? All of these are important concerns. Smaller tribes are always less advanced. They may only have a leader heading the tribe and will have a very small proportion of warriors to adolescents. Very little tool use will be in evidence. As the tribe becomes more established it will grow larger, provided there are sufficient sources of food. As it grows, the proportion of warriors to adolescents will begin to even out as one leader grows to become a chieftain and, eventually, others will become crafters, leaders and priests. The last sub-caste to appear will be that of priest and by this time, the tribe will have grown very large indeed, probably approaching the tribe's nominal upper limit of between one to two hundred, including females and young.

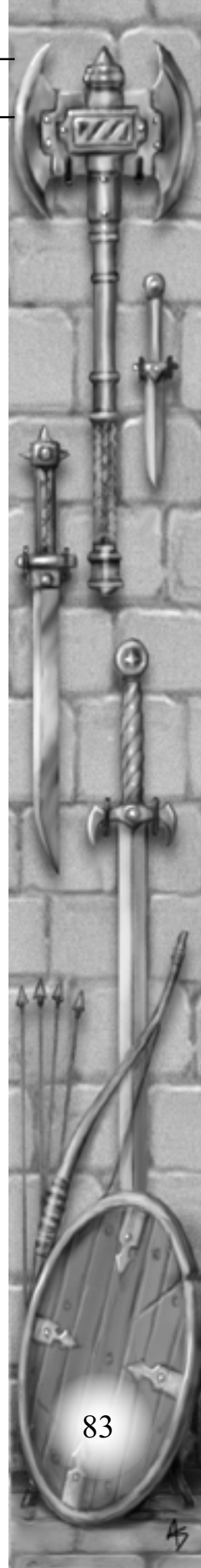
You can balance troglodyte encounters by varying the advancement level of the tribe. A primitive tribe without javelins and consisting of mostly unarmed adolescents should be something that a less experienced party can handle. Scouring their lair would be more difficult but still possible. As soon as more warriors, leaders and javelins make their appearance, the danger increases and once clerics become prominent, ting in the dark against a highly organised and fearless foe.

As a last word, remember that if a group meets and defeats a small patrol of fairly advanced troglodytes, there is a tribe in the area from which the patrol originated. Far from fleeing from such a minor setback, future patrols will be forewarned and forearmed, and may even operate in pairs or with outriders to report

back if the patrol falls under attack. Beating a few patrols is not likely to solve the troglodyte problem in the area, although it may result in their chieftain setting a trap for the irritating food animals attacking his resources.

TROGLODYTE NAMES

Even lower caste troglodytes have names, which they are usually awarded sometime during their adolescence. Leaders, priests and other high caste troglodytes may change names throughout their lives to commemorate events important to them – usually a victory over an enemy or a particular feat of either bravery or cruelty. The troglodyte language is an extremely corrupt dialect of draconic, which cannot really be properly spoken by most other humanoids. The structure of a troglodyte's mouth is so different from that of a human, elf or dwarf that there is simply no way for such races to simulate some of the sounds that troglodytes can create. The use of a *tongues* spell will translate their names as the activity they are named after. A leader might, for example, be called 'He who skinned the big food alive before eating.'



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Troglodytes are typically best used against parties of around 2nd–6th level, with the number and advancement of the troglodyte tribe being the balancing factor. They are very aggressive fighters and will attack without provocation every time. Larger, more advanced tribes are particularly dangerous, especially if the party uses their swords instead of their brains. What follows is a series of hooks and ideas for scenarios that a Games Master may use in his gaming sessions to demonstrate the unique characteristics of this race and thus lend his adventures a far greater depth than if troglodytes were simply another monster for players to hack apart.

CLUTCH!

Late at night, the group encounters a ‘clutch’ or patrol of troglodytes. As usual, the Game Master can balance the troglodytes by adjusting the level of advancement of their tribe. They may have giant lizards and could even be led by a cleric, which would make them very dangerous. The hook for this encounter is not the inevitable combat itself but the reaction of those who later hear about the party’s actions. If the locals are at all knowledgeable about troglodytes, they will not simply thank the group for bringing down a marauding pest but will instead begin panicking as though an invasion were imminent! The puzzled adventurer’s may eventually discover that, unlike so many other monsters, troglodyte patrols are merely a symptom, not the disease.

LOST SHEPHERD, LOST SHEEP

In a small highland village, sheep have been disappearing with alarming regularity. As this began to grow to near epidemic proportions, the village began increasing the number of shepherds to keep a better watch for whatever has been raiding their flocks. Now, not only is a flock been found vastly reduced but a shepherd is

also missing. Tracks have been found leading up into the rocks before they disappear.

A troglodyte tribe has moved into the area and has been raiding the flocks as a perfect food supply that is unprotected and for the taking. The shepherd was looked upon as a boon from the Lizard Toad and is to be sacrificed in a ceremony of ‘The Hatching’ very soon. A variant of this might be to find the youngster wandering alone and in agonising pain through the mountains as the group searches for him. He falls, incoherent, as the group finds him and screams in agony just once before dying. A small, blood-soaked lizardlike creature (a hatchling troglodyte) follows the scream out into the open air as it emerges, still eating, from his mouth.

FULL POTENTIAL

When a group of adolescent troglodytes became separated from their destroyed tribe, they wandered into a verdant and uninhabited valley. Having plenty to eat and no real competition, no dominant rose to the top and now all six of them are of full chieftain size and intellect. The question is, are these troglodytes, who grew without the brutality of the usual troglodyte tribal struggle, as evil as those in the tribes. Is their evil *really* inbred? Even if it is not, who really wants six seven foot tall carnivorous and bad smelling lizards roaming around – and what happens if some decide they want to acquire females with which to breed?

A DANGEROUS THESIS

Karthos Mevellen – Pursuivant of Mors Derkagos – is a prominent sage. Unlike many of his colleagues, he has decided to put the effort in to actually study the troglodyte race. His study is based on what some feel are totally mad theories of an ancient Empire of draconic speaking races. He feels the study of one such race may give insight into the others and their interrelationships. To get as uncontaminated a sample as possible, he has chosen the most isolationist of the races he has evidence of participation in this ‘Empire’ - the troglodytes. Mevellen has already acquired a corpse to dissect and located a tribe to study. He now wishes to employ the adventurers to gather information for him. The various questions that Karthos wants answers to in his first expedition are listed below. Once these are answered he may well demand further answers to his ongoing studies.

† Troglodyte Females and Young - Why have none ever been reported? What do they look like? Can a sample be acquired for study and dissection?

† Warrior Society - What do troglodytes do when they are not killing others? What past-times and games do they pursue? What tales do they tell?

† Artifacts - Why are there only a very few troglodytes who wear armour? Why does a society with steelworking skill still make extensive use of stone tools?

† Religion - Do the troglodytes have more than a single deity? Are all their ceremonies blood rites? Are there any peaceful troglodytes that may be approached for discourse?

taking on troglodytes in their own lair is not a task for the faint of heart (or stomach).

ONSLAUGHT

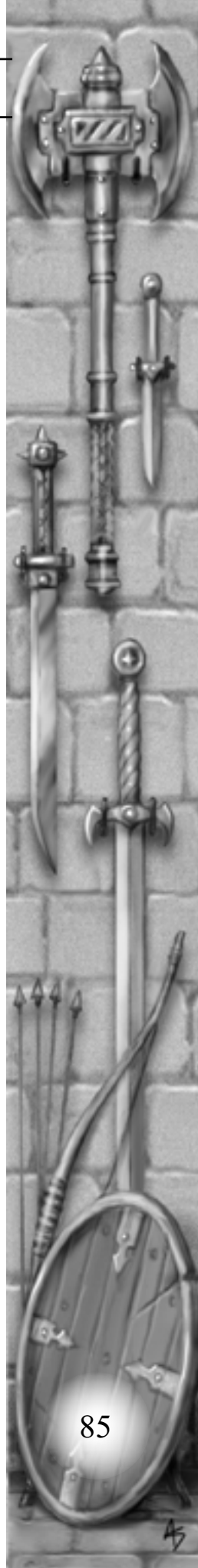
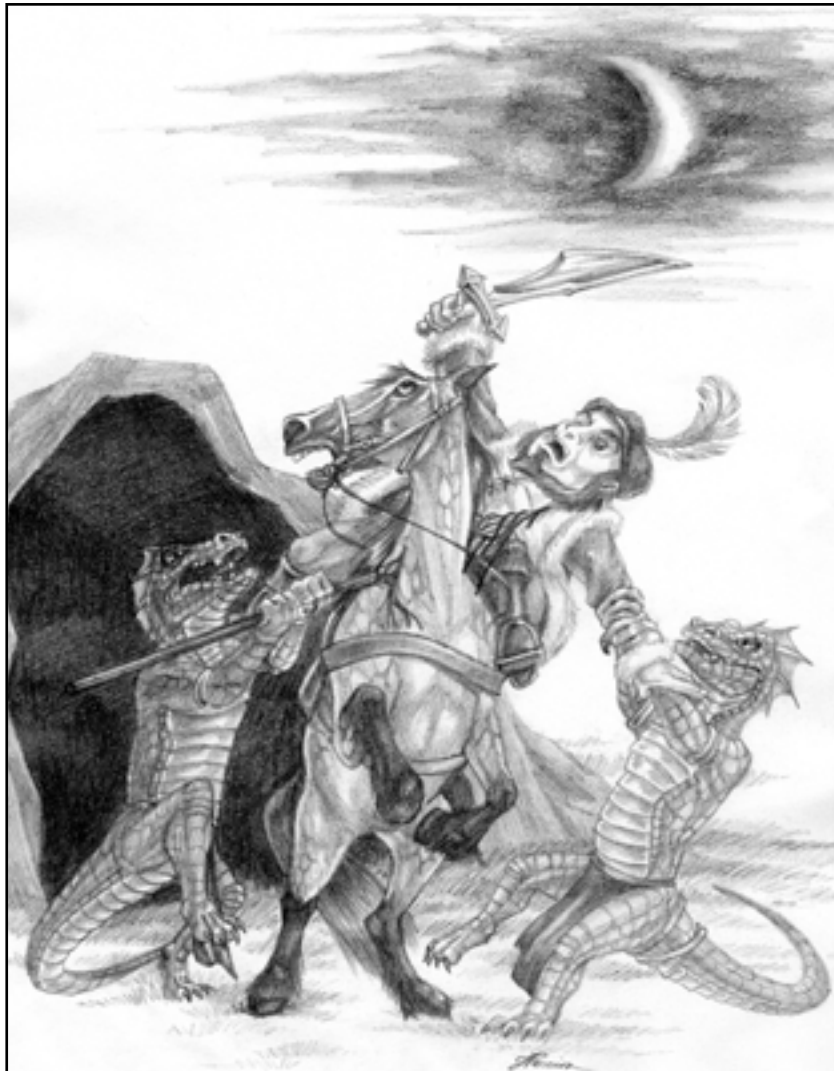
A full-blown troglodyte raid blossoms without warning in the dark of the night as the party is bedding down in a quiet tavern. While innocents are slain or driven into prepared holding areas for eating, torture and sacrifice later, the adventurers must get themselves organised and armed whilst formulating a plan of battle. Their goal could be anything from flight, exciting for a lower level party, to turning the tables on the attackers. Regardless of the levels of the group, this should be a fully developed and supported troglodyte assault by a highly advanced tribe. If the group decides to fight against impossible odds and subsequently loses – well we always said troglodytes were nasty, didn't we?

SCOUT

Similar to some of the activities Karthos may ask of a party, this mission is simply to scout out a lair in preparation for an assault. Any group could hire the party to do this – from lowly shepherds to rich dwarven miners but the goal is much the same. Discover weaknesses, disarm traps and pave the way for the main assault. If the party is of sufficient level, they may well be asked to lead the assault themselves.

RID THE WORLD OF LIZARD SCUM!

Someone feels the party is strong enough to eliminate the local troglodyte tribe. Again, the employer and motivation can be almost anything from ethical calls of protection to a stack of gold coins. The goal will be to penetrate the troglodyte lair and slay them all. The best time to do this is likely during the day, when following a retreat from the lair places the troglodytes at a distinctive disadvantage. Of course, as has been mentioned before,



CRAFTERS

Amongst the more mysterious denizens of troglodyte lairs are the crafters, creatures who seem to violate so much of the nature of the rest of their tribe. Demonstrating a consummate ability to mine new areas, rig lethal traps, harness the power of giant lizards and forge great weapons, it is often the crafters who are the real strength behind any troglodyte tribe, carefully harnessed by their chieftains. A tribe with a great many crafters will be extremely well armed and terrible to face in open battle.

Hit Die: d8.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a crafter, a troglodyte must fulfil all the following criteria.

Intelligence: 10 or higher

Wisdom: 12 or higher

CLASS SKILLS

The crafter's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), and Ride (Dex). See *core rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the crafter prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: The crafter is proficient in all simple and martial weapons, and all

armour. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble.

Lizard Master: The crafter is gifted with a sixth sense that allows him to control giant lizards as if they were extensions of its own body. A giant lizard that has had at least two months training from the crafter receives a circumstance bonus to its attack rolls equal to the crafter's class level whenever both are present in the same combat.

Mine Works: At 2nd level, the crafter receives a +4 competence bonus to all Profession (miner) checks, as it begins to learn the intricacies of tunnel mining and expanding the troglodytes' lair.

The Forge: The crafter is now a rarity amongst troglodyte kind, having discovered how to forge metal. From 3rd level onwards, the crafter receives a +4 competence bonus to all Craft (armoursmithing) and (weaponsmithing) checks.

Arcane Forging: Despite its lack of knowledge in matters arcane, the crafter gains direct insight from the Lizard Toad at 4th level and receives the knowledge required to forge weapons and armour of awesome power. From this point, the crafter may forge magic weapons and armour with an enchantment bonus equal to half its character level, rounded down. No item may have an enchantment bonus greater than +5.

Path of the Lizard Toad: At 5th level, the crafter moves closer to the designs of the Lizard Toad. It gains one divine spellcasting level as a cleric.

The Crafter

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Lizard Master
2 st	+1	+3	+0	+3	Mine Works
3 rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	The Forge
4 th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Arcane Forging
5 th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Path of the Lizard Toad

THE SHRINE OF ST. DARIAS

The History of St. Darias

St. Darias is named after the saint of the same name who roamed this region centuries ago, bringing the light of his church to the heathen. He is said to have been a large, jolly friar who could outdrink, outboast and outfight most men and yet still had the gentlest and kindest of hearts.

After the death and subsequent canonisation of the great round fellow, a small shrine was established on the site of the tiny church he had built in the mountains. The beauty of the alpine meadows, combined with the slow pace of life and the generosity of the locals quickly made it a popular retreat for those clerics wishing to rest from their labours. Over the decades, it grew to a respectable abbey where the gentle fathers grew grapes and vegetables and maintained a library for religious study.

Just a few years ago, the death of the abbot filled one of the last remaining sepulchre rooms in the stone cellars below the shrine. Shortly thereafter, work started on an expansion for additional tombs and a larger cool storage area for wine and dry goods. After only a very few days of labour, the workers broke through into a large natural cavern complex. Overjoyed at the possible savings in time the new abbot quickly renovated a couple of the caverns for storage, installed a small secondary shrine near an underground pool in a beautiful grotto and fitted a heavy iron gate to block off the extensive and unexplored lower caverns. The intent was to make further use of those later as the abbey grew.

What the abbot could not know was that these same caverns would bring death to the Shrine of St. Darias.

Only two months later, a troglodyte tribe that had been forced from its territory in the underdeep happened upon the new gate. Waiting for the noises of movement on the other side to die down into the depths of night, the troglodytes used their giant lizards to pull the gate down and then fell upon the unsuspecting friars. In a single hour of blood drenched fury, the starving troglodytes slew virtually all the inhabitants, from the newest novice to the abbot himself. Only a handful

of friars escaped into the countryside, running as the troglodytes feasted.

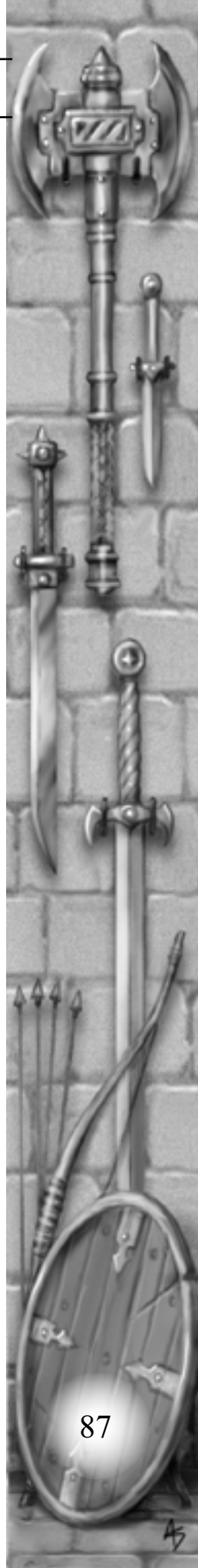
THE TROGLODYTE TRIBE

The tribe inhabiting the Shrine of St. Darias is strong and fairly advanced despite their recent move. While many of the tribe were lost in the conflicts of the underdeep before the migration, the tribal chieftain remained firmly in command at all times and was careful about marshalling its resources.

There are a goodly number of troglodytes in the tribe with representatives of all the various castes, from new hatchlings to the chieftain itself. The prime fighting strength of the tribe consists of over forty adolescents and nearly as many warriors. There are a number of leaders, a small group of giant lizards, a full contingent of crafters and a trio of priests all in the service of their chieftain.

The bulk of the troglodytes live in the old cellars and catacombs beneath the shrine. The dark, subterranean ambience mingling with filth, garbage, the remains of former meals and the bones from the ossuary serve to make the tribe feel at home. The giant lizards are kept in the old stables above ground and are only tended at night, as the cellars beneath are simply not large enough to provide them with sufficient room. Also, the chapel to the Lizard Toad is, oddly, above ground as the chieftain believed the old temple to St. Darias would serve well as a shrine to the Lizard Toad. The only real modifications necessary were the bricking up of windows, replacing the statue of the saint and digging sacrifice pits. During the day, the shrine is as quiet as a tomb – the troglodytes perfectly willing to allow any attackers to enter the lair, to be easily captured for sacrifice or food. At night, however, the shrine bustles with activity from raiding parties, clutch patrols and scouts.

The present tribal leader is a priest-chieftain as is common with many troglodyte tribes. Its name is a series of hisses and clicks that a humanoid would be hard pressed to replicate but the locals call it the 'Night Lizard King.' In the underdeep, the Night Lizard King ruled a much larger tribe and, with the move to the shrine now completed, it wishes to expand its domination over the region surrounding the shine. The Night Lizard King's only real obstacle is its own senior



THE SHRINE OF ST. DARIAS

The total fighting strength of the tribe is listed below, though it must be remembered the young will take no part in any battle. The females will only fight to defend their nests, if attacked, or if an intruder is alone and appears to be an easy candidate for a nice fresh meal.

Night Lizard King
3 Priests (1st - 4th level clerics)
4 Crafters (1st - 3rd level crafters)
11 Leaders (2nd - 4th level fighters and warriors)
44 Warriors
49 Adolescents
26 Females
Several dozen hatchlings
11 Giant lizards

priest who would like nothing more than to rule the tribe itself. It is only a matter of time before he makes an attempt to either assassinate the current chieftain or challenge him openly.

The other high caste troglodytes are content to serve the tribe for the time being. Since moving to this land of plenty, they are reasonably well fed and are even growing, slightly, toward their potential, an extravagance the Night Lizard King allows only as it wishes its prime rival to have greater problems with those below than worry about taking control of the tribe.

The area around the shrine is rife with small highland villages raising sheep and grapes. The alpine valleys provide herds of deer, mountain goats and several other herbivorous prey animals, all of which combine to make the region perfect for a tribe of carnivores. So far, the Night Lizard King has kept its raids almost exclusively to sheep and the occasional shepherd, realising that having those who raise the flocks nearby and not devoured provides a longer-lasting source of food. This can only continue for so long, however, as eventually the sheep and their cousins will all have disappeared down the gullets of the troglodytes. Once this happens, villagers will quickly follow. For now, the loss of the priests of St. Darias and the increasing raids on their flocks terrify the locals but are not yet enough to drive them from their homes.

TODAY

From a distance, the Shrine of St. Darias does not appear to have changed much since the days of rule by

the church. The gardens and vineyards are overgrown and there is no smoke wafting from the chimneys but from across the valley it does not look much different. It is only when closer that one notices the unkempt condition of the once neatly trimmed stone paths, the filth and excrement in the corners mixed with bones and rags of cloth and the grimly bricked up windows of the nave. Then the loss of the place really hits home. Once within the walls, the lingering stench of troglodyte fills the courtyard, engulfing the other foetid stinks. By day there is little else to see, although those in the courtyard uninvited may be investigated as a potential meal by the giant lizards living in the stables.

By night, St. Darias comes alive once more. The constant noise of movement, hissing cries and the sound of scales upon stone fill the lonely valley. What is most strange to civilised beings is the complete lack of light one normally associates with such movement. Raiding parties and guards are all comfortably wrapped in complete darkness and any source of light in the valley is a welcome sign. To the troglodyte tribe it announces the arrival of additional food supplies. On dark nights, a torch, or even candle, will be seen a long, long way off by the hypersensitive eyes of the troglodytes. Ambushes will immediately be prepared for such intrusions.

Above Ground

The shrine is built on a grassy plateau about halfway up the sloping side of an alpine valley. Just north and east of it, the swift Narra Stream runs through a deep cut at the very edge of the plateau before launching itself once more down the mountainside to flow into the river running along the valley floor. A thin road winds up the mountainside to the front gates and then narrows into a path that continues up the slope to where the friars kept their vegetable garden.

On the plateau is the shrine proper and a number of outbuildings as well as the now unkempt grapevines on their tall wooden trellises. Just east of the trellises is what was once a lovely flower garden, running along the steep cut of the Narra. Just south of that is a small stone amphitheatre where the friars could give sermons or have debates when the weather was too pleasant to be cooped up within the stuffy abbey residence.

Further east, and running along the amphitheatre's rim, is a seven-foot tall stone aqueduct which originates in a granite cistern built into the bank of the Narra and



runs behind the amphitheatre, across the path to the vineyards and terminates against the wall of the shrine's bathhouse.

West of the vineyards, the valley walls rise quite steeply, forming a long slope covered with wildflowers. To the south of the amphitheatre, the winery and brewery sit unattended.

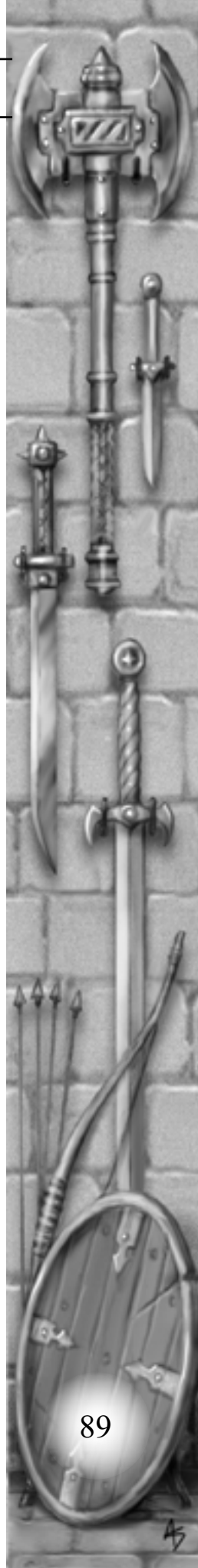
Centered on the plateau, taking up much of the usable level surface is the shrine itself. A simple walled compound of native stone, the shrine is an imposing structure that dominates the valley. The compound has several structures built against and into its walls.

The Shrine of St. Darias

Entering through the imposing wooden doors of the gate, the inner square is dominated by three structures. Dead centre is a tall fountain, the water still flowing down its carved stone sides despite months of neglect. Along the north wall, the tall temple presents its huge bronze doors, the twenty-foot high windows that once flanked them now bricked up with rubble and debris.

To the right lie the three-storey friar's residence, its tall peaked roof and high windows smudged with soot. Between these buildings, smaller structures occupy the fringes of the compound. All about the square, detritus, bones and garbage have been tossed about, winding up at the foot of walls and clearly marking out the main traffic areas with a lack of rubbish.

The residence was once a three-storey building with a peaked roof, occupying the south-east corner of the complex. The first floor contains what was once a kitchen, dining hall and debate theatre, as well as a small scriptory. The second floor contained the offices of the abbot and his assistants as well as cells for the senior friars whilst the third floor is completely filled with the small cells of the junior friars. Once, the attic was used for storage although a pair of troglodyte females now maintain a small hatchery in a very dark corner. The rest of the building is empty during the day although the first floor is sometimes used as a marshalling area at night. The main entrance to the tunnels for low caste troglodytes is down the stairs in the kitchens to what used to be storerooms.



THE SHRINE OF ST. DARIAS

A bathhouse and lavatory occupy the rest of the east wall and running water is brought in via the aqueduct and dumped into a limestone well. As well as providing water for the baths, it also carries away waste from the toilets and runs into a small trough at the feet of the toilet area so that users may wash the sponges provided for clean up. A small covered walkway allows dry transit from the residence to the bathhouse.

The temple dominates the north wall. With its once high windows completely bricked up, the home of St. Darias has become a grim and dark place. A great statue of the Lizard Toad has now taken the place of the representation of the jolly friar and a pair of sacrificial pits have been dug on either side of the now blood-soaked altar. The high caste troglodytes use the stairs from this area as their main entry and exit from the tunnels below. Even during daylight, there will usually be a junior priest and some adolescents or warriors here as the building has been completely sealed against sunlight.

Also along the north wall are the temple offices, really just an extension of the temple and, in the north-west corner, the library. The library is not much used by the troglodytes. It is two storeys and has high wide windows that have proved difficult to brick up. Many of these windows are on the north wall and could be a valid means of entrance. Troglodytes seldom come here and the books have been mouldering since the abbey fell.

The west wall has a long wooden structure with an open front. Once used as a work area, blacksmith's forge, stable and storage, this large open building now houses the tribe's giant lizards. During the day, they will either be here resting or sunning themselves in the

The filth and stench of these tunnels is horrid. Bones of humans and animals are just shoved out of the way against the walls and there is plenty of evidence of reptilian defecation. Ventilation was never good and over a hundred troglodytes, with scent glands running full bore, have inhabited the tunnels for months. It is unlikely the smell will ever go away, short of powerful magic use.

All creatures, except troglodytes, within these tunnels must pass a Fortitude save (DC 13) or take 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage as they are overcome with nausea. This will last for the duration of their time within the tunnels.

courtyard and they are *not* friendly. Next to the stables in the south-west corner is a seventy-foot tall bell tower. Once used to call the friars to prayer, it now lies empty and silent during the day and is a troglodyte lookout post after dark.

Across the road from the shrine to the south lie a pair of structures. The first, once a storage shed, is little more than a fire-gutted shell. The other is an abandoned guest hostel intended as a residence for pilgrims to the shrine. It contains a pressure-sensitive secret door that leads to a tunnel that connects with the fountain pump room. A few friars managed to escape using this tunnel.

The Tunnels

The tunnels beneath the shrine were originally built as two separate complexes, the funerary area beneath the nave and the storage rooms beneath the residence. Over long years, expansion has caused them to grow together. With the most recent expansion, a new natural cavern complex makes up a third section. Now they all are home to the troglodyte tribe.

The funerary areas include the sepulchre, the shine, the ossuaries and the preparation and meditation areas. These have now become the primary residences of the high caste troglodytes whilst the northernmost shrine is home to the Night Lizard King. The sepulchres have been given to the leaders, the large ossuary to the other priests, and the crafters live and work in the corridor to the south that connects to the storage complex.

The storage complex is the home of the bulk of the troglodyte tribe. Large numbers of warriors, adolescents and the most junior of leaders all make their foetid homes in the large finished storage areas and dry-goods store. During the day, nearly a hundred troglodytes can be found in these rooms. The fountain pump room is largely ignored and the troglodytes never discovered the secret passage leading out to the guest hostel.

In the north-east, the new area of the tunnels is little used by the troglodytes, the exception being the females. Whilst a few females lair in the wine cellar and the shrine, most live in the caverns beyond the subterranean pool in the main chamber in caves the friars never discovered. They are small, many little more than crawl-spaces, but are perfect for the females and their egg clutches. Many young troglodytes, having been driven from their nests, make their first meals out

of the preserved food in the dry goods area. Food an adult troglodyte would not touch is welcomed by a much less picky hatchling. Finally, the new sepulchre is commonly used as a larder by the troglodytes to store live food until it is time to eat or sacrifice it. Any prisoners will be kept here but few stay long.

DEFENCES

During night, troglodyte attacks will be made by way of ambushing anyone spotted approaching. As many troglodytes will be away on patrols and raids, attacking on a bright, moonlit night may actually be the best plan. There will be the fewest number of troglodytes on hand and no troglodyte cleric is going to be able to extinguish the moon, whatever his powers. In this case, the troglodytes will fight with javelins and spells above ground making use of *darkness* and *pitch sight* spells, as well as their chameleonic ability to set up ambush after ambush in an attempt to whittle the invaders down or drive them off. If things start to go badly, they will retreat back underground where their darkvision grants a tremendous advantage and use their knowledge of the tunnels to attack the invaders front and rear simultaneously.

If attacked during the day, the troglodyte leaders will rely upon their fodder troops to alert them. An attack on the nave will meet with the junior priests and the few warriors that it has present. An attack upon the stairs from the residence into the dry goods section will be met with a fighting retreat. Adolescents will take the brunt of the fighting as the rest of the troglodytes fall back into the central corridor and then back toward the natural caverns. If pursued, troglodytes from the eastern storage room will attack from the rear, quickly backed up by the priests, leaders and possibly even the crafters from the funerary area. If the invaders elect not to pursue, they will have to either stop at the first intersection (the one running to the eastern storeroom) or turn and attack down that intersection, again exposing their rear. Either way they had best be equipped for a two front battle in pitch darkness.

USING THE SHRINE OF ST. DARIAS

This lair is best placed in a mountain valley or pass within your existing campaign. It can be used either as a simple extended encounter or as the basis of several linked scenarios. A quick consultation of the Scenario

The Night Lizard King

Medium Humanoid (Reptilian)

7th level Cleric, 3rd Level Fighter

Hit Dice: 9d8+3d10+48 (105 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 20 ft. (30 ft. base)

AC: 25 (+1 Dex, +6 natural armour, +8 +3 *breastplate*), touch 11, flat-footed 24

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+13

Attack: Greatsword +14 melee (2d6+6/19-20), or claw +13 melee (1d4+4), or javelin +11 ranged (1d6+4)

Full Attack: Greatsword +14/+9 melee (2d6+6/19-20) and bite +11 melee (1d4+2), or 2 claws +13 melee (1d4+4) and bite +11 melee (1d4+2), or javelin +11/+6 ranged (1d6+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. /5 ft.

Special Attacks: Rebuke undead 4/day, spells, stench

Special Qualities: Stench, darkvision 90 ft.

Saves: Fort +15, Ref +4, Will +7

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +3, Concentration +9, Heal +5, Hide +4*, Listen +5, Jump +1, Spellcraft +4

Feats: Cleave, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Focus (javelin)

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/3+1/2+1/1+1, save DC

11 + spell level): 0th: 2 x *detect magic*, 3 x *inflict minor wounds, resistance*; 1st: *bane, cause fear, detect good, doom, extinguish, protection from good*; 2^d: *darkness, desecrate, inflict moderate wounds, pitch sight*; 3rd: *animate dead, magic circle against good, summon monster III*; 4th: *lesser planar ally, unholy blight*

Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

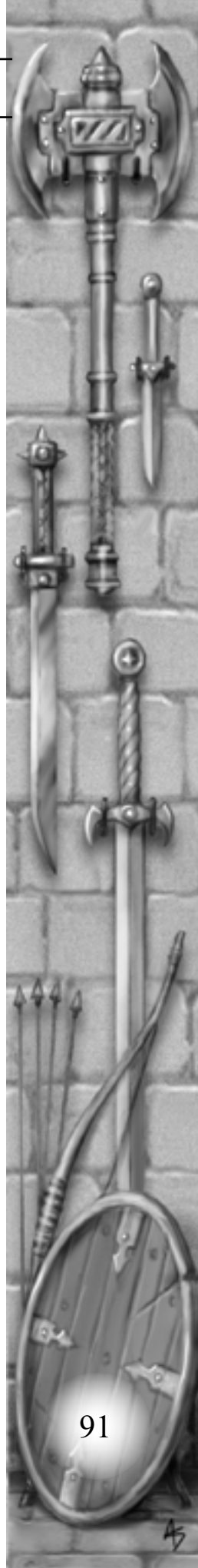
Challenge Rating: 11

Treasure: +3 *breastplate*, greatsword

Alignment: Chaotic evil

* In rocky or subterranean settings this bonus becomes +8

Hooks and Ideas chapter will provide many possible adventures you can embark the players upon. In this way, a Games Master can take relatively low-level characters and set them against troglodyte ambushes and raids, perhaps upon the nearby alpine villages. Gradually, as the players gain levels and power, they can attempt an attack on the lair itself, though over a hundred troglodytes fighting on their own turf is no



THE SHRINE OF ST. DARIAS

easy proposition, even for a mid-level party. However, several loop-holes have been built into the troglodytes' defences, giving most parties a more even chance, particularly if they confine their operations to the upper levels.

Scouring this lair completely would be a fierce challenge even for mid-level parties if the troglodytes are played properly. Working as a unified force, they will cut the party off from the surface, put out the lights and then pick them off one by one.

Durin crouched behind the jagged outcropping and hunched his back to the wind. He reapplied the strongly spiced salve to his upper lip to combat the heady miasma of musk permeating the area. It had taken over a fortnight of tracking and scouring the rugged passes farthest from the trade road to find what he and his companions had been searching for. Bartolo had stumbled on the entrance to the caves two days previous and only blind luck had kept the bard from setting off the trip line cleverly hidden just outside the opening. Durin leaned forward and peered down at the path from his perch. Unless there was another entrance, the beasts would have to exit here to forage for food. Should the foraging band be small enough for he and his companions to take, they would shadow the creatures and slay or capture them far enough away from the entrance that their screams would not call reinforcements.

The location of the cave was either deviously designed or horribly lucky. The general lay of the land and prevailing winds ran north to south, parallel to the trade road. A crosscut in the steep ravines formed a diagonal that ran for roughly half a league east to west. On the south face of this ravine was the cave entrance. The northerly winds that screamed through the canyons and passes kept the stench of the lair downwind of the trade road. Durin had not investigated the entrance personally, but Bartolo swore to the gods the stone was tooled smooth.

The soft call of a dove drew Durin's attention to the jumble of rocks opposite and above his position. Thurisaz must have seen something. Holding his sword to the side so it did not clatter against his armour, he shifted his position to get a better look at the cave entrance.

He stared at the entrance and the surrounding area for several moments before finally catching a glimpse of movement in the near total darkness. A thin shadow scampered amongst the other shadows on the rough pathway below him. How Thurisaz spotted such things sometimes amazed him, though they had travelled together for years. A brief lull in the wind let the smell of the creatures assault his senses full force. He ground his teeth against the wave of nausea that threatened to reacquaint him with his dinner and hissed a quiet sigh of relief when his stomach settled. Quiet retching to his left told him that Bartolo had not been so lucky. No matter. He moved to follow the troglodyte patrol with the careful silence of a born woodsman.

* * *

Thurisaz cursed floridly in her native tongue as she parried another blow on her cloak-wrapped arm. She had not liked the idea of trying to capture one of the troglodytes alive, but Durin and Bartolo had insisted. They would receive payment in either event and she saw no reason to risk life and limb to take one of the foul things alive and then try to transport it back to the monastery. If they had just followed the patrol then killed them, they would not be facing the predicament they were in now.

Bartolo had refused to use the salve stating it made his lip sting. Had she not been busy fighting for her life, she would have laughed. The bard's face was a ruin of claw marks. If he was conscious, she was sure it would sting more than the salve ever did.

She had killed three to get to Durin's position next to the bleeding bard. She stood back to back with her sword-brother now, fending off the remaining six beasts. The stinking things seemed to move of one mind, intent on separating she and Durin. She felt her sword-brother stagger against her nearing the end of his strength. Something in her mind snapped and a red haze settled over her vision.

* * *

The acolyte who answered the loud pounding at the study door fainted. To his deathbed he would swear the blood-soaked god and goddess of battle had visited his master that cold morning and brought with them the stinking demons of the deepest hells.

TROGLODYTE REFERENCE LIST

Troglodyte Chieftain

Troglodyte Ftr6: CR 7; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+8 plus 6d10+27; hp 77; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +7; Grp +12; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4/3, longspear) or +10 melee (1d4+3, claw) or +8 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+4/3, longspear) and +8 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +10 melee (1d4+3, 2 claws) and +8 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +8/+3 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear); SA stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; SV Fort +14, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Hide +7*, Jump +7, Listen +6, Spot +2; Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (javelin), Weapon Focus (longspear).

Troglodyte Leader

Troglodyte War4: CR 4; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+6 plus 4d8+15; hp 48; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +9; Atk +8 melee (1d8+3/x3, longspear) or +7 melee (1d4+2, claw) or +6 ranged (1d6+2, javelin); Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+3/x3, longspear) and +5 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +7 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws) and +5 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +6 ranged (1d6+2, javelin); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear); SA stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; SV Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Hide +7*, Jump +6, Listen +4; Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (javelin), Weapon Focus (longspear).

Troglodyte Crafter

Troglodyte Crafter3: CR 4; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+4 plus 3d8+6; hp 32; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/19-20, longsword) or +4 melee (1d4+1, claw) or +4 ranged (1d6+1, javelin); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/19-20, longsword) and +2 melee (1d4, bite) or +4 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d4, bite) or +4 ranged (1d6+1, javelin); SA stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft., lizard master, mineworks, the forge; SV Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Craft (armoursmith) +8, Hide +3*, Listen +5, Profession (miner) +9; Multiattack, Weapon Focus (javelin), Weapon Focus (longsword).

Troglodyte Priest

Troglodyte Clr4: CR 5; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+4 plus 4d8+11; hp 42; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1, light mace) or +5 melee (1d4+1, claw) or +5 ranged (1d6+1, javelin); Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+1, light mace) and +3 melee (1d4, bite) or +5 melee (1d4+1, claw) and +3 melee (1d4, bite) or +5 ranged (1d6+1, javelin); SA rebuke undead 3/day, spells, stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +7, Hide +7*, Listen +4, Spellcraft +5; Combat Casting, Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (javelin).

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/2+1, save DC 11 + spell level): Oth-detect magic, detect poison, inflict minor wounds (2), resistance; 1st-bane, curse water, inflict light wounds, protection from law*, random action; 2nd-darkness, pitch sight, shatter*.

Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Troglodyte Warrior

CR 1; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk +1 melee (1d8/x3, longspear) or +1 melee (1d4, claw) or +1 ranged (1d6, javelin); Full Atk +1 melee (1d8/x3, longspear) and -1 melee (1d4, bite) or +1 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and -1 melee (1d4, bite) or +1 ranged (1d6, javelin); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear); SA stench, SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref -1, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +5*, Listen +3; Multiattack, Weapon Focus (javelin).

Troglodyte Adolescent

CR 1/2; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +0; Grp +2; Atk +0 melee (1d4, claw); Full Atk +0 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and -2 melee (1d4, bite); SA stench, SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +5*, Listen +2; Multiattack.

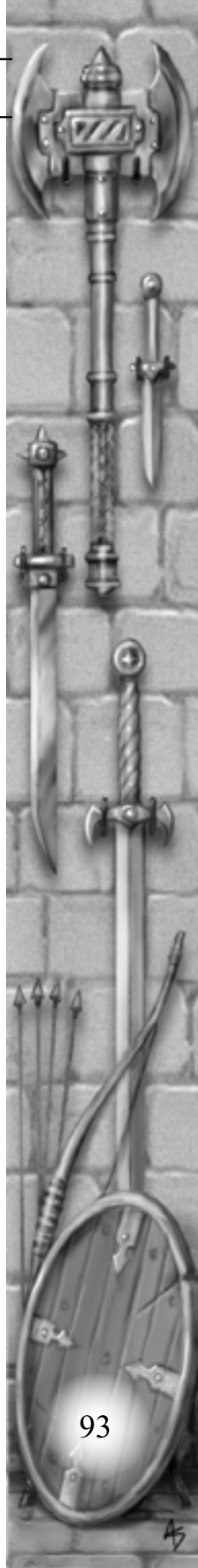
Troglodyte Female

CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +0; Grp +0; Atk +0 melee (1d4, claw); Full Atk +0 melee (1d4, claw) and -2 melee (1d4, bite); SA stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -2; Str 10, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +7; Multiattack.

Troglodyte Hatchling

CR 1/4; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 1/2d8; hp 2; Init -2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp



-6; Atk -1 melee (1d4-2, bite); Full Atk -1 melee (1d4-2, bite); SA stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -2; Str 6, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +7*; Multiattack.

Giant Lizard

CR 4; Large animal; HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 8, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +17; Atk +12 melee (1d8+12, bite); Full Atk +12 melee (1d8+12, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA stench; SQ darkvision 90 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Hide +1, Listen +7, Spot +6; Alertness, Great

Fortitude, Stealthy.

TROGLODYTE SPELLS

There are many wild reports from adventurers of troglodyte clerics demonstrating divine powers that defy rational explanation. Such spells are few in nature but are relatively common amongst the devoted followers of the Lizard Toad and greatly enhance the attacks of



troglodytes when employed against the hated surface-dwelling races. Followers of the Lizard Toad use the domains of Evil and Chaos, though there are known to be other, more minor, deities that a small number of troglodyte tribes follow. The priests of such tribes may

choose two domains from; Chaos, Death, Destruction and Evil.

The two spells listed below may only be used by troglodyte clerics who worship the Lizard Toad. Spellcasters of other races and faiths may not use them under any circumstances.

Extinguish

Transmutation [Evil]

Level: Clr 1

Components: V, S

Casting time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. +5 ft./2 levels)

Area: Cone-shaped burst

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

When cast, this potent spell allows the troglodyte priest to invoke the power of the Lizard Toad to bring blessed darkness upon a battle. Use of this spell will extinguish every natural source of fire within its area of effect automatically. *Extinguish* has no effect whatsoever on magical sources of illumination, which must be countered through the use of a *darkness* spell.

Pitch Sight

Transmutation [Evil]

Level: Clr 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. +5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature per level

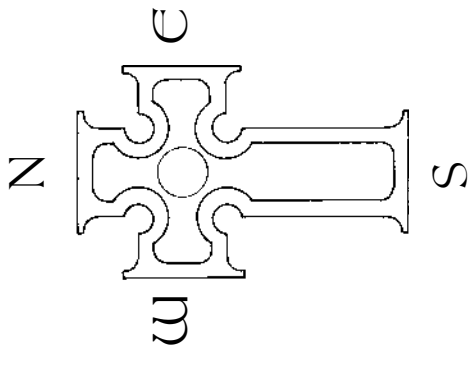
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell allows the troglodyte priest and its allies to see normally through magical *darkness* which would normally block even darkvision. *Pitch sight* is commonly used by priests of the Lizard Toad in conjunction with *darkness* spells, blinding enemies completely whilst enchanted troglodytes are able to see and attack normally.

Material Component: A small piece of phosphorescent lichen.

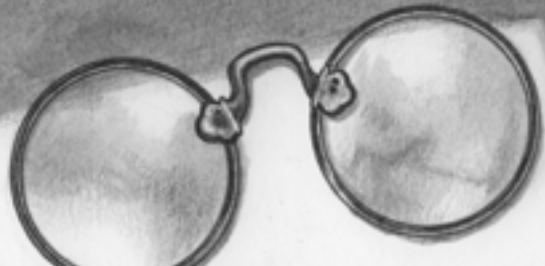
The Shrine of St Oarias



Malick Dervishire
Duke of Swindon



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The Slayer's Guide To Bugbears

Pound for pound, muscle for muscle, bugbears are stronger, sneakier and far more unpredictable than their other goblinoid cousins. They are brutal guerrillas who strike fast and fade away, bursting onto the scene to wreak terrible havoc before vanishing. If they could ever unite under a single banner, or maintain the military discipline of the hobgoblins, they would shake the heavens with their rage. Fortunately for the rest of the world, bugbears are as fractious as they are violent, driven by chaotic urges and consuming greed that prevent them from developing the social structure of more advanced races.

Bugbears are cunning adversaries, creatures that rarely fight to the death, preferring to flee from a lost battle in order to nurse their vengeance for another day. Adventurers who believe they can simply wade into a horde of bugbears and slay them in glorious combat are in for a rude shock and are certain to fall prey to the myriad traps and ambushes the bugbears use in their own style of warfare. Even when it appears the heroes have won the day, there is always a chance one of the foul creatures has escaped and will lead others of its kind to exact revenge upon the adventurers.

In this book, Games Masters will find the information they need to portray the bugbears as dangerous and elusive enemies. Players may learn enough to survive a bugbear ambush or discover the tactics they may face should they choose to assault a dungeon held by bugbears. Most importantly, both sides of the Games Master's screen can enjoy the fun of seeing an old foe in a new light.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 games systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these are the races all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who pay little heed as countless thousands get slaughtered during the acquisition of new levels and magic items.

BUGBEARS – EVIL CUNNING

Every *Slayer's Guide* features a single race, in this case the bugbear. Herein you will find extensive information on bugbear physiology, habitat, religion and society. This encyclopaedia of bugbear lore gives Games Masters plenty of hooks to hang their stories and scenarios upon, as well as tips on how to inject a healthy dose of humanoid mayhem into their existing campaigns. Players will learn what they can expect if they choose to tangle with these goblinoid guerrillas, and what their fate will be should defeat raise its ugly head.

Last but not least, a detailed look at a bugbear warren and its occupants wraps up the book. This lair can be used as a straight-ahead dungeon crawl or as a source of ongoing trouble in a campaign, providing players with an enemy that just keeps coming back for more.



The twin fires crackled intimately as the group of adventurers resting around them tended their wounds and wolfed down a cold meal. It had been one of those days. It shouldn't have been. The ponderous silence told much. Normally they would have been laughing and joking, teasing each other about the little nicks they had sustained, whilst idly arguing about how to split up the treasure they had picked up. Not today though.

Wardell could not even begin to study his magic tome, even though he knew that study was the cornerstone of his art. He just felt too deflated. He looked across at Andria, who was binding a rough piece of cloth about a sword cut on her forearm. Normally he'd take the opportunity to admire her legs, but right now he wasn't interested in that sort of thing either. Not that the pretty elf ever took much notice of him anyway. He began to mope, annoyed that he was able to still do that with monotonous regularity.

'Can't quite work out what happened,' said Eldreg, at length. The dwarf fighter had been left standing bemused when the bugbears had fled. Just when they were being sucked into the party's little trap. How had the devils known?

Andria looked up from her running repairs. 'The pigs just fled!' she announced, stating the obvious.

Several of the others nodded, none in the mood to tease her. They were a large party, to be sure – close to double figures, but there had seemingly been many more bugbears. Having fought plenty of goblins before, it left them confused. Weren't these just bigger versions of the same thing?

'I tried to slow them down...' Wardell let his words tail off. He knew they were feeble, and he was certain that everybody blamed his poor concentration.

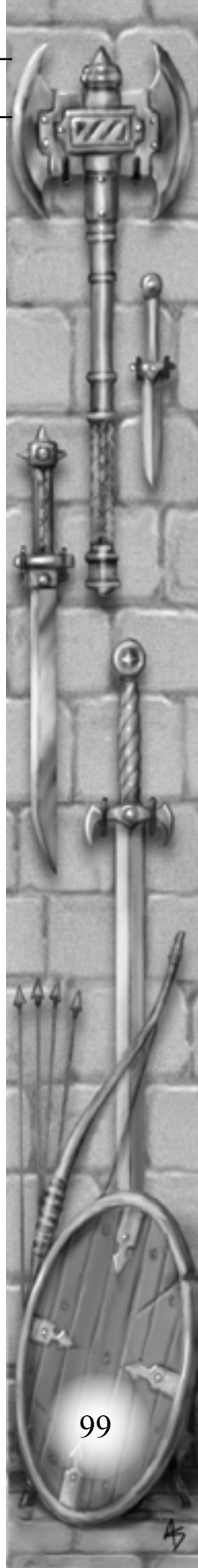
'Not your fault, old boy,' replied Tothac gently. The cleric was older than the rest, and far wiser, yet more often than not kept his counsel private. The others assumed he was just the dark, silent type. Lucky they didn't know the truth, he thought.

Wardell smiled at the kindness. He noticed that the fighters had kept quiet though. Magic wasn't a popular pastime in this group, unfortunately, and Wardell bemoaned the absence of another mage to share some time with. Considering the size of the group, his existence was a moderately lonely one.

Off guard as they were, the object thrown into the camp, landing in one fire before rolling out onto the turf, caught their attention in a flash. It would have caused a shock, even if it had not been the head of Nelis, who was supposed to be guarding the horses and patrolling the perimeter of the makeshift encampment.

Then a howling went up, seemingly from all around them. In a second they were on their feet, weapons drawn. What in the names of hell could it be?

Then the first of the bugbears erupted out of the undergrowth into the firelight. It was not alone.



BUGBEAR

PHYSIOLOGY

Taller than all but the most extraordinary of men, bugbears cut an imposing figure in the light of day. When glimpsed dashing through the shadows, their bulging muscles and towering frames are enough to give any adventurer a moment's pause. In the heat of battle, drenched in the blood of their foes and the foam of their own fury, the morningstar-wielding maniacs are intimidating indeed and might convince even the most foolhardy that today may *not* be a good day to die.

From the tips of their wedge-shaped ears down to their bear-like feet, bugbears have thick patches of wiry hair that varies in colour from dingy brown to brick red. Under this coarse hair, bugbears have a thick hide that, when not stained with blood or daubed with camouflage paints, ranges in hue between light and brownish yellow. This thick hide provides more protection than the leather armour bugbears use to augment their defences and can be used to fashion durable clothing and armour in its own right.

Bugbear Hide Armour

Any leather, hide or studded leather armour made from the hide of a bugbear receives a +1 natural enhancement bonus. A single bugbear can be skinned to provide two small suits of armour, one medium suit, or half of a large suit. Costs for each type of armour are listed below and weights are as for standard armour of each type.

Leather Cost: 450 gp *Hide Cost:* 475 gp
Studded Leather Cost: 550 gp

Male bugbears are gifted with a more defined musculature than females, who tend towards obesity. Female body and facial hair is finer and less prominent than that of the males, giving the mature female bugbear a surprisingly doughty appearance. Both sexes reach maturity around ten years of age. Bugbear children are rugged and begin life with the tough skin characteristic of their parents. Within the first year or so of life, they sprout hair across their bodies, and by their fifth year they are miniature replicas of adults. Young females

do not develop the layers of fat to fuel their breeding years until they reach maturity, making it difficult for outsiders to tell young males from young females.

One of the most distinctive feature of the bugbears are their noses, which led to their popular name. Like a bear's, the nose of a bugbear is wide and somewhat flexible, allowing the creature to detect a wide variety of scents with a great deal of accuracy. Coupled with their excellent darkvision, this sense of smell allows bugbears to navigate their subterranean lairs and detect intruders with ease. Though bugbears have claws on their hands and feet, these are not often used in combat as this race long ago learned the advantages of metal weapons. Still, their natural weaponry is often a point of pride for the bugbears, and it is not unusual to see claws painted with bloody pigments or carved with crude glyphs.

The Smell of Blood

Bugbears have sensitive noses, which provide them with the Alertness feat. If strong smells are introduced into the bugbear's environment, the creatures suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to all Spot checks. Stronger odours other races find merely unpleasant can be nauseating to bugbears and force them, at the Games Master's discretion, to make a successful Fortitude save (starting at DC 15) or suffer the effects of a *stinking cloud* spell. When confronted with such tactics, bugbears will retreat and wait for their enemies to leave the affected area – and then pounce on them later.

Stinkpot

The stinkpot is a small clay vial broken on the floor to unleash an unpleasant odour in a 30-foot radius from the point of impact. This gives those with keen noses (such as bugbears and most natural animals) a -2 circumstance penalty to all Spot checks and a Fortitude save (DC 15) must be made or the creature will become nauseated, as with the *stinking cloud* spell. The odour disperses after 1d6+1 rounds. The Craft (alchemy) skill (DC 15) can be used to craft a stinkpot for 15 gp.

Market Price: 30gp *Weight:* ½ lb.

THE HUNGER

Bugbears have frightening appetites and are almost always hungry. Meat, of any kind, is the preferred meal

of the bugbear and the creatures can eat two to four pounds of it at a single sitting. Bugbears char their meat over an open flame if available but have no problem digesting raw meat torn from a screaming victim if necessity arises. When on the move, bugbears sometimes take slaves with them to avoid carrying their own food. When the slaves tire or slow their pace too often, they are skewered on cooking spits.

Because of their extreme dietary needs, bugbears only settle in areas with an abundance of game animals. If they cannot find a suitable habitat, they adopt a semi-nomadic lifestyle, stopping in an area only so long as the food lasts, then moving on. This can have disastrous consequences in areas of the wild already threatened with ecological imbalance, earning bugbears the hatred of rangers, druids and other protectors of the wild. This enmity is mutual and bugbears will often track down such opponents intentionally.

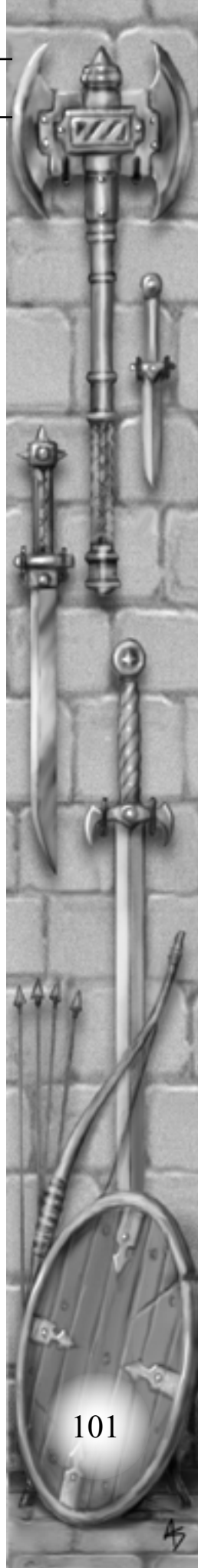
In dire straits, bugbears can indeed eat fruits or vegetables but doing so leads to digestive discomfort and lowered energy levels. Bugbears deprived of a steady diet of red meat for more than five days will become fierce and careless in their hunger. In this state, they will attack any living creature they come across in an attempt to fill their stomachs. Until they have gorged themselves on red meat, the hungry bugbears will receive a +1 morale bonus to damage rolls, but suffer a -1 morale penalty to all other checks. When this hungry, even females and the young will attack, as each bugbear attempts to stuff its gullet with flesh.



CRADLE TO GRAVE

In preparation for pregnancy, female bugbears begin gorging themselves on fresh meat with high fat content. When carrying a child, a bugbear mother doubles her food intake to increase the stores of fat that are burnt off while nursing a pup. Bugbears give birth to single, live young, with the rare set of twins being born in times of warren prosperity. If food is scarce, females are unable to carry their young to term and the warren finds itself forced to relocate to a more fertile hunting ground or face extinction.

Bugbear mothers nurse their pups for the first few weeks following delivery and the pup's voracious appetite for milk quickly reduces the fat content of its mother. By their third month, pups have their first set of teeth and begin eating whatever meat they can snatch. With their first year behind them, pups are active children that compete ferociously for food. Maturing by their tenth year, bugbears join the adults of the community when they can begin hunting. Pups unable, for whatever reason, to hunt by their eleventh year often become



the victims of ‘accidents’ that end with their own flesh roasting over the cete’s fire.

Whilst it is possible for a bugbear to survive into his forties, their violent lifestyle and frequent clashes with other races mean most males will be cut down before their twenty-fifth year. Females, being the more sedentary and less combative of the species, often live well into their thirties, but complications from childbirth and illness are a common cause of death.

THE MIND OF THE BUGBEAR

The prime motivations for most bugbears are hunger and greed. As noted above, bugbears have ravenous appetites that lead them to acts of violence in the name of physiological need. They are also victims of an inborn greed that tempts them to attack targets merely to acquire more plunder.

Shiny, valuable items are lusted after by bugbears with the same intensity as fresh, red meat and they are as

likely to put themselves at risk to loot a pack of coins as they are a bloody meal. Even well defended caravans fear attack for once a bugbear catches sight of a rich target, it will not relent in its attacks until the mark has fallen. Bugbears fear their own weakness above all else, or at least, the appearance of such weakness. This fear can lead young bugbears to acts of reckless abandon and adult bugbears to commit cruel atrocities as a way to display their own power and influence. If in the company of his tribe, a bugbear is simply too terrified of appearing weak to do anything but put on a brave face. Khans and priests are mostly immune to this fear, as they are regarded as the strongest amongst bugbears and have nothing more to prove.

These drives are what give the bugbears their chaotic nature, as the creatures are constantly at the mercy of their baser instincts. If they could suppress these traits, it is likely that bugbears would become a frightening force for evil in the world, rather than the scattered pockets of savage violence typical of their existence.

In the time before the sun, Render and Stalker fashioned the goblins and hobgoblins and set them loose upon the earth. The goblins were cunning and the hobgoblins were disciplined, but they were ultimately weak and, when the sun rose, they were driven before the other races and harried from their lands.

In the hidden places below the earth, these weaklings cried to the gods who birthed them, begging for champions to save them from their enemies. Disgusted, Render and Stalker withdrew from their disappointing creations and set about creating beings worthy to serve them. From the goblins they took cunning and from the hobgoblins they took strength; these were mixed together in the cauldron of Render’s blood and Stalker watched over them through the cold of winter. And so did the bugbears come into being, stumbling from the blood of their god into the cold light of the moon.

For ages they warred with the weaklings, hiding from the sun and striking from the dark of night, and Render and Stalker were proud of their creations. The elves fled from Render’s children and hid themselves away in boughs of forests; the dwarves turned their caverns into fortresses, barring their passages to keep out the horror of the bugbear war machine. Even men, whose cities sprouted from the black earth like stony weeds, feared the creeping doom of the bugbear war march. But the goblins and hobgoblins grew jealous of their cousins’ success and they were spurned in the eyes of Render and Stalker. The gods of war and murder wanted nothing to do with their first creations, and they were abandoned to their own devices.

Sadly, these pathetic creatures could not accept their fate, and on the eve of a great war, the goblins crept forth to betray the bugbears to the elves. Even as the goblins revealed what they knew of the bugbear forces and their hidden homes, the cursed hobgoblins were massing on the flank of the bugbear war host, waiting like vultures. In the end, the treachery of their cousins doomed the bugbears to defeat, and they were sorely wounded by the elven bows and hobgoblin lances.

Still, the bugbears survive, and they grow in the dark and secret places, stirring their hatred and husbanding their strength, for the day of vengeance is coming . . .

HABITAT

Bugbears are capable of surviving in most environments and are equally at home in the wilderness or hidden within the cities of more civilised races. The important factor for bugbears is that they have a steady supply of food and a subterranean lair to call their own. They have been known, on occasion, to hole up in houses or other buildings but are much more comfortable beneath the earth.

THE WILDERNESS

In the wild, bugbears look for untamed environments with large populations of native fauna that are not protected by druids or roving rangers. Just as important as the availability of food is the proximity to a source of loot, as bugbears cannot rest easy unless there is the possibility of pillaging in the near future. Isolated stretches of caravan trails are particular favourites and bugbears delight in finding poorly defended lengths of road between major towns and cities.

In the wild, bugbears move their lair as often as necessary to stay ahead of their enemies and keep their stomachs full. Clever tribes have a steady stream of scouts heading out to find the next suitable spot for a lair and when solitary bugbears are encountered, they are most often on such a mission. When the time comes to move, bugbears pack up as much of their plunder as they can carry and trudge off to the next spot chosen by their scouts. When on the move like this, bugbears are exceptionally dangerous and prone to attacking anything that comes near. Goblins will sometimes follow bugbear tribes, at a safe distance, and settle near them in order to swoop in and snatch up any plunder left behind when the bugbears move on. The goblins must move quickly, however, as bugbears have been known to return for their property and cart it back to the new lair.

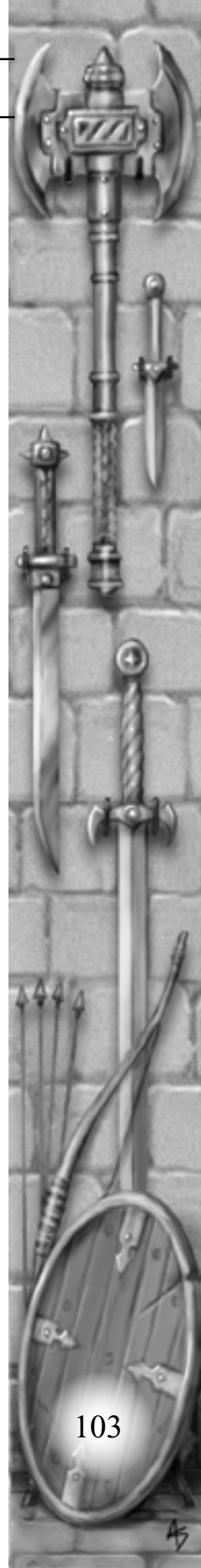
THE CITY

Caves near towns are a favourite location for bugbears, as are old and unused sewer systems common in larger cities. These lairs provide bugbears with a steady source of food and ample opportunities for burglary but the danger of discovery and subsequent extermination is much greater than for a wilderness lair. Bugbears choosing to lair in a city must be very clever to avoid being slain in short order.

When lairing in the countryside near a city, bugbears will attempt to establish secret means of entering the settlement. Short tunnels are a favourite means of getting beneath the walls of a city and the enormous strength of bugbears allows them to claw out such passages with ease. Cities that do not bother with walls are no challenge for bugbears, who make use of their natural stealth to slip unseen amongst the residents. When a city sinks its walls deep enough to prevent simple tunnelling, the bugbears protect their sensitive noses and swim up the sewer outlets to gain access to their targets. More cunning bugbears do not bother with such trivialities, preferring instead to move their lair below the city itself. This works best in cities with an extensive, permanent sewer system, in the abandoned sections of which bugbears are more than content to lair. From these subterranean boltholes, the bugbears venture forth to hunt and steal, creating well-fed and prosperous warrens that grow dangerously large in a few years. Fortunately for the citizens of the cities they lair in, bugbears are most often unable to hide their location for this long and become the target for the local guard or hired adventurers.

LAIRING BASICS

Bugbears will lair in any reasonably secure location, but prefer subterranean homes. Cavern complexes are their favourite hideouts, whilst underground ruins and abandoned sewers are also commonly used. A bugbear clan will take up residence above ground only in the most extreme circumstances, and will usually relocate as soon as possible.



BUGBEAR SOCIETY

Bugbears are most often encountered in routs, small groups of two to four, generally up to no good. Routts are usually roaming members of a cete, looking for food, loot or both. Such groups have little interest in conversation or negotiation, and attack if the odds are in their favour. When outnumbered, though, routs shy away from contact, preferring instead to watch anyone in their territory from a careful distance.

Cetes are the largest bugbear communities and are composed of anything up to twenty males, as many as thirty females and about as many children as the total number of adults. While bugbear females and children fight if cornered, they are never in the forefront of a combat and are often the first to make use of the escape tunnels when their home is invaded.

ROUTS

The constant hunger and maddening greed experienced by bugbears from their earliest years drives them to make frequent searches for fresh meat and valuable, shiny items. Young males venture forth from their homes often, patrolling the territory of their cete by night. Known as routs, these groups are always spoiling for a fight, though it is sometimes possible to pay off bugbears at the cost of everything their victims may be carrying. Adventurers are regarded as dangerous but worthwhile targets by bugbears, who may find themselves picking up a trail of routs waiting for their chance to kill powerful enemies and loot the bodies.

Routs may consist of a few males and females who left a cete that grew too large. Known as a colonial rout, these bugbears want nothing more than to find a suitable location for their lair, settle in, and *then* start looking for trouble. If encountered by adventurers, these displaced creatures are more than happy to negotiate for passage, doing their best to look harmless and downtrodden. If a fight erupts, these family units attempt to flee the situation and survivors will remember their enemies for a long, long time. When encountering a rout, adventurers are advised to deal with the creatures quickly and use every means at their disposal to prevent any survivors from escaping. While not every bugbear rout has a cete nearby, enough do that

the prudent traveller will not permit an injured bugbear to gather reinforcements. This assumes, of course, that the bugbears are spotted – all too often the cunning creatures simply ambush their targets, ending the fight as quickly as it began.

CETES

Unlike the more mobile routs, a cete of bugbears settles in an area and moves only when it has exhausted the local food supply or is driven away by enemy forces. For this reason, cetes are almost always encountered in their lairs where they are at their most dangerous.

The core of a cete consists of ten to twenty mature males, all ready and able to do battle at the command of their khan. A successful cete will have one or more mature females for every male, but it is more typical to find cetes with only half as many females as males. This is due, in large part, to the fact that females have a much harder life than males and pregnant bugbears have a high mortality rate if the warren is invaded. It is common to find a bugbear child in the warren for every adult male and female, and many more just after the birthing season. There are no true family units within a cete and children have no idea who either of their parents are. After birth, children are cared for by whichever female happens to be closest to them at the time and are disciplined by any bugbear large enough to do the job. By nature, bugbears are incapable of forming any real bonds with other creatures, even those of their own race. Their loyalty is based on the need for survival and the cete as a whole is the only family a bugbear will ever need.

Khans are careful to keep an eye on the other males in their cete in order to protect their own position. When two dozen or so males are in one location, the battles for dominance can tear a warren apart and a clever khan will use troublesome rivals as the basis for a colonial rout. The khan sends a small number of males and females out into the world under the leadership of his rival, charging them with creating a cete of their own. Colonists are expected to travel far from the territory of their original cete and failure to do so leads to deadly conflict between the colonists and their former family.

DARK RANGERS

A crucial element of bugbear society, the dark rangers are the only members of a cete directly concerned with the future. While most bugbears remain near the warren

with their cousins, the dark rangers range far and wide, searching for new homes and hunting territories for their cete. These far-ranging wanderers are chosen for their natural stealth and receive gifts from Stalker to better fulfil their role.

Dark rangers are charged with the dual purpose of finding new warrens for their cete and removing dangers in the cete's territory. They are both rangers and assassins, travelling through the night in search of likely lairs or ripe targets, as ready to hide as they are to slit the throats of sleeping travellers.

Because they spend so much time far from home, dark rangers are quite devout, spending their lives in service to Stalker. This gives them the strength of will to endure the hardships and isolation that is their lot in life, and makes them fanatically loyal to their race. These skilled bugbears view adventurers or other armed forces as immediate threats and will do their utmost to either force them away from the cete's territory or simply kill them. Skilled in ambushes and the use of poison, dark rangers are dangerous foes, even for adventurers.

A stealthy survivalist and ruthless foe, the dark ranger is well-trained and seasoned by years spent roaming the land alone. Members of this prestige class spend their time searching for new homes for their cete and slaying those careless or foolhardy enough to wander into 'bugbear country.'

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To become a dark ranger, a bugbear must fulfil these conditions:

Race: Bugbear.

Move Silently: 6 ranks.

Hide: 4 ranks.

Special: Only those bugbears that have proven themselves to the other dark rangers or a priest of Stalker will be trained in the secrets of this prestige class.

Class Skills

Climb (Str), Craft (trapmaking) (Int), Disguise (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Wis), Spot (Str), Swim (Str), Use Rope (Dex), Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int Modifier.

Class Features

Weapons and Armour Proficiency: Dark rangers are proficient with bows (long and short, normal and composite), dagger, javelin, morningstar, net, scimitar and whip. Dark rangers are proficient with light armour and shields; note that armour and load penalties apply to Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble.

Krug scratched his backside, idly sniffing the results as he squatted down, watching the orcs. He didn't worry that they might see him. They were too busy with their loot, that and throwing the head of some poor adventurer between them, laughing in that throaty way of theirs when any of them dropped it. He did briefly twitch though when their leader shouted out a guttural warning, although as it transpired he seemed to merely be annoyed at the trivial game which was playing havoc with his counting.

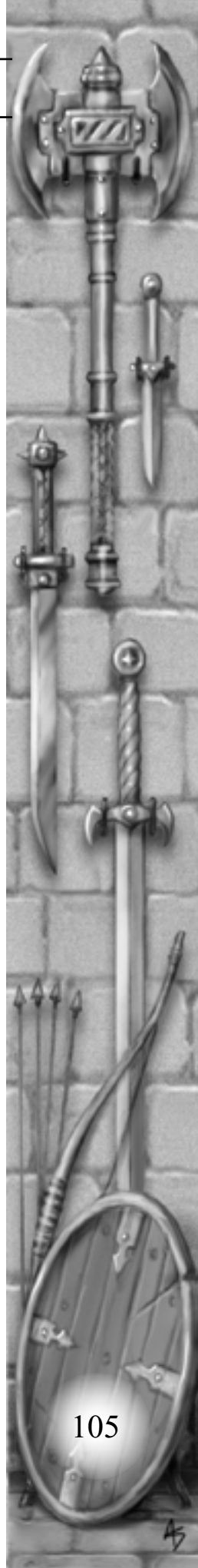
Time for business, thought Krug, and his eyes glittered menacingly. Then he stood up and half staggered into the orc camp, a huge wineskin dangling carelessly over his shoulder. 'Hail, brothers!' he shouted cheerfully, flopping down next to the surprised orcs who were so taken aback by this unarmed, drunken bugbear that the thought of drawing a weapon seemed pointless.

'What does you want?' asked the chief, a twinge of suspicion in his voice.

'Not a lot,' answered Krug, remaining casual and praying to Stalker that he could pull this one off. 'Just a warm fire in exchange for some of this booze what I got off of a dwarf what happened to die with it.'

The orcs began to chuckle. Typical bugbear, they thought. Well, why not? It couldn't do any harm, and from the smell of the bugbear he had indulged heavily already.

Krug smiled. That would be the last trouble this bunch caused in his khan's territory.



The Dark Ranger

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+0	+2	+2	+1d6 sneak attack
2 nd	+2	+0	+3	+3	Poison expertise
3 rd	+3	+1	+3	+3	+2d6 sneak attack, track
4 th	+4	+1	+4	+4	Survival
5 th	+5	+1	+4	+4	+3d6 sneak attack, unfailing senses

Sneak Attack: If a dark ranger's target is denied their Dexterity bonus to AC, the dark ranger's attack will deal an additional 1d6 damage. This damage increases by +1d6 every other level, but is not multiplied on a successful critical hit. Ranged attacks can only be sneak attacks if the target is within 30 feet. Note that the target must have a discernible anatomy, must be alive and must be clearly visible to the dark ranger – any creature that has concealment cannot be the target of a sneak attack. Any creature that is unaffected by critical hits is also immune to sneak attacks.

Poison Expertise: At 2nd level, the dark ranger masters the use of poison and will never inadvertently poison himself when applying poison or fighting with a poisoned weapon. The dark ranger can be poisoned normally and has no special resistance to poisons.

Track: Dark rangers gain Track as a bonus feat at 3rd level.

Survival: To keep starvation and dehydration at bay, the dark ranger is adept at scrounging up enough food and water (even stagnant water and grubs) to survive. As long as the dark ranger is in natural surroundings (including naturally formed subterranean complexes), he will not starve or suffer dehydration. This ability is gained at 4th level.

Unfailing Senses: At the highest levels of their training, dark rangers become impossible to surprise and have honed their senses so that they are never caught flat-footed.

LAIRS

While bugbears will choose any reasonably secure area as a basic lair, they inevitably begin modifying their home as soon as they take up residence. The first order of business is to excavate extensive escape tunnels, a process undertaken as a matter of survival.

Established lairs have several of these tunnels leading away from the warren, making it difficult to lay siege to these creatures. The escape tunnels are supplemented with additional corridors constructed to form passages between rooms. This gives the bugbears a great deal of mobility within their lair, and makes it confusing for invaders to navigate. Small tunnels, barely wide enough for a bugbear to crawl through, cross over and under the main passages, allowing them to circle around intruders.

Traps make up another crucial element of bugbear defence and they make good use of the primitive technology available to them. Escape tunnels are rigged with deadfalls to collapse behind fleeing bugbears, and many passages hold pits to snare the unwary. The surface area surrounding a bugbear warren may also be trapped, but these defences are found only in isolated areas where other humanoids are the main enemies. Surface traps are never found when the bugbears are lairing below civilised areas, where they pose a great danger of exposing the warren to hostile forces.

Bugbears often use dire rats as pets and free-roaming guard animals. The rats are kept well fed and are given the run of the bugbear warrens, though the females do their best to keep the creatures away from the vulnerable infants. The dire rats are not normally trained but know enough to not bite bugbears and to attack any invaders they find in the warren. In exchange for scraps from bugbear meals, the rats roam the rooms and corridors of the lair, making a racket if they discover intruders.

WINTER

Bugbears do not hibernate, but are more sedentary during the winter months. Males spend their time sleeping and avoiding the females, who spend the colder months suffering through their pregnancies. Hunting is no less important during winter than any other time, but the more successful tribes learn to stock away salted

meat to gnaw on during the lean weeks. Immature bugbears are as rowdy and combative as ever, but when the winter winds howl they may end up in the bellies of their cete if food runs low. The quest for loot is at its lowest during this time and bugbears do not venture out above the surface except to hunt. Adventurers have the best chance of catching the bugbears unawares during this part of the year, when the creatures seem to care less about defending their warren or staying vigilant than they do about catching sleep or snaring a good meal.

Religious cetes are kept active during the winter by priests who insist on observing the sacred ceremonies. When the days are short, bugbears believe Render walks the land and the priests lead their people in ancient rites meant to please and pacify their savage god.

SPRING

Bugbear young are born in the spring, after their mothers have suffered through difficult pregnancies during the autumn and winter months. The mature males stir from their winter torpor and head out with fresh vigour to hunt down raw meat and loot. Females, weak and starving from feeding hungry children, spend their days filling their bellies and keeping the males from biting the heads off noisy infants. Travellers should avoid known bugbear warrens during the days of spring, as the bugbears are active and aggressive during this part of the year. With the pressing need to feed their young and females, roaming routs will waste no time attempting to bring down any prey –including your average party of well-armed and armoured treasure hunters.

Dark rangers are dispatched from the cete during this time of year and may spend over a month searching out a suitable back-up lair for the cete. Though bugbears generally have crude cartographic skills, dark rangers are able to create average-quality maps and use these to mark possible future warrens for their leaders.

SUMMER

Bugbear hunting reaches its peak during this season, when the warriors do their best to bring in plenty of fresh meat for the females to salt away for the winter. The bugbear version of courtship also takes place during this time, with aggressive males pursuing females. Children born during the spring are now large enough to attain some small independence and spend most of their time crawling around looking for scraps of food. The shift in focus from loot to food means that bugbears

are unlikely to be found near civilised areas as their pursuit of game animals carries them further into the wilderness. Druids and rangers dread this time of year, and many hire adventurers to patrol the bounds of their territory to head off bugbear predations.

Cetes led by a priest spend the summer weeks involved in religious consecration of food that bears a suspicious resemblance to salting meat. Being wiser than most other bugbears, however, priests push their followers to more extremes of food gathering, stocking enough away to see them all through the winter.

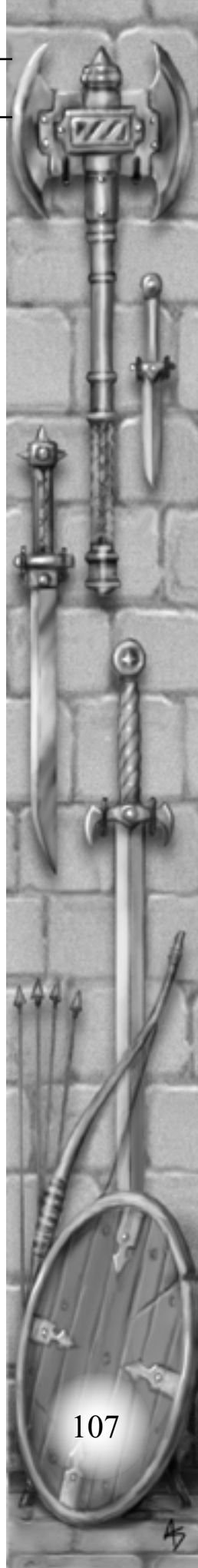
AUTUMN

With the heat of summer past, bugbears continue their hunt for food but also accelerate their quest for plunder. With winter closing in, civilised merchants attempt to do as much over-road business as possible before the snows, and bugbears delight in attacking overburdened caravans and dragging the loot back to their warrens. This is the time of year that bugbears are most aggressive toward traders, and merchants pay well for adventurers to guide their caravans through ‘bugbear country’.

Bugbear females gorge themselves on fatty hunks of meat, packing on weight to carry them through their winter pregnancies and the early weeks of feeding their children. Males do their best to keep the females supplied with fresh meat, but with most animals migrating during the autumn, hunting is not as rich as attacking trade caravans, leaving many bugbears hungry. By this time, the children born the past spring can walk and have learned enough to stay away from their hungry mothers and the cete’s hunters. Dark rangers usually return home in early autumn, marking a surge in the number of religious observances by bugbears. Priests begin chanting the tales of Stalker in addition to the cruel parables about Render. These stories are meant to bring luck to the dark rangers that are still roaming, so they may bring back news of rich hunting grounds and a new lair.

RELIGION

Bugbear religion is an informal affair centred on the violent worship of the twin gods Render and Stalker. Render is the more popular of the two, and altars to this bloody god will be found in any established bugbear lair. Stalker is venerated by dark rangers, who call on his stealth and guile to see them through their



The old druid was bleeding from a blow to the head, and even now was held up only by the presence of the two burly bugbears beside him. Through smoke-burned and teary eyes, he looked upon the desecration of his holy grove. His followers must all be dead by now, he reasoned, and he himself was drained of power, unable to cope with the appalling violence he had faced.

This was not how it was written in the Way of Peace.

He heard screaming, and realised to his horror that the beasts were unspeakably violating his women. The horror made him howl in anguish, and the creatures laughed. Better that they *had* all been killed as he had at first thought.

Through burning eyes the druid could make out a bulky figure stalking towards him. He blinked hard. Once, twice, then after two more tortuous efforts he focussed upon the bugbear priest. In his hands was a massive morning star, from which dripped the blood of the druid's people.

The creature smiled, hefting the weapon easily, and licked a thick strand of blood mixed with some other substance from the head of the weapon.

The Way of Peace had turned out to be the wrong way after all.

dangerous missions in the outside world. Primitive shrines to Stalker are often found in the wilderness and may contain simple supplies for use by bugbears lucky enough to discover them.

Though bugbear clerics are uncommon, there are times when one or the other of the two gods will bestow their gifts upon an aggressive and clever bugbear. Such priests use their new-found power to establish their place in the bugbear community, often becoming leaders or fearsome khans.

STALKER, THE CUNNING

Bugbears are stronger, but less numerous, than their goblinoid cousins. Because of this, they have learnt to be cunning about survival and Stalker is the patron of those who take these lessons to heart. Priests of Stalker are drawn from proven survivors who have all undergone a traumatic experience that laid low those around them. Bugbears sometimes receive the touch of Stalker after a harrowing encounter with a druid or band of rangers, and Stalker likewise favours the sole survivors of destroyed cetes. Priests of Stalker are not leaders, but use their powers to advise their khans and defend their warrens. These priests are often dark rangers, ranging far and wide in search of new warrens for their cete or rich targets to attack. Vengeful and secretive, the priests of Stalker make fierce enemies and long-term foes for any group of adventurers that carelessly leave them alive when attempting to clean out a bugbear warren.

The worship of Stalker is not a group affair and priests do not proselytise. Cetes with a priest of Stalker among their number will have a small shrine in an isolated portion of their warren, at which any bugbear may pray for guidance from the Cunning God. A black cloak blocks the entrance to these shrines, which contain simple wooden altars stained with charcoal. Stalker's symbol, a pair of white eyes on a field of black, is painted around the altar, or constructed from chips of quartz and coal on the altar itself.

Stalker does not demand offerings from his followers, but is said to bestow favour when the eyes of an enemy, natural poisons and any dark or bloodstained cloth are left on his altar. These items may be transformed into the powerful blood poison if the bugbear's cete is headed into a time of trouble, but most often simply disappear.

Clerics of Stalker are granted the domains of Evil and Trickery. The favoured weapon of Stalker is the scimitar.

RENDER, THE HEADSMAN

As befits a bugbear god, Render is a violent god with a penchant for cruelty. He incites his people to commit atrocities and gives his blessing to those capable of executing cruelty and mayhem on a grand scale. His clerics are always khans, most of whom receive his

Blood Poison

This poison appears on shrines to Stalker in vials of black clay and is the god's gift to his faithful. Each vial contains 1d3 applications of the poison. Bugbear rogues can apply this blade venom to their weapons or traps without fear of poisoning themselves but non-bugbears will *always* poison themselves if attempting it. Other bugbears have the standard 5% chance of infecting themselves when applying this poison to their blades. This poison is never offered for sale by bugbears and is useless to other races.

Type: Injury DC 15

Initial Damage: 1d2 Str

Secondary Damage: 1d4 Str

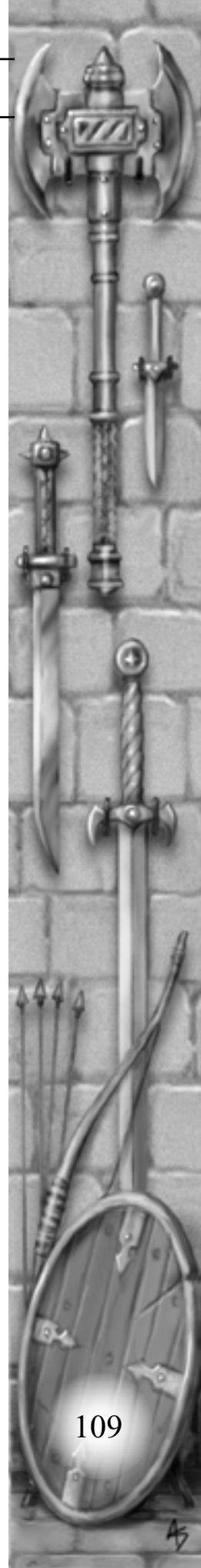
blessing following a notably bloody conflict. Battles against druids or rangers are certain to draw Render's attentio, and khans who lead their cetes against such enemies will almost certainly become clerics – if they are not killed first.

Priests of Render are not as wanton as other khans, because they are provided with a very direct message from their god when they are inducted into the priesthood. These khans are given a goal to accomplish, often one that will require the entirety of their lives to fulfil. Recovery of artefacts, destruction of an opposing god's temple, the desecration of druidic groves or the conquest of a prosperous city are some examples, but anything that contributes to the spread of misery and violence may become a goal. Khans who follow Render often seek the counsel of the Stalker's followers, incorporating their stealthy doctrine into their own plans. In all ways, the priests of Stalker are subservient to those of Render, but the followers of the two gods can work well together when needed. To minimise any potential strife, khans often assign the priests of Stalker missions that keep them in the field, and away from the cete as a whole.

Render demands regular worship from his priests and they, in turn, demand the same

from their followers. As noted above, this worship reaches a fever pitch during the winter months, when services are held each day and cetes are subjected to the rantings of their priest for hours on end. During the months in which bugbears are more productive, worship sessions occur once or twice each week and are of a much shorter duration. All services take place before an altar to Render and sacrifices are heaped at its base. Render has a fondness for skulls, and the heads of the cete's enemies are stacked in a crude pyramid to form his altars. These rotting masses are the centrepiece of a warren and are viciously defended against invaders.

The morningstar is the Headsman's symbol and cetes often leave their weapons leaning against the altar in the hope of receiving a divine blessing. Sacrifices are left



BUGBEAR SOCIETY

as well, including jewellery, weaponry, body parts and armour. When Render is pleased, temporary blessings are bestowed on the weapons left at the altar, and some khans have been blessed with *Render's Star* for their continued faith and obedience.

Clerics of Render are granted the domains of Chaos and War. The favoured weapon of Render is the morningstar.

Render's Star

If an altar to Render is built in a bugbear lair, there is always a chance the Headsman will take pleasure in the carnage he sees and bless a morningstar consecrated upon that altar. Known as *Render's Star*, such weapons are prized by bugbears and powerful priests wield them in defence of the lair. In the hands of a bugbear, the weapon functions as detailed below, but in the hands of a non-bugbear the weapon becomes a -3 morningstar that emits a high-pitched keening when within 100 feet of bugbears.

When wielded by a bugbear, *Render's Star* functions as a $+2$ morningstar. In addition, bugbears within 30 feet of this item also receive a $+1$ morale bonus on their attack and damage rolls so long as the wielder is also in combat.

Note that this item has no effective market value as it is of use only to bugbears who will never buy it, but will kill to get it back. Bugbears also lack the skill to actually create these items, which appear only as a gift from their god.

THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT

Bugbears are not renowned burglars or confidence tricksters, but they have a definite place in the underground hierarchy of cities they may lair beneath. Their stealth and hardy constitution also allow them

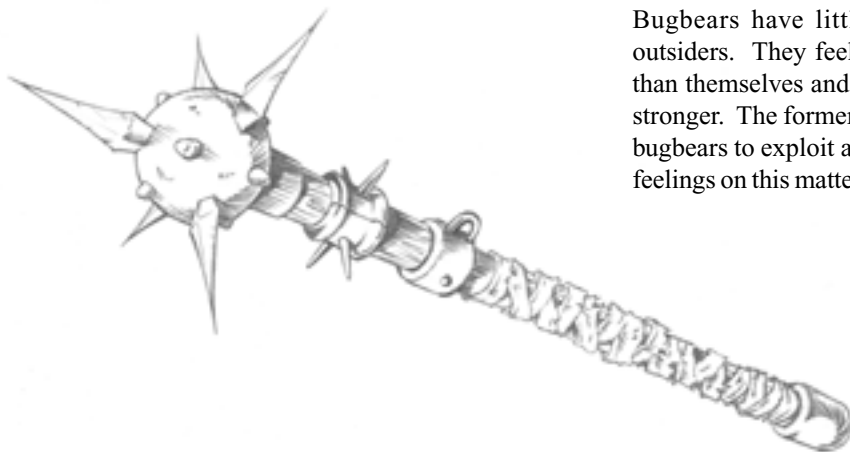
to survive for long periods of time in the wilderness, which makes them ideal bandits. Bugbear cetes have devastated trade routes running through their territory and no merchant wants the risk and expense of dealing with such a problem. Because bugbears have no qualms about stockpiling far more loot than they can hope to move or use, they will not leave a rich area unless driven out.

When arriving in a city, bugbears will first establish themselves in sewers and tunnels, before making contact with local criminals. Cunning and arrogant, bugbears do not care much for what other races think or feel, but they are aware of the need to cultivate possible allies near their home when lairing beneath cities. For their part, criminals are often willing to provide advice about the city in exchange for the great muscle provided by the bugbears. This relationship works well for both sides and the bugbears will not intentionally rock the boat unless they find themselves in a position of obvious superiority. Wise criminal organisations sell the bugbears out when the opportunity presents itself – before the bugbears can make their own bid to wipe out their 'partners.' In most cases the uneasy truce lasts for a few months at best, before one side or the other starts an all-out bid to do away with the others. Bugbears just do not make for good business partners.

In some rare cases, bugbears led by Stalker clerics have established longstanding criminal empires within cities. These criminal regimes are brutal and effective, dealing with threats in a straightforward and vicious manner. In the end, though, they always disintegrate as a combination of greed and impatience leads the bugbears to commit more and more daring crimes. Eventually, city guards and adventurers are called in and the bugbears must fight for their lives.

OTHER RACES

Bugbears have little patience when dealing with outsiders. They feel only contempt for races weaker than themselves and a resentful fear for those that are stronger. The former are potential prey or tools for the bugbears to exploit and they rarely bother to hide their feelings on this matter. Though bugbears are capable of



being stealthy enough to mount an ambush, they are blunt and straightforward in their dealings with strangers. Those able to present a show of force to bugbears may convince them to form a temporary alliance, but it will never last. Bugbear mercenaries are best when used for extremely short assignments of a very violent nature, after which they should be paid and left to their own devices. Attempting to harness the violent might of bugbears never ends well, and the wise will remember this.

When presented with a foe that is obviously capable of crushing an entire group of bugbears, the humanoids do not waste time getting out of sight. They may plan an ambush for later, but bugbears will not stand their ground in a confrontation they are clearly not going to win. Temporarily fleeing from real danger is not considered cowardice among bugbears, but a strategic means of insuring their survival. Only fools throw themselves into a battle that cannot be won. As always, adventurers should be cautious about letting bugbears retreat.



Ylend rode at a slow pace through the forest, aware that, with dusk falling, she could have been in a better place. It was still many leagues though before she would arrive at the monastery, and it was important that Master Ymir's despatches were delivered with the utmost urgency. She twitched involuntarily, feeling his reed discipline cane on her back. She understood the need for it, but that didn't mean she had to like it.

It was not that she was inexperienced, but rather the uncomfortably long hours in the saddle which allowed Ylend to become dangerously distracted. In fact, her horse saw the group of bugbears before she did. Suddenly, they were just there, snarling menacingly.

Becoming more alert, Ylend studied the situation as she had been trained to do. Certainly she could dismount and with luck could best what appeared to be a group of four of the ugly brutes. All males, she noticed, grateful that she wasn't a female bugbear. This would likely be one of the 'routs' that Master Ymir had spoken of.

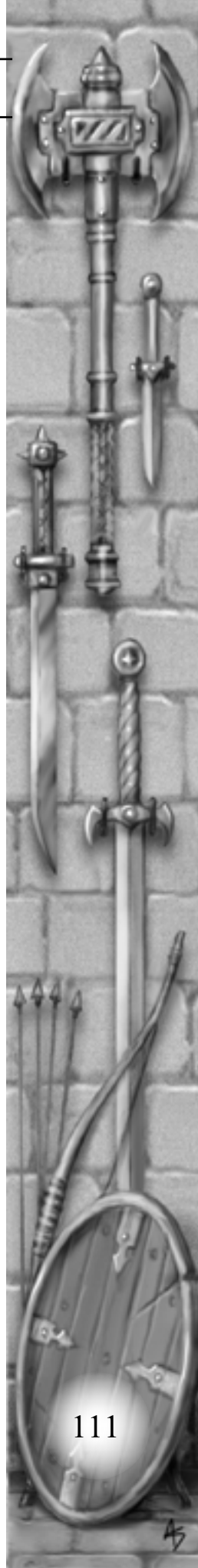
She knew at once what to do. Reaching behind her horse for the saddle bags, she said in the Common tongue, 'Go on, take it. I have nothing else.'

'You've got a horse, girlie,' snarled the largest of the four, his Common a disgrace to the word 'language'.

She sighed. 'Would you leave me to walk?'

'Lucky we leaves you at all,' said the bugbear who, despite appearances, wasn't as stupid as he looked. Better to get the goodies without a scrap. These monks all knew how to handle themselves, girlie or not.

As she began the long walk to the monastery, Ylend considered the wisdom of her master, although the letters did chafe against her skin.



METHODS OF WARFARE

Bugbears are thrilled at the prospect of a good fight and do not shy away from battle. Physically powerful and smart enough to formulate tactics, the bugbear is a dangerous foe on any battlefield. In skirmishes, where individual strength is a deciding factor, bugbears have a distinct advantage over the members of most other races. In large battles, however, the lack of real organisation or a strong grasp of military strategy puts the bugbears at a distinct disadvantage to the more disciplined races and the more organised humanoids, such as hogoblins.

TOOLS OF WAR

The combination of bone-crunching power and flesh-tearing spikes make the morningstar the favourite weapon of bugbears everywhere – it is also Render's holy symbol. Javelins are also popular and bugbears will often hurl them at their foes during an ambush. Young bugbears begin their training with javelins from

the rear of bugbear forces, throwing weapons over the heads of charging warriors to soften up the enemy before engagement. Bugbears will use shields when they are available, adorning them with war trophies such as severed hands and teeth strung on copper wire. Bugbears view these grisly mementoes of past battles as badges of honour and display them proudly to cow foes and impress allies. Following a great conflict, bugbears can be found prowling through the carnage to collect prizes.

Because bugbears do not have the patience to learn crafting skills, they acquire their weapons and armour through trade or thievery. This gives their gear a patchwork appearance, with each bugbear equipped with whatever gear they have managed to pry from the cold, dead fingers of their enemies. More organised cetes will conceal these differences with liberal applications from a coal pot to blacken their equipment into a semblance of uniformity. Leather armour is used most often, as it can be adjusted to fit the bugbear's large frame without much effort.

Dark rangers and priests often arm themselves with smaller arms and more accurate missile weapons.

Those who follow Stalker make extensive use of scimitars and short bows, slathering both blades and arrows with poison whenever possible. Because Stalker rewards the faithful with vials of potent venom, encounters with these bugbears can come as a nasty surprise to adventurers.

Nets often find their way into bugbear ambushes due to their ease of use and ability to slow down opponents that might otherwise escape slaughter. Because nets also



The elf, Herlyn, looked up from the corpse of the dark ranger. He had felt no guilt after finally cutting the creature's evil throat. After what its like had done to his people, only revenge and victory mattered now. He wiped the blood from his dagger on the oily clothing of its victim.

'He did not tell us much more than we already knew,' stated Lathandrel, the commander of the infantry.

'True, although at least we know that they will fight today,' replied Herlyn.

'That in itself is not like the bugbears,' opined Jirdan, the high priest.

Herlyn nodded. 'And what do your ministrations tell you, Wise One?' he asked reverently, but with the tone of an old friend.

'The gods say that you have planned well, and that through your actions this day our people will be saved.'

Herlyn nodded once more, satisfied with the divination. It was just as well. This campaign against the bugbears had been the worst his people had known in living memory. For one thing *it never* happened. Not as a rule, anyway. It had been common knowledge that the creatures could not organise properly, although he admitted that in hindsight, greater credence should have been given to the stories of a great warlord who had forced the cetes to his will by force of arms and strength of will. Gods willing, this mistake would never be allowed to happen again.

All at once the air filled with the sound of thundering horns and booming drums. The heartbeat of the savage, Herlyn thought to himself. It was terrifying, and he must be strong for his people.

'To your places, friends,' he said, smiling a smile that failed to reach his eyes, mercifully shaded by his helmet.

'Let them come,' added Lathandrel, his warrior blood alight.

'I see we have little choice,' replied Jirdan, motioning towards the skyline.

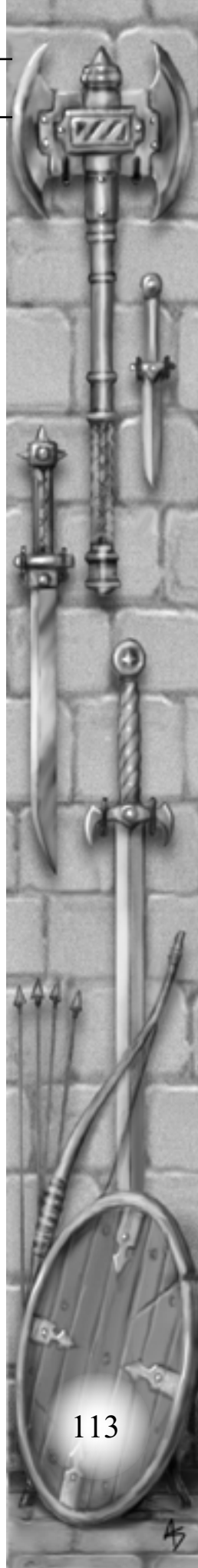
ignore the protection offered by heavier armour, bugbears always bring them when hunting powerful prey. Nets are only used as the bugbears close for combat, as the time it would take to refold the cumbersome weapons is put to better use by swinging a morning star. Well supplied bugbear cetes may display enchanted weapons or metal armour, but these will be used by leaders who will have equipment appropriate to their character class.

THE BUGBEAR RUSH

Though chaotic by nature, bugbears are capable of focusing their fighting ability when directed by a leader. When a bugbear group initiates a combat, the leader will charge towards the target he deems to be the strongest. The rest of his rout will follow his lead and each of them will concentrate their attacks on this target. Large routs will often have two or three leaders, each with a small group of bugbears assigned to them so no

bugbear goes wasted. Bugbears go in fast and furious, focusing their damage-dealing capacity to eliminate foes before they can react.

After the initial rush, bugbears will press their attack if they are winning. If there is any doubt about the direction the battle is taking, the leader will call a retreat and the bugbears will disengage and head back to a pre-arranged meeting point. Their path of withdrawal is often studded with traps prepared ahead of time and they will turn on any pursuers that fall victim to their snares and pits. If they are not pursued, the bugbears will regroup and set out after their foes again, hoping to catch them unawares with another rush. The cycle is repeated until the bugbears are reduced to one quarter of their original number or their enemies are dead. Defeated bugbears will go for help, if it is available, leading a larger war party back to take revenge on the bold adventurers.



METHODS OF WARFARE

This tactic is the cornerstone of bugbear combat, and is maddening to face when properly executed. To defend themselves, the bugbears' targets must use some method to either slow or stop the rapid retreat of the bugbears. Spells such as *animate rope*, *black tentacles*, *control plants*, *entangle*, *grease*, *hold person*, *order's wrath*, *plant growth*, *slow*, *soften earth and stone*, *spike growth*, *spike stones* and *web* all work well to slow down the movement of opponents. Due to the way that bugbears scatter themselves through the ranks of their enemies and then hare off in different directions during their retreat, it is difficult to bring spells of mass destruction into play. A *fireball* is a superb spell to use when your foes are distinct from your allies, but when both are standing side by side, it is not so useful.

Wise characters will also use the same tricks the bugbears employ - throwing nets over charging bugbears can disrupt their attack and prevent them from retreating. Whips and tanglefoot bags can also be used to deprive bugbears of their mobility and tripping foes works well to slow them down. Ranged weapons are a must, allowing defenders to fire on the bugbears as they charge forward *and* retreat. Strategically tossed flasks of burning oil can also create flaming blockades that reduce the area the bugbears have to manoeuvre, forcing them into positions chosen by their opponents.

All of these defensive options assume, of course, the bugbears do not succeed in their initial goal - striking so fast and hard that their targets are completely unable to fight back.

THE AMBUSH

Where the bugbear rush is a common tactic used in many situations, ambushes are carefully co-ordinated and rely on preparation and planning as much as a powerful initial attack. Ambushes are often used along well-travelled overland trade routes, and in defence of their lairs. No cete worth its salt will neglect such plans for its own lair, and most invent a scheme to pin down and ambush invaders.

When launching an attack against travellers, bugbears will build crude pit traps to trip horses and large net traps to entangle those on foot. Once a trap has been triggered, the bugbears follow up with a hail of javelins and the standard bugbear rush. Those that are not slain in the initial charge will be harried toward additional traps set up by the bugbears, with pit and crushing traps being particular favourites. The woods around a

bugbear ambush site are littered with crude but effective traps prepared ahead of time. Bugbears mark these traps with urine sprays to avoid stumbling into the devices themselves.

Precision Ambush (Bugbear only Feat)

Skilled dark rangers can ambush targets that would otherwise be protected by concealment.

Prerequisite: Dark Ranger.

Benefit: Bugbears with this feat can sneak attack targets that have concealment.

Like the standard bugbear rush, a bugbear ambush is designed to deal crippling damage in the opening seconds of combat. The ambush gives them the opportunity to tilt the odds further in their favour through surprise and the use of traps. After the first few rounds of the ambush, the bugbears will revert to the bugbear rush, using alternating waves of attack and retreat to wear down their foes. The best defence against a bugbear ambush is vigilance. Travellers using trained scouts to watch for surprise attacks give themselves at least a fighting chance against the bugbears, while those who skimp on such protection will often find themselves cut down before they have a chance to react.

Camouflage Paint

Bugbear dark rangers have created sticky pigments used to camouflage their armour and bodies, providing them with a +2 circumstance bonus to any Hide checks they make whilst wearing the paint. One pot of the paint can be used to coat one medium, two small, or half a large user.

Cost: 60 gp (not normally sold) *Weight:* ½ lb.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Bugbears shy away from open warfare because they generally lack the numbers and organisational skills to hold together a large army. Only clerics of Render have the strength of will to bring together a true bugbear army. The priest leads his cete to the lairs of his bugbear neighbours to convince these cetes to join with his own. Such endeavours are always goal-oriented, and the priest will stress how important his quest is to Render.

Bugbears may not be the most reverent creatures, but they are superstitious and unwilling to offend their gods if it can be avoided. Should a cete refuse to join with the priest and his growing army, skirmishes may erupt, but it is rare for a cete to be wiped out by a gathering of their cousins.

This manner of putting together an army can be conspicuous, which is another reason bugbears do not enjoy going to war. As they travel about gathering numbers and momentum, they must also be careful not to engage their enemies too early. Dark rangers will often travel ahead and around the army as it snakes its way through the countryside, acting as a crude early warning system. If an organised force assaults a growing bugbear army before they are confident of their numbers, the humanoids almost always scatter, preferring to return to their homes rather than face a losing battle. On the other hand, once a few hundred bugbears have been gathered, all hell will break loose. Whatever the goal of the army is, the priest sets about accomplishing it with a vengeance. Villages burn in their wake and entire woodlands are put to the torch. Rivers are poisoned with whatever filth the bugbears can put their hands on and fields are razed to the bare earth. Where the bugbears go, fear follows in their footsteps. Terrorism is a favourite activity of warring bugbears and they will often perform atrocities just to terrify their foes.

The typical goals of a bugbear army may be;

† Defilement of a temple of a 'good' aligned god. Because bugbears do not have a clear concept of what exactly a good god is, they are likely to launch indiscriminate attacks against any non-bugbear temples.

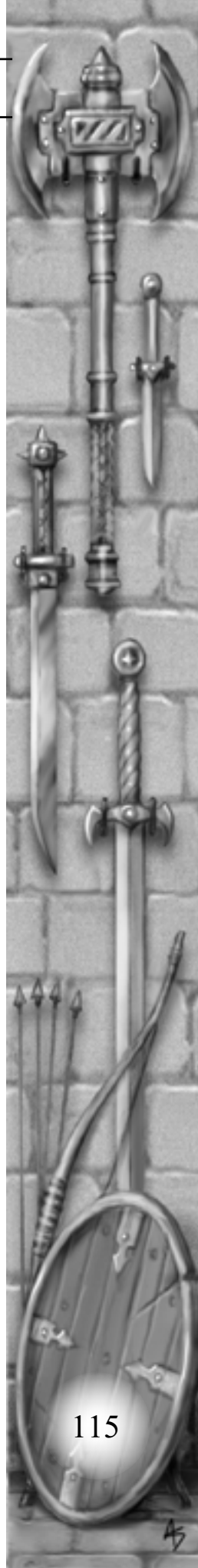
† Recovery of an artefact Render covets. Unable to create true artifacts of their own, clerics of Render may instead point their followers to the location of potent magical items.

† Annihilation of enemy cities on 'bugbear land.' Territorial wars are uncommon, but horrifying when they occur. Bugbears have been known to salt the earth, set fire to forests and otherwise despoil land their enemies occupy, having no qualms about wiping out anything necessary to drive others away.

† Disrupting the forces of other evil gods. Render likes to keep his hands in the affairs of more powerful gods and he uses his followers to strike against the servants of other dark gods. An army of bugbears marching through the corridors of the underdeep is enough to send many creatures fleeing.

† Bloodlust. There are times when a charismatic and insane bugbear priest will raise up an army of his kindred for no other purpose than to sate his own thirst for violence. These armies do not last long, however, as they are unable to maintain their focus without a clear goal in mind.

In general, bugbear armies will form slowly, strike once at full power and then fade away. Conquest is not something most bugbears are able to manage, and no bugbear would have the patience to rule over a large area even if they could take control of it. Bugbear hordes are raiders, not an occupying force bent on building an empire.



ROLEPLAYING WITH BUGBEARS

Bugbears are great for Games Masters who enjoy throwing nasty, evil villains at their adventurers. Cunning, ruthless and utterly without virtue, bugbears just cannot get any more evil. But they are more than mere cannon fodder destined to die by the score. Bugbears can also make excellent non-combat encounters, providing unscrupulous characters with powerful but dangerous allies. It is the intention of this chapter to shed some light on new ways to roleplay this race.

Lone bugbears are cautious, but curious, about travellers they encounter. A bugbear dark ranger will make an attempt at neutral contact with any adventurers he stumbles across, if only to gather information about them and spread a little misinformation of his own. If attacked, a lone bugbear will flee without hesitation, attempting to hide or go for help, depending on the circumstance.

Routs of bugbears will attack groups that appear weaker than themselves. It is a natural part of bugbear life to prey on the weak and with their constant hunger and greed, no rout is going to pass up a target that can fill their packs or their bellies. When encountering a strong group, though, the rout will attempt to either trail them at a safe distance (using their Move Silently and Hide skills to stay out of sight) or approach them openly with an offer of truce. Though bugbears are habitual liars, they may provide useful information to the characters during a peaceful meeting. Bugbears are more than willing to point adventurers toward their own enemies, and a wise group of travellers may even cultivate bugbear contacts within the underdeep to keep them apprised of the locations and activities of forces below the surface of the world. Of course, turning your back on a rout is almost always an invitation for a morningstar against your skull, so caution is always advised.

Stumbling blind into a bugbear lair may prove lethal. Those who immediately attempt to mollify the creatures with offers of treasure and servile praise for the

bugbears' obvious superiority may be allowed to flee, but death is often the only outcome in these situations. Bugbears value their privacy and since they cannot imagine keeping a bargain with outsiders themselves, they have little reason to believe anyone else will either. City bugbears are more amenable to contact with other races, as they often need information or supplies they cannot easily find for themselves. These bugbears will seek out unscrupulous characters with offers of gold in exchange for fresh meat or information about the latest guard patrols. Money up front should always be the rule for dealing with bugbears, as they have no qualms about cheating their partners.

Clerics of Stalker will contact other races if they have no choice, but avoid them whenever possible. The doctrines of Stalker make it clear that bugbears survive by staying away from their enemies, striking only when at a distinct advantage. A powerful priest might attack a weaker group by himself, but only if they are a very tempting target. Wounded or sick parties are at the most risk from such attacks, as are those returning from adventure loaded down with treasure and weary from their efforts.

Render's clerics are difficult to deal with and any group of bugbears led by a priest will share his god's views. Render calls for the blood of other races and does not believe in turning the other cheek or giving quarter. Because of this attitude, priests of this god are practically obligated to engage in wanton violence when running into members of another race.

Overall, it is important to remember that bugbears are victims of insatiable hunger and maddening greed. Appealing to either of these instinctual drives can help in surviving a bugbear encounter, as the humanoid are often willing to forego an immediate feast or ransacking if they have a reasonable chance of getting a better meal or more loot by letting their victims live. Characters that can lead bugbears to more tempting targets can convince the monsters to follow them, but they will need to be quick about it or the bugbears will get bored and hungry, effectively ending the truce.

SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Bugbears can make effective opposition for parties of 2nd to 5th level and the addition of a bugbear cleric can make such an encounter challenging for even higher level characters. The following are some story seeds that can be used to display the unique strengths and characteristics of bugbears, adding spice to what might otherwise be just another mundane combat with goblinoids.

CREEPING DEATH

Local religious figures are vanishing during the nights of the new moon, never to be seen again. A young acolyte claims to have seen a mysterious mist near the door to the priest's cottage on the night of his disappearance. Rumours abound of a vampire in the vicinity, but there have been no bodies found, much less any drained of blood.

In truth, a bugbear cleric of Stalker has moved into the area just outside of town and set himself up in a small cave hidden in the nearby forest. The priest sneaks into town under the cover of darkness and uses the *obscuring mist* spell to cloak his attacks and retreats. He is holding the clergy in his cave for a grand sacrifice to Stalker, which will occur in three months and after three more attacks. Adventurers can be brought in on the case by the local church (if there are clerics or paladins in the group) or may respond to the reward of 500 gold pieces being offered for either the return of the priests or the death of their kidnapper.

If confronted by strong opposition, the bugbear will waste no time unleashing any spells at his disposal and then do his best to escape.

AREN'T THEY CUTE?

Small items have begun to go missing from a renowned candy shop in the city. While the monetary loss is slight (most thefts have involved nothing more than sweets), the shop's owner is incensed over the matter. Because the city guard has better things to do than track

down candy thieves, the shop owner has contacted the characters as a last resort. He offers 20 gold pieces reward to the characters if they can capture or kill the thieves, a lot of money to him.

Bugbear children are the culprits and they sneak up through the sewer grates every few nights to steal more candy for their stash. Their enormous bugbear appetites keep them coming back for more, and characters will only have to wait a night or two before the youngsters make their move. Whatever the characters are expecting, they most likely will not be prepared for a pack of mangy young humanoids looking to score a quick belly-full of treats.

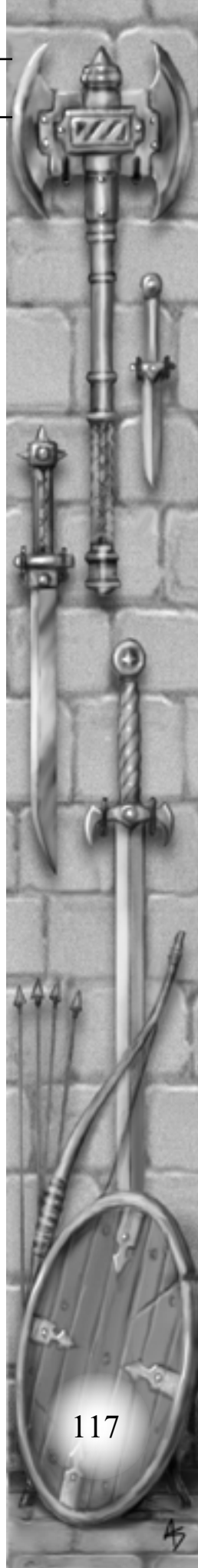
Regardless of how harmless the bugbears may appear, though, their presence hints at even more bugbears below the city – many of which want blood and gold rather than a few handfuls of candy. Characters who avoid detection and follow the young bugbears back to their lair find a large cete of the creatures gearing up for raids to the surface. Those who attack the young humanoids and let any escape become the targets of a bugbear vendetta that will not stop until either they, or the bugbears, are dead.

DARK TRADE

A new trade route is experiencing bandit problems and heroes are needed to clear the raiders away from the road. Upon arrival, the characters find a cete of bugbears harassing those travelling the trade road. The bugbears are thorough in their raiding, however, and have gone to the unusual lengths of burning the carts and wagons of merchants they encounter.

If the characters attack the bugbears, they are going to be in for a protracted guerrilla battle. The bugbears know the area well, are ready to lead pursuers through traps and treacherous terrain and relish the chance to test their mettle against something other than hired guards. During the fighting the characters will discover these bugbears are very well armed and many wear suits of chainmail tailored to their bulky, oversized bodies.

Cornered bugbears will offer up information about where their gear comes from – a merchant house with a vested interest in closing this trade route to their competitors. What the characters decide to do at that point is an adventure for another day. . .



TIDES OF WAR

A powerful leader has risen among the ranks of the bugbears, a cleric of the dark god Render. Under his guidance, an army of bugbears is forming in the dark recesses of the underdeep. Characters may catch wind of this from other subterranean creatures that have been displaced to the surface by the growing numbers of bugbears, they may stumble across evidence during their own travels beneath the earth, or may even receive a vision from one of their patron gods alerting them to the danger below their feet.

What the characters do about the problem can be the seed for an adventure series, or even the focus for a whole campaign. It can take a long time for the bugbears to get themselves to full force, and the actions of a few brave men and women may turn the tide of the war before it even starts. Heroes may undertake a war of shadows with the bugbears, striking at their leadership and attempting to reduce their numbers through strategic attacks at weak points. More mercenary characters may actually decide to work *for* the bugbears in an attempt to keep their location and activities secret from the surface world. Which ever side the characters take, dealing with the treacherous bugbears for an extended period of time will be a nerve-wracking prospect.

THE BLACK FINGERS

A bugbear khan named Graal has learned from his priests of an ancient bugbear artefact known as the *fist of blood*. In the prehistory of the world, bugbears were led to dominance over large swathes of land by a great leader whose name is lost to history. What is known about this leader is that his fist was passed down as a totem from khan to khan, insuring their continued victory in battle and prosperity in raiding. But a sneak attack by loathsome elves ended with the *fist of blood* being destroyed and its fingers scattered across the earth by fleeing cetes of bugbears. From that day forward, the bugbears have lived in relative isolation, eking out their survival among the realms of more numerous races.

During a raid on a svirfneblin colony, Graal discovered a locked chest containing many magic items – one of which was the core of the *fist of blood*. Inspired by this find, Graal has dispatched dark rangers to find information about the *black fingers* that must be found to restore the bugbears to their former glory. When the adventurers get wind of this, it becomes a race to track

down the few bugbear scholars in the world and find out what they know before the dark rangers find them, interrogate them, and then kill them.

This can lead to an extended series of adventures during which the adventurers must compete with a horde of cunning, evil monsters that will do anything to beat them to the punch. Only quick wits and strong sword arms will see the heroes through, and even then they'll need a healthy dose of luck to turn back the chaotic might of a bugbear khan and his minions.

Fist of Blood

Major Artefact

This artefact comes from the first days of the bugbear race and is actually a body part of their most famed khan. An elven mage shattered the item into six pieces, a core and five fingers, that were scattered by fleeing cetes of bugbears. If the pieces can ever be gathered together, the bugbears will have a potent item to rally around.

The *fist of blood* is a +5 *unholy chaotic morningstar* that provides a +3 morale bonus to all bugbears fighting under its owner's leadership. In addition, the *fist of blood* is able to cast the following spells three times a day: *animate dead*, *augury* and *chaos hammer*. Once per day, the *fist of blood* can also cast the following: *circle of death*, *earthquake* and *finger of death*. All spells are cast at the 15th level of ability.



LUURG'S WARREN

Long ago, a group of formians established a small outpost based around a natural cave complex and extended the area with tunnels of their own, creating a maze of twisting passages and irregular rooms from which they launched scouting missions into the surrounding countryside. When one of their tunnels breached the course of a subterranean river and sent water rushing into their home, the formians abandoned the outpost and returned to their home plane.

Over the years, the water level dropped and the flooded tunnels ran dry. A large cete of bugbears discovered the cave and its attached tunnels and took it as their home. The bugbears have been in this home for two years and will not move unless forced to due to their contacts in the area.

Their khan, Luurg, has worked out a deal with a local guild of thieves based in a city a few leagues distant. The thieves provide Luurg with news about trade caravans in exchange for occasional bugbear muscle, thus benefiting both groups. Luurg relies on the thieves and it is a relationship that may last some time as the bugbears benefit on both ends of the deal. The caravan information lets them pick and choose their targets for maximum gain without 'hunting out' the region, while loaning their more inexperienced members to the local thieves gives the younger bugbears a chance to practice their skills for the benefit of the cete.

WARREN NOTES

This warren is portrayed during the summer months, when bugbear activity is at a normal pace and dark rangers are in the field. If used during the winter, add five dark rangers to the number of bugbears present and reduce the chance of a guard being at his post (in areas 2 and 3) to 10%, day or night. The spring brings heightened activity to the lair and the chance of a guard being on duty rises to 75%, day or night.

DIRE RATS AND EQUIPMENT

The bugbears keep dire rats as semi-domesticated pets and a dozen of the creatures have taken up residence here, scavenging from the bugbears' refuse. These

creatures know enough to only attack outsiders and are allowed to wander freely throughout the lair. Games Masters should spring these creatures on adventurers at any inconvenient time. For their abilities and characteristics, refer to *Core Rulebook III*.

Unless otherwise noted, all bugbear warriors are equipped with morningstars, light wooden shields and leather armour. Female bugbears carry cleavers, but will fight only if forced.

ENCOUNTER LEVELS

The encounter levels noted for each area are accurate only if the creatures and tactics listed are used. Games Masters will need to adjust these levels if there are deviations from the lair as designed. Note that the treasure for this lair was based on the encounter level of the final battle with Luurg, as seen in area 6. Games Masters should feel free to adjust this as they see fit.

TRAPS

There are four types of trap in this lair, described below;

Pit Trap (10 ft. deep): CR ½; 1d6 damage; Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 20.

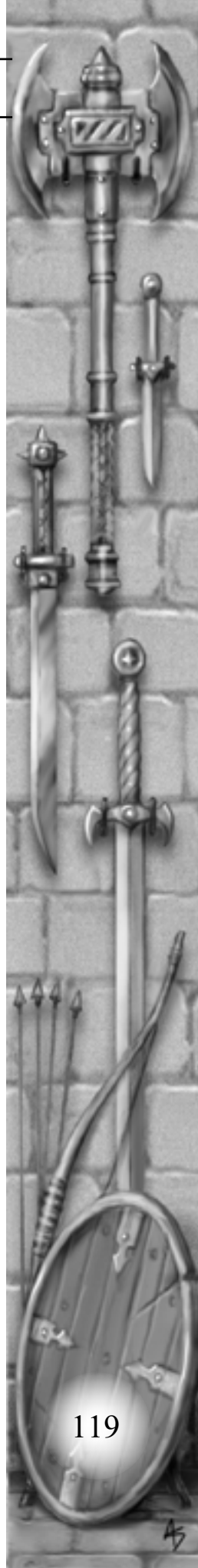
Spinning Star Trap: When tripped, five morningstars spin down on the end of a twisted cord, creating a flailing circle in the area noted on the map. CR 2; Atk +10 melee (2d6); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20. This trap must be manually reset, requiring 10 rounds and three bugbears to do so.

Deadfall Trap: When triggered, the ceiling gives way, releasing large stones and other debris on intruders. This effectively blocks passage through the trap's area of effect. The trap must be manually reset, taking 1d4 hours and three bugbears. CR 5; Atk +10 melee (5d6); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25.

Weighted Net Trap: CR 1; Atk +10 melee (special); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25. Characters within a 10 ft. square area are grappled by the net (Str 20) if they fail a Reflex save (DC 15).

TUNNELS AND WANDERERS

The entrances to the lair's tunnels are concealed with thin, dirty boards (for lower tunnels, Spot DC 15) or



LUURG'S WARREN

ratty blankets and cobwebs (for the upper tunnels, Spot DC 20). The tunnels themselves have seven-foot ceilings, were carved by formians and later expanded by the bugbears.

The following table can be used to handle wandering monsters for those Games Masters who desire to use them.

D20 Wandering Monster

1-5	1d2 dire rats (note that there are 12 rats total in this lair, deduct those killed from this number)
6-7	1 bugbear warrior (from area 9)
8-12	1d3 bugbear females (from area 5)
13-15	1d6 bugbear children (from area 7)
16-17	1d4 bugbear warriors (from area 6)
18	Gulgu
19	Murgul
20	Luurg

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

1. Entryway and Cooking Pit (EL 2)

The bugbears use this low-ceilinged room for their cooking, as the natural ventilation carries the smoke and other fumes up through the cavern's chimneys, dissipating them through the porous limestone.

Cooking is done during the early evening, and three females from area 5 tend the fire and turn a spit of meat over the flames. There is a 50% chance that a warrior from area 6 is here to oversee the operation. Children are never allowed in this area, for fear they will wander off and get lost or reveal the cete's presence.

Tactics: The females flee from intruders if at all possible, heading into the lair whilst shouting at the top of their lungs. Females continue their headlong flight deeper into the cavern to warn the rest of the females in area 5 and gather the children at area 7. The parade of females and young then hurry to the treasure room (area 11) to wait out the invasion.

If a warrior is present, he pushes the females back into the lair and attacks invaders only if he has no choice. By preference, he runs back into the lair and hides by the pull rope for the trap in area 4 (A on the map) in the hopes of catching the intruders unawares. If forced into combat, he does his best to delay the intruders and make enough noise to warn the lair at the same time. Guards in area 2 have no trouble hearing a battle in this area, and react according to the tactics section of those areas, below.

Creatures: Three bugbear females from area 5 and one warrior (see reference list for stats) from area 6.

2. Guard Post (EL 2)

The bugbears post a guard here every day, but it is rare for the guard to stay here for a full shift. During the day, there is a 25% chance of a guard from area 6 being at his post here; at night, the chance rises to 60%. If tensions are high (such as following a raid against the lair or an expected assault by their enemies) a guard is here at all hours, alert and ready for any trouble.

Tactics: If a guard spies intruders making their way into the lair, he immediately runs to alert the bugbears in areas 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 12. If there is a battle in area 1, the bugbear rushes to his comrades' defense, hoping to turn the invaders back. Otherwise, the bugbear takes note of any enemies in the cavern and then rendezvous with the other bugbears in area 6.

Creatures: Bugbear warrior (see reference list for stats).

3. The Larder (EL 1)

The bugbears use this area to store their food. Mounds of salt litter the floor along with crude racks for holding raw and salted meat. If an alarm has not been sounded, there is a 50% chance of finding four bugbear females here salting meat.

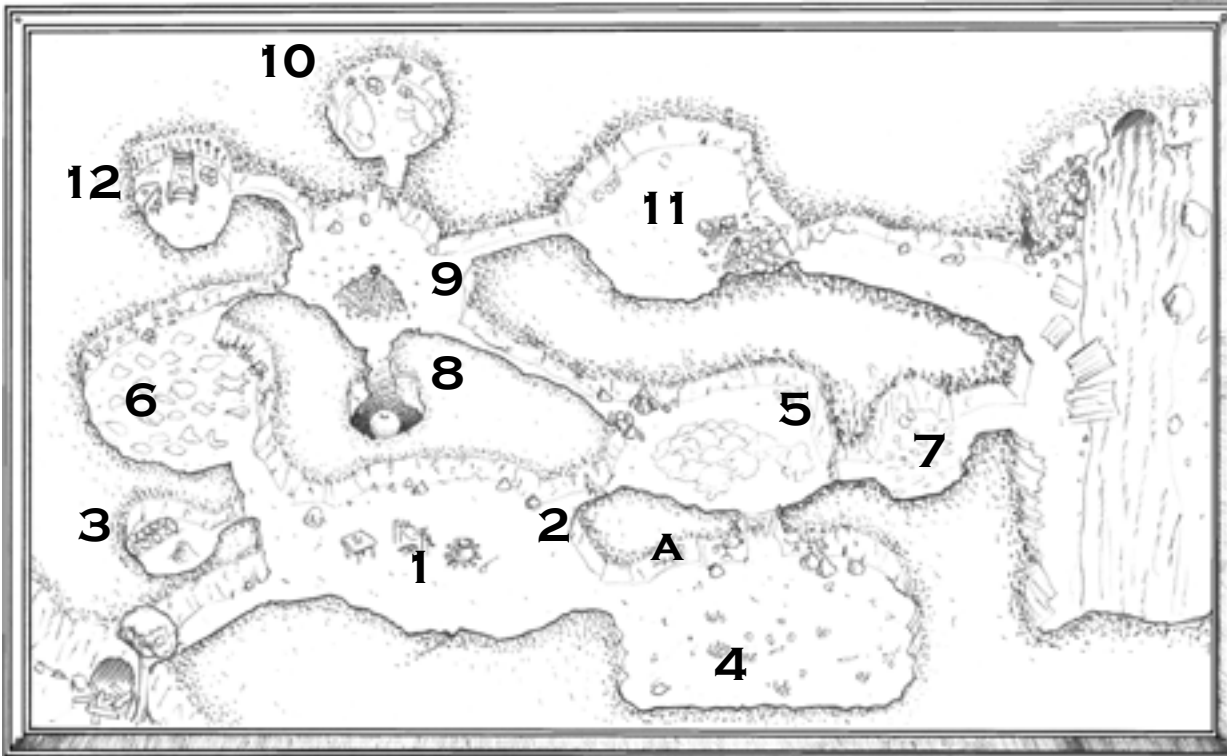
Tactics: When the alarm for invaders is sounded, the females flee this area by clambering up into the tunnel and running to the warriors' room. From there, they make their way through area 13 and on to area 5 where they warn the other females and head down to retrieve the children in area 7.

Creatures: Four bugbear females (see reference list for stats).

4. The Dining Hall (EL 7)

The bugbears take their meals in this room, ripping hunks of meat off whatever creature has been most recently cooked by the females. There are no furnishings here and the only decorations are bloody pictograms on the walls. Uneaten scraps are heaped along the walls and dragged down to area 13 to be dumped in the river once they start to stink.

The only meal that is 'served' to the bugbears occurs two hours after dusk, when the females drag in the carcasses cooked that evening. During this meal, all bugbears gather here to squabble over the more



tender portions with warriors getting first choice, the females and children waiting their turn. Meal times are raucous affairs and the bugbears will be subject to an automatic surprise if they are attacked during this time.

At other times of the day, there is a 25% chance of 1d4 bugbear warriors from area 6 being present, nibbling on the scraps left over from the last meal. There is a 50% chance of 1d3 females from area 5 and 1d6 children from area 7 being present at any time as they struggle to filch food to survive. Two dire rats are always found here, gnawing on bones.

Tactics: If this room is breached during mealtime, the bugbears suffer one round of surprise as their attention is focused on eating. Bugbear women and children attempt to flee from intruders if they have not been warned and are caught in this room. Warriors retreat, but one remains behind to trigger the trap by pulling the cord at A. Either a warrior or a female, depending on who is present, rushes to area 5, then sounds the alarm. The remaining warriors rendezvous with their comrades at area 6.

If a warning has been sounded, a single bugbear from area 6 will be hiding near A to trip the Spinning Star trap on the invaders.

Creatures: Four bugbears warriors, three female bugbears and six young bugbears (see reference list for stats); two dire rats (hp 7 and 5).

5. Living Area, Females (EL 3)

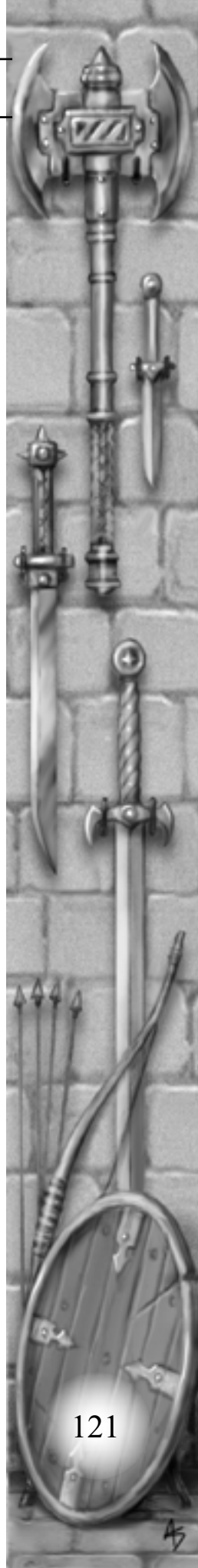
This room is littered with thick wool blankets that the females use for bedding. Unlike the males, the females cluster together in the center of the room, creating a communal nest. If the alarm has not been sounded, the females are resting or nibbling on scraps they managed to wrest from the males and talking quietly. If the cete is in a state of alarm, the females are not here but instead follow the tactics listed below.

Tactics: When an alarm is heard, the females leave this area and head for the nursery at area 9. Once there, they round up the children and make their way to area 11 where they await word from Luurg and the warriors. If surprised in this room, they attempt to get to their children in area 9 to get to area 13 and flee the cete's lair altogether. They will return in 4d4 hours to see if there is anything left of their home.

Creatures: 20 female bugbears, or 17 during the two hours after dusk when the females are preparing food (see reference list for stats).

6. Living Area, Warriors (EL 7)

Twenty warriors call this cavern home. They sleep on ragged piles of cloth that have been accumulated through raids on merchant caravans and outlying villages. The walls of this area are covered with the same bloody pictograms as can be found in area 4, with depictions of monstrous bugbears and their fallen victims.





LUURG'S WARREN

The warriors can be found here at most times of the day or night, unless they are taking part in a raid. If an alarm has not been sounded, the bugbears will be here throwing knucklebones for scraps of meat.

Tactics: When an alarm has been sounded, the bugbear warriors, sergeants and Khan Luurg gather here to prepare their defenses. It takes three rounds for all of these to gather here. On the rounds following the arrival of the final stragglers, Luurg dispatches one half of the warriors, under the leadership of Gulgu through one tunnel to swing round behind the invaders. The other half, led by Luurg himself, will face the enemy and slowly draw them back into area 9 where they will seek to make a stand. See the Tactics section of area 9 for more information on their plans.

Creatures: 20 bugbear warriors (see reference list for stats).

Treasure: Luurg does not allow the rank and file warriors to keep any treasure in their living area, as all of this is transported to area 11 following a raid.

7. Nursery

Over forty bugbear young make their home here amidst the clutter of tattered rags and cast-off clothing they use as beds. The young stay here, out of the way of the warriors and females, except for meal times when they scramble for food in area 4 along with the rest of the bugbears.

Tactics: The bugbear children have no tactics to speak of. If surprised by invaders, they will do their best to flee, heading toward area 5 and the protection of their mothers. If that is not possible, they will do their best to scatter through whatever exits are available to them. Bugbear young will not attack invaders unless directed to do so by their parents.

Creatures: 43 bugbear young (see reference list for stats).

8. Shrine of Stalker

This small altar is dedicated to Stalker and is tended by Murgul under the watchful eye of Luurg. The walls, floor and ceiling of this room are blackened with charcoal, and bits of quartz are ground into the walls to form glittering white eyes all around. The altar itself is a simple boulder with a depression in the top to receive offerings. Murgul's faith has been rewarded and if he comes here during an invasion he finds a vial of bugbear blood poison (see pg.109) to use against the intruders.

9. Shrine of Render (EL 15)

This room is dominated by a massive pile of skulls that serves as the altar to Render; a morningstar surmounts the shrine, its surface clotted with bits of flesh and smears of blood. Bugbears are not much on worship, however, and their services occur only following a successful raid when they add their trophies to the stack and bellow their praises to Render. Luurg is here each midnight, praying over the altar and consecrating it to Render with gifts of bone and blood.

The altar itself is a focus for the bugbear community, and any bugbear doing battle with invaders in this area benefits from a +1 morale bonus to all actions and damage rolls. The morningstar atop the altar is a *Render's Star* when used to defend against intruders in this area. If the morning star is ever removed from this area by a non-bugbear, it transforms immediately into a -3 *curse morningstar* that is recognizable to any bugbear who sees it as a stolen relic.

Tactics: The altar gives the bugbears strength and courage, making it a logical place to make a stand against intruders. As noted above, once Luurg's cete is aware of the intruders in their midst, half the warriors use the tunnels to circle around behind the trespassers and trail them to this area, where the other half are waiting.

Luurg and his warriors stand in a loose circle around the room, blocking access to areas 8, 10, 11 and 12. Luurg will be positioned near the control for the Weighted Net trap here (found at the base of the Shrine) and drops the net on any invaders that pass through the trap's area of effect. The noise of the trap triggering alerts the bugbears led by Gulgu to launch their rear attack. With the trap sprung and the rear-guard attacking, the invaders find themselves assaulted on two fronts. Those in the net are spared from the initial attack, but are questioned at the close of combat if the bugbears are victorious.

The bugbears use the tactics noted in the Methods of Warfare chapter, with groups of four engaging a single target and unleashing their full fury. Luurg uses *blindness* to incapacitate apparent spell casters (primarily unarmoured foes) followed by *doom* to weaken the nearest front-line fighter. The khan then casts *silence* on enemy spell casters and *bull's strength* on himself. *Bane* and *bestow curse* are used to further weaken opponents and *cause fear* is used to chase powerful melee fighters from the battle. Gulgu's warriors are trained to spot spell casters and pounce on any in the rear ranks of the invaders if they see spells being prepared. Both Luurg and Gulgu have mastered the Power Attack feat, and use it to good effect here.

Clerics are the bugbears' prime targets in the initial rush and any invader with a visible holy symbol takes the brunt of the first attacks. Wizards and sorcerers are the next targets, followed by bards with melee fighters left for last. Murgul circles the battle with an eye toward engaging any rogues that manage to tumble through the encircling action, taking any available sneak attack opportunity. If more than three bugbears fall in the defense of the lair, Murgul retreats to the Shrine of Stalker (area 8) and poison his weapons with the vial of bugbear blood poison found there. He then returns to the fray in an attempt to poison as many of the enemy as possible.

If the invaders attempt to withdraw from this area before engaging Luurg and his warriors, Gulgu will engage immediately and begin shouting for reinforcements. Fighting the adventurers in another area of the lair does not afford the bugbears the same advantages as battling near their shrine, but they will enjoy numerical superiority in most cases.

Should the invaders defeat six or more of the bugbears while suffering losses below half of their own strength, Luurg calls a retreat. Bugbears rush away to launch the rafts found in area 13 and take to the subterranean river. The females bundle up as much treasure as they can carry and join the warriors in their flight. The bugbears plan to meet again at a lair chosen a few months ago, and begin building up their power base once more.

Treasure: There is no treasure here other than the morning star on the shrine which becomes cursed if removed from this area.

Creatures: Luurg; Murgul; Gulgu; 20 bugbear warriors. Note that any bugbears previously killed by invaders should be removed from this final encounter.

10. Sergeants' Chamber (EL 6)

Gulgu and Murgul, Luurg's sergeants, occupy this room as their reward for faithful service and each received a pile of furs and a small chest to store their personal treasures. Both sergeants are here if it isn't mealtime or a warning has not been sounded. If the cete is aware of invaders,

they hide their chests in a shallow depression and move to area 6 to follow the tactics outlined there.

Tactics: Gulgu is a powerful warrior, who he won't hesitate to fight if cornered in his room. Murgul attempts to flee if an attack occurs, doing his best to warn others. He heads first to area 6 to warn the warriors, and then tries to reach area 2 and sound the alarm. Murgul then stalks the intruders using stealth to ambush them when possible.

Creatures: Gulgu (use the bugbear leader warrior variant) and Murgul (use the bugbear leader rogue variant).

Treasure:

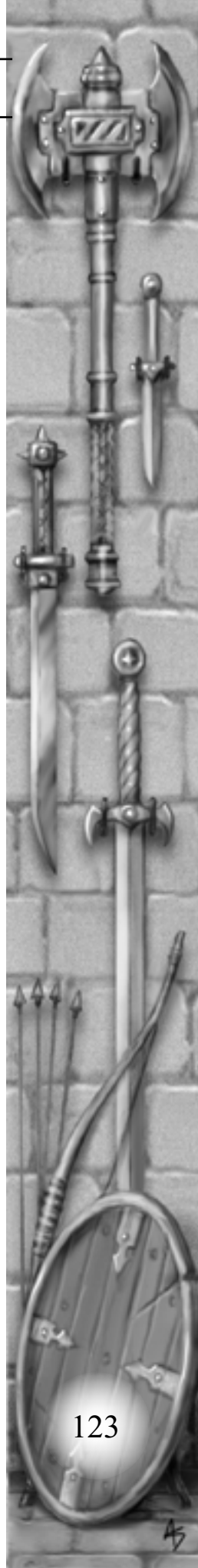
Gulgu's: Flawed emerald (12 gp), crown of silver (50 gp), black amber (20 gp), ruby (700 gp).

Murgul's: Pink opal (850 gp), 60 pp.

11. Treasure Room

This is where the bugbears store their loot, which Luurg counts at least once every other day to insure no one is pilfering from the cete's stash. The room is unadorned stone, with the treasure stacked in a pile in the southeast corner to conceal the lower escape tunnel.

In the event of an invasion, the females gather the young here and begin loading the cete's treasure into burlap sacks for easy transport. When the retreat is called the females take the children down the lower tunnel and head south into the underdeep in an attempt to get to the back-up lair chosen by Luurg a few months ago. If the invaders have breached this



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tunnel, the females load the young onto the crude rafts at area **13** and will try to float away down the river to their new home. If cornered, the women fight with their crude meat cleavers and try to break through the invaders to get their young to safety. In this case, they drop the treasure they are carrying to make better time and keep from being encumbered in combat.

The females take the gems and items when they evacuate and leave the coins behind for intruders to pick over.

Creatures: 43 bugbear young and 20 bugbear females (see reference list for stats).

Treasure: Silver ankle chain (700 gp), golden crown with ruby (2200 gp), golden music box (2050 gp), ivory scroll tube (90 gp), mithril brooch (1000 gp), ornate silver arrowhead (70 gp), mithril pirate's hook (900 gp), 300 platinum coins, 2 emeralds (400 and 550 gp), quartz ring (30 gp), blue topaz (550 gp), small diamond (100 gp), obsidian (10 gp), opal (40 gp), mottled jasper (60 gp), aquamarine (100 gp), ruby (75 gp), star rose quartz (25 gp).

12. Luurg's Chamber (EL 7)

The leader of this cete, Luurg is an accomplished khan and priest of Render (see reference list, below). The walls of his chamber are etched with images of morningstars, leaving no surface spared. Unlike the other bugbears, who have pelts or blankets to sleep on, Luurg has a large bed complete with sheets (albeit stained) and pillows. He also has a small writing desk that he uses to write to the rogues allied with his cete, and a chest of his personal treasure. Luurg has kept most of the cete's best loot for himself, and has a substantial hoard of his own.

Tactics: Luurg spends most of his time here, either alone in private devotion to Render or enjoying the company of a female companion. During the daily meal, he joins the others in the dining area and can be found in area **4**. If an alarm has been sounded, Luurg makes his way to area **6** to await the arrival of his warriors and sergeants. If his troops do not arrive within five rounds of the alarm being sounded, Luurg knows something is wrong and sends the women and children away, then searches for the other bugbears himself. He makes heavy use of the various tunnels worming their way through the lair, and uses his abilities to gain surprise on the intruders whenever possible. If the invaders are a serious threat, Luurg retreats with his women and children to their back-up lair deeper below the earth and starts life in this new location. He never forgets, however, and the invaders will see him again.

Creature: Luurg (use the Bugbear Khan in the reference list).

Treasure: 572 gp, white opal (1300 gp), flawless jasper (50 gp).

13. Refuse Dump

The bugbears dump their refuse into the subterranean river that flows through this area and let the rushing waters carry it away. This area also serves as an emergency evacuation point for the bugbears and there are a dozen crude rafts on the bank near the river. Each raft can hold up to five adult bugbears (two children count as one adult for purposes of determining how many fit on a raft), and an additional one or two could cling to the side of a raft, allowing them all to escape via this route. There is nothing of value here and the bugbears keep the area clean enough to avoid attracting scavengers such as carrion crawlers.

Tactics: If encountered here, the bugbears are on their way out of the lair and have no intention of making a desperate last stand. The females and young board the rafts, which the warriors then shove into the river, letting the water carry them away to safety.



BUGBEAR REFERENCE LIST

This chapter provides Games Masters with a ready-to-use list of typical bugbears. These creatures can be dropped directly into a game as wandering monsters or may form the basis of unique adversaries within the Games Master's own scenarios.

Bugbear Khan

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

5th Level Cleric of Render

Hit Dice: 8d8 + 8 (44 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)

AC: 22 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +1 light wooden shield, +7 +2 chainmail), touch 11, flat-footed 21

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+7

Attack: Morningstar +8 melee (1d8+2) or javelin +6 ranged (1d6+2)

Full Attack: Morningstar +8 melee (1d8+2) or javelin +6 ranged (1d6+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Rebuke undead 3/day, spells

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., scent

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +10

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 10

Skills: Climb -2, Concentration +10, Hide -1, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +2, Spot +8

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Iron Will

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: +2 chainmail

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/3+1/2+1, save DC 13 + spell level): 0th Level: *detect magic, guidance, light, resistance x2*; 1st level: *bane, cause fear, divine favor, magic weapon, Render's wrath*; 2nd level: *bull's strength, shatter, silence, spiritual weapon*; 3rd level: *bestow curse, blindness, magic vestment*.

Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), War (Martial Weapon Proficiency (morningstar) and Weapon Focus (morningstar)).

Khan's Advisor

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

2nd Level Cleric of Stalker

Hit Dice: 5d8 + 5 (27 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +1 light wooden shield, +2 leather), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5

Attack: Scimitar +5 melee (1d6+2/18-20) or +1 short bow

+5 ranged (1d6+1/x3)

Full Attack: Scimitar +5 melee (1d6+2/18-20) or +1 short bow +5 ranged (1d6+1/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Rebuke undead 3/day, spells

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +2, Concentration +2, Hide +3, Knowledge (Religion) +2, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Point Blank Shot

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: +1 short bow

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/3+1, save DC 12 + spell level):

0th Level: *Detect magic, detect poison, guidance, purify food and drink*; 1st Level: *Cause fear, magic weapon, obscuring mist, protection from good*.

Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise and Hide become class skills).

Bugbear Leader

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

2nd Level Rogue

Hit Dice: 3d8 + 2d6 + 5 (25 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 18 (+2 Dex, +3 natural, +3 leather armour +1), touch 12, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5

Attack: Morningstar +5 melee (1d8+2) or short bow +5 ranged (1d6/x3)

Full Attack: Morningstar +5 melee (1d8+2) or short bow +5 ranged (1d6/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Sneak attack +1d6

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., evasion

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +1

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 9

Skills: Climb +4, Hide +9, Listen +6, Move Silently +12, Spot +6

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: *Leather armour +1, potion of spider climb, potion of cure light wounds, potion of blur*

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Bugbear Leader

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

2nd Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 3d8 + 2d10 + 5 (27 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

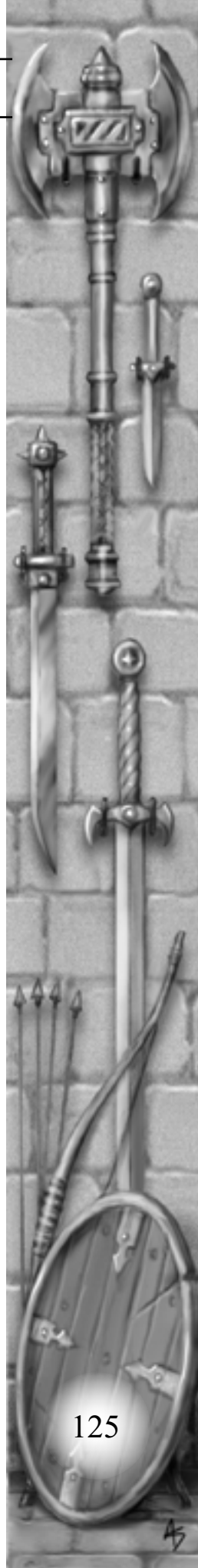
Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +1 light wooden shield, +2 leather), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+7

Attack: +1 morningstar +7 melee (1d8+3) or javelin +5 ranged (1d6+3)

Full Attack: +1 morningstar +7 melee (1d8+3) or javelin



BUGBEAR REREFERENCE LIST

+5 ranged (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., scent

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Climb +3, Hide +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3

Feats: Alertness, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: +1 morningstar

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Dark Ranger

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

2nd Level Rogue / 3rd Level Dark Ranger

Hit Dice: 6d8 + 2d6 + 24 (57 hp)

BUGBEAR SPELLS

There are many reports from adventurers telling of bugbear clerics wielding divine powers previously unknown in their experience. Even the clerics of other gods are often at a loss to explain the remarkable powers of their bugbear counterparts. Such spells are few in nature but are relatively common amongst the devoted followers of Render and Stalker. The two spells listed below may only be used by bugbear clerics who worship Stalker or Render respectively. Spellcasters of other races or faiths may not use them under any circumstances.

Stalker's Ambush

Conjuration

Level: Clr 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 100 ft.

Effect: All bugbears within 100 ft. burst centered on caster

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

When cast, *Stalker's ambush* wraps all bugbears within 100 feet of the caster in shadows, providing them with concealment (20% miss chance) and a +1 profane bonus to the first attack they make.

Render's Wrath

Evocation [Sonic]

Level: Clr 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 ft.

Effect: 30 ft. burst centered on caster

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

With a mighty roar, the cleric of Render unleashes the wrath of his god on his enemies. All non-bugbears within the area of effect will suffer 1d4 points of sonic damage and have a 75% chance of dropping any held item as the blast of Render's rage strikes them.

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 19 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, +3 +1 *shadow leather*), touch 13, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+8

Attack: Scimitar +8 melee (1d6+2/18-20) or short bow +9 ranged (1d6/x3)

Full Attack: Scimitar +8/+3 melee (1d6+2/18-20) or short bow +9/+4 ranged (1d6/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: +3d6 sneak attack

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., evasion, poison expertise, scent

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +12, Will +4

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +23, Listen +9, Move Silently +17, Spot +9

Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude, Point Blank Shot, Track

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: *Shadow leather armor* +1, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of blur*, *potion of cure moderate wounds* x2, *potion of ghoul touch*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of water breathing*

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Bugbear Warrior

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

Hit Dice: 3d8 + 3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +2 leather, +1 small shield), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+4

Attack: Morningstar +5 melee (1d8+2) or javelin +3 ranged (1d6+2)

Full Attack: Morningstar +5 melee (1d8+2) or javelin +3 ranged (1d6+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., scent

Saves: Fort + 2, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Climb +3, Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (morningstar)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Bugbear Female

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 13 (+3 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+1

Attack: Cleaver +1 melee (1d4)

Full Attack: Cleaver +1 melee (1d4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., scent

Saves: Fort + 3, Ref +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Climb +1, Hide +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +3
Feats: Alertness
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Bugbear Infant
Small Humanoid (Goblinoid)
Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 12 (+1 natural, +1 size), touch 11, flat-footed 11
Base Attack: +0/-5
Attack: Bite +0 melee (1d2-1)
Full Attack: Bite +0 melee (1d2-1)
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5ft./ 5ft.
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., scent
Saves: Fort + 0, Ref +2, Will -1
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 4
Skills: Listen +1, Move Silently +4, Spot +1
Feats: Alertness
Challenge Rating: 1/2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil.

‘When they come, it will be fast and furious. They’ll be in bunches of half a dozen or so, led by a bigger one. He’s the one to watch. You get the big one, the rest will bolt.’

‘But they are *all* big!’ complained one of the pupils.

‘Nonsense. Size is relative. Are they as big as an ogre? A troll? A kraken? Of course not.’

‘They look big to me,’ the pupil continued.

The teacher smiled. ‘Nevertheless, they bleed, and bleeding is what counts. Now, where were we? Oh, yes...their attack. Well, let’s assume you’ve seen them off, for if you don’t what comes next is an irrelevance. Don’t be fooled by their flight. More often than not it is well prepared. Nothing a bugbear likes more than to separate a fellow from his comrades and lead him to his death.’

He waited, expecting another interruption, but none came. The class was riveted now, keen to learn about one of their future enemies.

‘Bugbears like traps,’ he continued at length, letting the pause tighten his subject’s focus. ‘Especially the sort that speaks of the wild hunter. Stake pits, snares, rope traps, that sort of thing. Well disguised too. Don’t mistake the bugbear for a fool, just because he looks like one.’ That raised a gentle, if slightly nervous, laugh.

He waited now.

‘Erm...so, how do we actually *beat* bugbears then, sir?’

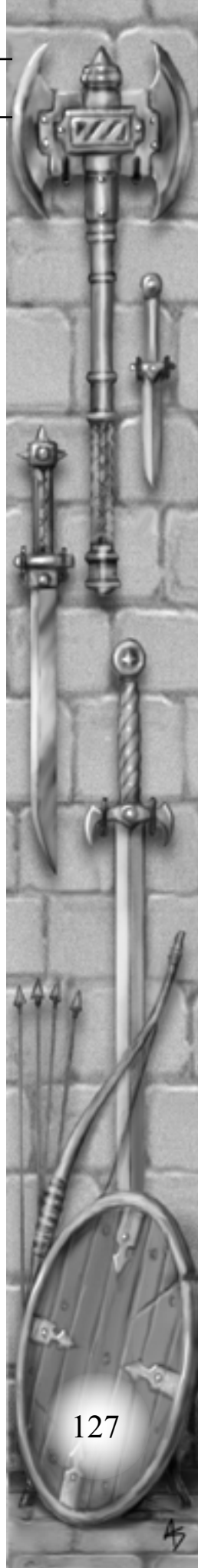
The old man smiled approvingly. It was the right question. ‘Quite easy actually, if you stay calm and remember your business. We play them at their own game. Lay out some traps of our own. Have our mages standing by with spells to slow them down. Do you see? You have to think like your enemy to beat him. It’s not an original concept by any means.’

He waited for the knowing chuckles to pipe down. At least they were understanding previous lessons. It was a good sign.

‘He likes ambushes, does Friend Bugbear,’ the old man continued. ‘Both attack and defence. If you are in his country, always have a good scout out ahead, and make sure you keep him in sight. No point walking round a bend in the track and wondering where the devil he’s got to. Chances are he’s already dead and you are short one scout.’

‘But how would they know?’ protested a youngster.

The teacher sighed, shaking his head gently. ‘Have you not been listening boy? I think a visit to the master-at-arms might focus your concentration suitably,’ and he made a quick, written note. One young man would be missing his dinner that evening. ‘Treat the bugbear with respect. If you don’t, it’ll be *you* who pays!’





XII

TROLL STUDY

no.1



EYES SUNKIN
DEEP INTO
CRANIUM

ENLARGED
SPINE



NATURALLY
CROUCHED
POSTURE



WIDE
POWERFUL
HANDS

ELONGATED
FEET



William
2002

The Slayer's Guide To Trolls

Trolls are a staple of fantasy adventure, often used when the Player Characters have advanced to the point where goblins, orcs and even bugbears pose little threat to the party. Trolls are poised right at the boundary between goblinoids and giants. While technically classified as giants, they are unquestionably the smallest of such creatures yet, standing some nine feet tall, they easily tower over even the greatest of bugbears. Furthermore, the troll's distinctive regenerative abilities make them memorable foes and a much greater challenge than a mere nine-foot goblin.

Trolls are often first encountered singly, as powerful, brutish strong-arms for a group of the lesser goblinoids. Games Masters often throw a troll into the mix to toughen up an encounter with a band of orcs or hobgoblins, with little thought as to the reasons for such a relationship between the species. However, as will become evident as we explore troll culture, such mixed-race encounters are not only plausible but even quite commonplace.

The knowledge that follows has been compiled over the ages by those adventurers and scholars lucky enough to

have encountered trolls and lived to tell the tale. Games Masters will learn many behind-the-scenes details about troll culture enabling them to make memorable encounters with this race for their players, while the players themselves may learn a fact or two that could possibly save the lives of their characters.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 games, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, thoroughly detailing their beliefs, society and method of warfare. Typically, these will be races all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who view them as little better than cannon fodder.

TROLLS – RAVENOUS PREDATORS

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race, in this case the troll. You will find detailed information on trollish physiology, habitat and society, giving you a fundamental level of understanding on how this race exists and interacts with the rest of the world. Players can learn the types of combat tactics trolls are likely to employ against their characters and Games Masters are given guidelines on how to introduce trolls into their existing campaigns, and will also benefit from material demonstrating how to portray these creatures to the players. A few troll subspecies can

change the expectations of any encounter, as do the new trollish feats that alter the standard troll into something even more horrific. Finally, a complete troll lair is featured to be used as either an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios or even just as an example of how such troll lairs are generally laid out.

There are more to trolls than first meets the eye. After reading the *Slayer's Guide to Trolls*, you may never view these monsters in quite the same way again.



Naturally, Bjorgus was the first to see it. He was, after all, well ahead of the rest of us, in the musty darkness of the dungeon, out of the range of our sputtering torches. It was of some comfort to us, here in the middle of our first underground excursion, that such a sturdy and battle-hardened dwarf veteran led us in this foray. Thomas and I had thought it great fun to leave our village for a life of high adventure, but here, in the dark, we felt small and exposed. The others didn't look much more confident either. We were lucky to have the dwarf, I reckoned. In his many years of adventuring Bjorgus had seen it all, or so it seemed, and had lived to tell of it. He had a collection of scars that was the envy of us younger folk, and a story to go with each one. Sometimes I thought he did go on a bit, particularly with a yard of ale inside him, but that was to be expected. I'd never even been in a tavern until I met him. There was not a man among us that did not look up to old Bjorgus, despite the fact that we stood a good head taller than him. He was almost our surrogate father.

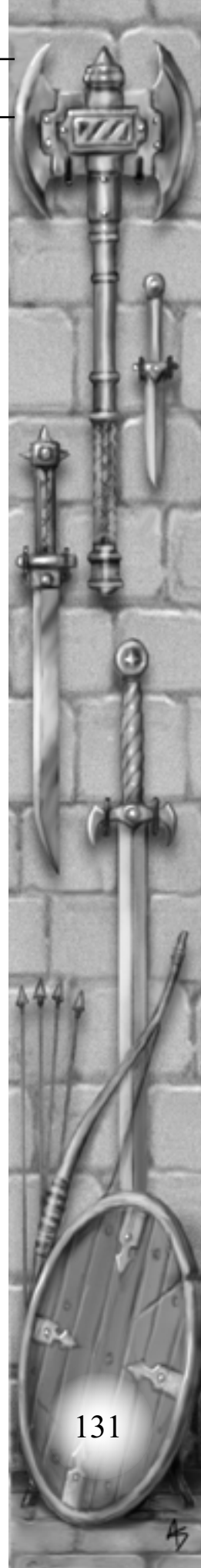
Our first indication that something was wrong was when we heard a dwarven curse from beyond the gloom of the corridor ahead. None of us spoke Bjorgus' language, but a man knows the sound of a curse when he hears it no matter what tongue it is spoken in. This was followed by the sound of booted feet running quickly in our direction.

We tightened our grip on our weapons and raised our shields to the ready position. I felt my knees trembling like leaves in the wind. If whatever lay ahead had old Bjorgus backing up for a tactical retreat... Well then, we were going to be ready for it and show the old dwarven fighter that we were not afraid, that our months of training would be put to good use.

'Out of my way, ye ninnies!' shouted Bjorgus as he sped into the circle of torchlight. 'It's a troll! Run! Run ye weasels! If he catches us we're all doomed!' And he sped past, ploughing through us like a scythe through wheat. Tomas and I exchanged looks, and neither of us could believe that our hero's nerve had left him like that. Bjorgus, who we had seen cut his way through half-a-dozen goblins before we could even draw our swords. Bjorgus, who once killed two kobolds by smashing their ugly heads together. Whatever it was that had spooked him so badly, it had to be pretty nasty. I know Thomas and I were both thinking of turning tail and following Bjorgus in a hasty retreat, but neither of us wanted to be the first one to do so, and I am willing to bet the three guys behind us were feeling the same way too, because we did not hear them running either.

The firm grip I held on my sword seemed to loosen of its own volition as the troll entered our little circle of torchlight, hooting and gibbering. I looked in horror at it. Thick, rubbery lips curled back from its mouth to expose a wicked set of pointed teeth, its long arms waving back and forth as it loped in our direction. I can clearly remember noticing there was drool running from its mouth. I do not remember dropping my weapon, or my shield, but I did.

Rounding several corners without really noticing where I was going, I found out that I did one thing eminently better than old Bjorgus. Actually, two things. I turned out to be pretty good at overtaking as well.



TROLL PHYSIOLOGY

The first time an adventuring party comes up against a troll they are liable to be taken aback by the creature's ferocious demeanour and bestial appearance. Unlike the more 'civilised' goblinoids, the troll is unlikely to be wearing any armour or clothing, and more often than not will be weaponless as well. Of course, this is not necessarily a good thing, for the troll has natural weapons in the form of wicked claws and a set of vicious, razor-sharp teeth, all of which are put to good use on the battlefield.

Although weighing in at an average of 500 pounds, trolls are often lanky to the point of seeming frail, but they possess a surprising amount of strength despite the thinness of their limbs. A troll's arms are disproportionately long for its body, and the fact that the creature's posture is stooped, with its knuckles often dragging on the ground when it runs, contributes to giving it a somewhat simian appearance. Its skin coloration belies any resemblance to the simian races, as troll flesh runs the gamut from a moss green to a sickly grey, often with a mottling effect combining both colours. The skin is often lumpy and warty, and from a distance may resemble scales. Thick, hairlike tangles sprout from the top of a troll's head, writhing of their own accord depending upon its mood. While these movements may seem erratic to an outside observer, trolls are remarkably perceptive to the moods of others of their race just by observing the motion of their hairlocks. These growths are present only on the top of the head; trolls are otherwise hairless.

While female trolls are larger and stronger than the males, it is difficult to differentiate between the sexes at a distance since females do not sport breasts any more so than gorillas or chimpanzees, and facial features and hairlocks bear very little sexual dimorphism. Trolls have no taboo against nudity and usually stride around unclad, viewing clothing and armour as something to be worn only when it suits an obvious purpose.

Trolls have four digits on each wide hand, with three strong fingers and a powerful thumb each ending in blackened claws. Their massive feet bear only three similarly clawed toes, leaving unmistakable tracks that rangers quickly learn to recognise in troll-infested areas.

Trolls speak the common language of the giants. Both sexes speak in rough, deep, grating voices; the females' voices are if anything even deeper than those of the males. Trolls speak in short, clipped (almost barking) sentences, as if they are physically ripping the words out of their throats. Despite sharing the same language, many of the more civilised giant races have a hard time understanding troll speech.

HEIGHTENED SENSES

The troll's most distinctive facial feature is its lengthy, drooping nose. Trolls have as much muscular control over their noses as some dogs have over their ears: For instance, a troll can pull its nose upright when actively sniffing, for instance, a common practice during combat that prevents it from getting in the way of bite attacks. As might be expected in a creature with such a well-endowed proboscis, a troll's sense of smell is exceptional. It can detect intruders within 30 feet by sense of smell alone, and often uses its olfactory abilities to track down prey by their scent-spoors. Furthermore, trolls can detect the subtle pheromones others of their race exude through their pores, and interpret the slight nuances in odour caused by differing emotional states. So important is the creature's sense of smell that the size of one's nose is not only a status symbol, but also a measure of attractiveness and a major influence in attracting potential mates.

Their other senses are slightly less impressive except for eyesight, which allows them to see perfectly well in the dark to a range of 90 feet, significantly further than most other races gifted with this ability. A troll's eyes are dull and black, sunken into its face behind furrowed brows. Trolls dislike bright lights, but suffer no combat penalties even in direct sunlight. Trolls have small, lobeless ears that are pressed tightly to the sides of their heads. While their hearing is nothing spectacular – almost on par with that of a human – trolls are constantly alert to their surroundings and often pick up on small sounds that a human might disregard. Thus, while a troll's hearing covers a slightly smaller audible range than a human's, trolls usually pay more attention to what they do hear.

REGENERATION

The troll is perhaps best known for its extraordinary ability to heal its wounds almost instantly. Regeneration not only allows the troll to shrug off most damage, but also to reattach severed limbs or regrow lost ones; any appendage can grow back in under 20 minutes, even

the head. If the troll's body regrows a missing part, the original, severed part usually withers and rots away, despite countless rumours and numerous wives' tales of severed troll hands continuing to scratch at their enemies or decapitated troll heads snapping their teeth at their intended victims.

In game terms, all damage from most normal attacks is considered nonlethal damage, and the trolls' regenerative powers automatically restores five points of nonlethal damage each round.

Because of this extraordinary ability, there is little that can permanently harm trolls, except fire and acid. Any wounds caused by either of these deal normal damage that the troll cannot regenerate, only heal naturally over time. However, since trolls regenerate all other forms of damage, burn marks from acid or fire are the only types of scars a troll will ever carry. Also, once burned, a troll's flesh 'remembers' such scars, so that if a troll's hand is burned and scarred and then later severed, the hand that grows back will bear identical burn marks to the 'original' hand.

Trolls can eventually be knocked unconscious by the same kinds of attacks that would kill other creatures. Once a troll is unconscious, it is possible to perform a coup de grace to finish the troll off, but it must be an attack form that the troll cannot regenerate, meaning fire or acid. Because of this, most trolls are unable to slay others of their kind despite the ferocity of their attacks. This causes some stability within troll clans in a way, for they can fight amongst themselves with abandon, revelling in the bloodshed they cause without doing any permanent harm to the clan's overall strength.

As for troll's blood, it is highly notable both in that it is green and figures prominently in recipes for many antidotes and non-magical healing potions. The collected blood from a single troll is enough for three such potions and can be sold to an alchemist for about 400 gp. Unfortunately, the tricky bit is harvesting the blood from the ferocious troll in the first place. Some alchemists rely upon captive trolls, kept docile thanks to a *charm monster* spell and locked in cages. Such practices provide them with a steady supply of troll blood, but it is inherently dangerous and not recommended.

There is a much-dreaded troll disease, the gunge, which temporarily shuts down a troll's regenerative abilities. The gunge is characterised by an outbreak of reddish

welts on the troll's skin, which itself becomes flaky and peels off in areas. While the disease is not contagious, no troll in its right mind is ready to take the chance that it could be, and diseased trolls are immediately cast out of their clans until such time as they can prove that their ability to regenerate works once more. In a way, such trolls are lucky, for the superstitions against touching a gunge-infected individual are probably the only thing preventing them from being slain by others in their group in an attempt to climb up the clan hierarchy. The gunge usually runs its course in a few weeks.

The troll lifespan is about 80 years, and elderly trolls around that age find their regenerative powers failing, taking progressively longer to heal damage until they are finally unable to do so. A troll that reaches this condition usually leaves the clan on its own accord, before the other trolls find out. The chaotic evil trolls would otherwise have a great time at the elder's expense, ripping it to shreds and marvelling at its inability to spontaneously heal the damage. Trolls greatly enjoy attacking others of their kind when they are at such a distinct disadvantage. A troll unable to regenerate is weak therefore of little use to a troll clan. Nearly all trolls would consider such an individual to be a burden on the clan's resources.

The Gunge

This is a rare disease that only affects troll species. It attacks their regenerative abilities and this is greatly feared for it makes trolls extremely vulnerable.

Infection DC: Injury 5

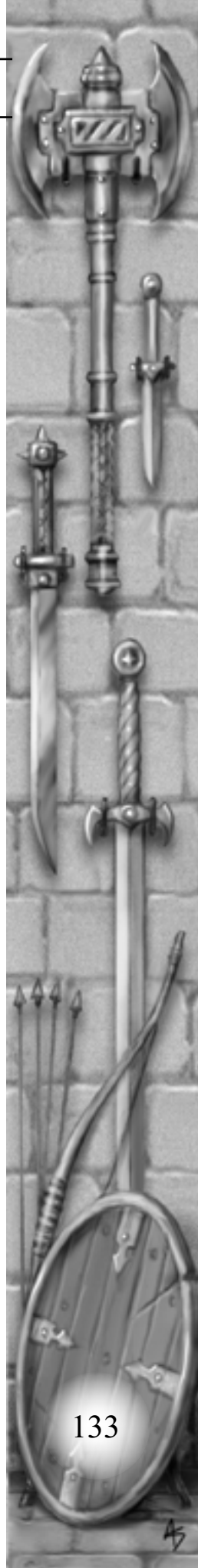
Incubation: 2d6 days

Damage: Loss of regeneration

Although the gunge can be passed on through injuries, it is far more likely to develop spontaneously in unlucky trolls, seemingly at random. Gunge infections usually run their course after 7+2d4 days if the troll has not already fought off the disease.

DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS

Trolls are carnivores by choice, preferring the taste of raw meat above all else but, at a pinch, can survive on raw vegetable matter as well. They have ravenous appetites and eat the flesh of anything they can kill.



While they do not particularly enjoy the taste of carrion, a sufficiently hungry troll has been known to devour it with as much relish as it does anything else in life. Perhaps because of their healthy respect for fire and the permanent damage it can cause, trolls refuse to cook any of their food.

Another interesting thing to note about the trollish diet is their lack of squeamishness regarding cannibalism. Trolls prefer carrion to the taste of their own flesh but, lacking any other prospects, will gladly devour their own kind. The interesting thing about troll cannibalism is that the victims are not killed. A hungry clan can rip and devour the limbs off its weaker members (usually the males and children), but they heal shortly, none the worse for wear. Cannibalism is a powerful incentive for the males to put some effort when they hunt for the rest of their clan. Being hacked and chewed may not kill the unlucky hunters, but it certainly *hurts*.

As an absolutely last resort, these creatures can subsist on their own flesh if the need arises. There is no known upper limit to this ability, and there have been documented cases of trolls surviving for several years in this manner.

Trolls have hearty constitutions and are capable of ingesting substances others would find deadly poisonous. Such fare includes varieties of mushroom and toadstool, as well as venomous creatures like scorpions and rattlesnakes. It should be noted that trolls cannot regenerate damage from poisons, so a poison deadly enough to overcome the troll's 'iron stomach' slays it as easily as it would any other humanoid species. Trolls take note of any poisonous substance that kills one of their kind and take steps to avoid ingesting such substances themselves in the future.

THE TROLL'S LIFECYCLE

Despite having a warty skin that is often confused with scales, trolls are mammals. The females give birth approximately every five years after a six-month gestation period, usually to a single child, although twins and triplets are not unknown. They nurse their young only until their teeth start coming out at about two weeks later, when the whelp is ready for a diet of solid flesh.

It should be noted that pregnant females are in no way hampered by their condition, nor are they offered any preferential treatment by the other trolls in the

clan. They are still expected to join in hunts for prey, scavenge for food, and battle clan enemies. The signs of pregnancy are noticeable only in an overall growth in the size of the female's abdomen and a general increase in her hunger, crankiness, and vindictiveness. Pregnant trolls are the most vicious monsters an adventurer will ever want to meet, and males of all ages make it a point not to cross their path, because they have no qualms about taking a bite out of the next troll that happens by if there is not enough food available.

Young trolls grow rapidly, reaching their full adult size when they are around ten years old. The first decade is a difficult time for the growing whelps, for troll parenting skills appear barbaric when viewed through the lens of human civilisation. Rather than protect their children from harm, adults go out of their way to expose them to all manners of hardship and pain, the better to toughen them up and make them strong. After all, a troll's remarkable regenerative ability is of less use if it is afraid of the pain involved in limb-rending and subsequent regrowth. Trolls must learn to ignore all physical pain if they are to attain their full strength. To this end, troll children often suffer the periodic claws and bites of their elders to inure them to such pain. Furthermore, if a clan must resort to cannibalism it is usually the young that first give up their limbs to the community's dinner table. This is done not only to help the young get used to the agonising pain of having its limbs rent apart, but also because their flesh is less gamy and stringy.

When a young troll finally attains full adult size, it demonstrates its usefulness to the tribe by chewing off each of its own limbs in turn. This rite of passage proves the troll has mastered the concept that 'all pain is merely transient', and is also a literal self-sacrifice to the clan. The clan leader is the first to partake of the young's offering followed by the rest of the adults. This is the only time that trolls eat the flesh of one of their own willingly. When the troll's limbs regenerate and can once again stand before its clanmates, it is welcomed into adult society and treated accordingly.

Jezelyn followed the old man into the clearing. 'It was right here, I found it,' he said, the words choking in his throat. Jezelyn saw the tears forming in the corners of his eyes, and watched him struggle to keep them back, but said nothing.

The old man sighed, and blinked back the wetness in his eyes. 'Do you have the item?' Jezelyn asked quietly, once he had composed himself.

'Here,' the man replied, pulling a silver brooch from his pocket and passing it to the wise-woman. Jezelyn handled it carefully, noting the clasp was still attached to a piece of torn cloth, and that a tiny drop of dried blood stained the brooch's front. 'I just want to know,' he said, looking Jezelyn helplessly in the eye, silent pain etched across his wrinkled face.

Jezelyn held the brooch in her hands and quieted her mind. When she felt sufficiently composed, she cast her spell and watched as past events unfolded inside her closed eyelids.

A young woman struggled fruitlessly in the grip of a huge, hulking brute that gripped her under one arm like a toy. Others of its kind sprang up, wicked grins spread across their primitive features. Jezelyn's heart skipped a beat as she recognised the feral faces of trolls, her most hated enemies. Jezelyn counted five of the brutes drawing close.

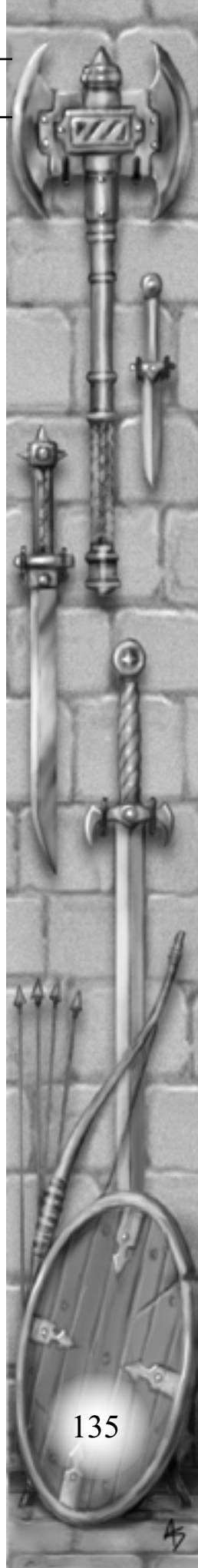
The trolls formed a rough circle. The largest one threw the woman roughly into the centre, and she fell to her side. She scrambled quickly to her feet, eyes darting in all directions, desperately looking for a way out. There did not seem to be one.

A troll stepped up and pushed her from behind, sending her reeling into the waiting claws of another. This one grabbed her roughly by the arm and sent her flying off in another direction. A good chunk of her sleeve, and a piece of the flesh of her arm, remained behind in the troll's bloody claws. The trolls continued their game, each one ripping another gash into the panicked young woman's body. Blood streamed from a dozen wounds as she staggered weakly from troll to troll, unable to fend off their relentless attacks. She held her arms up above her face, shielding her eyes and trying to block out the pain being cruelly inflicted by her tormentors. Jezelyn grimaced as she made out the words of a desperate prayer on the young woman's lips. Mercifully, the wise-woman's mystical visions did not include sound.

One troll, apparently tired of digging furrows into their collective victim's flesh, took a good-sized bite from her right shoulder when she was pushed its way. She screamed and fell to the ground where she lay. Immediately, the trolls were on her, ripping off limbs and carrying them away into the darkness to devour. A silver brooch lay overlooked on the ground, the clasp to the young woman's cloak.

Jezelyn opened her eyes and ended the spell. 'I'm sorry,' she said quietly to the old man. His wizened face turned to her, barren of all hope. 'It was...' began the wise-woman, her throat suddenly dry. She swallowed, and started again. 'I'm sorry, Ebert. It was wolves. A small pack, half-starved from the looks of it. They chased her, she fell and hit her head on a rock. I think... I think death was instantaneous.' She looked at the old man. Tears now flowed freely down both cheeks, and he made no effort to hide them. Jezelyn placed a hand on his shoulder, trying to provide comfort through human touch where no comfort was possible. 'She... at least your granddaughter did not suffer.' The words were hollow in her own ears, but Ebert nodded quietly and placed his gnarled hand upon her own. Jezelyn returned the silver brooch, and he slipped it back into his pocket.

'Thank you, wise-woman,' he said in a cracking voice. 'At least now I know.' Jezelyn just nodded silently, then watched the old man stumble off down the forest path back to the village. Only when he was out of sight and well out of earshot did she break down and cry.



SUBSPECIES

There are almost as many subspecies of troll as there are types of terrain. Trolls can be found living in the harshest deserts, in the steamiest jungles, in the icy wastes of the tundra and on barren mountaintops; there are even a few species that live underwater. Each has adapted to its particular ecosystem: sea scraggs and their freshwater cousins can breathe underwater through gills in their necks, sand trolls are resistant to the desert's extreme temperatures and have developed a skin tone that allows them to blend in with their environment, while polar trolls have adapted so well to their frigid climate that they no longer feel the cold that dominates their world.

In addition, trolls have been known to breed with various other humanoid species, producing even greater numbers of variant troll strains. Giant trolls have been born to troll and hill giant parents, while breeding with ettins produces ferocious, two-headed trolls. Often, these half-breeds join up with a troll clan, so it is not uncommon to see a number of different troll subspecies living and working together.

There are rumours of even larger trolls hidden among the barren mountain peaks or far beneath the ocean's depths, either the result of unions between trolls and even larger giants or the products of magical

experimentation. Such monsters are said to reach a height of 20 feet or more. Fortunately, these rumours are as yet unfounded.

The following troll subspecies are offered for use in the Games Master's campaign.

Sand Troll

Large Giant

Hit Dice: 7d8+42 (73 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+14

Attack: Claws +9 melee (1d6+5)

Full Attack: 2 claws +9 melee (1d6+5) and bite +4 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d6+7

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., regeneration 5, resistance to cold and fire 5, scent

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +5*, Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Track

Climate/Terrain: Any desert

Organisation: Solitary or gang (2-4)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Sand trolls have tan skin often mottled with various shades of brown, which makes excellent camouflage in the desert environment, giving them a +8 racial bonus to Hide checks when surrounded by sand. They have further adapted to their surroundings by requiring very little water intake and developing a resistance to temperature extremes, both the parching heat of the desert sun and the freezing nights. Because of the scarcity of food to be found in the desert environment, sand trolls are found in fewer numbers. Perhaps not coincidentally, sand trolls are also more intelligent than most other troll subspecies; eking a successful living in the harsh desert environment takes more skill than does living in a forest or jungle with plentiful game.





Polar Troll

Large Giant (Cold)

Hit Dice: 4d8+24 (42 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

AC: 15 (−1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+12

Attack: Claw +7 melee (1d8+5)

Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (1d8+5) and bite +2 melee (1d4+2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d8+7

Special Qualities: Cold immunity, darkvision 90 ft., fire vulnerability, regeneration 3, scent

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +2

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 13, Con 23, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will

Climate/Terrain: Arctic

Organisation: Solitary or gang (2–4)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Polar trolls have a mottled skin coloration ranging from white to light grey to a slightly bluish tinge. Their hairlike masses are a uniform white, and dirty

yellowish-white hair grows from their lower arms and legs. They are smaller than most trolls, generally standing no taller than 8 feet. Like the sand trolls, polar trolls have a keener intellect than the standard troll, sharpened by the necessity of survival in the harsh environments they call home.

Polar trolls usually lair in ice caves near the coastline, or in hand-carved caves dug into the sides of ice floes. Some live in caves along the coasts of subarctic rivers and lakes. They are strong swimmers but cannot breathe underwater like scraggs can. Polar trolls seldom stray too far from water, for their regenerative powers, which are somewhat weaker than that of standard trolls, only take effect when they are in contact with it.

Giant Troll

Large Giant

Hit Dice: 8d8+48 (84 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 15 (−1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+17

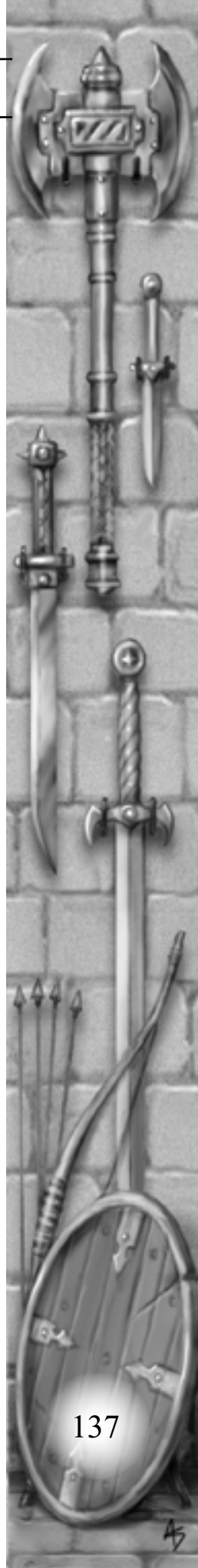
Attack: Claw +12 melee (1d6+7) or greatclub +13 melee (2d8+10)

Full Attack: 2 claws +12 melee (1d6+7) or greatclub +13/+8 melee (2d8+10)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d6+10

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., regeneration 5, scent



SUBSPECIES



Giant trolls are often found wielding huge greatclubs instead of relying upon claws in battle, but a giant troll without a weapon has no trouble reverting to its instincts.

Bicephalous (Two-Headed) Troll

Large Giant

Hit Dice: 9d8+54 (94 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+16

Attack: Claw +11 (1d4+6) or greatclub +11melee (1d10+6)

Attack: 2 claws +11 melee (1d4+6) and 2 bites +6 melee (1d8+3), or 2 greatclubs +11/+6 melee (1d10+6) and 2 bites +6 melee (1d8+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Superior two-weapon fighting, rend 2d4+9

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., fast healing 3, scent

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +4

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 14, Con 22, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 8

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +3, Will +3

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +10, Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (Huge greatclub)

Climate/Terrain: Any hills, mountains, or underground

Organisation: Solitary or gang (2-4)

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Giant trolls are the result of a union between a standard troll and a hill giant. They retain the trollish physiology in most respects, but giant trolls have blunt teeth like their hill giant parents and thus do not bite in combat. Their lumpy skin is a mottled reddish brown. Giant trolls stand over 10 feet tall, and are occasionally found ruling a clan of normal trolls. This is one of the few times that a male might be found in the role of clan chieftain.



Skills: Listen +5, Search +2, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Track

Climate/Terrain: Cold and temperate hills, mountains, and underground

Organisation: Solitary or gang (2–4)

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

That a bicephalous troll's parentage includes an ettin is made obvious by the creature's two functional heads. These two-headed trolls often have brownish tones to their skin mottling, but otherwise conform to the standard troll physiology. They can be found living with normal trolls, ettins or on their own.

A bicephalous troll attacks with either two claws and two bites, or with two greatclubs. When biting, each head attacks the same victim, but a two-headed troll can attack two different foes with its arms without an off-hand penalty, as each arm can be 'controlled' by a different head. These crossbreeds have a much weaker form of regeneration (fast healing) that heals damage but cannot rejoin severed limbs.

Megalotroll

Huge Giant

Hit Dice: 18d8+126 (207 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 40 ft. (plus swim 40 ft., aquatic strains only)

AC: 17 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +13/+29

Attack: Claw +19 melee (2d4+8/19–20)

Full Attack: 2 claws +19 melee (2d4+8/19–20) and bite +14 melee (1d10+4)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 4d4+12

Special Qualities: Darkvision 120 ft., regeneration 10, scent

Saves: Fort +18, Ref +9, Will +7

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 12, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +14, Jump +13, Listen +7, Spot +7

Feats: Alertness, Improved Critical (claws), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Track

Climate/Terrain: High mountains or oceans (separate species in each terrain)

Organisation: Solitary or gang (2–4)

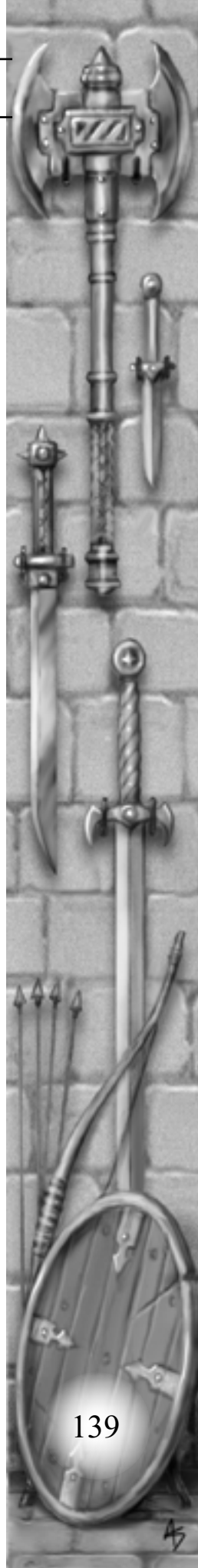
Challenge Rating: 16

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

The existence of megalotrolls is mere rumour, with tales accounting of a physiology identical to that of a normal troll except for sheer size. Its attacks and tactics would be the same, although even more deadly coming from such a huge monster. Sailor's tales speak of aquatic versions looking like enormous marine scraggs. They stand at least 20 feet tall and are attributed with even more powerful regenerative abilities than normal trolls.



HABITAT

Trolls prowl around just about every corner of the world in some form or another, adapting to their particular environment. In more hostile climates, the adaptations might have altered the troll physiology somewhat, but they are still easily recognised as trolls.

The ‘standard’ or ‘common’ troll prefers temperate or warm climates, and can also be frequently found living an entirely subterranean existence. Surface trolls lair in caves or in crumbling ruins, depending of which is available and more comfortable. Otherwise, they usually dig underground lairs commonly referred to as ‘trollholes’. In forested areas, trollholes are often dug at the base of a large tree and frequently have several entrances, each camouflaged with a large woven mat of twigs and leaves. These mats disguise the dwelling’s entrances to avoid unwelcome visitors, and they occasionally provide a free meal when an unsuspecting victim steps on it and crashes into the trollhole. Entryways are vertical shafts some five or six feet in diameter and ten feet deep. This makes it difficult for victims falling into the trollhole to escape, while the nine-foot trolls simply place their hands on the surface of the ground and effortlessly hoist themselves up.

Beyond the entrance, there are usually several tunnels slanted downward in various directions, leading to the larger individual areas of the troll families. Inside its own dwelling, each troll builds a nest out of whatever materials are available – straw, twigs, leaves, grass, and the like – with remains of recent meals likely to be scattered about and incorporated into the nest as well. Troll habitats are filthy, often crawling with insects such as fleas, ticks and lice. Larger animals like rats and mice are scarce as they are large enough to warrant the trolls’ attention as a food source. Moulds and fungi growths are common and even encouraged in troll lairs, for those that are not edible can be put to use as primitive bedding.

Most of the treasure found in a troll cave or trollhole is all that is left from previous victims. Weapons might occasionally be put to use by various clan members, with any magical object incorporating fire or acid effects going directly into the chieftain’s hands.

Armour is less likely to be used, and coins and gems are almost certainly tucked away in some corner as inconsequential, or at best shiny objects for the young to play with on occasion. Most trolls place no value on money. After all, it is not as if they are going to spend it anywhere, and even those trolls who recognise the importance other races place on gold and gemstones, are not likely to use their valuables to purchase goods when they can just take what they need by force.

Because of their inherently lazy natures, trolls tend not to move on to new territories once establishing a home unless forced to. While other races are more nomadic and willing to pack up and move to greener pastures when food sources become scarce, most troll clans will resort to self-cannibalisation before finally admitting to themselves the necessity to move on.

When seeking out a new home, the primary consideration is, of course, food. This takes precedence over factors like defensibility and distance to potential enemies or allies. Trolls like having access to easy meals, whether those be bountiful forests filled with abundant wildlife, pasture land teeming with succulent sheep or cattle, or even small humanoid settlements. Trolls have been known to pick off the inhabitants of a small village one by one during a series of nightly raids until nobody remains alive, everyone having either been driven off in fear or become a day’s supper. Of the various humanoid races, humans and elves have the dubious honour of being favourite prey, but trolls will eat just about anything that moves.

One habitat the main troll species tends to avoid is deep water. Most trolls are not good swimmers, and they are well aware that despite their regenerative abilities they are just as susceptible to drowning as any other non-aquatic race. Probably the best way to avoid a predatory troll is to swim away to deep water. Despite their constantly ravenous hunger, most trolls will not pursue their prey into a body of water that rises above their own heads.

‘Found a troll’s arm once. Put the thing in my back-pack, and by the time I got back to the camp, it had grown back into a full-sized troll. True as I’m standing here.’

Harlan the Ranger, sitting at the bar of the Strutting Wench tavern

TROLL SOCIETY

Most trolls live in a clan-based society. Clans are rather small affairs, generally numbering no more than a dozen individuals. This is primarily due to the trolls' ravenous appetites, as larger gatherings of trolls would rapidly deplete the surrounding land of potential food sources. When a clan's numbers increase too much, they usually split off into two smaller groups, with the younger trolls moving off to form a new clan elsewhere.

On the other hand, most troll clans are willing to let other trolls join them, as long as their ranks are not already too full, because new blood keeps the clan healthy. Naturally, once a troll enters a new clan the 'pecking order fights' begin almost immediately, as the clan members try to determine where the 'new guy' falls in their hierarchy. A troll supplicant to a new

clan has the option of turning down such fights, with the understanding that he places himself at the bottom of the ladder.

Unlike most humanoid and goblinoid races, trolls very rarely name their clans. This is partly due to their inherent arrogance and superiority complex: as long as they know who they mean by 'the clan', what do they care whether or not other races know who is meant? The closest a clan comes to having a distinct name is when the clan is referenced by the name of the chieftain. Thus, while there will not be a 'Bloody Claw Clan' or a 'Clan of the Severed Hand', there might well be an 'Oograk Clan' or a 'Clan of Vraask'.

Clan Structure

Within the clan there exists a definite hierarchy, and every troll knows where he or she stands in the chain at any given moment. Given the chaotic nature of trolls, however, this hierarchy is constantly shifting and changing as individual trolls fight among themselves, jockeying for position in the clan. Females, being larger than males as a rule, are usually found holding the

The troll had just about run the party ragged. Nothing they could do seemed to damage the repulsive creature. It was a female, apparently, considered Klort, standing at the back and hoping that the troll would get bored and leave before it got to him. No doubt the others would blame him for not having enough spells ready to deal with the thing. Well, it was easy for them. They hardly had to do any thinking at all, and that ox Tharg was the dimmest of the lot. In fact, he was so dim that he'd wandered off just when they needed him most. Stupid barbarian ignoramus!

Lost in his thoughts, Klort noticed a shadow cover him. He looked across jerkily, prepared for the worst, but it was the familiar shape of the barbarian, standing with his arms folded. No weapon even drawn. What a buffoon, thought Klort contemptuously.

Norbert, the woodland druid, was thrown out of the melee as they stood there, landing in a heap nearby. Tharg looked down easily. 'Go look after him, Klort. I'd better sort out this business.'

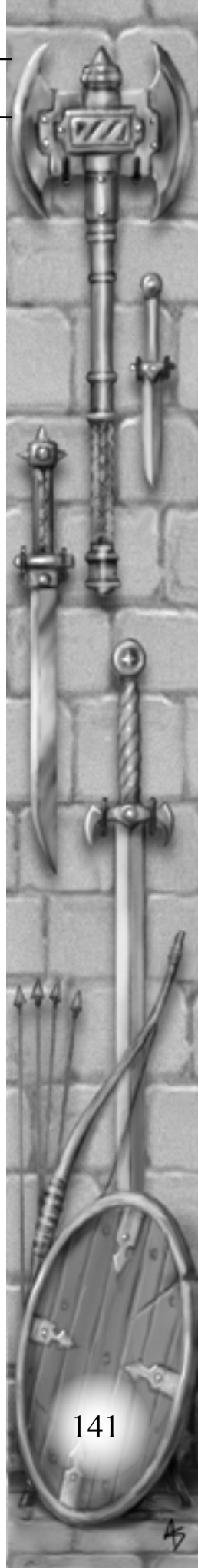
'Well you'd better get your axe out,' advised the mage as the huge barbarian strode off almost nonchalantly towards the troll.

For reply Tharg just laughed over his shoulder, intent now on the troll. 'Oi, girlie! Come over here and take on someone your own size!'

The troll shrieked angrily, confused by the new arrival. Still, the man was small compared to her, and she lumbered towards him.

'I didn't know you could punch like that,' said Norbert in admiration, looking down at the flattened troll, her droopy nose even flatter than before.

Tharg smiled, looking around for a rag. Troll snot made one hell of a mess.



dominant positions in the clan, but large males capable of fighting their way up the ladder can also attain power, prestige and influence. Nonetheless, the vast majority of troll clans are led by the dominant female.

ON THE LEADERSHIP OF FEMALES

The largest and strongest *female* in a troll clan is almost always the largest, strongest *troll* in the clan. She acts as the chieftain and quite frequently also as the head shaman, casting divine spells for the betterment of the clan or, more commonly, simply to cement her position as clan leader. Leadership of a troll clan is held only through combat, and any time another troll thinks that she (or, less commonly, he) can wrest power from the current incumbent, a battle for power ensues. There is no proper etiquette to these challenges, no ritual and no oratory as to why it is being made; an attack can come at any time, without warning. It is for this reason that most troll chieftains also wield divine magic: it gives them an edge in what would otherwise be a simple physical combat of claws and teeth. These battles are seldom fought to the death, thanks once again to the troll's remarkable regenerative abilities, but the victor traditionally decapitates the loser and displays the head on a stick after proudly parading it around in front of the other clan members. Meanwhile, the defeated troll has to lie there and wait for her head to grow back. Often, once the loser's head has regrown it is forced to wear its 'previous' head on a rope or chain around the neck for a week or so as a constant reminder of its previous defeat and a public warning against further dissidence.

Fortunately, such challenges for leadership are rare, as a troll only attains the level of chieftain by proving to all other clan members that it can easily defeat them. Furthermore, most males realise they will never be strong enough to wrest power from one of the mighty females, let alone the strongest of them all, and most females are patient enough to wait for a moment of weakness on the part of their leader before striking.

The chieftain's duties primarily consist of leading the clan on their nightly forages for food. She might approve of sending off a small group of trolls to hunt in other areas or she may insist that the clan stays together. She is also in charge of overseeing the proper raising of the troll children in the clan. This usually means that she is the main dealer of 'necessary pain' to the young.

This has the added benefit of teaching the whelps to fear their clan chieftain, even as they learn to master their fear of pain. Chieftains see being feared by the members of their clan as an obvious boon, helping them to cement power at the top of the clan.

Along with greater chances of assuming clan leadership, adult females have positions of power over the lowly males. Trolls seldom mate for life, and this is at the preference of the females, not the males. Female trolls choose their mates or, more frequently, choose two suitors and let them fight it out to see who wins the right to breed. This ritual has several benefits, for the bloodthirsty males it is a chance to fight and demonstrate their combat prowess to the other females in the clan, because even the loser stands to impress other females if he makes a good showing. The female gets the thrill of having two males fight over her, and the ensuing offspring is sure to enjoy a strong set of genes. Once impregnated, the female maintains the male as her mate until she delivers her child. During this time, the male is seen as the 'property' of his mate and is ineligible for breeding selection by another female. This keeps the gene pool healthy by preventing the single strongest male in the clan from siring children with all of the females.

Some select few females within a clan may have a level or two as an adept, and the chieftain keeps a constant watch over them, as they are usually her greatest potential rivals for power. Males rarely become adepts or wielders of magic in any of its forms and, when they do, it is usually when sorcerer abilities manifest of their own accord. However, troll sorcerers of either gender are extremely rare.

Another female duty is the keeping of the oral history of the clan. Since trolls do not bother with a written language, the only means they have of recording the clan's past accomplishments are the stories they pass down from generation to generation. Usually, only female trolls take on the duties of storyteller, as the males are generally seen as too lazy and undependable. Nearly all females will know some of their clan's stories, but there is usually one chief storyteller per clan. She is liable to know the complete history of the clan going back many decades or even centuries, and may even have attained a level or two as a bard, although this is certainly not true of all chief storytellers. Troll bards are a rarity, but those that do exist rely upon spoken oratory rather than music, as trolls are universally tone deaf and dislike most music in any case.

Males are typically the drudge-workers of the troll clan, and a different pecking order exists among them so that, when females start giving orders, they can delegate 'down the chain' to those weaker than themselves. Of course, all troll males dislike having to take orders from females, let alone other males, so most male-to-male orders devolve into a quick battle to see whether there ought to be a change in the male hierarchy. Once a victor has been established, the loser is forced into doing the work unless a female gets tired of the bickering and steps in, at which point both males are likely to end up with the chore.

THE OUTCAST

Some trolls, especially males in low standing, dislike the thought of spending their lives under the dominance of the females and may decide to do something about it. They leave the clan and strike out on their own. These self-exiled outcasts often hook up with groups of other humanoids like kobolds, goblins, hobgoblins, orcs, gnolls, bugbears or even ogres, ettins or hill giants. A troll living among much weaker creatures upgrades his social standing significantly, often going from being lowest male in the clan to most powerful creature in the new tribe. Life is good for a troll among kobolds or goblins: it is valued for its strength, can demand the lion's share of all food, strike fear into the hearts of everyone around, and does not have to put up with constant demands from pushy female trolls.

Female trolls are well aware of this male tendency and keep a sharp eye to prevent them from deserting in such a fashion. A successful troll outcast usually attains his status by sneaking off during a raid when the females are too engrossed in the heat of battle to notice, or by slipping away during the day when most trolls are in blissful slumber.

Of course, some trolls become outcasts by being exiled by the chieftain. This is seldom done as a punishment for wrongdoing, as chieftains would much rather subdue such transgressors, render them helpless in the lair, and torture them until the lesson finally sinks in. The most common reason for casting out a clan member is if he or she succumbs to the dreaded gunge disease, although troll sorcerers who start manifesting fire-based abilities are cast out immediately before they can upset the chieftain's power base. Fortunately for the chieftain, troll sorcerers are few and far between.

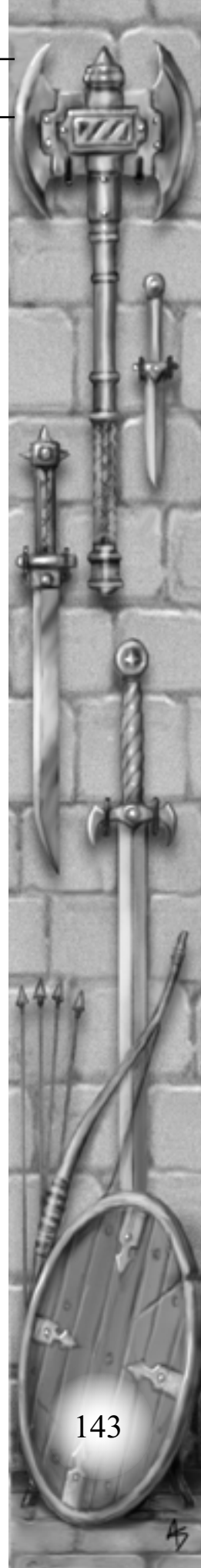
The lowest troll outcasts are those that failed to master their indifference to pain. Adults that still fear pain despite their regenerative powers are seen as cowards and failures in the eyes of other trolls, and no clan will harbour such a drain on their resources. These outcasts find refuge among goblinoids, at least until their new tribe discovers that the 'added muscle' they have been supporting is afraid of battle, at which point the outcast troll finds itself running for dear life. Goblinoids like nothing better than to attack and destroy a troll that fears pain, as they do not often get the opportunity to bring down such powerful prey.

TROLL SPIRITUALITY

Troll spirituality is relatively easy to categorise: non-existent. Trolls are too instinctually savage and generally do not possess the necessary level of intelligence to worry about something as metaphysical as the divine. There is no pantheon of gods, or even a single troll deity looking out for the welfare of its mortal children. The trolls do not see this as a lacking, since trolls do not even believe in the existence of gods of other races, despite the evidence of divine magic. Arcane magic does not require gods to make it work, and from a troll's point of view divine magic is merely the same thing under a different name.

However, as with nearly all generalities, there are exceptions. Some trolls have the necessary faith to manifest divine magic, they just do not receive their spells from troll deities, as there are none. Troll clerics are referred to as 'shamans' by other trolls, and they worship chaos and evil nature as divine forces, while others are 'adopted' by gods of other races. The latter is especially true among troll outcasts living with members of another race: a troll shaman living among orcs will probably worship an orcish god, and the same holds true for troll adepts.

Unlike many other divine spellcasters, troll shamans do not try to convert others to their beliefs; quite the opposite, in fact. Being selfish to the core, no troll shaman will try to give away his or her own tactical advantage by introducing others to the benefits of divine spellcasting. In fact, most troll shaman/chieftains use their divine-derived powers to defend any potential threats to their leadership. Fire spells like *produce flame* and *burning hands* remind other clan members of the price of challenging a chieftain's authority, and no shaman in her right mind is ever going to cast *imbue*



TROLL SOCIETY

with spell ability and give one of her strengths away to another, no matter how tactically sound it may be.

For similar reasons, many troll adepts try to keep their powers hidden from the chieftain, or any others who might feel they could profit from announcing such a discovery. The first time a troll adept demonstrates her powers to others is often when she attacks the chieftain in a bid for leadership, hoping to strike with an advantage, using powers none knew she possessed.

The closest most trolls come to spirituality, however, is a deep-rooted superstition. A hunting group that managed to slay a purple worm on a rainy day might consider all rainy days to be inherently lucky. If a troll slits open a vein on her arm to smear herself with her own blood before entering battle, and subsequently slays more than her share of foes, she may believe the blood-anointing ritual is what brought her such success. Troll superstitions work on a personal level, with each member of a clan having its own rituals and beliefs.

Gronkorzonk waddled clumsily down the game trail, his trusty greatclub balanced on a meaty shoulder and gripped in a hand the size of a baked ham. The ogre whistled cheerily, if somewhat out of tune, for he was in a good mood today. After all, today was Tribute Day, when the goblins in their ramshackle little wooden fort paid him for another week of 'safekeeping'. He wondered idly what his payment would be this time. Gold coins, silver bars, polished gemstones? Or, if they did not have a sufficient tribute, perhaps just a goblin or two for his stew pot? Gronkorzonk was an easygoing ogre; it mattered little to him.

He came to a stop a few scant paces from the barred door of the goblin fortress. Surprisingly, the two goblins on guard duty up in the ramparts had their crossbows aimed in his direction. Surely they did not mean to take him on again? Had they not learned their lesson the hard way the last time?

'I'm here for my tribute,' thundered Gronkorzonk. 'Open your gates and present your payment for my week of protection.'

'We don't need you any longer!' Called down one of the guards. 'We protect ourselves from now on. Go away, and leave us alone!'

Gronkorzonk snorted his disbelief. 'Protect yourselves? And just how are you going to do that? You scrawny little goblins need a leader like me to keep your miserable hides safe! There are dangerous beasts out here, including me! Enough of this, open the gates and give me my tribute!'

'He wants in!' One of the goblin sentries cackled suspiciously. 'Better open up and let him have it!'

'I'm glad to see you smarted up,' remarked Gronkorzonk, watching as the shoddily reinforced door to the goblin fortress was slowly pushed open. Lucky for you, I'm in a good mood, so I will only double the usual...' The words caught in the ogre's throat, for the gate swung fully open and there stood a hideous troll, arms folded and face split in a crooked-toothed grin. Standing behind him were a dozen goblins, all armed with swords. The goblin chieftain poked his head warily from behind the troll's massive bulk.

'We don't need your protection no longer,' he repeated. 'Voragg here will be doing all our protection now.'

Gronkorzonk gulped, the blood draining from his face as he gazed at the troll. The troll just stood there grinning at him, squeezing his biceps over and over with his own claws. Blood dripped down the troll's arm and pooled at his feet; he did not even seem to notice. 'I... I get it,' Gronkorzonk finally replied. 'Fine, if you're safe... that's all I was worried about.' He spun on his heel and started waddling away.

'Oh, Gronky, something else.' The goblin chieftain said gleefully. The ogre bridled at the nickname but said nothing. 'About that money we 'loaned' to you? We want it all back, now that Voragg is here to keep it safe for us. And I'm sure Voragg would be happy to help you bring it back here, if you don't think you can handle it alone.'

Gronkorzonk hung his head. 'I can do it,' he grumbled.

'See you soon, then, Gronky!' replied the goblin chieftain with a hearty wave. Gronkorzonk plodded back to his cave in silence, dragging his greatclub behind him. Somehow, he did not feel like whistling.

METHODS OF WARFARE

Trolls are not overly complicated in their attack strategies, preferring to charge straight at the nearest enemy hooting and hollering with unrestrained joy, and let the victim have it with everything the troll has. Clans seldom co-ordinate their attacks; regardless of the number of trolls on the battlefield, it is usually every troll for itself, as befitting their chaotic bent and selfish tendencies. Scholars and civilised commanders refer to such erratic attacks as ‘the wilding’. Trolls go on the wilding when hunting too, rushing madly at any potential prey as soon as it is spotted, every creature trying to be the first to rip it to shreds. A favoured troll tactic is to rend a victim’s flesh once it connects with both sets of claws. Trolls usually concentrate on a single opponent and slay him before moving on to the next rather than splitting their attacks among several foes, even if it means allowing one attacker to remain unscathed while slaying the other. The troll’s own wounds will heal fast enough, after all.

Trolls caught up in the wilding attack in reckless abandon and are heedless of their own safety. There have been occasions of trolls flinging themselves over the edges of cliffs in an attempt to grab winged prey fleeing to the safety of the skies. A troll spotting prey at the bottom of a mountainside might leap down a nearly vertical slope, confident in its ability to regenerate any damage incurred by the rough tumble en route to its victim.

Trolls do not usually have the patience or the good sense to employ stealth before an attack. During their nocturnal food raids, trolls stroll carelessly and take what they want. It does not matter if it is an attack upon livestock in a barn or the denizens of a small human village. Trolls do not seem at all concerned that, if they sneak quietly into a dwelling and make off with the inhabitants therein, they might escape without alerting the neighbours to their presence. Instead, they seem to relish the panicked screams of their prey and are arrogant enough to regard alerting others as insignificant. After all, are they not trolls? Can they not handle anything thrown at them?

Fortunately for some potential meals, trolls caught up in the wilding become so savage that they often attack one another, especially if there are not enough victims to go around. Tales have been told of a lone woodsman escaping with his life after an initial troll attack was blocked by another troll intent upon making the woodsman its victim. While the two trolls tore each other apart, the woodsman had the presence of mind to escape as fast as he could.

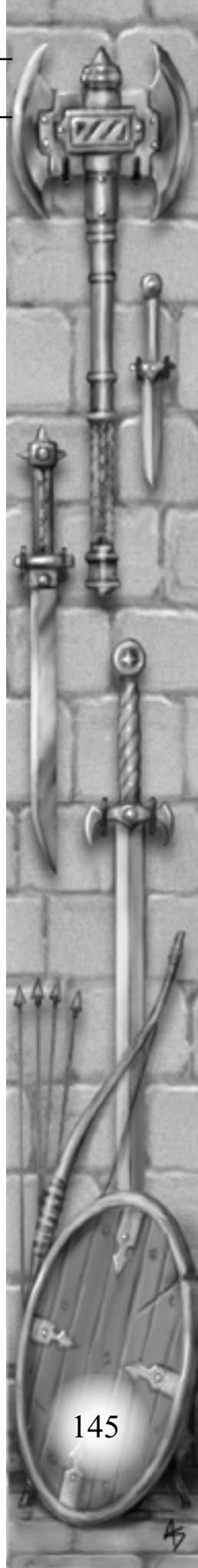
‘Don’t be put off by the look of them. They might seem like some sort of circus act, what with their arms dangling down and their gangly bodies. Those devils are killers, and no mistake.’

Harlan the Ranger

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

Most trolls eschew both armour and weapons, preferring the visceral appeal of ripping into opponents with bare hands and sharp teeth and relying upon their own considerably thick skins to protect them. Armed and armoured trolls are not unknown, as some pick up the concept from the foes they slay. Outcasts living among other races that employ weapons and armour might demand the best of both that their adopted tribe has to offer, if only because they can. Trolls are familiar enough with all simple weapons to wield them without penalty. One fact bears stressing: trolls seldom, if ever, craft their own weapons or armour. Rather, trolls that wield weapons use those taken from their allies or previously slain foes, and those that wear armour generally wear piecemeal sections taken from several different sources. Because of the troll’s large yet lanky build and long arms, most armour made for other races will not fit a troll properly.

The sole exception to the trolls’ inability to make their own weapons is in the use of bone. Some males have nurtured a belief in the luck inherent in using a weapon crafted from their own bones when battling creatures much larger than themselves. Traditionally, a male chews off his own leg above the knee and crafts a weapon from his shin bone, usually by just sharpening one end of it into a point for stabbing. Since trolls do not possess a written language the bones are usually etched with a made-up symbol that the male has decided is his personal mark. Such males traditionally begin a combat by first stabbing their bone weapon into their victims,



then abandoning it and reverting to attacks with teeth and claws. The males believe that the bone weapon helps guide their subsequent attacks, and it furthermore marks the victim as theirs. Male trolls have nurtured this superstitious belief so much that they will actively hunt dangerous creatures most trolls avoid, such as purple worms or dragons, armed only with their lucky bone shafts. The bone weapons do piercing damage as a halbspear, although they are never thrown.

Upon occasion, even trolls relying upon teeth and claws hurl rocks at their enemies as they close to melee range. Because of their exceptional strength, troll-hurled rocks can do devastating damage to those they hit. Rock throwing is more of an opportunistic attack, occurring only when there happens to be handy ammunition lying around, as trolls seldom carry rocks with them for use as missiles.

DEFENDING THE LAIR

With their arrogant attitudes regarding their own superiority, trolls usually give only cursory thoughts to defending their lairs. Obviously, they want to be protected from dragons, wyverns and similar-sized predators; but trolls only guarantee their safety against such beasts by ensuring that the entrances are too small to allow them entry. Trollhole entrance shafts are thus rarely wider than six feet, and if a troll clan takes residence in a cave with an overly large opening, they will partially block the entrance with large boulders.

As far as sentries go, trolls are similarly unconcerned by attacks from creatures small enough to enter their dwellings, so a single guard is more a token show of force than anything else. Guard duty, being tedious, dull and potentially dangerous, is usually passed off to one of the hapless males in the clan, although not without stern warnings as to what should happen if the male tries to sneak off and become outcast. The chieftain usually has a pretty good idea about the trustworthiness of the males in her clan, and ensures that only those with little likelihood of abandoning the others are given the task. Troll young are also frequently put on guard duty, as it gives them something to occupy their time and they are less likely to wander off than are the older males.

Trolls almost never raise watch beasts to guard their lairs, for the same reason they seldom keep slaves: their short-term hunger almost always outweighs their long-term thoughts about the advantages of keeping

such lesser beings alive. For the same reason, troll sorcerers and rangers are never found with familiars or animal companions for very long.

One very rare exception to this rule is when a sufficiently powerful troll shaman casts *animate dead* on a troll skeleton. Other trolls will not bother an animated skeleton, as it cannot be eaten. Very powerful animated troll skeletons can be made when the cleric uses a complete set of her own bones, each ripped from her body and allowed to regrow. Such monstrosities have maximum hit points, the same Strength score as the caster, and are turned as if they were two Hit Dice higher than normal. They can be mentally commanded by their creators without uttering a sound, so great is the link between the spellcaster and her own old set of bones. Fortunately, these forms of undead are extremely rare, for few chieftains have the luxury of cutting off their own heads to provide the skull for their unliving guardians without having their status as chieftain being challenged while they are in such a helpless state.

If a troll on guard duty sees an intruder, he will either retreat into the lair and wake up the rest of the clan if it is a worthy foe he is unable to beat by himself (for example, a dragon) or yell out a warning and immediately engage the threat himself if it is a foe he is reasonably sure he can beat on his own. The troll may simply disregard the rest of the sleeping clan and engaging the enemy single-handedly if he is completely sure he can defeat it or if he is hungry and does not want to share the kill with anyone else. This latter case is yet another example of a troll 'thinking with its stomach'.

'Take my advice. If you get invited to a troll's coming-of-age party, then don't go. You wouldn't like the buffet.'

More sage advice from Harlan the Ranger

ROLEPLAYING WITH TROLLS

So far, the *Slayer's Guide to Trolls* has examined the primitive and bestial nature of the trollish race, their unusual regenerative capabilities, the factors that motivate them, and their tactics in battle or lack thereof. Now it is time to put all of that knowledge together to make an encounter with trolls a different roleplaying experience than one with any other formidable humanoid race. The main thing to remember about running a troll encounter is that they are single-minded, arrogant and fearless. In addition, keep the troll's exceptional senses in mind.

The single-mindedness actually makes your work as a Games Master a little easier, for you will not have to come up with elaborate strategies for troll characters unless you are planning on using an exceptional troll that deviates from the racial norm. Trolls are not known for their elaborate combat strategies, and once one troll spots the adventuring party, it is going to make a beeline toward them with nothing but quick and bloody evisceration on its mind. A troll is not going to be concerned about cover, and it will not care about suffering attacks of opportunity as it unerringly heads towards the nearest potential victim.

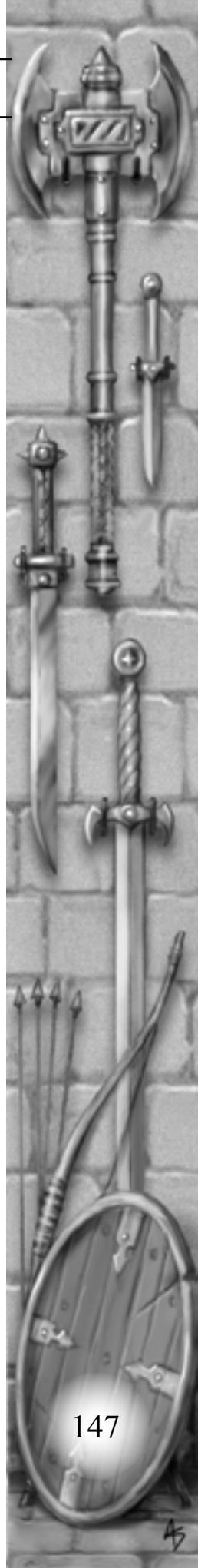
The troll's fearlessness and arrogance come into play when the adventurers start fighting back. Despite the fact that the dwarven fighter just pulled out a flaming waraxe or that the party's cleric is preparing to hurl a vial of acid, the troll will not let anything like that keep it at bay. Trolls literally have no fear of death, and are certain of victory whenever they enter combat. They will still attack the dwarf with the flaming waraxe, trusting in their combat prowess to slay the dwarf before he can get any good hits in with his magic weapon. The troll is probably thinking about the advantages such a weapon would give it over the other trolls in his clan...

Finally, remember that trolls have an astonishing sense of smell. They will know by smell when a party member opens a flask of oil, and deduce from experience that the character is planning to douse the troll and set it aflame, so it will target that character first

to prevent getting covered in the flammable substance. Trolls will probably smell any adventurers in hiding hoping to ambush them unaware, especially if the trolls have been tracking them by scent for a while. They might even smell the fear an adventuring party usually feels while battling trolls. Such a heady aroma acts as a powerful stimulant for the bloodthirsty monsters, encouraging them on to further bloodshed. If the trolls were not under the effects of the wilding before the blood of first victim is shed, the rich, coppery scent of warm blood being spilled is sure to drive them into a frenzy as soon as they smell it. Many witnesses of trollish violence have compared creatures caught up in the wilding to sharks in the midst of a feeding frenzy, and with good reason.

Troll Names
 Troll names are usually short and guttural with hard consonants. In the event you need to name one of the trolls in your campaign, any of the following can be used as troll names:

Borakk	Brakk	Brog	Bokrag	Darpok
Frak	Glung	Gorrug	Grok	Gund
Jukk	Korak	Muk	Nogur	Plokk
Traag	Ulek	Varg	Vrukkus	Vrogar



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Trolls are best used against experienced parties, as combat against even a single troll is not recommended for adventurers of less than 5th level. And if the troll has anything to say about it, be certain that any encounter involving one will result in combat. Still, it is easy to add a troll outcast to a band of orcs, for example, especially if the adventuring party is of mixed levels, the troll will keep the higher-level characters busy while the less experienced members tackle the orcs. Encountering an entire clan of trolls is best reserved for high-level adventurers, especially if the trolls have levels in character classes themselves.

The Games Master can use the following scenario hooks and ideas to bring trolls into his games. Note that not all of these ideas are suitable for low-level parties.

BRING ONE IN ALIVE

A wizard or alchemist hires the party to subdue and capture a living troll, so he can use its blood as an exotic ingredient in a magic item. The trick is to find a troll alone, subdue it into unconsciousness, somehow bind it securely so it cannot escape, and transport it back to their employer, all without being discovered by any of the troll's clan-mates. A possible follow-up scenario might involve a party of the captured troll's clan-mates tracking it down, and the heroes having to fight off the enraged trolls intent upon freeing it.

I WANT A TROPHY!

The party members are hired as guides for a wealthy noble who wants to impress his peers by going 'into the field' and slaying a fearsome troll. Naturally, the noble has much more in the way of riches than fighting prowess, and is liable to be more of a hindrance to the party than an aid. Furthermore, he

insists on landing the killing blow himself; he just wants the party to find him a troll and 'soften it up a bit' for him.

RUNNING AMOK!

A retired adventurer (perhaps an old associate of the Player Characters) built himself a fine manor house, behind which he has established a menagerie of dangerous monsters. Unfortunately, although he had the iron bars of the troll cage made thick enough to prevent the creature from bending them, he failed to take its animal cunning into account and was dismayed to learn the troll had bitten off its own limbs and squeezed through the bars. Once its limbs grew back it escaped the menagerie, leaving its cast-off limbs behind. There is now a hungry troll lurking in the midst of a city, and it is up to the Player Characters to find it before it kills anyone.

FRIEND OR FOE?

A single male troll approaches the party in broad daylight, but rather than attacking them he begins gnawing off his own arms as a sign of goodwill. He is a troll outcast, and has decided to ally himself with the adventurers! Should the party accept him into their ranks, they will have to bridge the communication gap (unless one of them speaks the language of giants), 'train' him to the adventuring lifestyle and decide whether or not he can be trusted not to turn on them when his hunger outweighs all other considerations. This could be a good way to give a low-level party a 'boost' in strength that may or may not be permanent, and opens the way for all sorts of roleplaying opportunities. What happens the first time they enter a town with their 'hench troll' in tow? How do they convince the paladin they meet on the road not to kill their new-found companion? What happens when a female from the troll's clan comes searching for their errant member?

PIT FIGHTERS

The party members run afoul of the local Thieves Guild and wake up in a combat arena hidden deep in the bowels of the city's underground levels. There, the Guildmaster runs illegal gladiatorial fights and makes a small fortune on the betting generated by

the bouts. Stripped of their magic items and armed with but a single weapon apiece, the adventurers are pitted against a captured troll, the Guildmaster's house favourite. Somehow, they must not only defeat the troll but escape the arena and bring the Thieves Guild's illegal operation down.

polymorphed into a troll by a wizard, who asks him to infiltrate a troll lair and retrieve a magic item that belonged to the wizard's retainer, recently slain and devoured by the trolls. Despite wearing the shape of a troll, the character does not have a troll's regenerative abilities, and interacting with the troll clan, the *polymorphed* character will not dare get into a fight with those he meets in the lair. The fact that the wizard will only return the character to his normal form upon retrieval of the item is liable to be a powerful incentive to do as asked.

INFILTRATION

This scenario can be fun when only a single player shows up for the session. The character is

Tharg sat looking at the troll, fascinated as its new arm grew out of the stump hacked away by Portia. The rest of the party could hardly bear to watch, but to the barbarian, it was just another facet of nature. Odd that the druid didn't think so, he considered idly.

As if called by thought, Norbert sidled up to the fire, gesturing across at the troll. 'What's she doing?' he asked, rather simply.

'Regenerating,' advised the barbarian knowingly, pleased to be the one with the most information for a change. 'It's name is something like Grizzle-bottom, but I don't quite understand. Oh, and she's a *he*.'

'Really?' said Norbert, without conviction or interest. The troll looked up from re-growing, and appeared to smile, which confused the druid.

'Have a word,' encouraged Tharg.

So, bizarrely, druid and troll sat across a fire, one with a bandaged head, the other regenerating an arm, and had a conversation. After a few minutes the druid turned around, shaking his head in wonder.

'Well?' enquired Tharg, who had lost the track of the conversation shortly after *hello*.

'He's impressed. Very impressed. With you,' said Norbert, not noticing that he was unconsciously talking at the same speed as their guest. 'In fact, he's so impressed he wants to stay. He's never been beaten in a fight by anything other than another troll, and then only female ones.'

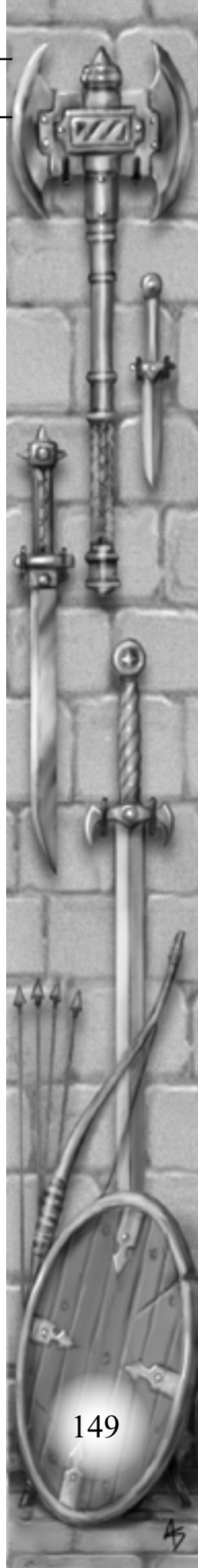
'He got duffed over by bints?' asked Tharg, incredulously.

Norbert shook his head. 'Not quite the same in their society, old chap. The ladies rule the roost, you know.'

Tharg belched out an expletive, drawing a grunt of amusement from their guest. 'What's he going to do now then?'

'Rather surprisingly, he'd like to come along with us. He seems to think you'll be good company. Can't imagine why.'

The barbarian paused for some seconds before replying, and when he did so, it was with a hushed voice. 'Don't know if I fancy hanging about with a bloke who gets beaten up by girls,' he said at length, scratching his chin thoughtfully.



TROLLS AS CHARACTERS

As if trolls were not dangerous enough as they are, some of them have the patience or the single-minded stubbornness to acquire class levels. These exemplary creatures soon rise to be clan leaders or, in the case of outcasts, highly paid mercenaries. Even more rare are adventurer trolls who venture out of their known life to expand their horizons; these are the truly dangerous ones, worthy of becoming a party's nightmare and even a recurring villain. It is recommended that trolls be limited to the following classes: adept, barbarian, bard, cleric (referred to as a 'shaman'), fighter, ranger, sorcerer and warrior.

Troll adepts are almost always female, and might hide their abilities from the rest of the clan. The troll's favoured class is barbarian, as their lifestyle makes this class a logical choice. Troll bards are very rare, and almost always female. They share the standard trollish dislike for music, deriving their bardic powers through storytelling. Troll bards rarely gain more than a level or two of this class. Clerics choose two of the following domains: Chaos, Evil, Fire or Strength. A troll's worship of fire comes from the fact that it is one of the few things that can actually cause it permanent harm, and why clerics frequently steer toward the fire domain to enjoy an advantage over the other trolls in their clan. Many male trolls take levels in either fighter or ranger, especially those intrigued with the concept of using weapons. As has been mentioned before, troll sorcerers are almost unheard of, but there seems to be no predilection toward either gender as to which trolls have an innate ability to intuitively wield arcane magic. Warrior is a common class for trolls to take, and most clans will have several warriors in their midst.

Challenge Ratings are calculated by adding the class levels to the creature's base CR in case of a Player Character Class (barbarian, bard, cleric, fighter, ranger and sorcerer), but in case of a Non-Player Character class (adept and warrior) add the class

level minus one. This means that a 4th level troll barbarian has a Challenge Rating of 9 (the base troll CR of 5 plus 4 class levels), while a 4th level troll adept has a rating of 8 instead (the base troll CR of 5, plus 4 class levels minus 1 for being a Non-Player Character class).

Troll characters have different ability scores than a normal troll, especially spellcasters who need Wisdom or Charisma scores above 10 to be able to cast even the weakest of spells. In addition, these are the trolls' racial traits to be used when creating a troll character from scratch.

TROLL RACIAL TRAITS

† +12 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +12 Constitution, -4 Intelligence (minimum 3), -2 Wisdom, -4 Charisma.

† Large size: As Large-sized creatures, trolls suffer a -1 penalty to their Armour Class and attack rolls.

† Space/Reach: 10 feet/10 feet.

† A troll's base land speed is 30 feet.

† Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

† Trolls start with six levels of giant, which provide 6d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +4, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +5, Ref +2 and Will +2.

† Racial Skills: A troll's giant levels give it skill points equal to 9 x (2 + Int modifier, minimum 1). Its class skills are Listen and Spot.

† Racial Feats: A troll's giant levels give it three feats.

'You know that trolls are thick, don't you?'

Harlan the Ranger

- † +5 natural armour bonus.
- † Natural Weapons: Claw (1d6) and bite (1d6)
- † Special Attacks: Rend, damage 2d6 + 1-1/2 times Str modifier.
- † Special Qualities: Regeneration 5, scent.
- † Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Orc. Furthermore, a troll outcast can choose the racial language of the race it has adopted as a bonus language.
- † Illiteracy. Trolls do not know how to read or write any of their spoken languages, although they can learn such skills at a later date, provided someone is willing to teach them, and they even care to learn (most trolls cannot be bothered).
- † Favoured Class: Barbarian. A multiclass troll's barbarian class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. Troll 'monster levels' do not count either, since they are considered to be a racial trait, not an actual character class. Barbarian skills are of primary importance to trolls and are drilled into them at an early age. Furthermore, a troll's susceptibility to the wilding shows a racial sensibility to the barbarian's rage.

Common Troll Skills

Troll characters have more skills thanks to the points they get with each class level. The following make good choices for trolls: Climb, Craft (weaving), Intimidate, Jump, Search, Speak Language and Survival.

Troll Feats

In addition to the collection of feats troll characters can acquire depending on their chosen character class, there are a few feats that are only available to members of the trollish races, as they tie in with their regenerative abilities.

Body Incorporation (Troll)

The troll can attach severed body parts to other areas of its body.

Prerequisites: Regeneration, Body Link, Body Shaping, being reduced to half total hit points by self-inflicted damage.

Benefit: Identical to Body Shaping, but the troll can reattach severed body parts just about anywhere on its body.

Body Link (Troll)

The troll can retain control over its severed body parts.

Prerequisites: Regeneration, being reduced to half total hit points by self-inflicted damage.

Benefit: A troll with this feat could cut off its left hand, fling it at an enemy, and attack that enemy with its severed hand, or a decapitated troll could continue attacking with its body as long as the head could see the battle area. While exerting control over its severed members, the troll also suppresses the regrowth of the missing limb, so that it can be reattached at a later time. As long as the troll concentrates on controlling its separated body parts, they count as being 'alive', thus not decaying.

Special: If the troll has Blind-Fight, it can still fight even if it cannot see what its body is doing.

Body Shaping (Troll)

The troll can reattach severed limbs to its body and still regrow new ones.

Prerequisites: Regeneration, Body Link.

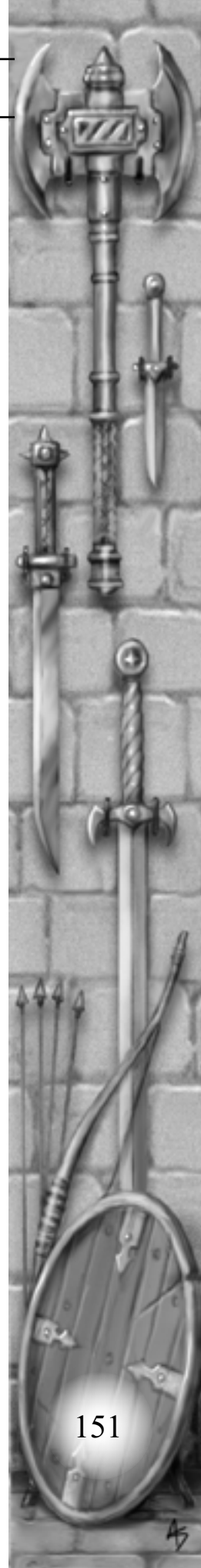
Benefit: By both regrowing severed body parts and reattaching the old ones, a troll can add additional limbs and enhance its combat abilities. A troll with this feat could add extra arms to its body and later learn the multiattack feat, or even add a second head. Whole arms could be grown next to each other at the shoulder, or a pair of forearms could extend from one elbow, depending on how the original limb was severed. A second head is always placed right next to the other one, facing the same direction.

Graft Bone (Troll)

The troll can graft severed pieces of its own bones back into its skeleton.

Prerequisites: Regeneration, being reduced to half total hit points by self-inflicted damage.

Benefit: The troll can take severed bones from its own body, sharpen the ends, and fuse them back into its body by plunging the bone shards into its flesh



‘No, I ain’t drunk, nosirree; well, mebbe I am now, but Hell, can ye blame me? But lemme tellya, I was as sober as ever when I saw the... when I saw the *thing*.’

‘It were full midnight, it were, but what with the full moon an’ all I could see plenty fine. I was takin’ the path through the forest – yeah, I heard the stories ‘bout them bein’ haunted an’ all, but so what? – I figger I can take care of meself, right? An’ this here axe’s fer more’n jest cuttin’ trees. An’ besides, jest about every forest I ever seen’s got tales ‘bout it bein’ haunted, so whassa dif’rence? So anyway...’

‘I’m jest crestin’ the big hill down by Cooter’s Creek, ye know the one I’m talkin’ ‘bout? So whatta I see but this big shadow down there by the bridge, risin’ up like it’s been waitin’ fer me. I’m thinkin’, cripes, it’s a werewolf – was a full moon out, ‘member? – an’ I grip my axe an’ get ready to fight the thing off if’n I gotta.’

‘Well, it were not no werewolf, it were too big fer that, it were as big an’ ugly as a troll. Now, I ain’t heard of no trolls around here, but I heard folks tell of what trolls look like, folks what have seen ‘em, like, and lemme tellya, that were no regular troll. It rose up to its full height, mebbe half again as tall as I am, an’ it spread its arms out wide, like it was gonna crush me inna bear hug or sumpin’. And I gotta tell ya, that sucker had *four arms*! No joke, an’ no lyin’, four arms, each one longer’n I am tall! An that ain’t even the worst thing. It looked over at me, its eyes all a-glintin’ in the moonlight, an’ it grinned at me with this evil set of teeth, and they was all pearly white and a-gleamin’ in the moonlight. And then – and then, another set of eyes opens up, square in the middle of that thing’s chest, an’ another set of teeth opens up in the middle of that thing’s stomach, and it started cacklin’ out loud and lemmetellya, that was it, I was outta there. The thing chased me from here to Hell’n back, I swear it, gibberin’ like a madman, but I finally lost it somewheres back there in the forest, and it’s a good thing I’m a woodsman, an’ know m’way around back there, or I would not be alive now to tell the tale.’

‘So yeah, I heard lotsa tales ‘bout haunted forests, proolly more’n ye ever will, but lemme tellya—this one’s haunted fer sure. Haunted by what, I dunno, but it’s haunted all right. I seen it fer myself, an’ I do not ever wanna see it again.’

until they hit bone. Trolls can, in this fashion, craft sharp bone spikes on their bodies that can be used as natural weaponry. Typically, a troll with this feat adorns the outer edges of its arms, elbows, knees and possibly even its skull with these shards. Bone spikes allow trolls to deal 1d6 points of base piercing damage (plus by the troll’s Strength modifier) with each successful grapple attack. Trolls with makeshift bone ‘horns’ can gore their victims for a like amount of damage.

Total Pain Insensitivity (Troll)

The troll can totally ignore pain.

Prerequisites: Regeneration, suffering damage at least twice a week during a period of ten years.

Benefit: The troll can ignore pain effects from such spells as *symbol of pain* and the *sicken* version of *eyebite*. It gains immunity to pain-based magic from items like *pipes of pain* and *robes of vermin*. The troll is immune to death by massive damage.

Troll Spells

Despite their rather limited intelligence, some troll spellcasters have actually created new spells. These spells are seldom seen being cast by members outside the trollish races.

Gunge Blight

Necromancy

Level: Adp 3, Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Living troll touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell is greatly feared among trolls, making it popular among shamans and chieftains for keeping their underlings in line. Casting this spell causes the spellcaster’s hand to glow and pulsate with a

sickly red light. A successful touch attack transmits the dreaded gunge disease into the victim, who is allowed a Fortitude save to negate the effects. If the save is failed, the victim immediately shows signs of the gunge: reddish welts appear on its body, its skin becomes flaky and starts to peel. Trolls who fall victim to this disease lose their regenerative abilities until the disease runs its course in $7+2d4$ days. Despite the fact that trolls enjoy healthy constitutions and most can successfully save against this spell, many are unwilling to take the chance. In fact, in more than one troll clan where this spell has been used, the lead storyteller (with bard levels) has taken to casting a *silent image* on her hand duplicating the appearance of the reddish glow of a latent *gunge blight* spell to bluff her clan-mates into thinking she has the power to inflict the disease upon them.

Gunge blight has no effect on non-trolls, as the gunge is a troll-specific disease.

Second Helping

Necromancy

Level: Adp 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 2 minutes

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Dead flesh regenerates on the bones within range

Duration: 24 hours (see text)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

The casting of this spell causes all bones within range to regrow the flesh that once adorned them. Trolls use this spell to get a 'second helping' of flesh from the bones of their previous victims. The material components for this spell are the bones to be affected, which are not consumed in the casting. Any bone can only be affected by a *second helping* spell once.

The flesh that regrows as a result of this spell is fresh, as if the victim was just recently slain. The flesh rots to putrescence after 24 hours if not eaten, which is generally not a problem with most trolls. However, if *second helping* is cast upon a complete skeleton followed by an *animate dead* spell, the resulting undead will be a zombie rather than a skeleton, and the zombie's dead flesh does not putrefy 24 hours after the casting of the *second helping* spell, as would normally be the case. Trolls use this spell exclusively for food, not to create zombies, although the possibility certainly exists. Spellcasters theorise that a dead body treated in this manner is once again susceptible to resuscitation magic, treating the body as if it was recently slain. No wizard or cleric has coaxed the knowledge of this spell from a troll shaman.



AZKHAK'S LAIR

A small troll clan led by a powerful chieftain/shaman named Azkhak has recently made a lair in the heart of the Greenglade Forest. The lair is a simple trollhole, dug in the junction between two large oak trees, and is typical of such dwellings. The Games Master may use this chapter as the location for an encounter with a troll clan or simply as a springboard to design trollholes for his own campaign.

Clan Strength

Azkhak's clan consists of ten trolls, currently ranked in the following hierarchy of strength:

- Azkhak**, female shaman/chieftain.
- Gloora**, female adept (who openly uses her adept spells).
- Togla**, female adept (who has so far kept her adept abilities hidden from the clan).
- Zogg**, male barbarian hunt leader.
- Nokklar**, female warrior.
- Glunk**, male warrior.
- Pok-Tor**, male warrior.
- Bokk**, male warrior.
- Pooma**, young female.
- Broglo**, young male.

1. Entry Shaft

From the outside, there is little indication that Azkhak's trollhole exists. The tunnel entrance is covered with a woven mat interspersed with oak leaves and grass, and looks perfectly natural at first glance (Spot check at DC 15 to notice the mat). Anyone over 20 lb. that steps on the mat falls through to the entry shaft below. The entry shaft is six feet wide and ten feet deep, spilling out into the common area below.

There is a strong rope made of braided troll-hair anchored to the side of the shaft by an exposed root from one of the great oaks above. The rope is tied to the side of the shaft when not in use, its length kept coiled around two bones pounded deep into the ceiling of the common area. When fully extended, the rope is 20 feet long, and strong enough to bear the weight of an adult troll.

2. Pit

A pit that is ten feet in depth opens directly below the entry shaft, also with a six-foot diameter opening. The pit's floor is ten feet wide and the walls are canted inwards to prevent prey from climbing out. Anyone crashing through the trollhole entrance actually falls for 30 feet, taking the appropriate falling damage. The pit also functions as the clan's garbage disposal area and latrine, making for poor sanitary conditions. The trolls like to throw opponents into the pit in dominance challenges.

3. Common Area

This is the central living area of Azkhak's clan, where they eat their grisly meals, fight their endless hierarchy battles, tell their clan's stories, and otherwise spend 'quality time' when not on the prowl in the forest above or sleeping in their chambers. When the trolls go off on one of their nightly hunting excursions, they usually keep one troll behind on guard duty, defending their lair. This is usually Bokk, the youngest and weakest of the males, or Pooma, one of the two troll children in the clan.

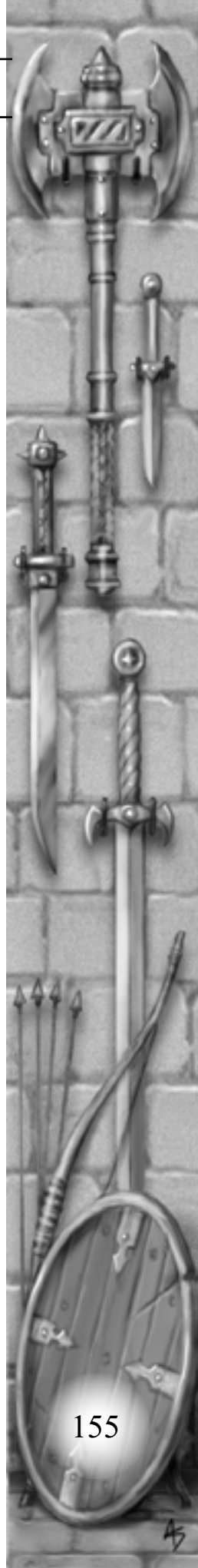
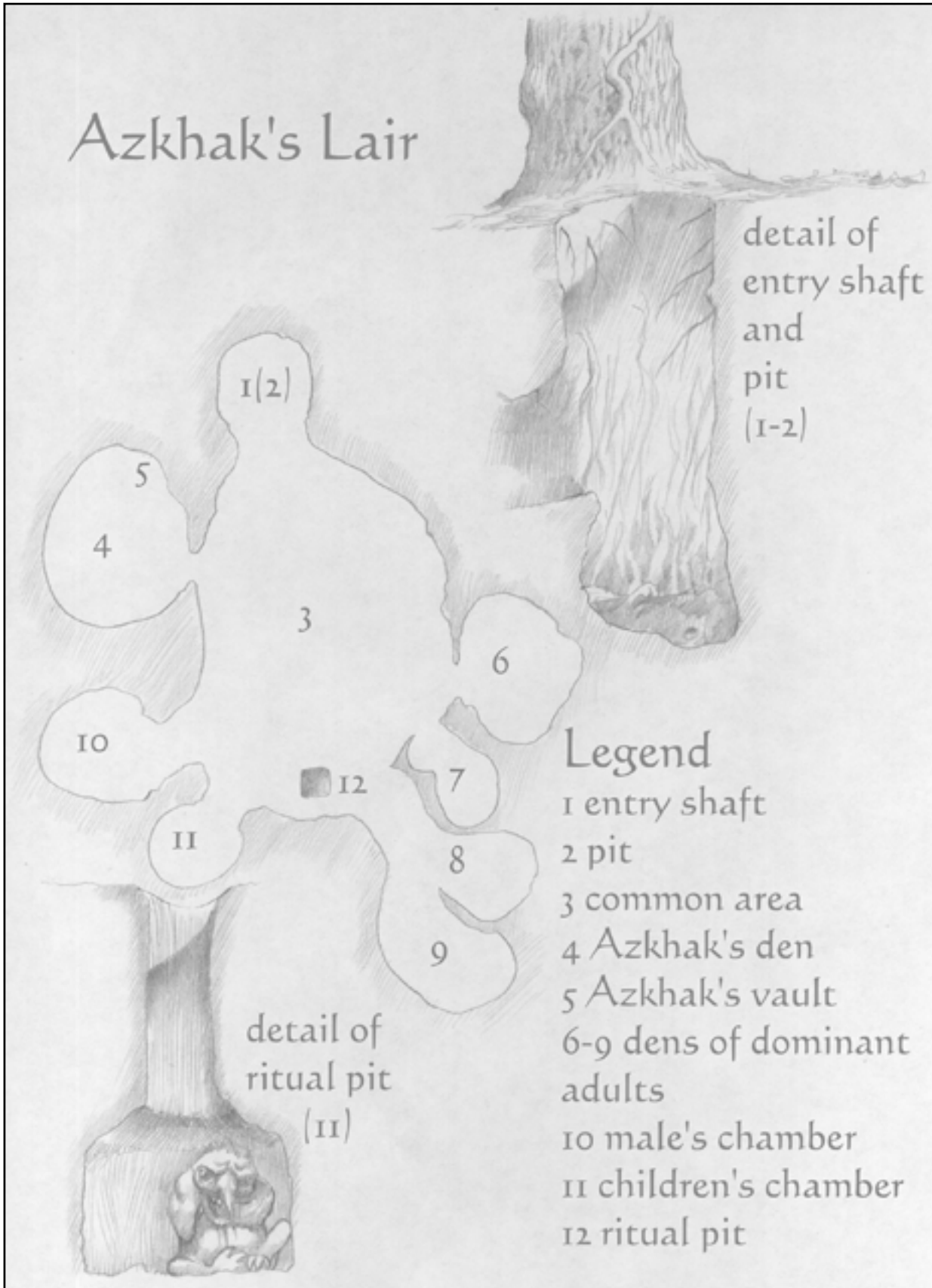
Bokk spends much of his time while playing with the numerous coins scattered over the floor of the common area, treasure from previous victims that the other trolls deem worthless. Bokk has recently hit upon a rather different idea: he is inserting coins into open wounds on his chest and torso, slipping them under the skin before it heals. This improvised subdermal armour grants him a +2 armour bonus to his AC. Bokk plans to attack Pok-Tor when the moment is right, sure that he has the advantage he needs to overwhelm the stronger male and supplant him in his place in the clan hierarchy. If slain, Bokk's body gives up 67 gp, 12 sp, and 32 cp.

The rest of the common area contains a total of 23 gp, 52 sp, 29 cp, and three small rubies valued at 50 gp each, all scattered among scraps of torn clothing and the bones of recent victims. A pair of daggers, a short sword, a scimitar and a hunting knife are embedded point first in the walls; the trolls occasionally grab them when in the midst of a hierarchy battle.

4. Azkhak's Den

This is the shaman/chieftain's sleeping area, the largest of such additions in the lair as befits her status. Azkhak has taken for her own nest the finest animal skins her clan has acquired. Pine needles, oak leaves and clumps of moss complete the building materials.

Azkhak's Lair



5. Azkhak's Hidden Vault

A small depression behind a large rock hides Azkhak's personal treasures: the skull of a mouse, two *potions of wisdom*, a *potion of darkvision*, and a *wand of flame arrow* with 11 charges remaining. Azkhak has seen the wand put to use firsthand but is unable to decipher the command word etched on its side, and thus unable to use it. Nonetheless, she does not want others in her clan to get their hands on such a powerful item. The three potion vials are made of glass, sealed with corks and sealing wax, and labelled in the common script. Azkhak believes them all to be *potions of water breathing*, because that was the effect of a fourth potion found along the others.

6–9. The Dens of Gloora, Togla, Zogg, and Nokklar

Each of these small dens is the private sleeping chamber of the other four dominant adults. Rather than simply dig their own den into the side of the common area as these four have done, the other trolls secretly plot the overthrow of one of these four to gain their coveted sleeping areas.

10. Males' Chamber

Glunk, Pok-Tor, and Bokk, the three lowest males in the clan's current hierarchy, share this filthy chamber.

As males, these three are relegated to the lower levels, away from the action, and where they must pass by the chieftain's den to leave the trollhole. Azkhak suspects Glunk and Pok-Tor will attempt to become outcast if left to their own devices.

11. Children's chamber

The two troll young, Pooma and Broglo, shared this sleeping area until recently. Pooma gained exclusive use of it, if only temporarily, until Broglo gets out from the ritual pit.

12. Pit

This ten foot cube has a narrow (four feet diameter) vertical shaft as its sole access. Broglo, the youngest of the troll children, was thrown down here two days ago by Azkhak herself, as a traditional troll learning experience. Broglo has not been fed since being banished here, nor will he be fed for the next month or so; he is expected to survive by devouring his own regenerating flesh. This is a lesson all troll children must learn. Pooma herself went through this ritual last year, but still enjoys taunting Broglo from the top of the pit.



TROLL REFERENCE LIST

The following are provided as a quick and easy reference for Games Masters to use on short notice. However, it is suggested that Games Masters use these examples as mere starting points to build unique trollish adversaries for their Player Characters to confront.

Troll Shaman/Chieftain

Large Giant

7th Level Cleric

Hit Dice: 13d8+78 (136 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+20

Attack: Claw +15 melee (1d6+7)

Full Attack: 2 claws +15 melee (1d6+7) and bite +10 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rebuke undead 2/day, rend 2d6+10

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, regeneration 5, scent

Saves: Fort +16, Ref +6, Will +10

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 15, Con 23, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 8

Skills: Climb +9, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +3

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 12

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/3+1/2+1): 0th- *create water, detect magic* (x2), *detect poison* (x2), *resistance*; 1st- *burning hands, command* (x2), *divine favour, endure elements* (fire) (x2); 2nd- *bull's strength, cure moderate wounds, hold person, produce flame*; 3rd- *bestow curse, blindness/deafness, resist energy* (x2).

Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Fire (turn water creatures, rebuke fire creatures, 2/day).

Female Troll Adept

Large Giant

3rd Level Adept

Hit Dice: 6d8+3d6+54 (91 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+16

Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d6+7)

Full Attack: 2 claws +11 melee (1d6+7) and bite +6 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rebuke undead 1/day, rend 2d6+10

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., regeneration 5, scent

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +7

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 7, Wis 11, Cha 7

Skills: Climb +8, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +3

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Power Attack, Track

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Adept Spells Prepared (3/2): 0th- *create water, guidance, purify food and drink*; 1st- *burning hands, endure elements* (fire).

Male Troll Hunt Leader

Large Giant

2nd Level Barbarian

Hit Dice: 6d8+2d12+48 (88 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+16

Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d6+6) or bone axe +11 melee (1d8+6/x3)

Full Attack: 2 claws +11 melee (1d6+6) and bite +6 melee (1d6+3), or bone axe +11/+6 melee (1d8+6/x3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d6+9

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., fast movement, rage 1/day, regeneration 5, scent, uncanny dodge

Saves: Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +3

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6

Skills: Climb +7, Jump +7, Listen +5, Spot +6, Survival +1

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usual chaotic evil

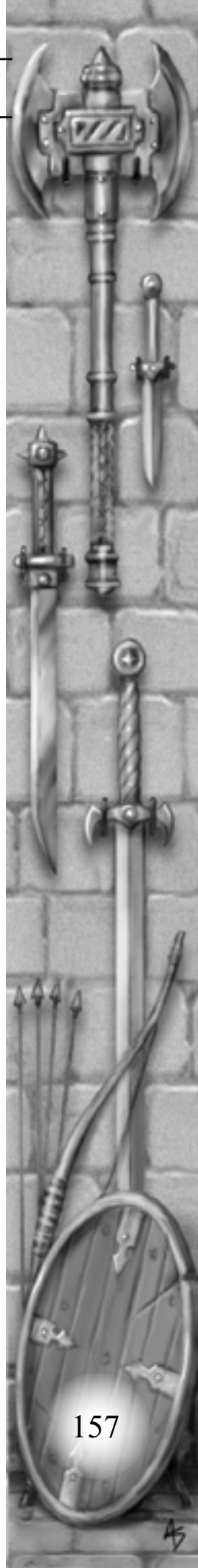
Troll Hunter

Large Giant

1st Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 7d8+42 (73 hp)

Initiative: +2



TROLL REFERENCE LIST

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+15

Attack: Claw +10 melee (1d6+6)

Full Attack: 2 claws +10 melee (1d6+6) and bite +5 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d6+9

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., regeneration 5, scent

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +4, Will +4

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +1

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Track

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Typical Troll Clan Member

Large Giant

Hit Dice: 6d8+36 (63 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+14

Attack: Claw +9 melee (1d6+6)

Full Attack: 2 claws +9 melee (1d6+6) and bite +4 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d6+9

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., regeneration 5, scent

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +6

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Track

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Troll Infant

Medium Giant

Hit Dice: 3d8+15 (28 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+7

Attack: Claw +7 melee (1d4+5)

Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (1d4+5) and bite +2 melee (1d4+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d4+7

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90 ft., regeneration 5, scent

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +2

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 5, Wis 8, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil



Borrag and Skrung loped down the forest path, wielding their bone weapon shafts in their hands. Above them the moon gleamed through the canopy of trees, throwing arced highlights across their unpleasant features. Borrag, who had been busy picking at a boil under his armpit suddenly tensed, nose erect, and tentatively sniffed at the night air. 'Elves,' he announced.

Skrung, the younger of the two, stopped short and, copying the actions of his companion, took a few cautious sniffs of the air as well, lifting his nose high to take in every waft of scent on the breeze. He grunted his agreement, then scowled.

'Wanted bigger game,' he said at length, fingering the bone shaft in his hand. Carved on the side of the weapon was his personal sigil, two straight claw marks bisected by a third at an angle.

'Yuss,' admitted Borrag. 'Do not want elves here, though. Trespassing. Eat our food. Look.' He pointed at a rune carved into a tree trunk. It was *his* own personal sigil, three parallel grooves centred in a rough circle, underneath which he had carved a number of straight lines of varying lengths. He was considered something of an artist in the tribe.

Skrung peered at the carving, clearly impressed. 'What it say?' he asked of his elder clan-brother.

'Says: "Borrag the Mighty claims this forest for the clan. All others go away." That's me,' he announced, rather obviously, although Skrung was grateful for the confirmation. Borrag the Mighty was quite a common name, after all.

'Elves not listen,' concluded the younger troll, gesturing down the track.

'Elves pay for it then,' stated Borrag, his ugly features taking on a scowl which did nothing to alleviate the impression. He gestured again to the random scratches he had carved into the trunk of the tree. 'Also says, "Trespassers get eaten,"' he decided, on the spot.

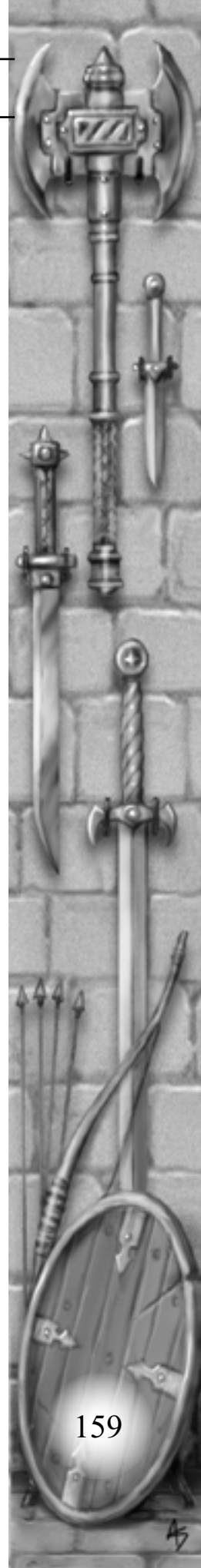
'Eat elves...' mused Skrung, his face breaking into what passed for a grin in Trollish circles. 'Skrung likes.'

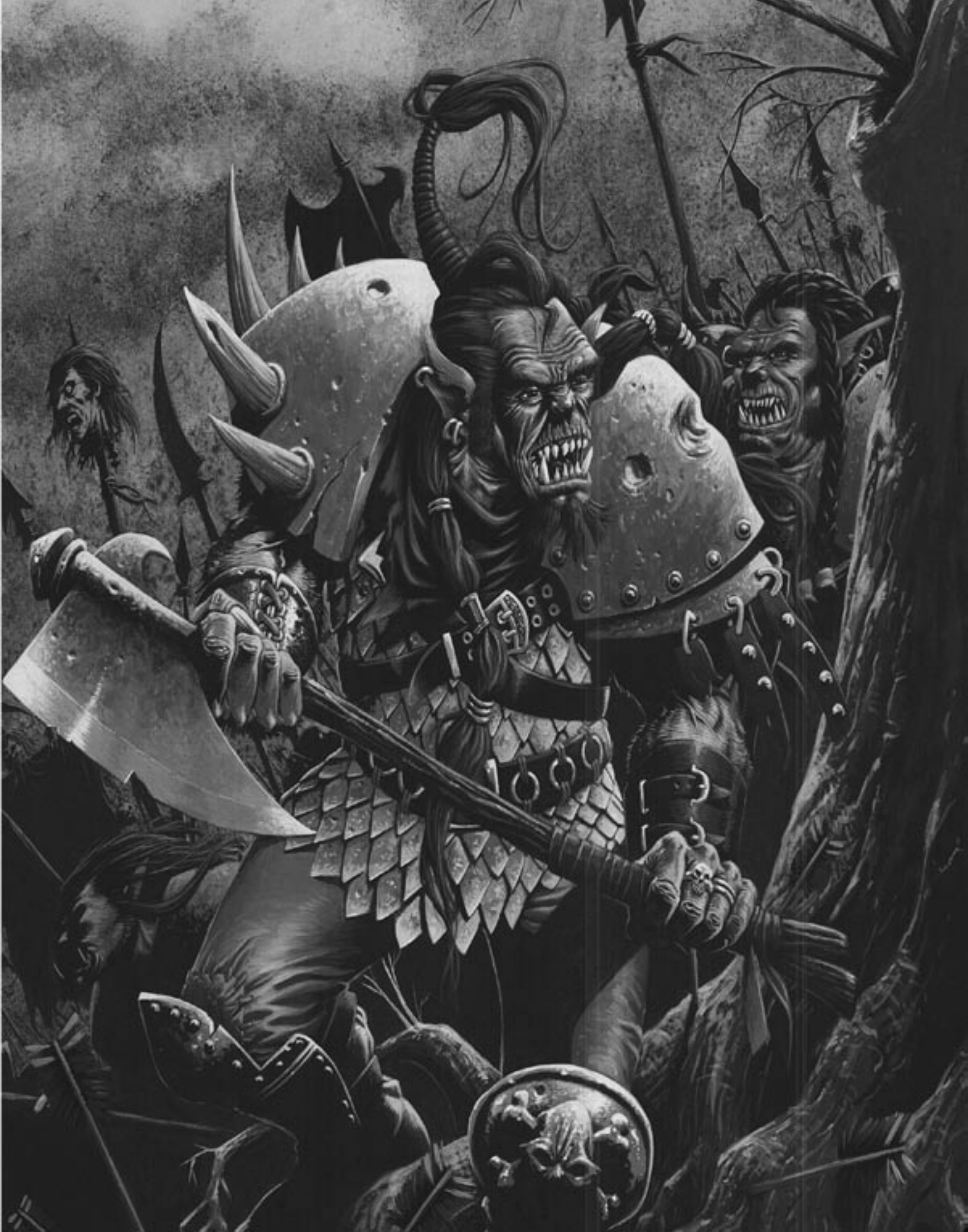
'Borrag likes too,' replied the elder troll, chuckling in anticipation. 'Come.'

'Hang on,' admonished Skrung. Holding his bone weapon in his left hand, he scratched his own sigil in the tree trunk underneath Borrag's. He added a few random scratches below it, looked at it, and added a few more for good measure. 'There,' he said. 'Says: "Skrung kills all trespassers. And eats them. And drinks the marrow from their bones." What you think?'

'Not bad,' said Borrag, his head tilted as he appreciated the new artwork. He made a mental note to alter his own sigil to keep ahead of the game. Skrung obviously bore watching. 'Come. Find elves,' said Borrag, scampering off, tired now of the writing game, and having already forgotten his mental note.

Skrung waited a second or two, taking one last glance at his new, improved rune. Then he hefted his weapon and followed, nose twitching as he followed the elven scent-trail into the forest gloom, tummy rumbling in anticipation of what was to come.





DRCS

- stooped posture
- grayish skin

- Low forehead.



- primitive humanoid skull

- prominent lower canines



- enlarged spine creates a strong neck



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The Slayer's Guide To ORCS

Orcs are the foot soldiers of evil, the creatures that make up the hordes of darkness that threaten to overwhelm the good peoples and turn the entire land into a region of little else than slaughter and depravity. Most Games Masters use them as the guardians of low-level dungeons, just a slight step above kobolds as a threat. Often they are simply portrayed as evil humans and are given little more thought than that.

Shallow as they are individually, ruts on most roads have more depth and complexity; orcs as a people are a bit more unusual than that. They have a society all of their own, one that is often misunderstood or entirely ignored by the people who war against them. After all, when most heroes are fighting for their lives, they usually do not stop to have a conversation with their attackers, and orcs are not great conversationalists by any account.

Most of the hard information people have gathered about orcs has come under difficult circumstances, generally from those who somehow survived slavery under the orcs long enough to escape. Some other salient details have come from those heroes who have managed to actually capture a live orc, a fairly unusual circumstance. Orcs make dangerous prisoners, constantly scheming for freedom. Most people prefer to kill them rather than keep such an untrustworthy viper close at hand.

The details found in *The Slayer's Guide to Orcs* were collated from the hard-won knowledge of the loremasters and warriors from dozens of realms. This represents the best and most current intelligence concerning this fascinating subject. Using it, Games Masters can transform the lowly orcs into a powerful, villainous force that can easily become a key element in any campaign. Players, on the other hand, should find enough in here to properly prepare themselves to face these creatures on the field of battle, for it is in war that the orcs are truly at their most fearsome.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 System games, exhaustively examines specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these are the races that Games Masters and players

tend to overlook as creatures best suited for little more than sticking on the end of a sword en route to gathering any treasure the creatures might happen to be guarding.

ORCS — HORDES OF EVIL

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race: in this case, the orc. Peruse these pages and, within, you shall find a treasure trove of information about orc physiology, habitat, society and habits of battle. This should give you a thorough grounding on what role orcs have in the world.

This book also gives details on how the Games Master can best use orcs in a fantasy roleplaying game. It could be that the heroes have already killed innumerable orcs, but now they may discover that these beasts were simply a prelude to the real orc threat. The book concludes with a clenched fist full of orc scenario ideas, a complete orc war camp and a number of sample orc statistics for immediate use in your game.



ORCS INTRODUCTION

Captain Emathilon backhanded the orc captive with his spiked gauntlet, sending orc spittle and greyish flesh splattering across the polished surface of the nearby table. 'Talk, you tusk-faced beast!' he demanded.

The orc only looked up at the elf lord and sniggered, as if enjoying some private, repulsive joke by the torchlight in the darkened tent. Emathilon smashed his fist into the orc's grey-skinned face, flattening his already flattish nose and busting off the end of one of the vile creature's tusks. The orc did not seem all that perturbed by this chain of events. He grunted with pain and fell silent for a moment. Then the sniggering resumed, muffled only slightly by the ruin of his black-lipped mouth.

Emathilon drew back his clenched fist to slam home another blow but Lieutenant Crestantir reached out and stayed his hand. 'Captain,' the younger elf said evenly, 'you are wasting your time. You cannot pry secrets from this creature's lips by violent means.'

Captain Emathilon snatched his hand back from his subordinate. 'Violence is the only language such monsters understand,' he spat. 'And if you ever lay your hands on me again, my friend, I can promise you a fate so terrible you would wish to take this creature's place.'

Crestantir bowed his head to acknowledge Emathilon's authority. 'Of course, my captain. I merely wished to point out that there are other, perhaps more effective, means of procuring the information we so badly need.'

Emathilon fell silent for a moment, bowing his head. When he looked up, his eyes were almost steaming and the elven lieutenant involuntarily took a step back. 'If you think you know better, lieutenant,' the captain hissed, 'than please proceed.'

Crestantir snapped off a quick bow to his superior officer and then turned to the orc chained to the chair. 'What is your name?' he asked firmly.

The orc growled something at the elf. Crestantir tried to repeat it. 'So that's your name?' he asked.

'No,' the orc chortled low and mean, 'I just want you to say those words.'

Crestantir looked quizzically at the orc.

'They mean: 'My manhood is very small!'' The orc nearly choked on his laughter. He stopped short as Emathilon stepped up to strike the creature again but Crestantir stayed the elder elf's hand.

'Forget your name,' Crestantir said. 'What are you doing here?'

'Being beaten by a pair of pansies,' the orc replied flatly.

'Before that. What were you doing here? You are a long way from any orc camp.'

The orc laughed. 'So you think, pointy ears. So you think.'

'What do you mean by that?' Suddenly Crestantir felt his heart in his throat.

'We are orcs! We are never far away. We will always be here. Someday, we will kill you all, you and all your worthless kin.'

It was Crestantir's turn to laugh. He chuckled softly. 'I have been through several wars with your people,' he said. 'You never get very far.'

'This time is different,' the orc grunted, baring his tusks with a sloppy, battered smile. 'This time we did not start with your front. We started on your back.'

'What do you mean by that?' Crestantir repeated, his blood chilling in his heart.

'While you elf-men are all on patrol, we went to your homes. We raped your wives. We slaughtered your children.' The orc's face leapt with delight when he saw the horror painted on Crestantir's face. 'This time, we decided we would have our fun first. There is time to kill you later.'

As the orc guffawed at his revelations, Crestantir drew his dagger and slit the creature's throat with a single, clean movement. Blackish blood poured from the wound and the beast's laughter quickly turned to a harsh, gurgling sound. Within moments, the orc slumped against his chains, silenced forever.

'We need to verify this right away,' Crestantir said. 'I will send runners.'

Emathilon shook his head, his face gone ghostly pale. 'The accursed beast was telling the truth, I am sure.'

'Then we should go to their aid!'

Emathilon shook his head again. 'If the beast was truthful, then it is already too late. We cannot return home now and leave a gaping hole in the nation's defences. That is just what they want.'

'What are we to do?'

The elven captain's face turned even grimmer. 'We hunt them down and kill them. We kill them all. Let the gods sort them out.'



ORC

PHYSIOLOGY

Tall, wide and made of muscles, orcs seem as if they were built for war. According to some legends, they actually were. Bred from corrupted elves by some dark god that required a race of pure evil to worship him, they were supposedly crafted to be the bane of the good races everywhere. Whether or not this tale is true – the orcs have their own, different creation myth – the outcome is the same. Orcs have spread across the planet and can be found in just about every realm in substantial numbers.

Orcs stand from five to seven feet tall, although they often seem much shorter as they have a tendency to slouch or hunch over, especially when charging into battle. They like to say this is so the smaller races cannot get away from them. Most scholars believe the orc skeleton simply has a hard time handling the many layers of muscles atop it.

Orcs that make it to old age invariably have back problems and often wear studded leather trusses to give themselves some relief. Some orcs see this as a sign of weakness but those elders who have made it that far are often cunning enough to cut off any troublemakers at the knees—often literally—before any real trouble starts.

As with humans, any given orc can look a great deal different from another. The disparate orc cultures vary in skin, hair and eye colouring, as well as clothing and hairstyles. Each orc tribe speaks its own distinct dialect of Orc, most of which differ so greatly even orcs from neighbouring tribes have difficulty understanding each other. For this reason, most orcs speak the common tongue of the land, but they do so poorly. An orc would rather speak with his axe than his mouth.

Orc skin colour ranges from green to grey. Their hair is normally dark and coarse and can be anything from a dark blond to jet-black. Some orcs wear their hair cropped close but it is more common to see their tresses worn long and sometimes braided. Some tribes even favour dreadlocks, frequently reeking of the blood used to dye them.

The eyes of an orc can be any colour, from a pale blue to a pitch-black. They sometimes come in crimson, which most orcs take to be the sign of great strength. Many orc leaders have been blessed with such eyes.

Orc males have hair over almost their whole bodies. This is thick, coarse and almost always brown or black. Many older orcs sport beards as well, but these usually do not come in as full as that of a dwarf or gnome. Their younger brethren will usually chop or shave them off rather than have to keep them groomed. Otherwise, the beards are usually crusted with food, drink and *mrog* (a favourite orc drink described below).

Orc ears are pointed and their noses are usually flat and upturned, exposing their nostrils, which flare widely when the orc is angry. They also have sharp, pointed teeth set in a horrible under bite. Their lower jaw is thrust out harshly, exposing the long tusks that jut out past their lower lip, often far enough to nearly touch the orc's nose. This all makes the orcs look as if their ancestors were humans crossed with wild boars.

BORN FOR DARKNESS

Orcs live freely either above or below the ground. They are most active during the night, preferring to sleep during the day, normally in places hidden away from the prying eyes of the civilised peoples. They certainly can move about freely during the day, despite what some legends might say. However, they prefer not to, as the harsh light of the sun in a cloudless sky hurts their eyes.

Orcs can see well in the dark, as finely as any dwarf. Their night vision depicts images in shades of red and black, which they can discern between as if they were black and white. This leads many people to think of orcs as colour-blind, a misconception that is often exploited by orc tribes.

Because of this, orcs often wear garish colours that most other races would think clash horribly. Orcs like to have any attention they can get. From their point of view, there is no reason to wear clothing if it does not draw notice to the wearer.

A TASTE FOR BLOOD

Orcs are technically omnivorous but they prefer to eat meat above all else. When not at war, orc males spend most of their time hunting for fresh meat, as they rarely have the patience to tend cattle instead. Most times, the rare herd overseen by an orc is quickly decimated by raids – even by the herders themselves, who find it hard to resist a quick snack with such easy prey nearby.

Many orcs do not bother to cook their kills until the meat is at least a couple of days old. They prefer the taste of fresh blood, the warmer the better. Female orcs, who are rarely

if ever allowed along on a hunt, almost never get to enjoy this treat. It is up to them to cook the leftover food later. Orc males consider such activities to be beneath them.

Orcs are not addicted to blood in the fashion of a vampire, but they do relish the flavour. They claim prey that has been frightened right before it was killed tastes the best, due to the fear flowing through its veins. Creatures actually frightened to death are the rarest and most prized kills. This is one reason orcs like to cultivate the most frightening appearances they can.

Most orcs prefer to slake their thirst with the blood of a sentient creature if possible. These people, they say, feel the fear more poignantly, making their blood much more exquisite. In the heat of battle, it is normally impossible for an orc to stop to sample a victim's blood but it does happen from time to time, especially if there is a cessation in the fighting.

Apparently, the blood of those who fight against the orcs does not taste nearly so wonderful. The flavour of courage runs foul to an orc's palate. Orcs prefer to catch their prey on the run.

Mrog

The favourite drink of orcs is *mrog*, a dark mead made from fermented honey and blood. This has a sweet, coppery tang to it that many orcs compare favourably to the taste of fear in the lifeblood of their prey. Most orc armies carry several barrels of *mrog* with them, often making more along the way. The recipe is as simple as it is brutal, and fresh *mrog* can be ready to drink in as little as three days, although it is considered better if it is able to sit in its casks for at least a week.

Mrog is often called by the kind of blood used to brew it. Elf-*mrog* or dwarf-*mrog* is normally considered to be the best that is commonly available, although dragon-*mrog* is reputedly the best. Of course, such a drink is rare enough that only a few orcs have ever tasted it, so the others must take the word of such fortunate souls.

In the larger orc cities, some taverns actually blend various types of *mrog* together to produce unusual flavours. Still, most orcs prefer their *mrog* straight up. The most famous brands have loyal followings. These include Dead Dwarf, Skullcracker, and Old Elf guts.

after only six months in the womb and they reach sexual maturity by the age of eight.

The sexual promiscuity that runs through orc culture leads to the birth of many children. Female orcs are usually considered to be little more than cooks and mothers. It is not uncommon for an orc female to give birth to 30 children before hitting menopause somewhere around the age of 40, assuming she lives that long.

Once born, an orc child is the property of its mother. Fathers have little or no say – or even concern – about their children. Orcs do not marry, forming and breaking relationships with each other as suits them. Male orcs often return to the same female again and again, but they may find they are sharing her with several others in the tribe. Jealousy among orcs is common, despite the open nature of the relationships, and this is the cause of most fights that happen within a tribe.

Orc mothers raise their children cruelly, often seeing them as little burdens the gods have placed upon them for being unfortunate enough to be born female. They do love them in their own way, but all orc mothers know baby orcs eventually grow up and have little use for their mothers.

Orcs have no incest taboos, so it is not unusual for orcs of the same family to breed with each other. This is particularly true in smaller tribes, especially those decimated by war.

Once an orc reaches the age of eight or so, he is considered to be an adult. An orc does not reach full maturity until about age 12 or so, but at eight the orc is old enough to hunt, fight, breed or start raising children.

Female orcs each usually have a hut or tents they assemble themselves, sometimes with the help of male orcs who wish to bed them. The males tend to lay down wherever they like when they wish to sleep. They carry what few belongings they have with them and share the bed of any female who will have them. When alone, they often simply sleep on the open ground.

Of course, in the larger orc settlements or cities, the most powerful males have their own places too. The chieftain of a tribe often establishes his own home and beckons females into it, but this is a rare honour reserved for him.

Orcs rarely reach old age. Usually, those that manage it have a natural tendency toward treachery that has allowed them to outlast all those who might have wished to take

AN ORC'S LIFE

The lives of most orcs are brutal and short. Orcs breed like mad to make up for this, as many young orcs never make it through their childhood. Orc babies are born



from them what is theirs, including their own lives. Others die either in war or at the hands of their own kind in one sort of squabble or another.

THE ORC MIND

The orc mind is the unfettered id. They are the moral equivalent of two-year-old humans, caring little for anything but their own immediate needs. Those few who rise above this mindset inevitably ascend to positions of great power within their tribe – or meet an untimely death.

Orcs are not terribly smart. Nor do they place much value on brains unless they are cracking them out of a foe's skull. Raw, brute strength is what is most important to them. A kind of animal cunning can help too, but most orcs do not have the patience to bother with anything so complex as a scheme.

Orcs are interested only in the three Fs: food, fighting and fornicating. They are first and foremost physical creatures, living eternally in the moment and doing what little they can to stave off their impending doom. This makes them extremely malleable by wiser folk. It explains how many an evil overlord has used his might to whip an army of orcs into shape to crush those who might dare to stand against him.

Orcs are uniformly bullies, which means in their hearts they are cowards. They are full of savage bluster until someone stronger stands up to them. Sadly, most orcs are too stupid to realise when they are outclassed and must be taught such lessons by force rather than threat.

As a group, orcs are even less likely to recognise the superior strength of a foe. They tend to goad each other into untenable situations by means of war cries and their garish war banners. Orcs are willing to follow a strong leader just about anywhere, as long as they believe they can get what is coming to them in the end. Sadly, by the time they figure out what is coming to them is death, it is almost always too late to do anything about it.



'Ol' fart Zag don't d'serve dat fine 'ut an' fine slave girl. Time ta sort 'im out.'

Gakk pushed the hide door-covering aside and stomped into Zag's hut. Zag scuttled up from his rough bench, his back so bent he was barely any taller upright than seated.

'Gakk, ya fine youn' fella, good ta see ya – want meat?' Zag proffered the human thigh joint from the table, 'Cooked but still good.'

Gakk was surprised – he'd come here to kill the aged orc, but here he was being unusually friendly. Maybe he could be cowed into submission instead. That would be better still. He snatched the meat and took a great bite from it, roaring, 'Right ya ol' cripple, ya gimme ya food, ya hut, ya slaves, and ya do wot I say fro' now on or ya get a piece o' this!' Gakk waved his massive axe over his head for emphasis as Zag cowered beneath him in the dirt.

After another few seconds, Zag suddenly rolled aside, displaying a surprising agility to avoid the younger orc's body falling forward. Gakk's tongue, swollen and blackened, lolled lifelessly from his mouth and his eyes bulged hugely. Zag grinned, revealing several missing fangs.

'Get out here, slave – I want this new meat jointed and gutted right away. Save the guts, liver and lights as a gift for Gakk's brother.'

ORC HABITAT

Orcs can be found just about anywhere, in any climate. Various tribes prefer to live in certain parts of the world but they can generally adapt quickly to just about any environment. Still, most orc tribes can be found in one of two places: either underground or on their way to war. There are some exceptions to this but they are notable mostly because of their relative rarity.

UNDERGROUND

Because of the pain that direct sunlight causes their eyes, many orcs prefer to live underground. This also makes it easier for them to protect themselves from those who might wish to do them harm. Orc war camps are notorious for attracting too much attention from those people to whom they wander a bit too close.

Orcs are not great at working stone, however. Most orc-built tunnels are in constant danger of collapse. For this reason, orcs prefer to occupy settlements that have already been built.

This has resulted in dozens of wars between orcs and dwarves, which has caused an enmity between the two races that never seems to lose its fervour. Orcs are also happy to encroach on the homes of gnomes but they often find gnome homes unacceptably cramped. A few orc tribes have fought long and hard against the subterranean dark elves too, but it is more common for the savvy dark elves to strike deals with the orcs to work together against the dwarves and elves they both hate so dearly.

The occasional dark dwarf clan strikes an alliance with orcs from time to time too, but this is rare. Even evil dwarves do not trust orcs. The enmity between the two races runs deep.

Given a choice, orcs invade a dwarven stronghold and kill everyone in it. They then repair the defences as best they can and take up residence there themselves. The trouble is that most orcs have absolutely no skill at anything other than swinging an axe. Such occupied dwarven redoubts quickly fall into disrepair, their original glory soon swallowed in a wave of orc filth and neglect. The only

thing that keeps such places standing is the fact that the dwarves did such a fantastic job of building them in the first place.

There are some dwarves in hotly-contested regions who lament this state of affairs, suggesting that their people not put so much effort into building places that might someday be used against them. Even so, the dwarven sense of pride is far too strong for these disheartened voices to ever find much of an audience.

However, some of the more entrenched dwarven clans have taken great pains to place traps about their homes to protect against invaders. This extends all the way to their leaders being able to literally bring down the roof with the pull of a single 'doomsday' lever. This has done little to deter the orcs, though, since they are happy to live in the other parts of the stronghold and simply laugh at the fact that they forced the dwarves to destroy what they had worked so hard to build.

The trouble with the orc habit of taking over the homes of other people is that the survivors (if any) or their relatives often wish to reclaim their home. Since the orcs are not



very adept at defence, preferring to be on the warpath than studying engineering, they regularly get rooted out of their acquired homes. Of course, the first chance they have, they will usually mount a counteroffensive of their own.

In this way, certain underground lairs have traded ownership dozens of times over the centuries. Entire chambers of these places have been decorated with the bones of the fallen – either to honour the dead or to spit on them.

IN THE DARK FOREST

Some orcs prefer to live in the heart of the darkest forests instead, under the thick canopy of an evil wood, the ground of which never sees the light of day. Orcs that live here often abandon their traditionally nocturnal ways, as they are able to function just as well during the day as at night. Of course, the elves normally see the forests as their homes and this puts them in direct conflict with the orcs.

The two races treat their homes very differently. Elves see themselves as the caretakers of nature in its most unspoiled forms. They go to great lengths to integrate their way of life with that of the flora and fauna around them. They live in harmony with their environment.

Orcs, on the other hand, see Mother Nature as just another useless female to be raped. They ravage her at every opportunity, laying waste to one region and then moving on to the next. Orcs have destroyed entire forests in this way and only the largest woods have a chance of regrowth before the orcs find their way back to it again.

The elves are at a distinct disadvantage here, as they wish to save their homes. The orcs could not care less. If they are pressed into a corner, they are only too happy to set the forest ablaze and escape under the cover of the blackish smoke while the elves struggle to contain the damage, often in vain.

IN THE WAR CAMP

While orcs are often found in the dark places of the planet, there is one notable exception: the war camp. When orcs go to war, they realise the juiciest targets are often those that bask in the undiluted rays of the sun. For this

reason, orc leaders sometimes force their fellows on long marches from their tribal lands to fresher territories ripe for the conquering.

Dozens, even hundreds, of huge tents mark an orc war camp. During the day, the orcs tend to shelter under these large canopies. Only those on scouting or guard duty are regularly forced to brave the sun's burning eye.

At night, though, an orc war camp is abuzz with activity. Orcs normally travel at night, although they can force themselves to march along in the day if they must. At such times, they rely on their sorcerers to cover the sky in an iron-grey veil, relieving the orcs of the discomfort they would find under direct sunlight.

Any large group of orcs, which are not ensconced in a forest or underground, are considered to be in a war camp. This is often a nomadic existence in which the orcs stay in one place until they have totally befouled it and eradicated its resources. They then move on to greener pastures.

Such orcs are always on the warpath, whether they have a generally agreed-upon target or not. They may simply wander about until they find someone to fight against, or they may be a bit more directed in their movements, hunting for hapless foes to destroy. The difference is usually in the heart of their current leader. For this reason, an orc tribe that was wandering aimlessly for months can suddenly become rapaciously aggressive, simply by the ascension of a new leader.

Orc war camps are mobile towns, complete with females and children. Since the orcs do not really know where they might end up next, they are loathe to leave the non-combatants behind. When the orcs do actually find a target to besiege or destroy, they usually leave the females and children at least a full day's march behind the front line of the battle. They do not, however, leave any able-bodied male behind to defend the camp. No such orc would be willing to waste his time guarding the camp when he could be in the middle of a battle instead.

Canny foes have used this fact to destroy orc encampments before but they overestimated the effect it would have on the orcs. Instead of causing them despair, such actions only enrage the orcs, spurring them on to even more horrible deeds. Orcs do not mourn their dead. As the old orc saying goes, 'the dead are not worthy of life'.

ORC SOCIETY

While it is hard to call anything about the orcs organised, there are certainly ways in which they interact that are roughly predictable. This is what passes for a society among the orcs and, while it is not the kind of strictly hierarchical structures seen in many races, understanding it is vital to comprehending any group of orcs.

THE EVIL THAT ORCS DO

Orcs are full of both chaos and evil and their society – such as it is – reflects this. There is no honour among them. Might makes right and, when that does not work, there is always treachery instead.



Roughly translated, a favourite orc war chant is: ‘Rape, loot, pillage and burn – we’re gonna rape, loot, pillage and burn – eat babies!’ This fairly well summarizes the outlook of the common orc. They do what they want to whomever they want. They take what they feel like. They destroy everything else simply because, if they cannot have it or carry it away with them, they do not feel as if anyone else should either.

Orcs breed like mad. If possible, the males rape those who resist. They do not particularly care about the race of those they defile, although the more exotic the conquest the more bragging rights are allotted the beast who commits the crime. This is why there are so many half-orcs in the world. Most of these are born to the survivors of orc raids on their homes.

There is nothing calculating about orcs. They live in the moment and rarely think of consequences. This makes them particularly good footsoldiers in armies of evil. A strong figure can mould them into a savage fighting force. Such leaders usually hail from outside their race but a truly exceptional orc sometimes rises to the challenge. Additionally, as long as their bosses feed the orcs’ baser natures on a regular basis, the orcs are usually happy enough to go along with whatever they are told to do.

‘Self-recrimination’, ‘empathy’, ‘compassion’ and ‘angst’ are words that do not exist in the orc tongue. Orcs have a dozen different words for gutting a foe, however, most of which depend on both the weapon used and the movement of the gutter’s arms. Another dozen or so words are dedicated to various forms of treachery and betrayal. Many of these are based upon the names of the greatest perpetrators of these heinous deeds.

Orcs can be cowed and controlled by forceful figures but the attention paid to them must be consistent for this to work. Left to their own devices, orcs inevitably turn upon each other or let their minds wander to fulfilling their own evil needs. Their attention spans are pathetically short and the best way to keep them focused on the task at hand seems to be either excruciating pain or the nearly constant threat of its application.

Orcs care only for themselves and their own comfort. They would kill their children to save their own skins, and without a moment’s remorse. They breed like rabbits, so there are always more offspring to come.

Orcs are also bloodthirsty. An orc’s favourite sound is the noise a skull makes when crushed with a solid blow. Many of their musical instruments are based on this



principal, including a variety of what they call ‘crack-drums’, which are fashioned from skulls stripped clean of their flesh. The fresher the crack-drum the better, as older ones tend to fracture from the vicious poundings they regularly receive.

There is nothing redeeming about orcs. They are vile in every way. This is why civilised people feel justified in killing them all whenever the opportunity presents itself. They know to a certainty that the orcs would murder them in a heartbeat if given the chance.

Orcs are xenophobic too. Given the choice between killing an orc or a member of some other race, they invariably team up with the other orc to kill the intruder. After that bit of work is done, the orcs usually turn on each other as well. A smart orc might let a temporary ally exhaust himself in a battle so that the wise one could later kill the other. Most orcs are not so cunning. Those that are, generally rise quickly through the horde’s hierarchy.

THE CRITICAL MASS THEORY

Sometimes orcs can live in relative peace in their homes for years. While there is certainly some internal strife going on in any orc settlement on a nearly constant basis, most of the time this violence does not spill over into the surrounding areas. Inevitably, though, the orcs somehow turn their attention to the outside world. Soon after, the thunderous rumblings of war break into a raging storm.

There are lots of different reasons for this. They normally include a leader springing up among the orcs and goading them into war, or an evil sorceress grinding the orcs under her heel and sending them off to do her dirty work. But there is a theory about an underlying reason for each of these incidents that tends to explain them all.

Orcs breed like magically-accelerated rabbits. As such, their population regularly explodes. The only breaks in this are during times of war. During such dark days, the males are not available for breeding and a number of them are inevitably lost in the constant battles.

In fact, there have been times in the past during which an entire tribe of orcs has nearly been wiped out. Unless they are entirely destroyed, though, they always seem to find a way to come back. The surviving orcs go into hiding and start breeding again. Within the space of a few generations of orcs – which are only 10 years each – their numbers have grown exponentially and they are once again a major threat to the civilised people of the region.

The theory is that there is a certain tipping point at which the population of an orc tribe reaches critical mass. Once it does, the internal bickering among the tribe threatens to rip it apart. If they do not somehow figure out a means to focus their naturally aggressive tendencies outward, they are doomed to destroy themselves.

Some orc tribes do just that, and their more peaceful neighbours simply thank their gods when they learn of it. An orc versus orc conflict usually trims the size of the population down to the point at which there is no longer any point in fighting. This sometimes results in a single, clear winner emerging from the ruckus. When this happens, those civilised neighbours had better start praying even harder, for there is little more dangerous than an orc tribe with a strong leader.



If that leader can manage to hold on to power long enough for the orc tribe to replenish its numbers—something which rarely takes more than a single generation—he is sure to lead his people into war. The savviest leaders sometimes find other powerful forces with which they can ally their people: warlords, wizards, even other armies, whether orc or not. Either way, the orcs are coming.

THE WARBAND

Most people are never so unfortunate as to meet an orc army or stumble across an orc settlement or encampment. That does not mean they are sure to be free of any encounters with this evil race. Any region that is not entirely civilised – and even some that are – often finds itself plagued by individual groups of orcs known as warbands.

An orc warband is a nomadic group of troublemakers who feed themselves and their families by raiding other settlements and taking what they need. They can number up to 250 orcs strong, of which only about 40% are orc males. The rest are females (20%) and children (40%).

Most orc warbands are composed of people who were kicked out of the larger orc communities or are the remnants of such a group that was nearly destroyed in battle. They are floundering about, looking for a place in the world. There are few locales that are both willing to accept a new warband of orcs and still have excellent targets for raiding nearby. Those that exist usually already have a large population of orcs in them and the local orcs are not usually happy about assimilating a large group of outsiders – unless they are preparing for war, in which case all orcs are welcome.

Life in a warband is simple. The males forage for food and other necessities, either by hunting or raiding. The females bear and care for the children. They also cook food and brew mrog, as well as handle the defence of the camp should any attackers arrive. The children brutalise each other horribly, preparing themselves for their adult lives.

The warband survives by raiding, but not too much. Many civilised peoples who live in frontier areas accept the occasional orc raid as a fact of their lives. It is when



the orcs spend too long in one place that the locals start to get up in arms about it – often literally. Warbands run by smart leaders always hit a target and then move on. While they may face the occasional vengeful relative of their victims, most people are simply relieved enough about the orcs moving on that they do not pursue the matter. When the orcs stick around, though, the locals are compelled to take action simply to survive. Many orc warbands have been eradicated after being too foolish to leave in a timely manner.

THE HORDE

Large orc communities are known as hordes. These can number in the thousands – even tens of thousands – but the ratio of males, females and children remains roughly the same. Most times, hordes have a stable base of operations. This could be a commandeered dwarven stronghold, a pillaged elven city or simply a massive encampment which its neighbours are terrified of provoking.

With few exceptions, the males of a horde eventually go on the warpath. There are only a small number of stable

orc cities in recorded history and the word 'stable' is used loosely in each of these cases. Most times, the battle-worthy males of the horde eventually come pouring out of the settlement en route to inflicting some serious misery on some other people in some other place.

As with warbands, hordes are led by a single, incredibly mighty ruler. Orcs are notoriously horrible at sharing power. They are only ever ruled by a lone dictator, usually a fascist who abuses his control horribly.

Of course, the orcs who rise to such position are truly exceptional creatures. It is impossible to rule over every single orc in a horde by brute force, so many of these duties are delegated. This means delegating power to

another orc, though, and an orc with a taste of such power is bound to be hungry for more.

Many rulers of hordes hunt for worthy foes for their people simply to keep their underlings from constantly plotting against them. While being at war does not keep a treacherous orc from scheming, it at least keeps him too busy to think on it much and often keeps him too far from the ruler to implement those plans the plotter might have.

In one sense, a horde is little more than a large group of warbands brought together under a single banner, often for a single reason. Life in a horde, however, is a bit more specialised. Each warband that is part of the horde is usually assigned a particular task, whether that is scouting, hunting, guarding, forging (or stealing) weapons and armour, or whatever else. Those warbands that perform well are lauded for their successes. Those that fail are assigned ever worse tasks, often with a new leader to replace the one who is executed on the spot.

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

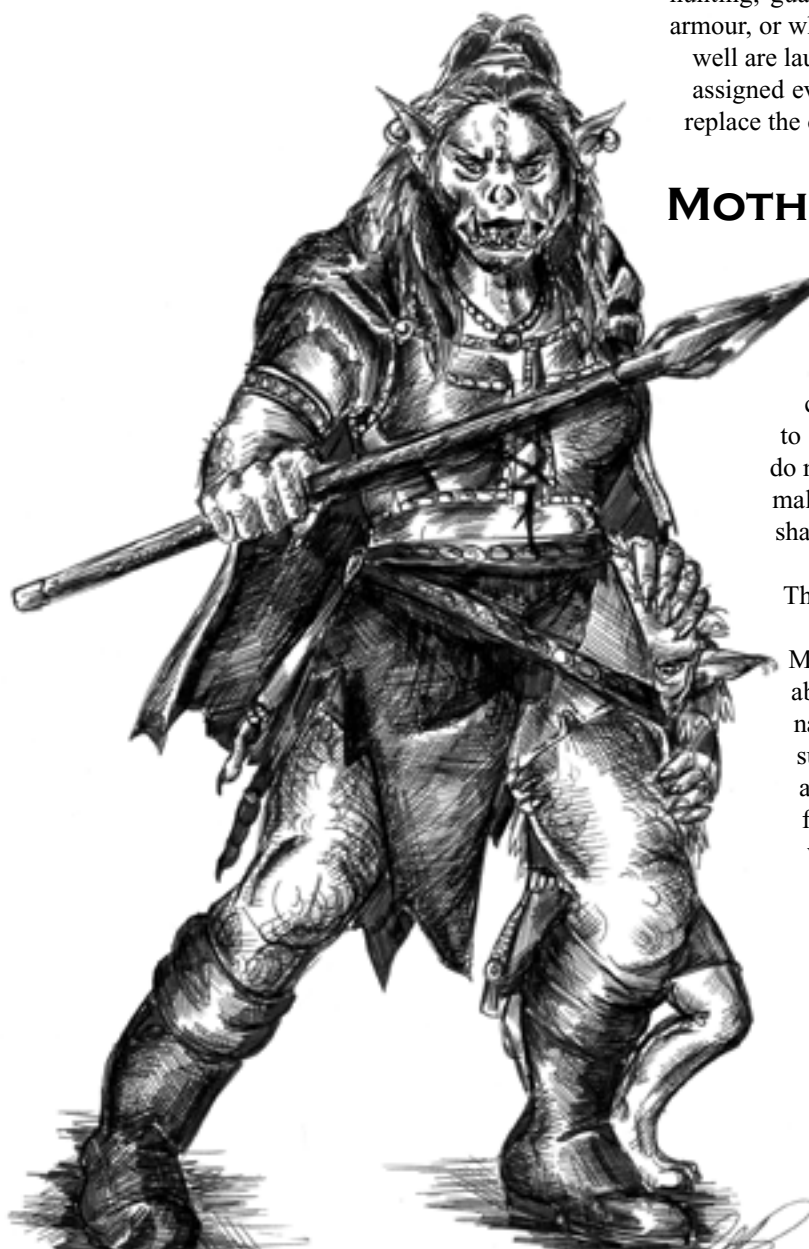
If male orcs consider the females and their spawn so worthless and troublesome, why do the males bother with them at all? Such creatures are not capable of thinking abstractly about the continuation of the species, and appealing to their better nature is pointless, since they do not have one. So what is it that keeps those males bringing back their kills to the camp to share with those left behind?

The answer is simple: sex.

Male orcs live for sex and, while they are not above raping females to satisfy their sadistic natures, they often find the female orc does not submit as easily as a male would like. Many a male orc has been killed in his sleep by a female he raped. Others have been murdered while in the actual act.

While female orcs may not be the killing machines their male counterparts are, they are perfectly capable of slitting a throat or breaking a nose when an aggressive male's guard is down. Even orcs cannot be ready for a fight at all times. Eventually they have to sleep.

So the males bring back their kills and other trophies to offer up to potential



mates as enticements. Since there are usually twice as many male orcs as there are females, the competition for the attentions of lady orcs is often intense.

This is another reason why female orcs eschew long-term relationships. They find the moment they settle down with a single male, he invariably slacks off in providing for her and her children. To maintain the lifestyle to which she is (or would like to become) accustomed, the female orc needs to keep up the competition between her suitors. Otherwise, she is sure to be forgotten.

While male orcs may not care for their children much, female orcs are ready to fight to protect their spawn with their last breath. The maternal instinct among orcs is as strong as any found in the animal kingdom. The mother-child relationship is the only stable one in the lives of most orcs. If an orc learns his father has been killed, this is normally barely enough to cause the orc to raise a mug of mrog in his father's honour. If someone even speaks poorly of his mother, though, this is an insult of the gravest sort and the situation usually ends up with someone's mother losing a child.

although not all orcs are as selective in their choice of victims.

Slaves are common sources of half-orcs, although many women pregnant with such offspring do their best to kill either themselves or the child at the earliest opportunity. Much of the time, their orc masters are only too happy to take care of this detail for them.

Most slaves are dead within a year if not sooner. Orcs treat their slaves poorly, often forgetting to provide them with food and water. A dead slave is simply one less thing to worry about from most orcs' perspectives. Of course, this relief only lasts until the orc misses the services the slave once provided, which often precipitates a search for another slave.

In the orc social hierarchy, slaves are on the bottom-most rung, below children, females and even half-orcs. In most cases, their only hope is for a quick death. Those that are rescued from such a horrible fate are generally grateful beyond words.

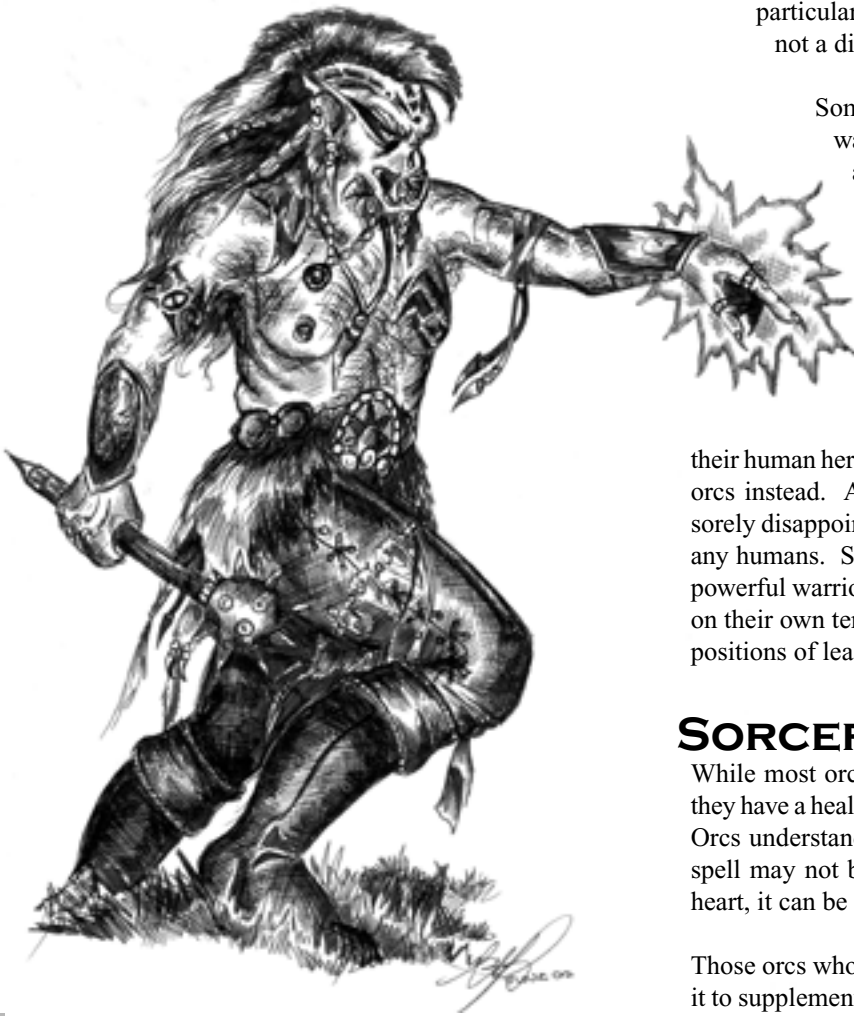
SLAVES

There are some jobs in a horde or even a warband that orcs just are not willing to do. If it is something even an orc finds distasteful, be assured that it is vile indeed. If an orc can find someone else to perform such tasks, be assured that he will. That is where slaves come in.

In the course of their raids, orcs sometimes come upon people who foolishly surrender to them or are simply unable to prevent themselves from being captured or kidnapped. Those that suffer this fate are in for far worse than a simple death at the end of a battleaxe. They are bound for a short, miserable life of servitude in their captor's home.

Orcs love to have slaves but they normally never take more with them than they can manage. If they happen to capture an entire village, the orcs normally enslave the most able-bodied among the captives and then kill the rest. Given a choice, a male orc usually chooses a female slave over a male. To the mind of an orc, a female slave is weaker and thus less likely to fight back,





HALF-ORCS

All the rapes orcs commit leads to a number of half-orcs being scattered in their wake. This can cause a great deal of heartache in such communities. The spawn of these horrific couplings find it difficult to be accepted in their mother's hometown, where they serve as a constant reminder of the crimes done to both the woman in particular and the community at large. While the children themselves are hardly at fault, their very features betray their bastard heritage and, even if they leave their homes – they are still forever and clearly marked as who they are.

Half-orc children are unwelcome in any orc community. Orc fathers care even less for them than they do for any fully orc children they might have, and the maternal instinct of a female orc does not extend to those not of pure orc blood. In fact, most females have their hands full enough with their own children that they do not

particularly care about the fate of anyone who is not a direct, full-orc relative either.

Sometimes, an adult half-orc goes out of his way to find his father. Of those that do, most are hoping to avenge the crime committed against their mothers. These situations always end up in someone's death.

There are the rare half-orcs who actually seek out an orc warband or horde to which they can become a part. Disgusted by the treatment they have received at the hands of those who share their human heritage, they hope to find acceptance among orcs instead. A large proportion of these half-orcs are sorely disappointed, as orcs are generally far crueler than any humans. Still, there are the rare exceptions, mostly powerful warriors who are able to cow their orc brethren on their own terms and quickly catapult themselves into positions of leadership.

SORCERY

While most orcs prefer to rely on the strength of arms, they have a healthy respect for the sorcerers in their midst. Orcs understand power of any kind and, while a magic spell may not be as direct as a blade shoved through a heart, it can be a great deal more spectacular.

Those orcs who do have some talent at sorcery often use it to supplement their skills as a warrior. They often find themselves either quickly ascended to a position of power or made the pawn of some other orc already in such a post. Those that ally with the wrong person quickly discover they have two options: find another patron or die along with their current one.

Most orc leaders consider sorcerers important enough that they do not kill such rivals straight off. For this same reason, though, these orcs keep a close eye on their sorcerer allies or underlings. If they feel they are about to be betrayed by a sorcerer, most orcs try to kill the traitor rather than let someone else have him.

A rare few female orcs are sorcerers. This is one of the only ways a female orc can have any power in orc society. Even the most powerful female sorcerers must constantly struggle against the patriarchal nature of orc society though. It is rare for respect to be given to such people ungrudgingly.

It is even rarer for an orc to be a wizard though. Orcs do not place much value upon good study habits or

memorisation skills, things which being a wizard demands. Even if an orc had the temperament to become a wizard, it is nearly impossible for such a creature to find a willing mentor to which he can apprentice himself. There are vanishingly few orc wizards around and wizards of other races are not often prepared to teach their secrets to someone who could, and probably would, betray them at a moment's notice.

RELIGION

The kind of magic most orcs really understand is that powered by the gods: clerical spells. The gods are a very real influence in the lives of most orcs, although most of them only pay tribute to the Orc God himself. The Great Warrior, as he is also known, is the only one to whom the orcs can turn in times of trouble. They know that most of the other gods, even those who approve of their evil ways, do not wish to have anything to do with them.

In the orc mythos, the Great Warrior arose from the dark beneath the mountains to take his rightful place as the ruler of the world. The other gods, cowards that they are, banded together to defeat him through base treachery, a lesson the Great Warrior learned well.

Unable to take over the world by force, the Great Warrior came up with a cunning plan. He stormed through the world, spilling his seed into any womb he could find. The creatures formed by these unholy unions were the first orcs. In effect all orcs, even those of the purest blood, have only half of the greatness of the Orc God in them. Half-orcs are cursed to only have a quarter of that. All others are not even so poorly blessed.

Orc clerics, who are almost exclusively male, hold a prominent position in their society. Unlike the priests of other religions or races, these creatures often find themselves in the thick of battle instead of tending the wounded in tents far behind the front lines. Such powerful warriors often leapfrog over more battle-scarred veterans to prominent positions. The most notable among these become battle shamans. See 'Roleplaying with Orcs' for full details on this new prestige class.

Orc clerics can choose two of the following domains: Chaos, Evil, Strength and War. These domains play to the central pillars of the orcs' strength as a race.

Churt raised his greatsword once more, cutting a particularly ugly orc in half with a single powerful swing of the massive blade so the creature's legs fell one way and torso the other. He looked about hastily, but that seemed to be the last of Garr's warband – or at least, the last who was willing to face Churt in open combat.

Only Garr himself remained. The savage orc war-leader advanced cautiously, leading with his shield, wary of the mighty half-orc who had so devastated his most trusted followers. 'I have gold,' Garr said, 'Females too – join me, and I will give you four patrols of your own, make you a captain of the warband.' Garr raised his flail a little behind his back, ready to sweep it up and over his head in hopes of taking the interloper by surprise.

Churt seemed to be considering the offer, but took a half-step back as Garr's flail smashed down, evading the spiked metal balls by inches. The huge greatsword swung once more, slicing deep into Garr's shield and the arm beneath. The orc leader gave a scream of pain as Churt deftly reversed the blade's motion, cutting off both his legs just below the knee.

Already bleeding to death, his flail bouncing uselessly on the ground, Garr roared, 'Why? What are you doing this for?'

Churt raised the greatsword one final time, 'For my mother. For what you did to her. For the life you cursed me with, for your vile blood that flows through my veins.' He cut through Garr's head cleanly, slicing off the top of the skull just above the eyes, spattering blood, brain and shards of bone all over the cavern walls.

After a moment, he became aware he was being watched. Turning swiftly, the great blade ready to strike again if need be, he saw a dozen or more orcs entering through various side tunnels, bowing their heads to him. No warriors these, but the first females of the warband he had seen so far.

'Hail Churt, son of Garr! All hail, war-leader Churt!'

from The Wars and Conquests of Horde-Master Churt, called The Great, by Royal Sage Glawker



CELEBRATIONS

Orcs like to take any excuse they can find to have a party. While they have regular celebrations at the traditional times of year, such as the solstices and the equinoxes, they are often happy to break open a cask of mrog for anything from a battle victory to the birth of a child.

Orc celebrations are often brutal affairs. Some parties last for several days and, by the end of the affair, it is not uncommon for several of the celebrants to be dead. Their demises just as often come from overindulgence in mrog or foolish attempts at stunts designed to prove their power as they do from the hands of their fellows.

Drinking contests at orc parties are legendary. It is not uncommon for the winners of such events to suddenly become prestigious members of their community. In any case, both the winners and losers have to deal with mrog hangovers, which the orcs often boast are bad enough that they would be the death of any non-orc who happened to somehow consume that much mrog.

The only real difficulty with orc celebrations, from an orc leader's point of view, is that the orcs sometimes start celebrating a little too early. Many orc warbands break out the mrog right at the end of a battle. If there is still a war going on, though, this can damage the orc warlord's strategic plans, as he can count on that group of orcs being unavailable for battle for at least the next day or two.

SPORTS

When not engaged in hunting or war, male orcs need something to keep them busy so they do not end up focusing their natural aggressiveness on each other. In the distant past, an orc chieftain concocted an orc sport known as bootskull, so named for the fact that it involves using your boot to kick a freshly-harvested skull through the other team's goal.

The only problem with bootskull is there are few rules against fouls. While players are not allowed to be armed or armoured, there is nothing that prevents them from beating each other senseless at any opportunity. The only

thing that keeps the players focused are the large bets that most of them place on the game. This makes scoring points actually worthwhile to most orcs.

Every now and then someone gets caught shaving points or betting against his own team. When this happens, the guilty orc is executed at the start of the next match and his head earns the honour of serving as that game's skull.

Orcs sometimes engage in other forms of competition—most of which are just as bloody but less destructive to each other. However, bootskull is far and away the most popular. Some warbands manage to get together regularly for matches. While there is no true league, as such, fans of the teams do keep a strict count of victories and losses. Amazingly, some rival warbands have been able to settle their differences with a game of bootskull rather than a full-out battle. On the other hand, more than a few battles have broken out during a bootskull match that swelled to include everyone in the stands and beyond.



METHODS OF WARFARE

There are few things for which orcs are renowned, but fighting is one of them. They are as willing to attack a foe as look at him. While they may not be the best blade-wielders in the land, they are known for the kind of arrogance that can only be felt by those supported by the massive numbers of troops the orcs are able to field.

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

When it comes to weapons and armour, as with most of their belongings, orcs usually have whatever they have been able to take from their victims. An orc fighting force is rarely entirely outfitted with the same kind of equipment. This makes for a motley fighting crew but these variances can allow an orc warband a great deal of versatility too.

Given a choice, orcs seem to prefer armour that does not restrict them too much while still providing adequate protection. Most orcs enjoy wearing a breastplate for these reasons. They often paint them with garish colours and obscene symbols to help terrify their foes.

Orcs that want some heavier protection usually fashion their own splint mail out of whatever kinds of armour they can strip off their victims. Since orcs rarely forge their own mail, this is normally ill fitting and noisy, but the orcs like it that way. They believe the clanking makes them even more frightening in combat.

The melee weapon of choice for an orc is the axe. Smaller or younger orcs content themselves with the battleaxe, while most of the adult males take up the greataxe as soon as they are able to swing it.

Many orcs use javelins in battle because of their usefulness in both melee and ranged combat. Also, this is one of the few weapons that most orc warbands can fashion for themselves should the need arise. Given a choice, however, an orc usually takes a mighty composite longbow instead.

THE WARBAND

The tactics of an orc warband are different from those of an orc horde. When working with smaller numbers of troops, the orc leaders like to try to set up ambushes.

The trouble is that they are not particularly good at it. Invariably, the intended victims somehow spot one of the attackers early, or one of the orcs lying in wait gets a bit anxious about the attack and jumps before the moment is right.

The warband is much better at the hit-and-run raid. First the orcs send out scouts to find a likely target. Then the orcs approach the target overland, avoiding any roads so as not to alert their intended victims. They wait until the middle of the night, preferably with cloud cover over the moon, and then charge out of the darkness to slaughter their victims while they sleep.

Orcs may use torches to set a foe's home alight and drive any occupants out into the waiting orc's axes but, in general, the orcs decline to use light sources of any kind. This is particularly true when they are attacking humans or members of other races that cannot see in the dark themselves.

Once the battle is over, the orcs kill any male survivors and rape any female survivors. Young are sometimes simply abandoned to die, although they are slaughtered just as often. As for goods, they take whatever they want and can carry and destroy the rest if they have the time and energy to do so.

Their work done, the orcs leave immediately. They know their tactics all too often attract attention and they do not want to be around when someone comes to investigate.

THE HORDE

The aims of an orc horde are similar to that of a warband. However, their tactics are vastly different. An army the size of an orc horde cannot move around as quickly or as nimbly as a relatively tiny warband.

When working with a horde, an orc general must first rally as many warbands together as he can find. To do this, he needs to have both a means and a cause. For a means, most orc generals are some of the nastiest and most influential orcs around. If they have managed to reach a point in their lives at which other orcs willingly call them generals, then they probably already have the means to gather a horde.

Still, orcs do not band together under a single banner for no reason at all. The general needs to give the orcs a solid cause for gearing up for war. This is fairly easy, since most orcs are just itching for a reason to fight. An attack against an orc village would do, although the simple fact that there are elves living nearby, just waiting for a proper



horde to overrun them would be even better. A rousing speech can help but it is not sufficient on its own. To really get themselves whipped up into a frenzy, the orcs need a point to rally around.

Once the horde is ready, the general sends out scouting parties to find the clearest way to their chosen target, whatever it may be. An encounter with just such a party may be the first clue the locals have that the orcs are on their way.

The general also dispatches warbands to hunt up food for the horde. A horde of orcs can eat more than a squad of dragons and, if each warband in the horde was to hunt for its own food, the army would never manage to get anywhere. These hunting warbands can provide heroes with an even harder challenge than the scouting parties.

If possible, an orc general likes to just run the horde straight at a target by the fastest route possible. He follows the input given to him by his guides and forces the horde ahead. The horde proper ideally moves only under the cover of darkness, either at night or underground. This can help shield their movements from spies but it is still hard to conceal the presence of such a large fighting force.

Because a horde is so large and relatively slow, most of its targets have at least a bit of an advance warning before the horde shows up on their doorsteps. The orcs realise this and often carry easily-reassembled siege weapons with them.

Orcs have been known to lay siege to a well-defended city for months, although this is rare. More often, they hurl themselves against the walls of the city throughout every night they can, until the city falls. They have little patience for starving their foes out.

DEFENCE

Sometime orcs are called upon to defend their homes, when a group of heroes attacks, hoping to liberate the region from the orcs' reign of terror. Orcs are ill suited to defence. They would much rather be on the offensive than the defensive, so much so that they have been known to abandon their homes – whether they were the orcs' to begin with or not – regroup later, and then counterattack from the outside.

When orcs find themselves defending their homes, the males often flee if they are too pressed, leaving the females and children behind if they must. The females are far more reluctant to leave a place, having been the ones who actually forged a home out of it. To an orc male, the place where he sleeps is just that. To a female, it is far more sacred. The children stick with their mothers, no matter what.

Female orcs sometimes spend time preparing simple traps around their homes. These usually involve things such as pits, rockfalls, or falling nets. These are as useful against the unwanted attentions of overly-aggressive male orcs as they are against invaders, so they tend to get a lot of use.

No matter their gender or age, cornered orcs fight with the ferocity of wild animals. They know the best they can expect from most civilised foes is death, and they are not willing to go down without a fight. They struggle on to the bitter end, only stopping when their breath leaves their bodies for the last time.



ROLEPLAYING WITH ORCS

Now that you know all about orcs, it is time to put that knowledge to use in your games. Traditionally, many Games Masters have simply stuck orcs into any ten-by-ten-foot room, apparently figuring that the local necromancer must have hired them cheaply from the nearest Thugs' Guild. These creatures are little more than a notch on a hero's blade as he marches from one end of an adventure to another.

While it is possible to treat orcs like this in your game, it is a bit of a shame not to be a bit more imaginative. With the information you have received from this book already, you should know that orcs are far more than cannon fodder. Here are some details to help you breathe life into them as a race, to aid working them into your game.

ORCS IN YOUR GAME

It is certainly acceptable for low-level heroes to run into small groups of orcs as they wander around their first couple of dungeons. However, orcs do not tend to work in such small numbers. As the heroes become more powerful and more able to handle such challenges, start making the orcs tougher and tougher.

The easiest way to do this is to simply add more orcs to the encounters. This soon becomes a problem of its own, though, as large battles can quickly bog down the game and cause it to feel dull. Literally cutting a swathe through an orc horde may sound wonderfully epic but, in practice, it can be monotonous.

Orcs advance by means of classes, just as characters do. If you want a harder challenge for your heroes, all you need to do is make each orc more experienced. While a handful of 1st level orc warriors may cause a mid-level party to yawn, the same cannot be said of a vicious strike team of high-level orc assassins.

On the other hand, one of the reasons orcs are so feared is that there are so many of them. Whenever the heroes face a force of hundreds or even thousands of orcs, their first instinct should be to run. No matter how powerful they may be against a small group of foes, that many orcs should be enough to eventually overpower just about anyone.

Teach your heroes that orcs are dangerous because of their numbers. If the heroes destroy an orc warband, they can be sure that another such warband is not far behind. Eventually, the heroes should get to the point that every time they see an orc they should suspect that there is likely to be an orc army nearby. The sight of even a single, 1st level orc warrior can be enough to terrify even the most jaded hero when he considers what that one warrior's presence could very well mean.

PORTRAYING AN ORC

While the standard orc is a warrior, an orc's favoured class is that of the barbarian. Orcs are nothing if not barbaric. They have no use for the rules of civilised society or anything else that stands in the way of them taking whatever it is they want whenever it is they want it.

Orcs are not all that smart, and they know it. They distrust words as a means of trickery, placing their faith in the power of their arms instead. The most articulate thing most heroes ever hear from an orc's mouth is the war cry it lets loose just before it charges into battle.

An orc's decision process breaks down into just three questions.

† Is it dangerous? If so, kill it – or avoid it if it is too tough.

† Can I eat it? If so, kill it and then eat it.

† Can I have sex with it? If so, proceed to try.

Beyond that, most orcs do not bother to give over a whole lot of time to other concerns. The only other question that comes up fairly often in their lives arises when someone gives them an order or makes them an offer. Then they simply ask: What is in it for me?

Orc leaders differ a bit from the ravenous herd. They usually bear a sort of animal cunning that has already permitted them to advance as far as they have. Mostly this means that they are better than most orcs at figuring out exactly what could be in any given situation for them. This means they are more willing to talk than other orcs. However, they are just as ready to turn to their battleaxes to end a conversation with a large exclamation mark.



While orcs are more than happy to oblige anyone looking for a fight, they are bullies at heart. They usually do their best to intimidate or run someone off before they actually start swinging, especially when up against superior numbers. If they succeed, that means they can focus more of their attention on those who managed to stay behind.

HALF-ORCS

Half-orcs are available as one of the standard Player Character races for one particular reason: there are lots of them around. The orc tendency to raid and rape has left thousands of single mothers scattered throughout the lands, trying to raise children they did not want in a world that does not care for them either.

Just about every half-orc has a troubled childhood. Even if a half-orc's mother truly loved him and raised him the best she could, she still has to face the world as a victim of rape. Also, most communities are not all that understanding about half-orcs. Even the most accepting communities still have to deal with the fact that the character's orc heritage means he is likely to be a bit more aggressive, perhaps even crueller, than other children his age.

Because of their heritage, half-orcs often believe they are always being watched. They feel as if the world is just waiting for them to make a mistake so they can be persecuted, or even executed, for being too much like an orc.

A lot of half-orcs crack under the pressure and become just as evil as everyone expects them to be. When the heroes meet a half-orc, they must struggle to decide whether or not they can, or even should try, to trust such a character. If they get into a situation in which such trust is essential, they may find themselves willing to take extreme measures to resolve the situation as quickly as possible.

Physically, half-orcs are similar to the full-blooded variety. From a human point of view, they look an awful lot like orcs. The reverse can be said from an orc point of view though. Half-orcs tend to be just a little bit weaker than full-blooded orcs. On the other hand, while they enjoy the powers of darkvision, they are unaffected by the sensitivity to light that plagues regular orcs. They do not wince from the light of the sun. This, if nothing else, should indicate that there is some hope for them after all.

THE BATTLE SHAMAN

The battle shaman is an orc spellcaster who glories in the dangers of battle. They use their magical powers

to transform themselves into some of the most lethal warriors ever seen. Many of them become high-ranking officers in orc armies, if they manage to survive that long. They prefer to lead from the front, where the battle is thickest, trusting in their might of arms and magic to win the day.

Most battle shamans start out as either clerics or sorcerers. There have been some wizards and druids that have become battle shamans but these are rare. Some rangers become battle shamans as well but they tend to be far less effective than those hailing from other classes.

Battle shamans are rarely, if ever, found without a warband or, better yet, an army surrounding them. While they are happiest in the thick of battle, they did not get where they are by being suicidal. They are cunning warriors, always angling for every edge they can find to earn victory for their side. While rare even among such a fecund race, their presence is often enough to inspire or outright force a victory in many engagements.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To become a battle shaman, a character must meet the following requirements.

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Feats: Combat Casting.

Race: Orc.

Concentration: 9 ranks.

Spellcraft: 9 ranks.

Spellcasting: Able to cast 3rd level spells.

Special: The battle shaman must have been blessed in some way by an orcish deity so as to be able to take on the powers of a battle shaman.

Class Skills

The battle shaman's class skills (and their key abilities) are Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spellcraft (Int) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the battle shaman prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Battle shamans are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all types of armour and with shields.

The Battle Shaman

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per day
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+0	Battle power (1 st level)	+1 level of existing class
2 nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	<i>Bane</i>	+1 level of existing class
3 rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	Battle power (2 nd level)	+1 level of existing class
4 th	+3	+4	+1	+1	<i>Protection from arrows</i>	+1 level of existing class
5 th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Battle power (3 rd level)	+1 level of existing class
6 th	+4	+5	+2	+2	<i>Haste</i>	+1 level of existing class
7 th	+5	+5	+2	+2	Battle power (4 th level)	+1 level of existing class
8 th	+6	+6	+2	+2	<i>Rage</i>	+1 level of existing class
9 th	+6	+6	+3	+3	Battle power (5 th level)	+1 level of existing class
10 th	+7	+7	+3	+3	<i>Spell resistance</i>	+1 level of existing class

Spellcasting: A battle shaman maintains his training in magic. Whenever he gains a new battle shaman level, the character also gains new spells known and spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he already had before he became a battle shaman. However, he does not acquire any other benefit he would have gained for advancing a level in that spellcasting class. This essentially means that he adds his levels as a battle shaman to the levels he has in another spellcasting class to figure his spells per day, spells known and caster level. If the caster had more than one spellcasting class before he became a battle shaman, he must decide which class he adds each level of battle shaman to, for the purposes of determining spells per day.

Battle Power (Su): Starting at 1st level, when a battle shaman kills a foe, of equal or higher CR to his level, in single combat, he immediately gains the ability to cast an additional spell at a maximum level equal to half the victim's level or the character's level as a battle shaman – whichever is less – rounded up. This extra spell slot must be filled immediately from the list of spells that the character has already prepared for that day. The ability to cast this spell lasts until one hour after the end of the current battle, or for one day, whichever is less.



For each level the character has as a battle shaman, he can gain up to one such additional spell per day

For example, if a 4th level battle shaman kills a 5th level foe in combat, the battle shaman can instantly add a spell of up to 2nd level. He can use this power up to four times per day.

Bane (Sp): The battle shaman can use the *bane* spell as a spell-like ability three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

Protection from Arrows (Sp): The battle shaman can use the *protection from arrows* spell as a spell-like ability three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

Haste (Sp): The battle shaman can use the *haste* spell as a spell-like ability three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

Rage (Sp): The battle shaman can use the *rage* spell as a spell-like ability three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

Spell Resistance (Sp): The battle shaman can use the *spell resistance* spell as a spell-like ability three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Standard orcs are best used against a party of 1st to 4th level or so. They can also be a threat to higher-level heroes when they appear in great enough numbers to be able to simply overwhelm a hero's defences. Still, the best orc threat for a powerful hero is a powerful orc. An elite shock team of orc troops can stand up to a party of heroes of a roughly equivalent level. In such a situation, these veteran orcs can certainly give as good as they get.

This section lists a number of different adventure hooks a Games Master can use to creatively add orcs into a campaign. Feel free to pick and choose from them as you like, combining or altering them as you will.

RAID!

Orc warbands are constantly on the hunt for new communities to terrorise. They like to storm into a place in the early evening, take what they like and burn the rest to the ground. The next morning, they move on to the next place. This cycle has been going on for generations. It is up to the heroes to break it.

The elders of a town have word that the orcs are on their way again. They remember their last visit from years ago and this time they wish to be prepared. They hire the heroes to help them build up their defences and to help protect the town when the orcs finally arrive.

If the heroes manage to repulse the orcs' attack, the encounter is not over though. Unless the orcs were thoroughly routed, they are sure to be back, and this time they should have plans of their own for dealing with the town's reinforced defences.

AN ACCIDENTAL MEETING

Orc hunting parties range far and wide looking for fresh food. When they stumble upon a group of travellers, they see it as an opportunity to land a gourmet meal.

Late one night, the orcs steal up on the heroes' camp and attack. The heroes must rouse themselves and leap

to their own defence. Most likely, the heroes can rout their attackers pretty quickly. However, this encounter serves to keep them on their toes, even when they should be sleeping.

This encounter can also lead to many of the other encounters. Once the orcs are defeated or run off, the heroes can follow their trail back to their main settlement or fighting force. Of course, at that point the heroes are sure to be vastly outnumbered. What they do from there is up to them.

THE RACE

The heroes have learned of a great orc fighting force on its way to assault a nearby city. Unfortunately, the orcs have discovered the heroes as well. The orc army has sent out its fastest runners or riders to hunt the heroes down. The heroes cannot make a direct stand against such a superior force. Their only hope is to run as fast as they can to the city the orcs have targeted and raise the alarm.

While a strict race can get boring, it can be spiced up with a few lightning attacks by orc scouts that may already be ahead of the heroes. The orcs coming up behind have signalled their brothers by either magical or mundane means, possibly even using something as primitive as smoke signals.

If the heroes succeed, the city should be prepared for the inevitable attack. They might even be able to raise an army to meet the orcs on the field of battle. Otherwise, it could be that the city has time to stock supplies for an extended siege.

SIEGE!

The heroes are trapped in a city when the orcs lay siege to it. Unable to get past the orc horde on their own, the heroes must offer their services to help break the siege. With the proper planning, they might even be able to make a few surgical strikes against the orc leadership. Enough successes along these lines can eventually soften the orcs up enough for the people of the city to be able to take the battle to them and drive them from the field.

REVENGE OF THE DWARVES

A band of homeless dwarves approaches the heroes and asks for their help to reclaim their ancestral home from the orcs that stole it so long ago. This is a dungeon crawl

with a purpose. While the dwarven halls may be filled with traps, the dwarves should be able to point most of them out to the heroes so they can be avoided. However, the orcs are sure to have set up some crude pitfalls of their own.

The dwarves should be outnumbered but undaunted. With the heroes help and their knowledge of a set of secret tunnels running throughout the complex, they hope to be able to chip away at the orcs' defences until the vile creatures either voluntarily leave their home or are destroyed.

ORC BAIT

Orcs know that the civilised people hate them, and they are all too happy to take advantage of it. Many human settlements are a bit more forgiving of those of other races, and sometimes orcs can actually move freely within the walls of such places. In such a case, an orc strolling past a paladin could nearly spark off a riot.

If the party has such do-gooders within its ranks, an orc seemingly wanders in front of them, sees them and then takes off at a dead sprint. If the heroes pursue, the orc leads them on a merry chase throughout the worst parts of the city. Eventually, he dashes into a blind alley, seemingly trapped. If the heroes follow, a band of the orc's fellows steps in behind them, sealing them in the alley instead.

This is a common mugging tactic used in many large cities. It may only work against a novice group of heroes once, but it is a good lesson for them to learn: when you are chasing someone, take care of where you are being led.

THIS MEANS WAR!

A local orc horde is on the warpath. An army from a nearby city is marching out to meet them before the evil beasts can cause any more harm. The heroes have joined the army of good, either voluntarily or through conscription.

This is a chance for the heroes to earn glory for themselves – and to get a taste of the horrors of war. If you have access to mass-combat rules, you can actually play out the war in full. Otherwise, the heroes should be given, or find, a few key missions they can attempt to pull off that can affect the course of the entire war.

VANDALS!

It seems a number of orc warbands are setting fires in a forest at random. While the local elves put out the fire, the heroes are sent out to figure out what is going on and attempt to stop the fires at the source. As the heroes spar with the orcs, they realise that the placement of the fires is not quite as random as it might seem. In fact, the orcs are herding the elves into a valley in the forest, a place perfectly situated for a lightning ambush from a full orc horde. Once the heroes figure this out, they must warn the elves before it is too late.

LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER

This adventure hook works best in conjunction with one or more of the others. Use it once the heroes have already had a number of encounters with orc warriors and are good and angry with them.

While out hunting for an orc warband or horde, the heroes stumble upon the orcs' camp. The males are all out on the warpath but the females and young are still at home. The heroes are presented with a dilemma. Do they attack and kill the 'defenceless civilians', or do they try to come up another means of dealing with this problem? Or, do they simply walk away and leave these 'innocents' alone?

If the heroes do attack, they should find the female and child orcs do not just roll over and die. They fight with the desperation of creatures who know there are no other options than death. While they are not as skilled in battle as the males, they fight just as ferociously to defend their homes. Low-level parties should be hard-pressed to take out an orc camp on their own.



GRUK'S KAMP

General Gruk has long since established himself as one of the most dangerous orcs in the world. At the ripe, old age of 42, he has gathered around himself a community of roughly 5,000 orcs, of which nearly half are warriors in his army. The simple utterance of Gruk's name has been known to cause apprentice guardsmen to soil their armour.

Gruk has personally led armies that have destroyed several towns and even a couple of larger cities. There is a huge price on the general's skull but to get to Gruk, an assassin would have to first work his way around just about everyone else in the general's camp, a relatively mobile community that follows the general and his army around almost everywhere they go. Gruk's Kamp, as it is known far and wide, is filled with literally thousands of

cutthroats, hundreds of which could actually be capable of commanding a warband of their own.

Besides the 2,485 members of Gruk's army, there are 2,515 others. Of these, roughly 150 are slaves that the highest-ranking members of the army and the community's tiny aristocracy keep. Gruk also has a handful of slaves – including a few truly unfortunate women – for his own personal use. The rest are mostly females, youths and the few, lucky orcs who have managed to live to a ripe, old age.

This last group forms the support structure for Gruk's army. Their presence helps to make Gruk's Kamp a truly self-sufficient community. These are not orcs who leave their homes to go to war. Instead, they bring everything they own along with them.

The orcs living under Gruk have no home base, other than the camp, to which they can hope to return. In Gruk's experience, this has been a wonderful motivating factor for his soldiers since they know they cannot go home if the battle goes against them. If they fail, their entire town would likely be wiped from the face of the planet.

Many of the orcs who live in Gruk's Kamp were born there, although for the older members of the Kamp this was during the reign of Gruk's predecessor, Gratt. Gruk slew Gratt in single combat nearly 13 years ago. The fight was rigged against the elder orc and everyone knew it, Gruk having been taken aside by Thantarr the battle shaman before it began. Still, Gruk had assembled himself enough of a power base within Gratt's army that no one questioned his authority when he took over.

The majority of the orcs in the camp came from outside of it however. Some found their way there from other, less powerful hordes or warbands. Others were part of such organisations that Gruk's Kamp assimilated, either peaceably or, far more likely, by brute force.



A small number of half-orcs, approximately 50, have found their way into the camp too. These are the ones that were tough enough to prove themselves to the orcs in the camp. Those that failed over the years were immediately classified as far too tainted with the blood of those worthless humans and then tossed into chains.

THE KAMP

The following locations are keyed to the map of Gruk's Kamp. Since the camp is mobile, the juxtaposition of these various elements can change from place to place, depending on the local geography and any threats both real and perceived. In other words, feel free to rearrange where things are if it makes more sense that way.

The camp is composed almost entirely of tents. These are large affairs made of canvas and ropes strung over frameworks of stout, wooden poles. They are oiled to make them waterproof. The interiors of the tents are lit by lanterns when necessary, although orcs do not normally need them. Similarly the only fires in the camp are usually for cooking or warmth. When the horde is trying to sneak up on a target, however, they do not use any fires at all.

1. Gruk's Tent

This is where the leader of the camp lives. This is by far the largest tent in the entire camp. It actually consists of several tents stitched together to almost form a house. These include (A) the foyer tent, (B) the war room tent,

(C) the private armoury tent, (D) the treasure tent and (E) the private chambers tent.

The entire complex of tents is surrounded by heavily-armed guards 24 hours a day. Gruk does not trust anyone, so the guards patrol in groups of four or more. Gruk is sure that at least one member of each group is either loyal enough or cowardly enough to turn his fellows in should they decide to steal from their general. In this way, he maintains discipline through a network of fear and distrust.

A. The Foyer Tent: Most visitors never get past this tent, where Gruk normally comes to greet those who wish to speak with him. The room is almost entirely bare, except for the six high-level orc warriors who stand watch here constantly and serve as Gruk's bodyguards. Gruk does not like to sit much, and he prefers to make his guests stand as well. He does not have patience for long conversations, so this arrangement helps to keep meetings short.

B. The War Room Tent: This is where Gruk meets with his captains to discuss his strategy – such as it is – for any upcoming conflict. The room features a large table surrounded by wooden chairs. Sometimes there is a map pinned down in the middle of the table, on which the orcs diagram their proposed attacks.

C. The Private Armoury Tent: Gruk keeps his armour and weapons in here. This is where he comes to be dressed

Gruk's Kamp (Large Town): Conventional; AL CE; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 750,000 gp; Population 5,000; Isolated (96% orc, 1% half-orc, 3% human (slaves)).

Authority Figures: General Gruk (CE male orc Bbn17).

Important Characters: Thantarr (CE male orc Clr6/BaS10).

Army: Bbn14 (1), Bbn12 (1), Bbn11 (1), Bbn10 (1), Bbn9 (1), Bbn8 (4), Bbn7 (4), Bbn6 (7), Bbn5 (6), Bbn4 (13), Bbn3 (13), Bbn2 (25), Bbn1 (26), Brd10 (1), Brd9 (1), Brd6 (1), Brd5 (1), Brd4 (2), Brd3 (2), Brd2 (5), Brd1 (5), Clr13 (1), Clr12 (1), Clr11 (1), Clr10 (1), Clr9 (1), Clr8 (1), Clr7 (1), Clr6 (4), Clr5 (3), Clr4 (8), Clr3 (8), Clr2 (15), Clr1 (15), Drd6 (1), Drd5 (1), Drd4 (2), Drd3 (2), Drd2 (5), Drd1 (5), Ftr10 (1), Ftr9 (1), Ftr8 (3), Ftr7 (3), Ftr6 (5), Ftr5 (5), Ftr4 (10), Ftr3 (10), Ftr2 (20), Ftr1 (20), Rgr8 (1), Rgr6 (1), Rgr5 (2), Rgr4 (2), Rgr3 (2), Rgr2 (4), Rgr1 (4), Rog10 (1), Rog9 (1), Rog8 (2), Rog7 (2), Rog6 (3), Rog5 (3), Rog4 (6), Rog3 (6), Rog2 (13), Rog1 (13), Sor15 (1), Sor12 (1), Sor11 (1), Sor10 (1), Sor9 (1), Sor8 (1), Sor7 (2), Sor6 (3), Sor5 (4), Sor4 (7), Sor3 (7), Sor2 (12), Sor1 (13), Wiz19 (1), Wiz2 (1), Wiz1 (1), War15 (1), War13 (1), War12 (1), War11 (1), War10 (4), War9 (4), War8 (13), War7 (13), War6 (50), War5 (50), War4 (196), War3 (196), War2 (777), War1 (778)

Others: Ari8 (1), Ari7 (1), Ari6 (5), Ari5 (5), Ari4 (21), Ari3 (21), Ari2 (86), Ari1 (86), Com10 (2), Com9 (2), Com8 (12), Com7 (12), Com6 (48), Com5 (48), Com4 (193), Com3 (193), Com2 (776), Com1 (777), Exp8 (1), Exp7 (1), Exp6 (5), Exp5 (5), Exp4 (21), Exp3 (21), Exp2 (86), Exp1 (86).



for war. He has several female orcs who help him with this task.

D. The Treasure Tent: The accumulated wealth of Gruk and the rest of the tribe is kept here. The amount of treasure can vary greatly depending on the success of any recent operations, as well as how long it has been since the army conquered a town. At minimum, there are 10,000 gp worth of precious goods here but that can range as high as 100,000 gp.

E. The Private Chambers Tent: This is where Gruk sleeps. The place is surrounded by guards at all times. Gruk is only here about half the time though. The other nights, he is off to the tent of some lucky orc female who has pleased him instead.

2. Slave Pen

This pen houses the camp's 150 or so slaves when they are not on their duties. This usually means that they are here only at night, but even then the place is normally only about two-thirds full.

The slaves are treated poorly and their pen usually smells from their waste and the rotten food the orcs throw them to live upon. For this reason, the pen is always located downwind from Gruk's tent.

Guards always surround the place, although there are twice as many here at night as there are during the day. Escape attempts are punished by an immediate beheading. Eventually most slaves decide this is preferable to enduring another day of torture at the hands of the orcs.

3. Mess Tent

The orcs eat their three daily meals here. The place is open around the clock to feed the guards who work through the night, as well as anyone else who wanders through. Everyone eats here, as opposed to in their tents, even Gruk. The only exceptions are when Gruk is in the middle of an intense planning meeting in his war room tent (#1B). At such times, the leaders eat in that tent.

4. Guard Post

These small tents dot the perimeter of the camp and beyond. They are staffed by at least ten orcs at a time. Each post also has a horn in it so the guards stationed there can sound the alarm.

This is but one of the camp's lines of defence. There are also squads of orcs on patrol throughout the surrounding

region at all times. Gruk wants to make sure that no one sneaks up on him.

5. Barracks Tent

These tents are scattered throughout the camp. They each hold a full squad of orcs, plus perhaps a few higher-level officers. Each soldier keeps his arms and armour next to his bed when he is not wearing them. There is no central armoury.

6. Home Tent

These tents tend to be found toward the centre of the camp. This allows the residents of the barracks tents to protect the home tents if the camp is attacked. These home tents are filled with female and young orcs. There is usually a male orc or two hanging around each of these places as well, hoping to make a good impression upon the females who live there.

7. Main Square

This open area in the centre of the camp is a place for all the orcs to gather. They come here at least a few times a week, usually for Thantarr's religious services, or for one of Gruk's infrequent rallies. Gruk's tent (#1) overlooks the main square, usually from the north.

The centre of the square has space for a large bonfire. After victory in a great battle, the orcs light this fire and celebrate throughout the night.

8. Thantarr's Tent

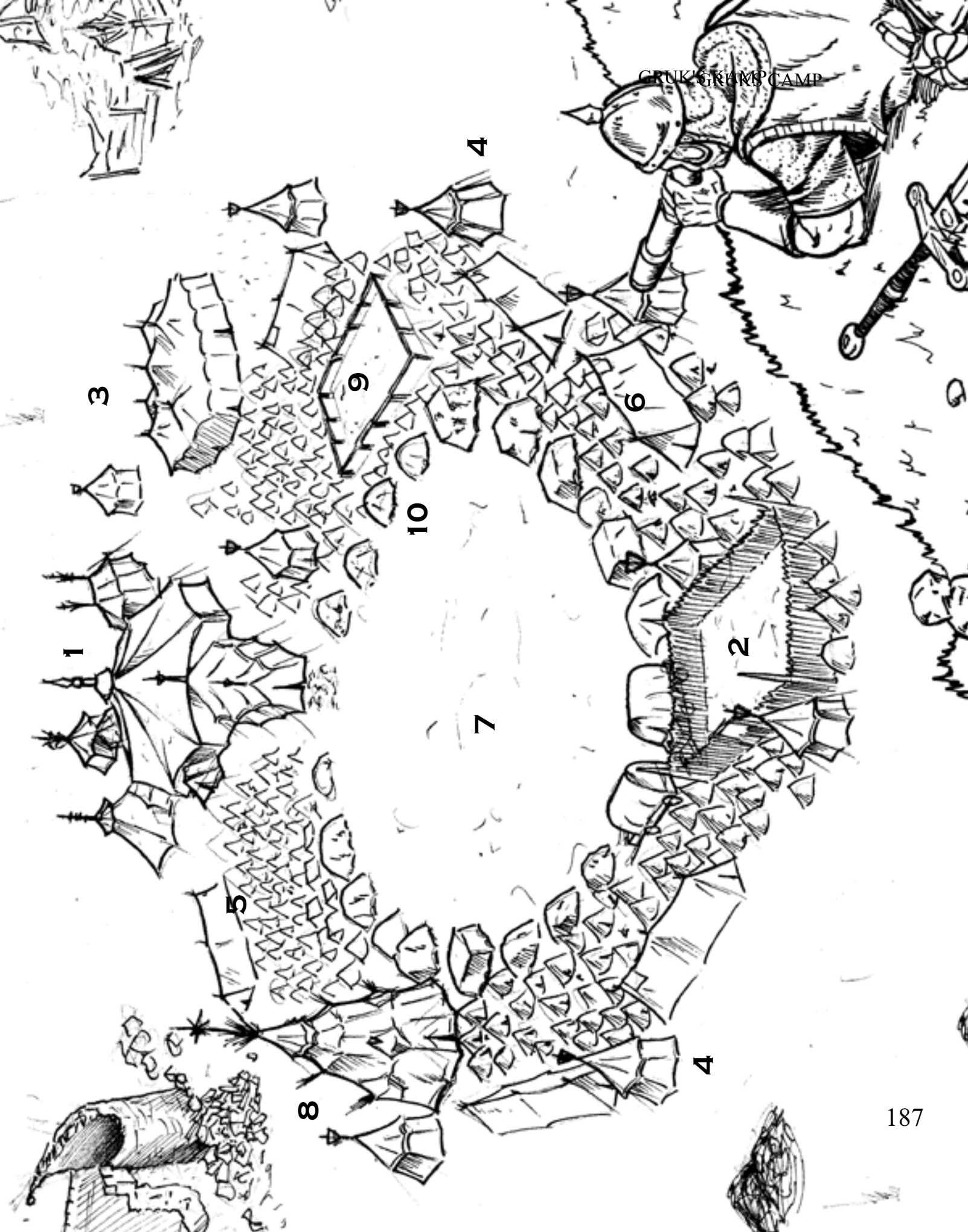
The most powerful battle shaman in the camp lives here. His tent is only a single room but it is second only to Gruk's in its size and splendour. Thantarr is not here often, preferring to be out checking up on the troops at nearly all times. He is Gruk's right hand in the camp, the one who keeps close tabs on the orcs who live here while Gruk concentrates on the larger picture.

9. Horse Pen

The relatively small number of horses (about 200) the orcs own are kept here. Gruk is one of the few orcs to actually have his own horse to ride. Most orcs fear the beasts will throw them at the first opportunity. Still, the orcs need something to haul their wagons whenever they move their camp. The horses are kept here until such a time.

10. Storage Tents

The outside of the main square (#7) is lined with storage tents. These are basically small warehouses in which the orcs keep the goods they need to wage their near-constant war.



GRUK'S KAMP

Gruk

Medium Humanoid (Orc)

17th Level Barbarian

Hit Dice: 17d12+68 (178 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft. (base 40 ft.)

AC: 22 (+3 Dex, +7 *breastplate of command*, +2 *ring of protection* +2), touch 15, flat-footed 19

Base Attack/Grapple: +17/+24

Attack: +3 *orc double axe of flaming burst* +27 melee (1d8+10 plus 1d6 fire/x3) or +2 *composite longbow* (+4 Str bonus) +23 ranged (1d8+6/x3)

Full Attack: +3 *orc double axe of flaming burst* +27/+22/+17/+12 (1d8+10 plus 1d6 fire/x3) or +25/+25/+20/+15/+10 (1d8+10 plus 1d6 fire/x3), or +2 *composite longbow* (+4 Str bonus) +23/+18/+13/+8 ranged (1d8+6/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 4/—, darkvision 60 ft., greater tireless rage 5/day, improved uncanny dodge, indomitable will, light sensitivity, trap sense +5

Saves: Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +6

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +20, Intimidate +20, Jump +20, Listen +15, Spot +17, Swim +16, Survival +20

Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (orc double axe), Great Cleave, Leadership, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting

Challenge Rating: 17

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Possessions: +3 *orc double axe of flaming burst*, *breastplate of command*, *horn of blasting*, *ring of protection* +2, +2 *composite longbow* (+4 Str bonus), 20 arrows, heavy warhorse with scale mail barding, *potion of invisibility* and 39 gp.

Thantarr

Medium Humanoid (Orc)

6th Level Cleric/10th Level Battle Shaman

Hit Dice: 16d8+64 (136 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)

AC: 18 (+1 Dex, +7 +2 *breastplate of invulnerability*), touch 11, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +11/+16

Attack: +3 *spellstoring greataxe* +20 melee (1d12+10/x3), or masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) +12 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Full Attack: +3 *spellstoring greataxe* +20/+15/+10 melee (1d12+10/x3), or masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str

bonus) +12/+7/+2 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Rebuke undead 4/day, spells

Special Qualities: Battle power, damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, spell-like abilities

Saves: Fort +16, Ref +6, Will +12

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 12

Skills: Concentration +15, Heal +8, Intimidate +4, Profession +7, Spellcraft +15

Feats: Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Leadership, Maximise Spell, Power Attack

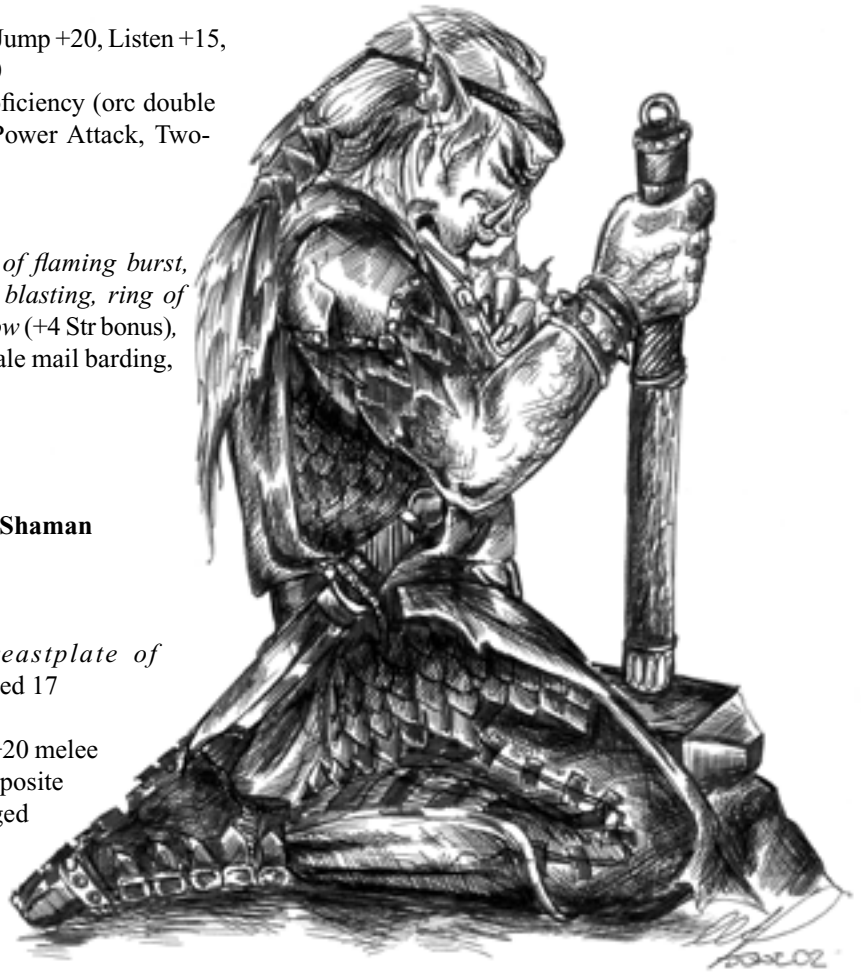
Challenge Rating: 16

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/6+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/3+1/2+1), Save DC 14 + spell level

Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), War (Weapon Focus (greataxe)).

Possessions: +3 *spellstoring greataxe*, +2 *breastplate of invulnerability*, *carpet of flying*, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), and 80 gp.



ORC REFERENCE LIST

The following orc statistics are listed here to give the Games Master an instant reference for the various commonly found types of orcs. You can plug these into a scenario at a moment's notice by simply giving the creature a name. Possessions listed are only suggestions but their effects have been factored into the rest of the statistics. If you like, though, you should feel free to substitute other magic items or pieces of equipment that you believe would be more appropriate to your particular situation.

Orc General

Medium Humanoid (Orc)

10th Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 10d8+40 (85 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)

AC: 20 (+3 Dex, +7 +2 *breastplate*), touch 13, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+17

Attack: +2 *greataxe* +20 melee (1d12+12/x3) or composite longbow (+4 Str) +14 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Full Attack: +2 *greataxe* +20/+15 melee (1d12+12/x3) or composite longbow (+4 Str) +14/+9 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +3

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +10, Jump +6, Listen +2, Ride +10, Spot +4, Swim +4, Tumble +2.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*greataxe*)

Challenge Rating: 9

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Possessions: +2 *greataxe*, composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), +2 *breastplate*, *horn of fog*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, 20 arrows, one *sleep arrow* and 97 gp.

Orc Captain

Medium Humanoid (Orc)

7th Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 7d8+28 (59 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)

AC: AC 20 (+3 Dex, +7 +2 *breastplate*), touch 13, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+13

Attack: +1 *greataxe* +14 melee (1d12+10/x3) or composite longbow (+4 Str) +10 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Full Attack: +1 *greataxe* +14/+9 melee (1d12+10/x3) or composite longbow (+4 Str) +10/+5 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +6, Hide +1, Intimidate +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +1, Ride +6, Spot +3

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 6

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Possessions: +2 *breastplate*, composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), +1 *greataxe*, 20 arrows and 29 gp.

Orc Lieutenant

Medium Humanoid (Orc)

5th Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 5d8+10 (32 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)

AC: AC 17 (+1 Dex, +6 +1 *breastplate*), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+9

Attack: +1 *greataxe* +11 melee (1d12+7/x3) or composite longbow (+4 Str) +6 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Full Attack: +1 *greataxe* +11 melee (1d12+7/x3) or composite longbow (+4 Str) +6 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 8

Skills: Climb +5, Intimidate +3, Listen +1, Spot +1

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (*greataxe*)

Challenge Rating: 4

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Possessions: +1 *breastplate*, composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), +1 *greataxe*, 20 arrows, two *potions of cure light wounds* and 29 gp.

Orc Sergeant

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

3rd Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (23 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)

AC: 16 (+6 +1 *breastplate*), touch 10, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6

Attack: Masterwork *greataxe* +8 melee (1d12+4/x3) or composite longbow (+3 Str) +3 ranged (1d8+3/x3)



ORC REFERENCE LIST

Full Attack: Masterwork greataxe +8 melee (1d12+4/x3) or composite longbow (+3 Str) +3 ranged (1d8+3/x3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -1
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 7, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +0, Spot +0
Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (greataxe)
Challenge Rating: 2
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Possessions: +1 *breastplate*, masterwork greataxe, composite longbow (+3 Str bonus), 20 arrows, two *sleep arrows* and 14 gp.

Orc Warrior

Medium Humanoid (Orc)

1st Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)
AC: 14 (+4 scale mail), touch 10, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+3
Attack: Greataxe +3 melee (1d12+3/x3) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6+2)
Full Attack: Greataxe +3 melee (1d12+3/x3) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8
Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness
Challenge Rating: 1/2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Possessions: Scale mail, greataxe, three javelins, 7 gp.

Orc Sorcerer

Medium Humanoid (Orc)

5th Level Sorcerer

Hit Dice: 5d4+5 (17 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 12 (+1 Dex, +1 *bracers of armour*), touch 11, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+4
Attack: Morningstar +4 melee (1d8+2) or javelin +3 ranged (1d6+2)
Full Attack: Morningstar +4 melee (1d8+2) or javelin +3 ranged (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spells

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 15
Skills: Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Listen +1, Spellcraft +7, Spot +1
Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/5), save DC 12 + spell level:
0—*daze, flare, light, read magic, ray of frost, resistance*;
1st—*mage armour, magic missile, sleep, true strike*;
2nd—*scare, summon monster II*.
Possessions: +1 *bracers of armour*, *wand of magic missile* (3rd level caster), +1 *cloak of resistance*, morningstar, three javelins and 39 gp.

Orc Battle Shaman

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

6th Level Cleric/4th Level Battle Shaman

Hit Dice: 10d8+20 (65 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 20 ft. (base 30 ft.)
AC: 19 (+1 Dex, +7 +2 *breastplate*, +1 *ring of protection +1*), touch 12, flat-footed 18
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+13
Attack: +2 *greataxe* +16 melee (1d12+11/x3) or composite longbow (+4 Str) +8 ranged (1d8+4/x3)
Full Attack: +2 *greataxe* +15/+10 melee (1d12+11/x3) or composite longbow (+4 Str) +8/+3 ranged (1d8+4/x3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Abilities: Rebuke undead 5/day, spells
Special Qualities: Battle power, darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, spell-like abilities
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +9
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 15
Skills: Climb +6, Concentration +11, Intimidate +5, Jump +5, Listen +5, Profession +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +5
Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe)
Challenge Rating: 10
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1), save DC 13 + spell level
Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), War (Weapon Focus (greataxe)).
Possessions: +2 *greataxe*, +2 *breastplate*, composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), *javelin of lightning*, 20 arrows and 79 gp.

‘General! The elves! They are coming! They are coming! They will destroy us all!’

Gruk glared down at the pitiful creatures grovelling before him. They were bleeding, out of breath and frightened half to death. He snarled at them and felt their fear refocus from the elves they had left far behind to the more immediate threat to their worthless lives: him.

‘What happened?’ he growled.

‘We are doomed!’ squealed the scout who had been talking before. The shaken wretch had not been able to keep his mouth shut since he had entered Gruk’s tent.

The general stepped forward, his double axe in his hands. With a swift, almost careless move, he used one end of the axe to lop off the head of the hapless scout. As the freed skull spun through the air, Gruk swung the axe’s other head around and cleaved cleanly through the surprised expression still stretching across the dead orc’s face.

The other members of the squad were showered with brains and blood. They started to protest before a second growl from Gruk’s yellow-tusked mouth struck them all silent.

‘Do not make me repeat myself,’ the orc general grunted.

The surviving scouts glanced at each other desperately. Finally, one of them rose to his feet and spoke. ‘The elves – they are on their way here,’ he choked out.

‘How far away are they?’ Gruk asked, his eyes piercing through the brave scout like javelins.

The scout gulped, then spoke: ‘A day. Two at most.’ He then involuntarily closed his eyes and waited for the deadly blow. Gruk’s reputation for slaughtering messengers bringing bad news was legendary throughout the camp.

Instead, Gruk started to cackle with glee. He reached out and slapped the scout on the back and the creature’s knees almost buckled. ‘Good,’ Gruk snorted. ‘Very good.’

The scout was so confused that he actually spoke to his general without being asked a direct question. ‘You are not angry?’

Normally such a transgression would have caused Gruk to do worse to the scout than he had already done to his former fellow, the one whose corpse was still cooling at their feet. But today the general seemed to be in a rare mood: a good one.

Gruk laughed. ‘This is my plan. The elves are like a crab. When the crab is in its shell, its shell is too tough. It makes it hard to kill. Better to find other prey.’

‘Crabs?’ the scout asked, still amazed that he was not dead.

‘You know,’ Gruk snarled happily, ‘crabs! Those little things on the shore with the pincers and shells: crabs!’

The scout realised that he simply needed to agree, whether he understood or not, so he nodded as sagely as he could manage.

Gruk sized the scout up with his eyes for a tense moment, then seemed satisfied and continued on. ‘Crabs, these elves in their homes, they are hard to kill. But,’ a toothy smile crossed Gruk’s tusked face, ‘you get them out of their homes and it changes. The fires we set got them to notice us. They want to come out and beat us down. They would have been safer in their homes. There, we might not be able to crack their shells.’

Gruk chortled to the guards looking on before he continued. They knew well enough to laugh along, although they were not any better able to understand their leader than the confused scout could.

‘They fell for my trick,’ Gruk said, smiling even more broadly. ‘Now they will fall to our axes.’ He turned to one of the guards and said with relish, ‘Call out the signal. Tonight, we advance!’

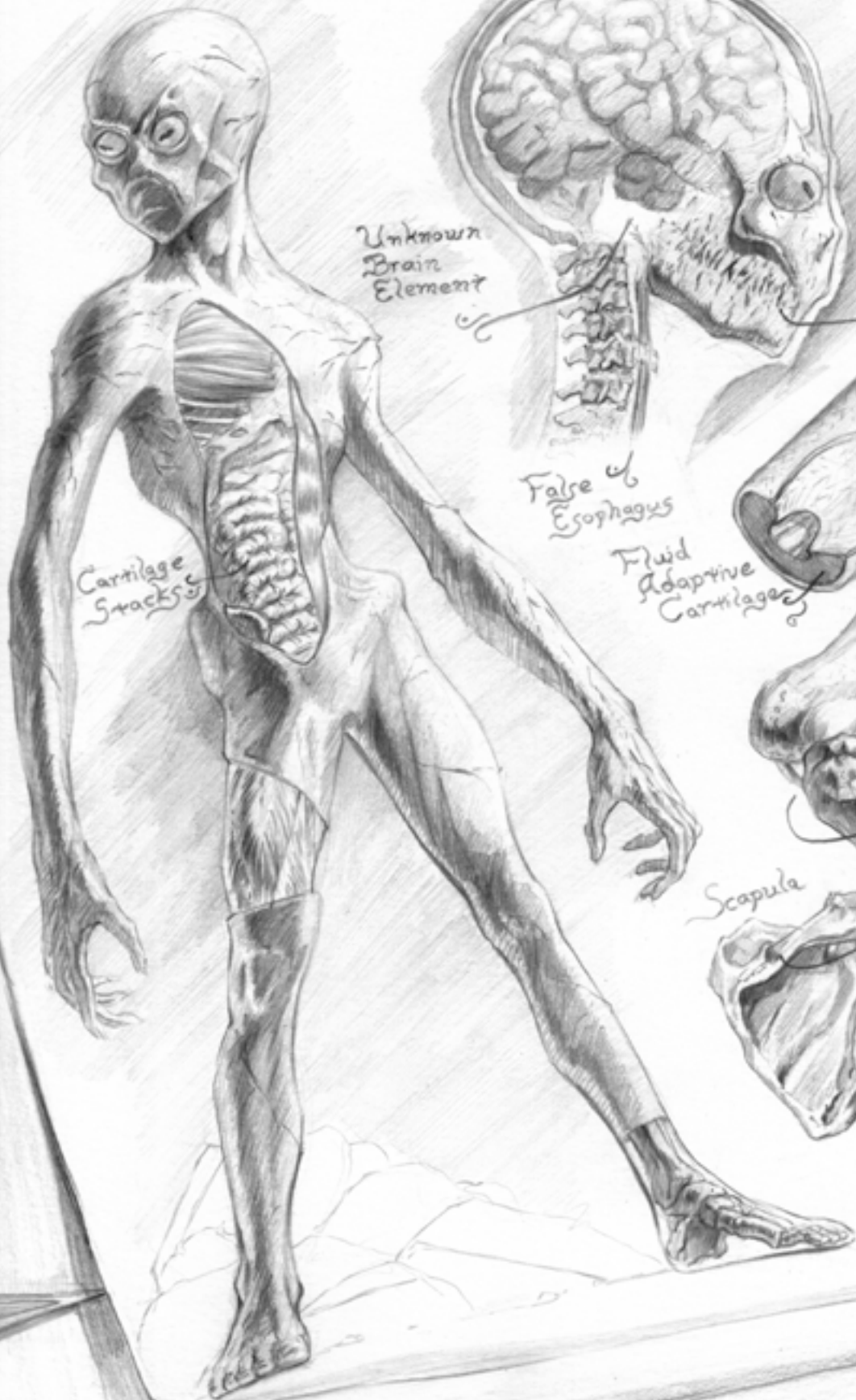
The guard nodded and dashed off to comply with the order. Gruk clapped the scout on the back. As he did, one of the scout’s teeth popped out of his mouth and landed on the general’s boot.

Moments later, Gruk picked up the scout’s severed head and tossed it to another one of his guards. ‘This one did good,’ he said. ‘Give him the place of honour. Stick his head on my personal banner pole.’ The general let loose with a wicked belly laugh. ‘It is a scout’s dream. From there he can see the whole battle!’



Tilted Brain

1915



Unknown Brain Element

Self Knitting Cartilage Mandible

Bone Cross Section

False of Esophagus

Fluid Adaptive Cartilage

Sheath

Cartilage Stracks

Secondary Arterial System (Cartilage Transfer)

Scapula

Wing Eyelets - Used for Wing and Secondary Limb Creation

The Slayer's Guide To Doppelgangers

Doppelgangers are self-serving shapechangers, interested in nothing more than deceiving others and posing as important figures in civilised society. They exist simply to kill people and take over their life for no reason other than because they can. At least, that's how it might seem to many players. Doppelgangers are generally used by Games Masters to add a bit of mystery and surprise to a city or an adventure, but the individual doppelganger itself is often looked upon as a malicious figure bent on nothing more than world domination starting with posing as a king or other ruler.

This is simply not true. Doppelgangers possess a complexity in their thoughts and plans that astounds even the most learned scholar. Their hopes and ambitions show an amount of depth that rivals even the most ambitious wizard. They have a higher purpose than simply impersonating royalty and pitied will be those who stand in the way of their goals.

No longer reduced to the status of a simple mystery to be solved and killed, doppelgangers possess an intellect and a cunning that will pose a challenge to the most hardened of veteran adventurers. They can prove to be very deadly to any meddling adventurers who interfere with their plans... as you will soon see.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 game systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, thoroughly detailing their beliefs, society, and methods of warfare. Typically, these will be races all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who view them as little more than speed bumps on their path to fame and power.

DOPPELGANGERS — DANGEROUS DECEPTION

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race, in this case the doppelganger. Within, you will find extensive information on doppelganger physiology, philosophy, and society, giving you a deeper understanding of how this race interacts with and influences the surrounding world. This handy reference will give Games Masters plenty of plot hooks and believable reasons for doppelgangers to do the things they do as well as a veritable treasure trove of information concerning the nature of doppelgangers and their way of life. Players will find valuable information concerning the deceptive tendencies of doppelgangers that may well save their lives.

Finally, an advanced doppelganger community is presented in full detail. This lair can be inserted seamlessly into any setting and can be used as a high-level adventure or as a springboard for an entire campaign.



DOPPELGANGERS INTRODUCTION

The elf stood at the entrance to the city and inhaled deeply. His eyes showed nothing, but the wrinkle of disgust reflected thoughts unspoken: the city stank. He hesitated, seeming to debate turning around and leaving, then decided against it, moving into the city.

Visions assailed unblinking eyes that took everything in without passion, memorizing small details for later. A woman who dropped her fresh laundry at his feet began to gather her sheets back into the basket. The elf did not move to go around, nor did he stoop to help. He watched her work, staring with those depthless blue eyes. Unnerved, the washer woman picked up her laundry and hurried off.

The merchant district was thronged with people, both those buying and those selling. One merchant thrust a cut of beef towards the elf, claiming it to be the finest cut available in three duchies. The flies landing on the meat were reflected in the eyes of the elf, who stared at the hawker as he pushed his wares. Swallowing, the vender withdrew the meat, turning to another potential customer.

The elf continued on, making mental notes. All in all, he found this settlement disgusting. His delicate sense of smell picked up the strong scents of animal dung, rotting food, overly perfumed women and, underlying that, human sweat. It was vile, and he pondered why there had been no warning to expect this.

Clearing the market district, soft boots carried the elf onward towards the merchant district. More prosperous than the market crowd, the streets were cobbled instead of just dirt paths, with large standing braziers to light the streets. Such was the role of the affluent within this community that they could command such finery. The elf smiled as he took this in.

Sitting down on a bench to watch the building that bore the symbol of a sailboat with a coin emblazoned on the sail, the elf watched people pass. The city guard patrols passed the bench three times, all different, all within three minutes of each other. It was regular enough that any action taken would have to be taken within those periods.

The door to the merchant building opened, and the elf stood up. The target was there all right, and the elf began walking, glancing back to watch the mark. Locking the office, he looked both ways down the street, then made his way into an alley to the left of the building. The elf doubled back to follow him. After a circuitous route, which both puzzled and amused the elf, the target arrived at a house and knocked on the door. From his vantage, the elf could see that a rather buxom woman with red hair, a thick waist, and sheer clothing opened the door. The door closed, and the elf took up position out of sight.

To keep himself busy, he practiced changing into the woman's form, mimicking the sheer clothes as well. An older couple passing by happened to glance in the alley while the new form was displayed, and the gasp of the female was audible, while the old man continued to look, craning his neck to do so. The woman smiled and waved with the new form, which seemed awkward and clumsy compared to that of the elf. The old man blushed and smiled back before being dragged off by his wife.

Looking around, the doppelganger reverted to the elf form again, and watched the house anew. When the target left, it watched him leave, and then shifted again, adopting his form. Human forms were so clumsy, so awkward. Still, the assignment was given, and despite the preference for the lithe grace of the elf, the doppelganger would see the job done.

Standing in front of the house, a quick rap on the door brought the lady of the home to the door again.

'Marek,' she smiled, somewhat nervously. 'My husband will be home soon. Why did you come back?'

He smiled back at her, a leering grin that was taken from the old man that passed by. 'I need to show you something.'

She frowned, looking both up and down the streets. 'Will it take long,' she asked, backing away as she opened the door for him.

Marek shook his head and stepped inside, hearing the door close behind him. Already shifting form, Marek turned back to the woman reading thoughts that she couldn't hide from him. He could sense the terror as his face started running and reshaping into her own, but before she could scream, a strong hand, **her** hand, clamped over her mouth, the other on her throat.

'This won't take long at all,' her voice responded.

DOPPELGANGER PHYSIOLOGY

ANATOMY

In its natural form a doppelganger is slender and gangly and may not seem very intimidating. Unfortunately for the average adventurer, their lack of obvious body mass can be dangerously deceptive. Speak with an educated sage or historian who has studied these strange creatures and you will discover that there is much power contained in that emaciated form. Their mastery of trickery and deception insures that such creatures are not to be taken lightly when threatened.

Appearing gaunt and frail, doppelgangers look more like humanoid cadavers than the hardy and strong race they are. Their slim limbs and milky, bulging eyes give them a strange and unsettling look, while the pale gray-white color of their oily hairless skin serves to further their cadaverous appearance. This changes, however, when the doppelganger wills it so. The figure mistaken for a weakling only a moment ago can reveal itself to be a towering warrior, ready for battle or an ancient and powerful wizard, ready to destroy his opponents at a moment's notice with powerful eldritch energies.

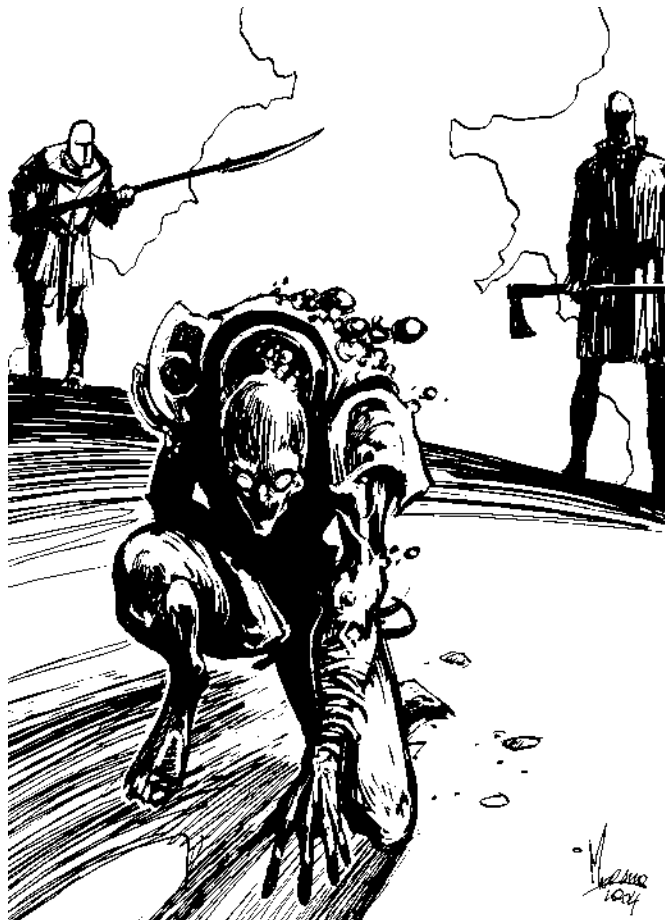
Such is the true power of the doppelganger, the ultimate shapechanger. While capable of reducing an opponent to pulp with its fists, the doppelganger prefers to subtly infiltrate some aspect of the daily life of its opponents and work from the inside as a trusted friend, servant or loved one. With their ability to shapechange and their uncanny knack for detecting the thoughts of others, the disguise is almost perfect in every way.

ORIGINS

There are many theories concerning the origin of the doppelganger race. Campfire stories often speak of some unknown deity who created them as a means to infiltrate the followers of his rival gods. Other stories speak of an insane court wizard who created the first doppelganger to assassinate his king so that he could claim the throne. Still other tales place doppelgangers as ancient slaves of the Illithid race who fought free and have been hiding ever since. The most popular theory among learned scholars is that doppelgangers originated on another plane of existence and that somehow they made their way to the prime material plane. Despite the many stories and rumours, not even the doppelgangers know where or when their race originated from.

While they may appear very different on the outside, the anatomy of the doppelganger is not unlike that of most other humanoids. A heart, lungs and other soft organs all reside within the chest cavity, protected by the sturdy ribcage and the tough outer flesh. The major internal difference between a doppelganger and most other humanoids is the lack of a digestive tract. Doppelgangers possess no stomach or intestines, as they do not require food in the standard sense. The doppelganger's skin acts as a filter through which nutrients and moisture are absorbed and waste is released. Such waste collects on the surface of the skin – much like human sweat – which accounts for the oily texture of the skin.

A doppelganger's body is tough and hard, despite its 'skin and bones' appearance. It is capable of taking a large amount of punishment and is capable of dishing out quite a bit of damage as well. A doppelganger's slam attacks do normal damage instead of nonlethal. A doppelganger is perfectly capable of emulating equipment, armor and weapons while shapechanging, though most of it will be useless for anything but appearance. The armor a doppelganger wears may look just like real armor, but it is only part of the doppelganger, after all.



The brain of the doppelganger is an interesting organ, capable of reading minds from a very young age. As a result, it makes an unusually good alchemic reagent and spell component. As a side note, it also makes a great soup base.

Check the goblin scholar, from the library of scholarly lore, volume MXVII

Perhaps the most interesting anatomical feature of a doppelganger is its brain. The face, and subsequently the sensory organs that go with it, sits very low on the doppelganger's head. This allows room within the skull for a larger brain. The brain of a doppelganger is sized and shaped the same as a human brain except for a bulbous area at the very bottom of the organ. Scholars believe that this sector is what controls the doppelganger's strange ability to detect the surface thoughts of other beings. Another theory is that this part of the brain is really a separate organ that may provide a

doppelganger with its odd ability to completely forego the need for sleep.

WHILE CHANGED

While shapechanging, a doppelganger's limbs can be subtracted or added, height can be changed, weight can actually be altered and the overall form can be shifted to look dramatically different. There are many things that a shapechanged doppelganger can do that it normally could not. While shapechanged, a doppelganger is perfectly capable of eating, assuming that the race it is imitating possesses a stomach and digestive tract. If the doppelganger changes to a form that possesses gills, it may breathe under water. If the shapechanged form has wings, the doppelganger may use them to fly.

There are many things that a doppelganger is incapable of doing, despite being shapechanged, however. A doppelganger cannot utilise the special attacks of a form it has adopted unless it already possessed those special

Form Freeze

This disease is the bane of all doppelgangers. It is not extremely infectious, but when it is contracted, it causes the doppelganger to lose all shapechanging abilities. After the disease incubates, the doppelganger will revert back to its natural form and will be unable to shapechange again until its body repels the disease.

Infection: Airborne (contact)

DC: 10

Incubation: 1d3 days

Damage: Loss of shapechanging abilities

In most cases, form freeze only lasts a few days (1d4+1 days), though even that short a time can prove detrimental to a doppelganger that is posing as someone else.

Social Bane

This is a particularly nasty sickness of the mind that is feared by every doppelganger. It is an extremely rare affliction, though it is highly contagious. The disease incubates quickly in the doppelganger's brain, eventually causing normal brain activity to go a bit haywire. During the duration, the doppelganger becomes unable to suppress its detect thoughts ability. Furthermore, when the doppelganger detects the thoughts of someone, it immediately assumes the form of that person as its brain sends conflicting signals to its body. It may reassume the form it held before, but if the doppelganger is in view of anyone, the damage may have already been done.

Infection: Airborne (contact)

DC: 20

Incubation: 1d4 hours

Damage: Abnormal shapechanging and brain functions, 1d3 Wisdom damage

Social Bane lasts 1d6+1 days. During the infection, the doppelganger's thoughts are being constantly rerouted and changed. This has caused more than one doppelganger to go completely insane. Naturally, a doppelganger with this disease is scorned and avoided by other doppelgangers.

attacks. It does not possess the defenses of the new form, meaning that scales and tough skin are just for show. In addition, a doppelganger's ability scores do not change due to shapechanging, no matter what form it takes.

HEALTH

While the physical makeup of a doppelganger differs a bit from that of other humanoids, many of the same vulnerabilities still exist. Doppelgangers are just as susceptible to poison as any other being. The only real difference is that due to the fact that a doppelganger has no stomach or digestive tract, ingested poisons might seem a bit useless. Anyone who has researched doppelgangers will know that this is not quite the case. Because a doppelganger takes in nutrients and moisture through its skin, it is actually easier for someone to use an ingested poison on a doppelganger, only needing to splash a bit of it on its skin. Treat ingested poisons as if they were contact poisons where doppelgangers are concerned. Such poisons retain their normal save DC and act normally in all respects save the application.

Likewise, doppelgangers are not immune to disease. Doppelgangers are as likely to get sick as any other humanoid except that they are able to brush off any diseases that effect or germinate within a humanoid stomach or digestive tract. Nature seems to have made up for this by creating diseases that only effect doppelgangers.

LIFE CYCLE AND BREEDING

Doppelgangers generally live for 350-400 years, though no non-doppelgangers viewing their natural form would notice any outward sign of advanced age. Their extended age has allowed more than one doppelganger to pose as an entire lineage of rulers in the societies of shorter-lived humanoids.

During the course of its life, usually around its hundredth year, a doppelganger will seek to mate. Though they may mate many times during their lives, there seems to be a certain period in which they do it, lasting about fifty years or so. Whether children are successfully born or not, a doppelganger cannot (or will not) attempt to reproduce again during its lifetime after its mating years are over. Their strange process of reproduction causes a large number of doppelganger infants to be stillborn or to miscarry early during the pregnancy. This is perhaps nature's way of assuring that the doppelganger population remains small and cannot overrun other civilised races.

Doppelgangers are asexual and cannot produce children among their own race. When a doppelganger chooses



to have a child, it must assume the form of a female humanoid and find a likely male. After the union, assuming the pregnancy is successful, the doppelganger cannot change back to its natural form and must carry the child to term, during which, the doppelganger generally stays close to the father for protection. All details of the pregnancy such as length and other considerations are the same as the race the doppelganger has assumed and/or the race of the father.

Occasionally, the race the doppelganger is emulating and the race of the father will not be the same (such as a “human” doppelganger and a dwarven father). The pregnancy will take place in this situation only if it is possible between the two races in the first place. Doppelganger children born in this way run a higher risk of mutations (discussed later).

A doppelganger child is born appearing as a normal child of the same race as the father, though it may seem to mature faster than normal and usually will not possess the racial abilities of the father (such as the halfling’s advanced hearing). A doppelganger child will generally reach maturity after only 10 years; at which point its shapechanging and thought detecting abilities begin to take effect, usually reflexively at first. At this point, if the parent doppelganger has not already done so, it will take the child and leave the area and possibly the family it has been a part of for years to protect the child. Many doppelganger children have been mistaken for all manner of things they unknowingly shapechanged into and were injured or killed as a result.

Doppelgangers do not usually possess any real attachment to their children aside from seeing them as the continuation of their race. After the child’s shapechanging abilities become apparent, the parent doppelganger will begin instructing the child in the ways of their race. The child generally picks up such



instruction very quickly. After the parent is convinced that it is able to function on its own, it will usually leave the child to its fate. Occasionally, the parent and child will journey together, but either one of them is likely to leave the company of the other as soon as it finds a person or place that amuses them.

PSYCHOLOGY

The life of a doppelganger is a life of constant change. From the time it begins maturity to the time of its death, a doppelganger possesses the power to change its shape to match its surroundings. This seems like it would lead to a life of decadence and ease, but the fact is that

DOPPELGANGER PHYSIOLOGY

doppelgangers who spend their time among other races lead a very difficult and dangerous life. The constant need for secrecy and disguise eventually forces all but the most socially established doppelgangers to relocate and begin their deception anew, lest they be discovered.

Most doppelgangers are not evil or malicious creatures with an intent to control the lives of other races, though most scholars believe they tend to have a rather skewed perception of other races in general. Doppelgangers simply see infiltration and subterfuge as part of their lives. The people they deceive are simply tools to be used and discarded as needed. Doppelgangers seek to enjoy a life of wealth and ease, even if this life is a dangerous one. It comes as easily to them as does shapechanging. If achieving that life of ease requires the infiltration and deception of other races, so much the better for this is where the doppelganger truly excels.

Doppelgangers invest a great deal of time and thought into their plans. They will often study their targets for a great deal of time before making their move, learning the subject's quirks, mannerisms and language. A doppelganger's plans may take months or even years to come to fruition and such plans usually do not benefit those who have been duped by the doppelganger in the least.

Doppelgangers are generally solitary creatures. They constantly work to better their own situation, without taking much time to consider the needs or desires of others. Their own self-interests generally override any desire for social interaction with other members of its race. As a result of their solitary nature, doppelgangers have never developed a language specific to their race, preferring to use their detect thoughts ability as a basic form of mental communication with each other.

'How much farther is it?' Tarak was anxious to be done with this adventure and back into the arms of the busy tavern wench he had met the previous night.

'Not much farther now. It was on the other side of that room just ahead.' Valmere motioned with the torch in his hand as he spoke.

'Good, I'll be glad to be out of this hole. Why did you say we had to come here again? Haven't all the evil priests been gone for years?' Religion was almost a foreign concept to Tarak. He occasionally offered a small prayer to the gods, but it was more out of superstition than a real belief. In any case, he definitely didn't have the kind of faith that Valmere had.

The duo stepped into the room, small and shadowy in the flickering light of Valmere's torch, with sand covering the floor and charcoal drawings smearing the walls. At least, Tarak hoped it was charcoal. On the far side of the room was the wicked thing that had dragged them here. Standing among a pile of broken bones and unidentifiable refuse was an altar charred black with fire and the blood of countless innocents. 'Well, this shouldn't take long.' Tarak unslung his hammer from its place on his back and started across the room towards the mess, not noticing that Valmere hung back. Suddenly, the sand beneath his feet gave way, sucking Tarak in up to his waist. His hammer already beneath the sand, Tarak found he had nothing to use as leverage, no handhold to grab and pull himself out. 'What's this? Valmere, help me! I'm sinking!'

Valmere stepped forward a single step, but it was no longer Valmere. In his place stood a gaunt, pale creature humanoid in appearance, but obviously not the human cleric that should have been in its place. It held its torch forward a bit as if to survey the scene. 'Join your friend at the bottom,' it said with a troubling lack of emotion in its voice... Valmere's voice! 'You won't be troubling me anymore.' As it turned to walk away, it dropped the torch onto the floor near the sinking warrior. It sputtered for just a moment and finally sank below the sand, leaving only the darkness to carry Tarak's muffled screams as the sand spilled into his mouth and over his head.



MUTATIONS

The reproductive cycle of the doppelganger is an imperfect process at best. A lot of room for error exists, which usually proves fatal to the child. Once in a great while, the ravages of nature and the incompatibility of the parents take their toll without killing the child. Instead of perishing, the child is born mutated, a hideous mockery of the perfection it could have been, as far as the parent doppelganger is concerned. Usually, the mutation is physical, and therefore apparent at birth. Occasionally, the mutation is not apparent and won't manifest until much later in life. Regardless of the mutation, when it becomes apparent that the child is not normal, the doppelganger parent will usually abandon it, leaving it in the hands of the father. Mutants are almost never accepted into the rare doppelganger society, which usually leaves the child at the not-so-tender mercy of superstitious people when its shapechanging abilities manifest themselves. Only if the mutation proves beneficial somehow will the doppelganger be accepted by others of its kind.

Treat the mutated child as though it were already dead. It would be better if it were.

Teaching of the Order of Rulers

USING MUTATIONS

Mutations can be an interesting and fun way to add a bit of mystery to the already mysterious doppelganger. Even the player who memorizes every minute statistical detail about the creatures he may face will come up surprised and challenged with this new twist on an already intricate creature.

Under normal circumstances, there is roughly a 30% chance of a miscarriage or some other fatal occurrence during a doppelganger pregnancy. The chance of a mutation instead of infant death is 10%,

with another 10% added to the chances of both miscarriage and mutation if the race of the father did not match the form of the doppelganger parent. A Games Master wishing to include the birth of a doppelganger in his game or simply wishing to add something extra to an existing doppelganger should simply roll 1d10 and apply the result of the mutation chart to the doppelganger. An entire mentality or philosophy can be built around a single mutation. Loose clothing could be the trademark of a doppelganger with extra limbs while a kleptomaniac doppelganger could view the entire world and everything in it as its for the taking.

D10

Mutation

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------|
| 1: | Conjoined Twins |
| 2: | Extra Limb |
| 3: | Missing Limb |
| 4: | Random Racial Ability |
| 5: | Innate Magic or Psionics |
| 6: | Single Form |
| 7: | Albino |
| 8: | Random Racial Drawback |
| 9: | Mental Illness |
| 10: | Roll Twice |

CONJOINED TWINS

Rarely, twins are born to a doppelganger. An even more rare occurrence is when the two fetuses do not separate correctly in the womb, which leads to conjoined twins. At the Games Master's option, conjoined twins can be two doppelgangers joined together somehow or an amalgamation of two bodies with a single brain. If the latter is the case, the Games Master is free to rule that the doppelganger has a split consciousness, resulting in a permanent schism effect.

Regardless of the type of conjoinment, the twins will be able to shapechange normally into a single humanoid of large size due to the increased amount of flesh they carry between them, however the twins will not be able to assume the form of a humanoid of smaller than medium size.



EXTRA/MISSING LIMB

Occasionally, something goes physically wrong with the development of the child due to the incompatibility of the parents. Sometimes extra limbs are produced. Sometimes limbs are stunted before they can grow. In the case of an extra limb, the Games Master decides whether an extra arm or leg is the case and exactly where on the body the extra limb sprouts.

With an extra arm, the doppelganger may eventually learn to use the multidexterity and multiweapon fighting feats. If an extra leg is the case, the doppelganger gets a +4 stability bonus against trip attacks. In the case of missing limbs, a stunted arm reduces the doppelganger's natural attacks to a single slam attack. In the case of a missing leg, the

doppelganger's locomotion becomes restricted.

In either case, an extra or missing limb cannot be removed or replaced, even due to shapechanging, despite the doppelganger's natural ability to add and subtract limbs. An extra limb may be camouflaged as a tail, hidden under or within loose clothing or otherwise concealed, but it may never be removed due to shapechanging.

RANDOM RACIAL BONUS

Sometimes, the traits of the father show up in the newborn doppelganger child. If this mutation is rolled, the Games Master chooses one racial bonus of the father (+2 to constitution from a gnome father, for instance) and applies it to the doppelganger child. Alternatively, a racial

ability may be selected (such as a halfling's +2 to listen checks) and may be applied instead of a racial bonus. Racial bonuses already possessed by the doppelganger stack, but racial abilities the doppelganger already possesses (such as an elf's immunity to sleep effects) do not stack.

INNATE MAGIC OR PSIONICS

Rarely, sorcery or psionics are part of the father or run in his family. Around the same time as the doppelganger's shapechanging abilities begin to manifest, its latent magical or psionic abilities emerge as well. This often has the undesirable effect of drawing even more unwanted attention to



MUTATIONS

the child. Treat the doppelganger as a 1st level psion or sorcerer, choosing spells or psionic abilities as normal. If sorcery or psionics are not part of the Games Master's world, he may ignore this mutation and roll on the chart again.

SINGLE FORM

There have been times when a doppelganger child is born that simply cannot shapechange into anything except his natural form and the humanoid form it inhabited before maturity. This often has the effect of drawing a bit less attention to the child when its shapechanging abilities manifest, but such a child will be crippled as a doppelganger.

If this mutation is rolled, the doppelganger is limited to its natural form and the form it grew to maturity with. It may still shapechange as per normal; it simply cannot choose a form other than the two to which it is limited.

ALBINO

The lack of deep color in a doppelganger's skin occasionally causes a mutation in the womb. If this mutation is rolled, the doppelganger infant is born as normal but will be an albino, possessing no skin pigmentation and appearing stark white. Such a child may burn easily while under direct sunlight and inherits a sensitivity to light (-1 to all attacks and saving throws while in bright light) that carries over into its shapechanged forms. The doppelganger's natural form is normal in every way except the skin is very white. The doppelganger will also appear albino in any form it takes, though this may be covered or concealed with the use of hooded cloaks, gloves, masks or make-up.

RANDOM RACIAL DRAWBACK

Every race has a weakness and the racial weaknesses of the father occasionally manifest in a doppelganger child. If this mutation is rolled, the Games Master chooses one racial drawback of the father (-2 to intelligence from a half-orc father, for instance) and applies it to the doppelganger child. Alternatively, a racial hindrance (such as a dwarf's light sensitivity) may be chosen and applied instead of a racial drawback. Racial penalties already possessed by the doppelganger stack, but racial hindrances the doppelganger already possesses do not stack.

MENTAL ILLNESS

A doppelganger is as susceptible to mental illness as any other race. Some of the most feared tyrants in this history of civilization have in reality been mentally disturbed doppelgangers. If this mutation is rolled, the Games Master chooses a mental illness and applies it to the personality of the doppelganger. Obviously, the mental illness will probably not be apparent at the time of birth, but some illnesses may become apparent sooner than others. Examples of possible illnesses include derangement, kleptomania, pyromania, obsessive-compulsive disorder, etc.

ROLL TWICE

Roll two times on the mutation table and apply both effects. Count this option only once and reroll if it comes up a second time.

DOPPELGANGER SOCIETY

Doppelgangers generally do not have a tight-knit social structure, as they are often hiding or mingling with other races. Usually, a single individual will be present, having shapechanged itself to avoid detection from potentially deadly threats. Small groups or pairs are not too rare and are in fact a common occurrence among traveling doppelgangers, most often a doppelganger parent with its offspring in tow. A small group of three or four doppelgangers may travel together for protection or camouflage while on a long journey. These small groups often perform well together as their ability to detect each other's thoughts often keeps them out of otherwise unavoidable trouble. The important thing to remember, though, is that in most cases, a doppelganger is mainly interested in looking out for itself above all others. If this can best be accomplished by traveling with others, so be it. Most doppelgangers would much prefer to rely only on themselves, however.

Very rarely, a larger group of doppelgangers will find refuge together and start a small community. This is an uncommon event and usually does not last more than a few months, as such a community will eventually draw the unwanted attention of other races. There is no real hierarchy in these communities to speak of since the community itself

will usually be little more than a group of individuals taking refuge in the same place. Occasionally, however, a single charismatic doppelganger or perhaps a group of doppelgangers will step up to fill the role of leader and will unify the individuals into a cohesive community, capable of working together for the betterment of each other. This concept is generally very foreign to most doppelgangers, which does much to explain why such groups are rare and do not usually last very long at all.

Exceptions do exist, however. Occasionally, a small gang of doppelgangers will find a mutual interest and will work together to achieve it. Very rarely, an entire



city of doppelgangers will exist, hiding their true nature from the surrounding civilizations. Such cities almost always rely on their thought detecting ability to keep their ruse a secret, which works for a while but usually fails eventually. Other times, doppelgangers will form a community that relies not only on their thought detecting abilities, but also on their nature for deception and subterfuge. Such communities will plant informants and moles in neighboring communities, seeking to discredit or remove those who might discover them for what they really are.

THE ORDER OF RULERS

The largest and most structured doppelganger society is the Order of Rulers. Some centuries ago, a large amount of doppelgangers were taking shelter in a network of caverns from an army of humans that was marching through a nearby pass. Forced to exist together in the cold, wet caverns while an army camped through the winter above them, the doppelgangers had to establish many methods of everyday life, lest they be discovered. A temporary council of the five most intelligent doppelgangers was established to work towards keeping the caverns safe and undetected.

Towards the end of the winter, a lone human scout was captured after he ventured into the caverns. Extensive questioning and probing of the scout revealed that two nations were at war and more soldiers would come through the area when the snows finally thawed. This presented a problem for the community and the council deliberated for a long time, finally coming to a decision. A pair of doppelgangers would have to sneak past the army, each heading to the warring nations. They would be charged with the task of removing and replacing the commanders of these armies and preventing them from coming close enough to discover the community of doppelgangers sheltering in the mountains. Within a few weeks, the snow was thawing, but the human army turned back and left the area. The plan had been a success!

The success of this operation gave the doppelganger council much to consider. Weeks of debate ensued concerning the pros and cons of having doppelganger operatives in ranking positions all over the area. The council finally decided that life for the community could be made much better if doppelgangers were to infiltrate the governments of local nations, states and large cities. From their new positions, they could use their influence

to keep the community secret and improve the quality of doppelganger life in the area.

The Order of Rulers is comprised of four groups: the council, the protectors, the operatives and the community.

The Council: The council is made up of five doppelganger spellcasters, usually adepts. The council chooses a new member of the council when an old member dies. Usually, the council has a few prospects chosen ahead of time from the ranks of operatives who show intelligence and some ability with spellcasting or scrying. The council is responsible for all the major decision-making that concerns the community as a whole. Operatives are chosen and assigned by the council. Generally, the council does not leave the safety of the network of caverns that house the Order of Rulers.

The Protectors: Despite the unfailing success of the operatives in making the community virtually undetectable, the community remains on constant alert against any discovery. The protectors serve a dual function of guarding the community and training the operatives. The protectors are mostly ex-operatives who performed well in completing their jobs and were asked by the council to stay rather than being reassigned, though most protectors use far more lethal means than those of the operatives to defeat their opponents or targets.

The Operatives: The bread and butter of the community, the operatives are the doppelgangers who are sent on assignments by the council. They are highly trained by the protectors and perform their jobs unfailingly, whether it is assassination or infiltration. Generally, the operatives perform an assignment with an emotionless but fanatical determination. They pride themselves with the knowledge that no operative has ever allowed itself to be captured when discovered, preferring instead to take its own life rather than betray the secret of the community.

The Community: The community is made up of the doppelgangers that keep daily life going within the order. The community handles the basic tasks that the community needs, such as gathering supplies and making needed items. Occasionally, members of the community are trained by the protectors to act as guards and area scouts for the order.

While the Order of Rulers is the largest doppelganger community, it does not recruit. The council wisely decided centuries ago that in order to remain undiscovered, the community must remain small. Only its members giving birth to doppelganger children swell its ranks. No one, not even other doppelgangers, can expect to join the ranks of the Order of Rulers. Throughout history, there have been very few who have learned enough about the order to petition for membership and the order has killed all who have dared to try.

The Order of Rulers is an exception to many rules concerning normal doppelganger life. They would be a serious threat to almost every other civilised race if they ever allowed their ranks to grow. Fortunately, that does not seem like it will ever be an issue. Members of the order are uncharacteristically social-minded. They have been taught from birth that the community is always a higher priority than the individual. Every member of the community is fanatically loyal to the order and is prepared to die to see that it remains intact.

‘Ye don’t wanna go up there, lad. People’s been known to up and disappear in that passage. Best just to take Gharik’s pass and be done with it.’ The old dwarf spat at his feet and made a sign to ward off evil.

‘What do you mean, old one,’ asked Branaghan. ‘It’s the quickest route to Free Haven from here. Gharik’s pass is thirty miles from here. Why would I go that far out of my way?’

‘Ye do as ye like, lad... but ye won’t catch me goin’ up there. Folks ‘round here say it’s haunted up there.’ The dwarf finished counting the money that had been given to him before handing the sword over to the big human. ‘An don’t be thinkin’ that this here sword’ll be protectin’ ya, neither.’

The human warrior leaned forward, obviously interested and wanting to hear more. ‘Why? What’s up there?’

‘Nothin’ I care to discuss.’ The dwarf turned away, intending to end the conversation, but paused when he heard the familiar sound of gold coins dropping onto a wooden table. Sighing, he turned and began to scoop up the coins. ‘Whadaya wanna know, lad?’

‘Tell me everything, old one. What’s up there?’ Branaghan found a stool and settled down, prepared for a long story.

‘If’n yer gonna go up there anyways, I s’pose ye’d best be warned. That pass... there’s somethin’ bout it makes people go all crazy. I’s only up there once, but that was enough, lad. I used to have me an assistant fir me shop here. Name was Brak. We was havin’ a bad season and we decided to save us some time gettin’ to Free Haven fir the yearly fair, so’s we took us a short cut through that pass. We wasn’t in the pass fir two miles when Brak stops his horse to go answer nature. He comes runnin’ back few minutes later all preachin’ somethin’ ‘bout people in a cave.’ The dwarf paused for a moment, obviously struggling with the memory.

Branaghan leaned forward. ‘Go on, old one.’

‘I could see he was serious, so I told him to go see if they was interested in buyin’ some of our stuff. Brak, he takes his horse and heads off by his self to go talk with these people o’his. He comes back just as calm as ye please sayin’ they didn’t want nothin’. Next thing I know, ol Brak wallups me upside the head. I woke up on m’horse later that night. Brak’s horse was tied to a tree next to mine. Brak wasn’t ‘round, so I looked through his stuff to see if I could find me a clue as to where he’d gone off to.’ The dwarf paused again. He looked almost at the point of crying.

‘What did you find,’ asked Branaghan, his interest peaked.

The dwarf sobbed and composed himself before softly continuing. ‘Brak’s clothes and his spectacles was wrapped up on a bundle on his saddle. His... his hand was still in his pocket.’ The old dwarf paused a moment before looking the human right in the eyes. ‘I’d say the message was clear. In seventy years, I ain’t never gone back.’ The dwarf turned and walked to the back of the shop, leaving the human alone to hear his soft sobbing.

Branaghan gathered his gear and left, turning the sign to read ‘closed’ as he exited. As he stood outside the little shop, he stopped a small boy, pressing a silver coin into the child’s hand. ‘What’s the quickest way to Gharik’s pass, boy?’



ROLEPLAYING WITH DOPPELGANGERS

Up to now, the *Slayer's Guide to Doppelgangers* has dealt with the physical, mental and psychological aspects of the doppelganger, as well as a bit concerning the rare doppelganger societies. Now that you know all of this information, it is a good time to mention a few things that may help you make doppelgangers an unforgettable and indispensable part of your game.

The life of an adventurer is not an easy one. Sleeping on the snowy ground, constantly traveling from place to place and constant fear of a bloody death do not match most doppelganger's idea of a good life. Occasionally, however, a doppelganger may be found traveling with a party of unsuspecting adventurers. More than one group of travelers has been startled to discover a monster in their midst. Usually, a doppelganger will only travel with an adventuring group as a means to protect itself until it reaches its destination. Occasionally, a group may discover a doppelganger among them as it tries to trick the party into a trap. Every so often, however, a doppelganger will create or (more often) slip into an adventuring party because it helps it accomplish a more long-term goal.

Almost every plan a doppelganger will ever make hinges on achieving the kind of easy life it dreams of. Even the most complex plans show a single-minded determination to ultimately result with the doppelganger in a position of power or wealth, thus granting it the lifestyle it desires. The most common way a doppelganger will follow through with a plan is to simply assassinate a person who holds a high or prestigious position and replace that person using its shapechanging ability, thus placing itself into that position and granting it a good, if dangerous lifestyle. Sometimes a doppelganger decides to forgo the deceptive route and finds itself a home in a secluded area where it can live in relative peace, far from prying eyes. Such creatures are generally antisocial and will use deadly force to protect their home from any threat.

Whatever route a doppelganger takes to achieve the lifestyle it wants, remember always that almost no

doppelganger with half a mind will die needlessly attempting to get it. If a plan does not work out, it will move on to a different area and try again. When faced with a group of armed and ready veteran adventurers bent on catching or killing it, a doppelganger will flee the area rather than face capture or death.

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

As a general rule, doppelgangers are not overly religious as a race. No one seems to know exactly how old the doppelganger race is or when they originated, not even the doppelgangers themselves. This, coupled with the lack of a concrete history on the subject, has served to prevent a unified doppelganger religion from ever becoming a reality.

This is not to say, however, that doppelgangers cannot be pious. No one distinct doppelganger god has ever stepped forward to make himself known, but that has never stopped doppelgangers from becoming clerics capable of wielding powerful divine magic. Many doppelgangers are converted into the worship of gods, generally gravitating towards gods of trickery and deceit. Others study philosophy and spirituality in an attempt to learn how to dip into the divine pool and channel the magic they find there without the need for an interventionist god. Though not restricted from any specific domain, doppelganger clerics generally include the trickery domain as part of their clerical training.

Other doppelgangers study spirituality in an attempt to perfect themselves both mentally and physically. Many take this study a step farther and join monasteries, hoping to learn from the wisdom of masters. Doppelgangers make excellent monks. Their long life spans allow them to study for far longer than a lot of other races while their physical malleability gives them an advantage in combat against unsuspecting opponents. Occasionally, a doppelganger will focus its training on incorporating its thought detecting abilities into its monk studies. This path of training eventually leads doppelganger monks to become almost invincible opponents.

Usually, a doppelganger intent on joining a monastery will hide its true nature in the beginning, but it will eventually reveal itself once it realises that most monasteries will accept almost anyone that is willing to learn. Many doppelganger mutants that survive

childhood take this path in life, searching for some meaning to their existence.

DOPPELGANGER FEATS

In addition to the feats a doppelganger may acquire as part of a character class, there are a few feats that are available only to doppelgangers, since they complement their shapechanging and thought detecting abilities. These feats may only be taken by doppelgangers.

Accelerated Change (Doppelganger)

The doppelganger is able to shapechange quicker.

Prerequisites: The ability to shapechange, Favored Form

Benefit: The doppelganger has become so familiar with its favored form that it is able to shapechange into that form as a free action instead of the normal standard action. The doppelganger may also shapechange into its natural form from its favored form as a free action.

Favored Form (Doppelganger)

The doppelganger is getting better at its deception.

Prerequisites: The ability to shapechange

Benefit: Choose one creature race the doppelganger can change into. The doppelganger has become so intimately familiar with that form that it gains a +2 to its Disguise and Bluff checks while in that form.

Special: This feat may be selected multiple times. Each time this feat is selected, it applies to a new creature race.

Harden Hands (Doppelganger)

The doppelganger can harden its fists to deal more damage.

Prerequisites: The ability to shapechange

Benefit: The doppelganger may harden its fists to increase the damage die by 1 (d6 to d8). Harden Hands requires a standard action, but remains in effect indefinitely. The doppelganger may not perform "normal" tasks with its hands while they are hardened.

Special: The doppelganger may use Harden Hands to shape its fists to deal piercing damage in lieu of bludgeoning damage

Improved Intuition (Doppelganger)

The doppelganger is more likely to dodge blows.

Prerequisites: The ability to shapechange, Monk level 1+

Benefit: The doppelganger monk has honed its thought detecting abilities to improve its chances in combat. If the



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doppelganger can detect the thoughts of its opponent, it adds +1 to its armor class against that opponent. This ability only works if the doppelganger monk can add its wisdom bonus to its armor class.

Non-Humanoid Shape (Doppelganger)

The doppelganger may shapechange into a non-humanoid form.

Prerequisites: The ability to shapechange

Benefit: The doppelganger may assume the form of a non-humanoid object. The object must be small or medium-sized. The doppelganger must still breathe, which imposes a –4 penalty to its disguise check if the assumed form is that of a non-breathing nature such as a tree.

Special: A doppelganger with the Conjoined Twins mutation can assume the form of a medium or large-sized object, but not a small-sized object.

Nonlethal Strike (Doppelganger)

The doppelganger is able to deal nonlethal damage with its fists at no penalty.

Benefit: Through long experience and training, the doppelganger has learned the best places to strike to neutralise an opponent without killing him. The doppelganger is able to decide between normal or nonlethal damage with its slam attacks at no penalty.

THE INFILTRATOR

While the Order of Rulers trains many operatives in the arts of the assassin, it recognizes that killing is not always the best course of action. More often than not, a person may be kidnapped or simply subdued for a short time until an operative of the order is able to insure that the

interests of the council are assured. For this purpose, the order trains a highly specialised group of doppelgangers known as the infiltrators.

Sworn to uphold the will of the council, infiltrators are the perfect agents to use when it is better to leave a target alive instead of killing them. Trained in the arts of stealth and subterfuge, they are trained to sneak in, subdue the target if necessary, perform its job and sneak back out. Infiltrators have no qualms about killing to uphold the wishes of the council, but they focus on non-lethal forms of combat. They generally work alone, though a small team may be sent in to deal with a particularly complicated or delicate situation. Preferring stealth and surprise above all else, they generally attempt to subdue an opponent with a single unforeseen attack, removing them and their interference in a single quick and silent blow so that their main mission objective may be carried out.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

To become an infiltrator, a doppelganger must fulfill all of the following conditions:

Race: Doppelganger

Move Silently: 8 Ranks

Hide: 8 Ranks

Feats: Nonlethal Strike or Weapon Focus (any weapon that deals nonlethal damage)

Special: Must possess the ability to sneak attack. Only doppelgangers that are members of the Order of Rulers will be trained as infiltrators.

Class Skills

Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int, exclusive skill), Diplomacy (Cha),

The Infiltrator

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Knock Out
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	+1d6 Sneak Attack
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Silver Tongue
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	+2d6 Sneak Attack
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Camouflage

Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Pick Pocket (Dex), Read Lips (Int, exclusive skill), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), Use Magic Device (Cha, exclusive skill) and Use Rope (Dex)

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int Modifier

Class Features

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: An infiltrator’s weapon training focuses mainly on non-lethal weapons.

Infiltrators are proficient with the dagger, sap, sling, dart, shuriken and net. Infiltrators are not proficient with armour and shields.

Knock Out: Infiltrators are masters of catching a target off guard and using non-lethal force to subdue them. If the infiltrator studies its opponent for 3 rounds and then makes a successful sneak attack with a melee weapon that deals nonlethal damage (or its slam attacks, if it possesses the Nonlethal Strike feat), the sneak attack has the effect of immediately rendering the victim unconscious. Upon being damaged, the victim may make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + damage dealt) to remain conscious. While studying the victim, the infiltrator can undertake other actions so long as his attention stays focused on the target and the target does not detect the infiltrator or does not perceive it as an enemy.

Sneak Attack: Infiltrators are trained to watch for the vital and unprotected areas of their targets. The infiltrator deals extra damage when it catches a foe off his guard. This ability works exactly like the rogue class’s special ability. Extra sneak attack damage granted from the infiltrator class stacks with that granted by other classes.

Silver Tongue: Over time, an infiltrator’s social skills improve to the point where talking its way out of a dangerous or delicate situation becomes second nature. The infiltrator gains a +2 bonus to its Bluff and Diplomacy checks while shapechanged.

Camouflage: At fifth level, the infiltrator’s shapechanging skills are so fine-tuned that it is able to blend in flawlessly with its surroundings. The infiltrator gains the Non-Humanoid Form feat for free.

DOPPELGANGERS IN THE PARTY

Doppelgangers can be truly dangerous creatures if the machinations of their plans are ever interrupted. Most doppelgangers strive for a utopian lifestyle of decadence and ease and their plans almost always





reflect this. With their natural abilities at their disposal, most doppelgangers take the easy, but dangerous route of infiltrating a society and attempting to blend in as if it belonged. Rarely, however, a doppelganger will decide that the risk of adventuring for a few years is better than that of being discovered and executed as a spy, and may very well pay for its own private home and fund its easy legitimate lifestyle for decades to come.

Sometimes, when a character is unlucky or foolish enough to be separated from the group, he may be subdued or

even killed by a doppelganger. In an effort to join the party or to lure the remaining members into a trap, it will often take the form of the unfortunate adventurer and seek out the rest of the group. Should this occur, a Games Master may allow the player whose character was replaced to play the part of the doppelganger for a while. This usually involves taking the player aside to determine his character's fate, then offering him the choice of being the doppelganger or not. This is often times a fun surprise for the entire group when one player turns out to be the enemy.

Occasionally, the Games Master may want to have a bit of fun with his players and will introduce a doppelganger into the party in the beginning. Usually, this is accomplished by speaking with one of the players privately and allowing that player to secretly play a doppelganger. This can be a truly fun and memorable experience for the Games Master and the players alike, but there are a few questions that the player should take into account when creating the character.

- ❖ What is the doppelganger's motivation for adventuring? Is it seeking money and power to use as a springboard for a better life? Is it under orders from the Order of Rulers or other doppelganger society?

- ❖ Is the doppelganger a mutation? If so, how does it view other doppelgangers in general? On that same note, how does the doppelganger view other races?

The Games Master should carefully consider the impact of allowing a doppelganger player in his game. The natural abilities and bonuses of such a creature may prove to overshadow the other players and cause tension within the group.

SCENARIO HOOKS & IDEAS

A smart doppelganger is not going to face off against a party of experienced adventurers unless combat is the absolute last resort. Doppelgangers prefer deceiving their targeted opponents, drawing them into potentially deadly situations where they will be easy to finish off quickly and quietly. It is a foolish doppelganger indeed that does not keep a contingency plan for escape handy. Despite this, it's often easy for a Games Master to include a doppelganger as a villain, perhaps keeping it around as a reoccurring thorn in the sides of the party.

The following scenarios can be used by the Games Master to create interesting encounters with doppelgangers in his games. Some of these ideas are suitable for low-level parties, though some may not be. The Games Master is of course free to alter these ideas as he sees fit.

DANGEROUS INVESTIGATION

This scenario can be presented to the entire party or to a single party member who is a member of, or wishes to join the thieves' guild.

The party is approached by a member of the thieves' guild and asked to investigate their leader, who has been acting very strangely recently. The guild cannot openly investigate him, since that may start a power struggle within the ranks, so they need to hire investigators from outside the guild. They believe their leader is under some sort of compulsion spell, but the truth is far more surprising. The leader of the thieves' guild has been assassinated and replaced by a doppelganger. The trouble is that as soon as their investigation begins, the doppelganger assassin becomes quite aware of the party and will stop at nothing to eliminate the problem they present to it.

ASSASSINS

The party has become the victim of many assassination attempts. The assassins are always clever enough to get away and it seems that the same assassin never strikes twice. The attempts have not been overly dangerous to the party, but it seems that each time an assassin strikes, a different member of the party is specifically targeted. In reality, there is only one assassin and it's a doppelganger. It was hired by one of the party's many enemies and has been feeling the party out, looking for potential weaknesses before it decides to make its final strike.

BRING THEM BACK TO ME

This scenario may present an interesting moral dilemma to some party members.

A merchant begs the party to find and return his kidnapped wife and young son, promising them any amount of money and items from his shop for their safe return. He tells the party that everything was fine one day, but they were suddenly gone with no warning the next. That was two weeks ago and no ransom note has been sent to him. The only clue the merchant has is that someone in town saw his son heading south in the company of a strange man. If the party tracks the merchant's family down, they find more than they bargained for, as it becomes more and more apparent that they were not kidnapped, but left of their own free will. As it turns out, the merchant's wife and son are doppelgangers and the child has finally reached maturity. The parent doppelganger is taking the child away to protect it from being injured or killed by superstitious villagers.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

While traveling, the heroes encounter a barbarian war party. They claim to be hunting an evil spirit in the forest that has been responsible for the deaths of many members of their party over the past few days. The barbarian leader would greatly appreciate any help the heroes can give to them and promises them a reward for their assistance. Unbeknownst to both the heroes and





the barbarians, the evil spirit is really a doppelganger that makes its home in the woods. Two days ago, it killed and replaced one of the barbarians and has been amusing itself by watching the party fall victim to the many traps it has set throughout the forest.

ONLY SKIN DEEP

A rash of rather brutal murders has gripped the inhabitants of a small city with terror. The captain of the guards herself was found beaten to an unrecognizable pulp. The heroes are asked to help find whoever is responsible and

to bring them to justice. The only link among the victims is that they were all beautiful human females. Of course, the responsible party is a mutated doppelganger, deranged from birth. It desires to be the most beautiful person in the world and it chooses forms (and victims) based on this deranged idea.

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

This scenario can be used after the heroes have made a few enemies who want them out of the way, but don't have the resources to kill them. Someone who wants the party (or perhaps just one of them) out of the way for a while has hired a doppelganger to get the job done. The doppelganger has taken the form of one of the heroes and has rampaged through town, killing and destroying randomly. Of course, the local militia comes to arrest the hero for the crimes they believe he committed. If the heroes fight back, they are branded as criminals, but if they do nothing, one of their number will be arrested and executed as a murderer.

BRAINS!

A local spellcaster is trying to develop a spell that negates his need for sleep. After numerous failures, he has happened by an ancient tome that details the anatomy of the doppelganger. He has come to the conclusion that the brain of a doppelganger could be of great use to him in his research. The spellcaster hires the party find a doppelganger and slay it, being careful not to damage the brain in any way. He wants the head returned to him intact and still as fresh as possible. His divinations have revealed that a doppelganger currently resides in a nearby city, but he has been unable to determine whom the doppelganger is imitating.

HOME OF THE ORDER

The Order of Rulers established itself in a cavern system eight hundred years ago. Located near a mountain pass, the order has access to nations on both sides of the mountains and uses the road to their advantage. Keeping the location of their home a secret for many hundreds of years has developed a kind of rigid discipline in the order, which has served to increase the already fanatical view the doppelgangers have concerning the rightness of their actions.

The order has had operatives in place in many areas for centuries, which practically guarantees their secrecy and has the added benefit of making the acquisition of materials and goods quite easy. Every two months, a small caravan of doppelganger operatives brings needed goods and tools home to the community from wherever they are stationed at the time. The two closest nations are both so infested with doppelgangers that they are practically under the complete control of the Order of Rulers.

Operatives are assigned to nearby positions to make sure that no one journeys through the mountain pass by spreading rumors, advising other routes or simply killing those persistent enough to ignore the warnings, thus keeping unwanted travelers at a minimum. Generally, the order leaves most of the few travelers who do pass through alone, concerning themselves only with those who threaten or compromise their home.

NOTES

Doppelgangers function perfectly well with no light at all. As a result, the entire cavern is dark with no light source of any kind. Unless otherwise noted, the ceiling of the cavern is about ten feet above the floor.

With their shapechanging abilities, it may seem like it would be difficult for doppelgangers to determine who is and who is not a fellow doppelganger. This is not so much an issue as one might think, considering the doppelganger's ability to detect the thoughts of others and of each other. The Games Master may assume that doppelgangers will always be recognized and never mistaken for non-doppelgangers in this place, no matter what form they currently inhabit.

Doppelgangers also have little need for spoken communication. This aids them in that sounding the emergency alarm is done with the aid of their detect thoughts ability, which makes no noise. If a doppelganger escapes combat by retreating into the cavern depths, assume that it has sounded a general alarm.

Because of the doppelganger's desire for cushy life, most of the cavern chambers will be richly furnished and decorated. While some trappings and decorations have been mentioned in the description, the Games Master is free to add anything he feels will enhance the portrayal of the life of the doppelgangers.

TRAPS

The traps used in these caverns are very rudimentary due to the traditionalist values that the council holds. Aside from a few necessary alterations, the caverns have not been significantly altered since they were discovered centuries ago. The three traps located in the caverns of the Order of Rulers are listed below:

Deadfall Trap: When triggered, a group of large rocks tumble down from a break in the stone column, showering intruders with sharp stones and rock dust, potentially burying any in the trap's area of effect. This effectively blocks passage though the traps area of effect, which is a secondary design of the trap. It takes two or more people 2d10+2 minutes to dig through this rubble enough that a medium-sized creature could squeeze through. This trap may not be reset. CR 5; +10 melee (5d6/x2 critical); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 25).

Mold Killer Trap: A single clay pot contains a noxious poison, which the doppelgangers use to kill brown mold. Anyone foolish enough to ingest any of the substance must immediately make fortitude save (DC 14) or take 1d6 points of Con damage. One minute later, another save is required to avoid 2d6 secondary Con damage. CR ½; no attack roll necessary (ingested), 1d6 Con damage initial, 2d6 Con damage secondary; Search (DC 15); Disable Device (N/A)

Mold Trap: Brown mold covers the ceiling, wall and floor of the room, minus a pool of water in the center of the floor. When an opponent enters or is pushed into the room, a doppelganger throws a flask of alchemist's fire, thus doubling the size of the mold and activating the



trap. A switch outside the room causes a large steel plate door to slam downwards from the ceiling, blocking off the doorway. The door may be lifted with a successful strength check (DC 25).

Any living thing within the room takes 3d6 points of cold nonlethal damage each round. When the size of the mold increases, another 3d6 points of cold nonlethal damage are applied. Any living thing standing in the pool takes real damage instead of nonlethal. CR 2; no attack roll necessary, 3d6 cold nonlethal damage; Search (N/A); Disable Device (N/A)

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

1. Entrance and Guard Post (EL 8)

The entrance to this cavern appears to be a roughly horizontal fissure, about 5ft tall by 10ft wide, though the entrance has several large stones in front of it, making it difficult to see, even when one is close (Spot DC 25). The floor slopes sharply downward and levels out just before area 2. Two doppelganger guards (see reference list for stats) are posted outside at all times. A third guard is stationed in the large alcove just inside the cavern entrance. The guards keep a strict pattern during their shifts, which change out every twelve hours. In addition to the doppelganger guards, there is always a protector (see reference list for stats) present in the alcove as well. The protector spends its shift in the form of a stalagmite.

Tactics: One guard assumes the form of an orc while the other takes the form of a dwarf. If any non-doppelganger approaches or wanders too close to the cavern entrance, one guard alerts the third guard by tossing a painted stone down the sloping cavern entrance. The two guards outside take up arms against each other, appearing to fight, while the guard inside quietly moves to area 2 to raise a general alarm and finally moving to guard area 3. The guards will use their mock combat to draw their opponents closer, where they can take up flanking positions and quickly defeat any intruders.

Unless directly ordered to do otherwise by a council member, the protector will remain in the same form and position, even during a fight at the cavern entrance. Should intruders make it inside, it will wait until they head for area 2 and it will shapechange into a humanoid form and quietly follow them, attempting to flank them at the entrance to area 2.

Creatures: Three doppelganger soldiers and a protector.

2. Main Cavern (EL variable)

This area is used as a sort of gathering place for the doppelgangers during their day-to-day lives. The ceiling rises some thirty feet above the floor, which slopes downward almost imperceptibly toward area 6. There are several small formations on the floor and ceiling and a large ledge standing ten feet tall along the eastern wall, on top of which lies an obvious tunnel exit. A large switch is secured to the wall near the entrance to area 6. This switch activates a steel door, which is usually left open (see *mold trap* for more information). The switch may be disabled (DC 20), though the protectors immediately attack anyone who gets close enough to examine it.

The cavern is very well decorated, with tapestries hanging from the wall and ornate rugs covering the floor. If an alarm has not been sounded, 1d4+1 non-combatant doppelgangers (use the community member stats, see reference list) will be present in this area as well as three protectors, all inhabiting the form of a stalagmite.

Tactics: If the guard from area 1 arrives here, all but two of the non-combat doppelgangers make their way to area 3 to hide. Two doppelgangers run to sound the alarm, one heading to area 8 and the other heading to areas 4, 5, and 7. The lone protector guarding the northern entrance assumes a humanoid form, hoping to trap any intruders between itself and the protector from area 1. The two protectors in the southern part of the room remain in stalagmite form, hoping to catch intruders by surprise and bull rush them into area 6 (see area 6 for more information on their tactics).

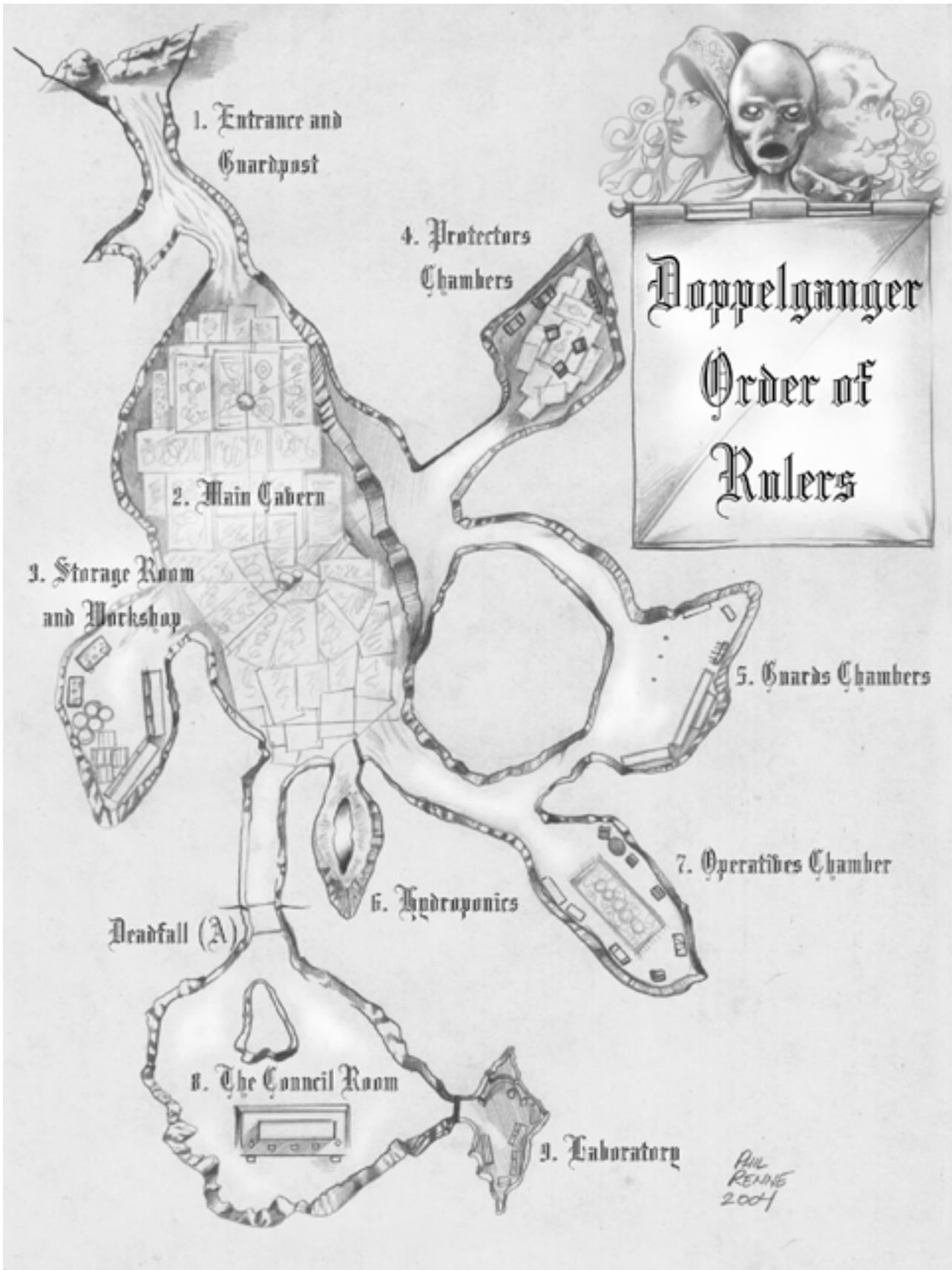
Four rounds after the alarm is sounded, the three protectors from area 4 appear on the ledge to pepper the intruders with arrows. One round after that, the three operatives from area 7 appear from the south entrance. They will attempt to distract the intruders while the occupants of area 5 head towards area 8.

Creatures: 1d4+1 community doppelgangers and three protectors.

Treasure: The tapestries and rugs that decorate this room are ancient and could be worth up to 1000gp to the right collector.

3: Storage (EL 6)

Area 3 is used as a storage area for the basic necessities of doppelganger life. It is also a small workshop, used by the community doppelgangers to craft everyday items



HOME OF THE ORDER

such as baskets, leather straps, etc. If an alarm has not been sounded, there are four community doppelgangers in this room, crafting minor everyday items. During an invasion, this is the area used by the community doppelgangers as a shelter and hiding place. When the alarm is sounded, all community doppelgangers attempt to make their way here.

Tactics: The guard from area 1 will try to make its way here to protect the community. It attacks any non-doppelganger that enters the room and will fight to the death, even if offered a chance to surrender. The community doppelgangers will aid the soldier in its fight, but will surrender if the soldier and more than half of their number are slain.

Treasure: The doppelgangers bring the raw materials needed to create basic items here. Multitudes of baskets, pots, jars, leather straps and the like can be found in here in addition to the raw materials needed to create them. One of the many clay pots is marked with a picture of a plant leaf on it. This pot contains the poison used to keep the brown mold in area 6 from expanding into inhabited area. See *mold killer trap* for more information.

Creatures: Four community doppelgangers.

Note: The base EL of this area is 6. Add ½ to the EL of this area for each of the community doppelgangers present. Do not include the guard.

4: Protector Chambers (EL 13 or 0)

This area is used as the chambers of the protectors. Weapon racks hold bows and swords and a large hutch holds clothing of almost every type. Fine rugs almost completely cover the floor and various paintings hang from the walls. Sturdy and ornate wooden chairs sit in the center of the room. At any given time, three protectors are spending their off time in this area.

Tactics: If the doppelgangers are encountered here, they will take up arms and defend their home. If they cannot flank the intruders, they attempt to force them from the room, hoping to push them back enough to bull rush them off the ledge in area 2. If an alarm has been sounded, the protectors grab bows from the weapon rack and rush to the ledge in area 2. They attempt to keep the intruders in the center of the room, specifically targeting any who head towards another area. If the fight goes badly from the doppelgangers in area 2, they attempt to force the intruders back into area 1.

Treasure: Six masterwork short bows, ten quivers of masterwork arrows and three masterwork short swords occupy a weapon rack. The clothing in the hutch is practically worthless, but the hutch itself and the matching chairs could fetch a nice price. The rugs and artwork on the walls would be worth up to 2000gp to an interested buyer.

Creatures: Three protectors.

5: Guards' Chambers (EL 17 or 0)

The doppelganger guards spend their off time here, though what little space isn't taken up by weapon racks is usually devoted to combat and stealth training space. This chamber doubles as a sort of training area where guards and operatives are instructed by protectors. Training goes on in shifts, which match the shifts of the guards. The council often has one of its members here as well; on the lookout for any doppelgangers that show magical promise enough to be trained in the ways of the council.

Tactics: If the intruders manage to reach this area without an alarm being sounded, there's a 50% chance of a lecture or demonstration going on, giving the intruders a surprise round. Otherwise, the doppelgangers are combat training and will easily notice a party of non-doppelganger intruders. If no alarm has been sounded, a protector and a guard will escort the council member to area 4 while the rest of the room's occupants grab up weapons from the many racks and defend their home. They fight to the death, seeing intruders make it this far into their home as an insult to their abilities. If pursued, the council member will fight back as best as it can, but if cornered, it will turn it's ceremonial dagger on itself before it will surrender.

If the alarm has been sounded, the entire group protects the council member and escorts it to area 8. Once there, they will stand as guards for the council. If the intruders directly attack the group along the way, the protectors will rush the council member to area 8 while the guards stay behind to keep the intruders from following.

Treasure: 1d12 greatswords, short swords, composite shortbows, composite longbows and short spears, 2d6+2 daggers and 3d6 quivers of arrows.

Creatures: 3 operatives (see reference list for stats), 2 protectors, three guards and one council member.

6: Hydroponics (EL 12)

This area is a large alcove, barely separated from area 2. Water from a nearby mountain spring drips very slowly from the ceiling into a pool in the center of the room. The ceiling, walls and floor are covered with brown mold, which the doppelgangers allow to remain because it keeps beneficial nutrients in the air.

The two protectors from area 2 that remained in stalagmite form have been trained to use this area as an ambush, should their cavern home be invaded. As soon as an invader moves close to the entrance of area 6, both protectors shapechange into humanoid form and attack. One protector attempts to bull rush the invader into the moldy room while the other throws a flask of alchemist's fire into the room, thus doubling the size of the mold instantly (see *mold trap* for more information). On the following round, one of the protectors throws the switch near the entrance, causing the steel door to slam shut and trap the invaders inside. The two protectors take up flanking positions around the entrance to area 6, hoping to easily dispatch any invaders that escape the mold.

Creatures: Brown mold

7: Operatives' Chamber (EL 12 or 0)

When not out on assignments, the operatives generally share this area as their personal chamber. The community has done a good job decorating this area to give the operatives a welcome feeling when they return from a long assignment. Cushy velvet-covered chairs and large, beautifully carved chests sit along the walls of the chamber while a single gigantic woven rug covers the larger part of the floor. Richly decorated tapestries depicting doppelgangers in positions of power hang from the high ceiling. At any given time, three operatives are relaxing in this room while waiting for reassignment.

Tactics: If caught unawares, the operatives suffer a surprise round as their attention is focused on relaxation. After the surprise round, the operatives will attempt to subdue the intruders with their fists. If the operatives are obviously outnumbered or outmatched by the intruders, they will use deadly force, hardening their hands or using whatever weapon they can find. They will attempt to make it to the chamber's entrance to sound the alarm and cut off the escape of the intruders.

Once the alarm is sounded, the operatives from this area make their way to area 2 to help defeat any intruders.

They will use deadly force, if necessary, but prefer to subdue their opponents so the council may question them. Either way, they attempt to surround the intruders and keep them in the center of the room so they cannot escape.

Treasure: The furniture and rug in this area could be worth a lot of money to a collector. The chests mainly contain clothing and perhaps a small nonlethal weapon. The clothing is of very fine quality and each chest produces a set worth 50gp.

Creatures: Three operatives.

8: The Council Room (EL variable)

The deepest area of the cavern is used as the council chambers. It is here that problems concerning the community are considered, major decisions are made and operatives are given their assignments. A large formation stands near the entrance of the room and formality dictates that non-council members enter the chamber from the west side of the formation and exit around the east side. A large, stage-like desk sits between the formation and the south wall. The desk supports five throne-sized chairs arranged in a semicircle facing the formation. Operatives being assigned, doppelgangers seeking operative status or outsiders being questioned before death are all considered here by the council.

In the case of an emergency or an invasion that has proved stronger than the protectors can handle, all doppelgangers are to make their way to this area, which is to be sealed off afterwards. Two guards are posted in this chamber at all times with orders to seal the entrance should invaders make their way here. A crack in the formation near the entrance has been rigged as a trap. When a sturdy rope (marked **A** on the map) is pulled, the crack will widen and cause the formation to come tumbling down, sealing off the entrance to the cavern (see *deadfall trap* for more information).

Tactics: The council members developed an escape plan centuries ago, but have never had to put it to use. After the trap is sprung, the council advisor Angiwar rushes to area 9 to retrieve a *wand of teleportation*. Each round, two doppelgangers are teleported to a maintained cavern some leagues away, beginning with the council members. Before teleporting out, Angiwar uses a scroll to cast *explosive runes* on the door to area 9, trusting that it will keep intruders out of the laboratory and another



scroll to cast *screen* on the three heavy chests secured to the council desk, knowing they are far too heavy to teleport. The council will send a pair of operatives back to the cavern 1d4 days later.

Treasure: The council desk is much too large and heavy to move by ordinary means. The real treasure is hidden inside the desk. The entirety of the community's currency is kept in three heavy chests, secured to the underside of the desk (Search DC 20). The treasure consists of 400 platinum coins, 1200 gold coins, a ruby amulet (700 gp), 6 emeralds (300 gp), a silver brooch (100 gp), a large diamond (500 gp) and a mithril ceremonial dagger (500 gp). There is also a 20% chance that the doppelgangers were in such a hurry to leave that they left the community record book on the desk. This book details the locations of operatives, the positions they hold and how long they have been there. It also contains a detailed record of all the treasure in the three chests (though it doesn't mention the location of the chests), listing the values of the non-currency items.

Creatures: Two guards, two council members, Angiwar and Saamar.

9: The Council Laboratory (EL 4 or 0)

Once used as a storage space, the doppelgangers converted this area into a workable laboratory for the study and creation of magical items. A sturdy wooden door (Hardness 5; 20 hp; break DC 25) blocks passage into this chamber. Eloquently carved letters spell out "Knock First" in common just above the internal lock (Open Lock DC 25). If the invaders didn't stop Angiwar beforehand, an *explosive runes* spell guards the door and the key is locked inside the laboratory.

Inside the chamber lies a complex, but well-ordered workshop. Shelves filled with books, bottles and other interesting items cover the walls and a large central worktable stands in the center of the room. Items of every description can be found within this room, from papers written by sages to a small system of bottles and glass tubes designed to make acid or alchemist's fire.

Treasure: The Games Master is free to include whatever magical items he wishes in this room. A large part of this room is dedicated to making potions, poisons, acid and alchemist's fire, so it is recommended that these items be a large part of whatever treasure is available here.

DOPPELGANGER REFERENCE LIST

The following doppelganger statistics are provided to give the Games Master a reference for various types of doppelgangers found in a social setting. It is highly recommended that Games Masters use these examples as a foundation stone for building doppelgangers and their societies within his game.

Doppelganger Council Leader

Medium-Size Humanoid (Shapechanger)

12th Level Adept

Hit Dice: 4d8+12d6+32 (92 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 14 (+4 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+12

Attack: Slam +12 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: Slam +12/+7 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Detect thoughts

Special Qualities: Alter self, immune to sleep and charm effects

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +17

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 21, Cha 14

Skills: Bluff +13, Craft (alchemy) +17, Disguise +13, Handle animal +15, Hide +0, Innuendo +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (nature) +16, Listen +14, Move silently +4, Sense motive +10, Spot +11

Feats: Alertness, Combat casting, Craft wondrous item, Great Fortitude, Leadership, Harden Hands

Challenge Rating: 14

Treasure: ornate dagger, platinum amulet (divine focus)

Alignment: Usually Neutral

Adept Spells Per Day: 3/5/4/3/1

Council Advisor

Medium-Size Humanoid (Shapechanger)

6th Level Adept / 2nd Level Sorcerer

Hit Dice: 4d8+6d6+2d4 (44 hp)

Initiative: +8
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 18 (+4 Dex, +4 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+8
Attack: Slam +8 melee (1d6+1)
Full Attack: Slam +8/+3 melee (1d6+1)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Detect thoughts
Special Qualities: Alter self, immune to sleep and charm effects
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +14
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14
Skills: Bluff +13, Craft (alchemy) +7, Craft (any) +7, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +15, Heal +5, Hide +4, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Listen +11, Move silently +4, Open lock +6, Perform +3, Scry +11, Sense motive +6, Spellcraft +8, Spot +8, Survival +3
Feats: Dodge, Alertness, Heighten spell, Improved initiative, Spell penetration
Challenge Rating: 10
Treasure: ornate dagger, platinum amulet (divine focus)
Alignment: Usually Neutral
Adept Spells Per Day: 3/3/2
Sorcerer Spells Known (6/5): 0th -- Dancing Lights, Detect Magic, Light, Mage Hand, Read Magic. 1st -- Identify, Magic Missile.

Council Member

Medium-Size Humanoid (Shapechanger)
7th Level Adept
Hit Dice: 4d8+7d6 (41 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+7
Attack: Slam +7 melee (d6+1)
Full Attack: Slam +7/+2 melee (d6+1)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Detect thoughts
Special Qualities: Alter Self, evasion, immune to sleep and charm effects
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +11
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14
Skills: Bluff +13, Climb +3, Concentration +7, Craft (Any) +13, Disguise +15, Handle animal +11, Hide +1, Intimidate +4, Listen +12, Move silently +1, Scry +9, Sense motive +7, Spellcraft +8, Spot +9

Feats: Dodge, Alertness, Improved initiative, Scribe scroll
Challenge Rating: 9
Treasure: ornate dagger, platinum amulet (divine focus)
Alignment: Usually Neutral
Adept Spells Per Day: 3/4/3

Doppelganger Protector

Medium-Size Humanoid (Shapechanger)
5th Level Rogue/ 1st Level Fighter / 2nd Level Assassin
Hit Dice: 4d8+7d6+1d10+12 (59 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+10
Attack: Slam +10 melee (1d6+1) or shortbow +12 ranged (1d6/x3)
Full Attack: Slam +10/+5 melee (1d6+1) or shortbow +12/+7 ranged (1d6/x3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Death attack, detect thoughts, poison use, sneak attack +4d6, spells
Special Qualities: Alter self, evasion, immune to sleep and charm effects, improved uncanny dodge, trapfinding, trap sense +1, +1 save bonus vs poison
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +14, Will +7
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 13
Skills: Disable Device +4, Disguise +10, Hide +9, Move silently +10, Open Lock +4, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language +2, Spot +5, Tumble +3, Survival +2
Feats: Dodge, Alertness, Favored Form (stalagmite), Non-Humanoid Shape, Harden Hands
Challenge Rating: 11
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually Neutral

Doppelganger Operative

Medium-Size Humanoid (Shapechanger)
5th Level Rogue/ 2nd Level Infiltrator
Hit Dice: 4d8+7d6+11 (53 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+9



DOPPELGANGER REFERENCE LIST

Attack: Sap +10 melee (1d6+1) or slam +9 melee (1d6+1)

Full Attack: Sap +10/+5 melee (1d6+1) or slam +9/+4 melee (1d6+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Detect thoughts, knock out, sneak attack +4d6

Special Qualities: Alter self, evasion, immune to sleep and charm effects, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +14, Will +7

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 13

Skills: Bluff +19, Disguise +10, Forgery +4, Hide +11, Move silently +11, Open Lock +6, Search +4, Tumble +6

Feats: Dodge, Alertness, Weapon Focus (sap), Nonlethal Strike

Challenge Rating: 10

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually Neutral

Doppelganger Guard

Medium-Size Humanoid (Shapechanger)

3rd Level Fighter

Hit Dice: 4d8+3d10+21 (55 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 13 (-1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+9

Attack: +1 *greatsword* +11 melee (2d6+4/19-20) or +1 *short sword* +11 melee (1d6+3/19-20) or mighty composite longbow +1 +6 ranged (1d8+1/x3)

Full Attack: +1 *greatsword* +11/+6 melee (2d6+4/19-20) or +1 *short sword* +11/+6 melee (1d6+3/19-20) or mighty composite longbow +1 +6/+1 ranged (1d8+2/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Detect thoughts

Special Qualities: Alter self, immune to sleep and charm effects

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +6

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 9, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills: Bluff +12, Disguise +12, Handle Animal +9, Hide -1, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +10, Move Silently -1, Open Lock +1, Perform +4, Sense Motive +5, Speak Language +2, Spot +7, Swim +8, Survival +3

Feats: Dodge, Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: +1 *greatsword*, +1 *shortsword*, mighty composite longbow +1, *invisibility potion*, silver whistle

Alignment: Usually Neutral

Community Doppelganger

Medium-Size Humanoid (Shapechanger)

Hit Dice: 4d8+4 (22 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+5

Attack: Slam +4 melee (1d6+1)

Full Attack: Slam +4 melee (1d6+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Detect thoughts

Special Qualities: Alter self, detect thoughts, immune to sleep and charm effects

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5 Will +6

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 13

Skills: Bluff +12, Disguise +12, Listen +11, Sense Motive +6, Spot +8

Feats: Dodge, Alertness

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually Neutral

DOPPELGANGER REFERENCE LIST

The voice of the crier sounded loudly and echoed among the high ceiling of the throne room. ‘Sir Alabard tu Willar, commander of the Knights of the Charge and general of the Eighth Legion!’

The tall man made his way down the long aisle in the audience hall, his travel-stained cloak trailing behind him. He was obviously tired from a long, hard ride, but his step never slowed or wavered. He bowed quickly and stiffly before the throne, not the bow of a noble or courtier, but the bow of a warrior. ‘My liege, I bring you news from the line. Our forces have routed the Uhrkan army and forced them to retreat back to their accursed home. All we need do now is advance our troops and we could easily crush them and take their capital.’

The king leaned forward, his crown slightly tilting. He appeared upset, even annoyed, though his voice remained calm. ‘Were you not ordered to hold your position in the Plains of Daligoth? Who ordered an advance?’

Sir Alabard looked perplexed. ‘My liege, the enemy was just over the hills. Their numbers were few. It was the perfect time to strike! They barely put up a fight before running away like whipped dogs.’

The king shot up from his throne, anger twisting his face. ‘I asked you a question!’ He paused a moment before sitting down. ‘Who ordered an advance,’ he asked again, his voice returning to the quiet calm once more.

Sir Alabard appeared for a moment as though he might burn a hole through his king with his eyes. He took a deep breath, an old soldier’s habit when trying to remain calm. ‘I ordered the advance, your Highness. I received no word from you for some days and assumed that any runner you may have sent had been captured or worse. The troops were ready and the advance was flawless. I did what I thought was right, you Highness.’

The king appeared to consider Sir Alabard’s words for a moment. After what seemed like an eternity of quiet, he finally spoke. ‘Guards, seize Sir Alabard. Remove his standard and his weapon and place him under guard in the east wing.’

Sir Alabard finally lost all hint of his composure. ‘What?! Your Highness, I don’t understand! I come to you victorious. We have defeated our enemy. What crime have I committed?’ His rage gone, he simply looked bewildered. Even the guards looked confused as they stepped up to take him into custody.

‘You have disobeyed a direct order, Sir Alabard. If I had wanted you to advance, I would have given that order. You are guilty of treason.’ He looked Sir Alabard up and down for a moment. ‘Take him away!’

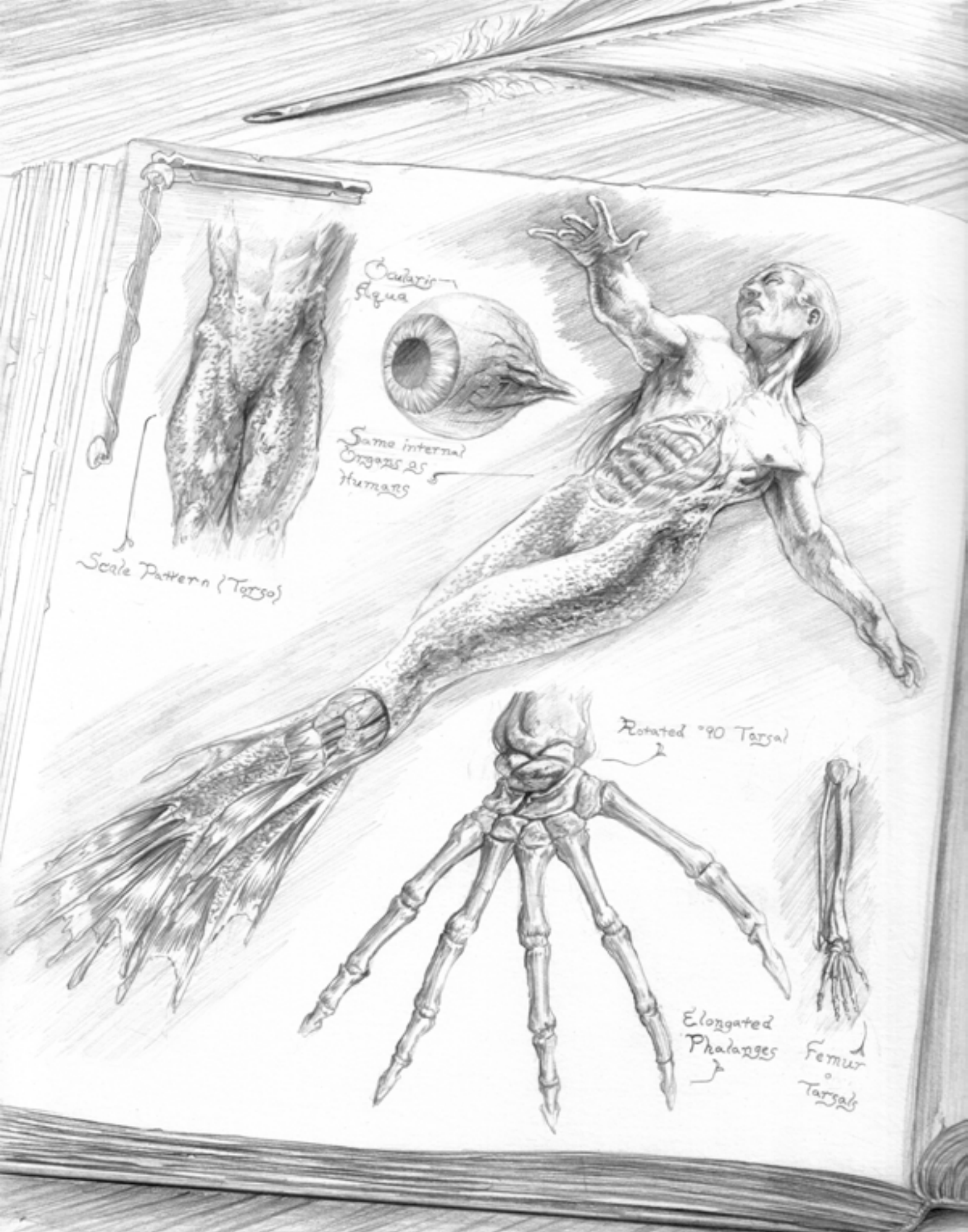
Halfway down the aisle, Sir Alabard paused. Without turning, he asked, ‘What happened to you, my liege? What happened to the man you used to be?’ He resumed walking and did not look back.

* * *

Later, in his private chambers, the king threw the heavy bolt to lock the door. With a contented sigh, his body began to thin and shrink a bit. The skin took on a gray color and all hair disappeared. Finally, the robes of office fell from the shoulders of the thing that was the king only seconds before.

‘Oh, how I hate wearing that body,’ thought Caagah as it removed the crown from its head. Still, it had its perks. That arrogant general had finally made a mistake. He would pay dearly for it, as well. He would be sent to Uhrka, where the other doppelganger, Zograh, had rule. Oh, how the two of them loved playing games with the humans.





Ocularis Aqua

Same internal Organs as Humans

Scale Pattern (Torso)

Rotated 90 Tarsal

Elongated Phalanges

Femur
Tarsals

The Slayer's Guide To Tritons

The races dwelling on dry land have known of them for centuries. Many a bathhouse mosaic depicts them, intertwined and beautiful in their weightless blue-green world. Their image has been wrought in silver filigree and embossed upon bronze shields. Marble statues of them take pride of place in manor house gardens; frozen in mid-leap they stand above sculpted waves, with fountains spouting from their lips. Sea-empires have taken them to be their standard. They adorn tankards, tin trays, inn signs and sailors' tattoos. Rare indeed is the port in whose dockside taverns no triton can be found.

Yet for all this surface patronage, they remain elusive. The people of the upper world are well versed in the myths of the tritons, for there is a great deal of myth to go around. Very few facts are known, which seems to be the way the tritons want it. Notwithstanding this desire for privacy, it is time the surface dwellers found out the salient facts about tritons, their ways, their culture and most importantly their purpose here. So, in this volume we will be parting their veil of myth and taking a look at the truth behind the fables.

Why should the Games Master trouble himself with tritons, other than as a plot device or a passing curiosity of the sea? Despite their good alignment, at first glance one would think them to be simply too alien, too secretive, to be worth the players' time. Evil players might conceivably choose to risk their lives raiding a triton palace for treasures, which are certainly there in plenitude, though there are many easier (and dryer) victims to assault.

As with so many things of the ocean, the truth is quite different to what first meets the eye. The tritons are key players in the politics of the sea, forming one of the only forces strong enough and determined enough to oppose the sahuagin. Those few surface dwellers that succeed in befriending the tritons will gain perhaps the greatest ally imaginable in all the seas.

Tritons have a fierce pride and noble heritage which stretches back over many generations, all the way back to their origins in stranger seas than those of this plane. Most startling of all, their purpose in being here at all is one for which the surface world is eternally indebted to them. Were it not for the tritons, there would be no line of defence against one specific brood of dreadful entity which, though dormant now in the ocean's deepest crevasses, will some day awaken and arise.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 games systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these will be the races all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who view them as little better than cannon fodder.

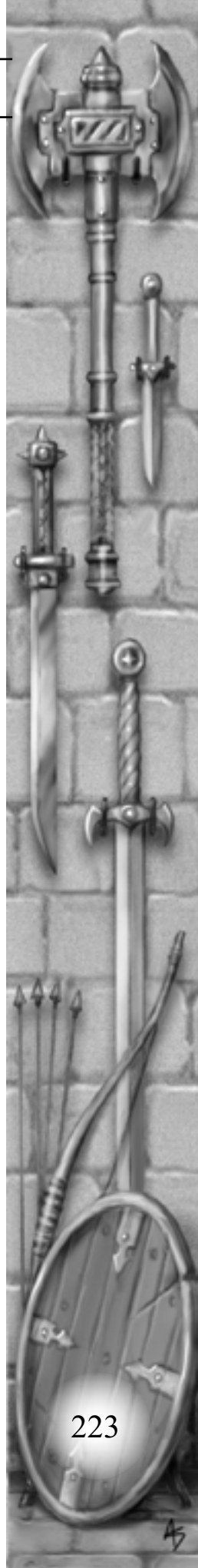


TRITONS: SENTINELS OF THE DEEP

Each *Slayer's Guide* focuses on a single race, in this case the triton. Even the best travelled of seafaring players will only be familiar with the common triton as detailed in *Core Rulebook III*. It is generally known that tritons are of good alignment, for which most players are grateful, but few know the extent to which this benevolence may be extended. The tritons are not merely kindly creatures under their haughty exterior; they are dedicated guardians who stand between the upper world and the vile beings of the lower depths. For this alone, they are worth consideration.

In this book we will not only examine the well-hidden life, social structure, customs and beliefs of the ordinary tritons but also take a look at the specialist members of their society, including the mysterious subspecies known as the seawarden. A lengthy section on triton warfare prepares the players for what they might encounter if they venture too close without invitation. This section also deals with the sea-beasts and elementals serving alongside the tritons as mounts and allies. Scenario suggestions are provided so that Games Masters can easily integrate the tritons and their settlements into an ongoing campaign. Finally, extensive details are given for the triton homestead of Karkulium, one of the oldest and most redoubtable of the tritons' strongholds, a haven for those who are welcomed within and a lethal challenge for any who would attempt to assault it.

This information is intended to assist the Games Master in portraying tritons as a complex and interesting race whose inclusion will add new dimensions of adventure and challenge to any campaign. Whether the players set out to win the tritons' trust or to pit themselves against them, they are in for a lot of surprises.



TRITONS INTRODUCTION

I have looked down the groove of a loaded crossbow more times than I can count. I have been stared at by empty eye-sockets while their owner tried to quarter me with a rusty greatsword. I have come damn close to being eaten alive by a vegetable. All of those moments came back to me just then and compared to what I was facing they seemed like pleasant summer afternoons.

The tritons had been polite, even when they were binding me with lengths of smelly green weed and I was swearing at them with the few phrases of Aquan I knew. Their clammy hands on my skin made me shudder. I had never been this close to something so alien, not even among the undead.

Now I was in front of the head honcho on his great coral throne. I tried to look righteously indignant but after several chilly hours in the water I was not a very impressive sight, with plankton in my hair and the gods knew what wriggling in my underclothes. In my head I was praying that the potion of water breathing I'd purchased from Noxid's House of Dweomers would last the distance.

'Little man, do you know the penalty for stealing from us?'

'I didn't steal from you,' I pointed out. Technically, it was true. (Okay, it was only true because they had caught me breaking in and never gave me half a chance to actually steal anything, but you have to try your luck.)

One blue eyebrow was raised; blue-black lips curled in a sneer. 'Do not pollute our home with your lies. You are not the first to seek out our riches. We are weary, so terribly weary of your sort. Oh, do not tremble so! It is beneath our dignity to slaughter the likes of you. Instead, we shall place you under the care of the best teacher we know. Perhaps you will go back to your world a reformed man. Brethren, give him over to the mercy of the sea.'

They closed upon me. I gulped. It was now or never.

'Set me adrift if you like, I understand, got to keep up the old customs, world would be a better place if more people respected tradition, bit old fashioned that way myself, you wouldn't think it to look at me I know, but you see the thing is if you do bung me on a raft and leave me to the mercy of the etcetera I won't be able to tell you any of the interesting things I know about Gugloth-Kra of the Long Throat. You know, horrid old thing, mostly bones and teeth, lives deep, deep down in the bottom of the sea...'

Instant pandemonium. It was as if I had let off a box of fireworks in a dryad grove. There were babbling voices everywhere. My friend on the coral throne was up and into the water, his expression half shock and half fury.

'... as some friends of mine found out when they ran into him a couple of months ago. Barely got away with their lives, they did. Good job they told me exactly where to find him, just so I could be certain to avoid the place in future. Very precise directions they left me. Very precise.'

There was a great stillness in that palace under the sea. After a long pause, the ruler motioned his people to settle down and gave me the oh-so-familiar curt nod that means 'okay, then, you smug little scab, we're going to play it your way.'

I allowed myself a tiny smile of victory. 'Perhaps you could ask that pretty lady to untie me, your royal wetness? Then perhaps we can come to some mutually beneficial arrangement.'

TRITON PHYSIOLOGY

There are many strange and wonderful creatures living in the seas. Even humanoids sharing characteristics of fish and man are not uncommon; several species do so. Even against such a diverse background, the tritons stand out as unearthly, for this is what they are. They are not creatures of the terrestrial sea but visitors from the Elemental Plane of Water.

This unearthliness is shown forth in their colouration, which only finds its likeness in the mundane seas upon exotic tropical fish. Unlike the merfolk, who can easily be mistaken for humans should one chance to see only their upper bodies, the tritons have shimmering silvery skin. In the young this gleams brightly, shining underwater like the surface of an air bubble. In older specimens it becomes dull and more like pewter. Beneath the waist, the body is covered with fine sequin-like scales. These are most commonly blue-silver, with the blue quotient deepening towards the base of the leg.

The hair of a triton is commonly a rich cobalt blue, with shades of turquoise sometimes appearing. The colour is most vivid underwater. When exposed to the air for any length of time, triton hair becomes dull and settles into a matted jelly-like tangle. Their eyes are bright blue throughout, both the cornea and the 'white', with wide, dark pupils. The eyes of extremely aged tritons become pearly, though this does not appear to interfere with their vision. Their blood seems black but is in fact deep indigo, like writing ink, as is readily apparent if it is shed in any quantity of water. This quality makes the inside of their mouths, their lips and their tongues appear blue-black; the internal tissues of their bodies appear the same, should they be wounded badly.

Tritons do not have gills. They breathe water through their mouths and noses, exactly as humans breathe air. Despite their aquatic nature, breathing air is not a problem for them. They find it unpleasant but preferable to outright suffocation. Tritons can survive out of a marine environment for limited periods, so long as they are regularly doused with water. Drying out is potentially fatal. A triton that has not had water upon 75% of his body in a given hour must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1 point of Constitution damage. He need not be immersed completely. A bucketful applied by an understanding friend or water elemental is enough to do the job.

The tritons' bifurcated lower bodies, organized as they are into two powerful finned legs rather than a single fishy tail, make them agile underwater and capable of sitting astride a mount. No other marine species than the tritons appears to have thought to ride upon another creature. Practicality is probably the primary motive, as tritons are slow swimmers when compared to their fellow sentient sea-dwellers, lacking the powerful tails of the merfolk or the webbed digits of the sahuagin. Without a reliable method of getting away quickly, they would not last long. The most popular mount is the porpoise, which is dependable, friendly and swift.

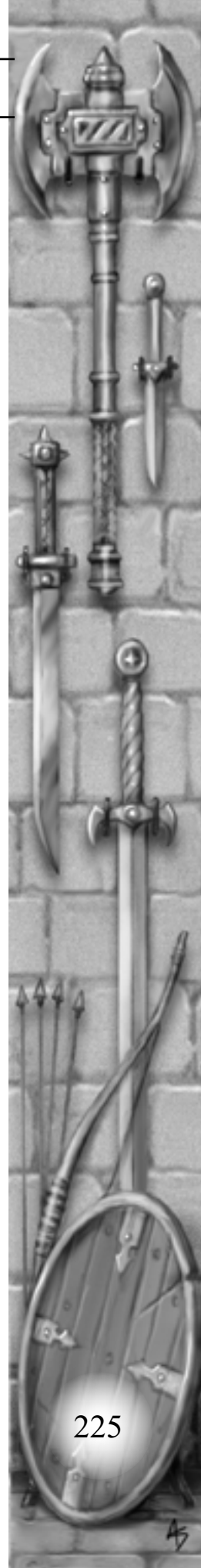
Tritons swim by kicking their legs rapidly like newts, keeping their arms close to their sides to cut down on water resistance. This makes them easy to identify when seen far off, since a member of the merfolk family or an ordinary fish the size of a triton will undulate its whole body, using its tail for propulsion, whereas the sahuagin use their webbed hands and feet to 'crawl' rapidly through the water.

The tritons' legs are next to useless for walking on land. The flipper-like appendages they have instead of feet are jointed to move back and forth like little fishtails. Having no flat soles on which to stand, they can only flop, crawl and slither. Their movement on land thus drops to five feet per round. Tritons who have an urgent need to visit dry land will almost always call upon the assistance of water elementals; see Chapter 4, Triton Society.

The triton reproductive cycle is piscine. Female tritons lay globular jelly-covered eggs in clutches of one to three and the males fertilise them with milt. They hatch in six months. Hatchlings grow to maturity in seven to eight years; a nine-year-old triton resembles a young man of sixteen in his human parts. The reason for this relatively swift development is unknown but is believed to be an evolutionary response to the many dangers of the tritons' environment.

Some eggs do not develop into common tritons but into a rare mutant subspecies called seawardens. These are only distinguishable from ordinary tritons by the flecks of gold in their eyes. The dwellers on the surface (who assume all tritons are alike) have completely failed to notice this subspecies. Full details of seawardens are given in Chapter 4, Triton Society.

Tritons' fertility is dependent upon the size and stability of the community. Where a group of tritons has been settled and stable for some years without loss of population, the females will not lay eggs. Where the





population has shrunk significantly because of war or disease, or females outnumber males by two to one or more, the females will begin to lay eggs again.

Their staple diet consists of fish, which are speared or shot wherever the hunters can find them. This is supplemented by shellfish (mostly oysters, crab and lobster) and strips of edible kelp, gathered into satchels of woven wrack and brought home to the settlement. Though they are surrounded by sources of food on all sides, Tritons never take any more than they need, nor do they store up reserves against times of want. They are gravely offended should any surface dweller squander the resources of the sea in their presence.

*Never leave a meal half eaten,
Never leave a task half done,
Never leave a foe half beaten,
Never leave a war half won.*

From *Sayings of the Triton People* by Zemeul Falkenstein

ORIGINS OF THE TRITON RACE

To understand the tritons properly, one must appreciate one aspect of their lives above all others. Unlike other humanoids of the sea, such as the merfolk, the locathahs or even the loathsome sahuagin, they do not belong here. Tritons are Outsiders, strangers to the Prime Material Plane who were compelled to come here many thousands of years ago for reasons upon which many have speculated and few have ever come to learn. Their true home, for which they yearn and which they will never forget, is the Elemental Plane of Water.

The tale of the triton exodus is one of great bravery and sacrifice. Deep in the distant past, corruption began to fester in certain dark and deep caverns upon the aquatic plane. Curious malformed creatures grew there with evil in their souls, resembling skeletal hybrids of anglerfish and human and possessing innate magical powers to dominate and destroy. Their bodies were immensely strong, capable of withstanding many tons of water pressure even in their earliest stages of life. Whether some demonic force seeded them there or whether they emerged spontaneously from the rot and filth is unknown. The common opinion amongst those who know credits their origin to a lich mage, in life a lord of the sea, who wished to breed an army in a place where it would not be detected.

At first embryonic and weak, the Devouring Ones fed ravenously upon the hapless sea-creatures who came too close to their lair. Later, when they were larger and stronger, they found other sources of food. When discovered, they were found to have been devouring one another and growing stronger from their cannibalism. By this point, they were a serious threat to the equilibrium of the aquatic plane.

Such a demonic presence could not, and would not, be tolerated by those denizens of the plane who tended towards good alignment. These banded together as best they could and took up arms against the growing horrors. Their heroism met with indifference from their neighbours. Many of the plane's inhabitants were too old, too stupid, too playful or simply too neutral to care and would not be persuaded to take action.

In dim archive chambers on the Elemental Plane of Water, tablets of translucent coral engraved with Aquan runes record the war against the Devouring Ones. Overhead, enormous frescoes show scenes of desperate battle. Races now extinct are shown, pitting their numbers against titanic gnarled figures who smash and devour them like so many minnows. The destruction of one giant forms the centrepiece, an occasion of triumph; leading the charge which fells him are the triton warriors, mounted upon glimmering beasts like finned horses. The valour of the tritons in that hour is their lasting pride and the shame of the other races that stood by and did nothing.

The Devouring Ones were defeated at great cost. Thousands of Aquan lives had been obliterated. Worse still, even in the hour of triumph a band of triton scouts discovered a set of interplanar gateways, still standing open. Some of the lesser Devouring Ones, the spawn not yet grown to full strength, had escaped. Hasty research



revealed they had fled to other oceans upon the Prime Material Plane, there to hide themselves in the deepest places they could find. Once there, they had only to feed, grow and wait, with all the patience of evil. In time, they would be strong enough to make the journey to the surface world, where new feasts of flesh would await them.

With great sadness, the Merefather of the tritons turned to his people. Their duty, he said, was clear. Any who wished to remain on the Aquan plane might do so, with no loss of honour; any who wished to finish the war which had cost the lives of so many of their sisters and brothers might follow him to the alien world beyond the gate, there to stand guard against the second rising of the Devouring Ones.

In this way the triton race first came to dwell in the seas we know.

THE TRITON SPIRIT

Although they are reverential and deferential towards the host oceans in which they now live, nothing else on the Prime Material Plane is likely to receive similar treatment from the tritons. They retain a fierce pride and with it a well nigh unbreakable warrior spirit. This derives from their status as Outsiders. They know themselves to be creatures not simply of the water but of the planar *essence* of water. They are not mere dwellers in the sea like the sahuagin, nor crude water elementals with only the most vague smattering of independent thought. They are pure, intelligent and articulate Aquan beings, standing in relation to the murky seas around

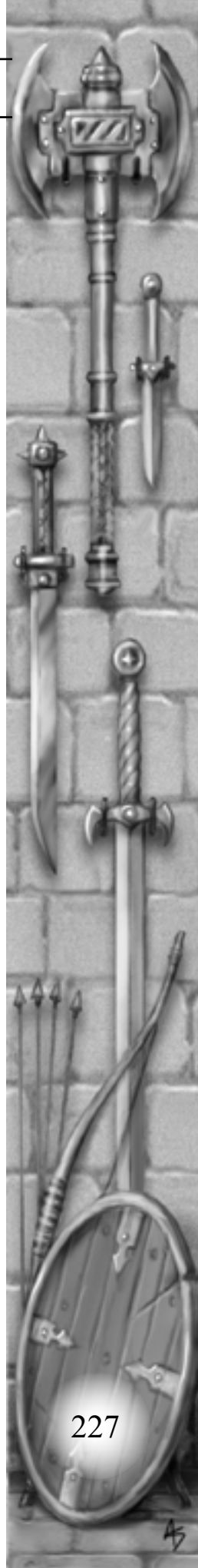
them like refined spirits who have voluntarily descended into a realm of base matter.

This pride flows strongly through the veins of the younger tritons, keen to prove themselves in battle. It radiates from those ancient pale-eyed veterans who were there when the Devouring Ones were driven from the Aquan plane and who are still living now. With this pride comes a sense of duty, redeeming it from becoming arrogance. Since they are more highly born than their fellow creatures (they say amongst themselves) they have an obligation to protect them, even if they seem ignorant and undeserving.

This dogged pride is what drives the tritons on even against overpowering odds. Any triton that admits defeat too easily has desecrated the legacy brought from the home plane by his forefathers. They may retreat from a battle waged in the open sea, seeing no dishonour in wise tactics, but once they are fighting on their own ground to defend home or family or any other thing under their sworn protection, they absolutely will not give in. In particular, the site of any of the sentinel fortresses constructed to watch for a particular Devouring One will be defended with the utmost savagery. More than just triton lives depend on those fortresses.

Their pride can also be an active hindrance for them. It does not come naturally to a triton to ask for help from anyone but another triton. Tritons are supposed to set an example to the lesser races, not to go crying to them when difficulties arise. Their stubbornness is such that if a triton is faced with a task he cannot accomplish without asking the help of a surface dweller, he is likely to attempt it anyway and perish gloriously rather than demean himself. It is possible, though difficult, to explain to a triton that there is no loss of face involved in enlisting aid. Those who attempt this had better have great reserves of patience.

Tritons have a well-known appreciation for beauty. They feel themselves privileged to be living in a realm so full of exquisite life. A triton can sit for hours examining the mathematical convolutions of a nautilus shell or the sheen of a fragment of coral. They are especially fascinated by the 'sea change' which is worked upon



TRITON PHYSIOLOGY

surface objects fallen into the deep. The skeleton of a sailor will be left undisturbed so that interesting encrustations can grow upon his bones; the hulk of a wrecked ship will be goggled at for weeks as the hard

planks turn soft, mossy and green; the rusting away of an anchor in clouds of red oxide is a thing to wonder at. The tritons tend to think that the things of the surface are aesthetically improved by the sea's alchemy.

Galt watched the porthole warily as if he expected it to burst inwards and flood the submersible the moment he took his eyes off it. I could hardly blame him; it was making an ominous ticking noise. The barbarian, usually so active, was sitting very still.

Craggit, to my annoyance, was not. He had left his seat again and was fuming up and down on his little legs. 'Damn you, Jackary, I cannot believe you're entrusting our lives to something built by Nobdire Tinkerbink!' he hissed. 'I told you often enough, you do not purchase an experimental contraption from a gnome who spends half his workshop time making artificial limbs and the other half creating a market for them! What was wrong with that Apparatus of Kwalish we saw at Caspar's, eh? That was class!'

'Well, thanks to a certain dwarf fracturing the jewel he was meant to be extracting, we were short by about sixty thousand,' said Cara acidly from her co-pilot's seat to my left. I gave the half-elf a warning look and she softened her tone. 'Besides, it works by magic. We'd never have gotten Galt into it. You know he is about wizard's things. This is mechanical. No devilry involved.'

Out of pure malice, I shifted us up a gear and the submersible lurched forwards, pitching Craggit right on to his fat griping arse as I had hoped. There was still not much to be seen outside but swirling sediment, foggy green water and the occasional rock. Pondering this, I remembered what Tinkerbink had told me about undersea visibility. At my order, Cara doused the interior lights and I brightened the exteriors. I heard gasps behind me. A gloved hand gripped my shoulder.

Suddenly we had shifted into a place of rippling shadows and cathedral light. The ocean floor loomed before and beneath us like the surface of some half-formed planet, the world into which everything else fell and was forgotten. It was utterly silent. A cloud of brilliant slivers darted across the path of our lights and shot away as one.

'Fish!' said Galt delightedly, pressing his nose against the glass.

'Okay, everyone,' I said, 'keep your eyes peeled. Shout if you see anything that reminds you of a habitation - doors, windows, anything. We know these critters are down here somewhere.' I brought the submersible down until we were nearly scraping sand. Everyone clambered into the tiny cockpit, silhouetted against the window as the huge shapes of the ocean bed slowly emerged and crawled by.

Cara craned forward. 'Does that bulge look artificial to you?' There were mutters and musings and we agreed that it was probably just an odd-shaped rock. After a couple of uneventful minutes, Craggit eagerly pointed out something domelike which on closer examination turned out to be a sunken coracle, though Galt would not be persuaded that it was not the skull of a sea-monster. Damn it, the tritons and their wealth had to be down here. I knew they were here, somewhere. Laughing at us.

As we rounded a vast outcrop of coral I took a second glance at it, saw oddly regular depressions in the surface and clapped my hands together. Clever, I thought, very clever. Burrow in the coral beds where nobody will see you and cover the openings with weeds.

'I think this is it, folks,' I grinned. 'I've got the old Jackary tingle in my palms again. Just look at that. Take a *close* look. It's easy to miss.'

'I don't think there are any tritons in that rock, boss,' whispered Cara.

'And why in hell not?'

'Because, to be totally frank, I think they're more likely to be living just across from it in that bloody great castle.'

HABITAT

Tritons are stoic, adaptable creatures. They do not expect the world around them to be shaped according to their likes and dislikes. Like all races, they have favourite surroundings but will choose their homes according to expedience and tactical necessity rather than a wish for comfort.

A triton's idea of the ideal place to live is a coastal shelf in an equatorial region. They prefer the waters around their homes to be clear, warm and not too deep. Coral reefs are especially prized, both for their beauty and for their use as a ready repository of building materials. A triton seawarden (see Chapter 4, Triton Society) has the innate ability to mould large quantities of coral into forms both strong and intricate. It is essential for the settlement to be close to places where porpoises and similar sea creatures are known to roam.

The largest and most heavily fortified settlements of tritons are found on the brink of steep chasms into whose depths the Devouring Ones vanished centuries ago. These were the first settlements to be founded. Since then the tritons have expanded across the oceans and smaller, less military colonies now exist in all but the iciest of waters. Tritons prefer to stay within five miles of the coast, as further distances mean deeper and colder water. Since the sahuagin share this preference, conflict is inevitable.

Of the two races, the tritons are more able to tolerate cold water. This has given them a strategic advantage over their sahuagin rivals. In regions where sahuagin and triton are both found, the former will inevitably entrench in the shallower and warmer parts of the sea while the latter will fortify themselves in waters which are colder or deeper or both. The mounted tritons are thus able to stage hard and fast strikes and retreat to shelters in chill waters where sahuagin pursuit would be uncomfortable, though not impossible.

A triton can live as happily in fresh water as in salt and triton castles are occasionally glimpsed at the bottom of deep lakes. Such settlements tend to be free from the intermittent warfare of the sea and because of this are used as places of refuge, healing or contemplation. It is only the tritons' wish to avoid surface dwellers that keeps more inland waters from becoming populated. Lakes frequently mean settlers and settlers mean fishing nets.

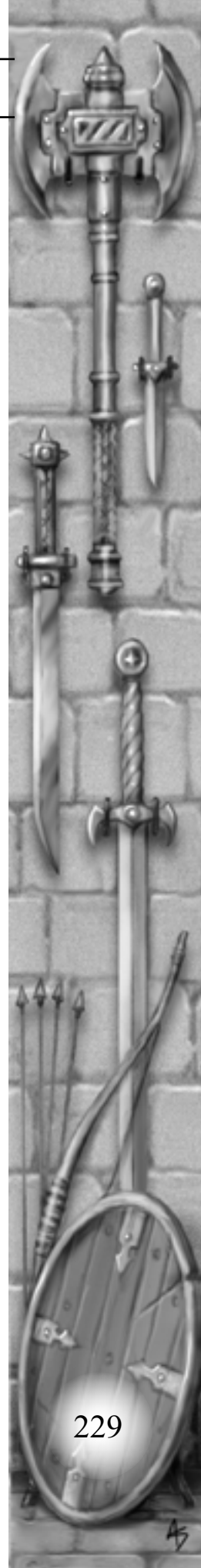
The tritons are able to survive in the deeper levels of the ocean for limited amounts of time but will never make permanent settlements there. Their most usual motive for heading into the lower depths is to find out whether a given Devouring One has shown any signs of stirring. For safety, they dive down in patrols of six to eleven, swimming as far down as they can. Even the most robust triton cannot penetrate deeper than two thousand feet as the water pressure would begin to crush them. The Devouring Ones sleep far beneath the diving range of any triton. Only extraordinarily tough or colossal sized creatures, like the kraken or the leviathan, can survive the pressure at such depths. (See *Seas of Blood* for rules governing depth of dive.) Fortunately for the tritons, it is not necessary to dive that far to conduct reconnaissance. The first sign that a Devouring One is stirring is an unmistakable stench rising through the waters and it is this that the triton patrols seek to detect.

Tritons do not usually travel outside their territory and rarely come within half a mile of dry land. They will come up to the surface if nobody is watching, to scan the horizon for signs of hostile activity or simply to appreciate the beauty of the moon and stars.

TRITON STRUCTURES

Whatever the size of a given community, it will always be based around one central structure or cavern complex, referred to as the 'homestead'. The area surrounding the homestead is considered to be the community's 'territory'. When a homestead is based more than twenty miles from the coast, the territory's limit is twenty miles across, for an offshore homestead it is five miles across and for a homestead based at the bottom of an inland lake it is one mile across.

Tritons do not believe in multiple dwellings; one homestead serves all. When a new community is founded, all members work tirelessly day and night until the homestead is complete. If the community is based upon or near a coral reef or is out in the open seabed the structure will usually be a freestanding edifice resembling a small castle keep. A seawarden is a great help at the founding stage, as he can use his Mould Coral ability to raise the main walls, smooth off the floor and shape simple defences. For this reason, groups of tritons setting off to form a new community will always be accompanied by a seawarden who will return to his own community once the homestead is built. The tritons try to leave as much of the surrounding seabed undisturbed as possible, which results in the castle standing out incongruously against its background. Such a fortress makes up in robustness for what it loses in secrecy.





If the tritons are occupying a set of sea-caves, their first priority is to build a pair of hidden watch-posts and some strong front gates so that the complex can be sealed against intruders. The whole frontal area is then covered with seaweed and detritus. This kind of homestead is easy to miss if you are not looking for it. A successful Spot check (DC 20) is required to notice the main entrance.

Although the first stages of a triton community base often look quite crude, this semblance does not last. When tritons are not actively waging war nor hunting for food they have many hours of free time on their hands. They occupy themselves by making their homes as beautiful as they can. Within so short a time as a month, a lumpy shelter thrown together from rock and loose coral can be transformed into a stylised ocean citadel. Unremarkable cave walls become sweeping works of art in stone, like the vaulted ribcages of leviathans. Triton art is a curious mix of the abstract and the figurative, with mathematical patterns forming many decorative borders (spirals are favoured) and central panels in classic melodramatic style depicting legendary tritons engaged in heroic deeds.

If their caverns are striking to view, the interiors of their castles are awe-inspiring. A visitor from the surface would at first be confronted by greenish-black murk; there is very little light, since the tritons possess darkvision and do not need it. Once a light source is brought to bear, the colours of the coral walls glow from all sides. Stained-glass windows prove to be thin panes of polished shell. Spires of twisted and translucent rock hang like chandeliers from the ceiling. Globes of bubble-filled blue crystal on silvery chains swim lazily around their moorings. Spiral staircases twine upwards into the dim foggy galleries above. The central hall of a triton castle will always contain several richly decorated statues commemorating the homestead's original founders, worth thousands of gold pieces intact and substantially less if broken down for scrap.

Castle-based communities whose numbers increase beyond the capacity of their homestead, a common occurrence, will simply build more wings and levels on to the structure until there is room for everyone once again. This practice results in an encrusted, fairytale look to their castle homes, with turrets growing from turrets and multiple towers rising up out of sight. Cavern-based communities are more likely to hive off, sending a select group of families out to found a new settlement of their own. Caverns are much more limiting than castles as the tritons are not willing to tunnel into the rock and make more space. They are expert at carving, as the walls of their homes testify, but they do not much care for mining.

TRITONS AS NEIGHBOURS

In the selection of a new home or the expansion of an existing one, the interests of surface dwellers are not given a second thought. Tritons' avoidance of contact with surface people wherever possible does not mean they are willing to move aside quietly should there be a conflict of interest. If a triton seawarden decides to raise an observation tower from the sea bed, with the result that your ship's hull is holed below the waterline in a collision with an undersea tower top which was not there yesterday, there is not much point in protesting that your rapidly sinking ship has been following this shipping route for the last ten years. As far as the triton is concerned, it is your fault and he is likely to ask you to go away before you cause any more damage.

The marine world is a different matter. Tritons live in close harmony with the sea creatures around them. They have a particular affinity with porpoises, who were their

first true friends upon this plane and who comforted them with clowning tricks when they felt longings for the home they left behind. The sight of a single triton mounted on the back of a porpoise is a breathtaking one; to see fifty of them so mounted, powering through the water in a cavalry charge, is terrifying.

Any threat to the territory's natural balance is interpreted as a threat to the tritons themselves. As far as they are concerned, they are not the owners but the stewards of their territory. For a presence to be considered a threat, it must be an intelligent force (or the instrument of one) and intend significant harm to the creatures in the region. A blue whale, moving through the area in search of food, is not a threat. A shark acting under its own initiative is not a threat either and is considered a blameless part of nature, though it will be driven off should it come too close to any members of the community's stable. (A shark under the control of sahuagin counts as the instrument of an intelligent force and therefore is a threat.) Even a fishing vessel is not considered a threat, so long as it does not take too many of the region's resources, because it does not pose significant harm. A whaling

ship, by contrast, is a threat, because there can never be more than a few whales in a territory and to slaughter even one counts as 'significant harm'. A group of pirates intent on plundering Triton treasure, a kraken or a hostile sea giant would all constitute definite threats.

In a different class from the invaders who threaten the tritons are the intruders who irritate them. Persistent and inconsiderate fishing in their area is guaranteed to annoy them. Their standard response is to take hold of the nets or lines and use them to drag the offending boat back to shore. Sometimes they will emphasise the point by rocking the boat roughly back and forth, which usually scares the life out of the fishermen. If this does not suffice, they may sever the nets completely and leave them neatly folded on the shore where they will be discovered at first light. The final measure is to have a band of triton warriors mounted on porpoises surface around the vessel and escort it back to the shore. If even this measure meets with resistance, the tritons will smash holes in the vessel's underside to sink it and assist its crew to swim to safety.

Stables

Any community of tritons will automatically have an ongoing relationship of mutual trust with a nearby school of sea creatures, referred to as that community's 'stable'. The members of the stable will willingly serve as mounts, scouts and sources of information. In return, the tritons will immediately come to their assistance if danger threatens. Without their help, the tritons would find it far harder to survive.

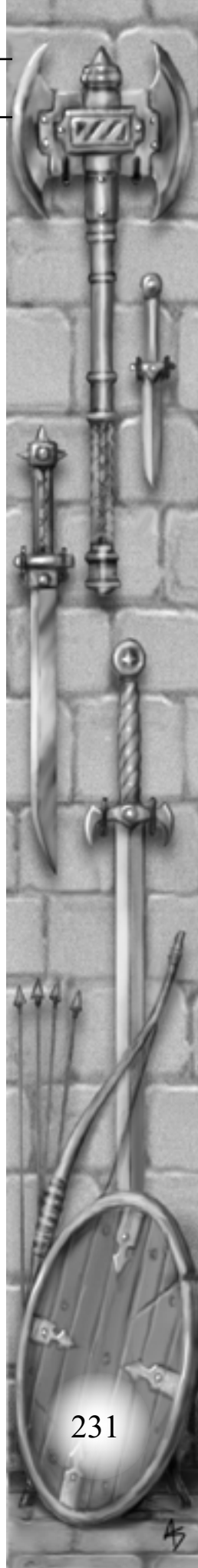
The stable is not housed within the homestead. Its members are allowed to roam free or, in the case of lair-dwelling creatures like sea cats, to make lairs of their own nearby. Mounts are not assigned to individual triton citizens, though sometimes a mount and its rider will spontaneously 'bond' and the mount will no longer allow any other Triton to ride.

Tritons with the vocation of Light Cavalry or Heavy Cavalry (see chapter 4, Triton Society) will always have bonded mounts, which need not be members of the stable. For example, a triton of the Heavy Cavalry will ride a sea cats even if his community's stable is entirely composed of sea turtles. Should a bonded mount die from natural or unnatural causes, its rider will be wracked with grief and suffer a -2 penalty to all skill and ability checks for 1d4 weeks. No new mount may be sought until the grieving period has ended.

A community will always give names to the members of its stable, often using a bombastic composite style combining two ideas; typical names are thus Surfspear, Coralback, Deathgripper, Swiftglider, Mereblade and Arrowfin.

The stable is only ever made up of one type of creature. The Games Master may choose as appropriate for the region or determine this randomly by rolling D100. (Owing to ancient enmities, sharks are never used as mounts nor may they ever form a triton stable.)

1-65%	2-20 porpoises (see <i>Core Rulebook III</i>)
66-80%	2-4 sea turtles (see Chapter 9, Triton Reference Sheet)
80-90%	2-12 giant crabs (see Chapter 9, Triton Reference Sheet)
90%-95%	5-12 sea cats (see <i>Core Rulebook III</i>)
96-100%	6-11 orca whales (see <i>Core Rulebook III</i>)



TRITON SOCIETY

Tritons are not lawful creatures in that they do not hold to an abstract code of laws. Their conduct is regulated by their extraordinarily strong idea of their own identity and manifest destiny upon the Prime Material Plane. Their loyalty to one another, their pride, their reverence for the world around them and their determination to protect it are the cornerstones of their society. Beyond these absolutes, their lives are organised by custom born of many long hard years of subsistence-level survival interspersed by frequent battle.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The bulk of the triton population, though diligent in carrying out their duty to the community, do not have any distinctive social function. Referred to as 'citizens', their role consists of elementary social maintenance as detailed below. A typical triton citizen will resemble in all respects the example triton in *Core Rulebook III*. Citizens are, by default, combatants. In accordance with the tritons' habit of wariness and readiness to defend



The Role of Water Elementals

The tritons' innate ability to use *summon nature's ally IV* once per day (see *Core Rulebook III*) gives them ready access to the help of small water elementals. These are seen as loyal friends and kinsmen, not as servants. Though they are summoned creatures and their presence on the Prime Material Plane is transient, while they are there they are allies of the tritons in every respect. They will fight for them and alongside them, massing together to slam into opponents in battle or to slow invading ships. (See Chapter 5 for the ways in which elemental and triton combatants complement each other.) The other occasion on which they will always be summoned *en masse* is the building of a new homestead, when their strength and mobility are especially useful.

their homesteads, all tritons are required to fight. There is no such thing as a non-combatant citizen.

Tritons fresh from the egg are called 'hatchlings' until they are one year old. From that point until they reach adulthood at the age of nine they are called 'broodlings'.

Perhaps surprisingly for a race so concerned with history, the tritons do not trouble themselves keeping track of parentage. (Given the males' habit of fertilising the eggs collectively, it would be next to impossible to achieve this.) They have a strongly communal society in which the duties of childrearing are shared out equally among all members. Their identity as occupants of a given homestead is much more important to them than their genetic heritage. They see their continued guardianship of their homes as an ongoing military victory, a holding of the line against evil.

The concept of the homestead is a curious amalgam of ancestral home, sacred ground, military regiment and close family. When making a formal introduction, a triton will always give the name of his homestead; 'I am Alocanth of Sisqualon and I extend the hand of greeting to you.'

SPECIALISTS

If a community is to survive, it cannot remain homogenous. It must eventually produce members whose talents are focused on one aspect of life. Accordingly, some tritons' age, field experience or capacity for swift learning distinguishes them from the general populace and they take on a specialised role in the community, referred to as a vocation. This is not the

same thing as a character class, as ordinary tritons very rarely take character classes. The vocations are Scout, Cavalry, Heavy Cavalry, Mounted Archer, Peacebringer and Weaponwright.

In game terms, a triton with a vocation is one who has progressed in hit dice and gained additional skills, feats and other modifications to the basic template. See Chapter 9, Triton Reference Sheet, for examples. The vocations given are typical, representing the recognised social roles taken on by tritons through the centuries. The Games Master is of course free to modify skills and feats as appropriate when creating individual triton characters.

Triton specialists are less common than ordinary citizens. See the sidebar for a breakdown of triton population by vocation.

SCOUT

Scouts pride themselves on their speed, evasiveness and ability to observe without being observed. Their usual mission at times of peace is deep foraging. Tritons prefer to take as little as possible from the regions surrounding them, so rather than risk exhausting local kelp beds or oyster populations they will simply look further out. Scouts will also be sent out if there is any exploration to be done, such as the searching out of territory suitable for a new settlement. Their other function is to take messages between the various homesteads, a particularly important role when several communities need to band together against a common threat.

In times of war, scouts serve both as lookouts from the homestead and as spies sent to gather information on

Tritons with Character Classes

Only those tritons that have the most dealings with the surface world are likely to take on a character class. These are not numerous, so tritons with character classes are exceptionally rare. A triton's favoured class is ranger; those that are not rangers tend to be fighters. They avoid spellcasting classes as these are the province of seawardens.



the enemy. When conducting reconnaissance they will leave their mounts behind so as to travel more stealthily, sacrificing speed for better concealment. Some scouts of great experience are competent in setting underwater traps. Given enough time, a group of such scouts can prepare a very unpleasant surprise for a group of invaders.

LIGHT CAVALRY

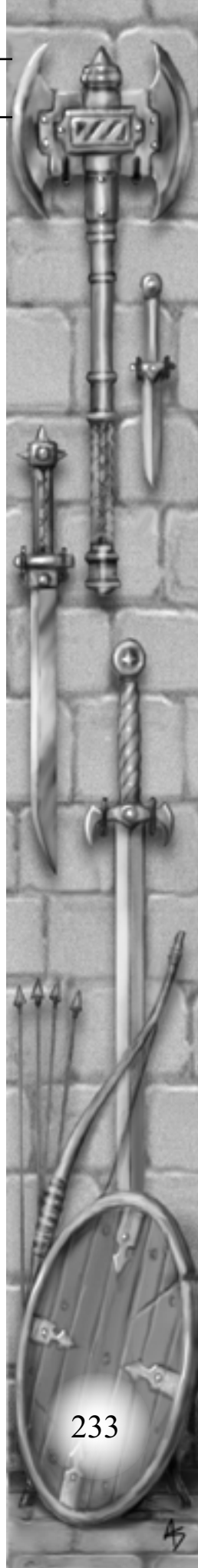
Invariably mounted on porpoises, the triton light cavalry patrol the perimeter of the homestead's territory, making sure all is well within their demesne. Guests of the tritons who are subject to their hospitality or people under their special protection are escorted wherever they wish to go by a division of light cavalry.

Light cavalry are also employed in those scouting expeditions in which enemy attack is a definite danger, such as the investigation of an unannounced appearance of surface dwellers or a sally into caverns where a Devouring One might be lurking. On the rare occasions when a large sea-beast must be hunted for food or driven off the territory, the light cavalry will take care of it.

In warfare against the sahuagin or other human-sized foes, the light cavalry are often the first to be sent in and move to flank the enemy, cutting off retreat. Their speed and manoeuvrability makes them ideal skirmishers.

HEAVY CAVALRY

These are the elite among Triton warriors, rarely younger than a hundred years old. Mounted upon one of the most savage beasts of the ocean, the formidable sea cat, they do not often venture beyond the territory of the largest and oldest of the triton homesteads. Their charge is the



single most devastating attack available to the triton race. Should a Devouring One ever rise, the heavy cavalry represent the best chance of putting an end to them. In peacetime, they are responsible for maintaining the homestead's internal defences and form the final living barrier against invasion. The Merefather of Throia is guarded at all times by a company of heavy cavalry.

Their role as guards of the grandest homesteads means they rarely see combat in any other circumstances than full-on warfare, since nothing weaker than an invading army, wandering kraken or Devouring One is likely to try its might against such fortifications. At such times, they are either assigned to guard crucial tactical positions or, depending on territory, kept hidden in preparation for a mass charge.

MOUNTED ARCHER

All Tritons are proficient with the heavy crossbow and use it as a hunting weapon. The mounted archer has trained himself to aim and fire accurately from the back of a bucking sea creature. Unlike the cavalry, the mounted archers may use any mount. They are most commonly found accompanying the light cavalry on their circuits of the homestead's territory. Since they are missile weapon specialists and missiles are more efficient when used above the water's surface, they are also charged with the duty of patrolling the sea's surface directly above the community. Many an ill-intentioned ship has had its crew picked off one by one by mounted archers, who would keep vanishing back under the waves before there was a chance to return fire and coming back up in new positions with their crossbows reloaded.

Since their patrol duties bring them into contact with passing ships and coastal people more often than most, they are given the additional duty of liaison with the surface dwellers. Many players' first encounter with a triton may well be with a mounted archer.

PEACEBRINGER

Some tritons turn their talents towards meditation and a search for harmony in preference to combat. This is as much a part of the overall triton strategy of defence and survival as any more martial vocation. If all are to survive, troubled waters must sometimes be calmed.

Peacebringers concern themselves with healing, study and the acquisition of wisdom. They will also specialise in a school of decorative art; sculpture in stone is the most popular choice, though many peacebringers turn their hand to making jewellery or carving in driftwood.

Their role in triton society is as mediators, calming and untangling any disputes between the members. They will also intervene, putting in a word for peace, if relations with the surface world are becoming tense.

Peacebringers do not leave the homestead in times of battle. The wounded are brought to them to be tended. If a wounded triton (or indeed any other creature) is in pain and is unlikely to live, the peacebringers will live up to their name by administering a swift, merciful death.

WEAPONWRIGHT

It is not an easy matter to secure a supply of tridents and heavy crossbows when one's people live under the sea. As with so much else in the tritons' lives, they must make do with whatever materials come to hand. It is the task of the weaponwrights to create sturdy, reliable arms from the remains of sea creatures' bodies, the detritus of the sea bed, scavenged remnants of ships and their fittings and whatever other waterproof materials can be located. Every homestead has an armoury and it is the prime duty of the weaponwrights to ensure it is kept stocked with reliable, well-balanced weapons.

Despite the considerable skill of the weaponwrights, when it comes to keeping the populace armed and ready even the resourceful tritons cannot easily get by on local materials alone. Heavy crossbows can be cobbled together from sculpted ribs, weed and urchin spines but bone is simply not a strong enough material for a trident. It is therefore necessary, if disagreeable, to conduct a certain amount of trade. As the weaponwrights are the specialists who will be using the materials, trade arrangements are left to them.

Most of the tritons' trade is with the locathahs, who can be relied upon to collect such useful staples as obsidian slivers, giant oyster shells and blowfish spines in their travels. Metal is most commonly garnered from the aquatic elves, who themselves acquire it from surface dwellers. The weaponwrights are especially desirous of bronze and brass, as they do not rust (unlike iron, which is completely useless underwater). Most prized of all are lengths of ironwood. Once these have been carefully weighted with bronze fittings to prevent them from floating to the surface, they make the best of all tridents. Magical weapons are usually welcome, being waterproof, though the tritons are too set in their ways to bother with anything not resembling a trident, heavy crossbow or bolt.

Metal intended for use in weapon making has to be fashioned into points and blades before delivery or the

tritons will be unable to use it. They have no equivalent of the forge or the blacksmith, since it is impossible to work non-precious metals underwater. The only way to do this would be to set up shop in an air bubble of some kind and then produce intense heat, such as by magic.

SEAWARDENS

The most rare of all specialists, these mutant tritons are said to have brought the concentrated magic of the Elemental Plane of Water with them in their blood. Their societal concerns are twofold: construction and defence of homesteads and gathering lore relating to the Devouring Ones. A seawarden will always be present when a new homestead is first constructed. Collectively, they maintain archives in which the known Devouring Ones and their locations are recorded. Information gathered by scouting patrols is passed back to them. It is their responsibility to ensure the tritons are ready to meet their ancient foes when the hour of their awakening comes.



Triton Seawarden

Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 6d8+6 (33 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 5 ft., Swim 40 ft.

AC: 16 (+6 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+7

Attack: Trident +7 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Full Attack: Trident +7/+2 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Mould coral, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +9

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 12

Skills: Craft (stonemasonry) +5, Hide +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +6, Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +9, Perform +5, Ride +6, Spot +8

Feats: Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack

Climate/Terrain: Any aquatic

Organisation: Solitary or council (2-4)

Challenge Rating: 6

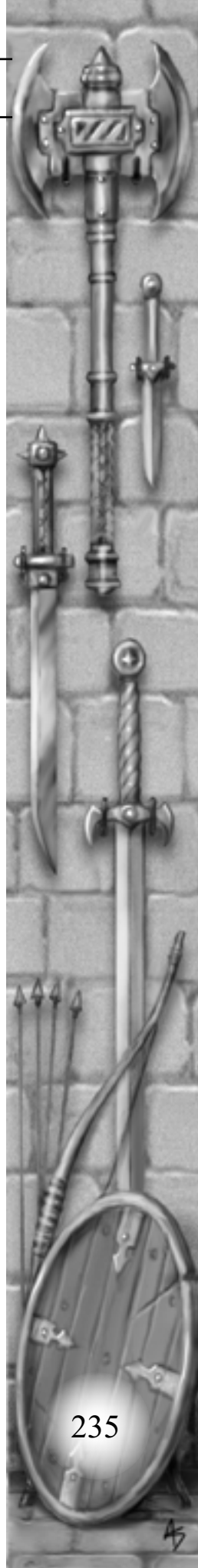
Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always neutral good

Advancement: By character class

Seawardens hatch from only one in a thousand triton eggs. Natural prodigies, they are reserved and calm even in their days of youth; the stillness of the deep ocean is reflected in their gold-flecked eyes. They are the born counsellors of the tritons. They do not consider themselves leaders, leaving that role to the elders of the various communities. They are content to watch, wait and give advice when called upon. Though they have excellent singing voices and often chant in unison, weaving harmonies together, seawardens rarely speak. When they do so, it is in pleasant mellifluous tones unless they are angry or defiant, when their cold, precise words convey a sense of shuddering dread far worse than any noisy bluster could achieve.

A seawarden's favoured character class is wizard. They generally restrict their studies to the creation of magical items in preference to battle magic. Those who do not become wizards become clerics, administering the blessings of the Great Mother.



Mould coral (sp): A seawarden may use the following as the spell cast by an 8th-level sorcerer but may not employ or affect any other type of stone than coral: at will - *meld into stone, soften earth and stone, spike stones* and *stone shape*; 1/day - *wall of stone*.

Spell-like abilities: 1/day - *summon nature's ally IV*. Caster level 7th. Tritons often choose water elementals as their companions.

INSIDE THE HOMESTEAD

The primary role of the male citizens in a homestead is to build and to hunt; the primary role of the female citizens is to carve the walls and to tend the young. If the conch is blown for battle, both the sexes will take arms and go into the fray with equal status, taking orders from the elders. A small delegation of males and females will remain behind to guard any younglings, hatchlings and eggs.

Female tritons' meticulous wall carving is a central part of triton culture. Like mediaeval ladies working on a tapestry, they chart the history of their own settlement, its members and their achievements, not omitting the members' ancestors and their achievements, all the way back to the days of the tritons' first coming. Battles great and small are shown, the dead are commemorated and the migration of the tritons across the world can be charted. Any triton homestead gradually becomes an archive. Instead of a written history, they have a stone-carved one.

No triton of fighting age ever leaves his homestead unarmed. In addition to the trident and crossbow, a conch shell is always carried. This is both a religious symbol representing the Merefather and the universal signalling device among tritons. Blown in one way, it sounds the alarm; blown in another, it signals all clear.

Triton Carvings

In their thousands of years upon this plane, the tritons have seen many things long since forgotten by other beings. A few fortunate scholars of the upper world will sometimes be permitted to enter a triton homestead and spend a few hours examining the walls. By recourse to the tritons' designs, wizards have filled in the gaps in incomplete accounts of artefacts, adventurers have discovered the final resting places of legendary heroes lost at sea and monarchs have replenished their kingdoms by discovering the location of treasure fleets sunk in storms long ago. There is no better place to seek knowledge of history in the undersea world than upon a triton's wall. Since each settlement's history is unique, it is really just a matter of making sure one has the right wall and (of course) permission to study it.

Every community will also have a single sacred conch, kept in the central chamber of the homestead.

The elders of the community are its leaders, irrespective of gender. The tritons set great store by the past. The more battles an elder remembers, the more scars he has to show, the more honour he has incurred. Each community recognises its nine oldest members as its Council of Elders. Any important decisions, including those related to the ongoing wars with the sahuagin, are referred to them.

Any triton community fortunate enough to contain one or more seawardens will treat them with the same honour shown to elders. The seawardens do not have an executive role in the Council but their advice is always sought, owing to their great wisdom and knowledge of arcane matters. The role of a community's seawarden is as a tutor to the young, a mediator between the tritons and other races and a magically empowered defender of the homestead.

Population of Triton Settlements by Vocation

Settlement size*	Scout	Light cavalry	Heavy cavalry	Mounted archer	Peace-bringer	Weapon-wright	Seawarden
Tiny (15-20)	1d6	1d2	-	1d2	-	-	-
Small (21-50)	2d6	2d6	-	1d6	1	1	-
Medium (51-90)	4d6	3d6	1d6	2d6	1d2	1d3	1
Large (91-150)	6d6	4d6	3d6	3d6	1d4	1d4	1d3
Huge (151-300)	8d6	7d6	6d6	4d6	1d6	2d4	1d6

* This figure refers to the number of citizens in the settlement and does not include any specialists.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Tritons honour three divine figures, two of them godlike, one incarnate. These are the Great Mother, the foster-mother and the Merefather.

The Great Mother is a spiritualised idea of water itself rather than any actual body of water. She is manifested by the sea but is no less manifest in a single raindrop. She is the source of all life, both in the sense of reproduction and in that of nutrition. She is simultaneously close to her tritons and a world away, for she is an aspect of the Elemental Plane of Water, the home they have left behind. She is also identified with the night sky; the stars are said to be the gleams of immense fish swimming slowly in her depths. Tritons believe the whole world occupies a bubble floating in space, which to them is not a vacuum but a primordial body of water.

When she is represented in triton art, she is shown as a blue-black female triton coiling her body around a sphere, representative of the world-bubble. Small, unadorned circular items are used as her sacred objects, most commonly rings or bangles.

Much less abstract than the Great Mother is the foster-mother who is simply the earthly sea wherein the Tritons live. Although she is not the original source of the tritons' line, she is loved and revered for the shelter and sustenance she brings. She is not depicted pictorially, because she never needs to be. She is all around at all times. When she needs to be referred to in visual art, a simple symbol of a disk crossed by wavy lines is used.

Inasmuch as the sea itself is one instance of 'water', the Great Mother and the foster-mother are really two parts of the same idea. One is spiritual, the other material. The tritons honour them by deeds rather than by rites. Their gratitude to the foster-mother is expressed in the care they take to defend her. They do pray to the two mother deities and sincerely believe their prayers are heard.

The Merefather is the spiritual and temporal lord of all the Tritons. Should it ever be necessary to command all of them as one, his would be the voice to which they would listen. He is seen as partly divine, a quality which he takes on when he becomes the consort of the foster-mother. This ceremonial marriage is carried out when a new Merefather replaces the former one, which has only happened five times in all the years since the tritons left their world.

The current Merefather is Alacrantus. He resides in the stronghold of Throia, the first castle-city ever to be founded by the Tritons and the traditional seat of

government of the Merefather. Throia overlooks an abyss called Barathrum in whose lightless bowels three of the most hideous Devouring Ones are said to sleep.

TRITONS' ATTITUDE TO OTHER CREATURES

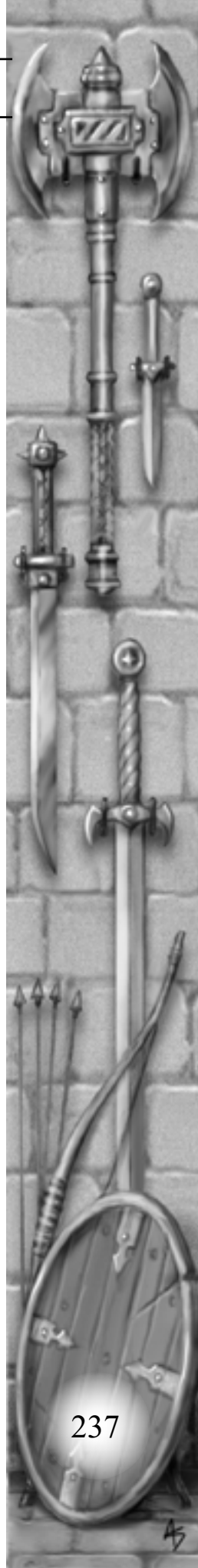
Even after so many generations away from their original home, the tritons are keenly aware of their status as guests on this plane. That, at least, is how they see themselves. Another race might not care overmuch, choosing instead to live as comfortably as they could, living freely off the world around them and its resources or even plundering the Prime Material without a second thought because, after all, it's not home. The tritons are simply incapable of thinking like this.

They do not truly belong here and they know it. It is because of this that they are so very reluctant to upset the world around them or to interfere with it. Enough potential damage has already been done by the escape of the Devouring Ones. If they build fortresses, it is not done to make their mark permanently upon this world, but in order to assist them in their task of protecting the surface world from the oceanic depths. They eschew agriculture, refusing to cultivate even so much as a bed of kelp, since they feel this would be too much of an imposition. Instead, they take what they need to survive where and when they can find it. Whenever possible, use is made of all parts of a hunted creature. The tritons abhor waste.

As detailed above, the earthly oceans are to them a foster-mother. They are grateful for Her providence and in return they try to live in such a way as to cause Her as little damage as possible. In this sense, they are ecologists and protectors of the environment. This does not stem from idealism or altruism but from a simple recognition that they must not damage what is not theirs.

The tritons' agenda has broadened somewhat since they first came to the Prime Material Plane. They realised very swiftly how many other evils there were already resident in their new home. They were here for a purpose, they reasoned, not just to stand guard against the rising of the Devouring Ones but also to take the initiative against evil, whatever form it took. In this way they became dedicated foes of the sahuagin.

Before the coming of the tritons, so legend has it, the sahuagin held dominion over the majority of settled coastal waters. The tritons' first priority in the new world was to build and fortify shelters for their communities.





They had just come from a war and expected another at any moment. It came as a surprise to the complacent sahuagin to find these militant, graceful aliens in their midst. Their surprise turned to anger when they found the tritons would not yield to intimidation or to the savagery of sahuagin claws. On the contrary, this fresh opposition seemed to rally them. Retribution for the sahuagin attacks was swift and merciless. It was not long before triton and sahuagin were locked in protracted and bloody war.

Many of the surface races believe the tritons to be standoffish and reserved. This is not entirely a deserved reputation. The tritons come across as such for two reasons. Firstly, as long-lived Outsiders they do not easily relate to the mortal folk of earth, though they find elves less incomprehensible than the rest of the surface races. (They do not like dwarves at all and dwarves do not like them. This may be because the tritons are beings of the water, which is not at all welcome in a dwarven mine.) Secondly, they are loath to involve themselves in matters that do not bear directly upon their own business. They rather resemble knights on a holy quest

in a foreign land; single-minded, purposeful and polite but unwilling to waste time on anything or anyone which does not help the cause.

If a triton does make up his mind that you are neither his enemy nor a waste of his time, he will be loyal to the end. A friendship made with a triton is a friendship for life.

The relationships individual characters may develop with tritons are of course largely dependent upon their own choices and the degree of respect they show. In general, druids, rangers, paladins and fighters are the character classes with whom tritons prefer to deal, if they must deal with surface dwellers. Sea druids (see *Seas of Blood*) are the most welcome of all, for they share the tritons' regard for the sea as a sacred thing. Rogues are viewed with instant suspicion. Triton palaces are often decorated with precious ornaments and many a rogue has mistakenly believed a pearl or two would not be missed.

Of the undersea races, the locathahs and the merfolk enjoy the best relations with the tritons. The nomadic locathahs are made welcome in triton territory whenever their voyaging brings them there and often have goods to trade. Ancient treaties ensure that the tritons will feed and shelter the locathahs as their own, so long as the locathahs do no damage to the tritons' people or property. The locathahs do not seek out trouble with the sahuagin if they can avoid it but should a sahuagin attack take place while the locathahs are guests of the tritons, both races will fight side by side against the aggressor.

Merfolk are tolerated but are seen as far too frivolous. The tritons are not a sombre people by any means but they do have a serious purpose and are not inclined to waste time in the company of a people whose favourite pastimes are basking and singing.

Despised even more than the sahuagin, though encountered far less frequently, are the kuo-toas. An older race, diabolical where the sahuagin are brutal, they know a great deal of the lore of the Devouring Ones. Some of the elder tritons even believe the kuo-toas to be tiny versions of the Devouring Ones, serving them as minions and working towards the day when they shall rise from the deep. Today, the kuo-toas are more commonly found in caverns far beneath the earth than in their original sea habitat. The tritons believe the kuo-toas are compelled to remain there out of fear of triton wrath.

METHODS OF WARFARE

Tritons fight only when there is no alternative. Unless they are facing an intruder on their territory or making a tactical strike in the course of an ongoing war, they will opt to evade an opponent rather than close for combat. The ocean floor offers plenty of long weeds and curious rock formations among which a triton may hide. They will not enter combat recklessly or against the odds; they will only engage superior numbers if their backs are to the wall. Precision, economy and intelligent use of the environment characterise the tritons' approach to combat.

Their Achilles' heel as a species is their inability to heal damage during or immediately after a fight. Some rare homesteads have resident seawardens who have clerical ability but even these will rarely stir beyond their chambers. The tritons thus have no way to restore hit points lost in the field. Their only option when badly hurt is to escape and recover over time. For this reason, when on the offensive they will always opt to strike fast and get away immediately upon their mounts instead of remaining in the area to inflict further damage.

Tritons hate to lose even a single comrade in battle. Even if it means losing ground, any severely wounded triton will be helped home by a kinsman on a shared mount, travelling as fast as possible. Once the casualty has been left in the hands of the peacebringers, other tritons from the homestead will ride out to take his place. The only time when tritons will fight to the death as a group is when they are defending the homestead. At all other times they will withdraw if the battle goes against them.

Individual tritons sometimes choose to lay down their lives for others, such as by allowing a powerful enemy to catch their scent and then leading them away from the settlement.

INTIMIDATION

If tritons become aware of a hostile force that appears to be weaker than them and is as yet unaware of them, their first tactic will be an attempt to scare off the aggressors with sheer presence. If the encounter takes place underwater and the other force has not yet closed the distance, the tritons will arrange themselves into a battle line and come into the enemy's view while levelling

Combat in Three Dimensions

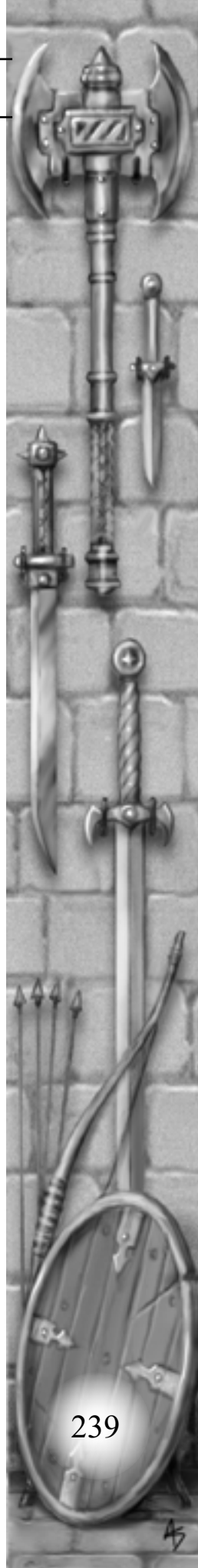
Inexperienced players attempting to engage in combat under the water will instinctively fight as if they were on a more viscous version of dry land and try to keep their feet on the floor. The tritons have long since learned to exploit the vertical dimension in melee, swimming upwards to assume a dominant position and launching their attacks from above. In practice, assume that any triton encountering the players under the water will seek to occupy a vantage point at least ten feet higher than theirs. This gives the triton a +1 bonus in melee for occupying the higher ground.

their tridents in preparation for a charge attack. Any mounted archers present will move to the flanks. Thus braced, they will glare at their oncoming opponents, making it perfectly clear that they will be charged down and impaled should they be foolish enough to continue their advance. The tritons remain perfectly still and confident throughout. This is no bluff; an enemy who does not think twice and retreat will be subject to a charge attack and bombarded with crossbow bolts. The tritons in this situation have the advantage of speed, as a porpoise-mounted triton can easily cover eighty feet in a single move.

SPECIAL TRITON MANOEUVRES

Even ordinary tritons are extremely dangerous when encountered in numbers, which is always the way it will be if they see you before you see them. When fighting away from their own territory, they prefer harassment tactics to open engagement. If faced by opponents who are keeping close together, the tritons will attempt to remain hidden, seeking out good cover and attacking at range with their crossbows before swimming away to find a new crevice in which to hide. Spread-out opponents will be ambushed and attacked by pairs of tritons, who will close on the enemy from opposing sides in order to confuse them and gain the +2 attack bonus for a flank attack.

Tritons mounted on porpoises can be devastating against targets that are restricted to the surface, such as sailors on board a ship. Their practised manoeuvre against such targets is known as the 'skyburst', possibly because it involves breaking the surface, the 'sky' of the triton's realm. A triton executing a skyburst attack begins from a point beneath the sea. His porpoise mount then makes the first half of a double move, heading for the surface and bringing the triton's body above the water at the





When fighting beneath the surface, tritons using their heavy crossbows will usually circle a single large opponent, such as a shark under the control of sahuagin. This tactic cuts off escape and ensures the majority of attacks will come from the flanks or the rear. They will also circle any creature or group of creatures they wish to keep in one place.

Triton light cavalry, who have the Ride-By Attack feat (see *Core Rulebook I*, p. 84) often use a manoeuvre called the ‘naiad’s comb’ when there is space to do so. (The Games Master should remember that in the three-dimensional realm of undersea combat, there is often space *above* and *below* a swimming target!) When an enemy comes within 80 ft. they charge, attack (receiving the standard +2 bonus on the attack roll and –2 penalty to AC for doing so) and then move another 80 ft, which almost always brings them out of range of the enemy’s melee weapons. They will then spend the next round moving into position for another charge. See *Core Rulebook I*, p. 124 for details on charge attacks.

Note that this Ride-By Attack does not provoke an attack of opportunity from the target. It will, however, provoke attacks of opportunity from nearby enemies should the triton’s charge move them out of the enemy’s threatened area. For this reason the naiad’s comb manoeuvre is not often used against enemies who are standing in close

end of the move. The triton’s heavy crossbow attack is then resolved (at the usual –4 penalty for attacking with a ranged weapon during a mount’s double move) following which the mount uses the second half of its double move to retreat back under the sea. A triton using the skyburst attack can begin and end his action at least 30 ft. beneath the sea, which makes him extremely difficult to hit. About the only way to attack a triton performing this manoeuvre is to ready a missile attack against him, loosing the missile when he breaks the surface. Even then, the player has to be sure he is facing in the right direction!

Mounted archers excel at the skyburst manoeuvre. Their Mounted Archery feat (see *Core Rulebook I*, p. 83) enables them to attack with a penalty of only –2 instead of –4. For greater efficiency, patrols of mounted archers will surround large floating targets, circle them and execute skyburst attacks on alternate rounds, using the round spent underwater to reload.

New Skill:

Craft (Underwater Trap Making)

The skills of the surface dwelling trap maker are mostly useless when employed underwater. Poison washes away, explosives become waterlogged, rope decays and intricate metal mechanisms become clogged and rusty. Only the crudest of standard traps, using the bare minimum of moving parts, are likely to function in such an environment. A –8 circumstance penalty is applied to any use of the Craft (trap making) skill when attempting to create a trap which will function underwater.

The underwater trap maker may draw on a wholly different class of expertise. He knows which sea-creatures yield glutinous water-resistant poisons, which materials weigh how much underwater, which bones to save from a shark’s skeleton to make a mantrap and which strains of seaweed will make the most elastic twine when cut and woven.

formation. When confronting small numbers of widely spaced opponents, two tritons will team up and attack the same target in parallel, one on each side.

Heavy cavalry do not often use the naiad's comb, as their sea cat mounts are not swift enough to carry them out of sahuagin swimming range. Instead, their usual method of attack is to open with a charge. Any attacks successfully striking their targets will deal double damage, owing to the heavy cavalry's Spirited Charge feat. On the next round, the heavy cavalry will remain in place and strike with their tridents while urging their ferocious mounts to tear into the enemy with claws and teeth. (In game terms, since the sea cats are not taking a move action on the second round they are able to make a full attack, both claws and a bite. Remember that if both claws hit, the sea cat does rend damage.)

Light and heavy cavalry working together will employ the 'jaws of leviathan', which can only be executed if both forces act on the same initiative slot. In this ostentatious manoeuvre, the light cavalry move first, attempting to execute Overrun attacks (see *Core*

Rulebook I, p. 139) against the enemy. At the conclusion of their attack, the light cavalry should be at least 60 ft. behind the enemy, many of which should now be tripped and therefore prone. The heavy cavalry then charge into the enemy ranks, taking full advantage of the -4 penalty to AC suffered by a prone opponent. On the next round, the heavy cavalry and their sea cat mounts execute full attacks as above while the light cavalry wheel their mounts about and attack the enemy ranks from behind.

Fighting on dry land is anathema to a triton; he is literally out of his element. If forced to do so, his usual recourse is to use his *summon nature's ally IV* spell-like ability to summon a small water elemental (assuming that there is a source of water nearby). He will then use the elemental as an impromptu mount, treading the water of the elemental's body with his fishtail legs as if he were swimming on a small wave. As the elemental is much more mobile on dry land than the triton, this gives him a better chance of surviving the combat or escaping back into the water.

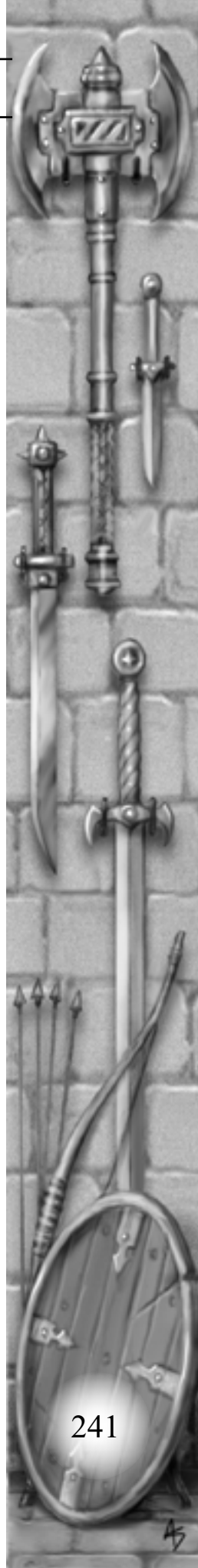
Using Ranged Weapons Against Submerged Targets

Projectiles are slowed down by water, reducing the amount of damage they deal on impact. Ranged weapons marked as piercing deal half damage at depths of 20-50 ft., quarter damage at depths of 51-80 ft. and cannot damage an opponent at all at greater depths. Other ranged weapons deal half damage at depths between 3 ft. and 5 ft., one-quarter damage at depths between 6 ft. and 8 ft. and are useless beyond that range. This rule applies only to small projectiles. Weapons as large as the shipboard ballista and sea catapult (see *Seas of Blood*) may triple these ranges.

As well as the problem of the water's viscosity, there is also the issue of visibility. The deeper a target dives, the more difficult it is to see it clearly. Accordingly, submerged targets are granted a concealment rating. (See *Core Rulebook I*, p. 133.) A target at a greater depth than 50 ft. is considered to have total concealment. For concealment purposes, creatures of size Huge or larger count as 10 ft. closer to the surface than they are, whereas creatures whose colouration closely matches that of the water around it (which may vary from sea to sea) count as 10 ft. deeper than they are.

Clear water is most usually found in tropical climates, lakes and artificial water-holding structures such as ornamental pools. Calm, open sea assumes no scum, weed, sea foam or other material is floating on the surface. Murky water is usually so because clouds of sediment or mud have been stirred up. Large quantities of blood will also make water murky. Rough water can be anything from a strong wind to a storm, so long as the sea's surface is ruffled. If it is raining, the water counts as rough.

Water type	10 ft.	20 ft.	30 ft.	40 ft.
Clear water	No concealment	One-quarter	One-half	Three-quarters
Calm, open sea	One-quarter	One-half	Three-quarters	Nine-tenths
Murky or rough water	Nine-tenths	Total	Total	Total



CAPTURE OF ENEMIES

The tritons will fight without mercy against Devouring Ones, sahuagin and any other enemy native to the sea. They have no compunctions about killing such beings. Surface dwellers, however, are not usually killed outright and will be subdued and captured when possible.

Unwilling to serve sentence upon creatures who are not of their realm, the tritons prefer to leave their fate in the hands of the foster-mother, the sea herself. Captive surface dwellers will first be stripped of all their possessions (these will in all probability be traded to the locathas) then set adrift ten miles from the nearest shore. If the captives came in a boat, this will have the oars and mast removed before they are returned to it. Otherwise, the tritons will use a crude raft built for the purpose. Once the captives have been abandoned to the mercy of the sea, the tritons forget all about them and will ignore them altogether should they see them in difficulty or crying for help. As far as the tritons are concerned, these people are already dead.

NACREOUS ARMOUR

One of the most striking examples of the tritons' resourceful adaptation to their new home is their invention of nacreous armour. Having found their own natural armour of scales and tough hide to be of limited use in deflecting the claws, teeth and weapons of the sahuagin and their shark allies, they realised some augmentation was necessary. The most expert carvers among the female tritons eventually perfected the art of paring away at the shells of giant oysters until polished plates of material were left. These were then jointed together to make armour. It proved to be spectacularly effective. The art of making it remains one of the tritons' secrets. No other undersea race has yet discovered it, nor would they be likely to possess



the necessary skill in carving to make use of it even if they did.

Armour made from nacre (mother-of-pearl) is visually splendid, gleaming with silvery and opalescent colours. More importantly, it is extremely strong, rustproof and less dense than metal, therefore lighter underwater, which makes it the armour of choice for undersea combat. Its primary disadvantage is its scarcity. Giant

Armour	Cost	Armour Bonus	Max. Dex Bonus	Armour Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	Speed 30 ft.*	Speed 20 ft.*	Weight*
Nacreous scale mail	2,500 gp	+4	+3	-4	25%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lb.
Nacreous breastplate	4,000 gp	+5	+3	-4	25%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.

* This is the effective speed penalty and weight of the armour when worn underwater. If worn on land, nacreous armour is treated as an ordinary breastplate or set of scale mail for encumbrance purposes. Tritons in nacreous armour are not slowed down at all and retain their 40 ft. Swim speed.

oysters are few in number. It is also difficult to repair large pieces; once nacre is chipped or cracked, not much can be done to restore it.

Nacreous armour is made in two styles, the scale mail tunic and the much less frequently seen breastplate. Nacreous scale mail is made from multiple lozenges of nacre attached to a backing of woven weed. The breastplate is made from two large pieces, painstakingly carved into shape and jointed at the shoulders and waist. Both the scale mail and the breastplate cover the torso region and upper arms only. Tritons never wear armour on their legs, as it irritates their delicate fins and interferes with their free movement. Some extremely rare examples are trimmed with silver at the edges for added protection against cracking. All sets of nacreous armour are prized heirlooms. Tritons will never sell it to an outsider. They will only ever part with it by bestowing it as a gift and then only upon a proven friend of good alignment who has shown outstanding honour and bravery.

So far, the tritons have only fashioned this armour to fit themselves, not their mounts. Although it might seem an obvious move to a human fighter, the thought of cladding a porpoise friend with 'nacreous barding' would horrify a triton.

THE SAHUAGIN WARS

In the frequent conflicts between large numbers of tritons and sahuagin, the former are motivated by ethical principle (the destruction of evil) and a desire to live in safety, whereas the latter are concerned with the expansion of their tribes and the plundering of all other races. Tritons fight because they have to; sahuagin fight because they love to.

Neither race is willing to travel far beyond its own borders to inflict damage on the other. They are both too practical for that. War under the sea is a close-range business, breaking out when one race discovers the other on its doorstep. This happens most often in those warm equatorial waters beloved of tritons and sahuagin alike.

As the sahuagin are the natural aggressors and have the weight of numbers on their side, triton tactics in times of protracted war are heavily defensive. They opt to fortify and entrap their homesteads, knowing that the bloodlust of the sahuagin will fire them to make the first attacks. Not until the initial waves of sahuagin have spent themselves against the tritons' defences will the tritons mount a counterattack of their own. Tritons

will attempt to use their enemies' aggression against them, using blood in the water and easy-seeming targets as bait to lure them into ambushes. Ingenuity and strong, co-ordinated mutual defence are the tritons' best weapons.

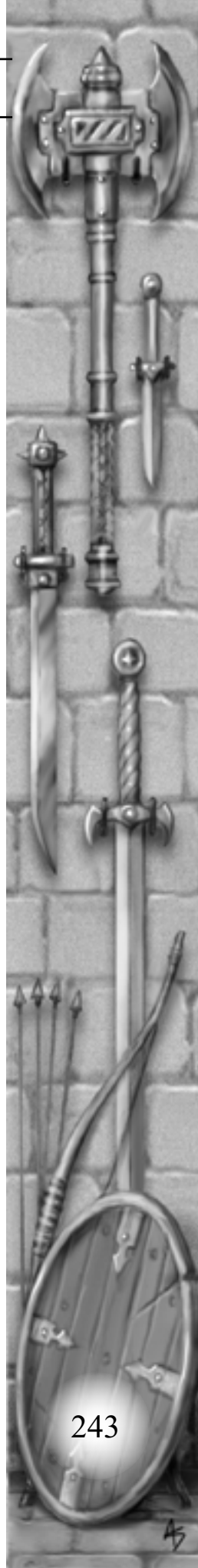
When the tritons lose, it is most often because the sahuagin have simply overrun them in hordes, sacrificing vast numbers of their own people to breach the tritons' defences. The sahuagin have also learned to employ their shark allies to great effect, sending them to attack the tritons' stables (forcing a terrible choice upon the tritons; to defend home or animal friend?) and using them as stealth troops, since they cannot easily be identified as sahuagin pets until it is too late.

Wars between sahuagin and tritons are hazardous to any shipping passing overhead, especially those seeking to fish or trawl, as the battle-frenzied sahuagin are liable to fall upon any easy target in the vicinity, while the tritons will go out of their way to keep strangers out of contested territory. This they do in order to cut down on the risk of collateral damage, to keep nets, anchor chains and such obstacles out of the way of their battle plan and to prevent the sahuagin receiving aid from unscrupulous surface dwellers. (While it does not often happen, there are pirates and traders who are so vile as to sell slaves and arms to the sahuagin.) Ships entering contested areas also run the risk of having their hulls rammed by sharks, whales, porpoises, water elementals and any other creatures fighting for either side who mistake the ship for an enemy.

Horns of the Tritons

The oldest homesteads will have a *Horn of the Tritons* (see *Core Rulebook II*, p. 219) as their central sacred conch. One of the elders or a spellcasting seawarden will be given responsibility for its use. The tritons do not balk at using it; if there is even a minor threat in the vicinity they will draw upon its summoning and panic-inducing powers to defend the homestead. (Sharks summoned by a *Horn of the Tritons* will ignore telepathic messages from sahuagin.) In times of peace, the Horn of the Tritons will be used to calm stormy seas if friendly or neutral ships are in danger.

The tritons alone know the secrets needed to manufacture one of these wondrous items. Accordingly, Horns of the Tritons are rarely found, as they must be made either by a non-triton spellcaster working with triton assistance or by a spellcasting Seawarden considerably advanced in levels.



'Ideal place for a spot of lunch,' observed Bryth, unpacking our stolen cheeses in the shade of a crumbling wall.

I had to agree. We were off the road, close to the beach and well shaded from the summer sun by the remains of the old fort, or castle, or whatever it was. I pulled my boots off and set them by Mirande and Corm's discarded gear. The halfling and her beefy friend had already run down the sandy slope and were now knee-deep in the surf, looking studiously out across the sea. Mirande drew her arm back and a small flat stone went skip, skip, skip across the water's surface, finishing its journey with a plop.

Bryth waved away my offer of warm ale with the wine bottle he had in his hand. He was wearing a familiar expression; almond eyes narrowed, brow furrowed, looking as if he was gazing into the far distance although he was not. Elves get that *déjà vu* thing a lot, living as long as they do. More often than not, they *have* been there before, they just can't remember exactly when. I watched him fishing around inside his mind for whatever was eluding him. I knew better than to distract him at such times.

'Of course,' he breathed and patted a toad-like lump of masonry as if he were thanking it. 'I *did* know the place. It's the Rillingaunt Fastness, or used to be. I think I prefer it like this.' He looked around at the overgrown, toppled slabs, the roughness where a smooth surface had smashed and the stubby remains of columns with grass poking through. Down on the beach, Corm flung a stone across the little waves. It sailed far and landed with a single heavy splash. Mirande shook her head.

I was suddenly uneasy, as if I were sitting on a burial ground. 'I remember hearing about Rillingaunt the sea-butcher. Bit before my time, though. Didn't he fall foul of a merman in the end?'

'Not a merman,' said Bryth with patronizing patience, 'a triton. The night after a storm, one of Rillingaunt's scythe-ships was weighing anchor. When it came up, there was a wounded creature tangled in it, barely alive. Rillingaunt had it bound and brought in to him. To his surprise, it could speak his language. Spoke it better than Rillingaunt, truth be told. It didn't beg nor plead, it just asked to be set free.'

'Well, you know what the butcher was like. He thought he'd found a new world to conquer. He had the triton tortured and asked him all sorts of imbecile questions; how did he come to be on Rillingaunt's property, where was the triton village, how rich was it, how many of the triton's kin were there, could triton women breed with a human male and so on. The triton never once cried out, even when they brought the irons out. They say the only thing he said at all was 'Water, water,' but even that wasn't like a plea – more like a promise.'

I was dimly aware of Mirande telling Corm to find a flatter stone and try again.

'Naturally, the triton died,' said Bryth. 'Rillingaunt had his body tossed back into the sea as a warning to any others who might be down there. Well, that night the storm blew up with a vengeance. Rain came hammering down hard enough to crack the windows. Rillingaunt was a little perturbed and had all the doors locked and barred. It didn't help. The fires wouldn't burn, the torches flickered and died and soon the whole ground floor was swimming in half a foot of water. It got so damp, the only light to be had came from the lightning and such closed lanterns as could be found. The water deepened. When they started finding drowned bodies floating past the furniture, the place went into a panic.'

Shouts of joy came from the beach. Corm had finally found a flat, greenish stone and managed to make it skip across the waves before plopping in. Mirande slapped his back. The two of them turned and began to make their way up to the ruins.

Bryth went on. 'Rillingaunt barricaded himself in his master bedroom but he must have known there was no safety there, because the kitchen staff had seen water pouring through a keyhole when the flooding hadn't even reached that height yet. It was as if the water was alive. Fluid creatures were moving through the castle, washing people away with them. He knew the end had come when his bedroom doors burst open and the water rushed in to smother him. The last thing he saw was those who commanded the water, standing at the foot of the bed, with tridents raised and burning eyes.'

I looked out across the peaceful sea and shuddered to think of what had once come out of it. Then something occurred to me. 'Hang on. If everyone in the castle died, how does anyone know what happened here?'

Corm and Mirande had just reached the top of the rise when there was a clunk and a yelp. Something had been thrown and bounced off Corm's helmet. He looked around for it, stooped and picked up the flat, greenish stone he had just thrown into the sea. It had been thrown back.

ROLEPLAYING WITH TRITONS

For a group of players who wish to explore the dangerous and rewarding world beneath the sea, the tritons are the best allies imaginable. They are dedicated good-aligned defenders whose mighty homesteads are ideal places to recuperate, trade or research marine history. Unfortunately, they are not inclined to welcome visitors with open arms. They have seen far too much treachery in their time.

Unless the Games Master wishes to take a shortcut and start a campaign with the players and the local triton community in friendly contact, the first challenge is always going to be the closing of the divide between players and tritons. (This assumes, of course, that the players do not think of tritons as mere monsters to bash. Those who do will find plenty in this book to keep them occupied.) The best way to do this is to find out what each side has that the other wants. For all of their separatism and pride, the tritons do have many needs. They require raw materials to make their weapons and armour, information to aid them in their lifelong wars against the sahuagin and the abyssal ones and (though they will never admit it) allies to assist them in battle. The players' needs are going to depend on the campaign but are certain to include the support of strong allies, reliable information and a base of operations, especially if the players are in an otherwise hostile region.

This introduction stage offers many opportunities for involved roleplaying, as diplomacy, persuasion and tact are far more important than combat. Much of the fun for players and Games Master alike will be found in the contrast between the graceful, unearthly tritons with their noble heritage and the typical group of players, which usually includes at least one or two rowdy types. Tritons are easily offended and resent intrusion into their realm, so there is plenty for the players to do wrong, from failing to finish a meal to asking too many questions. Most players will probably think they are making a worse impression than they are, simply because the tritons are always so haughty-seeming around strangers. In truth, you have not failed with them until they throw you out.

The key is for the players to persist until they have a chance to prove themselves, by deeds rather than words. Unless the players prove to be just too obnoxious or

Triton Names

These often have a classical Greek sound to them and include liquid sounding syllables, like 'th', 'qu', 'sh' and 'gl'. Male names usually end in 'us', 'ax', 'an' or 'th'. Female names always end in a vowel, usually 'a', 'e' or 'ae'.

Male: Calamus, Aglaresh, Korithrax, Melemeth, Quallian, Paglius.

Female: Timorai, Shamishae, Callia, Mielle, Glarithe, Tetraquia.

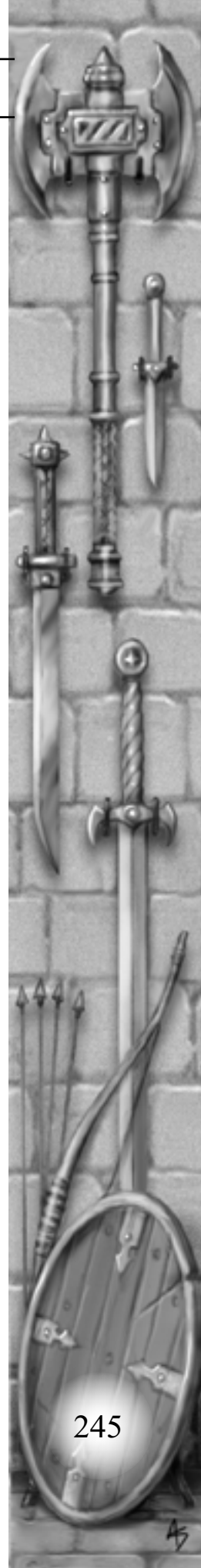
violent to tolerate, the tritons will give them that chance. For most players, the best way to win the tritons round is to shed blood with them in battle against a common foe. The second best way is to impress them with a deed of generosity or sacrifice that helps another creature but brings no personal gain to the giver. Those who know a thing or two about the tritons' origins and self-appointed purpose will be able to win great favour by proving themselves opposed to the Devouring Ones, all the more so if they can give news of any of them.

Once trust has been established on both sides, the players can enter the co-operation stage. The tritons will help the players by protecting them while they are within their territory and showing them to any interesting features of the region such as shipwrecks or ancient ruins. Players in search of a good hard fight will be given key roles in battle plans drawn up against the sahuagin or the Abyssal Ones. Relationships with individual tritons

The Lore of Tritons' Hair

According to folklore, strands of hair from the head of a triton woven into a bracelet and worn around the wrist or neck make a potent charm against drowning. There is, in fact, some truth in this but as with so many legends it is not quite as simple as it seems. The power of the charm derives from the tritons' living link with the Elemental Plane of Water; should the triton die, the charm will become useless. The triton must also give the hair willingly. Only one such charm may be made from any one triton's hair at any time.

The effect of the charm is to give the bearer a +1 Competence bonus to any Constitution check to avoid drowning (see *Core Rulebook II*, p. 85). This bonus applies only when the bearer is drowning in water.





ROLEPLAYING WITH TRITONS

have the chance to deepen, possibly turning into close friendship with time. Players who have a ship will be able to call on the tritons for assistance should they be attacked or becalmed; tritons have even been known to haul a friendly ship away from rocks during a tempest. In the long term, travel to far-away places will be a little

less daunting, as an unfamiliar triton homestead will always welcome those who can prove themselves to be the friends of tritons in another part of the world. Players who are on good terms with the tritons and willing to aid them can count on their support in any part of the world where they live.

Once again, father, I offer you my thanks from the world of the living. Were it not for the posthumous respect still accorded to you by these extraordinary beings I would never have learned of the existence of the Laoconic Vault, let alone been given the chance to enter it as I am to be allowed to do tomorrow (under close supervision, no surprise there). I am used to sleeping underwater by now but I doubt I shall sleep tonight. I shall, instead, keep my mind occupied with this diary. Plenty of potions and wax tablets left; the Gods know I shall need them tomorrow! Five hundred years' worth of records at the very least!

My hosts are relentlessly courteous, if not exactly friendly. They do not seem accustomed to dealing with surface dwellers at all, though one can tell they are doing their best. At luncheon today they were kind enough to provide me with an extremely tarnished knife and fork, along with the torn-off frontal section of a large lobster, quite raw of course. I didn't know how to tell them about our penchant for cooked food without seeming ungrateful. Talk about stiff formality. It made those visits to Aunt Grisham's house seem like a bar room ruckus by comparison.

I should perhaps expect this but I am very saddened by the way their little ones dart away from me like minnows whenever I pass by. Maybe they will grow used to me in time.

Cannot wait to enter Vault. If the theory – your theory, let me not forget – is correct, the carvings in the chamber will document every significant event in the area for at least the last five centuries. Now, I cannot believe for one moment that the screaming plunge of a mortally wounded celestial would go unnoticed, can you? Yes, I know, it is becoming an obsession with me. I have gone over and over the accounts of that fall so many times now. I can almost see Luxibel's face as he struck the water, wracked with holy torment, exactly as he appears in Jendale Reem's unforgettable painting.

You know how much I loved that painting, father. All of this really begins with that trip to the Temple at Paveley. Ever since the first day I saw it, I knew I had to find out how the story ends. That was why I asked so many questions. Did it really happen? Did the angel die? What happened to the sword?

Ahem. As I later discovered, once I was old enough to understand such things, the fall of Luxibel was the last the surface world ever saw of the sword Sallowvein, still burning with black bane-fire as it vanished beneath the waves, embedded to the hilt in the breast of a dying archon. Maybe the Laoconic Vault will shed some light on what happened to Luxibel's remains and the sword that fell with him. I believe they will. They must. Oh, how I wish you were still alive to share the moment with me.

Damn. I think that was the sound of a blown conch. Does this mean we are being attacked? Sounds like it – alarums and excursions in the passageways. There it goes again. I had better -

Wax tablet diary of Tambine Falkenstein (fragmentary) dating from the reign of Lucius III, found washed up among assorted beach detritus and now in the private collection of His Holiness Rechartus VII, Primarch of Cisternum.

SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

It is easy to work tritons into an ongoing campaign or base a scenario entirely around them. Depending on where the players are based, the tritons can represent anything from the first tentative presence of benign civilization in a hostile sea to an established empire. Triton-centred adventures work best for groups of players of levels 4-9, though players of even higher level could well find their mettle tested when standing with the tritons against a risen Devouring One and its spawn.

THE MESSENGER

This scenario plunges the players straight into the tritons' world. Washed up on the shore (or floating on the waves) and discovered by the players in his last moments of life, a dying triton scout begs them to take a vital message. It comes from his homestead of Axilium and must be delivered to the homestead of Rethemai. The message is simply this: 'Axilium is falling to the sea devils. If she falls, the surface dwellers will be next.' Promising them a rich reward for their assistance and giving over his own pearl and silver torc as proof of the tritons' wealth, he dies.

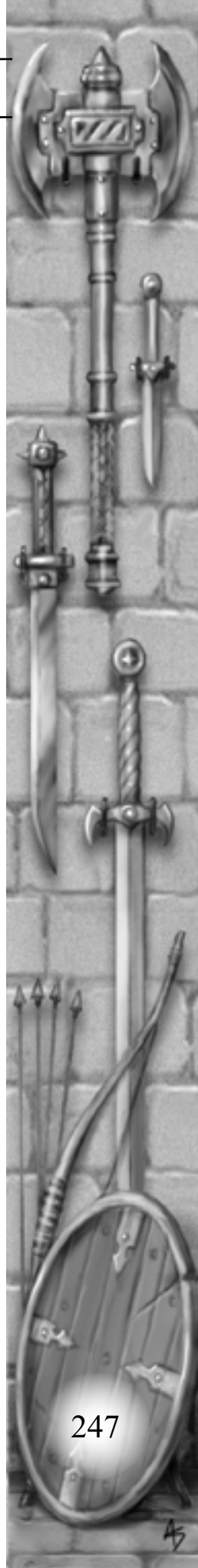
The players must find out where Rethemai is, take the message there with all speed and persuade the tritons of Rethemai of the danger. As these have just had to repel an invasion by human pirates who pretended to be peaceful scholars, they are even less trusting of surface dwellers than usual! Meanwhile, the sahuagin army is besieging Axilium, a small homestead close by the island of Luden, until now a peaceful place. Only Axilium stands between the bloodthirsty sahuagin and the villagers of Luden. Whether reinforcements will come from Rethemai in time to fortify Axilium and save the island is up to the players...

THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

In this scenario, the tritons appear as figures of mystery, uneasy patrons and eventual allies.

The coastal town of Cal Ambri is an ideal place to relax between adventures, so long as one has money to spend and a stout constitution. Recently, however, it has not been so convivial. Fishermen are complaining of severed nets, merchants are discovering wet trails and fishy smells befouling their ships and there have been sightings of strange fish-men in the harbour. Someone is going to have to talk to them and find out what is afoot.

Cautious investigation will reveal a very upset community of tritons. Their sacred conch has gone missing and the only sign left by the thief was a tangle of red and unmistakably human hair, caught on a coral lintel. All triton conches are sacred but this one was especially treasured; it was a *Horn of the Tritons*. The players will not be told this at first! The tritons would very much appreciate the conch's safe return, promising a considerable bounty of sea-treasures in exchange; pearls, scavenged gold and triton jewellery made from coral and silver being the most part of this.



Players who investigate the dockside community in search of red-headed thieves will (after as many entertaining diversions as the Games Master decides to introduce) be able to track the conch down to one Broad Bobby Cauldheart, up and coming buccaneer, whose ship is docked in the bay. He is aware of the conch's powers to calm stormy seas, making it a major prize for a seaman. When Cauldheart gets wind of a party of adventurers on his trail, he will attempt to slip away in the night. The closing scenes of the adventure involve the players and tritons working together to board Cauldheart's ship in the middle of the open sea. Games Masters who want to give their players a little extra challenge might like to have Cauldheart bring the conch to a community of sahuagin with whom he has been trying to curry favour. They would be extremely glad to get their claws on such a prize.

DANCES WITH TRITONS

This adventure works well for a group of players who prefer intensive roleplaying to combat, though it does offer an opportunity for quite a spectacular rumble towards the end. Whether by shipwreck, misguided teleportation, treachery or some other ill fortune, the players are stranded on an island somewhere warm and tropical. Only some ancient ruins reveal that this place was ever settled by intelligent life. They must busy themselves with the tasks of survival, constructing shelter, hunting for food and dealing with any strange beasts that the Games Master decides are living there.

As time passes, the players become aware they are not alone. There is a small, recently founded triton settlement just off the coast, clearly visible beneath the water to any who swim out far enough. The players have the chance to interact with the tritons, who are strangers to the area themselves in their own way. Weapons might be traded, stories told and help given, such as the players' magical healing of a hurt triton, or rescue of a drowning player by the tritons. If relations become sufficiently friendly, the tritons may be able to help the players escape the island (on porpoises, perhaps) and return to their own lands. However, players and tritons alike will first have to face the threat posed by the horde of sahuagin heading their way and intent on settling the island's coast themselves.

THE SEA-KING'S TOMB

Lord Vandomaris, an eccentric and wealthy landowner, has become obsessed with genealogy and has (so he

claims) traced his noble line back to a sea king called Harkland who held dominion in the area a thousand years ago. According to legend, Harkland was buried in a rich tomb filled with all the wealth of his glorious rule. It has never been looted, as it sank beneath the waves along with the rest of his city in a mighty cataclysm. Vandomaris wants the tomb found so he can claim what he believes to be his legacy. He is willing to pay handsomely for this.

Research on Harkland reveals him to have been an authentic historical figure. Unusually for a surface dweller, he enjoyed the respect of the community of tritons in his domain because of his bravery in battle and defence of the weak. As might be expected, the tritons of the time recorded the legends of Harkland on the walls of their homestead. They and their descendants (for the community is still there) have kept the location of the sunken city a secret for a thousand years.

The players must somehow persuade the tritons to allow them access to the carvings. If the tritons learn of their destination they will follow them and (if necessary) attempt to prevent them from entering the sea king's tomb. Their concern is well founded, for they know something the players do not; a Devouring One caused the earthquake that sank Harkland's city as it stirred in its sleep. Ignorant surface dwellers poking around among sunken ruins might stir up more than they can handle.

'... AND PEARLS THE SIZE OF A MAN'S HEAD!'

This one is for unscrupulous players only. In between singing bawdy shanties, an old thief in a dockside tavern tells anyone that cares to listen the tale of his numerous thefts from the 'stuck-up' tritons he claims are living ten miles out to sea. Nobody pays him very much attention, as he never produces any evidence to back up his stories. One blustery night when the tavern is mostly empty and he is more sober than usual, he brings in a neck ornament of silver and aquamarine and tries to make the barman accept it against the price of a bottle of rum, which of course the barman does not do, believing it to be a fake. Players who have some skill in Appraise will be able to tell it is genuine and extremely valuable.

Noticing their interest, he will tell his tale once again. He was too greedy and was caught stealing from the tritons, who abandoned him to the mercy of the sea as is their wont. To his delight he was rescued by a passing

ship a mere twelve hours later, which almost (but not quite) made a religious man of him. He offers to make a 'fifty-fifty' deal with the players. He will tell them where the Tritons' homestead is and the best ways of getting in and in return they will split any treasure down the middle. Naturally, he will need them to put up some cash upfront as a token of goodwill.

The thief's information is correct as far as it goes; the homestead is where he says it is. Unfortunately for the players, the defences have been updated since the thief's last visit and there are quite a few more traps in place. By the next day's dawn, careless players may well find themselves stripped of their possessions and floating on a raft in the open sea.

MALACHOR RISING

This scenario should be used once the players are already on civil terms with the local tritons.

At an unremarkable and prosperous seaport town, ships coming in to harbour report an amazing phenomenon; several leagues out to sea, a patch of ocean half a mile across has turned black! Mariners are now avoiding the region, saying there is a nasty, haunted feeling to it. Rumours circulate that several ships have gone missing altogether. Maritime trade is disrupted and a worried town council asks the players to do what they can to investigate the matter.

Investigation reveals the black patch has been caused by great clouds of sediment rising from somewhere far beneath. There are strange pale sea-creatures floating in it, quite dead and unlike anything seen on the surface. Evidently, the tritons must be consulted.

As the players may have guessed, the news is as bad as it could be. One of the Devouring Ones, Malachor the Double-Faced, is awakening much sooner than predicted. The tritons of the nearby settlement are far from being ready to confront him. Reinforcements have been sent for but will not arrive for two days; meanwhile, Malachor is on his way upwards with a host of his spawn. The players and the tritons must work together to prepare their defences. They are all that stands in the way of the Devouring One as he gropes his way out of the depths and towards the surface world.

This scenario is suitable for players of 9th-10th level who feel like a real challenge. As the statistics for the Devouring Ones are left to the Games Master to

*As I was a-rowing my catch back to shore
(Sing rain, wind and thunder, O)
I spied me a silver girl riding before
(And dive ye back down under, O!)*

*Her hair flew as free as the foam on the tide
(Sing rain, wind and thunder, O)
On dolly-fin's back this fine lady did ride
(And dive ye back down under, O!)*

*Her skin it did shimmer like silvery dew
(Sing rain, wind and thunder, O)
What lay 'neath her waist, boys, no man ever knew
(And dive ye back down under, O!)*

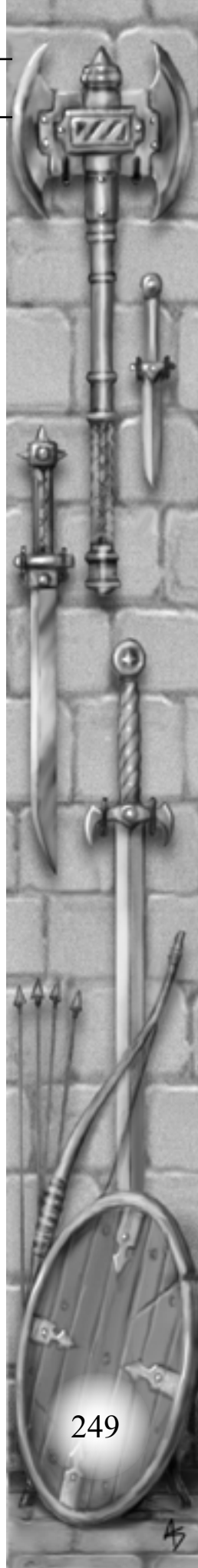
*She gave me a smile and unto me did say
(Sing rain, wind and thunder, O)
'I'll beat your boat back to the harbour this day,'
(And dive ye back down under, O!)*

*'And if you should do so, what would you from me?'
(Sing rain, wind and thunder, O)
'Your catch, sir, my own people's supper shall be.'
(And dive ye back down under, O!)*

*'But what will you give me, fair maid, if you lose?'
(Sing rain, wind and thunder, O)
'From all of my pearls, sir, you freely may choose.'
(And dive ye back down under, O!)*

Extract from 'The Fisherman's Lament' as sung by Rick Hardup, self-proclaimed Bard in Residence at the Lord of Laughter, Crescent City

determine, it could also be adapted for a lower level party; simply have Malachor a prematurely hatched Devouring One, undersized and lacking in demonic powers but still a grave threat.



THE FORTRESS OF KARKULIUM

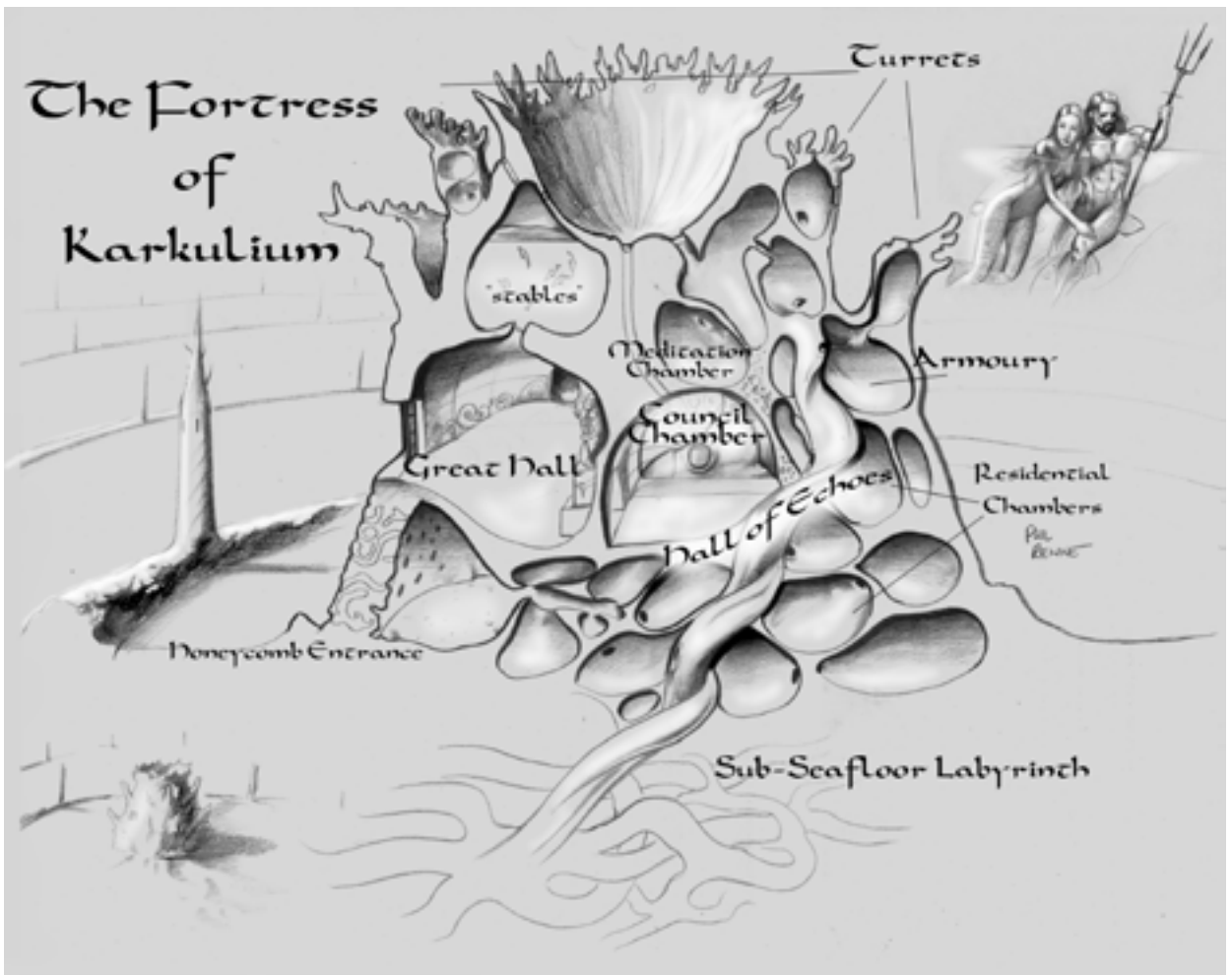
Sometimes the features of the landscape attract tritons and surface dwellers alike. One such feature is the point at which one land is separated from another by nothing more than a narrow stretch of sea. Surface dwellers build many ports in such areas, as the opposite country can be reached in less than a day's sailing time. Tritons, for their part, find marine channels to be ideal defensive locations. As an added attraction, the surface dweller traffic often deposits metals and other useful resources upon the seabed.

Karkulium can be sited in any tropical or temperate location where a narrow stretch of water connects two oceans. If a campaign does not have such a feature, it could also be sited at the mouth of a very large river, especially one that flowed into an inland sea or broad lake.

THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF KARKULIUM

Situated on a coral reef that juts like a spur into the sea between two shores, Karkulium began its existence seventy-five years ago as an insignificant outpost settlement and rapidly became a vital strategic location in the war against the sahuagin. The channel in which it stands is the main sea-bridge between the sahuagin lands of the west and the triton territories in the east, as well as being a heavily frequented shipping route for the surface dwellers. Like a keep on a narrow mountain pass, Karkulium prevents the sahuagin from forcing their way through.

The surface-dwelling civilizations on either side of the channel know of the triton castle and keep well away from it, steering their ships around it rather than over it. As far as they are concerned, the tritons are keeping the region safe from the sea devils and long may they continue to do so. Older sailors mutter that the sea devils would not have shown such an interest in the channel if



it weren't for the tritons occupying it in the first place but few listen to them.

Karkulium is an ideal place for players to meet tritons for the first time. It is right in the midst of surface civilization, giving the players an easy return to their own familiar world. Its triton inhabitants are slightly more used to surface dwellers than most, so there will not be so much of a gulf of understanding between them and the players as usual.

WITHIN THE FORTRESS

The chief elder of Karkulium and bearer of the sacred conch is Celebrith, a scarred and seasoned veteran who understands the ways of surface dwellers better than most of his kind. Nauthilaa, an aged yet sprightly female seawarden, is in charge of maintaining the defences. She is far older than she looks and still has a clear memory of coming to the Prime material Plane as a youngling.

Using their expertise with coral moulding, Nauthilaa and her fellow seawardens have created a number of bizarre-looking defences. The first of these is the set of concentric ripple-like waves that surrounds Karkulium, through which domed bunkers with arrow slits rise at intervals. During an attack, these trenches are occupied by crossbow-wielding tritons. They use the bunkers as a place to retreat for medical aid or more ammunition.

The second layer of defence is the honeycomb of tunnels leading into the fortress itself. The patrols of scouts and light cavalry use this egress to enter and leave. The tunnels are only five feet across, with no room for an invading army to enter more than two abreast. Anyone not intimately familiar with the labyrinth would quickly become lost and fall foul of the traps that riddle it. Nauthilaa has also coated many of the surfaces of dead-end tunnels with *spike stones*.

The castle has a larger set of gates above the labyrinth level, used whenever large creatures need to be brought in or out. These gates are made from solid nacre-inlaid coral a foot thick, covered with the tritons' swirling artistic forms. For the gates to be opened, a complicated mechanism must first be primed from the inside by turning a series of great wheels in the council chamber. If the wheels are moved wrongly, the mechanism locks and must be reset by someone who knows the correct procedure. Only Celebrith, Nauthilaa and the Council of Elders know how to work the gate system.

Beyond the main gates lies the grand hall, where three statues stand. One is of Merefather Alacrustus, the

first leader of the Tritons; another is of Harrowthrax, the founder of Karkulium; the last is of Kaia, a wily-looking triton scout who prepared most of the traps in and around Karkulium and tragically lost her life when a comrade sprang one of them by accident while she was working on it.

The council chamber is hemispherical, lit by dim shafts of light from a grating in the roof. Its only features are the pedestal where the sacred conch stands when not in use and a large circular plinth marked with a map of the channel and its environs. This map is used to keep track of the position of enemy forces and plan expeditions.

Beyond the council chamber is the hall of echoes, a winding spiral that ascends into the castle's turrets and down beyond the labyrinth into deep rock. This is the main repository for the castle's historical carvings. The private dwellings of the castle's occupants are at the bottom of the hall of echoes, arranged into clusters of caves and sub-caves like bubbles blown in the coral. The deepest and best protected of these are the egg caverns, where new tritons wait to be born.

At the top of the spiral are found the meditation chambers (where Nauthilaa and the homestead's peacemakers are usually found), the upper defensive turrets, the workshop and the armoury. The workshop is filled at all times with an assortment of sculpture materials, many of them valuable. Gems and stones to a total value of 1,250 gold pieces could be ransacked from here, though it would take at least half an hour to collect them all.

POPULATION OF KARKULIUM

In addition to Celebrith and Nauthilaa the homestead houses a total of 250 citizens, 8 elders, 30 scouts, 25 light cavalry, 20 heavy cavalry, 20 mounted archers, 4 peacebringers, 6 weaponwrights and 3 seawardens. Karkulium's stable is a school of porpoises whose number ranges between sixty and eighty. Celebrith's own mount is a hoary sea cat called Spinecracker, who still has the broken point of a sahuagin trident embedded in his flank.

Celebrith, Elder Triton, Conchbearer of Karkulium

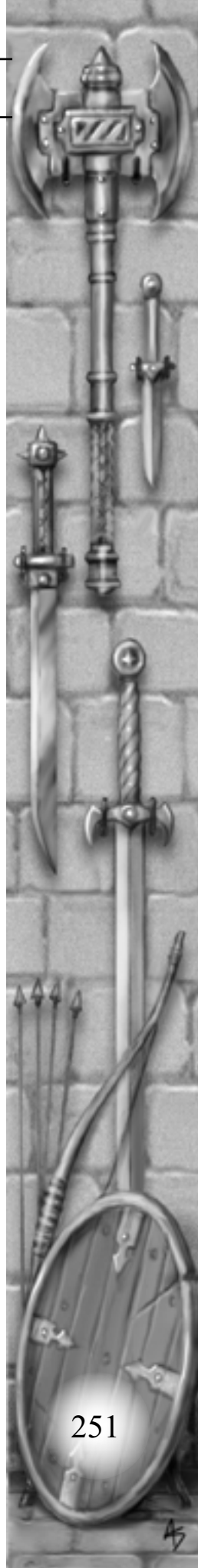
Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

3rd Level Ranger

Hit Dice: 9d8+3d10+24 (85 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 5 ft., swim 40 ft.



TRITON REFERENCE LIST

AC: 24 (+3 Dex, +6 natural, +5 nacreous breastplate), touch 13, flat-footed 21

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+18

Attack: *Trident of Warning* +20 melee (1d8+8) or heavy crossbow +15 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Full Attack: *Trident of Warning* +20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+8) or heavy crossbow +15 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. /5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Combat style (archery), darkvision 90ft., favoured enemy (sahuagin) +2, wild empathy

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +12, Will +10

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 14

Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Craft (jewellery) +7, Diplomacy +8, Hide +6, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (area history) +7, Listen +8, Profession (governor) +7, Ride +9, Spot +11, Survival +7

Feats: Cleave, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Track

Challenge Rating: 11

Treasure: *Horn of the Tritons*, *Potion of Cure Serious Wounds*, *Trident of Warning*

Alignment: Neutral good

The Conch

This is the story of the conch, the clarion shell, the symbol of the Merefather.

When first our people tasted the queer cold tides of these new seas, we were few in number and weak in blood. Many had offered up their lives, many more were grievously wounded. Even the little pebbles in our wake were stained blue with death. Before us lay only sand and rock. In this wilderness, we knew not what was good to eat or what would sting and bite and make an end of us.

Merefather Astyorax called the remaining elders together and bade them take each a band and swim forth in search of food, so that the hungry might eat. Melenaur his cavalryman answered him and said; shall we leave our people unprotected? For while we go to find wherewith to eat, our young may themselves be eaten and we shall return to find only sorrow and empty waters. For who is yet strong to defend them? Ye, even ye, cannot do this alone. If they cry, we shall not hear them, for wide, yea, wide is the sea.

Then was the hand of Merefather Astyorax guided for the first time by the grace of the foster-mother and he took from the sea floor a certain shell, twisted like a gnarled horn. He spoke again unto his captains, saying; by the cry of this shell I shall summon ye, should there be need. He set the shell to his lips, and lo, a sound like unto the bellow of a sea-dragon to her mate, resounding over all the dunes for many leagues afar and booming down all the deeps. In this we were glad.

From that day forth did the Merefather take the conch to be his sovereign symbol in our new home, the sign of his marriage to our foster-mother, the good sea of the new world. So it has been; so shall it be ever.

From *Legends of the Triton People* by Zemeul Falkenstein

Nauthilaa

Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

12th Level Wizard

Hit Dice: 6d8+12d4+18 (56 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 5 ft., swim 40 ft.

AC: 18 (+6 natural, +2 *Ring of Protection*), touch 12, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+13

Attack: Trident +13 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Full Attack: Trident +13/+8/+3 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Mould coral, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +17

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 12

Skills: Concentration +16, Craft (alchemy) +14, Craft (stonemasonry) +10, Hide +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (architecture & engineering) +9, Listen +11, Perform (sing, chant, epic, harmonise, poetry, conch) +7, Ride +9, Scry +9, Spellcraft +12, Spot +11

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Eschew Materials, Iron Will, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration

Challenge Rating: 18

Treasure: *Ring of Sustenance*, *Ring of Protection* +2, *Wand of Hold Person* (23 charges)

Alignment: Neutral good

Spells: 0th level: *Detect Magic*, *Flare*, *Mending* x2; 1st level: *Mage Armour* x2, *Alarm* x2, *Sleep*; 2nd level: *See Invisibility*, *Blur* x2, *Mirror Image*; 3rd level: *Magic Circle against Evil*, *Haste* x2; 4th level: *Minor Globe of Invulnerability*, *Otiluke's Resilient Sphere*, *Wall of Ice*; 5th level: *Hold Monster*, *Mind Fog*; 6th level: *Repulsion*, *Mass Suggestion*

TRITON REFERENCE LIST

The first part of the following section consists of examples of the various different triton specialists as well as the oldest and the youngest members of a typical Triton community. The statistics given here represent the specialist at a beginning or intermediate level of experience. Games Masters may adjust these templates at will to produce veteran specialists or customised individuals, using the standard rules for monster advancement given in *Core Rulebook III*. (Base statistics for the triton seawarden are given in Chapter 4, Triton Society.) The second part of the section details two additional sea creatures sometimes used as mounts by the tritons, namely the giant crab and the sea turtle.

When encountered outside the homestead, triton light cavalry are always mounted upon porpoises and heavy cavalry upon sea cats. See *Core Rulebook III*, pages 200 and 160 respectively.

Triton Scout

Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 4d8+4 (22 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 5 ft., swim 50 ft.

AC: 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+5

Attack: Trident +5 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Full Attack: Trident +5 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11

Skills: Craft (underwater trapmaking) +8, Hide +9, Listen +10, Ride +6, Spot +10, Tumble +4

Feats: Mounted Combat, Alertness

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always neutral good

Triton Light Cavalry

Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 5d8+5 (27 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 5 ft., Swim 40 ft.

AC: 20 (+4 nacreous scale mail, +6 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+8

Attack: Trident +8 melee (1d8+3) or heavy crossbow +5 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Full Attack: Trident +8 melee (1d8+3) or heavy crossbow +5 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11

Skills: Craft (carving) +7, Hide +3, Intimidate +4, Listen +9, Ride +8, Spot +9

Feats: Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always neutral good

Triton Heavy Cavalry

Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 8d8+8 (44 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 5 ft., swim 40 ft.

AC: 22 (+1 Dex, +5 nacreous breastplate, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 21

Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+12

Attack: Trident +12 melee (1d8+4) or heavy crossbow +9 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Full Attack: Trident +12/+7 melee (1d8+4) or heavy crossbow +9 ranged (1d10/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

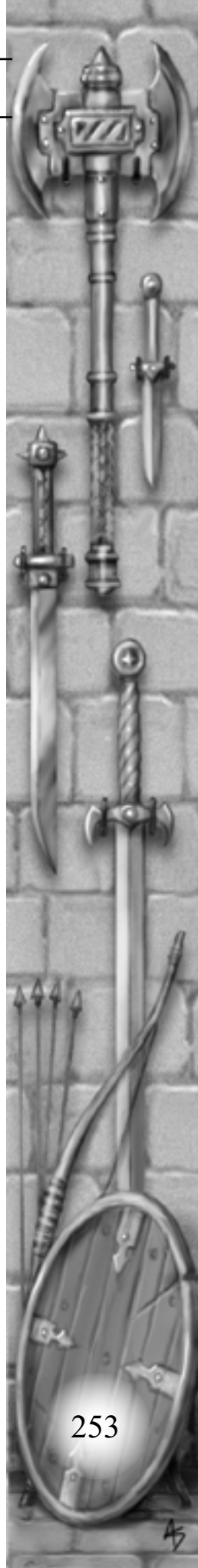
Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +7

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11

Skills: Craft (barricade building) +7, Hide +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (marine history) +6, Listen +9, Ride +12, Sense Motive +6, Spot +9

Feats: Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge



TRITON REFERENCE LIST

Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good

Triton Mounted Archer Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 5d8+5 (28 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 5 ft., swim 40 ft.
AC: 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+6
Attack: Trident +6 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10/19-20)
Full Attack: Trident +6 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10/19-20)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11
Skills: Craft (fletching) +8, Hide +10, Intimidate +3, Listen +9, Ride +10, Spot +9
Feats: Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery

Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good

Triton Peacebringer Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 7d8+7 (39 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 5 ft., swim 40 ft.
AC: 16 (+6 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Damage: +7/+8
Attack: Trident +8 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10/19-20)
Full Attack: Trident +8/+3 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10/19-20)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +8
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 12
Skills: Craft (fine art) +10, Diplomacy +8, Heal +11, Hide +8, Listen +13, Ride +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +13
Feats: Alertness, Mounted Combat, Skill Focus (heal)

Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good

Triton Weaponwright Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 7d8+7 (39 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 5 ft., swim 40 ft.
AC: 16 (+6 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+8
Attack: Trident +7 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10/19-20)
Full Attack: Trident +7/+2 melee (1d8+1) or heavy crossbow +7 ranged (1d10/19-20)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +8
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 12
Skills: Appraise +7, Craft (weaponsmith) +15, Craft (armourer) +10, Hide +8, Listen +13, Ride +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +13
Feats: Alertness, Mounted Combat, Skill Focus (craft (weaponsmith))

Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good

Triton Elder Medium-size Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 9d8+18 (59 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 5 ft., swim 40 ft.
AC: 24 (+3 Dex, +6 natural, +5 nacreous breastplate), touch 13, flat-footed 21
Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+15
Attack: Trident +15 melee (1d8+6) or heavy crossbow +11 ranged (1d10/19-20)
Full Attack: Trident +15/+10 melee (1d8+6) or heavy crossbow +11 ranged (1d10/19-20)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +7
Abilities: Str 22, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 14

Skills: Craft (jewellery) +7, Diplomacy +8, Hide +6, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (area history) +7, Listen +8, Profession (governor) +7, Ride +9, Spot +8
Feats: Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack

Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good

Triton Youngling

Small Outsider (Native, Water)

Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 5 ft., swim 30 ft.

AC: 15 (+1 size, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/-4

Attack: Fist +1 melee (1d2-1)

Full Attack: Fist +1 melee (1d2-1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Darkvision 90ft.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Hide +3, Listen+3, Spot +2

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always neutral good

Spell-like abilities (Sp): All Tritons may use *summon nature's ally IV* once per day at 7th caster level, often choosing water elementals as their companions.

Crab, Giant

Large Animal (Aquatic)

Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft.*

AC: 17 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +7 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/11

Attack: Claw +7 melee (1d6+4)

Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (1d6+4)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved Grab, Squeeze

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +1

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 2

Skills: Hide +3, Spot +6

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude

Climate/Terrain: Any aquatic

Organisation: Solitary or school (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 5-8 HD (Large), 9-12 HD (Huge)

Fishermen dread these monstrous crustaceans, as their claws can easily smash the underside of a small boat to splinters or scissor an arm or leg clean off. Fortunately, they are passive unless provoked to fight.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the giant crab must hit an opponent of Medium-size or smaller with its claw attack. If it gets a hold, it squeezes.

Squeeze (Ex): A giant crab that gets a hold on a Medium-size or smaller opponent automatically deals 1d6+4 points of claw damage each round the hold is maintained.

Speed: *A giant crab may move sideways at a base speed of 50 ft.

Sea Turtle

Medium-size Animal (Aquatic)

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (20 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 5 ft., swim 60 ft.

AC: 15 (+5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+3

Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d6+1)

Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d6+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +2

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +3, Spot +4

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude

Climate/Terrain: Warm aquatic

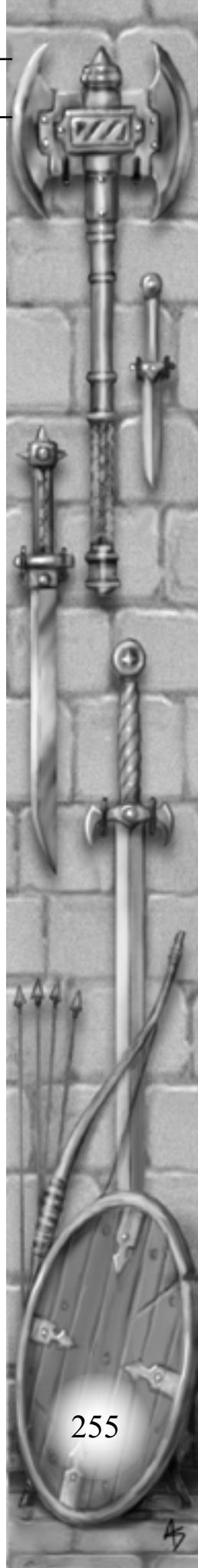
Organisation: Solitary or pair

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Sea turtles are very long-lived. Many triton homesteads have kept the same animals in their stables for more than seventy years.



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