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THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

TROGLODYTES



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of the Dungeons and Dragons®
Player's Handbook, Third Edition,
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The Slayer's Guide To Troglodytes

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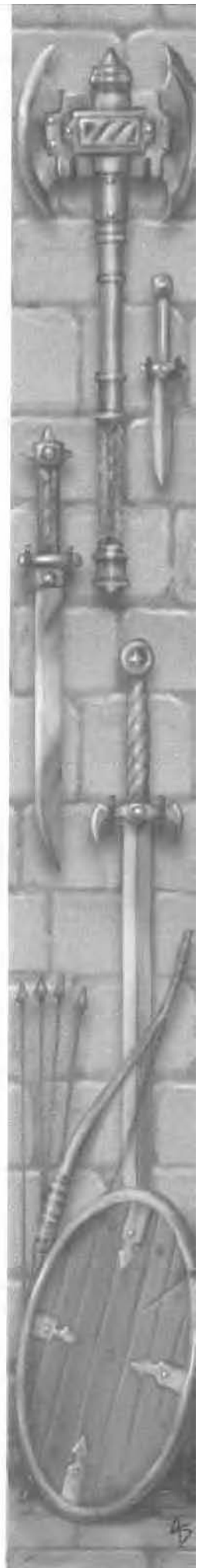
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INTRODUCTION

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, aren't 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.'

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

'-right, one of these *troglydtes*. 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 troglydte 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 may 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



TROGLODYTE PHYSIOLOGY

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

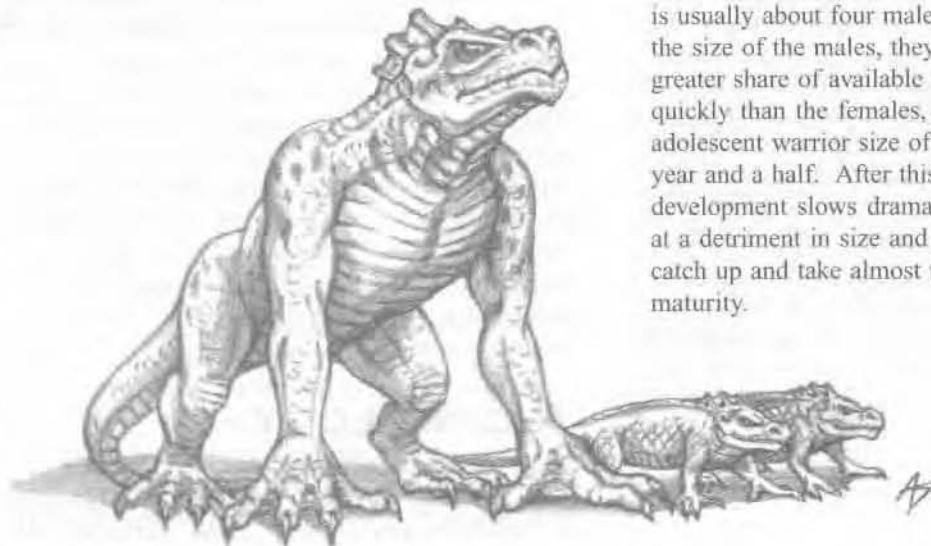
The lifecycle of a troglodyte is another aspect that makes them extremely alien creatures and has a dramatic impact upon all aspects of their life, society and existence. Troglodytes are all nearly uniform in potential at hatching with only the usual range of ability, strength and intellect one sees 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.



'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 buggger. 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.'

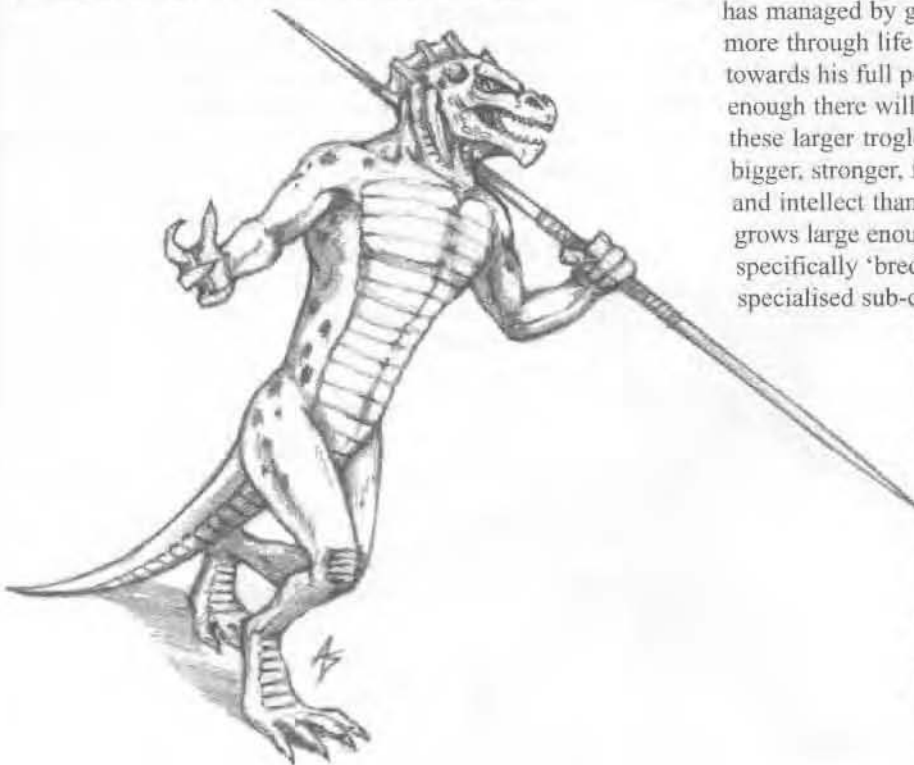
Alfric the Huntsman, to anybody prepared to listen.

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 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



HABITAT

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, Mind Flayers and Kuo Toa 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 Meyellen - 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

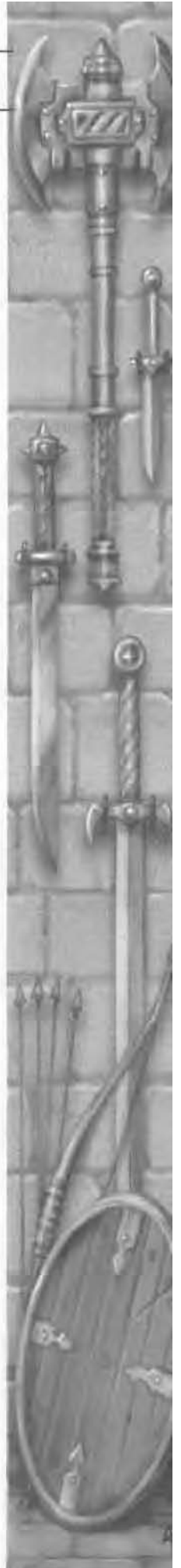
Female Troglodytes are also non-sentient. The male leaders will occasionally remember to toss them some food so they do not starve but that is about as much attention they receive unless a male is in the throes of a mating frenzy.

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



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adolescents and most adventurers will have no idea of 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 varned 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





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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 egg 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 Mind Flayers) 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.

'That's ludicrous, Karthos!'

'Is it?' The powerfully built sage settled into his chair stroking the grey-slashed black of his goatee. 'What makes you think so, Belden?'

'All the Empire knows that man was created by the Gods and placed here to rule over all things. The church -'

'- Is full of it and you know it,' the sage interrupted. 'We've studied with both the elves and the dwarves. Even other nations of man have their own interpretation of the origins of the world. The Church's view may be gospel to those of faith but it's insufferably arrogant! Would you like proof? Come and see.'

The elder sage strode to a nearby table and swept away the cloth that covered it with a flourish, revealing a carefully marked and detailed model of an archaeological site. 'Unlike most of those barbaric tomb robbers looking for treasure, I merely seek the truth. Look upon the angles of these walls, the shape of the buildings. What do they tell you?'

The young man stared, his eyes squinting and then opening and closing as tears ran down his cheeks. 'I - gah! What kind of sorcery do you have on that thing that makes it do that? I can't even look at it!'

'Interesting isn't it? There is no magic upon this model my young friend. I tell you as well that it was a great trial to build it properly. My own mind wanted to change the angles. To alter things in such a way that my eyes could comprehend it without that effect you've noticed so succinctly. It was a true effort of will to stick to the worker's measurements. You can't notice the eye twisting while on the ground at the site. Only from above on a carpet was I truly able to experience it first-hand. It's so disturbing I have to keep the model covered or it gives me migraines.'

'But the age you're claiming -'

'Is correct from sedimentary calculation. Arcane divination also gives the age as I've specified. Well over two million years old. Whatever built this city, if it even was a city and not something else, was very definitely not human and predates all of our previous theories of the age of the world. I am convinced, based on the evidence so far although I stand ready to be proven wrong.'

'It's astonishing, Karthos.'

'You think so, lad? You've not seen the strangest part.' The hulking sage moved to another corner of his eclectic study. 'It took me two weeks to get this stone out undamaged. I was lucky. It was the only part of a much larger stela to survive intact against the sands of time. Behold...'

With his usual flourish, Karthos pulled aside a tapestry to reveal a strange carved stone of black and gold marble. Etched into it in deep bas-relief were a group of strange and yet familiar creatures in a construction scene. At the top of a wall stood what appeared to be lizardman warriors. Below, scuttling from place to place were tiny kobolds moving under the lash of crested lizardlike beings that walked on two legs. More of those same crested creatures toiled at stone carving and another at what appeared to be a smithy. Over it all, a red dragon soared - seemingly giving instructions to the creatures below.

'Lords above!' Belden gasped in a whisper. 'Those creatures! Together!'

'Indeed,' Karthos smirked. 'Lizardman janissaries, troglodyte warriors and craftsmen, kobold slaves. All of them seemingly in the service of a dragon or, perhaps, a Dragon Empire.'

'This can't be.' Belden was stunned, 'it just can't.'

'Think outside the casket, youngster. Haven't you ever wondered why all those races speak some variant or dialect - even if horribly corrupted - of draconic? It was only this year we discovered the troglodyte tongue is a horribly corrupt form of that same language. For ages most sages were convinced they spoke their own tongue and no other! The puzzle fits, young Belden. It is quite possible that everything we've always believed to be true is horribly wrong.'



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.





METHODS OF WARFARE

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.

ROLE-PLAYING 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. Role-playing interaction with them could be most amusing for the referee 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.



ROLE-PLAYING WITH TROGLODYTES

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 even the most skilled parties will have a tough time fighting 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 humanoid. 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

Trogloodytes 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.



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

† 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?

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.

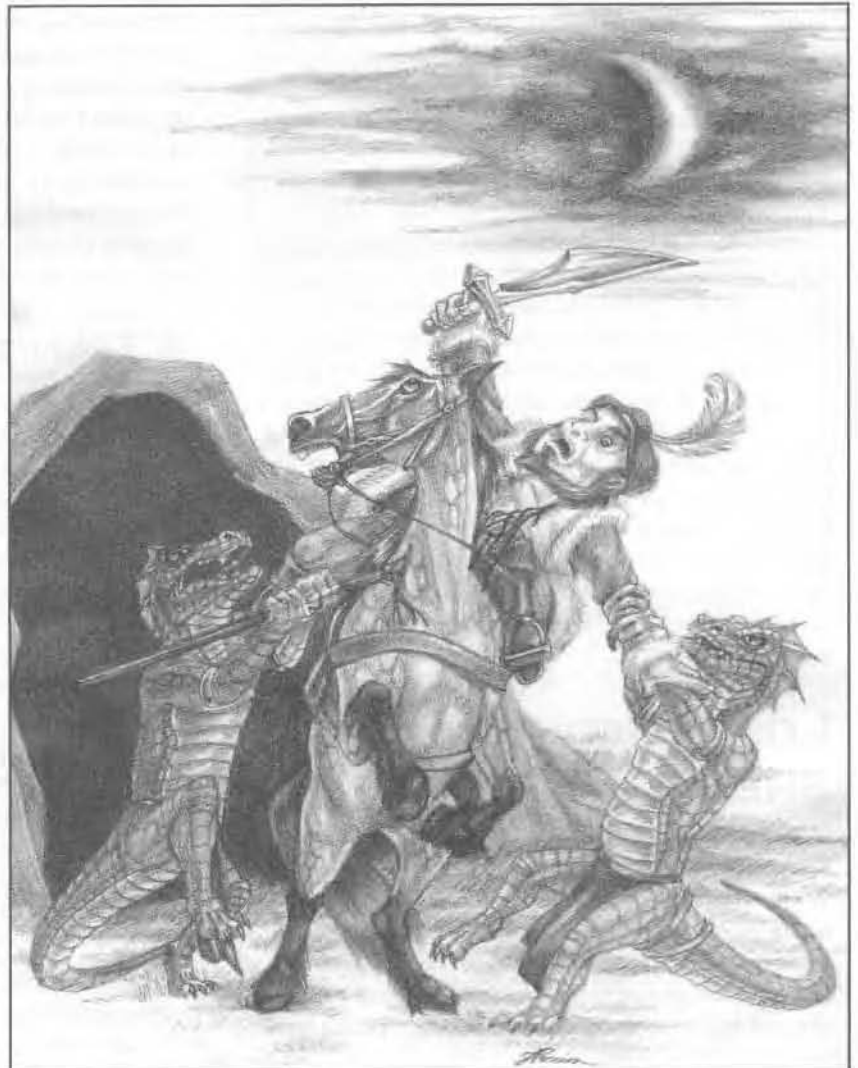
RID THE WORLD OF LIZARD SCUM!

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, 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?



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 (Cha), 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 only 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.

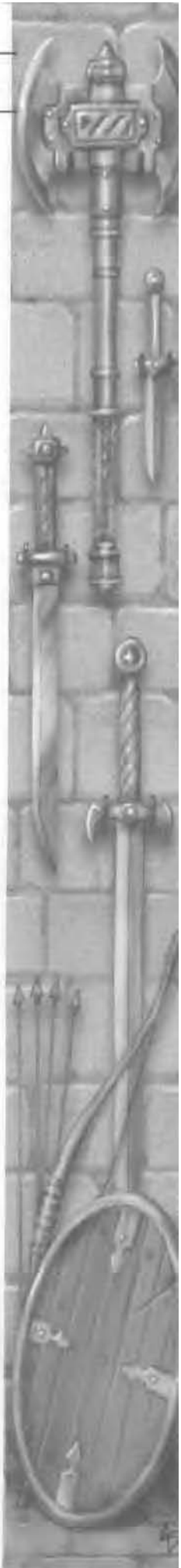
The Forge: The crafter is now a rarity amongst troglodyte kind, having discovered how to forge metal. From 3rd level onwards, the crafter receives a +4 competence bonus to all Craft (armoursmithing and weaponsmithing) checks.

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	+0	+2	+0	+2	Lizard Master
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Mine Works
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	The Forge
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Arcane Forging
5	+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'd 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.

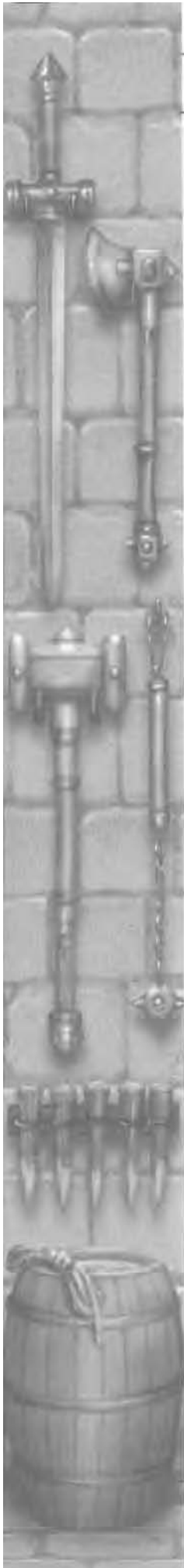
THE TROGLODYTE TRIBE

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



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

expand its domination over the region surrounding the shine. The Night Lizard King's only real obstacle is its own senior 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 Shine 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



THE SHRINE OF ST DARIAS



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.

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

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

now houses the tribe's giant lizards. During the day they will either be here resting or sunning themselves in the 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 shrine, 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



THE SHRINE OF ST DARIAS

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 drygoods 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 drygoods 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.

The Night Lizard King

Medium-Size Humanoid (Troglodyte)

7th level cleric, 3rd Level Fighter

Hit Dice: 115 hp (9d8+3d10+48)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 25 (+1 Dex, +6 natural armour, +8 *breastplate* +3)

Attacks: Greatsword +14/+9 melee (or 2 claws +13/+9 melee), bite +11/+6 melee; or javelin +11/+6 ranged

Damage: Greatsword 2d6+6; bite 1d4+4, claw 1d4+4; or javelin 1d6+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

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 +7, Concentration +9, Heal +5, Hide +4*, Listen +5, Jump +7, Spellcraft +5

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

Spells: Level 0: 2 x *detect magic*, 3 x *inflict minor wounds, resistance*; Level 1: *bane, cause fear, detect good, doom, extinguish, protection from good*; Level 2: *darkness, desecrate, inflict moderate wounds, pitch sight*; Level 3: *animate dead, magic circle against good, summon monster III*; Level 4: *lesser planar ally, unholy blight*

Challenge Rating: 11

Treasure: *Breastplate* +3, Greatsword

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

* In rocky or subterranean settings this bonus becomes +8

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 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 SHRINE OF ST DARIAS

the lair itself, though over a hundred troglodytes fighting on their own turf is no easy proposition, even for a mid-level party. However, several loopholes 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.

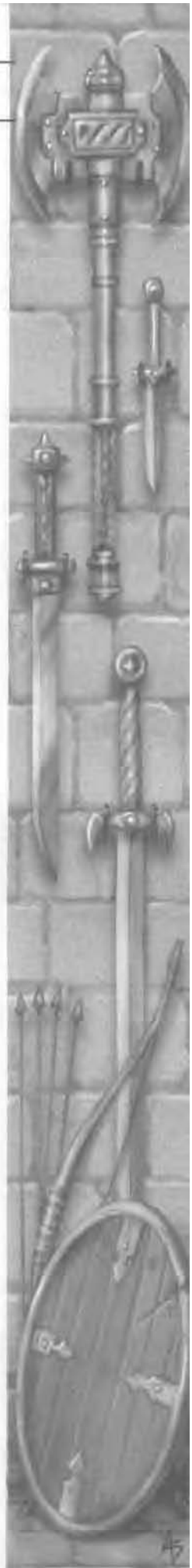
He stared at the entrance and the surrounding area for several moments before finally catching a glimpse of movement in the near total darkness. A thin shadow scampered amongst the other shadows on the rough pathway below him. How Thurisaz spotted such things sometimes amazed him, though they had travelled 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

6th Level Fighter

Medium-Size Humanoid (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 2d8+6d10+32+3 (77 hp). **Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative). **Speed:** 30 ft. **AC:** 16 (+6 natural). **Attacks:** Longspear +11/+6 melee (or 2 claws +10/+5 melee), bite +8/+3 melee; or javelin +8/+3 ranged. **Damage:** Longspear 1d8+3, bite 1d4+3, claw 1d4+3; or javelin 1d6+3. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft. (10 ft. with longspear). **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +14, Ref +2, Will +2. **Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 11, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10. **Skills:** Climb +9, Hide +7*, Jump +9, Listen +6, Spot +2. **Feats:** Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (javelin, longspear).

Challenge Rating: 7

Troglodyte Leader

4th Level Warrior

Medium-Size Humanoid (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 6d8+18+3 (48 hp). **Initiative:** +0 **Speed:** 30 ft. **AC:** 16 (+6 natural). **Attacks:** Longspear +8 melee (or 2 claws +7 melee), bite +5 melee; or javelin +6 ranged. **Damage:** Longspear 1d8+2, bite 1d4+2, claw 1d4+2; or javelin 1d6+2. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft. (10 ft. with longspear). **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +1. **Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10. **Skills:** Climb +6, Hide +7*, Jump +6, Listen +4. **Feats:** Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (javelin, longspear).

Challenge Rating: 5

Troglodyte Crafter

3rd Level Crafter

Medium-Size Humanoid (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 5d8+10 (33 hp). **Initiative:** +0 **Speed:** 20 ft. **AC:** 21 (+6 natural, +5 chainmail). **Attacks:** Longsword +5 melee (or 2 claws +4 melee), bite +2 melee; or javelin +4 ranged. **Damage:** Longsword 1d8+1, bite 1d4+1, claw 1d4+1; or javelin 1d6+1. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft. **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +4. **Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11. **Skills:** Craft (armoursmith) +7, Hide

+2*, Listen +4, Profession (miner) +8. **Feats:** Lizard Master, Mineworks, Multiattack, The Forge, Weapon Focus (javelin, longspear).

Challenge Rating: 4

Troglodyte Priest

4th Level Cleric

Medium-Size Humanoid (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 6d8+12+3 (42 hp). **Initiative:** +0 **Speed:** 30 ft. **AC:** 16 (+6 natural). **Attacks:** Stone Mace +5 melee (or 2 claws +5 melee), bite +3 melee; or javelin +5 ranged. **Damage:** Stone Mace 1d6+1, bite 1d4+1, claw 1d4+1; or javelin 1d6+1. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft. **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +9, Ref +1, Will +5. **Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11. **Skills:** Concentration +6, Hide +7*, Listen +4, Spellcraft +4. **Feats:** Combat Casting, Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (javelin). **Spells:** Level 0: *detect magic, detect poison, 2 x inflict minor wounds, resistance*; Level 1: *bane, curse water, inflict light wounds, protection from law, random action*; Level 2: *darkness, pitch sight, shatter*

Challenge Rating: 5

Troglodyte Warrior

Medium-Size Humanoid (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (13 hp). **Initiative:** -1 (Dex). **Speed:** 30 ft. **AC:** 15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural). **Attacks:** Longspear +1 melee (or 2 claws +1 melee), bite -1 melee; or javelin +1 ranged. **Damage:** Longspear 1d8, bite 1d4, claw 1d4; or javelin 1d6. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft. (10 ft. with longspear). **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +5, Ref -1, Will +0. **Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 9, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10. **Skills:** Hide +6*, Listen +3. **Feats:** Multiattack, Weapon Focus (javelin).

Challenge Rating: 1

Troglodyte Adolescent

Medium-Size Humanoid (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 1d8+2 (7 hp). **Initiative:** -1 (Dex). **Speed:** 30 ft. **AC:** 15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural). **Attacks:** 2 claws +0 melee, bite -2 melee. **Damage:** Bite 1d4, claw 1d4. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft. **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +0. **Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 9, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10. **Skills:** Hide +6*, Listen +2. **Feats:** Multiattack.

Challenge Rating: 1

Troglodyte Female

Medium-Size Humanoid (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 1d8 (5 hp). **Initiative:** -1 (Dex). **Speed:** 30 ft.

AC: 13 (-1 Dex, +4 natural). **Attacks:** 2 claws +0 melee, bite -2 melee. **Damage:** Bite 1d4, claw 1d4. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft. **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -2. **Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 6. **Skills:** Hide +7* **Feats:** Multiattack.

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Troglodyte Hatchlings

Small-Size Humanoid (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 1/2d8 (2 hp). **Initiative:** -1 (Dex). **Speed:** 30 ft. **AC:** 12 (-1 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural). **Attacks:** Bite -1 melee. **Damage:** Bite 1d4 -2. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft. **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -2. **Abilities:** Str 6, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 6. **Skills:** Hide +7*

Challenge Rating: 1/4

*All Troglodytes may add +4 to their Hide score when in rocky or subterranean settings.



Giant Lizards

Large-Size Animal

Hit Dice: 7d8+21 (52 hp). **Initiative:** +0 **Speed:** 40 ft. **AC:** 15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural). **Attacks:** Bite +12 melee. **Damage:** Bite 1d8+12. **Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 10 ft./5ft. **Special Attacks:** Stench, darkvision 90ft. **Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +6. **Abilities:** Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8. **Skills:** Hide +3, Listen +9, Spot +8.

Challenge Rating: 4

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

Evil

Level: Cleric 1

Components: V,S

Casting time: 1 action

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

Area: Cone

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

Evil

Level: Cleric 2

Components: V,S, M

Casting time: 1 action

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

Target: One creature per level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

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.

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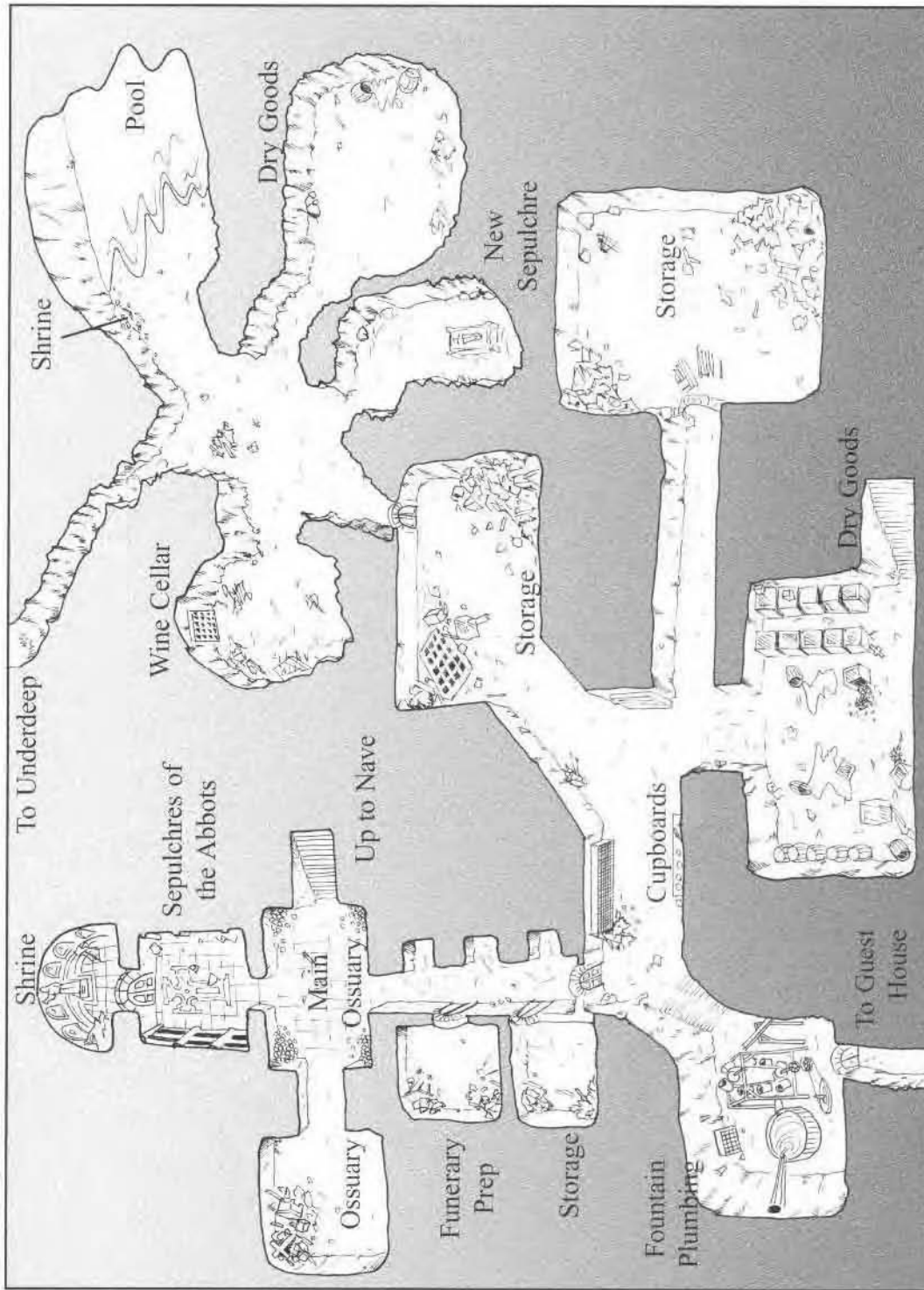
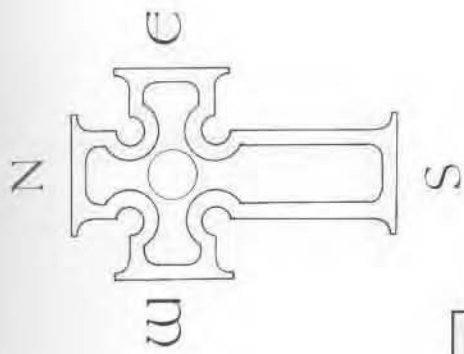
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The Shrine of St Oarias



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THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

TROGLODYTES

AN ANCIENT EVIL AWAITS

Troglodytes are a thoroughly foul reptilian race with all the chill mercilessness and cruelty of a cold-blooded snake. Many consider them to be as evil as the most loathsome of demons. Troglodytes inhabit the underdeep of the world for they are creatures of the dark but may also be found in the rocky peaks and passes of desolate mountains. These few tribes who live near the surface wage a constant war on nearby settlements during cold, moonless nights.

In the past many Games Masters have simply used Troglodytes as sword fodder for adventuring parties. Their skill with javelins, foul scent glands and chameleonic ambush abilities combined with large numbers make them truly lethal opponents. Up to now they have rarely been treated with the depth and detail such a race deserves. With this book, everything changes.

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