

TAGGAR'S TOMES OF TROUBLES:

Book 2: Odd Goblins

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TAGAR'S TOMES OF TROUBLES: ODD GOBLINS

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Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons™ Roleplaying Game
and The Expanded Psionics Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

INTRO

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What?

I've no time for you now – can't you see I've a far lovelier companion, and as a gentlemen her needs certainly must be my paramount consideration?

Sir, I must insist you take your hands off of me.

Now that was simply uncalled for. Tagar, could you come over here for a moment? These gentlemen seem to be having trouble finding their seats.

Yes, I thought you might rethink things. You're clearly men of great reason, and hopefully substantial wealth; I expect you feel terribly remorseful for these tears in my doublet, and plan to make full restitution? Excellent.

Now by the blessed left pap of Rhianna, what is so important that you felt the need to chase away my companion? Oh, you've slain a goblin have you, and you did it all by yourself? How courageous of you. Ah. Five to one, you say?

Just stop there, and let me make sure I understand correctly. You interrupted my evening in order to tell me of your great prowess as a slayer of malnourished creatures, and wave about a disgusting severed head that looks like it's been chewed on? Let us not forget that you felt your tale so urgent that your overinflated sense of self-importance caused you to lay hands on me, resulting in damage inflicted upon the new doublet I just received from the tailor this very day.

I should butter your heads, and let Tagar have you for a light snack...

There was no need to soil yourselves. Has the local adventurers guild's standards truly fallen so low that they'll take on boys who wet themselves at the first suggestion of being eaten? My companion's reputed appetite for heads has perhaps become a bit hyperbolic in recent days. How it happened is one of those unexplainable mysteries of life.

Where were we? Ah, yes, goblins. To be specific, those poor creatures you heroically slaughtered. No, no. You want to be quiet now. I'm going to tell you about some goblins that would make you wet your pants... again.

You might want to take notes.



EMPYREAL

I recall Tagar and I were making our way through the ruins of some temple. I had innocently solved a puzzle, and a doorway opened between two pillars. There stood a woman of incomparable and radiant beauty. I was in the midst of composing a tribute to her eyes, when she spoke in a strange, resonant voice, asking if I were a god.

Not wishing to disappoint her, because no gentlemen should ever disappoint a lady, I answered in the affirmative. There was a searing flash of brilliance, what was surely the roaring of some titanic beast, and a sensation I can only liken to being rapidly pulled through a narrow opening. I imagine it was only

the work of a moment, but at the time I thought it was never going to end.

When my vision had cleared enough for me to make out anything, I found that Tagar and I had been deposited in a field. There were a number of people tilling the dry, yellowish dirt, raising great choking clouds of the stuff.

Elves and humans seemed to be in the majority, but there were other beings there as well. Among the delegation approaching us was an insectoid-being, all multi-jointed limbs and jerky movements. One thing they all had in common were identical garments made from a grayish cloth that shimmered unpleasantly as it caught the light.

Being a naturally friendly fellow, I attempted to communicate with the strangely-dressed farmers. The only response elicited by my eloquent elocution were fish-eyed stares. The lamps were burning, but no one was answering my knock, if you catch my meaning.

As much as I'm loath to admit it, even I couldn't draw a response from that assembly. Never being one to stick around when I'm not wanted, Tagar and I chose to take our leave. Given the apathy of a moment before, I had the strange feeling that the crowd blocking our path wasn't a sudden show of appreciation. Numbers were against us, and we found ourselves throughly detained.

After a time the crowd parted, moving in unison as they split down the middle; providing a clear path for the strange party that arrived on the scene. Standing nearly seven feet tall, a group of figures garbed in patchwork leather robes – seemingly made mostly from patches taken from animals of the two-legged variety – glided toward us. At first I thought them unnaturally thin for such height, but as the figure in front's robe caught and momentarily dragged, it was clear there were no feet beneath the hem of that robe.

They were unpleasant to look upon: their too-large heads throbbed and rippled, and their eyes bulged – like some pressure was near to forcing their skulls apart. It took me a moment, but I finally realized what they looked like, were you to deflate their heads. Goblins.

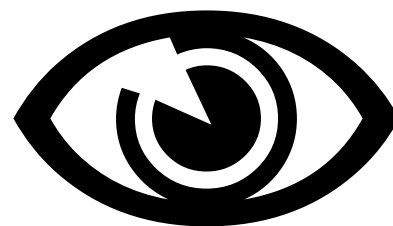
As these jumped-up goblins floated there staring at

us like we were so much horse muck soiling someone's hem, I felt the oddest thing. That hot, clinging wetness there at the front of your trousers? It was like that, only running through my head and down my back.

One of them spoke after that, directing us to come with him. Naturally Tagar and I were inclined to resist, but he just had some of his puppets help us along. We were taken to a bustling city, a metropolis of black basalt. Again, people of all types were in evidence, most of them mindless, or else reduced to a state of abject fear and obedience.

They kept us in a filthy pen, paying daily visits as they tried to break our spirits, promising we would soon join their "herd." We were able to learn a little of our captors. They called themselves the *Empyreal*, and claimed to have been brought to this place in a ship that the masters piloted through the great nothing. Using their mental abilities, they began enslaving all those they came across. The empyreal believe themselves to be the most perfect beings in all the planes, and seek to bring all creatures under their dominion.

Our escape was no easy task, and I have no desire to risk capture a second time. Even the normally redoubtable Tagar is hesitant at the thought of confronting our former captors.



EMPYREAL

Small Humanoid (Goblinoid, Psionic)

Hit Dice: 5d4+8 (18 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: Levitate 50ft. (10 squares),
Ground 10ft. (2 squares)

Armor Class: 15 (+1 Size, +4 Inertial Armor)
touch 10, flat footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/-3

Attack: dagger +2 melee (1d3-1/19-20) or
light crossbow +2 ranged (1d6/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: psionic powers

Special Qualities: darkvision 60ft., focus,
levitation, mind gestalt, polyglot

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

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 21, Wis 16,
Cha 6

Skills: Autohypnosis +15, Concentration +10,
Knowledge (Psionics) +17, Psicraft +17

Feats: Psionic Body, Combat Manifestation (B),
Expand Knowledge, Expand Knowledge (B)

Environment: Temperate Plains.

Organization: Solitary, pair, coterie (2 – 12).
In addition, there will be 1-3 thralls for every
empyrean present.

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +2



Empyrean resemble their cousins, with the exception of their enlarged heads, and the purple blotches that mark their skin in random patterns. Their typical garb is a long robe made from patches of skin of thralls whom have been punished for disobedience, or have simply outlived their usefulness.

Very rarely do empyrean take levels in character classes, the above stats are for a normal adult member of the race.

COMBAT

Empyrean only enter physical combat as a last resort, considering it to be beneath them. Instead they focus on using their mental powers against any opponents, and allow their thralls to do all the actual fighting. Depending on the exact nature of

the encounter, the thralls may be nothing more than peasant workers, former adventurers or exotic creatures captured and turned into mindless slaves by the empyrean.

PSIONIC POWERS: All adult empyrean are the equivalent of a 5th level Psion (Telepath). The Save

DCs for all powers is Intelligence based.

Typical Psion Powers Known (Power Points 36*, Save DC 15 + power level):

1st – *Charm (Psionic) Deceleration, Disable, Inertial Armor, Mind Thrust*

2nd – *Aversion, Brain Lock, Id Insinuation, Read Thoughts, Suggestion, Psionic*

3rd – *Crisis of Breath, Psionic Blast, Telekinetic Thrust*

*Empyrean rarely travel without first manifesting inertial armor, their normal power point reserve is 37.

Focus (Ex): Empyrean have no problem achieving psionic focus, and may make the Concentration check to do so as a free action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Levitation (Su): Because they do not touch the ground under normal circumstances, empyrean are immune to spells such as entangle, and may be out of the reach of smaller characters.

Mind Gestalt (Su): All empyrean within one mile of each other know what happens to any other - kill one, and all the others nearby will know it, and will already know whom they should be looking for. In addition, close proximity strengthens their already formidable abilities; every three empyrean within a 10 yard radius of each other increase their Intelligence modifier by +1, and gain +2 power points.

Polyglot (Sp): When dealing with any creature of Intelligence 3 or greater that is capable of speaking, an empyrean may use this ability to permanently learn that creature's language. He makes a psionic check (d20 + manifester level) against a DC of 10 + the target's Wisdom modifier – it is easier to use this ability against more intelligent targets; any positive Intelligence bonus lowers the DC of this check, while a negative Intelligence modifier raises the difficulty.

EMPYREAL AS CHARACTERS

While it is rare for an empyrean to separate herself from her fellows, it has been known to happen. All members of this race possess five levels of the psion (telepath) class, and many of those who advance beyond that take levels in the **Thrallherd Prestige Class***.

Empyrean possess the following racial traits:

- -2 Strength, -2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution, +6 Intelligence, +2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma. The impressive mental powers of these creatures has been developed at the expense of their physical bodies, and their attitude of superiority coupled with a lack of experience interacting with others on a meaningful level leaves them socially stunted.
- Small Size
- Levitation speed of 50ft. Base land speed of 10ft.
- Darkvision 60ft.
- +2 racial bonus on Autohypnosis, Concentration, Knowledge (Psionics) and Psicraft skill checks.
- Automatic Languages: Common, Goblin.
- Bonus Languages: Any
- Favored Class: Psion (Any).
- Level Adjustment: +2
- ECL: 7

*Thrallherd prestige class can be found in *The Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

THE BONESNAP GOBLIN

Tagar and I have seen many things twisted by magic, and at the whim of those who wield such forces. We were once the unintentional guests of a whole domain that had suffered such a fate.

Through a series of unexplainable events, we wound up crossing the Unliving Queen of Shar-vonal. I say unexplainable because I have no idea how it was I left the castle without informing her. Some greater power must have spirited me into that bed where Dahleena's personal guard found me. What mere mortal can fathom the intentions of the divine?

Ever loyal, Tagar attempted to come to my aid; only

to find himself sharing the next cell over. Dahleena felt that exiling us to a plane created by a former lover of hers would be suitable punishment. It should be noted that this former lover was a powerful, not to mention malicious magus with a penchant for experimentation. I can't help but feel she overreacted.

We found ourselves unceremoniously deposited in the middle of some primeval forest during a torrential storm. At least it wasn't cold.

We sought what shelter we could, waiting for the rains to pass. When they did, we found ourselves immediately wishing for their return; for with the storm's passing the local fauna came out in force. First came the insects. Biting, stinging, buzzing, crawling insects that seemed devoted solely to consuming me alive.

After a time we could hear the noises of larger creatures as they edged close enough to try and discover if we were suitably edible; the most aggressive of these beasts being a four-winged thing all covered in scales. Tagar killed one, and its fellows instantly fell to devouring the corpse.

The forest boasted at least one creature massive enough to shake the soaring trees around us. We chose not to stay and discover what manner of beast it might be – on the chance that it might be the manner of beast that found us to be a delightfully delicious mouthful.

Much later I would speak with a man who said that it was most likely sheer chance that drew them to us. Our presence caused the other creatures of the forest to seek us out, and in turn the hunters came to take advantage of the gathering of prey.

Not that I would have cared had someone told me at the time. The largest goblin I have ever seen, and ever hope to see, landed on my back. I felt a searing pain as it tried to open me up. I was fortunate in that Tagar brained it with a fallen limb before it could try opening my throat with its teeth.

They seemed to come out of nowhere – naked, growling and slavering, great shaggy manes of tangled hair falling back from heavily-ridged brows. Their skins were a deep red, and their bodies muscled near to match Tagar's. There were 10, maybe

15 of them; more than enough that we didn't want a standing fight, not with us unarmed and my back burning like some devil was personally applying hellfire to my tender flesh. I heroically summoned up enough focus to dazzle them with a magical incantation - after which we made our escape.

They must have settled on easier prey, for which I am to this day infinitely grateful, because before half the night had passed, I was overwhelmed by agony. The fire seared me to my very bones – even the touch of air against my skin was to be flayed alive. The pain drove me to my knees, and the very act of touching the ground only increased my hurt; for I felt the impact cause my legs to break, the bone snapping into splinters to pierce my flesh.

Even Tagar's gentle touch was enough to cause injury to me, and there was no choice but that he carry me or leave me to die. Had we not found an outpost of damned souls that had suffered our fate, I can't help but think I would have perished regardless of the choice he made. I was fortunate in that they had a cure, along with a healer possessed of powerful enough magics to repair the damage that had already been done.

A bonesnap goblin looks much like a normal goblin, only twice the size, and possessed of a significantly greater physique. They wear no clothes, though sometimes they paint their skin with mud and clay.

They have never been seen in a group of larger than 15; should more than that number of adult goblins be present, they will engage in combat amongst themselves until the weakest members have been killed or driven away.

Feral, these creatures speak no languages, though they do communicate with each other using a series of grunts and howls.

COMBAT

Products of an environment where everything is hostile, the bonesnap goblins prefer to attack through surprise whenever possible; several of them often teaming up to take down larger prey. Their usual tactic is to ambush a foe, bringing it

down and attempting to kill it on the spot. Should that fail the goblins will withdraw, hoping that their natural toxin will weaken the prey enough to allow for a quick kill.

Bonesnap Toxin (Ex): Any creature wounded by the goblin's teeth or claws is at risk for contracting this affliction. It attacks the victim on two fronts: first it directly stimulates the pain centers; the second effect is that it causes the target's bones to become brittle, and shatter the resulting splinters causing internal injuries. Disease: Bonesnap Toxin – claw or bite, Fortitude DC 15, incubation period 1d6 hours; damage – the victim suffers a -4 to all rolls from the pain, and the internal injuries are so severe that the creature's massive damage threshold is lowered until it is no higher than its Constitution modifier (minimum 1).

BONESNAP GOBLIN

Medium Humanoid (Goblinoid)

Hit Dice: 5d8+15 (40 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: Ground 40ft. (8 squares)

Armor Class: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 Natural Armor) Touch 13, Flat-Footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6

Attack: Claws +6 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: 2 claws +6 melee (1d6+3) and bite +1 melee (1d8+3)

Space/Reach: 5ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: Bonesnap Toxin, Overbear

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., Scent

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

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 3

Skills: Balance: +11, Climb: +11 Hide: +13, Jump: +11, Listen: +11 Move Silently +13, Spot: +11, **Survival:** +11

Feats: Power Attack, Track

Environment: Temperate Forest.

Organization: Solitary, pair, pack (3-15)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 6-10 HD (Medium); 11-15 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: -

Overbear (Ex): Bonesnap goblins are masters at taking their prey down rapidly. Any time the target

is denied its Dex bonus to armor class the goblin may make a grapple check. If this check succeeds the victim is rendered prone, and the goblin may then perform a full-attack action against the target. A single goblin may use this ability against creatures up to one size category larger than itself; for every two additional goblins assisting the attack, increase the size category of prey that may be affected with this ability by one.



I believe that brings us back to you gentlemen, yes? Still feel that your tale is worth my time? No, somehow I didn't think you would.

You might want to hone your skills a bit more, before you go bothering strangers while they're busy. You might also give great consideration to leaving town. I don't imagine the tale of the adventurers with wet trousers that your neighbors will carry from this place is going to do much good for your reputations. Not much good at all....

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