

The Weekly Delver

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BRENDIBE HASETH KENABU KHARKON JAMVHUL QUTAPAIN XIANGUR
AND SELECTED POINTS THROUGHOUT THE NINE EMPIRES
The Truth behind the Tolk

The Shaking of Brend

By Tylun Moave, senior Brendirian investigator, House Cleothe

The Endless City is no stranger to earthquakes, but rarely is one felt of such power and magnitude as the one that struck last week. Carts were upturned, marble columns and insulae walls crumbled like Prestarren flake pastry, and there was bedlam in the city. Throughout the Empire, nearly everyone felt at least the first tremors, which shook mirrors and paintings off of walls as far south as Dodrai, on the Triskatar peninsula!

Such was the strength of this quake that the Bay of Brend was nearly emptied, tidal waves pummeled the city when it refilled with seawater that poured over the Coral Falls. This stinking, churning mess flooded all but the highest points of the city, and washed away many survivors.

The loss of life, while staggering, was much lower than it might have been. Censors (takers of the Census for our non-Brendirian readers) have estimated the dead to exceed 7,500. They attribute the survival of the hundreds of thousands of others who would have been lost in a less protected city to the various magical wards and contingencies in place. These protected many insulae from the flooding, and from the worst of the quakes. Few Patrician properties and no civic buildings were damaged, and the Canali survived with few cracks and leaks (resulting in reduced water pressures throughout the city), which are being patched at the time of this writing. Citizens are asked to bathe only once per day, to conserve water.

Even a week later, there are small aftershocks, and the Bay of Brend remains shallow for miles, confounding sea trade. An ancient dwarven ark that none had suspected to even exist was unearthed 3 miles off shore, and certain merchants have begun to charge a premium on goods. The mysteries created by the event deepen with every day.

During the chaos, there was some looting, but much less than would be expected for the wealthiest city in the world. This reporter was caught up in the spirit of fellowship that arose just after the event, as people helped each other pull loved ones from the wreckage, and was touched by the power of emotion involved, as members of all races risked their lives for strangers with no other ties than the right to call themselves Brendirian.

Will this Happen Again?

Scholars and mages explain that as Arril's orbit becomes more eclectic, this kind of earthquake will become more common. While some point to the gods, others fearfully whisper that the Canticle caused all of this. True, even the day after the event, a new verse was discovered allegedly transcribed several years ago which may have prevented or at least reduced the loss of life. One thing's for certain, the plebeians want answers. Officials have promised that never again will the city be compromised by earthquakes, and the senate is expected to pass a bill that calls for the formation of a special order of sages to focus on natural disaster prevention.

City Cohort Faces Accusations of Corruption

By The Seeker

After the quake, a high ranking member of the military was among the dead. The disaster was immediately ruled out as the cause of death, as he was discovered with a foul black dagger in his back, and no other wounds. The dagger was allegedly necromantic. His name has not been released, but investigations indicate that he was a centurion.

Sources indicate that this murder was apparently planned, but that the killer fled before covering his tracks, possibly to protect his own hide during the aftershocks. THE DELVER has also acquired a rubbing made from the dagger's blade, which bears the symbol of the usurper god Yoson- a forked tail inside a circle. Apparently, that cult's involvement in the military runs deeper than we've reported in the past.

Legate Jasara Modrasian offered this statement:

"We will find the killer, and any collaborators who may be involved. Rest assured that our every effort will be to restore honor to the City Cohort. This does not appear to be a Canticle issue at this time." We certainly hope so, Madame Modrasian.

More on this story as information becomes available.

Dwarven Ark Discovered in Bay of Brend

By Fendres Milkul, junior Brendirian investigator, House Trammel.

After the devastating quake, an artifact of staggering importance was discovered in the Bay of Brend. An ancient Ark was unearthed, and its hull thrust into the sky, like a tower. While the legions are largely busy in other parts of the world, Delvers have begun to investigate it, hoping to find clues about the past, and possibly riches to bolster the Empire. Kharkonoi officials have no comment at this time, but it is likely that at least some of what is discovered will be returned to that Empire for diplomatic reasons.

The Empire needs you!

The legions are spread far and wide across the Root of the World, and so they are unable to secure the Ark themselves. The city cohort is preventing unauthorized travel from the ship, but the complement is too small to leave its post. Most of the soldiers have been working long hours in the aftermath of the quake, and with the recent controversy (see City Cohort Faces... by our secret investigator below) within their ranks, they are not in a position to over exert themselves.

City prefect

Regius Almintrin tells THE DELVER that the Senate has passed a motion to call for unenlisted citizens to help the Empire search this newfound discovery. The hope is that the ark can be explored, and eventually placed in a museum, barring Kharkonoi intercession.

It is said that the ark has also been discovered by Hrum Vaat, possibly with the help of the Canticle. It is certain that gedge and the beings known as 'orbs of many eyes' have been seen in the area.

A soldier calling himself "Barius of Brend" stated:

"Gedge are trying to secure the area, and we're trying to push 'em back. They have at least one eye tyrant with 'em. You should write that down."

He goes on to say that those who plan to undertake this expedition should bring some method of creating magical silence, to nullify the gedge threat. He has no hints on taking on the eye tyrant(s).

Though the bay is shallow, and filled with sandbars, the soil is soft, and it is not wise to attempt to walk, much less ride a horse to the ark. Recommended means of travel include capricorn, or some method of magical flight.

Game Mechanics for This Issue:

Earthquake Rules

Earthquakes are common on Thraxis, because of Arril, the massive moon that looms in the sky. Characters may frequently find that the earth shakes at inopportune moments. In an earthquake, a character is safest in two places, out in the open, or within a structure. Smart characters stay away from loose, heavy objects that can fall on them. The GM must determine the strength of the earthquake in terms of how much damage it does to structures. All buildings and structures (such as roads) are dealt this amount of damage every round, for the duration of the quake. If damage overcomes a structure's hardness, pieces fall from it, possibly damaging anyone below. Quaking buildings threaten an area around themselves equaling their height. Anyone within these squares must make a reflex save or take damage from falling objects. Keep in mind as well that the earth itself is taking damage, for the duration of the earthquake, and if its hardness is overcome, fissures might open, possibly adding lava to the threats. Roll 1d20 or assign a magnitude to a given earthquake:

Table 1: Earthquake Intensity

Roll 1d20:

Roll	Magnitude	Structural dmg	Duration	Area*	Side Effects
1-5	Small	1d6	1d4 rnds	1d10 miles	Windows rattle, books fall
5-10	Minor	2d6	2d4 rnds	1d10 miles	Furniture moves, waves form
11-15	Moderate	4d6	3d4 rnds	10 miles	Glass breaks, Ships capsized
16-19	Major	8d6	5d4 rnds	100 miles	Trees uprooted, Tidal waves
20	Catastrophic	16d6+	6d4 rnds	1,000 miles	Buildings collapse, Earth opens

* For game purposes, an earthquake loses one degree of magnitude for every 1/5th of its total area that it travels from its epicenter. Thus, if characters were 200 miles from the epicenter (within the 1,000 mile radius) of a catastrophic earthquake centered in Brend, they would experience the effects of a moderate earthquake.

After the initial quake, there is a chance for 1d8 aftershocks, distributed throughout the day. On the second day after the quake, there will be 1/2 as many aftershocks as the first day, on the third, 1/3 as many aftershocks, and so on.

Table 2: Aftershock Intensity

Roll 1d20:

Roll	Effect
1:	Higher (1 degree), or equal magnitude. In this case, the initial quake was a 'foreshock', and this is the true earthquake.
2-5:	1 degree of magnitude lower
6-10:	2 degrees of magnitude lower
10-20:	3 degrees of magnitude lower

Monsters

Capricorn, Thraxian
Large Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 2d10+3 (14 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 40 ft. (land or water)
AC: +3 (+2 natural, +2 Dex, -1 size)
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5

Attack: Slam +5 [tail slap] melee (1d8) or Bite +5 melee (1d8) or Gore +5 melee (1d4)
Full Attack: Slam +5 [tail slap] melee (1d8) or Bite +5 melee (1d8) or Gore +5 melee (1d4)
Space/Reach: 5ft/10 ft
Special Attacks: -
Special Qualities: Gift of Breath,
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3 , Will +1
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 13,Cha 10
Skills: Balance 4 pts.
Feats: Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush
Environment: Aquatic or Marsh
Organization: Solitary, pair, or school (4d4)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually Neutral (Good)
Advancement: 3d10-4d10 (Large)

Capricorns combine goat-like qualities with the sleek maneuverability of fish. They are entirely creatures of the sea, but when necessary, they can take to land for short periods.

Covered in scintillating scales from head to tail, with foreparts that superficially resemble a goat and the hindquarters of a powerful great fish, capricorns are a conundrum. They are seemingly the result of the crossing of a goat and a fish, but if so, it is a thorough one. It seems more likely that fish were altered to take on some of the features of a goat, or perhaps arose on their own, much like seahorses.

Instead of hair, long fragile fins and scales like those of a carp grow on the legs and neck. Horns are composed of a shell-like substance. Instead of hooves they possess fin structures that can be tightly curled fill the same function, and to allow the creature to walk as bipeds on their forelegs, with their tails balanced in an arc over their heads. In water, this beast will hold its rider above the surface or submerge as required. In either mode, they can carry a rider and goods weighing up to 300 lbs on their backs. They see common use as beasts of burden in the Dolphin Legions, and the province of Homm.

A capricorn may remain on land for up to six hours. For each additional hour, a capricorn takes 1d10 damage, which ceases after being placed in salty brine which is at least 1 foot deep. Environmental factors may modulate the amount of time a capricorn can travel on land.

COMBAT

Capricorns are usually not aggressive, only fighting when driven to it, either by a rider or predator. They will use their sharp teeth to bite while in the water, and will slap with their tails on land.

Gift of Breath (Su): Anyone who rides on the back of a capricorn benefits from a *water breathing* spell.

Gedge
Medium-size Aberration [Sonic]
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp) [3 per limb]
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft
AC: 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 Natural), touch 14, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +2 (+1 size,+1 Natural)/+6 (+2 BAB, +4 Strength,+0 size)
Attack: Slam +6 melee (1d3+4) or damage by melee weapon
Full Attack: Slam +6 melee (1d3+4) or damage by melee weapon,

slam +1 melee (1d3+4) or damage by melee weapon
Space/Reach: 5ft/10 ft
Special Attacks: Resonance (2d8 for two gedge, +1d8/additional gedge)
Special Qualities: Sonic Vision, Tensile Body, Organ Redundancy
Saves: Fort +3 (+7 vs. nonlethal damage), Ref +1, Will +8
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 21, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +6, Concentration +5, Escape Artist +3, Intimidate +4, Jump +6, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +3, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +2, Listen +7, Move Silently +3, Search +6
Feats: Endurance, Diehard
Environment: underground, marsh, mountains
Organization: Solitary, Clutch (2-5), Crew (6-10), Troop (10-15)
Challenge Rating: 3 (solitary) 5 (pair). Use pair as base for higher populations of gedge.
Treasure: Double Standard
Alignment: Usually Neutral Evil
Advancement: 3-4 HD Medium-size, 5-6 HD (Large [Medium-size when using Tensile Body] receives Swallow feat for small creatures)

Gedge are relatives of the Lreans (A race of wormlike artificers who create biomagical weapons and armor), who perform much of the grunt work that is required in the aberrant Empire of Hrum Vaat. Not possessing skeletons, they resemble nothing so much as flabby yet muscle-bound humanoid worms.

They have ropy, undulating arms and legs, which they use to move and manipulate objects. Their "faces" are broad, eyeless, and pulpy, and look like they have been smashed inward, giving them a caved-in visage. At a distance and in darkness, they superficially resemble particularly powerful dwarves in outline. They wear robes, and can wear any armor, but prefer not to, since it hinders their movement. Gedge can use any martial weapon, preferring axes or clubs.

Despite their strong willpower, gedge firmly believe in hierarchy. Gedge do not step out of line or rebel, in most cases.

COMBAT

Sonic Vision (Ex): Gedge "see" their surroundings by emitting a constant multifrequency hum that reveals the lay of the land in all directions, and any beings that are in the area. This extraordinary ability is so refined that it can reveal the specific features and basic equipment (no details on dweomers) of any creatures within 120 ft, even if they are behind an obstacle or wall. This power also detects secret doors flawlessly, and may even reveal dimensional pockets (on a Spot check vs DC 18) such as bags of holding or rope tricks by the deadened sound in the area of such. *Silence* creates blind spots (As a *darkness* effect), and alerts the gedge to be cautious.

Resonance (Su): When two or more Gedge congregate, they can cause their perpetual humming to resonate with one another, emitting a fearsome sonic attack that affects a 25 ft radius sphere around them, or a 50 ft cone in any direction; even doing damage to stonework, bypassing hardness. All creatures within the area of effect take 2d8 sonic damage with a fortitude save for half. Each additional gedge above the requisite two adds 1d8 to the amount of damage done by this attack, with a maximum of 10d8 damage per group. Separate groups can attack separately as long as they are more than 25 feet apart. Resonance requires a full attack to take effect, and other gedge or Lreans are unharmed. Resonance does not injure oozes.

Tensile Body (Ex): Though they cannot substantially change their basic shape (to the extent of creating extra limbs or disguising themselves as another race), gedge are creatures composed almost entirely of lumbric muscle, which is more flexible than its mammalian analog. They can contract and extend any part of their bodies. In combat they can become selectively and dynamically more compact or extended, benefiting from the AC and attack bonuses of a small size, without commensurate penalties to reach. In fact, they can snake out their limbs in combat to achieve a 10 foot reach. This contraction or extension is a

free action, taken whenever the creature enters combat, and the only time it can be considered inactive is when a gedge is somehow surprised. When they feel that they are safe, they may take a full round action to contract their bodies laterally, while extending longitudinally, reaching up to 20 feet vertically, or fitting through holes of 1 foot diameter. They may take no other action than 5 ft 'steps', and their AC is reduced by -8 while vulnerable in this way. If caught in the middle of passing through a small opening, they may contract their exposed portions without taking damage for being compressed, losing their Dex bonus to AC, unable to move further, but receiving a partial attack, and attacks of opportunity on any creature that comes within their (10 foot) reach. Gedge in this situation cannot resonate.

Fast Healing (Su): a Gedge heals 3 hp every round, but cannot regenerate severed limbs in this way. If a limb is severed, the gedge's maximum hp are considered to have been lowered by 1/5.

Organ Redundancy (Ex): A gedge has five hearts (one in each limb and one in its 'head'), and every other internal system has several backups. This makes them very hard to kill, requiring the severing of all limbs and the destruction of each in turn in order to fully annihilate the creature. To sever a gedge's limb or head, an attacker must deal 1/5 of the creature's total remaining hit points to the creature, rounded up (vorpals sever normally, treating each limb as a head). Limbs are lost in the following order: 'Head', 'Left Arm', 'Right Arm', 'Left Leg', 'Right Leg'. Legless gedge can hop, losing no mobility.

Any type of damage is sufficient, except sonic, since the detachment of a limb is reflexive. A critical hit that would sever a limb also destroys the heart within. When severed, a limb must make a fort save vs. DC 11 or is stunned for one round. During this time a coup de grace may be delivered to destroy the limb. Each limb itself is a tiny creature that has 0 hit points, but can survive to -10 hp (taking partial actions to -9). These appendages may attack (+1, for 1 damage) or grapple (+1), or attempt escape at 20 ft./round. Each appendage has the full memories and intelligence of the whole, and they may work in concert via subsonic communication. They will strategically sacrifice themselves, to allow at least one to escape and survive.

Any severed extremity containing a heart has the potential to grow into a full grown gedge in one week (limbs grow back in the same order they were lost), though if more than one survives, only one (or any remaining that are attached to one another) will regenerate. The rest die off and are eaten by the gedge, if possible, to help him heal.

GEDGE SOCIETY

Gedges are little better than skilled slaves in Hrum Vaat, but that's the way they like it. They are very much conformists, preferring to be led than to lead. Even in control, they act only on orders from those above them. Some break this stereotype, leaving the subterranean realms behind, but they never quite fit into other societies. Such gedges have been known to become smugglers or mercenaries. Little is known of their reproduction or rearing, but it has been conjectured that they are in fact the same race as the Lreans, and that they deviate during gestation.

They are skilled builders and miners, filling a role similar to dwarves, which brings the two races into frequent conflict. Unlike the dwarves, however, they do not hoard goods themselves, instead bringing them back to their superiors to enrich their empire.

GEDGE CHARACTERS

A Gedge's favored class is fighter, though rogues are not unheard of. There is a strong clerical tradition among the gedges, and although few become clerics, those that do rise in the ranks of Hrum Vaat society, becoming the equal of any Lrean.

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