

The Weekly Delver

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B·R·E·N·D·I·R·E · H·A·S·E·T·H · K·E·N·A·B·U · K·H·A·R·K·O·N · I·J·A·M·V·H·U·L · Q·U·E·T·A·P·I·A·N · X·I·A·N·G·U·R
AND SELECTED POINTS THROUGHOUT THE NINE EMPIRES
The Truth behind the Tolk

Hell's Window; Daily Life in Tobran

(Part one of two)

By Tylun Moave, senior Brendirian investigator, House Cleothe

This reporter must confess to a healthy dose of trepidation when he was invited to write this story, but in the interest of your edification, dear reader, he put all of his fears aside. Hopefully the Empire will turn its thoughts to the plight of our poor, diligent soldiers in Tobran, and find a solution to this ongoing problem.

Upon entering the province of Tobran, darkness seems to permeate everything. Sulphurous dust fills the sky, and the sun is but a smudged discus overhead. Despite this, it is overwhelmingly hot. It rarely rains in Tobran, but when it does, the precipitation consists of blood and acid, from which the only shelter are spells or climbing into an extradimensional space like a hold of holding, as this reporter was forced to do three days in. Demonic creatures are so common as to have taken over the ecology, and the restless dead are a real threat. Such pleasantness is why the province has gained the name Hell's Window.

The Delver caught up with the legions in the midst of a pitched battle. The demons were endless; flying, crawling, running they swarm in wave after wave. More than once, they broke through the line that our brave Brendirian men and women were struggling to hold, and more than once, it seemed this story would never be written. Words cannot convey the terror and foulness of the place completely, malevolent fires spring up unbidden in the midst of the battle, and the hardened earth is stained red with rust and blood. Our sources indicate that every day is much the same in this forsaken land, and that the soldiers are forced to battle by necessity day and night, fighting in shifts, with one day's rest between fighting and traveling. When they are relieved, they retreat into the Ripwood, to the place they call home. The trudge home is not a casual one, for even here, they must fight nearly every step of the way, but the men have developed a twisted humor about their lot. Some sing bawdy ballads as they cleave through the mass of demonflesh that assails them, or pose the dead demons in the semblance of awkward situations to further send the message that Brendir is not afraid.

One legionnaire, with a terrible burn scar that dominated his face, was assigned to guard the Delver's people. His name is Lallic Comberes, and he is the bravest man we have ever had the pleasure to know. He entered the legions for the stipend that all enlisted men and women receive at the end of service, but stayed on after his first and second tour to continue the fight. He could have left a hero years ago, but instead remains in relative obscurity to continue the fight. He truly believes that the legions are making progress. If things were once worse than they are now, we'd hate to think about what they used to be.

As we walked and fought, Lallic taught us something astounding; the squirrels and rats of Tobran are touched by the ignan and infernal energies of the place, and will

burst into flames upon death. He and the other soldiers have collapsible cages in their gear, that they place these nasty creatures into, which pierce such creatures when they are slammed shut. Called Hellfire Lanterns, they give off a goodly amount of light for almost an hour, and fully consume the bloody mess, leaving only ash behind. These burn so hot that they must be carried on the ends of long staffs, and the legions have specially prepared polearms for use as weapons.

It took us a full week to get to the immense iron cage that surrounds the only beacon of Brendirian law- the town of Sessir. As large geographically as a city, it is an empty place, where the few soldiers who are off duty sleep and restock their supplies. There are also at least a dozen unfortunate souls who have been trapped here for years, not daring to venture out of the town, and living their lives in constant fear of the walls falling, or the grate being breached. The city is dark as the grate blocks what little light reaches this place, but under the grate, magical blue lights and mystic fountains of fresh water are a welcome reprieve from the endless dirt and blood of the outside. Even the site of marble, and the sickly olive groves within the city are blessed reminders of what the men are fighting for. Brendirian accoutrements are beloved; wine is sacred when it can be had, and baths are a rare luxury that don't offer an excuse to be unarmed.

The Delver was surprised to see that there are demons within the town; walking freely, and given the same

City of the Gedge to Open Trade Talks with Brendir

By The Seeker

Brendirian gedge merchants, working with bloodfed halflings have opened up new possibilities for trade with Hatern, the so-called "City of the Gedge" in Kharkon. A message was brought before the Senate, whereby the halfling house Anhain would facilitate trade between Brendir and the Subterranean Empire. Details of just what would be traded are unclear at this time.

The denizens of Hrum Vaat are still very much enemies of Brendir, but some few have managed to live in our society, and even carve out niches for themselves within the communities that they live in. One can never say that an entire race is evil, and the same is true of these folk. The race of gedges, whose name is derived from "Gej" the dwarven word for 'earthquake', are a powerful mining race; derived from wormlike ancestry. They are sightless, but understand their environments via a sort of uncanny echolocation like that of a bat. So fine is this sound-sight that gedges can tell what's

respect as a man. When we inquired about this, it was pointed out that each wore a helm attached to a band about their necks, and that this device was a method of suppressing their most evil instincts. We were also assured that the creatures could be killed at will.

Next week we will bring you more from this terrible place, and explore the ways in which the men are able to cope with such depravity. In the mean time, the Delver will be collecting goods and letters at our headquarters in Brend. Be sure to give what you can, these men are laying down their lives for all of us.

in a man's pockets, to the last sheave. Gedges with the knowledge to do so can even read scrolls with relatively deep impressions. Those few gedges who have left Hrum Vaat behind find work as merchants, mercenaries, or in demolitions, because of their powerful sonic attacks, which have the ability to crumble masonry.

Obstacles Loom

Many, including myself, are skeptical. Hrum Vaat has a well-earned reputation for foul crimes against life, the best known of which are the Vadoghol or "sundermen"; a slave race

of deformed half-men which are used even as food. The idea that Brendir would even consider a trade agreement with Hrum Vaat has many alarmed. We can only hope that the Senate refuses these talks.

Still, our hands are not clean. This agreement would merely serve as an admission of what rumors have been saying for a long time anyway. Brendir trades with Hrum Vaat already; via the bloodfed halflings, Ijamvians, and less scrupulous merchants from our own Empire. Were I a braver man, I'd recommend a complete boycott of House Anhain, and the deportation of all who share Ijamvian interests, but we all know what would happen then. I'd be putting myself, the

Delver, and any who went through with such a protest in harm's way. That's something to keep in mind. That's all I'll say on this matter, for the time being. Until next week, this has been the Seeker.

Game Mechanics for This Issue:

New Equipment

Hellfire Lanterns

These are collapsible iron cages, with spikes on the interior that fill most of the space when the cage is in its stable configuration. For storage, they can be unhinged to create a flat circular disc that telescopes vertically when it needs to be used. After it's fully expanded, the sectional hinges reverse, the spikes straighten out, and the cage can be slammed and locked into the outward form of a very large lantern. (1.5 feet diameter by 2 feet tall). A door on the side is only operable before the cage is slammed shut.

Hellfire Staff

This masterwork weapon is in essence a 5 foot iron rod with a heavy duty hellfire lantern welded firmly to the end, like the head of a mace. Spikes protrude from this weapon, as with a mace. Such weapons trail fire while in use, and need to have their fuel replenished every hour. It takes a full round action to replace the fuel of this weapon, whatever that may be.

Martial Weapon	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight	Type
Hellfire Staff		1d4+1d6 (fire)	1d6+1d6 (fire)	X3 (x2 w/out fire)	-	8 lbs	Bludgeoning

Hellfire Oil- Though the Hellfire staff is essentially a very novel weapon, configurations have begun to see use in Triskatariot whereby rags or sponges soaked in an alchemical concoction derived from lamp oil and alchemist's fire replace the unfortunate creature, making it useful outside of Tobran. Hellfire oil burns for 1/2 hour, and bestows all of the effects of a demonic vermin's carcass to the weapon, even burning underwater. Hellfire oil costs 40 gp per flask.

Helm of the Bright Soul

This helm is joined to a collar by a solid bar of gleaming alloyed steel and silver. It possesses the combined power of a Helm of Opposite Alignment and a Vorpal weapon.

Unlike a Helm of opposite alignment, the only alignment this item will bring about is good, leaving the law/chaos axis unchanged. It only functions as long as the helm is on the creature, and upon being taken off, the creature reverts to its previous alignment.

When placed on the head of an evil or neutral creature, a Helm of the Bright Soul's collar wraps around the creature's neck, and changes its wearer's alignment to good, unless a will save vs. DC 28 can be made. Even if the save is made, once this helm is on, the collar will exert its vorpal effect automatically when the creature commits an evil act, decapitating the creature instantaneously. It takes one full round (and likely a grapple check) to lock the helm in place.

Overwhelming evocation [good], necromancy and transmutation; CL 18th; Create Wondrous Items, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *circle of death, keen edge*; Price 54,000 gp; weight 5 lbs

Monsters

Vadoghol, Hound
Large Aberration
Hit Dice: 5d8+20 (38 hp)
Initiative: +0 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 13 (-1 size, +4 Natural)
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+6
Attack: Bite +6 melee (2d4)
Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (2d4) or claw +6 melee (1d6)/ claw +1 melee (1d6)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:-
Special Qualities: Scent, Fear, Disease
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +2
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 6, Cha 3
Skills: Balance +2, Climb +6, Jump +6
Feats: -
Environment: Any land (Ijamvhul & Hrum Vaat)
Organization: Solitary, Pack (1d3+2)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always Neutral
Advancement: 6d8-10d8(Huge)
Vadoghol, Drudge
Large Aberration
Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (14 hp)
Initiative: -3 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft.
AC: 8 (-1 size, -3 Dex, +2 Natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+7
Attack: Punch +7 melee (1d6) or Bite +7 melee (2d6)
Full Attack:-
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: -
Special Qualities: Disease
Saves: Fort +2, Ref -2, Will +0
Abilities: Str 20,Dex 4,Con 12 ,Int 1, Wis 3,Cha 3
Skills: Hide -1
Feats: -
Environment: Any land (Ijamvhul & Hrum Vaat)
Organization: Any, 1 sentient handler per 6
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Usually None
Alignment: Always Neutral
Advancement: 4d8-8d8 (Huge)

Vadoghol are creatures created from human stock, most with the distorted features of a man, and the shape of some beast. They are sometimes called ‘Sundermen’.

These unfortunate creatures are used as slaves and beasts of burden in Ijamvhul while Hrum Vaat uses them for these things as well as food. They are tortured beings, with just enough humanity remaining to realize that they should not be. There are dozens of types of vadoghol, each bred for a specific purpose. They are cattle, beasts of burden, and semiskilled laborers that are twisted into forms that allow them to perform their allotted tasks and not much else. Only one breed of vadoghol; called scribes, possess enough intelligence to be considered fully sentient.

All vadoghol have several things in common. They are entirely hairless, they are deformed, and they are ugly. They are carriers of diseases, delivered through their bite, thus many are forced to wear muzzles in captivity. Their aberrant heritage causes many to have vestigial or superfluous limbs and useless organs.

Disease (Ex): All vadoghol are carriers of Cradle Burn (page 150, Morningstar), though they are immune to it themselves. They deliver this illness on a successful bite attack (DC 20, no damage; victim cannot bear or sire children). Vadoghol may also carry other diseases at the GMs discretion.

Below are two of the most common types of vadoghol, drudge and hound vadoghol.

DRUDGE

Drudge vadoghol resemble apes, and have the same general proportions. They use all four limbs to walk, but can also walk relatively upright. They are docile, but powerful beasts, used as porters and pack animals. They can carry 1000 lbs. They usually have no treasure, but may have some that they were charged with carrying. Roll 1d4-2 to determine the treasure multiplier. A result of 1-2=no treasure, 3=standard, 4= Twice standard.

Combat

Drudge vadoghol are confused when thrust into combat, taking mostly defensive actions, or blindly lashing out. They cannot take a full attack, and will commonly take a full move, or simply cower when attacked. Rarely, they will willingly fight, when a mate or relatively kind master is threatened.

HOUND

Hound vadoghol are almost demonic in their appearance; they are the stuff of a child's nightmare. Their twisted faces and canine bodies are horrific, and their sharp wedge-like teeth are brutal. They are commonly used as sentries, and for help in tracking prey.

Combat

Hound vadoghol are bred for meanness, and will always take a full attack.

Scent (Ex): Vadoghol can tell if a living creature is hidden in a 40 ft. area, and can track creatures by scent (DC 10+2/hour after creature passed through). Otherwise this ability functions like the track feat.

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