

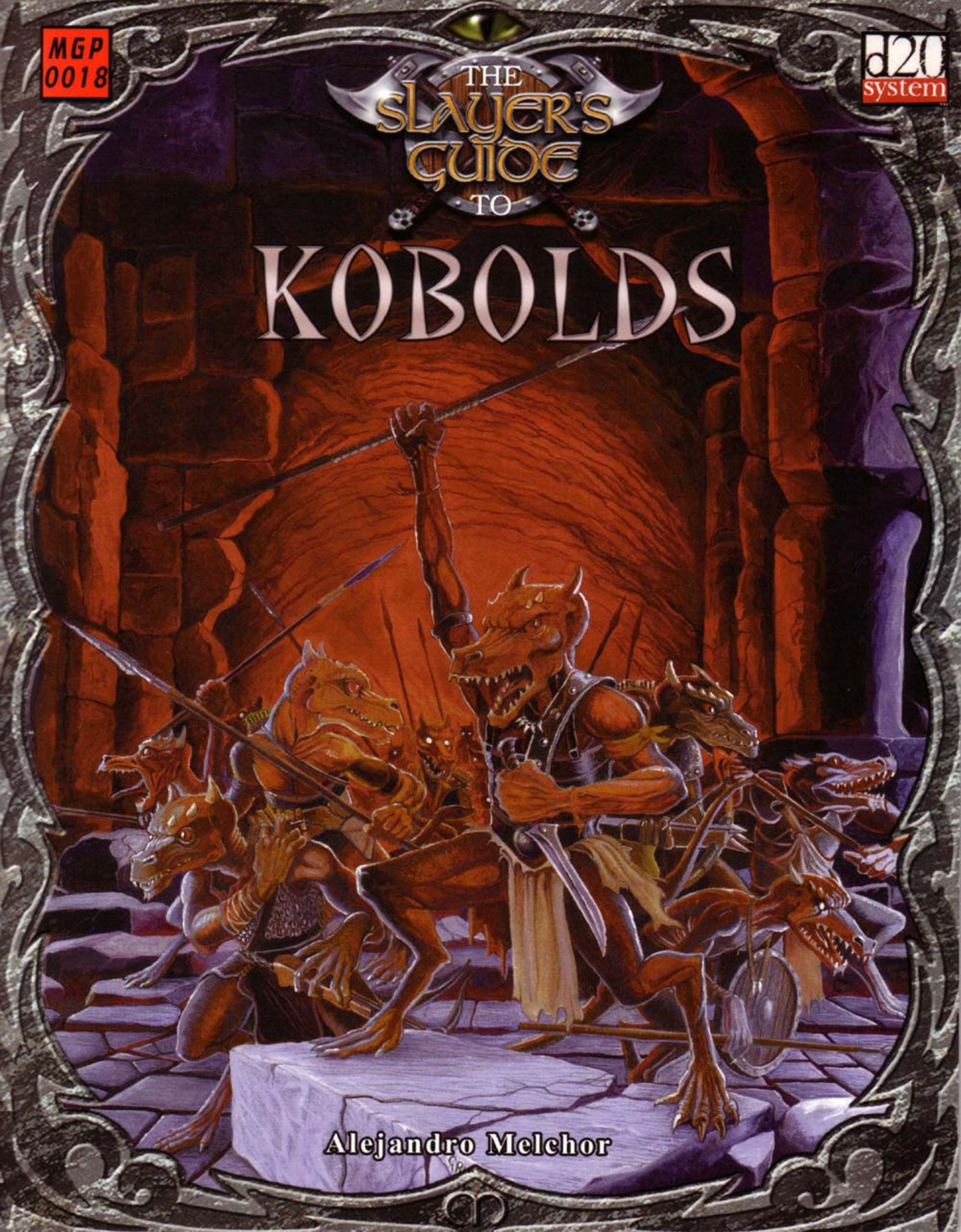
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THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

KOBOLDS

Alejandro Melchor





Koibolds



*Glowing
red eyes*

*Dog like
head
with two
small
white
horns.*

*Scaly skin
ranges from
dark rusty brown
to a rusty
black color.*

*Short reptilian
humanoid -
Non-prehensile
tail like
that of
a rat.*



Egg



*Bone structure
of foot.*

The Slayer's Guide To Kobolds

Alejandro Melchor & Matthew Sprange

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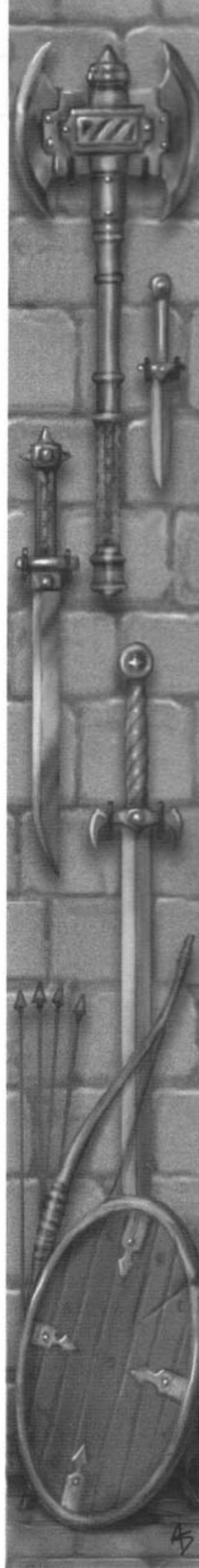
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INTRODUCTION

Kobolds are a very common sight in a great many campaign worlds and most adventurers are, in the very least, familiar with them. The main reason for this proliferation has nothing to do with their battle tactics, breeding rates or resilient culture but more through the pragmatism of Games Masters. Individually, kobolds are physically very weak, with even a first level wizard having a reasonable chance of defeating one in close combat without resorting to his magic abilities. Because of this, they are an ideal race for Games Masters to employ against low level parties, challenging his players without slaughtering their characters, even if relatively large numbers of kobolds bring their weight to bear.

As has been pointed out in previous Slayer's Guides, no race in any campaign world exists solely to provide cannon fodder for allegedly heroic adventurers. The purpose of this supplement is to redress this imbalance somewhat by giving Games Masters the information they need to make kobolds a solid and coherent part of their campaign. No longer will players merely scoff and draw their swords when they meet a group of kobolds within some ancient ruin. Finally, kobolds will have the respect they always deserved.

Any competent fighter or ranger may question the need to study kobolds in any great depth but they are likely to have encountered only a few scattered bands here and there, never having braved the full combined might of the kobold clans. The Slayer's Guide to kobolds instructs adventurers of all creeds in the culture and society of this vicious race, enabling them to track down, engage and wipe out scores of the murderous beasts. It can only be hoped that such efforts will be enough to stall and drive back a race that is almost literally numberless.

Kobolds are not stupid and despite their diminutive size, neither are they harmless. Any adventurer prepared to underestimate their capabilities may not live to regret such complacency.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based D20 games systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these will be the races all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who pay little heed

as countless thousands get slaughtered during the acquisition of new levels and magic items.

KOBOLDS – HATE AND SPITE

Each Slayer's Guide features a single race, in this case the kobold. Within these pages you will find a colossal amount of information on kobold physiology, habitat and society, giving you a fundamental level of understanding on how this race exists and interacts with the rest of the world. Players will learn how to locate and defeat entire kobold clans and tribes. Games Masters are presented with guidelines on how to introduce this race into their existing campaigns. They will also benefit from material demonstrating how to actually portray kobolds to their players, thus giving their campaigns and scenarios much greater depth than before. For the truly ambitious, rules are given for using kobolds as player characters.

Finally, a complete kobold lair is featured, to be used as an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios or even just as an example of how these cruel and twisted creatures live.



'Come on! They are on the run!' Koch yelled in triumph, raising his blood-drenched battle-axe while stepping over the bodies of his enemies.

'They must have finally smelled you, you stinky dwarf!' Answered Elnix, the gnome rogue who had surprised everyone in the party with the eagerness with which he had joined combat against the ambushing kobolds. 'We will teach those runts not to mess with us!'

The two remaining members of the party hesitated as their short companions charged onward. Merieth was looking at Radros with a question in her eyes. She had begun to cast a slumber spell to drop the entire ambushing party without need for further violence, but Koch and Elnix had begun hacking away before she was halfway through her incantations. For his part, Radros was contemplating the very serious talk he would have with his companions; as a priest of war he was used to battle, but this was not a fair fight; this had been unnecessary slaughter.

'Let us move quickly. We cannot let them alone now.' Koch's triumphant call carried well even as he disappeared at a trot into trees in the vague direction the creatures had taken. Merieth was not convinced but followed anyway. She trusted Radros' judgement.

They had not gone far along the darkening path in the forest when they heard a loud crash, interrupted by a pandemonium of shrill voices all screaming incoherently at the same time. Merieth almost crashed into the cleric's extended arm.

'Radros?'

'That was a trap, and by the sound of it, they *seriously* outnumber us', he said with clinical detachment.

'You don't mean we should leave them! Elnix and Koch may need our help.' The wizard stared in surprise.

'Of course not... but it will serve neither them nor us if we fall into the same trap for rushing... caution is the key here.'

'If you say so...' She nodded a bit hesitantly, but then began to cast the trigger for one of the spells she had studied for today. She felt the magic rush into her and they both vanished from sight. She explained what she had done and she saw Radros nod in understanding. They could see each other, but no one would see them.

The proceeded at a steady pace towards the noise and saw steam coming out of a hole in the middle of the path, dozens of shrieking kobolds swarmed around it, cheering at something below. The two humans could hear nothing other than their incessant yapping. The two looked at each other and nodded their approval to the other even as Merieth began to cast. Alerted to the sound of her voice and their gradually coalescing presence, the kobolds took arm, but not before she had finished and several of the reptiles fell to the ground. Radros began chanting in his heavy bass voice and those not asleep now ran in terror. The few who remained exchanged fleeting glances with each other before taking to their own heels, fuelled not by magic but by their own natural cowardice.

Cleric and wizard rushed to the pit's edge, but Merieth had to step back in horror. Koch and Elnix... or at least *what remained of them, lay, still twitching and moaning, the caustic acid vapour still rising from the pit floor.* Radros jumped down, ignoring the hissing of his boots as he stepped through puddles of the corrosive substance. Elnix was gone, but he could still do something to save the dwarf. The priest of the god of war flinched at the thought that crossed his mind, but acknowledged it as a divine lesson: a warrior does not underestimate his enemy, war should not be the same as slaughter.

Koch might even live to learn that lesson.



KOBOLD PHYSIOLOGY

Of all the denizens lurking within the dark places of the world, kobolds are one of the more prolific and the majority of adventurers are likely to encounter them at some point during their dangerous careers. Inns, taverns and other meeting places throughout the world ring to bard's songs and adventurer's tales depicting heroic warriors slaying countless hundreds of these creatures, providing a welcome barrier of safety to those in the civilised lands. Very few, however, make mention of the many servants of good who have fallen in battle against kobolds, perhaps due to their underestimation of a race that has existed upon the world far longer than humans. The intelligence, cunning and sheer numbers of kobolds living beneath the surface of the world pose a constant threat to all who dwell under the sun.

DIMINUTIVE WARRIORS

Kobold warriors are deceptive in appearance and with the largest rarely growing more than three feet in height, can easily belie an adventurer's fear of the unknown. Mighty warriors, in truth all too readily dismiss their small stature and primitive weaponry; there are few other creatures in the world that kobolds can battle in single combat with a fair chance of victory. As will become apparent, a kobold's real strength lies in its fiendish cunning and the overwhelming numbers of its comrades.

Kobolds are no larger than halflings but, like this civilised race, they are incredibly hardy for their size, able to endure much that might break a far greater being. Humanoid in form, kobolds are hairless and completely covered by rusty brown/black scales. Their small heads are strongly reminiscent of canines, though to some the two small light coloured horns atop the skull suggest instead something vaguely draconic. A scale-covered tail completes their diminutive physique, though it is not prehensile and used purely for balance when performing acts of agility. It is strongly suspected that as well as providing a measure of protection in battle, the scales of kobolds also insulate them against many of the diseases that plague civilisation and allow them to exist in lairs that are less than sanitary. However, it is also possible that kobolds are simply immune to such

infections by virtue of a physiology that is closer to reptile than human or elf.

Any lair of kobolds will carry a perpetual stench of a kind reminding many adventurers of wet dogs or stagnant water. Those of weaker dispositions have been known to gag or retch as they travel deeper into infested strongholds, so repugnant is the smell to them. Kobolds themselves seem to generate this pungent scent, rather than it originating from their manner of living and, more interesting to the dedicated adventurer, they seem to be wholly unaware of it. Many a kobold attack has been foreshadowed by a familiar stench carried on a prevailing breeze and sharp-witted warriors are often able to take advantage of this.

SIGHT AND SOUND

As creatures who seem to have originated from the depths of the earth, kobolds have well developed senses, with their eyesight being particularly sensitive to motion. Their red-coloured eyes are unusual in that, when exposed to any source of light, they actually shine rather than merely reflect. The biological mechanics of this reaction are unknown but it is readily apparent this causes great discomfort to kobolds, even pain, forcing them to seek to avoid bright light at almost any cost. Less reputable adventurers have been known to use this to their advantage, not merely in combat but also as a way of extracting information from captive kobolds in a method guaranteed to cause less upset amongst more squeamish allies. Removed from any light source, kobolds have the ability of most subterranean races to see perfectly well in the pitch-black environments of their lairs. This, combined with the unusual reactive qualities to light should cause little surprise when it is learnt the eyes of kobolds are important components in the crafting of many magical items.

Kobolds can often demonstrate an incredible awareness of surroundings even in locales to which they are strangers. There appears to be nothing supernatural in this ability and is likely the mere combination of sharp eyesight and hearing capable of pin-pointing both the direction and range of the slightest sound. This, together with their small size and substantial agility, allows kobolds to secrete themselves in the merest of shadows to lie in wait for their prey. Were it not for the constant stench, the stealth of kobolds might indeed be widely renowned.

FROM EGG TO GRAVE

One major reason for the proliferation of kobolds throughout the entire world, beyond their racial stubbornness, is their incredible breeding cycle that is able to allow any settlement to sustain massive damage and yet rebuild its numbers with extreme rapidity. The females of the species is almost permanently fertile and will lay a clutch of four to eight eggs a month after mating. It will be another month before she is able to breed again and it is interesting to note here that kobolds display very little passion for sexual matters in the way that dominates other intelligent races. It is often said their reptilian natures make them cold-blooded in more ways than one. Breeding tends to take place by instinct in times of great danger when severe casualties are expected amongst the kobolds, or when so ordered by the leaders of the clans. It is perhaps natural to assume, there appears to be no concept of love and belonging between the sexes of this inherently spiteful race.



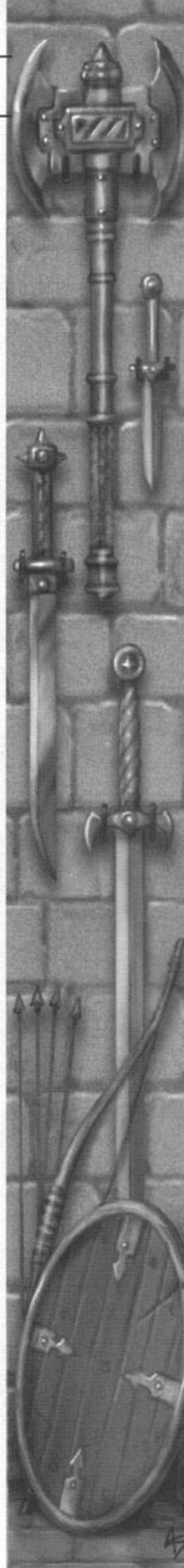
Eggs laid are brought together to a central repository within the lair where they are cared for by a small number of females suited to the purpose, thus ensuring the majority of egg layers are returned to their normal duties within the clan as quickly as possible. A kobold's egg has an incredibly hard shell with a surface very similar to cut stone and masses around eight times the size of those from domestic fowl. These characteristics often allow the eggs to remain camouflaged when invaders enter the lair and have even been known to prolong attempts to destroy them, permitting the kobolds time to mount their inevitable counterattacks. They hatch within three weeks, with variations of a few days to either side depending on the temperature of the lair and the amount of care given to them by the attendant females. It has been noted that kobold eggs mature at a far more rapid pace in warmer climates, though such differences tend to be minimal in practice due to the kobolds' preference for lairs deep within the earth.

Upon hatching, kobold young have full faculty of senses and are able to walk within minutes, though they are reliant upon adults for defence against any predator larger than the common rat. Their tenacious and ferocious natures even at this tender time are difficult to credit, however, and large numbers have been seen to rally behind adults to form a nasty and vindictive surprise to any invader who presumes them no threat. Their voices are highly pitched and resemble the yapping of small dogs, a distinctive sound that varies little as the kobold grows and matures throughout its life.

Physical maturity takes place inside a single year from hatching, representing a phenomenal rate of growth few other known races are able to match. Within these short months, the voracious appetites of the young allow them to grow in size and strength, a fact further demonstrating the ability of any group of kobolds, no matter how small, to recover after a string of defeats from their enemies. Their scales begin very soft to the touch, no stronger than rough human skin but throughout this initial year, they harden and solidify, creating the natural armour kobolds are renowned for. Any kobold has the potential to live well beyond one hundred and twenty years though it tends only to be the greatest clan leaders who reach such venerable ages, safely insulated as they are from the daily dangers and tragedies that plague the rest of their race.

DAILY LIVES

Given their small size and relative physical weakness, it is only the kobolds' ability to work together as a cohesive whole that allows them to survive in a world that has tried hard to eradicate the race entirely. It has often been postulated that this propensity for ready teamwork and comradeship is a natural racial trait rather than something born out of sheer necessity. What is clear, however, is that kobolds have many natural enemies and predators, both upon the surface world and within the eternal darkness of their homes below. Almost every other race they encounter possesses far greater physical strength and so kobolds have learnt to adapt, to rely less on their high breeding rates and more upon





survivalist traits to maintain an existence. Whilst this has bred a strong ability for kobolds of even different clans to work together, it has also given rise to an intense hatred to all forms of life but their own. Kobolds are known throughout the world for their cruelty, wickedness and spite, though some still reason their nature is of no surprise when the efforts almost every race have made to wipe them out are considered. Bitter and twisted by hatred, a kobold will never ask for respite and most certainly will not offer it, no matter what the circumstances. A kobold simply cannot entertain the possibility that a member of another race would do anything other than attempt to destroy them. There may indeed be a lot to credit in this way of thinking that has permeated the whole racial consciousness of the kobolds. One cannot help but consider what may have happened, however, should history have had but a slightly different weave, if they had not been immediately persecuted in the struggle all races endured for ascendancy in the distant past. Might kobolds, even today, be both seen and welcomed in the towns and cities of the civilised? Might not humans, dwarves and elves trade as readily with them as they do gnomes and halflings? The ill-thought reactions of our ancestors in ancient times may well have doomed us all to an eternal war against a race that may have been served better as allies.

There are, of course, those who mock such fanciful notions, claiming kobolds are inherently evil by

nature and there may well be some sound truth to this. They certainly demonstrate an innate hatred towards gnomes with whom they battle constantly for territory and also all races of the fey, for reasons less well defined. The intensity of hatred kobolds display for both is nothing short of genocidal on a level rarely seen in the lower elements of that most rapacious of races, the humans. It has been speculated that there is some deep cultural, perhaps even religious, belief that somehow marks gnomes and the fey as dirty, abhorrent, even the antithesis of everything kobolds strive for in their day-to-day lives. Whilst they readily battle any who threaten their territory, kobolds engage in almost suicidal attacks to drive away

any gnomish or fey presence taking residence in their vicinity. It is also fascinating to note that prisoners are never taken and whilst the omnivorous kobolds are usually perfectly willing to feast upon the bodies of sentient creatures as a matter of course, they never touch the flesh of these two racial enemies. In any other society, this would demonstrate all the hallmarks of a fanatical religious doctrine though few have been able to penetrate and decipher this alien culture to such an extent as to confirm or refute this.

The old female was carrying her favourite, 'Big Stick', and was gripping it with the firm intention of using it. She arrived at the gaggle of young hatchlings who were stumbling over each other to reach something in their midst. She barked an order once and began pushing the hatchlings with the point of her stick, without consideration for any seriously hurt. At their centre was a battered and wailing hatchling. The female snorted with contempt at such a show of weakness. 'He says he better than us!' One of the others hissed in explanation. 'We show him!'

'You.' The female prodded the fallen one. 'Get up. What do you think you are? Shiny scales mean nothing if you can't back your boasts up. Until you can beat all of them, you don't go claiming you're better!'

DIETARY HABITS

Kobolds are possessed of a single row of tiny, razor-sharp teeth they put to good use to take almost anything to their mouths. Their choice of habitats precludes them from farming the land, so they prefer to hunt small animals and gather edible plants. Half of the traps they build around their lairs are meant for prey, and they venture out of their area of influence to build such traps to catch game of almost any size, rather than confronting the animal in a more traditional hunt. Packs of hunters make routine checks on the traps to reset, repair and, if they are lucky, to collect whatever fell into the trap.

Although they have been known to eat sentient creatures, kobolds do not go out of their way to hunt for such prey, since it is usually more dangerous for the hunter than the prey. A human warrior puts up a lot more resistance than an elk, and yields less meat, not to mention that its skin is worthless. If the food stores are at a comfortable level, any intruder falling into a kobold trap will be left to rot after it has been slain and its body plundered of any valuables. Only when their situation looks worrying do the kobolds carry the carcasses of wayward adventurers back to be picked apart and eaten.

Sometimes, the hunting parties will be joined on their routes by gatherers, who pick up berries and other herbs with the hunters acting as escort. The advantage of this is clear and typical of the little reptiles' behaviour: strength in numbers. The gatherers become back-up warriors should the party encounter enemies and extra muscle if they find a particularly big or heavy animal in one of their snares. This mutual beneficial arrangement wins a first line of defence for the threatened clan while the gatherers run back to the lair to warn of attack, or get extra carrying claws while the hunters stand watch over their prize.

Kobolds are not proficient cooks either; they put meals to the fire only to soften them up for the hatchlings, but besides that, they seem to have iron-coated stomachs, able to digest anything raw.

OF THE ARCANE AND DEEPER MYSTERIES

There are proportionally far greater numbers of innate sorcerers amongst kobolds than in almost any other known race. Such individuals form the leadership of the clans to the extent where only the most accomplished of warriors may seek any

position of authority, a very rare occurrence. The majority of kobold sorcerers are relatively weak in magnitude, paling before the might of many practitioners from the civilised races. However, the great numbers of them within any kobold lair often pose a nasty surprise to overconfident adventurers. Furthermore, a very select few demonstrate the ability to harness almost limitless amounts of sorcerous energies and these are the creatures who not only rule kobold clans with an iron grip but can also single-handedly repulse invaders of their domains, if they so choose. Fuelled by raw arcane power, these sorcerers may live for two or even three hundred years and, marshalling their forces, may become feared and renowned in the dark realms beneath the surface of the world, an irony to many considering their small physical stature.

The combination of a reptilian physiology, a preponderance of sorcerers and the fact their natural language is draconic leads many to draw the conclusion that there is some, as yet unknown, relationship between the small but tenacious kobolds and the great and majestic dragons of the world. Others point out the flaws in this thinking, citing the lack of any other evidence of such a connection and the fact that where dragons are found, kobolds are as much prey as any other race. It may, however, be that some inquisitive adventuring party may yet locate some vital evidence that links the two and uncover a mystery that has confounded scholars everywhere.

A few of the more presumptuous scholars of the world are all too ready to latch on to rumours of a rare sub-race within kobold society. Growing numbers of adventurers tell of a higher leadership caste amongst kobolds that seem to dominate the very largest of lairs. Tales are sometimes told of kobolds greater in size and strength than the rest of their kin, sporting oversized wings and tremendous sorcerous powers that eclipse anything seen before in this race. As yet, however, no adventurer has been able to produce anything more than anecdotal evidence. Without substantial physical evidence, such as a carcass, whatever its condition, most scholars are still waiting for solid proof. If such a sub-race was known to exist though, it may just push the theories of a link between kobolds and dragons into a broader and more accepted context.



HABITAT

Left unchecked, the spread of kobolds can resemble a plague, sweeping across entire regions and defeating any in their path by sole virtue of their incredible numbers. They are halted only by determined and systematic resistance and by the constant, unyielding sunlight that guards the surface world against the creatures of the deep during the daylight hours.

The kobolds commonly encountered by the surface-dwelling races are but the periphery of a race that is as countless as all the grains of sand on all the beaches of the world. The majority live their entire lives in the perpetual darkness of the caverns, tunnels and caves that thread through the very crust of the world, lurking as an ever present threat to the civilised races. Expansion of numbers, competition for living space and dark, unnamed horrors occasionally force them to the surface realms where they can cause untold misery.

THE SURFACE REALMS

Though unused to the unchanging domains of the underworld, kobolds are a hardy race easily capable of enduring extremes of temperature and climate. They may thus be found throughout the world, from the highest and coldest of peaks, to the steamiest jungles, though they tend to shy away from arid areas of little moisture. Direct and unwavering sunlight causes them actual physical pain and even overcast days will give great discomfort. Any gathering of kobolds will therefore give prime consideration to lessening the impact the hated sun will have upon their day-to-day lives. Caves or ruins with extensive underground complexes will often be sought after in order to provide a readily defensible lair from which to sally out after dark against other nearby races. Forests and jungles are also favoured places given a lack of underground dwellings, where trees and foliage grow so thick as to create an almost constant twilight under their canopy.

In addition to darkness, kobolds will also naturally gravitate towards areas of great humidity, whether from atmospheric conditions or nearby sources of water. Here too, they are well served by forests and jungles, though there are many tales of small groups of kobolds rising in the night from ruins in the heart of deserts and savannah. It may be that such places conceal hidden waterways or perhaps the kobolds are able to burrow so far under the surface that they uncover subterranean rivers and lakes, providing for

all their requirements regardless of the conditions on the surface. The lesson here is clear though. Given enough water to sustain them and a ready shield against the burning sunlight, kobolds may exist in any region of the world, working their evil plans and enacting vengeance upon any unfortunate enough to enter their domain.

Kobold Hordes

The numbers suggested in the Organisation category in the kobold entry of the *Core Rulebook III* refers only to those showing themselves upon the surface world – those that adventurers are most likely to encounter with any regularity. Beneath the sunlit world, in the shadowy depths where few of the civilised races will ever tread, kobolds exist in vast numbers, their areas of control spreading for many miles in every direction. The maximum tribal size of 400 listed in the *Core Rulebook III* is likely to be the very lower limit of such kobold settlements. Many will be far larger, averaging 4,000, possibly reaching 10,000 or even more.

THE DEEP DARK

With hundreds of feet of rock between them and the glaring sunlight, kobolds are at their best. They are accomplished miners capable of creating tunnels and caverns of their own, digging in great numbers and using crude machinery to make up for their physical weakness. Fanciful tales speak of incredibly deep kobold enclaves that rival dwarven holds in scope, if not in craftsmanship.

Given enough time, kobolds can turn any abandoned dungeon or cave into a complex maze capable of resisting a full-blown siege by an army. A typical kobold lair will have dozens of tunnels of all sizes branching out of every cave and chamber, connecting the open spaces together. These tunnels have a variety of purposes, depending on their size. Most adventurers will follow the wide and tall corridors that offer the easiest travel and these are often the ones that kobolds trap more extensively and seldom walk through themselves, preferring the less obvious large tunnels to transport materials, prisoners and large prey. Decoy tunnels are rife with pit traps, trip wires and hidden alcoves from which kobold warriors can harass the invaders and make a quick retreat.

Such alcoves are one of the destinations served most readily by the smallest tunnels, where only kobolds and halflings walk with any measure of comfort. Even gnomes have trouble navigating these corridors, which offer the kobolds alternate routes between chambers for a variety of strategic purposes: regroup, escape, ambush and retreat. The tunnels connect and intersect each other in a maze-like pattern where only the most curious kobolds learn to navigate. The most widely used have clear openings into the caverns that they connect but, just as many are cleverly concealed or inaccessible from a particular chamber and it is these where kobolds post their sentries and ambushes.

There are so many narrow passages that a kobold tribe has no trouble slipping away from any large force that breaches their defences, thus ensuring the survival of their people and a chance to get revenge on those who run them from their homes.

Abandoned ruins pose an interesting challenge for the little lizards. Before settling in, kobold scouts check every inch of surface to uncover any traps or hidden passageway the original builders may have left behind. Returning to their leaders only a couple of days later with an almost complete map of their prospective home, it is then left only to decide how best to utilise the areas and rooms that have been discovered. For several weeks thereafter, the kobolds will reset any original trap they find, build new ones and familiarise themselves with every inch of their new home. This tends to give them a great tactical advantage over any nosy explorer that intrudes on their new domain.

Should the ruins have other inhabitants, kobolds take great pains in studying them. If they can be killed or expelled with little risk, they find a way to do so while minimising their losses. If the potential neighbour is too strong for them but manageable, they use them as part of their new lair's defences. Only when the creature or group of creatures are far more powerful do they prefer to look for another place to live. Cowardly they might be, but so are they stubborn.

The small group huddled tightly together behind the half-demolished wall. Their little red eyes were blinking and moving nervously. There was a loud grunt from beyond the wall, which moved the whole group back a step at once.

'You didn't say there was an *ogre* in here!' One of the kobolds hissed.

'It wasn't here before!' Says another shaking his head violently. 'We've been watching this spot for weeks before even telling you!'

'Fine, fine.' The little reptile scratched his chin. 'Okay; you and your band stay here and watch the ogre; I'll run back to the clan and think of a way to kick it out.'



KOBOLD SOCIETY

Adventurers often dismiss kobolds as just another barbaric race fit only for extermination, or that their organisation is limited to a few leaders barking orders to a formless horde of little reptiles. Nothing is further from the truth, for kobolds have a very complex social system that allows them to scramble quickly. Everyone has their place in kobold society and everyone knows it. Every individual kobold knows what is expected of him and he fulfils his duty, even if grudgingly, for their superb teamwork is sometimes the only thing that keeps them alive in a hostile world.

PECKING ORDER

Kobolds have a very regimented society with clearly defined castes within a hierarchy. Caste markings are never obvious to non-kobolds, mistaking the colourful rags that they wear as the best an uncivilised race can do for clothing.

Kobolds like to dress in tones of red and yellow and although their dying techniques are crude at best, they use clothing to differentiate their status in kobold society. A kobold's caste can be discerned from the colour of the ribbons tied to their arms, their numbers and their social standing. This creates a complicated system of colour and placement combinations, as a red ribbon worn on the right arm does not mean the same as if it were worn on the left. Only the highest castes can tie strips of bright red rags into knots across their chests, while a bandanna

or a scarf around their neck is the highest status symbol a kobold can wear.

Spiteful as ever, kobolds relish showing off their status, yapping derisively to their lessers and grumbling politely at their betters. Despite this grudging acceptance of social order, the usefulness of the caste system comes into play when a band or an entire clan is faced with an emergency. At such occasions, kobolds rally around their leaders and obey orders without hesitation, even charging to their deaths in an attempt to buy precious time for their kin to flee or prepare an ambush that will bring down the threat.

No kobold is happy with his station in life and is always seeking a way to advance it while simultaneously performing their duties. Social dominance is a pastime in every kobold lair, with hundreds of plots to strip a rival of their position running at once. When free from external threats, the kobolds' cunning and resentment are turned inward against their own.

Gauntlets

When a kobold is convinced that he has everything in place to oust a rival and take his position, he issues a challenge. The small reptiles do not like to fight amongst themselves simply because they are not exactly built for it, even against another of their kind. Rather than tests of combat, kobolds engage in tests of cunning. These challenges take many forms and, like a perversion of the gnomes' pranking contests, kobold challenges do tend to end in the death of at least one of the contestants. One of the most popular challenges is The Gauntlet. Both contestants have one week to prepare a tunnel full of traps they must build with their own hands and without help from any other kobold. Traps can be magical if the kobold is a sorcerer, but they must all be self-triggering, which means that no friend or ally may spring it for them. At the end of the week, both contestants must walk the other's tunnel and avoid any trap they find. Whoever comes out first wins. If one of them dies, the winner gains additional prestige. In the all too likely event that both get killed, all kobolds merely shrug and both castes are short one member, to be filled by others.

Less lethal forms of challenge include insults, bringing captives, finding a certain item first or single-handedly besting a stronger creature (and offer proof of it). Contests of craftsmanship are not as common as other forms of challenge when the loser ends up humiliated, but are still surprisingly



prevalent, further proving that kobolds are not savage brutes.

Challenges between two sorcerers are always spectacular, as they are always magic duels. The spells that each kobold spellcaster knows and can cast in a day are not as important as how he puts them to use. Sorcery duels are the most fascinating of kobold challenges, as each of the contestants displays a creativity in spell-use that would astound the magicians of other races were they even interested in the kobolds' magical practices.

The Castes

Unlike human caste systems, kobolds do not organise themselves in circles of similar professions and activities: there are no warrior or religious castes as such, thus warriors may belong to wildly different castes. Kobolds use a strange system of heredity and meritocracy to determine their castes. The basic idea is that a kobold who is more useful to the tribe belongs to a higher caste and is expected by a caste's progeny to be as useful as their parents are. Should an individual kobold fail to live up to their caste's expectations they may find themselves dropped or displaced in status by more capable kobolds.

Each caste breaks down in sub-castes that keep a power relationship similar to those of the castes themselves but, no matter what their status is, they are always considered superior to the highest member of a lower caste. Castes have names that are mostly untranslatable from the original Draconic concept, having something to do with reptilian body parts, with sub-castes being differentiated by qualifiers, although what qualifier has higher esteem than another is completely subjective.

The highest castes are known as the Horned Castes and count amongst their number the tribe leaders. The few scholars interested in studying kobold society have noted that within the Horned caste kobolds group in professions, something unique in a social system that does not classify its members by what they do but rather how good they are at it. Sub-castes of the Horned are colour-based, with the Crimson-Horned being chieftains, Ochre-Horned comprising sorcerers and clerics, Gold-Horned grouping artisans, Black-Horned being conformed by trappers and hunters, White-Horned grouping warriors and Green-Horned containing gatherers and simple workers. Aside from the Horned, the rest of the kobold castes are much looser in their categorisation, with no such hierarchy as readily apparent. Other castes include the Scales, the Claws,

the Fangs, the Tails, the Talons, the Slitted Eyes, the Horn-Ridged and the Tongues.

People who have escaped captivity by kobolds tell that these tiny lizards refer to the Winged, whom even the Horned speak of with fear and reverence. So far nobody has documented their existence, mostly because very few adventurers care to parlay with kobolds, and when they are in a position to talk it is most frequently at the wrong end of a crudely fashioned spear.

Winged Caste Kobold

Medium-size Dragon

HD: 2d12+2 {15 hp}

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft, fly 50 ft (average)

AC: 16 (+2 leather armour, +4 natural armour)

Attacks: 1 bite +3 melee; 2 claws -1 melee or 1 heavy crossbow +2 ranged or 1 shortspear +3 melee.

Damage: Bite 2d4+1; claws 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft x 5 ft/5 ft

Special Attacks: Spells.

Special Qualities: Brood dreams, energy resistance, immunities, keen senses, light sensitivity.

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

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14

Skills: Hide +2, Intimidate +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Profession (miner) +2, Search +2, Spellcraft +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Alertness, Hover, Silent Spell.

Climate/Terrain: Any Underground

Organisation: Solitary

CR: 3

Treasure: Double

Alignment: Usually lawful evil.

Advancement Range: By character class.

The Winged caste is all but legend. Hidden from outsiders, these creatures secrete themselves in the deepest corners of kobold lairs, dispensing their orders and mandates to the kobolds around the world. This form of imposed isolation, far from cowardly, is endured in the knowledge that should they show themselves to any but their lesser cousins they would certainly be exterminated. They are larger versions of kobolds with decidedly draconic features, although indistinct and not corresponding to any of the known dragon species. They claim they are the missing link between dragons and kobolds but, just like the kobold's claim of draconic





ancestry, it remains unproven. Their most distinctly draconic of their features are their wings, which can propel them through the air and are strong enough to sustain a prolonged glide.

The Winged caste rules kobolds from their deep lairs, issuing their commands through dreams to all clan leaders within their domain. Those of the Winged caste can mate between themselves but the birth rate is low, with a new Winged kobold being born only every ten years. Sometimes, a new Winged will hatch from the clutch of normal Horned caste kobolds and is an immediate cause for celebration.

Combat

Winged kobolds are even more averse to direct confrontation than their lesser brethren. Their low numbers compared to the rest of their kind make them overly cautious. They coordinate the kobold lands to defend them, supporting them from afar with magic.

Spells: All Winged castes are born sorcerers, able to channel magic as their draconic birthright. They cast spells as a 2nd level sorcerer and, if they choose to advance down that path, they add their Hit Dice to any sorcerer level they gain to determine the caster level, list of known spells, spells per day and access to spell levels. Typical spells known (Sor 6/5): 0 - *daze, detect magic, mage hand, mending, read magic*; 1st - *cause fear, expeditious retreat*.

Keen Senses (Ex): A Winged kobold can see four times as well as human in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. It also has darkvision with a range of 120 feet.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Winged kobolds suffer a -4 penalty to attack rolls and -2 penalty to skill checks and saving throws in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Immunities (Ex): Winged kobolds are immune to sleep and paralysis.

Resistances (Ex): Winged caste kobolds have a cold, fire and acid resistance of 5.

Brood Dreams (Su): Once per day, a Winged caste may send dreams to any kobold born in the Horned caste as per the *dream* spell, regardless of distance.

Skills: Winged caste kobolds receive a +2 racial bonus to Spellcraft and Spot checks.

Winged Kobold Characters

A Winged kobold's favoured class is sorcerer. Clerics can choose any two of the following domains: Evil, Law, Luck and Trickery.

FAMILY

Although kobolds feel no particular love towards each other, they have a strong sense of belonging and community that stems from a mentality of 'us against them' permeating the whole of kobold culture. They present a cohesive and united front against common enemies but, when left alone, they are partisan and fractious, the 'us' concept narrowing down to caste and the smaller groups that constitute a caste, while 'them' is attributed to kobolds that fall outside their circle. The caste system allows them to individually know where they stand among their fellows but also to tell them who they may count on for help.

Kobold gangs are often comprised of members of the same caste or sub-caste, with a couple of members of higher status to order them around. Each gang member is likely to have different and unique talents, ensuring that the group as a whole can face almost any situation with at least one competent head present. Bands and warbands have members of almost all the castes, including leaders from the Horned. Kobolds gather in these groupings for specific purposes, with bands being mostly prospectors and explorers in search of new homes or in the middle of building one, while warbands form to conduct war directly against the kobolds' enemies.

Beyond those assemblages forming as they are needed, kobolds gather in more stable groups: the clutch, the clan and the tribe.

Clutches

Clutches are members of a single generation that group together for mutual protection (and abuse) since their hatching. Kobold parenting is negligent when compared with the customs of other races, another indicator of their reptilian nature. A few adults are assigned to the care and vigilance of the young but, it is the hatchlings who ultimately have to fend for themselves. While all eggs in a kobold clan are kept in the same hatchery, they are separated by caste, so that when they break their shells, they imprint with their closer clutch-mates and are later informed by the adults as to the caste they belong to.

Clutch-mates tend to group in the same gangs and despite their mutual identification, promptly fall into power-games to ascertain dominance over the rest. Clutch leaders have no official recognition beyond the allies they can pull out from amongst their clutch-mates but, such ties have often proved useful as a gang composed of clutch-mates co-

operates more readily, or at least are cowed more effectively by their leader.

Clans

Clans are the largest group of kobolds adventurers are likely to meet without venturing deep underground. Clans have from 80 to 800 members, of whom half are battle-ready even if their daily duties do not involve combat. A single clan has members of almost every caste, although they may miss a couple. Horned caste members amount to about five percent of the total population, with the rest dividing evenly among the rest of the castes. Small lairs house one or two clans, who stage raids against the nearby settlements of other races. These attacks are what make kobolds infamous amongst other races and the retaliatory assaults on the clans' holdings by eager adventurers prove a constant threat.

Clans are efficient social constructs for kobolds: they are large enough to pose a real threat to any invader but, small enough that they can move quickly, a competence that is only enforced by the caste system of leadership and delegation of duties. Clan names exploit the kobold's purported draconic origin, adopting monikers that sound terrifying to the ear, when not uttered in a yapping war cry by pint-sized lizards.

Tribe

Very few adventurers have gazed upon the full might of a kobold tribe. Composed of at least ten clans, a tribe can have from 800 to 8,000 members, ruled by their Horned castes, who select a tribe leader in quick and brutal contests. Tribe leaders are always highly accomplished sorcerers and are a force to be reckoned with by themselves, without adding the full force of the clans they command.

Tribal holdings are always deep underground. Sending bands to seek out new territories and, when positive reports arrive back, a full clan may move out to carve its own power centre in the new settlement. The devilishly complex domains of a kobold tribe are a hazard to navigate without a native guide and invaders have learned to take extra precautions when moving through kobold territory, as large forces tend to be slowly but surely cut down days before they meet the full kobold armies.

Like gnomish settlements, kobold lairs are incredibly hard to find, even one large enough to house an entire tribe. The fabled Winged caste hides in the darkest corners of such havens and will only



venture out in very desperate situations, such as the fending off of an invasion.

Nation

The existence of kobold nations is pure speculation, extrapolated from the natural progression of clan and tribe associations. A nation would be composed of several tribes with members numbering in the thousands. Such a large amassment of vicious and relentless kobolds would be capable of overrunning any kind of resistance, especially considering the incredibly large proportion of sorcerers amongst their population. Just picture a barrage of hundreds, if not thousands of *magic missiles* in a single volley.

Such a nation would need an incredibly powerful ruler to keep all the machinations of the Horned and Winged castes in check. It is rumoured that insightful dragons could take hold of such groupings, for only a creature of its calibre would be able to cow kobolds in such large numbers into submission.

ON DAILY DUTIES

Division of labour is one of the practices that allow kobolds to apply their uncanny ingenuity. Given the quick rate at which they mature, hatchlings join a work crew almost within a year from their birth. This forced labour helps adult kobolds keep an eye on them without neglecting their duties to the clan while freeing those in nursery detail to care for a new clutch. Young kobolds learn quickly, grasping language and basic skills in a couple of months, becoming capable and useful members of their community in less than five years.

As was mentioned before, a single task force consists of members of the same caste when it calls for general skills but, gathers members with the same expertise but different castes when the job at hand is very specific. A mining force will be composed of miners from varying castes, the taskmasters of higher status mercilessly lording over the others.

Kobolds are not micro-managers and every leader enjoys a certain degree of autonomy over his underlings. The small reptiles enjoy their power games and do not miss any opportunity to gloat and snub their inferiors, which is why every kobold wants to climb to a higher caste. The petty lords, leaders and masters organise their gangs as they see fit, competing with others of their same station for greater influence. Kobold politics are quite complex, a detail that is lost to others who only hear barking where there is actually a debate going on.

Not an overly intellectual discussion but, a debate nonetheless.

CAPTIVES, SLAVES AND PETS

Kobolds hate every other sentient creature as a general rule and take great delight in tormenting any captive they keep. Any prisoner should count his blessings, for kobolds do not take captives very often; preferring to let intruders rot in a trap, pilfering any valuables later or simply kill their helpless target from a safe distance. Only after they have successfully incapacitated their target through magic or poison, do they think it is safe enough to capture an opponent.

Captives in a kobold compound are in for a lot of pain, however, as very few creatures can fit in a kobold settlement comfortably. Forced to crouch and walk on all fours, human-sized creatures or larger face constant humiliation by the gloating kobolds. If they ever take slaves, kobolds prefer them to be of their size, like goblins and halflings. Taller creatures are just too troublesome and pose a constant risk, so they sell them at the first opportunity to whatever race they have relations with. Prisoners confident they can stage an escape from the weak and frail-looking kobolds are in for a surprise when they meet their new masters.

Escape is a tricky proposition, for kobolds build simple but clever holding areas to keep taller creatures safely locked away. The most common prison is the pit covered by a crude iron grate, with wooden stakes pointing downward to dissuade would-be climbers.

When taking prisoners, kobolds make sure that they are stripped of every possession, with valuable items going to the higher castes first and then trickling down, although a gang can claim 'salvage rights' and distribute any loot amongst themselves, again, going from upper to lower castes within the group. Items they cannot use, such as big weapons, they sell or use to barter with other races.

Pets are uncommon amongst kobolds, since few animals can tolerate the stench that pervades a kobold lair. They do capture and train animals to help them in battle, with dire weasels being their favourites, for they are just the right size to serve as mounts for them and are appropriately vicious, not to mention sneaky.

'So... what is a strong and brave warrior like you doing in a place like this?' The halfling asked of the most recent prisoner to join the cage.

'Shut up or I'll sink that grin so deep inside your skull you'll be smiling at the people behind you.'

'Aw, come on... being captured by kobolds is not as bad as it seems.'

'That's because you don't have to *squat* to avoid knocking your head on the ceiling.'

MINING AND INDUSTRY

Primitive as they look, kobolds are proficient miners. Some of the machinery found in kobold mines could rival that of dwarves in terms of functionality, if not performance. Kobolds mine primarily for precious metals and gemstones but also for the many other ores the earth yields. They do not have the master craftsmen of other mining races but, for them, the shiny surface of a lump of gold and the colour of rough gemstones are pretty enough. They are perfectly aware of the value of their materials and are crafty negotiators with races they are not directly at war with. Finding a pyrite bed is a great boon for kobolds, who use it to fool greedy orcs and goblinoids when buying their support, or leave it around as bait for their traps.

Their mining output exceeds that of a human mine with the same number of workers and would make a great trading partner if not for the poor relationships they maintain with the rest of the world. What they do with so many raw materials is a mystery, as the piles vanish overnight, taken to greater clan holdings.

As good as kobolds are at extracting precious rocks and minerals, they are simply not builders or craftsmen. The very few forges they have produce weapons and armour of poor quality, although kobold weaponsmiths make serviceable spearheads and crossbows. Kobolds take no pride in a job well done or how aesthetically pleasing a finished object is; of utmost importance is the practical uses it has. Their craftsmanship is shoddy and looks unmistakably hurried but, contrary to their basic looks, they are durable and functional. An uneven prison bar is as tough as a straight one.

The Mechanical Fascination

Just like gnomes, kobolds have a strange fascination with mechanical devices. Probably a reason for their mutual hatred. In contrast with gnomes'

sophisticated gadgets, kobold machines are rustic and unsightly, made mostly of wood and iron. This does not mean that they are any less clever. Kobolds have crank-operated elevators in their deepest mines, counter-weighted gates that a single kobold can shut but need a giant to force open, waterwheels that use underground currents to move mining machinery and, most importantly, they have traps.

The fiendish devices that kobolds build are elegant in their simplicity but, cunning to the limit. Kobolds pour their best efforts and enthusiasm into trapmaking, making it a racial trait. Crafty rogues slap their heads when examining a kobold trap they are victims of, cursing themselves for falling for such simple tricks. If there is a matter of cultural pride for kobolds, it is their traps.

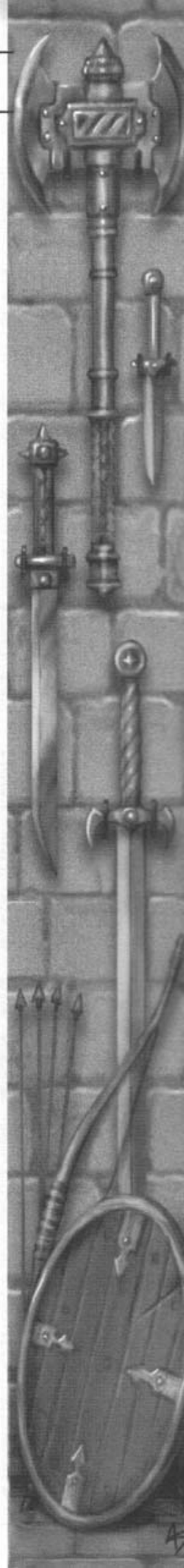
RELIGION AND SORCERY

Kobolds like their god, probably the only being in the universe to like them in the first place. The kobold deity probably identifies with the little creatures because nobody likes *him* either, or maybe he answered the kobolds' need for protection in lands where every living sentient is out to get them. Whatever the case, the kobolds keep a very close relationship with their god and he rewards their devotion by not asking too much in the way of religious practices, knowing full well that they are busy enough trying to survive and they honour him by merely being alive and being a thorn in other races' sides.

Kobold clerics are basically indistinguishable from other kobolds until they start using their divine powers and, even then, people who have heard of the species' sorcerous heritage are likely to mistake them for sorcerers. Already attuned to magic, many sorcerers do follow the priestly way to become their tribes' shamans, climbing in caste by merely being what they are and then by gaining the favour of the kobold deity.

Kobolds defend fiercely the theory of innate magic having its origin in dragon blood. They have conflicting myths and legends about this. One says that they are descendants of dragons, another that their race was created at the same time as the dragons themselves. A less popular one states that kobolds were created by the Dragon Mother to serve evil dragons but, that they broke away when the dragons slowly retreated from the land.

Dragons, for their part, do not pay attention to any of those theories. Those that deign to deal with the pests consider them amusing at best and just as



another food source at worst. What puzzles those who know more about kobolds is that, now and then, a clutch will hatch bearing chromatic scales. Rather than the common dull brown and green coloration, these throwbacks sport the tints of one of the chromatic dragon species with complementary energy resistance. Chromatic kobolds are always sorcerers and even more powerful than their peers. They are seen as almost divine, proof of their claims of draconic descent, climbing to Horned status regardless of the caste they were born in.

Chromatic Kobolds

'Chromatic' is a template that can be added to any kobold (referred to hereafter as the 'base creature'). The creature's type remains unchanged. It uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Hit Dice: Increase base Hit Dice to 2d8; apply this before adding any class levels.

AC: Natural armour improves by +1 (kobolds already have a +1 natural armour bonus).

Special Attacks: A chromatic kobold casts spells as a 1st level sorcerer. When taking levels in the sorcerer class, its caster level, list of known spells, spells per day and access to spell levels correspond to a sorcerer of one level higher than its class level.

Special Qualities: Chromatic kobolds have all the special qualities of the base creature, plus low-light vision and darkvision with a range of 100 feet. They are immune to sleep and paralysis effects and have additional immunities based on their dragon variety.

Dragon Variety	Immunity
Black	Acid
Blue	Electricity
Green	Acid
Red	Fire
White	Cold

Saves: Same as the base creature.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +2, Int +2, Cha +2.

Skills: A chromatic kobold gains 8 skill points plus its Intelligence modifier. Treat skills from the base creature's list as class skills and other skills as cross-class.

Feats: Chromatic kobolds receive one extra feat.

Climate/Terrain: Same as the base creature.

Organisation: Same as the base creature

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +2 (for use as Player Characters, chromatic kobolds are equivalent to a 2nd level character, plus any class level they have).

Treasure: Same as the base creature.

Alignment: Same as the base creature.

Advancement: By the sorcerer class.

OTHER RACES

To say that kobolds' relations with other races are poor is an understatement. Kobolds *hate* all other races. They harbour a deep resentment over the centuries of mistreatment and outright genocide inflicted upon them by every race they have encountered, good and evil in equal measure. Persecuted as they are, their first response to meeting another race is flight if they are stronger and attack if they seem weaker. Only when they have had some time to study the situation do kobolds seek a deal... and even then with all the reservation that centuries of slaughter have taught them.

Kobolds do have an important advantage in their dealings with others: they know perfectly well the contempt with which others see them and thus how easy is to trick those races into underestimating them. Doing their best to look pathetic and scared (something they invest little effort in), they offer alliance to goblinoids, paying them with pyrite nuggets and with a back-up plan to kill them all once their relationship is finished, before those 'allies' have a chance to do the same to them.

The only relatively stable relationships that kobolds seek and maintain is with other reptilian humanoids. Although such alliances are short-lived as well, they do not end with bloodshed as often as their associations with other types of humanoids.

The hatred they feel towards gnomes in particular has its origin in how similar the two races are in their interests and pursuits, not to mention their size. Both prefer trickery to open combat, are excellent miners and burrowers and have a strange fascination with mechanical devices. Like two sides of the same coin, each race cannot help but despise the other with religious fervour. The animosity towards fey is harder to explain but, it may have to do with racial envy as the fey have not been as persecuted as the kobolds, even if they tend to look stranger and can be much more evil in disposition. Whatever the case, both fey and gnomes awake an uncharacteristic fury in the small reptiles, prompting them to attack on sight abandoning their cowardice and caution for the chance to kill their most hated of foes.

METHODS OF WARFARE

Kobolds are not much to look at when they fight in small groups, mostly because they do not fight at all but rather scatter to the four winds amidst a cacophony of frightened yelps. Although their fear is quite real, it also serves a second purpose: to allow them to regroup and mount an ambush when their enemies believe they are already routed. Kobolds are cowards out of necessity. Easily overpowered by larger opponents, they do not present much of a challenge when using standard battle tactics, so they fight in their own unique and disconcerting way.

WEAPONRY

Ranged weapons make up the kobolds' main arsenal. Their skill with mechanical devices allowed them to reproduce crossbows from their experiences of them on the battlefield. As the crossbow does not require the user to be particularly strong nor proficient with martial weapons, kobolds adopted it readily to deal crippling damage over greater distances.

The shortspear is the second favourite kobold weapon. With heads knapped from stone or hammered from crude iron, kobolds can throw them or use them to fight better against larger foes, which practically means anything else. They have little use for other melee weapons that rely on strength or require maintenance, so axes and short swords are an unusual sight in a kobold horde.

The most effective weapon in the kobold arsenal is magic. With their high proportion of sorcerers, kobolds have an edge when dealing with their enemies. Every kobold gang will be accompanied by at least one sorcerer for every ten warriors. The most commonly used spells in a kobold sorcerer's repertoire include *colour spray*, *sleep*, *web* and in case of emergencies *expeditious retreat*. A sorcerer's main role in a gang is to strike first in a way that gives an advantage to the warriors.

GUERRILLA TACTICS

It is hard to surprise kobolds; their small size allows them to hide very effectively, and their paranoid nature prompts them to do so. Anyone entering kobold territory should assume that they are being watched and, the closer he gets to the actual lair, the more careful he must be about traps and ambushes.

When spotting an enemy, a kobold party will break into teams and pairs. A pair runs back to the lair to warn of intruders, informing the lair's leader of the size of the threat. While they wait for reinforcements, the remaining kobolds take turns in keeping an eye on the unwelcome guests, much like wolves do when harassing prey, except that the kobolds keep quiet.

Once an adequate force is assembled, the kobolds strike with their favourite tactic: the hit and run. They will fire volleys of crossbow bolts before dispersing. A small group will serve as bait; bullied into the position by their leader, their duty is to present a visible target to the opponent and run away, making sure that they are being pursued. Those acting as bait run towards specially prepared sites full of weight-sensitive traps where the small and light kobolds can run through unharmed, but any larger creature will trigger one trap after another. Should an enemy avoid the traps, the rest of the kobolds, who held their position and are now behind the enemy, start shooting again, with yet another group to serve as decoys. They repeat this manoeuvre until the enemy falls into a trap or it is worn down and killed.

THE TACTICAL ADVANTAGE

Kobolds do not fight in terrain they are unfamiliar with if they can avoid it. In the rare cases that they are ambushed, they run away and regroup later, going by the philosophy that scattered they have better chances of survival, as a pursuer only concentrates on one unlucky kobold at a time. When travelling or establishing new territory, kobolds explore the land for miles around, becoming intimate with all the corners where they can hide or build a trap.

Knowledge of their terrain has many advantages that kobolds exploit thoroughly. Since everybody takes them for cowards anyway, they lure pursuers to dangerous places that kobolds know are ahead and have prepared well in advance. Since they are fast for a creature of their size, the small lizards can bolt through hidden holes overland just before reaching the manticores' lair and just after they made enough noise to wake the monster to deal with the first thing that comes near, namely the kobolds' pursuers.

Kobolds can run and regroup repeatedly when they know where every path and corridor leads to and, when they see their plans working, cowardice turns to malice and they get a kick out of confusing opponents.



TRAPS

By far the preferred kobold tactic, trapping is a culture-wide practice that kobolds excel in. Their traps may not look as fancy as those of ancient ruins, but they work, and they are often humiliatingly simple. Kobold traps start popping up as far as one mile away from their lair, following patterns that try to drive intruders away.

Kobold traps are cheap when set above ground as they are made with natural materials. Even underground traps use generous amounts of wood from above and iron smelted in their poor forges. The quality that lacks in every other product of kobold industry is poured in their traps. A kobold can labour for weeks filing the teeth of a gear meant for a trap, giving a couple of passes to a stake meant for a common palisade.

Traps multiply the strength of a kobold warband when fighting on their home soil, they fill the gaps in their defences and strengthen their morale when they work properly. Traps require no direct confrontation, and that suits the kobolds just fine. Not all of a kobold lair's traps are automatic, their triggers are, as often as not, hidden in an alcove with a kobold sentry who activates it when the time is right. Sorcerers are just as useful here, as they can send their familiars to watch a particular corridor or chamber and warn of intruders, so that the kobold sorcerer can activate the trap's trigger while not being too near the trap itself. Manually activated traps are harder to detect, since the trigger is often what gives a trap away. Increase the DC for any Search checks by +5, or have characters roll Spot checks against the trapper's Hide check (add any bonus for cover that his hiding place may provide to find the trap operator. The inherent down side to these kinds of traps is that kobolds need co-ordination. It is not rare for a baiting kobold to fall into a trap activated too early, or a pursuer hearing crashing noises behind him as the trap activated too late. Triggering a manual trap in time requires a Dexterity check (DC 10 + trap's CR), and it may be done as a ready action if the kobold has advance warning.

Kobolds build different kinds of traps depending on their purpose:

Decoys: The small reptiles know that traps not only affect their victim's bodies, but also their minds. Decoy traps are meant to deceive, not harm. They go off too early on purpose, dropping a log a few feet ahead of their triggering point so as to make the victim believe he avoided it, but making him aware

that there may be more traps ahead. Decoys can also be purposeless mechanisms that are easy to find, diverting attention from the *real* trap just a few feet away. It takes a Spot check (DC 20) to identify a trap intended as a decoy.

† **False Pressure Plate:** A flagstone is raised and can be pressed down, with a cord that extends to a nearby wall. It does nothing else. CR 1; no attack roll necessary; Search (DC 15); Disable Device (none).

Alarms: These traps make a lot of noise, alerting sentries and patrols as to the presence of intruders as well as their location. Kobolds show their cunning by 'coding' alarms, giving each a distinct sound so that there is no question about where it was set off. Any kind of trap can be combined with an alarm, just to literally add insult to injury. An alarm grants a +10 bonus to sentries' Listen and Intuit Direction checks. Additional bonuses can be installed into the alarm by raising the trap's CR by +1 for every additional +5 bonus.

† **Clattering Deluge:** Opening a door causes several metal pots and scraps to fall from the ceiling, granting sentries a +15 bonus to Listen and Intuit Direction checks to determine the intruder's position. CR 2; no attack roll necessary; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 15).

Delaying Traps: Decoys work very well in delaying intruders by making them fear what might not be there and take unnecessary precautions, but delaying traps do it by physically hindering the movements of an intended victim. Coupled with alarms, delaying traps help kobolds gather an adequate force to repel the threat. Delaying traps do not deal damage, but create obstacles to an intruder's passage. For every ten minutes that a trap is designed to delay whoever falls for it, it has a +1 CR. Note that an ingenious character may get around the obstacle sooner, while an unlucky one may need more time than is generally required. Delaying traps can be anything from a cave-in that blocks a passage, filling a chamber with poisonous vermin, jamming the lock of a door beyond repair to bursting the dam of a river to create swamplands.

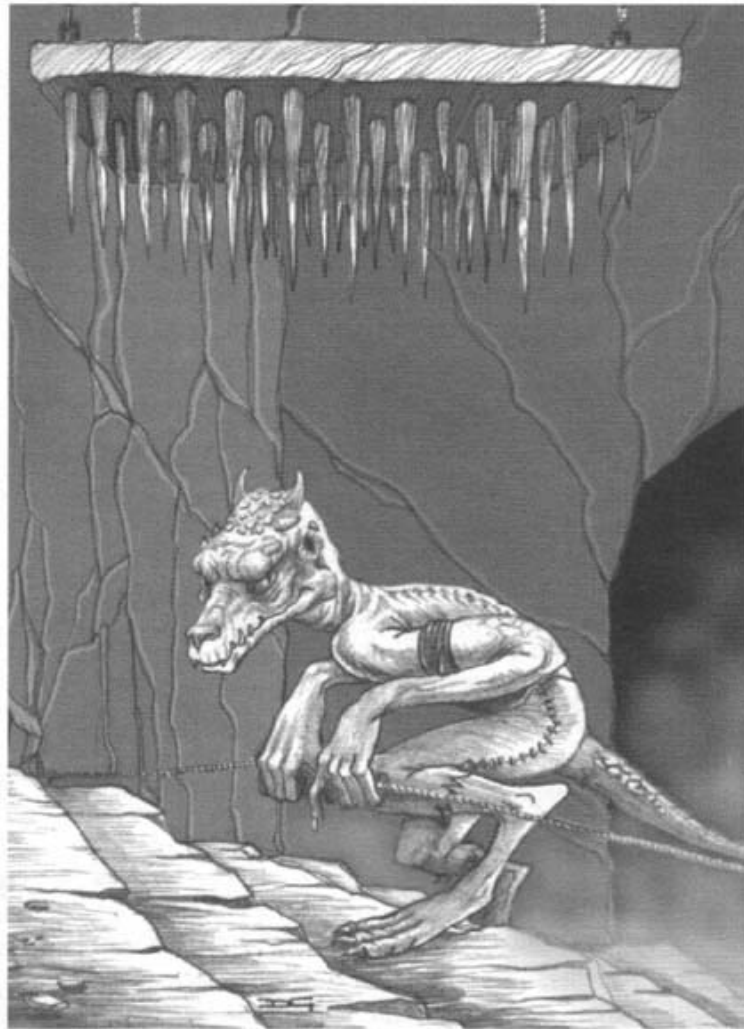
† **Jam Lock:** Opening a door without the right key causes it to jam, raising the DC for any Open Lock check by +5. Trying to pick the lock also sets off the trap if the Open Lock check does not exceed the lock's DC by 5 or more. CR 1; no attack roll necessary; Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 20).

Capture Traps: As the name implies, these traps are meant to hold victims in one place while kobold patrols arrive to investigate. Capture traps can be designed to trap one or more creatures, depending on their construction. From nets that hoist victims aloft, clamps that close around a thief's hand as he tries to take a jewel to simple pit traps with added protection against climbers, all serve as good capture traps.

† **Snaptrap Door:** A pressure plate just before a false door triggers a framework dotted with several spikes to swing down from the ceiling. This framework, once in place, seals the exit route from the door leaving the intruder trapped in the cage it has formed. Raising the spiked frame requires a Strength check (DC 20), but the imprisoned creature suffers a -2 circumstance bonus due to their unfortunate position. CR 3; no attack roll necessary (1d10 subdual), Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

Incapacitating Traps: While many incapacitating traps do cause damage, their real purpose is to make life difficult for the victim and give kobolds an easier time of defeating them. These traps vary in effect depending upon their maker's wont. Some examples of incapacitating traps are flagstones that break into a small tanglefoot bag, a ceiling that drops to three feet in height that only allows small creatures to fight effectively or a magical trap that deafens creatures inside a room. As a rule of thumb, a trap that induces a condition like deafened, dazzled, etc. raises the trap's CR by +1. Also, for every -4 points of penalty that it imposes on the victim's actions, the trap's CR increases by +1.

† **Tricky Passage:** This trap is activated manually. Two kobolds hide on either side of a doorway, one of which stands on a platform, while several other kobolds act as bait, fleeing through the passageway. The lowest operator pulls a rope tight across the floor and secures so as to trip the pursuer. An instant later the highest operator pulls a lever that slides a thick wooden board out from the wall so the victim slams into it as they jump the rope. If the victim fails either of the two required saving throws, he falls prone, at the mercy of the kobolds who are now coming back. CR 2; no attack roll necessary; Reflex save (DC 15) avoids first part, Reflex save



(DC 20) avoids second part; Spot (DC 18); Disable Device (not applicable).

Battle Traps: When kobolds have the luxury of choosing the field of battle, which is to say when they have not run away, they run and manoeuvre to make use of several devices built in anticipation of attack. Such traps can be automatic or manual, depending on their intended use, and are meant to seriously injure the kobolds' enemies without actually engaging them. The little creatures do a lot of running to set enemies up for a battle trap, and most of them are built in such way that they can go off without affecting the kobolds themselves. Some battle traps include swinging logs, spear traps, caltrops and the like.

† **Jumping Knives:** This trap is activated manually. A kobold fighter steps on a pressure plate or pulls a tripwire, causing a framework full of daggers to spring forward from the wall like a catapult, the framework passes over the kobold's head and impales the opponent he is facing (or fleeing from). CR 3; +8 melee (6d6); Reflex save (DC 20) halves; Spot (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Lethal Traps: The standard variety of traps kobolds build along sensitive areas or in places and situations where they prefer to kill intruders rather than keep them prisoner. This type of trap is always automatic so as to lower the risk of harm to the kobolds it is designed to defend, this type of trap is also the most familiar with adventurers. See *Core Rulebook II* for detailed examples.

Magic Traps

Given that kobolds have a facility for both building traps and sorcery, it is no surprise that many of their traps are magical in nature. A trapper with a magical bent is a valuable member of any kobold community, often 'funded' by the clan leaders to build magical traps around any kobold compound. Magic traps can serve any of the purposes outlined above, depending upon the spells that the sorcerer uses to create their devices. Building a magic trap requires the Craft Wondrous Item feat, with the costs of building these kinds of items found in the Adventures chapter of *Core Rulebook II*. Examples of spells for magic traps that serve a specific purpose are as follows:

- † **Decoys:** *Permanent image* of a trap, *programmed image* simulating a trap's effect.
- † **Alarms:** *Alarm* (of course); *magic mouth*, *message*, *sculpted sound*, *whispering wind*.
- † **Delaying Traps:** *Slow*, *transmute earth to mud*, *wall of stone*.
- † **Capture Traps:** *Animate object*, *Bigby's grasping hand*, *hold person/monster*, *hypnotic pattern*.
- † **Incapacitating Traps:** *Enervation*, *daze*, *stinking cloud*, *web*.
- † **Battle Traps:** *Flaming sphere*, *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*.
- † **Lethal Traps:** *Cloudkill*, *explosive runes*, *symbol*.

OVERWHELMING ODDS

When they are forced to fight, kobolds are ferocious and relentless. They only need to remember the abuse they have received at the hands of every race in existence to fire their little hearts into a battle frenzy. When in this state, they can fall by the hundreds and still keep coming in a seemingly endless wave of scaled fury.

As angry as they get when fighting, kobolds do not lose any of their cunning and are capable of combat manoeuvres that one might be expected to see in a



disciplined army, not in a band of yapping lizards. Their high mobility granted by their size and speed can be used to devastating effect during combat. When they engage in melee, kobolds do their best to separate their foes so that they can attack from every angle, using one another to utilise as many flanking options as possible. When surrounding an enemy, kobolds use aided trip attacks, since a prone opponent is practically helpless when surrounded by them, but if they have a different way to trip an enemy, they will employ that just as readily.

When things get desperate kobolds have been known to actually throw themselves at an enemy. With strength born out of panic, they can latch on to their opponent's limbs and attack in a flurry of claws and bites that deal little damage, but greatly improve the chances of the rest of his fellows to hit their foe and bring him down. This combat action is called 'latching.' By making a successful touch attack, the kobold can grapple the limbs of a Medium creature with a +2 to his Strength check due to his position. His desperately brave act imposes a -1 circumstance penalty to his opponent's attack and damage rolls, as well as to his Armour Class. Most creatures can easily shake the kobold off but it takes a standard action to do so, giving other kobolds a chance to either attack or do the same to impose cumulative penalties, and a character can only shake one kobold off in a single turn. During any single round that a creature has four kobolds latched on to him, he loses his Dexterity bonus to AC.

This action costs the lives of many kobolds, but ultimately can bring down almost any adventurer by sheer force of numbers.

ROLEPLAYING WITH KOBOLDS

There is one word that can describe kobolds, their culture and their attitude: spite. They are the bottom rung in the ladder, the lowest link in the food chain and their Challenge Rating does not even reach one. When even goblins bully you, you tend to develop natural armour in more ways than one and kobolds' thick skin not only raises their Armour Class but, also shields their morale.

The world is a hostile place when viewed from below, but kobolds seem possessed of an untiring and unbeatable spirit. If only they were good sports about it, they would be an admirable race. They rightly see the entire world as their enemy but, instead of taking it in their stride they take it personally, becoming the world's enemy in return. A lack of allies and an abundance of enemies coupled with their physical frailty pushes kobolds to be an incredibly self-reliant race. Unlike other barbaric races like goblins and orcs, kobolds forage and hunt for their own food, mine their own minerals and build their own lairs. They do not raid the settlements of other races out of parasitic necessity but out of revenge and greed.

When dealing with others, kobolds can put on any face they like: whimpering cowards, solicitous servants or even helpful assistants but, behind that façade lies a bitter and hateful personality. They do not measure pride and honour in the same way as other races, which allows them to act pathetically without losing face with their brethren, since they all know it is just an act intended to trick non-kobolds.

Kobold pride resides in how many others they can bring to their knees. They take great delight in poking fun at their captives, treating them like animals and subjecting them to concentrated doses of the abuses they themselves have endured throughout the centuries.

One thing that must be kept in mind at all times is that kobolds, for all the primitive look of their habitat, are not savages. They do not charge madly at opponents (unless they are gnomes) but, plan a

careful strategy that will cause maximum damage with minimum losses. They will lie, cheat and take every opportunity to defeat their enemies and they do it with perverse glee. They are truly dangerous because they know their weaknesses and squeeze every last drop of their strength.

Facing a gang of kobolds is a good warm-up exercise for a party; they will defeat them easily and give them a small taste of what kobolds are about. The gang will try to use its usual tactics but their small numbers will prevent them from being effective, so they will probably try running away once the first couple of kobolds fall under the characters' blades. And then comes payback. The rest of the clan will notice when the patrol does not return, or survivors will warn them. As characters get closer to the kobolds' lair, they will start stumbling into traps and triggering alarms so that, by the time they finally approach the entrance, the characters are in no shape to fight the horde of kobolds that is waiting for them.

Kobolds understand magic and they know what it can do. Spellcasters become primary targets once they reveal their powers, as other kobolds circle around the warrior types to buy some time. Spring a true kobold ambush when a party gets too cocky about the kinds of enemies they can defeat.

If characters somehow get on the kobold's good side, they can gain access to a world they never knew existed and a promise of help against bigger, more terrible threats is a good start. Kobolds tend to keep their word when they give it, which is why they do not give it often. They grow up knowing that keeping up with their duties and meeting their

fellows' expectations ensures their own survival, which is why they will live up to anything they promise but nothing more.



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Kobolds make for excellent encounters for characters of levels from first through tenth simply by scaling the size of the opposition and presenting tougher warbands and traps. Past 11th level, kobolds must start becoming seriously vindictive if they wish to make an impression. The following are ideas for stories and adventures that a Games Master may employ in their games, using several aspects of kobolds' characteristics and society to make for memorable encounters, giving kobolds their due as credible threats and not just as cannon fodder.

MINE THIEVES

A small dwarven mine is reporting strange happenings: things are disappearing between shifts. It started with simple tools and miners' lunches; the taskmasters called a cleric to exorcise whatever spirit was playing such pranks on their workers to no effect so, when an entire cartful of gold disappeared, the dwarves decided to call in outside help. The truth is that one of the dwarves' tunnels got very close to a kobold mine, and the little creatures heard the noise of tools on stone from the other side before dwarves did. Creating a secret entrance connecting the two complexes, the kobolds were stealing the superior mining equipment the dwarves use, but got greedy and began stealing the products of their labour. Characters have a chance to explore a kobold-built mine with a relatively small proportion of warriors amongst the population, traversing small tunnels and smelly passages, not to mention the traps they are bound to find when they stumble on important areas.

THE GOLDEN CLUTCH

A strange halfling hires the adventurers to check on some small ruins nobody has paid attention to since they were looted clean decades ago. This halfling claims to have found a secret passage revealing an ancient temple from the times when dragons dominated the world. The stranger will later reveal himself to be a kobold sorcerer, disguised through illusions in order to hire adventurers to keep him safe during his explorations. His clan have kicked

him out because he seeks to confirm within the hidden ruins the ultimate link between kobolds and dragonkind. The secret of the ruins reveals the existence of the chromatic kobolds, the Winged caste and makes particular mention of *metallic* kobolds, servants of great dragons that became the keepers of a glorious kobold civilisation lost to the ages.

THE CULT OF THE SCALE

A small kobold clan is getting restless and decidedly more hostile. Usually content to carve their existence from the mountains' caves, there have been numerous raids on nearby settlements and assaults on caravans. Survivors speak of kobolds fighting under a strange banner. A small garrison of human soldiers have analysed the attacks and discovered a disturbingly logical pattern to the raids, but need proof of a plan before calling for reinforcements to contain *kobolds*. Intercepting a gang, the adventurers see that the little reptiles seem strangely motivated to throw away their lives for a cause and are wearing tabards with a symbol painted in bright red (very strange behaviour in kobolds). The force behind their recent zeal is a half-dragon cleric, one of many who are preparing a horde of expendable troops for their dragon parent. This adventure can take many directions, for the characters may decide to free the kobolds from the thrall of their half-dragon masters or cut straight to the chase and go after the dragon overlord itself.

THE LONG ROAD

Kobolds mine deep, sometimes even deeper than dwarves. Villagers have reported a huge mobilisation of kobolds; the largest ever seen. An entire tribe is fleeing its ancestral underground home, raiding settlements on the way. Curiously enough, the only casualties are the combatants who resist the horde, as the kobolds just take the food and other valuables and then move on. If asked, the multitude of survivors will attest that the reptiles looked scared, more scared than usual. The tribe will defend itself if attacked, but definitely seems in a hurry to get as far away as possible. If the adventurers do nothing, a few days later an army of demons burst forth from the abandoned kobold mines. Characters have a chance to explore the abandoned hold and discover how complex kobolds make their homes, and even co-operate with a group of kobold sorcerers to try and close the gate to the Abyss they have inadvertently opened, so that the tribe can return home. Although once the extent of the kobold threat is revealed, characters may not be so keen on letting them be.

WEAPONS OF MASS EXPULSION

In a conflict with no true black and white, characters are forced to choose sides between a small kobold clan and a gnomish community. Gnomes developed a strange contraption that would flood the kobold caves with a *stinking cloud* effect, but kobolds stole the plans before it could be built, and now the gnomes suspect the kobolds are making it with a lethal difference: it will disperse a *cloudkill* effect on the gnomish community! Both enclaves have been in place for decades, but they only met recently as the gemstone deposits the gnomes were mining came very near some ruins that kobolds have claimed as their own for longer than they can remember. The mutual racial hatred has not made things any easier, and it may be up to the adventurers to stop a massacre from taking place... on either side.

TERROR FROM BELOW

A small human city is in the grip of an unknown terror. Every fortnight, several townsfolk disappear without a trace, and the authorities have not found any clue as the nature of the disappearances. Kobolds have settled the sewer system and expanded it with their own constructions, building trapdoors that drop into special cages. The little reptiles remove the bars from these trapdoors every two weeks to capture as many humans as they can, without raising too much of a ruckus, so that they can sell them as slaves to hobgoblin smugglers that stop near their caves' entrance to pick up the latest 'shipment.'

THE HUNT

On the way to their destination, the characters cross through territory that a kobold clan recently settled. Alarmed at how quickly other races seemed to have found their lair, the small reptiles go crazy with paranoia and decide to make a lesson out of the intruders. Every night they will harass the party, keeping them from sleeping well but never truly attacking. If the party tries to confront them, they will quickly disperse and run away only to return the next night. On their way ahead, the party finds that kobolds have sabotaged any bridge or pass they needed to get across, and then the real hunt begins. This adventure should be played to highlight the vicious trickery that kobolds perform on their

enemies, wearing them down both physically and mentally before actually committing a direct assault.

STEPPING ON THE FOOTHOLD

A large city is famous for the tolerance shown to every race that wishes to settle and make an honest (or at least peaceful) living. A few kobold families have arrived to build a new home in the city, claiming a few derelict buildings in the slums. In the following weeks they have gained employment in several criminal organisations, peddling their willingness to do the basest and most humiliating jobs. What the criminal lords ignore is that they are under orders from a Winged sorcerer who spent several years living there, *polymorphed* into a human. He saw the possibilities for his people in such an environment and has begun infiltrating the major criminal guilds, as no one would suspect a kobold of high ambitions. The characters can get involved as unusually violent gang skirmishes explode into outright war between criminal elements, manipulated by the information the kobold spies drop.



KOBOLDS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Kobolds can be introduced very easily as player characters, since they have no particular strength and their racial traits balance each other out. A kobold character benefits greatly by replacing its rather pathetic Hit Dice with those of a character class, so even a first level sorcerer is tougher than the average member of his race.

The first choice for class for a kobold character should be sorcerer, playing up the racial heritage and opportunities of self-discovery that such an option represents from a role-playing angle. Kobolds are not restricted to such classes, but the player must give a good explanation as to why his kobold character is an educated wizard instead of an innate sorcerer. To play the rest of the classes, the player needs to take some things into consideration.

Barbarians: A kobold barbarian is feasible, as it channels centuries of racial oppression to access their inner rage. Kobold barbarians are nonetheless a rarity, as the race is mostly lawful and with a strict, if rather brutal culture. They are outcasts relegated to the front lines in the hope that they will get killed, and often escape the restraints of their society to face the world head on. A kobold who can resist a sword strike and keep coming is an impressive sight indeed.

Bards: Kobolds do not enjoy the performing arts, and thus have no need for bards as other races have. They do have an oral tradition, and kobold bards

may be the storytellers of their tribe. They are interested in the ancient legacy of their race and their magic may stem from the same root as the sorcerers', except that they express it through the pride in their origins.

Clerics: Unless the kobold was raised in a different culture, if he becomes a cleric he serves the spiteful kobold deity. Evil to the core but completely devoted to their brethren, evil kobold clerics propitiate sacrifices to their god and support a crusade against any other non-kobold, which makes their inclusion in a party of non-kobolds a difficult, if not impossible task.

Druids: The little reptiles have nothing to be thankful to Nature for. They were created small and weak, easy prey for every other animal and race. Odd kobolds might feel the earth's voice through the mines and become druids, but they usually become ostracised by their fellows and leave to settle in a quiet grove, usually joining a druidic circle for protection.

Fighters: Because they are not precisely built for combat, kobolds see little good in becoming professional fighters. If they find the time and inclination to train exclusively for combat and not get killed, they prefer to take feats that allow them to strike from afar and in relative safety, with Dodge and Mobility being prime candidates for inclusion, with ranged weapon feats following a close second.

Monks: Kobolds have the discipline necessary to become monks, but there are no kobold monasteries as the race as a whole is not interested in finding inner peace and balance. Some kobolds are attracted



to the monk's fighting style and earn their apprenticeship. The monk's abilities complement the kobold's racial talents, making the character a small and lethal fighting machine that can move like lightning and cause astounding blows with its little claws. They can use their new-found abilities to return to their clans and protect them, or seek a way to reconcile their resentment towards every other living creature.

Paladins: It simply does not happen except in the direst exceptions. Kobolds are normally in a paladin's hit list and while the small reptiles have the adequate adherence to law, they need a complete turn around in attitude. Obey divine edicts they can do, sacrifice their lives for the sake of others? No way.

Ranger: The kobold race is survivalist by definition, so the ranger class fits them perfectly. Kobold rangers are the scouts that venture into the wilderness to make the rounds between traps and can track an enemy through the forest to keep an eye on what it is doing and assess its threat to the clan. The ranger's first two favoured enemies should be gnomes and fey, as the kobold attacks these creature types with more fervour than others.

Rogue: Not as predisposed as halflings towards the rogue career, kobolds are nevertheless well suited for it. Their small size is an asset when sneaking under an enemy's nose, and they do value individual skills. Kobold rogues are also much faster than halflings and are better protected, not to mention that they already have a natural ability for traps. The rogue's fighting strategy sits really well with kobolds, who are very agile by nature and are better served by exploiting their dexterity than their low strength.

joins the adventurers to exact revenge, or his clanmates were slaughtered by other adventurers, and the little kobold hero joins the party to look for those murderers. A kobold of a good alignment has the monster's perspective in a party, and can be the best defender of the right of the monsters in a dungeon to live on.

Racial Traits

- † +2 Dexterity, +2 Constitution, -4 Strength.
- † Small size. Kobolds gain a +1 size bonus to Armour Class, a +1 size bonus to attack rolls and a +4 size bonus to Hide checks, but they must use smaller weapons than Medium-size creatures use, and their lifting and carrying limits are three-quarters of those of Medium-size characters.
- † Kobold base speed is 30 feet. They are very fast despite their size.
- † +2 racial bonus to Craft (trapmaking) and Profession (miner) checks. Craft (trapmaking), Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Search and Spot are always class skills, regardless of what class the kobold actually is. They train in such skills since young and no kobold reaches adulthood without them.
- † Darkvision: Kobolds can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only, but it is otherwise like normal sight. Kobolds can function normally with no light at all.
- † Light sensitivity: Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.
- † Bonus feat: Alertness. Kobolds have every reason to believe everything is out to get them, and are unusually observant of their surroundings.
- † A kobold's scaly skin gives him a +1 natural armour bonus to Armour Class.
- † Automatic Languages: Common and Draconic.
- † Bonus Languages: Dwarven, Gnome, Goblin, Orc and Undercommon.
- † Favoured Class: Sorcerer.

KOBOLD CHARACTERS IN A CAMPAIGN

A player who chooses a kobold as his character's race is in for a role-playing challenge. Regardless of his actual alignment, the kobold can expect to be maligned and alienated at best, attacked on sight at worst. He will have to utilise all manner of disguises and trickery to hide his nature from the eyes of prejudiced townsfolk.

A kobold may join an adventuring party for many reasons. The race is *usually* lawful evil, which means that the character can be from any alignment and serve any role. He can be the last survivor from his tribe, decimated by a goblinoid raid and thus



KI'CHKEESHLA'S LAIR

Nobody remembers who built the shrine that rests against the wall of a sloping canyon and nobody recognises the god to which it was erected. What people who do live nearby know is that it is not a good idea to go there. The old guardians have recently returned to resume their watch over the shrine and people who venture there fall foul of freak accidents, some so grave as to cause lasting injuries and even death.

These 'accidents', far from being caused by the forgotten vassals of a dead god are the result of extensive traps laid by the kobolds who have taken up residence in and around the shrine complex. The traps seem so natural that would-be adventurers have confused them with extremely bad luck or divine intervention: strange noises, flagstones that give away to break ankles and toppling columns await those daring enough to enter.

The kobold band that have claimed the shrine are under the leadership of Ki'chkeeshla, a cleric of the kobold god. She grudgingly shares power with Reek'shek, a sorcerer who was born with deep black scales, a reflection of a true draconic descent. A common goal has brought them together, along with all their warriors and miners, to the shrine which now acts as an advance post for their combined clan. The shrine itself is not a very good habitat as far as kobolds are concerned but they have been busy excavating deeper into the cliff against which the shrine is built. Eventually, the shrine will be a gigantic trap to mislead potential invaders but right now it is the kobolds' first line of defence. Reek'shek is the chief engineer, overseeing the excavations and the construction of traps; he is responsible for casting the few *illusory walls* that hide traps and hidden entrances.

Small Tunnels

The kobolds excavated a series of tunnels connecting parts of the old shrine together. These are barely over three feet in height, forcing creatures larger than Small size to scuffle through on their hands and knees, suffering a -2 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls and to Armour Class. Using Medium weapons imposes an additional -1 circumstance penalty and it is impossible to wield slashing and bludgeoning weapons effectively if they are Medium or larger.

Band Strength

This is the total population of the shrine claimed by Ki'chkeeshla's band. There are three castes present, including the leader's own Horned caste. The non-combatants are miners, engineers and trapmakers, with the warriors doubling as hunters.

Ki'chkeeshla, Horned Caste Band Leader
Reek'shek, Chromatic Kobold sorcerer
6 Sergeants
48 Warriors
6 Taskmasters
42 Miners
6 Young
3 Dire Weasels
Tons of traps

1. Courtyard

The walls that surround the courtyard are very old and in ruins, with two watchtowers that indicate there was once some threat against which the building was protected. There is a secret alcove (**Area 7**) on the western side of the shrine beneath which lies a mound of loose rubble, it is possible to climb there (Climb DC 20). Climbing the rubble triggers an alarm trap.

Rubble bell: A thin cord tied to a stone that falls, at the smallest disturbance, from the pile, pulling a bell deep inside the shrine and alerting the guards in **Area 5**. CR 1; no attack roll necessary; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 15).

The courtyard is covered with wild grass that has grown unchecked for many years but there is a patch of dirt in what used to be a path towards the shrine itself. There are six ankle hold traps hidden in the grass on each side of the shrine and one on the path. There is a 15% chance of encountering one of these traps for every 20 feet walked.

Ankle Hold: Holes covered with loose fabric and shielded from plain sight by a scattering of grass or dirt. Wooden spikes protrude from their walls. Treat as a caltrop wound. CR 1; +5 melee (1 hp, half movement), Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 15).

The eastern side of the cliff hides a secret entrance (Search DC 20) consisting of a small tunnel that connects **Area 1** with **Area 12**. It can be opened from the inside by pulling a rope that collapses the rubble pile and clears the way. It is an escape route excavated primarily to lessen Reek'sheks' paranoia.

'We must turn back.' Golan said. He had too many scars from old battles and knew when it was time to call it quits.

'Go back? But we are barely past the entrance!' The other warrior, a younger and inexperienced lad who had just learned how to handle a sword gave his opinion of Golans' suggestion.

'Your ankle is hurt.' The more experienced warrior said. 'Benares has already expended his healing magics curing Vedrim from those falling rocks and we lost half our equipment in that hole I barely escaped from falling into.'

'But... but we have not fought *anything* yet! I thought you said the ruins had kobolds living in here!'

'That is what is worrying me now.' The old warrior sat down. 'These traps... they are simple and too numerous. Either there is something *really* important that way or the kobolds just want us to think there is.'

'Think? Those lizards can't be that sneaky!'

'They are worse than sneaky, my lad.' Golan shook his head. 'When I was in the army, I heard an entire regiment had to retreat simply because they could not advance ten feet without a soldier stepping on a poisoned needle and that, when they found a way around, they were trapped in a narrow canyon with kobolds throwing rocks from above. Only a handful survived. We are only four and I doubt kobolds would treat us any better than they treated the king's own army.'

2. Shrine Hall

This was the main part of the shrine. It has four columns on each side and the defaced carving of some forgotten deity on the far wall opposite the entrance. There is a trap next to the third column on the right.

Falling Column: CR 1; +4 melee (2d6), Reflex save (DC 15) halves; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

3. Oratoriums

These two rooms contain what remains of row upon row of benches. The rooms have no other features except that, if kobolds are alerted to the intruders' approach, they place some of the trinkets they found deep in the shrine's vaults to lure the intruders inside. They wait in hiding among the columns until all invaders are inside the room and then drop an iron framework that shuts the room and traps those inside (portcullis hardness 10, break DC 24; Open Locks DC 20).

4. Empty Rooms

The kobolds have no idea what the original builders had in mind for these rooms but, they use them as staging grounds and defence points. The easternmost room has a secret entrance (Search DC 20) that connects the room with **Area 8** via a small tunnel.

The corridors are full of rubble and the doors are sealed in any case, so it is impossible to go this way, making the small tunnels the only real access. Disturbing the rubble in any of the corridors triggers a trap.

Pit Trap (40 ft. deep): Rubble falls into the pit immediately after the trap opens, dealing +1d6 points of damage to anyone inside. CR 2; no attack roll necessary (4d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

In the western corridor, a hidden entrance (Search DC 18) connects with **Area 6**.

5. Mess Hall

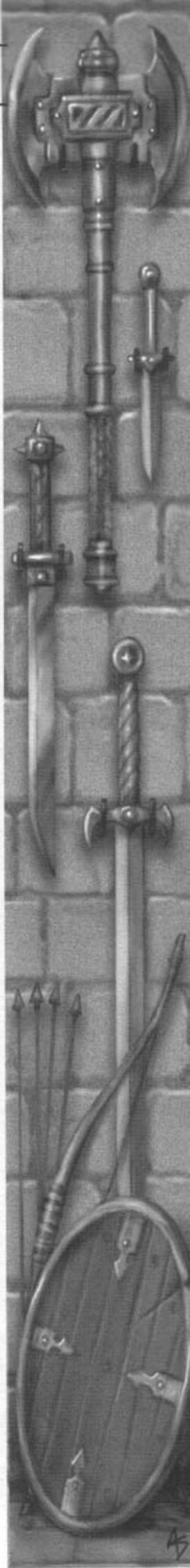
This was indeed a mess hall in the original design and kobolds use it as a staging ground and eating spot for the warriors and hunters. The alarm triggered in **Area 1** sounds here and a hidden entrance (Search DC 18) connects with **Area 6**.

6. Observation Room

The secret chamber has several spy holes opening to **Area 2**. Whatever their purpose, kobolds find it highly amusing to watch the progress of any intruder.

7. Alcove

Kobolds post sentries at night, covered by a stone-coloured canvas (Spot DC 20).



8. Storage

There are small columns in the wall that once supported shelves. Kobolds do not store anything in this room but, use it as the access point for the secret tunnel from **Area 4** and have another secret entrance (Search DC 25) connecting to **Area 11**. This entrance was part of the original design.

9. Barracks

Warriors and hunters sleep in these rooms when they are off-duty but, it also serves as a place for ambush when they flee deeper into the compound, with blood-thirsty adventurers on their tail. The entrance to cell A and the corridor between cells B-C and D-E is covered by *illusory walls* that conceal what is behind. Between cells B-C and D-E there is a tricky passage trap (see the Methods of Warfare chapter) and cell A is the holding pen for the band's dire weasels (see *Core Rulebook III*). Cell E has a secret entrance (Search DC 20) connecting to **Area 10** via a small tunnel. A small tunnel with an open entrance connects cell A with **Area 14**.

10. Kitchen

The kobolds have refurbished the iron stove that stands here and use this room as a secondary storage room so that warriors and hunters need not go into the deeper chambers for food. A pit trap is located at the mouth of the tunnel towards **Area 13** using the same design as that of **Area 4** but without the falling rubble. It has an activation mechanism that kobolds use when retreating so that they do not fall in the pit during normal transit. A secret entrance (Search DC 18) in the east wall connects with **Area 12** via **Area 11**.

11. Passageway

This cramped hallway is just a connection between rooms and access to the secret vault in **Area 12**. There is a trap near the southern entrance.

Poison Needle Trap: The needles fire to the north from the southern entrance. CR 2; +8 ranged (1 hp, plus medium spider venom, 1d4 Str/1d6 Str, save DC 14); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

12. Treasure Vault

The kobolds found what other explorers had failed to; the secret treasure vault. Overjoyed by their discovery, the kobolds catalogued the treasure and have used it to buy tools and weapons from traders with no qualms about dealing with kobolds. Ki'chkeeshla and Reek'shek have divided the magic

items amongst themselves (with the sorcerer getting the lion's share) and the rest is still kept in this room, along with other products of their mining.

Treasure: Black pearl (600 gp), Moonstone (50 gp), Rich purple corundum (900 gp), 900 gp coins.

An *illusory wall* covers the entrance of a small tunnel that leads to **Area 13**.

13. Common Room

The first of the kobold-built chambers serves as the workers' resting and living space. Half of the taskmasters (kobold, Exp 4) and workers (as depicted in *Core Rulebook III*) plus all the young can be found here at any one time, next to a single gang of warriors with a sergeant. A trap built by Reek'shek himself protects the entrance to **Area 15**. The trap is keyed to two magic medallions in the possession of each of the band leaders. The trap goes off if it does not detect the presence of either medallion within ten feet when someone passes below the trigger rune etched into the ceiling.

Doom Tendrils: Uses *evard's black tentacles*. CR 5; the length of the tunnel plus a 5 foot square at the entrance; 12 tendrils grapple +4 bonus (1d6+4 damage each); Reflex save (DC 16) avoids; Search (DC 29); Disable Device (DC 29).

14. Storage

Rows of odd tools line the walls of this room, which kobolds use as a secondary storage room to complement **Area 12** and **8**. This is also an access route to the main part of the shrine and, if need be, a delaying trap. If kobolds come running from **Area 9A** they can pull a chain that will loose all the tools and scraps on to the floor behind them. Any creature passing through here must make a Balance check (DC 15) or fall prone. Running imposes a -2 circumstance penalty to the check.

15. Leader's Room

Both band leaders have their sleeping quarters here. The west side holds Ki'chkeeshla's shrine to the kobold god as well as her sleeping mat. The east side has Reek'shek's meditation and sleeping mat. Both of them mate when they feel like it or they believe that the mine needs a clutch of high-caste hatchlings. The room has no traps in it but the sorcerer casts *alarm* any time that both of them have to leave the room.

16. Working Area

This place is a work in progress. The leaders intend it to be the ante-room for holding cells as they prepare to launch slave-gathering raids and accommodate a whole warband Ki'chkeeshla has requested from the clan's main hold. The remaining taskmasters and workers labour here, digging and hauling earth outside for the rubble traps in **Area 1**. As chief miner, Ki'chkeeshla is expanding excavations as her *rod of metal and mineral detection* registered a vein of platinum nearby.

Band Leaders

Ki'chkeeshla: CR 8; female Kobold Clr8; Small Humanoid (reptilian); HD 8d8 (cleric); hp 42; Init +1; Spd 30; AC 18; Atk +5 base melee, +8 base ranged; +4 (1d8, Crossbow, light); +5 (1d8-2, Morningstar); SQ: Darkvision (Ex), Light sensitivity (Ex), Luck and Trickery domains; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +4, Craft (trapmaking) +5, Heal +4, Hide +4, Profession (miner) +8, Search +3, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +5; Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Toughness.

Possessions: Studded leather armour, morningstar; crossbow, light, *ring of protection* +2, *rod of metal and mineral detection*.

Spells Prepared (Clr 6/4/3/2): 0 - *detect magic* x3, *guidance* x3; 1st - *cause fear*, *detect good*, *doom* x3, *entropic shield*; 2nd - *aid*, *death knell*, *hold person*, *invisibility*, *undetected alignment*; 3rd - *animate dead*, *bestow curse*, *invisibility purge*, *protection from elements*; 4th - *confusion*, *giant vermin*, *spell immunity*.

Reek'shek: CR 10; male black chromatic Kobold Sor8, Small Humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+4 (chromatic kobold) 8d4+16 (sorcerer); hp 34; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 15; Atk +2 base melee, +5 base ranged; +1 (1d8, Crossbow, light); SQ: Low-light vision, darkvision 100' (Ex), Light sensitivity (Ex) Immunity (acid, paralysis, sleep); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 7, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 9, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +6, Bluff +5, Concentration +8, Craft (trapmaking) +9, Hide +4, Intimidate +5, Profession (miner) +1, Search +3, Spellcraft +7; Craft Wondrous Item, Quicken Spell, Run, Silent Spell.

Possessions: Crossbow, light; *ring of force shield*; *bead of force* (2), *amulet of natural armour* (+1), *bracers of armour* (+1).

Spells Known (Sor 6/6/6/6/4): 0 - *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound*, *mending*, *open/close*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*; 1st - *alarm*, *charm person*, *expeditious retreat*, *hold portal*, *magic missile*; 2nd - *blindness/deafness*, *detect thoughts*, *locate object*, *protection from arrows*; 3rd - *explosive runes*, *haste*, *invisibility sphere*; 4th - *evard's black tentacles*, *illusory wall*.

Familiar: Devil, Imp; CR 2; Tiny Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 3d8 (outsider); hp 10; Init +3; Spd 30', Fly 50' (perfect); AC 22; Atk +6 base melee, +9 base ranged; +9 (1d4, Sting); SA: Spell-like abilities, Poison (Ex); SQ: Polymorph (Su), Regeneration (Ex), Damage reduction (Su), Resistance: Spell (Ex), Immunity: Poison (Ex), Resistance: Fire (Ex), See in darkness (Su); AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 10. **Skills and Feats:** Hide +15, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Search +5, Spellcraft +5, Spot +5; Dodge, Weapon Finesse.



KOBOLD REFERENCE LIST

Warband Leader

9th level Fighter

Small Humanoid (Reptilian)

HD: 9d10+18 (67 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 18 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +4 chain shirt, +1 buckler, +1 natural armour)

Attacks: +15/+10 melee, or crossbow (heavy) +11/+6 ranged.

Damage: Short sword 1d6+4 (15-20/x2), crossbow (heavy) 1d10

Face/Reach: 5 ft x 5 ft/5 ft

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', light sensitivity.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10 (14 modified), Dex 13, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +3, Craft (Trapmaking) +7, Hide +10, Intimidate +5, Jump +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +2, Search +7, Spot +8, Tumble +4.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Improved Critical (short sword), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Specialisation (short sword).

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Challenge Rating: 9

Possessions: Chain Shirt; +2 keen short sword, heavy crossbow, buckler; belt of giant strength +4.

Warband Sorcerer

8th level Sorcerer

Small Humanoid (Reptilian)

HD: 8d4+16 (36 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural armour, +3 bracers of armour)

Attacks: Lt. crossbow +6 ranged.

Damage: Lt. crossbow 1d8

Face/Reach: 5 ft x 5 ft/5 ft

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', light sensitivity.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +6

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 17

Skills: Concentration +10, Craft (trapmaking) +12, Hide +11, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (minerals) +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Scry +6, Search +8, Spellcraft +14, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Great Fortitude.

Spells Known: (Sor 6/7/7/6/3) 0- arcane mark, detect magic, flare, ghost sound, mage hand, mending, open/close, read magic; 1st- burning hands, grease, protection from good, shield, true strike; 2nd- ghoul touch, spectral hand, web; 3rd- dispel magic, fireball; 4th- enervation.

Alignment: Chaotic evil.

Challenge Rating: 8

Possessions: Light crossbow; bracers of armour +3; 3 potions of charisma; ring of spell storing; wand of magic missile (5th level caster).



Sergeant

6th level Warrior

Small Humanoid (Reptilian)

HD: 6d8+15 (32 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+2 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural armour, +3 studded leather)

Attacks: Halfspear +8/+3 melee or halfspear (thrown) +10/+5 or Lt. crossbow +9/+4 ranged.

Damage: Halfspear 1d6, Lt. crossbow 1d8

Face/Reach: 5 ft x 5 ft/5 ft

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', light sensitivity.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +2

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

Skills: Hide +10, Intimidate +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Search +4, Spot +5.
Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Toughness, Weapon Focus (halfspears).

Alignment: Lawful evil.
Challenge Rating: 5
Possessions: Halfspears, light crossbow, studded leather.

Taskmaster

6th level Expert
 Small Humanoid (Reptilian)

HD: 6d6+6{27 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 16 (+2 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural armour, +2 leather)
Attacks: Dagger +4 melee or Dagger (thrown) +7 ranged or club +4 melee.
Damage: Dagger 1d4-1, club 1d6-1.
Face/Reach: 5 ft x 5 ft/5 ft
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', light sensitivity.
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10
Skills: Appraise +8, Climb +8, Craft (Metalworking) +6, Craft (Trapmaking) +11, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Minerals) +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +5, Profession (Miner) +15, Search +10, Sense Motive +5, Spot +10.
Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (profession (miner))

Alignment: Lawful evil.
Challenge Rating: 5
Possessions: Dagger, club, leather armour.

Trapmaker

4th level Rogue
 Small Humanoid (Reptilian)

HD: 4d6 (14 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 17 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural armour, +2 leather)
Attacks: Dagger +2 melee or dagger (thrown) +7 ranged.
Damage: Dagger 1d4-2.
Face/Reach: 5 ft x 5 ft/5 ft
Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +2d6.
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', light sensitivity, evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC).
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +1



Abilities:
 Str 7, Dex 16,
 Con 11, Int 16, Wis 10,
 Cha 10
Skills: Balance +7, Climb +3, Craft (Locksmithing) +6, Craft (Stoneworking) +6, Craft (Trapmaking) +14, Disable Device +9, Hide +12, Intuit Direction +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +8, Pick Pocket +6, Search +12, Spellcraft +6, Spot +8, Use Magic Device +6.
Feats: Alertness, Run, Skill Focus (craft (trapmaking))

Alignment: Neutral evil.
Challenge Rating: 4
Possessions: Dagger, leather armour, masterwork artisan tools.

Hatchling

Tiny Humanoid (Reptilian)

HD: 1/4 d8 (1 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 20 ft.
AC: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 size)
Attacks: Unarmed +0.
Damage: Unarmed 1.
Face/Reach: 5 ft x 5 ft/0 ft
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', light sensitivity.
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2
Abilities: Str 4, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 10
Skills: Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Search +2, Spot +2.
Feats: Alertness.

Alignment: Neutral evil.
Challenge Rating: 1/8

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THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

KOBOLDS

Hate and Spite

Kobolds are a common sight in many campaign worlds; deemed by most adventurers to be a minor nuisance at best. Certainly, most experienced adventurers would question the need to study kobolds in any great depth, but then, few have faced the full might of a kobold clan and lived long enough to warn others of the peril they offer. *The Slayer's Guide to Kobolds* offers insight to all adventurers in the culture and society of this vicious race, enabling them to track down, engage and wipe out dozens of these murderous beasts. It can only be hoped that such efforts will be enough to stall and drive back a race that is, almost literally, numberless.

No race in any campaign world, however, exists solely to provide cannon fodder for allegedly heroic adventurers. *The Slayers Guide to Kobolds* redresses this imbalance by giving Games Masters the information they need to make kobolds a solid and coherent part of their campaign. No longer will players merely scoff and draw their swords when they meet a group of kobolds within some ancient ruin. Finally, kobolds will have the respect they have always deserved.

Inside You Will Find:

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