

ALLIES & ADVERSARIES

ORC LIFE

THE ALLIES AND Adversaries series provides GMs with NPCs that can be quickly and easily inserted into any adventure or ongoing campaign. Each NPC receives a detailed treatment of character traits, ideals, bonds, and flaws, as well as game statistics, physical description, backstory, and tips on how this NPC may be used in play.

Orcs need not be evil, but they sure are great at it. Below are orcish NPCs of diverse lifestyles, classes, and alignments. Only some of them conform to the “evil, brutish, warmongering beast” archetype of orcs, and those that do can easily be altered to suit different dispositions. Instead, each of them is driven by a need and a passion, like any other character.



WRITING KIEL CHENIER
COLOR ART PHIL STONE
EDITING JAMES J. HAECK
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

GURK, ORC PAINTER IN THE BIG CITY

The studio is spacious, filled with canvas, timber, and paint. You hear humming coming from the corner. A seven-foot-tall orc stands with his back to you. Behind him are three unconscious human thugs, blood spattered on the ground. The turns around to you, wearing a leather smock, his nose is broken and bleeding. He stands before a fresh painting of a perfectly rendered glade, a palette and brush in his hands. "Men tried interruptin' me painting. Very rude," he comments with a chuckle.

STATISTICS

- Traits.** I have an eye for beauty, no matter its shape or size, and am quick to comment on it.
- Ideal.** Equality. I will be recognized as a great artist, regardless of what people say of my race.
- Bond.** Lydia, a gallery curator, often hosts my art. I'm forever grateful to her.
- Flaw.** I have a temper, and will not let an insult slide.

Chaotic good Medium humanoid (orc)					
Str	16 (+3)	Dex	14 (+2)	Con	12 (+1)
Int	8 (-1)	Wis	10 (+0)	Cha	14 (+2)

- Notes:** Gurk is an orc **commoner** who lives in a big city. He has Darkvision out to 60 feet and the Aggressive feature, as an **orc**.
- Possessions:** Gurk dresses in plain cotton clothes, a leather smock, and carries a purse with 22 gp and a mouse skull in it. He owns the deed to a large studio space in the artist/tradesperson district of the city. The studio is filled with 300 gp worth of art supplies, canvas, and paints.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Gurk is a handsome orc by human standards, maybe even elven standards. He has a narrow face and a strong chin, green skin, and shoulder-length black hair. His face is always covered in thick stubble.

BACKGROUND

Gurk was an orphan raised in an orphanage in the city run by goodly priestesses of a benevolent deity. He was deposited on their doorstep as a baby, and the priestesses could not bring themselves to kill the orc. He was raised to be good along with all the other orphans.

At fourteen years old, Gurk left the orphanage to work as a blacksmith's apprentice. While he had no skill with a hammer or forge, he was adept at sketching and making blueprints. The blacksmith, being an eccentric, introduced Gurk to her artist friends. While many of these artists scoffed at the idea of an orc artist, some were impressed with his talent, and took to teaching him more advanced techniques. Gurk rose to prominence quickly, selling his first painting to an aristocrat when he was sixteen, and owning his own studio by nineteen.

ROLEPLAYING GURK

Gurk is well-spoken and intelligent, surprising those who see him as just a dumb orc. He knows a great deal about art history and the prominent artists and painters in the region. He enjoys fine food and drink, but often is forced to live meal-to-meal.

Gurk has become a sought-after painter, and many established human and elven artists hate that. Frequently Gurk is the target of racism and attacks by thugs hired by these rival artists. Gurk seeks out adventurers from time to time to help him deal with such problems, drawing them into a world of artistic rivalry and intrigue.

RATHBONE, BANISHED ORC WAR-PRIESTESS

An orc woman limps over the next ridge. Her head is shaved, coarse hair fashioned into a mohawk. Clad in bloodstained armor, dozens of arrow shafts stick out of her back. She meets your eyes and quickens her awkward gait. She raises a battle-axe, goblin skulls affixed to the haft, and cries out to you: "I see you! Fight me!" she wheezes. It is clear she is in a bad way.

STATISTICS

Traits. Me having orcish proverb or prayer for situation, like "Don't eat thing you haven't killed or is too big to lift."

Ideal. Strength. Goddess only value strong orc, so I be strong.

Bond. Balla, a previous orc lover. She am better than Rathbone deserve. Miss her very!

Flaw. Me am like to drink, but get sad when drunk. Cry too much.

Lawful neutral Medium humanoid (orc)

Str 20 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+2) **Con** 16 (+3)

Int 6 (-2) **Wis** 10 (+0) **Cha** 8 (-1)

Notes: Rathbone is an orc **priest**. She has Darkvision out to 60 feet and the Aggressive feature, as an **orc**. She is a 5th-level spellcaster with spells prepared as a **priest**, and speaks Common and Orcish.

Possessions: Rathbone carries a ceremonial battle axe (1d8 + 5 slashing damage), a suit of ceremonial splint mail armor (AC 17), a backpack, 3 goblin-fat candles, 2 days-worth of meat rations, 50 feet of hemp rope, an empty waterskin, and a holy symbol of an orc goddess.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Rathbone is a brawny battle-scarred orc, the survivor of numerous raids, attacks, and duels. Her hair is shaved and spiked in a mohawk, her 'tusk' teeth jut out as far as a male orc's would, and she is almost always clad in armor. She smells strongly of blood, sweat, and fresh-cut grass. She seems to be perpetually scowling.

BACKGROUND

Rathbone was brought up in a unique tribe of nomadic orcs who worship a lawful orc goddess, rather than the patron deity of orcs. She was raised to be a war priestess, carrying the commandments of her goddess with her into battle.

Unfortunately, her tribe was slaughtered in a night raid, with her and several other orc women taken as prisoners. This did not deter Rathbone, as she spent the next year converting her captors to her chosen deity. Under her religious influence, Rathbone's new tribe flourished for a year before falling to the blade of another orc tribe. She was captured again.

This would become a trend, as Rathbone successfully converted seven tribes to her deity, and all seven of them have fallen to ruin under her influence. Still, Rathbone keeps the faith. After being banished from her eighth tribe, she wanders the wilderness looking for a new tribe to call home.

In her fifth tribe, Rathbone became the lover of an orc chieftain named Balla. When the tribe was later slaughtered by elves, Balla was taken prisoner while Rathbone was left for dead. The two have not seen each other in years.

ROLEPLAYING RATHBONE

Rathbone is a severe woman. She seldom laughs or smiles. She respects only grand shows of strength, and will gladly travel and fight alongside those she views as strong, regardless of their race. However, she also has a secret weakness for cute things or people (halflings, squirrels, gnomes).

Rathbone seeks to see the enemies of her goddess punished, and wants to find the elven militia that stole Balla away killed. More than that, she desperately wishes to see Balla again, though she has trouble admitting it.

VORTCH, ORC “CHEF”

A fire roars beneath a massive iron cauldron. A thick, viscous stew bubbles inside. Steam rises from it into a wide orc's face, decorated with bone piercings and ornamental scars. His piggish snout snorts up the steam. He lowers a bone ladle into the stew, raising its bubbling contents to his lips. He sips it delicately, then puckers his lips. "Too pungent. It's the ground fennel seed that's done it. It needs a sweetener...and we're all out of elf's blood," he sighs ruefully.

STATISTICS

Traits. I've got the most refined palate in all the seven tribes.

Ideal. Pride. Somethin's not worth doin' if you can't do it right.

Bond. Clan Collarbreak, I owe those lumps my life, and I will serve 'em as best I can.

Flaw. I cannot stand to be condescended to. I'll break an orc's legs if he thinks he's better than me.

Chaotic evil Medium humanoid (orc)

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 14 (+2) **Con** 16 (+3)

Int 12 (+2) **Wis** 8 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+1)

Notes: Vortch is an orc **thug** and a member of Collarbreak Orc Clan. He has Darkvision out to 60 feet and the Aggressive feature, as an **orc**, and the Pack Tactics feature, as a **wolf**. He speaks, reads, and writes in Common and Orcish

Possessions: Vortch wears studded leather armor (AC 14) and carries a longsword (1d8 + 3 slashing), a spear (1d6 + 3 piercing), and a massive cast-iron pan (2d4 + 3 bludgeoning). He carries with him 50 gp worth of cooking utensils and tools, and 100 gp worth of spices and assorted rare ingredients. He carries all of these in a sack made from a dire boar's stomach.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Vortch is a brutish orc. His face is holds numerous bone piercings and is covered in ornamental tattoos. His head is shaved bald and his chin has a black pointed beard. He is average in height for an orc, but has a paunch of a belly.

BACKGROUND

Vortch was born into Clan Collarbreak, a tribe of orcs known for smashing the collarbones of their captives. Votch came to prominence in his clan for having a sensitive tongue and nose, and was put in charge of testing food and drink for poison and rot.

Years later, during a raid of a human village, Vortch managed to salvage a human cookbook and a number of kitchen tools. Over the next year, Vortch taught himself how to cook and took his place as the clan's ration-master.

ROLEPLAYING VORTCH

Vortch is an odd sort of orc. He's better-spoken than his orc brothers and sisters, speaking in a cockney accent, and he is better-versed in cuisine and culinary techniques than most human chefs. He is eager to boast about his knowledge and his ingenuity in combining human cooking with the kinds of foods orcs like to eat, all of which are foul to "civilized" palates.

Vortch is always looking for new herbs and spices to improve his cooking, and will pay or trade with outsiders for them. His clan isn't opposed to eating other sapient races, so PCs might encounter him if they are ever taken captive by orcs. He will gladly converse with them, even bargain with them, as he's preparing them to be eaten.

BALLA, ORC DANCER AND SERVANT

In a dimly-lit hall, patrons sit on cushions before a stage. Opium-laced smoke trails from their lips, as they sit mesmerized by the woman dancing upon the stage; a voluptuous orc woman who shakes her body, undulating and gyrating to the beat of an unseen drum. As she dances, her sad eyes lock with yours. She makes her way into the crowd, still dancing, and makes her way to you. Her voice is raw as she whispers, "Please, help me." She gives you a pleading look, then turns away, a showy smile on her face, to entertain the other guests.

STATISTICS

Traits. I've got an indomitable will, and more patience than an elf.

Ideal. Freedom. Orcs aren't meant to be kept in chains.

Bond. Rathbone, my lost love. I only hope she's better off than I am.

Flaw. I cannot bear to be hungry. I am as much a slave to my stomach as I am my mistress.

Chaotic neutral Medium humanoid (orc)

Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Con** 10 (+0)

Int 12 (+1) **Wis** 8 (-1) **Cha** 16 (+3)

Notes: Balla is an orc **commoner**. She has Darkvision out to 60 feet and the Aggressive feature, as an **orc**. She speaks Common, Orcish, and Elvish.

Possessions: Balla wears a satin bedlah (belly dancer's outfit) with beads and tassels affixed to it. She has no other possessions to her name.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Balla is a voluptuous beauty, even by human standards. Her orcish features, tusks, snout, and greenish skin, are diminished compared to other orc women. She moves with uncommon grace, and is dabbed with jasmine perfume.

BACKGROUND

Balla was a member of an orc tribe that was killed by an elven militia for encroaching too close to elven lands. She was taken prisoner by an elf archmage and aristocrat, Hez'bendiah of the Unbent Willow. She immediately recognized Balla's beauty, and trained her to be a dancer and consort for her burlesque house in the city.

Now, Balla dances on stage for the leering eyes of elves and humans in the city. She suffers Hez'bendiah's cruel and lecherous treatment, reduced to being little more than a slave to her elven mistress.

ROLEPLAYING BALLA

Balla is an alluring and seductive dancer, but her piercing eyes reveal the pain she feels as a woman forced into her profession. She is otherwise quiet and obedient, fearing punishment from her mistress if she doesn't do as she's told.

If she gets someone who looks strong or trustworthy alone, she will do everything she can to get them to free her. She holds no love for Hez'bendiah, but fears her magic. If speaking with a half-orc, she will ask them if they know of Rathbone, an orc war-priestess. She is Balla's only known connection to her previous life, and someone she is sure would come to her rescue. 