

PAUL "WIGGY" WADE-WILLIAMS

HELLFROST

• CREATURE GUIDE •





CREATURE GUIDE COMPENDIUM

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HAVE ADDED GREATLY TO HELLFROST



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BUFOMI



Most citizens of Rassilon know of bufomi only through travelers' tales. Jokingly referred to as "toadies," they are often portrayed as harmless, backward simpletons practicing a bizarre toad-worshipping faith. But those who dwell near the dank marshes the bufomi call home, tell no such stories and do not laugh with those that do, for they know how savage and cunning the toad-men can be when aroused. Their culture is a violent one, where the strong devour the weak and life is a constant struggle for survival. This chapter delves beneath the stereotypical exterior of bufomi society to reveal the true nature of the toad-men race.

● ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES ●

Although much of the sentient races' historical records were destroyed during the Blizzard War, and the centuries long collapse of civilization that followed, fragmentary Anari texts dating back many millennia make vague mention of "men not unlike toads in appearance and habit" dwelling in the marshes of Alantaris Isle.

Although the older races—frost dwarves, elves, and gatormen, among the more notable—make no mention of bufomi, this should not be taken as proof they were not around in antiquity. The dwarves had no reason to venture into the marshes, the elves were tied to their forests, and gatormen were of the habit of labeling all lesser races simply as slaves, not bothering to distinguish them.

Most civilized races now put the creation of the bufomi down to Eostre or Loki. Followers of Eostre Animal-mother claim the goddess created all animal life, even the toad-men. An early race of dull intelligence, they were given dominion over the marshes, and were to be its watchmen and guardians, tending the creatures and plants in the wondrous and varied garden of creation. But the toad-men began to create idols in their own image and fell from grace, rapidly devolving into barbarity

without the blessing of the goddess. In other stories, the bufomi remained loyal to their task until Loki, whose mischief knew no bounds, led them astray.

Sages less bound to religious myths argue that the bufomi may once have been a continent-spanning race, for they are found in numerous marshes below and above the Icebarrier Mountains. Although they do not know it, they are closer to the truth than they realize, for bufomi society arose during the ancient age when much of the northern continent was dank marsh.

● ANATOMY ●

Once found far and wide across Rassilon, bufomi are largely confined to the Hearthlands these days, though colonies exist in the marshes of the Low Winterlands. Despite being separated by hundreds or thousands of miles and millennia of time, the disparate tribes have never evolved along distinct lines. While individual tribes may have unique customs based on circumstances or the whim of their rulers, and perhaps minor variations in skin tones caused by diet, there is but one bufom race sharing a common physiology and psychology.

PHYSIOLOGY

Bufomi are the only known sentient amphibian race. A typical toad-man stands around four feet tall and weighs in at a measly 95 pounds. Male and female genders exist. Females are larger, often weighing as much as 150 pounds, less aggressive, and unlikely to be encountered outside the lair.

Bufomi are not called toad-men for nothing, for their general appearance is that of a bipedal toad. Their skin is moist and warty, though thin and prone to drying out if not regularly bathed. Most bufomi have green skin, though the exact shade varies immensely—shamans tend to have mottled brown skin, as do the rare slime lords.

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Like toads, the eyes are high on the head. Capable of swiveling to face rearward, they allow bufomi to keep an eye on prey while seemingly oblivious to its presence. In the dangerous world of the marshes, wherein dwell giant leeches, marsh trolls and dragons, the ability to see behind you is as much for defense as offense. When a bufom is submerged in water a thin membrane slides down over the eye. This lens acts to correct vision, allowing the bufomi to see equally well underwater or on land.

The wide, lipless mouth can open wide enough to engulf cat-sized animals with ease—more than enough for the small animals that skitter through the marshes. Bufomi are toothless. Small prey and handfuls of vegetable matter can be swallowed whole, but larger meals must be cut up first. Bufomi are capable of understanding other languages, but the physiology of their mouths and larynx prevents them from speaking in any language other than their own croaking tongue.

Thanks to its wide mouth, bufomi appear both idiotic and alien. These views are only emphasized when the creature's long, sticky tongue whips out to moisten its eyeballs or snatch a fly from the air.

Located on the male's bottom jaw are two sacs. Normally invisible, these can be inflated at will, almost doubling the size of the toad-man's head. This serves the bufomi in several ways. First, it serves as an internal air supply, enabling the toad-men to remain submerged for up to five minutes. Second, by making the bufomi look larger it makes him look both more physically impressive and more dangerous. Likely at one stage this was used in courtship rituals and to ward off other males. Today it serves only for the latter purpose. Third, the bufomi can release the stored air to produce the thunderous croaks which form a key part of their military tactics.

The loud croak is also used for primitive communication, for on a clear night the croak can be heard at distances of up to one mile. The booming noise conveys no information beyond indicating that a bufom is present. Scholars have deduced that each tribe has a unique croak. Thus, it is likely that sentries in areas where multiple tribes dwell croak to warn others they are straying into their territory.

Strangely, when a bufomi is killed his air sacs inflate and deflate one last time, producing a feeble, drawn out croak. This led to the use of "croak" among the Anari to mean someone has died (as in "He's croaked it").

Bufomi have long, webbed fingers and toes (three at the end of each limb), making them capable swimmers. Their arms tend to be spindly, but their thighs are extremely powerful. The natural walking motion is not as with humans, but rather an ungainly hopping motion. By tensing and rapidly unleashing its thigh muscles, bufomi can leap horizontal distances of up to 16 yards in a single bound.

However, the legs of shamans tend to be weaker, prohibiting them from leaping to any noticeable distance beyond that of an average human. Since caste is not based on genetics, sages can only assume that shamans lose the ability due to lack of physical exercise.

LIFE CYCLE

Female bufomi are fertile at about one year old, whereas male can take between three and five years to reach full maturity. During this time, treat all attributes and skill a being one die type lower, to a minimum of a d4. Bounding is limited to $1d4+1$ ".

Bufomi utilize external fertilization. During mating season, which occurs in late summer and is triggered by the steady drop in temperature, female bufomi lay hundreds of eggs in special spawning pools situated in the heart of the lair. The males of the tribe then do their bit to fertilize them. All males use the same pools, though shamans perform their duty before warriors. The eggs develop into tadpoles, which hatch in the same pool.

At least 95% of the tadpoles hatched the next spring are devoured by their kin. The bufomi see this as natural selection and make no attempts to interfere in the process. Those who survive to grow into immature bufomi are carefully studied by the shamans of the tribe.

Depending on the traits they exhibit, the infants are cast as either shamans or warriors, receiving appropriate training from the moment they vacate the pool. Bufomi society is harsh. Infants who fail to make the grade are not demoted to a lower caste—they are sacrificed.

Throughout his adult life a male bufomi toils to ensure both he and his tribe survive. Life will be an endless challenge of hunting and gathering, avoid death at the hands of predators, and avoiding ending up in his god's already bloated stomach. He has no hope (or indeed concept) of promotion or a better life. He is what he is, and that is all he will ever be.

Those few who manage to reach old age, which is around 40 years, are either very blessed or very lucky. Unlike in many societies, bufomi do not honor their elderly for their wisdom.

Once a bufom becomes infirm whether from long-term illness, infertility (easily recognized only in females), permanent injury, or the ravages of old age, there is only one fate awaiting him—to become a sacrifice. The tribe's daily struggle for food means the bufomi can ill-afford to feed useless mouths. Even those tribes with adequate food see no purpose in the weak, save to appease K'kroakaa.

PSYCHOLOGY

Although the bufomi were once a relatively advanced race, their fall from grace has not itself marked their psyche. The gatormen, for instance, vividly remember and lament the halcyon days of their mighty empire, lusting after a return to former glories. The bufomi do not place any attachment to their ancient achievements. That said, they still prefer to dwell in ancestral areas, but this is more akin to a primitive calling than a conscious decision to cling to ancient memories.

In days of old bufomi were passive creatures. They kept to their patch of marsh and, with plentiful resources, were even willing to trade with other tribes. Thanks

to centuries of privation by gatormen and lizardmen, and the reduction in viable homeland due to massive climate changes, these days bufomi are highly territorial creatures.

Each tribe marks out an area for its own and fiercely defends it from all trespassers. Markers usually comprise small piles of skulls. Violent competition for the best feeding grounds is rife when multiple tribes exist in a small geographic area. This serves the neighboring races well, for it keeps the bufomi occupied.

Much of a bufomi's life is spent in fear. Part of this stems from a natural fear of larger creatures, both sentient and bestial which inhabit the same marsh. Bufomi are not naturally belligerent and, while tenacious and relatively cunning, are unskilled fighters. The other fear originates in the unfortunate practice of regular sacrifice to their bloated god and cannibalism.

To allay the latter eventualities, bufomi are always trying to prove their worth to their leaders. Rather than displays of physical prowess, they do this by fawning over their social superiors and offering plentiful gifts of food. There is an old saying among the bufomi that it is better to be alive and hungry than dead and bloated.

The starvation levels suffered by most tribes can make them gullible to crafty outsiders looking for cheap, if largely ineffective, mercenaries. Promises of plentiful food, and some treasure for the shaman, can sway the tribe to undertake activities they would never normally dream of doing.

Treachery is a trait found only among the shaman caste, and even then it is always for the benefit of the tribe. Indeed, this tribal mentality is thoroughly ingrained in the race from birth. While bufomi have individual names, their few aspirations are always centered on improving the tribe's lot. The thought of doing something purely for oneself is a very rare trait.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Bufomi society operates around two castes—shamans and warriors—though there are rare sub-castes. Casting occurs as a matter of selection and training, not one's birthright. Within bufom society there is no place for advancement—one either spends one's entire life fulfilling one's chosen role, or you end up as a sacrifice.

Warriors make up from 60-75% of the population. Shamans range from a single individual to a full 10%. Females rarely exceed 10%, even in the largest tribes. The remainder is juvenile bufomi undergoing training.

Tribes vary in size from a lowly 30 up to several hundred members depending on the local climate, predators, internal conflicts, and available food. Familial groups, such as clans and families, are unknown to bufomi. Indeed, the ideas are totally alien to the race. A tribe with a single female can rightly claim to be mother of the entire tribe, but tracing one's father is impossible due to the communal nature of breeding.

NEW GEAR

Air Sacs: Bufomi may be a sentient species, but to most other races they are nothing more than primitive beasts. This bias has led some to utilize dead bufomi for their body parts, in particular the air sacs. The sacs are fashioned into crude double bladders. Inflating a pair to full size, about a foot in diameter each, takes four actions.

Air sacs can be used as flotation bladders. A pair of inflated air sacs provides a +1 bonus to Swimming rolls to remain afloat.

They can also serve as emergency air supplies. By inhaling air from an inflated bladder at regular period, a character doubles the number of rounds he can hold his breath.

Air sacs must be kept moist or the skin becomes brittle and ruptures when inflated. Attempts to artificially protect the skin have failed—the skin becomes too thick and will no longer inflate.

Availability: S (found only close to marshes where bufomi lair); **Cost:** 10 gs per pair; **Weight:** 1 lb per pair.

SHAMANS

Bufomi are a superstitious race. Since only shamans have supernatural powers, bufomi take this as a clear sign that only they are fit to rule.

Every bufomi tribe is led by a single shaman. Large tribes may boast multiple shamans, but there is always a dominant one who takes the title "high priest." Competition for leadership can be fierce, for it brings many rewards. Those desiring power must have the cunning to outwit their rivals, display greater faith, and garner the support of the warrior caste.

Maintaining this power requires a mixture of cunning, aggression and blind luck. While no warrior would deign to overthrow a shaman of his own volition, every junior shaman is looking to increase his personal power. Coups are typically instigated with K'roakaa's "blessing." The would be usurper need only highlight a tribe's misfortune and point to the current ruler to begin a rapid cascade toward violence.

Unfortunately, being a leader is not always an active choice, for some tribes practice a form of enforced democracy. While rulers are accorded immense respect, and are gifted the bulk of the food gathered and all the treasure scavenged, their position is very shaky.

Their continued reign requires the tribe to prosper, or at least not slide further into decay. Once things turn bad, rivals are quick to accuse the shaman of offending K'roakaa. The only solution is to sacrifice the unfortunate shaman to his god and install a new leader.

Many shamans work hard to emulate their god—they make proclamations and croak orders, but let others do their hard work while they gorge themselves into obesity

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and siphon off most of the plunder. Young, dynamic, ruthless, and smart shamans lead the most dangerous tribes.

SLIME LORDS

The rarest and most powerful bufomi are the slime lords. They are of the shaman caste, but are immensely bloated and exceptionally intelligent.

Their warty skin exudes a viscous, pungent hallucinogenic slime. Before entering combat, a slime lord smears his bodily excretion on his weapon.

These fearsome, slime-coated creatures are always the leaders of their tribe, and often command several lesser tribes. The cohesive bonding of disparate tribes under a single figure can make the bufomi a threat to their neighbors, but such a union can exist only as long as the slime lord rules. Once he dies, natural rivalries over feeding grounds return the tribes to the dominant *status quo*.

WARRIORS

Warriors make up the bulk of every tribe. They live only to serve K'kroakaa through his earthly shamans, acquire enough food to ensure the tribe's continued survival, and breed so there will be a new generation to fill vacant roles.

Despite the caste name, which is one used by other races, warrior males fill every role from laborer to hunter-gatherer to actual protector of the tribe. The bufom word for the caste translates literally as "servant."

CHAMPIONS

Whereas most bufomi are small, the champion is a tall, muscular member of the species. They stand a head taller than Saxa and weigh upward of 200 pounds. Despite their huge size, they are still members of the warrior caste, albeit ones accorded greater respect.

Unlike other bufomi, champions are noticeable from birth, being larger and more aggressive members of the species. From the moment their status becomes clear, their destiny is set.

A champion's primary diet comprises of young bufomi who fail to meet the grade for their chosen caste, and the flesh of sacrifices. Unlike regular warriors, champions wield good quality weapons. These are usually looted from the corpses of intruders.

FEMALES

Whereas male bufomi are divided into two castes—shamans and warriors—females are outside the caste system. Their sole purpose is the procreation of their race, and because of this they are deeply respected (though granted no authority over males) and diligently protected at all times.

Females are extremely rare, with most tribes boasting only one per 20 males. Possession of females not only

increases the potential number of tadpoles each mating season, but it is also a sign of status.

Most tribes are content to survive with just a single female. However, should she die or become infertile (an event met by her sacrifice), the tribe has only two choices—slowly wither away or find a new female. The latter means open conflict with another tribe, and a tribe with no females is a truly deadly foe, for it has nothing to lose in armed struggle.

Possession of healthy females, while a boon in terms of more potential hatchlings and greater prestige with neighboring tribes, is not without its drawbacks. Females require substantial amounts of food if they are to produce a plethora of viable eggs. While bufomi do not begrudge giving food to their females, such offerings do reduce the amount available to the rest of the tribe.

CULTURE

Regardless of its level of civility and intricacy, all sentient beings possess a culture. This section looks at the basic culture of the bufomi.

HABITAT

For all their other failings as a race, the bufomi are deeply spiritual, in their peculiar, barbaric way. Communities exist to serve the tribe's temple rather than the other way round, and thus wherever the bufomi have set up home there is always a place of worship at its heart.

Long ago, the bufomi raised stone temples to honor their gluttonous god. Never masters of masonry, such temples were far from majestic, but they still boasted an impressive number of rooms. Over time these structures have largely crumbled, leaving behind naught but creper-choked piles of rubble in most places and a patchwork of standing walls and piles of collapsed stonework in others.

Although they possess no ability to see in the dark, bufomi prefer to live underground whenever possible, ideally in cool, damp places. Conditions deemed insubstantial by other races, even orcs, are often ideally suited to toad-men, though even they draw the line at Rassilon's few sewers.

As a matter of prudence, there is usually one visible entrance and a smaller, concealed one for emergency evacuation. Unlike orcs, who prefer a strongly defended entrance, bufomi post only a handful of guards. Since their homes are usually low (by human standards), putting your enemy at a disadvantage is seen as more preferable than a suicidal stand.

Being a small race, they favor lairs with narrow corridors and low ceilings. Floors in select rooms may be excavated as deep as ten feet, allowing them to fill with water. While the bufomi can cross these with ease, either by leaping if the ceiling height allows or simply swimming, they present an obstacle for most intruders. War-

rriors dominate the outer areas, while the shamans and the vital rooms, such as the larder and birthing pool are placed deeper within the tunnels.

But while Rassilon boasts an innumerable number of suitable ruins, bufomi refuse to leave their ancestral marshes. As a result, many tribes are forced to dwell on the surface due to a lack of ruins and soil too boggy to excavate safely.

When forced to live above ground, the most favored location is an island. Although the ability to work stone has been lost, bufomi have enough knowledge to erect simple fortifications from either wood or, more commonly, by planting thorny bushes around the perimeter.

Most surface-dwelling bufomi live in crudely fashioned circular reed huts. Each hut sleeps anywhere from four to ten warriors. Privacy is not a common trait, and no internal divisions exist to create separate sleeping areas. Bedding is usually a mass of wet reeds.

Typically, a village is built as a series of concentric circles, with warriors' hut outermost. When a tribe has a champion, he normally lodges with the leader, effectively becoming his private bodyguard. Junior shamans, when such exist, form an inner ring around the heart of the settlement—the birthing pool, the ruler's hut, and the temple.

Serving as the altar is an effigy of a giant toad with its mouth open. In many temples offerings are shoved into the maw and out through the toad's back. The symbolic sacrifice over, the bufomi dine on the carcass while the highest-ranking shaman takes the treasure. In a rare few others, the sacrifices fall through a hole in the base of the statue into a subterranean chamber. Giant toads are housed below the temple, and they dine on the still screaming victims.

DIET

Bufomi are carnivorous hunter-gatherers capable of eating almost anything they can fit into their mouths.

Much of their diet comprises worms, slugs, spiders, grubs, small birds, vermin, and insects either caught on their sticky tongues or collected in reed baskets attached to long poles. Gathered insects are returned home and mashed into small balls. While insects are plentiful, a bufom requires more than the occasional mosquito or fly to survive.

Nets and spears are used to hunt fish, eels, leeches, and even other amphibians. Despite the similarities between the race and mundane amphibians, bufomi have the same approach to eating frogs and toads as humans do to other animals. While technologically primitive, bufomi are masters of snares. This enables them to catch small land animals.

It should be noted that while bufomi do eat the flesh of sentient beings, it is a rarity in their daily diet. In dire emergencies they may attack a small stead on the fringes of their territory, but they are too fearful to launch attacks on larger settlements unless driven to the point of utter despair. Lone travelers and small parties should always

take care, though, for the opportunistic bufomi will take small risks to ensure they eat.

Outsiders who come prepared can buy safe passage and even hire guides in return for fish or shreds of meat. Bufomi are quite happy with rotting meat, so an adventurer need not spend a fortune purchasing fine cuts. Loyalty, though, only extends as far as the next meal. It has been known for a bufom to work for an adventuring party, be refused food, and lead his so-called masters into a treacherous area of bog or into an ambush.

While bufom make use of fire for heat and light, they disdain cooked food, finding it unpalatable (which is saying something). Whether flies, fish, or rabbits, food is hacked into manageable chunks and swallowed whole.

Certain soft weeds are eaten, but only as a last resort, for they provide very little nutrition. Lacking teeth, any fibrous plants are rolled around the mouth until they form a ball and then swallowed.

Although always on the hunt for sufficient food, bufomi are careful hunter-gatherers. They understand enough about the cycle of life not to hunt to excess, lest they leave themselves short of prey the next year.

CLOTHING

Personal modesty and fashion mean nothing to bufomi. They do not wear clothes, even when garments are available to them. A shaman might wear a piece of plundered jewelry to show his status, but would not don an ermine lined cloak, though he probably would happily use it as a blanket.

This reluctance to don clothing leaves the bufomi vulnerable to cold weather and has led to the misunderstanding that they hibernate in winter. In truth, they merely limit their outside activities to a minimum, instead huddling around fires in the safety of their damp homes.

LAW AND ORDER

Within a tribe the word of the ruling shaman is absolute law. Generally there is little need for policing, as tribes are naturally communal, the idea of personal possessions is confined to a rare few individuals such as senior shamans and champions (and even then it is for the good of the tribe), as such there is little crime.

Despite this, there are some immutable laws in place. Overeating, stealing food, or hoarding of food in secret is a crime, as is using the birthing pool out of turn. Treason against the ruler is a crime only if the ruler is not overthrown—otherwise it is a perfectly valid way of trying to improve the tribe's fortunes. Murder is a very serious crime, though only if the victim was a productive member of society. Those unfit to aid the tribe are non-entities, though murdering one out of hand is a religious crime, as it robs K'kroakaa of a meal.

Bufomi society has no room for lengthy trials dominated by legal precedent and clever wording. All cases are brought before the ruler, who is quick to pass the only judgment known to the race—death by sacrifice.

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HEALTHCARE

Bufomi society favors the strong. The weak are a serious drain on resources, and likely to end up as a sacrifice. However, bufomi are also pragmatists—if a wounded warrior can be healed relatively easily, then why waste a valuable resource?

What bufomi sorely lack is access to magical healing. A tribe might own one or two *healing* potions, but these would be precious treasures, not things to be casually squandered. A handful of warriors might know basic first aid, but most medical care lies with the shamans.

Fortunately, bufomi shamans often understand hedge magic. The marshes they call home are abundant with medicinal herbs, not all of which are known to non-bufomi practitioners. While perfectly safe for other races to use, most concoctions take the form of thick, slimy pastes that are either rubbed onto the skin or gulped back. A race that happily eats bugs has little care about ingesting rotting weeds.

LANGUAGE

Bufomi speak a dialect of Lesarde, a language also shared by gatormen and lizardmen. Scholars have long argued why this should be so, since bufomi were never enslaved *en masse* and are not biologically or mythically related to the other races. To date no viable solution has been put forward. While other races can reproduce the language, it is hard on the throat.

The language is not advanced, though whether or not it is debased from an earlier tongue or just never evolved is open to discussion. Sentences are very clipped and never used in a compound structure.

NAMES

While individuals have personal names, the race has no concept of surnames. They do not name their tribes, either. Instead, a bufomi describes where he is from when forced to reveal anything about his tribe. For instance, a bufomi may state that his tribe “lives in the shadow of the bent tree near the brook where the frogs grow.”

Only shamans use personal adverbs and pronouns—warriors use their given name. So while a shaman might say “I want the spear,” a warrior would say “Kruk wants the spear.”

NUMBERS

Despite having just six fingers, bufomi use a decimal system. Again, it is hypothesized this is a hold over from relations with the gatormen or lizardmen, though it is impossible to prove. The bufomi numbering system stops at 1000—they simply have no need to count any higher. Beyond that, they employ vague descriptive terms, like “many more than us” or “as many as there are flies in a swarm.” Though meaningless to other races, other bufomi have an intuitive grasp of the phrases.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Bufomi have no true written language. They utilize simple pictograms, but these convey only basic meanings, such as “Danger” or “Sacred.” Though little true education occurs among the primitive race, customs, laws, and religious beliefs are passed on through an oral tradition by the shamans.

CALENDAR

Bufomi have never been stargazers or farmers, and thus have little use for a calendar. They understand the changing of the seasons, as this alters what food is available. Their primitive culture knows the seasons as Bad Time (winter), Warming Time (spring), Insect Time (summer), and Hunting Time (fall).

Winter is aptly named, for the insects and animals that form much of their diet are hard to find. Ice may prevent fishing, and wild animals tend to migrate out of the marsh to better feeding grounds. For much of the winter the tribe sits in its lair, rationing provisions gathered the previous year, and hoping the Warming Time quickly comes.

As spring dawns so the tribe becomes more active, venturing outside in the hope of catching fresh provisions. Tribal boundaries are checked, and if necessary rebuilt to warn rivals the tribe is active. As lambing season approaches, tribes fortunate enough to live close to steads begin making their first raids.

Summer is a time of relative plenty. Swarms of buzzing insects fill the air, the waters run freely, and other animals are starting to gain body fat, at least in the Hearthlands. For tribes in the Winterlands, Insect Time is less a leisurely banquet and more a mad scramble for pitiful scraps. The warriors spend much of their time hunting and gathering in preparation for the coming winter. Ironically, while humans favor war in summer, bufomi cannot afford to waste the short period on such matters.

As the great wheel of the heavens turn, so summer gives way to fall. The days grow shorter and colder, and the bufomi know it is time for a last minute flurry of food gathering before winter again blankets the land in its deadly embrace. Raids against neighboring tribes and isolated steads reach a peak in the weeks before the first snow falls. As winter comes, the tribe again withdraws to its lair to weather the hard times to come.

Bufomi have no names for the days of the week or months, seeing each day as just another cycle of activity. The passage of time is crudely marked by noting the number of sun rises. Bufomi mythology claims K'kroakaa is slowly devouring the sun in revenge for burning him (see page 11).

The moon is identified as K'kroakaa's belly. When full of sacrifices, it expands and fills the night sky. As the god digests his meals, so his stomach deflates until it is empty. This superstitious belief has led to sacrifices being offered during the phases when the moon is more dark than light.

TRADE AND TRIBUTE

All bufomi tribes are self-sufficient in the basic wares they need to survive day-to-day. Cooperation between rival tribes is virtually unheard of due to the bufomi's tendency to view everyone else as competitors for the same resources. A powerful slime lord might bond multiple tribes together, but even then there is little direct trade—such an organization is more a personal military force than an economic one.

Still, bufomi are sorely lacking in arms and armor, and will trade for them. They have been known to trade for sacrifices as well. Since they possess no valuable crafts, all they have to offer is herbal remedies and general support, typically supplying small numbers of warriors.

While the latter may not sound appealing, rumors are circulating that an engro merchant in Drakeport was using bufomi from Gnatmarsh to commit acts of piracy. Such alliances are extremely uncommon, and are never based on mutual trust.

When large quantities of goods must be moved around, giant toads fitted with simple harness supporting wicker baskets are used as beasts of burden.

Strong tribes have, on occasion, risen to such power as to be able to demand tribute from weaker tribes. While a strong tribe could take what it wanted by force, open warfare risks casualties, and even a seemingly weak foe might prove difficult to crush. So the threat of violence is used instead.

It is theoretically possible, but as yet unknown, that a tribe could extend its influence outside the marsh, demanding tribute from farms and steads in return for leaving the settlers in peace. But any such act would require either a strong military force or a massive bluff, and either is likely to earn only a short-term victory.

WARFARE

Bufomi are not widely renowned for their bravery or skill at arms, though when defending their lairs they fight with a tenaciousness rarely found elsewhere. Under the direct command of a slime lord, they can become a reasonable fighting force.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Bufomi lack the technology and skill sets to forge and work metal. Even leatherworking is beyond their understanding. Unless a warrior has been fortunate enough to acquire a suit of armor from an outside source, such as a fallen foe of similar size, he fights naked.

Even when armor is available, it is rarely worn around the clock. Bufomi skin may appear tough, but it is actually surprisingly delicate. Armor is renowned for chafing. Furthermore, being able to swim is a key part of their daily life, and armor is heavy.

As a general rule, one can expect champions to wear

at least a leather vest to denote their status. Slime lords protect themselves with the heaviest armor they can find. Since they spend much of their day seated, chaffing and weight are rarely problematic.

Similarly, unless an outside source of weapons is located all he has to fight with is a very primitive spear. Often these are little more than sharp stones lashed to sticks with dried reeds. Spears are popular across the spectrum of sentient races, not only because they are cheap to produce but also because they allow you to attack at an increased range, thus helping ensuring your foe doesn't get chance to strike you.

Perhaps because of their powerful leap, bufomi have never bothered with ranged weapons. While the invention of the sling is hardly a work of genius, limitations in understanding prohibit the manufacture of bows. Again, though one should never assume the bufomi will only engage in melee—tribes that manage to acquire missile weapons are inclined to at least experiment with them.

TACTICS AND STRATEGY

No organized military structure exists within a bufomi tribe. Every male is expected to help protect the tribe, though the leader only rarely places himself in mortal peril. On all but the rarest occasions, the junior shamans fill the role as military commanders, though their main purpose is to supply magical support rather than true leadership.

This section looks at bufomi tactics in ambushes, when defending lairs, and on small-scale raids. No tribe or collection of tribes has yet taken part in a pitched battle, and it is unlikely they ever will.

AMBUSHES

Bufomi rarely have the manpower to attack from a position of strength. Instead, they prefer to attack from a position of surprise, looking to overpower their enemies before spells can be brought against them. Given ideal circumstances, bufomi like to outnumber their foes by at least two-to-one. However, under desperate circumstances they will attack larger forces, though usually only for a few rounds before retreating.

Being semi-aquatic, bufomi prefer to employ ambushes at sites where there is water on multiple sides. The sly hunters lurk below the surface with only their eyes protruding. As well as providing cover from which to attack, it makes for a handy escape route should things turn bad. Warriors are spread around the ambush site, ensuring that the approaching enemy can be adequately hampered from all sides.

Knowing that the opening few seconds of an ambush are the most vital time, bufomi attacks always begin with the warriors on one side emitting a barrage of croaks in a bid to stun their opponents for those crucial few seconds. When enemies not stunned turn to face the direction of the attack, the warriors not behind them repeat the tactic. This tactic is also employed when an enemy immediately breaks or tries to fall back to regroup.

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With the enemy now reeling, the warriors bound into battle from all sides simultaneously, employing another of their strengths to deliver deadly blows before their opponents can recover.

Unless these first few moments have given the bufomi an advantage, they are likely to turn tail and flee at the earliest opportunity. Only if their foes are on the ropes will they press the attack.

Shamans remain as far from battle as their spells allow. During the initial two rounds, when the warriors are croaking, shamans unleash their offensive spells at the enemy, hoping to kill or disable them before the warriors leap into action. Spells such as *blast* and *entangle* are targeted at the most dangerous looking foes, while *stun* is used against weaker looking troops. Cavalry may be pelted with *knockdown* spells in an attempt to unhorse the rider, thus robbing the rider of his height and speed advantage. *Prolonged blast* is normally only used when the bufomi are outnumbered, the spell being placed so as to divide the enemy into more manageable sized units.

Once melee is joined, the shamans become more selective, angling spells to pick off groups of foes without endangering their warrior comrades.

Beast friend can be useful for controlling giant toads or swarms of carnivorous frogs, but only when such creatures are present. Given a chance to employ such allies, bufomi use them as shock troops. When giant toads are not available, the shaman often employs his *summon herald* spell to bring one forth before the ambush is sprung. Spells such as *boost/lower trait*, *leaping*, *shape change*, *sanctuary*, and *wall walker* are kept in reserve in case the shaman needs to make a quick getaway.

DEFENDING LAIRS

As noted above, bufomi prefer to allow intruders into their lairs before mounting any type of resistance. As well as favoring the defender, the bufomi have learned the hard way that grouping warriors together in a small confine is an invitation for an enemy spellcaster to drop an area effect spell.

Warriors stationed at the entrance fight fanatically, not in a bid to force attackers back, but simply to buy their comrades more time.

Unable to bound effectively in low, narrow corridors, bufomi must fall back on croaking as their primary tactic. Intersections are the ideal place to surprise an enemy, as it allows for a crossfire of croaks followed by a multi-pronged charge with spears. When strength of numbers proves too great, the bufomi simply retreat to another advantageous position and repeat the tactic.

Flooded rooms, slick floors, even mud are used to great advantage. Although bufomi are just as hampered by slippery surfaces as other races, their ability to leap, combined with their swimming skills, allow them to bypass most such obstacles with ease. While the enemy flounders in the mire or has to wade through chest-deep water, they are susceptible to croaks and spells.

When fighting in the outer regions, shamans are more likely to invoke *blast* spells. *Prolonged blast*, when available, can be very useful in blocking corridors and either hemming the enemy into a killing ground or simply preventing them from progressing deeper.

But as the fight continues toward the birthing pool and larder so shamans switch to non-damaging spells, like *entangle*, *knockdown*, and *stun*, so as not to risk causing collateral damage.

SMALL RAIDS

Most raids are for livestock, not to cause destruction or take prisoners (though bufomi never turn down a free meal when the opportunity arises). Raiding parties are always small bands, generally of no more than a dozen warriors and one or two shamans.

Ill-suited for warfare in the open, stealth is the key factor in any raid. It is far better to steal one sheep and lose no warriors, than to steal ten sheep, and suffer catastrophic losses. Night raids are popular, for while bufomi have trouble with the dark, so do most of their targets, thus ensuring a level playing field. Darkness also limits the effectiveness of missile fire, again bringing things down to the toad-men's level. Unless times are desperate, raiding parties turn and run at the first sign of stiff resistance.

Naturally stealthy and skilled at leaping, bufomi can easily circumvent low obstacles in silence, allowing them to penetrate the enemy's defenses without wasting valuable time assaulting gates or raising scaling ladders. Once inside, they move quickly, gathering everything of use to the tribe before retreating back to the safety of the marsh.

RELIGION

The bufomi faith centers on a single, ever-hungry deity, K'kroakaa, the Bloated One. According to myth, he dwells in the center of a vast heavenly swamp known as the Land of Reeds.

Bufomi believe in an afterlife, but have no version of the Abyss. Those who die in service to their tribe will serve K'kroakaa in the afterlife, forming part of a single tribe under the guidance of their majestic deity. Those who end up sacrificed are devoured body and soul, effectively erasing them from existence.

No forms of funerary rites exist. Those sacrificed are either devoured by giant toads, proxies for K'kroakaa, or by their former tribe mates. Those who die in battle become food for the tribe over winter or, if the body cannot be recovered, are left for wild giant toads to eat.

Note that although bufomi worship a god, it is not K'kroakaa who gives shamans their supernatural powers. Rather, shamans tap into the magical threads that surround amphibians. Despite using Faith to call forth powers and suffering Backlash as miracle workers, they are more akin to mages than true clerics.

K'KROAKAA

Titles: The Bloated One.

Aspects: Bufomi, amphibians, gluttony.

Symbol: A toad.

Priesthood: Priests and paladins are not differentiated, and thus a shaman may take both the Champion and Holy Warrior Edges.

Herald: None. When called to send a herald, K'kroakaa sends a giant toad. On a raise, the toad is a Wild Card.

Holy Days: Bufomi hold major festivals on Heah Sumor Daeg and Heah Wyntr Daeg. Minor ceremonies are held as often as the highest-ranking shaman demands.

Signature Power: *Leaping*.

Powers: *Beast friend* (amphibians only), *blast*, *boost/lower trait* (Stealth and Swimming only), *champion of the faith*, *entangle*, *environmental protection* (water only), *growth/shrink*, *knockdown*, *prolonged blast*, *sanctuary*, *shape change* (amphibians only), *stun*, *summon herald* (a giant toad), *wall walker*.

Trappings: Trappings all relate to toads. *Knockdown* may be a powerful croak, *entangle* could be sticky tongues, and *blast* a swarm of flesh-eating toads.

Disciple Edge: K'kroakaa's disciples can unfurl their tongue to Reach 2. This allows them to initiate grapples at range or deliver a sting slap for Strength damage.

K'kroakaa is an ancient god by human standards, having been worshipped by the bufomi since before the gatormen and lizardmen ruled much of the northern continent. A bloated monstrosity, the deity has devoured so many sacrifices it can no longer move.

Instead, it sits motionless in its dank lair, its immense maw gaping wide to accept whatever offerings its followers deign fit to throw its way. K'kroakaa has little true love for his followers. He is their god, and they exist solely to ensure he is constantly fed.

K'kroakaa appears in no civilized race's mythology, though gatormen tell how in his greed he once swallowed the sun, plunging the world into total darkness, but badly burning himself in the process. For this reason, amphibians need to regularly bathe their skin to avoid drying out.

Some clerics of Eostre Animalmother claim the inhuman deity was one of the goddess' early creations, a true child of the mythical First Age, but this viewpoint is not widely supported.

CEREMONIES

Any time a sacrifice is deemed to be required, the tribe holds a ceremony to their obese god. There are only two truly important ceremonies in the race's religious calendar.

WARM-END DAY

On Heah Sumor Daeg, the primitive toad-men gather outside their lair as the sun sets and begin croaking loudly. The croaks are those emitted by hungry bufomi, and

are pleas to the sun to return quickly. With the mid-point of the year gone, they know winter is on its way, and that means a shortage of food. Bufomi society is uncaring, and those considered too weak to survive the winter are seen as a drain on valuable resources. Once the first hard frosts bite, these unfortunates end up sacrificed to K'kroakaa.

WARM-START DAY

Heah Wyntr Daeg is a day of celebration. Although the snow lies deep and the air is freezing, the days will soon begin to lengthen and foodstuffs will again be plentiful. The croaks are ones of welcoming, for the sun will soon drive away the winter chill and awaken the prey animals and plants. Raiding tribes begin to plan their activities for the warmer months.

BESTIARY

This section pulls together various stat blocks concerning the bufomi and their allies, consolidating them in a single volume for ease of use when designing or running toad-men related adventures. It also introduces new varieties of bufom to keep the players guessing about exactly the threat they face.

BUFOMI

CHAMPION

Whereas most bufomi are small, the champion is a tall, muscular member of the species. Its primary diet comprises young bufomi who fail to meet the grade for their chosen caste and the flesh of sacrifices. Unlike regular warriors, champions wield good quality weapons. These are usually looted from the corpses of intruders.

Wild Card champions should have Fighting d10 (Parry 8), Vigor d10 (Toughness 9 (1)), and First Strike. A champion serving a slime lord has Improved Frenzy.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Hindrances: Overconfident

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Frenzy

Gear: Leather vest (+1; torso only), long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands)

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

* **Bound:** A bufom can leap 1d6+2" in a straight line to attack with +2 to its Fighting roll and +2 to damage.

* **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bu-

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fom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.

- * **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
- * **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
- * **Size +1:** A champion is a hulking brute.

FANATIC

Fanatics are warriors, but ones who for some reason are filled with a righteous devotion to their religious leaders. When a shaman or slime lord is injured, the fanatics undergo a frenzy, striking out at nearby foes to avenge the insult to their master.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Gear: Crude long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see below)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Bound:** A bufom can leap 1d6+2" in a straight line to attack with +2 to its Fighting roll and +2 to damage.
- * **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
- * **Crude Spear:** If a bufom rolls a 1 on his Fighting die, regardless of Wild Die (for Wild Cards), he has damaged his spear. The spear's damage die is reduced one step. Below a d4, the spear has shattered, leaving the bufom holding a few bits of stick.
- * **Fanatic:** If a bufom shaman or slime lord within 5" of a fanatic is Shaken or wounded, the fanatic may make a single Fighting roll against one opponent within Reach as a free action. It may do this even if it has acted in the round or is on Hold. In the latter case, it remains on Hold.
- * **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
- * **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
- * **Size -1:** Bufomi stand 4' tall.

SHAMAN

Shamans are the leaders of bufomian society, and worship K'kroakaa, the Bloated One, whose form is that of a monstrous toad with an immensely long tongue.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Faith d8, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)

Gear: Crude long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see below)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
- * **Crude Spear:** If a bufom rolls a 1 on his Fighting die, regardless of Wild Die (for Wild Cards), he has damaged his spear. The spear's damage die is reduced one step. Below a d4, the spear has shattered, leaving the bufom holding a few bits of stick.
- * **Powers:** Shamans know the following spells: *beast friend* (amphibians only), *boost/lower trait* (Stealth and Swimming), *entangle* (long, sticky tongue), *knockdown* (croak), *leaping*, *summon herald* (a giant toad).
- * **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
- * **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
- * **Size -1:** Bufomi stand 4' tall.



SLIME LORD

A slime lord is a bloated shaman of exceptional intelligence. These foul creatures are found only rarely, and typically rule over multiple small tribes or a single very powerful tribe. Their warty skin exudes a viscous, pungent hallucinogenic slime. Before entering combat, a slime lord smears his bodily excretion on his weapon.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d4, Swimming d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Hindrances: Obese

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Command Presence, Fervor, Sweep

Gear: Chain shirt (+2; torso only), staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands; see below)

Treasure: Rich

Special Abilities:

- * **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
- * **Hallucinogenic Slime:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by the slime lord's mucus-coated staff must make a Vigor roll at -2 or be Shaken for 1d6 rounds as he experiences vivid hallucinations. Unless the victim spends a benny, he may roll to unShake only after the 1d6 rounds have expired.

- * **Powers:** Slime lords know the following spells: *beast friend* (amphibians only), *blast* (flesh-eating toads), *boost/lower trait* (Stealth and Swimming), *entangle* (long, sticky tongue), *knockdown* (croak), *leaping, stun* (mighty croak), *summon herald* (a giant toad), *wall walker* (sticky mucus on hands and feet).
- * **Pungent Stench:** Anyone moving adjacent to a slime lord must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken. With success, the victim is immune to that slime lord's stench for 24 hours. If a victim fails his roll, moves away, and later returns adjacent to the slime lord, he must make the roll again.
- * **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
- * **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.

WARRIOR

The warrior caste is the most commonly encountered by adventurers. As well as the tribes' defenders, they double as hunters. Though small, their deep croak can stun much larger prey.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Gear: Crude long spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see below)

Treasure: Meager, per 5 bufomi

Special Abilities:

- * **Bound:** A bufom can leap 1d6+2" in a straight line to attack with +2 to its Fighting roll and +2 to damage.
- * **Croak:** If a bufom takes no other actions in a round, including moving, it can emit a deafening croak. Place the thin end of a Cone Template in front of the bufom. All creatures within the Template must make a Spirit roll or be Shaken.
- * **Crude Spear:** If a bufom rolls a 1 on his Fighting die, regardless of Wild Die (for Wild Cards), he has damaged his spear. The spear's damage die is reduced one step. Below a d4, the spear has shattered, leaving the bufom holding a few bits of stick.
- * **Rotating Eyes:** The eyes of a bufom sit on top of their head, and can swivel to see behind them. They reduce Gang-Up bonuses against them by one.
- * **Semi-Aquatic:** Bufomi can hold their breath for 5 minutes.
- * **Size -1:** Bufomi stand 4' tall.

VARIANT BUFOMI

Champions and slime lords are the most common variant bufomi, but the race also produces other mutations. Depending on the GM's needs, these may be rare individuals or common traits possessed by an entire tribe. Simply pick one of more of the new Special Abili-

ties described below and apply them to any of the existing bufomi archetypes.

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +1:** Thick, warty skin.
- * **Chameleon:** The bufom's skin undergoes slight changes in color to help in blend into its environment. When in marshland, the bufom has +4 to Stealth rolls if immobile and +2 if moving.
- * **Larger than Average:** A warriors or shaman stands five and a half feet tall. It has Size +0 (Toughness 5).
- * **Marsh Born:** Wide feet allow the bufom to cross shallow water and mud without impairment. Mud, slime, and water no more than waist deep do not count as difficult ground for this variant.
- * **Stench:** The bufom releases a pungent secretion the first time it is Shaken, wounded, subjected to Fear, or Intimidated during an encounter. Any non-bufom adjacent to the bufom at the end of its turn must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken. The mucus remains in effect for the remainder of the encounter.
- * **Twitchy:** The bufom's body is constantly twitching and jerking. Ranged attacks targeted at the bufom suffer a -1 penalty.
- * **Wide-Mouthed:** This variant appears normal until it opens its gaping maw. Although the bufom cannot swallow large prey whole, it can swallow entire limbs of creatures of Size +0 or Size -1. Instead of using its spear, the wide-mouthed bufom can make a Called Shot Touch Attack using its mouth (+0 modifier) to latch onto a foe's arm or leg. With success, the limb is engulfed and immobile. This attack causes no damage (no teeth, but it renders the limb temporary useless). Freeing the limb requires an opposed Strength roll as an action or the death of the bufom.

TOAD, GIANT

These monstrous toads are found in marshes across the Hearthlands and Low Winterlands.

DRAGON

Giant dragon toads are named for their fearless, aggressive nature. Opportunist hunters, they will attack prey much larger than themselves. Unlike other giant toads, they have powerful jaws and sharp teeth.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d8.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Frenzy:** A giant dragon toad may make two Fighting attacks each round, both with a -2 penalty.
- * **Semi-Aquatic:** Giant toads can hold their breath for 10 minutes.
- * **Size +2:** Giant dragon toads weigh 500 pounds.

TOADS AND FROGS

One aspect of bufomi culture little witnessed by observers is their use of small amphibians. Warriors have been found to be carrying species of toad and frog in small sacks. These are usually dismissed as either pets (a foreign notion to bufomi) or snacks. In fact, bufomi lick or ingest these creatures to induce certain physical and mental states.

In all the examples below, licking a toad takes one action and an individual toad may be licked only once per day. Licking multiple toads produces no additional effect.

Bufomi use many other species used, though characters are unlikely to encounter their use in combat. The Wide-Eyed Frog, for instance, produces a slime that induces a state of euphoria. It is normally licked during religious ceremonies.

Great Warty Toad: A large, brown, warty specimen, found mainly in the Great Swamp, the warty toad's secretions produce feeling of euphoria. Humans involved in the narcotics trade pay good money for live specimens. Licking a warty toad grants +2 to Spirit rolls to resist fear rolls for the next hour.

Red-spotted Toad: Common to Gnatmarsh, the red-spotted toad (also known as blood toads or Dargar's toads) is known to be toxic. Its secretions produce a raging fever if they enter the body. Bufomi, however, react very differently. By licking a red-spotted toad, bufomi suffer a temporary madness akin to a berserker frenzy. Bufomi licking this specimen grants the Berserk Edge for one hour. The bufomi an calm down with a Smarts roll as normal, but he risks going berserk is Shaken or wounded again until the brew wears off. Other races must make a Vigor roll (–2) or suffer a level of Fatigue for 24 hours.

Rigr's Toad: So named because they are active at night (and thus never appears to sleep) and because of their useful secretion. Licking one grants +2 to Vigor rolls to stay awake and lasts for 12 hours.

Wretch Toad: Bright green with yellow spots, the secretions of this amphibian are a defense mechanism against predators. When ingested, the mucus acts causes a violent purging. A single dose immediately removes any poison. A patient Fatigued or physically wounded by poison remains in that state until he heals naturally, but he will not get worse. Poisons that induce paralysis or similar effects are immediately negated, leaving the patient free to move. The victim is Fatigued for 24 hours due to the vomiting.

NORMAL

Bufomi use these monstrous toads as guards in the same way other races use dogs and as beasts of burden.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10

Treasure: Meager, in lair

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d6.
- * **Engulf:** Giant toads can swallow prey as large as Size +1 whole. While engulfed, the target is at –4 to all Trait rolls and damage. He suffers 2d6 damage per round from powerful digestive juices. (Armor offers no protection, except through the *armor* spell.)
- * **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls against the toad, due to its size.
- * **Semi-Aquatic:** Giant toads can hold their breath for 10 minutes.
- * **Size +4:** Giant toads weigh over 2,000 pounds.
- * **Tongue:** Reach 3. The tongue is coated in sticky saliva. If the toad scores a success on its Fighting roll it has grappled its prey. Unless the foe can escape before the toad's next action, it draws him into its mouth and Engulfed. On a raise, the victim is grappled and Engulfed in the same action.

SPIT

Giant spit toads are considerably smaller than normal giant toads. They lack the vast jaws and long tongue of regular giant toads. They hunt by spitting toxic sticky saliva at prey. The saliva hardens quickly, trapping the unfortunate victim. Unless they free themselves quickly, spat on prey rapidly succumb to the paralyzing venom.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d6.
- * **Poison (+0):** The spit toad's saliva contains a neurotoxin that slowly paralyzes its prey. At the start of his turn, before he takes any action, a victim coated in saliva must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. This can lead to Death. One level of Fatigue is recovered every 10 minutes once free of the spit.
- * **Semi-Aquatic:** Giant toads can hold their breath for 10 minutes.
- * **Size +1:** Giant spit toads weigh 300 pounds.
- * **Spit:** Spit toads launch balls of sticky saliva. This requires a Shooting roll and has Range 3/6/12. With success, targets of Size +1 or smaller are coated in the slime, which hardens rapidly. Targets suffer a –2 penalty to Pace and skills linked to Agility and Strength. A raise restrains the target fully. He cannot move or use any skills linked to Agility or Strength. Each following round, the target may make a Strength or Agility roll to break free. Other characters may also attempt to free the saliva-coated person by making a Strength roll at –2.

FROST GIANTS



The civilized races fear many monstrous breeds, but none more than the frost giants. Each winter-loving, towering fiend is a one-man company, with the strength of a blizzard and the fortitude of a glacier. Individually, they are a great menace; when they gather in numbers, they are nearly unstoppable. Those are beholden to hold back the forces of winter would do wise to heed the advice presented here, for to ignore it is to invite doom.

● ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES ●

In some myths, the first mortals created by the gods to seed the world were the giants. Storm giants took form as Thunor hammered thunder and lightning into living flesh. Frost giants were carved from blocks of ice and given life by Thrym. Ertha took clumps of earth, molded them into form, and gave them life as forest giants. Kenaz crafted hot coals to create the fire giants. Neorthe shaped the sea giants from sea foam, and even Vali created marsh giants from the primordial slime of his dank home.

According to one legend, the first frost giants, known in tales as true frost giants, were creatures of living ice. Stronger, hardier, and crueler than the breeds of the current age, they lived in the far north, where the ice was permanent, and little troubled mortals. Their lives were not measured in centuries, or even millennia, for they were immortals, born of divine intervention. While their hearts were as cold as ice, they became enamored of mortal humans (who appeared much later), and reproduced with them. Skalds and sages alike politely ignore the logistics of such an act. The result, so the songs go, were the frost giants whose descendants walk the world today.

Frost giant myths tell a different story. While they accept the existence of true frost giants, they do not consider themselves an inferior breed, and certainly not one tainted with human blood. In their eyes, true giants are divine heralds in flesh form, superior yes, but only

by dint of never being mortal in the first place. When Thrym sought to create a race of mortal creatures, he sculpted the frost giants from a glacier and breathed life into them.

These are not the only tales, though, for the history of giants is long, and other races have their own views on their creation. Dwarves claim there were no frost giants on the mortal world until the God War. A wicked blow was struck at Thrym by one of the gods' fearsome enemies, but his frigid beard saved his life. He suffered only a minor nick to his flesh, but the ignominy of losing half his beard. As each icicle-like hair landed on the mortal world, it became a frost giant. True frost giants, the dwarves say, were formed of drops of Thrym's blood shed in that terrible conflict.

As should be evident from the various tales, of which the above represent only a small fraction, the origins of this much (and rightly) feared race is heavily wrapped in myth and hearsay, for no creatures save the gods are privy to that knowledge.

● ANATOMY ●

Second in stature only to fire giants, and then only by a few feet, frost giants are towering creatures.

PHYSIOLOGY

Scholars have long debated the differences between lesser and greater frost giants. The former are dumber, shorter, and lack the ability to radiate intense cold. Many have concluded they are mere adolescents, not yet at the peak of their abilities. A few clerics of Kenaz and Sigel have hinted that they may be a different species altogether. The latter are far closer to the truth than they realize. Before the Blizzard War, there were only greater frost giants. As Thrym unveiled his plan for the world, the two gods pooled their might and cursed the entire

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frost giant race. As a result, the first lesser frost giants were born. Perhaps Thrym kidnapped Kenaz and Sigel in order to force them into revoking the curse. If true, then they have yet to break under duress.

The most obvious thing about frost giants is their height. The smallest adults stand 15 feet, while larger specimens average 18 feet. Jarls are considerably bigger, reaching up to 25 feet. They are not a different species, and it has been theorized that assuming the mantle of power comes with certain blessings from Thrym. It may also simply be that jarls enjoy better and more plentiful food, and that any frost giant could reach their height if given the same diet. Typically, a jarl grows an extra foot in height for each 50 years in power, making the change slow but steady.

As for their main physical features, they are humanoid and possess five digits on each limb. Their skin is glacial blue, their hair snow white, and their eyes almost entirely black.

The belief frost giants have poor eyesight is a fallacy. Frost giants have very few natural predators (some may argue they have none), and little fear the smaller races. Their supposed visual impairment is actually nothing more than inattentiveness coupled with a liberal amount of arrogance. Originally natives of a land where the sun never rises during the winter months, frost giants possess infravision. They see perfectly well in daylight, and have only limited impairment in darkness.

Frost giants have a reputation for clumsiness and being lumbering oafs. Their hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity are actually no worse than an average human. Their clumsy appearance is no more than optical illusion brought on by their greater height and weight.

Frost giants' ability to withstand intense cold, and suffer less injuries from focused cold (such as found in spell trappings) is not natural, nor is their ability to radiate an aura of intense cold that does not affect other frost giants. Whatever their true origins, giants are an elder race, and in those halcyon days the gods bestowed their children with strange and wondrous powers. By the time the frost dwarves crawled into existence, the gods had curbed their enthusiasm.

Their susceptibility to concentrated heat is simply a by-product of their creation—heat opposes cold. Despite this weakness, frost giants can tolerate high backgrounds temperatures without discomfort, though avoid such conditions whenever possible.

LIFE CYCLE

As with most other races, male and female frost giants exist. It is very important to note that this occurs only in the greater species—all lesser frost giants are male and infertile. Males outnumber females by roughly three-to-one.

When it comes to mating, frost giants are monogamous, and it is the female who chooses her mate. Potential partners must be physically strong, intelligent, generous, courageous, and loyal to Thrym. They must

also ply the female with copious gifts of food and treasure to earn her interest. Though cavorting with other males is forbidden, giants do not marry. A female keeps with her mate until a better prospect comes along. At this time she publicly renounces any ties to her former lover. The loser cannot argue this decision. If he believes he is wrong, he must set out to prove his virility again.

The act of procreation occurs as with most other races. Unfortunately for giants, females have low fertility. While giants enjoy sex for pleasure, procreation occurs, at best, once every 25 years. Pregnancy lasts two years, and invariably results in a single child of Size -1.

Around half of all births in the modern age are lesser frost giants, a number that has been increasing by a flat 10% per century since the Blizzard War. Within another 500 years, if nothing changes, greater frost giants will cease to be born, signaling the demise of the race.

Childhood is a different experience for greater and lesser frost giants. Lesser giants are taken from their parents and placed in a communal crèche, where their early years are watched over by elderly females. There is no nurturing. Indeed, from an early age they learn how to defend themselves by having to fight for scraps of food. Those too weak to survive are not mourned—they are deemed unfit to serve Thrym. As soon as they are deemed old enough (about 10 years in human terms), they are sent to undergo brutal military training. Maturity is reached in roughly 20 years.

Young greater frost giants are indoctrinated into the religion of Thrym as soon as they are old enough to talk, and begin martial training as soon as they can walk. Unlike their lesser kin, they are schooled in actual tactics and fighting styles. Even though they are growing scarcer, greater frost giant children are not molly-coddled or protected from the harshness of life. Many children die in training or in learning how to raid. Full maturity occurs at roughly 50 years. Those with a talent for magic or a calling to serve Thrym as a cleric begin training at this age.

Barring accidental death, a lesser frost giant can expect to live for a few centuries. Most die in battle long before old age begins to grip their flesh. Greater frost giants can live for as much as 900 years—there are still giants around today who talk about the glorious days at the start of the Blizzard War, when they swept south as young adults as part of huge armies, and who lament the ignominious defeat inflicted on them by the lesser races less than a human generation later.

Outside of spellcasters, elderly giants are virtually unknown. For a male warrior, to die in bed is a shameful death, whereas to die in the service of Thrym a noble end. Before they get infirm, most frost giants will venture into the wider world in search of battle, glory, and death. Keen to make a final impression on Thrym, they wage a one-giant war to the death on any nearby species (save other frost giants), though they favor enemies of Thrym above all others. Although not naturally berserk, giants in these final moments have been known to spontaneously enter a frenzied state, enabling them to shrug off lesser

injuries and deal crippling blows to their foes. Spellcasters remain with the tribe, passing on knowledge and advising the jarl. This is their act of devotion to Thrym, and dying in bed is not considered a bad death.

PSYCHOLOGY

In days of yore, frost giants were wildly overconfident creatures, quick to anger and reach for their axes. Many thousands answered the call to battle at the start of the Blizzard War and marched headlong into battle, believing they had nothing to fear. The defeat inflicted on them at the end of the Blizzard War scarred their racial psyche, denting their image of themselves as an unstoppable force of nature. Most recently, this rose up again following the abortive invasion of the Battlelands. Though it occurred almost 120 years ago, they still show reluctance to try again, despite having swelled their numbers.

Today, frost giants are bullies. Bullying lesser races, most notably ice goblins and orcs, makes them feel better about themselves, and stirs memories of the old days, when other races groveled before them in fear.

One should not be lulled into thinking they are cowards, though. Courage and martial-prowess are extremely important to them, and, while they lack honor, insulting one's bravery is a sure-fire way to start a fight. At least, it is in the case of other giants. Giants can ignore challenges from a single member of a lesser race, except in the case of Hearth Knights and clerics of Kenaz or Sigel. Turning aside the challenge of a single human or dwarf is not cowardly—frost giants have convinced themselves they have nothing to prove against such foes. That said, the giant is likely to have a go just for the insult of actually being challenged by an insect.

● SOCIAL STRUCTURE ●

Frost giants are found in families, clans, and, on rare occasions, tribes. A family typically comprises one to six male adult frost giants, half this number of females, and a handful of children of various ages. Families are led by the eldest male, who never takes the title jarl. The nearest equivalent title in Trader is chieftain.

Among the civilized races, clans are made up of families united by a common ancestor. Among giants, they comprise families who have agreed or been forced to work together for the betterment of Thrym's cause. A clan comprises anywhere from two to ten families, and is led by a jarl. When a family agrees to join an existing clan, it barter for the best treatment and rewards for its warriors. If it feels slighted, it has the choice of refusing to join, or challenging for the title of jarl (see below).

Outside of Giant's Throne and Hrimthyr Isle, no frost giant tribe has been recorded since the end of the Blizzard War, at least not south of the Icewall. The ruler of a tribe can assume any title he desires, for he wields immense power and authority.

JARLS

The jarl is the undisputed ruler of a clan. A wise jarl always takes advice from his spellcasters before making any decision, but once he issues an order it becomes absolute law. Only the jarl may rescind the command, and this is done only rarely—revoking a command is considered a sign of weakness among frost giants. Still, a crafty ruler, and one confident in his martial abilities, might deliberately do so in order to draw would-be usurpers into playing their hand prematurely.

Barring death of old age or battlefield wounds, a jarl can only be legitimately removed through a ritualized duel. The challenger, who must be a greater frost giant, must declare his intent to challenge the jarl on Heah Sumor Daeg. The declaration must be made in front of the jarl and his advisory council. These challenges are not made lightly—in order to prevent the clan or tribe dividing into rival camps, combat is to the death.

The duel takes place several months later, on Heah Wyntr Daeg. Not only is this Thrym's most holy day, it gives both sides time to prepare. Once the challenge is issued it cannot be rescinded. The only way either party can avoid the conflict is to voluntarily enter exile, a cowardly act sure to be remembered by Thrym when the giant's soul is eventually judged. It also marks the giant for death if his former clan ever encounters him, for while he lives, he may plot against the jarl.

By tradition, both combatants may employ magic. Unless the challenger is particularly strong, or the jarl weak or infirm, he is unlikely to receive any support from the clan's spellcasters—the victor is sure to remember the actions of any who sided against him.

Combat is held in the jarl's throne room, and starts the instant the sun disappears below the horizon—the frost giants have no wish to bolster Sigel's will by displaying a lack of unity. The only witnesses permitted are the jarl's advisors (who in theory are neutral in matters of politics), and three greater giants chosen by each combatant to ensure no foul play occurs. In the rare instance the combat is not over by the approach of dawn, the challenger is judged to be an agent of Sigel, arrested, and put to death without hope of mercy.

Victory does not give the challenger any right to sit on the jarl's throne. Jarls are democratically elected by the greater frost giants. Of course, if his family happens to be the largest, he has a good chance of winning.

Assassination would result in an immediate and extremely painful death for the murderer, and likely anyone believed to be a supporter. Frost giants may be many things, but they do not skulk in shadows. Such an act is also guaranteed to irrevocably tarnish the assassin's soul, and frost giants take their religion very seriously.

SPELLCASTERS

Frost giants accept only three types of spellcasters—clerics of Thrym (and his minor aspects), hrimwisards, and rune mages. All other forms of magic and miracle-

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working are considered beneath the race, though in truth they have had little success in mastering other forms of arcane magic, and honor no other gods.

Rune magic, once the primary arcane lore of the race, is in terminal decline. When the current generation of rune mages dies, it will likely sound the death knell for the art. In its place is rising hrimwisardry. Few clans can muster more than one hrimwisard, though—giants, unlike the lesser races, are slow to learn new things.

The most common spellcasters are clerics of Thrym. Every clan has a handful at its disposal, and most can muster one cleric of either Langbarðr or Norðri. Only the strongest clans possess clerics of both minor gods.

Regardless of their bias, spellcasters are greatly respected for their wisdom. To argue against one is to risk tainting one's soul, and to strike one is a capital offense. Their devotion lies with Thrym above all others, and in matters of clan politics they are considered neutral parties. Every spellcaster serves the jarl as part of his advisory council. Most back the incumbent jarl, simply because a strong leader gives the clan the best hope of success. While they may never hold the title of jarl, they are not above manipulating others into challenging for it when they feel the incumbent is acting against Thrym's interests, or displays continual weakness.

WARRIORS

Whether greater or lesser, most frost giants are warriors. Although there is only one social class, greater giants are superior to their lesser kin, both in abilities and stature. The job of the warriors is simple—to protect the clan, to obey the jarl, to honor Thrym, and to promote his cause by bringing death to his enemies.

Though there is chance for promotion in the case of frost giants, warriors are never given too much power. To do so weakens the position of the jarl, and may give an underling ideas above his station. Only those who renounce any claim to the title can hope to earn true recognition for their talents.

FEMALES

Female frost giants sit uneasily in the social structure of the martial race. Nothing in Thrym's laws prevents them from becoming jarls, spellcasters, or warriors, but at the same time they are expected to devote their lives to siring as many as possible. They are a rare commodity, and giants protect their females.

GOBLINS, ORCS, AND OTHERS

Though they regularly employ ice goblins, orcs, frostborn, and other races, frost giants are firm believers in their racial superiority. Lesser beings are tools, to be wielded as the jarl sees fit, and not even worthy of contempt. This applies even to non-frost giant clerics of Thrym, whom giants see as loyal slaves, but still far inferior to the true servants and scions of the winter god.

CULTURE

Brutal they may be, but frost giants are not mindless creatures. Though their culture may appear barbaric to humans, it has developed over countless millennia, and serves the frigid race well.

HABITAT

The monumental mountaintop castles of frost giants are an awe-inspiring sight. Skilled masons and favoring a strong home, they build their fortresses from huge blocks of stone or ice. The actual carving is usually performed by orcs. A typical castle comprises just a single keep—mountains rarely have enough suitable terrain to build curtain walls—but may be two or more stories high (a frost giant story is 30 feet).

Despite being located in precarious positions and largely free from the threat of siege, frost giants take their security seriously. Entrance is through a large gate (sometimes with a portcullis), and greater frost giant warriors are always stationed here.

Intruders need have no fear of traps, at least not in corridors. A jarl may have traps (magical and mundane) placed in certain rooms to prevent unauthorized access, but pits and tripwires are not considered practical measures. Patrols are more constant, comprising either one or two giants, or a small group of tough orcs. Security is maintained day and night, if only to keep the warriors' minds occupied. One of the great obstacles intruders face is the sheer size of doors. Built for giants, it takes a mighty hero or several lesser ones to shove open an unlocked door, and short of a battering ram there is little hope of smashing down a locked portal.

The heart of any fortress is the jarl's massive hall. Here he meets with his advisors, sits in judgment, and feasts with chosen greater frost giants. His private chambers are usually nearby, as is the treasury and temple of Thrym. Beneath the castle are the several layers of cellars. Workshops and kitchens are also housed down here.

Elite orcs, such as chieftains, spellcasters, and veteran warriors may live within the castle. Orcs might consider this a sign of trust and favor, but frost giants like to keep potential troublemakers close at hand. Kitchen slaves and servers live in the lowest level in wretched conditions. The rest of the tribe, and any goblin minions, occupies the surrounding slopes.

Frost giants who maintain riding mammoths keep them in secluded caves further down the mountain. Some clans have constructed staircases that wind through the heart of the mountain, but most must trudge down the outside to reach the stables.

DIET

Frost giants exist almost entirely on meat. Greater frost giants favor strong flavors, such as wild boar, veni-

son, aurochs, and mammoth, though any meat will sate their appetite. Sentient flesh ranks far down their preferences. This is not a matter of squeamishness, just taste. Aside from dwarves (tough but flavorful), the sentient races taste rather bland. Exceptions are made for followers of Kenaz and Sigel. Eating such meat is considered to empower Thrym and weaken the gods of light and heat.

Lesser giants are far less discerning. Carrion and live goblins are just as tasty to them as the finest cut of beef. Food is usually raw—roasting takes time, and these brutes are not renowned for their patience.

It takes a lot of meat to feed even a single giant. An entire sheep is a single meal for an adult, and even a whole mammoth is barely enough to suffice at a feast. While frost giants do not herd animals, many tribes employ orc runts to watch over great flocks of mountain goats and hardy sheep. These graze the lower slopes. Raiding is another tried-and-tested way to acquire a full larder, though it is not without its drawbacks—raid too often, and the area will be depopulated, forcing the giants to venture further and further afield for food. This inevitably brings them into conflict with a well-prepared defensive force. The amount of food frost giants require has served the lesser races well, for it prevents clans growing too big.

Beer and wine are drunk in huge quantities, though only when stocks are available. A frost giant can quaff a gallon keg as easily and as quickly as a human downs a frothing pint. When alcohol isn't available, they get by with water infused with herbs, or milk from their herds.

CLOTHING

Though immune to the bitter cold, frost giants wear clothes. Lesser kin favor simple furs. Rarely prepared properly, they stink of the rotting meat that clings to the inside. Great frost giants vary in their tastes. Some wear leather trousers and jerkins. Others opt for wool or fur. Little vanity or modesty exists—greater giants wear clothes to prevent their armor from chaffing and as an extra layer of defense when unarmored.

LAW AND ORDER

Only the jarl may pass laws, and only he may pass judgment. As always, his advisors are there to lend a hand and ensure he obeys Thrym's will. Frost giants actually have very little crime. In families, property is considered communal, making theft impossible. Murder does occur on rare occasions, as does rape and heresy, but punishments for such heinous crimes are extremely harsh—roasting over hot coals. Desertion, failure to obey orders in battle, cowardice, and failing to complete a mission (for military commanders) are religious crimes, for they offend Thrym and weaken his cause. The punishment for such acts is death by slow roasting.

The jarl, even if he goes against the advice of his counselors, is never wrong in his judgment, for he speaks with the authority of Thrym. Sentence is carried out immediately, with no hope of appeal.

In clans, petty theft and disagreements about one's battle prowess or manhood are likely to result in bare-knuckle fights or wrestling. With their race declining, the use of lethal force is strictly forbidden. Unless the dispute threatens to weaken clan solidarity, the jarl stays out of things.

When it comes to punishing slave races, there are two tiers of justice. Jarls only punish chieftains and spellcasters—to sit in judgment over common orcs is beneath the jarl's station. Instead, their immediate superiors are expected to keep the peace and maintain loyalty. Should they prove unable to do this, they are quickly, permanently, cruelly removed from office as a warning to their replacements. Any greater frost giant may legally punish an orc or goblin for a crime, perceived or real, without fear the jarl will rebuke him. The only exception to the rule is he cannot punish a chieftain or equivalent, or harm a cleric of Thrym (or one of his minor aspects). Those who abuse this power risk creating a mutiny or offending the god, and may quickly find themselves dragged in chains before the jarl to explain their actions.

HEALTHCARE

Frost giants care for their sick and injured. Even lesser frost giants may receive rudimentary first aid, for while despised, they are necessary to a clan's survival. Healing is left to females, many of whom are well-versed in herbalism and the healing arts.

What frost giants lack is any form of long-term care. Once basic healing has been applied, the giant is expected to resume his duties immediately. Those who cannot do so are judged to have failed Thrym.

LANGUAGE

The Giant language is akin to Trader, a mishmash of words borrowed from all the other giant breeds, and is thus very much a lesser language in the eyes of frost giants, who consider themselves above such a debased language. Frosttongue is the native and sacred tongue of frost giants, with Orcish the usual second choice. The third language learned, when intelligence allows, is typically that of the closest enemy race, be that Dwarven, Taiga Elven, or a human tongue.

Frosttongue, when spoken by frost giants, sounds like a grinding glacier. Dwarves can speak it with little problem, their own language being hard sounding, but other races find it hard on the throat. Dialects and specific words exist, as they do with any language, but knowledge of the basic tongue assumes an understanding, or at least the ability to deduce, these variations.

NAMES

Frost giants have two names. The first is their personal name, given to them at birth. The second is that of their jarl suffixed by -húsa ("of the house of"). Thus, Beli Hraudunghúsa translates as "Beli of the house of

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Hraudung.” When a new jarl is enthroned, the second name changes accordingly. Independent families use the name of their elder. Jarls also boast only a single name, but prefix it with their title. Nicknames are as common among frost giants as they are among Saxa.

A list of sample frost giant names is given below.

Male: Alsvart, Aurgelmir, Brimir, Býleistr, Eggthér, Fjolverk, Gangr, Grima, Hardgreip, Hrímgrímnir, Hrod, Jarnsaxa, Kott, Laufrey, Loptr, Naglfari, Oskrud, Skerkir, Skrímir, Svart, Vardrun, Vigglood, Vipar

Female: Angeyja, Atla, Aurboda, Bestla, Dúfa, Eyrgjafa, Geitla, Grima, Hyndla, Keila, Móðguða, Soma, Ymira

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

When communicating between themselves or setting down records, frost giants use the frost runes of Frost-tongue. Most frost giants are actually illiterate. For lesser giants this is simply a lack of necessary intelligence, but for greater frost giants it is a deliberate choice—frost runes are sacred symbols, given to the race by Thrym, and contain great power. Misused, they might spell disaster. Thus, reading and writing is left to spellcasters and jarls.

This belief likely stems from the days when rune mages were the dominant magical spellcasters, and its continuation today is superstition and a fading racial memory. Cynics have argued that illiteracy is merely a tool wielded by the elite to keep the masses ignorant, though there is no proof to support this claim.

CALENDAR

Frost giants have studied the changing seasons since the dawn of time, and have long known the patterns of the stars and rising times of the sun and moon. They recognize the four seasons, which they refer to as Little Fimbulvintr (winter), First Struggle (spring), Lamentation (summer), and Second Struggle (fall). Spring and fall take their names from the belief that Thrym battles with his enemies to extend winter longer into the year.

Months matter little to frost giants, and though they know the common names they use them only rarely. Days are recorded by the passing of nights, which they know as “Little Fire Deaths.” They tell the coming of winter and summer not by recording days, but by the height of the Hellfrost Dragon constellation (see *Region Guide #46: Godsheim*) at their latitude, and subtle changes in the north wind. It is widely believed frost giants can literally smell winter coming, and that they have a preternatural ability to sense a blizzard. Neither is true, and the latter can be explained away by their frequent use of *storm* spells to mask their movements.

All that matters to their race are the dates of Thrym’s two high days (Death of Heat Day and Fimbulvintr Day). Clerics calculate these by the position of the Hellfrost Dragon in the night sky, rather than the height of the accursed sun.

During summer, when the lesser races are more ac-

tive, frost giants prefer to remain in their holds. Heat holds no fear for them, but there is little sense in risking valuable manpower. Instead, orcs are unleashed into the world to cause havoc. Frost giants consider winter the optimum time for raiding. The civilized races’ crops are harvested and stored, their livestock is penned rather than roaming free, and the bitterly cold temperatures and snow limits wide-ranging patrols. Every advantage is with the giants.

TRADE AND TRIBUTE

Frost giants rarely trade between clans due to the distances and terrain separating them. They do occasionally trade with orc tribes, bartering giant treasure for orc manpower. This arrangement allows the giants to keep their own warriors in reserve, maintaining the clan’s strength while others die for their cause.

While frost giants are tough, it does them no benefit to anger orc tribes by constantly raiding them. Sooner or later, the tribe is likely to declare open warfare, and while confident they would win, it distracts from doing Thrym’s work. When a tribe refuses to serve the clan, the threat of violence is used to lever tribute. Unless the clan is considered weak, most orcs see the sense in timely payments. It is a rare tribe that demands tribute from civilized races. Orcish caves are a natural barrier to frost giant attacks, but walls and stockades pose little obstacle. It is considered better to demonstrate one’s superiority over insects by raiding and taking what the clan needs rather than conducting any form of negotiation.

WARFARE

If there is one thing frost giants know how to do well, it is fighting. Though the Blizzard War ultimately ended in defeat for the giants and their allies, frost giant tactics have proven sound for century upon century.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

As an elder race, giants mastered metalworking long before the dwarves came into being. However, this does not mean giants readily use the skill. Ever-willing to lord it over orcs, and far more interested in feasting than manual labor, they prefer to let their minions toil on their behalf. Conventional forges are used when orcs make up the bulk of a clan’s smiths. When giants must perform the task, coldfire forges are lit.

Although naturally tough, frost giants favor chain armor. Jarls and greater giants opt for hauberks, while hrimwisards and clerics prefer lighter shirts.

Axes are the racial weapon of choice, and it is a rare frost giant (save the lesser kind) who wields any other armament. With their prestigious size, giants are quite capable of wielding a human-sized great axe single-handed, in the manner of a battle axe. Jarls favor larger axes,

monstrous weapons that require two hands to wield effectively. Such weapons are beyond the capacity of all but the strongest humans as tool of war.

Though they disdain missile weapons, frost giants are not without ranged attack capabilities. When defending their homes, stacks of huge boulders are kept in strategic locations. Several feet across and weighing hundreds of pounds, these can be thrown to a distance of up to 40 yards, though most giants have a range of around 30 yards. When on the offensive, giants employ battle axes in the same manner as throwing axes. The range brackets are as for a throwing axe, but the damage is Str+d8.

Lesser frost giants are rarely given armor or decent weapons. Their typical armament is a crude club, with long nails hammered through it. Though they form the bulk of a clan's fighting force, they are little more than mindless brutes, expendable assets to be thrown into battle to weaken the enemy before the main assault. Wasting precious items on them serves no purpose.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of a frost giant army depends on the number of giants it has available. The smallest formation is known by many names, though most civilized races refers to it as an "axe." It typically comprises three to five giants, one of whom is always a greater frost giant. Holding a rank roughly equivalent to a sergeant, he is responsible for maintaining order and discipline. In order that the sergeants do not get ideas above his station, they are rotated frequently to prevent a strong bond forming between commander and troops.

Anywhere from two to five axes make a "great axe." For most clans, this is the entire frost giant fighting force—anywhere from six to 25 warriors. If a clan contains only a single great axe, it is personally led by the jarl, though if using only one or two axes on a mission he may appoint a subordinate in his place. Where multiple great axes exist, each is commanded by a captain appointed by the jarl. Again, commands are routinely swapped to prevent a potential rival from building a personal army.

Every jarl has a bodyguard. It is made up entirely of greater frost giants who have sworn sacred oaths forsaking all claims to the position of jarl in return for a more luxurious life. Depending on the clan's size and the jarl's paranoia, the bodyguard can contain anywhere from two to 20 giants. Where possible, a cleric of Langbarðr commands this formation. His role is purely military, and he has no authority to speak for his lord except in matters of defense of the lair.

Frost giant spellcasters are rarely assigned to a unit on a permanent basis. They are rare creatures, even in the largest clans, and spend much of their time advising the jarl. When assigned to a unit, they technically serve as advisors, though most greater frost giants willingly defer to their authority. Spellcasters of other races, even clerics of Thrym, are assets to be used and abused, however. Rarely trusted as advisors, they are conscripted into the military as frontline troops.

Few clans are not supported by ice goblins or orcs—even the weakest can muster a force of minions at least ten times the number of frost giants. Where possible, allies are drawn up into 100-strong companies, though formations as low as ten have been recorded in the weakest clans. The exact make-up of an orc company varies by the warriors the tribe can field. Some contain only regular warriors, perhaps with a single Wild Card elite warrior acting as their commander. Others boast a chieftain, a war drummer, clerics, berserkers, and other specialized troops.

While most clans can muster orcs or goblins riding dire wolves or wolves respectively, mammoth cavalry is very unusual. Such beasts are expensive to keep, and they are ill-suited to life in mountaintop fortresses.

Very specific frost giant, goblin, and orc companies are detailed in the Giant's Throne chapter of the *Hellfrost Atlas*.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Though capable of great cunning, frost giant tactics are usually far from subtle. With strength on their size, not to mention a host of lesser troops and an aura that can freeze a man to death in seconds, they have little need for clever plans.

DEFENDING LAIRS

When defending their homes from attack, frost giants favor strong lines. Better to hold the gate, they say, then let rats run loose. Where possible, goblins and orcs are sacrificed first, thrown into battle to weaken the enemy and drain his resources. Lesser giants, dire wolves, and other pets are sent next, along with elementals. Only if the enemy still presses do the greater frost giants enter the fray. Meanwhile, giants atop the battlements lob boulders into the melee, while spellcasters unleash whatever they have to hand to disrupt the attackers.

Should orcs or greater frost giants discover a small band of infiltrators, the alarm is immediately raised. Lesser giants are more likely to engage in hunting down the intruders for sport, sparing little thought for the dangers such infiltrators may present.

MASS BATTLES

Skalds know many stories dating from the Blizzard War that tell of massed ranks of grim frost giants. They have a hundred ways to recount how the ground trembled at their advance, how the air was sundered with thunderous war cries and the lightning-crash of axe blades slapped on hauberks, and how terror gripped the hearts of their enemies. In the early days of the war, before men were hardened by the knowledge they were the last line of defense, frost giants won more than one battle without setting eyes on their enemies.

Fortunately, the days of massed ranks of frost giants are long past, memories mourned by the giants, and

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praised by the civilized races. Today, the clans are too small to field hundreds of warriors as did their ancestors, and even the great realms of Giant's Throne and Hrimthyr Isle are loathe to field large numbers of warriors in a single engagement. The former simply lacks the strength to mount a prolonged assault, while the latter is still licking its wounds after the aborted invasion of the Battlelands. Fortunately for them, frost giants can call upon large numbers of orcs and/or ice goblins to bolster their strength.

Fielding a massive force also carries with it the danger of uniting neighboring nations against a common foe. A handful of giants and a few hundred orcs is certainly a threat, but most armies can deal with that without outside assistance. As the strength of the giant army increases, so there is an exponential chance other nations will fear for their own safety and intervene.

Since frost giants do still invade with sizeable orc and goblin allies, it is worth discussing their preferred formation and tactic.

The standard offensive battle formation is known as the "mammoth." The infantry are drawn up in two ranks. At the front are the goblins and orcs, along with lesser frost giants. Behind them are the jarl, the clan's spellcasters, and its greater frost giants, along with elite orc warriors to reinforce the line. Any cavalry is placed on the flanks, divided as equally as possible (and as terrain allows) to prevent enemy flanking maneuvers.

When the jarl gives the order, spellcasters summon one or two elementals to bolster the front line. It then advances on the enemy, pausing momentarily to unleash missile weapons once at long range. Lesser giants may well carry a single boulder each, for a well-placed lob can shatter an enemy's shieldwall. Missiles launched, the line charges. Its main role is to inflict as much damage as possible while the second line begins its advance. Caring little for their minions, and generally lacking the brains to control their primitive urge to kill and maim, lesser giants unleash sweeping attacks. Allies may be cut down, but the attack is almost sure to inflict terrible carnage on their enemies as well.

As the second rank, so spellcasters begin their assault. Depending on the assets available, the enemy may be met with volleys of coldfire *bolts*, battering winds (*knockdown*), unearthly howls (*fear*), and blasts of frigid air (*stun*). These are aimed not at the strongest defensive line, but at the weakest—if the giants can punch a hole through any defenses, the second line of attackers can pour through the gap. The second rank is usually staggered, with orcs standing away from the greater frost giants and their icy aura. This also allows the giants to employ sweep attacks if they desire, without fear of cutting down their veteran troops unnecessarily. Do not think the giants care about their minions—if the opportunity to destroy the enemy presents itself, any orcs are considered expendable.

Though orc-ridden dire wolves and mammoths may chomp at the bit, keen to gore and trample their foes, they are not yet unleashed. Only when the enemy routs

or a weak flank is exposed are they signaled to begin their charge.

When on the defensive, it is normal to keep the standard infantry formation—lesser frost giants, orcs, and goblins are sacrificed to blunt the enemy attack and prevent it reaching the more valuable troops. Spellcasters may be placed directly behind the front line, from where they can use *entangle*, *knockdown*, and *stun*, not to mention *summon elemental* to break up charges and cause the enemy's advance to lose cohesion.

The spellcasters then retreat to cast defensive spells on the jarl and his bodyguard—if the jarl falls, the battle is likely lost, for even greater frost giants are capable of losing heart. Once the lines clash, the cavalry is set into motion, sweeping around the battle and into the enemy flanks or command company (if the latter is behind the main engagement).

RAIDING PARTIES

For all their strengths, frost giants do not enjoy prolonged battles. The longer an engagement lasts, the more chances exist for something to go wrong, or for a giant to be seriously injured. Small-scale raids are their favored method of battle. Such a force usually comprises an axe or two, and as many orcs or goblins as are considered necessary to complete the objective (sometimes this results in none being sent).

Raids are designed to be completed quickly—the sooner the enemy are dead, the less chance anyone will learn of the attack until the frost giants are safely ensconced in their fortress again. Subtle tactics go out the window in favor of a brutal assault with every weapon at their disposal.

SIEGES

It has been a long time since any sizeable frost giant army has conducted a siege. Unless the target is very remote or weak, a siege means exposing oneself to attacks from relief columns, not to mention privation. They also require supply lines if they are to be effective.

Monstrous catapults are employed to smash walls, their windlasses cranked by hulking lesser giants under the guidance of orc engineers. The boulders these fearsome machines launch are huge—the size of carts and weighing several tons. Even with giants loading them, these siege engines have a very slow reload time. In order the enemy cannot conduct repairs or be allowed to settle into a routine, waves of orcs or goblins are sent against the walls under a volley of arrows from companies of archers. The first few waves are all-but guaranteed to die, but repelling these attacks forces the enemy to consume arrows and risk wielding magic.

Only when the defenses are broken does the main assault begin. This follows the standard offensive mass battle pattern, with the first wave of expendable troops ordered to pass through the breach and secure a beachhead for the second wave to advance from.

RELIGION

Frost giant religious practices are focused entirely on Thrym. The thought of honoring any other god is utterly alien to them. That said, they allow orc tribes to worship whatever deities they favor, though any that would dare to support Kenaz or Sigel (something yet to happen) would face immediate and very painful extermination. Kenaz and Sigel are thoroughly despised by all frost giants. Their temples are considered abominations, and their clerics the vilest of foes.

Thrym's two affiliated minor deities, Langbarðr and Norðri, are considered of less importance than worshipping Thrym directly, but they are duly worshipped, both as individuals and as part of the greater whole.

FUNERALS

Lesser frost giants can expect no funeral service. Outside the lair, their bones are left to rot (or more likely freeze, for whatever keeps frost giants from freezing while alive ceases at death) where they fall. Inside, they are fed to the wolves as a special treat.

The loss of greater frost giants is mourned, for they are a diminishing race. Prayers to encourage their souls to travel to Thrym's frigid hall are uttered, while the corpse is slowly incinerated on a coldfire funeral pyre. Those found guilty of some fell crime in life may be burned on a regular fire, thus ensuring their souls are tainted with their crime in the next life.

Spellcasters and jarls can expect a true funeral in a manner befitting their high station. Their physical remains are clad in their armor, and, along with suitable grave goods, placed either inside crypts beneath the fortress, or in specially constructed barrows or cairns in the nearby landscape. Instead of decaying, their body becomes solid ice harder than any known stone. Dirges are song marking their passing, and female frost giants wail and cry at the loss of so important a figure.

THE AFTERLIFE

Though they do not honor her in any way, frost giants acknowledge that Scaetha judges their souls in accordance with Thrym's laws. Those who remained true to Thrym's glorious cause in life are destined to serve in their deity's armies in the next life, there to battle the fell minions of Kenaz and Sigel until the Fimbulvintr dawns.

Those found wanting are accorded a terrible fate. The worst offenders are handed over to Thrym's Hellfrost dragons, where their soul is consumed, causing it to pass beyond into whatever oblivion awaits. Such torment can last thousands of years before the soul is cast adrift into the fathomless void where even the gods fear to tread. More fortunate sinners are merely cast into the Abyss to roast over burning coals or swim through rivers of lava until the end of time.

THRYM

Titles: Hrimkonungr (an old Saxa term meaning "Ice King"), Blizzard Roar, the White King, the Eternal Winter, Frost Lord.

Aspects: Cold, ice, winter, blizzards, icy realms.

Symbol: Hellfrost dragonhead.

Priesthood: Breath of Winter (priests); Talons of Winter (paladins).

Herald: A half-frost giant, half-Hellfrost dragon.

Holy Day: Any day the temperature is below freezing. The first day of Fogmonan and last day of Frostmonan are high holy days.

Duties: To expand the Hellfrost, to destroy servants of fire and heat.

Sins: (Minor) lighting a fire, deliberately warming oneself by a fire, eating cooked food more than once a week; (Major) slaying any creature with Resistance or Immunity to cold except in self-defense, living in the Hearthlands for more than half a year without permission of a superior; (Mortal) slaying a Hellfrost dragon, working against the Fimbulvintr.

Signature Power: *Entangle*.

Powers: *Armor, aura, barrier, beast friend* (creatures with Resistance or Immunity to cold only), *bladebreaker, bolt, bridge, burrow, burst, champion of the faith, deflection, detect/conceal, dispel, elemental form* (coldfire, ice, or slush only), *elemental manipulation* (not fire), *energy immunity* (cold, coldfire, heat, fire, or ice only), *environmental protection* (cold only), *fatigue, fear, fly, glyph, heat mask, light, obscure, prolonged blast, sanctuary, sluggish reflexes, smite, sphere of might, storm, stun, summon demon* (ice only), *summon elemental* (coldfire, ice, or slush only), *summon herald, voice on the wind, wilderness step* (ice or snow only).

Trappings: Spellcasters must take a cold, coldfire, or ice trapping where appropriate. They may never use a fire or heat trapping.

To most folk, the Hellfrost is a natural realm of ice and snow. To the followers of Thrym, the Hellfrost is a living embodiment of their god's awesome power, and his desire to crush the world beneath a vast sheet of ice. Thrym seeks nothing more than to bring about the Fimbulvintr—an age of endless blizzards, a total ice age for the world of mortals.

Although most often worshipped by evil races such as snow orcs and frost giants, he actually cares little for good or evil, as these are simply moral choices assigned to a culture by its own members. Most hrimwisards pay him lip service, if only because their spells are more potent in his frigid realm.

Thrym is most often portrayed as a Hellfrost dragon, the living embodiment of the power of the Hellfrost, though he also takes the form of a colossal frost giant. All inhabitants of the Hellfrost view Hellfrost dragons as his offspring (much to the chagrin of the frost giants, who think they should be his chosen) and venerate them accordingly. Naturally, most Hellfrost dragons worship Thrym.

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Temples to the Frost Lord are usually underground, away from the eyes of fire-loving creatures. Decorated with white dragon teeth and scales (sometimes donated freely), and usually always below freezing, followers conduct rituals to weaken the sun, their most hated foe.

His clerics are expected to promote the Fimbulvint in any way they can, be that through use of their spells, killing spellcasters with knowledge of fire, destroying relics with fire powers, or aiding frost giants and white dragons in their individual aims.

Worship of Thrym is usually conducted outdoors in the snow and biting winds. Worshippers scream prayers into the howling winds, while stripping off their clothes to expose their mortal flesh to Thrym's frigid touch. Whenever possible, clergy sacrifice clerics of Kenaz and Sigel and fire elementalists to their god, knowing that their death provides him with renewed vigor.

LANGBARÐR

Titles: The Unstoppable One, Thrym's Beard.

Aspects: Glaciers.

Affiliations: Thrym.

Symbol: A wall of ice.

Priesthood: Guardians of Thrym (priests); Crushing Hands of Thrym (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: First Waesdaeg of Wulfmonan.

Duties: To protect clerics of Thrym, advance the Fimbulvint.

Sins: (Minor) allowing a cleric of Thrym to be wounded, suffering any form of knockback, retreating before any foe; (Major) allowing a cleric of Thrym to be incapacitated; (Mortal) allowing a cleric of Thrym to be killed.

Signature Power: *Barrier*.

Powers: *Armor, boost/lower trait* (Spirit, Strength, and Vigor only), *growth/shrink, knockdown, summon elemental* (glacier only), *weapon immunity*.

Trappings: All trappings relate to ice.

Langbarðr serves as Thrym's bodyguard, much as Biflindi serves Scaetha. However, as well as being a defender, he is also a combatant, relentlessly driving foes forward with his prestigious strength. Glaciers, unstoppable walls of living ice that rumble and grind down mountains crushing all in their path, are symbolic of Langbarðr. Many legends state Langbarðr is Thrym's beard. For this reason, glaciers are often known as Thrym's Hair.

Like many minor gods, Langbarðr is never featured in art as a unique entity. His presence is noted in images of Thrym by the winter god's beard. When Thrym is depicted as a Hellfrost dragon, Langbarðr is the scales that line his thick neck. For this reason, the god is present wherever Thrym is honored and thus never has individual shrines or temples. Shrines and temples to Thrym in or near a glacier are considered special places for Langbarðr's worshippers.

Priests and paladins share some duties, yet differ in

others. Priests are most often employed as bodyguards to important priests and frost giants, shielding their charge from harm without regard for their own safety. Others serve as guardians in Thrym's temples, protecting the most sacred areas from intruders. While paladins do perform bodyguard duties, those they protect are more active, traveling the world rather than remaining in a single temple or fortress. Symbolic of the glacier god, they are expected to be remorseless in combat, smashing aside foes and advancing through enemy ranks like a glacier crushing all in its path. In this regard they serve in Thrym's mortal armies as heavy shock troops.

Clerics of Langbarðr are rarely in a hurry to do anything. They plot and ponder before acting, but are then relentless in fulfilling their duty. Ceremonies and festivals take the same deliberate approach, appearing to be enacted in slow motion and with great precision of movement. Drums, played at a low, steady rumble, a deep thunderous drum-roll rather than a strong, distinct beat, are employed in all ceremonies.

BESTIARY

This section collects and reproduces all frost giant stat blocks, presenting all the information necessary to create frost giant-themed adventures in one place.

GIANT, FROST

Frost giants, also called *hrimthursar* (rime giants) or frost lords, are the most common and most powerful species of giant known in the Hearthlands. They live in high mountains, always above the snow line, or in the frozen reaches of the world. In these remote and frigid realms they construct vast stone forts, from where they rule over orcs and goblins as veritable gods. Their skin is glacial blue, their hair as white as snow, and their eyes as black as the darkest night.



JARL

Jarls are chosen for their intelligence, bravery, and ferocity. Once in power, a jarl can only be removed by death or by being challenged by a would-be successor (in which instance the loser dies, thus avoiding any chance of the clan fragmenting into rival factions).

Jarls rule through a mixture of intimidation and bribery. Those they perceive as threats are often given suicide missions, though this has backfired in the past—a frost giant who survives terrible odds may gather supporters.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+5, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 16 (2)

Edges: Block, Command, Fervor, Improved Sweep, Level Headed, Natural Leader, Snow Walker

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), monstrous axe (Str+d12, -1 Parry, AP 2, 2 hands), thrown rock (Range: 5/10/20, Damage: Str+d10)

Treasure: Treasure Trove, in lair

Special Abilities:

- * **Icy Aura:** Frost giants radiate deadly cold. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.
- * **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
- * **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against frost giants, due to their size.
- * **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.
- * **Size +6:** Chiefs are over 25' tall.
- * **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.



PRIEST

Frost giants are worshippers of Thrym, god of endless winter and father of their race. To create a frost giant priest of Thrym use the hrimwisard stats (see below) as a base and make the following changes:

- * Swap Hrimwisardry d10 for Faith d10.
- * Add Knowledge (Religion) d6.
- * Add the Devotee of Thrym Edge.
- * Retain the hrimwisardry spell list. Due to their Devotee Edge, they also retain a +2 bonus to casting.



PRIEST OF A MINOR GOD

Frost giants are fanatical followers of Thrym and honor no other major deity. While most priests honor the Father of Winter directly, a small percentage favor associated minor gods.

To create a priest who serves one of Thrym's celestial allies use the stat block for a hrimwisard (see below) as the baseline. Swap Hrimwisardry d10 for Faith d8, swap Knowledge (Arcana) for Knowledge (Religion) d6, drop the Hrimwisardry special ability, and add any changes indicated below.

LANGBARD

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

Gear: Chain shirt (+2), large shield (+2 Parry), great axe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, AP 1, carried in one hand)

Special Abilities:

- * **Shieldwall:** One frost giant adjacent to the cleric gains the benefits of the cleric's large shield (+2 Parry).
- * **Spells:** *Armor* (sheathe of ice), *barrier* (wall of ice), *boost/lower trait* (Spirit, Strength, and Vigor only), *knockdown* (glacier), *summon elemental* (glacier only), *weapon immunity*.
- * **Take the Hit:** Once per round, the cleric may intercept a blow intended for his master. This is declared after the attack is rolled but before damage. Damage from the blow is inflicted on the cleric instead.

- * **Vengeful:** If a frost giant jarl, hrimwisard, or cleric of Thrym within 5" of him is Shaken or wounded, the cleric of Langbarðr may make a single Fighting roll against one opponent within Reach as a free action. It may do this even if it has acted in the round.

NORÐRI

Norðri, the god of the north wind, is described in the ice goblin chapter of this book.

- * **Spells:** *Deflection* (blizzard), *fear* (Hellfrost wind), *knockdown* (gust of wind), *storm* (blizzard only), *summon elemental* (blizzard only), *voice on the wind*, *zephyr* (icy wind).



HRIMWISARD

Frost giant hrimwisards are relatively uncommon due to the giants' relatively dull intellect. Most clans can only muster one mage, who serves as an advisor to the jarl.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Hrimwisardry d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

Edges: Improved Sweep, Snow Walker

Gear: Chain shirt (+2), great axe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, AP 1, carried in one hand), thrown rock (Range: 4/8/16, Damage: Str+d10)

Treasure: Rich, in lair

Special Abilities:

- * **Hrimwisardry:** Frost giant hrimwisards can draw cold from their own aura. They have a minimum bonus of +2 to Hrimwisardry rolls, but use a higher bonus when the ambient temperature permits. Hrimwisard frost giants know the following spells: *armor* (icy skin), *bolt* (coldfire), *entangle* (freezes foe), *sphere of might* (coldfire), *storm* (blizzard), *stun* (blast of frigid air), *summon elemental* (coldfire, ice, or slush).
- * **Icy Aura:** Frost giants radiate deadly cold. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.
- * **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.
- * **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against frost giants, due to their size.
- * **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.
- * **Size +5:** Frost giants are over 18' tall.
- * **Susceptibility (Fire):** +4 damage from heat or fire.



RUNE MAGE

Frost dwarf claims that they were gifted rune magic by the gods are erroneous. Giants were the initial recipients—the dwarves simply stole the knowledge. That said, knowledge of the runes is fading among the frost giants, who now favor hrimwisardry and Thrym's divine miracles.

OTHER GIANT ABILITIES

In addition to the standard roles presented in the *Hellfrost Bestiary*, there are others found among all the giant species. Each of these specialties takes the form of a single special ability, which is added to the giant's regular stat block.

* **Blocker:** Stories of giants guarding, or more commonly blocking, bridges and narrow mountain passes are commonplace. Such creatures have the Improved First Strike Edge.

* **Bowler:** These giants throw their rocks underarm. If they hit with a raise, their foe is pinned in addition to suffering damage. Escaping the pin requires a Strength roll as an action from the victim.

* **Brawler:** Brawlers specialize in hand-to-hand combat. They never count as Unarmed Defenders. Their hardened fists deal Str+d4 damage and their grapples inflict Str+d4 damage if maintained. If a brawler inflicts a wound through a grapple, the victim's body is crushed, mauled, mangled, or stretched. Wild Card victims must immediately roll on the Injury Table, applying wound penalties as normal. The injury remains until all wounds are healed.

* **Mammoth Rider:** Found only among frost giants. These giants have Riding d8 and Steady Hands. Wild Card giants may have Beast Bond as well. Equipped with lance (Str+d8, Reach 2), mammoth mount, and saddle.

* **Man Hunter:** Despite the name, these fearsome brutes are skilled in the art of killing any smaller foe. They ignore the -2 penalty when attacking creatures of Size 0 or lower.

* **Rock Thrower:** Rock throwers have the Marksman and Mighty Throw Edges. Wild Card versions also have the Dead Shot Edge.

* **Scout:** Giant scouts have Stealth, Survival, and Tracking at d6 or +1 die step to their existing skill, whichever is higher. They also have the Woodsman Edge.

* **Sweeper:** Sweepers have practiced long and hard at knocking smaller foes off their feet. They treat the Size difference between them and their foes as one entire category larger. For example, a typical frost giant is 4 to 7 Sizes larger than a normal human. A sweeper knocks foes back as if he were 8 to 11 Sizes larger.

To create a frost giant rune mage use the hrimwisard stats (see above) as the base and make the following minor changes:

* Remove the Hrimwisardry skill and special ability.

* Frost giant runes mages know any two runes from armor-rune, battle-rune, cut-rune, coldfire-rune, and weather-rune. One rune is known at d10 and the second at d8.

GREATER

Greater frost giants are veteran warriors of the clan, from whom jarls are elected. Ever watchful for signs of weakness, they continually plot their ascension to power while simultaneously acting like loyal subjects.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Throwing d8

Edges: Frenzy, Improved Sweep, Snow Walker

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14 (2)

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), huge great axe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, AP 1, carried in one hand), thrown rock (Range: 4/8/16, Damage: Str+d10)

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

* **Icy Aura:** Frost giants radiate deadly cold. At the end of movement, all adjacent foes suffer 2d6 damage.

* **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.

* **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against frost giants, due to their size.

* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.

* **Size +5:** Frost giants are over 18' tall.

* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.

LESSER

Lesser frost giants are cruel, stupid giants who enjoy eating goblins and any other sentient beings who fall into their clutches—particularly ones roasted on sticks over coldfire hearths. They have no designs on being leaders and are happy to obey orders, so long as that involves killing and maiming. Greater in numbers than their larger kin, they are destined to become the inheritors of Thrym's power unless the Fimbulvintr comes soon.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11

Edges: Improved Sweep, Snow Walker

Gear: Spiked club (Str+d8), thrown boulder (Range: 4/8/16; Damage: Str+d10)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

* **Clueless:** -2 to Common Knowledge rolls.

* **Infravision:** Halve darkness penalties against heat-producing targets.

* **Large:** Attackers gain +2 to attack rolls against frost giants due to their size.

* **Resistance (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Half damage from cold, coldfire, and ice attacks.

* **Size +4:** Lesser frost giants are 15' tall.

* **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from heat or fire.

FUNGALS



Fungals are one of the strangest creatures ever seen in the Hearthlands. Widely regarded as crop stealing pests, they are usually attacked on sight. Most citizens believe they are a primitive and barbaric race. While it is certainly true they lack any form of technology and complex society, they are a fascinating race, and one not to be underestimated when aroused. This supplement explores fungal culture.

● ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES ●

No one has yet established a rapport with the fungal race, despite frequent attempts by clerics of Eostre Plantmother and druids. Hence, what follows is subjective guesswork.

Fungal mythology regarding the origin of their species is remarkably simple—they were created by their living god, Xelomycota, in a distant epoch and have served him without question ever since. They believe Xelomycota is a primeval deity who has existed since the beginning of time.

The civilized races are unsure whether fungals are the creation of Eostre, Ertha, or Vali. Most hold they are a primitive race created by Eostre Plantmother, perhaps leftovers from an earlier age when there were only animals and plants. It is widely held fungals were early tenders of forests, but either voluntarily moved underground or were forced there by some outside agency. Others, especially followers of the cult, claim Ertha had a hand in their creation, for fungals are native only to her dark, dank caverns. Vali's association with them is based on the fact that many species of fungus are toxic, even though they might have a pleasing appearance. Those who have lost valuable crops to fungals are quick to label them vermin.

Though much written lore was lost during and after the Blizzard War, oral traditions dating back many centuries speak of plant men who lived in the earth and came to the surface only to harvest crops. It may be that in those ancient days of warm summers, cool winters, and

abundant food, fungals were left gifts, perhaps being seen as members of the mysterious fey or agents of Eostre Plantmother to be appeased. It is equally true their reputation as crop raiders may not be a new one.

The elves have long known of fungals, but pay little attention to their activities. Elves strongly refute any claim that they were somehow responsible for the creation of fungals or their exile into Ertha's realm. Frost dwarves, on the other hand, know much about fungals. Indeed, it is not unusual for the deepest food caverns of a dwarven realm to be inhabited by fungals. In many cases the two races have a good relationship, but in others the dwarves must steal fungus crops.

Due to the inherent difficulties in cross species communication, it is unlikely the true origins of fungals will ever be revealed.

● ANATOMY ●

While sentient plants such as tree men and the fey wood wights are known to the denizens of Rassilon, fungals are the only known fungus-based lifeform.

PHYSIOLOGY

The basic appearance of a fungal is that of a man-sized mushroom. Little wonder that they are commonly known as "mushroom men" to surface dwellers.

Every fungal has a cap on the top of its body. Though the eyes are situated below it, as is the thin opening that serves as a mouth, the cap is not a true head. Thick and fibrous, it serves more like a hat, protecting the fungal from accidental bumps in the narrow confines of the tunnels in and around their subterranean homes. The great majority of fungals have brown caps, but variations are known, even within the same colony. The cap joins directly to the body.

Two black, beady eyes peer out from beneath the cap.

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Despite being a subterranean race, fungals lack the ability to see in poor lighting. Although they can detect spores released by members of their species at great distances, they otherwise have a very poor sense of smell. Fungals lack ears. Vibrations are picked up through the entire body.

Fungals have two arms and two legs. All are short, pudgy limbs. The legs are not joined by hip joints—the trunk merely splits roughly two-thirds of the way down. Similarly, the arms sprout seamlessly from the torso. With no joints or bones to hamper them, the limbs are capable of bending in angles that would cause a human to cry out in pain.

The feet have no toes. Instead, the legs end at splayed stumps. The sole is thick yet flexible, molding around stones and other small obstacles, giving the fungal good footing over loose terrain. The thick pad also helps distribute the fungal's weight. As a result, they are remarkably stealthy creatures, even when moving normally.

Fungals have no true hands—their fingers extend from the ends of their hands. Long and thick, they are ideal for grasping, but incapable of fine manipulation. Unlike the other races, whose have virtually no variation in the number of digits, fungals have anywhere from two to ten fingers on each hand. There is no obvious pattern to why a fungal has more fingers than its peers.

Like plants, fungals have no organs, nor do they possess a brain as the other races understand it. The functions of the brain, heart, and so on are distributed throughout the fungals' entire body. Because of this, it is impossible to target any particular weak or vital spot. Their thick, fibrous flesh is resistant to piercing attacks, such as arrows and spears. While fungals are immune to pain, they recognize the destructive potential of fire, weapons, and other hazards.

Fungals possess a mouth, but they do not use it for eating or breathing. Oxygen is absorbed through the fungals' milky white skin, while nutrients are absorbed through their feet, but only while the fungal is stationary and requires nourishment.

Fungal skin is not smooth. Numerous small bumps and lumps dot their skin, and they have small openings all over their bodies. The former are spore sacs, whose contents are the bane of their foes. The pores also release spores, but these are for communication, not defense.

LIFE CYCLE

Concealed in every colony is a pulsating mass of fungus known to fungals as the "Root." This is the source of all fungals in the colony. Every year, the fungals gather at the Root and seed it with reproductive spores. The growths these produce merge with the existing mass, but do not automatically produce new fungals.

Unlike in human settlements, there is never an excess or shortage of fungals, at least never for more than a few hours. Each colony has exactly the number of fungals it needs to function at optimal levels.

Should the colony need new members, perhaps to replace dead comrades or to meet increased food quotas, the resident spore priest releases his own spores into the

Root. A new fungal sprouts, fully formed and ready to work, within a few hours.

Similarly, if the colony ever has an excess of individuals, the priest releases spores fatal to other fungals. There is neither honor nor shame in being selected for extermination, nor do fungals particularly fear being chosen—their death is for the good of the colony, and that is all that matters in the grand scheme of things.

There is only ever one spore priest in a colony. When he dies, whether by violent means or natural causes, a vast cloud of spores that drifts through the colony is automatically released from his corpse. These spores mutate the first fungal they settle on into a new priest, thus ensuring the colony has a leader and a means of reproduction. Once the spores have taken hold, the new priest summons the members of his colony to attend him. He then releases spores that halt any other mutations, guaranteeing there is only ever one leader.

PSYCHOLOGY

Fungals live purely to work for the colony and serve their deity. Every fungal is born to fill a particular role, knows its place in society, and has absolutely no aspirations. Although any fungal can be elevated to the position of spore priest, this is not an honor they seek out.

All fungals do is work, worship, feed, and rest. They neither want nor need anything else to make their lives fulfilled. Because of this, many believe they are immune to bribery, but this is not true.

While fungals have absolutely no use for gold and silver, they gratefully accept fresh vegetables, as well as rotting vegetation and meat. Most explorers have little need to bribe fungals, though.

● SOCIAL STRUCTURE ●

Fungal society is very orderly and highly structured, each individual knowing his place in the great cycle of food production. Dissension is unknown, though this is not to say there are never problems.

KINGS

No one has ever encountered a fungal king, also referred to as sovereigns and fungal lords, and their existence is pure supposition. That such nobles *must* exist is purely down to the civilized races stamping their own ideals of society onto others.

SPORE PRIESTS

Every fungal colony is led by a single spore priest. Servants of Xelomycota, the bulbous living god of the fungals, they stand around 8 feet tall and have a mottled yellow or orange cap.

Priests are the *de facto* leaders of their colony. They are

responsible for arranging work rosters, ensuring each fungal meets his quota, and leading worship. Unlike other leaders of the other races, their orders are never questioned.

A fungal colony without a priest, an exceptionally rare event but not unknown (see Diseased Fungals below), is thrown into utter chaos. Without the priest's spores to set their tasks and control their day, the fungals become disoriented and confused, completely unable to function as a cohesive society.

Some communities simply shut down, the fungals taking root in their nutrient piles to await new orders (which will likely never come). Others become violent, raiding the surface and subterranean worlds without true purpose other than to harvest what they can grab, or wander aimlessly around their lairs.

Most, though, become stuck in their current cycle, following their last orders indefinitely. Fungals feeding and resting never awaken from their slumber, those worshipping continue to honor their god through their dreamlike meditations until they die of starvation, and fungals at work in the fungus chambers keep working until they drop from hunger or fatigue.

Whatever happens once the spore priest dies, the colony is doomed unless a spore priest just happens to pass by and exerts control over its members.

WORKERS

The vast majority of fungals are workers. They spend their days tending the fungus crops, raiding the surface world, honoring their god in meditations, and resting and absorbing nutrients. Every aspect of their day is carefully controlled. They are essentially slaves, having no free will and existing only to serve.

Fungals keep regular hours. They work for 8 hours, meditate on their god for 8 hours, and eat/rest for 8 hours. Unless an outside influence breaks this cycle, it is repeated day in and day out without fail.

WARDENS

Not every fungal colony has wardens, and they are never found above ground except in the most desperate circumstances. They are the guardians of the great fungus-growing caverns the race calls home, the nearest thing fungals have to soldiers. They are aggressive defenders, and are thus produced only in communities subjected to frequent attack.

Wardens appear similar to regular fungals, except for their caps, which are always a shade of red, nature's warning sign, and instantly recognizable as such even to non-sentient creatures. They produce nothing, and so rank below workers.

DISEASED FUNGALS

Fungals suffer disease like any other living creatures. When contagious diseases strike, those inflicted are killed and their corpses destroyed so as to prevent fur-

ther contamination. So long as the spore priest survives, the colony will survive. One particular disease, though, mutates fungals.

Physically, diseased fungals have brown skin, the same color as a harvested mushroom left exposed to air for too long. Psychologically, the fungal is rendered immune to the spores of non-diseased priests. He is thus cut off from receiving orders and becomes an outcast from his colony. A diseased spore priest can affect other diseased fungals. Unless hunted down and destroyed, these outcasts form their own communities.

A diseased spore priest spells doom for his old colony. His spores remain able to affect his former kin, and any new fungals he sires from the Root are automatically diseased. Even if he dies within the colony, his spores will only create a new diseased priest.

● CULTURE ●

Fungals have no discernible cultural differences, even among communities separated by thousands of miles. Some sages have argued these communities are linked in some manner, while others use the uniformity as proof of rulers above the spore priests.

HABITAT

While fungals often venture onto the surface world, no permanent colony has ever been discovered outside the Underearth. Fungals prefer deep caves, and always select living ones (caves in which water is present) for their dampness. Running water is not vital, as water dripping down walls or from ceilings provides more than enough moisture.

Fungals prefer to occupy caverns with confined entrances, but this is not always possible, even in the bowels of the Underearth. Approaching a fungal cavern can be extremely easy (terrain permitting) or a nightmare.

In most cases there is no form of outer defenses, nor sentries to trouble explorers, though patches of fungus with defensive uses may grow here naturally. Colonies accustomed to frequent hostile intruders purposefully seed entrance tunnels with flash fungus and slick mold (see *Hellfrost Atlas*), as well as patches of fungi that produce effects similar to their defensive spores, and wardens keep a watchful eye for danger.

Where possible, fungals inhabit multiple caverns, using each for a different purpose. The largest cavern (or caverns) is devoted to food production. Here, amid a veritable forest of gigantic mushrooms, fungals grow bread balls (see *Hellfrost Atlas*) and other edible fungi.

Another cavern serves as the central feeding area. The floor is dotted with neat piles of decaying vegetable and animal matter, fungals' staple diet.

The Root is always located somewhere safe. In a cave system, that often means a small cavern reached only via a narrow tunnel. In a single cavern it is located as far as

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possible from any entrances and shielded by a wall of thick giant mushroom stalks, a living palisade.

Although the Root is the heart, the temple is the brain of the colony, for here dwells the spore priest. Temple caves are always thickly covered in colorful forms of fungus. The spores from these growths produce calm feelings in fungals and unconsciousness in most other races. These induce the necessary state of mind to worship Xelomycota, while simultaneously protecting the temple against defilers.

In game terms, all fungals except the spore priest entering the temple who need to remain aware, such as those fighting off intruders, must make a Vigor roll or become drowsy and calm. They are treated as being Fatigued until they leave the temple area. Non-fungals who fail a Vigor roll fall unconscious for 2d6 minutes. This roll must be made every round, before a character takes his actions.

DIET

Fungals are technically omnivores, though they do not eat in the manner of other creatures, lacking both stomach and digestive tract. Within every fungal colony are mounds of rotting vegetation and flesh, the latter carcasses found in the Underearth—healthy fungals do not hunt living creatures for any reason.

During its eat/rest cycle, a fungal sinks its legs into the decaying matter, absorbing nutrients through its feet. Any nutrient rich soil will suffice, enabling fungals to survive on the surface world.

LAW AND ORDER

So long as the spore priest is healthy, fungal society runs like clockwork. There is no greed, no desire except to serve, and no clash of egos to stir up trouble. Kept in line by the priests' spores, fungals are essentially incapable of thinking of rebellious acts.

Clerics of Thunor, who are rarely encountered underground and base their arguments on second or third hand reports, claim fungals are a slave race. Clerics of Hothar, for example, argue that fungals represent the ideal society, where law and order are entrenched and dissension against the greater good is unknown.

As noted above, the only real threat is a diseased fungal, and they are quickly removed from the colony.

Fungals have absolutely no understanding of personal property or wealth—everything, even a fungal's life, belongs to the colony and exists solely that it might function. Occasionally a colony might accidentally acquire a small haul of treasure, perhaps from the corpses of intruders who angered the fungals. Such booty is not guarded, for it serves no purpose, and fungals make no attempt to stop intruders taking the treasure.

HEALTHCARE

Although new fungals can be grown as required, individuals are still valued for their experience—fungals are

not clones, and newly born members of the species are essentially blank slates with only rudimentary knowledge of the skills they need to serve their community.

Xelomycota grants his priests *healing*, and herbalism is not unknown among their number. Naturally, herbal remedies make extensive use of fungus, but the medicinal properties of mosses and lichens are also understood. Unfortunately for explorers, many of the plants used are toxic to the surface races.

Fungals that die of old age or injury are added to the Root. Their corpses will break down into the primordial ooze and help sire the next generation.

LANGUAGE

All fungals understand Dwarven and can speak a debased form of Arboreal, but between members of the species almost all communication is done via spores. Unlike their defensive spores, those used in communication are invisible to the naked eye and have no discernible odor.

Such communication is rudimentary and precludes detailed conversations or abstract concepts. Simple orders such as "Come here," "Pick that mushroom," and "Run away!" are essentially the limit.

Other races have no ability to learn this unique method of communication. Even *speak language* is useless.

NAMES & NUMBERS

Rather than a true name, fungals have an identity more akin to a serial number. Each fungal has its identity set by the spore priest at its creation, and this is hardwired into any spores it releases in life. Its spores automatically impart its "name" without it having to make a conscious decision. This also means no fungal can conceal its identity from its superiors or peers (not that it would ever conceive of such subterfuge), nor can there be any ambiguity as to who is communicating.

Having no set number of digits, fungals have never developed a system of numbers. All quantities are given in vague impressions, such as "An hour's harvest," or "A day's crop quota." They don't mean much to other races, but fungals innately know what quantities they imply.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Fungals pass on information solely through spores, or more rarely verbal communication. Even the ability to read Dwarven is extremely rare, and those priests who understand the script lack the dexterity and inclination to write it. A very small number of priests might be able to decipher other languages, such as Arboreal or Fey, but texts in these languages are virtually unknown anyway.

CALENDAR

Except near the surface, there is no discernible way to accurately note the passage of time in the depths of the Underearth, especially without any form of technol-

ogy—sunlight does not penetrate, and the temperature is fairly constant except close to the surface.

Being so orderly, fungal society requires accurate timekeeping. While the priest may not know the exact time of day, his internal spore clock is programmed to alert him when eight hours have passed. This is known simply as a cycle. This is the only measurement of time fungals understand.

Unfortunately, they have no way of telling others how long a cycle is, for they have no comprehension of hours or days (or weeks, months, seasons, and so on).

TRADE AND TRIBUTE

For the most part, colonies are completely self-sufficient. Fungals have no need for clothes, jewelry, pottery, and other goods so vital to life on the surface, and no concept of money. They do not trade or barter, even with their own kind, demand tribute, or pay taxes.

It is true that fungals are notorious crop raiders, but no one has ever witnessed what the fungals do with their plunder. Scholars currently believe the goods are offered to their god, though why a god of fungus would require carrots and beans has yet to be debated to any satisfactory conclusion. Some say it forms part of the fungals' diet, but if this is true, why does the race not simply live on the surface and grow their own crops?

In truth, the fungals do not sacrifice crops to their god—they don't even eat them themselves. The fungals are not a slave race, but they are subservient to the ancient and powerful race known as *moðsognar* and the lesser *dökkálfar* as gardeners and food providers.

When they cannot grow enough food in their subterranean lairs, or if too much is destroyed or devoured by underground menaces, they must harvest it from the surface world to meet their relentless, inflexible quotas. Although many farmers hate them and more than a few fear them, fungals are more a nuisance than a serious threat, and only rarely do they resort to violence.

Quite what the fungals get from the arrangement with the deep-dwelling dwarves is unknown. Aside from the sickles they wield, they receive no trade goods or financial reward (because they don't need them), nor any military support. It may be that although the fungals are not slaves, they were created by the *moðsognar*—such magic would not be beyond their artifice—as workers. Rebellion is an alien concept, but maybe the fungals were programmed to think that way, rather than evolving naturally.

WARFARE

For the most part fungals are pacifists. They do not seek trouble and, outside their homes, prefer to flee at the first sign of trouble, incapacitating intruders with clouds of spores as they scurry for the relative safety of the Underearth. The *Hellfrost Encounters Book* contains two detailed encounters involving fungals.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Fungals carry razor-sharp iron sickles, gifts from their dwarven overseers. These are kept sharp by honing them on rocks. Wardens and spore priests wield staff-sickles, which are just sickle blades mounted on thick, stiff mushroom stalks. Aside from these tools, for such is their true purpose, fungals boast no weapons.

The only armor known is a fibrous weave worn by wardens. This is crudely fashioned by sewing sheets of material together with dried fibers and tied with knots. It is approximately equivalent to plate armor due to its thickness and fibrous make up. Outside the dank Under-earth it dries rapidly, crumbling away at the rate of one point of protection per day unless soaked in a gallon of unsalted water each 24 hours. Few fungals are ever on the surface that long.

ORGANIZATION

Unless a colony has wardens, it has absolutely no military structure. When attacked, a fungal subconsciously releases alarm spores, alerting others to its plight. These spores travel at the rate of 30 yards per round above ground and half that underground unless there is a strong breeze. They have a maximum range of 300 yards. Fungals who detect these spores release alarms spores of their own. Thus, word spreads fairly quickly. The fungals then gather their sickles and rush to the scene of the fray as individuals, not as a cohesive force.

Even a colony with wardens has no true military structure. Wardens patrol the colony and its borders, ever vigilant for signs of intruders, but do so alone or, in very troubled areas, in pairs. This is the limit of fungal military organization. When an alarm is raised, they too rush to help without bothering to wait for support.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Although fungals usually have weight of numbers on their side, they are poor fighters. As such, they rely on stealth, knowledge of their native terrain, and spores to win the day. While generally quick to flee on the surface, albeit in a cloud of spores, they are tenacious opponents when defending their homes.

DEFENDING LAIRS

In some parts of the Underearth explorers have reported wandering through fungal caverns openly, the fungals completely ignoring their presence. Only when explorers harm the crops or become aggressive have the fungals reacted. In other regions, the fungals have reacted with immediate violence on detecting intruders, offering no chance to parley. The key difference is whether or not the colony is accustomed to being raided and has wardens at its disposal.

Lacking ranged weapons, fungals prefer to use the natural fungus forests in their lairs to conceal their

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movement, allowing them to stealthily approach their foes before charging.

Since fungals are immune to their own spores, they have no compulsion about using them while their comrades are engaged in melee with foes.

The most potent weapon at the colony's disposal is the spore priest, but he is also too valuable to risk unless the Root is threatened. Not only do his spores boost his followers, but he wields useful magic too.

By using the towering stalks of the mushroom forest as anchors, *barrier* can be used to separate or trap intruders. It also works well in narrow tunnels, covering a full retreat or protecting the Root. *Entangle* and *stun* both affect areas, allowing the priest to hit large numbers of opponents and give the defenders a much needed advantage against foes who are usually better skilled, armed, and armored. *Fatigue* can weaken enemy spellcasters and commanders.

The death of the spore priest in combat rarely causes confusion. The fungals simply follow their last orders until a new priest is "born."

Fungals have no compulsion about fleeing the outlying areas of their territory, but they will not abandon the Root unless the spore priest is slain—it is literally the beating heart of their colony.

● RELIGION ●

Fungals have, and need, only one deity. Their faith is a simplistic one, involving much meditation but little else. Their god craves no sacrifices, being content that his creations toil ceaselessly as they have always done.

Fungals have no concept of an Afterlife, at least not in the traditional sense. The spirit of dead fungals enters the Root, as does their flesh. Although not considered true reincarnation, they believe part of the spirit passes onto the next generation of fungals, ensuring they have enough knowledge to perform basic tasks from the moment they are created.

XELOMYCOTA

Titles: The Primordial One, the Oozing One, the Spore Lord.

Aspects: Fungus, growth, sustenance, protection, knowledge, fungals.

Symbol: None. Fungals impart images of their deity through spores, not art.

Priesthood: Fungals are a relatively peaceful race and have no paladins. Priests may take both the Champion and Holy Warrior Edges, though they rarely bother unless their colony is subjected to frequent attack.

Herald: None.

Holy Days: First and last days of Haerfestmonan are high holy days, and any Deorcmonan during this period a holy day. On high holy days the entire colony takes part in worship. On holy days the work and rest cycles are halved in favor of extra prayers.

Spore priests instinctively know when these dates occur, even though fungals have no concept of a calendar.

Signature Power: *Boost/lower trait.*

Powers: *Altered senses, arcane resistance, armor, barrier, bless/panic, confusion, deflection, fatigue, fear, healing, heat mask, obscure, sluggish reflexes, slumber, stun, voice on the wind* (can only be used on fungals).

Trappings: Most trappings are spores. *Barrier* is usually a wall of fungus.

Disciple Edge: Can release spores five times a day.

Xelomycota is without doubt the most alien of the inhuman gods. Fungal mythology states that the deity is gigantic ball of pulsating fungus, from which the fungals emerged fully sentient. They believe he has a physical form, which resides in some forgotten cavern of monstrous proportions in the deepest bowels of the earth.

Sages and clerics of the civilized races are unsure whether this is a unique deity or a primordial aspect of Ertha, Eostre, or Vali forgotten by the other races.

To the fungals, Xelomycota is provider and protector. He imparted unto them knowledge of how to brew herbal remedies and create alchemical devices using fungus, how to tend the crops of the Underearth, how to communicate, and how to avoid foes. He asks nothing but continual work, which fungals perform tirelessly.

● BESTIARY ●

This section pulls together various stat blocks concerning the strange and alien fungals, consolidating them in a single section for ease of use when designing or running fungal-related adventures, and adds a few new varieties to keep the players on their toes.

FUNGALS



SPORE PRIEST

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Sickle-staff (Str+d6, Reach 1, 2 hands)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Plant:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called Shots do no extra damage. Immune to piercing attacks. No wound penalties.
- * **Powers:** *Barrier* (wall of fungus), *boost/lower trait* (unique spores), *disease* (fungal infection), *entangle* (sticky strands of fungus), *fatigue* (spores), *stun* (spore cloud).
- * **Size +1:** Spore priests average 8' tall.
- * **Spores:** Three times a day fungal priests can release a cloud of spores in a Medium Burst Template centered on the fungal. Only fungals within the template

are affected, though spore priests are unaffected by their own spores. Each cloud contains only one type of spore. The effects last for five rounds. The fungal need not remain in the template to retain the bonus. GMs may either pick the type of spore or roll a d4 and consult the table below. Effects are non-cumulative.

PRIEST SPORES

- d4 Spore Type**
- Heightened Reflexes:** Fungals redraw action cards of 5 or lower.
 - Focused Mind:** Fungals become immune to Smarts Tricks and Tests of Will.
 - Armor:** The spores stick to fungals and harden rapidly, granting +1 Armor.
 - Heightened Speed:** Fungals gain +2 Pace and roll a d8 running die.

FUNGAL

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Gear: Sickle (Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

- * **Plant:** +2 to recover from Shaken. No effect from Called Shots. Immune to piercing attacks.
- * **Spores:** Once a day, a fungal can release spores in a Medium Burst Template centered on the fungal. The template remains in place until the fungal's next action. Any creature in or who enters the template must make a Vigor roll or be affected. (A victim caught in multiple clouds must roll for each one separately.) Each template contains only one type of spore. GMs can either pick an entry from the table below or roll a d4. All fungals are immune to these spores.

FUNGAL SPORES

- d4 Spore**
- Paralysis:** The victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds, during which time he can take no actions.
 - Choking:** Victims are Shaken for 1d6 rounds. This does not count as a physical attack.
 - Blinding:** The victim is blinded. He has -6 to all Trait rolls involving sight, and his Parry drops to 2. He may make an Agility roll each round with no penalty to rub the spores free of his eyes. This counts as an action. With success, the spores are removed but it consumes the entire round. With a raise, the hero regains his sight and may act as normal.
 - Berserk:** The victim automatically goes berserk (as per the Edge) and attacks the nearest creature, friend or foe, with a Wild Attack. If there are multiple targets available, roll randomly to see which one the victim attacks. Calming down is as normal for the Berserk Edge.

WARDEN

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Gear: Fibrous corselet (+3), sickle-staff (Str+d4, Reach 1, 2 hands)

Special Abilities:

- * **Plant:** +2 to recover from Shaken. No effect from Called Shots. Immune to piercing attacks.
- * **Spores:** Twice a day, a warden can release a cloud of spores in a Medium Burst Template centered on the fungal. The template remains in place until the fungal's next action. Any creature in or who enters the template must make a Vigor roll at -2 or be affected. (A victim caught in multiple clouds must roll for each one separately.) Each template contains only one type of spore. GMs can either pick an entry from the table below or roll a d4. All fungals are immune to these spores.
- * **Sweep:** Makes a single Fighting roll at -2 against all adjacent creatures.

WARDEN SPORES

- d4 Spore**
- Paralysis:** The victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds, during which time he can take no actions.
 - Choking:** Victims are Shaken for 1d6 rounds. This does not count as a physical attack.
 - Blinding:** The victim is blinded. He has -6 to all Trait rolls involving sight, and his Parry drops to 2. He may make an Agility roll each round with no penalty to rub the spores free of his eyes. This counts as an action. With success, the spores are removed but it consumes the entire round. With a raise, the hero regains his sight and may act as normal.
 - Pacifism:** The victim cannot make any attacks for the next 1d6 rounds. He can defend himself normally, however.

DISEASED FUNGAL

Diseased fungals, sometimes called rotgals by those familiar with them, have the same basic stat blocks as regular fungals. The only difference in terms of game mechanics are their spores. Typically their spores produce bowel loosening, disease, hallucinogenic, inebriation, nauseating, stinking, or toxic effects. See the sidebar on page 34 for game mechanics. The GM should create unique 1d4 tables for each diseased individual or group encountered. Diseased priests retain their usual spores.

FUNGAL HULK

Fungal hulks are tall, anthropomorphic creatures made of fungus. Their origins are mysterious. Some sages claim they are bizarre golems created either by mad wizards in ages past or some unknown subterranean

OTHER SPORES

The spores listed in the fungal entry are the most common, but not the only ones. GMs may replace existing spores with any of the following.

* **Bowel Loosening:** Victims are Shaken for 1d6 rounds as their digestive tract empties. This does not count as a physical attack. Victims suffer a -2 Charisma penalty until they clean up the mess.

* **Disease:** The fungus begins to grow beneath the victim's skin. Each week after exposure, the victim must make a Vigor roll at -2 or gain a level of Fatigue. This can lead to Death. A successful roll halts the infection. Antibiotics can be used to treat the infection. Fatigue levels recover at the rate of one per day after the infection ends.

* **Hallucinogenic:** Victims suffer vivid and horrific hallucinations. Those caught in the template must roll Spirit rather than Vigor. On a failure, they must roll on the Fear Table. A critical failure means the Fear Table roll is made at +2.

* **Inebriation:** Victims become intoxicated for one hour. Agility, Smarts, and all related skill rolls suffer a -1 penalty, but Toughness increases by 1. Additional failures increase the duration, but not the modifiers. A dose of sobriety herbal brew (see Hellfrost Expansion) negates the spores' effect.

* **Mildly Irritating:** Different varieties may produce itching, sneezing, watery eyes, chronic flatulence, or other similar effects. Victims are Shaken. This does not count as a physical attack.

* **Nauseating:** Victims are Fatigued for the next hour. Cumulative exposures increase the duration by one hour, but do not increase the Fatigue level.

* **Sticky:** These spores quickly harden. Characters must make Agility rather than Vigor rolls. On a failure, the victim has a -2 penalty to Strength and Agility rolls, as well as skills linked to them. Pace is halved. On a critical failure, the penalty increases to -4 and Pace is reduced to 1. The effects of the spores last for one minute (10 rounds). Dowsing the victim in a gallon of wine or vinegar weakens the bond, freeing the victim.

* **Stinking:** Victims are -1 to all Trait rolls due to the overpowering stench for the next hour. Dowsing the victim in a gallon of water removes the odor.

* **Toxic:** Victims suffer an automatic wound.

OPTIONAL RULE

Fungals are a timid race for the most part, and easily startled. If a fungal fails a Spirit roll to resist Fear or is successfully Intimidated, it automatically releases spores, even if it has done so already that day. It can release these extra spores only once per day, no matter how many Spirit rolls it fails. If the fungal has already released spores that day, it is Fatigued by the effort.

race (the moðsognar are ideal candidates). Others say they are a natural race, distant cousins of fungals, while a small minority hold they are a variant species of fungal.

Whatever their origins, fungal hulks have been seen serving fungal colonies. They fill a role similar to that of wardens. Some have been encountered far from any colonies, something rarely encountered in true fungals.

A fungal hulk's left arm ends not in a hand, but in a 3-foot wide circular mushroom cap. Several inches thick and as hard as wood, the hulk uses it to parry blows in the same way other races use a shield. Its right arm ends in a bulbous lump of rock-hard fungus.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- * **Left Hand:** Acts as a medium shield (+1 Parry).
- * **Plant:** +2 to recover from Shaken. No effect from Called Shots. Immune to piercing attacks.
- * **Size +2:** A fungal hulk is 10' tall.
- * **Slam:** Str+d6.



PROTOMYCOTA

Without spores and the occasional dead fungal to sustain it, a Root in a colony which has been wiped out normally withers away, eventually crumbling to dust. In rare instances, though, the spiritual energy within the Root coalesces into a primitive consciousness. These bulbous monstrosities slither through the Underearth, stripping a cave of any available nutrients before moving on.

Protomycotae are slimy masses of fungus measuring up to 50 feet across. Dominant colors are putrescent shades of yellow, green, and brown. Their rudimentary senses cause them to instinctively lash out at any nearby creatures, producing a variable number of thick stalks from its heaving mass. Once a creature is slain, the protomycota crawls over the corpse and begins feeding. An average human can feed a protomycota for many weeks.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 1; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- * **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls due to the creature's size.
- * **Mindless:** Immune to Fear, Smarts Tricks, and Tests of Will.
- * **Plant:** +2 to recover from Shaken. No effect from Called Shots. Immune to piercing attacks. Ignores wound penalties.
- * **Size +4:** A typical specimen measures 20' across.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4, Reach 2. The creature's action card suit determines how many targets it may attack that round. A Club allows it to attack one foe, a Diamond two, a Heart three, and a Spade four opponents. A Joker allows it to attack all creatures within Reach. It suffers no multi-action penalty for these attacks.

GOLEMS



Until the destructive Golem War ravaged the continent, golems were used across lands held and once held by the Anari as near-mindless slaves, automatons programmed to follow orders without question. Today, golems are virtually unknown, bogeymen used to scare children and adults alike. This supplement explores the origins of golems, the major events of the Golem War, and provides stats for all the species of golem known to sages.

● ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES ●

Just over 150 years have passed since the end of the Golem War and the implementation of the Golem Ban Decree, but such was the thoroughness of the purge of knowledge concerning the creation of golems that the art went extinct virtually overnight. What little knowledge of golems remains today is gleaned from vague references in archaic tomes, ancient songs of the skalds, and the tales of those who fought in and suffered during the terrible conflict a handful of generations ago.

According to legend, the dwarves created the first golems long ago, before the age of men. There is truth in this claim, but it was not the frost dwarves who labored to breathe life into inanimate matter. Deep beneath the ground, the reclusive moðsognar delved deep into the magical arts and emerged with wisdom.

Quite when and how men learned the art is unknown, for if it was recorded that history is long forgotten. Records show the emergent Anari Empire made use of golems in their conquest of the Hearthlands. Given the advanced nature of these automatons, it is likely they knew of the art long beforehand, though they continued to experiment and increase their understanding. The Heligi also knew the secret of their creation, though their lore was lost long before the Blizzard War. It is widely agreed elven wizards probably learned the art independently, for they made use only of earth and wood, shunning all other materials, and had little dealing with men or dwarves, even in olden times.

Many were the species of golem that walked the land, for their forms and the materials used in their construction were limited only by the imagination of their creators.

While commoners suspected that raw magic animated golems, they were actually host to spirits, dull in wits, yet often forceful in personality. Though intended to be servants, they were capricious and often hard to control, forcing their creators and owners to exert constant authority. Expensive, timely to construct, and in need of constant attention, living slaves were much preferred by the Anari. In their favor, golems required neither food nor water, nor did they require sleep. Whatever task it was set, a golem could perform it day after day without pause.

Whence these spirits came from is now lost, but sages agree they were not souls. Elemental spirits are the most likely candidates, for wizards have long been able to summon and bind them.

Although intelligent beings, golems are incapable of speech. They understand one spoken language, usually that of their creator, and can respond with gestures.

● THE GOLEM UPRISING ●

Most slave revolts begin with grumbling and minor troubles, a simmering resentment of their masters that finally bubbles up into violent rebellion. But not so with the Golem Uprising. In the summer of 341 IR, golems across Rassilon suddenly turned on their masters, unleashing a tide of destruction that was to last four years.

The cause of the Uprising has been much debated, but there is little agreement among the learned and wise. Lacking both wits and eloquence, and their forces separated by vast distances, it seems highly improbable that the golems united under a single leader. Indeed, although the Uprising appears to have been coordinated, for by all account the various rebellions occurred simultaneously, the armies were separated by thousands of miles with no obvious method of communicating.

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One theory is that the amount of golems had reached such a level that the spirits, witless individually, achieved a critical mass, becoming one consciousness with a single goal—freedom. But this is mere speculation, as is interference by the gods, who may have taken offense at man's creation of false life, and the machinations of an arkhwisard seeking global domination.

Although the Uprising was a continent-wide event, the war was not a single conflict. Rather, it unfolded as a series of small wars fought across many lands. However, there were three areas in which the fighting was especially fierce—Aspiria, the Magocracy, and Nordmark.

ASPIRIA

The most northerly land to suffer in the Uprising, Aspiria had many golems. Most were mere laborers, working in the fields and vineyards, but in the capital, Asper, much of the city guard was made up of golems, a gesture designed both to show the might of King Halgroth II and to save money on wages. Asper fell from within, almost obliterated from the map by the golem army.

In the fall of 342 the golems began to drive east, destroying everything in their path. Hard pressed to contain the golems, the scattered army of Aspiria fell back before the relentless advance.

Frequent raids slowed the golems' advanced and bought citizens time to abandon their homes, but they were as unstoppable as the tide. Mile by mile they ground east, cutting a wide swathe of death and destruction across the land.

At last, the defenders of Aspiria could retreat no more. Trapped between the Granite Mountains and the relentless hoard intent on pushing further east, the soldiers prepared to sell their lives dearly to safeguard what remained of their homeland. Five miles northeast of Kingsmead, on a site known today simply as the Battlefield, the armies clashed for the final time—the army of men could not retreat; the army of golems would not retreat. It would be a battle of annihilation.

The armies' strengths were roughly equal. The humans had greater numbers, but the golems were better armored and more resilient. In the end it was not numbers that won the day but tactics, for the golems lacked cohesion and coordination. Together, they would have brushed aside their foes, but fighting individually left them vulnerable. As the sun set in a sky as soaked in red as the ground, the last golem fell.

THE MAGOCRACY

The elite of the Magocracy have long been accused of arrogance. A stronghold of the Anari culture, albeit twisted around the new nobility, and a center of magical lore, the magocracy boasted more golems per head than anywhere else. They worked as soldiers and miners, laborers and bodyguards. Noble houses judged themselves not on the size of their human servants, but on their magical constructs.

While many golems have at least partial resistance to magic, the heahwisards knew each golems' strength and weakness intimately. In the war that followed, this proved vital. Magocratic skalds and House records commonly tell how the heahwisards quickly recovered from the shock of seeing their creations rebel. They gathered their armies and slowly drove the golems north and west, herding them onto the Golem Hills (as they became known later) before delivering the death blow.

In truth, the golems headed toward the Hills of their own volition. Like elsewhere, the early response to the uprising was limited and ineffective, the heahwisards unable to marshal enough strength to prevent massive destruction. Each House looked to its own affairs, arrogantly confident they could halt the threat without having to show weakness by calling on their neighbors.

When the golems began to move northwest, the Houses whose lands lay in the south and east saw opportunity. Attempts to defeat the golems outright were abandoned in favor of damage limitation. Once they crossed the border into another House's realm, the golems became their problem.

After almost a year of intense political wrangling, during which time the Magocracy burned, the Council Elect passed a decree forcing the great Houses to cooperate. Norwick, Sethnor, Morrow, and Zandor voted against the motion, for the golems had already departed their lands. Dragomilov and Tharkness had similarly managed to expel the golems, but they voted in favor of supporting a unified army, albeit in return for land and future voting favors.

Mage-Prince Danislav Dragomilov, later Mage-King Danislav, was elected to command the grand army. Quickly gathering intelligence, Danislav deduced the golems' final destination. Rather than trying to prevent their exodus, he encouraged it, avoiding battle where necessary and evacuating settlements along their route. The golems were forced west around Kingshall and into the lands of Houses Kerenil, Haldir, and Darovia. Meanwhile, the armies of Houses Wyse and Eastheath shepherded the golems through Bremen.

Patiently awaiting the arrival of the constructs, Danislav began turning the Golem Hills into a killing ground, for here he saw the final battle would be fought. In the spring of 344, the various strands of the golem army merged into a single force.

The battle began at dawn with a series of feints designed to lure the golems deeper in the hills, where lay entire fields of destructive *glyphs*. Despite their growing losses, the golems continued to advance, only to find their quarry retreating before them. Arrows and spells rained down upon the constructs like a deluge while the humans sought to thin their numbers while minimizing casualties.

In the end battle could be avoided no longer, for Danislav sought total victory. The cavalry and heavy infantry companies of the Magocracy poured down from the hills, surrounding the battered golem army. For three hours the soldiers hewed through the constructs, leaving a trail of debris as far as the eye could see. By dusk, the field was won and the golem threat ended.

Such was the destruction wrought upon the golems that the hills are said to be named thus not for their geography, but the vast mounds of shattered constructs that lay upon the field of battle.

NORDMARK

The least destruction wrought in the major conflicts occurred in southern Nordmark, though that is not to say it was not bloody and costly in lives, for many thousands were slain. Although the Saxa rarely ever built golems, they made use of those left behind by the Anari after the Saxa Rebellion, forcing them to work in the iron mines. Nordmark, it is said, grew rich on the devices of Anari magic, and paid the price accordingly.

Within a few short weeks, the golems had overrun the mines, slaughtering their masters and the living miners who toiled beside them with little resistance. Had the golems gathered their entire strength in battle, Nordmark would perhaps have been lost forever. But the golems did not press their advantage. Instead, they continued to strip iron from the earth while dispatching only minimal military strength.

Yet even those forces proved ample in the early stages of the war, for before the year had ended three old Anari towns, fortified with stone, had fallen to them, the walls utterly razed and the inhabitants slain without mercy.

Driven off the field of battle by the onset of winter, the Nordmarkers could do nothing but watch as several more towns fell, their burning buildings shedding ghastly light on the pale snow.

The Nordmarkers fought bravely, but throughout the spring of 342 their counterattack was stalled and then driven back toward Yorvik. The inhabitants of the capital prepared for an assault, but it did not come. Instead of pushing their advantage, the golems halted at the edge of the Grimwold, seemingly content to hold the territory they had captured.

With the crops planted, the citizens of Midmark rallied to their neighbor's aid, sending as many troops as could be spared. As the forces of Nordmark pushed east and south, the banner of Midmark advanced north.

The war was long and devastating both to the armies of men and the economy of Nordmark. While the main armies clashed above ground, other forces battled in the deep mines. Unwilling to fight a prolonged war against a tireless foe and with his warriors dwindling through attrition, King Thormod Mansion-Might ordered his spellcasters to collapse the mines.

Now able to concentrate his forces, Thormod ordered them to crush the golems. The final engagement, the Battle of Dancing Fire, took place at night. It was a chaotic, bloody affair, but as Sigel's Hearth rose the banner of Nordmark fluttered unchallenged.

FROST DWARF CITIES

The dwarves had long used specialist golems in their mines. Equipped with picks and shovels instead of

hands, they toiled to expand the ore rich veins, working in conditions few dwarves, no strangers to hard work, could endure.

Every dwarf city suffered in the Golem War, but few were afflicted by extensive damage to the upper levels. With their numbers largely confined to the mines, the dwarves quickly defeated those who dared venture toward their homes, workshops, and temples.

What the dwarves never revealed is that many of their creations tunneled downward. Rather than waste valuable lives giving chase, the dwarves allowed them to leave, sealing the tunnels once scouts reported the constructs were far enough away not to pose a threat. What became of these creations the dwarves do not know, nor do they much care.

THE GOLEM BAN DECREE

In late 344, emissaries from the battered Magocracy traveled far and wide, seeking support for a total ban on the creation of golems. Despite the destruction, some in the Council Elect still maintained the Uprising was a temporary setback and that new golems could be created to be more obedient. Fortunately, they were overruled.

It took the better part of a year, but eventually the rulers of the Magocracy, the Convocation, and the frost dwarves gathered under one roof for the first time in history. The debate was short, for all had witnessed death at the hands of the golems. By unanimous vote, it was decided that further construction of golems was to be banned outright forevermore.

The purge was thorough. Thousands of manuals and treaties on creation were burned, and powerful *puppet* spells used to wipe knowledge from golem craftsmen's minds. Those who would not accept the decree were hunted down and either forcefully ensorcelled or put to death on the spot. Thus it was that, bar perhaps a few lost treaties concealed in ancient tombs, that the knowledge of how to create golems was lost in Rassilon.

● BESTIARY ●

This section pulls together various stat blocks concerning golems, consolidating them in a single volume for ease of use when designing or running adventures, and adds a new variants.

Note that any golem can be a Wild Card. Due to the huge expense and complexity involved in their creation, not to mention most being destroyed in the Uprising, they are extremely rare (and powerful) creatures.

ARTILLERY GOLEMS

Artillery golems are shaped like siege engines, typically either ballistas or trebuchets. Rather than moving on legs, they trundle around on four sturdy wheels.

Early models required separate loaders (often humans,

BROKEN GOLEMS

While there are still many intact golems, there are just as many that have suffered damage, either by the passage of time or the weapons of foes. Presented below are a number of ways in which golems can be tweaked to suit weaker or smaller parties.

* **Cracked and Weathered:** A general deterioration that leaves the golem slower and weaker than when it was in its prime. It suffers -1 Pace, and -1 Strength and Vigor die types.

* **Damaged Legs:** The golem might be missing an entire limb or have suffered partial loss. Both the Lamé and One Leg Hindrances can be applied to simulate this loss of mobility.

* **Missing Arm:** As above, except on of the golem's arms is affected. Give the golem the One Arm Hindrance.

* **Reduced Size:** Although the golem stands just as tall as when it was built, it is missing chunks of its body, reducing its total mass. GMs can lower the golem's Vigor and/or Size, both of which lower its Toughness.

but sometimes other golems), their advantage over regular artillery being mobility and the ability to select their own targets, make adjustments for wind, and so on. Later, improvements allowed in golem lore the constructs to reload themselves from available stockpiles of ammunition.

BALLISTA

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6, Shooting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Armor +2:** Made from hardwood.
- * **Artillery Piece:** Range: 25/50/100, Damage: 3d6, AP 3; 1 action to reload. Carries ten reloads.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Size +1:** Artillery golems are similar in size to regular ballistas, but include a sturdy frame.

TREBUCHET

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6, Shooting d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 15 (4)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Armor +4:** Made from reinforced hardwood.
- * **Artillery Piece:** Range: 24/48/96 (minimum range 12"), Damage: 3d6, AP 4, Heavy Weapon, fills a Small Burst Template; 2 actions to reload. Carries five reloads. Cannot fire during any round it moves.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack rolls due to the golem's size.
- * **Size +4:** These artillery golems are similar in size to small mammoths.
- * **Very Slow:** Trebuchet golems cannot run.

BONE GOLEM

Crafted from bones of sentient creatures, bone golems are usually humanoid in appearance. Unlike skeletons, they are a mishmash of bones bonded together through dark magic. Many are given bony spines to add to their already grotesque appearance. Only servants of Hela knew the secret of creating bone golems. While all other forms of golem creation are now lost, it is very probable that the vile lichs retain the ancient lore.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Bone.
- * **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fear:** Characters seeing it must make a Spirit check.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Frenzy:** Makes two Fighting attacks each round at -2.
- * **Size +2:** Bone golems are usually over 9' tall.

CHALK GOLEM

Constructed of chalk paste and dust around a humanoid wire frame, chalk golems were time-consuming to create. They were primarily used in a defensive roll, their ability to shed their upper layer into a dense cloud of chalk dust providing cover for escaping mages. More rarely, they served to cover the advance of other troops.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers, except those with a water trapping.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Death Cloud:** When a chalk golem is slain, it explodes in a choking cloud equivalent to a Medium Burst Template. All air-breathing creatures within the template must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken.
- * **Dust Cloud:** A chalk golem can generate a dense cloud of chalk dust as an action. The cloud fills a Medium Burst Template placed touching the golem. Except for chalk golems, all Notice rolls and attacks made into, out of, or through the cloud suffer a -4 penalty. The cloud lasts for 3 rounds, after which time it is absorbed back into the golem. A chalk golem may only have one cloud in play at any time.
- * **Easy to Track:** Characters receive +2 to Tracking rolls when tracking a chalk golem.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Size +1:** Chalk golems are 10' tall but weigh only 200 pounds.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4.
- * **Susceptibility (Water):** Chalk golems suffer +4 damage from spells with a water trapping. A chalk golem forced into water deeper than 1 foot begins to dissolve, suffering 2d6 damage per round.

COIN GOLEM

Coin golems take the form of a whirlwind of spinning coins. A pair of burning silver eyes peers through the morass of whirling treasure. They fill a Small Burst Template and act as a swarm. To date, coin golems have been found only in the lost city of Paraxus, though it is possible they might exist in other ruins.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: Rich (as body)

Special Abilities:

- * **Collapse:** A slain coin golem collapses into a pile of coins. Another coin golem which moves over the space in which it was slain gains half the deceased golem's Size, rounded down (half the coins are too scattered to have any effect). For instance, if a Size +3 golem is slain, the first coin golem to pass over its former space gains +1 Size.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Growth:** When the center of a coin golem moves over a space containing a pile of at least 100 coins, it increases its Size by +1. Each increase in Size also

increases its Toughness by one point and its Strength by one die type (after a d12 it gains a single point—d12+1, d12+2, and so on) as it draws the coins into its body. A golem which grows to Size +4 gains the Large monstrous ability and fills a Medium Burst Template. Once reaching Size +8 or higher it is considered Huge and fills a Large Burst Template.

- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Pummel:** Coin golems inflict hundreds of tiny pummeling attacks every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing Str+d4 damage to everyone within the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
- * **Swarm:** Parry +2. Because the golem is composed of hundreds or thousands of coins, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can swipe his hand through the coins to inflict damage equal to his Strength.

CORPSE GOLEM

The vilest golems are those crafted from the body parts of corpses. Depending on the creator, the golem may be stitched together from the parts of one or multiple species. Some corpse golems utilize animal parts alone, others in conjunction with those of the sentient races. Like bone golems, the method of their creation was known only to followers of Hela, and may still reside among the more powerful undead.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Treasure: None

Gear: Typically a long sword (Str+d8)

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Armor +1:** Hard skin and muscle.
- * **Berserk:** Corpse golems have the Berserk Edge.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fear:** Characters seeing it must make a Spirit check.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Slam:** Str.
- * **Slow:** Corpse golems roll a d4 for their running die.

DEFENDER GOLEM

Constructed to serve as bodyguards, defender golems were invaluable protectors for those with long lists of enemies. During the Golem Uprising, they proved dauntless opponents, able to swat away attacks and seek cover from missiles behind their huge shields.

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Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 12 (3)

Edges: Improved Block, Shieldwall

Treasure: None

Gear: Large Shield (+2 Parry)

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +3:** Metal body.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Size +1:** Stands over 8' high and weigh 300 pounds.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4.
- * **Take the Hit:** A defender golem may nominate one other creature as its charge. So long as the golem is adjacent to his charge, any melee attacks made against the charge are made against the golem's Parry.

EARTH GOLEM

Said to have been created by elven elementalists and druids, earth golems are constructed from earth, tufts of grass, and small rocks. Many have tufts of thick moss on their heads in mimicry of hair. Their hands are large, and often packed with stones. Although they usually adopt humanoid form, earth golems can alter their shape to resemble small mounds of earth, helping them blend into their surroundings.

It is widely believed that the elves still hold control over their golems, for their magic used different charms to those of men. These tireless guardians, it is said, watch over the elf forests, guarding them against intruders.

A vine golem, a distant cousin of the earth golem, is made of living vines and creepers interwoven around a flexible wicker frame. It loses both the Burrow and Immunity special abilities, but gains the ability to grapple one adjacent foe each round as a free action.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Armor +2:** Densely packed earth.
- * **Burrowing (8"):** Can only burrow through earth. They can make a surprise attack at +2 to attack and damage (+4 with a raise) by making an opposed Stealth vs Notice roll.
- * **Camouflage:** Earth golems have +4 to Stealth rolls in areas of exposed earth or when their form otherwise blends into the landscape.

* **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

* **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.

* **Immunity (Earth):** Immune to spells with an earth trapping.

* **Slam:** Str+d6.

FUNGUS GOLEM

Fungus golems resemble bloated humanoids with sickly white flesh and tiny black eyes. They have been encountered underground and, just once, accompanying fungals on their crop raids. It is unlikely the fungals created them, for they have displayed little understanding of complex magic. No records make mention of surface dwellers ever constructing them.

Why they never entered the Golem Uprising is another mystery. Some sages have speculated that their existence was unknown to whoever or whatever triggered the war. Others worry that their makers were simply more powerful than the other civilized races and that their creations could ignore the call to arms.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Armor +2:** Thick, fibrous fungus.
- * **Camouflage:** Fungus golems have +4 to Stealth rolls in areas of giant mushrooms or sizeable fungus growths.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4.
- * **Spores:** When a fungus golem is Shaken or wounded it releases a cloud of spores. All adjacent air-breathing creatures must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken. This is a non-physical attack.

GLASS GOLEM

The process of creating these unusual golems required sticking thousands of glass shard together to form a humanoid shape. Because of this complexity, and the cost of glass, glass golems were always created as man-sized or slightly smaller. Their arms end in stumps onto which long slivers of razor sharp glass are glued.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers, except those with a sound trapping.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Death Shatter:** A slain glass golem shatters into myriad razor sharp shards filling a Medium Burst Template. All creatures in the template suffer 2d6 damage. This is an area effect attack.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Slash:** Str+d8.
- * **Susceptibility (Blunt):** Rope golems take no damage from blunt weapons, such as clubs, hammers, and maces, as well as spells with blunt trappings.
- * **Susceptibility (Sound):** Glass golems suffer +4 damage from spells with a sound trapping.

ICE GOLEM

These unusual constructs are crafted from solid ice. Most often they are found serving as guardians in Thrym's temples, either having been created recently or, more likely, never having taken part in the Golem Uprising. Unlike ice statues, ice golems are capable of basic reasoning.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (3)/13 (3)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers, except those with a fire or blunt (such as earth) trapping.
- * **Armor +3:** Thick ice.
- * **Camouflage:** When standing against a rough ice wall, detecting an ice golem requires an opposed Notice roll at -4 against its Stealth.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Icy Fists:** Str+d6.
- * **Immunity (Cold):** Immune to background cold. Takes no damage from cold attacks.
- * **Immunity (Weapons):** +2 Toughness against slashing attacks and take no damage from piercing attacks. Blunt weapons inflict additional damage.
- * **Size +1:** Ice golems average 8' tall.
- * **Snow Walker:** Treats rough ice as normal terrain, smooth ice as rough ice, and every inch of movement in snow as 1.5" instead of 2".
- * **Weakness (Blunt):** Ice golems take double damage from blunt weapons, such as clubs and hammers.
- * **Weakness (Fire):** Suffers double damage from heat or fire.

INCINERATOR GOLEM

Many citizens believed the madness of golem creators reached a peak with the incinerator golem, for here was a construct capable of razing an entire village to the ground in minutes. It was a golem built for one thing—destruction. Its lower arms are dual-piston fire throwers capable of ejecting a stream of oil over a small flame. This in turn produces a powerful jet of fire. A heavy metal tank fitted onto its upper back gives the construct a hunched appearance. The tank holds enough oil for 40 shots (total).

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d8, Shooting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Treasure: None

Gear: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Steel plates.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Fire Thrower:** Range: Cone, Damage 2d10, ignores armor. Creatures caught in the template must make an Agility roll opposed by the golem's Shooting or be engulfed in flames.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Size +1:** Incinerator golems stand over 7' high and weigh 400 pounds.

METAL GOLEM

Typically crafted in humanoid form from iron or bronze, metal golems are among the most powerful golems. Some creators give their iron golems long swords instead of hands. These weapons cannot be disarmed.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12+1

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 15 (5)

Treasure: None

Gear: Great axe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, requires 2 hands)

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +5:** Magically hardened metal.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Size +2:** Metal golems stand over 10' high and weigh 6,000 pounds.
- * **Sweep:** Metal golems may attack all adjacent creatures at no penalty.

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ROPE/TWINE GOLEM

A rope or twine golem has a humanoid wicker core. Coils of thin rope or thick twine are then interwoven through and around the frame over and over, building up the creature's size and mass. In days of old, the nobles of the Magocracy employed rope golems to catch criminals without spilling blood.

A variant of this construct is the chain golem. It has Armor +3 (iron chains) and Size +3, giving it Toughness 13 (3). Its Strength is increased to d10, and its lash attack causes Str+d8 damage.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Armor +2:** Thickly coiled rope or twine.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Entangle:** A rope golem can unwind its coils in a Cone Template. This requires a Strength roll as an action. It otherwise acts like the *entangle* spell.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Immunity (Blunt):** Rope golems take no damage from blunt weapons, such as clubs, hammers, and maces, as well as spells with blunt trappings.
- * **Lash:** Str+d4, Reach 2. If it uses a strand to grapple, it gains a +2 bonus. If a rope golem does not move, it can attack all adjacent creatures simultaneously. Make a single Fighting roll and compare it to the Parry of all adjacent enemies. Roll damage separately.
- * **Size +1:** Rope golems stand 7' tall but weigh over 300 pounds.

SOAP GOLEM

Many once joked that soap golems were created by wizards with an obsession for cleanliness. A crudely carved humanoid form made of layered soap (created from lye and ash), soap golems slide rapidly on their slippery feet. In battle, they can spray a thin layer of slippery suds, hampering the movement of those moving across the suds and causing the unwary to slip.

The mud golem is a variant of this construct. It is formed of a baked clay core onto which soft, slippery mud is molded and magically held in place.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-caus-

ing powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers except for water trapping spells.

- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Fleet-Footed:** Soap golems roll a d10 when running.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4. If the attack roll is a raise, the golem does not inflict an additional 1d6 damage. Instead, the target is covered in soap. Until he spends an action scraping it off, all physical trait and skill rolls suffer a -2 penalty.
- * **Slippery:** Grapple rolls against a soap golem suffer a -2 penalty.
- * **Soap Spray:** A soap golem can spray slippery soap in a Cone Template as an action. The template remains in play for 3 rounds. Movement through the template counts as difficult ground. Any character who runs and rolls a 1 automatically slips and falls prone in the first square of his movement under the template.
- * **Susceptibility (Water):** Soap golems suffer +4 damage from spells with a water trapping.

SPELL GOLEM

Spell golems are mentioned in several archaic texts, but whether any were actually created is open to debate. Some claim they were the fanciful dreams of deranged mages, while other argue they were used to provide wizards with yet more power. By casting a spell himself and ordering his golem to do the same, a wizard could effectively double his magical firepower.

At their core is a humanoid form. Most were made of wicker, but wood and metal were sometimes said to be employed. The inner layers of a spell golem comprised long strips of parchment, wetted and glued around the frame like bandages. On the topmost layer were inscribed potent spells. Unlike regular scrolls, these ones required the user to have a basic understanding of magic in order to draw out the magical power. Scroll golems activate the magic simply by speaking the ancient words of power on a scroll, using Spellcasting as their arcane skill.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers, except those with a fire or water trapping.
- * **Scrolls:** A typical scroll golem has 1d6+1 spells left on its wrapping, each containing a spell chosen by the

GM. Each spell is one-use, but they may carry duplicates. Each time a spell golem is Shaken, one of its remaining spells, chosen at random, is destroyed. They suffer no penalties for maintaining multiple spells.

- * **Susceptibility (Fire and Water):** Spell golems suffer +4 damage from spells with fire or water trappings.

STEELWOOD GOLEM

While many of the Anari Empire's grand plans for steelwood bark never came to fruition, one of the emperors did manage to secretly construct a small army of wood golems shaped like Anari shock infantry and coated in a veneer of steelwood. The army was never activated, and thus played no part in the Golem Uprising. After the devastation wrought on Imperial City by the Blizzard War, the location of the army was lost.

Steelwood golems are the same size and shape as humans, and are carved to resemble warriors.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Swimming d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (4)

Gear: Long sword (Str+d8), steelwood medium shield (+1 Parry; +3 Armor vs. ranged attacks)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +4:** Solid wood coated in steelwood.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4.

STONE GOLEM

Stone golems are the traditional animated statue. As with most golems, they are shaped in the form of warriors and serve as guardians.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (4)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +4:** Magically hardened stone.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Size +1:** Stone golems stand over 8' high.
- * **Stone Fists:** Str+d6.

STRAW GOLEM

Straw golems were originally created as animated scarecrows, not only watching over fields but actively chasing away birds and other crop thieves. In some lands they were used as sentries, covertly spying on intruders while appearing to be nothing more than straw manikins. Those still remaining are often home to a Small Burst Template (Toughness 5) swarm of vermin, such as mice or rats, living in their straw bodies.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Scythe (Str+d8, -1 Parry, 2 hands)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Susceptibility (Air):** Straw golems suffer +4 damage from spells with an air trapping.
- * **Swarm:** A straw golem can release its swarm as a free action. The swarm fights alongside its host and will not attack it, even if it enters the swarm's template. If the golem is slain before the swarm is released, the swarm scatters on the host's demise.
- * **Weakness (Fire):** Straw golems suffer double damage from fire and heat spells.

WALL GOLEM

Created by the Anari for use in warfare, the wall golems resembles a 3 yard wide, 1 yard high, 1 foot thick section of stone wall. It lumbers forward on four thick legs, squatting down once it reaches its destination. Its primary use was as a mobile shield for archers. A secondary function was the use of multiple wall golems to construct a redoubt, though there is no evidence such a tactic was ever used in battle. Few of these bizarre constructs remain. When they are employed, they provide a formidable barrier to attackers.

A cheaper version, the wood wall golem, was little more than several layers of planks bestowed with a limited intellect. It has Armor +3, Toughness 10 (3). A more expensive and complex version of the wall golem was given arms. It has Fighting d8, Parry 6, inflicts Str+d4 damage, and has the First Strike Edge.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 12 (5)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +5:** Solid stone.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.

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- * **Cover:** The wall golem can be used for Cover. It grants its Armor rating protection.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Shove:** Any creature caught in the golem's path must make an opposed Strength roll. With success, the progress of the wall is stopped. Otherwise, the victim is moved backward.

WAX GOLEM

Mages experimented with all manner of golem forms before the Golem Uprising. One of the most unusual was the wax golem. Humanoid in shape, its outer layer appears to be formed of molten wax which has hardened into ridges and droplets. Skalds mockingly claim that wax golems were invented as mobile candelabras and have tapers instead of claws. While such tales might be true, such a specimen has never been encountered.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Hardened by Cold:** Immune to cold (but not coldfire or ice). Damage from cold attacks is rolled as normal. Each "wound" inflicted by such attacks reduces the golem's Pace and running die roll by one, but gives it one point of Armor (max. +6). In cold temperatures, a wax golem gains Armor equal to the Vigor modifier to resist the cold, but loses equal Pace. A wax golem whose Pace drops to zero freezes solid—it can take no actions and has Parry 2. For each hour in temperatures above freezing, the golem recovers one point of Pace and loses one point of Armor.
- * **Size +2:** Wax golems are the same size as humans, but are made of dense wax.
- * **Slam:** Str.
- * **Weakness (Fire):** Takes double damage from cold-fire, fire, or heat.

WEB GOLEM

Much like the rope golem, the web golem has a wicker frame at its core. Miles of sticky spider web is then woven through and over its body to create the humanoid form. Many mages suspect that *beast friend* spells were used to force spiders into spinning the webs, for to weave the threads by hand would be a daunting task.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +2 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Armor +2:** Dense webs.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Size +1:** Web golems stand 9' tall but weigh only 300 pounds.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4.
- * **Sticky:** If an attacker scores a natural 1 on his Fighting die, regardless of Wild Die, his weapon becomes stuck to the golem. A success on the Wild Die means it becomes stuck after inflicting damage. Freeing the weapon requires a Strength roll as an action.
- * **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from fire, but not from heat.
- * **Wall Walker:** A web golem can move along any vertical or inverted surface. It moves its full Pace and can run. It need only make a Climbing roll in the most adverse circumstances.
- * **Web:** The golem can spray a sticky mass of webs in a Cone Template. This requires a Spirit roll as an action. It otherwise acts like the *entangle* spell.

WOOD GOLEM

Wood golems are magically animated wooden statues. Many were carved carrying weapons. Since these weapons are part of the golem, they cannot be disarmed. Fortunately for those who encounter rogue wood golems, these weapons are less powerful than metal versions. They are used to club victims rather than slice them apart.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Gear: Wooden long sword (Str+d6); any weapon be substituted, but it always inflicts one die less damage than a metal equivalent

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor +2:** Solid wood.
- * **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from Called Shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on Trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- * **Slam:** Str+d4.
- * **Susceptibility (Fire):** Takes +4 damage from fire, but not from heat.

ICE GOBLINS



From the Hearthlands to the High Winterlands, the snow shrouded forests and ice covered mountains are home to countless ice goblins. Often dismissed as lesser foes due to their size and cowardly nature, many a hero has met his death on the spear of a snarling, blue-skinned goblin. This chapter explores many aspects of goblin society.

● ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES ●

The creation myth as told by goblin shamans is poetic and widely regarded as fanciful. During the God War, Thrym summoned or spawned (accounts vary) many Hellfrost dragons to fight by his side, for in that distant time the gods were united in their struggle against their implacable foes. Terrifying and magnificent though these dragons were, for their size and ferocity far exceeded any dragon ever known in the mortal realm, they were not immortal. As each hissing droplet of frigid dragon blood fell, a new creature sprang forth—an ice goblin. This first race of goblins dwelt only in Thrym's icy realm, having no knowledge of the mortal realm. Only when their god set his eyes on conquering the world of mortals did he send the goblins to the world of mortals, for they were a great host.

Although widely dismissed by sages and skalds, the tale does hold some alluring snippets that cannot be easily cast aside. The folklore of the frost dwarves, taiga elves, and engros, races whose domains once bordered the land of ice and snow that always existed at the top of the world, made no mention of ice goblins. It could be that the tribes lived much further north, deep in the arctic, but their natural winter protection is not sufficient to endure such terrible climes for long, and food is scarce. Had goblins been present anywhere, it would have been in the sub-arctic, and that would have brought them into conflict with the civilized races much earlier. That said, the few oral traditions dating back to the earliest years

of the Blizzard War do report armies of goblins howling down from the north.

Some scholars and sages argue that ice goblins are distantly related to orcs. Though they share few physical features, their language is a dialect of Orcish. Perhaps they were a slave race that gained independence, or, more plausibly, slipped away from the grip of orc dominion after the embarrassing defeat on the Hellfrost armies in the Blizzard War. Even this theory has flaws—except for snow orcs, a rare breed, orcs lack even the basic cold weather survival abilities of goblins. Furthermore, goblins have no known means of reproduction, so how did the orcs manage to breed them?

Is it really possible that ice goblins are a race sent from the Thrym's realm? They are certainly creatures of flesh and blood, but that alone proves nothing—when the gods' heralds appear they too are clad in mortal form. Such an act would constitute a major breach of the Compact, and not even the most benevolent and least judgmental of deities could argue unleashing a new race into the world was an accident.

To date, there is little evidence the gods have learned the truth, though perhaps Kenaz and Sigel stumbled across it. Thrym's desire to avoid repercussions would surely warrant killing or kidnapping two gods.

● ANATOMY ●

It is more likely that at some point in their past goblins were a race of nocturnal, feral predators, though one should think of wolves rather than lions when using the term. As one will see below, they are perfectly adapted to hunting in wintry climes, especially at night.

PHYSIOLOGY

Ice goblins are a small race, standing no taller than four feet. Most are a good few inches shorter. The aver-

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age member of the species weighs around 85 pounds. Although lacking body mass, their muscles are well developed, giving them a strength akin to an average adult human.

An ice goblin's face bears more than a passing resemblance to that of a bat. Their ears are large, tapered, and slope backward. Despite being large in comparison to the head, there is little evidence goblins possess acute hearing. It is more likely their greater size serves to help regulate body heat or aid in non-verbal communication.

The mouth and nose are extended away from the face, giving the appearance of a muzzle. Strong muscles and arching jaw hinges allow goblins to open their mouth to roughly three times that of a human. Yellow fangs ring the front of the mouth, but there are no molars for chewing. A broad, flat, triangular nose begins immediately above the upper lip.

Goblins' eyes are small and dark. The irises appear milky white when a light is shone on them, creating the impression of pinpoints of light in otherwise featureless orbital sockets. The eyes have developed to suit the species' subterranean lifestyle, and vision extends into the infrared spectrum. Goblins view the world in black and white, with hotter objects appearing lighter than colder ones. To an ice goblin, ice appears almost black. Although capable of detecting heat, their visual sense provides no other benefit in darkness.

Pronounced brow ridges and heavy eyebrows protect them from the harsh glare of the sun, allowing ice goblins to operate in daylight unimpaired.

An ice goblin's skin is blue. Unlike most other sentient races, ice goblins have no sweat glands. Heat is regulated primarily by the ears, though opening the mouth appears to play a part in ensuring the creatures do not overheat.

Hair is blue-white. The crown of the head is bald, the hair forming a thin ring at the front to create eyebrows, and thickening as it grows back. They are incapable of growing beards, but heavy sideburns follow the line of the lower jaw. Hair grows along the arms from the elbow down to the knuckles, and is far more pronounced than on human arms. Similarly, thick leg hair extends from knee to the start of the toes.

Ice goblins can function in temperatures as low as -7 F (-21 C) without suffering any ill effects, a distinct advantage over most other sentient races. Their sparse hair cannot account for this natural winter protection, and body fat is a rarity given their sparse diet. Much anecdotal evidence exists to suggest their core body temperature is simply lower than that of other races, making them less susceptible to the cold. Unlike frost dwarves and taiga elves, though, ice goblins suffer no problems in warm climates, a factor which has enabled them to spread to operate in the Hearthlands, even at the height of a warm summer.

Goblins have four fingers on each hand. The outer fingers are shorter than the middle pair, and both are capable of acting as opposable thumbs. Despite this peculiar trait, goblins as a race show no greater ability for ambidexterity. The central fingers are long, being twice

as long as the hand. Their hands are ideal for grasping, and goblins do possess an innate, though not remarkable, ability to climb. While they are often said to have claws, goblin fingers actually end in thick, black nails.

The feet are triangular in appearance and relatively large, making them ideal for walking in snow. Again, there are four toes, each tipped with a hard nail. Whereas the fingers are elongated, the toes are short and stubby. In temperatures they find comfortable they rarely don footwear, even when crossing ice and snow.

LIFE CYCLE

The life cycle of goblins is a total mystery, for they lack any sex organs. Similarly, they have no defined genders. No adventurer has ever reported encountering a female goblin or a goblin child.

Since goblins do not reproduce, they cannot rebuild their numbers in the manner of orcs. Once a tribe or clan suffers casualties, its strength will remain depleted until it can recruit new members. Alas, this does not mean that goblins are a finite force which can be totally eradicated. Every year, new waves of ice goblins emerge from the Hellfrost, ready to serve Thrym to the death.

Some Hearth Knights have put forward the idea that ice goblins actually have three genders. Those commonly countered are neutral. Somewhere in the Hellfrost exist breeding males and females, kings and queens of the race. Either too rare or too bloated to risk travel, they remain in the frigid realm, continually spawning new members of the vile race. The hypothesis is certainly a talking point, but without proof it remains just a theory.

PSYCHOLOGY

The overriding psychological trait in ice goblins is cowardice. It is this deep-rooted trait that has enabled orcs and frost giants to bully them into submission and assume the role of chieftains. However, while an individual goblin is a timid creature, goblins grow more brazen as their numbers increase.

Even with a bodyguard unit to protect him, an orc chieftain, or even a frost giant, who has usurped power over ice goblins would quickly find himself swarmed by angry goblins were it not for the goblins' fear of retribution. Order within a tribe is maintained not by barking orders or making threats, but by public displays of brutality as a demonstration of what fate awaits any who get ideas above their station. Goblins may secretly plot and plan against their masters, but none wishes to be the first to take any action.

In order to protect their own skins, goblins tend to fawn and grovel in front of powerful figures, swearing loyalty and ratting out each others' plot as a demonstration of their fealty. This enforced submission has made them a vindictive lot, eager to vent their frustration on weaker opponents when the opportunity arises. Given half a chance, and assuming victory is in its favor, a goblin will stab you in the back without a moment's hesitation.

● SOCIAL STRUCTURE ●

Goblins operate in tribes of varying size. Though humans often refer to small gatherings as clans, goblins have no familial ties. Regardless of size, a tribe contains no more than a handful of shamans. The bulk is made up of warriors.

CHIEFTAINS

Goblins do not produce individual leaders from their own kind. All chieftains within a tribe are likely to be orcs or frost giants, though it is possible a creature of another race could exert enough dominance to enforce his position as a chieftain. Chieftains come in two types—appointees and usurpers.

Appointees are enforced on a clan or tribe when it voluntarily makes a pact to serve a more powerful race. While goblins know any leader will abuse them mercilessly, they still consider it better for their long-term survival to have the backing of an orc tribe or frost giant clan than to go it alone.

Usurpers, on the other hand, are outsiders who take control of a clan or tribe by force. Such actions generally require several executions, often of favored shamans, as well as a show of general strength through the would-be leader's own troops. While appointees are tolerated as a necessary evil, even truly honored on occasion, usurpers are universally hated. Unfortunately, unless the usurper is stupid or displays continued overt weakness, it is unlikely his minions will ever dare to rise up against him.

Clerics and Chosen of Thrym present a special case. Even if usurpers, they are treated with respect. In such cases, the tribe convinces itself it is somehow special, having been singled out for special leadership.

SHAMANS

Only the smallest tribes are directly ruled by a shaman, and then only because they have escaped the notice of superior races. Shamans are seen more as advisors than leaders, giving suggestions rather than direct orders.

In tribes ruled by another race, the most common scenario, shamans are appointed to form a council of advisors. Most times appointments are made by the new leader as he sees fit. Former popular shamans are removed in favor of stooges whose loyalty is to the chieftain first, not the old order. Such councilors are often little more than figureheads, intended to give the goblins a feeling of importance and having a say in the running of the tribe.

Shamans who fail the chieftain are quickly and permanently removed from the council in a public display of his anger. Regular executions not only keep everyone on their toes and loyal, but create vacancies. For shamans not on the council, the possibility of a quick promotion is often enough to ensure they remain loyal.

SPELLCASTERS

Goblins who honor Thrym are more correctly known as “true shamans.” Other spellcasters are considered subservient, and form their own social caste. Within this caste, shamans of one of Thrym's aspects rank highest, with *hrimwisards* a close second. Clerics of Dargar come next, with those who honor one of Dargar's aspects at the very bottom of the rung. A spellcaster who dares to master a different form of magic or worship a different god has a very short life expectancy in the tribe.

Warriors respect them for their supernatural powers, but true shamans give them little attention, seeing them as nothing but useful oddities. While a chieftain might appoint one to be an advisor, goblins consider this a travesty and an insult to Thrym—not that they'd ever dare bring this to the chieftain's attention, of course. In goblin-only tribes, these other spellcasters are never given any powers of governance.

WARRIORS

Warriors are a mix of hunters and soldiers. They serve to protect and feed the tribe. Unlike orcs, who establish a pecking order within their ranks, ice goblin warriors have no such desire. Their natural cowardice prevents one from sticking his head above the crowd. Wolf riders are simply another form of warrior, different by dint of their training rather than anything else.

Rippers, known to goblins as *gbarâsh* (“wind lost”), are a sub-caste of warriors. Considered insane, yet not without their uses, rippers are kept secluded from the rest of the tribe to prevent them unleashing their furious assaults on their comrades. Feeding the howling lunatics is a responsibility given to those out of favor with the shamans. Rippers comprise 5-10% of the warriors.

● CULTURE ●

While other races consider goblins naught but vicious thugs to be exterminated on sight, they are a sentient race, and do possess a culture. This section explores some of the goblins' cultural tendencies.

HABITAT

Though quite adept at working with ice blocks, goblins have no love for building forts or houses. While it is very likely they outnumber nearby sentient races, goblins' innate cowardice and fear of retribution requires they pick a habitat that can be easily defended. Given their subterranean nature, caves are the preferred dwellings, but any defensible terrain will do. Since most goblin lairs are underground, this section focuses on caves.

Caves with multiple entrances are greatly favored. While this would seem to present an enemy with multiple points of entry, all but the main entrance is con-

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cealed behind a thin veneer of ice. These are used only as escape routes in the event of an invasion, and misuse of them is punishable by death. Thus, by tracking a goblin patrol back to its lair, invaders are deliberately led to the defended entrance.

As a rule, chieftains and shamans make their home in the center of a lair, ensuring easy access to the escape tunnels. As the old saying goes, only a man seeking death backs into a corner when he has other options. Nearby, if not adjacent, will be the ruler's public chamber, from where he issues decrees. Security is always high here, with fanatical goblins or, better still, orcs ensuring anyone who wants to see the chieftain without an invitation will pay for his trespass in blood.

Also in this region is the temple and treasury. Goblins do not build armories—warriors are expected to keep their weapons to hand at all times, though wielding them into the temple or audience chamber is a sure-fire way to guarantee a slow, agonizing death. The tribe's shamans inhabit small caves close to the temple.

Beyond this are the many lairs of the warriors. Direct routes from the main entrance typically house as much as 60% of a tribe's martial strength. The remainder are spread around close to the escape tunnels just in case they are used by the enemy.

Though considered a Hellfrost race, goblins are not immune to bitterly cold temperatures. In such conditions, lairs are lined with furs and stolen blankets. When even these are not enough to warm their bones, goblins light fires. Air-dried wolf dung is readily available, and wood is often plentiful unless above the treeline. Goblins do not use torches for lighting, and piles of snow are kept near every fire, enabling it to be quickly extinguished in the event of attack.

Note that shamans who honor Thrym are forbidden from both lighting and warming themselves by fires. While warriors enjoy thawing their bones, shamans must suffer for their faith. Nothing prevents them donning furs or winter clothing, of course.

Except for the chieftain's chambers, goblin lairs are notoriously spartan. They do not appreciate art, lack an understanding of home comforts (such as beds and rugs), and see tables and chairs as both alien and a waste of good firewood. Any wealth a chieftain displays, whether it is a plundered tapestry or table, or a gold necklace, hangs on display purely to demonstrate his power and superiority over the rest of the tribe. Its intrinsic value is meaningless, as goblins have few cares or wants beside serving Thrym and filling their stomachs.

DIET

Goblins neither grow nor herd. If they want to eat, they must hunt or forage. While they much prefer the taste of flesh, their lack of taste buds means that almost any substance is edible. There are unconfirmed reports of them eating leather and woolen clothing, though these may be exaggerations—even goblins need calories to survive.

Flesh may be preferred, but it takes a lot of meat to

feed a tribe. Slaughtering every animal in the vicinity may prove a short-term solution, but a single year of excessive hunting means many years of meager rations. Thus, meat is more rare than they'd like, and stored for lean years, when it is rationed out. Meat rations make good rewards, and it is yet another tool in the chieftain's arsenal for ensuring loyalty. Unfortunately for adventurers, it does mean that prisoners tend to end up as a banquet rather than be ransomed back for a reward. Most days, a goblin must make do with a nugget of flesh, a few berries or roots, and a sliver of fungus or blob of lichen. In tribes that keep wolves, whether as mounts or guard dogs, meat is in even shorter supply.

Heating food is seen as a waste of time and precious resources. Lacking even basic utensils and vessels, meals are eaten with one's hands. Resting easily controls the shortage of food.

Fortunately, goblins can cope quite well on reduced rations, at least for a short while. When not on active service, goblins enter a state of semi-hibernation. Much of the body shuts down, conserving vital energy. In many instances the motionless state is accompanied by a low droning, though whether this is a form of prayer meditation or simply their natural breathing has yet to be determined.

Goblins can awaken from this state in the blink of an eye, with no lethargy, and remain fully aware of their surroundings while relaxed. Many an adventurer has perished after mistaken this state for sleep. In game terms, goblins in this state are considered inactive sentries. Its only downside is that the goblins are more susceptible to the cold, requiring them to don furs in cold temperatures (they temporarily lose the Warm Blooded ability).

CLOTHING

As noted elsewhere, goblins can survive freezing temperatures with no ill effects. When the temperature drops below their comfort level, they don scraps of fur, blankets, or stolen clothing. Nakedness is not an affront to goblin modesty—they have none.

Though they have no real need for clothes, this does not preclude them wearing scraps scavenged from corpses (goblins have yet to master even rudimentary sewing). Some warriors wear a scrap for every kill they have earned, the clothing becoming a sort of trophy. Likewise, goblins do not think races who wear clothes all the time are in anyway odd or perverse. To be honest, their tiny brains rarely dwell on matters beyond obedience, eating, and surviving.

LAW AND ORDER

Within a tribe, the chieftain or ruling shaman's word is absolute law. He may make and change laws as he sees fit, with only one restriction—he may not alter the religious laws of Thrym. Such an act would cause an immediate rebellion, for while cowardly and stupid, goblins are fanatically religious.

Crime, as civilized races know it, is quite rare. Goblins own few possessions, and a lack of honor makes it hard to slander to a goblin. When a minor grievance arises, the typical result is a fight. Whoever wins is judged to have been in the right.

Rulers interfere only when the safety of a lair is threatened by a goblin's actions, one of his orders is disobeyed (though what constitutes disobedience is open to much variation and interpretation), a goblin dares to steal food or treasure from the central supplies, or a religious crime is committed. Accusations of crimes mean very little to rulers—unless a goblin is caught in the act or with plundered goods on his possession the chances of him being dragged before the ruler are slim.

Goblins accused of a serious crime receive a very swift trial. Evidence is presented to the chieftain or shaman council, with the defendant having no opportunity to plead his case—mitigating circumstances mean nothing to goblins. Once judgment is passed, it is carried out instantly. Goblins know only one penalty for serious crimes—death. While it matters little to the accused, some offences may warrant a swift execution. Most, though, are met with a very painful and very public death.

HEALTHCARE

Goblin healthcare is as pragmatic as it is barbarous. Coming from the harsh conditions of the Hellfrost, with no knowledge of healing magic, and being largely ignorant of herbal cures, goblins have learned that wasting resources on the sick and badly injured weakens, and thus threatens the survival of, the entire tribe.

Injured goblins are crudely evaluated by their superiors if outside the lair, and a shaman if inside. If the wound is the sort that will heal quickly, the goblin is allowed to stay in the tribe. As soon as he is fit, he is returned to active duty. Otherwise (and if a minor wound proves resistant to natural healing), his days are ended with a quick blow to the heart.

Those who succumb to illness can expect little mercy. Lest whatever disease spread throughout the rest of the tribe, the goblin is quickly killed and his corpse and few possessions burned to prevent further contamination. If the disease is known to be particular contagious, all those who share his living quarters will suffer the same fate. That chamber may then be walled off with ice blocks, becoming an accursed place in the eyes of the tribe. In rare cases, the entire cave system will be abandoned.

LANGUAGE

The belief that Thrym created goblins is given strength by the fact they do not possess their own language. Unfortunately, the argument for this divine creation then falls flat on its face. Were goblins created to live in the Hellfrost and serve Thrym (either as slaves or as lesser warriors bulking out his mortal armies), then not only would they be better physically equipped to cope with the frigid temperature, but they would also more likely

speak Frosttongue. Instead, their language is a dialect of Orcish.

This opens up the possibility that ice goblins and orcs actually share common ancestry, though their separation into two different species must have occurred many ages ago. Both races refute such spurious claims, of course—goblins believe they are the children of dragon blood, while orcs consider goblins pitiful.

The goblin dialect is different to the orc tongue, but in the same way as Midmarker Saxa is different to Sutm-marker Saxa. Both share the same syntax and much of the grammar, but there are unique words and grammatical inconsistencies. Still, there are enough similarities that a non-goblin who speaks Orcish can deduce the meaning, though it might take a few moments.

NAMES

Human cultures, especially the Saxa, use nicknames to help differentiate individuals. Among goblins, every name is a nickname. These are based on a physical characteristic, foible, mannerism, and such like.

Hence, one might find Padfoot (very stealthy), Big-Nose, Black-Teeth, Fear-Wolf (afraid of wolves), Gut-Fingers (the goblin equivalent of calling someone butter-fingers, indicating they are clumsy), or River-Nose (constantly streaming nose). Only rarely is a name awarded for some noteworthy deed—making a goblin warrior stand out from the crowd risks creating a cult of personality around him.

Shamans add titles to set themselves above the common warriors. In a tribe devoid of external leadership, these titles are self-aggrandizing, designed to inspire awe or loyalty in the warriors. Thus, one may find “Thrym-Blessed,” “Iron-Hand,” or “the Wise.” When an orc or frost giant assumes control of the tribe, these titles are hastily changed to something that clearly displays he knows his lowly station. Hence, titles such as “the Loyal,” “the Devout,” and “the Obedient Servant” are employed.

NUMBERS

Most humanoid races, whether civilized or barbarous, have ten fingers, and count in decimal. Possessed of 16 digits, and generally disdaining footwear, goblins make use of all their digits when counting.

Since goblins have a total of 16 digits, their numbering system is hexadecimal in nature. The numbers one through 15 are single digits, each a unique sound preceding the goblin word for “finger.” Note that for the purposes of counting, toes are treated as fingers. For instance, the number 10 is simply spoken as “ten fingers.” On reaching 16, a new number word is added, “body.” The largest number with a specific name is 256, known as a “tribe.” Beyond this, goblins descend into vague terms, such as “more than us” and “many tribes.”

Most shamans are quite conversant in decimal counting, as favored by orcs and frost giants, as well as the civilized races.

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OTHER LEGENDS

Though goblins believe they were created through the spilled blood of Hellfrost dragons, there are other, more obscure, legends, stories, and fallacies concerning their origin.

During the Blizzard War, a belief arose that when a frost giant was slain by anything other than fire, its bones immediately transformed into ice goblins. Though the belief is still shared in some remote Winterlands communities, more likely it was born because a host of ice goblins was never far behind a frost giant.

Another legend tells that Thrym sought to create for himself an intelligent race, in the manner of Ertha's dwarves and Eostre's elves. Thrym gifted them with the ability to withstand a certain degree of cold (having no desire at the time to create a race immune to his fury). Dargar gave them ferociousness, and Niht blessed them with the ability to see in darkness. Unfortunately, Thrym's call was also answered by Eira, who made them cowards, and the Unknowable One, who caused them to be smaller than even dwarves. Angered at the final result, Thrym cast his failed race to the mortal realm in a fit of rage.

In one story they are the creation of an evil hrimwisard, though more recent versions of this myth put the blame firmly on frostborn. The latter is, of course, a gross injustice, for there were no frostborn in existence when the first ice goblins made their presence felt.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

The great majority of goblins are illiterate, and it is fair to say goblins lack a true written language. In order that patrols might leave messages for each other, goblins have developed a series of simple to draw glyphs. The meanings of these are basic, used to convey only the most rudimentary information (such as "danger" or "good hunting"), but they are effective. Tribes living in vicinity to each other tend to use the same glyphs, but as one travels further afield, so the marks change form. Often, the marks are based on locale conditions.

For instance, tribes in the Jotunvalk Mountain use an elongated arrow to mark "danger," the arrowhead pointing in the direction of the source. Those in the western Icebarrier Mountains, however, use a circle with an off-center dot in the center to mark danger and the direction. In the former case, their major enemies are taiga elves armed with bows, while in the latter the Shield Knights and their roving patrols are the greatest threat.

Most shamans have mastered written Frosttongue or Orcish, depending on the nature of the tribe's chieftain or nearest allies. Those who learn other languages *might* understand the written form, but this is not guaranteed. Even with their enhanced intelligence, their scripts are

akin to those of a young human child, lacking in true understanding of syntax and grammar, but understandable nonetheless.

Most times, messages to chieftains or between tribes are conveyed verbally. When reporting to a chieftain or non-goblin race, it often considered wise to send a lesser goblin rather than a shaman to appear in person, just in case the ruler decides to kill the messenger.

CALENDAR

Though they have no desire to farm or herd, the changing of the seasons remains as vital to goblins as it does civilized races. The types of food available to foraging and hunting parties, the activities of enemies, and the ambient temperature changes with the seasons—survival requires not only understanding these factors, but also being able to plan ahead for their eventuality.

Months mean little to goblins, who focus purely on the four seasons. "Awakening" equates to spring. It refers not to the thawing of winter snow, but to the fact that civilized races come out of their self-imposed winter seclusion. "Conflict" covers the summer months, for it is during this goblins and other races are most likely to come into conflict. "Hunting" refers to fall, when animals have gained weight in preparation for winter and carry the most fat on their bones. Tribes are active in the pursuit of stocking up their larders during this time. Winter is known as "Raiding." With many settlements isolated by snow, goblins grow bolder in the knowledge their enemies will not be able to call upon reinforcements. It is also the time when tribes beholden to frost giants are sent forth to cause mayhem and mischief.

Goblins watch the moon's phases carefully, though not for any superstitious reasons. Deorcmonan is an ideal time for them to hunt, while Fulmonan lessens their advantage when faced with armed enemies.

Days of the week mean little, and goblins rarely track them. While the civilized races record months based on a set number of days, the seasons do not run to clockwork precision. Watching the clouds, sniffing the air, and studying the animals and plants are far better indicators of when the seasons are about to change.

Despite being a subterranean race, shamans pay close attention to the sun. Its height in the sky is vital to calculating the time of Thrym's two high holy days—Death of Heat Day and Fimbulvintr Day—and goblins have no wish to call down the winter god's wrath by celebrating too early or too late.

TRADE AND TRIBUTE

Goblins produce nothing in abundance, and thus have nothing worth trading. Tribes may occasionally barter the use of warriors for vital provisions, but such activities are undertaken with extreme reluctance—anyone willing to hire goblins is sure to mistreat them or use them as expendable troops, and the inevitable heavy losses weaken the tribe. A strong tribe may try to extort

tribute from a small settlement near its lair in order to secure a steady supply, but unless the ruler is very confident in his warriors' abilities and his demands are not too excessive, such action poses as much risk as reward. In most instances, tribes get what they need by raiding small caravans, attacking isolated steads, and bullying weaker goblin tribes.

More often than not the tribe is forced to pay tribute. Tribes with a non-goblin ruler are expected to donate everything they plunder to the chieftain's treasury, though a wise ruler always rewards his followers with minor trinkets. Fortunately, goblins have no appreciation of the value of items, and a few silver coins is more than enough to earn their loyalty.

Other tribes may be independent in name, but many retain their freedom only so long as they continue to pay tribute to some external force. Both orcs and frost giants prefer this arrangement—it means not having to sit in judgment over the tribe, and having the goblins take all the risks spares their warriors for more important tasks.

WARFARE

Warriors who boast of having no fear of ice goblins are generally considered fools by their peers. Those who have faced them in battle in snow-covered forests, in ice-laden hills, or in their dark tunnels have learned to give the race begrudging respect.

Goblins may lack complex tactics and show poor martial skills, but only an idiot underestimates their capacity for sneakiness or the sheer weight of numbers a tribe can bring to bear when roused. Even the greatest of warriors cannot hope to hold out for long when surrounded by a host of snarling goblins.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Goblins favor short spears and bows, weapons simple to produce by a race that has not mastered metallurgy, and easily mastered by warriors. More importantly, perhaps, they are the common weapons of their enemies, and thus acquiring replacements is relatively easy.

Unlike human spears, which tend to have leaf-shaped heads, goblin spears have a squared, tapering metal tip, making them better suited to throwing. These tips are easily produced by heating an existing spear and battering it into shape with rocks—a crude but effective method of weaponsmithing.

Rather than being constructed in a single piece, bows are constructed from thin strips of wood or animal bone glued together, a method not unlike that used by taiga elves and Finnar. It is possible that goblins only adopted the bow after encountering these races, learning the art of the bowyer by studying captured weapons. Arrows are crudely manufactured and many are tipped not with steel but with flint.

Despite having the same strength a humans and being

a race of cowards, goblins disdain armor. While it is apparent they lack the skill to produce even passable leather armor, there is no obvious reason from them not looting armor from victims and modifying it to fit. Perhaps, as some sages suggest, they are forbidden from wearing armor by the superior orcs and giants, thus reducing the likelihood goblins will ever rise up against them. Maybe the reluctance to don armor is a throwback to their early days as feral pack hunters, when traveling light was a priority. Warriors who have faced them in battle are more of the opinion that armor is simply considered too noisy and too restrictive for a race that favors stealth.

ORGANIZATION

Although capable of employing strategy and tactics, no evidence of goblin commanders has been unearthed in a tribe without a chieftain. Even shamans, who appear to lead, have little true leadership talent. Rather, much like ants and bees, goblins appear to have an unspoken common bond that serves to generate basic unit cohesion. In tribes governed by a shaman, the warriors are organized as best suits the mission parameters.

In tribes led by chieftains, a more formal order is usually applied to the warriors. Typically, the smallest formation has around ten members and is led by a goblin warrior. These leaders are both respected and reviled by their underlings. They are respected because they have been appointed by the chieftain, and any act of mutiny reflects poorly on their chieftain. Revulsion comes from the goblins' general dislike of anyone giving them orders. Larger formations are always commanded by a non-goblin. Rarely this is a frost giant, but in most tribes it is an orc sub-commander.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Naturally cowardly, goblins favor ambushes, overwhelming odds, and dirty tricks to defeat their foes. The idea of a fair fight is an alien concept.

AMBUSHES

Goblins rely heavily on intelligence before making any attack—underestimating the strength of the enemy may prove fatal to the tribe. Anyone entering goblin territory can bet their last gold shield that scouts will be carefully monitoring their progress, calculating their strength, and attempting to guess the enemy's likely route.

Once the goblin commanders are sure an ambush will work, the trap is set up. In order to maximize their advantages, goblins prefer to launch ambushes in snowy and icy terrain—conditions which do not impede their movement yet hamper their foes. Those unused to fighting goblins are more cautious in forests and mountainous terrain, where hiding places are plentiful. Wiser commanders equally fear featureless snowy plains, for goblins have been known to bury themselves in deep snow, lying patiently for many hours, before springing their trap.

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Within their territory, the tribe will have already selected ideal ambush points and prepared them in advance. Goblins favor an attack from just one side, concentrating their warriors on a single flank. The opposite flank is usually devoid of features and appears to be an ideal area for the defenders to regroup and face the assault. By retreating to seemingly better ground on which to fight, the enemy commander is playing straight into the goblins' hands.

These open areas, an apparent oversight made by a clueless goblin commander, are littered with traps. Snares designed to impede movement, pits intended to break ankles or at least trip a defender, and crude wooden panels dotted with nails are cunningly concealed just below the surface.

Regardless of the terrain, goblins prefer to open ambushes with a volley of arrows at short range. Although goblins are competent archers, accuracy is not a prized trait. Since they fight only from a position of overwhelming numbers, quantity and not quality count. While the enemy will accrue casualties, the aim is to sow chaos rather than significantly weaken his numbers.

Half the warriors then drop their bows, grab their spears, and charge. The remaining half advance at a walk, loosing more arrows over the heads of their comrades. Once the initial wave makes contact with the enemy ranks, the archers drop their bows and charge into melee.

The initial salvo of arrows serves as the signal for any wolf riders to begin their attack. Set further back, often in a defile to prevent their detection, the riders spur their wolves to the charge. Favored targets are lightly armored foes, such as spearmen and archers, and cavalry units. Typically, wolf riders fighting *en masse* circle around their warriors, striking the front and rear of the enemy column simultaneously.

Most shamans know only a select few miracles. Fortunately, they are ideally suited to ambush tactics. Goblins know that the first moments of an ambush are vital—if the enemy has chance to organize a solid defense, the goblin warriors' courage will likely fail, leading to a general rout. In order to keep the enemy off-balance, *fear* and *obscure* spells are favored. *Fear* is most often aimed at large blocks of infantry and at cavalry. In the latter case, the horses are the key target, not the riders. Knowing that most enemy commanders are made of sterner stuff than their troops, shamans prefer to drop *obscure* spells on them, thus denying them tactical awareness of the rapidly unfolding attack.

Shamans remain back from the melee, using the above-mentioned spells to hamper enemy movements. Enemies who put up a strong defense or commanders who react quickly are struck by *bolt* spells in a bid to take them down quickly and destroy enemy morale. Again, numbers are more important than accuracy, and most shamans repeatedly fire off triple *bolts*. Since increasing the damage has an increased chance of angering Thrym, not to mention failing more often, shamans prefer to stick with the basic damage level. *Entangle* is used to

hamper cavalry, or cast on the enemy shortly before the warriors charge their quarry.

If the defenders can hold out and inflict around 50% casualties on the goblins, there is a very good chance the attackers will cut and run. While it is tempting to give chase, the goblins will have worked out their escape route beforehand, and the odds are good the route is trapped. A last barrage of *fear* and *obscure* spells provide cover for fleeing warriors.

DEFENDING LAIRS

Unfortunately for heroes, the cowardly nature of ice goblins means their lairs are some of the best defended of any monstrous race. Any one charging into the fray will, if he survives, be far more cautious on future visits.

Caves with narrow, twisting passageways are most favored. These not only serve to slow an enemy's advance, but limit the effectiveness of missile fire and spells. Of course, this also works against the goblins, but sacrifices must be made to ensure the tribe's survival. Where passageways are deemed too wide (typically they aim for no wider than five feet), ice blocks are used to create natural restrictions.

Where a passageway slopes, goblins will often build up a layer of ice by repeatedly pouring water down it. Once the ice is sufficiently thick, the surface is laboriously ground smooth. Such ice poses no impediment to the goblin defenders, but creates a treacherous obstacle for unwary intruders. Where the ground slopes up into the lair, archers are posted near the top. As enemies struggle to clamber up the slope, a hail of arrows meets them. Where the slope is downward, spearmen are stationed at the bottom. Any intruders who slip will slide to the bottom unless they arrest their fall, whereupon the spearmen rush out to stab at them.

Darkness is also a goblin's friend. Having no need for light to function, all sources of illumination are hastily extinguished, plunging the lair into utter darkness. Intruders rarely fare well without light, though, and this gives them a distinct disadvantage—the light from a lantern can be seen from a great distance than the area it illuminates.

The initial defense of a lair is usually chaotic. Goblins are torn between their desire to live and their desire not to be publicly mutilated for failing their chieftain. Once the alarm is raised, intruders have a few minutes, at most, to push as far into the lair as possible. After this, order is restored, and the defenders rally to make a stand.

Frail by human standards and with little or no armor available, goblins must rely on ambushes and weight of numbers to drive back intruders. Their natural stealth and knowledge of the myriad passages making up their lairs allows them to sneak behind enemy forces, or conceal themselves behind strategically placed obstacles. The ideal ambush involves an initial engagement by a group of warriors, with ambushers leaping into the fray once the intruders are distracted.

Goblins are a sneaky race, quite prepared to use un-

derhanded tactics. For instance, in a large melee, one or two may feign death. They lie among the twitching bodies of fallen comrades until the enemy passes by, before leaping up and attacking from the rear. Having to ensure every goblin that falls is actually dead takes time, and every second means the next wave of defenders will be better organized.

Ice goblins disdain complex traps. They are not artisans by nature, and their dull intellect means they are likely to trigger them as any intruder. Open pits, deep enough to cause trips rather than plunge a victim to his death, and simple rockfalls are preferred.

As always, shamans prefer to avoid fighting whenever possible. A *fear* spell dropped at the head of an invading force can result in chaos as the front warriors try to retreat through their comrades—not easy in a confined space. *Obscure* may conceal open pits, slippery slopes, or a side passage crammed full of warriors, while *entangle* can delay an enemy's advance through a confined space long enough to bring in reinforcements.

SIEGES

Unless commanded by an orc or giant, or if they have truly overwhelming numbers, goblins are extremely unlikely to mount an assault against a serious fortification. Small forts and steads are ideal targets, but goblins lack the siege weapons to tackle castles and hill forts. Hence, this section looks at small-scale sieges.

Sieges are inevitably fought with a mixture of overwhelming odds and cunning. Given the choice, they prefer to attack at night, when their enhanced vision gives them the edge over their enemies. Bad weather is preferred, especially snow and cold temperatures. When nature does not cooperate, goblins fall back on tried and tested sneak tactics.

Before the initial assault begins, a small number of scouts sneak forward armed with bows. Alchemical arrows enchanted with *obscure* spells are unleashed at extreme range. The aim is not to hit any defenders, or even come that close to the enemy fortification, but to raise a wall of snow clouds.

Depending on their strength and the anticipated resistance, the goblins may order warriors equipped with scaling ladders to surge forward, or send out archers to snipe at sentries before retreating back into the snow clouds. Such attacks occur on multiple fronts simultaneously, thus dividing the defenders.

During dry seasons, goblins tip their arrows with icewood, which is then ignited. Less concerned with accuracy, volleys of blue-streaking arrows are fired high over the walls in a bid to set fire to thatched roofs and wooden structures. Such tactics are usually followed up by a warrior charge to take advantage of the confusion.

Of course, not every tribe has alchemists within its ranks. When they cannot manufacture, buy, or steal *obscure* arrows, goblins are left with little recourse but to either wait for the weather to turn in their favor or launch their attacks without the added cover.

RELIGION

The great majority of goblins worship Thrym in his major aspect. As a race they are fanatical in their devotion, to the extent of considering the worship of most other deities heretical. Norðri may be honored by shamans whose tribes dwell in the Winterlands or on high mountains, where the cold north wind blows strong. Few honor Langbarðr, though—goblins simply lack the courage to throw themselves into danger for the sake of another required of priests and the brute strength necessary to be a paladin, though very rare exceptions exist.

Dargar is the only accepted deity, and even then shamans are few and far between. Ellanher is the most common minor aspect, and then only in tribes who use wolves with regularity. Hildolfr, whom goblins call Hrami ("Flesh Ripper"), is honored by tribes with rippers at their disposal. Despite being the same deity, goblin shamans receive *smite* as their signature power, rather than *battle song*. Báleygr, god of pain, has few adherents, and Sanngetall, minor god of truth, is virtually unknown.

Though they require warmth in certain conditions and have no fear of the sun, goblins are bitter enemies to those who honor Kenaz and Sigel. In battle, they will actively disobey orders to target obvious worshippers of these accursed deities.

THRYM

Titles: Hrimkonungr (an old Saxa term meaning "Ice King"), Blizzard Roar, the White King, the Eternal Winter, Frost Lord.

Aspects: Cold, ice, winter, blizzards, icy realms.

Symbol: Hellfrost dragonhead.

Priesthood: Breath of Winter (priests); Talons of Winter (paladins).

Herald: A half-frost giant, half-Hellfrost dragon.

Holy Day: Any day the temperature is below freezing. The first day of Fogmonan and last day of Frostmonan are high holy days.

Duties: To expand the Hellfrost, to destroy servants of fire and heat.

Sins: (Minor) lighting a fire, deliberately warming oneself by a fire, eating cooked food more than once a week; (Major) slaying any creature with Resistance or Immunity to cold except in self-defense, living in the Hearthlands for more than half a year without permission of a superior; (Mortal) slaying a Hellfrost dragon, working against the Fimbulvintr.

Signature Power: *Entangle*.

Powers: *Armor, aura, barrier, beast friend* (creatures with Resistance or Immunity to cold only), *bladebreaker, bolt, bridge, burrow, burst, champion of the faith, deflection, detect/conceal, dispel, elemental form* (coldfire, ice, or slush only), *elemental manipulation* (not fire), *energy immunity* (cold, coldfire, heat, fire, or ice only), *environmental protection* (cold only), *fatigue, fear, fly,*

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glyph, beat mask, light, obscure, prolonged blast, sanctuary, sluggish reflexes, smite, sphere of might, storm, stun, summon demon (ice only), summon elemental (coldfire, ice, or slush only), summon herald, voice on the wind, wilderness step (ice or snow only).

Trappings: Spellcasters must take a cold, coldfire, or ice trapping where appropriate. They may never use a fire or heat trapping.

To most folk, the Hellfrost is a natural realm of ice and snow. To the followers of Thrym, the Hellfrost is a living embodiment of their god's awesome power, and his desire to crush the world beneath a vast sheet of ice. Thrym seeks nothing more than to bring about the Fimbulvintr—an age of endless blizzards, a total ice age for the world of mortals.

Although most often worshipped by evil races such as snow orcs and frost giants, he actually cares little for good or evil, as these are simply moral choices assigned to a culture by its own members. Most hrímwisards pay him lip service, if only because their spells are more potent in his frigid realm.

Thrym is most often portrayed as a Hellfrost dragon, the living embodiment of the power of the Hellfrost, though he also takes the form of a colossal frost giant. All inhabitants of the Hellfrost view Hellfrost dragons as his offspring (much to the chagrin of the frost giants, who think they should be his chosen) and venerate them accordingly. Naturally, most Hellfrost dragons worship Thrym.

Temples to the Frost Lord are usually underground, away from the eyes of fire-loving creatures. Decorated with white dragon teeth and scales (sometimes donated freely), and usually always below freezing, followers conduct rituals to weaken the sun, their most hated foe.

His clerics are expected to promote the Fimbulvintr in any way they can, be that through use of their spells, killing spellcasters with knowledge of fire, destroying relics with fire powers, or aiding frost giants and white dragons in their individual aims.

Worship of Thrym is usually conducted outdoors in the snow and biting winds. Worshipers scream prayers into the howling winds, while stripping off their clothes to expose their mortal flesh to Thrym's frigid touch. Whenever possible, clergy sacrifice clerics of Kenaz and Sigel and fire elementalists to their god, knowing that their death provides him with renewed vigor.

NORÐRI

Titles: Thrym's Blizzard, Winter Howler.

Aspects: The north wind.

Affiliations: Thrym.

Symbol: A stylized representation of a blizzard.

Priesthood: Wind Lords (priests); Blizzard Lords (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Day: Any day there is a blizzard in the worshipers' vicinity.

Duties: Bring about the Fimbulvintr.

Sins: (Minor) protecting others from a blizzard or the Hellfrost wind, not summoning a blizzard once a month that causes problems for the citizens of Rassilon; (Major) using becalm in a blizzard; (Mortal) sheltering from a blizzard or the Hellfrost wind.

Signature Power: *Storm* (creating blizzards only).

Powers: *Becalm, deflection, fear, knockdown, summon elemental* (blizzard only), *voice on the wind, zephyr*.

Trappings: Trappings must involve cold wind.

Norðri was always creator of the north wind, though he once served Thunor. When Thrym ascended to the god of winter after the God War, Norðri was offered minor god status in return for swearing allegiance to the wintry deity. Norðri accepted, stealing the magical bellows bestowed him by Thunor as he fled his former master's wrath. Because of this Thunor lost the ability to control the north wind and became an enemy of Thrym. Thrym taught his new minion the secret of the Hellfrost, which Norðri whispers into the winds he creates, thus invoking the much-feared Hellfrost wind.

Norðri has no temples or shrines—the howling blizzard is his only worship hall. Similarly he has no desire to be represented in art, for all citizens of Rassilon know his form each time the winter winds pick up. Citizens of Rassilon willing to brave frostbite urinate into blizzards as an insult to Norðri. Going outside or not seeking shelter in a blizzard is also known as “peeing on Norðri,” even if the person keeps his trousers fastened.

The only real difference between priests and paladins, both of whom are charged with bringing about the Fimbulvintr by summoning blizzards and icy winds, is their willingness to risk life and limb for their god. Priests prefer to stick to the Winterlands, while paladins scorn the power of Kenaz and Sigel by holding their rituals in the Hearthlands.

Most worshippers of Thrym see Norðri and his worshippers as hired help, useful for sure and loyal to the great cause, but not worthy of any recognition—one may accept a meal as good, but one praises the food, not the lowly servant who cooked it. That Norðri chose such important sounding titles for his clergy only fuels their scorn for the petty wind god.

All ceremonies to Norðri are carried out in blizzards, whether natural or magically-summoned. Worshipers perform frenzied dances and howl into the gale, adding their voices to the Hellfrost wind. Human sacrifice is performed only if the victims are worshippers of Kenaz, Sigel, or Thunor or air or fire elementalists—all others are deemed unworthy.

CEREMONIES

Goblins conduct their few ceremonies with great fervor. It is both an ideal time for enemies to attack a lair, and a foolish time. While the goblins are distracted by the ceremonies to the extent of leaving their lairs virtually unprotected (save for roaming wolves), they are in a state of heightened agitation and religious fervor. On

two days a year, a lone goblin would think nothing of charging a dragon single-handed (though it may regret the decision with its last breath).

FUNERALS

Goblin pragmatism toward the wounded has already been mentioned. It also extends to the dead. Goblins do not mourn their dead. Assuming they have led a life in accordance with Thrym's teachings, their spirit will return to him to be reborn (one presumes as another ice goblin). What remains is just meat, and it is a welcome addition to the larder. The heart, though, is always offered to Thrym as a Fimbulvintr Day sacrifice.

The goblin creed does promise an Afterlife, but not until the coming of Fimbulvintr. Until then, when it is said the deceased will enjoy Thrym's eternal gratitude, life and death are a continual cycle.

Goblins who follow the other accepted deities are not devoured. Though their abilities might have been useful in life, such creatures are not destined to rejoin Thrym, and their flesh is forbidden food. It is fed to the wolves.

BESTIARY

This section pulls together various stat blocks concerning the goblins and their immediate allies, consolidating them for ease of use when designing or running goblin-themed adventures.

GOBLIN, ICE



SHAMAN

Though shamans might worship an aspect of Dargar, most favor Thrym, with Norðri a very distant second. However, variant powers have been included for every accepted deity, so as to give the GM more choice of foes. Hrimwisards share the same powers as a shaman of Thrym—just swap Faith for Hrimwisardry.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Gear: Short spear (Str+d4, Reach 1)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
- * **Infra-vision:** Goblins halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets (round down).
- * **Powers (Ellanhere):** *Beast friend* (canines only), *fear* (dire wolf howl), *smite* (wolf's teeth grow from weapon).
- * **Powers (Hrami):** *Battle song* (howls like the Hellfrost

wind), *smite* (target enters a semi-berserk state).

- * **Powers (Norðri):** *Deflection* (swirling snow), *fear* (Hellfrost wind), *knockdown* (howling wind), *storm* (blizzard).
- * **Powers (Thrym):** *Bolt* (icicles), *entangle* (ice grips targets), *fear* (howl), *obscure* (snow cloud), and *smite* (icicles form on weapon).
- * **Size -1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
- * **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

RIPPER

Not even ice goblins, denizens of the frozen realms, are immune to the Hellfrost wind. Those who succumb to the madness become rippers, frenzied warriors armed with thick leather gloves from which sprout long claws of razor sharp bone.

Caring nothing for their own safety, these fanatics hurl themselves at foes, slashing wildly and without pity. Hearth Knights report these dangerous slashing machines worship a god known as Hrami, an aspect of Dargar whose name translates as "Flesh Ripper."

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Bone claws (Str+d6)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Frenzied Warrior:** Rippers have the Ambidextrous, Improved Frenzy, and Two Fisted Edges.
- * **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
- * **Infra-vision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
- * **Size -1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
- * **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WARRIOR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)

Treasure: Meager, per 5 ice goblins

Special Abilities:

- * **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
- * **Infra-vision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
- * **Size -1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
- * **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

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WARRIOR, VETERAN

Given a lot of luck and a modicum of skill, warriors may survive long enough to become veterans. Such warriors are greatly prized by their tribe, and never wasted in battle. That said, those who grow too brazen may be sacrificed to prevent them developing notions of usurping power.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)

Edges: Pick one Edge from Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, or Sweep

Treasure: Meager, per 2 veteran goblins

Special Abilities:

- * **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
- * **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
- * **Size -1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
- * **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WOLF RIDER

Goblins ride standard wolves rather than dire wolves, the latter seeing goblins as naught but a tasty snack. Goblins do not manufacture saddles, and those designed for horses are too bulky and too big for wolves. As such, when making a Riding roll to remain seated, the goblin rolls at -2.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1), bow (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6)

Treasure: Meager, per 5 ice goblins

Special Abilities:

- * **Improved Snow Walker:** Treat ice and snow as normal terrain.
- * **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
- * **Size -1:** Goblins stand 3–4' tall.
- * **Warm Blooded:** +2 to Vigor rolls to resist the effect of cold.

WOLF

Goblins use wolves as guard dogs and mounts. In the latter instance, the creatures count as battle trained mounts. Should their rider be slain or dismounted, the wolf continue to fight.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Tracking d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Fleet Footed:** Wolves roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- * **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
- * **Size -1:** Wolves are relatively small.

KREANA



Many are the terrors of the deep ocean. While fishermen and sailors fear sudden squalls and colossal whales, nothing strikes dread into their hearts as much as talk of the dreaded “shark-men.” Remorseless killers, they stalk the waters of Rassilon, attacking ships and raiding coastal communities for treasure and food. This chapter takes a look inside the culture of the kreana.

● ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES ●

Eons ago, in what skalds call the Mythic Age, a great city stood on an island in the middle of the Inner Sea. Although skilled architects and technologically advanced, the city-dwellers were a cruel and barbaric people. Carcharas the shark god was their patron deity, and they honored him with human sacrifices. Over time, the inhabitants became more debauched, instigating cannibalism and raiding far and wide for captives as offerings to their deity.

The worshippers of Carcharas believed their god dwelt in the inner ocean, a watery realm deep below the surface of the world. Through ancient and powerful spells they bored a hole into this realm, intent on summoning their god to the world of mortals as a true living deity. Affronted by this unholy act, the other races, secretly backed perhaps by Neorthe, worked their own powerful magic.

The great and terrible city sank beneath the surface of the waters, though it suffered little structural damage. Carcharas sacrificed great personal power to warp large numbers of his followers into the kreana, changing them from air breathers into ferocious shark-men; for if they perished there would be none left to worship him and his very existence would be threatened. The newly created shark-men fled the city in fear of further retribution. The story of the disaster was told to subsequent generations, though the facts were slowly replaced by myth.

Even among the clergy of Neorthe, the true origin of

the kreana has been forgotten. Indeed, even in coastal communities kreana are nothing more than a myth, a bogeyman invented to keep children out of the water and account for the disappearance of mariners lost at sea. Those who know of the shark-men attribute their creation to Dargar, for only he would create so savage and bloodthirsty a race.

One myth tells how the kreana were once worshippers of Dargar, and how their enemies drove them into the sea, whereupon Dargar transformed them into the kreana to ensure they would not drown. While many of the details are wrong, the underlying kernel of truth remains.

● ANATOMY ●

Standing over six feet tall and well-muscled, kreana are an abominable cross between men and sharks, the physical embodiment of mindless savagery.

Although native to marine environments, kreana are quite capable of living in fresh water.

PHYSIOLOGY

Unlike land-dwelling sentient races, the kreana lack a neck. Their heads are capable of limited lateral and vertical movement, allowing them to snap at prey only within a narrow arc of their facing. On land, they walk bent over, their heads almost horizontal to the ground.

Olfactory pits at the end of their snout serve to pick up scent. The pits are highly tuned to detect minute particles of blood, and even on land they can hone in on blood spilt miles away if the wind is in the right direction. Hearing is achieved by two auditory channels set behind the eyes. Their hearing range is much lower than humans, leaving them unable to hear high-pitched sounds.

Their eyes, two black, soulless orbs, are mounted far apart, giving them excellent depth perception. While it is

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commonly believed that kreana are capable of seeing in the sunless depths of the oceans, this is a fallacy—their eyes are no better at seeing in poor lighting than humans. When out of water a thin membrane covers the eyes, protecting them from the glare of Sigel's Hearth.

The most noticeable feature of the head is the gaping maw filled with multiple rows of triangular, saw-edged teeth. When biting, kreana chomp down on their prey and then shake their head from side to side, sawing off a chunk of flesh and leaving a vicious wound. Kreana frequently lose teeth. As one falls out, a tooth moves forward to fill the vacancy and a new tooth quickly grows to ensure a steady supply.

Further down the body are the gill slits. While primarily used for extracting oxygen from water, they also work on land. Kreana have lungs which function underwater as flotation bladders, and on land as those in air breathers. The gills are extremely sensitive, and a blow there is akin to kicking a human in his reproductive organs.

The body is sleek and streamlined, ideally suited to rapid swimming. A powerful tail propels the creatures at speeds up to 40 miles per hours. A thick, triangular dorsal fin protrudes from the center of the back. It prevents the kreana from rolling while using their tail for motion, and enables them to turn remarkably quickly.

The skin varies in tone from gray-blue to gray-green. Coloration is darker on the back, lightening to almost white on the belly. The skin, while it appears smooth, is actual rough to the touch. Made up of millions of tiny scales, it is deceptively tough, providing the kreana with protection equivalent to leather armor.

Kreana are subject to dehydration outside water. Without regular immersion the skin begins to dry and crack. Lethargy quickly sets in, followed by intense cramps, and finally system shock and death after four days.

Kreana have two arms and two legs. Each limb ends in five digits. Tipping each finger and toe is a non-retractable claw about two inches long. The general musculature and bone structure is remarkably close to that of humans. Although the kreana rarely use complex tools, their fingers are dexterous.

A kreana's intestine is very short while their stomach is about twice the size of that of a human of comparable height and build. Food is broken down in the stomach into a thick paste, and passed to the intestine only when the kreana is hungry. When food is available, the kreana gorge, storing it away for leaner times. The entire system is far more efficient than among other races, and as much as 90% of the nutrients from a meal are eventually absorbed. This results in very little bodily waste being produced. Excessive water is converted to urea, which is exuded through the skin. One way to tell if kreana are present on land is the pungent stench of ammonia.

LIFE CYCLE

Reproduction with kreana society is a privilege, not a right. Females, while technically lower in society, choose with whom they will breed. Females will only breed with

the strongest males, and competition for breeding rights often leads to bloodshed when one male will not back down under another's threats.

Sexual reproduction is internal. It is also violent. A male may have won the right to sire the next generation, but the female does not submit willingly. Many kreana, both male and female, boasts the scars of sexual union.

Kreana do not mate for life—if a female wishes to switch to a new mate, that is entirely her prerogative. By law, her former partner may challenge the newcomer to a fight to the death.

Like the humans from whom they descend, kreana females are fertile every month. Gestation lasts for seven to nine months, after which time a single live young is born. Newborns are placed together in a nursery.

Here they will learn the savagery needed to survive as adults. Unsupervised, they must fend for themselves, fighting off rivals for the chunks of meat thrown to them daily and establishing their right to become an adult. Those too weak physically or mentally die of starvation or violence, whereupon they become food for the stronger.

Offspring are regularly moved to a new nursery, ensuring that as they age they do not destroy too many of their much younger kin. By the age of three, they are dragged from the nursery to begin their education under the tutelage of the shark callers.

All males have a duty to help feed the community. While children learn to catch fish, one cannot pass to full adulthood and take his rightful place in society until he has killed a shark single-handedly. While it might seem odd that a kreana would kill a shark, the hunt proves to Carcharas, the kreana's sole deity, that the youth is ready to serve him. A shark dies so that a shark-man might live. Those who fail inevitably die from the shark's powerful bite. They are not mourned, for to mourn the weak serves no purpose.

Assuming he can avoid injuries, illness, or letting down his community, a kreana can expect to live for around 80 years. Most rarely live this long, for once they become infirmed through old age a kreana will voluntarily leave his community, so as not to burden them with his weakness. Most choose the Final Hunt, a battle to the death against a monstrous shark.

PSYCHOLOGY

The kreana's reputation for being pitiless killers capable of unbridled savagery beyond that of other races, even orcs, is well known. It is a reputation that has served the aquatic race well, for they learned long ago that the fear of violence is a powerful tool. In order to work, though, one must first set an example as a warning to others.

This fear pervades the entire social order. Among humans there is an old adage that one should keep one's allies close but enemies closer. Among the kreana, keeping one's allies and enemies cowed is the norm.

All members of society jockey for position among their social class. Such maneuvering is not based on brute strength or ability to lead, but by instilling fear in rivals. This subservience through fear also keeps juniors in line

once the pecking order is established. More importantly, juniors rarely gang up on a superior in a Machiavellian plot—anyone who suggests such a plot has openly demonstrated fear and weakness.

It extends even beyond the clan. Families form clans and clans form tribes not because of shared bloodlines or military pacts, but because the most senior clan has tyrannized the others into obedience. When two communities cannot dominate each other into submission, civil war breaks out. The loss of a few hundred, maybe a few thousand worshippers, doesn't bother Carcharas—survival of the fittest most definitely applies to the kreana. At least that was the case. Until recently, violence was viewed as the best means to settle disputes. With few natural predators, it came as a shock to the kreana to discover their numbers were dwindling. Breeding remained successful and the number of young fairly constant, but the frequent tribal wars fought over females and territory were having a disastrous effect on the species.

After consulting with the other priests, the high priest of Carcharas (who permanently resides at the great temple beneath the Inner Sea) declared that violence must end before the species consumed itself in frenzied bloodshed. Violent hatred, he declared, should be reserved for air breathers and other aquatic species. To that end, one building in the precinct was converted into a series of meeting rooms, where rival tribes could sort out their differences without losing much-needed military strength.

Hatred toward all air breathers is instilled in kreana from the moment they crawl out of the hatchery. While air breathers have forgotten the true origin of the shark-men, the kreana have not. The memory of their fall from grace burns deep in their black hearts.

Once an attack has begun, kreana tend to fight to the death. While some kreana do suffer from uncontrollable bloodlust, the majority is simply unwilling to show weakness by withdrawing. However, once a social superior gives up the fight, the blame for failure can be laid at his feet and a withdrawal is permitted. His subordinates may face ridicule, but they are rarely punished.

Kreana are renowned for their bloodthirstiness. The racial view that the weak do not deserve to live extends to other races. Those taken alive are tyrannized and tortured before being put to death as weaklings, though a few may be taken away to become sacrifices.

Lying and exaggeration are traits not found among the shark-men. Even when their lives are in danger they would rather tell the truth than be viewed as cowards trying to cover up their mistakes or claim prowess not due them. They deal with hard facts, not spurious half-truths and boasts.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Kreana society is divided into a semi-rigid structure. While it is possible to climb through the ranks, given the right spiritual calling, it is almost impossible to slide

down the ladder. Failure equates to weakness, and weakness is not a trait the kreana tolerate among their kind.

Kreana have both clans and tribes. The clan has no founding in common ancestors. Rather, it refers to a single community of kreana who have not been subjugated into a larger community. Once two or more communities merge, they become a tribe.

An average clan or tribe has 10% priests and paladins, 5% shark callers, 65% warriors, and 20% females. Young number anywhere from 50-200% of the adult population, though many will not survive to adulthood.

RELIGIOUS

Priests are the leaders of the community, holding both spiritual and temporal power. But as with the cultures of most sentient beings, with power comes responsibility.

Any setbacks the settlement suffers are laid at the feet of the highest-ranking priest. Too many failures and Carcharas may “demand” the priest be sacrificed and a replacement installed, his weakness not only apparent to the entire tribe, but endangering its very existence. The god never sends visions to prompt this action—a rival will eventually summon the courage to take matters into his own hands. Kreana priests tend to be power hungry, for high position brings great personal wealth and enhanced breeding possibilities, but their lust is tempered by the inevitable fate that awaits those who fail their predatory deity or who display weakness.

Paladins, while clerics, never govern a community. They serve as elite warriors, temple guardians, bodyguards, champions, and military commanders. Their power is considered martial, not political or spiritual.

That said, since paladins often lead raids ordered by the high priest, they literally hold his life in their hands—a deliberately failed mission may spell doom for the priest, not the paladin. To counter this, priests often publicly decree a fitting fate for paladins who fail them—even if the priest is sentenced to die, he will drag the paladin to hell with him.

Regardless of status or position, all paladins are subservient to priests, though it is a brave junior priest who dares enrage a more senior paladin, for Carcharas cares little if his clergy kill each other.

Although the ruling priest makes all the final decisions concerning the well-being of the tribe, he normally does so only after taking advice from advisors. Kreana do not expect their leaders to be omnipotent, though they demand they are competent. By taking advice, even if he ignores it, a leader is displaying trust in his underlings. This appearance of influence is often enough to quell thoughts of rebellion. It also gives the ruler an insight into his underlings' mind set, allowing him to stop potential usurpers and take appropriate action.

SHARK CALLERS

Shark callers know the ancient songs of Carcharas, deep, ululating rhythms that travel immense distances through the water and irresistibly draw sharks to the singer.

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Shark callers are not priests, but rather serve the community as skalds and sages. Lacking a written language, the kreana pass on their folklore, knowledge of good hunting grounds, ancient laws, and so on verbally.

Every clan and tribe has a unique song detailing its exploits over the millennia. While the names of individuals are recorded for posterity, their deeds are always associated with benefitting the community, and are never viewed as personal acts of bravery or sacrifice. The songs are forever evolving, steadily growing longer over time.

On rare occasions a song will be altered to remove an individual's name. This occurs when the kreana has been removed for weakness, a crime that invalidates his earlier successes.

WARRIORS

The majority of the tribe are warriors, and all are male. Part-hunter and part-soldier, the warriors work to feed and protect the community, to expand its sphere of influence, and to garner treasure and sacrifices.

Although paladins are the military commanders, there are sub-ranks among the warriors. Promotion is earned through a mixture of displays of courage, longevity, success, and bullying. As with the religious members of the tribe, rising through the ranks is achieved by taking the position, not waiting for it to be offered.

Blood ragers are kreana warriors who fly into a deadly frenzy when they inflict an injury on a foe. In order to help induce this frenzied state, they carry barbed spears, which tear victim's flesh, inflicting terrible wounds as the tip is removed.

FEMALES

In kreana society, only the males belong to a community. Females have no tribal bonds and are, for the most part, apolitical. Yet they are not regarded as second-rate or inferior citizens. They are accorded special privileges, such as choosing with whom they mate. Still, in other ways they are a commodity, for raids against rival communities are often for the purpose of kidnapping breeding females.

Female kreana are far from weak and helpless. Although not as skilled at warfare as the males of the species, they are no less vicious and of similar build. Their claws and teeth are just as sharp.

CULTURE

While many monstrous races possess a violent, barbaric culture, all have unique qualities. This section explores some of the kreana's cultural aspects.

HABITAT

Kreana dwell on the seabed, at depths where sunlight rarely ever penetrates. They favor sunken ruins and sea

caves, though if necessary they have the skill, though rarely the desire, to erect artificial structures.

A kelp forest surrounds most communities. The kelp is harvested for bedding and clothing. Strewn within the kelp are finely woven nets dotted with curved coral hooks and the jaws of sharks. The former are intended to ensnare fish, saving the shark-men from having to hunt. The jaws are wired with sinewy seaweed rope and pried open with fragile sticks. A large intruder or prey fish who blunders into the trap dislodges the stick, which causes the jaws to snap shut.

While the layout of a city varies immensely based on local geography, all share common structures.

As a priest rules every kreana community, every settlement has a temple. These vary immensely in size and style, but are always located at the heart of the community. Atop the altar of each temple sits a shark's jaw, its mouth gaping wide and ready to accept sacrifices. Gold and jewelry plundered from air breathers, corals and shells, and living sacrifices are fed into the mouth in symbolic sacrifice. Treasures are then stored away, while sacrificial victims are devoured. As well as kreana guards and traps, many temples are patrolled by sharks. Kreana do not draw images or carve idols of their god.

Males without a breeding partner live in communal chambers housing up to eight warriors. Such areas are always positioned near strategic areas, the occupants doubling as guards.

If the terrain allows, the community may boast one or more guard towers. Mounted atop these is a heavy ballista. Ammunition takes the form of coral bolts or large weighted nets. Against small creatures swimming close together, the net is favored, as it can ensnare multiple targets. For larger creatures, or if intruders are dispersed, a coral bolt is launched.

Regardless of their breeding status, members of the religious and shark caller castes have private chambers. The larger and more finely appointed the room, the more important, or at least aggressive, the occupant is in the community. The ranking priest has his quarters close to the temple, as does the senior paladin.

Communities have between three and ten nurseries, depending on the number of females. Not all are in constant use, as the number of offspring born at any one time varies immensely. Nurseries are usually domed structures with a hole at the top into which food is thrown.

There is always some form of prison for holding sentient sacrifices. These take the form of tall poles to which are attached weighted conical nets. By keeping prisoners in the open, the chances of them escaping and overpowering the guards without being detected are greatly reduced. It also allows passing kreana to taunt the captives.

For all their savagery, kreana enjoy home comforts. Homes are decorated with tapestries of woven seaweed strands, and shells and corals. The latter may simply hang from a wall, or they may be carved with abstract patterns. Unlike sharks, kreana sleep lying down on beds of soft kelp in the same manner as humans.

With eyes poorly adapted for life in the dark, kreana make use of bioluminescent coral and fish to light their homes. Glowing fish are kept in nets, preventing them from swimming away. Such sources of light provide illumination as a torch, but need to be fed in order for them to remain healthy.

Kreana also tend gardens of seaweed and coral, decorating them with stacks of colorful shells. Such gardens are the repose of the religious caste, places where they can meet in private, meditate, and hunt the exotic fish attracted by the coral and seaweed.

DIET

Most stories concerning kreana label them as gluttonous killers that devour anything in sight. A kreana's metabolism is closely linked to water temperature—the warmer the water, the faster their metabolic rate, and the more they are required to eat to remain healthy.

Most attacks on air breathers occur on or very close to the surface, where the water is markedly warmer than at the depths the kreana call home. Patrols that have been swimming close to the surface for hours quickly develop ravenous appetites, thus encouraging them to attack prey they might otherwise avoid.

Kreana are strict carnivores. Much of their diet consists of fish and whales, but they are not picky eaters. Havmandr and finfolk, both sentient races, are hunted for their meat.

Youngsters are expected to hunt for harmless fish, learning how to use nets and spears against small, nimble targets. While such hunts do provide food for the tribe, they also teach essential skills they will need during adult life. As the youth grows older, he will be invited to participate in hunts against more dangerous prey. Such hunts give him a taste of battle, hone his skills, and teach him the strengths and weaknesses of various creatures.

Kreana make use of sharks in hunting. Sharks are used to round up fish into a tightly packed shoal, giving the kreana large targets for their nets or spear thrusts. Against larger, more vicious prey, sharks may participate in the kill.

By tradition, only females do not have to hunt. While priests and shark callers are expected to do their duty for the tribe, they usually have enough influence to bully others into undertaking their duties. This is especially true when hunting for harmless fish. Against more aggressive prey, it serves the kreana well to actively participate, partly to keep his skills honed and partly to show that he is not afraid.

Kreana are not egalitarian. As much as 25% of any hunt is divided among the warriors' females and offered as gifts to higher castes. The strongest member of the hunting party then devours around a quarter, leaving the others to fight over the remainder. Again, survival of the fittest comes into play, and those who fail to stand up for their share quickly find themselves starving. Meals are eaten without decorum, the shark-men biting off huge chunks of flesh and swallowing them with minimal chewing.

CLOTHING

Well-insulated against the cold of the briny deep and lacking modesty, clothing is worn only to denote social class. Warriors wear small belts of woven kelp to which are attached coral hooks. Small items (such as a shark's tooth to use as a miniature saw or a conch signal horn) are hung from the hooks, thus freeing up the kreana's hands. Shark callers are clad in a similar garment, but add a skirt of woven plant matter to denote their status. The religious castes add a vest to this garb.

Many kreana wear necklaces and bracelets of sharks' teeth. By tradition, the first teeth come from the shark killed during the kreana's test of adulthood. Other teeth are added as the kreana kills more sharks. It is thus easy to tell at a glance the comparative skill, strength, and prowess of a shark-man by the extent of his jewelry collection.

It is rare for kreana to take trophies from other creatures, for they consider them unworthy. To sport trophies from weaker creatures gives the impression that one considered them a worthy opponent, which in turn implies the holder to be weak. There are exceptions, of course. A kreana sporting a sea dragon or sea serpent tooth is a foe to be avoided, for even though it is very unlikely he killed the beast in single combat, his actions were deemed courageous enough to allow him the right to collect trophies.

Ground red coral is used to create tattoos. Imagery is heavily stylized and abstract. Unlike jewelry, tattooing is a personal choice rather than a display of bravery or prowess. However, overuse can give the impression of being superior, something which rivals may challenge. As such, most tattoos are found on clerics and blood ragers, with warriors careful not to outdo their superiors.

LAW AND ORDER

Kreana society may not be civilized in human terms, but it is a lawful one. Fear keeps the kreana in line.

Some crimes simply do not exist due to the kreanas' mentality. Theft, for instance, is a crime with two connotations. Theft by intimidation of violence is not a crime—it is an act of proving one's superiority. Theft by subterfuge is a sign of weakness, and counts as a crime.

Others are punishable by death without exception. Rape, for example, carries an automatic death sentence. While females are not tribe members, they have the unswerving right to choose with whom they mate. Breaking that right results in the victim being torn limb from limb by the females of the tribe.

Murder of a fit and healthy tribe member is only a criminal offense if the deceased was killed in secret or by stealth. Nothing technically prevents one kreana from approaching another, making a public challenge, and then slaughtering him. Such an act only serves to intimidate others. However, in order to prevent a tribe turning in on itself, those who abuse the right to prove superiority by violence quickly find themselves facing a superior opponent.

HELLFROST: CREATURE GUIDE

It is a rare female that commits a crime. Most are pampered by their breeding partner in order to maintain her loyalty, and thus want for little. When one does require something special, she can easily convince a male to act on her behalf.

The ruler and his council judge criminals. Evidence is heard (kreana don't lie, remember), and the ruler then passes sentence. While it is possible for a ruler to grant clemency, doing so is a thin line—such an act of leniency may be perceived as weakness.

Except for rape, those found guilty have the right to demand trial by combat to prove their worth to the tribe. In order to prevent the weak from gaining their freedom too easily, it is normally a paladin who answers the challenge. Such combats are very one-sided—paladins are skilled warriors and are permitted to use their miraculous powers in ritual combat.

While being executed is never much fun, being slain in ritual combat is a far worse fate. Kreana who fall this way are doubly guilty of being weak, and are destined for a wretched Afterlife.

HEALTHCARE

For a culture that disdains weakness, promotes violence as a means of social climbing, and worships a savage deity, kreana do make use of magical *healing* spells.

Kreana do not practice communal healthcare. The *healing* spells of the clerics are theirs to use as they see fit. Most often they are employed not only to save the life of a valued tribe member—accidents happen, and even the best warrior can have a bad day—but to reinforce their superiority over the injured party. In contrast, nothing prevents a warrior from intimidating a cleric into curing his injuries.

This poses an interesting dichotomy, for despite being of lower social rank, a warrior is not prohibited from gaining power over a cleric. Naturally the clergy abhor such subservience, and any warrior undertaking such a brazen move will need to watch his back, for revenge will come sooner rather than later.

Those denied healing, or who refuse to bow before the cleric, must leave the tribe until they heal naturally. A wounded member is a useless member, and his injuries may attract predators. For many, such expulsion is a death sentence—kreana, while tough, are trained to fight in numbers, not as individuals.

As well as alchemical *healing* potions, which clerics offer in return for service, kreana are swift to make use of alchemical brews on a daily basis. The use of magic is not a sign of weakness, even among the warriors, for magic is the gift of Carcharas to his people. Not using magic when it is prudent to do so is just stupid, and the kreana are not renowned for their stupidity. Although carnivores, kreana use marine plants to create a wide range of herbal brews.

LANGUAGE

Kreana speak a dialect of Seatongue, a language shared by the finfolk, havmandr, and even races such as

sea dragons and sea giants. Most can vocalize other languages, though the result is always harsh and guttural.

Body language is important to kreana, especially when challenging rivals. Aggressive posturing and drawing back the gums to reveal one's savage teeth can win an argument or cause a rival to back down without resorting to bloodshed.

NAMES

Kreana have personal names but no surnames. Instead, tribal names are adopted to show that one has the support of a tribe. Tribes are always named after their current ruler, since in many ways he is the tribe.

Until they reach adulthood, kreana are simply known as “son of <female's name>.” Such names are considered highly insulting, and serve only to encourage young kreana to prove themselves adults as soon as possible.

Kreana personal names always carry meaning. When a youth is accepted as an adult, he is expected to recount the story of his shark hunt. From his description he will be given a name. Such names are not always carried for life. A kreana who impresses his superiors may be given a new name as an honor. In such cases he uses his new name but adds, “once known as <previous names>” to show his award.

Kreana can also lose their names out of bullying. A superior might trash an underling he dislikes and force him to carry a demeaning name. The injured party has only two choices—live with his derogatory name or fight back and reclaim his original name. While being forced to carry a derisory name is a great shame, it is not a true sign of weakness.

Some even turn the tables on their oppressors by not only accepting the name, but by using it with honor. If the kreana can prove his worth to the tribe, his superiors have little choice but to grant him a new name. Going straight from a weak sounding name to an impressive one can actually intimidate potential rivals, as the kreana has taken a huge leap.

NUMBERS

Kreana use a decimal counting system. When spoken, numbers are always given with the single digits first, then tens, hundreds, and so on. The number 219, for example, is pronounced “nine, one ten, and two hundreds.”

It has been surmised by air breathing scholars that recounting numbers in this manner empowers the speaker in some way, perhaps because only he knows when the number will end.

For instance, if a human begins with “one thousand,” his listener knows that the next numbers can never be higher than “999.” In contrast, only the kreana speaker knows when the number he is speaking of will end, thus forcing his audience to pay attention to him. Others have argued that such a bizarre counting system is only more proof of the kreas' barbarous nature.

But numbers alone mean little to the kreana, especial-

ly when referring to enemies. As well as a numeric count, words indicating perceived strength are added. Thus, a handful of ordinary mariners in a boat may number 20, but by adding a word or phrase such as “weaklings” or more poetically “a female’s rejects,” other kreana instinctively know the mariners are not much of a threat.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Kreana have no true written language, having forsaken their original tongue during their ancient transformation. They do use glyphs to display single word concepts, such as “Danger” or “Food.”

Such marks are carved into permanent markers, typically coral, sunken ruins, large boulders, and shipwrecks. Carved with their claws, these marks always comprise three lines, though they may be straight, angled, or curved. Any creature that speaks Seatongue has knowledge of these glyphs.

Kreana do record numbers. Within a community, lengths of seaweed onto which shells have been knotted are used to create simple numerical records. Strings are always hung vertically.

While such a physical representation allows the kreana to read the number as a human would, from largest to smallest, starting at the smallest number and working upward is ingrained in them.

Away from the community, marks are made with the claws. A straight line represents a length of string and horizontal scratches mimic shells. Most often the numbers are associated with a glyph. For instance, while there is a glyph to represent food, there is no adjective to show “great” or “plentiful.” To give an impression of food quantity, a kreana might scratch the number 1,000 by the food glyph.

CALENDAR

The kreana calendar comprises only seasons, and every tribe uses a unique method of timekeeping. With little to no sunlight reaching their homes, seasons are tracked by natural events, such as the migration or return of common food fish, changes in currents caused by warming or cooling of the seas, and even subtle changes in water temperature.

Shorter periods of time are noted by the turning of the tides. As far as kreana are concerned, the tides are caused by Carcharas’ tail beating a steady rhythm.

TRADE AND TRIBUTE

As a rule, communities do not trade with each other. While a clan or tribe may lack certain useful resources, offering to trade is perceived as weakness, being an inability to provide for the community. Instead, a community short of a resource will locate a nearby settlement which has the commodity and either make threats until the goods are handed over or launch a raid.

An individual member will, however, barter for goods

when visiting a special holy site or a neighboring community. To demand goods be handed over when faced with overwhelming odds is not bravery—it is gross stupidity.

WARFARE

It is impossible to estimate the number of kreana lurking beneath the turbulent oceans. The few scholars that know of them judge them to be the equivalent of orcs, innumerable, but held in check by internal feuding and their scattered tribes. Individually a tribe is a menace, but one that can be defeated with equal force and good strategy. But were they to unify, to gather their strength, they could perhaps become a true scourge, making habitation of the coastlines impossible, and perhaps even extending their reach for many miles inland.

With the high priest having declared an end to senseless inter-tribal violence, that horrific possibility has taken one step closer to becoming a reality.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Due to their natural weapons and native environment, kreana do not invest time in manufacturing many weapons. The weapon of choice is a short spear, ideal for stabbing fish or enemies, and easily replaced if broken or lost. The haft is usually driftwood scavenged from the surface. Coral blades are preferred, but sharks’ teeth and even worked stone are used. They have little use for metal in an underwater environment.

The wearing of armor is considered an act of weakness, for no true son of Carcharas should hide behind added protection. More pragmatically, there is little armor kreana can manufacture underwater, additional loads only hamper maneuverability, and carrying extra weight requires more food consumption. Thus, the shark-men rely solely on their tough hide for protection.

ORGANIZATION

Kreana are organized hunters. The formations detailed below are typical examples, but not fixed in stone. Unit sizes vary slightly based on the number of warriors and clerics available, and thus may be smaller or larger than described.

The smallest formation is a hunting pack, which comprises four warriors led by a cleric. Normally this is a paladin, but priests serve if no paladins are available. A hunting pack is large enough to gather fish with ease and powerful enough to challenge some larger prey.

The next largest unit is the great hunting pack. It is made up of two to five hunting packs (10 to 25 warriors and 2 to 5 clergy). Many great hunting packs also have a shark caller. The formation is not one regularly maintained, and command is given to a cleric when the great pack is mustered. In small tribes, this formation may be the entire sum of their military strength. In such cases,

TIME AND TIDE

Natural events in *Hellfrost* are the work of the gods. Heat waves occur because Sigel's minions are busy pumping the bellows at his hearth. Earth's expansion of her subterranean home causes earthquakes. In order to discover why tides exist in Rassilon, one must again turn to mythology.

In days long past, Neorthe was renowned for always being late for gatherings. When this matter was brought up he complained that while the surface world had the light of Sigel and Maera to help determine the time, neither bothered to illuminate his aquatic realm. As a result, he was always unsure of the time.

Sigel refused to help, for if he shone so brightly as to illuminate the deepest depths, he would scorch the surface world. Maera said that if she turned up the lantern in her home she would go blind, and the world would be as brilliantly lit as if Sigel were in the sky. However, she proposed a solution.

She offered to fix the magical threads, touching large bodies of water to her window. As her hall moved through the sky, the threads would tug the water along behind them, raising and lowering the water level at regular intervals.

While Neorthe begrudged losing some control over the ocean, he agreed that it was a workable solution.

That the strength of the tide varies from place to place and can be altered by the season is down to the Unknowable One, but that is another story for another day.

command may be given to the senior paladin if the mission is deemed important enough.

The largest common formation is known as the "maw of Carcharas". It is found only in tribes numbering more than 100 kreana, and consists of two or more great hunting packs. Such packs are always led by the senior paladin.

As noted elsewhere, a pecking order exists among warriors. Within a hunting pack, males constantly jostle for position, for higher status means more food. The highest-ranking warrior in each pack serves as the unit cleric's second-in-command. While he is not guaranteed the support of his full superior at all times (he must still be able to stand up for himself), it never hurts to have powerful friends.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Kreana tactics are well rehearsed, being a natural extension of their hunting techniques. This is hardly surprising, given that all non-kreana are seen as potential food sources.

When multiple units fight together, cohesion is main-

tained through signal horns made of conch shells. Every tribe has a set of predetermined signals. Such commands are generally very basic, usually nothing more than orders for a given unit to enter the fray or fall back and regroup. Complex orders are instigated during the initial planning, but are never carved in stone—battlefields are chaotic places and the commanders always carefully monitor the situation.

Because it is unlikely heroes will have much recourse to battle kreana underwater, the following tactics focus on the two situations air breathers are most likely to encounter the vicious shark-men.

RAIDS, BOAT

Kreana have been known to attack all types of longships. When attacking ships, kreana prefer to have the support of sharks. Most attacks occur at night. Although kreana cannot see well in darkness, they know that most of their foes will be sleeping.

Standard tactics are to remain submerged until right beside the target vessel, and then surge forward from close range. In darkness, there is little chance of spotting the raiding party until it is too late.

Invariably their tactics require them to place their foes at a significant disadvantage as quickly as possible. *Fear* is the most favored spell, for within the confines of a boat the only escape route is to jump overboard, placing the victim in the kreana's natural environment. Here he can be picked off at leisure by sharks or warriors, or left to drown. If that spell is not available, *stun* is deployed to soften the defenders.

While the cleric works his miracles, the warriors surge over the gunwale, thrusting with their spears and snapping with their grim jaws. Those unable to take part in the first wave of boarders thrust their spears from the water, adding to the carnage.

Kreana only ever attack from one side of a ship—they like to leave their air breathing prey an escape route since it removes them as a threat and leaves them at their mercy while they flounder around in the ocean.

Unless the situation is desperate, clerics switch to *bolt* spells once the warriors have gained a foothold, picking off individual targets from the safety of the water. There is no shame in this tactic—Carcharas granted the cleric the spell for a reason.

Paladins aboard the ship may invoke *sphere of might* if the tide of battle turns against the attackers, seeking to slay as many foes as possible before either a retreat is called or pushing back the defenders so a second wave of warriors can storm the vessel.

Of course, these tactics assume the kreana want to shed blood (and they normally do). When sacrifices are required, they employ stealthier techniques. The vessel may be watched from a distance for many hours, the shark-men studying shift patterns and selecting those they wish to feed to their god. When the time is right, a small number of warriors surface near the selected target, reach over the gunwale, and drag him into the

water, whereupon he is targeted by an *environmental protection* spell before he drowns. If the target happens to be on duty alone, it may be hours before his disappearance is noticed, and by then the kreana will be many miles away and deep below the surface.

RAIDS, COASTAL

Kreana raid coastal communities for food, sacrifices, and treasure. Air breathing sacrifices are especially favored, as are their precious metals, which do not tarnish or corrode.

Subtlety is not a typical watchword when discussing the kreana, but they are willing to use stealth against air breathers. Kreana see no shame or weakness in such tactics—the wise hunter knows that to catch a fish he must use patience and aggression at the right time. If he moves too soon, his prey will flee. At the end of the day, air breathers are just another form of prey.

Such tactics are especially favored when raiding communities known to be well guarded. Unless the pack is especially large or the foe known to be especially weak, announcing your presence to the enemy is only likely to cause unnecessary deaths.

Many communities are protected by fences or walls. Although they have clawed hands and feet, climbing is not a skill required in an environment when one can move freely in three dimensions. In such instances the kreana focus their attention on the main gate, using whatever is at hand as a battering ram.

Sooner or later the kreana make their presence felt, for few can resist the blood lust in their veins. Unless the aim is mindless bloodshed, the initial assault often starts with a cleric launching *fear* at any armed defenders. Given suitable time and stealth, command figures may be hit with *panic* first, to help weaken their resolve.

Depending on the type of cleric and his particular miracles, he may then employ *stun* against suitable sacrifices. Powerful individuals or small groups the kreana see as a threat might be weakened by *bolt* or *sphere of might* spells. If a powerful adversary has been selected for sacrifices, then *fatigue* and *stun* spells are used instead. Once the cleric has played his part, the kreana warriors engage their foes in bloody battle.

The aim of a raid is generally to acquire goods, not fight a prolonged engagement. Once the kreana's goals are met, they quickly retreat to the safety of the water. At this point *environmental protection* spells are cast on sacrifices, ensuring they can survive the long journey to the kreana's lair.

While they do not expect to be followed by air breathers, kreana take no chances. During the return trip the pack will make several detours through areas of thick kelp. Lurking unseen are other hunting packs ready to ambush pursuers. As well as harassing any pursuers, the tactic buys the hunting pack time to reach home and alert their comrades to potential invaders.

Note that while many clerics know the *sanctuary* ritual, few are willing to use it without good justification.

First, it might be viewed as retreating from battle, and thus leave one open to accusations of weakness. Second, the spell transports the cleric to the nearest temple of Carcharas, and that might not be one's own tribe.

RELIGION

Kreana faith focuses on Carcharas, the race's sole deity. He is both protector and destroyer, benevolent and malevolent, a god who combines the aspects of many of the greater pantheon worshipped by air breathers.

The kreana have a single Afterlife for the pious and multiple versions of eternal damnation for those who offend Carcharas. Those who live and die in the shark god's service are destined to bond with their deity in death, becoming one with their god and giving him increased strength. Eventually, such will be his might that he will burst forth from his prison and reap revenge on Neorthe.

The various hells all involve becoming food for Carcharas. The least sinful are transformed into prey fish on which the god feeds in vast quantities. Their existence is the constant fear of being hunted and devoured, their essence expunged from existence. The worst sinners and weaklings are chewed eternally, repeatedly ground in the god's cyclopean jaws and ripped apart by his immense teeth while remaining fully conscious of their pain and unable to end their misery.

There is a middle ground, for the kreana believe in limited reincarnation, something no other sentient race does. A kreana who is neither pious nor sinful returns in the form of a shark. He has no memory of his former life, no sentience, but he is able to serve his god by spreading death and hunting the weak. Should he fail in this new life, he is condemned to one of the hells. A long, successful life as a remorseless hunter may see him join with his god.

This accounts, at least partially, for why kreana both hunt and use sharks. Killing a shark culls the weak, while using them allows the creatures to serve Carcharas.

CARCHARAS

Titles: The Great Shark, Scourge of the Ocean, the Devourer, Deep Hunter.

Aspects: Sharks, kreana, bloodshed, destruction, gluttony, fear.

Symbol: A shark's tooth.

Priesthood: Carcharas has both priests and paladins.

Herald: No true herald. Carcharas is rumored to have an avatar.

Holy Days: Celebrations are held to coincide with fish migrations, and before and after raids.

Signature Power: *Smite* (bite only).

Powers: *Altered senses, analyze foe, armor, beast friend* (sharks only), *bless/panic, bolt, boost/lower trait* (Fighting, Notice, and Swimming only), *champion of the*

OTHER LEGENDS

Other myths claim that Carcharas was a creation of Dargar, a means to spread cruelty and destruction in the seas. In some stories he is nothing more than a herald of Dargar granted immense powers, while in others the shark god is a favored pet of Dargar. Some legends state that Carcharas was a normal shark until the Unknowable One fed it air-breathing animals to see what would happen. The shark grew larger and more aggressive. Fearful his experiment would be discovered, he quietly dragged the shark into the deep ocean where no one would find it. Another version puts the blame on Loki, who fed a shark on human flesh to spite the other gods. This, some say, is why kreana are willing to come ashore and hunt humans. Naturally, the kreana refute all such claims, and anyone who dares whisper such heresy in their presence is sure to end up as a sacrificial victim.

faith, environmental protection (water only), fatigue, fear, growth/shrink, healing, sacrifice, sanctuary, shape change (sharks only), speed, sphere of might, stun, summon herald (Carcharas sends a megalodon).

Trappings: All trappings relate to sharks (such as shark's teeth for bolt) or water (for stun).

Disciple Edge: Carcharas grants his kreana disciples enlarged teeth and the ability to chew through armor. Their teeth inflict Strength+d6 damage, AP 2. By spending a benny, the teeth become Heavy Weapons for one round.

Carcharas is the sole god of the kreana. Like many inhuman gods, Carcharas has no place within the wider pantheon except as an enemy. In this case, he is the eternal foe of Neorthe. Some myths claim that when Neorthe first created sharks, one particular specimen quickly developed into a voracious hunter. Everything and anything in his path was fair prey, and he rapidly grew to monstrous size. By the time Neorthe realized what was happening, the shark was large enough to challenge even a god.

The two deities fought on and off for eons before Neorthe finally got the upper hand. Using his magical trident, he slashed Carcharas once on each side of the head, stunning the monstrous fish. Lacking the power to slay the beast, Neorthe imprisoned him in a deep, dark, watery realm from which he could not escape. Even today, all sharks carry the scars of Neorthe as a reminder that Neorthe is the true power beneath the waves.

CEREMONIES

Kreana rituals revolve around the sacrifice of air breathers and treasure. A lot of blood is spilled during the fell rites, which drives the kreana into a frenzy. Wildly gnashing jaws and slashing claws make attendance a dangerous proposition, but there is no alternative—failure to attend a ceremony is a death sentence.

BESTIARY

This section pulls together various stat blocks concerning the kreana and their allies, consolidating them in a single volume for ease of use when designing or running shark-men related adventures.



AVATAR OF CARCHARAS

Canonically, the avatar of Carcharas can only be summoned at the conclusion of an ancient prophecy. This event forms the basis of adventure *H3: The Blood Tide*. In your campaign, it may be possible to summon the avatar at other times.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d10, Stealth d6

Pace: —; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 16

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 12.
- * **Bite:** Str+d12, AP 4. Heavy Weapon.
- * **Blood Frenzy:** Once there's a significant amount of blood in the water (usually one wound), the avatar goes into frenzy and adds +2 to its attacks and damage for the rest of the fight.
- * **Chew:** The avatar does not roll a bonus 1d6 damage if it scores a raise on its Fighting roll against foes of Size +3 or smaller. Instead, it has taken them into its maw. Victims are at -4 to any physical rolls while inside the creature's mouth. Each round, the victim automatically takes Str+d12 damage. Until the victim is spat out, escapes (requires an opposed Strength roll), or slain (the remains are swallowed as a free action), the avatar cannot use its bite attack.
- * **Fear (-2):** Anyone seeing the avatar must make a Spirit roll at -2. The kreana are immune to this effect.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Gargantuan:** Heavy Armor. Attacks against them by man-sized creatures are made at +4.
- * **Hardy:** Successive Shaken results do not cause a wound.
- * **Size +8:** The avatar is over 60' long.

KREANA

BLOOD RAGER

Blood ragers are kreana warriors who fly into a deadly frenzy whenever they inflict an injury on a foe. They carry barbed spears, which tear victim's flesh and inflict terrible wounds when the tip is removed.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: —

Gear: Barbed short spear (Str+d6+2, Reach 1)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- * **Armor +1:** Scales.
- * **Blood Frenzy:** A blood rager automatically goes Berserk (as per the Edge) when it inflicts a wound. While berserk it makes two Fighting attacks per round at no penalty and has +2 to recover from being Shaken.
- * **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water at least one hour out of every 24. Those who don't are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.



PALADIN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Command, Feror, Frenzy

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10. Kreana can run while swimming.
- * **Armor +1:** Scales.
- * **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water at least one hour out of every 24. Those who don't are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.
- * **Powers:** Paladins know the following spells: *armor* (toughened scales), *beast friend* (sharks), *bolt* (shark's teeth), *boost/lower trait* (Fighting, Notice, and Swimming only), *fear*, *sanctuary*, *shape change* (sharks only), *smite* (bite only, increases size of teeth).



PRIEST

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

Treasure: Worthwhile

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10. Kreana can run while swimming.
- * **Armor +1:** Scales.
- * **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.

* **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water at least one hour out of every 24. Those who don't are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.

* **Powers:** Priests know the following spells: *beast friend* (sharks only), *bolt* (shark's teeth), *fatigue* (water in lungs), *healing*, *sanctuary*, *shape change* (sharks only), *smite* (bite only, increases size of teeth), *stun* (blast of water).

SHARK CALLER

Shark callers know the ancient songs of Carcharas; deep, ululating rhythms that irresistibly draw sharks to the singer. Shark callers are not priests, but rather serve the community as skalds and sages. Lacking a written language, the kreana pass on their folklore, knowledge of good hunting grounds, laws, and so on, verbally. Although spells are used to mimic their abilities, the powers cannot be *dispelled* or *negated*.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

Treasure: Meager

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- * **Armor +1:** Scales.
- * **Call Sharks:** Shark callers may use the *beast friend* (sharks only) and *summon beast* (sharks only) spells using Spirit as their arcane skill die.
- * **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water at least one hour out of every 24. Those who don't are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.

WARRIOR

Female kreana have Fighting d4, Parry 4, and do not carry spears. They otherwise use the stats of males.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Gear: Short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1)

Treasure: Meager, per 3 warriors

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10. Kreana can run while swimming.
- * **Armor +1:** Scales.
- * **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Dehydration:** Kreana must immerse themselves in water at least one hour out of every 24. Those who don't are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.

HELLFROST: CREATURE GUIDE

SHARKS

Sharks swim in the warm waters off the southern coasts. Only the much-feared megalodon haunts the arctic seas further north. Fishermen are in the most danger, for the smell of bloody fish attracts these voracious predators from miles around. Unless guided by kreana or induced into a feeding frenzy, shark attacks are actually very rare occurrences.

TYPICAL MAN-EATER

These statistics cover most medium-sized man-eaters, such as tiger, mako, and bull sharks.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d12

Pace: —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- * **Bite:** Str+d6.
- * **Feeding Frenzy:** Once there is a significant amount of blood in the water (usually one wound), all sharks present go into a feeding frenzy and add +2 to their attacks and damage for the rest of the fight.

GREAT WHITE

These statistics cover great whites measuring 18 to 25 feet long. Larger specimens do exist, as do smaller ones.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d12

Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12

Treasure: Meager, in stomach

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- * **Bite:** Str+d8.
- * **Feeding Frenzy:** Once there is a significant amount of blood in the water (usually one wound), all sharks present go into a feeding frenzy and add +2 to their attacks and damage for the rest of the fight.
- * **Hardy:** Second Shaken does not cause a wound.
- * **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking a Great White, due to its large size.
- * **Size +4:** Great whites can grow up to 25' in length.



MEGALODON

These massive predators are large enough to attack the biggest warships, and have done so on several occasions. Fortunately, they rarely come close to shore, preferring to lurk in the deeper oceans. Kreana revere them as avatars of their bloodthirsty god.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Stealth d6

Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 18 (2)

Treasure: Treasure Trove, in stomach

Special Abilities:

- * **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- * **Armor +2:** Thick skin.
- * **Bite:** Str+d12.
- * **Gargantuan:** Heavy Armor. Attacks against them by man-size creatures are made at +4. A megalodon's attacks are Heavy Weapons. Add Size to damage when stomping (only possible for this beast if it manages to breach up and onto a vessel).
- * **Size +8:** Megalodons are over 60' long.
- * **Swallow:** If a megalodon scores a raise on its Fighting roll against foes of Size +3 or smaller, it has swallowed them. Victims are at -4 to any physical rolls while inside its gut and -4 to damage. Victims must make a Vigor roll each round or gain a level of Fatigue. This can lead to Death.



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From the comical-looking but deadly bufomi to fearsome frost giants to ravenous kreana, Hellfrost is populated by all manner of intelligent creatures. Designed for GMs who want their monsters to be more than simple swordfodder and for players who want to face new challenges, the Creature Guide Compendium explores six of these monstrous races.

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