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CITIES OF
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SKRAAG

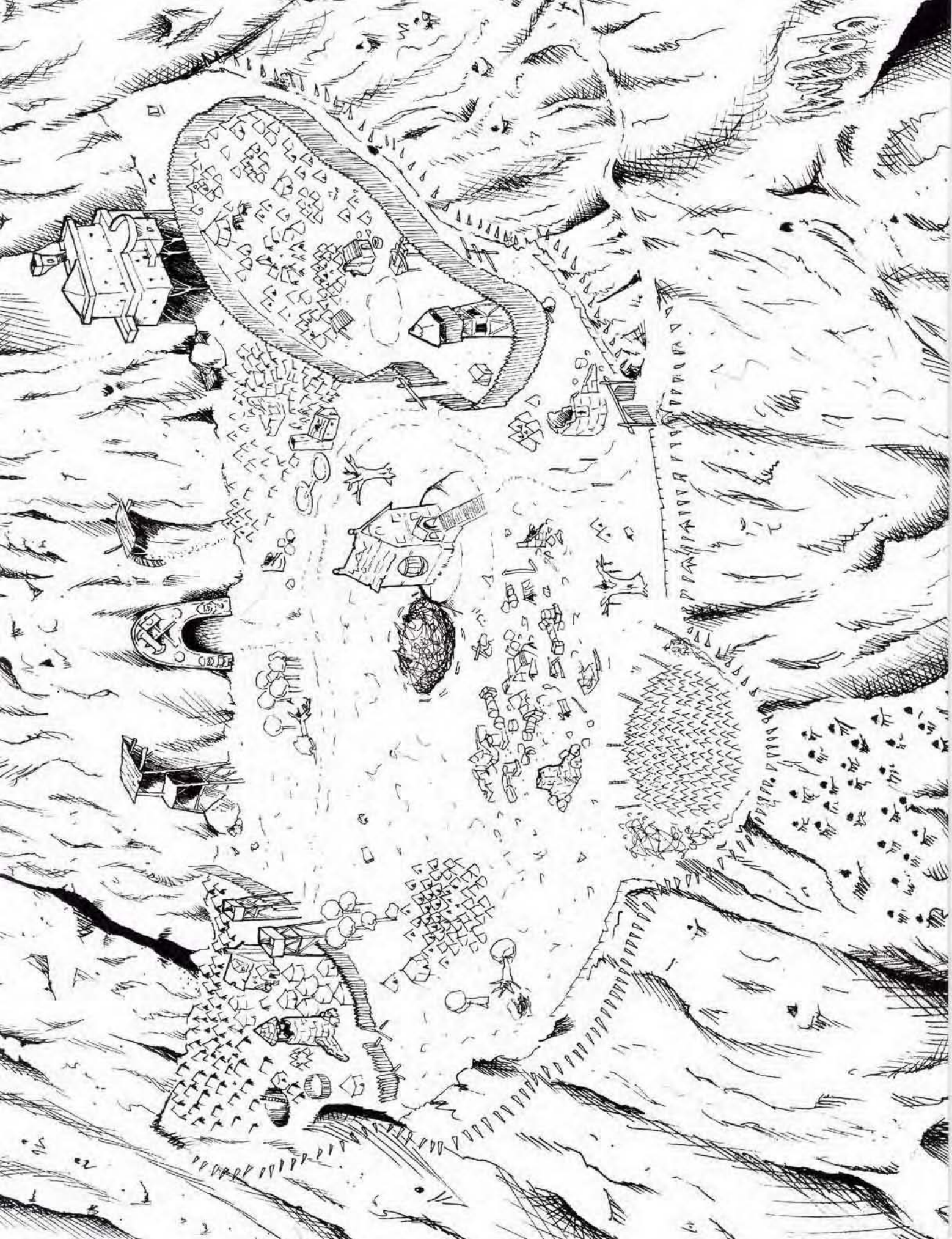
CITY OF ORCS



Wil Upchurch

RCH-12-01

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Skraag City of Orcs

Wil Upchurch

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INTRODUCTION

Home to over twenty-five thousand rampaging orcs, Skraag is a city of pure brutality, a place of nightmare that even the bravest adventurer will fear to tread. Built from the ruins of an ancient dwarven stronghold the orcs themselves destroyed, the hordes of Skraag range for miles in every direction, bringing slaughter and misery to any community unfortunate enough to be within range of their predations.

Few dare to make their way into Skraag, for the orcs are an evil race that despise any not of their own kind. To travel on the plain of Skraag, or within its deep caverns is to court death itself. No amount of skill in arms or magic will prevail here and yet there is much that must be discovered about the orcs' organisation and overall aims. Do they intend to stay within the boundaries of the city? Or are the warlords of the marauding orc armies building up their strength so as to sweep all kingdoms before them in a murderous red tide of blood-letting and carnage?

The rulers of the city detest any interruption of their interests and the order maintained over its barbarous inhabitants and so ruthlessly quash all uprisings. The common orc endures much hardship beneath his masters and yet remains loyal to his race, his allegiance bought by the promise of gold and the ever present threat of death. Goblins live at the bottom of the social strata of the city and yet even they provide no in-road for a would-be invader and vanquisher of orc-kind. Life within Skraag is characterised by murder, brutality, poverty and starvation, but no inhabitant seeks escape whilst the forces of man, dwarf and elf do their utmost to eliminate any weak orcish presence found beyond the boundaries of the city. The city remains an eternal threat to all those who hold dear the forces of righteousness and civilisation. It falls to the swords and wit of heroes to overcome this great menace, to perform the very acts of legend and succeed where entire armies might fail.

CITIES OF FANTASY

Skraag, City of Orcs heralds an exciting new series from Mongoose Publishing. Designed to provide Games Masters with entire settlements and communities to drop into any existing campaign, Cities of Fantasy will open the door to an entire treasure trove of exciting gaming sessions, made all the more memorable for the locations in which they

are set. Every city within the series is specifically designed to inject the very element of high fantasy into any campaign. Skraag represents the kind of city that is often mentioned or spoken about, but rarely written as a sourcebook, ready for Games Masters to use with their players – you now have an entire city of orcs to play with. Enjoy!

SKRAAG – CITY OF THE ORCS

Within this sourcebook, you will find an entire city ready to drop straight into your campaign. *Skraag, City of Orcs* is fully detailed, with maps and illustrations depicting the foul lives led by those who dwell within. In addition, Games Masters will be able to make ready use of the complete backgrounds provided for those individuals and factions who have risen above the rest to become dominant forces within the city, constantly vying for power with one another in a continued struggle set to destroy Skraag from the inside.

Skraag, City of Orcs contains enough action and adventure to keep players on their toes for many gaming sessions to come and an entire chapter is dedicated to enabling Games Masters to insert Skraag quickly and easily into their existing campaigns. One way or another, few players will ever forget the adventures they endure within an entire city of orcs and their foul kin.



I write this under extreme duress. The damnable orcs have taken the Hearth Plain, and they now seethe like a glob of pure evil, waiting to press on into the underhome. Our hearty dwarven defenders are readying themselves for the next push, and I know each will slay dozens of orcs before he falls. Unfortunately I fear this will not be enough. The women and children have already been moved deeper into the mountain, and preparations are underway to send them even farther away.

Gods! The orcs have penetrated much deeper and faster than I expected. I was just barely able to fend off a number of the foul creatures, and as I write this several battle-hardened veterans are fighting off another group just down the hall. Held under siege in our own halls! This place feels like a prison now, and I fear that soon the inmates will be running the place.

Let anyone who finds this know the glory of Ironhallow Hall! We were a great trade outpost, our gems and hospitality much sought after by wanderers in this land. I never cared much for the humans and elves who settled here, but their bravery in battle cannot be denied! They fell long before even one orc set foot inside Ironhallow Hall, and their number will be remembered forever alongside the dwarven heroes of this place.

I must rest now, even as I prepare for the final sleep. Damn my aged body, for I would like to die fighting the enemies of my home.

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I have awakened to dire news after only two hours sleep. The women and children have been sent away. Nothing can stop the orcs now; all that is left is to die as dwarves, defending our home. The sacred chanters have worked through the night to seal off passages that lead to places holy to our gods. It will not do to have the orcs running rampant on our sacred grounds. Our shrines and the sacred artifacts therein must never be found by the likes of the orcs. By collapsing these passages we make one last defiant stand against our conquerors, for defeat us they shall. Their numbers are too great; not even our legendary dwarven resolve can compete with the tide of evil they have unleashed upon us.

Curse my infirmity! If my legs would allow I would be out there now, dying in the tunnels my ancestors found many hundreds of years ago. I hear there is but one final phalanx of defenders guarding the main tunnels. I know that my brother has already fallen. These last two days have been a nightmare that we could not have foreseen, and when we awake from it we will stand by the side of our gods.

Now I believe I will close this parchment and seal it away in a place only a dwarf could find. That is my one consolation, that our most sacred treasures will be forever hidden away from the foul creatures that now infest our home. Our dwarven eyes can see things in the rocks that they can never see, and one day when we come to reclaim our home these small things will be waiting for us.

Bah! Enough of this writing! Recounting such thoughts weighs heavily on me, and I can hear the screams of my clanmates as I sit here in foolish self-reflection. I wish only that generations hence remember the dwarves of Ironhallow Hall for their bravery, their piety, and their fierce defiance of the unrelenting tide of evil that now drowns my people in its dark embrace.

Olfar Grimblestone

HISTORY

Over seven hundred years ago the dwarves of the Ironhallow clan were driven from their ancestral homes by a combined force of duergar and troglodyte invaders. They, along with several other clans of the shattered dwarven settlement, fled to the surface in order to find a new home. After wandering for several months, disagreements began to creep into the inter-clan council. The council could not reach a consensus on where or how to continue their search and so most families began to go their separate ways, with the Ironhallow clan being the only ones to remain above ground.

They travelled for months, lost in the land above, and many died or abandoned the clan. Some of those who fled were younger dwarves, hot-heads who told the elders they would rather wander the land as adventurers than continue their quest for a new home. These became the Dispossessed of Ironhallow, but theirs is another tale.

The rest continued to wander, far from their wounded home, until they eventually came upon a flat plain atop a great mountain. Here they rested for several days, until a scouting party later returned with exciting news - a crevasse had been found in the side of the mountain. Explorers were sent immediately and, after several days, they returned to report a large network of caverns within the mountain. No signs of prior inhabitation were found throughout, and one of the caverns even housed a large lake.

The dwarves rejoiced at the news. The clan elders christened their new home Ironhallow Hall and pronounced that forever more the day of its discovery would be a sacred holiday.

IRONHALLOW HALL PROSPERS AND GROWS

It took several decades to truly make the place a home. The first order of business was the construction and reformation of the interior caverns. The dwarves decided to leave the main entrance small at first to facilitate the clan's protection and not until two hundred years later did they finally create a grand stone archway to welcome visitors to their home.

Inevitably, the other races inhabiting the area began to notice the dwarven community. War is as much a way

of life underground as it is on the surface, and Ironhallow Hall quickly found it had a number of enemies in places untouched by the sun. A familiar foe quickly became the predominant aggressors in the new community, for the troglodyte clan making its home nearby was not large, but was particularly hardy for the species and relentless when battling the dwarves.

From the outside world came humans and elves, though the fair folk rarely cared for dwarven company. These travellers usually sought shelter, but as time passed they started to come for trade. The Ironhallow dwarves had discovered untapped jasper and emerald mines beneath the mountain, and soon found themselves beset more often with traders and merchants than lost adventurers and rangers.

The clan elders feared for the safety of their people and wished to preserve the sanctity of the hall in the face of increased traffic. They ordered construction started outside the hall on the plain they had settled decades before, now referred to as the Hearth Plain. Structure after structure went up, and in little time a thriving town lay just outside the dwarven city. Taverns and inns were almost as numerous as shops devoted to trade, crafts, and goods, and over the next three centuries Ironhallow Hall prospered under this busy trade.

THE HORDE DESCENDS

Just over a century ago, three dwarven rangers arrived at Ironhallow Hall just ahead of a rampaging orc horde. The horde had already smashed several settlements within a few miles of the hall and was quickly ascending to the Hearth Plain. Defences were hastily mounted as the cry of invasion rang through the caverns. Many of the town's visitors fled, seeking shelter and safety with their own people. A few others stayed to help defend Ironhallow.

These brave few included Acheroi's Stalwarts, a human mercenary band resting after a rigorous campaign against the troglodytes beneath the mountain, and the Sai'chin, a feared group of elven archers whose reputation for both accuracy and bravery was known the land over. Erik de Galhart, a paladin whose star was on the rise within his order, made his final stand with the Ironhallow dwarves too. One member of his retinue, Pangrath, survived the battle and it is his writings that provide one of the main sources of information about these bloody days.

The orcs struck quick and hard. They roiled into the city in a seething, evil mass, cutting down defenders and burning homes and shops. Several units of dwarf crossbowmen and infantry had been stationed in the outer city, their grim duty to slow down the horde whilst those inside prepared to defend their home. These forces included the elven archers, whose deaths are given solemn remembrance by Pangrath alongside the dwarven fallen.

It was not long before the Hearth Plain fell to the invaders, and the horde showed no signs of stopping or reinforcing its position. The orc warlords pushed their troops onward, executing any orc who stopped to loot or plunder. By nightfall, the orcs had secured the entry halls, but the stalwart dwarven defenders, supported by powerful chanters and priests, had managed to stay the momentum of the horde. As the moon reached its apex, the orc warlords finally called a halt and posted units to shore up their positions. The first day of battle was over.

The dwarves worked through the night to gather children and other non-combatants, readying the

groups to descend into the caverns if the orcs overwhelmed the Hall's defenders. Phalanx after phalanx of dwarven infantrymen, crossbowmen, chanters and battle priests arranged themselves for the orcs' next assault. They knew that being underground gave them no advantage, for the orcs could see as well as they in the sunless realms. The dwarves and their allies steeled themselves, comforted with the thought that dying in defence of the clan-home would make them heroes in the afterlife.

Before sunrise, the attack came again. Orcs poured in droves through Ironhallow Hall as the defenders desperately attempted to push them back. Dozens of invaders fell at the hastily constructed walls, but twice as many remained to fill the empty space. The dwarves, pressed back deep into their caverns, had failed to spot a second horde arriving from the southern valley. This orc army had been delayed as it tried to cross the Valley of the Sphinxes, but after a day and a half of negotiation was allowed to pass.

Beset by an endless tide of invaders, the dwarves assigned two regiments to lead the children and elders away from Ironhallow Hall. The ancestors of those who founded the great clan-home were on the move once more, but vowed to some day return and enact their vengeance.

ORC RULE

It took several more days for the orcs to root out the last of the stubborn defenders, as most dwarves fought to their dying breath. Looting and celebration took place alongside the execution of surviving clansmen. Dwarves were forced to watch as their enemies took over their homes, ate their food, and destroyed their belongings.

The orc warlords themselves marched into the defeated city on the ninth day of the attack. This was just as their shaman had predicted - one day of battle for each of the fingers of the Maimed Lord, followed by victory in his name. They ordered a parade of the last few surrendering dwarves and cut off the fourth finger of each of their hands. They then turned them loose, the sacrifice complete.

Few buildings remained intact in the outer city, and many still spat smoke into the sky as scavengers picked over the battlefield. Twisted harpies and goblins were among those picking the dead clean of flesh and gold. Ironhallow Hall itself was more a charnel house than a former dwarf cavern. Thousands of dead bodies





littered the floor, and Craddush Lake, once the lifeblood of the dwarven community, now ran red with the very blood it once nourished.

The orc warlords claimed what buildings were left as their own, leaving the horde to find shelter within the mountain. They had little knowledge of what lay within the mountain passages, but realised they had reached the end of their war.

THE CITY IS REBUILT

The army ate better than it had in months, feasting daily on the bodies of their fallen enemies. The orcs cleaned out the passages of Ironhallow Hall and brought valuables to the outer city for the warlords to admire and squabble over. Great mounds of treasure were scraped from within the halls. The stronger orcs took the best caverns for themselves, whilst others instinctively banded together to insure themselves a good base. The warlords realised the horde was not travelling further and decided to call Ironhallow their new home. Messengers were sent to orc encampments across the land, and thousands upon thousands of orcs descended upon the new city. Crude tents and fire pits dotted the Hearth Plain as orcs awaited the word to move into their new home. More arrived daily, often with tribes of goblins in tow.

Meanwhile, the orc army had cleaned out the underground halls, converting smithies and foundries into kitchens and storage rooms. The trading post, one of the few buildings remaining intact after the assault,

became the home of the powerful shaman of the horde who advised its warlords. After a few years, the caverns became choked with orcs, so the army moved out of the city to make way for the overflow. They encamped a mile from the main city, just on the edge of the Hearth Plain and the warlords gave over control of the settlement to a City Master and left a small contingent of troops to keep order and support his will. This form of government still exists in the city, though tensions between the incumbent City Master and the captain of the troops threatens to erode the stability of the entire city.

FURY OF THE MAIMED LORD

For generations the orcs lived in their new city, now renamed Skraag. The warlords found their horde dispersing as the attrition of peacetime slowly shrunk their force, for fighting was common both in the outer city and inside the caverns, and roving bands of thugs and hoodlums made it a chaotic and violent place. A new shaman, Akrilla, predicted a great catastrophe would befall the city, whose leaders grew fat and lazy whilst its people wasted their good fortune.

This prediction was to come true in a murderous fashion. Great black clouds were seen forming through the peaks of nearby mountains, growing larger as they moved toward the city. The warlords, nervous because of Akrilla's frightening prognostication, ordered all troops to break camp and

take shelter away from Skraag. It was the last time many would see their mountainside home.

The storm descended furiously on Skraag, pelting the outer city with large drops of rain and hail the size of an orc's fist. The wind blew so hard that the orcs' desperate cries were lost in the maelstrom and those that took shelter within the mountain were granted but a temporary reprieve, one that would last only hours. Soon, water began dripping through the ceilings of the halls, and in many places the rocks burst open to allow great torrents of water to barrel through the city.

The storm subsided after a half day of destruction, the clouds seemingly dissipating into the great, black sky. The army moved back to the Hearth Plain to survey the damage, and many of the orcs spread further destruction in fits of anger and rage. The warlords immediately sought Akrilla, thinking she had brought this disaster on with her precognition. Although protesting they had not heeded her warning, the orcs demanded her blood and Akrilla was forced to flee the city using magic to escape her pursuers, and lost herself deep within a nearby swamp. She remains in exile to this day, watching over the city that unfairly

punished her, torn between her desire for revenge and her servitude of the orcs' cruel god.

Being superstitious and not fully convinced that Akrilla's visions were indeed false, the warlords wasted no time in raising their army once more. They told the assembled horde that they must destroy in their god's name or be destroyed themselves by his vengeance. Something awakened in the orcs that had lain dormant for many years and the horde was on the move once more.

THE AFTERMATH

With the horde gone and the city in near ruin, orcs from around the region began again to migrate to Skraag. Although a small military contingent had been left behind under the command of a young orc named Grogan Thral, authority in the city was weakened and many orcs saw the opportunity to grab power in the void. The most notable of these was Cylus Groom, a vicious and gluttonous orc who would stop at nothing to fulfil his desires. He assembled a dedicated group of followers who insured his rivals were in no condition to contest his control over rebuilding the city.

Skraag was slowly rebuilt using labour from nearby tribes of goblins, hobgoblins and trolls to speed the process. Cylus Groom and his men arranged all of this, further solidifying his position as civil leader of Skraag but whilst Grogan Thral and his followers disliked Groom's tactics, and resented the presence of hobgoblins and trolls in their midst, they had their orders from the warlords and so co-operated.

THE PRESENT DAY

Portions of the horde return to Skraag every few months, to refresh their numbers and bring loot to be stored within the city's deepest vaults. Meanwhile, those that live in Skraag go about their lives. Some of the hobgoblins and trolls that helped rebuild the city stayed, and the ever-present goblins still eke out a living from the scraps of the orcs. Cylus Groom and his cronies run the entire city, having suitably impressed visiting warlords with their quick rise to power and ability to maintain control. Grogan Thral watches Cylus from afar, but does not bring his concerns to the warlords, knowing they would likely strip him of his command, or worse. The descendants of those the orcs displaced still seethe over their past defeat, waiting in the shadows for a time to strike.

Thus it stands today, a once proud dwarven outpost reduced to a slop pit for the families of those that destroyed it.



GOVERNMENT

Civil government in any orc city is a loose affiliation of powerful and ambitious orcs with the backing of the most powerful tribes and chieftains. Skraag is no exception to this. The single most powerful orc in Skraag is the fat, ruthless schemer, Cylus Groon.

Groon first came to power in the wake of the devastating storm that nearly destroyed the city twenty five years before. Since then, his unyielding grip on the city's operations has shown no sign of slipping. In times past he was a young, pugnacious orc with a reputation for travelling with a rough crowd of rowdy drinkers and thugs. He often displayed a cruel imagination and stomach for trouble that frightened even the seasoned criminals among his gang but underneath this disgusting exterior, lay a keen and ambitious mind.

When the storm came, Groon and his cohorts took shelter in the caves along with the rest of the city. There they plotted ways to profit from the chaos and destruction, talking of looting destroyed structures and bullying those that found themselves without shelter. Cylus, however, had another plan. Rather than risking the wrath of the returning army, why not aid them in regaining order? Although this did not sound like fun to the majority of his gang, Cylus eventually won them over with promises of power and riches gained with impunity. After the storm receded, they immediately began 'organising' work groups to bring order to the blasted city. They beat orcs and goblins alike, forcing them to work night and day and report to Cylus regularly.

Groon and his group spent the rest of their time eliminating any who would stand in the way of their rise to power. Many of the town's leaders had been killed during the storm but others remained, and it was these that Cylus primarily saw as his rivals. Several 'accidents' later and most of the would-be opposition had been taken care of permanently. While his men did most of his dirty work, and often took the fall for their behaviour, Cylus travelled to a nearby tribe of hobgoblins in order to broker an agreement. He paid them a sum of gold and the promise of further remuneration in exchange for a few dozen of their tribe to aid in the rebuilding of Skraag. Although potentially more dangerous than the hobgoblins, Cylus also made the same deal with a nearby group of trolls.

He returned to the city with a retinue of strong and loyal followers, though he convinced the orc warlords he had merely brought in aid at great personal expense. Further challenges to his authority were not forthcoming, and with the horde leaving soon to resume its plundering and destruction, Cylus was firmly entrenched as the civil leader of Skraag.

GROON'S GOVERNMENT

Cylus has managed to build a loyal network of followers during his tenure as City Master. The surviving members of his original gang form a close inner circle that provides the muscle behind his rule. Their numbers have been augmented by new recruits over the years, even including a half-orc who proved his worth by killing his human mother when she travelled to Skraag to find him.

These enforcers, known as the Silver Tusks, wade through the city in small gangs, rooting out any signs of dissatisfaction or antipathy toward their leader. They see failure to pay regular tribute to Cylus for all the good works he performs as a sure sign of dissatisfaction, and offenders are beaten and intimidated, depending on their standing within the community. Those found taking their complaints to the guard under Grogan Thral are treated far more severely. Cylus' orcs take what they want when they want it, but they are careful not to abuse this privilege. They know that if they are too blatant, Cylus will be forced to make an example of one or more of them to appease the warlords by whose grace he rules. These gangs give a wide berth to those who court influence with Grogan Thral or the other military leaders.

Groon has other sympathetic followers within Skraag as well. A small community of hobgoblins has grown around the original group that were brought in to aid in the rebuilding process. Around a hundred and fifty of the creatures now make Skraag their home, and they have formed their own tribe with the blessing of their former chieftain. This tribe is moderately loyal to Groon and his company, although some of its younger members show an independent streak that has the orc City Master on edge.

Many of the goblins in the city are in his employ, usually as thieves, messengers, or labourers. They are not necessarily loyal to Groon, being simply dependent on him for wages and food. Some of the more unfortunate goblins end up as food themselves,



for those who displease Groon are fed to the trolls he keeps as guardians and labourers.

GROON'S GOALS

Groon desires nothing but power over as many orcs as possible. He was far too lazy to join the hordes that periodically terrorise the surrounding lands, so he chose a different route to power, one easily afforded to him when the horde left Skraag. Since then he has enriched his personal coffers at the expense of the city, whilst maintaining at least the façade of performing governmental duties. He keeps the streets free of chaos and violence (for the most part) and polices the city's main resources, namely water, weapons and material goods.

Despite all of Cylus' flaws, he is a reasonably efficient City Master. There have been no major internal conflicts under his rule and several attacks upon the city have been rebuffed through his leadership and that of Grogan Thral. Normal life continues in the city without much disturbance. The open market flourishes, especially when the orcs of the horde return with plundered goods and gold, and few orcs desire to leave the city once they arrive. Groon himself answers only to the orcish warlords that visit the city from time to time, in particular

Warmaster Thak who retains the ultimate authority to have Cylus removed. The warlords as a whole have determined Groon to be a satisfactory caretaker of the city and do not bother themselves with inquiries regarding his methods or motivations. Grogan Thral has been informed in no uncertain terms that he is to do whatever he can to insure the stability and defence of the city, and that includes seeing to the safety of Cylus Groon.

NOTABLE AUTHORITY FIGURES

The second most powerful orc in Skraag is Grogan Thral, leader of the standing army of Skraag. Thral is an unusually intelligent orc who despises Cylus Groon for his gluttonous and conniving ways. He believes orcs in leadership should be fit and able to defend their own interests, not rely on a cadre of bullies and informants to monitor their affairs. However, he is bound by the warlords to provide a regular guard for Cylus, which he does, but uses this position to gather information about the City Master. He secretly tries to undermine Cylus' rule but is very careful not to implicate himself in any uncovered plots. One slip is all he needs to remove Cylus from power, but so far no opportunity has presented itself.

'I want you to kill him. Then bring his body to me so I may defile it properly.'

Cylus gave the order as if he were ordering ale from a waitress, fully expectant his wish would soon be fulfilled without the slightest hesitation.

'Yes, Groon, he will be dead before morning,' said the tall, muscular orc standing in the doorway. 'By the way, I thought your take-over of the southern land holdings was masterfully performed.' The orc then formed a meaty fist and thumped his chest, the common salute used by orcs from the horde.

'I've told you not to do that around me,' said Cylus. He grabbed the wall next to him and hoisted his corpulent form out of the chair in which he was sat. 'I am not a warlord, nor do I have the desire to be. If I wanted to I could make it happen, of that there is no doubt, but I will leave such strenuous work to orcs like your warlord Grimlir.'

'Whatever you say, Cylus,' said the other orc. *Alodai be damned, I hate this Groon. Still, he is the most powerful orc in the city and there is an obvious connection between he and warlord Grimlir.* 'I will bring your cousin's body, and those of any who stand in my way.'

Cylus watched the orc as he receded into the hallway. 'There is one who will go far,' he said to the burly orc with silver tusk caps standing next to him. 'He has just the proper amount of respect, and the proper amount of ambition.' Cylus turned to his aide and gave him a serious look. 'He is not to leave this building alive.'

The other orc nodded, and with a silent grin he drew his axe and stepped off into the darkness.



The leader of the orc army, Warmaster Thak, also wields great power in the city when he is in residence. His word is law and even Grogan keeps a low profile during these times. At times when he is off leading the horde, he entrusts the military duties of Skraag to Grogan, who has proven a capable and enthusiastic leader. Warmaster Thak is aware of some of the tactics used by Cylus in his rise to power, but he keeps himself wilfully ignorant of current activities. So long as the city functions as well as it has, he cares little as to what its leaders or citizens are doing. In his own opinion the city is no more than a place to bring the loot his horde captures and provide a fresh recruiting pool for more warriors.

orcs sent to guard Cylus are loyal only to him. This guard provides information on Cylus' movements and plans, allowing Thral to devise counter-schemes to hinder Cylus' growing operations. He also knows the Silver Tusks do not target businesses with ties to him or his forces and so he has created a number of interests in the city run by orcs retired from his army. By channelling more commercial activity into areas the City Master cannot touch, he forces Cylus to siphon less gold to his personal coffers.

The dwarves living near the underground caverns of Skraag are also a thorn in Grogan's side. They plot constantly to sabotage the orcs in what they still consider to be their city. Ambushing the deepest orc patrols, they steal both equipment and food whenever they can. The resistance includes the Warriors of the Nine, a group descended from the dwarves who lost their fingers to the orcs' dark god. These stealthy warriors have attempted to assassinate both Cylus and Grogan in the past, but such missions have always failed.

THE OPPOSITION

The only serious threats to Cylus' rule are the machinations of Grogan Thral, and the ever-present menace of the dwarven resistance. Grogan Thral has several plans in motion that he hopes will slowly erode the power of his corpulent rival. First, he ensures any

WARRIOR OF THE NINE

The Warriors of the Nine are a group of dwarven fighters descended from those who were mutilated by the Mended Ones during the initial invasion of Ironhallow Hall by the orc hordes. They have carried the weight of their fathers' and grandfathers' humiliation down through the ages, and their close ties to the ancestors grants extraordinary powers and abilities.

Hit Dice: d10

Requirements

To qualify to become a warrior of the nine, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +8 or higher.

Skills: Knowledge (history) 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 2 ranks.

Wisdom: 13+.

Special: Must be directly descended from one of the dwarves who were mutilated by Alodai's priests during the invasion of Ironhallow Hall. Must sever the thumb of their left hand.

Class Skills

The warrior of the nine's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge

(History) (Int), Listen (Wis), and Spot (Wis).

Skill points at each level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

Weapons and Armour Proficiency: A warrior of the nine is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light armour, medium armour and shields. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armour and equipment carried.

Power of My Father's Father: At 1st level, the warrior of the nine learns to channel the lingering rage of his ancestors. As a free action, the character may add a +4 bonus to his Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution for one minute per class level. At the end of the duration, the character is dazed for one round for every minute he spent channelling this ancestral energy. The warrior of the nine may voluntarily end the action early in order to lessen this effect, but he is always dazed for at least one round.

Ancestral Image: At 2nd level, the warrior of the nine learns to project an image that can be used to scout, mislead enemies, or perform a variety of other tasks. This image takes the form of an

Warrior of the Nine

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Power of My Father's Father 1/day
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Ancestral Image 1/day
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Ghosts of the Past, Spirit of Stone
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Power of My Father's Father 2/day
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Spirit Journey, Knowledge of the Elders
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Ancestral Image 2/day
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Power of My Father's Father 3/day
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Ghostly Double
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	Bonus Feat
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Spirit Merge

ancestor and glows with a faint white radiance. It is incorporeal with Armour Class 10 and is dispelled if it takes damage from any source. The image can travel up to one mile per class level of the warrior of the nine who summoned it, and the character can see and hear as if he were in the physical location of the spirit. The image cannot interact with physical objects, nor does it have any attacks or special abilities. While the image exists, the warrior of the nine who summoned it must remain in a semi-catatonic state though the character can voluntarily end the projection at any time, allowing him to wake from the catatonia. If the image is dispelled through damage, the character must make a Will save (DC 18) or be brought to -1 hit points and become unconscious.

Ghosts of the Past: At 3rd level, the warrior of the nine can call upon ghostly duplicates that swarm around him in constant motion. He can do this a number of times per day equal to his Wisdom modifier, and it acts the same as a *mirror image* spell cast by a 12th level sorcerer.

Spirit of Stone: At 3rd level, the warrior of the nine may call upon the memory of his ancestor's sacrifice to strengthen his resolve, gaining a +4 bonus to all Will saves.

Spirit Journey: At 5th level, the warrior of the nine is able to enter the spirit world for a limited period of time once per day. This ability is identical to *ethereal jaunt* cast by a 12th level sorcerer.

Knowledge of the Elders: At 5th level, the warrior of the nine learns to coax information from the spirits of the dead. This ability is identical to *legend lore* cast by a 12th level sorcerer.

Ghostly Double: At 8th level, the warrior of the nine gains the supernatural ability to call forth a replica made of solidified shadow. This double fights in combat as the warrior of the nine who summoned it, but cannot duplicate spellcasting, psionic, supernatural, or spell-like abilities. The warrior of the nine loses 1/10th of his maximum hit point total, rounding down, when creating the ghostly double, and if the double is slain this loss becomes permanent. The duplicate's equipment is similarly made of shadow stuff but does not have any magical qualities of the original. All equipment carried by the double disappears with it, even if separated from the double while it existed. A double that is dismissed will regenerate all damage in a single day. If it is called before this time it will retain any damage. If a double is killed the warrior of the nine must wait a month to call another. It takes a standard action to call a double, and the double can be dismissed as a free action at any time.

Bonus Feat: At 9th level the warrior of the nine may choose a bonus feat from the fighter's list.

Spirit Merge: At 10th level, the warrior of the nine merges with the spirit of an ancestor, shedding his material body and becoming a true spirit warrior. The warrior of the nine's creature type changes to 'outsider' and he becomes semi-ethereal. The character is no longer affected by spells that target living creatures and will be checked by a *magic circle* against his alignment. The semi-ethereal state of the warrior of the nine has the effect of a permanent *blink* spell, as well as granting him Damage Reduction 10/+1. The warrior of the nine otherwise interacts with his environment normally.

THE FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

Cylus runs the government from a converted trading post, once the largest in the original dwarven city. He spends much of his time organising the daily business of Skraag, including monitoring the work crews, keeping up to date on the Lake Guard, and even more importantly taking reports from his men on the state of his personal affairs.

Most orcs do not care to work for Groom, so they take full advantage of the other races living in Skraag. The primary labourers in the city are goblins, who perform mostly as waste disposal and other forms of slave labour. Most often, the goblins are happy to work for the city as it is the most reliable source of income they can hope for in Skraag. Those that do not work in this capacity are often forced to steal or settle for slave wages where they can get them, but most often are thrown onto a work crew where they live in servitude. The tribe of hobgoblins is far more self-sufficient and organised than the goblins. They have a standing contract with the city to produce metal goods, including armour and weapons, and they grow a good portion of their own food within the boundaries of their settlement.

Sometimes Cylus is asked to resolve disputes between citizens, and as often as not will make judgement against both participants, thus limiting the amount of time he spends on such endeavours. The result is that vigilantism and hired 'trouble-shooters' are the most common and reliable form of justice in the city. When

Groom does make judgement against a citizen it most often results in time on a work crew, not a good prospect because of the cruelty of the crew masters. Fines are rare because of the relative poverty of the city's denizens, but they can be levied on the spot when it is deemed necessary or when the target is known to be wealthy.

Other law enforcement in the city is carried out by either Grogan's men or the Silver Tusks, depending on who is in the area at the time. The Tusks always defer to the military in order to avoid any confrontation that could reflect poorly on the City Master. Grogan is fair but harsh, and will not hesitate to send an offender to the work crews or the army.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The attitude of Skraag's citizens is that nothing is criminal until you are discovered. Getting caught will earn the unfortunate culprit the following punishments;

Theft

Assigned to a work crew, for a period of up to six months.

Military service may be substituted for getting sent to a work crew, if the guilty party desires it although the minimum term of service is one year. In this case he is left free until the next horde arrives. Subsequently avoiding this military duty results in execution at the hands of Thral.



Murder

Depending on Cylus' mood and his disposition to the orc in question, this may or may not result in work crew servitude.

Bringing False

Accusations

Time on a work crew. This punishment is often handed to both the plaintiff and the defendant, regardless of how the case is adjudicated. Cylus really does not care about the legitimacy of a complaint, and this law only exists so he can rid himself of more orcs by punishing them under this statute.



Damaging City Property

Expulsion from the city or death on the spot, depending on the mood and demeanour of the orc who caught the offender. Either is acceptable by law. The beaters of the church of Alodai also carry out this punishment with pleasure.

Consorting with an Enemy of Skraag

Death.

These are the only crimes that warrant serious punishment in Skraag, where law does not reign in any great fashion. Cylus and the Silver Tusks answer only to their own laws and are free to break these as they wish though Groon does monitor the behaviour of his servants and egregious lawbreakers will be dealt with permanently.

GROON'S BUSINESS INTERESTS

Cylus has firmly entrenched his own interests with that of Skraag.

- † Cylus personally owns a portion of the habitable area on the Hearth Plain, as well as several caverns within the mountain. He charges a fair price for using his land, though he also takes a percentage of any commercial enterprise performed by his tenants. This is one of the few legitimate business interests Cylus presides over.
- † The hobgoblins overcharge the city for their metalworking and blacksmithing, and pay a percentage back to Cylus as 'craftsman fees.'
- † Cylus draws a salary from the city treasury, and he also pays his cronies as city servants. They have several funds from which they can draw gold, and do so liberally.
- † The Silver Tusks solicit protection money from nearly all of the city's traders and craftsmen. They are careful not to demand too much, and if any are caught overcharging they are beaten and expelled from the Silver Tusks.
- † A group of goblin thieves works under the Silver Tusks and pays them a percentage of their take, most of which goes directly to Cylus.

ECOLOGY

Living in Skraag is not easy for the vast majority of its inhabitants. The city lacks many of the basic provisions necessary for life, including an abundant food source. Water and living space are also in high demand, although these are more easily come by than food or even safety. Those that live well do so at the expense of others, leaving many of the orcs and goblins of Skraag to die of starvation or disease. Survivors often master the art of scavenging their basic needs from the discarded waste of those above them whilst thieves generally take what they need where they can find it, and many others are forced to submit themselves to the work crews voluntarily just to subsist on the meagre rations provided by the city.

Skraag is barely self-sufficient, as is the case for most permanent orcish settlements. It relies heavily on plunder brought back by the hordes and on banditry perpetrated by its citizens. There is no permanent water supply above ground, so the orcs must retrieve their water from deep within the bowels of the city where an underground stream feeds the lake. The lake itself is under permanent heavy guard, as dwarven guerrillas, troglodytes and other underground perils constantly vie for this important water source.

The leader of this city is the foul, bloated orc named Cylus Groon. He is an unusually savvy orc, given to bouts of extreme cruelty even as he uses cunning and sneaky diplomacy to keep himself firmly entrenched as the highest orc. He exercises complete authority over the city, although most orcs do their best to ignore his pronouncements and go about daily life. The captain of the city's defenders, Grogan Thral, sees Cylus as a

gluttonous buffoon, but also recognizes the threat Cylus would pose if he were to openly question the authority. Both are subordinate to the Hordemaster when he is in residence and the town resembles a military encampment more than a civilian city.

FOOD AND WATER

Water is relatively plentiful due to the underground lake that sits on the city's outskirts, but it is still rationed by the permanent garrison under Grogan Thral. The many subterranean races that utilise the water source battle constantly for dominance of the caverns around the lake, so it is imperative for the city's security that common orcs not be allowed to move freely around them. They must also insure the lake's water remains fresh and pure, as the despoliation of the lake would surely mean an end to Skraag.

Orcs are given ration chips, small black tokens made of baked animal waste, which they can exchange for water at stations throughout the undercity. One ration chip is good for one meagre week's worth of water for a single orc. These chips can also be purchased on the black market for a high price (this is one of the most lucrative businesses in Skraag), and in some areas of the city are worth more than their weight in silver. A desperate orc might part with a ration chip for as little as 2 gold pieces, but more likely they would be acquired through the black market at a cost of six to ten gold pieces each.

Food is a major concern for a city this large, especially one with no real trading partners or agriculture and the mountainous terrain in which the orcs live affords them little opportunity to hunt or fish. Therefore, the orcs of Skraag have become adept



at scavenging the surrounding area for food and many of them hunt for game in the caverns below the Hearth Plain.

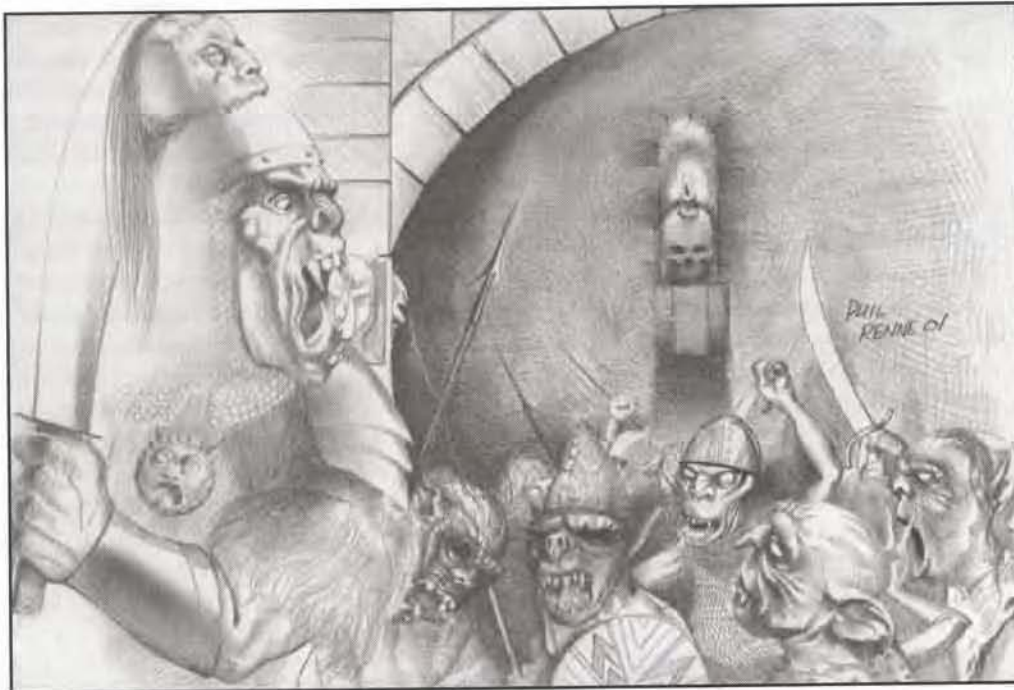
Skraag's only outside source for food is the hobgoblin tribe from which Cylus Groom originally recruited the warband that now lives in the city. They bring food from the wilderness, as well as captured stores of grain and livestock from nearby human villages and towns. The food is transferred from hobgoblin to orc and then on to Cylus himself. By the time it reaches the common inhabitants of Skraag, its price has been outrageously inflated.

Some of Skraag's inhabitants have taken to raising small edible animals such as rabbits and rats that are then sold live, dead or cooked, on the open market. Rat meat is the most plentiful found in Skraag. Even so, swarms of the rodents scurry about in the dark because of the city's filthy environment, and a larger dire race has been growing in numbers for years.

SHELTER

Shelter is another concern for the orcs of Skraag, since the city's population greatly exceeds the living space afforded by the caverns below. The Hearth Plain is nearly at capacity as well, making its habitable area both valuable and limited. The filth and squalor in which much of Skraag's populace live further reduces the available space because waste dumps and gravesites have sprung up all over the city. With no formal plan in place to deal with these issues, vast areas of the Hearth Plain have been made uninhabitable. Those who live on the Hearth Plain know Skraag to be a vastly different place from those orcs underground.

The undercity is a sheltered environment, free from the worries of the frequent storms that pelt the city. Although it is perpetually chilly in the caverns, those living below do not have to deal with climatic



changes and sudden weather patterns. Those who can afford cavern space below the Hearth Plain generally decline to build structures in which to live as the caves themselves provide cover from wind and storms. However, walls or doorways are often built into private caverns to dissuade casual theft, and valuable items are kept hidden in caches within the stone walls.

It is easier to live without a permanent home in the caverns, because unclaimed space can be squatted more easily. Although Cylus owns much of the undercity as he does the Hearth Plain, his personal foot soldiers, the Silver Tusks, are much more active on the surface. The heavy presence of Grogan Thral's guard dissuade the Silver Tusks from openly conducting their business in the undercity with any frequency, and squatters can usually count on protection in the short term, even if they will be forced to pay bribes to Thral himself.

Life on the surface is much tougher for the citizens of Skraag. They are under the immediate scrutiny and control of Cylus Groom and his Silver Tusks, and must face the ever-present danger and annoyance of heavy storms, animal attacks, and even raids. Less than a dozen structures were spared the torch during the battle in which the orcs won control over the city.

DAILY LIFE

Life in Skraag is a daily struggle for survival. While some orcs are able to carve out a decent life in the city, it is almost always at the expense of others. Stronger orcs tend to punish the weak or sickly, taking what they want without regard. This forces weaker orcs to band together, and often they pay protection money to the Silver Tusks or some other group of stronger orcs simply to be left alone. Bullying and thuggery are especially prevalent any time a large group of horde orcs returns from their plundering. In order to prevent this abuse from becoming widespread, the warlords have enacted strict policies of separation between the hordes and the city. This is the reason for the fenced area at the edge of the Hearth Plain where horde orcs are forced to stay when they return to the city.

Since there is no organised agriculture in Skraag (aside from the few hobgoblins, who have many small gardens to supplement their hunting), the orcs rely on captured goods and hunting for their sustenance. This creates a harsh environment in a city this large, and most orcs have found a way to scrape by even in the leanest of times. The religious Mended Ones tell the people their poverty and hunger is a sign from the god Alodai that the orcs are not being true to their nature. Orcs are made to conquer and destroy, not lazily inhabit a city where no terror can be wrought. However, no matter what the shamans say, those orcs who do live in Skraag need to live. To this end many orcs have learned the art of scavenging, or finding a way to live where little living is to be made. These scavengers generally take on two forms - those that live alone and make their way about the city on their wits and cunning, and those that are adept at living off the discards of more successful or affluent orcs.

New Feat: Scavenger (General)

You are able to live on almost nothing, finding sustenance where you can and utilising the discards and garbage of others.

Benefit: You need never spend money on food and drink. In addition, given a week, you can acquire any mundane item worth 5 gp or less for free.

The first is the archetypal impoverished orc, clothes tattered and teeth rotting from a deprived diet and poor health. These unfortunates barely sustain themselves by begging and foraging through the discards of other orcs. They often go for days with nothing to eat but the grasses of the Hearth Plain or the occasional scrapings of moss and fungi from the cavern walls of the undercity. The true scavengers are far more cunning, however, and it is often impossible to tell they use intelligent tactics to survive. These clever orcs attempt to befriend more successful orcs and use this affiliation to their advantage. These orcs gain entrance to parties and meetings where food and drink are served, stealing excess away for later consumption. They make their way into organisations whose membership can be counted on for a meal or a helpful fist of gold in lean times. Their scam is to appear as if they do not need help, thereby making it easier to convince people to help them.

The consumption of alcoholic beverages ranks as a favourite pastime for all orcs of Skraag, especially those from the hordes visiting the city. The dwarven stores of ale and wine that were kept in the caverns beneath the Hearth Plain were one of the greatest finds for the orcs that invaded the city. Too heavy to carry with them as they retreated, the ale represented a treasure the dwarves were forced to leave behind in the wake of their defeat. Most of these stores were depleted in the days of celebration following the successful invasion, but the warlords managed to hide some of the barrels away for their private stores. Some of these hidden caches were sold or transferred to heirs upon the deaths of the original warlords, but there are tales among the city's elite telling of caverns full of barrels that remain intact and ownerless to this day. Cylus Groon has made it a high priority to find these lost barrels of ale and wine, as the prices they would fetch from the warlords and other city leaders would be considerable.

Unable to rely on regular shipments of alcohol from the horde, who are not quick to give up their spirits, the orcs were forced to brew their own grog using local ingredients. After years of experimentation with roots and herbs, the orcs found what they required below the earth. A dark grey mushroom grows in many of the caverns beneath the Hearth Plain and after the original dwarves were vanquished the orcs quickly found them to be inedible, causing acute abdominal pains if eaten either raw or cooked. It was for this reason that it took so long for the orcs

to figure out that when properly distilled, the mushrooms would produce a strong, bitter brew. The orcs call this dark concoction grokk, and the citizens of Skraag have learned to favour this drink above all else. It certainly beats another captured consignment of disgusting elven wine.

As has already been discussed, many orcs do not worry about survival because they simply take what they need from their weaker neighbours. Individual orcs take it upon themselves to use stealth to acquire the goods of others, but for the most part thievery is left to the goblins. There is no established thieves' guild in the city of Skraag, but there is a group of goblins who live together and co-ordinate their efforts. Whilst not officially a guild, this organisation has made them far more successful than their more individualistic counterparts.

The goblins that live at the edge of the Hearth Plain are also frequently found on the work crews that perform most of the hard labour within the city. A Silver Tusk or other government official needs no reason or justification to throw a goblin on the work crew, and once assigned it is nearly impossible to gain release. Goblins work side-by-side with orcs on these crews, and this is the one place in Skraag where all receive equal treatment. Work crews are usually made up of between twelve and twenty individuals, all under the supervision of a brutish taskmaster. They are responsible for keeping the city free of waste and garbage, as well as making repairs to important buildings and the defensive structures along the edge of the Hearth Plain. Every few weeks, a dozen or so work crews are taken down the

mountain to cut logs from the forest and retrieve plants, herbs, and peat from the swamp on the western end of the mountain base.

In the caverns beneath the Hearth Plain, the work crews haul rocks and rubble, as the orcs are continually excavating new caverns as well as those buried by the dwarves during the invasion. They are also used to collect water from Lake Craddush so other orcs can avoid the dangers of that area. The large number of goblins lost at the shores of the lake account for the many zombies controlled by the disciples of the Asphibiex (see p25).

Life in Skraag is even tougher for the orcs children of the city, who lack both the strength and cunning to defend themselves from adults who show little mercy. The harshness of their

existence is reflected in a popular children's game in Skraag known as Ackabar. Ackabar begins with a group of children climbing up to one of the numerous ridges that cover the cliff face of the mountain where they then pair off, before attempting to throw each other to the ground below. The game pauses when an orc child flies off the ledge, as the others scramble to watch the impact. Unless the loser breaks a bone, goes unconscious, or dies the game continues.

Outside observers of this brutal pastime use it to justify the destruction of the orc race, citing the violence of even

the children as proof that the race entire is evil to the core.



COMMERCE

In commercial terms, Skraag is an island. The orcs living in the city see very little foreign commerce due to both their isolation and base aggressive nature. The humans and elves that once traded with the dwarves of Ironhallow Hall now shun the area, unwilling to enter into any agreement with the orcs and fearful of the consequences of even short term dealings. Even the independent merchants who once made the mountainside plain a regular and profitable waystop along their usual trade routes have stopped coming here. A few early violent incidents with the orcs convinced them and those that came after that trading with Skraag was far too costly to consider.

The nature of the orcs themselves would make it difficult to establish trade relations with outsiders, were this ever the inclination of the City Master and warlords. Even distant orc and other humanoid tribes make poor trading partners, as they tend to be just as treacherous as those in Skraag. Another problem standing in the way of trade is the almost total lack of natural resources and produced goods in Skraag. The orcs simply create nothing of value to any other community. If an orc needs something, he simply takes it, either from another orc or a nearby settlement. It is much more in keeping with the nature of orcs to conquer and plunder rather than open the channels of commerce other races find so valuable. The orcs are consumers of the highest order, taking from the land and people around them without contributing anything valuable in return.

The most regular source of income for the city is the large amount of treasure brought back to the city by successful warlords. Most of this ends up in the city's coffers one way or another as Cylus is quite adept at funnelling much of this into city expense funds and the like. Still, some of the loot gets distributed to the families and friends of orcs returning from the horde. The Hordemaster himself makes a fair amount of coin by making himself the intermediary for such transactions, since horde orcs are rarely allowed within the city proper. All things considered, he is relatively honest in these transactions, merely taking a cut of whatever he is transporting into the city.

The city's internal economic system is far more robust than its trade concerns. There are rich and poor in Skraag just as in any city, but the determining factors of wealth are far different from a human settlement or dwarven kingdom. Rather than skill and hard work

determining an individual orc's success, the denizens of Skraag rely on cunning and brute strength to establish their pecking order. At the top of the ladder stands Cylus Groom, along with his network of cronies, cohorts, and servants. As the City Master, Groom is responsible for the distribution of city funds as well as payroll and business.

He also oversees the distribution of land both on the Hearth Plain and within the caverns beneath, a position he utilises to the greatest advantage. As there is no real private land ownership in Skraag, acquiring prime real estate necessitates dealing with Groom. Those that find themselves in the good graces of Groom, whether through favourable business dealings, alliances or flat bribery, always have an easy time gaining access to favourable locations. Groom is wise enough to grant the best caverns and lairs to the warlords and their favoured minions, especially those affiliated with one of the most powerful, Bakka Grimlir. The rest are open for sale and sometimes new buyers become quite attached to their high priced living spaces.

Much of the city's commerce occurs in two places, the Field and the underground market. The market is an abandoned dwarven amphitheatre, where orcs lay out their goods on blankets and seek to sell or trade with the other denizens of the city. Occasionally Cylus or a Silver Tusk will wander through the marketplace, claiming interesting items as a tax to the city government; The Field is a much more chaotic environment that not even the Silver Tusks relish intruding upon. Here is where black market deals are made without the prying eyes of Cylus and his cohorts. The Field is also one of the few safe places in Skraag for foreigners, if they can even reach the cavern, which lies deep within the city's core. Anything goes in this wild and rowdy place, and pit fights arranged therein would be reviled in any civilised city.

SKRAAG RELIGION

Religion plays a large role in the everyday life of the orcs within Skraag, permeating everything they do. They primarily worship the god Alodai, also known as the Nine-Fingered or the Maimed Lord due to a missing thumb on his left hand. He received this disfigurement at the hands of Kharkus, a demon lord that sought to challenge Alodai's divinity in the distant past.

The tenets of Alodai force orcs to submit wholly to his will, which is most often interpreted for them by the shamans known as the Mended Ones, though it often takes a visit from the sect's enforcers to impress the urgency of their god's desires upon stubborn or non-religious orcs. Alodai also demands daily remembrance of the power he holds over his worshippers, which most often comes in the form of self-abuse.

Aside from the two main shrines to Alodai in the city, several smaller ones can be found throughout. These shrines take the form of a wooden likeness of the god's face nailed to a post in the ground whilst sticks and chains are placed next to the post. Worshippers use these implements to bludgeon themselves, their form of deference to the Maimed Lord. It is considered bad form to bludgeon another orc with these implements, no matter how religiously inspired the act may be.

Although mandated a daily ritual, very few orcs actually practice this on a regular basis. This gave rise to the practice of using brute squads to insure that the Maimed Lord was getting his due. These squads of burly orcs travel out into the city on one day each week, thumping orcs who pass by a shrine without stopping to worship. On the other days of the week, these squads collect tithes for the church. While they do not often resort to physical violence, the menacing image of these orcs with their thick red robes and large clubs is sometimes not enough to inspire the believers.

The orcs of Skraag believe the city was given to them by the Nine-Fingered as a gift for heeding his

The Legend of Alodai and Kharkus

Kharkus the demon lord rules an abyssal layer whose very air inflicts pain and suffering on those exposed to it. The air whips and cuts the skin as clouds of sulphurous dust coat the eyes and throat. A millennia ago, Kharkus hatched a plan that would expand his dominion beyond this realm.

The orcish god of suffering, Alodai, was to manifest himself on the material plane for a brief moment in order to power a great orcish war machine that would lead his followers to victory. During this moment, Kharkus would strike at the god, who would be weakened by this manifestation. Kharkus intended to destroy the god and rise to divinity, claiming the dead god's realm as his own.

A moment can be an eternity even for those as powerful as Kharkus and Alodai, and it was more than enough time to wage a battle between the divine being and his would-be usurper. Kharkus shifted into the material world at the exact moment of Alodai's arrival and forced them both into a field where no time ran. Alodai, enraged by this interruption, drew his mighty spiked club and attacked the demon lord. Kharkus countered with his two bladed whips, inflicting great wounds upon the god. One of his strikes severed the thumb from Alodai's left hand, a wound that lingers to this day and gives Alodai one of his most fearsome titles, the Maimed Lord.

In the end, Alodai defeated the demon lord and drove him back to the Abyss. As punishment for his transgression, the god locked Kharkus' plane in a state of timelessness, creating a barrier that could not be crossed through either side. Kharkus was forced to work indirectly to further his fiendish agenda, and in retaliation he sent an ally to help the orcs who founded the Cult of Kharkus.

Alodai has held the upper hand in this epic struggle for nearly a thousand years, but the pendulum is beginning to swing back toward Kharkus. His cult has grown far beyond expectations and the barrier erected by Alodai is beginning to weaken, allowing limited movement between the planes. All signs and portents point toward another epic conflagration between the two powers, and it may be that their struggle will spill into the material world where terrible destruction would be wrought.



prophecies and abiding by his will. More importantly, they believe it was he that nearly took it from them due to their complacency during the great storm that swept across the Hearth Plain many years ago. They still refer to that storm as the Fury of the Maimed Lord, and they live in fear that every dark cloud forming on the horizon is once again a sign of his displeasure.

Alodai

The Maimed Lord, The Nine-Fingered

Alodai is the chaotic evil orcish god of pain and suffering. He exhorts his followers to commit acts of cruelty upon one another and themselves, demanding pain is felt in order to understand what he protects them from. Human theologians have postulated the god merely feels sorry for himself, and that he wishes the pain of his lost finger on each and every follower. Alodai also demands his worshippers spread pain, death and destruction on all those around them. He drives them constantly into battle and relishes the large hordes spreading his gift to the peoples of other races and nations. Alodai is associated with the Chaos, Destruction, Evil, and Strength domains. His favoured weapon is a spiked greatclub.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

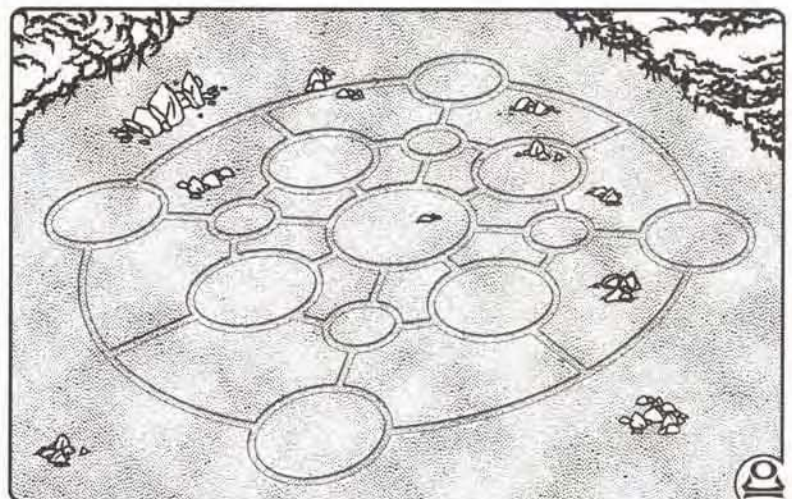
The self-administered floggings of Alodai's faithful are by far the most common of religious practices in the city. This duty is usually fulfilled at one of the small shrines around Skraag, although few do so regularly. This practice is not meant to harm the Nine-Fingered's followers, and even when they must be administered by his brute squads are in no way fatal or even harmful beyond a few bruises and some pain.

Alodai's faithful are not under strict duty to follow any other rituals, although many have personalised their worship of the Maimed Lord with a variety of small tributes or sacrifices. Some give money to the church above and beyond that claimed by the brute squads, whilst others wear symbols of the god at all times. There are two common symbols worn by the faithful. The first is a circular wooden medallion carved to resemble their god's face, similar to those found at the shrines. The second is a cape or robe in the same rust colour as the robes worn by the faith's enforcers.

The shrine of Alodai on the surface is called the Shrine of Circles, a pattern of circles beaten into the grass of the Hearth Plain. According to doctrine, the Maimed Lord watches each circle and looks favourably upon those within. Adepts and clerics of the orc god walk between the circles, administering a righteous thump to the faithful who prostrate within. The priests follow this with the phrase 'Alodai thanks you,' and then move on to the next circle. Staying in a circle too long elicits suspicion from the priests; either the orc has done something terribly wrong or he enjoys the thumping a little too much.

The other major shrine, found beneath the city's surface, is known as Blue Falls Rock. This natural stone formation has a unique combination of minerals that cause it to glow blue when exposed to light. It has the appearance of molasses flowing down the walls of the cavern, but the smooth floe is every bit as strong as the surrounding walls. The blue stone has an unexplained effect on creatures using darkvision, acting like a bright light would to a creature using normal vision - anyone viewing the wall using darkvision is temporarily blinded. This property fades immediately if the stone is removed from the wall, and the wall itself radiates no magic at all.

Patterns have been painted on the walls using tree sap, which is hard to detect with normal sight (Spot DC 20) but blocks the blinding effect of the wall on creatures using darkvision. These patterns are transcribed from ancient orc writings that detail the form of Alodai. Worshippers stare at the wall and then close their eyes, where the shapes and patterns invert to become bright images in the orc's mind. They believe that by taking the image of their god



into their minds, they allow the deity to feel a wholeness of body that his maimed form does not allow.

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

The Church of Alodai

Priests and laymen devoted to Alodai walk the caverns and streets of Skraag in great numbers, performing both the spiritual and mundane tasks of the church. The church is led by a group of shamans known as the Mended Ones and it is they who determine official doctrine and lead the orcs in crowded group services on holy days.

The Mended Ones are a mysterious group that wear black masks when they move about in public. These masks are identical in appearance, so individual Mended Ones cannot be identified by observers. They live in a wooden building built against the rising cliff face of the mountain, just to the west of the Shrine of

Circles. It is said that when the fires die out on holy celebrations and orcs lie drunk and gorged in the streets and alleys of the Hearth Plain, the Mended Ones walk through the celebration claiming the service of orcs who catch their eye.

Orcs singled out in this manner are bound to serve the church in a variety of capacities. They are used to gather food, deliver messages, and do the mundane, laborious work of the church. The length of engagement is at the pleasure of the Mended Ones, but rarely lasts less than a year. Those who refuse this service are judged infidels, branded with the symbol of Alodai on their cheeks, and sent out into the city. Orcs branded in this way rarely survive a day in Skraag, as thugs and thieves descend upon them using their heresy as an excuse to slay them for their belongings.

However, service to the church of Alodai is a good lot for an orc in Skraag, and most recognise it as such. They are well fed and clothed, even given a special tabard to wear that identifies them as wards of the church. This grants them access to areas otherwise

Church Rituals and Holidays

Most of the orcs in Skraag claim allegiance to the church of Alodai, even if many are not truly faithful. Almost every orc in the horde is a faithful servant of Alodai since the time of the great storm and the inattentiveness of the orcs in Skraag often contributes to conflicts with homebound horde orcs.

The church has five holy days each year, one to mark the passing of each season and one to celebrate the defeat of Kharkus.

The Yawning Sun: This ritual is performed to celebrate the lifting of winter, and is the only time any kindness is shown within the city. The church invites all citizens to come together and feast in celebration of the beginning of spring. They set up tables of food at various locations within the city and watch long lines form as the citizens come to claim their free meal.

The Burning Thirst: In the middle of summer the church mandates that its followers drink nothing but hot water for an entire week. This causes many orcs to become sick and die, but the ritual continues to be followed without regard for their suffering. The horde is exempt from this ritual, but many of them are so devout they still follow it.

The Broken Back: As autumn descends on the Hearth Plain, the church demands its followers give a tribute of gold and either wood or peat to the church. This has a dual function, allowing the church to garner a great deal of raw currency and also insures the city stores are filled with fuel for the winter ahead.

The Maimed Lord's Triumph: On the first day of winter the church celebrates the victory of Alodai over the demon lord Kharkus. Followers are supposed to spend the day in supplication to their lord, and any found roaming the streets by vigilants of the church are beaten in the Maimed Lord's name.

The Frigid Belly: Helping to conserve the always-strained resources of the city, the followers of Alodai fast at the midpoint of winter. This is the least followed ritual of the five holy days as it is difficult to keep an orc's stomach from dictating his actions.



deemed off limits to the common orc, and affords a basic level of respect not shown to any other. The orcs are not paid for their service, but are granted access to equipment and goods of a higher quality than is generally found elsewhere in the city. While they may not keep any such things after their service is complete, the orcs are free to use these items as they please during the time of their service.

The leader of the Mended Ones is a mysterious orc whose influence in the city grew after a successful run with the horde almost twenty years ago. When he returned from the campaign he called a group of Alodai's servants together. They retreated for several days into the structure that would become their home, and when they emerged they wore the black masks that have become their trademark. From that day they expanded the church's influence in Skraag, to the point where the Mended Ones' word carries almost as much weight as that of Grogan Thral and even Cylus Groom. Cylus and Grogan both have good relations with the priests, and the Mended Ones often hire muscle and purchase information from the two rivals.

CULT OF KHARKUS

This dangerous cult has existed in orc culture for some time, and they have a large presence within Skraag, boasting just over seven hundred members in or around the city. The size of the city allows them to hide their activities whilst accommodating the strange and unusual rituals they are bound to perform.

Recruits are subjected to a day-long ritual before being given full status as a member of the cult and many fail



to survive the initiation. The initiate is first blindfolded and brought into the cult's private caves, where he is given a mark on the right hand that burns through the entire ritual. He is then forced to perform heavy labour for several hours whilst cult members yell and scream at him. This serves to dull the thoughts of the initiate and implant suggestions into his subconscious mind. Finally, when he is exhausted from the day's assault, he is taken into the cult's summoning chamber to face his final test - confronting a demon.

The cult has used the same demon for nearly a year now, being forced to find a replacement after the last broke free of its bonds and rampaged through the cult compound. They wooed this new demon with the blood of thirty orc and goblin captives, and pay it regular tribute in the form of gems, gold, or further sacrifices.

Cult members bring captives into the summoning chamber and call the demon. The mark given at the beginning of the initiation allows the demon to affect the initiate without breaking its bonds. At this point they leave the demon and initiate alone, entering the room an hour later to find either a new member or a dead body, depending on the whim of the demon and the strength of the initiate. Once the initiation is over, the orc becomes a full member and spends the next few days learning the ways of the cult.

The fundamental belief of this cult is that Alodai did not survive his confrontation with the demon lord Kharkus. Rather, Kharkus killed the god during their battle and now inhabits his body, ruling both his own minions and those of the dead god. The fact that their priests are unable to cast spells does little to deter them. Kharkus, in their minds, does not grant spells to the true followers so the foolish masses continue their worship of Alodai, thus feeding the demon lord yet more power. It should be noted that the Cult of Kharkus does not seek to undermine the Alodaisian

faith. In fact, the most zealous proponents among Alodai's faithful may belong to the cult. Their god benefits from a growth in Alodai's worship, so they work toward that end with a fervour equal to that of the Mended Ones themselves. They believe that those who are worthy will be brought into the cult in their own time, so they actually spend very little time seeking recruits.

Those that do undergo the initiation rite find themselves in a world of alliances, nepotism, and corruption. They are showered with material goods immediately, seducing them all the more into the demon lord's realm and suddenly find themselves paying discount prices in the market and gaining preferential treatment in taverns and inns. Such orcs may find an extra ration chip or two in their sack at

the beginning of the month, or an extra gold piece in their pocket at the end. These small things alone are enough to insure the loyalty and commitment of most new members within a city like Skraag. Beyond that, members are granted access to the best jobs in the city. Proven members can find themselves in positions of authority within the standing guard and every place in the city feels the influence of the Cult of Kharkus, though many times orcs have no knowledge of such a connection. Even the Silver Tusks are not free from its influence for at least two of their number swear allegiance to the demon lord. Cylus Groon does not deal with the cult himself, and collectively they are perhaps his biggest rivals for economic domination of the city. If he knew members of his own gang were affiliated with the group the City Master would have them purged immediately.

The orc stood in the corner, sweating. He could feel the coarse robe rubbing the skin of his chest and arms. He was sure they were red, and the sweat and grime that covered him would cause them to burn well into the next day. . . if he lived that long. The robe was golden and covered with strange symbols whose meaning he could not even guess.

'All things ready?' asked the orc beside him to another who was busy checking the circle of powder on the floor of the room.

'This is good circle, Kruk, the demon won't even be able to breathe our way,' said the other.

Grendl fought back the urge to shed his robes and flee from the cave before they could summon the nether beast. He knew, though, that if he fled he would never make it out alive. The cult members in the next cavern would kill him before they let him leave, secrecy being of the utmost importance. No, his path was chosen and now there would be no turning back. He had a better chance with the demon.

'Listen, let's get this one out of the way fast,' said Kruk. 'I'm hungry.'

'Right, don't rush me,' said the other orc, whose name Grendl did not know.

The orc backed off the circle and pulled a leather pouch from his belt. He withdrew a handful of powder and began to chant. As his words reached a crescendo he threw the powder over the circle, creating a glistening globe of force that flickered into and out of existence. Amber smoke started to rise from the ground within the circle, and a creature appeared that looked like a purple wardog with an oversized mouth and two human arms.

'That's disgusting!' said Kruk.

The other orc jumped in. 'Demon! Bellow with rage, for you are now mine to command!'

'Can we not just get this over with?' said the demon in a lazy tone. 'You know I have villages to burn. I am starting to think this was not worth the orcs you sacrificed to me.'

The orc looked startled, but he recovered quickly. 'That's why we brought you these gems,' he said as he held out a silver tray full of black gems. 'We just got them today, bathed in blood as you like them.'

'Hmmm. . . Where is the initiate then?' asked the demon.





Disciple of Kharkus						
Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Demonic Familiar	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Whip Proficiency	+1 level of existing class
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Demonic Feat	+1 level of existing class
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Fiendish Presence	+1 level of existing class
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Whip Mastery	+1 level of existing class
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Demonic Feat	+1 level of existing class
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Dark Lord's Gift	+1 level of existing class
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Possessed Form	+1 level of existing class
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Demonic Feat	+1 level of existing class
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Servant of Darkness	+1 level of existing class

The downside to affiliating with the Cult of Kharkus is harsh indeed. First, junior members are expected to act as the eyes and ears of the seniors. If a senior member demands a favour, those of lower standing must complete the task in a satisfactory and timely manner for the cult has frightening ways of dealing with those who shirk their responsibilities. Since its beliefs run contrary to those of the church of Alodai, the cult has been outlawed within Skraag. Indeed, there are few places an orc can openly wear the mark of Kharkus. If an orc were ever publicly revealed as a member of the cult, he would likely be beaten severely and delivered to the church of Alodai, who would instantly slay him.

Order of Kharkus

The demon worshipping members of the cult of Kharkus hold special powers over demonic entities, using them to intimidate enemies, increase personal power and wealth and spread influence to even greater levels. Each member is infused with a form of demonic energy upon joining the cult, and the leaders of the cult can draw upon great amounts of this raw power. Consorting with demons is never without its risks, however, and as senior members of the order grow in power, so do they grow in attachment to the demonic forces that grant it.

Hit Dice: d4

Requirements

To qualify to become a disciple of the Order of Kharkus, a character must fulfil all the following criteria;

Skills: Knowledge (arcana) 6 ranks, Knowledge (demon lore)* 8 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 2 ranks

Feats: Strength of Personality*

Special: Must have a familiar. Must have bound a demon into an item*



* As detailed in *Demonology: The Dark Road*, also from Mongoose Publishing.

Class Skills

The disciple of Kharkus' class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Spellcraft (Int), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill points at each level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Disciples of Kharkus are skilled with the club, dagger, heavy crossbow, light crossbow, and quarterstaff. Disciples of Kharkus are not proficient with any type of armour nor with shields. Armour of any type interferes with a disciple of Kharkus' movements, which can cause his spells to fail (if those spells have somatic components). Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of equipment carried.

Demonic Familiar: Upon taking the first level of this class, the disciple of Kharkus' familiar automatically becomes demonic (see *Demonology: The Dark Road*, page 28). If these rules are unavailable, simply apply the fiendish template to the familiar.

Whip Proficiency: Devout disciples of Kharkus spend time learning to use the whip, their demon lord's favoured weapon. At 2nd level the disciple of Kharkus gains proficiency in whips of all kinds.

Demonic Feat: At 3rd level and every three levels thereafter, the disciple of Kharkus gains a demonological feat from those found in *Demonology: The Dark Road*, page 41. If these rules are not available, the Games Master may substitute a metamagic feat.

Fiendish Presence: At 4th level, the disciple of Kharkus gains a presence that affects those around him. His Charisma score increases by +2 and he gains a +4 bonus to all Charisma-based checks when dealing with creatures from the Abyssal planes.

Whip Mastery: At 5th level, the disciple of Kharkus' expertise with the whip has grown. He gains the

Weapon Focus (whip) feat and may elect to deal normal damage when using a whip in combat.

Dark Lord's Gift: At 7th level, the disciple of Kharkus' skin changes hue, becoming slightly red and scaly in texture. This grants the disciple of Kharkus Fire Resistance 15. From this point on it will be obvious to all that the disciple of Kharkus has made pacts with dark powers.

Possessed Form: At 8th level, the disciple of Kharkus' transformation is nearly complete. He must spend one hour each day being possessed by a demonic servant of Kharkus. What he does during this time is of no consequence, so long as he gives his body over to the dark lord in preparation for the final stage of the transformation. This possession also gives the character new abilities; darkvision 60 ft. and Spell Resistance 15 for the duration.

Servant of Darkness: At 10th level, the disciple of Kharkus actually takes on the aspect of one of the demon lord's lieutenants. His type changes to outsider, his body and spirit no longer linked to the material world. He also gains Damage Reduction 15/+1.

DISCIPLES OF THE ASPHIBYIEX

This strange cult was founded after the great storm hit Skraag over two decades ago, and has been growing in influence over the last few years, now boasting around four hundred members city-wide. The cult's followers believe an ancient god rests at the bottom of Lake Craddush, and it was he that caused the great storm, not the Maimed Lord. They also believe another storm is imminent, and that one day soon their god will rise up and destroy those who live in his sacred caverns. It is their hope that Skraag will be delivered to those who were faithful, namely them.

Members of the cult also believe that becoming an undead creature will bring them closer to their god, allowing them to serve his needs more closely. For this reason, almost every priest of the Asphibiex specialises in the necromantic arts. Members consider it a high honour to be chosen for this service, and once a year the members hold a type of lottery for the privilege of being killed and then reborn as one of the undead. The cult's leaders have always rigged the lottery, as none of them yet wish to test their faith with such finality. By sheer accident, although those in the



Lake Zombie

Medium Undead

Hit Dice: 2d12+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20ft.

AC: 12 (+2 natural)

Attacks: Slam +3 melee

Damage: Slam 1d6+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spit

Special Qualities: Undead, Watery Corpse

Saves: Fort +0 Ref +0, Will +3

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con -, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 1

Feats: Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organisation: Gang (2-5), squad (6-10), or mob (11-20)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Neutral

Advancement: 3 HD (Medium)

Lake zombies are the foul creations of the disciples of the Asphibiyeix. Their only known location is under the black waters of Lake Craddush, in the caverns beneath the city of Skraag for the elemental god known as the Asphibiyeix revealed the secret of their creation only to the orcs who worshipped him. Ever since, these orcs have created several dozen of the wretched undead who live beneath the surface of the lake, feeding on bodies dumped into the water by the disciples. These zombies are often called to the surface by the disciples to perform manual labour or to fight on behalf of the cult. Their existence is still a secret in Skraag, and the disciples' operatives within the Lake Guard help to safeguard this secret.

Lake zombies feed on the flesh of the living as do other zombies, but their proximity to the elemental god whose secrets permitted their creation grants them several advantages over other zombies. First, they act more swiftly than normal zombies, allowing them a full array of actions each round. Second, the water they absorb into their bodies makes them incredibly resistant to bludgeoning weapons of all kinds. This water can also be used to distract their opponents in combat, thus making it easier for the zombie to drag his foe into a watery grave.

Spit (Su): As a move-equivalent action, the lake zombie can spew forth a torrent of water from its body.

This distracts the lake zombie's opponent, allowing the zombie to make his attack as if his opponent were flat-footed. This is extremely effective just before the zombie attempts a grapple, since its opponent no longer receives an attack of opportunity when the grapple is initiated. The zombie may do this three times per day, and must spend at least 4 hours in the water each day in order to absorb enough liquid to be effective. Characters and creatures that are unable to be caught flat-footed are immune to this ability.

Undead: Lake zombies are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. In addition, they are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Watery Corpse: The lake zombie's corpse is bloated and full of water. This extra cushion makes the zombie incredibly resilient to bludgeoning weapons, granting the creature Damage Reduction 15/+1 versus bludgeoning weapons only. However, piercing weapons cause spouts of water to leak from the zombie's body. The lake zombie loses one additional hit point per round for every wound it has received from a piercing weapon until it dies or retreats to the water. A lake zombie that fully submerges itself in water gains the Fast Healing 2 ability and no longer loses hit points from piercing damage.

Animate Lake Zombie

Necromancy

Level: Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M, DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Targets: One corpse touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell functions exactly like the spell *animate zombie* from *Necromancy: Beyond the Grave* except it allows the creation of a lake zombie. However, the corpse used must have died by drowning.

Material Components: A small black onyx gem worth at least 50 gp must be placed into the mouth or eye socket of the corpse. The magic of the spell makes this gem worthless.

Disciple of the Asphibiex

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Zombie Guardians	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Necromantic Power	+1 level of existing class
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Necromantic Feat	+1 level of existing class
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Excellent Swimmer	+1 level of existing class
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Waterlogged	+1 level of existing class
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Necromantic Feat	+1 level of existing class
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	Aquatic Acclimation	+1 level of existing class
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	Elemental Companion	+1 level of existing class
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	Necromantic Feat	+1 level of existing class
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	Necromantic Mastery	+1 level of existing class

cult's higher echelons proclaim it to be a boon of their god, the cult discovered the process for creating a potent form of undead known as a lake zombie. These zombies are amphibious, requiring contact with water to fuel their undeath, and are fearsome combatants both on land and underwater. The disciples have a large number of zombies hidden beneath the dark surface of Lake Craddush, and call upon them whenever their is need of their services.

Disciple of the Asphibiex

The leaders of this strange cult within Skraag practice the dark arts of necromancy in conjunction with their worship of the water elemental god, the Asphibiex. They are able to create the undead terrors known as lake zombies, and their charismatic lectures are persuasive enough to convince orcs to sacrifice themselves to a god they have never known. Although the group is not large by any means, its members are loyal and very well placed within Skraag society. More powerful members retreat to their secret cavern in order to prepare for the return of the Asphibiex.

Hit Dice: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a disciple of the Asphibiex, a character must fulfil all the following criteria;

Abilities: Charisma 15+

Skills: Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks, Knowledge (necrology) 4 ranks

Feats: Spell Focus (necromancy)

Spellcasting: Ability to cast necromantic spells.

Domain: Water.

Deity: The character must worship the Asphibiex as his deity.

Class Skills

The disciple of the Asphibiex's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), and Spellcraft (Int)

Skill points at each level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Disciples of the Asphibiex are skilled with simple weapons, all types of armour, and shields. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of equipment carried.

Zombie Guardians: At 1st level, the Asphibiex sends two lake zombies to serve the disciple. These zombies are completely under the disciple's control, and do not count against the normal maximum number of undead that he may control at any one time.

Necromantic Power: At 2nd level, the disciple gains greater control and understanding of the necromantic energies he deals with. From this point on, all necromantic spells are cast at +1 caster level.

Necromantic Feat: At 3rd level and every three levels thereafter, the disciple gains one Necromantic feat. A list of these feats, and the drawbacks of their use, can be found in *Necromancy: Beyond the Grave*. If these rules are unavailable, the Games Master may substitute any metamagic feat.

THE ASPHIBYIEX

The Asphibiex is a neutral evil water elemental god, originating from the elemental plane of water, trapped in the material world by a consortium of powerful spellcasters who were bent on closing an elemental rift near their home. He is a minor deity of water elementals and is worshipped by certain communities of merfolk and other aquatic creatures. It is unknown how he acquired dominion over water-borne undead, but leads his followers down the necromantic path at every opportunity. The Asphibiex is associated with the Death, Destruction, Evil, and Water domains. His favoured weapon is the trident, though many of his priests also focus on grappling and bull rush attacks to force their opponents into water where the priest has a distinct advantage.



Excellent Swimmer: At 4th level, the disciple gains a Swim movement rate of 20 ft. as he become more comfortable in the environment of his deity.

Waterlogged: At 5th level, the disciple's skin permanently wrinkles and turns a shade of grey. He permanently gains the benefits of a *protection from water* spell (found in *Seas of Blood*) and he gains a +2 bonus to all Charisma-based checks when dealing with followers of the Asphibiex.

Aquatic Acclimation: At 7th level, the disciple is able to breathe water as if permanently under the effects of a *water breathing* spell.

Elemental Companion: At 8th level, the disciple gains a medium-size water elemental as a companion. The elemental is an intelligent being and is devoted to the Asphibiex. This companion will serve the disciple so long as his actions are in accordance with the god's wishes, and in all ways acts as a cohort. If the elemental dies in the service of the disciple, a new one will be assigned within one week, but the Asphibiex will become irritated very quickly if this boon is abused.

Necromantic Mastery: At 10th level, the disciple has come far in his necromantic training. He can double the maximum amount of undead he can control at any given time, and the Difficulty Class to resist his necromantic spells is increased by 4.

The disciples gather monthly to offer sacrifice and prayers to their unknown god. They congregate near the lake, taking care to avoid the inevitable guards who patrol the area and call into service a dozen or more zombies to

protect them from the cavern's numerous dangers. They have an elaborate ritual that involves pouring water from one cylindrical, bottomless jug to another without spilling a drop. The ritual takes incredible coordination, and thus far has never been performed correctly. Still they strive toward that goal, for they



believe it will be a sign of the impending appearance of their hidden god.

The necessity and utility of having members within the regular guard posted to Lake Craddush is obvious, and insinuating its members into the guard has been the cult's greatest success. Several members of the lake guard are affiliated with the cult, whether through initiation or simple business dealings. Cult members arrange for monthly meetings to take place outside the view of other orcs and insure the stock of zombies is never discovered. Two members of the lake guard unknowingly aid the disciples by smuggling ration chips to cult members disguised as black market traders. The disciples then sell the ration chips on the black market, helping to fund the cult.

There are no prominent citizens or great leaders within the cult, and this is one likely reason for its lack of widespread appeal. Another is the general insanity of the cult's beliefs. Surprisingly, however, the cult is not too far off the mark in its doctrine. Although it is not an ancient god that dwells at the bottom of the lake, a lesser water elemental deity named the Asphibiex does in fact reside there. Lake Craddush was formed when a powerful spell sealed an open portal to the plane of water, trapping the Asphibiex in the material world, and he has dwelled here ever since.

AKRILLA THE WITCH

Akrilla was the High Shaman of Skraag for over a decade before she fell into disfavour during the great storm that destroyed much of the city. Her rise to power had been quick, during the days when the Mended Ones and the church of Alodai were the official religious leaders of Skraag. In those days they were not masked, and walked freely about the city. Although many in the city did not trust her, Akrilla held the respect and awe of many of the Mended Ones due to her skills in divination and potion making. So, on the day of the Yawning Sun, they unanimously proclaimed her High Shaman.

During her tenure as High Shaman, Akrilla was a recluse from the city, only leaving her sheltered home to attend meetings of the church leaders and to oversee the celebrations on Alodai's holy days. Rumours abounded that she consorted with devils, and many claimed she was in league with the Cult of Kharsus. Nothing could have been further from the truth, however, as Akrilla dedicated herself solely to

the church of Alodai and the orcs of Skraag, even enduring untold suffering to complete the rituals that made her divinations so powerful. All of this took place away from the eyes of other orcs and their suspicion led to Akrilla's downfall after the mighty storm known as the Fury of the Maimed Lord.

During the weeks leading up to the Fury, Akrilla repeatedly tried to warn the city's leaders about the coming punishment. She would emerge from her abode, her skin drenched with sweat and caked with the blood of animals, screaming the contents of her visions to sceptical orcs. Despite her reputation, such claims were not easily believed by the other Mended Ones, and she soon stopped emerging from her home completely. She spent the final days communing with Alodai and brewing potions that wracked her body with intense pain. In a final, desperate act to ward off the coming storm, she held the thumb of her left hand over a candle until flesh and bone alike disintegrated. To her dismay, the clouds continued to build on the horizon. After the storm receded and much of the city lay in ruin, the berserk inhabitants of Skraag were in danger of finishing what the storm had begun. Their rage had no direction, and thus it turned inward, causing the destruction of hundreds more orcs as well as many of the structures that had survived the storm. The warlords convened and decided they needed to redirect the energy of the orcs. What they needed was a common enemy.

The Mended Ones, already searching for a means to rid themselves of the troublesome witch, provided the perfect solution. They informed the warlords of her predictions and that she had cited the orcs' recent laziness and pacifism as the reason for their god's displeasure. They also spoke of her unusual behaviour of late and fears that she may very well have succumbed to some form of demonic possession. Of course few believed this, but it mattered little to the warlords. They saw a double victory in the offing. They could allay the rage of the orcs by providing a scapegoat in Akrilla, and then could use her predictions as impetus to raise the greatest horde in living memory. This solution proved beneficial to both the Mended Ones and the warlords, and so the plan was enacted and Akrilla was forced to flee the city just to save her life.

Akrilla still lives deep in a swamp at the base of the Hearth Plain, continuing her study of divination and potion brewing.



DEFENCES

The horde that constantly roams the countryside searching for plunder and causing destruction is Skraag's greatest defence. Although most of the horde, and the warlords who control it, remain away from Skraag at all times, a small contingent always rests within the city. These orcs spend their time repairing war machines, recovering from wounds, and helping the Skraag Guard defend the city. The most experienced and deadly warriors of the Skraag Guard usually graduate to the Lake Guard, a group that patrols and defends Lake Craddush from the deadly denizens of the caverns below.

THE HORDE

Orcs love to rampage and destroy. So when Alodai expressed his displeasure at the laziness that had befallen the orcs of Skraag, a horde of immense proportions was gathered. Each of the hordes that overran the city of Ironhallow Hall numbered nearly three thousand berserk orc warriors. The new horde unleashed was larger than both combined, sending over seven thousand orcs on a blazing, destructive path throughout the surrounding countryside.

The warlords who organised the horde decided amongst themselves that they alone would lead the orcs to glory. Their use of the witch, Akrilla, as a scapegoat for the destruction of the city also gave them an excuse to exclude other shamans from the leadership. This horde would go without shamans, who were tasked to help rebuild the city in an image more pleasing to the Maimed Lord.

In the intervening years, the shamans have grown in power and authority within the horde. The warlords, though jealous of the power of these orcs, do not discourage such growth for after the first such shaman rose to power and allied himself with one of their number, all warlords have struggled to see their own shaman win over the loyalty of the orcs they command. A warlord without a shaman in today's horde is a weak and vulnerable target for an aggressive underling.

FACTIONS

The horde is currently divided into several different factions, each with a powerful warlord as leader. Smaller factions exist, but often ally with a larger

faction out of necessity and survival. None of these smaller factions pose a great threat to the more powerful warlords, and so they are permitted to exist as separate entities. A shaman supports each of the warlords, and in return gains the respect and devotion of the warlord's orcs. These influential leaders are often more scheming and treacherous than their martial counterparts, as each desires to gain enough influence to become the High Shaman of Skraag, a post left empty since the exile of Akrilla. There is one unaffiliated shaman in the horde, Esteria, who has assembled a few dozen loyal orcs to guard and protect her and the minor warlords who do not maintain an allied shaman all court her favour, viewing the addition of a shaman as the next step toward legitimising their command. Esteria has not yet made a decision and most think she will not do so soon. None of the warlords has stepped up to prove his worth to the aspiring shaman, and some believe the shaman aspires to become a warlord herself, a feat unheard of in orc society.

The various factions of the horde are detailed below;

Warlord: Aganir Thak.

Affiliated Shaman: Helag.

Number of Orcs in Command: 3,200.

Auxiliary Troops: 12 trolls, 150 goblins, 2 catapults,



2 pitch throwers, and 1 attack sled.

Plots and Intrigues: Thak is the horde's Warmaster, and his troops are primarily veterans of previous actions. Although Bakka Grimlir commands a force of similar size, Thak's troops are far superior and his allegiance with the troll clan who push his attack sled makes him a feared and respected leader.

Aganir Thak also commands the home force, although this is only a nominal position since he is rarely present in Skraag itself. His loyal servant, Grogan Thral, carries out his commands within the city. Thak does not share his faithful lieutenant's hatred of Cylus Groom, but is wary because of Groom's connection to Grimlir, his main rival. At some point he may have to remove Bakka in order to maintain the status quo within Skraag.

Warlord: Bakka Grimlir.

Affiliated Shaman: Ghaudrik.

Number of Orcs in Command: 2,400.

Auxiliary Troops: 40 goblins, 1 battering ram, 1 catapult, and 1 pitch thrower.

Plots and Intrigues: Grimlir's rise was a quick one, and it caused much contention and jealousy in the lesser ranks of warlords as he was but a minor leader under the command of Agramm Schuul when he struck up a working relationship with Cylus Groom. His men would smuggle horde booty into the city and be paid handsomely by the fat City Master. Soon Cylus recognised that having a powerful ally in the horde would be necessary for his own survival, particularly in light of the growing rivalry between himself and Grogan Thral, whose patron is the arch-warlord of the horde.

Bakka does not consider himself beholden to Groom for any of his success, but is shrewd enough to recognise the benefits of their relationship. Unknown to the other warlords, Bakka sometimes diverts his troops to some purpose Groom has given him. These excursions have made him quite rich, but they are starting to cause friction with his shaman, Ghaudrik. It could be that soon Ghaudrik makes a move on Bakka in a bid to lead the horde himself. No one knows what such disruption would mean for the horde overall, or whether or not other warlords will even allow such a large force to be commanded by a shaman.

Hordemaster: Rathak Kell.

Affiliated Shaman: Borrug.

Number of Orcs in Command: 1,700.

Auxiliary Troops: 60 goblins, 80 wardogs.

Plots and Intrigues: Hordemaster Kell maintains good relations with all the warlords, for he is responsible for their armies whenever they return to Skraag. Though Kell's fighting days are long since over, he now enjoys a wealthy existence, freely accepting bribes from warlords and warriors alike.

Shaman: Esteria.

Number of Orcs in Command: 40.

Plots and Intrigues: Esteria is one of the most intriguing characters in the horde, being neither warlord nor affiliated with one. She trails the horde of Warmaster Thak, providing support whilst trying not to overstep into the duties of his shaman, Helag. Helag does not consider her a major threat, because she has no affiliated army and because she is female, and she has little interest of vying for his position. Esteria merely sees the advantage in being near the largest and most well-commanded of the hordes, and is biding her time for opportunity to arise elsewhere. Contrary to popular believe, Esteria has no desire to become a warlord herself, as she learned well from the example of Akrilla what happens to female shamens who overstep their bounds.



Warlord: Korrang Val.
Affiliated Shaman: Drekken.
Number of Orcs in Command: 1,500.
Auxiliary Troops: 50 goblins and 1 battering ram.
Plots and Intrigues: Korrang Val tries to keep himself and his troops out of the political intrigues of the other warlords. He can often be found separated from the main body of the horde and is currently resting his troops within Skraag. Rumours abound that he has found some great resource, but as yet has not told any of the other warlords what it might be.

Warlord: Agramm Schuul.
Affiliated Shaman: Sharrik.
Number of Orcs in Command: 420.
Auxiliary Troops: 160 goblins.
Plots and Intrigues: Agramm has the weakest personality of any of the warlords, and most assume that his troops are actually controlled by the shaman Sharrik. In his laziness, Agramm has failed to notice his command becoming more and more alienated from the rest of the horde. His troops were significantly diminished by the defection of Bakka Grimlir, but still he sits inactive whilst Sharrik drives his troops on. Sharrik knows that the dispersal or defeat of Agramm's

troops would likely mean his death and he is desperately trying to hang on to what they have. He has taken note of the increased presence of messengers from both warmaster Thak and warlord Grimlir as this does not bode well for their survival, for both warlords seem to be sizing up Agramm's commitment to his troops for a possible take-over.

Warlord: Cartag Reiga.
Affiliated Shaman: Krick.
Number of Orcs in Command: 260.
Auxiliary Troops: 60 goblins.
Plots and Intrigues: Reiga's troops were nearly decimated after an unsuccessful siege several months ago. He spent nearly two months back in Skraag trying to raise more troops, but a combined plot by Cylus and Bakka kept him from being successful. Bakka is taking advantage of Cartag's weakness by offering him a position with his troops, but so far Cartag has held out, knowing full well the cruelty with which Bakka treats his troops. If Cartag did not enjoy a special relationship with Warmaster Thak he would have already been assimilated into Bakka's command by force. Cartag is desperately searching for a way to dig himself out of his weakened position,

Defences

Orcs are well known for using siege engines in their quest to destroy that which they do not own. Some say their knowledge of such complex destructive machinery must come directly from their gods, since orcs are unable to master other engineering techniques considered rudimentary by the standards of other races. Dwarves contend that the secret to such weaponry was stolen from their god by an orc deity thousands of years ago.

How they came about this knowledge matters little to the victims of an orc siege. Defenders examine the weapons orcs bring, so that a proper response can be planned. Below is a study of the most common siege engines used by the orc horde within Skraag.

Battering Ram (*Core Rulebook II*)

Catapult, light and heavy (*Core Rulebook II*)

Pitch Thrower - The pitch thrower is a device resembling a trebuchet using a specially treated cloth to hurl flaming balls of pitch at the orcs' enemies. These balls of pitch explode on contact with any surface, showering the area with a sticky, burning substance. All those within 10 ft. of the impact point take 2d6 fire damage and must make a Reflex save (DC 18) or catch on fire. The rules for firing a pitch thrower are identical to those for aiming a catapult, except that it takes three crewmembers 6 full rounds to load and aim the device. It takes a minimum of two crew to man the pitch thrower. *Cost: 750 gp; Range Increment: 100 ft. (minimum 75 ft.)*

Attack Sled - This unique device is made for transporting orcs attacking walled fortifications such as fence lines and the walls of a castle or city. It takes the appearance of a one hundred foot long covered sled in which up to forty orcs with ladders and grappling hooks may hide, granting them full cover from attacks. The machine is usually pushed by two lines of ten large creatures, such as ogres or trolls, who are allied with the attacking army. These creatures line up on either end of the sled, and are only given half cover from attacks. Trolls make excellent choices as they are hard to bring down with normal missile fire and are strong enough to push the sleds for over a mile over rough ground without resting. *Cost: 450 gp*

and is trying to forge an alliance with Korrang Val, who he knows is plotting for his own gain. So far Korrang has rebuffed these attempts, but he may take the lesser warlord into his camp if it means subtly putting a roadblock in the way of Bakka's ambition.

ON THE HOME FRONT

The warlords leave a regular presence in Skraag to perform a number of duties in support of the massive horde. This home force, under the watchful eye of the Hordemaster, helps to construct new war machines for use in besieging towns and cities, and also repairs damaged machines brought back to the city. Warlords who treat the Hordemaster, Rathak Kell, with some measure of respect (and the only measure Rathak truly cares about is ounces of gold) get their machines and men tended to more quickly, thus keeping a stronger force in the field at all times. A bad relationship with the Hordemaster has been the downfall of many a warlord in the past.

The group oversees the upkeep of the fences and ditches the orcs have built to protect their city from outside invasion. Most of these are built on the sloping edges of the Hearth Plain, effectively barring entry by any large invasion force. The heavy storms that regularly pound the city have an adverse effect on these defences and so require near constant attention. The Hordemaster's effort to keep these defences in high standard has paid off for Skraag, which has never had to repel an invasion from the outside.

Cylus Groom often hires idle orcs from the Hordemaster's stable to work his foundries. Skilled orcs also help the Ugreckt tribe forge weapons and armour for the city. This provides a chance for the orcs to intermingle with the citizens of Skraag. When they roam the city they are generally regarded with nervous admiration, and tend to take what they want from the city without complaint. It also helps that Cylus Groom and Hordemaster Kell enjoy a friendly relationship, meaning that any indiscretions by the Hordemaster's troops are likely to be overlooked.

THE LOYAL GUARD

The other main body of defence for the city of Skraag is the Home Force, led by a cunning and loyal lieutenant of warlord Akanar, named Grogan Thral. This force roams the Hearth Plain, looking for trouble in Skraag and keeping tabs on the various agents of Grogan's enemy, Cylus Groom. Their primary responsibilities include keeping track of who enters and leaves the city and monitoring the activities of any non-orcs within Skraag, whether residents or visitors. They tend to closely monitor the activities of the Ugreckt tribe in particular, as Grogan distrusts the hobgoblin leaders. He believes their tribal loyalty and close relationship with Cylus Groom make them dangerous to the city and is currently investigating claims that the Ugreckt are hatching a plan to take over the city with the help of allies in the area.

This, of course, often brings the guard into direct conflict with Cylus Groom, who cultivates his relationships with the hobgoblins of the Ugreckt tribe as well as the trolls he employs. Cylus has personally debunked Thral's theory about the Ugreckt, although he privately has concerns that it may hold some measure of truth. For now, though, he is using his own resources to discover the veracity of the claim, whilst at the same time sabotaging Thral's investigations. If such a plot were ever discovered it could mean the end to Cylus' reign, so he is most interested in uncovering it before anyone else. He could then use the plot to his advantage, executing the hobgoblins responsible and reinforcing his position as City Master.

GUARD PATROLS

Visitors to the city who take one of the two main roads into town will be met by a force of orcs and their business with the city demanded. If a satisfactory answer is not given immediately, or if the orc in charge is in a particularly foul mood, parties will be stripped of arms and marched to the outpost to meet with Grogan or one of his underlings. The larger or more dangerous-looking the group, the more likely this course of action will be taken. Resistance to this procedure is met with force of arms, with one of the orcs blowing a large horn to alert Skraag to the danger whilst the others attempt to slay the attackers.



Skraag's Spellcasters

Over the decades of the ores' domination of Skraag, orcish spellcasters have developed a number of unique and powerful spells to aid them in the defence of Skraag, as well as bolster the fighting effectiveness of the horde when they are forced to march alongside warriors to battle. Adepts, clerics, wizards and sorcerers of all types within Skraag may be found unleashing such spells at their enemies.

Enrage

Transmutation

Level: Brd 1, Adp 2, Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area of Effect: 1 target

Duration: 1d4 rounds

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

The recipient of this spell flies into a bestial rage, disregarding his own safety in order to launch a ferocious attack on his enemies. This rage functions exactly like the Barbarian's Rage class ability, except the period of recovery after the rage ends lasts only one round.

Material Components: A rattle made from the bones of a weasel or wolverine.

Extend Rage

Transmutation

Level: Adp 3, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area of Effect: 1 target

Duration: See below

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell allows a barbarian to continue raging past his normal limits. The barbarian recipient of this spell adds 1 round per caster level to the duration of his current rage. At the end of this extended rage, the barbarian takes 2d6 points of subdual damage in addition to normal fatigue. The spell must be cast on a barbarian who is already raging and may not be combined with the *enrage* spell.

Material Components: A rattle made from the bones of a weasel or wolverine.

Intimidate

Enchantment (Compulsion)

Level: Brd 2, Clr 2, Adp 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 ft. burst centred on caster

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell causes all those in the area to regard the caster as a powerful and deadly enemy. Affected creatures will not attack the caster or his allies, and have a -2 penalty to all Will saves for the duration of the spell. The caster also gains a +10 competence bonus on any Intimidate checks versus affected creatures.

If an affected creature or his allies are attacked during this time, the spell is automatically broken. Using Intimidate to make them commit actions they normally would not attempt does not break the spell, but the normal rules for using the skill still apply.

Material Components: The caster must paint fearsome patterns on his face with specially prepared paste as a part of casting the spell.

Rally

Transmutation

Level: Brd 2, Clr 2, Adp 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 50 ft. radius centred on caster

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates (Harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes

All allies within 50 ft. of the caster gain an additional saving throw against any existing fear effects, with a +4 morale bonus to the roll. In addition, all affected creatures gain a +1 morale bonus to their next attack roll.

Material Components: Banner or flag depicting some significant image.



A typical orc patrol will be made up of seven city guardsmen and one lieutenant. The lieutenant will tend to do all the talking whilst the others mill about with axes drawn. One of the guard orcs will hold a ram's horn, which he will blow to alert the city in case of imminent battle.

Grogan Thral's men also man the cliff forts that were built by the orcs to survey the surrounding land for signs of an invading army. Four such forts sprout from the cliffside that surveys the valleys below the Hearth Plain, built in the last several years as the main body of the horde ranged further and further from Skraag. Advance warning of any large-scale invasion became a necessity since it would likely take the horde up to a fortnight to receive any message to return home, and another to make it back to the city.

A giant eagle eyrie rests atop the cliff face, several hundred feet above the highest fort. These eagles enjoy fun at the expense of the orcs stationed in the cliff forts - specifically, they love to dive down and snatch equipment off the fort's walls, sometimes even snatching the helmet off an unsuspecting orc's head.

Although the orcs often lose valuable equipment in this way, including several spyglasses, they have yet to find a way to scale the cliffs and drive off the intelligent birds. It is only considered a minor nuisance, however, and no formal plan to eradicate the eagles has been enacted.

GROGAN THRAL

The leader of the Home Force is both charismatic and cunning, relying on his warrior's instincts to protect the interests of his patron whilst throwing obstacles in the path of Cylus Groom. He plays a very active role in the city, contrary to his rival, but like Cylus he employs a number of underlings and henchmen to carry out the day-to-day activities necessary to maintain his authority in Skraag.

He is beginning to fear that the sheer size of his command structure is weakening his position, however, and is reluctant to spread forces too thin lest he lose control. He is secretly planning a purge that he hopes to combine with a blow to Cylus' organisation, thus ridding himself of two problems in one stroke. The plan is perhaps far too ambitious for any orc to succeed in, but thus far is progressing as envisioned.

Ultimately, Thral would like to become City Master himself. With the might of the greatest orkish warlord behind him, he believes the various factions and alliances in Skraag can indeed be unified. What he requires is an enemy, one that threatens the city's very existence. That enemy, he believes, is the hobgoblin tribe. Thral's agents have been working with the tribal chieftain of the hobgoblins under the guise of orc merchants to establish trade with the other hobgoblins in the area. This has been done clandestinely, even avoiding the prying eyes of Cylus Groom and his cohorts. When the time comes, Thral's agents intend to set up a large shipment of weapons and armour that will subsequently be discovered by the city guard. Evidence found incriminating Cylus Groom in a plot to take total control of the city will enable Thral's forces to ride in and save the day against a surprised and off-guard Groom. Until this plan comes to fruition, however, Grogan is content collecting information via his plants in Cylus' organisation and supervising the defence of the city he feels destined to rule.



THE LAKE GUARD

This group of orcs, led by an insane overlord named Grezius Bosh, defend the cavern complex surrounding Lake Craddush. Bosh is technically under the auspices of Grogan Thral, but the difficulty of dealing with the insane orc and Grogan's own machinations on the surface have slowly eroded their relationship to the point where Grogan now leaves the mad orc to his task, only getting involved when disputes or emergencies arise.

The guard roster fluctuates between one hundred and fifty, and two hundred orcs at any one time and is always manned by experienced warriors. Three shamans also appear in the ranks of the Lake Guard, which is a departure from the normal practice of excluding shamans from participating in the guard. In addition, several members of the cult of the Asphibiex have made their way into the Lake Guard to help further their own goals. The dangers of the undercity are numerous and ever present, and the Lake Guard is a duty that brings both large rewards and great danger. Aside from the usual subterranean dangers such as umber hulks, darkmantles and troglodytes, the Lake Guard battles the constant attempts of the nearby dwarves to poison the water supply and sabotage the orcish city. The orcs have become intimately familiar with their foes over the past hundred years and consider the ongoing battle a matter of pride.

Lake Guard patrols consist of five orcs, one leader and four warriors, all trained to work and fight underground. They monitor the caverns constantly and summon others when they note a suspicious trail or item. Aware their darkvision is not the advantage down here that it is on the surface, the Lake Guard carry numerous light sources in the hope the cave dwelling creatures they encounter will be more irritated by it than they.

The other function of the Lake Guard is to ration the city's water, guarding the stock of ration chips and seeing they are distributed in a manner consistent with the wishes of Cylus Groom. These chips are a valuable resource and another reason the Lake Guard is manned by reliable and experienced orcs. The Lake Guard also man the booths where ration chips are collected and exchanged, often hiring outside mercenaries or off-duty orcs from Hordemaster Kell to transport and defend both water and chips. That said, the black market for these commodities is large in the city, and more than one orc in the guard has been known to participate for his own gain. The punishment for being caught in such endeavours is execution on the spot, so such activities are usually limited and hidden. The disciples of the Asphibiex have actually convinced Bosh that drowning is an appropriate punishment for such a crime, and they happily collect the bodies of such victims to use in their rituals.



TOUR OF THE CITY

Skraag is a large city housing over twenty five thousand orcs. Split into two halves, many spend their entire lives on the Hearth Plain, scratching out an existence whilst trying to avoid the attentions of the various factions vying for total control of Skraag. The majority, however, exist within the mountain, in the old caverns of Ironhallow Hall, the original dwarven settlement. Though poverty, strife and death is never far away for the weak and helpless, those that manage to move to the undercity tend to have a far higher life expectancy than those exposed to the elements outside the great stone archway.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE

This building was once the centre of trade in the Ironhallow settlement. It was built by the dwarves of Ironhallow as a place to meet and respect those of other races and cultures, all the while engaging in the trade that had become the lifeblood of the settlement. As such, it features a variety of architectural influences meant to make other races feel at home during their stay on the Hearth Plain. It is the only building in the city to use imported white marble as a building material, and this sturdy stone was one of the reasons the building was spared during both the initial orc invasion and the great storm seventy five years later.

The dwarves built the structure on an artificial hillock in order to allow for three-dimensional architectural design, as well as to create areas that would feel comfortable to the occasional halfling contingent of traders and explorers. One of the hillsides is flat, and a pipe that runs through the hill funnels water caught in storm drains into a waterfall, which splashes into an intricately carved basin at the hill's bottom. Here travellers of all races took their lunches in the open air, viewing the underground atrium through an enormous glass wall built directly into the hillside. Without the purifying spells of the dwarven clerics, however, this pool has become tainted and stagnant, only cleaning itself after a long rain. Garbage and muck fills the bottom of the basin and a group of goblins that work for Cylus Groon has claimed the area as their own.

The once-grand doors to the establishment were destroyed during the siege and have since been rebuilt with wooden replacements that do not quite reach the top of the frame. The doors lead into the entry hall, which was once a grand, vaulted room but now lies in a state of semi-ruin. Members of the Silver Tusks can be found here lounging at all times of the day, and the place stinks of faeces and rotting fish due to an old fountain now used as a latrine and garbage bin. All of the interior doorways have been cleared, and the side rooms are filled with heaps of junk. Food, beer, and other daily requirements are also stored in the rooms, and a fire pit has been arranged in one of the rooms to cook the fresh meat Cylus' minions bring each day.

The building contains several underground rooms, built into the artificial hillock and even deeper into the earth. This is where Cylus spends many of his waking hours, plotting and managing to add to his riches and power. The deepest rooms are his private sanctum, guarded by layers of traps and loyal minions, while the middle rooms near the surface hold much of his accumulated wealth and the living quarters of his most trusted allies. Breaching this area would be a fantastically difficult task, and since the time of the dwarves these chambers have remained inviolate.

There are rumours of hidden caches of gold and gems located throughout the hillock that would have been used by the merchants of Ironhallow Hall, but none have ever been found and Cylus continually denies their existence to keep thieves and opportunists from constantly ransacking the place. Although few, if any, of these thieves would be able to bypass Cylus' defences, it is a headache that he does not wish to add to his list.

TEMPLE OF ALODAI

The temple of Alodai is one of the few structures in the city that was not rebuilt or converted from the time of the dwarves. It dates back only 20 years to the time just after the great storm that ravaged the city. At that time the shaman Akrilla was the leader of the Mended Ones, and her expulsion from the city and subsequent disgrace brought suspicion onto the remaining leaders of the faith.

They lived with this distrust for several years, and many of their number were killed by fearful and superstitious orcs. Then came Grum Preddor, a powerful and influential shaman who distinguished himself on the field of battle whilst travelling with the First Horde. Grum came to the Mended Ones and





called them into a retreat for prayer and reflection. When they emerged from the small, wooden church building near the Shrine of Circles they seemed to resonate with focus and direction. The church leaders were all wearing black masks and they proclaimed from that day forth their identities would remain secret.

Their first action after this new revelation was to commission the construction of a new headquarters, one that could house them in secrecy and allow them to conduct church business without distraction. A hundred orcs and goblins worked night and day to complete the structure, which can still be seen on the

spot of the old church building, some fifty yards from the site of the Shrine of Circles.

The building is made completely of native orangewood, and it stands out against the harsh grey cliff face that reaches skyward from the Hearth Plain. The outside of the structure is architecturally complex, with many small rooftops, landings, and balconies placed throughout. It appears awkward to outside observers, and perfectly reflects the chaotic nature of those who built it and those who live within. The Mended Ones can often be seen overlooking the Hearth Plain from these various perches, their draping robes and dark masks presenting a grim site to those who tarry to watch.

The inside of the structure is far less chaotic than the outer shell, housing several large rooms on the first floor and living quarters on the second and above. The top floor is one large room, a private worship area for the Mended Ones to commune with Alodai and learn his wishes. Screams of agony can often be heard echoing across the plain from this private shrine as the high priests of Alodai submit themselves, and others, to painful and agonising rituals.

The living quarters on the second floor are more conventional, with each room being equally furnished with a bed, chest, desk, and chair. These rooms also have openings to the balconies and landings visible from the exterior. These open doorways are often decorated with strings of beads or painted animal skin. The balconies and landings are often higher than the rooms themselves and are accessible by stairs that hug the building's outer walls. Although the Mended Ones have servants that attend to their needs, they are never seen on these balconies, which are considered the private areas of the individual priests and off-limits to all uninvited trespassers.

The bottom floor is divided into three large rooms, each having several closets, cubby-holes, and storage bins built into the walls. The first is the temple of Alodai itself, and this covers nearly the entire front half of the building. It is the only place in the structure where all orcs are permitted, and also the only room in which there are windows to the outside. The room is covered by blood soaked rugs, most made from the skin of both surface and subterranean animals, and crude paintings depicting scenes from the doctrine of Alodai cover the walls of the room. Most of the paintings show great historical battles in which a shaman has played a decisive role or orcs submitting themselves to the rituals and trials

demanding by their faith. One wall carved in bas-relief is devoted to the battle between Alodai and Kharkus. It depicts a victorious Alodai, his lifeblood draining from his wounded hand, standing over the beaten demon lord as he cringes in fear.

The faithful are expected to pay monetary tribute to Alodai for which they receive a righteous beating at the hands of one of the lesser priests. After enduring their worship, the faithful are granted food and drink, then sent on their way. Most orcs in Skraag muster the strength to worship here at least once each month, although the truly committed come here as often as they can. At least one Mended One along with several lesser priests, guards, and servants tend to the faithful here at all times.

The second room, reached through a door to the right of the main altar, is a kitchen and pantry area where servants of the Maimed Lord prepare food for the faithful and priests. A large fire pit stands in the centre of the room, and it is not unheard of for an unhappy priest to throw a servant in with the evening's fare.

The third room on the bottom floor of the temple acts as quarters for the temple's servants. It is not a happy retreat, because of a ghost that haunts the room. The apparition appears randomly, causing a chill in the room and causing flames in the room to either flare up

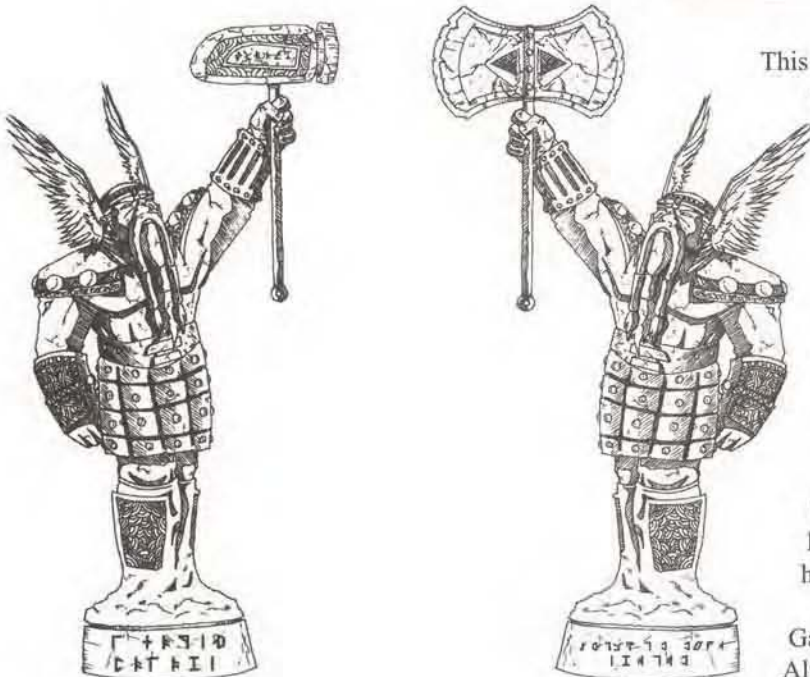
or snuff out. So far the ghost has not harmed any of the servants, but it does cause a lot of lost sleep.

MARKET CAVE

This large cavern stands as a lasting tribute to the artistic and engineering genius of the dwarves who built the original city. It was once a large amphitheatre where dwarven bards and storytellers would sing songs telling of their ancestors' great deeds. The ridged half-dome behind the stage is carved completely from the rock of the cavern, and the rest of the cave is decorated with statues depicting heroes of dwarven legend. Most of these statues have been vandalised over the last hundred years, broken and covered with all manner of disgusting things. Two of the statues resisted this vandalism and eventually the orcs tired of trying to destroy them.

Statue Properties

The two undefiled statues were warded against ageing and damage with powerful dwarven rune magic. The orcs lack the magical knowledge to decipher the runes for what they are, and so leave the statues intact in the marketplace as a reminder of who they conquered. There are rumours that these statues are the inert forms of legendary dwarven warriors who will reclaim the city when the time arrives. These stories are dismissed by the shamans of Skraag as idiotic fancy.



This stone-ridden cavern is where the orcs meet to trade and do all manner of business. There are only a few orcs here that make a living at trade, and the majority of those make just enough to rent their space from Cylus. These destitute traders usually sleep in the cavern when business is scarce and feed themselves by catching cave rats or flaggs. One orc, Garkyon, has managed to carve out a decent living merely by trading here in the market. His wooden stand deals mainly with tools and other items for everyday living, but as with everything in Skraag his success has a hidden tale.

Garkyon is the cousin of Cylus Groom. Although such familial distinctions are all but meaningless in orc society, he was able



to use Cylus' name where others would have been killed for doing so. He approached the Silver Tusks and offered to make their jobs a little easier in return for protection from the collections they made. He offered to be their eyes and ears in the caverns below, dealing information whilst selling goods to the orcs of Skraag. In order to protect Garkyon's burgeoning business, the Silver Tusks declared the market to be off-limits to bullies, thugs, and thieves. This is the only area in the city with an official prohibition against such activities (for otherwise the Silver Tusks' own activities would be quite inhibited). They visit the ruined cavern frequently, and often employ work crews to transport goods to and from Garkyon's subterranean shop. Other orcs are safer here from the predations of the Silver Tusks and other criminals than anywhere else in the city. This makes trade here brisk, and orcs are not afraid to bring their hard-earned or stolen gold. Sometimes orcs even barter their goods to the traders, but doing so fetches abysmally low prices.

There are close to two dozen other vendors and dealers in the market, and new arrivals appear in place of failures on a regular basis. Visiting traders and merchants can rent floor space in the cavern by the day for a fee of three silver pieces, payable to any Silver Tusk or to Cylus Groom at Government House. Hunters will often bring extra game here to sell to those who are unable to catch their own, and one of the regular traders sells nuts, roots, and

berries gathered from the surrounding wilderness. Inferior cloths can be found here, most of them obviously heavily used or stolen for sale at the market but orcs do not personally value silks and other fine materials beyond the price they can fetch in human markets. Any tools or adventuring gear found here are likely to be of inferior quality and stand a good chance of failing when used under less than optimal conditions.

THE CHOKED PIT

There are a hundred small places within Skraag where orcs meet to drink and blow off aggression, but few of them offer the service of the Choked Pit. Built into an old barracks house near the entrance to the caverns, this tavern plays host to a variety of clients from both above and below ground. There is even a separate room where brave non-orc residents of Skraag can mingle without being mobbed by drunken orc warriors. The Choked Pit is a rough place but an orc can at least be assured of hot food and decent spirits. If an orc keeps his head down and his axe at the ready, he may just find a break from the ever-present violence of life in Skraag.

The owner and barkeep is an old orc named Gireous Phlog. Phlog is nasty and brutish, even by orc standards, and it is said that working for him is worse than being thrown into the work pits. Even so, he never has a shortage of females to carry drinks and cook food in his establishment. This is one of the few places in Skraag that a female is paid for her work, and there is ample side business to be gleaned by accompanying more generous patrons home at the end of a shift.

The establishment is open twenty-four hours a day and those who frequent it swear Gireous never stops manning the bar. In reality, he is only around about half the day, but enjoys the reputation he has for working non-stop so he employs various tactics to maintain the illusion. The menu is the same day and night, though cooks can sometimes create something different depending on the availability of ingredients. The usual fare is a thick stew with meat whose origins are better left unknown. Orcs do not bake bread, but will add grain directly to the stew when it is available. An orc that speaks to the cooks privately can even get special orders made, though asking Gireous himself is liable to get one thrown out of the establishment altogether.

FLAGG

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft.; Fly 40 ft. (good)

AC: 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)

Attacks: Tail Sting +3 melee

Damage: Tail Sting 1d4+1+pain

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Darkvision 120', Electricity Resistance 10

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +6, Hide +6*, Move Silently +6*

Feats: Weapon Finesse (tail sting)

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organisation: Flight (5-14) or swarm (15-100)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Neutral

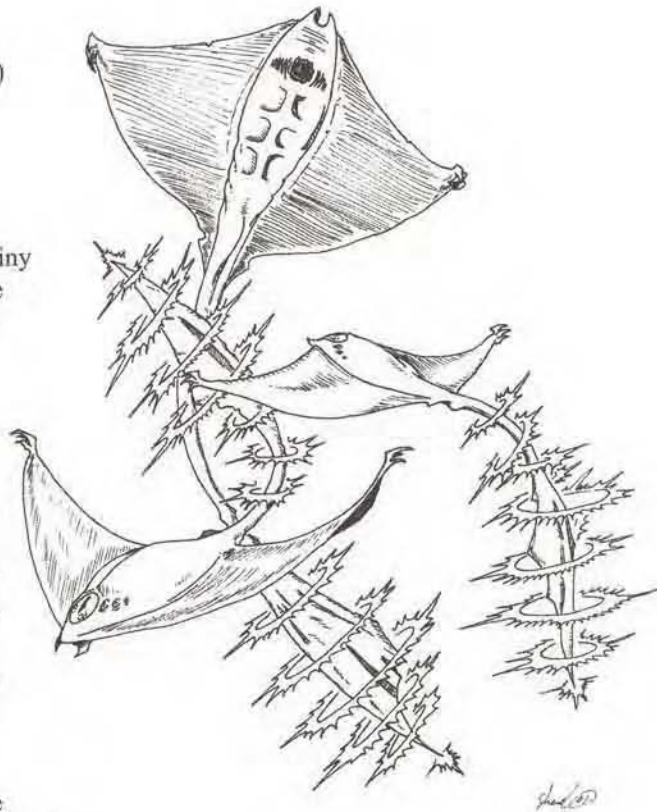
Advancement: -

Flaggs are peaceful creatures who feed on the tiny moss and fungus that grows ubiquitously on the walls of underground caverns. They resemble manta rays and their leathery skin ranges in colour from pale brown to light grey. The flaggs' tiny mouths are only good for scraping food from walls so their only method of defence are the long tails that trail behind as they fly. These tails build up a slight static electric discharge through flight, though the exact physiological reasons for this are unknown. Every minute or so, the tail of a flagg will give off a small burst of electricity, causing it to glow momentarily. This can be a very eerie site in a dark cavern full of sixty or seventy of these creatures.

Flaggs normally fly only a few inches from the ground when travelling, but can fly along the ceilings and walls of a cave when feeding or fleeing from danger. Doing so causes them great stress, however, so they only do so when necessary. They can skitter along the ground slowly but prefer to remain aloft at all times.

Tail Slap: The tail of a flagg strikes with little force, but the impact causes great pain due to the electrical build-up. This pain results in an opponent suffering a -1 penalty to all attack rolls, ability checks, and skill checks that require concentration for one minute after being struck. The effect of multiple strikes is cumulative, but the penalty can never become greater than -3.

Skills: *Flaggs receive a +4 bonus to Hide when in their natural underground surroundings and a +4 bonus to Move Silently whilst flying due to their fluid motions.



The Choked Pit serves all types of drinks as they are available. The horde's raiding parties insure a constant flow of ale and wine into the city, and a good portion of it ends up in the private cellars of the Choked Pit. The tavern's speciality, as one might expect, is grokk. They make their own special blend of grokk and its reputation is mostly responsible for the tavern's present success. A mug costs a mere silver piece, making it one of the rare affordable luxuries in Skraag. Gireous has considered the idea of recruiting a Silver Tusk to run the business, as he could then hold his cousin responsible for any mishaps. The popularity of his tavern is going to force his hand soon, and there is competition amongst the Silver Tusks to see who will get the opportunity.



THE FIELD

This is the largest single cavern in the complex beneath the Hearth Plain and its floor was cleared of stalagmites and debris in the time of Ironhallow Hall. The orcs use it much as the dwarves did, as a common area where sports and combat practice take place alongside casual meetings and secretive business dealings. Roaring crowds of orcs can be found at all times watching combat trials and pit fights, sometimes against dangerous creatures dragged from deep in the earth. This is not a place for infants or outsiders as it stands for the most dangerous and violent aspects of orcish culture and mindset.

The pit fights started almost immediately after the orcs invaded as a way for off-duty soldiers to blow off steam and direct their unspent rage. It went this way for decades, and the pit masters that arose to arrange fights for the appreciative crowds gained great wealth and prestige. One such pit master was a fat orc named Cylus Groom, whose exotic fights and reputation for pleasing the crowds soon vaulted him to the top of the scene. After the devastation of the Fury of the



Pit Fights

The most common types of fights in these pits are One-on-One, One-on-Many, Chain Gang, Beasts and Monsters, and Blood Bath. See *Gladiator - Sands of Death* for more details on these types of matches.

The most commonly used beasts are wolves and other animals from their surroundings, but occasionally the orcs find something more exotic such as a captured centaur. A particularly nasty match that is a true orc favourite places several gladiators in a wooden ring into which several sacks of dire rats are poured.

Maimed Lord, he used this popularity to help solidify his position as City Master.

Fighting away from the pit is common in the Field as well. Business dealings gone sour and poor sportsmanship are typical reasons for such violence, which can often turn as deadly as those in the pit. When such fights break out, crowds will often ring around them, looking for interesting side action away from the pits. The regular authorities in Skraag stay away from the Field and the unstated law is anything goes. If the fights get too big, however, a force of guards will be called in to prevent wholesale rioting and destruction. Orcs are rowdy and hot-blooded, and

neither Cylus nor Grogan wish to preside over a city full of enraged warriors. Any involved in such massive brawls are generally executed on the spot, though some survivors may be thrown onto a work crew.

In addition to the constant fighting, shady business dealings of all sorts take place across the Field. This is the centre of the black market in Skraag, if an orc knows where to look and who to ask. The black market here functions like that in any major city, though there is no one power in control of it and most of the groups in Skraag have an interest in these quiet dealings.

The Cult of Kharkus sells its secrets and small portions of its power to entice new followers into the fold. They track potential recruits, sometimes for weeks, to gauge if they are likely to join the cult or would report to Cylus or Grogan in hopes of a reward. When a potential mark is found, the cult sends an agent out to the Field in order to make contact. This usually involves some discussion of religion or philosophy, as well as an attempt to gauge the ambition of the orc in question. If the recruit is receptive to the initial overtures, more senior members of the cult will approach the orc on his next visit to the Field. They are fond of offering minor magic potions or small tokens charged with demonic power in exchange for a favour from the recruit. At this point the cult sits back and waits for the recruit to come back for more, knowing that when the orc returns they have hooked another initiate.

The orcs that worship the mysterious being known as the Asphibyix also take advantage of the relative freedom of the Field. Here they trade for items needed to perform their grisly rites, paying primarily with the ration tokens they have acquired, and looking for incense and a large quantity of black onyx gems that would create suspicion if they were acquired openly. The disciples of the Asphibyix also attempt to make contact with new followers in the Field, but they use the lure of extra ration chips to recruit their followers. If they suspect one of their contacts is going to the authorities with information about the cult, they will track the orc until he is alone and kill him, taking the corpse to be sacrificed to their unknown god.

Even Cylus and Grogan utilise the field to perform operations and acquire goods in a manner that will not implicate them or their underlings. Cylus usually sends a group of goblin servants into the Field to deliver or receive messages and goods in order to avoid risking the lives of his more valued orcs and the goblins become convenient scapegoats should a

mission run afoul. Cylus has considered getting involved in the ample drugs trade, but thus far he has chosen to keep his hands clean. That said, several of the Silver Tusks are involved in distributing drugs they buy through handlers in the Field, simply not involving Cylus in their business.

Grogan's men watch from a distance, only entering the Field in the case of an emergency. He is most interested in implicating the Silver Tusks or Cylus' goblin lackeys in illegal

activities but, unfortunately, the orcs Grogan has assigned to the Field are far from loyal to him. Instead, they are paid by most of the rival factions to conceal what they learn, and the accumulated bribes are more than enough to guarantee silence. It is through these traitors that the disciples of the Asphibyix managed to infiltrate the ranks of the Lake Guard, as enough gold and ration tokens can buy an orc's way anywhere in Skraag if he knows who to bribe.

As dangerous as it is, the Field is where many of the orcs of Skraag come to relax when they are not scraping for survival. A variety of sports are played on the field, including *skrat*, a game whose object is to kick a newly separated horse's head into the opposing team's goal. The game lasts until the horse's head is literally torn apart by the rough treatment, at which time the goal with the most gore is declared the loser. Another popular game is *agger*, in which each orc takes a greatclub and smashes it against other combatants until only one orc is able to swing the club.



ARTISTS' CAVES

This small cluster of caves is where some of the orcs of Skraag gather to play music, tell stories, and engage in various other amusements. Most of Skraag's citizens have little interest in engaging in such frivolous activities, but more refined and civilised orcs do exist. They engage in artistic endeavours ranging from painting to music, and the only real written records of life in Skraag can be found in the rucksacks and scroll tubes of a few of these orcs.

As one might expect, orcs that spend time in these caves are the object of ridicule and bullying by the majority of Skraag's population. Because of this, the community of artists has become a close-knit group, aiding one another and living a communal lifestyle within these caves. They return the derision they receive from other orcs in kind and would like nothing better than to be able to leave Skraag altogether.

Unfortunately they realise that without the protection of the other orcs, they would most likely be killed in the wilderness simply for their race and appearance. Thus they remain in Skraag, losing themselves in their work in order to forget their daily trials.

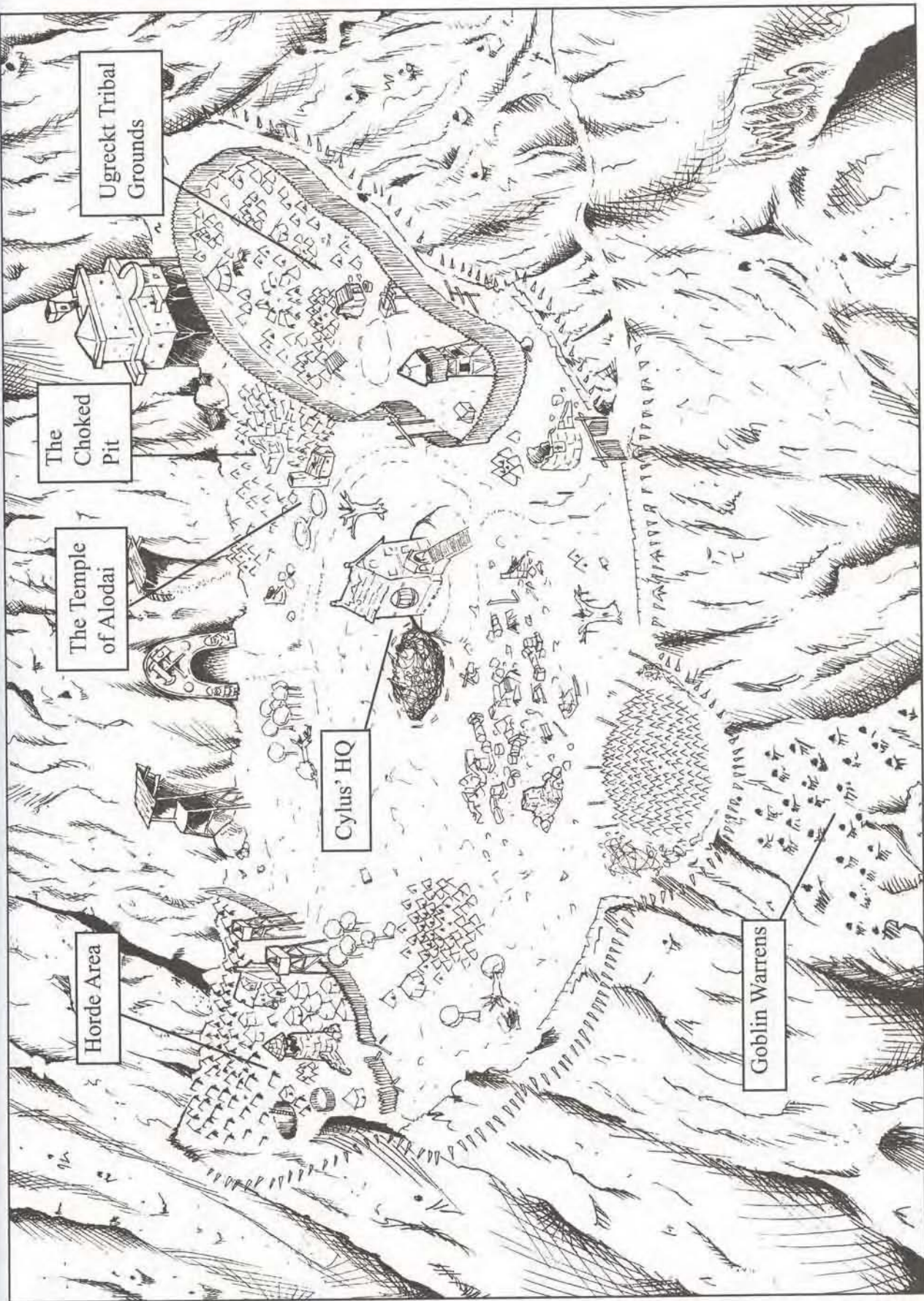
These orcs brave the city at large in order to sell some of their handiwork, which is appreciated by many orcs in the city even if the creators are not. The irony of this is not lost on the artists, but they endure what they must to make a living. Despite constant badgering these orcs do not hold ill feeling toward their race as a whole, and would certainly not aid any outsider attempting to undermine or destroy the city. They might, however, sell their wares to such interested parties, possibly providing a good route to get inside help infiltrating the city, since the artists would aid in the smuggling of their pieces and would likely help an outsider secretly gain access to Skraag.

There is one popular cavern amongst these caves, called the Musicians' Corner. Here one can find orcs playing drums and a variety of other percussion instruments for amusement and profit. The orcs almost exclusively play percussion instruments, as others tend to be too delicate for them to handle and stringed instruments, especially those requiring plucking such as harps and dulcimers, irritate orcs beyond reason. Music is the only art form taken seriously by the orcs, who love to dance and scream wildly to the beat of hollow shells and flagg-skin drums. Sometimes a storyteller will pair with a drummer, realising his art will never be taken seriously outside of a musical context. He rarely gains more respect, however, as none of the whooping and hollering orcs stop to pay attention to what is being said.

UGRECKT TRIBAL GROUNDS

The Ugreckt tribe sprung up around the initial group of hobgoblins Cylus Groon hired to help rebuild the city. Their main task was metalworking and defence, and to this end Cylus ordered a large smithy built for them, around which they now live. The smithy and the tribe have both grown in the past twenty years, and the





hobgoblins now claim nearly the entire eastern edge of the Hearth Plain as their home. At the insistence of Grogan Thral their expansion has been curbed in the last few years, and the tribal chieftain, a powerful hobgoblin warrior named Tallarak Vressun, keeps tight control over the number of hobgoblins living on the plain. Though distrustful of both their numbers and race, Grogan understands the defensive benefits of having the tribe situated where they are and he has not made a case for their dissolution.

In addition to the fences and ditches surrounding the entire Hearth Plain, the Ugreckt chieftain has ordered the construction of several other defensive structures to aid the hobgoblin tribe. The first of these is a log wall built using wood hauled up the mountain from the forest below. These three foot high walls are designed to slow an invading army while still allowing for the use of javelins and other ranged weapons against the tribe's foes. The hobgoblins have also built several large ballistae to counter flying invaders and dissuade attackers from approaching the compound. A lookout tower rises above the rest of the hobgoblin encampment, from which the hobgoblins monitor the mountainside as well as the city of Skraag itself. They keep watch on movement outside the city and give such information to Cylus Groom, who is always interested in the extracurricular activities of Grogan Thral's scouting units.

The hobgoblin tribe now numbers over two hundred warriors, as well as one hundred and fifty females and children, not enough to seriously challenge Skraag as a whole, but enough to prevent them from being abused like the goblins of the city. Tallarak Vressun is the only surviving member of the group that made the agreement with Cylus Groom twenty-five years ago and is a cunning hobgoblin who leverages his relationship with Groom to its fullest potential, granting him privileges of movement and protection not enjoyed by any other outsider. He often travels around the city with a powerful retinue of guards in order to buy goods, make business and other arrangements, as well as gather information.

Unbeknownst to either Cylus or Grogan, the hobgoblins have dug an escape tunnel leading from their compound to an unwatched portion of the mountain slopes. They have been using this route to secretly engage in talks with a large hobgoblin tribe living several miles from the city. The nature and outcome of these talks is unknown, but is unlikely to be beneficial to the orcs. Grogan believes the

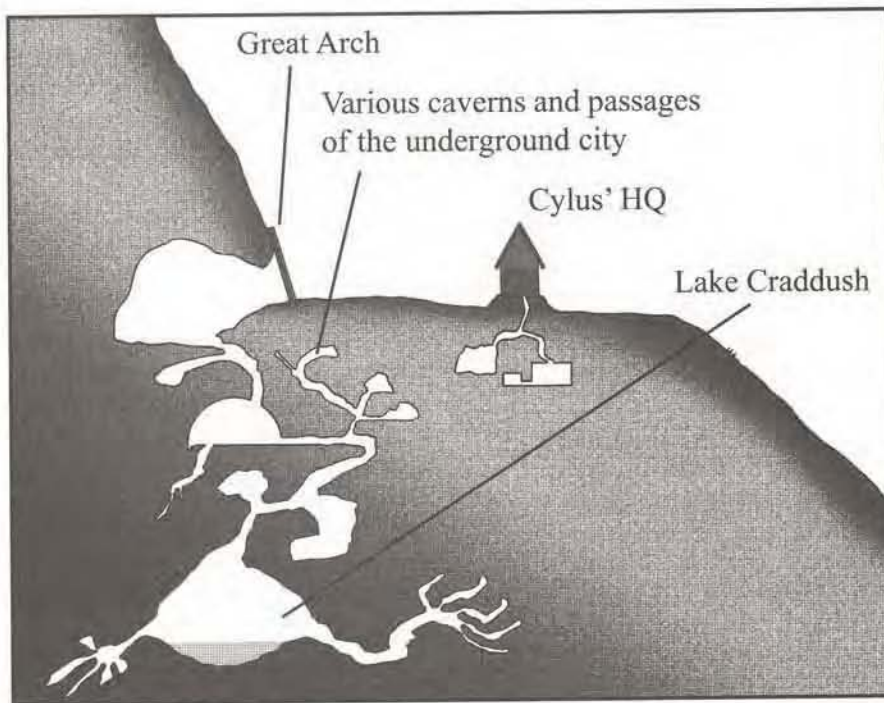
hobgoblins are planning something but he cannot be sure, and their close relationship with Cylus makes him cautious about confronting the chieftain.

GOBLIN WARRENS

This area was where the bulk of the hordes rested after the first day of the invasion of Ironhallow Hall. It quickly became uninhabitable, a bowl-shaped depression full of waste and rot. When the orcs completed their conquest of the area, this portion of the Hearth Plain was vacated. It was used primarily as a dump and waste disposal area until the goblin population in the city started to exceed the land the orcs had given them. At that time all goblins of the city were forced to move into this area, which had abundant tunnels underneath small hills that dotted the area.

Since that time this area has become the goblins' own, the trash and waste the orcs dumped here having been cleaned out for the most part, though the goblins add more of their own every day. Otyughs have been driven further into the Hearth Plain to feast on the discards of the multitude of orcs that make camp there and a tunnel has been dug that leads out of the city onto a hillside near the mountain. Some of the patrols





know about this hidden entrance but no action has been taken to close it. The goblins exit the city frequently, always leaving enough of their number in the warrens to ensure no one knows they are moving. Goblins are much too erratic to sit in one place for long without direction, and being outside the confines of Skraag means being away from the abuse and work they endure on a constant basis.

Much like the hobgoblins, the goblins of Skraag have also contacted a goblin tribe outside the city and trade goods and information with them on a regular basis. These dealings are hidden from the orcs within the city, who would immediately become suspicious of such behaviour. The goblins do not have any plots brewing and are generally satisfied with their rather poor lot in life. Most know they are lucky to have the protection of a large city and do not consider relocating to live with the other tribe.

The goblins of Skraag are not organised, and there is no chieftain to oversee their affairs as a whole. They govern themselves and individuals are held responsible for their own actions. Any goblin who is caught doing anything that could anger the orcs is dealt with harshly as none wish to bring the inevitable retribution down upon themselves. The goblins are too content with their lifestyle to desire change, even if they get thrown on the work crews for the slightest of infractions.

The closest thing to an organisation within the goblins of Skraag is the group of thieving goblins that coordinate with each other. Other goblins detest this group and are always on the lookout for a reason to turn them in to their orcish taskmasters, though to do so is to risk retribution from the tight knit group of rogues.

LAKE CRADDUSH

This enormous underground lake once fed an entire ecosystem beneath the Hearth Plain, but since the dwarves claimed Ironhallow several hundred years ago, it has been a tightly controlled water supply. Some of the creatures that lived close to water were slaughtered to near extinction whilst others moved on to safer territories. It is not known what became of the troglodyte clan that warred with Ironhallow Hall - perhaps they were obliterated by the dwarves or maybe they too went off in search of darker pastures. They were gone by the time the orcs conquered Ironhallow Hall and named this lake after their Warmaster of the time, Craddush.

Many of the more aggressive species stayed, as did those who did not rely on the water supply for their very survival. This makes the large cavern that contains the lake an incredibly dangerous place, which is why the orcs keep it so heavily guarded. Displacer beast attacks are common near the lake and a colony of owlbears continues to visit in order to feed even

though their traditional food sources were driven out over a hundred years ago.

As if this was not enough for the Lake Guard to control, the dwarves of the resistance, led by Darius Stonereaver, harass the orcs in this cavern, where they are most vulnerable. The dwarves strike in teams designed to kill a few orcs and sabotage a cavern before retreating into the caves, foiling any determined pursuit or reaction. Grogan is incredibly frustrated by these attacks and the inability of his orcs to track these guerrilla warriors back to their lair. He understands that fighting in caves leaves his troops at a disadvantage, but he cannot simply leave the lake undefended. Although he has a distaste for magic, Grogan is considering consulting the oracles amongst the Mended Ones for guidance in this situation. It is likely Alodai knows the truth, but his willingness to share the information with Skraag may depend on Grogan's ability to root out the growing number of followers of Kharkus in the city.

One of the most dangerous natural features of the cavern is a blue moss that grows on the shores of the lake in large patches. Bluemoss is not harmful unless disturbed, at which time it releases a cloud of spores that infects all creatures nearby. The bluemoss is resistant to fire and the orcs have yet to discover how to rid themselves of this annoyance, though in day-to-day life it does not hinder them much. The Lake

Dungeon Hazard

Bluemoss (CR 3)

This leafy moss grows on the shores of Lake Craddush in large patches that are difficult to see in the dark cavern. The dark blue moss blends with the rocks surrounding the lake, so the only warnings are the crude signs posted by the Lake Guard to protect their patrols. Bluemoss is also used in the creation of lake zombies, but only the cult of the Asphibiyex knows of this dire use.

Anyone wandering into a patch of bluemoss will cause a release of spores into the air. All creatures within 10 ft. of the bluemoss must make a Will save (DC 15) or be compelled to walk into the lake, where they drown unless rescued. They will not resist any rescue attempts, but if left unattended, once again try to walk back into the lake. Furthermore, a Fortitude save (DC 15) must be made each day or one point of temporary Constitution damage will be dealt as their lungs fill with fluid. Two consecutive Fort saves will rid the character of the compulsion, as will a *neutralise poison* or similar spell.

Guard would be greatly interested in discovering a way to cultivate the bluemoss so they could block certain passages into the city, but this is not likely to happen given the orcs' primitive knowledge of such things.

EYRIE

Situated near the peak of the mountain that rises above the Hearth Plain, this shallow cave is home to nearly two dozen giant eagles. This group made contact with the dwarves of the resistance a few years ago, and since that time have endeavoured to help them reclaim their lost city. In addition to harassing the orcs stationed in the cliffside forts, the eagles also scout the surrounding land, keep track of horde movements, and direct good-natured strangers away from Skraag itself and on to the dwarves. The Eyrie holds close to four full families of eagles and is not practically accessible by any means except flight.

CLIFFSIDE FORTS

These wooden structures are built high on the cliff face that overlooks the Hearth Plain and from these vantage points, orcs can view all approaches to the city for several miles, providing a great deal of information and tactical aid to Skraag. At least three orcs man each of the forts at all times, rotating shifts every four days and wooden hand and footholds afford an easy climb up the nearly 200 ft. stretch to the forts. The orcs are armed with crossbows and battle axes to ward off attackers, and each fort has a spyglass affixed to one of the crossbeams. The duty here is so routine and boring that orcs often leave their post to pursue other interests during their shift.

The giant eagles have fun harassing the orcs on these stations, diving in to snatch their weapons or food and dropping them several hundred feet to the ground below. So far the orcs have not managed to kill one of the great creatures, but hate them terribly and often dream of cooking an eagle carcass over an open flame.

CAVES OF THE RESISTANCE

These caverns are hidden deep in the earth beneath the Hearth Plain and into the mountain that now teems with orcs. They lie well beyond Lake Craddush and are therefore outside the boundaries of Skraag. This insures the dwarves are not bothered by orc

raiding parties or minions bent on the destruction of the last remnant of Ironhallow Hall.

The resistance is quite well placed. They have a run-off stream from the lake that feeds them fresh water, and several exit caverns to the outside world provide them with a means of replenishing food stores and travelling beyond the confines of the city and its environs. The dwarves have used their mastery of stone to hide these entrances from all but the most scrutinous eyes. They are so well hidden, in fact, that only a dwarf can readily tell them apart from the normal crags and ditches of the mountainous terrain. If an orc ever found one of these entrances and lived to tell of its existence, it would surely mean the end of the dwarven resistance effort forever. These caves have little or no light, and the dwarves being content to utilise their natural ability to see in the dark for everyday life for this also helps keep any intruders that rely on light from posing a serious threat. The dwarves have set up various stonework traps and trick doors to further insure their safety.

The Warriors of the Nine are headquartered in these caverns and use them to launch their forays into the city. These raids are a major source of food and

supplies for the resistance, and always manage to slay a few orcs for good measure. Their leader is a dwarf named Darius Stonereaver, one of the oldest remaining in the resistance movement. Despite his age, he is still a formidable fighter and would never let a major action go forward without personally leading his troops. The Warriors of the Nine have a heavily guarded cavern from which they call upon their ancestral images to scout their next mission. These warriors are the spiritual leaders of the resistance and others naturally look to them for command and direction.

THE HORDE ENCAMPMENT

This area was put aside for members of the horde after several incidents between them and the citizen orcs of Skraag. Warmaster Thak decided to keep the two groups separate and issued an order that orcs visiting Skraag for healing or repair not enter the city proper unless given authorisation by Hordemaster Kell. Nevertheless, orcs manage to find ways into the city proper, whether it be through stealth or a bribe paid to the Hordemaster. Money is the Hordemaster's great weakness and his open policy of accepting bribes for nearly any service or boon has made him a wealthy orc. If the situation gets too far out of hand, however, the warlords will make sure he does not live to spend it.

A wooden fence surrounds the entire encampment. Two gates break the fence, one to the south and another to the east. Guards are posted at these gates constantly, and they are under standing orders to let none enter or leave without the Hordemaster's express permission. The area on the western end of the Hearth Plain is rocky and has been cleared of any shrubs or small trees that may have once grown here. Small holes and caves dot the area, many of which are used by the visiting horde orcs for shelter, stealth, and privacy.

There is a low, saucer-shaped depression in the encampment that orcs use as a makeshift hospital. While few have any skill in healing or basic medicine, the hobgoblin shaman has been teaching some of the older orcs to use plants from the area to aid in the recuperation process. The state of the encampment is not conducive for healing, so many orcs simply come here



to live well before they die. Prostitution, drinking and gambling are just some of the vices that wounded orcs enjoy here. All of this is run by the Silver Tusks, with a portion of the proceeds going directly to Hordemaster Kell.

The other task of the Hordemaster is to oversee repairs on the various siege engines used by the orcs when they rampage across the surrounding region. A group of very skilled orcs from the Blackmuck tribe live in the encampment, and their sole job is the repair and salvage of the horde's engines of destruction. They sometimes collaborate with the Ugrect on large projects and generally admire the hobgoblins for their metalworking skills. Some have accused the Blackmuck of favouring the company of hobgoblins to other orcs, and in some cases this has proved to be true. The Blackmuck have built a solid structure in which they live, and many of the orcs of Skraag look upon it with jealousy and greed. It is only their reputation for extreme skill in both combat and craft that has kept them safe from the predations of their own kind.

There is a fenced area where the wardogs used by the horde are bred and trained, an incredibly dangerous place for any except the trainers, and most orcs steer clear of it at all times. Wardogs are an integral part of the orcs' horde tactics, and there are three full wardog units within Skraag at all times. The fearsome orcs that control and direct these dogs are feared by even the toughest of orcs and are almost always covered by numerous scars from the bites and mauls they suffer over the years from dealing with these dangerous creatures, though the wardog trainer views these as marks of pride rather than regrettable mementoes of training gone bad. The wardog training area is double fenced, an extra precaution taken by the nervous orcs in the horde encampment.

Orcish Wardog

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (13 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)

Attacks: Bite +3 melee

Damage: Bite 1d6+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Trip

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +1*

Feats: Track

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organisation: Solitary or pack (5-8)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

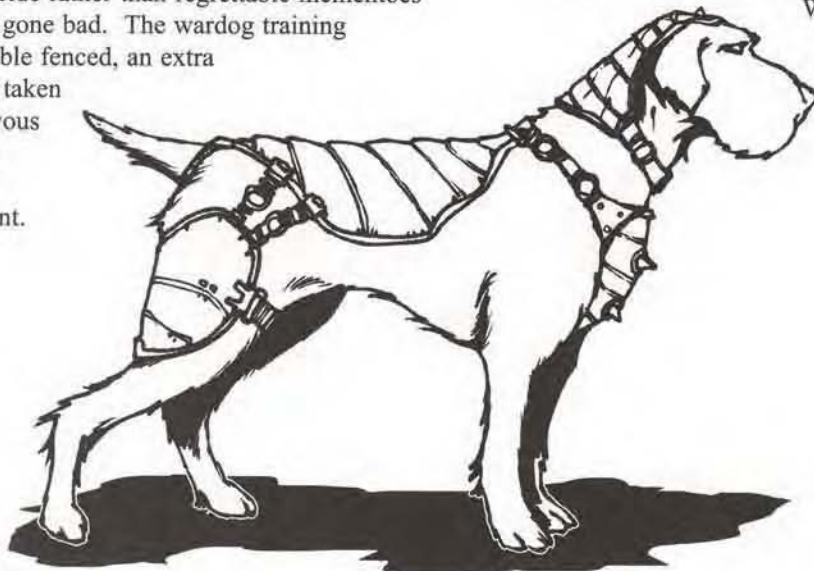
Alignment: Always Neutral

Advancement: -

Aggressive breeds such as giant pit bulls and rottweillers are often used as war dogs by orc tribes who unleash them upon unsuspecting enemies as a prelude to the orcs' own attack.

Trip (Ex): A wardog that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot trip the dog in return.

Scent (Ex): *Wardogs receive a +4 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.



MOVERS AND SHAKERS

This section is devoted to the Non-Player Characters of Skraag. Most of the named characters in the book are detailed below, and a variety of templates are given so that Games Masters may quickly generate a group of foes with which to challenge their players. The Non-Player Characters are all presented in a standard stat block format, with a complete rundown of skills, feats, and prepared spells. Only magical possessions are listed, as individual Games Masters should outfit the Non-Player Characters with whatever mundane equipment he thinks is necessary for a given encounter.

The following characters described in this sourcebook are fully detailed in this chapter;

Cylus Groon
Warmaster Thak
Grogan Thral
Hordemaster Kell
Tallarak Vressun
Akrilla the Witch
Garkyon
Gireous Phlog
Darius Stonereaver

The demon lord Kharkus is also included, for use in high level adventures where player characters have managed to penetrate the city of Skraag and unwittingly become embroiled in the eternal struggle between the two principle deities of the orcs.

In addition, several examples of the various types of common orc are also provided in order to allow a Games Master to portray such encounters quickly and easily, with the minimum of preparation.

Cylus Groon

Male Orc Barbarian 11/Aristocrat 7: CR 17; Size M (5 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 11d12+11 plus 7d8+7; hp 128; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (+2 Dex, +8 breastplate, +3 *ring of protection*); Attack +25/+20/+15/+10 melee (1d12+12+1d6 electrical *great axe of shocking burst* +2); SV Fort +13, Ref +10, Will +13; AL CE; Str 22, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 18.



Skills and feats: Climb +15, Craft (weaponsmith) +9, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +8, Hide +5, Intimidate +17, Jump +12, Listen +5, Move silently +9, Profession (civic leader) +9, Read lips +8, Speak language +2, Spot +10, Swim +8; Alertness, Cleave, Combat reflexes, Great Cleave, Power attack, Quick draw, Skill focus (intimidate).

Languages: Common, Dwarf, Orc, Undercommon.

Possessions: *Breastplate of medium fortification* +3, *great axe of shocking burst* +2, *ring of protection* +3, *ring of invisibility*, *circlet of persuasion*, *cloak of resistance* +3, *portable hole*, *potion of bull's strength*, *potion of expeditious retreat*, 2 *potions of cure serious wounds*.

Warmaster Thak

Male Orc Barbarian 10/Fighter 8: CR 18; Size M (6 ft., 0 in. tall); HD 10d12+20 plus 8d10+16; hp 156; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 24 (+3 Dex, +7 *breastplate of command*, +4 *amulet of natural armour* +4); Attack +29/+24/+19/+14 melee (1d12+15 *greataxe of thundering* +3), or +24/+19/+14/+9 ranged (1d6+9 *throwing axe of returning* +2); SV Fort +17, Ref +9, Will +6; AL CE; Str 25, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 17

Skills and feats: Climb +17, Craft (weaponsmith) +6, Hide +4, Intuit direction +10, Listen +10, Move silently +4, Ride +17, Search +4, Spot +7, Swim +2; Alertness, Cleave, Endurance, Great cleave, Great

fortitude, Improved bull rush, Improved initiative, Improved unarmed strike, Power attack, Sunder, Weapon focus (greataxe), Weapon specialisation (greataxe).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: *Breastplate of command*, *greataxe of thundering +3*, *2 throwing axes of returning +2*, *amulet of natural armour +4*, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *brooch of shielding (38 points)*, *2 potions of expeditious retreat*, *1 potion of charisma*, *2 potions of cure serious wounds*.

Grogan Thral

Male Orc Barbarian 8/Fighter 4: CR 12; Size M (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 8d12+32 plus 4d10+16; hp 111; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +6 *chain shirt +2*, +1 *amulet of natural armour +1*); Attack +22/+17/+12 melee (1d8+11 *longsword +2*), or +14/+9/+4 ranged (1d8+3 *mighty (+2) composite longbow +1*); SV Fort +14, Ref +4, Will +4; AL NE; Str 24, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and feats: Craft (weaponsmith) +5, Handle animal +10, Intimidate +9, Intuit direction +7, Listen +12, Ride +11, Sense motive +3, Spot +1, Swim +10, Use rope +6; Blind-fight, Combat reflexes, Endurance, Improved critical (longsword), Improved initiative, Weapon focus (longsword), Weapon focus (longbow, composite), Weapon specialisation (longsword).

Languages: Common, Orc, Undercommon.

Possessions: *Chain shirt +2*, *longsword +2*, *mighty (+2) composite longbow +1*, *amulet of natural armour +1*, *2 potions of cure serious wounds*.

Hordemaster Kell

Male Orc Warrior 8/Commoner 5: CR 12; Size M (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 8d8+16 plus 5d4+10; hp 78; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 studded leather); Attack +17/+12 melee (1d8+7 longsword), or +14/+9 ranged (1d8+1 repeating crossbow+1); SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +6; AL CE; Str 25, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and feats: Balance +6, Disable device +4, Forgery +6, Hide +4, Intimidate +11, Jump +12, Move silently +4; Blind-fight, Exotic weapon proficiency (crossbow, repeating), Improved critical (crossbow, repeating), Leadership, Skill focus (forgery).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: *Repeating crossbow+1*, *cloak of resistance +2*.



Tallarak Vressun

Male Hobgoblin Ranger 7/Fighter 7: CR 14; Size M (7 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 7d10+35 plus 7d10+35; hp 151; Init +9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+5 Dex, studded leather of spell resistance +2, +1 ring of protection +1); Attack +20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+9 dire flail +1), or +19/+14/+9 ranged; SV Fort +15, Ref +11, Will +6; AL LE; Str 19, Dex 20, Con 21, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 13.

Skills and feats: Alchemy +7, Heal +10, Hide +11, Intimidate +5, Jump +14, Knowledge (nature) +12, Listen +15, Move silently +9, Open lock +9, Profession (leatherworking) +9, Ride +15, Spot +11, Swim +11, Wilderness lore +9; Alertness, Ambidexterity, Combat reflexes, Exotic weapon proficiency (flail, dire), Expertise, Improved critical (flail, dire), Improved initiative, Lightning reflexes, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon focus (flail, dire), Weapon Specialization (flail, dire).

Languages: Common, Elf, Giant, Goblin, Orc.

Possessions: *Studded leather of spell resistance (13) +2*, *dire flail +1*, *ring of protection +1*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of invisibility*.

Ranger Spells (2): 1- *entangle*, *resist elements*. DC 13 + Spell Level.

Akrilla the Witch

Female Orc Adept 9/Sorcerer 10: CR 18; Size M (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 9d4+27 plus 10d4+30; hp 124; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 amulet of natural armour +4); Attack +16/+11 melee (1d6+9

quarterstaff +2); SV Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +15; AL NE; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills and feats:

Alchemy +17, Concentration +17, Heal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (nature) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +4, Scry +21, Spellcraft +14, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +11. Alertness, Armour Proficiency (light), Brew Potion, Craft Rod, Craft Wand, Maximise Spell, Quicken Spell.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Orc.

Possessions: *Quarterstaff +2, vest of mage armour (casts mage armour on command, 3/day), amulet of natural armour +4, crystal ball (detect thoughts), wand of lightning bolt, 6 potions (type varies), scroll of polymorph self, scroll of neutralise poison.*

Adept Spells: (3/4/4/1); DC 12 + Spell Level: 0- *Detect Magic, Guidance, Read Magic*, 1st Level - *Comprehend Languages, Detect Good, Endure Elements, Obscuring Mist*, 2nd Level - *Animal Trance, Endurance, Invisibility, See Invisibility*, 3rd Level - *Neutralise Poison*.

Sorcerer Spells: Known (9/5/4/3/2/1); Cast (6/7/7/7/5/3); DC 13 + Spell Level: 0 Level known - *arcane mark, daze, detect poison, ghost sound, light, mending, open/close, ray of frost, resistance*, 1st Level known - *alarm, change self, color spray, feather fall, protection from good*, 2nd Level Known - *arcane lock, daylight, fog cloud, scare*, 3rd Level known - *dispel magic, fireball, hold person*, 4th Level known - *bestow curse, wall of fire*, 5th Level known - *teleport*.



Profession (tinker) +16, Ride +9, Spot +6; Improved initiative, Point blank shot, Skill focus (profession), Two-weapon fighting.

Languages: Common, Gnoll, Orc.

Gireous Phlog

Male Orc Commoner 8: CR 7; Size M (5 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 8d4+8; hp 29; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather); Attack +11 melee, or +5 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; AL NE; Str 24, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and feats: Appraise +6, Craft (leatherworking) +8, Handle animal +10, Hide +4, Listen +2, Move silently +5, Profession (mining) +4, Spot +2, Tumble +5, Use rope +11; Alertness, Lightning reflexes, Skill focus (profession).

Languages: Common, Gnoll, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon.

Darius Stonereaver

Male Dwarf Fighter 8/Warrior of the Nine 10: CR 18; Size M (3 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 8d10+24 plus 10d10+30; hp 157; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 26 (+1 Dex, +10 dwarven plate +2, +2 ring of protection +2, +3 large steel shield +1); Attack +26/+21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+9 warhammer +3); SV Fort +16, Ref +6, Will +9; AL N; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 18.



Garkyon

Male Orc Commoner 10: CR 9; Size M (5 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 10d4+10; hp 36; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather); Attack +12 melee, or +6 ranged; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +6; AL NE; Str 24, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and feats: Climb +10, Concentration +6, Disguise +2, Hide +1, Listen +3, Move silently +2,

Kharkus

Large Outsider (Chaotic, Evil)

Hit Dice: 18d8+108 (198 hp)

Initiative: +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40ft., fly 90 ft. (good)

AC: 31 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +20 natural)

Attacks: *Whip of Kharkus* +28/+23/+18/+13 melee, +3 *bladed whip* +26 melee; or 2 slams +24 melee

Damage: *Whip of Kharkus* 1d6+12, +3 *bladed whip* 1d6+3, slam 1d6+7+fear.

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, fear, poison barbs, entangle, summon tanar'ri.

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 30/+4, SR 35, tanar'ri qualities.

Saves: Fort +16 Ref +13, Will +17

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 15, Con 21, Int 20, Wis 22, Cha 19.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (whip).

Skills: Bluff +18, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +25, Hide +19, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (religion) +23, Knowledge (planes) +20, Listen +26, Move Silently +13, Scry +21, Search +20, Sense Motive +26, spellcraft +21, Spot +26.

Climate/Terrain: The Abyss.

Organisation: Solitary, with troupe (2 balors, 2 mariliths, and 4-7 hezrous).

Challenge Rating: 23

Treasure: Double standard coins and items, no goods.

Alignment: Chaotic Evil.

Advancement: -

Kharkus is lord of a middle layer of the Abyss. His realm is gruesome, a place where even the clouds are laced with thin razors that cut and tear at visitors and denizens alike. He was once ambitious and sought to replace the god Alodai as lord of pain and suffering. The cruel god defeated him in battle, however, and confined him to his layer of the Abyss for a millennia. That was over 900 years ago, and his bonds have become weakened in the past few years. He has reached out to the orcs that worship him, and through demonic thralls and allies has managed to make contact with the most powerful of them. As his power and that of his followers grows, he once again dreams of usurping Alodai's power, but this time he is liable to recruit tens of thousands of his followers to wage war in the material world as well.

Combat

Kharkus wades into combat with gleeful abandon, wielding his two whips with savage accuracy and power. He is always accompanied by a troupe of servants, and will always summon more tanar'ri to aid him if necessary. Very few individuals can survive a meeting with the demon lord, especially on his home plane.

Spell-like Abilities: At will- *blasphemy, deeper darkness, desecrate, detect good, detect law, fear, greater dispelling, pyrotechnics, read magic, suggestion, symbol (any), telekinesis, teleport without error (self + 50 pounds of objects only), tongues (self only), unhallow, unholy aura, unholy blight, and wall of fire; 1/day- dominate monster, fire storm, implosion, meteor swarm;* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 20th-level sorcerer (save DC 14+spell level).

Fear (Su): Any creature hit by one of Kharkus' slam attacks must make a Will save (DC 23) or flee from him for six rounds.

Entangle (Ex): Kharkus often uses his off hand whip to entangle foes, grappling them against his body to die by the deadly poisonous barbs that pierce through his skin. As a free action, any time Kharkus hits with his whip he may make an opposed Strength check to drag his foe to him. Those who fail the check are held against his body, taking damage as if they were grappling. It requires a Strength check to break free from the whip. Dealing the whip 30 hit points of damage will free the grappled creature as well.

Poison Barbs (Ex): Spiny barbs that drip a foul poison from their tips cover Kharkus' body. Anyone grappling with Kharkus (or those caught in his whip) will suffer 2d6 points of damage each round and must make a Fortitude save (DC 22) or die. Even those who make a successful save suffer 2d10 points of damage from the potent poison.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp): Kharkus may summon up to 30 Hit Dice worth of other tanar'ri to his side per day. This may be divided however the demon lord chooses, and he is not beholden in any way to the summoned creatures.



Skills and feats: Climb +14, Craft (weaponsmith) +15, Intuit Direction +8, Jump +10, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +10, Spot +9; Blind Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (warhammer), Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Leadership, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Sunder, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Specialisation (warhammer).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Orc, Undercommon.

Possessions: *Slick dwarven plate +2, orcbane warhammer of defending +3, large steel shield of light fortification +1, ring of protection +2, ring of counterspells (hold person), bag of holding (bag 1), 2 potions of cure serious wounds*

High Priest of the Mended Ones

Male Orc Cleric 7/Adept 4: CR 10; Size M (5 ft., 11 in. tall); HD 7d6+7 plus 4d8+4; hp 60; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 *ring of protection +2*); Attack +12/+7 melee (1d8+5 *heavy mace +1*), or +9/+4 ranged; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +14; AL NE; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 11.

Skills and feats: Alchemy +7, Concentration +15, Forgery +8, Hide +2, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +17, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +6, Profession (herbalist) +13, Scry +13, Sense motive +6, Spot +5, Wilderness lore +4; Alertness, Extend Spell, Scribe scroll, Spell focus (conjuration).

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Goblin, Infernal, Orc.
Possessions: *Heavy mace +1, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2, wand of cure light wounds, scroll of charm person, scroll of knock, scroll of web, potion of clairaudience/clairvoyance.*

Adept Spells (3/3/1): 0 Level - *detect magic, ghost sound, guidance*; 1st Level - *cause fear, endure elements, obscuring mist*; 2nd Level - *bull's strength*. DC 13 + Spell Level (DC 15 + Spell Level for Conjuration).

Cleric Domains: Chaos, War.

Cleric Spells (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/1+1): 0 Level - *guidance, inflict minor wounds x2, read magic, resistance x2*; 1st Level - *bane x 2, doom, inflict light wounds, protection from law, random action*; 2nd Level - *death knell x 2, hold person x 2, spiritual weapon*; 3rd Level - *animate dead, magic vestment, prayer x 2*; 4th Level - *chaos hammer, inflict critical wounds*. DC 13 + Spell Level (DC 15 + Spell Level for Conjuration).

High Disciple of the Asphybiex

Male Orc Cleric 5/Disciple of the Asphybiex 6: CR 11; Size M (5 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 7d6+7 + 4d8+4; hp 64; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex);

Attack +12/+7 melee, or +7/+2 ranged; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +15; AL CE; Str 22, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 18, Cha 15.

Skills and feats: Concentration +7, Knowledge (religion) +11, Knowledge (necrology) +4, Profession (miner) +7; Combat casting, Leadership, Spell focus (necromancy), Spell focus (illusion).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: *Cloak of resistance +2, bracelet of friends, clear spindle ioun stone, potion of invisibility, scroll of freedom of movement.*

Cleric Domains: Evil, Water.

Cleric Spells (6/6+1/5+1/4+1/2+1/1+1): 0 Level - *create water, detect magic, detect poison, guidance, purify food and drink, resistance*; 1st Level - *curse water x2, inflict light wounds x2, invisibility to undead, obscuring mist, protection from evil*; 2nd Level - *darkness x2, desecrate x2, hold person, summon monster II*; 3rd Level - *bestow curse, invisibility purge, prayer, water breathing x2*; 4th Level - *control water, freedom of movement, inflict critical wounds*; 5th Level - *dispel good, ice storm.*

DC 14 + Spell Level (DC 16 + Spell Level for Necromantic and Illusion spells)





Silver Tusk Veteran

Male Orc Barbarian 6/Silver Tusk 5: CR 11; Size M (6 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 6d12+6 plus 5d10+5; hp 82; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 *breastplate +3*); Attack +18/+13/+8 melee (1d12+9 *greataxe +2*), or +14/+9/+4 ranged (1d8+9 *shortspear +2*); SQ: rage 2/day, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC; can't be flanked); SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +3; AL NE; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills and feats: Bluff +10, Climb +8, Intimidate +14, Jump +7, Knowledge (Skraag) +5, Listen +4, Sense Motive +5; Brutal, Cleave, Improved Critical (greataxe), Power Attack, Skill Focus (bluff), Skill Focus (intimidate).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: *Breastplate +3, greataxe +2, shortspear +2, potion of bull's strength x2, potion of cure serious wounds.*

Silver Tusk Initiate

Male Orc Rogue 4/Silver Tusk 1: CR 5; Size M (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 4d6+4 + 1d10+1; hp 26; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 *studded leather +1*); Attack +10 melee (1d6+6 *short sword +1*); SQ: evasion, sneak attack +2d6, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1; AL NE; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and feats: Bluff +13, Climb +9, Disguise +4, Gather Information +12, Hide +6, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (Skraag) +5, Move Silently +7, Pick Pocket +9, Search +4, Sense Motive +8, Spot +6; Brutal, Improved Initiative.

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: *Studded leather +1, short sword +1, potion of cat's grace, potion of cure light wounds x2.*

Common Orcs

The following orcs may be used by the Games Master to represent any minor Non-Player Characters the players come across, without requiring him to spend time generating new orcs to fully populate Skraag.

Bruublam, Male Orc Barbarian 1: CR 1; Size M (5 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 1d12+4; hp 16; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 scale mail); Attack +7 melee, or +3 ranged; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0; AL CE; Str 22, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12.
Skills and feats: Handle animal +4, Hide -1, Intuit direction +1, Jump +6, Move silently -1, Wilderness lore +4; Power attack.

Banrri, Male Orc Barbarian 2: CR 2; Size M (6 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 2d12+8; hp 26; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 scale mail); Attack +8 melee, or +3 ranged; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +1; AL CE; Str 22, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12.
Skills and feats: Handle animal +6, Intuit direction +6, Ride +6, Wilderness lore +6; Power attack.

Arrachk, Male Orc Barbarian 3: CR 3; Size M (5 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 3d12+3; hp 31; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +4 chain shirt); Attack +10 melee (1d8+7 *battle axe +1*), or +7 ranged; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; AL CE; Str 22, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and feats: Climb +12, Handle animal +6, Hide +4, Innuendo +1, Move silently +4, Ride +10, Swim +10; Power attack, Toughness.

Possessions: *Battle axe +1.*

B'gykrah, Male Orc Adept 1: CR 1; Size M (5 ft., 6 in. tall); HD 1d6+1+3; hp 10; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +3 melee, or +1 ranged; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; AL CE; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills and feats: Alchemy +7, Handle animal +7,



Hide +3, Knowledge (nature) +7, Move silently +3, Spellcraft +7, Spot +3; Toughness.

Adept Spells (3/2): 0 Level - *cure minor wounds, ghost sound, guidance*; 1st Level - *cause fear, obscuring mist*. DC 11 + Spell Level.

K'saarak, Male Orc Adept 2: CR 1; Size M (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 2d6+2+3; hp 14; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +4 melee, or +2 ranged; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6; AL CE; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills and feats: Alchemy +8, Hide +2, Knowledge (nature) +5, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +5, Move silently +2, Profession (miner) +7, Spot +4, Swim +5, Wilderness lore +8; Toughness.

Adept Spells (3/2): 0 Level - *cure minor wounds, ghost sound, guidance*; 1st Level - *cause fear, obscuring mist*. DC 13 + Spell Level.

Possessions: *Wand of cause fear*.

B'frarachk, Female Orc Adept 3: CR 2; Size M (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 3d6+6; hp 19; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Attack +4 melee, or +3 ranged; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +7; AL CE; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills and feats: Concentration +8, Heal +6, Hide +2, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +5, Move silently +4, Scry +6, Spot +5; Scribe scroll, Combat Casting.

Possessions: *Cloak of resistance +1, potion of bull's strength*.

Adept Spells (3/3): 0 level - *cure minor wounds, ghost sound, guidance*; 1st Level - *cause fear, obscuring mist, protection from chaos*. DC 13 + Spell Level.

B'caalix, Male Orc Adept 2/Barbarian 2: CR 3; Size M (5 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 2d6+2 plus 2d12+2; hp 26; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 *studded leather +1*); Attack +9 melee, or +4 ranged; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +8; AL CE; Str 23, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 11.

Skills and feats: Climb +11, Concentration +7, Handle animal +2, Hide +3, Listen +4, Move silently +3, Ride +5, Scry +5, Spot +2, Wilderness lore +8; Iron will, Skill focus (scry).

Possessions: *Studded leather +1, wand of cure light wounds, potion of bull's strength*.

Adept Spells (3/2): 0 Level - *cure minor wounds x2, guidance*; 1st Level - *cause fear, endure elements*. DC 13 + Spell Level.

Ragah, Female Orc Adept 3/Barbarian 3: CR 5; Size M (4 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 3d6+3 + 3d12+3; hp 38;

Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 *studded leather +1*); Attack +9 melee (1d12+7 *greataxe +1*), or +5 ranged; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +7; AL CE; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 11.

Skills and feats: Craft (leatherworking) +9, Handle animal +4, Heal +9, Hide +2, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +4, Move silently +2, Scry +9, Spellcraft +8, Spot +5, Swim +5, Tumble +2, Use rope +3; Power attack, Scribe scroll, Spell focus (evocation).

Possessions: *Studded leather +1, greataxe +1, potion of mirror image, potion of bull's strength*.

Adept Spells (3/3): 0 Level - *cure minor wounds x2, guidance*; 1st Level - *cause fear, endure elements, protection from chaos*. DC 13 + Spell Level.

The Blackmuck Tribe

The Blackmucks are a recent addition to the city, having arrived after a meeting with Warmaster Thak and his troops. They realised there was a great opportunity for the tribe to showcase its talents by keeping the city's siege engines in good repair and, in return for this service, they are granted the run of the city and have many privileges other orcs do not. They come from superior stock to their brethren and their haughty attitudes never allow the ordinary orcs of Skraag to forget it. Although most of the orcs in the city resent the favoured, the Blackmucks' safety is insured by the vital job they do. They understand the politics and society of Skraag very well, and make sure to keep on good terms with leaders in every corner of the political map.

The Silver Tusks

This group of orcs is fanatically loyal to Cylus Groon and are in charge of running his day-to-day operations. They move about the city, cowing and intimidating all who do not pay the proper respect (and gold) to Cylus' cause. Protection, racketeering, gambling, prostitution and smuggling are some of their better-known business interests. The initiation process for this group is brutal, consisting of a series of tests and tasks designed to insure devotion to Cylus Groon above all else. This rule has been broken only once, when a particularly useful half-orc candidate murdered his human mother to prove loyalty to the organisation. Each member gets a set of silver caps to put over his lower tusks upon acceptance and, from that day forward he is regarded as a full member of the organisation.

There are currently eighteen Silver Tusks in Skraag, and their number has never risen above four dozen for



MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Cylus prefers to keep the group small so he can manage their loyalty and operations more effectively. Although the Silver Tusks roam in packs, they tend to be very individualistic. Several powerful members have been found dead after gaining the loyalty of other Tusks, so most are careful about breeding friendships and alliances. Cylus prefers his minions loyal to him alone.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify to become a silver tusk, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any evil.

Race: Orc or half-orc.

Skills: Bluff 3 ranks, Intimidate 7 ranks, Knowledge (Skraag) 3 ranks, Sense Motive 3 ranks.

Feats: Brutal.

Special: Must be personally approved by Cylus Groon, and accept a mission chosen by him. These missions are often heinous and personal in nature, designed to test the new recruit's devotion to Groom.

Class Skills

The silver tusk's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Local) (Int), Ride (Str), and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Points at each level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the silver tusk prestige class.

Weapons and Armour Proficiency: A silver tusk is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light armour, medium armour and shields. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armour and equipment carried.

Membership: After passing the initiation rites, the new member is given a pair of silver tusk caps to signify his affiliation. These tusk caps are worth 15 gp each, but no one in Skraag would buy or sell them for fear of getting caught. The penalty for such a transaction would be death by beating. Any orc wearing these tusks gains a +4 circumstance bonus to all Intimidate and Diplomacy checks made involving citizens of Skraag. In addition, the new member begins drawing a salary from the city funds - all Silver Tusks are paid 10 gp per class level per month as employees of the city.

As a member of Cylus Groom's personal brute squad, the new Tusk is likely to be watched closely by agents of Grogan Thral. Anytime the Tusk attempts to perform any action whilst avoiding the attention of Thral, there is a 25% chance that it is noticed by one of these agents. If word gets back to Thral he may pass the information along to Groom in an attempt to weaken the Tusks from within.

Skill Focus: At 2nd level, the silver tusk has begun to learn from the more experienced members and may choose to take the Skill Focus feat for any one of the following skills; Bluff, Gather Information, Intimidate, Knowledge (Local), or Sense Motive. He may choose another such Skill Focus at 4th and 6th levels.

The Silver Tusk

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+0	Membership
2	+1	+3	+0	+0	Skill Focus
3	+2	+3	+1	+1	Avoid Pursuit
4	+3	+4	+1	+1	Skill Focus, Privilege
5	+3	+4	+1	+1	Call for Aid
6	+4	+5	+2	+2	Skill Focus
7	+5	+5	+2	+2	Intimidating Presence
8	+6	+6	+2	+2	Informant Network, Privilege
9	+6	+6	+3	+3	Marked
10	+7	+7	+3	+3	Tusk Leader

Avoid Pursuit: When being pursued in any part of Skraag, the Silver Tusk adds +10 to his Hide check to lose his pursuers. His knowledge of the city's twists and turns, and willingness to barge through homes and businesses, gives him an advantage in such a pursuit.

Privilege: Membership in the Silver Tusks definitely has its privileges. At 4th and 8th level, the silver tusk may choose one of the following privileges:

† **Land** - If this option is chosen at 4th level, the silver tusk gains a plot of land and home on the Hearth Plain. At 8th level, he gains cavern space in the coveted inner caverns. It is possible to take this privilege twice, but the home in the outer city will be reclaimed and given to a lower level tusk.

† **Money** - Taking this privilege at 4th level grants a payout of 500 gp. At 8th level, the Tusk receives a lump payment of 1,500 gp.

† **Power** - At 4th level, the tusk is given four goblin servants to run his errands. One of the goblins is a Rog1, whilst the other three are Com2. At 8th level, the tusk gains two hobgoblin bodyguards (Ftr3) from the Ugreckt tribe and four goblin servants (Rog1 and Com2 as above), and a lower level silver tusk (Rog4/Stk1) becomes his protégé. Each draws pay from the city and is loyal to his master unless severely mistreated, and then is likely to be simply reassigned. Servants lost in this way will be replaced, though if it happens repeatedly the tusk may be disciplined by Cylus.

Call for Aid: At 5th level, the silver tusk is important enough within the organisation that other members will respond to any call for assistance. Given an hour, the silver tusk can gather up to four other members (members responding to a call will always be lower level than the tusk calling for aid) to aid him in any task. If the tusk is in immediate need, he can blow a horn and 1d3 tusks will rush to his aid within 1d6 rounds. This use is extremely rare, however, and those who use it lightly are punished.

Intimidating Presence: At 7th level, the silver tusk is well known in the city. As a free action, the tusk may attempt to intimidate any citizen of Skraag with a +4 competence bonus to his roll. This bonus is cumulative with that from Membership.

Informant Network: At 8th level, the tusk has gathered his own network of informants within the city and gains a +10 bonus to all Gather Information checks within Skraag. The tusk does not actually have to spend the day searching for information

himself, though it still takes this long for his network to report back their findings.

Marked: A Tusk that continues past 8th level is considered to be vying for leadership of the group, and therefore becomes marked by the Tusk Leader as a rival. The Tusk leader will bring his resources to bear against the marked tusk in order to either kill or discredit him. Obviously the only reason a tusk would progress this far is to challenge for leadership of the group, and therefore it is in his best interest to resolve the conflict as soon as he can. Only one tusk can be Tusk Leader, and thus become a 10th level Silver Tusk, so the only way to attain that is to create, or take advantage of, a void in that position.

Any Tusk can claim leadership during a time in which there is no Tusk Leader, but only one of 10th level can actually achieve the rank. Cylus can smell power as easily as fresh elf stew, and he enjoys watching the machinations and scheming that go on within a power void and will therefore never approve someone of lower station. It is not unheard of for a tusk to wait in the wings for a power struggle to play out, only to step in and claim the title for himself. This is a dangerous tactic, however, and is only employed by particularly keen and powerful tusks.

Tusk Leader: No two Tusks can hold this position simultaneously, so in order for one to advance to 10th level there must be no current leader. The Tusk Leader is a very powerful individual within Skraag. He acts as Cylus Groon's right hand man, and is privy to all but the most secret of the City Master's operations. He oversees the Silver Tusks and helps to organise the different businesses in which they are involved. The Tusk Leader gains the following:

- † All privileges he did not select at either 4th or 8th level.
- † An additional guard of two Silver Tusks (Rog5/Stk4).
- † Secondary control over all of Cylus Groon's business interests.
- † 500 gp per month salary, paid by the city.

New Feat: Brutal (General)

You are exceptionally tough and violent.

Benefits: You may use your Strength modifier in place of your Charisma modifier for Bluff, Gather Information and Intimidate checks.



SKRAAG IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Skraag is designed as a complete city to be dropped into any campaign world, and Games Masters may place it in any mountainous wilderness region at least one hundred miles from civilisation. It can be used to varying degrees, whether as a mythical city, a base for orcs in the north or perhaps having it spring up closer to the players' home land, causing orc raids and horde activity to increase dramatically. Games Masters are encouraged to make Skraag a living, breathing city just as they would a human or elven settlement.

While the orcs of Skraag do not engage in trade like other races, they will still provide a very important key to any region's economy. They will cause existing trade routes to be more heavily guarded, and alter the paths of newly planned routes to trading partners across the land, and the constant raids and horde movements will create a more war-weary people in the surrounding lands. Warriors and rangers take on a much greater role in these lands, and the governmental structure of existing territories can be slowly affected as powerful warlords who can defend their people supplant bureaucracies and other more benign forms of government.

The orcs use a great deal of fuel and natural resources, and forests for miles around the city are apt to be over-hunted and over-logged. In addition, these forests become places of great danger as orc hunting and raiding parties infest them in great numbers. For this reason, rangers of the region tend to study and hate orcs, making them a natural choice as a favoured enemy. Druids also despise the wasteful and disrespectful orcs, and often work with settlements and towns to defeat any such threats. Overall, this creates a region where rangers and druids are far more common than paladins and other holy warriors. Wizards often eschew such areas, favouring more peaceful and secluded areas not troubled by constant bands of orc raiders. Sorcerers are much more common around Skraag, where natural instinct and survival skills become favoured traits over long study and laborious research.

CAMPAIGN & SCENARIO IDEAS

Most campaigns centred around the city will probably focus on survival skills and wilderness life rather than the opulence of a magistrate's court and urban intrigue. The orcs live in a violent region, and their brutality affects all around them. Still, several different options are available for Games Masters to choose from when integrating Skraag with their games, a few of which are presented here.

SURVIVAL IN THE WILDERNESS

This idea is great for low-magic, low-powered campaigns where the players have the opportunity to make a large impact on their community and environment. The focus here is not on saving the world but on surviving to the next day and ensuring those around the characters are able to do the same. Tracking small groups of orcs and cutting their supply lines when possible will be key strategies. Guerrilla tactics should be favoured over brute force in this type of campaign, and it should give players ample opportunity to steer their own futures. Finding veteran rangers and druids with knowledge of the orcs and the time before they came will be of great importance, as will finding a way in and out of Skraag without discovery.

The players will most likely come from a small town or fortified area such as a mine or distant outpost and likely have never travelled much or been outside the immediate region. The presence of Skraag has made an already wild and dangerous frontier even more so, and the people have no doubt that one day they will have to face the mighty hordes that spread destruction across the land. They live resigned to this fact, having neither the means nor the will to try to stop this inevitable catastrophe. The time is ripe for a new band of heroes to emerge, either to halt the orcs from expanding their influence or to put an end to their threat forever.



EXAMPLE SCENARIO: THE HEROES OF FOWLER'S CREEK

Set Up: Fowler's Creek is a small town built around a nearby copper mine that has all but dried up in the past few years. There is still enough copper in the mines to keep the settlement from becoming a ghost town, but since the nearby dwarven trading post of Ironhallow Hall was overrun by orcs there have not been many traders with which to leverage the town's resources. Little more than a frontier town, there are no real organisations within Fowler's Creek. Even local religion centres around but a few shrines the townsfolk visit with little real direction. There is a small mill on Fowler's Creek run by a hard man in his mid-fifties named Angus McGreeley, and the water is just deep enough to float logs to a larger river some miles away and then on to the nearest city for sale or barter. It is from this environment the characters come.

Characters: Since Fowler's Creek is so small and isolated, paladins and even clerics are virtually unknown in the town. Also, there have not been any wizards travelling through the town in nearly twenty years. The only unrestricted classes available to player characters are druid, fighter, ranger, rogue, and sorcerer. It is possible to multiclass as a bard, cleric, paladin, or wizard, but these should be limited to characters attaining 3rd level and may not be taken until contact with an external church authority, master performer, or arcane master has been made. Monks and barbarians are unknown in the region and no player character may learn their ways.

Characters may be of any race except half-orc, who would not be tolerated by the townsfolk or the druids and rangers. Dwarves and elves are an interesting choice, as they may be distantly related to one who stood in defence of Ironhallow Hall. Humans should be the most prevalent race chosen, as over 90% of the townsfolk are of that stock. Half-elves are also likely to be accepted this far out into the frontier.

It is likely that most of the characters will have a mentor of sorts, whether or not he shares the character's profession. The mentor of a ranger or druid would be especially important to the campaign's development, and would probably belong to some loose organisation in the wilderness whose purpose was to fight off the orcs.

Equipment: Nothing above 50 gp value can be procured at the beginning of the campaign, and the town's total resources only come to about 1,500 gp.

Adventures and Goals: A dwarven emissary from a group referring to themselves as the Resistance recently visited Fowler's Creek. They believe the leaders of Skraag have discovered the nearby copper mines and will soon be sending a large force to take them. The imminent destruction of the town and subsequent loss of the mines has finally prompted the townsfolk to action, and the players have answered the call to arms. The dwarves have informed them that there is an isolated orc warlord who currently holds the information on the mines, and he has not sent this information to any of the other orc leaders for fear of losing out on his rightful share. If the characters can locate this warlord and destroy him before he reveals what he knows then the threat to their town will be over. The dwarves do not know which warlord has the information, nor do they know his current location. The only clue they have is the name of an allied shaman who resides in a cave near the orc city of Skraag. If the heroes can infiltrate her lair, they are likely to find the information they need to go after the warlord, including his identity and location.

A group of rangers and druids dedicated to saving the wilderness from the depredations of the orcs can be of great help to the heroes. In order to gain their trust, however, the heroes must first prove their worth to the organisation by retrieving an ancient scroll that can be used to restore an ailing treant ally to health. They believe the scroll has been stolen by a group of goblins that live in the city of Skraag but who venture into the wilderness regularly.

THE RULES OF TRADE

This campaign is better suited to a higher magic and more involved setting. The hordes have overrun a great deal of the wilderness surrounding the mountains and trade routes between two of the land's largest cities are in danger of being cut. The heroes are probably already celebrated for their exploits and have been on several successful adventures. They may be adventuring at the behest of a rich and powerful patron, or perhaps they have carried some favour with the city leaders. Whatever the case, the people of both cities look to these heroes as defenders and expect them to sally forth and destroy the orc menace.

This campaign centres around heroes well on their way to becoming regional legends, and their exploits are



likely to be told in taverns and inns across the land as they happen. Even if a bard is not present in the party, one will likely attempt to follow them and track their exploits. The heroes will probably have access to a great deal of wealth and resources, being able to find whatever equipment they need, given time. The challenge in this case is the sheer number of orcs that must be dealt with and the necessity of gaining the alliance of outside forces to help defeat the horde.



EXAMPLE SCENARIO: THE CAVES OF DRAN HANNAR

Set Up: Dran Hannar is an abandoned drow stronghold recently discovered by an errant warlord from the hordes of Skraag. After he realised what he had stumbled upon, he scrambled to deliver the news to the other warlords, and an expeditionary force was sent below ground to survey the extent of the tunnels and caves. It was found that the caves extended for miles into the neighbouring lands, and were an excellent route to infiltrate deeper than the orcs ever had in the past. Using this new route, the horde was able to practically shut down trade along two main roads and now threatens a third path by laying siege to the important crossroads city of Glencove.

Characters: There are no limitations to the available characters in this type of campaign, as the pool of talent the players have to draw upon is cosmopolitan and diverse. The party can even be affiliated with large organisations such as a thieves' guild or city watch, and may be driven onward by the righteous fervour of a cleric or paladin.

Equipment: Again, the players have a myriad of options here as their available resources are incredibly high and it is easy to find items they need. It may take some time to find more exotic items, but with a little foresight the characters should never be wanting for adventuring gear or magic. Once they enter the caves of Dran Hannar things may get a little tougher, but replenishing supplies under the surface may not be as difficult as it first sounds.

Adventures and Goals: The characters have been tasked to find out what route the orcs are taking to effectively ambush and raid the merchant caravans along Wayfinder's Road. The raiding parties are attacking and disappearing with seemingly supernatural speed. Lord Rencault asks the players to accompany his daughter on her trip to the city of

Alananta and look for clues to the orcs' success. The players will first encounter an orc raiding party, led by a mysterious shaman who flees before the orcs can be destroyed. The players can follow her trail to a series of caves, where they will find evidence of large orc movements leading deeper into the earth. It is at this point that they enter the caves of Dran Hannar.

Within the caves the players must track orcs whilst avoiding surface-bound raiding parties. They will meet interesting characters like Arkanios, a deep gnome trader with some strange obsessions, and Al' Kzahar, a repentant minotaur monk who lets the characters use his maze as a shortcut to the mythical city of Dran Hannar. After exploring the ruined city for some time the characters will be contacted by the ghost of an elven warrior. He asks the party's help in fulfilling the final steps of an ancient prophecy, one that will destroy Dran Hannar forever and possibly provide the key to bringing down Skraag forever.

RECLAMATION OF OUR HOME

In this unusual campaign, the players will take on the role of dwarves active in the resistance movement near Skraag. They will start out as newcomers to the resistance movement, either being born of parents who are embroiled in the fight or as some of the Dispossessed looking to avenge the loss of their fathers. The campaign centres around the dwarves' efforts to retake their ancestral home and enact vengeance upon those who destroyed the sacred caverns of Ironhallow Hall.

The dwarves have their work cut out for them, as their numbers are few and their task monumental. It is incumbent upon them to find help where they can, such as their strange alliance with the family of giant eagles that live in an eyrie high above the city of orcs. They spend their time attempting to reconcile the current architecture of the city with that of the original Ironhallow, and looking for hidden caverns that were protected by the sacrifice and foresight of their ancestors. Within these caverns lay weapons and sources of power now fabled in dwarven communities across the land, and if the resistance can tap into enough of these artefacts they may just convince an army of dwarves to rally to their cause.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO: THE LEGEND OF WHITE STEEL

Set Up: A group of resistance fighters has been assembled in the caverns outside Skraag to investigate an old legend, one proclaiming that a vein of white steel ran beneath the Hearth Plain, and those who discovered it would be destined to lead their kin to victory. The dwarves are scrambling to find out if the legend is true, and if so are ready to devote all their energy and resources to finding the vein before the orcs.

Characters: Players can conceivably be of any class for this campaign, though there will probably be a heavy emphasis on fighters, clerics, and paladins. Most of the characters will be dwarves, fighting for the resistance in their quest to restore Ironhallow Hall to its former glory. There is room for other races, save half-orcs, as the dwarves may have help from many strange quarters.

Equipment: The dwarves of the resistance have access to most mundane goods, and magical weapons and armour are relatively easy to find. Most of the other magical items they have focus on survival or divination, as the priests that aid the Warriors of the Nine make good use of scrying to aid their holy warriors.

Adventures and Goals: The characters are a group of newer resistance fighters, young and eager to help in any way they can. They have heard of the legend of the white steel and latched onto it as a new hope for achieving their goals. While the elders among them feel it unwise to go on such a reckless search so close to the city, they cannot deny the enthusiasm of the young dwarves and their cohorts that sparks hope within the resistance. With hesitant approval from the elders, the players go off in search of the legendary vein.

Their first clues are to be found in an old scroll, which leads them to what they believe is a buried dwarven temple deep within the mountain. When they arrive, however, they find that they were tragically mistaken. Their excavations awaken a great monster within the earth, and they must stop it from unleashing its fury upon their brethren above. From this they go on to search for a reclusive tribe of centaurs, rumoured to have

weapons made of the white steel of legend. They find the quiet creatures, but the only white steel exists in a spear tip now kept as an artefact from days past. Still, the players will have confirmed the existence of the white steel.

Returning to their caverns, they once again resume the search for the legendary vein. As they fight their way deeper and deeper into the mountain, they start to find clues that lead them to believe they are on the right track. First the caverns seem to be full of low levels of electricity, a property attributed to large quantities of the metal. They also find shattered bits and pieces of very old goods made of white steel. Eventually they come to the hidden mines, but find them guarded by an ancient and legendary beast. They must face their most dire challenge to give their people the greatest treasure of all - hope.



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CITIES OF
FANTASY

SKRAAG

CITY OF ORCS

A Pit of Savagery

Home to over twenty-five thousand rampaging orcs, Skraag is a city of pure brutality, a place of nightmare that even the bravest adventurer will fear to tread. Built from the ruins of an ancient dwarven stronghold the orcs themselves destroyed, the hordes of Skraag range for miles in every direction, bringing slaughter and misery to any community unfortunate enough to be within range of their predations.

Inside You Will Find:

City History: Discover how the dwarves of Ironhallow Hall lost their home in a dramatic battle with the orc hordes.

Government: Despite being run by orcs, Skraag has a convoluted government with several factions all vying to wrest control from the warlords and City Master.

Daily Life: For most of the orcs and goblins that dwell within Skraag, life is a misery beset by poverty and brutality. Yet they continue to thrive, posing an ever present threat to every civilised nation within range of the rampaging hordes.

Religion: The gods of Skraag hold sway over vast segments of the unruly population, their priests guiding the hordes into predetermined paths to serve, an as yet, hidden purpose.

Tour of the City: Walk the burnt out streets and dank caverns of Skraag, avoiding the most dangerous regions in an effort just to survive in this most violent of civilisations.

Movers and Shakers: Full details are given on the inhabitants of Skraag, from the barkeep Gireous Phlog, through to the infamous City Master, Cylus Groom and the Demon Lord Kharkus. Watch orcs rise through the ranks of the Silver Tusks and spread throughout the Disciples of the Asphibiex or the Mended Ones.

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