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THE  
SLAYER'S  
GUIDE  
TO

# HOBGOBLINS

This Product Requires the use  
of the Dungeons and Dragons®  
Player's Handbook, Third Edition.  
Published by Wizards of the Coast®





*Filius Torinium  
Scribe of Ages*

*SULLIVAN  
2001*



# The Slayer's Guide To Hobgoblins

Matthew Sprange

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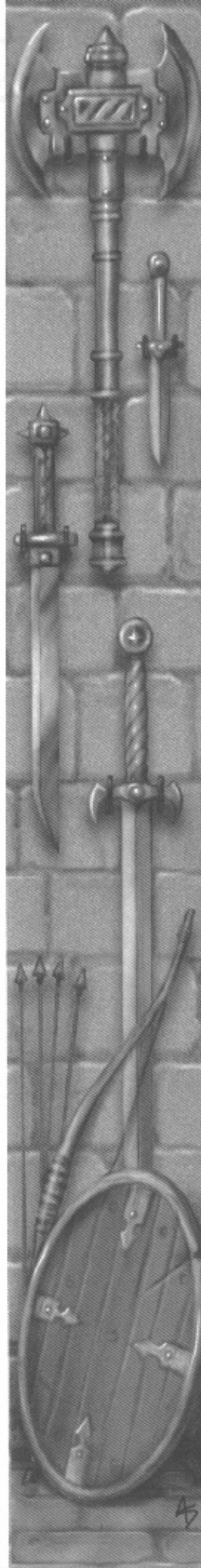
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# INTRODUCTION

The goblinoid races of goblin, hobgoblin and bugbear have been a staple fodder for player characters since the dawn of role-playing.

Individually they are seen as weak and Games Masters are eminently willing to use them in large numbers, the better to challenge their players. So-called heroes have slaughtered millions of the wretched creatures over the years on their way to tackling more deadly monsters, gaining the rewards that come from successive victories.

That is about to change. Goblinoids have their own perspective of the world, their own society, beliefs and desires. Their purpose is not to simply populate the nearest ruin or cavern, awaiting the next party of adventurers to find them. These races have their own plans and motives – and woe betide any civilisation if such ambitions are ever realised.

Towering over their smaller cousin; the goblin, and only a little shorter in stature than the largest goblinoid of all, the bugbear, hobgoblins are a martial race, dedicated to warfare. Eschewing many of the traits found in the other goblinoid species, they adopt military characteristics of civilised races and this alone can make them exceptionally dangerous. Coupled with a hatred of any race but their own and the ability to bully large numbers of orcs and goblins into coherent fighting forces, hobgoblins represent a threat to all intelligent life when a tribe moves into a new region.

Far from being just another critter for adventurers to hack apart whilst in some underground dungeon, you will soon discover why hobgoblins truly are dangerous.

## THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based D20 game systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare thoroughly. Typically, these will be the sorts of races often all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who view them as little better than cannon fodder.

This outlook just has to be wrong. An entire race does not just suddenly materialise in the campaign world and there are very few who exist solely to wage

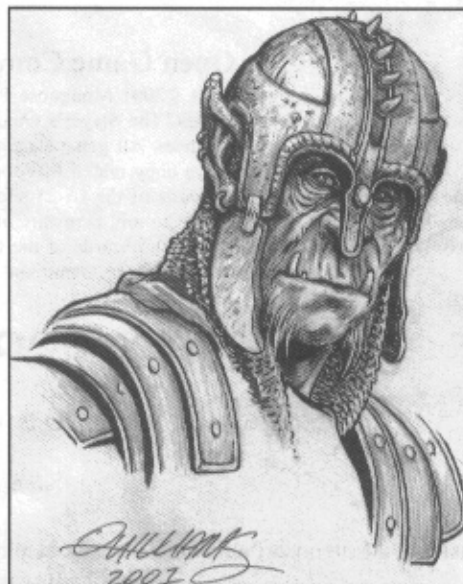
war. What are they doing when the player characters are not around?

## HOBGOBLINS – A WORTHY FOE

Each Slayer's Guide features one race, in this case the hobgoblins. Within these pages, you will find discussions on hobgoblin physiology, habitat and society, giving you a fundamental understanding of how this interesting and unique race operates. Their (very efficient) battle tactics are explained, in terms of what a party of adventurers may encounter and within huge land battles that may alter the course of history itself. Games Masters are given guidelines on how to play hobgoblins in the game and an inspirational list of detailed scenario ideas is presented so they can be integrated into existing campaigns with minimal effort. Players are even given the chance to try their role-playing skills with hobgoblin characters.

Finally, a complete hobgoblin lair is detailed to be used either as an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios or even just an illustration of what hobgoblins are capable of, given enough time.

As a player, you will gain a new respect for an old and familiar race. As a Games Master, you will know you are playing hobgoblins well when experienced parties start to retreat from cunningly prepared ambushes and lightning fast raids.





The barbed arrow whipped through the air, missing Kerron's head by a mere inch as he jerked back behind the rock, blood thumping through his veins in response to the threat.

'By the gods, that was close!'

The hobgoblins' methodical advance across the darkened cave was audible to the whole party, the goblinoid leader all the while barking commands to his warriors as arrows continued to fly overhead. Kerron glanced down at Krystallia the elf and her worried look confirmed his fears. They were in serious trouble. After two and a half years adventuring with everyone in the party, he just could not believe they were about to die at the hands of mere hobgoblins.

The wizard, Abner, lay over twenty feet away in open ground, three arrow shafts standing erect from his chest. So far, no one had been able to give him any aid, fighting for their own lives as they were. The ambush had been perfect and complete, with not even Krystallia realising how long the hobgoblins had been tracking them until the first arrows flew amongst the party. Abner could be dead by now for all Kerron knew.

Their ranger, Rolf, had disappeared for what seemed an eternity, determined to find a safer path through the caverns. Kerron tried to glance above the rock once more to see the progress the hobgoblins had thus made, or to catch a glimpse of the ranger, but the seemingly inexhaustible arrow stream continued, forcing him to squat back down almost immediately. Krystallia was becoming rigid with fear, he could see. This was no place for a successful rogue like himself to get caught.

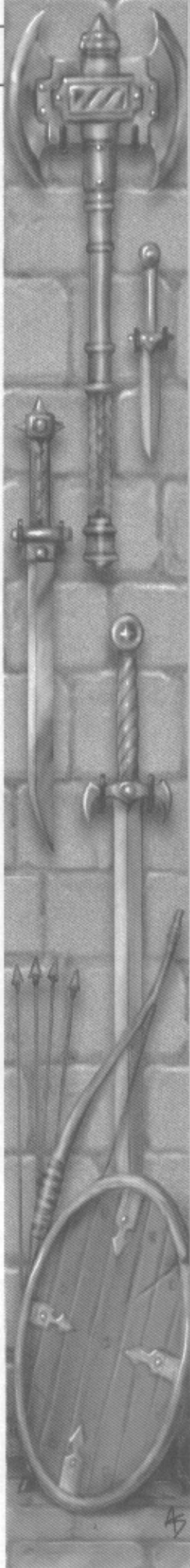
Still no Rolf. Where was the damned ranger? Saving himself? Difficult to believe. Kerron knew Rolf had more honour in his little finger than he himself would ever know. Dead then? Hobgoblins could be everywhere by now. The arrow salvos above suddenly stopped, much to Kerron's surprise and he considered the risks of glancing over the rock again. A harsh, guttural voice rang out through the still air. Kerron heard the heavily accented common, amazed any backward hobgoblin had bothered to master the language.

'Give us the elf!'

Krystallia shrieked with terror, the piercing sound soon followed by the rolling laughter of hobgoblins. Far too many hobgoblins. Kerron winced as Krystallia's nails dug hard into his thigh as she grabbed at him for support. He could see she was seconds away from complete hysteria.

'Give us the elf and you can go free!'

Kerron closed his eyes. He could hear the hobgoblins move about once more, taking new positions, beginning to flank them. He had to assume Rolf had been found and killed. Half the party was gone and Krystallia was heading far beyond rational thought. Reaching down to his belt pouch, Kerron closed his fingers around a small vial he knew to contain a heady but reliable potion of gaseous form.





# HOBGOBLIN PHYSIOLOGY

The average hobgoblin warrior is a creature sure to strike fear into the heart of any normal man, dwarf or elf. Standing between six and seven feet tall, hobgoblins have well developed muscles born from a lifetime of warfare and are surprisingly agile for their stature. Their flattened noses, pointed ears and almost feline faces mark them unmistakably as one of the goblinoid races, but an observer not running in fear of his life might notice some important differences in comparison to goblins and bugbears. A hobgoblin's weapons and armour would seem to be unusually well looked after, even polished, for what is supposed to be a primitive warrior. Far from adopting a goblinoid's traditional stealth, hobgoblins fight in rigid and disciplined formations, easily a match for any unit from one of the more civilised races.

Despite being nearer in size and mass to bugbears, hobgoblins are physically closer in form to the smaller goblins. However, they are much stronger and tougher than their diminutive cousins and have a very different outlook on the world. In the few studies that have been performed on the goblinoid races, beyond mere adventurer boast and banter, there has been no evidence that hobgoblins are any more intelligent. It is their natural aggressiveness and innate discipline that allows them to accomplish far more, to the extent a tribe is able to dominate all manner of creatures, even those physically stronger.

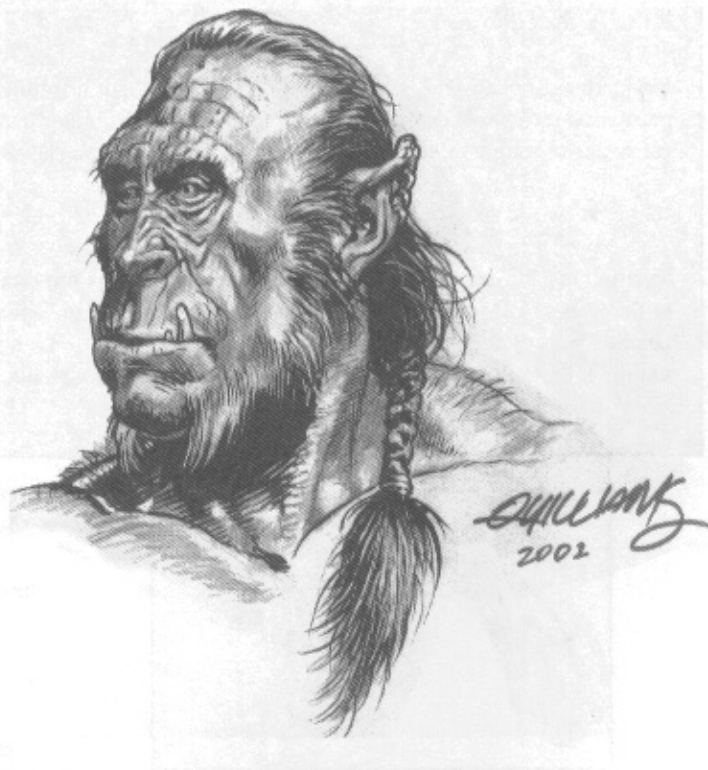
Their highly developed senses are a legacy from their goblinoid origins and are far superior to those of any human, approaching the sensitivity of an elf. A hobgoblin's finely attuned hearing seems to be able to not only detect the faintest of noises in relative silence, but also has the ability to pick out and filter individual sounds from a multitude of sources, even during pitched battle. It has been theorised that far from being a natural talent, this capability is hammered into hobgoblins from an early age, as goblins and bugbears do not seem to demonstrate anything similar, though their own hearing is at least

as good. The benefits of hearing your unit leader's voice barking commands in the midst of deafening combat are obvious.

Size, weight and muscle power aside, the defining difference between hobgoblins and related races, physiologically speaking, is their relative lack of stealth. Goblins and bugbears demonstrate a consummate ability to utilise any shadow or terrain feature to mask their approach upon an enemy and even when fully armed for battle they are able to make near soundless passage. It is apparent that somewhere along their history, hobgoblins lost much of this capability and though some few individuals are adept at stealth tactics in combat situations, as a race they are noticeably inferior when performing such careful actions. It is this one deficiency alone that may permit many goblins to live freely and not be part of an entirely enslaved race, subservient to hobgoblins everywhere.

## OF ORIGINS

Placed squarely between goblins and bugbears on a physical basis, hobgoblins have often posed scholars and other students with interesting questions and speculations concerning the origin of the species. It





is often presumed that goblins and their kin have existed in the world for at least as long as dwarfs and elves. There are certainly very old histories and legends telling of their existence and they are well situated within the myths of most civilised races. Their proliferation throughout the world attests to both their long and tumultuous history, as well as their stubborn refusal to be wiped out by the likes of man and dwarf. Given this, it seems a likely assumption that hobgoblins should be the most successful and prolific of all their kin. Adventurers and scholars alike deem the hobgoblin to be the strongest goblinoid race, not least because they exhibit so many human-like characteristics. Texts have been written about the likelihood of hobgoblins someday creating an entire nation of their own in the mould of the civilised races, clearly surpassing any such predictions for orcs who are often, and incorrectly, viewed as a goblinoid race. So, the question must be raised; if hobgoblins are so capable, respond readily to discipline and easily dominate other races, why are they not more common? Indeed, why are the civilised races not constantly engaged in full scale warfare against large and self-sustaining hobgoblin empires?

The pervading misconception is, of course, that being mere monsters, hobgoblins have neither the wit nor the will to succeed as man, dwarf and elf has. To any who have made the most cursory study of the hobgoblin race, this reasoning is utter folly, perhaps dangerously so. There are far too many recorded incidents throughout history of hobgoblins destroying powerful armies and breaking immense fortresses for them to be dismissed in this way.

Many scholars, loremasters and other deep-thinkers believe instead that, given the hobgoblins' racial supremacy amongst others of their kind, their relative rarity demonstrates that they are in fact a newer race, opening up the debate of how they actually came into being. Such men are also strong advocates for the culling or even methodical genocide of the entire race, living as they do in fear of eventual hobgoblin mastery across the entire world. Needless to say, such raised concerns are often ridiculed. With the wilderness full of orcs, dragons, legions of the dead and other foulness, hobgoblins are normally regarded as but one threat amongst many.

Discussions on the specific origins of hobgoblins are varied, but they all tend to follow a common theme in that the race is derived from goblins directly. Some tell of an ancient sorcerer, quite mad, who attempted

to create a warrior race in order to overcome his rivals who commonly used unaugmented goblins to further their plans. Others presume hobgoblins were indeed artificially created, but dismiss the use of magic, citing instead a process of selective breeding such as that used to produce stronger and more aggressive war horses. Yet more pronounce that the creation of an entire race for war is an insane and time-consuming venture and propose that hobgoblins developed naturally from goblins and further, that bugbears developed from hobgoblins. This prompts speculation of a race even more powerful than the towering bugbears.

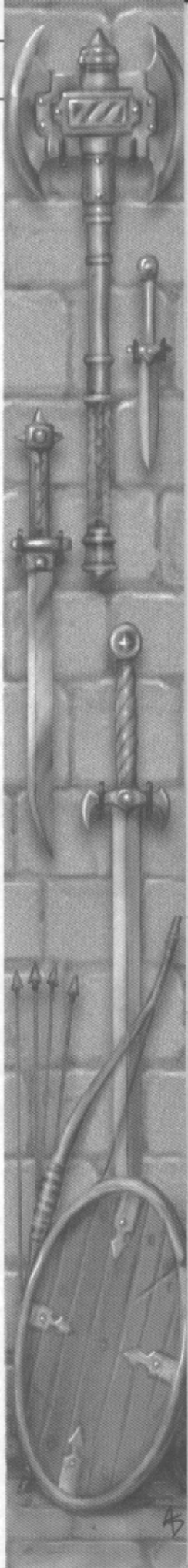
For their part, hobgoblins rarely, if ever, speculate on their own origins and are content to leave such thoughts in the hands of their god, The Mighty One, and his adepts. The lesson is clear though. Any race as aggressive and capable as the hobgoblins is likely to have a profound impact upon any others it meets.

## DIET AND RELATED MATTERS

Goblinoids are noted for their ability to subsist for long periods of time on just about any organic matter they scavenge and this, more than anything else, points to a racial stubbornness to exist within habitats that any civilised race would shy away from. Hobgoblins seem to be a little more refined in their preferred tastes and, where possible, exist solely on meat and water. Horse flesh is a favourite and raiding parties seeking to steal all manner of livestock from other nearby races provide the primary source of food for a tribe. However, where meat is scarce, hobgoblins are perfectly capable of digesting an incredible array of material, even turning their hands to farming on occasion. The only foods they seem to avoid at all costs are carrion and, interestingly, cannibalism, the latter of which they absolutely shun though it is a common practice amongst other goblinoids.

## THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE HOBGOBLIN

The life of a hobgoblin revolves around just three things; eating, making war and achieving a greater standing within the dominance hierarchy of the tribe. Individuals are expected to work towards the good of the tribe and are rewarded for successful results. Of interest is that whilst young are protected and seen as embodying the future of the tribe, the role of motherhood is not assigned any great standing. A





## HOBGOBLIN PHYSIOLOGY

female hobgoblin may be respected as a warrior in her own right, but her duty to provide the tribe with new potential warriors, whilst expected, will never be rewarded.

Physically, female hobgoblins look very similar to their male counterparts, particularly when dressed in full armour, to the extent that a member of any other race may have great difficulty distinguishing sexes. They are certainly capable of becoming as good a warrior as any of the males, though the female will rarely attain any position of true authority within the tribe's structure. Whilst carrying young, her fighting ability, and thus her tribal standing, all but disappear. In common with other goblinoids, hobgoblins have no concept of long term relationships between sexes and though an especially weak female may be considered the property of a strong male, in general she will be fully capable of choosing her own mate for breeding purposes.

The gestation period of a hobgoblin female is six months and she will typically bear two or three young, though life in a hobgoblin tribe is often harsh if not brutal and it is rare for more than one of the young to mature as an adult. Hobgoblin young develop fast and are capable of rigorous combat at the age of six, easily able to defeat any non-fighting member of the civilised races. They are considered adults within the tribe around the age of eleven or twelve, when they will join the other warriors.

A hobgoblin may die of old age between sixty and sixty-five years, though it is exceedingly rare for any to reach this age. Most will die much sooner through battle or disease and only the adepts and clerics of a tribe have any real chance of attaining such great ages, as they are afforded greater levels of protection by the other tribal members.

## PHYSICAL VARIATIONS

Hobgoblins tend to exhibit the same types of physical variation within the species as the other goblinoid races do in terms of hair, skin and eye colour. Commonly, skin colour is dark or red/orange, whilst the hair that covers all parts of their body bar hands, feet and face is typically dark red/brown or grey. Of more note is that such colour variations tend to breed true within a tribe so that each member is more or less identical in terms of colour. Exceptions can arise, however, and are often treated as figures of ridicule or as being *Drafer*, 'not of the tribe.' Needless to say, the life expectancy of any who are different is

drastically reduced from the norm.

The combination of dark skin and red eyes seems to be exceedingly rare and, rather than being subjected to vilification, such hobgoblins are usually accorded greater status within the tribal structure. Hobgoblins often portray their patron deity, referred to as The Mighty One, as bearing these colours and so it is natural to assume that such hobgoblins are seen as having been touched by the god and that he watches over their destiny. These individuals often become adepts or even clerics within the tribe.

Exceptionally large males are often seen with their pale noses developing either a blue or red shade, the colour again dependant upon the tribe they were born into. The exact purpose of this colour change and the process of its development is not known, though it is certainly a natural phenomenon rather than being artificially applied. It is often presumed that such colourations, which become bolder as the male develops physically, make him somehow more attractive to hobgoblin females and thus increase his chances of mating.

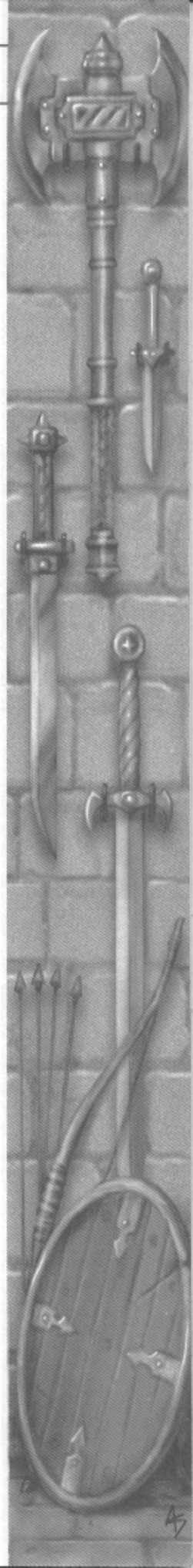
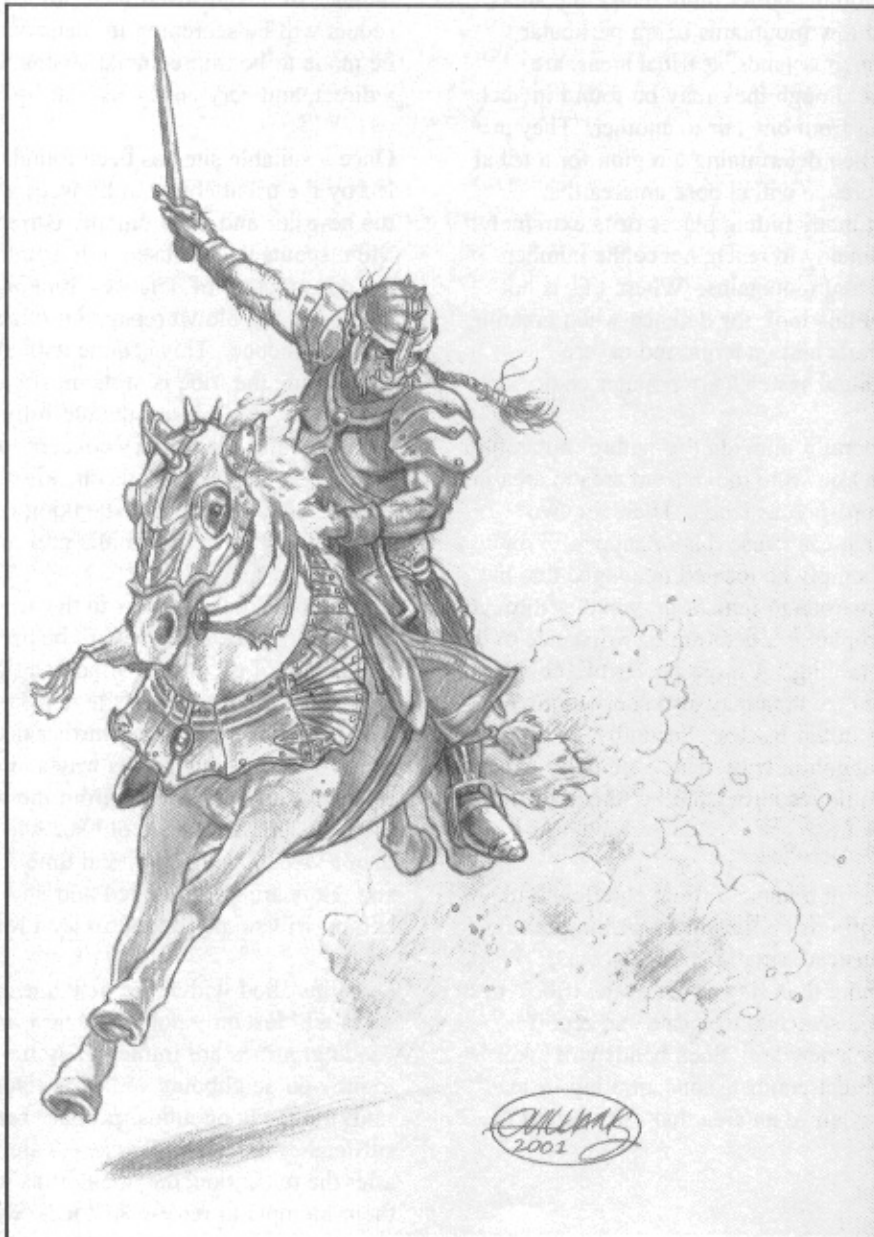
## PSYCHOLOGY

A hobgoblin's life is one of constant conflict, not just against every race it meets, but also within itself. On the one hand, a hobgoblin shares many traits with the other goblinoids. It is merciless in nature, uncaring of other sentient beings and utterly dedicated towards its own personal advancement. From the earliest age, however, a hobgoblin is taught that the tribe as a whole is of all-importance and that true strength and power are bestowed by its underlying order. Manifesting as a strong adherence to discipline that sets hobgoblins apart from every other related race, hobgoblins are relatively easy for their leaders to control and their belief in the strength of their own tribe is paramount. However, a hobgoblin is unlikely to be willing to lay down its life for others, merely that any personal advancement will take place through actions that benefit the entire tribe and are thus amply rewarded.

An example of this can be found in the hobgoblins' attitude towards their young. Though capable of fighting at an early age, their young are kept far from any potential combat unless the tribal lair itself is actually being overrun by enemies. This is not out of any maternal or paternal feeling towards the young, merely that they represent the future of the tribe. All goblinoids display a hatred for any race other

than their own, but hobgoblins have developed an aggression that far outweighs that of their cousins. They vigorously pursue war and conflict as a way of day-to-day survival, gleefully attacking other races at any opportunity. Differing tribes of hobgoblins will readily battle one another and these other tribes are usually regarded as being no better than members of a different race. Of special animosity to a hobgoblin are the elves, a race that, in myth at least, dealt a murderous defeat to all goblinoids. This hatred permeates the entire race and hobgoblins have been witnessed in battle dispensing with their renowned discipline and actually bypassing several enemy units in order to strike at a sighted elf. Where a race is not wiped out by hobgoblins, it will

be enslaved and dominated. Nowhere is this more true than with orcs and goblins. Entire tribes may be rounded up and moved to the hobgoblin's own lair, where they will be turned into slave labour or used as cannon fodder in future battles. Hobgoblins operate a brutal regime for any captive, viewing them no differently than beasts of burden, though it is said that hobgoblins treat their horses better than they do their slaves. Even bugbears may be subjugated in this manner, if the hobgoblins are given the chance.





# HABITAT

In common with the scourge that is the goblinoid races, hobgoblins can be found in practically any environment all over the world. However, as well as being a little less prolific than their goblin cousins, they are also wary of more extreme climates, being all too aware of the additional and often unnecessary dangers that can be posed by a harsh desert or frigid glacier. Whilst an adventurer may well find hobgoblin tribes in such regions, they are likely to be present only through the most dire of circumstances.

In general, hobgoblins prefer more temperate areas, with forests and low mountains being particular favourites. Open grasslands, as tribal areas, are usually shunned, though they may be found in such places, travelling from one lair to another. They are very cautious when determining a region for a tribal lair and by preference will choose an area that provides a great many hiding places or is extremely difficult for an enemy to reach, hence the number found in forests and mountains. Where this is not possible, hobgoblins look for defence when creating a lair. Ruined forts and underground cavern complexes or tunnel systems are popular choices.

Though not generally nomadic by nature, hobgoblin tribes have been known to move from area to area in search of more prosperous lands. There are two circumstances that can cause this to happen. Firstly, a tribe's lair may simply be located in an area that has become too dangerous to remain in, whether through a natural catastrophe or a determined resistance to the tribe's constant raiding. A more powerful goblinoid tribe moving into the area may also cause a move, if they survive the initial battles. Secondly, and more commonly, a hobgoblin tribe may eventually exhaust all readily available resources and be forced to find a more bounteous area.

Unless disaster is imminent, a tribal chieftain will never risk his entire tribe by simply striking out into the unknown. Instead, small bands of scouts, numbering no more than five or ten of the tribe's best warriors will be dispatched to locate and report on possible sites for a new lair. Such bands will take steps to avoid direct combat, concentrating instead on finding a new lair in an area that can support the entire tribe.

There are several key factors hobgoblins will consider when searching for a new home. Most importantly, the surrounding area must be able to support the tribe in terms of both food and supplies. As the largest hobgoblin tribes can number well over three hundred warriors alone, with nearly twice as many young, this is no easy task to accomplish. The scouts will be looking for numerous weakly defended farmsteads and villages, abundant natural resources or several smaller goblinoid tribes the hobgoblins can begin to dominate and enslave. They will also attempt to get a sense of the balance of power in the new region. Though hobgoblins live to make war, they are by no means foolish and will avoid stronger tribes or civilised areas with professional standing armies. The defence of the lair itself is of prime concern so the scouts will be searching to identify areas that could be made to be impregnable against anything short of a direct, and very costly, assault by any sizeable army.

Once a suitable site has been found, a warband, often led by the tribal chieftain himself, will be sent to take the new lair and clear out any current inhabitants. More scouts will be used to locate food sources and the construction of defences, ranging from simple ditches to full blown repairs on ruined fortress walls, will commence. This is done with all speed, for it is at this time the tribe is at its most vulnerable, with neither the new lair nor the old fully defended. It will be the chieftain's primary concern to bring the rest of the tribe to the new lair as quickly as possible and so the warband will work fast, taking no more than two or three days to complete the preliminary defences.

Aside from a few warriors in the original warband, every warrior of the tribe will be used to protect the movement of the tribe's young and possessions as they make the journey to the new lair. Generally, a tribal chieftain will go no further than fifty or sixty miles when moving in this way and so the task of relocating the entire tribe from the initial scouting to the abandonment of the old lair will take little more than a week. Being a critical time for the tribe, stragglers are not tolerated and any hobgoblin falling behind will simply be left to fend for itself.

Once installed within the new lair, any neighbouring races will instantly notice the new arrivals' presence. Raiding parties are immediately mounted and begin to prey on neighbours and their resources. These raids are the hobgoblins' primary means of sufficiency and as food reserves are likely to be low after the relocation, the hobgoblins will be vigorous in their attempts to replenish stocks, with horses and

other livestock being their main targets. The defences protecting the lair will also be reworked and built upon, becoming ever more elaborate and, by goblinoid standards, sophisticated, with initially even the young being drafted in to assist. Walls, watchtowers and often small engines of war will be constructed to prevent any attack from forcing the hobgoblins to move on once more.

After a tribe has established itself in a new area, a constant process of war and raiding will begin, with

just two aims in mind – the continued existence of the tribe and the utter destruction or domination of all intelligent life other than hobgoblin.

*It was with some fascination that I discovered the Plague of War tribe of hobgoblins had taken residence within Fallyrn Forest. Long since a haven for orcs and their foul kin, I could barely wait to see what effect the hobgoblins would have and so, at great personal risk to myself, I entered Fallyrn with my manservant Luis to record this so far unseen process.*

*The Plague of War had already moved into its lair, a well known complex of caves at the heart of Fallyrn, before we arrived and had destroyed the incumbent Red Axe orcs. This must have, incredibly, taken mere days. From several very well hidden retreats, we were able to track much of the hobgoblins' movements from this point forward.*

*The first move we were able to observe was an all out attack against the nearby Hammer Tribe orcs, following a day's worth of scouting by small units of just a few hobgoblin warriors. The assault was launched at night and I missed much for the orcs began fleeing in all directions and it was paramount for me to be able to later relate what I was learning. However, come morning, over one hundred orcs were being led back to the Plague of War's lair.*

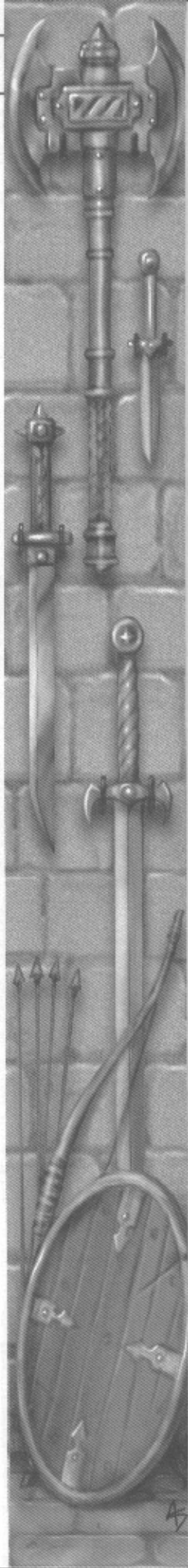
*Two days later, the hobgoblins were on the attack once more, this time against the orcs of the Dark Slayers. However, in this battle I saw the Hammer Tribe orcs attacking as part of the hobgoblin force! I was astounded. How had the hobgoblins managed to subjugate these fiercely independent orcs so quickly? Heavily outnumbered by the hobgoblins and their new allies, the orcs' defeat was predictable but instead of being moved to the Plague of War's caves, a number of burly-looking hobgoblins were left in the Dark Slayers' simple stockade, presumably to govern the orcs in accordance with their chieftain's wishes.*

*We left a few days after as yet another attack was being launched, against the Splintered Tooth orcs. Mixed orc and hobgoblin patrols through the forest were becoming more frequent and more thorough. As much as I had enjoyed this study, I had to return to civilisation lest I myself be captured.*

*My conclusions are self-evident. In little more than a week, the Plague of War hobgoblins managed to move into orc-held territory and began to take over one tribe after another. At this rate, the entire Fallyrn will be under their complete domination within a month. The obvious danger here is that instead of facing a few scattered orc attacks, the three nearby towns may have to contend with a large, malignant and disciplined army of humanoid's led by the hobgoblins, stationed just a few miles from their boundaries.*

*No doubt Archduke Suunar-Laker will send his army into the Fallyrn soon. I must endeavour to gain his permission to accompany that force, for I am anxious to see just what the hobgoblins have achieved in this time.*

*Fillius Torinium, Scribe of Ages*





# HOBGOBLIN SOCIETY

The vast majority of hobgoblins live as members of tribes, though independent mercenary companies are also common. Tribes steadily grow in prosperous times with each hobgoblin having its own specific tasks to fulfil, though every mature adult is considered first and foremost a warrior. A typical tribe will average around one hundred and fifty warriors or so, though it can grow to over twice that size in areas with many diverse resources or when two tribes fight and are eventually amalgamated by the victors into one. There will also be a great many non-combatants in the form of the injured, young and pregnant females, perhaps tripling the size of the entire tribe in numbers.

Though there can be infinite variation between tribes in terms of lair, equipment, specific culture and resources, all form a dominance hierarchy led by an overall tribal chieftain who is recognised as the greatest warrior of all and who likely attained his position through sheer force of arms. All authority within the tribe is derived directly from the chieftain and he (for there have been no recorded instances of females becoming chieftains) will maintain an iron grip on the order of the hobgoblins beneath him.

Directly beneath the chieftain in terms of both rank and authority are his overlords, the most capable warriors of the tribe who act as unit leaders and bodyguards. There will generally be between four and twenty such overlords, depending on the size of the tribe, and they are noticeably better equipped than the bulk of the hobgoblins they lead. The chieftain personally selects warriors himself for this duty, usually after some great achievement in battle, though a scout consistently finding wealthy resources for the tribe to plunder may also be granted such status.

Whilst hobgoblins have only the most tenuous grasp of a martial honour system, they do acknowledge that the laws of the tribe must come first in all things. When a chieftain dies for any reason, his successor will come from within the elite group of overlords who are already considered to be far superior to the average warrior of the tribe. Very rarely, the overlords

may reach a consensus as to who the natural leader should be, especially if one of the overlords is considerably wealthier than the others. To a hobgoblin, excess wealth can only mean a large number of victories in battle and so it follows that the wealthiest have the best skill in arms. However, this is not the usual course of action as chieftains generally take great care to keep their overlords more or less equal to one another. Instead challenges, known as *Surka* will be issued to determine who has the right to lead the tribe.

## SURKA – THE TRIBAL CHALLENGE

It is this system of challenges that forms one of the more remarkable aspects of hobgoblin society and something that distances them yet further from their goblinoid cousins. Any disputes in the tribe, from the ownership of a horse to the rightful leadership of the tribe will be resolved in one of two ways. Either the chieftain will arbitrate important issues with no room for argument or more commonly, a challenge may be issued, if the hobgoblin in question is so permitted;

- Ø No hobgoblin who is not considered a full warrior may challenge one who is (indeed, a hobgoblin who cannot fight for any reason will not have many rights at all within the structure of the tribe).
- Ø Only an overlord may challenge the chieftain and then only as a direct result of a claim to lead the entire tribe himself.
- Ø No hobgoblin may challenge an adept.
- Ø Adepts are held to exist beyond the authority of the tribe and are thus forbidden themselves to issue challenges.

There are always witnesses to a call for *Surka*, indeed it is likely to draw a substantial crowd from tribal members and any melee weapons or armour owned by the protagonists may be used. *Surka* always ends when one combatant yields to his opponent. Thereafter, the matter in dispute is considered permanently resolved. The amount of damage a hobgoblin sustains in such a challenge is purely down to his own discretion and there is no loss of face for being forced to yield to a superior warrior. To the hobgoblin mindset, the fact that there is always a victor and a vanquished in battle is in perfect accordance with the natural order of their way of life.

On a practical level, this system of challenges ensures any disputes within the tribe can be resolved quickly and easily and yet do so in such a way that needless and wasteful loss of life is avoided. After all, no tribe is served by having its members slaughter one another.

The only exception to this is when an overlord makes a direct challenge for the leadership of the tribe and this is something no hobgoblin will consider lightly. Overlords and adepts are the only members of the tribe permitted to advise the chieftain and question his orders, though it is understood that the chieftain's final decision is just that – final. There are several circumstances, however, where an overlord may decide to take extreme measures against his chieftain and make an attempt for the highest position in the tribe. He may sincerely believe a chieftain's orders will irreparably harm the tribe, or he may have become powerful enough to believe he can overcome his leader. Nevertheless, this form of *Surka* is always fought to the death and the whole tribe is summoned to watch. This is done primarily so that the chieftain, whomsoever it may be after the combat, is undisputed in his claims to rule the tribe as the ultimate embodiment of their combined strength.

Because of this, assassinations or any form of foul play outside of *Surka* (in which any number of dirty tricks may be employed so long as others are there to witness it) are exceedingly rare in hobgoblin society. Without the outward display of martial prowess, there might always be some element of doubt in a new chieftain's ability to rule the tribe correctly and in a manner that will benefit all. As a chieftain's own power flows from his position at the head of the tribe, this is the last thing he will want.

## DIVISION OF WEALTH

Through the processes of raiding and racial subjugation, it is possible for a hobgoblin tribe to amass a large amount of wealth in a relatively short period of time. Hobgoblins, however, are very much a pragmatic race and material goods such as horses, weapons and armour are afforded greater worth than such abstract concepts as currency. That said, barter and exchange of items for coinage is possible between warriors and a great many silver and gold coins may find their way into the decorations of a warrior's armour.

It is the task of the chieftain to personally divide any

plunder taken during a raid and hand a portion to each warrior who took part. The chieftain himself will claim around a quarter to a half of the total haul, depending on how successful the raid was considered to be. However, he is also expected to support the tribe with his own amassed wealth in lean times and also grant additional rewards to any warrior who performs exceptionally well in battle. Many chieftains may grumble at such expense but they know all too well their position relies on the continued unity of the tribe, with no room for dissension.

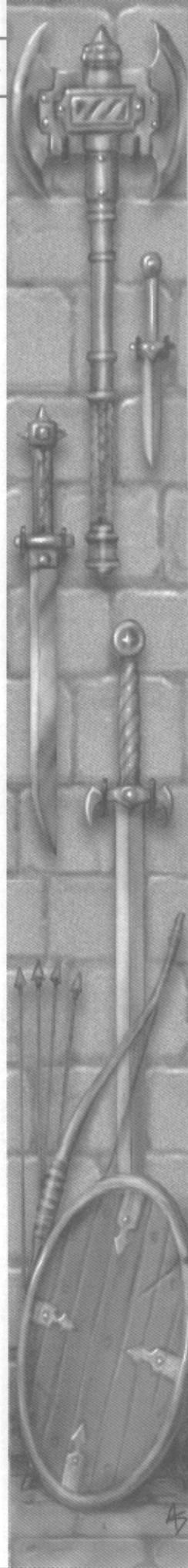
Adepts and overlords all receive shares that are more or less even and will be between three and four times greater than that of an ordinary warrior. Those who cannot fight will never receive anything of their own.

## TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRY

The preferred method of a tribe's sufficiency is the raid. After all, what hobgoblin would want to toil in hard labour when they can simply fight and take anything they need or desire? Failing likely targets for such piratical activities, a hobgoblin's next choice will be to take the role of overseer. Having subjugated another goblinoid tribe, the hapless slaves will be forced to toil in forests and roughly cultivated land to provide for a tribe's sustenance, though chieftains rarely permit such a state of affairs to last long as their slaves are always easier to control in battle than when farming.

If these two methods fail to support a tribe, hobgoblins certainly have the wit and intelligence to turn their own hands to the more fundamental means of survival. If the situation warrants such measures, blacksmiths, farmers and even shepherds can arise from the ranks of the warriors. These duties are allocated by the chieftain who will likely spend his own time searching for new raiding targets as few hobgoblins are likely to tolerate this labour for long. He may well only have a matter of weeks before he begins to face a succession of *Surka* challenges from his overlords.

Very large tribes, which can number upwards of a thousand hobgoblins, can begin to suffer with so many mouths to feed and there are few areas that can support a tribe of this size through raiding alone. In these cases, tribes may be forced to turn to agriculture simply to supply enough food. Wise chieftains always





try to rotate warriors used in this labour and the cleverer ones may use it as a punishment detail that will cause no argument or possible recrimination.

All warriors are capable of adjusting and repairing their own weapons and armour, which usually come from plunder taken in raids and they are, in fact, taught to do so from a very early age. The maintenance of one's own arms is considered an important duty within the tribe and failure to do so will bring the immediate, and usually unwelcome, attentions of the tribal chieftain. This is another mark that distinguishes the race from other goblinoids, as goblins and bugbears can be noted by their shabby armour and rusting weaponry, whereas a hobgoblin's will likely be polished and shining. Taking into account their stature, units of hobgoblins have been mistaken for human soldiers at range, a fact that talented chieftains have used in the past to great effect.

Hobgoblin tribes are also skilled in the construction of simple but effective defences for their lairs. Any hobgoblin lair, whatever its location, is likely to have a very large array of traps, ditches, grounded spikes and even primitive engines of war such as catapults and ballistae. Given time and a ready source of materials, a hobgoblin tribe may even attempt large scale stonework though, as a rule, they much prefer to work with wood for speed and simplicity.

### THE TRIBE AT WAR

In open battle, hobgoblins form disciplined units led by an overlord that can rival the capabilities of any similar formation of humans, dwarves or elves. Where several units are engaged in combat simultaneously, mature young on the verge of adulthood will often be employed as runners, ferrying orders to each unit directly from the chieftain who will be fighting with a bodyguard of his most trusted overlords. The tribe will rarely engage in combat without the forward planning of the chieftain and every warrior will be instructed with precisely what he is expected to accomplish. This method of warfare, far

from being rigid, makes a hobgoblin tribe a very potent force that is difficult to overcome unless the enemy is able to achieve superiority either in quality of soldier or sheer numbers.

It is not unusual for a tribal lair itself to come under attack, for as soon as the hobgoblins begin to prey on other goblinoids or civilised settlements, it can only be a matter of time before an army of some sort is raised to destroy them. When defending their own lair, hobgoblins are at their most dangerous. As well as the large number of defences tribes prepare, chieftains also use a system that humans and dwarves may define as standing orders. Each warrior is given long term instructions of where to go and what to do in the event of attack so when the alarm is sounded, the entire tribe can be mobilised and ready to fight within minutes. With sentries permanently in place, often in hobgoblin-built watchtowers, surprise is nearly impossible to achieve.

Every hobgoblin tribe has its own banner that is



considered a prized possession of the chieftain. The design is usually a stylised icon that will reflect the name of the tribe and may also be found on the shields of some of the warriors. The tribal banner is normally kept safe within the chieftain's own living space in the lair and only brought out in large-scale battles where the majority of the warriors will be fighting. It will be carried within the chieftain's own bodyguard unit by a warrior the chieftain has personally selected either for special honour or great punishment, depending on how much the tribe actually reveres their banner. However, it tends to be the law of most tribes that if the warrior loses the banner, he is not expected to return to the tribe alive.

As a final note with regards to tribes and warfare, the most common cause of *Surka* against a chieftain is a serious defeat in battle. This is one likely reason that chieftains plan their battles so well and in such detail – another indication that the hobgoblins are, at their core, a very pragmatic race.

## MERCENARY WARBANDS

Outside the common tribal structure, there are a few hobgoblins who form warrior bands of their own, searching for ever larger battles and ever greater victories. They doubtless consider the fact they get paid for waging war a mere bonus.

Hobgoblin mercenary warbands typically have between twenty and one hundred skilled warriors, with no place for young and those seriously injured. They usually form either from surviving warriors who manage to escape the shattered remnants of a broken tribe, or a group of hobgoblins who have grown dissatisfied with their chieftain. Unable or unwilling

to challenge him they will simply leave, striking out for the unknown but determined to survive by their warrior skills. To the other members of the tribe, an action that weakens them to such a degree is an unforgivable betrayal. Systematic searches will be mounted to locate the absconding warriors and if any are caught they will be subjected to a protracted and painful death.

Mercenaries will be willing to fight for almost anyone, with other goblinoid or orc tribes being the most common employers, though humans with few scruples have seen the value of the hobgoblins' disciplined approach to war. Many come to regret such a warband in or near their settlements, however, as hobgoblins may demonstrate difficulty in adjusting to more civilised societies for however brief a time. When hobgoblin mercenaries are used in predominantly human armies, their warlike nature and love of horse flesh can create an uncontrollable friction with other fighting units.

Hobgoblin mercenaries themselves have no such prejudices with who employs them and will literally fight for any who can pay. They can adapt well to life beyond the strict confines of their original tribe and quickly come to understand the values of both gold and reputation. It is relatively rare, for example, for a hobgoblin mercenary warband to intentionally betray its current employer, if for no other reason than they realise their chances of successive employment would likely disappear thereafter. With steady service and skilful fighting, hobgoblins amass more gold, which is in turn spent on weapons, armour and horses, which remain their true passions.

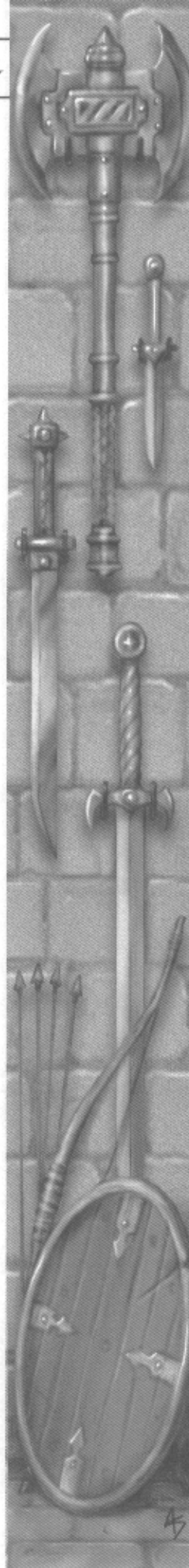
The structure of a warband follows similar lines to

*As with tribes, mercenary warbands also have a collective identity, though such terms relate to what the warband can actually do, or what it is capable of, rather than what the hobgoblins consider themselves to be. I have theorised, though some slower-witted scholars have in the past disagreed, that hobgoblin mercenary captains liken this name to an advertisement, proclaiming to prospective employers what they have achieved in past battles.*

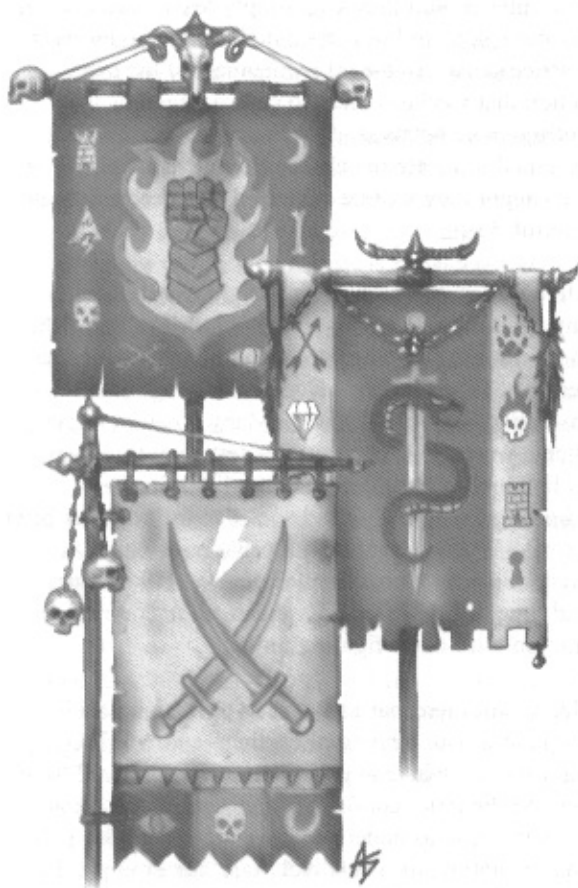
*Kin-Slayers  
Gold Takers  
Quick Death Company  
Lords of Battle  
Warriors of the Tunnels  
Scorched Lands*

*Ravagers  
Despoilers  
Smashed Lances  
The Mighty Horde  
Life Stealers  
Pain Bringers*

*Fillius Torinium, Scribe of Ages*







that of a tribe, with the overall captain (who may well term himself warlord after several successful engagements) commanding several sergeants of his own choosing, who in turn have authority over the regular warriors. Payment and plunder are also shared out in similar ways, with the captain taking up to half of each, though he is expected to arm and equip all his warriors regardless of circumstances. The more adventurous captains may even go to the expense of mounting their entire warband on horses rather than just having them eaten, once he understands how much more cavalry units can get paid. In fact, horse-riding hobgoblins are far more common in mercenary warbands than they are within tribes.

Each warband will carry a banner into battle and a much greater significance is placed on this than within tribes. To a hobgoblin mercenary, the entire pride of the warband is bound into the banner and they will fight fiercely if it is ever captured by an enemy in combat. In addition to the warband's icon, again based on their name, there will also be stylised depictions of their greatest victories and thus their banner is a direct measure of their achievement and

worth. When courting new employers, a captain will always bring his banner to negotiations, born by a powerful and intimidating warrior, as proof of what his warband has accomplished in its history.

It is an inevitable fact that any hobgoblin mercenary warband is doomed from the moment of its initial formation. Its members will never retire from the joy they find on the battlefield and their hostility towards outsiders, even other hobgoblins, means they will never hire reinforcements. It is the fate of every mercenary hobgoblin to one day be destroyed by his pursuit of war.

## RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL MATTERS

Hobgoblins are not religious by any measure and though they are nominally bound together under the goblinoid deity known as The Mighty One, they rarely pay the god anything more than lip service until a real disaster strikes the tribe. Even then it may only take the form of blaming The Mighty One for their misfortune.

Not every tribe will have adepts to service what few spiritual needs the hobgoblins may have and those that do rarely have more than half a dozen. Adepts tend to function outside of the chain of authority that runs through the tribe and they are considered inviolate when it comes to *Surka* and punishment – even the most irreverent of chieftains will be unwilling to court danger by harming a hobgoblin who is granted any amount of supernatural power directly from The Mighty One. Instead, adepts are primarily used in two ways by the tribe. When posed with a particularly difficult problem, a chieftain may go to his adepts and consult with them for advice, though he may place no special value in what they say and will be under no compulsion to obey their words. Secondly, all adepts are expected to use their supernatural powers for the good of the tribe either in battle or in the normal day-to-day life of hobgoblins by overcoming trials and obstacles that might otherwise be laboured over.

For their part, hobgoblin adepts make relatively poor worshippers of The Mighty One themselves and some may even secretly suspect the powers they wield come from within themselves rather than being channelled from any god. However, they are always

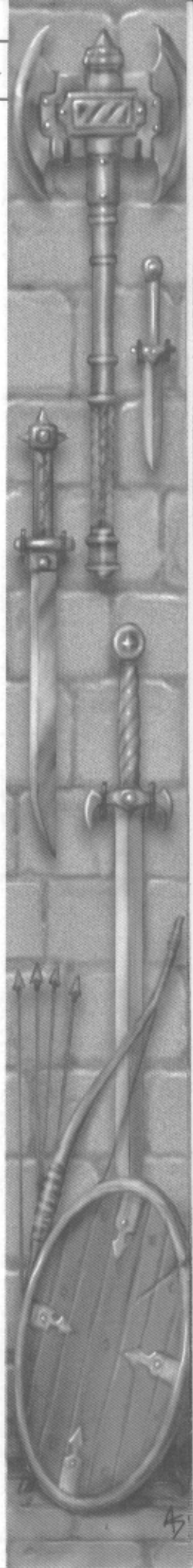
keen to capitalise on their status within the tribe as it grants immediate power and will always keep them far from any physical labour. This lack of duty towards The Mighty One seems to go unpunished by the god as hobgoblin adepts are no less skilled than their goblin counterparts. It can only be presumed that, by their very existence, hobgoblins continue to further The Mighty One's grand scheme for all goblinoids.

All adepts within a tribe are considered of equal standing, regardless of their relative skills. Power struggles between them are rare but can occur, especially if the chieftain is foolish enough to demonstrate any particular favouritism. Such struggles are usually ignored by the rest of the tribe but if other hobgoblins are brought in to aid one adept or another, the chieftain is likely to step in and resolve matters with his own undisputed authority.

Clerics are exceedingly rare in any hobgoblin tribe, with perhaps one in twenty having a cleric of any real power. Along with far greater skills and powers than a mere adept, hobgoblin clerics are fanatical followers of The Mighty One and it is possible the one goes in hand with the other. The cleric's self-declared mandate to follow The Mighty One's most minor wish can easily lead to direct confrontations with the tribal

chieftain. Any adepts in the tribe will likely consider themselves in the service of the cleric rather than the chieftain and this can create a powerful faction that can destabilise the entire structure of a tribe. Though not regarded as being part of the law of any tribe, a very powerful cleric may call *Surka* against the chieftain if he believes the leader to be weak and, if successful, will become chieftain himself. This is not a common occurrence though as many clerics believe the running of a tribe is beneath their concerns and will only do so if they need to directly control every hobgoblin, or if they believe it is the demand of The Mighty One that they do so.

It is rarer still for a hobgoblin cleric to follow any other deity than The Mighty One, though it has been known to happen. Such clerics tend to be the most fanatical hobgoblins an adventurer will be unfortunate enough to meet, with their blood-crazed rages in battle a true phenomenon to witness. They are likely to have taken over the leadership of their tribe with a very specific purpose in mind, in accordance with their god's wishes. This can lead to tribes of hobgoblins acting in very un-hobgoblinlike ways.





As impious as they are, the majority of hobgoblins will nevertheless at least acknowledge The Mighty One as their patron deity. They consider themselves the chosen of The Mighty One, as he is seen as both a war god and a great general, qualities with which hobgoblins can readily identify and that they believe they fulfil far better than mere goblins. The god, who is always portrayed by his adepts as an unusually large and muscular hobgoblin with flaming red eyes, sharp fangs and wickedly clawed hands, is said to command huge armies of goblinoid spirits. However, the only way a hobgoblin may join this mighty force after he dies is to be slain on the field of battle and this is generally as far as their religion goes.

However, members of tribes commonly retell stories from the time when The Mighty One walked the world, crushing all in his path, especially after they have fought a successful battle themselves. It is said that during his time in the material world, The Mighty One led the greatest force of hobgoblins ever seen, for they were always his favoured people. Many battles were fought against the other races and, for a long time, The Mighty One remained undefeated at the head of his horde. The complete domination of the world was his for the taking with only the elves, led by their own forest god, standing in the way. Marching to war, The Mighty One led every hobgoblin in the world into a massed battle to decide which was the greater race. Numberless hordes of hobgoblins poured into the assembled ranks of elves, heedless of the casualties caused by the elven bows as the massacre commenced, whilst The Mighty One sought out the elven god for single combat. The Mighty One towered over the elven god and time and again, he charged his enemy who, every time, simply dodged and twisted out of the way.

The Mighty One became enraged at his cowardly enemy, wildly swinging his huge axe at the elusive figure. All around him, hobgoblins slaughtered every elf they could reach, but he could not land a single blow against his own enemy. Again he charged and again the forest god dodged, but this time, the fine sliver of the elf deity's thin sword lunged forward under The Mighty One's guard, striking him cleanly through the heart and banishing him from the realms of mortals forever.

Hobgoblins recount the Fall of The Mighty One with bitterness and injured pride, for they know who was winning the battle before their god was banished and that the elves could only win through trickery and deceit. The rightful victory was denied to the hobgoblins who, if it were not for that, could be masters of the entire world in current times. This denial is ingrained into every hobgoblin and manifests itself as an utter hatred of the elven race. Many times in battle, hobgoblins have been seen ignoring some enemy units in favour of attacking any elf present.

As to the truth behind this tale, obviously I cannot judge, but it is maybe true in form, if not in fact. I find it hard to credit that The Mighty One ever walked this world, though I know some elves believe their own god once did. To my mind it is far more likely that, many centuries ago, a particularly renowned hobgoblin chieftain perhaps had the strength of will to unite several tribes, forming a mighty army that threatened elven lands. The defeat of this army somehow left an impression on the entire hobgoblin race through to this day. Now, my supposition may be no more correct than that of the hobgoblins themselves, but it is, I believe, far easier to give credence to.

Fillius Torinium, Scribe of Ages

# METHODS OF WARFARE

**T**hough both hobgoblin tribes and mercenary warbands tend to be judged purely by the number of warriors they contain, this is often a false measure as these warriors are capable of fulfilling a variety of roles on the battlefield. Though dedicated in the main to raids and ambushes, any large group of hobgoblins is capable of conducting disciplined manoeuvres on an open battlefield that make them comparable to well-drilled human soldiers in terms of effectiveness and flexibility. Ultimately, this race can turn its hand to almost any military action with at least a reasonable degree of success.

## WARRIORS

The regular hobgoblin warrior most will meet in battle will be formed up into units with other tribal members, numbering anything between twenty and one hundred overall, led by an overlord. The Majority will be clad in studded leather armour, bearing a large shield and a longsword, with javelins being a common addition for many. However, it is possible to find a great deal of variation in the way hobgoblins are armed and armoured, even between warriors belonging to the same unit. Longswords may be replaced by spears or battleaxes, or the shield may be discarded altogether so a greatsword or greataxe may be wielded. Tribes who have been successful in many raids and particularly wealthy mercenary warbands are likely to have large proportions of their warriors sporting chainmail. Breastplates and helmets are also popular choices amongst hobgoblins.

## ARCHERS

Many tribes will have the resources to arm their warriors with longbows but, given the hobgoblin penchant for destroying enemies at close quarters, they tend to be employed only in the defence of a lair, or for specific and well-defined tasks. A chieftain may decide, for example, that an enemy needs to be thinned out before he orders an attack, or that the use of longbows would make a superior diversionary action possible. Whilst no hobgoblin could compete with an elf for marksmanship, when used en masse, a

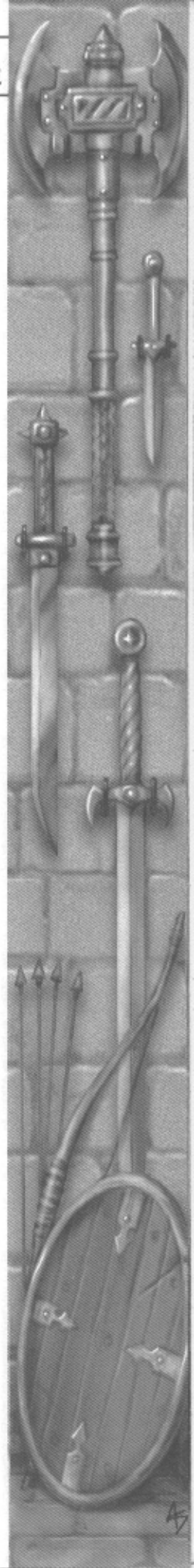
volley of arrows can prove devastating to an opposing unit.

## CAVALRY

Hobgoblins have been known to use cavalry to supplement their attacks, though this is far more common within mercenary warbands than with tribes. However, some tribal chieftains do see the value in such units, particularly if the terrain around their lair suits mounted warriors or if they have been defeated in the past by a charge of cavalry. Horses are the preferred mount of hobgoblins but given their dietary tastes, it can be very difficult keeping such a unit active for any great amount of time.

## SCOUTS

Every fighting group of hobgoblins will maintain a select number of warriors whose battle skills are beyond reproach and who specialise in stealth tactics. These scouts are primarily used to locate and report back on settlements for future raids and attacks, or for tracking ambush targets as they near the main hobgoblin force. In battle, the scouts may join regular warrior units or operate in small groups, infiltrating enemy positions to create disruption and havoc, chasing down fleeing units, or simply harrying an enemy as they attempt to close on the hobgoblins' front line. Whilst their abilities to hide and move silently may even rival those of other goblinoids, such skills are always considered secondary to their strength in battle. Even these hobgoblins are warriors, first and foremost. They tend to opt for lighter armour than the traditional warrior, the better





to aid in their stealthy missions, and ranged weapons such as longbows and slings are very common.

## CHIEFTAIN'S RETINUE

The most potent unit in a hobgoblin tribe, however, will always be led by the chieftain and is comprised of his most favoured overlords. These hobgoblins represent the very finest warriors of the entire tribe and, concentrated into one solid block, they are a very powerful force on any battlefield. There will be a huge variation in their weapons and armour, but it will be of a distinctly higher quality than that of any other warrior and it is here any magical weapons the tribe has in its possession will be found. This retinue is also likely to include a warrior who will hold the tribal standard aloft to be used as a focus and rallying point for the entire fighting force and also to mark the position of the chieftain at all times. If the tribe has one or more adepts, it is also likely that the banner will be magically charged with spells unique to hobgoblins and thus become a powerful weapon of war in its own right. The chieftain and his retinue are expected to lead by example and so can always be found at the forefront of any large hobgoblin assault, using their incredible martial skills to literally smash through enemy opposition and allow the rest of their force to sweep through broken and demoralised lines with catastrophic results.

## OF RAIDS AND AMBUSHES

Unless a target for a raid or ambush has a particularly formidable defence, it will be unlikely that even the majority of a tribe's warriors will ever be utilised at once. Even whilst the important business of war goes on, lairs still need to be watched and guarded, new raiding areas have to be scouted and even stronger defences constructed.

A chieftain will always judge what size of force is required to win a battle, based upon the verbal reports of his scouts and hobgoblins tend to be uncannily accurate when estimating their enemies. The tribe's scouts will have scoured the terrain for miles in every direction, often working alone, seeking weak victims that can provide food and resources for the tribe. These scouts are very capable in what they do, able to gather preliminary information on an enemy in less than an hour, though they usually spend two to three days evaluating any one target, stealthily keeping their distance whilst memorising all they can about

their unsuspecting prey. In the main, they will search for lightly defended farmsteads and villages, main caravan routes and other goblinoid tribes, keeping far away from larger towns and fortresses until the tribe has drained every other resource in the immediate area.

Their reconnaissance complete, they journey back to the lair, where the chieftain will decide which of the targets his scouts have presented will be attacked first, as well as how many warriors will be committed. Plans of battle will also be made, taking into account an enemy's defences as well as the surrounding terrain, and the chieftain's overlords will often take part in this process, volunteering to lead raids and even making suggestions to their leader. On rare occasions where the chieftain is less sure of what lies outside the lair, the tribe's adepts may also be consulted.

With plans set, the overlords then instruct each of their warriors in what they are expected to achieve in the coming battle. Strict objectives will be defined and adhered to. If the tribe is seeking horse flesh, for example, no hobgoblin will engage in wanton slaughter for the sheer joy of it unless he is welcoming of a chieftain's punishment. That said, it is just as likely that a tribe's objective *is* the slaughter of every sentient being they can find. It could be said that orders for murder and destruction on this scale could be given to test the warriors' mettle or to hone their fighting skills but, truth be told, hobgoblins often engage in such random slaughter simply because they enjoy it. They sincerely believe no other race but theirs has the right to exist in the world.

Hobgoblins, as a race, are well suited to the following of well defined orders without variation and are more than capable of carrying out some of the more complex commands their chieftains may sometimes demand. The patience required in waiting for the right time to strike, the blood thirsty charge followed by the immediate breaking off of combat and the accurate timing of diversionary attacks are all well within the grasp of the most average of hobgoblin warriors.

With their highly developed darkvision, hobgoblins prefer to attack at night, but they are equally suited to daylight battles, just as they are no less capable of subterranean warfare as they are on the surface of the world. They are well aware of how many other races suffer in darkness and have even been known to make intelligent use of fire in such battles. Tactics such as

blinding their opponents and destroying their night vision, or employing scouts to create large fires that silhouette targets for archers have both been witnessed in some raids.

It is in the largest of battles, where the majority of a tribe's warriors are brought out to fight, that the hobgoblins' cunning tactics and disciplined resolution to orders can impress even the most seasoned of generals. This is, thankfully for civilised peoples, a rare occurrence and usually only happens when a large town is being attacked or when a chieftain makes the decision to face an approaching enemy away from the lair. When hobgoblins fight in such numbers, they are unlikely to intentionally leave any survivors, be they trained soldiers or non-combatants.

### Tribeless Hobgoblins

Hobgoblins without a tribe, if they do not become mercenaries, will often locate a goblin or orc tribe and simply usurp control. They will seek to remove and destroy any existing tribal leader, along with his most skilled warriors and set themselves up in his place. Once in this position, they rule through methods of dominance and total fear, demonstrating a callous disregard for the well-being of their new followers. Any dissent is immediately and cruelly put down by the sword for the hobgoblins will be eminently willing to leave and find another such tribe if their current home becomes too weak as a result of their merciless rule.

## FACING THE TRIBE

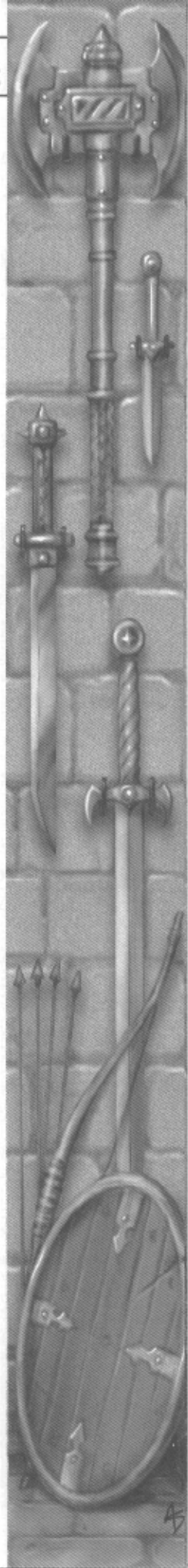
Imagine, for a moment, that you are the commander of an ad hoc army ready to fight off a large hobgoblin attack with the few meagre resources you have managed to pull together. An entire populated village is depending on your victory as the enemy approaches.

If you were unusually observant, the first you may see of the hobgoblins' approach may be a few scattered scouts, though they will likely be using their superior skills to stay hidden as they move into position, ready to carry out their chieftain's orders. The solid

warrior units appear soon after, marching in tight formation and ready to support one another when battle is joined. With their weapons shining in any available light, some previous victims have in the past made the mistake of assuming the army was their own reinforcements. Such thoughts may be quickly forgotten, as the chieftain is spotted in the centre of the army, surrounded by the largest hobgoblins of the entire tribe. Next to him is a warrior, hoisting the crude-looking tribal banner high into the air, proclaiming to all that the hobgoblins have now arrived.

As your own infantry move forward to engage, desperate to keep the hobgoblins away from the village, the warrior units on the flanks peel off and adopt far looser formations. Unslinging their previously hidden longbows, your infantry is now subjected to volley after volley of arrow fire. The hobgoblins then charge, led by the chieftain's own retinue and a loud crash echoes across the battlefield as opposing shield lines clash violently. The chieftain uses the weight of his charge to smash the infantry units in front of him, creating a hole in your battle line that the nearest units of hobgoblin warriors rush to fill. Arrow fire continues to rain down on any infantry that have yet to engage the enemy and hobgoblin scouts begin rising from their hiding places to attack your units in the flank and rear, or to finish off the injured who by now are falling to the ground in huge numbers. Then, at a signal from the chieftain, hobgoblins mounted on horseback and armed with wickedly barbed spears rush from nearby woodland that your own huntsmen had previously claimed was clear. One by one, your units begin to turn and rout as the cavalry plough into their rear, only to be hacked down by blood-thirsty warriors. And the hobgoblin tribe wins yet another battle.

Moving forwards, the hobgoblins proceed to raze the village, slaughtering all they can find and stealing anything of value that can be carried back to the lair. The smoke rising high into the sky from the village is likely the last you will ever see of the settlement as you make a very hasty retreat from the disaster.

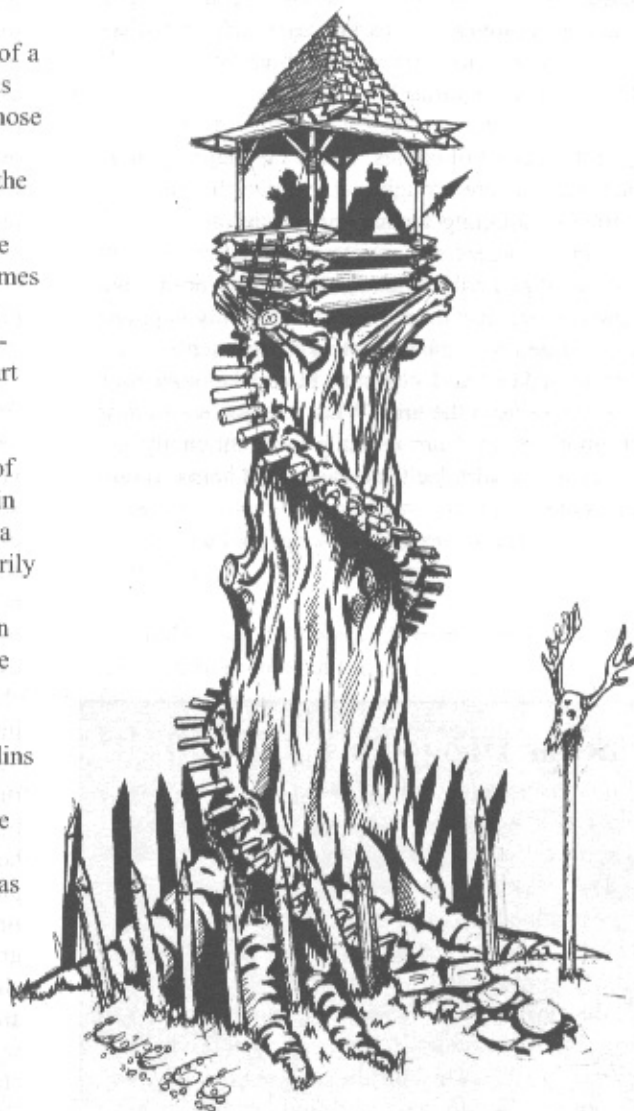




## TACTICAL VARIETY

The example above is neither typical nor unusual of a massed hobgoblin attack, as every chieftain has his own methods for defeating his enemies. Indeed, those who pursue such tribes can sometimes identify a particular raiding party of hobgoblins, simply by the tactics they employ. Such battles though, are generally the largest-scale in which hobgoblins are willing to fight. When, as has happened several times in history, a charismatic and powerful leader starts binding goblinoid tribes together to form a nation-defeating force, hobgoblins may well become a part of it and be used as shock troops, but these are exceptional circumstances.

What has been portrayed in this chapter is a taste of the variety of tactics that any hobgoblin may use in combat, whether it is in razing a village, or facing a party of brave adventurers. They may not necessarily have any 'set' tactics, but will be able to quickly adjust to any new situation they find themselves in and, thus, must never be underestimated. There are fortresses now in hobgoblin hands, for example, being used as fortified lairs simply because the previous commander did not believe that hobgoblins were capable of siege warfare. Anyone who has previously fought hobgoblins will tell you that the best method to approach combat with them is to always assume that they are *at least* as intelligent as you are.



*Though I have concentrated primarily on traditional tribes and mercenary warbands, hobgoblins, like any intelligent humanoids, are not bound by any fixed set of rules. Adventurers travelling as far and wide as I have over this world may encounter this race in the strangest of places and doing decidedly un-hobgoblinlike things. For example, I have seen with my own eyes the Enflamed Arrows of the far-away steppes who, like the humans of the region, adopt the life of wide-ranging nomads, constantly herding an incredible number of horses to new areas of grazing. I have heard of, but not seen, the Blood Drinkers of the southern seas, by all accounts a rapacious and battle hungry group of hobgoblin pirates who have managed to amass a veritable fleet over recent years. And there are always dark rumours of hobgoblins being valued members of many thieves and assassins guilds throughout several cities, though this is harder to credit. It is clear, however, that hobgoblins, for all their deficiencies when compared to us, are an extremely capable race that may forever pose a threat to decent peoples.*

*Fillius Torinium, Scribe of Ages*

# ROLE-PLAYING WITH HOBGOBLINS

In this chapter, we will look at how hobgoblins can be integrated into an existing campaign and, more importantly, how a Games Master should endeavour to portray them when they encounter the player characters. Up to this point, you have learnt about every aspect of hobgoblin life, from their disciplined martial skills to the physical traits that enhance their ability to survive in a world eager to wipe them out. Now it is time to put all of that information into practice. There is one golden rule you must never forget in your games:

## Hobgoblins are not stupid!

The average hobgoblin is as smart as the average human and whilst they do not have the same civilised societies that spread all over the world, they more than make up for this with sheer cunning.

Too many Games Masters in the past have treated hobgoblins merely as critters for players to vanquish at the earliest opportunity. But every tribe and warband has a history and no hobgoblin will have survived long enough to even meet the players if they had simply flung themselves into every available combat.

At their core, hobgoblins are highly disciplined and very efficient warriors. Even with their overlord or chieftain slain, they will instinctively know when to push an advantage in combat and when to retreat from under an onslaught. In an attack, such as a raid or ambush, hobgoblins are likely to have planned the battle in advance, using secondary waves, diversionary forces and withering bow and javelin fire as and when required. Players should find that hobgoblins have an uncanny knack of manoeuvring units into positions where they will do the most damage. If, despite this forward planning, the players manage to start defeating their enemy, the hobgoblins will not wait around to be slaughtered. Instead, they will retreat behind a dedicated rearguard, regroup a good distance away and then strike back, this time having taken into account the strengths and

weaknesses of the players.

If you fancy a memorable evening of gaming and wish to challenge your players to their very limits, you could do a lot worse than have them attempt an attack on a hobgoblin lair. It is here, in defence, that the hobgoblins can demonstrate their true mettle and even relatively high level characters may find themselves seriously challenged by 'mere goblinoids.'

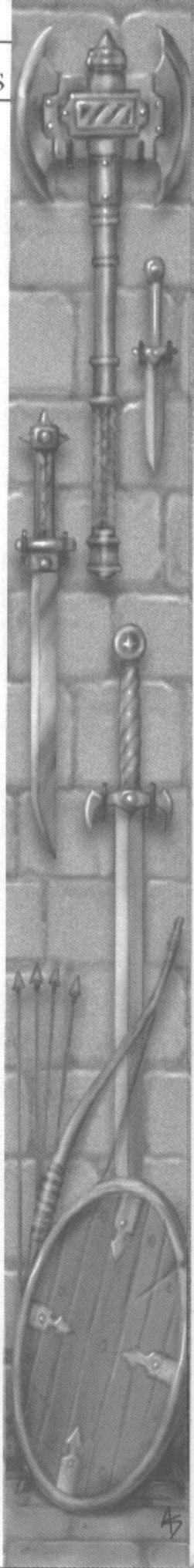
Imagine a typical lair for a moment. There are defences and traps for at least a couple of hundred yards in every direction. There are watchtowers, sentries and active patrols stretching much further away. Catapults, ballistae and stations for longbow armed hobgoblins cover every conceivable approach. For perhaps months the chieftain, a formidable warrior in his own right, has constantly drilled the tribe in what to do in the event of an attack and this is one very important point to remember – within a few short minutes of the alarm being sounded, *every* hobgoblin in the tribe will be armed, in position and ready to fight. Most player characters are likely to need a small army to help them overcome such an obstacle and losses will be high.

On very rare occasions, the players may meet a few 'stray' hobgoblins and have fun defeating them in short order. This is fine. You can then put them up against the resources of an entire tribe where they will soon develop a very strong respect for a race that has both numbers and martial prowess on its side. No longer mere monsters, hobgoblins have the potential to be the nemesis of every player character in the game.

## Hobgoblin Names

Unlikely though it may be, it *is* possible that player characters could open a dialogue with a hobgoblin, if only they can delay its murderous tendencies long enough (keep any elves far out of sight!). More likely, a Games Master will want to name the prominent hobgoblins of a tribe or warband out of a sense of completeness or in the event that a chieftain gains a great deal of renown in any one area. In general, their names can seem harsh to human and elf ears, but not as hard or short as those of orcs. Provided here are some examples of hobgoblin names.

Tallarak	Terreck	Gruushavak
Kilmark	Mogosatik	Takarna
Chabosh	Defanma	Makara





# SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

**H**obgoblins provide the Games Master with a wealth of opportunities to use as adversaries against the players. Characters of all levels may be challenged by the intelligent and militarily forward-thinking hobgoblins, to the extent that any party foolish enough to dismiss them as mere goblinoids may quickly find themselves in real trouble.

Presented here is a short jump-off list of scenario hooks and ideas that a Games Master may use to introduce hobgoblins into an existing campaign.

## MERCHANT CONVOY

A well-traversed caravan route through the wildlands has suffered greatly in recent months, with entire trains of wagons disappearing without trace. The players are hired to escort the next caravan to discover what is happening and, if possible, put a stop to it. The Games Master can have plenty of fun with this type of scenario, planning ambushes and using the hobgoblins' advanced grasp of tactics to hinder the players' attempts to remove them.

## ASSASSINS!

A large force of goblins and orcs has been detected nearly sixty miles away from a civilised settlement and appears to be approaching fast. Scouts and huntsmen have estimated that the oncoming horde will easily crush the meagre defences of the settlement and so the players are drafted in to attempt a reckless plan. A small group of hobgoblins have been spotted leading the force and it is supposed that their deaths will cause the orc and goblin army to fall apart through infighting. The players must stealthily enter the enemy camp and destroy the hobgoblin presence without bringing huge numbers of other goblinoids down on their heads.

## THE SIEGE

A nearby fort has recently fallen to a surprise hobgoblin attack. The defenders have all been slain

and the hobgoblins are now in sole possession of the fort. The rest of their tribe cannot be far behind and once they arrive, the fort may prove to be all but impregnable and the entire region will then fall under the domination of the hobgoblins. The players are hired to lead a small unit of militia to take back the fort and then hold it against the rest of the tribe when it arrives. The hobgoblins will try a direct assault at first but if this fails, they will begin to lay siege, trying successively more sophisticated and imaginative methods of attack. The Games Master is welcome to relieve the players with a larger army after a set amount of days. Or he could just leave them stranded. . .

## SWEEP AND CLEAR

After a particularly gruesome battle, a combined force of goblinoids was finally shattered after plaguing the region for so long. However, a mercenary warband of hobgoblins became separated from the bulk of the force during the battle and managed to escape slaughter. Now hiding in the wilderness, they are conducting successive raids on the surrounding area and have already claimed many innocent lives. It is the task of the players to track the hobgoblin mercenaries down and destroy them. They will soon find, however, that these hobgoblins are veterans of many battles and know how to survive on their own whilst avoiding direct combat.

## SCOUT HUNTERS

The players are spending time in a village, possibly for rest and re-supply between adventures, when an alarm is raised – a hobgoblin has been spotted on the far outskirts of the settlement. It is known that there is a hobgoblin lair around sixty miles away to the west and they have been an unholy terror on the farms of the area. Up to this time, however, they have never come as far east as to attack this village. The presence of a lone hobgoblin could signal their intentions to start raiding further away from their lair. At all costs the scout must be captured or killed before he can alert his tribe as to the position and defences of the village. The players must hunt and track down this scout as the hobgoblin races back to his lair, eager to tell his chieftain of the rich plunder the village may yield.

## VENDETTA

It is possible that, in one of the scenario ideas presented above, the players may have done a great

deal of serious damage to a hobgoblin tribe and yet left some survivors. Such hobgoblins, the only remains of a broken tribe, may well take a keen interest in the future actions of the players, tracking them down and then attempting to bring about their premature deaths. A strong hobgoblin warrior with rogue skills leading a dedicated warband could cause even high level characters some problems.



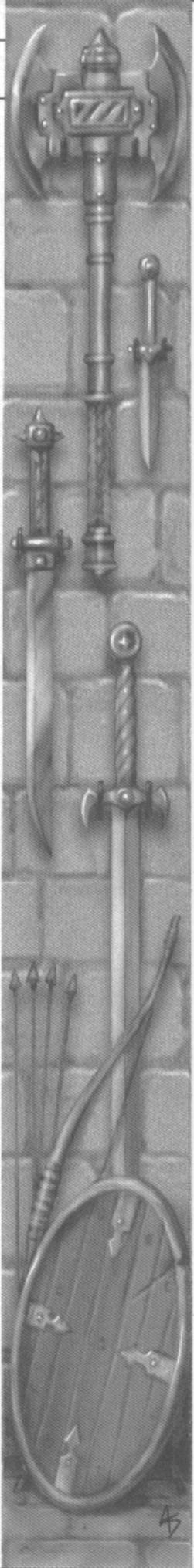
## HOBGOBLINS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

**H**obgoblins have a tremendous scope to be used as player characters within the game, though caution is urged when introducing them as part of a regular party line-up alongside humans, elves (especially elves!) and the other races. The hobgoblin personality is one dedicated to war and the domination of every race not of their own. Though the idea of a hobgoblin gaining a conscience and working to atone for the crimes of his race may appeal to some, it is highly unlikely. This must be left to the discretion of the individual Games Master and his players. However, a hobgoblin-only campaign may have a great deal of length to it, whether the player characters are part of a tribe, have left for some reason or have formed a mercenary company. Such a campaign is likely to be military in nature and can provide a good break from 'regular' adventuring sessions, with the party seeking to amass fame and fortune as mercenaries, or climbing up the dominance hierarchy of a tribe until they are capable of challenging the chieftain themselves.

It is recommended that player character hobgoblins restrict themselves to Fighter, Rogue and Cleric classes though, as always, a player's creativity should never be bound by any rulebook. If a suitable rationale is created for an unusual hobgoblin character, the Games Master is urged to indulge his player. As always, it is assumed that player character hobgoblins are above average when compared to other members of their race.

### HOBGOBLIN RACIAL TRAITS

- Ø +1 Dexterity, +1 Constitution, -2 Charisma: Hobgoblins are superior warriors but their relations with other people tend to be characterised through fear and dominance.
- Ø Medium-size: As Medium-size creatures, hobgoblins have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Ø Hobgoblin base speed is 30 feet.
- Ø Darkvision: Hobgoblins can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only but is otherwise like normal sight and hobgoblins can function just as well with no light at all.
- Ø +4 racial bonus on Move Silently checks. Hobgoblins retain some of the stealth of their goblinoid cousins.
- Ø +1 racial bonus to Fortitude and Reflex saves.
- Ø Bonus Feat: Alertness. Hobgoblins, as a race, are unusually observant of their surroundings.
- Ø Hide, Listen, Move Silently and Spot are always considered to be Class skills, regardless of what class the hobgoblin actually is.
- Ø Automatic Languages: Common and Goblinoid. Bonus Languages: Giant, Gnome, Ogre, Orc, Troll, Undercommon.
- Ø Favoured Class: Fighter. A multiclass hobgoblin's fighter class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. To a hobgoblin, warrior skills are paramount and are taught from an early age.





# GRAVEN HILL BORDER FORT

The Graven Hill border fort is provided as an example of a hobgoblin lair. Whilst there is a great deal of variation between the specifics of such lairs, it does give an indication as to the level of organisation a tribe can possess, as well as the extent the hobgoblins may develop their defences. Enough information has been given for dungeon masters to use Graven Hill as an extended encounter for their players, or even as the basis of several full-blown adventures, possibly utilising some of the ideas given in the Scenario Hooks And Ideas chapter.

Graven Hill is typical of the many border fortresses that safeguard the lands of men from predators and invaders. Constructed nearly a century ago from locally quarried stone, it has remained a bulwark against the wild for all the human and halfling farmsteads and villages in the immediate area, with few enemies willing to launch any sort of attack simply because of its presence. However, such safeguards can breed a lax attitude and the forty or so soldiers stationed at Graven Hill began to grow disinterested in their preparations of defences and sentry duties. Even the walls began to crumble with little done to halt the process by the fort's commander. When the Black Drake hobgoblin tribe attacked in the dead of one night, Graven Hill was overcome within an hour and no human was left alive inside its stone walls.

## THE TAKING OF GRAVEN HILL

The Black Drake tribe had been forced to relocate its lair after the dwarves of the south finally moved against the hobgoblins in retaliation for months of successive raiding attacks on dwarven settlements. Faced with complete eradication at the hands of the vengeful dwarves, Mokvara, the tribal chieftain of the Black Drakes, had little choice to evacuate the cavern complex the hobgoblins had occupied, or be destroyed. The scouts of the tribe immediately began ranging ahead of the main body of hobgoblins, for Mokvara knew this was a critical time and feared that his tribe would be caught and annihilated by a dwarven force at any time. Never before had the Black Drakes been this vulnerable. Without a lair,

nearly four hundred hobgoblins could not be easily hidden and, if attacked, they might all die fighting.

So it was with no small amount of relief that the scouts soon reported to Mokvara that a human fort had been found three days' march to the north-west and, moreover, it seemed lightly defended enough for the tribe to conquer. Leaving the tribe to the leadership of one of the overlords, Lokandat, the chieftain led a large force of warriors to gain possession of Graven Hill.

By the time Mokvara gained sight of Graven Hill, more scouts had already moved into the area and having spent three days watching the fort, the human defenders blissfully unaware, they had discovered exactly how many men were inside and how relatively poor the defences were. Mokvara studied his foe carefully, keeping his army away from the fort and his plans began to formulate. His tribe would take longer to reach Graven Hill than he did and so he could perhaps expect their arrival in five days time. This effectively gave him nearly a week to breach the fort and wipe out its defenders with the minimum of cost on the part of his warriors. With time on his side, he consulted with his scouts as to which was the weakest wall of Graven Hill, whilst he ordered his warriors to begin the construction of two large catapults, using materials scavenged in nearby woodland.

On the fourth night since their arrival, the hobgoblins attacked, whilst most of the humans slept. They managed to move their catapults into position and actually start firing at the weak east wall before any alarm was raised inside Graven Hill. Confusion reigned inside the fort, with archers firing blindly into the dark against an enemy all too aware of their presence. Longbow-equipped warriors closed range with the east wall, their superior darkvision allowing them to pick off many of the archers on the wall whilst themselves remaining hidden by the veil of night. After little more than half an hour's bombardment, the dilapidated east wall finally gave way to the hobgoblins assault, and the centre section half collapsed. The catapult fire ceased and Mokvara led the attack himself into the newly created breach. The slaughter began very quickly. Though every human in the fort was now armed for battle, many were still unsure as to the direction of the hobgoblin attack when the east wall was breached. Outnumbered by the hobgoblins, with many still terrified by the sudden night attack, they were cut down with merciless efficiency. Not one human was

spared and the hobgoblins lost only half a dozen of their warriors in the subsequent fighting.

## A NEW HOME

The rest of the Black Drakes tribe arrived in the following day and Mokvara immediately set his hobgoblins to work, eager to fortify Graven Hill and make it more suitable for the goblinoid way of life. The chieftain was well aware how lax the humans had been in the upkeep of their fort and he had no intention of making the same mistakes. First, the two large catapults used to take the fort were disassembled and moved to the towers that stood either side of the breach they had made. Then began a dedicated and systematic rebuilding of Graven Hill's defences which, in the end, made it a far stronger position than it had ever been in its history.

The breach in the east wall was repaired first, using thick wooden ramparts and supports. Whilst obviously not as strong as stone, the two catapults dominating a wide area in front of the wall would make any attack on the quarter difficult and Mokvara had plans to make it harder still. Two ballistae were hastily built to arm the western towers, wicked wooden spikes were placed at the foot of the walls and digging began on deep ditches that would almost completely surround Graven Hill and make it nearly impossible for an enemy to find easy progress. Three watchtowers were built away from the fort and more digging took place beyond the ditches, creating huge numbers of small potholes that would entrap any approaching cavalry and slow down those on foot. Only the main track leading from the gatehouse was left clear of these potholes. For its part, the gatehouse was given a wooden portcullis, where none had been before, and large rocks were balanced on a series of ramps, ready to be sent crashing down on to the heads of any who tried to assault the gates. Only when all this was done, did work begin on the housing for the tribe as a whole. Whilst Mokvara and the tribe's adept, Foriar, had taken outhouses within Graven Hill for their quarters, the rest of the tribe started to build wooden huts for themselves in the centre of the courtyard, creating a kind of village within the walls of the fort.

Whilst this renovating of Graven Hill was taking place, raids were established, but Mokvara was careful only to take what his tribe needed to survive and no more, knowing that if an enemy was provoked into attacking whilst the hobgoblins were still working on the defences, then the chances were the

whole tribe may perish. With the defences as strong as the Black Drakes had made them, Mokvara felt confident enough to re-dedicate his warriors to raiding attacks and soon the whole region around Graven Hill began to feel the presence of the fort's new masters.

## THE BLACK DRAKES

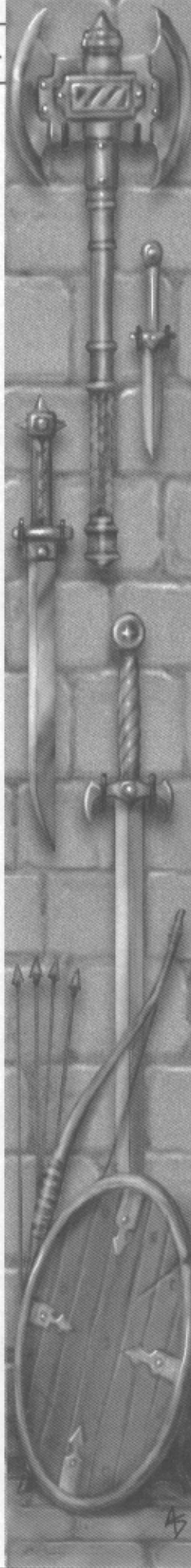
The Black Drake tribe of hobgoblins has managed to strengthen the defences of Graven Hill fort to the point where it will take a major, dedicated assault by a large professional army to force them out. It is possible that Mokvara may become a little too reliant on the strength of his new lair and thus over extend his tribe when conducting raiding attacks, but he is constantly drilling his warriors in the defence of the fort and, as shown below, the Black Drakes have the resources to make a direct attack on Graven Hill a very costly process for anyone.

### Tribal Structure

Mokvara, Tribal Chieftain  
 3 Dire Wolves, Mokvara's own 'pets'  
 Foriar, Tribal Adept  
 8 Overlords  
 135 Warriors, all of which can be armed with longbows  
 11 Scouts  
 Approx. 200 Young and other non-combatants  
 26 horses not kept for food and used as cavalry in raids  
 2 Ballistae  
 2 Large Catapults

### Pothole defences

The hobgoblins of Graven Hill have dug many potholes surrounding the fort, each around a foot deep and covered with grass and twigs. As such, it takes a wary eye to find them (Search Check, DC 20). The potholes themselves have been designed to slow men and cavalry, and they can cause injuries such as sprains and broken legs. If characters are caught unawares in an area of potholes, they must make a Reflex save, DC 15 or take d3 damage. Running through an area filled with potholes makes the chances of hurting oneself greater (Reflex save, DC 20). Horses and other mounts stepping into a pothole area will automatically suffer the same type of injury and their riders may be thrown (Riding check, DC 15, 20 if moving faster than a walk). Once detected, potholes have no effect on those walking at their base speed through the area.





**Mokvara, Hobgoblin Tribal Chieftain****Medium-Size Humanoid (Goblinoid)****8<sup>th</sup> Level Fighter****Hit Dice:** 53 hp**Initiative:** +5**Speed:** 20 ft.**AC:** 18 (+1 Dex, +7 *chainmail* +2)**Attacks:** Greatsword +12/+7 melee; or mighty composite longbow -9/+4 ranged**Damage:** Greatsword 2d6+5; or longbow 1d8+2**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +4**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12**Skills:** Hide +6, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Spot +6**Feats:** Alertness, Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialisation (greatsword)**Challenge Rating:** 7**Treasure:** *Chainmail* +2, *Cloak of Resistance* +2, *Potion of Cure Serious Wounds***Alignment:** Lawful Evil**Lokandat, Hobgoblin Overlord****Medium-Size Humanoid (Goblinoid)****4<sup>th</sup> Level Fighter****Hit Dice:** 19 hp**Initiative:** +5**Speed:** 20 ft.**AC:** 18 (+1 Dex, +4 *scalemail*, *large shield* +1)**Attacks:** Longsword +7 melee; or longbow +4 ranged**Damage:** Longsword 1d8+2; or longbow 1d8**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +1**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10**Skills:** Hide +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +6**Feats:** Alertness, Blind Fight, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)**Challenge Rating:** 3**Treasure:** *Large shield* +1**Alignment:** Neutral Evil**Foriar, Hobgoblin Adept****Medium-Size Humanoid (Goblinoid)****2<sup>nd</sup> Level Adept****Hit Dice:** 9 hp**Initiative:****Speed:** 30 ft.**AC:** 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather)**Attacks:** Club +1, light crossbow +3**Damage:** Club 1d6, light crossbow 1d8**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 11**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3 (+18 optional points to spend)**Feats:** Alertness**Challenge Rating:** 2**Treasure:** *Potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of gaseous form***Alignment:** Lawful Evil

## THE BLACK DRAKES TODAY

The Black Drakes tribe has now occupied Graven Hill for over nine months and has spread its area of domination to all the human and halfling settlements within a forty mile radius. Many of the closer villages and farms have been razed to the ground and others live under the perpetual fear of raiding attacks and murder. Three militia armies have been raised to destroy the hobgoblin threat, but all have been bloodily repulsed by the now superior defences of Graven Hill. A number of larger towns lie outside of the Black Drakes' area of control and their peoples look on in fear of what the tribe may do next. Mokvara's main problem is that, despite the virtually impregnable nature of his lair, he lacks the numbers of warriors to attack such well defended settlements, but it can only be a matter of time as the tribe continues to prosper and grow that such plans come to the chieftain's mind more frequently.

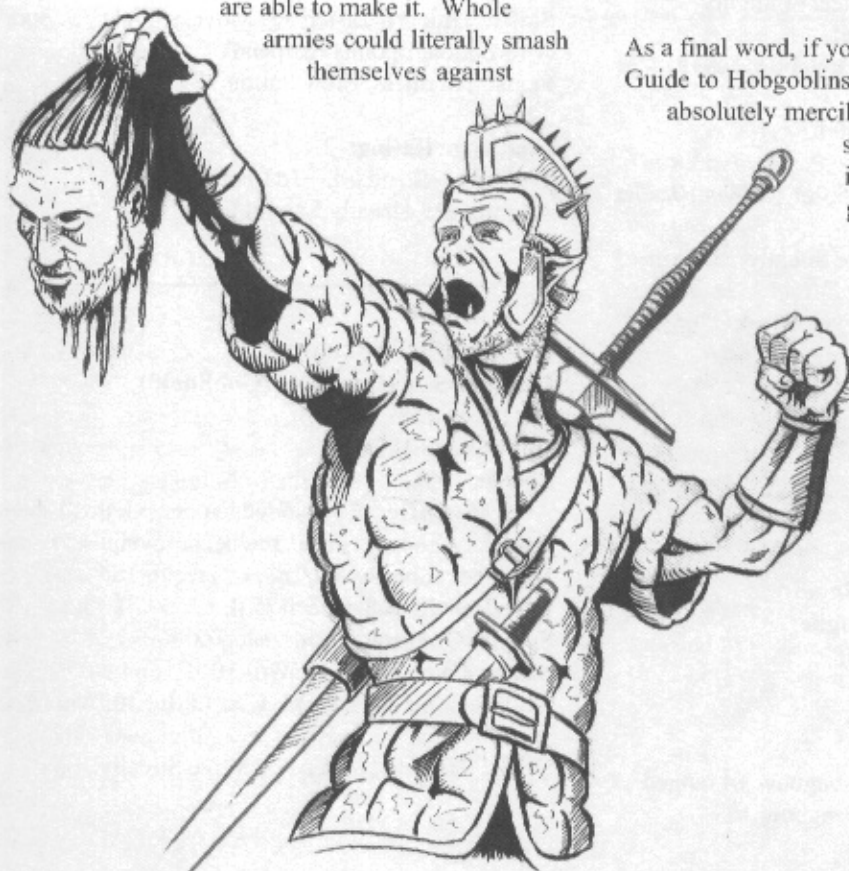
That it will be a major undertaking to reclaim Graven Hill for human hands is without question, for the hobgoblins guard their lair with eagle eyes and grow stronger with each passing raid. It is likely that only a protracted siege, completely cutting the tribe off from their food sources will enable a force to

sufficiently weaken the hobgoblins to allow an assault to take place, for with so many mouths to feed in such a relatively small area, the tribe is unable to keep a large amount of stores for such an eventuality.

The townsfolk who live near this ominous threat have received word recently that the Stone Maulers tribe of ogres has also moved into the area. Though their low numbers has yet to make a significant impact on any settlements, many hope that they will soon encounter the Black Drakes and that any battle fought between them will sufficiently weaken both tribes to the point where they may finally be combated effectively. Other, however, secretly dread what may occur next if the Stone Maulers and Black Drakes are somehow able to co-operate and join forces, for the ogres could represent the increase in his army that would allow Mokvara to finally attempt a major assault upon one of the towns. If that were to happen, no human or halfling within a hundred miles of Graven Hill could consider themselves safe.

## USING GRAVEN HILL

Though hobgoblins are individually fairly weak, Graven Hill has been designed from the outset to be as nigh impregnable as the Black Drakes are able to make it. Whole armies could literally smash themselves against



its walls whilst leaving the tribe relatively unharmed. A party without even a small militia to back them up is going to have to be of quite high level if they are to survive Graven Hill.

There is, however, one glaring weakness the Black Drakes have so far yet to contend with – magic. They have little in the way of magical defence beyond their thick walls and a party with access to particularly destructive spells will have a far easier time than most.

When playing the hobgoblins of Graven Hill, Games Masters are urged to pay attention to the Role-Playing With Hobgoblins chapter of this supplement. Militarily, hobgoblins are highly advanced when compared to other goblinoids and you should make sure the party is aware of this through their actions rather than your own words. Just because the tribe is behind the walls of a fortress, the Black Drakes will be no less active in their tactical thinking. They will watch their enemies, weigh odds and launch attacks only when they believe they can win. If the party demonstrate any significant weaknesses within the defences the hobgoblins have constructed around Graven Hill, the tribe will move fast to build new, more effective ones.

As a final word, if your players also own the Slayer's Guide to Hobgoblins, you have our permission to be absolutely merciless to them – your players should know what to expect from intelligent and highly disciplined goblinoids after all!



# HOBGOBLIN REFERENCE LIST

Whilst it is a truism that there is no such thing as an average hobgoblin, the following are provided as a quick and easy reference for you to use on short notice. However, Games Masters are encouraged to use the following entries as examples to build upon when creating truly unique adversaries for their players.

## Hobgoblin Tribal Chieftain

**Medium-Size Humanoid (Goblinoid)**

**7th Level Warrior**

**Hit Dice:** 7d8 +14(Con) +3(Toughness) (47 hp)

**Initiative:** +1

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail)

**Attacks:** Greatsword +10/+5 melee; or mighty composite longbow +8/+3 ranged

**Damage:** Greatsword 2d6+3; or longbow 1d8+2

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

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3 (+26 optional points to spend)

**Feats:** Alertness, Toughness, Power Attack

**Challenge Rating:** 6

**Treasure:** Standard x3

**Alignment:** Usually Lawful Evil

## Hobgoblin Overlord

**Medium-Size Humanoid (Goblinoid)**

**3rd Level Warrior/1<sup>st</sup> Level Rogue**

**Hit Dice:** 3d8+3/1d6+1 (20 hp)

**Initiative:** +1

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 15 (+1 Dex, +4 scalemail)

**Attacks:** Greataxe +4 melee; or longbow +4 ranged

**Damage:** Greataxe 1d12+1; or longbow 1d8

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

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

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

**Feats:** Alertness, Power Attack

**Challenge Rating:** 3

**Treasure:** Standard x2

**Alignment:** Usually Lawful Evil

## Hobgoblin Adept

**Medium-Size Humanoid (Goblinoid)**

**3rd Level Adept**

**Hit Dice:** 3d6 +3(Con) (13 hp)

**Initiative:** +2

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather)

**Attacks:** Club +1, light crossbow +3

**Damage:** Club 1d6, light crossbow 1d8

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

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 11

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3 (+18 optional points to spend)

**Feats:** Alertness, Brew Potion

**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Treasure:** Standard, +1d3 potions

**Alignment:** Usually Lawful Evil

## Hobgoblin Warrior

**Medium-Size Humanoid (Goblinoid)**

**Hit Dice:** 1d8+1 (5 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield)

**Attacks:** Longsword +1 melee; or javelin +2 ranged

**Damage:** Longsword 1d8; or javelin 1d6

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

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

**Skills:** Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3,

Spot +3

Feats: Alertness

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually Lawful Evil

**Hobgoblin Young**

Small-Size Humanoid (Goblinoid)

0 Level Warrior

Hit Dice: ½ (2 hp)

Initiative: +1 Dex

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 12 (+1 Dex, +1 size)

Attacks: Small club -1, small javelin (treat as dart) +1

Damage: 1d4 -1, 1d4

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 11

Skills: Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3

Feats: Alertness

Challenge Rating: 1/4

Treasure: none

Alignment: Usually Lawful Evil

**Hobgoblin Spells**

Adventurers have often reported hobgoblin adepts and clerics casting spells of a divine nature that are completely beyond the experience of other races. Such spells are few in nature but most hobgoblin spell-casters seem at least familiar in their use. They tend to be concentrated around the use of a tribe's or warband's banner and enhance its effect in battle, making it not only a rallying point for units but a potent weapon of war in its own right.

The two spells listed below may only be used by hobgoblin adepts and clerics who worship the Mighty One. Spell-casters of other races or other faiths may not use them under any circumstances.

**Fortitude**

Healing

Level: Adept 2/Cleric 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Area: Close (25 ft.)

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Cast directly onto a tribal or warband banner, this spell spreads its effect to all nearby hobgoblins. The banner is the focus of the spell and is not consumed by the casting. Every hobgoblin within 25 feet of the banner will automatically be healed one hit point in every round it sustains any damage, for the duration of the spell. If a hobgoblin sustains no damage in a round, no hit points will be healed, regardless of the health of the hobgoblin. A hobgoblin cannot gain hit points above his original starting level using this spell. This spell will have no effect on hobgoblins from a different tribe or warband to that of the banner's.

*Material Component:* Tribal or warband banner.

**Vengeance of the Mighty One**

Evil

Level: Adept 3/Cleric 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 20 minutes

Range: Touch

Area: Close (25 ft.)

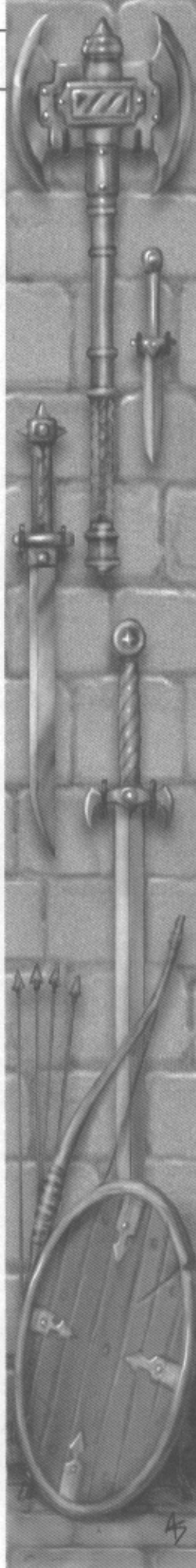
Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: None

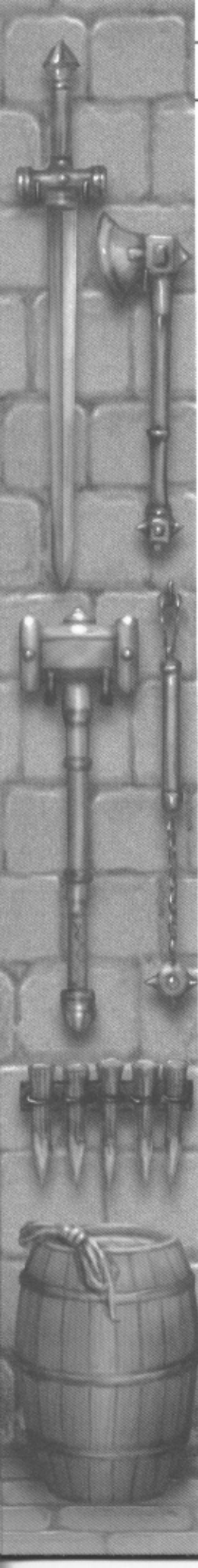
Spell Resistance: No

Cast directly onto a tribal or warband banner, this spell spreads its effect to all nearby hobgoblins. The banner is the focus of the spell and is not consumed by the casting. Every hobgoblin within 25 feet of the banner will automatically receive a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. This spell will have no effect on hobgoblins from a different tribe or warband to that of the banner's.

*Material Component:* Tribal or warband banner.







Garak held up a hand to halt his men. He and his band were nearly finished with the second circuit of their patrol when his night-keen eyes had caught a glimpse of movement ahead. He moved forward slowly, thumb testing the edge of his blade out of long habit. He squatted down and watched as a small group of humans made their way toward the gates of the fortress. The hobgoblin sergeant chuckled silently to himself and motioned to his men to follow him. He would enjoy giving this band of bravos a little surprise. The hobgoblin gang moved in near silence to set an ambush in the path of the slowly advancing humans.

• • •

Kirin cut short a curse as her foot slipped on something in the darkness.

'Tell me again why we can't have a torch.'

Calil waved his hand in an impatient gesture to quiet the complaining thief. His whisper hissed from between clenched teeth.

'Keep quiet, woman, as you value your skin.' Angry nods from Barihl and Dugan as they clutched their weapons lent support to the priest's sentiment.

Kirin rolled her eyes and made a disgusted face as something squelched moistly beneath her sandaled foot. 'There's no one out here, I tell you,' she muttered. 'We might as well have some light so we don't break our necks afore we even reach the gate.'

Calil's retort became a startled squawk as a crossbow bolt seemed instantly to bloom from his shoulder. Kirin blinked and stared at the priest as he clutched his shoulder. Her peripheral vision registered eight sets of yellow eyes just a few paces away.

• • •

They had waited in front of the gate for a quarter turn of the glass as they watched the humans approaching. Garak marveled at the over-confidence of the humans. Did they really believe they could just walk straight up to the gates without challenge? The sergeant leveled his crossbow and loosed a shot that caught the robed human in the shoulder and sent him to the ground. Garak chuckled as the night-blind humans milled about like ants then ordered his unit to set for charge. One of the humans must have understood him for they stopped where they stood. Garak growled under his breath as one of the humans began to mumble and move his hands through ever more intricate patterns. He spat a curse as the night enclosing them burst into the light of day. The plan would have to change. He gave his next order, 'Advance on my mark.'

• • •

'What is it?' Dugan cried. 'What's happening?'

'Calil is hit,' Barihl spat before closing his eyes and muttering under his breath. His mumbled casting was over-powered by a guttural voice from one of the now visible hobgoblins. Dugan fumbled in his pouch for flint and steel as bright light flooded the scene. The warrior dropped the flint to the ground with a curse. 'What did it say?' Dugan gripped the hilt of his sword so tightly his knuckles creaked. It had been against his counsel, judgement forged from long experience, to attempt a raid on the hobgoblin fort.

'Something about advancing,' Barihl replied as he prepared to cast another spell. 'They're coming this way!' Kirin blanched and swallowed loudly.

Dugan nodded and begrudgingly gave the goblinoid leader due credit for having been so well organised. The front rank of spearmen with shields knelt as the second rank held their glaives high and over head, creating a glittering wall of steel ready for any foolhardy charge. Dugan allowed himself the small satisfaction of seeing himself proved right. Hobgoblins were not as stupid as their larger brethren and could operate just as easily with or without light.

• • •

Garak shouted orders and encouragement to his men as they met the humans. One of his men seemed to stop during the advance as if he had forgotten what he was doing. The sergeant had shaken him until his senses returned. Garak sent the young hobgoblin back for reinforcements. One so easily caught by harmless spells had better uses in any battle. Two of his other men had dropped back to defensive positions due to the wounds sustained from the gray-bearded human warrior. The sergeant allowed himself a toothy smile, however, as one after the other, the wounded humans fled until only the old warrior and the robed weakling Garak had taken with his first shot remained. The hobgoblin took a step back from the graying fighter when he heard the clatter of goblinoid reinforcements behind him. Garak's smile turned to a wolfish grin as the human threw his unconscious companion over his shoulder and retreated into the darkness. The humans might try an assault on the fort with a larger force. When they did, the Black Drakes would be more than ready.

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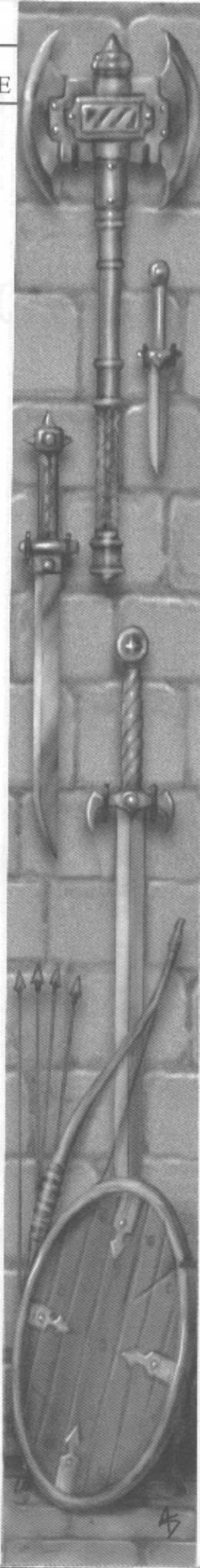
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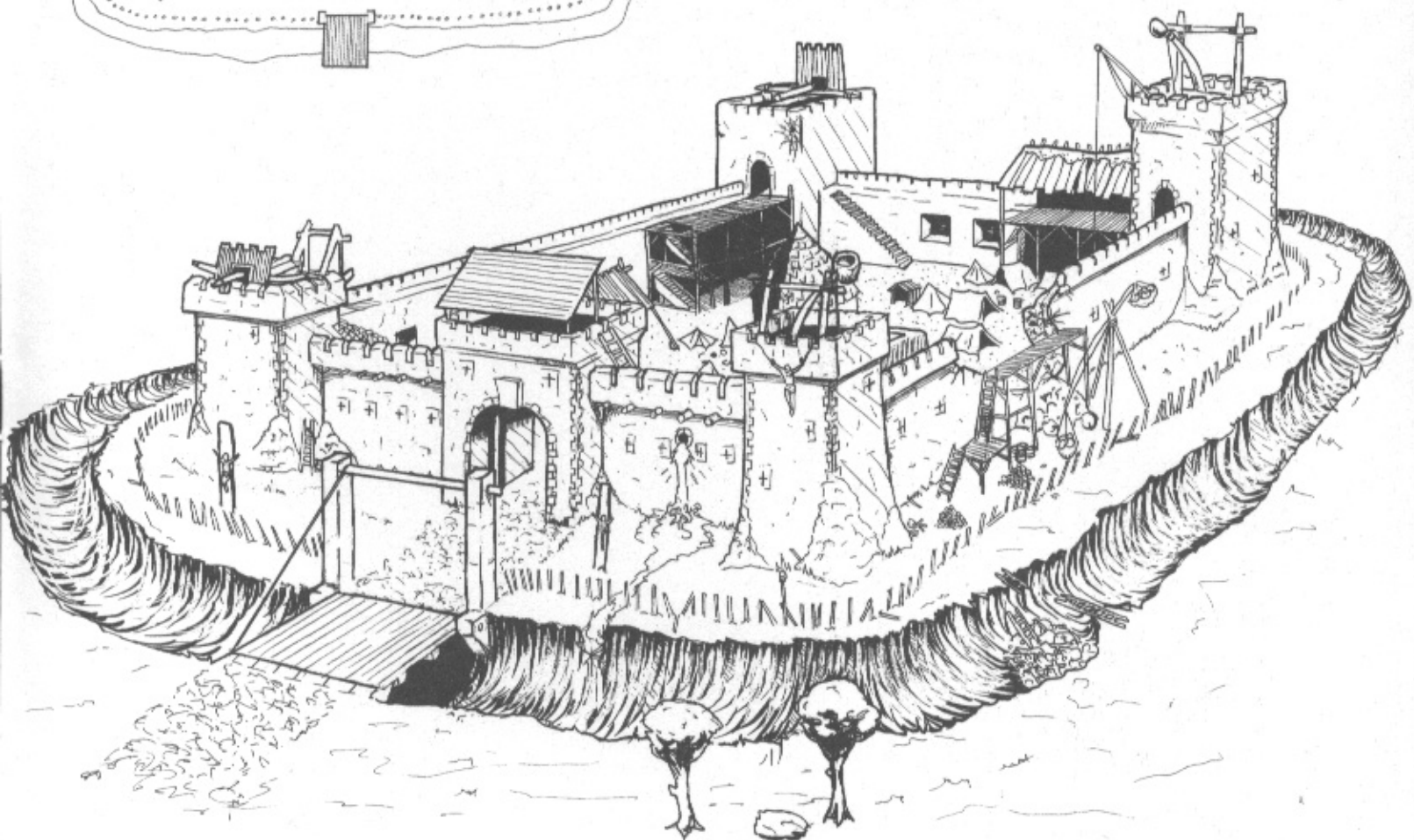
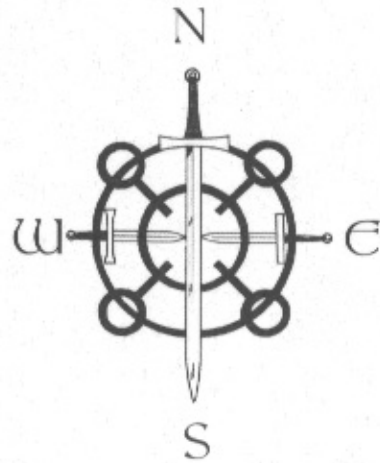
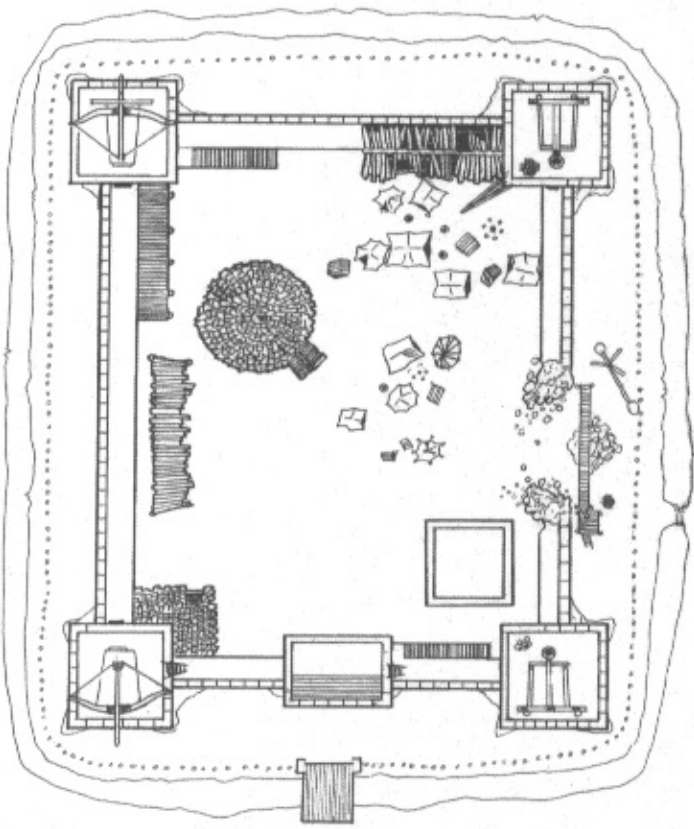
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# Graven Hill border fort





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