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THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

GNOLLS



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of the Dungeons and Dragons®
Player's Handbook, Third Edition,
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*Benela-Kor Surfette
Royal Scholar of the Tallud*

2001



The Slayer's Guide To Gnolls

Matthew Sprange

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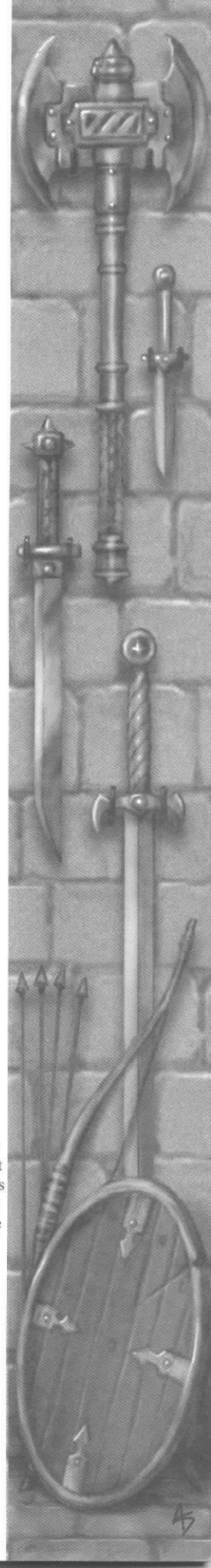
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INTRODUCTION

Gnolls are a vicious race of hyena-like humanoid, cruel in nature and hateful of all life but their own. They are typically used by Games Masters against players who have progressed beyond mere orcs and goblins as the 'standard' horde-type creature and now seek a slightly greater challenge. With their superior strength and combat abilities, gnolls have certainly been able to give players a good hammering in the past. With the coming of *The Slayer's Guide to Gnolls*, this race becomes just a little more dangerous.

Gnolls have their own customs, habits and tactics that make them a potentially lethal force when used against an unprepared party of adventurers. Whilst your average barbarian may have little appreciation for the more subtle nuances of gnoll culture, he will certainly feel the effects of it when a battleaxe gets embedded in his back after seriously underestimating this race. Many players and, indeed, Games Masters often assume gnolls are but few, scattered here and there across the campaign world to provide fodder for adventurers. This is far from the truth as you are about to discover. There are regions of the world infested with gnolls that nothing short of a full blown crusade will eradicate. More importantly, the gnolls have a reason for being there that has the potential to become an integral part of any campaign.

The knowledge within these pages has been collated by the scholars, loremasters and warriors of many worlds and represents the most detailed information resource on this evil race. Games Masters can delight in reintroducing an old monster in a new fashion within their campaigns, whilst players are urged to pay particular attention to the collected wisdom of this supplement – it may just save their lives.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based D20 games systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these will be the races all but

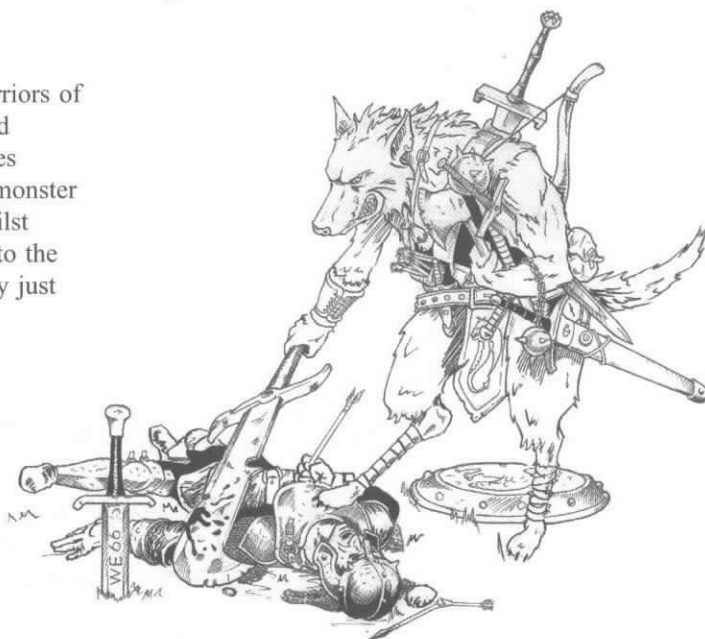
ignored by Games Masters and players alike who view them as little better than cannon fodder.

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?

GNOLLS – VICIOUS SCAVENGERS

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race, in this case the gnoll. You will find a colossal amount of information on gnoll physiology, habitat and society, giving you a fundamental level of understanding on how this race exists and interacts with the rest of the world. Players can learn the sort of combat tactics the gnolls are likely to employ against them and Games Masters are presented with guidelines on how to introduce this race into their existing campaigns. They will also benefit from material showing how to actually portray gnolls to the players who are in turn given the chance to try gnoll characters for themselves. Finally, a complete lair is featured to be used as either an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios or even just an example of what gnolls are capable of.

After reading *The Slayer's Guide to Gnolls*, you may never view this monster race in quite the same way again.



My name is Cephir Al-alladin ibn Kasham ibn Neylar and this is my story.

It was the first season of the year when Captain Kaishalla came to us with the contract. We had been engaged by the potentate of Sashmir to investigate raids on the northern villages. The Captain was confident that we, the Band of Iron, would have no difficulty finding and putting an end to those responsible.

After a journey of near a fortnight, we arrived at the first village. The infantry of the Band quartered the scorched ruins while the outriders, Fayam, Moresha and my humble self ringed the town on our swift horses looking for traces. Alas, The Divine was not kind for we found clear signs of the raiders retreating to the north. At the time we rejoiced.

The trail led north then east and Captain Kaishalla followed it eagerly. Those of us mounted ranged ahead as scouts and we followed the trail until it dipped into a deep chasm between the hills, edged in shattered stone and long dead acacias. Here we would have halted but the Captain drove us on, eager to have his pay and plunder.

The rift was less a valley and more nearly a cave, so closely were the walls overhead, and soon it was as dark as night. The Band of Iron moved slowly four wide, their heavy chain and great shields glinting in the deep shadows. Moresha and Fayam were on point whilst I brought up the rear on my stallion, Scirocco.

We had been moving for some hours when one of the men cried a warning. As if the cry were a signal a great beast - half man and half jackal - arose with the howl of a wolf and we were set upon!

From both sides of the chasm wall, from behind boulders and in the shadows of the crevasse the creatures rushed at us. They wore rotting armor of leather and steel and bore weapons covered in the stains of old blood. Each was more jackal than man but went on two legs and were taller than the greatest of us, coming near to my short ribs whilst I was mounted. A few arrows hummed through our ranks as some of the creatures fired small bows a single time - then dropped them to charge with the others.

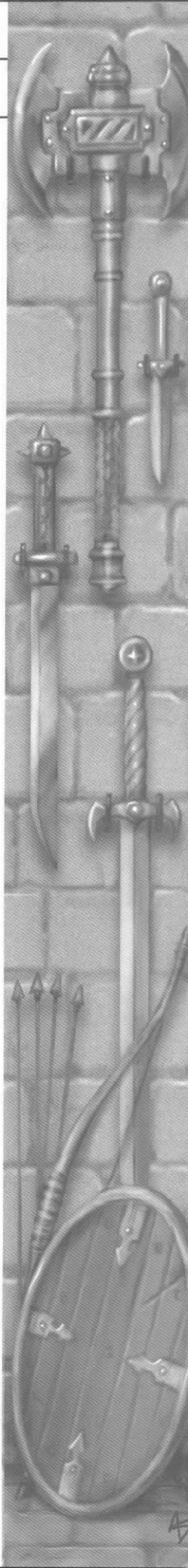
The men of the Band tried to form but the beasts were close and quick. Some of the men managed small squares while others were hacked down as they tried to react - their heavy armor availing them little against the fierce blows of the monsters.

Then I too was set upon and was forced to defend myself as two creatures attacked. I spurred Scirocco to rearing at the nearest as I struck at the other with my scimitar, destroying much of its foul head with the blade's razor edge. I saw Fayam swept from his mount and sent my stallion into a leap which bowled over his assailant with a sound of shattering bones. As I hacked left and right I called to him but could see the life go out of his eyes as he lay below, his torn throat leaking his life's blood.

The creatures closed in on me again and I lifted Scirocco into a capriole which dropped two and gave me the room to break free of the press. Back down the crevasse I turned, ready to attack again. An arrow struck my thigh, penetrating the mail there but I did not hesitate and drew my horn bow from its case at the side of my saddle.

The bulk of the creatures were now engaged and I watched as the Iron Band, outnumbered more than three to one, began to fall under the attack. I fired arrow after arrow into the great jackal things - slaying several more before the last infantryman fell and they turned to race up the chasm at me. With my knees I told Scirocco to flee and I fired at them until all my shafts were spent. I rode like the wind toward the open wood beyond the chasm's edge.

Out there, where my mount gave me the advantage and was not pinned in by walls and stone, they refused to pursue. Cowardly creatures, but smart. Smart enough to lay an ambush perfectly for the Captain of the Band of Iron - may The Divine welcome him into paradise.



GNOLL PHYSIOLOGY

When confronted by a gnoll for the very first time, an adventurer may experience no little trepidation. At seven-and-a-half feet tall, the gnoll is likely to stand at least a head higher than the largest of human warriors and its great strength will be immediately apparent from the consummate ease with which it swings its crude but heavy battleaxe.

Gnolls have heavy-set dog-like faces surrounded by a large mane running all the way down the back to their almost constantly active tails. Thick fur, which seems almost impervious to dust, covers the rest of their muscular bodies and is a usually dirty yellow in colour. Their manes have a great many dark red/grey spots, which slowly fade as the gnoll matures. The oldest of gnolls will either have very faint spots, or they may disappear altogether. This thick fur, as well as keeping a gnoll's skin free of dirt and infection, also provides some small measure of protection against weaker blows but any gnoll engaging in serious combat will always augment this natural defence with layers of metal and leather. A very small proportion of gnoll family groups feature stripes instead of spots and dark brown fur instead of the more usual yellow. This sort of variation, rather than marking such gnolls out as being different and therefore subject to prejudice from others of their race, is all but ignored. No special attachment, for good or ill, is given to such differences in hide markings.

Amongst the civilised races, gnolls have a reputation for being very strong and for having a markedly low intelligence. Despite a strong element of truth, gnolls are very instinctive creatures, able to apply their considerable natural talents to the best effect in most situations. They are also often regarded as being a cowardly race but, as the *Slayer's Guide to Gnolls* will demonstrate, this is simply not the case. Any adventurer relying on a gnoll turning tail and fleeing after a display of strength is likely to end his career prematurely.

SHARPENED SENSES

Gnolls are primarily nocturnal creatures but whilst they dislike any bright light and will, under normal

circumstances, seek to avoid the source, it does them no actual harm. They can certainly tolerate such interference during combat. Their senses, in general, are very highly developed and they use a combination of sight, sound and smell to track down their prey. A gnoll's eyesight, in particular, is very sharp and their darkvision capabilities easily match those of a dwarf. On the rare occasions they deign to post alert sentries around their lairs, it can be incredibly difficult to approach them unawares.

The gnoll senses of sound and smell are similarly well developed, with their nasal passages having a much sharper definition than those of the civilised races. A gnoll's hearing is capable of extending much further down the scale of sound than most other creatures can sense. There are documented cases of particularly sensitive elves detecting a series of very low sounds from groups of gnolls. Whilst this may be an irrelevant trait as far as most adventurers are concerned, if it were possible to create a deep bass sound far below the range of human hearing, it may just cause a degree of confusion or even distress amongst an attacking group of gnolls. On the other hand, it may simply summon every gnoll within a range of four or five miles, all intent on destroying the source of the sound. It still remains for a brave party of adventurers to actually test this supposition.

Notice to Games Masters

So, if your players manage to create a deep, continual bass sound, how will gnolls react? Well, we are going to leave this little detail up to you. Perhaps gnolls will shy away from such an irritating source or maybe they will arrive in droves from the surrounding areas, angered and determined to silence the source. We suggest you pick one reaction and then stick to it for the duration of your campaign. If nothing else, this will keep your players guessing whilst at the same time giving them another possible weapon to use against any gnoll packs they encounter.

It has been demonstrated that gnolls use all their senses when tracking and hunting prey and they seem capable of picking up the merest of scents upon a breeze. A far more fascinating conjecture is that gnolls are able to determine far more about creatures by their scent other than mere position and species. Just as canines and many other carnivores can 'smell' the fear of an enemy, it is possible that gnolls can too. There have been oft told tales of gnolls launching an ambush, then attacking with redoubled

fury when they discover non-combatants present with the warriors. Some point out, however, that this may just be another indication of gnoll cruelty and that they are simply eager to attack intelligent beings who are unable to fight back. If this hypothesis proves correct though, gnolls may well be able to sense a whole range of emotions through smell and, further, if they can generate various scents themselves at will, this could pervade their whole society. It would effectively reveal a whole new facet of gnoll life that has remained unseen for centuries. It would point to gnolls using scent as a form of communication, passing air-borne silent messages on the wind, though they would no doubt be very basic in nature. This is likely to remain a theory, however, as other races seem unable to detect any such scents emanating from the gnolls, with adventurers merely remarking that they smell 'very bad.'

'I just hacked that gnoll's nose off!'

'How will he smell?'

'Terrible!'

Popular, if rather old, dwarven joke

Regardless, more credence is given to the idea that as well as a spoken tongue, gnolls have an unwritten language that takes the form of signalling with their tails, ears and manes, the latter of which can be made to stand erect from their skin. Whilst much of this is clearly an involuntary response to whatever emotions hold them at any one time, it is apparent gnolls are able to combine such signals with sub-vocal grunts and whines to give virtually inaudible commands to one another. This racial trait alone gives their prepared ambushes a lethal advantage.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Gnolls are primarily carnivores, preferring live or just killed creatures above all else. It is a common view that gnolls have an additional preference for intelligent creatures if only because they scream more whilst being consumed. Whilst it is true that gnolls often begin eating the limbs of any prey before anything else, learned scholars tend to believe instead that any preference for intelligent races is one born of simple taste rather than an impractical and cruel desire to cause pain. This is often likened to some wild animals that, once having tasted human flesh, strive to seek it out above all else.

During night hours, those searching for gnolls are far more likely to locate them in their hunting areas than in the pack lair. Any temperate or warm wilderness area that has a great proportion of feral herd animals is a good place to start, as are lonely farmsteads and villages. Well-travelled trade routes are popular sites of ambush for any gnoll pack, provided they are a good distance from civilisation and not heavily traversed by armed soldiers.

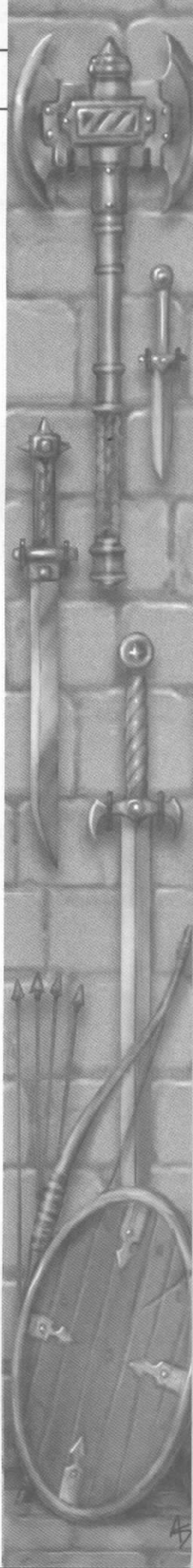
When consumed with hunger, gnolls are willing to eat just about every part of their prey, to the extent they can often be seen gnawing on the bones of victims to obtain the marrow therein. Their highly developed jaws are incredibly strong, easily capable of breaking through the thickest leg bones of most creatures.

From time to time, hunts will fail and provide no prey for the gnolls and in these circumstances they will eat practically anything. A diet of roots, fruits and eggs may give them cause for complaint, but it will keep a gnoll alive and in fighting strength for months. Hungry adult males will commonly consume any live young present in the lair, if they can make their way past the females. The gnolls' young are always the first victims of the males' appetites when food becomes scarce. There is no stigma attached to this cannibalism and gnolls regard it as an accepted practice in lean times.

THE GNOLL'S LIFECYCLE

Female gnolls gestate for a period of four months and tend to be prolific breeders. However, they generally only produce one or two young in each litter, who have an extremely high mortality rate. Ostensibly, the young will remain with their mothers for anything up to eighteen months before taking their place within the rest of the pack but disease, starvation and the predations of both invaders of the lair and adult male gnolls can drastically cut short their average life expectancy. The thick fur characteristic of adult gnolls does not fully grow on the young until around the ages of five or six, making them much more vulnerable to outside infections. Instead, they are covered with a soft down, though the spots of their final coat will be present even then.

During this period, the young will never leave the safer parts of the lair and often create their own smaller burrows in which to hide if harm comes their way. They will show signs of rapidly approaching maturity at three years of age but even taking into

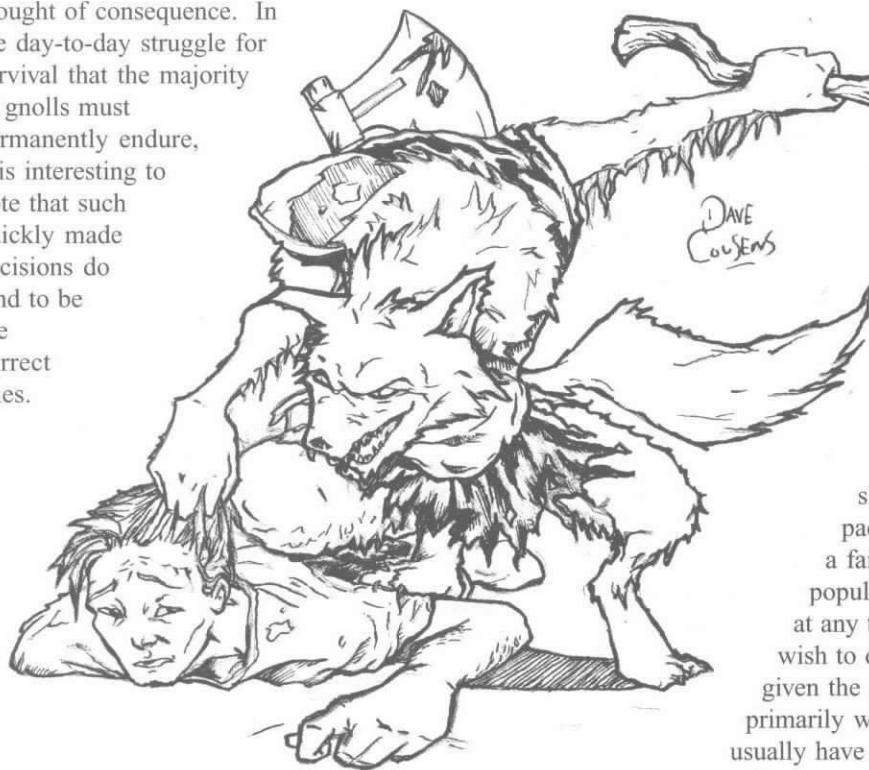


account their incredible growth rate, the young will not achieve full adult size until around nine years of age. At this point, they are more than capable of looking after themselves.

The natural lifespan of a gnoll is around thirty years, but the brutal nature of their lives results in very few ever achieving anything near such an age.

THE GNOLL MINDSET

Individual gnolls tend to be very instinctive creatures with a great degree of low cunning, something that spreads through their entire society. Whereas a human may pause to consider any potential problem, weighing up the benefits and disadvantages of his choices, a gnoll will simply act, immediately and without thought of consequence. In the day-to-day struggle for survival that the majority of gnolls must permanently endure, it is interesting to note that such quickly made decisions do tend to be the correct ones.



By human standards, gnolls are utterly selfish, interested only in their own survival, above and beyond even that of the members of their own family group. Again, this is indicative of their harsh lifestyle but the majority will carry this much further, delighting in the cruellest acts imaginable upon other races. This is, perhaps, the result of some degree of intelligence combined with pure animalistic tendencies. However, it is not just other races a gnoll will be willing to torment and destroy. Gnolls are

more than capable of turning upon one another if they believe they may overcome their enemy and gain something from the struggle.

Despite all of this, they are at least capable of forming alliances with other races, usually humanoids such as ogres, orcs and hobgoblins. Any agreement though, tends to be short-lived as the mere presence of gnolls often guarantees conflict with others and matters only become worse when food becomes scarce, given the gnolls' dietary tastes.

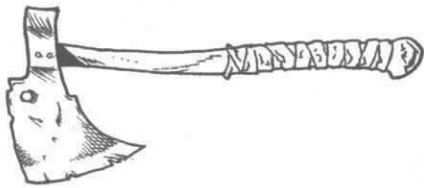
Gnolls absolutely detest any sort of manual labour not related to hunting or battle and have no clear concept of group organisation in any shape or form.

This results in the common practice of capturing slaves whenever possible. A pack of any great size may have a fairly large attendant slave population who will toil and labour at any task the gnolls simply do not wish to do for themselves. However, given the gnoll tendency to think primarily with their stomachs, such slaves usually have a shorter life expectancy than gnoll young, even whilst other food sources remain plentiful.

HABITAT

Adventurers actively seeking gnolls in the wilderness will immediately note that, as a race, they are far less prolific than orcs or any of the goblinoid races. Whilst physically more powerful and dominating, the relatively primitive society of the gnolls has a heavy impact upon their numbers. However, those who purpose to search for gnolls packs may happen across them sooner or later, providing it is known where to look.

In general, gnolls prefer warm or temperate areas and will readily relocate if environmental conditions change. Their keen senses and natural instincts often allow them to predict any such variations as storms, floods or droughts and packs may be found moving out of troubled areas before disaster strikes. They have even been known to sense impending earthquakes of a natural origin, but their intuition does not stretch to magical causes. Deserts and mountains are openly avoided, though gnolls are willing to take over subterranean living spaces, so long as they are far enough beneath the surface to isolate the pack from any harsh conditions. Ready food sources are also a concern for gnolls but given their ability to subsist on almost any material, this tends to only be a factor in the most sterile of locales.



There exist in the world wild areas that have plentiful food sources. In such places, many packs can gather. Though these packs are just as likely to fight each other as any other sentient being, a region filled with gnoll hunting parties is a lethal place for all intelligent life. So long as food is present and easily available to every pack, gnoll numbers will grow to dangerously large proportions. In the past, crusades have been launched against such gatherings of packs with the determination to wipe out all gnoll life, but these military actions are always costly, given the basic fighting capabilities of even the weakest adult.

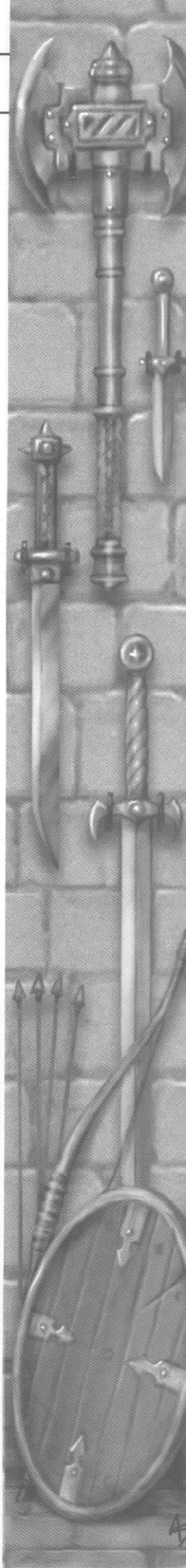
Others may decide to simply let the gnolls continue to exist and grow for, sooner or later, the food sources will be insufficient to support such burgeoning numbers. It is an inevitable consequence that the gnolls will begin to turn upon themselves, tearing the heart out of their packs as they prey upon one another.

LAIRS

Gnoll lairs are almost always burrows or tunnel complexes created by other creatures such as ankhegs, dire badgers or even intelligent races such as kobolds. It is only under the most extraordinary of circumstances that gnolls will voluntarily build or dig their own lairs. When a gnoll pack relocates, for whatever reason, it will search for a likely burrow or something similar and will usually make claim to the first that presents itself, regardless of whether the original inhabitants are still in residence or not. Unwilling to travel further once a new home has been found, only the stiffest resistance or an especially powerful monster living in the burrow will force them to reconsider.

Once installed within the new lair, the gnoll pack will set about its normal day to day tasks of hunting, feeding and breeding, and nothing else will be done to expand the lair in any way until slaves begin to be captured. These slaves, enduring miserably short lives, will usually be forced to extend the burrow system to make way for expanding or newly arrived family groups. They are also often utilised in the construction of surface emplacements around the lair's entrances, improving the defensibility of the gnoll pack. These constructions, however, are rarely sophisticated by any measure and may be easily overcome by dedicated military or magical force.

On failing to locate a suitable burrow, gnolls are willing enough to accept other living areas, once again providing local sources of food are plentiful. Underground caverns are popular secondary choices, so long as they are warm, as are substantial ruins. More primitive cultures have in the past, much to their distress and consternation, found their burial mounds inhabited by gnoll invaders, who are often keen to gnaw on the bones of the recently deceased.



GNOLL SOCIETY

The society of gnolls is structured around two basic units; the family group (*Teenogur*, in gnollish) and the pack (*Kuunalla*). Family groups number anything between fifteen and thirty gnolls of varying ages, though around half will be combat-capable adults. These gnolls will all be related in some way, with the young descending from the dominant males. Packs, often incorrectly called tribes, are simply collections of family groups living in the same lair for more or less mutual benefit. Whilst many lone family groups do exist in the world, the vast majority of gnolls are to be found within packs, which may number anything up to perhaps fifteen separate family groups.

The structure of packs and, indeed, individual family groups, is disorganised to say the least, with only the strongest and fittest of gnolls achieving any sort of maturity. It has been said the collective purpose of any gnoll pack is simply to feed.

TEENOGUR — FAMILY GROUPS

Within family groups, there is a sharply defined pecking order amongst the adults, with one dominant male ruling over all. The gnolls beneath him are all ranked according to their strength and skill in battle, with brawls and full-blown fights between them being the most common deciding factor to establish this. A family group has no sense of overall law or order other than that which the dominant male may arbitrarily decide as mood and whim takes him. Any gnoll may fight another to resolve any dispute or gain any advantage as a matter of course. This is not considered as a 'right' amongst gnolls, it is simply a part of their everyday struggle for

survival. Females, for instance, breed to any male capable of overwhelming them, whilst the males themselves will regularly fight over which females they will lay claim to. After a successful attack against, perhaps, a human soldier patrol, each gnoll will claim a varying amount of booty. However, when it is taken back to their lair, one gnoll may freely take any number of items from another. If the original owner wishes to retain possession of his prize, he must be prepared to fight for it. Such fights are rarely fatal, though there will be no remorse if death does occur. A gnoll that is plainly beaten will usually turn tail and run if he is able to, avoiding the victor as much as possible in subsequent days. Presiding over this chaotic way of life is the dominant male who will take anything from the other members of the family group he desires. Fights to defy him are uncommon, as there will be a multitude of scars, gouged eyes and even corpses to constantly remind the other gnolls of his sheer strength.

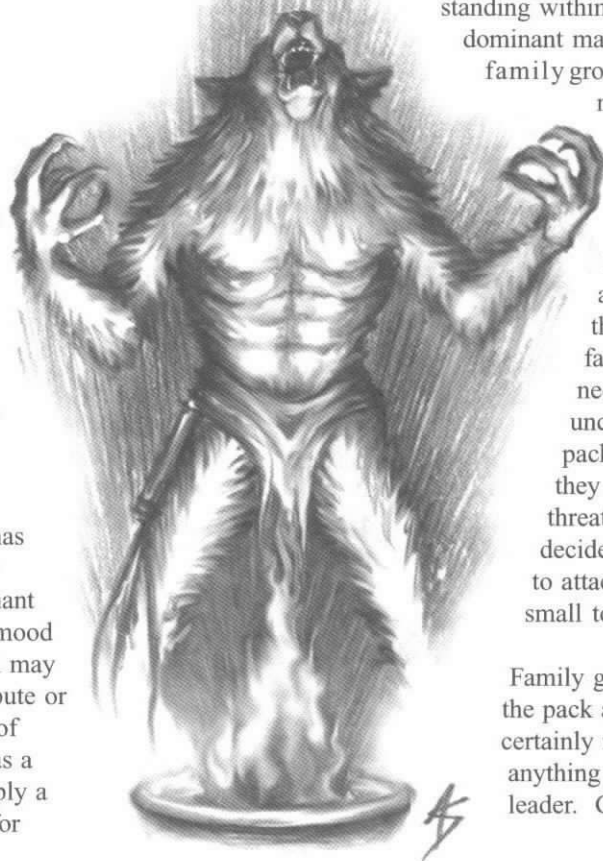
KUUNALLA - PACKS

The relationships of different family groups within a pack is much the same as between individual gnolls.

Each family group will have a defined standing within the pack with the dominant male of the dominant family group considered to be the nominal leader of all.

However, family groups tend to be fairly independent, conducting their own hunting and foraging alone, only combining their strength with other family groups when necessary. Thus, it is uncommon for an entire pack to act together unless they are all directly threatened or the pack leader decides they are strong enough to attack larger targets, such as small towns.

Family groups come and go from the pack at will as there is certainly no oath of fealty or anything similar towards the pack leader. Groups may disperse as



food becomes rare, particularly if they have a low standing overall as it may become increasingly likely that they themselves will provide the next meal for the pack. Wandering family groups may join a pack at any time and when this occurs, a great deal of fighting will commence. This is not out of any ill-feeling towards the newcomers, but simply a mechanism to decide their standing within the pack as a whole. It normally takes a couple of days for a family group to 'settle in' to the structure of the pack and after this, their overall standing will be known to every gnoll. Packs have also been known to amalgamate upon crossing paths, greatly increasing their strengths but this will only happen where food sources can support both simultaneously. It takes far longer for two packs to mesh together than it does for a single family group as the two pecking orders of the original packs must be resolved into one, a process only completed through a great deal of bloodshed. In rare cases, the hierarchical order may prove to be unresolvable by this simple method. When this occurs, packs can break down completely, with family groups dissipating from the main body either alone or in some numbers, forming several different packs each going their own way.

Gnolls are survivalist by nature and it is certainly possible for weaker adults to survive and prosper, despite the strength of others in their family group and pack. Such gnolls may become adept at avoiding direct confrontation and instead gain that which they desire through theft or straight-forward assassination. Such activities are not frowned upon within the pack and it is commonly held that any warrior foolish enough to succumb to a stab in the back was not much of a warrior to begin with. At its heart, gnoll society is based around strength and possession – any gnoll that lacks the strength to hold on to his possessions will also lose his standing within the pack and his family group, if not his life.

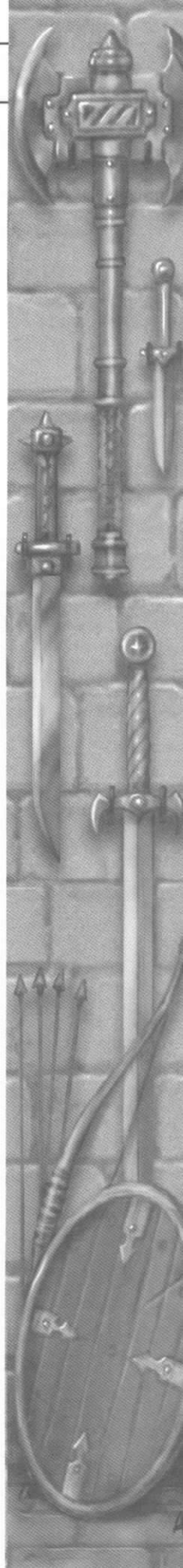
THE SLAVE ECONOMY

A pack has little to no sense of monetary values and treats such things as coin and gem as mere trinkets, however attractive they may be. After all, a strong gnoll may claim anything he desires, so what would he buy? Aside from such plundered items that have little real practical value, almost every gnoll will own weapons, armour and other tools but unless they have been recently taken from another race, they will always be in very poor condition.

Gnolls favour heavy weapons that have the ability to crush or cleave their enemies, with axes being a common choice. Armour tends to be leather-based, usually with attached metal plates of varying sizes, giving a crude appearance of scalemail which it also tends to match in effectiveness. Shields are often little more than hammered pieces of metal held on to a gnoll's arm by leather straps. Left to its own devices, a gnoll will quite happily let its armour rust and its axe blade dull until both can be replaced from the spoils of a raid against another race. This does not diminish a pack's combat capability to any great degree, as a gnoll's natural strength and toughness more than overcome any shortfall in their equipment, to the point where a blunt axe will be wielded in a manner more consistent with a hammer. Given the power a gnoll can put into each swing, such a weapon will still be more than capable of battering an enemy to death.

This state of affairs tends to reverse quite rapidly once a pack starts to gain a slave population. As well as food and weapons, gnolls will always seek to capture slaves of practically any race, though humans and orcs are the most common, during their constant raids and attacks. Gnolls simply detest physical labour of any sort if it is not related to hunting or killing. When they are not engaged in these activities, gnolls are typically found exploring their surroundings, fighting mock combats (where limb loss and even death is not unusual) or even just sunning themselves, a worthwhile pursuit for any gnoll during daylight hours. Even dominant males and pack leaders will find they cannot force another gnoll to sweat and toil for more than a few hours. Thus for a pack to get anything done beyond simple survival, slaves are a necessity.

The largest packs may have up to thirty or forty slaves at any one time, but require constant replacement. Life inside a gnoll lair is harsh, brutal and short. Slaves are not considered the property of any one gnoll and may be commanded to perform any task by any adult. More worrying for the unfortunate slaves, they are free to be eaten by any gnoll that lays a claim to them and this is something that happens with alarming regularity. Few slaves survive for more than a month after they have been brought into the lair, where they will be constantly underfed and overworked. Some gnoll packs will expect their slaves to literally feed off one another. When a slave dies it is often a mercy, be it from a gnoll beating him to death, through starvation and lack of water or, worst of all, becoming a gnoll's next



'We were given nothing. Whatever clothes were on your back when you were captured were what you wore until you died. . . Or until someone else did and you took theirs. Sometimes we wouldn't eat or drink for days, maybe longer. We only ate what we could sneak away from them when we prepared or served their meals. Some of us were better at stealing food than others, so we would share. We tried to help each other survive. I remember thinking the world had gone mad, that somehow everything had just gone crazy and no one had thought to stop it. After the first few days I began to think perhaps I was the one who was insane, maybe I was asleep and this was just a depraved nightmare. There's an old wives' tale that says if you think you are dreaming, you should pinch yourself to see if you wake up. I pinched myself so hard I bled, but I never woke up. It was real. Not that sleep was ever really a possibility whilst I was their slave. It was too dangerous to sleep.

'If we weren't awake before them, They would kick us across the room to rouse us. Those slaves too sick to get up and work, and there were many, were beaten with the flat of an axe blade until they were unconscious. Over half of those awoke to find themselves being gnawed upon or bound and being carved like a haunch of meat by one of the other slaves. The lucky ones never woke up. Imagine wielding the knife as the main course pleads with you for mercy. I saw more than one slave who had been ordered to 'prepare' the meal meet the same terrifying end after refusing to go on or even trying to help the poor soul already on the menu. Those of us who had been there a while just went numb from pain or hunger or the things we had seen or sickness or any number of other things. Once you get to that point, survival is the only thing that seems important or real. At that point, the will to survive is the only thing in the world.

'Sometimes, you wouldn't do anything wrong but you would find yourself being beaten or being made to stand in the coals of the fire or beat one of the other slaves just because the Leader was bored or hungry or angry, or anything. Fiends in the darkest hells would shudder at what we had to do to ourselves and to each other. But we did it. I did it because I knew that if my survival was to continue, I *had* to. Remaining alive for one more turn of the glass, or even a fraction of that amount of time, was worth enduring the blackest torture of mind, body or soul. I knew that if I could just string enough moments of living together, I would see my wife again. People ask me what happened to my legs. Usually I lie and tell them some story about a glorious battle because the truth would be too much for civilised folk to bear. Those sharp-eared, gods-forsaken animals heard one of the other men and I trying to organise an escape. They broke me when they decided I didn't need legs to make armour and that I was just food from the knees down. The other man ended up as a full meal, at least most of him. They put his head on a spike in our tiny little chamber as a reminder. His face was the one I saw when I looked at my wife - before she left. At least I lived to see her. . .

'You can't change what happened, nor can I. I watched two score men and women go down the gullets of those beasts in just under two months. Part of those forty formed my meals too when I couldn't steal anything else or there was no other food to be had. Now I hoard bread under my cot, because in the shadows of my dreams those creatures are hiding, waiting to take me back. This time, I'll be prepared.'

meal. All too often a slave's last moments consist of watching two gnolls fight for the right to eat him, then being slowly consumed, feet first, by the victor.

The slaves of a lair will work and toil constantly for the gnolls, extending the burrow complex, repairing or making armour and weapons, or constructing surface emplacements around a lair. The labour is back-breaking and soul-destroying but by no means

sophisticated in nature. Gnoll lairs will rarely have more in the way of defences than a wooden stockade wall, with any sort of trap or engine of war being virtually unheard of.

OTHER RACES

The society of gnolls is generally considered to be driven by one thing alone - food. The gnolls' perceptions of other races are somewhat coloured, as they are perfectly willing to consider any member of any intelligent race as a potential meal. They are not



necessarily hateful of other races or even of each other. Gnolls merely consider it part of their very existence to be at odds with literally everything in the world.

That said, gnolls do sometimes form alliances, usually with the likes of ogres and hobgoblins where they consider the other races as being an extended part of the pack. However, such alliances tend to be precarious in the extreme. Gnolls will only join with another race in this way if they, naturally, have something to gain in the way of food, equipment or protection from a greater threat. If long term goals are planned by the gathering, gnolls tend to lose focus of any objectives, being more concerned with immediate hunting and feeding. The greatest cause of any break in such alliances is one of food or rather, a lack of it. Once gnolls begin to get hungry, they will quickly start to prey upon any supposed ally, tearing apart the whole alliance from the inside. It also has to be noted here that alliances where gnolls are in the majority simply do not work. It is inevitable that, sooner or later, the minority will end up in the stomachs' of the packs.

For similar reasons, gnolls tend to make very poor mercenaries, despite their incredible fighting strength. It is a common misconception amongst those prepared to hire such units of humanoids that one merely needs to keep gnolls well fed to maintain order. The fault in this thinking lies in the fact that any group of gnolls, large or small, will never be completely satisfied with their lot, however good the circumstances. Even when supplied with a constant source of food and new weaponry, there will always be something to tempt a gnoll warrior. It may be a desire to own an axe belonging to another mercenary or something as base as the instinct to hunt and kill. Gnolls, by their very nature, are disruptive and breed friction amongst any they are forced to mix with. Failing that, and given complete segregation, they are likely to turn upon themselves as the instinct to breed becomes increasingly paramount, or as adult males decide to readjust their position within the family group or pack.

It is easy to understand why many in the past have attempted to bring gnolls into their fighting forces. The brute strength of gnolls is legendary amongst such races as goblins and orcs, surpassed only by the likes of ogres and trolls. On the face of it, they are also cheap, requiring only armour, weapons and a

great deal of raw meat as payment. Most mercenary leaders, however, come to regret such a choice of soldier and rapidly come to think that gnolls are just not worth the effort or trouble.

It must be noted that gnolls never seem to ally with giants and are openly hostile to the smaller species, actively seeking to drive them away from shared territory. For the larger races of giants, packs will do all they can to avoid any sort of contact, to the point where they will actually evacuate lairs if any great numbers of giantkind enter the region.

The reasons for this animosity, it has to be said, are not fully understood, but proponents of gnoll cowardice are quick to suggest that the giant races represent some of the few intelligent beings that they are unable to dominate either through strength or numbers. There may, however, be more practical reasons, such as the fact that any sizeable group of giants will have a severe impact on food resources in any area they inhabit and thus the gnolls are forced to either leave or drive them off. There may even be some deep-rooted religious edict or long-borne racial memory that brings intolerance to the fore. Whatever the specific reasoning, it is abundantly clear that gnolls and giants simply do not mix.

ON RELIGION

Primarily, gnolls revere force, power and little else. As such, they are not noted for being a particularly religious race and dedicated clerics are rare in the extreme, with adventurers being lucky (or unfortunate, depending on your point of view) to find one within a hundred packs.

However, virtually all gatherings of gnolls, from the largest amalgamated packs to the smallest family groups, demonstrate a reverence for the cycles of the moon. Whilst it is fairly common knowledge that the patron deity of all gnolls is a Demon Lord, it is less well known that gnoll culture (such as it is) depicts the moon as this being's prime creation, having fashioned it millennia ago. Such thinking may prove laughable to any from the civilised races, but it must be remembered that gnolls are, essentially, pagan in their beliefs. Even with this in mind though, the fanatical devotion all gnolls exhibit in their moon worship is puzzling, given the general lack of religious conviction throughout the rest of their lives. It has been postulated that gnolls, despite their beliefs of the moon's creation, are naturally drawn to the shining disc at night, much in the same way as

wolves are said to howl at the moon. On the other hand, it must be warned that too great a parallel can be drawn between ordinary canines and gnolls, who resemble dogs and related animals in appearance only.

There are two main celebrations in the gnolls' calendar, taking place at every full and new moon. On both occasions the entire pack, bar the young, will leave the burrows of their lair and gather together under the night sky. It is important to note they will continue to assemble if the moon is obscured by cloud and even when such overcast conditions last for days or weeks, their timing of the phases is faultless. The worship normally takes the form of feasting, hunting and fighting, all taken to far greater excesses than in the gnolls' everyday life. No one gnoll leads these celebrations or commands their start. The collective actions of all present are completely spontaneous.

It is not uncommon for any slaves to suffer dreadfully in either celebration, but it is during the night of the full moon that the gnolls become absolutely wild, losing any last semblance of self-control. Starting as soon as night falls, gnolls will arise from their lair and begin quickly building themselves into an utter frenzy of wanton destruction. Fights break out between adult males with frightening regularity as a blood-lust permeates every member of the pack and they soon turn upon their slaves, literally tearing them apart in an orgy of slaughter. With no other prey in easy reach, the gnolls disperse in large groups, intent on sweeping through the surrounding area in a brutal series of barbaric attacks. These reigns of terror, perfectly timed with every full moon, can be the bane of any life, intelligent or otherwise, in regions where packs become dominant. This can often lead to organised militia being raised to destroy the threat the pack represents, whereas simple gnoll ambushes may be tolerated, looked upon as just another danger in a wilderness full of enemies.

When pictorially represented, the Demon Lord is depicted as a tall, thin and very gaunt gnoll, though he rarely appears in any design a gnoll may have created. Far more common on shields and the walls of stockades is his symbol, a three-headed flail that the demon is said to carry into battle, with each head reputed to have its own devastating effect upon his enemies. The first is capable of taking the head of even an ogre off with one swing, whilst the second is laced with a potent poison that can paralyse any living creature. The last is said to be magically

charged and will bewilder any creature it brushes against, leaving them almost defenceless for the Demon Lord's next set of blows. Beyond the worship of the cycle of the moon, gnolls do not appear to venerate the Demon Lord at all and there have never been any recorded instances of adepts within family groups and packs.

GNOLL CLERICS

Rare as they are, gnoll clerics have been found in the past, but it is interesting to note that they do not advocate the following of the Demon Lord at all. Instead, the majority are worshippers of Deities of Slaughter. The presumption to be made here is that the Demon Lord simply does not have the power to grant any supernatural abilities to his followers and thus Deities of Slaughter become far more suitable patrons to any gnoll with a spiritual bent.

A weak cleric may suffer very badly within the hierarchical order of the pack, as they are likely to demonstrate little interest in the traditional moon worship and will therefore be marked as different by the other gnolls. As intolerant as gnolls tend to be of major differences amongst themselves, weak clerics rarely survive long. However, a strong cleric, confident of his powers, can easily cow other gnolls into submission, with physical displays of his deity's spells being enough to dominate even the strongest of males. The cleric will use such manifestations of supernatural energies to compel his pack into the active worship of his Deity of Slaughter, promising the god's anger and divine retribution if they do not follow his lead. In general though, there is unlikely to be much friction between that which the cleric believes and what the rest of the gnolls want. After all, a typical gnoll's lifestyle tends to match the creed of Deities of Slaughter very well. The cleric is even unlikely to interfere with the regular veneration of the moon, as such events always end in copious bloodshed, yet furthering the ends of his god.

Once a cleric manages to attain any measure of standing amongst other gnolls, it is almost inevitable that, sooner or later, he will become the pack leader, displacing all dominant males. A gnoll cleric will be no weaker than any of his kindred and his god-given powers can grant him an edge in combat that few other gnolls are able to match.

GNOLL DRUIDS

As uncommon as gnoll clerics are known to be, rarer still are the feared gnoll druids. Solitary by choice, these malignant practitioners eschew contact with any others of their kind and are said to be the most evil and twisted of those who follow the druidic path. Bearing no love even for their wild surroundings, these rapacious druids pervert and control the forces of nature to their own selfish ends. They tend to be utterly despised by many other druids who often seek them out to destroy the harmful effect they have upon the world. Even other druids of a diabolical bent treat them with extreme suspicion and distrust, all too aware of how capricious gnolls can be, especially if they discover any weakness within another.



METHODS OF WARFARE

There are no well-defined troop types within a gnoll force and diversity is the norm. In open warfare, many consider them to be unsophisticated shock troops, but this belies other capabilities that can make any number a powerful force.

Gnolls from the same family group will demonstrate a great deal of variation in weapons, armour and preferred tactics, and an attack from a whole pack can seem chaotic in the extreme. Adult gnolls of all sizes will be seen fighting, from the largest and strongest of males to barely matured females. Equipment tends to rise in quality with the size of the gnoll, as the more powerful simply take whatever they desire from those who are weaker. Family groups and packs who have existed in a region for a long period of time will also be significantly better equipped, as they will likely have a large number of slaves imprisoned within their lair, working to fashion weapons and armour.

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

The preferred weapon of any gnoll is one that is heavy, can be wielded in a single hand (not a problem for the largest males) and will be capable of utilising their great strength to best effect, crushing or cleaving any enemy. Axes, combining all these qualities and being relatively simple to construct are thus very common, with large warhammers being a popular second choice. Packs with a diminished access to metal equipment will be perfectly happy using great spiked clubs, but gnolls seem universally wary of wielding swords of any nature. It has been supposed there is something within the gnoll psyche that the intricacy of swordplay simply eludes, though it is perhaps more likely that the satisfying swing a gnoll gets from an axe or hammer completely overrides any desire to learn to use more complicated weaponry.

When hunting or setting ambushes, many gnolls will also carry a shortbow to battle and for a race that tends to rely on brute strength and maddened rushes to win combat, they are often quite accurate shots. Whilst a gnoll's size and massive strength would lead

many to believe they would be far more suited to longbows, it must be remembered that gnolls consider archery to be secondary to close combat. They never deploy dedicated units of archers to bombard an enemy with arrow fire but instead use them as a prelude to ambush and in the bringing down of elusive prey during a hunt. Even when fully equipped for battle, no gnoll will be encumbered by the addition of a shortbow and so the weapon fulfils their requirements perfectly.

Like their weapons, gnolls' armour is usually in an advanced state of disrepair even if they have a great many slaves within their lair. Whilst this manpower may be freely available, gnolls are rarely interested in quality of workmanship and slaves quickly learn any extra effort on their part will never be appreciated by their cruel masters and will not lessen their torment by the slightest degree. Most young adult gnolls will start out with hardened leather armour that covers little more than their torsos but as time goes on, they will have slaves begin to attach metal plates to every available surface, forming a crude type of scalemail. Combined with their dense fur, this is usually all the protection a gnoll requires in combat for they have the ability to ignore a great



deal of non life-threatening pain. However, larger males will often take suits of chainmail, helmets and breastplates they have won in battle and force their slaves to attempt to fit them on to the gnolls' out-sized frames. The result can look faintly comical, but the added protection these layers of metal grant a gnoll warrior is rarely found amusing by those who have to fight them.

The last addition almost every gnoll can be seen with in combat is an oversized shield. Some gnolls will use the larger shields of other races, wrested from enemies during raids and ambushes, but these rarely last long in the harsh gnoll lifestyle. Shields of wood will not survive more than a few days and even the finest metal ones will quickly be bent and twisted out of shape to the point where they become useless. It has to be kept in mind that the majority of fights gnolls engage in will be against other gnolls during the regular combats within a family group or pack. There are few shields crafted by the civilised races that will endure successive strikes from a gnoll axe without need for constant repair.

The ideal shield, to a gnoll's mind, is one made by slaves out of the largest plate of thick metal that can be lifted by one arm. Simple leather or rope straps will be threaded through the plate, allowing use in battle. This type of design makes gnolls look very crude and primitive in appearance but it is also strong, durable and incredibly resistant to blows from other gnolls, the essential qualities this race looks for.

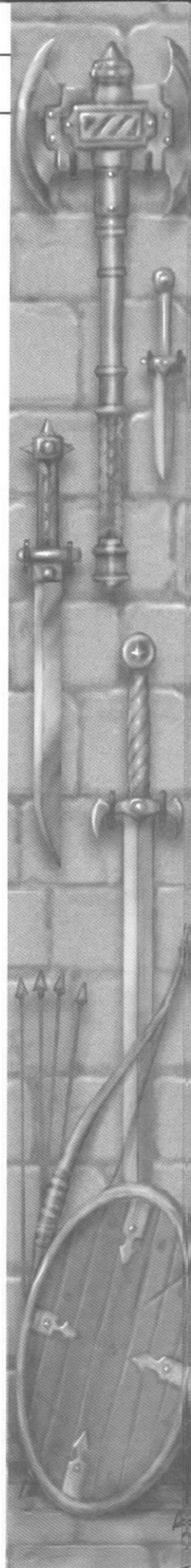


AMBUSH

The most common method of attack for a gnoll will always be the ambush. Despite their strength and superior combat skills, gnolls remain an instinctive race of low cunning and will always seek to turn odds in their favour at every opportunity. Given their size and heavy equipment, however, gnolls can find it incredibly difficult to hide effectively. To offset such a disadvantage, gnolls have become tremendously adept at picking ideal locations for ambushes and will actively seek to avoid places that provide too little cover to conceal their numbers. If only a few scattered rocks and bushes are present, then gnolls will *not* attempt to set an ambush unless it is absolutely necessary. Instead, they will seek darkened areas of great shadow, dense foliage and maze-like sections of underground caverns. It is a sad tale of fate that adventurers often find themselves thinking 'this is the perfect place for an ambush,' just as the hidden gnolls launch their attack. . .

Being primarily nocturnal creatures, the majority of gnoll attacks take place at night. Gnolls love any advantage they have over others and are well aware their innate darkvision gives them an immense superiority over such races as humans. However, whilst they are aware that other races share this ability, they are unlikely to know exactly which ones. This is rarely a factor though, as gnolls quickly learn if the inhabitants of the region they lair in have this capability or not. If they do indeed lack darkvision, even a small family group on the outskirts of a territory can prove lethal to the unwary traveller. That said, it must be pointed out that adventurers who also have darkvision may be able to take advantage of this kind of presumption on the part of the gnolls.

As an ambush is launched, gnolls will seek to engage their enemies in hand-to-hand combat as quickly as they can throw themselves forward. Such ambushes are meticulously well-timed, as individual gnolls keep in contact with one another as they lay in wait, using their unspoken sign language to warn of approaching enemies and their numbers. The largest male present will give the order to launch the attack, usually by springing from cover, bellowing a guttural war cry. The other gnolls will be quick to follow him, though the youngest present may be



commanded to instead shower targets with arrow fire rather than engage directly. Again, such a decision will be made in perfect silence by the largest male before the ambush is launched with a quick series of tail and ear twitches.

Gnolls enjoy close combat above all else bar feeding but as they wait in ambush, their instincts take over and even the youngest amongst them can remain motionless and alert for many hours, waiting for the perfect time to strike. Such patience may seem contrary to usual gnoll nature but, taking an objective view, it can be seen to be within perfect accord with their lifestyle. After all, gnolls greatly detest physical labour and so will be unwilling to make mistakes in an ambush if it means they have to work harder for their prey.

An adventurer suddenly confronted by a gnoll ambush will have precious little time to react before he is engaged in combat. Arrows may be streaking down amongst his party members, causing injury and disrupting the casting of retaliatory spells, though the latter is likely to be purely unintentional. After having faced gnolls, many adventurers speak of a kind of battle rage that most gnolls seem to be able to fade in to and out of at will. A gnoll will often literally pounce on an enemy, almost completely disregarding its own safety as it launches a truly savage attack. A quick-witted adventurer may be able to take advantage of this with a well-aimed sword thrust, though great caution is advised. If such a blow does not prove fatal to the gnoll, it will likely tear apart its enemy within seconds.

As a last note, it should be mentioned that the majority of ambushes are launched to the rear of a target, that is, after it has already passed the gnolls' position. Races such as orcs often make the mistake of launching their attacks far too soon, but gnolls tend to entrust to their ability to lay superior ambushes and thus be able to charge straight into the rear of an enemy. It should go without saying that such a tactic, when used against an unprepared party, can prove devastating in the extreme.

OPEN WARFARE

It has to be remarked that finding gnolls engaged in open battle is an extremely rare occurrence and any such event is worthy of note and a good tale back at the tavern. This method of warfare just goes so completely against a gnoll's basic nature that most will not even consider it.

Large scale confrontations have been known to happen in the past, usually when a pack grows to such a size that hunting and ambushes alone can no longer support them. In such an instance, a pack leader will be compelled to look elsewhere for supplies and villages or small towns are obvious targets. Gnolls engage in battle primarily with horde tactics and this is where they have gained their reputation as shock troops. There are few units of soldiers in the world that can withstand a direct charge from a similar number of gnolls and even sustained bouts of missile fire do little to slow them down, much less actually slay them. It is readily evident in these attacks that gnolls are unable to maintain any great amount of discipline, even when dominant males and pack leaders are present. They are thus unable to react to great changes on a battlefield with any speed, but they do seem able to maintain a degree of unit coherency, no doubt due to a powerful pack mentality.

The guiding principle over whether gnolls are willing to engage in open battle is one of simple numbers. Constantly looking for every advantage available, gnolls tend to judge their enemies purely by respective numbers. Essentially, if they can see they outnumber an enemy, they will attack. If not, they avoid battle, an outlook that has given rise, in part, to their reputation for being cowards. It is important to remember that, in the gnoll mindset, factors such as archers or spell-casters are not just disregarded, they are not even given the briefest thought. Gnolls will watch on the outskirts of a village, weighing up the odds in terms of fighting men and women, but will not give the slightest consideration to the two ballistae being wheeled into position to defend against the impending attack. As the average gnoll is fully capable of ripping apart three or more human warriors in straight combat, such oversights are often the salvation of isolated settlements.

This is generally as sophisticated as gnolls become in warfare. A pack will never lay siege to a fortress, though it may ambush travellers going to and from such a place. They will never co-ordinate attacks with any allies, though others may take advantage of their maddened rush. A gnoll's primary reason for fighting is the simple acquisition of food and slaves. Even the capture of new equipment and treasure are secondary concerns. Those seeking to utilise gnolls in their battle plans will be constantly thwarted by a complete lack of understanding of the most basic of developed tactics. Whilst gnolls do indeed make superior shock troops, no one will ever have a great

It is interesting to see that when a lair is attacked by a substantial force, adult gnolls seek to escape the threat and dissipate in scattered groups throughout the surrounding area. This can seem utterly alien to civilised races for in doing so, the gnolls demonstrate they are eminently willing to leave their young behind to face whatever danger may enter the lair. Whilst it is true the young create their own, much smaller, burrows in which to hide and protect themselves, there seems to be absolutely no parental care whatsoever. Given that adult males are often compelled to actually consume the young this should not, perhaps, be so much of a surprise.

Almost abhorring open battle, gnolls whose lairs are under threat will rarely even attempt a wide-scale defence if outnumbered by their attackers. On the whole, they far prefer to operate in dispersed groups, attacking invaders as they approach by way of ambush, or by seeking to enter the burrows of a lair after the enemy has disappeared inside. From there the gnolls will utilise their knowledge of the burrow complex to launch successive attacks until the invaders have been wiped out. Despite the unorthodox nature of such a defence, it can prove highly effective, especially against small parties of adventurers who are powerful enough to force the adult gnolls to flee in the first place.

ROLE-PLAYING WITH GNOLLS

Through reading the *Slayer's Guide to Gnolls*, you will have learnt about every aspect of the lives of this truly unique race. The past chapters have taken a look at the primitive society of the gnolls, their religion, the factors that motivate their ambitions and their tactics in battle. Now it is time to put all of this into practice.

In the past, more than one Games Master has been guilty of simply putting a group of gnolls in some convenient underground chamber or room in order to give his players a tough combat before they can proceed with the rest of the adventure. And why not? Gnolls are noticeably tougher than orcs and goblins and so make the players work harder to overcome them, an especially important factor as the party begins to rise in level.

The intention of this book is, in part, to demonstrate that whilst gnolls certainly can be used in this fashion, a Games Master can make the very easy mistake of presenting all his monsters in an identical way – they use the same tactics, go for the same party members, with only their attacks and spells having any degree of variation. With the *Slayer's Guide to Gnolls*, Games Masters now have the information they need to portray races of monsters so they actually 'feel' different to the players that meet them, rather than just being another critter to hack apart. Any campaign will be enhanced enormously if every monster race operates in its own distinctive manner, the world automatically being given a far greater depth than before.

GNOLLS IN YOUR GAMES

In straight combat, the two main facets of gnoll life that Games Masters must endeavour to portray are instinct and chaos.

For instinct, a Games Master should look first towards setting superior ambushes against the players. A gnoll's finely tuned senses should allow it to be aware of the players long before the party recognise the evil presence and rather than forcing a direct confrontation, the gnolls will retreat and make ready their ambush. It is important to remember the ambush is the gnolls' principle method for launching any attack and, despite their large size, they are very good at it. After all, they have been practising for all their lives. Only the most observant of party members should perceive a threat before the gnolls charge.

Instinct can also be demonstrated in a far more general sense. Gnolls are adept at finding prey and will tend to select the very best areas along, say, a trade route from which to launch their raids. Weak targets will be selected, heavily armed resistance avoided whenever possible.

The chaotic nature of gnolls is best portrayed, visually at least, in combat. An ambush will be launched with absolute synchronicity but after that, it is every gnoll for himself. The Games Master should attempt to convey a feeling of wild, heedless savagery. Let the gnolls charge from all directions, each making a beeline for their chosen target, regardless of the actions of the others in the pack. When engaged in hand-to-hand struggles, make frequent use of their innate Power Attack feat, combining it with shield bashes to demonstrate their

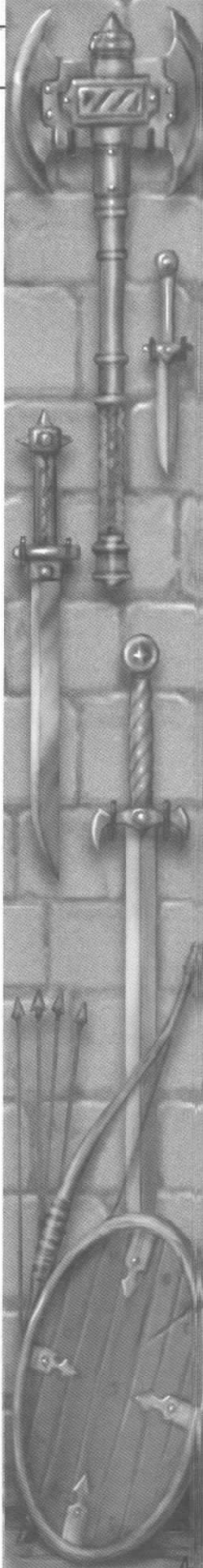


raw ferocity. Have some gnolls begin to feed before the combat has finished. Your players will get the idea soon enough.

BUILDING LAIRS

When creating a lair with which to populate with gnolls, think disorganisation, filth and brutality. No gnoll will do anything it does not want to and even bullying slaves to do the labour can seem a chore to the dominant males. Thus, their lairs are dirty, smelly places, often featuring structures and tunnels that are only half-completed. Their treatment of slaves and any other sentient beings they come into contact with should be accentuated to show the players just how mean, nasty and cruel gnolls are in their everyday lives. They will be more than willing to torture and maim another living creature just to hear screams of pain. Woe betide any player who gets captured by a pack. . .

As a last word, it should be noted that, for all their strength, cunning and instinct, gnolls do have disadvantages stemming directly from their low intelligence and aversion to physical labour. The example lair in this book has several built-in weaknesses for players to exploit and this is a characteristic a Games Master should make common to gnolls everywhere. Their lax attitude can very well be their downfall. Any party taking the time and trouble to actually study a gnoll pack before launching a raid should be well rewarded with a multitude of options based around incomplete patrols, lazy eyes in watchtowers and every gnoll within the lair itself being completely distracted by whatever minor concerns fill their lives.



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Gnolls are best used against parties of around 3rd- 6th level, with the amount of combat within a scenario being a major deciding factor. They tend to be very aggressive fighters and will just as soon attack a party member as look at him but a Games Master can set large numbers of gnolls against a relatively low level party if the players are prepared to use their brains more than their swords. What follows is a series of hooks and ideas for scenarios that a Games Master can use in his gaming sessions to demonstrate the unique characteristics of this race and thus lend his games far greater depth than if gnolls were simply another monster for player characters to hack apart.

POOR BABY

A shepherd in a far-flung and remote village approaches the players as they pass through. She found a gnoll infant in the hills and, feeling sorry for the poor creature, brought it home to take care of it. However, she suspects the gnolls will come to claim what is theirs and begs the players to defend her. The players, of course, may either agree or simply think she is utterly mad! A more interesting variation for role-playing groups is for the players to be the ones who locate the defenceless gnoll infant, exposed to the elements and clearly fated to die without their intervention. Assuming they do not simply put the creature out of its misery or they do not try to return it to distinctly ungrateful parents, this then raises a pertinent question. Can the gnoll be 'civilised' or would it just revert to its baser instincts? We would tend to go for the latter, but it is ultimately the Games Master's choice. . .

GOLD IN THE HILLS

Prospectors in a small wilderness settlement have been disappearing with alarming regularity of late. The players are asked to find out why. The gnoll pack in the hills responsible for the disappearances simply cannot believe that these humans *keep* coming into the hills and thus provide them with a steady supply of food and slaves. As the party adventures

into the hills, the Games Master will have the chance to spring a variety of ambushes upon them, using terrain the gnolls know well. By the way, if the players think to make a quick killing by prospecting for gold themselves, we suggest you introduce them to the life of the typical prospector. There will be lots of work and very little reward. We would start them finding, perhaps, five gold pieces worth a month and then let it become steadily worse until they get bored and set off for more exciting adventures.

IN THE DEFENCE OF

Gnoll ambushes have become increasingly common around a marble quarry and many workers have been taken, presumably to be used as slaves or for other, more repugnant, reasons. The players are asked for assistance, for the few warriors amongst the quarry workers were quickly killed as they tried to defend against the initial attacks. Though an entire pack is obviously making its lair nearby, the exact location is unknown. The players must first defend the quarry workers against gnoll attacks, track them back to the lair and then finally destroy the threat once and for all.

STARVE 'EM OUT

A combined army of hobgoblins, orcs and gnolls has been moving up a series of valleys, razing to the ground every village they find. The next settlement the evil army will reach is a major town. Whilst the militia and defences of the town probably will hold out against the horde, losses likely to be sustained are unconscionable. The players are asked to help. If they can cut off this roving army from its sources of food, the gnolls are likely to turn upon their erstwhile allies, greatly reducing the overall strength of the army.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

There are many wilderness areas where the civilised races exist only in small scattered settlements, scratching a living in dangerous conditions. Wild creatures and tribes of malignant humanoids are considered daily and common threats. However, as such tribes are just as likely to attack one another as any settlement a kind of uneasy balance can develop in the wilder regions of the world. A large pack of powerful gnolls moving into the area could destabilise everything as they begin to prey upon

GNOLLS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Gnolls are a very difficult race to role-play well, as they are utterly hateful of most other races and have very few redeeming qualities. However, players may like to experiment with such characters, most likely within the context of a gnoll-only campaign. Such a campaign could revolve around an entire family group initially fleeing from disaster, or perhaps the player characters are separated somehow from gnoll society and are struggling to survive in a world that would just as soon eradicate them. Having gnolls within a standard party line up of the 'civilised' races will be problematic at best, as no gnoll is likely to leave its vicious temperament behind in favour of joining the society of humans, dwarves and elves. This must be left to the discretion of each individual Games Master and his players.

It is recommended that player character gnolls restrict themselves to Fighter, Ranger 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 gnoll character, the Games Master is urged to indulge his player. As always, it is assumed that player character gnolls are above average when compared to other members of their race.



It is possible, and more consistent with gnolls as they are presented in the Monster Manual, for a Games Master to start characters at second level, whatever class a player chooses. However, this can make them over-powered when compared to other, non-gnoll, party members. This optional rule is best left to Games Masters who know their own campaigns far better than we do. A Games Master could judge, for instance, that as a gnoll will tend to create disharmony and friction wherever he goes and reactions against him will generally be negative, the character has penalties enough already and so starting at second level may go some way to balancing this out.

GNOLL RACIAL TRAITS

- † +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Intelligence, -2 Charisma: Gnolls are a strong, brutish race, but lack almost any form of wit or refinement.
- † Medium-size: As Medium-size creatures, gnolls have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- † Gnoll base speed is 30 feet.
- † Darkvision: Gnolls can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only but is otherwise like normal sight and gnolls can function just as well with no light at all.
- † +3 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks. Gnolls have very highly developed senses.
- † +1 racial bonus to Armour Class. Gnolls have a thick hairy hide that can absorb soft blows
- † Listen and Spot are always considered to be Class Skills, regardless of what class the gnoll actually is.
- † Automatic Languages: Common and Gnoll. Bonus Languages: Goblinoid, Ogre, Orc, Troll, Undercommon.
- † Favoured Class: Ranger. A multiclass gnoll's ranger class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. To a gnoll, ranger skills are of primary importance and are taught from an early age.

Gnoll names often tend to be difficult for humans to pronounce correctly but, ironically, elves seem to pick up the intonations naturally. Because of this, the names gnolls use for themselves are sometimes described as sounding elven but with an added 'hard' edge. Gnolls only ever have a single name and never seem to title either their individual family groups or packs. To a gnoll, such gatherings of their people simply 'are.' A sample of gnollish names is listed here for convenience:

Eenoga	Turbulata	Turneeva
Slagawuf	Bassacop	Moonakka
Howlarek	Sindionaa	Vekannar

EDENDALE

Two years ago, down the quiet road leading to the peaceful village of Edendale, the gnolls came. No one lives there now. They stayed only a few hours but when they left, the community that had existed for centuries was dead.

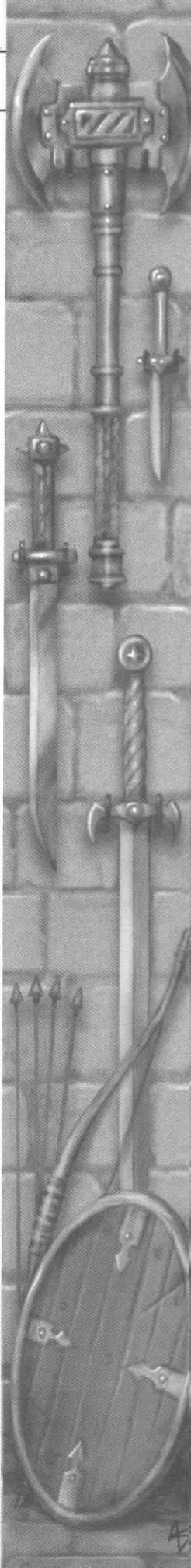
The day the gnolls came, the people were herded together into the lone village chapel. A few of the stronger men resolved to fight the invaders but were quickly overcome. The women and children bore witness to the brutality of the gnolls as the feasting of their men took place in front of their eyes. Within a short space of time, they too were slaughtered. Abandoning the now lifeless village to ruin, the gnolls soon found a series of burrows just a mile away from Edendale. It is here the pack stayed and made their own home. Though far from civilisation, the gnolls have proved highly effective at capturing slaves from the few scattered farmsteads, passing merchant caravans and even parties of adventurers who have strayed far too close.

The gnolls within this burrow are comprised of only seven family groups, making them a relatively small pack by usual standards. There are nearly one hundred and twenty adult gnolls capable of fighting, of varying size and strength and around half this number again of non-combatant young. A slave population of more than thirty demonstrates this pack's ability of not only acquiring captives on a regular basis, but also of keeping them from escaping by virtue of being held deep within the bowels of the lair. This is a situation partly of the slaves' own making as over a period of a year successive captives have been forced to extend the lair further down into the ground, as well as construct a simple stockade around the lair's main entrance. The original burrow may have perhaps belonged to creatures such as dire badgers but the resident gnolls have forced their slaves to not just extend existing tunnels, but to actually add a whole new level beneath the first for the use of the stronger family groups. It is here, in the pits of Edendale, that the slaves are housed when not serving their cruel masters. Any slave attempting to escape would have to literally pass every family group just to exit the burrow, making such a bid virtually impossible, especially considering the strength-sapping conditions the gnolls' victims have to endure.

The present pack leader is a vicious male gnoll named Eenoga. Even amongst his own kind, Eenoga is large and possesses exceptional strength to the point where he has not had to face any challenge from the other males since the pack relocated to this lair. His mere presence is enough to quell nearby disputes between others, lest he decide he wants to join a developing fight. Eenoga's commanding presence allows him to take ownership of any item of worth in the lair without question and, unusually for any gnoll, he freely takes females from any of the other family groups as he desires. There is simply no other male in the pack who has the strength to challenge his superiority.

Far from forcing the other family groups away from the pack, Eenoga's rod of iron rule and sheer physical power provide the rest with a measure of protection in the wilderness. Whether it is against marauding ogre tribes or organised merchant soldiers, his own family group is always the first into any battle and prove their right to stay at the top of the pack through a combination of victory and brutality. It can be said all the other gnolls are, to an extent, parasitic on Eenoga's successes and each must weigh the price of his brutal control of their family groups against the huge amount of food and slaves he manages to bring back from every fight, even if they will be denied the best pickings themselves.

The pack as a whole, when not fighting amongst itself, roves over the surrounding wilderness in family groups, hunting the native animal life and always on the watch for intelligent races travelling into the region. The gnolls have already destroyed the nearest farmsteads in their attacks over the past year, forcing them to quest further for a constant supply of slaves but two major trade routes run near Edendale. Whilst caravans are these days much more heavily armed than in the past, due in the main to the gnolls' previous successes, they are still somewhat vulnerable to the well-laid ambushes of the stronger family groups. Though several attempts have been made by adventurers in the past to locate the lair, it lies just far enough from the trade routes to make this a difficult, not to say hazardous, task. Once found, a standing army will likely have little difficulty in overcoming the gnolls' meagre defences, but even merchants who rely on the trade routes are unwilling to go to the expense of dispatching such a force if the whereabouts of the lair is unknown.



Pack Strength

The total fighting strength of Eenoga's pack is listed below, though it must be remembered that both young and slaves are a permanent presence in the lair despite the fact that neither will take part in any battle.

Eenoga, Pack Leader
 12 Dominant Males
 103 Adult Gnolls
 6 Dire Lions

EDENDALE

From the outside, the lair of Eenoga's pack is typical of the work of many gnolls and by day, adventurers may well be able to venture quite close without gaining unwanted attention. Daytime activity of the gnolls is infrequent to say the least, though there are usually at least a few within the stockade watching over the work of slaves, as well as ever-prowling dire lions. At night though, the lair becomes far more active, with bands of gnolls constantly hunting throughout the immediate area and even well-accomplished adventurers may be well advised to stay far away during the full moon.

The tunnels of the lair are generally between five to six feet high, causing most gnolls to stoop though this causes them little trouble. The smell emanating from every part of the burrow complex is foul to the nose of any civilised race, though half-orcs may feel a nostalgic twinge. The two separate entrances to the outside world provide ventilation through the passages of the first level, but they do little for individual chambers or the level below. All is dark within the lair, for the gnolls use no artificial lighting of their own and so any brought in by invaders will be almost immediately noticed.

1. The Stockade

The slave-built wooden stockade surrounding the lair is a crude construction of mismatched trunks and hastily repaired sections. A single entrance leads into a courtyard of sorts, dominated by a wooden building that covers the entrance to the burrow and the lair proper. The ground is strewn with debris, usually broken and cracked bones, as well as pieces of rusting or rotting equipment the gnolls have no use for, relics from a year's worth of savagery. During the night, the stockade is usually a hive of activity, with gnoll family groups constantly leaving for the hunt or coming back with the spoils of a successful night.

By day, the gnolls rarely venture to the surface, the few present likely to be young adults tasked with mastery of slaves as they are forced to work on the stockade. More common is the pride of six dire lions who have chosen to share a home with Eenoga's gnolls. Whilst the gnolls do not actively care for these huge creatures, they are allowed to feed on left-over scraps and the occasional careless slave which ensures the lions constant presence. The dire lions rarely attack any gnoll unless provoked but they are likely to pounce upon any unknown intruder they find within the surrounding area of the stockade, providing Eenoga with a highly effective guard system.

2. Wooden Housing and Main Entrance

This is another simple slave-built construct, with a ladder attached to its rear facing allowing gnolls to climb up on to the roof, thus serving as a crude watchtower or archer station. However, the gnolls will rarely keep any sort of permanent watch unless they are expecting trouble and even then they will find themselves constantly distracted, greatly reducing the effectiveness of any possible alert.

The housing itself covers the entrance to the burrow complex, an eight foot wide hole in the ground and it is obvious from the huge amount of tracks in the soft ground that it is well-used. More debris of the type inside the stockade can be found here, pushed against the walls of the structure but the area around the burrow entrance is kept clear. A single door allows entry into the housing, which was itself constructed as a means of defending the burrow and as a method of stopping the very occasional rain from running inside the lair. In both objectives, it proves more or less adequate.

3. Concealed Entrance

The construction of a concealed entrance to allow the gnolls to enter and leave the lair unseen was something of a leap in logic for Eenoga and is highly unusual for this race to consider such a thing. Being gnolls though, the entrance is concealed by nothing more than dry brush arranged in a very haphazard fashion. Any ranger or druid will immediately spot this entrance by the out of place vegetation if they circle around the stockade to its rear. Other characters will spot the discrepancy by making a Wilderness Lore check at DC 15.

4. Tunnel to Second Level

This well traversed tunnel is around eight feet in

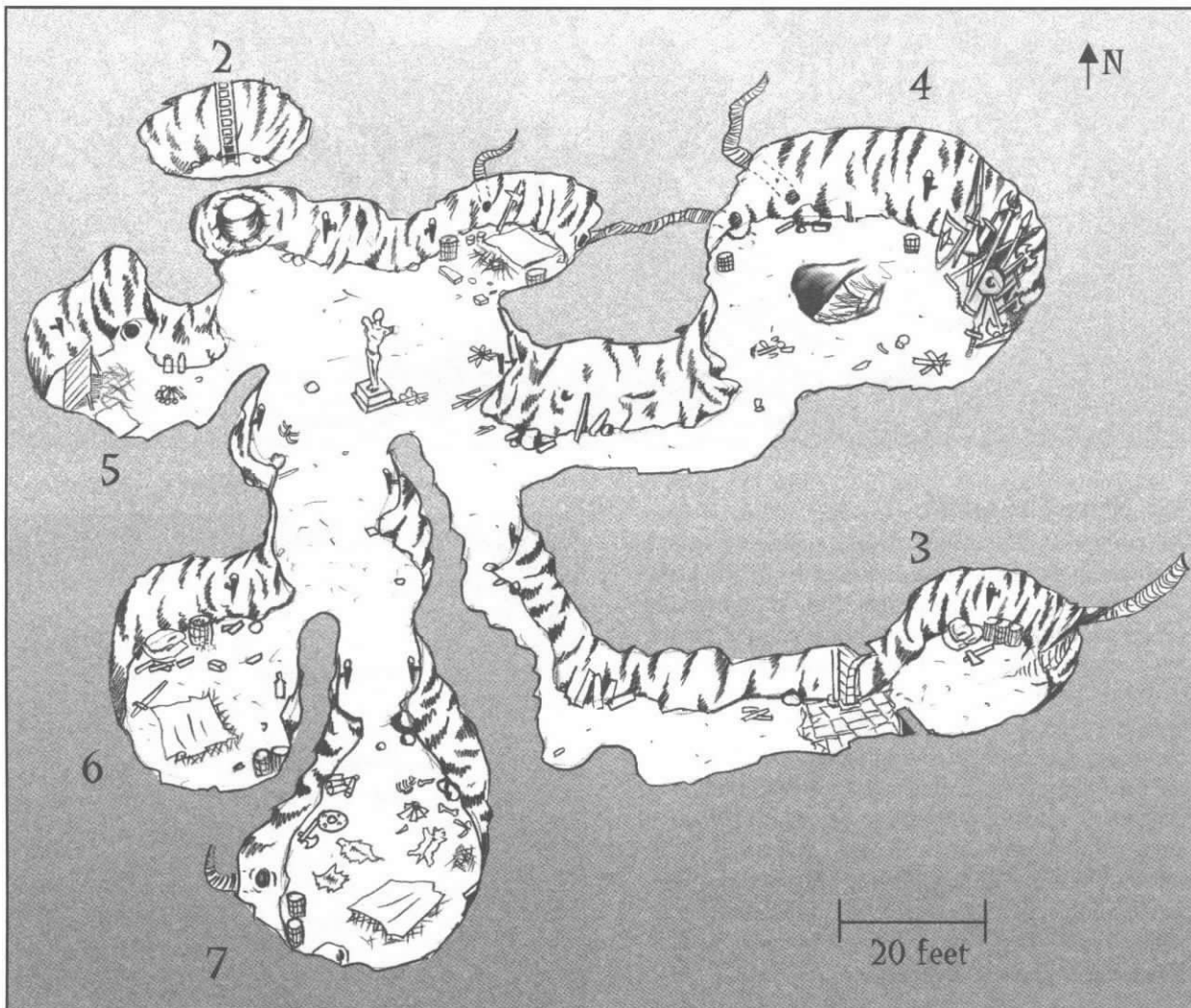
height, allowing the gnolls to move up and down between the two levels of the lair without stooping. The tunnel gently slopes down from one level to the other and has a three foot off-shoot that dead-ends halfway along its length. This is where the slaves who were forced to build the tunnel attempted to burrow directly under sections of the first level, hoping to bring about their collapse. Unfortunately, Eenoga has proved unusually observant of his slaves' activities and slaughtered them all himself before they could get anywhere near achieving their goal.

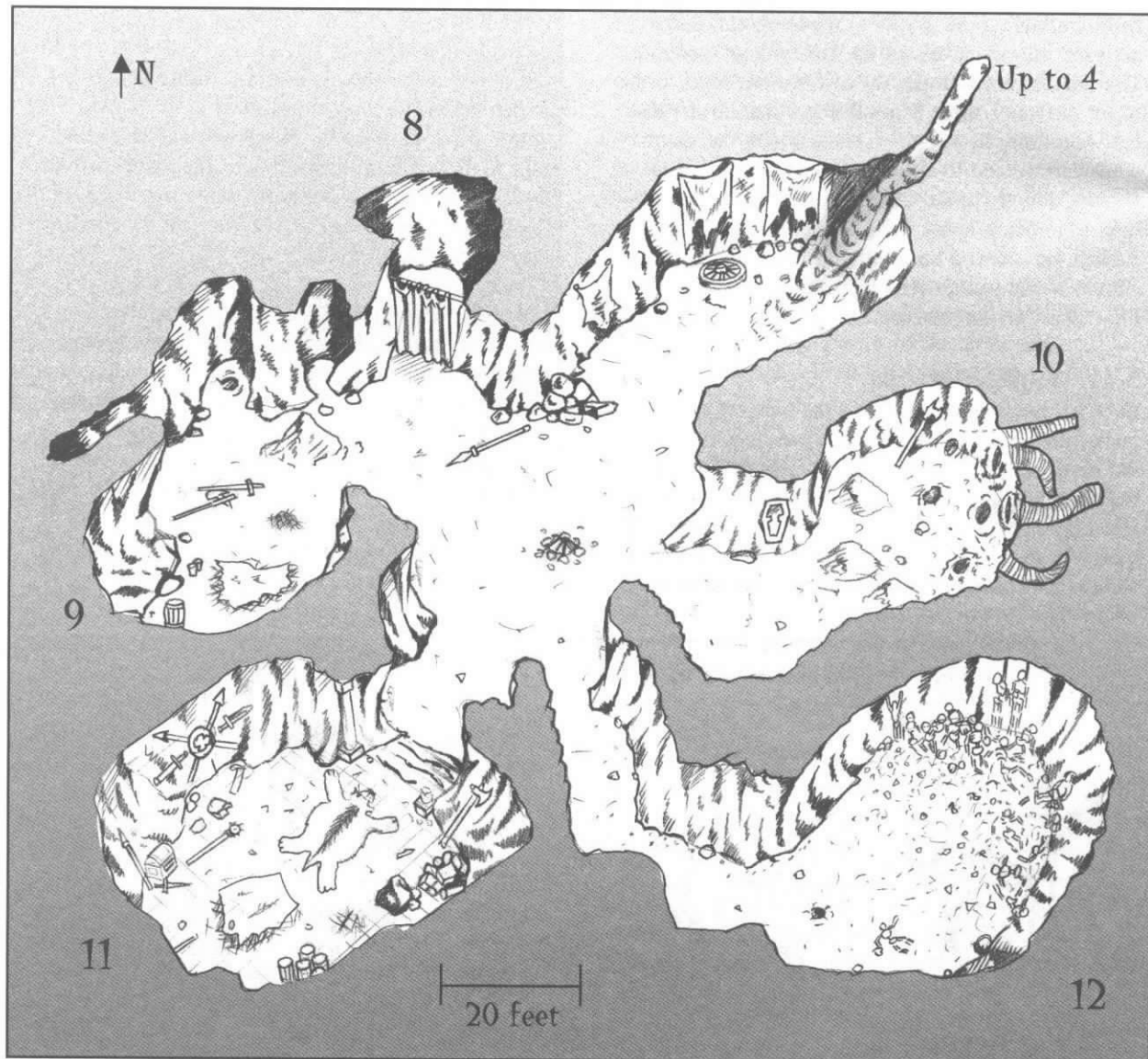
5-11. Family Groups

Each of the main chambers of the burrow houses a complete family group, with the weakest living near the main entrance, the strongest deep underground on the second level. Each chamber is a filthy place with a stench that will make most civilised people retch violently (note to Games Masters: You may want to force a particularly weak wizard or loremaster to

make a Fortitude Check, but most adventurers should be made of sterner stuff!). Carcasses and bones cover the floors of the chambers from wall to wall, with individual gnolls sometimes making their own nests within the rotting flesh. Small holes of between a foot to three feet in diameter line the walls at floor level. These are the entrances to the tiny burrows the gnoll young make themselves to avoid the predatory attentions of adult males.

Eenoga's family makes its home in chamber 11, vastly larger than that of any other family group. Sensitive adventurers may well detect a palpable aura of utter fear permeating this section of the burrow and it is a place few other gnolls will approach willingly. The other members of Eenoga's family group enjoy a privileged position amongst the other gnolls, but themselves are terrified by their pack leader as they all know first hand of his cruel fury.





12. Slave Chamber

All the slaves of the pack are kept within the same chamber, only being released when the gnolls have work for them. Conditions inside the chamber are utterly repugnant and far worse than any the gnolls inhabit, with foul waste and the dead strewn across the floor, rotting without attention. This is a breeding place for disease and even plague, though the gnolls themselves seem immune. For their part, the slaves rarely have time to succumb to such dangers as they are unfortunate enough to be housed alongside Eenoga's own chamber. Whether it is time for the full moon or not, Eenoga has a tendency to sate his frequent rages with a trip to the chamber, a visit that always results in outright butchery of the slowest and weakest slaves.

Perils of the Slave Chamber

Any character spending any amount of time in the slave chamber runs a very real risk of contracting a variety of unpleasant diseases. For every day or part of that is spent in the chamber, a Fortitude Check DC14 must be made. Failure results in a number of infections and diseases being contracted, their combined effects incubating for a single day and causing damage of 1d3 Strength and 1d3 Constitution.

The infection type of these diseases is not relevant as simply being in the chamber is enough to risk contracting them, such is the level of filth and decay.

EENOQA, PACK LEADER

Medium-Size Humanoid (Gnoll)

7th Level Fighter

Hit Dice: 61 hp

Initiative: +6

Speed: 30 ft. (chain shirt) base 30 ft.

AC: 19 (+1 natural, +4 chain shirt, +2 large shield, +2 Dex)

Attacks: Battleaxe +12/+7 (2 attacks/round); or shortbow +9/+4 ranged

Damage: Battleaxe 1d8+6; or shortbow 1d6

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 9

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6, Intimidate +6, Climb +4, Intuit Direction +4, Search +6, Wilderness Lore +3

Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialisation (battleaxe)

Challenge Rating: 7

Alignment: Chaotic Evil



USING EDENDALE

This lair may be placed in any temperate or warm wilderness region within your existing campaign and can be used either as a simple extended encounter or as the basis of several linked scenarios. A quick consultation of the Scenario Hooks And Ideas chapter will provide many possible adventures you can embark the players upon. In this way, a Games Master can take relatively low-level characters and set them against gnoll ambushes and raids, perhaps upon the nearby trade routes or farmsteads. Gradually, as the players gain levels and power, they can attempt an attack on the lair itself, though one hundred and sixteen fighting gnolls is no easy proposition even for a mid-level party. However, several 'loop-holes' have been built into the gnolls' defences, giving most parties a more even chance, especially when you combine them with a typical gnoll's lax behaviour when it comes to anything beyond fighting and eating.

The ultimate challenge of this lair would be to task a low-level party with rescuing one or more of the slaves. Unable to face the whole pack in straight combat and with a full moon fast approaching, the party would be under a severe time constraint and must use their brains to come up with a plan that will hopefully allow both themselves and the slaves to live.



GNOLL REFERENCE LIST

The following are provided for simple ease of use. A Games Master may confront his players with any of the gnolls listed below at a moment's notice but for prepared scenarios, it is suggested he simply use them as a basis for his own unique adversaries. Whilst gnolls may not have a huge amount in the way of magical items, they will demonstrate a great variation in their own choice of weapons and battle skills.

Gnoll Pack Leader

Medium-Size Humanoid (Gnoll)

6th Level Ranger

Hit Dice: 7d8+14 (52 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 30 ft. (chain shirt) base 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 natural, +4 chain shirt, +2 Dex)

Attacks: Battleaxe, handaxe +9/+4 melee (3 attacks/round); or shortbow +8/+3 ranged

Damage: Battleaxe 1d8+3, handaxe 1d6+2 off-hand; or shortbow 1d6

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 11

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6, Intimidate +6, Climb +4, Craft/Weaponsmith +4, Heal +4, Intuit Direction +4, Search +6, Wilderness Lore +3

Feats: Power Attack, Two-weapon Fighting, Ambidexterity

Bonus Feats: Track, 2 favoured enemies (usually Human & Orc)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually Chaotic Evil

Gnoll Cleric

Medium-Size Humanoid (Gnoll)

4th Level Cleric

Hit Dice: 5d8+5 (27 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 20 ft. (scale mail) base 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 natural, +3 studded leather, +2 large shield, +1 Dex)

Attacks: Battleaxe +5 melee; or shortbow +4 ranged

Damage: Battleaxe 1d8+2; or shortbow 1d6

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +6

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +3, Knowledge/Religion +3

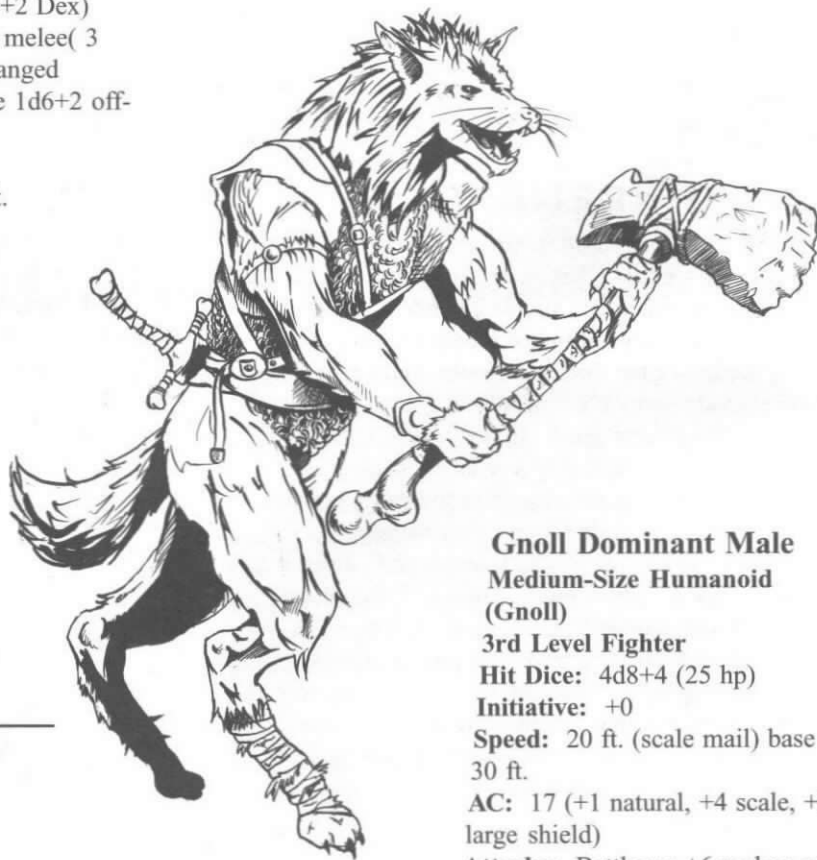
Feats: Power Attack, Dodge

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually Chaotic Evil

Spells: 0 Level: Detect Magic, Mending x 2, Resistance x 2; 1st Level: Magic Weapon, Bane, Cause Fear, Curse Water, Summon Monster I; 2nd Level: Desecrate, Bull's Strength, Darkness, Hold Person



Gnoll Dominant Male
Medium-Size Humanoid
(Gnoll)

3rd Level Fighter

Hit Dice: 4d8+4 (25 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft. (scale mail) base 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 natural, +4 scale, +2 large shield)

Attacks: Battleaxe +6 melee; or

shortbow +3 ranged

Damage: Battleaxe 1d8+3; or shortbow 1d6

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

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

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +3, Intimidate +3

Feats: Power Attack, Toughness

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually Chaotic Evil

Gnoll Warrior

Medium-Size Humanoid (Gnoll)

Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft. (scale mail) base 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 natural, +4 scale, +2 large shield)

Attacks: Battleaxe +3 melee; or shortbow +1 ranged

Damage: Battleaxe 1d8+2; or shortbow 1d6

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +3

Feats: Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually Chaotic Evil

Gnoll Young

Small-Size Humanoid (Gnoll)

Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. base

AC: 10

Attacks: Claws +1 melee

Damage: Claws 1D4+1

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

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

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2

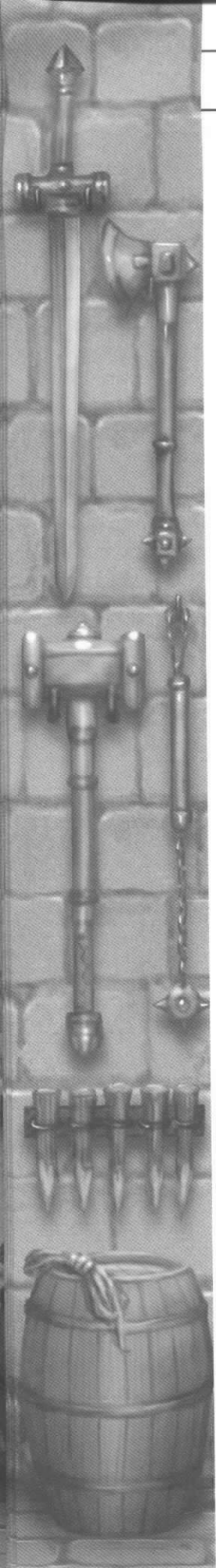
Feats:

Challenge Rating: 1/4

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually Chaotic Evil





There it was, a slight movement in the darkness of the narrow ravine. The backward twitch of the leader's left ear he had been waiting for. The Prey was almost at hand. An errant breeze brought the slightly metallic scent of anticipation to his sensitive nostrils along with something else; the annoying stench of distilled flowers. There must be a female with the Prey. Rayk fought back the urge to howl with joy for scented women always screamed the loudest.

Soon the Prey was in sight. Five armed humans flanked a palanquin borne by four more men as the procession wound its way through the narrow pass. Soft light within the curtained litter showed the outlines of at least two others. Eleven Prey total, and only five of those armed. Rayk began to swish his tail slightly, signalling his readiness. His sharp eyes caught twelve other tails lashing in the darkness. He gripped his axe and waited for the signal to attack.

Scant heartbeats after the Prey had passed his position, a snarling howl pierced the night as the leader leapt from the boulder he had been perched upon and landed on top of the palanquin. He watched as the litter toppled to the ground on the broken shoulders of its bearers amidst screams of pain, shouts of surprise and the heady fragrance of fear. He rushed from his position, voicing a series of fast whoops as he charged toward the rearmost warrior.

Rayk grunted loudly several times and swung his battleaxe over his head in a huge circle. The human warrior set himself for the oncoming gnoll's charge, completely ignoring the younger gnoll approaching from behind. A shout of surprise sounded from the human's throat as a heavy warhammer glanced from his armour. The human whirled to face his immediate attacker, ignoring Rayk for a vital moment as he fought for his life against the smaller gnoll.

Rayk grinned savagely at the effectiveness of the manoeuvre and slowed his charge to approach from a more advantageous angle, skirting round the human's unguarded back. The younger attacker giggled maniacally as the human landed several solid blows. Rayk trotted faster, realising that the younger male needed assistance.

Just as Rayk arrived to join the fight the human clouted the young gnoll with his shield, knocking him unconscious. The lieutenant saw his opportunity and attacked the human's unprotected flank. Scales clattered on the ground, ripped from the human's armour by the force of the gnoll's blow. The lieutenant raised himself to his full height, fully three heads taller than the human, and howled with triumph.

Rayk grinned as the face of the warrior in front of him drained of colour. The human had incapacitated the younger gnoll only two breaths before Rayk attacked and he was still off balance. The gnoll could smell surprise and anxiety emanating from the human in waves. He snarled and raised his hackles as he swung his battle-axe in a low, one-handed arc that caught the smaller combatant in the ribs, caving them in with the satisfyingly wet crunch of bone and armour. With a flick of his wrist, he dislodged his axe from the corpse of the fighter and moved to the palanquin, stepping over bodies of human and gnoll.

He ripped the thin curtain aside with one bloody hand and sneezed involuntarily as the scent of flowers assaulted his sensitive nose. Rayk shook his head and snorted which kept him from dodging the silvered serving tray swung at his head. A slight gonging sound rang in the confines of the palanquin. He glared at the slim woman wielding the tray, ignoring the other occupant cowering amongst the cushions. Though she glared back, her brave stance and perfume could not mask the terror in her eyes or the heady musk of fear that surrounded the spirited young noblewoman. Rayk's chuckle rumbled deep in his chest as he knocked the tray from her hands and grabbed her by the waist, throwing her over his shoulder. Small fists pounded ineffectively at his mane as he lifted her from the litter. It would be great fun to make this one scream. He would take his time.

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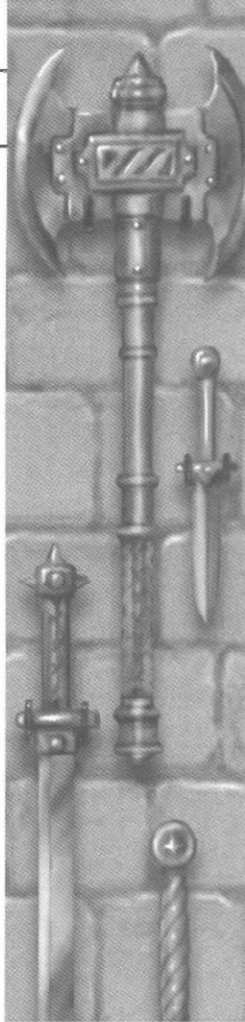
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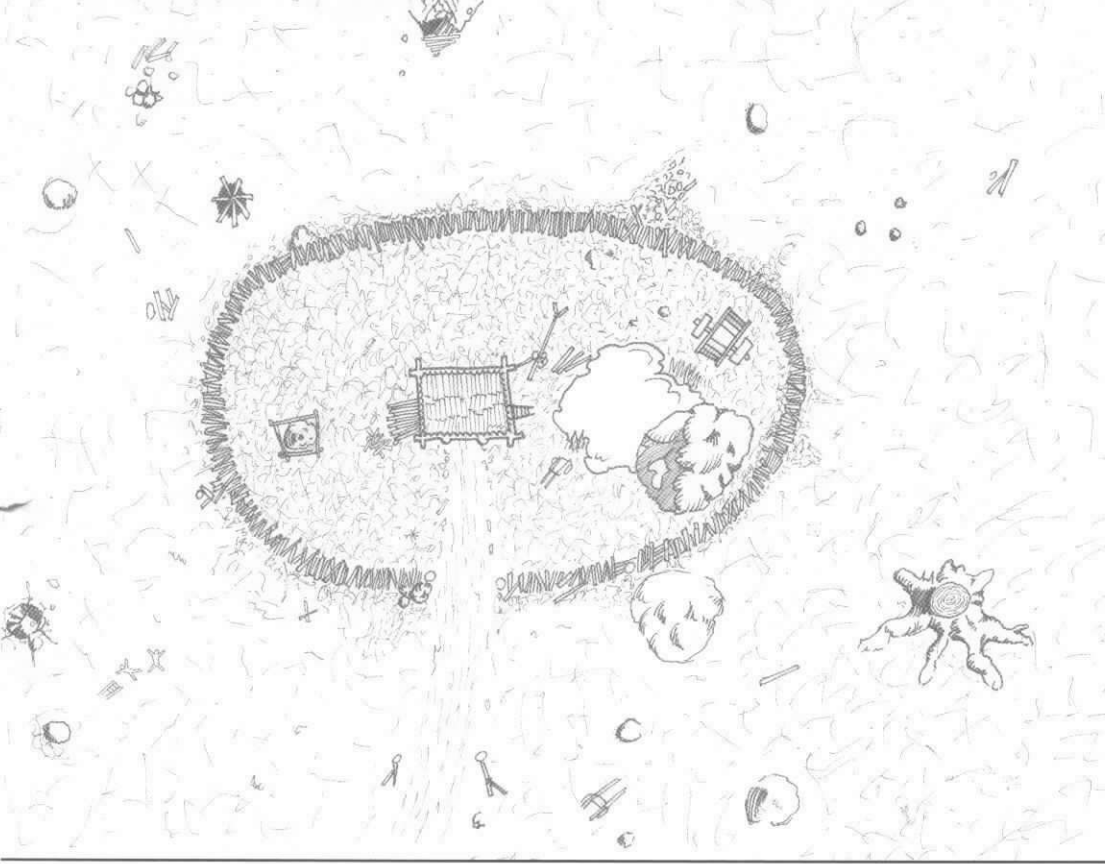
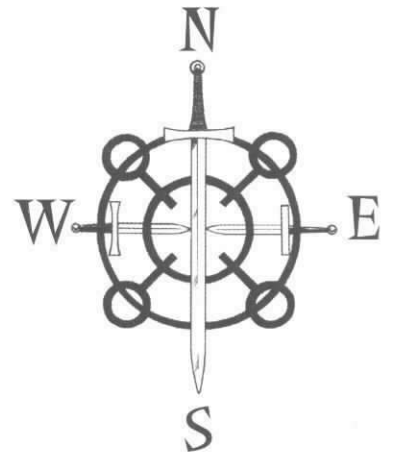
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