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d20
system

THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO
ORCS



Matt Forbeck

ORCS

- stooped posture
- grayish skin

- Low forehead.



- primitive humanoid skull

- prominent lower canines



- enlarged spine creates a strong neck



The Slayer's Guide To ORCS

Matt Forbeck

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INTRODUCTION

Orcs are the foot soldiers of evil, the creatures that make up the hordes of darkness that threaten to overwhelm the good peoples and turn the entire land into a region of little else than slaughter and depravity. Most Games Masters use them as the guardians of low-level dungeons, just a slight step above kobolds as a threat. Often they are simply portrayed as evil humans and are given little more thought than that.

Shallow as they are individually, ruts on most roads have more depth and complexity; orcs as a people are a bit more unusual than that. They have a society all of their own, one that is often misunderstood or entirely ignored by the people who war against them. After all, when most heroes are fighting for their lives, they usually do not stop to have a conversation with their attackers, and orcs are not great conversationalists by any account.

Most of the hard information people have gathered about orcs has come under difficult circumstances, generally from those who somehow survived slavery under the orcs long enough to escape. Some other salient details have come from those heroes who have managed to actually capture a live orc, a fairly unusual circumstance. Orcs make dangerous prisoners, constantly scheming for freedom. Most people prefer to kill them rather than keep such an untrustworthy viper close at hand.

The details found in *The Slayer's Guide to Orcs* were collated from the hard-won knowledge of the loremasters and warriors from dozens of realms. This represents the best and most current intelligence concerning this fascinating subject. Using it, Games Masters can transform the lowly orcs into a powerful, villainous force that can easily become a key element in any campaign. Players, on the other hand, should find enough in here to properly prepare themselves to face these creatures on the field of battle, for it is in war that the orcs are truly at their most fearsome.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 System games, exhaustively examines specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these are the races that Games Masters and

players tend to overlook as creatures best suited for little more than sticking on the end of a sword en route to gathering any treasure the creatures might happen to be guarding.

ORCS — HORDES OF EVIL

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race: in this case, the orc. Peruse these pages and, within, you shall find a treasure trove of information about orc physiology, habitat, society, and habits of battle. This should give you a thorough grounding on what role orcs have in the world.

This book also gives details on how the Games Master can best use orcs in a fantasy roleplaying game. It could be that the heroes have already killed innumerable orcs, but now they may discover that these beasts were simply a prelude to the real orc threat. The book concludes with a clenched fist full of orc scenario ideas, a complete orc war camp and a number of sample orc statistics for immediate use in your game.



Captain Emathilon backhanded the orc captive with his spiked gauntlet, sending orc spittle and greyish flesh splattering across the polished surface of the nearby table. "Talk, you tusk-faced beast!" he demanded.

The orc only looked up at the elf lord and sniggered, as if enjoying some private, repulsive joke by the torchlight in the darkened tent. Emathilon smashed his fist into the orc's grey-skinned face, flattening his already flattish nose and busting off the end of one of the vile creature's tusks. The orc did not seem all that perturbed by this chain of events. He grunted with pain and fell silent for a moment. Then the sniggering resumed, muffled only slightly by the ruin of his black-lipped mouth.

Emathilon drew back his clenched fist to slam home another blow but Lieutenant Crestantir reached out and stayed his hand. "Captain," the younger elf said evenly, "you are wasting your time. You cannot pry secrets from this creature's lips by violent means."

Captain Emathilon snatched his hand back from his subordinate. "Violence is the only language such monsters understand," he spat. "And if you ever lay your hands on me again, my friend, I can promise you a fate so terrible you would wish to take this creature's place."

Crestantir bowed his head to acknowledge Emathilon's authority. "Of course, my captain. I merely wished to point out that there are other, perhaps more effective, means of procuring the information we so badly need."

Emathilon fell silent for a moment, bowing his head. When he looked up, his eyes were almost steaming and the elven lieutenant involuntarily took a step back. "If you think you know better, lieutenant," the captain hissed, "then please proceed."

Crestantir snapped off a quick bow to his superior officer and then turned to the orc chained to the chair. "What is your name?" he asked firmly.

The orc growled something at the elf. Crestantir tried to repeat it. "So that's your name?" he asked.

"No," the orc chortled low and mean, "I just want you to say those words."

Crestantir looked quizzically at the orc.

"They mean: 'My manhood is very small!'" The orc nearly choked on his laughter. He stopped short as Emathilon stepped up to strike the creature again but Crestantir stayed the elder elf's hand.

"Forget your name," Crestantir said. "What are you doing here?"

"Being beaten by a pair of pansies," the orc replied flatly.

"Before that. What were you doing here? You are a long way from any orc camp."

The orc laughed. "So you think, pointy ears. So you think."

"What do you mean by that?" Suddenly Crestantir felt his heart in his throat.

"We are orcs! We are never far away. We will always be here. Someday, we will kill you all, you and all your worthless kin."

It was Crestantir's turn to laugh. He chuckled softly, "I have been through several wars with your people," he said. "You never get very far."

"This time is different," the orc grunted, baring his tusks with a sloppy, battered smile. "This time we did not start with your front. We started on your back."

"What do you mean by that?" Crestantir repeated, his blood chilling in his heart.

"While you elf-men are all on patrol, we went to your homes. We raped your wives. We slaughtered your children." The orc's face leapt with delight when he saw the horror painted on Crestantir's face. "This time, we decided we would have our fun first. There is time to kill you later."

As the orc guffawed at his revelations, Crestantir drew his dagger and slit the creature's throat with a single, clean movement. Blackish blood poured from the wound and the beast's laughter quickly turned to a harsh, gurgling sound. Within moments, the orc slumped against his chains, silenced forever.

"We need to verify this right away," Crestantir said. "I will send runners."

Emathilon shook his head, his face gone ghostly pale. "The accursed beast was telling the truth, I am sure."

"Then we should go to their aid!"

Emathilon shook his head again. "If the beast was truthful, then it is already too late. We cannot return home now and leave a gaping hole in the nation's defences. That is just what they want."

"What are we to do?"

The elven captain's face turned even grimmer. "We hunt them down and kill them. We kill them all. Let the gods sort them out."

ORC PHYSIOLOGY

Tall, wide and made of muscles, orcs seem as if they were built for war. According to some legends, they actually were. Bred from corrupted elves by some dark god that required a race of pure evil to worship him, they were supposedly crafted to be the bane of the good races everywhere. Whether or not this tale is true—the orcs have their own, different creation myth—the outcome is the same. Orcs have spread across the planet and can be found in just about every realm in substantial numbers.

Orcs stand from five to seven feet tall, although they often seem much shorter as they have a tendency to slouch or hunch over, especially when charging into battle. They like to say this is so the smaller races cannot get away from them. Most scholars believe the orc skeleton simply has a hard time handling the many layers of muscles atop it.

Orcs that make it to old age invariably have back problems and often wear studded leather trusses to give themselves some relief. Some orcs see this as a sign of weakness but those elders who have made it that far are often cunning enough to cut off any troublemakers at the knees—often literally—before any real trouble starts.

As with humans, any given orc can look a great deal different from another. The disparate orc cultures vary in skin, hair and eye colouring, as well as clothing and hairstyles. Each orc tribe speaks its own distinct dialect of Orc, most of which differ so greatly even orcs from neighbouring tribes have difficulty understanding each other. For this reason, most orcs speak the common tongue of the land, but they do so poorly. An orc would rather speak with his axe than his mouth.

Orc skin colour ranges from green to grey. Their hair is normally dark and coarse and can be anything from a dark blond to jet-black. Some orcs wear their hair cropped close but it is more common to see their tresses worn long and sometimes braided. Some tribes even favour dreadlocks, frequently reeking of the blood used to dye them.

The eyes of an orc can be any colour, from a pale blue to a pitch-black. They sometimes come in crimson, which most orcs take to be the sign of great strength. Many orc leaders have been blessed with such eyes.

Orc males have hair over almost their whole bodies. This is thick, coarse and almost always brown or black. Many older orcs sport beards as well, but these usually do not come in as full as that of a dwarf or gnome. Their younger brethren will usually chop or shave them off rather than have to keep them groomed. Otherwise, the beards are usually crusted with food, drink and *mrog* (a favourite orc drink described below).

Orc ears are pointed and their noses are usually flat and upturned, exposing their nostrils, which flare widely when the orc is angry. They also have sharp, pointed teeth set in a horrible under bite. Their lower jaw is thrust out harshly, exposing the long tusks that jut out past their lower lip, often far enough to nearly touch the orc's nose. This all makes the orcs look as if their ancestors were humans crossed with wild boars.

BORN FOR DARKNESS

Orcs live freely either above or below the ground. They are most active during the night, preferring to sleep during the day, normally in places hidden away from the prying eyes of the civilized peoples. They certainly can move about freely during the day, despite what some legends might say. However, they prefer not to, as the harsh light of the sun in a cloudless sky hurts their eyes.

Orcs can see well in the dark, as finely as any dwarf. Their night vision depicts images in shades of red and black, which they can discern between as if they were black and white. This leads many people to think of orcs as colour-blind, a misconception that is often exploited by orc tribes.

Because of this, orcs often wear garish colours that most other races would think clash horribly. Orcs like to have any attention they can get. From their point of view, there is no reason to wear clothing if it does not draw notice to the wearer.

A TASTE FOR BLOOD

Orcs are technically omnivorous but they prefer to eat meat above all else. When not at war, orc males spend most of their time hunting for fresh meat, as they rarely have the patience to tend cattle instead. Most times, the rare herd overseen by an orc is quickly decimated by raids—even by the herders themselves, who find it hard to resist a quick snack with such easy prey nearby.

Many orcs do not bother to cook their kills until the meat is at least a couple of days old. They prefer the taste of fresh blood, the warmer the better. Female

orcs, who are rarely if ever allowed along on a hunt, almost never get to enjoy this treat. It is up to them to cook the leftover food later. Orc males consider such activities to be beneath them.

Orcs are not addicted to blood in the fashion of a vampire, but they do relish the flavour. They claim prey that has been frightened right before it was killed tastes the best, due to the fear flowing through its veins. Creatures actually frightened to death are the rarest and most prized kills. This is one reason orcs like to cultivate the most frightening appearances they can.

Most orcs prefer to slake their thirst with the blood of a sentient creature if possible. These people, they say, feel the fear more poignantly, making their blood much more exquisite. In the heat of battle, it is normally impossible for an orc to stop to sample a victim's blood but it does happen from time to time, especially if there is a cessation in the fighting.

Apparently, the blood of those who fight against the orcs does not taste nearly so wonderful. The flavour of courage runs foul to an orc's palate. Orcs prefer to catch their prey on the run.

Mrog

The favourite drink of orcs is *mrog*, a dark mead made from fermented honey and blood. This has a sweet, coppery tang to it that many orcs compare favourably to the taste of fear in the lifeblood of their prey. Most orc armies carry several barrels of *mrog* with them, often making more along the way. The recipe is as simple as it is brutal, and fresh *mrog* can be ready to drink in as little as three days, although it is considered better if it is able to sit in its casks for at least a week.

Mrog is often called by the kind of blood used to brew it. Elf-*mrog* or dwarf-*mrog* is normally considered to be the best that is commonly available, although dragon-*mrog* is reputedly the best. Of course, such a drink is rare enough that only a few orcs have ever tasted it, so the others must take the word of such fortunate souls.

In the larger orc cities, some taverns actually blend various types of *mrog* together to produce unusual flavours. Still, most orcs prefer their *mrog* straight up. The most famous brands have loyal followings. These include Dead Dwarf, Skulleraeker, and Old Elf guts.

make it through their childhood. Orc babies are born after only six months in the womb and they reach sexual maturity by the age of eight.

The sexual promiscuity that runs through orc culture leads to the birth of many children. Female orcs are usually considered to be little more than cooks and mothers. It is not uncommon for an orc female to give birth to 30 children before hitting menopause somewhere around the age of 40, assuming she lives that long.

Once born, an orc child is the property of its mother. Fathers have little or no say—or even concern—about their children. Orcs do not marry, forming and breaking relationships with each other as suits them. Male orcs often return to the same female again and again, but they may find they are sharing her with several others in the tribe. Jealousy among orcs is common, despite the open nature of the relationships, and this is the cause of most fights that happen within a tribe.

Orc mothers raise their children cruelly, often seeing them as little burdens the gods have placed upon them for being unfortunate enough to be born female. They do love them in their own way, but all orc mothers know baby orcs eventually grow up and have little use for their mothers.

Orcs have no incest taboos, so it is not unusual for orcs of the same family to breed with each other. This is particularly true in smaller tribes, especially those decimated by war.

Once an orc reaches the age of eight or so, he is considered to be an adult. An orc does not reach full maturity until about age 12 or so, but at eight the orc is old enough to hunt, fight, breed, or start raising children.

Female orcs each usually have a hut or tents they assemble themselves, sometimes with the help of male orcs who wish to bed them. The males tend to lay down wherever they like when they wish to sleep. They carry what few belongings they have with them and share the bed of any female who will have them. When alone, they often simply sleep on the open ground.

Of course, in the larger orc settlements or cities, the most powerful males have their own places too. The chieftain of a tribe often establishes his own home and beckons females into it, but this is a rare honour reserved for him.

AN ORC'S LIFE

The lives of most orcs are brutal and short. Orcs breed like mad to make up for this, as many young orcs never



ORC PHYSIOLOGY

Orcs rarely reach old age. Usually, those that manage it have a natural tendency toward treachery that has allowed them to outlast all those who might have wished to take from them what is theirs, including their own lives. Others die either in war or at the hands of their own kind in one sort of squabble or another.

THE ORC MIND

The orc mind is the unfettered id. They are the moral equivalent of two-year-old humans, caring little for anything but their own immediate needs. Those few who rise above this mindset inevitably ascend to positions of great power within their tribe—or meet an untimely death.

Orcs are not terribly smart. Nor do they place much value on brains unless they are cracking them out of a foe's skull. Raw, brute strength is what is most important to them. A kind of animal cunning can help too, but most orcs do not have the patience to bother with anything so complex as a scheme.

Orcs are interested only in the three Fs: food, fighting and fornicating. They are first and foremost physical creatures, living eternally in the moment and doing what little they can to stave off their impending doom. This makes them extremely malleable by wiser folk. It explains how many an evil overlord has used his might to whip an army of orcs into shape to crush those who might dare to stand against him.

Orcs are uniformly bullies, which means in their hearts they are cowards. They are full of savage bluster until someone stronger stands up to them. Sadly, most orcs are too stupid to realize when they are outclassed and

must be taught such lessons by force rather than threat.

As a group, orcs are even less likely to recognize the superior strength of a foe. They tend to goad each other into untenable situations by means of war cries and their garish war banners. Orcs are willing to follow a strong leader just about anywhere, as long as they believe they can get what is coming to them in the end. Sadly, by the time they figure out what is coming to them is death, it is almost always too late to do anything about it.



'Ol' fart Zag don't d'serve dat fine 'ut an' fine slave girl. Time ta sort 'im out.'

Gakk pushed the hide door-covering aside and stomped into Zag's hut. Zag scuttled up from his rough bench, his back so bent he was barely any taller upright than seated.

'Gakk, ya fine youn' fella, good ta see ya – want meat?' Zag proffered the human thigh joint from the table, 'Cooked but still good.'

Gakk was surprised – he'd come here to kill the aged orc, but here he was being unusually friendly. Maybe he could be cowed into submission instead. That would be better still. He snatched the meat and took a great bite from it, roaring, 'Right ya ol' cripple, ya gimme ya food, ya hut, ya slaves, and ya do wot I say fro' now on or ya get a piece o' this!' Gakk waved his massive axe over his head for emphasis as Zag cowered beneath him in the dirt.

After another few seconds, Zag suddenly rolled aside, displaying a surprising agility to avoid the younger orc's body falling forward. Gakk's tongue, swollen and blackened, lolled lifelessly from his mouth and his eyes bulged hugely. Zag grinned, revealing several missing fangs.

'Get out here, slave – I want this new meat jointed and gutted right away. Save the guts, liver and lights as a gift for Gakk's brother.'

ORC HABITAT

Orcs can be found just about anywhere, in any climate. Various tribes prefer to live in certain parts of the world but they can generally adapt quickly to just about any environment. Still, most orc tribes can be found in one of two places: either underground or on their way to war. There are some exceptions to this but they are notable mostly because of their relative rarity.

UNDERGROUND

Because of the pain that direct sunlight causes their eyes, many orcs prefer to live underground. This also makes it easier for them to protect themselves from those who might wish to do them harm. Orc war camps are notorious for attracting too much attention from those people to whom they wander a bit too close.

Orcs are not great at working stone, however. Most orc-built tunnels are in constant danger of collapse. For this reason, orcs prefer to occupy settlements that have already been built.

This has resulted in dozens of wars between orcs and dwarves, which has caused an enmity between the two races that never seems to lose its fervour. Orcs are also happy to encroach on the homes of gnomes but they often find gnome homes unacceptably cramped. A few orc tribes have fought long and hard against the subterranean dark elves too, but it is more common for the savvy dark elves to strike deals with the orcs to work together against the dwarves and elves they both hate so dearly.

The occasional dark dwarf clan strikes an alliance with orcs from time to time too, but this is rare. Even evil dwarves do not trust orcs. The enmity between the two races runs deep.

Given a choice, orcs invade a dwarven stronghold and kill everyone in it. They then repair the defences as best they can and take up residence there themselves. The trouble is that most orcs have absolutely no skill at anything other than swinging an axe. Such occupied dwarven redoubts quickly fall into disrepair, their original glory soon swallowed in a wave of orc filth and neglect. The only thing that keeps such places standing is the fact that

the dwarves did such a fantastic job of building them in the first place.

There are some dwarves in hotly-contested regions who lament this state of affairs, suggesting that their people not put so much effort into building places that might someday be used against them. Even so, the dwarven sense of pride is far too strong for these disheartened voices to ever find much of an audience.

However, some of the more entrenched dwarven clans have taken great pains to place traps about their homes to protect against invaders. This extends all the way to their leaders being able to literally bring down the roof with the pull of a single 'doomsday' lever. This has done little to deter the orcs, though, since they are happy to live in the other parts of the stronghold and simply laugh at the fact that they forced the dwarves to destroy what they had worked so hard to build.

The trouble with the orc habit of taking over the homes of other people is that the survivors (if any) or their relatives often wish to reclaim their home. Since the orcs are not very adept at defence, preferring to be on the warpath than studying engineering, they regularly



get rooted out of their acquired homes. Of course, the first chance they have, they will usually mount a counteroffensive of their own.

In this way, certain underground lairs have traded ownership dozens of times over the centuries. Entire chambers of these places have been decorated with the bones of the fallen—either to honour the dead or to spit on them.

IN THE DARK FOREST

Some orcs prefer to live in the heart of the darkest forests instead, under the thick canopy of an evil wood, the ground of which never sees the light of day. Orcs that live here often abandon their traditionally nocturnal ways, as they are able to function just as well during the day as at night. Of course, the elves normally see the forests as their homes and this puts them in direct conflict with the orcs.

The two races treat their homes very differently. Elves see themselves as the caretakers of nature in its most unspoiled forms. They go to great lengths to integrate their way of life with that of the flora and fauna around them. They live in harmony with their environment.

Orcs, on the other hand, see Mother Nature as just another useless female to be raped. They ravage her at every opportunity, laying waste to one region and then moving on to the next. Orcs have destroyed entire forests in this way and only the largest woods have a chance of regrowth before the orcs find their way back to it again.

The elves are at a distinct disadvantage here, as they wish to save their homes. The orcs could not care less. If they are pressed into a corner, they are only too happy to set the forest ablaze and escape under the cover of the blackish smoke while the elves struggle to contain the damage, often in vain.

IN THE WAR CAMP

While orcs are often found in the dark places of the planet, there is one notable exception: the war camp. When orcs go to war, they realize the juiciest targets are often those that bask in the undiluted rays of the sun. For this reason, orc leaders sometimes force their fellows on long marches from their tribal lands to fresher territories ripe for the conquering.

Dozens, even hundreds, of huge tents mark an orc war camp. During the day, the orcs tend to shelter under these large canopies. Only those on scouting or guard duty are regularly forced to brave the sun's burning eye.

At night, though, an orc war camp is abuzz with activity. Orcs normally travel at night, although they can force themselves to march along in the day if they must. At such times, they rely on their sorcerers to cover the sky in an iron-grey veil, relieving the orcs of the discomfort they would find under direct sunlight.

Any large group of orcs, which are not ensconced in a forest or underground, are considered to be in a war camp. This is often a nomadic existence in which the orcs stay in one place until they have totally befouled it and eradicated its resources. They then move on to greener pastures.

Such orcs are always on the warpath, whether they have a generally agreed-upon target or not. They may simply wander about until they find someone to fight against, or they may be a bit more directed in their movements, hunting for hapless foes to destroy. The difference is usually in the heart of their current leader. For this reason, an orc tribe that was wandering aimlessly for months can suddenly become rapaciously aggressive, simply by the ascension of a new leader.

Orc war camps are mobile towns, complete with females and children. Since the orcs do not really know where they might end up next, they are loathe to leave the non-combatants behind. When the orcs do actually find a target to besiege or destroy, they usually leave the females and children at least a full day's march behind the front line of the battle. They do not, however, leave any able-bodied male behind to defend the camp. No such orc would be willing to waste his time guarding the camp when he could be in the middle of a battle instead.

Canny foes have used this fact to destroy orc encampments before but they overestimated the effect it would have on the orcs. Instead of causing them despair, such actions only enrage the orcs, spurring them on to even more horrible deeds. Orcs do not mourn their dead. As the old orc saying goes, 'The dead are not worthy of life'.

ORC SOCIETY

While it is hard to call anything about the orcs organized, there are certainly ways in which they interact that are roughly predictable.

This is what passes for a society among the orcs and, while it is not the kind of strictly hierarchical structures you see in many races, understanding it is vital to comprehending any group of orcs.

THE EVIL THAT ORCS DO

Orcs are full of both chaos and evil and their society—such as it is—reflects this. There is no honour among them. Might makes right and, when that does not work, there is always treachery instead.

Roughly translated, a favourite orc war chant is: 'Rape, loot, pillage and burn—we're gonna rape, loot, pillage

and burn—eat babies!' This fairly well summarizes the outlook of the common orc. They do what they want to whomever they want. They take what they feel like. They destroy everything else simply because, if they cannot have it or carry it away with them, they do not feel as if anyone else should either.

Orcs breed like mad. If possible, the males rape those who resist. They do not particularly care about the race of those they defile, although the more exotic the conquest the more bragging rights are allotted the beast who commits the crime. This is why there are so many half-orcs in the world. Most of these are born to the survivors of orc raids on their homes.

There is nothing calculating about orcs. They live in the moment and rarely think of consequences. This makes them particularly good footsoldiers in armies of evil. A strong figure can mould them into a savage fighting force. Such leaders usually hail from outside their race but a truly exceptional orc sometimes rises to the challenge. Additionally, as long as their bosses feed the orcs' baser natures on a regular basis, the orcs are usually happy enough to go along with whatever they are told to do.

'Self-recrimination', 'empathy', 'compassion' and 'angst' are words that do not exist in the orc tongue. Orcs have a dozen different words for gutting a foe, however, most of which depend on both the weapon used and the movement of the gutter's arms. Another dozen or so words are dedicated to various forms of treachery and betrayal. Many of these are based upon the names of the greatest perpetrators of these heinous deeds.

Orcs can be cowed and controlled by forceful figures but the attention paid to them must be consistent for this to work. Left to their own devices, orcs inevitably turn upon each other or let their minds wander to fulfilling their own evil needs. Their attention spans are pathetically short and the best way to keep them focused on the task at hand seems to be either excruciating pain or the nearly constant threat of its application.

Orcs care only for themselves and their own comfort. They would kill their children to save their own skins, and without a moment's remorse. They breed like rabbits, so there are always more offspring to come.

Orcs are also bloodthirsty. An orc's favourite sound is the noise a skull makes when crushed with a solid blow. Many of their musical instruments are based on this principal, including a variety of what they call



'crack-drums', which are fashioned from skulls stripped clean of their flesh. The fresher the crack-drum the better, as older ones tend to fracture from the vicious poundings they regularly receive.

There is nothing redeeming about orcs. They are vile in every way. This is why civilized people feel justified in killing them all whenever the opportunity presents itself. They know to a certainty that the orcs would murder them in a heartbeat if given the chance.

Orcs are xenophobic too. Given the choice between killing an orc or a member of some other race, they invariably team up with the other orc to kill the intruder. After that bit of work is done, the orcs usually turn on each other as well. A smart orc might let a temporary ally exhaust himself in a battle so that the wise one could later kill the other. Most orcs are not so cunning. Those that are, generally rise quickly through the horde's hierarchy.



THE CRITICAL MASS THEORY

Sometimes orcs can live in relative peace in their homes for years. While there is certainly some internal strife going on in any orc settlement on a nearly constant basis, most of the time this violence does not spill over into the surrounding areas. Inevitably, though, the orcs somehow turn their attention to the outside world. Soon after, the thunderous rumblings of war break into a raging storm.

There are lots of different reasons for this. They normally include a leader springing up among the orcs and goading them into war, or an evil sorceress grinding the orcs under her heel and sending them off to do her dirty work. But there is a theory about an underlying reason for each of these incidents that tends to explain them all.

Orcs breed like magically-accelerated rabbits. As such, their population regularly explodes. The only breaks in this are during times of war. During such dark days, the males are not available for breeding and a number of them are inevitably lost in the constant battles.

In fact, there have been times in the past during which an entire tribe of orcs has nearly been wiped out. Unless they are entirely destroyed, though, they always seem to find a way to come back. The surviving orcs go into hiding and start breeding again. Within the space of a few generations of orcs—which are only 10 years each—their numbers have grown exponentially and they are once again a major threat to the civilized people of the region.

The theory is that there is a certain tipping point at which the population of an orc tribe reaches critical mass. Once it does, the internal bickering among the tribe threatens to rip it apart. If they do not somehow figure out a means to focus their naturally aggressive tendencies outward, they are doomed to destroy themselves.

Some orc tribes do just that, and their more peaceful neighbours simply thank their gods when they learn of it. An orc versus orc conflict usually trims the size of the population down to the point at which there is no longer any point in fighting. This sometimes results in a single, clear winner emerging from the ruckus. When this happens, those civilized neighbours had

better start praying even harder, for there is little more dangerous than an orc tribe with a strong leader.

If that leader can manage to hold on to power long enough for the orc tribe to replenish its numbers—something which rarely takes more than a single generation—he is sure to lead his people into war. The savviest leaders sometimes find other powerful forces with which they can ally their people: warlords, wizards, even other armies, whether orc or not. Either way, the orcs are coming.

THE WARBAND

Most people are never so unfortunate as to meet an orc army or stumble across an orc settlement or encampment. That does not mean they are sure to be free of any encounters with this evil race. Any region that is not entirely civilized—and even some that are—often finds itself plagued by individual groups of orcs known as warbands.

An orc warband is a nomadic group of trouble-makers who feed themselves and their families by raiding other settlements and taking what they need. They can number up to 250 orcs strong, of which only about 40% are orc males. The rest are females (20%) and children (40%).

Most orc warbands are composed of people who were kicked out of the larger orc communities or are the remnants of such a group that was nearly destroyed in battle. They are floundering about, looking for a place in the world. There are few locales that are both willing to accept a new warband of orcs and still have excellent targets for raiding nearby. Those that exist usually already have a large population of orcs in them and the local orcs are not usually happy about assimilating a large group of outsiders—unless they are preparing for war, in which case all orcs are welcome.

Life in a warband is simple. The males forage for food and other necessities, either by hunting or raiding. The females bear and care for the children. They also cook food and brew mrog, as well as handle the defence of the camp should any attackers arrive. The children brutalize each other horribly, preparing themselves for their adult lives.



The warband survives by raiding, but not too much. Many civilized peoples who live in frontier areas accept the occasional orc raid as a fact of their lives. It is when the orcs spend too long in one place that the locals start to get up in arms about it—often literally. Warbands run by smart leaders always hit a target and then move on. While they may face the occasional vengeful relative of their victims, most people are simply relieved enough about the orcs moving on that they do not pursue the matter. When the orcs stick around, though, the locals are compelled to take action simply to survive. Many orc warbands have been eradicated after being too foolish to leave in a timely manner.

THE HORDE

Large orc communities are known as hordes. These can number in the thousands—even tens of thousands—but the ratio of males, females and children remains roughly the same. Most times, hordes have a stable base of operations. This could be a commandeered dwarven stronghold, a pillaged elven city, or

simply a massive encampment which its neighbours are terrified of provoking.

With few exceptions, the males of a horde eventually go on the warpath. There are only a small number of stable orc cities in recorded history and the word 'stable' is used loosely in each of these cases. Most times, the battle-worthy males of the horde eventually come pouring out of the settlement en route to inflicting some serious misery on some other people in some other place.

As with warbands, hordes are led by a single, incredibly mighty ruler. Orcs are notoriously horrible at sharing power. They are only ever ruled by a lone dictator, usually a fascist who abuses his control horribly.

Of course, the orcs who rise to such position are truly exceptional creatures. It is impossible to rule over

every single orc in a horde by brute force, so many of these duties are delegated. This means delegating power to another orc, though, and an orc with a taste of such power is bound to be hungry for more.

Many rulers of hordes hunt for worthy foes for their people simply to keep their underlings from constantly plotting against them. While being at war does not keep a treacherous orc from scheming, it at least keeps him too busy to think on it much and often keeps him too far from the ruler to implement those plans the plotter might have.

In one sense, a horde is little more than a large group of warbands brought together under a single banner, often for a single reason. Life in a horde, however, is a bit more specialized. Each warband that is part of the horde is usually assigned a particular task, whether that is scouting, hunting, guarding, forging (or stealing) weapons and armour, or whatever else. Those warbands that perform well are lauded for their successes. Those that fail are assigned ever worse tasks, often with a new leader to replace the one who is executed on the spot.

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

If male orcs consider the females and their spawn so worthless and troublesome, why do the males bother with them at all? Such creatures are not capable of thinking abstractly about the continuation of the species, and appealing to their better nature is pointless, since they do not have one. So what is it that keeps those males bringing back their kills to the camp to share with those left behind?

The answer is simple: sex.

Male orcs live for sex and, while they are not above raping females to satisfy their sadistic natures, they often find the female orc does not submit as easily as a male would like. Many a male orc has been killed in his sleep by a female he raped. Others have been murdered while in the actual act.

While female orcs may not be the killing machines their male counterparts are, they are perfectly capable of slitting a throat or breaking a nose when an aggressive male's guard is down. Even orcs cannot be ready for a fight at all times. Eventually they have to sleep.



So the males bring back their kills and other trophies to offer up to potential mates as enticements. Since there are usually twice as many male orcs as there are females, the competition for the attentions of lady orcs is often intense.

This is another reason why female orcs eschew long-term relationships. They find the moment they settle down with a single male, he invariably slacks off in providing for her and her children. To maintain the lifestyle to which she is (or would like to become) accustomed, the female orc needs to keep up the competition between her suitors. Otherwise, she is sure to be forgotten.

While male orcs may not care for their children much, female orcs are ready to fight to protect their spawn with their last breath. The maternal instinct among orcs is as strong as any found in the animal kingdom. The mother-child relationship is the only stable one in the lives of most orcs. If an orc learns his father has been killed, this is normally barely enough to cause the orc to raise a mug of mrog in his father's honour. If someone even speaks poorly of his mother, though, this is an insult of the gravest sort and the situation usually ends up with someone's mother losing a child.

SLAVES

There are some jobs in a horde or even a warband that orcs just are not willing to do. If it is something even an orc finds distasteful, you can be sure it is vile indeed. If an orc can find someone else to perform such tasks, you can be sure he will. That is where slaves come in.

In the course of their raids, orcs sometimes come upon people who foolishly surrender to them or are simply unable to prevent themselves from being captured or kidnapped. Those that suffer this fate are in for far worse than a simple death at the end of a battleaxe. They are bound for a short, miserable life of servitude in their captor's home.

Orcs love to have slaves but they normally never take more with them than they can manage. If they happen to capture an entire village, the orcs normally enslave the most able-bodied among the captives and then kill the rest. Given a choice, a male orc usually

chooses a female slave over a male. To the mind of an orc, a female slave is weaker and thus less likely to fight back, although not all orcs are as selective in their choice of victims.

Slaves are common sources of half-orcs, although many women pregnant with such offspring do their best to kill either themselves or the child at the earliest opportunity. Much of the time, their orc masters are only too happy to take care of this detail for them.

Most slaves are dead within a year if not sooner. Orcs treat their slaves poorly, often forgetting to provide them with food and water. A dead slave is simply one less thing to worry about from most orcs' perspectives. Of course, this relief only lasts until the orc misses the services the slave once provided, which often precipitates a search for another slave.

In the orc social hierarchy, slaves are on the bottom-most rung, below children, females and even half-orcs. In most cases, their only hope is for a quick death.





Those that are rescued from such a horrible fate are generally grateful beyond words.

HALF-ORCS

All the rapes orcs commit leads to a number of half-orcs being scattered in their wake. This can cause a great deal of heartache in such communities. The spawn of these horrific couplings find it difficult to be accepted in their mother's hometown, where they serve as a constant reminder of the crimes done to both the woman in particular and the community at large. While the children themselves are hardly at fault, their very features betray their bastard heritage and, even if they leave their homes - they are still forever and clearly marked as who they are.

Half-orc children are unwelcome in any orc community. Orc fathers care even less for them than they do for any fully orc children they might have, and the maternal instinct of a female orc does not extend to those not of pure orc blood. In fact, most females have

their hands full enough with their own children that they do not particularly care about the fate of anyone who is not a direct, full-orc relative either.

Sometimes, an adult half-orc goes out of his way to find his father. Of those that do, most are hoping to avenge the crime committed against their mothers. These situations always end up in someone's death.

There are the rare half-orcs who actually seek out an orc warband or horde to which they can become a part. Disgusted by the treatment they have received at the hands of those who share their human heritage, they hope to find acceptance among orcs instead. A large proportion of these half-orcs are sorely disappointed, as orcs are generally far crueler than any humans. Still, there are the rare exceptions, mostly powerful warriors who are able to cow their orc brethren on their own terms and quickly catapult themselves into positions of leadership.

SORCERY

While most orcs prefer to rely on the strength of arms, they have a healthy respect for the sorcerers in their midst. Orcs understand power of any kind and, while a magic spell may not be as direct as a blade shoved through a heart, it can be a great deal more spectacular.

Those orcs who do have some talent at sorcery often use it to supplement their skills as a warrior. They often find themselves either quickly ascended to a position of power or made the pawn of some other orc already in such a post. Those that ally with the wrong person quickly discover they have two options: find another patron or die along with their current one.

Most orc leaders consider sorcerers important enough that they do not kill such rivals straight off. For this same reason, though, these orcs keep a close eye on their sorcerer allies or underlings. If they feel they are about to be betrayed by a sorcerer, most orcs try to kill the traitor rather than let someone else have him.

A rare few female orcs are sorcerers. This is one of the only ways a female orc can have any power in orc society. Even the most powerful female sorcerers must constantly struggle against the patriarchal nature of orc society though. It is rare for respect to be given to such people ungrudgingly.

It is even rarer for an orc to be a wizard though. Orcs do not place much value upon good study habits or memorization skills, things which being a wizard demands. Even if an orc had the temperament to become a wizard, it is nearly impossible for such a creature to find a willing mentor to which he can apprentice himself. There are vanishingly few orc wizards around and wizards of other races are not often prepared to teach their secrets to someone who could, and probably would, betray them at a moment's notice.

RELIGION

The kind of magic most orcs really understand is that powered by the gods: clerical spells. The gods are a very real influence in the lives of most orcs, although most of them only pay tribute to the Orc God himself. The Great Warrior, as he is also known, is the only one to whom the orcs can turn in times of trouble. They know that most of the other gods, even those who approve of their evil ways, do not wish to have anything to do with them.

In the orc mythos, the Great Warrior arose from the dark beneath the mountains to take his rightful place as

the ruler of the world. The other gods, cowards that they are, banded together to defeat him through base treachery, a lesson the Great Warrior learned well.

Unable to take over the world by force, the Great Warrior came up with a cunning plan. He stormed through the world, spilling his seed into any womb he could find. The creatures formed by these unholy unions were the first orcs. In effect all orcs, even those of the purest blood, have only half of the greatness of the Orc God in them. Half-orcs are cursed to only have a quarter of that. All others are not even so poorly blessed.

Orc clerics, who are almost exclusively male, hold a prominent position in their society. Unlike the priests of other religions or races, these creatures often find themselves in the thick of battle instead of tending the wounded in tents far behind the front lines. Such powerful warriors often leapfrog over more battle-scarred veterans to prominent positions. The most notable among these become battle shamans. See 'Roleplaying with Orcs' for full details on this new prestige class.

Churt raised his greatsword once more, cutting a particularly ugly orc in half with a single powerful swing of the massive blade so the creature's legs fell one way and torso the other. He looked about hastily, but that seemed to be the last of Garr's warband – or at least, the last who was willing to face Churt in open combat.

Only Garr himself remained. The savage orc war-leader advanced cautiously, leading with his shield, wary of the mighty half-orc who had so devastated his most trusted followers. 'I have gold,' Garr said. 'Females too – join me, and I will give you four patrols of your own, make you a captain of the warband.' Garr raised his flail a little behind his back, ready to sweep it up and over his head in hopes of taking the interloper by surprise.

Churt seemed to be considering the offer, but took a half-step back as Garr's flail smashed down, evading the spiked metal balls by inches. The huge greatsword swung once more, slicing deep into Garr's shield and the arm beneath. The orc leader gave a scream of pain as Churt deftly reversed the blade's motion, cutting off both his legs just below the knee.

Already bleeding to death, his flail bouncing uselessly on the ground, Garr roared, 'Why? What are you doing this for?'

Churt raised the greatsword one final time, 'For my mother. For what you did to her. For the life you cursed me with, for your vile blood that flows through my veins.' He cut through Garr's head cleanly, slicing off the top of the skull just above the eyes, spattering blood, brain and shards of bone all over the cavern walls.

After a moment, he became aware he was being watched. Turning swiftly, the great blade ready to strike again if need be, he saw a dozen or more orcs entering through various side tunnels, bowing their heads to him. No warriors these, but the first females of the warband he had seen so far.

'Hail Churt, son of Garr! All hail, war-leader Churt!'

from The Wars and Conquests of Horde-Master Churt, called The Great, by Royal Sage Glawker



Orc clerics can choose two of the following domains: Chaos, Evil, Strength and War. These domains play to the central pillars of the orcs' strength as a race.

CELEBRATIONS

Orcs like to take any excuse they can find to have a party. While they have regular celebrations at the traditional times of year, such as the solstices and the equinoxes, they are often happy to break open a cask of mrog for anything from a battle victory to the birth of a child.

Orc celebrations are often brutal affairs. Some parties last for several days and, by the end of the affair, it is not uncommon for several of the celebrants to be dead. Their demises just as often come from overindulgence in mrog or foolish attempts at stunts designed to prove their power as they do from the hands of their fellows.

Drinking contests at orc parties are legendary. It is not uncommon for the winners of such events to suddenly become prestigious members of their community. In any case, both the winners and losers have to deal with mrog hangovers, which the orcs often boast are bad enough that they would be the death of any non-orc who happened to somehow consume that much mrog.

The only real difficulty with orc celebrations, from an orc leader's point of view, is that the orcs sometimes start celebrating a little too early. Many orc warbands break out the mrog right at the end of a battle. If there is still a war going on, though, this can damage the orc warlord's strategic plans, as he can count on that group of orcs being unavailable for battle for at least the next day or two.

SPORTS

When not engaged in hunting or war, male orcs need something to keep them busy so they do not end up focusing their natural aggressiveness on each other. In the distant past, an orc chieftain concocted an orc sport known as bootskull, so named for the fact that it involves using your boot to kick a freshly-harvested skull through the other team's goal.

The only problem with bootskull is there are few rules against fouls. While players are not allowed to be armed or armoured, there is nothing that prevents them from beating each other senseless at

any opportunity. The only thing that keeps the players focused are the large bets that most of them place on the game. This makes scoring points actually worthwhile to most orcs.

Every now and then someone gets caught shaving points or betting against his own team. When this happens, the guilty orc is executed at the start of the next match and his head earns the honour of serving as that game's skull.

Orcs sometimes engage in other forms of competition—most of which are just as bloody but less destructive to each other. However, bootskull is far and away the most popular. Some warbands manage to get together regularly for matches. While there is no true league, as such, fans of the teams do keep a strict count of victories and losses. Amazingly, some rival warbands have been able to settle their differences with a game of bootskull rather than a full-out battle. On the other hand, more than a few battles have broken out during a bootskull match that swelled to include everyone in the stands and beyond.



METHODS OF WARFARE

There are few things for which orcs are renowned, but fighting is one of them. They are as willing to attack a foe as look at him. While they may not be the best blade-wielders in the land, they are known for the kind of arrogance that can only be felt by those supported by the massive numbers of troops the orcs are able to field.

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

When it comes to weapons and armour, as with most of their belongings, orcs usually have whatever they have been able to take from their victims. An orc fighting force is rarely entirely outfitted with the same kind of equipment. This makes for a motley fighting crew but these variances can allow an orc warband a great deal of versatility too.

Given a choice, orcs seem to prefer armour that does not restrict them too much while still providing adequate protection. Most orcs enjoy wearing a breastplate for these reasons. They often paint them with garish colours and obscene symbols to help terrify their foes.

Orcs that want some heavier protection usually fashion their own splint mail out of whatever kinds of armour they can strip off their victims. Since orcs rarely forge their own mail, this is normally ill fitting and noisy, but the orcs like it that way. They believe the clanking makes them even more frightening in combat.

The melee weapon of choice for an orc is the axe. Smaller or younger orcs content themselves with the battleaxe, while most of the adult males take up the greataxe as soon as they are able to swing it.

Many orcs use javelins in battle because of their usefulness in both melee and ranged combat. Also, this is one of the few weapons that most orc warbands can fashion for themselves should the need arise. Given a choice, however, an orc usually takes a mighty composite longbow instead.

THE WARBAND

The tactics of an orc warband are different from those of an orc horde. When working with smaller numbers of troops, the orc leaders like to try to set up ambushes.

The trouble is that they are not particularly good at it. Invariably, the intended victims somehow spot one of the attackers early, or one of the orcs lying in wait gets a bit anxious about the attack and jumps before the moment is right.

The warband is much better at the hit-and-run raid. First the orcs send out scouts to find a likely target. Then the orcs approach the target overland, avoiding any roads so as not to alert their intended victims. They wait until the middle of the night, preferably with cloud cover over the moon, and then charge out of the darkness to slaughter their victims while they sleep.

Orcs may use torches to set a foe's home alight and drive any occupants out into the waiting orc's axes but, in general, the orcs decline to use light sources of any kind. This is particularly true when they are attacking humans or members of other races that cannot see in the dark themselves.

Once the battle is over, the orcs kill any male survivors and rape any female survivors. Young are sometimes simply abandoned to die, although they are slaughtered just as often. As for goods, they take whatever they want and can carry and destroy the rest if they have the time and energy to do so.

Their work done, the orcs leave immediately. They know their tactics all too often attract attention and they do not want to be around when someone comes to investigate.

THE HORDE

The aims of an orc horde are similar to that of a warband. However, their tactics are vastly different. An army the size of an orc horde cannot move around as quickly or as nimbly as a relatively tiny warband.

When working with a horde, an orc general must first rally as many warbands together as he can find. To do this, he needs to have both a means and a cause. For a means, most orc generals are some of the nastiest and most influential orcs around. If they have managed to reach a point in their lives at which other orcs willingly call them generals, then they probably already have the means to gather a horde.

Still, orcs do not band together under a single banner for no reason at all. The general needs to give the orcs a solid cause for gearing up for war. This is fairly easy, since most orcs are just itching for a reason to fight. An attack against an orc village would do, although the simple fact that there are elves living nearby, just



METHODS OF WARFARE

waiting for a proper horde to overrun them would be even better. A rousing speech can help but it is not sufficient on its own. To really get themselves whipped up into a frenzy, the orcs need a point to rally around.

Once the horde is ready, the general sends out scouting parties to find the clearest way to their chosen target, whatever it may be. An encounter with just such a party may be the first clue the locals have that the orcs are on their way.

The general also dispatches warbands to hunt up food for the horde. A horde of orcs can eat more than a squad of dragons and, if each warband in the horde was to hunt for its own food, the army would never manage to get anywhere. These hunting warbands can provide heroes with an even harder challenge than the scouting parties.

If possible, an orc general likes to just run the horde straight at a target by the fastest route possible. He follows the input given to him by his guides and forces the horde ahead. The horde proper ideally moves only under the cover of darkness, either at night or underground. This can help shield their movements from spies but it is still hard to conceal the presence of such a large fighting force.

Because a horde is so large and relatively slow, most of its targets have at least a bit of an advance warning before the horde shows up on their doorsteps. The orcs realize this and often carry easily-reassembled siege weapons with them.

Orcs have been known to lay siege to a well-defended city for months, although this is rare. More often, they hurl themselves against the walls of the city throughout every night they can, until the city falls. They have little patience for starving their foes out.

DEFENCE

Sometime orcs are called upon to defend their homes, when a group of heroes attacks, hoping to liberate the region from the orcs' reign of terror. Orcs are ill suited to defence. They would much rather be on the offensive than the defensive, so much so that they have been known to abandon their homes—whether they were the orcs' to

begin with or not—regroup later, and then counterattack from the outside.

When orcs find themselves defending their homes, the males often flee if they are too pressed, leaving the females and children behind if they must. The females are far more reluctant to leave a place, having been the ones who actually forged a home out of it. To an orc male, the place where he sleeps is just that. To a female, it is far more sacred. The children stick with their mothers, no matter what.

Female orcs sometimes spend time preparing simple traps around their homes. These usually involve things such as pits, rockfalls, or falling nets. These are as useful against the unwanted attentions of overly-aggressive male orcs as they are against invaders, so they tend to get a lot of use.

No matter their gender or age, cornered orcs fight with the ferocity of wild animals. They know the best they can expect from most civilized foes is death, and they are not willing to go down without a fight. They struggle on to the bitter end, only stopping when their breath leaves their bodies for the last time.



ROLEPLAYING WITH ORCS

Now that you know all about orcs, it is time to put that knowledge to use in your games. Traditionally, many Games Masters have simply stuck orcs into any 10-by-10-foot room, apparently figuring that the local necromancer must have hired them cheaply from the nearest Thugs' Guild. These creatures are little more than a notch on a hero's blade as he marches from one end of an adventure to another.

While it is possible to treat orcs like this in your game, it is a bit of a shame not to be a bit more imaginative. With the information you have received from this book already, you should know that orcs are far more than cannon fodder. Here are some details to help you breathe life into them as a race, to aid working them into your game.

ORCS IN YOUR GAME

It is certainly acceptable for low-level heroes to run into small groups of orcs as they wander around their first couple of dungeons. However, orcs do not tend to work in such small numbers. As the heroes become more powerful and more able to handle such challenges, start making the orcs tougher and tougher.

The easiest way to do this is to simply add more orcs to the encounters. This soon becomes a problem of its own, though, as large battles can quickly bog down the game and cause it to feel dull. Literally cutting a swathe through an orc horde may sound wonderfully epic but, in practice, it can be monotonous.

Orcs advance by means of classes, just as characters do. If you want a harder challenge for your heroes, all you need to do is make each orc more experienced. While a handful of 1st-level orc warriors may cause a mid-level party to yawn, the same cannot be said of a vicious strike team of high-level orc assassins.

On the other hand, one of the reasons orcs are so feared is that there are so many of them. Whenever the heroes face a force of hundreds or even thousands of orcs, their first instinct should be to run. No matter how powerful they may be against a small group of foes, that many orcs should be enough to eventually overpower just about anyone.

Teach your heroes that orcs are dangerous because of their numbers. If the heroes destroy an orc warband, they can be sure that another such warband is not far behind. Eventually, the heroes should get to the point that every time they see an orc they should suspect that there is likely to be an orc army nearby. The sight of even a single, 1st level orc warrior can be enough to terrify even the most jaded hero when he considers what that one warrior's presence could very well mean.

PORTRAYING AN ORC

While the standard orc is a warrior, an orc's favoured class is that of the barbarian. Orcs are nothing if not barbaric. They have no use for the rules of civilized society or anything else that stands in the way of them taking whatever it is they want whenever it is they want it.

Orcs are not all that smart, and they know it. They distrust words as a means of trickery, placing their faith in the power of their arms instead. The most articulate thing most heroes ever hear from an orc's mouth is the war cry it lets loose just before it charges into battle.

An orc's decision process breaks down into just three questions.

- † Is it dangerous? If so, kill it—or avoid it if it is too tough.
- † Can I eat it? If so, kill it and then eat it.
- † Can I have sex with it? If so, proceed to try.

Beyond that, most orcs do not bother to give over a whole lot of time to other concerns. The only other question that comes up fairly often in their lives arises when someone gives them an order or makes them an offer. Then they simply ask: What is in it for me?

Orc leaders differ a bit from the ravenous herd. They usually bear a sort of animal cunning that has already permitted them to advance as far as they have. Mostly this means that they are better than most orcs at figuring out exactly what could be in any given situation for them. This means they are more willing to talk than other orcs. However, they are just as ready to turn to their battleaxes to end a conversation with a large exclamation mark.

While orcs are more than happy to oblige anyone looking for a fight, they are bullies at heart. They usually do their best to intimidate or run someone off



before they actually start swinging, especially when up against superior numbers. If they succeed, that means they can focus more of their attention on those who managed to stay behind.

HALF-ORCS

Half-orcs are available as one of the standard player character races for one particular reason: there are lots of them around. The orc tendency to raid and rape has left thousands of single mothers scattered throughout the lands, trying to raise children they did not want in a world that does not care for them either.

Just about every half-orc has a troubled childhood. Even if a half-orc's mother truly loved him and raised him the best she could, she still has to face the world as a victim of rape. Also, most communities are not all that understanding about half-orcs. Even the most accepting communities still have to deal with the fact that the character's orc heritage means he is likely to be a bit more aggressive, perhaps even crueller, than other children his age.

Because of their heritage, half-orcs often believe they are always being watched. They feel as if the world is just waiting for them to make a mistake so they can be persecuted, or even executed, for being too much like an orc.

A lot of half-orcs crack under the pressure and become just as evil as everyone expects them to be. When the heroes meet a half-orc, they must struggle to decide whether or not they can, or even should try, to trust such a character. If they get into a situation in which such trust is essential, they may find themselves willing to take extreme measures to resolve the situation as quickly as possible.

Physically, half-orcs are similar to the full-blooded variety. From a human point of view, they look an awful lot like orcs. The reverse can be said from an orc point of view though. Half-orcs tend to be just a little bit weaker than full-blooded orcs. On the other hand, while they enjoy the powers of darkvision, they are unaffected by the sensitivity to light that plagues regular orcs. They do not wince from the light of the sun. This, if nothing else, should indicate that there is some hope for them after all.

THE BATTLE SHAMAN

The battle shaman is an orc spellcaster who glories in the dangers of battle. They use their magical powers to transform themselves into some of the most lethal warriors ever seen. Many of them become high-

ranking officers in orc armies, if they manage to survive that long. They prefer to lead from the front, where the battle is thickest, trusting in their might of arms and magic to win the day.

Most battle shamans start out as either clerics or sorcerers. There have been some wizards and druids that have become battle shamans but these are rare. Some rangers become battle shamans as well but they tend to be far less effective than those hailing from other classes.

Battle shamans are rarely, if ever, found without a warband or, better yet, an army surrounding them. While they are happiest in the thick of battle, they did not get where they are by being suicidal. They are cunning warriors, always angling for every edge they can find to earn victory for their side. While rare even among such a fecund race, their presence is often enough to inspire or outright force a victory in many engagements.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To become a battle shaman, a character must meet the following requirements.

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Feats: Combat Casting.

Race: Orc.

Concentration: 9 ranks.

Spellcraft: 9 ranks.

Spellcasting: Able to cast 3rd-level spells.

Special: The battle shaman must have been blessed in some way by an orcish deity so as to be able to take on the powers of a battle shaman.

Class Skills

The battle shaman's class skills (and their key abilities) are Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Scry (Int), Spellcraft (Int) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the battle shaman prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Battle shamans are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all types of armour, and with shields.

The Battle Shaman

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	Battle power (1 st level)	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	<i>Bane</i>	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	Battle power (2 nd level)	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1	<i>Protection from Arrows</i>	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Battle power (3 rd level)	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+2	<i>Haste</i>	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+2	Battle power (4 th level)	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+2	<i>Emotion</i>	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+3	Battle power (5 th level)	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+3	<i>Spell Resistance</i>	+1 level of existing class

Spellcasting: A battle shaman maintains his training in magic. Whenever he gains a new battle shaman level, the character also gains new spells known and spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he already had before he became a battle shaman. However, he does not acquire any other benefit he would have gained for advancing a level in that spellcasting class. This essentially means that he adds his levels as a battle shaman to the levels he has in another spellcasting class to figure his spells per day, spells known and caster level. If the caster had more than one spellcasting class before he became a battle shaman, he must decide which class he adds each level of battle shaman to, for the purposes of determining spells per day.

Battle Power (Su): Starting at 1st level, when a battle shaman kills a foe, of equal or higher CR to his level, in single combat, he immediately gains the ability to cast an additional spell at a maximum level equal to half the victim's level or the character's level as a battle shaman - whichever is less - rounded up. This extra spell slot must be filled immediately from the list of spells that the character has already prepared for that day. The ability to cast this spell lasts until one hour after the end of the current battle, or for one day, whichever is less.



For each level the character has as a battle shaman, he can gain up to one such additional spell per day

For example, if a 4th-level battle shaman kills a 5th-level foe in combat, the battle shaman can instantly add a spell of up to 2nd level. He can use this power up to four times per day.

Bane (Sp): The battle shaman can automatically use the *bane* spell three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

Protection from Arrows (Sp): The battle shaman can automatically use the *protection from arrows* spell three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

Haste (Sp): The battle shaman can automatically use the *haste* spell three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

Emotion (Sp): The battle shaman can automatically use the *emotion* spell three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

Spell Resistance (Sp): The battle shaman can automatically use the *spell resistance* spell three times per day. Use his total levels to determine the spell's effectiveness.

SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Standard orcs are best used against a party of 1st to 4th level or so. They can also be a threat to higher-level heroes when they appear in great enough numbers to be able to simply overwhelm a hero's defences. Still, the best orc threat for a powerful hero is a powerful orc. An elite shock team of orc troops can stand up to a party of heroes of a roughly equivalent level. In such a situation, these veteran orcs can certainly give as good as they get.

This section lists a number of different adventure hooks a Games Master can use to creatively add orcs into a campaign. Feel free to pick and choose from them as you like, combining or altering them as you will.

RAID!

Orc warbands are constantly on the hunt for new communities to terrorize. They like to storm into a place in the early evening, take what they like and burn the rest to the ground. The next morning, they move on to the next place. This cycle has been going on for generations. It is up to the heroes to break it.

The elders of a town have word that the orcs are on their way again. They remember their last visit from years ago and this time they wish to be prepared. They hire the heroes to help them build up their defences and to help protect the town when the orcs finally arrive.

If the heroes manage to repulse the orcs' attack, the encounter is not over though. Unless the orcs were thoroughly routed, they are sure to be back, and this time they should have plans of their own for dealing with the town's reinforced defences.

AN ACCIDENTAL MEETING

Orc hunting parties range far and wide looking for fresh food. When they stumble upon a group of travellers, they see it as an opportunity to land a gourmet meal.

Late one night, the orcs steal up on the heroes' camp and attack. The heroes must rouse themselves and leap

to their own defence. Most likely, the heroes can rout their attackers pretty quickly. However, this encounter serves to keep them on their toes, even when they should be sleeping.

This encounter can also lead to many of the other encounters. Once the orcs are defeated or run off, the heroes can follow their trail back to their main settlement or fighting force. Of course, at that point the heroes are sure to be vastly outnumbered. What they do from there is up to them.

THE RACE

The heroes have learned of a great orc fighting force on its way to assault a nearby city. Unfortunately, the orcs have discovered the heroes as well. The orc army has sent out its fastest runners or riders to hunt the heroes down. The heroes cannot make a direct stand against such a superior force. Their only hope is to run as fast as they can to the city the orcs have targeted and raise the alarm.

While a strict race can get boring, you can spice it up with a few lightning attacks by orc scouts that may already be ahead of the heroes. The orcs coming up behind have signalled their brothers by either magical or mundane means, possibly even using something as primitive as smoke signals.

If the heroes succeed, the city should be prepared for the inevitable attack. They might even be able to raise an army to meet the orcs on the field of battle. Otherwise, it could be that the city has time to stock supplies for an extended siege.

SIEGE!

The heroes are trapped in a city when the orcs lay siege to it. Unable to get past the orc horde on their own, the heroes must offer their services to help break the siege. With the proper planning, they might even be able to make a few surgical strikes against the orc leadership. Enough successes along these lines can eventually soften the orcs up enough for the people of the city to be able to take the battle to them and drive them from the field.

REVENGE OF THE DWARVES

A band of homeless dwarves approaches the heroes and asks for their help to reclaim their ancestral home from the orcs that stole it so long ago. This is a dungeon crawl with a purpose. While the dwarven halls may be

filled with traps, the dwarves should be able to point most of them out to the heroes so they can be avoided. However, the orcs are sure to have set up some crude pitfalls of their own.

The dwarves should be outnumbered but undaunted. With the heroes help and their knowledge of a set of secret tunnels running throughout the complex, they hope to be able to chip away at the orcs' defences until the vile creatures either voluntarily leave their home or are destroyed.

ORC BAIT

Orcs know that the civilized people hate them, and they are all too happy to take advantage of it. Many human settlements are a bit more forgiving of those of other races, and sometimes orcs can actually move freely within the walls of such places. In such a case, an orc strolling past a paladin could nearly spark off a riot.

If the party has such do-gooders within its ranks, an orc seemingly wanders in front of them, sees them and then takes off at a dead sprint. If the heroes pursue, the orc leads them on a merry chase throughout the worst parts of the city. Eventually, he dashes into a blind alley, seemingly trapped. If the heroes follow, a band of the orc's fellows steps in behind them, sealing them in the alley instead.

This is a common mugging tactic used in many large cities. It may only work against a novice group of heroes once, but it is a good lesson for them to learn: when you are chasing someone, take care of where you are being led.

THIS MEANS WAR!

A local orc horde is on the warpath. An army from a nearby city is marching out to meet them before the evil beasts can cause any more harm. The heroes have joined the army of good, either voluntarily or through conscription.

This is a chance for the heroes to earn glory for themselves—and to get a taste of the horrors of war. If you have access to mass-combat rules, you can actually play out the war in full. Otherwise, the heroes should be given, or find, a few key missions they can attempt to pull off that can affect the course of the entire war.

VANDALS!

It seems a number of orc warbands are setting fires in a forest at random. While the local elves put out the fire, the heroes are sent out to figure out what is going on and attempt to stop the fires at the source. As the heroes spar with the orcs, they realize that the placement of the fires is not quite as random as it might seem. In fact, the orcs are herding the elves into a valley in the forest, a place perfectly situated for a lightning ambush from a full orc horde. Once the heroes figure this out, they must warn the elves before it is too late.

LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER

This adventure hook works best in conjunction with one or more of the others. Use it once the heroes have already had a number of encounters with orc warriors and are good and angry with them.

While out hunting for an orc warband or horde, the heroes stumble upon the orcs' camp. The males are all out on the warpath but the females and young are still at home. The heroes are presented with a dilemma. Do they attack and kill the 'defenceless civilians', or do they try to come up another means of dealing with this problem? Or, do they simply walk away and leave these 'innocents' alone?

If the heroes do attack, they should find the female and child orcs do not just roll over and die. They fight with the desperation of creatures who know there are no other options than death. While they are not as skilled in battle as the males, they fight just as ferociously to defend their homes. Low-level parties should be hard-pressed to take out an orc camp on their own.



GRUK'S KAMP

General Gruk has long since established himself as one of the most dangerous orcs in the world. At the ripe, old age of 42, he has gathered around himself a community of roughly 5,000 orcs, of which nearly half are warriors in his army. The simple utterance of Gruk's name has been known to cause apprentice guardsmen to soil their armour.

Gruk has personally led armies that have destroyed several towns and even a couple of larger cities. There is a huge price on the general's skull but to get to Gruk, an assassin would have to first work his way around just about everyone else in the general's camp, a relatively mobile community that follows the general and his army around almost everywhere they go. Gruk's Kamp, as it is known far and wide, is filled with literally thousands of cutthroats, hundreds of which

could actually be capable of commanding a warband of their own.

Besides the 2,485 members of the Gruk's army, there are 2,515 others. Of these, roughly 150 are slaves that the highest-ranking members of the army and the community's tiny aristocracy keep. (Gruk has a handful of slaves—including a few truly unfortunate women—for his own personal use.) The rest are mostly females, youths and the few, lucky orcs who have managed to live to a ripe, old age.

This last group forms the support structure for Gruk's army. Their presence helps to make Gruk's Kamp a truly self-sufficient community. These are not orcs who leave their homes to go to war. Instead, they bring everything they own along with them.

The orcs living under Gruk have no home base, other than the camp, to which they can hope to return. In Gruk's experience, this has been a wonderful motivating factor for his soldiers since they know they cannot go home if the battle goes against them. If they fail, their entire town would likely be wiped from the face of the planet.

Many of the orcs who live in Gruk's Kamp were born there, although for the older members of the Kamp this was during the reign of Gruk's predecessor, Gratt. Gruk slew Gratt in single combat nearly 13 years ago. The fight was rigged against the elder orc and everyone knew it, Gruk having been taken aside by Thantarr the battle shaman before it began. Still, Gruk had assembled himself enough of a power base within Gratt's army that no one questioned his authority when he took over.

The majority of the orcs in the camp came from outside of it however. Some found their way there from other, less powerful hordes or warbands. Others were part of such organizations that Gruk's Kamp assimilated, either peaceably or, far more likely, by brute force.



A small number of half-orcs, approximately 50, have found their way into the camp too. These are the ones that were tough enough to prove themselves to the orcs in the camp. Those that failed over the years were immediately classified as far too tainted with the blood of those worthless humans and then tossed into chains.

THE KAMP

The following locations are keyed to the map of Gruk's Kamp. Since the camp is mobile, the juxtaposition of these various elements can change from place to place, depending on the local geography and any threats both real and perceived. In other words, feel free to rearrange where things are if it makes more sense to you that way.

The camp is composed almost entirely of tents. These are large affairs made of canvas and ropes strung over frameworks of stout, wooden poles. They are oiled to make them waterproof. The interiors of the tents are lit by lanterns when necessary, although orcs do not normally need them. Similarly the only fires in the camp are usually for cooking or warmth. When the horde is trying to sneak up on a target, however, they do not use any fires at all.

1. Gruk's Tent

This is where the leader of the camp lives. This is by far the largest tent in the entire camp. It actually consists of several tents stitched together to almost form a house. These include (A) the foyer tent, (B) the

war room tent, (C) the private armoury tent, (D) the treasure tent, and (E) the private chambers tent.

The entire complex of tents is surrounded by heavily-armed guards 24 hours a day. Gruk does not trust anyone, so the guards patrol in groups of four or more. Gruk is sure that at least one member of each group is either loyal enough or cowardly enough to turn his fellows in should they decide to steal from their general. In this way, he maintains discipline through a network of fear and distrust.

A. The Foyer Tent: Most visitors never get past this tent, where Gruk normally comes to greet those who wish to speak with him. The room is almost entirely bare, except for the six, high-level orc warriors who stand watch here constantly and serve as Gruk's bodyguards. Gruk does not like to sit much, and he prefers to make his guests stand as well. He does not have patience for long conversations, so this arrangement helps to keep meetings short.

B. The War Room Tent: This is where Gruk meets with his captains to discuss his strategy—such as it is—for any upcoming conflict. The room features a large table surrounded by wooden chairs. Sometimes there is a map pinned down in the middle of the table, on which the orcs diagram their proposed attacks.

C. The Private Armoury Tent: Gruk keeps his armour and weapons in here. This is where he comes to be

Gruk's Kamp (Large Town): Conventional; AL CE; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 750,000 gp; Population 5,000; Isolated (96% orc, 1% half-orc, 3% human (slaves)).

Authority Figures: General Gruk (CE male orc Bbn17).

Important Characters: Thantarr (CE male orc Clr6/BaS10).

Army: Bbn14 (1), Bbn12 (1), Bbn11 (1), Bbn10 (1), Bbn9 (1), Bbn8 (4), Bbn7 (4), Bbn6 (7), Bbn5 (6), Bbn4 (13), Bbn3 (13), Bbn2 (25), Bbn1 (26), Brd10 (1), Brd9 (1), Brd6 (1), Brd5 (1), Brd4 (2), Brd3 (2), Brd2 (5), Brd1 (5), Clr13 (1), Clr12 (1), Clr11 (1), Clr10 (1), Clr9 (1), Clr8 (1), Clr7 (1), Clr6 (4), Clr5 (3), Clr4 (8), Clr3 (8), Clr2 (15), Clr1 (15), Drd6 (1), Drd5 (1), Drd4 (2), Drd3 (2), Drd2 (5), Drd1 (5), Ftr10 (1), Ftr9 (1), Ftr8 (3), Ftr7 (3), Ftr6 (5), Ftr5 (5), Ftr4 (10), Ftr3 (10), Ftr2 (20), Ftr1 (20), Rgr8 (1), Rgr6 (1), Rgr5 (2), Rgr4 (2), Rgr3 (2), Rgr2 (4), Rgr1 (4), Rog10 (1), Rog9 (1), Rog8 (2), Rog7 (2), Rog6 (3), Rog5 (3), Rog4 (6), Rog3 (6), Rog2 (13), Rog1 (13), Sor15 (1), Sor12 (1), Sor11 (1), Sor10 (1), Sor9 (1), Sor8 (1), Sor7 (2), Sor6 (3), Sor5 (4), Sor4 (7), Sor3 (7), Sor2 (12), Sor1 (13), Wiz19 (1), Wiz2 (1), Wiz1 (1), War15 (1), War13 (1), War12 (1), War11 (1), War10 (4), War9 (4), War8 (13), War7 (13), War6 (50), War5 (50), War4 (196), War3 (196), War2 (777), War1 (778)

Others: Ari8 (1), Ari7 (1), Ari6 (5), Ari5 (5), Ari4 (21), Ari3 (21), Ari2 (86), Ari1 (86), Com10 (2), Com9 (2), Com8 (12), Com7 (12), Com6 (48), Com5 (48), Com4 (193), Com3 (193), Com2 (776), Com1 (777), Exp8 (1), Exp7 (1), Exp6 (5), Exp5 (5), Exp4 (21), Exp3 (21), Exp2 (86), Exp1 (86).

dressed for war. He has several female orcs who help him with this task.

D. The Treasure Tent: The accumulated wealth of Gruk and the rest of the tribe is kept here. The amount of treasure can vary greatly depending on the success of any recent operations, as well as how long it has been since the army conquered a town. At minimum, there are 10,000 gp worth of precious goods here but that can range as high as 100,000 gp.

E. The Private Chambers Tent: This is where Gruk sleeps. The place is surrounded by guards at all times. Gruk is only here about half the time though. The other nights, he is off to the tent of some lucky orc female who has pleased him instead.

2. Slave Pen

This pen houses the camp's 150 or so slaves when they are not on their duties. This usually means that they are here only at night, but even then the place is normally only about two-thirds full.

The slaves are treated poorly and their pen usually smells from their waste and the rotten food the orcs throw them to live upon. For this reason, the pen is always located downwind from Gruk's tent.

Guards always surround the place, although there are twice as many here at night as there are during the day. Escape attempts are punished by an immediate beheading. Eventually most slaves decide this is preferable to enduring another day of torture at the hands of the orcs.

3. Mess Tent

The orcs eat their three daily meals here. The place is open around the clock to feed the guards who work through the night, as well as anyone else who wanders through. Everyone eats here, as opposed to in their tents, even Gruk. The only exceptions are when Gruk is in the middle of an intense planning meeting in his war room tent (#1B). At such times, the leaders eat in that tent.

4. Guard Post

These small tents dot the perimeter of the camp and beyond. They are staffed by at least 10 orcs at a time. Each post also has a horn in it so the guards stationed there can sound the alarm.

This is but one of the camp's lines of defence. There are also squads of orcs on patrol throughout the surrounding region at all times. Gruk wants to make sure that no one sneaks up on him.

5. Barracks Tent

These tents are scattered throughout the camp. They each hold a full squad of orcs, plus perhaps a few higher-level officers. Each soldier keeps his arms and armour next to his bed when he is not wearing them. There is no central armoury.

6. Home Tent

These tents tend to be found toward the centre of the camp. This allows the residents of the barracks tents to protect the home tents if the camp is attacked. These home tents are filled with female and young orcs. There is usually a male orc or two hanging around each of these places as well, hoping to make a good impression upon the females who live there.

7. Main Square

This open area in the centre of the camp is a place for all the orcs to gather. They come here at least a few times a week, usually for Thantarr's religious services, or for one of Gruk's infrequent rallies. Gruk's tent (#1) overlooks the main square, usually from the north.

The centre of the square has space for a large bonfire. After victory in a great battle, the orcs light this fire and celebrate throughout the night.

8. Thantarr's Tent

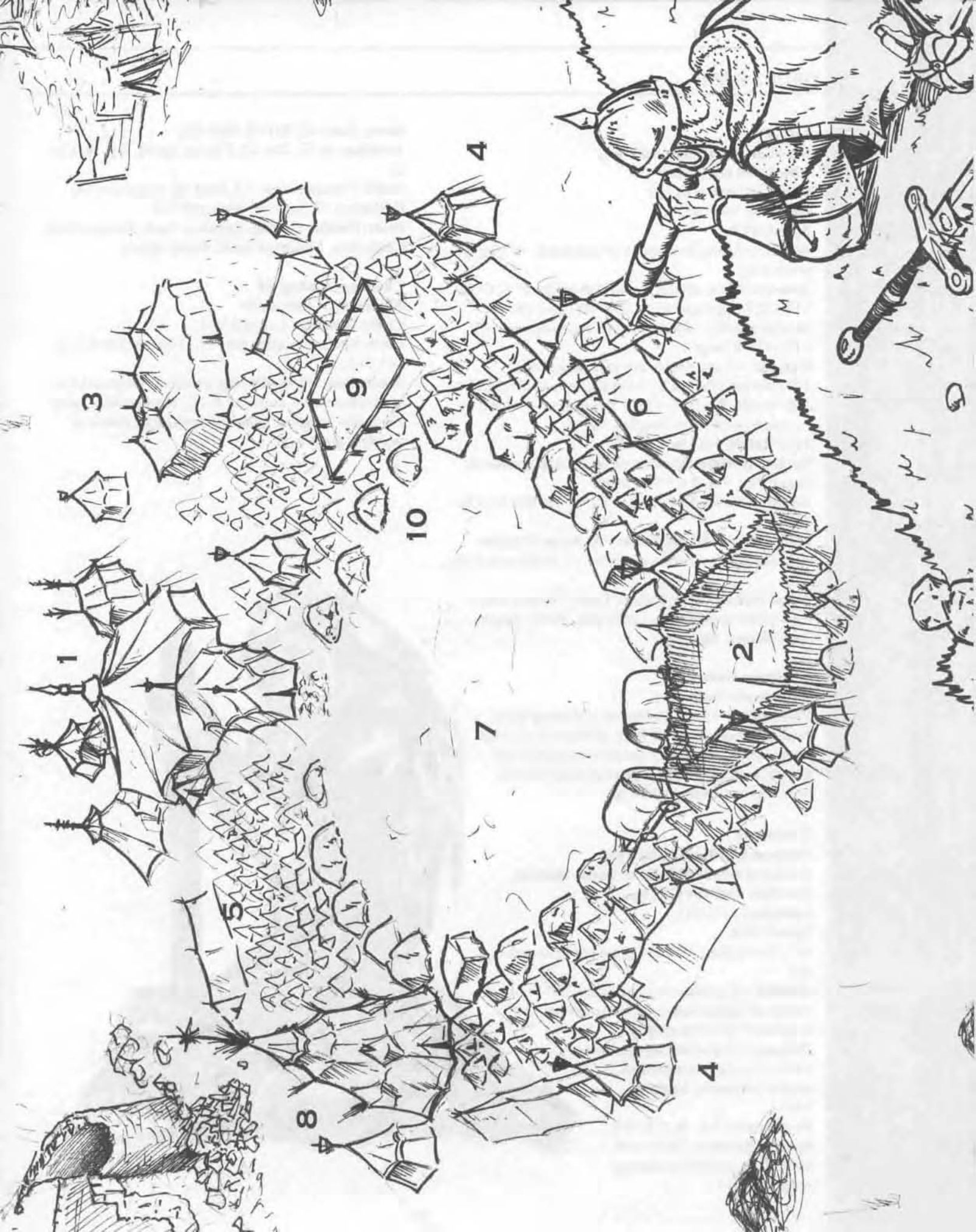
The most powerful battle shaman in the camp lives here. His tent is only a single room but it is second only to Gruk's in its size and splendour. Thantarr is not here often, preferring to be out checking up on the troops at nearly all times. He is Gruk's right hand in the camp, the one who keeps close tabs on the orcs who live here while Gruk concentrates on the larger picture.

9. Horse Pen

The relatively small number of horses (about 200) the orcs own are kept here. Gruk is one of the few orcs to actually have his own horse to ride. Most orcs fear the beasts will throw them at the first opportunity. Still, the orcs need something to haul their wagons whenever they move their camp. The horses are kept here until such a time.

10. Storage Tents

The outside of the main square (#7) is lined with storage tents. These are basically small warehouses in which the orcs keep the goods they need to wage their near-constant war.



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Gruk**Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)****17th-Level Barbarian****HD:** 17d12+68 (181 hp)**Initiative:** +4 (+4 Dex)**Speed:** 40 ft.**AC:** 22 (+4 Dex, *breastplate of command*, +2 ring of protection)**Attacks:** +3 *orc double axe of flaming burst* +27/+22/+17/+12 (single attack) or +25/+20/+15/+10/+25 (double attack); +2 *mighty composite longbow* +23/+18/+13/+8 ranged**Damage:** +3 *orc double axe of flaming burst* 1d8+10+1d6 (fire) (x3, +1d10 fire instead of +1d6)/1d8+6+1d6 (fire) (x3, +1d10 fire instead of +1d6); or +2 *mighty composite longbow* 1d8+6**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity**Saves:** Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +6**Abilities:** Str 25, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10**Skills:** Climb +12, Intimidate +20, Intuit Direction +17, Jump +17, Listen +15, Swim +7, Wilderness Lore +20**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (*orc double axe*), Leadership, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting**Challenge Rating:** 17**Alignment:** Chaotic evil**Possessions:** +3 *orc double axe of flaming burst*, *breastplate of command*, *horn of blasting*, +2 ring of protection, +2 *mighty composite longbow*, 20 arrows, heavy warhorse with scale mail barding, *potion of invisibility* and 39 gp.**Thantarr****Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)****6th-Level Cleric/10th-Level Battle Shaman****Hit Dice:** 16d8+64 (128 hp)**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)**Speed:** 20 ft.**AC:** 18 (+1 Dex, +2 *breastplate of invulnerability*)**Attacks:** +3 *spellstoring greataxe* +19/+14/+9 melee, or masterwork mighty composite longbow +12/+7/+2 ranged**Damage:** +3 *spellstoring greataxe* 1d12+10 (x3); or masterwork mighty composite longbow 1d8+4**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, damage reduction 5/+1**Saves:** Fort +16, Ref +6, Will +12**Abilities:** Str 21, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 12**Skills:** Concentration +13, Heal +8, Intimidate +4, Profession +7, Scry +5, Spellcraft +12**Feats:** Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Leadership, Maximize Spell, Power Attack**Challenge Rating:** 16**Alignment:** Chaotic evil**Cleric Domains:** Evil and War**Cleric Spells per Day:** 6/6+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/3+1/2+1**Possessions:** +3 *spellstoring greataxe*, +2 *breastplate of invulnerability*, *carpet of flying*, masterwork mighty composite longbow, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of sneaking* and 80 gp.

ORC REFERENCE LIST

The following orc statistics are listed here to give the Games Master an instant reference for the various commonly found types of orcs. You can plug these into a scenario at a moment's notice by simply giving the creature a name. Possessions listed are only suggestions but their effects have been factored into the rest of the statistics. If you like, though, you should feel free to substitute other magic items or pieces of equipment that you believe would be more appropriate to your particular situation.

Orc General

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

10th-Level Warrior

HD: 10d8+40 (99 hp)

Initiative: +4 (+4 Dex)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: AC 20 (+3 Dex, +2 breastplate)

Attacks: +2 greataxe +20/+15 melee; or mighty composite longbow +14/+9 ranged

Damage: +2 greataxe 1d12+12 (x3); or mighty composite longbow 1d8+4 (x3)

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +3

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +11, Jump +6, Listen +2, Ride +10, Spot +4, Swim +4, Tumble +2.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Challenge Rating: 9

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Possessions: +2 greataxe, mighty composite longbow, +2 breastplate, horn of fog, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility, 20 arrows, one sleep arrow and 97 gp.

Orc Captain

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

7th-Level Warrior

HD: 7d8+28 (64 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: AC 20 (+3 Dex, +2 breastplate)

Attacks: +1 greataxe +14/+9 melee; or mighty composite longbow +10/+5 ranged

Damage: +1 greataxe 1d12+10 (x3); or mighty composite longbow 1d8+4 (x3)

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +6, Handle Animal +6, Hide +1, Intimidate +8, Listen +3, Move Silently +1, Ride +6, Spot +3

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 6

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Possessions: +2 breastplate, mighty composite longbow, +1 greataxe, 20 arrows and 29 gp.

Orc Lieutenant

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

5th-Level Warrior

HD: 5d8+10 (36 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: AC 17 (+1 Dex, +1 breastplate)

Attacks: +1 greataxe +11 melee; or mighty composite longbow +6 ranged

Damage: +1 greataxe 1d12+7 (x3); or mighty composite longbow 1d8+4 (x3)

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 8

Skills: Climb +5, Intimidate +3, Listen +1, Spot +1

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (Greataxe)

Challenge Rating: 4

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Possessions: +1 breastplate, mighty composite longbow, +1 greataxe, 20 arrows, two potions of cure light wounds and 29 gp.

Orc Sergeant

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

3rd-Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (23 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 breastplate)

Attacks: Masterwork greataxe +8 melee; or mighty composite longbow +3 ranged



ORC REFERENCE LIST

Damage: Masterwork greataxe 1d12+4 (x3); or mighty composite longbow 1d8+3 (x3)

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

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

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 7, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +0, Spot +0

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Challenge Rating: 2

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Possessions: +1 breastplate, masterwork greataxe, mighty composite longbow, 20 arrows, two *sleep arrows* and 14 gp.

Orc Warrior

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

1st-Level Warrior

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +0

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

AC: 14 (+4 scale mail)

Attacks: Greataxe +3 melee; or javelin +1 ranged

Damage: Greataxe 1d12+2 (x3); or javelin 1d6+2

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2

Feats: Alertness

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Possessions: Scale mail, greataxe, three javelins and 7 gp.

Orc Sorcerer

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

5th-Level Sorcerer

Hit Dice: 5d4+5 (17 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 12 (+1 Dex, +1 bracers of armour)

Attacks: Morningstar +4 melee; or javelin +3 ranged

Damage: Morningstar 1d8+2; or javelin 1d6+2

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

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

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 15

Skills: Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +3,

Listen +1, Spellcraft +7, Spot +1

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/5): 0—*daze, flare, light, read magic, ray of frost, resistance*; 1st—*mage armour, magic missile, sleep, true strike*; 2nd—*scare, summon monster II*.

Possessions: +1 bracers of armour, wand of magic missile (3rd-level caster), +1 cloak of resistance, morningstar, three javelins and 39 gp.

Orc Battle Shaman

Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc)

6th-Level Cleric/4th-Level Battle Shaman

Hit Dice: 10d8+20 (72 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft. (breast plate)

AC: 19 (+1 Dex, +2 breastplate, +1 ring of protection)

Attacks: +2 greataxe +15/+10 melee; or mighty composite longbow +8/+3 ranged

Damage: +2 greataxe 1d12+11; or mighty composite longbow 1d8+4

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

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +9

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 15

Skills: Climb +6, Concentration +12, Intimidate +3, Jump +5, Listen +5, Profession +12, Scry +6, Spellcraft +10, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 10

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Cleric Domains: Evil and War

Cleric Spells per Day: 6/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1

Possessions: +2 greataxe, +2 breastplate, mighty composite longbow, javelin of lightning, 20 arrows and 79 gp.

'General! The elves! They are coming! They are coming! They will destroy us all!'

Gruk glared down at the pitiful creatures grovelling before him. They were bleeding, out of breath and frightened half to death. He snarled at them and felt their fear refocus from the elves they had left far behind to the more immediate threat to their worthless lives: him.

'What happened?' he growled.

'We are doomed!' squealed the scout who had been talking before. The shaken wretch had not been able to keep his mouth shut since he had entered Gruk's tent.

The general stepped forward, his double axe in his hands. With a swift, almost careless move, he used one end of the axe to lop off the head of the hapless scout. As the freed skull spun through the air, Gruk swung the axe's other head around and cleaved cleanly through the surprised expression still stretching across the dead orc's face.

The other members of the squad were showered with brains and blood. They started to protest before a second growl from Gruk's yellow-tusked mouth struck them all silent.

'Do not make me repeat myself,' the orc general grunted.

The surviving scouts glanced at each other desperately. Finally, one of them rose to his feet and spoke. 'The elves—they are on their way here,' he choked out.

'How far away are they?' Gruk asked, his eyes piercing through the brave scout like javelins.

The scout gulped, then spoke: 'A day. Two at most.' He then involuntarily closed his eyes and waited for the deadly blow. Gruk's reputation for slaughtering messengers bringing bad news was legendary throughout the camp.

Instead, Gruk started to cackle with glee. He reached out and slapped the scout on the back and the creature's knees almost buckled. 'Good,' Gruk snorted. 'Very good.'

The scout was so confused that he actually spoke to his general without being asked a direct question. 'You are not angry?'

Normally such a transgression would have caused Gruk to do worse to the scout than he had already done to his former fellow, the one whose corpse was still cooling at their feet. But today the general seemed to be in a rare mood: a good one.

Gruk laughed. 'This is my plan. The elves are like a crab. When the crab is in its shell, its shell is too tough. It makes it hard to kill. Better to find other prey.'

'Crabs?' the scout asked, still amazed that he was not dead.

'You know,' Gruk snarled happily, 'crabs! Those little things on the shore with the pincers and shells: crabs!'

The scout realized that he simply needed to agree, whether he understood or not, so he nodded as sagely as he could manage.

Gruk sized the scout up with his eyes for a tense moment, then seemed satisfied and continued on. 'Crabs, these elves in their homes, they are hard to kill. But,' a toothy smile crossed Gruk's tusked face, 'you get them out of their homes and it changes. The fires we set got them to notice us. They want to come out and beat us down. They would have been safer in their homes. There, we might not be able to crack their shells.'

Gruk chortled to the guards looking on before he continued. They knew well enough to laugh along, although they were not any better able to understand their leader than the confused scout could.

'They fell for my trick,' Gruk said, smiling even more broadly. 'Now they will fall to our axes.' He turned to one of the guards and said with relish, 'Call out the signal. Tonight, we advance!'

The guard nodded and dashed off to comply with the order. Gruk clapped the scout on the back. As he did, one of the scout's teeth popped out of his mouth and landed on the general's boot.

Moments later, Gruk picked up the scout's severed head and tossed it to another one of his guards. 'This one did good,' he said. 'Give him the place of honour. Stick his head on my personal banner pole.' The general let loose with a wicked belly laugh. 'It is a scout's dream. From there he can see the whole battle!'



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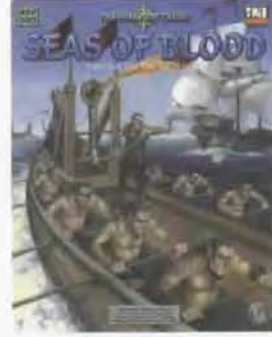
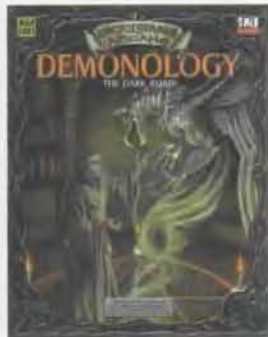
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THE SLAYER'S GUIDE TO ORCS

Footsoldiers of Evil

Orcs are the foot soldiers of evil, the creatures that make up the hordes of darkness that threaten to overwhelm the good peoples and turn the entire land into a region of little else than slaughter and depravity. Most Games Masters use them as the guardians of low-level dungeons, just a slight step above kobolds as a threat. Often they are simply portrayed as evil humans and are given little more thought than that.

Inside You Will Find:

Physiology: Whilst the life of orcs are often brutal and short there's more to them than meets the eye

Habitat: Where and why orcs can most often be found

Society: From Tribe to warcamp to raiding party, orcish societies are geared towards warfare

Methods of Warfare: There are few things for which orcs are renowned, but fighting is one of them

Roleplaying with Orcs: Breathing life into orcs as a race, including the dread Battle Shaman Prestige class, blessed by their gods for combat.

Scenario Hooks: A selection of ideas on how to use orcs in your campaign

Gruk's Kamp: A detailed orc camp is presented

Orc Reference List: A ready to go list of characters and enemies for players to face, when they stumble across these evil creatures.

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