

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	6	CHAPTER SIX: ORC EQUIPMENT.....	38
CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS.....	8	Weapons.....	38
CHAPTER TWO: ORC PHYSIOLOGY AND HABITS.....	8	Armor.....	41
CHAPTER THREE: THE LIFE OF THE ORC.....	16	Battlefield Equipment.....	42
Tribal Society.....	16	Pocket Items.....	43
Tribal Organization.....	17	CHAPTER SEVEN: ORC FEATS.....	44
Warchieftain.....	17	CHAPTER EIGHT: ORCS IN BATTLE.....	46
Chieftain.....	17	Ambush at Tallin's Crossing:	
Subchief.....	18	An Example of Orc Tactics.....	48
Shaman.....	18	Fighting Against Orcs.....	50
Witchdoctor.....	18	CHAPTER NINE: ORCISH RELIGION AND RELICS.....	51
Bloodrager.....	19	Orcish Demigods.....	52
Warhulk.....	19	Ghoragosh the Glutton.....	52
Longshadow.....	20	Paragon Path: Juggernaut.....	53
Worgrider.....	20	Sanguinal the Bloodbather.....	53
Berserker.....	21	Paragon Path: Bloodrage Acolyte.....	54
Warrior.....	21	Tornazsh the Mutilator.....	54
Raider.....	21	Paragon Path: Dread Mutilator.....	55
Scout.....	21	Relics.....	56
Drudge.....	22	CHAPTER TEN: ORCS IN THE CAMPAIGN.....	57
Females and Young.....	22	Ways to Use Orcs in Your Campaign.....	58
Sample Tribes.....	22	Adventure Ideas for an Orc-Centered Campaign.....	59
Hordes.....	23	How to Use the New Items in This Book.....	60
The Warbringers.....	23	AFTERWORD.....	61
CHAPTER FOUR: RELATIONS WITH OTHER RACES.....	25	Author's Note.....	61
Pets.....	28	APPENDIX ONE: CAVES OF THE BLOODTUSKS.....	62
CHAPTER FIVE: ORC SUBSPECIES AND HALF-BREEDS.....	30	APPENDIX TWO: ORC VARIANTS AND MONSTERS.....	75
Subspecies.....	30	Orc Variants.....	75
Cave Orcs (Gharltuns).....	30	Cave Orc.....	78
Feral Orcs.....	31	Feral Orc.....	79
Greater Orc (Orogs).....	31	Grunt.....	80
Lesser Orcs (Grunts).....	32	Ogrillon.....	81
Half-Breeds.....	34	Orog.....	82
Ogrillons (Half-Ogres).....	34	Otrollon.....	83
Otrollons (Half-Trolls).....	34	Racial Traits.....	84
Mongrelmen.....	35		
The Vizdshadi.....	35		
The Half-Orc.....	36		
Playing a Half-Orc Character.....	36		

# INTRODUCTION

They had been warned a tempest was coming.

Merchants arriving at Lowbridge spoke of seeing odd gatherings of figures in the distance as they traveled the dusty caravan roads. They told of creatures that walked with a surprisingly fast, scuttling gait and seemed to avoid the sunlight. Humanoid bands of some type, furtively moving to places unknown. As the days went by, the sightings steadily increased. Then suddenly, without warning, they stopped altogether.

That was one week ago.

Marta huddled in the hall with her young son, Erik, her fear growing with every passing minute. The militia had been called, the town elders assembled, and all available able townfolk without young ones to tend were handed weapons. Some of these latter individuals milled about outside, clutching axes and wooden staves uncertainly. The worst fears of the populace had come to fruition, it seemed, for travelers over the last few days had reported seeing ever-greater numbers of orcs gathering in the distant hills and forest. This morning scouts had been sent to the hills, brave men who were experienced, properly equipped, and accepted the task without complaint. They did not return at the appointed hour.

In the distance a great horn sounded, its terrible blast echoing over the hills and fields. The dreadful din seemed to shake the building to its very foundations. Armed men ran through the hall, knocking aside chairs. A clay tankard rolled off the nearest table and fell to the floor, shattering into pieces. Marta pulled Erik close to her chest, as if to shield him from the din.

"Do not fear, Marta," said Father resolutely. "My men and I have fought ogres. We have fought trolls and burned their remains. We have even drawn swords against a hydra and survived. We can put down a few raging orcs."

He pulled his longsword free of its worn leather scabbard and walked resolutely toward the door. As Father reached the doorway he paused, and turned back to her.

"Remain here. Keep him safe."

As he turned back, the door suddenly burst open. Afolen, Father's brave second in command, stood in the doorway and seized his shoulder in a strong grip. Afolen's eyes were wild, and Father felt his blood grow cold as he realized he saw fear in Afolen's gaze. Father pushed the warrior aside and looked outside.

The distant hills were covered with what appeared to be thousands and thousands of ants. The flowing black mass slid over the hills and grew closer. From far away, the hellish war horn again sounded, and its droning cry boomed over the entire village. The closest "ants" soon revealed themselves to be orcs clad in fire-blackened armor. Snarling, they waved jagged swords and spears as they surged relentlessly forward, wave after wave of them.

Father staggered back. "By the gods above," he said, his voice now a hollow whisper.

There are many fierce monsters in existence. Adventurers tell tales of all manner of fantastic magical beasts, weird aberrations, and beings from other planes. Yet the common orc, a humanoid that is found in most areas and climes of the world, is given little attention and is rarely understood. Many human leaders or settlements have underestimated the might or cunning of orc groups to their extreme sorrow.

Orcs have demonstrated a resiliency and diversity only exceeded by humans. They exist in nearly every clime and country. Despite many attempts by great elven kings or human commanders to rid their lands of orcs, somehow the orcs always survive, slither away into the shadows, regroup, and return to attack when least expected. They breed quickly, grow to maturity rapidly, and their talent for making war is only matched by their extreme hostility.

Yet so little is known about orcs as a race. How do they organize themselves? How do they worship? How do they tend their young, and what do they teach them? Are they all simply mindless savages?

A better understanding of orcs and their many forms may aid the good folk across the Known Realms to better prepare for the days when orc hordes raise the grim flag of war.

This book is divided into nine chapters:

**Origins** explores the origin of the orc race, presented in different theories and in a historical scroll that has recently come to light.

**Physiology and Habits** provides a look at orc anatomy, diet, habitat, motivations, and superstitions of the orc.

**The Life of the Orc** examines the day-to-day life of tribal orcs, defines the positions held by orcs in a tribe, and speaks about the fearsome super-tribes known as hordes and the mysterious Warbringers.

**Relations with Other Races** covers the interactions and behavior of orcs toward other humanoid species. This section also speaks about orc "pets" and the rat-like rhodenar.

**Orc Subspecies and Half-Breeds** provides a detailed look at the many orc subspecies, from the rare cave orc to the greatly feared orog, as well as information about mongrelmen and the diseased vizdshadi. This section also offers glimpses into the psychology of the half-orc and provides role-playing tips for those playing half-orcs.

**Orc Equipment** presents new weapons, armor, and battlefield items used by orcs, as well as information a GM may use to determine the contents of orc pockets or containers.

**Orc Feats** introduces new feats for use by orc and half-orc characters.

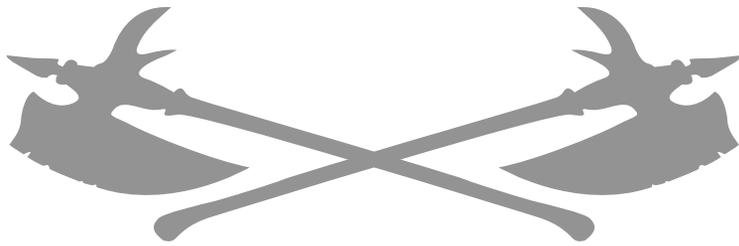
**Orcs in Battle** covers basic orc combat tactics, including a detailed illustration of an orc ambush, and also provides strategies that characters may employ when fighting these humanoid.

**Orcish Religion and Relics** delves into the worship of three popular orc demigods, and well as the importance of relics in orc society.

**Orcs in the Campaign** presents ideas for using orcs in various settings and ideas for creating campaigns in which orcs play a major part.

**Appendix One** provides a fully fleshed-out orc lair, ready to be inserted into a GM's campaign with minor development.

**Appendix Two** provides statistics for all the new orc classes, subspecies, and half-breeds introduced in this book, as well as racial traits for PC and NPC development.



Witchdoctors and shamans within their own ranks are respected and feared. Non-orc spellcasters joining forces with an orc tribe are never fully trusted, and are sometimes butchered in their sleep by the apprehensive humanoids.

## POPULAR ORCISH SUPERSTITIONS

### 1. *Walking past a body without stopping is bad luck.*

Orcs hold that any fallen foe (or comrade, for that matter) may possess something of value, and they dread the idea that they may bypass a beneficial item, weapon, or free gold. Given a choice, they always stop to at least crouch by a body and look it over before moving on, even if they have already witnessed a fellow orc doing the same. It is for this reason that orc armies tend to get delayed on the field of battle; the individuals loot the bodies of friend and foe alike, and only the strictest of commanders can get the host moving in short order.

### 2. *Elves can curse individuals with a glance.*

Orcs do not trust elves as far as they can throw them, and they assume that all elves wish them ill (which many do). Moreover, they are aware of the great aptitude elves have for magic, and most have come to believe that elves can cast spells through their large eyes without uttering a word, cursing humanoids to a painful death.

### 3. *A drawn blade must taste blood.*

If an orcish warrior unsheathes a bladed weapon, it is considered bad luck to sheath it again unless it is given blood to “quench” its bloodlust. If a drawn blade is not “sated” in this manner, it may grow dull at the prospect of being wielded by a coward and fail its owner at some vital junction. For this reason, orcs that have drawn a weapon but not used it may keep it drawn until it sees true use. Other, old-fashioned orcs, simply run an unused blade across an arm or leg to “feed” it with blood before putting it away. This practice has led to the orcish moniker *bhargaden thumes*, or “banded legs”—a derisive nickname for a coward derived from the sight of old warriors with heavily scarred legs.

### 4. *Being caught on open ground under the rising sun is bad luck.*

Given the orcish dislike of sunlight and their tendency to lair in dark places, this superstition is not a surprising one. Orcs have given the sun many names, and most of them refer to it as a giver of pain or a hated thing, and being caught exposed at daybreak is considered an omen of a bad day or week ahead. For this reason, even force-marching armies usually pause before dawn under trees or within shallow caves and wait for the first moments of sunlight to pass before they venture out.

### 5. *The first warrior to retreat dies a coward's death.*

This tale was most likely spread and reinforced by orc commanders to dissuade their troops from retreating. Orcs are conditioned from youth to believe that the first orc in a large group that runs away from a foe, even a vastly superior one, will die before the day is out. In cases where orcs retreat, they can usually be seen watching their fellows, just waiting for a comrade to lose nerve and run so they may safely follow. There is also some evidence that orc chieftains and subchiefs help give this rumor credence by identifying orc individuals that are the first to retreat and making sure they never live to see the morning...

larger forces in an attempt to gather information about an enemy's size, location, tactics, and weaknesses. Orc grunts (see Chapter Five) make excellent scouts and are often used in this fashion. Scouting parties usually have 10 members or less.

When possible, scouts take the higher ground and attempt to get a good comprehensive view of the enemy territory. When scouting a town or village, they arrive at night so they may travel the streets unseen and peer through the windows of meeting halls and temples. If discovered, scouts make every attempt to flee back to the safety of their tribe.

Scouts wear light hide or leather armor covered by scraps of cloth that match the terrain in which they are operating. Weapons used by scouts are typically small, light weapons such as handaxes and short swords. During large-scale battles and open warfare, parties of scouts are equipped with enough rations and supplies to survive away from the larger tribe or horde for a week or more if needed. Large tribes and hordes may send out several such scouting parties in different directions, in the hope that at least one party will return with valuable information.

## DRUDGE

Orc "drudges" are the least experienced warriors in the tribe. They often represent the young and most inexperienced warriors, and most chieftains remorselessly use them as cannon fodder. Drudges rarely go into battle alone, but instead serve a support role and bolster the more skilled orc warriors. They are considered expendable.

Bloodragers and berserkers allow drudges to swarm their foes and soften them up before the more experienced orcs wade into battle themselves. Taken singly, drudges do not pose much threat to seasoned militiamen or adventurers, but when attacking in great numbers, they can surround more powerful foes and drag them down.

Drudges, as can be expected, tend to be the most cowardly of orcish warriors. They enthusiastically participate in fights that go their way, but if met with a larger opposing force, the smartest drudges retreat if possible. Drudges are often assigned to guard duty, watching over less-important tribal resources.

Drudges go into battle with the simplest equipment available. Armor consists of hide armor or armor made from scraps. Weapons of choice are daggers, clubs, crude spears, or other simplistic weapons that may be used with only a modicum of training. Drudges tend not to use shields, and they do not use missile weapons as a rule.

## FEMALES AND YOUNG

Females and young generally do not fight. Females serve a gatherer role in tribal society, and they also care for the young. When caring for children, females organize themselves into large groups to best distribute food and manage their young, savage charges. If pressed into battle or forced to defend their young, female orcs

should be considered drudges for purposes of battle ability.

Females do not wear armor of any kind, but in colder months they garb themselves in thick hide garments that are functionally similar to hide armor. They do not normally carry weapons, but grab any hand axe or tool within reach if threatened. Although not known to be particularly "motherly" some female orcs have demonstrated surprising battle fury when protecting the young. Adventurers are cautioned that females or young orcs do not always make for easy prey, nor are they easily intimidated. If confronted within their tribal lair by intruders, females tend to think (often rightly so) that the other warriors have already been defeated, and if easy flight isn't an option, they either resolutely offer themselves as slaves or they fight to the death.

Orcs younger than 5 years of age cannot fight in any sense, and are effectively helpless without female protection. Tales are told of females discovering slain children going to great lengths to track down and slay the perpetrators. Sages believe these tales to be factual.

## SAMPLE TRIBES

### ORCS OF THE GRASPING CLAW

The Orcs of the Grasping Claw total some 240 in number. An ancient chieftain advised by a venerable shaman lead the tribe. A group of five subchiefs, all advisors in their own right, make the daily decisions, but only the chief can proclaim war or initiate a major migration of the tribe. The tribe has no worgriders, but they pride themselves on an unusual number of berserkers willing to give their lives for any cause the chieftain deems worthy.

The device of the Grasping Claw is a wyvern claw gripping an eye that drips blood. This icon is always set on a black background, and they paint it liberally on their shields and breastplates. Those of the Grasping Claw are prone to accenting things with the color red, such as twisting strands of interwoven red leather around a weapon haft or tying red feathers to the blunt end of a spear. Sometimes they enhance the color of their shields and such by smearing fresh blood atop the red paint for a touch of realism.

The Grasping Claw has amicable relations with a small clan of ogres living in the area and they have also, after some long negotiation, forged a truce with a nearby trio of bog hags in the swamps to the east. Occasionally, the ogres accompany the tribe on local raids, and the tribe rewards them with first choice of any jewelry and similar baubles found. The tribe trades gems (useful as spell components) to the hags in exchange for potions and magical salves.

The Claw, as locals call them, were nomadic for a time, but have now settled down in a cave system at the end of a narrow valley that provides water via a natural spring. The