



DARK • SUN[™]

W O R L D

Slave Tribes

by Bill Slavicsek

Official Game
Accessory





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by Bill Slavicsek

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Slave Tribes

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Introduction

Slave Tribes is an accessory for the DARK SUN™ campaign setting. It features information on slavery on Athas, descriptions of some of the prominent slave tribes roaming the endless wastes, examples of life in a slave tribe, and even advice on how to create new slave tribes for your own campaigns.

Be aware, the DARK SUN setting is very different from other fantasy worlds. It is a brutal, unrelenting world that rewards carelessness with quick death. Life is precious, exciting, dangerous, and very, very short. The world, Athas, has seen its fundamental nature twisted and warped by centuries of unrestrained, abusive magic. To survive, the races you know from other AD&D® game settings have adapted to this new world by undergoing bizarre modifications. Because of this, we suggest you become familiar with the DARK SUN™ boxed set before delving into the information set forth in this book.

That said, *Slave Tribes* offers much to Dungeon Masters and players involved in or getting ready to start a DARK SUN campaign. First, a discussion of slavery on Athas describes who slaves are, where they come from, what they do, and who they do it for. It also examines the benefits of slavery to Athasian society, slaves in the major cities and villages, and the emerging slave rebellion. After this background information has been laid, you'll meet the tribes of ex-slaves that have begun to make names for themselves from the Hinterlands to the Sea of Silt. These tribe profiles make up the bulk of the book, providing DMs with information, game statistics, and adventure ideas to use in their own campaigns. A look at life in a typical slave tribe is geared toward role-playing and features plenty of adventure ideas to build upon. Finally, a section on creating new tribes provides advice to both DMs and players seeking to swell the ranks of the free.

The information waits within these pages. What you and your players do with it is, as always, up to you. Now, the hot sand of Athas beckons and the slave tribes grow restless. The rebellion is about to

start, and it won't wait until you're ready. Hurry! The sun dips below the horizon, and who knows what another day will bring to this arid land.

Daled's Chronicle

I am Daled, dwarf and ex-slave on this burning world called Athas. What I am about to share with you was gathered by guile and tenacity and dangerous travels. It began as most work does for a slave, at the behest of my master in far-off Balic. He was a patrician in the city-state, one of the privileged nobility. To keep his lands, he agreed to undertake a project generously offered to him by a high-ranking templar.

The sorcerer-king of Balic has a desire for knowledge, and he constantly starts research projects to satisfy his most-current curiosity. Like Athas itself, the sorcerer-king of Balic thirsts for so many things. On that day so many cycles ago, he wished to know more about the growing number of slave tribes dotting the endless wastes. When the job was forced upon me, it became my focus, my own thirst.

Look around you, for this is Athas! Hot and dry, the world screams for life-sustaining water to wash away the sweat and sand. Slowly dying, it thirsts for vitality and rejuvenation to make life grow again. Brutal and savage, it thirsts for the tranquility of peace. My world thirsts for many things, but it can find no magical, all-quenching liquid to provide relief. There is only the searing heat, and it is as endless as the desert that covers my world. Add to these thirsts the thirst to know more about this world-parched by sun, swept raw by wind, and sucked dry by foul magic.

From the Hinterlands to the Sea of Silt and beyond, my world is a pale, withered husk, a fading memory of a far-different place only a few can even imagine. Once, some say, there was water so plentiful that it covered the land as the sand does today. So much water! What must it have been like to never be thirsty? I cannot even conjure such a world in my dreams, and little good comes from wishing for



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things that will never be again.

Another thirst plagues Athas, however, and there may be a way to quench this raging fire. I slowly learned of it while engaged in the research set before me. And, like the other thirsts of Athas, this one too became a part of me. This thirst burns the throat of Athas raw in the gladiatorial arenas of Draj and in the quarry pits of Urik. This thirst is for freedom; every slave throughout the land desires to sample its cool, sweet taste. How many have died for a few drops of this precious liquid? How many more will die to soothe Athas's parched lips?

Do not misunderstand me. The practice of keeping slaves was established long before you or I were born to these hot, wind-swept plains. I am not sure the cities would survive without the labor provided by the strong arms and backs of human, dwarf, and mul slaves. And without the cities, could Athas itself continue to linger, even in this half-life it stubbornly clings to?

But at the same time, we cannot pretend that the thirst for freedom does not exist, for at times and in certain places it burns as hot as the afternoon sun. Some claim that the thirst will set all of Athas on fire, forcing the slave owners and sorcerer-kings to douse the flames by granting freedom to every slave. I believe these claims are nothing more than dreams, but perhaps that is what Athas needs in these times of so many unquenchable thirsts.

Who am I? I am Daled, once a slave serving a patrician in the city of Balic. The noble taught me to read and write, entrusting me with the chronicling of his words and deeds so that they could be passed on to his family. Then he gave me a task that would become my focus, the one I spoke of earlier. Even my freedom, which came unexpectedly and without planning, has not distracted me from this task. Now I am an ex-slave in a tribe of ex-slaves, continuing to learn and record everything I can about the slaves living in similar tribes throughout the Tyr region.

Since joining my tribe, I have traveled far and

wide across Athas's scorched surface. I have seen sights of majestic beauty and unparalleled horror. I have visited countless tribes of ex-slaves, each trying in its own way to carve life out of the stark and unyielding wilderness. I have seen tribes thrive, but more often I have seen them die.

This is my chronicle of the things I have witnessed or been told about concerning slavery, slave tribes, and all of the practices associated with both. In theory, I do this at my tribe leader's bequest so that the future—if there is a future—will know of our struggles and dreams. In truth, I do this for myself, to satisfy an all-consuming need of my own that I barely understand.

The discourses and descriptions that follow have been culled from years of travel and countless hours of listening. Listening is the slave's art, for the slave learns to blend in and listen from the day he is enthralled, and the owner speaks of what he will with no more regard for the slave than for a table or chair. To the owner, after all, property is property. Still, listening garners only what the listener can hear, and many tales grow taller in the telling. While I believe that much of what I present is true, some may no longer be true and some may never have been true. What was true yesterday can be false today because of a sudden shift in the wind. That is the nature of life on Athas—nothing is forever but the sun and sand. Of course, what was false will probably always be false. Errors cannot be helped, but please trust that the underlying themes and patterns are correct, for these have survived all the tellings and, where possible, have stood up to personal inspection.

Much of the presented material concerns the thirst for freedom that I spoke of, for this basic need defines the dreams of so many slaves. I have been charged with bringing these dreams to every slave tribe I visit. How slaves and their tribes respond tells me a little more about Athas and its people.

Do I believe in the dream of freedom, or do I merely serve it? I cannot answer that, for in truth I

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do not know. I know that I have tasted freedom and it is very sweet. I never want to thirst for it again, toiling for a master while my spirit withers beneath the hot sun of bondage. But do I believe that Athas can survive this dream and wake up better because

of it? That is for someone else to decide, for I am only the chronicler, and this is the chronicle of the slave tribes of Athas, which it has been my focus to record.



Chapter 1: Athasian Slavery

Slavery exists throughout Athas. It thrives in the city-states of the sorcerer-kings. It flourishes in the merchant houses. It lingers in villages far from the centers of civilization. Almost every living, intelligent being knows of the practice of capturing, raising, and keeping slaves. Some relish the system and embrace its methods and ideology completely. Some ignore it with the disdain reserved for the commonplace and widely accepted. Others fear it, dreading the loss of personal freedom that is so tenuous for those of less than noble birth. Others live it, marked as property and put to work for the good of the city-states, the templars, the nobles, the merchants, or the sorcerer-kings. Few understand the practice, for that is not required. Slavery exists, and that is understanding enough for most people.

A few wish to know the hows and whys of things, and I am among them. To know the slaves, we must know why they are slaves. To understand slavery, we must understand the motives and forces that drive the system. With these goals of knowledge and understanding in mind, I begin this chronicle with questions. Perhaps by the time I finish, there will be answers.

What is Slavery?

Athasian slavery is a system under which individuals from all races and stations of life become the property of others. Under this system, the property, called slaves, can be used or disposed of at the will of the owners. They perform whatever tasks their owners set before them, and live basically as their owners choose, either in comfort or in squalor.

While this definition works as a banner description, slavery remains a multi-headed beast. What is true of one head may not be true of another. The system appears one way in one city, while in another city it takes on a different shape entirely. The system even takes on different aspects within a given city, depending on the owners, the slaves, and the tasks to be performed. With this in mind, be aware that customs and specific situations can alter the face of

slavery from one place to the next; thus, at best, my chronicle can be taken as a broad set of guidelines to the institution of slavery.

In some city-states, a visitor may not be able to tell freeman from slave. In another, slaves have become chattel, treated as things. Some slaves receive favored treatment, living better than the average freeman. Others endure harsh conditions and cruel punishments as a regular part of their exploitation.

My own experience as a slave was as personal, unique, and universal as any other slave's. I did what I was told to do, when I was told to do it. If I was a bit too slow, or if I looked displeased with the task set before me, I endured whatever punishment my master or his overseer saw fit to dispense. I cannot claim to have been treated any better or any worse than others in my position. Indeed, had I been pampered or maltreated, the situation would have been the same—I was property, branded and shackled to my master with no personal freedom. That is the condition of slavery.

Who Are Slaves?

Athasian society is a slave society. Slaves occupy a central role in the economic and social dynamics of this world of fire and sand. Slaves come from all races and social classes, though slaves taken from the noble or merchant classes usually regain their freedom with the help of the ceramic pieces of their friends or family. Clerics and mages are also rarely found in bondage, as their powers and abilities provide them with abundant opportunities for escape.

The most common races found among the slave population are humans, dwarves, half-giants, half-elves, and muls. Less common are elves, thri-kreen, and halflings, though even these races sometimes show up working in the fields or providing exotic entertainment in the gladiatorial arenas.

How do these people from different societies and different walks of life come together in the great melting pot of slavery? Some are born to it, the sons and daughters of generations of slaves. Others find



themselves captured in war or kidnapped in raids launched specifically to replenish a city-state's slave population. Finally, there are those who are sold into slavery because of debts or as punishment for some crime.

Anyone can become a slave. Templar or noble, merchant or freeman, rich man or poor, the gates of slavery are wide open, admitting any unfortunate enough to wander too close to the gaping maw. Who are slaves? Some say we are all slaves—it is just a matter of how tightly we are bound.

Who Are Owners?

Any freeman can own slaves, and most keep at least one slave to handle those tasks considered laborious or below a freeman's station. Sorcerer-kings own thousands of slaves, filling every conceivable duty with chattel labor. These vast numbers of slaves serve to reduce them to the level of mere property. Many lead miserable existences as disposable labor. Nobles tend to keep large numbers of slaves, but none come close to approaching the servile armies of the sorcerer-kings. Nobles employ dozens of well-treated household servants, pampered stables of gladiators, and severely disciplined field workers. Templars, while they may own slaves, rarely keep more than a few personal servants and concubines. Instead, they are free to make use of a city's slave population. Whenever a templar needs bodies to perform some task, he dips into the stables of his sorcerer-king and takes as many slaves as he needs.

Freemen, on the other hand, can rarely afford more than a handful of servants, depending on their level of income and their profession. Slaves owned by freemen rarely find themselves enduring unpleasant drudgery, such as mining or quarry work. In fact, a freeman's slave is one of the best-treated slaves in all of Athas. Often, these slaves work beside their freemen masters, tending small plots of land, toiling in craft shops, or constructing private dwellings somewhere in a city.

Merchant houses keep slaves to handle the labori-





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ous tasks associated with trade. Hefting, stacking, and carrying goods are jobs assigned to a merchant's slaves. Those merchant houses that produce goods also keep shops full of artisan slaves to turn out weapons, textiles, and pottery.

I have found a direct correlation between how masters view their slaves and how slaves are treated. Those who keep large numbers of slaves tend to see them as property, a nearly limitless supply of tools for getting jobs done. Those who keep only a few slaves get to know them personally and usually treat them more like people. Also, if a freeman has but a handful of slaves in his service, then each of those slaves becomes too valuable to waste through maltreatment or overwork.

Still, do not conclude that some slaves have easy lives. Even the most favored servants do not get to make the simplest decisions concerning their own affairs. Indeed, they have no affairs, except those allowed by their masters.

What Do Slaves Do?

Slaves come in a variety of classes, which are defined by the duties of the slaves that fill their ranks. Whatever the class and its specific duties, slaves must do anything their owners ask. That is the nature of slavery. The most common classes of slaves are artists and artisans, concubines, domestic servants, farmers, gladiators, laborers, and soldiers. I will also discuss a rarer breed of slave, the indentured scholar.

Artists and Artisans

While the arts are appreciated in most Athasian cities, they are not highly regarded. Templars, nobles, and even the sorcerer-kings enjoy art, often surrounding themselves with the best examples they can find. The creation of artwork is viewed as a laborious chore, however, and all chores are entrusted to slaves.

Because the arts are used by nobles and other

owners to impress their peers, slaves can attain a good standard of living by demonstrating even rudimentary artistic abilities. Those who excel in a particular artistic endeavor achieve a state of pampered luxury for as long as they continue to produce stylish creations. Of course, style is a matter of opinion, and the only opinion that counts is that of an owner. If an artist's particular style goes out of fashion, the artist loses his favored status-and perhaps a whole lot more.

Some owners keep a single artist within their stable of slaves. Others set up workshops full of artisans to turn out as many creations as possible for their own enjoyment and as a profit-making enterprise. Examples of artistic endeavors popular throughout Athas include singing, acting, reciting poetry, painting, sculpting, storytelling, and bone carving. In addition to these arts, many slaves receive instruction in reading and writing. Although in theory only templars and nobles are allowed to possess these skills, on penalty of death, in practice these skills are taught to artist slaves so that they may assist an owner with the keeping of records or to enhance a slave's ability to create works of art.

While the favored artist produces items of style and beauty, the artisans produce finely made crafts and other useful items. Some artisan workshops contain dozens of slaves. They keep busy turning out pots, drinking cups, clothing, and even armor and weapons. Each workshop and its artisans usually specialize in a given type of craft, be it pottery, weaving, or wood or stone working. They produce excellent weapons, hand-wrought articles of clay, stone, and bone, and even items of metal, when that rare material can be obtained.

Concubines

Concubines are slaves kept for the physical enjoyment of their owners. These male and female slaves usually receive pampered treatment, for they are expected to pamper their owners in turn. Expert in all forms of physical pleasure, concubines employ var-



ied techniques to accomplish their intimate duties.

Rumors persist that a few of the sorcerer-kings maintain harems full of concubines, while most nobles keep no more than one or two. It is in the ranks of the templars that these purely physical servants are most often seen, always on hand to attend to their masters' needs.

While many owners come to appreciate and perhaps even care for their concubine slaves, most regard this class of slave as little more than attractive furniture. The fact that concubines are trained to think of themselves in the same way helps perpetuate the situation. It is the rare concubine slave who can survive freedom, for they have few skills to make use of outside their pampered existence.

Domestic Servants

Domestic servants attend to the daily needs of the households they are bound to. This class of slave serves as cook, baby-sitter, chamberlain, butler, maid, or major-domo for their owners. Some sorcerer-kings employ dozens upon dozens of domestic servants to handle their individual household needs, while templars and lesser nobles may keep but one to fill all of the duties applicable to this slave class.

Many owners have become so dependant on domestic servants to run their households that they would be lost without them. Of the nobles who keep such slaves, few can care for themselves. They depend on their household slaves to cook their meals, buy their food, raise their children, clean their homes, and even help them dress at the start of the day.

Most nobles agree that humans and dwarves make the best domestic servants. Both have the temperament to apply themselves to such mundane tasks, and most can be trusted or at least controlled by their owners. Few slave owners, however, would employ any of the other races to work so close to them. Neither elves nor halflings inspire trust; most owners would be afraid of being served poisoned

broth with their evening meal. And who would want to try to order around a half-giant or a mul, when their great strength is better used on other tasks?

Domestic slaves have become such an extension of wealthy Athasian life that few of noble birth could manage without them. Most nobles look down upon any of their class who are so poor that they must employ spouse and children to handle domestic tasks. From shopping to stocking supplies, from milling grain to preparing meals, even to attending to the physical well-being of masters, the chores assigned to domestic slaves have become so important to the higher classes that Athasian nobility can no longer survive without them.

Farmers

Every city maintains extensive fields of crops and keeps large herds of animals to provide sustenance and other materials for their populations. At least half of all slaves within a given city-state work the fields and manage the herd animals, such as carru and kitsus. These farmers endure the most rigorous and hardship-laden lifestyles imaginable—with the possible exception of certain laborers, such as the quarry workers of Urik.

Farmers must till the soil, reap the crops, weed the fields, kill dangerous insects with their bare hands, and fetch water with back-breaking regularity. To accomplish these tasks, farmers receive the barest essentials—just enough food and water to stay alive. They are beasts of burden, treated more harshly than the herd animals they tend.

The farmer slaves of Balic, for example, must work exceedingly hard to keep the flocks of kitsus in their care alive. These strange-looking "bird-lizards" are small creatures with sand-colored scales, tooth-filled beaks, and feathered wings for gliding. Not only are these creatures raised to produce eggs, but the cooked flesh of the kitsus makes a particularly tasty dish. If a farmer loses one of his kitsus to death, poacher, or escape, he is punished by having a strip of skin peeled from his body. Few



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farmers survive losing more than a handful of the bird-lizards.

In Raam, farmer slaves tend herds of carru. They make sure the hoofed animals eat well, have enough water, and even pluck insects from their short-haired fur. The four-footed herd animals provide milk and meat to the city-state, and a single carru is considered more valuable than the farm slave who cares for it. The animal's name comes from the sound it makes through the nasal horn that curves up along its head. Mistreating a carru or allowing one to come to harm before it is scheduled for slaughter is a serious offense. Tending slaves often endure the terrible punishment associated with these crimes—slow death in the arena.

Other strict rules govern farmers' lives. No field slave may put hand to mouth without the leave of his overseer on penalty of a severe beating. If a field slave steals food or water, he loses a hand. After the second theft, the now-useless slave is put to death.

Gladiators

Public entertainment in the city-states of Athas provides momentary distractions from the day-to-day hardships most citizens endure. The most successful spectacles take place in the great gladiatorial arenas, where slaves pit strength and skill against others for the enjoyment of the masses.

Wealthy templars and nobles keep stables of male and female gladiators. These slaves are selected for their fighting prowess. Strength, intelligence, speed, and skill—these traits are the most desirable in gladiator slaves. Still, every stable maintains a small stock of exotic and less-than-perfect thralls to use purely for the entertainment they will provide.

While some stables breed and train their own gladiators, most go to one of the merchant house gladiatorial schools to replenish their stock. House Jarko in Balic, for example, maintains one of the best gladiator schools, and its slaves draw high prices on the open market. The Jarko slaves receive excellent training and pampered treatment, and

most do very well in the arenas. In contrast, the city-state of Draj sports its own training facilities where slaves are taught how to be gladiators through cruel lessons and harsh treatment. Interestingly, Draj's gladiators are as sought after and feared as those from House Jarko.

While members of any race can be trained as gladiators, one race has made a name for itself in the gladiator arenas and battle pits. Muls are the quintessential gladiators. A cross between a human and a dwarf, a mul combines the best of both races into a tough fighting machine. As tall, dexterous and cunning as a human, a mul is also endowed with the strength and endurance of the dwarven race. Like dwarves, muls have a tenacious single-mindedness that makes them warriors of such determination and stamina that few can stand against them.

Of course, some races wind up in the battle pits just to provide an exotic flavor to a day's slate of matches. Crowds come out to see a thri-kreen or half-giant gladiator, and even halflings create curiosity when they appear on the bill. In rare instances, gladiators are pitted against a creature from the unexplored wastelands. Few can resist coming out to watch a mul take on a deadly braxat or gaj.

The gladiator contests inspire wagering, with nobles and freemen alike betting considerable amounts on the outcome of a given battle. Owners observe the contests from private boxes high above the arena, while the less wealthy watch from crowded bleachers. Many wagerers, whether templar, noble or freeman, are sold into slavery when their favorite gladiator falls and they cannot pay off the debt. I have sometimes wondered if a gladiator, upon hearing the staggering amounts wagered on him to emerge victorious, contemplates losing just to spite the nobles and templars who bet on him. Unfortunately, a gladiator who loses a match has never survived for me to ask.



Laborers

Servile laborers endure perhaps the worst conditions of any class of slaves, depending on the work they are forced to do and for whom they do it. Those in the service of freemen generally receive the best care, for they are too valuable an investment to needlessly waste. Those under the whip of the sorcerer-kings' overseers are literally worked to death and then replaced by procuring minor criminals and vagrants.

Slaves are employed by freemen labor to build homes, shops, and other private structures. Those in thrall to the kings labor in dangerous mines and deep quarries, work to build and maintain public structures, such as temples and city walls, and are even put to work on frivolous projects for the amusement or aggrandizement of a sorcerer-king.

Slaves working in the flint pits of Nibenay and the obsidian quarries of Urik endure the most terrible conditions of all, often dying to pull the precious

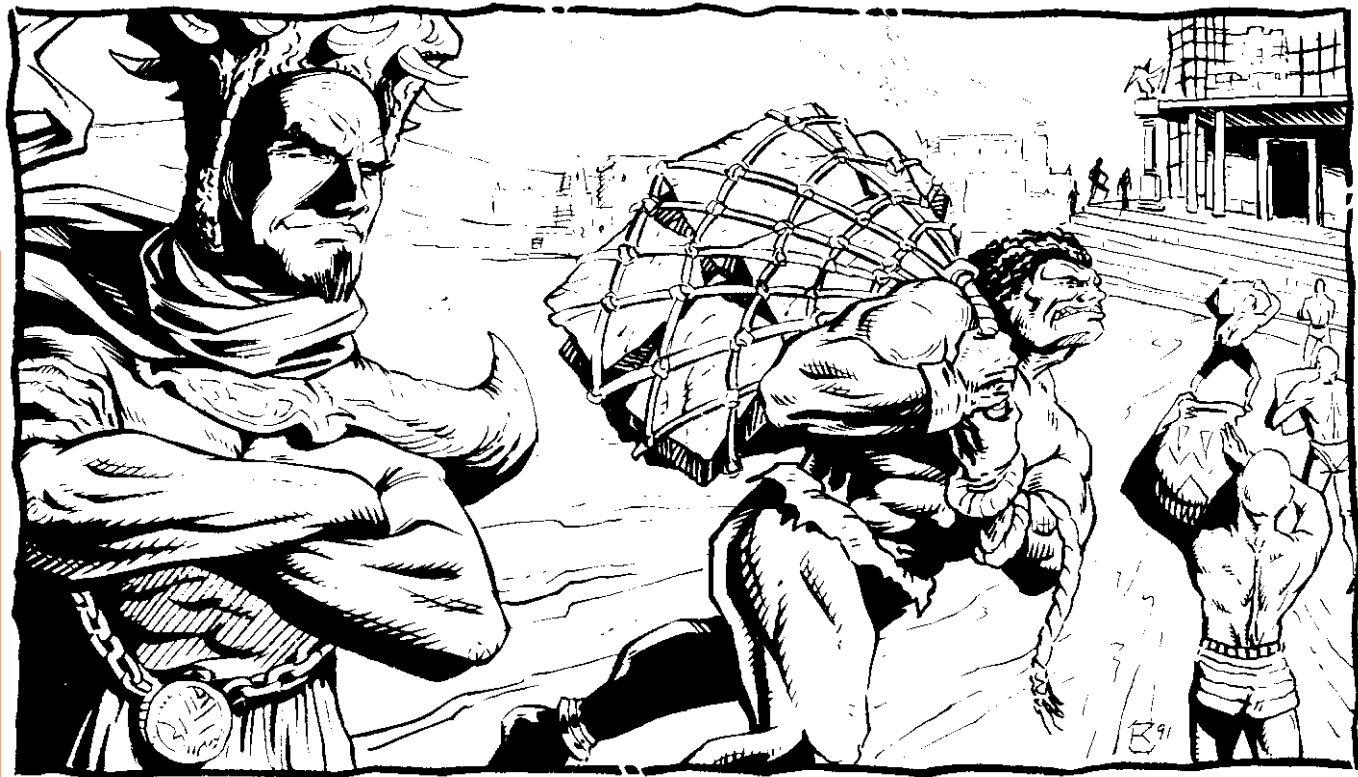
material from the ground. These most premium minerals require a premium cost—the sweat and blood of the slaves who labor in the earth with muscle, hand, and tool.

The best laborers come from the strong races. Dwarves and half-giants are the most common, but muls who have become too old or too maimed to continue as gladiators can also be found slaving away in work gangs from Balic to Raam.

Scholar Slaves

A rare type of slave found only in the service of the Shadow King of Nibenay, scholars receive dispensation so that they may openly practice the otherwise forbidden skills of reading and writing. Nibenay has gathered a small group of scholar slaves (mostly culled from the ranks of nobles and templars) to study the ancient writings found in the ruins near his city.

Why he uses slaves instead of templars to study





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the ancient writing remains a mystery, for most of the scholar slaves never emerge from the university Nibenay has prepared for them inside the walled sub-city. Some say the writing of the ancients drives the slaves mad after a time. Others claim that once Nibenay's scholars have deciphered the text, he has them put to death. I have even heard that the other sorcerer-kings have begun to grow a bit nervous about these mysterious rumors.

Soldier Slaves

In addition to regular army units and local militia, the sorcerer-kings and the noble houses use armies of slave soldiers to protect the city-states and client villages. Often, these armies of slaves are assembled when danger is imminent. Taken from the fields or other slave stations and equipped with some type of weapon, a slave soldier is usually considered as an added pawn to help the regular soldiers in time of war. Few city-states maintain more than a token standing force of slaves unless absolutely necessary, and slave soldiers receive rudimentary training at best. Only the most confident sorcerer-kings feel comfortable keeping a large force of armed slaves at the ready within a city's walls. Discipline among the slave soldiers is maintained through the use of privileged treatment and swift punishment.

Noble houses, however, have different needs. Many select infant slaves to train to army life, raising loyal fighting machines to protect the family's interests and to aid the forces of the city-state in time of war. By its nature, a noble's slave army is small and well-organized. Slave soldiers in service to a noble house receive excellent training from the time they can crawl. By the time they are full-grown soldiers, these slaves have come to regard the owning family as their own. They will fight to the death to protect it, with little regard for their own safety.

Of course, such loyalty inspires mistrust in the sorcerer-kings. To keep the armies of the nobility in check, many kings enlist half-giant troops to serve as a sort of royal guard. Few among the other races can

stand long against these powerful brutes, and even the sorcerer-kings must employ talented templar officers to keep the half-giants under control with magic.

Slaves in the City-States

To this point I have been somewhat general in my discussion of Athasian slavery. In the next section, I will briefly touch upon some specifics concerning the slave condition in the various city-states of the Tyr region. This is by no means an exhaustive treatise. It is a short overview as to the nature of the many-headed beast called slavery.

Balic

It is said that on the streets of Balic, a visitor cannot tell a freeman from a slave. Of course, this is only said by templars and nobles from other city-states. As a slave who once served in Balic, I can assure you that only the owners claim the slaves are well-treated. To be fair, what I have learned of the conditions in other city-states does lend some substance to their claim, but twice better than terrible is still intolerable.

Balic's slave owners allow their slaves small amounts of freedom and a satisfactory standard of living. While the citizens of Balic find their way of life to their liking (and their token gestures of goodwill toward their slaves ease their troubled consciences), citizens of other city-states look down upon their neighbors from Balic as uncivilized brutes who share their privileges and living space with common property. Many visitors are quick to point out the lesson of the now-dead city-state of Yaramuke, where slaves and citizens worked side-by-side as near equals. This humane treatment, they say, led to Yaramuke's death, and Balic should learn from the mistakes of others.

For all of the predictions of the doomsayers, Balic thrives. Citizens and slaves work together in the olive orchards and on the grain farms, harvesting the



primary produce of the city. The nobles, called patricians, also put the slaves to work producing olive oil and milling grain, or as shepherds watching over the flocks of kitsus and other animals. Many artisan slaves also work in the pottery shops, creating beautifully decorated pottery that sells throughout the Tyr region.

This unprecedented level of cooperation between freeman and slave extends to the defense of Balic as well. Because of its proximity to the Forked Tongue Estuary, this secluded city-state is safe from attack by other city-states. However, its location makes it a tempting target for raiding giants wading out of the sands. For this reason, all slaves and citizens are members of the militia. The slaves receive more military training than their equivalents in other cities, and they spend every tenth month alongside the regular army, patrolling the fields and scrublands in an effort to reduce the frequency of giant raids.

Do not think that Balic is any less oppressive for all of its talk of owner-slave cooperation. While physical punishments are frowned upon, they are not unknown in Balic. In fact, if a slave does something so terrible as to drive his master to reach for the lash, then it is considered acceptable to whip the slave nearly to death. Mostly, however, the owners employ punishments designed to destroy the spirit and break the will. Extended confinement in small, dark pits is a particular favorite of the nobles, while templars enjoy adding small insects and reptiles to keep the punished slave company.

In Balic, because slaves have the freedom to work as they will and at their masters' sides, the laws concerning their behavior are piled up like high walls around them. A stray look, a slow bow, or even a wrong step can be considered obstinate behavior and can earn a slave time in a confinement pit. Because anything can be considered improper behavior for a slave in Balic, fear and anxiety are constant companions of every slave. To outsiders, Balic may seem like a pleasant city where slaves are free to roam and work without fear of the overseer's lash.

But the truth is there are other things to fear in Balic, and those fears hang like dark clouds over the city-state's slave population.

Draj

The life of a slave in Draj is filled with fear and terrible anticipation. The Mighty and Omnipotent Tectuktitlay enjoys sending his city-state to war. These raids seem to have but one purpose—to procure prisoners to sacrifice upon the sorcerer-king's great pyramid. As long as prisoners are plentiful, the slaves can relax and go about their business. However, if the number of prisoners falls below the level Tectuktitlay deems acceptable for a day's sacrifice, the balance is culled from the city's slave population.

Draj makes use of slaves as soldiers, as gladiators to fight in the great arena below the king's pyramid, and as laborers in the lush vegetation of the surrounding mudflats. They also work to harvest hemp to make rope and clothing, and they labor in the grain mills, for Draj maintains a brisk trade with the other city-states despite its warlike nature.

A major slave occupation in Draj is brick making. Every day, work gangs are sent into the mudflats to collect mud, shape it into bricks, and carry the drying bricks back to the city. The mud bricks dry quickly under the hot sun, baking into hard squares that can be used to construct new buildings or to repair existing structures.

Gulg

The forest city of Gulg treats slaves with an impersonal indifference that often leads to mistreatment. Unlike other city-states where nobles employ a good percentage of the slave population, Gulg slaves are all owned by the city itself. The huge work gangs, managed by templars and overseers, all fall into the category of farmer/laborer. Strict rules and harsh punishments are the way of life for these slaves.



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Because of the city's lush location, food and natural resources are plentiful—as long as someone goes out to get it. The slaves make daily trips into the forest to gather wild fruits, nuts, roots, and berries. The nobles, who operate as hunters, fighters, and scouts, bring in food in the form of fresh meat. All food gathered by slaves and nobles becomes the property of the oba, Gulg's sorcerer-queen. She redistributes it to the citizens and slaves so that their needs are met. If the slaves ever need to be disciplined on a large scale, the oba simply refuses to give them a share of the food and water until the lesson of obedience has been learned.

A Slave Revolt

The following story was told to me by an ex-slave who was there. I will tell it to you as it was told to me, in the ex-slave's own words.

I'd been captured again, after only a few months of freedom. I was just getting used to living in a slave tribe when the slavers caught me. I cursed the hot sun for my bad luck and curled up in a corner of the crowded slave wagon. This time I was certain that I would be returned to my owner in Draj and punished for my previous escape. After two days in the moving slave wagon, however, we finally reached our true destination.

I watched through a small crack in the wagon's wall as we entered a temporary village. I later learned that the village was called Langu. It was a merchant settlement established outside the city-state of Urik. Through the crack I could see hundreds of people. There were merchants and guards everywhere, but there were even more slaves.

The slavers who captured me halted their wagon right beside a large fence with a sturdy gate. Guards forced me and my fellows out of the wagon and into the holding pen. They seemed nervous, these guards, always looking around and

keeping their weapons close at hand. Even after the gate was once again secured, the guards on the other side remained cautious and even a little bit afraid. That made me feel much better than my situation warranted.

More days passed, and from my place in the holding pen I watched as the village swelled with slaves. They were brought in by wagon, in caravans, or marched in shackled one to another. Soon the pens were filled and the slaves were put to work building more enclosures.

I learned that this village had been established as a transfer and supply point for an upcoming slave market to be held in Urik. Too many slaves and not enough guards quickly combined to make the merchants and their hired mercenaries very, very nervous. This nervousness made the slaves bolder than usual. Even I, a simple domestic slave who briefly lived in a free tribe, grew brave enough to heckle the guards and add to their discomfort.

What happened on the day before the great market has been blamed on Urik's enemies. Some suggest that Tyr instigators infiltrated the slave pens and sowed discontent. Others blame one of the growing number of rebellious slave tribes operating outside of the cities. The truth, at least as far as I know it, is made up of unrelated circumstances instead of grand plots.

As the crowds of slaves grew and the guards became more tense in anticipation of something—anything—going wrong, nerves became frayed and everyone was on edge. The village was a dry bush waiting for a spark to set it aflame. I was assigned to a work detail on that day, set to the task of building yet another holding pen for the endless stream of slaves flooding into the village. A young slave girl named Valuna was carrying a water pouch to quench the thirst of the workers. A few of the slaves called to her, making jokes that under other circumstances they



would not have made. Turning this way and that, young Valuna did not notice the guard standing with his back to her. She walked into him, spilling water everywhere and frightening herself and the nervous guard.

What happened next is a blur in my memories. I saw Valuna bump the guard. I watched as sparkling water sloshed into the air and rained to the ground. I gasped as the guard struck out with his sword and Valuna's blood mixed with the spilled water in the sand. I screamed, and every slave in sight joined in with screams of their own. Outraged at the unthinking act of violence and full of tension from days past, we attacked as one.

With bare hands and overwhelming numbers, we fell upon the guard and tore him apart. His fellows tried to come to his aid, but the other slaves rose up to help us. Soon some of us had weapons, taken from the fallen guards, and we pushed on through the village. In what seemed like the blink of an eye we overthrew the inadequate small amount of guards and disappeared in to the wilderness.

I was free again, and I vowed that I would never again let myself get captured by slavers or herded into a pen like a frightened animal. And I'll never forget the sight of poor Valuna's blood drenching into the hot sand.

Citizens of Urik, of course, tell the tale somewhat differently, and I have heard many variations. Langu remains typical of recent slave revolts, though, regardless of which version of the tale you want to believe. Most slave revolts are nothing more than spontaneous actions that lead to either freedom or death for the slaves involved. Grand plots and insidious subterfuge make great stories, but they are rarely the stuff of reality.

The life of a Nibenay slave varies dramatically depending upon the part of the city in which he works and lives. In Nibenay proper, artists and artisan slaves labor to decorate every building with stone reliefs. These carvings range from highly realistic to totally abstract to representations of rarely seen monsters. Those employed by the nobility tend to the bubbling springs or the abundant rice fields. Even the free craftsmen use slaves to assist them with their work, employing slaves to chop wood in the Crescent Forest and to aid in shaping that wood into weapons for sale across the region.

In the walled sub-city of the sorcerer-king, the life of a slave is rumored to be much harder and much shorter. I say rumored, for few of the slaves called to labor in the inner city ever emerge from its dark confines. Within the sub-city, Nibenay (who named his city-state after himself) supposedly keeps a multitude of slaves busy administering to the needs of himself and his templars. All of Nibenay's templars, by the way, are women, and some say they all share the duties and station of wives to the sorcerer-king. Scores of domestic servants and concubines wait hand and foot upon the king and his templar court, while an equal number of laborers work to build and maintain the structures within the sub-city.

Also at work within the walled sub-city are scores of artisan slaves. It is said (though no freeman has ever personally seen it) that Nibenay's palace resembles the Shadow King's head. Rumors abound that these craftsmen constantly sculpt and carve images of the templars into the palace-sculpture's hair. More recently, rumors have circulated that the Shadow King has established a university within the walled sub-city and stocked it with scholar slaves. What project these slaves are working on is unknown, but some say it has to do with ancient writings found in ruins deep within the Crescent Forest.

Nibenay slaves dread the inevitable day when they know they will be called into the sub-city, for



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none of their fellows so called ever returned. Even if life within the Shadow King's inner sanctum was nothing but pampered luxury for the slaves, the fact that every task ends in death darkens the mood of potential servants.

Nibenay slaves also serve as soldiers in the regular army. Constant conflicts with Gulg and oft-occurring civil disturbances within the city require large numbers of able fighters to maintain the Shadow King's interests.

Raam

A sorcerer-queen, Abalach-Re, presides over the city-state of Raam. She is a paranoid monarch, as fearful of her own citizens as she is of the other city-states. This paranoia ripples from the highest seats of power down to the lowliest slaves, causing chaotic winds to whip through society like a sand storm through the desert. In this chaos of frightened templars, raiding nobles, and angry citizens, it is the slave population that suffers the brunt of the near-anarchy.

A slave exists in Raam only as long as he or she is useful. Because of the prevalent chaos and poor organization, it falls to the slaves themselves to find useful work to occupy their time. The moment a slave appears idle, he is sent to the arena to entertain the crowds. As most of these slaves have no combat training or experience, the entertainment is short-lived at best.

Raam appears as a city on the verge of collapse. Its sorcerer-queen locks herself away within her palace's ivory walls, hidden deep behind defensive breastworks and ditches. Her templars refuse to walk the streets for fear of finding an assassin's dagger waiting for them. The nobles behave as raiding tribes, fighting among themselves and against the templars. Even the merchant houses find themselves caught up in the paranoia and chaos, hiring large bands of mercenaries to protect their goods.

This lack of stability and leadership hurts the slaves most of all. As the fields lie untended and the

herd animals wander away, food becomes scarcer and scarcer. The slaves receive the least share of what remains, and punishments become more frequent and much more brutal.

Tyr

Strange rumors have come to me concerning the current situation in the city-state of Tyr. Once this city-state used hundreds of slaves to pull iron from the nearby mines. More recently, the slaves were diverted to the task of completing a mighty ziggurat rising high over the city. Now, at least as I have come to understand it, the terrible sorcerer-king Kalak has been killed and a new king has taken over from among the ranks of the templars.

The stories that have come to me from Tyr have been confusing at best, and I feel that they simply reflect the confused and chaotic state that exists within the city. The one tale that intrigues me the most is the story that slavery has been abolished in Tyr. At least two different merchant caravans related this story to me, each attesting that the slaves of Tyr are now free.

What does this mean to other slaves and ex-slaves throughout the Tyr region? I have no idea. Perhaps the situation will be short lived. While I hope otherwise, I cannot see the other templars and nobles going along with this new king who sets their slaves free. While I shall endeavor to discover more about events in Tyr, I must caution that chaotic situations tend to be the most dangerous situations in Athas. Even if the slaves are free today in Tyr, tomorrow they may once again be enthralled. After all, if someone was able to kill the terrible Kalak (and rumors persist that he was killed by a gladiator!), then someone can just as easily kill this new king who seems to be a friend of slaves.

Urik

Urik and its king, Hamanu, have created a city of contrasts as far as the slave population is concerned.

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On one hand, the worst task a slave can ever imagine being assigned to is the obsidian quarries of the Mountain of the Black Crown. On the other hand, Hamanu's armies constantly set the slaves of his enemies free. Such contrasts are maddening, but they make perfect sense to Hamanu.

Actually, Urik's slaves are among the best treated and most loyal of any I have met in the Tyr region. All of the usual servile duties can be found in Urik, but the city-state's warlike ways bring many slaves into military service. Slaves make up a large portion of Hamanu's army. Military slaves serve as officers' assistants, shield bearers, weapon carriers, grooms, and even soldiers, fighting side-by-side with citizens and Urik's more interesting combat units—half-giant clubbers and a company of halfling rangers.

Of course, there are the negative aspects of life in Urik that both slave and freeman must be aware of. Hamanu's laws must be obeyed to the letter; as long as a person keeps these laws he can go about his

business in peace. But one transgression, one single disregard for the strict and unforgiving code, and you will find yourself among the slaves in the obsidian quarries.

Few servile duties compare to the terrible conditions existing in the quarries of black glass. Like the miners of Tyr, the quarry slaves are worked from dawn to dusk without rest. Each has a quota of stone to meet, and those who fail to hew enough of the material from the pits undergo excruciating punishments. Urik's economy depends upon the precious stone, and laziness among the quarry slaves is never tolerated.

The troubles in Tyr have caused conditions in the quarries to worsen. Without the iron from Tyr to make proper tools, the quarry slaves are forced to dig for the glassy rock with inferior tools and even with their bare hands, giving the black rock a slick coating of blood along its sharp edges.



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Slaves in the Villages

Villages dot the open spaces between the city-states, but few of them are more than temporary shelters from the wilderness. Every day, one or more of these tiny communities falls to raiders, natural disasters, or the dragon. Because of this, any discussion of village slaves must be handled in general terms, for the specific conditions change with the wind.

Client villages often mirror the attitudes and practices of their city-states. However, life in the wilderness can lead to more extreme behavior, as far as slaves are concerned. Some receive almost equal status with their masters, as the cooperation such treatment brings is invaluable far from the walls and armies of the sorcerer-kings. Some masters view conditions in the villages as open invitations to treat their slaves with hardened hearts and stinging whips, hoping that stern authority will keep the thralls in line.

No matter what attitude toward slaves sways a specific village, rarely are slaves kept in large numbers so far from the centers of civilization. Large numbers of slaves can be difficult to handle, requiring more overseers and guards than a typical village can employ. Slaves also make tempting targets for the various raiding parties that can sweep out of the desert without warning. Finally, most slave rebellions have taken place within villages. No village can close its borders as effectively as a city, and slaves see their best chance at freedom occurring while on a village work detail.

Other types of villages treat slaves according to their purposes. Some have no slaves at all; a few are made up entirely of escaped slaves. Some villages are nothing more than armed camps, temporary bases along a slave gang's supply line. These types of villages treat slaves harshly and keep a constant vigil over them.

How Did Slavery Start?

Sometime in the past, the sorcerer-kings first raised armies against each other and went to war. As few historical documents exist (at least that I am aware of), the past lives only in stories, legends and the memories of the sorcerer-kings. These stories provide few details, and many change from one telling to the next. One story remains fairly constant, however, and its telling has sent many off to sleep after a night around the slave fires.

The story concerns the citizens of one city-state and how they were taken prisoner by the soldiers of another. These prisoners of war expected to be tortured and eventually killed by their captors, as was the practice of the day. But the hero of the story, a prisoner named Ragoner, engaged his sorcerer-king captor in conversation for a day and a night. Throughout the discussion, Ragoner convinced the sorcerer-king that there was a better use for his prisoners than simple slaughter. He described the types of tasks he and his fellow prisoners could perform, from the mundane to the difficult to the dangerous, leaving the sorcerer-king and his people time for more important endeavors.

The sorcerer-king (who takes the form of the ruler of whichever city the story is being told in) contemplated Ragoner's words for another day and night. As he considered, the prisoners of war remained alive. Finally, the king appeared and called Ragoner and the other prisoners forward. With great fanfare, the king declared that from that moment on all prisoners, criminals, misplaced foreigners, vagrants, and debtors would serve useful purposes instead of meeting quick deaths. These prisoners would become slaves and would labor for the benefit of freemen everywhere. Thus did slavery begin and the slaughter of prisoners came to an end.

Or so the story goes.

I have found that all stories and legends have some basis in truth, and the tale of Ragoner is no



exception. We know through tales of the ancients that once, all prisoners were executed. One day, so long ago that no one alive remembers when (except perhaps the sorcerer-kings), the concept of slavery was introduced and the needless slaughter ceased. As time went by, the practice of taking and keeping slaves developed into the sophisticated system of master and servant operating on Athas today.

Now the entire basis of Athas's economic and social order is built upon slavery. Servile stock still comes partly from captured prisoners, but more often it is raised on slave farms and purchased at slave markets. Laws govern the sale of slaves, from guarantees concerning hidden imperfections to the length of servitude for those sold to pay off debts or as punishment for some crime.

Countless templars and nobles have justified the practice through philosophical arguments. In the natural order, these great thinkers declare, the weaker naturally become subservient to the stronger. Weaker, in this argument, does not point to physical

strength, but to the strength of mind and spirit. Those of strong mind and spirit are naturally born to be masters, as evidenced by the advantages those wielding psionics have. Those of the body, whose strength is measured not by psionics but by sinew and bone, naturally become slaves.

However the practice of slavery began, it has become an integral part of life on our brutal, unforgiving world. In many ways the system provides for the otherwise hopeless masses, granting them meaningful tasks, clear purposes, shelter, and food where there might otherwise be none. I wonder, if the foundation of slavery were ever pulled away, would the society above it collapse into the sand, never to be seen again?

Why Is Slavery Necessary?

Some regard slavery as the natural order, that the keeping of slaves by freemen is good and right. Slaves are necessary instruments for the handling of





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dull and heavy tasks. Without slaves, the natural superiors in society would not be free to pursue greater leisure and other endeavors.

Others see slavery as a means to an end. In this case, the end is the continuation of civilization upon our harsh, cruel world. Without slaves, these philosophers reason, all life would be reduced to a constant struggle against the environment. As long as the system of slavery exists, slaves remain the buffer between civilization and barbarity. In this view, the ends definitely justify the means.

A growing minority sees slavery as an outdated practice that keeps one level of society fat and content at the expense of another. In this view, civilization is held down by the weight of slavery, and it will not reach its heights until the weight is cut loose.

My own view, for what it is worth, falls somewhere in between. Our world, for better or for worse, has been built upon the foundation of the slave system. The leisure and advances of the upper classes, the great cities and their monuments, even life itself, rests upon the forced labor of the multitude. Life on Athas is not bought lightly, but with the sweat and blood of hard, hard work. I see a day when we buy our freedom with hard work, but others see a day when freedom is purchased with rebellion. But such a rebellion requires radical change, and I do not believe Athas can survive a rapid change that cuts out the foundation of society.

Some say that slave and freeman are in constant opposition to each other, that what is won by one is lost by other. I say this is wrong. Slave and freeman are struggling not with each other, but with Athas itself, for the world gives up its gifts reluctantly.

Why is slavery necessary? It is true that only through the efforts of society as a whole—both freeman and slave—can the races hope to survive upon this dying world. But would not slaves work for survival even harder if they were freed? I long for the day when we can eliminate this immoral and evil practice of keeping slaves. Then all freemen can struggle toward a good life for everyone on Athas.





Chapter 2: The Slave Tribes

Once you leave the safe, civilized confines of a city-state, the vast wilderness of Athas stretches before you. Out there, beyond the solid walls and protective gates, the burning sands await. The real Athas is out there—bleak, barren, and full of stark, deadly beauty. It waits patiently beneath the hot sun, ready to reveal itself to any who dare wander from civilization's small, fragile shore. Its revelations, however, are both wondrous and terrible to behold, and few survive even a brief glimpse unscathed. The wilderness of Athas changes those who travel its unmarked paths. Those who respect it, fear it, even admire it, can find sustenance in the most remote places. Those who seek to challenge the wildness, to bend nature to their own will, find that Athas is a stubborn, unrelenting opponent.

The trick to surviving is to use what Athas gives you to your best advantage. The slave tribes have learned this lesson well. The most important gift the wilderness provides is protection from those who would hunt down the escaped slaves and take away their hard-fought freedom. The forlorn and desolate regions of Athas provide hiding places, secure shelters, and natural defenses against the slave tribes' many enemies. No matter what resources the wilderness stubbornly refuses to make available, it does give the slaves who come to it the thing they need most—a chance.

Slaves labor for their masters in the cities and villages of Athas. They live, they work, and they die. That is the cycle of life for slaves. There is another possible step in the cycle, however, that slaves hope for and masters dread. There is escape. Slaves have been escaping from bondage for centuries. To a slave, escape means freedom. If he dies in the attempt, he is free. If he gets away without being killed, he turns to the wilderness to put distance between himself and those who would again enslave him. Either way, he is free.

Escaped slaves inevitably find other escaped slaves hiding in the desert. To survive, these groups of ex-slaves form tribes. There are hundreds of slave

tribes scattered throughout the desert. Some tribes are nothing more than small groups of nomads who travel together from oasis to oasis. Others grow large and establish villages to protect themselves. I have visited many slave tribes in my travels. Some of these tribes are still intact and operating outside the influence of the city-states. Many more have ceased to be, either swallowed by the sands, slaughtered by vengeful owners, or destroyed by their own inner conflicts.

The tribes included in this chronicle have been selected to demonstrate a variety of slave communities. While all of the tribes have the goals of survival, prosperity, and continued freedom in common, they do not all strive to achieve these goals in the same manner. While you will find the differences between the tribes fascinating and informative, be watchful for the similarities. For in the similarities lies the key to every tribe's ultimate survival.

Almost without exception, slave tribe leaders tend to be of military orientation. Soldiers and gladiators offer protection and order, so other types of slaves naturally rally around the more exceptional members of these classes.

Wizards and templars—even those who fell into slavery—never rise to positions of leadership in these communities. To the slaves, these classes represent the most evil aspects of Athas. Every wizard is a potential sorcerer-king in a slave's mind, and every templar is a reminder of life in servitude. This is not to say that wizards have no place in the slave tribes. The protection and other services they can provide make wizards tolerated, if not welcomed, in slave communities. Of course, a tribe or village normally allows only one type of wizard to wield his arcane arts for it. Rarely will you find both a preserver and a defiler in a slave tribe, for their radically different approaches to magic put them at odds with each other and disrupt the community's peace.

Ex-slaves exist in a state of blissful happiness, for they are truly thankful to be free. However, they also remain ever watchful for those who would take away



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their freedom. To this end, most ex-slaves live from moment to moment, enjoying what time they have in freedom's embrace. Every Slave knows all too well what life is like in shackles, and they understand that freedom is a fragile thing that could evaporate with the rising sun.

I understand these things as well, for I count myself among their number. For that reason, take what is presented for what it is—a chronicle about ex-slaves written by an ex-slave.

The Free

The first tribe I wish to chronicle has, in its short period of existence, become a matter of legend. Slaves everywhere whisper the name of the Free in reverent tones once lavished upon the sorcerer-kings. Every day the legend spreads and the tales grow taller with each retelling. That is the nature of legends.

I have heard old house servants tell young play slaves that someday the Free will come to take them away. On that day, the old servants said, the slaves would be carried away in a huge caravan of gold-covered metal wagons. No master could hurt the slaves in the wagons, not only because of the metal but because of the great speed at which the caravan moves. The caravan's destination is a city-state that has no masters, where every slave is free.

The legend sounds so wonderful that I am reluctant to spoil it with truth, but spoil it I must. Someday the Free may come to liberate those old servants and young play slaves, but more likely the stories will enable the slaves to free themselves.

The truth is that the Free is the same as a hundred similar raiding tribes operating in the Athasian wilderness. Yes, they sometimes help slaves escape to freedom, but only as an afterthought. The city-state spoken of in legends, where every slave lives free, is nothing more than a fortified village hidden within a deep crater.

The Free believe that all slaves deserve to live in freedom. They follow this credo as long as doing so

does not threaten their own freedom. They are a wild bunch, but they refrain from acts of true evil. From the tales I have heard, the Free attack only those who keep slaves—merchant caravans, slaver wagons, client villages, and even the cultivated fields around the city-states. There has not been a single story of the Free plundering from another slave tribe or a village that does not keep slaves.

The tribe contains over 500 members, who live together in a fortified village far from other settlements. They believe that the good of the group is paramount over all other concerns. All members share equally in supplies, and any slaves freed by their raiding parties are invited to join, if they so desire.

The tribesfolk see themselves engaged in a war to keep the freedom they have worked hard to preserve. Anyone who threatens that freedom is considered an enemy of the tribe. Slaves, as prisoners of the enemy, are considered allies to be helped, if such help does not put the tribe at risk.

Organization

Bartras, an ex-soldier slave, leads the Free. He considers the post a temporary evil, for no slave should be placed above another. He promises to abolish his position once all slaves are free. As leader, Bartras has reluctantly organized the tribe along military lines, recognizing that the struggle to remain free is a war between masters and slaves. Eight generals serve as his council of war. These men and women have been selected from all classes and races of slaves to offer advice and to keep Bartras informed of events within their spheres of influence.

Below the generals, a major presides over the Hidden Village. In addition to administering to the village's daily needs of decision making and dispute settling, the major oversees the village's defenses and assigns work details to maintain and expand the settlement as needed.

Raiding parties are led by captains and consist of as few as six members or as many as several hun-



dred, depending on the target of the raid.

Operations and Means of Existence

Everything the Free does revolves around maintaining freedom. They engage in raids to procure supplies, free slaves to swell their ranks, and attack client villages to strike back in some way at the masters who once held them in shackles. These raids are usually aimed at slave-keeping facilities: merchant house outposts or caravans, city-state work details, or client villages. In addition to gaining needed supplies, the raiders also seek to free any slaves they encounter while on such missions, as long as doing so does not put their own members at risk.

The Hidden Village maintains small herds of carru and tends an oasis. What it cannot make for itself or acquire through raids, the village obtains by trading with other communities. It sends out caravans belonging to fictitious merchant houses to engage in trade with legitimate villages and outposts.

While planning a raid, the tribe watches for opportunities to free slaves. This may be as simple as sneaking into a work detail and persuading the slaves to revolt, thus providing a diversion under which to launch a raid. However, it may be as difficult as actually setting an ambush and overpowering guards. If a raid goes as planned, then any slaves attached to the plundered area are released.

Many circumstances can arise to cut short the slaves' new-found freedom. The slaves may refuse to cooperate with the raiders; they may be afraid to leave their familiar surroundings for the unknown desert. Even if they do follow the Free, weariness, fear, or lack of supplies may later turn the slaves against their saviors. The raiders will at the very least provide what food and water they can spare and give the freed slaves directions to a safe location, such as an oasis. If the slaves are cooperative, they may be offered a chance to join the Free.





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Origin

Bartras grew up as a play slave in the house of a Balic patrician. The slave child learned much at the side of his master/playmate, participating in almost all of the lessons assigned to the patrician's son. When Bartras was nine years old, it was decided that he would serve as a soldier slave in the patrician's personal army. He was given over to the patrician's sergeant-at-arms to begin his military training. Bartras excelled at armed and unarmed combat, easily besting larger, stronger foes. He gained an appreciation for strategy and planning, paying extra attention to lessons concerning military tactics.

As Bartras came of age, he took his place among the best and highest ranking soldier slaves in his patrician's militia. But Bartras was not content. Why should slaves have to settle at best for near-equality and at worst for status as property to be used and abused as an owner pleased? There had to be more for Bartras, and for slaves throughout Athas. Something was missing, and the hole it left within the young soldier slave burned like his throat did when he was thirsty.

Years went by, and Bartras served the patrician's family well. His undefined desires never interfered with his duties or his loyalty. They just left him feeling hollow and incomplete.

Disaster struck while Bartras was accompanying his one-time playmate into the patrician's fields outside of Balic's protective walls. The noble's son was making a routine check of his family's holdings, and Bartras and his soldier slaves were along to protect him. The raiders struck without warning, ambushing the small party as it traveled the path toward the olive orchards. When the painfully quick skirmish ended, the soldiers and the noble's son were dead. Bartras alone survived, though unconsciousness and bloody wounds made the raiders believe that he also was dead.

Bartras had a choice to make when he regained consciousness. He could return to Balic and explain

to his patrician why he had failed to protect the noble's son, or he could walk away into the desert and disappear. Either choice seemed to end in death, as far as the young man could see, but at least in the desert he could die free. Bartras struck out into the wastes.

In the desert, death did not find the ex-slave. Instead, he wandered alone and soon discovered that the hollow feeling within him had been filled. It was freedom that he had craved, and now that he could go where he chose to go, do what he wanted to do, he felt almost complete. In the desert, it was more than just his body that Bartras let wander. He also freed his mind, letting it explore inner thoughts that he once shied away from. He realized that freedom was a constant battle, waged against the masters of Athas who took pleasure in enslaving the masses.

It took several years, but he eventually gathered enough followers (every one of them an escaped slave) to start his own tribe. The Free was born in the heat of the desert, and it quickly blossomed in a shower of raids against slave holders everywhere.

Location and Defenses

The Hidden Village lies at the bottom of a crater within the foothills above the Great Alluvial Sand Wastes, lost somewhere between Tyr and Urik in the shadow of the Ringing Mountains. I cannot be more specific than that, for I have pledged to keep every tribe I write about as protected as I can.

Its hidden location and the surrounding countryside offer the village much protection, but the village is not without its own defenses. Every member of the tribe, from the young to the old, takes part in exercises designed to teach the ex-slaves to work together for the common defense. Specific locations and fortifications are under the command of experienced military personnel, either ex-soldiers or gladiators, who direct the non-military-oriented members of the community in matters of defense.

Scouts from the village constantly roam the land for miles around, serving as first-line defenders (with

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orders to act only against small groups) and to sound the alarm should danger approach too closely.

In addition to the crater itself, with its natural wall that rises some 30 feet over the crater floor, a sturdy brick wall surrounds the village, rising to a height of ten feet and mounted with battlements to protect the defenders. Gates in the wall can be closed and barred. Within the walls, the village has been designed to offer fall back positions and hiding places for the defenders, while frustrating any attackers with its maze of low walls and ambush vantage points. If attackers do manage to break through the walls, they will have to fight for every foot of ground they gain once inside.

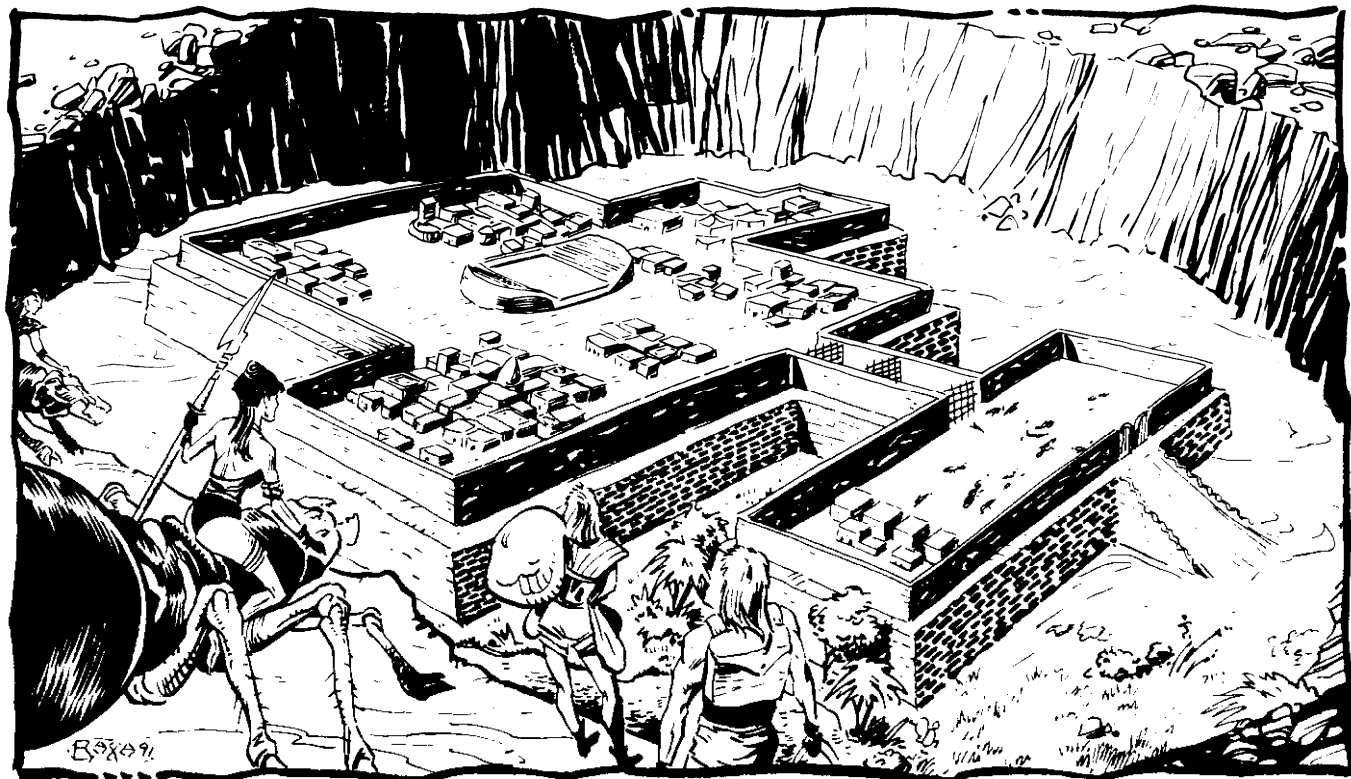
The village itself is built upon a raised platform of baked mud, making attacks against it very difficult. Not only must attackers drop down into the deep crater or navigate the narrow ramp that is the sole accessway, but once at the bottom they face the raised platform and the village walls. If any attack-

ers get this close to the village, they will find themselves facing concentrated attacks from the defenders' higher positions.

The Hidden Village is a thriving community of ex-slaves working together to create a home. The building the village is proudest of is the Free Arena. Modelled after the gladiatorial arenas of the city-states but constructed on a much smaller scale, the Free Arena is an open-air amphitheater in which tribe members can gather to discuss important topics and reach group decisions. While Bartras and his generals are not yet ready to give up their positions as leaders of the community, they have nonetheless begun to turn some community decisions over to the Arena.

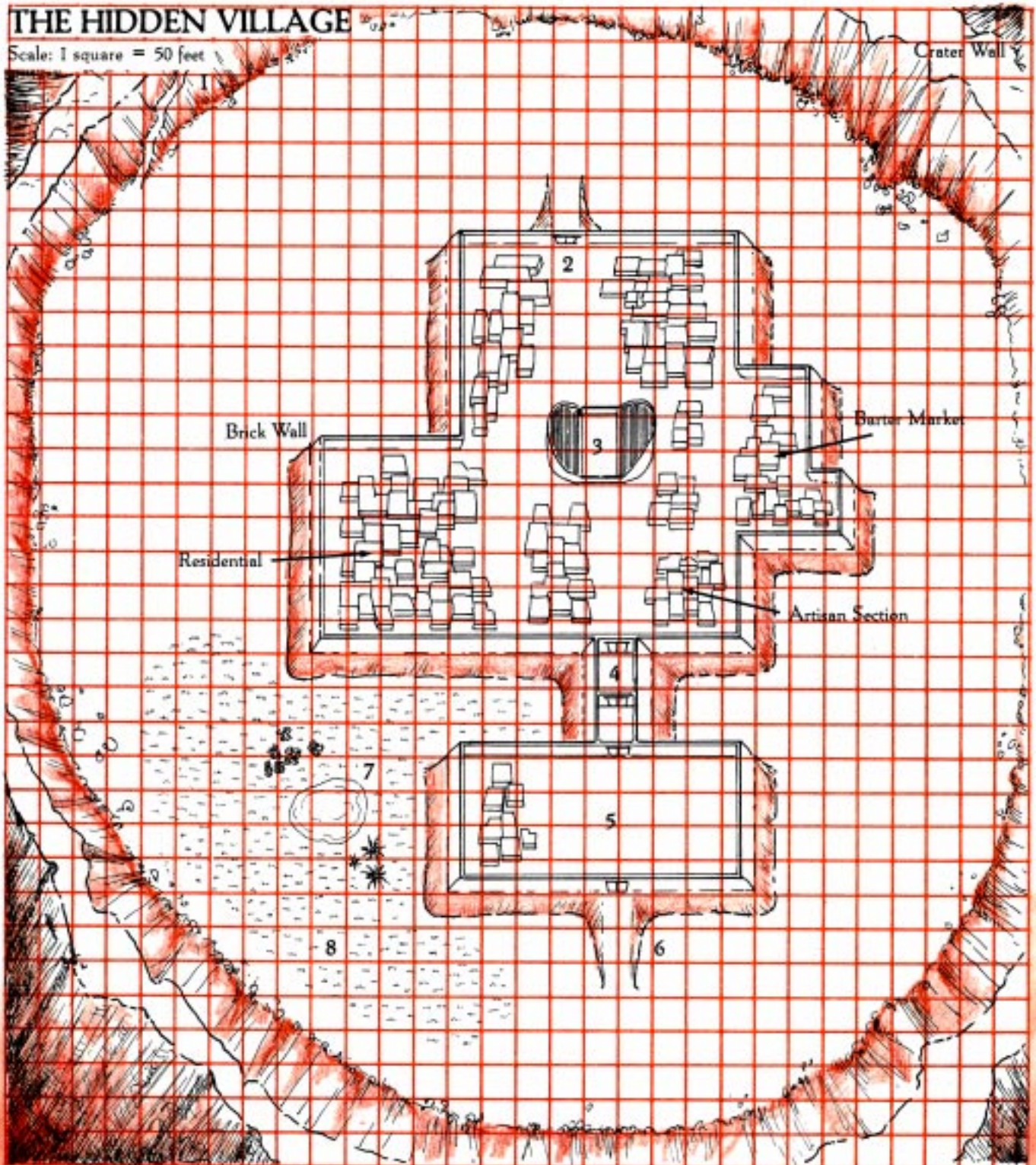
In the Arena, anyone who wants to voice an opinion can do so without fear of reprisal or retribution. Issues can be debated, and everyone participates in the decision-making process.

The village also boasts a respectable barter market where members of the community trade their





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skills and wares, a large artisan section full of all kinds of craft shops and studios, and a growing residential section where the children of the Free can grow up to be whatever they choose—with or without the permission of owners or the sorcerer-kings.

The Hidden Village

Map Key

The following key describes the map of the Hidden Village.

1. Crater Wall Ramp: This narrow ramp made of sun-baked mud provides access to the crater in which the Free have constructed their village.

2. The Main Gate: A narrow ramp leads up to the village, which has been built upon a platform of sun-baked mud. The gate opens upon the village proper and faces the Free Arena.

3. The Free Arena: This amphitheater, modelled after the gladiatorial arenas of the city-states, serves as a meeting hall and gathering center where news can be shared and community matters can be debated and decided upon.

4. The Corridor of Gates: A narrow corridor divided by three gates separates the main village from the herd pen. These gates can be sealed to protect the village from invaders.

5. The Herd Pen: Herds of carru and a few flocks of kitsus are kept in this part of the village. The animals are permitted to graze in the brush surrounding the oasis every day, coming and going by the herd gate.

6. The Herd Gate: A narrow ramp and a sturdy gate provide access from the herd pen to the surrounding grazing fields.

7. The Oasis: This oasis provides water for the entire village.

8. Grazing Fields: This stretch of grass, sustained by the oasis, provides nourishment for the village's herd animals.

Relations with Others

The Free trade with almost anyone. The community routinely sends caravans to villages and outposts. These caravans pretend to be from some far-away or non-existent merchant house. Other than this bit of deception, they trade fairly, making shrewd deals and cutting tough bargains with the best merchants and traders in Athas.

The only folk the Free refuse to deal with fairly are those who regularly engage in slave trade or who work directly for the sorcerer-kings. The Free might visit such an outpost or merchant camp in the dead of night to spirit away slaves, but they will never even pretend to conduct business with such groups. Of course, they avoid the city-states as much as possible, with the rare exception of conducting a raid on the surrounding fields.

Joining the Tribe

As with most slave tribes, only ex-slaves may apply for membership with the Free. All races and most classes are welcome, as long as the applicant can prove he was a slave. Proving servitude can be difficult, especially for those slaves from households that do not use branding. When physical proof cannot be offered, the Free look to attitude, skills, origin to determine the applicant's worthiness. If the slave in question was freed as part of a raid by the tribe, he has the best chance of being accepted. Defilers are the main exception to the Free's welcoming attitude. No wizard who practices the defiling arts is welcome among the Free.

Still, desire to join and status as a slave does not guarantee full tribal rights. A period of initiation must be undertaken, lasting no less than three



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months and no more than a year. During this period, the applicant is assigned to a raiding team. He must demonstrate his thirst for and love of freedom by helping the tribe wage its war against owners and by freeing other slaves when the opportunity presents itself. If he can perform some special service or heroic feat while undergoing his initiation, he assures his selection as a member of the tribe.

Any member who acts against the tribe or who fails to prove himself during initiation is put to death, for the location of the Hidden Village is too important to entrust to those cast out from the tribe.

Important Tribe Members

Bartras

Human Fighter, Chaotic Good

Armor Class 5 (kank armor)	Str 15
Movement 12	Dex 14
Level 8	Con 15
Hit Points 52	Int 13
THAC0 13	Wis 12
No. of Attacks 3/2	Cha 15

Damage/Attack: 1d8-1 (stone long sword)

Psionic Summary: PSP 44; Wild Talent—Daydream (PS Wis; Cost—Contact + 3/round)

Bartras, a human fighter, served as a play slave to a noble's son and then as a soldier slave in the noble's militia before he found his freedom. He has spent his time as an ex-slave establishing the tribe called the Free.

As leader of the Free, Bartras employs his followers as soldiers in a war against slave owners. He sees the struggle to remain free and to live in the wilderness away from the city-states as a war against both nature and the owners. Each successful raid provides another day of freedom and thus is considered a small victory in his ongoing war.

His ability to lead comes from his military train-

ing, charismatic orations, and his hands-on approach to tackling problems. With the help of his wild talent, Bartras can easily distract caravan guards so that a raid can go off without a hitch. He loves freedom and wishes to see all slaves free. Every group of raiders from his tribe has standing orders to set slaves free as long as doing so does not endanger the welfare of the tribe.

Drog

Dwarf Fighter, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 6 (mekillot hide)	Str 16
Movement 6	Dex 14
Level 6	Con 17
Hit Points 42	Int 13
THAC0 15	Wis 14
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 11

Damage/Attack: 1d8 (stone battle axe, -2 to attack roll)

Drog, a dwarf who once served as a soldier slave in Tyr, serves as the major (the governor) of the Hidden Village. He is a strict but fair administrator with a knack for bureaucratic routine. Under his care, the settlement has grown from a tiny camp at the bottom of a huge crater to a thriving village. He is constantly evaluating his actions to make sure he is not imitating the methods of the masters in the city-states.

Drog definitely does not like the position he has been placed in, but he understands why he was chosen. He was one of Bartras's first followers, and he has an eye for detail that makes him a natural administrator. However, he believes that the position stinks of owner, or worse, of templar, and he longs for the day when Bartras abolishes all positions of command. Of course, total freedom scares him as well. It frightens his lawful, ordered tendencies with visions of uncontrolled chaos. Sometimes he wonders if that is what they are striving for. Then he

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remembers his time as a slave, and such thoughts flee before his own desire to remain free.

Selanu

Human Thief, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 4 (caru leather)	Str 16
Movement 12	Dex 18
Level 5	Con 14
Hit Points 23	Int 10
THACO 16	Wis 14
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 3

Damage/Attack: 1d6 (bone club, -1 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 34; Wild Talent—Graft Weapon (PS Con-s; Cost—10 + 1/round)

Selanu once served as an artist slave in the temple court of Balic. Her specialty had been bone carving, but she developed a few additional skills to help her get around the court unseen. Her fledgling thieving talents found full expression under the tutelage of another artist slave who once made a living as a rogue (before his talents earned him a place as a slave).

After gaining her freedom due to the efforts of the Free, Selanu asked to join the tribe. She now puts her talents to work as a raider and as a thief when she is assigned to a trade caravan. She enjoys stealing additional goods and ceramic pieces while wandering a village in the guise of a merchant from some fictitious house on the other side of the Tyr region.

Tenpug's Band

One of the more unusual and creative slave tribes I have heard of is a small group called Tenpug's Band. The tribe is made up of artist and artisan slaves who have put their collective talents to good use. As they have few skilled warriors among them,

and no other survival skills worth mentioning, the tribe has come up with another way to survive.

Tenpug's Band sends its members to small villages and caravan camps where they masquerade as freemen and sell their services. They take on work repairing wagons and tools, entertaining with stories, and even producing works of art if anyone is interesting in such things. The wages these "freemen" earn is brought back to the tribe for distribution to all.

About 200 artist and artisan slaves make up Tenpug's Band. Of these, only a dozen are skilled with weapons.

Organization

Tenpug's Band has a very loose structure. The leader of the tribe is a one-armed mul named Tenpug whose experience as a gladiator (before he lost his arm) made him a natural leader. It was his idea to survive by selling talents instead of raiding. He continues to lead and make the final decisions concerning the welfare of the tribe.

The other positions of note are the keeper of the wages and the keeper of supplies. These two tribe members work together to use the money brought in to purchase the supplies the tribe needs to survive. As this is the primary means for the tribe to get food and water, these positions are very important.

There are other important members of the tribe who constantly confer with Tenpug, but there is no strict hierarchy of ranks or stations. If someone has an idea, he presents it to the tribe. If the tribe likes the idea, it is used. If the tribe does not like it, it is shelved.

Operations and Means of Existence

Tenpug's Band assigns every member of the tribe a number of one-week periods to earn wages during the coming year. When a member's time arrives, that member must leave the camp and head for a village or caravan camp. Pretending to be a free-



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man, the tribe member offers his particular talents for sale. He remains with the village or camp for as long as there is wage-paying work to be had or until his week (15 days) is up. Then he gathers his earnings and returns to the tribe until his turn again comes up.

Sometimes a tribe member is sent out with a sack full of finely crafted pottery or some other goods made by the tribe. In addition to offering his talents for sale, the tribe member seeks buyers for the goods he carries.

The tribe never sends out more than half of its number at any given time. The rest remain behind to protect the camp, make goods to sell, or repair tents and tools. Whenever necessary, the tribe sends out a small caravan to purchase supplies. They use at least three different nearby settlements for this purpose, never going to the same one twice in a row. Again, the caravan pretends to be from a freemen village that needs to supplement its own stocks by purchasing supplies.

Origin

Tenpug's Band started as a small group of traveling craftsmen who earned food, water, and shelter by performing small tasks for their hosts. The first members were all artisan slaves from Nibenay. The story, at least the way I heard it, went like this.

During a particularly hard time in Nibenay, slaves from all classes were forced into labor details to gather wood from the Crescent Forest. One detail was made up of artisan slaves, including the one-armed mul named Tenpug. After a hard day of work, the slaves finished loading up their carts with wood and made ready to return to the city. They were barely on the path back when warriors from Gulg ambushed their small party. The warriors killed the guards and scattered the frightened slaves.

The slaves gathered in the forest and looked to Old Gralth for guidance. The ancient dwarf, who had slaved away for Nibenay longer than any of the other slaves could remember, told them to run into

the desert. "You are free men now," Gralth told them, "For the warriors of Gulg have broken the bonds that held you."

The slaves all began to talk at once, asking questions and seeking to postpone the inevitable. Finally, Tenpug asked, "How can we survive without our masters? What can we do?"

Angry, Gralth turned on the mul with a snarl. For a moment, he looked more like a gladiator than a weaponsmith. "You can do what you've always done!" Gralth shouted. "You each have skills that most freemen would die for. Combine your talents, pool your resources, and sell them to the highest bidder! But don't do it like slaves. Do it like free merchants."

Gralth and Tenpug talked through the night, setting forth the ideas that would be used by these ex-slaves to survive. When they finished talking, the dwarf bid them farewell and turned back toward Nibenay. When Tenpug asked where he was going, Gralth said that he still had a focus to finish. He did not want to end up wandering the wastes as a banshee after he died. That was the last time any of them ever saw the old dwarf.

Eventually, the band found a secure spot to set up a permanent camp. Once they no longer had to move from place to place, the band could concentrate on finding work and making money.

Location and Defenses

Tenpug's Band has established a camp within the half-buried ruins of an ancient temple. The temple is located some 50 miles northeast of Nibenay, near the shore of the Sea of Silt. The blowing sand has covered much of the ruins, offering protection from passing travelers. The fearsome statues that protect the temple entrance serve to frighten away all but the most desperate or ruthless raiders. Those who do try to force their way in can usually be scared off by a few blasts from the ghost horns. (These instruments were specially made by Tenpug's craftsmen to produce eerie, otherworldly noises.)



The partially buried temple is built on a massive scale, as though the original occupants were giants. The ceilings are 40 feet high, and the entire structure is made from fitted stones. It must be from the time of the ancients, but no spirits walk its huge halls.

Within the abandoned temple, which has been remarkably well preserved, the band has set up tents between massive pillars that are as large as trees from the Crescent Forest. Few items have been found within the temple, and Tenpug has been reluctant to look for secret caches. So far, the ancient gods have tolerated their presence. He does not want to do anything to upset that. In fact, Tenpug has taken to placing a share of the goods they make and the money they earn on the massive altar as an offering to the ancient gods. He hopes this appeasement will keep his band welcome within the ancient halls.

Tenpug's Camp

Map Key

The following key describes the map of Tenpug's camp.

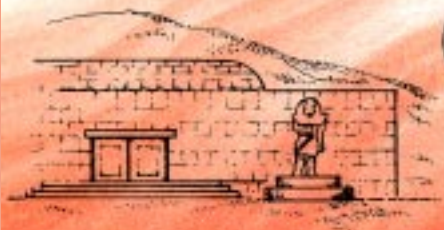
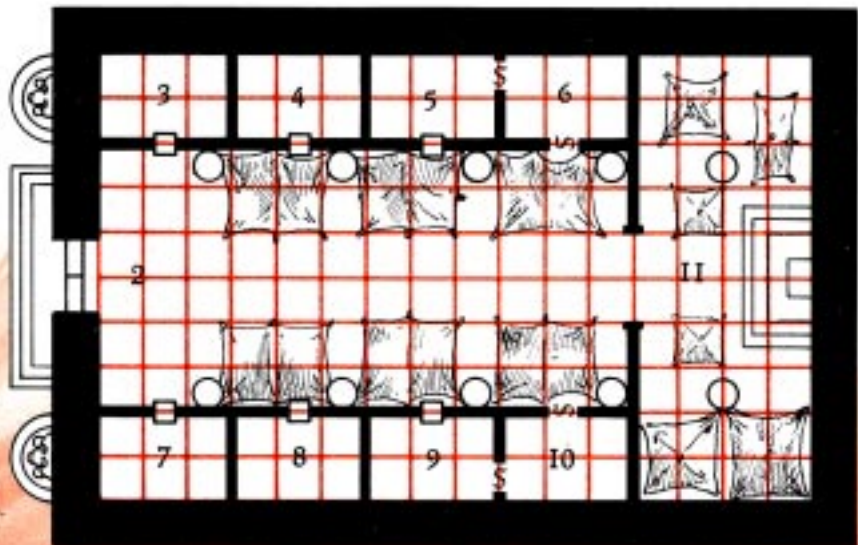
1. The Temple Entrance: Huge stone steps and giant stone doors lead into the half-buried temple. Great stone statues guard each side of the doors. The statues are giant humans with the heads of lions.

2. The Great Hall: This huge hall, built to giant proportions, rises some 40 feet to a domed ceiling. Great stone pillars stretch like trees from the floor to the ceiling. Between these pillars, the tribe has erected great tents that serve as living and work areas.



TENPUG'S BAND

Scale: 1 square = 20 feet





3, 4, 5. Empty Chambers: Each of these huge chambers has 25-foot-high ceilings. These chambers were empty when the tribe arrived and Tenpug has decided to keep them that way. The only items of interest in these rooms are the wall murals that have been etched directly into the stone. The murals depict scenes of a world far different from present-day Athas. There are lush forests, huge lakes, raging rivers and waterfalls, and giants engaged in artisan activities.

6. Secret Chamber: So far, this chamber has remained hidden from the tribe. It still contains its original treasures, including giant-sized furniture, piles of gold, and objects made of metal. There are bronze cups, iron swords, and even whole suits of plate mail armor.

7, 8, 9. Empty Chambers: These rooms are similar to rooms 3, 4 and 5.

10. Secret Chamber: This room is similar to room 6.

11. Altar Chamber: A gigantic stepped altar fills much of this huge hall. Tenpug has piled goods made by the tribe as well as a portion of the wages the tribe has earned atop the altar as a tribute to the ancient gods who have allowed them to dwell in this temple. The tents set up in this area include storage tents, Tenpug's command tent, and meeting tents.

Relations with Others

With the possible exception of raiding tribes and city-states, Tenpug's Band gets along well with the other settlements in the wilderness. Few settlements refuse to welcome their craftsmen with open arms and open purses, for the coming of even a single traveler breaks the normal routine and brings news of other places to the remote villages.

The Band keeps its members' pasts hidden, be-

lieving that they would not receive warm welcomes if their hosts knew they were escaped slaves. Instead, they pretend to be freemen looking for honest work.

Of course, sometimes a lone traveler makes a tempting target for monsters, raiders, or slavers. Every once in a while, a member of Tenpug's Band goes out and never returns. That is a cruel fact of life for the ex-slaves in Tenpug's Band.

Joining the Tribe

Any slave with a talent as an artist or artisan is welcome to join Tenpug's Band. Tenpug wants nothing to do with preservers, defilers, or templars, however, and none of these ex-slaves are welcome. Also, the mul is cautious when it comes to warrior types who want to join his band. Though the tribe could always use another strong defender, Tenpug knows that his people have grown used to being on their own. Warrior types usually like to lead, and Tenpug's Band just isn't set up as a military organization.

Tenpug's Band attracts artists and artisans, for these were once wretched slaves who found a measure of worth by demonstrating artistic abilities. They have no practical skills, only artistic talent; while they were slaves their lives often ended as soon as the popularity of their creations waned.

Those who are accepted into the tribe must spend a period of time apprenticed to someone with similar talents. They spend this apprenticeship at the temple, working beside the tribe member and learning about life in Tenpug's Band. Once the tribe member is convinced that the apprentice is good for the tribe, he is made a full member and assigned weeks to sell his services. This period is designed to weed out spies and slavers, for to simply allow a new member to see the location of the camp and then wander off is to invite disaster. Those not accepted are sent into the Sea of Silt without food, water, or weapon.

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Important Tribe Members

Tenpug

Mul Gladiator, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 5 (carru leather)	Str 20
Movement 12	Dex 17
Level 7	Con 16
Hit Points 56	Int 15
THAC0 11	Wis 13
No. of Attacks 3/2	Cha 11

Damage/Attack: 1d4 +9 (iron war hammer)

Tenpug once served as a gladiator in the arena of Nibenay. It was there that he lost his left arm and almost his life. He was made an artisan slave after he healed, at which time he showed a talent for making weapons. Now he works as a weaponsmith in the tribe, turning out some of the finest weapons of stone and bone to be found anywhere in the Tyr

region.

The mul with one arm appears frightening to many, but he is actually a very gentle, very quiet man who toils endlessly over his wares. The workmanship shows in the final product.

Once he arrives at a village and demonstrates his craftsmanship, customers gather their own material for him to work on. They gather pieces of stone and bone to take to Tenpug One-Arm. Then the one-armed mul forges the material into a sword, or axe, or dagger of perfect balance and razor sharpness.

When he isn't away working, Tenpug leads the tribe much as he makes weapons. He has forged his band into a successful group of artists and artisans who make a good living selling their talents.

Feera

Half-Elf Artisan, Chaotic Good

Armor Class 8 (padded armor)	Str 13
Movement 12	Dex 13



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Level 3
Hit Points 16
THAC0 20
No. of Attacks 1

Con 12
Int 14
Wis 13
Cha 12

Damage/Attack: 1d4-1 (bone dagger, -1 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 30; Wild Talent-Biofeedback (PS Con-2; Cost-6 + 3/round)

Feera, a half-elf female, serves as a bone carver in Tenpug's Band. She is a well-spoken, likable, and attractive young woman who puts customers at ease with her friendly banter.

Feera was not born into slavery. She was the daughter of a freeman in Raam who made his living much as Tenpug's Band does today—by selling the fruits of his carving talent. Feera grew up in this environment, learning her artisan skills at her father's side. Her father was human, and she never learned what happened to her mother. She only knew that her father loved the elf woman very much. Disaster struck when her father took on a job for a templar. The templar liked the bone carving so much that he had Feera and her father arrested and turned over to the slave pens. Feera was assigned to the concubine pen, and soon learned to hate the self-serving templar.

A chance trip away from the city led to Feera's escape. While the templar was examining the fields, Feera slipped away. Eventually she was found by one of Tenpug's Band on his way back from a job. He took the young woman with him and she soon became a member of the tribe.

Salt View

To enter the village of Salt View is to enter a place of contrasts. Moving about among its people, you will see life in a slave tribe from a number of different angles. The villagers are an unruly lot of ex-slaves from all races. They partake in most of the

normal activities associated with the slave tribes—they raid caravans, they stay alert for slave hunters, and they live every moment of freedom as if it were their last. In addition, the people of Salt View have a true love of the arts. They are especially enamored of storytelling, which they have taken to new levels in arenas they call *theaters*. Here, instead of a single storyteller weaving a tale for an audience, a whole group of storytellers acts out the tale from beginning to end. I must tell you, to watch such a performance is to be whisked away to another time!

In Salt View, the wild, boisterous raiders enjoy performing for audiences. While the permanent theaters in Salt View are used to hone their skills, they send traveling theaters out to villages, caravan camps, and oases to perform for others. This new concept has apparently appealed to many, for I understand that the village supplements its livelihood with the proceeds these traveling theaters bring in. The two plays (that is what they call these multiple storyteller performances) I watched were exhilarating and quite enjoyable.

Salt View is a fairly sizable village of more than 500 people. Representatives of all races constantly walk the busy streets, enjoying lives that are no longer controlled by the whims and desires of uncaring masters. While humans and dwarves account for a large part of the population, quite a number of elves have taken up residence specifically to perform in the theaters. There are also a few muls in the village, including the tribe's leader. On my visit, I even saw a thri-kreen and a couple of half-giants wandering around.

With such a diversity of individuals, there is no single dominating trait at work in Salt View. The closest the entire group comes to a unified outlook can be seen in the chaotic nature of the village itself. People come and go without rhyme or reason, and most spurn serious work in favor of having a good time. This is not to say that the people of Salt View are lazy, for when the need arises they band together to accomplish the job at hand. But the orderly



schedules kept by other slave tribes like Tenpug's Band remind the people of Salt View too much of their past lives as slaves. When work must be done, it is. When a job can wait, the people fill the streets with drink, song, and dance.

Salt View, although a raiding tribe, should not be confused with the likes of the Black Sand Raiders. Salt View raiders rarely injure or kill those they ambush. They want the carried goods and supplies, not the blood of the caravan's protectors. Once they subdue a caravan and take what they can carry, they thank their victims with a theatrical flourish and ride back into the Great Ivory Plain.

Organization

Salt View, like most slave tribe communities, is loosely organized into a military structure. Xaynon, an ex-gladiator mul, leads the tribe through strength and battle prowess. It's not quite true to say that he commands the other members of the tribe, but his suggestions are almost always followed. He tries to let the community fend for itself, imposing as few rules and restrictions upon the ex-slaves as possible. As long as no one limits the freedom of another, the people of Salt View are free to do as they please. However, if danger threatens or a raid must be undertaken, Xaynon sheds his lackadaisical approach to leadership and becomes a warlord to be reckoned with. At these times, the ex-slaves know better than to challenge his authority, for fear of a quick and painful death.

Xaynon's chief advisor is a preserver named Arya, who often backs his authority with powerful displays of magic. Many distrust the wizard, as most slaves look upon their kind with suspicion, hatred, and fear. None can deny that the mage has earned her place in Salt View, though, often using her arcane arts to the benefit of the village.

Most of the villagers operate as members of one or more raiding parties. These groups come together under the command of Xaynon's chief lieutenants for the express purpose of engaging in raids.

During a raid, chaotic freedom takes a back seat to military protocol. Raiding party officers must be obeyed or the precious supplies they seek could be lost. It was an amazing sight to see the otherwise loud and unruly slaves fall into line to conduct a raid.

Other than the rankings based on strength and skill that are assigned to the raiding parties, there are no formal levels of authority in Salt View. A more organized chain of command smacks of the city-state hierarchies that Salt View has rejected. Informal levels of authority, based on the power of the strong over the weak, exist here as in most slave tribes. Often, decisions are agreed upon by combat or the edge of a dagger. Survival of the fittest is definitely the law in Salt View.

Operations and Means of Existence

The village does not maintain farms or raise herds of animals. It rarely engages in trade, and few artisans set up shops within its walls. Hunting and gathering, while practiced, serve to supplement the tribe's primary source of revenue. Salt View, first and foremost, is a base of operations for raiding parties that prey upon travelers and caravans bound for Gulg and Nibenay. Merchant caravans making the circuit between these two rival city-states never know when the raiders from Salt View will appear to demand tributes for safe passage or even entire cargoes from them.

Whenever Salt View needs to restock dwindling supplies, it sends scouts into the Great Ivory Plain to watch for approaching caravans. Once a caravan's path has been established, the scouts return to lead an appropriately sized raiding party back to the caravan. A raiding party might track a caravan for days, shadowing its trail while determining the size and strength of its guards. Once the party leader feels he has learned everything he needs, he meets with his veteran raiders to plan an ambush. Ambushes can be simple affairs in which the raiders rush out of the wilderness, or they can be compli-



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cated sieges designed to cripple wagons and break the spirit of defenders.

As stated earlier, the raiders from Salt View try to keep their plundering as bloodless as possible. They see cargo bound for the city-states as fair compensation for the years they spent as slaves to the sorcerer-kings. They have no desire to hurt anyone or see any of their fellows hurt in turn. They will defend themselves and even kill stubborn mercenaries if necessary, but always as a last resort.

Most merchant houses that trade with Gulg and Nibenay are painfully aware of Salt View and its raiders. While some have tried to foil the raiders' attempts by constantly changing caravan schedules and even hiring more guards, most have simply increased the prices charged in the area to make up for the occasional lost shipment. As long as Salt View continues to take only what it needs and does not resort to needless bloodshed, the merchant houses will tolerate the infrequent raids. Any noticeable increase in raids or incidents of excessive violence could lead to a war of sorts. The merchant houses have been known to pool their resources in the past to hire large armies of mercenaries to drive out raiders and monsters along caravan trails. Xaynon is careful to keep his tribe's activities below the levels that would inspire such action to be taken against Salt View.

The slave tribe supplements the revenues brought in by caravan raids with a new form of entertainment. Salt View boasts a bustling theater district where a new breed of artists, called *actors*, stage productions, called *plays*, for appreciative audiences of fellow slaves. These plays have the same feel as the stories told by traveling bards, but with one major difference. Instead of simply telling a story, the actors take on the roles of the characters and act out the story as though it were actually happening on the stage. These productions range from simple affairs to elaborate treatments complete with costumes and scenery.

Few non-tribe members ever get to visit Salt View,

so the theaters there are more for the enjoyment of the tribe. Plays are scheduled nightly, bringing laughter, drama, music, or tears to enthralled audiences. The atmosphere is contagious, and almost all of Salt View's inhabitants belong to one of the dozens of theater companies operating in the village. They practice and perfect their techniques on the stages to the delight of their fellows, then take their shows on the road to bring enjoyment to others.

Traveling acting troupes have become lucrative additions to the normal operations of the tribe. These troupes put on shows for wealthy merchants at caravan camps and for settlers in neighboring villages, usually appearing before packed crowds. The troupes put on fine shows that leave their audiences wanting more, ensuring them return engagements. If they can gain information concerning caravan schedules and carried cargo while performing for the merchants, so much the better.

The troupes pass themselves off as freemen, never revealing their identities as ex-slaves or hinting at a connection to Salt View. In fact, they go to great lengths to approach a camp or village from the opposite direction of the Mekillot Mountains.

The acting troupes from Salt View never put on shows for nobles or templars, and they have been known to refuse even the invitation of Nibenay's sorcerer-king (who thought he was hiring a group of freemen). To perform for these people would be akin to once again donning the shackles of slavery, no matter how much wealth may be offered. They may satirize these classes in their plays, but they will not perform for them.

Origin

Xaynon and his original tribe of raiders grew tired of the nomadic life they were leading. They wanted more than just the freedom of the trail. They wanted the freedom to establish homes and raise families. They wanted the safety and security that only a fortified village could provide them. When his tribe set



foot upon the eastern face of the Mekillot Mountains and found the abandoned salt mine, Xaynon knew that they had found their home.

Xaynon had been a gladiator, regularly fighting for his life in the arena in Raam. When the mul finally found freedom, he imagined that his days of fighting were over. He was wrong, for he soon found himself fighting the leader of the slave tribe he joined for command of the group. His victory began a new chapter in this tribe's existence. First, the mul led them away from Raam, taking his tribe southwest in search of plunder and adventure. Second, he changed the tribe's habit of killing those they stole from. There was no need to bring more death to this dying world, he told them. He also gave them more freedom to determine their fates. When they needed a leader, he was there. When they did not, he let them make their own decisions.

More ex-slaves joined Xaynon's tribe as it traveled around the perimeter of the Sea of Silt, past the Dragon's Bowl, and south toward the Great Ivory Plain. Besides the soldiers and gladiators that flocked to Xaynon's side, he attracted a large following of artists. Perhaps this was because he enjoyed the arts, and even fancied himself something of an artist. He loved to tell stories and dance, and he could listen to sculptors and painters talk for hours about the techniques of their craft.

In the Mekillot Mountains, he ordered his tribe to halt. The time of travel was over, he decided, at least as far as he was concerned. Anyone who wanted to continue on was free to go. Those who wanted to stay would have to help him build the village he always dreamed of living in. That was how Xaynon and his tribe came to build Salt View within the caves of the mountains.

Not long after the first dwellings were built and the perimeter wall was constructed, a few artists who had shared stories and poems with Xaynon asked if they could build an arena. The ex-gladiator was aghast at the suggestion and in his anger he almost struck the man who suggested such a thing. But

they quickly explained that they wanted this arena to serve as a showcase for the arts, not for bloody entertainment. So Xaynon agreed and Salt View's first theater was built. Who would have imagined at the time that one day the actors would earn a significant percentage of the village's income, taking their place beside the raiding parties as revenue producers? Even now Xaynon laughs at the thought—when he is not on stage performing!

Location and Defenses

Salt View is located on the eastern face of the Mekillot Mountains, overlooking the Great Ivory Plain. The village has been built within a great cave that Xaynon believes was once a salt mine for the ancients. The village's first line of defense is the geography itself, for the village is hidden within the mountain's numerous caverns. The trails up the mountain are winding, dangerous affairs that often end in steep cliffs or impassable walls. Only the inhabitants of Salt View know which paths lead to their village, and any unwanted guests can be discouraged with sudden rock slides or unseen pit traps. If anyone reaches the cavern itself, the tunnels leading to the village can be collapsed. A blocked secret tunnel can be opened in such an event, providing an escape route for the villagers.

As in other slave tribes, every member of the Salt View community can be called upon to defend the village. Even those slaves who came to the tribe without any combat skills have received enough training to enable them to wield sword or club in their own defense. And those with warrior or military backgrounds have honed their skills on countless raiding missions.

Salt View Village

Hidden within a huge cavern in the Mekillot Mountains, Salt View rests serenely out of sight of the spying eyes of its enemies. The layout of the village is chaotic in nature, with very little evidence of



The Slave Tribes

plan or purpose.

The village gets its water from a mountain stream that pools within the cavern. There are no fields of crops to harvest, no herds of animals to watch over. There is a marketplace where the goods and supplies taken in raids are displayed. Members of the tribe take turns distributing stolen food and other items as fairly as possible among the entire population.

The rest of the village is a haphazard grouping of dwellings and taverns—the inhabitants of Salt View love their taverns—built around the large theater district and the small artisan camp. Some theaters are simply raised platforms set before open ground where audiences can sit, the entire area covered by a tent. Others, like the artist arena, is built of stone and shaped like a gladiatorial arena. Most other buildings, including the dwellings, are either thatched huts, brick boxes, or large tents.

Map Key

The following key describes the map of Salt View village.

1. The Theater Arena: This structure, modelled after gladiatorial arenas, serves as a meeting hall for the village, as well as a place to perform elaborate plays.

2. Residential Area: This portion of the village is made up of dwellings for the tribe members. There are also a fair number of taverns scattered throughout this area.

3. Marketplace and Artisan Camp: In this portion of the village, tribe members take turns handing out the goods stolen in raids. Also, a small portion of the area houses the artisan camp, where artisans work for their own enjoyment, as well as to produce necessary items for the village. There are a few taverns scattered throughout this area.

4. Theater District: Besides the Theater Arena, dozens upon dozens of smaller theaters fill this section of the village. There are also a few taverns scattered throughout the area.

5. Residential Area: Like Area 2 above.

6. Cavern Pool: A thin stream of water runs from the top of the cavern to a pool against the rock wall. Since much of the cavern is filled with salt deposits, the water has a salty taste. Still, it does not contain so much salt that it is unhealthy to drink, and the village uses it to supplement its supply of water (gained in raids against caravans and other villages).

7. Blocked Tunnel: This tunnel serves as an escape route should the main tunnels be unavailable. The rocks blocking the tunnel can be moved aside quickly to provide access.

Relations with Others

Salt View engages in very little trade with other settlements. They produce few goods, instead relying upon passing caravans to supply their needs. As such, Salt View is considered an illegal community of thieves by both Gulg and Nibenay. Fortunately, the troubled relations that keep these two city-states at odds also keep them too busy and cautious to mount expeditions into the Mekillots in search of the slave tribe's village. Both cities fear that they would leave themselves open to attack by the other if they sent large forces after the raiders.

Both cities occasionally send armed escorts to guide and protect approaching caravans, and these forces do cause trouble for the raiders. But many caravans cannot afford large numbers of troops, and these make easy targets for Salt View's inhabitants.

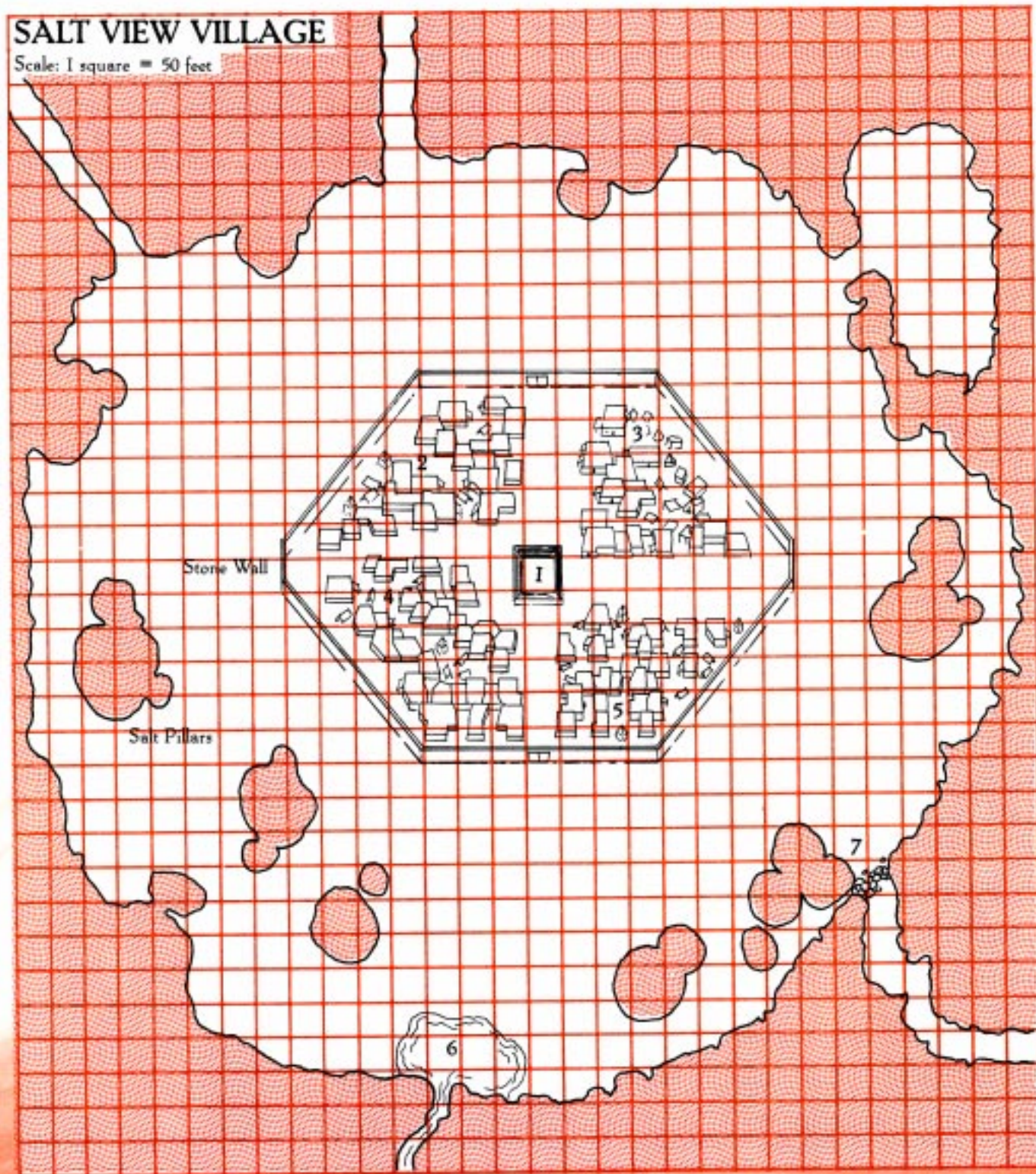
Salt View's nearest neighbor, the dwarven village of North Ledopolus, refuses to have anything to do

The Slave Tribes



SALT VIEW VILLAGE

Scale: 1 square = 50 feet





The Slave Tribes

with the slave tribe. They consider the raiders a threat to their caravans, as evidenced by the amount of cargo that never reaches its destination.

The merchant houses that regularly trade with Gulg and Nibenay are familiar with Salt View and its practices. Many order their caravan drivers to simply give up part of their cargo as tribute to the raiders, in effect purchasing free passage through the Great Ivory Plain and its surrounding environs. Others try all kinds of things to deter the raiders—varying their caravan schedules, traveling at night, adding extra guards, employing powerful psionicists and mages, even sending out decoy caravans carrying worthless cargo to occupy the raiders while the true caravan takes another route. Sometimes these ploys work, but more often than not the raiders get their share of goods to distribute at Salt View's market.

Salt View maintains good relations with the merchant houses and even with the dwarven villages through the activities of its traveling acting troupes. While these troupes never claim to be from Salt View, many of their audiences suspect the truth. They have grown so fond of these actors and their plays, however, that they never voice their suspicions or threaten the actors in any way. They consider the raiders a necessary hazard of business (at least as long as they do not become greedy or needlessly kill the caravan attendants), and they adjust their prices accordingly. The acting troupes provide a level of entertainment unavailable anywhere else, and so they receive the hospitality and protection of their hosts (as well as ample payment) in exchange for an evening of fine theater.

The biggest threat to Salt View is from other bands of raiders who claim to be part of Xaynon's tribe but have no regard for the lives attached to the caravans they plunder. Consequently, these small groups of raiders are not on good terms with the people of Salt View. If these pretenders cause too much blood to be spilled, then Salt View could find itself in serious trouble with the merchant houses.

Recently, Xaynon has ordered his scouts to watch for signs of other raiders working the Great Ivory Plain. When such a group is spotted, the scouts are to bring the news to Xaynon immediately. Raiding parties are routinely sent out to catch up to a sighted pretender group and drive it off before it can plunder any caravans.

Joining the Tribe

Salt View is cautious when it comes to bringing in new members. Xaynon knows he needs fresh blood and muscle to keep the tribe strong, but he also knows it must be the right blood and muscle. Only slaves are considered for membership, and it helps if the slaves have a talent for entertaining. Salt View takes its reputation for fine theater very seriously.

Those who do wish to join must undergo a period of testing. During this time, they participate in raids and work with the acting troupes while tribe leaders carefully evaluate them. If the period of testing goes well, the slave becomes a full member of the tribe and nothing more is ever said. However, if a slave does not perform well and must be denied a place in the tribe, he is sent into the Sea of Silt to die. The tribe cannot chance having a denied member reveal Salt View's location to its enemies.

Things that will cause a slave to be turned down for membership include extremely violent tendencies, excessive bloodthirstiness in raids, an unwillingness to fit in, and bad acting.

Important Tribe Members

Xaynon

Mul Gladiator, Chaotic Good

Armor Class 4 (braxat hide breastplate)	Str 21
Movement 12	Dex 18
Level 7	Con 15
Hit Points 79	Int 14
THAC0 8	Wis 16
No. of Attacks 3/2	Cha 15

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Damage/Attack: 2d4 + 3 (steel bastard sword)

Xaynon was a crowd favorite at the gladiatorial arena in Raam. Whenever the powerful mul was scheduled to appear, wagering increased. Xaynon had never lost a match, and this fact inspired the crowds to bet heavily—both for and against him. When the young mul made his first appearance in the arena, he enjoyed the cheers of the crowd. When he won the day, the cheers serenaded him. But with each victory he won, another gladiator died, and the cheers turned to wails of sorrow in his mind. The cheers haunted him, conjuring images of every human, dwarf, and mul he killed. Finally, he decided that he had had enough of this bloody entertainment.

Xaynon urged the other gladiators in his pen to rise up against the guards watching over them. Many died on both sides of the conflict that day, but

in the end the mul and a handful of his fellows had escaped. The ex-slaves fled into the wilderness around Raam, eventually joining up with a raiding tribe. It wasn't long before Xaynon challenged the raider's leader for control of the tribe. Like every battle he had ever fought, he won that one, too.

Now his tribe is firmly established in the Mekillot Mountains, living in a village called Salt View. Xaynon leads by example and by granting his people the freedom to do as they choose. This freedom is appreciated and cherished, but they always turn to the mul for advice, leadership, and protection.

Xaynon loves all expressions of art, and artists and artisans find a special place in his tribe. He especially loves the artist arena, where he can watch fine performances and give some of his own. The mul enjoys acting in comedies best of all, and the cheers that rise up when he takes the stage have almost made him forget the bloody memories of his past. Almost.





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Arya

Half-Elf Preserver, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 6	Str 12
Movement 12	Dex 18
Level 7	Con 15
Hit Points 28	Int 17
THAC0 18	Wis 17
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 16

Damage/Attack: 1d6 (wooden quarterstaff)

Arya is a tall woman with striking features and long, dark blond hair. She is of indeterminate age, and her slightly exotic eyes hint at the half-elven heritage she never talks about. In fact, Arya never talks about her past at all, except to admit she once served as a slave in a city-state far from the Tyr region.

The woman joined Xaynon shortly after he took command of the tribe. She literally appeared out of the ruins of Yaramuke and offered her services to the mul. While the rest of his tribe failed to hide their fears and suspicions, Xaynon took the woman at her word. She became his chief advisor and a powerful ally to the tribe.

Arya is now such a fixture at the beloved mul's side that long-time tribe members have come to accept her, if not trust her. Newer members still find the thought of a wizard with such influence very disturbing, but they are careful not to voice their apprehension in earshot of either the woman or Xaynon.

One thing that has eased feelings over the years is that Arya practices a non-destructive art. She does not engage in the practices of the defilers, but works a balance between nature and magic. Some have even suggested that she is a member of the Veiled Alliance, but no one knows for sure. What they do know is that Arya uses her art for the benefit of Salt View, and for that she finds tolerance and an uneasy acceptance.

Vandrellen

Elf Ranger, Chaotic Good

Armor Class 3 (carru leather)	Str 15
Movement 12	Dex 21
Level 6	Con 14
Hit Points 33	Int 17
THAC0 15	Wis 16
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 18

Damage/Attack: 1ds-1 (obsidian long sword, -2 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 48; Wild Talent-Precognition (PS Wis-5; Cost-24)

Vandrellen escaped from Raam with Xaynon after a short stint as a gladiator. When the elf was taken as a slave, he refused to bend to the templars' will. Vandrellen's lack of cooperation quickly landed him in the arena, where it was decided that if he could not serve a useful function he would at least provide some entertainment in a gladiatorial bout. His speed and fighting skills surprised everyone, though, and Vandrellen won his first two matches. His next scheduled bout was against Xaynon, but the two escaped before they were forced to determine who was better.

The hearty and unpredictable elf decided to stay with Xaynon. He told the mul that he could not leave before he satisfied his curiosity about which of them would have won their match. Now, years later, Vandrellen remains at Xaynon's side as a valued member of Salt View.

Vandrellen serves as a raiding party leader, employing his skills as a ranger and warrior to best advantage. Like many ex-slaves, the elf does not reveal much about his past. Sometimes he gets a far-away look in his golden eyes, and at those moments Xaynon wonders how much longer his friend will remain with the village. Someday, he believes, the elf will announce he is returning to his own people. On



that day, Xaynon will wish him well and try not to show his sadness.

Like many of Salt View's inhabitants, Vandrellen loves to perform on stage. He is an accomplished actor, easily moving from one role to another with a skill that makes many of the other actors jealous. He seems to have no favorite type of role, for he approaches every kind of play with equal relish.

Kilay

Human Bard, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 6 (carru leather)	Str 14
Movement 12	Dex 16
Level 6	Con 12
Hit Points 24	Int 20
THAC0 18	Wis 18
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 17

Damage/Attack: 1d4-1 (stone dagger, -2 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 43; Wild Talent—Animate Shadows (PS Wis-3; Cost—7 + 3/round)

Perhaps the most accomplished playwright working in Salt View is the bard, Kilay. Kilay is short for a human, barely taller than a dwarf, but the plays he creates for the theaters of Salt View are wonderful to behold. He has tried his hand at all types of stories, but a few stand out as particularly fine. His comedy, *The Halfling Comes to Dinner*, stands out as a work of comedic genius. His drama, *The Last Slave in Yaramuke*, brings tears to the eyes of every audience, even if they have seen it before.

The bard also performs from time to time, usually preferring musicals to heavy dramatic roles. His voice has been called the most beautiful sound in Salt View, and many a fair maiden has swooned to Kilay's songs.

Kilay came to Salt View after its reputation for fine theater had spread. When he heard tales of a

local form of entertainment that took storytelling to new heights, he knew he had to find out if it was true. While his claim to being a slave has never been substantiated (and most believe he never was), the bard made a fine showing during his period of testing. When Xaynon heard Kilay sing, he immediately agreed to let him join the tribe.

The bard does his share of tribal work. He goes on raids, travels with the acting troupes, and even has been known to pitch in when the wall needs repairs. But his true love is creating stories for the actors to perform, and few others can match the power of his creations.

Krikik's Pack

Now let me tell you about a tribe of ex-slaves who have adopted a rather different type of lifestyle from most other slave tribes. This tribe, or "pack," as they call themselves, operates out of a hidden oasis that has a small copse around it. While the pack is made up of as varied an assortment of races as any slave tribe, it has patterned itself after a thri-kreen hunting pack.

The pack is led by a thri-kreen druid named Krikik. The druid sees the members of his pack as not only hunters but as fellow protectors of the hidden oasis he guards. Everything that passes near the oasis is prey for the pack, providing food and other supplies for the members.

The pack lives within the trees of its hidden oasis. There are less than 50 ex-slaves in the pack, which often leaves the tree village to roam the surrounding countryside in search of travelers to prey upon.

Krikik's Pack views life as a precarious balance that must be maintained. As such, the pack sees itself as an instrument of balance. When the pack has a need, it seeks a passing caravan that has too much of a given item. By taking what it needs from those who have too much, the pack maintains a balance and so helps the world. Granted, I doubt that many of the pack members see it this way, but it is how their leader understands it. And without Kri-



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kik, the pack would soon dissolve into a purposeless collection of individuals.

Krikik's Pack can be considered a raiding tribe, though they never take more than they need from those they plunder. They have no qualms about killing, and some of the pack's members relish bloodshed, but usually they do not go out of their way to engage in slaughter. Instead, the pack kills when it must, hunts when it has needs to satisfy, and plunders from those who are weaker.

Organization

Krikik's Pack is led by a thri-kreen druid. He sees this collection of ex-slaves as his hunting pack, and so treats each member as though he or she were a fellow thri-kreen. Krikik does not abide idleness, though he understands that his pack cannot go without sleep like a normal thri-kreen pack. When rest is over, however, the druid expects his followers to hunt or care for the oasis.

The pack is organized along a strict order of dominance, as in any thri-kreen pack. Krikik assumes his place as leader, though he has never been challenged for dominance. The rest know exactly where they stand in the pack, and any disagreements are handled via the time-tested method of battling until one of the combatants surrenders or is killed. Because of the pack instinct, Krikik is extremely loyal to his fellow tribe members. He expects the same loyalty from them.

Jaleen, a human psionicist, serves as second in command of the pack, and usually leads the hunts that take the pack away from the oasis. She ruthlessly uses her psionic abilities to put down any opponent, and her skills with physical weapons have surprised many who thought she was an easy target once her psionic powers were spent. She appreciates the hunting pack attitude that Krikik has instilled in the tribe. Sometimes she even imagines herself as one of the powerful mantis warriors, prowling the desert in search of prey.

The third rank in the pack is currently held by a

dwarf named Krom. Krom relies totally on strength and weapon skill to keep his position of dominance. While he sometimes feels he could take Jaleen and thus move up in rank, he likes the psionicist too much to want to upset the current order. As long as Jaleen treats him with the respect he believes is his due, he will be content to stay third in dominance order.

While this dominance order reminds some of the ex-slaves of the ranks used by templars, the pack does not treat its members like slaves. In fact, everyone who wants to can battle for dominance if he so desires. No one is assigned a position just because of the station he was born into or the amount of money in his belt pouch.

Operations and Means of Existence

The hunt is the pack's primary means of existence (though others call what they do raiding). The pack ranges far from its hidden oasis to search for small caravans or other vulnerable groups of travelers. When the pack attacks, it can be vicious. Well-protected prey is hit hard and killed quickly in order to even the odds. Weaker prey may be spared if they surrender. The pack will destroy an entire caravan, however, in order to protect the oasis.

At times, the pack even attacks villages or the fields around a city-state if Krikik believes they can do so with a minimum of casualties.

The pack takes only those items it needs or will use in the near future. It does not plunder to raise wealth, but to survive. Food, water, weapons, and clothing are the most common targets in a hunt.

Krikik also demands that the pack aid him in protecting the hidden oasis. This involves driving off destructive creatures or even attacking travelers who desecrate the oasis in any way. Travelers who seek to use the oasis for normal purposes are not bothered unless their number includes a defiler or if they pose some threat to the pack. Of course, once they leave the oasis there is nothing to stop the pack from preying on them.



Origin

The story I have heard concerning the origin of Krikik's Pack tells much about this strange tribe of ex-slaves. The thri-kreen druid had started his time of wandering, traveling the Tyr region to gain understanding of the world and his faith. While traveling near Draj, Krikik was captured and placed into slavery. He decided to abide as a slave for a time, for he considered the bondage as another part of his time of wandering and learning.

While working in the fields outside the city-state, Krikik got to know his fellow slaves, including the psionist Jaleen. Jaleen had persuaded some of the other slaves to join her in an escape attempt. Sure that this somehow related to his period of learning, Krikik decided to help the slaves escape. Using his own strength and druidic powers to complement Jaleen's psionics and the others' sheer determination, Krikik provided the extra ingredient to overpower the guards.

Once the small group of runaway slaves reached the open desert, some of them began complaining that they had no plan, no supplies, and no chance to survive. Listening to these beings, Krikik finally came to a decision. He challenged Jaleen for leadership, telling the slaves that he knew a place they would be safe. The psionist did not resist Krikik's bid for dominance, for she had seen his powers and had no plan of her own. So the druid led the slaves to his guarded land.

Krikik decided that these people were to be the pack he did not have. They were the reason he had originally started wandering, for the oasis he guarded was too precious to trust to a single guardian. It needed a full pack to protect it from defilers and desecraters. These slaves would be Krikik's pack, and they would serve as additional guardians for his hidden oasis.

He explained to the ex-slaves what a pack was and how it was set up. Anyone who did not want to remain with the pack was free to leave, but they had to leave as they arrived—without supplies of any kind.





The Slave Tribes

None of the ex-slaves took his offer to go. They all decided they wanted to be part of Krikik's Pack.

Location and Defenses

Krikik's Pack operates from a hidden oasis that is the druid's guarded land. The oasis lies at the bottom of a deep valley in the mountains north of Raam. The valley, especially the area right around the oasis, is a lush domain of fertile land. A small copse of trees surrounds the oasis, and the pack has built a village within the branches of these trees.

The location of the hidden valley is the oasis's primary defense. The small range of mountains is surrounded by desert on all sides, and the valley is tucked away between two closely-spaced peaks. The druid guards the oasis with all of his ability, for he considers this patch of land to be his sacred trust. With the help of the pack, he can deal with most bands of travelers who would desecrate the area.

The pack itself remains hidden within the branches and leaves of the trees. They have built a village high above the ground by constructing platforms between the trunks of the largest trees. Protected and hidden by the mighty branches and lush foliage, the village is further disguised by covering the tents with vines and leaves. Ladders can be raised, thus eliminating all outward signs that the trees are inhabited by a slave tribe.

Krikik's Village

Map Key

The following key describes the map of Krikik's village.

1. The Meeting Tent: This large tent serves as the gathering place for the pack. Here hunting forays are planned, stories are told, and decisions concerning the pack are discussed. Krikik allows discussion on all topics save the oasis. When a

decision must be made about his guarded land, the druid makes it alone. He does listen to the opinions of his dominant pack members, however.

2. Rope Ladders: These openings in the tree platform allow egress to the tree village. Strong rope ladders made from hemp and giant hair can be raised or lowered depending on the situation, and hatches can be closed to offer further protection.

3. Jaleen's Tent: This tent serves as the living and sleeping area for the pack's second in command.

4. Supply Tent: Whatever the pack acquires during a hunt or raid is stored in this tent. Food, water, and extra weapons are placed here.

5. Krom's Tent: This tent serves as the living and sleeping area for the pack's third in command.

6. Krikik's Tent: When the druid is not communing with the oasis or off wandering, he uses this tent. As he does not need to sleep, the tent serves as a place for the druid to think, to work on his weapons, or to meet with members of his pack.

Relations with Others

The pack sees everyone as prey. Only those who approach the hidden oasis to drink are left alone, but this free passage usually lasts only as long as the travelers remain within the oasis. Once outside, they again become prey for the pack.

Krikik's Pack does not engage in trade. It exists to hunt and raid. The pack's favorite targets are small groups of travelers moving between Urik, Raam, and Draj. At times the pack will even raid the fields outside the city-states. The ex-slaves tend to stay away from large settlements, for there are not

The Slave Tribes



enough of them to adequately attack secure defenses.

Joining the Tribe

Few slaves wander out of the desert asking to become part of the pack. However, when the pack attacks caravans or fields where slaves are kept, they often set the slaves free. If any of these slaves seek to join the pack, they are invited to come along.

Several considerations are made when determining if a slave is worthy of the pack. First, the slave must serve the balance of the pack, neither upsetting the relationships of the members nor requiring too much help to survive. The pack survives by working together, and anyone who seeks to unbalance that is cast out into the desert to fend for himself. Second, the slave must agree to protect the oasis, for that is the pack's sacred mission (at least as far as Krikik is concerned). The oasis offers the pack shelter and water, and the pack must offer it protection in return.

If a slave agrees to these two rules of life in the pack, he is allowed to join and even fight to establish his place in the dominance order. If a slave is found unacceptable, he is either sent into the desert or killed outright, depending on how much he can tell others about the pack.

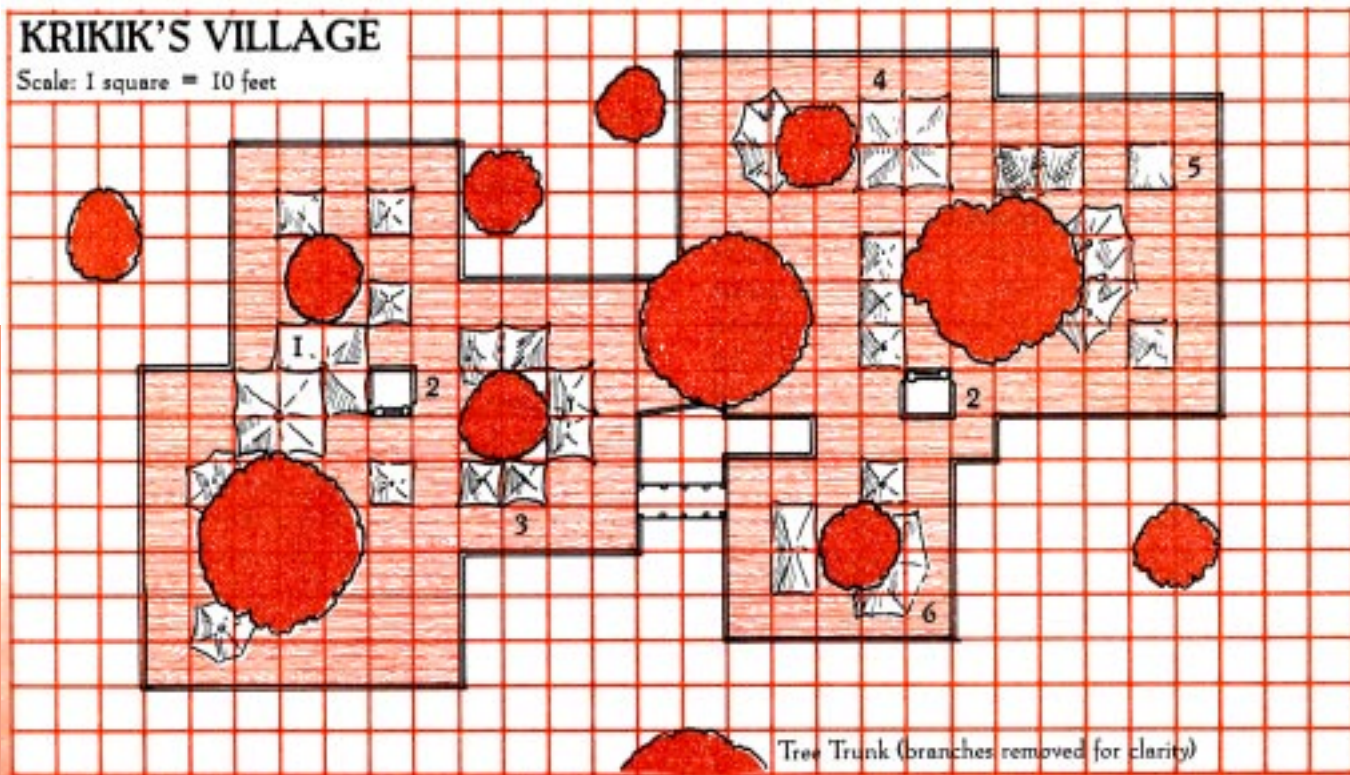
Important Tribe Members

Krikik

Thri-Kreen Druid, Neutral

Armor Class 1	Str 18
Movement 18	Dex 18
Level 12	Con 16
Hit Points 73	Int 16
THAC0 14	Wis 17
No. of Attacks 5 or 1	Cha 15

Damage/Attack: 1d4+2 (x4) / 1d4+3 or 2d4+2
(*gythka*)





The Slave Tribes

Chosen Spheres: Water, Cosmos

Krikik became a slave while on his time of wandering. He took his imprisonment in stride, seeing it as just another learning experience. While working in the fields outside Draj, the druid learned of an escape attempt planned by his fellow slaves. As this attempt also seemed to relate to his period of learning, Krikik decided to help the slaves. Together with the psionist named Jaleen, Krikik aided the slaves escape into the desert.

It wasn't long before the druid decided that these ex-slaves were meant to help him with his life's work of protecting his guarded land. He offered the slaves a chance to become part of his pack. As pack members, they would share in the thrill of the hunt and would have an oasis for shelter as long as they pledged to protect it. The slaves agreed and Krikik's Pack was formed.

Now Krikik spends most of his time in the hidden valley, communing with the spirit of the oasis. He sometimes goes on a hunt with his pack, but he prefers to leave such matters to Jaleen.

Jaleen

Human Psionist, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 8 (padded armor)	Str 16
Movement 12	Dex 14
Level 5	Con 15
Hit Points 25	Int 16
THAC0 18	Wis 18
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 15

Damage/Attack: 1d6 (bone short sword, -1 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 78; Disciplines – Clairsentience, Psychokinesis; Sciences – Aura Sight, Clairvoyance, Project Force; Devotions – Combat Mind, Danger Sense, Know Direction, Know Location, Radial Navigation, Spirit Sense,

Animate Object, Ballistic Attack, Control Flames, Control Light; Defense Modes-Mental Barrier, Tower of Iron Will, Thought Shield

Jaleen was born a slave, growing up in the children's pens in Draj. When she first demonstrated a wild talent for psionics, the templars decided to kill her. A noble petitioned for her life and took the child into his home to serve as one of his domestic slaves. The noble was an accomplished psionist himself, and he found enjoyment in teaching young Jaleen to use her powers. He was good to her and as kind as masters get, and she never considered using her mental powers against him. The templars, on the other hand, were another matter. If she was ever in a position to psionically attack the templar who wanted to kill her, she would do so without a second thought.

Her life as a domestic servant ended when the noble died and she was turned over to the templars for field duty. That was where she met Krikik. She now serves as the pack's second in command and personally leads most hunts.

Jaleen has fiery eyes that project defiance and a fiercely independent mind. Her red hair falls about her face like a mane of fire, and she has a temper that can melt stone. Still, she is a fair leader and has earned the respect of Krikik and the pack.

Krom

Dwarf Fighter, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 6 (mekillot hide)	Str 21
Movement 6	Dex 14
Level 7	Con 17
Hit Points 62	Int 12
THAC0 10	Wis 11
No. of Attacks 3/2	Cha 12

Damage/Attack: 1d4 + 3 (club)

The dwarf Krom once held an officer's rank in



Draj's slave army. He survived the slave uprising led by Krikik and Jaleen, though he was left for dead with a bloody head wound. When he awakened, Krom decided to make his own bid for freedom. The other guards were dead, including the templar officer who kept the soldier slaves in line. There was no one to stop the dwarf from simply picking up his weapon and walking away. He followed the escaping slaves' trail, as he had nowhere better to go at the time.

Krom eventually caught up with the runaway slaves and asked to join. Though hesitant at first, the other slaves agreed when Krikik and Jaleen welcomed the dwarf. Now he shares his military training with all who would learn.

While Krom is a fierce fighter, he has become an accomplished tracker as well. He adores the human Jaleen, and is content to remain third in dominance order as long as she returns his gestures of friendship.

The Black Sand Raiders

They sweep across the Tablelands like nightmare wraiths, engaging in an unending spree of murder and plunder. They are the Black Sand Raiders, and those unfortunate enough to encounter them leave only broken, bloody bodies to tell the tale. I decided not to include this tribe of ex-slaves on my list of stops, but I did want to write about them in this chronicle. What follows has been pieced together from stories told to me by those who claimed to have survived a meeting with the raiders, or those who knew someone who had. The most reliable material came from a dwarf who had been a member of the tribe. He was willing to answer my questions, as long as I never asked him his name. I never asked him why he left the tribe, either.

All tales told about the Black Sand Raiders are told in whispers, as if speaking too loudly about these terrible marauders will attract their foul attention. They have become creatures of legend, much as the Free have. But unlike the tales of the Free, the

legends concerning the Black Sand tribe are dark and evil.

Most tales center around the tribe's leader, Zeburon, who wears an iron helm, iron gloves, and a breechcloth over otherwise bare flesh. The man—if man he is—is capable of the same atrocities attributed to the sorcerer-kings, though on a smaller scale. His cruelty, ruthlessness, and greed set the agenda for his followers as he leads them on increasingly violent raids from the Siren's Song to the Dragon's Bowl. In even quieter voices, people speak of Zeburon's wizard. This powerful defiler apparently communes with undead creatures, further tainting the Black Sand Raiders' already stained souls.

Zeburon rides at the head of a tribe 100 strong. Rumors say that the number of raiders never changes, neither increasing nor decreasing. When a tribe member dies, he is immediately replaced with another escaped slave. Despite the claim that there are 100 raiders in the tribe, no report has ever placed more than 30 of them in a single raiding party.

The Black Sand Raiders are the epitome of evil for those living outside the walls of the city-states. These raiders stop at nothing to take what they want, and they seem to revel in death and destruction. Their chaotic evil tendencies are barely contained by Zeburon and his defiler wizard, but they are given plenty of opportunities to indulge those tendencies during raiding.

Organization

Zeburon rules the Black Sand Raiders, quite literally, with an iron fist. He rules through power and fear, easily putting down any challengers to his rule. For the most part, as long as he continues to lead the slaves on successful raids, Zeburon will continue to command them. He claims the title of warlord, though most of his conquests seem to be over the weak and poorly defended. He has yet to take on any well-protected caravans or operate near a city-



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state.

The raiders are organized on a strictly military rank system. However, ranks are not earned by hard workers and good leaders. Instead, the powerful move up in authority and position by eliminating those above them. If you can defeat your challenger in battle (whether it is a fair fight or not), then you can keep your rank. If not, a new officer is initiated with the blood of his predecessor. Zeburon selects his personal body guards from among his top officers. Rumors persist that these guards must first submit themselves to the defiler's magic before they can assume their new posts.

The defiler, called Fevil in most accounts I heard, plays a major role in the life of the tribe. He is more than just chief council to Zeburon. He is the dark soul that permeates the Black Sand Raiders, conjuring visions of conquest to drive the marauders into a battle-frenzied state. His word is law in the camp, for the tribe members fear him as much as or more than they fear Zeburon. Few want to draw the dark wizard's attention, for he sometimes enlists raiders to "assist" him in foul ceremonies.

The rankings determine when a raider can take his share of the spoils. Like a pride of lions after a kill, the high-ranking raiders take their fill before those below them choose. The newest or weakest among the raiders select last, which usually motivates them to work their way up as soon as possible.

Operations and Means of Existence

The Black Sand Raiders have two methods of operation: they go on raids to acquire wealth and supplies, and they go on raids to satisfy their primal urges to cause pain and spill blood. They have a simple outlook on life. Whatever they need or want is theirs for the taking, they believe. It is theirs by right of strength, and more, by right of retribution. Zeburon speaks of what Athas owes his raiders for the years they suffered as slaves. Every raid the Black Sand tribe undertakes is an attack against the nobles and templars who once lorded over them.

They do not care that innocents and other slaves suffer in their raids as well.

The raiders' technique is simple. They pick a target they can overwhelm and pounce on it. The Black Sand marauders have been known to attack outposts and small villages, moderately-sized caravans, and even other raiding tribes. The raiders ride kanks and strike swiftly once they have selected a target. There is no planning or style evident in their actions. They simply attack and kill, then they take whatever they can carry and disappear back into the wilderness. They try not to leave any survivors, though in the confusion of their attacks, a few lucky individuals sometimes escape.

Zeburon's raiders operate almost exclusively in the Tablelands. They have been known to hit targets as far north as the Dragon's Bowl and as far south as Siren's Song. They rarely travel into the Great Ivory Plain, but there have been tales of them striking caravans cutting across the sand wastes en route to Tyr.

When not raiding for spoils, the marauders attack for the sheer pleasure of defeating and killing a weaker enemy. They have also been known to engage in hunts, where they allow those they have captured a chance to escape. As long as the captives can keep ahead of the raiders, they can stay alive. Once the raiders catch up with them, death comes slowly and with as much pain as Zeburon and his followers can coax out of the victims.

Every story I have gathered speaks of Zeburon personally leading every raid. He travels with a party of 30 mounted warriors, and sometimes his defiler accompanies him. They must make a fearsome sight, riding kanks and wearing black cloaks and hoods. How they stand the heat is beyond me, but that only adds to the tribe's supernatural trappings. Zeburon and his followers fancy themselves as avenging spirits, but I see them as nothing more than murderous thugs.

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Origin

Here the legend really takes a bizarre turn. The origin of the Black Sand Raiders traces back many years, to when a gladiator named Zeburon escaped from Urik. In the arena, Zeburon learned to kill in order to survive. He took that lesson to the extreme while wandering the Tablelands, killing everyone he came upon. His blood-stained trail finally led him to an island of black sand in the middle of otherwise barren terrain. The black sand shimmered evilly in the morning sun, beckoning the one-time slave forward. He accepted the invitation.

Zeburon found that the black sand surrounded the ruins of an ancient city. Some buildings jutted from the sand, exposing partially intact structures of strange design and unfathomable purpose. A pool of water lay hidden amid the ruins, and Zeburon drank deeply to quench his thirst. When he stood up, he noticed a figure watching him from the shadowed opening of a crumbled tower. The gladiator

moved to deal with this intruder as he had dealt with the others he had met in his travels, but he was stopped in his tracks by arcane words and the tingle of magic.

Zeburon could do nothing but listen to the figure that stepped out to greet him. "I am Fevil," the defiler said with an evil grimace. "I have been waiting for you to arrive." Zeburon listened as the defiler told him of his visions of power and conquest. With Zeburon to command their army and Fevil to commune with the ancient undead of the ruined city, there was nothing they could not accomplish. After a time, Zeburon became intrigued by the wizard's words. He accepted the proposal.

To prove his worth, however, Fevil demanded that Zeburon survive a simple test. The defiler explained that if the gladiator could enter the chambers below the crumbled tower and emerge alive, then he was worthy to lead the soon-to-be born Black Sand Raiders.

What Zeburon encountered beneath the tower,





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no one knows. According to the story I was told, he was down there for a full day and a full night while Fevil waited above. When he finally emerged from the shadow-filled doorway, Zeburon was wearing the iron helm and gauntlets that have become his trademark.

It was only a matter of time before Zeburon attracted a group of followers. He appealed to the barbaric and unscrupulous elements, cajoling them with promises of unlimited wealth and unending excitement. Thus was the tribe of the Black Sand Raiders born.

Location and Defenses

The Black Sand Raiders make their camp in the ruins of an ancient city, rumored to be located somewhere in the vicinity of Silver Spring in the area called the Tablelands. The ruins rest within a pool of black sand, from which the tribe takes its name. Their camp is said to be a jumble of tents stretched between the ruins, but some of the more privileged raiders make their homes within the shattered and collapsing structures.

A number of factors work to protect the camp, though few of them have anything to do with the tribe. Most travelers have heard tales of the Black Sand Raiders, so any who come upon an area of black sand tend to leave the area immediately. Those who haven't heard of the raiders still tend to avoid the area, for black sand hints at things beyond the natural world.

The camp maintains a semblance of defenses, most of which take the form of patrols. Patrols have two purposes. The first is to guard the camp's perimeter and provide ample warning of any threats from outside. The second is to guard the camp's interior, for occasionally something decidedly unfriendly emerges from the caverns below the ruins. Often, the defiler can herd these nightmares back into the depths. The patrols have been established for those times when he cannot turn them back, as well as to protect the tribe until he can be located.

Otherwise, it seems the Black Sand camp does

not concern itself with defenses. There are no sturdy walls to hide behind, no formal militia to turn to. Instead, every raider protects himself until Zeburon calls them all together. That is the way in the camp of the Black Sand.

The Ruins

Most of the strange, ancient buildings have crumbled into piles of rocks or have been totally buried in fine, black sand. Those structures that jut out of the sand and offer some protection from the elements are used by the ranking members of the tribe. One small building remains almost completely intact, and Zeburon uses this as his personal quarters. The partially crumbled tower that leads to the caverns below has become the defiler's domain; there is no one who cares to challenge him for the space.

The caverns under the ruins seem to go on forever. Only a small section of them have been mapped and explored by Fevil and Zeburon. Sometimes they send a party of raiders into the depths to find ancient treasures or to conduct some foul experiment for the defiler. Other times, the caverns are used to test new members or to serve as punishment for those who have angered Zeburon. In either case, those who descend into the depths must be prepared to deal with the denizens that wander the dark passages and haunt the strangely-designed chambers.

Black Sand Camp

Map Keys

The following key describes the map of the Black Sand camp.

1. Fevil's Tower: This partially crumbled tower serves as the defiler's personal domain. Within the ancient walls he works his foul magic. The tower also serves as one of the entrances into the chambers below.



Beneath the Black Sand Camp

2. Zeburon's Dwelling: This ruined building of unknown purpose now serves as the personal dwelling and headquarters of Zeburon, leader of the Black Sand Raiders. Leering creatures out of nightmares decorate the outer walls of the structure in bas reliefs and statues.

3. Prisoner Tent: Any prisoners taken in a raid are kept in this tent until needed. Prisoners include slaves who may be allowed to join the tribe, nobles taken for ransom, and sacrifices to be used by the defiler to appease the undead beneath the ruins.

4. Weaponsmith's Tent: While the tribe does not make any of its own weapons or armor, they do need to keep what they take in good repair until new items can be acquired. The weaponsmith, an ex-slave who learned his skill in an artisan camp in Raam, is charged with keeping the raiders' weapons sharp and strong from raid to raid.

5. Treasure Tent: All treasure taken in raids, from money to weapons to textiles, is stored in this tent.

6. Cooking Tent: Food for the camp is prepared and served here over great cooking fires.

7. Tent of the Elite: Zeburon's personal guards make their home in this large, spacious, well-appointed tent.

8. Ruins: These crumbling, almost completely buried ruins are covered with fine black sand. Not even the defiler can guess at the original purpose of these buildings, but many of them contain secret entrances to the chambers beneath the camp.

Map Key

The following key describes the map of the chambers beneath the Black Sand camp.

1. Tower Basement: A spiral staircase leads from Fevil's tower into this large basement chamber. The chamber is constructed from stone as black as the sand that covers the ruins above.

2. Ancient Crypts: This roughly carved chamber has a dirt floor. A film of black sand covers the hard-packed dirt. Stone crypts fill the chamber. Some ancient artifacts can be found in and around these crypts, but those who seek them must overcome the skeletons that guard this place of the dead.

3. Ancient Crypts: Like chambers 2 and 5, this chamber houses a few stone crypts. Unlike the others, these crypts have all been broken into and looted.

4. Passage Cavern: This cavern connects to a series of tunnels that lead to similar chambers beneath the other ruins. The tunnels also lead to entrances to the surface. The iron door that rests partially open is covered with arcane icons from the ancient world.

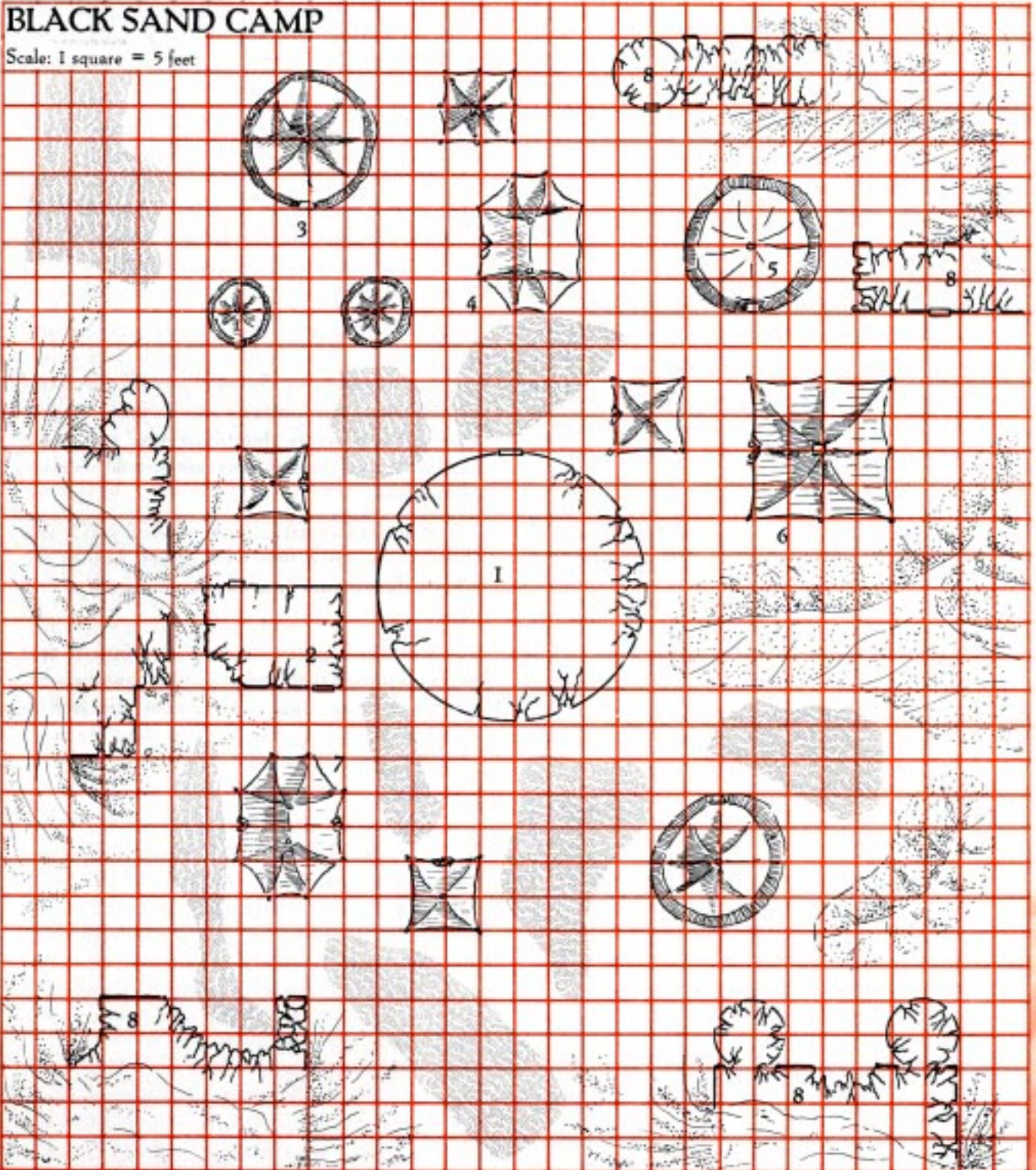
5. Ancient Crypts: This roughly carved chamber has a dirt floor. A film of black sand covers the hard-packed dirt. Stone crypts fill the chamber. Some ancient artifacts can be found in and around these crypts, but those who seek them must overcome the zombies that guard this place of the dead. A passage in the northern wall leads to the chambers beneath the other ruins and to entrances to the surface.



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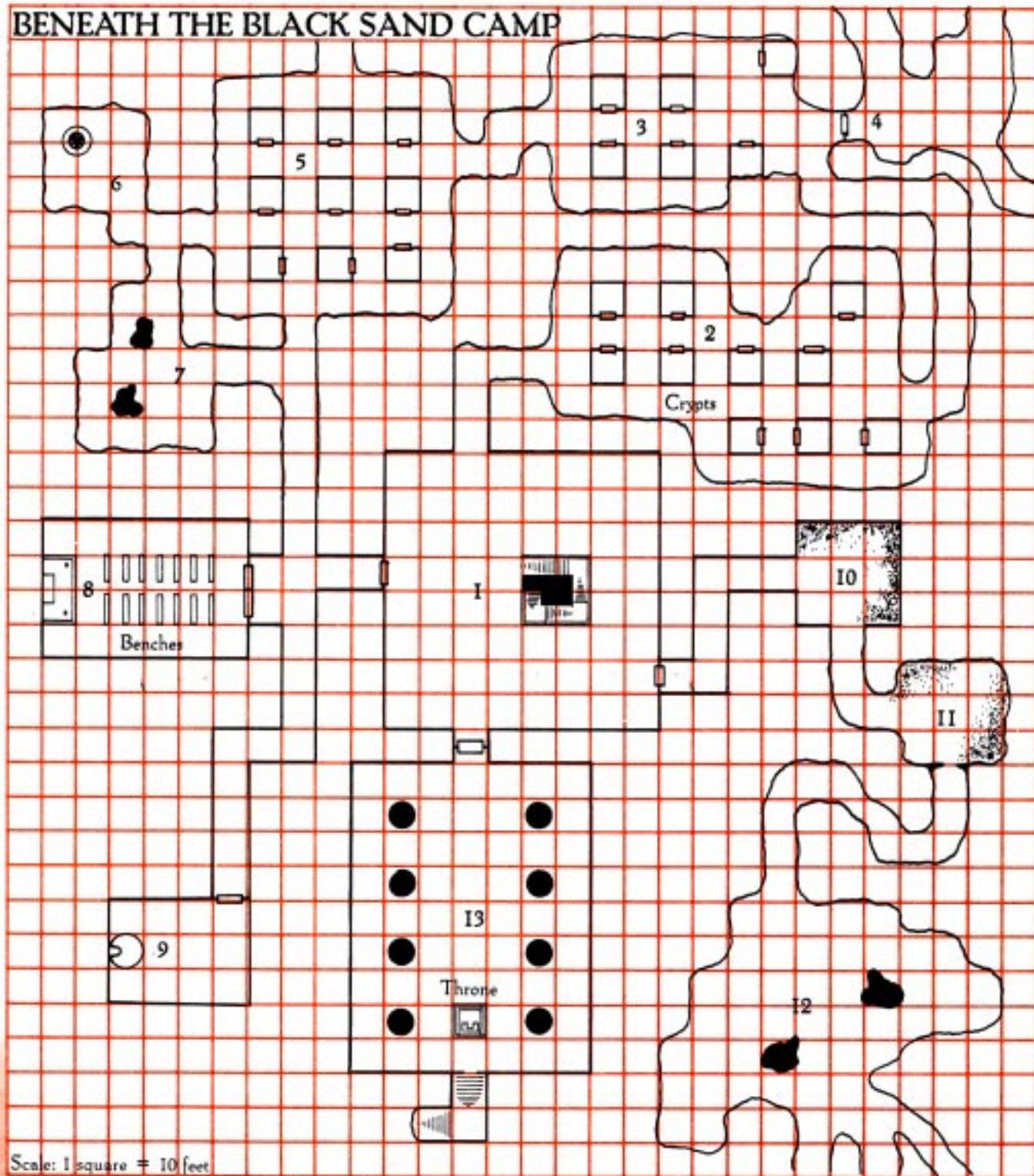
BLACK SAND CAMP

Scale: 1 square = 5 feet





BENEATH THE BLACK SAND CAMP





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6. Well Chamber: An ancient well, long-since dried out, rests in the northwestern corner of this chamber. The well leads to unexplored levels farther below the ground.

7. Bone Chamber: This natural chamber, complete with irregular columns of rock that stretch from floor to ceiling, has a carpet of ancient bones. Some of the bones have crumbled to dust, while others stick up white and shiny from the powder-covered ground.

8. Ancient Altar: This ancient temple has rows of stone benches set before a black altar. The altar, obviously dedicated to some ancient god of evil, is decorated with nightmare carvings of creatures that no longer walk the surface of Athas.

9. Fountain Chamber: A fountain fills the western half of this chamber. The fountain features a large obsidian bowl. Black water spills from the gaping, tooth-filled maw of a nightmare creature with evil wings sculpted from a single piece of obsidian. The water seems to have no source or drain, yet it never ceases, nor does it spill out of the bowl. Drinking the water has killed many of the initiates Zeburon has sent down here, but their bodies have been dragged away by the walking undead.

10. Rubble-Strewn Room: Various items can be found in the heaps of rubble scattered about this room, including objects made of metal. Some are broken, some whole. A few are even thought to be magical.

11. Rubble-Strewn Room: See 10 above, but note that a secret door is located in the southern wall.

12. Treasure Chamber: This large natural chamber is littered with ancient treasures collected by Er'Thork, a raaig (see the "Important Tribe Members" section) that lords over these

ancient ruins. A forking passage leads to the ruins and to entrances to the surface.

13. Throne Room: Great pillars line the walls of this throne room, and a great throne rests along the southern wall. Tattered tapestries hang on the walls, but whatever images once adorned them have long-since faded. The throne is the regular haunt of Er'Thork, the raaig that rules these ancient chambers. A secret door leads to stairs that drop deeper into the bowels of Athas.

Relations with Others

Zeburon considers everyone who is not a part of his tribe to be an enemy. He conducts his affairs as though he was still fighting in the gladiatorial arenas, following the law of kill or be killed. Every other tribe exists for only one purpose—to provide for the needs of Zeburon and the Black Sand Raiders. For this reason, few settlements have any formal agreements with the raiders. Instead, most simply hope that the Black Sand tribe never comes to call on them.

The Black Sand tribe's nearest neighbors keep a watchful eye for signs of the marauders. Altaruk, for example, has not been directly attacked by the raiders, but a few of their caravans have fallen. Altaruk is a powerful deterrent to the marauders, and Zeburon hates the client village with all his dark heart. On more than one occasion, Zeburon has had to call off his raiders because of the appearance of a heavily armed escort from Altaruk.

Despite the size of its army and the strength of its walls, Altaruk is regularly destroyed by giants from the Forked Tongue Estuary. Zeburon watches for these attacks, for while the village is being rebuilt his raiders have free reign over the area.

Silver Springs, on the other hand, cannot hope to hold back Zeburon's raiders (or at least the elven chief whose tribe settled here believes this to be the



case). He opens his oasis to the raiders whenever they wish to use it, suffering under the humiliation and pain they cause in return for his life. One day Zeburon may kill the elves and loot the storehouse of silver that supposedly lies hidden here. Until then, he and his followers will continue to use it as a resting stop.

Joining the Tribe

Zeburon constantly seeks new members for the Black Sand Raiders. The lifestyle they lead and the methods used for determining the tribe's hierarchy make life among the lower ranks exceedingly short. However, the fact that they instantly attack anyone who wanders into their domain makes finding new members rather difficult. Zeburon leaves the recruitment of new members to Fevil. The defiler has an uncanny knack for knowing when the tribe will need new blood, and he magically searches for suitable prospects. Sometimes the defiler even leads a

raid on slave market caravans for the express purpose of acquiring fresh slaves.

When the defiler extends an invitation to a slave, the slave must agree to join the tribe on the spot. Even a moment's hesitation brings swift death from the defiler or his raiders. There have been rare instances of slaves actually coming to the raiders in order to join them. At least one small slave tribe merged with the Black Sand camp in order to survive, but mostly the defiler goes out to find his own recruits. Of course, certain prisoners are sometimes brought back to the camp for entertainment purposes or to give to the undead in the caverns below the ruins. Once in a great while a recruit is found among these wretches.

Only slaves may join the Black Sand tribe, and only warriors usually survive the rigors of testing. Tests of loyalty, courage, and strength vary, but most usually include a trip into the caverns beneath the Black Sand ruins. If the potential recruit can make it out of the depths alive, he is granted full





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status as a member of the raiding tribe. If he manages to emerge with some bit of treasure from the past, he may be offered a position of power in the camp's hierarchy. If he does not emerge, then the defiler wishes the denizens of the deep a happy meal and sends in the next potential member.

Important Tribe Members

Zeburon

Human Gladiator, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 7	Str 17
Movement 12	Dex 16
Level 7	Con 16
Hit Points 67	Int 14
THAC0 7	Wis 12
No. of Attacks 3/2	Cha 14

Damage/Attack: 1d8+6 (bone long sword, -1 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 52; Wild Talent-Danger Sense (PS Wis-3; Cost-4 + 3/turn)

Zeburon became leader of the Black Sand Raiders in much the same way as all of its members joined the tribe: he survived the tests of the caverns beneath the Black Sand ruins. While he is the leader of the tribe, which he rules through the strength of his iron-gloved fists, he follows the advice of the defiler, Fevil.

The ex-gladiator approaches all situations from the perspective of the arena. Everything is a game, but a deadly game. The winner of the game lives to fight again, while the loser simply dies. He sees all opponents in these terms, believing that if he does not kill them first, they will surely kill him. He rules the raiders in the same way. If any of his followers question his orders, he swiftly kills them and asks if anyone else cares to disagree.

Zeburon does not talk about his encounters beneath the ruins, but he proudly wears the trophies

he won in the depths. The iron helm covers his entire head. His eyes sparkle malevolently from within the shadows of the thin, menacing slit that cuts across the helm's front. Strange designs etched into its sides mark it as something from another age. The designs may be magical in nature, but so far there have been no special powers attributed to the helm or its matching gloves. The gloves are iron gauntlets that fit snugly over Zeburon's hands. He wears no other armor or clothing, save a breechcloth, sandals, and a short black cloak. He wields a sword of sharpened bone.

The ex-gladiator is quite mad, but that does not hamper his ability to lead. Of course, he leads his tribe down his own dark paths of madness. He craves battle and has a fierce blood lust that must constantly be sated. He hates all those who are not slaves, for they turned him into what he has become. He hates all slaves, for that was what he learned in the arena. Consequently, Zeburon hates everyone and everything. Someday that hatred will consume him, but until then he satisfies some of his foul urges through the actions of the Black Sand Raiders.

Fevil

Human Defiler, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 7	Str 15
Movement 12	Dex 17
Level 10	Con 16
Hit Points 42	Int 22
THAC0 17	Wis 17
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 8

Damage/Attack: 1d6+1 (bone quarterstaff)

Fevil has his own agenda, which Zeburon and his raiders unwittingly help him to follow. He lets the ex-gladiator think he is in command, for the slaves would never agree to follow a wizard. What the defiler needs the slaves for has yet to be determined, and he refuses to give any hints to those who may



one day oppose him.

The defiler stumbled upon the ruins within the pool of black sand long before Zeburon arrived. He knew that unlimited power awaited him in the caverns beneath the ruins, but he was unable to explore very much of the depths. While his personal power was great, the foul denizens of the deep could overpower him if they attacked in force. So he bided his time, studying the areas that were open to him.

There are those who claim that Fevil communes with one or more of the creatures living beneath the ruins. Some say he gets his powers from a far-reaching evil out of Athas's past. Others say that his powers come from the records the ancients left behind. The wizard will not comment either way.

Fevil is a short, plump man with graying hair and an unkempt beard. He is as cruel and evil as Zeburon, but much more cunning and calculating. While Zeburon acts on instinct and in response to his own madness, Fevil acts according to a carefully laid out plan. When the details of that plan are finally revealed, the defiler's true nature will also be revealed. However, by that time it may be too late.

Lokee

Halfling Fighter, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 4 (carru leather)	Str 15
Movement 6	Dex 13
Level 6	Con 15
Hit Points 33	Int 16
THAC0 15	Wis 14
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 13

Damage/Attack: 1d6 (iron short sword)

Psionic Summary: PSP 48; Wild Talent-Adrenalin Control (PS Con-3; Cost-8 + 4/round)

Lokee is a halfling in whom Fevil recruited into the Black Sand Raiders. He was part of a captured

group of slaves bound for the city-state of Nibenay. Because of the behavior of halflings in captivity, Lokee was scheduled to be sold directly to the gladiatorial arena where his death could bring a few laughs to the crowds. When Fevil and his raiders attacked the caravan and freed the halfling, he eagerly agreed to undergo whatever test the wizard decreed. From what he could see, the Black Sand Raiders was the kind of tribe he wanted to join.

The halfling refuses to discuss his past, other than to say he is no longer welcome in the Forest Ridge. Some speculate he may have done the unforgivable-eaten halfling flesh.

Now Lokee ranks as one of the most privileged members of the tribe. His cruelty, fighting skills, and evil personality make him the equal of most of the camp's officers. In fact, Lokee has served Zeburon faithfully for more than a year now. Few of the other officers can make such a claim.

The halfling warrior especially likes engaging in hunts, for they remind him of his youth spent in the western forests. Sometimes Zeburon even lets him keep one of his catches so that he may satisfy his craving for intelligent flesh.

While Lokee follows Zeburon's orders without question, he much prefers the company of the defiler. He can only learn so much about killing and plundering from the ex-gladiator, while he is sure that the defiler can teach him how to be truly evil.

Er'Thork

Raaig, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 0	Movement 6
Level 11	THAC0 10
No. of Attacks 1	Damage 1d10

Er'Thork is an ancient undead creature known as a raaig. This incorporeal spirit haunts the chambers beneath the Black Sand camp, still paying homage to dark gods that no longer exist on Athas.

The raaig has allowed the defiler Fevil to form an



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uneasy alliance with it, thus providing the creature with a pawn in the living world. It grants the defiler some hints of the magic of the ancients, but only enough to keep him interested. Someday Er'Thork hopes to steal the defiler's body, though it knows that the evil wizard has plans of his own.

Er'Thork can be damaged only by weapons forged from iron. In addition, the raaig can use death gaze at will against its opponents. A successful touch drains 1d4 points of Intelligence from its victims, and it can control lesser undead (like zombies and skeletons) at will.

Werrik's Stalkers

In the Tyr region, as in much of the world of Athas I fear, there are those who make their fortune at the expense of others. Perhaps the most contemptible of these types are those who deal in slaves. From independent tribes to organized merchant houses, many people make their living by hunting, raising, and selling slaves. The absolute worst of these, in my opinion, are the ex-slaves who have turned to the slave trade as a means of retaining their own freedom.

Werrik's Stalkers fall into this category. The ex-slaves of this tribe call themselves the Stalkers, but their leader prefers the name Werrik House, believing that it gives the tribe a legitimacy and the same prestige allotted to the great merchant houses. The only thing the more-lofty name accomplishes is to call attention to the fact that Werrik's band is nothing trying to be something. The Stalkers, no matter what name they go by, remain nothing more than a nomadic tribe of one-time slaves who have taken up the whips and shackles of their masters to use against other slaves.

Werrik's band, like so many of its ilk, does not specialize in one aspect of the slave trade. The tribe prides itself on hunting down runaway servants, as well as securing new slaves for sale at markets. The two services that the Stalkers refuse to handle are specialized slave training and slave farming—they

do not raise slaves. They simply secure and package them for market.

An escaped slave will know the Stalkers (or Werrib House, if you prefer) when he encounters them, for they have adopted a tribal identity through similar clothing and hair styles. In fact, a Stalker has no hair at all save for a long braid that falls back from the top of the head. This braid is adorned with bits of bone and twisted tightly into a single tail. Otherwise, the entire head is shaved bald. Both male and female band members adopt this style upon acceptance into the tribe. In addition, all tribe members wear at least one piece of mekillot-hide armor. The higher a member's position in the tribe, the more mekillot-hide armor he wears.

The tales associated with Werrik's Stalkers range from the disturbing to the frightening. Slaves hunting slaves is a concept the sorcerer-kings must truly love, for who else could conceive of such an evil irony? If you are an escaped slave and the Stalkers catch your scent, you will find it extremely difficult to shake them. Not only are they persistent, but they think like runaway slaves because they are runaway slaves. They know all of the tricks and hiding places. At times, it almost seems as though they know your thoughts before you do. When you turn around, a Stalker is already there. When you find a place to hide, a Stalker finds it, too.

Werrik's Stalkers consist of some 30 ex-slaves. The nomads travel together in a caravan made up of a huge wheeled slave pen dragged by a temperamental mekillot, a dozen or so banks, and a few small wagons full of supplies. When on the hunt, the tribe makes camp anywhere. When they have a choice, they prefer to set up camp in the vicinity of a village where they regularly do business.

Werrik's Stalkers are evil. As an ex-slave, I feel that their business and way of life are abominable. They may see what they do as their only chance of remaining free, but that does not excuse the sheer joy the Stalkers take in a good hunt, or the pleasure they obviously receive from playing masters to their



captured slaves.

Organization

The female bard Werrik leads the Stalkers. As their best tracker, she can find an escaped slave's trail even after her hunters have lost it. While her fighting skills are formidable, her leadership is based more on her cunning and sense of vision. When the previous leader of their tribe could no longer provide for their needs, Werrik stepped forward with her ideas. As long as she continues to provide her brand of leadership—a leadership that has seen the tribe grow strong and prosper—Werrik's tribe will remain loyal and devoted to her cause.

While ideas and direction-setting visions do wonders as far as keeping the tribe motivated, the Stalkers still are, at heart, a tribe of ex-slave raiders. As such, the tribe's leader needs some muscle to keep the raiders in line. This is provided by Werrik's two lieutenants, Doorub and Bontar. Doorub, a huge half-giant, uses his great strength to enforce Werrik's orders and keep her safe. Bontar, a dwarf psionicist, serves as Werrik's chief advisor, using his particular gifts to judge the mood of the tribe, ferret out malcontents, and even subdue difficult prey who otherwise might be wounded or killed by the Stalkers.

Other ranking members of the tribe include the pen keeper and the hunt masters. The pen keeper's job is to guard and feed the captured slaves, making sure they stay relatively healthy until they reach market. The hunt masters conduct the hunts for escaped slaves and the searches for sources of new slaves. They take command of small hunting parties and break off from the main caravan to conduct their searches. These parties usually never include more than six hunters, for they must be fast and stealthy to accomplish their work.

While combat sometimes determines a member's position in the Stalkers, Werrik prefers to appoint ranks according to a person's abilities. A mul gladi-

ator could defeat one of her hunt masters in one-on-one combat, but could the gladiator track a fleeing slave across the Ringing Mountains? Probably not. But Werrik is careful to include military officers in her hierarchy so that the warrior classes remain happy. Even these ranks are determined by Werrik, who assigns them according to who she thinks will do a better job. As long as the Stalkers remain a specialized band of slave hunters, Werrik's system of advancement according to skills will be the rule.

Operations and Means of Existence

Werrik's Stalkers travel from villages to outposts in their caravan, bringing slaves to market or taking on contracts to locate and secure runaways. If business has been slow, the band even accepts cargo hauls, agreeing to move slaves from one location to another for a sizable fee.

With the frequency of escapes and deaths among the slave population, and with the demand for larger work forces in the cities, there is a constant need for new slaves. Through the inattention of negligent guards, unexpected distractions like erdlus stampedes, the efforts of raiding tribes, or through some trick of their own, slaves escape from bondage all the time. This leads to a deficit in the servile population, and thus in a shortage of able-bodied laborers. Add to the number of runaways all of the slaves who die of natural causes or because of the hardships of their duties, and suddenly the need for a constant supply of new slaves becomes clear. When you figure in the number of fresh slaves needed to keep up with the increasingly larger and more ambitious projects of the sorcerer-kings, it becomes easy to see why the efforts of the official slave suppliers must be supplemented by tribes like the Stalkers.

When the merchants cannot keep up with the demand, they turn to Werrik House and other freelance suppliers. The fact that Werrik and her band were once slaves does not matter to the merchants as long as they can provide lots of able bodies. If the slave merchants ever decided that the



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Stalkers were not doing everything they could to meet demand, then they would simply take what slaves they needed from the ranks of the Stalkers themselves. So it behooves the band to keep their pen well stocked.

One way the Stalkers stock their slave pen is by seizing people. When the Stalkers come across travelers or small settlements, they overpower as many of the people as they can. This is done either by outright force (if the Stalkers significantly outnumber their targets or obviously appear stronger), or by guile and cunning (if the target settlement is strong or well-defended). The band is careful not to kill too many of the targets, for the dead usually make poor slaves. Instead, they use nets and blunt weapons to entangle and knock their targets unconscious.

If they attack in force, the Stalkers take all of the people they can jam into their wheeled slave pen, as well as all of the plunder they can carry. Those who cannot be taken are left to go on with their lives. Werrick believes that if the Stalkers leave the remainder to rebuild, then they can return at a later date to find a fresh supply of potential slaves.

If they use guile and cunning, the Stalkers move the caravan away from the target settlement and send in a small strike force to find weaknesses they can exploit. The strike force might simply sneak into the settlement and open the gates for the rest of the band. Or they might slip in and taint water and food supplies to cause painful but short-lived illnesses. The Stalkers have even been known to approach a settlement openly, claiming to be traveling merchants. As most out-of-the-way settlements welcome merchant caravans for the news and goods they bring, this trick often gets the Stalkers past a settlement's most formidable defenses. After that, it is a relatively easy matter for them to round up as many people as they can haul away.

The procurement of slaves by raiding small villages and settlements provides the Stalkers with large numbers of stock. They also build inventory for a slave auction by capturing travelers they meet. Few

are more vulnerable than those who travel the wastes. Wandering tribes, merchant caravans, even other raiders can easily find themselves locked within the wheeled pen if they are not careful. Even heavily protected caravans can be taken while most of their members sleep. In fact, Werrick likes to take a camp while it sleeps, for she loses less stock that way. Even if they must kill the guards who are on watch, the Stalkers still have a crowd of sleepers for the pen.

Of course, Werrick never stocks her pen near the villages or outposts she wants to sell to. For example, it is much better to procure stock from around Balic if the Stalkers are planning to trade at the outposts near Raam and Draj. This greatly reduces the possibility of losing stock to angry relatives.

Another service the Stalkers provide to paying customers involves recovering runaway slaves. As long as the slaves are recent escapees and the Stalkers have no pressing business, Werrick will take on bounty contracts. Escaped muls make for the most lucrative contracts, but they are also the most dangerous targets to capture. She sends small bands to track and locate the runaways, then moves in with the full tribe to round them up. Werrick accepts bounty contracts only on slaves who have escaped within a week of the contract. Runaways who escaped more than 15 days (an Athas week) ago have either died or hooked up with a tribe. Either way, their trail is probably too cold and their recovery too difficult to make the contract worthwhile.

A final service provided by Werrick House is safe transport of slaves from one location to another. Usually, a merchant house outpost will hire Werrick's pen to move slaves to a temporary auction village. As Werrick and her band have experience handling slaves on long journeys, they are often trusted with this kind of job. Of course, it frees up a merchant's caravans and mercenaries for other trips, which also makes it an appealing arrangement.

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Origin

Werrick hated life as a slave. She much preferred her life before her bondage, when she roamed the uncivilized wilderness freely. Unfortunately, her roaming led her to an outpost that was in dire need of slave labor. She never even found out which city-state or merchant house sponsored the outpost. They simply arrested her and put her to work making mud bricks. Suddenly her freedom was gone, and Werrick's spirit darkened. After a few failed escape attempts and seemingly endless weeks of hard labor, Werrick lost the happy-go-lucky nature that had been so much a part of her character. She gave in to the hopelessness of her situation.

However, other events would coincide to change Werrick's life. One day the outpost was attacked by giants. When the surprise attack was over, Werrick's captors were either dead or scattered, and the slaves that remained alive were free. Hardly believing her good fortune, Werrick struck out into the desert. She

wanted to put as much distance between the shattered outpost and herself as quickly as possible.

Her dark mood never truly lightened, for Werrick continued to have nightmares of her time as a slave. She joined a slave tribe for the protection it offered, but soon became disillusioned with the tribe's leadership. The tribe was dying, for while the leader was the strongest fighter among them, he had no sense for leadership or planning. With the help of Doorub and Bontar, Werrick took command of the tribe and gave it new purpose. To stay free, she decided, they would have to make sure their former owners were content. As long as the owners had enough slaves to meet their needs and desires, then the members of Werrick's tribe would retain their freedom. The best way to assure this was to become a supplier of slaves.

It took time to train her band to become expert stalkers, and to build up enough wealth to outfit their caravan. The tribe came to call itself Werrick's Stalkers, though Werrick discourages this name. She



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prefers the more legitimate-sounding title of Werrick House, for it conjures visions of the grandest and most trustworthy merchant establishments in the Tyr region. Even with a lofty name and a mekillot-drawn slave pen, Werrick had to build her tribe's reputation a piece at a time.

Werrick House started as a band of bounty hunters, recovering escaped slaves for a fee. The merchant houses first saw the benefit in using Werrick's Stalkers. Many of the tribe's earliest and most lucrative contracts came from the merchants. When the leader of Jarko House suggested Werrick consider finding him new slaves for his gladiator training camps, her future course was determined. Now Werrick House is welcome in villages, outposts, and caravan camps for the services it provides. Sometimes Werrick even conducts her own auctions instead of selling slaves directly to slave merchants.

Location and Defenses

Werrick's Stalkers, or Werrick House, is a nomadic tribe. It has no permanent settlement to protect. It does have the caravan, however. The caravan consists of over 30 hunters, warriors, and slave tenders who work together to guard their precious cargo from desert scavengers. The central piece in the caravan is the great wheeled slave pen and the mekillot that pulls it. There are also more than a dozen kanks and few small wagons in the caravan.

The great slave pen is a long box with wheels. The fortified pen features armored sides and platforms that can hold defenders. On top of the pen sits a swivel crossbow nest. A single defender can simultaneously fire two braces of six crossbows each in a single volley, but he must then manually reload them before firing again. The pen itself is divided into three interior compartments: two large holding pens and a smaller pen that usually serves as a holding for captured runaways.

Werrick's band has become quite adept at defending their caravan. When attackers approach, a volley of crossbow bolts rains down upon them. Then,

if the attackers have been sufficiently weakened, the kank riders strike quickly. If not, the defenders all take their places on and around the great pen, using it for protection.

When the caravan stops to set up camp, tents are set up beside the pen. Guards are placed throughout the night, as well as ranging patrols that can provide advance warnings of danger. Werrick never wants to find herself or her people again on the wrong side of shackles and whips, and she knows how quickly a village can recant its hospitality.

The tribe operates throughout the Tyr region, making the circuit around the perimeter of the Sea of Silt from Balic to Draj and back again as often as they can. Sometimes they range far afield to find new sources of slaves, but mostly they stay within the area bounded by the Ringing Mountains to the west, the Sea of Silt to the east, Siren's Song to the south, and Yaramuke to the north.

Relations with Others

Werrick House maintains good relations with most of the merchant houses, as they all require a constant supply of slaves. House Jarko is a particularly close associate. Those merchants who run their own slave-gathering operations tolerate Werrick and her band, sometimes even purchasing from her stock when they have not acquired enough through their own efforts for a scheduled auction. If these slave gatherers wind up vying for the same catch as Werrick's band, the two groups try to come to an agreeable solution. If the merchant house gatherers outnumber Werrick's hunters, she graciously concedes the catch to them. If she has the upper hand, she negotiates a settlement. Even when dealing from a position of power, Werrick is careful not to create bad feelings with the merchant community.

The Stalkers trade freely with the client villages of Balic, Draj, and Nibenay. Their dealings with the client villages of Gulg and Raam are sporadic at best, and they only approach these areas after checking on the mood and climate of the templars



and nobles. Their transactions with Urik's outposts are the most lucrative of all. The outposts pay well for slaves to help meet the needs of the city-state. Urik needs more and more slaves to work the obsidian quarries since Tyr stopped producing iron. Without the tools made from Tyr's iron, Urik's quarry workers quickly become useless as the sharp rock slices their hands to ribbons.

The band stays away from the city-states themselves, for they would quickly be taken as slaves within the confines of the thick walls.

Finally, the independent settlements and the other slave tribes consider Werrick's Stalkers to be their mortal enemies. As long as the Stalkers continue to trade in intelligent flesh, they remain a threat to ex-slaves everywhere.

Joining the Tribe

New members do not come easily to Werrick's Stalkers. The tribe of slave traders accepts only ex-slaves into their ranks, but as most slaves who come to them wind up as merchandise within their holding pen, the line between potential members and potential profit often blurs. Still, Werrick desperately understands the need to keep her tribe vital and strong through the introduction of new members.

The Stalkers never consider the stock they capture from small settlements for membership. Nor do they accept offers from those who openly walk into their camp. More than likely, the ex-slave who wanders into their fire light (if he somehow makes it that far without finding a sharp bone dagger in his back) is unceremoniously dumped into the holding pen with the rest of the merchandise.

The candidates with the best shot at becoming part of Werrick's band are those who probably wanted nothing to do with them in the first place. When the Stalkers raid another slave tribe for new stock, Werrick and her chief lieutenants keep watch for those who want freedom at any cost. A Stalker must be willing to go against the usual practices of ex-slaves in order to keep his own freedom. For while

most other slave tribes treat ex-slaves with friendliness and offer them hospitality, a Stalker offers only the comfort of the great wheeled pen and a ride back to slavery.

Someone singled out as a possible candidate is offered a chance to join the Stalkers. If he accepts, the candidate undergoes a series of tests designed to measure his desire to be free, his loyalty to Werrick and the Stalkers, and his hunting and fighting skills.

One test that Werrick enjoys can mean immediate membership or immediate late failure, depending upon how the candidate responds. Without the candidate's knowledge that a test is being conducted, Werrick allows one of the candidate's fellow slaves to escape. This escape occurs while the candidate is on guard duty, and the escapee is usually whichever slave the candidate seemed closest to before he was offered membership. If the candidate takes the escapee back to the pen, he is awarded membership. If he lets the escapee go free, both he and the runaway are returned to the pen.

Werrick never off membership trials to the run-aways she has been contracted to find. To do so would be a breach of her agreement with the contractor, and as such would be considered bad business.

Once a candidate passes all of the tests or otherwise impresses the Stalkers, he is awarded full membership in the tribe. He receives his first piece of mekillot armor (usually an arm or leg pad) and is allowed to shave his head in tribal fashion. From then on, he is marked as a member of Werrick House and receives all of the benefits and responsibilities that go along with the position.

Important Tribe Members

Werrick

Human Bard, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 2 (mekillot hide)
Movement 12

Str 19
Dex 19



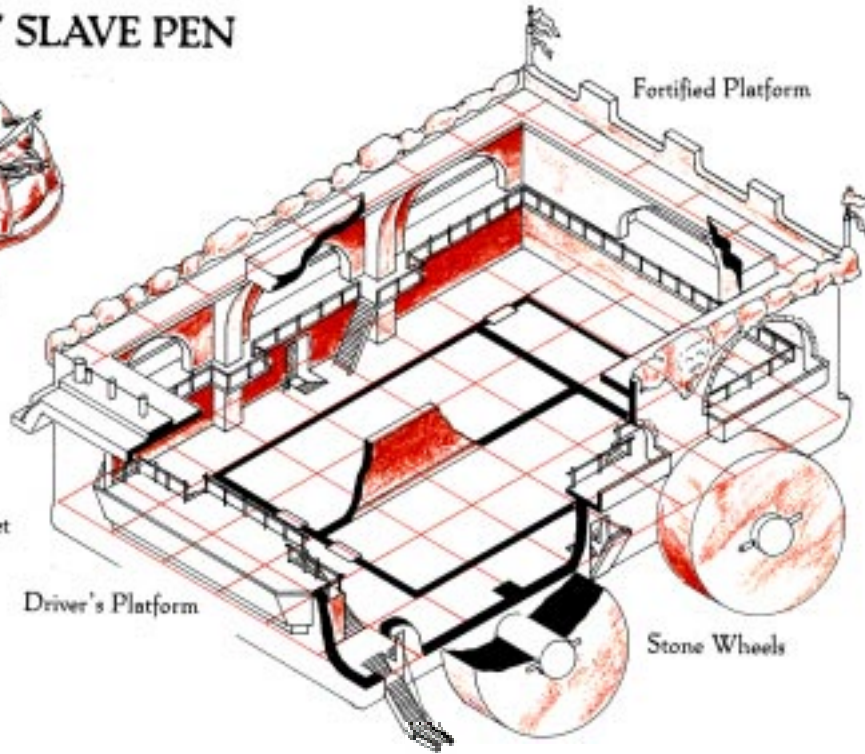
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THE GREAT SLAVE PEN



Swivel Crossbow Nest

Scale: 1 square = 5 feet



Level 7	Con 15
Hit Points 35	Int 17
THAC0 11	Wis 20
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 16

Damage/Attack: 1d10+7 (iron two-handed sword)

Werrick's view of the world has changed since she first became a bard. Then she was free, and the dark experience of slavery was in her future. Before her time as a slave, she saw the world as a wondrous place, and she knew that her role was to be a protector of good. After she was forced into bondage and made to work for cruel, evil owners, her views changed. They became as dark as the cage she found herself in, and her understanding of good also changed. When she finally won her freedom, she swore that she would never let it be taken from her again. To that end, Werrick has become a protector of her band and only her band. The Stalkers are

now her definition of good, and everything not of the Stalkers is evil—especially slavery.

To keep, her freedom, Werrick has turned her tribe of ex-slaves into slave hunters and traders. By working with the evil and feeding it, she hopes to keep it away from her and her band. Of course, every day that she continues down this path leads her closer to the darkness she fears. Even now, her alignment swings farther and farther along the path of evil.

Werrick has no plans to change her methods, for they have kept her tribe safe and helped it to prosper. Her leadership abilities remain strong and she commands the respect and admiration of her band. But late at night when the nightmares come, more and more often the dreams of confinement give way to darker, fouler dreams. So far, she has been able to put these aside when the sun rises, but how much longer she can continue to do so remains to be seen.

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Bontar

Dwarf Psionicist, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 8 (leather)	Str 16
Movement 6	Dex 13
Level 7	Con 17
Hit Points 40	Int 18
THAC0 17	Wis 19
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 9

Damage/Attack: 1d6 (stone hand axe, -2 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 131; Disciplines—Psycho kinesis, Psychometabolism, Telepathy; Sciences—Disintegrate, Death Field, Life Draining, Probe; Devotions—Ballistic Attack, Control Body, Control Flames, Control Sound, Body Control, Body Weaponry, Enhanced Strength, Flesh Armor, Heightened Senses, Awe, Inflict Pain, Send Thoughts; Defense Modes—Mind Blank, Thought Shield, Mental Barrier, Intellect Fortress

The dwarf Bontar helped Werrick assume leadership of the tribe that was to become Werrick's Stalkers. He once served as a slave in a Gulg labor camp, gathering food from the forest to satisfy the city's needs. He was a wild talent then, with a few impressive psionic powers at his command but without the experience to use them. So he kept his ability a secret and did the jobs that were assigned to him. When the day came to escape (thanks to a passing herd of erdlus), Bontar went in search of a true psionicist to teach him what he desperately needed to learn.

It took almost a year of wandering before he finally heard of a master psionicist living in the wilderness. It took most of another year to track him down. When he finally reached the ruins where the psionicist lived, he found the ancient human waiting for him. Wary but full of an unbridled excitement, Bontar placed himself into a new kind of bondage,

this time as student to the ancient teacher. The master psionicist taught as fast as Bontar could learn, and when the old man died a few short years later, the dwarf was ready to be on his own again.

He joined up with a tribe of ex-slaves out of necessity sometime later, but soon grew frustrated with the band's ineffectual leader. When the bard named Werrick proposed a different solution to the tribe's problems, Bontar helped her "retire" the current leader. He has served as her chief advisor and second in command since that time.

Bontar is a quiet, brooding sort. He studies problems from all angles before offering advice. While Werrick sometimes becomes frustrated with his slow responses, she values his carefully formulated opinions. The dwarf believes that there is poetic justice in the fact that he and his fellow slaves are using the system to protect themselves. He does not even care that they have betrayed other slaves, as long as he can remain free to practice his psionic techniques. The dwarf has long-range plans for the Stalkers, and Werrick fits into them for as long as she remains an effective leader and does not have a change of heart concerning their methods of operation. He knows of the dark memories that motivate her. This knowledge makes it extremely easy to influence her.

Doorub

Half-Giant Fighter, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 8 (mekillot)	Str 19
Movement 15	Dex 14
Level 5	Con 17
Hit Points 54	Int 9
THAC0 13	Wis 8
No. of Attacks 1	Cha 9

Damage/Attack: 1d6+7 (stone club)

Doorub is a half-giant who took an immediate liking to the bard Werrick when she first joined the tribe. When she said she had a better way to run



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things, Doorub decided to help her. Now he enforces her orders and keeps her safe. No matter where he is in their caravan or camp, he always has at least one eye on his leader.

The half-giant is huge, among his own kind. His legendary strength makes him a formidable fighter, and his steadfast devotion to Werrick makes him a perfect bodyguard. He does not care for the brooding dwarf, and he does not understand why Werrick tolerates his behavior. As long as she does, however, Doorub will curb his natural tendencies and simply wait for Bontar to make the wrong move. Then he will flatten the little dwarf.

Doorub trusts Werrick completely. He knows that Werrick would never lead him or the Stalkers astray. Perhaps this blind faith that Doorub has in Werrick relates to his treatment as a slave. He was worked nearly to death in Urik's quarries and still bears the scars to prove it. When he joined the tribe, things did not get much better. The leader berated Doorub at every opportunity, making him the butt of jokes and cruel tricks. When Werrick joined the tribe, she showed Doorub kindness. They became friends. She was the first friend the half-giant can ever remember having. Friendship, he believes, like freedom, is too valuable to let slip away now that he understands its worth.

Sortar's Army

Some ex-slaves feel they are at war with the city-states, conducting small raids in hopes of someday winning a major battle. Few have such grand visions as to believe they can seriously cripple the city-states, but they take satisfaction in each minor wound they inflict. Most of these see each raid as a small pay-back for the years they spent in thrall to the sorcerer-kings. One tribe takes this idea of war to a more literal level, actually seeing its purpose as one of waging war against the city-states. This tribe calls itself Sortar's Army, and it operates along the caravan trails from out of the mountains around Altaruk.

Organized along strict military lines, Sortar's Army is a ruthless, battle-crazed band of raiders. Fierce and destructive, Sortar's warriors sweep across the desert like a wild wind, ripping their intended targets apart with all the rage and ferociousness of a sudden sand storm. For all of their fierceness and berserk tendencies, this tribe directs its anger and aggression at the city-states and the caravans carrying goods between them. They tend to leave other villages and small parties of travelers alone, unless these groups do something to incur Sortar's wrath.

Each member of this tribe bears tattoos that mark him as part of Sortar's Army. These tattoos cover the face of each member, cutting dark diagonal slashes from forehead to neck. In addition, each member wears a shard of obsidian on his left ear.

The tribe consists of over 70 members. They travel the caravan trails atop fast-moving kanks, waiting for city-state wagons. When they find a caravan, they attack quickly and with little regard for their own safety. Stories abound of Sortar's Army taking on larger, better armed opponents-and winning.

To other slaves, much of Sortar's excessive violence can be forgiven, for it is directed at the city-states and others who keep slaves. The tribe is one step removed from the vile evil of the Black Sand Raiders, and often the atrocities attributed to one were done by the other. The big difference is that the Raiders attack everyone with wild abandon, while Sortar's Army is engaged in a war against the city-states. Of course, as in any war, innocents suffer along with the enemy, but Sortar does not go out of his way to slice up slave villages or to kill lone travelers for the amusement of his band.

Organization

Sortar, a human fighter, serves as leader and warlord of the tribe. His leadership is based upon his deadly combat skills and the vision he has brought to his followers. He promises them the wealth of the sorcerer-kings and the blood of the owners. So far,

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he has made good on these promises. He gained his skill working as a soldier slave in Balic, fighting against raiding giants out of the Forked Tongue Estuary.

As warlord of the tribe, Sortar has a grim determination akin to a dwarf's focus. He sees his purpose in life as being the great enemy of the city-states, and he has instilled this purpose in his followers. The tribe does not raid to survive (though that is how it gains the supplies it needs to continue its war); it raids to strike back at the masters who once imprisoned them in the shackles of slavery.

Two of Sortar's chief lieutenants are a half-elf called Derrim and a mul called Porgo. Derrim serves as Sortar's second in command and is never far from the warlord's side. Porgo commands the scouting parties that search for caravans or other potential targets. Once a target is identified, part of the scouting party remains near it to track its course, while another part goes to gather the tribe.

An ex-templar from Nibenay serves as one of Sortar's main advisors, even sitting in on councils of war. A number of wizards also work with the tribe. All of these wizards are preservers; the power they provide often means the difference between victory and defeat for Sortar's Army.

By its very nature, the tribe is a warlike, barbaric lot. Battles settle every argument. Surprisingly, though, few of these battles are to the death. Sortar provides enough outlets for the shedding of blood with his constant state of war that the tribe members are content to settle their own differences in wrestling and brawls rather than with the sharp point of a sword. Even positions within the tribe are determined through contests of strength and skill, though Sortar has been known to overturn the outcomes of some battles to promote those he feels will do a better job.

Operations and Means of Existence

Sortar and his band wage war against the city-states of Athas that perpetuate the practice of slav-

ery. They do this by attacking and plundering the caravans that travel the roads between the city-states. Sortar believes that everything within a city-state caravan was bought or built with the sweat and blood of slaves. As such, it is only right that Sortar and his army of ex-slaves be the ones to liberate those goods from the clutches of the templars and nobles, who only exist to grow fat on the labor and pain of the enthralled masses.

The tribe constantly has small scouting units ranging along the known caravan trails. Their job is to find a suitable target, determine that it is in fact a caravan bound for or coming from one of the city-states, then send messengers to gather the rest of the tribe. A few scouts remain to follow the caravan and to direct the rest of the tribe to it when they arrive.

The warriors of Sortar's Army ride swift-moving kanks. It falls to the scouts who selected a target to determine its strength and defenses and to come up with a plan of battle. These plans are usually simple affairs based upon the territory the caravan is riding through and the number of guards protecting it. If ambush sites are available, Sortar's Army makes use of cover and strikes when the caravan is least expecting it. If the caravan rides through open desert, the tribal warriors use a surround-and-charge tactic that cuts off escape and enables the full strength of their army to be brought to bear.

If the caravan carries slaves, Sortar's tribe attempts to set them free. Otherwise, they leave no survivors to tell of their battle prowess. The tribe is careful not to attack travelers who do not carry the spoils of nobles or templars with them. They have no wish to kill innocent ex-slaves, duped freemen, or villagers from settlements that do not practice slavery. They are quick to slaughter nobles and templars when they find them, however.

Sortar's Army operates throughout the Tyr region, though it concentrates its efforts around the central Tablelands. Besides attacking city-state caravans, the tribe has been known to sweep down upon city-state client villages and outposts, and it



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has even made minor raids into the forest surrounding Gulg and Nibenay. It does not limit its targets to only the weak. Sortar's Army has been known to take on heavily guarded caravans and well-fortified client villages, using a combination of surprise, lightning-like strikes, and magic to gain the upper hand.

Everything the tribe needs to survive comes from the caravans it raids. However, this is only a secondary benefit for the tribe. Its main purpose is to strike out in any way that will hurt the templars and nobles. If the tribe also gains food, water, and supplies as a result of its efforts, so much the better.

Make no mistake—Sortar's Army is a blood-thirsty band of berserkers. However, they direct most of their deadly impulses toward the agents of the city-states, which makes them much less of a menace to the other slave tribes of the Tablelands than the Black Sand Raiders.

Origin

Sortar grew up as a slave in Balic, enduring the same hardships as other slaves. He suffered ritual beatings, was forced to work until he collapsed from exhaustion, and put up with every humiliation a master may visit upon a slave. This was the life he was born to, and he knew no other.

In Balic, every freeman and slave must spend time in the militia. The militia helps the regular army patrol the mud flats around Balic, watching for signs of approaching giants who regularly raid the area. When Sortar's turn came to join the militia, he discovered his love of battle. Sortar had a knack for combat and took to his training well. Even his commanding officer was impressed, and when the slave's shift in the militia came to an end, he was reassigned to the standing slave army.

As a soldier slave, Sortar learned everything his masters would teach him. He learned unarmed combat. He learned to fight with a variety of weapons. And he learned strategy and concepts of waging war that few other slaves could ever imagine on

their own. One of his teachers, a templar called Gebiz, took a particular fancy to the young slave. This is not to say he liked Sortar or treated him well. What he did do was fill the youth's head with tales of long-past wars and his own theories on how to destroy the other city-states. The templar loved to talk, and Sortar obliged him by listening. And by learning.

One day Gebiz told Sortar about a slave revolt in one of Balic's client villages. He described the bloody coup in graphic detail, for he knew the young slave appreciated such things. What he did not know was that this story would stay with Sortar for the rest of his life. In the story, Gebiz described how the foolish slaves tried to overpower the templar overseers so that they could escape into the wilderness. A few templars fell before the savage attack, but in the end the slaves died for their trouble. Sortar did not see these slaves as foolhardy, though. He saw them as brave, and he decided that someday he would avenge their deaths by striking back at the templars and nobles who enslaved them. Perhaps, he thought, he could even find a way to hurt the sorcerer-kings.

Of all his duties as a soldier slave, Sortar most loved the patrols into the mud flats. He was developing a lust for battle, and whenever a giant happened ashore he rushed to engage it in combat. Soon he was among the best warriors Balic could field, and Gebiz took credit for the youth's development. On one patrol, Sortar saw his opportunity to escape. The patrol was surprised by a gang of giants coming out of a silt-filled channel. As the patrol moved to engage the giants, Sortar buried his sword in the templar's back. Gebiz, his eyes wide with surprise, died before he could cast a single spell. Sortar left the rest of his companions to their battle as he struck out for the west.

His time alone in the desert helped Sortar formulate his plans for the future. He knew that when he killed the templar, he had declared war upon the city-states. All he needed now was an army to wage



that war with. He joined up with a tribe of slaves that made a living by raiding travelers approaching Grak's Pool. Within a matter of weeks, he was ready to challenge the half-elf leader for command of the tribe. Sortar's superior fighting prowess easily won him the job of tribe leader. With that victory was born the tribe that would one day become Sortar's Army.

The first order of business for the new leader was to stabilize his tribe and make it prosper. This was done by engaging in a series of daring raids that netted big profit with little loss of life. Then he began to outline his ideas for waging war against their former masters, inflaming his followers with visions of templar and noble blood. More members were added to the tribe, and a secure location for their base of operations was found in the mountains around Altaruk.

Location and Defenses

Sortar's Army makes its camp in the mountains around Altaruk. The craggy mountain peaks serve as the camp's first line of defense. The trails up the mountain can be treacherous on their own, but the tribe has added pit falls, rock slides, and other obstacles to discourage visitors. Within the shattered crater of one of the mountain tops, the tribe's home is an island surrounded by a pool of bubbling lava. Because of the protection offered by the crater and the lava pool, the tribe has not erected walls or permanent buildings. The tribe uses huge tents for shelter. Each tent houses over a dozen warriors, depending on its size. The largest tents can comfortably shelter as many as 40 tribe members.

A series of stone bridges connects the island to the crater wall. The innermost bridge can be pulled onto the island to cut off access from the far side of the lava pool. This is done as a defensive measure, and only as a last resort, for the ex-slaves do not relish being





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trapped in the middle of the bubbling lava.

To prevent such dire measures from being taken, the tribe maintains constant patrols in the surrounding mountains. If any sign of danger shows itself, the tribe is mobilized for battle. The warriors know all of the passages leading up to their island home, and they can sweep down the narrow passages quickly to engage and encircle any threat.

The passages nearest the top of the lava crater are further protected by two catapults. Aimed down the narrow approaches, these weapons can rain rocks and rubble upon enemy forces, crushing them before they can bring large numbers to bear in the confined, canyon-like trails.

Sortar's Camp

Map Key

The following key describes the map of Sortar's camp.

1. Crater Wall: The top of a mountain, shattered by an ancient volcanic explosion, serves as the hidden location of Sortar's camp. The crater wall hides what lies within from the eyes of those passing below. It also makes a perfect position for scouts and lookouts from the tribe.

2. Lava Pool: This bubbling pool of lava surrounds an island of solid rock. The tribe makes its camp on the island.

3. Stone Bridge: A series of stone bridges leads from the island to the crater wall. The bridge closest to the island can be pulled in to cut off access in times of dire emergency.

4. Sortar's Tent: The largest tent on the island houses Sortar, his chief advisors, and his personal troop of warriors. Important meetings are held within this tent, as well as joyous celebrations and councils of war.

5. Warrior's Tent: This tent shelters over 20 of Sortar's more experienced warriors.

6. Porgo's Tent: Porgo and his scouts call this tent home. The mul and 15 of his best scouts share this shelter, when they are not out looking for a target to raid.

7. Warrior's Tent: This tent shelters nearly 20 of the tribe's soldiers.

8. Warrior's Tent: This tent shelters nearly 20 of the tribe's soldiers.

9. Supply Tent: Supplies taken in raids are stored in these small tents.

Relations with Others

Sortar's Army treats everyone associated with city-states as its enemies. This includes templars, nobles, client villages, outposts, and even merchants who sell to the city-states. These folk suffer swift and violent attacks if they cross the tribe's path.

The tribe has an uneasy truce with the village of Altaruk. Though the village is a regular stop for caravans coming from and going to the city-states, its connection with the Veiled Alliance makes it a sometime friend to slaves. Though the tribe has not attacked the village itself, it does often prey upon the caravans approaching and leaving the village's heavily fortified walls.

Sortar's Army also has an understanding with the mercenaries guarding Grab's Pool. As long as the tribe is allowed to use the facilities (which they readily pay for) it leaves the mud-brick fortress in peace.

Other slave tribes, villages, and travelers are usually safe from Sortar's wrath, unless they somehow reveal themselves as agents of the city-states. The two exceptions to this are the Black Sand Raiders and Weriik's Stalkers. Sortar considers Weriik and her band to be as bad or worse than the templars

The Slave Tribes



and nobles, and he has declared the slavers to be his tribe's mortal enemies. Sortar has sworn to destroy any member of Werrik's band who ever crosses his path. As for the Black Sand Raiders, Sortar sees them as dangerous thieves and murderers who kill indiscriminately. He does not mind when they destroy those connected with the city-states, but he does take exception to their preying on other slaves.

Joining the Tribe

Sortar needs a large army to eventually take his war directly to the sorcerer-kings. More than likely, he will never be able to field an army large enough or powerful enough to march on a city-state. That does not stop him from trying, however.

Whenever the tribe comes across captive slaves, the first priority is to free them. Freed slaves are immediately given the option to join Sortar's Army. If they agree, they must undergo a few tests of battle skill and loyalty. If they refuse, they are given what-

ever supplies the tribe can spare and sent on their way. Those who agree to the tests either become full members of the tribe or die trying.

All of Sortar's tests are geared toward determining if an ex-slave is worthy and skilled enough to join his growing army. The tests are difficult and dangerous, often involving battling desert creatures, attempting risky quests, or even pitting combat skills against his chief lieutenants.

Important Tribe Members

Sortar

Human Fighter, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 4 (mekillot hide)

Movement 12

Level 10

Hit Points 84

THAC0 8

No. of Attacks 3/2

Str 20

Dex 16

Con 16

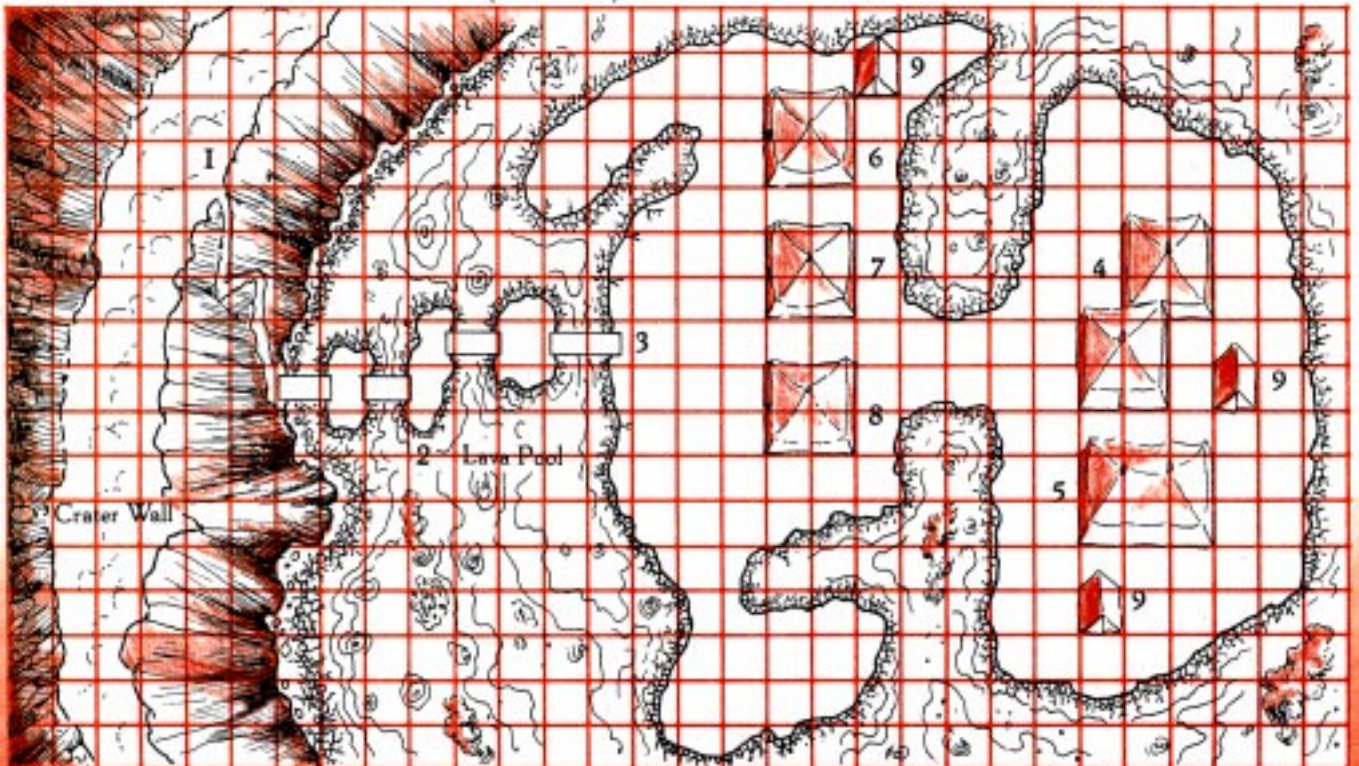
Int 15

Wis 13

Cha 14

SORTAR'S CAMP

Scale: 1 square = 10 feet





The Slave Tribes

Damage/Attack: 1d10+7 (bone long sword, -1 to attack roll)

Sortar was born a slave in the city-state of Balic. His knack for combat techniques earned him a place as a soldier slave, and it was during this period of his life that he came to understand the mission he was destined to undertake. Tales of slave revolts in the client villages inspired him to eventually seek his own freedom. Shortly thereafter, he began gathering a tribe of followers to serve as his army against the city-states.

Some call Sortar's quest a fool's dream—but they do not call it that when he is close enough to hear. The huge and powerfully built human has dedicated himself and his tribe to a war they cannot hope to win. Sortar's Army has made its main course of action to battle and destroy whatever belongs to the templars and nobles. This includes caravans, client villages, and outposts across the Tyr region.

The warlord has become very close to the ex-templar named Caletta. Some say they are even in love- or at least that he is. But while he has become very fond of her and even loves her in his own way, there is little room in his life for a true commitment, other than the one he has already made to his private little war.

Sortar is obsessed with his war. His love for combat and his hatred of the templars and nobles have combined to drive him to attempt reckless, heroic, and often crazy feats that no sane man would try. As a result, he is respected and loved by his followers, and a little feared.

Derrim
Half-Elf Ranger, Chaotic Good

Armor Class 4 (carru leather)	Str 16
Movement 12	Dex 18
Level 7	Con 14
Hit Points 38	Int 16

THAC0 14

No. of Attacks 3/2

Wis 18

Cha 16

Damage/Attack: 1d8 (obsidian bastard sword, -2 to attack roll)

Psionic Summary: PSP 56; Wild Talent-Control Light (PS Int; Cost-12 + 4/round)

Derrim joined the tribe shortly after Sortar became leader. He liked the idea of waging war against their former masters, even if he takes a more realistic view of their chances than does Sortar. Derrim believes that they have little chance of doing anything more than bloodying the figurative noses of the city-states, but he is more than willing to contribute his share to the war effort.

The half-elf ranger never actually served time as a slave, though he was captured by slavers and bound for the markets of Urik when Sortar and his tribe set him free. He was attracted to Sortar's ideals, even though he was less-than-enamored of his methods. He quickly worked his way into a chief lieutenant spot in the tribe. Now he sees his post as a voice of reason and moderation to stem Sortar's more violent tendencies.

The half-elf uses his ranger skills to best advantage, finding water for the tribe, tracking caravans, and doing a host of other tasks. He also serves as one of Sortar's chief advisors, rarely leaving the leader's side for more than a few days at a time. He does not get along with the mul, Porgo, for the gladiator wants Sortar to give in to the tendencies Derrim tries to control. He also has little trust for the ex-templar from Nibenay, but he attributes that more to her past position than to her recent actions.

Derrim stands slightly shorter than six feet, has a slim but muscular build, and has a wild mane of light brown hair. He wields an obsidian bastard sword and wears a suit of carru leather armor.

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Porgo

Mul Gladiator, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 2 (mekillot hide)	Str 13
Movement 12	Dex 13
Level 8	Con 20
Hit Points 70	Int 14
THAC0 13	Wis 14
No. of Attacks 3/2	Cha 10

Damage/Attack: 1d8+6 (stone battle axe, -2 to attack roll)

Porgo was a member of the tribe that eventually became Sortar's Army. He was present when Sortar joined the tribe, and he witnessed the ridiculously short battle in which Sortar took over leadership. He decided that any human who could fight that well deserved a chance to be leader, and he has served as one of Sortar's chief lieutenants and advisors ever since.

The mul once fought in the arena of Tyr, back before the sorcerer-king was killed and the city fell into chaos. He found freedom as many slaves do—strictly by luck and accident. His early days of freedom taught him that gladiatorial skills and strength of arms would get him only so far in the harsh wilderness of Athas. When the mul finally joined up with a tribe of ex-slaves, he sought out anyone with knowledge of survival and wilderness skills. His obsession with learning these skills turned Porgo into not only a better warrior, but a true scout.

The mul operates as commander of the scouting patrols. His scouts seek out targets to raid and then lead the tribe straight to them. Porgo's combat experience also enables him to size up each opponent, spot strengths and weaknesses, and determine the best method of attack. In many cases, Sortar turns command of the warriors over to Porgo so that he may best implement his tactics.

One thing Porgo learned as a gladiator was how to kill. He even developed a taste for shedding blood

that he now satisfies by killing templars, nobles, and their agents. He does not get along with Derrim, for the half-elf ranger tries to curb the mul's desire to kill and destroy. Porgo feels the half-elf doesn't understand that the only way to win Sortar's war is to kill the owners before they can kill you.

Caletta

Human Fighter, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 5 (carru leather)	Str 15
Movement 12	Dex 17
Level 7	Con 15
Hit Points 52	Int 17
THAC0 14	Wis 16
No. of Attacks 3/2	Cha 18

Damage/Attack: 2d4 (gythka)

Psionic Summary: PSP 36; Wild Talent-Inflict Pain (PS Con -4; Cost-Contact + 2/round)

Caletta was once one of Nibenay's templars. She served her master well in his walled sub-city, even submitting to his occasional carnal desires. Her love of evil was surpassed only by her love of power; serving Nibenay provided her with plenty of power and the opportunity to use it for evil. She reveled in physical power, commanding large numbers of lesser templars and slaves. She also reveled in priestly power, using all of the energy that Nibenay provided with wild abandon. She thought her course in life was set, but then everything changed.

A minor misunderstanding (at least from Caletta's point of view) led to a major mistake as far as the sorcerer-king was concerned. Caletta's slaves brought back only a dozen agafari trees from the Crescent Forest instead of the score Nibenay had demanded. For their mistake, the entire slave work detail was slain. Calette, as the templar overseer in charge of the detail, suffered a worse fate. She was stripped of her templar powers and station, then as-



The Slave Tribes

signed to another work detail bound for the forest. She was made a slave.

Caletta learned to hate the sorcerer-king and her sister templars over the two years she spent as a slave. Every day she toiled in the forest, cutting down trees and hauling wood. Every night she returned to the city-state where a crowded slave pen and a barely life-sustaining meal waited for her. She contemplated ways to get back at them all, but every dream ended when the gate on the pen slammed shut behind her.

One day while laboring in the forest, an opportunity for escape presented itself. Caletta took it greedily. Her chance to leave slavery behind came when a thri-kreen hunting pack appeared in the forest. The mantis warriors decided to prey upon the slaves and their templar guards. In the heat of battle, Caletta ran. The only thing she took with her (besides the clothes on her back) was a gythka from a fallen thri-kreen. She has used the polearm with the wicked blades as her personal weapon ever since, in tribute to the thri-kreen who inadvertently helped her gain freedom.

In the wilderness, the combat training she received in her first years as a templar came back to serve her. Without clerical magic to aid her, she had to rely on her own combat skills to protect her. While survival was her major concern, Caletta allowed the dreams of revenge against Nibenay and his templars to once again occupy her thoughts. She would later find realization of these dreams—at least in some small part—as a member of Sortar's Army.

Caletta's one-time status as a templar made it hard for her to find a place outside of the city-states, but she knew that the only place for her within the walls of civilization was in the slave pens—or worse. When she thought all of her options were used up, Caletta met Sortar's tribe. It was by the grace of the powerful warlord that Caletta found acceptance in the tribe. Now the two are lovers, at least in the physical sense, though many say she is simply using Sortar's feelings to achieve her own ends. To some

extent that is true, but she also feels a special bond to the man that goes beyond her personal schemes—and that bothers her.

Gammeg

Human Preserver, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class	10	Str	16
Movement	6	Dex	14
Level	3	Con	18
Hit Points	40	Int	22
THAC0	18	Wis	17
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	11

Damage/Attack: 1d6+1 (quarterstaff)

Gammeg is one of four preservers currently working with Sortar's slave tribe. Like others of his ilk, Gammeg uses magic in concert with the environment. He came to the tribe in order to use his magic freely and to find a place and a people to call his own. Though the tribe treats him and the other mages with some suspicion, they have also come to accept the preservers and even appreciate the help they provide during combat.

Gammeg learned magic as an apprentice to a member of the Veiled Alliance in the city-state of Gulg. He knew it was illegal to practice magic in the city-states, but Gammeg didn't care. He found happiness in magic that he could not find in life, for Gammeg was a slave. He toiled in the forest outside the city, gathering wild fruits and nuts for the benefit of the oba, Gulg's sorcerer queen. On certain days, when conditions were right and he wasn't under close observation, Gammeg's contact materialized out of the forest to conduct brief lessons. This went on for a number of years, but progress under these conditions was painfully slow.

The day finally came when Gammeg could stand it no longer. He petitioned his contact to help him escape so that he could learn more about the preserver's art. Surprisingly, the contact agreed. It took



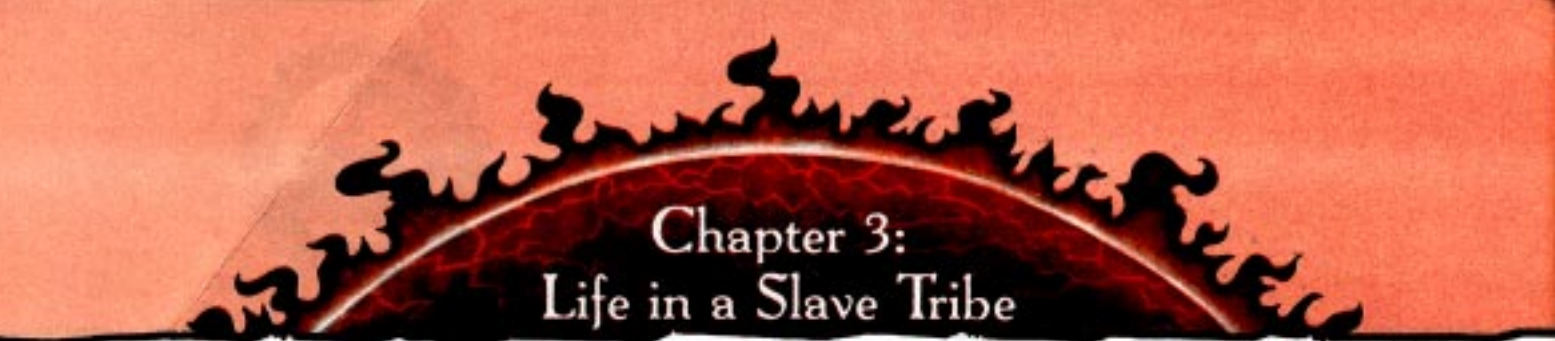
many more weeks before the contact proclaimed it was time. Then, almost without warning, the preserver who had been teaching him cast spells that confused the other slaves and distracted the guards and templar overseers. Gammeg was never sure, but he thought his contact must have had unseen help from elsewhere in the forest. Before he could change his mind or even gape at the spectacular display of magic, the preserver led Gammeg out of the forest and away from Gulg.

He was taken to Altaruk, where another powerful wizard continued his training. During this time, Gammeg learned about magic and how to use it without harming the environment, and he learned about the Veiled Alliance. He also heard of a slave tribe called Sortar's Army that was operating out of the nearby mountains. Gammeg was told that when he was ready, he would be sent to join that tribe, for the Alliance was interested in its leader and the activities he involved his tribe in.

To join the tribe, Gammeg first had to come before them as a slave—something he hadn't been for many years. He reluctantly allowed himself to be captured by a slaver caravan on its way from Altaruk to Gulg for a slave auction. He hoped he had learned enough to set himself free if Sortar's Army didn't do it for him, for he had no intention of returning to his old city-state in the back of a slave wagon. A day out from Altaruk, a band of raiders attacked the caravan. True to the stories Gammeg had heard, the raiders freed the slaves and offered invitations to any who wanted to join their benefactors. The tattoos on their faces marked them as part of Sortar's Army, and Gammeg readily agreed.

To this day, the preserver has never admitted his connection to the Veiled Alliance to Sortar or even to the other mages. In fact, he has had precious little contact with the Alliance since joining the slave tribe. Someday he may be approached with orders to invite Sortar to merge his forces with the Alliance. He feels that such a day would be to both parties' benefit.





Chapter 3: Life in a Slave Tribe

What is life like in the slave tribes? Before I answer that question, I must tell you what life is like for slaves. As a slave, your life is not your own. You serve a master, and he may command you as he chooses. What you do from one moment to the next is dictated by your owner. He tells you what duties to perform and how to perform them. He provides you with shelter and sustenance, as much or as little of each as he sees fit to make available. Whether he is a good master or a bad one, whether he treats you as a near-equal or as near-worthless property, your life is not your own. As a slave, the choices of life have been taken from you, leaving you with nothing but the solid walls of your imprisonment to define your world.

Some races and certain individuals cannot survive without choices. The walls of slavery crush them with a weight born of limits and commands. Half-lings, for example, quickly wither and die when placed in bondage, and elves show signs of great distress, which manifests itself as a kind of madness. There are those who survive slavery, and some who even find a level of contentment, but no slave truly thrives.

Is it any wonder then that what lies beyond the walls of their imprisonment catches hold of slaves' imaginations and will not let go? They place their heads against the walls and listen for barely perceptible sounds, catching bits of noise they cannot identify. The noise has an untamed quality to it that reminds them of open spaces and clear skies. They search for cracks and sniff at the cool, blowing breeze. And if these slaves are lucky, they can place their mind's eye to a crack and glimpse a sight to make their spirits soar. They can see freedom beyond the walls of their slavery, brief visions that their imaginations expand to fill the emptiness within them. Whatever waits for them beyond the walls—whether it be hunger or thirst or slow death—they will gladly accept it as the price of the freedom they long for.

Now ask me your question again. What is life like

in the slave tribes? Compared to life in the slave pens, it is glorious!

The Unspoken Agreement

When an escaped slave finds sanctuary as a member of a slave tribe, he enters into an unspoken but fully understood agreement with that tribe. For his part, the ex-slave agrees to limit his newfound freedom for the benefit of the entire tribe. Complete freedom would result in unrestrained chaos, and the tribe needs at least a modicum of order to survive. This limit implies that the ex-slave will work in cooperation with the rest of the tribe to secure shelter and supplies, and to do a fair share of the required work (whatever that work happens to be). In exchange for these limiting factors, the tribe promises to provide protection, companionship, and a meaningful existence for the ex-slave. A meaningful existence usually requires that the ex-slave goes on enough raids to keep the tribe fed and clothed.

In most cases, this agreement loosely binds a host of separate individuals for mutual defense and self-interest. In a few cases, it weaves the individuals into a cohesive unit headed by a strong leader. These units eventually reach maturity as a settlement or village, organized along either a democratic or totalitarian model of society, depending on the outlook of the strong leader.

An Ex-Slave Without a Tribe

Never have you been so alone! This day started as the last one ended. You are cold, hungry, thirsty, and frightened. All you own are the rags that covered you when you escaped and a makeshift weapon that makes you feel better but serves very little practical purpose. Soon it will become hot, as the sun rises higher into the morning sky, it will become hot. Then your thirst will become worse, and you might actually find yourself cursing this freedom you so desperately longed for.



What knowledge you possess concerns the duties you had as a slave, and few of these are useful in the wild. You need to know how to find food and water, but that was not a skill taught to slaves, so you go hungry. Of course, desperation provides the inspiration to accomplish much toward prolonging your survival, as long as you do not allow it to turn to panic. You could hunt, but you have no idea which animals are good to eat or even where to find them. Perhaps as you wander something will run across your path. If you get lucky, it might be small enough and slow enough for you to kill by yourself. If not, you will spend another night in hunger.

Thirst is worse, though, for the dryness burns your throat and leaves your mouth raw. You need to find water, but have no idea which way to go. The masters never taught you to track or live off the land. They taught you precious little, but at least there was usually food and water waiting for you at the end of a hard day. Your mind wanders, conjuring images of the slave pens that were once your home. At least they gave you food and water and a place to rest after a long day of labor.

No! Push such thoughts from your mind! Whether you live or die now, at least you will do so as a free man. But how much better it would be to live!

The day drags on. You find a pool of stagnant water and drink deeply. Nothing so foul ever tasted so sweet! You still need to find food, but at least your thirst has been quenched for a time. You wish there was someone to talk to. You are so lonely. But if you do meet someone, would they be friendly? Perhaps, but perhaps not. No, on second thought it might be better to remain lonely. You are virtually defenseless, and anyone you meet could be an agent of the masters. Or worse, they could be raiders who revel in causing pain and death. Caution must be your company, you decide, caution and fear.

When the sun begins to set, you find a narrow crack in the side of a rocky hill. You settle down without blanket or fire, trying to get comfortable within the shallow depression. You fail, but at least you get out of the wind. As the darkness of night deepens, you try to find shelter in oblivious sleep. It seems even this is denied you, for the increasing cold, your hunger, and the strange sounds of night keep sleep at bay.

Perhaps freedom will be better tomorrow.

Social Organization

Slave tribes function within a framework of general rules that every member is expected to follow. Each tribe has a system for ranking its members, usually based on strength, battle prowess, and other factors that help a tribe survive. Those members whose positions are believed to be critical to the tribe's success and those who perform crucial tasks especially well are ranked higher than others. With these higher ranks goes higher rewards, expressed in the form of more prestige, a larger share of the tribe's wealth, and greater authority and influence.

Whether a slave tribe is a gang of drunken raiders or an army of disciplined gladiators, it organizes itself with some form of social behavior. Sometimes this organization is a conscious effort; other times it just falls into place. While there are few hard-and-fast rules, there are patterns of behavior that are repeated from tribe to tribe, due to the way in which most tribes are created.

A tribe usually begins as a collection of individuals who find themselves thrust together for mutual protection. When slaves of varied backgrounds mix, the weaker among them tend to look toward the stronger for guidance and protection. Inevitably, the soldier and gladiator slaves come to the wilderness better prepared than the artist and domestic slaves, if for no other reason than the warrior classes can better defend themselves. This natural tendency for



Life in a Slave Tribe

the weak to seek leaders and the strong to lead establishes the internal tribal hierarchy.

At the top of the hierarchy is the tribe's leader. This individual achieves his rank through proven battle prowess, a display of clear military thinking, or a combination of the two. Rarely does simply having one or the other talent make a good leader. The leader organizes the tribe's activities, plans for possible problems, and quickly offers solutions when problems assert themselves. Among the slave tribes, leaders who make their communities feel that they are contributing to the decision-making process fare better than those who lord over all with absolute authority. In fact, few leaders who attempt to set themselves up as dictators remain in their posts for long. The ex-slaves joined their tribes to start new lives, not to place themselves once more in the grip of a master. Anything that reminds them of the templars and the sorcerer-kings is quickly eliminated.

Because of this aversion to dictatorial societies, tribal leaders are careful about what titles they apply to themselves. Most tribes call their leaders by some military rank, usually general or major. Others have adopted a variety of titles, including chief, headman (or headwoman), and leader. The responsibility for the tribe's well-being rests with the leader, no matter what title he claims for himself. If a tribe prospers, it is usually due to the fine direction provided by its leader. If a tribe has no direction or if it begins to die, the blame falls upon its leader. In such cases, if the rest of the tribe recognizes that there is a problem, the headman will be challenged for leadership of the tribe or simply replaced. Few replaced leaders choose to remain with their tribes, opting instead to take their chances alone. Of course, many replaced leaders have no choice to make as the methods of removal are often fatal.

Leaders coordinate the interactions of their communities. Through these coordinated efforts, a tribe can reach goals that its individual members could not achieve alone. The satisfaction of the individual members and the continued existence of a tribe are

dependent upon the leader's success in attaining his tribe's goals.

A leader is assisted in his duties by his chief lieutenants. These members of a tribe, no matter what titles they are awarded, help direct the efforts of the tribe by putting their leader's commands into effect. In small tribes, there may only be one chief lieutenant. In larger communities, there are many more. Usually, these assistant leaders are the heads of hunting or raiding parties, or of whatever units a tribe is divided into. They have direct authority over their groups, serving as liaisons between them and the leader. Without the cooperation of these respected members of the tribe, a leader could not continue to direct his community.

A leader is also assisted by a number of advisors. These advisors sometimes include the chief lieutenants, but there are usually one or two other members serving in this capacity. Advisors receive no special status as such, for there is rarely a rank in the slave tribe's social organization specifically for those who offer advice. However, advisors often create their own level of prestige and authority through their proximity to the leader and their role in deciding important issues.

Wizards and clerics often find themselves in these advisory roles. Those who work with the arcane arts are afforded little trust by ex-slave communities, but they nonetheless exert influence over a tribe. Their broader range of knowledge and their ability to use magic for the benefit of the tribe place them alongside the uppermost members of a tribal hierarchy, even if the fears of the community will not allow them to be inducted into the hierarchy itself.

For the most part, even the lowest member of a tribe's hierarchy has a say in the day-to-day process of tribal life. Because of the common background of all slaves, the desire to allow everyone to share in the governing process is very strong. Commands, even those issued by the tribe's leader, are often seen as nothing more than suggestions by the members of a



slave tribe. They obey the commands because they respect their leader, because they agree with his decisions, or because the situation they find themselves in demands immediate action.

Customs and Laws

There are few hard-and-fast laws governing behavior from slave tribe to slave tribe. Most ex-slaves want nothing to do with rules and regulations, for those are the things they are escaping from. If there is a common law that all slave tribes share, it is that there are no laws. There is only cooperation between a tribe's members.

Still, certain patterns of behavior can be seen from tribe to tribe. As many of the members of a slave tribe are from warrior classes who learned their manners in the gladiatorial arenas, tribes tend to be violent places. Disagreements are settled with fists and swords, and agreements are signed with the blood of the loser. Strength often makes a person right, and even ex-slaves from non-warrior backgrounds must learn to give as good as they get if they want to survive. Freedom and life in a tribe must be earned every day, and it often must be protected with sharpened bone and stone.

Tribes have universally learned caution, and it becomes second nature to those tribes that survive more than a cycle in the wilderness. Gaining and giving trust remains a difficult practice for ex-slaves. Even the members of the same slave tribe are slow to trust their companions. Once that trust is won, however, a tribe member remains loyal to his fellows until something happens to break that trust. Events that can shatter the trust of a tribe include any acts that harken to owners, masters, and overseers.

Because trust is hard to come by, tribes do not take kindly to visitors. Anyone who wanders into a slave tribe's camp is either killed on the spot or held captive and then killed. No tribe wants the location of its base of operations known to the outside world, for such knowledge can lead slavers and other raiders to them. It is the rare exception that sees a





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visitor—be he slave or freeman—live from one sunrise to the next. Slaves do not kill slaves, an old saying goes: Athas kills slaves. In my experience, however, slaves kill whomever they must to survive.

When on a raid however, most tribes behave a little differently. Few ex-slaves want to see other slaves held in captivity. Because of this, most tribes try to set slaves free when circumstances permit such an action with little danger to the tribe. A tribe may offer help to slaves they meet in the field, for these slaves cannot reveal secrets concerning their benefactors.

If circumstances allow, and if there is enough food and water to spare, a tribe will provide whatever it can to recently freed slaves. The tribe usually offers directions to a nearby oasis and a wish of luck to those they set free. If the escapees seem likable, if the tribe is successful enough to support more members, and if the tribe feels it needs more members, some or all of the escapees may be invited to join the tribe.

If the slaves decide to accept the tribe's invitation, they must pass a series of initiation tests to prove their worth to the tribe. These tests also help to determine each slave's position in the tribe hierarchy. Depending on how well an initiate performs, a new member could find himself with a favored position as a hunt or raid leader. Usually, though, a new member joins the tribe at the bottom of the tribal hierarchy. Of course, if a slave fails the tests, membership is denied. Then he faces an often fatal test as the tribe turns him out into the desert without supplies, or simply kills him on the spot.

It is an extremely rare visitor who can prove himself trustworthy and a friend to the tribe. Such a person can leave with supplies and the good wishes of the host tribe. To accomplish this, the visitor must first survive any initial reactions to his arrival (which is not an easy feat!) and then perform some special service to the tribe. Often, adventurers who wander into the territory of a slave tribe find this course the only one open to them if they wish to live another day. Such services include saving the tribe from

some great danger, finding something the tribe desperately needs, or performing some special task at the request of the tribe's leader.

Certain customs have grown out of the harsh conditions under which the slave tribes live. Common punishments for crimes against a tribe include death or banishment (which often leads to death). If a tribe member accuses another of a crime, it is common for the leader to listen to both sides and render judgment. There are no provisions for appeal.

Other customs deal with such noble beliefs as rights and liberties. For example, in many tribes it is acceptable for two people with a disagreement to fight each other. The winner of the fight is seen as the person in the right, and the argument ends. Some arguments require only a simple wrestling match to prove right and wrong. More serious disagreements lead to battles to the death.

Some customs contribute to a tribe's purposes. Others are rooted in sentiment and tradition. And a select few are in response to tribe members' memories of their time in bondage. If a custom that defines social relationships is breached, such as using the wrong greeting, tribe members may be annoyed or disappointed, but they probably will not reprimand the offender. If a custom critical to the achievement of the tribe's goals is violated, such as refusing the orders of a raid master while on a raid, the offender can expect to be severely punished or even killed. Life is harsh in a slave tribe (indeed, throughout Athas), and it often ends quickly and without warning.

An almost universal custom among the slave tribes concerns the tribes' views on race relations. To the slave tribes, there are no humans or elves or muls or dwarves. There are only slaves and masters. Under this view, the slave tribes welcome all slaves into their ranks (as circumstances permit), no matter what particular racial stock they may come from. The slave tribes are the true melting pots of Athasian society, for in few other settings can you find



thri-kreen and elf working side-by-side for their common good.

An Ex-Slave in a Tribe

The day begins with a morning meal eaten around the communal fire. The meal consists of roasted erdlu meat, dried farro leaves, and cool tea—all provided by the previous day's raid. Around you are your friends and raiding companions, the members of the tribe you proudly call your own. You eat and drink your fill, thinking how fortunate you are to have been accepted into this tribe of ex-slaves.

As the meal draws to a close, your raiding party leader calls a meeting to discuss the day's work. He starts by outlining the suggestions of the tribe's leader, then adds his own thoughts. Once he has finished, he asks the rest of the party for opinions and ideas. You still marvel at the fact that someone in authority asks you what you think about an important subject. Finally, after everyone has had a say and the decisions have been made, you gather your weapons and traveling gear. It is time to go in search of a fully loaded caravan.

You are in luck, for after only a few hours you chance to come upon a small merchant caravan. The raid master assesses the situation, but asks none of the party members for advice. The time for group discussion is past. Now, in the middle of a raid, only the raid master's decisions matter. He directs the party with succinct orders, and you and the others hurry to carry them out.

Using proven techniques and oft-practiced maneuvers, the raid unfolds as the raid master planned it. Everything goes right, and the few guards assigned to the caravan surrender with hardly a show of resistance. You smile as you examine the contents of the cargo, for these supplies will keep the tribe well-stocked for at least another week.

Back at camp, you excitedly describe the raid to other members of your tribe while sharing in the evening meal. After the meal, you help with a few chores before the sun completely sets. As the stars fill the night sky, you settle into a warm tent, surprised at how tired you are. The sleeping furs feel comfortable against your cool skin, and sleep comes quickly. You drift off, thanking the elements that you are part of such a wealthy and powerful tribe. Freedom, you decide, is a wonderful thing.

Lifestyle

When we speak of lifestyle in connection with the slave tribes, we usually speak in terms of two different approaches to tribal life. One approach is the nomadic approach. This is the least-often adopted lifestyle of the slave tribes, for few newly formed tribes have the experience or knowledge to survive in this manner. The other, more common approach is the permanent settlement.

Nomadic tribes travel from place to place seeking the things they need to survive. Instead of trying to defend a parcel of land that may or may not always be able to meet the needs of the group, a nomad tribe carries everything it owns across Athas. While they may seem to be purposeless wanderers, the nomadic tribes actually follow a set course. Sometimes they travel caravan trails, for many nomadic tribes raid caravans for supplies. Other times, nomads seek out oases or animal herds.

Life for the nomads consists of almost constant movement. They travel by day, set up temporary camps by night, and move out by morning's light. While a nomad tribe might stay at a particularly good oasis for a few days, it will shortly resume its endless trek.

The reason few slave tribes adopt this lifestyle is that it exposes them to too many people. Ex-slaves



Life in a Slave Tribe

are a suspicious lot, and every group they happen upon could be agents of the templars and sorcerer-kings. Additionally, nomadic life means lots of social interaction with the various people met on the trail. Ex-slaves, with some exceptions, are ill-equipped to be social and friendly to strangers.

Slave tribes that establish settlements approach life in a different manner. To them, stability is their means of survival. Like the city-states, a settlement builds sturdy walls and gates to protect itself from hostile outsiders. Within the walls, the settlers establish homesteads full of as many comforts as they can afford. By staying in one place, the members of a slave tribe settlement have more time for endeavors other than those needed to ensure daily survival.

Also, a well-hidden camp that can be returned to after a raid gives a tribe a sense of protection and home. By returning to a stable base, tribes can heal wounds, rest, enjoy the spoils of their plunder, and comfortably plan their next raid without worrying about what they will find over the next dune.

These two approaches also help define the means of existence for the slave tribes. The nomads are primarily raiders, for they must constantly replenish their supplies. They can store only what they can easily carry, making frequent raids a necessity. The settlers, on the other hand, have more choices when it comes to means of existence. Settlements enable a tribe to farm and raise herds if it so desires, to set up artisan shops, or to establish trading posts. The tribe may still need to carry out raids to supplement its means of existence, but it is in no way limited to just this method of acquiring wealth and supplies.

No matter which approach a slave tribe takes, all have a rich cultural life to participate in. Members of a slave tribe tend to be more artistic than free folk in the cities. The arts are seen as chores in the cities, and chores are left to slaves. Consequently, escaped slaves bring the arts to the tribes, where they can practice them as they see fit.

Singing, dancing, painting, sculpting, storytelling—all these and more fill the idle time in a

slave tribe camp. In addition, all tribe members who wish to (and have not already learned while serving their masters) can learn to read and write. When they escape to a slave tribe, ex-slaves who possess forbidden knowledge bring it with them and pass it along to all who want to learn.

Behind every tribal practice, belief, and way of life is the unspoken fear that freedom will not last. This fear manifests itself in a spirit of blissfulness. The ex-slaves, ever thankful for the freedom they have, live from moment to moment, enjoying the time in freedom that has been given to them. A common saying in many slave tribes sums up the attitude of many ex-slaves: "Eat, drink, and dance, for tomorrow we are slaves."

Religion, Magic, and Psionics

Clerical magic, wizardry, and psionics can all be found at work in the tribes, but each is accorded a different place and level of respect.

Clerical magic as practiced by the elemental priests is the most revered of the supernatural forces. The clerics of air, earth, fire, and water are welcomed into the tribes, for the blessings they can bestow greatly enhance a tribe's standard of living and means of protection.

Templars, on the other hand, do not receive the same welcome afforded the elemental priests. For one thing, ex-templars do not have access to all of the clerical power once at their command. For another, the templars—even those stripped of rank and cast into slavery—remind ex-slaves of their past. Nothing brings back memories of captivity and hard labor like the presence of a known templar. Ex-templars are allowed to join tribes, but they are never given positions of leadership.

The same is true of wizards. Whether they are defilers or preservers, wizards and the powers they wield remind the tribes of the sorcerer-kings. The tribes are wary of magical powers, but they also realize that these powers can greatly aid a tribe. Wizards find a level of acceptance in slave com-

Life in a Slave Tribe



munities that they do not find anywhere else. In the city-states, the use of magic is illegal. That is not the case in most slave tribe villages. Wizards are tolerated, and so they lend their skills to the ex-slave communities. No matter how tolerant a particular slave tribe may be, it never allows more than one type of wizard to practice their arts in the community. The two approaches—respect for life forces versus the destruction of life forces—are not compatible, and usually lead to friction and outright hostility when practiced side-by-side.

As many humans and demihumans on Athas have psionic powers, no special attitudes concerning psionics exist. Wild talents are so common as to not even cause a stir, and true psionics with access to many disciplines are welcomed into the highest ranks. In fact, those tribes with trained psionics often set up training programs dedicated to teaching members who wish to learn how to better harness their own mental abilities.

Tasks

All tribe members share equally in the day-to-day tasks necessary to the tribe's survival. The most common tasks include preparing meals, skinning and preserving hunted animals, repairing clothes and equipment, keeping weapons in working condition, and feeding and caring for any herd animals the tribe may keep.

Other tasks usually require specialized skills. Making weapons and armor, making clothes and pottery, hunting, and patrolling the tribe's perimeter all fall to the artisans and warriors, respectively.

Finally, the most important tasks are those by which a tribe procures its means of existence. Raiding tribes must conduct raids. Settlements must plant and harvest. All must secure food and water. Whatever is necessary to the survival and well-being of the tribe must be done, and whoever is available and capable must do it.





Life in a Slave Tribe



Threats to the Slave Tribes

The tribes face many threats to their existence, from both within and without. Internal conflicts concerning leadership or other disputes can erupt into bloody violence, for the tribes draw the majority of their members from those classes who think with their weapons. Because the bonds holding the ex-slaves together are only as strong as each slave's commitment, any major disagreements can tear the fragile structures apart. Leaders must remember this and direct the fiercely independent slaves while making them believe they are participating in the decision-making process.

While the threats from within a tribe can be deadly, we must not forget the threats from without. It is said that slave tribes have a thousand enemies. These include other slave tribes, a variety of raiding groups, many monsters, slavers from the city-states, an even Athas itself, which turns weather and terrain against the hardest bands.

No matter where the threats come from or what they consist of, the only way for a slave tribe to survive is for its members to work together. Alone, the escaped slaves cannot hope to stand against those that threaten them. Together, as part of a tribe, the slaves' chances increase significantly.

Appendix: Creating Your Own Tribes

Daled's chronicle introduced you to the world of the slave tribes. Besides giving you an overview of life in a slave tribe and a perspective on Athasian slavery, the chronicle also provided information on a number of different types of slave tribes currently operating in the Tyr region. This appendix takes the world of the slave tribes one step further. It provides both DMs and players with details and suggestions for creating their own slave tribes.

The details of creating a tribe depend on who wants to create it and for what purpose. DMs will approach tribe creation from a completely different direction than players. For this reason, this appendix is divided into two main sections: Dungeon Master Creation and Player Creation.

Dungeon Master Creation

As a Dungeon Master running a DARK SUN™ campaign, you need to create slave tribes for a variety of reasons. You may want to build an adventure around the PCs meeting a specific slave tribe, or you may need to quickly generate a tribe if your PCs unexpectedly strike off into the desert. What follows is general advice on fleshing out a slave tribe, as well as a quick generation system to use when you need to create a tribe on the spur of the moment.

The slave tribes should be viewed as any other part of adventure and world design. A tribe is just a group of NPCs, and it should be as detailed and complete as you need it to be to run an encounter or group of encounters. Usually, you will place a tribe into your campaign world to fulfill a specific purpose—either as a friend or foe to your PCs, as a source of information or a hindrance, or as a mood-setting device or background element to make the scene more real. How much detail you put into the creation of a tribe depends on how important that tribe is to your campaign.

If the tribe in question is designed to be nothing more than a minor obstacle or a background element, then it is silly to put too much time and effort into every part of the creation process. Develop only

those elements you think you need for a particular session. You can always come back and fill out the rest at a later date if the tribe survives to make another appearance.

If the tribe is central to a particular adventure, then it deserves to be as fully developed as you can make it. You need to know the motivations and personalities of the various tribe members in order to effectively role-play key scenes. You also need to know the tribe members' game abilities to run combat and other game-mechanic related situations.

So, what are the various elements that go into creating a slave tribe? You need to decide upon a number of things, and the more detail you can add to each element, the more colorful and exciting the tribe. These elements include the tribe's name, size, primary alignment, operations and means of existence, personality, origin and background, location and defenses, responses to typical actions, strengths and weaknesses, and its most important members.

Each of these elements come together to create a slave tribe. Depending on the tribe's role in your adventure or campaign, not every element will have to be considered in great length initially. You may want to go back and add details at a later date, however, if you think the tribe will play a part in further adventures. Where possible, we have included a quick generation table to help you randomly decide on an element. As with all random generation systems, this one is only presented as a guide. You should not feel locked into the roll of a die or obliged to use the system just because it's here. Instead, let it help you be more creative—and toss it out if it gets in your way.

A final note before we move on. The DARK SUN world is gritty and dangerous. Think accordingly when adding details to each element. Life is hard on Athas, and its inhabitants have become hard in response. Violence and death are commonplace, and the people can be as unforgiving as the world itself.



Creating Your Own Tribes

Tribe Name

Every slave tribe goes by some descriptive term. Without a name, the members of a tribe would have no way to identify themselves. Also, a good name tells you much about the tribe it is applied to. The more colorful the epithet, the more real a tribe will seem.

When deciding upon a name, there are three basic approaches. A tribe's name can come from the name of its leader or founder, from the area it lives or operates in, or from a descriptive term for the tribe's basic means of existence. In addition, many tribal names are formed by some combination of the above. For example, Werrick's Stalkers takes its name from the name of their leader (Werrick) and from the primary means of existence they employ to survive (stalking runaway slaves). The Black Sand Raiders, on the other hand, have combined the unusual terrain feature of their base of operations (an ancient set of ruins surrounded by black sand) with their primary means of existence (raiding) to form their name.

The tables below provide some samples of means of existence and locations, as well as a random method for determining a slave tribe's name. For example, if you roll 15 on Table 1A, and 17 on Table 1C, you might call your tribe Horgon's Ravagers.

Quick Generation Table I: Tribal Name

Table IA: Source of Name

(Roll 1d20)

1-4	A. Founder or leader's name
5-7	B. Location
8-11	C. Primary means of existence
12-13	A and B combined
14-16	A and C combined
17-19	B and C combined
20	A, B and C combined

Table IB: Possible Locations

(Roll 1d20)

Sea of Silt

1	Along the shore
2	On an island
3	Ruins

The Tablelands

4	Stony barrens
5	Sandy wastes
6	Salt flats
7	Rocky badlands
8	Scrub plains
9	Beside an inland silt basin
10	Ruins
11	Hidden Oasis

The Ringing Mountains

12	Foot hills
13	Canyons
14	The mountains
15	Ruins
16	Hidden valley

The Hinterlands

17	Stony barrens
18	Scrub plains
19	Ruins
20	Hidden Oasis

Table IC: Sample Descriptive Terms

1-3	Raiders
4-5	Pillagers
6	Plunderers
7	Hunters
8-3	Stalkers
10	Warriors
11	Pirates
12-13	Brigands
14	Reavers



15-16	Marauders
17-18	Ravagers
19-20	Predators

Tribe Size

How large is the tribe you want to create? Is it a small band? A hamlet? A full village? The size of the tribe determines what kind of activities it can pursue, how strong it is, and even how easily it can find food and water.

While the size of the tribe should be based on how you want it to fit into your campaign, you could use the following quick generation system to randomly decide its size. Of course, the size of the tribe will determine the direction of the rest of the creation process.

Quick Generation Table 2: Tribe Size (Roll 1d100)

01-35	Small (up to 50 members)
36-70	Medium (60 to 200 members)
71-90	Large (200 to 500 members)
91-100	Huge (500 + members)

Primary Alignment

Tribes, like characters, have alignments. A tribe's alignment determines the way its members operate as a group, giving the DM a clear picture of how this tribe will behave. As with any group, however, the individuals who make up this tribe can come from a variety of alignments.

For example, a chaotic good tribe may make a habit of sparing the lives of those they raid, while a chaotic evil tribe revels in orderless violence directed at everyone they meet.

You should pick an alignment that best describes the behavior you envision for the tribe as a whole. The quick generation table should be used only when you are creating a tribe on the fly. And remember, the tribe's alignment determines only the

broad outlook of the group. Individuals members could possess any alignment you see fit to give them.

Quick Generation Table 3: Tribe Alignment (Roll 1d20)

1	Lawful Good
2-3	Lawful Neutral
4-6	Lawful Evil
7-7	Neutral Good
10- 11	True Neutral
12- 14	Neutral Evil
15-16	Chaotic Good
17-18	Chaotic Neutral
19-20	Chaotic Evil

Operations and Means of Existence

Every slave tribe's foremost goals are to survive and remain free. In the harsh, unforgiving wilderness of Athas, there is room for little else. How a tribe fulfills these goals says much about the tribe and its members.

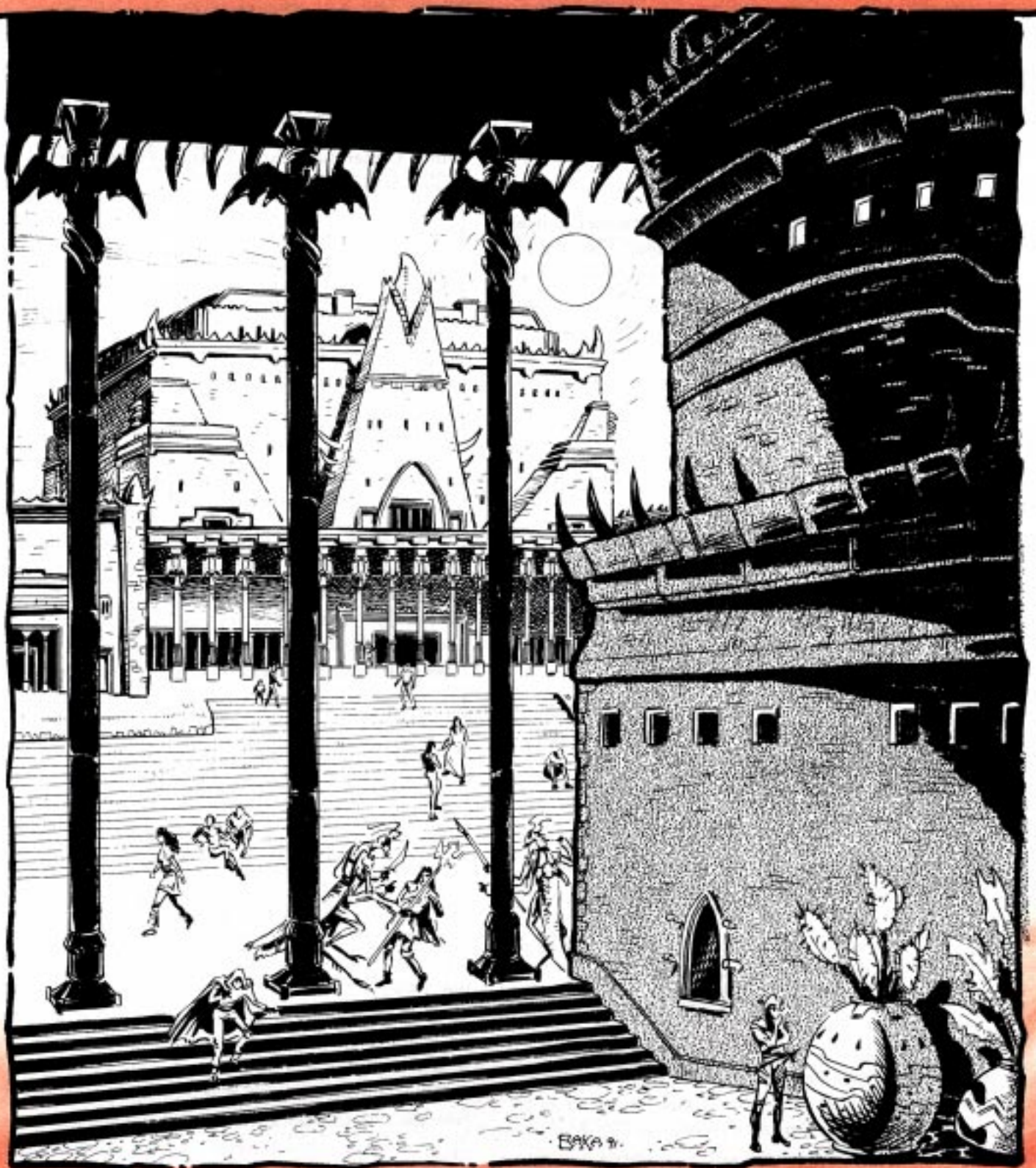
Most tribes are interested in plundering from all who come their way. What distinguishes each tribe is how it plunders, where it plunders, and how far it is willing to go in order to survive.

A tribe's means of existence supports its efforts to fulfill its goals. Some tribes have a secondary means of existence, others engage in only one. These means of existence are often accomplished through specific operations, such as conducting raids, ambushing and attacking caravans, and scouting out potential targets. Secondary operations could include farming, gathering, hunting, sending out acting troupes (like Salt View), posing as freemen artisans (like Tenpug's Band), or even pretending to be legitimate traders in order to exchange goods with other villages.

What a tribe does to maintain its survival and freedom often dictates the manner in which it meets up with PCs. Raiders may attack the PCs while they are traveling. A farming community may be



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encountered while the PCs are exploring an out-of-the-way region of Athas. When you decide on the primary and secondary (if there is one) means of existence, combine it with the tribe's alignment to determine how it goes about the business of surviving.

Personality

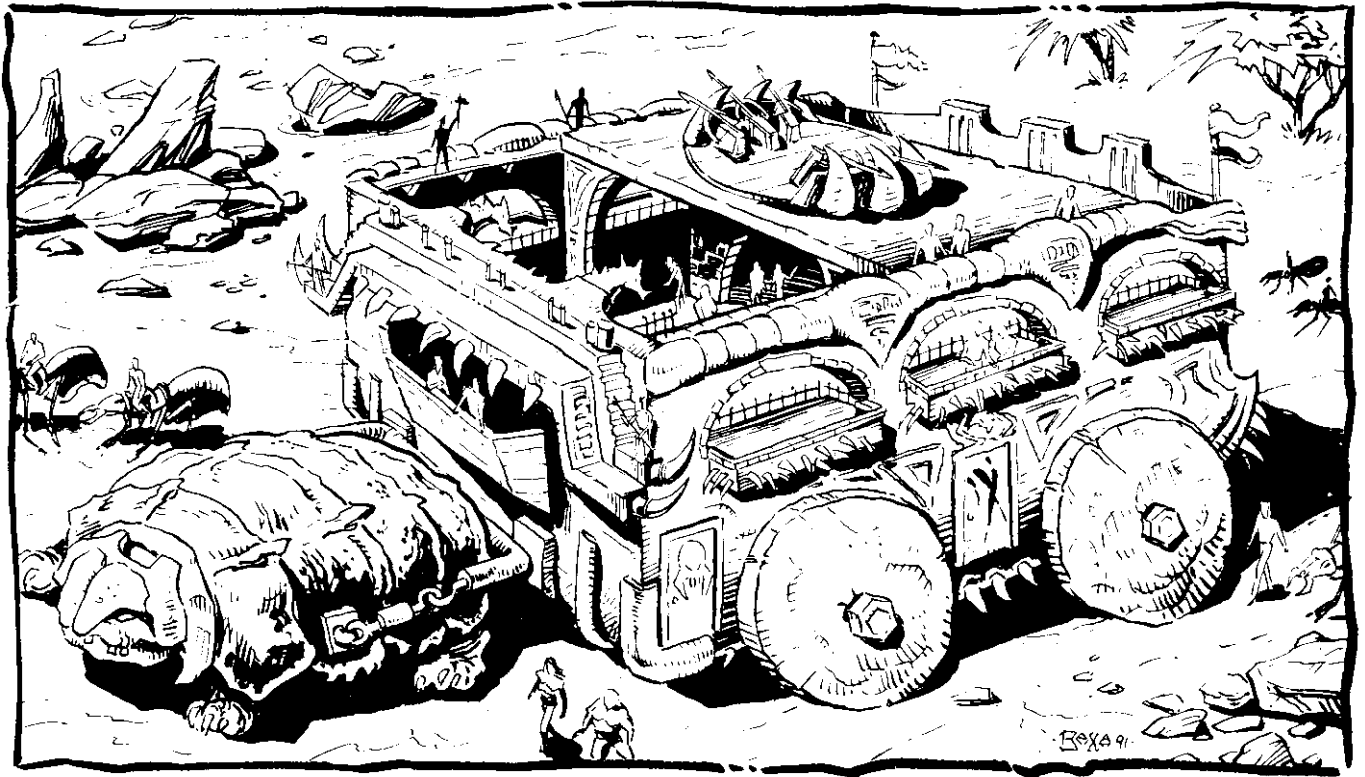
A tribe, like a character, needs a personality to make it memorable and engaging. Build a tribe's personality around such elements as the appearance of the tribe's members, the tribe's specific method of operation, and the motives driving it when it encounters your PCs.

The appearance of a tribe's members can range from no standard dress to rigid uniformity, depending on your desires, as long as the look is distinctive enough to make a lasting impression on your players. Some tribes are so individualistic that each member adopts his own style of dress. Others have formed such tight-knit groups that the members

have adopted clothing and adornments that are almost uniforms. Clothing, armor, jewelry, hairstyles, and even body decorations, such as tattoos, can be used to give a tribe its own memorable appearance.

For example, a very poor slave tribe may clothe its members in rags because that is the only clothing it can afford. Another, like the Free, contains such free-spirited members that each tries to outdo the other as far as their appearance goes. On the other extreme, Werrik's Stalkers have adopted the same striking hairstyle and Sortar's Army has marked its members with facial tattoos to identify them as part of the group. Even the Black Sand Raiders wear similar black hooded cloaks when pillaging a passing caravan.

Try to develop distinctive traits, unusual methods of operation, and powerful motives when creating new slave tribes to populate your DARK SUN campaign.





Creating Your Own Tribes

Origin and Background

Each tribe you create takes on a life of its own once all of the various elements are in place. Even so, no tribe can be complete without the details from the past that molded it. In most cases, these details relate to the tribe's origin. Most origins play important roles in the subsequent formation and actions of the tribes. For example, Werrick's Stalkers became slave traders because of the treatment their leader suffered while she was a slave.

Origins usually revolve around the strong leader who takes control of an existing tribe or forges a new one by offering direction to escaped slaves. While all slave tribes allow their members great amounts of freedom and self-determination, they often follow the urges and ideas of the strong individual who leads them.

Slave tribes are also built upon the events that shaped their background. Important events that forever influence a slave tribe include the discovery or loss of a secure base of operations and significant raids they have been involved in.

Together, the origin and background of a tribe help to create its history. Without a history, a tribe seems artificial and two-dimensional. It might have height and width, but without a past, a tribe has no depth. A vibrant history, filled with events that shape your campaign area, will create a rich setting for play. Give your slave tribe a clear and intriguing past, and it will help you determine its own future.

Location and Defenses

Almost all slave tribes are raiding tribes. Run-away slaves often lack the skills or resources to become anything else. If you need a slave tribe to use in an encounter while the PCs are traveling, you may not need to know very much about the location of the tribe's camp or village. However, the more details you put into the creation of a tribe, the more the tribe enriches your campaign. For that reason, we suggest developing the location of the tribe's

base and the defenses protecting it, even if you don't think the PCs will ever visit it. And who knows? A creative group of players might surprise you with the actions of their PCs.

Make each tribe's location special and interesting. To do this, base it in an exotic or unique locale. Look at the examples in this book. One tribe built a village in the bottom of a huge crater. Another set up a secure base deep within an ancient salt mine. Still another took over the ruins of an ancient city, ignoring the tinge of evil that continues to hang over the place like a burial shroud.

Rarely does a slave tribe exist solely as a nomadic group. While a tribe may range far from a central point to conduct raids, most return to a secure base after the raid has ended. A few of these raiding villages might have small farms or even facilities for herd animals, but these functions are secondary at best. Mostly, these villages are designed to provide protection for their tribe while it is resting between raids.

After you pick a locale for the village, you need to draw a map and decide what defenses the tribe has set up to protect itself. The map can be as detailed and complicated as you wish to make it. Go into whatever level of detail you need to run encounters in the village should the PCs find themselves there. The same goes for the village's defenses. Are the defenses simply handled by the unusual terrain, or has the tribe built walls, set traps, and placed sentries to further protect itself from wild creatures, roving slavers, and other tribes? Whatever you decide, the details you add will further develop your slave tribe into a memorable group of characters.

Standard Responses

How does the slave tribe you are creating deal with non-tribe members? Hardly at all and with a good deal of suspicion. Still, why create a tribe to use in an adventure if it will have nothing to do with your PCs? You must determine the standard responses to whatever you believe your PCs may do

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when they encounter the tribe. Determining how the tribe deals with outsiders will direct the course of the encounter with the PCs. For this reason, unless it truly does not matter, this decision should be made with careful consideration and planning.

Do you want the tribe to be enemies bent on the destruction of the PCs, or do you want them to just be hostile toward strangers? Enemies tend to be raiders who want to kill or capture the people they plunder, while hostile tribes attack to drive away strangers and keep themselves safe. They could also be neutral in their dealings. Many tribes approach strangers in this manner. A few could even be friendly, though the cautious nature of ex-slaves usually precludes this except in extraordinary circumstances.

Quick Generation Table 4: Tribal Attitudes Toward Strangers

(Roll 1d10)

1	Friendly but cautious
2-5	Neutral but cautious
6-7	Hostile
10	Enemy

How Do PCs Join the Tribe?

This question needs to be answered only if you think the PCs might want to join the tribe you have designed and they have a background as ex-slaves. In this case, think carefully about the manner in which you want to approach this subject. More than likely, it will be the basis for a full adventure or even a series of adventures as the PCs attempt to prove their worth through quests and special missions.

You must decide, based upon the tribe you have created, if the tribe would even consider the PCs for membership (keep in mind that no slave tribes offer



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membership to non-slaves). If the answer is yes, then you must come up with a series of tests that the tribe would use to determine the worth of the PCs. Keep in mind that you want to make these tests logical and as harsh as the burning winds of Athas. A raiding tribe that asks the PCs to engage in a trading mission probably won't make sense in the context of the campaign, and a tribe that demands proof of a PC's farming skills isn't in the mood or spirit of a tough DARK SUN™ adventure.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Every slave tribe must have strengths and weaknesses. Without these, you won't be able to determine possible outcomes to the meetings between the tribe and your PCs.

Strengths can range from the talents and abilities of important members of the tribe to the location where the tribe set up its village or camp. A powerful cleric, psionicist, or wizard who owes allegiance to the tribe can drastically affect the outcome of any situation. So, too, can the presence of experienced warriors, good leaders, and tactical geniuses. As for the location of the camp, the tribe that makes its home amid the ruins of the ancients might have access to objects made of metal. Armor, swords, shields, and other metallic items can make the difference in engagements of life and death.

Weaknesses include flaws that the PCs can exploit in order to emerge from an encounter victorious. These weaknesses should not be blatant, but as DM you should drop hints so that quick-thinking players can figure out a plan of action for their PCs. Weaknesses can take the form of dissention in the ranks, a flaw in the tribe's typical tactics, or even some aversion the tribe has (to a particular area, for instance).

Consider the strengths and weaknesses you give to your tribes carefully. You don't want to create a tribe of ex-slaves so powerful that they can overthrow a city-state. Similarly, you don't want to create a tribe with obvious weaknesses that can end an

adventure much too quickly.

Important Tribal NPCs

Who are the leaders of the tribe you created? Who are its members? The NPCs who populate a tribe will make it come alive, so make sure they fit the mold you have sculpted, or if they break it, give them good reasons for doing so. You need only create as many individual NPCs as you think the PCs will want to interact with. Typical members are important, for they are usually the first ones the PCs will meet. Low to mid-level leaders are important, for they will come to investigate the visitors. Only if your PCs are powerful in their own right will you need to bring in the tribe's leader.

Look at the tribe members included with the slave tribes presented earlier in this book for inspiration and samples. Here are a few sample NPCs for the quick generation system:

Sample Tribal Member: Int Avg; AL CN; AC 8 (carru leather); MV 12; HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club); SZ M; ML 10

Sample Tribal Sub-Leader: Int High; AL NG; AC 6 (mekillot hide); MV 12; HD 6; hp 35; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (obsidian long sword, -2 to attack roll); SZ M; ML 11

Sample Tribal Chief: Int High; AL LN; AC 4 (mekillot hide); MV 12; HD 3; hp 5 1; THAC0 12; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d10 (steel two-handed sword); SZ M; ML 12

Player Creation

Players want to create slave tribes for different reasons than Dungeon Masters. In a DARK SUN campaign, PCs want to establish slave tribes for the same reasons that others want to build strongholds and gather followers. As such, the creation of a PC slave tribe must be worked out with the DM. The

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creation of the tribe will doubtless become the object of many adventures and possibly even the focus of the campaign itself for a period of time.

When players decide that they want their PCs to establish a tribe, they must first discuss the matter with their Dungeon Master. They will need his cooperation to build appropriate scenarios into the campaign. If the DM decides that he cannot work such events into his current storyline, the players must live with that decision for the time being. However, the DM should make every effort to eventually fit the players' desires into his campaigns.

After initial approval from the DM, it is up to the players to do a little planning. Using the guidelines given in the Dungeon Master Creation section, the players should sketch out a rough model of the tribe they wish to create. They should include ideas for a tribe name, the size of the tribe they wish to found, its primary alignment, and the operations and means of existence they foresee for the tribe. The adventures to follow will flesh out the tribe's origin,

and the existing background of the PCs (provided they were once slaves) will serve as the initial background for the tribe. It is also a good idea for the players to give the DM some suggestions concerning the type of location they would like for their tribe's village, as well as a few possible strengths and weaknesses.

Of course, not everything will always go as the PCs wish. All of the troubles and other problems inherent in forming a tribe become the obstacles of adventures. The final goal remains the creation of the tribe, if the PCs can achieve it.

This method of campaign creation by both the DM and the players can lead to exciting situations and a sharing of the DM's heavy workload. Of course, the DM is not obligated to follow every player suggestion to the letter, but by defining the goals they wish to accomplish, the players can inform the DM of the direction they want to see the campaign take. This leads to an enjoyable campaign for all concerned.





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Slave Tribes

by Bill Slavicsek

Out of the swirling, bone-dry sands of Athas come hordes of raiders. They overrun caravans, strip them bare, then vanish into the untracked wastes once more. Who are these ghosts of the desert? Where do they live? How do they survive far from the high walls of the city-states? *Slave Tribes* answers these and many more questions about the ex-slaves who escape into the desert.

The DARK SUN™ game world is now open to campaigns in



realms beyond the reach of the sorcerer-kings. The most prominent and successful slave tribes of the Tyr region are presented in great detail in this accessory. *Slave Tribes* enables the DM to create entirely new tribes to roam his DARK SUN campaign. It also shows players how to form their own tribes when their characters escape the clutches of the sorcerer-kings. The deadly world of Athas shows no mercy to those who are unprepared for its dangers!

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