

## NOTABLE BEHAVIOR OR TACTICS

- | d8 | Notable Behavior or Tactics                                   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Use of flaming arrows and burning pitch                       |
| 2  | Use of drums and screeching horns to spread fear              |
| 3  | Attempts to capture and use siege engines                     |
| 4  | Carry and spread disease                                      |
| 5  | Prisoners kept in cages and tormented                         |
| 6  | Use of nets to take captives for feasting later               |
| 7  | Leader has a powerful item, such as a <i>horn of blasting</i> |
| 8  | Actions magically controlled by a spellcaster                 |

## DEMONIC INFLUENCE

- | d12  | Demonic Influence                             |
|------|---|
| 1    | Food and drink spoil                          |
| 2    | Animals become rabid, vicious                 |
| 3    | Terrible storms erupt                         |
| 4    | Minor earthquakes strike                      |
| 5    | Residents suffer bursts of short-term madness |
| 6    | Folk indulge in decadence, excessive drinking |
| 7    | Quarrels turn violent                         |
| 8    | Friends betray one another                    |
| 9-12 | None  |

## GOBLINOIDS: THE CONQUERING HOST

Maglubiyet is truly the Conquering God. He stiffens the spines of cowardly goblins. He rouses bugbears from their lazy slumber. He sets the thunderous step of hobgoblin legions. Maglubiyet takes three races and turns them into one people.

In bygone times the goblinoids were distinct from one another, with separate faiths and different customs. Then Maglubiyet came and conquered all who stood before him, mortals and deities alike. Gods and heroes who wouldn't bend to his will were broken and discarded. He put his foot on the neck of mighty Khurgorbaeyag, bound the will of intractable Hruggek, and forced sadistic Nomog-Geaya to fall in line. What the goblins, the bugbears, and the hobgoblins were before their gods bowed to Maglubiyet no longer matters. Now they are, first of all, followers of Maglubiyet.

On the surface, goblins, bugbears, and hobgoblins are as different as halflings, dwarves, and elves. Each race has its own tendencies, outlook, culture, and gods. But Maglubiyet's hand joins them together, just as he made all their other gods parts within a greater whole. When one kind of goblinoid encounters another kind, the two groups don't see one another as strangers or foes. Instead they know that by the fact of their meeting alone, Maglubiyet has commanded them to come together. They know the time has come to form a host.

## GOBLINS

Goblins occupy an uneasy place in a dangerous world, and they react by lashing out at any creatures they believe they can bully. Cunning in battle and cruel in victory, goblins are fawning and servile in defeat, just as in

Ahh, the Sly Fox. Soft beds, warm turnip pie—such pleasant memories. Alas, the tavern's no more. Goblinoids plundered her stores and burnt her to the ground. Those heathens have no appreciation for the finer things!

—Volo

their own society lower castes must scrape before those of greater status and as goblin tribes bow before other goblinoids.

## BEAST MASTERS AND SLAVE DRIVERS

Goblins know they are a weak, unsophisticated race that can be easily dominated by bigger, smarter, more organized, more ferocious, or more magical creatures. Their god was conquered by Maglubiyet, after all, and now when the Mighty One calls for it, even their souls are forfeit. It is this realization that drives them to dominate other creatures whenever they can—for goblins, life is short.

Goblins seek to trap and enslave any creatures they encounter, but they flee from opposition that seems too daunting. For miles around their lair, they employ pit traps, snares, and nets to catch the unwary, and when their hunting patrols encounter other beings, they always look for ways to capture their foes instead of killing them. Goblins that run up against the fringes of a society first test its defenses by stealing objects, and if these crimes go unpunished, they begin stealing people.

Enslaved creatures receive the worst treatment the goblins can dish out while still getting decent performance out of the slaves. But humanoids and monsters that are especially capable or that provide unusual services find themselves treated like favored (though occasionally abused) pets.

### KHURGORBAEYAG: THE OVERSEER OF ALL

Goblins once had many gods, but the only one who survived Maglubiyet's ascendancy is cruel Khurgorbaeyag, known as the Overseer. Khurgorbaeyag drives his worshippers to be the masters of others. Only by wielding the whip can they hope to escape its lash. Khurgorbaeyag sometimes makes his presence or his desires known through wrathful signs and magical blessings: the crack of a whip without a visible source, chains or ropes that move of their own accord, or a glowing cage that appears to trap foes or those who displease him. Worshipers of Khurgorbaeyag are sometimes overtaken by sudden onsets of depression, which they take as a sign that they have somehow displeased their god. When they rouse themselves from this despondency, they take up the master's whip with renewed zeal and seek out more creatures upon which they can wield it.

Khurgorbaeyag's holy symbol is a yellow-and-red striped whip made of leather. This mark of his authority is used by its wielder against goblins of a lower caste as well as on slaves and enemies. The knowledge of how to make such a whip is enough to elevate a goblin to the master caste of lashers. Often the secret is guarded by one family in a tribe, which enjoys prestige and influence because it controls the supply of whips.



Virtually any kind of creature that can be browbeaten into service might be found with a goblin tribe, but rats and wolves are nearly always present. Both have lived in concert with goblins for at least as long as humans have worked with dogs and horses, and in goblin society those two animals serve similar purposes.

#### FAMILY MATTERS

A goblin tribe is organized in a four-tiered caste system made up of lashers, hunters, gatherers, and pariahs. The status of every family in the tribe is based on its importance to the tribe's survival. Families that belong to the higher-ranking castes keep their status by not sharing their knowledge and skills with other families, while those in the lower castes have little hope of escaping their plight.

Outsiders who don't understand the goblins' social system are sometimes surprised by how different castes interact with them. A single human warrior might frighten away a dozen gatherers, only to be shocked when two hunters viciously attack. A captured group of invaders might hang in a net while dozens of goblins pass by and pay them no heed until a group of gatherers shows up.

**Lashers.** The closest thing a goblin tribe has to nobility is the caste of lashers—families of goblins trained in the ways of battle, and also possessed of key skills such as strategy, trap-building, beast taming, mining, smelting, forging, and religion. If the tribe has any spellcasters, this caste includes them. Lashers follow the lead of the tribe's boss, and enforce their will on other goblins with whips.

**Hunters.** The families of goblins that are skilled in the use of weapons but not privy to any other special knowledge have the second highest status in the tribe. Hunters are often the best wolf riders and know the most about the territory farthest from the tribe's lair. These individuals hunt game in peaceful times, and in combat they serve as scouts, foot soldiers, and cavalry.

**Gatherers.** Families in the second lowest caste are responsible for getting food from the surrounding area, taking what's naturally available or stealing whatever they can. Gatherers also do the little amount of farming of which goblins are capable and are charged with checking traps for captured people or beasts. Gatherers aren't usually armed with weapons more deadly than a sling or a knife, but they frequently carry nets, caltrops, lassos, and nooses on poles for controlling captured creatures. These goblins cook for the tribe, and in times of war they are also responsible for making poison.

Gatherers, and the pariahs beneath them, greatly fear for their lives in battle, believing that the lashers and the hunters have special knowledge of how to survive. It is the members of the lower castes that give goblins their reputation for cowardice.

**Pariahs.** Some goblin families are the lowest of the low, composed of the most dimwitted, least educated, and weakest goblins. They get the worst jobs: mucking out animal pens, cleaning up after other goblins, and doing any hard labor such as digging mines. If the goblin tribe has slaves to do some of this work, the pariah families enjoy the opportunity to supervise and dominate such creatures, which have no status at all.

"BOOYAHG" MEANS "MAGIC" IN THE GOBLIN TONGUE.  
SHOULD YE HAPPEN UPON GOBLINS CHANTING  
"BOOYAHG BOOYAHG BOOYAHG," BE WARNED!  
THERE MIGHT BE A POWERFUL SORCERER LURKING  
IN THEIR MIDST.

—ELMINSTER



## STATUS SYMBOLS

Goblins love symbols of authority, and thus the tribe's boss often has such trappings wherever he or she goes. Such a symbol can take a typical form, perhaps a crown or a throne, but also can be a more distinctive objects like a high-backed wolf saddle or colorful boots. The castes in a tribe also adopt symbols to indicate membership or kinship, but the symbols used are rarely the same between different tribes and often make little sense to other creatures. Some possible status symbols are given in the Status Symbols table. A caste or a boss might display more than one of these items.

## BOOYAHGS

Spellcasters of any sort among the goblins are rare. Goblins typically lack the intelligence and patience needed to learn and practice wizardry, and they fare poorly even when given access to the necessary training and knowledge. Sorcerers are less prevalent among them than in many other races, and Khurgorbaeyag seems to dislike sharing his divine power with his followers. And although many goblins would readily offer anything to have the abilities of a warlock, the patrons

### WHO'S THE BOSS?

Goblins pattern the rule of their tribes after the whip-cracking rule of their god, Khurgorbaeyag, and thus each group has one leader that exerts autocratic control. But as with many tyrannies, the passing of a leader often results in a chaotic transition to the next. Sometimes a goblin boss has the foresight to declare a successor, often a child or other family member the boss has been able to trust. But such a declaration doesn't always prevent a mad scramble for influence and allies, or secret backstabbing and outright fights over the title. Most often, the victor in such a struggle comes from another family of the lasher caste, and any allies of the previous boss count themselves lucky if their only punishment is demotion to the pariah caste.

Sometimes another creature assumes control of a goblin tribe, by killing or subjugating the current boss and cowing most of the rest of the tribe. If the creature is dimwitted, like a troll or ogre, the lower-class goblins give it obeisance, but before long the upper-class goblins begin to think that whoever can bend the ear of the new leader can act as the real boss. If the creature brushes aside such manipulation, the tribe falls into line behind the new tyrant—better to abide the new rule than conspire against it and be called out as a traitor.

## STATUS SYMBOLS

### d20 Status Symbol

1	Earrings and notches in an ear
2	Rib bones tied into hair
3	A belt made from raccoon pelts
4	A gnome's boot used as a hat
5	A pouch of toenail clippings from an allied ogre
6	A frog kept in a jar
7	Fragile helmets made from axebeak eggs
8	Nose rings
9	Painted or stained hands
10	Bugs kept in a bag for snacking
11	War cry tattooed on chest
12	Shields made from ankheg chitin
13	Bracelet made of pieces of goblins turned to stone
14	Special breed of rat kept as pet
15	Teeth pulled out in certain places
16	Owlbear-feather cloaks
17	Scars from lashings
18	Orc-tusk lip piercings
19	Umbrellas made from dead darkmantles
20	Cloaks made of scraps from an elven tapestry

that grant such power know a goblin is unlikely to be able to uphold its end of any bargain.

Even when a goblin is born with the ability to become a spellcaster, the knowledge and talent necessary to carry on the tradition rarely persists for more than a couple of generations. Because they have so little experience with magic, goblins make no distinction between its forms. To them all magic is "booyahg," and the word is part of the name they give to any of its practitioners. A goblin with access to booyahg becomes a member of the lashers and can often rise to the role of boss.

**Booyahg Caster.** This goblin served under a hobgoblin wizard, stole a look at its master's spellbook, and learned a little wizardry by aping the gestures and words it remembered. The goblin can cast a randomly determined 1st-level wizard spell once per day. Intelligence is its spellcasting ability.

**Booyahg Wielder.** This goblin found a magic item (a *necklace of fireballs*, a *circlet of blasting*, or the like) and learned how to use it.

**Booyahg Whip.** Khurgorbaeyag saw fit to gift this goblin with powers that enable it to dominate others. The goblin has 1d3 other goblins that slavishly obey its orders.

**Booyahg Slave.** This goblin warlock serves a patron who can extract payment in flesh if the goblin doesn't do as promised. Often this patron is a coven of hags serving as the tribe's boss, a fiend that has made its way into the world, or an undying lord such as a lich or a vampire. (For more information on undying lord patrons, see the *Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide*.) Use one of the warlock stat blocks in appendix B to represent this goblin, adding darkvision and the Nimble Escape traits common to all goblins.

### NILBOGS: PRANKSTERS WITH POWER

A nilbog (“goblin” spelled backward) is a goblin possessed by the spirit of a mischievous prankster god. Even though goblins dwell at the bottom of the hierarchy in a goblinoid host, the threat of a nilbog appearing in their ranks keeps the bugbears and hobgoblins from inflicting too much cruelty upon their lessers.

A nilbog doesn't use its abilities indiscriminately. One can be placated if it is provided with comfortable quarters, good food, and free rein to do as it wishes, in which case it holds its power at bay.

Hobgoblins have learned how to guard against the appearance of a nilbog: the crudest, most obnoxious goblin in the host is given the title of jester. This goblin lounges in a hobgoblin warlord's command center, free to behave as it wishes without risk of punishment or rebuke.

For more information on nilbogs, see chapter 3 of this book.

**Booyahg Booyahg Booyahg.** This goblin is a sorcerer with the wild magic origin whose every casting, including cantrips, is accompanied by a wild magic surge. Use the **mage** stat block in the *Monster Manual* to represent this goblin, adding darkvision and the Nimble Escape traits common to all goblins. Each time the goblin casts a spell, there is an accompanying surge of wild magic; roll on the Wild Magic Surge table in the *Player's Handbook* to determine the wild magic effect.

### GOBLIN LAIRS

Tribes of goblins take up residence in shrouded valleys, shadowy forests, and caves and tunnels beneath the surface of the world. Capable miners and crafters, they seek to settle in places where they can get the raw materials to make weapons and armor. Their need for iron and other metals sometimes puts them in conflict with other races, but just as often, goblins get what they need by claiming mines abandoned by other races and scratching away at veins thought to be played out.

When goblins expand a mine, the tunnels they dig are narrow and warren-like. Goblins live both within these tunnels and on the surface around the outside of the area. They guard the territory around the mine for miles, sending out patrols of hunters equipped with war horns and using wolves as watchdogs to alert them to intruders.

**Outskirts.** The territory around a goblin lair has several hallmarks, most of which aren't readily apparent. Packs of wolves allied with the goblins serve as effective perimeter guards, without giving away the fact that a tribe of goblins lives nearby. Hunters take up guard posts in tall trees and atop high rocky outcrops from where they can view the terrain while staying unseen. Any obvious path through the territory (a valley, a clear trail, or a river) might be turned into an ambush point where a force of goblins can capture intruders. Such places might also be set with net traps, snare traps, or hidden pit traps that gatherers regularly check for new slaves. The area also includes burial grounds for each caste, always placed far from the lair.

**Lair Exterior.** Anyone who is skilled or fortunate enough to pass through the territory of a goblin tribe without being detected is likely to come upon some tell-

tale signs of habitation—complete with goblins at work and other goblins standing guard over them.

If the lair was built around a mine, the tribe's smelting furnace and forge will be in the vicinity. A lair inside a forest likely has piles of cut timber (and suitable tools) nearby. In appropriate terrain, the goblins might set aside some land for simple farming (raising mushrooms and gourds). If the lair doesn't have enough space underground for everyone, gatherers and pariahs are housed in huts on the surface, near the areas where they work.

**Lair Interior.** The ideal place for a goblin lair is an abandoned mine that features two or three large chambers and a few smaller ones, with tunnels connecting them. In such a place, the tribe can protect its most valuable assets while providing for a modicum of comfort. Most lairs have only a single entrance, but the goblins might build a number of escape tunnels that emerge far from that location.

Close inside the entrance, if a suitable area exists, the goblins set up a den for their wolves. The animals come and go as they please, unless the goblins have use for



them. Any tunnel in the lair, whether dug by goblins or not, is likely to be trapped, typically in a way that not only injures the enemy but also collapses the passage.

Open spaces inside a lair are useful for a number of reasons, and the goblins will hollow out chambers for their use if need be. Slaves and tamed monsters are best kept in large areas with limited access, making them easier to guard. The tribe's boss lays claim to a space that's treated as a throne room of sorts. The lashers and hunters of a tribe occupy other caverns and chambers, enjoying the comfort and safety of underground living as a reward for their status and their value to the group.

## BUGBEARS

Bugbears feature in the nightmare tales of many races—great, hairy beasts that creep through the shadows as quiet as cats. If you walk alone in the woods, a bugbear will reach out of the bushes and strangle you. If you stray too far from the house at night, bugbears will scoop you up to devour you in their den. If a bugbear cuts off your head, your soul stays trapped inside, and the bugbears use your head to magically command all whom you once knew.

Lurid tales such as these have flowered from the seeds of truth. Bugbears do rely on stealth and strength to attack, preferring to operate at night. They do take the heads of enemy leaders, but they are no more likely to eat people indiscriminately than humans are. Bugbears aren't likely to attack lone travelers or wandering children unless they clearly have something to gain by doing so. From the viewpoint of the rest of the world, their aggression and savagery are thankfully offset by their rarity and lethargy.

### SHIFTLESS, SAVAGE LAYABOUTS

When they're not in battle, bugbears spend much of their time resting or dozing. They don't engage in crafting or agriculture to any great extent, or otherwise produce anything of value. They bully weaker creatures into doing their bidding, so they can take it easy. When a superior force tries to intimidate bugbears into service, they will try to escape rather than perform the work or confront the foe. Even when subsumed into a goblinoid host and drawn into war, bugbears must often be roused from naps and bribed to get them to do their duties.

This indolence offers no clue to how vicious the creatures are. Bugbears are capable of bouts of incredible ferocity, using their muscular bodies to exact swift and ruthless violence. At their core, bugbears are ambush predators accustomed to long periods of inactivity broken by short bursts of murderous energy. Ferocious though they may be, bugbears aren't built for extended periods of exertion.

### GANG MENTALITY

Since bugbears aren't a particularly fecund race, their overall population is small and spread over a wide area. Bugbears live in family groups that operate much like gangs. The individuals in a group typically number fewer than a dozen, consisting of siblings and their mates as well as a handful of offspring and an elder or two. A gang lives in and around a small enclosure, often

a natural cave or an old bear den, and it might have supplementary dens elsewhere in its territory that it uses temporarily when it goes on long forays for food.

In good times, a bugbear gang is tight-knit, and its members cooperate well when hunting or bullying other creatures. But when the fortunes of a gang turn sour, the individuals become selfish, and might sabotage one another to remove opposition or exile weaker or unpopular members to keep the rest of the gang strong. Fortunately for the race as a whole, even young and elderly bugbears have the ability to survive alone in the wild, and the cast-off members of a gang might eventually catch on with a different group.

Left to their own devices, bugbears have little more impact on the world than wolf packs. They subsist by crafting simple tools and hunting and gathering food, and gangs sometimes come together peacefully to exchange members and goods between them.

### MALEVOLENT WORSHIP OF MALIGN GODS

Bugbears worship two deities who are brothers, Hruggek and Grankhul. Hruggek is the fearsome elder sibling, possessed of legendary might and prowess in battle. Bugbears believe their strength and bravery come from him. Cunning Grankhul is the younger one, and in the stories bugbears tell, he gifted them with stealth but in return he sapped their vigor, so that bugbears sleep in his stead while he remains eternally alert and awake.

According to bugbear legends, Hruggek and Grankhul often fight alongside each other, preying upon all they encounter as is their right as superior warriors. Hruggek takes the heads of those he kills and puts them on spikes in his den, where they utter pleas for mercy and sing paeans to his might. Grankhul watches over Hruggek when he sleeps, but if he must be elsewhere, he whispers commands to the severed heads to wake Hruggek if any danger threatens him.

Bugbears admire the qualities of both brothers. Because of Hruggek, they consider bravery and physical superiority to be their natural state. Thanks to Grankhul, they can use their size and strength to work as stealthy assassins rather than blundering around like ogres.

Bullying, murder, and engaging in battle are all holy acts for bugbears. Garroting an unsuspecting creature and defeating foes in open battle are seen as acts of worship, in the same way that dwarves consider metalsmithing to be sacred to Moradin.

The bugbears recognize two other gods, both of which they disdain and fear: Maglubiyet and Skiggaret.

Maglubiyet, the leader of the goblinoid pantheon, forced both brothers to submit to his rule, but instead of killing them, he showed mercy and even honored them in a way by setting them free—under his control—so that bugbears could continue to employ their talents against his enemies. Bugbears understand that by venerating Hruggek and Grankhul, they also give tribute to Maglubiyet, even though they don't openly pay homage to their overlord. When bugbears are called to join a host, bugbears believe Maglubiyet has again corralled the brothers into a divine battle, and they honor their gods by following suit.

Skiggaret is the bugbear version of the bogeyman, as hateful and terrifying to them as bugbears are in the eyes of many other races. His name is rarely spoken, and never above a whisper. Skiggaret's influence manifests at times when bugbears are forced to act in a cowardly fashion; a bugbear that knows or feels itself to be in mortal danger is affected by a form of madness and will do anything, including trying to flee, in order to stay alive. Bugbears believe that this feeling of fear comes from being possessed by Skiggaret, and they don't relish experiencing it. After the madness has passed, bugbears don't dwell on things that were done in the presence of Skiggaret. Talking about such acts might call him back.

### BLESSINGS OF THE BUGBEAR GODS

Bugbears have no use for priests or shamans. No one needs to tell them what their gods want. If the brother gods are angry with them, they let the bugbears know with bolts of lightning (Hruggek) or by striking them blind or dead (Grankhul). Bugbears worship their gods simply by preying on other creatures, using no other sort of ceremony to show obeisance—with one exception.

In an act of worship that also sometimes attracts favorable attention from their gods, bugbears sever the heads of defeated foes, cut away or stitch open the eyelids, and leave the mouths hanging open. The heads are then placed on spikes or hung from cords around a bugbear den. The heads themselves are trophies that honor Hruggek, and their ever-staring eyes are an homage to sleepless Grankhul.

The heads of leaders and mighty opponents are particularly sacred, and offering up such a trophy can provide a bugbear gang with a special boon. A gang that gains the favor of Hruggek and Grankhul in this way might find that the head will emit a shout when an enemy gets too close (in the fashion of an *alarm* spell). Sometimes the heads of people who have information the bugbears need speak their secrets amid blubbered pleas for mercy (as with the *speak with dead* spell).

ONE USEFUL TRICK: IF YE FACE BUGBEARS WHO HAVE SEVERED HEADS ON SPIKES AS TROPHIES, CAST A SPELL TO MAKE THE HEADS SPEAK. AFTER THAT, YE CAN COZEN THE BUGBEARS INTO DOING ALMOST ANYTHING.

—ELMINSTER



## HOBGOBLINS

War is the lifeblood of hobgoblins. Its glories are the dreams that inspire them. Its horrors don't feature in their nightmares. Cowardice is more terrible to hobgoblins than dying, for they carry their living acts into the afterlife. A hero in death becomes a hero eternal.

Young hobgoblins start soldiering when they can walk and heed the mustering call as soon as they can wield their weapons capably. Every legion in the hobgoblins' entire society forever stands prepared for war.

### BRUTAL CIVILITY

Hobgoblins hold themselves to high standards of military honor. The race has a long history of shared traditions, recorded and retold to keep the knowledge fresh for new generations. When hobgoblins aren't waging war, they farm, they build, and they practice both martial and arcane arts.

These trappings of civil society do little to conceal an underlying brutality that hobgoblins practice on each other and perfect upon other races. Punishment for infractions of hobgoblin law are swift and merciless. Beauty is something hobgoblins associate only with images of conflict and warfare.

The iron grip their philosophy holds on their hearts blinds hobgoblins to the accomplishments of other peoples. Hobgoblins have little appreciation or patience for



art. They leave little space for joy or leisure in their lives, and thus have no reserves of faith to call upon when in dire straits.

### IMPLACABLE GODS

Hobgoblins revere two gods unique to their race, the only survivors of a pantheon that was decimated by Maglubiyet so long ago that hobgoblins don't remember the names of the fallen. Nomog-Geaya is the greater of the two and the more frequently honored. He is seen as a stoic, cold-blooded, and tyrannical leader, and hobgoblins believe he expects the same behavior from them. Bargrivyek is a god of duty, unity, and discipline, and he is thought to be pleased by displays of those principles.

In the stories that hobgoblins tell one another, Bargrivyek serves as Nomog-Geaya's second in command. Nomog-Geaya would prefer the position were filled by someone more like himself, but Bargrivyek was all he was left with after Maglubiyet's conquest. Although both deities are ultimately beholden to Maglubiyet, the greater god allows them to retain a measure of their influence over the hobgoblins because their philosophies are in line with his own.

Hobgoblins don't build temples to their gods, lest they displease Maglubiyet, but the few priests among them do tend small shrines and interpret the body of legends about their gods. Nomog-Geaya's priests always wield his favored weapons, a longsword and a handaxe. They are responsible for martial training as well as instruction in strategy and battlefield tactics. Bargrivyek's priests wield his symbol, a flail with a head dipped in white paint. They work as a police force in hobgoblin society, making judgments about honor, mediating disputes, and otherwise enforcing discipline.

### RANK, STATUS, AND TITLE

As in any strict military hierarchy, every hobgoblin in a legion has a rank, from the warlord down through a cadre of officers to the soldiers that make up most of its number. These ranks, using the titles most often applied to them, are as follows:

1st rank: Warlord	5th rank: Spear
2nd rank: General	6th rank: Fist
3rd rank: Captain	7th rank: Soldier
4th rank: Fatal Axe	

A legion is organized into units called banners, each one made up of a group of interrelated families. Members of a banner live, work, and fight together, and each banner has a separate status within the legion that is reflected in the power of its officers. For instance, the captains of the highest-ranking banners can expect their orders to be followed by the captains of any banners of lower rank.

Rank and responsibility aren't necessarily commensurate from one legion to another or even between banners in the same legion. A phalanx of foot soldiers led by a captain in one legion might be two hundred strong, while in another such a force numbers just twenty. One banner might have four warriors mounted on worgs led by a fist, while a fist in another banner of the same legion might lead ten mounted warriors. If any rank

### BLOODY BLUE NOSES

Hobgoblins are sometimes born with bright red or blue noses. This attribute is thought to be a sign of potency and potential. Blue- and red-nosed hobgoblins receive preferential treatment, and as a result they occupy most of the leadership positions in hobgoblin society.

The noses of all hobgoblins become more colorful when they are enraged or excited, much the way that humans' cheeks can flush with emotion.

doesn't serve a purpose in the legion, the warlord eliminates it from the hierarchy to maximize efficiency.

### HONOR BOUND, BY GLORY CROWNED

Advancement in rank comes as a result of attaining glory, but for the achievement to mean anything, a hobgoblin must abide by the race's code of honor in doing so.

Glory can be earned by discovery of great resources (such as finding a new vein of iron or a powerful magic item), by fine performances (writing and performing a great ballad about the legion), by designing and constructing a great defense or monument, and through other means. But the greatest respect is reserved for those who earn their glory in battle. In theory, the fortunes of war can elevate the lowest-ranking banner in a legion to the highest status. In practice, warlords are careful to position themselves and their banners to claim the greatest victories in any conflict, and they portion out opportunities and responsibilities to other banners as politics dictate.

Each hobgoblin legion has a distinct code of honor and law, but all follow a few general precepts that are at the heart of the hobgoblin honor system.

**Follow Orders.** Carrying out orders without question is critical on the battlefield, and hobgoblins follow this dictum in peaceful times as well in order to maintain stability in their society. Hobgoblins don't shrink from following orders that they know will result in death if the act will bring glory to the banner or the legion.

**Honor the Gods.** Hobgoblins give regular recognition to the deities left to them after Maglubiyet's conquest. Idols of Nomog-Geaya, as well as standards and flags with his image or symbol, receive a bow or salute at all times except emergencies. Bargrivyek's peacemakers receive due deference regardless of rank or banner status. Of course, Maglubiyet's call to conquest is always answered.

**Suffer nor Give Insult.** As befits their warlike nature, hobgoblins believe that any insult demands a response. Suitably (and somewhat ironically), the outward politeness and civility that they demonstrate among each other enables them to avoid conflicts in daily life. This same form of "courtesy" is often extended to other races the hobgoblins have dealings with, much to the outsiders' surprise. When such respect isn't reciprocated, though, relations can swiftly deteriorate.

**Reward Glorious Action.** Hobgoblins never deny advancement in status to a banner that has earned it, nor do they withhold higher rank from a deserving individual. If a banner attains great glory in battle but is nearly destroyed, the handful of members who remain are welcomed into another banner, taking their banner's

name and colors along with them, and assuming places of leadership in the group.

**Uphold the Legion.** Hobgoblins care more for the survival of their legion than they do for others of their own kind. Two legions might battle over territory, resources, or power, or out of simple pride. Such a feud can continue over generations in an ongoing cycle of retribution. Each legion has a list of grievances against any others it knows about, and any legions meeting for the first time view each other with immediate hostility. Only a truly great warlord can force legions to work together as an army if Maglubiyet has not called forth a host.

## IRON SHADOWS

A few hobgoblins have mastered a system of unarmed combat called the Path of the Iron Shadow. Its practitioners are known as Iron Shadows. They serve as a secret police force and a spy network in hobgoblin society. Statistics for a typical hobgoblin Iron Shadow can be found in chapter 3.

The Iron Shadows recruit from all ranks of hobgoblin society. They answer only to the priests of Maglubiyet, and use their talents for stealth, disguise, and unarmed combat to squash potential insurrections and treachery before an uprising can flourish.

These hobgoblins have the ability to command shadow magic to conceal their true nature, create distracting illusions, and walk from one shadow to the next.

When they operate in the open, they wear masks that resemble the leering faces of devils. As befits their role in society, they receive proper deference from all other hobgoblins that cross their path.

## ACADEMY OF DEVASTATION

Hobgoblins know the value of arcane magic in warfare. Where other cultures treat magic as an individual pursuit, a calling that only a select few can even attempt, hobgoblins practice mass indoctrination and testing to identify every potential caster in their ranks.

The Academy of Devastation is a hobgoblin institution made up of spellcasters. Members are sent abroad to test young hobgoblins. Those who show an aptitude for magic are enrolled in the academy, brought to a hidden school, and subjected to a rigorous regimen of drills, exercises, and study. In the academy's view, every young student is a potential new devastator, destined to be forged into a weapon of war.

Hobgoblin devastators have little knowledge of or use for spells that have no use on the battlefield. They are taught potent, destructive spells and also learn the fundamentals of evocation magic. The death and destruction they bring about is worthy of as many accolades as the ruin wrought by traditional warriors. Luckily for their enemies, devastators seldom employ sophisticated tactics, functioning essentially as a mobile artillery battery. They can bring tremendous force to bear, but rarely display the versatility and inventiveness of spellcasting elves and humans. A few do become accomplished tacticians in their own right, and it isn't uncommon for such an individual to serve as the warlord of a legion.

Statistics for a typical hobgoblin devastator can be found in chapter 3.



Hobgoblins are relentless soldiers that cleave to rigid tactics and orders. I fear their less-predictable scouts and spies more.

—Volo

## HOBGOBLIN LAIRS

When hobgoblins aren't on the move, they have a stable lifestyle and society wherein they can raise new generations, train them, and prepare for future battles. If few enemies exist nearby and the hobgoblins in a legion have room to spread out, the members of each banner might live in a separate location, effectively its own settlement, with worg riders and messenger ravens passing communications between the sites.

In lands dominated by other humanoids, hobgoblins will settle for taking up residence in an old dungeon or ruin where they can hide their numbers and keep their presence secret. Such an arrangement isn't desirable, because space is usually at a premium.

**Permanent Visitors.** If a hobgoblin legion is looking for a place to set down roots, its first choice is an out-of-the-way area that has adequate resources or can be improved to suit the hobgoblins' needs. Land for farming or grazing is desirable, as is access to lumber, stone, or metal ore. If the hobgoblins find a place that fits the bill, they build non-portable facilities such as forges and sawmills, marking their intention to stay either until all the resources have been harvested or until Maglubiyet calls them off to war. If the hobgoblins are interested in doing business with the outside world, they might erect a trading post on the fringe of their territory where other people can come to exchange goods and coin.

**Who Goes There?** A hobgoblin lair resembles nothing so much as a military base. It is always well guarded, whether by lone sentries perched in trees or a stone tower with a full garrison of troops. As space permits, large areas are dedicated for use as training grounds, marshaling fields, target ranges, combat arenas, and similar facilities for the practice of warfare. Monuments, typically statues and pillars, are erected around these areas to remind the legion of past glories.

Every legion's headquarters includes a command center where the warlord meets with banner leaders and others of high rank. Inside the complex or somewhere near it is the Way to Glory—a road, river, tunnel, or valley on either side of which the honored dead are interred, each burial site complete with a description of the banner, rank, and glories of its occupant.

The quarters for troops are austere but sufficient, as are the necessary stables and dens to hold the legion's animals and beasts. Legions that have need of such amenities also set aside space for a library, which can





double as a school and training facility for spellcasters. If a hobgoblin lair has a prison, it's usually a small one—miscreants are incarcerated for only a short time before facing the hobgoblins' harsh justice.

## MAGLUBIYET'S WILL BE DONE

When Maglubiyet conquered the goblins' gods, he taught the goblins to fear his cruelty. They bowed in sniveling obeisance to him and then turned their impotent wrath upon others, becoming petty tyrants. When Maglubiyet conquered the bugbears' gods, he taught the bugbears the practicality of cold brutality. When Maglubiyet conquered the hobgoblins' gods, he knew he had to take the hobgoblins firmly in hand. From him they learned discipline, and thus they became the natural leaders among all the goblinoids.

The goblinoids are bound together by Maglubiyet's subjugation of their individual deities. All types rightly fear Maglubiyet's wrath, but each carries out the Mighty One's divine will differently. Goblins typically flee from obvious threats, and hobgoblins often have to round up and threaten them before they can make use of them. Bugbears accept hobgoblin demands for assistance only grudgingly, and often they must be bribed with loot, spirits, battle gear, or the severed heads of enemy leaders—a particularly holy gift. Hobgoblins operating on their own will remain in their forts, content to deal with internal politics of rank and matters of defense, but when they

encounter other types of goblinoids (or seek them out), it is viewed by all as a divine sign—Maglubiyet has called them together to do his bidding on a grand scale.

### CALL TO WAR: FORMATION OF THE HOST

When the three types of goblinoids coalesce into a host, this new societal and military arrangement fundamentally changes how virtually every individual behaves.

**Leaders in Word and Deed.** Hobgoblins form the backbone of the new culture, taking up most leadership roles and acting as the strong center in any military action. Hobgoblins that are called to lead a host become fired with purpose, overtaken by a fanaticism that lends new urgency to their every action.

When multiple legions gather into a host, each of those legions has a separate status, just as each banner in a legion does. The legion of the host's warlord has the

### NO OTHER GOD SHALL STAND

Goblinoids are indoctrinated from a young age to consider all gods but their own as lesser, false entities. Maglubiyet is the only true deity, they learn, and the world will be wracked by chaos and despair until he one day conquers all pantheons. Goblinoids harbor a special hatred for clerics of enemy deities, focusing on them in battle and desecrating their temples whenever they have the chance. Whether a deity is good, evil, or neutral is immaterial. All gods other than Maglubiyet and his servants are false and must be destroyed.

highest status, and warlords of lower status are demoted to the title of general. A member of the lowest-ranked banner in the warlord's legion has a higher status than those of other legions who share the same rank, but a general at the head of another legion still outranks everyone in the warlord's legion except for the warlord.

Hobgoblins in a legion set aside their animosity for other legions when a host forms. The warlords of rival legions don't seek to depose the leader of the host unless the fortunes of war create the opportunity. Each legion records all the insults directed toward it while a member of a host, and when the host disbands, those grudges again come to the forefront.

**Stealthy Shock Troops.** Bugbears that are subsumed into a host function as a special cadre of spies, assassins, and bodyguards, answering to the senior leadership of the host rather than to others of their own kind.

On occasion, their hobgoblin leaders will see fit to equip the bugbear force with improved equipment, such as metal-tipped javelins in place of stone-tipped ones, or chain shirts instead of the usual hide armor. Bugbears are never outfitted with ranged weapons (which they refuse to use) or with heavy armor (which compromises their stealthiness).

If some bugbears demonstrate a particular talent for some facet of combat or subterfuge, the hobgoblins might separate them into squads that employ those skills to best effect (see the "Bugbear Special Forces" sidebar).

**Reluctant Little Tyrants.** One of the first steps hobgoblins take when a tribe of goblins joins the host is to train the gatherers and the pariahs as soldiers, effectively elevating those goblins' status to that of hunters and reducing the number of castes in the host to two. Leaders and religious figures of the tribe still maintain some of their authority, but the lowliest hobgoblin or bugbear can give an order to a goblin chief, and that chief must leap to obey or, as is often the case, immediately yell orders for other goblins to do it.

Goblins that are conscripted into a host resign themselves to their fate—which could well be to have their souls claimed by Maglubiyet for eternal war in Acheron. Thus reconciled, they become humorless and show no pity toward whatever meager victims fall under their dominion, usually enslaved laborers or monsters that are pressed into service as battle beasts. When the need arises, they also work as scouts, sappers during sieges, and skirmishers on the battlefield.

**Auxiliary Units.** A host rarely consists of nothing but goblinoids, especially if it has been on the move for a while. In addition to wolf and worg mounts and flocks of squawking ravens, a host might attract or press into service many kinds of creatures. Some possibilities:

- A low, two-wheeled pushcart loaded with small wooden cages containing cockatrices.
- A hydra with goblins riding on each head that direct the beast by controlling the view of its blinkered eyes.
- Former slaves, often soldiers who once fought against the host, who now fight alongside the host to gain better treatment and protect loved ones held captive.

Hobgoblins have a code of honor. Its details vary from legion to legion, but it's always brutal.

—Volo

- A carrion crawler ridden by several goblins in a row and directed by a lead goblin using a long pole to suspend a lantern just out of reach of its tentacles.

### THE HOST ON THE MARCH

A goblinoid host that is prepared for war doesn't wait for the enemy to approach its doorstep. In pursuit of ever greater glory for Maglubiyet, the host's leaders keep the army on the move, occasionally breaking off small garrisons (often of one type of goblinoid) to guard territory that needs to be held.

A host usually marches at night, with outriders, who carry messenger ravens, traveling ahead, behind, and on both sides of the main group. The ravens can distinguish between individuals from a great height and navigate over long distances. Thus, a raven can fly back to the main body when it is released by someone remote from the group, and it can be sent out again to look for the individual that released it in order to deliver a response.

Most of the army travels on foot, and wolf-riding goblins and worg-riding hobgoblins also make up a significant portion of the force. Hobgoblins might ride horses or other mounts they could obtain, such as hippogriffs, axe beaks, or giant vultures. Bugbears don't ride mounts, but they aren't above hitching a ride in the howdah of an enormous battle beast such as an elephant or a hydra.

### BUGBEAR SPECIAL FORCES

Under any circumstances, bugbears are valued members of a goblinoid host. If some of them are specialized (or can be trained) in different aspects of warfare, their value increases, especially when they work in concert.

**Thugs.** Bugbears that serve as thugs have more of Hruggek than Grankhul in them. They leap in among massed foes and make wide, whirling swings with their weapons to create openings in enemy formations.

**Bulwarks.** The wild attack of a group of thugs is often followed by the charge of one or more bulwarks. A bugbear bulwark carries a spiked shield into battle that it uses like a plow, bashing aside whatever it encounters.

**Murderers.** Bugbears that are gifted in stealth are sent out to kill enemy sentries and thus clear the way for others to penetrate the foe's defenses. Murderers carry many javelins with them, which they throw from hiding and wield in melee, and they also carry garrotes to cut off sounds of screaming.

## THE WARBORN

While a host pursues conquest, it is taboo for its members to copulate. Such proclivities must be suppressed so that all effort is focused on the task at hand. Breach of the taboo can bring summary execution, so it is rare for offspring to be born among the host even when it successfully campaigns for years.

The taboo doesn't extend to female goblinoids that come into the host already pregnant and give birth while on campaign. Such offspring are called Warborn, a title they keep for life. The Warborn are thought to be blessed by Maglubiyet, and as a result these young goblinoids are carried into battle like a standard and used to rally troops.

If the host has slaves, they pull wagons or sledges in the center of the army, dragging along the equipment of war while surrounded by its users. If slaves have yet to be acquired, goblins and beasts of burden perform this function.

## CONQUEST AND OCCUPATION

Warfare in the name of Maglubiyet isn't conducted like the raiding of orcs or the wanton slaughter of gnolls. It is instead a practice of claiming territory and subjugating people. Those who surrender to the host with little or no resistance get fair and honest treatment. If they offer proper tribute, they can even look forward to avoiding goblin whips and chains. Warriors among the conquered people might be accepted as auxiliary units in the host, if they prove to be capable and trustworthy.

Typically, a goblinoid host seeks to retain enough of the population in a conquered settlement for the community to continue to produce goods and services. The labor force likely includes more youngsters and elderly than before the goblinoids' conquest, with a corresponding drop-off in production. In any case, a group of conquered people serves the host best when it continues to produce resources that the goblinoids can use. Only when a settlement offers stiff resistance or has no lasting value to the host do the goblinoids resort to slaughter and slavery to empty it of enemies.

A host that gains many victories might end up claiming vast amounts of territory and eventually become a true nation. Such an empire might last for generations if the military can continue achieving new conquests or at least claim victories when the goblinoids defend territory they previously took over. If triumphs of some sort don't keep coming, the bonds of allegiance among the goblinoids eventually fray. Legions of hobgoblins begin infighting, and goblins shirk their duties while the hobgoblins are distracted. Then, seeing the disarray of the host as a sign that Maglubiyet is no longer looking, the bugbears turn on their hobgoblin leaders, take a few of their heads as fresh trophies, and leave.

## LIFE IN A SLAVE STATE

When a host conquers a settlement or a community, the surviving victims quickly learn to adapt to life under goblinoid rule. The hobgoblins bring their own legal code down upon the vassals, and it is liable to be harsher than that to which the inhabitants were accustomed. Yet the host will also respect traditions of law and custom among those they conquer, as an aid to maintaining or-

## MAGLUBIYET'S ARMY OF IMMORTALS

The war horns of the host signal that every goblinoid has the chance to prove his or her worth to Maglubiyet and join his Army of Immortals in Acheron, the plane of eternal battle. There Maglubiyet marshals his host against slaving orc hordes in a bid to bring Gruumsh and the other orc gods to heel, a mythic contest that has pitted the goblinoids and orcs of the world against one another since time immemorial.

der by pacifying the population. Some surviving civilian leaders are allowed to retain their positions, often gaining more privilege and power than they previously possessed by serving as agents of the goblinoids, helping to identify any who are disloyal to the host.

In matters of religion, there is little or no flexibility. The host eliminates any spiritual leaders or temple servants who offer any resistance. Clergy of gods that are deemed harmless, such as a deity of the harvest, can escape this fate. When the host encounters priests of deities of battle or conquest, they offer them a simple choice: Turn to the worship of Maglubiyet, or prove the superiority of your god in combat. Any such priest who remains faithful to some other god rarely lasts long, because the priest will face a succession of foes—as many as it takes for the priest to succumb and for others to see that resistance is pointless. Maglubiyet ultimately offers only two options: submit or die.

If the settlement has holy sites dedicated to conquered gods, these are converted into shrines to the Mighty One. All representations of the defeated gods are thrown down, ruined, or marred. Mosaics are broken apart. Stained glass is shattered. Flags and pennants are soaked in blood. Statues are put in chains. Altars become chopping blocks where Maglubiyet's bloody axe is used to decapitate all who refuse to bow to him.

## GOBLINOID WAR CAMP

A goblinoid army doesn't stay on the move forever, but when they make camp, it isn't for rest and recreation. A goblinoid war camp is a place that is constantly ready for war, and the hobgoblins run it accordingly.

A war camp might be a permanent settlement that a hobgoblin legion uses as a garrison. The accompanying map depicts one such place, and it can also be used to represent a location constructed to serve as a staging area by a host that is actively campaigning.

The basic layout of a war camp is circular. To prepare the site, slaves, goblins, and any beasts fit for the purpose dig a ditch around the desired location, interrupted in places where wide paths provide access to the center of the enclosed area. Inside this ring of excavation are sections of a wooden palisade, each part capped with a gate and a tower on either end. These outer walls and gates aren't regularly manned or patrolled, because the occupants aren't concerned about being taken by surprise. If an enemy force does approach, though, these barriers do a good job of delaying any incursion until the goblinoids can rally their defenses.

Inside the surrounding bulwark, the goblinoids all have their separate quarters, organized according to their wons. Typical of any camp are the wide paths that



crisscross it, running from each gate through the center of the camp and out the other side. This configuration enables all the goblinoids to swiftly rally and exit the camp en masse to meet an approaching threat.

#### COMMAND CENTER

The camp's warlord resides in the command center, which is a large wooden building in the middle of camp. Here the warlord meets with advisors and makes plans for future conquest. Most of the time, a command center also holds elite bugbear bodyguards that protect the warlord and a goblin jester that serves as insurance against the appearance of a nilbog (see the "Nilbogs: Pranksters with Power" sidebar).

In a camp that doesn't have separate facilities for a library and a rookery, the command center subsumes those functions. Library records are stored in a chamber adjacent to where the war council meets, and posts for ravens are set all around the exterior of the building.

#### GOBLINOID QUARTERS

Each type of goblinoid has its own accommodations within the war camp.

**Bugbear Dens.** After the hobgoblins stake out their territory, bugbear gangs dig their dens wherever else they wish, sometimes building them in the shadow of the outer wall but most often scattering them about, seemingly at random. A den typically consists of a hole and a crawlspace big enough for a few bugbears.

**Goblin Hovels.** The camp's goblins settle wherever their hobgoblin commanders tell them to. Their quarters

usually surround the areas where slaves and beasts. The typical goblin hovel is a round tent where related goblins sleep. In a permanent camp, these hovels often take the form of wattle-and-daub huts.

**Hobgoblin Barracks.** Not surprisingly, hobgoblins have the most spacious and well-appointed quarters in a war camp. Each of the banners in a legion has its own group of lodges in one of the quadrants of the interior, each one facing the pathway that runs past its front door.

#### LIBRARY

Hobgoblins know the value of improving one's base of knowledge, and so they value any documentation about the world around them—maps, accounting records, battle reports, and other important facts. This knowledge is sorted by a legion's librarian and stored in the camp's library. The library serves as a hub for communication and strategy, and it is never located far from the group's leaders. In the field, the army's library is carried in a fortified and fire-protected wagon, surrounded by battle-hardened caretakers (often devastators or Iron Shadows) willing to give their lives to protect it.

#### PENS AND PITS

Goblins are responsible for tending to the camp's slaves, battle beasts, and beasts of burden. These are hobbled, chained to posts, or placed in pens, cages, or pits as needed. Most of these containment sites are surrounded by goblin hovels, and those that aren't are nearby, so that the goblins can keep track of their charges.