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THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

CENTAURS



This Product Requires the use
of the Dungeons and Dragons®
Player's Handbook, Third Edition,
Published by Wizards of the Coast®



Allavandriel Sunlighter
Bard-Laureate, the Elf Court of Sylvania

2001

The Slayer's Guide to Centaurs

Matthew Sprange

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INTRODUCTION

Centaurs make rare appearances in most campaigns and there are many good reasons for this, not least because as a race they are so shy. Games Masters are often reluctant to pit their players against centaurs because they do not represent any kind of evil or savagery. Why would the party want to waste time dealing with a reclusive race devoted to nature when there are thousands of goblinoids at large who are just desperate to have a sword run through them? At best, centaurs are used as occasional allies against such evils.

There is more to your average centaur than this though. They have very ancient traditions, a complicated culture and a reason for living that goes far beyond merely protecting their hidden territories. Games Masters can use the information within the *Slayer's Guide to Centaurs* to give their scenarios a lot more depth, portraying this race in a manner their players will never forget. For their part, players will find this book an invaluable resource when dealing with centaurs if they wish to avoid a large arrow in the back. Understanding a centaur's perception of the world is the first step to working alongside a race that greatly values its distance from others. Of course, more unscrupulous players may be keen to discover the defences centaurs place around their settlements and what manner of treasures may be found therein. In any case, as the first contact anyone is likely to have with centaurs is a warning flight of arrows, it is decidedly beneficial to know what to expect if a party should inadvertently stray into their territory.

Whilst it is true that centaurs are a highly secretive race, there are those who have prolonged contact with them. Of these, most swear themselves to silence concerning the things they

have seen and heard in their time with the enigmatic creatures, but a few have seen fit to record and relate their experiences. Whole generations of adventurers are in debt to such people. The *Slayer's Guide to Centaurs* compiles the knowledge of all these wise people into one invaluable tome, though no responsibility can be taken as to what adventurers might actually do with this resource. Only this will be said – if you plan foul play against centaurs, be prepared to face the most capable of enemies. Evil to he who thinks evil.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based D20 games systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. Typically, these will be the races all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike who pay little heed as countless thousands get slaughtered during the acquisition of new levels and magic items.

CENTAURS – ENIGMATIC FRIEND AND FOE

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race, in this case the centaur. Within these pages you will find a colossal amount of information on centaur physiology, habitat and society, giving you a fundamental level of understanding on how this race exists and interacts with the rest of the world.

Players will learn how to approach centaur tribes and how to defend themselves if needed. Games Masters are presented with guidelines on how to introduce this race into their existing campaigns. They will also benefit from material demonstrating how to actually portray centaurs to their players, thus giving their campaigns and scenarios even greater depth than before. For the truly ambitious, rules are given for using centaurs as player characters.

Finally, a complete centaur village is featured, to be used as an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios or even just as an example of how these shy creatures live.



Jordan bit back a curse as another volley of arrows sang through the air overhead. For the first time since he had snuck away from his parents' farm six years ago and set his feet on an adventurer's path, he was afraid he was going to die. This was not the thrilling fear of danger, which made his nerves sing and sharpened his senses. It was the bone-deep certainty he would not leave this forest alive. He pulled his knees to his chest and propped his shield against his side. Two arrows buried themselves in the shield as he moved it, narrowly missing his fingers. He tensed himself for the next wave and nearly jumped out of his skin when a voice broke the eerie silence.

'Jordan! Are you all right?'' Naedeoj's voice came from behind a large tree to the human's left. Good, at least the elf was still alive.

'Aye! I don't know about Rokim though, I know he took at least two hits before I lost sight of him. . . plus the three from earlier.'

Rokim was their half-orc companion. They had been ambushed twice before as they travelled through the forest. Each time the attacks seemed to be concentrated on the burly fighter. Neadeoj had warned them as they entered the woods that there were rumours of a centaur settlement near their intended path. Jordan had told the elf that nothing bad should happen as they intended simply to travel through. The elf's protestations that the presence of Rokim would likely draw an attack if they were detected had been roundly ignored. The fighter had thought it was just another example of Neadeoj blaming Rokim for his heritage. He now wished they had heeded the elf's advice and chosen a different route.

Pained, incoherent mumbling to Jordan's right startled him, making him jump a second time. He risked a quick look over his shield and caught a hint of motion in the filtered green light of the forest. Before he ducked his head back to the safety of cover he caught a glimpse of Rokim's prone form some twenty paces away. Jordan squeezed his eyes closed and ground his teeth. His companion was still alive, but gravely injured. If he and the elf could just get to him to pull him to safety, away from the forest, away from the relentless pursuit of their seemingly invisible attackers.

'Naedeoj! Call out to them. Tell them we will leave.' Jordan hoped their pursuers had could understand him and would pull back. He heard movement to his left though he could not bring himself to move from behind his cover to see what it was as another arrow buried itself in his shield.

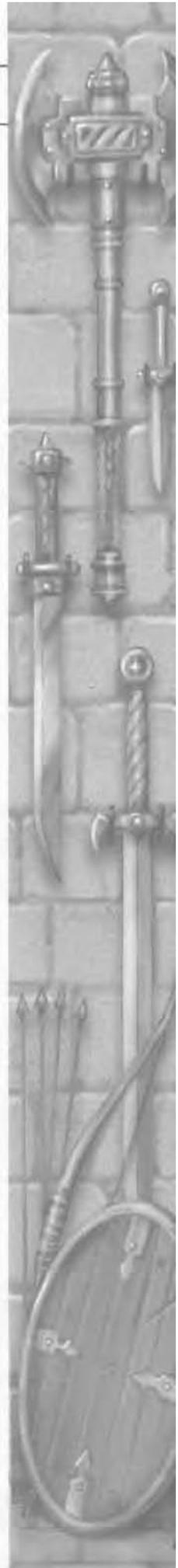
Eerie silence settled over the forest. The only thing Jordan could hear was the pounding of his own heart. He gripped the edge of his shield and ground his teeth as he mustered the courage to peer past its protective edge. Motion again caught his eye, but this time it was in the foliage surrounding Rokim. He quickly ducked back behind his shield. His companion's low muttering rose in pitch to fevered cursing then ended abruptly with a startled gasp.

'For the love of the gods, Naedeoj, tell them!' Jordan tasted bile in the back of his throat and prayed to every god in the heavens that he would not be sick.

'Tell them we are turning back, tell them we mean no har-' Jordan's instruction to his companion was cut short as he nearly went cross-eyed trying to focus on the lance point levelled at his head.

'Leave or die, manling.' The massive centaur's speech was thickly accented with the lilting intonation of its native tongue.

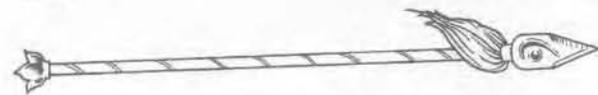
Jordan quickly crawled backward as best he could to get away from the vicious looking weapon and its powerful wielder. He stood and ran, completely forgetting his comrades in his flight from the defenders of the forest.



CENTAUR PHYSIOLOGY

Of all the humanoid to walk these worlds, centaurs are certainly one of the more distinctive races. Standing up to nine feet in height, they seem an almost magical combination of horse and man, possessing both swift speed and great strength. They are also few in number and their habitats are extraordinarily rare and so it is only a tiny minority who can truthfully say they have seen these fascinating creatures with their own eyes. As such, any study of the centaur is fraught with misconception and hearsay, with only the most diligent of scholars able to wade through myth to uncover raw fact.

First, the falsehoods have to be set aside. Legends of centaurs tell of horses with strong human bodies but whilst the torso is indeed muscular, facial features have more in common with elfkind. Such stories may have roots within very primitive cultures whose people, on seeing a mounted human for the first time, assume man and beast are one. It is oft said centaurs are masters of the woodland and can waylay those who stray into their realms with powerful and twisting magicks. The former may certainly be true but whilst there are druids amongst their numbers, the majority of centaurs simply do not have the intellect for complex arcane lore. Last, there are tales of huge cities within the great forests, populated with centaurs and elves, magically hidden from the outside world. As we shall later see, this is pure folly.



THE TRUTH UNCOVERED

On first sight, a centaur is indeed an impressive creature. Well-toned muscles bulge under its skin as it moves with a grace seemingly at odds with its great mass. There are no documented records of any centaur suffering from disease or plague and it appears they are able to shrug off ailments that would strike down other races with consummate ease. Every sighted centaur appears in perfect health, with their powerful equine bodies being likened to the finest charger of any noble-born knight. It is this

incredible physique that grants the centaur its fantastic speed and they are easily capable of keeping up with pure-bred horses that are smaller and lighter than themselves, even at a full gallop.

What a piece of work is the centaur! How noble in perfection! How infinite in expression! In form and moving how swift and elegant! In action how like a spirit! In grace how like a god! The beauty of the sun! The paragon of the forests!

Allavandrial Sunlighter, Bard-Laureate to the Elf-Court of Syllavia

The humanoid half grows from where the withers of a horse would normally be located. Combined with the enormous frame of their horse bodies, the humanoid torso possesses far greater strength than might be presumed at first glance, as centaurs can draw upon the power of both when lifting heavy objects or swinging large weapons.

Hair colour for both body and torso is predominantly very dark brown though a very small proportion of females may be pale grey or white. Females lack any hair on their torsos aside from that on their scalps and above the eyes. The hair of males is far more prevalent, spreading to arms, chin and stomachs though not to their powerfully built chests. Hair for both sexes is grown long and never tied back but strands bound together with beads are a common addition.

Aside from belts and straps, centaurs eschew clothing of any form. There seems no impetus for such refinements within their society and their choice of temperate homelands ensures extreme cold weather rarely troubles their sturdy bodies. The belts, made of leather or twine, are usually utilitarian in nature, being used to hold weapons and other pieces of equipment so as to keep the centaur's hands free. Male centaurs may take the trouble to decorate these straps with stitching or precious metals and many also add a pouch to carry the few coins and gems they have in their possession.

Centaurs are omnivores, having a mixed diet of meat, fish, fruits and crops they cultivate themselves. Aside from a great male passion for elven wine, the principle liquid intake will be either clear water or milk gleaned from small herds of deer or forest goats.

THE WOODLAND SIXTH SENSE

Good hearing, combined with a deceptive agility and ability to move with quiet grace, allows centaurs to detect those entering their territory long before the invaders themselves realise they are surrounded by an entire hunting group. The centaur capability for both setting and spotting ambushes is renowned amongst those who know them best but it is interesting to note this only seems to apply whilst they are within their natural woodland environment. On the rare occasions a centaur ventures from its homeland, the senses seem to become much duller, leading to reasonable speculation that a centaur's usual sixth sense of its environment is tied closely to their bonds with nature. When detecting hidden enemies, for example, a centaur's eyesight may not, in fact, be any better than an average human's. They simply 'sense' something wrong in their surroundings. When removed from woodland, this sense all but disappears. This could well account for the skittishness that grows and magnifies the further they travel from their homes. It is also worth noting that this close tie with natural woodland surroundings also relates to their ability to conceal their own presence, to the point where invaders may pass large numbers of centaurs unawares, despite their massive size. Removed from their habitat, again this skill vanishes and their large mass becomes as detrimental to hiding as it would to any other race.

Centaurs in Other Environments

To represent the centaurs' bond with nature and woodland surroundings, Games Masters may like to disallow any bonus to Hide, Listen, Move Silently and Spot skills when they travel elsewhere. In more extreme environments, such as icelands, deserts and cities, penalties may be appropriate, though no centaur would venture into such regions willingly.

INTO THE MIND OF CENTAURS

Contrary to the views of those willing to relate them with elfkind, centaurs tend to be of lower than average intelligence when compared to the more civilised races. Only a rare number of females demonstrate any high degree of wit and such

individuals are well marked within centaur settlements, becoming part of the leadership of any village.

The most noted characteristic of the centaur psychology is their innate shyness, leading to a preference for isolation from other intelligent beings. They are anything but violent in nature, instead pursuing the arts of music and horticulture, and remaining in tune with the greater good of their woodlands. They take great pains to avoid contact with the outer world until an intrusion threatens their settlements. Even then, a centaur will attempt to guide any possible invader away by more peaceful means. However, the quiet existence of centaur life is of paramount importance to them and direct assaults upon their territory are swiftly and brutally repulsed. This is a side of their personalities that centaurs abhor and they detest any who force them to battle but when it comes to threats against their continued way of life, they act without hesitation.

To a centaur, the members of their family and village take precedence above their own individual safety and there are many tales of captured centaurs actually being successfully ransomed for large amounts of gold. The centaur penchant for non-violence and avoidance of contact ends when any other is harmed. Invaders who capture or kill any member of the village will be pursued for miles through woodland domains and the vengeance extracted upon them can be dreadful. If a centaur is successfully captured, the others of their village will be willing to use every resource they own to secure or ransom the safety of even the most unpopular of males.

The only other exception to their peaceful lives occurs during the consumption of alcohol which is something only the males of the species engage in, but it appears to have a potent effect that far outweighs that of other races. Though they can consume vast quantities before becoming insensible, even relatively small amounts can produce a marked effect. Their shyness all but disappears and entire groups can become rowdy, boisterous, even gregarious. Woodlands can ring with bawdy songs as groups of males race through the trees, attempting to out-do one another with displays of speed, strength and the jumping of high obstacles. Acts of violence between male centaurs during such times are uncommon but if they encounter intruders within their territory, they are likely to attack first and regret the action later in a sober dawn.



CENTAUR PHYSIOLOGY

Female centaurs avoid alcohol at all times, treating it as a purely male pursuit. The matriarchal society of the centaurs is seen as one cornerstone of their way of life and thus such uncontrolled behaviour is neither fitting nor sought. One cannot help but wonder if some young male, his mind clouded with drink, might not be tempted to contaminate the milk or water of a female as some kind of practical joke. Unfortunately, there is no documented evidence of

this ever happening. Perhaps it is something no male would dare to even think about or maybe alcohol does not have such a pronounced effect on the female physiology, or this may just be an extremely rare occurrence centaurs keep very quiet about. The thought of a powerful centaur druid affected by drink encountering those merely lost in the woods is a terrifying one.

External evaluation of the specimen verifies that which most persons familiar with the centaur know. The upper portion of the creature is almost that of a human or elf terminating at approximately the waist, wherein the equine portion of the body begins at the 'withers' and continues into the form of a horse. There is little of special interest to report on the external examination except for the remarkable development of the musculature of this creature. The internal examination of the specimen begins with the chest cavity of the human portion and continues toward the posterior.

The upper chest cavity contains not the standard organs that inhabit the body of a human, but rather a sparse grouping of structures that seemed ill-suited to support a creature of such thriving vitality. The upper lungs are rudimentary, much less developed than expected in such a large creature, and are linked by separate windpipes through the throat to the nasal cavity and continue, in tandem, to the posterior. The upper heart, and this is quite interesting, consists of only two chambers, much like that of the common chicken. This pulmonary organ has two large vessels, vein and artery, leading to the posterior. The exploration of the chest cavity continues with an examination of the digestive tract.

The oesophagus leads to a small pouch, assumedly a stomach, then continues toward the main equine body. Instead of the complex entrails of a human the entire abdomen consists of thick bands and sheets of muscle that protect the trachea, oesophagus and blood vessels as they enter the 'horse' body. The spine of the human portion of the specimen connects with the axial portion of the equine skeleton as would be expected.

The examination of the lower portion of the specimen reveals the axial and appendicular skeletal structures are identical to those of the common horse. The only notable difference occurs at the juncture between the two halves of the specimen. Located dorsally, just inside the equine ribcage, is an odd structure appearing to be nervous tissue, possibly an auxiliary 'brain' for the co-ordination of the two halves of the body. Also located in the chest cavity are the primary lungs and four-chambered heart (this specimen suffered a spear wound that punctured the primary heart and the left primary lung - the most likely cause of death). The liver, primary stomach and intestines are also located within the equine portion of the centaur.

Excerpt from the notes of Ignatious Thetterveil, Master Dissectionist and Senior Research Co-ordinator, Ralize Monastery



We readied our swords and spears against the initial centaur charge. I truly thought these were sound tactics, considering the ease with which we had cut down their patrols. I used the normal strategies taken directly out of the war manuals and we should have been able to slaughter the horse-men easily as they approached. But the beasts had aid of a supernatural kind! As we made ready to meet the initial charge, the very trees of the forest wrapped about the limbs of my men. It was as if unseen spirits were controlling the very foliage surrounding us. I admit several of the men felt fear at this time and only the iron discipline drilled into all our troops enabled me to regain control of the unit. The troops found it nearly impossible to advance their position or strike out at our enemy.

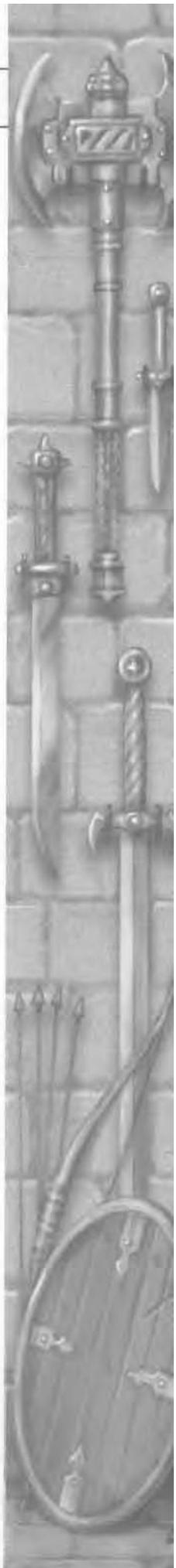
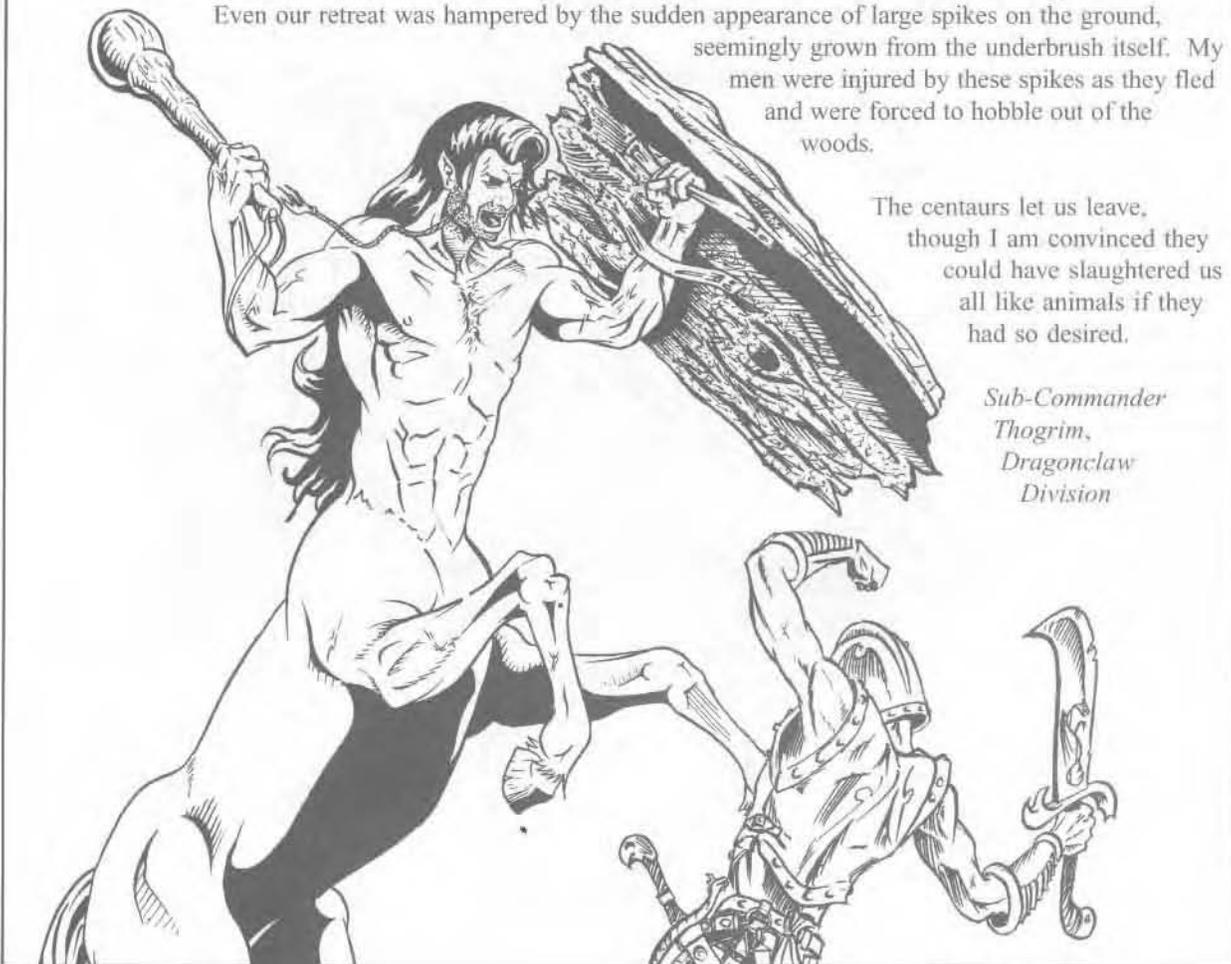
The very ground beneath our feet was turned into thick mud and our counter-charge failed as my troops became stuck in fluid earth. The devastation to the Third Unit was extreme as the centaurs flanked our trapped men, showing no mercy to the bogged down and hampered warriors. Even the men we had waiting in ambush were snagged by magical snares bound to nearby trees. They were unable to free themselves in time and were cut down like dogs.

Though I would not have thought it possible, the centaur spellcasters became even more deadly with the next wave of attacks. Our swords became too hot to hold and we had to drop our weapons before we blistered. Swarms of biting and stinging insects flew amongst our troops. Plants and trees continued to attack us, mighty winds drove us back and impenetrable walls of sharp thorns caused massive amounts of damage to our advancing troops. All the while, the centaurs cut us down, one by one. I truly believe we may have yet defeated these beasts but we had no hope of success whilst the very forest attacked us. When a creeping wave of foul insects stripped the flesh from a dozen of my finest warriors in seconds, I was forced to give the command to disengage or else run the risk of losing my entire force to those four-legged scum.

Even our retreat was hampered by the sudden appearance of large spikes on the ground, seemingly grown from the underbrush itself. My men were injured by these spikes as they fled and were forced to hobble out of the woods.

The centaurs let us leave, though I am convinced they could have slaughtered us all like animals if they had so desired.

*Sub-Commander
Thogrim,
Dragonclaw
Division*



HABITAT

Centaurs form strong communities and, as such, require the same basic requisites of any more civilised settlement. Continual sources of food are needed to sustain any gathering of centaurs and clean water is essential for good health. They must also find protection against both the elements and invaders who seek to eradicate their way of life.

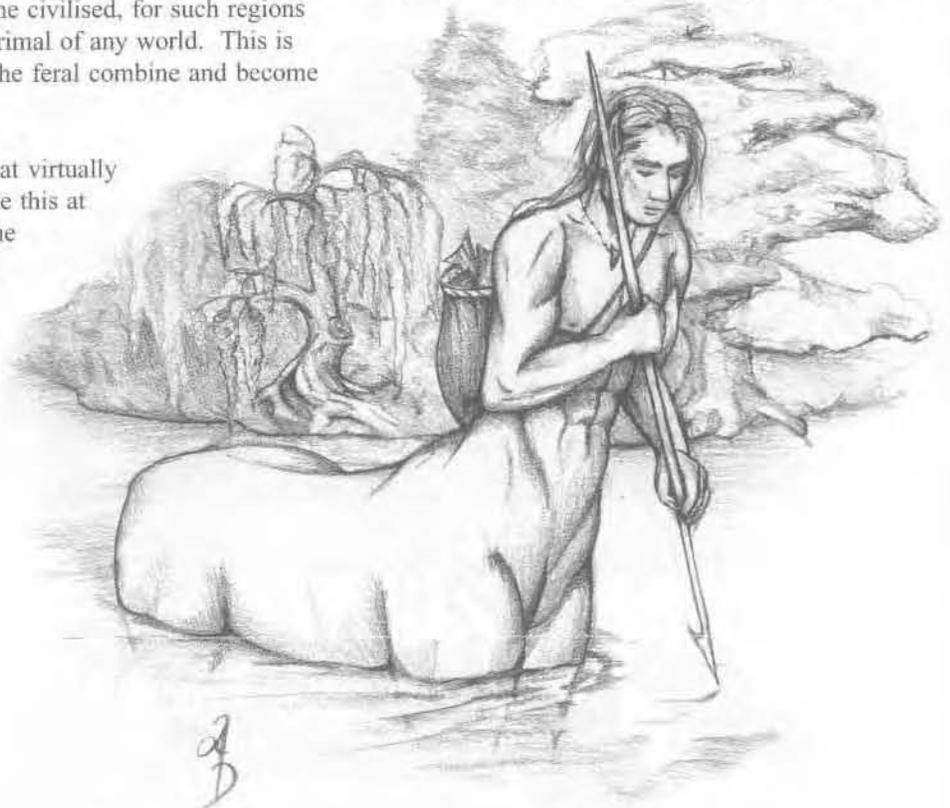
THE DEEP FOREST

Only to be found in temperate woodland environments, centaurs are shy and withdrawn creatures, who prefer to avoid contact with other forms of intelligent life. Their domains are therefore within the deepest forests, far from civilisation in the wilderness of nature. These are the places where the likes of man and dwarf will almost never tread, where giant centuries-old trees dominate and where some say the powerful forces of magic are ultimately generated. Strange creatures may prowl these depths, unseen by the eyes of the civilised, for such regions are amongst the most primal of any world. This is where the ancient and the feral combine and become as one.

Elven legends tell us that virtually the entire world was like this at one time, long ago in the dawn of its formation. The encroachment of man, dwarf and the hordes of evil drove the primal forests back in recent millennia and god-driven changes of climate cause woodland to recede in payment

for crimes elvenkind committed in some long-forgotten age, that we today may never hope to understand. The deep forests are now but scattered enclaves for the woodland folk and where centaurs might once have been numerous, they are now amongst the rarest of creatures.

Any human travelling into the great forests of the world may be forgiven for thinking that after adventuring nine or ten difficult miles into woodland, where the night lights of cities are hidden by thick trunks and dense underbrush, they have indeed found the deep forest. To find the likes of centaurs, however, one must travel much, much further. The true deep forest may lie anything up to eighty or ninety miles from any boundary or well-used track, perhaps more. Unless suitable provisions are made, these places can be all but inaccessible to the outside world and those ignorant of woodland lore will find the journey exceedingly difficult, if not outright impossible. Even experienced rangers may have little knowledge of the deep forest. However, with good and equal amounts of wit, luck and determination, one may eventually uncover these



secret parts of the world where centaurs have lived since their creation.

THE BALANCE OF NATURE

Centaur settlements never grow larger than small villages and are to be found within glades and clearings in the most quiet regions of forests. Such villages are characterised by over-sized huts or even simple lean-tos constructed from the abundant materials of the forest. Other glades, even pastures, will be found within half a day's trot and these will serve as places where crops are grown and the males practice their hunting or combat skills. Clear, running water will always be present nearby and remains one of the prime considerations for the location of any centaur settlement. As well as providing pure drinking water, they will also bathe and fish from the stream, river or brook.

Every village, no matter how large it grows, remains in perfect concordance with the implacable forces of nature that surround it. Of all the races in the world, it may be the centaurs that have the closest bond with their surroundings. They



demonstrate an unconscious awareness as to the balance of needs between themselves and nature. Whilst a centaur village will never permit any member to go hungry, they will also never over-hunt or over fish, switching between food sources regularly to allow wildlife to once again grow as it should. Where one tree is axed to provide wood for heat or a hut, another will be immediately planted. It is also interesting to note that centaurs are well-accustomed to the methods of crop rotation civilised farmers employ, allowing soil to lie fallow for a season as it regains its precious nutrients. However, this is likely to be more due to a desire to uphold the delicate balance of natural habitats rather than maximising the quality of crops as our own farmers endeavour to do.

In the rare event of a forest fire, centaurs have been witnessed working suicidally close to the flames as they tear down trees and brush in a desperate attempt to halt the inferno's spread.

Once the fire has died down, they are the first into the stricken area, clearing debris and replanting vegetation.

Overall, when centaurs move into a new region, it is likely that few other

inhabitants will notice their presence, even elven communities with whom they sometimes share territory. In the event of a village being forced to move on to locate new dwellings, the woodland they leave will be no worse off for their presence and is likely to have been greatly revitalised.



CENTAUR SOCIETY

Communities of centaurs are organised into villages, though those without knowledge of their culture often incorrectly call them tribes.

Such misconceptions are somewhat understandable amongst people used to the comforts of civilisation and they will certainly not find a tavern, blacksmith or farrier in any centaur settlement. However, centaurs possess a degree of sophistication that places them far beyond mere goblins or other undeveloped humanoids, no matter how primitive they seem to be at first glance.

Centaur villages can vary wildly in size, numbering anything between twenty and two hundred individuals, though most will have between fifty and one hundred. Smaller villages tend to lack the strength to defend themselves against the darker threats that may lurk in the forests, whilst the larger settlements can place a terrible strain upon the surrounding natural resources. Each village in turn is comprised of distinct families, numbering around four to ten centaurs.

The village itself will be located in a large natural clearing or glade capable of supporting every centaur present, with much room to spare. Each family will have its own strongly built, though primitive looking, hut of outsized dimensions by human standards, spacious enough to shelter every family member. Extensions and other additions will often be grafted on to the sides and rear of these dwellings to accommodate new arrivals within the inhabiting family. In warmer climates with only moderate rainfall, huts may be dispensed with altogether, with only a wooden lean-to for each family to shield against the elements. These dwellings are always arranged in a circular formation with their entrances facing inwards. Despite differing levels of respect being applied on a day-to-day basis between, say, the village druid and the youngest adult male, centaurs ultimately believe not one of their number is worth any more than another. The circle the families create with their dwellings is an outward symbol of this equality.

Included as part of this circle will be the village shrine, dedicated to the gods and forces of nature, and usually located next to the dwelling of the druid

and her family. Rather than presuming to call themselves the equal of any god, much less of nature itself, this is again symbolic of considering such higher powers as an integral part of the everyday life of each centaur within the village. Families are not deemed any more favoured the closer they are to the shrine and the lifestyle of centaurs allows for little time spent inside their dwellings in any case.

In the centre of the circle will be a great stone hearth, built as far away as possible from the trees that ring the village. This hearth is a communal feature any centaur is permitted to use at any time, though it is generally worked only by the females of the village as they prepare morning and evening meals for every centaur present. During colder winter months, the hearth will be continually stoked so the embers never die down, providing a constant source of heat for the entire community no matter how frigid the weather becomes.

CENTAUR TRAPS

The defences of a village will be painstakingly concealed (base DC 20 to spot a typical centaur trap) and will use all the natural resources available. The simplest will be alarms made of hollow wood chimes attached to vine trip wires that warn the village of approaching outsiders. Falling nets or well-covered pits are used to trap marauders so they can be later questioned before being turned away but where centaurs fear for their lives, far more lethal devices are used. Wooden spikes smeared with poisons and held under tension by trip wires are common. Similar spikes may also be placed at the bottom of existing pits. Finally, the village druids may choose to lay all manner of magical defences, binding the forces of nature itself to protect the village. It is traps of this type that are often the most difficult to locate and most devastating when unleashed.

Perhaps three or four main tracks will lead through the tree line away from the village, providing the centaurs easy access to the closest clearings and pastures they use for crops and play. There may however be a dozen more hidden trails, difficult for any to detect other than the centaurs themselves. Surrounding the village for up to three or four hundred yards in every direction will be a vast array of traps and snares. These will have a wide variation in relative lethality, though centaurs generally prefer to utilise alarms and devices that ensnare rather than

CENTAUR SOCIETY

Pygro sighted down the length of the lance in his hands. This was to be his first joust. He had barely been able to refrain from leaping through the roof of his family's dwelling when Narrfa, the village druid had told him he would be permitted to participate. In the four moons since that day he had carefully crafted his first war lance. Pygro had taken it as a gift from the gods of the forest when lightning split a majestic walnut tree during a fierce storm. He had carefully removed the stout heartwood of the tree with his own hands, accepting no help from his father or brother. With painstaking care he had carved and crafted the timber into a length that fit him so well it was almost an extension of his own arm. The wood was still green enough that it had some give to it whilst being nearly as hard as iron. Long hours had been spent polishing the surface with fine sand and river silt until it was as smooth as skin. Thin layers of beeswax had then been applied to lend a sheen that caught the sunlight, accentuating the beautiful grain of the dark wood. Pygro straightened as his name was called and walked proudly to the starting line. From the other end of the field his brother taunted him, trying to break his concentration. The young centaur only smiled and lowered the dark, shining lance to a ready position. Today, he was a man.

proWess, especially when alcohol is being consumed. The brewing and distilling of alcohol is the only preparation of food or drink any male will deign to do, simply because no female will ever have anything to do with such frivolous tasks. Village druids have been known in the past to actually destroy brewing equipment, usually after a particularly destructive alcohol-induced event and so it is usually done far away from the village in locations known only to the centaurs involved in the creation of the drink.

Though wines of many different forms are the usual concoction of male centaurs, they are apt to experiment with a bewildering array of differing base ingredients and brewing or distilling techniques. The effect is always the same though. There is something within the physiological make up of the male centaur that is fired by alcohol of any type, leading them to become rowdy, pugnacious and, above all, loud. Bouts of drinking are normally performed far from the village and away from the inquisitive eyes of females. Incredible feats of physical strength and speed will be demonstrated by the males during these times as they continually attempt to outmatch one another. Days following such drinking matches are often spent with the males

trying to repair the damage they have caused to the woodland, ranging from tending to trampled underbrush, to planting saplings in replacement of uprooted trees.

It is the male centaur those travelling into their territory are most likely to encounter. Hunting groups gathering food for the village or patrolling for intruders will typically number anything between five and twenty adult males. Though every male will pride himself on his combat skills, many become rangers and such creatures tend to be leaders of these groups. Though mild tempered, male centaurs are always armed, even when in the village, but they are rarely quick to combat, preferring to initially watch and track intruders to determine their intentions. Nominally, attacks may only be sanctioned by the village druid, but this authority may be passed on to any hunting group if immediate danger presents itself. It is a falsehood to say that such a group will automatically attack and slay any evil humanoids invading their territories. Centaurs much prefer to hide and watch such creatures pass by rather than slay them and announce their presence to others. Only when enemies come with sword and fire may confrontation be inevitable.

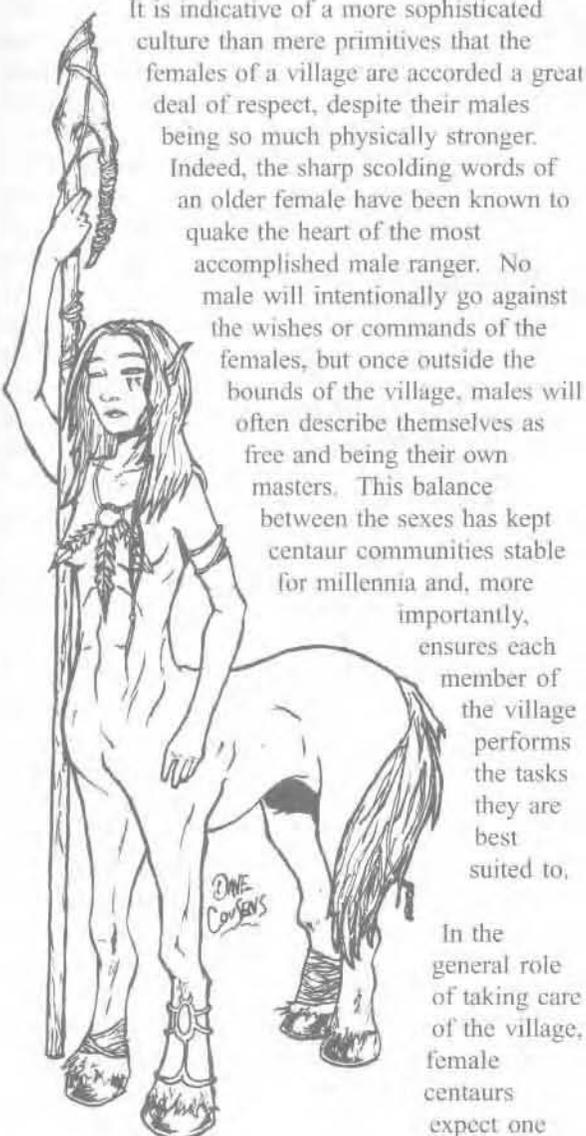


OF THE GUIDANCE OF FEMALES

Centaurs form matriarchal communities and females will usually make up the majority of the population of any settlement. From the day they can walk and learn, females are taught their duties in leading and

administering to the needs of the entire village. Though physically somewhat weaker than the average male, females are noticeably more intelligent, being at least on par with most humans.

It is the prime role of every female to ensure the continued health and existence of the village and every one of its constituent members. They do this through the resolution of disputes, dispensing of punishments, making decisions that affect the entire village, as well as performing more practical tasks such as the preparation of food and care for any injured. Physical labour is not their mandate, particularly when idle males are nearby, though it is not uncommon to see females foraging or joining the harvesting of crops from time to time, when extra hands are needed.



It is indicative of a more sophisticated culture than mere primitives that the females of a village are accorded a great deal of respect, despite their males being so much physically stronger. Indeed, the sharp scolding words of an older female have been known to quake the heart of the most accomplished male ranger. No male will intentionally go against the wishes or commands of the females, but once outside the bounds of the village, males will often describe themselves as free and being their own masters. This balance between the sexes has kept centaur communities stable for millennia and, more importantly, ensures each member of the village performs the tasks they are best suited to.

In the general role of taking care of the village, female centaurs expect one

Funerals

Unlike many other sentient races, centaurs do not view death as the tragic end of life but rather as a transition to another world or level of consciousness. This is not so much a concept of reincarnation as of rebirth, much like the changing of the seasons within their forest home. One might be surprised to find there are no loud displays of grief at the funeral rite of a centaur. Every village believes the essence of the departed, upon hearing the cries of the living, will stay on the material plane to comfort loved ones rather than moving on.

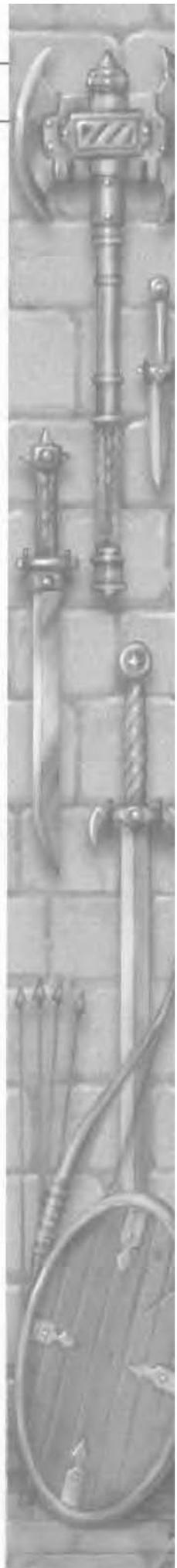
Like the rest of the centaurs' lives, the funeral rite is very simple. The body is carried through the arch of the village shrine and buried at the foot of a young tree within the great forest. In this way, the earthly remains of the centaur may nourish the forest which gave sustenance in life, completing the cycle and maintaining the balance of the woodland. The possessions of the departed are arranged outside of the shrine, symbolising that which has been left behind in the material world. After a day and night of mourning, the items will be distributed among the village as fond reminders of the departed.

another to help in any way they can, and so all share the workload of, for example, food preparation. However they also have their own individual tasks to perform as well, these being dictated by each female and her own skills.

All centaurs demonstrate a passion for delicacies and males can be sent many miles from the village to uncover a rare berry or root. Certain females may become renowned within their village for their ability to prepare food and amongst some families it is considered a great calling, the youngest of females able to command the eldest when preparing a favoured meal.

Centaur females also often become bards and their rare sensitivity and relation to the woodland around them lends their work a rare, haunting beauty that can rival the best any elf has to offer. Sadly for the rest of the world, it is only the elves that may have any real chance of hearing this unique and treasured art and so far none has been able to duplicate it.

The most notable females, and those who can cause the most accomplished adventurer to have nightmares for the rest of his natural life, are the druids. Every



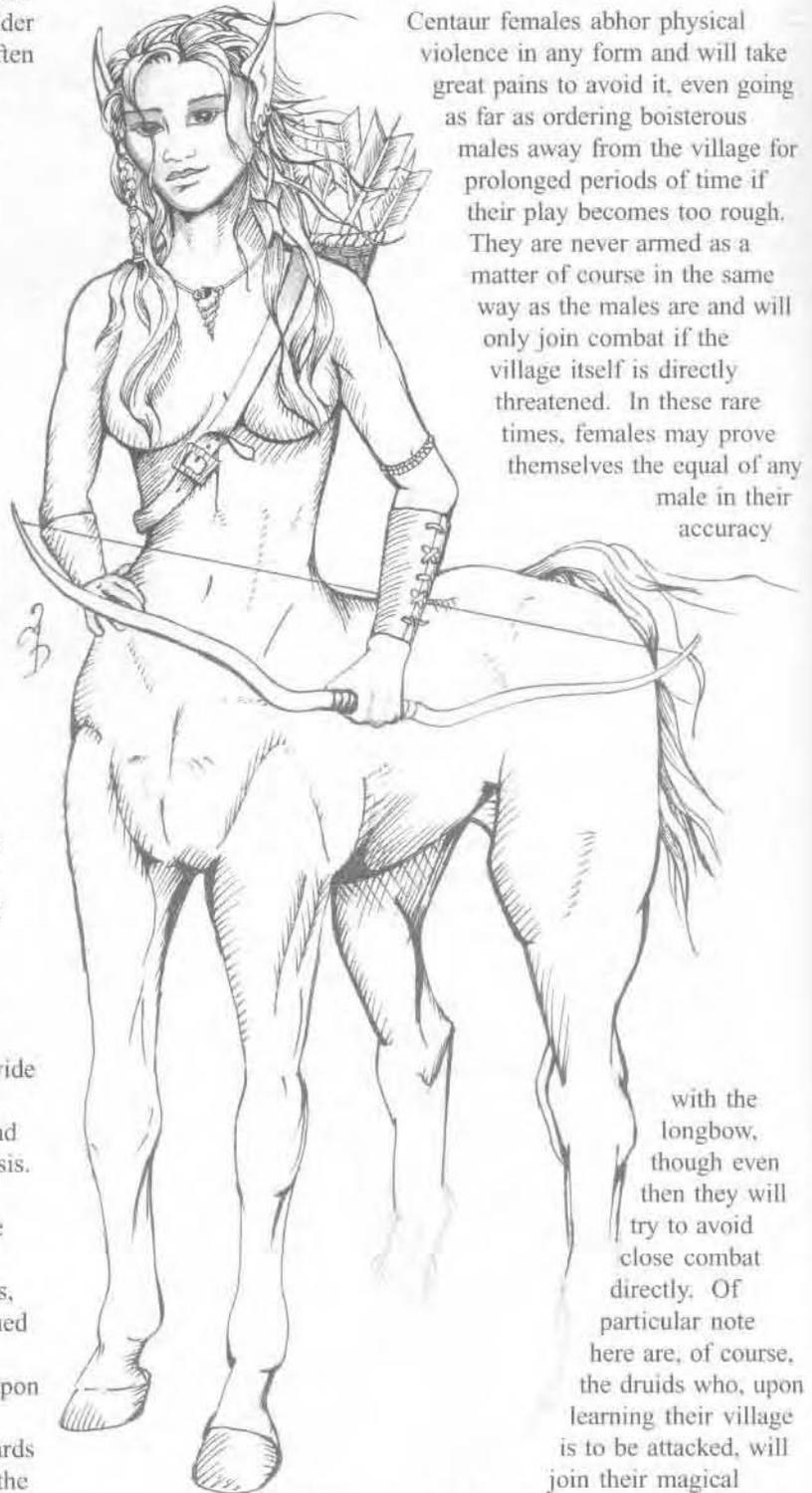
CENTAUR SOCIETY

village will have one ruling druid who, in theory, has the wisdom to resolve any dispute between other centaurs with an unquestioned finality. In practice, she is the nominal leader of the entire village, with her word commanding instant obedience though she will always take and consider advice from any other female. It is often believed, usually because of several incorrect myths and legends, that centaur druids are always those who have the rare pale grey or white hides and hair. This is simply not true as any female who demonstrates the aptitude is permitted to study the druidic mysteries, though for reasons as yet unknown, every female of lighter shade seems to inevitably become a druid.

Whilst druids may arise from any family in the village, they most commonly come from the ruling druid's own, with the majority of her females learning the secret lore. Regardless of their origins though, every lesser druid, or *failae*, comes under the direct authority of the leader and none are permitted to practice their skills without her presence or direction. The elves who know centaurs best tend to regard this as being part of an ancient belief that there should only ever be one druid at any time within a village, lest more unintentionally dilute the forces of nature they draw upon. For practical reasons though, other centaurs are trained in druidic lore in order to provide a simple replacement for the village leader if death should overtake her, and to augment her powers in times of crisis.

In the event of the death of the village leader, the females will nominate her replacement from amongst themselves, usually choosing the most accomplished and selfless druid of the village. A centaur village with no druid to call upon will consider itself to be in the most desperate of straits and will look towards each new generation of females with the lasting hope of finding one with the talent. Even if such a female is born, her progress is

likely to be slow without the teachings of other druids. This is an incredibly rare event, however, and will generally only occur if the village as a whole has been savagely beaten in battle.



Centaur females abhor physical violence in any form and will take great pains to avoid it, even going as far as ordering boisterous males away from the village for prolonged periods of time if their play becomes too rough. They are never armed as a matter of course in the same way as the males are and will only join combat if the village itself is directly threatened. In these rare times, females may prove themselves the equal of any male in their accuracy

with the longbow, though even then they will try to avoid close combat directly. Of particular note here are, of course, the druids who, upon learning their village is to be attacked, will join their magical forces to bend the very woodland to their will in preparation of defence. Few attackers

unprepared for such magical energies will enjoy victory as the combined power of a vengeful druid and her *failae* in their own territory is a terrifying prospect to fight against.

DRUIDIC LIFE

Though only the village leader is permitted to perform her druidic arts without supervision, it would be a mistake to believe other practising females are mere aides or adepts. Indeed, by the standards of other races, each may be a full druid in her own right, capable of wielding incredible forces of nature. All operate under their leader's authority, however, and by tradition will only practice their skills in her immediate presence or by her explicit direction.

The religion of centaurs is based around two core ideals; the protection and preservation of their natural surroundings, and the continuance of the community each village forms within the great forests. The marked difference between centaurs and other races in matters spiritual is that rather than setting aside specific times and rituals for worship, their religion permeates every waking moment of their lives. A devout human cleric may be fanatical about his faith, but each centaur follows the tenets of their beliefs through every word and action. This is not to say centaurs are fanatic spiritualists, crusading against any with differing beliefs. Rather, the opposite is true and it is by their very existence the faith is demonstrated and advocated. For the centaur, there is no distinction between living their lives and following their religion. The one encompasses the other.

The basic tenets every centaur is raised to respect and honour revolve primarily around the woodland in which they inhabit. As has been seen in the preceding chapters, centaurs will defend their habitat against any danger and will never intentionally inflict harm upon their environment. If others cause needless damage, they will work hard to repair the harm. This goes far beyond a simple desire to protect their territory – to a centaur, they are as much a part of the woodland as the trees and wildlife and so an attack on either is considered a direct assault upon themselves.

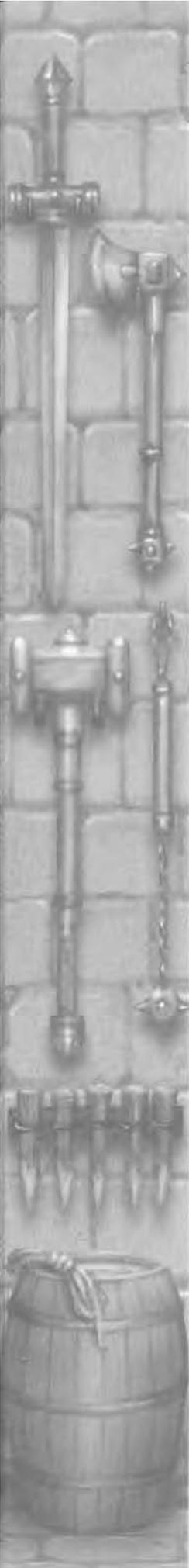
The centaurs' view of their community follows much the same lines. The village and, by extension, their whole way of life, is considered to be in perfect conformity with the great forests, as natural as the glades in which these settlements are sited. There is

nothing artificial in the construction of their huts and hearth any more than in a badger digging its burrow or a forest hawk building its nest. Whilst humans and other civilised races may choose to separate these twinned beliefs in nature and community for their own ease of understanding of this race, for centaurs they are one and the same.

We have already looked at how centaurs will protect one another and the methods by which they avoid permanent harm to their surroundings by avoidance of over-hunting or harvesting and this is how we may see them venerating their faith. However, centaurs have also developed more advanced forms of worship and religion that one of the civilised races may more readily identify with. Whereas many other druids will ascribe no god or gods as a focus to their worship of nature in all its diversity, centaur villages quite often put a name and form to the powers their own druids wield. Thus, an almost bewildering array of gods devoted to nature and community can be catalogued if one is fortunate enough to be able to visit several villages in succession. It is generally held by the wise and learned though, that whilst the names of these higher powers may change, they all have the same spheres of influence and the fact most centaur religious observances are identical in nature between villages separated by even great distance indicates such differences to be superficial.

Every centaur village has a shrine symbolic of both the woodland environment and their tight-knit community, taking its place as part of the equal circle formed of the family huts and dwellings. This shrine is a simple wooden structure, taking the form of a large log table behind a tall archway of similar construction. It is here every centaur of the village will gather at dawn to receive the blessings of the woodland god in a ritual led by their druid. During this daily blessing, each family will present meat, fruit and milk to the druid who will in turn walk through the archway and lay each gift, one by one, on the log table. This is a highly symbolic gesture of communal sharing by the centaurs of the village and represents their intimate connection with all natural surroundings through, and by the grace of, their woodland god. The offerings will remain on the table for the entire day, with no centaur permitted to touch the food, even in times of hardship. The village druid will then remove all gifts at dusk, scattering them throughout the nearby woodland where it will be shared by forest creatures and plants alike, the manifestations of the centaurs' god.





CENTAUR SOCIETY

The archway of the shrine signifies entrance to the higher realms of the woodland god, where the great forests spread untamed and without constraint, and where every centaur of good heart roams when they leave the mortal worlds. As the most sacred part of the village, only the druid and her *failae* are permitted to pass through the arch and approach the table to directly commune with the god of the forest. The one exception to this is when two centaurs marry, a ceremony likely to take an entire day and night to celebrate. Marriage is a solemn process for any centaur as it symbolises an ultimate union and is seen as the very cornerstone of their community.

Centaur marriages are for life and whilst the males may engage in many displays of protestations of courtship for prospective partners, it is nearly always the female who selects and condones her mate. The actual process of courtship may take over a year to complete and any potential pairing may be nullified by the parents of the centaurs concerned or the village druid. During this period, both are expected to exemplify what is believed to be the best in any centaur. The male will work hard to provide food for the village and will be in the forefront of any battle if marauders invade the centaurs' territory. The female, for her part, will take a far more active role in the governance of the village, her opinions and thoughts being carefully weighed by her elders. It is often considered that the female has the far harder task in this period but in truth, the ever watchful eyes of the parents and druid make it difficult for any young centaur to live up to expectations and it has been known for couples to elope, fleeing into the forest to found their own small village.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RACES

Centaur societies are primarily characterised by their shy, reclusive nature and the only contact any other race may be lucky to have will be with hunting groups of males. A select few have been able to penetrate this barrier the centaurs use to protect their way of life and describe them as a very sociable race, ever willing to help a friend in need.

Elves, in particular, are known for their close ties with centaur villages and both races are usually willing to share territory for mutual defence and advantage. Any woodland elf society will find a centaur village to be the perfect border guard, ready to fend off any intruders who venture too far into the

great forest and also supplying a good source of front line troops when a more powerful enemy appears. In return, centaurs easily develop a love of elven food and wine, considering such things the finest delicacies and a strong trade relationship is likely to develop between the two communities.

Of the other civilised races, the presence of halflings and gnomes in the region will be tolerated but they will be carefully watched and actively discouraged from approaching the village itself. Though centaurs have little actual love for these peoples, they are aware that such races generally cause little harm and so long as such parties abide by the laws of the wood and do not mind being constantly studied, they are safe enough. Humans and dwarves are another matter altogether as the centaurs hold both responsible for the decline of the great forests, viewing them as rapacious and selfish, if not actually evil. They will first avoid such invaders at all costs, monitoring their progress but staying far out of sight. If they start to venture too far into the centaurs' territory, any human or dwarf will be actively discouraged from journeying further by hunting groups of males. This may take the form of hidden, but non-lethal, traps set in their path, a warning arrow shot from dense foliage or even a personal confrontation with a large number of males dissuading them from going any further. If such warnings are ignored, the centaurs will be ready to attack in order to halt what they will see as an invasion.

Many adventuring parties contain members of several races and in such instances, centaurs will always view them with the lowest denominator – elves travelling in a mixed party will be treated cordially but will be asked to turn back if humans are also present. It should be noted at this point that centaurs are prejudiced in the extreme towards half-orcs, viewing them as no better than their barbaric kin and, under any but the most extraordinary of circumstances, will attack on sight.

There have been tales told in taverns throughout the world of centaur hunting groups placated and even befriended by gifts of fine wines. This is certainly a possible route by which a party may gain access to centaur territory, given that hunting groups are always formed of males. However, it must be warned that centaurs are very discerning drinkers, especially if they trade regularly with elves. A poor vintage may be greeted with undesired, even hostile, reactions.

METHODS OF WARFARE

Whilst the male centaur very much enjoys physical pursuits such as hunting and fishing, he shows a great dislike for actual combat and battle. There can be no question of cowardice when one is conversant with these noble creatures, for tales of centaurs bravely defending their homeland against both monster and natural disaster are too common to discount. It must be presumed that centaurs, perhaps alone of all the intelligent races, genuinely detest and abhor mortal combat and lethal bloodshed.

In the previous chapter, we have already looked at how other races are received when venturing, intentionally or by accident, into the centaurs' domain. Most will be turned away by nothing more than stern words or a well-shot arrow burying its head into the ground mere inches from their feet.

Centaur's are, however, all too aware of the existence of more evil and malignant races than mere humans and dwarves. Whilst the great forests form a natural bastion between the villages and the outside world, the proliferation of such races as orcs, goblins and ogres almost guarantees this protection will be breached on occasion. In upholding their continued way of life, centaurs have learnt to fight this evil, both by way of ambush and, in rare instances, open battle.

ARMS AND EQUIPMENT

It is the primary responsibility of males to defend a village's surrounding territory and they regularly patrol the region in hunting groups, led by one of their number most skilled in battle and woodland lore. A village may have anything up to three or four of these groups operating at any one time, patrolling, hunting and guarding the settlement whilst other males work with the crops or tend to the heavier work in the village. Males are always armed, even whilst in the safety of the village, but none will deign to wear armour of any type. They also eschew metal weaponry, preferring to work with the more natural materials woodlands provide. They can prove to be woodsmiths and bowyers of unparalleled ability, seemingly able to bend and shape their weapons as

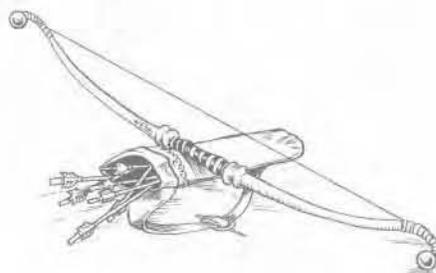
they are worked upon. Many races would consider even the most humble of centaur-fashioned clubs to be works of fine art.

Female centaurs will almost never be seen carrying any weapon, though nearly all will own a bow and can prove to be most skilled in its use. Males will always have at least a large and finely crafted club to hand, measuring between five and seven feet in length. Other races may look poorly upon clubs as primary weapons, but those of centaur manufacture are made from the heaviest oaken trunks and are more than capable of crushing the skull of any man-sized creature. Combined with a centaur's natural strength, these weapons can pack a more powerful punch than the heaviest of maces, so adventurers are warned not to be fooled by their relatively primitive appearance.

Hunting groups of males are typically armed with large wooden shields and mighty composite long bows. It is a little known fact that centaurs can craft their bows to match and even exceed anything an elf may produce. Those in the know will always choose a centaur bow before all else, so long as they have the raw strength to use this weapon effectively. It is with the bow and shield that most will see centaurs and it is with this combination that the males conduct most of their lives outside of the village. They are generally very good shots and the long, heavy arrows can penetrate the densest foliage to bring down deer or intruder alike.

Centaur Missile Attacks

Targets of centaur missile attacks only receive half their usual Cover AC Bonus (rounding up) as listed on P133 of the Player's Handbook when in vegetation. The combination of the centaur's heavy weaponry and their keen eyesight makes a mockery of any such cover.



METHODS OF WARFARE

Every male centaur will also own a very heavy war lance which is usually kept within his family's dwelling. These lances will be as strong and as heavy as the male can manage and he will craft several during his lifetime as he physically matures. They are, on occasion, brought out for playful jousting matches, particularly if fine elven wine has been brought into the village, though these weapons have but one real purpose – the waging of outright war.

ARCHERY AND THE CHARGE

There are few occasions where centaurs will be willing to engage an enemy with lethal intent and they all revolve around the invasion of their territory or the destruction of the great forest. Those interested in taking their chances with any perceived pacifism should be warned – all the play male centaurs engage in has a serious purpose as it ensures they are well trained in the skills necessary to survive fierce combat. Wilful human parties or over-inquisitive scouts from tribes of evil humanoid will all, initially, face similar attacks.

Hunting groups of males, often working co-operatively against stronger threats, will converge on the position of any marauder, using their superior knowledge of the surrounding woodland to stay silent and hidden. A heavy and

synchronised hail of arrows will likely be the first sign of the centaurs' presence these invaders notice and if the hunting group has been provoked far enough to actually attack, they will be shot with deadly accuracy. After a couple of volleys, the centaurs will retreat with all haste, disappearing into the trees with consummate ease and discouraging any direct pursuit with another round of arrow fire. The hunting group will later seek to retrace its steps to set up another ambush, usually within an hour or less of the first attack. Their aim in this hit and fade method of combat is twofold. First, they seek to draw enemies away from the village, leading them a twisting and deadly path through the loneliest regions of the forest. Secondly, these attacks are designed to wear an enemy down to the point where they will either give up and retreat, or will prove easy prey for a sustained barrage of arrow fire. Even invaders with good access to healing magicks will be sorely tested by these tactics, as magical resources will be drained whilst the centaurs will likely suffer no more than minor injuries from ineffective return attacks. Any response with powerful offensive magicks will provoke a retreat by the hunting groups as they pull back to the village. However, any such success by an invader will be short-lived as the males will soon return, this time backed up by the terrible might of the village druid and her *failae*.

These are the main tactics all centaurs use to protect



The charge of the centaurs. What a thing to believe. Such an event may happen once every five hundred years, and always veiled within the depths of the great forests. But these eyes have seen the charge. To this day, I still live in awe.

Vile, tainted orcs, heedless of the destruction they caused, invaded this forest. Such were their numbers, we elves were all but powerless to stop them. But the centaurs blunted their progress and finally turned back the horde with one perfectly flawless action. As the orcs advanced, the very trees seemed to come alive and turn against them, bending to the very will of a great and powerful druid. Then, as lightning, the centaurs broke from the tree line, fifty or sixty lances levelled at the throats of the orcs. The first ranks of the disgusting creatures foolishly stood to receive the charge, but were merely spitted or crushed underfoot. More were mercilessly slaughtered as the army of evil faced growing panic. Then they began to break. Incensed by the destruction the orcs had inflicted upon their home, the centaurs pursued, riding down many more, uncaring of pleas for quarter or clemency.

I know of no orc that survived the day. As much as I pride in the presence of these lovely creatures on our border, I fear the day our own arrogance may provoke the centaurs.

Allavandrial Sunlighter, Bard-Laureate to the Elf-Court of Syllavia

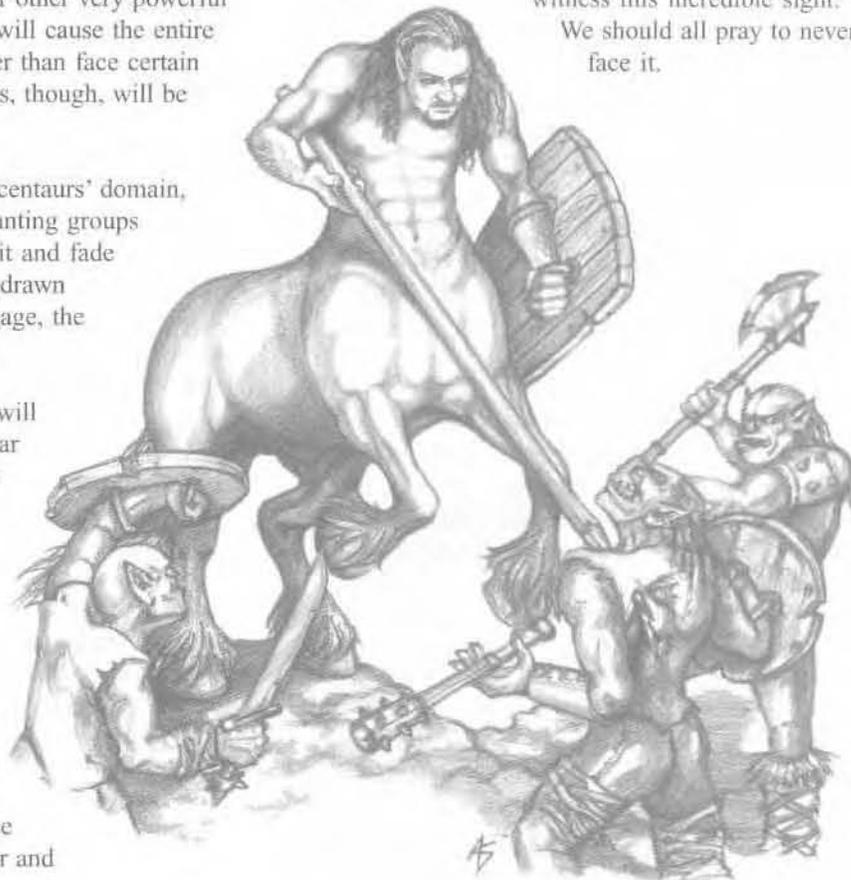
their territory and most males will live out their entire lives without seeing any larger form of combat. It is a sad fact though that the world harbours many evils and the depths of the great forests can veil many terrible threats. Centaurs believe themselves to be bound to defend the woodland they consider to be an integral part of, but their love of life and community is also strong. An evil dragon or other very powerful creature moving into their area will cause the entire village to uproot and leave rather than face certain death. A tribe of evil humanoids, though, will be fought.

If such creatures move into the centaurs' domain, the initial skirmishes will see hunting groups following their time-honoured hit and fade tactics, but as their enemies are drawn forward in a vain attempt to engage, the charge will be unleashed.

Every adult male of the village will gather, armed with shield and war lance, into one location and will wait, readying themselves for attack. As the enemy army approaches, the centaurs will strike, charging as one, lances lowered as the druid and her *faillae* unleash the awesome forces of nature to crush the invaders. There are few enemies who can withstand the colossal might of a charging centaur and most will simply flee as up to one hundred break cover and

attack. There are few recorded instances of such battles, but it must be presumed the very ground shakes and rumbles whilst the enemy cries in dismay as lances pierce their ranks and great numbers are crushed under the heavy hoofs of their assailants. It is always the centaurs' intent to end entire battles with this one devastating charge. One may hope to witness this incredible sight.

We should all pray to never face it.



ROLE-PLAYING WITH CENTAURS

Centaurs are one of the more interesting races a Games Master can use within his campaigns as they have the capability to pose his players with a number of problems. Firstly, they are good-aligned, with a strong interest in preserving both the great forests and their way of life. This means many parties will have to lay aside their swords and crossbows in order to achieve their goals and succeed in scenarios. Centaur villages are also very powerful. Whilst not as numerous as, say, hobgoblins, the average centaur can easily tear apart neophyte adventurers and when working together may challenge almost any party. A player who accidentally invokes the wrath of the druids as well as the males, has our sympathies.

This race has a rich and vibrant culture which must be portrayed when introducing centaurs into a campaign if you are to avoid wise-cracks from your players about hippies and tree-huggers. The two primary facets to remember when playing centaurs is the protection of their woodland environment and the survival of their community – but both will only apply to the centaurs' own point of view. It will not matter how many paladins are in your players' party, if they start lighting large camp fires or, worse, cutting down trees for their own ends, the centaurs will attack.

With good-aligned parties, the majority of scenarios will likely revolve around working with centaurs to achieve common goals. This will, however, first entail befriending this skittish race, no easy feat even for an elf and made all the more difficult by the presence of any humans or dwarves. Part of the point of the Slayer's Guide to Centaurs is to demonstrate to players what these creatures care about and how to approach them. Any display of strength or any perceived threat will be met immediately by a hail of arrow fire and once trust has been lost, the players are unlikely to ever regain it. It is this tightrope of role-playing the players must walk that makes centaurs such a demanding and involving race to bring into a campaign. Once friendship can be

established, the players will be welcomed as part of the village, but this is likely to take many, many gaming sessions of proving themselves. Fighting evil and protecting the great forest are good ways to start. Once accomplished, however, there are few allies as powerful as a centaur village and even the most barbaric of characters should see the advantage of a having a few dozen lance-wielding elite cavalry on their side.

CENTAUR NAMES

Almost without exception, centaurs take shortened versions of elven names for themselves, regardless of whether the two species share territory or not. Their speech is also accented as an elf's and the two races can readily understand one another when meeting for the first time. Examples of centaur names are given below and may be freely applied to both males and females.

| | | |
|-------|-------|--------|
| Arlan | Aurue | Bereth |
| Brisa | Caend | Dolar |
| Elfer | Jelan | Killi |
| Malma | Myrr | Nyat |
| Rani | Sele | Tarbe |

We must make mention here of *those* parties that will quite happily blunder into the uncharted depths of the great forests, intent on destroying a centaur village for fame and fortune. Unfortunately, the Slayer's Guide to Centaurs will give them all the information they need to have a good chance in succeeding at this. Our advice? Let them have it. Hit them with repeated hit and fade attacks as they draw closer to the village. Bury an arrow into the back of the most pugnacious character and make sure it is a bloody big one too. Call the druids forth and turn the great forest itself against the party. If they are well equipped, the party may well still prevail but if they are physically sweating after the last dice roll has slain the final centaur, you can rest assured they may think twice before attacking such a village again. Then you can set them against the elves of the area who will take a very dim view of such wanton destruction. Remember, centaurs are good creatures – they have right and justice on their side!

SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Centaurs are a wonderful race to use in scenarios simply because they can be adjusted to fit parties of virtually any level. Low and mid-level characters may find themselves scurrying for cover under a hail of arrows as they desperately try to open a dialogue with a hunting group. Higher level characters will face similar problems in trying to negotiate with a reclusive race, but if they ever reach for their swords, will quickly find a centaur village has the resources to match them. 9th or 10th level rangers leading hunting groups will not be uncommon and 14th level or higher druids may be found in many villages. With numbers also on their side, centaurs will stand firm against the most aggressive and rapacious of parties.

What follows is a series of hooks and ideas a Games Master can use within his gaming sessions to demonstrate the unique culture and character of centaurs. Not all the ideas presented here will be suitable for all parties. Some feature centaurs as enemies, others as potential allies to be befriended, but a Games Master is free to tailor all his scenarios to best fit the style of his players.

TROUBLE AT NEWBERRY

As an (almost) gentle introduction to centaurs, the Games Master can introduce his players to the troubles currently happening in the hamlet of Newberry. Located deep in a forest, Newberry is populated by human woodsmen eager, even desperate, to capitalise on the rich timber surrounding them. As the players arrive, the woodsmen will tell of wild creatures that constantly ambush any attempt to fell the bigger trees that lie deeper in the forest and beg for help. Naturally, a village of centaurs is merely protecting its own territory. Players are likely to approach this scenario in one of two ways. Either their role-playing skills will come to the fore and will persuade centaur and man to a compromise, or they will wade in with swords swinging and fireballs flying. If they opt for the latter and are actually capable of defeating the centaurs, we would suggest you go for the sympathy

and guilt angle as they see the last survivors of their wanton destruction are a few limping, pathetic centaur young...

DESPERATE STRAITS

Driven by the most fateful of circumstances, a hunting group of centaurs hail the players as the party travels through the forest. An extremely dangerous creature (perhaps even a dragon of some kind) has claimed the region for its own and has started to hunt the centaurs. Unwilling to move from such a verdant area, the centaurs lack the strength to defeat the creature themselves. However, they will willingly unite with the party and co-ordinate an attack to rid the forest of this evil. Success will gain the players some powerful allies in the forest.

THE SLAYER'S GUIDE TO CENTAURS

It is, perhaps, inevitable that there will be more than a few players out there who will believe this scenario is what this book is all about. If so, have fun!

A rich scholar from one of the large cities has devoted his life and fortune to the study of the unusual and exotic. He has many creatures and stuffed carcasses in his collection but to date, he lacks the most elusive woodland creature of all – a centaur. The scholar hires the players to bring him a centaur, dead or alive, though he will double payment if it still breathes by the time it reaches him. Feel free to let your players peruse the Slayer's Guide to Centaurs before they embark on this quest, as the scholar is very knowledgeable on this race and has many ancient tomes covering woodland lore. Needless to say, make the players work hard to attain their goal, hitting them with everything a centaur village can muster.

ELF FRIEND

During a stay with a woodland elven community, the players become aware of some disturbance that is agitating their hosts. It soon becomes apparent that several elf traders and scouts have gone missing in the north-eastern portion of their territory and the players are presently asked to investigate. The elves tell them that no word has been heard from a centaur village that guards their north-eastern border and that the forest of the area seems unusually dark and ominous. A great unknown evil is sweeping through the forest but what will the players find when they



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

venture forth? Perhaps a few scarred centaurs, the survivors of a once prosperous village, fighting for their very lives against an implacable force that threatens to sweep all before it?

NEWLY WEDS

This is one for players who have already gained the friendship of a centaur village. Three young couples have all eloped from the stern and watchful eyes of their families and the village druid, apparently to form their own settlement and start afresh. It is known, however, that a strong tribe of ogres is nearby and whilst the couples have so far avoided their predations, it can only be a matter of time before disaster strikes. The players are asked, as a neutral delegation, to locate and bring back the wayward young. This will earn them more respect from the village, but chaotic good characters may

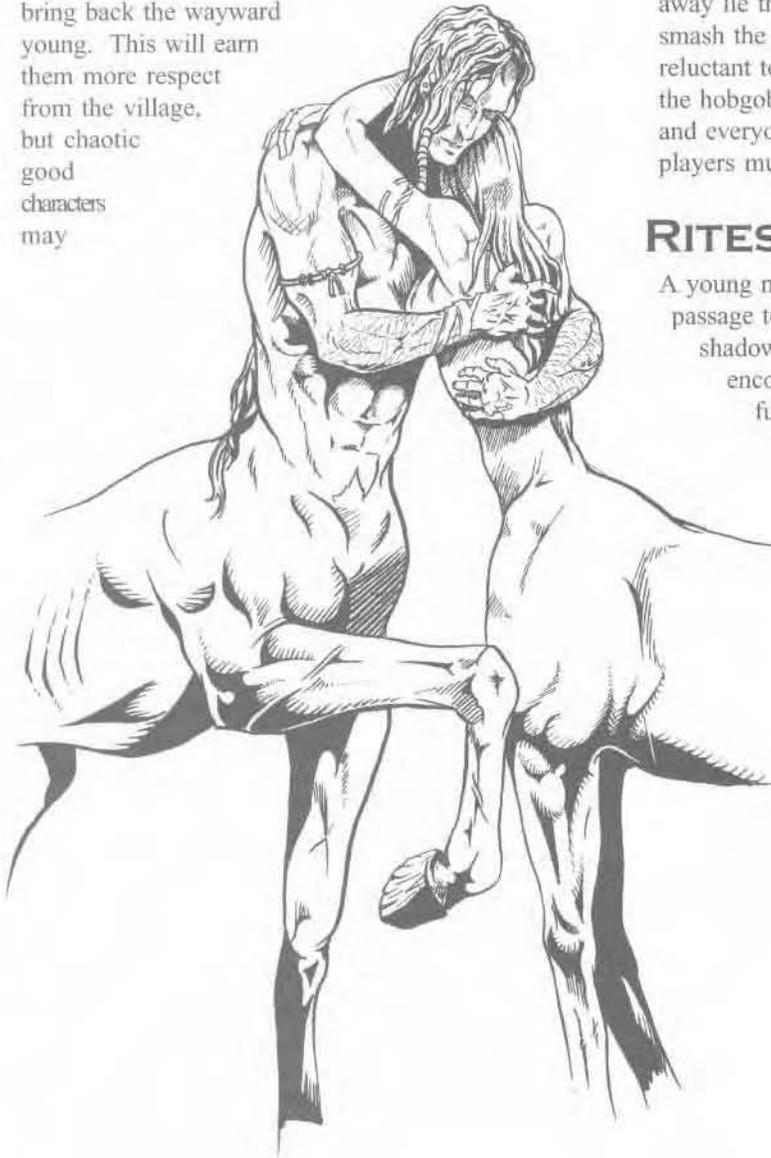
well have a problem with bringing the couples back against their will. . .

THE QUIET ARE UNNOTICED

Humans are prolific by their very nature and even the great forests may provide a home to a few of their scattered settlements. One such hamlet lies just outside of a centaur village's territory but whilst both groups are aware of one another, they live in an uneasy truce. The players soon arrive, having previously learnt of an impending attack from an over-sized hobgoblin tribe they have been battling against for several days. The hamlet does not have the strength to defend itself, but just a few short miles away lie the centaurs, whose charge could easily smash the goblinoid army. However, the centaurs are reluctant to risk their lives, believing if they lay low, the hobgoblins will never find them. If the hamlet, and everyone living therein, is to be saved, the players must convince them otherwise.

RITEs OF MANHOOD

A young male centaur is embarking on his rite of passage to enter the ranks of the adults. Though shadowed by a rather large hunting group, he encounters the players and, perhaps somewhat fuelled by alcohol, promptly decides it is the will of the forest that they aid him in his quest. If they agree (and even a young centaur may prove troublesome if they do not) then they must walk the tightrope of aiding the centaur in his set task and avoiding any provocative actions that could result in a hail of arrows from the trailing hunting group. The successful completion of such a scenario is likely to result in the friendship of the young male, even if the rest of the village remain somewhat suspicious of the players' motives.



CENTAURS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Unless players are willing to try their hand at an all-centaur campaign, such characters can be difficult to integrate into regular gaming sessions. Their racial advantages make them very powerful when compared to starting characters of other races and this can have the effect of unbalancing an entire campaign. After all, what is the advantage of playing a human fighter if the centaur cleric in the party is so much better in combat?

There *are* ways they can be used however, and centaur characters can make a fascinating choice for any player who wishes to explore their unique culture and perspective on life. The first method is, of course, to play a purely centaur campaign, with the players taking the roles of leading members of a family. A Games Master can create scenarios revolving around threats to their territory, or perhaps their original home has been destroyed by a great evil, one that has to be first escaped and then revenged against.

The alternative to such a campaign is to use centaurs within regular parties, but a great amount of care must be taken. The one time we would really recommend their use is when parties reach mid-level and one of their numbers is killed. Then, instead of starting at base first level, or artificially inflating a character to match the other members of the party, a centaur may be chosen instead. The distinct racial advantages a centaur character begins with will go some measure to balancing out alongside the other members of a party who have already started to acquire greater levels of power.

CENTAUR RACIAL TRAITS

† +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -4 Intelligence: Centaurs are strong and robust, but they are not generally noted for any great intelligence.

† Large-size: As Large-size creatures, centaurs

suffer a -1 penalty to their Armour Class and Attack Rolls.

† Centaurs start at first level with three extra hit dice. Modifiers, such as Constitution bonuses, apply to *each* hit dice.

† Centaur base speed is 50 feet.

† Centaurs have the following racial bonuses that apply in woodland environments: +3 Listen and Spot, +4 Move Silently and Wilderness Lore, +6 Hide.

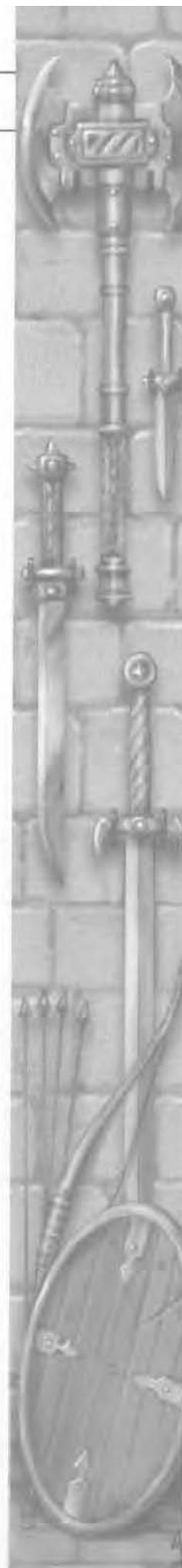
† +2 racial bonus to Armour Class. Centaurs have a tough hide that can absorb soft blows.

† Automatic Languages: Common, Sylvan and Elven. Centaurs do not receive bonus languages during character creation. Their extremely insular society does not allow enough contact with outsiders for new languages to be learnt.

† Favoured Class: Ranger. A multiclass centaur's ranger class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. To a centaur, ranger skills are of primary importance and are taught from an early age.

It is highly recommended that player character centaurs are restricted from using armour of any type, with the exception of shields. However, we can foresee centaurs becoming slowly integrated into civilised society over a long period of time and thus adopting many of the customs, traits and equipment of other races. Rather than make any hard and fast rules to govern this, we will leave it purely up to the discretion of the Games Master to gradually allow a player character centaur to become accustomed to wearing armour. We would suggest perhaps permitting such a character one point of armour class per class level above the first, with costs for such custom armour in the region of ten times the amounts listed in the Player's Handbook to account for the centaur's unique physiology.

One final note to make here is that centaurs of any type do not take kindly to being used as mounts or beasts of burden. We will leave this to the individual conscience of centaur players but if you allow yourself to be used as such, you will most certainly be considered second class to the rest of the party.



LANHYD

Lost for centuries in the heart of one of the great forests lies the lone centaur village of Lanhyd. Though isolated from the outside world by the natural barrier the forest forms, the life of these hidden creatures has not been without danger or peril, though they have yet to feel the insidious threat of civilisation.

None know how long Lanhyd has stood, not even the village druid Bethe, who has guided the welfare and being of every centaur here for over sixty years. Her own stories, used to teach and instruct young and old alike, tell of a one-time alliance with elves, long before her own life, when territory was gladly shared. Now the elves have moved on, hundreds, maybe thousands of years ago or perhaps they were forced out of the great forest altogether – Bethe is never sure. Such is the nature of the legends within centaur society, passed on by one druid to another throughout the years.

Within living memory, the centaurs of Lanhyd have had their own share of trials and most can recall at least one family member killed in the defence of the village and its people. Kobolds tunnelling under the great trees, rampaging dire animals or the most hideous of magical creatures, and forest fires intentionally started by ignorant humanoid tribes for their own selfish ends have all taken a toll on the centaurs within recent times. Such constant dangers have made Bethe and her centaurs far more reclusive than even others of their kin. Utterly convinced the outside world offers nothing more than evil and death, the centaurs of Lanhyd avoid contact with any not of their race at almost any cost. In these dark times, even goodly elven folk are viewed with some mistrust and Bethe has always given strict instructions to all her people that neither contact nor confrontation must be initiated unless the security of Lanhyd itself is at risk.

EVERYDAY LIFE

Due to their location, far from the permanent presence of any other intelligent race, the average daily life of the centaurs is far less fraught, with intrusions being a relatively rare, though distinctly unwelcome, occurrence. Though on constant guard due to lessons learnt in the past, they still do and enjoy all the things others of their race take part in.

The males extend the wooden dwellings of the village to allow for new births, cultivate and harvest the crops, whilst all the while practising the tracking and fighting skills that have kept Lanhyd safe and whole for so long. For their part, the females have remained the main pillar of support for all the centaurs, ensuring the needs of each are met and that no action is undertaken likely to reveal the village to the outside world.

THE VILLAGE

Lanhyd is located within a roughly circular glade deep inside the great forest with four trails, grown from regular animal tracks by the centaurs, leading to three other glades and a natural pasture, all within two miles of the village. All three of the outer glades are much smaller than the one Lanhyd occupies and are used as cropland to provide a continued means of sustenance for the centaurs so as not to place any undue burden upon the forest itself. One is always left fallow during each season, lest the glades be permanently scarred by the farming.

A stream, called Tanduain by the centaurs, the name further suggesting an ancient tie with elves, runs through the village to provide easy access to a clean source of water for drinking and washing. Throughout the seasons, the Tanduain rarely expands its banks by more than two or three feet and Bethe is always at hand with her *failae* to curb the greater excesses of a spring thaw. Some few fish do inhabit the stream, but they tend to be too small in number to form a staple part of the centaurs' diet. Instead, males often fish purely for pleasure, or at the behest of a female with a special celebratory meal in mind.

The Inhabitants of Lanhyd

- Bethe, the village druid (12th level)
- 4 *Failae* druids (3rd-7th level)
- 7 Adult males (2nd-8th level warriors/rangers)
- 8 Young males (0-2nd level warriors)
- 12 Adult females (2-6th level bards/experts/commoners)
- 7 Young females (0-2nd level experts/commoners)
- 3 Infants



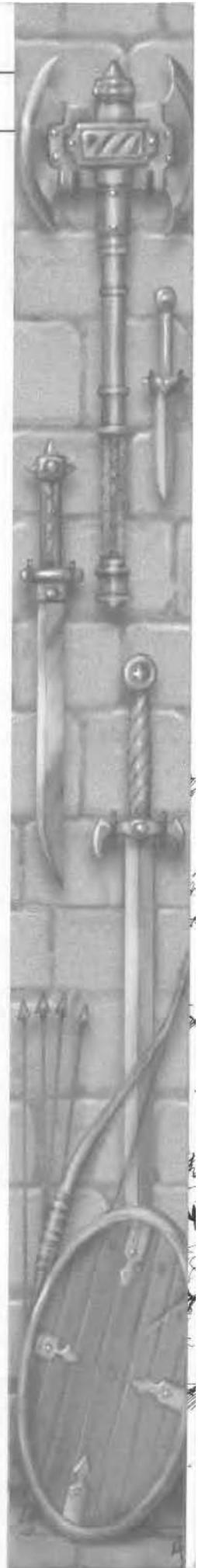
The village shrine, located next to Bethe's own family dwelling, has much in common in its construction with others of centaur design, though it has a single leg bone of a dire bear mounted directly above the archway. This rather gruesome relic came from a creature that once prowled the centaurs' own territory and brought the deaths of half a dozen males before it was finally dispatched. This loss of life was seen as a baptism of fire, of sorts, by the centaurs of Lanhyd and they have since dedicated the creature's strength and energy to the personification of Merle, the village deity of nature and community. As Bethe puts it in her tales, this was a time when Merle himself came from his own forest domain to test the fortitude and resolve of his people.

Since its formation in the mists of time, the village of Lanhyd has wavered and stumbled but it has yet to fall. The centaurs who live there believe what they build and care for endures. The longevity of their society goes some way to bearing this belief out.

USING LANHYD

In many respects, the village of Lanhyd is typical of most other centaur settlements in its layout and means of survival and, as such, makes for a good model when Games Masters come to create their own villages. In its actual application, however, Lanhyd may be more or less unique. The centaurs of this place have been hammered constantly by the unwanted attentions of both dangerous wild creatures and intelligent races and so have withdrawn into themselves, desperate to avoid any who may have the most minor impact upon their way of life. This will raise some interesting problems for players wishing to make any kind of meaningful contact.

The first thing to consider is that the centaurs here are a little weaker, militarily, than most other settlements, with only forty two being present and three of those being non-combatant infants. They still have the druids on their side, however, and one must not underestimate either their ability or resolve to defend themselves against clear and present dangers. Any party just blundering into the great forest will likely pay for the mistake. As the centaurs will actively avoid any party travelling through their



LANHYD



territory and as the actual location of Lanhyd is likely to be unknown, the first problem will be trying to find a centaur with which to open a dialogue. When accomplished, the players must then prevent the centaurs from simply bolting into the forest, leaving them quite alone. This may well be the crux of any scenario involving these centaurs and will almost certainly require the players using their brains and role-playing skills to the utmost limit in order to gain any degree of success.

The players may try to work with the centaurs, perhaps setting up some sort of camp within their territory and adopting a centaur lifestyle, maybe even go as far as tending to the wildlife around them. This would certainly get the centaurs' attention if nothing else. They may try to wait until the males produce their next batch of wine and attempt a meeting during the same night, though this will be fraught with peril. It has to be pointed out that any attempt to fool or trick the centaurs, such as through use of *charm*

spells will result in immediate hostility from the village, once they work out what has been going on. Once some sort of contact and tenuous trust has been established, the players will then be able to proceed with the rest of their adventure and many of those presented in the Scenario Hooks and Ideas chapter of this supplement can be utilised by the Games Master in conjunction with Lanhyd. These particular centaurs, it must be remembered, will always be incredibly hard to befriend and even once some sort of concord has been established, great suspicions will remain, with many of the party's actions being taken out of context and used as 'evidence' of the threat they pose to Lanhyd. Of all the Slayer's Guides presented thus far, this lair may be the hardest for players to resolve – when the players realise that even finding the centaurs is an adventure in itself, they may come to appreciate the intricacies behind this race's society a whole lot better. . .

Bethe, Druid of Lanhyd

As the village druid of Lanhyd, Bethe is all too aware of her responsibilities towards the centaurs she is charged with protecting. During her tenure in this position, she has faced many trials and seen far too many of her kin fall to evil and darkness. This has given rise to a demeanour many describe as dour and taciturn, for Bethe has a tendency to keep her own counsel in all but the most immediate of dangers. She sees the only course of safety for Lanhyd as being found within a complete isolation from the outside world that has done nothing but bring trouble to the centaurs. Even those entering her territory in distress are likely to be ignored or turned away, no matter their plight.

Married to Kerrl, a well respected ranger, she has given him strict instructions to avoid bringing any danger to the village beyond that which is absolutely unavoidable. Over the past years, Bethe has had Kerrl and the other males of the village construct an impressive array of traps she has augmented herself alongside her failae and their collective magical powers. It is nigh on impossible for a stranger to approach the village undetected and any who do so are unlikely to survive completely unscathed.

The location of Lanhyd, deep inside the great forest, gives a broad level of protection to Bethe and her centaurs, but it is all too apparent that evil can find its way into the most peaceful of glades. This is the druid's one over-riding concern over all else – whilst the area around Lanhyd may not be bounteous, it provides more than enough for the existing centaur population and so she need worry little over such mundane matters.

Large-Size Humanoid

12th Level Druid

Hit Dice: 15d8+15 (84 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 14 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: 2 hoofs +10/+5 melee; or mighty composite longbow (+4) +12/+7 ranged

Damage: Hoof 1d6+1; or mighty composite longbow 1d8+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Nature Sense, Animal Companion (Forest Hawk), Woodland Stride, Trackless Step, Resist Nature's Lure, Wild Shape (4/day, Dire, Large, Tiny), Venom Immunity

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +11

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 14

Skills: Animal Empathy +10, Concentration +8, Handle Animal +12, Heal +13, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (Nature) +14, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Scrying +6, Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +15

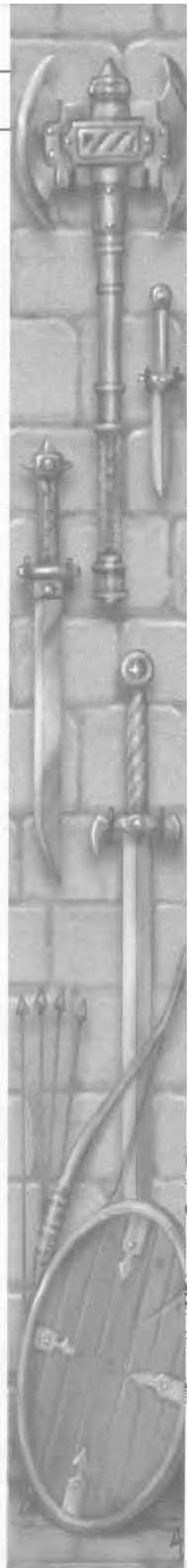
Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Run, Weapon Focus (hoof)

Challenge Rating: 13

Treasure: *Ring of the Ram, Potion of Hiding, Potion of Truth*

Alignment: Neutral good

Spells: 0 Level: *Cure Minor Wounds* x4, *Virtue* x2; 1st Level: *Animal Friendship, Calm Animals* x2, *Faerie Fire, Goodberry, Obscuring Mist*; 2nd Level: *Animal Messenger, Animal Trance, Barkskin, Delay Poison, Speak with Animals* x2; 3rd Level: *Cure Moderate Wounds* x3, *Remove Disease, Snare*; 4th Level: *Control Plants, Dispel Magic* x2; 5th Level: *Animal Growth, Commune with Nature, Tree Stride*; 6th Level: *Greater Dispelling, Spellstaff*



CENTAUR REFERENCE LIST

Even more than monsters such as hobgoblins and gnolls, centaur communities really are made up of individuals and the Games Master is urged to detail each one of the major characters the players meet as thoroughly as time allows. However, there will be many times when many centaurs appear at once or when a surprise random encounter throws up a hunting group. For these cases, a list of centaurs is provided below, giving a good spread of all the capabilities and skills that may be found within a typical village. They can either be used exactly as presented here or as just the basis for the Games Master's own creations.

Centaur Village Leader

Large-Size Humanoid

14th Level Druid

Hit Dice: 14d8+28 (91 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 13 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: 2 hoofs +11/+6 melee; or mighty composite longbow (+4) +11/+6 ranged

Damage: Hoof 1d6+1; or mighty composite longbow 1d8+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Nature Sense, Animal Companion (Deer), Woodland Stride, Trackless Step, Resist Nature's Lure, Wild Shape (5/day, Dire, Large, Tiny), Venom Immunity, A Thousand Faces

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +13

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 15

Skills: Animal Empathy +12, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +15, Handle Animal +18, Heal +12, Hide +5, Intuit Direction +17, Knowledge (Nature) +16, Listen +10, Move Silently +8, Scrying +13, Spellcraft +9, Spot +12, Wilderness Lore +17

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Craft Staff, Run, Weapon Focus (hoof)

Challenge Rating: 15

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually neutral good

Spells: 0 Level: *Cure Minor Wounds* x3, *Guidance*, *Mending*, *Virtue*; 1st Level: *Animal Friendship*, *Entangle* x2, *Faerie Fire*, *Invisibility to Animals*, *Obscuring Mist*; 2nd Level: *Animal Trance*, *Barkskin*, *Charm Person* or *Animal*, *Heat Metal*, *Hold Animal*, *Speak with Animals*; 3rd

Level: *Cure Moderate Wounds* x2, *Plant Growth*, *Snare*, *Stone Shape*; 4th Level: *Control Plants*, *Dispel Magic* x2, *Giant Vermin*, *Summon Nature's Ally IV*; 5th Level: *Animal Growth*, *Awaken*, *Wall of Thorns*; 6th Level: *Healing Circle*, *Liveoak*, *Transport via Plants*; 7th Level: *Control Weather*, *Transmute Metal to Wood*

Centaur Failae Druid

Large-Size Humanoid

8th Level Druid

Hit Dice: 8d8+16 (40 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 13 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: 2 hoofs +7/+2 melee; or mighty composite longbow (+4) +7/+2 ranged

Damage: Hoof 1d6+1; or mighty composite longbow 1d8+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Nature Sense, Animal Companion (Deer), Woodland Stride, Trackless Step, Resist Nature's Lure, Wild Shape (3/day, Large)

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +9

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 14

Skills: Animal Empathy +9, Concentration +8, Handle Animal +10, Heal +10, Hide +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Scrying +8, Spot +10, Wilderness Lore +11

Feats: Blind Fight, Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (hoof)

Challenge Rating: 9

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually neutral good

Spells: 0 Level: *Create Water*, *Cure Minor Wounds*, *Flare*, *Mending* x2, *Resistance*; 1st Level: *Animal Friendship*, *Calm Animals*, *Entangle* x2, *Obscuring Mist*; 2nd Level: *Barkskin*, *Delay Poison*, *Resist Elements*, *Summon Swarm*; 3rd Level: *Call Lightning*, *Neutralise Poison*, *Remove Disease*, *Summon Nature's Ally III*; 4th Level: *Cure Serious Wounds*, *Scrying*

Centaur Adult Male

Large-Size Humanoid

9th Level Ranger

Hit Dice: 9d10+27 (69 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 16 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural, +2 large shield)

Attacks: Greatclub +12/+7 melee (or heavy lance +12/+7 melee), 2 hoofs +8/+3 melee; or mighty composite longbow (+4) +12/+7 ranged

Damage: Greatclub 1d10+4 (or heavy lance 1d8+4), hoof 1d6+2; or mighty composite longbow 1d8+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Track, Favoured Enemies (Beasts, Goblinoid)

CENTAUR REFERENCE LIST

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +4
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 12
Skills: Heal +4, Hide +7, Knowledge (Nature) +3, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Search +4, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +7
Feats: Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (hoof)

Challenge Rating: 10
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good

Spells: 1st level: *Entangle*

Centaur Adult Female

Large-Size Humanoid
5th Level Bard
Hit Dice: 5d6+10 (28 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 13 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks: 2 hoofs +6 melee; or composite longbow +5 ranged
Damage: Hoof 1d6+3; or composite longbow 1d8
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Bardic Music, Bardic Knowledge
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +5
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16
Skills: Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +7, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Perform +8, Sense Motive +7, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +6, Use Magic Device +7
Feats: Run, Weapon Focus (hoof)

Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good

Spells: 0 Level: *Dancing Lights, Ghost Sound, Resistance*; 1st Level: *Alarm, Cure Light Wounds x2, Unseen Servant*; 2nd Level: *Animal Trance, See Invisibility*

Centaur Young Male

Large-Size Humanoid
Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +2 large shield)
Attacks: Greatclub +7 melee (or heavy lance +7 melee), 2 hoofs +3 melee; or mighty composite longbow (+4) +5 ranged
Damage: Greatclub 1d10+4 (or heavy lance 1d8+4), hoof

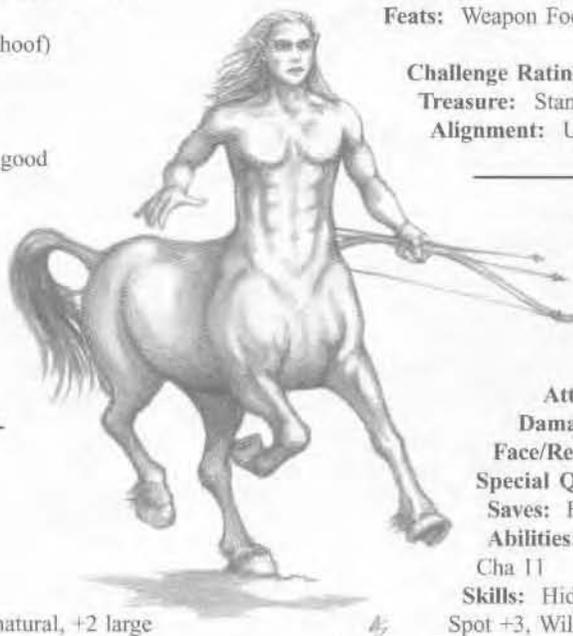
1d6+2; or mighty composite longbow 1d8+4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +5
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 11
Skills: Hide +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +5
Feats: Weapon Focus (hoof)

Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good

Centaur Young Female

Medium-Size Humanoid
2nd Level Expert (Food & Delicacy Preparation)
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (18 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks: 2 hoofs +4 melee; or composite longbow +3 ranged
Damage: Hoof 1d6+2; or composite longbow 1d8
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +5
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12
Skills: Heal +3, Hide +2, Listen +6, Knowledge (Elven Foods) +4, Knowledge (Food Preparation) +5, Knowledge (Nature) +4, Move Silently +5, Profession (Cook) +5, Profession (Herbalist) +3, Wilderness Lore +8
Feats: Weapon Focus (hoof)

Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good



Centaur Infant

Small-Size Humanoid
Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 13 (+1 size, +2 Dex)

Attacks: 2 hoofs +0 melee

Damage: Hoof 1d6-2

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

Special Qualities:

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

Abilities: Str 7, Dex 14, Con 9, Int 7, Wis 8, Cha 11

Skills: Hide +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +4

Feats: Weapon Focus (hoof)

Challenge Rating: 1/2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good





CENTAUR REFERENCE LIST

'Oh Mother, I just don't know what to do. I need your advice. Everything is just so *wrong* now. It's like someone took the warmth from the sunlight and the brightness from the stars. Even the wind in the trees sounds different, hostile and hollow. Gods, how I miss your laughter, without it everything is just so unbearably serious. Each word I speak, each action I take, every twitch has meaning to someone besides me... a lot of someones. I don't mean just Father and the boys... I mean all of the survivors because they're all expecting the druid's daughter to know what to do. How did you ever feel like laughing? I don't want to be the leader, I just want everything to be like it was four days ago, before *They* came.'

'I thought I was so grown up, so independent, so ready for the world, but I realise now I wasn't... and I'm still not. Fifteen summers just isn't long enough to have the experience needed right now. But I think I know what you would tell me. You'd say I have the knowledge and good sense to do what is right, because that's how you taught and trained me. You would tell me confidence comes with experience and the only way to gain experience is to set your hoofs on the path into the unknown and trust there will be more forward steps than backward. You would caution me to learn from the missteps I make so as not to repeat them in the future, for therein lie the seeds of wisdom. And I would look at you as if you were crazy. But by virtue of my following in your footsteps down the druid's path, they see me as their leader. I don't feel very much like a leader. What I *feel* is that if I make even the slightest mistake all will be lost, not just for me, but for everyone.'

'My hearts tell me to let the men raid the orc encampment as they wish, to crush those devils while they sleep and trample their bodies under hoof such that their grandchildren will bear the scars. The violence of my wishes terrifies me. But good sense tells me to take refuge in the deeper forest so that we might regain our strength. I remember you telling one of the warriors when I was much younger, "Time sharpens the wit of Vengeance". I think that may be the best concept to follow now, when it is most difficult.'

'Tarishka? Who are you talking to?' Her father's deep voice sounded from the darkness.

The girl hastily wiped her eyes and forced a note of calm into her voice. 'I was meditating on the best course of action to take.' The young druid stood from where she had been kneeling and turned to face her father. She could see only his silhouette backlit by the moon.

The warrior's form stiffened with anticipation. 'Good! It was hoped that you would tell us soon. What have you decided?'

Tarishka approached and put her hand on her father's wounded shoulder, feeling a slight tremble of rage there. 'Tell the others to prepare. We are travelling to the deep forest to rest and regroup. The orcs will not be able to follow us for there are no clear paths and most of the snares and wardings are still in place. When they are comfortable with their victory and think we are forever gone, we will reclaim our lands. But not before we are at full strength.'

The girl's father blinked at her, an unspoken battle of emotions bringing tears to his eyes. Finally he nodded and whispered, 'You've so much of your mother in you. She would be proud. But you should tell them, it is your place to do so.'

Tarishka nodded, 'Yes. It is my duty now. I'll be there in a moment to tell them, you go on ahead and get the boys ready.'

She waited until her father disappeared into the darkness before heaving a sigh that shook her pale flanks and made a chill race from between her shoulders to the base of her tail.

'For good or ill, Mother, I've made my first decision. I pray that it is the right one. Gods help us if it is not.'

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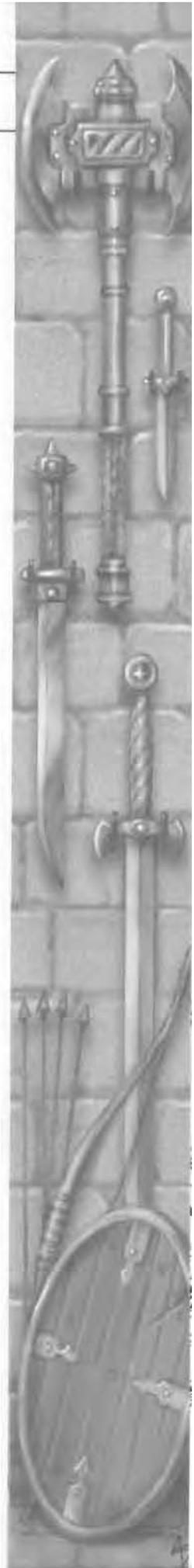
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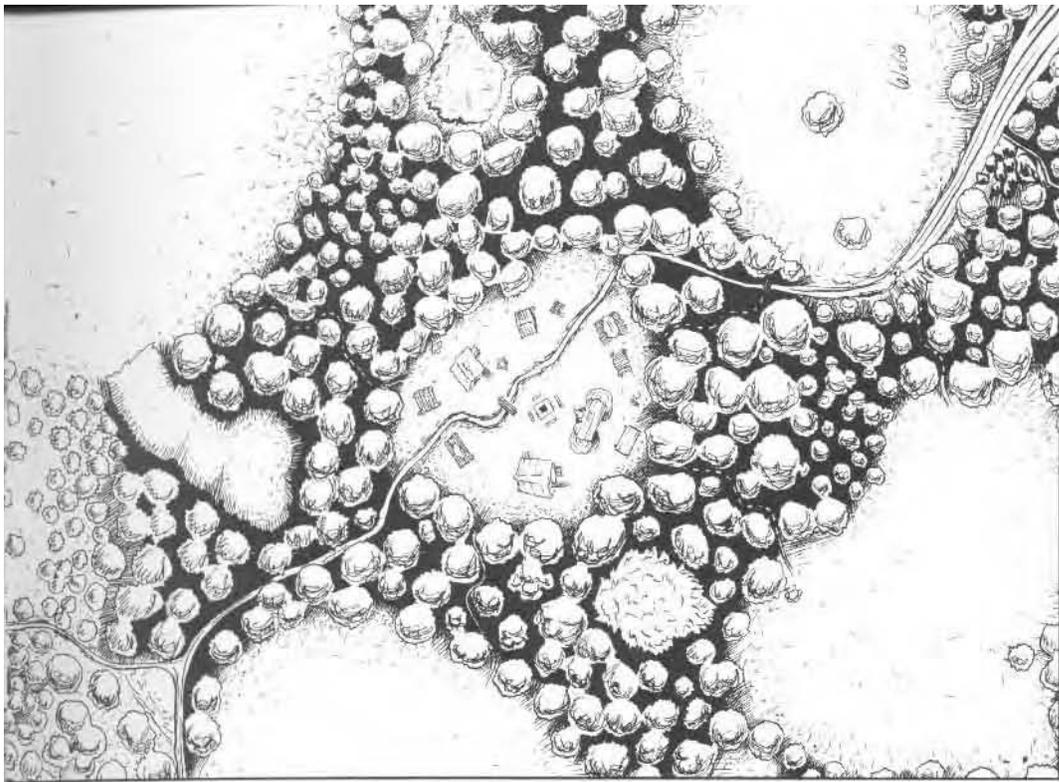
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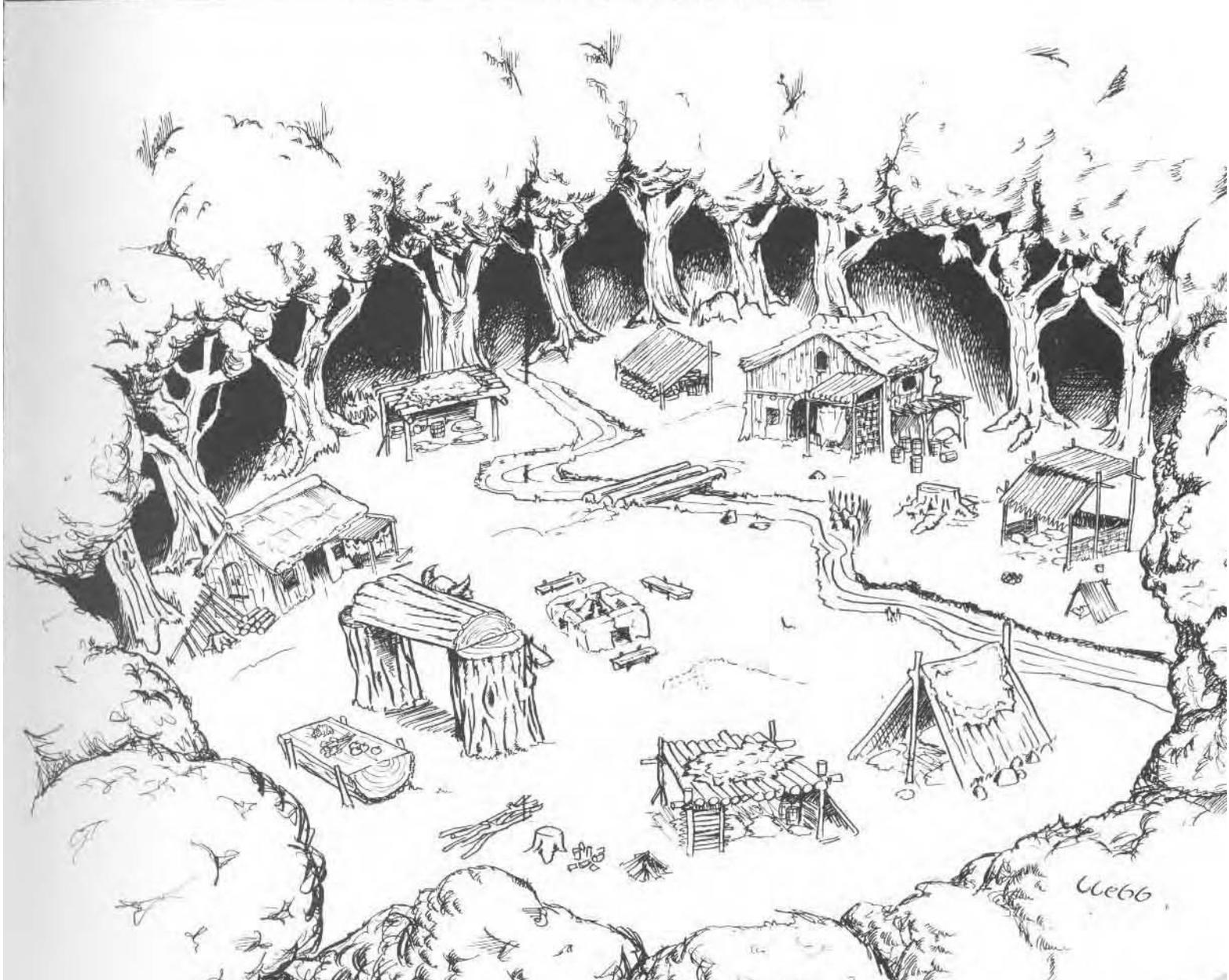
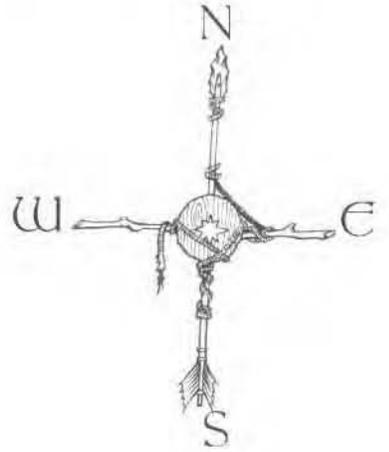
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Requires the use of the Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®

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US \$ 7.99

ISBN 1-903980-02-X



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