

FELLOWSHIP OF THE BLACKENED OAK

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Compatible GM's RESOURCE by Christian Alipounarian and Creighton Broadhurst



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Allied with a power-hungry wyrm obsessed with finding and claiming her birthright, the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak lurks in the shadowed depths of the forest. A powerful alliance of convenience and mutual interests, woe betide any who invade the Fellowship's woodland home.



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CONTACT US

Email gatekeeper@ragingswan.com with questions and comments about this adventure.

ERRATA

We would like to think *Fellowship of the Blackened Oak* is completely error free and that absolutely no mistakes have crept

in during design or editing. However, we are realists. So in that spirit, we shall post errata three months after release on ragingswan.com. We aren't going to be correcting typos and spelling errors, but we will correct any game mechanic or balance issues that come to light.

ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

Creighton is a keen gamer who passionately believes in the Open Gaming License and is dedicated to making his games as fun and easy to enjoy as possible for all participants. Reducing or removing entry barriers, simplifying pre-game prep and easing the GM's workload are the key underpinning principles of the products he releases through Raging Swan Press. Creighton has worked with Expeditious Press, Paizo and Wizards of the Coast and now owns Raging Swan Press. You can read his thoughts on game design at raging-swan.livejournal.com.

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NPCs BY CR

CR	NAME	DETAILS
7	Dhoean Tahlthar	NE male half-elf bard 4/ranger 4
7	Holg	NE male half-orc ranger 8
7	Lafithel Traivanna	CN female elf sorcerer (draconic [gold]) 8
7	Vola	NE female half-orc druid 8
11	Aurakraul	LE female young adult green dragon

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THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BLACKENED OAK

Allied with a power-hungry dragon obsessed with finding her slain parent's lair, the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak makes a formidable enemy.

An unlikely band of disparate individuals, the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak comprises the following individuals:

- **Aurakraul** (LE female young adult green dragon): Crafty and mighty, this vicious green dragon is obsessed with her dead parents' lost lair and jealously defends her territory.
- **Dhoean Tahlthar** (NE male half-elf bard 4/ranger 4): Charming and completely amoral, Dhoean is interested only in himself and his base desires.
- **Holg** (NE male half-orc ranger 8): This taciturn, hulking fellow is passionately devoted to his wife, Vola, but is also capable of fearsome acts of violence.
- **Lafithel Traivanna** (CN female elf sorcerer [draconic {gold}] 8): an unpredictable, divisive and suspicious woman, Lafithel is now considering abandoning the Fellowship.
- **Vola** (NE female half-orc druid 8): Devoted to Holg, the woodlands and the Fellowship – in that order – Vola is the group's spiritual backbone.

Wary of those encroaching on their woodland lair, the Fellowship keep a vigilant watch for intruders. Wandering adventurers, desperate bandits, hunters and even loggers have all fallen prey to the group's depredations. Aurakraul rarely takes part in such skirmishes. The Fellowship knows that news of a powerful dragon in the area would inevitably mean many groups of glory-seeking adventurers descending on the forest in

search of battle-wealth and fame. The few survivors of such actions, however, are often brought to Aurakraul for interrogation. None survive such sessions, and the dragon always eats well thereafter...

GOALS

Operating under Aurakraul's leadership, the group's nominal aim is to find her parent's lair (and the treasure within, of course). As detailed in each member's write-up, some of the Fellowship are more dedicated to this goal than others and some have their own agendas.

LOCALES FREQUENTED

The Fellowship dwells in a semi-ruined tower hidden in the deepest, densest reaches of the forest. Set out over two floors, the humanoid members dwell upstairs while Aurakraul lairs on the ground floor. The small network of cellars and storage rooms beneath the tower are crammed full of the mundane equipment taken from those falling prey to the Fellowship while the pitted and yellow-stained bones of those consumed by Aurakraul partially fill a sinkhole behind the keep.

The whole Fellowship is rarely here, however, as members often walk the forest, searching for Aurakraul's legacy, hunting for food or keeping a watch for encroaching adventurers and other folk whose business brings them into the wilderness. In particular, Holg and Vola often disappear for days at a time to be alone with each other.

Dhoean Tahlthar and Lafithel Traivanna also occasionally visit the villages and small towns surrounding the forest. (Dhoean in search of news and Lafithel to purchase such small items of luxury that she cannot do without). It is likely that the PCs may first encounter the Fellowship in this manner. Dhoean in particular keeps an eye open for adventurers planning to explore the forest, offering his assistance and advice to those openly planning such expeditions. Alternatively, Dhoean could try to deflect the PCs from their exploration by sharing news of far-flung treasures or recent events such as goblin raids, wars and such.

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The *Fellowship of the Blackened Oak* has been designed to fit easily into almost any GM's home campaign. Dwelling in almost any wilderness area fringed by outposts of civilisation, they rarely leave their woodland home. A few facets of each member's background – the identity of Dhoean's father and his lord for example – remain deliberately vague to allow the GM to customise things to better fit his own campaign.

Each of the band's members benefits from an extensive write-up. This enables the GM to either use the Fellowship as written or to employ individual NPCs as desired. Thus, for example, Aurakraul could be used as a simple rampaging dragon while Dhoean Tahlthar could serve as a woodland guide or black-hearted bard.

Of course, in a pinch any of the humanoid members of the group could also serve as a short-term replacement player character or NPC followers (with a quick alignment change!)

HOOK: THE LOST JOURNAL

The PCs may come to the forest after discovering fragments of Sehhar Ilrailaias's lost journal (pages 8 and 18-19). The document tells the story of the Crimson Sword's defeat of Aurakraul's parents. If the Fellowship learns the PCs possess such a document, they stop at nothing to gain possession of it.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BLACKENED OAK

The Fellowship of the Blackened Oak haunts the edge of civilisation, occasionally sending Dhoean or Lafithel into surrounding villages and towns for supplies and news. At home in the wilderness, the band wanders the hidden dells and trackless depths of the forest in search of Aurakraul's legacy and any other hidden treasures they should stumble across.

Encounters with the Fellowship do not always have to end with the clash of blades and the screams of the dying.

LAFITHEL (EL 7; XP 3,200)

Having wandered off from her comrades to gather her thoughts, Lafithel is probably no match for a prepared band of doughty adventurers. Thus, if challenged, she attempts to parley with strangers. If battle breaks out, she uses her powers to flee as quickly as possible. If the PCs seem peaceful – or at least not downright hostile – she tries to convince them to aid her leave the Fellowship. She has no problem betraying her former comrades.

AURAKRAUL (EL 11, XP 12,800)

Flying above her leafy domain, Aurakraul constantly searches for her parents' lair. She claims a great swath of woodland around her lair as her territory and jealously guards it. If she perceives the PCs, she may attack if they seem easy prey. Alternatively, she informs the Fellowship about the intruders who then begin tracking the interlopers.

It is possible that the PCs will not even realise they are in the presence of a dragon if Aurakraul is very well concealed.

HOLG AND VOLA (EL 9, XP 6,400)

The married couple sometimes slip away from their companions to spend days wandering the forest. Although the two are thoroughly black-hearted, they love the primal beauty of the forest and fight fiercely to protect it. Unless they clearly outmatch any they come across, they do not fight larger groups preferring to watch and wait. (Such waiting goes hard on Holg and Vola often has to sooth him with soft words and platitudes).

THE FELLOWSHIP (EL 11, XP 12,800)

Abroad in the wood as a group, the Fellowship is a danger to any they meet. Not above a spot of banditry, the Fellowship delights in setting upon and

capturing interlopers into their domain. If they defeat their enemies, they do not slay them out of hand preferring to take them to Aurakraul as tribute and a sign of good friendship. Humans in particular brought before Aurakraul have little chance of mercy – the best they could hope for is to be eaten quickly.

AURAKRAUL AND THE FELLOWSHIP (EL 13, XP 25,600)

Aurakraul and the Fellowship are rarely encountered together. The only two places where this is likely to occur is the abandoned tower the Fellowship uses as their base of operations or the lair of Aurakraul's parents.

GM Note: This is a complicated encounter. All the NPCs have a variety of spells, abilities and magic items to use in battle and therefore extensive preparation is (sadly) necessary.



AURAKRAUL

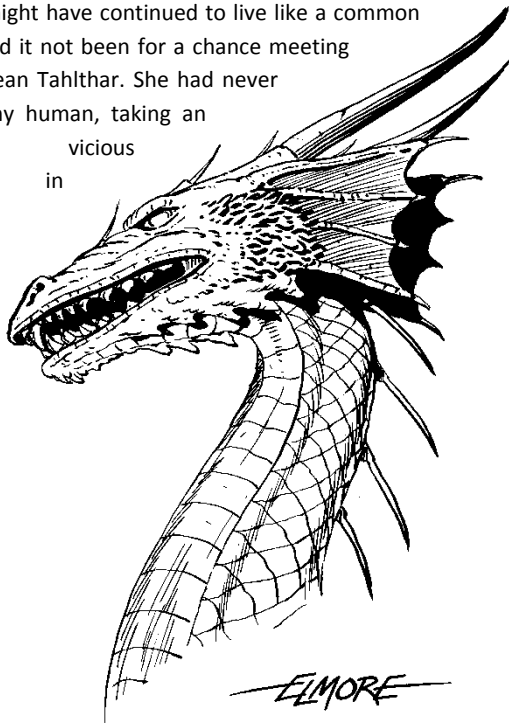
Steeped in battle-cunning and decidedly vicious, this green dragon jealously defends her territory, and is obsessed with her dead parents' hoard.

A vicious and conniving green dragon, Aurakraul remains intent on discovering the truth of her past. She has vague recollections of humans in gleaming mail and plate, chanted magic and the roars of dragons in pain. A chance meeting with Dhoean Tahlthar enabled her to begin to reclaim her birthright, and now she schemes to uncover her past and to take vengeance on the adventurers that orphaned her and those like them. To this end, the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak slowly coalesced around her, named for the most vivid part of her otherwise-murky memory of her parents' lair.

Background: Aurakraul's background largely remains a mystery even to her. Her earliest memories are of a company of adventurers attacking her parents in a misty, shrouded grove. Her most powerful recollection was a tall oak set ablaze by magical fire. She believes rapacious adventurers slaughtered her parents and orphaned her, but cannot be sure.

Aside from this single memory, maddeningly vivid in one detail and so murky otherwise, Aurakraul lived a feral existence in the forest marked only by the constant need to hunt. She knows vast swaths of the woods, but has never found a charred tree to match the one haunting her dreams. In time, the desire to find the blackened oak became an obsession.

She might have continued to live like a common animal had it not been for a chance meeting with Dhoean Tahlthar. She had never spared any human, taking an especially vicious delight in



slaughtering the creatures that had taken her parents, but this one looked different and was singing in her language. The two parleyed and each found much to like about the other. Aurakraul found the half-elf to be black-hearted, ruthless, charming and knowledgeable about the ways of her kind – in short, a perfect companion. For his part, Dhoean found the dragon to be a useful and powerful ally, and her thirst for lore about dragons in general and her parents in particular dovetailed nicely with his interest in such things. This alliance of mutual interest and convenience has grown stronger over the years, and the half-elf remains the dragon's favourite amongst the Fellowship.

The Fellowship itself was Dhoean's idea. He proposed a group that would be mutually defensive, an example of safety in numbers. The humanoid agents of the Fellowship could act in areas of civilization where the dragon could not. They could watch for groups of dragon-hunters and do-gooders, leading them astray or drawing them into ambush when they entered Aurakraul's realm. And above all – in Aurakraul's eyes, at least – they could work together to discover the whereabouts of the scorched tree that figures first and foremost in the dragon's half-remembered dream.

Personality: Aurakraul's personality is highly binary - so much so that she could be described as insane. Most of the time, she is calculating, conniving and treacherous. She is a careful planner and in her mind she has numerous ongoing plots and schemes. Aurakraul is clever enough to realize that while she is a dragon, she is a small, young one. She prefers careful thought and planning before striking and often calls upon Vola to perform various divinations to better plan her schemes.

She is surprisingly loyal to the Fellowship, treating them more as peers and less as minions – an unusual attitude for a dragon. She favours Dhoean above all, and their relationship is a true friendship. She respects Holg and Vola for their dedication to the Fellowship and to each other, as well as for their combat prowess. However, her relationship with Lafithel is strained. The elf often uses her natural charisma to sway the Fellowship into making decisions contrary to the dragon's desires, and her flighty, carefree attitude frequently clashes with Aurakraul's deliberate and methodical nature.

When roused to anger her sanguine and collected nature gives way to a terrifying rage. It is during these times that the dragon's pent up fury over her parents' fate as well as her draconic nature erupts. When it does, she wades into battle, tearing at flesh and shattering bones. Even the members of the Fellowship stay clear of her for fear of falling prey to the acrid tang of her noxious breath.

Because she believes humans slew her parents, she finds it very difficult to view them as anything but enemies. Humans falling into her clutches are eaten alive after a cursory session of

torturous interrogation. Other sorts of humanoids might be able to barter for their lives, particularly if they have information or lore of interest to her and volunteer to join the Fellowship.

Mannerisms: Aurakraul's voice is surprisingly pleasant to the ear, praise and threats coming across in an equally purring, warm tone. She is thoughtful, and often pauses for a few moments before responding to even straightforward questions.

Distinguishing Features: Aurakraul's scales are a rich emerald hue. She takes great pride in her appearance; she is fastidious about making sure her teeth are white and her claws are sharp. Her most striking feature is her eyes, a glacial blue that burns with an intensity born of madness hatred or both.

Her right flank is badly scarred and many of her scales there are ruined. She tends to shield that side of her body from those with whom she is speaking. She does so not because this part of her body is especially vulnerable; rather, she does so out of self-conscious vanity; woe to anyone who mocks her disfigurement!

Hooks: Most meetings with Aurakraul feature a desperate battle. Other situations are possible, however.

A group that has discovered the dragon's interests (draconic lore, the location of her family lair, etc.) could arrange a meeting with her, though Dhoean usually handles such encounters,

acting as her voice in all things. Because of her lawful alignment, Aurakraul honours any compacts into which she enters, although she seeks to twist such bargains to suit her own needs.

Alternatively, the PCs might claim an area of the forest containing the Blackened Oak – perhaps unwittingly building a stronghold nearby – thereby rapidly coming into conflict with Aurakraul and her allies. In a twist of the usual stereotype, perhaps the PCs find Aurakraul's parents' treasure trove, and for once it is the adventurers who must defend the treasure from a vengeful dragon.

In unusual circumstances, such as a potent threat to the forest, Aurakraul may form an alliance of convenience with the PCs. She views the forest as her domain, and with the Fellowship's focus on nature, a threat to the forest could mobilize them out of self-interest. It is probable that this alliance crumbles the moment the threat is overcome, but the dynamics of such cooperation would make for intriguing roleplaying.

AURAKRAUL CR 11 (XP 12,800)

Female young adult green dragon

LE Huge dragon (air)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., blindsense 60 ft., Aurakraul sees four times as well as a human in dim light and twice as well in bright light; Perception +18, Sense Motive +14

Speed 40 ft. (woodland stride), fly 200 ft. (poor; Flyby Attack), swim 40 ft.

Woodland Stride (Ex) Aurakraul can move through normal foliage at full speed without taking damage or suffering impediment. Foliage affected by magic, affects her normally.

ACP 0; Acrobatics +0 (+4 jumping), Climb +11, Fly +8, Stealth -8, Swim +21

AC 24, touch 8, flat-footed 24; **CMD** 32

(-2 size, +16 natural)

Immune acid, paralysis, sleep

Fort +12, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10; **SR** 22

hp 136 (13 HD); **DR** magic/5

Space 15 ft. (frightful presence 150 ft.); **Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +22

Frightful Presence (Ex) Creatures within 150 ft. of Aurakraul with fewer than 13 HD must make a DC 18 Will save or become shaken (or panicked if it has 4 HD or fewer) for 5d6 rounds if they see her charge or attack. A creature making a successful saving throw is immune to Aurakraul's frightful presence for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Melee bite (reach 15 ft.) +18 (3d8+10/19-20),
2 claws (reach 10 ft.) +18 each (2d6+7),
2 wings (reach 10 ft.) +16 each (1d8+3) and
tail slap (reach 10 ft.) +16 (2d6+10)

Atk Options Power Attack (-4 attack, +12 damage with bite, claws and crush, +4 damage with wings and tail slap), crush

Crush (Ex) If flying or jumping, Aurakraul can, as a standard action, land on foes that are three or more size categories smaller than her. She affects as many creatures that fit in her space. Creatures in the affected area must make a DC 22 Reflex save or be pinned, automatically taking 2d8+10 bludgeoning damage in the next round unless Aurakraul moves (or they escape). She can maintain the pin with a combat manoeuvre check as normal. Pinned foes take crush damage every round unless they escape.

Special Actions breath weapon

Breath Weapon (Su) Every 1d4 rounds, as a standard action, Aurakraul can breathe a 50 ft. cone of acid. Creatures in the cone take 10d6 acid damage (DC 22 Reflex save halves). Aurakraul can use her breath weapon while grappling.

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 3rd; concentration +5)

1st (6/day)—*expeditious retreat*, *mage armour*, *shield*

0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 12), *mage hand*, *message*

Spell-like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +15)

At-will—*entangle* (DC 13) *charm person* (DC 13)

Abilities Str 25, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 14

SQ water breathing

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Power Attack

Skills as above plus Appraise +10, Bluff +18, Diplomacy +18, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nature) +18, Spellcraft +6

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven

Water Breathing Aurakraul can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use her breath weapon, spells and other abilities while submerged.

AURAKRAUL'S PARENTS

Slain long ago by the Crimson Swords, Aurakraul's parents had amassed a great store of treasure.

Tsotynbahr and Vureenthrothr were a mated pair of mature adult green dragons that dwelled deep in the forest. Powerful predators, they were both hateful, spiteful creatures. Local stories still relate their destruction of several villages and their deaths at the hands of the Crimson Swords.

THE LAIR

Set in an isolated part of the woodlands, Tsotynbahr's and Vureenthrothr's lair is beset by mists and warded by impenetrable thickets of gorse and brambles. The blackened and scorched remains of an immensely ancient oak tree (once home to a dryad cruelly slain by the dragons) stands before the cave.

The cave has remained undisturbed since the Crimson Swords retreated from the forest to return several slain members to life. Sadly, encumbered by the bodies of their fallen companions, the survivors could only carry off a few choice items; thus most of the hoard remains untouched.

THE CRIMSON SWORDS

A character making a Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (history) check may know some information about the Crimson Swords. A successful check reveals all information gained by a lesser check.

DC 15: Active around 50 years ago, the Crimson Swords was a powerful group responsible for the deaths of almost a dozen wyrms.

DC 20: The Crimson Swords were seven-strong. Of the seven, five were humans while the final two were half-elf brothers. Most are now either dead or extremely old.

DC 25: The Crimson Swords comprised Steren Nance (female human fighter; alive but very old), Talan Uren (male human ranger; deceased), Jenna Ahearn (female human cleric; deceased), Caja Uren (female human rogue; deceased), Sehhar Ilrailaias (male half-elf sorcerer/fighter; alive), Morwenna Faull (female human wizard; deceased) and Evlian Soltasean (male half-elf druid; alive).

FORESHADOWING

If the GM desires he could determine that one or more of the PCs are related to the Crimson Swords. Perhaps a PC is the child of one of the members or is related in some other way. The PC could come across accounts of the unclaimed treasure in their parent's journals (pages 18-19), which gives them a reason to explore Aurakraul's domain.

Flocks of birds now nest in the cavern making nests on the many ledges of the cave walls. Deep within the cave dwell thousands of bats that emerge at night to hunt in the surrounding forest. The bones and scales of both dragons still lie where they fell – even a cursory glance at the remains shows that great violence was wrought upon them ere they fell. Scattered about, the remaining treasure of the dragons is slowly being covered with bird droppings and bat guano.

THE HOARD

Unable to carry the vast bulk of treasure away, the Crimson Swords made a map of the lair's location vowing to return. However, they never did; shattered by the battle, the band drifted apart and never mounted another expedition. Thus, adventurers finding the lair discover a great store of treasure. The hoard comprises:

- A great mass of coins scattered about the cavern. In total, there are 151 pp, 3,492 gp, 5,934 sp and 14,648 cp in a heap. Bird droppings and bat guano cover much of the coinage, making retrieval a difficult and smelly task.
- Scattered among the coins (and also drenched in bird droppings) lie the following gems:
 - 4 transparent bright deep green stones (emeralds worth 500 gp each; DC 25 Appraise identifies).
 - 12 transparent red brown stones (spinel each worth

AURAKRAUL'S PARENTS

A character making a Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (history) check may know some information about Aurakraul's parents. A successful check reveals all information gained by a lesser check.

DC 20: Aurakraul is the progeny of Tsotynbahr (her father) and Vureenthrothr (her mother). Both were mature adult green dragons that fell before the swords and spells of the Crimson Swords. Legends relate how the survivors could not retrieve the bulk of the dragons' treasure because they had to carry away the bodies of several slain members so they could be returned to life. Shortly thereafter, the group drifted apart. Thus, the bulk of the treasure remained unrecovered.

DC 25: Tsotynbahr and Vureenthrothr dwelled in a deep cave hidden in the most remote part of the forest. In a shallow valley, ringed by dense thorn bushes the place was practically unreachable on foot.

DC 30: The deepest recess of the dragons' lair contains an ancient permanent *teleportation circle*. Damaged in ages past, the magic of the circle fluctuates, sending those stepping within to several locations of ancient artifice.

- 3 transparent blue stones (sapphires worth 1,000 gp each; DC 25 Appraise identifies).
- A slender longsword of obvious elven manufacture; intricate carvings of leaves decorate the blade (faint evocation [DC 16 Knowledge {arcana}]; DC 18 Spellcraft identifies as a *+1 longsword*).
- A small granite cube carved with the Draconic rune for warning (faint abjuration [DC 16 Knowledge {arcana}]; DC 18 Spellcraft identifies as a *stone of alarm*).
- A simple golden crown that feels slightly warm to the touch (moderate evocation [DC 18 Knowledge {arcana}]; DC 21 Spellcraft identifies as a *minor crown of blasting*).
- A golden harp decorated with intricate carvings of elven maidens arms raised in song (faint enchantment [DC 18 Knowledge {arcana}]; DC 20 Spellcraft identifies as a *harp of charming*).
- A small, crude bronze statuette of a griffon (moderate transmutation [DC 21 Knowledge {arcana}]; DC 26 Spellcraft identifies as a *figurine of wondrous power [bronze griffon]*).
- A battered-looking flask full of pure water (moderate transmutation [DC 21 Knowledge {arcana}]; DC 24 Spellcraft identifies as a *decanter of endless water*).

- A glowing, but otherwise unremarkable short sword (strong evocation [DC 24 Knowledge {arcana}]; DC 32 Spellcraft identifies as a *luck blade* with no wishes remaining)
- **Disease:** Characters retrieving the treasure expose themselves to a variety of minor diseases lurking within the bird droppings and bat guano. This concoction of diseases is equivalent to bubonic plague (*onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d4 Con damage and 1 Cha damage and the target is fatigued; *cure* 2 consecutive saves [DC 17 Fortitude]).

HOOKS

The PCs could come across Tsotyhbahr's and Vureenthroth's lair by following the map in Sehhar Ilrailaias' lost journal (pages 4 and 18-19).

Alternatively, the PCs could enter the lair through a malfunctioning *teleportation circle* hidden deep within the caves. Using this alternative plot hook turns the situation on its head. Instead of defeating a dragon to gain its loot, the PCs gain the hoard without having to fight. However, Aurakraul and the Fellowship inevitably discover the PCs' good fortune – either through encountering them in the forest or by hearing rumours of their sudden wealth. Thus, the PCs will quickly have their hands full keeping the treasure away from a vengeful Aurakraul.



DHOEAN TAHLTHAR

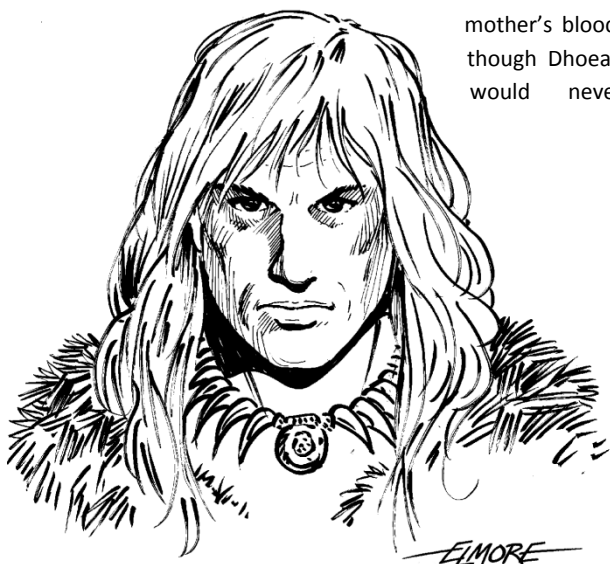
Charming and amoral, Dhoean is interested only in himself and what he wants. And scullery maids...

The son of a seneschal to a cruel and ruthless lord Dhoean Tahlthar was forced into exile and a nomadic life of banditry when his father's master was overthrown. He is the "kingmaker" of the Fellowship, whose strong voice often sways the band into a course of action he favours. He recognizes power when he sees it and works with Aurakraul in the hopes of reaping rich rewards.

Background: Dhoean was born into a life of wealth and privilege. His human father was the grim-faced seneschal of a noble lord while his mother was an elven pleasure-slave given to his father as a reward for loyal service. At first, he demonstrated every negative stereotype of someone born into power and wealth, but although a spoilt and petulant child, he was doggedly loyal to his father. He terrorized the scullery-maids of the castle – in his youth by vicious pranks, but later in more perverse and sinister ways. When not forcing himself on women, Dhoean learned scholarship, diplomacy and court intrigue from his father.

If Dhoean's father was merely amoral, the lord he served was pitiless and heartless. Eventually, his own people rose up against him. Dhoean barely escaped the ensuing bloodbath, but his father was not so fortunate. Alone, the first few years were jarring ones for the now-homeless bard. He refused to be reduced to begging or "playing for his supper" like some common minstrel. Instead, he conned others out of their coin or took it by force. The latter method forced him to remain mobile and learn how to survive on the road; he nearly starved more than once. But eventually the half-elf softened by court life found that he had a knack for survival in the wilds – perhaps the

influence of his mother's blood, though Dhoean would never



admit such a thing. His meeting with Aurakraul was a watershed moment for the young man. It was Dhoean who convinced the dragon to join forces with him and to create the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak.

Dhoean serves a number of roles in the Fellowship, manipulating Aurakraul into doing what he feels is best for the group and also acting as peacemaker when arguments flare up.

He hopes someday to be able to quit the forest and purchase a manor or estate where he can revel in the style and comfort he enjoyed in this youth. And he will be sure to have scullery-maids there. Old habits die hard...

Personality: Dhoean exhibits many of the classic traits of a sociopath. He is superficially charming, manipulative and glib. But under the glossy surface lies a self-interested being with no regard for the suffering or weal of others. Unlike many sociopaths, however, he is capable of restraining short-term impulses in favour of long-term goals.

He embraces none of his mother's heritage, even only speaking her language with the greatest reluctance. He does not think of himself as half-elf, but half-man, and even favours caps or coifs that conceal the points of his ears.

When the PCs first meet Dhoean, he appears pleasant without being exceedingly gregarious. He even puts himself in direct danger to lull his new friends into a false sense of security – making their subsequent betrayal all the more delicious. Dhoean is the most evil of the Fellowship – a true (and dubious) distinction in such a band of malefactors.

Dhoean respects Aurakraul for her strength and ruthlessness, though he regards her obsessions as a severe weakness – one he hopes he can exploit before their enemies learn of it. He has little regard for Holg and Vola; they are tools to be used and disposed of when they are no longer of value. However, he is aware and wary of their great strength and their unbreakable loyalty to each other. Dhoean suspects that Holg is more than he appears to be, and watches him closely. It takes every ounce of self-control and guile to keep Lafithel from knowing how much he despises her. If he had his way, the lovely elf would serve him in the manner that his own mother served his father. He regards her as a disruptive influence that makes it difficult to hold the Fellowship together.

Mannerisms: While "in character" Dhoean smiles a lot and goes out of his way to be courteous, especially to ladies. He presents himself as the stereotypical travelling rake with a heart of gold, even "opening up" to a sympathetic ear to talk about how he is in exile.

When stripped of his pleasant veneer, Dhoean is cold and brutal, almost automaton-like. Whenever a prisoner needs to be tortured for information, Dhoean is the first to volunteer. He is a sadistic brute with no ability to empathize with others.

Distinguishing Features: Dhoean has two styles of dress. In cities and towns he dresses as a minstrel in well-tailored, fashionable, but threadbare clothes. In the woods, he favours utilitarian clothing – close-fitting clothing of brown and olive to better stride through the woods unseen and unheard.

Hooks: Dhoean is the only member of the Fellowship except Lafithel the PCs may meet outside the forest. Of all the Fellowship, Dhoean is the most proactive in terms of dealing with threats to the group – if something could be a danger, Dhoean acts to eradicate that danger. This attitude could easily bring him into contact with the PCs; well-armed adventurers exploring the woods definitely attract his attention.

Dhoean presents himself as a scholar of dragons and their kin; parties with questions about fighting such beasts, or with spoils from a dragon's lair, might seek him out for his expertise. (A few adventurers over the years have approached Dhoean about tracking down a certain green dragon and its evil followers – with predictably disastrous results for the questioners.)

Dhoean also has a passion for art objects relating to music, including musical instruments. Characters recovering such items find the half-elf intent on gaining their acquisition, either by legitimate purchase, theft or brute force.

The status of Dhoean's mother remains vague. If she lives, she might hire the PCs to find her wayward son and bring her word of his disposition. Or it could be that she loathes her son for what he represents and wants him brought to justice. Perhaps an elf PC is Dhoean's half-sibling or even his illegitimate child, a situation ripe for rich, even poignant, roleplaying.

The PCs might also be looking for Dhoean for other reasons. Perhaps his father's killers seek the cruel seneschal's son who ravished so many innocents to bring him to justice. Alternatively, a member of a PC's family might have been victimized by Dhoean, giving the PC reason to seek revenge.

LARTHETH	CR – (XP 0)
Male hawk N Small animal	
Init +6; Senses low-light vision; Perception +6, Sense Motive +2	
Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)	
ACP 0; Acrobatics +2 (-6 jumping), Fly +8	
AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12; CMD 12 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1 natural)	
Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2	
hp 11 (2 HD)	
Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +1; CMB +0	
Melee bite +2 (1d4) and 2 talons +2 (1d4)	
Abilities Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6	
SQ trained (hunting [attack, down, fetch, heel, seek and track] and come)	
Feats Improved Initiative	
Skills as above	
Languages link	

DHOEAN TAHLTHAR

CR 7 (XP 3,200)

Male half-elf bard 4/ranger 4

NE Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +3 (+5 in forests); **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +14 (+16 vs. elves or in forests, +18 vs. elves in forest), Sense Motive +1 (+3 vs. elves)

Speed 30 ft.; Nimble Moves

ACP 0; Acrobatics +10, Climb +7, Stealth +14 (+16 in forests), Swim +7

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; **CMD** 22

(+3 Dex, +4 armour [+1 studded leather], +2 shield [+1 darkwood buckler])

Immune sleep

Fort +7, **Ref** +12, **Will** +7; +2 vs. enchantments, +4 vs. bardic performance, sonic and language-dependant effects

hp 52 (8 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +7/+2; **CMB** +9

Ranged +1 composite longbow (range 110 ft.) +12/+7 (1d8+3/x3)

Melee mwk longsword +10/+5 (1d8+2/19-20)

Atk Options Precise Shot, favoured enemy (elves +2)

Special Actions bardic performance 18 rounds (countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire courage +1), share spells (Lartheth)

Bard Spells Known (CL 4th; concentration +6)

2nd (2/day)—*heroism*, *whispering wind*

1st (4/day)—*cure light wounds*, *disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *undetectable alignment*

0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *know direction*, *message*, *read magic*, *summon instrument*

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +2)

1st—*longstrider*

Combat Gear *dust of dryness*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 14

SQ bardic knowledge, combat style (archery), favoured terrain (forest), hunter's bond (Lartheth), multitiered (bard, ranger), track, versatile performance (wind), wild empathy +6 (+2 vs. magical beasts)

Feats Endurance^B, Extra Performance, Nimble Moves, Precise Shot^B, Skill Focus (Perform [wind]), Skill Focus (Survival)^B, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills as above plus Bluff +9 (+11 vs. elves), Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +1, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +1, Knowledge (engineering) +1, Knowledge (geography) +1 (+3 in forests), Knowledge (history) +1, Knowledge (local) +1 (+3 vs. humans), Knowledge (nature) +1, Knowledge (nobility) +1, Knowledge (planes) +1, Knowledge (religion) +1, Perform (wind) +12, Survival +12 (+14 tracking or in forests, +16 tracking elves or tracking in forest, +18 tracking elves in forest)

Languages Common, Elven, link

Gear as above plus 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance* +1, spell component pouch, 13 gp, 19 sp

HOLG

This taciturn, hulking fellow is passionately devoted to his wife, Vola, but is capable of fearsome acts of violence.

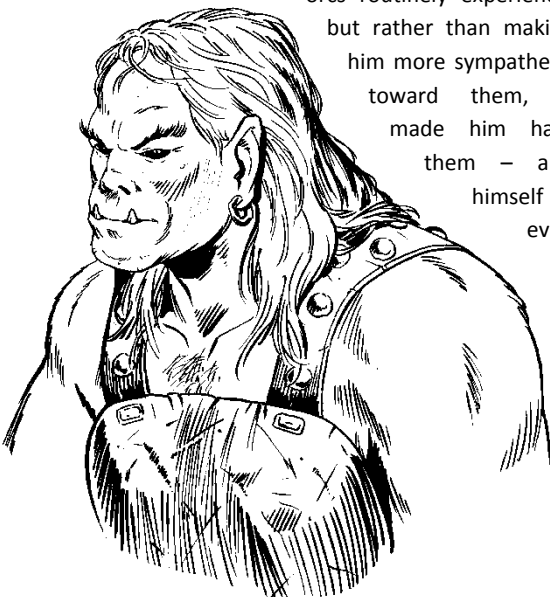
Thick-limbed, Holg is brutish and primitive. A savage warrior at heart, he loves nothing more than the twang of his longbow or the thud of his sword cleaving his foes. Astute observers – particularly elves and half-orcs – might notice that the brute seems to be something other than he appears to be...

Background: Holg is a half-orc. At least, he is now. But the tale of how Holg came to be what he is today stretches back several centuries and many leagues, to a time when Holg was Arusandair Greybane, an elf ranger. In those days, he was in service to a faraway elven kingdom beset by orcs. Arusandair, and many like him harried the orcs and killed their leaders in brutal, desperate battles. He learned their guttural tongue, becoming wise to their mannerisms and ways.

Arusandair's luck ran out when an orc patrol captured him. Subjected to brutal tortures they impaled him on a spear and left to die. His compatriots recovered his remains and, having no priest to return him to life, prevailed upon a druid to reincarnate him. To their horror, Arusandair returned as a half-orc.

After recovering from their initial shock, his commanders thought that the former elf could make a superb covert agent, but his unwilling transformation traumatized him greatly. He stabbed to death the druid who reincarnated him, before deserting the service of the kingdom forever.

In this wanderings, he encountered the usual prejudices half-orcs routinely experience, but rather than making him more sympathetic toward them, it made him hate them – and himself – even



more. He became so embittered that by the time he reached the woods he now calls home, he resolved to cut himself off from contact with others completely.

But Holg, as he now called himself, spied a half-orc female in his woods one evening. Safely hidden in the brush, he aimed an arrow at her heart, but something stayed his hand. After a time, he dared to speak with her. Her name was Vola, and she was a druid, though not of the hated sect that had thrust Holg into his new body. Indeed, Vola was decidedly non-orcish, a result of her human upbringing. They shared a race, a love of the forest and eventually a love of each other. With their mutual aid and formidable woodland skills, they were easily able to survive in the forest and eke out a simple life.

Two years later, they noticed that game was rapidly being depleted, and Holg sought the cause eventually discovering that Aurakraul's voracious appetite was to blame. The dragon saw the value of two skilled woods-folk as additions to the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak, especially since the ranger Dhoean was frequently away as Aurakraul's eyes and ears in nearby villages and towns. Aurakraul's bargain was a simple one – join the Fellowship and search the woods for her birth-lair in exchange for safety in numbers and an equal share of the spoils. Seeing the value of such an arrangement, and fearful of Vola's fate should he refuse, he agreed on their behalf. Since then, he has proven his value time and again. Holg is an accomplished hunter, and even in the leanest seasons the Fellowship's lair contains more than enough smoked and preserved meats to comfortably maintain the group.

Holg is content with the current situation. He lives more or less as he did, contentedly with Vola. Their lifestyle remains basic, but augmented with spoils from adventurers and travellers falling into the Fellowship's clutches. Holg and Vola have scoured the woodlands for Aurakraul's birth-lair, but have found nothing to date. (In truth, Holg doubts the lair even exists and that it is just the wild imagination of a crazy dragon).

Personality: Holg is gruff and speaks little. Most of the time, he grunts. When he isn't grunting, he communicates largely in monosyllabic words. He is a creature of action, content when he is doing something – hunting, tracking, fighting or loving Vola – but restless when forced to sit and wait. He is thus a good fighter, but a poor ambusher.

While Holg is evil, he is not needlessly cruel. If a prisoner must be executed, he has no qualms about doing it. However, unlike Dhoean, he does so swiftly and takes no pleasure in it, though neither does he feel remorse. "Do what must be done" is a common phrase favoured by Holg.

His loyalty to Vola is absolute, outweighing his loyalty to the Fellowship. This is an open secret in the Fellowship; his love for her is true. He has little regard for Dhoean, who he regards as a

needlessly cruel fop who uses violence and sadism to compensate for some unknown shortcomings. Holg respects Aurakraul for her power, and indeed is a bit afraid of her, though he would never admit it. He is sullen and taciturn around Lafithel; she reminds him of his past life and how his lifespan, once measured in centuries, is now but a handful of decades.

Mannerisms: To the casual observer, Holg appears very orcish. Since he knows nothing of his “other half” (humans) he acts highly orcish. Indeed, he inadvertently almost lampoons being an orc. Vola, having been raised by humans, isn’t able to spot this, but others can. A perceptive linguist might notice a surprising hint of an elf’s accent in his speech, or recognize elven fighting styles in his archery or swordplay. He reacts very negatively to anyone pointing this out, especially in front of Vola.

Holg is the first to goad his companions into action and the last to back down from a fight. His companions have learned that the best way to manipulate Holg is to couch suggestions in terms of Vola’s weal – “We need to be patient; all of us (read as: “including Vola”) could get hurt if we rush in.”

Holg is restless and frequently fidgets.

Distinguishing Features: Holg’s left eye is a milky white and frequently bloodshot. (This does not hamper his sight.) He has many battle scars on his face and forearms. Like other members of the Fellowship, he wears clothes of brown and green to blend into the woods he calls home.

Hooks: Anyone who harms or interferes with Vola eventually encounters Holg. Alternatively, Holg could be swayed to help a group of PCs that aids his wife.

Holg is the member of the Fellowship most likely to capture an enemy for Aurakraul to interrogate. He might catch someone significant to the PCs and the investigation into the disappearance could lead the player characters to Holg and Vola (and the balance of the Fellowship).

FENG

CR – (XP 0)

Male wolf

N Medium animal

Init +3; **Senses** scent; Perception +6, Sense Motive +1

Speed 50 ft.

ACP 0; **Acrobatics** +8 (+16 jumping), **Stealth** +7

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14; **CMD** 19; **Dodge** (+3 Dex, +4 natural)

Fort +7, **Ref** +7 (evasion), **Will** +2

hp 37 (5 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +5

Melee bite +6 (1d8+3 plus trip)

Trip (Ex) If Feng hits with his bite attack, he can attempt to trip his opponent as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If this attempt fails, he is not tripped in return.

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

SQ trained (fighting [attack, down, stay], defend, guard)

Feats Dodge, Improved Natural Attack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills as above

HOLG

CR 7 (XP 3,200)

Male half-orc ranger 8

NE Medium humanoid (human, orc)

Init +1 (+3 in mountains, +5 in forests); **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12 (+14 vs. elves or in mountains, +16 vs. orcs, in forests or elves in mountains, +18 vs. elves in forests, +20 vs. orcs in forests), Sense Motive +1 (+3 vs. elves, +5 vs. orcs)

Speed 30 ft.; swift tracker, woodland stride

Swift Tracker (Ex) Holg can travel at normal speed while tracking without penalty. He takes a -10 penalty when moving at up to twice normal speed.

Woodland Stride (Ex) Holg can move through undergrowth at normal speed without taking damage or suffering any impairment. Undergrowth magically enchanted to impede movement still affects him.

ACP 0; **Climb** +12, **Stealth** +12 (+14 in mountains, +16 in forests), **Swim** +12

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 23

(+1 Dex, +5 armour [+1 *mithral shirt*], +1 shield [Two-Weapon Defense], +1 deflection [*ring of protection* +1])

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

hp 88 (8 HD); orc ferocity

Orc Ferocity Once per day, when brought below 0 hit points, Holg can fight on for one more round as if disabled. At the end of his next turn, unless brought above 0 hit points, he falls unconscious and begins to die.

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +8/+3; **CMB** +11

Melee +1 *longsword* +12/+7 (1d8+4/19-20) or

Melee +1 *longsword* +10/+5 (1d8+4/19-20) and throwing axe (range 10 ft.) +9/+6 (1d6+3)

Ranged throwing axe (range 10 ft.) +11/+6 (1d6+3)

Atk Options Quick Draw, favoured enemy (elves +2, orcs +4)

Special Options share spells (Feng)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 5th; concentration +6)

2nd—*cure light wounds*

1st—*longstrider*, *resist energy*

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *wand of barkskin* (10 chgs.)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10

SQ combat style (two-weapon combat), favoured terrain (forest +4, mountain +2), hunter’s bond (wolf), track, wild empathy +8 (+4 vs. magical beasts)

Feats Double Slice, Endurance^B, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting^B, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting^B

Skills as above plus Bluff +0 (+2 vs. elves, +4 vs. orcs), Intimidate +7, Knowledge (geography) -1 (+1 in mountains, +3 forests), Knowledge (local) -1 (+1 vs. elves, +3 vs. orcs), Knowledge (nature) +4, Survival +12 (+16 tracking or in forests, +18 tracking elves, +20 tracking elves in mountains or orcs, +22 tracking elves in forests, +24 tracking orcs in forests)

Languages Common, Orc, link (Feng)

Gear as above plus 4 throwing axes, spell component pouch, 12 gp, 2 sp

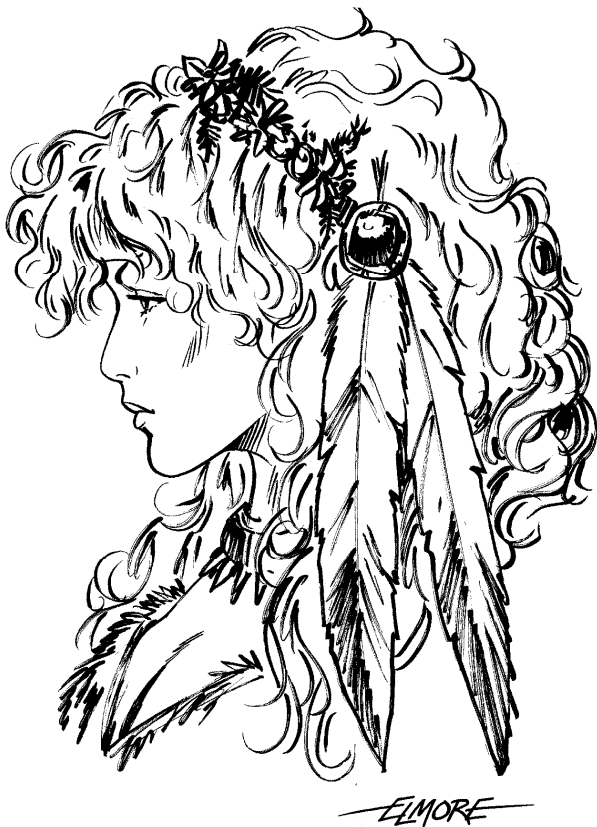
LAFITHEL TRAIVANNA

Capricious and flighty, Lafithel searches for an ancient draconic power source.

A wild and independent spirit, Lafithel is the inheritor of a thousand-year-old family quest to uncover a lost source of draconic magic. While she is the least ruthless and independently capable of the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak, she is also the most unpredictable, and thus the most likely to strike some kind of alliance with the PCs.

Background: The Traivanna dynasty of elves has existed for millennia. The most notable members of this family are blessed with supernatural power and an aptitude for arcane magic whose source descends from a lost draconic legacy. Family members often make spectacular achievements but just as often suffer gruesome fates; all seem cursed to live interesting lives.

Long ago, the founder of the Traivanna line had a powerful vision in which he half-glimpsed a slumbering golden wyrm of unprecedented size and magnificence deep underground in a shadowed and dust-choked chamber decked with ancient banners and filled with wealth beyond imagining. Motes of power sparkled about the sleeping dragon and wisps of magic swirled about the chamber. Unbidden the name Agryt'Untryr came into his mind as the vision faded.



Finding the lair of Agryt'Untryr – the Slumbering Wyrm — has become a family obsession.

The discovery of Agryt'Untryr is no easy task, but the rewards of finding it are so great – and the indoctrination of the family's elders upon their descendants so strong – that every Traivanna has sought it out. Those few who have fallen away from the family's spiritual quest have been sought out and murdered by their kin; they fear that should others discover the existence of Agryt'Untryr, they might complete the quest and a thousand years of effort by the Traivanna family would be for naught.

Lafithel has been as diligent as any seeker from her family, but she has sought to go about it in her own unique fashion. Like other notables in her dynasty, she is a sorcerer, and her belief is that Agryt'Untryr is somehow linked to the power coursing through her own veins. Her reasoning is that the common denominator between all of the Traivanna is their very kinship, so surely Agryt'Untryr's location can be found through her own sorcerous power.

Lafithel reasoned that since the source of her family's power was the admixture, somewhere in the distant past, of dragon's blood with that of her elf ancestors, the best way to study and develop her personal power would be at the foot of a true dragon. She was the only member of the Fellowship who actively sought out Aurakraul. Saying nothing of her familial quest, she indicating that she merely wished to serve the dragon and learn more of her distant kin, she joined the Fellowship.

The elf sorceress has remained with the Fellowship since that time, but in truth, she has retained a place only because of her raw arcane power. She is simply too headstrong and independent to really fit with the rest of the group; she is also the only member of the Fellowship who is not evil – Dhoean has described her as “cheerfully amoral” while suppressing a scowl.

Lafithel's time with the Fellowship is nearing its end. Like Holg and Vola, she finds Aurakraul's obsessive quest for her birth-lair to be an unacceptable sign of weakness (even as she overlooks the parallel between it and her quest to discover Agryt'Untryr). She has learned all she can from the narrow minds of the Fellowship, and will soon move on.

Personality: Dhoean's description of her amorality is accurate. Lafithel is very much like a self-centred child. She lives for the moment and the satisfaction of her own desires and wants, and is heedless of the effects it might have on others. She is not deliberately cruel, but thinks nothing of taking actions that endanger or harm others. She is selfish and petty, and rather flighty (with the exception of her quest). In this one area, she is capable of single-minded obsession and clarity of focus and purpose that seems otherwise wildly out of character.

She has little regard for the other members of the Fellowship, and she pigeonholes them with simplistic, derogatory tags. She views Aurakraul as a pathetic obsessive-compulsive; Dhoean as a manipulative, ruthless bastard; and Holg as an idiot. The only person she has even a passing respect for is Vola. The druid's quest to become a superlative predator is a (child-like) parallel of her family's own and unlike Aurakraul, Vola has managed to pursue her goal without it consuming her.

Although she likes to think of herself as independent, Lafithel is actually the one most dependent on the rest of the group. Every other member of the Fellowship has some modicum of woodland survival skills. On the other hand, Lafithel would probably be dead within a week if left to her own devices, in the forest.

Mannerisms: Lafithel is flighty and inattentive, with a propensity for wandering off-topic and (as Dhoean notes) "being distracted by bright, shiny objects." This might make her seem vapid or stupid to uninformed observers. On the occasions that she is pursuing the Slumbering Wyrms, her sudden snap into focus should be a jarring contrast to observers.

She is very manipulative, using her natural charisma and social skills to prod members of the Fellowship into seeing things her way and following her suggestions. Only Dhoean is her rival in this area, and each is often the other's counterweight in debates on what course of action the Fellowship should pursue.

Distinguishing Features: Though she favours traditional magician's robes, practical considerations force her to wear boots, breeches, blouse and a hooded cloak. As befits her nature, Lafithel refuses to attire herself in the earthy hues that her more woodsy companions wear. Much to the chagrin of Vola, Holg, and Dhoean, she favours garments of pastel hues that are all-too easily seen in a forest. Her hair is a pleasant blend of silver and gold hues and her narrow green eyes are vibrant. She has the lithe build and high cheekbones common to her race, and a laugh that can sound pleasant, cruel or mocking as the mood suits her.

Hooks: Lafithel does her best to maintain as much luxury as she can – she and Dhoean are the only members of the Fellowship to actively travel to nearby settlements. As a result, PCs might encounter her there (possibly cloaked under a *disguise self* spell). Lafithel visits such places to secure luxuries unavailable in the woods. Exotic oils, soaps, perfumes, hand mirrors and the latest in fashionable clothing – all these things and more are of interest to the vain elf.

Lafithel is aware that if she announces her intention to leave the Fellowship, her companions will likely kill her to keep their secrets from others. As a result, she might seek the aid of a strong group of PCs in escaping the Fellowship – perhaps even by manipulating them into believing she is an unwilling captive.

Because Agryt'Untryr could slumber literally anywhere, a GM can use this as a hook to link Lafithel to any PC. Any object that the PCs might recover, or bit of lore they learn – anything – could be of vital interest to Lafithel, if she believes that it might lead her to Agryt'Untryr.

Like Dhoean and Aurakraul, Lafithel is keenly interested in all things related to dragons. Any such items or lore are of interest to her, and a GM could set up a situation where all three could be attempting to take something draconic belonging to the PCs, through force, guile or persuasion.

LAFITHEL TRAIVANNA	CR 7 (XP 3,200)
Female elf sorcerer (draconic [gold]) 8 CN Medium humanoid (elf)	
Init +7; Senses low-light vision; Perception +13, Sense Motive +0	
Speed 30 ft.	
ACP 0	
AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12; CMD 17 (+3 Dex, +1 deflection [<i>ring of protection</i> +1], +1 natural)	
Immune <i>sleep</i> ; Resist fire 5	
Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7; +2 vs. enchantments	
hp 38 (8 HD)	
Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +4; CMB +3	
Melee mwk dagger +8 (1d4-1/19-20)	
Melee 2 claws +8 each (1d6-1)	
Atk Options claws	
Claws (Su) Lafithel can grow claws as a free action. She can use her claws for 6 rounds per day. These rounds do not need to be consecutive.	
Special Actions Empower Spell, bloodline arcana (fire spells +7 damage)	
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 8th; concentration +11; spell penetration +10, ranged touch +7)	
4th (3/day)— <i>wall of fire</i> (DC 19)	
3rd (6/day)— <i>fireball</i> (DC 18), <i>fly</i> , <i>haste</i>	
2nd (7/day)— <i>false life</i> , <i>invisibility</i> , <i>resist energy</i> , <i>web</i> (DC 15)	
1st (7/day)— <i>burning hands</i> (DC 16), <i>charm person</i> (DC 14), <i>disguise self</i> , <i>mage armour</i> , <i>mount</i> , obscuring mist	
0— <i>acid splash</i> , <i>dancing lights</i> , <i>daze</i> (DC 13), <i>detect magic</i> , <i>mage hand</i> , <i>message</i> , <i>prestidigitation</i> , <i>read magic</i>	
Combat Gear <i>lesser metamagic rod of silent</i> , <i>potion of cure serious wounds</i> , <i>scroll of wind wall</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> and <i>stoneskin</i>	
Abilities Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16	
Feats Empower Spell, Eschew Materials ^B , Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Improved Initiative ^B , Spell Focus (evocation), Weapon Finesse	
Skills as above plus Bluff +14, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Spellcraft +13 (+15 to identify magic items), Use Magic Device +14	
Languages Auran, Common, Elven, Sylvan	
Gear as above plus <i>cloak of resistance</i> +1, 15 gp, 12 sp	

Calm and contemplative, Vola is devoted to her husband and to her woodland home.

Devoted to Holg, the woods and the Fellowship – in that order – Vola is the latter’s spiritual backbone. She serves as the group’s healer and uses her druidic magic to give them a substantial edge in the group’s frequent woodland battles. Vola represents a calm, reasonable voice amongst her fellows, though she can be every bit as ruthless as the rest of them – particularly when it comes to protecting Holg.

Background: Like so many of her kin, Vola’s birth was the result of a brutal rape. Her mother was a young peasant living on the edge of lands contested by several warring orc factions who would occasionally stop killing each other long enough to ravage human territories. Unlike many survivors who lived through such ordeals, Vola’s mother, a deeply religious woman who venerated life in all its forms, opted to have her child.

Vola was a living reminder of the orc plunder of the village, and her treatment at the hands of the villagers reflected this. Eventually, her mother purchased Vola’s freedom from the lord she served and took her daughter away from the prejudice of her fellows. Her request was granted, and after a two-week trip mother and daughter made their way to a small city. Once there, Vola’s mother worked as a seamstress while her daughter helped as best she could.

When Vola was ten, her maternal aunt, Sura, came to visit. As devoutly religious as her sister, Vola’s aunt was a druid and offered to teach her niece the ways of her order. Vola’s mother wanted something more for her daughter than a

lifetime of sewing needles, and so she agreed.

What Sura didn’t mention to Vola or her mother was that her druidic order was decidedly evil, and revered the spirit of an ancient man-eating tiger. However, this was not an order of screaming druid savages; their order revered the aspects of the thinking hunter, the one that outwits and outmanoeuvres their prey. Indeed, though thoroughly evil, the order was one filled with contemplative thinkers, examining their respective places in the natural realm, as predator or prey.

By the time she was sixteen, Vola had demonstrated a remarkable aptitude not just for the order’s philosophy but also for their rituals. She was instructed to go out and seek a hunter from which she could learn more. Hearing rumours of dragons in a faraway wood, she slung a rucksack over one shoulder and left the order behind.

And find a hunter she did, though it was not the one she was seeking. Finding herself at first the target of Holg’s bow, their decidedly unromantic introduction has led to a genuine love affair. Both have a passion for the woods they call home, and each has learned a great deal from the other. She has a vague sense that Holg is keeping some important personal secret from her, but thus far, she is content not to pursue it.

Through Holg, Vola has met the dragon she sought, along with the rest of the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak. She has been very disappointed with Aurakraul, seeing the dragon’s obsessive searching as a weakness that could be exploited too easily by those hunting her; in her eyes, the dragon is hardly a vaunted predator. She rarely bothers to conceal her contempt for Dhoean, though his silver tongue persuades her as readily as the others of the Fellowship. She is indifferent towards Lafithel, though she respects the elf’s magical prowess.

If Holg is the hunter in the Fellowship, Vola is the gatherer. She keeps healthy and verdant plant life that sustains her companions; without her and her mate, the Fellowship would live a much leaner existence. She frequently uses her magic to question the animals of the woods, using them as spies for the Fellowship.

Personality: Calm and contemplative, Vola is in many ways the opposite of Holg. She is a proponent of planning, stalking before pouncing and working smarter not harder. Using her magic Vola can organize, execute and augment devastating ambushes against woodland interlopers. Like Holg, she is evil, but not needlessly cruel. She is a pragmatist who avoids needless risks to herself, the Fellowship and Holg. Like Holg, she can sometimes be persuaded to take a course of action by suggesting that not doing so could endanger him.



Mannerisms: Vola weighs each sentence before speaking, giving her speech an unusual, stilted cadence. This might seem to indicate a lack of intelligence; on the contrary, Vola is thoughtful and careful and her pattern of speech reflects this.

She dresses in utilitarian clothing of earth tones that allows her to blend into woodland settings. Her sole nod to feminine vanity is her predilection for braiding wildflowers into her hair.

Her order forbids its members from wild shaping into the form of anything other than a predatory animal; Vola favours birds of prey and tiger forms.

Hooks: The most certain way PCs could meet Vola is through Holg. Anyone who harms or captures Holg will certainly feel her wrath. Alternatively, Vola could be swayed to aid a group of characters that helps her husband. Her loyalty to him eclipses that which she feels for the Fellowship; this could be exploited by a clever group of adversaries.

A number of hooks could connect the PCs to Vola's druidic order. Perhaps the PCs slew a member of her order and Vola has been tasked with seeking revenge. Perhaps the PCs have in their possession, knowingly or not, an item of religious significance to the order, one which they are willing to kill to retrieve.

Despite her cold heart, Vola has a deep love of the woodlands. If the PCs threaten the woods (or their natural balance), they make an enemy of Vola. More interestingly, perhaps she (and Holg) and the PCs might find themselves in a temporary truce against a greater threat to the forest.

FANG

CR – (XP 0)

N Large animal

Init +6; **Senses** scent; Perception +7, Sense Motive +1

Speed 50 ft.

ACP 0; Stealth +4

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 25

(-1 size, +3 Dex, +8 natural)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8 (evasion), **Will** +3; +4 vs. enchantment spells and effects

hp 47 (7 HD)

Space 10 ft.; **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +12

Melee bite +11 (2d6+9 plus trip)

Trip (Ex) If Fang hits with his bite attack, he can attempt to trip his opponent as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If this attempt fails, he is not tripped in return.

Abilities Str 23, Dex 16, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

SQ trained (combat [attack, come, defend, down, guard, heel], fetch, stay, work), devotion

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills as above plus Survival +5

VOLA

CR 7 (XP 3,200)

Female half-orc druid 8

NE Medium humanoid (human, orc)

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15, Sense Motive +4

Speed 20 ft.; base speed 30 ft., trackless step, woodland stride

Trackless Step (Ex) Vola leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked. She can leave a trail if desired.

Woodland Stride (Ex) Vola can move through undergrowth at normal speed without taking damage or suffering any impairment. Undergrowth magically enchanted to impede movement still affects her.

ACP -2; Swim +4

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16; **CMD** 16

(-1 Dex, +5 armour [+1 *hide*], +2 shield [+1 *darkwood buckler*])

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +10; +4 vs. spell-like abilities and supernatural abilities of fey and spells and effects that utilise or target plants.

hp 47 (8 HD); orc ferocity

Orc Ferocity Once per day, when brought below 0 hit points, Vola can fight on for one more round as if disabled. At the end of her next turn, unless brought above 0 hit points, she falls unconscious and begins to die.

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +6/+1; **CMB** +7

Melee +1 *falchion* +8/+3 (2d4+2/18-20)

Ranged mwk sling (range 50 ft.) +6 (1d4+1)

Special Actions share spells (Fang), spontaneous casting (Augment Summoning, *summon nature's ally*), wild shape 3/day (Natural Spell, *beast shape III*, *elemental body II*, *plant shape I*)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 8th; concentration +12)

4th—*dispel magic*, *ice storm*, *freedom of movement*

3rd—*call lightning* (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds*, *poison* (DC 17), *water breathing*

2nd—*barkskin*, *heat metal* (DC 16), *owl's wisdom*, *resist energy*

1st—*cure light wounds*, *entangle* (DC 15), *faerie fire*, *longstrider*, *speak with animals*

0—*detect magic*, *know direction*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

Combat Gear *horn of fog*, *pearl of power* (1st)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 14

SQ nature bond (animal companion), nature sense, resist nature's lure, wild empathy +10 (+6 vs. magical beasts)

Feats Augment Summoning, Natural Spell, Spell Focus (conjuration), Toughness

Skills as above plus Handle Animal +13, Heal +9, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (nature) +13, Linguistics +4, Survival +17

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan, Orc, link

Gear as above plus 10 sling bullets, wooden holy symbol, spell component pouch, 12 gp, 4 sp

SEHHAR'S LOST JOURNAL

Talan died today. In truth, I think he was the best of us – fearless, loyal and with a heart as big as his mountain home. It is hard to believe but there are only three of us left now. Yes, less than half of the Crimson Swords still draw breath and it is Talan's demise – the gods rest his soul – which has prompted me to pick up the quill and set down the tale of our greatest adventure.

Once we were the mightiest of companies – the bane of dragons, feted in every town. But age makes fools and weaklings of us all and as I write this only myself, Steren and Evtian remain in the land of the living. It is my fervent hope that upon reading this a band such as we once were, young and filled with hope and courage, will tread the same path to riches and glory.

In truth, so much time has passed that I wonder whether some other evil has taken the place of that which we vanquished all those years ago. Or perhaps the greatest treasures of the dragons Tsotynbahr and Vureenthothr still lie unclaimed in the dank cavern from where the pair once burst forth to wreak havoc on unsuspecting homesteads. Whatever the truth, perhaps my recollections of that fateful day when the seven of us ventured deep into the forest will serve as both a motivation and a guide to those who would follow in our footsteps.

As you would expect, the cavern was not easy to find – not easy at all. Indeed, I remember we floundered around in the darkest depths of the woodland for almost a week before Talan eventually found the clearing. He may have been our leader but Talan was, first and foremost, a canny tracker who refused to give up on our quarry. It is fair to say that without his determination to discover the dragons' lair the rest of us would probably have given up the ghost after a couple of days amongst those gloomy trees.

As it was, it was the ranger who discovered the cave entrance which emerged out of the mist like a gaping maw. Talan held his hand up to halt us and I recall catching my breath as I looked for the first time upon Tsotynbahr and Vureenthothr's hidden base. Even beyond the treeline, the entrance itself was protected by stinging thickets of gorse and brambles. But it is the silence and the dense fog that shrouded the lair which I recall most vividly. It was a thick and cloying mist which restricted our vision and, dare I say it, played tricks on the mind.

The place had an air of foreboding which the rational mind cannot countenance but which, to this day, still sends a shiver down my spine. It was as though we were being watched – and perhaps we were. We approached the cave an hour before first light, hoping to catch the wyrms sleeping. The truth is that, powerful as we were and filled with the arrogance of youth, we could not have triumphed against a pair of green dragons such as they without fortune smiling on us. However, lady luck favoured the bold on this occasion for as we ventured deeper into the lair we could hear the deep, rhythmic breathing of the sleeping monsters. I say luck was with us also because our presence did not disturb the vast colony of bats which had made their home within the furthest recesses of the cavern.

Not daring to use light sources for fear of waking the slumbering wyrms, we relied on the elven sight of Evtian the druid and myself to guide us towards our goal. Eventually we found ourselves within maybe twenty or thirty paces of Vureenthothr – her huge, slick form looming out of the semi-darkness. We could hear Tsotynbahr breathing and supposed that he lay just beyond his mate.

At a signal from Talan, we fanned out to surround them – silently drawing eldritch blades from muffled scabbards before falling upon the creatures with zealous fury. Talan, Jenna, Steren and Caja attacked the larger Tsotynbahr while Morwenna, Evtian and myself fought Vureenthothr.

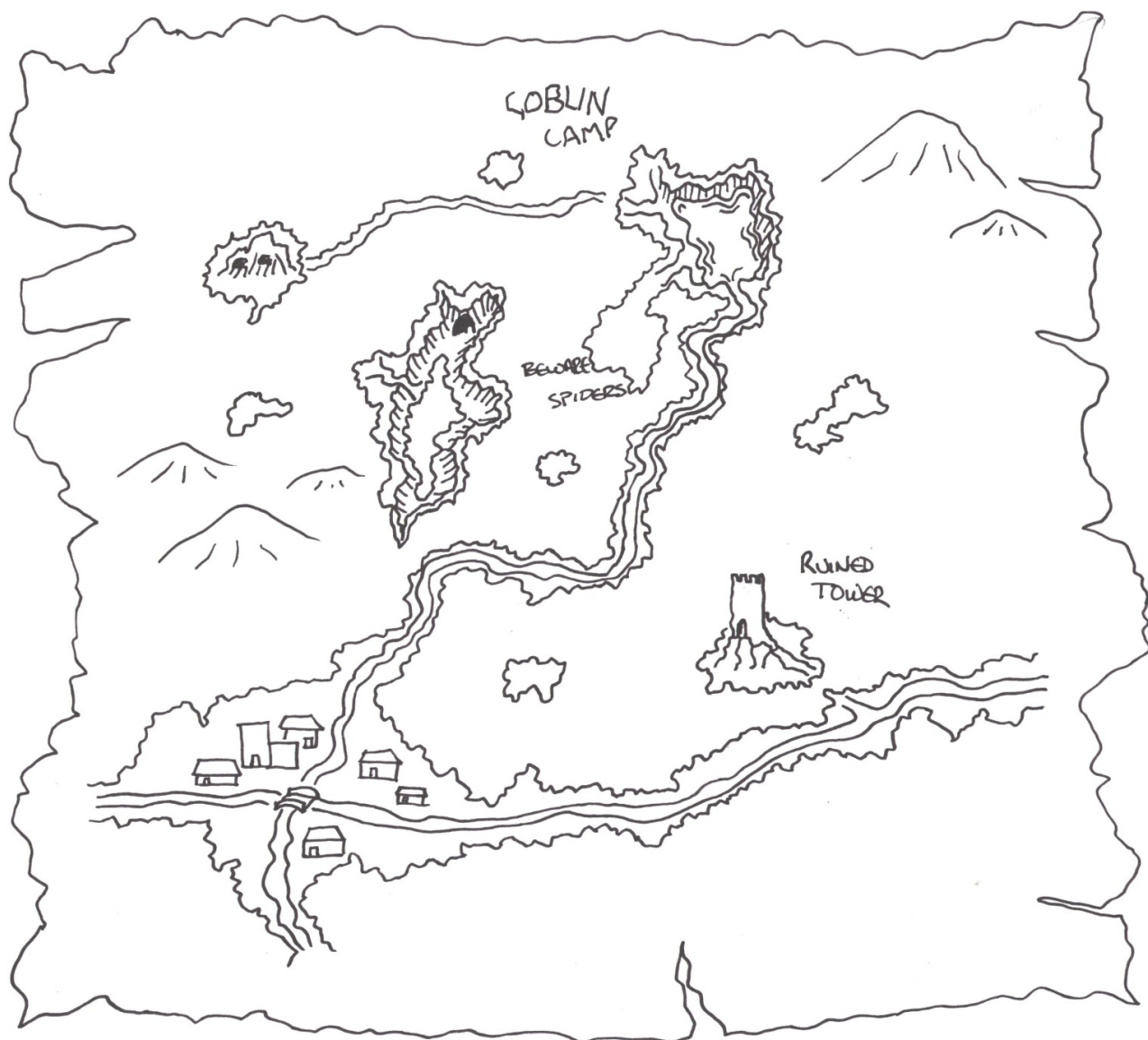
What followed was a horrific slaughter that seemed to last for many minutes but which I suspect was over rather more quickly than that. Powerful bolts of magical energy shot from Morwenna's fingertips – lighting up the cavern – and Evtian set about the Vureenthothr with a primal fury that lent power to her enchanted scimitar. Meanwhile I hung back, loosing arrow after arrow at the creature's fierce, powerful head.

I could hear our four comrades were having a far tougher time against the more powerful male and my heart sank as I heard screams from the darkness beyond my quarry. In truth, however, I did not have time to fear for my friends as I had soon emptied my quiver and leapt into the fray. I am proud to say that it was I, with my blessed blade Whisper – which I have carried with me all these long years, who struck the fatal blow to Vureenthothr. At that very same moment, Talan was dispatching her mate and it seemed to me that their death cries would bring down the very walls of the cavern. Indeed, I recall falling to my knees and covering my ears as the keening wails reached their zenith.

Then all was silence in the darkness – aside from the heavy breathing of myself and my remaining companions. I recall lighting a torch and recoiling in horror at the fact that I was literally covered in dragon blood. Evlian was no better off and her left arm hung limply at her side – broken as we soon discovered. Morwenna, as usual, had managed to avoid even a scratch at the hands of these deadliest of nature's creations. However, only Talan was left standing from the battle with Tsotynbahr. Cāja was unconscious and bleeding to death. Steren and Jenna were dead – the warrior crushed by the creature's powerful tail and the priest badly mauled. Following a battle such as this, it is my experience that all strength drains away leaving one feeling rather weak and saddened. There was certainly no euphoria as we gathered our fallen comrades and tended to Cāja and Evlian. The pact we had made to resurrect our companions meant that we were only able to search briefly through the dragons' hoard and select a few choice treasures to carry away.

When we eventually returned to civilisation, Steren and Jenna left the group to battle their own personal demons. Those of us who remained quickly turned our attention to other quests but, in truth, I think we never had the strength to return to that cavern for what we had earned. Needless to say that, somewhere in the trackless reaches of that forest lies a fortune unclaimed, waiting in the darkness for the bold or the reckless. I only hope my recollections aid them on their journey.

Sebhar Itraillias



READING STAT BLOCKS

Fellowship of the Blackened Oak includes all necessary stat blocks; these notes explain how to read them. Unless otherwise noted, all listed scores include all the creature's normal modifiers. Stat block appear in four sections: basic, defensive, offensive and supplemental.

BASIC

Name, CR and XP: The monster's name appears first followed by its CR and how many experience points it is worth. If more than one creature is encountered, a bracketed number lists how many appear.

Appearance: The GM can read aloud or paraphrase this section. If a picture depicts the creature, this section may be omitted.

Sex, Race, Class and Level: If the monster has class levels these appear here along with its race and sex. The first noted class is the creature's favoured class.

Alignment and Type: The creature's abbreviated alignment and its type (including applicable subtypes).

Init and Senses: This creature's initiative modifier appears before any special senses (such as scent or darkvision) and the creature's Perception and Sense Motive scores. If the creature has special Perception-based abilities, such as trapfinding or stonecunning, these appear here.

Speed: The creature's modified land speed appears first along with any other relevant speeds (such as climb or fly). If the creature's base land speed is different to its modified speed this is also listed.

ACP and Movement Skills: ACP presents the creature's normal armour check penalty modifier. If the creature's Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, Stealth or Swim modifier differs from the relevant ability modifier minus its armour check penalty, these skills appear here.

DEFENSIVE

AC: The creature's normal, touch and flat-footed AC along with its CMD; additionally this section lists any defensive powers or abilities that affects the creature's AC.

Immune, Resist and Weaknesses: If the creature has immunity, resistance or a vulnerability to an effect or condition it appears here.

Fort, Ref and Will: The creature's saving throw modifiers along with any conditional modifiers and defensive powers (such as evasion) and spell resistance appear here.

HP: The creature's full, normal hit points along with the number of hit dice it possesses. A bracketed hit point total indicates that the creature is injured. If the creature has damage reduction or hardness it appears here.

OFFENSIVE

Space, Base Atk and CMB: The creature's space, base attack bonus and CMB.

Melee: This section lists a creature's melee attacks. If the attack has a reach that is not 5 ft. it is listed here. Each attack includes attack bonus and damage information. If the attack

has the default critical hit characteristics (20/x2) this information is omitted.

Ranged: This section lists the creature's ranged attacks. It always includes the attack's range. Each attack includes attack bonus and damage information. If the attack has the default critical hit characteristics (20/x2) this information is omitted.

Atk Options: This section lists any abilities or feats that can affect the creature's attacks. Subsequent listings describe all but the most basic abilities in more depth.

Special Actions: This section lists any useful abilities that a creature could use in battle. Subsequent listings describe all but the most basic abilities in more depth.

Spells and Spell-Like Abilities: The creature's caster level, along with its concentration modifier and domains appears in brackets before the main spell listing. If one or more of the creature's spells require a touch attack, the relevant attack bonus is included. Spells available appear in reverse order from highest to lowest level. Spells denoted ^D are domain spells. If applicable, a spell's DC is also provided.

Combat Gear: This section lists any combat-related equipment the creature possesses.

SUPPLEMENTAL

Abilities and Special Qualities: These sections list the creature's ability scores and any special qualities that do not appear anywhere else in its stat block.

Feats: An alphabetical listing of all the creature's feats.

Skills and Languages: These sections list any skills the creature possesses that have not already appeared in the stat block and all languages spoken or understood. Any language-based special abilities also appear here.

Gear: This section lists any gear not already listed in the creature's stat block. This section hardly ever contains weapons or armour as they usually appear in the relevant sections above.

Spellbook: The contents of the creature's spellbook and its barred schools.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Special abilities appear in the section to which they are best suited. Thus, offensive abilities appear with a creature's attacks while defensive ones appear with its other defences. Full write-ups of irrelevant powers (such as those that could not affect combat) are omitted. The effects of abilities that factor into a creature's normal attacks or defences have already been included in the relevant calculations.

Allied with a power-hungry wyrm obsessed with finding and claiming her birthright, the Fellowship of the Blackened Oak lurks in the shadowed depths of the forest. A powerful alliance of convenience and mutual interests, woe betide any who invade the Fellowship's woodland home.

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