

## ***“Omerian Tales: Lands and People of Omeria”*** **(A d20/OT supplement)**

### **Welcome to Omeria**

This is the first background supplement for *Omerian Tales*, a d20-Fantasy RPG set in the “New World.” Settlers from Alkaghi, the “Old World, are forging new paths to fame an adventure every day. This supplement is intended mainly for GM use. A set of the d20/OT rules are required to play this game (though it can also be adapted to any d20 fantasy setting in a pinch).

**Flavor of the New World:** Humans are quickly making inroads in the vast, unexplored tracts of Omeria. This is primarily due to their skill in magic. To draw a real-world analogy, magic is to Omeria what gunpowder was to the actual new world. The

intelligent denizens of the New World tend to greet humans with a mixture of fear, awe, respect and contempt. Naturally, there are opposing forces at work among the Old World Folk. There are those who see Omeria and its people as one, and seek to live among them as harmoniously as possible, Then there are those who see a land ripe for exploit, dark forces long kept silent in the old world, seeking a place to make their melevolevt voices heard once again.

### **The Land**

**Upper Omeria – land of Relics:** Settlers from Alkaghi have a well-established foothold in the new world in the form of Balderville, a bustling, megalopolis on the shores of Omeria. The vicinity beyond Balderville is still being explored, but already tales of ruined keeps, and vast underground labyrinths filled with amazing structures are flooding the area, attracting both the brave and the foolhardy to these shores. Upper Omeria is a land of verdant plains, old, deep forests, imposing mountains, and -- as if to balance out its wonder -- menacing threats tucked away in the dark parts of the world. Decades of seclusion have brought about the development of extremely large versions of mundane creatures, like spiders, rats, bats, and snakes (some of the latter so big, they are called “dragons”). Thankfully, there are more than enough adventurers willing to try their hand at charting this land of opportunity, thus taming the land and making safe for all.

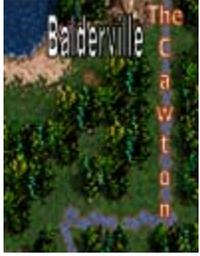


### **Major geographical features:**

**The Iznawt Expedition:** Most of what is presently known about Omeria comes from the reports of adventures. There was, however, a great expedition of several years led by a Kzetan named Nethis Iznawt. His map of the area, first sketched over a decade ago, forms the basis of what is known about Omeria, since amended by the *Learned Uncles* at UMMAC (see below).

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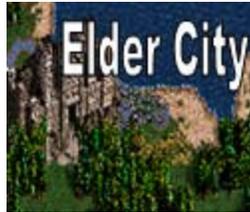
**BALDERVILLE:** Balderville is a thriving megalopolis built around the original New World Settlement of *Omerton*, which is now little more than a historical district and administrative center at the heart of the city. It is a collection of several smaller cities,



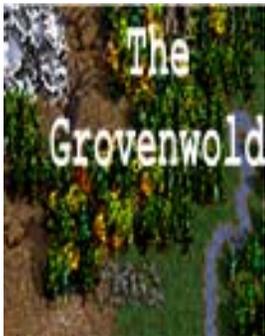
surrounded by thick walls, guarded by an imposing garrison. Just outside the eastern wall of the city is the huge trading port of *Cawton Estuary*, which runs far inland. Pretty much anything and everything can be found in Balderville, depending on where you go, and it is said one may

spend a lifetime exploring the city streets (not to mention, its vast underground). The city's power and position are further solidified by the presence of *The Red Temple*, a large garrison housing *The Fangs of Semit* (elite warriors and their associated priests) and *The University of Metaphysics and Magic* (UMMAC), where *Learned Uncles* study many great and powerful relics, and find new means of exploiting Alkaghi magic.

**ELDER CITY:** A tremendous edifice, rising 20 stories and covering several miles, the city glows with a faint blue tint that can be seen for miles at night. This blue barrier has thus far thwarted all attempts to enter this perfectly preserved remnant of the long-lost civilization scholars call *The Ancients*. No one really knows what lies within its haunting spires, though everyone wants to find out.



**THE GROVENWOLD:** A deep, tangly, but inviting forest that is largely unexplored, if only because the few who have entered do not wish to return.



Travellers speak of a pervasive feeling of being watched by unseen eyes. There are tales among the Inwahe of an elusive, powerful spirit that resides somewhere in the heart of the Wold. The Gnoll call it *Fer Mel I'Kamen*, or "The Spirit of the Green Mist."

**CASTLE BLACKROCK:** A remnant of the long-dead Baldren Empire, a rugged, human-like race that evidently ruled the realm sometime after the Ancients. The keep is well preserved, and sits atop an apparently endless labyrinth of caves and caverns, both natural and man-made (which adventurers call "Blackdeep"). The peaks of Blackrock are incongruously chilly, leading some to believe there is a curse laid upon it due to

some transgression by its citizens. Adventurers traveling to and from the ruins report many dangers, including a living city deep in the earth, populated with powerful warriors clad in glimmering metal. The description of these folk, echoed by reports from other locations, has led scholars to term these them using a name from mythology. They call these strong, wide, bearded, powerful, axe-wielding warriors "dwarves." To date, there have been many reports of "dwarves," none of them depicting the people as anything other than zealot xenophobes who destroy anything and anyone who enters their realm.

**The Broken Lands:** This flat, arid plain consists of huge fissures and canyons, some of which plunge deep into the earth. To date, no one has bothered to venture very far down, though there are several stories of a race of cliff-dwelling humanoids, blue-skinned, who traverse the canyon lands on great birds. Scholars have discounted most of these stories, though they yet to explain away the return of a gleaming sword of incredible sharpness, reportedly taken from one of these folk.

**Craggiset:** The land of the Grig Gnoll. Craggiset is full of precious metals and ore, which the Grig craft into strong weapons and armor. Thankfully, they are so busy at war with each other that they have taken little notice of the Omerians. Expeditions to the Craggiset always return with tales of ruined structures and Baldren statues – not to mention markedly fewer members than when they started. Most believe it the trip to Craggiset, a harsh, unforgiving environment, isn't worth the effort. In the far south of Craggiset are twin cities of Talis and Talmued, well-preserved Baldren keeps that are, at present, completely overrun with Gnoll.



**Coyne's Pass:** An armed garrison that serves as a way station for those traveling down The Longway Run. There is a large, friendly tribe of Inwahe (the *Open Hand* tribe) who inhabit the hills just west of who seem to be on peaceful terms with the Grig in the mountains nearby (a clan known as *The Whiteskull*). Omerians use the Inwahe as an

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intermediary to placate the Grig. Coyne’s Pass is a popular launching point for expeditions across the water into Bothan, as it allows a party to avoid The Plains of Elendi, where the warlike Puningji roam.

**Bothan:** More inviting than the Grovenwold, Bothan features numerous ancient structures and ruins in which adventurers can find relics to return to UMMAC for great reward. The relative frequency of these ruins suggest to scholars that this area was once home to a powerful kingdom, most likely Baldren. The dangers of the forest are typical: large versions of pests (spiders, wasps, rats and the like), plus the occasional monstrosity located in the interior, when adventurers find old caves and dungeons dating from long ago. There have been reports of a swift, elusive group of creatures, who inhabit the area where the forest is most dense (the southern edge of Bothan, near the foothills of Ironhold).



No one has ever seen these creatures. What is usually found are the corpses of adventurers hanging from the trees, their gear untouched,

their bodies pockmarked with holes that appear to have come from arrows.

**Ebronder:** This is a collection of Inwahe tribes who have come together mainly as a means of security against the Omerians. Though on good terms with the Humans, the Gnoll are ever vigilant of deceit, citing “other dealings with your kind,” the likes of which they refuse to expound upon. Some believe this antipathy is a remnant of a long ago age, just after the Baldren period, but well before the present day.

**Lawton’s Bend:** Little more than a turn in the river itself, this area is home to yet another large, ruined keep, as yet unnamed (most simply call it “The Keep at Lawton’s Bend”). The keep itself is avoided, mainly because the first five expeditions who visited it all vanished without a trace. Some travellers have reported strange, winged creatures emerging from



the ruins on moon-filled nights, but no one has bothered to go find out what they could actually be (scholars assume some form of giant bat).



**Ironhold:** No one travels far into Ironhold, if they travel in at all. Though there is evidence to suggest abundant metals, gems and minerals, the entire mountain range emits a strange radiation that thwarts magic. The further one travels into Ironhold, the harder magic is to use. To make matters worse, there are suggestions of a massive dwarven population who inhabit not just the underground, but the surface areas, as well. Scholars have taken to calling these people *The Chaar*, based on the discovery and decipherment of runes located in the lower foothills (all examples of which appear to be warnings that one should not trespass on pain of death).

**The Dreadmyre:** A huge swamp, filled with precious stones and not a few Baldren ruins. There are also reports of a sunken, haunted Ancient city at the Myre’s center. Unfortunately, this area is most definitely the home to the largest versions of Omerian snakes, or “Dragons,” some of which appear to possess a rudimentary intelligence in the form of extreme cunning. Two expeditions have successfully returned from The Dreadmyre, one of which came back with a cut emerald the size of a human head. The other expedition brought back the skin of a snake, which was crafted into a suit of armor as light as leather, but hard as mail. The lure of obtaining additional skins has led many to take on the mire, but few to return, most empty-handed, with tales to freeze the bones.

**The Hole:** At the base of Winder’s Peak (at the tallest mountain in Omeria) is a tremendous chasm, whose sheer walls plummet deep, deep into the earth. No one has ever bothered to see what lies beneath. Only a few have bothered to climb the mountain, whose tallest spires extend into the clouds.

**The Towers/Evinsfayte:** this is an almost completely unexplored mountain range. “The Great Pillar of Iznowt” is a tall, narrow, needle-like spire that thrusts straight up out

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of the range. It is obviously named for Nethis Iznawt, who headed the first Omerian mapping expedition. The range of Evinsfayte is named for Iznawt's Altherian companion, Abelard Evins, who perished there from a fall.

**Rabscuttle:** A completely inhospitable place that is home to several warring Grig factions, among them: *The Bonebreakers; The Bloody Skull; The Eyebiters, and The Red Sun.* None of these tribes are friendly, though it was *Red Sun* guides who took Iznawt through the region when he mapped it.

### **The indigenous people**

Upper Omeria is (was?) primarily populated by the Gnoll, a tribal race of dog-like humanoids. Though each tribe has its own identity, special customs and mores, all currently known species of Gnoll are classified into three camps:

*The Inwahe:* benevolent lodge-dwellers found primarily Ebronder, and in the forests on the outskirts of Balderville.

*The Puningji:* fierce horseman who roam the Plain of Elendi in search of great herds.

*The Grig:* “advanced,” metal-using, warlike tribes who rule the harsh lands of The Cragiset.

PCs can expect to meet with Inwahe fairly early in the campaign, as the Inwahe trade freely with the “Irdruzil,” or “the Strange Folk,” (or simply “Strangers”). Encounters with the Puningji should be avoided, as their reactions depend entirely on their mood at the moment. As already noted, very few adventurers have gone into the Cragiset and returned to tell of it. Though individual Grig tribes hate each other, they despise outsiders even more. Additional information on the Gnoll, plus the other unusual races of Omeria, is found, below.

### **New World Races**

The new world is populated by the typical races found in most fantasy milieus. In *Omeria*, however, it is assumed that there has been very little contact between the people of the old world and the people of the new, as humans only recently settled the new world. For that reason, no encounter can be considered “standard.” Stance of neutrality, enmity and empathy are forged as the campaign progresses, and there is no way to know what reactions will occur until they are played out.

**Racial archetypes:** Some racial descriptions are broken down into “Archetypes” and “Ethnicities.” A racial archetype is a general description of the race overall. An ethnicity is a subset or variation of the archetype. Not all races have archetypes and subsets.

**Omerian Player Characters:** As the campaign develops, and players come into contact with more and more Omerian people, some players may want to play these new races. For that reason, information is available under each archetype or ethnicity.

### **DWARVES**

*(Ethnicities: Hill, Mountain and Surface)*

<b>Bonuses</b>	<b>+1 STR</b> <b>+1 BP, +2d6 STA</b>
<b>Negatives</b>	<b>-1 DEX, -1 CHA</b>
<b>Virtues</b>	<b>Determined</b>
<b>Vices</b>	<b>Zealous</b>

Dwarves are short, stout creatures resembling small, stocky (often bearded) humans. They are typically strong and wide of shoulder, and short of leg. They are generally hardy fighters, and usually bitter realists. On the whole, most Dwarven cultures are introverted and somewhat xenophobic, their initial reactions typically range from neutral to openly hostile.

Dwarves are split into three related, but unique sub-species. These sub-species, while cultures unto themselves, nonetheless share many common traits and characteristics. There are two reasons for this. First, while it is uncommon for the different types of Dwarves to mix cultures or intermarry, it is not unheard of. All Dwarves tend to cling to and carry their cultural mores with them. More integral than intermarriage, however, is the generally agreed upon belief that all Dwarves sprang from the same stock and location, during which time they shared a common tongue and culture for hundreds of years. The reasons why the race inexplicably split off into their present three branches is a secret only the Dwarves know (and they ain't talkin').

All Dwarves are by reputation excellent craftsman, known for their expert building skills, fine jewelry and well-made armament. Their communities are found in three places, the surface (rare, but usually plains), the hills and the mountains. Being less than tolerant of other races (and sometimes not even very tolerant of each other) Dwarven communities (usually) trade freely amongst themselves. Where the different terrains merge (i.e., hills with mountains, plains with hills), you will often find the two types of Dwarves living relatively close by. On occasion, there will be isolated pockets of single Dwarven races (usually consisting of Mountain or Hill Dwarves). In these cases, the community

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consider themselves apart from even their Dwarven cousins. Such communities are invariably powerful and exert major influence on their habitats and neighboring kingdoms.

The prevalent Mountain Dwarf belief system revolves around the ability to "craft," be it in a skill like masonry, or a task such as war. Anyone who is excellent at his craft is seen as blessed by the gods. Their most revered god is, of course, Kranrik, "the great craftsman." Dwarven society is heavily patriarchal. Females are treated as property, for the most part, and almost all marriages are arranged (usually by cooperating clans as a means to maintain power and/or influence).

Dwarven names are usually descriptive, reflecting their backgrounds. Typical Dwarven last names include Steelhand, Ironhelm, and Goldhammer (these, of course, are translations from the Dwarven tongue). Dwarves live to be between 550-750 yrs. old.

**Hill Dwarves:** Hill Dwarves are seemingly a mixture of Mountain and Surface Dwarves, possessing a synthesis of traits that the others have individually. It is rumored among scholars, in fact, that the Hill Dwarves most closely resemble the original Dwarven culture to which all Dwarves once belonged. Unlike their Mountain brethren, Hill Dwarves are comfortable living both above and below ground and their architecture and lifestyle reflect this. Some Hill Dwarf

communities build their abodes completely inside the earth, while others may build entirely outside, like humans. No matter how the community is built, it is always walled, heavily fortified, and trapped to the gills. Hill Dwarves are equally adept at farming as their surface brethren (see below) and as good as their mountain brothers at mining and stone cutting. If they were as aggressive as their mountain cousins, they might rule more and larger territories than they do.

While not as prejudiced and introverted as the Mountain Dwarves, Hill Dwarves are nonetheless a relatively closed society. They rarely interact with non-Dwarves unless it is to their benefit. When they do, they prefer that the Surface Dwarves act as a go between in their relations with others (non-dwarfs). They can be as quick to anger as their Mountain brothers and are fierce fighters when provoked. They are fiercely devoted to king, clan and family (usually in that order), and tend to treat their females as subservient beings. There is relatively little infighting and political posturing among Hill Dwarven populations, due to the fact that they see their leaders as part of an unbroken line descending directly from the gods.

**Mountain Dwarves:** The most fiercely introverted, mysterious and warlike of all the Dwarven "races" are the Mountain Dwarves. Mountain Dwarves live in seclusion, far away from almost all outside influences. They usually maintain somewhat cordial relations with other Dwarven enclaves (except with Surface Dwarves which they view with a certain degree of contempt). All other creatures are usually treated as hostile invaders. Typically, an initial encounter with a Mountain Dwarf will be, at best, tension-filled. To say they are distrustful of all other races is an understatement. No one knows the reason behind their warlike stance, but most assume it has its roots in simple arrogance. A select few sages point to some strange historical event that occurred many years ago, perhaps the same event that causes the legendary original clan to split into the present three races.

Since the Mountain Dwarves are so secluded from the rest of the world, they tend to be greedy when it comes to anything outside of the world they live in. Metals and stones are common to a Mountain Dwarf, but such things as paper or fine cloth are sought out and hoarded. It is this greed for the unusual, in fact, that accounts for the very few (often black market) trade routes that exist between Mountain Dwarves and non-dwarves. Such trade is often conducted through several layers of middlemen, and most often is instigated by rich and/or curious Dwarven nobles.

Mountain Dwarves exist in a clan-like culture whose politics exhibit their inherent violence and capriciousness. This makes the aforementioned trade



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agreements spotty and, sometimes, very dangerous to maintain. Like Hill Dwarves, they believe their leaders are anointed by the gods. Unlike other Dwarven ethnicities, they are much quicker to reconcile the replacement of inept leaders through combat or assassination as “the will of the gods,” particularly if the leader has acted in a weak or dishonorable manner,

Physically, Mountain Dwarves’ homes are built inside massive tunnels (either natural or carved). They are exceptional miners, stone cutters and stonemasons, with expertise beyond all other Dwarves. While they live deep inside and beneath mountains, they will still often build great fortresses inside their underground kingdom. Like all other Dwarves, the Mountain clans are skilled in any other crafts they acquire.

Through means as yet unknown, Mountain dwarves have acquired a degree of magic resistance. Some sages speculate it has something to do with the very earth in which they have created their homes. The stone deep within the Omerian mountains is said to be a strange, dark substance that, according to rumor, exudes some sort of natural anti-magic radiation. In game terms, all mountain dwarves have a +4 resistance to any sort of magical effect, including beneficial ones, like healing spells. The Mountain Dwarf cannot turn this resistance on and off as he pleases. There are some rumors, however, of Mountain Dwarves losing their resistance as they travel further away from their homelands.

Needless to say, there are no Mountain Dwarf magicians, nor or there traditional priests. Mountain Dwarf priests tend to be either seers or war priests. The seers do not cast spells or scry like the typical member of their profession, but rather utilize rune stones, or sacred objects. They are said to be remarkably accurate in their predictions. Mountain Dwarf war priests are usually just extremely devoted or proficient warriors endowed with some unusual attribute or ability (like *Battlerager* or *Improved Critical*). There are some reports, however, of war priests who have the ability to create very limited spell-like effects on themselves and their immediate followers. Such reports are largely unsubstantiated.

**Surface Dwarves:** The most open and (relatively) friendly of the Dwarves, relatively speaking, are the Surface Dwarves. The surface dwellers are also the tallest but least physically powerful. Sometimes called “the sundered” or “the cursed” by their Hill and Mountain brethren, Surface Dwarves seem to have originated from the same stock as Hill Dwarves. Some scholars speculate that the Surface dwarves were part of a clan that was banned (for reasons unknown) from the old Dwarven society. They now serve as a link between the outside peoples and the more secluded worlds of their Dwarven brothers. In fact, it is the ability to comfortably live in both worlds

that allows the Surface Dwarves to thrive where their cousins seem to be dwindling.

Surface Dwarves have less of a problem conducting amicable relations with other races, and seem to be accepted (or at least tolerated) in the usually secluded homes of their relatives in the Hills and Mountains. Most surface clans themselves still live in mountainous regions, but on occasion, “wilders” or “rovers” (as they are called by the other Dwarves) can be found elsewhere. There are even some tribes, like the Malaryians of Bothan, who have adopted the wholly non-traditional role of fishermen (though they still tend to be poor swimmers).

Surface Dwarves are usually excellent farmers, creating croplands where most others would never dare try. Their hill farms are built on terraces, giving their communities a unique look to them. This terracing is useful in many ways. For starters it gives them the ground they need to raise crops. The second and much more subtle use of terracing is homeland defense. With each terraces higher and generally offset from those below, it offers strategic advantage for the sureshot Surface Slingers. Swarf clans that farm traditional flatlands tend to produce large amounts of crop in small spaces. This is because Dwarven crop specimens are unusually large. No one is sure how this effect is achieved. Rumor has it the Surface Dwarves import some sort of strange powder from their Hill and Mountain relatives which spurs this remarkable growth.

Surface Dwarves live in extended families as part of tribes of various sizes. While Surface Dwarf tribes are each unique in their temperament and structure, it is not unusual at all to find several tribes occupying the same territory and sharing it with a minimum of dispute. Unlike in the Hill and Mountain culture, Surface Dwarven females live in complete equanimity with their male counterparts.

### **ELVES**

*(Ethnicities: Wood, Steel)*

<b>Bonuses</b>	<b>+1 DEX</b>
<b>Negatives</b>	<b>-1 STR</b>
<b>Virtues</b>	<b>Free-Spiritied</b>
<b>Vices</b>	<b>Fearful</b>

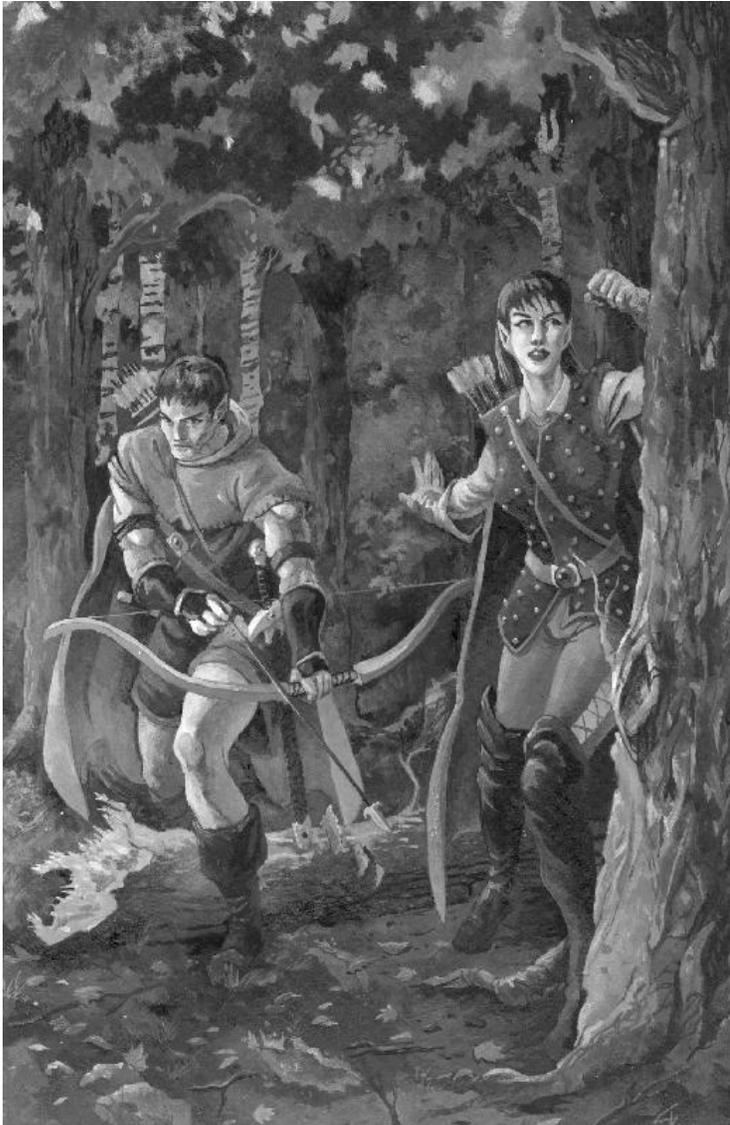
**Green (Wood) Elves:** Green elves inhabit the deepest, darkest forests -- areas seldom frequented by other races. They are hardy fighters, physically the strongest of elves, but are somewhat barbarous in their ways. Green Elves are normally over 6' tall, but are usually rather thin. Their skin color ranges in pigmentation, but there is always a hint of green. Hair color is usually black, though occasional, unexplainable variations have occurred. Their eyes are always a shade of green or blue.

Wood Elves are inclined toward militancy, and

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most spend a good portion of their lives training in the use of weaponry. These 'barbarians' are extremely proficient in the use Bows and Daggers (Crit on a 19 or a 20 with these weapons). Note that most Wood Elves characters stone, wood, or bone versions of weapons, as metalworking is almost unheard of in Wood Elf society.

Green Elves live in tribes of various sizes, and almost every tribe has a dozen natural enemies (including other Elf tribes). When dealing with outsiders, they tend to “shoot first and ask question later” (though they will usually stalk potential enemies for some time before committing to action). This is not to say they are foolhardy. They will scout any threat as much as possible, using a “blending skill,” which is basically a *Sneak* attack that allows them a +4 to their Subterfuge check in their natural



environment. This particularly deadly skill allows, a “blended” Green Elf to his blending and subterfuge

bonuses to any sneak attacks. This ability can only be used in the Wild Elf's natural terrain, however, the woods.

Green elves are very superstitious, and many will have obvious problems adapting to the outside world. Players playing Green Elves should be extremely detailed in their particular tribal norms, and must incorporate at least two strange habits into their character's daily routine. Green Elves tend to have certain strange phobias, which the player is encouraged to create and play.

Wood Elves live to be 120-150 years old, and always take names that reflect their life in the wilds. They wear clothing that blends with the wild, and always carry a hunting knife.

**Blue (Steel) Elves:** Blue elves inhabit remote areas, generally shunning the rest of society. They are stoic to a fault, but make strong allies. In appearance, they are tall and sinewy, which belies their great strength (for elves). Most are around or over 6' tall, and no fat steel elf has ever been seen. Their skin is a glistening, metallic blue. Their hair is always black, and their eyes are always some shade of blue.

The Blue Elves are excellent metal workers, and all are trained with the blade. In addition, Steel Elves are extremely adept at survival in their natural element (consider any Survival checks in natural terrain to be at DC 5).

Steel Elves wear as little, or as much clothing as they need. They are pragmatic creatures, with little use for ornamentation. Males and females alike always carry a sword of some type. Blue Elven names reflect their affinity for strong sturdy mountains and good, solid craft. Some humans have even gone so far to say that these names closely resemble those used by dwarves. There are legends of certain Blue Elf tribes living in huge dugouts in the walls of forbidding canyons. These Elves are said to ride great, fearsome birds.

### **GNOLL** (*Ethnicities: Grig, Inwahe, Puningji, Maotauna*)

<b>Bonuses</b>	<b>+2 STR</b> <b>+2 BP, +2d6 STA</b>
<b>Negatives</b>	<b>-2 CHA, -2 INT</b>
<b>Virtues</b>	<b>Industrious</b>
<b>Vices</b>	<b>Cowardly</b>

Gnoll is the human term used to describe that vast collection of tribes inhabited by this dog-like race. The Gnoll are basically large humanoids with canine facial features. They are best described as tall (6' to 7') stocky beings with human bodies and dog heads.

All Gnoll come from primitive backgrounds, and are usually short-lived. Little is known about them outside of their society, and many other races

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avoid them. They roam the land in tribal units, and no two tribes are the same. There are some basic similarities between tribal types, however, which allow major classification of the various enclaves. Besides their dog-like features, every Gnoll sub-race maintains the canine sense of smell. Their enhanced sense of smell grants makes them very difficult to surprise. Gnoll PCs are usually Archers, Fighters, Rangers, or Rogues.

**Grig (greeg):** The most common of the Gnoll, the Grig are typically barbaric. They have a "might makes right" mentality, with their size and strength more often than not placing them in "the right." They are hardy warriors, rather large and muscular. Their appearance can be menacing. Their fur is usually dark, and their coat is invariably dirty. They take pains to keep their canines glistening and menacing, however, and love to create and wear "perfumes" that smell of blood or offal. They prefer ornamentation that makes them look as menacing as possible (spikes, sharp edges, fearsome iconography emblazoned on shields, etc.).

Grigs tend to form large tribes, and because other races tend to push them out, they usually inhabit desolate places. They are adept at making steel weapons, if given the proper materials, and can fashion armor, as well. Many tribes, in fact, prize armor and weaponry above all else, and form relatively huge empires, ruling vast tracts of mountainous or rough terrain. Characters stumbling on such territory will almost immediately notice the despoiling of arable land (if any is present), as well as many examples of fearsome heraldic symbols, such as impaled cadavers or elaborate stone and bone markers. Grig are acquisitive and fearsome, and usually not prudent about choosing enemies, so such territory is frequented only by fools. Grig still maintain the pack mentality of their ancient ancestors, with the strong dominating the weak, and little care given to those who can't take care of themselves. They do not discriminate among male and female, each gender fully capable of exerting control (through various means) over their brethren.

Should a player run a Grig character, the bad reputation of the Grig as a whole will follow that individual character everywhere he goes. In game terms, all interactions with non-Grig, or non-party members suffer a -2. Checks concerning Elves, their natural enemies, are penalized at -4.

**Inwahe (een-WAH-hee):** The benevolent Inwahe take up residence in great wooden lodges next to fertile tracts of land, such as streambeds or forests. They are forest tenders and farmers, a far cry from their brothers, the many typical, warlike species of Gnoll. Inwahe are the smallest of the Gnoll, approximately the size of Elves, with whom they sometimes share territory. Inwahe, in fact, tend to

make treaties with all of their neighbors, often at the expense of land or respect. As a predominately non-violent race, they tend to collect as powerful an "entourage" as possible to protect themselves. All Inwahe are capable farmers, and many can craft hunting arrows as well, given the proper materials.

Inwahe hold reverence for all living things, especially animals, with whom they feel a kindred spirit. Each Inwahe accordingly possesses a spirit guide (or totem), which they can communicate with using various rituals. The most common form of ritual involves meditation, focused on the use of a small bag filled with special personal objects. The bag, called a Niktaki (neek-TAHK-ee), or Medicine Bag, is worn around the neck and removed only in rituals involving the totem. The preliminary "calling ritual," or "Izh B'em'he (Eezh beh-MEH), is performed at the age of 10, and involves the actual summoning of the totem spirit. By this time, the child has collected a number of personal objects, which he removes from his pack and places on a small sheet of sacred material, usually leather or buckskin. The Inwahe then wills himself into a trance, during which time he sees his spirit guide in his mind. From that point on, the child will forever recognize his guide, and will be able to communicate with it on the spiritual level. Players running Inwahe characters should simulate the above ritual by rolling the guide's attributes on the table below (roll twice, once for type of creature, once for ecological niche).

	<b>TYPE (d20)</b>	<b>ECOLOGICAL NICHE</b>
Mammal	1-11	Carnivore 1-6
Avian	12-14	Herbivore 7-12
Sea creature	15-16	Omnivore 13-18
Insect	17-18	Scavenger 19-20
Reptile	19-20	

The player should bear in mind that the totem should reflect the characters strengths and weaknesses. Thus, a physically weak character with a Carnivorous Mammal as a totem would not likely have a Wolf as a spirit guide. Players who despair of their initial rolls, or who cannot come up with an appropriate guide should be allowed one additional roll on the above tables. After the second roll, however, the character is stuck with what he gets (as is the nature of the ritual -- the animal chooses the Inwahe, NOT the other way around). If the player simply cannot accept the hand dealt by fate (i.e., the above die rolls), assume that the character simply has no spirit guide. Perhaps he has attempted the ritual several times, and a guide has not yet shown. This could be a great role-playing hook for the character, who may be roaming the lands, searching for his guide, or attempting to accomplish some great feat to enamor him in the eyes of the spirits.

Whatever the case, Inwahe characters with spirit guides have certain advantages. First off, they

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may attempt *Communion* with the animal, which is quite similar to the above summoning ritual. In this case, however, the character merely clutches at the medicine bag, and attempts to contact the totem. If he is successful, the guide appears in a vision and imparts the requested knowledge to the character in symbolic, or cryptic form (it's up to the GM to decide how this is done). In game terms, *Communion* is accomplished by rolling WIS+Communication versus DC10. A successful roll indicates that the guide has appeared as above. *Communion* can only be attempted once per day, and takes no less than 10 minutes to accomplish. The character must have quiet and solitude to attempt the task.

A second advantage possessed by the character is *Manifestation*, which is the actual summoning of the guide in physical form. This is a more difficult feat to accomplish (DC20). If the character is successful, the guide appears within minutes, and remains to serve for a number of hours equal to the success ratio of the Check. Summoning can be attempted once per day.<sup>1</sup>

The final ability granted through possession of a totem spirit is *Transmutation*, which allows the character to take on characteristics of his guide. *Transmutation* is difficult to achieve (DC20), and physically taxing on the character (cost=2d6 STA). If the character is successful, however, he immediately the abilities of his totem, in whatever combination he desires. A character with a shark for a guide, for example, might be able to swim underwater without need of air. He might, as well, develop a mouth full of razor-sharp teeth.

*Transmutation* may be attempted any number of times per day, provided the character has enough STA. There are risks, however. A character that attempts *Transmutation* and loses more STA than he presently has, will collapse into unconscious, and must make a WILL check at DC15 or permanently lose a BP. Further, a critical failure on the part of a character attempting *Transmutation* requires a STR+Physical DC20 check to resist the following effects (roll d6):

1-2: *Unconscious*: Character loses all STA, in coma for 3 days.

3-4: *Injured*: Character loses STA + 2 BPs (structural damage from aborted change)

5: *Cursed*: Spirit Guide deserts character for 2d6 days. All checks at -2 during this time.

6: *Death*: Character must make an additional roll check versus DC25 or die. If successful, character is reduced to 0 HP's, 1 BP, and bedridden for a month. Spirit Guide deserts character permanently, quest must be taken to acquire replacement. Character loses d4 KAR, permanently.

The fur of the Inwahe is varied. In all cases, however, coloration usually features a base brown shade of some type, ranging from a dull, dirty color to a gleaming metallic gold. Trace elements of white are sometimes found on the snout and jowl fur, and occasional patches of green might be seen. These green patches are highly prized by Inwahe, and represent blessings from the spirits. Characters have a 6 in 20 (30%) chance of possessing such a patch, and are granted a 2 additional KAR points if they have it.

Of all their species, only the Inwahe maintain regular trade with non-Gnoll races. In addition, they tend to settle closer to and get along better with other races. They tend to build simple wooden dwellings (“lodges”), to include the occasional walled enclosure (fort). Though they are not great warriors physically, they tend to be prudent and patient during conflict. They will create all sorts of barricades, maintain secret hideaways, and exercise hit-and-run tactics against their enemies. Unlike the Grig and Puninggi, who seem to value individual strength and prowess above common sense, the Inwahe only care about winning the war. They are tenacious foes, and, if drawn into a conflict they cannot avoid, they will carry on harassing techniques indefinitely.<sup>2</sup>

**Puninggi (poo-NEEN-jie):** In many ways, the Puninggi are the most ferocious of Gnoll warriors, and are feared even by the steel-using Grig. They live in small, roving tribes that follow wild herd animals across the landscape, upon which they depend for sustenance. Some scholars believe that only their nomadic tribal lifestyle keeps the Puninggi from dominating not only other Gnoll, but other lifeforms in their area.

The Puninggi are exceptional horsemen and hunters. Some even call them the best mounted warriors in the world. Simply put, this incredible skill with horses equates a +5 bonus handling horses. In addition, a Puninggi riding a horse he himself has broken and trained never has to make a Check to perform unusual or outstanding feats while on that horse. All Puninggi warriors are also capable of the following racial Feats:

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<sup>1</sup> Note that, if the guide has no way of logically reaching the character (for example, the character summons a wolf while he is out at sea, or a fish while he is in a dry cavern), the manifestation automatically fails. The GM should, in fact, inform players whether the manifestation is logistically possible before they make the attempt. It is assumed that the character will know the best conditions for manifestation.

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<sup>2</sup> An apt template for this mindset and execution would be the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War.

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**Mounted Bow shots:** The Puninggi can fire without penalty from odd angles while mounted, such as leaning to one side, or bracing himself with his legs and firing from under the horse's neck (thereby using the horse as partial cover [+2 AC]).

**Leaping from horseback:** Puninggi can leap in attack from horseback to another target with no penalty, regardless of whether the other target is moving. The warrior must simply make a roll to hit, and gets an additional +2 if the target is dismounted. A successful attack requires the target to make a STR+Physical Check DC15 to remain upright. A Puninggi who 'misses' his leap will land unharmed, provided he makes a successful DEX+Physical Check+riding bonus vs. DC20. An offshoot of this trait is the ability leap *on* to horseback with a successful check like the one above. The mount, if it has been trained by the Puninggi, will automatically speed off in the desired direction.

Puninggi coloration resembles German Shepherds (browns and blacks), and their countenance often reflects their demeanor. Though they roam after the herds, the location of the herds is seasonally static. That is, the herds have a tendency to wander the same lands during specific times of year. Puninggi are quite possessive of their lands, and often attack trespassers first and ask questions later.

A feature of many of these lands are the Puninggi graveyards, which feature tall platforms set high above the ground on stilt-like legs. The

deceased Puninggi are placed on the platform with all their material possessions (which tend to be few, since the tribe roams). This always includes weaponry, and may include monetary possessions, if the tribe recognizes their worth (a few tribes maintain active trade with certain, trusted merchants). There is always a contingent of Puninggi warriors serving as Di'ish b'te (deesh ba'TEH), or "guardians of the dead." The graveyards are usually situated on or near the tribal "wintering lands" (Gol Narshasak [GAWL narshaSACK]), where the Puninggi settle during the cold months.

Puninggi warriors go to great lengths to present a fearsome image, often painting their faces wildly, or wearing gruesome skull masks. Some tribes have unusual rituals revolving around combat, in which mind-altering herbs or plants are consumed before battles. Still others perform bizarre rituals on the bodies of their dead enemies, such as scalping them or removing the victim's heart and devouring it to capture the former foe's 'spirit.' A Puninggi PC should have a number of these "strange habits" (suggest d6-1 habits).

Puninggi tribes usually elect their leaders through rituals of strength or skill. These rituals may include direct (sometimes lethal) combat, a test of hunting skills, an endurance trial, a "vision quest," or any combination of the above. Tribal leaders are always male, and are revered and served until they die or abdicate (either of which can occur by challenge). Some tribes feature a council of elders

with a "chief" at its head, and still others create councils of functionaries (i.e., "war chief," "hunt leader," "home guard," etc.). Puninggi are usually incredibly loyal to their rituals and their word, which sometimes leads them

into disadvantageous agreements with those who are not. They despise their Grig brothers, and tend to look down upon (and occasionally abuse) their Inwahe brothers.

**Moatauna (MOW[as in HOW] -TAH-NAH):**

The Maotana are a mystical, highly revered, and highly feared race amongst the Gnoll. They appear seemingly at random



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among any of the aforementioned races (and their birth usually causes great consternation among the tribe). They are natural spellcasters, often serving as shaman (Druids) for their people, performing rituals involving all sort of strange ceremony. Indeed, they are often the only Gnolls able to wield magic, and are thus treasured, as well as feared.

Though treated as a race unto itself, a Maotana can be born into any race. Similar to the case of the Minotaur (below), the birth of one of these creatures is said to be a sign from the gods. How the sign is interpreted is up to the individual tribe. A Puningi tribe, for instance, might see the birth as a sign of great power bestowed upon their warriors, and might immediately launch a hunt, or raid their enemies. The Inwahe might see the birth as a sign of a bitter harvest, or perhaps the opposite – a bounty. Grig almost always take great pains to protect, and later serve, the spellcaster. On the whole, though, the tribal reaction often depends upon many strange, unpredictable factors.

Maotana do not resemble their parents in any way. Their features are sleek and black, and their heads resemble Doberman Pinschers. They invariably carry with them an air of mystery. Their movements are fluid and surreal, almost ghostly. Other Gnoll (even boisterous Grig) tend to give way when they approach. They are almost always stoic and reserved, and usually utterly humorless. Most Maotana might as well be outcasts among their own people, as fear inevitably causes them to be shunned or, at best, kept at arm’s length. This occurs even when they are serving in important and benevolent roles, such as that of healer, or tribal shaman, their usual occupation for much of their adult life.

At some point in their lives – no one can explain why – some inborn instinct draws the Maotana away from his home and tribe. A strange migration takes place during the winter of one of the character’s younger years, leading the magical being to an undetermined location. No one is sure where the shaman goes, but legends say that all Maotana find their way to one central tribe, to live among their own kind and indulge in their mystical arts. Some Gnoll tribes tell stories about a mythical tribe of Maotana, which is gathering strength to descend from the mountains and destroy the lands during the Glim’wo Knitokshoaw (GLEE-mao nee-TOK-show [as in cow]), or ‘The Final Time,’ when all things return to the earth. Again, no one, other than the Maotana themselves, know where or why they depart. Some eventually return from their sojourn. Others are never seen by their people again.

In game terms, Maotana are always spellcasters, usually Elementalists. They are naturally resistant to magic (+2 on all resistance rolls). They may occasionally combine a Warrior or Archer profile with their spellcasting profession (this is more common among those born to Puningi tribes). In

fact, Maotana character’s are allowed to possess all granted abilities of their parent tribe (Puningi *Riding*, Inwahe *Spirit Guide*).

It should be quite obvious that the Maotana character is *rare* and specific to their racial group. Players should only be allowed to run one of these characters if the campaign is heavily centered on or connected with the Gnoll culture. It is almost unheard of for one of these strange creatures to associate with non-Gnoll.<sup>3</sup>

### **Haflings**

<b>Bonuses</b>	<b>+3 DEX</b>
<b>Negatives</b>	<b>-2 STR</b>
<b>Virtues</b>	<b>Determined</b>
<b>Vices</b>	<b>Fearful</b>

These small folk are a mongrel race of human-kin, most often seen as slaves of the more powerful races of the realm (primarily Grig Gnolls and Dwarves). Once a thriving people found in idyllic forest glens and rolling grasslands, the Halfling now exist in small, isolated pockets, burying themselves from the sight and sound of all creatures. They are inherently distrustful of all non-halfings, and take elaborate pains to protect their lands, using all sorts



of clever tricks, traps and misdirection to thwart their enemies. When Halflings do engage in combat, their small size and great dexterity give them a +4 to AC versus creatures larger than themselves. All Halflings have the ability to *Sneak* attack like a Wood Elf. Unlike Elves, these abilities extend outside

their home terrain or domain.

In appearance, the “Little People” are a small folk, and in appearance seem to be a cross between humans and elves. Some Halflings feature the

<sup>3</sup> Though not entirely improbable, given the right circumstances. After all, no one knows where the Maotana “migrate” to during their strange sojourn. Encounters with non-Gnoll will probably take place during such travels. It is also possible that the character is sick of being treated as an outcast, and is simply searching for a place to fit in (either before or after the strange “migration” takes place).

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traditional arched eyebrows of the elves, and a select few even have pointed ears. They tend to have bushy brown or red hair, and dark eyes. For reasons no one can explain, Halflings' names reflect a sensibility that is in direct opposition to their difficult place in the world (Examples: Handy Sunwarm, Glyssa Waterbright). Halflings have the same life expectancy as humans.

### **Humans**

*(see M20/OT Core Rules for PC creation)*

Humans new to the realm, and fast gaining power. They run the gamut between good and evil, prosperity and poverty, and are found mainly in well-established settlements. At present, the number of those settlements is expanding (much to the consternation of the other races). As a general rule, humans get along very well with (or at least tolerate) other races. They are also an extremely versatile and

as devious as a Halfling, and as menacing as a Grig. Thanks in part to their unusual combination of unpredictability and resourcefulness, almost all non-human races consider them to be the most dangerous creatures in the world. They are admired, envied, pitied and feared. And, much to the chagrin of certain races, they are here to stay.

Humans range from 5' to 7' tall, with weight ranges from below 100 to approaching 400 lbs. Human names are as varied as snow, though many favor appellations or titles (like "Lord," or "the Cursed," etc.). Most humans live to be around 100 years old. As for Traits, any combination of positive or negative is possible, given the eclectic nature of Human society. Human PCs are hail from the Old World, Alkaghi. There are rumors of human settlements in the New World, but none have been substantiated.

### **KENKU**

**Bonuses** +1 DEX, +1 WIS

**Negatives** -2 STR

**Virtues** Charismatic

**Vices** Capricious

These sinewy birdmen from the high mountains are travelers, traders, and merchants, fond of acquiring and dispersing fine gems and jewels. In appearance, they are bipedal, like humans, but their bodies are completely covered in feathers. The head resembles a bird of some type, usually a bird of prey. They have no wings, but instead have formed arms and hands, like their closely related humanoid brethren. However, their legs and feet closely resemble a bird's, so they are very careful to protect these fragile elements.

Kenku are natural craftsmen and experienced travelers. They hardly ever set down roots, preferring to roam the world in search of adventure and great riches. Accordingly, the two motivations are mutually exclusive, as riches tend to weigh the traveler down. That being the case, all Kenku prefer to convert their goods to something of a portable nature (i.e., gems, jewelry). They travel light, and dress comfortably. In addition, almost every Kenku will carry some sort of disguise with them on their sojourns, for traveling undetected through areas where they may not be welcome.

Kenku numbers are not numerous, and encounters with them are relatively rare. Most of these encounters take place in marketplaces, or perhaps place of business. As a result of their wanderings and their propensity to haggle, many reputation-destroying rumors are afloat that depict Kenku as con artists. The Kenku's ability to profit from their cleverness does little to refute these reports (though, in fairness to the Kenku, they are usually better business people than the established



adaptable people. They are also, as Dwarves put it, "dangerously fertile."

Humans tend toward organization and power, and can be as covetous as the greediest Mountain Dwarf. They can also be as enlightened as a Gold Elf,

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merchants themselves). Kenku are excellent appraisers of material goods (+2 to all checks). Though they admire sweet music, they are incapable of playing most instruments (specifically, any wind instrument, or instruments where lips are required). Many, though not all, still retain the ability to sing like a bird.

Socially speaking, Kenku are solitary creatures. They tend to come together with their own kind for mating and business purposes only. Mated pairs (Kenku never marry) live together (i.e., “nest”) only as long as is necessary, which is long enough to create and care for their children.<sup>4</sup> Kenku are extremely protective of their infants, and will do all they can to protect and provide for them. Growth is rapid, and once the child reaches the age of 3, however, they are considered fully grown, and the parents abandon them (or “kick them out of the nest”). There is usually little trace of parent-child bonding, and in truth, many Kenku seem to forget their parents within a few years after setting off on their own.

The Kenku sense of detachment and wanderlust may have something to do with their short lifespans (Kenku only live to be 50 or so). Everything about them, in fact, seems to run in fast motion. Their speech patterns are fast and clipped, almost as if they must speak before they forget what they have to say. In addition, they have a high rate of metabolism, but are lucky enough to possess eclectic and tolerant palettes with which to satisfy their insatiable hunger. Kenku always seem to be pecking away at something. They can, in a pinch, almost eat any sort of grass, bark, or naturally occurring vegetation. They are especially fond of meat, mainly for its caloric content. They are not picky. They will even eat domestic and wild birds, since they do not consider them to be true relatives. They seem incapable of getting fat, and so are able to maintain and thrive on incredibly unhealthy diets of fatty foods. They *hate* being offered worms or birdseed, and consider such offerings to be the height of ignorance.

All Kenku are areligious, though they do pay obeisance to a neo-Goddess named Diksbkeu (DEEKS-ba-koo). Kenku legend holds that Diksbkeu was the mother of the first “evolved” birdman. That first egg holds great significance for the Kenku, and the more “devout” of their lot will sometimes carry a

miniature ivory replica as a sort of totem. Kenku “priests” are usually elementalists (Druids) dealing in the realms of earth and air (the domains of birds). Many Kenku are, in fact, outright thieves, are at least trained in some of the covert arts. Though there are exceptions, most Kenku are individualists who subscribe to the law only as long as it is convenient to them personally. No Kenku has webbed feet and, as a general rule, they hate the water.

Kenku travel through so many lands and encounter so many people that it is inevitable they will form many unusual liaisons. Players wishing to run a Kenku should be required to have a handful of Contacts, and possibly Enemies. The character might be a renegade, through some ‘misunderstanding,’ or perhaps they are treated as a hero in some quarters, due to some great deed they also inadvertently performed. The very fact that these creatures are well traveled should be an excellent hook for the player to create a very colorful character. Take advantage of it.

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<sup>4</sup> Like their less evolved ancestors, Kenku still lay eggs. However, the eggs stay inside the female body throughout most of the incubation period (usually three months). The resulting eggs are then kept in a hatchery, in which the heating fires are tended daily by both male and female. It takes another month or so for the eggs to finally hatch. Kenku females normally produce only one large egg per mating, though there are scattered reports of bird-like “clutches” of up to four eggs.

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