

Across The Doomlands

Dark Lords rise and fall, but the Waste is Eternal

Currently called the Doomlands, previously called the Dreadlands, and probably soon to be called something else, the Waste is an expanse of stony inhospitable territory ringed by cruel mountains, subject to excessive volcanism and the lingering effects of dark, ancient magic. For as long as it has existed, warlords and warlocks have sought to claim its fell throne and spread their despotic empire over the surrounding lands...and each time, they have been deposed by another despot before they could begin their conquest.

The Orcs of the Waste have always served the dark lord, but long ago stopped keeping track of which dark lord they currently serve. Their essence is bound to the land itself, and they serve the Waste's will from the moment they crawl from their ghastly spawning pits to their violent death at the blade of an Adventurer. Truly, their existence is a wretched one.

Welcome to the Waste, Orc. Now, grab your kit and get in formation. There's a war on.



Our Adventure begins with a contingent of barely-trained orcs, who must cross the Waste to reach the Jagged Gate, where the forces of Duke Revulsad hold the line against the undead army of Lord Asphyxus.. Attrition at the gate is high, and the new recruits are badly needed. So desperate is the situation that supply lines are tangled and unreliable, and therefore these recruits have been provisioned with even less than is typical.

A band of larger orcs under the command of Skizruk were tasked with transporting a wagonload of provisions to the recruits, but have decided to keep it for themselves and continue on to the Jagged Gate. Not bothering to stop, Skizruk waves them off with threatening gestures and shouts that this is their wagon and another one will be along shortly. This is in fact the only supply wagon for several leagues, and the PCs will likely die unless they kill or drive off the other orcs. If the PCs decide to immediately charge the wagon, they can catch the filchers.

The wagon is pulled by a huge, stinking salamander native to the Waste. These unpleasant creatures become docile when blinded, and thus have metal plates bolted over their horrible bulging eyes. It is guarded by one Orc for each player.

Orc: Init +1. Atk Shank +1 Melee (1d4), AC 12; HD 1d8+1; MV 30; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1, AL N

Horrible Salamander: if the blinders are removed, the remover must make a DC 11 Reflex Save or suffer 2d6 damage. On it's turn, the Salamander smashes the cart and begins eating Skizruk's band, who flee with the salamander in hot pursuit. If the cart and salamander are captured intact, the Salamander will unexpectedly gobble up one orc (Bite +8, 2d6 dmg), but is then sated. At the end of the adventure, it eats one player's weakest, least-liked Orc if they have any extras remaining.

The supply wagon contains one set of the following per player:

Three (3) Portions of Maggoty Bread (heals 1 hp)

One (1) Dose of Grog (grants 1d4 temporary hit points)

The cart also contains:

One (1) vial of Blackblaze (thrown weapon with 10 ft range, deals 2d3 fire damage to target and minimum damage to all adjacent squares)

One (1) Shortbow, with three poison arrows (Fort DC 12, 1d4/1 str) and 7 arrows.

One (1) set of Studded Leather Armor

One (1) Polearm

Two (2) Shortswords

Any Orc killed by the PCs is carrying Something Shiny

While direct confrontation is certainly an option, cunning PCs might notice that the road the wagon travels on curves around ahead to avoid rough terrain, and orcs on foot could cross directly and ambush the thieves. However, this requires navigating a field of venting volcanic gasses.

Gas Field -

plumes of black and gray gasses spew from jagged crevices. The air is foul and stings the eyes and throat

PCs walking in front must make Luck checks to notice an area of bad air; those who fail must make saves vs poison (DC 11, 1d4 dmg/1 dmg) PCs who come up with a clever solution auto-succeed on their Luck checks to notice gas vents.

At the bottom of one gas vent is a dead Orc; looting the body exposes the PC to Poison (as above), but yields one Shortbow with 10 arrows, one loaf of Maggoty Bread (the maggots are dead), One (1) Grog, Something Shiny (1 fleeting luck), One (1) Grave Token, and a Longsword. The Orc himself is also quite edible (equivalent to two (2) Maggoty Breads) Looting one item takes a round unless players get creative

Regardless, ALL orcs must also make DC 11 Fort saves or take 1 damage from the ambient fumes

However, crossing the gas field brings the PCs to a cliff overlooking the road, complete with convenient medium-size boulders for dropping on the hapless foe, and a gravel slope that allows quick descent to melee range. The boulders destroy the cart and kill the salamander. One Orc is killed outright, two are injured (½ HP). Players can choose to go down Slow (safe) or Fast (make Agility check or take 1 damage), allowing them to make short work of the thieves. If the PCs killed the Orcs initially, the gas field is simply another road encounter.

Field of Carnivorous Thornvines

The path is overrun with fat, soggy vines that have a disturbing, meaty, mucus-y-ness to them. Their leaves are the blackish red of nearly-dried blood, and have razor-sharp edges. As you watch, they slowly move across the barren stone, creeping like starfish

All PCs must make luck checks; the ones who fail must make Reflex saves or find their front orc constricted by the thornvines. The vines activate at initiative 0, dealing 1 point of damage to any constricted orc. A Strength check frees the Orc.

Regardless, ALL orcs must also make DC 11 Reflex saves or take 1 point of damage from the venomous constricting thorns, unless players come up with a clever way of clearing or distracting the thorns (fire, a dead body as bait).

PCs will find one clear-ish area around a thorn "cocoon" containing a dead orc being digested. Opening the Cocoon yields two (2) Grave Tokens and a dose of (1) Grog. If any players have lost all their characters, the orc is still alive and only slightly digested, serving as a replacement PC. As the PCs leave the field, a Thornvine Colony notices them and forms to attack. It isn't particularly fast, but has a long reach. It attempts to pull in as many Orcs as it can on its first turn, and begins Engulfing on its second turn.

Thornvine Colony: Init -1; Atk Tendril +2 ranged [15 ft] (1 dmg plus pull plus grab), Engulf +4 melee (1d6 plus Digest); AC 8; HD 4d8+4; MV 10; Act 3d20; SQ: Half Damage from Ranged Attacks; Digest (on Engulf Kill, gain that much temp HP); SV Fort +4, Ref -3, Will Immune Treasure: the Thornvine Colony contains Two (2) Shines and two (2) Grave Tokens

Suspiciously Empty Stony Plains:

This empty field between two impassible upthrusts of jagged rock is empty save for a few bulbous cactus-like plants and small dunes of fallen gravel.

this expanse of barren rock is home to far too many giant trapdoor spiders; any Orcs walking in front must make a luck check; the orc who rolls worst is surprised as a spider lunges out at them from its burrow.

Giant Trapdoor Spider Init +3, Atk Bite +3 (1d4 plus grab plus poison); AC 13; HD 2d6+2; MV 20, Act 1d20; SQ poison Fort DC 11, 1d6 str/1 str; SV Fort +0, Ref +3. Will +0).

Any further traversal of the suspiciously empty stony plains will come across another spider burrow. There are a total of (number of PCs) trapdoor spiders the players can encounter; a successful Intelligence check notices a burrow after the first encounter. Spiders attack targets within 10 ft of their door.

Investigating the first burrow yields the accumulated remains of many orcs; among them is:

One (1) Blackspeaker Totem (Flaming Hands, max 19) Personality or Int

One (1) dose of Grog

Two (2) Grave Tokens

Any other Spider Burrows contain a Grave Token (+1 crit threat, +1 crit effect, 1 use) or a Shiny (1 fleeting luck) (50/50)

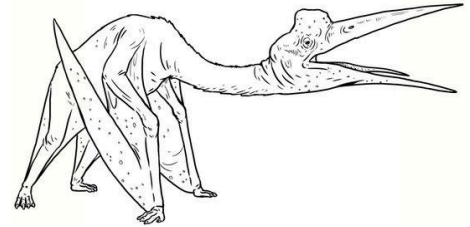
Men Go Before Orcs

A contingent of mail-clad men, dark of hair and dark of heart, ("Black as Bog"), march across a crossroads. They do not stop, but several of them peel off to approach the PCs cautiously. They have orders to bolster the guard at the Doomfort, seat of the Duke. They do have excess food and will trade it for Something Shiny (1:1)

Fell Beast Hunting Ground:

A valley opens before you, a small gray brook flows from a cleft passage in the mountains before you, visible only a league away. The valley is pocked by old, dead trees and a few worked-stone ruins. The always-overcast sky feels particularly, oppressively low here.

This valley is the favorite haunt of a Fell Beast; a pterosaur native to the Waste. It screeches and does flyby claw attacks on the PCs; vs a lone target, it lands and uses its beak.



Fell Beast: Init +2, Bite +8 Melee (1d10), Claw +2 melee (1d4 plus prone); AC 15; HD 6d8, MV 20' or Fly 50'; Act 2d20; SP fell screech (DC 13 Will Save or all foes suffer Fear [-1d]), Foul Vomit (15-ft square, DC 13 Reflex or 1 dmg) SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2

At the far end of the Fell Beast's territory is a narrow canyon; more a crevice in the rise of rock, that the creature is unwilling to enter. There are numerous upthrust rocks and dead trees that provide cover from the flying attacks of the Beast. An agility test allows a PC to move between them in one turn; failure means that PC is caught in the open when the beast next attacks.

The Jagged Gate

*The canyon opens on to a great open plain, strewn with jagged rocks and the black metal-and-stone buildings of industrial warfare, glowing with smoky red light. Across the plain, you see the high cruel spires of the Jagged Gate, site of the perennial siege against the Duke's forces. Except...everyone's on the move **away** from the gate. Other Orcs, human mercenaries, and a few trolls are beating a somewhat-orderly retreat, attempting to bring as many supplies and ordinance as they can. In the middle distance, you see an advancing wall of gray flesh studded with metal. A towering creature rears up, appearing like a great beast, but made of human bodies bolted to a metal scaffold as muscles attach to bone and sinew*

Lord Asphyxus's armies have breached the Jagged Gate, and Duke Revulsad's armies are in semi-orderly retreat. As a wagon loaded with ordinance and orcs passes by, the PCs feel the Will of the Waste shift slightly. The Jagged Gate no longer calls them, and they know they must march again, this time to the Doomfort. There the forces of the Duke shall mass to repel the invaders.

Orcs with a positive Luck Modifier gain a Lucky Sign; roll on the table below to determine it.

Black Signs: apply Luck modifier to the following rolls

- 1 Black-handed: Melee Attack Rolls
- 2 Keen-eyed: Ranged Attack Rolls
- 3 Corpulent: Hit Points
- 4 Brutal: Crit Effects
- 5 Twitchy: Initiative
- 6 Survivor: Saving Throws
- 7 Sadist: Melee Damage Rolls
- 8 Hunter: Ranged Damage Rolls
- 9 Knife-licker: Attack and Damage with Daggers
- 10 Tumorous: Spell Rolls and Spell Damage
- 11 Industrious: Skill Checks
- 12 Wasted: magical healing

Maggoty Bread: Heals 1 HP

Grog: gain 1d4 Temporary HP

Grave Token: +1 critical threat range, +1 critical effect, then expended.

(Grave tokens stack up to 3 times, expending themselves when used (If you carry 3 grave tokens and roll an 18, you get a critical hit, add +2 to the crit effect, and lose two grave tokens)

Something Shiny: grants 1 Fleeting Luck when looted from a corpse.

Blackblaze: (thrown weapon with 10 ft range, deals 1d4+1 fire damage to target and minimum damage to all adjacent squares)

Classes: Orcs that reach level 1 can select a class. All orcs have infravision.

Orc Foulbloods function as Dwarves, but do not have gold-sense, but do have normal movement. Instead of Sword-and-Board, Orc Warriors may suffer 1 damage as an Action to poison their next successful attack; (Fort DC 10 plus Max Deed Die, dmg 1d(deed) str/1 str).. Vs monsters, Every 3 points of str damage reduces melee attack and damage by 1.

Orc Sneaks function as Halflings but have normal movement and the Backstab, Poison Use, Hide, and Move Silently Skills of Chaotic Thieves and cannot share their luck with others. They can only dual-wield weapons of up to d4 damage. Their Hit Dice are d8. Once per day, they may regenerate 1d4 luck when they loot valuables from a slain foe.

Orc Blackspeakers function as Clerics, but their god is always The Will of the Waste, and may use Personality OR Intelligence for spellcasting. For Lay on Hands, all Orcs count as "Adjacent" alignment, and all other beings are "Opposed." Their hit dice are d8. The Will of the Waste is itself Chaotic.