



Altar at the Portal of Inevitable Decay





*Pygmy Folk*

The **Pygmy Folk** are small, averaging a mere 60 cm in height, with sharp featured faces, grey or black fur, hands with four digits and a short tail. They have three sexes, males making up 55% of the population, hermaphrodites 35% and females 15%. They live in an area in northern **Yán Kór** which is honeycombed with their subterranean towns and cites, but are found throughout the **Five Empires** as travellers and merchants. They have excellent hearing and vision and despite their small size they are vicious fighters.

## **Stereotypes**

The Pygmy Folk are infamously avaricious and clever merchants; as the old Tsolyáni proverb has it 'to bargain with the Pygmy Folk is to throw away your purse'. They are also allegedly utterly without any sense of honour as known to the citizens of the Five Empires, stealing anything not nailed down, betraying anyone, even each other, to gain wealth, and are incapable of keeping a promise or vow made under even the most solemn of circumstances and invoking the most dreadful of demons and deities. They are also bad enemies. The Tsolyáni were ambushed by them many times during the recent wars and claim that they tortured captives for sport and ate them alive. The Yán Koryáni say these tales are exaggerated, but admit that they are masters of ambush and do not follow the age-old rituals of war as known to human nations.

## **The Reality**

The Pygmy Folk have a 'dog eat dog' culture and have little regard for each other's life and property, let alone other species, and cannot comprehend why humans put up with weaklings and idiots to the extent that they do. They are self-centred, but will cooperate with others to mutual benefit. They will argue vehemently over everything, using all kinds of invective and insults among themselves and barely managing to stay on the right side of politeness when dealing with humans, but once an argument is over they quickly forgive and forget any harsh words; it is just the way they communicate. They are not really kleptomaniacs, but if they are sure they won't get caught then they will help themselves to other people's valuables without a qualm.

## **Clan and Lineage**

No human clan accepts Pygmy Folk members, and no Pygmy Folk could cope with giving up any of their material wealth to such an organisation. The Pygmy Folk organise themselves by burrow, with each complex being ruled (as far as such a thing is possible) by a council of elder females whose main role is to regulate the cycles of vendetta and personal vengeance arising from the many incidents of violence and theft that occur within the settlement. Females have a social advantage among Pygmy Folk, and are regarded as somewhat more reliable than the males and hermaphrodites.

## **Religion**

The Pygmy Folk have their own religion which involves sacrifice by mob violence. Little else is known for sure by any non-Pygmy Folk observer. Human temples will allow Pygmy Folk to worship if they wish, but always keep a very close eye on them in case they run off with temple valuables and know that any expressions of faith are more than likely a ploy in some kind of scam or plot.

## **Stats**

Strength: Maximum 4, average is 2.

Dexterity: Average is 6 and maximum is 12

Intelligence: As for humans, but see notes on Attributes

Psyche: As for humans

Willpower: As for humans

Charisma: As for humans with modifiers as noted below.

Derived Values

Pygmy Folk have a Pedhétl of 4

Net Cost

Total cost of packages is 3 points.

## **Attributes**

### *Mandatory Attributes*

All Pygmy Folk Characters have the following attributes and must pay for them

Base Cunning Level 1, Cost 1. All Pygmy Folk of whatever intelligence have a +2 bonus in any circumstance where they are under threat. Only Pygmy Folk with an Intelligence of 6 or less may take Base Cunning Level 2.

Decisive Level 1, Cost 2. All Pygmy Folk have quick reflexes and a sharp tongue.

Physical Advantage: Built for Speed Level 1, Cost 1. +1 on running checks and +20% sprint speed. Pygmy Folk are much faster than humans, despite their small size.

### *Unique to Pygmy Folk*

Physical Advantage: Good Eyesight. Level 1, Cost 1. Pygmy Folk get +4 to any stat check involving vision, even at night.

Physical Advantage: Good Hearing. Level 1, Cost 1. Pygmy Folk get +4 to any stat check involving hearing.

Materialist: Level 1, Cost 1. Pygmy Folk gain +1 in rolls for Merchant and Negotiation due to a very acute sense of the value of money and of their own advantage.

Small Level 2, Cost 4. Pygmy Folk are -1 to hit in mêlée and with missiles and gain +2 on any stealth checks.

### *Modified Attributes*

Emotional Control. No Pygmy Folk may have more than 1 level of Emotional Control, they are too emotionally volatile.

Resolute. No Pygmy Folk may have more than 1 level of Resolute, they are too emotionally volatile.

Female: Among Pygmy Folk being female is equivalent to Getting the Breaks level 1 and costs 1 point.

Attractive: Any levels of this attribute apply only to other Pygmy Folk.

Older: The limits on physical stats occur 1 level later, e.g. at Older Level 3 there is not limit, at Level 4 it is 14, Level 5 it is 13 and so on.

#### *Mandatory Defects*

Fragile 1BP. All Pygmy Folk lose 10 HP due to their small size, and lose out on endurance, but not on resistance to poison.

Second Class Citizen (Non-Human) 4BP. Pygmy Folk are all regarded as untrustworthy thieves by human societies.

Brutal 1BP. All Pygmy Folk are self-centred and cruel by human standards.

Greedy 1BP. All Pygmy Folk are Greedy. They must save vs. Will/Psy average to avoid taking a risky action to gain wealth.

#### *Unique to Pygmy Folk*

Impaired Charisma 1BP. All Pygmy Folk have a -1 Cha penalty when dealing with other species.

#### *Modified Defects*

Debts of Honour. No Pygmy Folk can take this defect as they do not recognise such debts.

Vow. No Pygmy Folk can take a Vow and keep it.

### **Careers**

Pygmy Folk do not join the priesthoods, but can be independent scholars, bureaucrats (in Yán Kór at least) and soldiers. The typical wandering Pygmy Folk is a merchant, buying (and sometimes stealing) cheap and selling high.

## **Skills**

### *Modified Skills*

Pygmy Folk language. There is just one Pygmy Folk language and it costs 2 points per level to learn.

Human Languages. Pygmy Folk pay 3 points for any human language, and always have a -1 modifier due to difficulties with some concepts and enunciation.

Stealth. This costs only 4 points per level for Pygmy Folk due to a natural aptitude in sneaking.

## **Pygmy Folk Equipment**

Pygmy Folk can use any weapon noted in the list on p. 99 of the T:EPT rulebook, as long as it has been modified and miniaturised for their use.

This involves -2 on any Str requirement, x0.5 damage multiplier (minimum x1 damage) and -3 from any initiative bonus (minimum 0). Thus a Pygmy Folk Battle Axe requires 2 Str, does x3 damage and has an initiative bonus of 0.

A Pygmy Folk using a weapon designed for a larger being has -1 attack even if the weapon is small enough for them to use and they have the stats required. Such weapons (usually daggers and light javelins) are just not balanced properly for the Pygmy Folk physique.

A human armourer making such a weapon has a modifier of -2 to any skill rolls, a failure resulting in a weapon defect of some kind (see p86-87).

## **NPCs**

### **Ókh'n the Exhibit**

Str 2 Dex 8 Int 4 Psy 2 Will 2 Cha 4

CV 5 Init 13 HP 10 SV 2 MR 3 Pedhétl 4 Respect 0

Base Cunning 2, Decisive 1, Built for Speed 1, Good Eyesight 1, Good Hearing 1, Materialist 1, Small 2, Older 1, Highly Skilled 2

Fragile 1, Second Class Citizen 4, Brutal 1, Greedy 2, Nemesis 1, Secret 1

Skills: Stealth 2, Burglary *Tombs* 2, Merchant 1, Climbing *Structures* 1, Deception *Offensive* 1, Acrobatics 1, Running *Speed* 1, Sleight of Hand 1, Teamwork 1, Sword 1, Deceptive Attack 1, Language: Tsolyani 1, Knowledge: Cities of the Dead 1, Streetwise 1

Ókh'n is the kind of Pygmy Folk that earns the rest their bad name. He is currently residing in a cage in Jakálla Zoo, having been bought as an exhibit from the Torúnal Islán, the Jakálla criminal prison, where he was awaiting trial and almost definite execution for tomb robbery. His whole gang of seven Pygmy Folk are actively sought by the Tomb Police and the Clan of the Nighted Tower as a result of this nefarious activity. If the authorities knew the whole story – that Ókh'n and co didn't just take the goods, but also choice cuts from the fresher bodies to sell to Ahoggyá back in the Foreign Quarter – their lives would not be worth a shirt button, not that anyone wears shirts in Jakálla, or knows what a button is.

After an initial settling-in period, during which he flung faeces at visitors and screamed obscenities all day and all night, he realised that he could be in worse places, like up a sharpened pole. His gang have visited to have a laugh at him, and have promised to break him out if he tells them where he buried his share of the takings from the robbery and butchery business. He isn't daft enough to fall for this scam, but being stuck down wind of the Kurukú cage he is getting desperate to get out. He will try and persuade any humans he can get alone near his cage to help him. He will promise anything, bragging about how much gold he has put by, offering to guide them to the richest tombs in the necropolis, including one with a magic animated Engsvanyáli wall painting, to disclose secrets of the Temple of Sárku, teach spells to repel M'rúr, draw a map of the secret Pygmy Folk tunnels leading throughout the upper layers of the Tsuru'úm and beyond the walls, you name it. How much of this he can really do is anyone's guess, and of course he has no intention of honouring any deal and will disappear at the first convenient opportunity after release.

## **Gulén the Clam-hunter**

Str 3 Dex 6 Int 3 Psy 6 Will 4 Cha 1

CV 5 Init 13 HP 25 SV 5 MR 4 Pedhétl 4 Respect 0

Base Cunning 1, Decisive 1, Built for Speed 1, Good Eyesight 1, Good Hearing 1, Materialist 1, Small 2, Resolute 2, Older 2

Fragile 1, Second Class Citizen 4, Brutal 1, Greedy 1, Ugly 1, Bad Start in Life 1

Skills: Knowledge: Desert of Sighs 1, Wilderness Survival: Desert of Sighs 2, Stealth 1, Polearm 1, Bow 1, Hunting 1, Hiking 1, Observation 2, Culture: Milumanyáni 1, Language: Tsolyani 0, Language: Milumanyáni 0, Language: Yán Koryáni 0

Gulén is that most unfortunate of specimens, a shy Pygmy Folk. (Gulén is a hermaphrodite, but I will use 'he' to avoid awkward sentences). In his youth he was mercilessly bullied by his siblings, and was nearly harried and beaten to death on several occasions. He still shows the scars and the ragged bitten-off ears and even humans will recognise him as a bit of a sorry specimen, while other Pygmy Folk know these are the stigmata of a born victim and take what advantage they can of him.

He joined the Yán Koryáni army as a scout, and ended up being left behind in Milumanáya during the war with the Tsolyani. He joined a human nomad band for a while, but could not adapt to their share and share alike ethos and left before he could be expelled. He now lives alone on the fringes of the 'civilised' districts near Sunráya where he hunts sand-clams and trades them with the local peasants. Gulén is very good at it, his keen sense of smell and hearing stand him in good stead in locating these tasty morsels buried under the dunes. He will most likely be encountered skulking about in the middle of the night hunting or by day selling sand-clams in a village market, and might even be mistaken for a spy. He is lonely, and might attach himself to a reasonably non-hostile party as a hanger on or try and persuade them to hire him as a scout and desert guide.

He is not particularly good company, being sullen and silent, and is entirely lacking in the boisterous self-confidence humans expect from Pygmy Folk. Acts of kindness or generosity towards him will result in even greater suspicion and expectation of some dreadful humiliation or a beating. On the other hand he does not steal much for a Pygmy Folk, his services come very cheap, and he may be preferable as a desert guide to the eccentric nomadic tribesmen.



## **‘N’Ékh the Marvellous**

Str 1 Dex 9 Int 6 Psy 2 Will 4 Cha 6

CV 5 Init 16 HP 15 SV 3 MR 5 Pedhétl 6 Respect 0 Power

Base Cunning 1, Decisive 2, Built for Speed 1, Good Eyesight 1, Good Hearing 1, Materialist 1, Small 2, Magic Use: Ritual 1, Older 3, Wealthy 1, High Pedhétl 2

Fragile 1, Second Class Citizen 4, Brutal 1, Greedy 1, Arrogant 1

Skills: Ritual Magic 1, Scholar: Ancient Artefacts 2, Language: Tsolyani 2, Language: Engsvanyáli 2, Culture: Tsolyani *Low Clan* 1, Merchant 2, Artist: Shadow Puppets *Performance* 1, Artisan: Jeweller 1, Charm 1, Sleight of Hand 1, Bow 1

### Spells:

Light, Inc Effect, Inc Duration (4pts),

Phantasms, Involving, Apparitions, Inc Duration 3 (6pts)

Perception of the Energies, Involving, Inc Area 1, Intentions, Spells, Ensorcellation (6pts)

Web of Kriyág, Involving, Debilitating (6pts)

‘N’Ékh is an itinerant trader and entertainer. He lives in a magnificent chlén-cart, with a gaudily painted mini-palace built onto the back with two Pygmy Folk sized floors, several rooms and even a ‘roof-garden’, a few pots and planters full of sweet herbs, where he lays in his hammock while on the move. He has a human slave cart-driver, Kél, a slow-witted youth who stoically bears his little master’s alien ways. People who see them on the road often smile as ‘N’Ékh pokes his slave with a miniature chlén prod and the slave passes the message on with a proper prod to their lumbering beast.

‘N’Ékh stops in small villages and towns and puts on entertainments of simple conjuring by day and with his magic lantern at night. This is an ancient Engsvanyáli device made of delicately figured brass and carved wood with a large crystal lens on the front and an alabaster cylinder in a compartment at the back. One casts a Light spell on the cylinder and it creates a focusable light like a projector. ‘N’Ékh uses this with a large linen screen and some beautiful old shadow puppets of Pygmy Folk make to put on presentations of comic folk tales, accompanied by Kél on the drum and croatal. He has some human-made puppets for episodes from the Epic of Hrúgga as well, but only does this show when he can get a village elder or epic singer to narrate. His piece de resistance though is his presentation of Engsvanyáli magic lantern slides. These are fragile discs of painted glass mounted in tíu-wood with various little handles to move them and create the illusion of motion; village folk think they are magical, and they impress some more sophisticated types as well with their ancient biremes on stormy seas, Sró flapping across the sky and changing hues of northern forest autumns. ‘N’Ékh has had some new ones made on the old pattern as well, but these are not animated.

He has a few other curios of great age hidden away in his cart; bits of old porcelain, a heavy bronze dagger with indecipherable Ssú letters on it, a pencil sharpener (a real mystery this, no one has used leaded pencils for millennia), statuettes of Engsvanyáli gods and so forth. Another prize item is a Planet Stone of Káshi (see VOG issue 11). This collection is worth several thousand káitars if sold to the right buyer, and he is always on the lookout for more and has sometimes made mini-archaeological digs in areas where such items have been found.

Another item of trade is cheap costume jewellery, chlén hide bracelets and plaques with polished semi-precious stones mounted on them, gaudy and garish. For special customers he has a few gold and ruby rings; however during the sale he will use sleight of hand to switch the real ring for a plated bronze and glass replica, leaving town before the subterfuge comes to light.

Players may come across one of 'N'Ékh's shows and might even trade with him. If they have ancient devices or objects on show he will approach them and make an offer. He may also offer employment for those willing to look in certain graveyards where he suspects ancient Engsvanyáli objects might be hidden, and he sometime gets to see a few heirlooms on display in some temples and clanhouses he cannot afford to acquire by conventional means.

## **Adventure Seeds**

### **The Pogrom**

The city of Usenánu has had enough. There has been a spate of robberies from clanhouses all across the city and the culprits are obvious – the group of Pygmy Folk who moved into the Foreigners Quarter of the city a couple of months ago. The city watch and a mob of disgruntled citizens have gone through the district, but the miscreants have fled into their own tiny tunnels and thence into the Tsuru'úm. The governor has issued a proclamation expelling all Pygmy Folk from the province of Urúsai and has offered a 50Kt reward for any Pygmy Folk found alive and 20Kt for any slain within the province. But were the Pygmy Folk really responsible? Is someone manipulating popular prejudice to divert attention from themselves? Where have the Pygmies gone? Perhaps the Pygmy Folk will start taking revenge, killing people during the night or perhaps they will take hostages, maybe they will do the sensible thing and just flee, relying on stealth and acute senses to move by night through hostile territory. Will Yán Koryáni merchants in the Foreign Quarter and province at large help them or hand them in? Will popular conspiracy theories blame a Yán Koryáni plot, or were they working for someone else, a temple maybe, or that infamous renegade Dhíich'üne?

### **Commandos**

Pygmy Folk make excellent scouts, but Yán Koryáni military men have always scorned their abilities as fighting troops. The Mu'ugalavyáni think they could be very useful indeed in this role, especially in Livyánu where they have been having terrible trouble taking Tinalíya built citadels. These are so cunningly designed that it is all but impossible to get to the walls through the overlapping fields of fire from the bastions, and of course once you have made a breach the corridors within are too small for human troops to fight properly. The Redhats have hired a mercenary force of Pygmy Folk; natural tunnellers like the Tinalíya they should be able to undermine the outer walls and make an effective assault on their diminutive occupants. They might also be able to take human fortresses via the often unguarded drains and privy shafts. The officers in charge of the project have reported a few discipline problems, but the masters of the Four Palaces of the Square have high expectations of this new secret weapon.

### **Pygmy Ruins**

Out in the hills north of Thri'íl excavations at an old city site have had unexpected results. The battered walls were not the remnants of another lost Engsvanyáli port, but as the network of tiny tunnels beneath the surface show they are a lost Pygmy Folk settlement. Some Imperial researchers hope that they will uncover a Pygmy Folk temple and discover the true nature of their god, others are sure this was a port and want to find Pygmy Folk ships, which are no longer built in their now landlocked territory. Almost all agree that it is imperative that the Pygmy Folk themselves do not find out. They would descend on the site en masse, steal everything and cause no end of trouble. They are a cunning lot though, with a knack for turning up when they are least expected and least wanted. One or two Thúmis priests think this is unfair; after all these are Pygmy Folk ancestral sites they are disturbing, it stands to reason that their scholars will be a lot

more able to interpret the remains than any human and the only way the humans can explore the site is by destroying it, whereas the Pygmy Folk could explore the tunnels intact.







