

**The Bonded
Ascension Surface High Orcs
OFFICIAL ASCENSION CULTURE PACKET**

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High Orc Racial Basics

Once a long-lived race content with a simple existence of farming, the Kutari have given much, and changed much. Their lives are much shorter now, and much harder, as the world has forced them into a more martial role.

The trials they have undergone have reshaped them. They still bear the hardness of their formerly pastoral lives, but it has been tempered, reforging them into a people ready to fight at any moment, should the need be.

As a whole, High Orcs tend to be straightforward, taking things as they are, preferring to take action instead of wishing about things. They remain strong through adversity, and take whatever small pleasures they can. Life has given lemons to the High Orcs - and the High Orcs stare life in the eye while eating those lemons, and then comment on how they like the sour taste.

High Orc History

"Once, things were so much simpler for us. THEN EVERYTHING WENT TO KARK!"

"That's right youngins. The world was harmonious and pleasant then the Vreech came. We aren't much for readin but our story speakers told us about their coming. About the great battles and the fall what did ruin the world. We know the dryads went to sleep and we all started dyin. Ten years it was no matter what. Some of us made it to the deep cities. Many tho, far too many got stuck up here and had to deal. It was chaos. The planes being ripped apart and the Vreech chompin and chugging down magics. We got smart and stayed away. It was tough as time passed , cause we don't live so long we needed some help with stabilizin stuff. That's when we met the Gem'd. The Selunari. They was running round in these big coaches. Fleeing from the

cities but they weren't that strong. So we made deals.. Bonds with em. They teach and help us and we protect them. That's how it's been. We made the three oaths that the Bonded follow and that's how we survived."

-Cedric TongueTerror- Storyspeaker

Recent History

No longer the guardians of the groves, the Bonded have come to caretake for their caravan or traveling members. These families, or "Bevys" as they are called, are made up of a chosen family. The Bonded will swear to them individually, and often will go as far as to sacrifice themselves for their fellows. They will hold grudges FOR others. While a slight might be forgiven by the person offended, the Bonded will often remember it and it shapes their behavior going forward. Thus as they travel and ally with tradesmen they have limited contact in some areas where deals may have gone raw and are seldom seen outside of Selunari Caravans.

Bonded Orc Culture

"War came easy to us. It was necessary. The Chaos storms that ripped through and turned the land up gave us no choice. Desperate creatures and desperate people were how we had to cut our teeth and hone the edge of our blades. War became natural. We hate it but we are very very good at it."

-Irene Dubois Horneater- Glitter-eye Caravan Guard

Stories became everything to the Bonded. Tales passed down from generation to generation became how education and history have been taught. When caravans or groups meet the Bonded often spend long hours in very frank and deep discussions to make sure they understand the stories and the news. For a Bonded to not ask a question following a story or tale is a rarity. It's never meant to jibe but out of genuine curiosity and a need to understand. They are mostly matriarchal with the women or female-presenting members being the ones who tend to make the decisions. The Bonded will tend to arrange marriages with other caravans and the like in order to keep the bloodline more varied. It's not uncommon for them to mate with other races as well. This is the source for many humans in the caravans. For the Bonded, Choice is everything. You choose to be arranged and you take part in what your standards are. You CHOOSE your contracts and you choose where to be the day you are to die. Since that day is no longer an exact time, the old phrase has a more symbolic meaning. "I will die amongst my friends sipping tea and with a large ham sandwich".

Bonded Orc Holidays & Celebrations

Traditionally, the Bonded had few holidays. They maintained seasonal festivals, tied to planting and harvesting, or to birthing and weaning animals. Their focus on finding joy in the little things, in treating every day as a celebration, dissuaded set festivals.

Since the Fall, they have doubled-down on this approach. Living above-ground has disrupted the natural rhythms that they once observed; now, harvests are tracked grove by grove, crop by crop. As such, the seasonal festivals have fallen by the wayside, one more casualty of what they sacrificed. Instead, they focus on taking each day as it is, finding joy and happiness as they can, armed with the constant reminder that life is fleeting, and short, and that time waits for no one - especially not for a short-lived race.

High Orc Racial Elders

Given their short lifespan (previously on average about a decade), there is a significant amount of churn in High Orc Racial Elders. Candidates are chosen by the Houses, typically after the Orc in question reaches 7 years of age, although rare exceptions are made for exceptional Orcs. Those chosen spend extensive amounts of time learning with the Librahm, and are expected to act as teachers and advisors for the rest of their lives, spreading knowledge to all High Orc Houses. For the Bonded these are almost always female-presenting.

High Orc Names

Bonded Orcs tend to have a blend of the standard “Noun Verb” names of the warlike orcs of common fantasy, but have a “face name” for when they are among a more pleasant company. Their given name may be “Roderick BloodDrinker” but their face name could be something as simple as “Chad”. This is obviously due to the influence of other races and they have adapted to this fairly unique style of naming.

High Orc Racial Notes

The Bonded have changed much since the Fall. In some ways, their shortened life spans have been a boon for them, allowing them to adapt faster than other races.

Due to their war-like efforts - both dealing with alchemical substances from dealing with poisonous plants or animals - the Bonded have developed a resistance to poison (Racial Resist Poison, 4 Build).

Their passion for defending their chosen allies eventually forged them into effective warriors. This approach has made it easier for them to take up weapons (all Weapon Skills are at half cost) and stay on their feet (Racial Resolute, 2 Build) (-1 cost for Hardy).

Because of their historical connection with the earth, and the subsequent change to fighting, High Orcs find it slightly difficult to start on the path of learning Celestial magics (double cost for Read Magic).

Their martial skills are a direct relation to the farm tools they used to use. It is well known that an Orc with a polearm is a common and feared sight.

High Orc Dress

Bonded orcs dress in a fairly militarist fashion. Their clothing is made for the roads. You will never see a Bonded in a dress, as it is impractical. In addition good footwear and extra socks are standard. They also tend to have a bag of essentials at hand whenever possible. They recently have developed love for hats, some having a very unique flair to them to show off to their friends.

High Orc Racial Makeup

As Orcs, they have the signature tusks and green skin of their race. All exposed skin should be green, either due to makeup, or some form of lightweight “base layer” type clothing (such as Underarmor™). Tusks can either be store-bought prosthetics, or made with crafting supplies such as moldable plastic.

Interactions with Other Races

Of all other races, High Orcs have the tightest connection with the Dryads - which is somewhat ironic, given that most High Orcs have never actually interacted with an awake Dryad. Their shared connection to the earth, and their long-ago collaboration, forged a bond between the two races that time has not been able to erase.

High Orcs have a very active relationship with the Biata as well; given their short lifespans, and their need to access the experience of their ancestors, High Orcs frequently talk to Biata Librahms about storing or accessing memories - perhaps too often, depending upon the Biata's viewpoint.

High Orcs have an oddly comfortable reaction to the Wylderkin, seemingly inherently familiar with the Kins' animal natures. Neither side seems to talk about it very much, simply content with the immediate familiarity.

The Sylvanborn are a source of fascination for the High Orcs. Their long lives and mercurial natures mean that there is a wealth of information available from them, but much like a game of chance, there's little telling how any attempt will turn out. High Orcs will often beg Sylvanborn for stories, but know to take those stories with a grain of salt.

Relations with the Selunari can be somewhat strained at times, as Selunari tend to be the exact opposite of what the Kutari stand for. Colorful in clothing, elaborate in their machinations, and uprooted in their lifestyles, High Orcs simply cannot wrap their minds around why the Selunari choose to live the way that they do.

Regarding Elves, the Orcs have a very complicated relationship. The Dark Elves seem the most unchanged: still larger-than-life, still engaged in elaborate efforts that are likely more effort than they are worth. The Harbinger Elves, who sacrificed others but not themselves, represent the worst of Elvenkind: hubris, arrogance, and a disregard for others. But the Stone Elves, in the eyes of the Kutari, have suffered the worst, and are mere shells, echoes of what Elves used to be. The Elves of the forest. Once were very similar to the way of life of the dryads. They lived in harmony with nature but soon before the fall they tried to manipulate it. Even now the Orcs feel they are up to something.

High Orcs have a keen gratitude to the Dwarves, as their preparation of the Cairn allowed everyone who made it to safety to survive over the long years. They consider their service in raising food to be their payment for their keep.