

**The Union
Ascension Hoblings
OFFICIAL ASCENSION RACE PACKET**

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This race packet contains information intended to be used only by those who are playing a character of this race in Alliance Ascension. It should not be shared with other players without approval from Alliance Ascension Head of Plot under any circumstances. The information here is race specific, and there is a great deal of other information many or all residents would also know in the Alliance Ascension Player's Guide.

Xavier held out his left hand, frowning eyes never leaving the scene before him. Maribelle placed the tool in his hand, and he brought it to the wood immediately, not needing to confirm that it was the chisel he needed. Some things did not need to be spoken - Maribelle was Union as well, and as skilled a sculptor. She could see the shape concealed by the whorls of the wood as clearly as he. More than that, though, was the shared mental connection that unified thought and deed. Without looking, he knew she had taken up her chisel, returning to work on her section.

The memory burst like a soap bubble, dissipating as Iniko blinked rapidly. He shook his head, trying to reassert his own identity, recovering from experiencing someone else's memory. For a moment, he felt a flash of annoyance at the fleeting and incomplete nature of what he'd seen. He knew random details from what he'd seen, but, frustratingly, he missed details he craved.

Still, it wasn't a loss - if anything, it was a major win. He now understood what the whole carving was supposed to look like, as opposed to the battered and broken remains that had baffled Cairn-dwellers for countless years.

Picking up quill and paper, he started to sketch out the carving. It was more than just a fascinating design - it was a map to a cache of pre-Fall supplies, and the details he was now able to supply was the key piece. He was about to save everyone.

Hobling Racial Basics

Since time immemorial, the Hoblings have always inherently remembered the deeds and knowledge of their forebears. Their direct bloodlines acquired knowledges and skills that trickled into them. In times before the Fall, they could talk without words, simply just knowing what others of the Union were thinking by virtue of a shared mental bond.

That changed in the Fall, and times, since then, have treated the Hoblings poorly. At times, bereft of the extra context of that lost mental connection, they have difficulties understanding or reading the emotions of other races. They mean the best, but what they say is often misunderstood. Though they have lost the connection to that mental bond, the Medly, occasionally that universal subconscious still attempts to reach out to them. It exerts itself in many ways - none controllable, except for their uncanny way to avoid certain attacks.

Hobling History

We don't know our origin. It seems ironic, almost laughable; we were linked by the Medly, shared thoughts and emotions and memories as easily and readily as others share words, yet there is a point in our history that is unknown, that somehow did not ever become recorded. We do not know where we come from, yet we accept that; we are a practical people, and what is more important is what we do, going forward, how we've dealt with what we've been given.

Our earliest histories showed us integrating into the society that had been built, this sprawling and complex dance lead by the Elves and the Selunari. We readily found our niche, our knack, and took over the day-to-day. They may have built it, but we made it work, kept it running. We kept the skyships afloat, maintaining the Selunari crystals and the Dwarven gears. We mastered the art of their cuisines, starred in their most prestigious restaurants. We discovered how the delicate machinery of their cultures worked, and what one learned was shared via the Medly to all.

The Elves ruled the world, and the Selunari owned it... but we ran it. We made ourselves indispensable, left our mark, built ourselves up. Where one went, we all went, and it was a common site to see small teams of Union members working together in harmony, communicating in a mix of words and Medly in a way that baffled others but left us working in sync.

It was, as they say, too good to last forever.

When the Vreech came, things followed in the typical way: Elves and Selunari came up with a plan, and we implemented it. That failed. They came up with a new plan, and we implemented that. Failed, again. And again. And again.

We threw ourselves into the efforts, but each time were beaten back. Inklings became mutterings, mutterings became full-blown resentment. Our "leaders", the ones who were supposed to guide us, illuminate a path, had failed. Had failed us. Our time, our efforts, our very lives had been spent like water, and to no avail.

Now we are in a unique position. Those who had been above us have been brought low. We can't share with one another as we used to, and for a while, we were lost. For a while, we were very angry. We realized, though, that our leaders have failed us, and placed themselves with us.

Underground, on equal footing. They are now us. Our strength comes in unity, and they didn't realize how strong we will all be together. We will show them the error of their ways.

Recent History

Hoblings have suffered a brief period of being lost when they first journeyed with the others to the Cairn. In recent times however, they seem to be in every essential position; they have a knack for knowing what's needed. They have gained fame and value for their ability to combine the most ridiculous or rare things into delicious food, which has made their Salons highly sought-after. There are tales told that when multiple members of "The Union" work together that things get done amazingly well. It's often difficult to keep them on the same task, though, as they are so needed throughout the Cairn.

The Medly

Thomas frowned and tried to concentrate; he'd been distracted for days by a nearly-electric tension, his entire mind and body seeming to vibrate like a just-released bowstring. He knew the stories, knew this was likely an impending glimpse into the Medly...but the waiting was damned inconvenient. When it finally came, hours later, he was lost to a memory: he (his name was Johann) was baking a dessert, the kitchen staff moving in a synchronized dance of cooking.

The moment was over just as fast as it began, the tension bleeding away just a freshly-burst soap bubble. Thomas blinked a few times, trying to make sense of it. Despite being barely acquainted with the basics of cooking, he could recite the entire recipe from the memory - little help that would be. He was fairly certain most of the ingredients were things they could no longer find - what the heck was hibiscus, anyway? Shaking his head, he dutifully copied it down before the details turned fuzzy. Perhaps it would come in handy to someone.

The Medly was the name the Hoblings gave to their pre-Fall connection. It linked Hoblings together no matter the distance, allowing them to share memories and feelings. That deep connection let them function together extremely efficiently, such that, even now, so long after the Fall, there's still an odd efficiency when Hoblings work together.

When the Fall happened, the Hoblings sacrificed their connection to the Medly, severing that bond. It was, in a word, devastating. The Hoblings had never known utter solitude like that before, and many of them fell into deep depression or developed other mental health issues. Others radically changed their viewpoints, leaning heavily into either forced optimism or taking a more fatalistic approach. The sudden surge of individuality resulted in a wide variety of responses.

As time passed, however, some Hoblings reported something odd - a momentary flash of something, a memory that wasn't theirs, a sudden wash of emotion that came from elsewhere. It was as if the Medly was still out there, and some sort of echo of the connection. A new tradition was soon started; any Hobling who had one of those echoes was to record all of the

information that they could, and share it with the others. Many Hoblings log anything they learn in journals, and keep them close at all times; many report that, after a momentary connection to the Medly, the memory that they'd experienced fades like a dream.

Hobling Culture

We are accountable. We have always been so. And for so long, we did it for everyone else. When the Fall happened, we realized that it's ok to be individuals, and to do good things for ourselves. We don't always understand the other races, but one thing we do "get" is how to just...relax. Good drink, great food, good music... All can share in this, and it's our best way to connect with others. When things are needed, we are there. We have always been there to help the Protectorate, and now in the Cairn where we remain. Now we understand how important it is to be at ease and recover as well. We have passions like the others, and we value community and family. Damn if we don't like making things work. Machines, spells...even people. The only thing we have never really figured out are ourselves.

An old tradition that survived the Fall and the loss of the Medly was the tradition of going on a "walkabout" sort of experience. It was not uncommon for families to fund their younger members to go on an adventure to bring back new memories to the Union. Some say this is where the term 'adventurer' started, and some of the more influential families were even known to walk the mists.

Hobling Holidays & Celebrations

The Union has three main holidays: Lanarhen, Golretyzin, and Barkarrik.

Lanarhen is a celebration of the fruits of the Union's hard labors, a day normally reserved to rest and laud others for their accomplishments. Some Hoblings choose this day to unveil new masterpieces. Lanarhen is celebrated in mid-Spring.

Golretyzin is Lanarhen's opposite, celebrated in mid-Fall, and a more somber occasion commemorating Hoblings injured or lost in the course of their work. Collections are normally taken up for those who cannot provide for themselves.

Barkarrik is the anniversary of the loss of the Medly during the Fall. Barkarrik is a mixed day; some focus more on the loss, while others focus more on the gain of individuality, reveling in new experiences. Many take this day to indulge in efforts to experience echoes of the Medly, and most people have a "guaranteed to work" set of routines (what others might describe as 'superstitions') to encourage such an event. Hoblings also participate in the periodic Salons started by the Selunari.

The Salons

In a world where skills are essential to survival and exploration, as well as dealing with deep trolls and goblins, the ability to calm yourself and recover the mental acuity and physical strength to execute abilities - commonly known as "meditating" - is essential. None have built better spaces than the Salons, a collaboration between the Selunari and the Hoblings. These places of respite are often comfortable and safe, with delicious food provided by the Hoblings, and entertainment and music from the Selunari. These have become integral in society, and the Collegium itself encourages their use. These Salons have become famous for elegant parties, and the Hoblings bring the best of the best offerings of rare delicacies at such gatherings.

Hobling Diet

"My favorite food? Is 'yes!' a valid option?"

Amaya Illari, Union Chef

Hoblings have grown to savor life, and their ability to survive almost anything has made for some rather unique food options. They also love small edible plates; while it's very rare that a Hobling would eat a steak, they would readily enjoy a cheese platter with steak in cubes accompanied by various sauces and drink pairings.

Hobling Names

Hoblings had a difficult time with names after the Fall. They have become something of a challenge. Going from the unity of the Medly to the individuality they were left with resulted in wide variations in post-Fall names. Common now are names that have deep meaning, or ones that are almost jokes, such as anagrams or acronyms. Examples include Beaufort Emmanuel Sizzletongue (aka BEST), or Perseverance Octavia. Some family names harken back to their first tastes of individuality and are noun/verb based like Millfixer or Steamtender.

Hobling Racial Notes

Because of their long experience working in potentially dangerous environments, Hoblings are particularly talented at getting out of the way of threats (Racial Evade; 6 Build). Due to their iron stomachs and flair for adventurous cuisine, they have built up an immunity to toxins (Resist Poison; 4 Build).

Hobling Dress

Hoblings are often dressed for their profession. Their clothing tends towards rugged, and, much like the Dwarves, they are usually adorned with pockets. Due to their adventurous nature, it's very common to see them with alchemy elixirs or potions bristling from straps or pockets, along with the tools of their trade. It's become common they usually have one outlandish item - maybe a brilliant colored scarf or amazingly ornate belt buckle, chosen to demonstrate their individuality.

Hobling Racial Makeup

Hoblings are recognizable immediately for their dark bushy sideburns for both male and female. These can be purchased at any costume shop and applied with spirit gum or liquid latex. Drawing sideburns on with make-up is not sufficient. Some Hoblings view the size and intricacy of their sideburns as a point of pride, so feel free to go for elaborate ones if that is appropriate for your character. Some players also like to attach bushy eyebrows but this is not required. Likewise, some players may choose to have furry patches on the back of the hands and/or on the tops of their feet.

Interactions with Other Races

Orcs: Their duty is astounding. They tend to the Dryads and the fields, even in this desperate place, with a fever and purpose that even we do not possess. They are to be respected.

Elves: They had the world and they lost it. They made their choices - and they made poor ones. Still, the machines are broken, but together we can help fix it. Next time though, we will help choose how this ship steers.

Selunari: Once our employers, and those in the crystalline towers. They have fallen, but have learned so much, even with losing their knowledge of crystals. They have helped us become social and accepted. And their tastes in music, food, and drink rival our own - though they can't produce it as we do. They are welcome at our table, and often have good stories and song.

Stone Elves: We don't understand them. We just don't. It's like they don't want to enjoy anything. Then they have some deep heartfelt awe-inspiring wisdom that makes us cry. Weird.

Biata: They hold so much knowledge. They orchestrate so much, but we never see their hands on the levers - and anyone who doesn't get their hands dirty seems off.

Oathsworn and Dwarves: Stalwart warriors and good to their word. We don't have a hard time understanding them, they express everything!

Ogres: They may have not been made as others were, but maybe we are more like them than we know. How are these collections of spirits made flesh? So amazing and unique! In them, maybe we can help foster where we were not.