

= Vortigaunt =

Vortigaunts are a fictional extra @-@ dimensional species in the Half @-@ Life series of video games by Valve Corporation . In Half @-@ Life and its three expansions , Vortigaunts are frequently encountered by the player as hostile non @-@ player characters . The Vortigaunts are depicted in Half @-@ Life as being an enslaved race in an alternative dimension called Xen , subservient to a large creature called the Nihilanth , which itself is a slave to undisclosed masters . In Half @-@ Life 2 , the Vortigaunts have broken free of their slavery , and actively assist the player and other humans in resisting the Combine occupation of Earth .

Vortigaunts are shown as a very communal and cultural race , believing in a force that binds the fabric of the universe and each Vortigaunt together , as well as producing a tradition of poetry and music . Vortigaunts also display the ability to summon and command electrical energy without the need for technology . This ability is used for various activities , such as a means of attack , powering electrical equipment , and healing .

The fictional creatures have received a range of critical responses from their various appearances . In addition to their role within the Half @-@ Life series , Vortigaunts have been adapted for machinima productions and have been made into a plush toy by Valve .

= = Character design = =

Louis Gossett , Jr. provides the voice for the Vortigaunts in Half @-@ Life 2 , and was partially chosen due to his role as the alien in the film Enemy Mine . In Episode Two , the Vortigaunts ' voicing was done by Tony Todd . Graphically , the Vortigaunts in both Half @-@ Life and Half @-@ Life 2 were designed by concept artists Dhabih Eng and Chuck Jones .

Initially , Vortigaunts were planned to begin Half @-@ Life as enemy non @-@ player characters , which the player has to win over as allies and lead in rebellion . This idea , however , proved impractical and was abandoned in favor of keeping the Vortigaunts as adversaries . The plan re @-@ emerged for Half @-@ Life 2 , in which the species are active allies of the player . The Vortigaunts in Half @-@ Life 2 were originally going to be fully integrated in City 17 alongside the humans under Combine rule . This did not reach fruition ; due to the focus on developing the city combat , the resources to accomplish this were not available . As there were so few resulting Vortigaunts in the city , the developers instead decided to involve the Vortigaunts far more substantially in the sections of the game taking place in the countryside surrounding the city . The few Vortigaunts placed inside the city were used to hint at the story arc for the Vortigaunts later in the game . Midway through Half @-@ Life 2 , the player witnesses a scene with a deceased Vortigaunt in a prison . Originally , the developers were intending to feature this Vortigaunt as an ally character who , if players rescue him , would fight enemy characters alongside the player . The developers liked this idea , but it was too late in the development to attempt this ; instead , the idea was preserved for use in Episode Two . The concept was later showcased in an Episode Two trailer shown at the Games Convention in 2006 .

According to series writer Marc Laidlaw , one of the most important goals with Episode Two was to expand on the Vortigaunts as characters , as opposed to just " purveyors of bugbait or Xen koans " . As such , Valve added new behaviours , new animations , and new audio to the Vortigaunts . Combine devices called " Vorti @-@ Cells " were to be encountered in Half @-@ Life 2 . They were meant to siphon power from captive Vortigaunts in City 17 . The player would then be able to free Vortigaunts from these devices to gain their assistance .

= = Attributes = =

= = = Society = = =

Vortigaunts are very intelligent and social creatures . In Half @-@ Life , they serve as basic ground

units for the Xen forces , often supporting heavier troops fighting the player and the humans in the Black Mesa Research Facility . They are capable of developing intelligent strategies and tactics to take on their enemies . Initially , Vortigaunts are enslaved to the Nihilanth , a large creature on Xen , who , in turn , claims it is a slave to unknown superiors . On Xen , the Vortigaunts are used as factory workers and drones . In Half @-@ Life 2 , Vortigaunts indicate that this slavery has lasted for generations . Despite this , Vortigaunts are shown to have developed an intellectual culture , valuing poetry , music and philosophy . In addition , Vortigaunts practise the husbandry of antlions , large insectoids that live in underground hives , as an ancestral tradition . The death of the Nihilanth at the hands of Gordon Freeman at the end of Half @-@ Life frees the Vortigaunts from their slavery ; consequently the Vortigaunts see Freeman as a messianic figure .

Vortigaunts possess their own method of vocal communication , " flux shifting " , which they can be heard using in Half @-@ Life 2 . This method of communication involves both speakers vocalising at the same time and cannot be understood by other species who lack the auditory anatomy to interpret the sounds . In addition to standard conversation , flux shifting can be used by Vortigaunts to communicate over long distances . Vortigaunts use scattered English words in Half @-@ Life to taunt the player , although by Half @-@ Life 2 they have learned to speak at least the English language fluently , albeit using archaic words and grammatical structures . In addition , the Vortigaunts believe in a binding life @-@ force referred to as the " Vortessence " . The exact nature of the Vortessence is left unclear , although it is revealed that Vortigaunts believe the Vortessence is the fabric of the universe and connects everything .

= = = Depiction = = =

In general , a Vortigaunt is a somewhat humanoid figure with two legs and two arms , but has an additional arm protruding from its thorax . Vortigaunts have mottled green skin and digitigrade legs , allowing them to move quickly . Typically , Vortigaunts have a slightly hunched posture . In addition , Vortigaunts have sharp teeth , clawed hands , strong senses , and their faces are dominated by a large red eye . In Half @-@ Life , this eye is surrounded by five smaller eyes , although , in Half @-@ Life 2 , this has been reduced to three smaller eyes . A key aspect of the Vortigaunts is their ability to summon energy to their command without the need for any equipment . In @-@ game , this ability is most commonly used as a means of attack , with Vortigaunts ' hurling the energy towards foes in the form of green electrical bolts . In addition , Vortigaunts have been shown to be able to use the energy for other purposes , such as assisting in repair work , removing rubble and blockages , recharging the player 's HEV suit or powering up electrical generators . Enslaved Vortigaunts are depicted with green collars and shackles , although the means by which these control Vortigaunts is not explored . Vortigaunts are not typically seen wearing clothing , although several Vortigaunts are observed wearing lab coats and chef 's clothing in the course of Half @-@ Life 2 and its expansions . Vortigaunts are depicted as meat eaters ; the player can observe Vortigaunts ' eating human corpses in Half @-@ Life and cooking headcrabs in Half @-@ Life 2 , although Half @-@ Life 2 also shows Vortigaunts working in kitchens with chef hats , preparing soups and salads , suggesting that Vortigaunts are omnivores .

= = Appearances = =

= = = Half @-@ Life = = =

Vortigaunts are first introduced as one of the primary enemies in Half @-@ Life . They are frequently encountered by players throughout Half @-@ Life and its three expansions , Opposing Force , Blue Shift and Decay . They are portrayed as one of the sentient races of Xen , often working in groups or with more heavily armored Xen troops . In the later stages of Half @-@ Life , Vortigaunts are seen working in factory @-@ like environments , constructing or maturing the more heavily armored Xen troops in cocoon @-@ like capsules under the direction of other aliens in the

Xen hierarchy .

In the cooperative multiplayer expansion Decay , players have the opportunity to assume the role of two Vortigaunts if they score highly on all missions . In this bonus mission , entitled " Xen Attacks " , two Vortigaunts , designated as Drone Subjects X @-@ 8973 and R @-@ 4913 , are given a mission by the Nihilanth to retrieve a number of crystals stolen from Xen by human scientists from the Black Mesa Research Facility .

== Half @-@ Life 2 ==

The role of the Vortigaunts is drastically changed in Half @-@ Life 2 . Now acting as allies to the player , Vortigaunts have been freed as a result of protagonist Gordon Freeman killing the Nihilanth at the end of Half @-@ Life . Instead of acting with hostility towards humanity , the Vortigaunts are actively engaged in assisting the human resistance against the Combine , a multi @-@ dimensional empire that has invaded and occupied Earth in between Half @-@ Life and Half @-@ Life 2 . Vortigaunts are frequently seen at resistance compounds and stations , often performing maintenance work or providing help with experiments , and sometimes assist the player by using their energy abilities to recharge the player 's HEV suit . However , a number of Vortigaunts are still in captivity , as at various points in the game , Vortigaunts are shown used as slave labor by the Combine ; for example , one Vortigaunt is seen cleaning the floor of a Combine train station with a broom , wearing a similar collar to those worn in Half @-@ Life .

Vortigaunts play a greater part in the story of the series in Half @-@ Life 2 's continuations , Episode One and Episode Two . In Episode One , Vortigaunts use unexplained powers to rescue Alyx Vance , the series ' main female character , from the top of the Combine Citadel in City 17 , saving her from the explosion of the Citadel 's reactor at the end of Half @-@ Life 2 . The Vortigaunts also free Gordon Freeman from the stasis imposed on him at the end of Half @-@ Life 2 by his enigmatic employer , the G @-@ Man , much to the G @-@ Man 's irritation . Episode Two dedicates much of the early part of the game to the Vortigaunts , with a group of four Vortigaunts working to heal Alyx Vance after she is mortally wounded by a Combine Hunter , while tracking and killing the Combine Advisors that fled the Citadel . One Vortigaunt accompanies the player and acts as combat support on an expedition into an antlion hive . In the latter stages of Episode Two , a number of Vortigaunts are observed in the White Forest missile silo , performing various tasks to facilitate the launch of a satellite to close a Combine super portal .

== Appearances in other media ==

The use of sandbox applications like Garry 's Mod have allowed for the Vortigaunt to be used in a variety of webcomics and machinima productions . For example , in the webcomic Concerned , the inability for the players to harm allied non @-@ player characters such as the Vortigaunt in Half @-@ Life 2 forms a recurring joke , where the protagonist Gordon Frohman constantly tries to shoot Vortigaunts due to their role as enemies in Half @-@ Life . This eventually backfires on him , as when Vortigaunts try to rescue Frohman from the destruction of the Citadel , his hostile nature leads them to simply abandon him to his fate . Vortigaunts are occasionally featured in machinima productions , often taking on the roles of minor characters , such as janitors under Combine jurisdiction . In addition , Vortigaunts are central to one Half @-@ Life single @-@ player modification , POV ? Point of View , in which the player assumes the role of a Vortigaunt slave attacking Black Mesa .

== Cultural impact ==

== Merchandise ==

The character of the Vortigaunt has been popular enough to inspire the creation of a Vortigaunt

plush toy . The toy was designed by Dhabih Eng and was sold and distributed via Valve 's online store . The toy was released in December 2006 and due to the proximity to Christmas , the Vortigaunt was accompanied by a to @-@ scale Santa Claus hat . Reviews of the plush toy were favorable , praising the toy as sturdy , as well as giving credit for its articulation and detail .

= = = Reception = = =

The change of the Vortigaunts from enemy characters to allied characters in Half @-@ Life 2 was described as " intriguing " by reviewers , with PC Zone stating that the Vortigaunts were one of the most interesting characters in the game , playing a role " somewhere between Yoda and ET " .

The role of the Vortigaunts in Episode Two was met with more approval by critics , who described the Vortigaunt who accompanies the player in the early parts of the game as " a great joy to fight alongside " , praising the improved artificial intelligence and noting that " the fact that they 're not trying to intricately imitate real @-@ life people " significantly aided the presentation of the Vortigaunts . In addition , IGN praised the visual and character overhaul given to the Vortigaunt in Episode Two .