

Borough Bound Races: Vol. 1



KENNELBORN

With wet noses, full coats of hair, and tails carefully tucked into pant legs, kennelborn don't always fit so neatly into the cities they call their homes. In order to better fit into the communities they join, many kennelborn choose to adhere strictly to societal standards of propriety and suppress their more animal instincts. These days, travelers are likely to find pockets of upturned kennelborn among the high-societies of many larger cities.

OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES

Kennelborn are not "man's best friend." In fact, most kennelborn consider this phrase to be dismissive and belittling. Kennelborn do everything they can to overcome the assumptions that their human kin tend to harbor. Nevertheless, many non-kennelborn are incapable of seeing kennelborn as anything more than doglike people. Physiologically, kennelborn share many similarities with the various breeds of dog that they resemble, but kennelborn are decidedly *not* loyal, extroverted, or servile by default.

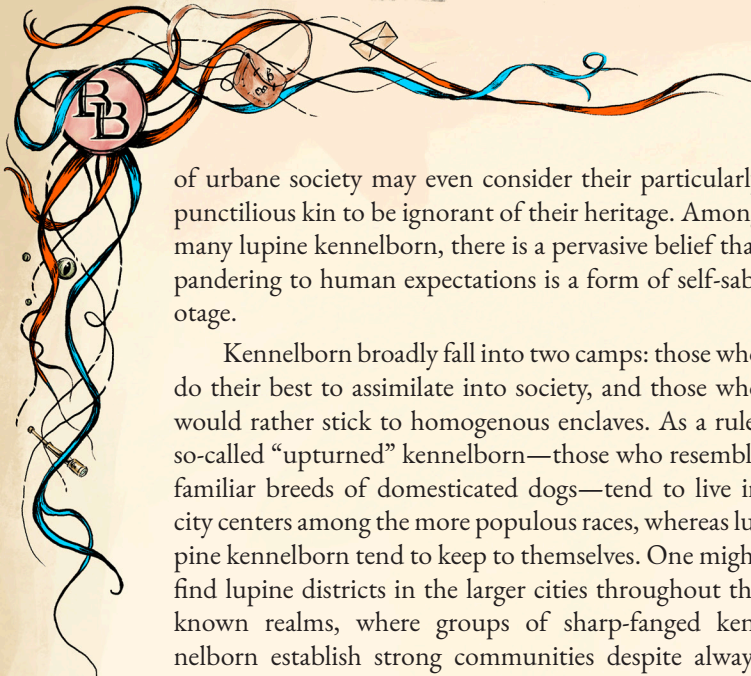
Crucially, kennelborn are not a monolith. Both culturally and physiologically, kennelborn are more diverse than their human counterparts. Mistakenly considered a single species by their ignorant kin, the kennelborn genus actually contains many distinct species that are reproductively isolated. Furthermore, a lupine kennelborn from the hinterlands and a pomeranian kennelborn from the inner city might have as little in common as a dwarf and a human.

"Kennelborn" was initially the common name given to any humanoid displaying "pet-like" features. This included the race of present-day kennelborn, but also varieties of werewolf, shapeshifter, and catfolk. It wasn't until many canine humanoids migrated into cities en masse that they began to appropriate the once-derisive term. By taking ownership of the slang put-down, the kennelborn hope to control the narrative of their relationship to dogs. Now, kennelborn cultural leaders emphasize their people's triumph over their bestial origins.

CANINE NATURE

Despite their strong desire to move past their similarities to dogs—domesticated or otherwise—each kennelborn must nonetheless confront the realities of their canine nature. Most learn to appreciate their keen sense of smell and highly-sensitive ears, but other aspects of their biology may feel limiting. A thick coat of hair is a blessing in the winter but can render certain fashion trends oppressively uncomfortable in warmer climates. Sharp teeth are great for chewing meat or intimidating would-be assailants, but they are suboptimal for the increasingly omnivorous diets of city-dwelling kennelborn. Their tails may be expressive, but there are countless instances when a kennelborn would rather *not* give away their true feelings with an inopportune tail wag.

Some kennelborn embrace their more primal urges, but the vast majority do everything possible to quell the desire to howl, to fetch, or to overreact when elated. In their quest to remain subdued, many kennelborn are notably sedate. The norm among urban kennelborn communities is to favor stoicism, a trend that those living in the wilds dismiss as overcompensating. Kennelborn who choose not to conform to the expectations



of urbane society may even consider their particularly punctilious kin to be ignorant of their heritage. Among many lupine kennelborn, there is a pervasive belief that pandering to human expectations is a form of self-sabotage.

Kennelborn broadly fall into two camps: those who do their best to assimilate into society, and those who would rather stick to homogenous enclaves. As a rule, so-called “upturned” kennelborn—those who resemble familiar breeds of domesticated dogs—tend to live in city centers among the more populous races, whereas lupine kennelborn tend to keep to themselves. One might find lupine districts in the larger cities throughout the known realms, where groups of sharp-fanged kennelborn establish strong communities despite always feeling out of place. Still, it is more common to find lupine kennelborn living in smaller villages or traveling in nomadic packs.



ERUDITION AND HONOR

To free themselves from associations with their domesticated kin, many urban kennelborn seek the good graces of high society. By donning fancy garb, attending elite universities, and bumping elbows at fancy soirées, they are able to distinguish themselves as above the animals to which humans are so quick to compare them. As such, kennelborn tend to be well-spoken and well-dressed. On average, upturned kennelborn are actually

wealthier than humans in most cities. Perhaps thanks to their resolute commitment to beating the humans at their own game, kennelborns excel in business and aristocratic maneuvering.

Kennelborn value honor above all else. Mere “loyalty” is cheap and free from nuance. A *pet* is loyal. A kennelborn is capable of higher thinking and a deeper understanding of morality. To act with chivalry is to master the social and ethical realm. Kennelborn, therefore, make ideal paladins, clinging to loftier ideals than simple allegiance to a master.

KENNELBORN TRAITS

You have the following racial traits

Age. Kennelborn have lifespans equivalent to humans.

Creature Type. You are a humanoid.

Size. Kennelborn may be anywhere from 4-and-a-half feet to 7 feet tall, and from 120 to 300 pounds. Regardless of your exact build, your size is medium.

Speed. Your walking speed is 30 feet.

Keen Senses. You have advantage on Perception checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Subrace. Kennelborn are highly diverse, but most fall into one of two broad categories: the urbane upturned, or the rugged lupine.

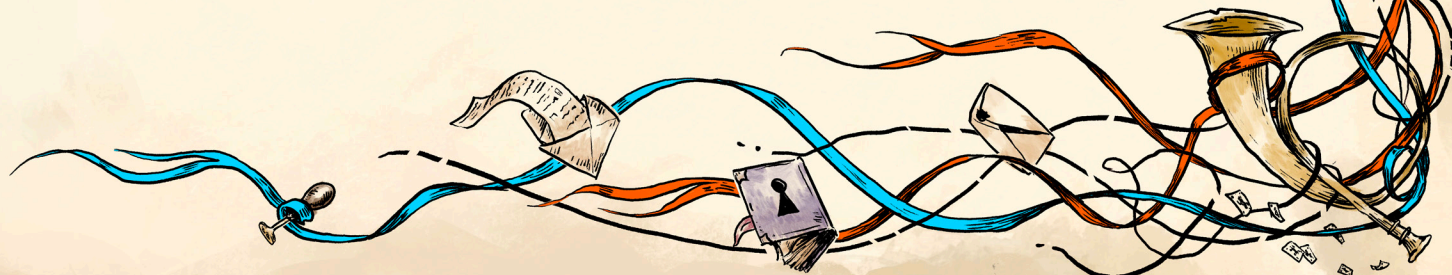
UPTURNED

As an upturned kennelborn, you bear resemblance to one or more breeds of domesticated dogs. You most likely live in an urban setting amongst groups of other humanoids. You still have animal impulses, but you’ve learned to subdue all but the most insistent urges.

Impulse Control. You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

City Mingler. You’ve learned how to fit in, no matter the company. You gain proficiency in Persuasion and Deception.

Smell Intentions. You have a knack for sussing out true intentions. Once per long rest, you may ask your GM whether or not the last thing an NPC said was a lie. The GM has to tell you the truth.



LUPINE

Whether you thrive as a lone wolf or travel with a pack, you're more in tune with your animal side than your upturned kin. As a lupine kennelborn, you feel less of a need to quell your bestial nature. You keep your teeth sharp, your hair thick, and your head on a swivel. To confuse and frustrate others, you often measure your age in multiples of seven.

Bite. Your fierce fangs are a natural weapon that you can use to make unarmed strikes. If you hit with it, you deal piercing damage equal to $1d6 +$ your Strength modifier, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike.

Thick Coat. You have dense hair that provides resistance to cold damage.

Wild Instincts. You gain proficiency in Survival checks. When traveling alone, you can add double your proficiency bonus to any Survival check. When traveling in a group, you and up to 5 other members of your "pack" can add a d4 to one Survival check per long rest.

RUNGAL

While kennelborn share a common biological ancestor, rungals are a curious example of convergent evolution. The extreme morphological diversity of goblinoids—theorized to stem from high rates of mutation among goblinoid offspring—has only increased over the millennia, with different subspecies evolving to fill specific niches in goblinoid culture and the varied environments they inhabit. Simian rungals are thus the natural result of goblinoids moving into increasingly thick rainforests or traveling on lengthy sea journeys.

SIMIAN ADAPTATION

Xenophobia has pushed many goblinoids further and further away from human societies. Wherever human-kind urbanizes, tribalistic sentiment tends to settle in. The creatures that men deem to be "monstrous" are summarily pushed into outer boroughs, then distant villages, and eventually away from human society altogether.

When goblinoids are thrust into thick jungles or out onto the sea, many evolve to take on simian forms. While the specifics vary from plane to plane, rungals may adapt any of the following:

- ◆ Prehensile tails
- ◆ Cheek pads
- ◆ Communication through scent
- ◆ Enlarged eyes
- ◆ Knuckle-walking
- ◆ Hypometabolism
- ◆ Muscle hypertrophy
- ◆ Nocturnality

Regardless of their apelike features, rungals are goblinoids first and foremost. They praise their Gods for blessing them with strategic adaptations, but they do not think of themselves as "animalfolk" or anything of the sort. They are quick to form ranks with goblins and hobgoblins, and will often serve under warring orcs, depending on the sociopolitics of a given region.





UP IN THE TREETOPS, HIGH IN THE RIGGING

Rungals are masters of two distinct environments. In dense jungles, they are exceedingly adept hunters and builders. They construct towering treetop villages, both to act as outposts from which to plan hunts and to protect themselves from intruders. When a clan of rungals goes to war, any non-rungal combatants will be at an immediate disadvantage due to the seeming impossibility of invading their soaring homes.

Likewise, rungals make for incredible seafaring travelers. With enhanced eyesight and a knack for swinging around on rigging, rungal crews are highly sought-after. Rowing, scouting, even pumping the bilge... rungal physiology is perfectly tailored for nearly every responsibility on a ship. It is not unusual for human or elven voyagers to hire rungal seamen even when political tensions might make such cooperation rare in other circumstances.

CLAN ABOVE ALL

Whether out on the high seas or deep in the rainforest, rungals achieve safety through numbers. Rungals organize themselves into highly structured clans with discrete roles for subclans and individuals. Unlike other goblinoid hierarchies, rungal clans are not led by their strongest members by default. Instead, clans are goal-oriented. Each rungal clan will decide communally what their focus ought to be (survival, conquest, diplomacy, relocation, etc...), and then a leadership structure is determined based on the needs of the group. A rungal clan that sets off into the wilderness in search of a new home will have a markedly different hierarchy than one trying to reclaim lost territory.

Despite high birth rates among rungal communities, clan sizes remain bounded. Once a clan expands beyond roughly 120 members, the clan will splinter. Usually, the offshoot clan will focus on a different goal than the previous. This ensures that at least one clan is likely to prosper and that they will be less likely to come into conflict. When rungals ally with members of non-goblinoid races, their first instinct is to prove their worth. They suss out a particular skill set missing from their newly forged alliance, and they set out to master it. As such, rungals make for excellent additions to any adventuring party.

RUNGAL TRAITS

You have the following racial traits

Age. Rungals reach adulthood at age 8 and live up to 60 years.

Creature Type. You are a humanoid.

Size. You are Medium or Small. You choose the size when you select this race.

Speed. Your walking speed is 30 feet, and you have a climbing speed equal to your walking speed.

Darkvision. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Nimble Escape. You can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of your turns.

Simian Adaptations. Choose two of the following:

- ♦ **Gorilla Physique.** You gain a +2 bonus to Strength saving throws, and you count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift.

- ♦ **Orangutan Checks.** You gain proficiency in the Intimidation skill.

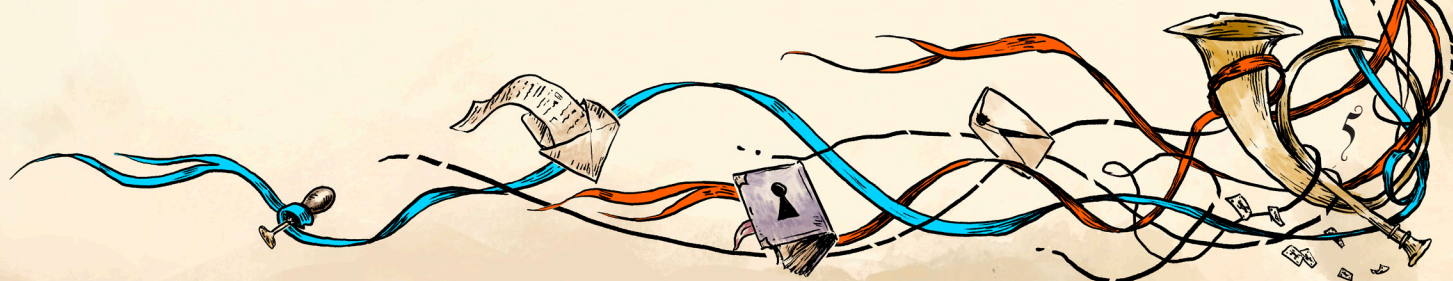
You may also use an action to frighten someone with your impressive visage. When you do so, choose a creature within 10 feet of you that can see you. That creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength modifier) or become frightened of you until the end of your next turn. After you've used the feature in this way, you cannot do so again until you've finished a short rest.

- ♦ **Mandrill Teeth.** Your sharp simian teeth are a natural weapon that you can use to make unarmed strikes. If you hit with it, you deal piercing damage equal to 1d6 + your Strength modifier, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike.

- ♦ **Spider Monkey Tail.** You may hang from your tail for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum 1) before falling.

You can also use your tail to lift objects of no greater than 5 pounds.

- ♦ **Tarsier Eyes.** You have advantage on Perception checks that rely on sight.





CHESSKÆL

With stony bones and scale-like flesh, the minuscule but dynamic cheskæl come across as energetic and unstoppable. A zeal for life and a dogged commitment to scholarship are stymied, however, by their tragically brief lifespans: a cheskæl is considered an adult by age 4, and most barely survive into their 20s. Nonetheless, wherever they live, cheskæl make their mark, with contributions to the arts and sciences that rival those of races that live 10 times as long as they do.

THE KNACK

The cheskæl value knowledge above all else. This may seem a fruitless endeavor; with such short lifespans compared to their elven, dwarven, or even human kin, how can any cheskæl hope to achieve the intellect of a great scholar? Luckily, an arcane quirk of their reproduction ensures that children will possess an innate aptitude toward studying any field known to their parents. The cheskæl refer to this hereditary expertise as “the Knack.” For example, a cheskæl born to a blacksmith and a chemist can master both fields prior to

adulthood before progressing toward their own chosen field of study. Through a generational commitment to self-improvement, it is, therefore, possible for a single cheskæl to amass the combined education of each of their ancestors over the course of their scant years.

In practice, however, few reach the pinnacle of what is possible for their species. Even with a predisposition for learning, a single uneducated or unmotivated cheskæl can ruin generations’ worth of research and practice. The Knack is passed down only by your parents, so if your mother and father failed to accumulate the knowledge of their own parents, you will be doomed to start from scratch.

When roleplaying a cheskæl, consider what skills your parents knew. Are you a wizard who hopes to quickly learn the spells your parents mastered? Or perhaps your parents were blacksmiths—you’ll pick up the craft easily, but you’ll need to learn the ways of the blade on your own. Your cheskæl traits give you an opportunity to incorporate the Knack into your character builds. Concocting a backstory with a lineage that accounts for these aptitudes will help you to fully embody your character.

RIGID PHYSIQUE

Despite their short stature, cheskæl are incredibly hardy, with rigid and scaly skin, tough constitutions, and bones that crystallize into gemstones as they age. Unfortunately, it is this same hardy physique that becomes their ultimate downfall. By age 20 or so, the minerals in their hair, skin, and bones start to rapidly decay, eventually crumbling to dust. The most common cause of death for an aged cheskæl is simply a collapsed chest cavity. As their crystalline rib cage erodes, their lungs are slowly crushed.

Heartless bandits may hunt cheskæl for their gemstone bones. If cut and polished, these gems are indistinguishable from “inorganic” precious gems. However, the gems quickly disintegrate in the body of a dying cheskæl, and must therefore be harvested immediately. Naturally, only the most desperate and destitute of grieving cheskæl would defile their loved ones by harvesting their bones.



TO RISK IT ALL

Chesskæl are always first associated with their prolific academics and artists, but they also make for incredible warriors when they dedicate their lives to honing their combat skills. Especially when descended from an adept fighter, a chesskæl can quickly master the blade, the bow, or hand-to-hand combat. With their hardy constitutions, a chesskæl can make for a fierce combatant before eventually succumbing to their inopportune old age.

Even though the skills of battle can be passed down through the Knack much like that of any science, language, or instrument, most chesskæl look down on those who pursue lives of violence. Fighting for a noble cause still puts their already short lives at risk, and the threat of losing generations of accumulated knowledge is too costly to leave to chance.

CHESSKÆL TRAITS

You have the following racial traits

Age. Chesskæl have lifespans that rarely exceed 20 years, though they are considered adults as early as age 4.

Creature Type. You are a humanoid.

Size. Chesskæl grow to a full height of about 4 feet tall by age 4. They then begin shrinking once they reach 18 or 19. Your size is Small.

Speed. Your walking speed is 25 feet.

The Knack. You gain proficiency in one skill, one tool, and one martial weapon of your choice. When you reach level 5, your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check that uses the chosen skill or tool.

Gemstone Bones. You have scaly skin and stony bones. When you aren't wearing armor, your AC is 13 + your Constitution modifier. A shield's benefits apply as normal while you use your natural armor.

Knowledge of My Ancestors. You learn one 1st-level spell of your choice from the wizard spell list. Once you cast this spell with this trait, you can't cast it again until you finish a long rest. You can also cast the spell using any spell slots you have of the appropriate level. Intelligence is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

FEL'DÆR

In moist cedar forests, fel'dær forage for food. If they're lucky, they'll find a giant puffball, a mushroom that will keep a fel'dær fed for days. After such a glorious find, it's not unusual for a fel'dær to simply plop down on the forest floor and slowly snack on the fungus over the course of a few days. A daydreaming fel'dær might be so calm and motionless during such a mushroom-fueled sojourn that various funguses start to grow on the fel'dær as well! "So be it!" the fel'dær will think to themselves. "More friends."

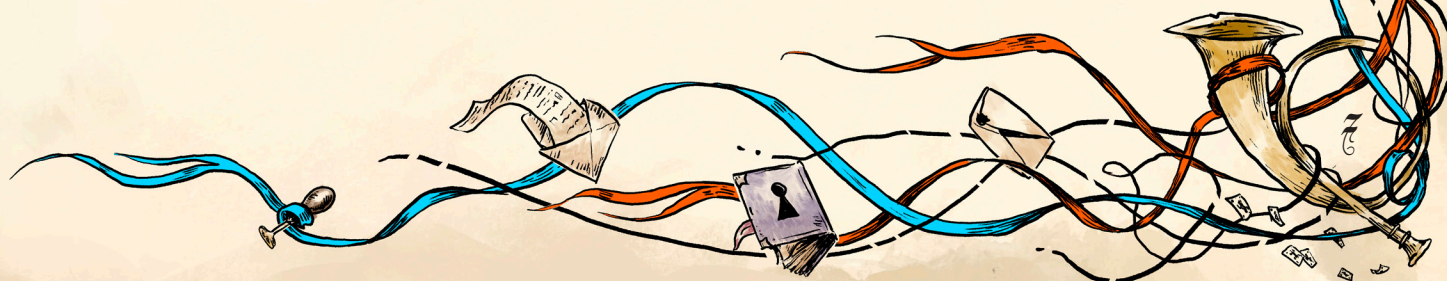
SLOW LIVING

A fel'dær's ideal day is 12 hours of leisure followed by 12 hours of sleep. Fel'dær are naturally *slow* creatures. Their glacial metabolism allows them to subsist off of minuscule diets despite their large stature. As such, the hunter-gatherer lifestyle ends up being rather undemanding for most fel'dær. A typical day might start with a morning walk picking berries followed by an afternoon nap, a dip in the pond, an hour of reading, a dinner of some nuts and crickets, then a quiet chat by the fire before an early bedtime.

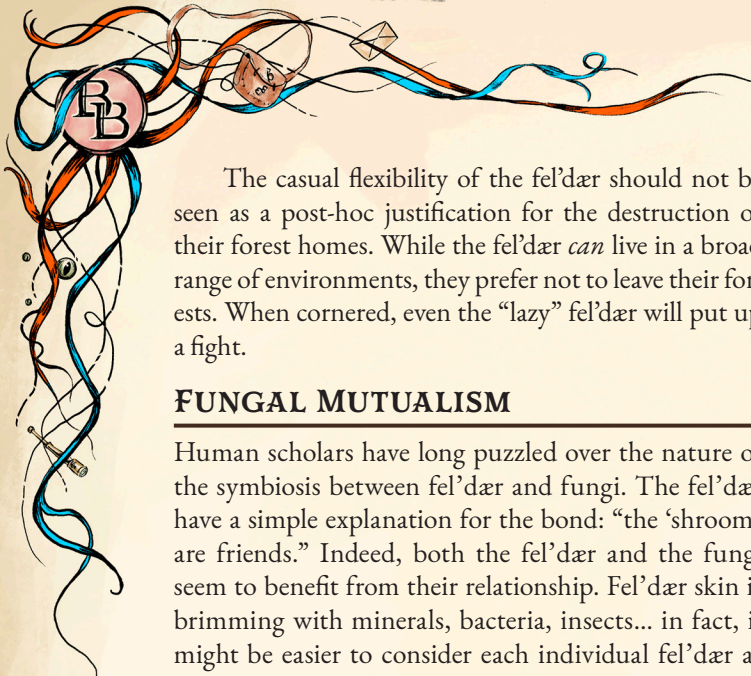
Cityfolk often disparage fel'dær for being lazy. Most fel'dær don't reject this claim, but they do take umbrage at the implied disdain. As far as fel'dær society is concerned, laziness is a virtue. Slow living means less need for food, fewer sprained ankles, and more time devoted to what really matters: spending time with family, relaxing with a cup of tea, and gazing up at the stars.

DISAPPEARING HOMELANDS

Increased urbanization in many realms has contributed to wanton deforestation, thereby displacing many fel'dær who call the woods their homes. Fel'dær don't have to live in forests, but temperate woods tend to be the easiest and quietest places for fel'dær to forage. Fel'dær will only ever move into cities begrudgingly. More often, they'll find a new forest, or else try to make do in some other environment. Many are actually quite surprised to find how easily they can adapt to radically different biomes. There are records across the known realms of riverboat fel'dær who fish all day while half asleep, desert fel'dær ambling slowly from oasis to oasis, and even tundra fel'dær who end up hibernating for months on end.







The casual flexibility of the fel'dær should not be seen as a post-hoc justification for the destruction of their forest homes. While the fel'dær *can* live in a broad range of environments, they prefer not to leave their forests. When cornered, even the “lazy” fel'dær will put up a fight.

FUNGAL MUTUALISM

Human scholars have long puzzled over the nature of the symbiosis between fel'dær and fungi. The fel'dær have a simple explanation for the bond: “the ‘shrooms are friends.” Indeed, both the fel'dær and the fungi seem to benefit from their relationship. Fel'dær skin is brimming with minerals, bacteria, insects... in fact, it might be easier to consider each individual fel'dær as a unique localized ecosystem. Fungi grow all over the skin of these slow lumbering forest dwellers, thriving amongst the nutrient blooms exuded from every pore. In exchange, the fungi heal cuts and abrasions, trap moisture, and inoculate their host against common illnesses, poisons, and venoms. Combined with their slow metabolism and carefree lifestyle, the symbiotic mushrooms can keep a fel'dær alive and healthy even in the harshest of climates.

CURIOUS WANDERERS

Fel'dær who stray from their home have a peculiar tendency to *wander*. As their primary goals day-to-day are simply to enjoy the outdoors, sleep under the stars, and munch on strange scraps, a fel'dær who strays outside of their wood—or who is forced out of their home by encroaching industry—will typically pick a random direction and start ambling. Some pick up minor hustles along the way: peddling wares, sharing fairy tales in exchange for snacks, or scaring birds away from fields yet to be harvested. Others simply live in the moment, seeing where their nose takes them.

When a fel'dær takes up a more deliberate cause, they will often do so for the camaraderie of a chosen party. A particularly charming group of adventurers may be able to entice a fel'dær to join their fight through sheer gusto. Perhaps through the party's influence, a fel'dær may find that there's more to life than lazing around by the riverside... or they may just tag along for the snacks.

FEL'DÆR TRAITS

You have the following racial traits

Age. Fel'dær can live for centuries. Most only pass after their fungal microbiome reaches an untenable pH, or if they are eaten by a predator in their sleep. Given ideal conditions, it is not clear that a fel'dær would ever die of natural causes.

Creature Type. You are a humanoid or fey. You choose when you select this race.

Size. Fel'dær are roughly 8 feet tall end to end, though most maintain a bent posture that puts them roughly eye-to-eye with adult humans. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your walking speed is 30 feet.

Slow Metabolism. You can subsist off of approximately 500 calories per day when traveling. If sedentary, you only need to eat roughly once a week.

Fungal Microbiome. The symbiotic mushrooms that grow on your skin aid you in the following ways:

- ◆ You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and you have resistance against poison damage.
- ◆ You are immune to disease.
- ◆ Whenever you spend hit dice to regain hit points, you can regain an extra 1d8 hit points.

If you take more than 20 + your level acid damage in a single turn, you lose access to this feature until you finish a long rest.

Wildcunning. Whenever you make a Nature or Survival check related to the geography or wildlife of a forest, bog, or river, you are considered proficient in the skill and add double your proficiency bonus to the check, instead of your normal proficiency bonus.

One with the Environment. While among thick vegetation, if you remain motionless for 1 minute, you begin to blend in with your surrounding environment. You gain a +10 bonus to Stealth checks until you move again. This benefit also applies when you are sleeping outdoors.

