



A Dungeons & Dragons setting by Jared A. Sorensen

The setting of Tundra is one of snow-covered mountains, immense glaciers and evergreen forests. Hunger and exposure are constant threats, as are the predators that roam the stark landscape.

## Races

Here are the new races to be used in the Tundra setting.

### Dire Men

Dire Men are often mistaken for half-orcs, due to their physiques and their habits, but are in fact another species of human (either an early form or some kind of devolved mutation). They are a dying breed, found only in the most remote places on earth.

**Personality:** Dire Men are savage and primitive, ignorant of the world outside their own territories. They worship dark, primal forces of nature and wrap themselves in folklore and superstition. Dire Men are aggressive, preferring brute force to any kind of subtle interaction.

**Physical Description:** Dire Men are larger, stronger and heavier than normal humans or half-orcs. Males are usually between six and seven feet tall, females are only slightly smaller. Their foreheads are prominent and their features are heavy and coarse. Dire Men have deep tan skin, long matted hair and dark eyes. Males almost always have beards of some length. Their faces, hands and bodies are often marked by tribal scars or tattoos.

**Relations:** The less warlike clans of Dire Men often trade with one another but tend to be xenophobic when it comes to other races. Half-orcs and orcs, when encountered, are usually greeted, albeit under close watch. Elves are seen as otherworldly creatures and are usually avoided.

**Alignment:** Dire Men are organized into several clans, with each clan containing a few dozen members. The largest clan, the White Bear Clan, is the most gregarious and welcoming of outsiders – it's members are neutral or neutral good in temperament. The smaller clans are true neutral with two exceptions: the Wolverine Clan (composed of outcasts from the other clans) is neutral evil, while the members of the Witch Bone clan are chaotic evil (as is their leader, a powerful druid-sorceress named the Great Mother).

**Dire Man Lands:** The Dire Men are spread out across the wastes of Tundra. The White Bear Clan exists at the outer rim of civilization. At the other end of the spectrum, the Witch Bone Clan lies deep within the caves of the northern mountain range.

**Religion:** Dire Men are animistic and practice a simple earth-based religion worshipping animals and forces of nature. The Witch Bone Clan reveres their "living goddess," the self-proclaimed Great Mother.

**Language:** Dire Men from the White Bear Clan (and a few other smaller tribes) speak a guttural dialect of the Common tongue. They have their own simple language as well. Dire Men have no knowledge of writing other than occult glyphs (known only to their druids).

**Names:** Dire Men names are taken from their own primitive language.

**Male Names:** Male names are short and usually harsh-sounding. Examples include Kor, Harg, Gurth, Tak. Elder males have names ending with u's or o's (Koru, Hargo, Gurthu, Taku).

**Female Names:** Female names are the same as male names except ending with an a or i. Kora, Harga, Gurtha, Taki. Elder females are similar to male elder names, but end with -ka or -ga (Koruga, Hargoka, Gurthuka, Takuka).

**Family Names:** Dire Men have no familial names. Instead, they use their clan's name when identifying themselves (Kor White Fox, Gurtha Bone Witch). The major clan names are: White Bear, Snow Owl, White Fox, Ice Demon, Witch Bone, Rock Seal and Sky Fire). The members of the Wolverine clan use their "clan" name but other Dire Men refuse to recognize the outcasts as a true clan.

**Adventures:** Dire Men of the White Bear Clan are usually found amongst remote pockets of civilization, either to trade goods or to hire themselves out as guides or porters. Most often than not, they are encountered in far less friendly circumstances.

### **Dire Men Traits**

- Dire Men are powerfully built, giving them a +2 Strength bonus. But like half-orcs, they are a crude and primitive race, with -2 Intelligence and -2 Charisma.
- Dire Men are medium-sized humanoids.
- Dire Men have a base speed of 30 feet.
- Dire Men receive their own language as an automatic language and may choose Common and Orc as bonus languages.
- Dire Men receive a +1 racial attack bonus when fighting animals and beasts.
- Dire Men also receive Alertness as a bonus feat.
- Dire Men are limited in their choice of weapons and armor. Regardless of the normal weapon and armor proficiencies granted to their first class, Dire Men are only proficient in hide armor and shields and may only use the following weapons without penalty: all simple weapons, composite short bows, all axes, all spears, maces, flails and clubs (including the greatclub).
- Their favored class is barbarian. Dire Men receive no penalties when multi-classing as a barbarian. Dire Men must be at least 1<sup>st</sup> level in the barbarian or druid classes before attaining additional class levels.

### **Ice Gnomes**

Tundra gnomes aren't true gnomes at all. In fact, they're some kind of quasi-elemental race who have lived in Tundra for aeons. Other names for these creatures are Tundra Dwarves and Ice People.

**Personality:** Ice gnomes are long-lived, mischievous and secretive, with a great appreciation for natural beauty and an amazing resistance to cold. They love to fashion ice sculptures from the blue glaciers where they live. Ice gnomes are basically peaceful, but their wrath, once incurred, is fearsome and terrible to behold.

**Physical Description:** Ice gnomes are small, stocky creatures with snow-white skin and pale blue hair. Their eye color ranges from the palest of blues to perfectly clear. Because of their natural immunity to extreme cold, they're likely to be found without many items of clothing (perhaps a simple waistcloth or tunic).

**Relations:** Ice gnomes are friendly with the winter elves who make their home in the frozen lands of Tundra. They are shy and cautious around humans but will seldom journey within sight of the Dire Men's campsites.

**Alignment:** Ice gnomes are generally aligned with the forces of Good. Their society values both tradition and freedom of expression. Most ice gnomes are Neutral Good.

**Ice Gnome Lands:** The ice gnomes live deep within the mountain glaciers in both fabricated homes and natural ice caverns. The gnomes were displaced from one major cave due to the arrival of a white dragon, many decades ago. The majority of ice gnomes reside in Great-Hoof, a huge glacier to the east.

**Religion:** Ice Gnomes have no gods or goddesses and do not particularly revere the natural world either. Ancestor worship is most common, with the gnomes erecting frozen tombs for the bodies of fallen heroes and leaders. The bodies are clad in finery, then frozen within crystal-clear blocks of ice. These blocks are then stood upright in glacial mausoleums, where they remain for all time.

**Language:** Ice gnomes speak a weird version of dwarven and all but the oldest gnomes speak Common. Ice gnomes may also choose elvish or giant as bonus languages.

**Names:** Ice gnomes favor gender-neutral names that reflect their natural habitat, usually some variation on the words ice, snow, cold, etc. (Sunglare, Glitterfrost, Icedancer, Snowdigger, Sleetskin).

**Family Names:** Ice gnomes have no familial names. They are a long-lived race that is small in number, so there is little need for names to distinguish between one another.

**Adventures:** Ice gnomes are natural explorers in the harsh environment of Tundra. The truly adventurous often brave the human encampments out of sheer curiosity, while the older gnomes enjoy parleying with the elf tribes. Ice gnome warriors can usually be found stalking giants and frost worms in the deep wastes.

### **Ice Gnome Traits**

- Ice gnomes are famous for the ability to withstand cold, hunger and sleep. Due to their size, they aren't as strong as humans and other races. They have a +2 bonus to their Constitution but suffer a -2 to their Strength.
- Ice gnomes are small-sized humanoids and gain a +1 AC bonus against larger opponents.
- Ice gnomes have a base speed of 20 feet.
- Ice gnomes receive Dwarvish and Common as automatic languages and may choose from Elvish and Giant as bonus languages.
- Darkvision: Ice gnomes have darkvision up to 60'
- +4 dodge bonus to AC against giants
- Icecunning: Ice gnomes have a +2 racial bonus when judging the strength, thickness and quality of natural or crafted ice. They also receive a +2 bonus when climbing or keeping their balance on icy surfaces.
- Icesmithing: Ice gnomes possess the innate ability to create durable artifacts from ice, including structures and piercing weapons (such as arrows, darts, spears and the like). The difficulty is the same as to create a masterwork item of the same type. Ice weapons also do additional half-damage as cold damage.
- Ice gnomes are Cold creatures; immune to cold damage but taking double damage from fire attacks (half damage on a successful save if the attack allows a saving throw).
- Their favored class is sorcerer. Ice gnomes receive no penalties when multi-classing as a sorcerer.

### **Winter Elves**

Winter elves are a subrace of elves who have learned to live and thrive in the taiga (cold, forested areas) and mountainous regions. Most are capable hunters, warriors and riders.

**Personality:** Winter elves are less playful and more practical than their woodland cousins. Visitors from warmed climes often call them "stone elves," due to their grim natures as well as their rocky homes.

**Physical Description:** Physically, winter elves are similar to normal elves. Their skin and hair is slightly darker and their bodies are shorter and heavier...but they are still quite beautiful to behold.

**Relations:** Winter elves get along well with the civilized tribes of humans, the ice gnomes and visiting elfs from other lands. They dislike the uncouth and bestial Dire Men and are often at odds with them over territory. Unfortunately, diplomacy fails more than it succeeds with the savage humans and bloodshed is often the result.

**Alignment:** Winter elves, like many in this unforgiving place, are neutral good.

**Winter Elf Lands:** Winter elves have two homes. In the warmer months, they live in the dense forests where they have access to rivers and lakes for fishing and fields for hunting. In the colder times, they retreat to the caves, where they shore up for the long dark winter.

**Religion:** Winter elves worship the normal pantheon of elven deities, with special regard for the gods of nature and hunting.

**Language:** Winter elves speak the same languages as normal elves.

**Names:** Winter elves have typically elvish names, with some influence from the Common tongue of the human tribes.

**Adventures:** Winter elves are the most likely to be found outside their homeland, as well as adventuring throughout Tundra itself.

### **Winter Elf Traits**

- Winter elves have greater stamina than their delicate cousins but don't possess the natural grace of the other elves. This means that winter elves suffer no bonuses or penalties.
- Winter elves are medium-sized humanoids.
- Winter elves have a base speed of 30 feet.
- Winter elves have elven blood and gain the full benefit of magical items catering to elves.
- Winter elves Elvish and Common as automatic languages and may choose from Draconic, Sylvan and Orc as bonus languages.
- Low-light vision: Winter elves can see twice as far as humans in dim light, much like other elves.
- All winter elves are trained in the use of bows and spear-like weapons, enabling them to receive automatic proficiency with these weapons. Unlike elves from more temperate climes, they do not automatically receive proficiency in sword or rapier.
- Immunity to magic sleep spells and +2 racial saving throw bonus against Enchantment effects.
- +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search and Spot checks. They also retain the elven ability to sense the presence of secret doors.
- +2 racial bonus on Ride checks. Winter elves favor reindeer or other large deer-like creatures as mounts.
- Their favored class is ranger. Winter elves receive no penalties when multi-classing as a ranger. The alternate ranger from the article "Ranger, Redux" may be used in Tundra.

## **Mountain Halflings**

There is but one clan of halflings high in the mountains, a stocky breed who call themselves mountain halflings. They live in a mighty walled fortress (presumably built long ago by an ancient race) that has been closed to the outside world for the last hundred years. Occasionally, a halfling leaves to fulfill some spiritual quest, but most remain inside from birth till death. They are peaceful folk, but are far from defenseless. Besides the impenetrable walls of the fortress, male halflings are skilled knife fighters. The mountain halflings' preferred class is fighter and halfling fighters are proficient with the kukri (which they use singly or in pairs).

### **Mountain Halfling Traits**

Mountain halflings are treated like normal halflings with but a few exceptions. Their preferred class is Fighter and the mountain halfling adventurer may choose exotic weapon proficiency with the kukri instead of their usual +1 racial attack bonus with thrown weapons.

## **New Uses for Old Skills**

### **Skiing**

The Balance skill can also be used to travel on skis at normal speeds across trackless desert terrain (snow). The Run and Endurance feats may allow for faster or longer travel.

Depending on the grade, a character can travel up to 60' in one round by using a full-movement action. When moving at full speed, the character may utilize feats such as Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Shot on the Run, Spring Attack and Mobility.

### **Ride**

The Ride skill can be used to pilot a dogsled or a kayak (a small, one-person canoe). The speed of a dogsled is roughly equal to that of a light horse, except that the travel speed is not reduced by trackless desert (in this case, snow).

## **Equipment**

### **Weapons and Armor**

Spears, harpoons and composite shortbows are the primary weapons in Tundra. Axes, picks and daggers are fine utilitarian weapons (and work well for climbing or chipping away ice). Large weapons (except for spears) are virtually unknown as they're considered impractical to carry and use far too much metal. Exotic weapons commonly found in Tundra are the kukri of the mountain halflings and the dire flail (used by warrior chiefs of the Dire Men tribes). Occasionally, an orcish double-axe may turn up in the hands of a Dire Man as well.

Hide armor is the most common type, with padded armor being the second most common. Dire Men wear the preserved skins of animals (treat as hide) and ice gnomes wear no armor at all, affording them the most freedom of movement. In Tundra, the real protection comes in the form of warm, dry clothing.

### **Mounts**

Yaks, caribou, reindeer and sled dog teams make up the majority of mounts in Tundra. The Dire Men's druids have occasionally made use of the mammoths for battles but the beasts are usually far too wild to control for long.

## **Adversaries**

### **Creatures**

The following creatures may be found in the lands of Tundra: cryohydra, ettin, giant eagle, giant owl, frost giant, frost worm, gray render, ice mephit, ice toad, nymph, ogre, orc, remorhaz, white dragon, winter wolf, worg, yeti (from Oriental Adventures) and yuki-on-na (also from OA, called Snow Women in Tundra). Gnolls and goblinoids may be found in the more temperate areas but usually don't travel to the far lands.

### **Animals**

The following animals are common in the lands of Tundra: raven, rat (lemming), weasel\*, caribou, owl, hawk, eagle, dog, bear\*, beaver\*, bison, boar\*, badger\*, Bactrian camel, riding dog, snow leopard\*, mastodon, mountain lion\*, giant squid, orca, baleen whale, cachalot whale, wolf\*, wolverine\*, woolly rhinoceros. Dire varieties of animals marked with asterisks may also be encountered.