

GRENDEL

A MONSTROUS RACE OF TROLL DESCENT FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST ROLEPLAYING GAME



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GRENDDEL

ASTELLA WAS ALMOST ASLEEP WHEN SHE HEARD HER DAUGHTER CRYING. SHE CALLED for her husband through the haze of sleep but was greeted by the steady rumbling of his snoring. Only the continuing cries of their infant daughter drove back the seductive fingers of sleep, yet several minutes still passed before her body would move, her daughter wailing all the while. As she rolled from the relative comfort of her straw bed, she heard the floorboards creak from behind her.

"I've got her, love..." Astella mumbled. Embers smoldered darkly in the hearth, and for a moment she considered plunging a taper into their heart so that she might light a candle. Ultimately she didn't; her daughter's makeshift crib—little more than a straw-stuffed manger—was only across the room on her husband's side, and the light would only frustrate Astella's ability to return the infant to sleep.

With a yawn, she circled her bed and crossed to where her daughter lay crying. As she approached, she saw another figure looming above the head of the crib. The lingering cobwebs of sleep still shrouded her mind, and so she had almost reached the crib before she registered that the thing standing there was not her husband, who still snored blissfully a short distance away. The thing looked at her with eyes shining yellow in the moonlight streaming through the broken window above the crib, moonlight which also outlined the intruder's lumpen, misshapen frame.


Astella screamed. Her first instinct was to snatch her daughter from beneath the imposing form of the intruder, but her better judgment took hold and she dove instead toward the hearth where the silhouette of the fire shovel could be faintly discerned against the embers' low glow. She landed hard on the rough planks grabbed the handle just the same. Instinct took over and the frightened mother swung the fire shovel back, crashing the heated iron against her pursuer as it lunged, showering it with hot ash and coals. It screamed—a disgustingly human scream—and whirled around, knocking Astella's frantic husband, who had only just begun to rise, back into bed. For one dreadful moment, Astella was sure the monster intended to vent its rage upon her helpless, wailing daughter, but found some measure of relief when instead it leapt out through the moonlit window.

Abominable and hated by most, the grendels are a hardy breed created through the mingling of troll and non-troll blood. These wretches most often arise when a troll's rapacious appetite turns from gastric to carnal, creating a monstrous offspring loved by neither parent. Rarely, a magical experiment or transmutation attempt goes awry and creates a grendel from an otherwise troll-free subject. Legend states that one can become a grendel if they're bitten by a troll but not eaten, or if a troll's severed flesh is pressed to a bleeding stump or open wound and allowed to attach to the healthy flesh. Troll blood can also lie dormant in a grendel's descendants, not unlike the lineages of aasimar and tieflings, meaning any descendant of a grendel has the potential to be born as one as well—a nasty surprise for any parents unaware of their ancestry.

TWISTED AND DEFORMED

Grendels are monstrous from the moment they're born as knotted, misshapen things. As they grow, their appearance only worsens. Though appearing superficially like members of their non-troll race, their bodies are hulking and deformed, with rubbery,

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wart-covered skin and noticeable asymmetry throughout. Their features are obviously tainted with their beastly lineage, with long, drooping noses, pronounced jaws, short tusks, wilting ears, and other markers of their monstrous birth.

Hiding from more civilized folk is rarely an option, as grendels often stand much taller and wider than their non-troll lineage and exude a natural musk best described as “sour earth.”

Because of their large, twisted bodies, most grendels have great difficulty finding suitable clothing; were appropriately sized garments available, that so many grendels display gross asymmetry not only in their features but also their bodies would still complicate things. Accordingly, most grendels wear what they can, whether an ill-fitting sack of a shirt crudely stitched together from several others or simply cast-off clothing twisted and tied about their bodies. A grendel's hair is similarly difficult: oily and hanging limply from their scalps or even as beards, a grendel's hair grows quickly—in some instances, more than an inch a day. Keeping their hair—scalp, facial, and body—groomed is a full-time job, one most grendels simply ignore, handling it only when the growth is out of control and even then usually with a torch rather than a blade.

MONSTROUS VITALITY

As expected of something cursed by troll ancestry, grendels possess an inhuman degree of stamina. Few grendels ever succumb to poison or disease, and even then they recover quickly. Most grendels can perform manual labor indefinitely without ever showing a hint of fatigue, and can stoically tolerate lethal temperatures both high and low. However, the most astounding aspect of grendel physiology is, naturally, their ability to recover from harm. Though a far cry from the legendary regenerative capabilities of full-blooded trolls, some small remnant of that power lives within the twisted bodies of grendels. Wounds that would prove fatal to a grendel's humanoid race heal quickly and without great difficulty, while lesser injuries recover in a matter of minutes—or even instantly. Were it not for this incredible ability, most grendels would die quickly at the hands of their parents, yet at the same they're cursed to feel the pain of their abusers' torment indefinitely.

Though prodigious, a grendel's ability to heal isn't infallible, of course. Their incredible ability to shrug off even mortal injuries can be overcome by both flame and caustics, which trolls attribute to the fickle palate of the dread god Vaprak. Injuries from fire or acid not only bypass a grendel's natural hardness but seem to disarm it as well, at least for a time. This vulnerability often presents grendels with a difficult choice: do they desire light and warmth

so much that they're willing to give a potential attacker such a radical advantage? Though many ultimately decide the small comfort is worth it, some languish in the cold and the darkness, surviving only on raw meat.

CAST ADRIFT

Wanted by neither parent, grendels are each doomed to a life of hardship. Those not eaten or killed by their troll parents are faced with near-constant torment and abuse, forced to live as slaves by their own horrific begetters. Most try to escape, and those few who succeed can expect little better, living on the edge of all but the most brutish societies and forging a life more a lateral change than an upward one from their previous existences. Those born and raised by their non-troll families can expect no better, with those not left to the mercy of the wilderness the recipients of similar neglect and abuse until they can gather the means and the courage to escape.

Grendels can usually expect to find legitimate work, at least in larger cities, though it's of the worst sort: knackers, gong farmers, executioners, corpse-haulers, laborers, and other unsavory professions are typically all that await them, though some restaurateurs and innkeepers have heard of the noteworthy olfactory abilities grendels possess and hire them as chefs and cooks—ones under their total control as indentured labor at best. Many are forced into lives of lawlessness, living as bandits, hitmen, and “boogeymen-for-hire,” thus condemning them to lives not unlike those of their monstrous parents. Some grendels—those born of goblins, orcs, or gnolls—actually find a place in their parents' society, though considerable hardship finds them there also as these races are often known for their savage cultures.

With these limited prospects, it's no wonder the life of an adventurer calls to many grendels. After all, many of them are used to living in less-than-ideal conditions, so why shouldn't they be their own masters while doing so? Such a life often involves killing and danger, but it's preferable to one filled with abuse or killing for someone else as a hired soldier, and adventurers tend to be more tolerant and worldly than typical folk. But, for many grendels who heed the call of adventure, this life offers the opportunity to be accepted, if not for who they are than for what they can accomplish.

GRENDEL TRAITS

You possess certain traits common to all grendels.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 2.

Age. A grendel's age varies greatly depending on their non-troll parent, though most are long-lived by the standards of their race.

Alignment. Unwanted individuals born to cruel parents, neglect and malice are all most grendels ever know, leading the majority of them to become evil. Most grendels are chaotic or neutral as well, either unable to understand the role of law in a society or not caring to. Grendels are rarely good, though not due to any inherent inclination towards evil but rather due to a lack of goodness during their formative years.

Size. Grendels vary greatly in build, depending heavily on their non-troll parentage. The smallest grendels are still around 5 feet tall, while the largest among them stand nearly 8 feet. Your size is Medium.

RANDOM HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

Base Height	Height Modifier	Base Weight	Weight Modifier
4'6"	+3d12	100 lbs	× 10 lb

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision. Much like your monstrous begetter, your eyes are adapted for darkness. 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.

Keen Smell. You've inherited your giant parent's olfactory acuity. You have advantage on ability checks which rely on smell.

Powerful Build. Within you flows the blood of giants, whose loathsome taint is responsible for your prodigious abilities. You count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity, and the weight you can push, drag, or lift.

Limited Regeneration. Though lacking the legendary regeneration ability of trolls in full, you're still highly resistant to harm and quick to recover from any you suffer. When you roll a natural 1 on a Hit Die roll, a death saving throw, or a Constitution-based check or saving throw, you may reroll that die but must take the second result. You may not use this trait against acid or fire damage, hunger, or thirst, and you lose its benefits until your next turn when you take acid or fire damage.

Monstrous Appetite. You can gain nourishment from anything of biological origin, even if it's rotten or processed (such as rope). Similarly, you can remedy dehydration with stagnant, filthy water or even blood. When making a saving throw versus ingested disease or poison, or an ability check related to finding or preparing food for yourself only, you make your roll as if you were proficient in the skill, tool, or saving throw used. If you're already proficient, instead your proficiency bonus is doubled for that roll. However, you count as one size larger when determining how much you must eat or drink each day, and you have disadvantage on saving

throws versus hunger or thirst.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and Giant. Though capable of conversing with any who speak Giant, most grendels are familiar with a dialect known as "trollspeak" by true giants: a guttural variation of Giant which includes many loanwords from Orcish, Goblin, and Common.

Subraces. Grendels are divided into subraces by their non-troll lineage. Choose one of these subraces.

FEY-BLOODED

Fey-blooded grendels can result in a number of ways, but usually arise from the coupling of a forest troll and an elf, firbolg, or fey creature, though other couplings—such as scrag and sea elf or cave troll and drow—aren't unheard of. Fey-blooded grendels are blessed with a small spark of fey magic, which affords them natural druid-like powers. Fey-blooded grendels often eke out a living as witches and soothsayers, though a grendel's natural disposition and appearance often sees them confused with hags.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1.

Age. Fey-blooded grendels age slowly, reaching adulthood at 30 years of age and living 300 years or longer.

Fey Ancestry. You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put you to sleep.

Forest Spirit. Fey-blooded grendels are blessed with some measure of the elusiveness common to fey. You can attempt to hide even when you're only lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, mist, and other natural phenomena. You have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks to hide when obscured by natural features or phenomena.

Speech of Beast and Leaf. You have the ability to communicate in a limited manner with beasts and plants. They can understand the meaning of your words, though you have no special ability to understand them in return. You have advantage on all ability checks you make to influence them.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Elvish or Sylvan in addition to your other languages known.

GNOLL-BLOODED

Gnoll-blooded grendels are perhaps the most monstrous of their kind. While trolls are generally crude and brutish creatures, adding to that the instinctive savagery of a gnoll results in a creature almost slavishly devoted to its basest desires. These monsters care for little beyond fighting, eating, and mating, and often try to combine the three. Whatever cunning a gnoll-blooded grendel has is devoted to indiscriminate and ruthless opportunism. Gnoll-blooded grendels are unfortunately rather common, given the carnal instincts of most gnolls, and the latter's strong pack instincts rarely see their grendels cast out while the former's savagery and hardiness often allows them to survive into adulthood.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1.

Age. Gnoll-blooded grendels reach maturity at around 5 years old and only live to around 40 years.

Pack Instincts. Gnolls and half-gnolls alike have an

inborn acuity for working in groups. In combat, you don't provide cover against your allies' attacks, and you may use the Help action as a reaction when an ally attacks a creature within 5 feet of you.

Opportunistic. If you make an attack roll with advantage, if the results of both d20 rolls are sufficient to hit your target, your attack is a critical hit.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Gnoll in addition to your other languages known.

GOBLIN-BLOODED

Goblin-blooded grendels often arise in many of the same ways as orc-blooded grendels and almost always count a bugbear or hobgoblin as a parent. Of course, many hobgoblins will intentionally seek out a troll as a mate, hoping to sire a powerful child and groom them to be a ruthless and effective asset. In this way some goblin-blooded trolls are fortunate, as they're at least desired by one of their abusive parents.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Age. Goblin-blooded grendels reach maturity at around 16 years of age, but can easily live to 120 years.

Show No Fear. Many goblinoids—particularly hobgoblins—have an inborn aversion to showing weakness in front of others. You're proficient in the Intimidation skill and have advantage on saving throws to avoid being frightened.

Opportunistic. If you make an attack roll with advantage, if the results of both d20 rolls are sufficient to hit the target, your attack is a critical hit.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Goblin in addition to your other languages known.

GOLIATH-BLOODED

Goliath-blooded grendels are something of an anomaly, as most troll-goliath couplings are initiated by the non-troll parent, most often as a result of the goliath trying to outdo some past accomplishment. Goliath-blooded grendels rarely live long as, even with their impressive physique, they're naturally aggressive, highly competitive, and completely fearless. Most die violent deaths early in their lives, usually as the result of picking a fight they can't win—such as with their parents—or attempting some insane feat. Those that survive become utterly ruthless, desperate to win by any means, no matter how despicable. This mindset alone makes goliath-blooded grendels outcasts from goliath society and dangerous to any who would stand against them.

Age. Goliath-blooded grendels reach physical maturity much slower than other goliaths, usually around 25 years of age. However, they've been known to live up to 140 years, though most perish long before then due to recklessness and combativeness.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Fearless. Goliaths and trolls are similar in but one way: neither one fears death. The result of their unions are therefore entirely fearless—recklessly so. You have advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Naturally Competitive. Goliath-blooded grendels

are known to be aggressive and combative. When making a Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution check, you have advantage if your roll is opposed by another creature's ability check or if you saw another creature succeed on the same check, using the same skill, in the past minute.

HUMAN-BLOODED

Grendels of human lineage are the most intelligent of their kind, and are therefore the most likely to survive to adulthood and beyond. They adapt quickly to new ideas and changing situations, and many outwit their brutish troll parents and escape upon reaching adolescence. Human-blooded grendels seem almost instinctively drawn to large groups and will find ways to be part of a community even if they aren't wanted. For this reason, human-blooded grendels often become bandits, guides, bodyguards, and laborers, suffering mistreatment and abuse stoically so long as they feel like part of the group.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1.

Age. Like fey-blooded grendels, human-blooded grendels age slowly. Though they reach maturity at around 25 years old, human-blooded grendels can live well over 150 years.

Wild Savant. You're quick to adapt to new things and have cultivated a useful craft or two which have enabled you to survive. You gain proficiency with one tool and one skill of your choice.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write one additional language of your choice.



MUTT

Grendel “mutts” are an usual subrace brought about by a number of diverse factors. Most mutts result from latent grendel heritage arising in mixed-breed races, such as half-breeds and planetouched. Some grendels are natural-born mutts, arising through quirks in the highly mutagenic nature of trolls mixing with the more stable natures of humanoids, with some combination of environmental factors, diet, and more seen as underlying causes.

Mutts are so named because they resemble no specific humanoid race in particular. Some are abnormally short or freakishly huge, with features common to a number of humanoid or giant races—even ones not in the individual’s heritage. While this should serve to rank mutts among the most monstrous of all subraces, this appearance ultimately has a positive effect: most humanoids see mutts as something familiar and, if not harmless, then at least less dangerous. This naturally sees grendel mutts more readily tolerated—if not necessarily accepted—by most societies.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 1.

Age. True to their nature, how long a mutt lives can vary greatly. Most age at roughly the same rates as humans—reaching maturity at around sixteen—but can live as little as 50 years or as long as 200.

Old Friend. Though obviously freakish (at best) your appearance reminds others of something or someone familiar, which can affect their judgment. When making a Charisma check versus a humanoid, or when making an ability check to pass yourself off as a member of another humanoid race, you may reroll any d20 results of 1 but must use the second result.

Mimicry. Though less adept than other races—such as changelings and kenku—grendel mutts are still talented mimics in their own right. You can mimic the speech of another person or the sounds made by other creatures. You must have heard the person speaking, or heard the creature make the sound, for at least 1 minute. A creature can tell the sound is faked with a Wisdom (Insight) check opposed by your Charisma (Performance) check.

Muddled Ancestry. Your muddled ancestry makes you more resistant to targeted effects. You have advantage on saving throws against attacks and features which target a specific creature type or race, and you ignore racial restrictions when creating, attuning to, and using magic items.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write one additional language of your choice.

ORC-BLOODED

Grendels of orc heritage are common, and are just as frequently the result of a shared understanding of brutishness as they are born from a display of dominance. Orc-blooded grendels are the most aggressive among an already-savage breed and, if not killed before reaching adulthood, become terrifying warchiefs of uncivilized tribes or monstrous threats which stalk the wilderness.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Age. Orc-blooded grendels typically reach adulthood

at 14, though their troll vitality allows them to live up to a hundred years.

Menacing. Orc-blooded grendels are massive and terrifying individuals. You’re proficient in the Intimidation skill.

Savage Strength. Though all grendels are freakishly strong, those of orc lineage are incredibly so. When you roll a natural 1 on a Strength-based attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, you may reroll that die but must take the second result.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Orcish in addition to your other languages known.



GRENDL FEATS

The following feats are intended to be taken by grendel characters, though not all of them require a character to be a grendel to take them. Check with your DM first to see if feats are allowed in your game and if these feats in particular are allowed.

FERAL ARMORY

Prerequisite: Grendel.

Your teeth have elongated into fearsome tusks, while your nails have become as long, hard, and sharp as dagger blades. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength or Dexterity by 1, up to a maximum of 20.
- You may use your tusks and fangs to make unarmed strikes. When doing so, you're proficient with your unarmed strikes, which deal 1d6 slashing damage, and you may add either your Strength or Dexterity to your attack and damage roll.
- When you hit with a melee weapon attack or unarmed strike, you may make an unarmed strike as a bonus action.
- When you hit a creature with an unarmed strike, you may use a bonus action to attempt to grapple or shove that creature. If you do so, use the result of your attack roll as your Strength (Athletics) result.

GIANT-BLOODED

Prerequisite: Giant-descended race (such as firbolg, goliath, or grendel), Str 13 or higher.

The giant blood flowing in your veins grants you incredible strength. You gain the following benefits:

- You gain proficiency in Strength saving throws.
- You count as one size larger for the purposes of grappling, shoving, and overrunning^{DMG}.
- You have advantage on ability checks and saving throws to avoid being knocked prone or physically moved from your space.
- You can cast the *enlarge/reduce* spell on yourself once using this feat, regaining the ability to do so upon finishing a short or long rest. When you do so, you don't require material components or spell slots, but you can only choose the spell's enlarge option.

GNARLED HIDE

Prerequisite: Grendel.

Your skin is exceptionally rubbery, warty, and resistant to harm. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Constitution by 1, up to a maximum of 20.
- Your AC equals 10 + your Dexterity modifier + the higher of your Constitution modifier or your armor's AC bonus. You lose this benefit against attacks which deal acid or fire damage, and you lose it until your next turn when you take acid or fire damage.
- If you aren't incapacitated, you may add your Constitution modifier to any Dexterity saving throw you make against an attack that doesn't deal acid or fire damage. If you take acid or fire damage, you lose this benefit until your next turn.
- When you are struck by an attack (except one that deals acid or fire damage), you may expend a Hit Die as a reaction and roll it. Add your Constitution modifier to the number rolled, and reduce the damage dealt by the attack by your total. If you take acid or fire damage, you can't use this ability until your next turn.

IMPOSSIBLE REGENERATION

Prerequisite: Grendel, Con 13 or higher.

While you may not be any stronger or hardier than other grendels, you've inherited more of your progenitor's healing ability than is common. You gain the following benefits:

- You regenerate a single missing limb when you finish a short rest, and you regenerate all missing limbs when you finish a long rest. You can't regenerate limbs lost to acid or fire damage.
- As a bonus action, you can spend a Hit Die, roll it, and add your Constitution bonus to the number rolled. You regain lost hit points equal to the total. You can't use this ability if you've taken acid or fire damage since the start of your last turn.
- When you're damaged while at 0 hit points, unless you were damaged by acid or fire, you must make a death saving throw instead of counting as having failed one.
- When you make a death saving throw, you may expend a Hit Die, roll it, and add the number rolled to your saving throw result. You can't use this ability if you've taken acid or fire damage since the start of your last turn.

INCREDIBLE OLFACTION

Prerequisite: Keen smell trait or keen hearing and smell trait.

Your incredible sense of smell grants you the following benefits so long as your sense of smell is unimpaired:

- You can navigate your surroundings purely by scent, granting you blindsight out to 60 feet.
- When you make an ability check which relies on smell, you make that check as if you were proficient with the skill or tool used. If you are proficient, instead your proficiency bonus is doubled for that roll.
- You automatically notice the presence of creatures within 30 feet of you and pinpoint the location of creatures within 10 feet of you, even if they're invisible or have total cover relative to you, but not if they have no scent or if they're completely cut off from you (such as by being in a separate room or underwater while you're not).

STOICISM

Prerequisite: Grendel.

Rare is the grendel who lives an easy life. After suffering abuse, abandonment, and isolation, grendels either develop methods to cope or they die. While many lash out at anything and anyone in displays of misplaced rage and contempt, many more develop the willpower to match their physical resistance, becoming unsung paragons of stoicism.

You gain the following benefits:

- You gain proficiency in Wisdom saving throws.
- Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Intimidation) checks made against you have disadvantage.
- When you make an ability check or saving throw to resist exhaustion, pain, discomfort, or being charmed or frightened, you're treated as proficient in the skill or saving throw used. If you're already proficient, instead your proficiency bonus is doubled for your roll.

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