

Secrets of the Misari Expanse 1



Far to the southeast of the Misland Republics exists a large archipelago that represents the edge of the known world. The seas beyond it are caught in a perpetual storm that rages far beyond what nature can produce of its own accord, and the storm is generally regarded as a magical phenomenon of some sort. Its origin remains unknown but for centuries it has stymied all attempts at exploration beyond the archipelago, and the storms that frequently spawn around its perimeter have made even the archipelago itself difficult to reach safely. The Misari Expanse, as the archipelago is called, remains only partially explored and one of the most dangerous and unpredictable environments known to the people of Aden. It is home to strange people, strange creatures, and secrets that can only be guessed at.

This is one of those secrets.

THE BELUA LEGACY

Centuries ago, an enchanter named Octavia Belua was one of the most brilliant members of the Celestial College in Aramyst. She was fascinated by, some said obsessed with, the elusive qualities that separated intelligent life from other creatures, and studied it much of her life in an attempt to replicate it in some small way. It was her life's work, her constant experimentation, that led to the creation of the ferran race. The experiments, as history now recognizes, were successful beyond her intention,

Credits

Written by: Shawn Carman & Patrick Duke

Editing: Shawn Carman

Interior Artwork: Jacob E. Blackmon

For Kyoudai Games

Shawn Carman, Creative Department

Rich Wulf, Mechanical Design

Ryan Carman, Logistics & Development

Butch Carman, Chief Financial Officer

Mike Brodu, Graphic Design & Branding

Original Graphic Design: Robert Denton

leading to a race that was truly as intelligent as any other, and it was Belua's hope to see them recognized as such. Unfortunately, her treacherous son Contemtus Belua betrayed her and saw her committed to an asylum while he continued to manipulate events and see the ferrans treated as slaves. It would be almost a century before the ferrans were truly freed. Even then, another in the Belua line, Luesti, would do all in his power to see the animal-people subjugated or slain outright. Fortunately, his schemes, while exacting a terrible price, were ultimately unsuccessful.

The Belua line did not end with Luesti. The family continued until the modern era, a constant fixture in the politics of the Celestial College and Aramyst in general, although much reduced from the glory days of Octavia Belua. The family is believed to have been wiped out in the Darkfall, based as they were in the capital city of Reggora. However, the shameful conduct of both Contemtus and Luesti centuries before had made them very cautious and conservative, and they had little tolerance for those among them who would not conform to societal norms. One such individual, a bastard half-breed with outrageous notions about the application of Octavia's original research, and was cast out from the family in disgrace long ago. Through a series of unlikely events, this outcast found himself on the Misari Expanse near his one hundredth birthday, ready to begin his life's work at long last.

Mercato Belua is a half-elven arcanist who has, without a doubt, inherited his ancestor's brilliance. Unfortunately, he shares a bit of his other ancestors as well and has very little sense of restraint when it comes to experimenting with his ideas without full consideration for the potential consequences. Upon arriving in the Expanse, a location chosen because he would be able to conduct his experiments with no outside interference whatsoever, Mercato quickly established a base of power and then began his experiments in earnest. For almost a century, he has perfected his art and answered the question that plagued both him and his distant ancestor: is there a barrier that be crossed when bestowing intelligence? Octavia Belua answered the question concerning lower animals, including mammals, birds, and reptiles, although the latter two would come to be undone by her descendant Luesti. Rapacians and naga confirmed the presence of intelligence among that kingdom, slurgithians among fish and fish-like creatures, and the ilithix among the insect kingdom. There was but one true frontier left, and Mercato Belua vowed to forge ahead into it at all costs.

In his laboratory in the Misari Expanse, far from the prying eyes of the Known Lands, Mercato Belua has created intelligence life from the plant kingdom. He calls his creations the florrans, and he continues to experiment and perfect them as much as possible, although he has no long-term goal in mind and they exist largely as slaves to his will. Naturally, in true keeping with his legacy, he has never through to take this into consideration and if he did, it would likely have no bearing on his experiments.

Florran Player Characters?

Well, of course! What would be the point of a new race if we told you not to play them? And not everyone would listen even if we did! It's true that, at the present in Aden, the florrans are confined to the Misari Expanse and no one outside the islands know of their existence. However, that could very easily change. Plants are remarkable organisms, after all. Spores can travel halfway across the world, birds can consume seeds and fly them to new islands, or they could even bob along in the waves until the ocean deposits them on some distant beach somewhere. There's any number of different ways for a florran to come to the Known Lands. Have fun with it!

THE FLORRANS

Like the ferrans, with whom they share similar arcane energies, the florrans are an incredibly diverse people. They share different qualities depending upon the type of plant from which they were created, and while Belua has experimented with dozens of different plants, only a few have proved truly reliable, and it is from their stock that almost all florrans presently in existence are drawn. His first experiments, years ago, drew from existing species of plants, some of which were very dangerous, that had the capacity for movement. His first successes were mobile plants that were largely mindless but which would respond to external stimuli and move toward water, sunlight, or whatever else they needed. With that success easily reproduced, Belua began altering the plants' forms. Certain creatures that already existed, such as shambling mounds, leshy and the like, that possessed at least a rough humanoid form, if perhaps not functional intelligence (the latter of the two being creations of the fey, and not reliably reproducible results).

Despite their nature as plant-based beings, florrans are different from their predecessors in numerous important ways. First and foremost, because of the level of activity and cognitive ability that florrans possess, they cannot gain all their nutrients from soil and sunlight as is typical for most plants. They must ingest calories to maintain a normal level of activity comparable to that of other races. Most florrans prefer high-calorie vegetable matter or sugar as a mean of gaining this energy, and prefer to leave the consumption of meat to animals. This is not to say that they cannot consume meat; they certainly can, and do when necessary, but it is something of a cultural taboo among their kind.

Florrans do not possess a gender as such things are understood by other races. Some prefer to adopt the aspect of male or female to facilitate their interactions with outsiders, but the majority simply exist as asexual beings. Reproduction is a purely practical matter and is also asexual, with the production of seeds or buds eventually resulting in new beings. The vast majority of florrans have no predisposition toward their offspring, and rarely know who they are. There has been a trend in recent years, as Belua has continued to evolve their intelligence, of some florrans taking a keener interest in their offspring. Others among their kind find it strange, and Belua seems to find it amusing, but for now has not done anything about it.

The creation of the florrans is not yet a perfected process. For all the similarities between ferrans and florrans, plants are vastly more different from the pre-existing intelligent races than common animals, and the process by which they have been evolved was more intricate, with greater room for error. At present, roughly one in fifty florrans that are created via the race's typical asexual reproduction is a monstrous, massive creature more comparable to the aforementioned shambling mounds than anything else. These creatures are cunning, but not truly intelligent, and ruthlessly destructive. The florrans regard these entities as kinsmen of sorts, but will not suffer their presence, as the monstrosities do not recognize anything else as an ally. When possible, they are pushed out of Belua's domain to exist in the wilderness, but when that is not possible they are destroyed. Belua regards the creatures as a curiosity, and as an additional layer of security ensuring that the lands surrounding his claimed area of the Expanse are difficult if not impossible to cross.

FLORRAN RACIAL TRAITS

Players wishing to play a florran may choose any one of the following racial profiles when making their character.

Sturdy Florran Racial Traits

Use the Sturdy Florran racial profile when creating a florran whose abilities and appearance draws from large, rigid plants such as trees or other particularly hardy types of flora.

+2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma: Sturdy florrans are hardy and observant, but tend to be socially incompatible with others.

Size: Sturdy florrans are Medium creatures.

Normal Speed: Sturdy florrans have a base speed of 30 ft.

Plant Type: All florrans are Plants, and have the Plant creature type. However, because they so closely mimic human form, they do not possess any of the standard immunities possessed by most Plant creatures (mind-influencing, paralysis, poison, et al.).

Verdant Nature: The florran race is naturally diverse. Florrans all choose three abilities from the Verdant nature racial traits.

Barky Flesh: Sturdy florran have thick, barky hides, which grants them a +2 natural armor bonus to AC.

Massive: Sturdy florrans count as large creatures when calculating their Combat Maneuver Bonus, Combat Maneuver Defense, and Intimidation skill checks. They calculate equipment encumbrance and make Strength checks as if their Strength was 2 higher. They receive no attack penalty for using weapons intended for large creatures. However, the limits on using oversized weapons remains unchanged.

Tangler Florran Racial Traits

Use the Tangler Florran racial profile when creating a florran whose abilities and appearance is inspired by vine-based, creeping plants.

+2 Strength, +2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma: Tangler florrans have great fibrous strength, but lack humanoid social skills.

Size: Tangler florrans are Medium creatures.

Normal Speed: Tangler Florrans have a base speed of 30 ft.

Plant Type: All florrans are Plants, and have the Plant creature type. However, because they so closely mimic human form, they do not possess any of the standard immunities possessed by most Plant creatures (mind-influencing, paralysis, poison, et al.).

Verdant Nature: The florran race is naturally diverse. florrans all choose three abilities from the Verdant Nature racial traits.

Reach Bonus: Because of its vine-like limbs and elasticity, Tangler florrans have Reach with any weapon, including their natural weapons.

Natural Weapons: Tangler florrans can whip with their vine-like extensions for 1d4 damage. They may use their vines with the Weapon Finesse feat, and tangler florrans with Two-Weapon Fighting may treat their vines as their off-hand weapon. Although the player may declare the tangler to have any amount of vines, only one natural attack is allowed.

Natural Grapplers: Tangler florrans have Improved Grapple as a bonus feat.

Thorny Florran racial traits

Use the Thorny Florran racial profile when creating a florran whose abilities and appearance are based on lithe, thorned plants, including various bushes and flower- or berry-producing plants.

+2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma: Thorny florrans are naturally mobile, but lack social acumen.

Size: Thorny florrans are Medium creatures.

Normal Speed: Thorny florrans have a base speed of 30 ft.

Plant Type: All florrans are Plants, and have the Plant creature type. However, because they so closely mimic human form, they do not possess any of the standard immunities possessed by most Plant creatures (mind-influencing, paralysis, poison, et al.).

Verdant Nature: The florran race is naturally diverse. Florrans all choose three abilities from the Verdant nature racial traits.

Natural Weapons: Because of the thorns covering portions of their bodies, Thorny florrans' unarmed attacks do 1d4 lethal damage.

Thorned Body: Any creature who attempts to grapple a thorny florran suffers 1d4 damage (plus the grapppler's Str bonus) per round grappling.

Verdant Nature racial traits

Florran characters do not receive alternate racial traits as the florran race is already naturally diverse. All florran characters select three racial traits from the following list:

- ✦ **BOUNTIFUL:** The florran can produce enough edible fruits or nuts to feed four medium-sized creatures for a single day each week.
- ✦ **BOUQUET:** The florran produces a mild pollen that has a pleasing scent to most civilized beings. The florran gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Bluff rolls with non-hostile beings who possess a sense of smell.
- ✦ **FIBROUS:** The thickness of the fibers running through the florran's body makes it tough to hack. It has DR 2 against slashing weapons.
- ✦ **FLORAL EMPATHY:** The florran can communicate with plants to get a general feel for the area (recent weather, whether certain types of creature have passed recently, nearness of water sources), granting a +4 bonus to Survival checks when in an area with verdant plant-life.
- ✦ **LOW-LIGHT VISION:** Florrans with this trait can see twice as far as humans in conditions of dim light.
- ✦ **PHOTOSYNTHETIC:** Although most florrans cannot subsist on sunlight alone, florrans with this trait have particularly robust chlorophyll that they can fall back on. The florran requires only half the normal amount of food and drink to remain healthy, as long as it gets at least two hours of direct sunlight exposure per day.
- ✦ **PHOTOTROPIC:** The florran has particularly active chlorophyll and can draw higher than normal sustenance from sunlight. As long as the florran receives a minimum of four hours of direct sunlight per day, it has no need to eat. Water is still a necessity.
- ✦ **SAPPY:** Once per round, if the florran has previously been struck with a piercing or slashing weapon during the same combat, the florran's may use its flowing sap to hold fast a weapon used against him. The attacker must make a Reflex save vs. DC 10 + florran's Con bonus to avoid this affect. Otherwise, he must make a Str check vs. the same DC, or use a full round action during which he is flatfooted, to free the weapon.
- ✦ **SPINED:** Any natural weapons that the florran possess particularly fine points and can be used to inflict more damage than usual. The critical range of the florrans natural weapons increases to 19-20/x2.

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