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CONTENTS

QLAARPIAN ......................................................3
QLAARPIAN RACIAL TRAITS .........................5
NEW PLANET: QLAARP ................................6
NEW VEHICLE ..............................................7
QLAARPIAN ADVENTURES .................................8
QLAARPIAN WETLANDS FARMER ..................9

OGL .....................................................................10

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when the Shatering broke Celmae
none could have foreseen
that it would be the beginning
of the end of the universe

The future is fractured
QLAARPIAN

Physical Description: Qlaarpian Indigenes stand, on average, about 1.3 meters in height and mass about forty-five kilograms. Their morphology resembles a squat variation on the typical humanoid pattern, but with the addition of a heavy, articulated tail that serves as an auxiliary support and a natural weapon. The skin is pink or red, moist, and prone to cracking in arid conditions. The heads of these beings show features suggestive of their amphibious nature: short bills bewhiskered with tendrils, eyes set high and protected by glassy, nictitating membranes. Fibrous masses of cilia in the mouth and throat as a filter for particulates in turbid waters, and perform a gas exchange, allowing the creature to breath water as well as air. Unwebbed hands appear nimble and slender compared with the broad, webbed feet.

The species possesses a number of anatomical and physiological adaptations to the home-world’s comparatively (by human and common demi-human standards) high gravity of 1.4 G. Wide feet and a strong tail help distribute weight over ground surface. An auxiliary heart, nestled under the primary cardiac muscles, provides boosts to circulatory pressure as needed, aiding venous return. This secondary cardiac organ also can take over for the true heart in instances of cardiac distress or arrest. Thick pads of cartilage and dense pockets of jelly-like synovial fluid at the knees, ankles, hips, shoulders, and vertebral discs give Qlaarpian a distinctive rolling gait.

These "shock absorber" joints allow for safer jumping, running, and tumbling in high gravity. Despite their ungainly appearance, Qlaarpian possess excellent balance and swift reflexes—crucial in an environment where falls and falling objects pose increased danger.

One more major difference from common humanoid patterns merits mention. The species possess only one sex, with no external genitals. Two Qlaarpian adults can "mate" by allowing their skins to dry to the point of cracking. They then become fertile. Ritual grappling combat follows, and the exchange of fluids expressed through breaks in the dermis results in both individuals becoming pregnant with a single embryo each. These combats produce no more pleasure in the participants than a wrestling match would in a human. Sexual excitement and lust in the normal sense are entirely unknown to the species. Qlaarpian vomit their young live after a 120 day pregnancy. The little ones ride piggyback on the adults for another thirty days.
Psychology: The species a basic range of emotions and drives similar to humanity, but differs in two major respects: justice and gender. Justice quite often overrides other considerations with this race, to the point that a typical bazaar trader haggles not for the highest profit for himself, but for the fairest possible exchange between himself and his customer. Agents of law pursue heinous criminals to the death. Wars among the Qlaarpians have been few, because equitable settlements of disputes have been the norm, but in those cases in which two opposing factions have believed themselves justified and rejected reconciliation, wars ranged nonstop for generations. But such wars can stop quickly if one faction is convinced justice is no longer on its side. This racial impulse to justice may stem from social-psychological traits developed under the harsh conditions of prehistoric Qlaarp, during the long millennia of the Dust Age, when the first pre-civilized, pre-literate tribal cultures formed among the species.

As noted above in the physical description, the species has no sexual division into male and female. It does, however, possess what can best be described as gender: Male Qlaarpians are feral, justice-focused, and its "usual self," Qlaarpians who dry out become aggressive and irritable; their commitment to justice diminishes but does not vanish. They become fertile but do not feel irrationally compelled to wrestle (the species thus controls its fertility—important on a harsh world with such major variations in the weather and seasonal cycles). Carriers are pregnant or carrying born younglings. Their justice instinct is dulled by concern for these offspring. Carriers revert to moist or dry when the younglings drop down and begin to wander alone.

As described previously, Qlaarpians do not experience lust in any human sense. They can sometimes be confused and surprised by humanoid sexuality and gender social constructs.

Society: Three major cultures exist among Qlaarpians: seminomadic foragers, feudal agriculturalists, and urban servitors. The indentured servitors of the cities live under the control of the evil Mud-Lords of Qlaarp, an association of Abolet who colonized the planet many centuries ago and set up regional power centers built around gigantic ceramic and metal ziggurats, their mystical spacecraft that now lie half-sunken in the rich mud-beds the aquatic aberrations came to seize and exploit. Servitors obey the aboleth in order to survive, or because of mental compulsion, but only a small number have been corrupted by service to such wicked masters. They primarily tasks involve industrial work: dredging, synthetic food processing, water filtration, mining, and so on. These Qlaarpians have the greatest familiar with off world tech. The feudal states that ring the Abolet/Mud-Lord cities follow a different social and technological pattern. Kings and heroes strong enough to resist outright Mud-Lord domination protect their people from virtual enslavement under the Mud Lords but demand service and tithes in return. Serfdom on Qlaarp is just and fair, if boring and full of drudgery.

Some feudal masters have fallen into corruption and madness from dealings with the Abolet, but most remain honorable and upright, fulfilling their obligations and doing their best to maintain the fragile truces and treaties that restrain the Abolet from overrunning more of the planet. Most tech in the feudal states is knock off or second hand off world work mixed with simple native-made items.

The foragers who travel the sere marshes and the dusty plains of the poorest and harshest parts of the home world live free of Abolet dominion and feudal ties. Their precarious existences rely on hunting, fishing, scavenging, and looting. Being Qlaarpians, they restrict their looting raids to legitimate targets: evil monsters, criminal gangs, anyone working for the Abolet. These tribes have never made truces with the invaders. Their technology has developed along unusual lines, with much of it biological rather than mechanical in nature.

All three groups of Qlaarpians share one vitally important common custom: the mud bath. Regular bathing, preferably in mineral-rich muds, keeps the integument of Qlaarpians healthy, moist, and supple. Bathing in mud pools brings the community together, ending the irritability of the dry-gender and reinforcing social bonds. Qlaarpians will invite members of other species to join them in the mud if they like or trust these outsiders. To refuse a bath constitutes a major faux pas.

Service forms another widespread institution, though its nature varies much by culture. To serve and be served is rooted in the racial instinct for justice. Accounts must be balanced, protection requires tribute, crimes demand redressed, and contracts fulfilled—service is the most common form of accomplishing all that.

Religion & Alignment: The true religion of the native majority is the worship of Justice as an abstract but living ideal. This philosophical worship has no temples and hardly any formal clergy, but teachers and judges exist and places of famous judgments and battles against iniquity have become shrines. Paladins occupy a special place in this widespread tradition, and enjoy immense prestige as peacemakers, war-leaders,
judges, and healers. Clerics are a recent cultural development, only appearing in the last century. For millennia, only the paladins possessed potent curative abilities, a fact that served to greatly increase their prestige among the people.

The Qlaarpian also make obeisance to certain elemental ruling powers of weal and speak in fearful tones of elemental ruling powers of evil-nature. Far from being distant metaphysical beings, these principalties of earth, water, and ooze have visited Qlaarp physically in the past multiple times. Some still send their elemental servitors to collect tribute and aid clients. Myths tell that the earliest civilizations on Qlaarp grew from colonies of rock and slime creatures that came from another planet or plane of existence, and that these beings taught language to the naked primitives they encountered—the ancestral Qlaarpian indigenes.

QLAARPIAN PHILOSOPHY OF JUSTICE

"Let Justice come crashing down like the heaviest rain, to sweep away the wicked and restore the righteous."

Alignment: Lawful Good
Domains: law, good, community, war
Favored Weapon: hunting tines
Holy Symbol: a clay cylinder glazed half blue and half brown, marked in a wraparound spiral with raised-relief glyphs

Adventurers: Paladins occupy the highest place of honor among Qlaarpians. They aren’t common, but the racial drive toward justice does seem to produce an unusual number of these champions of Law and Goodness.

Qlaarpian Fighters serve as officers and sergeants in the feudal armies.

Rangers often take aboleth catoblepas, hydras, or skum (aberration, magical beast, and monstrous humanoid) as species enemies. Most come from the forager tribes.

The scant numbers of clerics have increased in the last generation as the cult of justice becomes more and more a formal religion.

Wizards carry spell books made of nested hollow cylinders of thin but durable plastic, each tube marked with winding patterns of glyphs in raised relief. This is an old form of writing, long since displaced by Aquan script for all but mystical and religious purposes. A Qlaarpian can read such a tube-scroll in the dark by holding it in his mouth and rolling it through his fingers.

Given low rates of criminality, rouges aren’t common; most come from the Mud Lords’ industrial cities.

Qlaarpian adventurers have proved eager to ally with off-world parties who share their ideals or their enemies. A Qlaarpian who incurs a debt to an alien, whether in trade or because the alien has aided him with danger or difficulty, will try to pay off the debt by service just as he would for another Qlaarpian.

QLAARPIAN RACIAL TRAITS

+2 Dexterity and +2 Charisma. Qlaarpians are sociable and nimble.

Small Humanoid Halfings are Small creatures and gain a +1 size bonus to their AC, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, a –1 penalty to their CMB and CMD, and a +4 size bonus on Stealth checks.

Base Movement: Qlaarpians have a base speed of 30 feet and Swim speed of 30 feet. Qlaarpians receive a +8 bonus on Swim skill checks.

Languages: Terran and Common. Highly intelligent Qlaarpians may also know Aboleth, Aklo, Aquan, and Dwarven

Amphibious Members of this race are amphibious and can breathe both air and water.

Auxiliary Heart Qlaarpians may reroll a failed stabilization roll at a -2 penalty, once per round.

High Gravity Adaptation Qlaarpians gain High Gravity Adaptation as a bonus racial feat, identical to the description in the Starjammer core rulebook.

Nictitating Membrane Qlaarpians gain a +4 to saving throws versus gaze attacks, blindness, gas or smoke effects that irritates the eyes, vision, etc.

Nimble Faller Qlaarpians land on their feet even when they take lethal damage from a fall. Furthermore, they gain a +1 bonus to their CMD against trip attempts.

Slapping Tail Qlaarpians have a tail they can use to make attacks of opportunity with a reach of 5 feet. The tail is a natural attack that deals 1d6 points of damage plus the qlaarpian’s Strength modifier.

Terrain Stride Qlaarpians may select a ranger favored terrain type, and can move through natural difficult terrain at their normal speed while within the chosen terrain. Magically altered terrain affects them normally.

Water Sense Qlaarpians can sense vibrations in water, granting them blindsense 30 feet against creatures that are touching the same body of water.

Relations: Only corrupt or mad Qlaarpians actually like the Aboleth who share their planet: many regard the fishy horrors as invaders and exploiters. But because the Qlaarpian sense of justice requires honoring pacts, the cunning Aboleth have gained a measure of peace and compliance through trickily worded contracts and treaties.

Qlaarpians get on well with good-aligned Dwarves. They tend to find Elves too chaotic and unreliable to trust, and hence treat this race with caution. They regard most other humanoids without prejudice, but will expect just behavior and fulfillment of all obligations incurred.
Ripper Dogs sometimes visit Qlaarp to do business with the Aboleth. To avoid the heavy gravity of the planet, these Xilochothes contract Qlaarps to act as agents. Some Qlaarps have become indebted to Ripper Dogs, and vice versa, though such dealings, and mixed parties might be encountered in the stellar neighborhood of Qlaarp.

Names: Qlaarpian names are hard for those who do not speak Terran to pronounce, and sound mushy and ill-formed to those familiar with harder-edged dialects of that language: haPhloowoomm, haHoolship, GowrrcrwmRuu.

To make things easier on our outworlder companions, adventurers often translate their names. Shorn of suffixes or prefixes that mark them as personal names, most come out as animal, plant, and mineral names from the home world: Agate, Opal, Naphtha, Playa, Gluebug, Spicetree, Tri-shell, Dust, Rainbowler, Ochre

NEW PLANET

QLAARP

Qlaarp. Some outworlders say the name sounds like mud stubbornly sucking at a boot, while others liken it to a phlegmy cough. A fitting name, either way, for the high gravity, composite ooze/dust world, where the ubiquitous dust clogs everything that mud does not, and heavy equipment is swallowed up by quicksand mires and playas of silt. The name, Qlaarp, is a phonetic rendering of an Aboleth word for a particular type of nutrient-rich clay. That etymology has led ill-informed outworlders to the mistaken conclusion that the Aboleth Mud-Lords are native to the planet, when in fact they are alien invaders.

The true native intelligent race, a wetlands-adapted humanoid species, is variously known as the Qlaarpsian Indigene, Qlaarpsian Autochthon, and Philoowoosoolm. It sounds like a slurry of pebbles and clay sliding down a chute, in the dialect of Terran spoken most widely by these creatures. Less formal names in use among humans and kindred species refer to the Autochthones’ appearance and habits: tripoderos, muck-ducks, and slime suckers.

Qlaarp orbits a red star late in its life cycle. The world has been slowly losing atmosphere and surface water for a long, long time. Dying oceans and shrinking lakes have left vast regions of salt marsh, tidal flats, and bogs. Playas filled with salt and crystals dot the higher and drier zones. Subsidence has engulfed large land areas, creating unstable terrain and many natural pits. Solar flares disrupt weather patterns. The massive moon pulls waves of mud across the land in a churning ebb and flow. Droughts create dustbowls and desert winds can send dust rolling like ground fog for hundreds of miles into the wetter country. And all of this occurs at almost half again standard gravity.

So, while it is no hell-world, Qlaarp poses problems to would be colonists and developers: dust, mud, heavy gravity, and radiation. The latter is the easier to deal with; a wide hat, mud on the body, and other precautions cut down on harmful effects of the sun. Electronic devices not shielded may fail during solar flares. Unsealed machines soon get mucked up with dust and slime; local designs are made simple and easy to clean, with high-quality seals on anything delicate or finicky.

These environmental difficulties did not discourage settlement by the planet’s most infamous residents, the Aboleth faction known as the Mud Lords of Qlaarp. These Aboleth came to Qlaarp to set up operations to mine the nutrient-rich mud and to survey for other resources. The Mud Lords control a lucrative mud/fertilizer mining industry and have branched out into plastics, pharmaceuticals, and high gravity-adapted slave stock. They introduced humans, Ezzana, orcs, and other races, buying convicts from other civilizations and running their operations as for-profit penal colonies. But their principal skilled labor force consists of Qlaarpsians they have trained as technicians.

Apart from the natives and the Aboleth, various enslaved humanoid convicts live here. The wilderness areas are home to catoblepas, moletoads, giant trilobites, puddings, squonks, hydros, snolligators, etc. No native birds or bats exist, but gasbag wasps and gliding worms fill some of the same niches in the inundated spice tree forests and pseudo-mangrove belts.
CROONUSH (SPOUTER)

Class ATV

These ungainly-looking amphibious barge-crawlers travel the lands and seas of Qlaarp with tracks and paddles driven by wood gas and methane internal combustion engines (the name, ‘Splotter’, references the plumes of muck and gas coughed from prominent exhaust ports). Crew quarters are sealed against dust and fumes. Plastic and ceramic materials, equivalent to hard bone, used in the construction to keep the big craft relatively light for their volume and contact surface, which helps in traversing mud flats.

Croonush used in war mount turret guns that spray hot waste and rocks at impressive ranges. Powerful magnets are used to dredge for iron bogs iron and scrap, and a modified form of this system can be used as a tractor field.

Splotters used for interplanetary travel are fitted with more powerful engines and with collapsed ethereal portals. Kept folded outside-in, the doorway into the Ether appears to be a ball of condensed smoke. Turned inside out by mechanical controls, the doorway expands to engulf the barge-crawler and translate it into the Ethereal. Once freed of gravity (none exists on the Ethereal Plane) the craft can travel long distances with ease before reappearing on a planetary surface in another system. The invisible penumbra of the containment field for the ether drive tends to deflect beams and projectiles aimed at the craft.

The Aboleth Mud-Lords introduced this ether-gate technology to Qlaarp. It’s so expensive and difficult to manufacture that Qlarpian Indigenes encountered in a Splotter can safely be assumed to be working off a debt to the Aboleth (with a contract that frees them from obligation to do anything evil) or to whomever secured the phase box for them—even the wealthiest feudal realms can scarcely afford such costly technology.

CROONUSH/ SPOUTER
Base Hull Junk
Colossal space vehicle
Squares 312; Cost 8,453,000 gp Points used 17

DEFENSE
AC 4 (2 from hull + 2 deflection from a deflection shield generator, Type I); Hardness 5 Bone
hp 4,680; VP 468
Base Save +6

OFFENSE
Maximum speed 5 Acceleration 1
Weapons steam bombard, pod-mounted 360 degrees
CMB +8; CMD 18
Ramming Damage 1d12 + Speed VP

STATISTICS
Engine Alchemical Roar Engine, Phase Box
Pilot Check Pilot or Use Magic Device
Control Device levers and switches
Propulsion thrust & ethereal travel
Templates
Dual-landing
Open
Additional components
Air Generator
Climate Controller
Magiflux Dragnet
Crew 9
Decks 2
Cargo/Passengers 100 tons/45 passengers
Available Point Buy 17
SLIME CRIME

A deposed Mud Lord has developed an addictive drug based on enzymes found in Aboleth slime. The Aboleth now seeks to regain its ziggurat and its position, but taken by a rival, and is using sales of the drugs to secretly sponsor the Black Fork, an extremist movement of Qlaarqian Indigenes who have gone beyond the bounds of goodness in their quest to reclaim lands they believe the Aboleth unjustly seized. Most of the terrorists would be disgusted to learn that an Aboleth is providing them funds, and doubly so if they learned that sales of the slime drug ravaging urban Qlaarqian communities was the source of the money that bought their arms. The Aboleth Mud Lord under attack by the Black Fork has not yet learned that its old rival has returned, but any day now its spies may discover that information. So, where do the PCs fit in? They might be hired to aid one of the two Aboleth rivals. They might also have incurred a debt to a Qlaarqian and since been asked to deliver something to a certain place...a task that could embroil them in the conflict. Good-aligned characters may decide that stopping slime drug production is a sufficient reason to enter the industrial slums and start poking their noses into others' business.

A BLOODY HOMECOMING

Dawlogh once wore the hallowed mantle of a paladin. But the Qlaarqian hero’s quest to bring justice down on the Mud Lords led him into questionable alliances and morally dubious enterprises with off world smugglers, adventurers, and other ne’er-do-wells. Dawlogh did not so much fall from grace as slide down from it. After losing his powers, he fled the system. Now the champion has returned to his homeworld after years of obscurity and exile. He displays strange new powers. Dawlogh has celebrated his return with a brutal assault on a Mud Lord trading post, an attack that left multiple civilians dead. The PCs might witness one of Dawlogh’s vicious attacks and perhaps become his incidental targets if they are visiting a Mud Lord city. Friends or hirelings might die as collateral damage. They may decide to go after him for the reward the aboleth offers. The Black Fork wants to contact the fallen hero, and may attack the PCs if Black Fork leaders believe the PCs are on Dawlogh’s trail. One Dawlogh’s former adventuring companions has hinted that he knows the source of the ex-paladin’s new abilities and could be persuaded to tell more for a modest payment (Dawlogh has become a blackguard after pledging his loyalty to a powerful alien being of the Lower Planes, a Lawful Evil entity that bears an ancient grudge against the aboleth species. Dawlogh’s new patron communicates with him in his dreams, whispering always of the bloody reckoning to come.)

REPOSESSION

An aboleth vivisectionist and its minions have hijacked a mining vessel belonging to a Dwarf syndicate of the Celmae Belt. The Dwarves want their big, expensive vessel back intact. They wish to hire the PCs as the second of two recovery teams—the other team is made up of all Dwarves in mining armor suits. Opposition aboard includes surgically altered Qlaarqian slaves of the vivisectionist aboleth, programmed slimes, and the aboleth master. The vivisectionist possesses a special attack, one the dwarves do not know about: long retractable cybernetic spine injectors filled with a preservative drug that paralyzes humanoids and animals and at the same time renders them susceptible to mind control. The aboleth seeks to open the fabled God-Vault, a massive artifact released from Celmae’s core when the world broke apart fully, forming the Celmae Belt. The vivisectionist’s studies have convinced it the vault contains a stillborn godling. With such a specimen, such materials...

ALTERNATE FAVORED CLASS OPTIONS

BARBARIAN: +1 to hit with bull rush, overbear, and drag maneuvers in mud, sand, gravel, or similar loose and slippery terrain. The bonus increases to +1.5 when the barbarian is also raging.

BARD: Add +1 to Performance skill checks made for use of Bardic Performance class feature when used to affect earth or water type monsters.

CLERIC: Add +1/3 to caster level to spells with the good or curse descriptors.

DRUID: +1 to caster level for all spells of the Swamp terrain domain, but only if the druid has chosen that domain as his Nature Bond.

FIGHTER: Add +1 to the fighter’s CMD and CMD when grappling in mud, sand, gravel or similar loose and slippery footing.

PALADIN: Add +1/2 to effective paladin class level for the damage bonus of the smite evil class feature, but only against evil-aligned aberrations.

RANGER: Add +1 to the ranger’s Perception, Disguise, and Survival rolls for tracking, counter-tracking, spotting camouflage objects, and hiding objects with camouflague in environments with much mud, sand, gravel, and bare soil.
Qlaarpian Wetlands Farmer CR1/2
XP 200
Qlaarpian Commoner 1
LG Small humanoid (Qlaarpian subtype)
Init +1 Senses Perception + water sense (blindsight, limited, see below)
DEFENSE
AC 13 touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +1 size, +1 armor)
hp 3hp (1d6+0)
Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0
Defensive Abilities +4 to Saving Throws versus gaze attacks, gas and smoke that effect the eyes, etc.
OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft., Swim 30 ft.
Melee Tail Slap +2 (1d6+1) or Hunting tines (1d8+1)
Ranged Pellet projector +2 (1d4)
STATISTICS
Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 12
Base Atk +0 CMB +1 CMD 10
Feats 1 total feats from HD
Skills +4 Handle Animal, +4 Profession: Wetlands Farmer, +1 Ride, +8 Swim
Languages Aquan, common
SQ Amphibious, breathes air and water.
Water sense blind sense against creatures touching same body of water; to 30 feet.
Not slowed by non-magical mud or swampy terrain.
Combat Gear Hunting tines are tridents by another name. The pellet projector is a pneumatic tube weapon equivalent to a stonebow. The wetlands farmer wears a sealable tar-cloak to protect against sun, stinging insects, biting worm-fish, and other hazards. Equivalent to masterwork padded armor; very comfortable and flexible but tough.
Other Gear The farmer carries dredging tools, pots of berry-rice shoots, and whatever else he needs strapped on the back of his trusty bio-engineered draft tardigrade.
ECOLOGY Environment Qlaarp, civilized marsh/open
Organization hatch (1d6) mound-house (3d6) motte (9d12, + warriors and others in smaller numbers)
Treasure Value variable, but low, with incidental treasures or no items of great value

These peons work the rich rings of sediment and reclaimed marsh the Mud Lords' industrial burgs, growing berry-rice, tarflowers, and other native crops. Muddy, squat, with bills, webbed feet, thick articulated tails, and voices that sound like wet sand sliding over gravel, these beings may seem unlovely by human standards but most possess high social intelligence. They readily accept with aliens who respect their moral code.
TACTICS Farmers retreat from serious threats if possible, seeking the protection of the motte and the professional warriors. If pressed, they fight, shooting their pellet projectors from behind whatever cover is available, dive under the water to avoid air-breathing enemies, and meet charges with braced tines.
Grave injustices may provoke the farmers to form surprisingly disciplined lynch mobs; in most such instances, a more experienced Qlaarpian with multiple levels/hit dice leads the gathered volunteers.
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