

Rumblings of Evil beneath Rank Dwarves

Location: Zirak, Southern Ranke
Enemy: Furcalor, Kraken, Renove, Sahugin
Employer: Dwarves
Key Words: wet, cold, demons, lost children, sharks, mithral

1. *Drun Kin Raving about Evil in a Dwarven Mine*

Day One: A skilled and politically balanced group of concerned citizens of the world gathered together in crisis-station 17 to deal with the latest outbreak of trouble within our sphere¹ of influence. The citizens concerned were:

- Shizane, a male Human Fire mage and duellist (rapier & mg), of average height with red hair & blue eyes, radius of fire support 400'. Cooks well. No stated political position.
- Dramus, a male Fey "utility Necromancer" of slender but extended proportions, blond floor-length hair, with many left-wing political connections, and a willingness to seize the high moral ground.
- Ithilmor, a female Elven "mixed Celestial" of exquisite appearance, with long black hair, a strong centre-right moral position and starry ideals. With her beauty and stubbornness, she was the obvious pick for our leader.
- Mebh, a female Human Air mage of doughty build, with a range of very pointed equipment. She has strong right-wing opinions, though no active party membership.
- Eric², a male Dwarven Namer, somewhat diminutive, but of immense experience and capacity for violence. and with lapsed liberal left-wing links and a tendency to think from odd (shark, eagle, weasel) viewpoints.
- Myself, Kryan, a were-mer plant Thaumaturge of apparently normal if variable human appearance, with a penchant for destroying left-wing extremists, and the typical skills & talents of my race.

Our informant was Drun Kin, an excitable dwarf holding no official position, from the Zirak Holding in central Ranke. He claimed that on Day minus Fourteen, a mining crew of 12 had disappeared from the active face of their deepest mine shaft. This had not happened before in living memory. An investigating crew went down the next day, and found the bottom of the mine shaft filled with salty water. Worse still, over the next few days, many of the crew's children and a few other individuals had disappeared. Drun left his clan on Day minus Ten to walk to our Base of Operations to seek help.

We quickly gathered the minimum comforts of home, and flew on the wings of night³ to Zirak. The entrance to the stronghold is at approximately 4,000', and sits in a mountain range nearly 50 miles due north of the mouth of the Ranke River and 25 miles north of Baxt.

Once inside, we descended a long spiral stair past many passages to a large amphitheatre, where professional politicians discussed whether they needed outside assistance. In a masterstroke of timing, Drun introduced us, and swayed many of the undecided, and those doubtful help could be found. We withdrew to allow them to complete their deliberations, and acclimatised ourselves to the setting. Several hours later, the Senate Majority Whip, Morthrin, came calling, and announced that the clan would accept our offer of help on a provisional basis, with the implicit understanding that approval for the usual friendly-fire ratio, collateral damage budget and freedom of activity clauses were consigned to the same sub-committee as our alleged requests for cost reimbursement.

We found out that the remainder of the missing crew's children had been put under active guard, and had been taken on approximately Day minus Eight, using a Colleged sleep Spell. The guards remembered nothing. A few other children and one of the crew's spouses had also gone missing.

There were no other known races nearby, although a couple of rock spirits, water spirits and magical zones of rocks were known.

Our impression of the dwarves over dinner was one of a quiet, insular, anti-magical clan, willingly cut off from other dwarves and the events of the outside world. Our good humour faded somewhat over dinner, through the atmosphere of dourness, gloom and fatalism.

We gladly retired to a tower that Dramus owned a couple of thousand feet into the complex. The coveys of magical researchers, the friendly eyeball, the mithral-eating butler Granite and infinite corridors of changing rooms brought a welcome feeling of normality and homeliness to the party.

¹ More of an anguished oblate spheroid really, like an apple with a dozen bites taken out of it.

² Not initially present – found under a bar in Dramus' tower on 2nd Frost.

³ Actually, the coat-tails of the afternoon.

2. Unsafe Modes of Transportation

The next morning (Day Two), we descended to the bar for breakfast, clearing Eric out to allow adequate foot-room. Breakfast was a hearty affair, and we then splashed mana around liberally, it being taxed far lower within Dramus' demesne than in most lands. Once Eric was vertical and focussed, we filled him in on events, and he gladly offered to help, extended periods of domesticity suiting him no most than most of us.

As we set out, we came across a slight snag. The local rock had surrounded the tower overnight, presumably as a picket against unfair mining conditions. After a variety of attempts to reason with it via mana, Granite infiltrated the lines and started to mingle with the locals. We returned to the bar to await further developments. Before lunch-time, Granite had picked up a quiet local girl, and they convinced the crowd to disperse quietly. With a little refreshment of our protections whilst taxes remained low, we set off.

Almost straight away, we ran into problems. Eric noted that the first lift we came to had been sabotaged, with the pins of the emergency brakes missing. Some people took a second lift to the main levels to warn the dwarves, while the rest of us waited. Whilst waiting, Shizane noticed some movement in our supposedly deserted area, and pointed it out to us. A friendly rat investigated and informed us that there was a strong localised smell of sulphur.

The others returned, and we descended to the problematic working face in the second lift. Partway down, Eric opened the trapdoor to the roof, and seized a loitering Fire Imp. Upon being put to the question, he admitted he was to burn through the rope at an opportune moment. He also claimed that he reported to a Earth Devil, who reported to an E&E Devil, who through labyrinthine politics eventually reported to Furcalor, the Duke of the Waters. We rid ourselves of the imp, and informed the rest of the party once they arrived.

This area of mining was remarkably disappointing. The lift ran smoothly to a tunnel 4,000' down, which extended near-horizontally for 200 feet before dead-ending. However, the lift shaft continued down another thirty feet, and this hole was full of salt water to within a few feet of the passageway.

While we were wondering which investigative approach to take, a huge Earth Elemental leapt up from under my feet and proceeded to lay waste to the party. It was armoured and quickened, and easily knocked our woman-folk into the water while striking fiercely at the men. We held it back with swords and fire, while Eric used his mastery of anti-magic to reverse its summoning magic and banish it back to the dark beyond. Shizane then spotted and spectacularly destroyed a Wizard Eye as Dramus's narcolepsy gave us a nasty fright before Eric shook him out of it; we then saw off the second Elemental in a similar fashion. Some time during the fight, I had been thrown into the water and dropped an item of great sentimental value – a gift from the previous greatest living swordsman on Alusia. Returning to the lift shaft to look for it, I discovered it had been stolen. Roused by this infamy and the possibility of confronting our ambushers, the party decided to investigate the water.

Eric changed into a shark, and after insisting they remove the bottom half of their attire, I shared my shape-change with the rest of the party. Ithilmor required a little more persuading than most, being an elven maiden. Once they had mastered their tails, the party rapidly moved down the tunnel. The tunnel ran south-south-east, and we feared it may lead directly to the sea without break or fork. After each hour we needed to stop while I shared my form with the rest of the party, and then restored myself, the shape-change being the greatest and most difficult of the arts of the Mind. We noticed that the water was colder than the sea, and those resting in their natural form and breathing water through a spell were swiftly overcome by cold once their heat shields were finally eroded.

Near five hours later, with our supplies of restoratives and our body temperatures running low, we reached the wide blue yonder, and the others gladly took to the land again. Ithilmor was seized with a restlessness of spirit, but managed to contain herself. We searched high (Eric the eagle) and low (myself), as well as inland for signs of someone who may have inspired the restlessness, but eventually decided to head back. Due to the tiredness of all but Shizane, the party travelled as a wildfire back to the peaks around Zirak, while Eric and I used the thermals, as I could not walk, let alone run.

On the way back to Zirak, and again at the entrance to the stronghold, Ithilmor's spirit again tried to flee, but her stubbornness and Eric's cajoling once again helped her pull herself together. We noted that the attacks were approximately an hour apart, and would require knowledge of her ITN, but Ithilmor pointed out that most agents of the militant left wing knew such personal details of her, as they study their worst enemies closely.

Once on land above 4,000', my legs unfused, and I could walk again.

3. Taking Stock of our Situation

Upon arriving at the entrance to Zirak, we had to wait until Morthrin could be convinced of our credentials, for which he used a very large Tulwar. Having seen us head to the bottom of their mine 7 hours before, for some reason they didn't instantly accept us flying in from the coast. Dwarves are so linear.

We briefly filled the Whip in on events to date, while he let us know of a new plague – mithral-eating sentient rocks, for which the dwarves seemed to hold us responsible. While heading down to Dramus' tower, we had an interesting debate on individual vs. collective responsibility, wherein those of dubious politics insisted that it wasn't their fault and the dwarves should not have so much mithral lying around. Upon arrival, Granite was summonsed and told to gather up all the protesting picketers and offer them lodging and a new life within the tower. The remaining sentient rock also became animated about this idea over the next few hours, and by midnight we had accommodated the entire problem. Dramus then showed us the link between this tower and his tower just outside our secret Base.

Day Three was slightly overcast. We stayed at Base, discussing possible lines of inquiry and preparing a potion to find the lost sword (not because it was valuable, but as the best link to the dwarven kinder). Research indicated that the direct enemy, while an ancient evil, was not demonic.

<#include "Astrology Readings and answers">

Shortly after dusk, Ithilmor left Base alone, to source some Holy Water. She fainted momentarily, and her spirit found itself detained by a devil hidden in a cave. He seemed to be a bounty-hunter fulfilling a contract on her, but she used her mandatory one call to contact a high-up official in Elbereth's administration, who whisked her out of there just in time to avoid two unpleasant thugs with designs on her body.

She flew to the rest of the party, who were at a local watering establishment, dealing with weighty issues. We then girded our loins and set out to seek the miscreants. It was easy enough to track them for a period, but the trail was eventually lost. We retired to the top of a hill, where Ithilmor was again enticed to leave her body. This time she demurred, and the party set up a series of subtle and unobvious defences for her body. After another couple of hours, the defences were complete, and she allowed herself to succumb to the insistent call. However, the bounty hunter obviously didn't have a pick-up crew in position, for he merely let her know that she had been rude to pull rank on him the last time, and that he would return and claim her at a later date before dismissing her. Our trap thus went un-sprung.

An incident of inclement weather was coped with by moving to a point where the clouds could disperse, and then Ithilmor completed her ritual. Nothing new was learnt, so we returned to Base and slept.

The next morning (Day Four), we confirmed the location of the sword (and hopefully kidnappees), which was apparently the middle of Confederation Bay. We also interviewed a local aquatic expert, "Splosh", and gained some advice for breathing underwater; and the local National Front spokesman, "Rowan" for a few stiff whiskeys. Ithilmor also made a few traditional drinks for any acquaintances we might run into.

We rested and discussed tactics for the rest of the day, then prepared ourselves that night.

4. Looting the Enemy's Lobster Pot

Day Five: our plan was to use the water-breathing techniques from Splosh, head out on our bearing of the sword's location; then when in the area, use the location potion to narrow down our search. Finally, we would transform into merform, disguise ourselves as dolphins, and plummet into Confederation Bay from a height of several thousand feet. Descending rapidly to the bottom, we would send out scouts and keep our senses peeled. Upon locating the base, we would descend upon it, and with our fire-support team neutralised by the water, we would use cold-steel and Ithilmor's ability to inspire awe to storm the fortifications, lay waste to the devils guarding it, and engage the Duke of the Waters in his own element, deflecting elementals, dodging maelstroms, and ducking dehydrations.

As usual, the plan went smoothly until contact with the enemy. At 100 fathoms, we spotted two large patches of sub-tidal kelp, which usually grows between 5 and 10 fathoms below ebb-tide. Between them was a smooth dome with 5 trapezoid entrances, each a fraction under 5 feet across. Movement was spotted in the kelp. The sword's location was confirmed by visual observation to be at the centre of this unnatural lobster pot. Sharks began to circle overhead.

As Eric neutralised the second Bubble of Force ward and Dramus sent his hand in to grab the sword, the kelp exploded into a confusion of hostile bodies. We were pinned between two forces, each consisting of a dozen ten foot humanoids (?Sahugin?) with nets and tridents, followed by a score of their lesser kindred, barely measuring seven foot.

Unfortunately, one of them was not blinded by our autonomic defences, and a desperate fight ensued, with Shizane having to cut his way out of a net while being dragged off by a three foot hand of Dramus's as Eric hacked at his legs. Within thirty seconds, however, we had regained discipline, and turned on the enemy instead, to equally devastating effect.

Meanwhile, Ithilmor's feminine intuition told her there was an unaccounted-for assailant, as something was blasting holes in our bone fortifications while sending Ithilmor tumbling helplessly out of control in a tornado of water. After the second of these had failed to muss Ithilmor's hair, the attacker unwisely turned on me. The height I gained by the tornado allowed me to re-blind most of the opposition. At this point, with more dead than able to see, and with our cavalier attitude to their only effective attack, the remaining ambushers beat a hasty retreat. As they left, Ithilmor spotted a 5-foot squid leaving with them, who we thought was the most likely source of the instant waterspouts. The larger creatures and the squid quickly outpaced us, and so we returned to the surface with two prisoners, technically victorious, but having failed to see any dwarves or our true enemies.

5. Doing Something Cunning Any Day Now

At Base, we questioned the prisoners rigorously, but initially learnt little more than that we would be first up against the coral when the flood came. After a little time and pressure, they did let slip that the main dive of the gang was at the mouth of Confederation Bay, at around 200–250 fathoms. Furthermore, the dwarves were there as technologists training up a group of human "volunteers" working in sweat-shop conditions mining something near their base. Despite modern interrogation techniques, they didn't crack, and we were forced to let them go after 24 hours, as we didn't have any charges that would stick.

Days 6 through 15: The next few days were spent debating what to do. Some of the group started getting cold feet about the whole aquatic environment, and to be fair, Shizane and Mehb (our Fire and Air specialists) were turned into grunts by the damp conditions. However, each day we resolved to try a frontal assault the next day.

There were a variety of plans mooted, including: Shizane infiltrating Savnoc's organisation, and using corrupt real estate developers to raise an island under the enemy and build fortifications around it; utilising the militant rocks that had congregated in Dramus's bar as miners to tunnel out to the base (some 50 miles) and sneak up on the enemy; travelling to within a couple of miles, setting up Dramus's bar and using the miners from there; and the perennial favourite – plummeting in from above and killing everything we meet until we get what we want.

Shizane withdrew from the party, and we boosted its melee capability by hiring Kilaramadrum, a giant warrior, for the extraction raid.

While we were waiting, Dramus found out through his leftist contacts that the attacks on Ithilmor were a contract that had most of the local terrorists keen to pick up some brownie points and ready cash by turning her in. A hard look around one of the local parks after dark netted us a Hell's Angel disguised as a tree. Dramus declared himself neutral and went to make tea, while the rest of us circled and chatted with the lone scout, until Mehb got pushy and he bolted up a tree. Eric followed like a rat up a drainpipe, and cornered the thug, was promptly turned into a tuna, but was carried down successfully and stored in an iron cage we constructed out of a nearby boulder. Questioning the little devil turned out to be tricky, as he was quite happy to be deported rather than answer questions. He baited Ithilmor with a prediction that she would be destroyed in a bottomless chasm. Eventually, we got him to tell us about his rivals, increasing both his chance of successfully capturing Ithilmor, and our chance of defending her. We learnt of an old assassin called Adrian, who worked for Renove (as did our talkative friend), an air mage called Whisper (although her confusion spell prevented the devil from telling us too much), and a Seraphim called Miriam. Not trusting him at all, we deported him immediately thereafter.

It was interesting that we had previously worked with a trustworthy Air mage called Whisper with a talent for confusion, and MaryM, a Seraph-look-alike who was beyond reproach. Perhaps the devil had told us nothing of value.

Using long-range observation, we tried to pin-point the location of the enemy base. Eventually, we flew out over the bay until Dramus located the tracer on the Sahugin that we had released earlier. Bearings were taken and we tried observation at the new co-ordinate after returning to Base that night.

Success: We saw a large palace at a depth of ~1300 feet, with many patrols of Sahugin, varying from 5 to 20 feet tall, and accompanied by sharks of similar size. A fifty-foot giant squid waltzed by at one point. A chasm yawned near the palace, and a green glow emanated from somewhere far below. Silhouetted against this light were the tentacles of a massive creature. Even assuming that the full length of the tentacles were visible and that the creature was near the top of the abyss, it would have to be over a hundred foot long. This was the ancient evil that we had been warned of – not demonic, but of equivalent power.

We resolved to try a frontal assault the next day.

Day 16: We set out for the sea coast early in the morning to practise our disguises as Sahugin, and swimming and fighting within the limitations of the disguise. On the way, we spotted an imp waiting in a hidden position, so we placed it in an ethereal isolation cell, interrogated it, and then deported it rapidly. Shortly afterwards, the air grew charged, as it does before a lightning storm, and we flew back to the guild, apart from Dramus, who was content to stroll back under his own steam. We met Dramus again at his house, and he passed on some information from Seir. Apparently the imp was a courier, not an assassin. Seir would prefer it if we did not deport all his couriers immediately. Hah! Now there's a dangerous precedent to set. Additionally, Furcalor is expecting a guild party to attack his lair and free the humans he holds captive – he used Astrology to come up with this astonishing prediction¹. Seir advises us to only rescue the dwarves, not the humans. Not only will they be less guarded, but Furcalor may think that the predicted event had come about, and lower his guard before the other guild party rescues the humans. I feel we are being manipulated by Demons. However the rest of the party agrees that this seems like sound advice, particularly as they are only being paid to rescue dwarves, and the logistics are simplified when dealing with a sound rather than a hundred rescues. Dramus also admitted to assisting an overstay of Seir's, and offered him Sanctuary. We traced another guild party working for some merfolk to rescue someone, and sent a long-range message to them, with a concise warning. Dramus's beach house has its own private sea, and we practised there for the morrow.

We resolved to try a frontal assault the next day.

¹ It's a sure-fire way to spot a left-wing dictator – scared of the masses they claim to represent, they turn to superstition as comfort. Wiser and more conservative rulers just kill those who disagree with them.

6. Testing the Waters

Day 17: We prepared ourselves, then head out to Dramus's country estates for a visit to Splosh to thank him for his efforts. While there, we met an old true-blue Hawk, who gave Eric and Dramus a good going over. I took the old warmonger aside and we discussed the good old days, and the lack of moral fibre in today's youth. He let me know that Gabriel is keeping a weather eye out for me, and I let him know where we would be heading.

Unable to come up with any further excuses, the party flew to the far edge of Confederation Bay, and descended to the bottom. We encountered a patrol on the way in, which gave us a nasty fright, as it challenged us in some local dialect. We swam on, ignoring them, and the bluff seemed to work. We approached the colonial-era palace from the side furthest from the pit-mine with the large cephalopod, and dislodged a grating. Inside the room were two large Sahugin, who proved very difficult to overcome or even damage, three dwarf "nannies" and around 20 dwarf children. Having eventually subdued the baby-sitters, we started searching the nearby rooms for the other dwarves, but only found stores.

We used a dead Sahugin as a grate replacement, and took five minutes out to leave a tasteful piece of calligraphy¹:

Furcalor Doubt What
You See Is
Remove

Heading down a corridor/tunnel to the lower levels of the palace, we saw two Sahugin and a large shark approaching – we caught them at a corner, and while the shark got past the front ranks, the three of them were dealt with in rapid, if bloody, style. We headed down a drop-shaft after a dropped trident, and found a room that guarded the head of the lift which carried people to and from the bottom of the abyss. The entire group snuck past the four Sahugin guards, and down another couple of levels to a smithy / alchemical workshop. We found four Sahugin and six chained dwarves.

It took us a little while to all get out of the tunnel, as the Sahugin were strenuous in their objections. Two of the Sahugin were mages, and they seemed to summon sharks out of the shadows, as the sharks were not present initially, and there were no entrances except the one we came through. One of the Sahugin became a giant tortoise in a desperate ruse, but this allowed us room to spread out, and once four of us were each fighting a shark or Sahugin, Dramus and Ithilmor could use their magic to sway the fight in our direction. Unfortunately, by then the last mage to be engaged had ?summoned? transported? a water elemental, which was a little hard to spot, and was doing considerable damage to morale as we disposed of the rest of the Sahugin. Finally Eric hit the water elemental firmly in a counter-attack, and banished it back whence it came.

As we got our breath back, Eric and Dramus talked to the dwarves. The dwarves freed themselves from their manacles by burning some of the ore that was lying around – it burnt on contact with metal. Eric packed a couple of large boxes with the ore. The dwarves took a little convincing that we were not Sahugin – the makeup obviously wasn't running, even underwater. They told us the other 6 mining dwarves were due back shortly from the Abyss, so we went upstairs, and took out the four large Sahugin in 10 seconds – four nasty blows, one giant white rabbit, and one fellow pounded by all and sundry. Sahugin get easier with practice.

We herded the twelve dwarves and two chests back upstairs. Then, while the families were reunited and the rest of the party planned how to get out from 220 fathoms with 21 adults and 20 children², I sat down to cover our escape. Ten minutes later, I produced a perfect replica of Renove's trademark calling card – a giant Renove-Red Fog, and we fled to the roof as the visibility closed in.

We decided that we should leave with a conjuring trick to over-shadow any bad press we might get for our brutal approach to freeing hostages from a tin-pot third-world nation. We had carried up the Sahugin lift guards, and a little sleight of hand soon turned the first two into the semblance of a giant wicker basket and a waterproof tarp with ropes at the corners. When we had all got in and made the ropes fast to the basket, curious sharks were approaching, so the third Sahugin was disposed of with the "lady-in-a-locked-box" trick, and turned into thin air. This accelerated us upwards quite dramatically, and we didn't slow down until we were nearing the surface. Quickly folding back the corners and inserting tab A into slot B, we turned the basket and tarp into rafts, and bobbed to the surface. We hauled dwarves onto the rafts, and as Ithilmor gave each one their pilot's wings, we gave quick instructions and a small child to the newly inducted fliers. Ithilmor was losing her concentration by then, and had to take several still restoratives to restore her spirits, but managed to put wings on all the adults, and the 21-strong squadron set out for the mouth of the Sweetwater. As the last of the party left the rafts, they were already being smashed apart by the arriving sharks, and turned back into their constituent elements, to be consumed by the surprised but happy piscines. The testimony of the sharks explaining how we had left had been thrown into sufficient doubt to cover our trail.

¹ Token string ABCDEF is of course the literal truth, but ADF, BF and CEF are also true, while the others are ungrammatical. A rushed attempt, but perhaps sufficient to associate the master of Rhetoric with the work to a rank amateur such as Furcalor. The symmetrical arrangement of the three referents denies authorship by Renove.

² Of course we hadn't planned our exit in advance – there were too many situational variables, like "would we still be alive?", let alone subtleties such as the number of people we might have gathered or lost.

7. Aftermath

We flew to Dramus's townhouse where we met Shizane and dropped off Drum, and then portalled to his tower. From there we portalled to his manor, and dumped the boxes of mad metal in the swimming pool. We then tried to go to Dramus' tower in Zirak, but got lost in the Void a couple of times, and had to rest in Oz. We lost the tower at one point, and were on a volcano in a chaos place of power. Eventually we got to Zirak. By this time the dwarven children were asleep, and the rest were drunk. We resolved to rest until morning, and tried to remove the more virulent of Dramus's afflictions gained through his Tower time-share arrangements. Shizane and Mahb grew bits of Unicorn, and decided to keep them.

Days 18 through 23 we waited for the Dwarven council to finish deciding whether they would pay us. By the time they decided to pay us, Dramus was no longer undead, could see, and had the full use of his joints.

We went home.

Appendix - Politics

Gabriel, ArchAngel of Annunciation – right-wing, supported by Kryan for his encouragement of the arts.

Elbereth Gilthoniel, Star Maiden – centre-right, supported by Ithilmor for her star quality.

Foras, President of Interior Decorators – liberal democrat, supported by Eric for his retirement policy.

Seir, the Willing Prince – centre-left, supported by Dramus because of his beautiful blue eyes.

Furcalor, Duke of the Waters – left-wing, rogue Teleri/Vanyaarmi, raises storms, drowns people.

Renove, the Beautiful Earl – left wing deceiver, pederast, and avowed peacemaker.

Appendix – Sahugin

Information – Sentient aquatic humanoids. Green, scaly, fish-like heads, feet and hands very webbed and extended. They range in size from 6 to 25 feet tall. Mingle in large groups of mixed size. Their language appears to be guttural bubbly noises – impossible to fake without prior preparation. Often accompanied by sharks – seem to have bond with sharks – beastmaster? summon control? Some were water mages. They are the traditional enemy of merfolk. They had a supply of gold merfolk caps, but whether they constructed them or stole them from merfolk is hard to say.

They are doughty fighters – they are difficult to harm past their scaly skin as hard as plate (thicker for large ones), and they stay on their feet for a long time. They fight with Trident and Net – they are not great strikers, but are very strong, and their net is to be feared. They swim fast – little ones as fast as sharks, larger ones faster than dolphins. Hierarchical, military social structure seen – may be indictive of overall culture, or merely of an elite special forces squad. Do not respond well to surprises, and usually will not flee or surrender if out-matched. I believe they are used to being better than their opposition and do not have fall-back plans.

Appendix - Poetry

Are the dwarves in air or water?

Metal Mad, Metal Gold

No need for air, no sense of cold

Metal Gold, Metal Mad,

Air in here very bad.