

The Goblin City

The Goblin City is a single cavern, roughly spherical, buried in a seemingly endless piece of iron and coal-pocked granite. It is lightless, damp, mostly cool, and hollow. The cavern, although spherical, has no concept of “up” because things always fall towards the stone and away from the center hollow. This means that someone looking up across the passage (assuming they have sufficient light and there is less muck than usual in the air) could see another person standing a few miles above themselves. The passage itself is about 2 miles in diameter (creating about 50 square miles of inhabitable cavern) and is rarely clear enough to see through. The air is obscured by grey smoke, green clouds of ignis fatuus, white steam, and black coal dust. Visibility is always at a premium.

Goblins inhabit this cavern as they have for centuries. The city is the only inhabited location in the entire world, as the world (as much as anyone can tell) is simply a gigantic piece of granite that houses millions of Goblins. It is a clutter of brick buildings, tin roofing, leaky steam pipes, steel communication tubes, and outgrowths of stone. It is busy, noisy, smoky, and temperatures vary wildly depending on where you stand. Great brick clock towers rise above the city, like spears pointed towards the center of the cavern, to announce the changing of shifts. There is no particular hour designated for sleeping, so Goblins toil in the great city every hour of every day. It is eternally noisy and the work never ceases. Parts of the city are partially decayed and old structures are propped up with wooden trellises. On some streets, buildings literally loom over the street, as their facade lurches forward.

At street level, the city is bustling with activity. Salesmen approach Goblins in the street and vendors shout to passersby. The sound of hammers hitting metal rings out throughout the lane. Strange vermin roam the streets looking for a bit of bread left by a careless Goblin and watches are posted to keep Gremlins out of the city. Goblins, drunk on coal wine, laze about in the gutter or lean against a gaslight lamp pole. Pipes belch both smokes and defiled water into the street where it flows into the lower caverns that extend into the foundation of the city. One would think that the sewers of the city would not be inhabited, but Goblins traverse the sewer passages to get to illicit meetings without being traced.

Beneath the city, and even the sewers, lie the lower caverns. These passages began as mines but have largely ended up as naturally formed caverns as water from the city above seeps into the stone. These passages have been further connected and form a labyrinth of twisting interconnected passages known as the Below. Here, away from any sort of enforcement, twisted and insane creatures known as Gremlins seek to destroy the infrastructure of the city. Although the city has substantial muscle, it has no means of policing the Below, and thus the Gremlins breed and seek to enact their chaotic agenda. Gremlins themselves are twisted by their birth in the filthy runoff of the city, and even the most coherent Gremlin curses the city above. Although driven mad by their hate, Gremlins pose a real threat. Occasionally a mine will go silent when it accidentally veers

into a Gremlin breeding pit. Initiates of the Mysteries of Flame and Iron are then called in to cleanse the area with flame and well tempered steel.

The History of the Goblin City

The End of Nibelung Civilization

The city was not always home to Goblins. In fact, an overwhelming majority of the current infrastructure of the city is from the time before the Goblins. It was built by the Nibelung, an extinct race of clever (but flawed) builders. This race was greedy, possessed of oil-black colored skin, and a great deal less compassionate than the Goblins. Their heads had four small horns (a large pair and a small pair beneath) and their flesh was dark like the bottom of a well. Their teeth were similarly blackened and they grew new ones every few years. When cut, their blood and organs were seen to be as dark as their skin. Their knowledge of clockwork and steam technology allowed them to build a huge, bustling city. They were a scholarly sort of being, possessed of an inclination to experiment. Their alchemy was dangerously powerful and could be used to release deadly gases or conjure living things from the essence of darkness itself. Their way of life required that they perform very little labor, as a matter of their religion. Their beliefs stated that silence and stillness were holy things, and that action was a form of weakness. Hence, Nibelung culture favored automation above all other means of production and upkeep. The city was much quieter and a good deal more organized then, but the Nibelung had little unity amongst their kind. Their intellects were exceeded only by their greed and avarice.

During this time, the Goblins inhabited the Below, a product of spontaneous generation in the runoff of the great city. Chemicals produced above mixed in the Below and, incubated by the mild heat from chemical reactions, Goblins sprung to life from the garbage of the city. Just as maggots are generated by the presence of spoiled meat, the Goblins were generated from the filth below. The Nibelung treated them like sentient pests: possessed of self awareness and intellect, but vermin none the less. Goblins bred quickly in the filthy conditions below the city and quickly took control of the Below. The Nibelung had no desire to mount a campaign against these dangerous pests, staying true to their doctrine of non-action. Instead, they used their vast intellects to make war on goblin-kind. The war did not last long; the Nibelung tried various methods to exterminate the Goblins, but without direct assault, there was little chance of success. At the end, the foolish Nibelung released poisonous gas into the air to exterminate the Goblin menace once and for all. It killed more Nibelung than Goblins. Like cockroaches, Goblins adapted quickly to the airborne venoms. Nearly all of the Nibelung perished, and those that survived were killed defending their home from invading hordes of Goblins. The Nibelung were driven to extinction.

Reign of the Goblin King

After the annihilation of Nibelung civilization, the Goblins took up residence in the city. The city itself had been spared the sort of destruction a full scale invasion would have left. There were virtually no fires set or machines sabotaged. Goblin-kind had inherited an entire world filled with infrastructure and industry. The Nibelung had also left behind agricultural infrastructure as well, in the form of edible mushrooms which had been created as the City's primary food source. Using fire and flesh as the substrate, Nibelung had also created fire goats. These small ungulates are the only source of actual meat in the City. Their milk is used both as an ingredient in food production and as an industrial lubricant. Nibelung also had a host of small scurrying animals whose uses were not apparent. These have since become vermin in modern times or have been entirely wiped out by exterminators. Consequently, all flora and fauna in the City are the product of Nibelung engineering.

Early Goblin civilization was marred by intense violence. Without an understanding of the Great Machines, scarcity was everywhere. Family units roamed the urban wilderness, clubbing to death anyone who violated their territory. Eventually, these family units made extended alliances and tribes formed. Usually, these tribes maintained control of a single building or mine shaft. Clock towers became fortresses and herds of wild fire goats were prizes for local warlords. Skirmishes between tribes were quite frequent and the streets flowed with blood and excrement. Out of this chaos, a singular individual (later known as the Goblin King) united the entire Tower District under his rule and made war against all other tribes. This fight was more bloody than any previous conflict, as the Goblin King's forces engaged in vicious urban warfare. They waged battle from building to building, a feat which took several decades to complete. When the smoke of battle cleared (the smoke of the machines still lingered) the Goblin King found himself the ruler of the whole of the world.

The Goblin King set his court in the tallest structure of the City, known as the Grand Tower, commissioning a throne made of iron, Nibelung bone, and white marble. He declared that his reign marked the beginning of Goblin civilization, and established a calendar that marked the moment as Year Zero. Both he and his descendants espoused a form of rule referred to as "anarchy" but which really was a form of loosely governed feudalism. In essence, the King abolished any type of bureaucracy (which was seen as too "Nibelung"), favoring an entirely unregulated economy where powerful industrial lords employed indentured serfs. It was the belief of the time that the role of the King was only to keep peace, not interfere with the flow of society. Therefore, crime, exploitation, and all sorts of inhumanity flourished in the unregulated City. However, the Goblin King did his best to prevent unrest in the city. Despite this, gangs (themselves the inheritor of old tribal conflicts) still gutted each other in the street. The violence, however, was on a scale that was considered acceptable (if not containable). After a time, Goblins lived very much like their Nibelung predecessors. They lived in brick homes and kept the machines running. They mined for coal, forged iron into shapes they found useful, and harvested fungi

to nourish themselves.

The reign of the Goblin Kings continued unchanged for four hundred years with the children of the previous King, but the line began to decline. The King began taking affairs more and more into his own hands, setting up rigorous tax collection and regulators. Corruption and misrule were absolutely rife in the court and the public was intimately aware of it by way of secretly operated printing presses. In an effort to control public anger and give some semblance of propriety to the bureaucracy, the King established the Convocation of Lords (whose members, like the King, were hereditary), which served as a governing body for the city's services. The King, however, retained ultimate authority. The situation remained mostly unchanged for about a century, until once again, corruption and subversion of the bureaucracy reared its head. Goaded by the Convocation of Lords, neighborhood mafias, and furious revolutionaries, an angry mob stormed the Grand Tower and took the reigns of government hostage. Through the heroic efforts of Guy Framebox, the very throne-room of the King was detonated using mining explosives, but did not actually kill the King. The Goblin King thereafter abdicated his throne for fear of his life, and the monarchy was entirely disbanded. In its place, a second body of Parliament was established, known as the Meeting of Commons, which allowed direct election of representatives by the people. Although this body was, and remains, subservient to the Convocation of Lords (now known as the Greater House), this new type of government was called "democracy".

Despite the overwhelming desire to dethrone the Goblin King, supporters of the old order, as well as the royal family itself, have caused all manner of mischief since then. Dubbed "Royalists" in modern times, these malcontents have hatched numerous plots to disrupt the current order. Royalists still remain overwhelmingly influential in the affairs of organized crime. One of the largest gangs, the Scarlet Brigands, still holds the Goblin King as the rightful ruler of the City and its inhabitants. Royalists have very little power, however, and are not permitted to publicly gather, field candidates for office, or criticize the current government.

Recent Times

Modern reckoning of time places the year at 715 ((2010)) based on the year of the Goblin King's ascension to power. Recent time has seen an improvement of technology and a large increase in population. The city was not so cramped and cosmopolitan as it stands today. Only a few generations ago, there were common lands where shepherds grazed fire goats on lichen amid fallen ruins of the old order. These spaces have been closed off in favor of new mines and manufactories. Mills, pumps, bureaus, and coal burning factories have been built over these once grey-green common lands. Now, nearly all land is privately owned and developed. The loss of these spaces hit agriculture hard, but it has lead to a sort of renaissance in society. New techniques of growing fungus allowed a greater amount to be harvested while using less land. What once passed for something similar to a pastoral way of life has been completely eliminated. The

rediscovery of the steam engine (Goblins had not unlocked the secrets of its construction despite having access to many engines) allowed greater degrees of coal and iron to be harvested, which in turn allowed for larger structures to house the wave of births. For a time overcrowding was not a problem. However, the birth rate has since caught up with the city and once again the city is home to more Goblins than can be adequately housed. Privacy and personal space are the province only of the wealthy.

In the Below, a new type of being has appeared within the last few generations. Gremlins, an insane breed of thinking being, were at first seen as a novelty. They were considered a strange occurrence and of scientific importance for the potential revelations about the origin of the Goblin species. For some time, they were hunted and studied by the natural philosophers amongst the Goblins. Their warrens were objects of interest by the intellectuals of the city above. Then, they began attacking. Their garbled rambling, when they were captured, spoke of a time of a great Gremlin uprising. It became clear that Gremlins were not harmless anomalies, but rather, a force growing in the Below. Goblins were quick to attack the Gremlins, their own origins and conquest of the city fresh in their mind. The attacks met with little success, while the Gremlins made reprisal strikes against key Goblin mines. Gremlins have little self control and are ruled by unwholesome urges to attack and tear down the city so there is little possibility of entreating with them. Despite Goblin mastery over most of the machines, there are still a few machines left over from the Nibelung that even the Goblins do not know how to repair. Should the Gremlins harm them, those machines would be silenced forever, and entire sections of the city could be plunged into cold darkness. It is reasoned that Gremlins lack the whatever spark makes the Goblins able to perform the Mysteries of Flame and Iron, and thus, Gremlins are not truly sentient.

Five years ago, strange glowing portals began opening, revealing a bright world with no boundaries and filled with alien flora and fauna. At first, people thought they were mystic doorways to lush caverns within the Goblin City or the far off reaches of the Below. As the first reports of this world filed in, it became clear that these portals lead to a place beyond the City itself. Travelers to this place reported an unbroken wilderness of woodlands and a colossal orb of orange fire that rotated around the horizon. Those that returned were clearly changed by their experience. They spoke a strange sorcerer's tongue that was universally intelligible to everyone, despite having never been heard before in the City. For the first year, panic set into the City. Rumors that the fiery orb would roll into the city swept through the lower classes. The middle class feared foreign diseases, magical madness radiated by the place, and alien invaders. The upper classes feared economic panic and mass exodus. It became clear that the world beyond was undergoing some violent turmoil, as newly arrived travelers gave accounts of cannibalistic animal-men butchering Goblins who dwelt in the lands beyond. There was a brief scare that energies from the world beyond might reverse the pull of gravity in the City, and that the inhabitants would be crushed in the center of the cavern.

Once the panic abated, people became rather blasé about the world beyond

(travel to and from this place is rare, difficult, and unpredictable; its influence on the City was negligible at best). Many people considered the whole thing to be a hoax, perpetrated by Royalists or charlatans in an attempt to waylay foolhardy wanderers. Somewhere in this time, better intelligence began to pour in from the world beyond of this "Forest of Doors" as it became known. Penny dreadfuls instantly grabbed onto the idea of adventure in a distant land, romanticizing what had been once been terrifying. Mercantile interests flocked to the Forest of Doors to find commodities unavailable in the City. Among these are strange materials known as Lumens which, with exacting training, can be molded into various items of occult use. Those that know the technique refuse to teach it for monopolistic reasons. Thus, some Goblins travel to the Forest specifically to learn this arcane craft. Within the past year, eleven members of Parliament were attacked and killed by unknown assassins, presumably Royalist agitators. Consequently, a crackdown of Royalist interests has commenced in the name of public security. Simply criticizing Parliament, in some instances, is enough to be thrown in the clink. Royalists have flocked to the world beyond, citing the hideous oppression thrust upon them by the illegitimate Parliamentary regime. Rumors say that the rightful heir to the throne is operating in the Forest of Doors, drawing his loyal subjects to him for the creation of a new Goblin Kingdom.

Within the past year a new technology has also arrived from beyond the doors. Heinrich Irongear, a recently minted Industriarch, returned from the Forest bearing a device of his own construction known as a "Railcaster". This device is a hand-held weapon that, using magnetic principles and an experimental power source, fires a projectile out of a rounded barrel into the intended target. Irongear has produced hundreds of these weapons at the commission of Parliament and currently holds the sole patent for production. However, knock-offs have been backwards-engineered and some of these railcasters have found themselves in the hands of the public (and organized crime). Practitioners of the Twin Fang style of combat feel particularly threatened by this new form of weaponry, as it has the possibility to redefine the nature of urban warfare.

Goblin Society

Goblins live in an urban society. There are no lush pastures, no stretches of forest, and no open spaces. All stable locations have been paved over and made into roads or structures. There are no sunsets or sunrises. Mechanized bell towers chime the shifts over the course of the day. Great brick buildings rise towards the center of the cavern, and Goblins inhabit these places in large numbers. Space, visibility, privacy, and clean air are all premiums in the city proper. The culture of the Goblins is shaped by this urban existence.

Goblins live and work in every borough and neighborhood in the city. Signs advertising products and services are posted on all available surfaces. Private ventures are seen as sacred, and it is a given right that anyone may post advertisement where they can find free space. Thus, the city is filled with signs advo-

cating the purchase of dentifrice paste, energy tonics, coal wine, and tobaccolichen cigars. This glut of information is considered acceptable. Youth gangs roam the street, pushing idle passersby aside. The distinction between shop and living space is obscured, as many merchants and artisans live in the space where they toil. Manufactories rumble during all 25 hours of the day as Goblins oversee the machines that refine their food, make their cloth, and even build other machines.

Society operates on the principles of capital and industry. Workers are not paid by the quality of their work, for most workers simply operate machines or perform rote work that does not allow for operator skill. Workers do not own the means of production, as it is in the hands of industrialists. These businessmen, known as Industriarchs, gain a majority of the benefit of the labor since they own the means of production. In practical terms, this means that Industriarchs are much wealthier than those that they employ. Industriarchs do have concerns of their own however, for they must decide which products to produce, to which neighborhood they will sell their wares, and how much to charge for such items. Most of them own their own private apartments, usually an entire floor of a high rise building and employ a staff of servants.

However, industry has not obliterated the need for individual craftsmen. Skilled makers can still earn a living in competition with the large scale facilities of the Industriarchs. Shoemakers, smiths, clock makers, toy makers, fungus farmers, and a host of other professions exist parallel to the massive factories. Many well off Goblins prefer hand crafted goods to mass produced goods, and seek out these craftsmen. Although many of these craftsmen flourish, they are constantly in danger of being driven out of business either through legitimate means or underhanded means. Goblin literature makes numerous references to mustache-twirling Industriarchs who scheme to shut down a prosperous and skilled craftsman. Without fail, the craftsmen get the girl at the end of such a drama. Custom goods, such as clothing or art, are signs of wealth and taste. Most goods are mass produced, and thus, it is very common to see lower class Goblins wearing the exact same pair of pants and pull-over white shirt. Standing apart from the masses is the privileged of the upper and middle class.

Strata of Society

Goblins are very conscious of where they fit into society, and like clockwork, each piece is considered essential to the whole (except for the Scum; they are like the miscellaneous useless parts left over after assembling a clock). Goblin society tends to be divided along economic lines as a rule, but Goblin society has no nobility anymore, and thus, there is a high degree of social mobility. However, this social mobility usually comes about through criminal or otherwise underhanded means.

The Upper Class The Upper Class consists of Industriarchs, politicians, prosperous merchants, land lords, and celebrities. They spend their time in leisure, attending the opera, writing poetry, making decisions for their

business, or attempting to purchase a membership in the Greater House of Parliament. The Upper Class signals their status by wearing custom-made clothing and by employing large numbers of servants. They decorate their homes lavishly, focusing on works of art and household goods made of rare materials. Despite being a primarily leisure class, the Upper Class still makes a point of producing things of lasting significance. Many are themselves artists, or failing that, patrons of the arts. Those that do not play the games of politics are certainly embroiled in the academic world, criminal world, or Mysteries of Flame and Iron. The Bejeweled Fist, a secret society, supplies the Upper Class with whatever illegal commodities they desire, believing the "better" Goblins to be incorruptible by such things. One is not considered a true member of the economic aristocracy unless one has at least one residence in the Tower District. Distinctions between men and women are far more pronounced amongst the Upper Class.

The Middle Class Below the Upper Class lies the Middle Class. The Middle Class consists of graduates of the Mysteries of Flame and Iron, industrial managers, small business owners, artists, teachers, and salesmen. The Middle Class is most concerned with appearing like their Upper Class betters, attempting to affect a level of conspicuous consumption to signal their economic fitness. However, the very fact that a sizable percentage of Goblins are imitating the Upper Class (on a budget of course) ensures that their efforts appear nothing like that of the actual Upper Class. An entire industrial strata exists to produce goods catering to the Middle Class, making commodities which superficially appear hand-made but were in fact manufactured in the same manner as those goods produced for the Lower Class. The Middle Class mainly exists in Toadstool Hollow (managerial and industrial) and Leaden Hills (academia, the Mysteries, art, and industry), however, a few lucky members of this Class can afford a flat in the Tower District (entertainment and bureaucracy). The Middle Class tends to be a great deal more moralistic than the Upper and Lower Classes, and thus, very few members of the Middle Class engage in crime or interact with the criminal world.

The Lower Class The Lower Class is the largest economic distinction. This Class consists of factory workers, farmers, skilled crafters, and other low paying positions. The Lower Class is concerned most with daily survival, as a single paycheck is often the only thing that prevents the Lower Classes from falling into the distinction of "Scum". Their nights are filled with cheap pleasures, like singing and neighborhood gatherings; other considerations would cost too much. Often, the Lower Classes borrow money from their betters to pay for the daily livings, creating a cycle of debt and poverty that is difficult to break without also breaking the law. Indeed, the Lower Class is often considered synonymous with "criminal" amongst the Middle and Upper Class precisely because many impoverished Goblins must turn to crime to earn their daily can of bread. The Scarlet Brigands

and Golden Raiders recruit from amongst the Lower Classes, targeting the most ruthless, uneducated, and hopeless. There is very little revolutionary sentiment amongst the Lower Class, however, as social mobility does exist in some sense. The Lower Class is also permitted to directly elect representatives to the government and this gives them a means of redressing problems. Agitators can expect to be summarily fired, and, thus, be sent into the ranks of the Scum. Lower Class individuals are not usually overmuch concerned with gender roles. Low class men and women wear identical clothing, use the same degree of profanity, and make sexual advances with the same frequency.

The Scum The lowest of all classes is known as the Scum. Their ranks consist of thieves, the unemployed, hermits, and the morbidly diseased. The Scum tends to hide in the cracks of the city: its abandoned spaces, open caverns, and sewers. Society does not take them into account, and indeed, they have no place within it. Scum are not permitted to vote, and thus, have little means of improving their situation. Tent cities exist in the Below where Scum gather to aid one another, but Scum are notorious for their lack of morals. It is commonly held that the Scum are more likely to knife you than to help you. Consequently, Scum are driven off wherever they are found in the city proper and local laws reflect this. Begging, vagrancy, and public drunkenness are all quite illegal. As the population of the City swells, so do the Scum. In many ways, banishment from the City is a subtle means of executing unwanted populations.

Political Order

The Goblin City was once ruled over by a monarch, but political upheaval unseated the monarch and society is now ruled by two governing houses. These governing houses were set up by a popularly ratified constitution that is still the law of the land even today. The Greater House, also known as the Convocation of Lords, is composed of the first born child of the 25 most prestigious families in the Goblin City. All laws originate in this house. If a law is passed by majority in the Greater House, it is sent to the Lesser House where a two-thirds majority is needed to overturn the proposed legislation. Membership in the Convocation of Lords is usually hereditary, but if a line dies out it is replaced by auction. The highest paying family ascends to real political power and their first born joins the Greater House. There is no stigma associated with purchasing a position in the Greater House, as long as the auction was performed fairly and transparently.

The Lesser House, also known as the Meeting of Commons, is elected every three years. Each Common (as representatives to the Lesser House are known) is put up for reelection every three years, although realistically nearly all incumbents are sent back for a three year term. There are 30 seats in the Lesser House at any given time, and representation is apportioned by neighborhood populations. Censuses are taken every nine years to ensure that an accurate

accounting of population occurs. Voting is extended to all Goblins older than 16, but criminals, the unemployed, and the insane (Scum, in short) are barred the right to vote. Insanity for the purposes of voting can sometimes be extended to those outside the political mainstream, and anarchists, malcontents, and fanatics are often turned away at polling places. Poorer neighborhoods thus often are overlooked by politicians who only campaign and protect the interests of places where a majority are eligible to vote. Needless to say, the Gremlins do not have a say in who represents them, so the Below is given no stake in how the city runs itself.

Boroughs also elect a number of local officials. The magistrate, tax collector, sheriff, executioner, and other local positions are all elected by a majority of voters. Thus, although the Greater House is not elected, the population of the Goblin City expects a high degree of power given to the common people by way of election. The constitution of Goblin City was designed in this manner to keep the government relatively stable in an environment prone to chaos, gang warfare, and revolution. As a result, the same people from the same families end up making the large decisions. Despite this, the Greater House does not throw its weight around lightly. Although they tend to make overarching decisions, they are rarely vetoed by the Lesser House or despised by the people. However, there are agitators, anarchists, punks, and lowlifes who hate the current government and actively work for its downfall. These people are largely marginalized, and some are eventually executed or exiled into the Below.

Gangs

Nearly every neighborhood is claimed by one gang or another. Even the relatively swanky Tower District has its share of organized crime. Citizens of the city have come to expect a certain degree of corruption, and everyone is sufficiently cynical to know the score. While the actions of organized crime are truly criminal, their crimes of choice rarely leave a trail of bodies. Most gangs stick to petty theft, protection schemes, loan sharking, mugging, bootlegging, blackmail, and smuggling. Gangs often think of themselves as institutions within a Borough, and few if any dabble in assassination or torture. In fact, many gangs have noble ideals even if their actions are clearly ignoble. For instance, most gangs consider themselves keepers of the peace. They are there to help out the local people and protect them from Gremlins, a corrupt police force, and other rival gangs. This is largely a legacy of their origins during the time before the Goblin King unified the city. Many of them descend from tribal militias that once held down specific neighborhoods within the City.

The Scarlet Brigands The Scarlet Brigands' history extends back to the old order and the Goblin King. The original Goblin King was a mighty warlord. He and his warriors went building to building slaying those who disagreed with the King's claim to the city. Their campaign eventually conquered the entire city in small increments. After the overthrow of the King's no-good Great-Great-Great-Great-Great Grandson, Alexander, the

nobility of the ancient city didn't disappear. They reintegrated into society. The Scarlet Brigands, with their fading antique finery, claim descent from the monarchs of old. They incorporate Alexander's personal mark (a red "A" in a circle) in everything they do. It signals their territory, they wear it on their clothes as a badge of office, and they leave it as a calling card when they wish to be high profile. They reject the government utterly, arguing that it is not legitimate. Shouts of "Long live the king!" presage the arrival of Scarlet Brigands, and sends fear into the hearts of guardsmen. Younger members of the Scarlet Brigands care less for the ancient dogma, though. They take the trappings of their gang, but espouse anarchy. They long for the days of conquest when the Goblin King roamed the lands setting fire to those buildings that resisted his rule. These young punks still shout the old slogans, but their heart lies in a renewed age of chaos. The Scarlet Brigands are based mostly out of the Toadstool Hollow borough, but they aggressively expand when they can.

The Bejeweled Fist The Bejeweled Fist is not properly a gang, but a secret society that specializes in organized crime. Their symbol, a mailed gauntlet encrusted with emeralds and rubies, can be found wherever figures of power wish to commit deeds against their foes without fear of retribution. In fact, the Bejeweled Fist seeks to subvert the law by offering everything the law prohibits, but only to the rich. In this way, their excesses do not threaten the stability of society. Members of the Bejeweled Fist desire stability at all costs, for it is stability that keeps them wealthy and corrupt. They cater in prostitution, rare blends of coal wine, political intimidation, and industrial sabotage. Their methods are equally refined: they meet only in secret, keep their identities unknown through the use of ritualistic masks, and shed blood only when money is not enough to make a person turn a blind eye to their corruption. Their parties are attended, often unknowingly, by powerful Parliament members and local authorities. A majority of those who have membership in the Bejeweled Fists are themselves Industriarchs of extreme and fanciful wealth. In fact, membership in the Bejeweled Fists practically guarantees that one will become an Industriarch. Their base of operations is the Tower District.

The Golden Raiders The Golden Raiders are the most loosely organized of all the gangs. They have no clear leadership and factions within the Golden Raiders are just as likely to make war on one another as they are to make war on other gangs. They specialize in street level crimes such as trafficking, pimping, selling arms, and mugging. Their double dagger style of fighting (known as Twin Fangs) has become ubiquitous in the city, as Golden Raiders and their crossed daggers spread to other neighborhoods. Their greatest strength lies in their diffuse membership. All that is required to join is an oath of loyalty or tattoo and a willingness to commit crime on behalf of whoever you declare loyalty to. Like a pyramid, there are rungs of membership and those at the bottom pay those at the rung above. Those at the top of the pyramid are constantly under the

specter of assassination because of this system, but all the money flows to them. The Golden Raiders are responsible for a majority of the crime citizens encounter in the street, and although they are clearly reviled, they are still given a high degree of respect by everyone. The Golden Raiders are based out of Furnace Town, but every neighborhood has at least one aspiring Raider trying to create their own private network.

Gremlins

Gremlins are a perennial problem in the Goblin City. These beings seem at first to be similar to Goblins in many respects. They share the same greenish pallor of their subterranean brethren, but their ears are shorter and their skin possesses bright, near-poisonous streaks like a venomous toad. They are quicker than Goblins and although their mind clearly works faster, their thoughts are scattered and insane. Those who fight them know that they will not land a blow very often, for their reflexes are of the highest order. However, for all that, Gremlins have nothing in the way of stamina or rigidity. Their flesh, although not exactly spongy, is clearly not as strong as that of Goblins.

Their mindset is largely alien to the minds of Goblins, for their singular passion seems to be the tearing down of machinery. Gremlins despise machines, especially those that produce finished goods. Their hatred is both unreasoning and unexplained. Packs of Gremlins occasionally roam into the city and seek to do mischief on the local infrastructure. If the Goblins are lucky, they catch these roaming gangs of saboteurs early and put an end to their nonsense. If they are not lucky, the Gremlins will likely destroy the local infrastructure and spread out to cause the most damage. Gremlins are notorious for hiding in the smallest, most inconvenient spots in the city. No neighborhood is fully free of Gremlins at any given time, as many lurk for days where they expect no one to find them.

The origin of Gremlins is largely unknown, although there is a single credible theory. Goblins believe that the first of goblin-kind were born in a broth of poisonous runoff from the Nibelung into the trash heaps in the Below. Now, Goblins largely believe, the process has been repeated and Gremlins are the result. Although most Goblins consider Gremlins a terrible nuisance and potential danger, there are a few Goblins who believe that they should be treated as equals and that an understanding should be reached with the Gremlins. Whether an alliance could ever be coaxed out of the destruction-hungry Gremlins remains unknown, and as there are no overtures in the works it is unlikely that there would ever be peace.

Boroughs and Locations of the Goblin City

Although the Boroughs are the largest political regions of the City, they do not encompass all of the City. Roughly a third of the City belongs to no single

Borough. Instead, each neighborhood holds its own local government. It can be assumed that these neighborhoods are similar to the rest of the City, but possess their own unique flavor of industrial squalor.

Tower District The Tower District is the busiest and most heavily populated of all the Boroughs. Here, the great clock towers chime the hours while office workers and various officials walk down Main Street below. The government convenes in the Tower District in the Grand Tower, the highest building in the city and once home of the fabled Goblin King. Now, the two houses of government meet and pass law here. The building itself is crawling with various bureaucratic functionaries, but despite the volume of paperwork the bureaucracy is not impenetrably dense. Tubes pass between buildings all over this Borough as iron balls run noisily through pipes. These pathways provide space for message balls to run between buildings. Initiates into the Mysteries of Flame and Iron infuse these metal spheres with a magical message sent to a person at the end of the pipe. Messages are inscribed with the Crafting of Memory to ensure speedy, accurate flow of information. The rich and influential mainly live in this district and the population density is low.

Furnace Town Furnace Town is by far the noisiest, smokiest, and least hospitable of all the boroughs. Considered a small town in its own right, Furnace Town is the center of industry in the City. It boasts more manufactories, more forges, and more stretches of pipe than any other part of the city. If one considers that every part of the city is at least in some way devoted to manufacture, this makes Furnace Town the greatest center of industry in the world. Poorer workers live here in squalor. Tenements that house multiple families within a single room are common and the air quality is not particularly conducive to life. Smoke lichen grows on every available surface and buildings here are made of quarried grey stone instead of brick, to hide the residue that the coal dust leaves on everything. Many buildings do not possess running water as the ancient infrastructure corroded or was destroyed by Gremlins. People from this Borough take pride in their home though, as they can claim with complete truth that they are part of the single most productive area in the entire world.

Toadstool Hollow Toadstool Hollow is the agricultural district of the Goblin City. Once a pastoral landscape of rolling fungi marked with small cottages and herds of fire goats, it has since been transformed into another assemblage of factories and apartments. The fungi farms are still here and the fire goats still roam, but they exist in only small enclosed areas owned privately. Modern farmers, descendants of the old Hollow farmers, must pay a fee to graze their herd now. New techniques of farming which basically amount to growing fungi indoors, has made their old way of life mostly obsolete. Even the idea of harvest time is made obsolete by the ability to put fungi into tin cans that can be opened later. Despite this, it remains one of the more pleasant places to live. The air is clearer even if it

is sometimes filled with the smell of fire goats. It is relatively free of crime. Since it was constructed recently over pastures, it has a relatively large amount of open space. Those who hail from Toadstool Hollow tend to be more physically fit than Goblins from other places.

Leaden Hills The Leaden Hills are a collection of rolling, subterranean hills pocked with mines and caves. The majority of iron, tin, lead, coal, and copper that is used by the city are mined here. Mining, blacksmithing, and smelting are done on every shift of every day. Although factory work can be dangerous at times, it is nowhere near as hazardous as working in the mines. Mines are prone to collapse and many mines intersect with caverns from the Below where Gremlins spawn. Above the mines, town guardsmen train at all hours to cope with Gremlins looking to cause trouble in the city proper. This section isn't entirely devoted to the mines though, as numerous schools of magic initiate students into the Mysteries of Flame and Iron. As a rite of passage, many students are sent to survive a night alone in the Below. Coming back with the scorched head of a Gremlin is considered a high honor.

The Below The Below is a terrible, dark, cold place that few ever venture. It is said to be the birthplace of the Goblin race, but it is now home to the younger Gremlins. Its passageways twist about in a manner similar to a three-dimensional maze and it surrounds the Goblin City on all sides. Sluices carry sewage, trash, and other unwanted materials into the Below and few know the fate of refuse. Most assume it accumulates or passes into oblivion. Chemical reactions between substances in the runoff frequently produce smelly, humid warmth that is sickening to the spirit and to the body. Some things flushed down to the Below are caught up by Gremlins and used against the city. In fact, no one really knows if there is anything beyond the Below, as no one has ever mounted a successful expedition. Despite its inhospitable nature, there are Goblins who live in the Below. Their number is small, but they eke out an uncomplicated existence free of the hustle and bustle of the city above. Still, it's a steep price to pay for there is no natural light in the Below and temperatures are constantly low enough to make life miserable. Add to that a constant flow of garbage and fouled water. For criminals and hermits, it still remains home.

Main Street Main Street cuts through the center of the Tower District, touching the facades of a majority of the most important buildings of that Borough. Main Street is the most patrolled street in the City and guards armed with Railcasters are found on every corner. Members of Parliament openly mingle with the people on the road, which is the widest thoroughfare in any part of the City. Opera stars from the Grand Hall of Tones fraternize with famous sculptors from the Exquisite Atrium Salon, both of which are located on Main. Numerous craftsmen make their shops along this lane, ensuring that their goods cater to only the Upper Class and

well-to-do Middle Class. The street is lit with shiny brass fixtures which appear to organically grow from the curb.

Nibelung's Skull Row At the end of the extermination of the Nibelung one tribe in Furnace Town gathered up as many of the blackened skulls of the Nibelung as they could and embedded them into the curb of the road so that they would be eternally disgraced by having chamber pots emptied upon their brows. In modern times, the skulls still stand from one end of Furnace Town to the other, and the road, now unsurprisingly known as Nibelung Skull Row, has become the most notorious location for internecine gang warfare and the criminal world in general. Thousands of Goblins have bled their last onto the street in one of hundreds of conflicts that started there. Golden Raiders ostensibly hold the area, but they are just as likely to murder each other as they are a rival. The black market operates openly on this street and even Middle Class Goblins frequent the area to find illegal commodities. Parliamentary guards do not set foot near the Row, knowing that they will likely be carved up by Twin Fang-wielding toughs.

Twelve-Stalagmites-on-the-Cop This very small neighborhood (at the edge of Leaden Hills) consists of a dozen tenements, two dozen salons, and a single cul-de-sac. Each tenement is formed around a large stalagmite which gives the neighborhood the first part of its name. The second part of the name derives from the fact that the cul-de-sac forms off of the Copper Ore Way which is a major industrial corridor. However, Twelve-Stalagmites-on-the-Cop is the center of the bohemian art movement of the Goblin City as well as the infamous Cogdeaf Salon. Shady artists, who would otherwise be considered Scum in other neighborhoods, eke out a living selling avante garde pieces to forward thinking Middle Class Goblins. Although home to many homeless and destitute, this section of town tends to be well educated and hard working. The general populace thinks of 'the Twelve' (as it is called) as a haven for Gremlin sympathizers and nihilists. If the Goblin City can be said to have a counter-cultural movement, the Twelve would be its epicenter.

Goblin Culture

Goblin Nature

Goblins are similar in most ways to humans. They are similar in size, method of reproduction, structure, and lifestyle. They still eat, sleep, and think the way humanity does. They do vary in small ways though. Their ears are pointed in the manner of several subterranean creatures, particularly bats. This tends to make Goblins slightly more perceptive than human beings, as their hearing is slightly increased. Of all the Traits recognized in sentient beings, Goblins are more often Perceptive than any other Trait. Goblins' bodies are fueled by the

fungi they eat, and this tends to make them slightly weaker than mankind. On average, Goblins are faster than humans as their frames are lighter and more able to navigate small places. In regards to Traits, Goblins are not commonly Tough or Strong, but rather, Agile. This is not to say that Goblins cannot be (or are not) Strong or Tough; rather, it is rarer than what is seen amongst the beings of other worlds. Their capabilities in all other manners are essentially the same.

The organs of Goblins' bodies are made to resist toxins, as their world is choked by noxious gases and vaporous toxin runoff. Goblins possess a curious secondary circulatory system to filter toxins out of the blood and transport them away from important organ systems. This secondary circulatory system can be seen just underneath the skin of Goblins, appearing as veins with a greenish tint. These veins "flow" underneath the skin of Goblins, shifting across the body to evenly pull out any toxins that may be present. Nibelung of the past age tried to exterminate Goblin-kind by using terrible airborne poisons, but the amount necessary to kill them off was sufficient to also affect the Nibelung population. Goblins retain this resistance to toxins to this day.

Life and Death

The birth of a Goblin is noted by whatever physician is present and then mother and child are asked to move along to make way for another expecting mother. Many children attend school if their parents can afford to send them there, but a substantial amount never receives any formal learning. These children are sought after by both Industriarchs (for cheap labor) and the gangs (for future muscle). Upper class children are cared for by nannies. There is no concept of adolescence for the Goblins: either a person is a child or they are an adult. As such, upon physical maturity, Goblins are expected to join the work force. Idle hands, after all, carry daggers.

Goblins cremate their dead and scatter their ashes into the street. The City does with the remains as it desires. Cremation is favored because it does not take up any space. There are no mausoleums or graves in the City. There is simply no space. Nor do Goblins feel any particular esteem for sacred treatment of bodies. In their estimation, the body is merely animated garbage that is smart enough to walk and talk with other collections of refuse. Goblins have no concept of the immortal spirit or soul. Although they may acknowledge a divine or miraculous presence within themselves, Goblins believe that life is an essentially physical thing. Even the magic they conjure to themselves through the Mysteries of Flame and Iron is a manifestation of natural properties that theoretically could be measured with enough know-how. Whatever divine spark a Goblin possesses, it leaves her when she ceases breathing forever.

This makes the Goblin outlook on death a singularly bleak one: they believe one's consciousness departs upon death, never again to exist. Philosophers frequently debate the fate and nature of Goblin consciousness. Is it a chemical process, like the reaction of fire on wood? Or is it something else, of magical origin like mystic fire conjured through pure will? Despite the debate, nearly

all Goblins concede that the point is ultimately moot. All Goblins pass into nothingness when their time is up.

Technology

Goblin mechanical technology has reached new heights, building on the work of the city's previous inhabitants. Steam engines have been in the city as long as thinking beings inhabited it. Great furnaces heat the city and drive the mammoth engines at each of the six directions of the city. Although it blankets the city in soot and drives black clouds into the air, these devices give the city life. The machines build other machines which will themselves be used to upkeep the city or provide a service to the people who live within. The oldest of such machines are made from black iron that has been alloyed with darkness from the very bottom of the Below itself. These monstrosities have belched smoke into the air and toiled for centuries without maintenance. Indeed, there are few if any who could actually replace a busted part. These machines are incredibly valuable, though. They provide gas that lights the streets and homes, pump heat into otherwise freezing caverns, and keeps fresh water moving through the city for consumption and hygiene. These machines are greatly hated by the Gremlins who wish to silence their racket for eternity.

Newer machines run on steam and are a collection of steel and brass pipes. White plumes of smoke jut out of the sides of such contraptions and Goblins generally swarm on them to keep their bolts from bursting. Despite precautions, something always seems to muck up these engines and cause them to be fixed. Some of the more insane Gremlins are not averse to throwing themselves into the gears of these machines. Although they will surely perish between its workings, they know that they will shut the machine down at least for a few hours. That is apparently all the justification they need to throw away their lives.

Goblin technology provides the city with numerous amenities. Manufactured clothing, each suit exactly the same as the other, provides a cheap and efficient way for Goblins to cover themselves. Although the rich and well bred still employ tailors and seamstresses, everyone else wears whatever came off the assembly line. Canned fungi provide a steady, reliable source of food even in between fungi harvests. Other processes refine proteins into meat-like substances, allowing people to eat hearty, meaty meals without using the land and resources necessary for raising livestock. There are even machines that can ferment coal and turn it into coal wine. Light is provided by natural gas, which is pumped through the city by ancient, Nibelung-built machines. Great machines that run along tracks move large numbers of Goblins between neighborhoods. These steam powered Goblin-moving devices are called Ground Engines.

Printing presses have likewise always been a part of Goblin culture. Even in the tribal days, when technology was not well understood, pamphlets were spread from Borough to Borough. Newspapers, political agitprop, and pulp fiction abound in the City. Literature of the moment is preferred to well-bound books, as flimsy paper publications are far cheaper. In time, these publications find their way into the waste sluices of the city and degrade in the Below, but

more are printed daily. The most popular newspaper in the city is the Evening Urban Cantor, which is part tabloid and part legitimate journalism (as it is known in the City). The most popular serialized pulp follows the adventures of Gearhart Shock, a two-fisted hero and Initiate of the Mysteries of Flame and Iron. The current storyline tells of Gearhart's adventures in the Forest of Doors, although it is considered a work of pure fancy. Royalists publish weekly pamphlets urging worldwide revolution and no matter how many illegal presses are shut down, somehow, the flow of propaganda does not cease.

Economy, Measurements, and Calendar

The Goblin economy relies on a mostly unregulated system of capitalism, using the Gear as its most common unit of currency. The Gear appears like a copper coin with gear-like tines. Gears have denominations, denoted by larger or smaller tines and differing pictures on the faces of the coins (most commonly, Parliament, Nibelung skulls, and depictions of specific towers). The smallest unit is known as a pence, which is enough to buy a penny dreadful or a serving of flavored soda water. Twelve pence equals a shilling, which could buy you a Fire-Goat. Twenty shillings constitute a pound, which is enough to purchase a new Middle Class wardrobe. Goblins require very precise measurements in order to keep their machines in tiptop shape, and thus, they use a measurement system inherited from the Nibelung. The basic unit of measurement is the inch; twelve inches equals a foot. Three feet equal a yard. For mass, Goblins use the ounce as the basic measurement. Sixteen ounces of water constitutes a cup, which is the most basic unit of volume. Goblins measure degrees of temperature, with 32 degrees considered the freezing point of water and 212 degrees considered its boiling point. The Goblin method of keeping time measures seconds, minutes, and hours.

The smallest unit of the Goblin calendar is the Shift. Each day is composed of five five-hour Shifts, making the day 25 hours long. Shifts are named after their placement in the day; the First Shift begins first, Second following, then Third, etc. There are no natural occurrences, such as sunrise or increased warmth, to mark the beginning of a new day. Rather, massive chimes sound in every Borough to signal the changing of Shifts (the chime rings a number of times equal to the Shift that is starting). Because there is no environmental difference between Second and Fifth (or any other) Shifts, work is evenly distributed between Shifts. Thus, relationships can be separated by physical distance as well as by time; many friendships have been lost when a Goblin's scheduled work Shift changes because they might be sleeping when their friends are on their off-hours. Generally, every thirty days constitutes a Pay Period, which is also referred to as a 'month'. There are twelve Pay Periods in a year, each with a florid name to give them a distinct character. Pay Periods which end in the designation "-Ember" have an additional day (31 days), bringing the length of a year to 365 days. The beginning of a new year is hardly different from any other day, save that the Parliamentary leaderships of the various houses are required to give a State-of-the-City speech in their home neighborhood.

The Pay Periods (months) from first to last: Scrubber-Pipe, Lever-Pull, Bond-a-Bind, All-Torque, Fine-Halls, Tin-Whisker, Soot-Solvent, Jamb-Fitter, Bronze-Ember, Coal-Ember, Cog-Ember, and Toil-Ember.

The current year is 715 ((2010)), with the current accounting of years beginning with the reign of the Goblin King (year zero). It is believed that Nibelung civilization ended in year 13 BGK (Before the Goblin King). The Greater House of Parliament was established in 418. The last Goblin King, Alexander, abdicated his throne in 489. The phenomena known as the Forest of Doors was first seen in late 710, but did not enter the public's knowledge until early 714.

Names

Goblins have a first name and last name. Their first names are usually abstract, many of them taken from Nibelung words or phrases. Male names include or are similar to names such as Albert, Alexander, Bruno, Dietrich, Edmund, Gerhard, Hans, Hermann, Heinrich, Johan, Mathias, Michael, Otto, Sigmund, Tobias, Viktor, or Wilhelm. Women take names such as Abigail, Beatrix, Claudia, Edda, Gabriel, Hilda, Ingrid, Isabelle, Katarina, Magdalene, Nina, Rebekka, Salome, Sibelle, Ursula, or Veronika.

A Goblin's last name is taken from his or her father's family name. These names are concrete and refer to specific things, often tribe names or deed names left over from the tribal period of Goblin culture. Names such as Ironbelly, Coldhand, Swindlehome, Flamefist, Bat-Eye, Steelclaw, Tinderheart, Trashworth, Darktongue, Anvilskull, or Sadvoice are common in the city.

Food

Goblins subsist on a steady diet of a variety of fungi. A majority of the fungi used to feed the Goblin City are large mushrooms, each capable of feeding a single family. Hundreds of thousands of mushrooms are harvested daily to meet the needs of the city. Mushrooms are used as main courses for most dishes and its thick, protein-rich flesh is a ready substitute for meat. Spice fungi are also grown to season dishes made of traditional mushrooms.

A majority of food served in the city has been processed in some fashion. Fresh food is not considered very appetizing unless it has been fed through a machine in some manner. Most food is taken from a can, and Goblins can purchase entire meals that require no preparation at the local grocer in their neighborhood. Snacks, full meals, and even drinks are all processed in some variety. Carbonated soda water is popular amongst children, and some are sold as energy boosting supplements. These are made from specific mold cultures that produce a sweet, caramel taste and provide the Goblin body with enough a boost of energy to pull a double shift at whatever manufactory they are employed by.

Many drinks are made from inedible substances, but are rendered edible through the process of industrial fermentation. Coal, a very plentiful resource, is processed through ancient techniques to create coal wine, a traditional drink.

Coal wine comes in various strengths, from mildly intoxicating to outright hallucinogenic. The stronger coal wines can sometimes have addictive affects, and specific blends have been made illegal by Parliament. This does not mean that it isn't available though, for the gangs make a steady trade in such things. The least sulfurous coal wines are the most expensive, and true connoisseurs only drink draughts that are at least a decade old.

Although technically not food, Goblins ingest a lot of pills in the course of their lives. Pills provide Goblins with all manner of medicinal effects. Vitamins, pain-killers, energy boosters, laxatives, instant meals, and cosmetic enhancers of all types are taken via pill. Advertisements for the literally thousands of brands offered in the city litter nearly every free surface on local buildings. In time, these advertisements simply fall off and are washed into the Below. Moments later, a new advertisement is nailed to that very spot.

Clothing

Most Goblin clothing has been manufactured in one of many textile mills. Powered by coal, these manufactories produce hundreds of perfectly identical suits, pants, and shirts. Only the rich indulge in personally tailored clothing, and a skilled tailor or designer is a sign of wealth and taste. Buttons are found on all types of clothes. The working class dresses in tight shirts and buttoned-up pants. Pants are usually held up by suspenders. Should weather require it, they wear an over shirt made of heavy material such as wool. Women of the Lower Class generally dress identically to men. The Middle Class wears similar clothing, but might add a pocket watch or shabby hat to add an element of sophistication. The Upper Class wears well-cut suits with dark colored overcoats and silk undershirts. The true gentleman Goblin wears gloves, a tall black hat, carries a pocket watch, and walks with a cane. Sometimes, a Goblin will wear a monocle when being seen at a large gathering like Parliament or the opera. Female Goblins wear roughly the same clothing, except on formal occasions when they wear lacey hoop-skirts. In fact, the different modes of dress for men and women is largely considered the province of the rich.

Goblins of all sorts, regardless of class, adorn themselves with the trappings of industrial life. Polarized welding goggles, tool belts, steel toed boots, and similar accouterments have always been, and continue to be, fashionable in the City. In many ways, it signals a willingness to contribute to the overall industrial effort that keeps Goblin-kind alive and well. This is especially important to Industriarchs, as they use it as a sign of solidarity with the common worker. It is considered not at all strange to wear welding goggles on one's forehead while in an elegantly laced ball gown, for example.

Philosophy

Goblin culture values labor above all things. They respect a person who puts in additional effort while working a shift on the assembly line or the shoemaker that stays open after hours for those who need his services. Conversely, Goblins

revile those who indulge in leisure. Even the most powerful gangsters in town have their own businesses or day jobs. The most powerful crime boss in a Borough likely spends his days toiling at whatever labor he performs. Many incorporate their chosen crimes into their businesses. Those in the Upper Class devote themselves to matters of business and economics, and a few even take crafts to occupy their spare time. The unemployed are not even given political rights. Goblins believe it is a person's duty to labor until you die.

Goblins do not believe in a soul or life force. They do not foresee an afterlife beyond death. They have no tradition of a heaven, an underworld, a hell, a paradise, or any sort of existence beyond the physical. Science explains that Goblins spontaneously came into being in the filthy Below as a result of chemical reactions. Goblins firmly believe that they are animated rude matter set into motion and filled with a need to labor until the rude matter returns from where it came.

Because the Goblin City is so cosmopolitan, there is a strong undercurrent of collectivism to their philosophy. It is considered correct and just to help along those who are in need. It is considered a terrible thing to allow others to suffer, especially in one's own family. Even gangsters who routinely break debtor's legs likely give a coin to the coal wine drunkard on the street. Likewise, a crowded urban existence necessitates a certain degree of politeness to those around you. Goblins are not obsessed with politeness, as a rule, but adhere strongly to the "do not shit where you eat" mantra. Since the City is relatively small, "where you eat" is generally everywhere you go. There is no countryside to flee to or border to escape across aside from the Below.

Art, Architecture, and Music

Goblin art varies widely. There are really two great schools, and each is centered at a specific salon in town. The more acclaimed of the two schools is the "grand style" of the Exquisite Atrium Salon. Their style is reminiscent of the ancient masters and is highly influenced by the stark realist styles of the extinct Nibelung civilization. The grand style is known by its coldly representative images of the nobility and social elite. It is by, for, and about the Upper Class. Its use of darkness, hard angles, softly flowing edges, and intricacy can be seen in painting, sculpture, architecture, and even music. The composers who create the grand symphonies that the upper class loves so much are often staples of the artist circles. The middle class seeks forever to emulate the grand style, and as pretenders to the upper class's grace and taste, any Middle Class representation of the grand style always seems to fall flat.

The bias and snobbishness of the grand style and Upper Class has created a new school of art. The new school rejects the old styles and invents their own, new tropes. The so-called "urban heathen" style meets most often at the Cogdeaf Salon in Leaden Hills. Here, artists work while surrounded on all sides by other hung pieces. It is both a studio and a gallery, allowing interlopers the ability to see the works and artist at the moment of creative conception. Artists here create works with surreal angles, blurry half-shapes, and abstractly applied

depths. Art made by the urban heathens is maddening and stark. Many believe that being surrounded with such images can drive a person mad or attract the presence of Gremlins. Indeed, much of the artwork depicts Gremlins doing what they do best. Such works are seen as decadent, and the Upper Class clearly believes that such art celebrates the downfall of the city. Still, there is a large and rabid demand for such works of art amongst the educated Middle Class, particularly amongst initiates of the Mysteries of Flame and Iron. The Middle Class, in its emulation of the Upper, desires art greatly and as long as there is a demand for such works there will be artists with a willingness to defy the established principles of artistic expression. Many artists of the urban heathen school also practice the Mysteries of Flame and Iron, as something about abstract expression seems to also aid the budding magician in his studies.

Architecture in the Goblin City is often both utilitarian and decorative. Goblins excel at metalworking, and it is considered lazy and low-class to create useful items that are not also decorative. Images of Goblins, gears, pipes, weapons, industrial utopia, and fire are built in-relief on every awning in the city. Every building has gargoyles mounted at their edges. Every door knocker has the image of a Goblin's grinning face. Buildings are also made for strength. The use of metal framing allows buildings to be made at up to 10 stories tall. The great towers of the city are even taller, but these were not built by Goblins. As a result, even though the city is so very small, it houses millions and millions of Goblins. Most buildings are fire-proof, as very little wood is used in their construction. However, many of the city's buildings are so old that they are beginning to come apart. A common sight is a building that leans over the street. Usually, such structures are propped up with columns to make sure it doesn't crash into the road. Such a thing never happens, so obviously the technique is successful. This does not add any comfort to the atmosphere because, although the buildings stand, they loom over pedestrians in a very sinister manner.

Music in the Goblin City is not uncommon. Usually, it is drowned out by the din of metal hammering metal. The Lower Class folk often gather and sing or bang on sheets of metal with their tools. An entire style of music, based mainly on improvised percussion, has grown up around the city. It often has impromptu lyrics that accompany it. Usually, the music celebrates the local neighborhood and the people who inhabit it. It is self aggrandizing and makes reference to locations and points of pride amongst local people. The Middle Class attends the symphony just as their superiors do, but oftentimes retire to the pub later in the evening. Pub music, usually raucous drunken choruses, dates back to the time before the Goblin King. These tunes frequently imitate the war ballads Goblins sang as they marched against the Nibelung. Those in the Upper Class prefer the more orderly sounds of the orchestra. Great symphony halls exist in most Boroughs, but it is the Grand Hall of Tones on Main Street in the Tower District that is most celebrated. Here, grand operas are performed daily for those who can afford to attend. The stories told there are often morality plays about the need for honest labor and humility. Stringed instruments and metal horns are the standard for any orchestra.

Prejudices and Superstitions

Goblins tend to overestimate the necessity of work. Their culture values it so highly that sometimes unreasonable demands are made by superiors. Industriarchs in particular get richer the harder their workers labor. Therefore, they are given every possible encouragement (both positive and negative) to work as hard as is possible. Likewise, Goblins look down on those who don't earn their day's wage. Even criminals hold down day jobs. This irrational drive to make others labor is one part social conditioning and one part envy. The idea that someone could live their life without having paid their dues is unthinkable unfair to someone who has spent their life meaninglessly toiling on an assembly line.

To Goblins, the idea of other beings besides themselves, the Nibelung, and the hated Gremlins seems rather far-fetched. They have no concept of immaterial spirit beings. They have no histories that could explain abstract beings. If they were to meet such things, obviously they would not reject their existence. Rumors of such however would assuredly be met with derision. Stories from the Forest of Doors describe fairies (playful spirits of light), humans (uncultured round-ears), and apsara (lazy water-borne mystics) and the educated classes reject the existence of all of them. Thus far, no specimen, alive or dead, of any of these creatures have been proffered and thus cannot rationally be regarded by Goblin-kind.

Families, Gender Roles, and Marriage

Family is important to Goblins. Goblins expect that children obey their parents when they are young, and it is considered right and proper that a family member sacrifice for the benefit of her family. Families live together for their entire life. Often, they work for the same firms or toil away at the same assembly line. Families are expected to remain loyal to one another throughout their life.

Genders are considered roughly equal in Goblin society. A female Goblin is just as capable at any job that a male Goblin might excel in. The realities of mass production are such that it matters little whether the operator is male or female (or even educated or fully limbed). Thus, Industriarchs hire both equally and with the same amount of frequency. However, Goblin culture does make assumptions about the various genders. Women are usually shunned out of criminal culture, for there is a belief that women who break the law are somehow deficient. Women who do serve the criminal gangs surely have to prove their worth. Only amongst the rich do women dress differently from men.

Marriage amongst Goblins is a fast thing. There are no grand ritual weddings. A male Goblin asks a female Goblin (never in reverse) to marry and they are henceforth considered married. As long as the bureaucracy is eventually notified about the union, no one complains. Marriage is expected to happen early in a Goblin's life, for children are expected quickly and often. Single sex unions are not illegal and although homosexuality is tolerated by society, it is not legally recognized. Traditionalists are, as would be expected, horrified

by the notion of such a thing and brutish bullies love to torment anyone they perceive as deviant.

Holidays of the Goblin City

Goblins like their lives and lifestyles to operate much like clockwork. They do not have time to adhere to a thousand customary celebrations, nor would society permit something so insubstantial as rituals to get in the way of productivity. However, the Goblin City does recognize two very important days in which labor slows to a crawl.

Goblin Market Day (Spring Holiday)

During the month of All-Torque, Goblins begin producing goods to show off the heights of their talents. At the end of the month, each neighborhood holds a local fair known as Goblin Market Day. Everyone is expected to display their greatest products for sale and to give gifts to their friends and family. This holiday, in many ways, accounts for why nearly every Goblin has some sort of craft skill. Anyone not participating is seen as selfish, lazy, or at best, uncharitable. Endless literature is devoted to showing how miserly and lazy Goblins suffer during this noble holiday. Contests are held amongst the various brands and craftsmen to determine which producer makes the finest quality good. There are food tastings, durability tests, public critiques of art, and drunken feasts in every corner of the City. Even though workers are permitted to take the day off, the City still operates on a skeleton crew. The Mysteries of Flame and Iron meet for their secret rituals on the Fifth Shift of the Goblin Market Day to perform rites of an unknown nature.

Guy Framebox Day (Fall Holiday)

Every Cog-Ember, every neighborhood produces a likeness of the Goblin King out of industrial waste, which is promptly burned in effigy. This is to commemorate the day in 489 when Guy Framebox filled the King's throne-room with mining explosives in an attempt to assassinate the King. His plot failed to kill the King, but struck enough fear into Alexander and his advisers that he abdicated the throne that very day. In order to remind the people of Framebox's heroism, Goblins are given the day off so that they can complete the immolation of the monarch that Framebox had failed to accomplish. After the last ember of the effigy dies, everyone departs the scene in favor of the local pub, where prodigious amounts of drinking occurs. Royalists have marked Guy Framebox Day as a day of violent protest and general sowing of chaos. For this reason, people generally refuse to criticize Parliament during the day, in order that they are not seen as being revolutionary in any fashion.

Magic and the Mysteries of Flame and Iron

The Mysteries of Flame and Iron are based around paradoxes. It is a practice that reconciles creation and destruction. Coal is destroyed, but it allows iron to be forged. This is the principle magic in the Goblin City most embodies: sacrifice, change, and alteration. Practitioners of the style obsess over these paradoxes, questioning the nature of the elements they study. In the Leaden Hills Borough, mystery cults have sprung up around the magical style, and orders of magicians are initiated into the Mysteries after questing for Gremlins in the terrible below. Like the analogy of coal, flame, and iron, initiates into the Mysteries must destroy a Gremlin to forge their own skills.

The Mysteries (The spells and rituals) themselves are synonymous with the mystery cult that keeps them. If there is any overarching organization to the cult, it is kept in strictest secrecy. Indeed, there is much about the Mysteries that are kept behind closed doors. Practitioners of the School are notoriously closed lipped about their capabilities and the overall details of the practice. Supposedly, the Mysteries incorporate a secret handshake to identify members, but this is, like all things Mysterious, unverifiable. The spells and rituals are known to most people, however, only because of popular accounts in penny dreadfuls. The origins of the Mysteries of Flame and Iron are shrouded in... well... mystery. It is a commonly held belief that the Mysteries have been around for centuries and that they predate the Goblin's conquest of the city. Images of the Goblin King depict him with a crown of fire, alluding to the spell, Forgefire Crown. However, some controversial scholars propose that it was in fact first practiced by the Nibelung. This flies in the face of common wisdom, for the Nibelung are often associated with magic of darkness and endless depth. The Mysteries of Flame and Iron are antithetical to the principles of emptiness and darkness, so this belief is not widely held among practitioners of the Mysteries.

Initiates into the Mysteries are treated like any other worker who possesses a unique and useful skill. Lower Class folk find initiates to be eccentric or impractical. Although this perception is perhaps false, many Goblins feel that magical practice is too abstract to be worthwhile. Frequently, the governments of various Boroughs employ Initiates as Gremlin hunters, for their ability to strike foes with flame is unparalleled. Initiates also make master tinkers, for they can change the size and shape of tools at will. Toolboxes are obsolete for such workers, for they can conjure a dagger from their very bones and then alter it to become any tool of any size they may need. Initiates into the Mysteries also serve as healers, for fire is a hearth element. If an initiate knows the spell Crafting of Memory, they can serve in the bureaucracy reading magically encoded messages that are sent through pipes of one bureau to another.

The Mysteries of Flame and Iron are thought to be a natural thing. It is an extension of the will, like any machine or tool. Its presence does not point to the existence of a divine or permanent soul to Goblins. They see magical practice as a manipulation of natural forces through unorthodox but purely materialistic means. Like their attitude towards spontaneous generation in the Below, Goblins see supernatural occurrences as entirely rational, scientific

phenomena. Although it may be mysterious, magic is just another discipline, such as brick laying, canning, or shoe mending.

Common Aphorisms and Colloquialisms

“Idle hands carry daggers.” (Goblins believe strongly that a person, to be morally pure, must labor whenever possible. Hence, the implication that idleness causes violence.)

“Wish in one hand and crap in the other and see which one is filled up first.” (A very cynical phrase to discourage people from simply wishing good things to happen. It implies in a vulgar manner that one must take steps to achieve what they desire.)

“No one tells a Furnace Towner when he’s had too much to drink! Only a Furnace Towner knows when he has to stop drinking. Hence, this fight-preventing phrase.)

“Long live the king!” (Although it sounds like it is in support of the government, it is actually a call to overthrow the Parliament and replace it with a new Goblin King who will usher in an age of violent chaos. This is the battle cry of the Scarlet Brigands.)

“As worthless as Gremlin piss.” (An exclamation of worthlessness.)

“(S)he’s as dense as the air is dark.” ((S)he is extremely stupid. This saying does not necessarily make sense in other worlds.)

“Ashes to ashes, trash to trash.” (A saying of lament usually associated with death.)

Five Things Every Goblin Knows

All Goblins know...

...That Death is Final Goblins do not believe in an afterlife. They do not believe that their existence is divine, for they were the product of chemical reactions between city runoff and rotting garbage. Their spontaneous generation from trash is as without divine origin as their deaths. If presented with solid proof of an afterlife, many Goblins would change their view, but as it stands, Goblins see no evidence of a soul or an afterlife.

...That Hard Work is Essential to a Good Life Goblins respect hard work, particularly one that creates a finished product. Laziness, unemployment, or pointless artistic expression are things to be avoided. Goblins believe that labor is a moral imperative, and shun those who don’t wish to labor for the common good. Some Goblins even labor just for the sake of laboring, without any need. There are very few

Goblins who do not possess some training in the Craft or Tinkering Skills, and of those that don't, nearly all of them are either Upper Class or Scum.

- ...Whether They are Lower Class, Middle Class, Upper Class, or Scum Goblins are class-obsessed and even though the social strata have no legal standing they none the less dictate much about a Goblin's life. Each social class seeks to emulate the one above it, except of course the Upper Class whose opulence defies imitation by design. Goblins continuously seek to improve their economic standing and are made keenly aware on a daily basis where they fit.
- ...Their Favorite Products and Brand Names Goblins are surrounded by manufactories and advertisements. Every finished good has a brand name so that buyers can return to those products they especially enjoyed and expect the same level of quality. Thus, brand loyalty is high in the Goblin City. Goblins are loathe to switch to generic, low quality, or knock-off brands when they have access to the real thing. Goblins can always explain their preferences and are quick to make recommendations based on their personal experiences with products.
- ...Their Skills and Talents Every Goblin knows his worth. He can tell you, in precise terms, what he is capable of and at what price. Most Goblins have some appreciable skill and those ones who don't tend to drink coal wine all day and slip silently in the Below. Every Goblin seeks to be recognized for her own personal skill, so few will let an opportunity to show their acumen pass. Goblins are keenly aware of their Skills and Traits as a result.

Inspirational Material

- Labyrinth (Movie) Hey, it's a city. It's inhabited by Goblins. What more need be said?
- Gangs of New York (Movie) This is an urban setting where gangs make war in the streets while simultaneously holding down their daily jobs. The Goblin City is in many ways a fantastic vision of 19th century New York (and London to an extent).
- Nightmare Before Christmas (Movie) Although the themes of the movie aren't similar to the themes of the Goblin City, the aesthetic of Halloween Town is definitely similar to that of the Goblin City. The buildings loom, every surface has a carving or relief of something, and darkness clings to every corner.
- Songs of Innocence and of Experience (Literature) William Blake's best known works appear in this thematically aligned collection of poetry. Blake

lived in the dawn of the industrial revolution and despised the direction British civilization was headed. His image of a blasted industrial land and the historical elements he often wrote about were a huge influence on the Goblin City.

Arcanum (Video Game) This is a setting steeped in both magic and fantastic steam-level technology. The aesthetic of riveted swords and spells that conjure gas-burning fire is something both settings share.

The Ring of the Nibelung (Music) The particular part I am thinking of is in Act 2 of 'Das Rheingold'. As the Nordic Gods descend into Nibelheim to confront the Nibelung Alberecht, the creator of the mythic Ring to rule them all, Richard Wagner writes in a musical interlude that ends in the ringing sounds of anvils. It is one of the most powerfully melancholy pieces of music ever written and a masterful critique of industrial society.