

## THE MAILED FIST TRIBE

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Equally renowned for their battle skills and mercenary hearts, the warriors of the Mailed Fist serve anyone with sufficient coin. Heavily armoured, disciplined and well-trained, those who stand below the Mailed Fist's banner are formidable fighters capable of great slaughter. High above, their winged cavalry—elite warriors and battlecasters astride gigantic black bats—hurl missiles and spells down upon their hapless foes.

The Mailed Fist dwells in three heavily fortified ancient hill forts (Eir-Andra, Eir-Darrh and Eir-Othim) deep in a range of bare, sombre, crag-studded hills. From these redoubts, the tribe operates six battles (warbands 500 strong). The tribe's most feared weapons—even more dreaded than their disciplined, mail-clad warbands—are the huge black bats upon which ride their most puissant warriors and spellcasters.

The tribe does not trouble nearby kingdoms instead raiding nearby humanoid tribes for plunder and slaves. Thus, most of its civilised neighbours do not view them as an active threat. Indeed, several kingdoms pay the Mailed Fist a yearly tribute to attack the other humanoid tribes infesting the surrounding hills, thus binding them together in a mutually beneficial alliance.

### SOCIETY & ORGANISATION

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The Mailed Fist is a tightly regimented, organised society. Every adult tribe member has served or still serves in a battle, and many specialise in useful, martial trades as well. The tribe counts many armourers, engineers, animal trainers, siege specialists, weaponsmiths, and so on among its strength.

Relatively peaceful contact with so many nearby kingdoms and other powerful employers has somewhat mellowed the tribe's natural proclivity toward evil. While the tribe as a whole is still lawful and evil in outlook, the incidence of non-evil individuals is far higher than in other goblinoid tribes. Additionally, being highly lawful in outlook, the tribe has garnered a reputation for always honouring a contract.

The tribe's society thrives on equality, with tribal members making no distinction between the sexes. All adults serve in one of their fort's battles for a minimum of five years, and both males and females can rise to become a battle marshal.

The tribe numbers about 6,500 individuals of which 3,000 are warriors. Each hill fort maintains two battles. It is for the services of these units that potential patrons dare the long journey to the Mailed Fist's gates. Normally, one battle garrisons each fort while the other is on campaign.

**Arcane Magic:** Members of the Mailed Fist are the rarest of hobgoblins because they use "elf magic" to wage war. This is a new development for the tribe, only beginning after the tribe settled their hill fort homes. The tribe's sorcerers theorise that some forgotten echo of whoever or whatever built the hill forts yet lingers in these desolate places and that its unseen influence unlocks the arcane potential lurking in a select few of the tribe.

## PERSONALITIES

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Most of the Mailed Fist tribe comprises disciplined warriors intent on serving their tribe and earning battle-glory. A few members of the tribe, however, are exceptional.

- **Ceral** (male hobgoblin) tends toward neutrality rather than evil—a legacy of his many deployments serving human masters. A thin, skinny hobgoblin, he is a veteran of countless border skirmishes and orc hunts.
- **Battle Marshal Felyex** (male hobgoblin) leads one of the tribe's battles. A strict disciplinarian, he is a stern, fair commander. A veteran of almost 20 years of warfare, he has seen much in his time and is not easily impressed.

### ECOLOGY & LAIR

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The Mailed Fist dwells in three heavily fortified hill forts (Eir-Andra, Eir-Darrh and Eir-Othim) hidden deep within an inaccessible range of hills. The hill forts sprawl across the highest and least accessible summits and are visible from a great distance. All have excellent views of the surrounding area. Surprising the Mailed Fist in strength is difficult, if not impossible, without magical aid.

The tribe keeps the land around each hill fort clear, cutting back encroaching vegetation and maintaining their defensive works. Steep-sided ditches, hidden pits and fields of caltrops litter the surrounding bleak, wasted hillsides.

The Mailed Fist has augmented and expanded the hill forts—themselves the progeny of an unknown elder race—and have constructed their own stone redoubts as a final refugee in the face of overwhelming force. Caves and caverns pockmark the hills upon which the forts stand. Within these lightless realms, the tribe's bat masters train the great beasts for which the tribe is feared and famed. These beasts, a surviving remnant of an elder age, have served the Mailed Fist for generations.

### COMBAT & TACTICS

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Trusting to their heavy armour and superior training, units of the Mailed Fist often prevail against far more numerous foes by forming nigh-impenetrable shield walls. Their training, discipline and lawful nature enables them to keep fighting long after other more disorganised rabbles have spent themselves against the Mailed Fist's defences. Well protected by their heavy armour, warriors often fight defensively to limit casualties while pinning their opponents in place for their archers to annihilate.

Utilising their ability to see in the dark, the tribe is equally able to fight during the day and night—an advantage they ruthlessly exploit. Battle clerics serve alongside the warriors—healing them, using defensive magics to protect them and exhorting them onwards to ever more heroic acts.

**Words** Creighton Broadhurst