

The Guta



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If you go down to the woods today, you're sure of a big surprise
If you go down to the woods today, you'd better go in disguise!
For every guta that ever was brutal will gather there for certain
Because today's the day the guta will eat your head and drink your blood
and grind your bones and slurp your marrow and pluck out
your eyes and nibble your tongue!

-Children's lullaby from New Gardzyka

The guta are a mystery. Until that day they swarmed from the mountain passes and attempted to sweep away all that was civilized, they had never been seen nor heard of, not even in rumour. The term "guta" was borrowed from fables, evil spirits used to frighten children into behaving. But the guta today are very real. Debates continue: are the guta the creation of some mad demon prince? Are they marauders from another plane, trapped here on Ærth? Or could they really be, as the Solemn Brethren maintain, vengeance incorporated, sent by the gods to punish a faithless humanity?

What is known of the guta comes from the terrible days of the Guta Wars, and the work of the world's first (and to date only) gutaologist, Hamish Kaikbakstar of Arberabrae. The collected fragments of Kaikbakstar's works were published posthumously as *Twenty-seven hours and thirty-four minutes amongst the Guta*. Fortunately for future, less dedicated scholars, Kaikbakstar spent his time amongst the guta recording his observations and making sketches incessantly. Also fortunately, the Margraf of the Mountain Marches had a soft spot in his heart for scholars with a soft spot in their heads, and a squad was dispatched to extricate Kaikbakstar from his research. And finally, it is fortunate that Kaikbakstar used pigments that proved astonishingly resistant to digestive juices, and used a medium for his observations that proved remarkably easy to wipe clean of blood and gore.

To speak of guta society is an oxymoron; the guta do not build, nor mine, nor till the earth. They do not write, nor paint, nor compose songs. They do not even have a language as such, speaking a debased pidgin of the Common Tongue which is so perverted that it is incomprehensible to outsiders. They appear to exist solely to destroy. For this reason, there are no guta settlements: they roam their territories, eating anything which breathes, and go raiding for further food. The closest the guta come to fabricating anything is re-forging pilaged weapons and armour into baroque follies, the more spikes, barbs, and hooks the better. If they knew about Klingons, the guta would be using *bat'leths*.

... shapes and demeanours: dog heads and pig trotters; wolf face with goat's horns and man-like feet; and every other combination. Only the eyes appear human, if it is possible to use that term when a single glance reveals that there is no humanity behind...

Fragment #7, *Twenty-seven hours and thirty-four minutes amongst the Guta*

The overwhelming majority of guta are reivers, and the term “guta” is usually used to refer specifically to the reivers. Few are identical in appearance: they stand some seven to nine feet tall, on paws, hooves, trotters, talons, and occasionally feet. Heads and upper limbs are equally varied, resembling bears, canines, goats, rams, and any other foul-tempered animal. There is rarely any correlation between the apparent species from which the various pieces of anatomy are cobbled. Kaikbakstar believed that some types, such as those with goat heads, were the most intelligent, while the canine- and sheep-like reivers were the least. Such variations mean little amongst the guta, since there is no ordered hierarchy, but may have some bearing on who actually survives a battle.

Almost all guta, regardless of gender, are reivers, comprising the howling hordes which make a force of guta. Armour is highly variable, depending on what can be scavenged, and may be as much as a fashion statement as augmentation to the guta’s tough hides. Any sort of heavy, two-handed slashing or bludgeoning weapon is preferred (ideally with added spikes and barbs); human-sized polearms often nicely fit this bill. Perhaps one in ten guta reivers carries a crudely made bow, the size of a human longbow, but with the ranged of a short bow, firing a spear-sized arrow (viciously barbed, of course) with deadly force.

Reivers loathe running water and will detour for leagues to avoid crossing even a modest stream unless driven by the half-souled.



Guta Reiver / Setvasai

GUTA REIVER (medium humanoid) CR1 (XP 200)

AC 15 (natural hide plus scraps of armour) HP 33 Speed 30'
ST 16(+2) DE 11(+0) CO 16(+3) IN 7(-2) WI 6(-2) CH 8(-1)

Skills: survival +3

Senses: Darkvision 60'; passive perception 11

Languages: Guta (a pidgin version of Common, incomprehensible to an ordinary speaker)

Immunities Poison

Melee/ranged: Great Sword or polearm: +4 (2d6+2 slashing) short bow +3 (2d4+2 piercing plus 1d4+1 slashing when removing arrow)

Bedecked in scraps of ornate armour and wielding brutally hooked and barbed weapons, the bestial guta reivers live to destroy. Only the most intelligent will ever attempt to parley, and that will only for so long as is necessary to gain an advantage.

... fall from their bodies to the ground, where they scamper for shelter. Such scampering appears necessary, since I have seen a reiver grab one of these spawn and pop it into its mouth! But do not sympathize too much with these newborns, since I have watched them turn on...

Fragment #38, Twenty-seven hours and thirty-four minutes amongst the Guta



Free Peoples battling a Reiver and a Half-Souled / Setvasai

Perhaps one of every hundred guta who reach maturity is different: more intelligent, quicker, and most notably, winged. These are the half-souled, the natural leaders of the reiver hordes. Without the presence of a half-souled, reivers will normally slack off, napping, torturing, or simply fighting amongst one another. With a half-souled present, however, reivers can serve as an effective fighting force, disciplined and ferocious. Reivers will never openly defy a half-souled, at least not within its sight.

As well as providing stiffening to the unruly reivers, the half-souled instill fear in any who meet their gaze. To look into the eyes of a half-souled is to understand, with all filters stripped away, the depths of the gutas' hatred of all living things. Few can face the extent of this vision, and are frozen with fear.

... slouch against a tree as soon as the half-souled was out of sight, while the others promptly dropped their loads and began hacking off and eating the carcass. They did not realize that the half-souled had returned until the first reiver's skull was shattered by the spiked...

Fragment #52, Twenty-seven hours and thirty-four minutes amongst the Guta

GUTA HALF-SOULED (medium humanoid) CR2 (XP 450)

AC 17 (natural hide plus light chainmail) HP 47 Speed 30' / fly 30'
 ST 15(+2) DE 13(+1) CO 14(+2) IN 11(+0) WI 10(+0) CH 10(+0)

Skills: Intimidation +3

Senses: Darkvision 60'; passive perception 13

Languages: Common, Guta (a pidgin version of Common, incomprehensible to an ordinary speaker)

Immunities Poison, cold, mind-influencing spells

Magic resistances: Advantage on saving throws against magic

Terror of the Guta: Meeting the gaze of any half-souled for the first time provoked a DC 15 WIS save or be *paralyzed* with fear (re-roll save at the end of each round)

Fury of the Half-souled: Reivers within 30' of a half-souled gain +2 on initiative and advantage on all saving throws. Should the Half-souled be incapacitated, all Reivers within 30' must make a DC14 WIS save or flee in terror.

Melee: Two-headed flail: +4 (2d8+2 bludgeoning/piercing)

Far cleverer than reivers, half-souled have no concern for the wellbeing of their troops, and will fling reivers at opponents with no regard to casualties if there is a chance of success. Half-souled appear identical to reivers, save for their large bat-like or bird-like wings with which they fly awkwardly.

... reivers appeared behind the half-souled and forced its head into a sack, disarming it by the expedient of simply shattering its arms. It was then I saw the two other half-souled behind the reivers, and heard, in their barbarous pidgin, their relief that they had found another to partake in the experiments of the Soulless. At this point, they ...

Fragment #89, *Twenty-seven hours and thirty-four minutes amongst the Guta*

The half-souled are not the true leaders of the guta, however. That role belongs, without question, to the soulless. Half-souled do everything possible — short of direct disobedience — to avoid the attention of the soulless. The soulless are aptly named, condemned to a mortal existence on this plane, knowing they will have no after-life, no reincarnation, no future. It is said that they conduct hideous experiments on the half-souled, attempting to extract and imbibe whatever spirit exists within the half-souled.

Little else is known of the soulless. They are said to be closer in size to an average human than other guta, and not hideous, bestial monstrosities. The soulless are believed to be powerful sorcerers, specializing in destructive magics. They rarely venture out of their secret lairs within the guta territories, even on great raids; such lairs are said to ape the great houses of human nobles, though who might have constructed them for the guta is yet another mystery. Only when the entirety of the hordes pour faith, in a final effort to destroy the world, are the soulless expected to be seen.



Soulless / Hernán Valera

... to meet the mysterious Soulless! The reivers seem quite excited, even happy, if I am correctly interpreting the noises they are making as chuckles. We are approaching what appears to be a mansion — here in the middle of the forest, of new construction, if I am not mistaken. We have stopped to wait out front, while a group of reivers enter. The half-souled have vanished. To my surprise, the reivers have not lapsed into their usual indolence, but remain alert, watching me and smiling. The door has reopened...

Fragment #108, *Twenty-seven hours and thirty-four minutes amongst the Guta*. This fragment is believed to be the last one written, as evidenced by its discovery beneath a severed hand still grasping a quill.

GUTA SOULESS (medium humanoid) CR7 (XP 2,900)

AC 17 (chainmail) HP 156 Speed 40'

ST 15(+2) DE 17(+3) CO 15(+2) IN 14(+2) WI 16(+2) CH 17(+3)

Skills: Intimidation +2; perception +3; arcana +2; initiative see below

Senses: Darkvision 60'; passive perception 15

Languages: Common, Guta (a pidgin version of Common, incomprehensible to an ordinary speaker)

Resistances: Non-magical weapons

Immunities: Poison, cold, mind-influencing spells

Magic resistances: Advantage on saving throws against magic

Blinding strike: Soulless always have initiative unless surprised

Multi-attack: Two rapier or spell attacks per round

Soul-leech: A successful rapier hit stays in the victim and automatically does damage on the next attack, plus draining 1 point CHA unless DC15 CHA save. An opponent dies if CHA reaches zero. Lost CHA is regained at 1 point per day, or through *Greater Restoration*.

Melee: Rapier: +6 (1d12+2 piercing plus soul-leech)

Spell-like abilities: *Eldritch Blast* (at will); *Disguise Self*, *Expeditious Retreat*, *Ray of Sickness*, *Crown of Madness*, *Invisibility*, *Shatter* (twice per day); *Blight* (once per day). DC 15 save; +3 to hit.

Though they may appear human, the soulless are anything but. Their genesis is unclear, as are their numbers, but they are the undisputed masters of the guta hordes. Half-souled live in terror of them, and the experiments they conduct with their life-force leeching, saw-edged rapiers. But the soulless much prefer more vibrant life forces: being fed to reivers may not be the worst fate for a captive of the guta.