

Chapter 1 - On the Origins of Orcs

Long before the Orcs were a people, the Fae ruler Gruumsh lived alone in the Faewilds. Tied to the land, Gruumsh did not know what it meant to change. For as far as his eyes could see, there was only land. No shadows existed by which to tell time, and no change occurred to the land. Gruumsh did not know what was missing, he just knew that something that was missing. Nothing changed in him either.

And then, like a phoenix entering his sphere, another Fae ruler crossed into Gruumsh's territory and line of sight, the first that he had ever seen. The stranger was in the form of a flaming bird but in a moment, they became a shower of falling leaves, auburn, crisp, and crinkling. Before the leaves could touch the ground, they turned into several dolphins that swam up into the air and out of sight.

Gruumsh had never seen anything so brilliant or so strange. At first, he was filled with rage and anger. How dare that creature bring change into a place where change had never happened before. Gruumsh swore that, should this creature or creatures return, Gruumsh would find a way to stop them from changing.

But the other fae knew, somehow. Corellon the changing was intrigued by Gruumsh. The stoic Gruumsh drew Corellon's attention, something no other creature had managed to do thus far. When Corellon tired of traveling in a singular direction, they shifted into another plane and a new form. When she tired of that, she returned to see if Gruumsh was still there. He was, in the same place, the same form. Corellon was enthralled.

Gruumsh watched as the dolphin returned, then turned into a swarm of butterflies. Gruumsh waited for them to come close, but they stayed out of Gruumsh's reach. Corellon continued the dance around for longer than Gruumsh cared to remember. Gruumsh began to track the waits between visits from this strange fae. Seven visits. Ten visits. Thirty-two visits. Gruumsh lost count. Corellon's ever shifting form never got close enough to swipe at, and Gruumsh waited patiently.

And then they did not return. Gruumsh waited, not moving, not changing. Gruumsh waited longer. The longest amount of time that Gruumsh knew could exist, he waited. And Gruumsh realized that in this waiting, he had changed somehow. Where before there had just been land and magic and existence, now there was time and emptiness. Instead of a desire to strike out and restore order, Gruumsh wanted to reach out and absorb the other fae, to see what happened when an always moving object entered a never changing force.

The desire to entwine beings became too much for Gruumsh. In his newly found loneliness, Gruumsh began to cry and rake at his body. From where the tears and blood mingled in the fae dirt, half formed creatures began to take shape and scuttle away to hide. These creatures began to terrorize lesser faes and were cast into various other planes and locations in order to keep the balance that allowed the chaotic Faewilds to thrive. But Gruumsh did not care about balance and stoicism any more.

From the Elemental plane of Water, Corellon heard Gruumsh's wails, but did not not think it so serious until some of Gruumsh's tears began to seep into the Elemental plane of Water. Some of the creatures that found their way here were tentacled and stingered; Corellon had to fight to escape their grasp. Some of them were defeated, but many more lurked in the water, a new home for their foul intentions.

Corellon battled these half formed creatures through the Elemental planes of Air and Fire. Corellon fought her way into the astral planes, where some creatures masked themselves as portals to other planes or floating orbs. During these many battles, Corellon the changing was gravely wounded, losing an eye to a fire hydra. But they made it back to the Faewilds.

Springing into the Winter Court, they immediately took the form of the white dragon and flew as fast as they could, their spilt blood dotting the ground and turning sour. Their spilt blood also began to

take shape into monstrous creatures. The first of the Remorhaz were born this way; their hot blood a gift from Corellon himself. Crossing over into the wooded areas, other creatures began to take shape and be cast out.

And then Corellon, changing into a swarm of swallows, made their way into Gruumsh's territory. Seeing Gruumsh tearing himself apart, watching chunks of him turn into the ground that he sprang from and return to the earth, made Corellon feel as if they were tearing in two. They did not know what they could do to make his pain stop, and they did not have a plan for escaping Gruumsh's brutal swipes, but in that moment Corellon realized that they would rather be torn apart than watch Gruumsh suffer any more.

As Gruumsh plucked out his own eye, Corellon morphed from a flock of swallows into a single humanoid creature and plummeted down towards Gruumsh, stopping just in front of him. And for the first time, Gruumsh heard Corellon speak.

It sounded like a flock of birds. Gruumsh did not know how he knew what that was; before Corellon he had never seen birds, and he hadn't heard them ever. But the sound quieted the rage and filled the emptiness inside. Corellon had heard Gruumsh's suffering and had returned.

Corellon watched as Gruumsh stopped tearing at his large, lumpy body, the wounds beginning to close. Gruumsh turned a massive hand towards Corellon, and they prepared to be ripped in half or beaten down. The rough hand stopped before touching Corellon, and Corellon heard a sound like rocks grating against one another or the sound of earth settling while one sat in a tunnel.

Gruumsh waited to see if Corellon would flee again, or if they would come even closer. Their left eye was gouged and bloody, and Gruumsh wailed in anguish at the thought of something, someone laying a hand against Corellon in violence. The sound seemed to startle Corellon, who was expecting a blow instead of a hand extended in good will.

It only took a moment for Corellon to understand what Gruumsh intended, and they trilled with glee. A moment later, their languages converged somewhere in the middle of bird melodies and earthy dirges. And with this understanding, another understanding grew. One of completion; nay, one of fulfillment.

Still bleeding and crying, Gruumsh and Corellon came together in an embrace. Corellon changed forms several times to find the form that fit best within Gruumsh's embrace, but as they began to solidify into something more solid and less ethereal. Gruumsh found himself, solid as ever, molding to fit the changing one.

Their blood and tears mingled and began to seep into the ground. Where these tears fell, more creatures began to rise up, their lives given to them by the blood and tears shed by these beings. But instead of bearing the malice and pain of the previous creations, these creatures were noble and kind, moved into existence by sheer joy and kindness and belonging.

Where Gruumsh's blood mingled with Corellon's tears, orcs began to spring up, proud and broad. Where Corellon's blood mingled with Gruumsh's tears, elves began to spring up, tall and fair. While these two do not share many similarities in form or features, they are forever linked in the spring of their creation.

Chapter 2 - The Orc's time in the Faewilds

The orcs lived in the faewilds with their elf siblings for several seasons according to the Material calendar, though time is difficult to parse in the faewilds. Though the elves may claim that they were some of the first beings to live in the faewild and the eladrin joined them later, the truth is that the eladrin came before elves and that the elves and orcs came into existence at the same time.

While in the faewilds, the orcs and elves formed several alliances together and against each other, squabbling as siblings tend to do. The orcs and elves grouped themselves against each other over a botched match of Pankration and fought for weeks on end until the elder Eladrin came and enforced a peace accord that lasted a while.

Then the troll battles occurred, and many trolls were forced out of the faewilds, although some still lurk in the forests and marshes, waiting for a chance at revenge. Orcs and elves fought side by side, facing slime trolls, venom trolls, and even rot trolls. Once again orc and elf blood mingled together, reinforcing their bond together.

Some orcs and elves forged alliances together and began to explore the faewilds together, turning adventures into scavenger hunts and quests into times of bonding. There was peace between the races, although individuals still gathered to assert their dominance in tests of strength and hand to hand combat.

As the elves and orcs became more set in their new home, they began to become more involved in the politics of the elder faes and the gods who watched over them. A branch of elves, with dark skin and white hair, became an elite spy force, willing to work for whoever paid the most and provided the most protection.

Other elves and orcs reveled in the freedom they found in avoiding the political scheming of others creatures who wanted to exert their power over others. In ignoring the political scheming of others, the orcs and elves challenged the political structure and some fae began to conspire against the elves and orcs. Smaller fae with large ambitions began to single out orcs and elves for their tricks and japes. Greater faes set their sights on the originators of this unbalance of power.

Unbeknownst to Gruumsh and Corellon, the elder fae in the seasonal courts began to conspire against them. From the Spring court, Nathair Sgiathach the patron of pranks and mischief joined early but did not plan for his shenanigans to bring such weighty consequences. Hyrsam, the prince of fools, joined in later than most but helped wreck the most damage in the end.

At the time, the spring and winter courts were allied against the summer court, so none of the denizens of the Summer court were brought into this alliance. However, the empty throne in the Autumn court made it particularly easy for Nathair to draw in allies from both the Seelie and Unseelie courts. The Wild Hunt joined, eager in a new target to pursue. The Ashen Lady, believing this her opportunity to earn her redemption back into the Summer court joined, and the Pumpkin King, setting his sights on the empty throne, joined in. Hyrsam would bring in the Blight Lord later, and that would be the final blow against Gruumsh.

The Prince of Frost from the winter court joined in against the advice of the Queen of Air and Darkness, and this would eventually lead to his downfall, although his expulsion from the faewilds have little to do with this affair. His role in this plot was supposed to be to deceive Gruumsh and Corellon into accepting a favor that would make them indebted to him so that the Spring court faes could gain the upperhand. However, the Prince of Frost had other ideas.

Instead, he tricked Hyrsam into inviting the Blight Lord into Gruumsh's realm. Before Corellon could warn Gruumsh, the land around Gruumsh was struck by the Blight Lord's withering powers. The land that Gruumsh's body came from and was linked to was soured and began to rot. Gruumsh was

trapped by this blight, and his words could no longer reach his children without being twisted and corrupted by the power of the blight.

Corellon led a charge against the Blight Lord with the help of her children, both elves and orcs, and drove him back into his waste in the Autumn realm. This was not without great loss. The orcs and elves touched by the blight became the Forgotten, and many were killed or driven out of the fae realm. Those that live either hide in the depths of the faewilds or roam whatever plane they were driven into, spreading the blighted curse wherever they go.

Gruumsh holds off this blight from his body as best he can, but the blight has slowly begun to affect him. His left arm has become corrupted and withered, but with Corellon's love and help, he holds the blight off from withering the rest of his body.

After this plot was soured, the greater fae backed off and waited for a better opportunity to pull the elves and orcs under their power; they waited for an opportunity that would not link their names with the Blight Lord's treachery. However, they did not get that opportunity.

The elves and orcs turned against each other, each blaming each other for the fate of the Forgotten and those lost in the battle to drive the Blight Lord back. Bickering and squabbling turned into war and murder, and the blood of elves and orcs stained and changed the faewilds. The fighting grew to be known as the great schism, and Corellon, with Gruumsh's permission, asked the rulers of the Seasonal courts to help them banish the orcs and the elves who fought against each other to the material plane in order to end the bloodshed.

The Seasonal court, afraid of the power and danger that these two races wielded, quickly agreed. Corellon gathered her children. The elves that distanced themselves from the fighting were granted permission to stay in the faewilds and became as little siblings to the Eladrin. Those that partook in the bloodshed of their orcish siblings were banished to what is now known as the Sword Coast on the Material plane. Although they have since traveled out, that was the centerpoint where they were sent.

Corellon then turned to her other children, the orcs. Borne not of her blood, but from her tears, Corellon still loved these children as dearly as she loved her elvish children. Unlike the elves, the orcs had banded together with a camaraderie that simultaneously broke Corellon's heart and made it burst with pride. Her loyal children were banished to the material plane, although, with Corellon's help, Gruumsh still seeks to guide and influence them towards noble deeds.

Chapter 3 - Orcs in the Material Plane

Cast into the material plane, the orcs found themselves in the land now known as Thesk. At first, they tried to work together to find a way home, but the door had been shut to them and they could not find a way home. However, their time in the fae had shaped them in a way that the material plane could dilute but not erase. Many orcs find themselves able to cast magic because of their forgotten ties to the faewild, or have power over beasts and birds. Gruumsh's blood still flows in their veins, giving them strength and courage, while Corellon's tears rule their emotions and dreams.

The tentative peace made in the fear of a strange land could not hold forever. Once the orcs realized that there were no traces of their elvish siblings around, and that they were taller, broader, and stronger than most of the sentient races around, once again the blame began to shift amongst orcs. They began to divide themselves, shifting the blame for their expulsion from their place of birth.

The first clan to break this tentative peace would become known as the forest orcs. In the year -9753 DR, the forest orcs broke from the clan, slipping away in the shadow of night. This clan was comprised of those who blamed their orcish siblings for squabbling with the elves and, in the useless bickering, bringing all to ruin. To this day, forest orcs do not trust outsiders and are quick to blame strangers for any misfortunes that befall them. They have more of Gruumsh's blood than Corellon's tears in their heritage, and draw their strengths and magics from the land, particularly the trees. They are resistant to change, and seek to bend the growth of the forests to their own will. Of all the clans, they have traveled the least and prefer to stay rooted in familiar ground.

The clans that comprise the forest orcs currently are the Green Haven, Shadow Scuttlers, and the Sylwarren.

Upon waking and finding their siblings gone, the orcs that became known as the ocean or river orcs soon took to the water. It is said that they have more tears than blood in their bodies, and because of that, they are drawn to the water, always searching for something new. They revel in challenge and change, drawing strength from the tides and flow of rivers. Though they wished no ill will towards their orcish siblings, they did not wish to watch their friends and families torn apart by distrust and anger.

Those who stuck to the ocean found joy in the crashing of the waves and the danger of the reefs. Their connection to Corellon allowed them to learn to change their shape more easily than their other siblings, and many chose to add webbed feet or gills for ease of swimming. Many of their landlocked siblings look upon them with disdain, as though the water has weakened their blood. However, the love for Corellon that Gruumsh has flows through their veins and makes them the most welcoming and friendly of the orc clans.

Those who chose to stay to the rivers tend to be drawn more to the land, and the blues of their skin have mingled with the greens and teals of the river to provide better cover and protection. They too find joy in challenging the river rapids and surviving the water's strong pull, but they also enjoy the peace of watching the river pass them by while sitting on the dry land. They welcome company whether aquatic or land based.

The clans that comprise the ocean and river orcs are the Dark Star, the Moon Howlers, the Wavebreakers, and the Peat Skimmers.

The dwindling orc clan split once more in the year -9731 DR. The group now known as the mountain orcs made their homes in the Earthspur mountains. Those who traveled to the Dragon Jaw mountains were chased out by dragons guarding their hoards and found more welcoming mountain strongholds in the surrounding lands.

Their drive to find new heights, to seek the snow capped mountains and the thin air of the upper regions were at first an attempt to find a portal back to the faewilds that had not yet been blocked off.

They thought being closer to the sky would bring them the freedoms of the faewilds, for they did not understand that the Fae plane is over and inside of the Material plane.

The mountain orcs are composed of the Ice shield, the Ironback, the Skull Craig, and the Dolark Cairn clans.

The orcs left banded together to roam the plains and became known as the plains orcs. They offer guidance to wandering travelers, and find fulfillment in remembering the great deeds of those who came before them in song and reenactment.

The plains orc clans are Broken Axe, Horn Skull,

Most of the Orc clans have forgotten their origin and heritage. Only a few of the Forest clans have the memories of those from the faewild preserved to guide them in their quest to return to the faewilds.

While individual orcs of merit or skill have returned to the faewild for a time, the orcs as a people have never returned to the faewilds. Whether they will or not in the future is yet to be determined.