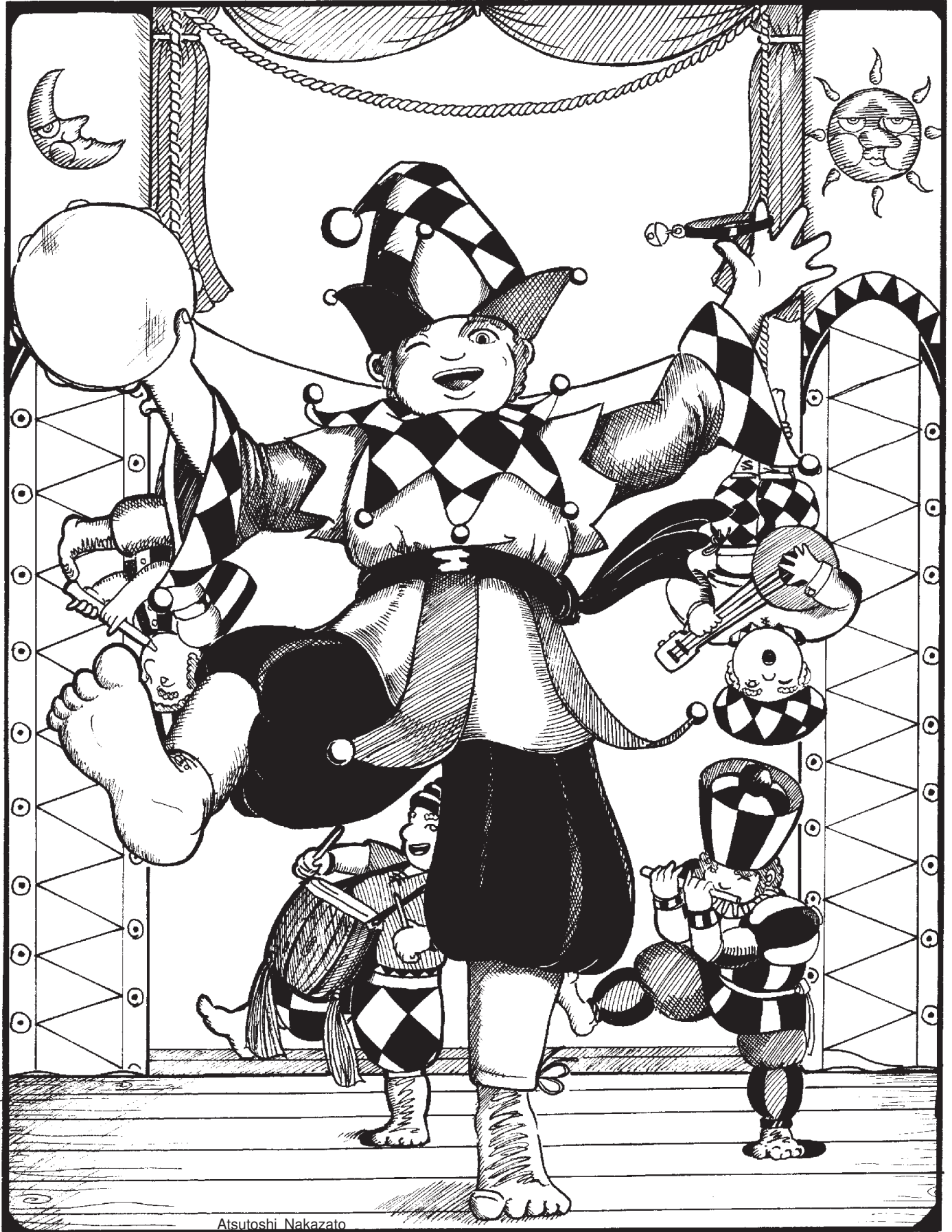


# Hobling



Murgy Bangbox was impressed. Very seldom could someone impress Murgy. Murgy was an accomplished hobling — someone who had succeeded in nearly every aspect of his life. Murgy sat in his favorite chair; his furred feet lay across his favorite hassock as his hands curled around his favorite pipe. Every detail had been intended to give Murgy a sense of praise for his accomplishments, for it was his day. A day to be remembered.

Murgy thought of everyone in Barrelbee as a member of his family, everyone one of them some sort of cousin. He mused thinking his family tree looked more like a briar patch, but he knew every single one and their relation to him. His direct family sat up front on the grass sitting on a beautifully quilted blanket. Murgy raised an eyebrow as they laid the blanket across the grass...its stitches were exquisite. Surely Boscan Proudneedle made that quilt, for he made the best in Barrelbee by far!

Murgy looked over to his loving sons Wurgy, and Nox. They too had taken a liking to locks, as had their father. While they hadn't quite gotten the more advanced concepts down, they were clever. If they ever got the special trick box open that Murgy made last winter then they would get a copy of his book showing them the finest points of locksmithing. He was sure they spent hours every night trying to open it. When they were good enough they would open it and his genius would be shared with his sons. Murgy sighed in contentment.

As more people gathered, Murgy repacked his pipe and took a long draw from his flagon of honeyed grape. Never much of a drinker ("Shaking hands make for bad locksmiths," Murgy's father used to always say) Murgy planned on indulging himself a bit today. The muffins were still warm too — all was perfect today. The Wakener family had done very good work today.

Beer flagons were filled across the small square, and pipes came alight as the last rays of the day began fade. Torches were lit, as well as the street lanterns. A small band began to play some light and frothy tunes...Murgy's favorite pub tunes. More than a few people sang along, and so did Murgy. His mother always said that beer went down better with a song! Father of course said singing always went better with the beer when mother was singing somewhere else. Behind him Murgy noted the gentle caress on his cheek by his daughter. She was an accomplished member of the circle of the earth — and she refilled his flagon. He smiled again, and sighed...truly this was a perfect day.

The music died down as the Wakener raised her hand. Sanla Wankener was beautiful tonight in her green dress and flowing braids. She bowed to Murgy, who raised his flagon to her, and she motioned for people to come forward to speak with Murgy. People brought gifts forward of their own making — those would go to his family as most likely Boscan's blanket would. Others recited small poems to him, dirty limericks of their own devising, reminiscings over an experience, beggings to be pardoned for an imagined slight. Murgy sat back and sucked it all in, enjoying every single moment of it.

Murgy of course made a few apologies of his own, which while awkward considering the circumstances were gracefully accepted. They were a very perfect closure on Murgy's perfect day. As the lines receded, the last one to come forward was Murgy's wife. Vanlee was a vision, making Sanla look like a rain barrel in comparison. Murgy always loved her smile most of all. Vanlee was special to him because she was the only one who possessed the ability to smile with her eyes and her whole body. Every graceful movement she made was reflected in her smile. It made Murgy far warmer than the honeygrape and the shawl he had been given.

Vanlee looked up at Murgy a little sad, but happiness hid behind the sorrow. As she sat facing away from him near the foot

of the dais he was upon and wrapped her shawl around her. Vanlee began to speak and tell the adventurer of a young rascalion. This was a young hobling that couldn't be kept out of any building, box, or chest. He departed Barrelbee being swatted with switches and kicks...a pack on his back and his favorite wire and pry in his pocket. As Vanlee described it, the youngsters listening giggled and several of the older folks wagged their fingers and smirked at Murgy. Vanlee continued tell of this young hobling's adventures with a group of adventurers. The young hobling had many adventures exploring the ancient Dwarven City to the west.

Dwarves had always fascinated the young hobling because they made such sturdy things! They were clever with their hands, and artful with their touch. The young hobling wanted to see of course if they could keep him out of their most secret places. Vanlee always said a secret was just something you hadn't learned yet.

The young hobling grew older exploring the Dwarven City over many years, and in time slipped past many portals and ancient defenses. Goblins came to the city soon after, and the young hobling had a wonderful time restoring traps, and defenses and causing all sorts of mischief for the goblins.

After his adventuring companions had long moved on, the young hobling found himself in love with the dwarven city — and perhaps with the ghosts that he imagined still inhabited it. So as the sole defender of a people long gone, our young hobling defended the city as a vengeful apparition.

After many months the goblins fled, fearful of ghosts and spooks killing their numbers every night. Murgy found a special door that night the goblins departed one he had never seen before while returning to his bedroll. Now the young lad had always been especially attentive to detail, yet he missed this special door. It was as if someone wanted him to find it. He examined the door, looking especially carefully for nasty surprises, and he struggled to open the door.

For five days and six nights he tried to open the door. On the sixth night, close to the 6th day of his efforts, in exasperation our young hobling said "I give up! You win! I can't open your door!"

Several people in the crowd gasped at this, for every hobling knows to admit defeat and to give up means your life will never be the same. Vanlee shook her head sadly, then giggled. At first Murgy felt a little guilty that his secret defeat had been discovered — but he knew as Vanlee finished the story he would be vindicated.

Vanlee continued and explained at that time a vision or ghost or some sort of impish apparition formed before the young hobling. The elderly dwarf that appeared looked at the young hobling and said "Some doors will not open for everyone, be sure to pick the door you are meant to open. Plus it's always fun to torment a hobling a little with the impossible."

With great mirth and merriment, the people listening to the story laughed and clapped at the hidden moral of the story. The irony was of course lost on the children, but they would learn in the time to come.

Vanlee explained behind the door was a wondrous workshop, with books and tools explaining all sorts of dwarven crafts. The young hobling carefully read them all several times cover to cover, taking the ones involving locks and such for himself and bundling the others up for the sages of Barrelbee to assess and absorb for years to come.

That young hobling grew up to be Murgy, Vanlee explained. She turned to Murgy and said, "And that was the young hobling that I fell in love with, and will love for all time!"

Murgy shed a tear, and then jumped to his feet! "To Bangbox! The best way to protect your possessions!"

His family jumped to their feet screaming cheers as the crowd began to sing "Remember me" as the musicians began to play.

Quietly and intimately, he looked at his wife and raised his glass, wishing he could give her a kiss once again upon her cheek. "To Vanlee, the mostly beautiful possession to ever be held within the arms of a Bangbox." He looked to his sons, nodding to them and their wives and their children. Nox and his brother held up the empty box he had left to them and he cheered them once again! Murgy was content that his hard work could be carried on by his clever sons he mused. He wondered why his daughter was never into boxes, but for this perfect day he was glad she had chosen this path for herself.

He turned to hug his daughter Button. "Thank you my daughter for my wondrous day, you do this so often for others... Thank you for doing it for me!" She began to weep, and he kissed her on her forehead. He turned to his guest and bowed and raised his cup!

"To Vanlee! To Bangbox! To Wakeners! To Barrelbee! To life!" he shouted.

In return they replied "To Murgy Bangbox! Father, Friend, and Locksmith of Barrelbee!"

With a flourishing bow, the circle of power around him began to fade, and for once Murgy dared to wonder what might be waiting for him. Mother always said to try to find out that answer before your time could lead you to be dead or worse, well perhaps he would now meet mother and find out...

## RACIAL BASICS

Hobblings in and of themselves are a fun loving, mischievous people — with a dedication to curiosity, adventure, and storytelling in everything they do. Hobblings love keeping traditions, superstitions, taboos, and other nostalgic practices in remembrance of the past.

Hobblings have a very strong bend towards oral tradition and storytelling. The highest possible skill within their society is the retelling of a good yarn, historical happening (no matter how exaggerated), a fable, or drama. Hobblings love to read, to sing, dance and jest. They are consummate gameplayer, lovingly dedicated to learning, inventing, or mastering any game of skill or chance they come across.

While generally a peaceful and content people, dedicated to tradition and comfort, some hobblings become struck with wanderlust. Now at first, people may think *wanderlust* means to pack up your bags and head out for adventure. However wanderlust can take *many* forms among the hobblings, as a hobbling is typically always embarking upon some foray of indeterminable length for a specific reason, rather than simply for the sake of excitement itself.

Hobblings themselves are actually reticent on embarking on journeys that have no personal interest, and typically are homebodies unless the journey is one of some personal importance. Hobblings who "wander" for the sake of wandering are typically cartographers or individuals that are searching for a specific thing: Perhaps the answer to an ancient riddle, the missing piece of a recipe for Grape Pie, the searching for a specific story. Some hobbling always wants the bragging rights of discovering something first, or being the only one to accomplish something. It adds prestige to one's name, and elevates the family in the community.

When a hobbling becomes interested in something, there is a tendency to become obsessed with it... this is where wanderlust kicks in. When a hobbling becomes obsessed with something rarely is anything to dissuade from their attempting to accomplish it.

Some hobblings, instead of wandering, tend to focus their obsession on being the best at what they do or competing with other hobblings and individuals. Some sages on hobblings theorize that the racial ability that hobblings demonstrate to dodge attacks derived once upon a time by a group of hobbling brothers challeng-



ing each other to avoid snowballs. The game kept up over the years, evolving to dodging acorns, then rocks, then knives, then spells... and so on. More hobblings became interested in this contest until it became nearly second nature to them. While this likely is merely a fable to amuse young hobblings, it's a good example of how the race is competitive in many aspects of their lives.

Unfortunately hobbling obsession can easily slip into insanity, and it happens all the time, especially when an obsession cannot be accomplished. While such hobblings clearly stay as members of society, however they are pitied for their inability to obtain their goals — not necessarily for their insanity.

It's important to understand that all hobblings do not necessarily find winemaking, locksmithing, and thievery their thing. There are loads of stories of the hobbling assassin, or hobbling trying to discover what makes chaos work. Usually such stories start around the fire on a dark night, in the privacy of ones own home — not in public. While these dark stories are sometimes told, it's not wise to assume everything in the hobbling community is sunshine and lollypops.

## HOBLING MAKE UP

Hobblings are recognizable immediately for their dark bushy sideburns for both male and female. These can be purchased at any costume shop and applied with spirit gum (ouch!) or liquid latex (better). Drawing sideburns on with make-up is not sufficient.

Some players also like to attach bushy eyebrows but this is no longer required. It is your choice whether to take this extra step.

## ROLE-PLAYING

These roleplaying tips will help you to develop your character and are meant as a guideline only.

Hobblings are very diverse with a few common traits. Hobblings like to be viewed as a being the best in their chosen profession — or at least being working towards being the best in their chosen profession. Hobblings set a high importance on personal achievement, making a legend out of their own names that will last for years after their final deaths.

Hobblings take pride in what they do, and consider their reputation among fellow hobblings to be extremely important. A hobbling does not place necessarily their reputation in such high regard in regards to other races. Seldom does a hobbling do something without considering the impact to his or her reputation.

Hobblings are competitive; they love games of chance and skill. Hobblings view life as a game in many ways, they like to compete and the like to win. Of course victory over members of the other races is somewhat expected, but a victory over a fellow hobbling makes the win twice as sweet.

Hobblings are not necessarily direct; they tend to look at problem solving through every possible angle before they implement a decision. Hobblings aren't warriors; they don't just step up to a foe and start swinging, they think before they act. In this way a hobbling tends to be "obtuse" in dealing with things, and sometimes other races consider this to be laziness and procrastination. A hobbling likes to set up the trap before springing it.

Hobblings love tradition, whether it be personal traditions like watching the dawn every morning or baking the same pie every Friday. These things are developed within families, communities, and within ones self. In the same way that hobblings hold traditions to be important, invariably a few things fall into the mix that are completely bizarre.

Hobblings are big on superstitions, wives tales, taboos, and outdated sayings. While a hobbling tends to be practical, they can't

help to pick up these things like a lint trap from the dryer.

Hobblings are big storytellers; the more exaggerated the better. Many hobblings can realize that a story is a "Big Fish Story" but sit down to listen nonetheless. It amuses a hobbling to hear someone tell a whopper. Even so, oral history and written history is extremely important to a hobbling. A hobbling dedicated to such an art sticks with the facts... who wants to be remembered as a slipshod?

All hobbling communities have loads of legends and tall tales about various things in the area. Hobblings love to wonder if there is an evil necromancer in the woods... sometimes they make one up to share that wonder with others.

Hobblings demeanor invariably is diverse. There are good hobblings, bad hobblings, and ugly hobblings. They range from farmer to footpad. But hobblings don't turn their backs on their family or friends. No matter what a hobbling has done hobblings don't turn their backs on other hobblings. Sure there are arguments, fights, feuds, etc. There however are not a lot of personal crimes against each other; after all there are other races to do that to.

Hobblings tend to become obsessive in things they do. Whether the obsession is bad hygiene (IG only we hope) or a desire to become a knight of a neighboring kingdom, a hobbling is driven to achieve their goals. "To fail is to be forgotten" is a common hobbling proverb.

However, sometimes hobblings fall off the cliff of obsession into insanity. It happens far more often then hobblings are likely to admit, and local stone elves tend to place large obstacles like oceans between themselves and a hobbling community.

Remember that having a biata remove the memory of an obsession typically just makes the hobbling obsessed about finding out what they were obsessed about.

Insanity runs from obsession/compulsion to multiple personalities (or something exotic like a phobia) and outright sociopath. When hobblings are cured by a stone elf, its up to the hobbling how far the cure will go... but likely its going to "reset" the hobbling putting him or her into a normal mindset.

However its important to remember if the object or source of the original obsession is still around there is nothing keeping the hobbling from falling back into old habits. (Please note this is for roleplaying fun only, it is not an excuse for the actions of your character or your behavior as a player. It is *not* an excuse for harassment of any nature of a fellow player.)

Please do not read this to mean that your hobbling has to be insane! Only that he or she should be somewhat compulsive...

