



Official Game Accessory

# Slave Tribes

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Chapter 1: Athasian Slavery .....	6
Chapter 2: The Slave Tribes .....	21
Chapter 3: Life in a Slave Tribe .....	78
Appendix: Creating Your Own Tribes .....	87

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# Introduction

*Slave Tribes* is an accessory for the DARK SUN™ campaign setting. It features information on slavery on Athas, descriptions of some of the prominent slave tribes roaming the endless wastes, examples of life in a slave tribe, and even advice on how to create new slave tribes for your own campaigns.

Be aware, the DARK SUN setting is very different from other fantasy worlds. It is a brutal, unrelenting world that rewards carelessness with quick death. Life is precious, exciting, dangerous, and very, very short. The world, Athas, has seen its fundamental nature twisted and warped by centuries of unrestrained, abusive magic. To survive, the races you know from other AD&D® game settings have adapted to this new world by undergoing bizarre modifications. Because of this, we suggest you become familiar with the DARK SUN™ boxed set before delving into the information set forth in this book.

That said, *Slave Tribes* offers much to Dungeon Masters and players involved in or getting ready to start a DARK SUN campaign. First, a discussion of slavery on Athas describes who slaves are, where they come from, what they do, and who they do it for. It also examines the benefits of slavery to Athasian society, slaves in the major cities and villages, and the emerging slave rebellion. After this background information has been laid, you'll meet the tribes of ex-slaves that have begun to make names for themselves from the Hinterlands to the Sea of Silt. These tribe profiles make up the bulk of the book, providing DMs with information, game statistics, and adventure ideas to use in their own campaigns. A look at life in a typical slave tribe is geared toward role-playing and features plenty of adventure ideas to build upon. Finally, a section on creating new tribes provides advice to both DMs and players seeking to swell the ranks of the free.

The information waits within these pages. What you and your players do with it is, as always, up to you. Now, the hot sand of Athas beckons and the slave tribes grow restless. The rebellion is about to

start, and it won't wait until you're ready. Hurry! The sun dips below the horizon, and who knows what another day will bring to this arid land.

## Daled's Chronicle

I am Daled, dwarf and ex-slave on this burning world called Athas. What I am about to share with you was gathered by guile and tenacity and dangerous travels. It began as most work does for a slave, at the behest of my master in far-off Balic. He was a patrician in the city-state, one of the privileged nobility. To keep his lands, he agreed to undertake a project generously offered to him by a high-ranking templar.

The sorcerer-king of Balic has a desire for knowledge, and he constantly starts research projects to satisfy his most-current curiosity. Like Athas itself, the sorcerer-king of Balic thirsts for so many things. On that day so many cycles ago, he wished to know more about the growing number of slave tribes dotting the endless wastes. When the job was forced upon me, it became my focus, my own thirst.

Look around you, for this is Athas! Hot and dry, the world screams for life-sustaining water to wash away the sweat and sand. Slowly dying, it thirsts for vitality and rejuvenation to make life grow again. Brutal and savage, it thirsts for the tranquility of peace. My world thirsts for many things, but it can find no magical, all-quenching liquid to provide relief. There is only the searing heat, and it is as endless as the desert that covers my world. Add to these thirsts the thirst to know more about this world—parched by sun, swept raw by wind, and sucked dry by foul magic.

From the Hinterlands to the Sea of Silt and beyond, my world is a pale, withered husk, a fading memory of a far-different place only a few can even imagine. Once, some say, there was water so plentiful that it covered the land as the sand does today. So much water! What must it have been like to never be thirsty? I cannot even conjure such a world in my dreams, and little good comes from wishing for



## Introduction

things that will never be again.

Another thirst plagues Athas, however, and there may be a way to quench this raging fire. I slowly learned of it while engaged in the research set before me. And, like the other thirsts of Athas, this one too became a part of me. This thirst burns the throat of Athas raw in the gladiatorial arenas of Draj and in the quarry pits of Urik. This thirst is for freedom; every slave throughout the land desires to sample its cool, sweet taste. How many have died for a few drops of this precious liquid? How many more will die to soothe Athas's parched lips?

Do not misunderstand me. The practice of keeping slaves was established long before you or I were born to these hot, wind-swept plains. I am not sure the cities would survive without the labor provided by the strong arms and backs of human, dwarf, and mul slaves. And without the cities, could Athas itself continue to linger, even in this half-life it stubbornly clings to?

But at the same time, we cannot pretend that the thirst for freedom does not exist, for at times and in certain places it burns as hot as the afternoon sun. Some claim that the thirst will set all of Athas on fire, forcing the slave owners and sorcerer-kings to douse the flames by granting freedom to every slave. I believe these claims are nothing more than dreams, but perhaps that is what Athas needs in these times of so many unquenchable thirsts.

Who am I? I am Daled, once a slave serving a patrician in the city of Balic. The noble taught me to read and write, entrusting me with the chronicling of his words and deeds so that they could be passed on to his family. Then he gave me a task that would become my focus, the one I spoke of earlier. Even my freedom, which came unexpectedly and without planning, has not distracted me from this task. Now I am an ex-slave in a tribe of ex-slaves, continuing to learn and record everything I can about the slaves living in similar tribes throughout the Tyr region.

Since joining my tribe, I have traveled far and

wide across Athas's scorched surface. I have seen sights of majestic beauty and unparalleled horror. I have visited countless tribes of ex-slaves, each trying in its own way to carve life out of the stark and unyielding wilderness. I have seen tribes thrive, but more often I have seen them die.

This is my chronicle of the things I have witnessed or been told about concerning slavery, slave tribes, and all of the practices associated with both. In theory, I do this at my tribe leader's bequest so that the future—if there is a future—will know of our struggles and dreams. In truth, I do this for myself, to satisfy an all-consuming need of my own that I barely understand.

The discourses and descriptions that follow have been culled from years of travel and countless hours of listening. Listening is the slave's art, for the slave learns to blend in and listen from the day he is enthralled, and the owner speaks of what he will with no more regard for the slave than for a table or chair. To the owner, after all, property is property. Still, listening garners only what the listener can hear, and many tales grow taller in the telling. While I believe that much of what I present is true, some may no longer be true and some may never have been true. What was true yesterday can be false today because of a sudden shift in the wind. That is the nature of life on Athas—nothing is forever but the sun and sand. Of course, what was false will probably always be false. Errors cannot be helped, but please trust that the underlying themes and patterns are correct, for these have survived all the tellings and, where possible, have stood up to personal inspection.

Much of the presented material concerns the thirst for freedom that I spoke of, for this basic need defines the dreams of so many slaves. I have been charged with bringing these dreams to every slave tribe I visit. How slaves and their tribes respond tells me a little more about Athas and its people.

Do I believe in the dream of freedom, or do I merely serve it? I cannot answer that, for in truth I

## Introduction



do not know. I know that I have tasted freedom and it is very sweet. I never want to thirst for it again, toiling for a master while my spirit withers beneath the hot sun of bondage. But do I believe that Athas can survive this dream and wake up better because

of it? That is for someone else to decide, for I am only the chronicler, and this is the chronicle of the slave tribes of Athas, which it has been my focus to record.

# Chapter 1: Athasian Slavery

Slavery exists throughout Athas. It thrives in the city-states of the sorcerer-kings. It flourishes in the merchant houses. It lingers in villages far from the centers of civilization. Almost every living, intelligent being knows of the practice of capturing, raising, and keeping slaves. Some relish the system and embrace its methods and ideology completely. Some ignore it with the disdain reserved for the commonplace and widely accepted. Others fear it, dreading the loss of personal freedom that is so tenuous for those of less than noble birth. Others live it, marked as property and put to work for the good of the city-states, the templars, the nobles, the merchants, or the sorcerer-kings. Few understand the practice, for that is not required. Slavery exists, and that is understanding enough for most people.

A few wish to know the hows and whys of things, and I am among them. To know the slaves, we must know why they are slaves. To understand slavery, we must understand the motives and forces that drive the system. With these goals of knowledge and understanding in mind, I begin this chronicle with questions. Perhaps by the time I finish, there will be answers.

## What is Slavery?

Athasian slavery is a system under which individuals from all races and stations of life become the property of others. Under this system, the property, called slaves, can be used or disposed of at the will of the owners. They perform whatever tasks their owners set before them, and live basically as their owners choose, either in comfort or in squalor.

While this definition works as a banner description, slavery remains a multi-headed beast. What is true of one head may not be true of another. The system appears one way in one city, while in another city it takes on a different shape entirely. The system even takes on different aspects within a given city, depending on the owners, the slaves, and the tasks to be performed. With this in mind, be aware that customs and specific situations can alter the face of

slavery from one place to the next; thus, at best, my chronicle can be taken as a broad set of guidelines to the institution of slavery.

In some city-states, a visitor may not be able to tell freeman from slave. In another, slaves have become chattel, treated as things. Some slaves receive favored treatment, living better than the average freeman. Others endure harsh conditions and cruel punishments as a regular part of their exploitation.

My own experience as a slave was as personal, unique, and universal as any other slave's. I did what I was told to do, when I was told to do it. If I was a bit too slow, or if I looked displeased with the task set before me, I endured whatever punishment my master or his overseer saw fit to dispense. I cannot claim to have been treated any better or any worse than others in my position. Indeed, had I been pampered or maltreated, the situation would have been the same—I was property, branded and shackled to my master with no personal freedom. That is the condition of slavery.

## Who Are Slaves?

Athasian society is a slave society. Slaves occupy a central role in the economic and social dynamics of this world of fire and sand. Slaves come from all races and social classes, though slaves taken from the noble or merchant classes usually regain their freedom with the help of the ceramic pieces of their friends or family. Clerics and mages are also rarely found in bondage, as their powers and abilities provide them with abundant opportunities for escape.

The most common races found among the slave population are humans, dwarves, half-giants, half-elves, and muls. Less common are elves, thri-kreen, and halflings, though even these races sometimes show up working in the fields or providing exotic entertainment in the gladiatorial arenas.

How do these people from different societies and different walks of life come together in the great melting pot of slavery? Some are born to it, the sons and daughters of generations of slaves. Others find