

# **Tales From Malatra:**

## **Stories From The Jungles Of Southern Kara-tur.**

**June 2020 Volume 1, Issue 4**

**Tags: Malatra Living Jungle Kara-tur Forgotten Realms**

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Welcome to Tales From Malatra!

Greetings all. Another edition of the Newsletter has arrived! And, with it some fun announcements.

First, a few weeks back I uploaded a massive revision/rewrite that Steve Jay had me do to his Day of the Saru Part 1. It can be found on the Malatra Facebook Group if you are not yet a member. I only have an outline of what was intended for part 2 but have been plugging away at that when time permits, hopefully by sometime next year it will be done.

Second, I am still hoping for any more submissions anyone might wish to make for Jungle themed stories, lore, art, adventures, game material, relevant movie/tv reviews, or pretty much anything people can think of that would fit. Contact me at the above email.

Third, the first 'fast and dirty' version of the 5e ruleset went out to locals who attended Free RPG Day here in my home state, as well as a few friends' communities. I also uploaded it to the Facebook page. Look for it there if you are interested.

Lastly, I am currently in the process of archiving the old Jungle Tales Yahoo Group messages so they can be read by posterity. I have been doing so at The Piazza, and I am only about a fourth of the way through as it requires me to do a lot of "cut and paste"-ing. So it will likely take a few months to get everything done. Check it out to learn something you had forgotten, or to reminisce. With that, bring on the monkeys!

Game Well, Everyone!

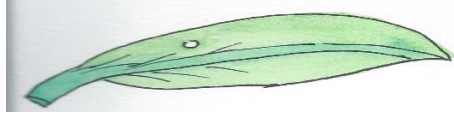
-Ryan Conrad, aka 'Apotheot'



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# LEAVES ON THE RIVER



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Editor's note: The following story, reprinted with permission, was sent to the Jungle Tales Yahoo group when Steve Jay once again became active in the setting following the end of the RPGA involvement. As the author notes, the characters depicted are her various PCs, except the Darkfur Elder, meant to have been Steve.

## Awakening

By Wendi Goodlich

Somewhere deep in the remote jungle, there is a large hut. In this hut resides the two most powerful of all the Jungle Elders. So powerful, that all the tribes, all the animals, all the plants and even the very Jungle itself is at their mercy. As you can see, that is why this hut is so remote and hard to find. Only the wisest...or the most foolish...would dare to call upon these Elders. Maybe a little of both....

In the clearing of the hut, everything is silent except for the sound of a feather being scratched across the surface of a thin piece of tree bark. The Darkfur Elder is hard at work with this scratching as he sits outside the hut in the sunshine. Many piles of thin tree bark with marks on them surround him and occasionally he will stop his furious scratching to look at them.

That is when the low crashing noise of underbrush begins. It is slow and steady then followed by a short burst of frenzied noises. The slow and steady crunching of the jungle plants continue, interposed with furious bursts and begin to get a little louder as the day wears on. It is obvious that the noise is coming closer to the clearing, but the Darkfur Elder is unconcerned. All it would take would be a wave of his magic feather and any threat to him would be neutralized. Looking more curious than alarmed, The Darkfur Elder raises his head from his tree bark, as the noise comes just to the edge of the clearing and then stops. Ever so slowly, the grey head of a large land tortoise pokes its way through the underbrush and blinks its liquid eyes. It seems to nod its head as if in a greeting and then lets out a large sigh.

Continuing to make its way into the clearing, the large tortoise emerges. It looks like any other giant tortoise except this one is wearing a strange necklace and has the most peculiar lump on its back. The lump seems to be made of white fur, colorful feathers, bits of bone, pieces of bronze and garishly patterned leather. The lump is also snoring.

The Darkfur Elder smiles and pauses in his scratching for a moment as the tortoise makes its way across the small clearing ever so slowly. Crashing through the underbrush behind the tortoise is one of the biggest and most ugly dogs anyone has ever seen. It circles the tortoise three times and then plops down before the elder with its paws waving in the air, belly exposed.

Giving a very heavy sigh, the tortoise begins to change. As it morphs into an upright position to stand on its two hind legs, the lump on its shell slides off and is unceremoniously dumped to the ground. The tortoise then opens its mouth and speaks in a thick, quiet, excruciatingly slow voice.

"Sooooooo goood tooo geet thaaaat mooonkeey ooooo myyyy baaaack." it proclaims with a slight lisp, "Soooo goood tooo seeee yooooo aaaagaaaain toooooo."

The lump of fur that was previously on the back of the Tortoise Katanga pops part of itself upwards. Two large, yellow eyes set in a black skinned face, under what looks to be a garuda skull adorned with paint and multi-colored feathers, blink rapidly and take in its surroundings. As if it had been launched from a fabled catapult, the ball of fur suddenly becomes alive, almost spastic in its actions. It starts jumping around like a tiger with its tail on fire.

"Yesyesyes we are here FINALLY could you have walked ANY slower Uunk?" The words shoot forth in rapid succession from its mouth not pausing for more than an instant and giving very little heed to punctuation. It is obviously the master of the run-on sentence.

Spying the Darkfur Elder it begins to bounce around him in a circle, somehow managing to miss every single pile of tree bark, which all remain neatly stacked.

"It is good to see you Elder Darkfur and it has been too long in the jungle without you and we have looked everywhere but I knew you would be back you could not stay away for long and I was growing so afraid I mean Uunk was growing afraid that we would all get faint in the memories and the stories would no longer be told and the rumor was that the jungle would just disappear but I knew that it wouldn't because you would be here again and we could all make new stories to tell the others but Uunk, Puppy and I looked so long and I'm glad we found you..."

With that, what appears to be a garishly dressed, female Monkey Katanga in half form, launches herself at the Darkfur Elder and gives him a big hug.

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## TALES OF MALATRA



### Idle Hands

Part 3 of 4

By Ryan Conrad

Flood's narrative analysis of the races of Malatra continues...

### Lacerials

The lacerials are not native to Malatra. They arrived here seemingly by accident or through malicious intent of the evil that lurks in the Valley of Spirits. There are four known varieties that we have encountered, but there is a possibility that more varieties exist on the strange world of their origin. One type that has been all but confirmed by our silent friends is the idea of a "lacerial king". None of the separate races have been able to speak verbally, but they can understand each other with no problems

somehow. They have also brought the wonders of sign language to our land, and with that we have learned to communicate with several other races including the elusive plantmen.

Each type of lacerial can only breed with others of its type, which has been an issue for our new friends. Thankfully, a few new lacerials have been hatched now of each type, thus preventing the extinction of their race at least for a short time. Sadly, with just more than 40 total lacerials, relatively equally divided among the four races, it is only a matter of time. The natural lifespan of a lacerial is comparable to nubari, saru, and oscray. Their fecundity, however, is not; and being how the race tends to mate for life, it is a sure bet that only one to two generations of lacerials remain before they are extinct. Much effort has gone into attempting to find a way home for these creatures, but a more interesting prospect would be trying to find others of their kind here. It is possible that more lacerials exist somewhere within Malatra, and likely that they might exist somewhere in the wider world. In this regard, the domes that are known to help shelter us from the dangers of the wider world are a major frustration to the lacerials.

#### -Bladeback Lacerial

The bladeback lacerial is possibly the most dangerous of the four varieties; at the very least it is the most physically intimidating. Their hulking frame hides a gentler soul, however. Bladebacks are known, even among other lacerials, for being trusting to the point of fault. They are ruled by their emotions greater than any other lacerial, and although slow to anger their rage knows no bounds when awakened and they are slow to forgive.

#### -Finhead Lacerial

A finhead sees the world in stark contrast. To them, there were absolute rights and wrongs. This unwavering moral compass was used as justification for why so many of them had previous to their arrival here, been chosen by a great spirit, called 'gods' by the oscray. Interestingly enough, many finheads have learned to mimic some basic rudimentary vocal sounds, though they are far from having any sort of conversation skills, it is suggestive that, for this type of lacerial at least, the possibility of vocal communication is not completely beyond them.

#### -Flyer Lacerial

The flyers are the lacerials most like children. They chitter and chirp using incomprehensible sounds constantly. These sounds do not have inflections or tonal variations but are simple grunts by most standards. The other lacerials always seem a bit irritated by the flyers, and them by the others. This may be due to their, forgive the pun, flighty nature. They often do not wish to stick around the ground for very long and are known to leave in the middle of group conversations. In some ways, I can understand this, as our aarakocra friends once said, if you could fly would you ever stay on the ground?

#### -Hornhead Lacerial

The most contemplative of the breeds, the hornheads are very deliberative in everything they do. They have been known to remain mute for some time just to consider their words. They are massive in size, dwarfing even the bladebacks. It may be because of this domineering stature, that they are so slow to commit to any course of action. They have learned through long experience that if they make a sudden movement, they could do something they cannot easily take back.

## Lizard Men

Called 'Lizard Folk' by their own people (the terms are often used interchangeably); the lizard men are a bit of an oddity. They are tall and powerfully built for hunting and fighting, and from stories of our ancestors we would expect them to be belligerent and warlike, but apart from some strong territorialism they seem to go out of their way to avoid violence unless they have the obvious advantage. In a few known encounters with their scouts and hunters in the years leading up to the war, the creatures were less antagonistic, and more curious about us. Our lizard friends, such as Gar Azor, have occasionally hinted at some great secret the race was keeping, but they are all very tight lipped when it comes to what that might be. It is surprising due to the stories from our elders of lizard folk raids and near constant attacks on tribes, that unlike our erstwhile yaun-ti allies during the war, there is the possibility of a real long term alliance with the race--unless, of course, we were stupid enough to trespass in their territory.

## Manscorpions

These large-sized creatures are a horror to behold. Their upper torso is like a nubari, but their skin is completely hairless, and their hands consist of two thick fingers and a long thumb, all with talon-like nails; this gives them the semblance of a scorpion's pincers. Their lower torso is where things become unnerving. It consists of Eight legs and a tail resembling the body of giant scorpion. Little is known about these creatures, as they are extremely hostile. As of yet, they have only been spotted in the depths of the Rayana Savannah, and on the far side of the Yaku Plains, but there is nothing preventing them from inhabiting any portion of the jungle except perhaps a theorized aversion to the more humid areas.

## Marrashi

Thankfully, only one of these jackal-vultures has ever been encountered. The creature had somehow come under the sway of the traitorous Somari, leading many to speculate that it is some sort of wicked air-spirit. It utilized a massive bow and vicious arrows that it fired from the air. I have attempted to create similar designs to this bow but have yet to achieve the distance this creature's weapon and ammo demonstrated. Although the creature was able to escape its binding to Somari and assisted in her death, it did not vanish back to the dreamtime as one might expect but was last seen flying toward the Forbidden Mountains. Since the creature was powerful and wicked, hopefully there are no more of them than this one.

## Nubari

By far the most varied of the races I have reviewed, the nubari are the very numerous and diverse. They have the potential to be the most just, fair, and honorable of all the races, or to be the vilest, wickedest villains. As far as can be determined most of this has to do with their upbringing, and the importance of having a strong tribal support structure. Nubari are a very social animal, so much so that they rely upon their tribe more than most races. It is a rare nubari that can survive prolonged exile without dying, going mad or both. In this way, exile is most likely a slow death sentence. Those unsavory nubari who have been exiled from their tribes and survived, invariably become potential threats later. But just as some individuals have shown negative traits others, such as the late Chief Bagoomba, demonstrated a greater valor than one would have honestly thought them capable of before their end. As the race most directly related to their namesake, it is an interesting insight into what the Ancients who shaped Malatra were possibly like.

## Ophidians

The snake-like humanoids are sometimes called 'snake-headed people'. They are very reclusive predators and are known to prey upon small shu hunting parties. They rarely will fight larger groups, unless forced and have a powerful known hatred for the yaun-ti 'snake-people'. Little is known of this group, as nearly every encounter with them has been hostile. The only race they are known to have had any peaceful contact with is the lizard folk, with whom they have on rare occasions traded. They treat other mammalian races with disdain, though oddly, they act indifferently toward snake katanga. One point of note is that the group seemingly remained neutral during the war with Tiger. What this exactly implies about their strength, motives, or demeanor is anyone's guess.

## Oscray

Our oscray friends have truly been a blessing upon the jungle. There are some who have called them the 'knowledge bringers' as when they arrived they brought with them the knowledge of the previously taboo black arts of reading and writing, as well as a greater understanding of metallurgy, warfare, tactics, taxonomy, astronomy, and timekeeping. They also provided many natives their first and likely only chance to see our world from a height greater than the tallest trees, which has aided in exploration and cartography. They are a truly honorable people, though quick to anger, they seem as in touch with nature as most native Malatrans, but thankfully are not as hung up on the old taboos as many of us are. There was some concern about their species long-term viability, but with the recent arrival of nearly a dozen new members of the race through a mystic gate, there is always hope that the race may survive another generation or two. Unfortunately, the race is prone to be adventurous and thus they may end up having a high death rate. They also have alerted us to a potential future enemy in the form of a race which they view to be the vilest race in all the worlds they have traveled. They call this enemy the 'elves'.

## Plantfolk/Moldmen

Calling our floral friends' "plants" is a bit of a misnomer. We have since learned that they are, in-fact, a type of fungus much like a mushroom, though this distinction is also new to us. This should not prejudice us against their nature at all, as they have always been stalwart allies. What this changes for us mostly is our fundamental understanding of their needs. We always knew they required water more than other races, but now we begin to grasp just how much water they are most comfortable with. Truthfully, they should actually be called the 'Noble Mold Folk', or their own name for their people the 'Botrytians'. In discussions with Old Root about their species, we have also learned that there are actually a few different races of "moldmen" that, at least once long ago, inhabited Malatra. The aggressive 'vegepygmies', and the animalistic 'thronies'. Although neither of these races are likely extinct, the Botrytians pushed them to the edges of the jungle sometime after the arrival of the Ancients after near-constant wars. It strikes me that the mold folk have much more history to share than they ever have let on. Certainly, they are comfortable with new technologies and weapons to the point that one might believe they have utilized them before and only had to be reminded. Although not definitive, several heroes of the past have observed behavior signifying that the Botrytians might have some unique way of communicating over great distances. They deny this idea though and try to pass off such observations as coincidences or the observer's active imagination. Whatever the truth of it is, I am confident in their willingness to help protect Malatra. One final note, many of the Mold Folk have spoken about a distant cousin race they believe might still exist somewhere deep within the ground called myconids. When they speak of them, they do so in the context of a warning.

## Pterafolk

The pterafolk are a strange race of lizard folk-like shape shifters. Similar to a 'garuda katanga' they can appear as nearly indistinguishable lizard folk, a winged lizard folk, or a very small Flying Lizard Garuda. They are not a pleasant race and have been known to attack lone hunters and raid isolated villages. They have not been observed to use weapons, though there is nothing preventing them from doing so. They also do not seem to follow a leader at all, and act independently while still working with others of their kind. Although not completely known, the assumption is that they make their homes in the mountains including the slopes of Fire Mountain. From reports of their sightings we estimate there could not be more than a few dozen of the race within all Malatra.

## Sahuagin (Fish-men)

The fish-men are a strange case. Our oscray allies tell us that the race is wholly wicked and ill tempered, but there must be some confusion, since the race the oscray spoke of live primarily in the brackish salty water sometimes found deep underground and the not the fresh waters of Dokuba Swamp. They also have not appeared to be a threat to any of Malatra's races except perhaps the lizard folk. The saru, Crunch even told us that the race had some sort of taboo against killing nubari, and supposedly any race closely resembling them such as katanga, tam'hi, or shu. They appear to have a great hatred toward lizard folk however, and it is likely this taboo does not extend to them nor to the snake-men, or lacerials. Indeed, their hatred of the lizard-folk could well be warranted, as some lizard folk told us that in years past the fish-men tried to conquer them, until the lizard folk showed them their true might. Now it appears that they just want to be left alone. They were even willing to ally with us during the war. Although they weren't witnessed fighting in any battles, more than a few kretch that had entered their territory were wiped out, their heads left upon spikes at the perimeter. As far as I am aware, no contact has been had with the race since we first discovered their existence during the early years of the war.

## Saru

Sometimes thought of as being the gentlest souls in the jungle, the intelligent ape-like saru are much more complex than they first appear. Most of the race is strictly vegetarian, with only a few breeds listed below as exceptions. The reason for this is rather obvious, as the simplistic creatures seem to think that EVERYTHING is alive in some way. They have been known to make friends with game that hunters are pursuing in order to help the animal escape. They have been seen talking to plants as if holding full conversations, befriending even the most wicked races until they feel personally threatened, and even trying to introduce themselves to rocks. The saru have long been friends and stalwart allies with the free tribes. They are universally scared of flamboyant magic and will often flee at the first spell used even if warned beforehand. No saru has the intelligence, coordination, or patience to become witch doctors. However, there are a very select few who have become shaman. These are always female, and claim to serve the saru goddess Chee'ah, but will be cagey about her nature or how they came to their powers. Perhaps it has something to do with the mysterious event called the 'Good Walk', which saru claim happens at least once a generation.

The most common type of saru are the Bu, these have reddish fur and resemble orangutans. In progressively smaller numbers, there are the Lings, which resemble chimpanzees, the Ku'rang which resemble bonobos, and the Kanga, which resemble gorillas. None of these are stupid, but they are slow to react as a culture. It took many years of interacting with us before they started to use weapons in

combat, for instance. And only recently have they started emulating us by building villages, in fact two such villages; Coridos, and Araka have been founded in recent years and survived the war as well as all the earthquakes. Our oscray friends were very accepting of the saru when they first encountered them. This was apparently due to being reassured by Bentfang that he had encountered their kind before, though they were called 'Hadozee'. Much later, Bentfang began to question the notion that the saru were the same as the race he had known, but sadly he died during the war before he could explain the two races similarities, so any potential connection between our saru and these star-sailing hadozee remains unclear. Since the saru are all still one race, all these sub-types are able to interbreed, unlike many of the ape races they resemble. The offspring always resembles the mother. Two other sub-races are known to exist, the Great White Saru, and the Long-Toothed Saru (see below), but what is most intriguing is several saru we interviewed claimed they had always been taught that there were at least three ADDITIONAL types whom we have yet to encounter, they called these: the Enlightened Saru, the Savage Saru, and the Deep Saru.

#### -Saru, Great White

The saving grace of the war with tiger is undoubtedly the introduction to so many new races on the plateau. The contributions of the jungle giants, the thri-kreen, and lion katanga cannot be overlooked, but in many ways these all pale in comparison to what the arrival of the Great White Saru did for us. More intelligent and wise than their cousins, these are the only known breed of saru that can become witch doctors. When they arrived, not only did they help improve morale during the lead up to the war, they also provided us with indispensable lore on where the kretch were coming from. Their work with other saru to help them get over their tendency to flee when magic was cast may have helped turn the tide in many battles. Their society is very regimented and extremely reclusive compared to other saru. It is doubtful that if the threat to Malatra had not materialized we would never have met them. Oddly, unlike their cousins, the Great White Saru have very little connection with nature. This is perhaps why they have created villages of their own. This could be due to their greater intelligence, as it allows them to not spend as much time trying to get a rock to talk back to them, but I cannot but help feel that something of their innocence is lost in the trade. Despite all this it is interesting to note that even among the great whites, only females can become shaman.

#### -Saru, Long-Toothed

Nasty, vicious, and bloodthirsty the Long-Toothed Saru are anything but friendly. These saru are the exception that proves the rule of saru being universally gentle. The Long-Toothed are carnivorous, and not shy about showing their work when they eat. Although not directly allied with Tiger during the war, their goals aligned well enough with them during the war that it was hard to distinguish a difference. The story goes that these saru once during a hunt decided to go after a korobokuru. After the first taste, they began to have cravings for them. After many years, they had hunted out all korobokuru they could easily find, and so they turned on other saru, including other long toothed saru in times of need. Whether this story is true or not, it would provide some sort of justification for the korobokuru's prejudice against saru. One would think that such a noteworthy and vile type of saru would be the type other saru dub as 'savage', but those saru steadfastly claim that the Long-Toothed cannibals are tame compared to the elusive savages.

### Scrags

From the descriptions of those involved, plus those found in a book taken from the Library in the Valley of the Lion, I am convinced that the underwater creatures that once raided the Zantira are called scrags.

The book makes it clear that they are of a lesser intelligence, have a nasty and vicious demeanor, and possess uncanny healing abilities. They are carnivores and enjoy their prey to be alive when eaten. We have not had any encounters with them since, but we have had very little need to explore much of the underwater area of Malatra, perhaps that should change. It is unclear if they were native to the Sleepy Lake, or if they had somehow emigrated. One warning though, from the oscray: these creatures are apparently only sub-species of a dangerous and invasive land-dwelling race called 'trolls'. The book suggests that the ancients hunted this species to extinction on Malatra, but since the scraggs were here somehow, I wonder if we might see more such 'trolls'.

## Shan Sao

I debated for some time if these creatures should be included or if they should be classified as spirits. Their magical abilities, and innate ability to polymorph certainly supports that. But other aspects of them, such as their apparent need to consume food and drink, as well as need to sleep seem to contradict this. In fact, we have only had one known encounter with any from the race, and we aren't certain there are any more within Malatra. To make matters more muddled, some days after the violent encounter with the shan sao, a group of nubari returned in order to dispose of their diminutive bodies found them to be missing. This could have simply been scavengers, but it does make one wonder. From reports, in their natural form the creatures plump, smaller than a shu, had orange skin and unruly hair. But, like all things with the race, whose name we only know because of korobokuru legend, nothing can be confirmed.

## Shu

Ah, the shu. Some of the toughest little warriors, yet most stealthy folk in the jungle. Little can be said about the race, which is not already known, but the hairless 'halflings' as the oscray call them, are still a bit of a mystery. The race tends to live on the fringes of the well-known areas, and we aren't even sure how many tribes there are. Some tribes also tend to migrate periodically. The elusive Yilgoma tribe being one of the best example, as we have not had contact with the tribe in more than 6 years, yet we know they are still active in the jungle as many from the Bootoo, that tribe of cowards and rejects from other tribes confirms it. The shu are adept at hiding, due to their history with the Ancients it is a not surprising they would have learned the skill. Suffice to say the relationship between the two was sometimes contentious. In fact, the shu's taboo against killing other shu dates to this time, and some stories say that is related. The shu are also sometimes flighty. One shu named Cheech has taken it into his head that it is the shu's destiny to one day fly like the aarakocra do. This has caused some problems in the past. Likewise, the entire tribe of the Simbuki, formerly Simbuku, are known to slightly change their name anytime a new chieftain is chosen. This will make chronicling their exploits confusing to later generations. We should not worry about the shu as allies. Through all the hardship, joys, pains, and strife of the last decade, they have stood with the tribes, and we have done our best to stand with them.

To be Concluded...  
Next: Tabaxi—The End

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## JUNGLE MOODS



### Updated MAP!

Trent Brewer was able to do make an alpha version of a more modern map for the setting. He is currently working on adding in tons of details I provided to him as well as making some minor tweaks. I will share an updated version when it is available, but here is one based solely on the Polyhedron maps.



