

KZINTI



by Robert Plamondon

FREQUENCY: *Rare*
 NO. APPEARING: 1-1000
 ARMOR CLASS: *Variable*
 (9 if unarmored)
 MOVE: 18"
 HIT DICE: 4+4
 % IN LAIR: 20%
 TREASURE TYPE: C
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-6/1-6
 or by weapon
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *None*
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *None*
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
 INTELLIGENCE: *Very*
 ALIGNMENT: *Lawful Evil*
 SIZE: L (8' tall)
 PSIONIC ABILITY: *See below*
 Attack/Defense Modes: *See below*

Kzinti were discovered by science-fiction author Larry Niven, and revealed to the rest of the universe in short stories and his novels, *RINGWORLD*, and *THE RINGWORLD ENGINEERS*.

DESCRIPTION

Kzinti look something like great cat: standing on their hind legs. They are heavier than cats, however, weighing about five hundred pounds. They stand eight feet tall on straight legs, and have hands instead of paws, orange fur, hairless pink tails, and retractable claws.

Kzinti are carnivores, preferring fresh-killed meat; when possible they eat their prey before it has had time to cool below body temperature.

Kzinti males are very strong, very fast, and have incredible stamina. This means that they make impressive opponents; they can carry heavy armor and still move faster than human infantry, and they can do it for longer periods of time.

Kzinti tend to go berserk when threatened; their instinctive reaction to hostile creatures is to instantly attack them, whether they can win or not. This tendency becomes less pronounced after the Kzinti lose a few wars, as the most enthusiastic warriors rush to the front

and die, while the cautious survive to perpetuate the race.

In spite of this kamikaze attitude, the Kzinti are capable of putting together well organized and well trained armies. Kzinti like warfare, and they're very good at it. Their eagerness works against them in one respect; they always seem to attack before they're ready.

Kzinti females are at best semi-intelligent; females from the primitive culture discovered on Ringworld can speak a few words; those in the modern world of Kzin described in *RINGWORLD* and *THE RINGWORLD ENGINEERS* are so unintelligent that they do not speak at all.

Kzinti females apparently are rather helpless physically, also. Thus, they need constant protection and attention from the males.

There are about three females for every male in cultures where warriors die a lot (as they would in a D&D setting). In more placid situations the ratio will ap-

proach one-to-one. The females will have from three to six young each.

A little arithmetic will reveal that of the kzinti population, only four to eight percent are adult males. The males will have their work cut for them; they have a lot of mouths to feed and bodies to protect.

ARRIVAL IN D&D WORLDS

Several hundred years ago there lived a magician of such extraordinary powers that he had partial control of several gods. As is typical of magicians of extraordinary powers, he wanted to rule the world. He commanded the gods to deliver to him intelligent monsters that could help him conquer the world. The gods wanted to deliver them in such a way as to kill the magician. They were tired of being ordered around.

The specs he listed fit kzinti pretty well. The gods bargained with other gods, who in turn dickered with other, more outlandish gods, who then dealt with truly bizarre, alien gods, who, in return for godly favors delivered a hundred square miles of Kzin, complete with flora, fauna, two hundred feet of dirt and rock, and five thousand puzzled kzinti.

The wizard survived the sky falling on him, but lost most of his troops and magic items. The kzinti were looking for and found the wizard. Three thousand kzinti died before the wizard, who after all had extraordinary powers, was rent into bite-sized morsels. Score one for kzinti recklessness.

The kzinti were confused by their strange surroundings, but they could take that. They were also puzzled by the failure of their old gods to respond to their prayers, and they were very concerned.

They found magic. They'd never had magic before, and it fascinated and frightened them. Regardless, the kzinti resolved to extend their dominion all over the world and subjugate all of the intelligent races.

Centuries passed, and the kzinti now control a large portion of the major continent, and have enslaved many tribes of Orcs, Goblins, Hobgoblins, Kobolds, Lizard Men, Ogres, Gnolls, Trolls, and Men. Elves and Dwarves they cannot enslave, though entire clans have been exterminated.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

As kzinti females are unintelligent, all kzinti social structures and pantheons are patriarchal in nature.

All adult male kzinti are warriors. They are by nature hunters, and enjoy hunting and fishing immensely — duels among themselves are common, although the formality of human dueling is unknown; the combatants leap to engage with each other without bothering to choose seconds.

The modern kzinti society has an extremely rigid structure; kzinti of low status have no names, and are called by their profession. As a kzin gains status, he may be given a partial name — one kzinti warship commander was called Chuft-Captain —or, if he does very well, he may be awarded a full name, which contains no reference to profession.

Social status also corresponds with superior fighting ability. A kzin with a partial name will have 6+4 hit dice, and one with a full name will have 8+4 dice.

Since names mean status, a kzin with a name is a big cheese, perhaps corresponding to a Count or Earl in human feudal society. A kzin with a partial name would correspond to a Baron. Kzinti without names would have status equal to that of a Knight if they are from a civilized region, yeoman if they are from a more primitive area.

Kzinti culture does NOT correspond closely to human feudalism, but the humans who encounter kzinti will try to define kzinti social status in human terms, and vice versa, and will convert each other's relative ranks accordingly.

About the only way for a kzin from a non-aristocratic family to get a name is to do something spectacular. "Winning a name for yourself" has great significance to kzinti. Young kzinti warriors are continually searching for a suitable quest to attempt in order to win a name.

Many kzinti quests center around gaining magic items. Kzinti are impressed by magic, but can't seem to learn how to cast spells, so their magic is limited to using enchanted items.

To get these enchanted items, kzinti go singly or in small groups to (you

guessed it) dungeons, abandoned castles, and other crumbling structures. This is where adventurers most often meet kzinti.

Magic-seeking kzinti are not always hostile to adventurers. They respect Fighters and Clerics of reasonably high level, and fear and respect Magic-Users. They despise Thieves and Assassins, and think Monks are crazy.

Kzinti tend to think of adventurers encountered in dungeons as good cannon fodder. They especially like to send party members ahead to find traps the hard way. They can sometimes be persuaded to treat everyone more or less as equals if there's someone in the party they respect.

Kzinti treasure hunters can be in any kind of armor, including none, and carry any kind of weapon, from claws to ballistae. Their equipment will generally correspond to the military gear common with the nearest kzinti settlement.

RELIGION

Kzinti religion underwent considerable revision after the kzinti were dumped into the D&D multiverse, as the kzinti gods had sold them out.

Searching for suitable gods, many kzinti found the Lawful Evil group (Asmodeus, Baal, et al) the most suitable. They do not particularly trust these alien gods, however, since they suspect that the gods don't really care about them. The kzinti tend to suspect they're being used, and they don't like it.

Since these gods are primarily interested in humanoid creatures, the kzinti clergy decided to misrepresent themselves as humans to their new gods, by



wearing masks of human skin during church ceremonies. This is similar to the Kdapist heresy described in *RING-WORLD*. These masks are used by the kzinti priests as holy symbols in spelt casting; masks made from the facial skin of a Good Cleric are considered the most potent.

MAGIC USE

Kzinti are unable to cast spells of any kind; their magic use is limited to using enchanted items, and occasional special dispensation from the gods. This dispensation will be very limited in scope; for example, one kzinti priest was given the ability to cast lightning bolts once per day, but he had no other spells.

PSIONICS

Kzinti are known to have psionic ability similar to that of humans. One kzin in five hundred has some psionic talent. Strength, attack and defense modes, etc. are determined as in humans. A kzin with psionics rarely has to go adventuring to gain status, so they're rarely encountered on dungeon expeditions.

FOOD

Kzinti eat a lot. An adult male kzin weighs in at around five hundred pounds, and leads a very active life. Moving a kzin's body around all day takes a lot of energy. Feeding three females and nine to eighteen young also takes a lot of energy. Rough calculations indicate that an adult male kzin needs fourteen pounds of fresh meat a day; and his family needs another 125 pounds per day. That's about ten times the consumption of a comparable human family — and humans can eat lots of things besides raw meat.

Another problem is that the kzinti prefer their meat VERY fresh. It is difficult for kzin to eat cold meat, and probably impossible for him to eat cooked or dried meat. Kzinti need to be close to a supply of live animals.

Kzinti population density is thus kept low by the necessity of being near food animals; Kzinti who live by raising cattle on prime pastureland could achieve a population density of two families per square mile — but only if there were no bad years and no cattle died of disease. A realistic density would be one kzinti family per square mile for PRIME pastureland; worse land would have fewer kzinti per square mile.

As one final complication, kzinti aren't temperamentally suited to caring for animals. A kzin would kill any domestic animal that bothered him, and soon there would be no animals left. A kzin has to have slaves to tend his animals, which screws up their population density even more.

In contrast, humans could realistically expect prime pastureland to support ten

to twelve families per square mile, assuming everyone was on an all-meat diet. Subsistence farming could support 50 or more families per square mile. The kzinti will always be outnumbered.

Even so, there is much that the kzinti can do to boost their population density. A major strategem will be to take slaves to raise grain for animal feed, which will allow more cattle in a fixed area. Tribute in cattle and grain will be exacted from neighboring countries whenever possible.

The kzinti also have the charming habit of eating members of the slave races (although Kobolds and Lizard Men will escape the honor, being cold-blooded and thus inedible as far as kzinti are concerned). Slaves can thus form a good backup food supply in the event that disease or drought reduces the animal population.

"WILD" KZINTI

Most kzinti will live in a semi-feudal society that concerns itself mostly with ranching and conquest. Some kzinti, however, are living the "natural life" in primitive hunting societies.

These kzinti will usually live in small groups in forests. They will be semi-nomadic of necessity, as kzinti will soon hunt out any area in a relatively short time.

Because a kzin who lives a claw-to-mouth existence in the forest is in a much more vulnerable position than a kzinti rancher under the protection of the Patriarch, the wild kzinti are much less arrogant and xenophobic than their more civilized relatives.

A wild kzin must hunt every day, and while he is hunting, his family is left unprotected. Considering the creatures that inhabit a typical D&D forest, this is a highly undesirable state of affairs. Carting the whole family along on the hunt is small improvement. Wild kzinti therefore lead a precarious existence unless they find strongholds, allies, or both.

One solution favored by many wild kzinti is to ally themselves with the Wood Elves. This odd alliance has advantages for both sides. The kzinti can leave their families under the protection of the elves, which leaves them free to hunt. The elves gain valuable allies; they can lounge around and drink wine all day while the kzinti take care of all the nasty forest critters. The kzinti don't understand the elves attitude, but respect them for their fighting ability and for their magic.

Wild kzinti tend to a more neutral alignment, partly because of the elves' influence, and partly because the wild kzinti are in a rotten position to do much evil. They have enough problems.

Even so, adventurers often find that wild kzinti like to accost travelers. They

rob and eat small parties, take tolls from medium-sized groups, and leave large ones alone. Merchants going through areas inhabited by wild kzinti usually pay an annual tribute, in return for which the kzinti guard their caravans. Kzinti like protection rackets. Payment is in coin or trade goods; wild kzinti are too proud to accept livestock as payment; they think it reflects unfavorably on their hunting ability.

Wild kzinti normally wear no armor, and use no weapons other than their claws. Because of the extremely low population density of wild kzinti, they are rarely organized into formal military units. Civilized kzinti, on the other hand, have a highly developed military organization.

KZINTI MILITARY

The kzinti military organization resembles that of the humanoid races. Differences in outlook and size make the kzinti auxiliaries rather unusual, but the regular troops are organized in a fairly conventional manner.

Infantry: Kzinti infantry is very powerful. Kzinti are almost as tall as Ogres, but are faster and smarter. Most kzinti armies are composed of light, medium, and heavy infantry.

The light infantry is composed of kzinti who wear either leather armor (armor class 7) or no armor at all. Weaponry varies considerably; swords, axes, and claws are among the preferred weapons. Most kzinti light infantrymen carry javelins or longbows. Kzinti light infantry moves 18" per turn, which means that they are as fast as heavy cavalry.

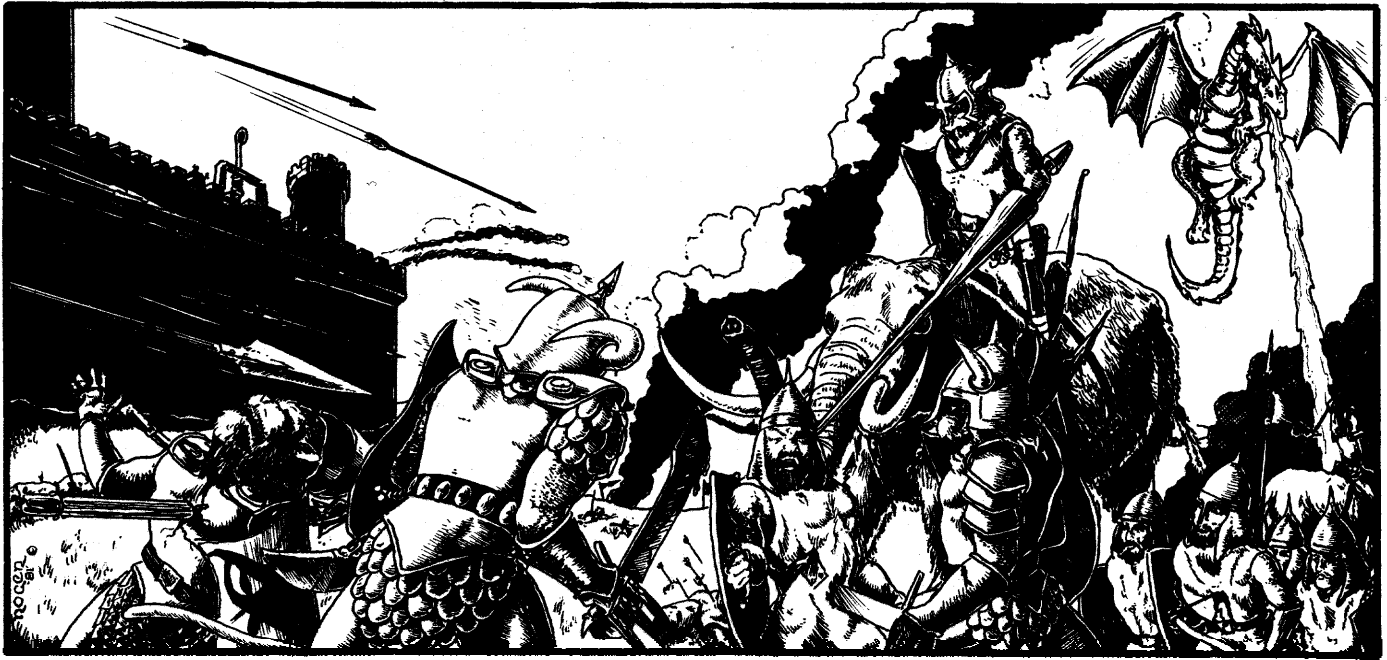
Kzinti medium infantry is the backbone of most kzinti armies. Preferred weapons are swords, axes, maces, and halberds. Kzinti with one-hand weapons will carry large shields, and all will wear armor—banded, chain, or plate—which is thicker than human armor. Armor classes, without shields, are AC 3, 2, 1 respectively. The shield drops armor class by one, as usual.

Medium infantry moves 12" per turn, the same rate as human fight infantry.

Kzinti heavy infantry is truly awesome. Armored in unbelievably heavy field plate, the heavy infantry lumbers along at 6" per turn, with an armor class of -2. They will use weapons suited to killing armored opponents; halberds, lucerne hammers, maces, and two-handed swords.

These are typical kzinti regular troops. The deficiency in archers in all but the light infantry can be attributed to kzinti eagerness to get into the fray; archers are considered to be useful mainly in ambush and siege, and are thus classed as auxiliary troops.

Cavalry: Kzinti can't ride horses; they're too heavy. They understand the value of cavalry, however, and looked for



a good substitute for horses. They chose mastodons.

Mastodons are mean, nasty, vicious, and hard to tame, but so are kzinti. The kzinti eventually tamed large numbers of mastodons for use in war. A large mastodon can carry two kzinti into battle. Some mastodons are armored in studded leather barding; these can carry a single kzin. Unarmored mastodons are armor class 6, and move at 15" per turn, armored mastodons are armor class 3, and move 12" per turn.

Kzinti lancers on mastodons probably make the world's best shock cavalry, but don't make up a large portion of the army, because of the huge cost in upkeep (pachyderms have the world's most inefficient digestive system, and eat enormous amounts of food). Figure about one mastodon for every ten to one hundred warriors.

SUPPLY

Kzinti armies are plagued with supply problems. Although they can often stretch supplies by eating dead and wounded humans on the battlefield, they still must either drive great herds of cattle wherever they go, or spend most of their time foraging. In many battles with kzinti, the main objective of the opposing army was to separate the kzinti from their cattle.

In addition to herd animals, kzinti supply trains will have many horse-drawn wagons for supplies and plunder. Kzinti like horses for their versatility; if there's no work for the horse, it can always be eaten.

Supply problems also make the kzinti lousy at conducting sieges that are any distance from home. They also have little patience, so they tend to storm fortifications instead. Suckering kzinti into at-

tacking a fort that they can't take is a favorite trick in the border countries.

DRAGONS

Kzinti LIKE dragons, especially talking dragons. Dragons are everything a kzin wants to be: big, fierce, arrogant, and magical. Kzinti and dragons get along fine. Kzinti like to have dragons as air cover in battles. Dragons like to have the kzinti deliver succulent human maidens to them every day and twice on Sundays. It works out.

This kzinti-dragon alliance results in dragons showing up for kzinti battles, typically one dragon for every two hundred fifty to one thousand kzinti. It can also work the other way; many dragon lairs have kzinti guards, either regular troops or wild kzinti who use the lair as a safe (for them) base. Dragons will also take a couple of kzinti with them when they decide to destroy a hamlet, since the kzinti are more effective at looting

SLAVE TROOPS

Slave races can usually provide the kzinti with cannon fodder for their campaigns. Humans and Orc auxiliaries are the most common, but the kzinti will use whatever they can get, including Trolls and Ogres.

These troops are organized into regular military units with kzinti officers. Morale is ten to twenty percent higher than normal for slave troops because they fear their officers more than the enemy. Their weapons and armor will be those normally used by soldiers of the slaves' races.

In extreme situations the kzinti have been known to eat slave soldiers. The Trolls are victimized first, since a Troll's regeneration ability allows you to butcher him several times a day.

HUMANOID AUXILIARIES

If a country is strong enough to successfully resist kzinti invasion, the kzinti will sometimes put forward an offer of alliance. These countries will gain the advantage of having a secure border with the kzinti and the promise of kzinti aid if their lands are threatened. In return, they must send their troops if the kzinti are threatened.

Thus, in many battles with kzinti, human and humanoid auxiliaries make up a large part of the kzinti forces. These troops are under the command of their own leaders, and can sometimes be persuaded to desert the kzinti before or during the battle.

Auxiliary units are less controllable than kzinti or slave units, since they are not directly under kzinti command. They sometimes ignore orders and battle plans in order to gain some advantage for themselves. They often stop to plunder a baggage train when they're needed elsewhere, for example.

CONCLUSIONS

Kzinti have been used for several months in the author's campaigns, and all of the encounters with them have been interesting (the party has always won, but maybe next time...). In my campaign, kzinti have filled a gap in the AD&D monster lineup by being nasty but very intelligent, vicious but organized.

I'd also like to express my thanks to Larry Niven for his patience in answering my questions, and for bringing us kzinti in the first place.

Finally, remember that kzinti have hair-trigger tempers. Calling a kzin nasty names is dangerous; insulting his ancestors is fatal. Under no circumstances should you call out to a kzin, "Here, kitty, kitty, kitty..."