

Sapient Species of Oria List

By Holly Lisle

THE INHABITANTS OF ORIA

Unlike Terra, Oria is awash in sentient species. The Orians have Orian names of course, but Southerners as a rule are not fond of long, foreign or un-descriptive names. So the Sentinels of Cat Creek have given their own names to the races that inhabit Oria and wash over from time to time into Cat Creek. These are short, colorful, comfortable names, and they prevent the Sentinels from slipping up in front of spouses, neighbors, associates, and good ol' boys down at Hardee's.

The good guys

These are good from the human perspective – good in the sense that they will not actively seek the destruction of humans most of the time, and that they can occasionally be bribed to do services for humans. They are not more moral than the neutral or bad (from human perspective) Orians. In fact, from a moral perspective, they include the species most likely to be shiftless, dishonest, or devious. They tend to be the smallest, neediest, and weakest of the Orians, too, those at the bottom of the power pyramid, and consequently those with the least to offer. Still, as allies go, they are often better than nothing.

And of course, generalizations about species do not offer a guarantee that any member of that species will fit the generalization.

Wicks

Seen as bright lights floating in darkened areas, invisible in

brighter places, wicks are only barely sentient. They often serve as messengers, though they are only capable of transmitting a message of one or two words, an image, or a location. They are telepathic.

Sports

They look almost like Chihuahuas twisted by some perverse mad scientist to stand on their hind legs and given hands. They have stubby little tails, sharp teeth, high-pitched voices, and soft, attractive fur. They are malicious, treacherous, clever, and very, very fast. And because of their size, they're ideal for getting into tight places and listening to conversations.

Stinkers

Rotund with plush honey-brown to deep auburn fur, teddy-bearish faces and physiques, long wavy hair on their heads that they love to style, and an unfortunate odor that emanates from their musk glands in moments of stress, fear, or excitement. They have cheerful personalities and terrible memories, and while they would love to be helpful (for the right bribe), they are hellishly unreliable.

Roaches

Three to four inches tall, four-legged with two pairs of tiny rib-arms on each side that give them a somewhat inflexible pincer grip, gray-green to black in color, with nubbly skin (no carapaces – they're soft-bodied mammals). High, whispery voices, moderate intelligence, fair loyalty, addiction to sugar. If you take in one, you acquire a whole family.

Runners

Wrinkled, leathery, hunched, with skinny, large-jointed arms and legs, outsized hands and feet. About three feet tall, but

most of the height is legs – the arms reach almost all the way to the ground, and when the runners run, they use their arms as forelegs and knuckle-run. Probably originally nicknamed knuckle-runners. They're highly intelligent, can read and write, usually act out of enlightened self-interest but are easily intimidated.

Young'uns

No younger than any other Orians, they received their nickname because the adults look much like attractive human children of about seven or eight. Like children, their heads and eyes are disproportionately large, while their jaws, teeth, hands and feet are small. They are very, very pale, fond of elegant clothes, even by Orian standards relatively rare. They have a cruel sense of humor.

Borrowers

Ranging from pale blue-gray through cornflower blue to a sort of seafoam green, always with matching hair and pale yellow-gold eyes, borrowers otherwise look like perfectly proportioned little humans. Their heights range from about eighteen inches to around twenty-six. They tend to be slender, dapper, and amusing – they also have an attraction to all things bright and colorful and soft, and they prefer to sleep in nests of pillowy fabrics. Hence their love of socks, which they steal with abandon. The ultimate borrower sock would be a cashmere rainbow-striped knee sock. They also like shiny, sparkly objects and little toys like action figures and wind-up toys.

Lookers

Called veyr in their own language. Between six and seven feet tall, delicately built, slender, beautiful. Sharp features, hair in pastel shades of yellow, orange, pink, lavender, blue, and green, skins of bleached-bone white, eyes black without

visible pupils or scleras. They have vestigial wings, and differing races have different numbers of fingers and joints, and different wing shapes. Sensitive to extremes of heat and cold. They have sweet voices and gentle dispositions, but when cornered either physically or by events, they can be deadly.

The neutral guys

These are neutral from the human perspective. Any one individual of any of these groups might be either friend, foe, or completely indifferent.

Grayfellas

Tall and terrifying to look at, always seen alone. Stooped, gaunt, claw-fingered, with luminous red eyes and lipless mouths, they could make a pretty good stand-in for Death if you handed them a scythe. They are highly intelligent and interested in sciences, maths, and literature.

Blackdogs

On a dark night on a lonely road or from a distance they might look like dogs. They have four legs, a tail, and a muzzle. But their eyes are clearly intelligent, they have both lips and flexible tongues for speech, and they have little arms with three-fingered hands that dangle from their sloping shoulders. They are hunters, predatory, about the size of Labrador retrievers.

Yalladogs

A species related to the blackdogs, but bigger, stupider, and meaner.

Hairballs

They could have been crossed from cats and raccoons – they run

from about twenty-five to forty pounds, have little raccoon-like hands, lean muscular bodies, cat-like faces. They are telepathic, highly territorial, and unlike most Orians can cross between the worlds completely without much difficulty. Within the sphere of Terra's higher energy, they multiply rapidly.

Thumpers, Whisperers, and Drips

Three classes of solitaries who have a special interest in humans and Terra. They're hulking, massive things too big for all but the largest gates. But they, like most Orians, can send a part of themselves into Terra through a gate. They are physically present enough that they make soft noises when they move, causing creaks and thumps in old houses. In the right light, their huge, shadowy forms will be partially visible.

The bad guys

From a human perspective, all of these are trouble. The interesting thing is that some of them are trouble from an Orian perspective, too. All of them are rare.

Suckers

Parasites. Energy vampires in both their world and ours, capable of attaching themselves to a person and slowly draining his will, his stamina and his focus. They don't attach physically, but they do need to be in fairly close proximity – their range is about thirty to forty feet in Oria and about ten to fifteen in Terra. Their bodies are bat-like and about the size of great horned owls, and they have owlish eyes and mouths capable of speech. They aren't terribly clever, but they don't need to be. They don't drain their victims to death, but if the victim was already weakened through illness or stress, he may die anyway.

Bleeders

A variant of suckers, but one that attaches physically and drinks blood. They are only a problem in Oria, because they are physically incapable of transitioning through gates. Watchers As a species, deeply attached to Oria, patriotic and gung-ho for the Orian way. They are smallish, dark brown to black with shadowy tabby-stripes, capable of soundless movement and careful strategy. They are pack hunters, four-legged with arms and hands like the blackdogs, about the size of ocelots with cat-lithe bodies. Their faces are monkeyish.

Creepers

Warm-blooded saurian, man-sized, raptor-shaped, intelligent, omnivorous, bookish. They are highly territorial, hunt for the pleasure of the kill, don't even care much for their own kind. They can be waylaid by words, however – they love poetry and stories of adventure and mystery.

Fiddlers

Feathered saurians with singing voices like violins, ostrich-sized, predatory, flightless, very fast. Unlike the creepers, they cannot be seduced from their purpose by a well-told tale.

The really scary-as-shit bad guys

They are the rrrn. Saurian humanoids, pure carnivores, big shadowy watchful plotters who hunger for the upworld wonders of technology, weaponry, transportation, and computerization. They are the pinnacle of the Orian food chain, and though they are rare, (so rare that humans will believe they're myths until Book Two), they have a hand in most everything that moves toward change in Oria. They are not evil, but from our perspective they might as well be, because everything they want will spell disaster for our world if they get it. They

hold human life in no value at all – anything that is not one of their kind is either a curiosity, an impediment, or a snack. They are feared by Orions and humans alike. Think telepathic Mafia with fangs.

Where to buy

(as a set)

- Amazon

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