

Tales of the Black Bard

These are the words and thoughts of Odi Silvertongue, a half-elven wandering, warrior poet who in his many years has traipsed across the known world of Shatterdawn in his own roguish bohemian style gathering, tales, songs and scars along the way. They should in no way be taken as "true fact" as the Black Bard has a tendency to "color" himself in a better light than his less than savory reputation affords him in many of the known kingdoms of this vast realm. As Odi is found of saying "Take from a tale what truths you will and leave the rest a little better than you found it."

***Swarms of rats and giant bats
Are the meekest foes to meet
Halfling's hide with pointed grins
As Hydra's stalk the steeps
In the hills dire death will come
To every fool who sleeps...***

-A children's rhyme sang in Varnos (author unknown)-

Of the Gnawbone Hills: These rugged, twisting grey and white hillocks are dotted with numerous caverns inhabited by massive swarms of marsh rats and their larger cousins the Saw-toothed Dire Rats, along with several species of bats some even of the dire variety. These rodents give the hills their name as it is said no man or beast can stand still long in these blighted hills without being eaten alive, sometimes consumed down to the bones in a mere nights time. The rats and bats are not the only dangers to be found amongst this knobby ridgeline, Tribes of feral barbarian halflings as well as a few marsh cats, several hydras and even a dragon is rumored to call these infested hills its home.

The gnawbones are a dangerous place for any who are ill prepared. Fires keep the rats mostly at bay (unless it is winter and they are starving), but draw the attention of the tiny bands of fierce halfling barbarians who demand trinkets and trade to travel in their harsh hilly homeland. These halflings should not be underestimated, most sharpen their teeth to points, and enjoy the flesh of unwelcome travelers as much as their normal meat heavy diet. If given shiny trinkets, weapons, or strong drink, they will most times leave travelers alone.

Some would ask why anyone would dare enter these nasty hills and the answer is a simple one, opals. In all the great northern Isle, no place is as rich with opals; the Gnawbones are rife with these shiny treasures. All and all a very harsh place to travel and one I recommend only to the fiercest of warriors.