

The Rise of TURROSH MAK



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Artwork: Roman Tishenin (<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/QoBbE>)

Preface

Turrosh Mak was born in 555 CY. He was 14 when he arrived in Greyhawk City in 569. He spent 2 years in the city as a student, but was forced to leave in 571.

The primary trait which Turrosh Mak has is a desire to help his own race, i.e. orcs (he doesn't identify with humans), and other similar humanoids. He feels that not only have they been given a more difficult position within the scheme of things, but the other races conspire to keep humanoids down. He also recognizes what he sees as a self-destructive tendency within humanoid communities, and this, as much as anything else, keeps them from developing a higher form of civilization. He sees himself as having a particular mission, to elevate the humanoids, particularly orcs, above their barbaric, fragmented culture and establish a state of "higher culture" within the humanoid community.

His experience within the humanoid community has taught him that it is their environment which leads humanoids to perpetual barbarism. In those few instances where some have lived apart from this structure, and apart from the human/demi-human cultures which also reinforce humanoid barbarism, they have grown into intelligent, thoughtful, introspective individuals with a high respect for the values of more "civilized" cultures such as integrity, truth, justice, etc. He is not against killing, especially if it is necessary in order to right the "great injustice perpetuated by and upon the humanoid community." Those are his words.

From the Pomarj Pits

In his early years, before his capture by the Flinds, he learned first-hand about humanoid life. Perhaps it was his half-orc status which allowed him to look upon this in a slightly more detached manner. Anyway, he was very young, and not much of that part of his life is remembered clearly. What he does remember is the constant struggle, both within the tribe itself as well as with external enemies. It was one of these enemy tribes, the Victorious Flind tribe, which captured Turrosh Mak during a raid and forced him to fight in the pit games, common throughout the Pomarj.

While fighting in the Pomarj Pits, he became quite aware of the naked brutality rampant in humanoid culture. He also noticed how many young were brought to watch the games, and over time he watched their innocent faces, filled with fear and revulsion, gradually change. They became accustomed to the bloodshed and eventually looked forward to and enjoyed the horrible and gory spectacle. It was then that he realized that it was his own kind, not the other races, which was responsible for the humanoid condition.

The Grey College

Having finally won his freedom, he traveled the human world in search of knowledge. This, so he thought, was the key to "transcending the miserable morass of brutality within which my people struggle." When he arrived in Greyhawk City he witnessed a thief steal something from an old man. Well, Turrosh Mak wasn't too comfortable about that; he was more idealistic back then, and he grabbed the thief as he darted by. He let the thief go, but took the item, a precious gem, back to the old man. As it turns out, he was the wise sage, Prosper, who needed the gem for research, and he was greatly pleased at its return. When he asked Turrosh Mak what reward he would like, he asked for tuition to the Grey College. Prosper was quite interested at the prospect of this inquisitive half-orc, and he granted Turrosh Mak's request. Prosper paid Turrosh Mak's first term's tuition and made him his personal servant for the duration of his studies; Turrosh Mak would have to work and pay his own way from then on.

Turrosh Mak quickly became a star student, and he excelled beyond anyone's wildest expectations. In fact, his essay on intertribal humanoid relationships was read by some of the City's most renowned scholars who were amazed at his keen intellect. This attention, however, had the predictable effect of insighting a growing envy from other students, jealous of this upstart half-breed. Eventually, they conspired against him, framing him for stealing books from the Great Library. Although

Prosper knew that he was innocent, the evidence was clearly against Turrosh Mak, and it was clear he would be expelled, mainly on account of Gratus Saghasht's anger regarding the affair. Rather than bring any disrespect upon Prosper, Turrosh Mak quit the university before being expelled and left Greyhawk City. Although Prosper has since removed himself from the public eye, preferring more private studies, he still recalls those days and their most interesting student. As he continues to meet with the city's leaders, they have long known about Turrosh Mak; in fact, some still remember him, and it is still their knowledge of his intelligence which truly frightens Greyhawk City's ruling council.

Shield Lander

Leaving Greyhawk City, Turrosh Mak booked passage on a ship to Admundfort, and crossed the Nyr Dyv to the Shield Lands. With a letter of recommendation from Prosper, as well as on account of his knowledge of humanoid languages and his fighting prowess, he was given a post in a small patrol guarding the eastern border from bandit raids. Although he was constantly looked down upon on account of his heritage, he nevertheless accepted this treatment stoically and went about his job. After about 3 months of service, his patrol was ambushed by bandits. During the desperate battle, his commander, a young nobleman and son of Harald Jenturi, a powerful Knight of the Holy Shielding, was gravely wounded. With the rest of the troop slain, Turrosh Mak gathered the young nobleman, Cowen, and fled on the nobles horse. Although wounded himself, having been shot twice by bandit arrows, he succeeded in returning with Cowen to the fortress. After Turrosh Mak recovered from his wounds, he was rewarded by Harald with a command of his own. Turrosh Mak excelled in this new role, and he eventually succeeded in bringing in the bandit leader who had ambushed his earlier troop, for which action he was promoted to captain of all four troop. Harald also allowed him to use his private library, stocked with works on the strategy, tactics and leadership of famous Oerdian generals of antiquity.

Over the next year, Turrosh Mak spent nearly all of his spare time in Harald's library. He poured through these works, and it was at this time that his plan for the Pomarj began to take form. However, just as his success in Greyhawk City invited envy among his peers, so to did his recent successes lead to grief. Some of his men, namely those with a bit of aristocratic blood, resented serving under a commoner and a half-orc at that. When one of these nobles finally challenged Turrosh Mak, he was forced into a duel in which the noble was slain. As the witnesses were all companions of the slain noble, they accused Turrosh Mak of murdering him and tried to capture him. Unfortunately for Turrosh Mak,

this occurred at a time when Harald was away in Admundfort, and it was clear that he would get no justice without Harald's aid. He thus chose to flee into the bandit lands, where he joined up with the same men he had so recently fought against.

The Vision of Turrosh Mak

For the next six months, Turrosh Mak fought alongside the bandits, trying to decide what to do with his life. Surely, there must be more in store for him than a life of banditry. Why else would the Gods have prepared him with such skill and knowledge if not to use it for his kind. It was at this time that he had his dream/vision. He saw the creation of Oerth and its peopling by various gods, during which the humanoids were left in only the most inhospitable and treacherous lands. He further witnessed the continued humanoid struggle to simply survive in a sea of more advanced, seemingly superior, races. He also saw the arrival of a figure who united the humanoids and created a culture to rival even the elves. He believes that he is that figure, and it is his destiny to at last elevate his kind. Although he has never shared this event, and he probably never will, it has become his driving force. Finally, he had a vision with which to match his desires. His often ridiculed, misunderstood, and seemingly out-of-place (even to himself) thoughts at long last seemed to have meaning and purpose. Convinced this was a sign that he would lead his race to greatness, Turrosh Mak steeled himself for the trials to come and struck out on his own at the first opportunity. Nearly copperless, he stowed away on a ship bound to Dyvers. Just before reaching the commercial entrepot, he was discovered, and the captain threatened to turn him over to the Dyvers constabulary. Well, having no desire to trust in the understanding of its dour Dwarves, he immediately jumped ship and swam to shore. Before word could reach the officials, he had stolen a horse and fled off along the high road, eventually reaching the city of Verbobonc.

Uniting the Pomarj

Turrosh Mak comes to power after the fall of the Slavelords. He begins by marching to Suderham, which is in ruins from the Slavelords' previous defeat. Having reequipped and retrained his tribe, Turrosh Mak leads them in the Battle of Suderham in 581 CY during which they defeated the other two tribes in, a battle of three armies (his, the flinds, and the gnolls). Although his is the seemingly inferior force, through his leadership, the orcs come out on top.

After the battle, Turrosh Mak secured the loyalty of the gnolls and flinds by promising them booty beyond their imaginations. Although wary of

his motives, and rightfully so as it will turn out, they went along with him. Further, he pacified their Shamans through conjuring up images of retaking the Lortmils which will prove to be the source of his greatest support among humanoid shamans.

With the support of these two tribes, the Victorious Flinds and the Vile Epithet Gnolls. Turrosh Mak began to defeat the nearby minor tribes which are quite numerous in the Pomarj. In fact, they are the crucial element in his plans of conquest. For decades these minor tribes, usually nomadic, had paid obeisance to whichever major tribe decided to pick on them. Turrosh Mak's solution is to weld them together into one great tribe loyal to himself. This he does, incorporating them into tribes along racial lines.

The Klumnak

Further, he takes half of the children of each tribe as his personal slaves (*Klumnak* in orcish), and these are sent to Suderham for training. Although this is primarily military training, the first years are taken with learning to read and write common, which helps to break down their racial identities. This is combined with rigorous indoctrination by Turrosh Mak's henchmen regarding loyalty to Turrosh Mak himself. At this stage, males and females are schooled together; however, they are segregated before beginning military training.

The military training then takes up the better part of their lives. Females are trained in bow and sword, while males are trained with the lance and sword. While males will make up the elite, mounted core of his future army, the females will make up his personal bodyguard. Correctly recognizing the second-class status of females in humanoid society, Turrosh Mak finds them to be his most loyal supporters; they realize that if he should fall, they would be without recourse and are thus quite vigorous in his defense. A further gender difference is that the females remain his slaves while the males, upon "graduation," are symbolically freed. This is only symbolic, however, as they are forever tied to Turrosh Mak personally, having no place within any other tribe.

Both sexes live in barracks throughout their lives, and while they are not permitted to marry, they are allowed sexual relations. Turrosh Mak recognizes that children of these relations could pose a problem, but has not decided how to deal with that yet. Currently, they are given the same status as their parents if even one was a Klumnak. The pregnant mothers, upon confirmation by the Klumnak father if the mother is a commoner, are sent to Suderham, where they are cared for by the state until the babies are born after which they are on their own. Each child is

considered a full Klumnak and placed in a nursery. Later on, the surviving children will be enrolled in the academy. Eventually, they will either become replacement for depleted barracks or make up a new one, depending on the need. Each barracks has a unit banner, based Shieldlander style, and houses a unit of 100 soldiers. They are completely isolated, physically and psychologically, from the rest of humanoid society. Speaking only common, they have virtually no ability to interact with them, nor do they have any real desire to do so. Not only is their life fundamentally different from other humanoids, but they view them as commoners, brutish and untrained in the finer arts of warfare and civilization.

Finally, it is from their ranks that the ruling elite of Turrosh Maks empire comes. He is slowly creating a military bureaucracy which will coexist alongside the feudal/tribal system already in place. The Klumnak have many rights and privileges which the commoners do not, including the right to kill any commoner at will and exemption from tribal law. They answer only to themselves, Turrosh Mak, and the law he creates. This system slowly evolved during Turrosh Maks conquest of the rest of the Pomarj and seems to be based on an early Oerdian state during the age of Leuk-O.

The Scarlett Tool

After the defeat of the Slavelords and the destruction of Suderham, Turrosh Mak seized the region. In the Slavelords archives he came across some very interesting information regarding their organization. Foremost, he found lists of all the Scarlett Brotherhood agents throughout the Pomarj and the Wild Coast—even those within bordering states such as Greyhawk City, Ulek and Keoland—in the papers of Brother Mierjoi. This also included detailed information regarding their activities in subverting the Slavelords as the first step to conquering the Pomarj, whose humanoids were then to make ideal diversions, drawing away the forces of important states such as Keoland, in preparation for their conquest by the Scarlett Brotherhood. Turrosh Maks immediate thought was to simply purge them from the Pomarj, assuming he is able to unite it; however, he later decided to wait. Why couldn't he use them just as they planned to use the Pomarj? Accordingly, he secreted the copious documents away and feigned ignorance of the Scarlett Brotherhood. He was soon contacted by their representatives, intent upon securing him as a useful ally (or rather as a tool), and he feigned interest in their help. Actually, he did desire their help, although in negotiations he pretended to know nothing about their vast network, in uniting the various tribes. The Scarlett Brotherhood, truly oblivious to the uncanny mental ability of this

apparently brutal and savage humanoid, who granted had a knack for military affairs, proceeded to eliminate the leaders of Blue, Highport and Stoneheim, preparing the way for Turrosh Maks conquest of the vital cities in the summer of 582 CY.

The Fall of Stoneheim

The first city to fall was Stoneheim. This was done without bloodshed, except for the previous warlord who was assassinated by the Scarlett Brotherhood. Turrosh Mak quickly moved in and accepted the surrender of the city without a fight. Gold from the Stoneheim mines placated his troops, and Turrosh Mak established his capital in the previous lord's citadel. The city's many human slaves were sent back to Suderham where reconstruction had been slowly underway since the eruption of Mt. Flamenbutt. Local officials were left in charge, no garrison was installed, and a Mayor was placed in charge. In the meantime, Turrosh Mak's warriors were forced to camp outside the city, as a show of force to its inhabitants. Upset at not being able to loot such a fair prize, two companies of gnolls raided a mine in the foothills. Upon hearing of the incident, Turrosh Mak had both companies executed. No more similar incidents occurred.

Highport

His next move was in the direction of Highport. As his army poured from the heights of the Drachensgrabs, they came across a skirmish in progress between the Green Meat Kobolds and the Crooked Claw Orcs. His army surrounded the two tribes and demanded their immediate surrender. The Kobolds, who were getting the worst of it from the Orcs, surrendered immediately, while the orcs turned upon this new threat. A fierce and bloody battle ensued, and when the Orcs finally threw down their weapons they were slain to a man and their heads placed on pikes. Turrosh Mak then marched on their village, slew all but the newborns who were sent under guard to Suderham, and razed the village to the ground. Word quickly spread throughout the Pomarj of the fate of the Crooked Claw Orcs. The other nearby goblin tribes, the Hill Beater Goblins and the Wicked Eye Goblins, submitted to Turrosh Mak without a fight and were allowed to join the march on Highport.

Turrosh Mak's army reached Highport in late Wealsun. The previous lord, Sturm Blucholz, briefly risen to power in the wake of the Slavers' deaths, was eliminated by the Scarlett Brotherhood shortly before, and chaos had prevailed since. When Turrosh Mak reached the city he found the private army of the Duke of Elredd besieging it. The Duke quickly withdrew his forces with all haste leaving the city to Turrosh Mak. Highport opened its gates to Turrosh Mak's forces, and he entered it as

its savior and conqueror. The minor tribes within the city were incorporated into his larger tribes, and a large garrison of loyal troops was left behind.

The Slavelords and the Siege of Blue

Through the information discovered at Suderham, Turrosh Mak had contacted the captains of the various slaveships operated by the Slavelords and requested they meet him at Highport. In a display of bravery which greatly impressed the assembled captains, he met them alone on the Ghoul, a slavelord galley. There he discussed plans to continue the previous arrangements, in fact, doubling their pay in the process. The assembled captains readily agreed and Turrosh Mak had a fleet. The new fleet was immediately called upon to transport the bulk of his forces to Blue in order to take the last of the peninsula's cities. Its lord had also been assassinated by the Scarlett Brotherhood; however, when the new oligarchy called on Turrosh Mak to annex the city, as had been the plan all along, rival factions rose against them and took control. They declared their complete independence and defied Turrosh Mak to cross the whole of the Pomarj and stop them. Well, they had defied the wrong warlord. After a grueling voyage—tough on the humanoids, unused to seaborne travel—the fleet arrived off Blue. The city was besieged and fell to Turrosh Mak after a week. To make an example, he allowed his troops free reign to rape and pillage, the brutal story of which quickly spread throughout the Flanaess. After the sacking of Blue, the Ochre Tooth Kobolds to the south submitted to Turrosh Mak as well.

With the taking of Blue, the three commercial centers of the Pomarj were in Turrosh Mak's control. Further, he had the remaining eastern tribes virtually surrounded. Many of these had been under the control of the Slavelords, and with their destruction they had begun to split apart. This fragmentation was halted by the Slavelord Theg Narlot who had managed to maintain his loose control over them. He had been the Slavelord who originally had bought Turrosh Mak from the flinds. Recognizing in Turrosh Mak a potentially powerful ally and he intended to bring him up as his protégé. However, Turrosh Mak had other plans, and at the first opportunity, he fled the Pomarj.

The two realized that there was no room in the Pomarj for both of them, and the issue would have to be settled by force of arms. While Turrosh Mak had only roughly half of his forces, Theg Narlot had managed to gather together a large number of warriors from the tribes under his control.

The Battle of Blue

As his army marched on Blue, which it reached by mid-Reaping, Turrosh Mak sent word by ship to Stoneheim, summoning the remainder of his forces. They would be forced, however, to march overland as the rest of his fleet would be busy supplying Blue so recently ravaged by Turrosh Maks own troops. This could work, however, in Turrosh Mak's favor, and he gave them specific orders to capture the villages of hostile tribes along their route. They could then be used as leverage to detach the tribes from Theg's army. In the meantime, Theg's forces made several attacks on the city, each of which was easily repulsed by its defenders before settling into what seemed would be along siege.

Over the next few weeks, Turrosh Mak's reinforcements made their way across the peninsula until they reached the mostly unguarded village of the Red Nails Goblins and the Purple Squid Hobgoblins, both of which tribes were aligned with Theg Narlot and were besieging Blue. Garrisons were left in each village, and runners were sent to secretly "recommend" the two tribes switch sides during the coming battle. With little choice, they agreed to the proposal.

About a week later, Turrosh Maks reinforcements reached Blue and together with the besieged forces, were able to lift the siege. Theg's army retreated to the plains north of the city and prepared for battle while Turrosh Mak reunited forces advanced against them. Here, the fate of the Pomarj would be settled as between the two armies nearly all of the Pomarj's major tribes were about to do battle.

Forces under Turrosh Mak:

Name Race Warriors¹

- Red Fang Orcs 800
- Victorious Flinds 500
- Vile Epithet Gnolls 450
- Green Meat Kobolds 150
- Hill Beater Goblins 850
- Wicked Eye Goblins 400
- New Tribe Flinds 500
- New Tribe Gnolls 400
- New Tribe Goblins 800
- New Tribe Hobgoblins 250
- New Tribe Kobolds 600
- New Tribe Orcs 1500

Total Force: 7200 warriors

Forces under Theg Narlot:

Name Race Warriors

- Rotting Kraken Hobgoblins 700
- Bloody Axe Gnolls 700
- Saltburner Orcs 500
- Fell Ichor Kobolds 800
- Dead Rat Kobolds 650
- Wolfbrother Goblins 700 (worg cavalry)
- Bluebottle Hobgoblins 500
- Shadowdoom Orcs 250
- Red Nails Gnolls 800
- Purple Squid Hobgoblins 700
- Minor Tribes Various 1500

Total Force: 7800

The battle took place the 15th of Goodmonth, 582 CY, and while Theg's forces had a slim advantage in numbers, he also had the only cavalry in

¹ *Dragon* #167

the Pomarj in the Wolfbrother Goblins. This made him quite confident in his prospects for victory over the tired and hungry forces of Turrosh Mak. What he did not know was the planned treachery of the Red Nails Gnolls and the Purple Squid Hobgoblins, and this would be his undoing. Theg Narlot's forces were arrayed in a roughly east-west line stretching between a creek to the west and a small forest to the east. On the east flank were his goblins while the kobolds held the west flank along the creek. The Shadowdoom Orcs lay in wait in the forest, awaiting the arrival of the Wolfbrother Worgriders to outflank Turrosh Mak's forces. Turrosh Mak's forces moved up from the south in very orderly fashion before spreading out opposite Theg's. On his part, Turrosh Mak fought alongside his own tribe at the center of his formation. To his left (west) were the new flind and gnoll tribes, while the Victorious and Vile Epithet tribes, along with the new orc and hobgoblin tribes were arrayed to his right. The east flank, bordering on the forest, was held by his goblins, while his kobolds held the west flank.

It was clear that Theg was not about to attack, and Turrosh Mak was forced, after a short period, to signal the advance. His forces began to advance against Theg's, breaking into a charge at the last minute. The kobolds on the left flank, however, advanced too quickly, and a gap appeared in his line between them and the new tribes. Theg quickly grasped the significance of this development and ordered his hobgoblins into the gap. As the center and the right flank became engaged in heavy fighting, Turrosh Mak's left flank, cut off from the rest of the line, began to collapse. However, at this crucial time, the Red Nails and Purple Squid tribes turned on Theg's forces. As Theg's center quickly collapsed, Turrosh Mak's forces swept through the center, fanning to the left and right around and behind Theg's now dangerously exposed flanks. Turrosh Mak himself then stabilized the situation on his left flank, and in furious fighting in which Theg himself was slain, Theg's western flank was surrounded and destroyed.

In the mean time, Turrosh Mak's forces had just begun to attack Theg's east flank from behind when the Shadowdoom Orcs and Wolfbrother cavalry burst through the forest and attacked their flanks. The fighting was fierce with most of the Victorious Flinds meeting their death. However, the new tribes were able to hold the line long enough for two companies of Turrosh Mak's own tribe to come to the rescue. As the shock of their attack began to fade, the fighting quickly turned against the Wolfbrothers who beat a hasty retreat into the forest. With their withdrawal, Theg's remaining forces threw down their weapons and surrendered.

Aftermath of the Battle of Blue

Turrosh Mak's army had won a crushing victory in which over half the enemy warriors were slain. The rest were sworn to Turrosh Mak and allowed to return to their villages, each of which was forced to pay an indemnity which was given to the Turrosh Mak's victorious warriors. These tribes were further forced to give up half their newborns, and these were sent off to Suderham. In the meantime, Turrosh Mak dispersed his army for the coming winter and returned to Stoneheim. During the coming months, Turrosh Mak accepted the submission of the Pomarj's remaining tribes, cowed by the display of his power and lured by promises of war, booty, and the retaking of their birthright. By beginning of 583 CY, Turrosh Mak had united the entire Pomarj under his leadership.