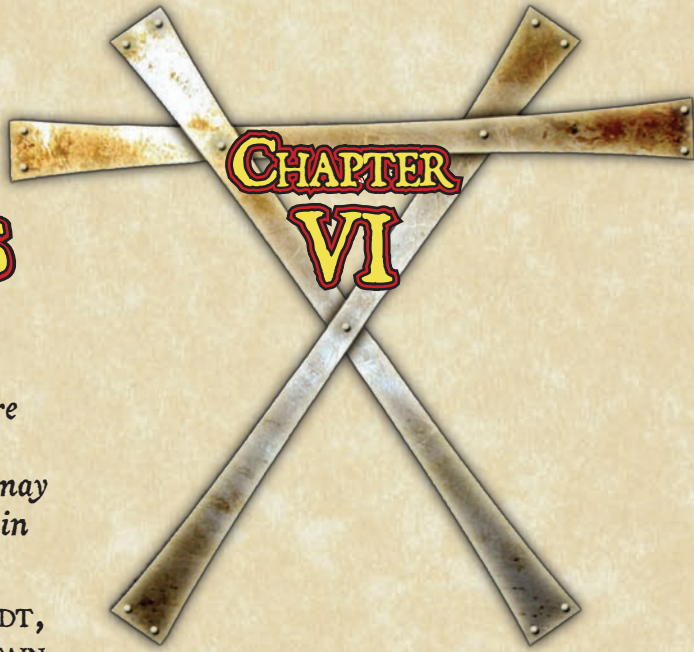


# SKAVEN CHARACTERS



*“Listen up boys. In my experience, there are three types of Skaven: white ones, black ones, and everything else. Some may be big, some small, but all die covered in their own pi...”*

—FINAL WORDS OF GREGOR SCHMIDT,  
SEWER JACK CAPTAIN

Even for Old Worlders who believe in the existence of the Skaven menace, few would go so far as to attribute to these beasts the intelligence and personality of Humans. Skaven society does not celebrate individual worth, so those who interact with Skaven as individuals have a hard time noting distinct personality traits, and when a horde of fur,

teeth and claws boils out of the bowels of a city, no one takes time to hold a conversation. This error of judgement is made by Humans time and again, and often enough leads to their downfall. For the Skaven are thinking things—hungry, intelligent, and deadly things. And underestimating them is the surest road to damnation.

## — ROLEPLAYING SKAVEN —

The Skaven are creatures of pure ego and selfishness motivated only by the fear of those above them in rank, the burning desire to replace those superiors with themselves, and a duty to exterminate all races not their own. They have little consideration for anything beyond these goals—no honour, no courage, no sense of decency or justice, and absolutely no ethics.

Which are, of course, the opposite of characteristics commonly found in heroic characters in a roleplaying game: a sense of honour, courage under fire, a devotion to something greater, and a firm dedication to teamwork and collaboration. Playing a Skaven means forgetting all that. It means caring only

about your own measly hide. It means being cowardly, craven and despicable. It means stabbing your buddy in the back.

It's important, therefore, to ensure that any antagonism in a Skaven campaign is kept between characters and not players. Before you do anything, everyone at the table needs to understand and accept the kind of moral backsliding involved. Otherwise, miscommunications can occur, and feelings might get hurt. However, having established this, you are free to give in to your baser desires, which is what makes playing a Skaven so much fun.

If you are a GM, you have nothing to worry about because you are used to giving into your baser desires. But for players and GMs alike, it

*Quick-quick! Move-move! The man-thing looks away.  
Strike now!*

—SNICKITCH, CLAWLEADER

*Oh most rotten of hearts, eater of cheese, ye of great and circular intellect, I quail before you and your almost majesty. Have mercy on our poor retched hides, for we are beneath contempt, too insignificant to be struck down by you vast-vast power . . .*

—TYPICAL CLANRAT ADDRESS TO A GREY SEER

*“Yes, of course I understand. Just be sure . . . be sure . . . to hide this. If it came out . . . well, I'd be ruined.”*

*“Yes-maybe, man-thing. We hide-reveal secrets. You serve-obey us, we reward.”*

—EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF SOME SHADOWY TRANSACTION

isn't always easy to bring the psychology of a character off the page and into the game. To help get you started, here is a list of some of the major aspects of most Skaven characters, as well as the ways in which they are expressed in their actions and choices.

## SQUEAK

Nobody wants to spend the entire session talking in a high pitched squeaking voice, but a distinctive Skaven voice can go a long way to establishing mood. Whining is good if you can keep it from being annoying; equally suitable are a scratchy hiss, a snarling growl or an excited whisper. Remember the nature of the Skaven language, as well: use lots of short, sharp sentences rather than one long one, and repeat words to indicate emphasis. Skaven also speak rapidly and typically skip all but the most essential elements of their messages—not because they're dour like the Dwarfs, but because they're trying to talk as fast as they think. They also don't talk about anything else except what's immediately important. The Skaven are pragmatists, and they live in the moment. Keep everything short, punchy and relevant.

## COWER

In the Skaven mindset, nothing is of value except your life and your status, and these two things are constantly threatened. So the Skaven are constantly afraid, and tend to be inveterate cowards. Even the slightest hint of a changing of the odds in the enemies' favour (even if it is just a bad omen) can cause them to fret, panic, or abandon their mission altogether. Your typical Skaven is incredibly paranoid, seeing hidden enemies everywhere and certain doom at every turn.



Of course, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't out to get you. At any moment a Skaven may be challenged or assassinated by an underling, or demoted by a superior, or sacrificed against impossible odds on the whim of the Lords of Decay. A Skaven's life is cheap, and every one of his fellow Ratmen is ready and willing to end it. Especially his Clanmates.

This fear does not completely paralyse the Skaven, however. They still attack superior odds or charge into certain slaughter if the circumstances, the Musk, or a superior demand it. Just be sure that such acts are not done out of any sort of bravery or sense of duty, but rather out of fear of the punishment for failure, due to mindless instinct and blood rage, or due to outright arrogance or stupidity.

## SNIFF

Being cowards, Skaven almost never rush into things. Not when they can make someone else rush into things first (which is why they prefer to lead from the back). This is true on both a military scale and a personal scale. In the former case, the Skaven never attack without acquiring as much intelligence as possible. They watch a target for weeks or even months, learning everything they can and putting their plans into action with great slowness and infinite patience. This way, they ensure that they won't be observed, and when the trap finally closes—months or even years later—no one sees it coming.

On a personal level, the Skaven always take a sniff around a corner before turning it, for who knows who or what might be waiting there? Likewise, they rarely take action without considering all the possible outcomes and other options. They often delay their first actions in a combat to wait and watch their opponents, so they can best decide whether to fight or run. At the back of a Skaven's mind, there is always the question "What's in it for me?" If the answer isn't one he likes, or if there is too much of a risk of harm or hindrance, he won't immediately go forward—and he may even go backwards.

## SPIT

For a Skaven, nothing is ever as it should be. If things were as they should be, he would be ruling the world on the bones of the lesser races, with a score of breeding females at his beck and call. But luckily, he's not to blame for this unfortunate state of affairs.

How can he be, after all, when the Skaven are the master race, and he is the greatest example of that race? No, it is most likely the fault of the lesser races. They constantly refuse to recognise the greatness of the Skaven. They refuse to die swiftly when attacked, and sometimes even insist on fighting back. This is terribly frustrating, especially when they win.

To the Skaven, the lesser races are a tide of vermin, existing only to ruin their plans. Thus a Skaven is filled with a fiery hatred for every other race, and an unending fury to teach them their proper places (which are either dead or in their belly). They consider it an insult to be attacked by them, and even in their death throes they will not stop spitting out their hatred for the inferior scum that brought them down.