KELPIE

BY VAIDENON OF HUSTAN, WARDEN OF THE INKHORN FELLOWSHIP

the Water-Horse, Ford-Horse, Ilvir's Steed

> "Every ford in Kaldor has a kelpie story. I have heard forty of them and believed perhaps three, but those three I believe entirely, and I no longer water my horse at strange fords after dusk."
>
> — Vaidenon of Hustan, Warden of the Inkhorn Fellowship, Tashal, Morgat 720 TR

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Every Hârnic upland has its tale of the fine horse found grazing by a ford, saddled or bare, its mane wet. Children climb onto its back, and it carries them laughing into the deepest pool and does not come up. I set this down plainly, because men will argue the point over ale: the kelpie is real. It is one of Ilvir's brood, an Ivashu of fresh water, and it feeds on the drowned.

Folk confuse the kelpie with the elmithri, the mischievous water ilsiri of Siem (Religion, Siem). The difference matters: an elmithri is a spirit, immune to steel, while a kelpie is flesh and bleeds. It is the elmithri who play tricks on bathers; it is the kelpie who keeps them.

THE WARDEN'S NOTE

I have stood at Elend's Ford, where the reeve with nine fingers was born, and spoken to his grandson, who has ten. The family keeps no horses. I asked an Ilviran priest at Tashal whether kelpies are wicked. He said they are no more wicked than a river, and that I should ask the river. I have not tried.

NATURE

Like all Ivashu, kelpies are sexless and cannot breed. A slain kelpie is reborn at Araka-Kalai, Ilvir's holy place, and returns in time to its waters (Ivashu 1; the Fellowship's convention). Ilviran priests told me that each kelpie was once a lesson Ilvir taught a careless people. They would not tell me what the lesson was.

SHAPES

A kelpie's true shape is a horse of fifteen hands, sleek, grey or black, always wet, with weed and rushes tangled in its mane and hooves turned slightly backwards. Its eyes are those of a fish, which is the surest sign if you are close enough to see them, and you should not be. It can take a second shape, a young man or woman with water in the hair. *(Inkhorn)*

DISTRIBUTION

Kelpies need deep, cold, fresh water and a ford or path where men come down to it. They are known at Tontury Lake, Lake Heras, Direna Lake, and Crater Lake at Araka-Kalai itself, and at deep fords on the upland rivers. I have never heard of one in salt water; the sea has its own horrors.

HABITS

A kelpie waits by its water as a straying horse, grazing quietly, and lets itself be caught. A traveller who mounts it, or even lays a hand on its neck, finds himself stuck fast to its hide. It then gallops for the deepest water and dives, and that is the end of the tale for most who tell it, which is why so few do.

COMBAT

In open fight, a kelpie bites, kicks, and tramples like a stallion. It will not leave its water for more than a few miles. In human shape it fights poorly and tries to grapple its foe and pull him into the water. Struck by iron in human shape it does not change back, despite the tales (Inkhorn).

BRIDLING

A kelpie that is bridled must serve the one who bridled it for a year and a day (Inkhorn). It works tirelessly, pulling a plough or turning a mill, but it will try to drown its master on the last day. Ilviran priests are said to keep bridled kelpies at Araka-Kalai.

SPECIAL RULES

ADHESIVE HIDE (INKHORN)

Whatever touches the kelpie's hide in horse shape sticks: a rider, a hand, a saddle-cloth. Each round, a stuck person may roll STR × 1. On a MS he tears free with a minor wound

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to the stuck location; on a CS he is free unhurt. Cutting away the stuck part (a cloak, a glove, or a finger) also frees him. The kelpie can release anything at will.

INTO THE DEEP

Once a victim is stuck, the kelpie gallops to the deepest water at MOV 38 and dives; Pulled Under (Fish) applies. A kelpie breathes water.

BRIDLING (INKHORN)

Putting a bridle on a kelpie needs a grapple to the head followed by an Animalcraft or Riding roll at −30, made before it can stick to the bridler. Bridled, it obeys for a year and a day.

IVASHU

Sexless, cannot breed, reborn at Araka-Kalai when slain (Ivashu 1). Ordinary weapons harm it.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS

- Ilvir: the kelpie is a sacred lesson; Ilviran priests will not kill one, and may object to those who do (Inkhorn).
- Siem: followers of Siem say kelpies poison the waters of the elmithri; a Siemite will help drive one off (Inkhorn).
- Peoni: Peonians bless fords against the water-horse with a sprig of rowan on the bank. It does not help (Inkhorn).

FOLK TALES

The Seven Children of Elend's Ford

Seven children found a grey pony at the ford and all climbed on its back. The youngest had no room and only laid his finger on its neck. When it ran for the water and he could not pull his finger free, he cut it off with his father's knife. He was the only one to come home. He became the reeve, and they say he never crossed water again.

The Miller's Year

A miller in Kaldor bridled a black horse he found by his millpond and set it to drive his wheel. He grew rich in a year. On the last day of the year he went to unbridle it and thank it, and it took him into the pond. The mill stood idle after; the miller's son would not grind there (Inkhorn tale).

The Ilviran Answer

A novice asked an Ilviran priest why Ilvir made the kelpie. The priest answered: "So that you would ask."

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A fine grey horse with a wet mane has been seen at the ford below a manor; three children have drowned this summer. The lord wants it caught alive for the Pamesani games.
- A traveller met on the road is charming, young, and has weed in her hair.
- An Ilviran pilgrim begs the PCs to stop the villagers from killing "a sacred beast".
- A bridled kelpie's year is up in three days, and its master knows the story.

ENCOUNTERS

Ivashu (Campaign 14, subtable 15), 96–00 Unique/rare Ivashu. The Fellowship proposes that a result of "Unique/rare Ivashu by fresh water" be resolved on this table:

D100	RESULT
01–30	Kelpie (horse shape, by the water)
31–40	Kelpie (human shape)
41–00	Other unique or rare Ivashu (GM)

Something in the Water (fresh) 97: kelpie at upland fords and lakes (else daranog sign). Equines (subtable 12) 00 Unique/rare: a kelpie if within a mile of deep fresh water.

RUMOURS

RUMOUR	TRUTH	WHERE
A grey horse grazes by the ford and no one owns it.	true	upland Kaldor, Chybisa, Rethem
Put iron to a water-horse and it must take its true shape.	false	anywhere
The Ilvirans keep tame water-horses at Araka-Kalai.	open	Tharda, Kaldor

ECONOMIC DATA

ITEM	PRICE	SOURCE
Bridled kelpie (a year and a day of work)	no lawful market; 500d+ to a reckless buyer	Inkhorn
Kelpie hide (stays wet and tacky)	sold as glue to woodcrafters, 30d	Inkhorn

THE FELLOWSHIP'S ADDITIONS

- The kelpie as an Ivashu of fresh water: its shapes, Adhesive Hide, Bridling, and distribution
- The religious views, tales, prices, and encounter additions

Everything else follows HârnMaster 3 and the Columbia Games articles cited, which the Fellowship commends to every reader.

CREDITS

Writer: Vaidenon of Hustan. Set down by Lesli of Bifel and his homunculus, Claudin.

Sources cited: Columbia Games' *Ivashu* (#4611: Ivashu 1), *Religion* (#4401: Ilvir, Siem) and the HârnMaster 3 core rules (Campaign 14 encounters; Skills; Combat); Fish, in this Physiologus.

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STAT BLOCKS

KELPIE (HORSE SHAPE)

Habitat: Upland lakes, deep fords
Height: 15 hands
Weight: 900 lb
Diet: Carnivore (the drowned)
Lifespan: Immortal (reborn)
Group: Solitary
Size: Large/d8

ATTRIBUTES

26 Str	14 Eye	08 Int	19 End
16 Sta	16 Hrg	12 Aur	38 Mov
• Dex	18 Sml	15 Wil	18 Swim
13 Agl			

SKILLS

65 Initiative	60 Dodge
70 Awareness	70 Stealth[1]
95 Swimming	60 Jumping

65 Bite 6p
55 Trample 8b
50 Kick 7b
[1] Stealth: still, at its water

ARMOUR

B4 E3 P1 F5 GAC 1

STRIKE LOCATIONS

01–12 Head	61–75 Abdomen
13–20 Neck	76–90 •Quarter (hip)
21–30 •Fore leg	91–98 •Hind leg
31–60 •Flank (thorax)	99–00 Tail

• Odd = Left, Even = Right. As quadruped, long (as Horses).

- Adhesive Hide; Into the Deep; water-breathing (Inkhorn).
- Natural armour except eyes, as horses.
- Ivashu: sexless; reborn at Araka-Kalai.

KELPIE (HUMAN SHAPE)

Habitat: By its water
Height: 5′ 8″
Weight: 160 lb
Group: Solitary
Size: Medium/d6

ATTRIBUTES

14 Str	14 Eye	08 Int	15 End
16 Sta	16 Hrg	12 Aur	12 Mov
10 Dex	18 Sml	15 Wil	18 Swim
13 Agl			

SKILLS

60 Initiative	60 Dodge
70 Awareness	60 Stealth
95 Swimming	

55 Unarmed 3b *(grapple; drags into water)*
40 Bite 3p

ARMOUR

B2 E1 P1 F4 GAC 1

STRIKE LOCATIONS

Use standard strike location tables (Combat; as Lycanthropes and the Ivashu with humanoid tables).

- Lasts a few hours; ends at once in rain or if it enters the water.
- Hoof-prints; water-weed in the hair (Awareness −10 to notice).
- Speaks only a few words of the local tongue.

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