

Tales *of the* Reaching Moon

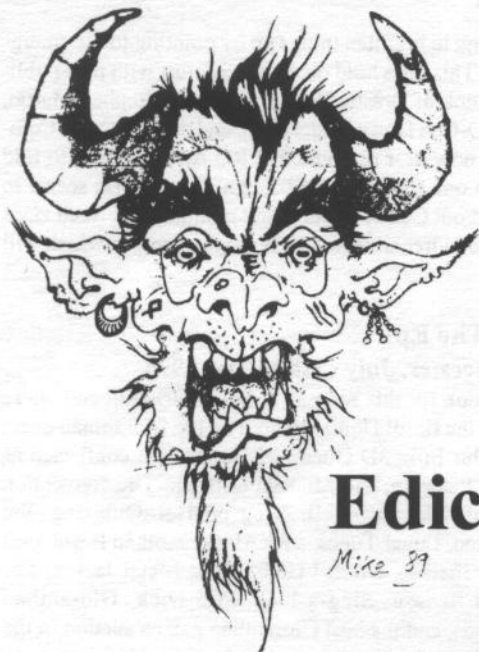
Issue 14



Praxian
Special

Regions of Prax
Spirit Cults
Cult of Eiritha

Scenario by Carl Pates



Edict #14

Mike 39

Welcome

At last! An issue set in that old Gloranthan heartland (err... ghetto?) of most GMs' and players' campaigns: the deserts and chaparral of Prax and the Wastes! Over the course of this issue and the next we hope to fill in some of the blank spaces in the Wastes, in Pavis, and in Praxian myth and culture. So, jump on those herd beasts, strap on your spurs, gird your loincloth, and ride 'em into the sunset. It may take your mind off the latest news...

Avalon Hill

The latest hot gossip (well, lukewarm actually) concerns the rumoured sale of Avalon Hill. According to an article in the Baltimore Sun back in July, the Dott family, who own the company, were looking for buyers after a couple of financial setbacks. However, these rumours are now being strongly denied by the Dotts.

Unfortunately, this episode has added to the confusion and uncertainty around the future of RuneQuest, especially in the absence of any new releases. In fact, the production schedule was looking rather bedraggled even before this news. As I see it, this can only be put down to the fact that there is no full-time editor for the RQ line at present, and as a result there is no co-ordination or direction.

So, what is on offer?

RQ4. I'm told that work still continues on this and that the rules are getting lighter by the minute. But I also can't help thinking on how long I have been reporting this same news... *Soldiers of the Red Moon* and *In Service to the Red Emperor*. These are currently stalled at the writing stage regardless of any AH announcements you might have read. All I can say is that I did my bits six months ago! *Tower of Night*. Stephen Martin tells me that no positive response was received from Avalon Hill and so this project has been shelved for the time being.

Chaosium

At Chaosium the Glorantha sourcebook and fiction lines of books are also stalled. The fiction book *Heroes of the King* is in the process of being edited, while the *Oceans* book is still being written. However, even if these do reach a finished stage there is likely to be insufficient funds at Chaosium to publish them in the near future—such is the effect of collectable card games on the RPG market at the moment. At Chaosium much would seem to depend on the success of their own upcoming *Mythos* Collectable Card game.

Tales of the Reaching Moon

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Contributions: Contributions are gratefully received, especially artwork. Write to the editorial address enclosing an SSAE or International Reply Coupon for our full Submission Guidelines. Written contributions should be doubled spaced and typed. Contributions on floppy disc are given preferential treatment! We accept 3.5" discs in various formats - write for details. Please don't send artwork contribution originals by normal post, good photocopies are preferred. As ever, the generous reward for publication is a FREE copy of the issue!

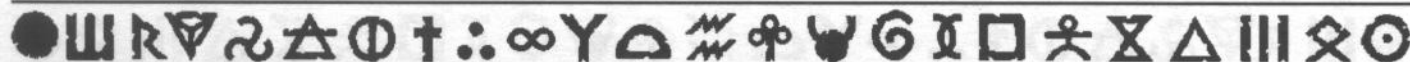


Table of Contents

Cult of Eiritha	5
Praxian Medicine Bundles	9
Tada, the First Khan	10
Zines Seen / Quick Zines	10
Praxian Creation Story	11
The Coming of the White Bull	12
Praxian Plunder Competition Winner	13
Firebats and Bog Monsters	14
Classified Ads	15
Rumours	15
The Basmoli Berserkers	16
The Storm Bull and His Sons	21
The Paps Cycle	22
The Praxian Sense of Space	26
Regions of Prax	27
A Praxian Hero Wars Prophecy	32
The Waha Ropes	33
The Bull Storm Approaches	35
Scenario: Sins of the Father	36
A Praxian Meeting Ceremony	38
Spirits of Prax (part 1 of 2)	44
Prehistory: The Golden Age	49
Questlines	50
Some Characteristics of the Roleplaying Heroquest	53
Dwarf Knoll	54
Letters	56
Plants of Dwarf Knoll	57
Things That Love Night (part 3)	58
Spirit Cults	63



Reaching Moon Good News

The next issue of *Tales* will be a Praxian special, part two... with a lil' bit of other stuff as well. *Tales* #16 is now the Lunar Special. After this a Sartar/Greydog special, a Pavis special, and an Elder Races special have all been mooted but not confirmed. Our future production schedule now includes Penny Love's Gloranthan novel, The Widow's Tale, the Tarsh War freeform book, Best of *Tales* #1 to #6, and a Gloranthan Index. Otherwise, work continues on our Lunar freeform game, Life of Moonson, and many futile attempts at winning the National Lottery.

The Good News?

At this point I was going to brighten things up by pointing to the emerging small press scene. This does hold out some comfort with new publications such as *The Book of Drastic Resolutions* from Stephen Martin, *Questlines* from the RQ-Con Down Under team, and the RQ-Con 2 Compendium. However, I now hear rumours that RQ Adventures is to fold after issue #6, and no one (not even its foreign distributors) seems to have heard anything about Codex #4 for many months now. Such zines provide regular shots of adrenaline to the Gloranthan corpse which will be sorely missed.

Convulsion 3D: The Epic

Stamford Hall, Leicester, July 19th to 21st 1996

Gosh! You'd better book for this soon as it's over 60% full and we're about to cast Home of the Bold! Don't miss out on the Gloranthan event of this millennium! Our fully 3D Guests of Honour are confirmed as Greg Stafford, Sandy Petersen, and Michael O'Brien. The convention will feature cool stuff like Trollball, Greg on HeroQuesting, the Gloranthan Lore auction, Lunar Tunes, a REAL Gloranthan HeroQuest in 3D, Eat at Geo's, Griselda, Nomad Gods, Rune Metal Jacket, The Hunt for Red Storm Season, Sing-a-long with Nick, Gloranthan storytelling, Greg Reads, and the best Gloranthan games auction in the world! Write to the editorial address for a membership form. Say no to two dimensions: get convulsing!

German RuneQuest-Con IV

May 24th to 27th 1996 at Castle Stahleck in the Black Forest. The main feature event is a Western freeform, The Rise of Ralios (well, the venue is a real castle). English speakers will be playing the Orlanthi. The guest of honour is David Hall, and various screaming megacorp groupies will be there too. Cost is 100DM for three nights and 70DM for two. Contact Philipp Kuckuck, Im kleinen Felde 7, D-30982 Pattensen, Germany.

Glorantha-Con IV

January 24th to 26th 1997. Chicago, USA. Guests of Honour are Greg Stafford and Sandy Petersen. The featured LARP is Argrath the White Bull by Scott Schneider which will take place over two days of the con. Registration is \$40 and rooms are \$72 per night single/double. Remember to wrap up warm as it's bloody cold in January! Contact: Andrew Joelson, 1330 D.Gifford Court, Hanover Park, Illinois 60103-5227, USA. Email: joelson@cpdmfg.cig.mot.com

Glorantha-Con V

July 25th to 27th 1997. Victoria, BC, Canada. The expected guests for this are Greg Stafford and Sandy Petersen. The Megacorp will also be in full attendance since the featured LARP is RMM's Life of Moonson. Contact: Neil Robinson, 2996 Dysart Rd, BC, V9A 2K2, Canada. Email: NRobinson@direct.ca

Travelling Man

Rant mode on: First, my apologies to anyone who ordered *Tales* photocopies from this place, suffered interminable delays, and lost money. I have only recently discovered how utterly incompetent they are due to their continual non-payment for goods I've sent them. Though I reckon describing them as incompetent is charitable since they do have my money. Beware! All who deal with them have been warned!

Issue #13

Unfortunately, *Tales* #13 had a couple of omissions. Firstly, the fine cover illustration by Dan Barker was actually a depiction of the Temptation of Saint Xemela. Secondly, two whole pages of stats for the scenario were inexplicably left out. We have now produced an errata sheet with theses stats, which includes an even better map of Wyrms Hold. These are available from your local Megacorp rep if you send an SSAE.



Eiritha

Herd Mother

I. Mythos and History

Before the Giants War, the goddess Eiritha was one of the happy deities of the world. She was an animal goddess, daughter of Ernalda, Earth Mother, and Hykim, Father of Beasts. Her favourite place was the rich plains of Genert's Garden, where she lived with her daughters, each a goddess and the mother of a type of friendly animal.

When the mighty Storm Bull came to the land with his peoples, Eiritha gave up all her old paramours and married the Bull. But their bliss was short-lived. Soon the War of the Giants rushed upon them and Death stalked the world.

Death came for Eiritha one day, but was baffled when he could not find her. A hero named Orani, son of the Storm Bull, fought with Death and delayed the giant, though he paid with his life. During that time, the superhero Tada, who was wily above all, led his people to dig a great pit and hid their goddess within the womb of the earth. Death was fooled, but since then Eiritha can never again walk freely upon the land.

During the Great Darkness, all the children of Eiritha suffered with all mortals, slowly learning the meaning of death. During this time, Waha was born, son of the Storm Bull and Eiritha. He salvaged pieces of his parents' magic and taught this magic to the surviving people. Neither parent god could return to the world. Instead, Waha taught them the worship of the daughters of Eiritha, called the Herd Protectresses, and of Waha, who knows all the secrets of the Founding spirits of all tribes.

The worship of Eiritha was spread to other parts of Glorantha during the Dawn Ages, when the animal nomads fought for the First Council. Those places still revere her, though they retain no formal relations with the Wastes or Prax.

The animal nomads worship Eiritha in two forms, one corresponding to the tribal Protectresses, and the other found only at the Paps and corresponding to the goddess Herself.

The Protectresses are worshipped as Herd Eiritha, though tribal worshippers prefer to prefix her name with the name of their own favoured beast. Thus, she is called Sable Eiritha, Impala Eiritha, etc. In this form, she is worshipped by the nomads.

The Paps is a pre-darkness site where the sorry remnants of the once-great Genert Cycle of earth deities cling to survival by their association with the beast-goddess. Here she is called Eiritha of the Paps, or simply Paps Eiritha.

Although the goddess is the great unifying factor on the plains, she has no absolute command or unity among the tribes, and is generally incapable of forcing unification upon the many divergent tribes. Thus the cult has had little influence upon the course of history.





The cult of Eiritha promises its members that there will be continued life after death, and that worshippers who are respectful and observant of her practices receive recognition by her in that afterlife. The cult teaches the cyclical reincarnation of souls and promises that priests and selected initiates will be able to spend some time in a blissful paradise between lives. Human members of this cult are always buried after they die, but only the tail of an animal (or one hand of a herd-man) need be buried. When burying a priestess, the Waha warriors chant the prayers of the Peaceful Cut over the grave, and priestesses do earth rites by sacrificing herd-beasts and letting the blood flow over the grave.

The goddess Eiritha is associated with the runes of Beast and Fertility.

II. Cult Ecology

Eiritha is the Mother of Herds. All cattle trace their origin to her. The nomad herdsfolk of the Wastelands and Pent are utterly dependent upon Eiritha for their daily existence. To be cursed or exiled by the goddess means death, unless the victim is able to flee the plains.

Eiritha is the woman's cult of all Praxian nomads. Almost all women, from the lowliest warrior's stolen bride, to the wives of the khans, share the secrets of Eiritha with each other, and on that level they are equals.

The worshippers of Eiritha hate all things of chaos. Additionally, they hate all animals or people that kill herd-beasts without knowing the proper and worship to send the souls of the beasts back to their mother-goddess. This includes most carnivores and non-Praxians.

As with most earth-cults, the most holy day of the year is Earth season, Fertility week, Clayday. Additionally, each season's Clayday of Fertility week is a special day. Time is set aside each holy day of every week for short ceremonies by the priestess.

III. The Cult in the World

The cult of Eiritha exercises immense power among the animal nomads, and their priestesses are always respected. The tribes of the Sable Riders and Morocanth revere her more than all other deities and her priestesses are also ruling queens of the tribes. Other tribes seat their High Priestesses on the ruling council and pay heed to their words, though they do not rule directly.

Eiritha is a dominant cult all through the Wastes and Prax. She is also important among the horse barbarians of Pent, though she does not rule there as in Prax. The Orlanthi barbarians have imported her rule throughout their land, wherever cattle are grazed.

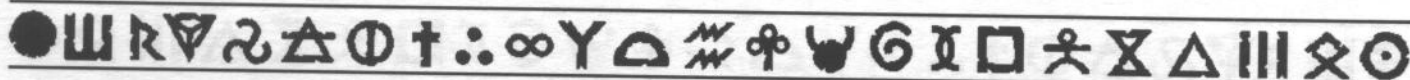
The size of an Eiritha temple depends on its clan's size. Since most adult female members of the clan are initiates, all but the smallest clans can muster at least a minor temple. Shrines to Eiritha teach Bless Animals.

The hierarchy at the Paps is an echo of the once-great earth religion that lived there. The High Priestess of Eiritha is the leader, and is called the Most Respected Elder. She never leaves the sacred precincts of the Paps and is the absolute ruler of the Sacred Ground surrounding the temple. Ten priestesses all report directly



to the Most Respected Elder and are associated with the animals. Five of these are the Respected Elders of the five great nations of Prax. The other five are priestesses of the lost, hidden, or minor tribes: respectively, of the Long-nose, Nose Horn, Plains Elk, Rhino, and Zebra. Some of these have priestesses of their own among minor clans on the plains. Some are remainders of extinct herds. The Most Respected Elder and her inner circle are responsible for correctly anticipating and interpreting the moods, health and needs of their Goddess; when they fail, all the herds in Prax and the Wastes suffer. In addition to these beast-aspects of the goddess, several sub-cults remain within the Paps under the control of Eiritha. Each has a ruling High Priestess and one or more priestesses. Some of these cults have priestesses among the tribes, and these report to their local Eiritha priestesses unless instructed otherwise by their own high priestess at the Paps. For this latter reason, these sub-cults are not popular among tribal leaders, who see their priestesses as a possible source of betrayal of their tribal priorities. The tribal hierarchies are a bare skeleton of the great religion of the Paps, but there is a strict control among them.

Each of the five major nomad nations has a single High Priestess who is the Respected Elder of that nation. She has access to special spirits who are reflections of the deities of the Paps. She may assign these spirits to temporary duty with priestesses under her control. She rules a council of priestesses for the nation's clans.



Each clan has its own High Priestess, for there are few occasions when the entire nation must act in concert under the guidance of the Respected Elder, and the nomads still need major contact with their goddess between those occasions. Each clan's High Priestess governs a varying number of priestesses and Herd Sisters who in turn teach and lead the clan's women.

The centre of power for the cult is the Paps. It is here that tribal priestesses gather for their rarely-scheduled meetings. The grounds of the temple are sacred, and there may be no fighting there even between mortal enemies. (Chaos beings, as always, are an exception, and subject to immediate slaughter.)

IV. Lay Membership

Among the animal nomads, it is assumed that everyone living with the tribe is a lay member of Eiritha, for each person benefits from the goddess' gifts and worships her for it. Visitors are only be allowed to participate in ceremonies by paying one herdbeast, or the equivalent in goods or cash, each time they worship.

Lay members participate in the Eiritha holy days, sacrificing as many magic points as they please. They usually participate in the weekly ceremonies, spending one magic point each time. Lay members may partake of the gifts of the goddess. This means that they have food, clothing, and implements made from the bodies of the beasts.

Lay membership is as high as any male tribesmen can aspire in this cult.

V. Initiate Membership

Any female tribesmember in good standing can join the cult automatically by sacrificing a point of POW. Outsiders must be adopted by the tribe first, which only occurs after the outsider has lived with the tribe for several years and has proven herself to be loyal and trustworthy. No tests are needed — if the potential adoptee has proven herself, she is accepted. If she has not, she is cast out of the tribe.

Initiates must sacrifice all their magic points but one at each holy day ceremony. Good initiates generally try to sacrifice at least one magic point at each weekly ceremony, and it is a mark of devotion to sacrifice all one's magic points but one at such times.

The mundane benefits of worshipping Eiritha are the same as for lay membership, except that initiates may learn the cult skill of Understand Herd Beasts and learn the spirit magic spell Ignite for free. The Understand Herd Beasts skill is only appropriate for the initiate's own herd beasts. It will not work with the beast of another tribe.

The spells of Bladesharp, Bludgeon, Disruption, Fanaticism, Fireblade, Firearrow, Ironhand, Multimissile, Protection, and Speedart are forbidden to all Eiritha initiates.

Spirit Magic: Farsee, Heal, Slow.

Eiritha Special Cult Skill

Understand Beast Speech

(Perception 00%)

This skill has a base chance of 0%, but all Eiritha initiates are taught for free to at least 5% plus their knowledge modifier. This skill trains a person to perceive and interpret warning signs, movements, odours, and other gestures made by herd beasts. Speaking to animals is not possible with this skill.

Special Divine Magic

Bless Animals

1 point

touch, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

This fertility spell increases the calving potential for each beast so blessed. Each birth produces a healthy calf or, rarely, twins. Nine of ten calves born to a beast influenced by this spell are female. This spell can only be cast on the High Holy Day of the year, and affects only the following year's calving.

Speak With Herd Beasts

2 points

touch, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

This spell allows the person on whom it is cast to talk with one type of hoofed mammal for the length of the spell. Oratory and Fast Talk can be used if the creature needs convincing. The spell does not instil any intelligence to the creature, so it can only speak from its natural awareness.

VI. Herd Sisters (Acolytes)

Herd Sisters must fulfil the same requirements as priestesses. In return, they receive access to reusable divine magic. They are given priority over all members of the tribe in gift-giving except for the khans and priestesses.

VII. Priestesses

The function of the cult priestesses is to lead the people in the protection and care of the herds they are dependent upon. This is not a fighting cult, and priestesses are required to have abilities appropriate to the survival of the herd without fighting.

Candidates for priestess must meet the standard requirements for acceptance. The checked skills are Animal Lore, Plant Lore, Understand Herd Beasts, World Lore & Ceremony.

Priestesses must obey the same restrictions as initiates. In addition, there is a strict prohibition against using any weapons, other than axes or knives. They may never use any weapon-enhancing magic. A priestess of Eiritha may never marry a Waha lay member. Priestesses receive the first choice of any portions of a slaughtered animal. They receive great status in their clan, and all social benefits thereby granted.

Common Divine Magic: all

Special Divine Magic: Bless Animals, Speak with Herd Beasts.



VIII. Subcults

Spirit of Reprisal

This spirit does not actively harm an offender, but instead follows and haunts her by attempting to communicate her outlawry to all worshippers of Eiritha and Waha who later meet her.

This communication is always attempted in a dream on the night following a meeting with the outlaw, and always succeeds with a priestess of Eiritha. A Herd Sister only succeeds in receiving the communication by making a POW x 5 check. Initiates of Eiritha and khans of Waha check at POW x 3, and lay members of Eiritha and shamans and initiates of Waha check at POW x 1. This all but guarantees that the offender will receive no aid from worshippers of the cult and it is tantamount to a death sentence in the harsh Wastelands.

The Forty-Eight Old Ones

These are the remnants of the old agricultural spirits still attached to the cult at the Paps. High Priestesses of Eiritha at the Paps (only) can receive one of these as an allied spirit. Each Old One has a POW of 3d6+12 and knows a special fertility spell, but they otherwise lack distinction. They remain disembodied while serving as allied spirits and can turn visible at will to communicate or engage in spirit combat.

The Herds

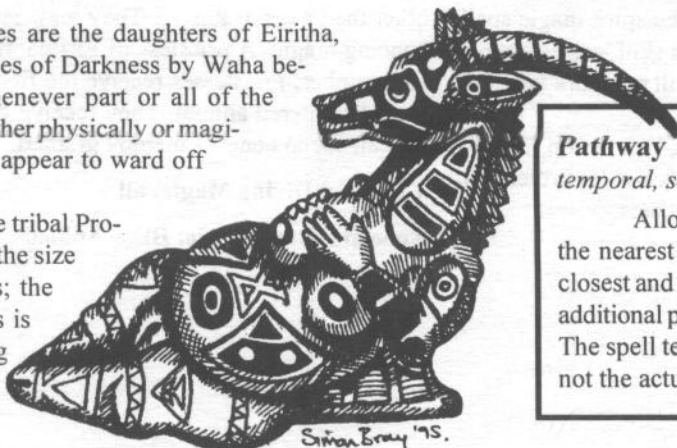
The Nomads recognise that Seven Great Magics or Medicine Bundles exist to enhance their ability to survive in the Wastelands and in beloved Prax. The greatest of these treasures are the Herds themselves, guarded over by the Protectresses. When Eiritha is healthy, and worshippers are interpreting Her moods properly during ceremonies, the herds of all the tribes are strengthened and increase in size. When Eiritha is sick, the reverse happens, and the herds diminish in strength and size.

Each clan maintains its own herds. From the Beasts is formed the wyter, or group spirit, of the herds. This spirit can be seen as the collective spirit of all of the animals in the clan, and as individual clans meet with each other, the ties that bind the herds together grow even stronger. This collective spirit can be represented as having 1 point of POW for every 10 beasts. The Wyter spirit acts as a defensive spirit only for the herds, and automatically appears, for example, when attacked by Malia's spirits of disease, evil sendings by crazed shamans, etc.

The Protectresses

The Protectresses are the daughters of Eiritha, liberated from the Forces of Darkness by Waha before the Dawning. Whenever part or all of the Herds are threatened, either physically or magically, the Protectresses appear to ward off the danger.

The Power of the tribal Protectress is a function of the size and health of the herds; the POW of the Protectress is measured by multiplying the POW of the herd wyter spirit by 10.



In this way, the Protectress can manifest herself simultaneously among many clans' herds, sending a portion of her power to aid a given clan's beasts; conversely, if all of the tribe's herds are gathered into one place, a single Protectress appears, one of immense powers and strength, representing the combined strength of all of the animals in the Tribe at one time.

These powers are different and appropriate for each type of beast, and are left to the gamemaster's discretion. As an example, the Protectress of the Impala Folk may grant the ability of Far-Leaping to her children, enabling each threatened Impala to leap 5 times its normal leaping distance for the duration of the physical threat. Other Protectresses would grant similar abilities to their children.

The Paps Deities

Many of the deities associated with Eiritha have no active cult remaining in the plains. Their only surviving temples are at the Paps. Even so, when great temples to Eiritha are formed at important tribal meetings, shrines to these deities are made available. These Paps deities include Aldrya, Dendara, Ernalda, the Good Shepherd, Ronance, and the 3-Bean Circus.

The Good Shepherd

This spirit was once mortal during the God's Age, and was even then a friend of Eiritha's. At that time he became the father of many Protectress spirits of Prax, but most of them were killed in the Great Darkness and his worship is now supplanted by that of Waha and the Storm Bull. His commitment to his goddess is unbroken, though, and he acts as the psychopomp of the religion, carrying the souls of worshippers to the bosom of Eiritha. He offers his spell of Seal Spirit to the cult.

Seal Spirit

3 points

ritual spell (ceremony), nonstackable, reusable.

This spell functions exactly as does the resurrection spell, except that the caster loses 1d3 CON each time he casts the spell. It may be cast upon Herd Beasts.

Mahome

This gentle campfire goddess was befriended during the Great Darkness by Waha, and given over to the priestesses to tend. Because of her, all initiates of Eiritha are taught the Ignite spell for free after they join.

Pathway

1 point

temporal, self, stackable, reusable

Allows the user to determine the direction to the nearest oasis. If two points are stacked, then the closest and second-closest oases are known, with each additional point increasing the number of oases known. The spell tells only direction and distance magnitude, not the actual distance.

Peace 3 points
temporal, 1 km radius, non-stackable, reusable

This spell causes all people within a one kilometre radius to lay down their weapons and forget all violence and war. For the length of the spell, they prefer rather to listen to the wonders of peace and love which the spirits send ringing through their minds.

Ronance

Ronance is a son of Ernalda who used to be the great ruler of the Wastelands. He taught men the secrets of plants and the mystical pathways of the cult. He was the Golden Age ruler of the Wastelands, and is the source of the Plant and Mobility Runes available to the Paps. He is still useful in finding the way across the seemingly trackless wastes, for his secret paths have their manifestations upon the desert.

The 3-Bean Circus

This is a band or family of ancient times whose fame was widespread as peaceful worshippers of the gods. But their power was broken and cast down during the horrid War of the Giants. However, their persistence is immortal, and they still wander about the Plaines. They have one spell, Peace. Only the Most Respected Elder or a priestess of the 3-Bean Circus can cast it.

IX. Associated Cults

Aldrya

The goddess of vegetation gives her sister the divine spell of Accelerate Growth. This derives from their early association as members of the Earth cult.

Dendara

In the Golden Age, Dendara and Ernalda associated together in the grand Earth cult then extant. She provides Eiritha with Heal Body.

Ernalda

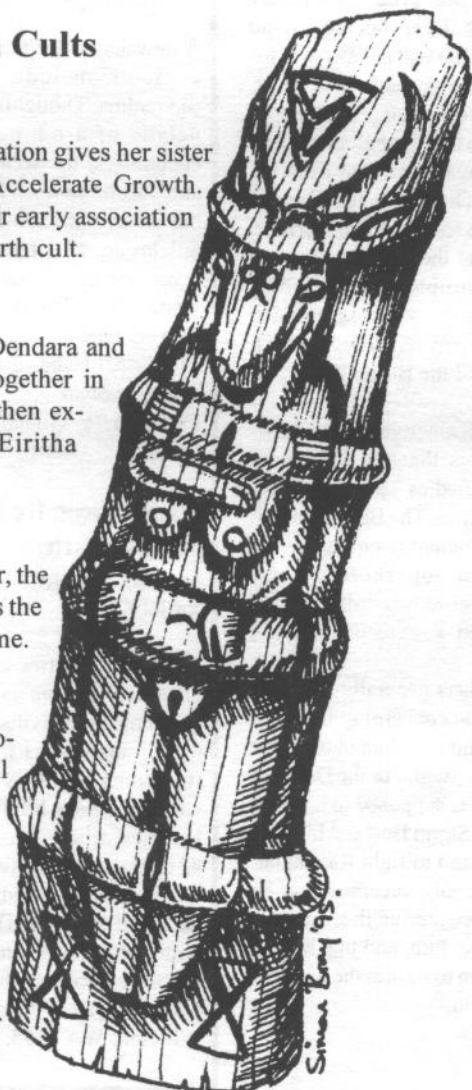
From the Earth Mother, the Beast Mother receives the spell Command Gnome.

Storm Bull

Eiritha's husband provides the divine spell Shield.

Waha

Eiritha's son teaches her worshippers the spirit magic spell Peaceful Cut and the associated skill of Butchery.



Medicine Bundles

by Greg Stafford

Medicine bundles are items of various powers that have proved their worth time and again to those that possess them. Several types of medicine bundles are found among the Beast-Riders of the Wastelands – those that have come down through the ages, even before the Dawning, and those that have a more ephemeral effect on the Nomads.

Generally, lorists recognise at least ten Great Medicine Bundles, although others have been known to exist, and more probably remain to be discovered. The powers that these bundles grant to their users vary considerably, but usually give support to the clan or the tribe, their powers are those of life, nurturing, reproduction. Their locations at any given time is unclear; some can be found or accessed only through going into the spirit world at one of the many altars found throughout Prax and the Wastelands, others are in the physical possession of some of the various peoples of the Land, others may be lost on the physical or hero world of the Praxians (which are one and the same to them, anyway).

The Ten Great Medicine Bundles of Prax are the Stepladder, the Clay Pot, the Trumpet of Apprehension, the Plough, the Comb, the Cradle, the Spicegrass Kettle, the Lens, the Table, and the Scissors.

A special spell spirit resides in each of the bundles. To activate their powers it must be defeated in order to become attuned to the powers of the Medicine Bundle. Most of these spirits are Helper Spirits, who gain strength from the use of their items – they are generally weak in nature (no more than POW 20 or so). Some of the bundles have Guardian spirits that, although not malignant in nature, require greater tests of will and knowledge on the part of the user, and demand certain tests, ceremonies, etc., and will only impart their knowledge of the Bundle's power(s) after greater personal or tribal sacrifice.

The second type of medicine bundle is of a more ephemeral nature – their powers are of limited use or duration, never lasting more than a season or so. These bundles are generally constructed by a shaman finding a special spirit, and being taught the spirit's special ceremony for the medicine bundle's construction. This requires more time on the part of the shaman as he or she must search the spirit plane to find this special spirit, rather than a sacrifice of characteristic POW.

[xxix.445.6]

"Within the city there is a keep where Arkat once did sleep, Within the keep there is a vault where Arkat once did halt. Within the vault there is a throne where Arkat placed a stone. Within the stone there is a scream to prove his heir does not dream."

A Western prophecy, here translated by Gorafan Westwise.

Tada, the First Khan

by Greg Stafford

No one in Prax is quite sure who Tada was. The Wandering Rangers say that he was the Queen's Champion. Tribal sources generally call him Khan. Pavis documents seem to indicate that Tada might have been a dynastic name. Modern scholars have claimed that the word is not a name at all, but is rather a non-translation of some ancient title of a divinity (they make the same claims about Waha).

The best preserved myth about Tada is contained in the battle-dance of the Basmoli. Despite the dangers involved several outsiders have viewed the ritual and survived to give vivid descriptions of it.

The early stages are concerned with the birth of the Basmoli people. Tradition demands that they dance upon mounds covered with flickering shadows, which indicates that they originated in the nearby Shadows Dance. Most of the watchers wear straw masks. The dancers wear the actual skins of the plains lions. During the dance an ancestral lion appears to lead the inner ritual.

The lion is fed a couple of captives to calm it and give it a more physical form. Then twelve spears are thrown among the slave-pens, including the real one which was used to first conquer the lion-god. When the Basmoli dancers stop their dance abruptly the lioness turn upon the slaves, whose pens are opened at the last moment. Most run, and are casually slain by the bounding creature. Those twelve with the spears must stand and fight. One will always win, for he holds the ancient ritual spear. The Basmoli count the number of spearmen that die before the lion is slain again and sent from the world. They then take omens from the results of that sacrifice, counting the dead and finding great prophecies or dooms among the stinking entrails. (Not many relish being a prisoner of the Basmoli.)

The distinctive feature, however, is that the spearman, identified as Tada, is always victorious. The Basmoli admit their ancient conquest by the ancient superhero. (Their name for him is "Murderer of Children, Torturer of Fathers.")

Other facts generally accepted to be true concerning this hero are that he was slain in battle by either Ragnaglar or the Devil, or both. He is supposed to have invited the Storm Bull and his sons into the land to fight Ragnaglar. It is generally accepted that he was buried under the tumulus named after him, and that he will return again to fight at the next end of the world.



Zines Seen

Games Games Games #95

10 times a year, 28 pages, A4. UK & Europe £1.95. Elsewhere £2.50.

Formerly the *Small Furry Creatures Press*, this magazine covers most games you could ever think of. There's RPGs, Freeforms (by Megacorper Kevin Jacklin), Boardgames, Card games, Wargames, and Play-by-mail (or even by email), with regular columns, reviews and articles. The news page is especially good (as well as timely, given the publication schedule), and the convention and games club listings are definitive enough to be used by various pro-magazines. A mail order section and links to postal games complete an excellent package!

Contact: SFC Press, 42 Wynnndale Road, London, E18 1DX, UK.
Email: G3@sfcpc.co.uk

Borkelby's Folly #1

Summer 1995, 28 pages, A4. Cost is four 1st class stamps.

A newsletter for *Skyrealms of Jorune*. The contents include an Introduction to Skyrealms, Thoughts on the Drenn system, details of a mining encampment with encounters, the weaponsmith occupation, and Jorune news. The production is basic but clear, with some decent artwork. The articles are all interesting and well written (even for non-Joruni like me). Definitely worth a look for all Jorune fans! It reminds me very much of the good 'ole days of *Tales #1* and *#2*! Issue #2 is now out and is up to 40 pages or so.

Contact: Ray Gilham, 22 Mirador Crescent, Uplands, Swansea, SA2 0QX, UK.

Western Front: The Multi-player Play-by-Mail Newsletter

Monthly, 12 pages, A4. A\$2 per issue; US\$2 for foreigners.

A new newsletter devoted to such PBM classics as Diplomacy, History of the World, Britannia and Civilisation. The editor Brad Martin also plans to feature hobby news (including a 'Zines Scene' page, hmmm... wonder where he got that name from?), historical articles, puzzles and variants. Issue #2 begins a series called The Real Diplomats, looking at real world diplomats in the same period as the game Diplomacy and starting with Lord Lansdowne. Well worth a squizz if you're into such things.

Contact: Brad Martin, 15 Turo Close, Willeton, WA 6155, Australia.

Quick Zines

On the RuneQuest scene, issue #5 of RuneQuest adventures is now out - it's a Snake Pipe Hollow Special. Issue #2 of the New Lolon Gospel is also out, but Codex #4 is nowhere to be seen. For Tekumel lovers, Issue #5 of The Eye of all Seeing Wonder is also out.

Arachne Solara's World Wide Web

There are various Gloranthan resources on the internet. Here's a few of 'em:

The Gloranthan Digest and RuneQuest Rules Digest. These are regular digests which contributors email articles to. When enough contributions are received they are batched together and sent out as an issue of the digest. Loren Miller looks after these digests, but they are not edited or moderated. For subscription information on these and other mailing lists, send electronic mail with "help" in the body of the message to:

Majordomo@hops.wharton.upenn.edu

There's World Wide Web material, including searchable archives, at:

<http://hops.wharton.upenn.edu/~loren/rolegame.html>

Shannon Appel runs an ftp site from Berkeley University which has a RuneQuest folder. *Tales* has a presence here with subscription info, convention plugs, and the full set of How the West was One short-form sect write-ups.

It's at: <ftp.csua.berkeley.edu>

RuneQuest Adventures also has its own web page at:

<http://www.best.com/~savage/rqa.html>

The Megacorp's freeform convention Convivium has a web page at:

<http://www.compulink.co.uk/~convivium/>

Dig those groovy 3-D effects in the Convulsion 3D plug! The tentacles are so realistic...It's like they're coming at you...agghhhh!!!

These pages will also give you various links to other Gloranthan and RQ sites.

See you online...

Praxian Creation Story

by Greg Stafford,
with Scott
Schneider

Imagine
all the
world divided
into two things:
Life and Chaos. Ev-
erything in existence is
one or the other, and that is
how the World is.

Once the World was all Life, save for the Empty Oasis, one tiny spot where no grass grew. All the World was light, and the herds of all creatures intermingled, and none of them preyed upon the other. The Serpent was the first one to eat something, the hapless Short and White People, who were not destroyed but came out as the Twins to the Impala, ancestors of the "Pygmy" people of Prax. Our Ancestors lived then, and some of the greater spirits who we now call the Forgotten Gods, because they are all gone.

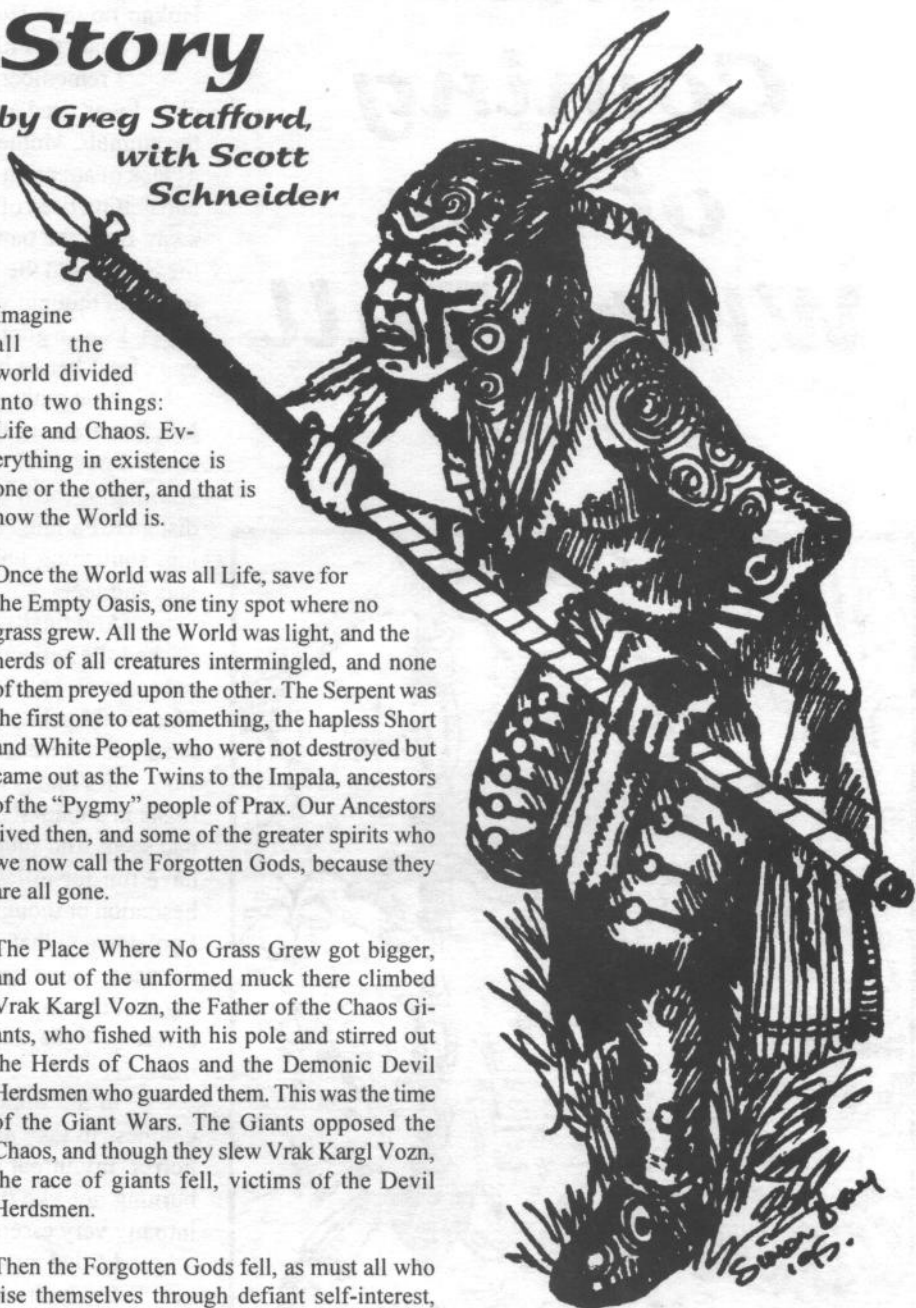
The Place Where No Grass Grew got bigger, and out of the unformed muck there climbed Vrak Kargl Vozn, the Father of the Chaos Giants, who fished with his pole and stirred out the Herds of Chaos and the Demonic Devil Herdsmen who guarded them. This was the time of the Giant Wars. The Giants opposed the Chaos, and though they slew Vrak Kargl Vozn, the race of giants fell, victims of the Devil Herdsmen.

Then the Forgotten Gods fell, as must all who rise themselves through defiant self-interest, leaving only the noble Storm Bull alive. All of Life was constricted into an area no larger than the previous Empty Oasis. In Prax, the final struggle took place and Storm Bull overcame his greatest foe, the Devourer into Nothingness. This way Storm Bull created the Centre of His Sky Tent, where He sits even now, and will forever be.

Storm Bull's victory freed many imprisoned spirits, who are now called the Liberated Ones. These beings rose from the Dead, and reclaimed their parts of the World. The Greater Pathways mark their travels across the World. Waha appeared among the Ancestors who survived - Your Ancestors! - and taught them the secrets

of Sunsince Life. They are the Nomad Gods and the Heroes of old. They did the first deeds, and they re-inhabited the World of Life. They explored the reborn world and established the Pathways.

Now the World is whole again, and the Oasis of Prax has spread throughout the world. No longer is it a world of Life or Chaos, but a mixture of both: everything is both the deadly with the loving, life with death, the impure with the pure. The places of Life include those where the Giants once lived, where the Liberated Ones and the Heroes walked and adventured. Now Pure Peace exists only in the Eiritha Oasis, and instead Life and Chaos are mixed.



The Coming of the White Bull

By Scott Schneider



Trouble. Always in **Trouble**. Never anything to do but watch the herds. Always the precious herds. Everywhere we go, Hokun do this, Hokun do that. But always watch the precious herds. I hate this life!

I remember as a little calf, before I became a bull of the clan. I was tired and angry at having to collect more dung from the animals, Mother had yelled at me again for what she said was a "lack of attention and responsibility to the welfare of the herds," and getting tired of her nagging and just wanting to be by myself, away from the bawling of the children, the incessant flies from the beasts, and the jibes of the Waha warriors. I started to run off to what I thought was an oasis, but unmarked by any of our clan ropes. I saw a glint of white in a rock formation, and ran to see if one of our beasts had strayed from the herds.

I ran without regard to time or distance or safety. Free at last, free from all the cares and orders and responsibilities of the herds. I never felt such joy at my running. I ran for hours, never seeming to catch up to the oasis that I thought was only a short distance. Falling several times, scratched and bruised, I kept going, something unknowing and uncontrollable taking over my legs and feet.

And finally, I saw it – the outcropping of rock from which flashed the reflection of water. As I approached, I failed at the time to notice all the signs I had been taught to observe – the lack of animal tracks, the absence of vegetation – just the stillness of the air and the beating of my heart broke the silence. The pool of water – for that is what it was – had collected at the bottom of the rocks in a natural basin. This had accounted for the gleam that I had seen. And suddenly I realised just how thirsty I was – I must have run for miles in the wasteland heat. Without a moment's hesitation or thought – for to this day I still do not remember how I got down to that pool – I slid and fell and splashed my way into the water, not caring to notice the rope hanging here, not knowing that this rope said to leave immediately, for this was a place sacred to Waha, and beyond the ken or hope of the ordinary beast-rider.

In my thirst, I drank deeply of the waters, expecting its coldness to take away the thirst shaking my body. Then, to my horror, my throat and belly and entire innards began to burn, a burning not like that of normal fire, but that of fire penetrating into my very essence and soul. But I could not stop drinking.

I filled myself to the point of bursting, and the pool dried out. I slowly crawled out of the rock crevasse, filled with the burning waters of the pool, looked high at Bright Treasure, and passed out.

I lay in a stupor, not knowing whether I lived or had died and had gone to Waha's Home. I do remember dreaming. And I dreamed that I was no longer part of my clan, nor even a member of the Waha cult, not being permitted to take the initiation rites like all other young men. But I was not a Gagarth outlaw or one of the berserkers of Storm Bull. I found myself hating the lifestyle of the Waha men, hating its rules and its strictures and its responsibilities and its limited means of dealing with the coming storms. But I was still a member of the nation of Beast-Riders, apart but still a part of, and men looked upon me with respect and honour and – fear.

And I dreamed further, and I saw that a strange man approached. And in his arms he carried a great medicine robe – a robe made of the hide of a white bull. And he told me that if I put it on, no longer would I have to feel like an outcast among my own people. It was a robe that belonged to all the nations of Prax, the Impalas, the Sables, the Alticamelus, the Bison – even to the Morocanth and the Bolo-Lizard men – it was for all men like me – discontent, angry, not knowing or wanting to have a place in the boring, unchanging life of Waha.

And I took the medicine robe with great fear. For I realised that if I put it on, no longer would I be able to live the life I pretended to. I would cast myself in a course for which there could be no turning away from, no more an aspirant to the way of Waha. And the waters of discontent welled up in my belly, burning away the last remnants of resistance, and I snatched the robe from the stranger, and cast off my leathers, and flung the White Medicine around my shoulders.

And a new fire burned me, searing into my very soul, scorching away the last vestiges of my former life, so that I knew in my heart of hearts that when the time came for my passage into manhood, the path would lay before me, and I would once again cast the robe of The White Bull around my shoulders, and serve at the stranger's side with all those like me, regardless of clan or tribal affiliation, regardless of whether Impala or Morocanth, but bound together in the Secret Society of the White Bullocks, a brotherhood of all the discontented, chastised, punished or different ones found throughout Prax and the Wastelands.

And I awoke from my dream on the barren plains, no sign of the pool or rocks that I had found, clutching a tuft of white hide in my hand. And I walked slowly back to my camp, no longer a boy but not yet a man, back to the beating that awaited me, back to the life that I hated so, and back to a future that no longer held the promise of eternal sameness, but one of hope and of adventure and of glory!



[xxix.445.4] The last words of Julgwn, Orlanthi Bard, while lying delirious on his deathbed. "First there were two, rivals from the start. But rivalry became murder, and only one was left. When chaos came to destroy one, alone, was not enough. So one sought the other to restore the balance. Rejoined they overcame and chaos was defeated. But fools forgot the past and a third was born. Now the compromise is doomed unless one is to die." Dutifully recorded by Semaj, the high healer who comforted Julgwn in his final hours.

Praxian Plunder Competition Winner

As judged by David Scott

At long last we present the winner of the contest started so long ago. This entry stood out above all the rest. It is presented here with the original Rhino Fat plunder item.

Rhino Helms

by John English

Description: The head of a rhino, crudely tanned and hollowed out, to make a sort of helm-come-mask. They tend to smell a bit.

Knowledge: Common.

Procedure: The helm is made pretty much how you'd expect it to be: the brain, skull, eyes, etc. are removed from the head of a dead rhino. An attempt at a simple curing is then made with ash (traditionally the burnt skull of the rhino) mixed in Rhino Fat. The rhino fat doesn't have to be from the same rhino as the head, though most people will tell you it does.

Powers: Rhino helms are traditionally worn in conjunction with a good coating of Rhino Fat over the wearer's body. If this is done then the wearer becomes exceedingly confident and is immune to the Demoralise spell and similar powers (e.g. the howl of ghouls), though more potent magic such as the Fear spell will still affect them. Even without the Fat the helm is reasonable 6 point head armour (one ENC), though they are not very stable things and generally fall to pieces within a year of manufacture.

Value: A helm will usually sell for 500 L.

Rhino Fat

Copyright 1982 Chaosium Inc.

Description: A clear, fatty gelatinous substance with a faint and unpleasant odour of burnt meat.

Knowledge: Common.

Procedure: Rhino Fat is made by taking hunks of fat from a dead rhino and simmering it in a pot for a week. During the process, the fat becomes inedible and shrinks in volume, so that a whole rhino will only provide enough fat for its SIZ in human SIZ points.

Powers: When rubbed on the body, Rhino Fat provides one additional point of armour protection. Applying the fat takes ten minutes (plus the time taken to take off and put on the clothes worn over it) and once on, it will begin to wear off after an hour. By the end of five hours, the fat will be completely gone.

Value: Enough fat to completely cover one person sells for 100 L.

Firebats

by Sandy Petersen



These bizarre creatures are quite rare, and are known from both the Krjalki Bog and the Tunnelled Hills. The local nomads believe that they are the reincarnated forms of Waha khans who chose to serve Chaos in their former life. They are clearly derived from some type of bat-like creature, but have no legs, and must fly forever. They can hover in one location. Their heads are blunt, and filled with gaping red holes. No eyes or other sense organs are visible, though a toothy mouth is prominent. They are never seen to eat, and engage in battle only irregularly or because they are attacked by animal nomads, who are of course hostile to all chaos. Some nomads believe that the bats feed on ambient chaos in the air, which is why they cannot range far from their home areas.

Their most striking feature is their power to burst into flame at will. This seems to cost them no effort, and they are greatly feared during the summer, when large areas of the Bog are dried out, because they cause grass fires. Most riding animals fear to approach a firebat, because of the flames, if nothing else. Each round that a firebat is within sight and hearing of any hoofed animal, a mounted person must succeed in a Ride roll, or his animal bolts.

NOTES: Each melee round, a firebat can attack three times, with two simultaneous wing buffets and a bite 3 SRs later. Anyone who is hit by one of the firebat's attacks, whether or not armour is penetrated, is also set on fire in the location struck. This flame does 1D6 damage per round thereafter until extinguished. Armour only counts for the first round. If a target does nothing else but try to put out the fire, he succeeds on a roll of DEXx5 on 1D100. Alternatively, he can "drop and roll", which always extinguishes the fire, but requires him to fall to the ground.

If a blow from the firebat is parried, the parrying weapon catches on fire, and loses 1D6 armour points per round, unless it is made entirely of metal.

Wing buffet damage equals the firebat's damage bonus.

DEFENCES: the flames emanating from the firebat's hide help protect it against flammable missiles (such as arrows, quarrels, or javelins, but not slingstones). Damage from any such missile is reduced by 1D6. Thus, if a firebat is hit by an impaling composite bow's arrow, it will take 2D8+2-1D6 total damage.

CHAOS FEATURES: a firebat normally has another chaos feature (beyond those described above) if its POWx5 is rolled on 1D100.

REGENERATION: A firebat can regenerate damaged body parts. This costs the creature 1 fatigue point per HP recovered, and it cannot regenerate more than 3 HPs per area per round.

Bog Monsters

By Sandy Petersen

When the Devil was crushed beneath the Block, his essence transformed the native swamp creatures into hideous mutants. Some of these are well-known, such as Bullsitch, and some have proved so successful that they have spread far beyond their original environs, such as Dragon Snails. But other swamp monsters exist within the depths of the Devil's Marsh and the Krjalki Bog.

Slime Toads

These are pretty much just like Cliff Toads, but with one or more chaos features. Roll 1d100, and give the critter one chaos feature for each multiple of his POW you rolled. For instance, if the toad's POW was 10, and you rolled 87, you rolled over 8 times his POW, so he'll get 9 chaotic features. This means that the lower the toad's POW, the more chaos features he'll get, on the average.

Roll 1D6 for each such chaos feature. If the roll is odd, he gets a "normal" feature, but if the roll is even, he gets a "reverse" feature from the Curse of Thed table.

Characteristics	Average	Hit location	D20	AP/HP
STR 5D6	17-18	Body	01-06	4/11 (.50)
CON 3D6	10-11	R wing	07-11	4/7 (.33)
SIZ 9D6	31-32	L wing	12-16	4/7 (.33)
INT 3	3	Head	17-20	4/7 (.33)
POW 4D6	14			
DEX 3D6	16-17	Move: 15/flying		
Hit Points: 21	Weapon	SR	Attk	Damage
Fatigue: 28	Wing Buffet	5/5	60+4	2D6 + flames
Magic Points: 17	Bite	8	40+4	1D10+2D6+flames

THE BASMOLI BERSERKERS

BY GREG STAFFORD
AND TOM ZUNDER

I. OVERVIEW

The Basmoli are a tribe of lion-people who live on the plains of Prax and the Wastes. Although at first glance human, the Basmoli are in fact inhuman, kindred of lions and descendants of a proud race. They are hostile to the dominant culture of Prax and survive only through their ferocity.

DESCRIPTION

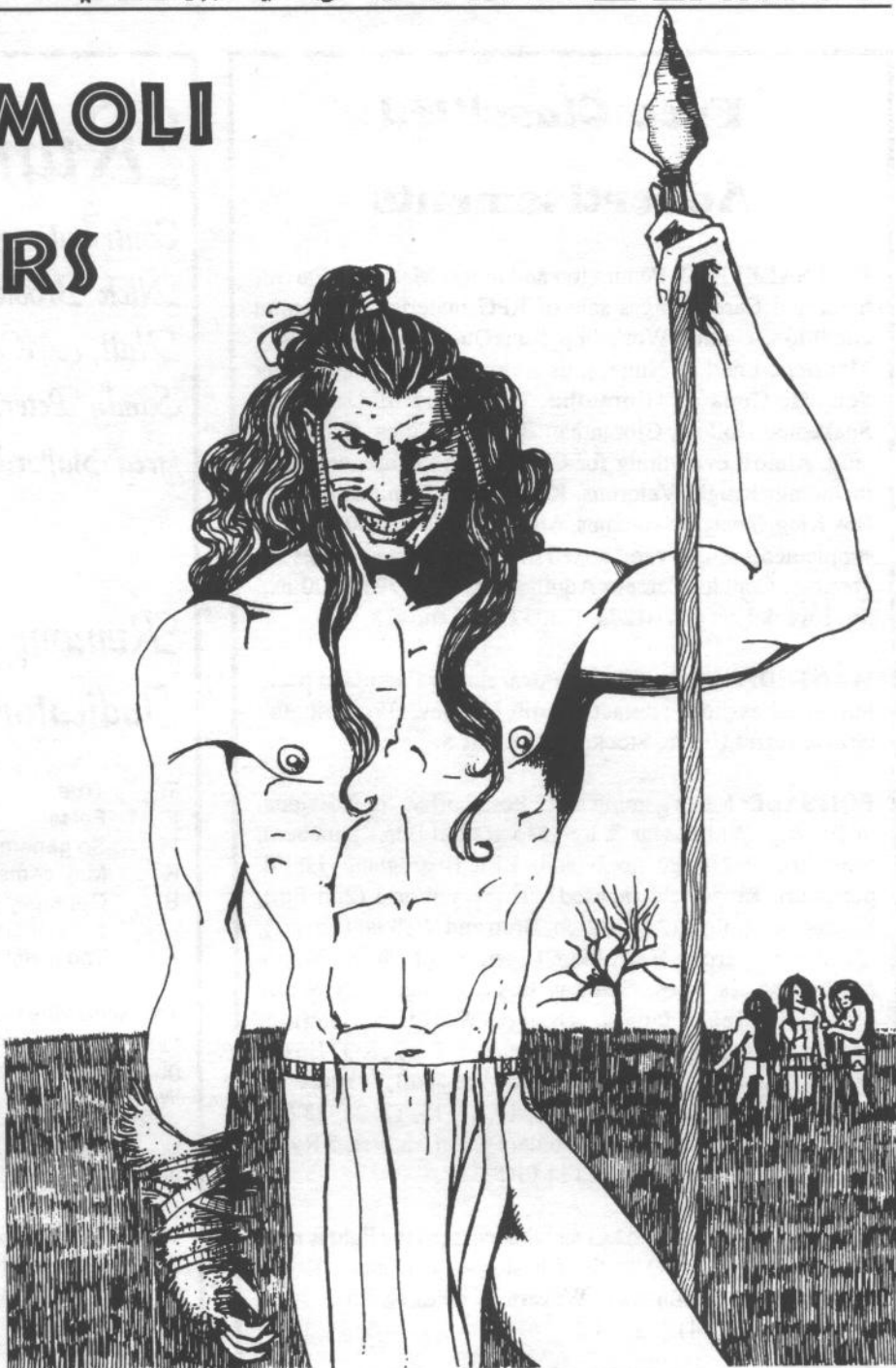
Standing just a little shorter than an average Praxian, Basmoli are lean, fleet of foot and tawny skinned. Their long flowing hair is usually auburn or some other red. Down their spine runs a line of wiry red hair, a vestigial mane similar to chest hair on a human. Their incisors are pronounced and sharp, with the lower jaw extending slightly more than one would expect. The Basmoli have vertical cats' eyes and it is well known that they can see in the dark.

ANIMAL DESCRIPTION

The Basmoli never ride animals and are culturally hostile to the concept. They are closely related to their kin, the Genertelan lion.

The Genertelan lion is a rare carnivorous beast with some of the social practices and lifestyle of the African lion of Earth. The Genertelan lion is different from the African lion in having a wholly matriarchal culture. It has a deeper red coat than Earth lions and its auburn fur is dotted with dark brown patches. It is said by Basmoli that the fur of a lion is the pattern of the Sky in the Gods War.

The Basmoli lion has not been seen in Inner Prax for generations, but prides still live in the Wastes. The society of the animals is much the same as their kin, the Basmoli.



Basmoli and Genertelan lions communicate through body language or speech. Although only one in a thousand lions is intelligent, most have a level of understanding which makes co-operation between the two-legged and four legged lions productive. Despite this the Basmoli do not live with lions: what co-operation there is is temporary.

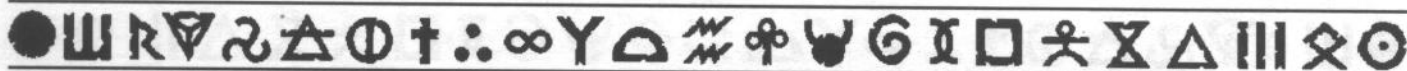
Use the lion statistics in RuneQuest for generating the Genertelan lion.

HABITAT AND FOOD

The Basmoli hunt the Southern expanses of the Wastes. They are a territorial species, and each pride holds rights to hunt over certain areas. A

pride of Basmoli holds a territory of roughly 40 square kilometres, the same as the lions. This will vary dependent on terrain and food availability.

The bachelor club of males will hunt the outer areas of the territory, the females the inner area. Individual males regularly travel to other prides for hunting, mating and adventure. Conflict between straying Basmoli is regular but rarely fatal. As with the Lions the Basmoli hunt zebra, warthogs, impala and other suitable food animals. Lions can be killed or injured by rhinos, sabres and stampeding bison and both Basmoli and the lions are usually cautious about hunting such prey.



Only bachelor male Basmoli raid the nomads' herds. Female Basmoli hunt free animals. Male Basmoli often combine their raids on nomad herds with raids for metal goods, a pre-requisite for any bachelor to be accepted into the pride.

Praxians say that Basmoli eat the bodies of nomads killed in their raids. This is true, and Basmoli unaccustomed to civilisation boast of it proudly.

Basmoli eat only raw meat. Their digestive systems do not require vegetable matter at all. The only time a Basmoli may eat vegetable matter is in the event of sickness, either as a emetic or some other cure. Basmoli (and the Genertelan lion) have lactose intolerance, which means adults are unable to digest milk. A Basmoli given milk or vegetables will be sick. Basmoli can eat cooked meat, but prefer not to.

SEX AND THE BASMOLI

Female Basmoli and female lions are receptive to mating only in the Sea Season of every year, bearing a litter of two to three young in the Fire Season of the following year. During this time a female may mate with any males who have impressed her, outside of that time they are not interested at all in sexual matters. Basmoli cubs are small, blind and furry. They open their eyes within two weeks and lose their birth fur within a season. Cubs are spread two-thirds male and one-third female.

BASMOLI CHARACTER GENERATION

To generate a Basmoli, use the normal statistics for a human, but add 3 to Dexterity and subtract 3 from Size. For previous experience, use Primitive Hunter.

A Basmoli can see in any level of light as if it were daylight, as per the Yelmalio divine spell Catseye. In complete darkness a Basmoli is blind.

A Basmoli's base skill chances are modified as follows:

Dodge	20	Ride	00
Swim	00	Scan	30
Scent	30	Fist/Claw	30
Bow	25	Spear	25
Shield	20		

Male Basmoli become very excited and skit-tish during the Sea Season, but are sexually receptive in all seasons. Casual homosexuality is common amongst the bachelor clubs of Basmoli. Male Basmoli are not naturally attracted to human females, finding them unappealing and "badly scented".

II. INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY

METHOD OF LIVING

Basmoli are two-legged lions. Thus their culture mirrors that of lions: the family group is the "pride" and children are "cubs". The core family group is the pride, in which the women rule supreme, hunting and gathering for their young. Only a few men are allowed in the core pride, those who have attained old age or a maturity of vision which leads them to be allowed to mate with the women and help protect the young. All other men form bachelor clubs which live around the pride and provide nothing to the upkeep of the core pride.

Although more men than women are born, the depredations of hunting and the wandering life mean that by the time of re-admittance into the pride there are more women than men. Basmoli society is matriarchal, and it is ironic that civilised folk see only the males as they serve as trackers and scouts on expeditions into the Wastes.

The Basmoli have no marriage or pair-bonding: their women choose mates as they see fit from the pride or the young bachelors. They aware that mating leads to progeny but they do not care who the father is. All males in the core pride are the "uncles" of the young, all the females are "aunts". The upbringing of young is the core pride activity, and until pushed out into the bachelor clubs, every cub leads a life loved and cared for by all the adults.

Young males roam free on their own or in small groups, and it is this which has led to the tradition of young Basmoli acting as native auxiliaries and mercenaries for Pavis, Sun Dome and other valley folk. Amongst these bachelors several secret male societies have grown up, each a spirit cult revering a male hero. Amongst the Basmoli near Sun County is the "Claw of the Leaping Sun", a spirit cult based around the hero who first served for the Yelmalions. In Pavis the Basmoli spirit cult is the "Prowling Brave Dances in the Night". These societies serve as a counterpoint to the female dominance of mainstream Basmoli society. Some "civilised" Basmoli find these societies and their new homes satisfactory enough never to return, but this is an exception.

BEHAVIOUR

TYPICAL, STEREOTYPED

Most non-Basmoli communicate with male Basmoli. Female Basmoli are a mystery to most other peoples. Therefore most of the views of Basmoli behaviour are of bachelor Basmoli.

In the Wastes the Basmoli are feared, respected and hated by the dwellers of Prax who are their prey. They are known to be vicious hunters who raid and kill nomads' mounts in attacks of fierce silence. It is known that as lions they eat their human victims as easily as they eat animals. Their word is seen as being untrustworthy, and their concepts of sex, parenthood and social life are unknown, subjects of speculation, fear and ridicule amongst the nomads. Set against this is the fact that the Basmoli are extremely fierce fighters, that they raid only for food and take just what they need, and that in many cases the willingness of young male Basmoli to fight alongside nomad tribes as mercenaries has allowed the traditional animosities to be put on one side temporarily. Common phrases about Basmoli amongst nomads are "fight like a Basmoli in a corner", "Never trust a lion-man with your chickens", and "as fickle as a Basmoli and his cats".

Basmoli bachelors fresh from the Wastes have no concept of honour outside the pride, and are believed by civilised people to cheat, lie and steal with impunity.

BASMOLI AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Basmoli make excellent Player Characters for an entry-level role-playing game set in Prax, especially along the Zola Fel river valley. For players with very little knowledge of Glorantha, the Basmoli offer the opportunity to play people with very little world knowledge, a strong need to serve in "civilised" society and very simple goals – "Get metal, go home and be accepted as a mate."

For players with a lot of Gloranthan experience, the Basmoli present an excellent opportunity to role-play a naive character, to question and make light of the conventions that so often rule a Yelmalio or Orlanthi character's life. Remember and note the Basmoli attitudes to women, food, property and the purpose of life. Note also that Basmoli are unarmoured hunters who should have some reluctance to become heavily armoured warriors, Basmoli characters will need scenarios where the power of opponents is suited to their limitations.

This is partially true: Basmoli find concepts of individual ownership and morality difficult to grasp. Since all property is common in the pride and total honesty is expected, it is probably the shock of individualistic life which makes Basmoli bachelors behave so erratically. Basmoli do accumulate, but always for the group; left in civilised society they can no longer clearly define who that group is anymore.

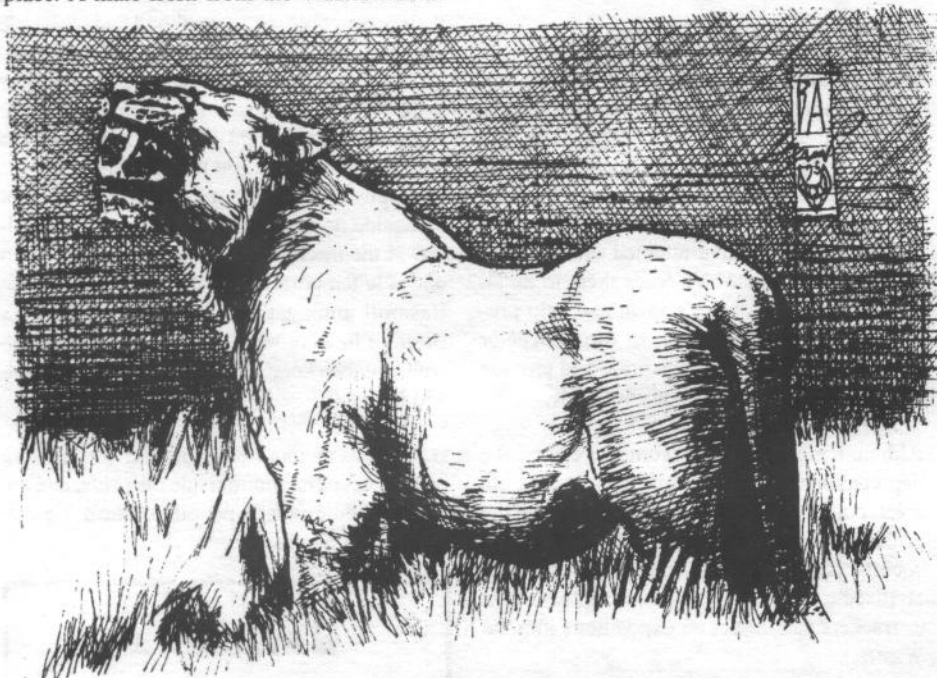
Most Basmoli have no real concept of money, and as such most are taken for every lunar they have earned the first time they enter a marketplace. A male fresh from the Wastes will in-

and only fully respect females or older and/or spiritual males. Those who have met with female Basmoli have no doubts that they embody the pride, hauteur and strength of the lion people.

INNER MOTIVATION

ALL BASMOLI

Like most felines Basmoli are fickle, inquisitive and playful. True predators, they switch quickly from light-hearted fun to ruthless killing, and many a Basmoli has killed only mo-



variably be very naive, constantly asking impertinent and foolish questions. They do not understand the moral niceties and taboos of most societies and can make the most awful mistakes. They are perceptive and quick to learn, a fact which often gives them frighteningly clear and objective views of civilised life. Most learn the ways of civilisation quite soon, usually with the help of one of the male secret societies, but those who don't can find themselves chased out of town or facing the gallows.

Once enlisted, a Basmoli mercenary will come to regard his military unit as a new pride, treating it and its ideals with respect and fierce loyalty. Soldiers who have served with Basmoli irregulars, and who see past their society's prejudices, view the Basmoli as fierce, noble savages, a little naive but "one hell of a fighter to have by your side." Those that are unable to see this view them as shifty, workshy and immoral whilst also being "vicious in a corner."

When non-Basmoli deal with female Basmoli the impressions are of a fierce protectiveness, of overwhelming passion to defend and maintain the pride. Basmoli females find it difficult to take seriously young males of any species,

ments after laughing and joking. They are a simple people, looking for food, warmth and love, in that order.

MALE

A male Basmoli is driven by the fundamental insignificance he has in Basmoli society. Males are raised and then turned away from the pride, leaving them with a yearning desire to be accepted, to regain the membership of the group. When wandering Basmoli meet other cultures, some transfer this desire to "belong" to their new friends. Hence the loyalty of male Basmoli auxiliaries in Yelmali and Lunar forces. Basmoli males are not interested in human females, their smell is "wrong".

FEMALE

A female Basmoli is an integral part of a close feminine group whose goals are to further the pride and its survival. A female Basmoli will defend the pride's cubs, her self, her sisters and no-one else. A male is always expected to fend for exception is a runt shaman, who is viewed at all times as a talented cub.

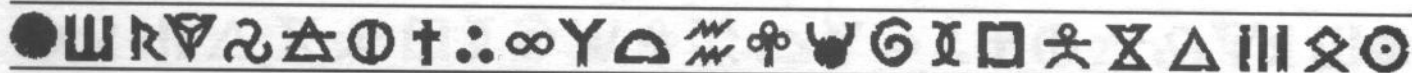
III. PAST

MYTHOS

Basmola was born of Shoulders, Legs, Smell, Sound and Fur, and was strong and proud. Her teeth and claws were strong and her coat was of the deepest red. Her mate was Basmol, and he was a strong mate, but smaller than Basmola. As a mating gift she gave him a mane, so that all might know that he was hers and she would fight to keep him. They were good mates and bore many cubs, but Basmol was a weak creature, and his pride in his mane meant that he was fickle and vain. After one of her cubs was left alone in the cold, Basmola set Basmol apart from her until he had learnt responsibility. He did indeed learn responsibility, and returned but until then Basmola protected and cared for her cubs alone. (Basmol's Quest is taught to young male Basmoli, and is the archetype for their own search for adult acceptance back into the pride. It is not told here.)

In the Good Days when there was plenty for all and the grasslands were long and the gullies full of water, Basmola was Queen of the four-legs. When the Emperor called for contests of arms and skills, Basmola bit and clawed her opponents to the ground. When she won she would tie her prize-ribbons into the mane of her mate. Of the four-legs, only Telmor and Ramal were worthy foes of our Queen. Ramal and Telmor chose to serve Kargan Tor, but Basmola declined to serve any other, and ruled with her mate Basmol across the Great Plains. When Death came to the world many four-legs were confused, seeking solace in strange places or in running and hiding. Basmola saw this, and saw that Death was the newest and greatest change in the world. She embraced it fully, and saw that her pride and her cubs were protected and fed. Now Basmola learnt to run faster and faster, to sneak with silence, to pounce with force and power. The pride of Basmola grew powerful and strong, and the running four-legs came to offer sacrifice and fealty.

When the Shadowing came Basmola saw by the dim light in the sky, and with her pride she hunted by the last glimmerings that remained. Chaos is an evil that the two-legs let into the world. Whilst the Storms fought, the corruption of Wakboth oozed into the world. Wherever this evil went, his followers came. Although heavy with cubs, Basmola fought many of these chaos gods and slew ZZur Karmar, a deity of pustulent death. Wounded in this fight Basmola was set upon by Bagog, the Scorpion Bitch, and was wounded in the belly by the bitch's poisoned barb. Basmola tore off Bagog's second head and threw it into the desert, before limping back to the Plains. There, with much pain and anguish she bore a strange and stunted litter. Unlike the strong lions she had borne



before, these were mewling two legged creatures, born in the form of men and without the sinews or strength to survive as lions.

Basmola, wounded and dying, looked on her new cubs with pity and disgust and raised her claw to put them out of their misery. She then stopped for she saw their lion manes, their lion features, and how they nuzzled to her teats as any cub would. So Basmola fed her new cubs for as long as she could and then she draw up her legs and began to journey for Basmol that he might return to guard her pride whilst she healed. On this journey she met the Fire Man and asked him to warm her strange cubs, and she met the Pointed Stick Man and asked him to show her new children how to hunt with spears and arrows.

So the new lions survived, and came to live as men-lions, and the lions of the Plains tolerated them, and Basmol tolerated them for his mate had told him to, but they were not powerful lions and they were only allowed the poorest of hunting in the Darkness of the world. And the men-lions suffered, as all suffered in the Darkness, and they were preyed on by trolls and killed by chaos things. Basmola was taken from the lions by the Horned One, and it was not known where she was, and the men-lions remembered her love and set out to find and heal her.

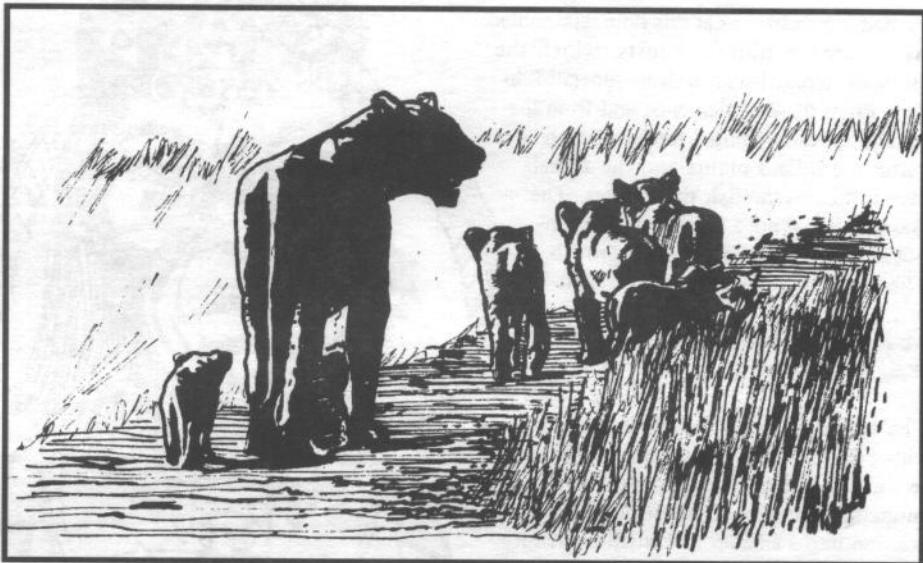
It was a long Quest: it began with meeting the Ribbon Man, to whom they traded their tails for the language of men, and it ended with White Lady, who gave them the power to heal Basmola in exchange for a vow never to call

upon the Disease Mistress. They found Basmola imprisoned by a demon on the edges of the Plains, and they slew it with the spears and arrows the Hunter gave them. They took the fire Oakfed had taught them to make, and burnt out the poison from Basmola's wound. They laid her on a litter of wood, healed her with the White Lady's magic, and returned her to the pride.

Basmola's love for her strange cubs was repaid with their questing, and as she took her place as Queen once more Basmol and the lions saw that the men-lions were as true and noble as they. They made pacts of kinship and fealty between them and they gave the men-lions the name of Basmoli, that they might be known

in another land where the lions did not wish to dwell. But Waha would not leave and so Basmola hunted him on his beast and struck him to the ground. She would have slain him as a lion should slay her prey, but White Lady came and pleaded for Waha. As White Lady had helped heal Basmola, Basmola tore the sinews from Waha's left leg and let him go. And this is why Waha must always ride his beast, for he cannot run even if he tries.

So would the world have been right, with Waha sent to the furthest Wastes, and the world full of running animals and happy lions. But then came the Morocanth, who were beasts, but who had cheated Waha into letting them walk and herd men as slaves. They told Basmola they



BASMOLI NAMES

Basmoli names sound like the sorts of noises lions make. Here are some examples:

Urrul, Grarl, Mrurr, Wyle, Neow, Purr, Rarr, etc.

Basmoli pride names are usually lion-linked, but can also be geographic. Some prides near the Zola Fel are:

Longclaw, Sharptooth, VulturePlain, SmoothFur, Snarling, EarthHills.

A Basmoli would normally state his name and pride at a first meeting, using his name alone in future. Nicknames are as common amongst the Basmoli as any other talking species. For bachelors long distant from their original pride, this may come to replace the pride name.

forever as the saviours of their god and people. Not only this but the lions did pledge that they would share the fate of their kin: in future, all lions who died would be reborn as Basmoli, and all Basmoli would be reborn as lions, so that all may be one people and be proud in their difference and sameness.

Thus would it have ended, for then did the Sun return to the sky: Night was followed by Day, and the world was set to rights. The lions ruled again on the Plains, and Basmola led those animals who had chosen to hunt, and held the fealty and fear of all those who had chosen to run. But all did not end there.

Waha was always a young and troublesome godling, and with the death of many great gods, he had usurped leadership of many men and beasts. With these beasts he made many pacts and conspiracies and he tricked many into being slaves of the men. These slave beasts were to live lives of misery and work, and then were to be killed and eaten without the freedom to run and escape. Basmola knew this was wrong, and saw that if more beasts were made slaves, none would be left to run when the lions needed food. So she told Waha that he and his people must leave the Plains, and that they must dwell

were pleased to see Waha banished, and they wished to free their men-slaves to be running beasts for the lions to hunt. Basmola let them enter the pride, and they released their men-slaves, but these did not run. Instead, they killed lions. As Basmola fought, Waha came from behind a skull bush and speared her, binding her with a demon of disease and striking her to the floor as the Morocanth bound her legs. Waha was most cruel, and avenged his sinews, for he tore Basmola's hind legs from her, and dragged her to the furthest place. Then did he hide the bones that none might heal her again.

Thus was Basmola lost.

HISTORY

The history of the Basmoli is muddled and confused. As a race they have little cultural continuity: all Basmoli are eventually reborn as lions, but their knowledge of their previous life is lost in the rebirth. Thus the Basmoli must rely on their oral traditions and memories. These are good but incoherent, since the Basmoli of today are but a fragment of the Basmoli of the First Age. What follows is a history that only a God Learner would know, the Basmoli version is far less clear.

In the First Age, the Basmoli and their lion kin roamed widely across Seshnela, Maniria and the Praxian Wastes. In the grasslands, devoid of the trees cut down and burnt in the Darkness, the lions were the prime predators and the Basmoli were the dominant Hsunchen tribe. In the primitive terms of that culture, they could be said to have controlled an Empire across much of these lands, with their greatest strength in the warm Seshnelan plains. Their enemies were the Hubris people, a hyena Hsunchen race, the Ramalian boar people who resisted hunting, and the Telmori of Maniria who were competitors for food. The trolls, who were widespread, powerful and relatively advanced in this time, were the Elder Race most often met by the Basmoli.

Settled humanity was at this time represented by isolated Brithini outposts, which the Basmoli avoided with a deep superstitious fear. From these settlements, and from the natural order of things, farmers began to settle the inland plains and the forests started to re-establish themselves. The Basmoli lion is not a forest lion, and cannot hunt in the brush and undergrowth. The Basmoli people are primitive hunters, and against the spread of horse-riding settlers they were unable to resist these encroachments onto their plains.

The entire Hsunchen culture was forced out of Seshnela, their numbers contracting as they withdrew. Some have called this a migration, but in many senses it was a contraction into a smaller and smaller territory. The Praxian Basmoli do not remember these defeats and withdrawals, which indicates that they were isolated and that no Seshnelan or Manirian Basmoli reached Prax.

The battle between Waha and Basmola was one of many such battles, some with Flamal, some with the Only Old One of the Shadowlands. All ended in the defeat and withdrawal of the Basmoli culture. The final battle with Waha actually crippled Basmola, and is reflected in the state of her people.

Other races have dim records of the First and Second Age fighting with the beast people, cat people, even "red lions," but these are muddled and confused, often mixed with tales of other struggles between Hsunchen peoples. That the Seshnelan God Learner culture both destroyed the mythical past and was then destroyed itself may explain why this period is badly recalled. It is said that the Ramalian nation, avoided by most other peoples, celebrates the downfall of their lion foes, and marches to war under banners which include mouldering lion skins and totems entwined with ancient lion tails. The Ditali deer-people may have other, gentler, ways of recalling their former predators.

In Prax, the Basmoli have always been tolerated, only able to survive due to their fierce ability to defend themselves. They have played little part in the history of Prax, willing to hire out males to most sides, save the Morocanth, yet happiest left to hunt and raise their young. Some Basmoli did fight against the God Learners who settled along the Zola Fel, and joined in the destruction of Ancient Pavis.

In recent history, some Basmoli have developed links with the Yelmadio Sun Domers. The first Basmoli to serve in the Sun Dome Templars as



auxiliaries rapidly spread the word amongst their kin, and Basmoli can expect welcome in the lush lands of the Sun worshippers. The Sun Domers have a very superior approach to their auxiliaries, but many of their victories were won with the aid of Basmoli scouting and reconnaissance.

Although some Basmoli fought against the Lunars at the battle of Moonbroth, it was not long before they hired themselves to the new forces. The Red Lion Brotherhood in Pavis was formed, and its members can often be found as scouts, auxiliaries and translators for the Lunars. The prides might have a deeper dislike of the Lunars should their chaotic side become more noticeable, but so far the females have not seen the Lunars as important.

THE CULT OF BASMOLA

Basmola is associated with the runes of Beast, and Death. She previously had links with the Mastery and Movement Runes, but has since lost these. Some proud or defiant Basmoli will still display these runes.

The cult as presented in Gods of Glorantha is to be used, noting only that it was written by a misinformed Theyalan God Learner.

IV. CULTURE

LEVEL OF MANUFACTURE

Basmoli culture supports bone and leather working. Most Basmoli use fighting claws manufactured from bone splinters and animal claws. Basmoli fletchers work with bone arrow heads and bowstrings of gut and sinew. All metal goods have to be traded for or stolen. Basmoli males work as mercenaries to gain metal.

ART, DRESS, ETC.

Basmoli art is based upon an extensive history of rock scratching which tell the tales of the Basmoli. Every pride has a sacred rock around which the core pride gathers for holy ceremonies, with the bachelor males allowed to listen and join in the chanting and dancing from a distance. Most Basmoli can dance well, and fire leaping and sinuous mock hunts are much loved by all.

Basmoli dress is minimal. Most wear a loin cloth of fur, carry a buckler shield, a spear and their bow. Many Basmoli have made themselves a fighting claw which they wear at most times. Basmoli are also very fond of their hair which they wear long, and treasure ribbons and bells as treasures to braid into their locks. Most Basmoli also carry small patches of lion fur, lion teeth or claws. These come from the bodies of dead lions and are used as foci for spells.

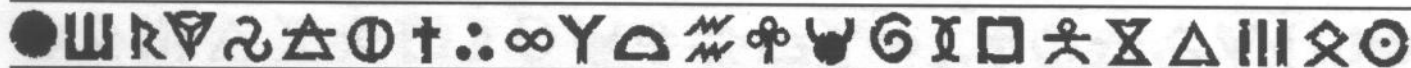
In Storm and Dark Season Basmoli wear cloaks and capes of animal hide. Basmoli hate hats, helmets and boots, finding them all restrictive and enclosing.

TRADE

Basmoli trade is simple. They have nothing to offer but themselves, and they do this by serving as mercenaries. They will even serve the hated nomads if metal is forthcoming.

LIKES AND DISLIKES

Basmoli like all felines, who they recognise as kin.



All males have a deep desire for metal due to its importance in male advancement. They have a magpie tendency, storing pots, pans, knives and other metal objects amongst their possessions.

Basmoli males are vain, given to preening and collecting ribbons and bows to adorn their hair. A Basmoli loves nothing better than to spend a morning preening and adorning, then an afternoon tracking, stalking and hunting. After such a day the Basmoli would preen again, then spend the evening dancing, fire leaping and sharing the day's kill with other members of the pride or bachelor group.

Basmoli are great dreamers and in between preening and hunting they will stretch out in the sun and drift off into a half-sleep of dreams. Most Basmoli believe in the dream world as the nearest they'll get to a glimpse of the after-life now denied them. Basmoli treat dream omens with great respect.

Basmoli hate all riders of beasts, whether horses or Praxian beasts. This relates to their mythos and history, but also to the fact that riders are nomads who herd, restricting the access of free hunters to the beasts of the veldt.

Morocanth are hated for their treachery of Basmola, and also for their practice of changing people into animals. Basmoli do not forget when a herd man is discovered to have been Basmoli.

Hyenas are the scavengers of the plains, known for stealing kills from both two-legged and four-legged lions. A pack of hyenas can chase a few Basmoli or a lone lion from a kill. For this hyenas are despised, and killed wherever possible. The Hubris Hyena Hsunchen were ancient foes of the Basmoli, and this memory is resurrected at many religious feasts.

Basmoli hate Western folk and those showing excessive learning or strangely different ways. Basmoli call such people "soulless". This antipathy is very old and based on distant events, and a Basmoli would sum them up as "evil and not from here". Early contacts with the Lunars ended in conflict due to this antipathy, but careful missionary work has changed this amongst some bachelors in Pavis.

Chaos is the oldest and most deadly enemy that Basmola and the Basmoli face. It is still rife in the Wastes, and Basmoli hunt and kill chaos without mercy. They will not attack suicidally, but since Basmoli are territorial they fight broo regularly: in times past, whole prides have died defending their traditional hunting grounds from the chaos hordes.

BASMOLI PREFERRED SPELLS

SPIRIT MAGIC

Clawsharp

Bladesharp variant, can be cast on a spear or on claws. As the spell is cast the caster claws at the air with a free hand, and the weapon or claw momentarily drips blood.

Co-ordination

The recipient crouches lower and moves in a loping, animal-like way.

Fanaticism

The recipient of this spell snarls, and their teeth become more pronounced.

Farsee

As the spell is cast the eyes of the target glow with a golden intensity. This lasts for the duration of the spell.

Shimmer

When cast, the recipient's appearance shifts quickly between Basmoli and lion form, confusing the opponent.

Speedart

As the arrow leaves the bow a growl can be heard and the arrow briefly resembles a leaping lion.

DIVINE MAGIC

All as per *Gods of Glorantha*.

[xxix.445.3] "Which wine is the world's finest? This is certainly a matter of individual taste, but one of the most expensive wines is the sparkling variety made at the monastery of St. Markeno on the isle of Pasos. Dom Markeno, the founder of the order and now recognised as a minor saint by the Rokari church, devised the secret method, which is jealously guarded by the Black Monks (so called for their darkly stained bare feet and the black grapes they crush with them). Some connoisseurs explain that the highly unusual tingling sensation felt when drinking the Dom's sparkling wine is caused by the small undine bound into every bottle, which is slowly destroyed during drinking and digestion."
Gorafan Westwise.

The Storm Bull and His Sons

by Greg Stafford



The Storm Bull is assuredly an air god, possibly of the Primary Generation of Lower Air Gods. He is described in barbarian terms as being a giant animal with horns like lightening, a bellow like thunder, and whose passing is the flooding overabundance of rain.

The Storm Bull first viewed Eiritha from his grazing grounds upon the Cosmic Mountain at the axis of Eternity, commonly called The Spike. This immortal mountain stood at the centre of the universe, housing the Greater Gods of Law, whose orders and works had created the world. Upon its slopes lived a myriad of races during the Gods Age. Among those were the Sons of the Storm Bull, and these demi-gods elected to follow their leader into the lowlands.

The present survivors of Prax claim that they were invited. Most myths corroborate that evidence. Modern scholars have suggested that it was really nothing but the second invasion of Prax by barbarians, the first being the Basmoli. Ragnaglar, in that version, takes on the heroic character of Defender of the Daughters of Eiritha. The latter-day heretics of modern scholasticism would have us believe that his later behaviour in questing for the evils of chaos to aid in his vengeance is justified reprisal for the outrage done by the Storm Bull. But if the perverted forms of Broos are an indication of the correct procedure being followed then there is little popular doubt that incorrect procedure was a better path.

Just as Storm Bull took Eiritha to wife after driving out Ragnaglar, so did his children take to wife the daughters of that Goddess. From these unions were born the sons and daughters of the Founder and Protectress, the First Ancestors who are specially set apart as having lived the Golden Age, before Death came to the plains.



The Paps Cycle

Reminisces of the Most Respected Elder

by Scott Schneider

There comes a time in every heifer's life, beyond the pleasures and follies of the calf, the pangs and ruminations of the cow, and the dryness and broken thoughts of the aged, when one longs for peace and the cessation from pain that only that final journey down the vagina of Our Goddess brings. Only in death, awaiting our eventual rebirth, can one find the bucolic existence, the serenity of good grazing, that is always a struggle in our daily living. In our own old age, one is left with only the shrivelled husk of a body, and the fragmented memories of a lifetime of serving Her.

I have been honoured and granted the privilege of being able to graze on the richness of Her body¹ for more knot-years than I can count, much more than the typical priestess is given. I have delved deeply, and explored the Mysteries of Her Ways, and go now into Her depths, far beneath the Paps, where the Remembering One² dwells. I hesitate to say live, rather than dwells, because she has always been there, waiting to receive the richness of each Priestess' memories and feelings. This passing on is vital to the survival of the People, for all Priestesses such as I, who can choose the time and place of our passing, must return our experiences to Her, in repayment for Eiritha giving us our Life.

Times change, and the Eternal cycle of Life, Death and Rebirth is threatened as never before. We have always faced starvation, destruction, wars - but never before, since the Devil came to beloved Prax, have we been faced with the utter annihilation of the Herds. Change comes to the Paps, and I (and those that follow) must ensure that Eiritha - our Goddess of the Herds - continues.

The Demons of the Red Moon - the blight that followed the coming of the Twin Star Sisters - continue to occupy the great city of Pavis, and they send their teachers out to the Plaines to preach the ways of peace and harmony - the peace of Chaos and corruption! Fewer calves join our Sisterhood each season, and I worry that we will not be able to gather enough initiates to conduct our Ceremonies in future years. The Goddess grows weaker.



She bleeds. The Plaines die.

It is rumoured that a White Bull³ has been born across the River, amid the mysterious Wastelands where some of the People live. The Waha warriors journey there to discover the truth of these rumours, to verify this Bull's existence and secrets, which are beyond the ken of any Eiritha priestess. Few return.

I have been preparing my successors with every scrap of memory, every feeling or piece of knowledge that I possess, that can help them deal with the coming crisis. Just as She taught me, I have taught my Daughters how to read and interpret Her moods - when She is sick, when She gives birth, when She needs more or less grazing lands for Her Children - all aspects of Her Ways, so that they can anticipate and understand what Her needs are, and how Her Children must be cared for. More importantly, I have tried to teach my students how to deal with all the Outlanders that have come to our Plaines. I do not know what is to happen. But I only hope enough remains to pre-

serve Her ways and people. I think not.

How the Goddess and the People will survive the coming storm, I can not know. But I want to leave my Daughters with a memory of my years of strength, when I was full of vitality, when I could bear twin calves every knot year, when I was just coming into my own as the most powerful leader of the Herds and Protectresses in many knot years - I, Egagia the Chewer, the Most Respected Elder of the Paps.



It had been a difficult time. Unrest spread throughout the Plaines as the Red Demons marched wherever they chose following the battle of Moonbroth. Rumours of Red Demons flowed like bad kumiss - that they would be establishing colonies along the River, that they would build forts for settlers, cutting off access to prime grazing areas for the Herds, that they would de-



mand a tribute of every daughter of every clan chief to satisfy the lusts of their barracks soldiers. All the young Waha warriors, to avenge the deaths of their fathers, brothers and uncles, sought to kill Red soldiers at every turn. The soldiers would hunt the warriors down in turn, or retaliate by seizing herd beasts from various clans. And the yearly Darkness Season rituals, when the secret sparks of the Daughters of Eiritha must be ignited and their life forces sent out to ensure the fertility of the herds, had to be successful.

Each priestess carefully practised her role in the upcoming ritual, each Herd-Sister taught her part. Each phase of the ritual must be performed perfectly. And there is never a guarantee of success. Each stage of the ritual is dangerous, and the most dangerous of all is the summoning of... But I get ahead of myself.

At the Darkness Season Time, we entertain many pilgrims and worshippers at the Paps. That year, more people showed up than usual. This was probably due to the troubled times, maybe to an increase in the insecurity of their daily lives, or the need to be able to call upon the Goddess, or the longing to seek divine assurances or help. We had to send to distant Sartar and Tarsh to hire additional Axe-Sisters⁴, to act as caravan guards for the pilgrims, and as protectors of the Darkness Season rituals. The Axe-Sisters would freely shed their blood, as is their wont, to feed the Earth during the rituals. They feed the goddess of the Earth in their own fashion.

Among the many visitors at the Paps at this time was a young trader - a Goldentongue - worshipper of the Speaking friend and boon companion of Storm Bull's little brother. He⁵ brought with him a slave woman of the Bison tribe. She was an initiate into the higher mysteries of Our Goddess' Ways, and held as a slave woman by an Outlander!! He sought an audience with me, desiring to speak. My servants, of course, turned him down repeatedly. However, after several days, and amused and curious at his persistence, I granted him a brief meeting. And was this male ever agile with his words! Goldentongue, indeed! He earned his reputation well that day. The man claimed to be journeying throughout the Plaines, trading as he went, learning our ways and customs as he could, with the intent of becoming rich and seeking new markets for his trade goods. He came to me with a proposition. This man, as a worshipper of a friendly deity, wanted to experience the deeper aspects of our ceremonies, in return for which he would use the powers granted to him by his Speaking God to contribute to our safety.

Foolish male! Did he think that the Goddess was so weak that she could not protect herself? What was it he stood to gain for himself? However, I looked deeply into this male's soul, and asked the Goddess directly if he should be allowed to participate in some of the ceremonies. To my surprise, I thought the Goddess bellowed that not only should he be permitted to participate, but that such participation was desired. Too, I was curious to see how this one would act, how this male would experience his darkest fears, when the most dangerous part of the ritual was enacted. Also, would he prove to be a desirable mate for that Bison Rider woman, who was supposedly his slave and concubine? Little did he know that he was already more of a slave to her than she was to him. And even the woman suspected little of that! We would thus test him as I thought the Goddess desired!

Our Darkness Time rituals would proceed in several stages, beginning with the usual preliminary chants and prayers for the

lay worshippers, a warm-up, so to speak, in the coldness of the Darkness Season. These early prayers were designed to put all of the worshippers in the right mood, so that each, in her own way, could be receptive to the feelings of the Goddess as we progressed deeper into the Ceremony.

Our initiates, schooled in the deeper Mysteries of Her ways, understood that these early chants began the cycle that would let all of our energies flow into and through our Goddess, so that She could renew the World and re-ignite the sparks of Her sleeping Daughters - the Protectresses - so that their spirits could once again flow out throughout Prax and the Wastelands, causing all of Her beasts that died with the Peaceful Cut in the prior year to be reborn again into the Herds.

The next stage, which only the initiates and our cult leaders understood, required the channelling of all worshipper energies directly to the Goddess, stirring Her into a vague level of Herd Consciousness, where we reveal and reaffirm to Her and to each other the secret of the Seventh Great Magic of Prax - a magic that no stupid male acknowledges or can know. Most Waha worshippers believe that each of our Great Magics is a singular object, handed down through the ages as a gift from the Land, from Waha, from Genert the Good Earth Giant, from Eiritha. They try to use these gifts for gaining coup over their enemies, for increasing their powers over other clans, for death and destruction. And some of these gifts can be used as such.

However, She has taught us that the greatest Magic in all of Prax and the Wastelands is the group spirit of the Herds themselves - the Wyter spirit of all the different types of beasts that are considered the Daughters and Children of Eiritha. It is this Wyter spirit - this greatest of all of the Seven Magics - that we feel and see and know. All the beasts - whether they live on the great Plaines, or in the Wastelands, or even still in the depths of Her body, unknown to mortal eyes - are revealed to each initiate and priestess⁶. We rejoice in the greatness of all the beasts, whether they be Bison or Impala or Rhino, and try to learn more of their ways so that the herds are healthy and can thrive. Those of us with special insight, who are able to go deeper into the ceremony than others, try to learn of ways to restore the hidden beasts to the light of the Bright Treasure, to release them from the Body of the Goddess so that they may take their places once more on the Plaines. Some of our Priestesses - the Elder Sister of the Plaines Elk, She of the Long-Noses, and all of the others (we have seen or felt more than thirty other Daughters of Eiritha still locked deep within Her body, those that Waha could not release from His struggle against the forces of Darkness) - have waited since the return of the Bright Treasure to have a Herd or Flock to guide. Thus, as Eiritha stirs more and more fully into consciousness and awareness because of our prayers and entreaties, we try to sense Her moods, and hope that this is a proper time to learn from Her more about our lost Sisters so that they may be released.

As the rituals proceed, we risk greater and greater parts of our life force and spirit, opening ourselves deliberately to attack from those deities who have no desire to see Eiritha and Her children revitalised for the coming year. Only in confronting our worst fears and nightmares, in struggling against our basest desires and thoughts, can we hope to grow and strengthen ourselves, and thus gain the energy that we can pass on to our Goddess. During the Darkness Season, our enemies are at their strongest, and to defeat them we must call forth our greatest strengths, yet, at the

I had told the Goldentongue to watch and learn, to not move or be surprised by anything that he saw, heard or felt. The ritual proceeded as anticipated, the energies built up as expected, the familiar foes we would summon to us approached as desired. As I continued with the ritual, I felt, rather than saw, the coming of our Foes, their passage guided through Her mystical tunnel⁷ their breaking down of the protective barriers. And then, to my amazement and utter shock, I heard the Goldentongue Priest cry out in fear⁸. And, without permission or understanding, he cast one of his god's spells just as our Foes were entering into our inner sanctum.

I watched in horror as, not only did the Dark Ones appear as expected, but so did Trolls and Broos and even Morocanth warriors. And in numbers I did not think even our Axe-Sisters could handle. My greatest fears had been realised - an actual invasion by the forces of Darkness was occurring. I feared for the destruction of the Herds should the ceremony not be completed properly; I feared for the lives of all those who be lost defending the secret places of the Paps from these Dark Forces. But most of all, in my horror and weakness, I feared for the wounds that I caused to Her for my folly, for my misinterpreting Her message to me that the Goldentongue Priest should witness our ceremony because I secretly wanted him to mate with the Bison Woman, and thus reverse her enslaved state.

And then I heard the Goldentongue shout, and pull a staff out, and rush down one of the tunnels into Her greater depths in support of the warriors. I continued my part in the ceremony, struggling to remember the words and unable to feel Her moods

as I had so easily done in the past. I felt the energies slipping away from my control and guidance, saw the emerging sparks of Her Daughters growing dimmer rather than brighter, heard the cries of despair and death and hopelessness from all of the worshippers. And it was all my fault.



And I also was taught this lesson, that defeating the forces of death and destruction required our joining with our own forces of destruction - the Waha males - who understood death like we worshippers of Eiritha could not. And the union of Eiritha's Life and Waha's death meant the preservation and health of the herds. And I was humbled in the presence of my Goddess, and continued the rituals without hesitation, strengthened in the knowledge that each worshipper was shedding her - and his - blood, so that Eiritha would grow stronger, and that the spirits of the Protectresses would be more powerful than ever. And we completed the ceremonies - victorious as never before over the summoned forces of Darkness - and the Daughters of Eiritha sped out of Her depths to all of the quarters of Prax and the Wastelands with a vigour never known to me before.



I saw the Goldentongue slumped in a corner, covered with the blood of foes and himself, an arm around his woman. I looked deep into his eyes, nodded slightly, and returned to my work. Our way of life would continue, and I knew that the path I must quest for in order to serve Her fully was laid before me, and that I had the strength and courage to delve deeper into Her Mysteries.



I begin now my final journey into Her depths, a journey begun many knot years ago, a path set in motion by the admittance of an Outlander into our inner Mysteries, a course set and required by Her so that I may guide the Herds through these years of troubles. Though the Storm is coming, I have strengthened the Herds so that they are powerful and full of Her life. I have sought and found the spirits of the Nose-Horns, the Plaines Elks, and something called a Loper⁹ - my successor makes preparations with the Waha shamans to free these Daughters from the spirits of Darkness that imprison them. I sense that the White Bull is a tremendous harbinger of change to our life - though I do not know if it will help us, I feel and sense that its coming will result in Her strengthening.

I continue determinedly forward to the place of the Remembering One, for I want to pass my feelings and my thoughts to her while I am still strong and aware, before I pass down the final passage of the Goddess to Her fields and grazing lands, before I return again to my beloved Prax and Paps, before the coming Storm breaks and I am too weak and broken to help. In this walk, I am not alone, and move with the feelings and thoughts of countless others - and I go now to join them, only one more Most Respected Elder, but one who will be recalled by the Remembering One as the Woman Who Saved the Goddess from Herself!!!



Footnotes by Minaryth the Purple

(1) The Praxians view all geographical terrain that comprises Prax and the Wastelands as different aspects of Eiritha's body, some bearing life, some not; Eiritha is present in every part of Prax and the Wastelands, not just in the Eiritha Hills.

(2) The Remembering One is apparently a reference to some obscure cult spirit, accessible only to the inner circle of the Paps hierarchy. Every effort by the Pavis Grey Sages (those bumbling pedants) should be made in order to investigate this spirit more comprehensively.

(3) This is news to Me! The White Bull may be either an actual rare albino bull, which seems to have some primitive symbolic or religious significance to these savages, or may represent something more. I will try to contact my Pol-Joni "groundsman", who "vanished" several years ago into the Wastelands, to see if he knows more about this bull.

(4) A reference to worshippers of Babeester Gor.

(5) Our records at Jonstown indicate that this trader was a certain Biturian Varosh, a Sartarite trader by cult affiliation, and Goldentongue by choice. The records show that he was active in the Praxian region 1613-1614, peddling his wares and moving among the various tribes in the region. We last heard of him from the "Pol-Joni", who officiated at the trader's wedding. It seems that the man liked the savage and dirty Praxian women better than the more cultured and beautiful women in his own Sartar. The bastard "went native!"

(6) This is just a bunch of religious hooey! LM teaches us that these natives are very primitive, and can not have risen to any degree of sophistication or level of understanding regarding ritual, divination, etc. Yes, the herds in Prax appear to thrive in an environment that would quickly kill off most of our good Sartarite cattle, but then, those Praxian beasts are not what I would call fit for human consumption. And the notion that the herds can call upon some great and powerful spirit to save their hides (oh! I still have my sense of humour. I'll have to tell the other sages about this one) is most ludicrous. As if animals have the intelligence to pray!

(7) If it can be said that there really is some being buried under the ground, and that this being is the physical representation of the entity known as Eiritha, then it can be surmised that the so-called tunnels within the Eiritha Hills represent nothing less than the internal organs of a giant cow!!! Then, the important fact to be determined here is whether the forces of Darkness moved through the Waste system, the Circulatory system, or the Digestive system. I wonder if the trolls stopped off in the stomach for a late-night snack (even more, which stomach did they stop off in?)? It boggles even my mind! A very good alimentary deduction on my part!

(8) This seems to have been normal behaviour for Varosh, who always seemed to be getting into situations he either did not comprehend or, because he thought he did understand, wound up either insulting, antagonising or patronising the natives.

(9) A speculative note: the sparse investigatory, empirical, and oral evidence available suggests that two basic types of herd-beasts exist, or have existed. It appears that the majority of extinct or dying species (like Rhinos, but they're too ignorant to realise this though) of herd-beast are toed, while the majority of thriving herd-beasts are hoofed. What advantage being toed or untoed has in the ecological system of Prax and the Wastelands is at the moment unknown to me, but I also note that the Morokanth are a toed species, and the rest of the Praxians claim that the Morokanth cheated at the Survival Contest — MTP.



Regions -of- Prax

by
**Sandy Petersen,
Scott Schneider
and Greg Stafford**



Geography

There are many misconceptions about the Wastes in other countries. This area is difficult to explore, and the native peoples are close-mouthed about their secrets.

The Wastelands are a grim place to live. The soil is hardpan, and only wiry desert weeds grow. There is no rain during Fire and Earth seasons, and only rarely in Dark season. During Dark, Storm, and Sea seasons wild storms rage. In wet years, stagnant pools of water remain atop the pavement-like ground until Fire season, when the sun's fury dries them.

The plant life of the Wastelands is scrubby, tough, and sparse. There are thorn-bushes, cacti, and clumpy grasses. There are occasional trees and more succulent plants at the few scattered oases. Oases near the seashore often boast date palms, but at most oases only skullbushes are found. The Krjalki Bog has a wide variety of weird and even carnivorous plants, and the Tunnelled Hills are comparatively overgrown, though only a starving beast-rider would call it lush. To the north the ground is more fertile.

The terrain here is monotonous steppe. The whole land is a great plateau many hundred meters above sea level. Near the southern shore, giant cliffs separate the desert from an uninhabitable marshy coastal region rich in horrible insect life.

Praxian knowledge of other lands is limited. The Outland nations surrounding the Wastes look on the Animal Nomads as foes and raiders, while the Praxians themselves see their neighbours mainly as prey or competitors, fit only for plundering or slaves. Of the greater world beyond the border nations, the Praxians know nothing at all, nor do they care.

The nomads view the World in the following Way, based on its Distance From Chaos: The Good World is the Central Lands; everything else is part of the Great Forbidden, the Outer World where the Way of Waha is Forbidden, and where you will surely die.

Places of Interest

Arinstoli

Grazelands. A Pathway. The north, central area of the Wastelands. This area was not explored by Waha, nor by his followers during the expansions of the Migrations period. Arinstoli Ten-Arrow, an Impala Rider, was the first man to lead a clan into the land, just like the Ancestors of old.

Bad Lands

Grazelands. Many consider parts of this area forbidden since several early nomad heroes were defeated in this area, giving it a bad reputation.

The Bleak Shore

A little used Grassland, this is the shore of never-ending sea. This pestiferous region is sometimes called "the world without Waha," a figure of speech which means "impossible to live in." A steep cliff rises precipitously to the height of the Wastelands Plateau, though many routes downward make its passage accessible. A vast marsh stretches between the cliff and the never-ending sea. These lands are bad for grazing, bad for hunting, and filled with parasites from the Maw of Malia. Only the peninsula known as Orali's Tongue is an exception. Only the moisture-loving Morocanth and Rhino People normally visit these marshes. The shore is always just as good (or as bad) for grazing.

The Block

Forbidden, a Giant Place. This is the Heart of the Storm Bull, who, when all of his allies were dead or dying, his lover drained of power, himself sorely wounded, and surrounded by the Chaos Herds, reached inside of Himself with all of the love and compassion and strength and courage and justice and fear of Chaos that He could muster, and tore out His own heart through which the entire universe had poured itself into. He struck the Chaos, crushing The Devil beneath It, thus preserving the Universe from utter destruction. A great number of Storm Bull's berserk still guard The Block, fanatically preventing any unlicensed theft of pieces of Truestone.

The Cactus Desert

A Pathway. This is the most bleak area of the Wastes to live in, mostly because of the pernicious influence of the Bull Storm, the persistent but erratic confluence of ill winds which plague the Wastes and makes its difficult environment almost impossible even for the hardy Praxians.

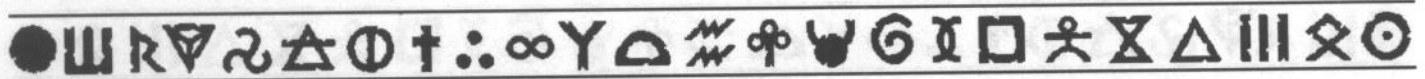
The Copper Sands

A Pathway, Bad Place. This is the least hospitable part of the entire Wastelands, for nothing but corroded green metal sand lies here. It has little water, less plant life, and no native animals. Even broos avoid the land. The Copper Sands were created during the Giant's War. Once Genert, King of the Giants, was sorely beleaguered by the Chaos Herds. He turned part of his forces into a stinging cloud of copper dust which Storm Bull blew upon the Chaos Herds and their Herdsmen, and into the eyes of the Devil. King Genert hoped to save the rest of the army. The Copper Sands bear witness to the magnitude of the event, and the subsequent destruction of the Giant's City attests to the futility of the sacrifice.

Dead Bottom

Bad Place, Spirit Place. This steep canyon is the deepest hole in the Wastelands which does not pierce through the earth into the Underworld. Many serpents stretch down into it, and in the end empty their precious water into its forbidden depths. Grywl Gontath, the Wicked Writher, is periodically born here.

In ancient times, the giants dug this pit to trap the Chaos Herdsmen and their Herds. Their trick failed, and instead, ten nations of animal riders fell in; those nations are now extinct, and with unknown names. This is considered a shameful and horrible act, and when Praxians speak of a situation in the "dead bottom," they mean shameful and horrible.



Demon's Quarter

Ostensibly a Grassland, though a few clans consider it a Forbidden Chaos Place. This is a desolate, dusty land, often raided by chaos monsters from the Tunnelled Hills. It is good for grazing once in four years.

The Devil's Marsh

Forbidden; a Chaos Place, inside of Prax. When the Devil was crushed beneath the Heart of Storm Bull, Waha dug the Good Canal to bring water to wash away the polluting chaos horror. The River did as it was told, and although the River sought to hide underground in shame at its job, the earth forced Her upward again. Thus the Devil's marsh was formed where the shameful River raised Her head. No animal nomad can become a khan before he has hunted and slain Chaos in this very marsh.

Dragon Pass

Outer Land; a Pathway. Waha has forbidden nomads to settle there. Dragon Pass is a fertile valley rich in plunder and magic. The Bastard Tribe separates the animal nomads from the valley people, except when the nomads can band together under Jaldon. When they muster to attack Dragon Pass, Jaldon Toothmaker always appears atop his steed named Home, to lead them once again. Most people here speak the Outer Language called Theyalan.

Fever Trees

Bad Place; A Pathway. This is a dense forest just south of the eastern mountains. Occasionally, a party of raiding nomads manages to survive the harsh journey through the tropical jungle, and emerges into a civilised land inhab-

ited by beautiful women, weak warriors, and very strong magicians. These Outlanders speak Teshnan.

Graydust

Grazeland. A Pathway. This is the area where the forces of Genert initially met the chaos herds; their blood and the chaos herds blood has mingled, and storm bulls winds still try to blow away the dust. Although good for grazing once every three years, an occasional green oasis appears when Storm Bull has been exceptionally good in blowing away the dust of the chaos herds.

Hidden Greens

Grassland. A Pathway. Within this comparatively fertile portion of the Wastelands lurk three magical vanishing oases. One of these oases contains the magic Women of Seclusion, who only appear to critically-wounded warriors. Assuming that none of the oases appear, the Hidden Greens country is good for grazing about once every three years.

Iron Forts

Bad Place. A Pathway, now pretty much blocked. The Forts are a series of defensive structures built by the Dragon Men of the East in the Third Age to stop the persistent nomad incursions. The Forts actually have iron walls, and each is manned by a cadre of holy warriors who worship their citadel. The warriors are all trained to speak Praxian, but they also know their native tongue of Kralori.

Knight Forts

A Pathway. This route into southern Kethaela is barred by a line of stone castles backed up by horse-riding, metal-armoured warriors extends into holy Prax just south of the Stormwalk Mountains. These people let the nomads pass freely in small groups, but fight when whole clans try to travel here. The inhabitants speak Western.

Krjalki Bog

Forbidden, a Chaos Place. During the Godtime, this was the location of Genert's Garden, the most beautiful spot in a beautiful world. The Herds of Chaos blasted the site and destroyed Genert. Now it is a chaos-infested swamp. The Storm Bull lives in his Sky-Tent above the bog, still guarding it for his lost lord, and the desert winds which originate here blow acid rain and poisonous vapours over the desert.

Monster Men Lands

Outer land. Here live races of beings who have yellow skins, dead black eyes, and speak a lilted sing-singing, unpronounceable by human tongue. They have strange magic to eat your soul.

Orali's Tongue

A Grassland, a Hero Place. This is where Orali's tongue was left by the Devil following Orali's mistake. The mistake was to open his mouth to mock the Devil.

The Paps

Eiritha Place. The Vagina of the Goddess. The countryside around the Paps for many miles is an excellent grassland. The Paps are an enormous underground earth temple, a vestige of the Golden Age. A thousand priestesses dwell here, many of whom worship gods found no place else but here. The animal nomads revere the Paps and its Sacred Ground because some say that they were dug by Eiritha when she hid Herself from the Devil Herdsmen by going underneath the earth.

Pavis

Giant Place. Sometimes Forbidden. This is the only city anywhere in the Wastes. It is divided into two sections: New Pavis, and the Big Rubble. New Pavis is a human city founded by colonists from Dragon Pass. The Rubble was made by the Giants, but now includes a Chaos Place, and the rest of the vast expanse of ruins is haunted by dwarfs, trolls, elves, and other such monsters.

Pent

Outer Land. Pent is the northern half of the central steppes of central Genertela. Here live savage horsemen, people whose customs are perversions of Waha's Way. For instance, they ride one animal, but herd another type. But worst of all, they ride horses! The horsemen speak Pentan.

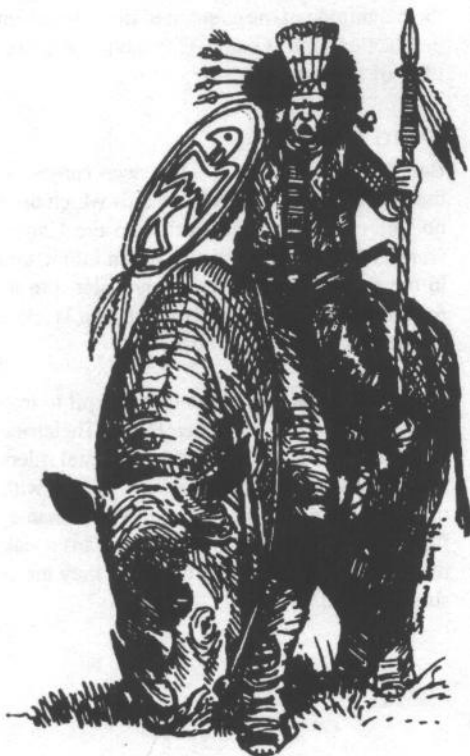
Plateau of Statues

A Giant Place. Forbidden. A plateau whose surrounding cliffs raise the plateau several kilometres high. Atop it, legends say, are giant ruined buildings and immense and beautiful statues of dead giants.

Prax

Eiritha Grassland. In theory a grassland, but always given its formal name. This fertile land is holy to all nomads of the Wastes because this is the home of their Ancestors. Most of the Beast Riders originated here and lived nowhere else until the tribes entered the Wastes in Prehistoric Times.

The verdancy of Prax is legendary: some parts of Prax are good grasslands every year. Date palms grow at all its oases. The Paps grass is good year-round!





River of Cradles

Grassland. This, the only major river of the Wastelands, marks the boundary between Prax and the Wastes proper. In the First and Second Ages, giant cradles holding equally giant babies were seen floating down it, but no longer. It is reliable grazing land.

Rockwoods

Outer Lands. The Western Mountains were raised by King Genert to keep out the ice demons that came down from the north to hurt his people. The Mountains are steep and precipitous, impossible for a herd to penetrate. A single hidden trail is rumoured to exist, and is said to be guarded by living giants, leading to a land ruled by trolls! The rest of the mountains are filled with trolls, dwarfs, and other monsters.

Snow Line

A Grassland. A Pathway. This is the ecological boundary between Pent and the Wastes. South of this line is struck with frost no more often than once in three years. North, it is annual. This line is the no-mans-land between the Praxians and the Pent nomads. When the nomads win battles against the Pentans, their gods win, too, and the Snowline is pushed northward.

The Praxians have won most of these battles over the last score of generations, so the line has moved steadily northward, causing more grazing lands for their beasts to open up. There appears to be no apparent reason for the success of the nomads, as the Pentans fight as fiercely as ever. Whatever the cause, the Praxians have been able to push their herds northward for grazing, driving the horsemen out of the grasslands, into areas unknown or cared about by most Praxians.

Snow Feed

Grassland. The land near the Snow Line is reliably good grazing, thanks mainly to the annual melt-off. However, the inimical proximity of the horse barbarians keeps all but the toughest or most desperate of clans away.

Starcrysal

High Place. Spirit Place. This place is where both monsters and spell spirits wander. It is the blood of Pole Star – located and hidden in the Tunnelled Hills – where Pole Star fought Tien and Thed. The strength of his virtue attracts many of the broken spirits of the Wastelands; the spirits of the chaos herds try to feed off the crystal's essence.

Strorkbiorn

Giant Place. Forbidden. High Place. It is named after the creature which lives there, who ruled for a time after Genert was slain.

Tada's High Tumulus

Giant Place. This great mound in Prax was raised over the ancient hero Tada, who was khan over the land today called Prax when the Giants ruled the World.

Tunnelled Hills

Chaos Place. Forbidden. This was a city during the God Time, but is now a rugged range of hills riddled with burrows of evil chaos herds-men. A common nomad legend states that a child of Genert is bound and enslaved within the very essence of the hills, and is being tortured by Devil Herdsmen in order to convert and pervert the being to become one of the Chaos Herds.

Vanishing Hills

Pathway. Praxian legend says that anyone who makes proper sacrifice at these hills will be protected while in the Fever Trees. Terribly, however, these hills are only visible to Praxians fleeing out of the Fever Trees.

Vast Teeth

Forbidden High Place. Howling ghosts ride around and around the precipices upon a frozen, killing wind.

Vulture's Country

Bad Place. This is the stretch of arid chaparral just to the east of Prax. It holds no oases, and its seemingly endless bleakness has fooled many Outland scholars into believing that no significant numbers of humans could survive in the Wastelands. This desolate area is only good for grazing about one year in ten.

Wahafanzali

Grazeland. The central of the Western Wasteland Regions. It is the least watered and the most bleak, except for the Vulture's Country. It is considered to be very dangerous because of its proximity to the Krjalki Bog, a notorious source of Chaos.

Wahalstorana

Grazeland. The northernmost of the Western Wasteland Region. Waha opened this region to his followers on the Waha North Trail. Before Yelm was returned to his place in the Sky Dome by the efforts of the Glorious Seven, Waha gathered his bravest tribesmen to him from around Prax ("except for the Trembling Impala, they were the hungriest and wouldn't

go"). Waha led them northward to Ankori's Bison Trail in Winter Grasslands, which is the gateway into grasslands to the north. The people of Waha grazed together for a while, and spread across the open lands.

Elstorana, after whom the area is named, was Waha's long-lived daughter, and she had four sons, each of whom married the ranking Herd Mother. Those men established the Elstorana khan dynasties. When the Migration came, the Elstorana tribes pushed northward. The Bison, especially those called the Snow Bison, led the move against the Horsemen of Pent.

Wahaoranstol

Grazeland. This is the most southern of the western Wastelands regions, and it stretches along most of the southern coast. It was explored only slightly by Waha, but was occupied by the First and Second Migrations.

Wicked Writher (Grywl Gontath)

Serpent. This Serpent is born in the Dead Bottom, hatched when the accumulated waters reach a certain depth whose waterline can be seen on the canyon wall. It leaps upward, too noble to be defiled by the ancient shame of the Dead Bottom, and eager to return the hidden wealth out of imprisonment. The Wicked Writher vomits the water out of the Dead Bot-



Thus, the Wicked Writher is not any single place, but rather the appearance of a mythic event, during which the river flows backward within any other Serpent.

Forbidden, Bad Place. One time the ancient hero Tada was bitten by a Chaos monster called Chavgaz the God-gobbler, sometimes called Canis Chaos. No one could kill this awful thing and so Tada's friend, Dolog the Giant, went to fight it alone. He could not kill it, though he hurt it a lot, and eventually he just sat down upon it, burying it under tons of rocky giant which has not moved since.

Packs of Chaos Wolves, the children of Chavgaz, range from this place across the Wastelands.



Khan of khans Genert
was the khan.
Khan of khans Genert
was our friend.
Khan of khans Genert
kept out the chaos.

Before there were men.
Before there were beasts.
The Bad came
and killed the khan of khans.

Men became men.
Beasts became impalas.
The Bad was fought and made less.

But the fight is not over.
The fight is still on.
Storm Bull fights the Bad every day.

But the Bad comes back anyway.
Who can save the impalas?
Who can save the men?

Only khan of khans
Genert can save the men.
Only khan of khans
Genert can save the beasts.
But the khan of khans is dead.

When the Bad comes,
the khan of khans will wake.
He will stop the Bad.
He will bring back the Golden Age.

But the Golden Age is not for us.
Men will not be men any longer.
Impalas will not be beasts.
The Way of Waha will be lost.
The Storm Bull will be slain.
Eiritha will wear shackles.
The spirits will go away.

If the Bad wins, our souls die, die.
If the khan of khans wins,
our spirits die, die.
It is the end of all we know.
Pray Waha to die before
the khan of khan's return.

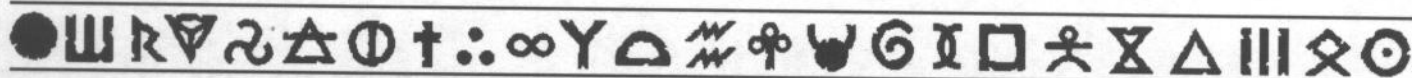
I ask this question: If Broos are really believed to produce a hybrid form with any creature with which they breed from then why is the goat headed form so prevalent even in areas where the goat is unknown? Consider, for example, the Wastes where the goat, hardy though it is, finds survival difficult. Goats in this harsh wilderness compete with other, better adapted beasts at a major disadvantage so they are very rare in this environment yet among the Broos of the Wastes the goat headed form accounts for some 78.4% of reported specimens (Pavis Irripi Ontor data). How can we reconcile this with the abilities of Broos reported in Lunar studies to hybridise with any creature with which they breed? Accepting that our colleagues within the Irripi Ontor cult follow rigorous methods comparable with our own I would theorise that there are several externally indistinguishable forms of broo.

(i) **HYBRIDISERS** which produce offspring that contain features of both parents at random or even favour those of the victim. It is these creatures which are responsible for the more outlandish Broo specimens reported (eg. the Bison Broos of Old Pavis Rubble, the Ankylosaur Broo of the Copper Sands).

(ii) **SEMI HYBRIDISERS** which produce offspring which contain features of both parents but largely express those of the broo parent. I believe these to be the most common form.

(iii) **DOMINANTS** which produce caprine broods' irrespective of mate. I believe that the rare female brood are almost exclusively of this form and are the main reason the race has maintained its goat like physiognomy over Time. Of course, all of these offspring are subject to the warping and often painful mutations termed 'Chaotic Features'.





The Waha Ropes

by Greg Stafford



She Who Ties is the spirit who taught this system of the Ropes to Waha in the Time after His Great Birth but before the Dawning, at the Place of Nets. It is on Waha's Pathway to the Grasslands of the Giants.

The Praxian culture uses a very ancient method for the recording of ancient wisdom called the Waha Ropes, of which there were many different varieties and uses. The best-known type is used to record Pathways throughout the Wastelands by having, in a very specific order, knots which denote critical events, beings, or places from a traditional myth or legend. It is usual to find one or more ropes hanging from a rock, or even a spear, at the natural approach to an area. The punishment for destroying, removing or changing a Waha Rope is a slow, and painful Death, including the ritual disowning of the perpetrator from all normal Praxian life. Should the perpetrator not be caught or escapes his or her captors, they usually wind up in the Dead Place or as a Gagarth worshipper, outcast and outlawed from the Ways of Waha and Eiritha for ever.

It is important for travellers to know several of the basic knot types to avoid dangerous sites. Travellers are recommended to avoid anywhere marked with any knot which includes Chaos, Sacred, or Giant.

A sample of a Waha Rope Trail follows here, which can be partially traced on the enclosed map. Given in parentheses () is the Official Distance From Chaos.

Arnstadle's Pathway:

Outer Chaos (0), Dragon Pass (1), Prax (2), Vulture Country, Serpent of the Seven Eyes, Arnstadle's Bison Sacrifice (2), Double Clan Bison Grasslands of Purple Flowers (1), Chaos Place of the Krjalki Bog (0), Giant Place of the Seven Picture Walls of Artash (1), Spirit Place of the Whetstone of Arnvish Artash (2), Giant Place of the Seven Picture Walls of Artash (1), Chaos Place

of Krjalki Bog (0), Serpent of the Gentle and Gemmed Teeth (1), Big Tribe Bison Arnstadle's Grasslands (2), Spirit Place of Arnstadle's Bolt (3), Pathway of Sore Hooves (4), Big Family Bison Green Well of Eriniala (4), Spirit Place of Waha's Blessings (4), Family Bison Grassland of Greystone Well (3), Serpent of Whirling Waters (2), Seven Family Bison of the Generous Serpent Grasslands (1), Chaos Place Where Serpents Fight and Love (0), Southflow Serpent (1), Great and Vast Grasslands Where Eiritha was Born (2), High Place of Storkbiorn (1), Giant Place of Storkbiorn (?), Tribe Alticamelus Grasslands of Battles (?), "unfinished"

* The "unfinished" knot indicates that the originator of the rope did not know how far from the end it was until Chaos was found again, thus indicating a questionable state of Distance From Chaos for that end of the Rope.

Praxians divide their territories into several types of terrain: Bad Places, Chaos Places, Forbidden Places, Giant Places, Grasslands or Grazelands, High Places, Outer Lands, Pathways, The Serpents, Spirit Places.

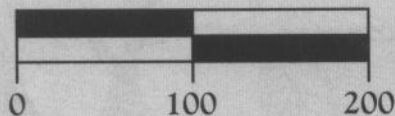
The assignment of this nomenclature is irregular, and they are said to exist within each other. Thus the Chaos Box is a Chaos Place of great fame and note, which is within the Spirit Place of Waha's Gift to Vammazel, which is within the Grasslands of Erno Arkazzel. At the same time, the Whetstone of Arnvish Artash is a Spirit Place inside the Giant Place of Seven Picture Walls of Artash which is inside the Chaos Place of the Krjalki Bog.

Knowing the interrelationships of these places, and the stories behind them, is considered to be the Wisdom of Prax.

Bad Places

Bad places are those which are generally inhospitable to man and beast. The cause is irrelevant: mountains, marsh and desert get the same application.

Scale



Hidden
Greens

Wolfhead

Rockwoods

Wahalstorana

Dagori Inkarth

Tada's
High
Tumulus

Prax

Pavis

River of Cradles

The Paps

Eiritha Hills

The Block

Devil's
Marsh

Vulture Country

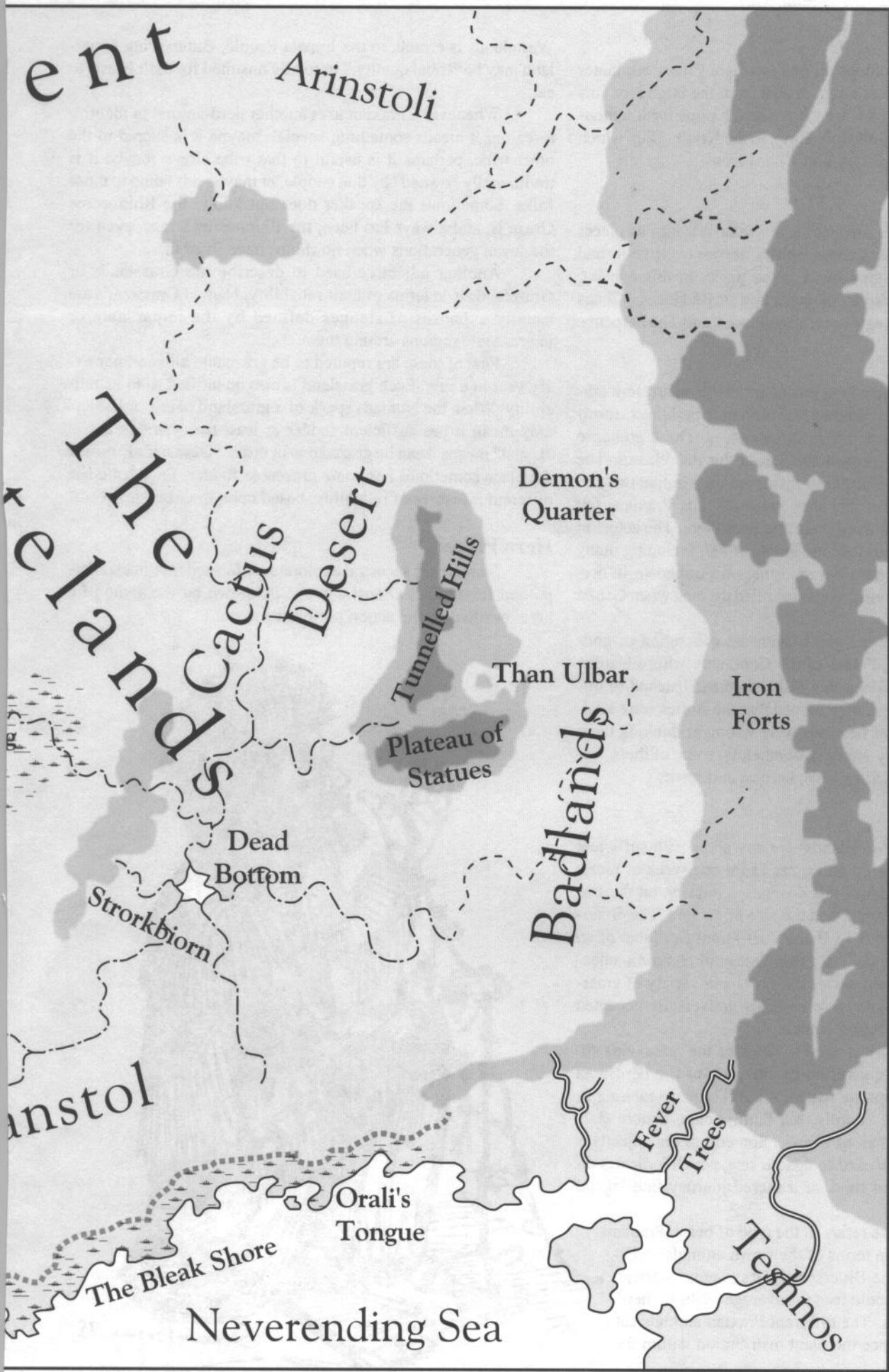
Wahafanzali

Copper
Sands

Krijalk

Wahaio

Corflu



ent

Arinstoli

The Cactus Desert

Demon's
Quarter

Tunnelled Hills

Than Ulbar

Plateau of
Statues

Iron
Forts

Badlands

Dead
Bottom

Strorkbiorn

anstol

Orali's
Tongue

Fever
Trees

Teshnos

The Bleak Shore

Neverending Sea



Chaos Places

Chaos Places includes all places where Chaos originates or dominates: these places range in size from the large area surrounding the coffin-sized Chaos Box (which pops forth a monstrous foe every Storm Bull Holy Day), to the Krjalki Bog, which is so large it encloses smaller, non-Chaos areas.

Forbidden Places

Forbidden places are known in Waha Wisdom as places where heroes meet their dooms, spirits devour your soul, and your beasts will die if they traverse the place. In this context, Forbidden Places may also be characterised as: Bad Places, Chaos Places, Giant Places, Hero Places, High Places, and The Serpents.

Giant Places

The characteristic which sets Giant Places apart from others is that they have the remnants of immense buildings, furniture (especially thrones and tables), or statues. These immense remains of mythic and prehistoric places dot the Wastes. The nomads do not know the origin of them, but their native religion tells of discovering them like they are now. The Praxians tell stories of the giants who lived there and used them. The actors in the legends of these places are the giants of old, including many which seem important here but are otherwise unknown in mythology, such as Strorkbiorn, who once ruled the land when Genert was gone.

Outsiders equate the giants with the generation of gods who lived with Genert, Father of the Continent, whose Garden grew upon this Land. When the Waha shamans listened to this theory in the Second Age, they agreed that the stories were similar, but said that the God Learners were wrong in thinking them gods, for they were only giants. Nonetheless, some of these "giants" are also worshipped as gods, heroes, and spirits.

Grasslands

Grasslands (or Grazelands) are any areas with sufficient fodder for the herds to stop and graze in for one week or more. The precise interpretation of this depends, naturally, on the size of a herd, the type of animal, and the size of an area. The Grassland of a poor family with 15 Bison is different from that of an Impala herd of 15 animals! As a result, several common adjectives are usually used to describe the types and variety of grasslands. Only the better-known, clan-sized, universally accepted grasslands are listed in this document.

One of the adjectives used to describe the grasslands applies to the herd size, quantified by the rank of the herdsman (with its assumed appropriate size implied). The usual ranking is, from lowest to highest: "family, big family, clan, double clan, tribe, big tribe, khan, khan of khan.") Sometimes the adjectives "Waha" or "Eiritha" are used to denote size, which indicates either an ancient mythical time, or a sacred journey into legend (i.e.- a Heroquest.)

Another adjective refers to the type of beast. Praxians usually discuss things in terms of their own animals. A Bison Rider would call the Bitterspring Grasslands "warrior quality" and means it would feed the average 20-bison herd of a warrior of his tribe. The different Praxian animals eat different plants, and since the plant distribution within the

Wastelands is erratic, to the Impala People, Bitterspring Grassland may be "tribal quality," or totally unsuited for their beasts to eat.

Whenever a Praxian uses another herd-animal to identify a region, it means something special: maybe it is sacred to the other tribe, perhaps it is useful to that tribe alone, maybe it is traditionally "owned" by that people, or maybe it is taboo to those folks. Sometimes the speaker does not know: the Rhinoceros Graze is, and always has been, the Rhinoceros Graze, even for the seven generations when no rhinos have lived there.

Another adjective used to describe the Grasslands or Grazelands is in terms of their reliability. Named Grasslands are usually expanses of steppes defined by the impassable or ungrazeable regions around them.

Few of these are reputed to be grazeable all year, nor every year in a row. Each grassland is also quantified as to its reliability. When the Nomads speak of a grassland being "reliable," they mean it has sufficient fodder at least two years in three. "Usual" means it can be grazed one in three. "Occasional" means the place sometimes has some grazeable fodder. Each tribe has different measures of reliability, based upon their beasts' needs.

Hero Places

Sites where ancestral explorers performed mythical or important feats. Thus almost any site is known by the name of a hero, or often by the action performed there.





High Places

High Places are all the places which are too steep for herd animals to navigate. They are known to be inhabited by spirits - usually including the malicious souls of the lost dead - and are different in each place. The biggest known High Places are Wolf Head, Star Crystal, Storkbiorn, and Vast Teeth.

Outer Lands

Anyplace outside of the Praxian-dominated lands is considered to be an Outer Land. The Praxians have tales about how each of the other civilisations began by people deviating significantly from the Way of Waha and, as a result, being cursed and driven out of the Wastes to suffer in the Outer Lands.

Pathways

Pathways are not categorised by the Nomads, for their types are so variable. Many of them are more barrier than Pathway, such as the Fever Trees in the Southeast.

The Serpents

The Serpents are the lowest lands: the gullies and the seasonal river beds. Because the water more often collects there, many plants appear only within their beds. During the actual wet time, the flowing waters bring forth luxurious and abundant food-stuffs of all types. This time is called the Blessing of the Serpents, bringing special things which do not exist otherwise. However, when rain falls anywhere upon the Wastes, the river beds far downriver are flash-flooded and the Serpents come springing out of their dens or pits to seek their courses. The Anger of the Serpents is seen in their flash-flooding, a constant danger to the herds grazing in their river bottoms.

The erratic gusting and blowing of the Storm Bull Wind prevents the Serpents from being regularly seasonal, and therefore the Serpents are capricious and untrustworthy, just like the Snake of Praxian mythology, bringing gifts or death according to its moods. The Serpents are thus regarded as beneficial, but they are also considered a Forbidden Place, because of the extreme danger in herding and animals there. A flash flood could wipe out an entire clan.

Grywl Gontath, the Wicked Writher, is the largest, and the most untrustworthy, of all of the Serpents.

Spirit Places

Spirit Places are those places where spirits are known to reside. These include places where shamans can summon a hero spirit, regions where the Dead linger, and the dreaded areas where the spirit plane leaks out into the physical plane. Normal people try to avoid these areas unless accompanied by a protective shaman.

Spirit Places are commonly named after the prevailing or most famous spirit of its mythical history. Often, the name of the place further signifies the deed done there, as in Varano's Speargrowth or Karvastos' Broo Slaughter.



The Bull Storm Approaches

by Greg Stafford

Myself, I like to see the great wave of the Bull's Wind roaring towards us, pushing tons of dust at us like a huge wall, stretching from as far as I can see to the left and the right, rising high into the air, growing taller as it comes closer. Louder.

First, from far away, a far-hearer hears a low buzzing - that means it's two days away, and we have to start soaking the nets. For our face masks, of course. Then Baz would check his statue, and everyone would check their mats and lines. Lines with the Karnelli knots were prepared for each mount. You know the Karnelli knots are the best.

At a day away, the storm sounds like a low thunder, constant, and far away. The whole horizon from the storm's direction browns up. At that, we distribute all the water to everyone, even the slaves - remember that! - and the mounts are tied with the Karnelli lines. We do this now because sometimes the storm is a hell of lot faster than usual, and we could get caught by it. That's what got ol' Parandus, you know.

A half day away and it is still a low, crushing noise, but louder now, and you can feel it down here in your chest. We put the nets over our faces, and the lead zebras, and mat up everything. We let Baz keep direction. He puts a pattern-field over the statue to protect it. We keep going. The Karnelli knots have never failed us in this, except the time the sorcerer came along, and we should have known better.

When the dirt hits, it's like hard rain, but the noise disappears after a couple hours. I don't know if we're used to it, or if it really goes away. But it's just like a really big sandstorm then. It gets weaker after the edge passes, and when we keep moving, it gets light after a day and night of travel. We make sure our mounts can work that long in the storm. Most Prax beasts can, of course. It's horses that are in danger here.

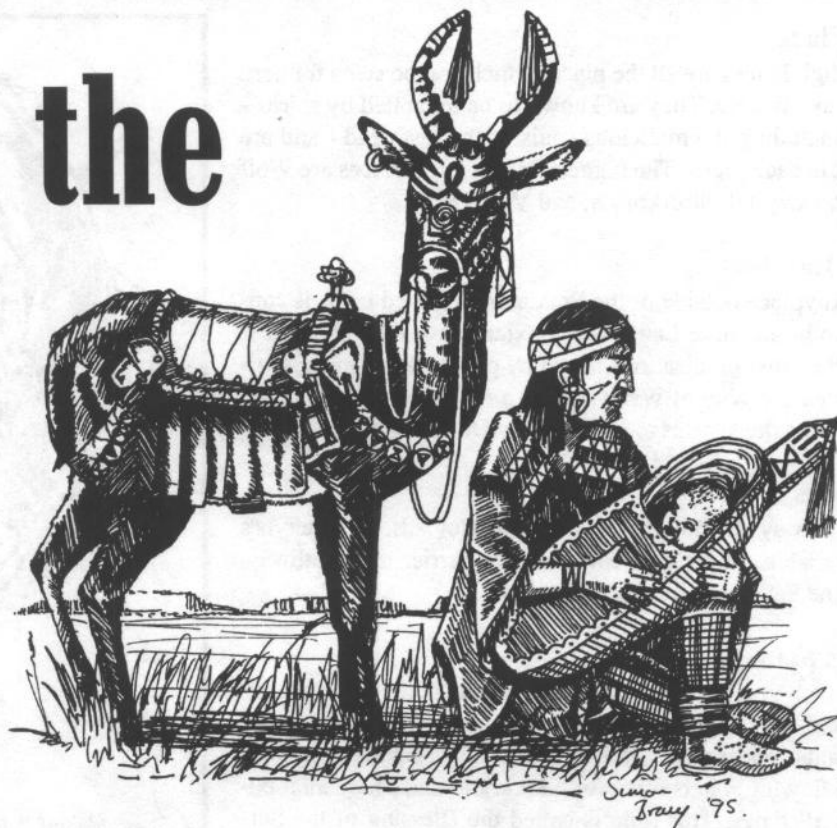
Be sure to water them well afterwards, and make sure that none of them have wounds crusted over with dirt or dust.

You know, nothing moves in the storm except us. We used it a couple of times to get away from enemies. Even left behind a Stalker once! If you do it enough, you even get so you can sleep through it. Just don't let Baz sleep, or whoever has the statue, though, or you'll probably get lost.



Sins of the Father

by Carl Pates



Introduction

Twenty years ago Vantarl Devostsson was a young Orlanthi farmer, fleeing the Sack of Boldhome and Lunar occupation of Sartar with his wife and family. Together with a host of other refugees they made the arduous trek across the hostile deserts of Prax and finally settled down to a life of farming with relatives on the edge of Pavis County. Only a year later their lives were once again shattered when Vantarl's wife was raped and killed in a nomad raid and his baby daughter abducted. Vantarl himself was severely tortured and left for dead, taking him many seasons to fully recover from his awful injuries, and then only with the blessing of Chalana Arroy. Twisted by hatred and the desire for revenge he devoted himself to the arts of war and the search for the nomads that wrecked his life; so far a fruitless one as the clan concerned, the Sabaro, have long since moved into the Wastes as part of their migratory cycle. Now they are once again returning to Prax and Vantarl does not intend to miss out on the opportunity for a reckoning.

GM Summary

This adventure, set on the edge of Genert's Wastes, takes the PCs out into the desert to help Vantarl Devostsson seek the nomad clan that wronged him so many years ago. The journey leads them to a farm devastated by a Praxian raid, an attack on the selfsame raiders, through Vultures Country, and finally to the Sabaro Clan camp itself. Vantarl himself is something of a mystery and gives the PCs little information regarding his real destination or intentions, although they may gain some insight into his

rather disturbing character during the trip. Vantarl's ruthlessness and singular lack of compassion or mercy become more evident with each encounter. They are also accompanied by an eccentric nomad scout, Jhosim Two-Teeth, who provides the GM the opportunity to present to the players some other aspects of Praxian life and customs.

Note: It is assumed that the adventure begins in Garhound, but the exact starting location is unimportant, so GM's should alter this accordingly to suit their individual needs. The only real requirements are that the PCs are in a settlement of some description, not nomads, and seeking employment. Access to a copy of the RuneQuest supplement *Shadows on the Borderlands* would also be advantageous.

Beginning the Adventure

News has gone around town that guards are being sought for a expedition into Vultures Country, and that interested parties should contact one Vantarl Devostsson at the Bartered Beast. Little is known about this man, although further questioning of the locals reveals that he has been associated with several Desert Trackers, and is a very capable warrior. It is also said that he detests nomads, and has been known to slay them out of hand on several occasions.

Arranging a meeting is easy, and the innkeeper fetches Vantarl when the PCs ask to see him. The Sartarite takes a moment to look over each of the PCs in turn before seating himself facing them. After the introductions he proceeds to tell them that two days hence he is to journey into

Vultures Country to deliver a message to the khan of one of the nomad clans, and that he wishes to hire some guards as extra protection for the duration of the trip. The entire expedition is expected to last somewhere in the region of two weeks, and payment is 10 lunars per day. After this he asks the PCs to explain why he should employ them, and questions them about any previous experience they have, and in particular about any nomad encounters. He answers no questions regarding the contents of the message he is to deliver, nor passes any comment on any rumours that they may have heard about him. Vantarl's opinion is that as the employer, he is not responsible to those he employs, and takes no hesitation in reminding the PCs of this fact should they need it. Hagglng is expected and Vantarl will go as high as 15 lunars per day. Attempts to push him further than this result in a furious outburst from Vantarl, who angrily asks them if they are warriors or merchants, followed by a terse "take it or leave it".

Assuming that the PCs give a good account of themselves and accept Vantarl's offer and terms, he tells them to meet him here at dawn two days hence. If asked he also advises them on what supplies they should bring too (see next page).

Outfitting for the Journey

Vantarl leaves town soon after the meeting, leaving the PCs to sort out what they will need for the journey. As they are heading out into some of the most inhospitable terrain in Glorantha, they will need to chose their supplies carefully. Of paramount importance here is



water, for there is little to be found once in Vultures Country, so they should ensure that they bring an adequate supply, and possibly a pack animal of some sort to carry it. As a guide, GMs should use the Water-Use tables as detailed on page 61 of *Shadows On The Borderland*. The Sabaro clan is camped approximately 100 km due east of Garhound, so assuming that there are no detours it should take the party two days to reach Vultures Country, a further three days to get past this, and then another three days to reach the campsite, a total of eight days to get there. Of course, there may also be the opportunity to steal supplies from any encounters along the way too!

The Scout

True to his word Vantarl meets the PCs at dawn two days later. He greets them briefly before leading them out of the town eastwards along the White Rock river, a relatively pleasant area that is quite well populated; farming settlements are a common sight and the land is well irrigated. A man of few words, Vantarl speaks little to the PCs during the journey. If they persist in asking him lots of questions he curtly tells them to be silent and stop disturbing his thoughts. Near midday, the PCs see a Sable rider waiting on the trail before them. This is Jhosim Two-Teeth, a nomad who Vantarl has recruited to aid him in his search for the Sabaro; the Sartarite confers often with the nomad during the trip, relying on his knowledge to help them avoid as many hazards as possible. Jhosim is a cheerful character, and slightly mad. He waves to the party, and shouts a greeting in very poor Pavic. Vantarl just nods to him, and tells the PCs that Jhosim will be guiding them for the duration of the trip. He also warns them to trust nothing that he says, for nomads are never what they seem (Vantarl met Jhosim on an expedition to Genert's Body some years ago, but didn't get the chance to kill him then. He intends to use the nomad to help him find the Sabaro and then kill him afterwards. He doesn't like loose ends).

Jhosim falls in with the PCs and his only too happy to talk to them, asking them about their background where they are from etc. If asked about Vantarl he says that he met him out in the Wastes many seasons ago, and that he takes life far too seriously for his own good. He also tells them quite enthusiastically and at length about the Red Dancer and asks the PCs if they have ever heard of her.

Jhosim's Role

Throughout the journey the GM should use Jhosim to impart as much information about the Praxians and their way of life as possible. There are many things in this issue of *Tales* that will be new to the PCs, such as the Praxian tradition of knot-writing and Sense of Space. Have Jhosim relate Praxian myths and stories to them when

they camp at night. The myth *The Praxian Creation Story* in this issue is an excellent example: the strange nomad is always happy to have an audience.

A Ruined Farm

This episode takes place at dawn on the second day. By now the party has moved well away from Garhound, are somewhere near the headwaters of the river. The arable land has given way to the desolate steppes leading up towards the rocky escarpments marking the beginning of Vultures Country. Signs of habitation in this area are scarce indeed, with only the poorer and more desperate farmers daring to live here on the edge of the steppes. Shortly after dawn the party see a plume of dark smoke rising from a valley about 5 km to the north. Vantarl seems content to ignore it and any PCs who suggest that they investigate are told that they have a far more important errand to attend. It is not until Jhosim mentions that High Llama raiders have been active in the area recently that Vantarl's interest is aroused, and he leads the party to the source of the smoke.

Jhosim was indeed correct about the nomad activity in this area, as the PCs soon discover when they reach the valley. Below them is the source of the fire; a collection of burning Orlanthi farmsteads surrounded by the mutilated corpses of their inhabitants, the result of a surprise dawn raid by a High Llama war party. The surviving livestock, once securely penned and tended, roam through the nearby fields, grazing where they please. Gates and doors to the barns and granaries hang ajar and bang noisily in the wind, while several vultures circle overhead. As they survey the scene, any PC who makes a special

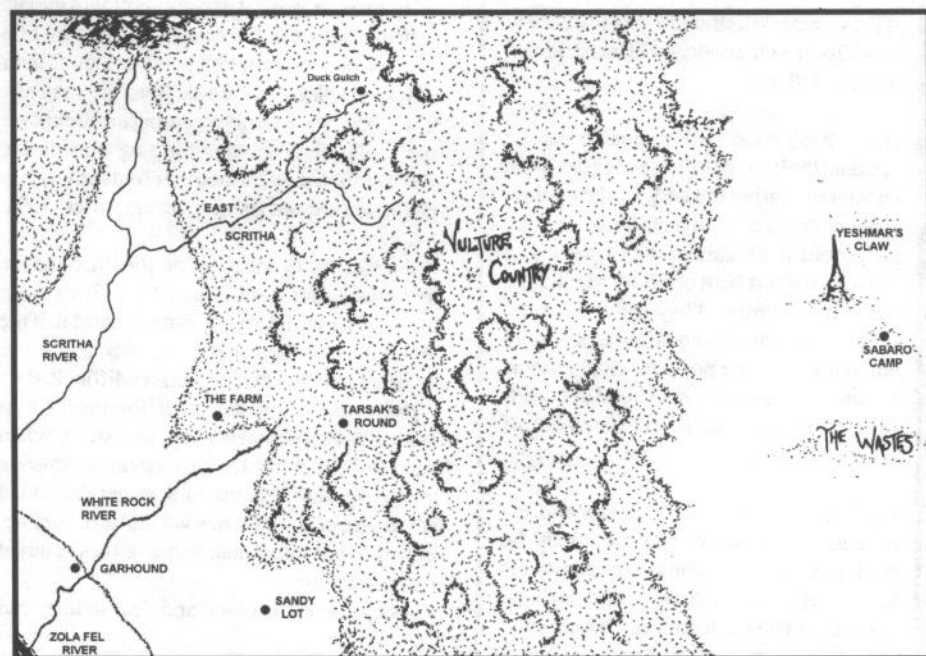
Scan roll notices a brief flicker of rage on Vantarl's face. Jhosim just shakes his head and tuts to himself, a sad expression on his face.

Vantarl loosens his weapons and descends into the valley, motioning for the PCs to follow him. When they reach the farm they hear a cry for help and a young, half-naked woman staggers out towards Vantarl from the wreckage, obviously the victim of rape. She is hysterical and sobbing, and clutches at him begging for him to protect her. Her cries suddenly cease as she slumps against him and slides wide-eyed to the ground, dead. The PCs see Vantarl calmly remove his dagger from her body and wipe it on her tattered clothes. His only comment is "Better that she dies than give birth to any nomad spawn."

If any PCs protest Vantarl reacts angrily and brandishes his weapons. He tells them that they should reserve their disgust for those that started this, for they will soon have their chance for vengeance. Without further hesitation he sheaths his weapons and starts following the Llama tracks that lead eastward out of the village, shortly followed by Jhosim.

Throughout the day the party follow the tracks left by the raiders. Jhosim proves to be an excellent scout and informs the party that there are eleven Praxians ahead, and that they are gaining on them. It is late afternoon when the Sable rider tells them that they are less than an hour away, probably camped in Tarsak's Round, a well-known site used as a stop-over by the nomads in this area. Vantarl knows that surprising High Llama riders is very difficult and he suggests that they wait until nightfall before continuing further. His intention is for the PCs to attack them on one front while he sneaks around the

Map of the Overall Route:





A Praxian Meeting Ceremony

by Scott Schneider

The various tribes of Prax are in a constant state of hostility. As a clan or tribe moves, it sends outriders for scouting purposes. When an apparently peaceful stranger is encountered, he is tested for his courage. A series of attacks tests the stranger's (or outlander's) familiarity with Praxian customs and weapons.

If several outriders come across a stranger simultaneously, a spear will be lightly planted in the ground. The scouts then circle the planted spear with their mounts, waiting for the slightest movement of the spear to fall. The first rider to catch the spear the moment it begins to fall is given the honour of testing the stranger.

Using the clan's weapons, the rider first of all tries to kill the stranger (kill on sight is the standard reaction to any stranger), usually going for the hardest target and in the most flamboyant way. The stranger must defend himself as best as he can. However, the ability of the stranger to display courage, disdain, insouciance, and restraint in the face of these onslaughts is watched closely by all of the riders. Should the rider expend all of his weapons and skill in trying to kill the stranger, theoretically he has been defeated by the stranger, and the rider's life is for the stranger to take. Usually, the defeated rider will approach the stranger and bare his chest.

If the stranger kills the defeated rider at any time then the other riders will attack him in order to kill him.

If the stranger has truly come in peace, he can bind the Praxian to him by initiating the custom of sharing the body of the mother. He scoops up a huge handful of Praxian soil, grabs the hands of the Praxian, and mingles the dirt between both his and the Praxian's hands. They now become brothers, which does not necessarily imply enough trust to be privy to tribal secrets, but does initiate a personal bond of friendship, brotherhood, and the unstated oath of giving one's life for the other.

In time, as the level of personal trust deepens, the stranger can eventually be made privy to deeper clan and tribal customs and secrets, culminating in initiation into the clan or tribe as an official adoptee.

them on one front while he sneaks around the back to surprise them. Jhosim takes no part in the fighting as he says he has no quarrel with these men, a remark that Vantarl observes as "an attitude typical of craven nomads."

Tarsak's Round

The raiders who massacred the farm have headed back towards Vultures Country and currently made camp in the shelter here. They are slowed somewhat by the livestock that they have stolen, and by the goods that they took from the farmers before they killed them. They are only a small party consisting mainly of young braves who are out to prove themselves. They expect to be well received when they reach their clan's camp and as such are in quite high spirits.

Tarsak's Round is a natural circle, the perimeter formed by a collection of jagged rocks atop a modest hillock. A small fire has been lit in the centre around which the raiders have laid out their blankets and tethered their beasts. The stolen livestock are nearby. At any time the nomads keep at least four lookouts while the rest sleep.

Vantarl leaves it up to the PCs as to how they organise the attack. He just wants a diversion so that he can slip in behind them, but this is not really feasible unless the PCs engage in melee. He also tells them that he only wants one of nomads alive, which he will deal with himself, so they are not to take any prisoners. Vantarl begins his own attack 1D10+10 melee rounds after the PCs start theirs. He asks them to wait ten minutes before they start however, to allow him to get into position.

Attacking the Round

The PCs have no real way to know where the lookouts are so the GM should provide them with a rough map of the Round (Jhosim can remember most of the details) and ask the PCs to mark out where they intend to mount their attack; Vantarl will attack from the opposite side. The rules regarding fighting in the dark are applicable here: anyone fighting outside the circle suffers a -60% modifier to their weapon skills, while those fighting inside suffer -30%.

If the PCs try to sneak up on the Praxians the lookouts suffer a -60% penalty to their Scan rolls, but their Listen rolls work as normal. If the lookouts spot their assailants they try to use missile fire first, but if this proves difficult, they merely take cover and wait for the PCs to approach and use melee weapons instead. When hand-to-hand combat ensues as many as possible try to use their mounts so they get the added advantage of height. They will not do so before, however, because it makes them an easier target for missile fire.

Vantarl's attack is quick and devastating, and

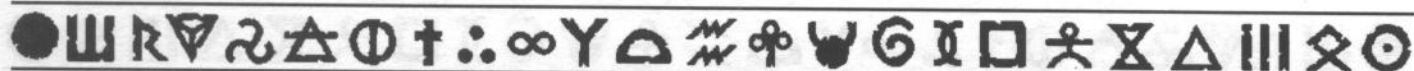
should be used to make the PCs aware of his martial skills. Describe to the PCs the ease at which he tackles his opponents, in most cases killing them in the space of a few blows. The aim here is illustrate to the PCs Vantarl's proficiency, possibly making them think twice about challenging him later on. He does not help any PC in a fight and does not appreciate it if any PC helps him. He intends to take one of the braves alive for torture and interrogation, so he knocks out his last opponent instead of killing him.

The nomads have little of value on them, except their supply of water and their weapons. Vantarl frees the livestock, but viciously slaughters any remaining mounts, cutting open their carcasses using the Bloody Cut, a skill he learnt from some Tusk Rider mercenaries years ago (see page 100 of the *Elder Races Book* from *Elder Secrets* for more details). He tells the PCs to heap up the bodies of the fallen nomads along with mounts in the centre of the round and leave them to rot, as this should make the place unattractive to other Praxians in the future.

Torture

Vantarl has a special "treat" in store for the raider whom he took prisoner, something that he learned from the nomads themselves when he himself was tortured and left to die. He stakes out the unconscious brave on the ground before reviving him with a splash of water, after which he slowly makes a number of several shallow cuts along the poor wretch's body. The nomad howls and shouts various curses at Vantarl who merely smiles and continues on with his gruesome work. When he has finished he takes out a small vial from one of the pouches at his belt and pours a drop from it on each of the nomad's wounds. The effect is instantaneous, as the raider screams and writhes in agony, his body convulsing and straining at his bonds. The liquid that Vantarl is using is a very weak poison that only serves to inflame open wounds rather than doing any actual damage. Unfortunately for the victim the effect lasts for quite a long time.

Vantarl doesn't appreciate any interference from the PCs with his entertainment, pointing out that this is exactly the way he got the scars that mark most of his body. Plus, he says, this will also serve as a warning to other raiders in the area; perhaps they will think twice before killing innocent farmers. Throughout this Jhosim is silent, and only shakes his head sadly. After this Vantarl once again leads the PCs and the mounts eastwards into the Wastes. Behind them the nomad still screams, and the vultures gather overhead.



Vultures Country

The next week or so is spent travelling across Vultures Country and out into the Wastes. This area of Glorantha is deadly and is avoided with good reason, hence crossing it is not easy. The GM should bear in mind however, that the object here is not to kill the PCs outright, but just to show them how dangerous it really is.

During the trip the GM is free to place whatever encounters he/she deems suitable before the PCs. Vantarl always tries to avoid any sort of contact (except as detailed above), but is liable to go out of his way to kill any reasonably-sized party of nomads that he thinks he can handle. He is indifferent towards chaos, and feels no special need to persecute it, preferring to save his wrath for nomads instead (an attitude not surprising considering his present plans). A good encounter table for this area of Prax can be found on p. 14 of the GM Reference Pullout from *Shadows*.

As well as the desert's hostile inhabitants, the PCs also have to contend with the environment itself. There is a 10% chance per day that the party encounter some adverse weather element.

Roll 1D6 to determine the type:

- 1) Sandstorm
- 2) Quicksand
- 3) Acid Rain
- 4) Poison Gas
- 5) Heat Wave
- 6) Freezing Conditions

Sandstorm: The party are caught in a sudden, scouring sandstorm that appears seemingly from nowhere and vanishes just as quickly. The storm lasts for 1D10 minutes, and everyone caught in it takes 1D3 points of damage to each hit location per minute. Armour protects as normal but loses 1 AP for each point of damage taken due to severe abrasion.

Quicksand: The PCs have stumbled across a treacherous part of the Wastes that conceals a deadly patch of quicksand beneath a seemingly innocent surface. Unless spotted by a special Scan roll, it will quickly suck adventurers that step into it down to their deaths.

Adventurers caught this way may first make a DEX x3 roll to catch hold of something (such as roots, branches, rocks or another adventurer) as they are pulled down. If successful they may haul themselves out by pitting their STR vs. their own SIZ on the resistance table. Subtract one percentile from their chances of success for each point of ENC. Success here indicates that they have pulled themselves free.

This STR vs. SIZ roll may be made once per round, but for each round after the first add 5 to the SIZ of the victim, to simulate the increased pull of the bog. It takes 1D3+3 rounds before an adventurer is sucked under this way, after which the RuneQuest Asphyxiation rules apply.

Other adventurers may help a trapped friend and add their STR to his when the roll is made, but if they fail then they too may slip in if they fail a DEX x5 roll.

Note: If the adventurer missed the first DEX x3 roll they will be pulled under in 1D3 rounds instead, although they may be helped as per the rules above.

Acid Rain: A collection of dark billowing clouds sweep quickly across the sky, showering the ground beneath with acidic rain for 1D6 minutes. Any PC out in the open takes 1D3 points of damage to each hit location. Armour protects as normal but loses 1 AP for each point of damage taken due to the rain's corrosive effect.

Poison Gas: Without warning, a sudden gust of wind from the east brings with it a cloud of, choking, poisonous gas. The gas has a potency of 2D6 and follows the normal poison rules as described in the RuneQuest rules. PC's who make a POW x1 role are not surprised by the gas and may try to hold their breath as described in the Asphyxiation rules. The gas cloud last for 1D10 rounds.

Heat Wave: The weather today becomes unbearably hot as Yelm shines down on the desert with his full radiance. All PCs suffer four times the normal fatigue point loss (as per the Exposure rules in the RuneQuest rules), and require twice the normal water rate. This also applies to animals too.

Freezing Conditions: The temperature drops to sub-zero temperatures, chilling the PCs to the bone. They may find that their water supplies are frozen, and they suffer four times the normal fatigue point loss as usual (See the Exposure rules in The World chapter of the *RuneQuest* rules for more details).

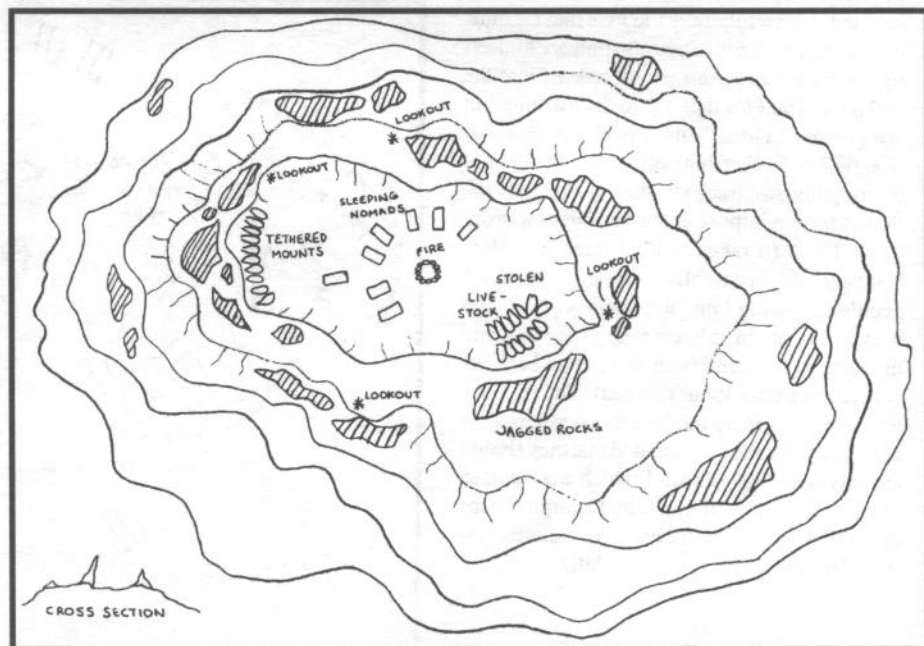
The Red Dancer

Throughout the journey there is a 10% chance per day that Jhosim is affected by his madness, believing that once again he is under the guidance of the Red Dancer. The GM should roll 1D6 to determine the effects of this, or alternatively use their own. Note that these incidents may happen at any time during the day.

1,2 - Sad: Jhosim becomes quite and withdrawn, beginning to weep. He tells the group of the torment and torture that the Dancer endures, trapped by evil spirits. He says he can feel her pain and only wishes that he could find her to release her.

3 - Berserk: The nomad is suddenly overcome with unbridled rage, drawing his scimitar and lashing out at the nearest PC. He is convinced that the party is in league with those who torment the Dancer and he will kill them all (If the PCs try to kill Jhosim, Vantarl intervenes and tells them to take him alive. He is too valuable to lose). He can only be stopped by magic (such as Befuddle, Sleep, etc.) or by a knockout blow.

Map of Tarsak's Round





4 - A Mad Dash: Jhosim suddenly spurs his mount out into the desert in a random direction (and perhaps into a nearby party of Broos or a nomad warband?). He thinks he has seen the Dancer on a ridge some distance away and rides to her rescue. Vantarl orders the PCs to bring him back so that they can find their way again. He is adamant that he will not return until he has visited the ridge to prove that she is not there.

5 - A Refusal: Jhosim believes that the Red Dancer has told him to remain where he is, as she will come to him there. He flatly refuses to travel any further, and a convincing argument, along with a successful Orate roll is necessary to get him to move again. He ignores threats of violence.

6 - A Worship Ceremony: The Sable rider dismounts, kneels on the ground, and begins to pray to the Dancer, eventually falling into a meditative trance. He gets angry and upset if disturbed and tries to attack anyone interfering with his ritual. There is little the party can do until he finishes it a few hours later.

Unseen Allies

Even though the Sabaro are a small clan by most standards Vantarl has no intention of taking them on with just himself and the PCs; there are simply just too many of them. Unknown to the PCs, the Sartarite has for sometime maintained contact with a group of Broos and their leader Ragloc, using them to ambush nomads and suchlike. When he learned of the Sabaro/Es location, Vantarl decided to employ them to attack the camp in a diversionary raid to draw off the clan's warriors. He has paid Ragloc a considerable amount to do this and so on the last night before the PCs reach the Sabaro he leaves the camp to meet his chaotically at Yeshmar's Claw, a large thin spike of rock a mile to the north, considered by the Praxians to be cursed and haunted. He merely tells the PCs that he must be alone for a couple of hours to prepare himself for the meeting tomorrow and sets off into the darkness. The PCs may try to follow him, but at night this is virtually impossible, and Vantarl is a skilled tracker himself, so he is adept at clearing his own tracks. If they wish, allow the PCs to try but impose at least a -80% modifier to all Track (it takes at least three to follow Vantarl) and Scan rolls. Vantarl is alert for people following him, and spots anyone who tries to do so. In this case he is furious and threatens to kill them if they do not turn back (he is deadly serious about this too). The purpose here is to suggest to the PCs that perhaps all is not as it seems; it is not intended that they should actually meet Ragloc's band, which is comprised of approximately 30 broos and scorpionmen! Providing the PCs don't provoke a confrontation Vantarl returns two hours later.

The Sabaro Camp

The Sabaro are a small High Llama Clan, and only composed of a few septs. In all they number approximately 120 people with about 150 animals, but despite this they are skilled and hardy, having spent the last twenty years living on the edge of the Wastes after a dispute with several other clans forced them out of the better grazing lands. Vantarl's plan of leading away the Khan and the core of his warriors has been completely successful, leaving the nomad camp lightly defended for a few hours; now only the youngest braves and some older warriors remain. The clan's shaman Wha'Chun, is currently resting, having used up most of his power helping to drive off Ragloc's band.

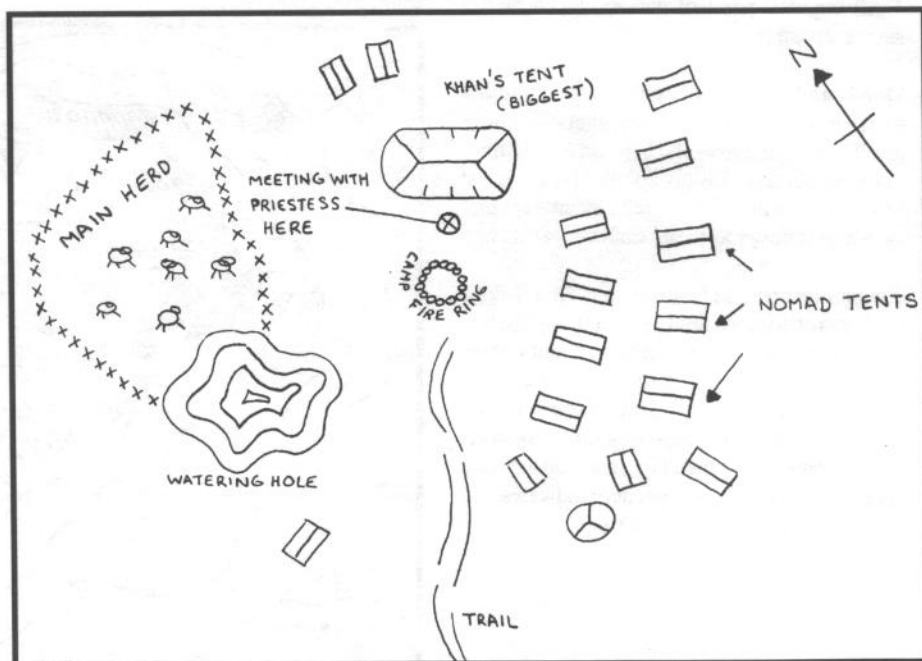
Approaching the Camp

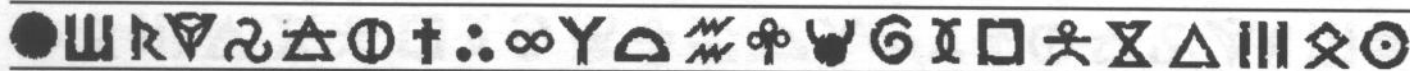
When the party nears the campsite they are met by a group of ten Sabaro riders who have been watching them for the last 15 minutes or so. Vantarl motions the PCs to stop and he carries on ahead to stop halfway between them and the nomads. One of the riders suddenly gallops forward from the rest (having previously caught the falling spear for the honour of testing the strangers as described in the nearby box) and attempts to spear Vantarl on the end of his lance. The attacker is G'harasan, the khan's youngest son, who intends to prove his bravery by slaying the stranger. Vantarl side-steps the lance easily, unmounts his opponent in the process, and steps back to await the nomad's next attack. After a few blows it becomes obvious that the Sartarite is merely defending himself from the young nomad without trying to counterattack (if the PCs are not familiar with this form of

testing, have Jhosim explain it to them at each stage). The fight continues for some minutes, until Vantarl disarms the Sabaro with a vicious parry. The defeated warrior falls to his knees and bares his chest, but instead of killing him, Vantarl scoops up a handful of Praxian soil and mingles the dirt between his and the riders's hands, thereby concluding the ritual. Jhosim tells the PCs that the two are now sworn brothers and that it is safe to continue.

Flanked by the riders, the PCs are escorted to the camp and taken to the largest tent, the home of the khan, where they are greeted outside by Sh'aara, the khan's wife and the chief Eiritha priestess. As befits a woman of her station, her clothing is very colourful and well-made from fine silks and wool. Her head is shaven in the style of her people, but for the single ponytail of long black hair which is adorned with golden decorations that match the brooches and rings that she wears. Although once beautiful, the hard years of desert life have taken their toll on her looks, leaving her skin dark and lined from the responsibility she bears. Although she is aware that most of the clan's warriors are absent she maintains a confident and self-assured manner, betraying little of the nervousness she feels inside at the camp's vulnerability. After a brief introduction from G'harasan who describes his meeting with Vantarl, she invites the party to sit while refreshments are brought, and then asks Vantarl the purpose for his visit. He begins by complementing her on the size and quality of her herd, and on the strength of her sons, referring to his fight his G'harasan earlier. Before he can continue however, the entrance cover of the tent

Map of the Sable Camp





is swept aside, and a fearful Wha'Chun stands there, points at Vantar!, and shouts "Evil!"; the shaman has detected the powerful aura of RotSoul, the plague spirit in Vantar!'s spear. With this Vantar! wastes no time: Knocking his guards aside, he draws a dagger and throws it at the shaman. It pierces the old man's chest and he falls to the floor, coughing blood and twitching with pain from the poisoned blade. Some of the women and children nearby scream, and the PCs have little time to react as the guards attack. (There are 18 in total: three attack Vantar!, and the GM should divide the other 15 between the PCs for their stats, use those of the High Lama riders presented earlier, but reduce their percentages by about 10-15% to reflect their inexperience)

A Hostage

This combat continues for 1D3+2 rounds before when Vantar! suddenly shouts "Stop!" Having dispatched the guards nearest him, he has grabbed Sh'aara by the hair and placed another dagger at her throat. He tells the nomads to back off or he kills her. As the remaining warriors pull back slightly, he motions for the PCs to join him, while slowly backing away towards the nearby herds. He wants to be in a better position to use his poisoned spear, but he wants the nomads to know why before he does so. The GM should be clear as to the exact location of each PC as this may have some bearing on later events.

If the PCs ask him what is going on or if Sh'aara asks him what he wants he replies, telling them about the attack on his farm, the murder of his wife and family, and the sacrifice of his baby daughter. He becomes more excited and wild-eyed, and tells them he is going to destroy the entire herd in revenge! If any of the PCs try to attack him at this stage he pushes the knife harder against the priestess's throat and repeats his warning. One of the warriors shouts that he will never leave the desert alive. Vantar!'s response is he has no intention of doing so: ruining the clan is sufficient.

A Reunion

Just then a beautiful young girl carrying a baby steps forward. She is dressed in a manner typical of the clan's women, but her features are different somehow; finer and not as heavy as the others. Her hair is lighter too, the ponytail is almost blond and her eyes are the colour of a clear summer sky (PCs who make a successful Human Lore roll may deduce that she is probably of Sartarite stock). She cautiously approaches Vantar! who tightens his grip on Sh'aara. "Father?" she asks hesitantly, moving closer to the snarling warrior, "Are you my father?"

Vantar!'s face transforms to a mask of disbelief and shock; he stares at the girl, struck dumb as the truth of her words begins to register. "You

are, aren't you?" she says, a smile slowly crossing her face. "You needn't have worried, father. I am Jh'ena. I am your daughter."

The blood drains from Vantar!'s features and he begins to tremble and the girl draws nearer. "I wasn't sacrificed," she continues. "These people have been kind and good to me, and they have raised me as one of their own; they would never harm me. I have a good life, I have a strong and brave husband, and look," she says, smiling and holding out her baby, "This is your grandson; he will be strong and proud and follow the way of Waha like his father too."

A strangled "No!" escapes from Vantar!'s throat and in a fit of rage he throws Sh'aara away and lunges at Jh'ena, punching her to the ground and knocking the baby out of her hands at the same time. Such is his hatred of nomads he cannot accept that his own daughter has polluted her bloodline with theirs. Almost incoherent, he shouts he will not suffer this abomination to live and raises his dagger to stab the squalling infant on the ground. Seeing this, a terrified Jh'ena screams for someone to save her baby.

At this point the PCs are probably the only ones near enough to stop him, so they must make a choice: will they aid the madman or kill him? The outcome of both possibilities are explained below.

Stopping Vantar!

Any PCs who joined Vantar! after he abducted Sh'aara are probably near enough to strike him directly. His attention is completely focused on the child so any attacker gets a "free" strike at him (with a +10% modifier for surprise) before he reacts. Note also that the only weapon he has to hand is a dagger, so he must also change weapons. If the PCs stayed apart from the Sartarite they may still engage him in combat but unless they use magic or missile fire he kills the baby first. In both cases the surviving nomads are confused as to exactly what is going on, and they may not realise that the PCs are actually quite innocent of Vantar!'s plans and are trying to help them. Hence the PCs may find themselves attacked by the guards at the same time that they are fighting Vantar! Jhosim tries to shout above the noise of the melee on the PCs behalf but the nomads will not stop until Vantar! is dead.

If Vantar! is defeated any nomads fighting break off when Sh'aara orders them to. She has gained a inkling of what has happened here and orders that the PCs lay down their weapons. If they comply they are taken prisoner until the khan returns (no matter how much they protest, no one will speak to them until the khan has returned and meted out justice). If they do not agree to this they must fight their way out of the camp, where they face long trek back across the desert, hotly pursued by the vengeful khan and

his war-band (see "Helping Vantar!" below). When the khan returns a few hours later the PCs are brought before him and asked to explain why they are here and why they turned on Vantar!. Jhosim (who is also on trial) also helps to translate if the PCs do not understand Praxian. If the child survived the khan is quite grateful towards them for saving his grandson (Jh'ena is married to the khan's oldest son, B'harsarim). He tells the PCs that they may rest with the clan for a few days before they return, and that he will give them enough water and supplies to sustain them. However, he says, it would be better for them if they were to stay behind their city walls, or better yet leave Prax altogether. They are treated with respect and courtesy until they leave, but they are not allowed to have their weapons back until then. On the other hand, if the child died, the khan says that they should not have been so stupid as to leave their towns and cities in the first place, and tread on the sacred grounds of the nomads. Even though it was not their intention it was their own foolishness has helped to bring this tragedy about and only the gods can judge them best. With this the PCs are stripped of any goods and valuables (bar weapons) and are cast out into the desert without food or water. They must make their way back as best they can.

Helping Vantar!

If the PCs choose this option the nomads attack as described above, but Vantar! uses his spear to stab the nearest mount, thus ensuring the plague is released (the herd is destroyed within a matter of days). He then joins in the fray with the PCs and tries to kill as many nomads as possible, including the women and children at hand too. He also makes a special point of killing Jh'ena, and even Jhosim during the fighting. If all the guards are killed the women run off into the desert, taking the children with them, leaving the camp virtually deserted. Vantar! merely sits down, looking lost and distraught, his earlier rage having dispersed. He cradles Jh'ena's head and begins to weep quietly. He says that he can never leave her now, and tells the PCs to go, for the khan will soon be on their trail.

If the PCs leave they have several hours head start on the khan, who, after slaying Vantar! hunts them down and tries to kill them, with eight of his remaining warband to help him accomplish the job. If they stay at the camp they face both the angry khan and his entire surviving warband of twenty-two warriors (for their stats re-use the High Lama Rider stats presented earlier, adding 25%-30% to their percentages. There should definitely be some Storm Bulls among them too!). Vantar! will bother to fight at this point, but is killed early on, impaled by a nomad lance.

THE END



Vantarl Devostsson

Gagarth initiate, proprietary Malia worshipper, Humakt and Orlanth apostate

Background

Born in Sartar nearly 40 years ago, Vantarl was the second son of a Lysan clan farmer. Marrying his childhood sweetheart at 16, he spent the next few years following in his father's footsteps until the Lunar Empire invaded in 1602. He was among those of his clan who fought the Empire and lost, and so fled to the new lands in Prax to escape retribution. Settling down with a relatives, Vantarl once again took up the life of a farmer, and soon after his wife gave birth to a daughter. For the next few seasons all went well until the farm was attacked by warriors of the Sabaro Clan. They laid waste to the place, raped the women, and tortured and killed all they found there, except for Vantarl's baby daughter, whom they took with them. Vantarl, the only survivor, was left for dead, staked out on the ground for three days in the blazing sun until help arrived. It took him a long and painful time to recover from the wounds he received that day, but he was driven on by the need to find out what had become of his daughter. He joined Humakt and became a capable warrior, but it was several years before he found any real information regarding his lost child. Eventually, he managed to track down one of the original raiders who said that the girl had died, sacrificed in a religious ritual some time ago. Vantarl became enraged and slew the nomad on the spot, vowing one way or another to wipe out the entire clan, and any other nomad who got in his way. His search for the Sabaro was in vain however, as they had by now moved far out into the Wastes, and even though he joined several Desert Trackers he could never find them. Absorbed by pure hatred and the desire for revenge, he forgot the ideals of Humakt and was outcast for his dishonourable treatment of nomads, ambushing and torturing them whenever he could. His loathing for them even eclipsed his one-time fear of chaos, and he has used this on several occasions as a means to further his vengeance by leading nomad parties into ambushes and suchlike. It is also this association that has given him the power to finally destroy the Sabaro by hiring Ragloc and gaining RotSoul. To Vantarl, the end justifies the means.

Appearance

The Sartarite is a tall and well-built, his skin heavily tanned and weathered by long exposure to the desert sun. Several faded scars criss-cross his dark, sullen features, out of which stare a pair of pale, icy blue eyes. His hair, once dark but now grey at the temples, is short and cropped almost to the skull. His clothing is travel-stained and dusty, and a plain and well-used morning-star flail hangs from his belt.

Distinctive Traits

Grim - Vantarl seems incapable of smiling, unless he is torturing nomads. His face seems to be set in a constant frown.

Silent - He only speaks when necessary, and never engages in idle chatter.

Cruel - Vantarl is incapable of mercy, and shows his foes no quarter in battle. He has a special hatred for nomads, and never gives them a quick death if he can avoid it.

Statistics

STR	18	Hit Points: 18
CON	18	Magic Points: (17+5+12+7) = 41
SIZ	17	Fatigue Points: (36-30) = 6
INT	13	DEX SR: 2
DEX	16	Move: 3
POW	17	Damage Bonus: +1D6
APP	9	(Already included below)

Hit Locations	[Melee/Missile]	AP/HP
Head	[19-20 / 20]	9/6
Left Arm	[16-18 / 18-19]	5/5
Right Arm	[13-15 / 16-17]	5/5
Chest	[12 / 11-15]	8/6
Abdomen	[09-11 / 07-10]	8/6
Left Leg	[05-08 / 04-06]	6/6
Right Leg	[01-04 / 01-03]	6/6

Weapons	SR	Att/Par%	Damage	AP
Morning-Star	5	134/93	1D10+1+1D6	8
Short Spear	5	111/79	1D8+1+1D6	10
Dagger (Melee)	6	91/69	1D4+2+1D6+POT 15 Poison	6
Dagger (Thrown)	2	101	1D4+POT 15 Poison	-
Target Shield	6	42/121	1D6+1D6	12
Crossbow (Light)	2	95	1D6+2+POT 10 Poison	-

Spirit Magic (85-30 = 55%): Countermagic(3), Demoralise, Disrupt, Heal(5), Slow(2), In matrix on Morning Star - Bludgeon(6), In matrix on Target Shield - Protection(4)

Divine Magic (100-30 = 70%): Seal Wound, True Mace (both one use in bracelet)

Skills: Bloody Cut 56%, Climb 70%, Conceal 49%, Devise 61%, Dodge 122%, Fast Talk 31%, First Aid 87%, Hide 90%, Jump 69%, Listen 84%, Ride 107%, Scan 103%, Search 88%, Sneak 109%, Speak Pavic 54%, Speak Praxian 87%, Speak Sartarite 70%, Speak Tradetalk 63%, Swim 40%, Track 110%

Notes: Wears a chainmail hauberk with soft leather padding, full plate helm on head, bezainted armour and ringmail on legs, all with padding. He carries three daggers and a quiver of 20 crossbow bolts, all poisoned (the daggers with POT 15 poison, the crossbow bolts with POT 10).

Vantarl was cast out from the Humakt cult for his intolerable behaviour. As a consequence of breaking his geases he may never pick up a sword without it breaking on him.

Special Items

Short Spear: Vantarl's spear is treated with POT 16 poison and contains a powerful disease spirit (POW 31) called RotSoul that he obtained from a Malia shaman some time ago in return for various services. RotSoul was found in the Devil's Marsh and delights in infecting High Llamas; it carries a special form of plague that attacks only that species. It is capable of devastating a herd within days and is released once the spear is bloodied in the body of a Llama.

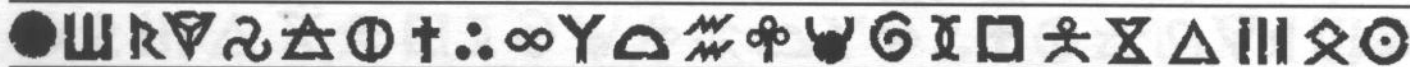
Morning Star: Enchanted as a 6 point Bludgeon Matrix and a 12 point magic point storage matrix.

Target Shield: Enchanted as a 4 point Protection Matrix.

Bronze ring: Acts as a five point magic point storage matrix.

Bracelet: Formed from the teeth of several trolls and humans, this was a gift from a Zorak Zorani Death Lord when Vantarl betrayed a group of his former colleagues to them. The two spells it contains are both one-use.

Plate Helm: Set into this helm is a smoky-blue crystal which acts as a 7 point magic point storage matrix.



Jhosim Two-Teeth

Sable Rider Waha Initiate

Background

Jhosim was a warrior of the Grey Horn Sable clan, and fought with his brothers at the Battle of Moonbroth. Unfortunately, during the battle, he was caught in the backlash of Lunar magic that made him slightly insane, and has remained that way ever since. Convinced he was sent a vision, he left his tribe to wander the deserts in search of the Red Dancer, a mysterious, shrouded figure that Jhosim is convinced he saw at the battle and who talks to him in his thoughts and dreams. Travelling to many places since then, he has joined several Desert Trackers on expeditions into the Wastes, which was where he first met Vantar. He recently discovered that the Sabaro clan are camped near Vultures Country, and remembering something of Vantar's quest to find them, passed the information onto him. He has little concept of events outside of his own head and none at all of Vantar's hatred for nomads. He cannot conceive that anybody would want to kill someone as harmless and happy as himself.

Appearance

Jhosim got his nick-name from the fact that he has only two front teeth left, a fact clearly exposed by his wide toothless grin. Dressed in the now ragged and threadbare attire of a Sable tribesman, this thin and wiry nomad carries many faded tattoos on his dark and leathery skin. Two light-brown eyes, bright and clear, look out from beneath a wide-brimmed felt hat that covers his shaven and wrinkled head. He wears little armour and carries only his hunting bow and scimitar.

Distinctive Traits

Distracted - Jhosim has a tendency to change the subject in the middle of a conversation, or break off completely. Usually this is because he believes he hears the voice of the Red Dancer, who speaks to him frequently. For this reason he can frequently be found talking to himself too.

Cheerful - Jhosim is always ready to talk to anyone who listens to him, and is in a constantly good mood.

Erratic - Jhosim suffers bouts of madness and delirium as described the section "The Red Dancer".

Statistics

STR	12	Hit Points: 14
CON	17	Magic Points: 13
SIZ	10	Fatigue Points: (29-10) = 19
INT	11	Damage Bonus: None
DEX	15	DEX SR: 3
POW	13	Move: 3
APP	8	

Hit Locations	[Melee/Missile]	AP/HP
Head	[19-20 / 20]	1/5
Left Arm	[16-18 / 18-19]	2/4
Right Arm	[13-15 / 16-17]	2/4
Chest	[12 / 11-15]	3/6
Abdomen	[9-11 / 7-10]	3/5
Left Leg	[5-8 / 4-6]	3/5
Right Leg	[1-4 / 1-3]	3/5

Weapons	SR	Att/Par%	Damage	AP
Scimitar	7	73/64	1D6+2	10
Hunting Bow	3/6/9	82	1D6+1	--

Spirit Magic (65-10 = 55%): Heal(3), Mobility(2), Peaceful Cut

Skills: Conceal 49%, Craft(Butchery) 82%, Devise 41%, Dodge 77%, First Aid 84%, Hide 91%, Jump 63%, Listen 95%, Ride 96%, Scan 89%, Sneak 105%, Speak Pavic 52%, Speak Praxian 71%, Speak Tradetalk 42%, Track 132%

Notes: Wears mainly cuirbouilli armour, but only leather on arms.

High Llama Riders (Waha Initiates)

The statistics given here are generic. GMs should feel free to customise them as they see fit, perhaps giving some of them one-use Rune Spells, or including a Storm Bull berserk among them.

Statistics

STR	13	Hit Points: 12
CON	11	Magic Points: 12
SIZ	12	Fatigue Points: (24 - 16) = 8
INT	10	DEX SR: 3
POW	12	Move: 3
DEX	11	Damage Bonus: +1D4
APP	10	(already included below)

Hit Locations	[Melee/Missile]	AP/HP
Head	[19-20 / 20]	4/4
Left Arm	[16-18 / 18-19]	3/3
Right Arm	[13-15 / 16-17]	3/3
Chest	[12 / 11-15]	4/5
Abdomen	[09-11 / 07-10]	4/4
Left Leg	[05-08 / 04-06]	3/4
Right Leg	[01-04 / 01-03]	3/4

Weapons	SR	Att/Par%	Damage	AP
Broadsword	7	40/25	1D8+1+1D4	10
Javelin (Thrown)	3	50	1D8	8
Javelin (Melee)	7	30/15	1D6+1	8
Lance (Mounted)	5	60/30	1D10+1+4D6	10

Spirit Magic(60-16 = 44%): Bladesharp(2), Heal(1), Peaceful Cut, Protection(1), Slow(1), Vigour(2)

Skills: Conceal 25%, Craft(Butchery) 40%, Devise 30%, Dodge 35%, Evaluate 20%, First Aid 25%, Hide 35%, Jump 30%, Listen 60%, Ride 70%, Scan 45%, Sneak 40%, Speak Praxian 55%, Track 45%

Notes: Each warrior wears cuirbouilli armour on all limbs, plus soft leather chest, abdomen, and head padding. They each carry a broadsword, a lance and three javelins which may be used either as missile or melee weapons. They also have 1D6 pennies worth of small goods/coins on each of them.

High Llamas

STR	35	Hit Points: 28
CON	16	Magic Points: 10
SIZ	40	Fatigue Points (basic only): 51
INT	4	DEX SR: 3
POW	10	Move: 10
DEX	11	Damage Bonus: +4D6 (included below)

Hit Locations	[Melee/Missile]	AP/HP
Head	[17-20 / 19-20]	4/10
Left Fore Leg	[14-16 / 17-18]	4/8
Right Fore Leg	[11-13 / 15-16]	4/8
Forequarters	[08-10 / 10-14]	4/12
Hindquarters	[05-07 / 05-09]	4/12
Left Hind Leg	[03-04 / 03-04]	4/8
Right Hind Leg	[01-02 / 01-02]	4/8

Weapons	SR	Att%	Damage
Kick	6	55	1D8+4D6
Rear & Plunge	10	30	2D8+4D6

Armour: 4 point Hide

Notes: A rider rolls 1D10+10 for hit location vs. foes due to the height of this animal. See page 12 of the *Gloranthan Bestiary* for more details.

Spirits of Prax

Part 1 of 2

by Sandy Petersen,
Stephen Martin,
Scott Schneider and
Greg Stafford.



Great Spirits

Among the many spirits of Prax, a few are known for their great power, general inaccessibility, and permanent cults. Called Great Spirits, each can be allied, though the cost is high. It is worth it, however, for each bring great power, and control over some of the daemons of the Spirit World.

Malia

The Mother of Plague. This evil spirit is a horrible and all-devouring creature, appearing to men as a great, multi-armed, headless torso with a gaping maw where her belly should be. When contacted through shamans, she provides the Command spell for one particular type of disease spirit, specified by the shaman when she is contacted. She is associated with the runes of Darkness, Death and Chaos.

If worship of Malia is marked by a special success, her worshipers gain access to Command spells for all types of disease spirits, as well as the spell of Cause <Disease>. Worship of Malia is considered evil and punishable by death except when the clan's khan considers it necessary for the survival of the clan.

Oakfed

Oakfed is the most powerful fire deity in the plains. He carries messages and sacrifices to the Air and Sky gods, but more important is his function as Protector. During the Great Night, men kept him alive by feeding him all of the great forests which once dotted the area, and thus, in turn, Fire helped men to survive. From this true worship and sincere reverence, Oakfed joined the Greater Spirits of the plains. He is associated with the runes of Fire, Motion, and Disorder.

Oakfed provides his faithful worshipers with Create Wildfire. If Oakfed's worship service is marked by a special success, he provides Cremate Dead as well as Create Wildfire.

Cause <Disease>

2 points

ranged, instant, nonstackable, reusable

This spell instantly summons a random Spirit of Disease of the appropriate type, which attacks any target within 100m designated by the caster. The Spirit of Disease possesses the target normally if it reduces his magic points to 0 (or 10 less than the spirit's). The disease spirit need not manifest to attack its target, in contradiction to the standard rules for Spirit Combat.

Create Wildfire

1 point

ranged, instant, stackable, reusable

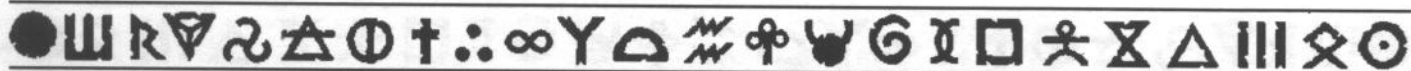
This must be cast on a fire. Each point increases its intensity by one level, adding 1D6 to the damage it produces, and increasing the fire's heat output. It also, naturally, causes the fire to burn itself out much sooner. This spell works on Fireblade, but the affected weapon takes 1D6 damage per point of the spell. This spell does increase the damage done by a salamander, but also does 1D6 damage per point when cast to the elemental.

Cremate Dead

1 point

ritual ceremony, nonstackable, reusable

This spell allows an official (usually a priest) to fully destroy the bodily remains of any one person after death. The affected corpse must belong to the same clan as the shaman presiding over the Worship Oakfed ceremony. It guarantees that the ghost will not return to haunt the family. It also burns all goods sent along with the corpse, allowing the deceased to carry some weapons and other supplies into the land of the dead. It can be used on the still-animated skeleton, zombie, or even vampire form of a former clansman to burn it, though the target's magic points must be overcome in this case.



Wild Hunter

This spirit is powerful even among the gods of the Upper and Middle Airs, for he is the gross and physical bully who commands the raging, sterile storms of Prax. Many of his worshipers believe their souls will go to him after death, to ride the winds and hunt savage Star Bears, or to wreak immortal vengeance against the hapless living. The Wild Hunter is usually only worshipped by renegade shamans and tribesmen, who cannot or will not obey Waha's laws. His runes are Air, Death, and Disorder.

He provides the spell of Wind Walking to his worshipers. On a special success he provides Create Whirlvish as well.

Zola Fel

Zola Fel is the god of the River of Cradles. He is powerful and friendly, but is tied to his waters, and cannot go far from them without being reduced to as mean an existence as the other water spirits of the Plains. When Pavis came he allied with the river, and both benefited from the arrangement, but the agreement was temporary, as alliances in Prax always are. He is associated with the runes of Water and Motion.

Zola Fel can only be contacted along his banks or on one of his tributaries. He provides the spell of Float. On a special success roll, the worshipers will gain access to Command Undine as well as Float.

The Spirits of Air

The ever-turbulent powers of the Lower Air are numerous in Prax, as they are over all the surface world. These are among the children of the Most Mighty and Victorious Umath, who tore Sky from Earth to make a home for himself. His children then came forth from their hiding places and invaded the world, conquering all before them. This was the start of the War of the Gods, which ended the Golden Age.

Lightning Boy

Lightning Boy was captured by air demons during the War of the Gods, married into the captor's hierarchy, and was then initiated fully to be among the Air Gods, though originally he was a Fire Herdsman. He is associated with the runes of Air and Sky. He provides Lightning to his worshipers.

Mistress Calm

This is the Mistress of the Calm Sky who appears cloaked in wispy but shadowing clouds decorating her benign appearance. Her influence calms even the dry chaparral. She is associated with the runes of Air and Harmony. She provides Decrease Wind.

Rainbow Girl

Rainbow Girl is the great messenger between the gods and men. She first brought words of peace and co-operation from the Sea to the Storm Gods, and later, to Earth and to Men. She is a well-known figure among the shamans of Prax. She is associated with the runes of Air, Water, and Communication.

She demands that her followers always try and resolve any conflict through peaceful means first, if possible. She provides the spell of Mindbridge.

Thunder Bird

Thunder Bird is one of the Three Feathered Rivals. In this role, he is always beaten in contest with Raven, yet always victorious over Sun Hawk, whom Thunder Bird wraps with his great clouds of feathers and smothers, accompanied by a great clap of thunder. He is associated with the runes of Air and Beast. He provides Cloud Call.

The Spirits of Darkness

These creatures first came to the surface during the Great Night. Ancient historians considered the Great Night to be a major invasion with malicious intent, but it is now thought that this horde of Darkness things was driven from Hell when the bright Sun died and went there. Their presence on the surface world soon made them masters of it, despite the many Star Captains and other heroes who fought against them. Though their inhuman rule and habits are malignant to men, they are in no way considered Evil, for it was they who bore the brunt of the fighting against the encroachment of Chaos into the world.

Cloud Call

1 point

indeterminate range, temporal, stackable, reusable

This spell is described in the *RuneQuest Magic Book* (p.32). However, in addition, a loud thunderclap accompanies the spell, and if a victim does not resist in a MP vs. MP roll, his or her Listen roll is reduced by 25% for the duration of the spell.

Create Whirlvish

1 point

ritual enchant, one-use.

This ritual creates a whirlvish from the spirit of a person slain by the enchanter. The ritual must be performed under the desert sky and takes all night to finish. The cursed person's spirit is murdered at the completion of the ceremony. (See *Tales#4* for whirlvish statistics.)

Mindbridge

1 point

range special, temporal, stackable, reusable

This spell allows mind-to-mind communication between two people. It must be cast by one party while thinking of the other, and allows transmission of conscious thoughts. As long as the other party is within the spell range of 1,000 meters per point, communication will be established, and lasts for the duration of the spell unless it is ended by one of the parties. Unlike the common spell Mindlink, more than two people cannot be linked by this spell. Nor can magic points or spell knowledge be traded or used by a participant, even with the other party's consent: the spell provides communication only. When the spell is cast, the caster is surrounded by a rainbow glow. As contact is established, a rainbow arc stretches across the sky from the caster to the other party, visibly connecting them.

Wind Walking

2 points

touch, temporal, non-stackable, reusable

This spell permits its target to walk on the air as though it were solid ground. It is commonly cast the spell on riding animals. The speed through the air is equal to normal walking or riding speed, plus 1 meter/SR in the direction the wind blows for every 3 points of Wind Strength. Thus, riding against the wind is lower than on the ground. The target can climb or dive through the air at 1/3 normal speed. This vertical motion is subtracted from the maximum horizontal movement. For instance, a windwalking high llama (speed 10, or 20 if galloping all-out) could descend 3 meters per strike rank, as well as move forwards up to 7 meters. If the high llama galloped at top speed, expending double fatigue, it could descend 6 meters per strike rank, as well as travel forwards up to 14 meters.



Grandmother of Spiders

The Grandmother of Spiders is the ancestress of a tribe of giant spiders occasionally found in Prax. When Chaos came, she came down from Shadows Dance and wrapped the monsters in her webs, then she and her children devoured them. She is associated with the runes of Beast and Darkness.

Any shaman who contacts the her will find all insect spirits hostile and all spider spirits friendly, though only as long as he is actively worshipping her or knows her Webbing spell.

Create Shadow

1 point

ranged, temporal, stackable (to 4 points), reusable

This spell creates a region of shadow, appearing as a haze in sunlight. The shadow is 10 meters in diameter, with a height one quarter that. It is immobile. When additional points of the spell are stacked together, the volume does not change, but the darkness deepens. Two points cancels the effects of sunlight on light-sensitive beings such as trollkin. Three points make a shadow equivalent to a moonlit night. Four points create a pitch-black area. Fire or other illumination within this darkness can be seen, but illuminates nothing.

Conceal

3 points

ranged, temporal, nonstackable, reusable

This spell makes the user invisible by attracting the enemies' attention to a spot other than where the character is. He remains unnoticed unless he wishes to draw attention to himself, or he is detected by magic. If he makes a noise, an enemy could try to strike him by ear, subtracting 50 percentiles from chances of success. If the character protected by the spell attacks with missile, weapon, or magic, he becomes visible in the first strike rank of the round in which he intends to attack or act and disappears again after the last strike rank of that round unless engaged in melee. In any round the character disengages from melee, he disappears again at the end of the round of disengagement.

Hide Wealth

1 point

touch, duration 1 day, stackable, reusable

This spell must be cast upon an inanimate bundle of goods, no greater than 1 ENC. It causes the target object(s) to become invisible to everyone except the caster or anyone else watching while the spell is cast. Each additional point stacked increases the ENC hidden by 1. Each point of Extension stacked with the Hide Wealth spell doubles the duration of the spell. Magic items hidden with this spell cannot be detected, even with magical spells, but the presence of the Hide Wealth spell itself could be (if the proper spell were cast). If the hidden goods are moved, the spell dissipates.

Webbing

2 points

ranged, instant, nonstackable, reusable

This spell hurls a mass of silver strands onto a specified area 3x3 meters across. Those within the targeted zone must succeed in a special Dodge roll to leap out of the way. Anyone hit by the strands is helpless until he overcomes the web's STR of 40 with his own STR. If multiple victims are caught, they may combine their STRs to escape. The webbing remains for 15 minutes after cast, and the spell can be stacked with Extension. Anyone walking over the top of the web has their feet Glued to it with a STR of 20.

Snow

1 point

100m radius around caster, temporal, stackable, reusable

This spell must be cast when precipitation is present. If it is raining, the spell changes all the rain to snow, sleet, or hail (at the gamemaster's option) within the spell's radius of effect. If it is already snowing, the spell doubles the amount of snow falling. Each additional point of this spell increases the radius of affect by 100m.

Night Woman

This spirit brought the Darkness to Prax. The peoples and gods fought her, but she was aided by the forces of death and winter, and could not be thrown out. Once she conquered the land, however, she ruled it benevolently, and gave her protection to all who sought it. When the Sun came, she agreed to give him half of her realm, as long as he promised to remain outside of hers. Thus, he rules the day, even as she rules the night. She is associated with the runes of Darkness and Mastery.

Night Woman is a favourite of the Morocanth tribe, but many of the lesser tribes revere her as well. She provides her worshipers with the spell of Create Shadow.

Raven

Raven is counted as one of the Three Feathered Rivals. In this role the clever Raven always overcomes Thunder Bird, yet is always overcome by Sun Hawk, whose clarity and keen eye sees through all trickery. Raven is associated with the runes of Beast and Illusion. He provides Conceal or Hide Wealth, at his whim.

White Princess (Inora)

This goddess is often called the most beautiful woman in Prax. She is tall and stately, cool and aloof, striding through the desolation of Prax in her long sparkling cloak and attended by a dozen small Snow spirits. Her cool beauty is enough to bring a little winter even to the Wastelands. Her winter neutralises the barren chaparral, making her a fertile and wondrous delight to be close to. She is associated with the runes of Cold (some say Darkness) and Harmony. She provides Snow.





The Spirits of Fire

These beings were mostly of small power, for they were always farthest from the world of men after Umath tore the Sky from the Earth and hurled it far away. Yet during the Great Night the Fire and Sky Spirits were foremost in attempting to rescue their kinsman, the Sun, and to aid the pitiful plight of lesser races.

Evening Star

Evening Star was once a lover of the Sun God and when that deity was slain she tried to follow to the underworld but was refused. Instead, she waited at the edge of the world, fighting off the horrors of night which spewed out at her. In her battle, she gained great power and reluctantly guided the Lightbringers to the Gates of Hell then left her place to help men. Now she is gifted with a house in the sky where her old vigil was held. She is associated with the Sky rune. This spirit may only be called when the Evening Star is visible. She demands that her followers worship no darkness or chaos entity. She provides Gloaming.

Morning Star

Younger sister to Evening Star, Morning Star was the triumphant bringer of the news of victory from Hell, where the Seven Seekers had fought against the Underworld and gained the freedom of the Sun God. This brought about the Dawning and the start of our age. She is associated with the Sky rune. She can only be contacted when the Morning Star is visible. She provides Aurora.

Pole Star

This was a famous hero, the first of the Star Captains to come to the world and the first to regain his house in the sky. He is also the most powerful, and from his unmoving seat in the sky, watches over the safety of those who befriend him. He is associated with the runes of Sky and Mastery. He provides the spell of Captain Souls.

Sun Hawk

Sun Hawk is one of the Three Feathered Rivals. He always conquers Raven, but is always conquered by Thunder Bird. He is associated with the runes of Beast and Truth, and is usually associated with Sun as well. Sun Hawk demands of his worshipers that they never lie, but has no other restrictions. He provides the spell of Clear Sight.

The Spirits of Water

Golden Age Prax was a rich and well-watered land. The historical lack of powerful water spirits is a stark example of the imbalance imposed on the world during the Great Night. Perhaps because of their gratitude at being alive at all, these spirits were uniformly benign and helpful to humans.

Dew Maid

This kind and gentle woman once spurned the hand of a dead god and has, since then, regretted her decision. She wanders sadly about, weeping softly to herself. This makes a watery mist which moistens the dry land and refreshes mortals. She is associated with the runes of Water and Harmony.

Aurora

2 points

self, duration special, stackable, reusable

This spell can only be cast while the Dawn Star is visible in the sky. It affects a area 10 meters in diameter, which glows with a clear pale light. This spell cannot be stacked with Extension. Everyone within the area of effect is infused with a sense of hope and confidence that the Sun will rise, banishing Chaos and Night once again. Everyone within the affected area has their Magic Points increased by 1 and their Fatigue Points increased by 1d6, when facing any chaos or darkness-related foe. Each additional spell stacked either increases the area affected by 10 meters, adds an additional magic point to each recipient, or adds an additional 1d6 Fatigue Points to each recipient. The spell remains in effect until the Sun rises, even if it is not visible because of cloud cover or because the spell was cast underground. At that time, all additional Magic Points and Fatigue Points are lost. This could cause the recipient to fall unconscious or suffer penalties due to negative Fatigue Points. The spell also ends if the caster is slain.

Captain Souls

1 point

ranged, temporal, stackable, reusable

This spell is cast upon one other person per point. The targets must voluntarily accept the spell. The spell then acts like a sort of one-way Mind Link, in that the caster can voluntarily provide magic points and spell knowledge to his targets. Spells that normally operate only at Touch range can be cast at range by the participants on each other. Conscious thoughts may be transmitted by any target to the spell's caster, and vice-versa. Unlike Mindlink, INT- or morale-affecting spells cast against one individual have no effect on someone linked by a Captain Souls spell.

Clear Sight

2 points

temporal, sight range, nonstackable, reusable

This spell permits the caster to see any illusion for what it is, and to see through cloaking spells such as Conceal. The caster's visual Scan and Search skills are increased by 30% each. This spell only functions when the object being looked at is in direct sunlight. Thus, the spell is useless at night, or when the sky is completely covered with clouds.

Gloaming

1 point

ranged, duration until the next dawn, stackable, reusable

This spell must be cast during the day, at a chosen area with a volume of 100 cubic meters per point of spell used. At dusk, that volume's light remains fixed in place, and remains present even after the sun sets, persisting all night as a small piece of day. The area will remain as bright as the day was as the sun sank below the edge of the world. The lighted area has indistinct edges, but is clearly visible at night. This spell may not be stacked with Extension, and ends as the sun rises above the edge of the world the next morning.

Dew

1 point

ritual Summoning spell, stackable, reusable

This brings the Dew Maid in person to the site. After fifteen minutes, she departs, leaving a well-moistened area for 100 meters radius around the summoning site. Glistening droplets of dew hang heavily on all bits of gear and shoots of vegetation. This dew can be sucked or licked off the grass to provide water for man or beast alike. Each additional point of Dew stacked together increases the radius of effect by 100 meters.

She provides the Dew spell. It is common practice to block the ears of beasts and men while she is present, and to avert eyes from her countenance. Thus none ever see or hear her presence, yet all know her passing. Her worshipers must make these traditional observances.



Frog Woman

Frog Woman is found in the Wastelands and Prax. She can only be contacted at an oasis or on the banks of the River of Cradles. She is a benevolent being, a relic of happier days. She demands of her worshipers that they use the Peaceful Cut spell (see Waha cult for description) when they butcher frogs and other amphibians. She does not teach Peaceful Cut herself. She is associated with the runes of Water and Motion. Frog Woman can only be contacted at an oasis or on the banks of the River of Cradles. She provides the Leap spell. Since the spell is one-use, only the worshipping shaman can obtain it – not his followers.

River Horse

The river horses are common to many waters of the universe, and are always the most numerous at the Headwaters of the World. The river horse spirits can only be contacted at a headwaters (including oasis ponds as well as the heads of the rare Praxian serpents). They are associated with the runes of Water and Motion. The river horse spirits can only be contacted at a headwaters (including oasis ponds). They provide the spell of Ride River Horse. Since the river horse spell is one-use, only the shaman himself may learn it.

Spirits of the Paps

Once upon a time, before the Great Night, this whole land (and many others) was ruled by a gentle and benevolent deity, Genert, a son of the Earth. His children ruled parts of this empire, and their presence brought ease and richness to all. Eiritha, mother of the Protectresses, was his daughter; his sons are known only in legend.

When Night and Evil came to Prax this great Earth Pantheon was shattered beyond repair. Genert was slain and his followers turned to gorp or worse. The few remnants of his people survived in the Paps, his daughter's home, while the lands which had been Genert's civilisation were turned into the Chaos Wastes and the Krjalki Bog.

Good Shepherd

Once the Founder of a great tribe, the Shepherd's flock was easy prey for invaders during the Great Darkness. This utter loss was not death or defeat for this god, however. Instead, he learned the true value in his ability to absorb the deaths of friends. He is associated with the Life rune.

Only a shaman who is an initiate of Eiritha can contact the Good Shepherd. He provides Seal Spirit. (See Eiritha cult.)

Ronance

Ronance is the god of fertility who was once the mainstay of the people of the Golden Age. His mere presence is inspirational to normal humans, and though his immortal chariot never touches the earth, the ground beneath him is always rich in growing edible things. An ancient magical road system, now lost, was made by the runnels of his wheels. Ronance is associated with the runes of Life and Motion.

Ronance can only be contacted if the shaman is an initiate of Eiritha. He provides Pathway (See Eiritha cult write-up).

Three-Bean Circus

Amid a place of constant war, it is a miracle at all that the spirit of passivity could ever survive. Most tribesmen think of these beings as perversely peaceful and unloyally fickle, yet, during the Golden Age, they were rightly held in the highest esteem, properly respected for the perfection in spiritual development which they had attained. This strength has lasted them well to now, for they have the ability to survive and persevere even under the most unlikely conditions. This proves, perhaps, that their existence here is not strange at all, but is rather a necessity to maintain a spiritual balance. The Three-Bean Circus is associated with the rune of Harmony. Worshipers of the Three-Bean Circus may bear no arms during the entire time of their worship. They provide Peace (see the Eiritha cult write-up).

End of Part 1...

Part 2 will be in Issue #15.

Leap

3 points

self, duration 1 day, stackable, one-use

This spell allows the shaman to travel up to 40 kilometres in a leaping arc to any destination he desires. For each magic point stacked, he can carry one follower and his ENC in equipment. The landing place must be known to the shaman. The trip takes a full day.

Ride River Horse

2 points

temporal, self, non-stackable, one-use

This spell, which may only be cast at a headwaters, summons a spirit river horse, with a horse's forebody and the hindquarters of a fish. It can be mounted and ridden on its trip from one headwaters to another. The shaman must have a clear idea of which headwaters is to be travelled to, or the river horse will take its riders to a random headwaters, possibly in another land! The entire trip never takes more than a few minutes. Anyone may ride the river horse, but there is a limit of ten passengers per spell used. This is a one-way trip – a return requires another spell.

Prehistory:

The Golden Age

by Greg Stafford

As with all of the world's true stories, the legends of Prax begin with the creation of the world, and like all of the creation myths that of Prax begins with a bright and golden state of affairs, in a dream-like existence where men and gods walked the earth together. There is no reason to doubt that this age existed, for magicians of today (scarce though they be) can still reach this unreachable place and pluck bits of holiness from it into our world. It is the place before birth, the place after death, and the place where all the gods live who have deserted the Plains of Prax.

Prax itself was a part of the greater lands known as Genertela. Genert was a son of the Earth, born to rule over its surface. The many races of this fertile dream-time swarmed across the surface of the earth, and three systems of worship were established by Genert, his sisters, and his daughters, to maintain consistency and command of the creatures. It was successful at first, but was an obvious target when the younger gods began their warring and the fragile network of the system was marauded and torn by air, sky, and sea.

We get our first known facts about Prax during this early stage of the War of the Gods. The land is said to have been ruled by Tada, although this is probably more of a title than a proper name. He is always named with a special epithet, translated as Superhero, which sets him apart from the usual weakling male deities who are found among the earth powers at this time.

His former strength is indicated by the parts of his body which are cherished on the Plains as powerful Medicine Bundles. Three Grisly Portions are definitely known to exist: Tada's Sandals, Tada's Cudgel, and Tada's Mask.

One of Tada's earliest recorded act was the defeat of an invader and the death of its Founder. The people were called the Basmoli, claiming descent from the Father of Lions. Hints of terrible fighting between Tada and the Lion-god are visible in the savage rituals of the Basmoli Berserkers. Before a battle they dance a ritual to re-live the defeat of their Founder by Tada, thereby shedding themselves of defeat before the battle (if the magic was strong enough), assuring their victory. In this dance the founder is a hapless slave who is torn apart by the crazed berserkers. The man who plays the part of Tada is awarded the skin of the slain

slave (which is supposed to make him invulnerable), and the honour of leading the battle the next day. The skin of the lion-god Basmol is among the great Lost Medicine Bundles of Prax.

Another early act was the slaying of Ragnaglar, the foul goat-god. Ragnaglar's gnawing had cut large parts of the country into dry wasteland, robbing the people of the earth's wealth. Tada slew the beast-man and drove his followers from the country into the hills of Shadows Dance.

Ragnaglar had a wife, Thed by name, who was also the Protectress of her Tribe. For the death of her husband she courted greater dooms for her vengeance, and is said to have entered into a pact with the devils of entropy to vanquish Tada from the earth. These demons of emptiness were glad to accept the offer, seeing in it their chance to turn the world back into the Chaos which spawned it. Thed and her children espoused the cause of Chaos, accepted their horrible mutations as the badge of their pledge, and returned to Prax to destroy Tada.

Most local legends state that Tada called upon the Sons of the Storm Bull to come to Prax to help fight against Thed and the Devil. Other places in the world call this the Silver Age or Migration Age, for it was when the peoples with Knowledge and Power fled from the fertile and no-longer immortal slopes of the Spike.

The Sons of the Storm Bull, poetically numbered at twenty-five, fought beside the forces of Tada in the Final Battle.

The Final Battle is the pivotal point between the Gods' Age and Man's Age. It was the moment that the Spike exploded. The Spike was the solid manifestation of Law upon the physical realities of the Elements, and its destruction was the result of the gods' fighting and breaking the Laws of Harmony laid down by the Creators. Following its destruction there was a period of pure anarchy and terror as the world was turned upside-down, usually called the Great Darkness.

Many of the ancient sons of the Storm Bull were slain during this battle. Only five escaped, and these returned to their people to lead a few into the darkness before they entered into the realm of the immortals. The other sons of the Storm Bull never survived to become Founders of their own Tribes.

The battle was also presumably the death of Tada, although we have no legends of this now. We are, however, certain that no vestige of his culture survived into the nomadic times after the Dawn.



[xxix.445.3]

"A magic road opened by Arkat can be used to travel from Ralios to Fronela. It starts in Ballid, and is guarded by the elves there who are ritually obliged to let anyone attempt to walk it (yes, even trolls!) that presents them with a certain type of coppercrown. The road usually ends in Oranor but travellers has been known to end up at other places in Fronela as well. The Yellowbeards of the Great Golden Glade knows the rituals needed to start off." Gorafan Westwise.

Questlines

Glorantha Myth: A User's Manual Part II

Path's of the Hero

by John Hughes

System & Storytelling in Realising the Heroquest

"Roleplaying is the simplest game in the world. To make it more accessible, to let it develop to new levels, to create richer backgrounds, better characters, more involving stories, a more complex environment for our imaginings, all we have to do is remember that fact."

*James Wallis, Realism Vs Playability? in Inter*action 1'.*

To realise the experience of heroquest in roleplaying terms, we have to aim high. Greg Stafford has stated that his hope for heroquest is to have the *player* share a *character's* moment of mythic insight and inner change. If we want to achieve this, we will have to test the practical limits of what roleplaying can offer, and perhaps challenge our present definition of what roleplaying can and cannot be. Success is by no means guaranteed, but testing the limits - of our ideas, our games, and our home campaigns - can bring reward in itself.

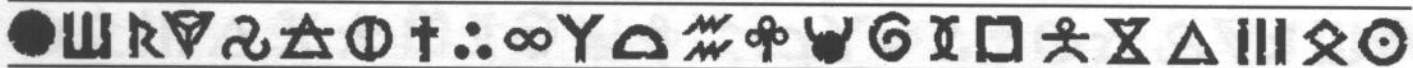
The time is ripe for heroquest. Most *RuneQuest* players are in their late twenties and thirties, and many of us have been exploring Glorantha for ten years or more. As we grow older, we begin to confront the hidden aspects of our personalities - the areas that lie undeveloped, the paths of our lives we have not taken, the relationships that have or have not grown. Our inner lives take new paths, and our hopes and dreams and fantasies all change. The power fantasies and escapism that largely fuelled our youthful gaming give way to subtler, more questioning styles. Chaotic ten-headed Ulerian werewampsters are replaced by issues of personal meaning and change as the usual centre of our gaming - why we act in certain ways, and what the consequences of those actions are. We use roleplaying to understand other people and other perspectives, and to understand ourselves. Heroquest has its part to play here, roleplaying as *katabasis*, the journey of the hero.



Joseph Campbell - who looms large in Greg's construction of Glorantha - constantly emphasises that the hero's journey occurs in *our own lives*. The confrontations, struggles and failures that our characters must overcome are of the same order as the ones we face daily, though mirrored, magnified and distorted in the mindscape of Glorantha. Our responses to love, treachery, trust, courage, ambition and jealousy are the same whether we're a one-legged duck bandit from Ironspike or a programmer/accountant from Wagga Wagga. When Greg speaks of Glorantha as a shamanic journey, that is one of the things that he means - we have the opportunity to bring back a gift from our explorations. Not a recipe for *Bladessharp 15*, but maybe some insight about learning from failure, or an

understanding of why others view the world differently². This is one of the core ideas for heroquest, and the one I'm discussing here because it hasn't as yet received much attention. It's one of the things that creative *play* has always been about.

Of course, the prime object of any game is to have fun, to entertain ourselves and each other. Heroquest is about creating new, satisfying ways to enjoy ourselves - about collectively weaving a magic spell. Success lies in matching up presentation and technique with players' expectations, interests and capabilities: in choosing and combining the right tools for the job from our common roleplaying toolkit.



The Nature of Heroquest

In the last issue I noted that in some circumstances the intrusion of game constructs (rules, dice, tables *etc.*) can keep the emotional impact and experience of roleplaying at arm's length. Its the price we pay for structure and consistency. While many the fumble gives joy in the retelling, Greg's criteria for the heroquest suggests that we need to cut down the distance between character and player, to strengthen the immediacy and resonance of the action - and to down-play system constructs that interfere with other ways of telling our story.

Now in Gloranthan terms, the goal of a low-level heroquest is essentially mythic and religious insight on a personal level - this is what the rituals and ceremonies and mysteries and initiations of the cults are all about. They are equally about physical transformation (strength in childbirth, banishing storms, ensuring good crops) and on the highest levels can change the way the world is put together (bringing back the sun, crippling the Uz with the Trollkin Curse). In game dynamic terms, heroquest represents the supranormal conflict of reality and possibility, a conflict where both are profoundly affected and constrained by prevailing belief. Defined in this way, heroquest is a genre where personality change through struggle and realisation is essential - both to the cultic advancement of the quester and the continuing strength of a cult and society. Heroquest is much more than Super-RuneQuest.

RQ characters are defined by *what they can do*, not by *who they are*. Game mechanisms ignore personality and motivation (though the Gloranthan cults do provide a measure of this, as does PenDragon Pass). One of the challenges of heroquest is to make our characters' motivations and their links with society as vibrant as possible. This is partially background preparation and partially an in-game challenge.

Heroquest is as much a gaming style as a rules system. Given that most Gloranthan campaigns use RQ or PenDragon Pass, our rules base is fixed, and any additional mechanics should be minimal. Instead, we need to cultivate a sensitivity to the ebb and flow of myth and personal storytelling in our campaigns - to look at new ways of conceiving plot and storyline. Taking storytelling seriously means using it not just as as description, but as a way of sharing and communicating emotions and inner states.

For a player, heroquesting requires a sensitivity to mythic resonance and form, a willingness to take responsibility for developing and sharing your story, a fully-rounded awareness of the personality and motivation of your character, and an intuition of the links between your character and yourself.

Success (in both campaign and personal terms) comes from applying these understandings to the game in an entertaining and dramatic way, and in giving characters opportunities to change and grow. It means using things like dreams and visions, omens and animal totems as storytelling vehicles to symbolise and share what is happening within.

For a gamesmaster, heroquest means crafting stories that flow from the private myths and personalities of the characters, using similar techniques to those pioneered in *Pendragon*. Campaigns will still be filled with sword-swinging, desperate dealings and the occasional funny monster, but the way the characters respond to them will be different. Love of gold and adventure is not sufficient motivation for a heroquest³.

In such stories, outer should mirror inner. Louise-Ragnar the broo reflects a character's own lusts and rapacious nature. The despised Harvar Ironfist in distant Alda Chur acts out of the same high ideals as the player party. And victory will not necessarily be measured in body, gold or cattle counts - The Quest for the Sacred Bull, for instance, might not be mastered with weapons and magic, but with a realisation and an acceptance that certain things must remain unattainable.

Working Together - Practical Suggestions

There is no easy or quick fix transformation here, no *HeroQuest Sensitivity Table*. Success is achieved only when a group consciously works together over time to find the level and style that best suits their needs. Campaign styles evolve through experiment, failure and success, and through constantly challenging notions of what you can and cannot do in a game. Using the right tools in the right combination is the key to maximising the power and sheer enjoyment of heroquest.

Taking Co-creation Seriously

The party-line in roleplaying is that we build and mould a story together, but in reality players are often fairly passive recipients to a GM's storyline and lead. In taking co-creation seriously, GMs must encourage players to weave their own stories out of campaign events, and ask them to suggest future scenarios that might develop personal themes. (For example - Lanolf the Silent is an outsider: he asks his wyter-brothers (fellow players) to develop a ceremony that will link him more strongly to the clan.) In doing this, you can build a level of group coop-

eration and confidence that allows much greater overall creativity. And though we never talk about it, Group trust is probably *the* most important factor in a successful campaign.

It can be very helpful to make a regular time to discuss how the campaign is progressing. (In our Far Point PDP campaign we do it during each Dark Season phase.) Talk about how things are going, what the difficulties are, and how characters are developing. Players often have suggestions the GM can take on board. And signalling the development of a theme ahead of time is useful too. For example, "In the next few sessions I want to explore the rivalry between Kierston and CradleDaughter, and the emotional cost of the two of you working together. Be sure to express your thoughts and feelings about this in play."

Building and Blocking

The concepts of 'blocking' and 'building' are borrowed from Theatre Sports, but are especially useful in campaign play. Suppose a player mentions some detail that has never come into play before, something that has come from her imagination. For instance, she asks, 'Your younger sister who married into the Princeros tribe, is she still loyal to the old ways'? One possible response - a block - is for the second player to reply, 'There's no sister on my character sheet, so wrack off, broo gizzard.' The storytelling response - a build - encourages something like, 'She loves her brother, but we have not spoken for many seasons. Why do you ask?' In accepting the gambit (and quietly marking a sister on the character's family tree), the issue can be explored, and the gambit builds into a full conversation. (As well, the GM will begin to suspect how the players will handle the current predicament.) One of the rules of storytelling gaming is 'Never Block'. Accepting such co-creative powers can lead to abuses, ('Is that a Truestone in your pocket?') but in a mature group it becomes a powerful gaming tool.

Maximising the Storytelling Element

There are many techniques you can use to maximise the storytelling element. All of them contribute to Maximum Game Fun. Here are just a few...

Retell the events of last session. Begin your evening by having a single character retell the events of the last session, as though they're talking to a trusted clan elder back at the stead. Emphasise that it should be from their own perspective - don't try to be objective! That way lots of juicy stuff will come out about what they really feel about other characters.

Character Insights. Each session, have a single player give a five minute dialogue about something that is important to them. Let them choose the topic. Samples might include, 'Why I hate ducks', 'The best thing about Sacred Time', 'What happened when I met the bear', 'The first time I fell in love', 'How to make good sticklepick[4]', 'Why my grandmother is a hero', or 'How the holy thunderstone exploded on my head'. It's a wonderful way to build up both character and detail, and its often hilarious as well.

Character Flashbacks. Much of a character's background is hidden on a character sheet, and even basic facts can be unknown to other players. Flashbacks build dramatic contrast and help players understand the underlying significance of events. When young Arson is preparing for his first rendezvous with the beautiful Lunar Princess (a Passion of strength 6, and a critical Lust role to boot), take five minutes to recreate his last evening with faithful Theya back at the stead. When the party find those first telltale signs of Thanatari in the hills, flash back to when Adrun discovered his parents' headless bodies in the snow.

Depth Characterisation - Understanding Genre

Depth characterisation generates its own story and drama. In a storytelling environment such as heroquest, if you can realise and play a three-dimensional character and encourage and draw out such play from your fellow questers, then much of what you hope to achieve will automatically follow. From depth-characterisation springs appropriate storytelling devices and cues, and an automatic awareness of the appropriate genre of the game.

Heroquest depends on character transformation in the face of adversity. Without adequate characterisation, a heroquest will become a very sterile exercise - a power fantasy with all the subtlety and emotional intensity of a wargame, where confronting and difficult decisions are transformed into thinly-disguised combats.

In the boxed table I've listed some prompts that may assist you in adding depth to a campaign character. It's based on the checklist I use when designing characters for storytelling games. A fully realised character will not only generate many stories, but will occasionally surprise even the person who is running it!

Tweaking the Compromise

There is no single correct balance between system and storytelling. The right mixture will be different for every different group and campaign, and will change over time as players grow in confidence and trust. In realising the heroquest, you have to tweak the compromise to your own needs.

I discuss some further practical examples of campaign storytelling in *Campaign Myth-Management*, to be featured in the Reaching Moon Megacorp's RQ Con Down Under *Questlines* book. And next column: Sex And the Single Gloranthan, a kilt-raising expose of lust in a magical society. Stay tuned!

FOOTNOTES:

1. Last issue, David Hall reviewed *Inter*action*, 'The Journal of Role-playing and Storytelling Systems' - now re-titled *Interactive Fantasy*. If you're at all interested in the future directions of roleplaying, or in the types of issues I attempt to tackle in *Questlines*, then this journal is a must read! *Interactive Fantasy* is 'good to think' - our hobby has been waiting for a journal like this for a long time. For information contact Crashing Boar Books, 29a Abbeville Road London SW4 9LA, (+44) (0) 181 673 6340. You can also contact the editor, Andrew Rilstone on the InterNet (journal@aslan.demon.co.uk).

2. Thanks to Loren Miller for this insight.

3. Harrek the Berserk? The exception that proves the rule.

4 A fiery dish made primarily from fermented fish, (in)famous in Far Point. (Don't ask.)

Forgotten? Glorantha

Do you know of any lesser known articles or other publications that contain RuneQuest and/or Gloranthan material? I'm compiling a detailed RQ index of ALL the sources of game and background related material and would appreciate any help you could provide. Please send any information to:

Email: RMeints@aol.com -or-

Rick Meints
#1 Fielder's Court, Crown Street
Brentwood, Essex
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England



f
rest

A black and white illustration of a hooded assassin. The character is wearing a checkered tunic, a hooded cloak, and fingerless gloves. They are holding a long sword in their right hand and a dagger in their left hand. The character has a mask covering their eyes and a slight smile. The background is plain white.

53

Dwarf Knoll

by Eric Rowe

The following is an excerpt from the notes of Thorgal the Far Traveller, assistant to noted Grey Sage and Botanist Rodin Greenbeak. Despite their open antagonism towards each other, Thorgal was not implicated in Rodin's mysterious disappearance in 1616.

**Fire Season/Death Week/Clayday 1613**

We took shelter from the sweltering winds at the Oasis known as Dwarf Knoll. Here, several low rises break the fierce westerly winds enough for a few dozen trees to grow about the small oasis. The largest of the hills is Dwarf Knoll, which is known to be an ancient home of the Mostali. Even now the smallest of the four hills has atop it a poorly sculpted but heavily armed Mostali. One of our guards insisted that this was a real Mostali, just waiting for his next assignment, but the others laughed at him until he left the fire.

As is typical of the Praxian Oases, this one was settled by people known only as the Oasis folk. These people are remnants of a great race that occupied these lands during the Golden Age. All that remains now are small bands of survivors living near any oasis and generally regarded as dull-witted. Of all the sites we visited, though, this had by far the fewest inhabitants. I eventually confirmed there were only seven people living at the Oasis, all of whom were male. While this provoked my intellectual curiosity, my 'mentor' Rodin started squawking about some moss in a tree. I ignored him and took the time to learn of these odd people.

In general, I was quite disappointed in the whole place. The Mostali of Pavis had led me to believe this was a great sacred holy place. I expected enormous mining machines and building-sized piles of refined copper lying about. It looked more like a place for a Godsdays vacation. At least the Oasis Folk proved of some interest.

Their leader was Ogul, though he says his name once used to be much longer. Although Ogul seemed to know many languages, we settled on Pavic as the one in which we could best communicate. One thing I immediately noticed that differentiated these Oasis Folk from the others was their use of tattoos. Ogul had several on each arm, as well as a prominent picture of the stasis rune on his chin. Whenever I mentioned or questioned him about the tattoos he just shrugged, as if he himself did not know where they came from.

The two Oasis Folk who helped us with our animals were Ono and Tal; I never got the names of the other four. They all live in three small wooden huts spread evenly about the pool, close enough to be sheltered by the trees. I believe Ogul has one to himself, while the others sleep three apiece in the other huts.

While talking with Ogul, I noticed a few strange behaviours in the other Oasis Folk. After having cleaned our animals, Ono took a coloured stick from his hut and began beating the ground where they had trod. After several minutes of this he stopped and returned to lounging in the shade. I regrettably never asked about this obscure behaviour.

At one point I also noticed one of the others was up in the palms collecting dates. After obtaining a large quantity of dates he sat down and began inspecting them. It seemed every third one was separated from the others, polished and placed into a small bag. When the bag was full, the man took it to the entrance of the copper caves, and then tossed it in. When I asked, Ogul told me the caves get hungry, and people should not enter them.

In the oasis there were none of the lean-tos the Oasis People commonly use to store food and supplies about their camp. In most places I have seen these are well-stocked to provide raiding nomads easy access to what they wish to pillage. Walking about I discovered their limited supplies were stored in their houses, a dangerous tactic on the plains. But I was soon to learn the reason for their lack of fear.

As we were talking later, a small band of Sable Riders decided to pay a visit to the oasis. Surprisingly, they took nothing from the Oasis People. Instead, they quickly watered their beasts and rode quietly out of the oasis. Ogul acted as though he had not even noticed them, hardly pausing in his slow, monotonous Pavic. I again wanted to note this to Rodin, but he was busy paddling around in the pool with a bunch of reeds in his mouth.

Fortunately, this gave me more time to question our host about the oasis. He told me that long ago, when Genert ruled the land, the earth was full of useful things. One day a group of Mostali came and asked Genert if they could dig for metal in his earth. Being a kind god, he agreed. The Mostali quickly and efficiently raised several mounds to protect the heavy equipment that they were using to mine copper from the area. After many years the amount of copper grew less, and the times more menacing, so the Mostali closed down their machines and left.

Word is out at the Flintnail Temple in Pavis: the Dwarf Knoll mine has recently been re-surveyed, and there appear to be several locations with large amounts of copper remaining. An expedition is being formed to re-start some of the old mining equipment. The Mostali are asking for guards for the journey and to protect the oasis while they are underground setting up the defensive equipment. Of course, the Uz spies also learn about this, and have plans of their own.

The Lunar Administration of Pavis has decided to reopen the mine at Dwarf Knoll and is sending a survey team out to prepare the site. The players realise this will mean the total destruction of the oasis and anything nearby due to the "minimal environmental impact" of the modern and efficient Lunar mining methods. For some reason, a Sable clan appears to fear this happening. They have sent a representative to the players to offer payment (in Sable furs) if they can stop the Lunar Survey. If the players balk at offending the Lunars, the Sable representative will double his offer before looking elsewhere for aid.



**Next Issue !
The Prax Special -
Part Deux**

Letters Page

Andrew Behan
Ranelagh, Dublin

I don't agree with Nick Brooke's characterisation of gifts and geases. Humakti geases seem to me to be closely analogous to the vows taken by the Christian religions. Early on the history of the Church vows were independent of each other. The existence of a vow of sexual abstinence implied a culture which disapproved of sexual licence but saw universal abstinence as impractical (more because normal people were considered too weak willed rather than out of any concern for the continuation of the species).

Furthermore, Yelmations and Humakti are sub-cultures of the Theyalan culture. Rather than see geases purely in a cult context we should bear in mind that in the context of a broader culture these prohibitions are genuine sacrifices.

Vesa Lehtinen
Tampere, Finland

I have assumed that all Humakti do know about all geases of the religion. Geasa define activities all of them are encouraged to avoid. By accepting a geas a warrior tries to approach a divine ideal that Humakt represents.

All the warriors of the world are not Humakti, though. And if all Humakti behaved exactly alike, they would not be treated as powerful warriors but as stubborn buffoons who would be easy to defeat by exploiting their honour code. That is true for most other warrior-cults too.

War isn't an orderly thing. Often mere survival is paramount. Sometimes there is no way anybody can survive except by ways that would be declared immoral or unethical in a normal situation. If there is no other way than to use poison, ambush the enemy or use projectile weapons, somebody who will not suffer from reprisals would be sent to do it. Not Swords, surely: they are leaders, able to send somebody to do the dirty work, and can afford to behave according to their tenets. Besides, they are more powerful and skilful, able to survive a situation that a normal warrior could not escape alive.

Humakti wouldn't behave this way? Then they would all be dead.

Stuart Riseborough
Norwich, Norfolk

I really enjoyed the Western issue. My favourite so far I think. The single subject issues have worked very well, although the Pamaltelan special was somewhat too esoteric for my tastes. The balance between "Gloranthan Lore" and playability is a delicate one, but all in all Tales does a good job.

The Malkioni sects articles on Rokarism and Hrestoli beliefs were excellent, and the "Beyond the Building Wall" scenario matched the Sea Special issue 10 for interest.

I always look forward to Tales dropping through my letter box, and it always finds ways to inspire the campaigns I run, and the characters my friends play.

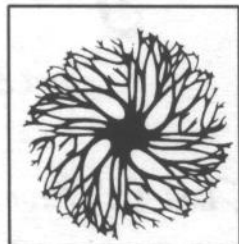
Thank you for all your hard work and devotion. Five of us in Norwich appreciate it, anyway.

De Ed: Unfortunately, the Beyond the Building Wall scenario was missing the Capratis stats. MOB has now produced a set of errata which also includes a better map of Wyrms Hold. Send an SSAE to your local Tales rep for a copy.

Plants of Dwarf Knoll

More sections from Noted Botanist Rodin Greenbeak

(as translated by Eric Rowe)



GAGARTH'S GIFTS (*Scrub Burrs*)

Gagarthus Fruticis

The first thing we did upon arrival at Dwarf Knoll was have the servant check us and the animals over for burrs. These so-called Gifts of

Gagarth are often found in the hot winds of Prax. They arise as seed pods upon one of the typical scrub bushes of the Praxian wastes. The only way to identify them is in early Fire Season, when their seeds begin to dry into wicked burrs. These are then blown from the plant into the blustering winds. Even after they fall, they may be blown about again, creating a hazard for the traveller all year long.

The main problem with these burrs is that they are designed to burrow slowly into whatever they catch on to, which is everything from clothes to fur to feathers. If they succeed in working their way into the skin they can lame animals, or enable easy infection by disease spirits. Natives are the best at finding them hidden upon the beasts, having to live with them all the time.

I ate several dried burrs, but only found that while crunchy, they gave me a sore throat. If properly prepared, by having the sharp points removed, I feel the burrs may prove an excellent salad topping.

Gamemaster Notes:

(1) Any windy day in Prax all creatures should make a POWx5 roll. Anyone failing has had 1d3 burrs catch on them somewhere. Once on a target, a simple search roll success will find them all. Those familiar with the object or beast they are searching may be given a bonus determined by the gamemaster. Multiple people may search anything, at five minutes a search. If the burrs are not found they will start to irritate in two full days, then will start to cause a point of damage every day after the first week until removed.

(2) An unknown mechanism causes both infection and possession disease spirits to favour attacking those with internal burrs instead of their burr-free neighbours.



LOAFLEAF (*Oasis Tuber*)

Tardus Harunus

Despite its name, the edible part of Loafleaf is the tuber. It is a common sight at Praxian Oases and undoubtedly gives the oasis people their sloth-like condition. At Dwarf Knoll oasis I found hundreds of these plants, and noticed the Oasis Folk chewing on them as they moved

about. I also noticed my assistant chewing on one. It didn't seem to affect or slow him down, but with him, who could tell?

Loafleaf is easy to pick apart from other water-reeds. The tips are tripartite, with each one competing to see if it can droop the lowest. The stem colour is a standard reed-green. The tuber starts off green at the top

and blends slowly into a light-red as it bulges to a width of about three fingers. The tallest reed I found there was about two metres in height, though the majority were much smaller.

I was unwilling to test the taste of the tuber myself, settling for its effect on my assistant and common knowledge to determine that while having a pleasant, minty taste, it numbs the brain. I did risk enough to taste the reeds themselves, and found them to also contain the excellent minty flavour of the tuber. I noticed no ill effect as I munched happily on them during my evening swim.

Gamemaster Notes:

(1) Despite Rodin's acceptance of common belief, Loafleaf does not in fact dull a person's facilities. This is just an incorrect inference based on the behaviour of Oasis Folk and the use of Loafleaf as a staple food source.



YAMSUR'S BEARD (*Oasis Tree Moss*)

Flavus Muscus

I was resting comfortably in the shade of Dwarf Knoll, the only protection from the blazing heat of a Praxian Fire Season, when I spotted a glint of yellow in one of the trees. I suspected that it might be a patch of Yamsur's Beard, a dye plant I had heard about from a merchant in Pavis. To confirm my suspicions I asked my assistant Thorgal to get it for me, but that lazy toad was too busy flapping his lips with one of the slow-witted Oasis Folk. After a rather strenuous climb I was rewarded with confirmation of my guess. I obtained a large handful of Yamsur's Beard for study.

My testing kit was running low on supplies, but I did manage a few rudimentary experiments. As the merchant had said, this Moss creates a remarkably bright yellow dye, a favourite among the Yelmations of the river valley. Thorough rinsing proved the dye held well, in fact, a little too well. It took several molts to return some of my parts to their natural colours.

As to its taste, it is nothing like the colourful display it presents. I have had more flavourful dry grass. It is also possible that the Moss was responsible for some severe cramps I had later that day, but I also suspect my assistant's lunch preparations. I resolved to save the rest of the Moss as a gift to a lady-friend of my in Sun Valley.

Gamemaster Notes:

(1) Yamsur's beard produces a vibrant Yellow dye, often reserved for only the highest ranking members of Solar Cults in the area. It is very strong, and will stain hands as well, if you are as careless as Rodin tends to be.



Things that Love Night

part 3

by Alan La Vergne

Shammat smiled, a small crystalline wraith of measureless corruptibility. His eyes, clear and empty, commanded Cassine's frozen crouch on the bed above Samm's twisted wreckage. Then he turned them on Zero. Zero felt himself being absorbed. There was a kind of innocence there, an irrelevance of good and evil, an unquestioning will to exist. Zero could understand. It was only natural...

He wrenched his gaze away from those limitless eyes. Vampire eyes invited you to dive for their secrets, secrets which had already pulled Samm under, secrets which weren't there. Zero looked away.

Cassine was beyond rescue. His friends were dead. He had to get out of here.

He had decided too late. Shammat was between him and the door. The only escape route now was through the unshuttered window into the open air, down to the stony courtyard five meters below. As if anticipating his intent, Shammat calmly drifted to one side, penning Zero in his corner. Snapdragon hadn't hesitated. She might not have recognized Shammat as a vampire, but she must have known he was something monstrous and cruel. Decision had taken but an instant. She had hurtled across the room to save her husband.

And I thought about running away, thought Zero. Well, Snapdragon, fair enough. We fight to the end now. He raised the chair again.

Shammat stopped. "How long can you hold it like that?" he asked pleasantly.

Zero watched Shammat's knees, to get as much warning as possible when Shammat started to move. But the vampire was right. Zero was either going to have to lower the chair or attack.

"I don't usually care for dessert blood at this early hour," continued the vampire. "I can tell that yours is going to be much too sugar-laden for my taste. It would certainly make my diet a lot more enjoyable if people would eat balanced meals. Too many pastries, right?" He shook his head mournfully as Zero lowered the chair a little. "I have to admit that I would choose a different meal if a more appetizing one presented itself. But Cassine over there is hardly nourishing any more, and for one of my breed, only living bodies count. That's one of..."

Shammat was expecting Zero's lunge, of course, but misjudged the speed of it. Instead of swinging the chair, Zero jammed it directly in Shammat's face. The vampire staggered back, arms swinging. Zero lunged after him. Now he swung the chair, and it caromed off Shammat's shoulder. Shammat fell slowly to one side, put down his right arm, and balanced for a moment like a tripod. Again the chair descended, on one of the arched thighs, and the tripod gave way. Once more the vampire's body collapsed without hurry toward the floor. He hadn't lost the

peaceful smile. Injured but unruffled, he slithered away from Zero. He raised his arm.

Magic! The vampire, his thirst just slaked at the well of Samm's soul, would be awash with Power. Zero would have no chance. Putting all his strength into a last desperate effort, he slammed the splintering chair at Shammat's head.

The legs struck the floor within an inch of Shammat's left temple. First one leg snapped, then another. The breaks took much of the force from the blow. The seat caromed off the green thing's chest.

The world changed.

Things are really confusing, thought Zero. Will I ever be able to figure this stuff out? For one thing, there's a naked girl on the bed. Kind of skinny. But naked girls are good for something or other. I've seen pictures of them. There's another one on the floor over there, only she isn't naked. The red and brown patterns in her hair are fascinating. I could sit and stare at them for hours. I wonder why she's sleeping on the floor. Somebody ought to remind her to breathe too. The guy by the bed looks familiar. I wonder if he's a bad person. I know some bad persons. But he's sleeping too. There's another one. A naked boy. If I remember right, it's only naked *girls* that are supposed to be fun. He's got a nice smile, though. Maybe he's a friend of mine. Funny, I don't remember any green friends, but it's so hard to be sure about things these days.

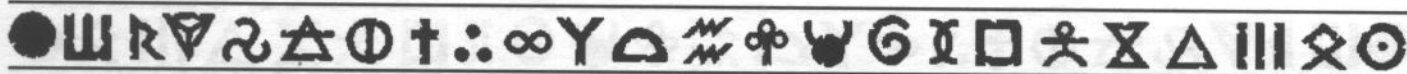
He wants me to lie down on the floor. I don't know. It's kind of a long drop. It's so hard to take care of everything at once if I try to move. If I concentrate on my knees, my elbows misbehave. But he says I look tired. He's probably right. Sleeping on the floor's not too bad, I guess. The other two are doing it. There must be a reason.

The seat of the chair exploded into Zero's head, and he went down like a stone. Shammat could have hit him harder. He was still conscious.

Whatever spell that was, Zero knew, it had allowed the vampire to recover.

Without noticeable effort, Shammat ripped Zero's tunic away from his neck and shoulders. Through the continuous roar of pain, Zero saw the vampire's fangs slide into position. "I sure hope you haven't been eating too much garlic," said Shammat, as if their previous conversation had not been interrupted.

Zero raised his arms to protect his neck. The fangs sank almost painlessly into his side. For some reason, it was terribly easy to submit. After a moment, Shammat sat up. He wiped his mouth on Zero's shirt. "You know," he said sociably, "most people think we go straight for the jugular vein. Anybody who knows anything about blood understands that doesn't make any sense. Arterial blood is much more nutritious



than venous. The carotid artery is also in the neck, but of course, people always try to protect it. What they don't know is that their arm motions expose the brachial artery, in the armpit. That's even closer to the heart, just about the freshest blood you can get. Unfortunately, not everybody bathes as often as they should. Some of the odors..." He wrinkled a fastidious nose. "With the ladies, we take the femoral artery every time. Just ask Cassine. Mortal pleasures just can't begin to compare. They keep coming back for more." Shammatt smiled again.

To distract Shammat, he asked, "Aren't there female vampires too?" Shammat shrugged. "Sure. But they've got their own ideas of fun. Uppity creatures mostly. And, of course, no blood. Now, if you'll excuse me..." He lowered his head again.

Flat on his back, with Shammat hunched over him, he couldn't see the window. Even if he could, he didn't want to. Either the elemental was forming out there or it wasn't. If it was, he'd find out soon enough. If it wasn't...

"What is it?" demanded Shammat, looking at him.

"My arm's going to sleep."

Momentary elation shot through him, and his flesh quivered. At the same instant, Shammat's fangs sank into his other side. He held his breath, hoping Shammat would think it was pain. His blood began to trickle into the vampire's mouth.

"Sorry. See the naked green guy? He's on top of me. I want you to reach through the window and grab him. All right?"

"Sure, boss."

The air roared. Across the room, the shutters flapped and crashed against the side of the house. Shammatt sprang around into a crouch, head cocked, a foam of blood on his lips. An insubstantial fist blocked the window, the thumb protruding through. The thumb was as big as Zero's chest. "It doesn't fit," said the voice in his head.

"Break in!" thought Zero. "Can you do it?"

"Am I supposed to do it, or answer your dumb questions?"

The thumb disappeared. Shammat's lemur face turned toward Zero. The pool eyes sought his. Zero looked away.

"Shammat!" It was Cassine, from the bed. "What's going on?"

The planks around the window exploded inward. Wood shrieked and gave way. Pieces sliced through the air, and Shammatt and Zero rolled for cover. Shammatt landed on all fours, unscathed, looking more feral than ever. A sliver caught Zero on the arm. Cassine, mobilized at last, jumped from the bed and scurried across the room, a grotesque spindle figure, skin pale as cave mushrooms. She flung herself in front

of Shammat. Through the jagged shards of the destroyed wall came a ghostly fist, slamming more boards out of the way, clearing and enlarging the opening. The air in the room shuddered and groaned under the force of wind corporate. The noise was tremendous. The floor sagged beneath Zero's feet with each blow. Shammat backed away from the hurricane, thrust out an arm, and caught Cassine under the chin as she reached for him, rocking her head back. She collapsed with a last sighing wail. The ceiling was beginning to buckle. The fist opened, became grasping fingers, and sought the vampire.

Screams from downstairs, upstairs, outside, howls from all over jumbled into the room as the building continued to rock from the buffeting of the elemental. Shammat's greenish skin grew sallow, wispy at the boundaries. Zero rammed his hand in his pocket, ripped open a seam, found the stone, scrambled it out onto the floor, where it skittered across toward Shammat. "Oh, no," he shouted, horror in his voice. "*My truestone!*"

By the door, Zero thought. Hurry!

Shammat braced a foot against the jamb, and two immensely powerful arms like temple lintels pulled at the door. It screeched as the wood gave, and yielded in infinitely reluctant jerks, but still held. Shammat gave the door another huge effort. The vampire's bare back rippled with desperation and urgency. The door creaked, but would not open. A moment later, the wind's thumb and forefinger wrapped around Shammat's torso.

With a violent lurch, Shammatt twisted free. His eyes searched for an escape route. With inhuman agility he leaped over the questing fingers again, back to the door, then to the left wall, trying to squeeze through an opening created by the battering the building was undergoing, trying to peel back the obstructing timber, leaping away just ahead of the elemental's fingers, leaping *toward* the window, striving for the gap between roiling wrist and shattered wall, only to be slammed to the floor by a sideswipe, but back on his feet in a fraction of a second.

With grim satisfaction, Zero at last saw indecision in the vampire's face. He knew what Shammat was thinking: *If I turn to smoke, I can't take it with me.* A truestone, a city's ransom, a prince's fortune: how could he leave it behind? Greed warred with fear. Neither could prevail absolutely. Zero sensed that Shammat was steeling himself to abandon it. "Give it up," he said sarcastically. "You'll never get away with it."

If the vampire heard, he gave no sign. But his paw tightened on the stone.

With alarm, Zero saw a gap widening in the wall beside the door. Shammat's eyes picked it up at the same moment. He launched himself at the buckling wood. Zero arrived simultaneously, collided with Shammat, staggered back stunned, but Shammat was also turned aside, knocked back into the fingers coiling around the room. Rebounding, Shammat hurled himself at Zero. The marble fingers dug into Zero's throat, clamped around his windpipe.

"Call it off!" hissed Shammat. "Call it off or I'll rip your neck apart."

"It's not mine."

"Like hell it isn't!" The red mouth snarled. Nails gripped, arm tensed for the pull. "CALL IT OFF!"



The room lit up like day, the sun rising in a cave.

"NGAAAH!" howled the vampire, and flung an arm over his eyes. The fingers of the elemental, now too bright to look at directly, wrapped around the paralyzed vampire. The grip tightened, squeezed. Shammatt writhed in agony, unable to see, hammered by the glare. The truestone fell from his flailing hand.

To the well! Zero bellowed within his own head. "Push it into the well and hold it under the water!"

The blinding tornado roared out of the room. Zero stumbled to the gaping wound in the wall, grasped a beam, and leaned out.

It was the first glimpse he had gotten of the entire sylph. Zero was a hard man to impress, but it struck him dumb with awe. An immense whirling humanoid storm, at least ten meters high, with fat arms and legs, and an enormous grinning mouth, was on fire, no, glowing like the sun itself, bathing the entire courtyard in its glare, lighting up the sides of houses a block away. In one plump hand, Shammatt struggled and cursed. The hand plummeted toward the well.

At the last instant, Shammatt screamed, an unearthly, demonic, despairing cry. It might have been a call for help. Zero shivered. The elemental's hand smashed through the well housing, boring down into the shaft. The terrible cry was cut off. A bellowing angry gout of steam spurted up out of the demolished well, mixing with the elemental in a cauldron of stormcloud. The elements — air, and fire, and water — had had their way.

Zero saw the woman in the window of the adjacent house, waving her hands.

"Arriet," he gasped, "you're an angel." He hung groggily on the broken windowframe. "I won't forget it."

"The pleasure was mine," she called back. Her smile was grim, with a lot of teeth. "I knew, sooner or later, I'd need that Day."

Hesmit came running out of the building on the other side, and looked up in dismay at the ruined rear face of his rental property.

"Oh, no!" he wailed. "My building! What have you done to my house?" Zero looked down at the short man with the red goatee. "I don't think I'm interested in buying it any more," he said.

"I'm sorry," said the white-robed woman behind the counter. Her long fingers tapped impatiently. "I've explained all this before. We're a small temple and we have to set priorities. If we didn't stick to our regulations, we'd never manage."

"What's the use, Zero?" Samm was slouched apathetically on the bench next to Snapdragon's body. He looked like a vacant house, scoured on the inside by what had happened to him. By contrast his wife looked much healthier. Magical healing had knit her bones, sealed her wounds, kept her blood fresh. It just couldn't bring her back to life.

Zero held his anger in check with difficulty. "She died fighting a vampire. In my book, that makes her a hero. You want to explain to me who it is that's more deserving, and why?"

"I advise you to adopt a different tone," said the woman. "I've told you before, we only do Resurrections for cash. There are too many candidates, and not enough ritual time and power to go around. We have to trim the list somehow. Requiring the money in advance is one way."

"I see. Deeds don't count."

The woman had a long nose. She looked down it. "Relatives have a way of magnifying the deceased's accomplishments."

Just a little jostle, he said in his head.

The woman's icy smile vanished, replaced by fear, as the walls creaked. Then she recovered herself. "Threats of violence will certainly do your cause no good, I can assure you of that."

The elemental had carried Snapdragon here, while Zero and Samm followed on foot. Now it waited outside.

The healing would keep Snapdragon's brain alive for another couple of days. Muscles and motor nerves began to degenerate within

an hour or two. Zero looked at her body, thought of her unhesitating charge across the room. Decay might already be eating at her.

"You simply must understand our position," said the woman. "We have three times as many candidates for Resurrection as we can handle. We can arrange for only four a week. This means we have to have criteria."

"It means you are people of stone," said Zero bitterly.

Her face was a mask. She didn't answer.

"All right," said Zero. "Will you take this?"

"What is it?"

"A truestone."

The woman stared skeptically at the rock. "If that's genuine, it's a lot to be just carrying around. Is it yours?"

Zero heard the elemental blowing outside. "No," he said at last.

"Then we couldn't possibly accept it."

Samm was holding Snapdragon's head in his lap.

"Wait here," Zero told him. "I know where to get the money."

The alchemist was sitting in a battered chair with one leg which didn't touch the floor. He was pulled up to a small table covered with a green waxed cloth. Hunched over his work, he was grinding something in a mortar, his right elbow making circles. There was a long history of concoction and smoke in the air.

The alchemist didn't look up as Zero opened the door, without knocking, but the other man in the room, who was perched on a tall stool, looking down on the alchemist's activities, did. He was a squat, solid person the color of pale sand, with bushy hair and eyebrows, and eyes which seemed to have teeth. He looked mildly at Zero, with a dangerous indifference. His name was Eshnael, and he was the chief alchemist. He had no living enemies. "Verek!" said Zero sharply.

The little chemist looked up. "Oh, hullo, Zero. How's the old sleuth biz?"

"You have an account to settle."

"How did you know I was here? I don't have any idea what you're talking about."

"There are only two places an alchemist might feel safe from other alchemists. One is in an Imperial prison. The other is right here in the temple. And we know Verek isn't in prison, because he's been out on the street selling black-market dust."

"I'd be careful if I were you," put in Eshnael calmly. "Verek is my..." "You stay out of this," said Zero. "Your turn will come in a minute. You have some things to answer for, too."

Eshnael's eyes widened, but he did not reply.

"I bring you news of Cassine," said Zero to Verek.

Verek's eyes glittered with malice. "Somebody got hurt? Too bad, I'd say. Serves him right."

"Him?"

"Whoever it was, he got his just deserts."

"And what did Cassine deserve?"

Verek was puzzled. "Why, did something happen to her? She knew about the dangerous places."

"But you didn't, you overconfident twirp." Zero felt the anger filling him, but he kept his voice cold. "You didn't have the foggiest idea who or what you were dealing with. You could have killed me, though, or one of my friends."

Without raising his voice, Eshnael broke in. "If you don't mind, could you please explain to me, at least, what is going on?"

"You do it, Verek," said Zero. "Explain why your wife is practically dead, will be for months. Explain to him why she's out of her mind, and probably will never get back in." Zero rapped on the table. "Go ahead, explain."

"What happened to her, man? I didn't do it, whatever it was. The guy who did it will pay, I promise you that."

"I was hoping you'd say that," said Zero. "Like I said. There's a bill."



"Right," interrupted Zero. "And tell him who the little bird was, that gave you this helpful tip."

Verek glared stubbornly, without speaking.

"That sounds like a good idea," said Eshnael. "Is it anybody I know?" Verek swallowed hard, and rubbed his sleeve across his forehead. Reluctantly, painfully, he said: "Arden."

"Precisely," said Zero, into the stillness of the alchemy chamber. "Helpful little Arden, who is sporting some nice jewelry she can't possibly afford. Where did she get the pin, Veker? And the bracelet? Somebody been giving her presents?"

Verek shrugged sullenly. "So what?"

"You're a dupe, Verek," said Zero. "A dupe and an idiot. Snails and frogs could outwit you." He picked up a book at random from the table next to Eshnael. "Animal toxins" was the title. He flipped a few pages. "Hell, snail shells could keep up with you." He replaced the book.

"Shove it, Zero."

Zero spoke slowly and deliberately. "Who do you think it was, genius, who set the vampire on your wife?"

Verek went white.

"That's right, chump. Sweet little Arden, with the funny story about her name. It was all her idea."

Verek shook his head weakly.

Zero was implacable. "She never belonged to you at all. She just exploited your vanity, and your possessiveness. The vampire owned her, just like he owned Cassine after you abandoned her. Shammat was his name, and he played you like a trained rat."

"You're making this all up," shouted Verek.

"The way I figure it," continued Zero, as if nothing had been said, "Shammat was Hezbin and Hesmit's father. He must have been a vampire's apprentice, or whatever it is that vampires have, at the time of Day At Night, seventeen years ago. Perhaps, probably, his master was among the vampires wiped out in that battle. Cassine's parents and Arden's parents were soldiers in the regiment that won it, even though Cassine's didn't survive. It must have seemed like a perfect vengeance, seducing and corrupting one of the daughters and feeding on the other." He paused, recalling Cassine's bleached, meager body. "It must have been very satisfying."

"It couldn't have been that way," protested Verek after a long silence. Nobody bothered to respond.

"Arden," said Eshnael at last.

"Her mother, Arriet, was almost certainly next on the list."

"It's hard to believe."

"Arriet saved my life. I owe her. So if Arden can be... Well, any leniency she can be made to earn..." Zero looked at Eshnael.

"It won't be easy," said the alchemist, after prolonged thought. "Maybe you can divert a little effort from your poison studies. Try developing something to reverse corruption." Then Zero added, "Just don't let Verek work on it."

"Yes," said Eshnael, "there is the matter of Verek's poor judgment to deal with. An alchemist has to be very careful."

"Before you embark on your endearing internal disciplinary proceedings, how about paying for the Resurrection of my friend? The Healers won't do it on credit."

Without a word, Eshnael turned and left the room. Verek put his head down onto his arms and started to cry. Zero watched the shaking back and felt no pity.

Eshnael returned with a large leather bundle. "This contains eighty gold coins. That should cover it."

"You might even get some change," said Zero. After a moment, he went on, "There is one other thing. There's a guy in the warehouse district hacking up animals, including humanoids, to make powders which he claims will restore virility. You know of him?"

"Haptor?" Eshnael made an expression of distaste. "I know of him, yes."

"Put him out of business. Make sure he doesn't do it any more, here or anywhere else."

"I can handle that. Consider it done." He smiled faintly. "I take it you want me just to close the operation, not dispose of him in a permanent fashion."

"Good guess."

Eshnael frowned. "Zero, I appreciate your efforts in this matter, and your discretion." He picked up the animal toxins book, and opened it. "Here's a good one. From a marine scorpion. Takes only a few seconds to work, and the lethal dose is so tiny it's invisible. Tastes like strawberries, it says here, although how they found out I don't know." He snapped the book shut. "I also want to express my regret that this department took insufficient safeguards during the Verek project. But just one thing, Zero."

"Yes?"

"Don't ever talk to me like that again," said one of the most dangerous men in the city.

Zero tucked the bag of coins under his arm. "Yes, sir," he said.

The End. (Hoorah!)

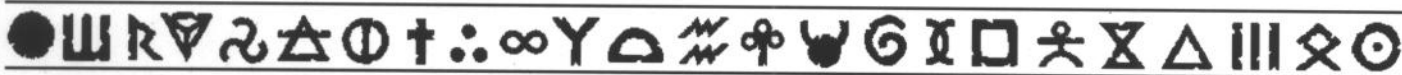


Another Note from Nochet

[xxix.445.8]

Part of the rites of mastery for followers of the Centipede style of Kralori martial arts requires the initiate to be locked in a furnished room overnight. During his short imprisonment the initiate must search and locate small pebbles which have been hidden within the room. The number of pebbles hidden remains unknown to the initiate until after the test. How successful the initiate is depends on how many pebbles he finds. This establishes where in the hierarchy he will be placed. He cannot change from that place until he takes the Pebble test again. An initiate doing the test for the first time usually finds four or five small stones. Although unconfirmed, reports state that Shao Yao Lin, the current master of masters, found seventy-two pebbles on his first attempt. Failure to find any pebbles or less pebbles than the last attempt leads to death of the testee. This has caused many of the disciples of this form to remain initiates or low-ranking masters although their technical skills are very high.

Shyntahru the Scrutable, beardless sage of the east.



Spirit Cults



Spirit cults are not an uncommon Gloranthan phenomenon. Though spirit cults have similarities to ordinary cults, temporary membership in most spirit cults is rarely frowned on by any religion. Thus, the storm-worshippers of Enkloso frequently call upon the darkness demon Revillo without offending Orlanth.

Everywhere that spirit magic is popular, people can contact one or more special spirits and provide it with worship in return for knowledge of special magic. Spirit cults are less common in civilised areas, for the spirits themselves are weaker here. Many spirits, especially malignant ones, have been driven into the wilderness. Magic lands such as Kimos or Prax have many powerful spirit cults.

The shaman must first contact the spirit. Usually a shaman must cast a special summon spell specific to the spirit (hence Summon Frog Woman, Summon Snake-Eater, etc.). These spirits are usually local, and can only be contacted in their own native area. The spirit of Raven, for instance, may only be summoned in the Wastelands and Pent. The Travelling Stone must be contacted at the stone itself in Dragon Pass. The Snake-Eater's minions can only be obtained at the Wheeled Tower in Kimos. Sometimes a focus of power (an idol, relic, or holy object) is also required. In most lands, such holy objects are often held by long-established pseudo-cults or shamanic traditions. Thus, it is rare that an independent shaman in Prax can contact Oakfed, for the pieces of charred wood required to contact him are monopolised by his the shamans who run his semi-permanent cult.

Once the spirit is contacted, it manifests itself at the site, where the shaman should have assembled his followers. All present now sacrifice one point of POW to the spirit. This does not increase the spirit's POW, but sets up a link between the spirit and its new worshipers. Some spirits may require additional restrictions of their worshipers.

The spirit can grant no benefits to its followers until it has been worshipped. At least once a season, a worship service must be held in which each of the spirit's vowed worshipers sacrifice all their MP but one to the spirit. Roll 1D100 – if the total is equal to or less than the total number of participating worshipers, the service succeeds. Otherwise, the link with the spirit is broken, and the whole process must be begun again.

As long as the spirit is being successfully worshipped once a season, the shaman can sacrifice for the spirit's single Rune magic spell, thus gaining reusable divine magic. The spirit's other worshipers can sacrifice for the spell on a one-use basis. Sometimes the spirit's spell is only one-use and so only the shaman can learn it. Once the spirit is no longer actively worshipped, the shaman's learned spells become one-use for him, as well. The spell learned is specific to the spirit. It is sometimes unique such as Frog Woman's Leap spell, but sometimes is a common Rune spell, such as the Ruby Tree's Warding.

A rare spirit knows more than one Rune spell. Even these spirits can normally grant only their main Rune spell to worshipers. During seasons in which a special success is obtained on the worship service, the worshipers can sacrifice for the spirit's other special Rune spell(s). In Prax, these deities include only the Great Spirits: Malia, Oakfed, Wild Hunter, and Zola Fel.

Sometimes a shaman can contact an actual minor deity, who possesses the common Rune spells. During seasons in which a critical success is obtained on the seasonal worship roll, the worshipers will be able to sacrifice for the spirit's common Rune spells. Such spirits are minor gods, and probably worshipped as true deities somewhere on Glorantha. Almost all such spirits require special actions on the part of their worshipers.

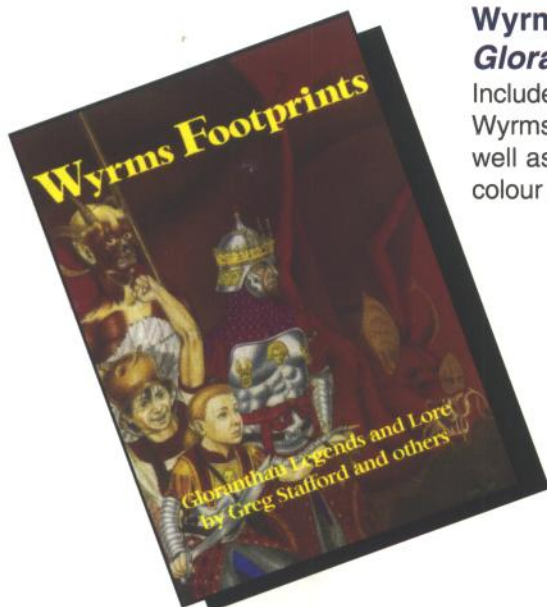
When a shaman contacts a god using this method, the god acts as does any other spirit. Such worship is usually considered false and heretical by the god's "true" initiates.

In Prax most shamans are members of the Waha cult. Thus, most shamans who contact these spirits will have access to the common Divine spells of Extension and Spellteaching (for Waha spirit spells), in addition to some special Waha spells.

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[xxix.445.1c] Fragments of the notebook of Lucien the Diviner, master of natural philosophy: "...it is known that certain geographical localities provide a focus for penetration to the other side for certain cults, the metaphysical mechanics involved being inexplicable, it remains only to note that the effects of the transfer depend upon the day of the year... for example, in the lands of the Sun, worshippers of Yelmario may quest for their god by entering a certain retirement tower on any holy days of the sun. The location of the temple is not recorded. ...and all agreed that if the initial conditions of time and space are favourable, that the god may offer counsel, and that even mortal men may scour the dead scrolls for news of their fate ...such as the Orlanthi who throw themselves to the winds from the height of the Old Wind temple to begin their quest ...where the elements have power to aid the transition. ...but where the path is taken alone without aid, propitious sacrifice and holy alliances ...these ways are seldom documented, but occur rarely, spelling disaster for the unlikely participant ...and are generally held to deny analysis... the analogue to chaos is self-evident ...not all of the being may cross, and some may be lost forever ...such identities are forever distorted by their experiences, beyond recognition ...the solution to all problems lies within the uncharted realm of the desynchronous quest, but the route of the quest itself defies prediction ... the individual, being unable to enforce its own illusory time, becomes lost in a sea of oblivion."

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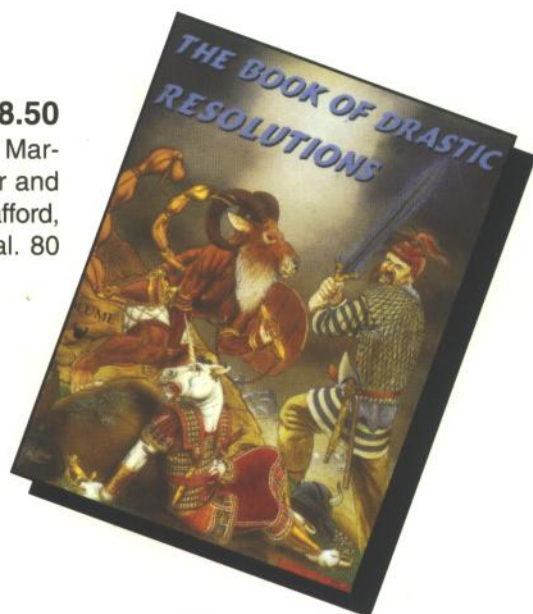
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