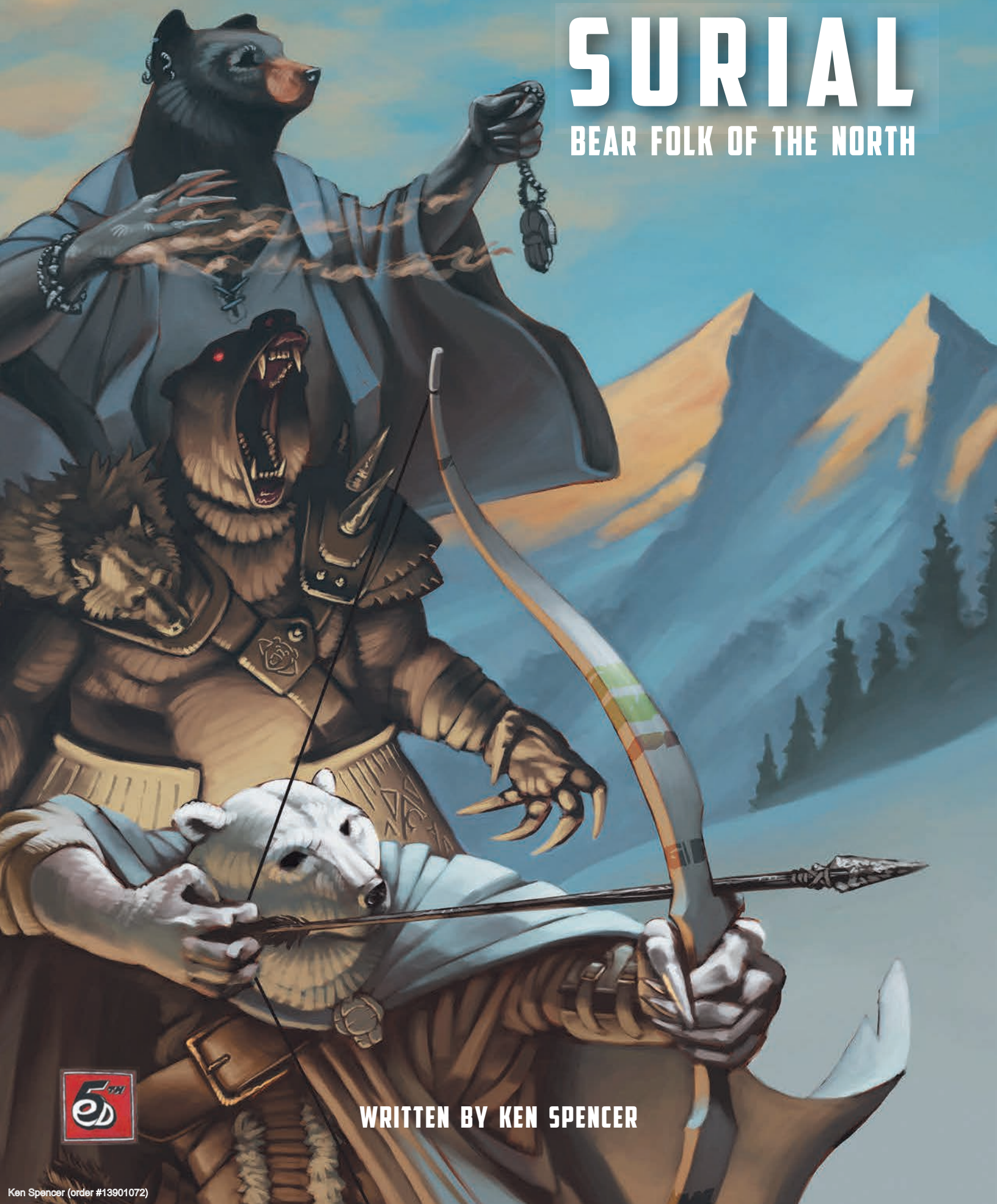


# SURIAL

BEAR FOLK OF THE NORTH



WRITTEN BY KEN SPENCER



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**Author's Dedication:** To all the bad bear jokes uttered during playtesting, and the horrible character names such as Beary Manilow. Next time, maybe we could playtest just the bare essentials.

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## Surial

The bear like Surial dwell in the frigid lands of the north, deep in high mountain ranges, among the evergreen trees of boreal forests, along floes of sea ice, and on the edges of the arctic tundra. In these lands, mostly forsaken by other races, the Surial are free to live the quiet lives they prefer, fishing, hunting, foraging, and tending to the needs of the natural world. To outsiders they are a peaceful people and so rarely seen that a visit by a single Surial is an event to be remembered.

### Kind Until Pushed

Surial have a reputation for kindness and healing gifts. They are slow to act, willing to wait patiently for wisdom to guide them and for all things to come to fruition. Many who suffer from an illness or grievous injury seek out a Surial healer, and if they can find one then relief is swift. Those Surial who leave to wander the world often find themselves lured into service as doctors, called to plague stricken lands, and sought after by the ill and infirm.

Their gentleness belies an easily roused seething anger. When pressed and given no other choice, or simply greatly annoyed, a Surial can become a rampaging beast of war, sowing destruction and death as easily as it once tended the gardens of kindness. An angry Surial is a terrifying sight, hundreds of pounds of rampaging beast wielding weapons in mighty hands and bellowing terrible war cries.

### Nature's Wardens

Created by the spirits of nature to protect the wild lands of the north, the Surial take this responsibility seriously. They spread their healing, stopping disease and coming to the rescue when accidents befall the animals of their lands. They do not heal everyone, for they know that nature must weed out the foolish and that predator must stalk and kill prey. The Surial are hunters after all, though they



will happily gorge themselves on berries, nuts, and honey. They truly come into their role when rapacious invaders, otherworldly horrors, and other vile things threaten the natural world.

Currently, the Surial are engaged in a long war against the hosts of G'Halithik the Despoiler, a demonic being who seeks to turn the entire world into one great wasteland. This war began generations ago and promises to continue for generations to come, and although not well known outside the boreal wilderness, the Surial were made to face such a threat and are willing to do so alone. Many evil creatures have flocked to G'Halithik's banners or have come north hoping to hide in the vast wilderness.





## Beholden to No Gods

Surial do not worship gods, though they do show respect and veneration towards the spirits of nature. They do not hate the gods, nor do they feel they need them. To build a temple seems to be a waste of resources to them, a house would be a better option, and leaving the land to provide would be the best. The spirits of nature make little demand upon the Surial, but are certainly powerful forces in the world that are worthy of respect. From time to time, a Surial will leave a small offering to the spirits of nature in the form of a ritual of thanks, such as a song sung from a mountain peak, a short poem recited at the base of a waterfall, or the ashes of burned food cast into the wind. Mostly, they show their reverence by following taboos, voluntary restrictions on their actions.



## Born of the Spirits of Nature

In ages past the spirits of nature decided that they needed something like a human in order to defend their lands and communicate with humanity and other intelligent races. All the great spirits were invited to come and help, and the lesser spirits were left to watch over forests and mountains, rivers and swamps. The great spirits wrestled to see what

form the new race would take, and Bear won out. However, Monkey pointed that the bear's paws were not well suited to making tools, and it spent too much time on all fours to stand tall against man. After much debate, it was decided to take the bear and mix in a bit of human, but just the best parts. Adding a fragment of humanity's clever tools making, as well as language, and the need to gather in groups to Bear.

While this mixing and debate continued, the lesser spirits of nature grew restless. Coyote and the Breeze of Sumer Nights wandered off from their duties and snuck into the cave where the greater spirits were making the new race. Breeze of Summer Nights was not good at stealth and blew in through the cave mouth. Desperately seeking some place to hide, it slid into the nascent Surial the greater spirits were making, thus gifting the race with a kind and gentle, if somewhat awkward, spirit. Coyote was furious that its companion could be so clumsy and foolish, and jealous that Breeze of Summer Night had added itself to the new race. In a fit of pique, Coyote snarled and spat and that angry spittle flew through the cave and landed upon the nascent Surial. Thus, the Surial were created with bear's strength, nature's wisdom, man's cleverness, Breeze of Summer Night's gentle comfort, and Coyote's angry spite.

**Ability Scores.** Your Wisdom increases by 2.

**Age.** Surial often spend the winter months in hibernation, thus extending their already long lives to two or three hundred summers.

**Alignment.** Attuned to both the natural world and to the needs of the less fortunate, Surial tend towards both Neutrality and Good. They place great emphasis on personal freedom and responsibility, and are most commonly Chaotic.

**Size.** Surial are massive, weighing between three







and four hundred pounds and standing 7 to 8 feet tall. You are medium size.

**Speed.** Despite your height, you have short legs and a waddling gait. Your speed is 20 feet.

**Gentle Touch.** Your touch is naturally soothing and can heal wounds both physical and spiritual. As an action, you may touch a willing creature and heal a number of hit points equal to your Wisdom modifier plus your proficiency bonus. You may use this trait once, and recover it following a short or long rest.

**Fury of the Bear.** While gentle by nature if you are roused to anger your might is truly terrifying. After you succeed on an attack roll with a melee weapon, you may use this trait to gain the effects of a critical hit. If you use this trait, you may not use Gentle Touch or Fury of the Bear again until after a long rest.

**Wardens of Nature.** You know the *druid craft* cantrip. At 3rd level you can cast *cure wounds* once with this trait and regain the ability to do so after a long rest. Once you reach 5th level you may cast *lesser restoration* once with this trait as a 3rd level spell, and regain the use of this ability after a long rest. Wisdom is your spell casting ability for these spells.

**A Life Spent in the Wilds.** You gain proficiency in the Survival skill and with the lithic toolkit.

**Clan.** All Surial belong to one of three clans. You must choose between Graach, Nabarrch, and Sariarch clans.

**Languages.** You read, speak, and write Surial, Common, and the Spirit Tongue. Surial uses the same script as Druidic and shares loan words with that language as well as Sylvan. The Surial language is rhythmic and features many guttural sounds, especially for nouns. Other parts of speech

tend to be pronounced with a rolling elide that blends suffixes and prefixes together and with an emphasis on middle syllables.

The Spirit Tongue is less a verbal language than a way of thinking. The spirits of nature do not often manifest physically, and thus rarely bother with such crude concepts as speech. Instead, they speak through the rhythms of the natural world, in blowing leaves, rattling cane bushes, and trickling streams. Knowing the spirit tongue does not mean learning grammar and vocabulary, but opening one's mind and soul to the messages surrounding one.

**Names.** Surial naming conventions are rather strict with each phase of life adding a syllable to a name. Although individual syllables have symbolic meanings, the whole of a Surial name does not have any meaning. For examples, an adult would have two syllables, such as Kerftuth, which has no meaning although the individual syllables symbolically represent the concepts of 'peace' and 'rage' ('ker' being from the middle syllable of 'grahkeryet', or peace, and 'ftuth' being from the middle syllable of 'rarftuthpilk', or 'rage'). There is no distinction between names based on clan, tribe, or gender, only age.

*Ackdarth, Dormtuth, Gharftuth, Gultikg, Partithf, Saspoeth, Utilcavth*





### Lithic Toolkit

This tool proficiency is different from most other tool kits. Lithic tools cover a range of tools and materials needed to make and repair simple items crafted from wood, stone, bone, leather, and other natural materials. Using this tool kit, you can make weapons and armor as well as goods that do not require metal parts. These simple items are not as long lasting or sturdy as ones made from metal or by those proficient with more specialized tools. Feel free to have them break on a roll of 1 or if treated roughly.

### Graach

The Graach are the Surial clan that lives the farthest north, even beyond the Taiga forests that normally mark the edge of Surial lands, out on the open tundra and polar ice floes. The Graach have adapted to this harsh land. Their fur tends towards white to yellow-white and has two deep layers, their hands and feet are slightly webbed, and their bodies are denser and more compact than are the other clans. Graach are also the most pragmatic of the Surial, their harsh homes leave little room for niceties. Among the Surial, the Graach are famed as scouts for their keen senses and patience, necessary traits for hunters who must not miss any opportunity.

**Ability Scores.** Your Constitution score increases by 1.

**Comfortable on Water and Land.** You gain a swim speed of 20 feet and advantage on Athletics checks to swim.

**Used to the Cold.** You have resistance to cold damage and are comfortable in temperatures ranging down to -30°F.

**Keen senses.** You are proficient in Perception.

### Nabarrch

The tree dwelling Nabarrch are the most numerous of the Surial clans and the smallest in stature, rarely standing more than six feet tall and weighing two hundred pounds. They build small villages in the tall trees of the north. Their fur is dark brown or black, and they are the most gentle and kind of a gentle and kind race. Their domain is the richest and their mountains are abundant in metals, making the Nabarrch the craftsmen of the Surial.



**Ability Scores.** Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

**Natural Climbers.** You have a climb speed of 20 feet and advantage on Athletics checks to climb and Acrobatics checks to keep your balance.

**Kindest of them All.** You may use the Gentle Touch trait twice. Alternately, you may expend two uses of gentle touch to heal the following conditions:







blinded, deafened, paralyzed, poisoned, or stunned. Any use of Fury of the Bear negates your Gentle Touch until after you have taken a long rest.

**Craftsmen.** You are proficient in one tool of your choice.

## Sariarch

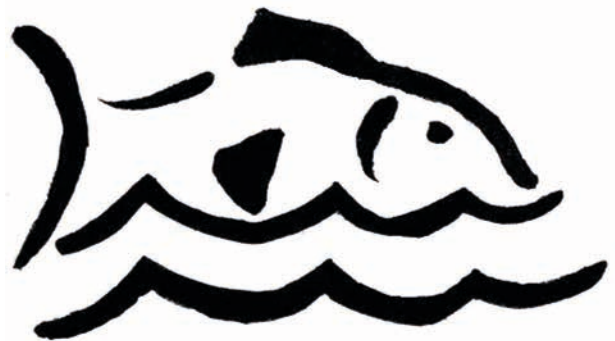
Known as the most warlike of the Surial, the Sariarch clan lives along the southern borders of the Surial lands, inhabiting rocky hills and high mountains as well as dense forests. Constantly pressed by invaders, the Sariarch have responded by leaving behind most of their race's gentle ways and focusing on defending their wild homes. Sariarch are also the largest of the Surial clans, standing nearly nine feet tall with some of their stoutest warriors stretching to ten feet or more in height. Their fur is a mottled brown and silvery grey, and often grows to longer and shaggier lengths than that of the other clans.



**Ability Scores.** Your Strength score increases by 1.

**Roaring Rampage.** When you use Fury of the Bear, you may use it one more time before having to take a long rest to regain it.

**Combat Training.** You gain proficiency with two martial weapons of your choice, as well as light armor.



## Religion

The Surial do not practice an organized religion per se, but they do give respect and limited veneration to the spirits of nature that created them. There are no special tenants or ethos of this religion, and few set dates or manner of worship. Instead, it is mostly up to the individual Surial to decide how often, the manner of, and which spirits to venerate.

There are Surial who dedicate their lives to the veneration of the spirits of nature, but these do not from an organized priesthood. The decision to do so is a highly personal, and to most Surial, a private one. Known among their own kind as the *Farrach* (spirit smitten in Surial), these spirit worshippers tend to lead solitary lives communing with the spirits of their wild homes and interpreting their messages.





## The Great Spirits

The most powerful spirits of the north are the five winds, the Great Bear, the Snow Maiden, Granite Lord, and Walking Tree. It is these spirits that the Surial venerate the most and that had the greatest part in the race's creation. When the Farrach call out to the spirits in a ceremony or when casting a spell, they call upon one of these great spirits first, even if it is a lesser spirit that is to be addressed.

### The Five Winds

Communally known as the Five Winds, the great wind spirits have individual personalities and domains, and are often at war with each other. Each of the Five Winds is the chieftain of a large clan of lesser wind spirits, often referred to as breezes. The Northern Wind is harsh and cruel, and often seeks to spread the Snow Maiden's wrath across the land. Opposed to him is the mighty Southern Wind who brings warm weather, but also fierce storms, reflecting his mercurial and sometimes vicious nature. From the west comes the Sea Wind, salty and warm with a touch of spice from distant lands. The Stinging Wind blows out of the southeast and brings dry air that feeds Biting Fire in the early fall. Finally, there is the Howling Wind of the tundra who never rests and carries the power to

drive people insane.

### The Great Bear

The patron of the Surial, the Great Bear is a powerful spirit that guides her people and watches over them from her position at the center of the sky. She is venerated as the mother of all bears, and the Surial especially, as the greyest warden of the forest, and as the protector of the dead. Her symbols, a raging bear face, a greatly pregnant Surial, or an open hand, decorate standings stones, holy items, and most importantly, the Sacred Caves where the dead reside.

### The Snow Maiden

A cyclic spirit, the Snow Maiden begins the winter as bringer of light flakes and warm blankets that put the world to sleep for the season. However, as the days shorten the Snow Maiden becomes angry for the Sun Widow has left her and hides itself away. In those days, and some of them are only a few hours long, the Snow Maiden vents her wrath upon the world, sending forth her children Icy Snow and Hard Pellets, or worse, calls upon the Death Wind to blow snow that covers the world for days or weeks on end. As her lover the Sun Widow returns from her sojourn to the far side of the world, Snow







Maiden relents and both she and the world can bask in the adulation of the Sun Widow. In those warm months, the Snow Maiden retreats to her icy home in the north or climbs atop high mountains to better reach her beloved.

### **The Granite Lord**

Deep beneath the mountains of the north sleeps the Granite Lord, king of all stone but most especially the piled bier he rests beneath. When the world was young, the Granite Lord suffered a horrible wound, bitten by the Father of Serpents. Fearing death, the Granite Lord pulled up the earth and piled a great mound of stone above himself, forming the mountains of the north that block the worst of the Northern Wind from blowing into the verdant forests of the Nabarrch clan's homeland. Though the poison has not killed him, it has rendered a mortal wound, and the Granite Lord remains in a deep coma. From time to time, he stirs, and when that happens all can feel the ground move. The iron and copper of the mountains is his blood, while the gold that washes down is the poison coming out of his wound.

### **Walking Tree**

Greatest of the tree spirits and said to be the father of all trees, shrubs, and other woody life, Walking Tree is a rare spirit for he regularly manifests in the world. Considered wise and gentle, Walking Tree moves among the deepest and densest forests, tending to his children and seeing that the Surial maintain their duties. His manifestation is a massive tree; each leg much like the tallest redwoods and his head so high up it touches the clouds.

### **The Lesser Spirits**

Hundreds of spirits populate the Surial world, and the Farrach seem to be always finding and identifying new ones. All that is, was, or will ever be has a spirit associated with it, and even the most irreligious Surial take time to properly venerate at least the spirits most important to their daily lives.

There are spirits for each species of animal, spirits for every plant and flower, spirits of wind, water, and weather, and spirits of certain actions or moods. The land is filled with spirits, and each stream, hill, or stretch of coast has its own spirits, as do villages, caves, and other features.



### **Acts of Veneration**

The spirits must be propitiated from time to time and shown the proper respect. Furthermore, many spirits have taboos that define relationships with them. The Surial take these responsibilities very seriously and consider it part of the reason for their creation. All Surial can communicate with the spirits, but the Farrach are the ones best suited to the task. Only they have the wisdom and knowledge to deal with the spirits on fair terms.

### **Communal**

The tribes and clans gather on sacred days in order to fulfill their obligations towards the spirits. Most often, this takes the form of rites led by the local Farrach and involves singing, dancing, and the





sacrifice of foodstuffs or goods. It is the latter that truly baffle outsiders, for the Surial will ritually burn valuable pelts, finely carved tools, and even prized weapons in order to fulfill the taboos and desires of the spirits. There is often a subtle competition to make the most valuable sacrifice, and communal rites can descend into an orgy of destruction as one Surial after another tries to gain greater status through conspicuous destruction.

Other rites, such as those marking the rise from adolescence to adulthood or burial, are affairs that are more serious. These rites involve the spirits, but are mostly to suit the emotional needs of the Surial. Each clan has their own rites and sacred days that they observe in secret, it is taboo for outsiders to even know of them, much less witness them.

### Personal

Most personal acts that venerate the spirits are idiosyncratic affairs such as brief prayers said before or after a hunt, minor rituals performed before undertaking a task, or personal taboos that restrict the actions of the individual. Among the Surial, these personal taboos and acts of veneration are so common that they elicit little or no comment. However, outsiders are often puzzled by the seemingly bizarre actions of the Surial.

### Personal Taboos

The following personal taboos make great bonds.

d8	Taboo
1	Before performing a specific action (such as before using a certain skill or tool, or before combat), I anoint myself with certain paints in an intricate pattern.
2	I will not sit with my back facing a certain direction.
3	During certain phases of the moon I act in a contrary manner, walking backwards, speaking in opposites, and using my non-dominate hand for all activities.
4	I burn a part of every kill I make in sacrifice to the spirits.
5	I will not eat or use the hides (or other parts) of a specific species, such as deer, wolves, or wildcats.
6	I will not sleep more than two nights in the same place.
7	At every corner of the year, I will perform a day long sacred dance that leaves me exhausted.
8	I will not speak a common word or class of words, such as never using my own name or refusing to make use of pronouns.



### The Four Corners of the Year

By far the most important sacred days to the Surial are the solstices and equinoxes. These days see great gatherings of the Surial and they are loath to stop for anything short of a war or other disaster during these sacred times. The rituals can go on for days, and the preparations beforehand can last for a week or more. Great feasts mark the Vernal Equinox as those Surial who choose to sleep away the winter stumble out into the light of spring to socialize and replenish their empty bellies. At Midsummer, the clans gather to hold meetings and rituals in secret glens and sacred places throughout the North. By the Autumnal Equinox, the Surial







have begun to slow down, but many find enough energy to enjoy the fruits of the short summer and hold rites dedicated to the coming of winter and the death of summer. By far the most sedate, Hibernial Solstice rites tend to be very personal or involve close relatives, as many Surial prefer to enter a state of near hibernation and can't be bothered to gather in large numbers.

### Sacred Caves

All Surial can agree upon one ritual, the internment of their dead. When a Surial dies, its body is taken to one of the sacred caves that it is said the first Surial wandered out into the world from. These caves are deep and often have several large caverns connected by winding passages. Down these passages and into the caverns the body is carried until it is laid to rest on a stone bier within the cave. Songs of sorrow and the passage from life to spirit are sung, and the deceased's most prized possessions are laid next to the body. The remainder of the deceased's possessions are burnt outside the cave and the mourners depart.

The Surial carefully guard these sacred caves, and all adolescent Surial must spend a year guarding and tending to the caves before they may undergo their rites of adulthood. Intruding animals are kept out, as are outsiders, and the dead are allowed to slowly decay, and in many cases naturally mummify, within the caves. Some of the oldest burials have begun to calcify, their body's tissues slowly being replaced by stone leached in from the caves.

### Gatherings of Farrach

The Farrach are generally a quiet and solitary bunch, though they sometimes gather in large numbers, some traveling for hundreds or thousands of miles to a specific site. These gatherings do not occur with any regularity and their location and timing depends on the calls of the nature spirits.

Usually there is a presaging event, a comet in the night sky, an eclipse, or some other natural sign. Other times the Farrach gather because they have been warned of some great catastrophe that will soon befall the wilds they guard or their race



### Social Structure

The Surial have a very loose social structure that places much emphasis on individual choice and personal morality. The largest division is the three clans. Tribes form wherever large numbers of Surial gather, usually a few hundred individuals, though Nabarrch tribes can number up to a thousand. Although divided by geographic boundaries, generations of mixing have led many tribes to contain members of all three clans. Tribal membership is granted at birth, but a Surial can change tribes simply by leaving one and going to dwell among another tribe.





### Three Clans

The three clans of the Surial are not just physically distinct. Their spirits are different, especially noticeable when you compare the ferocious Sariarch with the peaceful Nabarrch. The clans most often separate by geographic range, but in the tribes that have a mixture; inability to interbreed further separates the three clans. Because of this there are many taboos concerning marriage between the clans, Surial produce so few children that the removing two of the bear-folk from the breeding pool can have a devastating effect.

The Surial often see clan as more important than tribe, for they can change tribes, clans are however not just determined by birth, but also clearly demarcated by physical form and spiritual resonance. Each clan has its own secret rituals forbidden to other clans, patron spirits, and sacred caves. The clans also have secret means of communication, special signs they carve into trees or rocks, and subtle gestures of hand and body that only others of their clan know.

### Dozens of Tribes

There is no overarching government among the Surial tribes and none know how many tribes there are. Each tribe defends and tends to a particular geographic area and is named after their territory. The tribes are small, few have more than a few hundred members, and their range is most often proportional to their size. However, a tribe's range also depends on their environment. A hundred Graach might patrol a thousand square miles of tundra and ice, while the more temperate lands of the Nabarrch might see three times that number keeping an eye on a hundred miles of river.

Tribal membership is voluntary to all adult Surial, and if one wants, they can simply pick up and move to a new area, petitioning to join the new tribe and most often welcomed after a short probationary period. Most often, a change of tribe occurs



following a major life event, such as reaching adulthood, marriage, or a great personal loss. Surial are fiercely protective and proud of their tribes and will die to defend them, and in the cases of the moody Sariarch, fight to defend their honor, yet when they switch tribes they are just as patriotic to their new tribe as they were of their old.

Despite this mobility of membership, most Surial place great emphasis on their tribal identity, especially those in mixed tribes. Community is important to the Surial, and the tribes exist to provide this sense of community and to allow the Surial to fulfill their appointed task of defending the wilderness. One Surial might be a powerful force for protection and healing, but a hundred can tackle nearly any challenge.

### Government

There is no overarching government for the Surial race, only a loose governance within the tribes, and the barest hint of organization within the clans. A great deal of respect and authority is in the hands of the elders, though not all elders are given the same amount of respect. Usually within a clan or a tribe, the eldest's words carry the greatest weight, for the Surial respect wisdom and experience and can be said to have a gerontocracy.







Surial are not bound by the decisions of the elders; freedom of choice is a closely held trait among the bear-folk of the north. Instead, those who choose to heed the advice of their elders tend to apply pressure on those who disobey, and this can turn violent. Mostly, this is social pressure and the elders tend to take a dim view of the use of force, but the Surial have a deep anger within them and this can come out in inappropriate ways.

### **Tribal Leadership**

A Surial tribe is a community with a purpose. Granted the rights to hunt, fish, and gather in a specific area, the tribe is also tasked with defending and nurturing that area. Tribes hold their home ranges communally; the concept of a single person owning a plot of land is nearly unknown among them. Theoretically, all adults within a tribe are equal and free to act as they see best, but in practice there are restrictions and a loose form of leadership.

A council of elders selected by the elders from all adult Surial leads tribes. Rarely are there more than a dozen elders, even in the larger tribes. The term elder might be misleading, for there are no traditions that say that only the eldest of the tribe are eligible for selection to the council, but in practice, it is rare for any Surial less than fifty years old to be on a tribal council. There are no set requirements to be selected to join the council of elders, though those chosen have nearly always proven themselves by great deeds, are upstanding members of the community, have rarely or never gone against the will of the council, and more often than not have children and grandchildren. Having enough Surial willing to follow you in your decisions carries great weight with the elders, and sometimes younger or less accomplished Surial are selected due to their popularity.

The council of elders meets regularly to debate issues facing the tribe as a whole, especially issues involving threats to the tribe and their range,

spiritual matters, and issues revolving around the use of resources. When the council has reached a consensus, determined by the general mood of the council and not by vote, the council announces their decision to the tribe. Often the council debates an issue for such a length of time that the rest of the tribe grows impatient and simply takes matters into their own hands, hoping that the council ends up validating their actions later on.



### **Clan Leadership**

Operating across tribal lines, the clans are a secondary governance to the Surial. Each clan meets in secret on certain auspicious days and never at any other time no matter how great the threat or pressing the issue. To have a clan gathering when the time is not right is a betrayal of tribe and race, for although clan is of great importance it must never come before the needs of the tribe's protectorate or the race's survival.





Clan leadership is decided at these secret meetings, although as with tribal leadership there is nothing but social pressure and the weight of tradition to enforce the decisions of the clan leaders. Each clan chooses its leaders in different ways, and these leaders oversee only the local members of that clan. Clan leaders often communicate with their compatriots across tribal lines and from other clans, acting as an underground government that can serve as a bulwark for tribal councils, act to resolve issue that tribal councils have not addressed, or even oppose the decisions of the tribal elders on the rare occasions where clan and tribe come into conflict.

Each clan uses a different method to choose their leaders. The Graach hold physical and mental stamina competitions, requiring those who wish to lead the clan to prove their endurance. Most often these involve long distance swimming, recitation of epic poetry, ice sculpture, whale hunting, or all of these in close sequence or at the same time. The forest-dwelling Nabarrch clan chooses leaders

through feats of cunning and athleticism, such as capturing honey from giant bees, playing a prank on a grumpy forest dragon, or stealing the tail of a fox spirit. The warlike Sariarch prefer leaders who have accomplished great deeds on the field of battle or hunted and slain some major threat to the natural world.

### The Farrach

Outside of tribe and clan, the Farrach serve as a third layer of Surial leadership. Greatly respected, they speak with authority the will of the spirits. The Farrach rarely meet except for sacred days or for performing important rituals. The Farrach gather in times of trouble, or worryingly, shortly before times of trouble. All Farrach voices are equal save for the apprentices and all may speak in council, though none may interrupt another.

When the Farrach gather in council, all the Surial pay attention. The pronouncements that follow carry more weight than the edicts of tribal and clan







leaders, and few Surial are willing to go against them. Many feel more than the social pressure commonly exerted to obey, the dictates of temporal leaders is in play and that the spirits themselves might take steps to compel obedience to the Farrach councils.



### Family Life

Surial families are short-lived affairs and they do not have a concept of lasting marriage. Couplings are normally love based, though brief affairs centered on mutual lust are also common. Any children that are the result of these unions are the responsibility of the mother and another male who is not always the biological father, and might be a close friend or relative of the mother. This responsibility lasts until the child reaches

adulthood, usually around fifteen years, and requires the parents to protect and care for the child, as well as provide them an education. Once a Surial reaches adulthood, the parents provide the necessary goods for the child to start out in life.

### Sex and Marriage

Reproduction is very important to the Surial, for they are not a very numerous race and both the hard life they live and their constant war to guard their natural world takes its toll. Adding to this, while they are capable and interested in sex year round, both male and female Surial are not very fertile in the winter months. The gestation period is long, around thirteen months. Most Surial are conceived during the short summer and born during the long winter.

Marriage is almost unknown among the Surial, and especially long lasting or monogamous unions. The majority of pairings only last a few months, though it is not unheard of for one to have a longevity measured in years or decades. Most Surial experience both short term and long-term pairings in their lives. A short term pairing is not without passion or love, the Surial can be very passionate creatures and they see little difference between a love that burns for a season and one that endures for years.

While same sex pairings are accepted, and not uncommon, there is the general idea that every Surial has a duty to procreate at some point in their lives. This is somewhat easier for male Surial as the father of a child is the one chosen to raise it, and not necessarily the biological parent. Cross-clan mating does not produce offspring, and one cannot be the father of a child from a different clan, these pairings suffer a great degree of taboo. A Surial who never births or sires a child is one who has shirked one of their most important duties, and will certainly not be invited to join a council of elders without having proved themselves of great wisdom and courage.





## Gender and the Surial

The Surial have little in the way of gender demarcations other than females give birth and males do not. As a race, they do not show much sexual dimorphism, with males and females being roughly the same height and build, share the same range of coloration, and lack breasts (females do grow enlarged mammary glands when pregnant). They hardly notice gender as an issue, which can cause problems when dealing with other races. Even their language lacks gender; save for a few special grammatical structures that denote parentage or that a female is pregnant.

## Birth and Childhood

Most Surial are born in the winter months, often early in the winter. Pregnant Surial are even more rapacious than their brethren are. They must not just lay in enough food to see themselves through the winter but also their growing children. The most common Surial word for greedy roughly translates as 'Mother to Be', and though this originally did not have negative connotations, contact with other races have taught the Surial that greed can have negative aspects (and thus the other word for greed, *fatharik*, or 'empty womb hunger').

Surial births are usually twins, though these are most commonly fraternal twins. It takes a long time to bring a Surial child up to a healthy weight, and Surial nurse for two to three years, though they walk and talk by two summers. Once weaned, Surial children grow rapidly, attaining a weight and height approaching that of adults by fifteen years of age. Full adult size is most often achieved by eighteen years, with most Surial putting on the last hundred pounds or so in their seventeenth year.

Mothers raise their children with a male designated at the time of the child's birth. The mother chooses

the male parent, this does not have to be the biological father, nor do both children have to have the same father. It is common courtesy to ask the father if he wishes to take on the responsibilities, though it is not required (and failing to ask is a dishonorable act). Both parents are responsible for feeding, caring for, nurturing, loving, and teaching the child. The community and the elders in particular regard any failure most harshly. If one parent dies, the surviving parent is free to choose a replacement; again, consent is not necessary but is expected.

## Rites of Adulthood

Around their fifteenth year all Surial must perform a series of tests in order to be considered adults. Every summer the local Farrach gather all the appropriately aged Surial who they deem ready for adulthood. The young Surial will spend the next two years away from home in the care of the Farrach. During these years, they learn the ways of the spirits and the duties of adulthood. The youngsters also guard the Sacred Caves and other holy sites, meditating, and of course hunting and gathering.

At the end of this two-year period, the adolescent Surial embark on a minor quest as determined by the Farrach and the spirits they consult. Usually, this is a small affair such as to climb a peak, carry a message to a distant tribe, or seek out a rare plant or animal in the forest. Sometimes the soon-to-be adults are dispatched to find and call upon a powerful spirit and bring back its wisdom, or other more daunting tasks. Rarely are the Surial sent outside of their homeland, but the ranks of Surial adventurers are filled with youngsters who are on rather lengthy or arduous quests. Once their quest is complete, the youngsters return to the care of the Farrach until the next summer solstice. During the rituals that commemorate that corner of the year, the adolescents are inducted into their adult roles and given a second syllable for their name.







## Death and Burial

Surial are long lived and the elders are often in their second century of life when they join the council. Adding to their longevity is that they are a race of healers. When even the most ignorant among your people can heal a minor injury, or at the very least stave off blood loss and shock long enough for someone more qualified to take over arrives, death by injury is not commonplace. However, their role as protectors of the northern wilderness often places Surial in harm's way, and their homeland is inhabited by a variety of dangerous animals and monsters. Death is all too common to the Surial, especially for the more aggressive Sariarch and the tundra dwelling Graach.

When a Surial dies, the body is treated with great reverence and ceremony. As soon as possible it is striped and washed, anointed with rendered fat mixed with red ochre, and transported to the nearest sacred cave. The Farrach oversee this process, but if none are available, the eldest Surial present takes

the responsibility. Once inside the cave, the great spirits and the spirits of the dead are called upon, and the body is placed in a vault within the cave. The dry air inside the caves and the dutiful care that the resident Farrach provide encourages the remains to dry out and become mummified.

## Law, Crime, and Punishment

The Surial live without laws, preferring to give all the freedom to obey or disobey the rulings of the various leaders as they see fit. This is not absolute freedom, and failure to at least acknowledge the desires of the elders can lead to trouble. Usually this trouble is of a social nature. Others will be hesitant to allow the offender to accompany them on hunting trips or in war parties, pairing becomes more difficult, mothers will likely think twice before nominating for fatherhood someone who opposes the elders and in general, the offender will face a period of limited social opportunities. These limitations only increase as the offender continues to oppose the elder and can place a severe hardship on the offender. Keep in mind that the Surial economy is one of reciprocal gift giving, and social isolation places a Surial outside of not just friendship and trust, but also outside of their economic system.

Despite not having set laws, the Surial do have traditions that regulate behavior. There are the usual prohibitions against theft, assault, rape, and murder, as well as oath breaking and dishonesty. Minor crimes, such as theft, oath breaking, and lying, result in social isolation, though in the case of theft the owner might come looking for her goods. Assault, rape, and murder can lead to a trial by council.

Spiritual crimes are also covered by tradition and are reinforced by taboos. Any Farrach may declare a taboo, though most only enforce existing taboos. These taboos range from forbiddance to eat a certain food in a certain season, banning from





entering a certain region or approaching a certain geographic feature, through the taboo concerning cross-clan parings, and on to esoteric taboos that only take effect at certain times or in certain places. Violating a taboo angers the spirits, and as the primary intercessors between the spirits and the Surial, the Farrach punish taboo violations.

### **Trial by Council**

In rare cases of major crimes, always crimes against the body of another Surial or a guest in their lands,

the local council of elders may convene a trail. The council gathers and orders the offender and any witnesses to come forward, and if they are unwilling to do so, several warriors are sent to bring them to the council. The entire council sits in judgment and serves as the prosecution, asking questions and calling forth witnesses. By long tradition, the council accepts only testimony, but clear evidence might be allowed if presented as part of the testimony of someone the council considers an expert on the matter. Once the council has heard







from all possible witnesses as well as the violator and victims, the elders meet in secret to debate the case and render a verdict. The offender is held in custody by the council, placed under house arrest, and provided with food and allowed visitors until the trial is over.

If the accused is found innocent, the council apologizes for the mistake and makes restitution to the innocent party in the form of valuable gifts. Usually the council will not bother to convene a trial if they have much doubt about the verdict. The guilty suffer the greatest punishment the Surial can render, banishment from the entire homeland of the Surial. All Surial turn their back upon the banished and refuse to communicate with them. The Farrach inform the spirits and the banished is barred from the spirit world. Banishment can range from five years to life, and is considered a death sentence. Among the Sariarch, the banished are not even considered living creatures, but monstrous spirits that inhabit the remains of a Surial, and thus are open to being slain as any other monster. As the tribes that compose the greatest numbers of Sariarch dwell along the southern boundaries of the Surial homelands, few banished ever manage to escape to other lands.

### Taboo Violations

Those who violate a taboo and anger the spirits must repent by pleading with a Farrach to intercede on their behalf. The Farrach will then consult the angered spirits, often with other Farrach and even including close associates of the violator. After due consultation and mediation, a means to appease the spirits is found. Most often, this is a form of service such as: guarding a sacred cave or other holy site, providing the spirits with a sacrifice equal to the violation, or at the extreme completing some arduous task, journey, or quest. The spirits must be very wise, for their appeasement often comes in the form of a task that benefits the local community or even the Surial as a whole.

## Material Culture

The Surial do not live in a rich land, even the Nabarrch must spend some time struggling to gain enough food to last the long winters. The mountains contain excellent iron deposits, a few coal seams, and some tin, copper, and gold (which being poison in their mythology the Surial will not touch save to purify and destroy it). However, the Surial are not interested in making full use of these resources as that would damage the delicate northern ecosystems and thus they only take what they need from surface deposits or from small mines. For the most part, they rely on the most abundant resources their homeland provides, timber, game, and fish.

What the Surial cannot make themselves they trade for with outsiders. Few merchants find the risks of traveling into the northern wilderness to be worthwhile, but those who do bring manufactured goods to exchange for furs, amber, ivory, and rare herbs. For the most part the Surial are self-sufficient, but they do enjoy the occasional foreign luxury good or metal item. Merchants heading to Surial lands should bring metal tools and weapons (ax and spearheads as well as knife blanks, the Surial can make their own hafts), glass beads, ceramics, spices, tea, coffee, and wool cloth.

## Structures

Surial structures depend largely on the environment and the clan building them. The Graach build homes out of packed ice and snow cut into blocks, and these can be very cozy despite their frozen nature. The forest dwelling Nabarrch construct wooden homes high in the trees that connect to each other by rope bridges and swaying platforms. Of all the Surial, only the Sariarch rarely construct any permanent residences, though they are masters of turning natural caves into hidden fortresses.





### Standing Stones

All tribes construct standing stones to mark sites of importance. The Farrach order standing stones to appease the spirits or to mark an area taboo. Other standing stones commemorate sites of great battles, peace treaties, or are associated with legendary heroes. The stones can range from a pile of rocks precariously balanced atop one another to great rings of towering stones carved and transported from distant places. Larger stones have intricate scenes or figures engraved into them as well as flowing poetic inscriptions, but smaller stones might only feature a few words, a simple carving, or decorated with bright paints.

### Goods

The Surial are exquisite craftsmen with natural materials, shaping bone, wood, leather, fur, and stone to great effect. Beads, porcupine quills, dyes, and fine needlework often decorate clothing. The long winters are often spent embellishing and decorating goods, and one can find even utilitarian items such as ladles with geometric carvings around the bowl.

Despite the high degree of decoration that Surial made goods often have, they are primarily utilitarian items. The materials they use are sometimes not the sturdiest; especially around five hundred pound bear-folk, and there is a certain disposable attitude to most goods. Any Surial settlement or camp has its associated midden pile where discarded tools, broken weapons, food scraps, and other refuse slowly rot back into the ground. Only those things that do not quickly decay, such as metal, ceramics, or glass, are disposed of with any care. Ceramics and glass are ground into sand and used to decorate the sacred caves, metal refuse is collected and given to the local Nabarrch to be recycled.

### Weapons and Armor

As only the Nabarrch craft metal goods, they are the ones most likely to use metal arms and armor. In mixed tribes, the Nabarrch make the weapons and prefer to forge them from good steel taken from the northern mountains. Tribes without access to Nabarrch skills or resources trade with their fellow Surial tribes for metal weapons and armor, or strike deals with the few outside merchants who travel to the northern regions.

### Weapons

The Surial are a rather practical people and prefer weapons that serve multiple uses. The vast majority of their arms are for hunting yet serve in times of war. Spears, bows, axes, and clubs are popular, as are slings and bolas (treat as a net with a range of 15/ 30). The sword is not unknown, but the Surial do not manufacture their own, nor do they see much use for the variety of polearms that humanity seems to be enamored with.

Engraved scenes of hunting, fishing, or wilderness locales often decorate weapons. A favored weapon is adorned with trophies taken from a particularly notable prey or foe. Teeth, scales, tufts of fur, claws, and other body parts are preferred, though broken fragments of weapons and armor as well as jewelry are not uncommon.

### Armor

Most Surial armors are leather or hide, with chain shirts being a mark of distinction that brands the wearer as a great hero or the descendant of such a luminary. Metal plates are sometimes manufactured, but they are ill suited to the mobile wilderness warfare the Surial often find themselves in. Armor is generally not as highly decorated as weapons and is rarely named; even the rare metal plates are treated as utilitarian items. Most armor is camouflaged with dyes, twists of leather or cloth, dark enamels, or covered with animal fur.







### Stone Weapons and Tools

Weapons and tools made of stone are highly functional. They can be razor sharp and are as useful for most applications as metal weapons and tools. However, they are not nearly as sturdy. Though this is compensated for by ease of manufacture and repair, (at least compared to metal tools, knapping stone still requires patience and skill) they are fragile. For the most part, there is no need to have different statistics for stone weapons and tools, though if you want to model their fragility a stone weapon or tool breaks on a roll of 1.

### Food and Drink

The Surial are omnivores and take this to great heights, finding ways to eat even the most unpalatable or poisonous foodstuffs found in their homelands. They forage for roots, berries, seeds, fruits, grains, tubers, and other plant stuff, even draining the sap from certain trees to make a sweetener. Along the coasts fish, mussels, clams, oysters, and abalones are gathered, and the Graach and coastal dwelling tribes hunt whales. Waterfowl are hunted and their nests raided for eggs. Beehives, even those of the deadly giant bees, are fair game. Hunting makes up a small but significant part of the Surial diet, and brings in moose, elk, deer, squirrels, beavers, groundhogs, boar, mountain sheep, and sometimes monsters such as owlbears.

All food is gathered and consumed communally and simply prepared with a few spices and roasted or baked. The Surial do not care much for stews or soups, preferring to eat their food in large pieces they can bite into. It takes a lot of energy to keep a couple of hundred pounds of bear-folk going all day, and

the Surial have huge appetites. This is doubly true in the spring, as the fat reserves built up in the fall are consumed during the sedentary winter months. Because of the length of the northern winters and the tendency of the Surial to enter something akin to hibernation, though not nearly as deeply as their ursine relatives, food preservation is a high priority during the summer and fall. The Surial have a hundred ways to preserve nearly any food they harvest, from drying and salting to pickling and treating with lye.

### Arts and Entertainment

Music is by far the most favored form of artistic expression among the Surial, though handicrafts are a close second. They like to decorate their goods and spend much of the long winters, when not asleep, carving, weaving, tooling, dying, and painting even the most minor of utilitarian item. Yet, it is music, especially song, that most moves the Surial heart.





### Performing Arts

The Surial sing and sing often, accompanying most labor with a hearty song or two, singing to each other in the evenings, and performing ritual songs to mark the four corners of the year as well as other important days. The only time you will find the Surial quiet is when on the hunt or at war, though in the latter case there are songs to sing at the start of battle and dirges for afterwards. In addition to their voices, which tend to be deep and rumbling, the Surial accompany songs with drums, flutes, rattles, and stamping feet or clapping hands. There are no traditional stringed instruments in the Surial repertoire, though the occasional Caturday lute or other foreign instrument might be used.

In addition to music, the Surial are fond of communal dances, especially for ritual purposes, and storytelling. Dancing is a spring, summer, and fall activity and few Surial can be motivated to dance in the winter save for an important ritual or ceremony. The three clans all have their secret dances only performed for themselves, and each tribe has a few dances that only they have mastered. Dancing for the sheer joy of it is a common nighttime activity in Surial villages and camps, and usually there is at least one group practicing for the next festival. It should come as no surprise that some form of music accompanies all Surial dances.

### Visual Arts

Carvings, in stone, wood, or bone, are the most popular Surial visual arts. Much of their tool technology is based upon these materials, and it is common to find tools decorated with spirals, repeating geometric designs, lifelike renditions of the natural world, and intricate lines that form abstract shapes. Second to carving is bead and quill work, though these crafts are limited to clothing. Even leather goods many have tooled patterns of leaves, waves, and swirls.

The rare metalworkers among the Surial, usually of the Nabarrch clan, carry this love of carving into their medium. Most metalworking produces weapons and armor, and the Surial love etchings and engravings. Manufactured metal goods with detailed engraving work can fetch a high price from the Surial, as much as five pounds of amber for an engraved sword blade.

### Wealth

The Surial do not use money, indeed the coinage they acquire from trade are often used as ornaments or melted down for their metal content. This is not to say they do not understand the concept of money, just that their own economy functions differently.







Adventuring Surial certainly learn to use coinage and operate in monetary based economic systems, though few master the intricacies of the concept.

The Surial economy is one of gift giving. Goods and services are not traded per se, though a certain amount of equality in reciprocity is expected. Most Surial can make functional tools of the type they commonly use, hunt and gather food, and build what structures they need. As they do not farm, there is little need for a system of land ownership, though individual tribes certainly have hunting ranges that others should ask permission to use. Private ownership of goods is respected, but it is considered poor form to deny someone something they need.

Yet, there are those with greater skill than others, those more fortunate in the basics of life, and those who have more than they need of a good and desire a different good or service. The Surial work this out through the giving of gifts. For example, Tavvarck is a famed harpoon maker of the White Ice Mountain tribe. He can certainly hunt seals along the coast, but if he wants whale oil for a lamp, he must either join a hunt or find someone who has extra whale oil. However, his harpoons are so prized; no whale hunter would refuse the gift of a Tavvarck crafted harpoon. When the hunt is over, the whale hunters gift Tavvarck with rendered whale oil, as well as some meat, blubber, and other results of the hunt. It is a cumbersome system, but it works for the Surial.

Large scale gift giving occurs at large gatherings where ritualized gift exchanges are part of the traditions, and are often an integral part of many sacred rites. During these gift exchanges, a single good may pass through a dozen hands until it arrives with the Surial who needs or desires it the most. There is no asking or requesting of a specific item, the Surial expect gift givers to be aware of the needs and wants of others and to provide the best

gift they can to suit those needs.

When dealing with other races, the Surial prefer to do so within their own system. Strangers are welcome and it is expected that visitors and hosts will exchange gifts. This can cause problems for outsiders who are unused to Surial ways. If a merchant arrives with the expectation of turning a profit and the Surial expect everyone to leave happy and with the things they need, getting a good deal, or even making a deal, is a foreign concept, and can cause the normally docile bear folk to grow impatient or even enraged. Greed is taboo, and considered one of the gravest dishonorable actions one can take.

## Spirits

The natural world is inundated with incorporeal entities that exist on a plane congruent with, but separate from, the World. The spirits can interact with this world, even cross over to physically manifest or inhabit a physical body. The Spirit Realm is one of insubstantial chaos, a place of shifting energies and roiling change. The spirits themselves are pieces of this energy pinched off and given order, and they live under the constant threat of seeing their personal order dissolved back into the chaos of their realm.

Because of this danger of dissolution, the spirits seek to bring order to chaos through organization and interaction with the World. They group themselves into families and clans based around concepts both high and low. This strengthens their own existence and helps to protect against entropy and chaos. However, there is danger in this, for absorbing the energies of another spirit can also strengthen a spirit's energies. Close association is thus a threat, but the spirits have developed a culture that places great emphasis on oaths and honor, if not honesty, and few spirits would risk becoming outcasts by breaking a bargain, even those struck with mortals.





The solidity and order of the World, especially in the natural places far from the capricious laws of mortals and gods, draws the spirits. The mortal world offers them escape from their chaotic home plane, as well as strengthens the patterns that form their incorporeal bodies. Spirits congregate around natural weaknesses between the barriers that separate the World from the Spirit Realm. There they have power akin to the gods and can draw in the ordering energies of the mortal realms. However, they do not easily bridge this connection, and need regular support in order to remain. The spirits accomplish this by striking bargains with mortals.

Spirit bargains run a broad range, but all share some form of restriction the mortal and spirits agree to. These bargains are the basis of the taboos that the Surial are so concerned with and both forging and defending these bargains are one of the prime reasons the Great Spirits created the race. For some Surial, this is the source of their powers. Barbarians might forge a bond with a powerful predatory spirit in order to fuel their rage, bards might enjoin a spirit of the wind to turn song into magic, or a druid may rely on bargains struck with various spirits to endow their magical powers.

## Feats

These feats are best suited to the Surial, but other spirit or wilderness focused characters may be able to take them with the GM's permission.

### Animal Totem

You have forged a bond with a spirit linked to a natural animal. The spirit has taken on the form and traits of that animal in order to stabilize its energies, and part of that process is forging these bonds with mortals. When you take this feat, choose the nature of the spirit and you gain the associated benefits. You may only take this feat once, and any other spirit related feats you take, such as skin riding or skin thief, must follow the same pattern. For example, if you have the bear as your totem, you must choose a bear for skin riding. Spirits are jealous and temperamental; it is best not to anger them.

### Animal Totems

The following totems listed are prime examples of what benefits one can gain by forging a bond with an animal totem. This list is not comprehensive, and new ones can be invented for different worlds and ecologies.

#### -- Bear --

**Ability score bonus.** Your Strength score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20.

**Bear Rage.** As a bonus action, you may enter a rage. When you enter a rage, opponents have advantage on attack rolls against you. You gain advantage on all Strength checks and attack rolls. You also gain a number of temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier plus your proficiency bonus. You can maintain this rage for a number of rounds equal to your proficiency bonus. You may use bear rage once, and it recharges following a long rest.







### -- Bison --

**Ability score bonus.** Your Constitution score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20.

**Bison Charge.** As an attack, you may charge an opponent and attempt to knock them prone. Make an attack adding your Strength modifier + your proficiency bonus to the to-hit roll. If you hit, your target suffers 1d8 + your Strength modifier damage and must make a Strength save with a DC equal to 8 + your Strength modifier + your proficiency bonus. If the target fails the save, it is knocked away from you 5 feet, knocked prone, and gains the stunned condition for one round.

### -- Eagle --

**Ability score bonus.** Your Wisdom score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20.

**Eagle's Vision.** You may focus your vision, narrowing it down to a single point, and increasing its range and acuity. While using eagle's vision, you gain advantage on Perception checks and ranged attack rolls, and your range of vision is increased to the horizon. However, this focus limits your ability to react to outside threats and opportunities. While using eagle's vision all attack rolls against you gain advantage and you lose your reaction.

### -- Mountain Lion --

**Ability score bonus.** Your Dexterity score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20.

**Lion's Pounce.** As an action, you may make a lion's pounce attack. You move your full speed, ignoring difficult terrain, and may make two melee attacks against a target. You may use lion's pounce a number of times equal to your Dexterity modifier, and this trait recharges following a long rest.

### -- Rabbit --

**Ability score bonus.** Your Dexterity score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20.

**Wily Rabbit.** You may take the Dash or Hide actions as bonus actions. When in cover, you treat the cover as one degree higher than it is.

### -- Wolf --

**Ability score bonus.** Your Charisma score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20.

**Pack tactics.** As a bonus action, you may nominate up to your proficiency bonus in allies as part of your pack. You and members of your pack that are within 30 feet of you gain advantage on attack rolls when attacking the same target as another pack member, have advantage on Dexterity and Wisdom saves, and may use the Help action with each other as a bonus action. Pack tactics lasts the number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier, and recharges following a short rest.





## Bargain

You have struck a bargain with a spirit of some power. This spirit gives you limited power in exchange for a sacrifice or vow of some kind. When you take this feat, you learn one bargain that must be matched with one obligation. You may take this feat multiple times, gaining an additional bargain each time you do so, but also gaining an additional obligation.

You may call upon your bargains a number of times equal to  $2 +$  your proficiency bonus. Expended uses of bargain recover following a long rest. You can call upon any bargain you know repeatedly until you have exhausted all uses of this feature. Calling upon a bargain is an action unless otherwise noted.

Each bargain comes with a linked obligation of your choosing. If you violate an obligation you lose access to the linked bargain until you can atone. Atonement takes at least 24 hours of mediation and debasement at a site that forms a weak point between the World and the Spirit Realm. During this time, you may not take a short or long rest, and are insensate to the world as you commune with the spirit you have struck a bargain with and attempt to make right what you did wrong.

### -- Bind --

Through a long and intense ritual, you coax or force a spirit into an object. This spirit is one of the hordes of lesser spirits that roam the spirit realms. You perform a ritual that takes twelve hours to complete and leaves you with two levels of exhaustion. To perform the ritual you must have an object representative of the spirit you are binding, such as something decorated with eagle feathers for an eagle spirit or bear's teeth for a bear spirit. Once the ritual is complete, you have bound the spirit to the object, creating a fetish. When you

bind the spirit choose one bargain other than bind. Anyone who attunes to the fetish may use the bargain bound to it. The bound spirit will perform this bargain a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier, after which it has completed its agreement and is free to leave, which it usually does. Once the spirit leaves, the fetish crumbles to dust.

### -- Fetch --

You dispatch a spirit to bring you an object. The object must be within five miles of you and currently unattended and unobserved. You may describe a specific item, such as the ivory handled longsword belonging to Eddie the Brave, or a general class of item, such as a sword. The spirit takes 1d8 minutes to go and bring back the item. If there is no such item within range, the spirit spends eight minutes looking around and then departs.

### -- Influence --

The spirit you have bargained with exerts its subtle powers to alter peoples' perceptions of you. Choose one target within 60 feet that you are aware of. The target must succeed on a Wisdom save with a DC equal to  $8 +$  your Charisma modifier + your proficiency bonus or gain the charmed condition for one hour.

### -- Obscure --

The spirits wrap you in a hazy aura that makes it difficult to see you and even remember your presence. You have advantage on stealth checks and anyone attempting a ranged attack against you has disadvantage. Furthermore, anyone who does see you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw with a DC equal to  $8 +$  your Wisdom modifier + your proficiency bonus or forget their interaction with you after you leave their presence.

### -- Observe --

You dispatch a spirit to travel to a location no more than 5 miles away. You must give an exact







location, such as the house on Rock Hill. The spirit uses its true sight to observe whatever happens at that location until the next sunrise or sunset. It then returns and relays the information to you before fleeing back into the spirit realms. Although spirits, being invisible and incorporeal, can observe a great many things, they do not have a great grasp on mortal affairs and can easily misinterpret what they see. In addition, spirits can be detected and destroyed through supernatural means and there is no guarantee that the spirit you dispatch will return.

#### **-- Sending --**

You dispatch a spirit to carry a message to a person within 5 miles. You must give a specific target, such as Jane Avery, or a clear description, such as the dark haired woman wearing a sheriff's badge. The spirit will do its best to locate the target and convey the message. If the target does not speak the Spirit Tongue, the spirit will do its best to convey the message through signs and visions. Once the message is delivered, the spirit departs back to its home in the spirit realms. In addition, spirits can be detected and destroyed through supernatural means, and there is no guarantee that the spirit you dispatch will return.

#### **-- Spiritual Assault --**

You call upon the mighty spirits of nature to reach through the barrier between the physical world and the Spirit Realms and strike down your foes. Choose one target you are aware of and is within 120 feet. Make an attack roll against that target using your Wisdom modifier and proficiency bonus. If you hit, the target suffers 1d8 + your Wisdom modifier in psychic damage.

#### **-- Spiritual Defense --**

You may use this bargain as a reaction or as an action. The spirits intercede to save your life, crossing briefly across the barrier between here and there in order to effect a minor change. You may add your proficiency bonus to your armor class or a

saving throw. The effects of this bargain lasts until the end of your next turn.

#### **-- Spiritual Healing --**

You can tempt spirits to infuse yourself or others with spiritual energy, invigorating and healing them. Choose one target, the target recovers 1d8 + your proficiency bonus in hit points or removes one condition.

### **Obligations**

#### **-- Aid --**

You pledge to aid any and all members of a specific culture, profession, gender, or species. You must do so if they request it or if you see them in need. Furthermore, you must be kind to members of the chosen group. You may not attack a member of the chosen group unless you are attacked first, and even then, you must make every effort to escape the fight or end it without causing further harm.

#### **-- Asceticism --**

Your vow requires you to live a simple life eschewing strong drink, gambling, and frivolous activities. You must also avoid entertainments of any sort. Your vow goes so far as to require you to live humbly and only own those things that you need to survive and carry out your profession, and no luxuries.

#### **-- Celibacy --**

You have pledged to refrain from sexual and romantic relations.

#### **-- Charity --**

Your vow requires you to give away your excess wealth to those in need. Furthermore, you must spend at least twenty hours every week performing free labor for the needy. The recipients of your charity must be those in need; you can't simply hand some money off to your traveling companions and call it charity.





### -- Eccentricity --

You have pledged to live an unusual life in exchange for the gifts of a spirit. This vow can take several forms. Examples include: never speaking to a certain class of people, walking backwards when the sun or moon is at its zenith, wearing clothing appropriate for a different gender, never saying your own name, refraining from eating certain foods, always wearing a certain object, never touching anything with your left hand, calling everyone Bob, never sitting, or any number of odd things. The eccentricity must be hampering and obvious to anyone who interacts with you. You may take this obligation for multiple bargains, but the nature of the eccentricity must be different for each bargain.

### -- Honesty --

You have pledged to not tell a falsehood, ever, for any reason. This includes accidental falsehoods, so be very careful what you say. In addition, you cannot let other people believe something you know to be untrue.

### Favored of the Spirits of Nature

The spirits of the natural world are particularly fond of you and react well to your presence. While this allows you to speak and interact with them to a limited degree, it also means that they will grant you minor boons. You should keep in mind that the spirits of nature are a fickle bunch and do not take their friendship for granted lest you encourage their wrath.

- Your Wisdom score increases by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You gain proficiency in the Spirit Tongue.
- You may spend ten minutes performing a short ritual to call upon friendly spirits. This must be

performed in a natural setting, and the nature of the spirits you contact is based on the area you perform the ritual in. After you perform this ritual, you may choose to receive one of the following boons from your spirit allies. You may perform this ritual once, and regain uses of it following a long rest. The effects of the ritual last until the next sunset or sunrise.

- Advantage on a skill check appropriate to the spirits you contact, for example any nature spirit can provide secrets related to Nature or Survival, spirits of hunters might know Athletics or Acrobatics, and spirits of night animals might know Stealth.
- Your soul is strengthened, granting you temporary hit points equal to your Wisdom modifier + your proficiency bonus.
- The location of one creature, object, or natural feature within five miles.

### Patron Spirit

Through dedication, luck, or perhaps having performed a task, you have received the allegiance of a powerful spirit of nature. When you take this feat, choose one of the Greater Spirits of Nature from the following list and gain the associated effects.

- Your Wisdom score increases by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You gain proficiency in the Spirit Tongue.
- Choose one of the Greater Spirits of Nature as your patron.

**The Five Winds:** The Five Winds share the burden of being your patron. You may gain a fly speed of







20 feet for one hour, and regain use of this effect following a long rest. You may cast the *feather fall* spell a number of times per day equal to your Wisdom modifier, and you use Wisdom as your spell casting ability score.

**The Great Bear:** You are infused with the rage and compassion of the Surial. You gain an additional use of Gentle Touch and Fury of the Bear. If you do not have these racial traits, you gain one use of Gentle Touch and Fury of the Bear.

**The Snow Maiden:** Your patron grants you a selfish wrath. You may grant one ally you can see disadvantage on a roll, and if you do so you gain advantage on your next attack roll. You also gain resistance to cold damage.

**The Granite Lord:** You have been taught how to tap into the strength of stone and metal. Your flesh hardens and your hair gains a metallic tone, granting you resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage for the next hour. You may do this once, and regain use of this effect following a long rest. You have advantage on saving throws against poison.

**Walking Tree:** Your patron has taught you the secrets to living without consuming. As long as you have access to water and sunlight, you do not need to eat or drink. You may stretch this secret, forcing your body to survive without its normal

needs. You may designate a death save as a success, but must do so before you roll the save, and may only use this effect once before taking a long rest.

### Skin Rider

You have made a minor pact with a powerful animal spirit. In exchange for your clientage, the spirit has taught you to briefly inhabit the bodies of natural creatures. The creature you learn to inhabit must be related to the spirit you made the bargain with. You may only take this feat once, for the spirits are jealous creatures and will not accept others striking similar bargains with you.

- Choose one type of animal, such as a coyote, eagle, or buffalo.
- You gain proficiency in the spirit tongue.
- You may enter a trance during which you gain the unconscious condition. While in the trance, you cannot perceive your body or its surroundings. You are also unaware of any damage your body takes. You do become aware of any death saves your body is forced to make.
- While in the trance, your spirit inhabits a nearby member of the chosen animal type. You have complete control over this body and can move, attack, and perceive through its senses. You use your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma ability scores and the body's Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. You retain your original hit point total and maximum. You gain any special senses, movement types, or attacks the animal would normally have. You cannot speak while in the animal body, but can communicate in any manner the animal normally does.





- You may remain in the animal body for a number of hours equal to your proficiency bonus. You may return to your body at any time, but automatically return when the duration expires or the animal body dies. When you return to your body, you must make a DC 15 Wisdom save or gain the stunned condition for 1 minute per hour you spent skin riding.
- If your body dies while you are skin riding, your spirit becomes trapped in the animal body you are inhabiting. You lose a point of Intelligence every sunrise. When your Intelligence score becomes a 2 you have lost your sentience and become for all intents and purposes an animal.
- You may enter a trance once, and this feat recharges following a long rest.
- Choose one type of animal that is no more than one size category different from you.
- You gain proficiency in the spirit tongue.

### Skin Thief

A spirit has taught you the rituals required to steal the skin of a living creature. This is powerful, but somewhat distasteful magic, and if a spirit teaches you this you may not take this feat again.

- You have an enchanted skin of your chosen animal, and may as an action don it in order to transform into that animal. This is a specific animal that is distinguishable as a unique individual. While transformed, you use your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma ability scores and the body's Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores. You retain your original hit point total and maximum, but may spend hit dice to heal any damage you have suffered when

you transform. You gain any special senses, movement types, or attacks the animal would normally have.

- You may remain in your stolen skin for a number of hours equal to your Constitution bonus. At the end of this time, the skin falls away and you revert to your normal form. You may cast off the skin at any time as an action. If you die or gain the unconscious condition, the skin drops away and you revert to your normal form. You may not don the stolen skin again until after you have completed a long rest.
- Your enchanted skin can be lost or stolen. If so, you may make another enchanted skin by hunting and killing a member of your chosen animal, and then performing an intricate ritual to absorb its spirit and enchant the skin. You must hunt the animal using either your bare hands or a melee weapon and face it in single combat. The ritual takes three consecutive nights to perform and must be performed alone in the wilderness.

### Spirit Guide

You have gained the friendship of a minor spirit who has become your guide and companion. This guide is invisible to all but you, and can only manifest with your help. When it manifests it can interact with the physical world, but does not fully pass over and has no corporeal form. You may call upon your spirit guide a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier plus your proficiency bonus, after which it becomes fatigued or annoyed and will not respond to you. This feat recharges following a long rest. When you take this feat, you must choose the name and nature of your guide. If you have another spirit related feat, there should be some thematic traits across all of them.







For example, if you have the Snow Maiden as your Patron Spirit, your Spirit Guide will be a related snow spirit, one of the many children of the Snow Maiden. You may only have one Spirit Guide, but may take this feat multiple times in order to gain further benefits.

- You gain proficiency in the Spirit Tongue. The first time you take this feat, and each time thereafter, choose one of the following benefits.
- As a reaction, you can have your spirit guide grant you advantage on a saving throw.
- As a bonus action, you can have your spirit guide bolster your psyche and remove the frightened or stunned condition from you.
- As a bonus action, you can have your spirit guide give you advantage on one ability score check, skill or tool check, or attack roll. You must declare the spirit guide is helping you before you attempt the roll.
- As a bonus action, you can have your spirit guide envelop you in spiritual armor, granting you a number of temporary hit points equal to your Wisdom modifier plus your proficiency bonus.
- As an action, your spirit guide can envelope a five-foot area in a swirling cloud of dirt and debris, concealing the area. All perception checks and attacks passing into or through the area suffer disadvantage.
- As an action, you can have your spirit guide attempt to frighten an opponent. Choose a target within 60 feet that you are aware of. The target must make a Wisdom save with a DC equal to 8 + your Charisma modifier + your proficiency

bonus. If the target fails, it suffers 1d8 + your Charisma modifier in psychic damage and gains the stunned condition for one round. If it succeeds on the saving throw, it instead gains the frightened condition for one round.

### Surial Trinket Table

d100	Trinket
01-05	Three salmon carved from soap stone that when placed in water swim and leap about.
06-10	A feathered fetish dedicated to a favored spirit that answers one question every solstice.
07-15	A piece of amber containing a preserved insect that buzzes when placed in a fire.
16-20	A string of beads carved from crinoids that clatter when a storm is coming.
21-25	One large banner stone carved with hunting scenes and designed to hang from a weapon.
26-30	Two stones, a smooth flat stone and a carefully worked cylinder, used for grinding nuts.
31-35	Two small pots of honey.
36-40	A leather pouch filled with mementos from important life events and a chunk of red ochre.
41-45	This leaf from a spirit-touched plant will always be green and fresh.
46-50	Five small disks carved from a walrus tusk.
51-55	A collection of fish ear bones painted with Surial numbers.
56-60	A small spirit fetish that glows when held and emits a soothing tone.
61-65	When kept next to a furry body for a fortnight, this fist sized black rock will emit a red glow and the heat of a small campfire.
66-70	A gift from a spirit of clean water, this porous rock filters any liquid poured through it, but only at sunrise.
71-75	This small hand-thrown pot of coiled ropes of clay has been broken and one piece is missing.
76-80	A small fertility idol of a very pregnant Surial.
81-85	Six pieces of mineral pigment in a carved box.
86-90	A pair of beaded sandals that leave stork tracks behind as you walk.
91-95	A spirit has gifted this ball of snow that never melts, breaks, or grows warm.
96-00	A broken piece of a sacred stone that you must carry until you die.





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