

ROUDIER



WÜRM

Role Playing in the Ice Age

Welcome to the Ice Age...

Würm... the name of the last great ice age to sweep across Europe.

It is also a role-playing game set in the prehistory of humanity,
deep in the ice age, thirty five thousand years ago.

In these long-forgotten times, powerful beasts roamed a territory covered
in steppes and taiga, from the snow-covered mountains to the roaring sea:
mammoths, aurochs, bison, giant deer, bears and cave lions.

Two species of humans lived among these giant creatures, in small
hunter-gatherer communities: Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon.

When you play *Würm*, you will play the part of these prehistoric men and
women. As your characters experience adventures mixing legendary quests
and battles for their survival, they will gain strength, wisdom and prestige
by exploring unknown territories, venturing into dark and mysterious
caves, winning over the spirits of their ancestors and
fighting creatures of ice, fire or darkness.



WÜRM

Roleplaying in the Ice Age

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Welcome to Würm!

Whether you are passionate about role-playing games or prehistory (or maybe even both!), we would like to thank you for being curious and daring enough to purchase this rather unusual game. We hope that the book you are now eagerly holding will allow you to share dozens, if not hundreds, of hours of fun with your friends.

The rules of this game are designed to be as simple and clear as possible. The aim of these rules is to simulate the daily life and culture of our ancestors living in the Ice Age, through a fluid and straightforward game system. To bring the characters to life, you won't be using stats and skills, but rather a number of Strengths and Weaknesses that are connected to totem spirits. After all, what use is it to work out if a character is "average" in one area or another? Surely it's more interesting to discover their strong and weak points, and in this prehistoric world, what Guardian Spirit they are connected to? Furthermore, the Talents and Secret Skills that you will discover in this book will give you an idea of some of the proficiencies that a character possesses: painting, shamanism or certain combat skills, for example.

The rules of this game were designed to be as faithful as possible to the latest archaeological research, aiming to give you a detailed picture of the technical knowledge, the environment, and the culture of our ancestors. However, the world of Würm also allows for a degree of fantasy. Therefore, you will find herein rules that will allow you to play with the very real powers of the Spirits, or encounter a whole range of fantastical beasts such as Fire Spirits, or sorcerers or ice giants, just as easily as you'll come across mammoths and cave bears.

Of course, if any of these rules don't fit with how you want to play, or if the interpretation of prehistoric life that we present is not to your taste, then please feel free to change any of the aspects of this game. Utilize this rulebook as your tool kit to share YOUR vision of the world of Würm with your friends. The most important thing to remember is to enjoy yourself and make certain you and your fellow players want to slip into the furs and loincloths of our Ice Age ancestors.

This book is the translation of a compilation of the first edition of the Würm role-playing game and the Companion Book, both originally published in French, with a number of additional brand new sections, some clarifications and new illustrations. The game rules included in this book are pretty much the same as the ones in the previous French-language editions, however they have been improved and enhanced along the way. If you own any of the previous editions of this game and you notice any differences in some of the details of the rules, you can consider that this version of the rules has precedence.

Acknowledgements

We would like to say a big thank you to all the French-speaking players far and wide who tested the original version of Würm and helped us develop the final version. Their feedback was extremely precious during the process. We would also like to warmly thank all the readers who contributed their ideas and their suggestions, and all the members of La Cour d'Obéron and the Editions Icare community whose curiosity and constructive criticism were a crucial part of the improvements made to this role-playing game.

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Dawé the Damned

Tanak's clan, a part of the Great River tribe, has lived by the estuary since the dawn of time. Mordagg's season has draped a white cloak over the lands around the camp, where the Bearmen of this country live in their huts. The mist has clung to the valley all day, and now the chill of the night is slowly creeping in, all the way to the bone.

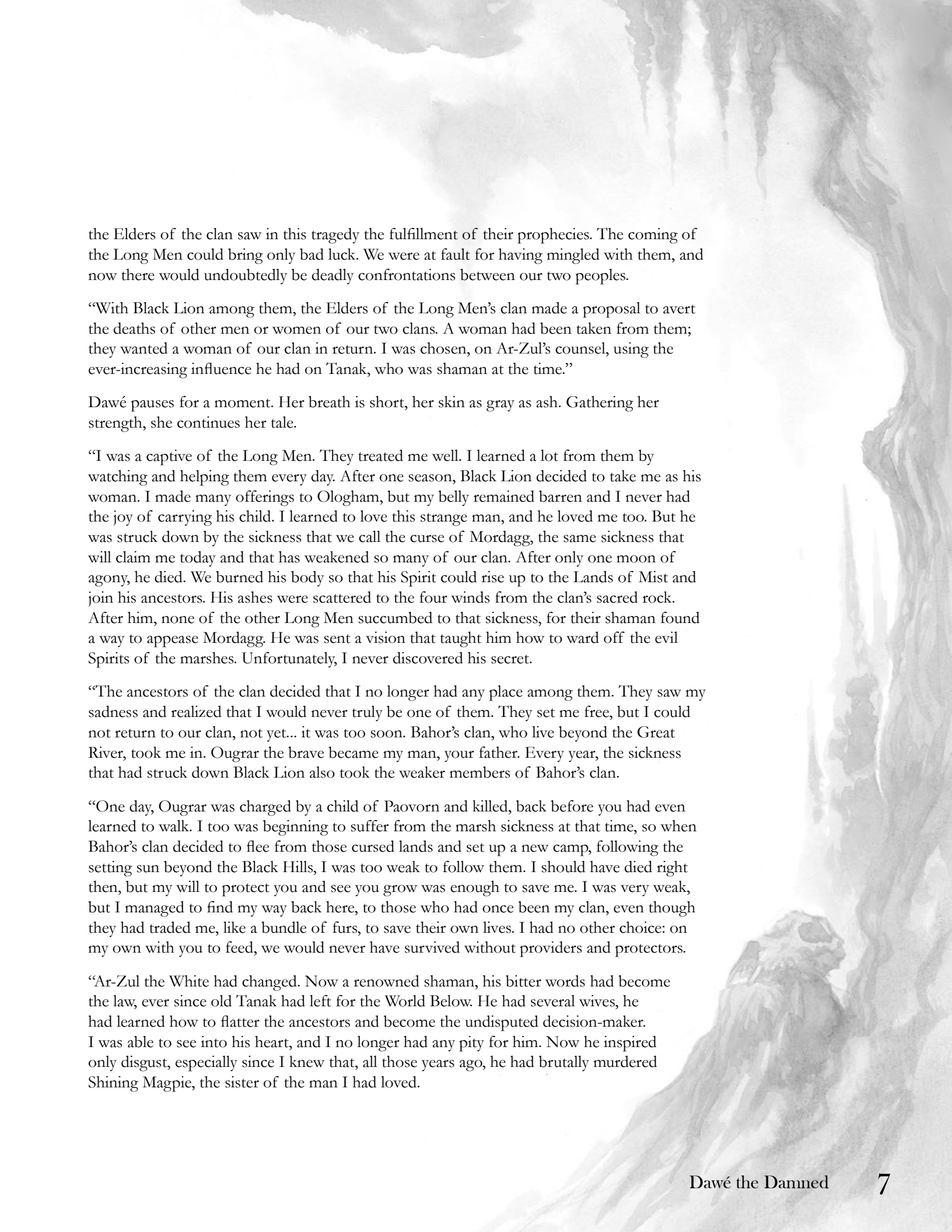
A pitiful hovel sits apart from the other huts, lonely among the reeds. It is there that the once fair Dawé Moon-eyes lies, waiting to breathe her last breath. For several days now, the curse of Mordagg has been twisting her belly. She hasn't eaten. She is cold — it's a harsh, biting cold that will soon steal away the little breath she has left. She knows that she will not see the sun rise again, but she is not afraid. She calls her child to her side. The boy is stricken. He has been waiting for several days, not knowing what to do to help his sick mother.

"Listen to me, the time for tears has not yet come. I must tell you who I was, long ago. When I was still just a child, Ar-Zul, our now snow-haired shaman, was but a young hunter. He was as mean as a hyena, as brave as a rabbit, and I had nothing but pity for him, but he decided that I would become his woman. My mistake was to reject him when he offered me a deer hide in front of the clan's assembled Elders. From that moment, the desire that he had for me became a fire of anger and hatred that burns deep in his heart to this day."

The old woman's face clenches in pain. Then she gingerly pulls herself up on her bed, and slowly swallows a sip of the bitter potion that helps ease her pain. Then, weakly, she continues:

"Then the Long Men came. Great Tanak had told us about their people. We knew that we should be wary of them. But some of us, the younger ones, were brave enough to dare go out and meet with them. We gave them a few gifts, and they returned the gesture. Disregarding the warnings of the Elders, we spent more and more time with them, especially with Black Lion, their young hunt leader. He knew how to strike his prey with a javelin like no one we had ever seen before. Then there was his sister, the beautiful Shining Magpie. Her song was an enchantment that lifted every heart. She was the kindest person I had ever met. Ar-Zul liked to follow her around, hoping to make me jealous, but he was laughable, and Shining Magpie didn't seem to understand that he was scheming to get close to her.

Then the unthinkable happened. Shining Magpie was found dead. She had been taken by force, and then strangled. Although everyone knew that Ar-Zul was the culprit, Tanak and



the Elders of the clan saw in this tragedy the fulfillment of their prophecies. The coming of the Long Men could bring only bad luck. We were at fault for having mingled with them, and now there would undoubtedly be deadly confrontations between our two peoples.

“With Black Lion among them, the Elders of the Long Men’s clan made a proposal to avert the deaths of other men or women of our two clans. A woman had been taken from them; they wanted a woman of our clan in return. I was chosen, on Ar-Zul’s counsel, using the ever-increasing influence he had on Tanak, who was shaman at the time.”

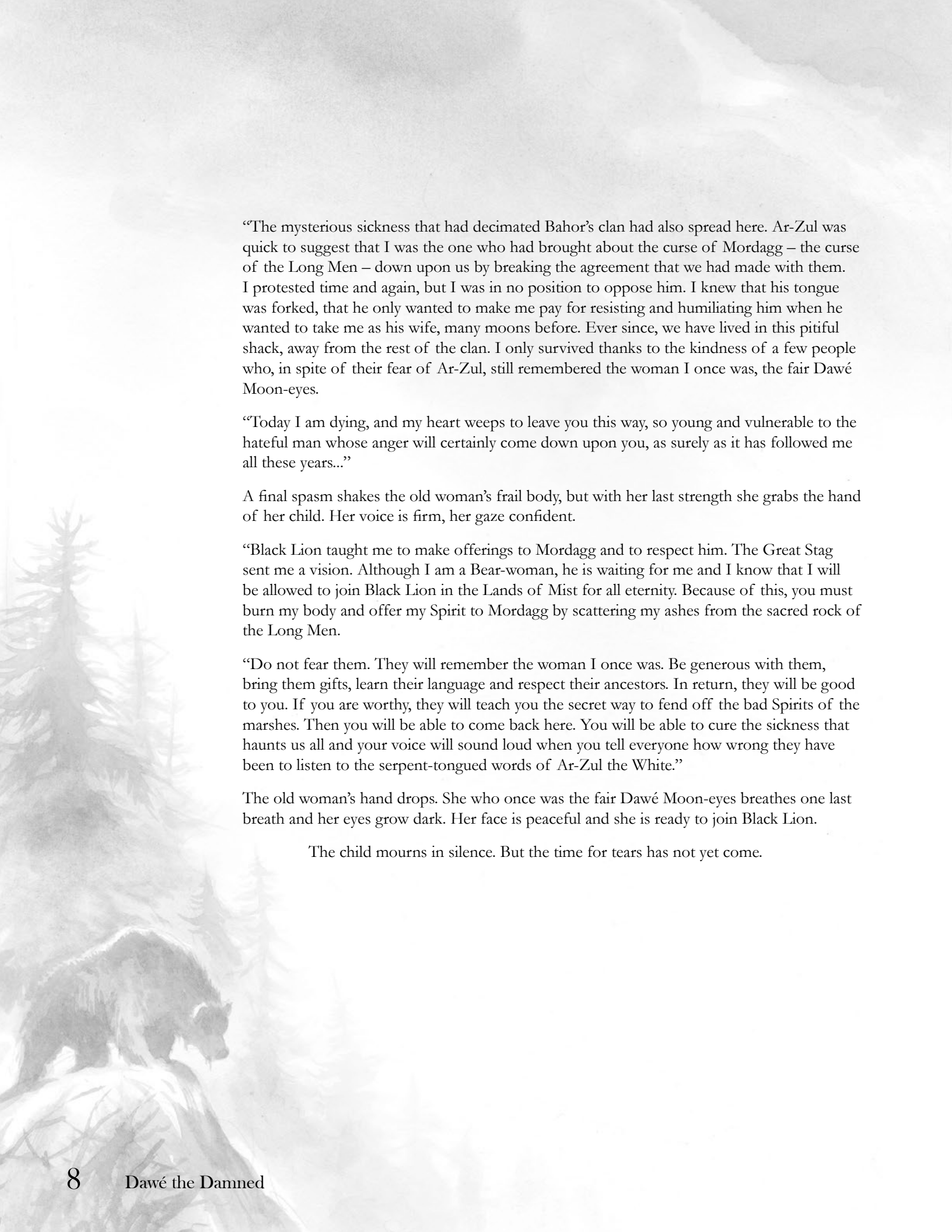
Dawé pauses for a moment. Her breath is short, her skin as gray as ash. Gathering her strength, she continues her tale.

“I was a captive of the Long Men. They treated me well. I learned a lot from them by watching and helping them every day. After one season, Black Lion decided to take me as his woman. I made many offerings to Ologham, but my belly remained barren and I never had the joy of carrying his child. I learned to love this strange man, and he loved me too. But he was struck down by the sickness that we call the curse of Mordagg, the same sickness that will claim me today and that has weakened so many of our clan. After only one moon of agony, he died. We burned his body so that his Spirit could rise up to the Lands of Mist and join his ancestors. His ashes were scattered to the four winds from the clan’s sacred rock. After him, none of the other Long Men succumbed to that sickness, for their shaman found a way to appease Mordagg. He was sent a vision that taught him how to ward off the evil Spirits of the marshes. Unfortunately, I never discovered his secret.

“The ancestors of the clan decided that I no longer had any place among them. They saw my sadness and realized that I would never truly be one of them. They set me free, but I could not return to our clan, not yet... it was too soon. Bahor’s clan, who live beyond the Great River, took me in. Ougrar the brave became my man, your father. Every year, the sickness that had struck down Black Lion also took the weaker members of Bahor’s clan.

“One day, Ougrar was charged by a child of Paovorn and killed, back before you had even learned to walk. I too was beginning to suffer from the marsh sickness at that time, so when Bahor’s clan decided to flee from those cursed lands and set up a new camp, following the setting sun beyond the Black Hills, I was too weak to follow them. I should have died right then, but my will to protect you and see you grow was enough to save me. I was very weak, but I managed to find my way back here, to those who had once been my clan, even though they had traded me, like a bundle of furs, to save their own lives. I had no other choice: on my own with you to feed, we would never have survived without providers and protectors.

“Ar-Zul the White had changed. Now a renowned shaman, his bitter words had become the law, ever since old Tanak had left for the World Below. He had several wives, he had learned how to flatter the ancestors and become the undisputed decision-maker. I was able to see into his heart, and I no longer had any pity for him. Now he inspired only disgust, especially since I knew that, all those years ago, he had brutally murdered Shining Magpie, the sister of the man I had loved.



“The mysterious sickness that had decimated Bahor’s clan had also spread here. Ar-Zul was quick to suggest that I was the one who had brought about the curse of Mordagg – the curse of the Long Men – down upon us by breaking the agreement that we had made with them. I protested time and again, but I was in no position to oppose him. I knew that his tongue was forked, that he only wanted to make me pay for resisting and humiliating him when he wanted to take me as his wife, many moons before. Ever since, we have lived in this pitiful shack, away from the rest of the clan. I only survived thanks to the kindness of a few people who, in spite of their fear of Ar-Zul, still remembered the woman I once was, the fair Dawé Moon-eyes.

“Today I am dying, and my heart weeps to leave you this way, so young and vulnerable to the hateful man whose anger will certainly come down upon you, as surely as it has followed me all these years...”

A final spasm shakes the old woman’s frail body, but with her last strength she grabs the hand of her child. Her voice is firm, her gaze confident.

“Black Lion taught me to make offerings to Mordagg and to respect him. The Great Stag sent me a vision. Although I am a Bear-woman, he is waiting for me and I know that I will be allowed to join Black Lion in the Lands of Mist for all eternity. Because of this, you must burn my body and offer my Spirit to Mordagg by scattering my ashes from the sacred rock of the Long Men.

“Do not fear them. They will remember the woman I once was. Be generous with them, bring them gifts, learn their language and respect their ancestors. In return, they will be good to you. If you are worthy, they will teach you the secret way to fend off the bad Spirits of the marshes. Then you will be able to come back here. You will be able to cure the sickness that haunts us all and your voice will sound loud when you tell everyone how wrong they have been to listen to the serpent-tongued words of Ar-Zul the White.”

The old woman’s hand drops. She who once was the fair Dawé Moon-eyes breathes one last breath and her eyes grow dark. Her face is peaceful and she is ready to join Black Lion.

The child mourns in silence. But the time for tears has not yet come.

1. What is Würm?

Basic Notions

Würm... A strange name that comes from a valley in the Alps. It designates the last great ice age to sweep across Europe. A period that began almost eighty thousand years ago and ended barely ten thousand years before our time. And now, Würm is also the name of a role-playing game, set in prehistoric times, 35,000 years ago.

What is a Role-Playing Game?

If you don't yet know – or you're not sure – what a role-playing game is, then read this chapter carefully.

A role-playing game is a game for two to six players that is played with logic and imagination rather than with a board. It is a very rich activity that is open to everyone but for Würm we recommend ages of 10+. One of the players will need to take on the role of *Game Master* (often abbreviated in this book as “GM”), and the other players will be the *characters*, who will embark on different *adventures* during each session, usually an afternoon or evening of play. There are plenty of books and websites on playing roleplaying games that give tons of information and advice to help you discover and deepen the way you engage in this fascinating type of game. In this book, the players who are playing the characters will simply be referred to as “players”, and the player who is taking on the role of Game Master will be called the “Game Master” or “GM”.

To paint you a better picture, here is a quick example of how a role-playing game works:

John, Paul, Luke and Sandra are friends. This evening, they meet to play a game of Würm. They don't need any special material to do so: a table and comfortable chairs in a quiet spot, a few dice, some paper and pencils. John will be the Game Master, while Sandra,

Paul and Luke will be the players. What's the difference? It's simple: as Game Master, John has read all the rules of the game (this book). He knows the game system and he has invented an adventure for the player's characters. As for the other players, they do not need to know the rules of the game all that well: John will explain the details clearly while they create their characters. Each one of them will be playing a prehistoric man or woman, for whom they will need to choose Strengths, Weaknesses and a backstory. Once all three characters are ready, the story begins.

“You are standing on a rocky outcrop looking out over a great valley,” says John. “The Elders of your community, the White Lion clan, have sent you out to explore this valley and find new tracks for hunting. They are also hoping you might find traces left by the Black Lion clan, who are related to you by the blood of many unions and who have mysteriously disappeared.” From that point, the players have a number of options. They can, for example, ask the GM to give them a more precise description of their surroundings, for he will be their eyes and ears throughout the whole adventure. Therefore, Paul could ask, “Can my character see any animal tracks on the ground?” (or he could say “Can I see any tracks...” to simplify things and to get a little deeper into character).

The players can also decide to perform an action, in which case the Game Master will tell them the result of their actions. For example, Sandra says “I head down into the valley, with my spear in one hand, looking for any signs of life...” If this action has an undetermined result in this situation in the adventure, then the Game Master will be the one to resolve it, by following the game rules and by rolling the dice.

For instance, if Luke's character wants to cross a stream in a single jump, then the Game Master will be the one to tell him if he has a chance of succeeding, what exactly his chances are, and he will ask him to roll the dice to see if his character succeeds in performing that action. The most dramatic cases in which these undetermined situations can arise are during combat when the characters fight for their make-believe lives! Game play then soon becomes a kind of theatrical improvisation where the players play the main characters and the Game Master brings the whole of the rest of the universe to life (no pressure!) as the players discover the events of the adventure prepared by the Game Master. The dice will

be rolled again and again, deciding the fates and the success of the characters, but not too often so that the "technical" side of the rules constrains the natural fluidity of the story-telling.

In the end, even once the characters have completed the story that the Game Master narrates for them, there is no winner or loser. In general, but even more so in a prehistoric setting where survival is so tough, role-playing games are collaborative games where all the players pull together to accomplish their mission, unravel the threads of a deep, dark mystery, or make progress on a personal quest that they have discussed with the Game Master.

Now, let's start at the very beginning...



How to Use This Rulebook?

This guide contains all the rules necessary to play the *Würm* role-playing game.

The first chapter explains the basic notions of role-playing and the *Würm* setting.

In the second chapter, you will learn how to create a character ready to embark on an adventure.

The third chapter covers the details of the game rules, **and the fourth** explains the specific rules of combat and dangers surrounding the characters.

The fifth chapter details the Talents and Secret Skills that the characters may acquire during their adventures, if they manage to stay alive.

The sixth chapter takes you to the world of magic and Spirits, introducing their role and importance in the *Würm* universe.

The seventh chapter takes a closer look at life during the ice age of *Würm*, including Languages, art, beliefs and conflicts. You'll get a fairly complete glimpse of the cultures and lifestyles of the peoples to which the characters belong.

The eighth chapter provides an alphabetical list of all the creatures that live in the *Würm* universe, divided in two parts: on one hand the real fauna from the end of the Pleistocene and on the other hand the fantastical creatures born from imagination, that you can decide to make real in the game.

Finally you'll find a number of adventures in **the ninth chapter** for your games of *Würm*, including a few beginners' scenarios as well as a method to randomly generate simple and fast adventure scenarios.




What is a Game Master?

As seen previously, the Game Master is both the director and the referee of the adventure of the players' characters. It's more difficult to be a Game Master than a player because it requires more preparation and an ability to think fast and improvise, but it's often also much more fun!

If you want to be a Game Master, first read this entire book very carefully and try to familiarize yourself with the game rules. As a Game Master, you will have to be able to answer the players' questions, and handle the multiple situations in which the characters will find themselves. Preparing an adventure for the characters is one of the things that makes it such fun to be the Game Master. However, you'll need a little practice to be able to create stories that take place during prehistoric times, as this type of setting is rather unusual.





If you prefer, ready-to-play adventures – or scenarios that just need a minimum preparation time – are available at the end of this guide and more are available for purchase. As a Game Master, be aware that you will have to play ALL the characters and creatures that the characters encounter during the game. Don't worry, you don't have to be a great actor to pull it off! However, the more familiar you are with the rules and the adventure, the easier it will be to play the various parts. The game will be more fluid and fun, and the world of Würm will come to life.

Players and Characters

Apart from the Game Master, all the people around the game table are called “players”.

In the following pages, when this term is used, it only means the players who play a character, not the Game Master.

If you want to be a player, first of all read Chapter 2, because your first task will be the creation of your alter ego in the Würm universe: your character. In order to form a consistent group, you will create your character in agreement with the Game Master and the other players, and he (or she) will be just the way you want him to be because character creation is a matter of choice.

Be warned! Your character will “come to life” during the adventure... but he may also “die” if he comes across dangers he can't overcome!

But if your character survives his first adventure, remember that you'll be able

to keep him and play him again in another adventure, where he'll be tougher and more experienced. Throughout his life, your character will grow, learn Talents and Secret Skills, create connections with other characters, have a husband or a wife, grow up to become an Elder, a leader, a shaman... There are many possibilities!

We recommend that players read Chapters 3 and 4, which are dedicated to general rules and combat. They may also benefit from reading Chapters 5 and 7, which are dedicated to Secret Skills and the peoples of Würm. But above all, players should not read Chapters 8 and 9 since it could really spoil the fun of the game.

What is a Scenario?

A scenario (or adventure) in the game requires two things: a plot that gives the outline and/or the details of the adventure, and the detailed characteristics of any non-player characters. To send the players off on an adventure, the Game Master must always prepare a scenario, which doesn't need to be too detailed, and doesn't even need to have an ending! Indeed a large part of role-playing is improvised, and players will often want to explore unexpected aspects of the plot or setting.

A good scenario therefore offers an adventure with a solid plot and characters, and enough freedom so that the players feel they are taking part together, along with the Game Master, in the creation of a real story. That's right! Although the Game Master has the responsibility – and the pleasure – of preparing the scenario with imagination and sometimes cunning, the adventure will only really move forward thanks to the players, and the story created will be the result of the combined imagination of all the people around the game table.

Game terms:

What is a “non player character”?

A non-player character (NPC) is a character played by the Game Master, rather than by one of the players.

How to Use Dice

In *Würm*, to simulate the effects of chance or the characters' luck, and to spice up the game, we use dice. Dice are rolled in all kinds of situations, and for all kinds of reasons, but most often to determine whether an attempted action succeeds or fails, or to measure the effects of an action.

We use two types of dice:

Most of the time these are simple six-sided dice, just like those used in every game. In the following rules, these dice will be called **d6**. If, in the text below, you read that you must roll 2, 3, or 4d6 to see the result of an action, it means that you must roll two, three, or four dice (or two, three, or four times the same die if you only have one!) and *add up the results*. Rolling a **d3** means rolling a d6 and *dividing the result by two* (round up).

The other type of die is the ten-sided die. It's much rarer, but you can very easily get one in any hobby game shop. This die is called a **d10** in the following rules, but it's not often used in the game. Note that this type of die is read in the usual way, with the upper face showing the result. The number "0" on the die should in fact be read as "10".

Game terms:

What is a "campaign"?

A campaign is a series of adventures linked together by a plot or by the simple fact that the main protagonists are the players' characters.

Historical reminder: The Paleolithic era

The game of *Würm* takes place during the Paleolithic age (which means "Old Stone Age"). Here is a chronological recap to help you understand the setting of the *Würm* era:

- Lucy's people, the *Australopithecus* (a form of of ape-men), appeared four millions years ago;
- the first humans, *Homo habilis*, fashioned the first stone tools in Africa 2.5 million years ago;
- *Homo erectus* appeared 1.8 million years ago. They were not one species but a multitude of species. They mastered hunting techniques and fire.
- *Homo sapiens* and *Neanderthals* emerged roughly 200,000 years ago. These two species co-existed for the first time 100,000 years ago in the Middle East, during maybe a few dozen millennia... Then Neanderthal went back to Europe...

The time period of the *Würm* game is set between the "Middle" Paleolithic and the "Upper" Paleolithic, 35,000 years ago. The Middle Paleolithic started roughly 250,000 years ago and saw the development of the "Mousterian" culture. In France, (where *Würm* was first published) the Middle Paleolithic was the era of Neanderthal, who lived alone on the European territory. New cultures appeared 35,000 years ago. They coincide with the development of abstract thought and technical skills: this was the beginning of the Upper Paleolithic.



so slowly that to the eyes of the peoples of *Würm*, their lifestyle would have seemed absolutely unchanging. They would have been certain that their great-great-great-grandchildren will live the same way as their great-great-great-grandparents. Between laughter and tears, men and animals grow up, get old, then die, but to them time is just a vast cycle that, with adequate rituals, regularly renews itself in a permanent and comforting repetition.

Neanderthal and Cro Magnon are very dissimilar and yet they are linked through blood. They have a common ancestor, *Homo erectus*

(probably *Homo heidelbergensis* to be precise). What's more: 35,000 years ago, the first Cro Magnon coming to Europe possess some genes of the Neanderthals (1 to 4%), which their ancestors ("archaic" Homo Sapiens) have already encountered in the Middle East almost 100,000 years before that, and with which they had – very slightly – interbred. However the memory of these few cases of interbreeding was probably not very vivid by the time Cro Magnon came to what is now France. Physically speaking, the two species (or subspecies?) were very different, even though, culturally speaking, their lifestyle was probably rather similar, as we'll see later on. Was their encounter a time for sharing, conflicts, repulsion or respect? Nobody to this day knows the correct answer to this question. As players of *Würm*, it will be up to you to imagine the life of these distant ancestors and to give YOUR vision of these remote times.

The Upper Paleolithic is mainly associated with modern Homo sapiens who arrived in Europe roughly 40,000 years ago. We know him better under the name of Cro Magnon. These early modern men who came to France are already completely identical to us, both physically and psychologically speaking. Culturally they bring forth characteristics that are called "Aurignacian", then later "Gravettian" and "Magdalenian", and with them we see the first complex artistic creations of our history.

This brief summary is however misleading, because these events happened over large periods of time that are difficult to fathom. Just think: between the moment we mastered fire, 500,000 years ago, and the time of the game, more than *twenty-five thousand* generations have followed each other! Of course, from the Upper Paleolithic onwards, techniques and concepts progressed, but



Roudier 06

2. Creating a Character

Each player has to create the character he wants to play in agreement with the Game Master, by following his directions and guiding principles. For instance, the Game Master can decide that players will play Neanderthals only, or that the characters all belong to the same tribe (which is often easier). As for the rest, each player is free to create the character he wishes, meaning he will have to choose between many options. There's not much randomness in this process, as you will see.

Now it's time to create a character. Download and print a copy of the "Character Sheet" available at the end of the guide (or just use a blank sheet of paper) and grab a pencil and an eraser.

A character is defined by:

- his people, his tribe, his clan;
- his Strengths;
- his Weaknesses;
- his Experience;
- his Stamina;
- his Talents;
- his Prestige;
- his Equipment.

2.1. Peoples and Tribes

Your character may belong to one of the two human species living in the heart of the Tribe lands during the late ice age: *Homo (sapiens) neandertalensis*, called Bear-men; or *Homo sapiens sapiens* (our species), called Long Men.

Depending on his people, a character will not have the same selected *Strengths* (this will be explained later) and will not access the same starting *Talents*.



Long Men

Long Men are *Homo sapiens sapiens*, meaning they belong to our human species, in a slightly more archaic version that is usually referred to as Cro Magnon. They are from the *Aurignacian* culture and their craftsmanship is refined. Their stone, bone, and skin craft shows a great level of precision. They live in semi-nomadic settlements, in large, elaborate and comfortable huts that protect them from the harsh conditions of the ice age. These humans are robust and tall: 1m80 (men) and 1m65 (women). Most of the men and women of this people have come to live in the Tribe lands from the far lands of the rising sun, beyond the Icy Mountains, which is why their complexion usually goes from tanned to dark, their hair is black, and their eyes brown, black, or dark blue. These humans usually live in clans of 20 to 40 individuals. There are shamans among them, and their beliefs are explained in Chapter 7 (*Peoples of the ice age*).

Key Strengths of the Long Men: either *Hand of the Ancestors* or *Speed of the Horse*.

Bear-men

Bear Men are *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*, also called Neanderthal Men. The Long Men of the ice age world sometimes call them *Trolls*. These humans are very robust. Their bones are thick and they possess a great physical strength due to muscle joints that sometimes differ from ours. They are small, the average male size being roughly 1m65, the average female 1m55. They have unusual facial features: powerful jaws with no chin, a long and wide nose, and a *supraorbital torus* forming an impressive brow ridge above the eyes. Built to withstand the cold climate of the Tribe Lands, these men and women have an exceptional resistance to the harsh conditions. Their hair comes in all kinds of shades, from fair to dark, often ginger. Their eyes are light colors: amber, green, or hazel. Their skin, although tanned by the sun and wind, is usually fair, pale even. They live in tribes of twenty members, including shamans as well.

There are two Bear-men cultures in the Tribe Lands. They both have the same roots but they have evolved differently. *Mousterians* are typical Bear-men: they have mastered flake flint knapping but they have no knowledge of laminar technique or bone craft. They worship the Great Red Bear. *Châtelperronians* are Bear-men whose knowledge is on par with the Long Men's: they know laminar debitage, make elaborate finery, and they have learnt engraving and painting. Their beliefs are described in Chapter 7 (*Peoples of the ice age*).

Key Strengths of the Bear-men: either *Strength of the Bear* or *Heart of Ice*.




Hairless or hairy? The Neanderthal look

Nobody currently knows exactly what the Neanderthal men and women looked like, because all that remains of them is their bones. We therefore have specific data regarding one part of their anatomy, but as for the rest, we only have clues, or speculation.

The study of their skeleton reveals that Neanderthals were stocky, with an average size a little below 1.70 m for the men and 1.60 m for the women. However there could be, as is the case nowadays, very tall individuals and others very small. Their muscle structure was probably impressive, as is shown by the study of the traces of tendons left on the bones, and their average weight was probably about 80-90 kilos. There was no big difference between men and women, and the latter were probably as robust as the men. Based on their large skulls (bigger than ours, on average), we know their facial traits: the supraorbital ridge forming a prominent brow ridge above the eyes, the face slanting forward, the strong jaws without the protruding chin bone...





The matter of the “soft tissues” (such as the nose, the ears) and the color of their skin, is trickier. We don’t have many clues, but we have to make do with what we have: for example, fair-skinned humans must have benefited from the weak solar radiation in Europe during the ice age, as a better way to synthesize vitamin D, which helps prevent rickets. A gene found in Neanderthal DNA seems to confirm this hypothesis. Facial reconstructions give us other clues: lips must have been thin because the lack of chin does not allow the development of thick lips, the nose was likely to be big or long, slanting forward... As for the rest: were their noses potato-shaped or turned up at the end? We have no idea. No clue regarding the ears: feel free to imagine them pointed! Genitalia are not well known either. It’s quite possible to imagine a penis in permanent semi-erection for the men (*penis rectus*) and rounded buttocks for the women (*steatopygia*), as is the case with the Bushmen in Kalahari (who are pure *Homo sapiens*) since these features seem to be truly very “primitive” characteristics.

Their hair coverage is another largely unknown fact! Neanderthal representations nowadays tend to show them hairless, just like us, with a beard for the men. Indeed the Neanderthal species appeared on Earth very shortly before us, a few tens of thousands of years at the most. Why, then, should they have more “primal” looks? However that reasoning is not necessarily justified. As it is, there’s nothing to prevent us from thinking that Neanderthals were maybe hairy, and had a body covered with a uniform coat as well as a glorious bushy mane... Because we shouldn’t be misled: they were indeed a different species from us. If we represent Neanderthals in a way that’s more and more similar to us, it’s only because we want to grant them more “humanity”, less bestiality. But the hair issue

has nothing to do with their intelligence and their cognitive and cultural development, and hairy Neanderthals could just as well have buried their dead and knapped flint like true experts. A gene found in the Neanderthal DNA leads us to believe that some of them could have been red-heads. So, a beautiful head of ginger hair or maybe red body hair?

By default Neanderthals are pictured hairless and pretty similar to us in the *Würm* role-playing game, as you can see in the illustrations of this book. But feel free, as GM of *Würm*, to go another route regarding the way Neanderthals look, and to give them a more “savage” appearance. However, it’s likely the Cro Magnons will act differently towards these other humans if they look more like bears! Why not? The real challenge then will be playing these wild and hairy Bear-men, who are true humans, with a few differences.

The Tribe

The choice of the character’s *Tribe* or *Clan* will determine the *Guardian Spirit* that will protect him, the taboos he will have to respect, and a few other characteristics. First of all, let’s define these terms.

A clan is a group of one or more families (from one family to several dozen) that feel connected by a common ancestor, whether legendary or not, imaginary or real. This ancestor may be a very prestigious Elder who actually founded the clan, or who established it in a new location. But it can also be a magical animal that created the first ancestors of the clan, or was in charge of their education.

A tribe can include several clans. It is usually a larger community, brought together by the acceptance of a common authority, a common system of government. In the



case of Bear-men though, tribes can be very small communities. These small autonomous groups are often scattered and there are no tight bonds between them.

There is no complete list of the many communities living in the Tribe lands of the world of *Würm*. The Game Master is the one who will usually indicate the options available to the characters when it comes to choosing the tribe they come from.

As mentioned earlier, it's easier to form a consistent group with all the members coming from the same community. However that is not mandatory. Ultimately the Game Master is the one who will approve the choice of the players regarding their tribe of origin. It is, however, recommended that the players confer with each other about this aspect of their character's life.

Gender and Age

Is your character male or female? You can check Chapter 7: *Peoples of the ice age* for the differences in status between men and women. The starting age of your character when beginning his adventures is different depending on his people of origin. As a matter of fact Bear-men grow up more rapidly than Long Men!


On average, Bear-men and women reach adulthood *three to four years earlier* than Long Men. Long Men usually have their coming of age ritual initiation when they are 14-15 years old, Bear-men when they are 11-12 years old. For women, this age is more flexible, since it depends on their first menstrual cycle.

No age "limit" has been set. It is however considered that an individual over twenty-five years old is a "mature" man, and an "old man" if he is over fifty. However some individuals may live much longer, in either people, with a little wisdom, sturdiness, and the help of the Spirits.

- If the character is a Long Man, his starting age is determined by rolling **1d6 + 14**.
- If the character is a Bear-man, his starting age is determined by rolling **1d6 + 10**.

Choosing to Play Long Men or Bear-men? How to Start?

If this is the first time you're playing *Würm*, you may be wondering whether it is more relevant, simple, or fun to play a Long Man or a Bear-man. This is good question and we'll try to answer it.



As we've seen, even if their culture differs from those *medieval fantasy* or *contemporary* role-playing gamers are used to, Long Men are typically "classic" men (in terms of role-playing). That's the reason why it may be simpler to play Long Men, to let you gradually get to know the prehistoric world of *Würm*. Simpler because we all have references allowing us to imagine what nomadic or semi-nomadic hunter peoples are: Native Americans, Inuit, Aboriginal Australians... Folklore and ethnography can provide us with many ideas. Simpler, and more realistic too: we know the cognitive capacities and the type of psychology of our species (modern sapiens), but we don't know what they could have been for Neanderthals, even though some physical evidence tends to show that they thought and acted with a great "humanity".

That being said, many fantasy or science fiction role-playing games include non-human races far more different from us than the Neanderthals: dwarves, elves, minotaurs, aliens... Perfect accuracy does not seem to be a major issue for most of us players when it comes down to it. On the contrary, it seems that the notion of playing the role of a non-human creature is a major part of the search for something different and fun that makes role-playing appealing. In fact if you want to immediately dive in a prehistoric world that is maybe a little more primitive, it may be better to play Bear-men first.

A word of advice however, whatever you choose: if you wish to develop a pretty realistic prehistoric setting (Spirits and magic aside!), don't give in to caricature. Ice age humans spoke languages a little more complex than just grunts and "ugga bugga" noises and they had truly original and rich cultures (see *Chapter 7*). Be careful

not to caricature the interactions between Long Men and Bear-men either. Although they were newcomers in the lands of Europe during the ice age, the Long Men did not behave like "conquerors", as they migrated at a very slow pace.

What tips can we give for playing a Bear-man or Bear-woman? Of course it's possible to see Neanderthals as more "primal" creatures than modern humans, but it's also possible to give them a finer sensitivity than ours. A small hint just in case: it seems that Neanderthals had very high testosterone levels! Your Bear-man may therefore be a brutal and sensual character, but without overdoing it and with a bit of nuance: the character may possess a certain amount of softness, a joyful and indolent personality, then blow up in sudden fits of rage and violence. His behavior may be quite ambivalent: both softer and wilder than a modern human, maybe also less curious, less ingenious, more motivated by his needs than his desires...

Four scenarios are available at the end of this book. The first one is designed for Bear-men characters, but it can quite easily be adapted to Long Men. The third one is designed for Long Men, but it can quite easily be adapted to Bear-men. On the other hand, the characteristics of the second and fourth scenarios, which are designed for Long Men children and Bear-men, don't allow these scenarios to be adapted to characters from the other people.

One last thing: Long Men are a little less sturdy than Bear-men. If you are the Game Master and you're preparing a first adventure for a group of Long Men, don't be too hard on them...



2.2 Strengths

Your character possesses a certain number of Strengths, granted by one or several totemic bonds that are connecting him to some Spirits of nature or to the Spirit of an ancestor. In fact each Strength is essentially just as magical as it is natural, since there's no difference between the two in the world of *Würm*.

In the game system, a Strength grants the character a 1d6 bonus when performing an action associated with this Strength. The Strengths you can give to your character are listed below, with a description of the effects of each one of them.

Each character starts the game with **3 Strengths**. *The first one is defined by the people the character belongs to* (see above), since the character must choose this Strength between the two Key Strengths of his people. It's up to the player to choose the second and third

Strengths. If he wants to, a player can decide to grant his character a fourth Strength but he will have to give him a *Weakness* as well (see below).

The bond connecting the character to the animal associated with each one of the Strengths is special. In order to keep his Strength, he must never kill the animal associated with it, except to defend his life. Likewise, he must never eat the flesh of that animal, except during some very formal rituals.

When a character is able to become a shaman and acquire some Secret Skills and powers, the bond connecting the character to his totem animals will directly turn them into *Auxiliary Spirits*, with no need to conclude a covenant during the game (see the Talents section, Chapter 4).

Strengths

1. Hand of the Ancestors
2. Majesty of the Aurochs
3. Secret of the Bear
4. Strength of the Bear
5. Knowledge of the Beaver
6. Might of the Bison
7. Song of the Blackbird
8. Flight of the Crow
9. Rise of the Eagle
10. Breath of the Giant Stag
11. Speed of the Horse
12. Agility of the Ibex
13. Heart of Ice
14. Fury of the Lion
15. Reflexes of the Lynx
16. Softness of the Otter
17. Sight of the Owl
18. Wisdom of the Mammoth
19. Eye of the Panther
20. Magic of the Rhinoceros
21. Inspiration of the Rocks
22. Flame of the Salamander
23. Fins of the Salmon
24. Grace of the Swan
25. Venom of the Viper
26. Protection of the Vixen
27. Cunning of the Weasel
28. Nose of the Wolf

Hand of the Ancestors – There's no particular bond connecting the character to a totem animal, however a special bond connects him to a dead ancestor of the tribe or the clan. This Spirit grants him a 1d6 bonus for all kinds of crafts *practiced by the tribe he was born into*.

Majesty of the Aurochs – The character, just like an aurochs, is tall and charismatic. He gets a 1d6 bonus for any social activity involving aura or charisma, such as leading a ceremony, telling a legend, leading a dance, convincing or impressing someone.

Secret of the Bear – The Spirit of the bear guides the character in his intuitive knowledge of deep caves and caverns. He is granted a 1d6 bonus for his moving and orientation Tests in underground situations, and he's never afraid to go there.

Strength of the Bear – The Spirit of the bear gives the character a tremendous strength. He is granted a 1d6 bonus for all his Tests of pure physical strength such as lifting, pushing or pulling heavy things, and he also gains a 1d6 bonus to all the Damage he inflicts in combat.

Knowledge of the Beaver – The beaver grants the character an infallible instinct – translated into a 1d6 bonus – for any action involving the building of shelters, huts, and traps, but also all kinds of floating transportation.

Might of the Bison – The Spirit of the bison inhabits the body of the character, giving him an extraordinary strength and great fertility. During the game, the character is granted a 1d6 bonus for any kind of trial involving physical strength, and for any damage he inflicts. This bonus is also important to determine if the character has successfully impregnated a woman, or – if the character is a woman – if she can give birth without difficulty.

Song of the Blackbird – Just like the Blackbird, the character has a melodious voice that can charm the most hardened hearts and the most twisted minds. In all the situations where he may have to use his voice to convince, seduce, sing, barter, or even lie, he is given a 1d6 bonus for his Tests.

Flight of the Crow – The Spirit of the crow guides the character's hand. He therefore shows an unmatched accuracy when throwing spears, javelins, or even when using a sling or bolas. The character is granted a 1d6 bonus to his ranged Attack Test.

Rise of the Eagle – The Rise of the Eagle grants the character a 1d6 bonus to his tests to enter a *trance*. He will therefore be able to do so more easily and rapidly than others. See Chapter 5 for the description of the techniques and powers of a trance.

Breath of the Giant Stag – The character is granted an extraordinary stamina and a great resistance to illnesses and infections. In game terms, the character is granted a 1d6 bonus to resist illnesses and poisons, and gains a lot of stamina: a Long Man gifted with the Breath of the Giant Stag Strength has 36 Stamina Points, and a Bear-man has 40.

Speed of the Horse – Just like the horse, the character can run at an amazing speed, and for a long time without getting tired. It means the character gains a 1d6 bonus to all his Running and Fatigue (when running) Tests.

Agility of the Ibex – This Strength makes it incredibly easy for the character to climb, jump and somersault. The character can also, better than anyone else, cushion his falls, if needed. In all these situations, the character adds 1d6 to his Tests.

Heart of Ice – The ice Spirit has breathed upon the character, who is granted an incredible resistance to the harsh conditions of the ice age. Likewise, the character has an extremely high resistance to pain. In all the

situations where he must resist the effects of cold or pain (for example in the case of *Serious Wounds*), the character is granted a 1d6 bonus for his Test.

Fury of the Lion – Guided by the Spirit of the lion, the character is a fierce fighter. Gifted with a great energy and a supernatural instinct for fighting, he is granted a 1d6 bonus for all his hand to hand Attack Tests. Furthermore, his fury in combat can be translated into actual roars. He therefore earns a 1d6 bonus to scare the animals.

Reflexes of the Lynx – The Spirit of the lynx grants the character superhuman reflexes that will keep him out of harm's way most of the time, especially during combat. The character is granted a 1d6 bonus for all his Initiative Tests and gains a +3 bonus to his Dodge score, increasing it to 10 rather than 7.

Softness of the Otter – The character has an aura that calms and comforts others. His physical contact is also appeasing and regenerating. The character is granted a 1d6 bonus for calming emotions, and for giving first aid. Anyone spending at least one hour, in the evening, being deloused, massaged, or stroked by the character, gets 1d6 Stamina Points back during the night, as if he had rested the entire day before.

Sight of the Owl – Thanks to the Spirit of the owl, the character's sight and hearing are very sharp, allowing him to see as well by day as by night, and making it impossible to sneak up on him. The character can also see farther than normal, and is able to hear the slightest noise. In the situations where he must perform visual and hearing Perception Tests, he is awarded a 1d6 bonus.

Wisdom of the Mammoth – Guided by the Spirit of the Mammoth, the character is gifted with a great memory and a great insight, probably making him a vital member of his tribe. Always calm, yet with a quick mind, the character is granted a 1d6 bonus for all his knowledge and common sense Tests, and also to detect lies or understand the emotions of both humans and animals.

Eye of the Panther – Inspired by the Spirit of the panther, the character shows an innate knowledge of the Spirits and he is able to communicate with them very easily. He is therefore granted a 1d6 bonus for all his *Contact with the Spirits* Tests.

Magic of the Rhinoceros – The character is gifted with the powerful magic that surrounds the Spirit of the woolly rhinoceros. He can detect the magic within things and enchant weapons and charms better than anyone. He is granted a 1d6 bonus to all his *Enchantment* or *Creation of Charms* Tests, but also in all his attempts to resist the effects of *Curses* directed at him.

Inspiration of the Rocks – This Strength is not related to any totemic or ancestral bond. However it grants the character an unmatched gift for artistic creations such as painting, engraving, or sculpture. He is therefore granted a 1d6 bonus to all these Tests, including body painting.

Flame of the Salamander – The Spirit of the salamander grants the character a magical capacity to light a fire whatever the circumstances, faster than most of the other men. He gets a 1d6 bonus to all his *Fire-lighting* Tests. Furthermore the character is able to resist the most scorching heat and divides the Damage he suffers from fire by 2.



Fins of the Salmon – Just like the salmon, the character is an excellent swimmer, able to resist the strongest streams. Assisted by the salmon Spirit, he is also an unmatched fisherman, who can bring in miraculous catches of fish. He is granted a 1d6 bonus to all his *Swimming* and *Fishing* Tests.

Grace of the Swan – The character possesses a supernatural grace and beauty. He is therefore granted a 1d6 bonus to his *Seduction*, *Charm*, and *Dance* Tests. Some animals may also be sensitive to this grace.

Venom of the Viper – Guided by the Spirit of the Viper, the character has an intuitive knowledge of the magical properties of plants and venoms. He is therefore able to prepare magical potions and ointments that are incredibly efficient. Furthermore, the character can also, better than anyone, prepare and use purifying cataplasms and decoctions. In all these activities, he is granted a 1d6 bonus for his Tests.

Protection of the Vixen – Under the protection of the vixen, the character is both very fertile and resistant. He increases by 1d6 his chances to procreate and, if the character is female, will only suffer 4d6 Damage Points during childbirth. She can roll two dice against the Births table and choose the result she prefers. Furthermore the Vixen protects the character from infections and provides a 1d6 bonus to resist illnesses.

Cunning of the Weasel – Just like the weasel, the character is an expert in hiding, silently moving, and camouflaging himself. In situations that require this, such as getting close to prey when hunting, he is granted a 1d6 bonus for his Tests.

Nose of the Wolf – Just like the Wolf, the character is an unmatched tracker, able to tell between the tiniest smells, and to detect almost invisible tracks. He can also find his way without ever getting lost. In all these activities, the character is granted a 1d6 bonus for his Tests.

Note About Cumulative Strengths

The effects of two Strengths are usually not cumulative. Most of the time, we will simply consider that when at least one Strength can give an advantage to the character, he gains a 1d6 bonus, which is usually enough to allow him to overcome extraordinary trials. However, at the Game Master's discretion, it will sometimes be possible to cumulate the effects of two Strengths in the same Test: for example, *Majesty of the Aurochs* and *Song of the Blackbird* in a social interaction essential for the Success of the scenario, where these two Strengths can be fully beneficial.

In some very difficult situations as well, a character cumulating *Breath of the Giant Stag* and *Protection of the Vixen* can be allowed to add 2d6 to his Resistance to illnesses Tests.

Cumulating the *Might of the Bison* and *Strength of the Bear* Strengths will require the utmost attention. This situation is a potential problem because it's frequently used, in combats especially, and it could seem to turn the character into some kind of raging hulk. It will be necessary to think this over, in order to moderate these cumulative effects. On one hand, it's possible to grant the character the *Might of the Bison* and *Strength of the Bear* Strengths only if one of these two Strengths is balanced out by a Weakness. On the other hand, for some Game Masters, a 2d6 bonus for the strength Test and for Damage may seem a bit high. In that case, we should then consider that these cumulative Strengths allow the roll of 1d10 or 1d6+3 instead of 2d6, at the Game Master's discretion. This should be decided once and for all at the beginning of the game. That being said, don't forget that combats in *Würrm* are dangerous, so the advantage given by these cumulative Strengths does not seem excessive.

Finally, don't forget that the *Might of the Bison* is a very limiting Strength, especially for a Neanderthal, since this animal is one the most hunted, after the reindeer. This aspect must not be overlooked. This is why it may be wiser for the player to try to grant the character this Strength through the use of a charm.

2.3. Weaknesses

You can decide that your character will have one or more Weaknesses. Weaknesses are crippling physical or personality traits that your character may have had since birth, or received after a wound or a curse.

In game terms, a Weakness inflicts a penalty of **-3** on the character when performing certain activities related to this Weakness, such as Visual Perception if the character is one-eyed.

A character can be afflicted with a maximum of **two** Weaknesses: one to compensate for an extra Strength, and one for the mastery of a Talent or Secret Skill (see section 2.6.).

For each of these Weaknesses your character is willing to receive, he improves his abilities in an other way. Bear in mind though that a Weakness could turn out to be lethal in the hostile setting of the ice age.

Weaknesses

1. Clumsy
2. Disfigured
3. Fearful
4. Fragile
5. Half deaf
6. Impressionable
7. Individualistic
8. Lamé
9. One eyed
10. Presumptuous
11. Quick-tempered
12. Simple-minded
13. Timid
14. Weak

Clumsy – The character is so inept at doing things requiring accuracy and dexterity, members of his clan tell him to steer clear of craftsmanship, and even more medicine. He suffers a penalty of -3 for all his Craftsmanship, First aid, or Potions and Cataplasms Preparation Tests.

Disfigured – The face of the character is disfigured from the after-effects of a previous fight (scars, broken jaw, etc.) or due to a difficult birth (malformation). He suffers a penalty of -3 for any social interaction involving trust or seduction, especially with strangers.

Fearful – The character is soft and very sensitive to pain, he is terrified at the idea of fighting. He suffers a penalty of -3 for all his Hand to Hand Attack Tests, and for his Pain Resistance Tests.

Fragile – The character's health is fragile and he is short-winded. He is often ill, so his life expectancy will surely be reduced if he isn't careful. He suffers a penalty of -3 for all his Resistance to sickness and poisons Tests, and he has less Stamina than the others: a *Fragile* Long Man has only 16 Stamina Points, a *Fragile* Bear-man only 20.

Half Deaf – A half deaf character suffers a penalty of 3 to all his Hearing Tests, and to any Tests that determine if he is surprised during an Attack. He also suffers a penalty of -3 to all his social interactions involving discussions (debates, talks).

Impressionable – The character is extremely frightened by all supernatural phenomena, or at least by what he feels is supernatural. He is afraid of the darkness of the night, but he's far more scared of the

darkness of the caves. In all the situations where the character must perform Steady Nerves Tests related to the dark, to death, or to magic, the character suffers a penalty of 3 to his die roll.

Individualistic – The character despises life in community and community effort. The members of his tribe, *as well as his Guardian Spirit*, see him as unreliable and selfish. In all the situations where the character must gain the trust of a member of his community, he suffers a penalty of -3. But most of all, the community's Guardian Spirit despises the character. Every time he draws a die from the Manna pool, or when he tries to replenish it, there's a 50% chance (1-3/1d6) it will have no effect. (see the Manna pool rules in Chapter 6)

Lame – Due to his handicap, a lame character gets a penalty of -3 to all his Running Tests, and to his Agility Tests too, such as jumps and falls (but not climbing).

One-eyed – The one-eyed character suffers a penalty of -3 for his Visual Perception Tests, as well as his Surprise Tests during an Attack. He also suffers a penalty of -3 for all his Ranged Attack Tests.

Presumptuous – The character is proud and arrogant, and he thinks so highly of himself that he's unpleasant to anyone who talks to him. He suffers a penalty of -3 for any social interaction requiring diplomacy. Since he thinks he knows everything, he hasn't bothered to truly learn anything and suffers a penalty of -3 for all Wisdom and Knowledge Tests.

Quick-tempered – This character is hot-headed and bad-tempered, which makes him get angry very quickly. He suffers a penalty of -3 in any social interaction involving diplomacy. If he has the feeling he's been provoked or insulted, he must succeed a normal Test (2d6 / 7). If he fails, he gets angry and can easily start fighting.

Simple-minded – The character's thinking capabilities are limited and he is forgetful. In all the situations requiring Knowledge or Intelligence Tests, he suffers a penalty of -3. The same penalty applies to some of his social interactions, especially the situations where the character should be charismatic or act with authority.

Timid – The character is shy and introverted to the point that it's difficult for him to give a speech in public or even to talk to people. He suffers a penalty of -3 for all social interactions requiring him to talk.

Weak – The character lacks vigor and energy. He is unable to carry heavy weights and other men laugh at him when he tries to hit someone. He suffers a penalty of -3 to all his Strength Tests and also to determine the damage he inflicts. He can however use any kind of weapon.

Note about the Bond Connecting the Character to his Totems

Some players and Game Masters may wonder about this: shouldn't the totemic bond connecting a character to his totem animals be determined by the way the character is played relating to these animals? This could imply that an inappropriate behavior could cause the loss – even temporary – of a totemic bond, and as such of a Strength. Clearly not. Why? Because the bond connecting a character to his totem animals is both natural and supernatural, real and imaginary. Some say that a character possesses the Fury of the Lion because he has the fighting Spirit of a lion as much as a true magical connection with the lion. So, it's as much a magical affinity as a physical sensitivity or capacity that conjures up the animal through comparison. What is more, the character may be connected to the animal by only one aspect. For instance: Agility of the Ibex. The character can possess a bond with the ibex or be reminiscent of this animal because of his superior agility, but not necessarily because of his personality. It's up to the player. Most of all, a totem is not a Guardian Spirit. It doesn't watch over the character, and it's important that this totemic bond should only be lost by killing the animal or eating its flesh outside of a ritualized situation. In other words, it should only be lost through a true shock or trauma, whether this bond is considered magical or psychological/emotional. That's why the totemic bond is also strong, and that's why it shouldn't be possible to lose it through an attitude considered inadequate in terms of the way the character behaves.

2.4. Experience

During their adventures, the characters will gain experience in many domains, which they'll be able to use in the dangerous situations they'll be confronted with later on.

Experience, just like Stamina detailed below, is estimated with a numerical score. It starts at **3** for all characters. Over time, this score will increase, usually by 1, 2, or 3 points per adventure. The increase depends on the dangers, or the new experiences the characters had. It always remains at the Game Master's discretion.

Each Experience Point can be used by the player to represent his character becoming tougher. When the character finds himself in a dangerous or important situation, the player can decide to use Experience: he spends one Point of his character's total, and this Point allows him to add 1d6 to any roll (except for a Talent the character does not have). 1 Experience Point makes it also possible to increase the Dodge or Running scores of the character by 3, for one Round. It's possible to cumulate *Strengths* and Experience benefits. These Points are only spent **temporarily**. When a character gets an Experience score of 0, it means he can no longer benefit from it **during the current game session**.

At the beginning of every adventure (or game session), the total of Experience Points is always restored to the maximum, and increased by the Points that may have been gained in the previous adventure.



2.5. Stamina

Stamina is a way to measure the characters' ability to resist wounds and illnesses, lack of food and the cold weather. It is represented by a number of Points that decreases with each Test resulting in a *Damage score*.

A character has **30** Stamina Points if he's a Bear-man, **24** if he's a Long Man.

A character gifted with the *Breath of the Giant Stag* Strength has **40** Stamina Points if he's a Bear-man, **36** if he's a Long Man.

A *Fragile* character only gets **20** Stamina Points if he's a Bear-man, **16** if he's a Long Man.

When a character reaches 0 Stamina Points, he risks falling unconscious or into a coma. He is, one way or another, unable to carry out an action of any kind.

At -10, the character dies and travels to the underworld of the Great Bear or the Lands of Mist.

Any wound causing 10 Damage Points or more in one blow is a *Serious Wound*. For the effects of Light or Serious Wounds, see paragraph 4.5. *Wounds and how to avoid them*.

Increasing Stamina Points:

A character may increase his Stamina Points by using his Experience, which shows he has become physically tougher and has grown used to all sorts of wounds, bites, and fractures.

To become a "tough cookie", the character can trade one Experience Point gained during the game for a permanent increase of his Stamina Points.

It can be done once, by spending one Experience Point – and only one! – after each game session *during which you have gained Experience*. Of course, this means that no character can increase his Stamina score that way during his first adventure. The traded Experience Point is gone for good, and will not return at the beginning of the next session, unlike the Points usually spent while playing.

In technical terms, each Experience Point spent that way grants the character a few extra Stamina Points and can increase his Serious Wounds Threshold. A character may spend one Experience Point that way for a maximum of eight times, to gain 20 Stamina Points and increase his Serious Wounds Threshold by 4, as you can see in the table below.

At his discretion, the Game Master can decide to increase the Stamina score of some important NPC, known to be experienced and tough. This must remain exceptional however. Sometimes the Game Master will also grant an animal such an increase, though exceptionnal animals will most often belong to the *Legendary animals* category.

Stamina Points Increase Table

Traded XP Points (cumulated)	Bonus to the Stamina Points	Bonus to the Serious Wound Threshold
1	3	1
2	6	1
3	9	2
4	12	2
5	14	3
6	16	3
7	18	4
8	20	4

2.6. Talents and Secret Skills

Talents and Secret Skills represent fields of knowledge that the characters can only use after having been initiated first. Talents are connected to *Craftsmanship* and *Art*. Secrets Skills are connected to *Combat*, *Shamanism*, *Enchantment*, and *Sorcery*. You will find a complete list of these Talents and Secret Skills, their description and the way they work in Chapter 5 of this rulebook.

A new character possesses a few starting Talents:

- all the basic crafts of his tribe or clan;
- one more Talent or one Secret Skill if he's willing to be afflicted with a *Weakness* in return.

Otherwise, characters cannot possess Combat, Shamanism, Enchantment, or Sorcery Secret Skills when starting a game. These must be acquired during the game, and their initiations should be played out. That's how we recommend your characters to start their adventures.

However it's possible to allow each new character to master *one* (and only one) Secret Skill: this exception can be justified if your group of players could not easily play long term "campaigns", but only small adventures, and even more so when the group is small and requires more clout or Stamina, for instance when there are only two or three players.

Last but not least, when a character from an experienced group dies during a campaign and his player creates a new character, it may be fair to allow him a little more depth!

Note that in this case, the Game Master will have to grant these characters a few extra Experience Points, let's say 5 or 6 instead of 3 (see above).

Generally speaking, a season (half a year) is necessary to learn a Talent or a Secret Skill, if a master is willing to train and teach the character.

2.7. Prestige

Once he's been created, your character's days of adventure have only just begun. At clan gatherings, the Elders won't be praising him for his exploits yet, and for good reason: your character has very little Prestige. Gaining Prestige will become an important priority for him. To do so, he can develop two key elements: Bravery and Generosity.

Bravery

A character gains Bravery Points when facing dangers, and when carrying out dangerous actions with courage. Only a character who has shown his courage, physical or intellectual, is worthy of becoming an Elder or a Guide.

When your character is facing a human opponent or an animal, while hunting or fighting, he can gain Bravery Points if he is victorious. If the victory was achieved as a group, the Bravery Points are always determined for the whole group, and only then shared out between the hunters (or the fighters). The points depend upon two factors:

- The Damage that can be inflicted by *the most powerful Attack of the animal or opponent*.
- The outcome of the fight. Was the animal or opponent killed, defeated, or did they run away?

For each animal killed, the *maximum Damage Points of its most devastating Attack* are divided (ex: $4d6 = 24$) by the number of hunters: the result rounded down, with a minimum final result of 1, is the number of Bravery Points that each hunter gains. For a *defeated* human opponent – that is, killed or surrendered – the same process applies. If the opponent is a shaman, add 20 to the maximum Damage Points.

For example: killing a mammoth brings in 36 Bravery Points (for its Trampling Attack at $6d6$), to be shared between the hunters. If there are five

hunters, they all gain 7 Bravery Points (36 divided by 5 = 7.2, rounded down = 7). If there are only two of them, they each gain 18 points (and for taking down a mammoth between them, they deserve it!).

When a character is attacked by an animal, a creature, or by humans, the fight can win Bravery Points for the character even if his attacker is only *wounded* and/or *runs away*, provided that other characters or NPCs can back up the story.

For each animal the character is facing, roll the die or dice for to its strongest Attack, and divide the result by the number of hunters, rounded down: the final result (minimum 0) is the number of Bravery Points each hunter gains.

For a human opponent who runs away, we proceed the same way. If that opponent is a shaman, add 10 to his maximum Damage Points.

Exceptions:

- A fighter who manages to overcome an animal while suffering a Serious Wound, or with a Critical coup de grace gets a bonus of 1 Bravery Point.
- A fighter who overcomes an animal or a monster on his own, with no witness, will only gain Points if he manages to bring back a trophy to convince the others of his bravery. If he doesn't, he only gains one Bravery Point.

Generosity

Your character gains Generosity Points when he offers gifts to those around him and when he helps them... Only a generous character is worthy of becoming an Elder or a Guide.

For each gift, the Trading Value Points of the object given represent the number of Generosity Points that the person making the gift will gain (see the *Trading Value Points* table in Chapter 7).

To make sure the rule for Generosity Points is properly applied, you must bear in mind that, within the tribe, almost everything belongs to the community as a whole, except in some special cases. That's the reason why **only an object made for a specific person** will count as a gift. Food portions brought back from hunting *do not count* for the Generosity score, since hunters can already gain Bravery Points. The act of giving *transformed* goods is what matters inside the tribe, as well as "generous" actions carried out as part of the adventure. Exceptionally, giving raw materials to members of another tribe can be taken into account, if the Game Master allows it.

Example : the hunters have gained Bravery Points for hunting and killing a bison. The bison is skinned and butchered, dried and cooked (which is done by the whole tribe). Everyone enjoys eating the meat, although some get better parts than others depending on their status (liver, etc.).

Let's say that one of the characters, as agreed within the tribe, gets the bison hide: if he gives it in its raw state to a girl in order to woo her, or to his uncle, this action does not earn him any Generosity Points. If on the other hand, he transforms the hide, turns it into a beautiful fur pelt or a coat or a carpet (using his skin craft skills), and gives it to someone, then this gift will earn him 4 Generosity Points (for the gift of a great and beautiful fur pelt, see the Trading Value Points table).

If another character takes a bison bone and gives it to his uncle, this action won't earn him anything, as the bone belongs to everybody in the tribe (unless it has been agreed otherwise). If on the other hand, the character takes the bone and turns it into a beautiful dagger in order to give it to someone, he can earn 4 Generosity Points. Of course this gift must be of great importance to the character, and the offering of this present must be played out (if there is time during the game). Bottom line, it's up to the Game Master to decide how the Points are given out (depending on the sincerity behind the gift).

Furthermore, **for each significant favor** done selflessly for someone else, a character gains a number of Generosity Points that must be determined by the Game Master. Usually it ranges from a few Points for a small favor, up to a few dozen Points for a crucial quest carried out for a clan or an entire tribe.

But make no mistake: a character's Generosity Points are not a measure of his "kindness". They are more a measure of his social skills. It's true that in some respects, for many in the world of *Würm*, giving someone presents and offerings is more a special form of social requirement, the main aim of which is to stigmatize those who are unable to offer such gifts or reluctant to partake in these customs. So the Prestige gain conferred by Generosity corresponds to the application of the character's ability for hunting or craftsmanship, and his willingness to share with the group. **A very generous character will therefore be seen as loyal and powerful**, far more than good or smug.

The sum total

...of the Bravery and Generosity Points indicates the character's current Prestige score. A new character starts the game with **6d6** Prestige Points that he may share out as he wishes between Bravery and Generosity. At the end of a particularly dangerous or

important adventure, the Game Master can decide that the characters deserve special rewards. These rewards can vary from 10 to 60 Points.

Losing Prestige

In some situations, characters acting in a particularly cowardly and disloyal way can lose Bravery Points. Likewise, characters who are particularly mean, and most of all those who betray others, can lose Generosity Points. It's up to the Game Master to decide the number of Points that will be lost on a case-by-case basis. But he must not hesitate to be harsh: the shame of disgrace in the eyes of clan or tribe members should be a terrifying threat to the characters!

Gaze of the Spirits

Generally speaking, the more prestigious the characters become, the more the Spirits will tend to be interested in them, sometimes helping them unexpectedly. But woe betide a prestigious character who would provoke the wrath of a powerful Spirit: a *curse* could well be coming his way...

Prerogative

Prestige is very important for a character since it largely determines his status within his clan or tribe. A man cannot marry a woman until his Prestige is equal to at least 50 Points. The opposite is also true. Once

Prerogative depending on the Prestige Score Table

Prestige Score	Gained Prerogative
50	The character can get married
100	The character can claim the best pieces when sharing meals
100	The character can marry the female/male of his/her choosing
150	The character can claim the best place to sleep
200	The character can take two wives/husbands and claim the best pieces
250	The character can become a <i>Hunt leader</i> (see Chapter 5)
300	The character can take three wives/husbands and claim the best pieces
400	The character can become an Elder*
700	The character can become the <i>Voice of the Ancestors</i> (see Chapter 5)

*The character can also become an Elder if he has reached the age of 50, regardless of his prestige. If you are using the Wisdom Points option, the character can only become an Elder if he has 60 Wisdom Points or more.

Option: Wisdom

The Wisdom score is a way to measure the *acquired* wisdom of a playing character. The innate wisdom is represented by the *Wisdom of Mammoth* Strength. Its use is optional. If you decide to use it, then the Wisdom score is taken into account in the total of the Prestige score points, just like Bravery and Generosity.

A character with **60** or more Wisdom Points is called an **Elder**: he is consulted for advice on every important decision regarding his tribe or clan, and he can play a leading role in the coming of age initiations of the young.

There are three ways to acquire Wisdom Points:

- after 20 years of age, a character gains 1 Wisdom point per season (two per year);
- when the character carries out an act showing great wisdom (at the GM's discretion), he may gain 2 or more Wisdom points;
- for each correct retelling of the previous game session, *told by the character's player* at the beginning of a new session, his character earns 1 Wisdom point.

Since Wisdom is taken into account in the total Prestige points, just like Bravery and Generosity, the Prestige score will of course increase more rapidly. If you disagree, don't hesitate to slightly alter the Prerogatives table in order to reflect a progression that seems fair to you. Therefore the second to last line of the table indicating a character may become an Elder with 400 Prestige points no longer applies if this option is used.

he reaches 200 Points, a man may have two wives, and three from 300 points, etc. A woman can do the same, although it's more unusual. Regarding the status, the character cannot claim to become a hunt leader or an Elder until he has earned several hundred Prestige Points.

Prestige Among Strangers

Of course, the Prestige score of the character mainly applies to situations involving members of his own clan or tribe, and maybe allies or familiar and friendly clans. But what happens when the character visits an unknown clan or tribe?

• **If the community is friendly** and if the characters have the opportunity to talk and introduce themselves, they can keep 50% of their Prestige score – depending on a Talks Test where all their Bonuses and Penalties related to their influence or social skills can come into play: *Majesty of the Aurochs, Song of the Blackbird, Disfigured, Half deaf, Timid, Simple-minded...*

Note that *Quick-tempered* or *Presumptuous* may have no influence at this point, if the Game Master thinks that there won't be enough time to perceive these Weaknesses or that they don't harm the character's Prestige.

• **If the community is hostile**, the characters are seen as having a Prestige score of 0.

Whatever the initial attitude of an unknown community, it will obviously be vital to arrive to such a meeting with adequate gifts in order to gain a few Generosity Points – if possible of course.

Prestige and Interaction Between the Characters

Except in some cases, **the interactions between the characters of the players should grant no Bravery or Generosity Point** so that the game balance may be maintained.

So a character who knows the secret of *Enchantments* and who gives away charms to his companions won't get any Generosity Point in return.

Likewise, a character who kills another won't get any Bravery Points (on the other hand, depending on the circumstances, he could very well lose a few!).

However if the Game Master feels that the characters have helped one another and shown true fellowship, then he may grant 1 to 3 Generosity Points to each of the characters involved, at the end of the game session.

2.8. Equipment

At the beginning of the game, your character owns a basic equipment: summer and winter clothing, weapons (those of his choice, of average quality – see Chapter 4. *Combat* for details), non-magical jewelry (none, if he's a Bear-man of Mousterian culture). He also owns a number of tools allowing him to work the materials he has access to, such as hammers for flint knapping, as well as sticks or firestones and some fuel (tinder...). Characters are also granted 1d6+1 Trading Value Points in various objects and materials (see 7.4. *Bartering and Trading Values*). He can use them to try to make good quality weapons or clothes. He then has to gather materials and carry out the adequate Test (see the *Craftsmanship Talents*).

A Mousterian Bear-man character can't have a bone dagger, bone-tipped spear, or javelin as part of his basic equipment.

A Long Man character cannot own bolas as part of his basic equipment.

- If the character possesses the *Venom of the Viper* Strength, he has enough plants to prepare 2d6 cataplasms or healing decoctions.
- If the character is gifted with the *Painting* or *Sculpture* Talents, he owns the pigments and tools necessary to put his artistic skills to use.
- If he has the *Song of the Blackbird* or *Majesty of the Aurochs* Strengths, he can own a flute or a drum.

2.9. Playing Child Characters

Würm is a role-playing game with simple rules and a setting easy to apprehend, that can be played with children. However they could enjoy it more if they had the possibility to play prehistoric children, characters that are still “growing”. You will find below a simple system to generate child characters. This creation, in three steps, will allow the young player to get “familiar” with his character as well as the rules and game universe, and will end after his coming of age initiation through which he will become a young adult.



When created, a child character is defined by:

- his people, his tribe, his clan;
- one of the two Strengths of his people;
- the *Child* Weakness (see below)
- possibly another Weakness;
- his Stamina: 16 (Long Man) or 20 (Bear-man);

- two basic Talents from his culture;
- his equipment (tools, weapons, clothes);
- his lack of Experience: he has no Experience Points;
- his lack of Prestige: he has only 2d6 Prestige Points, to share out as he wishes;
- his age: chosen by the player, but not under 6-7 years old, and it must be below the age of his coming of age initiation: under 14 years old for a Long Man and under 11 years old for a Bear-man.

All the Strengths, One by One...

All characters start with three Strengths. A child character starts with one Strength only.

- This first Strength is always the one related to the species he belongs to – for instance, *Heart of Ice* for a Bear-child. This actually speeds up the creation process, since there are only two possibilities to choose from.
- At the end of his first adventure, the child character may choose a second Strength with the Game Master. This Strength will best define the child's traits, behavior or even destiny. The child will possibly be given a nickname related to this bond, as he will only receive his adult name after his coming of age initiation.
- The initiation ceremony is the moment at which the child character will acquire his third Strength, which will be played out like a real game session. There, the character will meet a new totem animal that will remain with him throughout his life. A child character will only be initiated when he has reached the required age and has 3 Experience Points.



Unless the young player wishes to have a special connection with one of his totems (which doesn't give any special bonus), the different totems are all equal, even if they are not at the same level – for instance, the cultural totem offers less differentiation possibilities but it forms an identity bond with the entire community and in the end the Spirit's support is just as intimate.

A child character starts the game with only *two* basic Talents from his culture. But other Talents can be acquired at a normal rate (1 per season between the game sessions).

What about Weaknesses?

Child – Any character starting to play as a child has this Weakness (which isn't really a weakness, of course), with the following effects: the character suffers a penalty of -3 to all his or her physical Strength Tests and to the Damage he or she inflicts (1 Point minimum all the same), and he/she



has fewer Stamina Points than an adult: **16** for a Long Child, **20** for a Bear-child. Obviously it's better to avoid combats in scenarios for children, and play instead with mystery and discovery. For everything is new to children! And indeed, their lack of experience translates as a penalty of -2 to all their Knowledge Tests. As a Game Master, feel free, if you see fit, to apply this *lack of experience* penalty to other actions. However be cautious not to discourage your young players.

The *Child Weakness* can be compensated by *Strength of the Bear* or *Might of the Bison*, by *Breath of the Giant Stag* or *Wisdom of the Mammoth*, but the penalties will remain until the character succeeds his coming of age initiation. As soon as the character reaches adulthood, the *Child Weakness* and all its Penalties will completely vanish, and he will get the usual Stamina Points of an adult of the people he belongs to.

If one of the young players chooses to, his character can be afflicted with one or two extra Weaknesses, to get one extra Strength or Talent in return. A new Weakness can affect the character during childhood, until

his initiation day. It will then be compensated by the acquisition of a new Strength or Talent. There are two ways a new Weakness can affect him:

- ever since his early childhood, the character has a special trait, a “birth defect”, congenital or accidental, which leads him to live a richer inner life (due to his isolation and difference), and this gives him double the number of initial Strengths, and he is given two totem animals at birth;
- the character suffers a trauma, a wound, or an illness during the game, and he will have to choose one Weakness and one new Strength with the Game Master, during the course of the adventure.

Speaking from experience, even if the first method seems easier to set up, it's more gratifying and memorable for the young player to be affected by a new Weakness, and the corresponding Talent or Strength (with the new totemic bond), while playing. This could even be the basis of a solo scenario designed just for him.

Note that a child who chooses the *Weak Weakness* in addition to his *Child Weakness* will not suffer twice the Penalties. He will simply remain *Weak* after his initiation.

3. Game System

3.1. Carrying Out an Action

In most cases, in order to perform a successful action, a character must roll 2d6 and get a result superior or equal to a *Threshold* that determines the difficulty of the action. If the character possesses a special *Strength* that can help him, he adds 1d6 to his dice roll. If he's afflicted with a *Weakness* that may hamper him, he will subtract 3 from his roll.

Common Sense Warning

Of course, an action that's absolutely impossible to miss will always be successful, and there's no need to roll dice in that case. Likewise an absurd action that's completely undoable will automatically fail, and there's no need to determine a *Difficulty Threshold* (see below) or roll dice.

Action Opposed to a Threshold

Most of the actions are solved by opposing a 2d6 roll to the *Difficulty Threshold* of the action, usually abbreviated *DT*. This applies to climbing a tree, lighting a fire, making an object or remembering a detail, for instance. The harder the action, the higher the threshold. If the total of the 2d6 roll (or 3d6, or 2d6 -3...) is *superior or equal* to this threshold, this is a Success and the action can go through. If the result is inferior, then the action fails, with the ensuing consequences. There are six *Difficulty Thresholds*, ranging from *Easy* to *Impossible*. They are detailed in the table below.

The rules provide a certain number of situations where a *DT* is already indicated for the actions to carry out. When that's not the case, and when it's up to the Game Master to determine the *Difficulty Thresholds* of the actions, do not forget that the characters are individuals trained to do most of the ordinary tasks in a context of survival in the ice age. A task that may seem amazingly hard to you can very well be relatively easy for a prehistoric man.

Take into account, not only the difficulty of the action itself, but also the *conditions* in which it's carried out: is the character hurried, stressed, threatened, or can he take his time and ask for advice? This must be considered. As a Game Master, it's up to you to show common sense and provide balanced Tests for the players, so that they are kept on their toes but not discouraged.

Action Opposed to an Opponent

Sometimes the character finds himself in a situation where he has to be confronted with an opponent. This can be the case if he's trying to spot an enemy hidden in the shadows, or trying to detect a lie.

In that case, the player rolls 2d6 and compares his result to the opponent's roll. The one who gets the highest score wins. In case of a draw, the defending character is always the winner (a character trying to remain unnoticed, for instance, is a *defender*, opposed to the one who's trying to spot him, who's an *attacker*).

Difficulty Thresholds Table

Difficulty Level	Threshold to reach
Very Easy	3
Easy	5
Average	7
Difficult	9
Very Difficult	12
Impossible	15

Results Table

Result compared to the DT	Effect of the Action	Example for DT 7
<i>Double 1</i>	<i>Catastrophe</i>	<i>Double 1</i>
Lower than the DT	Failure	6 or less
Equal to or greater than the DT	Success	7 to 12*
Greater than the DT by 6 points or +	Brilliant Success	13 and more
<i>Double 6</i>	<i>Critical Success</i>	<i>Double 6</i>

* If you got a 12 with 3d6 or more, without having obtained a double 6.

In case of a draw in situations with neither attacker nor defender, such as strength or accuracy competitions (javelin throwing, arm wrestling, etc.), the Game Master may declare a status quo for a short period of time, before ending the suspense with a second roll.

Degrees of Success

To enrich the description of the Failure or Success of an action, the Game Master takes into account the dice result. The higher the result, the more important the character's Failure or Success. The table above helps understand the Success of an action, with the example of an Average difficulty.

Catastrophe

If the result of the 2d6 is a **double 1**, it is a *Catastrophe*. Not only does the action fail, but the circumstances of this Failure are made worse, often to the detriment of the character: either he causes a catastrophe, or he embarrasses himself, or he hurts himself...

Critical Success

In some cases, if the result of the 2d6 is a **double 6**, it is a *Critical Success*; the action is successful in a spectacular way. In the case of a combat, the damage dice are rolled *twice* and added up. Note that a character rolling 3d6 has higher chances of getting a *Critical Success*, but a triple 6 does not have a greater effect than a double 6. Note also that in case of a *Critical Success*, an action is always successful even if it should have failed, because of a supposedly unreachable threshold or because of various Penalties (for example, a DT 15 for a character rolling 2d6 or 2d6-3).

Brilliant Success

An action that gets a Brilliant Success is... brilliantly successful! The Game Master can give a colorful description of the effects of this Success, it is well deserved. In game terms, the outcome of the action is simply performed to perfection, without however being as spectacular as a Critical Success. In combat, the weapon's Damage get the maximum score, with no need to roll the dice. If the result of a dice roll is *both* a Brilliant Success *and* a Critical Success, the player may choose to apply the effects of the Critical OR Brilliant Success, but never both at the same time.

For example, a player rolling 3d6 for a DT 7 rolls 6, 6, and 4, with a total of 16. He gains both a Critical Success (double 6) and a Brilliant Success (total greater than the DT by 6 points or more). He can then choose to apply the effects of either the Critical Success or the Brilliant Success.

Note: only a human (Bear-man or Long Man) can achieve a Brilliant Success.

For 3, 4, or 5d6 hands

A character rolling 3d6 is either an exceptional character, or someone using his Experience, or someone calling upon his Guardian Spirit. A character rolling 4d6 is not only an exceptional character but he is also using his Experience or the help of his Guardian Spirit (charms and other bonuses are not taken into account):

- a character who rolls **3d6** gets a Critical Success if he gets *at least two 6s*. On the other hand, he only gets a fumble if he gets *three 1s*. This means that two 1s plus another number are not necessarily a Failure for this character.

- a character who rolls **4d6** still gets a Critical Success with a double six, but he can also achieve a **Legendary Success** if he gets *two double 6s*, in other words, four 6s. This incredible Success grants him, on top of his extraordinary result, an immediate bonus of 4 Prestige Points, if there are witnesses and if the intended action carries significant consequences. A *Legendary Success* doubles the effects of a Critical Success.

A character who rolls 4d6 must get *four 1s* to get a fumble. For him, two or three 1s do not necessarily mean a Failure.

- a character who rolls **5d6** can get a Critical Success (double 6) or a **Legendary Success** (four 6). He will only get a fumble with *five 1s*. A 5 dice hand is the maximum a character may roll in one go.



3.2. Tribal Activities

This is a list of some major activities a character may have to carry out – other than craftsmanship, which depends on Talents (which are detailed in Chapter 5).

Lighting a Fire

A character can light a fire with basic tools, and adequately keep it going, although the ambient climatic conditions can make that task difficult. It's possible to add +2 to any *Resistance to Cold* Test when the character is standing less than 3 meters from a fire. Trying to light a fire takes 10 minutes. With the *Flame of the Salamander* Strength, it's possible to roll 3d6 instead of 2d6 to start a fire. There are two ways to light a fire. Hitting pyrite or marcasite with a flint stone to get sparks that will ignite tinder (dried

fungus), then a bundle of dry grass in which the flames will grow. The other way to light a fire is by rubbing a wooden drill into a small board, where the heat of the friction ignites the tinder, then the dry grass.

Building a Shelter

Any character can try to build huts or shelters for protection against the elements, the cold, and the wild animals. A typical shelter may provide room for four people, but the character may decide to build a smaller one. If, on the other hand, he wants to build a bigger one, the Test of this skill is afflicted with a -1 penalty per person *over four people* that needs to be protected by the shelter. A typical shelter provides a +2 bonus for any Test for *Resistance to Cold*. A Critical Success when building a shelter doubles this bonus. Trying to build a shelter takes a quarter of an



hour per person sheltered, whether the dice roll is successful or not. With the *Knowledge of the Beaver* Strength, it is possible to roll 3d6 instead of 2d6 for these Tests.

Caring for the Sick and Wounded

Any character can give first aid, make cataplasms and purifying decoctions. He can try to heal a light wound, look after a sick person, or try to bring an unconscious character back to consciousness.

The DT is **7** for light wounds. If he tries to heal a Serious Wound (reducing a fracture, putting bowels back inside), the DT is **9**. There can only be one roll per wounded after each combat.

A Success immediately gives the character 1d3 Stamina Points back. A Critical Success doubles the Stamina Points given back to the wounded. If the character uses a *cataplasm* made of medicinal herbs, the gain will be 1d6, whether the Success is normal or Critical.

If medicinal herbs are used, one dose is necessary per roll. If the Test is a Failure, the dose is lost. Cataplasms and purifying decoctions can also be used to speed up the healing of the wounded and sick. For more details, see sections 4.6. and 4.7.

Making Tools

Any character can make the tools necessary for everyday life. For details about this activity, see Chapter 5 about *Talents*.

Carrying Out a Ceremony

The character may need to conduct all kinds of more or less important ceremonies using ritual words learnt by heart, chants, and dances. A poorly conducted burial or hunting ritual can have disastrous consequences, such as causing the appearance of ghosts or vengeful Spirits. Celebrating a ceremony can also be used to inspire people (DT 9), and grant a 1d6 bonus to all participants for a future Test determined during the ceremony (for instance, a ranged Attack). A character can conduct such a ceremony once every half-day, but he must wait until the following day to do it again if he fails.

Bartering

Bartering is an important part of the life in the tribes. Any character can try to estimate the Trading Value of an object or item he owns (see paragraph 7.4: *Bartering and Trading Values*), and therefore barter objects and goods fairly or to his advantage.

Dice roll	Result
Double 1	Twins (roll 2d6 again: each even result indicates a girl and each odd result indicates a boy)
Double 2	Girl
Double 3	Boy
Double 4	Girl
Double 5	Boy
Double 6	The player's choice: Girl, Boy, or Twins.

Courtship and Seduction

Relationships with the opposite sex are of course a major part of life in the prehistoric era. Loving and procreating is also a way to ensure the survival of the tribe. All kinds of criteria can be taken into account in seduction, depending on the sensitivity of the one who is to be seduced. However, *Grace of the Swan*, *Song of the Blackbird*, and *Majesty of the Aurochs*, are the most immediately attractive Strengths for anyone. On the other hand, given the rough conditions of the ice age, it is certain that the *Breath of the Giant Stag*, *Strength of the Bear*, and *Wisdom of the Mammoth* Strengths can play an important role in attracting a person of the opposite sex, man or woman. *Generosity* and *Bravery* are, last but not least, major factors, since nobody take a spouse until they have reached 50 Prestige Points, for example.

Using all these elements, it's up to the Game Master, depending on the situation, to set the DT of the Test and maybe grant a 3d6 roll instead of the usual 2d6. Remember though that a seduced person can still claim gifts and proofs of courage before they will grant their favors.

Procreation

When a character has made love with a person of the opposite sex (under furs, in the river, or in the meadows, as they see fit...), he must roll 2d6. If he gets a double (double 2, double 3, etc.), the woman is now pregnant and must check the table above. Note that a character gifted with the *Might of the Bison* Strength rolls 3d6 instead of 2, whether the character is a man or a woman. If two of the three dice are equal, he or she can't avoid the pregnancy.

Giving birth is a trial that unfortunately causes the death of many women.

In game terms, a woman who delivers an infant suffers 6d6 Damage Points. A female character gifted with the *Protection of the Vixen* or *Might of the Bison* Strength only suffers 4d6. It's fair to say that most common Enchantments are designed to protect women during this difficult but essential moment.



Playing Music

Any character can try to play a musical instrument. There are two main types: flutes, carved from bones, and drums, made of skins.

- On a successful Music Test, a flute player can inspire joy, lust, anger, or fear to his audience (-2 for Steady Nerves Tests).
- On a successful Music Test, a drum player can inspire courage (+2 for Steady Nerves Tests), fear (-2 for Steady Nerves Tests), or a trance (+2 for Trance Tests).

The audience is allowed an opposed Test to resist these effects (the changes due to the drums do not apply to this Test). The bonuses or penalties only last while the music is played. The effects are doubled in case of a Critical Success, but are reversed in case of a fumble.

Detecting Lies

A character can try to detect other people's hidden emotions (fear, love, sorrow...), but also their lies, with an opposed Test. The *Wisdom of the Mammoth* Strength can help detect feelings and lies, whereas the *Heart of Ice* or *Venom of the Viper* Strengths can help hide them. At the Game Master's discretion, women can get a +1 bonus for this kind of Test. If the character tries to detect the emotions or the sincerity of an individual from another people than his, the difficulty increases by 1. Note though that he can only understand what the other really says if he knows some of his language at least, or the *Shaman's Tongue*.

Building and Maneuvering a Boat

Most Long Men can build and use a number of different types of craft, such as rafts or dugouts. Note that, when it comes to swimming, the water conditions (calm or choppy) can cause Penalties for these Maneuvering Tests. A typical craft can carry two people. For more than two people, there's a -1 penalty per extra person to the dice roll to build and to maneuver the boat. Trying to build a boat takes one hour per person transported, whether the dice roll is successful or not. With the *Knowledge of the Beaver* Strength, it is possible to roll 3d6 instead of 2d6 for these Tests.



3.3. Hunting and Food

Hunting is an essential activity for prehistoric men. It is complex and covers a very large field of skills and knowledge. Here are some aspects, and how to handle them while playing.

Tracking

A hunter can find or follow the track of one or several creatures, by observing and interpreting signs (tracks, droppings, smells...). An average DT of 7 detects the passing of a small herd of herbivores a few hours before. The type of prey, the freshness of the tracks, the layout and the type of terrain all come into play when defining the Difficulty Threshold of the Tracking Test. Special climatic conditions can also noticeably increase the DT of the Tracking Test (fog, heavy rain...), or on the contrary decrease it (tracks in the mud, snow on the ground...). A hunter with the *Nose of the Wolf* Strength is of course an excellent tracker.

If the Tracking Test is successful, the Game Master can decide to ask the player to roll 2d6 and check the *Prey Table* below, applying potential changes due to the hunting ground, but the GM can also choose arbitrarily which type of prey has been detected.

Game Animals Table	Small Game Animals Table	Predators Table
Roll 2d6* 2 or lower Ibex 3 Wild Boars 4 Stags / Does 5 Small Game Animals (<i>see opposite</i>) 6 Aurochs 7 Horses 8 Reindeers 9 Saiga Antelopes 10 Bison 11 Megaloceroses 12 or higher Mammoths	Roll 1d6 1 Small Predator (wolverine, fox, badger) 2 Hares 3 Marmots 4 Grouse or ducks 5 Birds, small (thrushes, pheasants) 6 Birds, big (cranes, geese) <i>In the mountains, roll 2d6-1.</i> <i>In the steppe or the tundra, roll 2d6+1.</i> <i>In temperate forests, roll 2d3+1.</i>	Roll 2d6 2 Ice animals 3 Woolly rhinoceros 4 Red bears 5 Brown bears 6 Lynxes 7 Wolves 8 Red wolves 9 Hyenas 10 Wolves 11 Grey lions 12 Snow leopards

If the result is a 2 (Catastrophe), the tracker finds himself being hunted in turn by a dangerous animal, almost certainly a predator. He must then check the *Table of predators* above.

If, on the other hand, the Tracking Test is a Critical Success, the tracker can find the track of a *Legendary animal* or a fantastical creature (*see Chapter 8.2*). Animals can live alone, in herds, packs, or prides, as mentioned in their description in Chapter 8.

Lookout

This is a crucial step because a hunter lying in wait on the lookout must efficiently hide, camouflage, hide his smell, and move silently. To succeed in this task, the hunter must carry out a Test opposed to the Alertness of the targeted prey (see Animal Guide). A Test must be carried out for each significant move. Again, the outside conditions may influence the Test by bringing a bonus or a penalty. A character gifted with the *Cunning of the Weasel* Strength is an expert when it comes to hiding. To remain completely silent when approaching the prey, hunters often resort to signals.

Signals

Hunters use a language – one that may greatly vary from one tribe to the other – to silently communicate with coded gestures, leave signs to mark a track, or use

animal cries as signals. A Test is required to make signals or leave a track, but also to understand these signs. This Test is *Easy* if the two hunters belong to the same clan, but it can be *Difficult* if hunters do not know each other!

Hunting Roars

Hunters may use resounding roars and screaming to scare any animals (and sometimes fellow humans) that hear them. They must then roll a *Hunting roar* Test opposed to the *Steady Nerves* score (see Animal guide) of the targeted prey (1d6 people or animals, 2d6 if Critical). If the Test is successful, the animals panic, which translates into a penalty of -2 for all dice rolls (except for Damage) during the next 2d6 Combat Rounds, unless they run away. Using a flaming stick or a torch makes it possible to add +2 to one's score to try to scare animals off. There can only be one roll for this per combat. If skillfully used, this hunting technique can allow the hunters to make the prey go where they want, like off a cliff or into an ambush.

Attack

During an Attack, the characters go into a combat phase, managed Round by Round (see next Chapter, *Combat*).

During each Combat Round, a *wounded* animal must perform a Panic Test and roll

2d6 to try to get a result inferior or equal to its *Steady Nerves* score (see Animal Guide):

- if the animal fails, it tries to immediately run away, if it can, and the hunter then has **1d3 Combat Rounds** to try to catch it by running and fighting again. After these few rounds, the animal is out of range for hand to hand combat, but the hunter can still attempt one last ranged Attack.

- if, on the other hand, the animal succeeds its *Steady Nerves* Test, it can keep on fighting if the Game Master wants it to.

- if the animal gets a double 6 to its Panic Test, it automatically keeps on fighting with all its strength, getting a +2 bonus on all its Attack rolls for the next part of the fight.

Weight of Killed Animals Table

Species	Weight (mass)
Aurochs	700 kg to over a ton
Bison	600 to 900 kg
Ibex	50 to 120 kg
Stag	90 to 300 kg
Duck, geese, grouse	2 to 4 kg
Horse	240 to 360 kg
Red wolf	15 to 30 kg
Wolverine	8 to 20 kg
Cave hyena	80 to 130 kg
Hare	2 to 6 kg
Cave lion	160 to 350 kg
Wolves	30 to 80 kg
Mammoth	Up to 6 tons
Megaloceros	400 to 800 kg
Brown Bear	100 to 400 kg
Cave Bear	400 to 600 kg
Reindeer	120 to 280 kg
Woolly Rhinoceros	2 to 3 tons
Fox / Badger	5 to 8 kg / 8 to 12 kg
Saiga Antelope	20 to 50 kg
Wild Boar	50 to 200 kg

Running

Running is detailed in the paragraph dedicated to moving. While hunting, a character who runs to catch an animal is considered to be *sprinting*. During every Round where he runs, he must roll 2d6 (3d6 if he has the *Speed of the Horse* Strength). If he gets a result superior or equal to the speed of his prey, he has managed to catch it and may start fighting. Otherwise the animal outruns him, and he must retry during the following Round or accept defeat.

Butchery

Once the animal is defeated, there is still plenty to be done, take potential trophies from the animal, skin it, and cut the carcass into portions. All this can be done with two Tests. The first one is the **Skinning Test**, the second is the **Butchery Test**. The DT of the Skinning Test can vary from 5 to 9 depending on the type of wounds inflicted to the prey, but also depending on the quality of the hide: the DT will be high if, for example, the skin is particularly precious (snow leopard) or thick (mammoth).

The Butchery Test, on the other hand, remains almost always at DT 5, increased up to 7 in exceptional cases only. If the Test is successful, the skin can be used, as well as the bones, entrails, and sinews, and the animal can be divided into a number of parts equal to *half of the weight of the dead animal*, or a quarter in case of Failure. Each part is one *food ration*. Each one of these rations is enough for a meal for one person.

Very often however, it's impossible to bring the whole carcass of the killed animal back to the camp. In that case, hunters can take a haunch off, which brings in a number of parts equal to the *tenth* of the weight of the killed animal.

Since the weight of the animals most commonly hunted is not indicated in the Animal guide in Chapter 8, the table on the previous page lists the weight of the most common game animals.

Note that the lighter weights are usually those of the females, and the heavier weights those of the males, with all the possible and conceivable variations. This is particularly true of the animals that have a significant sexual dimorphism (different aspects and build between the males and females), like deer, including megaloceroses. As for Legendary animals, some of them will certainly have a higher weight than their ordinary fellow creatures.

It's up to the Game Master to decide the exact weight of the killed animal, and therefore the possible number of food rations obtained by the hunters

Liver Rules!

If eaten raw in the moments following the death of the animal, the ***liver*** of a killed mammal grants the one eating it the Strength connected to this kind of animal until next dawn. Note that this power only applies to mammals.



Traps

Most of the hunters learn to make and set all kinds of traps, from a simple snare to a pit full of spears. Note that a Test for the trap-building activity is only supposed to determine if the trap was adequately conceived and made, not if a victim gets caught.

If the character has set small traps, such as snares, there are *1, 2, or 3 chances out of 6* that a small animal gets caught during the night or the day, depending on the season, the location, etc. This animal can provide 1d3 *food rations*.

Complex traps, including pits filled with spears or swinging trunks, inflict 1d6 Damage Points per hour spent making them, with a maximum of 6d6 Damage Points.

The more damage the trap is supposed to cause, the longer it takes to make it, as mentioned in the table above. The Test must be performed at the end of the manufacturing process of the trap.

If the result is a Failure, the trap will function poorly, and will only inflict half the damage expected (rounded down).

If the result is a Catastrophe, the trap does not work at all, and – depending on the mood of the Game Master – could very well hurt the character himself. A Brilliant Success when making the trap means that one of the dice rolled (or the die if there's only one) will automatically get a 6.

A Critical Success means the trap is so lethal, it will inflict 2d6 extra Damage Points on its victim.

Traps Table

Time necessary to make a trap	Difficulty Threshold	Size of animal that can be trapped in pit	Number of Trap Damage Dice
One hour	DT 5	Small (fox)	1d6
Two hours	DT 7	Average (wolf)	2d6
Three hours	DT 7	Average (brown bear)	3d6
Four hours	DT 9	Big (horse)	4d6
Five hours	DT 9	Big (bison)	5d6
Six hours	DT 12	Huge (mammoth)	6d6

Fishing and Gathering Table

Test result	Fishing	Gathering
<i>Catastrophe</i>	<i>Nothing</i>	<i>Nothing</i>
Failure	Nothing	Nothing
Success	1d6 food rations	1d6 rations or 1d3 doses
Brilliant Success	6 food rations	6 rations or 3 doses
<i>Critical Success</i>	2d6 food rations	2d6 rations or 1d6 doses

Fishing and Gathering

With a little patience, half a day of fishing or gathering can prove fruitful. A Test must be carried out with 2d6 (3d6 when fishing with the *Fins of the Salmon* Strength, or when searching for plants with the *Venom of the Viper* Strength), and the player can check the table below to see the result of his attempt. For fishing and searching for food, the result is indicated as a number of *food rations*.

For the search for medicinal or magical plants, the result is indicated in *doses*, each dose allowing the preparation of a cataplasm, a decoction, a potion, or an ointment (the DT depends on the scarcity of the plant). In general, the difficulty for finding common medicinal plants is 5; the difficulty for finding more specific plants associated with the Sorcery Secret Skill is detailed in Chapter 5.5. The GM can of course take into account the difficulties related to the nature of the soil, the climate, or the season, to increase or decrease the DT, bearing in mind that the maximum difficulty remains Impossible (DT 15).

Eating Habits of the Peoples of Würm

Obviously the way men and women ate in ice age Europe didn't have much in common with our modern day diets. Besides, although Cro Magnon, our direct ancestor, had quite a similar metabolism to ours, things were different for our Neanderthal cousin, whose diet may surprise you.

Of all the humanoids, **Neanderthals** – the

Bear-men of Würm – are the ones who eat the most meat. A large part of their diet is made up of meat, so much so that their diet can sometimes come close to that of the... wolf. His most coveted game animals are reindeer, bison, horses, and ibex. When the climate is milder, aurochs or deer are the main ingredient of his favorite meals. Hunting is preferably done up close, with heavy pole weapons, as shown by the traces of fractures we found on the limbs of some Neanderthals (The study of fractured Neanderthals bones, mostly belonging to the upper part of the body, shows a similarity with the wounds sustained in rodeo competitions. So it's safe to think they were hunting in “hand to hand” mode).

Due to the huge needs for proteins due to their massive musculature and large brain, the Bear-men must eat impressive amounts of meat daily, sometimes with a little fish, plants and roots.

Modern Sapiens at that time, the Long Men that we know better as Cro Magnon, have an eating diet more similar to ours. However, due to the cold climate, vegetation being scarce, meat remains the main basis of their eating habits. Their hunting strategies may differ, but the animals they hunt the most are the same as those hunted by the Neanderthals. That being said, Long Men are curious to discover new flavors and willingly try all kinds of birds or seafood on a daily basis. In fact, they can feast upon over two hundred types of animals. Eating plants, berries, tubers, honey, and fish – with fishing becoming a major activity in some areas – provides them with essential supplements in terms of fibers, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats.

Travel Table

Type of terrain	Distance travelled in a day
Plain, steppe, tundra	40 kilometers
Hill, snow-covered plain, open forest	30 kilometers
Thick forest, mountain, swamp	20 kilometers
Snow-covered mountain, high altitude mountain	10 kilometers

3.4. Movement

A prehistoric man (or woman) moves around a lot, *especially* during a thrilling adventure! Here are the rules to manage these travels, at any speed, over any type of terrain!

Traveling

During a day's walk, an average prehistoric man can walk roughly forty kilometers with no particular effort. When a character has walked half this distance, he becomes *tired*, unless he carries out a successful Fatigue Test (DT 7). When he has completed his travel, he becomes *exhausted*, unless he carries out a second successful Fatigue Test (DT 9), or simply *tired*, if his first Test was successful but the second failed. For the effects of the fatigue, see paragraph 4.7.

Depending on the type of terrain, the average traveling distance may vary. Please refer to the table above.

Orientation

Characters may have to find their way when traveling. Thanks to their memory of the tracks, the stars, the signs, as well as their intuition, the characters can find their bearings and avoid getting lost. A Test is necessary for each half-day, and also in specific situations. It will be more or less easy if they are far from the land they know well. It's possible to add 1d6 to these Tests with the *Wisdom of the Mammoth* or *Nose of the Wolf* Strengths.

Running

A Running Test can be carried out to run at two speeds:

- A *Jog* makes it possible to run for half a day if the Test is successful. A character running at jogging speed can travel twice as far as his usual travels (see *Travels* below). A Failure for the Running Test means the character is out of breath after 1d3 hours, and cannot attempt a new Test before the next half-day.

- A *Sprint* makes it possible to run at maximum speed to catch an animal or an enemy on the run, or to run away from an opponent. The Test can be opposed to the *Running* score of the prey or opposed to the Test results of his opponent. However this speed is dangerous, and a character can easily fall while running at this speed. He must succeed a Running Test with the DTs listed on the table below to move without any problem. If he gets a double 2, he falls (the Damage caused by that fall is chosen by the Game Master).

Climbing

A Test is necessary when a character tries to climb steep rock walls, trees, or boulders. A Test must be performed for every 6 meters climbed, or 60 meters if the climb is an easy one. A Failure means the character cannot climb up. A Catastrophe means a fall (see *The Dangers of the Ice Age* in section 4.7. of this book).

Sprint Tests Table

Type of terrain	Difficulty Threshold of the Test
Plain, steppe, tundra	DT 3
Hill, snow-covered plain, open forest	DT 5
Thick forest, mountain, swamp	DT 7
Snow-covered mountain, high altitude mountain, swamp	DT 9



4. Combat and Dangers

Combat is an important activity for two reasons. When hunting great herbivores determines the survival of the group, the ability to aim accurately, and hit and kill efficiently, plays a vital part in the life of prehistoric humans, who live in an infinity of small communities sometimes hostile towards one another. Furthermore, combats are a special part of role-playing games since they are among the highlights of the adventures, when dice are rolled with anticipation or enthusiasm, and the characters haunted by the risk of a terrible wound or even death.

Given the importance of these combats, they won't be resolved with a single dice roll (except extraordinary situations). To better manage these key moments of the characters' life, time during combats is slowed down and cut into small sequences called "*Combat Rounds*".

Each Round represents about ten seconds. The kinds of dangers that threaten the characters' lives include fire, falls, drowning, or hunger. As with wounds caused by animal bites or enemy weapons, wounds caused by natural perils will affect the *Stamina* score of the characters.

4.1. Initiative and Choice of Actions

At the beginning of each Round, each player and each group of opponents roll a number of d6 corresponding to their *Initiative* ability: **2d6 for most humans, 3d6 for a character who possesses the Reflexes of the Lynx Strength**. The result is his Initiative score. During the whole fight, one Round after another, the characters will act in turn, in the decreasing order of their Initiative (from highest to lowest).

Note: a character can delay his action, but he then keeps his new Initiative score until the end of the combat.

The Initiative ability of the various creatures is indicated in their characteristics in the Animal guide in Chapter 8.

During each Round, a character has TWO action abilities when it's his turn to play:

- he can move up to a certain number of meters equivalent to his *Running* score: **7 for humans, 10 for a character possessing the Speed of the Horse Strength;**
- he can carry out a ranged or hand to hand Attack. A ranged Attack corresponds to a throw, but a hand to hand Attack is more a series of blows and dodging that translates as one die roll only. A character can only hit after or before he has moved. He cannot hit halfway through his movement and keep on moving afterwards;
- when his turn comes, a character or an opponent can decide not to Attack. He can then perform a second move at the same speed as the previous one.

The same goes for all the characters' opponents. *But these are all played by the Game Master*, who decides what are their intentions, while taking into account the intelligence and tenacity of the creatures.

A character can also decide to carry out another kind of action during his Round, such as pick up his weapon, look after a friend, give first aid, or look for something. In that case, the character can neither move nor fight, and his *Dodge* score suffers a penalty (see below).

4.2 Attacking and Dodging

Each character, animal or monster has a **Dodge score**. **For humans, this score is 7, or 10 if the character possesses the Reflexes of the Lynx Strength.**

To Attack, roll 2d6. If the result is superior or equal to the Dodge score of the opponent, then the Attack is successful, and the attacker can inflict a **wound** (see below). Characters owning the *Fury of the Lion* (hand to hand) or *Flight of the Crow* (ranged) Strengths, can roll 3d6.

During a Combat Round, each player rolls dice to test the Success of his character's Attack. The Game Master is the one who rolls the Attack (and Damage) dice for all the characters' opponents. **No character can carry out more than one Attack per Round**, except in the case of an Extra Attack (*see below*), or unless he masters the special *Melee* technique.

- If the Attack result is a **Catastrophe**, the clumsy character must roll 1d6: from 2 to 6, the character drops his weapon. He can pick it back up at the next Round, but he cannot Attack in that case. On a roll of 1, his weapon is broken, and inflicts 1d6 Damage Points on the character.
- If the Attack result is a **Brilliant Success** (6 points or more over than the DT), the Damage is automatically set to the maximum of the weapon used. *Only humans* can get a Brilliant Success.
- If the Attack results in a **Critical Success** (double 6), Damage is rolled twice and the results added together.
- If the Attack results in a **Legendary Success** (four 6s), damage is rolled four times and is cumulative!



Note that the 1d6 bonus for damage related to the Strength of the Bear or Might of the Bison Strengths is never affected by a Brilliant, Critical or Legendary success.

It is never maximized, neither doubled nor quadrupled.

Non-combat Actions

When a character decides to use his Combat Round to do something else than Attack, move or defend himself with a Total Dodge, he suffers a penalty of -2 to his Dodge score.

Retreat from Combat

Any character or creature who decides to run away from a hand to hand combat must resort to a **Retreat** (*Running* or *Dodge*) **Test**. The DT is 9, and the *Reflexes of the Lynx* or *Speed of the Horse* Strengths allow an extra 1d6 roll for this Test. To carry out the Test, the fleeing character or creature rolls as many dice as for the Initiative test, or 3d6 if its Running score is 9 or higher, depending on what's more beneficial for the animal or creature. If it's successful, the character or the creature can run away at full speed. On the other hand, if the Test has failed, then the character or the creature runs the risk of an immediate **Extra Attack** from the enemy (or enemies) fighting him hand to hand. No fighter can be granted more than one *Extra Attack* per Round.

Cautious Combat

In hand to hand combat, a character can decide to fight defensively, and be very careful not to let his enemy hit him, blocking his blows, and only attacking a few times at decisive moments. In that case, the fighter suffers a -2 penalty to his Attack rolls, but he gets a +2 bonus to his Dodge score.

Attitude Modifiers Table

Attitude	Attack roll modifiers	Dodge Score Modifier
Non-combat action	No Attack possible	-2
Cautious Combat	-2	+2
Reckless Combat	+2	-2
Charge	+1d6 to the Damage	-3
Total Dodge	No Attack possible	+1d6

Attack Roll Modifiers Table

Position	Hand to hand	Ranged
Attacking from above	+1	-
Attacking by surprise (from behind)*	+3	+2
Attacking from the ground	-3	-3
Crouching opponent	+1	-1
Prone opponent	+3	-3
Stunned opponent (<i>see Serious Wound</i>)	+2	+2
Running target	-	-2
Defenseless opponent	+7	+7
Hidden or camouflaged target	-	-1 to -7
Short range (<i>up to the half of the base range</i>)	-	-
Medium range (<i>up to the base range indicated</i>)	-	-1
Long range (<i>up to double the base range</i>)	-	-2
Maximum range (<i>up to triple the base range</i>)	-	-3

* *The attacker must not have been spotted before the Attack.*

Reckless Combat

Contrary to the previous tactic, here the character takes all the risks when fighting hand to hand, neglecting his defense and trying to brutally and decisively hit his opponent and be victorious as fast as possible. The fighter therefore gets a +2 bonus to his Attack rolls, but he gets a -2 penalty to his Dodge score. It goes without saying that such a strategy is very likely to lead to the death of the attacker if he has poorly estimated his opponent's strength.

Charge

During a Combat Round, a character can decide to carry out a devastating Attack by charging at his prey or enemy. To do so, he must be able to move at least 6 meters in straight line before hitting his target, on a firm and fairly smooth terrain. If the Attack is successful, 1d6 points are added to the Damage score. However a charging character's defense is greatly vulnerable. Until his next Round, the character suffers a -3 penalty to his Dodge score. The total movement of the character cannot exceed his maximum movement range (except in the case of a Total Dodge, see below). Note that it is not possible to combine a Charge with a Cautious or Reckless combat attitude.

Total Dodge

When in full possession of his senses, a character (or a creature) can spend his Combat Round performing a Total Dodge,

which is made of a series of feints or tumbling and rolling so that his opponent can't touch him at this Round. A Total Dodge grants the character a 1d6 bonus to his Dodge score. As a result, the character cannot perform any attacks during this Round, and he can only move half his usual distance, at the same time as his main opponent's Attack.

Total Dodge against a Charge

If the character tries a Total Dodge against a charging assailant, then the latter must perform an Initiative Test (DT 7) if his Attack fails. If the Test is successful, the attacker stops in his tracks. But if the Test result is a Failure, he can move 1d6 meters further if he is short or average sized (up to the human size), or 2d6 meters if he is tall (stag, bison, giant, etc.). This movement is mandatory and made in a straight line, even if the attacker had already moved the whole of his usual distance.

Attack Roll Modifiers

Various bonuses and penalties are taken into account for the Attack roll, depending on the attitude of the fighters and the situation of the opponent, as indicated in the tables below. These modifiers can be cumulative. Therefore a man throwing a long range javelin at a running prey that is slightly camouflaged (behind some foliage) will suffer a total penalty of -5 (-2 *Running*, -2 *Long range*, -1 *Camouflage*).

Option: Characters Playing an Active Defense

When using this option, you give players the opportunity to determine the effective Dodge score of their characters with a dice roll against each Attack. With this option, characters no longer have a Dodge score but a *Dodge ability*. Players will actively use this ability to test their defense against their opponents. This is a double-edged option because characters can perform miraculous dodging actions, but they could also poorly anticipate blows or stumble at the worst possible time...

With this option, **a standard character possesses a Dodge ability of 2d6. A character gifted with the Reflexes of the Lynx Strength possesses a Dodge ability of 3d6.** During a combat, when it's the opponents' turn to hit, scratch, or bite, the Game Master rolls the dice to determine the result of the Attack (usually a 2d6 or 3d6), then he gives the player the score of his character's opponent. The player then has to roll 2d6 or 3d6 (or more) to get an equal or greater score so that his character can Dodge this Attack with his Dodge ability. If the character has to defend against multiple opponents, he must separately roll the dice for each Attack he's trying to Dodge. All the attitude modifiers remain the same at this Round. For example, a *Cautious* character will be granted a +2 bonus to his Dodge Test(s).

Critical Successes and Catastrophes – If you are using this option, a character will only be able to Dodge a *Critical* blow if he gets a *Critical Success* to his Defense Test as well. Besides, a *Critical Success* to the Defense Test allows the character to Dodge any blow, even a *brilliantly* successful hit.

On the other hand, if the character gets a *Catastrophe* on his Defense Test, he finds himself in a bad situation: he falls on the ground and the opponent's potential Damage is increased by 2 points. He can still try to Dodge other Attacks carried out against him in the same Round, but with a penalty of -2. He will only be able to get up during the next Round. A Brilliant Success has no special effect in this situation.

Characters may of course rely on their Experience or ask for the help of their Guardian Spirit to improve their Dodge ability and thus save their life!

What is a “Defenseless” Character or Opponent?

In the table above, it is indicated that a defenseless opponent is an easier target, since a fighter is granted a +7 Bonus to hit it. Before we continue, what is exactly a “defenseless opponent”, compared to, for instance, a surprised opponent or one who's attacked from behind?

A “defenseless” opponent is a target that really does not move. Whether he is unconscious, immobilized, or asleep, he is completely unable to actively defend himself, not even struggle. A target unaware of the Attack and unable to defend itself under any circumstances, like a newborn, is also a “defenseless opponent”.

To make the rules simpler, unless multiple modifiers are at play, the Game Master can

consider that a defenseless opponent is simply *impossible to miss*, except in case of a *fumble*, instead of granting a +7 bonus to hit it. The *Reflexes of the Lynx* Strength is never taken into account to determine the Dodge score of a defenseless character, since he is completely passive.

What are the Throwing and Shooting Ranges?

There are two factors in the ranged combat rules: the distance between the attacker and his target (as indicated in the table below), and the range of his weapon (as indicated in the weapons table page 55).

The range indicated in the weapons table is the average range over which the weapon can be thrown. In reality, the weapon can be thrown up to twice as far.

Characters gifted with the *Strength of the Bear*, *Might of the Bison*, *Flight of the Crow* Strengths, or the *Flight of the Snowy Owl* Secret Skill, can even reach the maximum range, equal to three times the “base” range. Below half this base range, the target is said to be within short range. The short range doesn’t add any modifier to the dice roll. On the other hand, penalties are applied to the dice roll for average, long and maximum ranges, due to the increasing difficulty to hit the target with strength and accuracy.

Fighting with a Weapon in Each Hand

Although close combat with two weapons is a technique more reminiscent of historic fencing than anything else, it’s possible to fight that way in prehistoric times. In the world of *Wurm*, real hand to hand weapons (heavy club, spear) are weapons wielded with two hands. But the war club, for example, is a war weapon that we can picture wielded by a fighter holding a large skin shield in the other hand or maybe with a bone-tipped javelin. In a situation where a character wants to fight with a weapon in each hand, he can only ever perform one roll “to hit” per Round. However, the character decides which weapon causes Damage during this Round. With the other weapon, he can add a +1 bonus to hit or a +1 bonus for his protection during the same Round. If a character possesses the *Strength of the Bear* or *Might of the Bison* Strengths, he can wield a heavy weapon, usually wielded with both hands, with his leading hand (spear, heavy club) and a light one in the other (javelin, knife, cudgel...). In that situation, the character suffers a -3 penalty to hit and for Damage, due to the fact that he is wielding a heavy weapon with one hand only, but he can still add +1 to hit or for his protection.



4.3. Weapons of the Stone Age

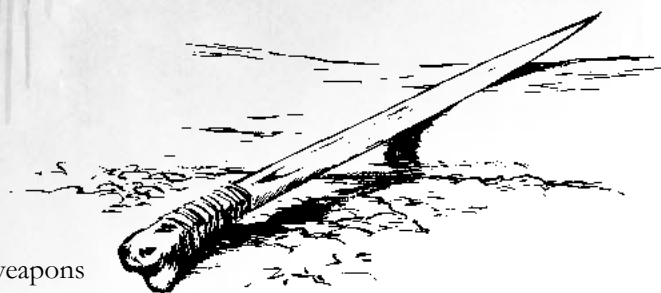
Stone age weapons may seem basic, but they are efficient, and they allowed prehistoric hunters to take down enough prey to survive and live in good conditions for tens of thousands of years. These weapons are made of several materials: wood, stone and bone. Wooden weapons are the simplest, although some can be skillfully crafted. Stone weapons are usually made of flint, which gives them the most homogenous and resisting cutting edge, but other rocks can be used, such as basalt, jasper or quartz. Bone weapons have a tip made of bone, reindeer or stag antlers, or ivory. Bone is sharp and sturdy, but reindeer antler is even more efficient since its greater elasticity means that it doesn’t break as easily as bone. In addition to a greater solidity, bone weapons are interesting because they can be sharpened many times, and therefore last longer.

Adding a Handle

All the stone-tipped or bone-tipped weapons are inserted into a handle, sometimes made of wood, for a better grip. These handles are carefully crafted, and the straightness of a lance's shaft is as important as the quality of the tip or the solidity of the fastening. The fastening is made of glue and string. The glue is inserted between the tip and the handle, then it's all wrapped with string, to ensure optimal grip. The best types of glue are birch bark tar, or a mixture of pine tar, beeswax, and coal, but there are other kinds of glue, of course: bone glue, fish glue... These glues are prepared over a fire, and they can then be left to cool and kept in small bark boxes. To use it again, all you would have to do is warm the glue up. The string used is usually made of tendon, leather ties, or dried gut.

Breaking the Weapon of an Opponent

When he is fighting a human opponent *armed with a spear, a javelin or a fish spear*, a fighter who gets a *Critical Success* on his Attack Test with *a heavy club, a stone axe or a war club*, can decide to Test the resistance of his opponent's weapon rather than inflict any Damage. He rolls 1d3 and checks the table above to see the effect of his blow on the weapon. A character gifted with the *Strength of the Bear* or *Might of the Bison* Strengths rolls two d3 and keeps the highest result; a *Weak* character rolls two d3 and must keep the lowest result. It is impossible to break the natural weapons of animals that way.



Here are details of the weapons that the characters can use during combat:

Stone Knife – This knife is made of a flint (or any other type of rock) blade with one or two edges and a wooden handle. It is as much a weapon as a tool, and everybody carries a knife when they are traveling.

Bone Dagger – This dagger can only be made of one piece of bone or ivory, with no handle added. Only a part of the weapon is sharp, the other part is used as a handle and can be covered with a leather guard for better grip.

Fire-Hardened Spear – This type of spear is made of only one piece of fire-hardened and polished wood. Its tip is often hardened by fire, for a greater force of impact. These weapons are not just sharpened pieces of wood: they are skillfully balanced, and their weight and diameter are carefully selected for a greater efficiency (if a spear is too thick, it will have difficulty sliding between the opponent's ribs!). The Shöningen lances found in Germany, dating from over three hundred thousand years, are impressive weapons that no longer look like twisted sticks.

Stone-Tipped Spear – This is a spear with an added flint tip. Most of the time, the flint tip must not be too big, so that it will be more solid and won't get stuck between the bones of the prey.

Bone-Tipped Spear – This elaborate spear has a bone tip, but most of the time sharpened reindeer antler is used. For a

Weapons Table

Type of weapon	Damage	Range	Resistance	Special rules
Bare hands (wrestling)	Special	-	-	<i>See rules below</i>
Stone knife	1d6	10 m	Normal	-
Bone dagger	1d6+1	10 m	Greater	-
Fire-hardened spear	2d6-1	10 m	Greater	-
Stone-tipped spear	2d6	10 m	Normal	-
Bone-tipped spear	2d6+1	10 m	Greater	-
Ivory lance	2d6+1	5 m	Magical	-
Cudgel	1d6	-	Greater	-
War club	1d6+2	-	Normal	<i>Special taboo</i>
Stone axe	1d6+2	-	Normal	<i>Or 1d10 Damage Points & Lesser Resistance</i>
Heavy club	2d6	-	Greater	-
Javelin	1d6	40 m	Lesser	-
Bone-tipped javelin	1d6+1	40 m	Normal	-
Throwing stick	1d6	50 m	Greater	-
Sling (with sling stones)	1d6	60 m	-	<i>With simple stones, Damage -1</i>
Bolas	1d6	20 m	Normal	<i>Immobilization, see table below</i>
Fish spear	1d6+2	10 m	Normal	<i>+1 Bonus for fishing</i>
Rock (small, medium)	1d3, 1d6	10 m	-	-
Rock (large)	2d6	5 m	-	-
Rock (huge)	3d6	5 m	-	<i>Can only be thrown by a Bear-man.</i>

Weapons Resistance Table

At the end of each Round, a character whose weapon has caused Damage must roll 1d6 and check its Resistance:

Die Result	Lesser	Normal	Greater	Magical
1	Broken weapon	Broken weapon	Broken weapon	Damaged weapon
2	Broken weapon	Damaged weapon	Damaged weapon	-
3	Damaged weapon	Damaged weapon	-	-
4	Damaged weapon	-	-	-
5-6	-	-	-	-

Broken weapon: the weapon is broken and can longer be used.

Damaged weapon: the weapon can still be used, but with a -1 penalty for its Damage score until it's repaired with a Craft Test and the right materials.

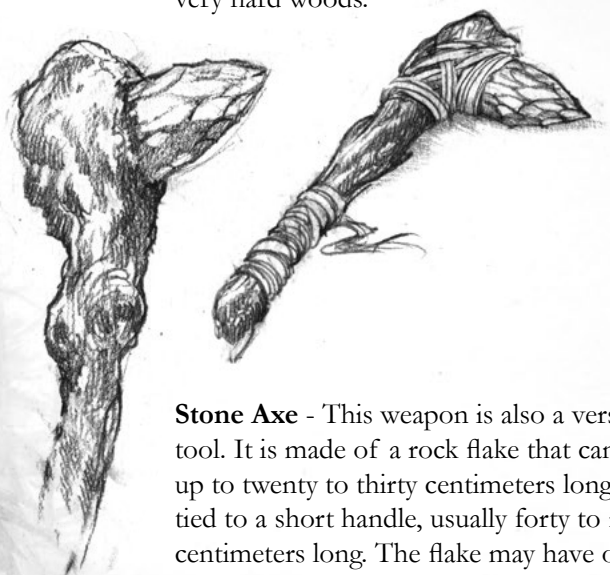
better efficiency, the sharpness of the tip and the quality of the fastening must be regularly checked and maintained. A widespread rumor says that spears with megaloceros antlers tips are the most fearsome. This may only be a legend...

Ivory Lance – The ivory lance is a typical Gravettian weapon, more specifically a Pavlovian weapon, a variant of Gravettian culture from Eastern Europe. Unless the Game Master decides otherwise, only characters belonging to the Gravettian culture (*see boxed text in section 5.1, Arts and craftsmanship*) can be equipped with such a

weapon at the beginning of their adventures.

An ivory lance is a long lance (up to 2m50) made of one straightened and sharpened piece of mammoth ivory. It inflicts the same damage as a bone-tipped spear, but it's a formidable weapon, because it never breaks: at the end of each Round, when rolling the dice to test its resistance, the ivory lance is treated like an enchanted weapon. An ivory lance is a high value weapon, very difficult to make, that only the most prestigious characters among the Gravettian peoples have the privilege of owning. Its weight is its only flaw, preventing almost any attempt at using it as a throwing weapon.

Cudgel and Heavy Club – These blunt weapons made of gnarly and polished wood are devastating for the skulls of prey and enemies alike. A cudgel is wielded with one hand, a heavy club with two. These weapons are usually chosen because they are perfectly adapted to the strength of the user, and a character gifted with an ordinary strength level will not be able to use the heavy club of a character gifted with the Might of the Bison for instance. The most sturdy heavy clubs are made of oak, ash or other types of very hard woods.



Stone Axe - This weapon is also a versatile tool. It is made of a rock flake that can be up to twenty to thirty centimeters long, tied to a short handle, usually forty to fifty centimeters long. The flake may have one or two altered cutting edges, or just be a large sharpened biface. The stone axe can be a dreadful weapon in combat, but most of all it can be used for many tasks, such as breaking bones or chopping wood. Because of its uses, its lifetime is limited, and very often its shaft is more precious than the flake, which will be replaced with a newer, sharper one. If the craftsman decides to make a massive stone axe with a heavy *band axe* as a flake, then this weapon inflicts 1d10 Damage Points instead of 1d6+2, but the resistance of such an axe is decreased (a *Weak* character cannot use such an axe).

War Club – This blunt weapon has a wooden handle and a stone head firmly fixed to the shaft. This head can be a round and polished stone ball, a piece of extremely hard wood or bone... For a better grip, the longer the handle, the shorter the head. And the more massive and heavy the head, the shorter the handle. A long one (up to one meter) with a head the size of a fist is usually the most efficient weapon in combat, rather than a heavy one with a short handle. There are many taboos regarding the war club. In most tribes, it's a "war" weapon, so neither women nor children are allowed to touch it, and it must never be used against an animal, otherwise the user risks being cursed by the Spirits.

Javelins – Javelins are thin wooden lances that are made to be thrown, although they can be used in hand to hand combat as well. At the time when the game of *Würm* is set, the propeller has not been invented yet and most of the javelins are not fletched, but it happens sometimes that a tribe gets the idea to add a fletching to stabilize its flight. A typical javelin is only made from a long tapered piece of wood, sharpened and fire-hardened. A bone-tipped javelin has a short, thin tip inserted in a handle, and firmly tied in place. *In hand to hand combat*, a javelin breaks more easily than any other weapon. During the Resistance Test of the weapon after the combat, a result of 1 or 2 means the weapon is destroyed.

Throwing Stick – This weapon, ancestor of the boomerang, looks like a kind of wood axe or cudgel curved at the third of its length. Some of them are made of bone, although less frequently. The throwing stick is a good weapon to hunt small game: it flies in a straight line, powerfully rotating on its

asymmetrical blades, and it can reach targets more than one hundred meters away, in open terrain. Since it's mainly a short, curved stick, usually weighing less than a pound, it is very simple to make and use. Contrary to the boomerang, it is thrown parallel to the ground and does not return to the thrower. It can be pierced with holes to make a threatening noise, which can help drive a herd or have a flock of birds fly away – and maybe knock out a few.

Bolas – This is a throwing weapon made of several stone balls, usually covered in leather and tied together, aimed at catching animals by entangling their paws. If a character succeeds a bolas roll with a 1] *Brilliant* or *Critical* Success, the bolas wrap around the paws (or legs!) of the target. The fighter must then throw 1d6 and check the table below. If the player gets one of the scores necessary to immobilize, then the prey falls on the ground with its legs entangled; it suffers 1d6 Damage Points due to the bolas blow, and is now considered a “prone opponent” and “attacking from the ground” in terms of Attack roll modifiers. That means it can be hit with a +3 bonus, and it suffers a -3 penalty to its Attack rolls. Furthermore, since its movements are hampered, it can only inflict half the usual damage for as long as it is entangled.

Type of prey	Necessary to immobilize
<i>Ibex, stag, horse, reindeer, saiga antelope</i>	3 to 6 on 1d6
<i>Aurochs, bison, megaloceros</i>	4 to 6 on 1d6

If the prey is not immobilized, it still suffers 1d6 Damage Points caused by the blow of the stone balls of the bolas.

Fish Spear – This weapon is used for fishing. It is made of wood, and has a long shaft and three tips as long as one or two hands, depending on the type of fish. Harpoons had not yet been invented at the time when the game is set, but we can imagine there could be one or two barbs on the tips, to improve its efficiency when catching a wriggling fish. A character fishing with a fish spear is granted a +1 bonus to his dice roll.



Sling – This is basically a typical sling made of a long piece of leather, reinforced in its middle, that is swung and used to throw projectiles over a distance. These projectiles are usually small stone balls, skillfully picked and rounded. But it's possible to throw any old pebbles picked up off the ground. In that case, Damage Points are reduced by 1 (minimum 0).

Rocks – These are plain blocks of stone that can be thrown at prey or enemies, for instance when your weapon is broken. The size of the rock that can be lifted and thrown depends on the character's people: a Long Man can throw small, average or big rocks, causing up to 2d6 Damage Points. A Bear-man (or a Bear-woman) can throw small, average, big or huge rocks, causing up to 3d6 Damage Points. A Long Man must throw an average rock with two hands, but a Bear-man can throw the same rock with one hand. However, he will still need two hands to throw big rocks (not to mention huge ones).

4.4. Unarmed Combat

Although Stone Age weapons are sturdy, they are not as resistant as the weapons that were later produced through smithing and metallurgy, and they can easily break during an adventure (or even during a fight, at the Game Master's discretion). In that case, if a character finds himself disarmed, he has two options: throw a rock at his opponent or prey, or fight him with bare hands. Carrying out an unarmed Attack is done the usual way, but a fighter who tries such a maneuver against an opponent armed with a long weapon, such as a heavy club or a spear, suffers a -2 penalty to his Attack Test. If the fighter succeeds his Attack, he will not directly roll for Damage, but he can choose among five options:

Strike a Blow – the character punches, kicks, head-butts, or strikes his opponent with the elbow or the knee, and inflicts 1d3 Damage Points. In this case, the *Strength of the Bear* and the *Might of the Bison* Strengths only grant a 1d3 bonus for damage. On the other hand, a *Weak* character only subtracts 1 Point from his Damage score.

Immobilize – The fighter gets his opponent in a lock, preventing him from moving. The victim suffers 1d3 Damage Points, with no bonus in case of extraordinary strength since here, the goal is to immobilize the opponent, not crush his body. During the following Rounds, an opposed Strength Test is necessary to determine if the victim can break free from the hold. The Protection Points granted by wearing clothes or an armor are not taken into account against the damage inflicted by the immobilization;

Strangle – The fighter proceeds the same way as with the immobilization, but he inflicts 1d6 Damage Points per Round (with no bonus for Damage caused by an increased strength). During the following Round, the victim is granted a +2 bonus to his Strength Test to break free from the hold. Then he suffers a cumulative penalty of -1 for his Test in the following Rounds (adding the initial +2, so +1 at the second Round, +0 at the third, -1 at the fourth, and so on). A strangled victim, *if he is armed with a stone knife or bone dagger*, can decide to hit his assailant rather than try to break free;

Disarm – The fighter grabs his opponent's weapon to try to take it away from him. At the next Round, the opponent must carry out an opposed Strength Test or lose his weapon. If the fighter gets a *Critical* or *Brilliant Success* on this Test, he keeps his opponent's weapon. If the opponent wins the Test, the disarming maneuver has failed and he can hit the character with a +2 bonus in this Round.

Lift and throw – The character must succeed his Attack and, in the same Round, win an opposed Strength Test. If the Test is successful, the fighter lifts his opponent and violently throws him to the ground to inflict 1d6 Damage Points (2d6 with the adequate Strengths), and the Damage score divided by three (rounded up) is also the number of meters the victim traveled through the air when thrown. Note that a human can only try to throw an opponent weighing up to roughly the same weight as him, or a little heavier if he owns the *Might of the Bison* or *Strength of the Bear* Strengths.

Catastrophes and Critical blows

During an unarmed combat, the results are slightly different from those of armed attacks:

- If the result of the Attack is a **Catastrophe**, the clumsy character must roll 1d6: from 2 to 6, the character falls to the ground. He can get back on his feet during the following Round, but then he cannot Attack. On a roll of 1, he twists a limb and suffers 1d3 Damage Points (without being granted any potential protection).
- If the result of the Attack is a **Brilliant Success**, Damage is automatically set to the maximum possible depending on the Attack.
- If the result of the Attack is a **Critical Success**, Damage is rolled twice and the results added together, and the character is granted a 1d6 bonus for the opposed Strength Test following this Attack.
- If the result of the Attack is a **Legendary Success**, Damage is rolled four times and added up, and the character is granted a 1d6 bonus for the next two opposed Strength Tests following this Attack.

Wrestling with an Animal

If a character tries to wrestle with an animal, check the following table to see the number of dice the animal will roll to carry out opposed Strength Tests with the character. The number of dice depends on its weight.

Animal weight	Number of dice
Less than 10 kg	1d6
From 10 to 100 kg	2d6
From 100 to 200 kg	3d6
From 200 to 300 kg	4d6

A wrestling fight with an animal over 300 kg is impossible – unless the character is gifted with the *Hunting Grappling* combat technique. (see Chapter 5). Even immobilized or strangled, an animal can still try to carry out an Attack during his action phase (only one, wether biting, clawing or goring), but with a -3 penalty for hits.

4.5. Wounds and How to Avoid Them

A successful Attack causes a wound. A character's number of Stamina Points represents his physical health. In combat, a wounded character loses Stamina Points because of his wound: thus, suffering 3 Damage Points is equivalent to losing three Stamina Points.

Damage

To determine the Damage caused by an Attack, roll the dice corresponding to the damage of the weapon used, increased of 1d6 if the character has the *Might of the Bison* or *Strength of the Bear* Strengths, and decreased by 3 if he is *Weak*: the total represents the Damage Points caused by the Attack, the minimum sum of which cannot be lower than 1. The protection score of the opponent is subtracted from this total, due to the clothes he is wearing, or the thickness of its skin for an animal (see the table on page 61). The remaining figure is subtracted from the Stamina Points of the target.

Serious Wounds

If a character loses at least 10 Stamina Points in one Round, he is *seriously wounded*. He must succeed a Pain Resistance Test DT 9 (he can roll an extra 1d6 if he has a *Heart of Ice*) or be stunned during 1d6 rounds.

Hit Location Table

Dice result	Location	Potential after-effects
2 or less	Foot	Lame
3-4	Left leg / Right leg	Lame
5	Lower abdomen	Impotent
6-7	Belly (or lower back)	Weak
8-9	Left arm / Right arm	Clumsy
10-11	Chest (or back)	Fragile
12 or +	Head	Special*

* Roll 1d6 again - If a piercing weapon is used, the potential after-effect is: *One eyed (even number)* or *Disfigured (odd number)*. If a blunt weapon is used, the potential after-effect is: *Half deaf (even number)* or *Simple-minded (odd number)*.

A stunned character can no longer fight, but he may try to Dodge (Total Dodge), or try to carry out some actions that don't require any concentration or dexterity. **All his dice rolls suffer a -3 penalty.** These penalties only go away when the wound is completely healed. If the character succeeds his Resistance to pain Test, then he doesn't suffer any penalty from the Serious Wound during the combat, or afterwards. If however, at the end of the combat, this character behaves in a way that could worsen his wound, the GM can ask him to roll a new Resistance Test. If it's a Failure, the -3 penalty is applied until he is healed.

Unless it is healed by a shaman with the help of Spirits, a Serious Wound can leave after-effects. That is why it is necessary to locate such a wound, unlike simple Light Wounds. When a fighter (human or animal) suffers a Serious Wound, the attacker who inflicted the wound must roll 2d6 and check the table above. A small animal subtracts 3 from its dice roll; a big-sized animal adds 3.

After-Effects

Once the Serious Wound has been healed, the character must roll a Resistance Test for infections (easy, DT 5).

If the Test is successful, the wound does not leave serious after-effects, except a scar.

If, on the other hand, the Test is failed, the wound leaves an after-effect: the character is afflicted with a *Weakness* (or a *Curse* in

the case of Impotency, see the section on Curses). If a character gets a Weakness he already had, the effects are not cumulative; there is no change for him.

Dying

At 0 Stamina Points, a character is on the verge of dying and can no longer fight. During each Round, he must perform a Test (DT 9) in order not to fall unconscious during 1d6 hours. A character gifted with a *Heart of Ice* is granted a 1d6 bonus to succeed these Tests. A *Fragile* character suffers a -3 penalty.

A dying character can no longer fight; in other words, he can neither attack nor effectively defend himself. As long as he doesn't fall unconscious, he can only move (slowly), call for help, try to drink a potion... Basically anything that a character could logically do with maybe his innards spilling out, his face beaten to a pulp, or his leg crushed. In any case he cannot give himself any first aid nor perform a Total Dodge. A dying character will necessarily be lying on the ground and will therefore be an easy target (+3 to hit him). But as long as he remains conscious, he is not a "defenseless opponent".

When the Stamina Points of a character reach -10, the character dies and leaves for the Lands of Mist or the Underworld.

Clothing Table

Type of Clothes	Ignored Damage Points
Summer Clothes (loincloths or tunics)	0
Summer Clothes – half-season (skin clothes or supple fur pelts)	1
Winter Clothes Skin clothes + thick fur pelts	2 (-1 Agility and Dodge)

Thick Skins and Furs Protection

Some animals have a naturally thick skin (fleece, fur, leather, scales...) that provides them with a natural protection against blows: this number is indicated in their detailed characteristics in Chapter 8, and must be subtracted from the damage they suffer, to determine the Life Points they will actually lose (the total cannot fall below 0). Likewise, characters can wear thick fur or skin clothes for protection.

Summer Clothing, worn through the mild season that lasts roughly from mid-May to mid-October, is available in two types:

- **“half-season”** clothes are made of soft skins and light furs, and grant **1 Protection Point** (the Damage suffered by the character is reduced by 1 Point);
- **summer** (roughly July/August) clothes are so light (sometimes only made of a loincloth) that they grant no Protection Points.

Winter Clothing refers to clothes worn during the cold season that goes from mid-October to mid-May. The clothes are made of several layers of skins and fur, and provides **2 Protection Points**. At the same time, the character's mobility is slightly limited, which causes a -1 penalty for his Agility Tests and Dodge score.

Shields and Breastplate of Bones

Not many tribes have developed the use of shields. However they do exist, among both Bear-men and Long Men. The Bear-men of a tundra tribe are reportedly the first to create huge shields made of mammoth hides, in order to block the javelins of the

Long Men fighting over hunting grounds.

In your *Wûrm* campaign, make sure that shields are very rare items kept only by belligerent tribes, or tribes that need to defend themselves against frequent attacks. A character who protects himself with a shield cannot use a weapon at the same time if it requires the use of two hands, such as a heavy club or a spear. If he tries to all the same, he will suffer a -3 penalty for his Attack roll and -3 for his Damage roll.

At the end of each Combat during which he has been hit, a character using a shield must roll 1d6. If he rolls a 1, the shield did not resist the fury of the Attacks and can no longer be used. The same goes for the breastplate of bones.

The breastplate of bones is made of various bones, often human, usually a collection of tibias or shoulder blades. It is tied to the neck and the waist, and only protects the torso. It can be worn over clothes, and its protection is then cumulative with the protection of the clothing. As with the shields, make sure breastplates of bones are rare items used by warrior tribes. Not to mention that the breastplate of bones has a very obvious macabre look.

Protections Table

Type of Protection	Ignored Damage Points
Skin or Woven Plant Fiber Shield	1
Mammoth Skin Shield	2
Breastplate of Bones	1

Note: *The Protection points of both the shield and the breastplate do not apply when the assailant sneaks up on the Character from behind.*

Option: Hemorrhages

Although this option gives a real advantage to the characters when it comes to pursuing fleeing preys that suffered heavy wounds, this option also makes the game much more lethal for the characters!

If you decide to go down that path, when a character (or creature) suffers a *Serious Wound*, he must roll 1d6: on a result of 1, he suffers a severe hemorrhage (benign hemorrhages are not taken into account in the game). This hemorrhage translates as the loss of 1 Stamina (or Life) Point per minute. It means that the character is doomed if his companions don't quickly give him first aid, effective enough to stop the bleeding, with a DT 9.

If the first aid provider fails, it's still possible to stop the hemorrhage by cauterizing the wound with something intensely hot, like a flaming torch. This method is radical but dangerous, because it causes 1d6 Damage points to the character, and could make him fall unconscious or even kill him. Let's not forget that the unconsciousness threshold is at 0, and the death threshold at -10 Stamina points.

Lighting a fire takes 10 minutes with a DT 5, or 7 in a humid environment. A fire can be started in just 5 minutes by increasing the Difficulty Threshold to 9 (Difficult).

4.6. Healing

Most wounds heal with time. A character gets **1d3 Stamina Points back per meal**, up to a maximum of twice per day. For each meal taken, he removes one *Food ration* from his character sheet.

Furthermore, a character gets **1d6 Stamina Points back, at dawn, per each full day of rest**. Requiring a full day's rest means that a character doesn't get any Stamina Point(s) back at night, during the "usual" course of an adventure. Don't forget that the characters often spend their nights in makeshift shelters, protecting themselves from the freezing wind, with only a small smoking fire to provide some comfort. In that situation, if you don't lose Stamina Points at night, that's pretty good going (see rules of cold). If the character really wants to get his points back through "natural" means (especially if he uses decoctions and cataplasms), then he needs to have a one-day break during the adventure.

Option: Serious Wound Threshold and Breath of the Giant Stag

The goal of this option is to make some characters a little more resistant to Serious Wounds. If applied, the Serious Wound threshold goes up to 12 for a Long Man gifted with the *Breath of the Giant Stag* Strength, and 13 for a Bear-man gifted with the same Strength (including through the use of a charm, of course). It remains at 10 for all other characters.

Of course, "resting" doesn't mean being idle. During a day "of rest", a character can still do all kinds of things: making tools and works of art, drawing, talking... but no traveling, fighting or hunting.

It is possible to speed up the healing process of a wounded or sick person with the use of *ointments* and *cataplasms* made of medicinal plants, or by having him drink *purifying decoctions*. An **ointment** is a greasy substance, a kind of cream, that helps calm a nasty cough, joint or muscular problems, and is massaged into the skin. A **cataplasm** is a non-greasy substance made of clay and ground plants, applied on the skin to help heal a fracture, alleviate joint pains, but also to stop a wound bleeding and prevent infection. A cataplasm is usually held in place with a leather strap, as it can dry out and crumble.

To use these remedies, the healer must succeed a *Preparation Test*. The Test has a DT 7 if it's only for treating a light wound, 9 if the wound is serious. If the Test is successful, then the healer can use one of these remedies, and the sick or wounded person can get **2d6 Stamina points back at dawn instead of 1d6** (he still must have had a full day's rest the day before).

A character gifted with the *Venom of the Viper* Strength is granted a 1d6 bonus when preparing such remedies.



Note that the recovered Stamina Points can never exceed the character's initial Stamina score.

First Aid

First aid refers to all the procedures that can help rapidly stabilize a wounded person. This can include making a splint, a tourniquet, etc. *First aid*, applied to a wound, makes it possible to heal **1d3 Damage Points per wound**. The DT of the Test is **7** for a Light Wound, and **9** for a Serious Wound.

Once a wound has been treated with First aid, it cannot be healed any further that way.

The use of cataplasms makes it possible to heal 1d6 points instead of 1d3.

A *Brilliant Success* on the Test can max out this aid (3 or 6 Points); a *Critical Success* doubles the number of healed Stamina Points. A Catastrophe makes the wounded character lose 1d3 extra Stamina Points!

Weaknesses caused by the *after-effects* of Serious Wounds can fade away with time (usually a season) and lots of care. At the end of the period of time granted by the Game Master, the character must take a new Resistance Test (easy, DT 5). If the Test is successful, the Weakness is gone. On the other hand, if the Test is a Failure, this time the Weakness remains permanently and only a Spirit can heal the character – for example through the *Miraculous healing* favor granted to a shaman (see Chapter 6.1).

Secret Skills

Some Secret Skills can also be taken into account when it comes to healing wounds and illnesses. Healing balms can give a wounded character all his strength back, and an exorcism can purge the wounds and illnesses in a very effective way. See Chapter 5 for more details on setting up these Skills.

4.7. The Dangers of the Ice Age

Landscape and Climate

At the time when the adventures of the *Würm* characters are set, the climate is getting colder after a warm and humid transitional stage, and the ice is slowly moving towards the south, in a series of cold and dry seasons.

This dry cold makes tree lines recede. The taiga trees are dominant: the Scots pine, larch, and birch somehow manage to persist. The alder and the willow trees, which can stand the cold but enjoy humidity, can only be found on a few riverbanks. Oak, ash, and hazel trees are disappearing from the tribe lands, except in more southern areas. As a whole, a vast steppe landscape stretches out over the prehistoric lands, becoming a tundra in the north, surrounded by taiga and woodlands.



This steppe, called “mammoth steppe”, is a cold steppe with wild grasses, mugwort, and thistle, the equivalent of the great North American *prairie*. It includes couch grass, wild oats (“bison grass”), lichen, juniper bushes, blueberries...

There are high, snowy mountains to the east and north, and after that, impassable glaciers. Long and rigorous winters come after short springs and mild summers.

Due to the worsening drought and a climate that is getting colder and colder, the waters are receding: sea levels are decreasing, up to a hundred meters lower than today! The coastlines of the land that will later become France are very different from those of today, sometimes stretching out over dozens of kilometers of plain now submerged by the sea or the ocean. The Channel and the North Sea are large prairies where mammoths and bison graze. Frozen in the huge glaciers that will soon extend over modern day England, the water has vanished from the sky, which is now clear blue with very few clouds.

In fact, although it is cold, the ice age climate is not bad at all. Despite a few torrential rain showers, it is usually fair and dry. After sunny days over the grasslands, come clear nights where thousands of stars and a large mysterious moon shine bright in the cold air. During the mild season, going roughly from mid-May to mid-October, the temperature varies between five and fifteen degrees Celsius, and can even rise to over twenty degrees in July-August.

However, during the cold season, from mid-October to mid-May, temperatures can drop dramatically, up to -40°C. The ice age climate is not so rough, but for the characters, it can still be dangerous...

Perils

Note that even if the negative effects of these perils are detailed in the same chapter as combat, it is not usually necessary to break the total time during which these rules apply into *Rounds*. When this is the case however, as with fire or drowning, it will be mentioned in the relevant paragraph. From a technical point of view, some perils require a Resistance Test opposed to a DT, as with the cold for instance, or opposed to a *Severity*, sometimes abbreviated SEV, as in the case of diseases or poisons.

Here is a list of these perils, in alphabetical order:

Asphyxia and Drowning – Whether he is drowning or inhaling toxic fumes from a fire, a character must succeed a Resistance Test per Round or lose 1d6 Stamina Points for each Failure. The first roll is against a DT 3, the second against a DT 4, the third against a DT 5, and so on until he is rescued or has lost all his Stamina Points. The Breath of the Giant Stag Strength allows a character to roll 3d6 instead of 2d6 for these Tests.

Blizzard – A blizzard is a violent snowstorm with whirling, freezing winds that chill you to the bone. All creatures fear being caught in a blizzard. If a character is in the middle of a blizzard, here is what happens: for as long as the blizzard lasts, his Orientation and Perception Tests suffer a -6 penalty. His other Tests, except the *Resistance to Cold* Test, suffer a penalty of -3. For each hour, the character suffers 3d6 Damage Points due to the cold and the whirling ice. A successful *Resistance to Cold* Test (DT 9) halves these Damage Points. A Critical Success means he does not suffer any Damage. In these conditions, the character's movement and speed are divided by 2 (rounded down).

Effects of the Cold Table

Temperature	Test frequency	DT of the <i>Resistance to Cold</i> Test*	Damage caused by the cold**
0 to -10° C	1 every 12 hours	5	1d6 Damage Points
-10 to -20° C	1 every 6 hours	7	1d6 Damage Points
-20 to -30° C	1 every 6 hours	9	2d6 Damage Points
-30 to -40° C	1 every 3 hours	12	2d6 Damage Points
-40° C and lower	1 every hour	15	3d6 Damage Points

* In the event of a fumble on the *Resistance to cold* Test, the character catches a cold with a Severity of 1d6+3, sent by the Ice Spirits.

** A successful *Resistance to cold* Test will divide the Damage by 2. For a drenched Character, the Damage score is multiplied by 2. At 0 Stamina Points, the Character falls unconscious. At -10 Stamina Points, the Character freezes to death. Note that the protection granted by the clothes the character is wearing is taken into account when calculating the Damage caused by the cold.
When a character has suffered Damage caused by the cold at night, he doesn't get any Stamina Points back at dawn, even if he has rested the whole day before.

Cold – Cold is one of the more serious dangers in the ice age world. Winters are long and harsh, and it's not always possible to stay in the warmth of the hut because it's sometimes necessary to go outside to hunt, fish, find wood, or look for help to perform a task, for example.

If a character is not in a well-heated shelter when the temperature is below or equal to 0°C, he must carry out a *Cold Resistance* Test every 12, 6, 3, or 1 hours (depending on the severity of the cold), with varying Difficulty Thresholds (see the Effects of the Cold Table).

The Wind is the ruthless ally of the Spirits of the cold. When it's blowing hard, the temperature is considered to be one level colder. For instance, if the temperature is between 0 and 10°C and there are gusts of wind, the Cold Resistance Test must be performed as if it was actually between -10 and -20° C...

Falls – The higher the fall onto a hard ground, the more the character risks hurting himself really badly. Falls cause 1d6 Damage Points every 2m onto hard ground (such as rock), every 3m onto loose soil (such as earth), and every 10m into water (provided the water is deep enough!). A successful

Agility Test (2d6, 3d6 if the character has the *Agility of the Ibex* Strength) can divide this type of Damage by 2 when it occurs, and even to cancel it completely on a Critical Success.

Fall From the Edge of a Precipice – an animal or a character that finds itself at the edge of a precipice or a chasm *at the end of a run* must perform an Agility Test with a DT 5 (or an Initiative Test for the animals), or fall and suffer damage.

Fatigue – A character who has not rested in 12 hours is *tired*. He suffers a -2 penalty for all his skills. A *tired* character who does not rest becomes *exhausted* after 12 more hours. An *exhausted* character suffers a -4 penalty. A night's rest cancels fatigue and exhaustion.
Nota: half a day roughly represents 6 hours.
Fatigue-related penalties can be cumulative with those related to malnutrition.

Flames – A burning torch can cause 1d6 Damage Points if it is used as a weapon. Falling into a small campfire causes 1d6+2 Damage Points. Falling into a big campfire causes 2d6+4 Damage Points. A character trapped in a fire suffers 1d3 Damage Points per Round, and risks dying from asphyxiation.

Illnesses – Illnesses are defined by the **Severity (SEV)** characteristic, which can vary from 3 (a common cold) to 12 (a devastating bubonic plague). The character facing an illness must oppose a Resistance Test to this *Severity*. If he fails the Resistance Test, the character is considered having fallen ill, and he will suffer as many Damage Points as the SEV score of the illness afflicting him. The character is entitled a new Resistance Test each day which, in case of a Failure, inflicts as many Damage Points as the SEV score of the illness.

The illness can last from 1d6 to 2d6 days (or at the Game Master's discretion), depending on its type. As long as the character is sick, he cannot get his Stamina Points back, either by eating or resting.

There are two ways a character can overcome an illness: **either by succeeding his opposed Resistance Tests to the Severity of the illness three days in a row, or by managing to stay alive until the end of the 1d6 or 2d6 days.** He can then start getting his Stamina Points back according to the usual healing process.

The use of purifying decoctions makes it possible to divide the loss of Stamina Points by 2, once a day. Each potion requires the use of a dose of medicinal plants. The difficulty of preparing an effective decoction is equal to the *Severity* of the illness to treat. The *Venom of the Viper* Strength grants a 1d6 bonus for the preparation of such remedies. An illness is always caused by a malevolent Spirit or a curse, so an *Exorcism* can also heal it.

Malnutrition – A character who has not eaten anything for one day will suffer the effects of **hunger**. He loses 1d3 Stamina Points and suffers a -1 penalty for his Tests, *except for combat or obtaining food*, until his next



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What About the Rain ?

It rarely rains during the ice age, but when it does, it pours. When it's raining, movement is limited to the 2/3 of the usual. When cold rain is pouring down, the characters must perform a *Resistance to Cold* Test (DT 7) for each day spent in the rain, or face a flu with a 1d3+2 Severity, sent by the rain Spirit.

meal. A hungry character who still does not eat becomes **famished** after another day. He loses another 1d3 Stamina Points and the -1 penalty then applies to *all his Tests*, with no exception. If the character manages to go through **three such days** of being *famished*, he is now considered being **fasting**. A *fasting* character suffers *no more penalties* to his Tests, but **loses 1 Stamina Point per day**.

A good hot meal and a little rest cancel all penalties acquired during the first days of malnutrition, but a fasting character must be careful not to end his fast with too rich a meal, or he can become severely ill. The lost Stamina Points have to be recovered with regular meals and rest.

Poisons – Poisons are defined by a *Severity*, just like diseases. If a character finds himself contaminated by a poison, he must roll a Resistance Test opposed to the Severity of the poison.

If the character fails his Test, he loses a number of Stamina Points equal to *double* the Severity score of the poison.

If, on the other hand, he succeeds this Test, he only loses a number of Stamina Points equal to *half* the Severity of the poison.

With enough time, a successful Healing Test can divide the SEV of a poison by 2. In game terms, we consider that poison can take a few minutes to a few hours to have an effect, and can only act once.

Of course the GM can create special rules for his own poisons. What matters is that the way it affects the characters – if they are poisoned – is truly the one required by the game's storyline; or the effect made by the characters, in the way they use a poison, does not affect the balance of power with their opponents.

4.8. After-Effects of Serious Wounds Caused by Natural Dangers

All Serious Wounds can have after-effects, and there are many situations where a character can suffer them. We will detail four particularly dangerous perils: falls, fire, cold, and landslides.

Each one of these perils can cause a number of Damage Points superior or equal to a character's Serious Wounds Threshold. If that is the case, unless the character is victim of a landslide, it is not necessary to locate the wound: any fall may cause the *Lame* after-effect; the cold or a blizzard can make the character *Fragile*, and fire can make him *Disfigured* (these after-effects correspond to the Weaknesses detailed in Chapter 2).

If a character is trapped in a landslide, roll 2d6+3, as if he'd been hit by a large animal, to determine where on his body he was hit by the boulder, and check the Hit Location Table (section 4.5.) to find out the corresponding potential after-effect.

Of course, in any case, the after-effect will only be temporary if the character fails his Resistance Test for infections, and it will be permanent if he doesn't heal from it.

Type of danger	Potential after-effect
Fall	<i>Lame</i>
Fire	<i>Disfigured</i>
Cold (& blizzard)	<i>Fragile</i>
Rockslide	<i>Roll 2d6+3 on the Hit Location Table</i>



5. Talents and Secret Skills

Through the millennia, Bear-men and Long Men have developed craft techniques and artistic talents, as well as particularly fearsome secret hunting, combat, or magic skills, adapted to certain situations. These Talents and Secret Skills can only be acquired under some conditions: **an initiation must be undertaken, during which the character must convince a master he is worthy of his teachings.** Art and craft skills are available to starting characters, but Secret Skills very rarely. These Talents and Skills are detailed below. In theory, these techniques are not transmitted from one people to another, but there can be exceptions if a character gets along or becomes friends with the other people.

As indicated in the chapter concerning characters generation, **a full season (half a year) is usually required to learn a Talent or a Secret Skill**, as long as a master agrees to initiate and teach the character.

We should also mention that a character can only learn one Talent or Secret Skill per season. He devotes himself to that task. Of course, that's not the only thing he does all day, but in terms of learning, his mind is focused on only one goal. This is to ensure that characters don't become too experienced too quickly. That said, if the GM sees fit, he can allow a character to learn one basic craft at the same time, under some conditions.

On the other hand, The Game Master may decide that some Secret Skills can take a whole year or even two to learn, to slow down the progression of the characters a bit.

Once acquired, the Talent or Secret Skill can be used with the usual action resolution rules, by carrying out, as with any other type of action, 2d6, 3d6 rolls, or more if the character owns Strengths that may come into play when using his Talents.

5.1 Arts and Craftsmanship

The table below lists the *basic* and *additional* crafts of the different cultures of the ice age, as well as their artistic talents.

Craft Talents

Any character can make various wooden or stone, sometimes bone, tools necessary to everyday life: scrapers, “bifaces*”, spikes, scrubbers, blades... If the character possesses the Flake knapping or Blade debitage talent, he will be able to produce a more or less high number of tools from a block of stone. To knap flint (or any other kind of rock), the character must have the most basic of tools: *hammers*. A *hard* hammer, usually an average sized pebble, is used in the first phases of work. A *soft* hammer, usually a small percussor made of reindeer or stag antler, is then used for the most delicate part of the work, such as removing the blades in a blade debitage, or some fine alterations, or the sharpening of an edge when using a flake knapping technique.

* *A biface is a pretty thick two-edged stone tool that is a kind of prehistoric “Swiss army knife”: it can be used in many ways, especially in butchery.*

Mousterian Culture

Basic: Wood craft, Stone craft - *flake flint knapping*

Additional: Skin craft

Art: Body art

Châtelperronian Culture

Basic: Wood craft, Stone craft - *flake flint knapping*, Stone craft - *blade debitage*

Additional: Bone craft, Skin craft

Art: Body art, Finery, Painting (engraving)

Aurignacian Culture

Basic: Wood craft, Stone craft - *flake flint knapping*, Stone craft - *blade debitage*

Additional: Bone craft, Skin craft

Art: Body art, Finery, Painting, Sculpture

Stone Craft

With this Talent, it's possible to manufacture tools from blocks of stone (flint or others). The quality of the rocks can grant penalties or bonus for the Tests. A Critical Success makes it possible to shape a spike or a blade of very high quality that will grant +1 to the Damage score. A stone tool can be used 2d6 times before it is unusable (this rule is different for weapons, see the *Combat* section).

- **Flake Flint Knapping** – This is the technique used by Bear-men, and, in some cases, Long Men. This technique allows a character to make 1d6 tools from one block, such as scrapers or spikes, or 1 large biface (that can be used in butchery, but also to fabricate a stone axe).
- **Blade Debitage** – This is the technique used by Long Men, and some Bear-men of Châtelperronian culture. It allows a character to make 3d6 tools or flint blades from a block.

Wood Craft

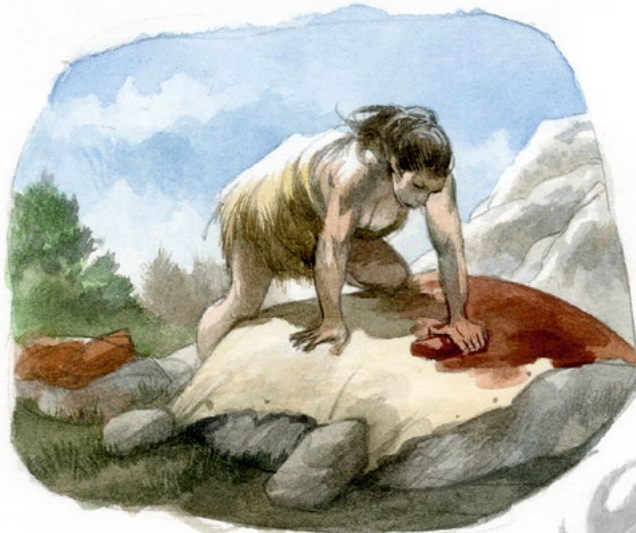
This Talent allows the character to fabricate various wooden tools or objects. It makes it possible to skillfully cut wood, shape it, and use its bark and sap. A character can use this Talent to create spoons, sticks, bowls and dishes, heavy clubs, shafts or handles from wood; boxes, slippers, or cloaks from the bark or fibers... A Critical Success for the making of a javelin shaft grants a +1 bonus to hit with this weapon.

Bone Craft

This Talent makes it possible to manufacture objects, tools or weapons from bone. A bone-tipped spear gets +1 for the Damage it inflicts, +2 in case of a Critical Success on the Bone Craft Test during its creation. A bone tool can be used 4d6 times before it becomes unusable (this rule is different for weapons, see the *Combat* section).

Skin Craft

This talent allows the character to remove the skins and furs of hunted animals, to treat them (with ocher for instance), then to tan them, soften or harden them in order to manufacture clothes and protection. A Critical Success for a Skin Craft Test gives the finished clothes a +1 bonus for protection, and a +1 bonus for the *Resistance to Cold* Test. Skin clothes can be worn for 1d6 seasons before they become unwearable, or 2d6 seasons in case of a Critical Success (a season equals half a year).



Ivory Craft

This Talent is only available to Gravettian characters (see next page), unless the Game Master decides otherwise for the needs of his campaign. This Talent gives the character the ability to craft ivory with an amazing dexterity. The character is therefore able to, for instance, manufacture incredibly fine pearls as well as the famous *ivory lances*. Note that the *Bone craft*, *Finery* and *Sculpture* Talents make it possible to craft ivory, but with less finesse in the case of Bone craft and Finery, and for other uses in the case of *Sculpture*.

Option: The Gravettians

The Gravettian culture followed the Aurignacian one. It appeared in Western Europe a little less than ten thousand years after the Aurignacians arrived. The Gravettian civilization lasted roughly from -29,000 to -22,000, which means that Gravettians were partly contemporary with the very last Neanderthals.

Gravettians were Long Men, whose culture presented some similarities (especially in the arts) with the Aurignacian culture. The characteristics of the Gravettian culture may stem from a certain influential form of Aurignacian. While the Aurignacian culture showed strong local variations, the Gravettian was, on the other hand, very homogeneous. At the peak of its influence, its amazing cultural unity was extending over a much larger area, ranging from the Atlantic to the Ural mountains.

Its characteristics are the use of light and efficient weapons and tools with thin straight blades, but most of all, the making of beautiful female figurines in ivory, limestone, steatite, etc.

Gravettian tombs, and most of all Pavlovian ones (Gravettian from Eastern Europe) indicate, through the presence of very rich offerings¹, the existence of complex social structures, probably organized into a hierarchy, and a first-rate knowledge in crafts, especially when it comes to the use of ivory.

If you choose to set a campaign during a time period including the Gravettians, then the characters belonging to this culture will possess the Talents (basic, additional, and artistic) detailed below, and will have access to the *Ivory craft* Talent. (see section 5.1) Gravettian characters who have more than 200 Prestige points can own an ivory lance (see section 4.3 *Weapons of the Stone age*).

Gravettian culture

Basic: Wood craft - *flake flint knapping*, Stone craft - *blade debitage*, Skin craft

Additional: Bone craft, Ivory craft

Art: Body art, Finery, Painting, Sculpture

¹ See Sungir, in Chapter 7.6. The tomb of an important character, maybe a shaman, has been found in Brno II (Moravia). It contained many necklaces, engraved artifacts, and ivory figurines, including an exceptional figurine of a male character, made of several parts assembled like an articulated puppet.

Finery

This Talent allows the making of all kinds of finery, jewels, and decorations. These can be enchanted afterwards to become *charms*. To know the various types of finery made at the time when the game takes place, see paragraph 7.9.

Body Art

This Talent allows the character to decorate a body (his own, or someone else's) with mineral pigment based paints:

- **Blood of Ao** – This body paint made of blessed red ochre increases the natural protection of the character by 1d3 points, for half a day (6 hours). The character must not wear any clothing to benefit from this protection. Red ochre also repels vermin and has healing properties.
- **Skin of Night** – Made from *stone of night* (a block of black manganese oxide), this body paint allows its wearer to blend in the darkness. At night, a character benefiting from such a body painting gets a 1d6 bonus to all his future Stealth and Camouflage Tests.



Painting

With this Talent, a character can draw, engrave and paint animals or signs, in a realistic or decorative manner, with various pigments (such as red ocher, iron or manganese oxide, charcoal...). These paintings can be used in several ways:

- **Shamanic focal aid** – A character who is watching, when in trance, a painting of a certain Spirit (or group of Spirits), can see his chances of contacting it (or them) increase by +2 (+4 if the result of the painting roll is a Critical Success). Note that this effect also works if the paintings have been drawn by others, but a successful Knowledge Test is then required to identify the Spirit associated with the painting (see 5.3.);
- **Information** – Paintings can be used to convey knowledge and legends. Reading these paintings, which can take between one night and a whole moon, can then help the character better understand the universe and know the Spirits. The paintings are mainly used in this way for initiations only.

Sculpture

With this Talent, a character can model clay, carve stone, wood, or bone, to create a statuette or a bas-relief. Bas-reliefs are used as shamanic focal aids (see *Painting*). Statuettes too, but their power is divided by 2 (+1, +2 in case of a Critical Success). In addition to being a shamanic focal aid, a statuette can be enchanted to become a magical object (see Enchantments).

To learn more about actual prehistoric art (drawing, engraving, painting or sculpting) themes and styles, you can refer to section 7.8: *Art, 35,000 years ago*.

5.2. Secret Combat Techniques

Most of these Combat Techniques are the well kept secrets of either Long Men or Bear-Men. As said previously, some of these Secret Skills may cross the borders of the tribes, but it must remain an exceptional gift to any character who does not belong to the rightful people.

Impaling

This combat technique was developed by both Long Men and Bear-Men to hunt large animals. It can therefore only be used against an animal the size of at least a small horse. Impaling is only used with a heavy spear and in hand to hand combat. It allows the character to aim for weak spots with strength and accuracy. If the Attack Test is successful, any Damage roll with a 6 on one of the dice allows the character to roll 1d6 again. If both dice show a 6, the character rolls another 2d6. The new Damage is *added to* the score of the first roll. If the player gets one (or several) more 6s, he keeps on rolling 1d6 again for each 6 he gets until he runs out of 6s. One cannot use the effect of Impaling cumulative dice when *Fighting like a Bear* (see below).

Invisible

A character gifted with this very rare Secret Skill is called an Invisible because he has become a great expert in the art of not being seen, smelled or heard, thanks to an infinity of cunning tricks learned from ancestral traditions. An “invisible” character gets a **1d6** bonus to all his stealth movements and attempts to camouflage and approach his prey or enemy. When they move by night, the invisible character sometimes paints his own body black, to improve his stealth, additionally using stone of night,

also called stone of darkness (manganese oxide), the properties of which are detailed in the section about body painting.

Shields

Because shields are rarely used, making them requires a specific Skill, and doesn't belong to the general area of skin or wood craft. A character gifted with this Secret Skill can manufacture any kind of shield: made of plaited plant fibers or skins, small or large. The manufacture of a shield can take between two days and a week, not including the time required to get hold of raw material (such as mammoth leather!).

Melee (*Long Men*)

This technique was developed by Long Men, over many a combat against other humans. It can therefore only be used against humans (Long Men or Bear-men). The fighter gains in flexibility and in peripheral vision, so that he can Attack in turn each opponent within his threat area, during the same Round and the same combat. The Attack roll against each opponent is however reduced by 1 Point per opponent (for example, against three opponents: 3 Attack rolls at -3 each).

Flight of the Snowy Owl (*Long Men*)

With this Skill, a Long Man can throw a javelin with lethal accuracy and strength. Damage dice are doubled in case of Success (and quadrupled in case of a Critical Success). So a javelin causes 2d6 Points, and a bone-tipped javelin 2d6+2 Points. The mastery of this Secret Skill allows a character to throw these javelins at the *maximum* range, equal to three times the base range (see *Combat and Dangers*).

Hunter of the Seas (*Long Men*)

This technique helps the Long Man to use the fire-hardened fish spear with a fearsome efficiency. At first developed for large fish and marine mammals, this technique can also be used against other prey. In the hands of an expert, the fish spear adds an extra +1 bonus to the *Fishing* Test, *in addition* to the usual bonus already granted by the fish spear, in other words a total of +2. It also grants a +1 bonus for hand to hand Attack Tests and +1 for Damage.

Fight Like a Bear (*Bear-Men*)

A Bear-man who uses this technique fights with frenzy and aims straight at his opponent's weak spots (head, belly...). Therefore the Damage dice for his weapons are modified: 1d6 becomes 1d10 (ex: a war club causes 1d10+2 Damage Points; a heavy club causes 2d10 Damage Points.). However this rule only applies to hand to hand combat, not ranged combat. Note that the 1d6 bonus due to the *Strength of the Bear* or *Might of the Bison* Strengths remains the same, since only the weapon damage is modified. *If you have no ten-sided die, you can change the effects of this technique this way: in hand to hand combat, the character gets a +2 bonus to each Damage die for the weapon used.*

Fight Like a Bull (*Bear-Men*)

This advanced technique gives a Bear-man the possibility to knock over his prey (or his opponent), up to a maximum size of 400 kg, to bring it to the ground by ramming it with his shoulder or by tripping it up, usually with his weapon. An Attack roll opposed to the strongest Attack of the opponent is required. If the Test is successful, the opponent falls to the ground and suffers 1d6 Damage Points. During the same Round, the Bear-man can then go on and hit his opponent with his heavy club or spear, benefiting from the +3 hit bonus, while the opponent must use his next action to get up, or fight from the ground with a -3 penalty.



Hunting Grappling (Bear-Men)

Prehistoric weapons can be fearsome, yet they remain fragile and can break, sometimes at the least convenient time. The Hunting Grappling Secret Skill is a set of unarmed combat techniques developed over the millennia by Bear-men to fight and defend themselves in hunting situations, when they could find themselves disarmed. A character well-versed in this Secret Skill can:

- *fight against large herbivores* – The character can engage in a fight against animals as large as megaloceroses, bison, or aurochs. Of course, he can neither throw them into the air nor strangle them, but he can grab them by the horns and try to “immobilize” them by bringing them down to the ground. To successfully overcome such an animal, the character must succeed

two Grappling Tests in a row against the animal. These creatures perform opposed Grappling Tests by rolling **5d6**. Let’s just say that only the most powerful Bear-men will risk carrying out such attacks;

- *break limbs* – When he’s grappling with humans or animals other than the huge creatures mentioned above, a character who knows the secrets of Hunting Grappling has an extra option: if he has managed to immobilize an opponent and inflict damage on him, then during the following Round, a successful opposed Strength Test gives him the possibility to break one of his opponent’s bones (arm, leg, neck, spine...) and inflict 2d6 Damage Points, in addition to any Strength bonus he may have.



5.3 Shamanism

Prehistoric Shamans?

Some readers and players would be right to wonder if there truly were shamans at the time when the game takes place, thirty-five thousand years ago. We must cautiously answer that there is much uncertainty in prehistory research, and researchers only have a small number of elements to get relevant information from. What are these elements? Our ancestors have left many indications of symbolic gestures: the numerous Neanderthal burial places, or the creation of therianthropic figures (half-human, half-animal creatures) by the Aurignacians come to mind. It's easy to consider these elements as evidence of a vision of the world that was not limited to the "physical", but one that envisions an invisible world, a form of afterlife or a life below, a magical "time of the ancestors" or a "dream time"...

Animism, of which Shamanism is a codified emanation, seems to be the very first form of Spirituality, along with the cult of ancestors. It's very likely prehistoric men tried to comprehend and gain the favors of the forces of nature, or the Spirits of the dead... Should we then imagine, among these communities, characters in charge of connecting with the Spiritual world, even though specialization wasn't frequent in prehistoric times? It seems tempting to conceive that slowly, through

the millennia, a few privileged people, first of all the Elders, started taking up this role that requires devotion, insight and a strong mind, carrying out pre-"shamanic" rituals. What kind of roles can we imagine for these characters? First of all, they would "tell the story", situate the community in the cosmos and in time; then help carrying out the rites ensuring the group cohesion and balance; through their clairvoyance, make sure the group make the right decisions for their future. Last and definitely not least, they would fight all forms of illness, the treacherous tendrils of the invisible world that plague the body or the mind, if our ancestors did differentiate these elements from the being.

On the other hand, on the "dark side", maybe communities also expect their shaman to take part in their fights, fair or unfair, and strike their enemies down with sickness and curses...

Therefore, in the world of *Würm*, shaman characters have to take on these important roles, and they may be among the most important members of the community, depending on the tribes in which they live. In your game sessions, the use of the term "shaman" does not have to be systematic (no more than it is necessary to call the characters well-versed in the Sorcery Secret Skill "sorcerers", or those who have mastered the Enchantment secret

skill “enchanters”): in some clans, he will be called the “teller”, or the “clairvoyant”, or the “intercessor”, or even “medicine man” or “healer”...

As to whether Paleolithic art belongs to a shamanic tradition, that is a different question. Some researchers say it does, although cautiously, while others insist that it doesn't. In the setting of a role-playing game such as *Würm*, it is interesting and very tempting to go down that road. That's why some of the *Painting* and *Sculpture* Talents will be used for the creation of *shamanic focal aids*. That being said, is the shaman himself an artist? In fact, even though a shamanic interpretation of cave paintings is possible, we can rule out the fact that the Paleolithic works of art have been made during states of trance, whether it be the animal figures or the numerous signs painted on the walls of deep caves: there's no way someone in a trance can concentrate on sculpting or painting with accuracy. On the other hand, his visions may be an inspiration for the work of an artist.

That's why learning these artistic talents is *not* associated with the learning of shamanic practices. Besides, let's not lose sight of the fact that, in the world of *Würm*, many paintings may have been made as a way to convey *information*. These could be seen as “heraldic” paintings, picturing various human clans in animal or pictographic forms. Or they could be “mythograms”: pictures (sometimes large paintings) that tell the myths and legends of the ancestors, or the story of the creation of the world... Thus, at the Game Master's discretion, a horse can represent a member of the horse clan, the horse Spirit that the shaman is trying to contact, or one of the great horse

ancestors, the Spirits of the winds, that led men wandering through the tundra...

A bison-man pictured on the wall of a cave can represent a shaman who has the bison as an Auxiliary Spirit, a member of the Bison clan, or an actual *Bison-man* (see *Fantastical animals*), an ancestral creature from the dawn of time when man and animal were not yet clearly differentiated...

Let's not rule out the possibility that some paintings or sculptures may have been created for esthetic enjoyment or as a display, although it's unlikely in some cases, such as a small otter carved in an unreachable corner of a dark tunnel, over a kilometer from the entrance of the cave...

Learning Shamanic Powers

The shamanic path is a long one, and a character deciding to go down that road should not expect being able to display powerful abilities very quickly.

Shamanic techniques must be learnt strictly in the following order: *Trance*, *Shaman's tongue*, *Contact with the Spirits*, *Exorcism* and *Animal form*.

Trance is therefore the first shamanic Secret Skill that the young apprentice will need to learn. It's fair to imagine he will have to go through his first trance during his initiation, and later during the season, he will learn to enter the trance state at will. This is the time when the character should look for Auxiliary Spirits.

The evolution is easy to work out: a character must dedicate a learning season (half a year or more) to each Secret Skill. So three full learning seasons are required before he can contact Spirits and ask them for favors, and four before he will be able to carry out Exorcisms.

Trances Table

Test Result	For DT 7	Time necessary to go into a trance
<i>Catastrophe</i>	Double 1	The character cannot make another attempt until the next day
Failure	6 or less	The character cannot make another attempt before 6 hours
Success	7 to 12	1d6 x 10 minutes
Brilliant Success	13 and more	10 minutes
<i>Critical Success</i>	Double 6	1d6 minutes

So, before he has acquired the *Contact with the Spirits* Secret Skill, an apprentice shaman can't really do anything useful related to shamanic magic. He can enter a trance state, but he finds himself in a kind of haze where he cannot find his way. If he possesses the *Shaman's tongue*, he can communicate with animals (which in itself is amazing), but won't be able to get in contact with a Spirit unless it first decided to contact him. Therefore, no one can really call himself a shaman before spending at least two years learning. Of course, he will also have to learn Secret Skills related to Sorcery or Enchantment, and his master can also demand that his student learn Talents such as painting or sculpture, before initiating him to the most secret shamanic techniques.

As for the content of the initiation the shaman will have to go through for each of his learning stages, that's up to the Game Master. At his discretion, this initiation can be pleasant, demanding, or even cruel...

As we mentioned earlier, the *Würm* communities usually expect their shaman to be a master of ceremony, a healer, an oracle who can "see far", and a spell caster. All these functions are related to the powers described in these rules:

- **To conduct ceremonies**, it is necessary to see the rules detailed in Chapter 3 that may apply to many circumstances, from the most intimate to the most solemn. Carrying out propitiatory rituals, which is also a large part of the shaman's role, is related to the *Supernatural assistance* of Auxiliary Spirits, or the *Appeasement* of angry Spirits (see Chapter 6.2.).

- **Medicine** is essentially related to the application of the *Exorcism* Secret Skill (see below), or the *Miraculous healing* granted by the Spirits (see Chapter 6.2.). Of course, the Healing balms or Life potion knowledge, which is a Sorcery Secret Skill, helps a lot (that's why shamans are often expected to know these secrets as well).

- **The oracle role** is connected to the *Clairvoyance* power that an Auxiliary Spirit may grant the shaman, especially the Guardian Spirit of his community (see Chap 6.2.). The shaman can also ask animals for help and information, thanks to his knowledge of the *Shaman's tongue*.

- **Casting malevolent spells** is detailed in the *Curses* section (see Chapter 6.3.). There are many of them, and they are often fearsome, but they all carry the possibility that the shaman will suffer the revenge of the Spirits in return. Shamans must therefore cast them with caution. Many shamans simply refuse to cast such spells.

Trance

This Talent allows the character to enter a trance, a state of altered perception that sends him into the Spirit world, the underworld, or the Lands of Mist. Beating a drum or dancing can help the character enter a trance state.

If the character throws a successful trance roll, he can go looking for Spirits with whom he may intercede, and thus undertake a *Shamanic flight*. The DT depends on the circumstances in which the shaman attempts to enter the trance state: if he's calm in his hut, it will be 5, but if he's in the middle of a fight in a dark cave, it will be 15. As a general rule, the DT will be 7 in a typical adventure.

A certain amount of time is required to enter a trance. Most of the time, the player rolls 2d6 (3d6 if he possesses the *Rise of the Eagle* Strength), and checks the table above. After a trance, the shaman must automatically succeed a Fatigue Test, or suffer its effects.

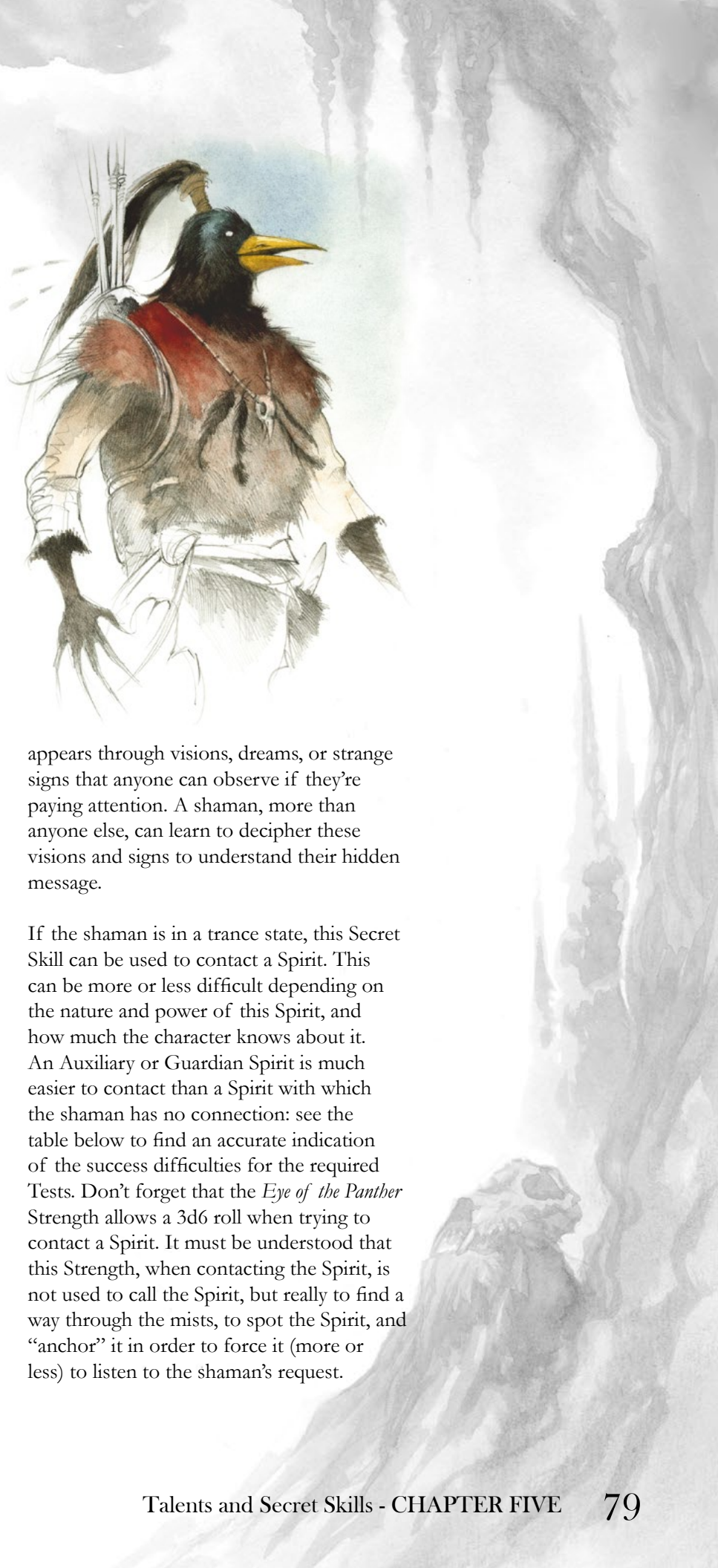
Shaman's Tongue

Shamans possess a strange ability allowing them to understand the language of all things, and to communicate with them: the words said by the shamans, though they're apparently said in ordinary language, can be understood by all creatures hearing them. A successful Test makes it possible for the shaman to get in tune with the language of the creatures he wants to communicate with, and thus freely discuss with them. The DT depends mainly on the intelligence of the animal: the more intelligent the animal, the lower the DT (for instance: talking to a wolf will get a DT of 5, talking to a tree a DT of 15).

Note that if a shaman is gifted with this ability, he doesn't have to go into a trance to speak the shaman's tongue. This is a free ability that may only be used once per encounter with a non human creature. No dice roll is necessary when discussing with a human being.

Contact With the Spirits

This Secret Skill represents the shaman's knowledge of the Spirits that populate the universe. He is able to identify them, and he knows legends about them that reveal their powers and nature. If a Spirit is possessing an individual, this Talent may be used to find out which one. Depending on the power and importance of these Spirits, the Difficulty Threshold (DT) will be more or less high. Besides, the voice of the Spirits often



appears through visions, dreams, or strange signs that anyone can observe if they're paying attention. A shaman, more than anyone else, can learn to decipher these visions and signs to understand their hidden message.

If the shaman is in a trance state, this Secret Skill can be used to contact a Spirit. This can be more or less difficult depending on the nature and power of this Spirit, and how much the character knows about it. An Auxiliary or Guardian Spirit is much easier to contact than a Spirit with which the shaman has no connection: see the table below to find an accurate indication of the success difficulties for the required Tests. Don't forget that the *Eye of the Panther* Strength allows a 3d6 roll when trying to contact a Spirit. It must be understood that this Strength, when contacting the Spirit, is not used to call the Spirit, but really to find a way through the mists, to spot the Spirit, and "anchor" it in order to force it (more or less) to listen to the shaman's request.

Contacting a Spirit takes a full Combat Round, no more, no less. Once the shaman has found the Spirit, he may then try to ask for its help or try to obtain its favors (see Chapter 6). Whatever the duration of the talks in the Spirit world, it is always brief in real time, **and always lasts a full Round as well.** During Talks attempts, the Strengths that can work in favor of the character are *Song of the Blackbird* (always), and sometimes *Majesty of the Aurochs*. It's up to the GM, as a last resort, to award a 1d6 bonus or not, depending on the character's Strengths or actions, during these Talks. You should NEVER grant a 2d6 bonus from Strengths alone (except for Experience or Manna pool) during Talks with the Spirits.

The shaman can also enter the underworld or the Lands of Mist to contact the Spirit of a dead one. If this is a character's ancestor, then the Test is carried out as usual. If, on the other hand, the character tries to contact a Spirit who is not one of his ancestors, then the Test is performed with a -2 penalty. As with an animal Spirit, talking to an ancestor

always lasts one Combat Round.

Inside a cave, a shaman in a trance state increases his chances of contacting a Spirit by +2. If the character finds himself in a cave where an ancestor has been buried, then his chances of contacting the Spirit of this ancestor are increased by +2 as well.

For some examples of the favors a shaman may ask of a Spirit, or the curses he may try to cast on his enemies, see Chapter 6: *The Powers of the Spirits*.

Exorcism

With his own strength, without even the assistance of his Auxiliary Spirits, the shaman can try to make a malevolent Spirit leave the body of an individual, thus lifting any curses that may have weighed on him, and cleansing his wounds. An exorcism lasts 1d6 x 10 minutes, even if it fails. A character can perform a maximum of 4 exorcisms each day, 6 if he possesses *the Eye of the Panther* or *Rise of the Eagle Strengths*.

To perform an exorcism, the shaman must first enter a *Trance*. Then he must find out which Spirit or type of Spirit has taken

Contact With the Spirits Table

Type of spirit	Result
Guardian or Auxiliary Spirit	DT 7
Wandering Spirit (<i>animal, artifact, wind...</i>)	DT 9
Rooted Spirit (<i>tree, lake, ancestor's tomb...</i>)	DT 7 to 12 <i>depending on distance</i>
Great animal, Astral, or Elementary Spirit	DT 12
Twisted or Secret Spirit	DT +2
Angry Spirit <i>against the shaman or his community.</i>	DT +2 to +5
Manipulative Spirit	DT -2 to -5
Shaman in a cave	+2 to the Test
With shamanic focal aid <i>drawings, engravings, paintings</i>	+2 (+4) to the Test
With shamanic focal aid <i>statuettes</i>	+1 (+2) to the Test

possession of the one who needs to be exorcised, with a *Contact with the Spirits* Test. If he succeeds, he can then try to perform the *Exorcism*. As with the *Contact with the Spirits* power, the *Eye of the Panther* Strength makes it possible to add 1d6 to the Exorcism Test. In this situation, this Strength is used to scare away the evil Spirit since here the Eye of the Panther helps more to intimidate than to perceive, in the Spirit world.

- **To block a curse**, the shaman must succeed an Exorcism Test with a DT equal to the DT of the Talks Test necessary to cast the curse. In case of a Failure, there can be no new attempt before 2d6 days. In the result is a Success, the curse is permanently lifted;

- **To fight an illness or a poison**, an Exorcism Test is opposed to the *Severity* of the poison or illness. In the result is a Success, the shaman uses his power to decrease the SEV of the poison or illness by 2d6 points, permanently (he can act that way only once per victim). In case of a Failure, the shaman cannot try again before the next day;

- The exorcism makes it also possible to **heal wounds** at a rate of 2d6 Damage Points per successful exorcism session (DT 7, DT 9 for a Serious Wound). If the shaman knows the person or the creature who caused the wound, he doesn't need to carry out a *Contact with the Spirits* Test.

During combat, Exorcism Tests can be performed once per Round to scare Wraiths or creatures of the darkness away or destroy them. These special Exorcism Tests do not require the shaman to enter a trance or identify the Spirit.




Animal Form

Some shamans possess the extraordinary ability to transform into animals, or into strange half-human half-animal creatures, *therianthropic creatures*. In general, the Guardian Spirit or one of the Auxiliary Spirits of a shaman allows him to take on the appearance of the animal that corresponds to that Spirit.

To be able to shape-shift, the shaman must go into a Trance, and manage to Contact the Auxiliary Spirit whose shape he wants to take on. If he does, he can then start his transformation, which takes a full minute for the animal form, just a Round for the therianthropic shape.

A shaman can only keep his animal or semi-animal form for a limited amount of time: 1d6 hours per day, if the animal's weight is under 300 kilos, 1d6 x 10 minutes, if the animal can weigh up to one ton, 1d6 minutes if the animal can weigh over several tons (wooly rhinoceros or mammoth).



As soon as he goes back to his human form, the shaman suffers a -3 penalty for all his Tests due to the fatigue and confusion, for 1d3 hours.

In his animal form the character borrows the animal's physical characteristics (see *Animal guide*), but keeps all his mental faculties and his own Stamina Points. Note that this rule *must not be altered*, even in extreme cases where the shaman assumes the form of a crow, fox, rhinoceros, or mammoth. The Stamina Points must remain those of the shaman. He has taken on an animal form, but his life breath remains his own. After he has taken on an animal form, a shaman can keep the advantage of his Strengths, except for the following: *Hand of the Ancestors, Might of the Bison, Agility of the Ibex, Speed of the Horse, Reflexes of the Lynx, Strength of the Bear*. Note that the shaman's equipment does not transform with him. He must get rid of it before shape shifting, or it will be destroyed, if he turns into a large animal. Therefore a shaman won't be able to keep the powers of his charms, after he has changed into an animal.

In a therianthrope form, the shaman can, at the GM's discretion, keep all his Strengths and his equipment. He moves on two legs, and his clawed or hooved hands allow him to scratch or hit, but also to use weapons. He still borrows the physical characteristics of the animal (Dodge, Thick skin, Initiative, etc.), but due to his semi-human stature, the Damage he inflicts is always limited to 3d6. The transformation into a semi-human shape only takes one Round. Of course, the shaman keeps his own Stamina points as well.

5.4. Enchantment

This Secret Skill allows the character to enchant objects or weapons, through rituals made of ancient gestures and sacred songs. An Enchantment is a powerful action that comes with a cost: to carry it out, a character must willingly give up a part of his vital energy, whether temporarily or permanently. Here are the two main enchanted objects categories:

Charms grant the effects of a *Strength*;

Magical weapons, including the *Hunting Crystal*, increase the Attack power of a weapon and the damage it causes.

In addition to the time that may be required to make the object, carrying out the Enchanting process in itself takes a certain amount of time. Check the table on the next page to know how much time a ritual lasts. The Difficulty Threshold of an Enchantment is usually equal to 9, 12, or more rarely 15 when very powerful objects are created. This Enchantment process drains a part of the vital energy of the character: at the end of the time required to perform the Enchantment, **he immediately loses 1d6 Stamina Points**. Those lost points can only be regained through rest (or magic). **An enchanted object retains its powers until the new moon. An object can only be enchanted once.**

Permanent Enchantments

It is possible to make an Enchantment permanent. In that case, the Stamina Points lost during the Enchantment are *permanently* lost. From then on, the Stamina Points of the character will never again exceed a score equal to his initial Stamina Points minus the d6 result. Contrary to the indications in the table above, the GM is encouraged to

Enchantments Table

Test result	For DT 9	Time necessary for an enchantment
<i>Catastrophe</i>	Double 1	1d6
Failure	8 or less	The character cannot make another attempt until the next day
Success	9 to 14	2d6 hours
Brilliant Success	15 or more	2 hours
<i>Critical Success</i>	Double 6	1 hour

make a character who has failed his Test to permanently enchant an object wait a full moon, or a season even, before he can roll the dice again.

Charms (DT 9)

Charms are enchanted objects reproducing the effect of a Strength (see Chapter 2) of the player's choosing. They must specifically be a reminder of the Spirit that lends its Strength to the charm. For instance, a charm granting the *Strength of the Bear* could be a bear skin belt, a bear claw necklace, or a small bone plate with a drawing of a bear engraved on it. **A character cannot carry more than three charms at the same time.**

A charm must be made, at least partly, by the person supposed to benefit from its effects, to ensure its efficiency. It's up to the Game Master to decide the required level of participation to make the charm really efficient, but most often, this participation must have cost the potential user time, sweat, and – why not – a bit of a fright.

Magical Weapons

It is possible to enchant a weapon to make it more efficient. The resistance of an enchanted weapon is increased: it becomes “magical”. (check the *weapon resistance table*, in Chapter 4.3.).

There are two kinds of weapon Enchantments:

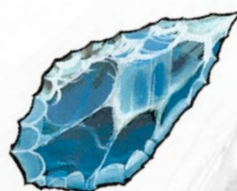
- **the weapon is dedicated to a combat Spirit**, such as a lion, a crow, a rhinoceros, a bird of prey or a wolf. In that case, the character gains a +1 bonus to his Attack Tests and Damage, whatever his prey or

opponents. Making weapons dedicated to combat Spirits is a skill common to both Long Men and Bear-men, though related to different traditions. (DT 9);

- **the weapon is dedicated to the Spirit of a specific prey.** It must usually be decorated in a way that pays tribute to this Spirit (engraving of a horse, ibex, or stag...). In that case, the character using it gains a +3 bonus to his Attack Tests and Damage, but only against the creature mentioned during the weapon Enchantment. Against any other prey or enemy, the weapon is not considered to be magic. **The manufacture of weapons dedicated to the Spirit of a prey is a Secret Skill of the Long Men.** (DT 7).

Hunting Crystal (DT 15)

This very rare skill **known only to Bear-men** allows them to make a rock crystal biface, the hardness and beauty of which is beyond compare. The spear to which it is fixed can also be consecrated to the hunting Spirits during a secret ritual. The difficulty is however high, because the crystal is very sensitive and can be spoiled if the craftsman makes the slightest mistake when cutting it. It is said among Bear-men that a man who goes hunting with such a weapon never comes back empty-handed and does not fear death. Therefore, a character armed with a crystal-tipped weapon gains a +2 bonus for hits, +2 for Damage, and causes a Critical Success on a dice roll of 11 or 12.



5.5. Sorcery

The character using Sorcery can prepare all kinds of potions and magical ointments. There are three main teachings in Sorcery: **the Teachings of the Taiga, the Teachings of the Marshes, and the Teachings of the Tundra**. Each one of these reveals the secret of how to prepare four potions or ointments.

Each one of the teachings detailed below requires a specific learning process and represents a distinct Secret Skill. The secrets of a teaching can only be learnt by following the teachings of a master, in the environment for which they were developed, during at least a season. The Teachings of the Taiga Skill is special since it is divided in two parts: one part for the women's knowledge, the other for the men's knowledge. Learning each one of these requires one season. It is not necessarily taboo for a man to learn the women's knowledge, and vice versa, but that may require long talks, and most of all they may be met with astonishment, suspicion or mockery.

The difficulty to find the plants and ingredients necessary to prepare potions and ointments is indicated by the Difficulty Threshold of the *Gathering* roll performed for the harvest. The same threshold must be used for the Preparation Test. Unless noted otherwise, potions and ointments can be kept for 1d6 days only. Balms, ointments, pastes, and oils go stale after 2d6 days.

Preparing *cataplasms of medicinal plants* or *purifying decoctions* is not related to Sorcery, but belongs to ancestral knowledge common to all peoples, and passed down to all the children at a young age.

Teachings of the Taiga

Environment: taiga and cold forest.

Time necessary to learn: 1 season for the women's knowledge, 1 season for the men's knowledge.

• Healing Balms

(preparation time 2 hours, DT 7)

Anyone who applies this balm to his wounds gets 3d6 Stamina Points back in one hour. Preparing Healing balms belongs to the women's knowledge.

• Life Potion

(preparation time 12 hours, DT 15)

Whoever drinks this potion is cleansed from all illnesses, wounds, or poisons after one night's rest (it is also possible to consider that the Life Potion heals 10d6 Stamina Points, as well as illnesses).

This potion goes stale after a day.

The preparation of Life potions belongs to the women's knowledge.

• Poisons

(preparation time 1 to 4 hours, DT 7 to 12)

It is possible to prepare poisons in the form of potions or pastes. The Severity of these poisons equals the DT associated with their preparation. Preparing poisons in the form of potions belongs to the women's knowledge; preparing poisons in the form of pastes is part of the men's knowledge.

• Moon Oil

(preparation time 3 hours, DT 5)

When this oil is applied to a wooden object, it makes it almost indestructible until the next dawn. A weapon entirely made of wood (fire-hardened spear, cudgel, heavy club) treated with this oil becomes magical: it grants a +2 bonus for Damage, and its resistance is increased, as for enchanted weapons. Preparing moon oil is part of the men's knowledge.

Importance of Sorcery and Enchantment Compared to Shamanic Practices

In game terms, these three practices have been separated to allow non-shaman characters to be able to practice superior forms of “craft”: preparing magical potions, enchanting charms and weapons, and thus give the players different ways to access magic. In the Ice age setting, it seemed important to allow some communities to include people who would be able to prepare healing ointments or charms, without necessarily possessing a full-fledged shamanic tradition. When playing, it's important that a character who doesn't wish to go down the difficult – and for a long time demanding – path of shamanism, may still have access to some magical powers, in short those unrelated to contacting Spirits, though it is quite obvious that most respectable shamans are likely to be fully versed in the Secret Skills of sorcery and enchantment. But learning to be a shaman takes time, so it's up to the player to decide in what order he wants his character to follow his training in magical practices... if his teacher doesn't decide for him!

Considering the game in itself as well as the background of the world of *Würm*, what matters for the Game Master is that sorcery and enchantment are “practical”, hands-on forms of magic, whereas shamanism is more “spiritual” form, since it's directly related to contacting the Spirits.

Therefore there are **three main paths** of improvement that a beginner character can take: **combat, shamanism, and “magical craft”**. In reality, players who are lucky enough to develop their characters over long periods of time and many campaigns will probably find out that their characters, if they survive long enough, will eventually be versed in all the Secret Skills. In the world of *Würm*, as in many legends of tribal peoples, all aged heroes are shamans and magicians...

Teachings of the Marshes

Environment: peat marshes and swamps.

Time necessary to learn: 1 season.

- **Sleep Potion**

(preparation time 4 hours, DT 7*)

Anyone who drinks this potion must perform a Fatigue Test opposed to a DT 12 or fall deeply asleep for 6d6 hours.

- **Love Potion**

(preparation time 8 hours, DT 12*)

If someone drinks this potion he or she must perform a Wisdom Test opposed to a DT 12, or fall in love with the character named by the person preparing the potion, for 6d6 hours.

- **Ointment of the Rhinoceros**

(preparation time 12 hours, DT 9)

Whoever applies this ointment to his skin increases his natural protection by 4 points, for 2d6 hours.

- **Potion of the Frog**

(preparation time 12 hours, DT 12)

Anyone who drinks this potion gets the ability to breathe underwater for 1d6x10 minutes.

** The love potion and the sleep potion can be prepared so that their effects last a very long time: 2d6 moons. Their preparation is then performed with a DT 15, and is three times longer.*

Teachings of the Tundra

Environment: tundra and mammoth steppe.

Time necessary to learn: 1 season.

- **Fire Potion**

(preparation time 4 hours, DT 5)

The person who drinks this potion gains a +3 bonus to all his *Resistance to Cold* Tests, for 4d6 hours.

- **Strength Potion**

(preparation time 4 hours, DT 9)

Whoever drinks this potion is granted a supernatural strength (like the Strength of the Bear) for 1d6 hours.

- **Potion of Darkness**

(preparation time 8 hours, DT 12) Anyone who drinks this potion must succeed a Resistance Test for poison opposed to a DT 12, or become blind and deaf for 3d6 hours.

- **Potion of the Stars**

(preparation time 2 hours, DT 5)

A person who drinks this potion becomes able to see in the dark as if in daylight, until the next dawn.

Talents and Secret Skills Summary Table

TALENTS

Crafts

Stone Craft, *Flake Flint Knapping*

Stone Craft, *Blade Debitage*

Wood Craft

Skin Craft

Bone Craft

Ivory Craft (G)

Arts

Finery

Body Art

Painting

Sculpture

SECRET SKILLS

Combat

Impaling

Invisible

Shield

Melee (LM)

Flight of the Snowy Owl (LM)

Hunter of the Seas (LM)

Fight Like a Bear (BM)

Fight Like a Bull (BM)

Hunting Grappling (BM)

Shamanism

Trance

Shaman's Tongue

Contact With the Spirits

Exorcism

Animal Form

Enchantment

Charms

Magical Weapons (*)

Hunting Crystal (BM)

Sorcery

Teachings of the Taiga, *women's knowledge*

Teachings of the Taiga, *men's knowledge*

Teachings of the Marshes

Teachings of the Tundra

(LM) means *Long men's knowledge*.

(BM) means *Bear-men's knowledge*.

(G) means *Gravettian Long men's knowledge*.

(*): the enchantments of weapons dedicated to the Spirit of a prey is a *Long Men's Secret Skill*.



5.6. Half-Shadows

As we have seen, learning to be a novice shaman can take a few years. It is a difficult and tedious path, paved with retreats, meditations, learning countless legends, dances, and traditions... However some will become shamans much faster than others. Of course this “fast initiation” comes with a price: great suffering.

Who are the half-shadows? These characters are men or women who have been violently sent into the Dark Lands of Death and have come back, forever changed. After a severe trauma, they lost consciousness and had an out of body experience as if they were going to die. Their Spirit started down the final path, but then it came back, after an experience near the frontiers of the unknown, similar to a powerful trance. Half-shadows return from this experience with special powers and a sometimes frightening affinity with the Spirit world, along with a permanent after-effect from the trauma that transformed them. They are now called “half-shadows” because a part of their being has forever remained in the land of shadows, Spirits, and ghosts.

In his tribe, a half-shadow can be accepted despite the fear he may inspire, and sometimes even be revered as being blessed by the Spirits. But he may also be harshly or insidiously ostracized, or even be declared “taboo”. It is of course up to the Game Master to decide how the character's entourage will react, depending on the needs of the adventures and the setting of the campaign.

A character can never start his adventures as a half-shadow (unless the Game Master agrees to make an exception, but that's really not recommended).

In game terms, if you decide to include this option, here are the circumstances that may transform a character into a half-shadow:

- he must have had a brush with death after a *Serious Wound* while hunting, fighting, after a fall, a blizzard or a fire, an avalanche or a landslide, or while giving birth, by reaching a Stamina score between -1 and -9, and have lost consciousness ;
- he must have acquired an after-effect as a result from this Serious Wound (unless the Serious Wound has been acquired during childbirth);
- if these two conditions are met, the Game Master must *decide*, depending on the needs of his campaign or the behavior of the player, if the character should become a half-shadow, and a future shaman. If the Game Master decides to transform the character into a half-shadow, the player must not be aware of his transformation; the Game Master will inform him little by little.
- If the Game Master does not wish to decide on his own initiative, but would rather leave it up to chance, then he secretly rolls two dice: if he gets any double, the character is now a half-shadow!

Once the character has become a half-shadow, here's what happens:

- The after-effect acquired from the Serious Wound that nearly killed him will never fully heal. This after-effect is permanently acquired;

- In return, the half-shadow acquires a new Strength, chosen by the player or at the Game Master's discretion, among the following: *Rise of the Eagle*, *Secret of the Bear*, *Eye of the Panther*, *Magic of the Rhinoceros* or *Inspiration of the Rocks*;

- The half-shadow automatically acquires the *Shaman's tongue* Secret Skill. But the character is not immediately aware of that (as he is not aware he has acquired a new Strength): he will find out little by little, through strange and sometimes disturbing sensations, or hallucinatory experiences;

- The character has a number of visions and prophetic or clairvoyant dreams. He is extremely sensitive to contacts with Spirits, but is not able to trigger them voluntarily, so he becomes a medium for many Spirits, and the Game Master must not hesitate to use him for the needs of his scenarios;

- A half-shadow will be a very gifted shaman: he will only need one season to learn both the *Trance* and *Contact with the Spirits* Talents. After that, he will learn the rest of the teachings the "usual" way.

Playing a half-shadow can clearly have significant advantages, if you're interested in the shamanic path. But it may also cause a complete re-assessment of the character's orientation. One way or another, the Game Master must really think twice before he lets a character become a half-shadow. Because, although such a character may turn out to be a very practical tool for the Game Master, playing this role with relevance may prove a delicate challenge – though certainly a stimulating one! – for some players.

6. The Powers of the Spirits

6.1. Guardian Spirits and the Manna Pool

Each clan and each tribe has a Guardian Spirit that they worship or fear, saying prayers and making offerings to this Spirit, sometimes even performing sacrifices. This Spirit can be an animal Spirit, such as the Spirit of the Great Bear, a group of Spirits such as the Spirits of the Ancestors, an elemental Spirit such as the Spirit of a very old fire, or even a local Spirit, such as the Spirit of Black River (see *Beginners' scenario 1*). This Guardian Spirit may be benevolent and protective, but it can also be malevolent and jealous. Usually, the mood of this Spirit has a direct influence on all the members of this community, and therefore defines the “spirit” of the clan or tribe.

In narrative terms, the Guardian Spirit helps and protects the whole community, watching over its members. In game terms, the Guardian Spirit grants a “Manna pool” of dice to the group of players whose characters belong to this community. Each player can draw from this “Manna pool” of dice to simulate the fact that his character, by calling upon the help of his Guardian Spirit, will suddenly find inspiration or supernatural assistance in case of hardship, *whatever the action attempted and the circumstances*.

The purpose of the Manna pool is as much to help the characters as to strengthen their sense of belonging to a tribe, a clan or any solid group. That's why it's better to use a die drawn from the Manna pool when carrying out tasks involving the welfare or even the future of the group, but there is no obligation to do so.

Practically speaking you should put the dice of the Manna pool in a cup or a bag. Each player will draw a die when he calls upon the help of the Guardian Spirit, and will put a die back when he honors this Spirit.

Starting a Manna pool – At the beginning of the game, the Manna pool includes **two dice** per character taking part in the adventure.

Local Guardian Spirit and Guardian Spirit of a Diverse Group

If the group of characters has a clearly identified Guardian Spirit, this Spirit, even if “local” (as the Spirit of Black River), is not as much connected to a place as it is to the community it supports. The Spirits know that the men they protect live in nomadic groups, so they watch over them wherever they go. Which means that, even in the situation where a community's Guardian Spirit is connected to a specific place, the characters can ask for its help anywhere, as they can also replenish the Manna pool wherever they are.

In a case where the group of players is made of characters coming from different tribes, each with their own specific Guardian Spirit, it's then up to the Game Master to (secretly) decide which Spirit will be the Guardian Spirit of such a group. This may be the Spirit of one of the tribes, but it can also be a new Spirit that the characters will need to find out. It will then be up to the characters to find out tentatively how to please this Spirit and gain its strengths. Therefore as long as the group of characters has no identified Guardian Spirit, as would be the case of a group made of travellers or characters coming from different tribes, and as long as this Spirit has not “revealed” itself – which may take time and should be a priority – the



group simply won't have the possibility to draw dice from the Manna pool.

How to Use the Assistance of the Guardian Spirit?

Whenever he sees fit, a player can decide that his character will ask for the help of the Guardian Spirit. He then takes 1d6 from the Manna pool, which he may use as he pleases and add it to any dice roll, as well as to his Dodge or Running score during a Combat Round. Note that this extra die can be added to the one you get from spending an Experience Point.

Once used, the die drawn does not go back to the manna pool. Some groups of players will prefer to keep the manna pool and only use it as a last resort; others will use it all along the game. Either way of playing is fine.

Besides, there is no need for equality within the group when it comes to how many times a character can ask for the help of the Guardian Spirit, since characters are all connected by this Spirit. So, during an adventure, a character can very well use the help of the Guardian Spirit five or six times, whereas his partners use it once or twice only. It's up to the characters to do something about this imbalance, depending on their degree of mutual aid or rivalry. Let's remember however that, in the world of the Paleolithic peoples, the clan and the tribe have more value than the individual,

and many men make no distinction (in terms of value) between what happens to them and what happens to any member of the clan, for better or for worse.

The Wrath of the Guardian Spirit

Two things may cause the dreadful wrath of the Guardian Spirit: a Manna pool dropping to 0 (very serious) and when the people it is protecting are using its help in a thoughtless way (pretty serious).

What does it mean to use the help of a Guardian Spirit in a thoughtless way?

It greatly depends on the mood of the Guardian Spirit:

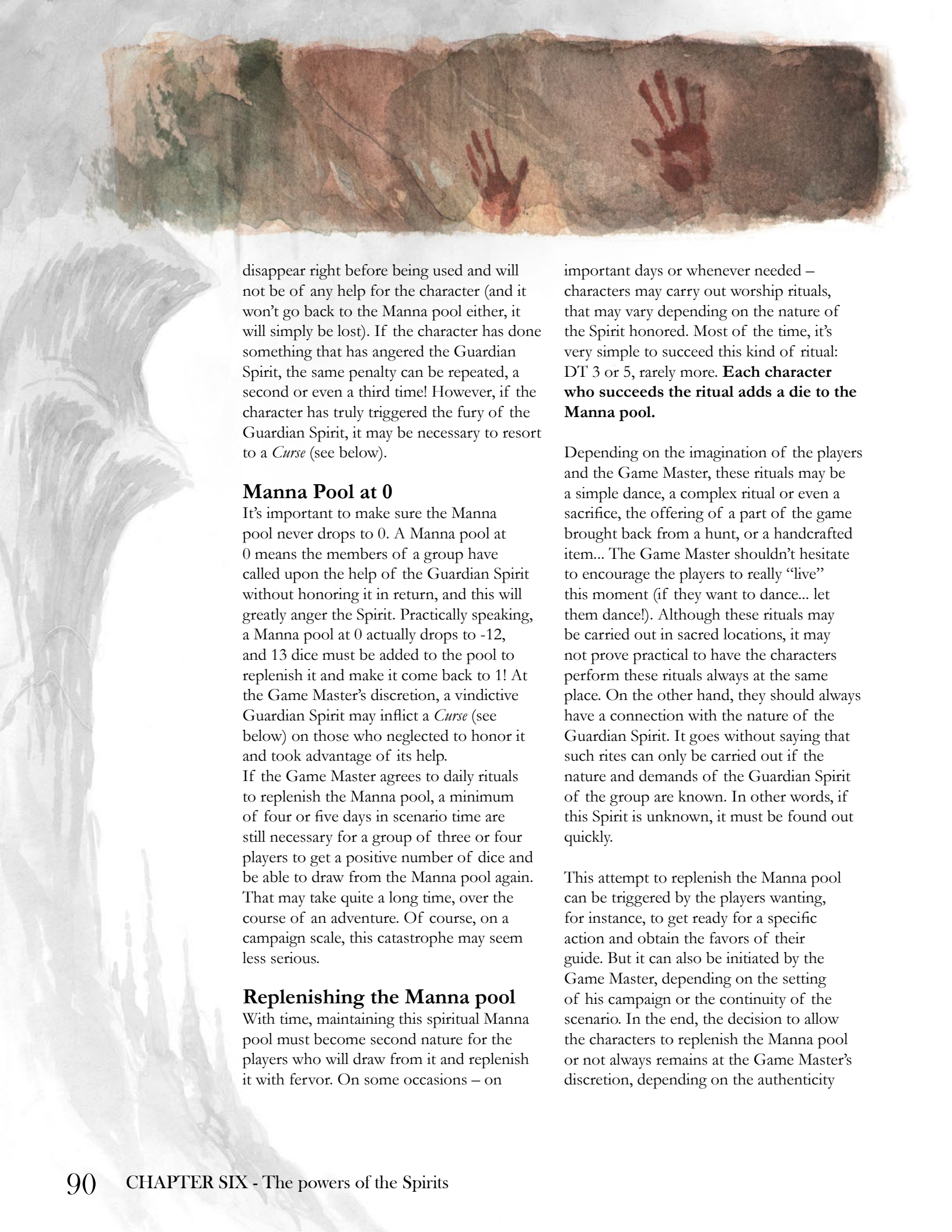
If it's benevolent, it will easily tolerate that a character uses its help for his own interest rather than the whole group's, but it will certainly disapprove using its help for malevolent acts, especially if this malevolence is directed at a member of the same clan.

If, on the other hand, it is vindictive, it will tolerate the malevolence towards other people, but will hate that a character uses its help for reasons that it considers to be futile or contrary to its demands.

Disapproval

If a character uses a die from the Manna pool to get help for an action that the Guardian Spirit disapproves of (at the Game Master's discretion), don't tell the player but note it down. Next time this character will draw a die from the Manna pool, the die will





disappear right before being used and will not be of any help for the character (and it won't go back to the Manna pool either, it will simply be lost). If the character has done something that has angered the Guardian Spirit, the same penalty can be repeated, a second or even a third time! However, if the character has truly triggered the fury of the Guardian Spirit, it may be necessary to resort to a *Curse* (see below).

Manna Pool at 0

It's important to make sure the Manna pool never drops to 0. A Manna pool at 0 means the members of a group have called upon the help of the Guardian Spirit without honoring it in return, and this will greatly anger the Spirit. Practically speaking, a Manna pool at 0 actually drops to -12, and 13 dice must be added to the pool to replenish it and make it come back to 1! At the Game Master's discretion, a vindictive Guardian Spirit may inflict a *Curse* (see below) on those who neglected to honor it and took advantage of its help.

If the Game Master agrees to daily rituals to replenish the Manna pool, a minimum of four or five days in scenario time are still necessary for a group of three or four players to get a positive number of dice and be able to draw from the Manna pool again. That may take quite a long time, over the course of an adventure. Of course, on a campaign scale, this catastrophe may seem less serious.

Replenishing the Manna pool

With time, maintaining this spiritual Manna pool must become second nature for the players who will draw from it and replenish it with fervor. On some occasions – on

important days or whenever needed – characters may carry out worship rituals, that may vary depending on the nature of the Spirit honored. Most of the time, it's very simple to succeed this kind of ritual: DT 3 or 5, rarely more. **Each character who succeeds the ritual adds a die to the Manna pool.**

Depending on the imagination of the players and the Game Master, these rituals may be a simple dance, a complex ritual or even a sacrifice, the offering of a part of the game brought back from a hunt, or a handcrafted item... The Game Master shouldn't hesitate to encourage the players to really "live" this moment (if they want to dance... let them dance!). Although these rituals may be carried out in sacred locations, it may not prove practical to have the characters perform these rituals always at the same place. On the other hand, they should always have a connection with the nature of the Guardian Spirit. It goes without saying that such rites can only be carried out if the nature and demands of the Guardian Spirit of the group are known. In other words, if this Spirit is unknown, it must be found out quickly.

This attempt to replenish the Manna pool can be triggered by the players wanting, for instance, to get ready for a specific action and obtain the favors of their guide. But it can also be initiated by the Game Master, depending on the setting of his campaign or the continuity of the scenario. In the end, the decision to allow the characters to replenish the Manna pool or not always remains at the Game Master's discretion, depending on the authenticity

of the characters' fervor, the quality of the interpretation by the players and the needs of the scenario.

At the end of an adventure, the Game Master must note down how many dice remain in the Manna pool. These dice will be the new starting Manna pool for the next adventure.

The Manna Pool and Non-Player Characters

Although in narrative terms, the Guardian Spirit of a clan or a tribe provides the whole community with its help and protection, in reality, in game terms, *only the players' characters can draw from the Manna pool and replenish it.*

No Non-Player Character (NPC) can do so, unless the Game Master decides to make an exception for a key scene of the adventure. Otherwise, characters would only have to ask their parents and friends to "pray for them", and the players would have an almost endless Manna pool of dice available! The Manna pool is mainly a *game tool* made to improve the cohesion of *the players'* group!

6.2. Favors of the Spirits

Sometimes, Spirits of nature, animals, or ancestors, other than the Guardian Spirit, decide to grant humans their favors, be it because a shaman in trance asks them for help or because they think a character deserves it. Most of the time, these favors translate into Strengths, but also into a supernatural luck, or miraculous healing. Once a shaman has entered a trance state and has managed to contact a Spirit or an ancestor, he may try to call upon its help to carry out some incredible actions: to do so, he must perform a more or less difficult

Talks Test. Note that a failed roll means the shaman will have to wait *half a day* before being able to attempt a new Talks Test.

At the Game Master's discretion, a Spirit that grants its favors to the shaman may demand something in return: an offering, the keeping of a promise, a sacrifice... Of course, the Auxiliary Spirits or the Guardian Spirit of a shaman can grant him their favors without expecting anything in return.


Here is a list of examples of the favors that can be granted by the Spirits, and the corresponding DT in brackets:

Supernatural Assistance (9) – The character may ask for the effects of a *Strength* that's associated with the Spirit. If he manages to convince the Spirit to grant him these effects, they will last until the following dawn.

Supernatural Protection (9) – Some Spirits or ancestors may grant the character their protection. This means they are given 1d6 Magical Protection Points, or 1 Point for a group of 2d6 people, for the duration of a combat decided beforehand.

Clairvoyance (9) – The shaman may ask the Spirit for information about a matter of his choosing. If the Spirit agrees, the answer will come to the character through a sign or a dream, which he will then have to interpret.

Miraculous Healing (12) – The shaman may ask a powerful Spirit to heal a creature's wounds (light or serious), illness, or the after-effects of a Serious Wound acquired during the game (and not during character generation). If he manages to convince the Spirit, and if the Spirit is powerful enough, then the healing is complete and instant.



Calm (12) – The character may intercede with an ancestor or a Spirit to calm its anger, or the anger of animals or elements associated with it. If he manages to convince the Spirit, the effects of its anger stop. In that case, the elements or the animals become peaceful again (but some animals may become ferocious again if they are attacked). Note that if the anger of the Spirit takes the form of a curse, a sickness, or wounds, Talks won't be enough and one or more *Exorcisms* will be necessary.

The effects of these powers are not cumulative, even if you ask for the help of several Auxiliary Spirits in a row.

6.3. Curses

It's possible to intercede with Spirits to get their favors, but it's also possible to ask them to cause misfortune to befall other people. These are *Curses*, the mere mention of which makes any Stone Age man or woman's blood run cold. As it happens, in these people's minds, and in the reality of the world of *Würrm*, most of the time, any bad thing that happens to someone comes from a curse cast upon him, voluntarily or not.

To make a Spirit curse someone or a group of people, the shaman must act the same as for requesting favors, in other words enter a trance state, successfully carry out a *Contact with the Spirits* Test, and perform a more or less difficult *Talks* Test.

However, in most cases, curses will be cast by animal Spirits or ancestral Spirits on their own initiative, to punish a man, a woman, or even a whole clan, for their bad actions, such as treachery or perjury, or for their excessive pride.

Evil Eye (9) – The evil eye is a common curse that anyone can cast, even if they are not a shaman, and even without contacting a Spirit. All they need to do is be violently jealous of someone or hate their guts, and the evil eye will be cast, almost always without the caster knowing. Here the DT 9 is not associated with a *Talks* Test, but with a Test to know if the evil eye has found its target. If it's successful, the victim must perform an average Resistance Test (DT 7) or fall prey to the effects of the evil eye, suffering a penalty of -1 for all his dice rolls until it dissipates. Touching one's genitals or any magical or sacred object (charm, weapon) grants a +2 bonus to the Resistance Test (bonuses are cumulative). Touching the skull of an ancestor when the evil eye is cast makes people immune to this curse.

Sickness (9) – Casting a curse often translates as the outbreak of a deadly sickness with a Severity of 9 directed at someone. Such an illness directed at a group of 2d6 people will have a Severity of 7 only. In both cases, this sickness is not contagious and can take many forms.

Vengeful Animal (12) – A shaman can ask a Spirit to unleash a killer animal against a given enemy, and the beast will hunt down the cursed person. This animal may look normal and be simply driven by murderous intent, but in a worst case scenario, it could be a fantastical creature (see Chapter 8: *The Prehistoric Animal guide*). The DT may be increased if the shaman asks for the intervention of a particularly powerful animal (up to DT 15).

Weakness (12) – The character may ask the Spirits to curse someone by inflicting a *Weakness* on him, of the caster's choice. The

Powers of the Spirits

Favor or curse required	DT Talks
Supernatural Assistance	DT 9
Supernatural Protection	DT 9
Clairvoyance	DT 9
Miraculous Healing	DT 12
Calm	DT 12
Evil Eye	DT 9 (<i>special</i>)
Sickness	DT 9
Vengeful Animal	DT 12 (15)
Weakness	DT 12
Frightened Preys	DT 12
Impotence or Infertility	DT 12
Wraith	DT 15
Cursed Offspring	DT 15

victim of such a curse may try to repel it by rolling a Resistance Test (DT 7). If this Test is a Failure, then the victim suffers the effects of the Weakness until an Exorcism is carried out to heal it.

Frightened Preys (12) – A shaman may ask the Spirits to curse someone by having all prey run away from him. This translates into a penalty of -3 to all his Tracking Tests, and a penalty of -3 to all his Throwing Weapons rolls performed while hunting. Note that when the cursed hunter is part of a group of hunters, this penalty applies to the whole group, as long as he remains with them. The victim of such a curse may try to repel it by carrying out a Resistance Test (DT 7). If this Test is a Failure, then the victim suffers the effects of the curse until an Exorcism is carried out to heal it.

Impotence or Infertility (12) – An evil shaman may ask a dark Spirit to curse someone so that, if it's a man, he will never again have an erection, and if it's a woman, she will never have any more children. The victim of such a curse may try to repel it by rolling a Resistance Test (DT 7). If this Test is a Failure, then the victim suffers the effects of the curse until an Exorcism is carried out to heal it.

Wraith (15) – The shaman may ask an evil ancestral Spirit to haunt – or even simply kill – a victim. A *Wraith* (cf. *Fantastical Creatures* below) then appears to torment the person targeted by the shaman.

Cursed Offspring (15) – With this curse, the whole lineage of the character is cursed as well as him. The victim himself doesn't seem to suffer from the evil eye, but all his offspring must succeed a Resistance Test

DT 9 each year, or die from a horrible sickness or an awful accident. Furthermore, the offspring also suffer from the effects of *Frightened prey*. The victim of such a curse may try to repel it by rolling a Resistance Test (DT 9). If this Test is a Failure, then the victim suffers the effects of the curse until an Exorcism is carried out to heal it.

Backlash

Cursing a living being is a dreadful action that doesn't go without consequences for the person who casts the spell. Every time a character casts a curse, he immediately loses 1d6 Stamina Points for a curse at DT 9, 2d6 for a curse at DT 12, and 3d6 for a curse at DT 15.

Furthermore, he will be haunted during his next night's sleep by a **dark Spirit**. The dark Spirit is an avenging evil force that will try to take hold of the character. The character must succeed a Resistance Test DT 5 (a character gifted with the *Eye of the Panther* Strength rolls 3d6). If the Test is successful, the character has blocked the dark Spirit and will be safe this time. If on the other hand, the Test is a Failure, the dark Spirit casts the same spell on the character as he just cast.

Resistance Test

Remember that a character gifted with the *Magic of the Rhinoceros* Strength rolls 3d6 instead of the usual 2d6, to resist the effects of the curse.



7. Peoples of the Ice Age

7.1. Bear-men and Long Men

Population Density in Europe at the Time of Würm

Let's be up-front about this: it is very difficult to estimate the density of the population in Paleolithic times. Over the years, various research groups have attempted to simulate the situation, but the results never seem to be consistent. Yet these simulations agree on one key point: at that time, the population density of Europe was very low. Depending on the various studies, we can imagine a population of around a few thousand, tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of individuals, spread out across the whole of Europe. Admittedly, that doesn't paint a very precise picture, but the fact remains that the glacial territories of the Würm era were, technically speaking, "deserts" in terms of human population. However, bear in mind that not all areas had the same level of population. For example, some sheltered valleys with pleasant rivers, situated on the paths of the great migratory herds, attracted a larger population. It seems that, during both the Middle Paleolithic and the Upper Paleolithic periods, some areas like the Dordogne or Ariège regions of today were relatively densely populated.

Two Humanities, Face to Face...

Beyond the obvious physical differences between the two types of humans who occupied the vast territories of Europe during the ice age, there was also a huge number of similarities in their way of life. For a start, these two peoples were both hunter-gatherers, but they were also nomadic, with animistic and, more often than not, totemistic beliefs. Yet these similarities also hide some subtle differences. For example, the Long Men

tended to move around more often and over greater distances than their Bear-men cousins, in search of materials or to trade goods. They were not afraid to travel on rivers, riding on rafts or in dugouts, while the Bear-men were usually very wary of this form of transport. The Bear-men tended to prefer sheltered living conditions deep in the valleys, snuggled in rocky shelters, whereas the Long Men preferred to set up their camps on higher, open terrain, where several animal trails crossed and they had a "good clear view". In consequence, the Long Men's many travels and their trading tended to enhance their vitality, and their communities could reach up to thirty or forty people, whereas the Bear-men rarely lived in groups of more than twenty. As for the beliefs and traditions of each of these peoples, they varied so much from one tribe to another that it is impossible to establish if there was any more difference between two tribes of the same species or two tribes of two different species.

Despite these many differences, there was some interaction between the two peoples. In some cases, several communities shared the same territory and were necessarily required to help one another; in other cases interactions simply took place because they seemed profitable for one community or the other. Although they were extremely rare, tribes that combined both Long Men and Bear-men in their midst did exist and could be very successful. Within these tribes, hybrid (or mixed-species, choose a term that suits you) children were born and raised, and they may have been accepted or rejected by their own community or the communities nearby. In the world of *Würm*, we have chosen to consider that, genetically speaking, the characteristics of the Long



Men were dominant and those of the Bear-men were recessive. Therefore, the blood of the Long Men was stronger, and after a few generations, any remaining traces of interspecies breeding with the Bear-men would have been completely diluted.

For the most part, contact between the two peoples remained sporadic, and the wildest tales would have spread from one tribe to the next about the physical appearance and the rituals of the “others”. Since ignorance inevitably leads to fear and aggressiveness, conflicts would have occurred, and would at times have been very violent. These conflicts, however, remained exceptional, and most communities quite rightly considered that the harsh conditions of the ice age were hard enough without adding more risks of losing lives.

Examples of Long Men and Bear-men Community Structures (see next page)

The function of the community’s *Guardian Spirit* as well as the presence of *chiefs* or

taboos within it are explained in the following chapters and sub-chapters. Therefore we recommend that you read them well to understand the terms used in these examples. The terms *patrilocality* and *matrilocality* indicate whether the man or the woman will leave his or her tribe to go and live with his or her spouse. In a community practicing patrilocality, the man settles in his father’s camp once the ritual joining him with his wife has been celebrated. In a community practicing matrilocality, the woman remains in her mother’s camp once the union has been celebrated, which means that the husband will then join his wife’s community (as is the case among the Iroquois or the Maori...). If there is any opposition to this, then the situation is resolved by negotiations and maybe some exchanges of gifts.

Note that two tribes of Bear-men, the **Black River tribe** and the **Jagged Rocks tribe**, are described in more detail in the first introduction scenario in Chapter 8. These can be examples to build on to create the home tribe for your players’ characters.

Below you will find are two examples of typical community structures. For each of them we have indicated the population, the culture, the Guardian Spirit, the social structure and the taboos of the community. When mentioned that you should roll a 1d6, the result of the roll should be compared with the numbers in brackets []. The matching result indicates what the tendency is for this particular community. If the result matches a formula like [1-4/1d6], it means you need to roll 1d6 and on a result of 1 to 4, the tendency is confirmed. You can also make up your own mind on the result depending on the atmosphere of the community you're creating. Of course, remember the cultural differences can be significant between clans of the same people, so feel free to surprise your players with some really unusual tribes or clans!

Typical Long Man Community

Population: 3d6 men, 3d6 women, 3d6 children. 1d3 shamans.

Culture: Aurignacian.

Social structure: Gender distribution (roll 1d6): male [1-3], female [4], even [5-6] ; Existence of a chief [1-4/1d6]; Existence of a *Voice of the Ancestors* [1-4/1d6]; (roll 1d6): Matrilocal [1-4], Patrilocal [5-6].

Taboos: Incest taboo; totem taboo; cannibalism taboo [1-5/1d6].

Guardian Spirit:

Ancestors + One main Spirit (roll 1d6): animal [1-3], local [4-5], elemental [6]

Typical Bear-men Community

Population: 2d6 men, 2d6 women, 1d6 children, 1 shaman [1-4/1d6].

Culture (roll 1d6): Mousterian [1-4], Châtelperronian [5-6]

Social structure: Gender distribution (roll 1d6): male [1-2], female [3], even [4-6]; Existence of a chief [1-2/1d6]; Existence of a *Voice of the Ancestors* [1-3/1d6]; (roll 1d6): Patrilocal [1-4], Matrilocal [5-6].

Taboos: Incest taboo [1-5/1d6]; totem taboo; cannibalism taboo [1-4/1d6].

Guardian Spirit:

Ancestors + One main Spirit (roll 1d6): Bear [1-2], one other animal [3-4], local [5-6]

7.2. A Word About Language

One of the difficulties that new *Würm* players may encounter is the whole concept of language. The common stereotype often portrays prehistoric men as communicating by grunting and gurgling, so it is fairly certain that a number of players will fall straight into this trap the minute they start playing this game.

Let's get this straight: that stereotype could be realistic if we were dealing with a very ancient period of humanity, several hundred

thousand years ago, but 35,000 years before our era, it is no longer true at all. Cro Magnon humans, as we have said before, were completely similar to us physiologically speaking, and the traces of their advanced culture shows us that, even such a long time ago, they already used a very complex language.

As for Neanderthal, the Bear-men of *Würm*, things are a little less obvious. We don't know exactly what their speech capabilities were really like, but we have a few clues. The

position of a certain bone in the throat*, the existence of a certain gene, the extremely advanced complexity of their stone working techniques and the deep humanity of their burial rites lead us to think that they very probably had a “modern” level of articulated language, rich with concepts and capable of transmitting knowledge as well as legends.

As a player, it will be up to you to agree with your fellow participants on the way you choose to handle the language styles of the two peoples of *Würm*. This choice depends on two main criteria: the sensation of otherworldliness that you want to create, and how comfortable you all are with acting out the characters around the game table. Of course, the Game Master will have the deciding vote on this question, as the “director” of this universe.

You can always choose to play your prehistoric characters without changing the way you talk at all. The idea in this case is to make these prehistoric people feel closer to us, despite their looks and the great cultural and temporal gap between us. Just be careful to avoid expressions that are too anachronistic! However, if you do want to introduce a certain amount of cultural difference, you might enjoy using “far west movie Indian” language, in other words referring to oneself in the third person, or even speaking a form of “pidgin” where you only use verbs in their infinitive form. Be careful, though, that using a “primitive” form of language does not push the way the characters are portrayed towards a caricature. Be wary of turning the whole atmosphere into a comedy session unless that is really the way you want it to play out. Then again, make sure you don’t stamp out the spontaneity of your conversations

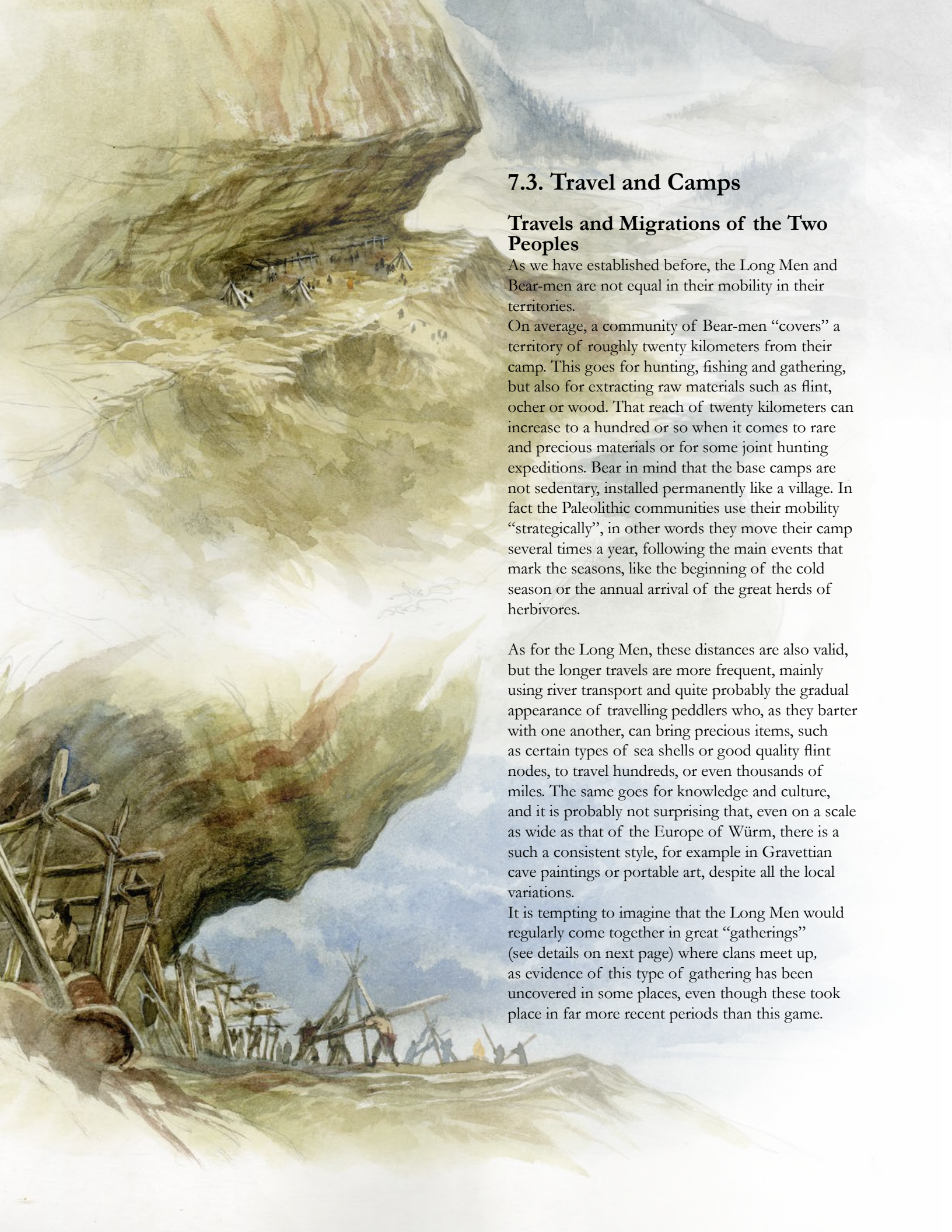
by sticking too rigidly to the “tone of voice” chosen for your characters. This is where the *comfort* element becomes important, to ensure that it is really fun for everyone to play their characters (*especially* for the Game Master who will have to play dozens of them!). Don’t forget that you can also mix things up a bit! You can perfectly well give the Long Men a more modern language while using a more “primitive” one for the Bear-men, or the other way around. Furthermore, within the same people, the cultural differences from one tribe to another can be significant. Therefore, feel free to surprise your players whenever you like.

**A (rather) recent study of a reconstitution of the Neanderthal vocal apparatus suggests that their voices would have been higher-pitched than ours. Did the Bear-men sound like pixies? Why not?*

The Language of the Bear-men

Here is a selection of the fictional vocabulary of the Bear-men used in the legend of *Vo'huna*. Players who wish to play a Bear-man character can use this mini-dictionary to generate their name.

Ao	life
Aod	sun
Aodwa	dawn
Atr	greeting
Athran	kiss
Boas	stone, pebble
Braughi	breast (female)
Braugo	torso
Dagg	antlers
Dakr, Daki	horn
Dauro	love (physical)
Draug	arm
Ei-go	short
Fau, Fauwg	fire
Go	small
Ha-Kani	long
Ham, Har	big, thick
Houn, Houm	days
Houna	she-bear
Ja	wind
Ka, Kati	handsome, beautiful
Kani, Kan	big
Kehkr	spear
Kuhm	pack, herd
Lag	ash
Lax	ember
Mah	word
Mana	moon
Meh	soft, sweet
Mone	earth
Monthah	mammoth
Mor	fear, ghost
Morauq	curse, evil
Orn	darkness
Olog	bison
Ourzo	red
Paov, Paova	thunder, to sound
Loi	thigh, leg
Roum	to hit
Scil	eye
Tha	old
Thego, Thega	wise
Theniki	horse
Theq	leader, chief
Thowe	male member
Torog	aurochs
Trani	cow (mother)
Trol	black
Ur	magic
Urkho	sorcerer
Va-hu	expression of agreement
Vo	woman
Vou	man
Voikum	tribe
We	strong, powerful
Wa	new, dawning
Wak	unknown
Xo	to give



7.3. Travel and Camps

Travels and Migrations of the Two Peoples

As we have established before, the Long Men and Bear-men are not equal in their mobility in their territories.

On average, a community of Bear-men “covers” a territory of roughly twenty kilometers from their camp. This goes for hunting, fishing and gathering, but also for extracting raw materials such as flint, ochre or wood. That reach of twenty kilometers can increase to a hundred or so when it comes to rare and precious materials or for some joint hunting expeditions. Bear in mind that the base camps are not sedentary, installed permanently like a village. In fact the Paleolithic communities use their mobility “strategically”, in other words they move their camp several times a year, following the main events that mark the seasons, like the beginning of the cold season or the annual arrival of the great herds of herbivores.

As for the Long Men, these distances are also valid, but the longer travels are more frequent, mainly using river transport and quite probably the gradual appearance of travelling peddlers who, as they barter with one another, can bring precious items, such as certain types of sea shells or good quality flint nodes, to travel hundreds, or even thousands of miles. The same goes for knowledge and culture, and it is probably not surprising that, even on a scale as wide as that of the Europe of Würm, there is a such a consistent style, for example in Gravettian cave paintings or portable art, despite all the local variations.

It is tempting to imagine that the Long Men would regularly come together in great “gatherings” (see details on next page) where clans meet up, as evidence of this type of gathering has been uncovered in some places, even though these took place in far more recent periods than this game.

As for the Aurignacian culture, that of the Long Men, it is however pretty reasonable to imagine that this type of meeting did occur, as there is evidence of trading that proves the existence of voyages of several hundred kilometers during this period.

Different Types of Camps

Base Camp – This large and well-equipped camp is a long-term, semi-sedentary installation. The main points of difference are found in the complexity of the camp's layout (lean-tos, low walls, huts, teepees, tents, cabins...) that complement the location's natural "elements of shelter" (rock shelter, etc.). This is the place where the community spends most of its time together, especially during the harsh ice age winters. The base camp is ideally south facing, situated close to running water, good quality raw materials and plentiful game. The burial grounds are also located close to the base camp.

Hunting Camps – These small, temporary camps are very easy to move and provide a place where the hunters prepare for their hunt, repair their weapons... If everything goes as planned, these camps also provide butchery sites where the meat is prepared before it's taken back to the base camp. These temporary camps can be set up in places that can be inhospitable but which are strategically interesting or simply respond to the needs of the travellers.

Raw Material Sourcing Sites – In these camps, human occupation is sporadic but they are used on a regular basis, often by only a small group of individuals within



the community. If the site is close to the base camp (up to about 10 km) then the raw materials are transported or the tools are prepared on site. If the site is far from the base camp (up to 100 km), then the raw materials are used to prepare rough pre-tools that are easier to transport and can then be finished back at base camp, if required.

Gatherings – These huge seasonal camps are set up temporarily in locations where several communities come together. Gatherings provide the opportunity to exchange goods and ideas, to celebrate together and also to form new coalitions. They are also an occasion for challenges and games, which can sometimes turn into duels or quarrels... These gatherings are held on a regular basis, often at key dates – such as a solstice or the appearance of a specific constellation in the sky – that provide an easily identifiable marker for all the groups who are bound together socially and culturally by the gathering. It is difficult to imagine that these gatherings existed for the Neanderthal men (the Bear-men). Their communities are smaller, more disparate, and they tend not to travel as far. However, it is not completely impossible that this type of meeting did occur in a few places where it was convenient.

Exchange Values Table

Skin 1	Skin bag 3
Fur 2	Beautiful fur 3
Large beautiful fur 4	Fire-starting equipment (sticks or stones, tinder) 2
Finished clothes 3	Finished winter clothes 5
Stone tool or knife 2	Bone dagger 4
Stone-tipped spear 3	Bone-tipped spear 5
Cudgel 1	War club 3
Heavy club 2	Javelin 3
Sling 1	Bolas 5
Common medicinal plants 1	Rare medicinal plants 5 to 15***
Gut string 2	Jewelry 5 to 20
Raft 5	Dugout 20
Flute 6	Drum 6
Pigments for paint 4	Handful of seashells 4
Raw stone – average quality 1	Raw stone – good quality 4*
Stag antlers 2	Megaloceros antlers 4
Aurochs horns 2	Large bone 1
Mammoth tusk 6	Huge bone 2
Skull 1 to 8	Precious wood 3
Rock crystal weapon 30**	Precious stone 4 to 12
Statuette 5 to 20	Charm <i>basic object</i> +5 or <i>basic object</i> +20
Block of Blood of the Earth (<i>red ocher</i>)§ 3 to 6	Stone of Night (<i>block of manganese oxide</i>)§ 3 to 6

Objects made with a Critical Success have a value bonus of +2.

Magic objects cannot be exchanged. They have to be given.

For a Charm or a magic weapon, the exchange value is equal to that of the basic object +5.

For a Charm or a magic weapon with a *permanent* enchantment, the exchange value is equal to that of the basic object +20

* A good quality raw stone gives a +2 bonus for the *Stone Craft* Tests carried out with that material.

** A weapon with a rock crystal tip made by someone who knows *Hunting Crystal* gets a special bonus.

See section 5.4. – *Enchantment*.

*** Common medicinal plants are used for cataplasms and decoctions. Rare plants are used for Sorcery: they are worth 5 if the DT is 7, 10 if the DT is 9 and 15 if the DT is 12.

§ The blocks of red ocher and manganese oxide have a value equal to the number of times they can be used (to create a body painting, dye a skin or carry out a ritual), in other words 3 to 6 times.


7.4. Bartering and Exchange Values

In addition to the peddlers who travel the land, there are many hunters who undertake sometimes perilous journeys to barter their goods, whether they do so on an ad hoc basis or during a clan gathering. The section below gives a detailed explanation of the bartering process in terms of game play, and the Trading Values of the raw materials or fabricated goods.

There is no concept of money in the ice age world of prehistory. Instead, goods are exchanged by bartering. Each object or item is worth a number of Trading Value Points between 0 (no value at all) and 20 (or more

for some of the magical objects). Therefore, if a person wishes to obtain an item with a value of 12, they will need to exchange 12 items with a value of 1, 6 items worth 2 each, 4 items worth 3, etc.

The *Bartering Test* (see chapter 3.2. *Tribal activities*) allows you to estimate the true value of the goods to be exchanged. Two characters engaging in bartering can both carry out a Bartering Test. The one who wins this opposed Test can then adjust his side of the exchange by 1 Value Point (2 if the result is a Critical Success). If a character gives an object or item to someone as a gift, he then immediately gains the value of the object in Generosity Points.



At the beginning of the game, a new character starts to play with his basic equipment (see character creation), plus 1d6+1 Trading Value Points in objects and raw materials of his choosing.

7.5. The Age of Würm, Golden Age or Age of Perils?

Before prehistory became a subject of scientific study, it was a mysterious land of fantasy. Although a layer of rigorous examination has now covered the subject, the myths and legends from the beginning of our world have never completely disappeared. Here and there, like a rocky outcrop peeking out through the geological strata, a number of sturdy archetypes and myths have made it through into scientific research and above all, the works of fiction based on prehistory research, such as wild men, or the golden age, or the battles of the gods against the titans (or giants).


So, for a long time, we were served the iconic image of a prehistory painted as an “age of perils”. The desperate struggle to survive ferocious animals, cold and hunger sets a dark picture which, on closer inspection, was mainly designed to make us better appreciate the benefits of our civilization based on progress. The fierce behaviors that were attributed to prehistoric Man, often directly inspired by ethnographic observations gathered in the colonies, gave readers a horrific and sometimes fascinating or titillating image of their ancestors. This was, undoubtedly, a twisted reflection of the true ferocity of the so-called “civilized” way of life, both in society as a whole and within individual families, at the dawn of the twentieth century. This picture of an age of

perils says as much about the industrial and colonial era as it does about prehistory itself.

Logically, as the pendulum of opinion swings back in the other direction, from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, especially since the ‘70s and ‘80s, a new mythical version of prehistory has emerged: it became a time portrayed as the true golden age of humanity. Whether it was set in the dark reaches of the Lower Paleolithic or the cultural light of the Upper Paleolithic, the fantasy portrait of this golden age was backed up by a number of scientific findings, such as the absence of traces of violence between humans in a majority of finds dating back to this time. The first traces of social inequalities and real warfare only appear, in fact, once Man became sedentary during the Neolithic and radical (albeit progressive) changes occurred in the prehistoric way of life. This was an example of a comforting myth. It seems obvious to us that the excess and numerous deviations of our industrial and consumer society constantly on the brink of catastrophe make us think, possibly quite rightly, that these ancient times could have been calmer and fairer, and at the very least better adapted to a sustainable life for communities.

This concept of a Paleolithic golden age is still quite popular among the members of the scientific community and authors of prehistoric fiction, but lately it has started to lose traction faced with a number of new discoveries, and also with a new swing of the pendulum of opinion towards a different social, scientific and fictional atmosphere.

The many discoveries about the encounters of Neanderthal Man and Modern Man play a key part in the image that scientific research



is building of our past. For example, the evidence that points to the responsibility of modern sapiens in the “extinction” of the Neanderthal, or the recent validation of the possibility of interbreeding between the two species (or maybe sub-species would be a more exact term), which does tend to take the edge off the term “extinction”. All these ups and downs will certainly provide plenty of color for our modern myths about the dawn of time. The colors of a world that was brutal, but as steady as a rock, where there was certainly no lack of solidarity, fraternity, or murder.

Violence Among Humans

It has to be said that, among the wealth of human bone remains found for the Paleolithic period, the traces of violence that can clearly be identified as caused by other humans are very rare. Of course, we only have a limited number of skeletons to examine. There are a few exceptions, such as the young Neanderthal, thought to be female, found in Saint Césaire, who seems to have suffered a sharp blow to the head, even though it wasn’t directly lethal. However, we can deduce from the vast majority of the documents that we have access to, that cases of violence between humans were apparently rare occurrences during these times.

We can imagine a number of reasons for this. For a start, the very low density of the population would have meant there was little cause to fight over territories. It would be nothing short of a caricature of our modern thought model, and at the very least incredibly anachronistic, to use the term “competition” to describe the relationship between the Prehistoric peoples. Then, of course, there was the harsh climate and the fierce wild animals all around that gave the

humans more than enough to deal with, so that their fellows tended to be seen as a chance for help rather than adversaries.

Yet we shouldn’t be misled: if the study of hunter-gatherer peoples has shown us that warfare (in the modern sense of the word) was almost inexistent for them, and that for them concepts like hospitality and solidarity were often essential, it also shows us that these peoples lived in an atmosphere where violence was always present and could suddenly be triggered by the tiniest spark. As they were used to hunting and often confronted with illnesses and accidents, these men and women are not afraid of blood or death.

The theory that Neanderthals gradually disappeared because they were too peaceful to defend their hunting grounds when faced with the arrival of modern man does not seem all that believable. On that note, it is important to mention that although some traces of ritualistic cannibalism have been found in Paleolithic modern man, these traces are far more common among the Neanderthals and also extend, in some areas, to a purely dietary form of cannibalism, where other men, women and children, were butchered, prepared and eaten with the same care and attention to detail as if they were reindeer or horses.

Applications in the Game

Of course, given the considerable stretch of time and immense territories covered in *Wurm*, the Game Master is free to imagine a wide variety of cultures, with varying degrees of peacefulness or aggressiveness, and to do so with a subtle approach or choose a more extreme one. To avoid going too far astray, however, here are a few tips:

- Try to avoid the overused scenario of the “war of the species”, done over and over again by the works of fiction of the early 1900s, where hordes of Bear-men would come forth to fight the Long Men invaders, or where the civilized Long Men pioneers go to war against the savage and lawless Bear-men. Although it is not impossible to play this scenario out brilliantly, you will need a deep and nuanced understanding of the subject to avoid wandering into caricature and anachronism.

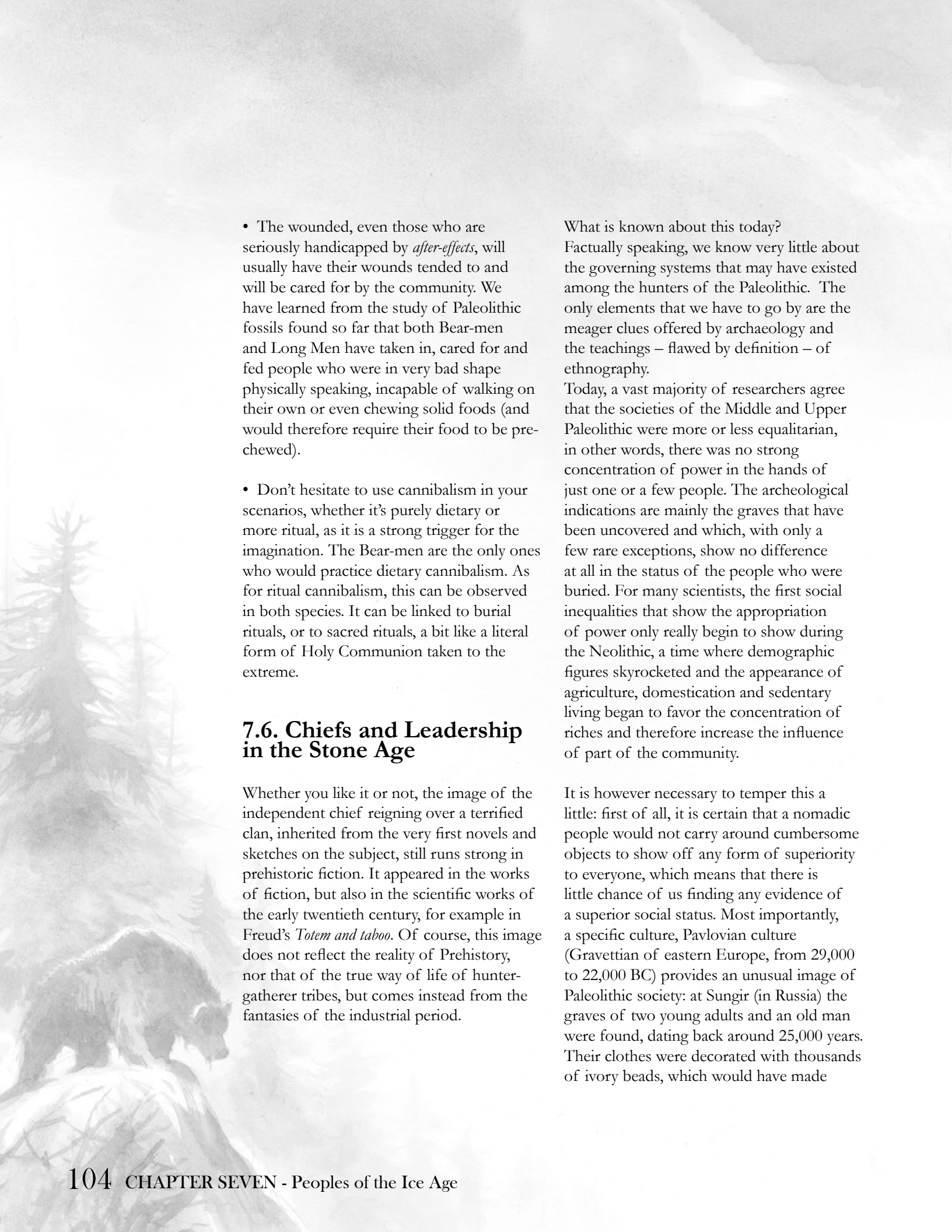
- If there is a conflictual situation, it’s best to go with individual combats, or even a “duel of the champions”, rather than combats between dozens of opponents at the same time. A community of thirty people or so can very well survive with the skills of only four or five able-bodied hunters. No community can risk being completely wiped out by a momentary conflict, unless specific traditions or exceptional notions of honor come into play.

- Killing another human being will never be rewarded with much in terms of Bravery. It is easy enough to imagine a culture where the key part of a combat is to hit one’s opponent and cast the first blood, without trying to kill him. This was the case for the Sioux, for example, for whom the most important thing in a fight was to “count the hits” by hitting their opponents rather than killing them, even though they were a warrior people, highly trained in the art of combat.

- The murder of another human being can be considered a taboo for some communities. Even if it is not totally taboo, a murder could be considered a serious blemish and would require some form of “purification”. What exactly this entails

and how long it takes depends on the Game Master. Furthermore, the Game Master can decide to invent communities where the mere contact with human blood is considered a blemish, even if the blood is not spilt because of a murder, including bleeding caused by an accident or even women’s menstrual blood. If this is the case, then a person who comes into contact with human blood that is not their own will also have to perform a “purifying” ritual.





- The wounded, even those who are seriously handicapped by *after-effects*, will usually have their wounds tended to and will be cared for by the community. We have learned from the study of Paleolithic fossils found so far that both Bear-men and Long Men have taken in, cared for and fed people who were in very bad shape physically speaking, incapable of walking on their own or even chewing solid foods (and would therefore require their food to be pre-chewed).

- Don't hesitate to use cannibalism in your scenarios, whether it's purely dietary or more ritual, as it is a strong trigger for the imagination. The Bear-men are the only ones who would practice dietary cannibalism. As for ritual cannibalism, this can be observed in both species. It can be linked to burial rituals, or to sacred rituals, a bit like a literal form of Holy Communion taken to the extreme.

7.6. Chiefs and Leadership in the Stone Age

Whether you like it or not, the image of the independent chief reigning over a terrified clan, inherited from the very first novels and sketches on the subject, still runs strong in prehistoric fiction. It appeared in the works of fiction, but also in the scientific works of the early twentieth century, for example in Freud's *Totem and taboo*. Of course, this image does not reflect the reality of Prehistory, nor that of the true way of life of hunter-gatherer tribes, but comes instead from the fantasies of the industrial period.

What is known about this today?

Factually speaking, we know very little about the governing systems that may have existed among the hunters of the Paleolithic. The only elements that we have to go by are the meager clues offered by archaeology and the teachings – flawed by definition – of ethnography.

Today, a vast majority of researchers agree that the societies of the Middle and Upper Paleolithic were more or less equalitarian, in other words, there was no strong concentration of power in the hands of just one or a few people. The archeological indications are mainly the graves that have been uncovered and which, with only a few rare exceptions, show no difference at all in the status of the people who were buried. For many scientists, the first social inequalities that show the appropriation of power only really begin to show during the Neolithic, a time where demographic figures skyrocketed and the appearance of agriculture, domestication and sedentary living began to favor the concentration of riches and therefore increase the influence of part of the community.

It is however necessary to temper this a little: first of all, it is certain that a nomadic people would not carry around cumbersome objects to show off any form of superiority to everyone, which means that there is little chance of us finding any evidence of a superior social status. Most importantly, a specific culture, Pavlovian culture (Gravettian of eastern Europe, from 29,000 to 22,000 BC) provides an unusual image of Paleolithic society: at Sungir (in Russia) the graves of two young adults and an old man were found, dating back around 25,000 years. Their clothes were decorated with thousands of ivory beads, which would have made

them incredibly valuable garments given that each bead would have required half an hour to an hour's work to make. What could the status of these people have been? Would all the members of this clan have worn this kind of clothes? Possibly not. Therefore, the societies of the Upper Paleolithic, especially Gravettian ones, could well have been more complex and have more of a hierarchy than one could think at first.

As for the Middle Paleolithic and the Neanderthals, it is important to remember that to this day, almost no burial sites have been uncovered for strong adult men, only children, fetuses, women and old men. What can we deduce from this? Maybe we can imagine some implications relating to a complex form of social status?

What does ethnography teach us, if we are willing to admit the principle that ethnology can teach us anything about the way of life of peoples who walked this earth tens of thousands of years ago? It tells us that the hunter-gatherer civilizations have a leadership system that is sometimes very different to the one we know, where the one designated as "chief" does not usually have any real form of authority. Yet we are far away from both the idea of the noble savage and the *social contract* imagined by Rousseau. For example, in the late Pierre Clastres' *Society Against The State*, we learn that almost all of the societies that anthropology qualifies as "primitive" require two essential qualities from their "chief": generosity and a talent for public speaking. Simply put, the culture of generosity and the constant under-productivity of this type of society just don't allow social inequalities to develop. Then again, there is nothing to stop someone with a lot of charisma or intelligence gaining an influence over others.

But sooner or later, any chief who tries to really take the power for himself, whether by force or by cunning maneuvers, will find himself ousted from his position and meet a rather nasty end.

In other words, unlike the cliché that portrays prehistoric tribes as dominated by an autocratic leader acting like an alpha male or an all-powerful father figure, in *Würm* not all tribes have a chief to speak of, in fact, far from it. In most tribes, the very idea of a chief is completely unheard of, and all important decisions are made by the community as a whole, or by an Elders' Council led by the *Voice of the Ancestors*, a well respected man or woman who passes down traditions and presides over ceremonies, or even sometimes by a shaman. In these leaderless tribes, there may still be a *hunt leader*, a great hunter who will lead most of the important hunts.

If the tribe does have a chief, then he or she must have a lot of prestige, and is often required to sway the members of his or her tribe with many gifts and advantages to maintain that prestige. The chief is also often the man who has the most wives (or the other way around!) However, the status of chief is a delicate one. Although it grants a considerable amount of influence over the rest of the tribe or clan, anyone who tries to truly use that power to serve his or her own interests runs the very real risk of being killed without any warning, if they make the mistake of turning too many clan members against them.





7.7. Women's Roles in the World of Würm

What kind of a position did women have in the societies of the Paleolithic? Now that is a difficult question to answer. We can however try to find some clues, by using archaeological knowledge, human physiology and a comparison with traditional societies throughout history. Although of course, with the latter, there are a great number of misleading similarities and seemingly clear paths can lead off track. For example matrilineal societies can give women a very small role, traditionally speaking, with very little autonomy, whereas societies that otherwise appear “macho” in a public context may grant women the lead role in a more private context, see them as the key decision makers, or even as sacred figures. First of all, we will start with the observation that, even in the most equalitarian societies, men and women have never been seen to be in charge of the exact same tasks. For a start, because mothers need to care for their children, *even more so* when there are no cows or goats around to provide milk and probably very few wet nurses available. And of course, breastfeeding is a known method of birth control. In fact, it is even plausible that within the same community, within the same clan, men and women could live in separate groups (this is the case in *The Giant Cat, or Quest of the Dawn Man*, the sequel to *The Quest for Fire*) with separate roles, and sometimes people who act as a bridge between them (male or female “berdache”).

Although the female body has a key role in the art of the Paleolithic (see below), there is little chance that the societies of this era were matriarchal: ethnography offers no examples of this among hunter

tribes. Yet, although the women themselves were not superior or subordinate to the men, the *female power* of giving life was probably considered as sacred. Because of this, women's bellies, as a resource that was essential to the survival of the tribe, were probably closely protected.

Furthermore there are a few fundamental biological differences that may have brought our ancestors to avoid risking the lives of their women during the hunts for large herbivores – at least as far as our species, *Homo sapiens*, the Long Men of *Würm* are concerned. The differences between men and women in terms of spatial memory are arguably mainly due to culture and education. However, it is obvious that men on average tend to have more upper body strength, twice the strength when it comes to grappling, and that the male reflex that blocks the wrist allows them to throw projectiles further. Then there are the neural pathways that allow the male organism to release physically enhancing hormones (testosterone, noradrenaline...) more easily and in greater quantities.

On the other hand, some studies show that the female brain is more efficient than its male counterpart when it comes to interpreting language and the finer recognition of facial expressions (understanding innuendos, recognizing lies...)

It is unfortunately difficult to tell if these differences already existed at the very origins of our species, over 200,000 years ago, or if they were less pronounced 35,000 years ago. While doubt remains, we won't take this into account in the mechanics of the game rules for *Würm*, but the Game Master can consider this aspect of things when he is enriching the traditions of the tribes he creates.

It is, however, unlikely to have been the case for our Neanderthal cousins. Indeed, although paleontologists do describe a difference in stature between Neanderthal men and women, they have found no difference in muscle mass between the genders. This means, therefore, that if this information is correct, Neanderthal women were truly as *strong as a bear*, and proportionally as strong as their menfolk. We can, for example, imagine a regular Neanderthal woman – perhaps a rather pretty one, with freckles – taking on and beating pretty much any of our trained sportsmen of today in an arm-wrestling match.

And yet this Neanderthal woman was nonetheless a woman and then probably had to breastfeed her children, or make sure she stayed within a reasonable perimeter around the base camp while she was pregnant.

Although their conditions are not those of ice age Europe, it is worth pointing out for the example that in traditional African hunter-gatherer societies, the women often bring back more food than the male hunters.

As for childbirth, the tribe's older women were probably the ones in charge. There are many plants with effects that can help ease the conditions of delivery, or cause an abortion if required, and they were probably well known by this time. There are a number



of mobile art items from the Paleolithic that seem remarkably well suited to breaking the amniotic sack.

Prolonged breastfeeding was probably also used as a form of contraception. It is also possible that the nomadic lifestyle also caused or at least added to the regulation of births, as menstrual cycles are often interrupted during a period of intense effort that triggers a loss of weight (amenorrhea). If this were indeed the case, then the nomadic women would have only become fertile again during the longer periods of sedentary living.



7.8. Art, 35,000 Years Ago

The era when the adventures of the game of *Würm* take place is the time at which the first modern men arrive in continental Europe. This arrival coincides, more or less, as far as we know, with the appearance of the first forms of European art that show an undeniable mastery of graphic and plastic principles.

For a long time, it was thought that the only artwork that could be credited to the Aurignacians were some rather rough stylized drawings and, strangely enough, a few finely crafted statuettes. This vision of the progressive development of art, struggling to take its first steps and slowly culminating with the refinement of the Magdalenians twenty thousand years later completely fell apart when the Chauvet cave was discovered, with a majority of drawings executed during the Aurignacian period. Art, in fact, appeared immediately with a breathtaking amount of technical mastery, in drawing, painting and sculpture alike.

This calls for two observations. First of all, we should probably imagine that the act of practicing drawing, painting or sculpture goes back way further than the oldest artifacts that we have of these arts. Researchers are a long way from having

discovered everything there is to find and then some. We will never know what the very first attempts at artistic creation were like if they were made out of perishable materials such as wood, skins, human skin or even exterior rock faces that are open to the elements.

Secondly, the development of this Aurignacian art begins during this time where the “Long Men” first encounter the “Bear-men” (in tens of thousands of years). *In theory*, it is not reasonable to dismiss the possibility that this encounter itself could have had an influence in the development of both cave art and mobile art. What’s more, no human remains were found in the sites painted in the Aurignacian period. We tend to suppose, conventionally, that these paintings were made by anatomically modern man, but there is no physical reason that could exclude the possibility that some of them were made by Neanderthals, who were still living in the region at that time, and would be for several thousand more years.

Cave Paintings in Würm: Themes and Techniques.

First of all, you should decide where you stand: do you consider that cave painting is a craft that belongs exclusively to the Long Men (classic approach) or something that is also accessible to the Bear-men (bold approach)?

Cave painting during the Aurignacian period showcases a variety of different styles. In the Dordogne, the art is quite simple, in Italy it is very stylized, in the Ardèche it is far more realistic... We should probably deduce that at the time when the game of *Würm* is set, human cultures are not yet as homogenous as they will later become, during the Gravettian and most of all Magdalenian periods.

The themes of the subjects that are represented remain, however, far more constant than the style. Cave painting during the Aurignacian period is mainly characterized by the representation of animals classified as “dangerous”, such as mammoths, woolly rhinoceroses, cave lions (also known in *Würm* as grey lions or steppe lions), or bears (red or brown)... Horses and bison are also often represented, but they do not have the leading role that they will twenty thousand years later.

As we can observe, the selection of animals mainly displays a certain might, but there are also representations of all sorts of other animals. Predators such as hyenas, panthers or owls, but also prey like reindeer or megaloceroses.

Symbols are also frequently used. In Chauvet, these are mostly red dots, hand shapes both “positive” (where the hand is dipped into pigment and then applied to the wall to make a print) and “negative” (colored pigment is blown over a hand applied to the wall and then removed to leave the hand shape), but also some lines, crosses or more complex signs. Female symbols mainly depicting vulva or pubis shapes have been found at several sites. Depending on your choices as Game Master, it will be up to you to apply meanings to these various animals

and symbols of the Aurignacian period as best suit your campaign.

There are a number of techniques that the cave painters of this period would have used. Cave art was made with many materials: charcoal, paint, drawings enhanced by engraving, hand engraving in clay, engraving made with flint tools, deep incision engravings or indirect percussion... All of these techniques are covered in the game by the *Painting* talent, the possession of which, *by definition*, implies a fairly wide range of know-how.



Portable Art in Würm: Figurines and Jewelry

The portable art of the Aurignacian period mainly consists of beautiful ivory statuettes, sculpted bone or stone representations of mammoths, horses, felines, bears or women, all relatively stylized and very elegant. In the Swabian Jura mountains, an impressive statuette of a man with a lion's head was discovered. Obviously impressive by its subject alone, it was also unusual because of its size: over 30 cm tall.

It was long thought that sculpting female figures (often known as “Venuses”) was exclusive to the Gravettian culture, but some beautiful statuettes of women, both thin and curvy, have been discovered in strata dating back to the Aurignacian period. These statuettes, such as the recently found Hohle Fels Venus (*illustrated above*) could have been made to be worn as pendants. In game terms, there is a fair chance that this kind of artwork was used to create powerful magic charms.

During the Aurignacian period, jewelry was an advanced art, making use of items such as perforated animal teeth of all kind, from deer canines to huge lion canines or the very sought-after fox canines. Seashells, both fossilized and contemporary, were also very popular. Some came from places far away from the sites where they were discovered (for example Mediterranean seashells have been found in the Perigord region in central France) and so must have been exchanged for precious goods or been prestigious gifts.



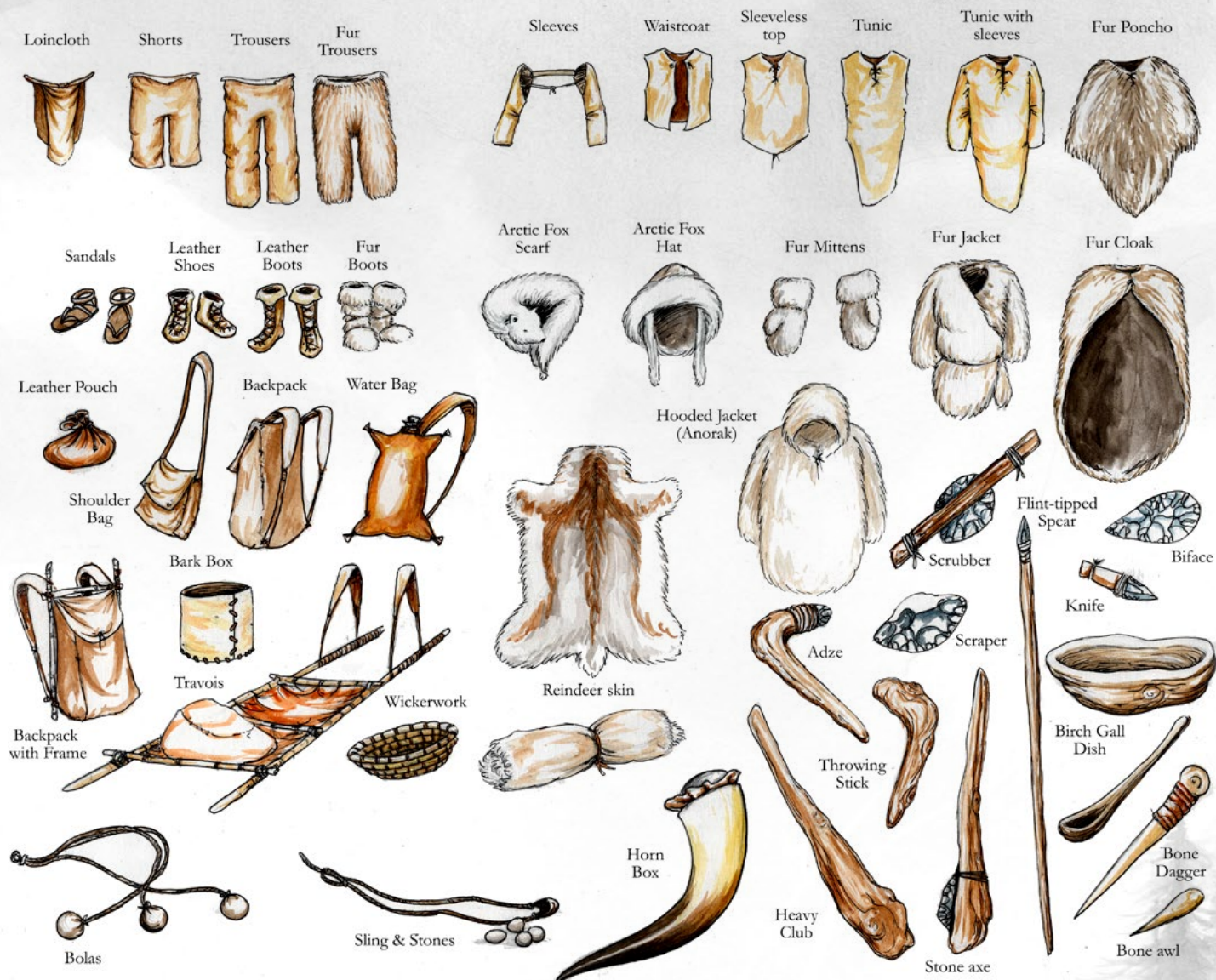
The Art of the Bear-men

To this day, there are no recognized forms of figurative art when it comes to the Mousterian or Châtelperronian cultures. For these cultures, we refer instead to “aesthetic decisions” when it comes to choosing a specific beautiful red quartzite stone to knap a biface, in choosing to decorate an object with zigzag engravings, or using ochre or manganese oxide pigments to decorate skin or clothes.

The “mask” of La Roche-Cotard, thought to be the work of a Mousterian tribe contemporary to the Aurignacians, is a block of flint through which a sliver of bone was inserted, and which seems to be a kind of “proto-statuettes” representing a human or feline face.

As for making jewelry, that was perfectly demonstrated in the Châtelperronian period with the use of bone or ivory pendants, and beads made from teeth or fossils with holes drilled in them. This was rare during the Mousterian period, but it does seem to have existed all the same, as proves a colorful, drilled seashell found in Spain, dating back 50,000 years, in the middle of the Neanderthal Mousterian, or the use of vulture or eagle feathers, probably as decorations, during the same period.

Then again, there is nothing stopping you, as Game Master, from siding with the idea that the Neanderthals, already on the Châtelperronian path to the Upper Paleolithic, could have practiced both two and three-dimensional figurative art. However, don’t forget that the communities of Bear-men were far more spread out and less well connected than the Long Men, and that therefore truly beautiful artistic creation could be the prerogative of only one tribe among many...




7.9. Clothing in the Ice Age

We hope that, after reading these rules, most players will have abandoned the idea that prehistoric man, during this period, was dressed in raggedy animal skins and carried a gnarly club and a twisted old spear. Not that this image is completely wrong. Although it is closer to the mythical image of the wild man than to the reality of our ancestors, it remains true that at some point or another it was probably the case, maybe back in the time of *Homo antecessor* or *Homo heidelbergensis*, a few hundred thousand years earlier. But 35,000 years before our era, prehistoric man looked very different.

The equipment sheet above gives us an idea of the kind of clothing and equipment that

humans would have used during the Upper Paleolithic. This equipment is not typical of the Aurignacians. It could just as well be Châtelperronian or even Mousterian, as far as we know. All of this boils down to our imagination, even though some surprising information can allow us to imagine a far more elaborate Paleolithic outfit than what we could have first expected.

Working skins is a common skill to all of the cultures of *Würm*. This means that there is no reason to portray the Long Men as finer tailors than the Bear-men. At most, we can imagine that for the Châtelperronians and Aurignacians, and even more so for the Gravettians, decorations and jewelry



were that bit more important and elaborate. However when it comes to the use of dyes, archaeology gives us every reason to believe that the Mousterians were not the least talented and they were quite capable of painting and dyeing their clothes. As the needle had not yet been invented, all the cultures used the same technique: skins were pierced with a small awl, and then carefully sewn or laced together, using strings made of leather, tendon or plaited plant fibers. So, in the end, any kind of cultural variation that you bring to the application of this craft technique will be a narrative decision. For example, you could very well dress your Bear-men in rather “rougher” clothes, with looser seams and without slippers or boots. This is not to imply any technical inferiority, but to play on the fact that they have the *Heart of Ice* Strength, and are more resistant to the cold and therefore less concerned about having clothes that really keep them warm.

In general, we can imagine that the summer clothes are made of supple leather and cut into tunics, trousers or waistcoats. The winter clothes are mostly made up of fur pelts (with the fur worn on the inside or the outside as required) and made up of thick trousers, anoraks and/or capes over – if necessary – a thin shirt. Mittens can be worn to protect the hands, caps or hats can protect the head, and the feet can be covered with several layers of footwear.

The skin used to make leather boots and shoes must be chosen for its sturdiness, insulation and suppleness. It is not unusual for a boot to be made up of pieces of different skins sewn together. The sole can be made up of two pieces of coarse, short-haired fur pelts with the hairs on the outside, one for “gripping” towards the front of

the foot, and the other to “reduce slipping” towards the back of the foot.

Beads and Embroideries

The most surprising element when we look at the more recent reconstitutions of the peoples of the Upper Paleolithic is the way that their clothes could be decorated. The use of ivory beads sewn onto the skins, used widely during the Gravettian period, could easily have also existed during the Aurignacian period, although with more moderation. Likewise, from the Châtelperronian onwards, we can imagine the use of fox or bear teeth, or any other kind of pendants, laced into the clothes. But their decorations do not stop there: tiny remnants of linen fibers, dating back about 34,000, have been discovered on the floor of a cave in Georgia. Several of them show marks of twisting, and one of them even seems to have been knotted. Some show traces of dyes, and with incredible colors: black, grey, yellow, pink, and turquoise! These fibers could have been used to make cloth, but more plausibly strings or ropes. It isn't hard to imagine them being used to embroider colorful decorations on our Aurignacians' clothes.

Naked in the Huts

In the world of *Wüirm*, the characters are used to surviving in a harsh ice age climate. This means that an outdoor temperature of 10 to 15 °C is considered to be warm. When temperatures reach 20 to 25 °C in the summer, it's like a heat wave! This all means that the characters probably couldn't bear to wear thick layers, or even lighter clothes inside the huts where they live. These long huts or tents, insulated with several layers of skins and sometimes also plants and earth, usually heated by a central open fire, were pretty much a constant

sauna for the humans of the ice age. This is why it is quite reasonable to imagine that the characters would live and sleep almost naked inside them, dressed only in simple loincloths made of skins or woven plant fibers.

7.10. Ceremonies and Beliefs

We have no way of knowing exactly what the Paleolithic peoples believed in. However, we do know that they did have spiritual concerns, thanks to the incomparable testimonials that are the burial sites. The funeral rites from these forgotten times are full of information on their hugely important belief in an afterworld, a life after death that created a link between the world of men and the supernatural world.

Burial Traditions

The first burials appear about 120,000 years ago, in the Middle East. They are performed by the Mousterians, who at this time are as much Neanderthals as “archaic” Homo sapiens. These burials, known as “primary and individual” (the body of one individual was deposited in a pit and covered up), were continually carried out during the whole Medium Paleolithic, with no distinction based on gender or age. From the Upper Paleolithic onwards, at the time where the game of *Würm* takes place, a great range of different traditions begin to appear. Burials can be individual, double, multiple, collective, primary, secondary (one part of the buried body is removed after burial and deposited “elsewhere”)...

In *Würm*, the variety of these traditions is such that it's difficult to keep count. For both the Bear-men and the Long Men, almost any kind of burial ritual is imaginable: burial in the ground, cremation, exposing



the body to wild animals or to the weather, burial in a river or the sea... The very ancient practice of depositing bodies in a great “bone pit” can also still be observed, just as more refined practices like a very codified ritual cannibalism or a “secondary” ritual involving part of the human remains that may (or may not) be linked to the cult of the ancestors. The most iconic form of secondary burial is the one where the skull is removed a short while after burial. This practice is observed in both the Sapiens and the Neanderthal cultures.

Traditions of the Bear-men

In theory, as mentioned above, these burials show no difference based on gender or age. For example, the Bear-men are known for having given a very touching burial to a fetus of seven months, with offerings left in the grave. In another case, an older man was buried on a bed of flowers.

To accompany the deceased's departure, the Bear-men would sometimes decide to carry out the sacrificial slaughter of a bear and give him a joint burial with the deceased human. This ritual is rare, as it is dangerous and considered by some to be blasphemous. As for the absence of young men in the Neanderthal burials seen so far (mainly in rock shelters), the simplest hypothesis is that





the Bear-men bury or “say goodbye” to their hunters when and where they fall: if they are killed during hunting, somewhere out in the tundra, or at the bottom of a ravine...

Traditions of the Long Men

Depending on how the Game Master wants to run the campaign, he can decide to apply a form of discrimination within a given community when it comes to the splendor of burials, reflecting a more complex and structured hierarchy, as with the three bodies in Sungir. This discrimination is conveyed by the presence and number of offerings placed in the grave with the deceased. These offerings can be made in the form of craft

items (javelins, daggers, spears, bracelets, richly decorated clothes, jewelry, statuettes, charms...), “valuable” materials (red ochre, yellow ochre, brown ochre, deer antlers, feathers, flowers...) or food.

The use of ochre – the “blood of the earth” – in burials is an important indicator. Ochre is used by Bear-men, but mostly by the Long Men. Sometimes, the whole body of the deceased is covered in ochre.

Although the most spectacular offering deposits are the work of the Gravettian culture, which comes after the Aurignacian culture of the Long Men of *Würm*, we can still consider that the burials of the Long Men in the game are by far the most sumptuous.

Important Game Note: the offerings made to a dead tribe member count as part of the *Generosity Points*, including when it is between player characters... (see Chapter 2.7. *Prestige* if necessary).

A **Cult of the Ancestors** is often the consequence of these traditions and funeral rites, as much for the Bear-men as for the Long Men. This type of cult implies the transmission of the memories of the recent and mythical ancestors and belief in a form of *afterlife*. This is usually the basis for the “unseen world” of each tribe. For the Bear-men, we can imagine that this invisible world where the dead go to live on is the “world below”, watched over by the Great Red Bear, accessed through the depths of the deepest caves where the Great Bear takes the souls of the dead when he hibernates. For the Long Men, this world could be up in the sky and the stars, or in the mysterious Lands of Mist, the access to which is protected by the Great Black Stag who catches the souls of the dead in the vast spread of his antlers. The cult of the ancestors usually considers

that the Spirits of the group's ancestors look out for their descendants – or sometimes haunt them. These ancestors can be many (all the dead who were buried according to the rules) or only a few (a small number of primordial ancestors). Either way, the community will conserve the bones of its ancestors, if they have access to them, as if they were precious relics. It is not completely unthinkable that the Spirit of an ancestor (or a group of ancestors) could act as a Guardian Spirit for the clan it is connected to. Other beliefs can consider that the ancestors transform into animals or even become supernatural creatures such as giants or chimeras (which you can choose to consider as real or not in the game). Likewise, we invite you to imagine a whole variety of strange traditions and rituals for each new tribe that you bring to life.

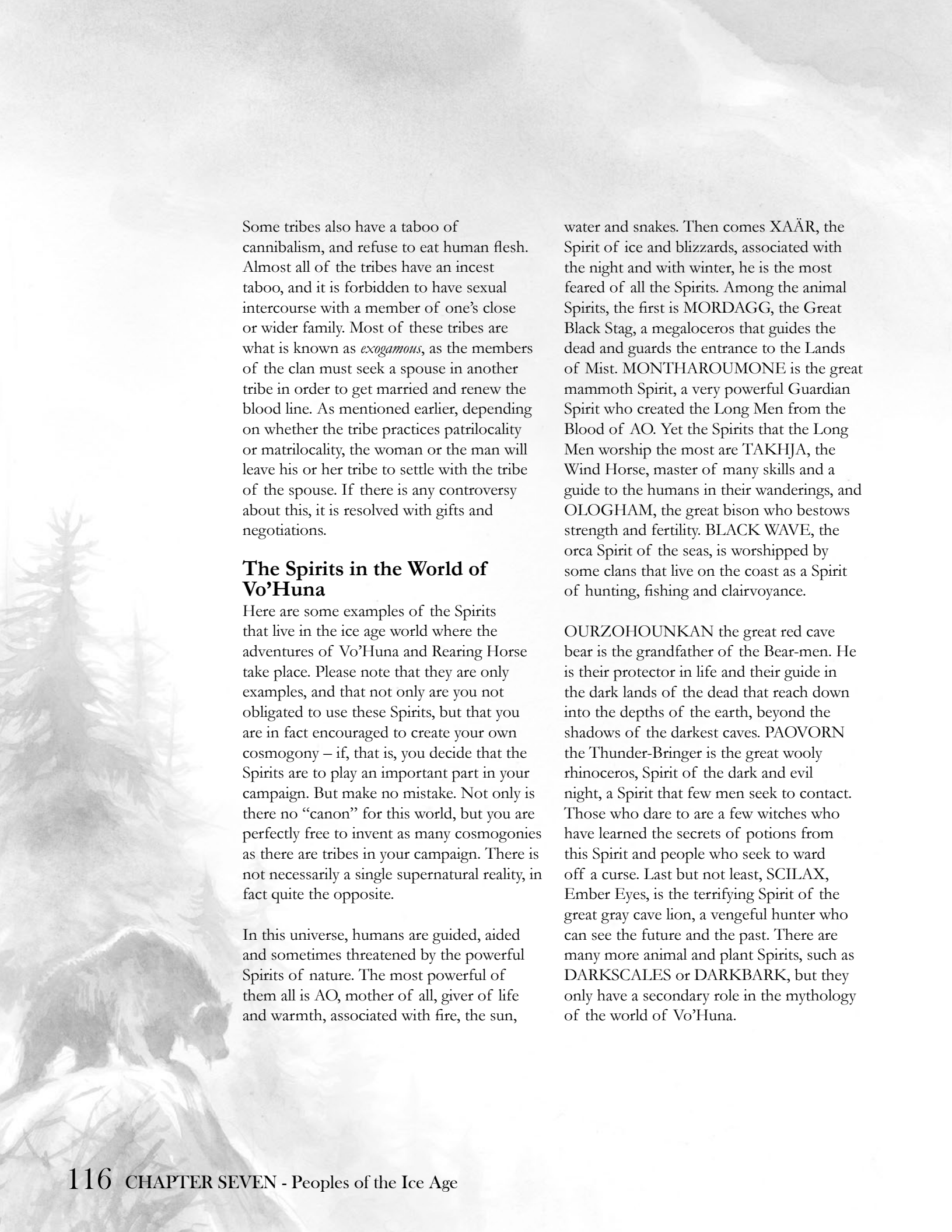
Totems and Taboos

Animism is the fundamental belief that defines the way the peoples of the Stone Age see the universe. It considers that everything has a Spirit that can be good or bad, calm or furious, and with which some humans can communicate. This would have been the case for an animal, but also for a weapon, a river, a rock or a fire. Sometimes, when humans have been in contact with one or the other of these Spirits, they give it a name. The Bear-men are almost all animists, and worship the Great Bear as much as the Sun Spirit, the Spirit of their camp fire or that of a good sturdy spear. The more powerful and terrifying the Spirits, like the Spirit of winter or the Spirit of night, the more frequent and complicated the rituals that the men will need to perform to appease them, with offerings and sacrifices. Shamanism is a Secret Skill that echoes back to the animist beliefs in the existence of auxiliary and evil Spirits.



Most of the tribes have a **totem taboo**: if the Guardian Spirit of the community is associated with a specific animal species, then it is not permitted to eat the flesh of that animal, nor to kill one. It is however permitted to fight them as self-defense in the case of an attack – which would be exceptional (see *totemic bond*) – coming from one of these totem animals. If such an attack should end with the death of the animal, it is a very bad sign for the character who killed it: he loses any benefits he may have had from his **totemic bond** (see Chapter 2), and loses *double* the Bravery Points associated with the totem animal that he fought. However, if the animal is only wounded in combat, there are no consequences for the character.

Exception: there are a few cases where the clan or tribe can carry out a ritual slaughter of the group's totem animal, or a hunt for animals associated with their totem. This will always be performed with the agreement of the Guardian Spirit and in very precise circumstances, following strict rituals. Usually these are propitiatory ceremonies before great hunts that hold the future and survival of the group in their outcome, or cyclical ceremonies where the whole order of the cosmos is purified and regenerated, to ensure the world keeps turning (the return of spring, for example) or to consolidate the structure of the universe.



Some tribes also have a taboo of cannibalism, and refuse to eat human flesh. Almost all of the tribes have an incest taboo, and it is forbidden to have sexual intercourse with a member of one's close or wider family. Most of these tribes are what is known as *exogamous*, as the members of the clan must seek a spouse in another tribe in order to get married and renew the blood line. As mentioned earlier, depending on whether the tribe practices patrilocality or matrilocality, the woman or the man will leave his or her tribe to settle with the tribe of the spouse. If there is any controversy about this, it is resolved with gifts and negotiations.

The Spirits in the World of Vo'Huna

Here are some examples of the Spirits that live in the ice age world where the adventures of Vo'Huna and Rearing Horse take place. Please note that they are only examples, and that not only are you not obligated to use these Spirits, but that you are in fact encouraged to create your own cosmogony – if, that is, you decide that the Spirits are to play an important part in your campaign. But make no mistake. Not only is there no “canon” for this world, but you are perfectly free to invent as many cosmogonies as there are tribes in your campaign. There is not necessarily a single supernatural reality, in fact quite the opposite.

In this universe, humans are guided, aided and sometimes threatened by the powerful Spirits of nature. The most powerful of them all is AO, mother of all, giver of life and warmth, associated with fire, the sun,

water and snakes. Then comes XAÄR, the Spirit of ice and blizzards, associated with the night and with winter, he is the most feared of all the Spirits. Among the animal Spirits, the first is MORDAGG, the Great Black Stag, a megaloceros that guides the dead and guards the entrance to the Lands of Mist. MONTHAROUZONE is the great mammoth Spirit, a very powerful Guardian Spirit who created the Long Men from the Blood of AO. Yet the Spirits that the Long Men worship the most are TAKHJA, the Wind Horse, master of many skills and a guide to the humans in their wanderings, and OLOGHAM, the great bison who bestows strength and fertility. BLACK WAVE, the orca Spirit of the seas, is worshipped by some clans that live on the coast as a Spirit of hunting, fishing and clairvoyance.

OURZOHOUNKAN the great red cave bear is the grandfather of the Bear-men. He is their protector in life and their guide in the dark lands of the dead that reach down into the depths of the earth, beyond the shadows of the darkest caves. PAOVORN the Thunder-Bringer is the great woolly rhinoceros, Spirit of the dark and evil night, a Spirit that few men seek to contact. Those who dare to are a few witches who have learned the secrets of potions from this Spirit and people who seek to ward off a curse. Last but not least, SCILAX, Ember Eyes, is the terrifying Spirit of the great gray cave lion, a vengeful hunter who can see the future and the past. There are many more animal and plant Spirits, such as DARKSCALES or DARKBARK, but they only have a secondary role in the mythology of the world of Vo'Huna.



8. The Prehistoric Animals Guide

This section presents a list of the animals and monsters that live in the world of *Würm*. It is possible to play in a more realistic way. To do so, the Game Master will only use animals from Chapter 8.1. in his scenarios: *Fauna of the ice age*. It's however also possible to send the characters off on a series of magical adventures, in which case the GM can include the *Fantastical creatures* from Chapter 8.2. in his scenarios.

Rules About Animals and Monsters

Ice age creatures are defined by a number of characteristics, just like the players' characters.

- **Dodge** works the same as for human characters.
- **Thick skin** counts as protection from damage.
- **Life Points** work the same as a character's Stamina Points. However the animal will only suffer a Serious Wound if a blow causes a Wound equal to at least *a third of its Life Points*. The GM can allow some robust animals to roll 3d6 for their Resistance to pain Test.
- **Attack** works the same as for human characters, but the number in square brackets indicates the number of attacks the animal or monster can carry out during a Combat Round if it has not moved (if it has moved once during the Round, it can carry out only one Attack of the GM's choice). Remember that *only a human* (Long man or Bear-man) can obtain a *Brilliant Success* in combat. Of course, all creatures may use the Cautious or Reckless combat attitudes, Charge or Dodge.
- **Damage** caused by a successful Attack is expressed as the number of d6 to roll, and is noted in brackets after each of the Attack types available to the creature. If multiple dice are rolled, the results of each die should be added up. If a bonus is written next to the die (1d6+2 for instance), it must be added to the die result.
- **Running Score:** this is the Difficulty Threshold a character must reach to catch up with the creature if it is running away (he gets 1d3 Combat Rounds to do so). An animal with a Running score of 9 or higher rolls 3d6 to retreat from a hand to hand combat (DT 9), even if its Initiative is only 2d6.
- **Steady Nerves** represents the ability of the animal to not give in to panic when attacked. The hunting rules detailed in Chapter 2 apply.
- **Alertness** corresponds to the Difficulty Threshold a player must reach to successfully go unnoticed by the creature.
- **Special Abilities** usually indicate special powers these creatures may use against their assailants. Note that the ice giants, mountain giants, bison-men and earth monsters, four entirely separate species, all possess their own languages, however basic they may be.
- When the characteristics of the **male** and **female** of a given species are different, they are separated by a slash.

8.1. Fauna of the Ice Age

The fauna that flourished in the ice age environment is very distinctive and is sometimes referred to as “megafauna”, due to the impressive size of its most famous species, such as mammoths, cave bears and giant deer. The ice age climate could be an indirect cause of the proportions of this fauna, through the typical open landscape of this era that could have favored large sizes, or the rich nutritive elements contained in the permafrost that covers the most part of the territory, that may have contributed to increased bone growth.

Arctic Fox

They are identical to the modern day arctic fox. Their coat changes from brown to white depending on the season. They live alone or very rarely with a partner, during the mating season.

Dodge 8; Thick skin 1

LP 9

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [1]: Bite 2d6 (1d6 Damage Points)

Running 7; Steady nerves 3; Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

Camouflage: the arctic fox hides by rolling 4d6.

Aurochs

This is the ancestor of our modern day bulls and cows. They can measure 2 m at the withers and their coat is a mixture of black and tan. Their lyre-shaped horns are huge. Aurochs live in herds of 1d6 or 6d6 animals, mainly in the more temperate areas.

Dodge 5; Thick skin 1,

LP 54

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Horns 3d6 (4d6 Damage Points); Trampling* 2d6 (4d6 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 9; Alertness 7



Special Abilities:

**Trampling:* a character hit by a charging aurochs must carry out a Strength Test (DT 9) to avoid being knocked over and trampled in the same Combat Round. The Trampling Attack causes 4d6 Damage Points.

Bear-man, Hunter

Dodge 7; Protection 0 or 1 (summer), 2 (winter)

Stamina Points 30

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: stone-tipped spear 2d6 (3d6* Damage Points) or heavy club 2d6 (3d6* Damage Points)

Running 7; Alertness 7

Special Abilities:

A typical Bear-man possesses the *Heart of Ice* and *Strength of the Bear* Strengths*. He gets the basic Talents of his clan (see Chapter 5.1).

Bird of Prey

These are the characteristics for various birds of prey, such as the falcon, the owl or the snowy owl (the latter being nocturnal birds). They can also apply to the crow, without the talon attacks, and to the eagle, by increasing its Attacks to 3d6 and its Damage to 1d6.

Dodge 9; Thick skin 0

LP 6 (3 for the crow, 12 for the eagle)

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [2]: Pecking 2d6 (1d3 Damage Points); Talons 2d6 (1d3 Damage Points)

Flying 15; Running 3; Steady nerves 5 (7 for the eagle); Alertness 12

Special Abilities: N/A



Bison

The prehistoric bison (Bison priscus) is a massive version of the European bison. It can measure more than 2 m at the withers and has a very thick coat, a "beard" and long black horns. It can be found in herds of 2d6 or 10d6 animals.

Dodge 6; Thick skin 2,
LP 48

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Horns 3d6 (3d6 Damage Points); Trampling* 2d6 (4d6 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 9; Alertness 7
Special Abilities:

***Trampling:** a character hit by a charging bison must carry out a Strength Test (DT 9) to avoid being knocked over and trampled in the same Combat Round. The Trampling Attack causes 4d6 Damage Points.



Brown Bear

They are identical to the European brown bear. They live alone or with a partner.

Dodge 6; Thick skin 2
LP 36

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [2]: Claws 3d6 (2d6 Damage Points); Bite 3d6 (2d6 Damage Points)

Running 7; Steady nerves 9; Alertness 9
Special Abilities:

Bear hug: a bear that has managed to hit its opponent during 2 Combat Rounds in a row, can attempt a Wrestling Test against him during the third Round (3d6). If this Test is successful, the bear inflicts 1d6 Damage Points per Round to its victim as long as it's holding him, and inflicts a Bite at 4d6 instead of 3d6.

Cave Hyenas

Cave hyenas are huge prehistoric hyenas. They are scavengers but they can hunt as well. Their coat is dark with black spots. They can be found in packs of 1d6 or 4d6 animals.

Dodge 8; Thick skin 1
LP 24

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Bite 3d6 (2d6+2 Damage Points)

Running 7; Steady nerves 9; Alertness 9
Special Abilities: N/A

Gray Lion (Cave Lion)

The gray lion, or cave lion or steppe lion, is a large feline roughly a third bigger than the modern day African lion. Its coat is gray, tan or white, and it has no mane. It lives alone or in prides of 3d6 animals. Its social behavior is very close to that of the modern day lion.

Dodge 8; Thick skin 1
LP 36

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [2]: Claws 3d6 (2d6 Damage Points); Bite 3d6 (2d6+1 Damage Points)

Running 7; Steady nerves 12; Alertness 9
Special Abilities:

Roar: anyone hearing it must carry out a Steady nerves Test or be panicked (SD 7) (see Hunting roars).

Horse

Prehistoric horses are stocky animals, with a thick tawny coat. Their black mane forms a raised crest and they sometimes have a short "beard". They live in groups of 2d6 or 10d6 animals.

Dodge 6 ; Thick skin 1,
LP 36

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [2]: Bucking 2d6 (2d6 Damage Points); Bite 2d6 (1d6 Damage Points)

Running 12; Steady nerves 7; Alertness 9
Special Abilities:

A character hit by a bucking horse must carry out a Strength Test (DT 9) to avoid getting knocked over.



Ibex

They are similar to the modern day ibex and they live in the mountains. An ibex's horns can be over a meter long. They live in herds of 1d6 or 4d6 animals.

Dodge 6; Thick skin 1,

LP 24

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Horns 2d6 (1d6+2 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 5; Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

The ibex has an incredible ability to climb and jump at 3d6.

Long Man, Hunter

Dodge 7; Protection 0 or 1 (summer), 2 (winter)

Stamina Points 24

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: bone-tipped spear 2d6 (2d6+1 Damage Points) or bone-tipped javelin 2d6 (1d6+1 Damage Points)

Running 10; Alertness 7

Special Abilities:

A typical Long Man possesses the *Hand of the Ancestors* and *Speed of the Horse* Strengths. He gets the basic Talents of his clan (see Chapter 5.1).

Lynx

They are identical to the modern day European lynx. Their coat is grey, striped or sometimes white. They either live alone or with a partner.

Dodge 10; Thick skin 1

LP 18

Initiative 4d6

Attack(s) [2]: Claws 3d6 (1d6 Damage Points); Bite 3d6 (1d6 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 5; Alertness 12

Special Abilities: N/A

Mammoth

Mammoths are the most impressive prehistoric herbivores. Their tusks are huge (up to 4 m) and they can measure up to 3.5 m at the withers. To best face the cold climate, they have very small ears. Their thick wooly coat is a protection second to none, made of two layers: the first one thin and very dense, the second, much longer, drops off in summer (some of the hairs can be over 40 centimeters long). Mammoths live alone or in herds of 6d6 animals: herds led by old females, or herds of males.

Dodge 4; Thick skin 3 in summer, 5 in winter

LP 72

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [2]: Tusks 2d6 (5d6 Damage Points); Trunk 2d6 (Holding*); Trampling* 2d6 (6d6 Damage Points)

Running 7; Steady nerves 15; Alertness 7

Special Abilities:

Trumpeting: Anyone facing a charging mammoth must pass a *Steady nerves* Test or be panicked (DT 9).

***Trampling:** a character hit by the mammoth's tusks must perform a Strength Test (DT 12) to avoid being knocked over and trampled in the same Combat Round.

***Holding:** A mammoth can hold someone with its trunk, if it manages to catch him. Once he's held, the character must succeed an opposed Strength Test against the mammoth, which rolls 3d6, be crushed (1d6 Damage Points per Combat Round), or be thrown into the air (6d6 Damage Points) during the next Combat Round.



Megaloceros (Giant Deer)

Megaloceroses are giant prehistoric deer. They can grow to more than 2 meters at the withers. They have a hump on their shoulders from which two dark lines run along the body as well as a collar-shaped marking around the neck. The male's impressive antlers, which can reach four meters across, fall off each year in the spring, just like those of the modern day deer, and are used for mating displays as well as in combat. They live alone as solitary males, in herds of 1d6 individuals, or with a herd of 3d6 does.

Dodge 6; Thick skin 1

LP 42 / 36

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [2 / 1]: Giant antlers (males only) 2d6 (3d6 Damage Points); Bucking 2d6 (1d6+2 Damage Points); Trampling* 2d6 (3d6 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 9; Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

***Trampling:** a character hit by megaloceros antlers must perform a Strength Test (DT 9) to avoid being knocked over and trampled in the same Combat Round.

Red Bear (Cave Bear)

Red bears, or cave bears, were gigantic prehistoric bears that could be up to a third bigger than the largest modern day brown bears. Their coat is red-brown. They are herbivores and they hibernate in caves. They live alone or with a partner.

Dodge 6; Thick skin 2

LP 48

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [2]: Claws 3d6 (3d6 Damage Points); Bite 3d6 (2d6+2 Damage Points)

Running 7; Steady nerves 12; Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

Bear hug: a bear that has hit its opponent during 2 Combat Rounds in a row, can attempt a Wrestling Test against him during the third Round (4d6). If this Test is successful, the bear inflicts 2d6 Damage Points per Round upon its victim as long as it's holding him, and inflicts a Bite at 4d6 instead of 3d6.



Red Wolf (Dhole)

Red wolves are a kind of wild canine with a lifestyle closer to that of the wolf, although they can hunt in packs of several dozens of animals. They are a little shorter and most of all lighter than wolves, and their coat can be tan, yellow or red. They can be found in packs of 2d6 to 10d6 animals.

Dodge 8; Thick skin 1

LP 18

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Bite 3d6 (1d6+1 Damage Points)

Running 8; Steady nerves 5; Alertness 12

Special Abilities:

Tracking: the red wolf can smell trails as well as a wolf (4d6). It can run on very long distances without ever running out of breath.

Reindeer

The reindeers are entirely similar to the modern day reindeers that live in the North. They live either in small herds of 6d6 animals or in larger herds of 2d6x100 animals. The bone of their antlers is highly sought after to manufacture tools, as well as their very warm and supple fur pelt, to make clothes.

Dodge 6; Thick skin 1

LP 24

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Antlers 2d6 (1d6+3 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 5; Alertness 7

Special Abilities: N/A

Saiga Antelope

Saiga antelopes have two small horns and a big nose in the shape of a short trunk. They live in herds of 2d6 or 6d6 animals.

Dodge 7; Thick skin 1

LP 18

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: horns 2d6 (1d6 Damage Points)

Running 12; Steady nerves 5; Alertness 9

Special Abilities: N/A

Snow Leopard

They are identical to the few remaining modern day snow leopards. Their lightly spotted coat is light grey or white. They often live with a partner, though they sometimes live alone.

Dodge 10; Thick skin 1

LP 24

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [2]: Claws 3d6 (1d6+2 Damage Points); Bite 3d6 (1d6+2 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 7; Alertness 12

Special Abilities: N/A

Stag (& Doe)

Stags are entirely identical to the European red deer. The same goes for the does. Stags usually live alone as solitary males, in herds of 1d6 animals, or with a herd of 3d6 does.

Dodge 6 / 7; Thick skin 1,

LP 36 / 24

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [2 / 1]: Bucking 2d6 (1d6 Damage Points); Antler (stag only) 2d6 (2d6 Damage Points)

Running 12; Steady nerves 7 / 5;

Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

A character hit by a Bucking stag must perform a Strength Test (DT 7) to avoid being knocked over.

Wild Boar

They are identical to modern day boars. They can live alone or in herds of 2d6 animals.

Dodge 6; Thick skin 2

LP 24

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Ramming 2d6 (2d6 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 7; Alertness 7

Special Abilities: N/A



Wolf

They are completely identical to the modern day European gray wolf. Some of them are black. There are white wolves in the North, which have +1 bonus for Damage and Steady nerves scores. They live in groups of 1d6 or 6d6 animals.

Dodge 8; Thick skin 1

LP 21

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Bite 3d6 (1d6+2 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 5; Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

Tracking: wolves can smell trails better than anyone (4d6). They can run very long distances without ever running out of breath.

Wolverine

Wolverines are carnivorous mammals, common in cold areas. The species is a member of the weasel family, but much larger, with a tan coat. They are identical to modern day wolverines. They are extremely ferocious animals that seem fearless and don't hesitate to attack preys much larger than themselves. They are almost exclusively solitary.

Dodge 8; Thick skin 1,

LP 15

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [1]: Bite 3d6 (1d6 Damage Points), Claws 3d6 (1d6 Damage Points)

Running 7; Steady nerves 9; Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

Rage : when a wolverine is wounded in combat, it becomes enraged. It then loses 2 Dodge Points (which go down to 6) and gains 2 Attack Points (3d6+2). Its Damage score is then increased by 1 Point (1d6+1). Once enraged, the wolverine fights to the death. It can only be calmed through a supernatural intervention.

Wooly Rhinoceros

The wooly rhinoceros is a monster the size of the white rhinoceros. It can reach 3m50 long and 1m80 at the withers. Its fleece is black, brown and grey, and it has two horns. The longer, saber-like one can reach 1m50. It is a short-tempered creature. It lives alone or (rarely) with a partner.

Dodge 5; Thick skin 3

LP 54

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Horn 2d6 (3d6 Damage Points); Trampling* 3d6 (4d6 Damage Points)

Running 9; Steady nerves 12; Alertness 7

Special Abilities:

***Trampling:** a character hit by a charging wooly rhinoceros must perform a Strength Test (DT 12) to avoid being knocked over and trampled in the same Round. The Trampling Attack (3d6) inflicts 4d6 Damage Points.





8.2. Fantastical Creatures

Fantastical creatures have no *Steady nerves* score because it's impossible to frighten them with Hunting roars. Bravery Points granted for having defeated a fantastical creature are always increased by 12 (before being shared out between the fighters).

Bison-Man

A bison-man is a horned creature with the hairy head and torso of a bison and humanoid limbs. It stands with a slightly hunched posture, but it can be over 2 meters tall. This creature is not always evil, but its aggressive instinct leads it to look for trouble whenever possible. Bison-men live in groups of 1d6 individuals, or in a tribe of 2d6 males, 2d6 females, and 2d6 children.

Dodge 7; Thick skin 1

LP 36

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [2]: Spear or Heavy club 3d6 Damage Points), Horns 2d6 (2d6 Damage Points).

Running 7, Alertness 7

Special Abilities: N/A

Chimera

A Chimera is a strange and mysterious creature that only comes out in the dark of night or that of a deep cave, or in the mists of a very foggy day. Its physical appearance changes constantly, so you can never be sure if a Chimera looks like an aurochs, a lion, or even a huge snake.

A Chimera is a wise and cunning creature that is not always evil. It speaks the Shaman's tongue.

Dodge 9; Thick skin 1

LP 39

Initiative 3d6

Running 7; Alertness 9


Attack(s): Shape-shifting Attack (see below)

Special Abilities:

Each Round, the chimera changes its appearance, always surrounded by dark mists. Each Round, it attacks with different weapons, defined by rolling 1d6:

- 1: Horns (3d6, 2d6+2 Damage points)
- 2: Bite (3d6, 2d6 Damage points)
- 3: Bite (2d6, 2d6 Damage points) + Claws (2d6, 1d6+2 Damage points)
- 4: Horns (3d6, 2d6+2 Damage points) + Bucking (2d6, 1d6 Damage points)
- 5: Viper bite (3d6, 1d6+1 Damage points + Poison SEV 9)
- 6: Horns + Claws + Viper bite.

Transform into a fog: a Chimera possesses the ability to transform into a fog at will, during its Combat Round. When it's in a fog state, a Chimera cannot be touched in any physical way, but it cannot affect its opponents in any way either. It can however move at its normal speed, but then it's barely visible, and characters must perform a successful Perception Test (DT 12) to be able to spot it. A Chimera can regain its tangible form at will, after at least 1 Round in its fog form.



Creature of Darkness

A Creature of Darkness can be an animal, a human, or a monster possessed by a dark Spirit. Fearsome and evil, dark as the night, with eyes red like embers, a creature of darkness inspires fear among the humans as well as the animals.

A Creature of Darkness usually lives alone, but sometimes they can be found in a group of 1d6, or even 2d6 creatures.

Dodge: regular +1; **Thick skin** regular
LP regular +9

Initiative regular +1

Attack(s): same as the regular creature +1, and the Damage score is increased by 1d6 for each type of Attack.

Running regular; **Alertness** regular +1

Special Abilities:

A Creature of Darkness has a few terrifying abilities:

Terror: A Creature of Darkness is so terrifying that anyone facing such an opponent must roll a successful *Steady nerves* (DT 9) Test or be panicked as if he was under the effects of a *Combat cry*.

Transform into a Fog: a Creature of Darkness can transform into a fog at will, during its Combat Round. When it's in a fog state, the creature cannot be touched in any physical way, but it cannot affect its opponents in any way either. It can however move at its normal speed, but then it's barely visible, and characters must perform a successful Perception Test (DT 12) to be able to spot it. A creature of darkness can regain its tangible form at will, after at least 1 Round in its foggy form.

Life Drain: A Creature of Darkness emits a powerful corrupting energy. Any creature standing less than 6 meters from it must perform a successful Resistance Test (DT 7) or lose 1d3 Stamina Points (humans) or Life Points (non-human creatures). This power is inactive when the creature is in fog form.

Contagion: the evil spells of the dark Spirit that inhabits a Creature of Darkness are contagious. Anyone suffering a wound inflicted by a Creature of Darkness will be infected by an illness, the Severity of which is equal to the *Steady nerves* score of the creature. Anyone who succumbs to the effects of this illness then becomes in turn a Creature of Darkness in 1d6 hours. This illness can be cured with an *Exorcism*, just like any other sickness.

Vulnerability to Exorcism: a shaman can try to exorcize a Creature of Darkness (DT 9). Each successful exorcism inflicts 3d6 Damage Points to the Creature of Darkness.

Vulnerability to Daylight: a Creature of Darkness is particularly vulnerable to daylight, which inflicts 1d6 Damage Points per Round of exposure.

When a Creature of Darkness is killed, the dark Spirit dissolves into the night, and the host creature's corpse quickly rots (its skin cannot be preserved).

Crow Sorcerer

A Crow sorcerer is a strange character, half-Bearman, half-Long man, gifted with a powerful magic and usually considered benevolent but extremely dangerous. It is said that there are only nine Crow sorcerers: six men and three women, all brothers and sisters, and that these nine sorcerers are immortal. A Crow sorcerer usually wears black fur pelts decorated with crow feathers and magical ornaments. Such a character may sometimes meddle in the matters of human clans and tribes, often to defend a cause that remains a mystery to common people.

Dodge 10; **Thick skin** 2

LP 48

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [1]: Bewitched spear or Heavy club 3d6+1 (3d6+3 Damage Points),
Combat Secret Skills*.

Running 10; Alertness 12

Special Abilities:

***Combat Secret Skills:** Crow sorcerers master a choice of four combat Secret Skills;

Shaman's magic: all Crow sorcerers are shamans. They have many auxiliary Spirits and know all the Shamanism, Enchantment, and Sorcery Secret Skills.

Dragon

A Dragon is a gigantic reptilian creature that can be up to 30 meters long. It moves like an enormous lizard, and surprisingly quietly for a creature of its size. Its spine is covered with spikes, and its skin is covered with extraordinarily thick dark scales. A dragon is a fearsome hunter that can slaughter entire herds for food, but its digestion is so slow that it luckily doesn't often leave its lair, usually located in the darkest part of a huge cave or in the depths of a misty lake.

Dodge 4; Thick skin 6

LP 84

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [3]: Bite 3d6 (6d6 Damage Points), Claws 2d6 (5d6 Damage Points), Tail 2d6 (4d6 Damage Points), Trampling* 2d6 (8d6 Damage Points), Swallowing* 2d6 (3d6 Damage Points).

Running 5, Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

Terrifying presence: seeing a dragon requires a successful *Steady nerves* Test, otherwise the character will be panicked (DT 12).

***Trampling:** any character hit by the claws or the tail of a dragon must succeed a Strength Test (DT 15) to avoid being knocked over and trampled during the same Round.

***Swallowing:** Any character bitten by a dragon must perform a successful Dodge Test (DT 9) or risk being swallowed and automatically suffer the Damage mentioned at each Round, until he dies or the dragon does. Note: a swallowed character can hit the dragon in the maw with a piercing weapon. He is then granted a +3 bonus and the dragon does not possess any natural protection against his Attack any more.

Breath: A dragon can exhale a cone-shaped breath of poisonous gas, which may be up to twenty meters long and a dozen meters wide. Anyone caught in the cone of breath must succeed a Dodge Test (DT 9) or suffer the effects of a poison with a Severity of 9.

Earth Monster

An earth monster is a powerful and primitive humanoid creature whose flesh is made of earth and clay, and whose bones and teeth are made of flint. Earth monsters have very long beards, and hair made of thorny vines and damp moss. Their huge hands end in fearsome flint claws. Earth monsters usually live in the depths of dark forests, alone or in groups of 1d6 creatures.

Dodge 7; Thick skin 1

LP 36

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1 or 2]: Heavy club 2d6 (3d6 Damage Points) or Claws 2d6 (2d6 Damage Points) and Bite 2d6 (2d6 Damage Points) Rock throwing* 2d6 (3d6 Damage Points)

Running 9, Alertness 7

Special Abilities:

***Rock throwing:** an earth monster can throw big stones and rocks, up to 40 meters away.

Fire Spirit

A fire Spirit is often a protective Spirit that can be found in the main campfire of some human settlements. If the members of the community give it enough offerings, the fire Spirit will provide the settlement with warmth and light. Sometimes it might also enlighten the clan or tribe members with its wisdom. But woe betides those who neglect such a Spirit: the fire will stop burning in their settlement and they will fall prey to various evils. A fire Spirit may take on several different appearances, but it often looks like a very small black-skinned human with red eyes, or a firebird.

Dodge 9; **Thick skin** 0

LP 15

Initiative 4d6

Attack(s) [1]: Burning claws 2d6 (1d6+2 Damage Points).

Running 12, **Alertness** 9

Special Abilities:

Fireball: the fire Spirit can throw small or big fireballs up to a distance of twenty meters. A small fireball can hit 1 target and cause 1d6+2 Damage Points. A big fireball can explode within a radius of 3 m and inflict 2d6+4 Damage Points. A fireball automatically hits its target, but the target can halve the burning effects with a successful *Dodge Test* (DT 9). A fire Spirit can throw a small fireball during each Round, but after having thrown a big fireball, it must wait 1d3 Rounds during which, it can only attack with its claws or defend itself.

Blessing / Curse: a fire Spirit can bless or curse a character or even an entire clan. Blessed characters are granted a +1 bonus to any Fire-lighting Test, and +1 to any *Resistance to cold* Test. Cursed characters suffer a -3 Penalty to their Fire-lighting score.

Ice Animals

Ice animals are a terrifying version of an ordinary animal, possessed by the ice Spirit sent by Xaär. Often white or grey, their bodies look like they're covered in frost and they are surrounded by ice-cold air. Short-tempered and unpredictable, Ice animals often turn out to be driven by some evil intent. They often live alone, but sometimes they can be seen in herds of 1d6 animals.

Dodge: same as regular animal;

Thick skin regular +1

LP regular +8

Initiative regular

Attack(s): regular, but the Damage inflicted is increased by 1d6 for each type of Attack.

Running and **Alertness:** regular

Special Abilities:

An Ice animal is immune to the effects of the cold, but it's very vulnerable to fire: fire causes double the Damage.

Arctic Breath: this is the most terrifying Attack of an Ice animal. This breath has a conical range of up to ten meters with a maximum width of half a dozen meters. Any creature within range of it suffers 3d6 Damage Points unless it is immune to the effects of the cold. A character can avoid this breath with a successful *Dodge Test* (DT 12), or reduce the Damage by half with a successful *Resistance to Cold Test* (DT 9). When an Ice animal has used its Arctic breath, it must wait for 1d6 Combat Rounds before it can use it again.



Ice Giant

Ice giants are colossal humanoid beings that live in the depths – or the heights – of the gigantic northern glaciers. They are almost 5 meters tall and their skin is chalky white. Their hair, beards and eyes are blue. These evil creatures live in tribes of a few individuals, usually 2d6 males, 2d6 females, and 1d6 children, sometimes including one or two shamans who have Xaär as their Auxiliary Spirit. You may also encounter marauder ice giants that travel on their own. Ice giants wear some furs and macabre jewelry, and they use an ice spear or a massive tree trunk as a heavy club.

Dodge 5; Thick skin 3 (2 for its own skin, 1 for the furs)

LP 54

Initiative 2d6-3

Attack(s) [1]: ice spear or giant heavy club 3d6 (5d6 Damage Points), Trampling* 2d6 (4d6 Damage Points).

Running 9, Alertness 7

Special Abilities:

***Trampling:** any human hit by the heavy club of a giant must perform a Strength Test (DT 9), or risk being knocked over and trampled during the same Round.

Resistance to Cold: ice giants are immune to the effects of even the most freezing cold. On the other hand, they suffer double the damage caused by fire (roll the dice twice and add the results).

Ice Shaman: A shaman from this giant people can try to contact the Ice Spirit to request its favors. They also possess the *Arctic breath* power, just like an Ice animal (see above).

Legendary Animal

A Legendary animal is an extremely powerful specimen of any type of animal belonging to the ice age fauna, often much bigger and stronger than the regular creatures of its species. This type of creature shows up from time to time, a creation of the great animal Spirits or of Ao herself, in order to strengthen a species or to carry out a particular task. A legendary animal is always unique when you meet it, but it may be surrounded by normal creatures of the same species.

Dodge: regular +2; **Thick skin** regular +1

LP regular +12

Initiative regular +2

Attack(s): same as the regular animal +2, and the Damage score is increased by 1d6 for each type of Attack.

Running regular +3; **Alertness** regular +3

Special Abilities:

A Legendary animal is always both magnificent and terrifying. Therefore any character facing such an opponent must roll a successful *Steady nerves* (DT 9) Test or be panicked as if he was hearing a *Combat cry* (see *Hunting rules*).

Mountain Giant

Mountain giants are massive humanoids that look like 4-meter-tall Bear-men. They wear dirty furs, their curly beards are huge and their hair disheveled. Their malevolent madness and stupidity can be seen in their eyes. A mountain giant almost always lives alone, hunting for itself, but it sometimes lives with a partner or in a group of 1d6 individuals. They use the trunk of a pine or birch tree as a heavy club.

Dodge 4; Thick skin 2 (1 for its own skin, 1 for the furs)

LP 48

Initiative 2d6

Running 7, Alertness 7

Attack(s) [1]: giant heavy club 3d6 (4d6 Damage Points), Trampling* 2d6 (3d6 Damage Points), Rock Throwing* 2d6 (4d6 Damage Points).

Special Abilities:

***Trampling:** any human hit by the heavy club of a giant must perform a Strength Test (DT 9), risk being knocked over and trampled during the same Round.

***Rock Throwing:** mountain giants excel at throwing huge rock blocks, which it can throw over a distance of up to 60 meters.

Skeleton

Moved by some evil magic or at the whim of the dark Spirits, a skeleton is always tied to the location where it died. It cannot get more than a hundred meters away from there, otherwise it will turn to dust. They are therefore often the guardians of a cave or some gruesome site. Skeletons are unable to speak, but they can almost unfailingly detect any intrusion into their territory. They can be found alone or in groups of 1d6, 2d6 even, or up to 4d6 individuals. Their characteristics are those of the original living creature, with a few variations:

Dodge: as before; **Thick skin** 0

LP as before -6

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [as before]: just like the initial creature, except the trunk for the mammoth (as before).

Running as before, **Alertness** 15

Special Abilities:

Fleshless Creature: due to its nature, a skeleton only suffers half the damage usually inflicted by sharp weapons. On the other hand, blunt weapons inflict damage increased by 1 Point.

Vulnerability to Exorcism: A successful *Exorcism* (DT 9) roll causes 3d6 Damage Points to 1d6 skeletons located less than 20 meters from the shaman.

Thorn Monster

A thorn monster is a malevolent creature that looks like a half-human half-plant. It stands about 1 meter tall, with a twisted body covered with sharp spikes. Thorn monsters can half-bury themselves in the forest soil, with only their back showing, making them look like bramble bushes. They catch their preys by surprise, as the thorn monster, half-man, half-plant, feeds on fresh blood as much as photosynthesis. Their spikes are coated with a lethal poison.

Dodge 8; **Thick skin** 2

LP 15

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Poisonous Claws 2d6 (1d6 Damage Points + poison)

Running 7, **Alertness** 7

Special Abilities:

Poison: the spikes of the thorn monster are poisonous. Anyone who touches them, or who is touched by them, must perform a Resistance to poison Test against a Severity of 7 (if a creature survives these effects once, it remains immune for 12 hours).



Unicorn

This very rare creature has a strange body, a cross between a horse and a snow leopard (especially the coat, which is spotted like a leopard's). There is a long, straight horn on its forehead that looks like that of a narwhal, and the horn can be up to 1 meter long. This magical creature is said to be benevolent and protective, and most of the tribes usually do not hunt it.

Dodge 9; Thick skin 1

LP 36

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [2]: Horn 2d6 (3d6 Damage Points), Bucking 2d6 (2d6 Damage Points).

Running 9, Alertness 12

Special Abilities:

Magic Healing: it is said that a unicorn can cure the wound of any woman or hunter who is pure in heart. If it wants to, the unicorn can give magic healing (+3d6 Stamina Points) up to 7 times a day. The healing is immediate.



Winged Dragon

A winged dragon is a reptilian creature from time before time that has large membranous wings, and a wingspan that can be up to 10 meters wide. Its long maw is full of powerful fangs and its claws are sharp as razors. Its terrifying cry will petrify anyone who hears it.

Dodge 5; Thick skin 2

LP 30

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [2]: Bite 3d6 (2d6 Damage Points), Claws 2d6 (2d6 Damage Points)

Flying 12, Running 5, Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

Terrifying Presence: seeing a winged dragon requires a successful *Steady nerves* Test, otherwise the character is panicked (DT 7).

Witch

A witch is a frightening woman, often an Elder, who possesses many shamanic powers and an ominous ability to curse people with her Terrifying Stare. Besides, she possesses a supernatural strength for a woman her age and long claw-like fingers. Witches live alone or in groups of 1d6 individuals.

Dodge 7 ; Thick skin 3 (1 for her own skin, 2 for the thick furs)

LP 30

Initiative 2d6

Attack(s) [1]: Claws 3d6 (2d6 Damage Points).

Running 7, Alertness 9

Special Abilities:

Terrifying Stare: three times a day, the witch can use the power of her stare to instill fear in her enemies. Any character catching her eye at that time must perform a successful *Steady nerves* Test (DT 9) or be terror-stricken. A terrorized character must perform a successful *Physical resistance* Test (DT 7) or be frightened to death. Even if he survives, he is terrified and must run as fast as possible from the witch, or fight if he can't run, with a Penalty of -3 to all his Skills.

Sorcery: a witch masters all the powers of Sorcery, and sometimes those of Enchantment or Shamanism.

Woman of the Waters

A Woman of the Waters is a fascinating magical creature that looks like a beautiful young woman, often naked. She sometimes appears in the waters of streams, springs, and rivers. It is said that she is the Spirit of a drowned woman coming back to haunt the river where she died, to drown reckless men in return. Others think it's an incarnation of a spring Spirit that came to guide and help humans.

Dodge 8; Thick skin 0

LP 18

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [1]: flint knife 2d6 (1d6 Damage Points).

Swimming 12, Running 7, Alertness 12

Special Abilities:

Water Spirit: a Woman of the Waters can breathe underwater and in the air as well, but she can't go any further than 100 meters from her river. She moves very quickly in the water and a successful visual Perception Test (DT 9) is required to spot her. A Woman of the Waters can grant the ability to breathe underwater to a maximum of four people per day.

Enchanting Song: her voice is so extraordinary that, if she so decides, any male character standing less than 100 meters from her, must perform a successful Wisdom Test (DT 9) or be enchanted. An enchanted man can only think of one thing: to go with the Woman of the Waters and satisfy her every whim, even if it means following her into the depths. If he starts to drown, the character may perform another Wisdom Test (DT 7). A man who manages to withstand the power of the Enchanting song is immune to its power for 24 hours. A man who succumbs to the song but doesn't drown can perform a new Wisdom Test each day, to try (if he wants to) to free himself from the effects of the spell.

Wraith

A wraith is a malevolent creature returned from the afterlife to carry out an evil action, look for revenge, or terrify the living. It has the shape of the initial creature, but it seems to be made of shadows or a whitish mist.

Dodge 10; Thick skin 0

LP 30

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [1]: Icy touch 3d6 (3d6 Damage Points*).

Running 12, Alertness 15

Special Abilities:

***Icy Touch:** If the Attack of a wraith is successful, the target must perform a Resistance to cold Test. If the victim's Test is successful, the Damage Points are divided by 2. No non magical protection can block these damage.

Spectral Body: only enchanted weapons can harm a wraith. However they cannot kill it: at 0 LP, the wraith vanishes and chased away for 1d6 days, but it will keep coming back until it has been calmed or exorcized.

Calm: a character can try to understand why the wraith has materialized: if he finds out, he can act in a way that will calm the wraith, for instance by digging a grave or by performing a ritual once overlooked.

Vulnerability to Exorcism: to chase a wraith away, the Shaman can perform an *Exorcism Test* (SD 9) once per Round. If the Test is successful, the wraith loses 3d6 Life Points (doubled on a Critical Success). But this is a dangerous action: on a *Catastrophe*, the shaman automatically suffers the damage caused by the wraith.



Roudier
2012

9. Prehistoric Adventures

Being set in the ice age period of prehistory means that your adventures can have a rich variety of themes (contrary to what you might think at first). Below, you will find a detailed list of suggestions for prehistoric adventures that can be a basis for the scenarios you can provide for your players. Of course, these are only a few examples to get you started.

The random table below, based on these adventure suggestions, can even allow you to improvise a quick adventure just by rolling a few dice.

9.1. Inspirations for Prehistoric Adventures

Preventing a Disaster

In this type of adventure, the Elders' Council, or maybe a Spirit, has warned the characters that a disaster is about to affect their tribe, or even several tribes. In most cases, to prevent this disaster, the characters will have to go to a specific place and carry out a difficult ritual to convince the Spirits to leave them alone. For example, the Ice Spirit could be threatening to make winter last longer, or an evil Spirit might be planning to chase away the game animals and cause a famine. Then again, it could also be about preventing a major conflict between several tribes. This kind of adventure can be quite difficult, and a secondary objective can often be necessary (see random table), but it can also be a chance to earn plenty of Prestige Points!

Freeing One or More Captives

This adventure will send the characters to the rescue of one or several clan members who have been captured by another tribe. The identity of the victims' captor(s) can


be very different from one adventure to the next. It could be a hostile tribe in need of more women, a cursed tribe for whom cannibalism is the only way that they can feed, a member of the characters' own tribe who has kidnapped a cousin's wife or child out of jealousy or malice. The perpetrator could even be an evil Spirit (and that makes things even more complicated) or a fantastical creature if you are using them in the game. Table 8 gives you a random list of characters. As for the location where the captives are being held, you can use table 4 (adventure locations) if you wish, although in most cases the captives will be held in the camp of the hostile tribe, or in a small, hidden cave nearby.

Killing a Monster

This adventure places the characters in a situation where a fearsome monster, either natural or fantastical (see the *Animals Guide*), is terrorizing the tribe and causing significant damage. It could be a pride of lions or a mean-spirited rhinoceros, or it could be a giant or a dragon if you are using fantastical creatures. In most cases, it is up to the characters to find the monster (or monsters) and defeat it, and of course they will need to perform the appeasement rituals after the killing. Often the monster will be prowling around the camp, but sometimes the characters will need to travel to a faraway place (see table 4) to kill the monster. In that case, it will probably be one of multiple objectives within a complex adventure (see table 2).

Appeasing a Spirit

For a reason of your own choosing, a Spirit has cursed a member of the tribe, or maybe the whole community. The characters are going to have to find a way



to appease the Spirit's anger and convince it to stop persecuting the victim or victims. The punishment can be well deserved or completely unfair, it's up to you. Table 5 gives a random list of Spirits who can be involved in this kind of adventure. To appease this Spirit, the characters may have to repair an offense (such as forgetting to perform a ritual or stealing a charm from the possessive Spirit of a dead person), but it could also be a case of bargaining with an evil Spirit by offering a sacrifice or by accomplishing some sort of initiatory quest.

Searching for Materials

During this kind of adventure, the characters will go looking for some sort of rare raw materials, often on demand from the Elders' Council or of the whole tribe, but sometimes also on their own initiative. They could be looking for a very rare medicinal plant, high quality flint stones, specific types of bones required to build a totem pole, a precious fur pelt to give to a woman in order to woo her... There are many possibilities and table 6 gives a random list of sought-after items. The location in which to search for these items can be obvious (by the seaside for seashells, for example), but you can also choose the location of the adventure randomly (see table 4).

Going Hunting

Of course, this is the most common type of adventure. In most cases, the characters are simply sent out to bring back enough food to feed the tribe. However, in an adventure with multiple objectives (see table 2), a "patron" can request that they bring back a specific type of game animal. To choose the hunted animal, you can use the game animals table in Chapter 3.3. (Hunting and food). If you like, you can spice things up a bit, for example by adding a legendary creature

to the list of prey to capture (but be careful, they are tough!).

Searching for a Magical Object

The characters can go looking for a specific enchanted object, be it on the orders of the clan Elders, for a Spirit, or based solely on their own desires. Table 7 gives you a random list of the objects in question. You are free to decide the reason for which the characters (or maybe only one of them, why not?) will embark on this quest. Most of the time the desired object will be guarded by a tribe, or by a monster or Spirit (see table 8) in a faraway place (see table 4), and the characters will need to overcome a series of challenges for bravery or wisdom before the object is handed over to them, or they can get their hands on it some other way.

Building an Alliance

In this kind of adventure, the characters are sent – usually on the orders of the Elders' Council – to build an alliance with another tribe. The other tribe can be more or less hostile towards them, but at best they are indifferent, maybe a tribe from the other people. There can be many reasons for wanting to establish this alliance: sharing a hunting territory, taking part in a very difficult but potentially lucrative hunt, a man from their tribe wanting to marry a woman from the other...). The conditions of this alliance are up to you, but in any case, they will require that the characters show their diplomatic talents. In some cases, this alliance can be formed with a Spirit or even with a fantastical being, like a witch or a unicorn. In these situations the creature will ask the characters to do them a favor, or it can carry out an initiation ritual, as you wish. Table 8 gives you a random list of people or creatures to build this alliance with.



Investigating a Mystery

A mystery has affected the characters' tribe. An unexplained disappearance, a horrible murder with an unknown perpetrator, a cowardly threat that nobody will admit to... The players' characters will need to investigate and unravel the threads of this mystery. Bear in mind that the culprit may not be a member of the tribe, that it could also be a Spirit or even an animal, and that their motive may not be truly evil (revenge, madness...). If you feel the need to, you can roll a die and check table 8 to get an idea of the person or creature at the heart of this mystery.

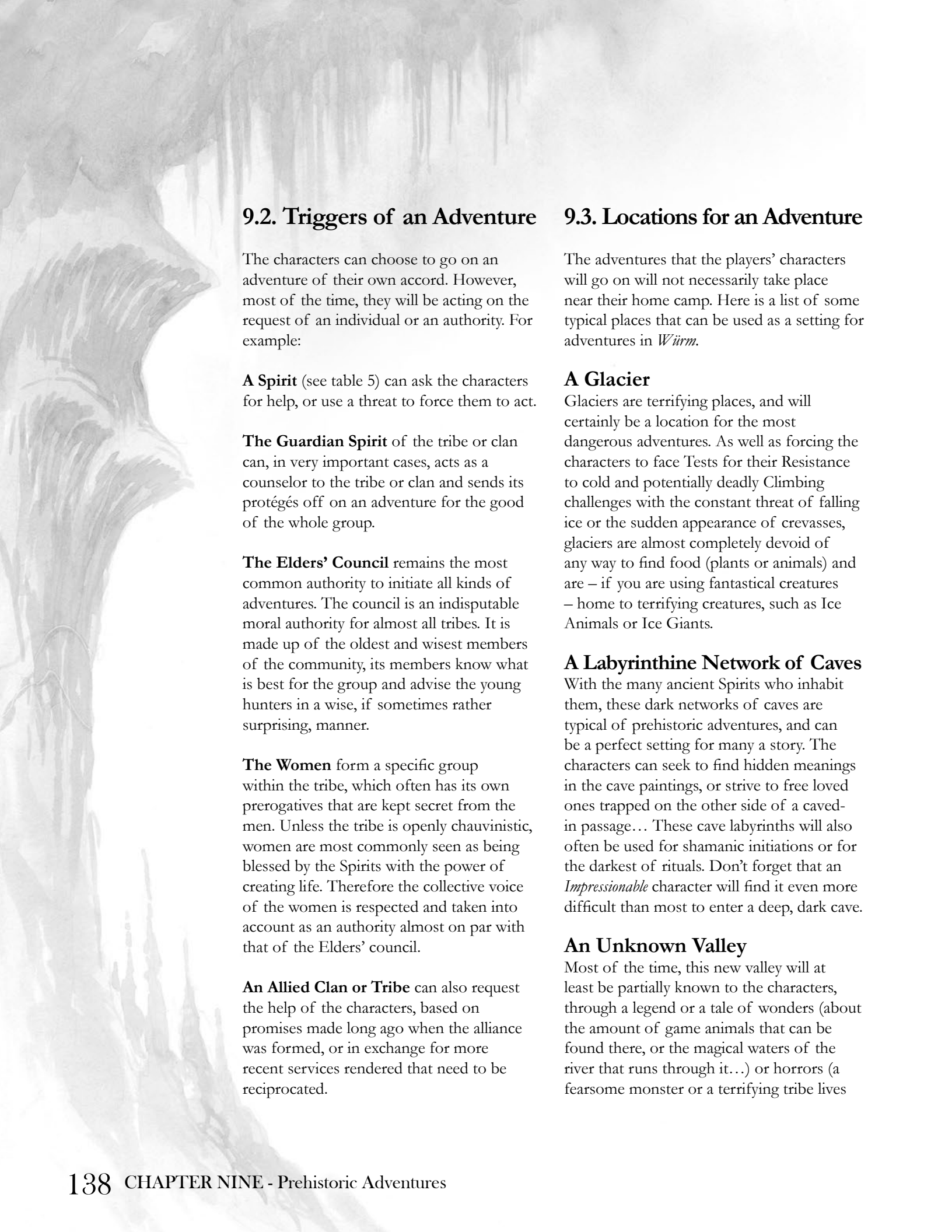
Conducting a Revenge Attack

Revenge! Following a severe affront to the characters' tribe, the Elders' Council has decided to launch a revenge attack against the tribe that caused it (roll a die and check table 9). The original affront could be the theft or rape of women or children, the murder of tribe members, the desecration of a sacred place, the robbing of graves or any other serious action that requires a fast and furious response. The attack could be direct

(just walk up and start killing everyone) or sneaky (in a small hidden group ready to attack in the black of night) and can either aim to kill as many people as possible, or to kill a specific person (the chief or the shaman for example), or to desecrate the other tribe's sacred place in return. It's up to you!

Conducting a Pillage Attack

This time, this kind of adventure will send the characters off on an attack that is not motivated by revenge: the only aim is to steal something from another tribe (roll a die and check table 9 to determine the kind of tribe). The object of the theft can be a specific object (see tables 6 or 7), but most often the aim will be to steal food or women. It's up to you whether this attack is a simple display of force or necessary for survival (all the tribe's women are dead, famine is taking a toll...). Whatever the reason, be wary of revenge. The surviving members of the targeted tribe may seek revenge, the Spirits of those who died in combat, or maybe even vengeful Spirits sent by a shaman as punishment.



9.2. Triggers of an Adventure

The characters can choose to go on an adventure of their own accord. However, most of the time, they will be acting on the request of an individual or an authority. For example:

A Spirit (see table 5) can ask the characters for help, or use a threat to force them to act.

The Guardian Spirit of the tribe or clan can, in very important cases, acts as a counselor to the tribe or clan and sends its protégés off on an adventure for the good of the whole group.

The Elders' Council remains the most common authority to initiate all kinds of adventures. The council is an indisputable moral authority for almost all tribes. It is made up of the oldest and wisest members of the community, its members know what is best for the group and advise the young hunters in a wise, if sometimes rather surprising, manner.

The Women form a specific group within the tribe, which often has its own prerogatives that are kept secret from the men. Unless the tribe is openly chauvinistic, women are most commonly seen as being blessed by the Spirits with the power of creating life. Therefore the collective voice of the women is respected and taken into account as an authority almost on par with that of the Elders' council.

An Allied Clan or Tribe can also request the help of the characters, based on promises made long ago when the alliance was formed, or in exchange for more recent services rendered that need to be reciprocated.

9.3. Locations for an Adventure

The adventures that the players' characters will go on will not necessarily take place near their home camp. Here is a list of some typical places that can be used as a setting for adventures in *Würm*.

A Glacier

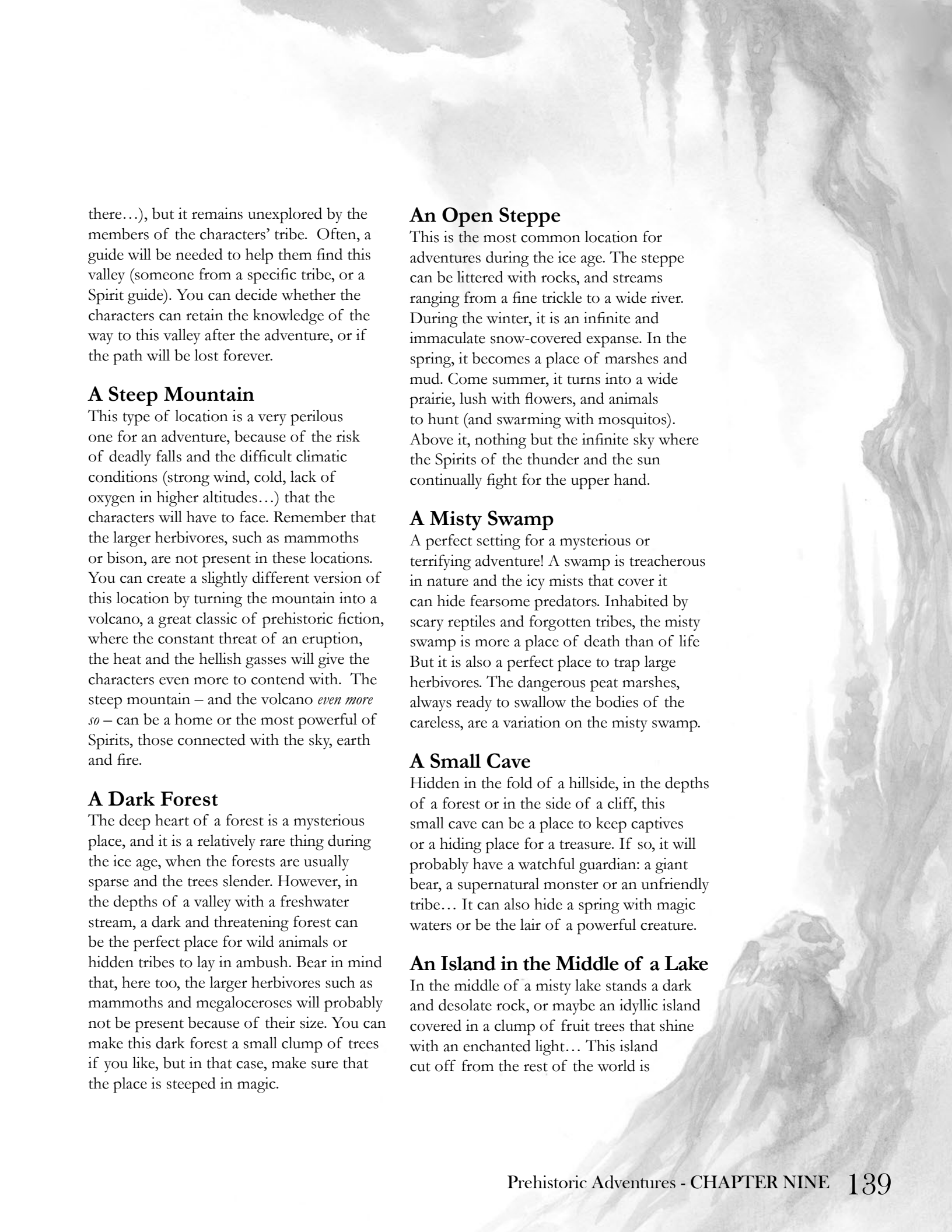
Glaciers are terrifying places, and will certainly be a location for the most dangerous adventures. As well as forcing the characters to face Tests for their Resistance to cold and potentially deadly Climbing challenges with the constant threat of falling ice or the sudden appearance of crevasses, glaciers are almost completely devoid of any way to find food (plants or animals) and are – if you are using fantastical creatures – home to terrifying creatures, such as Ice Animals or Ice Giants.

A Labyrinthine Network of Caves

With the many ancient Spirits who inhabit them, these dark networks of caves are typical of prehistoric adventures, and can be a perfect setting for many a story. The characters can seek to find hidden meanings in the cave paintings, or strive to free loved ones trapped on the other side of a caved-in passage... These cave labyrinths will also often be used for shamanic initiations or for the darkest of rituals. Don't forget that an *Impressionable* character will find it even more difficult than most to enter a deep, dark cave.

An Unknown Valley

Most of the time, this new valley will at least be partially known to the characters, through a legend or a tale of wonders (about the amount of game animals that can be found there, or the magical waters of the river that runs through it...) or horrors (a fearsome monster or a terrifying tribe lives



there...), but it remains unexplored by the members of the characters' tribe. Often, a guide will be needed to help them find this valley (someone from a specific tribe, or a Spirit guide). You can decide whether the characters can retain the knowledge of the way to this valley after the adventure, or if the path will be lost forever.

A Steep Mountain

This type of location is a very perilous one for an adventure, because of the risk of deadly falls and the difficult climatic conditions (strong wind, cold, lack of oxygen in higher altitudes...) that the characters will have to face. Remember that the larger herbivores, such as mammoths or bison, are not present in these locations. You can create a slightly different version of this location by turning the mountain into a volcano, a great classic of prehistoric fiction, where the constant threat of an eruption, the heat and the hellish gasses will give the characters even more to contend with. The steep mountain – and the volcano *even more so* – can be a home or the most powerful of Spirits, those connected with the sky, earth and fire.

A Dark Forest

The deep heart of a forest is a mysterious place, and it is a relatively rare thing during the ice age, when the forests are usually sparse and the trees slender. However, in the depths of a valley with a freshwater stream, a dark and threatening forest can be the perfect place for wild animals or hidden tribes to lay in ambush. Bear in mind that, here too, the larger herbivores such as mammoths and megaloceroses will probably not be present because of their size. You can make this dark forest a small clump of trees if you like, but in that case, make sure that the place is steeped in magic.

An Open Steppe

This is the most common location for adventures during the ice age. The steppe can be littered with rocks, and streams ranging from a fine trickle to a wide river. During the winter, it is an infinite and immaculate snow-covered expanse. In the spring, it becomes a place of marshes and mud. Come summer, it turns into a wide prairie, lush with flowers, and animals to hunt (and swarming with mosquitos). Above it, nothing but the infinite sky where the Spirits of the thunder and the sun continually fight for the upper hand.

A Misty Swamp

A perfect setting for a mysterious or terrifying adventure! A swamp is treacherous in nature and the icy mists that cover it can hide fearsome predators. Inhabited by scary reptiles and forgotten tribes, the misty swamp is more a place of death than of life. But it is also a perfect place to trap large herbivores. The dangerous peat marshes, always ready to swallow the bodies of the careless, are a variation on the misty swamp.

A Small Cave

Hidden in the fold of a hillside, in the depths of a forest or in the side of a cliff, this small cave can be a place to keep captives or a hiding place for a treasure. If so, it will probably have a watchful guardian: a giant bear, a supernatural monster or an unfriendly tribe... It can also hide a spring with magic waters or be the lair of a powerful creature.

An Island in the Middle of a Lake

In the middle of a misty lake stands a dark and desolate rock, or maybe an idyllic island covered in a clump of fruit trees that shine with an enchanted light... This island cut off from the rest of the world is



a privileged place for Spirits to live, be they good or evil, and it can often be associated with the gateway between the world of the living and the world of the dead or the Spirit world. Because of this, the island can be a place for burial or for initiation, but it is most often unknown to humans.

The Coast of the Sea

The great sandy beaches, the cavernous sea caves, the towering waves crashing against the rocks... The sea is an impressive place that hides terrifying mysteries. Many tribes have set up their camps along the coastline and live off their fishing or gathering shellfish on the shore. However, very few of them would dare to venture out to sea, searching for mysterious islands or extraordinary catches.

Using the Adventure Creation Table

This random table was designed to help you improvise an adventure for *Würm* with just a few rolls of the dice. Here are instructions on how to use this tool:

1. Define the trigger of the adventure:

This step is not mandatory, and you can choose the person who triggers the adventure yourself, depending on the theme of the adventure that you have picked. These characters are outlined in Chapter 9.2.

2. Define the complexity of the adventure:

Roll 1d6 twice. The result of the first throw indicates the number of objectives the adventure will include, and the second roll the number of places that the characters will need to visit.

3. Define the objective or objectives of the adventure:

Roll 2d6 and check the table. If the adventure includes several objectives, then roll 2d6 as many times as necessary.

Random WÜRM Adventure Creation Table

1 Triggers of the Adventure

Roll 1d6 to define who will send the characters on their adventure:

- 1 a Spirit (see table 5)
- 2 the tribe or clan's Guardian Spirit
- 3-4 the Elders' Council
- 5 the clan's women
- 6 an allied tribe or clan

2 Complexity

Roll 1d6 twice to define the number of objectives and locations during the adventure:

- 1-3 1 objective or location
- 4-5 2 objectives or locations
- 6 3 objectives or locations

3 Objectives

Roll 2d6

The trigger character asks the characters to:

- 2 prevent a catastrophe
- 3 free one or several captives (see table 8)
- 4 kill a monster (see the animal guide)
- 5 appease a Spirit (see table 5)
- 6 search for materials 1 (see table 6)
- 7 go hunting (see table of game animals)
- 8 search for materials 2 (see table 7)
- 9 build an alliance (see table 8)
- 10 investigate a mystery (see table 8)
- 11 conduct a revenge attack (see table 9)
- 12 conduct a pillage attack (see table 9)

4 Location(s) for the Adventure

Roll 2d6

- 2 a glacier
- 3 a labyrinthine network of caves
- 4 an unknown valley
- 5 a steep mountain (or a volcano)
- 6 a dark forest
- 7 an open steppe
- 8 a misty swamp (or a peat marsh)
- 9 a small cave
- 10 an island in the middle of a lake
- 11 the coast of the sea
- 12 roll the dice again

5 Spirits

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 elementary Spirit
- 3-4 animal Spirit
- 5-6 ancestral Spirit

6 Searching for Materials: Rare Raw Materials

Roll 1d6

- 1 plant(s) (medicinal herbs, bark...)
- 2 rocks (flint, quartz...)
- 3 pigments for paint
- 4 bone(s) (skull or special long bone)
- 5 skin(s) or fur(s)
- 6 seashells

7 Searching for Materials: Magical Objects

Roll 1d6

- 1 charm (statuette)
- 2 charm (jewelry)
- 3 charm (clothing item) or magic weapon
- 4 magic weapon
- 5 good potion
- 6 evil potion

8 Characters

Roll 1d6

- 1 a hostile tribe
- 2 a desperate tribe
- 3 a member of the home clan
- 4 a predator (or group of predators)
- 5 a fantastical creature
- 6 a Spirit

9 Tribes


Roll 1d6

- 1-2 an allied tribe
- 3-5 an enemy tribe
- 6 a cannibal tribe

10 Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1-3 no complications
- 4-5 rivalry / race
- 6 betrayal



It is then up to you to organize those objectives in the order that suits you, and the hierarchy of priorities that seems the most interesting. The various types of objectives are listed in Chapter 9.1.

4. Define the locations for the adventure:

Roll 2d6 as many times as necessary depending on the result of step 2 and to remain coherent with the objectives of the adventure. Feel free to roll the dice again if a location does not suit you. These locations for adventures are listed in Chapter 9.3.

5. Use the additional tables:

Depending on the objectives you rolled, you may need to roll the dice again against tables 5, 6, 7, 8 or 9. Feel free to roll the dice again and again until you reach a result that suits and inspires you, of course.

6. Define the complications:

Roll 1d6:

If the result is a 1, 2 or 3, then there are no complications and the adventure will be played out as it is.

If the result is a 4 or 5, then, on top of the adventure as defined previously, the characters will have to contend with a rival team who are attempting to carry out the same mission as them but better or quicker (finding an object or killing a monster first, coming back from a hunt with more game, etc.). These rivals can be members of the characters' tribe, or they can be members of allied or hostile tribes. It is up to the players to decide if, in addition to the difficulties of the adventure, they would rather get rid of these annoying rivals (if they are allowed to do so!).

If the result of the roll is a 6, then the characters will be betrayed. Often this would be because the trigger character sent them on their adventure for false reasons or with unthinkable intentions, and is attempting to reach a different objective than the one they were told, but through the same means. The characters can discover this betrayal during the adventure, or at the end of it, providing a possible plot twist that could lead the characters to seek compensation or to repair the harm they might have caused (for example in a case where they thought they were acting for the good of the tribe but were in fact acting against it). This betrayal can also be caused by another character, jealous of the fact that the characters were given an important mission, who will attempt to kill or prevent the characters from carrying out their mission.

9.4. Option : Playing Würm with Little or No Magic

This is an option to amend the rules to assist any Game Masters who want to master a game of *Würm* in a more realistic or concrete world where magic plays no part.

If the Game Master wants to retain a fantastical world but wants to use magic differently in game, the modification systems suggested below can, with a different interpretation, be used to provide a more ambiguous version of magic, a far more mysterious version, as it is not in any way accessible to the players themselves. If you are interested in playing *Würm* this way, here are the changes that you can make at the start of the game, before the characters' adventures begin.



Strengths and Weaknesses – The Strengths and Weaknesses don't change at all, neither in their effects nor in their name, for better or worse. However, the totemic bond is not always effective, and a totem animal can very well attack a character who is connected to it (it is then possibly up to the character to try and give some form of explanation for this attack, be it rational or supernatural) For all the members of all communities, the totemic bond that connects a man to an animal (or to the ancestors) is perfectly real and is never questioned (unless in the case of an attack, as previously mentioned). If a character kills his or her totem animal, it is up to the Game Master to decide, depending on the circumstances, if the benefits of the Strength associated with that animal are lost permanently or temporarily, due to the psychological shock of the event.


Talents – When it comes to crafts, the *Body art* Talent changes a little: the *Blood of Ao* (red ocher) no longer improves the character's natural protection but it does repel mosquitos! It can however give him a morale boost of 1d6 when it comes to performing some specific actions (combat, ceremonies) if the Game Master allows it. The effects of the *Skin of Night* remain the same.

Painting can no longer be used as a shamanic focal aid (see below). Or rather, it can still be used that way, but its effects are no longer measurable. The same goes for sculpture.

Shamanism – Shamanism disappears completely, leaving only a deliberate vagueness. It is up to each Game Master to decide whether or not each manifestation of magic, whether sought after or imposed upon the characters, can actually have any effect, rather than merely being due to their imagination. However, the players have no control over this whatsoever.

Enchantment – This can be retained as an option, by arguing that the benefits conferred by things like charms and magic weapons are in fact due to a gain in self-confidence and other psychological advantages. It is up to the Game Master to make that decision at the beginning of the campaign, once he knows what kind of perils he is planning on confronting his characters with. In any case, it may be interesting to make the effects of enchantments unreliable, irregular, at times inefficient, to increase the wariness or the fear that the supernatural world inspires.





Sorcery – It does not completely disappear. The Teachings of the Marshes is removed, but the recipe for the *Sleep Potion* becomes a part of the Teachings of the Tundra. The *Life Potion* is still used, however, it becomes “just” a powerful antipyretic and antiseptic drink. It therefore allows a decrease of 2d6 of the Severity of an illness (and that’s already a good start!) and its DT goes down from 15 to 12.

The Powers of the Spirits – The Guardian Spirit’s Manna pool is transformed. It becomes a sort of representation of the “team spirit” of the tribe or group, and although it does not have a supernatural entity as a source, its effects are quite real. This represents the extreme importance of the group’s cohesion when it comes to survival during the ice age. Therefore, the way it works remains exactly the same, whether it’s using it or regenerating it. Favors and Curses disappear... or not. It’s up to each Game Master to decide, depending on how real or virtual he wants to make the supernatural element of the campaign (and his own mood, which could just as well be the same as that of the Spirits), whether he wants to apply Favors or Curses and just how real, or simply psychological, they are. One way or another, nothing should keep the players, especially those who are close to the Shaman archetype, from trying to commune with the Spirits and ask for their help. The importance given to this attitude, both humble and brave when confronted with the mysteries of the universe, must remain a key part of the interpretation of the prehistoric characters in *Würm*.

Fantastical Creatures – If the Game Master wishes to run a campaign without any form of magic, then it is preferable to remove them from the universe completely. However, if the Game Master wishes to retain the presence of the supernatural in his campaign, he can keep the fantastical animals, even though the use of magic is no longer available as part of the player characters’ skills. One way or another, if the fantastical creatures disappear from the reality of the world of *Würm*, they remain present in the characters’ imaginations, and the Game Master shouldn’t hesitate to reference them (is that moaning sound the wind in the trees or the song of a Woman of the Waters? Was that the silhouette of a mountain giant you saw at the top of the mountain, just before the landslide started?)

The “Magical” Powers of Suggestion – a character or an NPC who has a recognized social status as a shaman, healer, sorcerer or similar role, and who has therefore followed a training where he learned the necessary gestures and words, chants and dances, can perfectly well use the rules laid out for conducting a ceremony to make his “magic” work, using powerful powers of suggestion (see Chapter 3.2). With a DT of 7 or 9 depending on the circumstances, this character can have an effect on another person. With a DT of 9 or 12, the celebrant can have an effect on a whole group. If the celebrant succeeds his action, and if he is using his powers for good, then the affected person or group gets a bonus of 1d6 for their next die roll (to be chosen by the celebrant, of course) to be made during the course of the day, whether it’s a Throwing Test for a javelin or a Resistance Test for an illness. If the celebrant is casting an evil spell over the person or group, then they suffer a penalty of -3 for the next die roll (also chosen by the celebrant) to be made during the course of the same day. They do have the possibility to ward off this spell by resisting it, as for a Curse (see Chapter 6.3.).

Laoki's Agony

9.5. Beginners' Scenario

This is a scenario that you can use to play your very first game of Würm. It was designed to easily let you get to know the many aspects and rules of the game's universe. The storyline is voluntarily straightforward to make it easier to follow for a beginner Game Master. The length of this scenario may require you to break it up into several game sessions. This scenario is designed for a team of Bear-men, but you can change it around for Long Men characters, with a few changes in the story and the ages of the characters.

A Quick Overview of the Story

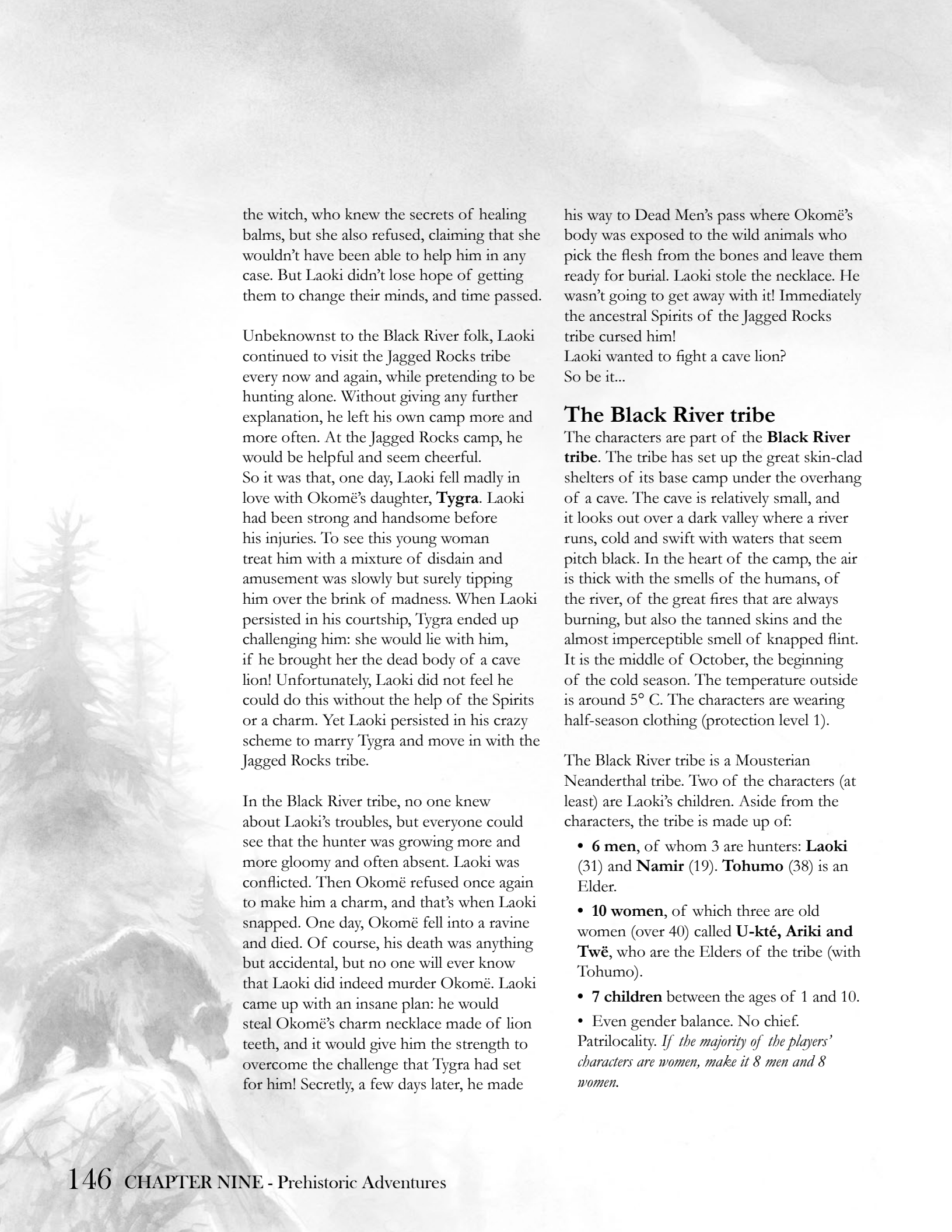
A small river trickles down between the majestic cliff sides of the valley. Then it begins to wind its way through a hillier region where bulrushes and birches grow along its banks. This is the **Black River***. For generations untold, this has been the name given to it by the tribe of Bear-men who live in the valley. A few other tribes live in this area: the Giant Stag tribe and the Old Fire tribe in the south, and in the mountains above the valley, in the northeast, the Jagged Rocks tribe. Traditionally, the Black River tribe had always been an ally of the Jagged Rocks tribe, and the many interactions and alliances brought much good for all. That was until the fatal hunt, ten years ago...

Back then, **Kumpaq** the rough was the hunt leader of the Black River tribe, a mature man with an amazing strength and a brutal personality. **Dour**, from the Jagged Rocks tribe, the brother of **Okomë** the charm-maker, had married **Twë** from the Black River, a few years beforehand. One tragic day, during a bison hunt, Dour was gored and trampled, and his breath left him. The hunt hadn't been poor, but Dour's death remained on everyone's mind, and suddenly

Okomë accused **Tohumo**, a hunter from the Black River, of having recklessly, maybe even deliberately, brought about Dour's death. At this, the hunters of the Black River became angry, and pointed out that none of the hunters from the Jagged Rocks had brought down a single bison this time, and had therefore lacked in bravery. Voices were raised and the situation escalated quickly. A fight broke out between Okomë et Tohumo, and soon **Faudagg** and Kumpaq joined in. Later came the time to share out the bison. As Kumpaq would not back down, the shares were made to the clear disadvantage of the Jagged Rocks tribe, to make up for the death of Dour, Okomë's insult and their hunters' lack of bravery. Before heading back up into the mountains, Okomë cursed Kumpaq. After that, the Jagged Rocks tribe cut off all relations with the Black River... And Kumpaq died the next winter.

Seven years later, during a hunt, **Laoki**, a hunter from the Black River tribe who had been present during the unfortunate hunt, was also gored by a bison. He did not die from his wounds, but he suffered serious damage and became a lesser man (*Weak and Clumsy*), and more importantly, he became very bitter. A year after his misfortune, he decided to travel secretly to see the Jagged Rocks people and ask for their help.

Laoki had always been a great friend to Okomë, and he admired him for his talent as a charm-maker. Laoki entered the Jagged Rocks camp with many gifts, and was at first met with hostility... but in the end his efforts paid off and he managed to rebuild a good relationship. Straight away, he asked his friend Okomë if he could make him some charms that would help compensate for his new handicaps, but Okomë refused. The disappointed Laoki turned to **Tavarra**



the witch, who knew the secrets of healing balms, but she also refused, claiming that she wouldn't have been able to help him in any case. But Laoki didn't lose hope of getting them to change their minds, and time passed.

Unbeknownst to the Black River folk, Laoki continued to visit the Jagged Rocks tribe every now and again, while pretending to be hunting alone. Without giving any further explanation, he left his own camp more and more often. At the Jagged Rocks camp, he would be helpful and seem cheerful. So it was that, one day, Laoki fell madly in love with Okomë's daughter, **Tygra**. Laoki had been strong and handsome before his injuries. To see this young woman treat him with a mixture of disdain and amusement was slowly but surely tipping him over the brink of madness. When Laoki persisted in his courtship, Tygra ended up challenging him: she would lie with him, if he brought her the dead body of a cave lion! Unfortunately, Laoki did not feel he could do this without the help of the Spirits or a charm. Yet Laoki persisted in his crazy scheme to marry Tygra and move in with the Jagged Rocks tribe.

In the Black River tribe, no one knew about Laoki's troubles, but everyone could see that the hunter was growing more and more gloomy and often absent. Laoki was conflicted. Then Okomë refused once again to make him a charm, and that's when Laoki snapped. One day, Okomë fell into a ravine and died. Of course, his death was anything but accidental, but no one will ever know that Laoki did indeed murder Okomë. Laoki came up with an insane plan: he would steal Okomë's charm necklace made of lion teeth, and it would give him the strength to overcome the challenge that Tygra had set for him! Secretly, a few days later, he made

his way to Dead Men's pass where Okomë's body was exposed to the wild animals who pick the flesh from the bones and leave them ready for burial. Laoki stole the necklace. He wasn't going to get away with it! Immediately the ancestral Spirits of the Jagged Rocks tribe cursed him!

Laoki wanted to fight a cave lion?
So be it...

The Black River tribe

The characters are part of the **Black River tribe**. The tribe has set up the great skin-clad shelters of its base camp under the overhang of a cave. The cave is relatively small, and it looks out over a dark valley where a river runs, cold and swift with waters that seem pitch black. In the heart of the camp, the air is thick with the smells of the humans, of the river, of the great fires that are always burning, but also the tanned skins and the almost imperceptible smell of knapped flint. It is the middle of October, the beginning of the cold season. The temperature outside is around 5° C. The characters are wearing half-season clothing (protection level 1).

The Black River tribe is a Mousterian Neanderthal tribe. Two of the characters (at least) are Laoki's children. Aside from the characters, the tribe is made up of:

- **6 men**, of whom 3 are hunters: **Laoki** (31) and **Namir** (19). **Tohumo** (38) is an Elder.
 - **10 women**, of which three are old women (over 40) called **U-kté**, **Ariki** and **Twë**, who are the Elders of the tribe (with Tohumo).
 - **7 children** between the ages of 1 and 10.
 - Even gender balance. No chief.
- Patrilocality. *If the majority of the players' characters are women, make it 8 men and 8 women.*

Guardian Spirit: The Black River

(+ Great Red Bear and ancestors).

The tribe follows sacred rituals connected with the Spirits of the Black River, the sun and the Great Bear. The “dance of the river” is the simplest of these celebratory rituals (DT 3): it involves dancing quite slowly around a container full of the water of the river, wetting your face with some of this water and then saluting the sun above. This ritual can be used by the characters to regenerate the Manna pool: successfully performing it once adds 1 die to the pool. If the result of the Test is a *Catastrophe*, the character knocks the pot of water over. He is then *Ashamed*, and suffers a -1 penalty for all his die rolls until the next day.

Taboos:

Incest taboo, totem taboo, cannibalism taboo. It is taboo to cross the Black River while carrying a dead animal, unless an offering is made to the river with a part of that animal. Simply put, the Black River defines the boundaries of the tribe's territory.

Secret Combat Techniques:

Fight like a bear, Fight like a bull (Tohumo can teach these)

Food:

At the beginning of the game, the tribe has meat from three ibex and a small stock of other meats and dried fishes, adding up to a total of 200 food rations. This is enough to eat to one's full for 4 days, or to eat for 8 days if stretched out a little.

The Members of the Tribe:

Laoki is an older man with a handsome face. He was wounded on a hunt, a few years ago, and is no longer as good a hunter as he once was. He is still one of the tribe's

hunters, but he is clearly less talented than he used to be. Since he was wounded, he speaks rarely, often sits around daydreaming and frequently gets angry at the children. Physically speaking, he has a powerful build, with very wide shoulders. But he still carries the marks of his wounds: a badly healed scar across his belly and a twisted right arm.

Namir is a slim man with muscles like cables, very dark hair, thick and bushy like a lion's mane. He has been leading the hunts since Laoki was injured. He has a jovial personality and has a twin sister named Kaadi.

Tohumo has grey hair and a big bushy beard. Although he was once very strong, he is now quite fat and arthritis has begun to take over all his limbs. He is wise and generous and especially likes getting deloused by the young women of the tribe.

U-kte is a woman with a very small body but a very loud voice. She knows more legends than anyone else, but she doesn't have much of a sense of humor. She is the Voice of the Ancestors. Her hair hangs down to the ground and is decorated with knucklebones that are said to have belonged to the ancestors themselves.

Ariki is a jolly old woman, curvy and very good with her hands. Her teeth are all worn down from chewing on skins to harden them during the tanning process.

Twë is the third of the Elder women. She is built like a sturdy man and, despite her older years, she can still hold her own when wrestling with the younger hunters of the clan. When she was younger, she would sometimes hunt big game, with the blessing of the ancestors.

The Adventure Begins

The characters are outside, a few kilometers from the cave where they live. They have come out to **fish** and to pick up six **snare**s they set the day before. Have them play out these activities (see Chapter 3). There are 2 chances out of 6 that a small animal has been caught in each of the snares. Each small animal can provide 1d3 food rations.

On their way back to their camp, the characters are walking along the banks of the Black River. When they are just a few hundred meters inside the entrance to the valley, and the slopes are not too steep, they suddenly come across the body of one of their clan members, lying in the river. The man is barely conscious and terrified. He is calling out for help. The man is **Laoki**, the father of some of the characters, and he has been missing for the last few days! He claims to have been attacked by the most gigantic lion there ever was. As he ran from the beast, he fell from a rocky outcrop about ten meters high, down into the Black River. The Guardian Spirit protected him and allowed him to escape the giant feline. Laoki's wounds are serious. He is covered in impressive scratches and bite marks, as well as bruises and impacts from the rocks in the river. Laoki's survival is far from certain.

The characters can notice that he is wearing a necklace made of animal teeth (DT 5: lion teeth) that nobody has ever seen before. To understand what this object could be used for, they will need to successfully carry out a Knowledge Test (DT 7). If any of the characters steals this necklace in front of a witness, they immediately lose 12 Generosity Points (the necklace's exchange value – not counting the enchantment), or only 6 Points if it is one of Laoki's children.

What do the characters know about Laoki?

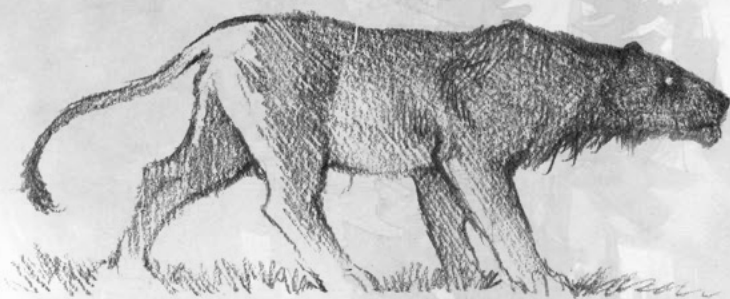
You can tell them the story of the fateful hunt, and mention that since that time, he has seemed to withdraw from the tribe little by little. Over the last few seasons, he has been known to go off on his own for up to a whole moon. Although people eventually think he must be dead, he always comes back safe and sound, but he never explains where he has been. This time, he has been gone for over ten days.

What is the relationship like between Laoki and his children?

At least two of the characters are Laoki's children. What do they know, and what do they think of their father? They have mixed feelings. Laoki was a brave and strong man, fairly kind and above all very curious, but all that changed after he was injured. He became moody and violent, even with his children and his two wives. It is not unthinkable that some of his children may have tried to follow him when he went on his solo wanderings. They will have discovered that he always headed off into the mountains, but they always lost his tracks...

If the characters don't think to give him first aid, and if they wait too long before taking him back to the camp, he will die an hour later.

If the characters look around for the lion, they will not find it (whatever they do). By heading back to where the attack happened, they can however find tracks. A *Critical Success* for the Tracking Test reveals that these tracks are very faint, given how much a beast that size should have weighed. Note that the location of the attack is on the other side of the river. The characters



mustn't forget the taboo about crossing the water while carrying a dead animal. If they have to, then they should make an offering to the river.

What if... the characters insist on hunting the lion? Try to convince them, in this case, that Laoki's condition requires him to be returned immediately to the camp for emergency care.

If Laoki is still alive by the time he is brought back to the camp, the old healers will take care of him. Laoki will be unconscious by then. They will watch over him all night.

If Laoki is dead, then the Elders of the tribe will spend the night preparing his body, in order to bury it soon in a small cave down the hill from the camp where the river water runs.

The Vengeful Lion

The next day, the Elders of the tribe are worried.


If Laoki is still alive, the healer women tell the characters that his condition is getting worse as his wounds are getting infected. They are truly worried he might die. They hope to be able to keep the dark Spirits away from his wounds, but... they think that the creature that attacked him has cursed him.

If Laoki is dead, the Elders are worried about the trouble that his Spirit might cause. Indeed, Laoki was not a man at peace, and they fear that he might return in spectral form to torment the tribe.

One way or another, the Elders discuss this with the characters and decide what should be done: **The beast that attacked Laoki must be hunted and killed.** First of all, because it is far too dangerous to let such a predator prowl around the base camp. But, **if Laoki is alive,** the beast must also be killed so that the creature's curse can be lifted and the victim's Spirit can be freed to allow him to heal normally. **If he is dead,** then the beast must die to show his Spirit that the tribe has avenged his death and honored his memory as it should be. If applicable, Laoki's burial (described below) will be held 3 days after his body is returned to the camp. According to the Elders, it is important that the beast be killed before Laoki is buried. The characters must therefore get on their way to find the lion. They can potentially take the day to prepare and only leave the next day, but they are told that it is preferable not to wait any longer.

From the place where Laoki was attacked, tracking the animal is possible but difficult (DT 9). A successful Test result will allow them to find the tracks of the solitary lion, which seems to twist and turn through the higher slopes covered in trees and bushes, heading back towards the camp! The tracks continue towards a dark patch of holly trees. The lion is waiting there, ready to pounce. It will attack the characters if they manage to find it. The characters must successfully carry out a difficult Alertness Test (DT 9) or they will be surprised by its attack.





The Vengeful Lion

A huge grey lion with bright, flaming eyes and a breath of icy mist. There is no doubt that this is a supernatural creature.

Dodge 8; Thick skin 1

LP 40

Initiative 3d6

Attack(s) [2]: Claws 3d6 (2d6 Damage Points); Bite 3d6 (2d6+1 Damage Points)

Running 7; Alertness 15

Special Abilities:

Roar: anyone who hears it must carry out a *Steady nerves* Test and if they fail they panic (DT 7) (see *Hunting roars*).

Blood of mist: If the lion is killed, it disappears into a cloud of mist, but it reappears 1d6 days later to prowl around the bearer of the tooth necklace. It will only disappear if it is exorcised (out of range from the characters) or if the stolen tooth necklace is returned to Okomë's burial site.

The Tooth Necklace

Back at the camp, the characters are awaited with anticipation. As everyone can see that they are not returning with a dead lion, their faces are visibly worried. If the characters tell the tribe what happened, some will refuse to believe it, but the Elders will confirm that the animal was certainly magical. Everyone hopes that Laoki will now be able to heal.

But the next day, if Laoki is still alive, his condition has worsened. **Ariki** thinks that his wounds will not respond to natural treatment. If Laoki is dead, whoever was on watch the previous night swears they saw his ghost wandering near the cave! The Elders gather the whole tribe for an Elders' Council.

If the characters have not stolen the necklace, and if they haven't yet told the Elders about it, then the old healers will have found it. If they have already told the Elders about the necklace, then they will have had time to think about it. As far as they're concerned, the connection between the lion tooth necklace and the lion Spirit is obvious. The Elders then shake their heads in agreement: **They recognize the necklace as being the work of a charm-maker called Okomë**, who is part of the Jagged Rocks tribe that lives higher up the mountain.

Even if the existence of the necklace is not revealed, **Namir** speaks up. He says that the last time Laoki left on a solo expedition, he followed him discreetly for almost a day. He clearly saw him heading towards the Jagged Rocks territory, and heard him muttering to himself, mentioning the names of **Okomë** and especially **Tygra**. He had thought at the time that Laoki was obsessing over old memories, but now, given the circumstances... Could the attacks of this lion be another curse sent by the Jagged Rocks tribe?

Tohumo says that he is certain that they are the ones who have cursed Laoki. Why? That is the question. But Tavarra the witch and Okomë the charm-maker are talented when it comes to curses! Okomë is also the brother of Dour, and he already cursed Kumpa!

As for Twë, she doesn't think that Tavarra has anything to do with Laoki's troubles. She remembers her as a good woman, a healer who, in fact, could probably have healed Laoki's wounds with her magic potions, if only the two tribes were still on speaking terms.



What should we do? ask the members of the tribe. This is when the characters can come up with their own suggestions. They will probably be curious to go looking into the Jagged Rocks tribe in one way or another. Encourage them to do so.

U-kte thinks that there is obviously something mysterious going on between Laoki and the Jagged Rocks tribe. It could indeed be that Laoki did travel to visit the other tribe when he went off on his own recently. In any case, if they want to save Laoki, or prevent his Spirit from haunting the tribe, they have to get to the bottom of this mystery.

Only Tohumu is opposed to this idea, as he thinks it is far too dangerous. Considering Laoki's condition, he needs hunters in good shape to feed the tribe, so why bother with Laoki or his ghost? As Game Master, try to present this attitude as antagonistic to the characters, especially Laoki's children. In fact Tohumu could even try to convince them that Laoki was a bad father or that he is in such pain that it would be better that he die. If the characters defy Tohumu or insult him, then he might go as far as fighting them hand to hand, but he will not authorize a duel.

In the end, it's up to the characters to decide. Then again, there aren't many options to choose from: either they go to visit the **Jagged Rocks tribe**, higher up the mountainside, to understand what has happened and find a way to save Laoki or his Spirit, and if necessary, avenge him... Or they do nothing.

If the characters are wasting time, let the situation worsen: Laoki's condition gets worse, or he dies, or his ghost is indeed seen roaming around near the cave, trying to lure the characters up into the mountains with him... If the characters are waiting for a clear sign, they may hear, sometimes very close and sometimes far away, the roars of the lion returning to haunt the bearer of the necklace...

If the characters decide to head up the mountain, the Elders of the tribe warn them that the journey will be dangerous. The way there is not an easy one to travel, and no one knows what kind of a welcome the Jagged Rocks tribe will give them after over twenty seasons. In any case, unless they want to sneak their way into the Jagged Rocks camp, the characters will need to take gifts with them, as is customary (it's up to them to select the gifts, but 7 Value Points per person is pretty much the bare minimum), to be worthy of their tribe and to show that, even though the two communities are hostile towards each other, the people of the Black River clan respect the customs! From a practical point of view, **the Elders recommend that they take the necklace with them** (if they haven't already taken it secretly). If Laoki heals, they say, the necklace will be returned to him, and if he dies, then it will be laid to rest with him when the characters return.

It is worth mentioning that the characters have already been to the other tribe's base camp, but it was a while back, over a dozen years ago, when they were just little children. Therefore, they only have a sketchy memory of the people from the other tribe. You can, however, remind them of a few characters who stick out from the fog of their

memories: figures of authority, children that they may have played with...

Laoki's Burial

If Laoki is dead and the characters want to take the time to attend his burial ceremony, this is how it is carried out:

A few days after Laoki's death, once his body has lost its rigidity, it is tied up with leather strips in order to maintain it in a fetal position. It is then carried down in a procession to the small cave below the camp area, from which a stream runs out and joins the Black River. The cave is mossy and very humid, and the ground is very slippery. In the light of the torches, the procession makes its way to the back of the cave, where a dark well can be found: the "well of the dead". It is into this well that Laoki's body will be lowered using ropes, so that it can join the underground waters of the Black River and the hunting grounds of the Great Bear. Although it is called a "well", there is only a trickle of water at the bottom of it. Offerings are then thrown down: weapons, tools, and some food to help him on his journey. During all of this, U-kte sings a strange lullaby, a melancholic and piercing melody that increases the feeling of loss that everyone is experiencing at that time.

What if... the characters throw the lion tooth necklace down into the well? It's not lost forever. But if and when they need it, they will need to go down into the well of the dead to get it, using ropes, torches and plenty of courage. A successful difficult Steady Nerves Test will be required (DT 9) for them to dare to venture down into the darkness of this place where the living must not tread. Two Climbing Tests, either easy with the rope (DT 5) or difficult without it (DT 9), must be carried out successfully

in order to first reach the bottom and then to climb back up, as the total depth of the well is 11 meters. At the bottom, a strong concentration of carbon dioxide poisons the air and further increases the characters' discomfort. Unfortunately, the necklace will not be easy to find among the bones (DT 7, one Test per person every 10 minutes). If the characters stay at the bottom for too long, you can also give them some light audio or visual hallucinations.

The Journey

The journey to the camp of the Jagged Rocks tribe lasts three days at least. The departure from the camp occurs on the morning of the first day, and the arrival at the camp of the Jagged Rocks tribe, at the earliest, in the afternoon of the third day. Do not slow the characters down too much if they want to hunt for food, or if they try to forage for edible plants on their way. The journey shouldn't take forever. At most, you can add an extra day to the journey.

During their travels, don't forget to take into account that, if the characters are carrying the necklace with them, **they will be targeted by the vengeful lion**. The lion will return to attack the characters 1d6 days after it was "killed". In other words, at the earliest on the first day of their travels, and at the latest on the fifth (it will not attack inside a camp). The presence of the prowling lion can be felt at night, for example, when the characters can hear a far away but chilling roar that sounds like rolling thunder.

On the first day, the characters leave on a day punctuated by light rain showers, and travel through a mountain landscape where birches, scots pines and larches grow. If they want to hunt, they can find small game animals or wild boar.

On the second day, the characters reach a more mountainous area where an icy wind blows, which requires them to take a *Resistance to Cold* Test (DT 5) every 12 hours, or suffer 1d6 Damage Points. If they want to hunt, they can track a herd of ibex.

On the third day, the characters reach the territory of the Jagged Rocks. There are two rather difficult places where they will need to pass a Climbing Test. The first one is a narrow and slippery passage (DT 5, a fall causes 4d6 Damage Points). The second is a passage that winds its way along a cliff face (DT 3, a fall causes 6d6 Damage Points). On the afternoon of the fourth day, the characters can try an Alertness Test (DT 7) to try and see the light of the great fire that burns in the center of the Jagged Rocks camp.

What if... the characters give the necklace to the lion?! The lion does not take the necklace in its mouth, but it stops attacking and runs off towards the Jagged Rocks camp. It will not attack the characters again, unless they fail to return the necklace to the burial place of Okomë within seven days, in which case it will return to harass them again.

The Jagged Rocks Tribe

The tribe's base camp is set up in a majestic semi-circular valley surrounded by cliffs, and through which a small brook trickles. It is set up along the base of the cliffs and is made up of five large dome-shaped huts covered in skins. Two wind-breaking walls, made of rocks, branches and skins, mark the edge of the areas for crafts and butchery. This Châtelperroian tribe is made up of thirty people or so. It includes:

- **11 men**, of whom 6 are hunters: the hunt leader **Faudagg** (30), three men named **Ohoun, Neouk and Edrou** (21, 15 and 14), an older hunter named **Hartwë** and the young charm-maker **N'qenik** (17)
- **12 women**, including the witch **Tavarra** (34), but more importantly, the charm-maker's three daughters: **Tygra, Leti and Ulva** (14, 13 and 12, all very beautiful)
- **8 children** between 1 and 10 years old, including **Namiaq** (9), the younger brother of the three sisters.
- Even gender balance. No chief. Matrilocality.

Guardian Spirit: The Giant Oronak

(as well as the Great Red Bear and the ancestors).

Every evening, the tribe carries out an appeasing ceremony of chants and prayers to the mountain Spirit Oronak, a terrifying – and thankfully sleeping – giant. As long as he is dreaming, Oronak watches over the community, as does the Great Bear and the ancestors. But if he was to wake, he would cause all the animals to flee, the humans would be cast out and the whole mountain would shake.

Taboos:

Incest taboo, totem taboo, cannibalism taboo. To avoid waking Oronak, it is taboo to shout in the mountains. The echo of a shout petrifies the members of the tribe.

Secret Skills:

Tavarra knows the *Women's Knowledge* of the *Teachings of the Taiga*; N'qenik knows how to make *Charms*; Faudagg knows the techniques to *Fight like a bear* and *Fight like a bull*.

The Members of the Tribe:

Faudagg, the hunt leader, has red hair and a long beard. He wears a headdress with antlers, unless it's inconvenient to do so. He is tall, strict and very respectful of the customs. He is married to a woman named **Bimeh**.

N'qenik has an older brother named **Ohoun**. They both have very long noses and large hands, Ohoun's hands are powerful and N'qenik's are agile. N'qenik is not yet very confident when it comes to making charms, but he hates it if people point it out to him. The brothers have no wives.

Tavarra is a tall and wide-shouldered redhead, who only has one eye. She has a kind of animal magnetism that still makes her very desirable, despite her grey hair and tanned skin. She is a widow and has not remarried.

The three sisters, **Tygra, Leti and Ulva** are all brunettes and very pretty. Tygra has a rather stocky build, with wide hips, and very muscular thighs and buttocks. All three have a very regal bearing. They are not married.

Arriving at the Camp

If the characters are approaching the camp stealthily, to spy on the activities of these people and try to find some clues, have them carry out Tests for Stealth and Observation, where the *Cunning of the Weasel* and the *Sight of the Owl* can come into play, and the distance and light conditions must be taken into account. You will also need to oppose these Tests to the Alertness of the camp dwellers. Roll 1d6: if the result is a 1, roll 3d6; if it's between 2 and 6, roll 2d6.

If the result of this opposed Test is in the players' favor, then they are not detected and you can give them information on the people of the camp and their activities. One way or another, they won't be able to learn anything about Laoki like that.

If, however, the Test turns to the advantage of the tribe's watchers, then carry out a second Test. If that Test is a Success, then the characters manage to hide just in time and the watchers don't see them, but they will be on alert from now on, which will make it a lot more difficult for the PCs. If the second Test is a Failure, then the characters are discovered.

If the characters are spotted, there are two possible outcomes: if it's night time, the watcher sounds the alarm, the hunters grab their weapons and call out to the characters while remaining in the camp. If it's daytime, then the six hunters run out to chase after the characters. If they are running away, the characters will have to carry out *Sprint* Tests on the rocky mountain terrain (see Chapter 3). The people from the Jagged Rocks tribe will want to know why the characters are doing snooping around their camp, and they will be hostile. They will quickly recognize them as members of the Black River tribe. They will not go as far as combat unless the characters refuse to explain their presence or insult them. If the characters show that they are willing to cooperate, then the Jagged Rocks folk order them to follow them to the camp.

If the characters approach the camp openly, they are welcomed with respect and hospitality. They are recognized as young members of the Black River tribe, and the other tribe is surprised to see them there.

If they come with gifts with a value of 7 or more per person – these gifts count as Generosity Points – the stiff and wary attitude of the Jagged Rocks tribe loosens up a little. They are offered a good meal.

If one of the characters is openly wearing Laoki's tooth necklace, see the paragraph “if the characters show the necklace” below.

The characters are given time to eat, rest and maybe even wash before their hosts begin to question them, as required by the laws of hospitality. In fact, the other tribe doesn't really want to know anything before the evening council where the whole tribe will be gathered around the great fire, unless they were caught snooping, in which case they will have to explain immediately. Again, according to the laws of hospitality, they are expected to behave as if they were in their own camp. In return, they should not ask any questions or show hostility or mockery. Explain this to the characters, as they would be expected to know these customs and be perfectly used to them. Make sure that they realize that going against these customs can seriously compromise their welcome and the rest of their adventure!

Talks in the Camp

It is quite a different atmosphere in the evening, when the whole tribe is gathered around the great fire burning in the middle of the camp, and all eyes are on the characters. Unless the characters have already shown them or let them see the lion tooth necklace, the Jagged Rocks people are just curious and have lots of questions. The tone of the questions from the tribe can go from polite to openly hostile, but it mainly conveys a great confusion as to why the characters


are there, and concern about their presence. The people of the Jagged Rocks tribe want to know: How are the Elders of the Jagged Rocks tribe? How is Laoki? Why have the characters come all the way here?

If the characters tell them what happened to Laoki, then everyone deplores the incident and they all nod in shared confusion.

If the characters try to find out if Laoki did indeed come to the Jagged Rocks camp over the last few seasons, then they are told what the tribe knows about Laoki's presence in the Jagged Rocks camp during that time (see story overview).

They are all convinced that Laoki, made bitter and nostalgic by his injury, wanted to see his old friend Okomë the wise. The characters learn that Okomë died three moons ago. Nobody knows that Laoki had asked Okomë for a charm, and that he repeatedly refused. Only Tavarra suspects something about this, but she won't share it during this meeting (although the characters can tell she knows more than she's saying). As for Tygra, she doesn't mention the challenge she set for the injured hunter (although here too the characters can also tell that she seems to be hiding something). However, everyone in the camp had noticed that Laoki was interested in Tygra, since he spent a lot of time following her around.

If the characters accuse the Jagged Rocks folk of cursing Laoki, or even if they just insinuate it, their slander will at first stun the tribe members, and then quickly turn to anger! It is possible for the characters to try and ensure that everyone keeps a cool head to clear up this business, but it will be difficult. Especially if anyone mentions Okomë's curse of long ago.



If the characters persist in their accusations, they will immediately be run out of the camp, and they will clearly not be welcome there again. Unless the characters behave in a really vindictive and violent way, the people of the Jagged Rocks tribe will prefer to avoid any combat with an uncertain outcome. However, if insults are flying and a combat seems inevitable, Faudagg can suggest a duel with one of the characters to settle the argument. It will be a duel to the death, unless one of the fighters becomes unconscious and is declared beaten. If Faudagg wins, the characters will have to leave the camp, never to return. If Faudagg falls or dies, the tribe will be completely stunned, but the characters will still have to leave. One way or another, they won't have made any progress. They will only have avenged Laoki's death (past or future) by Faudagg's (possible) death. That may satisfy some people in the Black River tribe, but it won't solve the problem of Laoki's ghost.

If the characters bring up the past conflicts, they are told at first that the past is the past, and that each season replaces the one before. But it is also made perfectly clear to them that nothing of what occurred twenty seasons ago is forgotten. The debate may continue about the legitimacy of the old quarrel, but it is fairly certain to be pointless. Some members of the tribe, however, like Tavarra, Hartwë or Ohoun think that it is probably time to bury the warclub...

If the characters mention the necklace, then the people from the camp will definitely want to see it! Indeed, only Okomë knew how to make charm necklaces, before he passed on his knowledge to N'qenik. But nobody seems to know if Okomë made a charm for Laoki. N'qenik certainly denies

having done so. In fact, since the old falling out, the rules in the tribe have always been clear: no bartering with the Black River folk, and especially no gifts. Okomë would therefore have had to refuse in any case.

If the characters show them the necklace, the Jagged Rocks folk jump to their feet, starting with Tygra, Okomë's daughter. Immediately, the Black River tribe is accused of theft and tomb raiding, for the necklace is none other than the one that Okomë wore, and which he was also wearing when his body was left at Dead Men's pass! The tone can quickly get ugly and the atmosphere can get stormy if the characters don't manage to calm their hosts' anger. If the argument turns into a fistfight, take into account that the characters will be punched, kicked and even hit with clubs by about fifteen opponents, both men and women.

If the characters do not mention the necklace or the curse set on Laoki, then they can discreetly continue their investigation about it by talking to N'qenik, Tavarra, Faudagg or Tygra...

Finding Out More...

Whether it is during the evening discussion, by insisting that Tavarra or Tygra tell them more (which can come across as very rude) or by inquiring more discreetly the next day, the characters can find out more information about Laoki's story.

N'qenik can tell them about how he makes charms, which is pretty much unknown to the characters, and about what he learned from Okomë. He doesn't know that Laoki asked Okomë for a charm, but he would find it plausible, given their close relationship.

Tavarra is kind and fascinating. Unless the characters have been rude or violent in their attitudes, she will be willing to help them. She thinks that Laoki might have asked Okomē to compensate the *Weaknesses* caused by his injuries, but she guesses that the charm-maker must have refused, for the reasons mentioned previously. Laoki had approached her for the same reason. He had asked her for a potion to cure him, but due to the situation, she had been obliged to refuse – besides, her medicine would not have been able to help Laoki. Speaking of her medicine, if the characters are polite and respectful, she will be willing to use her magic to help heal them at any time in the scenario, using her *Healing Balms*. She has five balms “in stock”.

Okomē’s daughters are charming, but only **Tygra** has any information to give the characters. With a little diplomacy, it will not be very difficult to get her to tell them what happened between her and Laoki, and how she challenged him to bring her the body of a great lion to prove himself worthy of sharing her bed. Tygra has a very fiery personality, she gets easily carried away, but her beauty and strength make her very attractive.

Faudagg has nothing to teach them more than the factual details that he is aware of. The characters can however notice that he is very wary of them.

The Tribe’s Decision

If the Elders of the Jagged Rocks tribe discover that Okomē’s lion tooth necklace was stolen by Laoki, they will take a few hours to discuss it with Okomē’s daughters. This is what they conclude: The tribe will forgive Laoki’s theft of the charm – an



action that taints the reputation of the whole Black River tribe – if the characters accept to carry out the ritual gestures on Okomē’s remains. According to the Elders, if there is indeed a curse on Laoki or his tribe, it can only be as a result of his bad actions.

At this point in the adventure, the characters are probably realizing that to remove Laoki’s curse of the vengeful lion, they will need to return the stolen lion tooth necklace to Okomē. Tygra is adamant that the characters take part in Okomē’s burial rites: she demands that they be the ones to go and hang her father’s skull on the tree of the ancestors, and that they go and get the skull of a bear.

The burial rites of the Jagged Rocks tribe

Following the burial traditions Jagged Rocks tribe, the dead body is left out in the open in a place in the mountains called “Dead Men’s pass”, a windy pass where wild animals

and vultures roam. The body stays there for three moons. After these three moons, the tribe comes to collect the person's remains, well cleaned by the animals and the elements, then the skull is taken to be hung up in the "tree of the ancestors", a very old scots pine, huge and twisted by the winds, all on its own on a high outcrop. Then the bones are buried in the "cave of burials" and covered by a slab of rock. One last detail: if the deceased is an Elder, then a bear skull must be laid in the tomb in the place of the deceased person's skull... And of course, Okomë was an Elder.

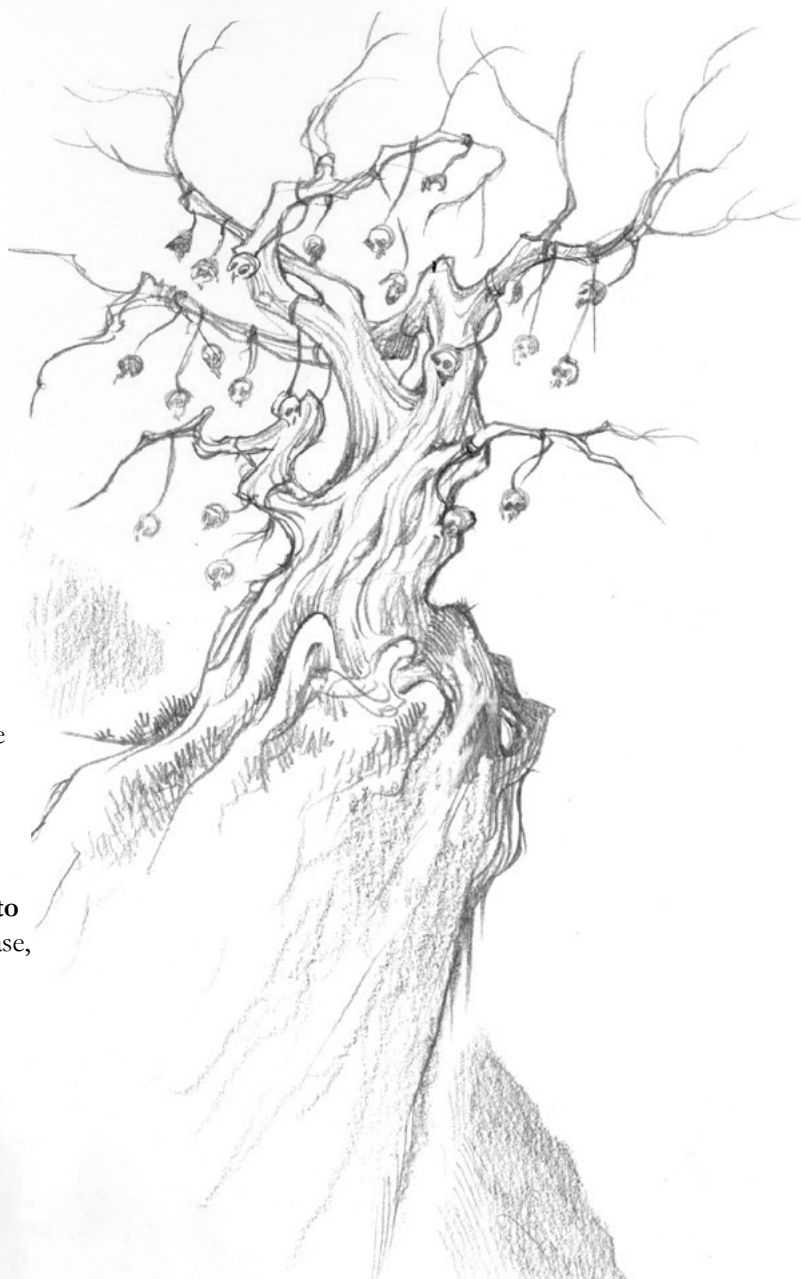
And it just so happens that the characters have arrived at the camp when the three moons since the death of Okomë are almost over. With a few days to go before the exact date (Tavarra is keeping track by carving notches on a bone), the people of the Jagged Rocks tribe therefore expect the characters to ritually slay a bear, and then proceed to the exchange of the skulls. This means they will have to hang Okomë's skull in the tree of the ancestors, and lay the bear skull in the tomb when the remains are deposited in the cave of burials. That is when the characters will need to place Okomë's lion tooth necklace in the tomb, returning it to its rightful owner in his last journey to the lands of the Great Bear.

What if... the characters refuse to take part in this ritual? In this case, unless it has already been handed over, the necklace is taken from

them and they are kicked out of the camp. In a way, they will have completed their mission: the necklace will be returned to Okomë's body and Laoki's curse will cease. But the relationship between the Black River tribe and the Jagged Rocks tribe will be even worse than before...

Dead Men's Pass

The characters and the Jagged Rocks people make their way in a procession up through the rocky heights of the mountain to Dead Men's pass. In this breathtaking yet sinister



place, whipped by an icy wind, they find Okomë's bones, picked perfectly clean. A few of the bones are broken, probably because of the hyenas, and a forearm is missing, but it doesn't seem to trouble the people of the tribe. The skull is there, and it's intact. This is therefore where Laoki sneaked up and stole his old friend's charm. Tygra and Faudagg gather up the dead man's bones in an animal skin and tie it up. Then they give Okomë's skull to the characters.

The tribe people then take the characters to a place even higher up in the mountain, near the towering peaks. Up there, clinging to a rocky outcrop, is a strikingly singular dead scots pine, twisted by the winds, its silvery wood almost shining in the sunlight. On the branches of this ancient tree, two dozen skulls hang from leather straps, some of them half smashed, and occasionally they knock into each other, making the sound of a macabre wind chime made of bones. This is the tree of the ancestors, and it is there that the characters need to hang Okomë's skull.

To do this, **the real difficulty is to manage to climb the rocky outcrop.** Climbing up into the tree to hang the skull, which has had a leather strap added to it by N'qenik, is a piece of cake. The characters can climb it together or send just one of them up there. The climbing difficulty is average (DT 7). It takes three successful Tests to make it to the top. Don't forget that the *Agility of the Ibex* Strength can influence this Test. If a character doesn't have this Strength, they can get a boost from eating the liver of an Ibex (see Chapter 3.3.).

If a character gets a *Catastrophe* on the Climbing Test, he falls! For the first Test, the fall is **6 m**, for the second it's **12 m** and


for the third, it's **18 m** (see the rules on falls in Chapter 4.7. to determine the damage suffered). If he falls, the player must roll 1d6: if the result is an odd number, then he breaks the skull in the fall. This will not disturb the ceremony all that much, but if it does happen, then Tygra will be the one to climb up and hang what's left of the skull. The only thing that could really mess up the ritual is if one of the characters dies.

The Bear Skull

One the first part of the burial ritual has been carried out, they move on to the next part: finding a bear skull. In this kind of situation, the people from the Jagged Rocks tribe make an exception and hunt a bear, then they ritually eat its flesh, and later purify themselves before the Spirit of the Great Bear. They encourage the characters to follow the same process. This also seems to be a test of their physical and psychological courage.

If the characters accept to carry out the bear hunt, they must first cover their faces with blood (animal or human, as they wish) as a sign of their mortification. Then, they will leave to hunt, alone. Finding a bear in the mountains is not difficult, especially at this time of year. A Tracking Test (DT 7) is required to find animal tracks, and this will take half a day.

In fact, if the characters succeed their Test, they find not one but **two** bear tracks: a brown bear and a red bear. It's up to them to decide which one they want to follow and which type of bear they want to fight, as a skull of either type of bear will do the trick. Following the animal's tracks is easy (DT 5). Once they have located the bear, it will put up a serious fight, but it will try to run away from the characters if its Life Points fall



below a *third* of the initial total. If the bear realizes that it won't manage to escape, it will fight with a last desperate burst of energy (+1 for hits and +1 for damage). See the animal guide in Chapter 8 for the details of red and brown bears.

The meal of bear meat

Once the animal has been killed, they will need to bring it back on a travois over the mountains to the camp, where it will be butchered and ritually prepared for the ceremonial meal. The characters who killed the bear can claim the best pieces, the liver for example, but it will come across very positively if they leave them for their hosts. The liver of a red bear contains extremely high levels of proteins, so it must be boiled before eating or it can prove lethal.

If you like, the character who ate the liver can have a hallucination during the night after. You can choose the subject of this hallucination; it could be about Laoki, the people from the Jagged Rocks tribe (Faudagg, Tygra or Tavarra, for example) or something more personal for the character. The day after this ritual meal, everyone who partook in the eating of the bear's flesh, and *especially* the characters who hunted it, must cover their bodies with the ashes of the fire where the meat was cooked and fast for three days, to purify themselves. N'qenik will prepare the bear skull for the last part of the ceremony.

If the characters categorically refuse to kill a bear, due to their totem taboo, even though it would be done ritually and the other tribe are offering a purification ceremony, it is not a big deal. It is possible to find a bear skull by searching the caves scattered around the mountainside. In this case, the characters will need to go off alone

to search for a cave that could have been a home for bears during the sleeping season, and therefore, potentially, contain one or more bear skulls.

To find this kind of cave, make them carry out a Search Test, where the *Secret of the Bear* Strength can come in handy. The Test is difficult (DT 9) as the characters do not know this area of the mountains. Each Test takes up a half day of searching. The characters can only carry out one roll of the dice for the whole group, not one for each of them. A failed Test means that the characters haven't found a cave, or found one that didn't contain a bear skeleton.

A *Catastrophe* means that they are attacked by a bear that is very much alive, red or brown depending on the group's strength!

When the characters find the cave they are looking for, it will be occupied by a pack of **cave hyenas** (as many as the number of characters +1, see the *Animal guide* for their stats). The characters can try to scare them off with hunting roars, or fight them out with their weapons. Once the hyenas have been chased off, the characters will have to head into the dark cave with their torches (Fire-lighting Test DT 3 and *Steady nerves* Test DT 5) About fifty meters inside the mouth of the cave, they find several bear dens and a number of red bear skulls.

Some easy Orientation Tests (DT 5) may be necessary to find their way back to the camp.

The Cave of Burials

Once the Jagged Rocks tribe has the bear skull in its possession, the final part of the ritual can be carried out.

The whole community travels to a small, easily accessible cave about an hour's walk from the camp. As the cave is fairly small, only the "celebrants" can go inside it.

Faudagg, N'qenik, Tygra and Leti go inside

and dig a small hole in the ground, as the smell of the freshly dug sand and clay wafts out to the characters. Then they lay down the skin in which Okomë's bones are wrapped. This is when the characters should deposit the lion tooth necklace, and maybe address a few words to the Spirit of Okomë. Once this is done, they will feel a strange sensation, as if a weight had been lifted from their chest... N'qenik lays the bear skull in the hole, and then the four celebrants cover up the tomb with a large, roughly flat stone shaped like a slab, and big enough to cover the hole. At last, everyone leaves the cave and the ritual words are said:

"Okomë, return to the belly of the earth! Go to join the Great Bear for the sleeping season! He will swallow your spirit and guide you down below, to the hunting grounds of the other world! The tribe who weeps for you keeps your precious skull close at hand, together with those of the ancestors, so your song will appease the giant Oronak and your Spirit will find the path to his dreams."

Hunting for Bison

Once the tooth necklace has been returned to Okomë and the burial rites completed, the characters can head on home with their heads held high.

But they can also choose to go one step further and try to improve the relationship with the Jagged Rocks tribe for the long run. If they show signs of wanting to do so, and if they have behaved honorably so far, then Faudagg will take the initiative of inviting them to take part in an endeavor that would allow them to put their old quarrel to bed for good. Would they be willing to help the tribe during a bison hunt that they are planning to lead up on the plateau, a half day's walk away? A few extra hunters would be a significant help, and Faudagg wants to make the most of the larger numbers. The

characters can, of course, take their part of the hunted bison with them when they leave. The characters can try an Insight Test to understand that, with this new bison hunt, Faudagg is offering them an opportunity to symbolically put the whole dispute between the two tribes to bed... but he'll be watching them closely. If they are smart, they will jump at the chance.

If they refuse, the characters can go back home, but nothing will really have changed in the long term relationship between the two tribes (still no bartering, interactions or marriages). At best, the fact that they managed to fix the harm that Laoki did will have prevented the disagreement from getting any worse.

If they accept, then all the hunters will have to wait until the end of the three days of purification before they can go hunting bison. They can also take time to recuperate if they have any injuries.

The great bison hunt takes place on a vast plateau covered in low steppe vegetation, with a few rocks sticking out here and there. The characters can notice that, for the occasion, Faudagg is wearing a headdress made of crow feathers, Ohoun has a necklace made of lion's teeth and N'qenik a necklace made of bear claws. The hunters of the Jagged Rocks tribe plan to approach the herd directly, and then sound their hunting roars to push the bison towards a place where they can ambush the herd's stragglers in the rocky ravines. Faudagg, Edrou and Neouk will be waiting in ambush. Hartwë, Ohoun and N'qenik will sound the hunting roars and carry flaming torches. The characters can join the different groups as they wish. The hunters



Character Strengths and Weaknesses

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths from Charms	Special
Laoki	Strength of the Bear, Cunning of the Weasel, Agility of the Ibex	Weak, Clumsy, Individualistic		Fight like a bear
Tohumo	Strength of the Bear, Heart of Ice, Majesty of the Aurochs			Fight like a bear Fight like a bull
Faudagg	Strength of the Bear, Breath of the Giant Stag, Fury of the Lion		Flight of the Crow	Fight like a bear Fight like a bull
Ohoun	Strength of the Bear, Heart of Ice, Nose of the Wolf		Fury of the Lion	Fight like a bear
Neouk	Strength of the Bear, Heart of Ice, Speed of the Horse			
Edrou	Strength of the Bear, Heart of Ice, Breath of the Giant Stag			
Hartwë	Strength of the Bear, Heart of Ice, Sight of the Owl			Fight like a bear Fight like a bull
N'qenik	Heart of Ice, Magic of the Rhinoceros, Hand of the Ancestors		Strength of the Bear	<i>Enchantment</i> - Charms
Tavarra	Strength of the Bear, Majesty of the Aurochs, Softness of the Otter, Venom of the Viper	One-eyed		<i>Sorcery</i> – Teachings of the Taiga (women)
Tygra	Strength of the Bear, Grace of the Swan, Heart of Ice, Agility of the Ibex	Quick-tempered		
Leti	Grace of the Swan, Wisdom of the Mammoth, Heart of Ice, Protection of the Vixen	Timid		

will try to take down several bison. The hunt is carried out using the rules laid out in Chapter 3.3. Don't forget to use the rules for the lookout process. **There are 26 bison** in the herd, including 1 herd leader, 6 fighters, 12 females and 7 juveniles (see the stats for bison in Chapter 8.1.). One of the females is injured and limping. The herd leader has **54** Life Points and adds **+2** to the Damage he causes; the fighters have **+1** for Damage; the wounded female only has **36** Life Points and her Running score is **7**. The juveniles don't fight back. Each of them has **18** Life Points.

Unless one of the characters uses the Manna pool or their Experience, the result of the hunting roars is defined by rolling 3d6.

If the hunting roars manage to scare the bison, then they will run away and the plan works as hoped. Only the bison wounded in the ambush may stand their ground and possibly fight back (*Steady nerves* Test), all the others will flee.

If, however, the hunting roars are not impressive enough to scare the bison, the herd leader will send out his six fighters to attack those who were doing the roaring. The leader himself remains Alert. If he sees that three of his six fighters have been killed, he calls back the other three and leads the herd in a direction away from the ambush location.

Feel free to encourage the players to use their imagination and cunning to come up with a more complex hunting plan, for example one that includes building traps.

Once the remaining herd has fled and the combats are all over, the hunters take care of the wounded (and the dead, if necessary). Then, two of the hunters are sent off to let the tribe know how the hunt went, and bring back people to help with the healing and the butchery.

A great fire is lit in the evening, in the place where the dead bison are being butchered.

The whole tribe has come to join them. There is much celebrating, singing and dancing, unless anyone died.

What Happens Next

During this evening, the characters talk to Faudagg. The hunt leader wants to define with them how the killed bison will be divided up. He is watching them carefully. If, in the end, the division is made fairly depending on how the hunt went (*as far as the Game Master is concerned*), then Faudagg congratulates the characters on their wisdom. The bison are divided up and Faudagg offers to accompany the characters when they travel back to the Black River camp, along with Tavarra and a few others, in order to rebuild the good relationship between the tribes. As well as celebrating the fortuitous hunt, this celebration also marks the end of the dispute and a new alliance between neighboring tribes.

During the celebration, if the alliance has indeed been restored, Tygra will be openly flirty with one of the male PCs, at the Game Master's discretion. She will use all her charms to seduce him and, if he is strong enough and a smooth enough talker, she will also lie with him that night. As for Leti, she has a rather different attitude, and it is really difficult to gain her trust.

As for the female PCs, Ohoun and N'qenik are the ones vying for their attention in their own ways: Ohoun has a certain swagger, whereas N'qenik is flattering and sweet.

If one of the male PCs suggests a marriage with one of Okomë's daughters, then Tygra will speak for herself and for her sisters. She happily and proudly requests that the suitor bring a prodigious gift to prove himself worthy: the skin of a wooly rhinoceros, killed in combat...

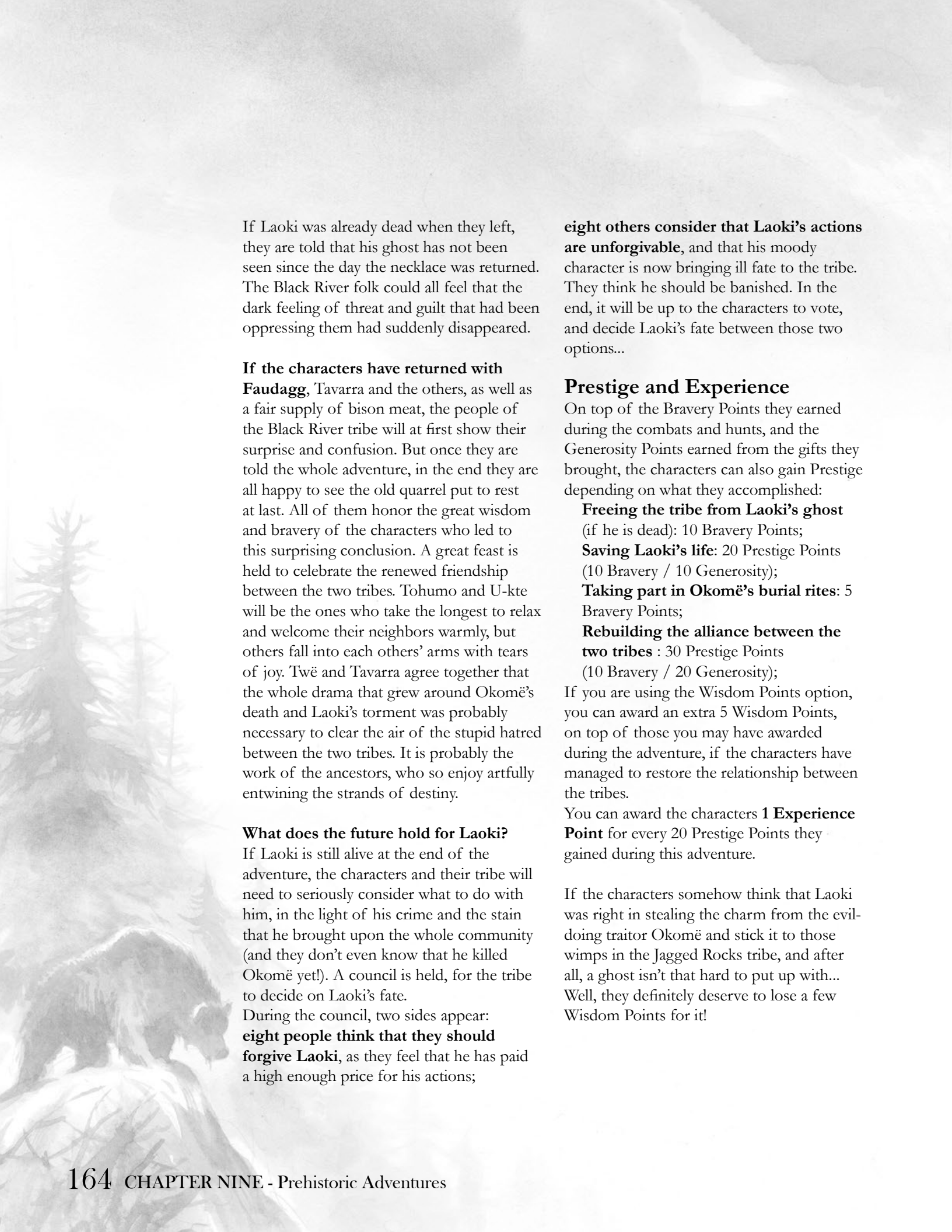
If a female PC accepts to lie with Ohoun or N'qenik, then her chosen one will become her "purveyor". He will wait for her to state her conditions to accept him as her husband. Unless her conditions are completely unrealistic, he will attempt to satisfy them.

Back at the Black River Camp

When the characters arrive back at the Black River camp, they discover that the whole tribe has been anxiously awaiting their return. If Laoki was still alive when the characters left, then the joy or sadness of the community depends on what the characters have accomplished:

If the lion tooth necklace was not returned to Okomë, then Laoki's condition slowly worsened until he finally died in a great amount of pain and suffering, unless he was dead before they left. Since then, his ghostly figure has been seen wandering around the camp. He doesn't seem to want to do any harm, but his presence is chilling, and a growing fear is spreading through the tribe... Maybe, in a future adventure, the characters can try to find a solution, by requesting the help of the Old Fire tribe or the Giant Stag tribe?

If the lion tooth necklace was returned to Okomë, and Laoki was alive when the characters left: They are told that one day – which will be the day they returned the necklace to its true owner – Laoki's fever suddenly subsided. Little by little, he regained consciousness, and then he began to build up his strength again. After a first brief awakening, Laoki fell into a peaceful sleep. Since then, he has been convalescing and is already in better shape, but his moody and unpredictable personality hasn't exactly changed for the better.



If Laoki was already dead when they left, they are told that his ghost has not been seen since the day the necklace was returned. The Black River folk could all feel that the dark feeling of threat and guilt that had been oppressing them had suddenly disappeared.

If the characters have returned with Faudagg, Tavarra and the others, as well as a fair supply of bison meat, the people of the Black River tribe will at first show their surprise and confusion. But once they are told the whole adventure, in the end they are all happy to see the old quarrel put to rest at last. All of them honor the great wisdom and bravery of the characters who led to this surprising conclusion. A great feast is held to celebrate the renewed friendship between the two tribes. Tohumo and U-kte will be the ones who take the longest to relax and welcome their neighbors warmly, but others fall into each others' arms with tears of joy. Twë and Tavarra agree together that the whole drama that grew around Okomë's death and Laoki's torment was probably necessary to clear the air of the stupid hatred between the two tribes. It is probably the work of the ancestors, who so enjoy artfully entwining the strands of destiny.

What does the future hold for Laoki?

If Laoki is still alive at the end of the adventure, the characters and their tribe will need to seriously consider what to do with him, in the light of his crime and the stain that he brought upon the whole community (and they don't even know that he killed Okomë yet!). A council is held, for the tribe to decide on Laoki's fate.

During the council, two sides appear:

eight people think that they should forgive Laoki, as they feel that he has paid a high enough price for his actions;

eight others consider that Laoki's actions are unforgivable, and that his moody character is now bringing ill fate to the tribe. They think he should be banished. In the end, it will be up to the characters to vote, and decide Laoki's fate between those two options...

Prestige and Experience

On top of the Bravery Points they earned during the combats and hunts, and the Generosity Points earned from the gifts they brought, the characters can also gain Prestige depending on what they accomplished:

Freeing the tribe from Laoki's ghost (if he is dead): 10 Bravery Points;

Saving Laoki's life: 20 Prestige Points (10 Bravery / 10 Generosity);

Taking part in Okomë's burial rites: 5 Bravery Points;

Rebuilding the alliance between the two tribes : 30 Prestige Points (10 Bravery / 20 Generosity);

If you are using the Wisdom Points option, you can award an extra 5 Wisdom Points, on top of those you may have awarded during the adventure, if the characters have managed to restore the relationship between the tribes.

You can award the characters **1 Experience Point** for every 20 Prestige Points they gained during this adventure.

If the characters somehow think that Laoki was right in stealing the charm from the evil-doing traitor Okomë and stick it to those wimps in the Jagged Rocks tribe, and after all, a ghost isn't that hard to put up with... Well, they definitely deserve to lose a few Wisdom Points for it!



Initiation

9.6. Scenario for Young Players

This short scenario gives you an original way of playing out the ritual for characters to mark their coming of age. In some ways, for example the presence of portable and cave art, this scenario is better suited to a group of Long Children.

The big day is here. The Elders have decided that the children of the tribe (the players' characters) should take a small packet, bound in leather, to the "wise man of the mountain", who will offer it to the great mountain Spirit.

It is crucial that they deliver it to its destination, or they will not be permitted to come back!

The journey is very long. The hermit lives a day and a night's walk away. If they open the parcel, the characters will only find a strange ivory sculpture representing a man with a fox's head.

When they set up camp for the night, a strange figure jumps through the fire: a man with the face of an arctic fox... and he shrieks with laughter as he runs away with the parcel!

There is only one thing to do: go and ask the wise man what to do. Although he is ill, he welcomes them warmly. Yes, he did indeed see the gloating fox Spirit run past. But before he can help them, he needs each of them to run a quick errand for him.

They must each volunteer for one thing, and one thing only. For example:

- go to find food (there is a small mountain lake nearby, where they can catch pike-perch) ;
- go to find some good quality flint stones and make a few tools (practical or ritual uses) ;
- go and pick some specific, and very carefully described, medicinal herbs.

Adjust the difficulty of the tasks depending on your players. Some tasks are technically challenging, others will imply an encounter with a "Spirit" – you have probably realized by now that the Spirits they have met so far were in fact adults of the tribe wearing a mask, body paint and disguises, to check that everything is going alright for the children, while making sure they don't have it too easy.

The wise man will say that he feels better thanks to their help, and he will reward them by telling them the tribe's legends until late into the night.

But an hour before dawn, the hermit wakes them with alarm! The camp is under attack from the evil Spirits sent by the arctic fox! There indeed, at the edge of the shadows, monstrous shapes are making noises that make their blood run cold.

To keep them away, the children must make plenty of noise, throw burning branches and "enchanted" snowballs at them, using the ritual chants they learned during the evening's storytelling session, etc.

When the dawn comes, all the monsters are gone.

"We must put an end to this fox Spirit's mischief! We will smoke him out of his den and take back what he stole," says the hermit.

He takes them to a nearby opening in the mountainside, and asks them to help him light a great fire into which he throws some of the herbs picked by the children. Soon, they hear cries coming from inside the den.

"Quick! Let's take back our gift before the fox Spirit gets his powers back!"

The inside of the den turns out to be a labyrinthine cave with walls covered in cave-paintings. The atmosphere is strange, and the animals painted on the walls seem to slowly come to life (which may have something to do with the intoxicating herbs that the old man just burned...). As they come round a corner in the gallery, the children come across the open leather package, next to which is the statuette of the fox Spirit.



They will probably wrap it back up and then quickly head back out of the cave.

Alas, they can't find their way back outside.

If the characters call out for help, or try to talk to the animals on the walls, they will end up entering a sort of trance state and hear the faint noise of flapping wings coming from a secondary gallery. This passageway leads to a huge cave, with an unreachable hole high up in the ceiling. A bright light is flooding down through the hole onto a drapery formation where they can see, a painting of a vulva and of a bison that follow the suggestive shapes of the rock face. This place is a sanctuary.

An eagle cries out. A majestic bird of prey swoops down at them from the hole in the ceiling... and then takes human form when it reaches the ground!

"I am the Spirit of the mountain. Have you brought a gift for me?"

As soon as he is given the statuette, the Bird-man begins to dance in front of the paintings of the Mother and the bison. The cave itself begins to twist and turn, and other animal figures begin to appear on the walls of the cave...

The Birdcave

“Quick! Join the Spirits in their dance. Come and fly on my wings!”

If the children join in the dance, they will feel like they are leaving the ground and floating up among the Spirits. Depending on the qualities they have demonstrated during the adventure, the eagle Spirit will give them a totem animal to match their accomplishments. Then they will be blinded by the light and fall unconscious.

The sun is high in the sky when they wake up. The children regain consciousness outside the cave, not far from the hole in the cave ceiling, on a granite terrace overlooking the hermit’s cabin.

The older tribe members are all waiting there, looking worried. Some of them are holding their masks, revealing the sacred trickery. They welcome the children with much relief, as true heroes. Two men carry the body of the hermit out of his cabin. He has quite obviously been dead for several weeks.

Epilogue

Everyone returns to the valley, where the children are welcomed as full members of the tribe.

The burial rites are soon carried out for the wise old man, whose name was “Mischievous Fox”. As they follow the funeral procession, up on a high ledge, an arctic fox and an eagle cry out with what sounds like laughter, and then they vanish.

9.7. Humorous Scenario

This short scenario is an opportunity to have some fun while playing quite seriously with the complex concepts of family ties and the matrimonial codes of these “first peoples”. Pay attention though, this scenario is full of surprises and it requires plenty of concentration!

It’s a disaster! Doe has returned to the tribe! Your sister was supposed to marry Orgh the handsome from the Weasel clan. Alas, he was repeatedly unlucky during his hunts, and after he failed his final initiation trial, he decided to go into exile as a berdache*.

Doe preferred to run away. She has bluntly refused to marry any of the other members of the Weasel clan. She begs her brothers to find an exorcist for her beloved, or to take her back into their clan... but that would mean declaring war on the Weasels!

After meetings, councils and much discussion, the Elders decide that they should seek the advice of Rupe-Awl, a renowned sorcerer who is said to have come across “cases like this”.

At break of day, a delegation is sent out to the sacred mountain of the Horny Bear. Unfortunately, they find the wise man in the middle of a “consultation” with Orgh in his sweat lodge.

Rupe-Awl is categorical. Despite his best efforts, the Spirits have made their decision: the former fiancé has become a man-woman! The tribe must give the Weasels another woman, and everything will be sorted.

Unfortunately, now Doe has told them all her terrible stories, none of the women are willing to go near Orgh’s tribe! And just to complicate things, a delegation of Weasel-men is on its way to the clan’s

**Berdaches, also known as “Two-Spirit people”, were historically, among the Native Americans, people of the “third gender”: man-women or woman-men. There is a berdache character in the movie Little Big Man”.*



home camp to demand justice! Exchanging wives is one of the most sacred traditions of the valley. If they don't keep their end of the bargain, no other honest tribe will want to trust them ever again. If they don't marry outside the clan, it will degenerate in just a few generations.

The Weasels agree to give them one moon to honor their promise, or they will spread the word and the whole clan will be declared taboo. Thankfully, one of the tribe's Guardian Spirits comes to their aid. Coming to them during a dream (or a Shamanic ceremony) the Spirit says: "If a stag can become a doe, then a doe can become a stag."

The message is clear: Doe must return to the clan of the Weasels and claim the title of hunter! If she manages to pass the initiation trial, she can claim her status as a man...

and marry her beloved. Doe accepts this suggestion with glee! The only problem is that her delicate frame doesn't exactly make her a natural for the rough hunting initiation. But if she is well trained, enchanted and loaded up with charms, it could work...

A little later, a rather timid Doe, accompanied by a suitable entourage, is sent to the Weasels. The other clan, pre-warned, has accepted the idea, but not without some difficulty. May the best woman win! However, it is now time to settle this messy business before things really go badly wrong.

Unfortunately, the characters arrive in the middle of a raid! The cursed clan of the Skull Chewers is stealing women to take back to their tribe. Among those who were taken is of course: Orgh the handso... um, the beautiful.

On hearing this, Doe's blood boils! Accompanied by the characters, she rouses the survivors with an incredible energy and organizes the tracking with an as yet unseen ferocity. (You can make the Skull Chewers Bear-men or Long Men, as you wish) When she returns victorious, covered in blood and honor, Doe will officially be adopted by the clan of the Weasels and made a hunt leader. She will use her new status to immediately marry her beloved.

Epilogue

Shortly after...

Led by their energetic hunt leader Furious Doe, the clan of the Weasels has crushed two other clans for futile reasons, just to seize their resources.

Times are hard. The tribe's Elders pray that the insatiable greed of their former sister does not one day turn against them...

The Odyssey of the Bear-men

9.8. Wistful Scenario

This scenario is not situated in the usual Würm period, but a little later, during the final period of Neanderthal man's extinction. This extinction took place over several thousand years, ending at the latest 24,000 years before our era, in what is now Portugal, where the last communities found refuge as modern man advanced across Europe.

This story will therefore be tinted with nostalgia and sadness. The GM will need to convey to the characters the feeling of their impending extinction as the Long Men's time moves ever closer.

The Last Times of the Clan

"When our ancestors' ancestors walked the earth, the Bear-men roamed all the lands. From the Icy Mountains to the Big Water, we could always find food to eat, a friendly clan to trade our precious goods with, or women for our best hunters to marry. Urzohunkan, the Great Red Bear welcomed the brave into the heart of the earth at the end of their lives, and always made sure to give us beautiful children in return, as a symbol of our rebirth, just as the seasons of Ao and Mordagg ever come around again. Then the time of the Long Men began. Our Elders warned us about them. Yet some daring souls did manage to trade with them, and they were not always hostile. But their numbers were far greater than ours, and they came with strong Spirits who fought continually in the unseen world against the Guardian Spirits of our clans. One after the other, the clans that we knew wasted away, then they disappeared or, like ours, went into exile. We had to leave the shadow of the ThaXo Tree, our Guardian Spirit.

Now, we have arrived at the end of the world. The Big Water will not let us flee any further, as our Guardian Spirits slowly disappear, and even Urzohunkan can not

protect his children any more.

He left us only the beautiful Akienka as a hope to hear the loud laughter of children ring out once again in our shelter. Take care of her, as if she was the most precious of jewels, and never forget to honor Urzohunkan until your last breath. He will remain by your side like a caring father, even though he can no longer guarantee us the prosperity we once knew."

So spoke Magwé when the young Akienka gave birth to her last child, stillborn like all the others before it.


This passage can be read as an introduction to the scenario, or the information it contains can be shared throughout the first part of the scenario.

The Bear-men clan that the characters belong to is but a shadow of its former self. Aside from the characters, the other members of the clan are the old shaman Magwé and the frail Akienka, so weak that she is only still alive thanks to the protection of Urzohunkan and the powerful medicine that Magwé gives her.

- **Note:** if there are characters of both genders, the powerful incest taboo that is law in the clan will prevent them from procreating together. The only hope to renew the clan is indeed Akienka, the only woman born of a different clan.

The Old Gray Lion

The clan's camp is meagerly set up in a tiny rock shelter, just a few steps from the cliff overlooking the Big Water, the "end of the world". Mordagg's season (winter) was very hard on them. Akienka lost her last child. She is slowly recovering, and she is out gathering shellfish on the pebble beach while the tide is low. Magwé is warming his old



bones in the spring sunshine and preparing one of the potions he knows so well. All the characters are going about their occupations in and around the camp.

Suddenly they hear cries. In an instant they all realize the tragedy that is about to happen. Cornered between the cliffs and the water, Akienka can't run. Facing her, an old cave lion, probably a male cast out from his pride by younger lions, has wandered up along the shore. Although he is dying, he wants to survive a little longer, and his hunger has directed him towards Akienka, as she is such an easy prey.

Regardless of the speed at which the characters intervene, the lion has already attacked by the time they get there. Cornered in turn by the layout of the location, the lion will fight back until his death (see the information on grey lions in Chapter 8.1.).

The Death of Akienka

They have to face the facts. Despite all the healing talents of Magwé, Akienka is about to leave for the World Below, where Urzohunkan awaits her. This is a crushing blow for the rest of the clan, as their last hope of ever seeing new children join their clan dies with her.

Her extensive bleeding and weak state mean that she will not survive for more than a few hours. The clan's burial tradition states that her body must be left out to the scavengers and the elements for the flesh to be taken as an offering to the circle of life, before her bones are crushed and buried in a place that Urzohunkan will reveal to old Magwé the shaman.

The characters can help Magwé, who will celebrate the ceremony, for example by helping him enter the trance state by beating the drum or carrying out the propitiatory dances.

As they enter the heart of the cave and the dark places where they do not usually venture, the clan members carry Akienka to her last resting place. Magwé calls upon the beaver Spirit that guided her during her life. After wandering in a trance state for a long while, feeling his way along the cave wall, he sees the Spirit appear in a place that he marks with the print of his hand, dipped in a greasy, black substance. This is where Akienka's remains will be buried, and where she will travel to the World Below.

Magwé laments, and calls upon Urzohunkan to show him where the last of his children have gone, so that their small group can join them.

If one of the characters is able to enter a *Trance* and *Contact with the Spirits* (these will all be assisted by Magwé, who is able to do it himself if nobody else is an initiated shaman), he will be able to experience a strange vision, the interpretation of which will require the *Contact with the Spirits / Clairvoyant ability* (DT 9).

A dark sky covers the Big Water and the hills that reach back from the shore. Then the clouds clear for a second, letting the starry sky and the moon light up the land. In the middle of the landscape is an old, dead tree, with branches stretching up that make it look like an old man saying a prayer to the infinite sky. It is too late, though. The tree has been attacked by the elements for too long, and it will soon be nothing but dust. Along comes a gigantic mammoth that tramples the old tree, almost without noticing as it falls and breaks.

Yet, huddling in a small shelter on the edge of a great forest whipped by the furious winds of the Big Water, a small group of Bear-men is moving around a strange silhouette standing in the darkness. It could be a woman, but her skinny figure and strange face make her look ugly. She seems to be as tall as a Bear-man, but as fragile as a large child.

Interpretation (either given directly to the characters or through Magwé, depending on their Success or Failure):

- The future of the Bear-men is dark (dark sky). In the whole of time and space (starry sky), they have already begun to disappear (the old tree represents the ThaXo Tree, the clan's old Guardian Spirit that they had to leave behind them many years ago) and their end is near, as the time and supremacy of the Long Men comes to pass (Montharumon the Great Mammoth, the most powerful Spirit of all, and creator of the Long Men).

- Yet some Bear-men still survive. They live on the edge of the Big Water, in a place where it is bordered by a great forest. The group's hunters think that they know the place, about three days' walk towards the fires of Ao (the fires of the sun, in other words, the south). On closer inspection, the second part of the vision seems to imply that the group has no more women other than the strange Long Woman (the characters have never seen one, although they have heard of them).

Looking for the Bear-men

The clan has no future if they stay where they are. They gather a council, however, to debate their decision (in other words, the characters and Magwé, they're all that's left!). Let each of the players express their own character's point of view: revolt, pessimism, vengeful feelings towards the Long Men, etc. One way or another, once the visions have been explained and commented on, they should be curious to go and find this handful of Bear-men and their strange female.

The group leaves the precarious shelter where they survived the rigors of Mordagg's season, and heads off into the unknown once again, feeling more and more bitter. Each of them has to prepare for the journey, think about what they are taking with them, what they'll need to hunt, defend themselves or just survive on a daily basis. Magwé reminds them that a few gifts and valuable objects to barter will certainly be useful if they do find their fellow Bear-men. If none of the other characters think to do so, before they leave the place Magwé will thank Urzohunkan for his kindness during Mordagg's season, and the evils that he kept at bay. He begs ThaXo to use his last strengths to protect them on their perilous journey into the unknown, leaving him some form of propitiatory offering (for example sprinkling a special infusion of rare plants on the ground, symbolizing the return of ThaXo's fertility).

- Remember to manage the clan's Manna Pool, which can be boosted by this ritual (DT 6, because of the distance from the ThaXo Tree).

Unless you want to punctuate the journey with any specific encounters, the next few days are mainly filled with a long and silent walk, under a grey sky and a fresh wind, across a landscape covered in steppe. Use the *Orientation*, *Fatigue*, *Hunger* and *Cold* rules to convey to the players that this is not an ordinary journey.

A *Tracking* Test (DT 9) can tell the characters that a group of Long Men (twenty or so) has travelled through this area recently, then headed east, leaving obvious traces of deer and horse hunting.



Their stocks of food are very low after the winter, so it could also be useful to hunt on the way, just a few smaller animals to keep them going.

The Grim Clan

Following the indications of their vision, after a few days, they arrive within sight of the forest where the Bear-men live. At the bottom of a ravine, surrounded by tree-topped cliffs, is a tiny cave. Five Bear-men live there. Use the characteristics of a hunter Bear-man from Chapter 8.1., and if necessary, add the modifications suggested by the description of each of the characters.

- **Aktra**, visibly the hunt leader. He is about thirty years old, seems to be particularly powerful, and his face is marked with a hideous scar from a wound that also seems to have taken a part of his lower jaw;
- **Boaloi** “stone legs”, has an evil gaze and is the main perpetrator of the violence towards the poor woman as they will soon see;
- **Sadduk**, a frail old man, weakened by rheumatism that deforms his body, and who barely survives with very little care from the younger men;
- **Mah-Go** is not a talkative one, he seems rather dumb, but he comes to life the minute he gets to use his great bone club;
- **Orolak**, Aktra’s brother, wing man, lackey, henchman, slave... He is always just a few steps behind Aktra ;

A Long Woman, covered in filth and bruises, is lying in a corner. She is simply known as Vo, “the woman”.

The newcomers receive a very chilly welcome! The group is visibly unhappy with the arrival of the characters and Magwé into their world. They timidly accept a few gifts in return for a part of their meal and a place at the fire.... Hospitality is a value they seem to have forgotten.

If there are any females among the characters, they will immediately become the center of attention, and Aktra will do anything to try and have his way with one, if not all, of them (gifts, intimidation, demonstrating his force by molesting his brother or Vo).

Sadduk is given a few leftovers that he has to share with Vo at the back of the cave, while Boaloi pulls a large chunk of cooked meat from the fire... which they can all quickly identify as a human thigh (*DT 3 for Alertness*, or they will risk transgressing a powerful taboo of their clan).

Regardless of the clan members' attitude, Aktra will interpret their refusal as an insult, and he will scorn and mock them. In other words, the atmosphere is very tense, and they are all preparing to spend the night in these conditions.

With tact, diplomacy and discretion, the characters can learn that:

- the clan hasn't had any women left since winter, and a child of 5 years died recently;
- the clan members began to violate their own taboo by eating Long Men (after all, are they really men?) since these newcomers began to covet their hunting grounds, three seasons ago. Since then, they have been harassing the Long Men by plundering, kidnapping (like they did with Vo), and even murdering (as they did with Vo's man and the child that was still suckling at her breast when they took it and threw it down onto a rock to break its skull);
- the characters' scant belongings are seen as very desirable objects by the members of this clan. They also fear that their guests will run away, taking the prisoner with them.

If all of this is not enough to make them unpleasant to the characters, just add a few scenes where these ruthless men torment their helpless female captive.

• **Option 1:** the characters are disgusted or scared and decide to get away from the group, leaving Vo to her misery. They will soon pay for their cowardice, when they run into a dozen Long Men on their way to take care of those cannibal Bear-men. They won't have time to explain anything (*typical Long Man hunter, see Animal Guide*).

• **Option 2:** they fight Aktra and his clan. Let the players come up with the details of their plan, but bear in mind that if they leave it too long, during the next day, the others will do the attacking, by surprise and with no intention of leaving any survivors! After the combat (which will also occur if they try to run away with Vo, as Aktra will run after them) they will need to decide what they want to do with Vo, and with Sadduk, who didn't fight.

Their situation is not exactly better than before, in fact it is worse, as they have now lost all hope of finding fellow Bear-men to trade with or even just to share some moments of fellowship.

The scenario could end there, with a deep feeling of failure and the certainty that they will soon be extinct for good. But this inexorable end of the world for the Bear-men could also come about in a more poetic (although sad) way, if they have the courage and the kindness to take Vo back to her own people.

Looking for the Long Men

Vo is intriguing in several ways. Sure, she is ugly (although, after a closer look...) and she seems fragile; but she has a number of talents and an ingenuity that constantly surprises the characters. She shows them how to make melodious sounds with a fragment of whittled deer bone, she dyes her clothes with unknown colors, braids her long hair and entwines wild flowers in it... (Don't hesitate to add more details to make the characters curious and affectionate towards her) In no time, Vo the beaten and humiliated woman becomes the beautiful Hisoni (her real name)!

She soon makes herself irreplaceable in the group by helping them all out with a number of small things. Although they don't understand each other, it seems clear to the characters that Hisoni carries the sadness of the death of her man and her child. Furthermore, she misses her clan, as they can easily tell when they come across the tracks of the Long Men who came to hunt in the area.

If they don't take the initiative to take her back to her people, a group of 10 Long Men will end up catching up with them. They will only be able to avoid a hateful and murderous confrontation if Hisoni intervenes at the last minute.



Epilogue

Whether they travel there of their own volition or are taken there by the Long Men, they reach the strange camp, made up of large huts covered in skins, sitting proudly on the top of a plateau, sheltered to the north and facing the sun. There live roughly thirty Long Men of all ages, and they seem prosperous with their tables laden with meats and dried fishes, the racks where the women are tanning skins, the laughter of their children and the harmonious sound of a flute accompanied by small drums. These are all things that the characters have never even dreamed of, and they now know that they will never share with their own kind... Humanity has found a new species to fly its flag.

Once their initial wariness has passed, the characters will be warmly welcomed by the clan (*the structure of which is up to the GM to define, depending on whether or not this adventure will continue*), and they are especially popular with the children. Their Talents and Secret Skills will quickly attract the attention of the older ones, while they also teach them a lot in return.

Maybe some beautiful stories will come out of this rare encounter. Maybe some of the Long Children will keep in their memories, and then in those of their children, the wisdom of the Bear-men as they slowly disappear. Maybe some hybrid children will be born of a beautiful union between one of the Bear-men and a Long Woman. One way or another, they all realize that the world they once knew is gone forever.



Afterwords of Acknowledgment

The author wants to express his warmest thanks to all the members of the team that made it possible for this book to be released. First of all, many thanks to Franck “Booga” Florentin who gave the primal impulse and followed the advance of the work with close attention; Thousands of thanks to Kathy Calmejane and Leslie Pierobon for their wonderful translation of my many words and ideas. You rock, girls! Of course, many thanks to Stewart Wieck and Nocturnal for the great surprise and treat they gave us when they decided to support Würm with full power and commitment. Last but not least, many thanks to my acolyte and editor Jean-François Morlaës, who made it all possible and has been caring for the development of *Würm* for many years now.

The author also wants to give his most sincere thanks to the hundreds of extraordinary people who decided to back up the Kickstarter project of an English translation of *Würm*. Nothing could have been possible without you! We all hope you liked what you read and will be ready to follow us on further adventures !

Emmanuel Roudier



Prestige & Status

Tribe	_____	Prestige	_____
Clan	_____	Bravery	_____
Status	_____	Generosity	_____
	_____	Wisdom	_____

Experience

<i>Character's Name</i>	Stamina	Food supplies
		○○○
People		○○○
		○○○
		○○○
		○○○
<i>Age & Sex</i>	<i>Serious injuries</i>	

Strengths & Weaknesses	Talents & Secret Skills	Equipment & Charms

Favors of the Spirits & Curses

Weapons			
<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Resistance</i>

