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BABOONS OF KRALORELA

David Millians

Baboon, Hwa Gow

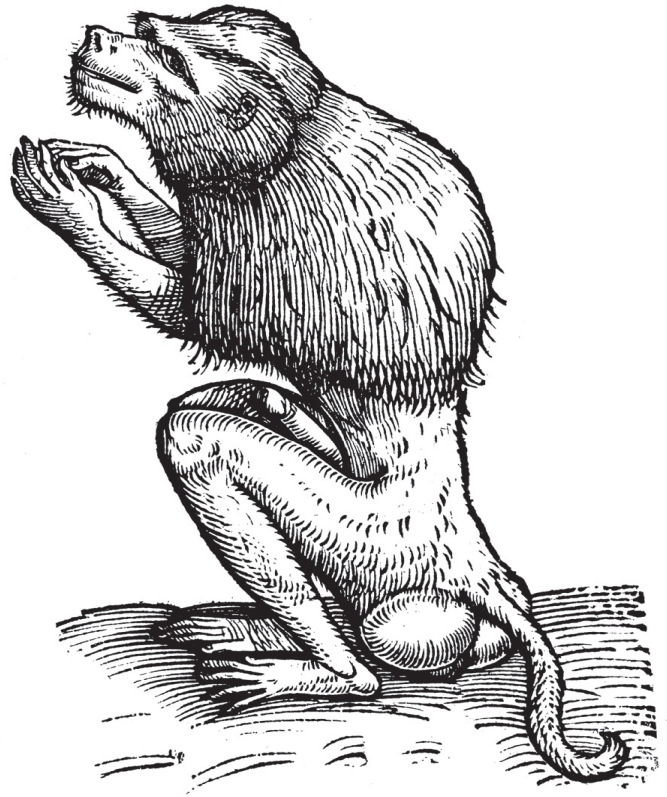
Papio cynanthropus

The Hwa Gow Baboon is one of the smallest species of baboon, usually less than two feet tall. Its pelt is a dark creamy color, darker on the face with a short mane. They have short, curling tails and can walk long distances. They are opportunistically omnivorous and sometimes dig for water.

This baboon lives in the high country of western Boshan province, preferring dry mixed vegetation and avoiding dense forest or open country. Troops of these baboons can have as many as one hundred individuals, collecting smaller groups of males with their females and young. They have a rich range of vocalizations for communicating with one another and usually sleep in trees at night. Threatened baboons will try to evade a pursuer or attacker, but they will fight if necessary.

Kralori and other human inhabitants of the Hwa Gow Plateau view these baboons largely as pests, though they are sometimes semi-domesticated as guard animals. They also trap them for meat and several body parts used in medicine.

Foo Fay was a younger son of Aptanace the Sage. He traveled across the world with his dog Kwan. They saved one another's life many times and fell unnaturally in love. Spurned by the rest of humanity, Foo and



Kwan retreated to the wild lands to make their life together. The stunted baboons of Hwa Gow are their numerous offspring.

Significant Abilities: Bite & Claw, Find Water, Run Away, Signal Other Baboons

Exceptional Abilities: Climb Fast

Consciousness: Animal

Baboon, Yellow

Papio croceus

The Yellow Baboon is a small, intelligent baboon of the lower mountain valleys of southern Kralorela. It stands up to four feet tall and has a light yellow-tan pelt. They usually live in small troops of six to twelve, but sometimes in areas with greater access to food, they form larger bands of up to one hundred. They are highly social and spend much of their time working together and grooming one another. They have an elaborate language of grunts and squeals, and a few speak a hsunchen tongue, more rarely Kralori.

These baboons roam through their area, often moving to warmer elevations in the winter. They are strictly vegetarian. These baboons pair for life and raise their offspring together. Young remain with their parents for at least five years. Yellow Baboons live about sixty years, though a few reach much more advanced age.

In conflicts, Yellow Baboons will first try to intimidate their opponents. Failing that they will all continue shrieking and close with their

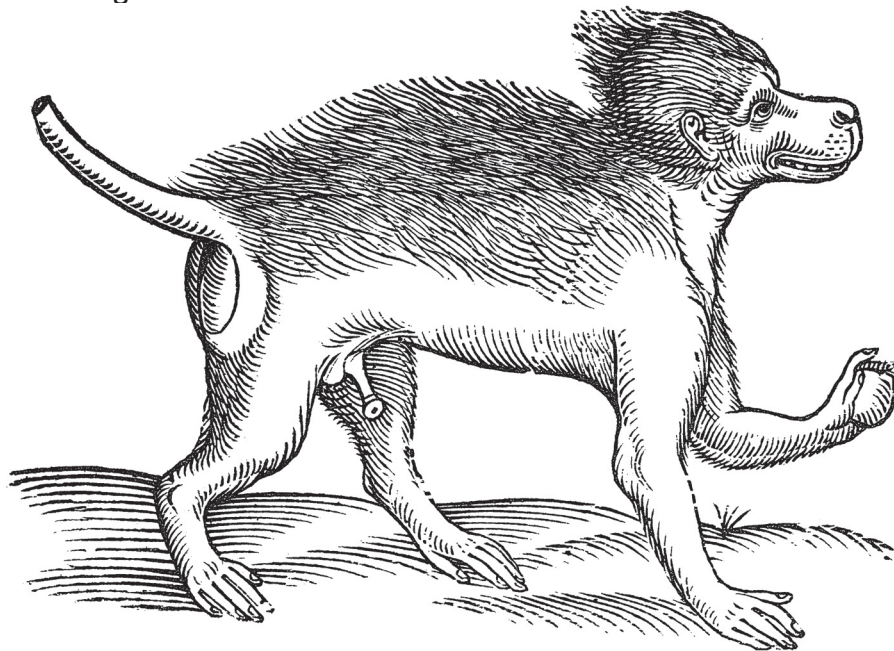
claws and teeth, trying to overwhelm their enemies and drive them away.

The Kralori believe that Yellow Baboons are the descendants of people from the era of Emperor Heenmaroun, men and women that found peace in a life in harmony with the cosmos. A few people seek them out for their supposed mystic knowledge, but most Kralori view them as little more than simple beasts.

Yellow Baboons know that they once they were masters of a powerful realm, perhaps an empire or some other world, but they came to recognize that power and prosperity only limited the development of their inner spirit. They cast off their arrogant ways and began their simple lives in the wilderness. They find the outsiders distracting but mostly ignore anyone that behaves calmly in their presence.

Significant Abilities: Bite & Claw, Find Simple Forage, Humble, Shriek Intimidatingly, Way of Nature

Consciousness: Sapient



THE LIVES OF SEDENYA, PART 3

Greg Stafford

The Other Side

Teelo Estara first entered the Otherworld at the Falling Place.

She did not know the method to become an independent deity. Others had become heroes, but no one had attempted to resurrect their entire body of past lives. She didn't know what to do, and She knew that She had tried before and failed. But She tried, once again.

Her Mothers gathered with Her other followers at the sacred place, and they erected a large tent to protect everyone from the elements. Inside that tent they erected a sanctuary, and inside that sanctuary they conducted the rites to open a gateway to the Other Side. They used prayers and sacrifice, spells and veneration, spirits and visions, as Teelo Estara had instructed them. In the center of their circle, the gateway appeared, and in the gateway a strange being whom only Jakaleel knew, and Teelo Estara walked towards it and then into it.

The creature before Her was nothing She had seen, yet it was oddly familiar. It was something that had been rescued from oblivion by Jakaleel, the old crone who had been Her precious and protective godmother. It was a Lune, a creature unknown to the world. It was the first time that Teelo Estara saw one. She had, by that time, developed Her sorb well enough to discern what type of supernatural creature was before Her. She

had been assaulted enough to know how to do this quickly. And with her sorb She peered closely at this thing, and it was clear that it was neither god, nor spirit, nor essence.

"I am Your future," it said, upon inquiry. "In the end I shall either devour You and suck Your bones dry of marrow and grind the rest to a powder, or else I will be three shadows for You, each from a separate source of light. But for now, You must either follow me, or stay here, or go off on Your own."

And She followed it. Since that first time, others have tried the alternatives. Some stayed, and their bones are a powder now that certain magicians use. Others have gone off on their own, and most have never been heard from again, though a few are known to exist in insufferable states of being.

"Have You ever fallen?" asked the unknown being, and of course Teelo Estara knew the answer was yes, and said so. "And have you wished for a chance to change that?" it asked, and again, Teelo Estara answered "Yes, but..." and before She was finished the ground from beneath Her disappeared, and She plummeted through open space, with the wind from Her fall whistling in Her ears like a gale.

Though She had grown strong and bold, She went white from fright at first. Yet She regained Her composure and had enough time to look around Her. She realized She was

amidst other creatures, like and unlike Her-self, as if there were a rain of people falling into the void below to water it with their frightened remains.

"I am not helpless," She thought, and then She shouted, "You are not helpless!" to the others about Her. Most seemed to ignore Her cry, or found it to be just another frightening thing. She did not wait to see the result, but spread her arms like wings and swooped towards the nearest falling being. It was a small girl, much like the girl She had once been, and She scooped it into Her arms and zoomed away towards the distance, dodging the plummeting beings as She had dodged the rocks that were rained upon Her army by the birdmen of Danadix.

A mountain hove into view, and She descended upon it, to find She was again alone. Or it is possible that it was that little girl who landed, who upon being set upon the mountain found herself alone, much to her surprise.

She set off with diligence, having neither water nor food nor clothes, nor even an idea of where to go. Yet to go was better than to stay, and She went. Amidst rocks which watched Her, through grass and weeds which parted to let Her through, and under a burning brightness which had neither source nor mercy, She went on. She crossed a vast jagged plain of black obsidian that roiled in frozen waves and whose surface cut Her feet to ribbons, so that She left a trail of red footprints behind Her, wet and glistening and filling the tiny pockets in the stone.

The Big Man was visible first as a hill which offered shade. She, now burnt from head to toe by the sun upon Her naked skin, sought its shade and shelter. She was nearly upon it when it moved and turned to face Her. A head like a hillock tilted to peer down; blue eyes

looked at Her, and a low rumble tumbled from its throat in a wordless sound of curiosity.

She remembered this. It was as though She had practiced it before, memorizing lines in a play whose climax and aftermath She knew. This meeting would be friendly at first, then curious, and climax at last in a fierce coupling which She remembered had been a terrifying and embarrassing spectacle.

Then She heard a bird cry, a small red thing with a pointed cap and wise black eyes. It was off to the side, and She knew that this was a sign of escape. This was the Safety Bird, and if She chose to follow it, She could escape, and attempt to make an entirely new start to Her life and Her lives. She could avoid this spectacle of inept behavior, this embarrassment of unknown experiences. And for a moment, She considered just that.

But instead, She stepped forward then into an old story, into a picture whose lines and creases and colors She already knew. It was, despite Her knowledge, a child's drawing with scrawls instead of fine lines, of the wrong colors scribbled outside the lines of perfection. But because She knew it, and was willing to try, it was different. This time the meeting was joyful, comforting, and pleasant.

So it was that She went first to the oldest realm, in the era of the early Golden Age when She was but a child, and changed Her world. She stayed with the entity known as the Big Guy, and She lived with him in a cave. She had lived there before, eons earlier, and in Her original life and this one both She gave birth to Homura, Her sweet gem. In Her first life, She had eventually fled from this place, but this time, She cast out the Big Guy for his infidelities. This time, when he put a curse upon her, She ignored it. She thought that his curse was finished along with their love,

but She did not understand its nature until it revisited Her later.

She remained there even after Homura, Her sweet gem, departed. Some of Her other children and their relatives built a small village. She taught them to make an altar, too, and upon it, they sacrificed red cocks and black pigs, and offered the placentas of their births.

Teelo Estara, who was called Teelo Verithurusa here, then arranged a great ceremony wherein She would be able to enter into the Otherworld. She had calculated that She needed to connect to another world of immortality at that very place. It was difficult, for She did not know all the prayers and gestures, nor the proper state of mind for assured success. She did get into the otherworld, but then the nature of Big Guy's curse became apparent. Instead of establishing a connection, She was cast out again, not as Herself but as a newborn. She was her own descendant. When She was born, She did not cry, but opened her eyes and spoke to Her mother and Her grandmother.

They named Her Lesilla, or this time, Teelo Lesilla. She grew up, and She was mighty among them. Overhead sat Her former self, her Other Self; a divine body like a planet, which had turned blue when she was thrust into mortal form. She eventually learned to travel to it again, and to claim it as Her own self. She and her people went back and forth from that idyllic world. But She needed more.

Her tribe departed from that cave, as had many before them. They traveled about far and wide, noting the wonders of the world and learning what they could from it. They met, after some time, the Sons of Thunder, another tribe. At first there was conflict, but after a while they remained together and formed a new people. They built a town which

became a city, and they were called the Merinitans.

Teelo Lesilla did all that She could to prepare for Her Otherworld journey. She set up schools and instructed wise and powerful people. She made an alliance with the Emperor, to obtain his help as well. Alas, that was Her downfall. When She undertook her great rite of transformation in the Otherworld, She was betrayed by the emperor, and when She found her way to the Otherworld, they did not seek to help Her return. She struggled, and She did return, but She also lost a great part of Herself. Instead of establishing a living connection with the Otherworld, She left a part of Herself there, dead. The planet overhead crashed to the ground.

Lesilla had been powerful. Her husband was an emperor, and so was Her son. But they did not love Her, being jealous in a world that was becoming overrun by such petty emotions. She was cast out among the ordinary people, and She despaired of ever finding Her way back to divinity.

For a while, She rebelled. She worked with the people of Hagu and taught them how to cast out their own failed gods. They did, but it did not help Her.

She tried surrendering. She went to the Emperor in the hill, called the Vast Dome, and She surrendered to him. She was put to work in the most demeaning and terrible ways, and She worked without complaint. Yet that gained Her nothing as well. When it came time to blame, She was cast as scapegoat and offered to the demons of evil. They impaled her upon a great pointed stake and the demons came and devoured her slowly.

She was devoured, but regenerated. She was suffering, but untouched. She was the cause of trouble, and its victim. She was all

things and nothing. She realized that her souls had been peeled from Her and tossed away into the winds of change and time. She was down to her last scrap of dignity and self. She remembered the past, Her pasts, Her experiences and knowledge and everything which had ever been. It was all inadequate for this.

That was when She realized her plight, and She stopped. She sat still, did nothing, save for being where and what She was. That was when the greatest monster of all came to Her and threatened Her. It is called Blaskarth by the Empire now, and others called it Wakboth,

Kajabor, Invendith, Sekeveragata, or simply just Cosmic Death. Utter annihilation. Loss of self. It stalked Her, slowly, to drag out Her agony and fear. She was afraid, and then so afraid that the fear could not exist within Her and burned itself out. So She was brave, but so brave that the courage too burned itself out. And so She cried until She could cry no more, and then She laughed in its face. She laughed until She could laugh no more, and so on through every possible feeling and thought until She was at last devoid of thought and emotion, entirely calm. Blaskarth hovered over her, and She offered Her throat



Blaskarth hovered over her, and She offered Her throat and womb to it. It struck, sinking hollow iron fangs deep within Her soul.

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and womb to it. It struck, sinking hollow iron fangs deep within Her soul.
 She died. All died. Everything. She failed to exist.
 She was not Her. She was. Not Her. Not. Her.
 She then saw what She had not. An empty cave. A ruined city. A desolate landscape. A meaningless life. These, and others, were the places she had tried to enter the Otherworld and establish Her presence. She then contemplated, without emotion, how She might return.
 That was when Yanafal Tarnils found Her, a hollow husk, an empty shell, a meaningless being.
 Now, we need to tell briefly of this brave fellow, the boldest in the land.
 Yanafal Tarnils had been born well, with strength and intelligence. He was not afraid to kill, nor to offer himself to death for a good cause; nor was he afraid of life. He had also learned courage and, perhaps more importantly, discretion and the critical application of caution.
 This great man of war never wavered in his loyalty to the goddess that he had helped to awaken. He was never disobedient, even when he was sent away from battle at Memkorth. But like all those Saints of Her Life he was subject to doubt, for that was always a

part of Her teaching. So when She went upon her great Godquest and left him in charge of the army, he was at the front or the rear of the fight, as required, to defend the sanctuary.
 He would never have left his post, except that the call of doubt nagged at him from across worlds. She had been gone for years, whereas everyone had expected it to be weeks at the most. Her followers in the Tent of Life had become discouraged; many had lost heart and abandoned the ceremony. Enemies had grown stronger and bolder, and they had begun to assemble and move upon the followers of She-who-would-be-goddess.
 So he then left the command to Paktalus, and he entered into the quest across other worlds to follow that call. Disobedient to Her word, he was nonetheless loyal to his obligations. He wandered through known and unknown events of the Gods War, and everything which dared to oppose him was slain or imprisoned. He was finally confronted by the ghost of Death, an empty Death that could devour his soul as a bat eats a fly. It was the dead Death, which to him appeared as a gigantic wasp, the Carmanian incarnation of whatever lay beyond Death. It was the goddess Ak, which had birthed the first Sword, the first wielder of that Sword, and the first Death. Tarnils fought it, first without success. But he stopped fighting for just one moment, and that foul creature sank its fangs into his hip. Then, with cool detachment borne from limitless practice and experience, he lopped

the head from it. Yanafal Tarnils continued to struggle forward with that head attached to him, dipping burning ichor as he walked. The Trail of Death is thus well marked and well known now, and it leads now to the place he found: the Fields of Waste, where he came upon Her ragged corpse, devoured by wasps and maggots and the empty ghosts of the bondage eagles which he had once, long ago, slain. She was staked upon a post, impaled like a puppet, and to his eyes She seemed to be suffering beyond all understanding.

"It is your fault," said a voice, and when the fear of that truth entered his heart, that was the moment of his greatest doubt, yet of his greatest trust in himself as well. And so, caught in that dichotomy of assurance and fear, he saw Taraltara, the impossible being who could not be seen.

"You are the cause, Taraltara," Yanafal Tarnils said to the Great One. He began to calculate how he might fight it. He felt the head of Ak gnawing at his hip.

"Not I, but She," replied Taraltara. And that was when Teelo Estara saw that Her tormenter was not Blaskarth, but Taraltara, the Great Mystery which underlay the whole of both cosmos and Chaos.

And from the grisly post where She was impaled, Teelo Estara, or the ghost of Her spirit, spoke.

"Good fellow, loyal man," said Teelo Estara, "I am glad to see you." And those words encouraged him to ignore the Greatest One, the Impossible One, and instead to focus again upon his job at hand.

"Good man, I need your decision," said Teelo Estara. "The world needs you and your skills. You have been gone from the world for months now. Back there, I see our people

being slain, being captured, and their souls and spirits taken into cages like birds. You can go back. They need you." Before he had set off to find Teelo Estara Yanafil Tarnils had heard Her one plaintive call for help from afar. Now he heard without doubt the innumerable moans of the wounded, the shrieks of the dead, and the cries of those in the sanctuary who were facing imminent demolition at the hands of their foes.

Teelo Estara then gave him a choice. She reminded him of the countless loyal followers on the other side who were awaiting his return. "Your men and women," said the goddess, "you can save them!"

"Those are Your followers, as well," he said. "They wait for You. And do I need to remind You that You have told me that the greatest sacrifice is of the Self?" he asked Her. And he stood. "My decision is made," he said. And he took the sword from his scabbard and looked at Her. "You, I love," he said, and with a quick move, he turned the blade upon himself and thrust it through his heart. He fell to the ground. It was only then that the grisly head of the wasp dropped from his hip, and it chuckled as it did.

"A life given for yours," said the Great One. "You live." And Teelo Estara fell from the stake, a small ember of life now independent of agony. Taraltara then gave the goddess a choice.

"You live. You are not alone. You are alive, and You can return to Your life with one other." And She was given a choice of others to take back to life with Her. "See, here are two beings who have given their lives for Yours. They are the most deserving, who gave without knowing." And before Her were two, Teelo Norri the young girl, and Danfive Xaron, the criminal.

"They have forfeited their lives for You, and as a reward for Your effort, You may bring one of them back." When She looked upon them, She saw that Danfive Xaron, the arch-criminal, was full of fear, while Teelo Norri, the innocent girl, was full of acceptance.

"Well, certainly these are equal, for though one in life was horrible and a terror, while the other was innocent and kind, they are both living beings of equal value. In the world of men they differ, but across the many lives they have lived, are they so different? Here in the empty plains of nothingness, I see they are equal." Then Teelo Estara pointed to the bloody corpse of Yanafal Tarnils,

"And him, too?" asked Teelo Estara. "May I go back with him?"

"Oh, yes, of course. He took his own life, but it was for You," said Taraltara. "So, should You wish, it may be him as well. Yet, would You prefer him, the death-giver, to her, Your gem?" Here Taraltara indicated Homura, the first child of Teelo Estara, who had brought Her from selfishness to an awareness of the world. It had been Homura who had akindled the Goddess, and made Her the Mother of Kindness as well.

"Then I see I have many more choices," said Teelo Estara. "I see that I may return with any being who has given his life for Me, or part of Myself which has given itself that I may be here now. Is that correct? I may take them instead?" asked Estara. She saw the faces of her lovers who had died, and even of those souls who were fighting desperately in the Tent of Life, leaderless without Yanafil Tarnils, who had been dead in the world for only an instant and were now joining the crowd.

At that moment, Danfive Xaron became uncomfortable, for he sensed that there were perhaps hundreds of thousands who might

qualify for this honor. And Danfive Xaron, of course, wished first for his own life to be returned. He had not relished his time in a suffering Hell.

"Yes," said the Great Goddess. "Choose any."

"Then," said Teelo Estara, "I choose You." No further dialogue was necessary. The truth of that statement was evident. In that place, no more trickery or choice or option was possible.

Taraltara smiled then, and Her smile was that of Teelo Estara. Each looked upon Herself. Two were not there, nor was One. It was not Zero, either, but something else.

And there, around Teelo Estara, rose a tent of wondrous beauty. Its fabric was of celestial silk, which Homura had first woven.

"I live," said six beings at once, in that moment. Three stood beside Teelo Estara, on the plains which were no longer those of nothingness. Teelo Norri, Danfive Xaron, and Yanafal Tarnils were with her. And in another world, where life and death were separate, the words were spoken by Deezola, a queen who had a moment before been pierced by a sword and two spears; and by a badly wounded scholar, armed with just a dagger and a shield; and by a great and powerful shaman who had been stripped of all her defenses by sorcery that ate spirits.

"We are all Us," they said, all six and another one, who for that second knew they were a part of the Great Sedenya.

"Hell and damnation," swore a great wizard at that same moment, though he was far across the field of battle, and then he faltered and fell, unconscious with blood running from his mouth, nose, ears and eyes. His lord, the son of a Shah, saw it and paled.

"Take him up," commanded the shah's son, "And follow me. Page, get our horses." And around that commander, his lieutenants and messengers and staff were all suddenly afraid too, and they all dashed for their own horses.

Now, when the Goddess had departed she left a body of worshippers behind, all of them dedicated and loyal and sworn to pray, even in the midst of fear and terror. They had worked and prayed for two years, relentlessly continuing a task that they had thought would take two weeks. They had stayed there, sometimes taking time to sleep or stepping out to bathe, but generally sleeping and eating there. Winter had not deterred them, though the fires inside that tent were never warm enough. Nevertheless, they persevered, for they thought at first that a few more weeks would be the worst they would have to endure. Then they thought that the first winter cold would be the worst thing they'd have to bear. Then the endless days wore on, and the second winter seemed like the worst. But they discovered that truly the worst thing was the Carmanian army which came upon them, slicing great rents in the cloth and charging in to kill.

At the "We are all Us" moment, the Lions of Carmania were among them, hewing and slashing in that sacred tent where the devout prayed for the return of their goddess. Oh, always remember those poor gentle folk who were being slaughtered at that very moment, praying and undistracted even though they were beyond hope. They were kneeling, or lying dead and bleeding, around the central Holy Tent, from which they hoped to see the emergence of their Goddess. Instead, from it leapt a man, armed and armored, who was their commander. His sword flashed, and with each blow, a foe fell dead or wounded. Of course, that was Yanafal Tarnils.

Another emerged, naked and scowling and desperate, yet more fierce for those conditions. He fell with bare hands upon the wounded who would have risen despite their wounds, and of course that was Danfive Xaron, who strangled them, and snapped their necks, and gouged out eyes, and bit the throat of one who dared to rise from the dead to fight again.

A third came, who did not fight, who did not struggle, but who instead raised her own voice in a prayer of supplication and mercy to help her beloved fellows and helpmates who were watching. That was Teelo Norri.

That assault drove the Lion Guard from the sacred tent. But never doubt the courage and training of those enemy soldiers, for they rallied to the barked commands of their remaining leader, and would all have fallen upon Yanafal Tarnils and reversed their defeat.

It was the howling moan from above that distracted them. That howl caused everyone to look upward, from the lowliest shovel man who had been impressed into the army to the son of the shah, who was even then seated upon his great stallion and spurring it away from battle. Even Mahedres Redbeard, the sorcerer, unconscious and draped upon another steed, looked skyward with bleeding eyes.

There She was. The Goddess, Teelo Imara as She would thereafter be known, radiant and the size of a mountain, standing upon the back of a screeching crimson bat. That bat was death and more than death, the Death of Gods. It was the color of fresh blood, sticky and wet, and the blood dripped from it in living tendrils. Its thousand eyes looked everywhere, and those eyes each saw what they sought, and they sought to look into the eyes of whomever wished harm to its rider. The eyes of the shah's son looked there,

and the eyes of Mahedres Redbeard opened and stared, and the gaze of the Lion guards as well looked upward into a vision that was impossible for them to behold. And each of them—a thousand foes!—felt their sanity drain out their own eyes, sucked into the impossible vision, and half of them fell dead upon the spot. The rest howled as they eyes burst, and they ran, panicked and mad, unable to see where they were going. Minds were just husks, unknowing of themselves or of others, all of them empty of purpose. The bat's eyes which had fed upon the souls of those now dead then turned and looked upon other foes, who in turn were driven mad or died. Every foe of the Goddess tried not to look, but they were compelled to see what they did not wish to see, and the madness and death entered them as well.

And what of those who loved Her? They had looked too, yet they saw only their radiant goddess, hovering there upon the back of a hummingbird, with Her extended hand bestowing blessing and healing. Those dead worshippers in the tent saw Her with their dead eyes, and they sat up, healed, and they joined in the song of praise and love that Teelo Norri was singing. Out of that canopy,

beautiful music swelled, and men and women who had been struggling a moment before were filled with joy. They raised their weapons and sang as well, and watched as an army which had been trampling upon them a moment before all dropped their weapons and ran, if they did not fall dead.

So She returned. The Bat continued, screeching and howling and driving the foes deeper into madness. She stepped gracefully from its back and descended, floating, down among Her followers and alighted where the Sacred Tent stood. Under the radiance of Her presence, the wounds of the dead and hurt were healed. From the pockets of Mahedres and the cages of his minions, the hummingbird souls and the butterfly spirits were freed, and they alighted on corpses as if they were feeding on flowers. The nectar of life flowed, and the dead rose alive.

Sedenya looked upon the field, and all saw Her. Then Teelo Estara stood there for a moment, and everyone recognized Her. Then she was more, and so afterwards everyone called Her Teelo Imara.



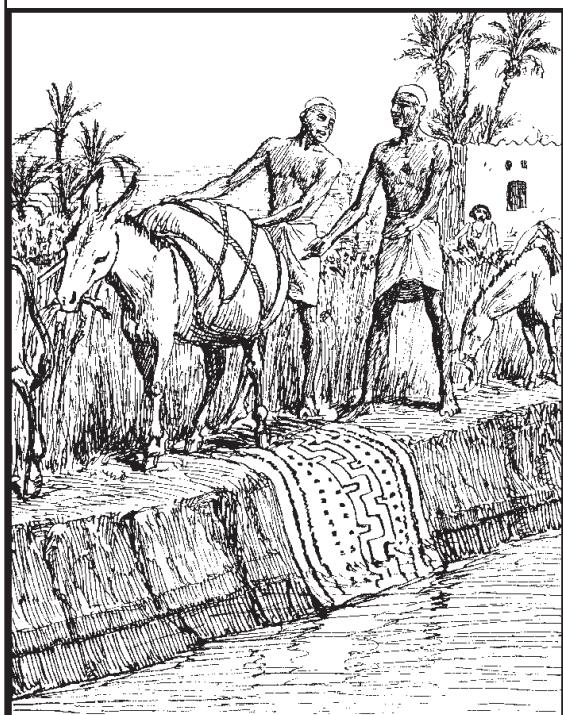
THE OSLIR RIVER

Roderick Robertson

The Oslir River is the primary highway for cargo-haulers of the central Pelorian basin. Some boats are owned by Associations, Trade families or Leagues, but the majority are owner-operated by Oslir Rivermen and their families.

The Oslir is generally divided into two areas – the Upper (Southern, upstream) and Lower (Northern, downstream) Oslir. The dividing line is generally considered to be the town of Jillaro, in the Satrapy of Sylila.

The Oslir floods every year in the spring, when the snows of the upper Oslir melt and fill the river with a jumping, roiling mass of water, foam, dirt and debris.



Season

Winter

(Dark, Storm Seasons) – The river is at its lowest. Some areas of the river are impassible due to exposed rocks and cataracts.

Spring

(Sea Season) – The river rises with the annual floodwaters. Navigation is unimpeded in the Lower Oslir, but the Upper Oslir has areas that must be portaged due to the wild white-water. North-westerly winds allow riverboats to sail up the river – the normal time for barbarians to return back to their steads.

Summer

(Fire, Earth seasons) – the river is no longer flooding, but remains full of water. Navigation is unimpeded all along the river, except in a few portage areas. Breezes are light in the upper Oslir, so most travel is downstream. Upstream travel is by the means of oars, poles or towing from the bank. Grain barges bring the harvest to the cities of the river valley.

Autumn

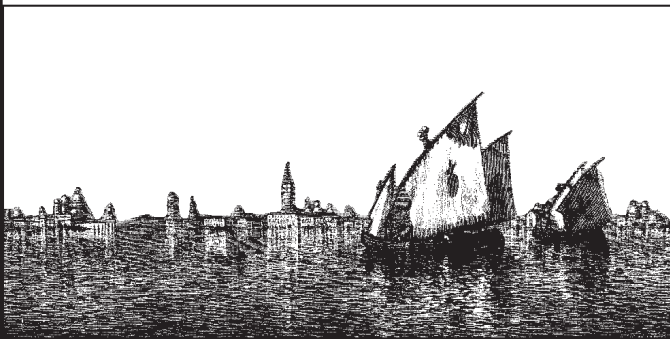
(Earth, Early Darkness) – the river starts dropping, exposing more and more rocks.

The Lower Oslir

The Lower Oslir is characterized by deep channels, shifting sandbanks, and a rolling current that travels deceptively fast. Upstream sailing is possible closer to the shore, with the center of the river a fast downstream ride. The banks are low, often lined with reeds or water willows. Hazards are most likely to take the form of sandbanks. There is usually a light up-river breeze, enough to propel boats slowly up-stream.

Zaruq

Zaruqs are small boats with a single mast which carries a lateen-rigged sail. They often have oars as a back-up for the sails. They have a crew of two to four, and carry up to 10 passengers or equivalent cargo. Zaruqs are primarily people, as opposed to cargo, movers.

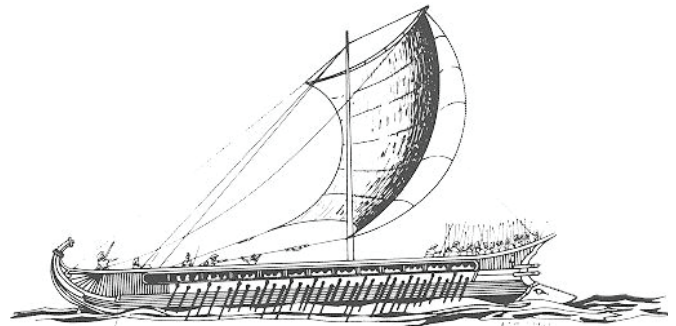


Grain Barges

In Summer the Lower Oslir swarms with grain barges – huge hulks carrying tens of tons of grain and other cargo up and down the Oslir. These massive barges are pulled by gangs of slaves along the bank of the river. Other boats must make way when one of these behemoths passes by.

River Galleys

The lower river is patrolled by galleys crewed by 30-75 men. The rowers and crew are all capable of fighting pirates or nomad incursions. Galleys often mount a scorpion – a light artillery piece like a large crossbow – on the bow. Raised fore and stern decks allow bow and javelin-equipped marines to pour missiles down on opposing craft or enemies ashore.



The Upper Oslir

The upper Oslir is characterized by rapid currents and rocky banks. Boats of the Upper Oslir need to be more robust than those of the Lower Oslir. The weather pattern of the upper Oslir allows the use of sails going upstream in winter.



Rafts and Flatboats

Rafts made of huge logs are floated down the Erinflarth, Crystal and Zalador Rivers from the forests of the Autumn Mountains; or the Black Eel from the forests of Balazar. It is a one-way trip for the rafts – they are broken up when they reach their destination – the busy cities of the Pelorian plain require wood for construction, and the shipyards of the Thunder Delta and Karasal appreciate the strength of the timbers for their icebreakers on the White Sea.

The barbarian crews of the rafts ferry ride their rafts only down to the Oslir, there they sell their rafts to Rivermen, who take them the rest of the way down the Oslir to their destinations. The rafts and their cargoes – hides, worked wood, exotic woods and metals – are sold as a unit at the riverside towns of Bostok, Tranthos, Penkranthos, Verdard and Mirin's Cross.

Rafts can be any size. The only difference between a raft and a Flatboat is that a flatboat has a rudimentary cabin for the comfort and convenience of the crew.

Sairdite Riverboat

A Riverboat is normally 14-17 feet wide and 50-70 feet long with a 4' draft, though some can be as large as 25 feet wide and 100 feet long, drawing 5 feet of water (the so-called "Riga" or "King" boats). A typical Riverboat can carry 70 tons of cargo, in a space approximately 75% of the length of the craft.

Riverboats are capable of traversing the rough waters of the Upper Oslir, though a number of portages must be made around particular rapids and cataracts. These portages are also sites for the propitiation of various river hazards that occur between portages. Portaging such a large vessel is a long and laborious process, and most ship owners "hire" Earth elementals from the locals to carry the boat and its load.



OSLIR RIVERMEN

Roderick Robertson

Oslir Riverman Keyword

Oslir Rivermen ply the waterways of the Empire, whether the more placid Lower Oslir, or the turbulent Upper Oslir. Most small craft are operated by their owner and his family.

Beginning Hero Suggestions

Adventures on the rivers of Glorantha usually call for boats, and boats mean crew. A Riverman is unlikely to leave “his river” without great provocation.

Appropriate Homelands

Anywhere with navigable rivers. An Oslir Riverman lives on and alongside the Oslir. Similar people live along the other great rivers of the Empire.

Abilities

Brawling, Dagger or Club fighting, Know [local river], Read Current, Ropework, Row, Sail, Stow Cargo, Swim, Woodworking

Typical Personality Traits

Boastful, Clannish or Gregarious, Taciturn or Happy-go-lucky

Typical Relationships

To boat, To crew, To Family, Rivalry with [other boat crew]

Typical Followers

Crewmen may have a pet as a follower, but rarely a human. A ship’s owner or captain might have the entire ship’s crew as followers.

Standard of Living

Minimal or Common

Typical Equipment

Knife, bundle of clothing, hammock or sleeping gear, access to cargo carried on the ship

Worship

Rivermen worship their local river and the beings of the wind. Propitiatory worship of the various known hazards of the river is common.



THE CULT OF THE OSLIR

Roderick Robertson

~ Oslir River Worship X

The Oslir is the greatest river in the Pelorian Basin. Rising in the depths of Dragon Pass, she winds her way northwards from the mountains to the White Sea. Along her banks are the rough towns of the storm-worshipping barbarians and the cities of Dara Happa. Her worship is included in that of all cultures along his route.

Like most Water deities, Oslir has been courted by all the land gods and goddesses she passes on her journey. Every culture along the river has their legend of her husband or his wife, and how the river was tamed by this God or Great Spirit. Some claim the Oslir to be a Wingless Dragon or Great Serpent, others know her as a gentle, nurturing entity, bringing fertility to the lands on her banks.

The Oslir is neither a God nor Spirit, she just is. If worshipped using sacrifice and theist rites, he provides Affinities, while ecstatic Animist rites allows access to Spirits. Worshipped in the Lunar Manner, she provides either or both affinities or Spirits.



Entry Requirements

Live on or along the River.

Homelands

Tarsh, Lunar Provinces, Lunar Empire

Abilities

[Local] Mythology of Oslir, Practitioner of Oslir *or* Initiate of Oslir *or* Devotee of Oslir (requires Concentration on "The Oslir"), Predict Change in River, Watereyes

Virtues

Patient, Rushing, Unstoppable

Affinities and Feats

~ **RiverLore** See beneath surface, Avoid rock, Sense depth, Sense [water creatures].

~ **Waterliving**
Breathe water, Dive deep, Swim against current, Walk on water.



Spirits

✓ **Current Spirits** Implacably Strong 16 to 2 \mathbb{W} 2, Smashing Wave 4 \mathbb{W} to 15 \mathbb{W} , Flow around 16 to 15 \mathbb{W}

✓ **River Creatures** Swim 12 to 15 \mathbb{W} 3, Breathe Water 18 to 5 \mathbb{W} , See Underwater 14 to 5 \mathbb{W}

Secret

✓ **Become Undine** The hero may turn into a water being and travel the length of the river or his tributaries.

Secret Requirements: The hero must concentrate his magic on “The Oslir”, and learn at least three magical abilities to at least 1 \mathbb{W} 2 each.

Other Side

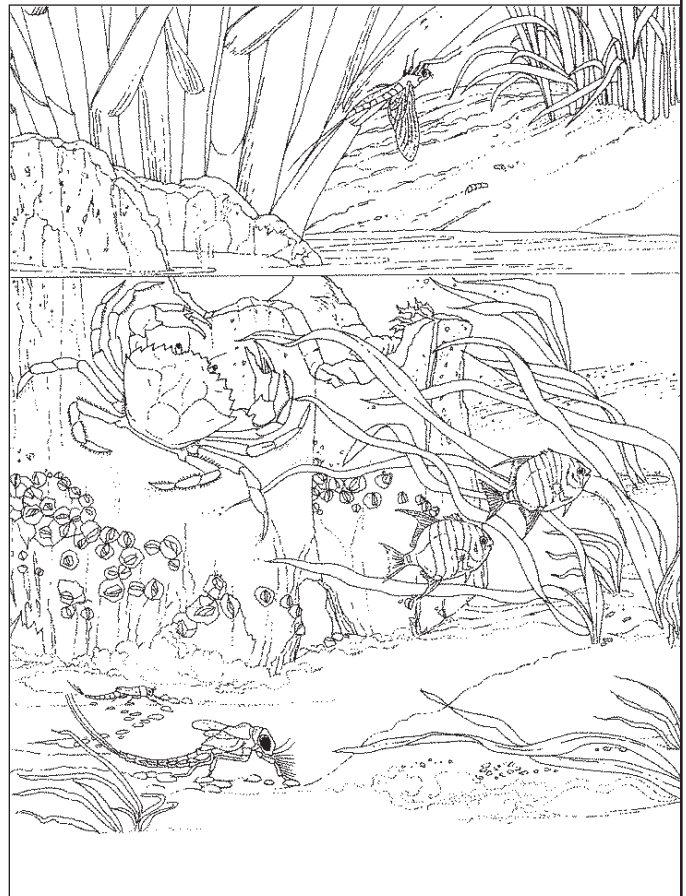
The Oslir flows through many Otherworlds, winding between the Otherworlds and the Middle World. At each transition between worlds, the worshipper must “cross the veil” to enter the new Otherworld. In all these Otherworlds, a concentrated Worshipper is considered to be in the “proper” otherworld as long as he stays on, in, or within sight of, the River.

Disadvantages

Until a worshipper concentrates on “The Oslir”, all his worship of the river is misapplied. Concentration on the Oslir is incompatible with any other known magical concentration. Concentration on the Oslir allows the hero to use both affinities and feats (if applicable), and Spirits of the Oslir (though not of other animist traditions).

Watereyes

Watereyes is a magical ability that allows the hero to see underwater (though not necessarily through silt or vegetation). It also allows sight of and communication with Otherworld denizens of the Oslir. It may allow sight of other Otherworld beings with a -20 Otherworld penalty, and a further -10 penalty if used outside of the river’s environs.



FLORA AND FAUNA OF PRAX

Andrew Larsen

Although it is a barren steppe, Prax and the Wastes are home to a wide variety of plants and animals that the Animal Nomads have learned to use for survival. The shamans of Eiritha and Foundchild regularly communicate with the spirits of these plant and animal life for various purposes. Here are some of them.

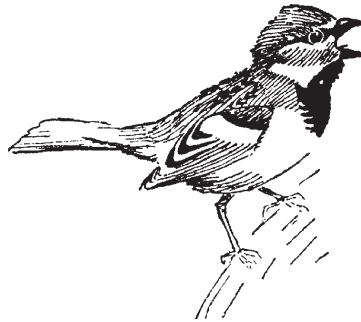
Fauna of Prax

Cowpeckers

Cowpeckers are small brownish-black birds with red or yellow beaks. They subsist by eating the ticks, lice, and other small insects that live on Eiritha beasts.

Anywhere a few Eiritha beasts are found, there will be a couple of Cowpeckers sitting on them. They are well-favored by Eirithans, both because they help maintain the health of the herds and because they chirp loudly when they sense predators. Cowpeckers are considered lucky, and it is bad luck to kill one.

Askari, the Cowpecker spirit, is considered a friend of Eiritha. In the Green Age, she gave Cowpecker permission to ride on her because he promised to keep Tick and Louse away. Because of this, some Eirithans employ



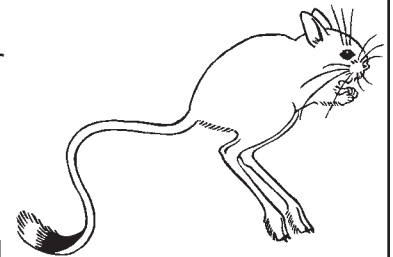
cowpeckers as familiars. When worshipped, Cowpecker provides *Detect Enemies*.

Jerboas

Jerboas are small gerbil-like rodents with long hind legs and tails and large ears. Nocturnal mammals, they feed on plant shoots, seeds, and berries and on small insects. They do not require water, getting the moisture they need from their food. They thrive in hot climates and can be found across Prax and the Wastes. They construct elaborate burrows with many false tunnels designed to confuse predators, and multiple points of entry, to enable them to flee if needed. Outside, they are capable of jumps of up to three meters at a time, faster than a normal person can run. They have large ears and excellent hearing. Foundchild hunters admire them for their skill at evading prey.

Yarbu, Grandfather Jerboa, was a clever spirit who was always one leap ahead of his predators until Foundchild trapped him one

night with a small lasso. To save himself, he agreed that he would teach Foundchild a few tricks and would allow Foundchild to eat whichever of his children were too slow to escape capture. Thus Jerboa is worshipped as a small but widespread subcult of Foundchild;



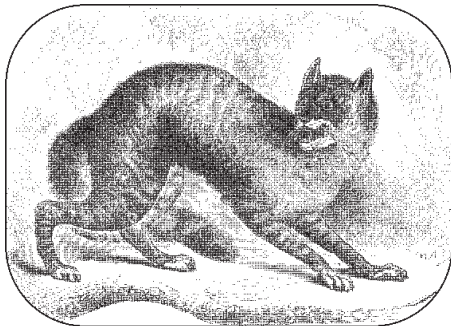
its members must know *Jump* at 50%. Foundchild hunters make an annual sacrifice of berries to Grandfather Jerboa to maintain this deal, and he always honors his bargain, appearing at the edge of a burrow to accept the sacrifice. Grandfather Jerboa teaches *Listen* and the spirit magic spell *Jumping* (identical to the Kygor Litor spell). His followers must agree to never worship Manul or Sun Hawk, two of his great enemies, and they must leave some berries or seeds outside a jerboa burrow every time they hunt jerboas. He loves dancing, and those who worship him do so with leaping dances.

Grandfather Jerboa is a popular figure in Praxian folklore, often appearing to offer advice to those in need. He is clever, but honest except with his enemies. Praxians view him as a symbol of resilience and survival.

Manul

Manuls are small Praxian cats with a grayish-brown coloring, thick fur, and squat profile. They live in small burrows and rock crevices in many parts of Prax and the Wastes, patiently hunting small rodents and birds. Typically they sleep much of the day and then emerge to hunt in the late afternoon and night. Praxians sometimes hunt them for their fur and, to a lesser extent, for their meat.

Manul, the spirit of the Manul, is often worshipped by Foundchild hunters for his patient skill. He is not an easy spirit to make contact with; he typically makes potential worshippers wait for a long time in a gully or near an animal burrow before he emerges to offer his

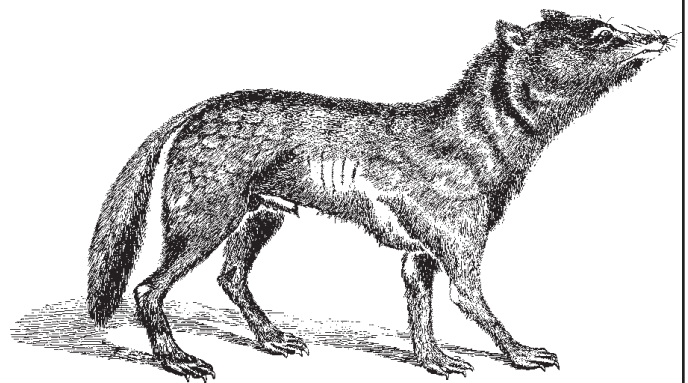


knowledge. He teaches *Hide in Cover* and the divine magic spell *Catseye*. Manul requires those who worship him to never kill a manul or wear manul fur. Manul dislikes Brother Dog, and rarely appears to those who are accompanied by dogs, but has been known to reveal himself to Orlanthi and Odaylans, who consider him one of Yinkin's litter.

Leaping Bears

Leaping bears are dark-furred predators about the size of a tiger, with short tails and a dog-like head. They are generally nocturnal, and prefer to leap onto a target from the cover of a gulley or a large bush or rock. They are generally solitary, except when they mate. They are extremely aggressive animals, and prefer very fresh meat; because of this often do not even finish eating a kill, particularly if new prey presents itself. They have been known to kill animals and not eat them, something that makes them seem particularly villainous to Foundchild's followers. They are most common in the Wastes and Hidden Greens, but occasionally venture into northern Prax.

Tripanandar, Leaping Bear Man, was always a difficult spirit. In the Great Darkness, Waha told him that he could only eat 1 out of 1000 animals, but Tripanandar thought that Waha had said he should kill 1000 animals



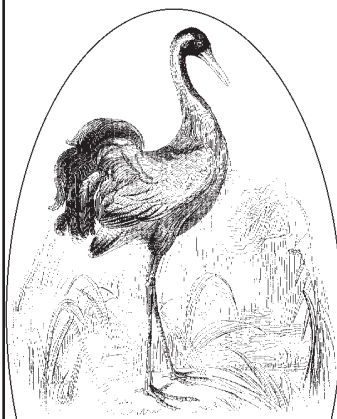
and eat one. Later, he plotted to kill Tada, who defeated him and ordered that he and his children should be hunted down and slain. As a result, leaping bears hide and attack from surprise.

When traveling through the Wastes, Eirithans sometimes leave sacrifices to Tripanandar to encourage him to leave the herds alone. Foundchild hunters occasionally worship him to gain the *Fanaticism* spirit magic spell. Waha shamans occasionally encounter him as an enemy in their rituals, or re-enact Tada's defeat of him to keep him away from the herds.

Cranes

Praxian cranes are typically grey and white, although some are all grey or all white (these latter are considered good luck to see). They flock in significant numbers along the River of Cradles, but can be found at almost all oases. Praxians hunt them for their meat and eggs, and for their feathers, which are used to decorate weapons and clothing and occasionally used to stuff pillows. Cranes are easily startled and keep an eye open for predators. Their haunting cry 'huuruahu' sounds like 'come away quickly' in Praxian.

Huuruahu, Crane Man, is a very wise and cautious spirit. He loved his wife dearly, and his children always mate for life. When Death came, Crane Man recognized him as dangerous and told his wife to come away quickly, but she was foolish and went to greet Death and never returned. Crane Man later promised Eiritha that he and his children would always warn her of danger, and so he is counted as a friend of Eiritha.



Eirithans worship Huuruahu, because he is very knowledgeable about the animals and spirits of Prax, but he is also very cautious. He will not come if anyone in the vicinity carries a weapon of any sort, and rarely appears to Foundchild's shamans. His worshippers dance and sing a mourning song at a body of water, and if he thinks it is safe, he comes down to join them and thank them for remembering his wife. He teaches *Farsee*, and often gives advice about other spirits.

Flora of Prax

Sunflower

Sunflowers grow in moist soils that get a lot of sun, and are therefore mostly found at Praxian Oases and along the River of Cradles and its tributaries. The Sunflower is prized for its seeds, which can be eaten raw, toasted, or processed into sunbutter, a food similar to peanut butter. The seeds can also be pressed for oil, often used when skullbush oil is not available. The stalks and leaves can be used to feed herd beasts, while the petals are used to make a yellow dye.



Essaseela, Sunflower Girl, is one of the 48 Old Ones revered at the Paps, where sunflowers are actively cultivated. During the Godtime, she stood gazing at Bright Treasure. When he was killed, she hung her head in sorrow, but now that he has returned she follows his daily journey across the sky. She may only be worshipped during the day, and she requires her worshippers to plant sunflower seeds at least once a season. When worshipped, she provides *Plant Lore* and the spirit magic spell *Follow Sun*.

Follow Sun: *Variable. Instant. Self. Passive.*
This spell allows the caster to know exactly where the sun is in relationship to the caster. At night, it indicates where the sun will rise the next morning. This is particularly useful during dust storms and the cloudy weather that is frequent during Winter and Winter Fertile seasons. It grants the caster +5% to *Navigate* rolls per point of the spell.

Tobacco

Tobacco grows in warm, well-drained soils, and is found most commonly at the more arid oases, such as Tourney Altar and Day's Rest, but it can also be found growing wild. Praxians consider it a sacred plant, and consequently its use has not spread to non-Praxians for the simple reason that Praxians rarely reveal its use to non-Praxians, although some Oasis Folk know how to use it. It must be dried to be used properly, then coarsely ground, put into a pipe and smoked. Its chief value lies in its unique property, because when it is smoked, it provides a form of *Mindspeech* to those who share the pipe. Each person takes a drag on the pipe and casts a magic point into it. For as long as the smoke continues to hang in the air, all participants can understand the meaning of what the other participants said, as long as it was said in a language they understand. This prevents misunderstandings and makes agreement easier to achieve. Consequently, tobacco is used in many situations where clans are negotiating or when those of different tribes need to reach an agreement. Holding a peace pipe is considered a statement of peaceful intent and a desire to negotiate for something rather than to fight for it.

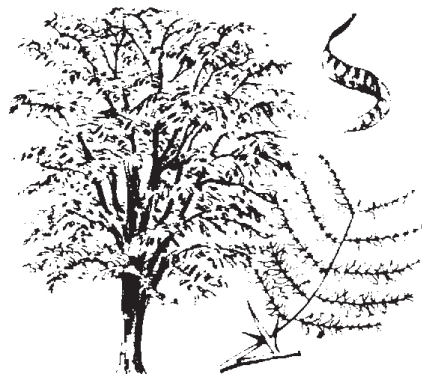


Tobakeh, the Tobacco Man, is a quiet but friendly spirit who sought to win friends during the Great Darkness. His skill at bringing people together in easy communion makes him a well-liked spirit, and he is often worshipped along with the Three-Bean Circus. He is commonly invoked in meetings between the Animal Nations. He is one of the 48 Old Ones, and his small cult there teaches *Orate* and *Mindspeech*.

Acacia

Acacia trees, or thorn trees, are a basic part of the Praxian ecology. They grow almost everywhere in Prax and the Wastes, being hearty enough to handle arid conditions, but they resist cultivation. They possess sharp thorns that deter almost all animals except the High Llamas, whose tongues are thick enough to ignore the thorns, and thorn tree leaves are the favored food for llamas. Thorn tree seeds can be eaten by humans, either raw or fried, and are used to give a garlicky flavor to foods. Its resin is used as a glue, as a thickener for foods, and to chew when thirsty. Thorn tree wood is often used to make implements for shamans, such as staves and rattles. Thorn tree bark, if burned, gives off a smoke repellant to most spirits, who must overcome the bark's POT (typically 2d6 to 4d6) in order to approach the fire. Thus shamans burn the wood when they feel a need to ward off spirits or to help exorcise possessing spirits.

Grandmother Thorn tree is a haughty and reserved spirit, who gives her favors only to those who court her properly. She is



worshipped by the followers of Llama-Eiritha because the acacia is critical to the survival of the herds. Grandmother Thorntree's rituals are very complex by Praxian standards. There are many ways to offend her, from incorrect posture to using the wrong words and hand gestures. As a result, only the most experienced Eirithans are permitted to contact her, lest her anger deprive the herds of their food. All rituals to contact and worship her are done at -20% penalty. She teaches the spirit magic spells *Glue* and *Detect Thorn-tree*, which has a range of 1 kilometer.

Saltgrass

Saltgrass is found primarily along the Praxian coastline and the mouth of the River of Cradles, but it also grows in the bogs of Prax, where it does well in the brackish water. It is edible by humans, but has a bitter and salty flavor, so most Praxians eat it only in extreme situations. It is mildly toxic to most herd animals, giving them stomach aches and diarrhea. But the gern of the Morokanth thrive on it, and so Morokanth seek it out. Saltgrass marshes grow quite high and are a haven for small birds and rodents, as well as a good hiding place for the Morokanth.

Tehonkawa, the Saltgrass Maiden, is the spirit of Saltgrass. She was a spirit of Genert's Garden; some say she was Genert's daughter. When the warriors approached her to woo her, she rejected all of them because none was exactly as she wanted him to be. This one was too tall, that one too short. This one was too war-like, that one too peaceful. She scorned them with harsh and mocking words. Finally, Genert lost his temper with her, and said there was no room in his garden for one as bitter as her. He ordered to go and dwell among the bitter places of Prax until she learned her lesson and he called her home. She left and grew lonely in the

bitter places, and she learned her lesson, but before he could call her home, he was slain. Thus she waits for an invitation that will never come.

Saltgrass Maiden is a lonely spirit, eager for worship and company, and always willing to hide or feed those in need. Consequently, she makes no demands on her worshippers, other than that they talk a lot when they seek her aid. Most Praxians find little value in worshipping her, but the Morokanth give her a good deal of worship. Both Eirithan and Foundchild shamans worship her. She manifests as a whispering breeze that moves the grass. She teaches the divine spell *Marshcover*.

Marshcover 1 point Divine spell. Range touch. Duration 15 minutes. Stackable. Reusable.

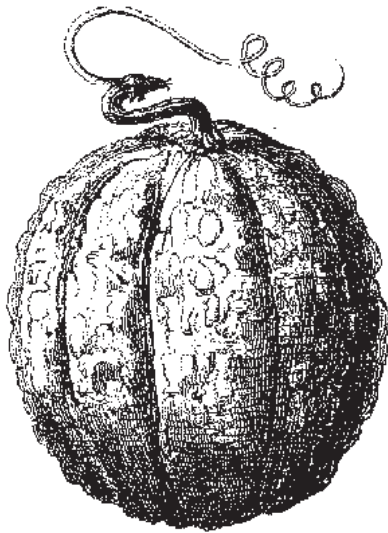
This spell can only be cast on a target who is in some sort of bog, swamp, or marsh. It allows the target to blend in easily with his surroundings. It grants the caster +20% *Hide in Cover*. Additional points allow additional targets to be affected. The spell ends if the caster moves onto solid ground.

Water Melons

The Praxian watermelon is a small round melon, 6-9 inches across, with green and yellow or green and red stripes. Its flesh is yellow or red and filled with sweet juice, which Praxians sometimes ferment into a type of wine. Its rind is quite bitter, but Morokanth use it as fodder for the gern. The vines are



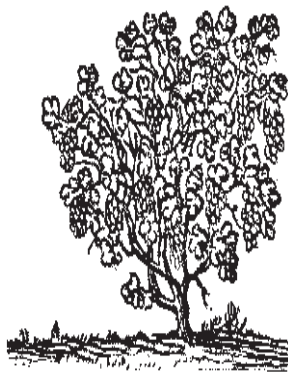
used as bindings, because they are quite strong, even when dried. Water melons grow in warm, shady places with access to water. They grow best at the oases, especially Agape, but they can be found even in the Wastes, because their vines are very good at seeking out water deep in the rocks.



Checheh, the Melon Boy, is a friendly, inquisitive spirit, worshipped as one of the 48 Old Ones. During the Great Darkness, he always found good places to hide, and was always willing to share what he had, even if it was only water. Eirithans revere him for his friendly, gentle nature. He is typically only worshipped at the oases, and only during Winter Fertile. He is easily contacted and readily teaches his spell *Detect Melon* to anyone who agrees to share his bounty when they find it. Detect Melon is a standard Detect spell with a range of 1 kilometer, a surprisingly useful spell because it helps find water.

Skullbushes

Skullbushes occur widely in Prax and the Wastes, growing best in the moist soils along river valleys, oases, and the Paps. Praxians and Oasis Folk loosely cultivate them mostly for the seeds they yield, which can be pressed for oil or eaten roasted. The



plant also gives a nectar used to flavor milk and yogurt. They are sometimes cut down for wood, but this is rarely done unless the plant is scraggly and not producing many seeds.

Ehawee, the Skullbush Woman, is one of the friendliest of all Praxian spirits, and one of the 48 Old Ones. Praxians consider her a welcoming and nurturing mother. They say she lost her children in the Great Darkness and has taken the skullbats in their place. She and Helpwoman are considered great friends, which is why Helpwoman's followers spend so much time at skullbush plants. All Praxians love her, and her cult asks only that her worshippers never kill a bat. The cult teaches *Craft: Cooking* and *Command Bat*.

Tamarisk

The Tamarisk is a scraggly evergreen that grows in dry, salty conditions. It puts down deep roots to find water, and so survives well in the Wastes.



Its needles provide reasonable fodder for herds, though only the High Llamas can easily graze on them, since they grow up to 18 meters tall., and their branches rarely droop low enough for other herd beasts to graze on them. Tamarisk trees exude salt from their bark, a vital commodity in the Wastes. And their sap is a sweet; it is consumed both as a syrup and dried into sugary crystals.

Askuwhetu, the Tamarisk Man, is a wise old spirit, who knows many secrets to surviving in difficult conditions. He is a stubborn and tenacious figure, easy to summon but hard to win over; rolls to persuade or bargain with him are made at -20%. He teaches *Survival* and *Detect Salt*.

Saxaul

The Saxaul is a shrub that often grows to the height of a short tree. Its bark is spongy and water-soaked. It favors dry sandy conditions and puts down deep roots that allow it to find water



even in the Wastes. In some parts of the Waste, it is the only vegetation for miles. Its leaves are good food for sable and llamas, and its bark is often stripped and pressed for water. Saxauls are commonly parasitized by other plants, because of the water easily available in the bark. In particular, Praxians find two common parasites useful. **Goyo** is a celery-like tuber that is poisonous; its juice, with a POT of 2d6, is sometimes used to poison weapons. **Borji** grows on the roots of the saxaul, putting up a yellowish shoot that terminates in a structure like a pinecone. Eirithans value the cone as a treatment for impotence and infertility.

Saxaul, the Saxaul spirit, is a challenging spirit to deal with. She is the last vestige of Genert's Garden, and determined to help the weaker plants who need her moisture to survive. She knows much about the plants of the Wastes, but requires reassurances that a shaman is not a threat before she will share her knowledge or aid. She teaches *Vigor* to those who can win her confidence.

Serpentweed

Serpentweed is a flowering shrub with irregularly-shaped leaves and a white or purplish flower that emits a pleasant fragrance. It grows wild in moderately moist soils and consequently is found near most oases and the River of Cradles. When conditions are too dry, it withers and lies dormant, but quickly flowers when water arrives. Its name derives from the fact that it grows in the beds of the serpents when the water flows. At the oases, it invades the fields of other crops and is hard to eradicate.

Serpentweed is a potent poison. The leaves contain 3d6 POT; the flowers 2d6 if eaten raw, 1d6 if boiled down into a mash. If the poison overcomes the CON of the consumer, it causes delirium, erratic and often violent behavior, and extreme dilation of the pupils (which produces light-sensitivity) for a number of hours equal to the POT. If the poison fails to overcome the CON, it produces less violent symptoms, including hallucinations and pupil dilation. Praxian shamans sometimes intentionally consume the drug to have visions, but more commonly the plant is eaten accidentally. In particular, herd animals tend to love it, and serpentweed often grows amid the grasses favored by impalas, bison, and rhinos. Animals that consume it tend to be violently agitated or act in unpredictable ways.

Datura, Serpentweed Woman, is a malicious spirit who delights in causing trouble for others. She becomes angry when she is not treated with respect, and tends to find ways to get herd animals and



children to eat her. As a result, Eirithans offer her propitiatory worship and treat her politely. Some shamans worship her for the visions she sends, but she has no formal cult, and rarely offers access to magics.

Scenario Ideas

- Eiritha has sent the clan dire omens that the herds (or the women of the clan) will have trouble conceiving in the coming year. The player characters are sent into the Wastes to find borji. It is not hard to find saxauls, but none of the ones they find host borji. If the Saxaul spirit is summoned, she can tell the players where to find borji, but she wants them to do something for her first...
- During an Eirithan ritual, Huuruahu suddenly arrives and reports that a great danger is coming. A plague of cowpox has broken out and is spreading, carried by harpies who worship Malia. The players must find a way to stop the harpies from infecting their herds.
- The cult of Foundchild is holding its annual ceremony to renew the pact with Grandfather Jerboa, but the spirit is angry because a member of the clan has made a pact with Manul. Jerboa threatens to spook all the cult's prey until the cult makes a special sacrifice to appease him. The players must find a rare fruit that grows at a particular oasis...
- Out in the Wastes, the players find a stand of tamarisk trees. Its sap is a valuable trade item and the salt the tree produces is useful as well. But before the players have a chance to harvest the sap and salt, a group of Bison Riders shows up, demanding that the players leave the trees to them. Do the players fight for the tree, or let themselves be intimidated into leaving?
- Tripanandar has been causing trouble for the clan lately. Several rituals conducted by the clan's shamans have been disrupted by him, and several leaping bears have been stalking the clan's herd. When the players investigate, they find evidence that a shaman from a rival clan is behind the troubles. Once Tripanandar has been defeated, the rival shaman must be dealt with somehow.



VOTANKI CLAN QUESTIONNAIRE

Keith Nellist

This is a bit derivative. It is both good and original, but the good bits are not original and the original bits are not good. I used it at the start of a Votankiland game - Citadel Kings of Balazar. It follows the format of the Sartar Clan generator, but uses the history of Balazar, up to 1330.

The Great Darkness

Hearth-Mother kept a desperate band of frightened humans alive during the Great Darkness by:

- ☐ nurturing them on her own hope and magic after the world died.
- ☐ finding a young mewling godlet alone in the wilds and raising him to be a great warrior with her three famous meals.

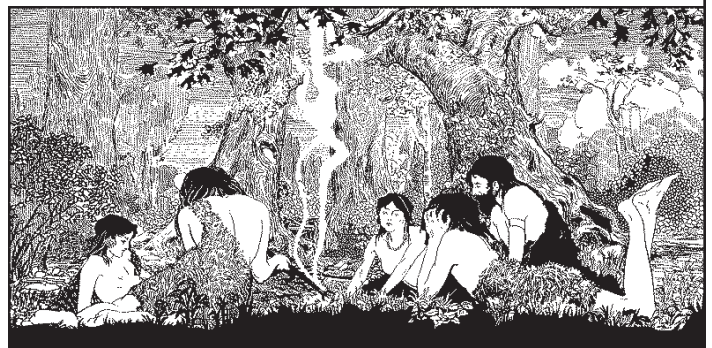


The Dawning

At the Dawning, the whole of the region was included as part of the Elder Wilds. The region was dotted with clumps of gaunt trees where lonely elves huddled in bitter defence. Human families skulked in the shadows, seeking stark fare to eke out their miserable lives. Dwarves were buttressed in Greatway, but their interests had been in Dragon Pass and they had sent few patrols to this region. Only troll war-parties stalked the land in strength, crossing the cold mountains from Dagori Inkarth to fulfil their pledge to fight and destroy chaos every place. The ascent of the sun and the passage of the Lightbringers

quickly brought back the old life to the land, and the ancient scrub woods blossomed into lush forests nearly as rich as the virgin woods which had once been there. Elves even planted some Great Trees of Shanassee in their strongholds. Game returned too, and the human hunters grew stronger. The humans at this time were children of Votank, and his descendants were called Votanki. During that time there was no fight between ancient races, for they still remembered their mutual struggle against chaos. Their greatest alliance was the First Council, made up of elves, dwarves, dragonewts, trolls, humans, and the otherwise-unknown Gold Wheel Dancers. Ambassadors came from the First Council:

- ☐ They were they quickly accepted.
- ☐ Our ancestors were suspicious.



The First Council

For generations the region lived in peace and grew to health. The elves sailed their lake and rivers, carrying dwarf goods northward after being boated down to the Dwerrow River. Trolls continued their gustatory control of the dinosaurs, and dragonewts settled several colonies. Humans hunted to their bellies' delight as animal herds grew, engaging in a silent struggle with trees for the good of the plains. At least one human from the area, Votalik a great hunter, was famous enough to be accepted in the Contest for Kerofin's Necklace held in Dragon Pass in 178 S.T.

- ☐ Votalik is our ancestor.
- ☐ We remember the elves sailing the Elf Sea and up the rivers.
- ☐ We helped the dwarfs carry their goods northward.

The Second Council

When the wars began, many residents from the area joined armies and fought their foes. The troll population was greatly reduced by war, but the area was not invaded by the enemy horsemen from the north. The Second Council was formed to rule the empire. When it moved to Dorastor, it was supported by many from Balazar who accompanied it, and Balazar seems to have drifted into drowsy peace lasting until the end of the age.

- ☐ We sent warriors to fight in distant wars.
- ☐ We went to Dorastor to help build a new god.

The God Project

The Second Council unveiled a plan to construct a god through the use of their own powers and those of the land of Dorastor. The trolls objected heavily and withdrew, followed shortly by the dragonewts. After that the government was called the Broken Council. The new god named himself Nysalor. He was a strikingly handsome godling and sensitive enough to break anyone's heart. One of his first, childish, acts was to curse the trolls and dragonewts. The dragonewts sloughed off their curse, sending it into the maws of a hungry dragon. But the trolls were overcome, and tragically began birthing trollkin instead of healthy children. The struggle between council and troll also turned into a fight between all



the Elder Races, opening many old sores closed since the Dawn. The elves were aided by the council, and the trolls were driven from the Elder Wilds.

- ☐ We remain neutral in bickering between elder races.
- ☐ Assisted the elves in driving the trolls from the Elder Wilds.
- ☐ Helped the trolls survive persecution from the Broken Council.

Nysalor

The elves of the Elder Wilds, with their allies, settled into a period of peace under the benevolent reign of Nysalor, the Golden One, the God of Peloria, who united Dragon Pass Lightbringers with lowland Sunfolk and horsemen. There were raids and fights with the damnable trolls in their ancient stronghold of Dagori Inkarth, but the miserable wretches were easily contained.

- ☐ We were happy to live in peace under Nysalor's Golden Rule.
- ☐ We sent warriors to raid Dagori Inkarth.

Wars of the Broken Council

Elf and human warriors from the region are known to have served with the armies of the Broken Council in their wars against the west, though no details are known.

- ☐ We did not fight in far distant wars where our spirits might get lost and forgotten.
- ☐ We sent warriors to fight in the far west.



Arkat Invades

A foreign army landed in the Shadowlands, ruled by the trolls from south of Dragon Pass. The trolls joined the army of the invader, and they marched north against the armies of Nysalor. The foreigner was Arkat Humaktson, a knight from the far west whose life had been spent hunting the Golden God. The forces of the region mustered to drive off the foe.

- ☐ We prepared to hide in the wilderness.
- ☐ We mustered to fight Arkat.

Traveling Stone

The Battle of Traveling Stone was met and the result was a victory for Arkat and his allies, while the elves from Balazar were slain to nearly a one. Afterwards Arkat became a troll and furthered their cause in the Elder Wilds. Terror and fear reigned. Tribes swarmed over the Wyrms High Pass and the Giants Pass to burn woods and kill elves. Some settled; the fighting went into the next age, after Arkat was long gone. As with many kingdoms of the Elder Races, the peoples of Balazar fought and troubled each other mercilessly through the Second Age. The dissension between elf, dwarf, troll, and dragonewt left the region badly weakened, and the Votanki humans were able to improve their own position by carefully playing one side against another to their own advantage.

- ☐ We played our enemies against each other.
- ☐ We hunted the trolls.
- ☐ We hunted the elves.
- ☐ We helped the elves.
- ☐ We helped the trolls.

Nomad Invasion

This made Humans half-enemies of all the non-human races and established a distrust that plagued relationships ever afterwards. After two centuries of such troubles, the lands were broached by outsiders. In 717, a large army from the Redlands passed southward through the plains occupied by the Votanki, stealing and killing wherever they went. They seriously disrupted the herds when they passed, and many of the Votanki knew hunger the next winter.

- ☐ We knew hunger that year.
- ☐ We avoided the evil horse riders.

Return of the Nomads

When the westernmost clans of Votanki sighted the nomads returning northward loaded with booty early the next summer, they hastened to their chiefs who determined to act together against the foe.

- ☐ We were determined to act against this foe.
- ☐ We wanted to avoid the horse people.



Nomad Treasures

The humans were aided by a few trolls and dragonewts as well, who desired to recapture some of the ancestral treasures stolen by the nomads while plundering Dragon Pass.

- ☐ We were brave enough to face the nomads without help.
- ☐ Dragonewts offered to help us, and we accepted.

Battle of Highbridge

Eight hundred and fifty years ago, the Redland nomads were ambushed at Highbridge. Their forces were divided by the bridge and they were destroyed half at a time by the frantic hunters. Although many nomads escaped the terrible slaughter, they did so without their plunder. The non-humans took their goods back, the rest was divided among the victors, and some items of great note were set aside to be returned to their owners in Dragon Pass.

- ☐ We were generous to our allies.
- ☐ We agreed to return some items of great note.

Hargaard Ironfist

The Votanki king Hargaard Silverfist was the envoy who returned the treasure to the Empire of the Wyrms Friends in Dragon Pass. His trip's profit surprised him, and he returned with tales of great wealth and splendour. Few were distressed when envoys from the empire came to their lands and solicited support.

- ☐ We were cautious about the tales of Hargaard and did not commit ourselves to these foreign people.
- ☐ We supported Hargaard, who was a good King.

The Third Council

Hargaard consented, and so did the local elves. These two forces, with Imperial dragonewt aid, suppressed the dwarves and drove the trolls back over the mountains, then entered a period of relative peace. The trolls sacked the city and shallower tunnels of Greatway about this time, and also burned the forests covering the land now called Dangerground. Seven hundred and fifty years ago the rulers of the Empire of the Wyrms Friends altered their government to a magical theocracy bent upon reestablishing the magical powers of the Gods Age in their land through the manipulation of the unusual Dragon Magics. They called their new organization the Third Council. For some time this succeeded, but internal dissension began, when the rulers ordered their subjects to worship them as gods. This brought protests, and the Aldryami of the Elder Wilds were the first to protest militarily. They seceded, and then invaded with a strong raid which escaped unscathed.



- ☐ We raided with the elves.
- ☐ We did not want to provoke the Dragons and tried to stay away.

Gaining the Southern Realm

Humans, less repulsed by the orders, fought the elves for some time, but the region was generally peaceful. The elves were hard pressed by their traditional foes, the trolls, for the elves had no imperial aid. Humans gained the southern forests as their realm by promising the elves that they would kill trolls, and by telling trolls they would kill elves. This was the first clear-cut agreement which delivered any of the region to humans directly. The elves probably planned to retake it at their convenience, but that has not come about yet.

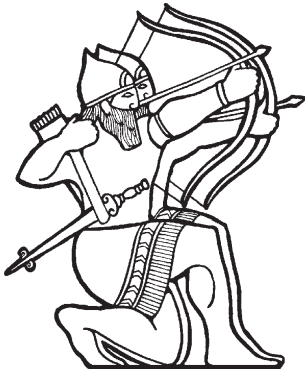
- ☐ We promised the elves that we would kill trolls in return for the southern forests as our realm.
- ☐ We promised the trolls that we would kill elves.

Revolt Against the Dragons

Dissatisfaction with the leaders of the Third Council grew until at last the Votanki peoples agreed to throw off their draconic yoke. Many other borderlands of the Third Council were also revolting.

- ☐ We hated the Third Council who abused their power and were among the first to agree to throw off the draconic yoke.
- ☐ We thought we would benefit from draconic magic but eventually it seemed the experiment had been a failure.

The War of Mercenaries



At first the Votanki were overrun by a brilliant raid by Third Council mercenaries. The Votanki asked for outside help from bands of mercenary adventurers, who thought they might seize themselves a kingdom while aiding

the hunters. Many failed.

- ☐ We waited for a leader to guide us to victory.
- ☐ We asked for help from mercenary adventurers.

Balazar

The leader named Balazar came from the northwest lands with his cult of Tharkantus and made many friends with the Votanki, both through his military skills and through his wisdom in dealing with the simple hunters.

- ☐ We did not trust this newcomer, thinking he might be another adventurer in search of a kingdom. It took five years to prove himself a friend, and two more years before we agreed he should become King.
- ☐ We immediately supported Balazar, and were pleased when he became King.

King Balazar

Within five years he was hailed as the leader of all those peoples, and two years later he was crowned as King Balazar. His lands became the Lands of Balazar, later called simply Balazar after him. Ever since then the clans have revered him as their greatest hero and taken his name as their own. Balazar built two

citadels and tried to bring agriculture to the region. The soil was too poor for such work, though. Balazar did steal a magical idol of Entra, the Sow Goddess, for his people, and since that time pigs have been raised at the citadels. The most important thing Balazar did was:

- ☐ To steal the sacred image of Entra the Sow Mother from dragons, and since then the spirit has allowed the citadels to raise those animals safely.
- ☐ Balazar worshiped a deity named Tharkantus. He taught his followers how to worship Tharkantus in the right way.
- ☐ He founded the dynasties that rule the three citadels, and so the nobles there and many common people, trace their lineage to Balazar instead of (or in addition to) Votank.

Dragonkill

In the year Gonn Orta strode through our land and settled in his Castle, the Third Council was ended by dragonewt betrayal. The lizardmen launched a great offensive against the heart of the council as invaders battered the borderlands, destroying armies and liberating the lands. The Council fell, and the lands were left to the dragonewt natives. In the Elder Wilds old antagonisms broke out anew, and the humans were hard-pressed to



keep their lands because of many successful troll and elf ambushes in the wilds. When peoples turned covetous eyes towards the dragon and lizard riches of Dragon Pass they often found, or made up, reasons to go raiding there. Soon all peoples turned upon their former dragonewt allies and began destroying their nests. The natives of Dragon Pass found allies and defended stoutly until their foes finally united in an attempt to destroy all bodies and eggs of the ancient race. The invaders massed and called themselves the True Golden Horde. They approached from several routes, thinking thereby to gain enough entry to suffer some defeats and some victories, but overwhelming the dragonewts by sheer numbers. This invasion began two hundred and thirty years go. They had not counted on the help which the dragonewts could muster from other realms. In 11 generations ago the armies were met by hundreds of dragons of all types, returning to protect their ancestral home. Dragons fell, both dream and true, but no army could withstand them. Thousands of people were slain in the war later called the Dragonkill War. Less than a hundred people survived, and only one single ghost is reported to have returned to the Balazarings to report the disaster.

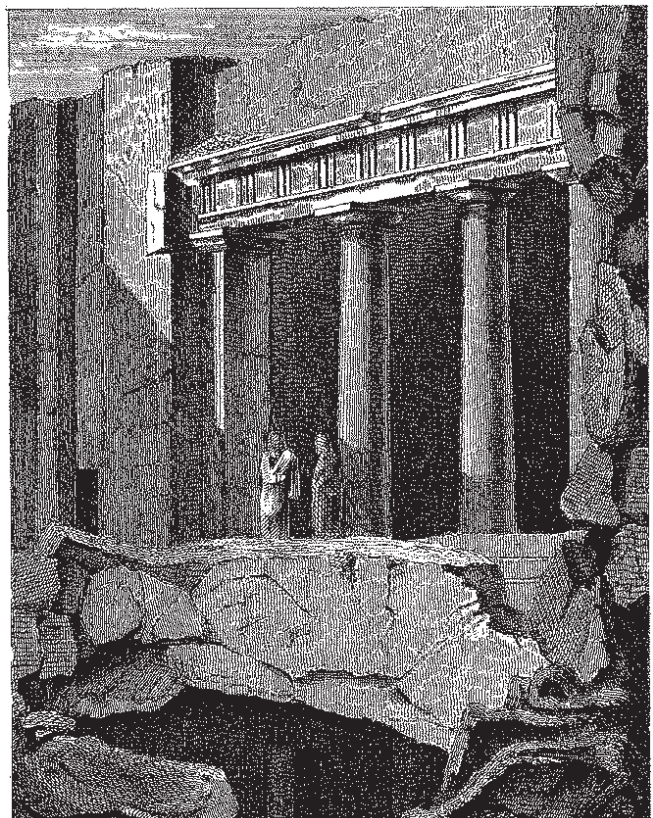
- ☐ The ghost of the Dragonkill haunts our memories.
- ☐ While those seeking glory went and died we stayed at home and practiced our old ways.
- ☐ Our best warriors all died with Balazar.

The Citadels

The hunter chiefs who tended the children of Balazar raised each according to their own tribal interests, so the three sons were quarrelsome rather than cooperative. The division of the citadels was mutually acceptable to

Dykene and Trilus, but Elkoi did not receive a citadel. Instead, he went into the wilderness and came back with three giants as slave, who built the citadel of Elkoi..

- ☐ We raised Trilus according to our customs. He was the eldest son of Balazar and won the best citadel in a game of knucklebones.
- ☐ We raised Dykene according to our customs, she was the daughter of Rigtaina, a hunter-nymph and was as fierce and aggressive as any man. She took the eastern citadel by force and would not relinquish it.
- ☐ We raised Elkoi according to our customs. He went into the Wilderness and forced three huge giants to build his citadel.
- ☐ We had nothing to do with the quarrelsome children of King Balazar.



Destruction of Dykene

Eighty years ago a trio of giants began ravaging travellers near the citadel of Dykene, and the king was killed in combat with them. They tore the citadel down almost to the ground and scattered the survivors.

- ☐ We were more worried about the Red Moon that had risen in the sky to the North-West three years earlier.
- ☐ We will be avenged on those wretched giants who killed our king!

Barbarian Influx

Dykene has remained in ruin. Around the year thirty years ago wanderers and refugees increasingly moved into Balazar from the west. These were mostly barbarians who worshipped Solar or Storm deities, and who were retreating before the encroaching Moon Empire.



- ☐ We accepted them amongst us.
- ☐ We avoided most of them and their peculiar ways and magics.
- ☐ We followed them into wars against the Moon.

Falling Hills

Many Balazarings were among the allies or in the pay of the newly formed Tarshite army, which itself followed a pair of divine children. These children were the Twins, and they were the Founders of the Tarsh Kingdom. They defeated the Lunar host at the battle of Falling Hills and after that most refugees went to Tarsh rather than bleak Balazar.

- ☐ We fought at the Battle of Falling Hills as allies of the Kingdom of Tarsh
- ☐ We sent mercenaries to fight at the Battle of Falling Hills
- ☐ We preferred to keep our warriors at home where they could be used for important things like finding foods or fighting for a Citadel King.

Changing Dynasties

During this period the royal dynasties of the citadels changed often. Sometimes the throne was taken by a foreign adventurer, sometimes by a conservative great old chief, sometimes by some vigorous thinking hunter with his grandfather's set of chainmail.

- ☐ We ruled a Citadel helped by a foreign adventurer.
- ☐ Our great old chief ruled the Citadel for a time.
- ☐ A brave hunter from our clan took the Citadel and made himself king.

Fame and Fortune

Kings of the Citadel made an occasional name for themselves.

- ☐ Our King ruled peacefully, with wisdom.
- ☐ Our King was a glorious, if bloody, ruler.
- ☐ We were clever and lucky in war

The Lunars Come

The Lunars came with a column of soldiers and Moon Wizards, guided by a hunter named Bykotus. King Partobas was killed and the Lunars occupied Elkoi.

- ☐ We helped defend the Citadel for three days of heroic fighting, but could not save King Partobas the Bold.
- ☐ The Citadel defense collapsed within days.
- ☐ Bykotus was a kinsman of ours, and his descendants still rule Elkoi and owe us a favour.



THE TAMING OF VOTANKILAND

EPISODE ONE: THE GLORIOUS SONS

Oliver Bernuetz

Of course I remember the Glorious Sons. Forgetting them would be like forgetting family. It was in the spring when the recruiter came to Sylila. Our clan was one of those that had gone as the wind blew. Long ago we worshipped Orlanth and Ernalda but when the hunting and waltzing bands had come we had embraced our inner dragons and turned to Dragon and Scale. But when Karvanyar toppled the Golden Dragon Emperor his followers came and scoured the hills with spear and flame and we turned our faces to the Sun. Oh the rumors held that back in the deepest hollows they still followed the Wind but as close as we were to Alkoth we followed the Sun with great outward enthusiasm.

The recruiter came with honeyed words speaking of the Emperor's need. Rumor we'd heard even this far away from the front had it that the war with the Carmanian Shah was going badly. Entire armies had been destroyed and the Emperor's need was ravenous and insatiable. The recruiter spoke of glory and reward but our land was still recovering from our redemption from the dragons and our parents smiled with their mouths not their eyes. Not even a promise of freedom from taxes during our service in the Emperor's army was enough of an enticement. So no stout lads accompanied the recruiter when he left and we all breathed a sigh of relief.

Soon after the recruiter had left the land was badly shaken. We knew not what to make of

this. Was Lodril angry at us for denying the recruiter or was it perhaps Maran Gor showing her displeasure for our wavering loyalties? No matter, as always we rebuilt and tried to resume life as normal. But then three weeks later the recruiter returned. And this time he was not alone. With him came a squad of Thunder Delta slingers. He had seen our village's wealth of youth and deemed we were worthy of another visit.

This is the inaugural scenario in a campaign that will eventually see the taming of Votankiland. The players will begin as callow Sylilan youth and end up as the rulers of an entire region.

At this stage in their history the Sylilan are an unhappy and confused people. Long ago their ancestors were devoted followers of Orlanth and Ernalda but then the EWF sent their hunting & waltzing bands to convert them. And many



did find the dragon in themselves and were happy.(Other villages among the Sylila remained Old Traditionalists in their ways).But both groups suffered once the Golden Dragon Emperor was deposed and the Dara Happans found a renewed faith.The Sylilans tell tales of the zeal with which the Dara Happans showed them the errors of their ways.Those clans that had adopted the way of the Dragon had particularly suffered hard but even the Old Way Traditionalists had to adopt at least a veneer of Solar beliefs.Now they practice a lackluster, wan version of Solar ways and chafe at what they perceive as the strictness of Solar ways but a feeling is growing that a change is coming.

Sylila is presently a peaceful land.It's rolling and more thinly forested unlike the lands to the south or east or west.The Sylilans are at peace with their neighbors and the old traditions of cattle raiding are no longer practiced.

Culturally they are virtually identical to the Orlanthi found all over Genertela, however at present they do not worship the gods of their forefathers and mothers but instead worship members of the Solar Pantheon.As newcomers they mostly worship the deities of the third tier since many of these possess similarities to their long lost Storm Pantheon gods: **Pela**, Goddess of Barley; **Busenari**, Goddess of Cattle; **Vergenari**, Goddess of Pigs; and **Memenari**, Goddess of Motherhood are common choices. **Yelmalio**, son of Yelm is the most popular war-like deity.

At this point in their history this clan of Sylilans live in a palisaded village that houses the seven families that make up the entire clan. They practice farming and herding and have fairly good relations with their neighboring clans whose daughters marry into theirs.The clan is known as the Heartridge.

Character Creation

Race: Wareran.

Languages: Theyalan, Sylilan dialect.

Cultural Backgrounds:

Barbarian, as per the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

Professions:

Barbarian Professions, as per the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

Cultural Weapons and Combat Styles: Barbarian weapons and Combat Styles, as per the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*

Magic: The Sylilans use Common Magic and begin with 6 points of Magnitude in Common Magic spells.

Cults: As described above.

The characters all start at the age of 14.This means that they will not receive any skill points from professions and only 200 free skill points.They will all be related as cousins or perhaps two of them are fraternal or identical twins.At the very least they are best friends.

The clan only has 330 members divided into seven families of roughly equal size.Roughly half of the clan members are adults of various ages split pretty evenly between the sexes.

(What about female characters?Because of the Solar orientation of this scenario it's difficult but not impossible to play a female character.Obviously a girl wouldn't go through the boys initiation into adulthood ceremony. Nor would they participate on the male side of



the Spring Maid and Sun Lad race. However there's no reason why a girl couldn't disguise herself as a boy and go along with the draft-ees).

The Recruiter

The campaign starts just before Sacred Time with a celebration. The young men of the community are all set to go off on their adult initiation ceremony. (The eligible girls of the village are also preparing to go off on their initiation rite the next day). The party members had gathered at one of their homes the previous night so they could go to the ceremony together the next morning. They could barely get to sleep because of their excitement but finally they drifted off. Early the next morning they're awoken by the sound of singing. The mother of the house has forgotten herself and she sings an old love ballad about Orlanth and Ernalda. The man of the house comes in and gently chides her for resurrecting the old

days. He slaps her fondly on the rear and she slaps him and tells him to wake the boys.

After a hearty breakfast (gobbled down due to their excitement) everyone troops over to the chief's longhouse. When they reach the longhouse they find that the entire village has gathered to wish them well. People are milling around and smiling indulgently at the excited lads when suddenly a stranger arrives at the longhouse. He is obviously Dara Happan and also obviously a soldier. He warmly greets the villagers and his eyes linger especially on the soon to be young men. He introduces himself as Carpathia Three-Boots.

He addresses the gathered clan and makes an eloquent, heartfelt speech about serving the Emperor.

"People of the Empire. I greet you in the Emperor's name, long may he reign as Yelm's representative. Our glorious Emperor is seeking recruits to join his glorious forces to defeat

the Carmanians who threaten our western borders. The Emperor needs a few good men. Who among you will sign up today and find glory?"

At this point someone at the back of the listening crowd loudly mutters, "Glorious death."



The crowd parts to reveal a young man leaning on a crutch due to his missing left leg.

“Yes, I joined the Emperor’s army and fought the Carmanians. I found glory but seem to have carelessly lost my leg.”

The villagers laugh. The recruiter smiles with his mouth, but not his eyes and replies.

“I am sorry for your loss but the need of the Empire is great. The family of any man or boy who agrees to join the army will suffer no taxes during their years of service.”

This statement is greeted by a surprised muttering. The veteran Arno Grimstrap shakes his head and hobbles away. The recruiter waits to see who will step forward but doesn’t seem overly surprised when no one steps forward. Any lads who try and dart forward are restrained by their relatives. Istvan, the clan chief, steps forward.

“These lads cannot make any such decision until after they’ve gone through their initiation. Only after that they will have the ability to make such a portentous decision.”

The recruiter bows his head. He lifts it and looks at the other young men who have already passed their initiation but none meet his eyes.

“Good luck with your initiation lads. Perhaps we’ll meet again.”

He turns and leaves the hall.

Once he is gone there is quite a bit of muttering along the lines of “*Over my dead body*” and “*Good riddance to bad rubbish*” until the chief silences it and preparations for the initiation ceremony continue.

From Boys to Men

More traditional forms of the Orlanthi initiation ceremony to adulthood has been lost to the Heartridge Clan. It’s been replaced with a competitive camping trip. The boys are divided into two groups and sent with basic tools and weapons out into the hills near the village to fend for themselves. They’re expected to provide for themselves while playing tricks and making mock attacks on the other camp. One group is given pots of blue paint while the other group gets red paint. They can use this paint to mark the possessions or bodies of the other group. (They’re not allowed to wash it off). Their older brothers and cousins always keep an eye on them so they don’t come to any harm or starve due to their ineptness.

They have to spend the entirety of Sacred Time camping. This can be abstracted by making them roll against their *Survival* skill +20%. The first day have the players make a Survival roll +20%. If half of them make the roll tell them they’ve found a good campsite with shelter and water and food for that day. Ask them if they are camping out or whether they find shelter in a cave. The weather is cool but not overly so. Each day after that get them to make another roll at +20% to see if they find enough food. (The +20 reflects the fact that they know the area quite well).



If someone manages to get a critical result based on the modified result they find food for enough days equal to half their critical chance.

Example: Ger rolls a 1 against his Survival skill of 40%. Since his critical score is 6 (factoring the +20 into his base score) he manages to find enough food for three days. This means he can search for food for the others on his free days.

Feel free to abstract this somehow or reduce the number of rolls to 1 or 2 a week if you prefer.

During this time they can also make *Track* rolls to see if they can find the other camp. If they do so they can try and sneak into the camp to count coup as it were. Any attempt to sneak in would require a *Stealth* versus *Perception* test. If the sneaker succeeds they can put a paint mark on the camp. Keep track of the number of successful coup attacks. The group with the most marks has prime bragging rights at the celebration back in the village and can of course impress the new made women with their feats of daring. They can also try and ambush actual people and paint their faces though they're not allowed to use deadly force of course. Anyone who ends up back at the village with a painted face will be subject to a lot of good-hearted teasing.

The first night they are camping out the groups are startled awake by the ground heaving beneath them. If they have camped outside their shelter falls on them and they become tangled in the tent. If they camped inside a cave the shaking and bits of gravel that fall on them no doubt terrifies them. Fortunately the ceiling does not fall on them nor does the entrance become covered by a slide. Interestingly both groups are camped-equidistant from the cave.

Ask them what they are doing. If they can make an *Athletics* -20% roll they can either crawl out of the cave or get themselves untangled from the tent. The shaking does not stop for quite a while. Once the shaking subsides the group will notice that there is light coming from a nearby hillside. The light is quite strong and obviously magical in origin.

In the Cave

Inside, the once-dark cave is brightly lit. The light seems to be coming from the back of the cave. Anyone who investigates will notice that the recent quake seems to have broken down a false wall that hid an inner chamber. Inside the chamber the party will discover a bier. On top of the bier is the corpse of a large man (SIZ 17). The man wears old fashioned bronze armour and the light emanates from a two handed spear held in his withered hands. These are the remains of a Dawn Age hero Yazur Firelorn. Instead of passing on to his reward with Yelmalio, Yazur's personality has come to inhabit his spear. Unfortunately the centuries have not been kind to Yazur. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Yazur is perhaps a little loopy after his long incarceration in his spear. He is incapable of seeing anything outside the spear but can see what the spear's wielder sees.

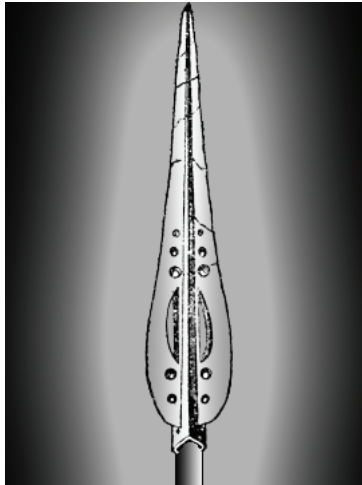
Yazur has lost all the magic he once knew except for Sunbright and Repair. He can keep Sunbright up indefinitely at any magnitude from 0 to 10. He can cast Repair which acts



more like a Heal spell for him.(So a casting repairs the spear and leaves scars, but the spear itself isn't weakened).

Note that the spear can affect creatures normally unaffected by non-magical weapons plus it will do double damage to creatures affected by iron.It also reduces the wielder's POW by 1 for the purposes of available Magic Points and slows the rate at which MP are recovered.

Yazur wants nothing more than to leave this cave.He is incapable/unwilling to possess anyone and cannot leave the spear (breaking it would free him but he is too fearful to desire this as a goal). What he wants is a taste of his former glory. He wants his wielder to take him and make a name for himself.(Not herself, Yazur is not that open minded).While he would like a competent wielder he would also like someone who's somewhat malleable.However his ego



would much prefer someone competent.In this, like most things he's of two minds.

When anyone enters the cave have them make an opposed *Persistence* test versus Yazur's 80% Illusion ability.If they fail all they see is a dusty old longspear.If they succeed they see a shiny iron longspear. Anyone who touches the spear is immediately addressed by Yazur.(When Yazur addresses his wielder he always says what he wants the wielder to hear first and then expresses his true thoughts. He doesn't realize that he's doing this and denies it if confronted on it.True thoughts are shown in italics.

"Greetings warrior! My name is Yazur Firelorn and I am here to lead you to glory! *Oh Great Yelm did it have to be a snot-nosed whelp? Oh well he's better than a trollkin I suppose!"*

Yazur Firelorn

STR NA
CON NA
SIZ NA
INT 15
POW 20
DEX NA
CHA 17

Skills: Sing 30%, Influence 75%
Common Magic: 89% Repair 6, Bladesharp 4
Divine Magic: Pact Yemalio 99%, Lore Yemalio 103%, Sunbright
Special Ability: Illusion 80%*.

Combat Actions 3

Magic Points 20 The spear also possesses a crystal that allows Yazur to store 10 additional magic points.

*Yazur has an odd power he gained on a heroquest that allows him to disguise his, i.e. the spear's appearance. Normally he makes the spear look like an ordinary bronze long spear. Oddly he won't or cannot make it appear more than it is. (Though an iron longspear that magically glows is pretty impressive). This ability works like the sorcerous spell and can be actively resisted with *Persistence* rolls.

The Spear of the Dawn

The spear has an iron point and ferrule and the following characteristics:

| Type | Damage Dice | STR/DEX | Size | Reach | Combat Manoeuvres | ENC | AP/HP |
|-------------------|-------------|---------|------|-------|-------------------|-----|-------|
| Spear of the Dawn | 1D10+1 | 5/5 | L | VL | Impale | 2 | 6/15 |

Yazur is hoping for an enthusiastic response to this. If he doesn't get one he demands to be put down or better yet taken to a true warrior. If no one wants to take the spear Yazur will try his hardest to convince them of his worth.

"Well I am a magic spear you know. Truly worthy to be wielded by a warrior such as yourself. *What a poltroon. Heavens help us!*"

"With my help you will be a warrior like none other. *That's honest isn't it? Crappiness is pretty unique isn't it?*"

Yazur is pretty desperate but he won't lie. In fact he *can't* lie due to one of his geases. He's gotten pretty good at avoiding things and talking around them, though. Hopefully someone will decide to take the spear.

At the end of the initiation period the party should head home to their welcoming celebration. (Of course they had been checked up on immediately after the quake so the villagers know they survived.) Yazur will keep his nature secret since he doesn't want to change wielders now that he's found the One.

The Spring Maid and Sun Lad

Every year since Time began the Sylilans have celebrated the promise and renewal spring brings. The traditional version of this celebration has unfortunately been lost with the scouring after the fall of the Dragon Emperor but a version goes on. The Sylilan villages traditionally share wedding partners with their neighbors to avoid too much intermarriage. Formerly both young men and women would switch villages but with the new Solar façade only the young women leave their villages.

The celebration now involves a big feast to celebrate the end of winter and welcome any new adults to the clans. The participat-

ing clans take turns hosting these events during which the new adults get a chance to mingle and size up the prospective marriage partners. After a day and evening of feasting all the new adults gather in a field to play the roles of Spring Maid or Sun Lad. (Originally it was of course Wind Lad). The young men congregate on one side of the field across from the young women and the two groups exchange the following:

YM: *O Spring Maid, beauteous of face and sweet of nature, it is I Sun Lad, brave and true, strong of wind and full of grace come to woo you.*

YW: *O Sun Lad, you come with sweet, true words of me but empty boasts about you. Why would such a prize as I consent to be wooed by the likes of you?*

YM: *O Spring Maid, I am swift and strong and can run like the wind. There is none other so worthy as I!*



YW: *Worthy is as worthy does. Let your deeds exceed your words. Come catch me!*

At this point the young women drop their skirts to reveal that they are wearing breeches or leggings. (This never fails to scandalize any more traditional Solar cultists watching). They have been training for an entire season to run and as a group turn, give exultant screams and run off across the hills. The course is traditionally run around a large hill to start and end at the village.

The young men, as tradition demands, have to wait for a three strong breaths before giving chase. After the three strong breaths they howl like wolves and give chase!

This pursuit can be abstracted in the following manner. As a group the young women have an *Athletics* score of 70%. Divide the race into as many sections as there are characters and have each player roll an opposed *Athletics* contest using his skill versus the 70% score of the young women. If the young men win the contest they catch up with the young women (they're not allowed to "catch" them before they return to the village, that would allow for all sorts of unsanctioned activities to occur. In the good old days they could catch their intendeds which led to unplanned pregnancies).

Example: *Say there are four PCs. The first round of the contest the young men lose the contest. This allows the young women to pull even further ahead. The next round the young men win so they are back where they started behind the young women. The next round they win again so they are literally breathing down the young women's necks. The last round they lose so the young women return to the starting position with a decent lead.*

The Return of Carpathia Three-Boots

The recruiter for the Emperor's army has returned with help to round up the village's youth. As the young men round the hill they notice that something is amiss at the village. (Have each one make a *Perception* test. If they succeed they can immediately stop.) What they can see is that armed men of some sort have taken the village hostage. When their parents see them they yell at them to run and hide.

The village has been invaded by a troop of spearmen and a group of Thunder Delta slingers under the leadership of Carpathia Three-Boots. While the spearmen restrain the villagers the slingers have been directed to grab the young men. All the males up to the age of twenty-five or so have already been herded into a rope enclosure. All that is needed now it to do is round up the runners and the work will be done.

The characters basically have three options open to them. 1) They can attack the invaders. Sheer foolishness considering that their kin have already surrendered; 2) they can meekly give themselves up; or, 3) they can make a run for it as their parents asked. (Another *Perception* test will show that no one seems to be hurt). If they choose this option (or number 1) the slingers will attack.

As they flee the slingers let fly with their missiles. These are not the dreaded Thunderflints they use in battle, but large leather balls designed to be flung from a staff sling which are used to bludgeon and incapacitate their prey. The players have to evade the slingers and flee to a hidden cave in the hills where they will be safe.

The head-sized leather balls contain spirits housed in the skulls of the enemies of the

Thunder Delta slingers. When a ball strikes a person they do the listed damage plus they automatically cause a “Stun Location” Combat Maneuver. (This may be on top of any Combat Maneuvers gained through combat). They are one use only (they need to be “re-charged” after use) and are fairly heavy and slow flying so they can be dodged and are easier to parry than a regular staff sling missile. (In the sense that they’re only L in size rather than H).

There are two more slingers than there are player characters; each slinger has three of

the stunning sling balls. Each slinger lets fly at one player. If anyone runs towards the village the extra slingers take aim at them. Otherwise determine randomly who the extras target. Once a player has been incapacitated men run over and subdue them. They won’t use deadly force but they are hesitant to club someone unconscious either. Once a player character is subdued his slingers who still have missiles can turn their attentions to other characters. They run to close the distance if necessary.

Thunder Delta Slingers

STR 11
CON 11
SIZ 13
INT 13
POW 11
DEX 13
CHA 11



Combat Actions 3

Damage Modifier +0
Magic Points
Movement 8m
Strike Rank +13 (+10)

Common Magic 70%: Multimissile 2, Coordination 2, walker

Detect Enemy, Speedart 3, Protection 2, Repair

but

1D20 Hit Location AP/HP

| | | |
|-------|-----------|-----|
| 1-3 | Right Leg | 1/5 |
| 4-6 | Left Leg | 1/5 |
| 7-10 | Abdomen | 1/6 |
| 11-12 | Chest | 1/7 |
| 13-15 | Right Arm | 1/4 |
| 16-18 | Left Arm | 1/4 |
| 19-20 | Head | 2/5 |

Typical Armor: Leather helm and linen jerkin, kilt, vambraces and greaves: –2 Armor Penalty 11

Skills: Athletics 75%, Brawn 70%, Evade 70%, Lore (Thunder Delta) 60%, Perception 65%, Persistence 55%, Resilience 70%, Survival 70%

Spirit Magic Spirit Binding 70%. Bound spirits Water

lizard – allows user to run but not walk across still bodies of water. Fish spirit – allows user to breathe underwater

not oxygen for the duration.

Weapons

| Type | SIZ | Load | Reach | Damage | AP/HP | Range |
|--------------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| Shortsword | M | - | S | 1D6 | 6/8 | - |
| Sling | L | 1 | - | 1D8 | 1/2 | 200 m |
| Staff sling | H | 3 | - | 2D6 | 4/8 | 100 m |
| - Head balls | L | - | - | 1D8 | - | 50 m |
| Quarterstaff | M | - | L | 1D8 | 4/8 | - |
| Buckler | M | - | S | 1D3 | 6/8 | - |

Combat Styles

Thunder Delta style (Sling, staff sling, quarterstaff and shortsword): 79%

If someone is lucky enough to avoid the missiles and make it all the way to the cave they enter it to find it already occupied by some spearmen who roughly bind and drag them back to the village. Back at the village they're dragged before Carpathia Three-Boots who tells them. *"Nice try, lads. But the Emperor*

needs men." If anyone manages to escape altogether — by heading to a different hiding place or something — feel free to either get them to roll up a new character among the captured men or make up outlandish reason why they're captured.

Carpathia Three-Boots

STR 17
CON 13
SIZ 14
INT 16
POW 15
DEX 16
CHA 10



Combat Actions 3
braces Damage Modifier +1D4
Magic Points 15
Movement 8m
Strike Rank +16 (+10)

Common Magic 70%: Multimissile 2, Coordination 2, Detect Enemy, Speedart 3, Protection 2, Repair, Bladesharp 4

Weapons

| Type | SIZ | Load | Reach | Damage | AP/HP | Range |
|----------------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| Shortsword | M | - | S | 1D6 | 6/8 | - |
| Shortspear | M | - | L | 1D8 | 1/2 | - |
| Pike | H | - | VL | 1D8+1 | 4/8 | - |
| Hoplite Shield | H | - | S | 1D4 | 6/18 | - |
| Short Bow | L | 1 | - | 1D6 | 4/4 | 80 m |

Combat Styles

Templar style (Short spear and shield, pike and shield, shortsword, short bow): 98%

Description: Carpathia Three-Boots is a stocky, powerful, balding man with a scarred but kindly face. He wears boots everywhere in all kinds of weather and he always has a matching boot hanging around his neck. He has served the Emperor loyally for many years but he hates his present duties because he knows most if not all of the lads he recruits will die. (He calls all his recruits lads and tries to not get emotionally attached to them, he fails every time). He feels great guilt over this but his love of the Emperor is strongly than his self-guilt. He is strict and firm but considers himself a fair man.

| 1D20 | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-------|--------------|-------|
| 1-3 | Right Leg | 1/6 |
| 4-6 | Left Leg | 1/6 |
| 7-10 | Abdomen | 1/7 |
| 11-12 | Chest | 1/8 |
| 13-15 | Right Arm | 1/5 |
| 16-18 | Left Arm | 1/5 |
| 19-20 | Head | 2/6 |

Typical Armor: Leather helm and linen jerkin, kilt, vam- and greaves: -2 Armor Penalty

Skills: Athletics 75%, Brawn 85%, Evade 90%, Lore (Dara Happa) 80%, Perception 65%, Persistence 55%, Resilience 90%, Survival 70%, Tactics 83%

Divine Magic Pact (Yelmlio) 75%, Lore (Yelmlio) 88%, 3 Points of dedicated POW – Shield 2, Heal Wound 1

We stood in a huddle before the recruiter and his troops and listened to his words about the Emperor and his needs. Someone brave shouted, "Why should we fight for the Emperor when he sends men to steal us from our villages?" At this a pained expression fled across his face and he said, "Because as of this point you are his soldiers whether you like it or not and desertion is punishable by death. Additionally anyone who deserts would make the Empire think that perhaps his village isn't loyal enough to the Empire and perhaps needs to be revisited to check for heresy and piety." I thought of my mother and her careless singing of old love ballads about Orlanth and vowed I would do my best to serve this Emperor.

Carpathia Three-Boots was not a bad man, though. He hated collecting the untrained boys of the hills and making them into grist for the mill that was the war between the

Carmanians and the Empire. He kept up a strong façade, though I suspect he never got to sleep sober. He was fair. When I asked him if I could return to my parent's house and get my spear all he asked was, "Do you swear to return by Yelmario?" I nodded yes and he gestured to the slinger to let me be. I dashed off and got the Spear of the Dawn. I left the armor because it was too old and too big anyway.

When I returned he looked surprised at my spear like he could see its true nature but didn't say anything about it. He just nodded in the direction of the coffer of recruits and said, "Into line over there Balazar". "Balazar?" I said, "That's not my name." He shrugged. "It's an old name, means spear bearer. Seems to fit." I went over and got into line and then nodded. "Yeah, Balazar. It fits.

