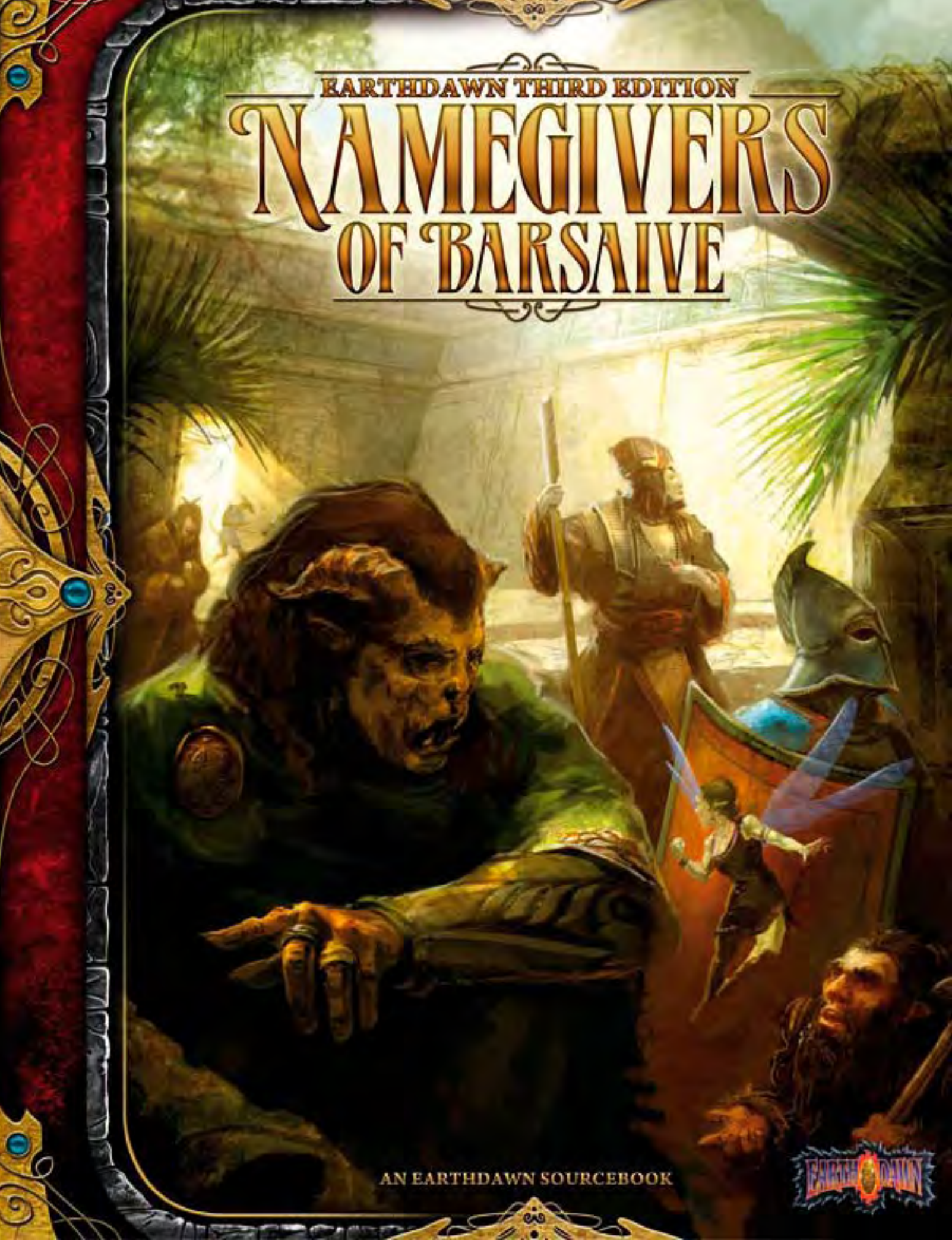
EARTHDAWN THIRD EDITION

NAMEGIVERS OF BARSAIVE



AN EARTHDAWN SOURCEBOOK

EARTHDAWN



• THIRD EDITION •

NAMEGIVERS OF BARSAIVE

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NAMEGIVERS OF BARSAIVE



Line Developer: Carsten Damm

Managing Director: James D. Flowers

Development: Steven J. Black, Eike-Christian Bertram, Lars Heitmann, Jeremiah Schwennen, Jason U. Wallace, Hank Woon

Original Writing: Louis J. Prosperi, Tom Dowd, Robert Cruz, Marc Gasgione, Shane Lacy Hensley, Diane Piron-Gelman, Sean R. Rhoades, Carl Sargent, John J. Terra, Robin D. Laws, Mike Mulvihill, Nigel D. Findley, Jim Nelson, Mike Nielsen

Additional Material: Steven J. Black, Eike-Christian Bertram, John W. Carter, Robert C. Charrette, Carsten Damm, Seth Feierstein, James D. Flowers, Joshua Harrison, Lars Heitmann, Graeme Lindsell, Danielle Mallette, Carl Meadows, Andrew Ragland, Tim Reynolds, Jeremiah Schwennen, Jason U. Wallace, Donovan Winch

Senior Editors: Carsten Damm, James D. Flowers

Associate Editors: Steven J. Black, Eike-Christian Bertram, Joshua Harrison, Donovan Winch

Layout: Carsten Damm, Kathy Schad

Interior Artwork: Tom Baxa, Joel Biske, Steve Bryant, Liz Danforth, Janet Aulisio, Earl Geier, Jeff Laubenstein, Darrell Midgette, Jim Nelson, Mike Nielsen, Tony Szczudlo, Kathy Schad, Larry MacDougall

Cover Artwork: Paul Tobin

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January 2010 — First Printing







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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Rules and rubrics may tax the brain, but without such things we'd have no game.

• Rafkallon of Elliv Skralc •

The age of **Earthdawn** is an era of magic that existed thousands of years ago in our world's dim past. Magic touched every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Namegiver races: humans, elves, dwarfs, orks, trolls, windlings, t'skrang, and obsidimen. However, as the levels of magic rose, so did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic brought the Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the people of Barsaive hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.

Now, the people of Barsaive have emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels, ready to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes step forward to champion their land, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures. Through magic, skill, and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge. By doing so, they become Barsaive's living legends.

Namegivers of Barsaive provides gamemasters and players with a wealth of detail regarding Barsaive's Namegiver races.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The first part of this book offers information on each race, appearing as excerpts from the Great Library of Throal. These chapters are dedicated to exploring all aspects of one race, offering in-depth descriptions of the Namegivers that complement the information found in the ***Player's Guide***. The book's second part contains fifteen new Disciplines, most of them unique to members of specific races. The new Disciplines appear in the same format as those described in the ***Player's Guide***.

Last, but not least, the third part of the book features rules for all the talents, talent knacks, and exotic equipment created and used by the individual races. Comprehensive language glossaries and a selection of ready-to-play characters are provided in the **Appendix** at the end of the book.

The ***Player's*** and ***Gamemaster's Guides*** are required to use this book. Though the information in this book creates a rich and diverse background for each of the Namegiver races, the game mechanics and general information provided in the aforementioned books define the **Earthdawn** universe.

PLAYING THE RACES

The stories of the Namegiver races in this book were written to create a more fully realized game universe for the world of Barsaive and give players more to work with when roleplaying characters of a fictional race. The roleplaying hints given in the ***Player's Guide*** summarize the broadest features of each race, providing a sketch on which to base the beginnings of a character. Because they represent the stereotypical and underlying qualities of each race and its important sub-groups, players should keep these ideas and concepts in mind when roleplaying characters of these races.

It is also true, however, that not all members of a race will act the same. Not all t'skrang, for example, seek *haropas*. Likewise, some windlings desire a comfortable, routine life, rejecting the constant search for change and passion common to their race. A few bored, dispassionate windlings surely exist somewhere in Barsaive! In general, one of the easiest ways to express the ideals and attitudes of a race is to choose specific personality traits to represent them. In the ***Player's Guide***, we suggest that players choose personality traits for their characters to reflect the characters' Disciplines. This same mechanism can be used to explore the unique aspects of a character's race.

> *A player creating a t'skrang character may choose the personality traits of "flamboyant" and "energetic" to represent* jik'harra, *while an elf character might display the traits of "private" and "pensive," to represent his quiet confidence in his heritage.*

ON THAT REMARKABLE PEOPLE KNOWN AS THE DWARFS

In order to ensure the accuracy of the portrayal of dwarfs in Denizens of Barsaive, my colleagues and I made a point of discovering and using as many sources by authors who are not dwarfs as we could. Had we used dwarf scholars to describe and comment on the dwarf race, it is not impossible that such authors would have emphasized our strengths and downplayed our weaknesses to the point where we would be unintentionally conveying false information. Therefore, in the interests of impartial scholarship, we have selected the following treatise, which paints a true picture of the dwarfs' good qualities while granting us our flaws.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

My Name is Derron Killat; I am a human scholar from the lands once known as the Kingdom of Landis. When the Therans closed their iron grip around that region of Barsaive, I forsook my former home for an underground dwelling in the Throalic city of Bethabel. From years of living in this dwarf-ruled kingdom, I have come to greatly respect the people of Throal. This race's affinity for building, their fierce loyalties, their genius for understanding the practicalities of life, even their often mule-headed stubbornness have helped to earn them prominence among the Namegiver races. In the hope of aiding others in understanding the dwarfs of Barsaive, I have written this treatise exploring their ways, customs, strengths, and flaws.

ON BEING A DWARF IN BARSAIVE

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the dwarfs of Barsaive is their view of themselves as "elder brothers" to their fellow Namegiver races. Some believe this view of the world stems from the dwarfs' position as the most populous of the Namegiver races; dwarfs account for fully a third of all Barsaivians, half of whom live outside the Kingdom of Throal in various villages, towns, and cities across Barsaive. Their sheer numbers give the dwarfs dominance and predispose them to see Barsaive as "their" land and themselves as first among its people. Others believe that the instrumental role Throal played in resisting Theran incursions after the Scourge has led the dwarf kingdom, and all other dwarfs by extension, to see themselves as Barsaive's natural leaders.

Whatever the reason, most dwarfs believe they have a duty to lead and teach the other Namegiver races how best to live. Though some dwarfs unfortunately fulfill this duty by scorning others' ways and customs and insisting that dwarf ways are superior, most dwarfs regard other races in a friendly, if somewhat condescending, light. I will explore this viewpoint in greater detail further on in this treatise.

One unfortunate manifestation of the "elder brother" view is a tendency toward stubborn rejection of anything that does not fit with dwarf ways of thinking. A dwarf who has formed strong beliefs about a subject is nearly unshakable in his convictions and resists new ideas with all his strength. For this reason, many dwarfs act less than courteously when dealing with those whose opinions differ from theirs.

ON DWARFS AS BUILDERS

Other Namegivers associate the professions of the craftsman, the merchant, the miner, the scholar, and the bureaucrat with the dwarf race. All these professions are rooted in the dwarf affinity for building and creating, activities that pervade virtually all aspects of dwarf life. To understand the importance of building in dwarf culture, one must realize that dwarfs measure themselves by what they build—their homes, furnishings, weapons, clothing. As the old dwarf proverb states, "The quality of a man's creations reflects the quality of the man." So strongly do dwarfs believe in the worth of building that they tend to see everything in the world as something constructed. A poem is built of lines and words, a language is built of sounds and meanings, even their system of government is built as a mechanism that will operate regardless of the worth of the individuals running it. To dwarfs, the truest worth of a thing lies in how it is shaped, and they, as the shapers, have a unique place in the Universe.

On the Making of Tools

The great esteem in which dwarfs hold their tools underscores the importance of building. Because all things are built with tools, the dwarf treasures his tools as the Swordmaster values his sword or the trollmoot values its airships. A dwarf's tools are an intimate part of him, and so dwarfs care for their tools no matter what they may be. A woodworker treasures his chisels and planes; a Warrior, his weapons and armor; a scholar, his pens and ink vials. As a dwarf's tools age with time and use, he replaces them with new ones, each set rendered more artistically than the previous one.

When a dwarf approaches death, he bequeaths his most recent set of tools to his grandchildren or great-grandchildren. In this way, dwarfs pass on the tradition of tool making from generation to generation and each dwarf symbolically hands down his skills to his descendants.

As with everything else they make, dwarfs decorate their tools, usually with symbols associated with Upandal, Passion of Building, whom they hold in great esteem. Such decorations never appear close to the portion of the tool put to use for fear of damaging the designs.

On the Importance of Building All Things in One's Home

In addition to tool making, dwarfs begin to learn other crafts at a very young age. Weaving, tailoring, furniture making—the young dwarf learns all he must know to craft a home and everything within it. Cooking pots, utensils, draperies, rugs—the dwarf crafts them all, for home-built items are a source of dwarf pride throughout much of Barsaive. A dwarf's pride in his home is also pride in his family, because family members will have made many of the furnishings and everyday objects in it. If a dwarf invites you into his home, he will proudly display every room and every object that he or some member of his family has built with their own hands.

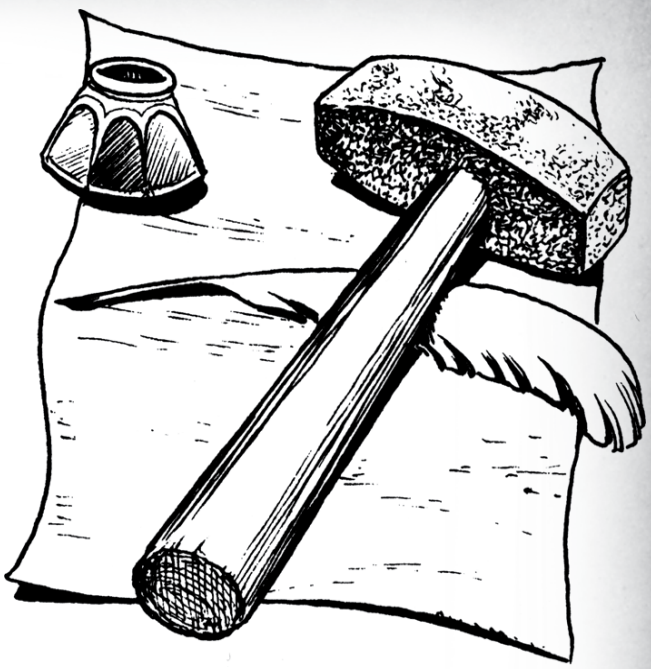
Dwarf homes rarely contain furnishings crafted by artisans of other races. Out of loyalty to their race, tribes, nations, and kingdom, most dwarfs purchase from other dwarf craftsmen those items a dwarf family cannot produce itself.

On Connections Between Craftsmanship and Artistry

Whereas many races draw a sharp distinction between art and craft, a dwarf sees no separation between the two. Dwarfs believe homes, clothing, tools, and the like should be well made, useful, and pleasing to look at. In a dwarf's eyes, useful but ugly items show little skill; beautiful but impractical items show no sense. Only items that fulfill some purpose efficiently and display superior artistry are truly beautiful by dwarf standards.

The growth of trade in Barsaive created opportunities for craftsmen—including many dwarf craftsmen—to profit by selling goods they had produced. As dwarf craftsmen began earning income, some began purchasing items rather than crafting all they used. They therefore had more time to refine their skill at particular crafts, and could in turn command higher prices for their works. Dwarf craftsmen began to specialize, each devoting all his energies to mastering and surpassing the traditions of his particular craft. This specialization, combined with the race's natural love of creating things, has made dwarf craftsmen in general the envy of other Namegivers.

Most dwarf craftsmen prefer to work with metal, stone, and gems because they are part and parcel of the earth. Dwarfs love the earth above all other elements in the Universe because all living things spring from it. They also value its solidity, seeing a connection between the texture and weight of earth, and the solidness of flesh. Though the element of wood shares earth's tangible properties, dwarfs regard it as lesser than earth, because wood owes its life to the earth rather than the other way around. Many dwarf craftsmen work in wood, but they regard it as a distant second to earthen materials.



▲ ▲ ▲

What rubbish! As an elven Weaponsmith, I can categorically state that I feel no envy of dwarf craftsmen. My people's artistic traditions are vastly superior to those of any other race.

—Rioran, Weaponsmith of Jerris

▲ ▲ ▲

On Architecture and Affinity With the Earth

Carefully designed and sturdily built, dwarf residences and other buildings are most often made of stone, wood, or a combination of both. Where possible, particularly in the Kingdom of Throal, dwarfs build exclusively with stone and even carve their homes from beneath the solid rock. Numerous tales of the first dwarfs describe them as living in underground settlements, and a large portion of the ancient Kingdom of Scytha was said to be underground. Where they cannot build with stone, dwarfs make their houses of wood.

As I understand it, dwarfs express their love of the earth by living within it or close to it. For this reason, a dwarf who lives on the surface of the earth almost always makes his home a single-story dwelling, or lives on the ground floor of a multistory building. Anything else takes him too far from physical contact with the earth, separating him from the first source of life and making him extremely uneasy. In contrast to homes, many places of business comprise several stories, particularly in Throal's thriving cities. Most dwarfs feel perfectly at ease conducting business above the ground floor or using the upper levels to store goods.

In keeping with the dwarf tradition of hospitality, many dwarf homes are built to comfortably accommodate most Namegivers (save the truly immense obsidimen and trolls). Doorways often reach heights of six to seven feet, and ceilings a foot or two higher. In addition, by constructing houses larger than the average dwarf requires, a dwarf builder creates a feeling of spaciousness particu-

larly appreciated by those dwarfs living underground. Many dwarfs of Throal, living as they do in underground cities, have helped to popularize this sense of space among their own people. As more of the other Namegiver races move into the kingdom, homes built exclusively to suit dwarf size are growing increasingly rare.

Dwarf houses are less intricately decorated than other dwarf handiwork, primarily because a dwarf architect regards the lines and space of the house itself as ornament and therefore sees no need to decorate it further with carvings, pillars, reliefs, and such. The graceful upward sweep of a ceiling arch, the gentle curve of a doorway, and the ways in which the rooms themselves frame space are all elements of a home's design that perfectly combine craft and art in the dwarf manner. Compared to many human dwellings, of course, a dwarf home still seems abundantly ornamented. Only careful comparison between the house and the things in it allows one to notice a difference.

On Clothing, Weapons, and Furnishings

Most dwarfs make at least some of these everyday items themselves, though they may buy others from fellow dwarfs specializing in a particular craft. All are intricately ornamented, often with rune-like designs or sigils somehow representative of the Passions important to a dwarf's Discipline or profession.

Many dwarfs prefer loose-fitting robes and tunics with large sleeves and several deep pockets in which they may carry carving tools, scrolls, pens, engraver's tools, and so on. Some dwarfs favor deep browns, dusty reds, and blacks that express their affinity for the earth; many others prefer colors so bright as to border on the garish. According to my learned friend Merrox, master of the Hall of Records in Throal, dwarfs first began to wear bright colors in unusual combinations during the Scourge, as a symbol of the many colors of the world they intended one day to reclaim from the Horrors. Ever since those dark times, dwarfs have worn bright garments out of respect for their long-dead ancestors. Occasionally, a dwarf weaver incorporates ornamental patterns or symbols into the fabric itself, but most often tailors add them to the finished garment.

Warriors across Barsaive prize dwarf-made weapons and armor for their superior construction and artistic design. Runic carvings on swords, daggers, and shields are often traced in silver, gold, precious gems, or (rarely) orichalcum. Dwarf Weaponsmiths tend to use these precious materials sparingly, and they are masters at maximizing their ornamental effect. Many Weaponsmiths favor symbols of Thystonius, the Passion of Conflict and Valor. Though they prefer working with metals, dwarf Weaponsmiths and armorers occasionally use crystal or wood.

Most furnishings and other useful objects in a dwarf's home (cooking pots, wine jugs, plates, and trenchers) are fashioned of stone, wood, and metal—most often iron. Softer metals such as gold or silver are used in small quantities, most often for decoration.

Many dwarfs place symbols associated with the Passion Garlen on household items because of that Passion's connection with the home.

On the Reasons and Source of Trade

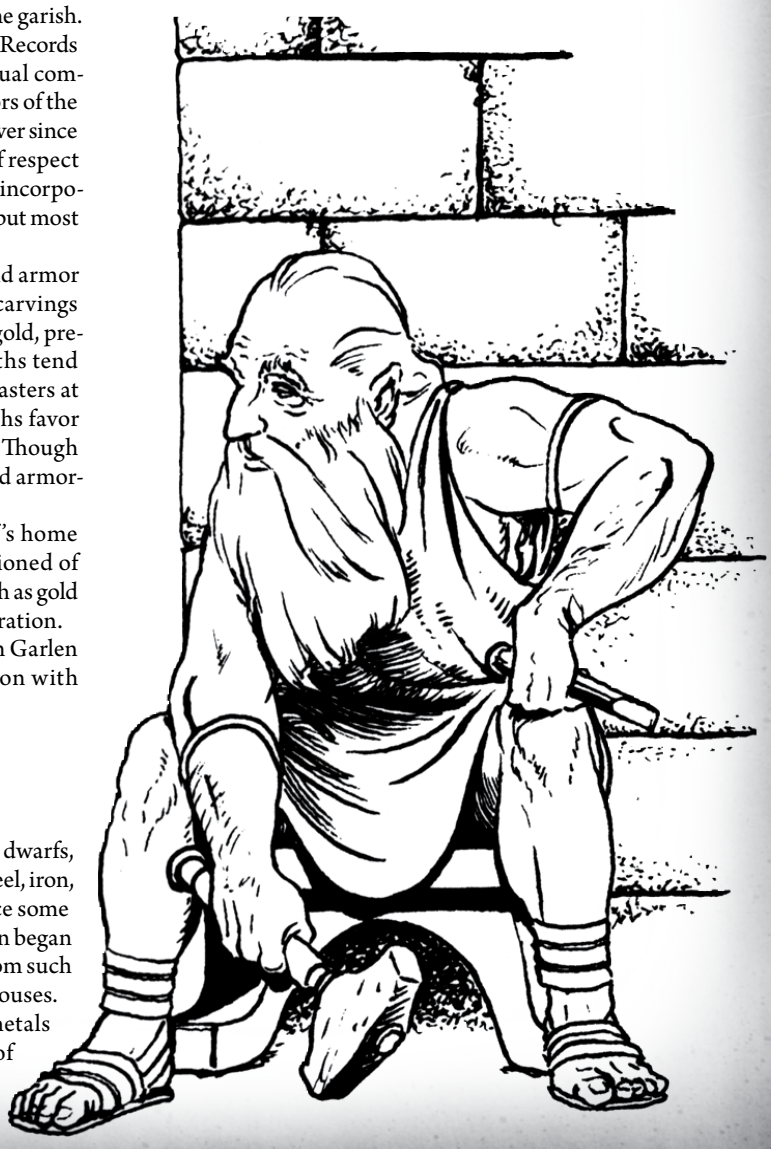
Building or crafting anything requires raw materials. For dwarfs, necessary raw materials include wood, fabrics and fibers, steel, iron, gems, and precious metals. Because dwarfs did not produce some of these materials, such as wood and fabrics, dwarf craftsmen began to trade for them. As more and more craftsmen profited from such trading, they founded the first of the great dwarf trading houses.

Dwarf miners, who had extracted gems and precious metals from the earth for their own uses, fueled the growth of trade by supplying their underground bounty to other craftsmen and by trading gems and precious metals for other raw materials. Beginning within their own race and soon spreading beyond it, the dwarfs of Barsaive built the vast, intricate trading network that today links all of Barsaive's far-flung peoples.

Building the Intangible

For the most part, dwarfs build tangible things. Tools, furnishings, weapons, armor—all these items can be touched, held, and shaped by the hands of a skilled craftsman. Many dwarfs see this tangibility as proof of an item's value. Many others, however, see a connection between building the tangible and the intangible. Just as a dwarf woodworker uses wooden planks and tools to create a dining table on which to eat, so have Barsaive's greatest dwarf scholars used words and ideas to build the systems of law and government that have sustained the Kingdom of Throal and the land of Barsaive since the Scourge. Some dwarfs even argue that these systems are as tangible in their own way as a chair or a sword; though one cannot pick up and hold a method of government, that government has a tangible effect on the lives of those governed.

Interestingly enough, the scholars of the Great Library of Throal see their domain as arising from the same impulse to build. Just as a dwarf craftsman creates the tools with which he can build other objects, the library's founders created a tool—a storehouse of knowledge—with which all of Barsaive may build its culture and civilization.



On Loyalty Among the Dwarfs

In ancient times, a dwarf felt himself bound by ties of loyalty to four groups: his family, tribe, nation, and kingdom. These days, only the first and last of these loyalties retain their original strength. However, one must consider all four of these loyalties when attempting to understand dwarf society of our own time. Even though the nations have largely vanished and the tribes have intermarried for generations, echoes of the old, fierce loyalties still remain in every dwarf's heart and soul. Therefore, I shall discuss dwarf society in both its ancient and modern aspects.

On the Claims of Family

As is common among most human families of my acquaintance, the dwarf family begins with a mother, a father, and a child. But unlike humans, the dwarfs consider other blood relatives—uncles, aunts, cousins, and grandparents—as closely bound to each other as parents are to children. While humans draw a distinction between immediate and more distant kin, the dwarfs see only "those of the blood." For example, a dwarf child regards his mother and his aunt with equal affection and devotion, and the mother and aunt regard the child similarly.

Of all their bonds of loyalty, the family bond is by far the strongest among the dwarfs. But a dwarf has many loyalties, and occasionally those loyalties conflict. When this happens, the dwarf is torn, because he must break one faith to keep another. How is he to choose in such a case? Where does the dwarf's primary loyalty lie? The answer, as any dwarf will tell you, is with his family. Therefore, the dwarfs emphasize the ties of blood above all others by giving the same loyalty to all blood kin.

Though the dwarfs have always held the ties of blood in great reverence, the dark years of the Scourge intensified that tradition. During those years, children lost parents, brothers lost sisters, and wives lost husbands to the Horrors and their minions almost daily. Far too many watched powerlessly as the hardships of life in the kaers drove their dearest-loved kinfolk mad. It is no wonder that surviving kin of any relation became doubly precious. One who mourned a lost sister could find comfort in the presence of that sister's child and could easily see the still-living relative as a connection to the departed. For those who had lost so much already, those family ties that remained—however distant, to our way of thinking—were an anchor to cling to in a world gone dreadfully wrong.

When the peoples of Barsaive finally emerged from their kaers, survivors of the same family often discovered each other after spending centuries in different kaers. Those first years after the Scourge were a time of despair for many; the Horrors had left the world blighted almost beyond recognition, and many succumbed to attacks by those powerful Horrors that still lingered in Barsaive. Against this backdrop, the discovery of kin they had never seen became a sign to the dwarfs. And so they loved these long-lost kinfolk as much as those with whom they had spent all their lives. Thus the Scourge and its aftermath deepened family bonds already grown strong throughout the many centuries of dwarf history.

On the Special Role of Grandparents

In truth, one kin tie among the dwarfs is more special than any other. The relationship between dwarf grandparents and their grandchildren holds a place in the life of each dwarf that no other relationship can claim, for the dwarf grandparent passes the traditions of the family to the grandchild. Thus, the oldest living generation gives the youngest the greatest gift that any dwarf can give another.

The dwarfs value tradition above all things. Many other Namegiver races see customs and traditions as phenomena that simply happen, practices that people take up because they seem to make sense at the time. Dwarfs view tradition as something chosen, crafted, labored over. One might think of a dwarf's family traditions as a house, begun as a single room in the family's first generation and expanded by diverse kinfolk over decades, even centuries. Each generation values what the previous generations built and takes inspiration for its own additions from what has gone before. The grandparent, then, takes the grandchild through all the rooms in the house and explains precisely why each one was built in a certain way. The grandparent teaches the child what it means to be a member of his family.

Of course, every family has two sides—the paternal and the maternal. Among dwarfs, as among many humans, a girl tends to feel herself her mother's daughter; a boy, his father's son. This is only natural, but it means the child grows up with a particular fondness for those pieces of the family tradition most strongly identified with only one parent. To ensure that a child learns the traditions of the entire family, a specific grandparent passes on the traditions to each child. The paternal grandmother teaches her granddaughters, and the maternal grandfather teaches his grandsons.

The special relationship between grandparent and grandchild begins at the grandchild's birth, when the grandparent chooses one of the child's Names. At certain times during childhood—the first month, and the tenth and sixteenth birthdays—the grandparent gives the child a gift that symbolizes something of significance from the family's past.

At the age of sixteen, a dwarf comes of age and leaves his childhood behind. During the last summer before the child's sixteenth birthday, he leaves the family home to live with his grandparent. In ancient times, dwarfs living in villages and small settlements would take their grandchildren into the deep woods or out on the wide plains, caring for them and teaching them apart from other kin and neighbors.

Such sojourns are rare in these more treacherous days, for too many dangers lurk in the wild lands. Instead, the grandparent and grandchild leave the extended family's home (with appropriate pomp and ceremony, as dwarfs judge such things) and take up residence in a small house. Most of these so-called summer houses, have been used by dwarf families for generations for this specific purpose.

On Tribal Loyalties

The importance of tribe loyalty has lessened considerably since ancient times. In the heyday of the great kingdoms and city-states of Barsaive, tribal ties rivaled family bonds in importance, and dwarfs of different tribes fought many wars out of tribal loyalty. Nowadays, the typical dwarf knows his tribe and takes pride in his heritage, but no longer needs to attack another's tribe to proclaim the superiority of his own.

The waning strength of tribal loyalties among Barsaive's dwarfs can be attributed to two factors: the Therans and the Scourge.

The Effect of the Therans on Tribal Loyalties

The Therans provided a common enemy for the different dwarf tribes of Barsaive. Those who believe that the dwarfs fared well under Theran domination while the rest of the Namegivers suffered see only a tiny portion of the truth. As administrators of our province, the dwarfs performed essential work for the Therans and so could not be molested or mistreated indiscriminately without greatly inconveniencing Thera.

Still, more than a few Therans resented the dwarfs' having anything to do with their empire. The dwarfs' constant efforts to mitigate Theran brutality toward other Namegivers only sharpened Theran anger in some quarters, and many a Theran official found persecuting dwarfs rewarding enough to risk disruption

of the Theran Empire's daily business. And even dwarfs not maltreated resented losing the freedom they had held by right in every dwarf realm for centuries.

As the Therans tightened their grip on Barsaive, the dwarfs' common experience of oppression taught them to see each other as kindred in a way that they had not before.

The Effects of the Scourge on Tribal Loyalties

The overwhelming threat of the Scourge further strengthened the growing unity among the dwarfs. Tribes of dwarfs that in past generations might have refused to acknowledge one another's existence worked side by side to build the kaers before the Horrors reached our world in force. The tribes provided similar aid to other Namegivers, whose differences made the distinctions between dwarf tribes seem inconsequential.

Life in the kaers unified the dwarf tribes even further. Though different tribes had lived within the borders of single nations for years, they had found it a simple thing to keep separate because they had plentiful land over which to expand their tribal enclaves. But the kaers enclosed many different tribes in much closer quarters than any of them might have desired. Inevitably, young dwarfs from different tribes met, worked, and played together. Equally inevitably, some of them fell in love and married.

Within the first two centuries of kaer life, a few dwarf tribes had intermarried so completely that they formed distinct new tribes; the Kaisthi and the Dwalithi of the lowland plains, now known as the Kalithi, are the best-known example. Such intermarriage gave the deathblow to tribal loyalty as a source of conflict, and the dwarfs emerged from the kaers free of their ancient tribal hatreds.

Oh really? What about the little band of malcontents trying to stir up trouble for King Neden? They are Huari from the eastern end of the Throal Mountains, every last one of them. The royal family of Throal is Mishwai, a tribe that has lived in the western Throal Mountains since before the kingdom's founding. And who do you suppose had a blood feud with whom, right up until the Scourge began?

—Tiras, Wizard of Bethabel

I fear friend Tiras' scholarship is faulty. I am of Huari ancestry and have heard nothing of a blood feud in any of my tribe's history. I am justifiably proud of my tribe, but my loyalty lies with my king, no matter what his tribal origins.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On Loyalty to Nations

National loyalties have changed greatly over the centuries as well. For many dwarfs in ancient times, the nation and the tribe were one and the same.

For those who ruled lands containing different tribes, the nation proved a useful idea for preserving peace. But as with tribal loyalty, national loyalty and the wars it often produced withered under Theran domination and the vast threat of the Scourge.

The Tragedy of Scytha

The downfall of Scytha exemplifies national loyalty and pride gone tragically awry. For centuries, the ancient dwarf nation, home to half a dozen tribes, had waged war against the neighboring dwarf city-states of Killea and K'rzon. Often, Scytha succeeded in conquering one or the other of its enemy realms, only to lose the holding to the inevitable violent rebellion that erupted within a generation or two. Liberated, the city-state would remain free for perhaps seventy to a hundred years before falling once more under Scythan domination. The constant warring eventually took a dreadful toll on mighty Scytha, costing it virtually an entire generation of men and women.

Under the leadership of the visionary King Cardok, Scytha signed peace treaties with K'rzon and Killea. Alas, the bright day of peace proved all too brief when a mysterious plague struck Scytha's capital city of Draoglin. Every dwarf child born that year withered and died of fever within the first month of life. The grateful people who had Named their sovereign Cardok the Peacemaker turned their rage and fear on him. They stormed the royal palace one dark night, pulled King Cardok and his family from their beds and tore them all limb from limb in the palace garden.

Their fear-driven blood-lust whetted by that dreadful act, the people proclaimed a new king: Ragnar, a petty warlord from Scytha's outlying lands, who claimed that the Passion Thystonius had sent the plague to punish Scytha for letting the coward Cardok make peace with Scytha's enemies. Ragnar made war throughout his brief but bloody reign, even neglecting the building of Scytha's kaer in his lust for conquest.

The Horrors fell upon defenseless Scytha like a black rain, killing every living thing.

Cardok and his family were all slain before the Scourge. Not a scrap of documented evidence suggests otherwise.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

What Came to Pass Elsewhere in Barsaive

Most of Barsaive's other dwarf nations built kaers and prepared for the Horrors' deadly onslaught, aiding former enemies in the face of the common threat. Save for Throal, all the dwarf nations that existed before the Scourge have disappeared, remembered only



by historians and in the pages of the *Book of Tomorrow*. Nowadays, dwarfs all over our land—even in Throal—regard Barsaive as their nation and all Namegivers in it as their kin.

The only other dwarf nation that exists in the modern day is Scytha Keor, roughly translated from the ancient Scythan tongue as "Scytha Reborn." In fact, Scytha Keor is less a true nation than a collection of loosely allied villages in the lands that once formed ancient Scytha. The villagers dream of re-establishing that fallen kingdom as a free republic open to all Namegivers and governed by dwarfs.

According to local lore, the headman of the village of Cramna, Rollo Redbeard, is actually a scion of the Scythan royal family. For a small fee, Redbeard will show you a family tree that traces his ancestry back to the ill-starred monarch, Cardok the Peacemaker. Redbeard and his fellow nation-builders consider themselves independent of Throalic rule, though they generally agree with Throalic aims. Redbeard styles himself First Republican of Scytha Keor and visits the King of Throal every autumn, with mounted escorts and pennons flying.

But despite these pretensions to power, the hamlets of Scytha Keor stand little chance of ever becoming a power to be reckoned with. In truth, their inhabitants are far more concerned with getting in the harvest and planting next year's crops than with challenging Throalic leadership.

On Fealty to the Kingdom

Most dwarfs in Barsaive, whether living in Throal or outside it, feel fiercely proud of that kingdom and gladly give allegiance to it. Throal inspires this devotion for several reasons. First, it is the wellspring of modern dwarf society and culture. Throalic scholars and philosophers produced both the language and the legal code that all dwarfs hold dear. Second, many dwarfs view Throal's achievements as their own, and each may claim some of the kingdom's reflected glory. The dwarfs never forget that Throal inspired Barsaive to fight for freedom from Thera. And if a few are too prone to forget that the rest of Barsaive repaid its debt by saving Throal from almost certain destruction at the hands of the Theran Navy, such selective memory is perfectly understandable, for who among us has not seen the achievements of his own people as shining just a bit brighter than those of others?

Of course, the loyalty of some dwarfs living outside Throal remains as shallow as an autumn-plowed furrow. Most of these simply cannot feel too strong a bond with a distant state and instead reserve their deepest fealty for their village. These farmers and landowners recognize only the claim of their own land and their own folk; real and immediate things. They view all else as a distraction from the practical business of life. Others, such as the would-be founders of a new Scytha, prefer to swear fealty to ancient history than to an existing realm. They are not against Throal as much as they are in the grip of a prideful dream they cannot surrender. Last (and most unfortunately, to my mind) are those dwarfs who regard Throal as a false kingdom. These malcontents are thankfully few in number, and their origins remain obscure. Their few writings, mostly incoherent screeds, tend to circulate in such dens of iniquity as Kratas and Iopos, though a few have turned up of late in Bartertown.

The Keeper of the Hall of Records in Throal most graciously made one of these writings available to me (the Great Library has a pamphlet in its possession, out of public view but preserved as part of the library's duty as a guardian of history). Its contents were scurrilous in the extreme. The tract calls the royal dynasty of Throal "a collection of illegitimate, Theran-loving lapdogs" and claims that the line of King Varulus is descended from "the bastard daughter of a sheep-biting, mud-swilling, midden-sweeper."



Insofar as I could glean anything from this vile tract, its authors seem to believe that Throal's growing power threatens Barsaive's freedom—a strange conclusion indeed, considering all that the dwarfs of Throal have done for Barsaive.



First Republican Redbeard is a true son of Scytha, and our nation grows in strength with every passing year! How dare this human Throal-toady suggest otherwise?!

—Morga Longblade of Cramna



On the Place of the Dwarfs in Barsaive

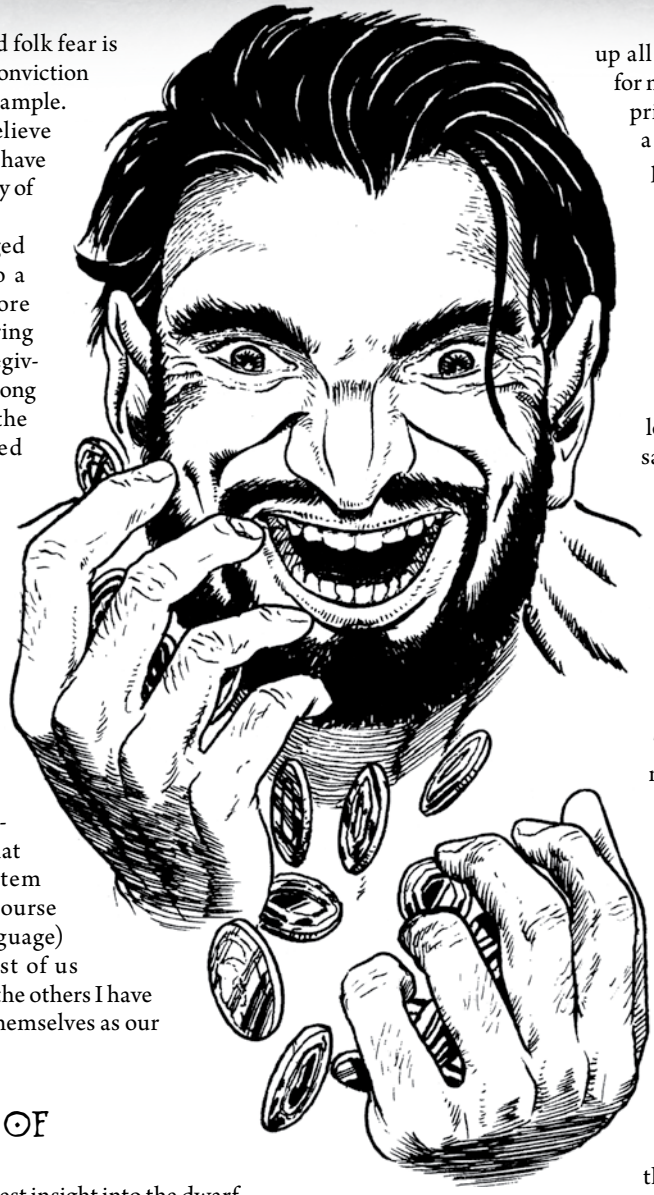
Many dwarfs of Barsaive see themselves as the natural leaders of our land—not by might or right of conquest, as the hated Therans ruled, but by their example to their fellow Namegivers. In a dwarf's view, his people are Barsaive's builders, the practical folk who gave Barsaive a common language, liberated its people from hiding with the voyage of the *Earthdawn*, united it under a banner of freedom and just laws, and opened the trade routes that allowed our land to prosper.

Therefore, it is only right that the other Namegivers should follow the dwarfs' lead. This way of seeing the world, while understandable and perhaps even true, unfortunately belittles the accomplishments of other Namegivers. The dwarfs have given Barsaive much, but as some say, there is no need to rub their fellow Namegivers' noses in it. Also, many dwarfs act as if they expect undying gratitude from every non-dwarf they happen to meet. This attitude is particularly unfortunate, as it only serves to bolster the arguments of those few who desire Throal's downfall. What saves the dwarfs from becom-

ing the tyrants these misguided folk fear is the dwarfs' genuine, deeply felt conviction that true rulers must lead by example. The dwarfs of Barsaive truly believe that they must live as they would have others live if they are to be worthy of the power they have gained.

The threat of the Scourge forged the ancient dwarf tribes into a single people, and this did more than any other single event to bring all of Barsaive's disparate Namegivers together. The wisest heads among the dwarfs—many of them in the kingdom of Throal—observed this new unity and saw a way to ensure that the culture of Barsaive survived the Scourge. These dwarfs realized the Scourge would force the Therans to quit Barsaive for many centuries, but that Theran forces would return as soon as they dared.

Determined that the Therans would find a different, stronger Barsaive awaiting them, the dwarfs set about creating the *Book of Tomorrow*. That volume and the Throalic system of justice (of which I shall discourse at length in the section on language) shaped the Barsaive that most of us know; for this reason, as well as the others I have mentioned, the dwarfs regard themselves as our land's fittest caretakers.



On the Meaning of Dwarf Fables

Dwarf fables provide the clearest insight into the dwarf code of ethics. These enormously popular tales have been handed down from generation to generation, since before written history in some cases, and every one of them either contains a moral or illustrates some particular application of dwarf ethics. The dwarfs raise their children on these fables, instilling in their offspring the notion that they must behave well before they can expect others to do so. I have transcribed one of the best-known fables below, as told to me by Lunas Ironhand, a dwarf Weaponsmith of the village of Ayres.

The Greedy Blacksmith, or, Enough is Enough

Long ago, when the world was young, a young blacksmith Named Copperfist lived in the village of Rossel. A fine blacksmith, Copperfist took fair pride in his work. He could make anything, from a horseshoe to a plowshare to a fine sword blade, and what's more, Copperfist could make it twice as well in half the time as any other blacksmith. He crafted many wares for the folk of Rossel and all the neighboring villages, taking payment when offered but asking none of those who could not give it. He earned enough to live on from those who could pay him in coin or kind. And for those who could not, he swore he was paid enough by the simple joy of making a thing.

Copperfist's fame spread until it reached the ears of a noble prince, whose sword had been broken in war. The prince had gathered up all the pieces of his blade but one, and for nigh on six years, no blacksmith in the prince's lands had proved able to forge a proper replacement for the missing piece. The prince determined to go to Copperfist and see what the wondrous smith could do. And so he arrived one bright day at Copperfist's doorstep, with the bits of his broken sword in hand. After giving the prince refreshment as a proper dwarf should, Copperfist set out the bits of metal and studied them. After a long while, he looked at the prince and said, "Your Worthiness, I will attempt to reforge your sword."

And oh, how he labored over the prince's blade! Day and night and day again, Copperfist sweated over fire and anvil, melting and pouring and hammering until the effort near drove him to fainting. At long last it was done, and Copperfist sent word to the prince.

The prince rode to Rossel, took his newly forged sword and aimed a mighty blow at an old tree stump to the back of the smithy. (You can see the scar in the bark to this very day.) The blade bit deep and did not break, for Copperfist had forged it true. Then the prince cried Copperfist's praises and presented him with a bag of gold for his trouble. Copperfist, curious to see gold for the first time in his life, took out a piece of the precious metal and held it up. It glinted in the sun, and Copperfist thought he had never seen anything so beautiful. The loveliest maiden in Rossel faded to nothing before its luster. And from that moment on, Copperfist wanted nothing but gold. Gold to feast his eyes upon, gold to run his fingers through, gold to pillow his head at night, even!

Copperfist began to work like a man gone mad, demanding gold in payment. Those who could not pay, he refused. No more would he make their nails, their plows, and their axe blades. He would forge metal only for the nobles and rich merchants, those who could pay him gold coin. He worked so hard that he ceased to eat, save for the odd crust snatched in the wee hours. And he ceased to sleep, save between strokes of the hammer as he stood over his anvil. And then one day, as he woke from one of these odd dozes, it came to him that he no longer felt happy. He gazed down at the dagger taking shape under his hammer and realized that he had forgotten what to do. Between one breath and the next, he had forgotten how to forge a blade.

Copperfist's stomach rumbled, and his dazed mind turned to food. If he ate, surely his memory would return. So he went to his larder for something to eat, only to find it as bare as a vine in winter. He looked in the wine jug that stood on his dining table and found it was empty. Exhausted and sorely puzzled, he threw himself down on his bed—only to spring up with a cry of pain. His bed was covered in brown sacks that bulged with something hard. Copperfist opened a sack and drew out a piece of gold.

A mist seemed to lift from his eyes, and he thought, "What am I doing? Gold I have in plenty, far beyond my dreams— but food and wine and rest have I none. I might buy such things from my neighbors—but would any sell to me, who have refused my work to them because I would no longer accept a fat chicken or a handful of pennies in payment?"

And Copperfist grew sad to think of the many friends he had turned away with a brusque word because they had no gold.

That night, so late that no candle burned anywhere in Rossel, Copperfist strode silently through the winding village paths and placed a bag of gold on every doorstep. When he returned to the smithy, he threw himself down on his soft, warm bed that had only one bag of gold on it—the one for himself, enough to keep him should business ever run dry.

When the villagers saw Copperfist's gifts, they forgave him his greed and gruffness on the spot. And from that day forward, Copperfist forged whatever folk needed and took a dwarf's proper joy in his work—but refused ever again to be paid in gold.

On the Manner of Dwarfs Toward Other Namegivers

Those Namegivers enamored of flowery or flamboyant manners, such as the elves and the t'skrang, often perceive the dwarfs' natural reserve as a deliberate affront to their sensibilities. In truth, it is nothing of the sort. A dwarf is of a practical turn of mind and sees no point in elaborate expressions of friendship or respect. If he is minded to show courtesy, he will use one word where other races might use ten and consider it sufficient.

An elf respectfully addressing a wealthy merchant might call him "your great and noble munificence who graces the world with your bounty." A dwarf respectfully addressing the same merchant would simply call him "sir." No lack of respect is implied; if anything, the brevity of the address is an additional compliment, acknowledging that the gentleman in question has more valuable things to do with his time than listen to empty praises.

Certainly, those who have enjoyed a dwarf's hospitality would never call them unmannerly. For the dwarfs, hospitality amounts almost to a religion. If you visit a dwarf's house for a mere five minutes, he will press on you some food or drink to satisfy his obligation as host. If you pass the time of day with a dwarf in the streets of Bartertown, he will invite you to share anything edible or drinkable he carries with him. And if he has nothing, before you part company he will invite you to supper within the week. In sharing a meal, a dwarf is bound by custom to give the best to his guest. He may even go hungry, if he has very little and his guest is minded to take all of it. To give anything less is to belittle his guest, a dishonorable thing among dwarfs.

A dwarf's code of hospitality dictates also that he inquire after his guest's family, friends, neighbors, business, and personal prospects to a degree that other Namegivers often find intrusive. Subjected to such an inquiry with the utmost friendliness by Merrox of Throal over a bottle of stout ale and a pigeon pie, I found it disconcerting. Indeed, I felt offended at first, as many a human might. We seek to keep private many of those things that a dwarf host feels he must ask after.

Only by reminding myself that I was dining with Merrox in part to study his people's customs could I restrain an instinctive outburst that would have sorely hurt Merrox's feelings. He would have been devastated to know that I thought his questions rude. (I do apologize, Merrox—I would not have you read such a painful thing, yet I feel I can only explain dwarf custom by relating my own experience.)

On Advice as a Gift

The dwarfs are by nature a giving people, and one of the things they love best to give is advice. This trait above all others causes many other Namegivers to lose patience with dwarfs, and dwarfs have considerable trouble understanding why. Their advice, they will tell you, is useful, practical, and above all, right. Therefore, why should any take offense at it? It is offered as a gift, after all, as an elder brother might advise a younger.

But that is the crux of the problem. The dwarfs see themselves as the elder brothers of Barsaive's other Namegiver races, and feel bound to impart their practical wisdom whenever possible to those they see as their juniors. Dwarfs believe deeply in the value of what they say, and not without reason; more often than not, advice from a dwarf is sound. But most dwarfs do not understand how their condescending attitudes offend other Namegivers. And when those Namegivers react with understandable irritation, many dwarfs feel as if their gift has been thrown at their feet. They in turn react with anger and hurt, and both sides take deep offense where none was intended.

I have attempted to explain to my dwarf friends how we other Namegivers feel when they give us unsought advice, to little avail. No one likes to hear how he should conduct himself, or worse yet, how he should have acted differently when it is too late to change something. But my dwarf friends do not understand me. Rather like stubborn mules, they return to the same argument: their advice is sound and therefore should carry no sting. They do not understand that the rightness of what they say is itself an insult added to injury for many Namegivers. And so the dwarfs' reputation for complacency and condescension is one they will find difficult to eradicate.



On the Culture of Dwarfs

Much of what makes a race unique are its practices, customs, and traditions. In the following section of this treatise, I will examine important dwarf customs and rituals, their view of art, and the development of the language and law that comprise so much of dwarf culture.

On Artistic Endeavor and Craftsmanship

Members of my own race and other Namegivers such as the orks and trolls tend to regard craftsmanship and artistic endeavor as two separate things. Only art should be pleasing to the eye; objects made by a craftsman should be useful without regard to beauty. Implicit in this way of thinking is the assumption that a useful object cannot also be ornamental, because ornament by definition has no use. For dwarfs, an object created to be useful should also show beautiful workmanship, and artistic endeavor has a use, though not always an obvious one. The end product of craftsmanship, however artistically rendered, has an immediate, practical application; a work of art has a use further removed from practical reality. A sword with an exquisitely detailed hilt, for example, represents craftsmanship because it has the immediate, practical use of protecting its wielder from enemies. A poem is a work of art because its "use" is less practical: to teach its readers about some event or idea, or simply to testify to the poet's skill with language.

For all their practical nature, dwarfs value art highly, and many are musicians, sculptors, painters, and poets. Dwarf art in general seeks to teach where others may seek simply to move or to entertain. A dwarf song, for example, almost always tells a story with a lesson in it rather than simply engaging people's emotions as an elven melody does. Most dwarf art is also intricate and complex, allowing the artist to demonstrate his skill at manipulating musical notes or words or images. Though not quite as intricate and less delicately rendered than most elven or windling artwork, dwarf art is (in my opinion) infinitely superior to the simple, rough, and clumsy works of troll and ork artists.

On Rituals Marking the Passage of Life

Like their fellow Namegiver races, dwarfs commemorate significant events in their lives with rituals. In the following text, I describe the most important of these rituals—those that celebrate a dwarf's birth, Naming, and death.

Unlike other Namegivers, the dwarfs do not mark a child's coming of age; he is simply considered an adult on his sixteenth birthday. During his first adult year he finds or builds a house and begins a profession; dwarfs wishing to become adepts often begin training at this time. According to my dwarf friends, the summer spent with a grandparent before adulthood adequately marks the dwarf's new status in life; therefore, he does not need additional commemoration.

On Birth and Special Birthdays

Though dwarfs revere the birth of a child as much as any Namegivers, they perform no ritual at the time of birth. Instead, dwarfs delay birth celebrations until the newborn dwarf reaches the age of one month. This custom, and also the commemoration of the child's tenth birthday, is the legacy of a particularly harrowing period in dwarf history, not long before the Scourge began in earnest. During that time, in the Kingdom of Scytha, a mysterious plague claimed the lives of almost every dwarf child within its first month of life. If a child survived for a month, the family knew the child would live. Dwarfs have commemorated a child's first month as a symbol of that hope ever since. The tenth birthday has a similar, awful significance. During the same period in a dwarf kingdom to the far south of Barsaive (whose Name has not come down to us), suicidal madness struck all of the children between the ages of seven and ten years. If a child survived to see its tenth birthday, the madness vanished, along with much of the child's memory of those three years. Like the first month of life, the tenth birthday became a symbol of life over death.

On Customs Marking the Approach of Death

When an aging dwarf approaches death, he bequeaths his possessions to surviving family members. Though evidence suggests that such bequests were once given orally, as part of a ritual in which the family gathered around their dying elder and he spoke to each of them in turn, frequent disputes between surviving relatives led to the practice of recording bequests in a formal document. The dying dwarf also selects one possession to be buried with him, often (though not always) a pattern item.



The last holdover from the original bequeathing ritual is the tradition whereby a dying dwarf bequeaths his craftsman's tools to his youngest grandchild or great-grandchild. These tools are often the first set used by the young dwarf, and frequently determine which craft he will follow. Legend claims this tradition began in the ancient Kingdom of Scytha, when one of the kingdom's greatest wood carvers bequeathed his finest woodworking tools to his youngest granddaughter and spoke the following words as he gave them to her: "With these tools I have built a life for myself and my family. I give them to you, that you may build for yourself and those you love." To this day, dwarfs speak these same words when giving their prized tools into younger hands.

On the Naming of Children

One week after the celebration of a dwarf child's first month of life, the child's family and closest friends gather for the infant's Naming. Family members are active participants in the ritual; they and other guests also act as witnesses. To begin the ritual, the parents announce to their guests the child's full Name: two given Names and a family Name. Then, beginning with the child's mother, each family member takes the child and states its Name and the relative's relationship to the infant. Each relative also describes how the child adds to the family's strength, lineage, and destiny.

Most dwarf families use ritual words similar to the following:

> *"You are [child's Name], the son of [mother's Name] and [father's Name], and thus you are my [child's relation to speaker]. You and your generation strengthen this family and its lineage as did your father before you, as did I, and as my father before me. As you build a family, so shall it add to this one."*

The first of a child's two given Names is chosen by its parents, the second by its most significant grandparent. A child most often shares its family Name with its parents, though in some cases a young dwarf shares that Name with its grandparents. A tradition especially common in the Kingdom of Throal is the Naming of a new son after his father; King Varulus III was Named for Varulus II, who in turn was Named for Varulus I.

It is interesting to note that the late King Varulus III broke this tradition by Naming his son Neden.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On How Affinity for the Earth Shapes Behavior

I have already discussed the ways in which the dwarfs' affinity for the earth determines where they dwell and in what manner they build their houses. This marked connection to the earth manifests in other behaviors as well, most strikingly in most dwarfs' pronounced aversion to riding animals or traveling by water and air. In riding a horse, traveling by boat, or traveling by airship, a dwarf can no longer feel the earth underfoot, a lack that he finds profoundly disturbing. It is as if he needs to touch the earth to be certain that it truly exists.

Some few dwarfs, however, overcome this aversion to being separated from the soil; I have known dwarfs, though not many, who follow the Disciplines of the Cavalryman, Air Sailor, and even Sky Raider. Because of their short stature, most dwarf Cavalrymen prefer sturdy ponies to full-sized horses, or else ride a kind of flightless bird known as a *huata*.

On the Importance of Language and the Law

Dwarfs have a reverence for words, both spoken and written. If a dwarf promises you something, you can be certain he will keep his word, no matter what the cost. In an interesting outgrowth of this regard for the spoken pledge, some dwarfs will go to extraordinary lengths to avoid making promises. They will hem and haw and demur for as long as possible to avoid committing themselves to a pledge they may not wish to keep.

But dwarfs revere the written word most of all. The written word is as sacred as life to them, and it seems appropriate that the dwarfs' greatest contribution to the survival of Barsaivians during the Scourge was the *Book of Tomorrow*. This volume, commissioned by King Varulus I of Throal shortly before the Scourge, began as a language primer and grew to include fables, legends, and pages upon pages of the practical information that dwarfs love to discover and set down. The book contains passages on house building, animal husbandry, gardening, various arts and crafts, and a variety of other valuable information, along with the one vital piece of magical knowledge the Therans had held back from the people of Barsaive: how to know when the Scourge was over.

On How the Throalic Tongue United Barsaive

The *Book of Tomorrow* contributed greatly to the spread of the Throalic tongue throughout Barsaive as well. The language we know as modern Throalic developed from two older, related dwarf tongues spoken in the Kingdom of Scytha and the long-vanished city-state of Ysdragyl. The languages of the two realms were quite similar, and elements of each appear in the language of Throal.

Modern Throalic first began to spread across Barsaive during the imperial period, when the dwarfs of Throal administered Barsaive for the Therans. Many criticize the dwarfs for serving the Therans, classing them as a lesser breed of oppressor; though I can understand the feeling behind such claims, I believe them unwarranted. For in their capacity as administrators, the dwarfs also mitigated the harshness of life under the Therans, particularly in the matter of so-called Theran justice. In my view, the dwarfs asked themselves (characteristically) how they might best be of use to Barsaive and concluded that working with the Therans would allow them to lighten the yoke of oppression on Barsaive's people. Therefore, they served Thera in name while serving Barsaive in fact.

Of course those feelings are unwarranted. As this learned gentleman rightly points out, we dwarfs did what we have always done; we served Barsaive as best we could.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Dwarf traders were among the few granted the freedom to travel the land under Theran rule, and they carried the dwarf language to communities all across Barsaive. The *Book of Tomorrow* completed what the traders had begun. King Varulus ordered enough copies made for almost every kaer and citadel, and during the dark centuries under the earth Throalic became not merely a language, but a symbol of all those things people no longer had—the sun, the stars, a soft wind on a warm spring night.

Learning Throalic became a way of experiencing the lost beauties and wonders of the surface world, a way of lighting the long darkness with hope for the future. And when the peoples of Barsaive emerged from the kaers, they spoke a common language for the first time in history. A common tongue gave the Namegiver races common ground.

And so when the Therans returned to Barsaive and threatened Throal with their war machines, Barsaivians united in defense of the kingdom that had given them their first sense of a common identity.

Some would say that the dwarfs served the dwarfs as best they could—as they have always done.

—Bonesnapper of Kratas

On the Development of Throalic Law

Dwarf scholars have always been numerous, and their writings cover almost every possible subject, from magic to medicine to metalworking. Dwarf literature—mostly fables and the occasional heroic saga—is also renowned. Poetry, alas, they have neglected somewhat for reasons I cannot fathom. Dwarf poets exist, but their numbers are far too few. It is a pity, for their facility with words would make them as great poets as the elves, in my humble opinion. But dwarfs are best known for their contributions to Barsaivian law.

Those of us living in these enlightened times take dwarf law and justice for granted. But in the days when the Therans ruled, justice scarcely existed for the ordinary Barsaivian. Barsaive's Theran masters fled during the dark years of the Scourge and cowered in their island home. And during those years, the dwarfs of Throal devised a legal system that banned the abomination of slavery and stated explicitly for the first time the equal worth of every living Namegiver. King Varulus I, and later King Varulus II, discoursed with countless scholars, philosophers, soldiers, craftsmen, and others almost from the date of the closure of Throal in 1050TH, preparing a set of principles to guide the Barsaive they hoped to build when the Scourge ended. The so-called *Council Compact*, recorded in its final form during Varulus II's Council of 1270TH, covers every aspect of dwarf law and justice, from the loftiest principles to how much compensation a farmer is due if his neighbor's pig tramples his young corn. When the Therans returned to Barsaive, the dwarfs and every other Namegiver of our land fought for the legal rights given to all by the Throalic law code.



Most Barsaivians know that King Varulus II produced the *Council Compact*. But few people realize that Throalic law is based largely on a legal text from Scytha that predates the Scourge by several centuries. Varulus I and his chief advisors used this text as a starting point for their discussions concerning the laws they wished to implement. To date, no complete copy of the Scythan tract has come to light. I chanced upon a fragment of a somewhat blurred copy in the Great Library of Throal, as well as copies of a few chapters written from memory by King Varulus II. These fragments are the only known remains of the original text.

Interestingly, the dwarfs' Name for themselves in the ancient tongue of Ysdragyl means "People of the Book." Most believe the Name refers to the *Book of Tomorrow*. However, an alternate Scythan translation of the Name means "People of the Law." I believe that both meanings are true, and that the book referred to is, in fact, the ancient Scythan tome.

On the Fascinating Ways of the Khavro'am

Almost every dwarf community, from the Kingdom of Throal to the smallest village, contains a few of the *khavro'am*, an ancient Scythan word loosely translated as "the learned." The name *khavro'am* is derived from the Scythan root word *khav'r*, "to read," and read they do. These men and women devote virtually every waking hour to study of some kind, poring over centuries' worth of texts and commentaries written by scholars and sages of ages past. When they tire of reading, they debate what they have read, each convinced that he or she alone understands its true meaning. Eventually, they argue themselves hoarse and resume reading into the wee hours of the morning.

The *khavro'am* favor certain items of dress, most particularly a soft, flat cap in which is sewn a piece of parchment. The parchment contains a copy, in the scholar's own hand, of several lines or a paragraph from the work the scholar considers to have most greatly influenced him. As he reads and studies more texts, he may replace his parchment with a new one taken from another text. By keeping this piece of parchment always with him, each scholar believes that the ideas on it will inspire him even when he is thinking of other things.

Usually *khavro'am* devote themselves to particular areas of interest, such as law, dwarf history, linguistics, or the working of gemstones. The *khavro'am* view their studies as an almost sacred duty, for they seek to learn the past and present so that Barsaivians may build a better future. To that end, they record all that they have learned for others to ponder. A vast number of dwarf scholars are or have been *khavro'am*, and it is said that even those who leave the ranks of the *khavro'am* never cease to learn. A popular fable among the *khavro'am*, the tale of Corby Dellock, illustrates this point.

The Tale of Corby Dellock

Corby Dellock was a learned young dwarf, so learned that he had read the whole of *Koligin's Magical Principles* and *Red Bull's Cautionary Tales* by the time he turned sixteen. He could read for hours at a time without getting tired, and he spent so many copper pieces on candles that his parents were in a sore state, wondering where they were to get money to live on. But they were proud of their Corby and never spoke a word against him.

One day, Corby leaned back in his chair to rest his eyes from reading and saw his neighbor, Turlo, plowing his field. Now Turlo was a fine-grown young dwarf, sturdy as a tree and brown as a hazelnut, with a fine singing voice and a twinkle in his eye. Turlo sang a love song as he strode back and forth behind his stout donkey, thinking of the sweetheart he was to wed in a month. The song was one Corby liked, and soon he began to sing along. But the thin, reedy sound of his voice shamed him, and he stopped singing before he'd gotten halfway through the chorus. Corby studied Turlo, then got up and looked at himself in the mirror. He looked back at Turlo, seeing his neighbor's strong back and legs and his bronzed skin as he strode along in the bright sunshine. Then he looked at his reflection and saw thin arms and legs, a bony chest, and skin as pale as new cream. It came to Corby that he was tired of reading; that he wanted to be out in the sun like Turlo. He didn't care if he never saw another book as long as he lived! And right then and there, Corby decided to give up his books and become a farmer.

Well, everything he tried went wrong, of course. He planted wisps from his mother's broom, thinking to harvest a fine crop of hay. He planted corn in the full of the moon instead of the dark. He planted cooked oats, thinking they'd come up as well as any. He planted potatoes with their eyes down, and all the shoots went straight down deep into the earth. Poor Corby began to despair, and so he went to Turlo for advice.

"Well, I don't know if it will help, but I'll show you what I do before I plant every crop," Turlo said after Corby had poured out his heart to him. And Turlo walked over to his small bookshelf, pulled out a leather-bound volume and handed it to Corby.

Corby was thunderstruck. A book held the key to farming? Stars in the sky, was he never to be free of books? Reluctantly, he read the title: *The Planter's Concise Almanac*.

"You may borrow it, if you like, though it's growing late in the season for anything but turnips," Turlo said.

Corby took the book home, put it on his study table and stared at it for a week without opening it. He kept an eager eye on his fields, hoping against hope that some crop might show. But the soil remained as bare of shoots as an eggshell is of hair. At last, Corby squared his shoulders, gritted his teeth and opened the tome.

The almanac fell open right to the page about planting turnips! Corby read every single word, and then he marched right outside and planted the pile of turnip tops his mother had saved for the hogs. And those turnips sprouted up in no time, growing faster and thicker than any other turnip crop in the village. Corby felt so proud and happy, he thought he might burst. And when his turnips won first prize in the village fair that fall, he fainted dead away and had to be revived by a dip in a brimming cask of ale.

As Corby and his mother and father sat by the fire that winter, munching on crisp turnip slices, Corby's mother asked him what crops he meant to plant come spring. "If it's all the same to you, Mother, I think I'll plant a fine crop of words," Corby said.

And he did. And to this day, dwarfs throughout the land remember Corby Dellock as the finest scholar and turnip farmer Barsaive has ever known.

Of the Traveled Scholar Discipline

Some of the *khavro'am*, and many other dwarf scholars as well, take up the Traveled Scholar Discipline. Like every other scholar, these individuals study texts and write commentaries on them, but only until they attain the First Circle of their Discipline. At that point, though they still study texts and write, they also begin to travel in order to learn of the world through experience rather than research.

A Traveled Scholar prefers to live the experiences for himself rather than simply read about them, and writes down his experiences so that others may benefit from them. In fact, Traveled Scholars pen many of the texts and journals that more traditional scholars pore over.

Once a year each Traveled Scholar returns to the Great Library of Throal to deliver his journals and other writings, and also to exchange tales of that year with any of his fellows that he may meet.

CHAPTER THREE

ON THE HISTORY OF THE ELVEN PEOPLE

The following excerpt from Volume II of Denizens of Barsaive *comes from the writings of Liandra, an elven Troubadour now dwelling in the city of Urupa, on the coast of the Aras Sea. This particular essay is unique in that its author is one of the few living Barsaivians born before the Scourge. Liandra was but a young child when he and his family took shelter from the coming of the Horrors in an underground kaer. Though many have wondered which kaer was Liandra's home for so many centuries, the Troubadour himself has said no more of it than to ask why it matters. He far more often speaks of the time before the Scourge, attempting to give people an understanding of the scope of the tragedy that the Scourge has wrought on the elves of Barsaive.*

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

As a traveler who has seen many sights and shared many stories with all manner of people, I have discovered among the Namegiver races a vast number of different and often conflicting beliefs regarding the elven people. As an elven scholar and Troubadour, I feel it my duty to share the truth of the life of an elf in Barsaive.

TO LIVE AS AN ELF SINCE THE CORRUPTION

In the wake of the Scourge, to be elven is wonder and tragedy at the same time. In wonder we behold once more the beauties of nature so long denied us, as we help the world heal itself and restore our land to its former splendor. Our tragedy lies in what we have lost, for we have become a people without a soul. The Scourge-born Corruption of the Elven Court at Wyrm Wood has destroyed the very heart of the elven race, and not an elf in Barsaive truly feels whole. The Elven Court bound us together, and its loss has left us blinded children crying in the dark. For centuries, all elves knew undying faith and trust in the guidance and wisdom of the Elven Court. Now we have lost our way and must find anew our place in the world among our fellow Namegivers.

OF THE ELVEN COURT AND ITS POWER

To fully understand the elven people, the reader must know of the Elven Court and the vital place it once held in elven lives and hearts. Unlike a kingdom such as Throal or the city-state that became the Theran Empire, the Elven Court held no temporal power.

It commanded no armies, though the Warriors who swore fealty to it defended it well from all perils. The queen and her courtiers did not govern, at least not in the Throalic sense of the word. Indeed, the Elven Court cared little for the doings of the lesser elven courts throughout the world, unless the actions of those courts came into conflict with the elven way. Only then did the Elven Court dabble in political matters, if the reigning queen deemed it wise. The Court passed no laws, enforced no peace, and certainly collected no taxes. Instead, the Elven Court served as the standard by which all the world's elven kingdoms judged how truly elven they were. From the Elven Court, the elves of the world learned how best to live.

All things good in elven life and culture took seed and grew from the Elven Court. It gave us our arts, our language, our mode of dress, our most sacred rituals, and all things that give life meaning. Even changes in our ways first began within the Court, just as the change of season that turns a green leaf golden begins within the heart of a tree. We looked to the Elven Court to understand who and what our people were. It was our model, our example, the pinnacle of elven accomplishment that all strove to reach.

ON THE CHOOSING AND REIGN OF THE QUEEN

As the Elven Court was once the heart of elven culture, so the Elven Queen was the heart of the Court. Upon the death of the previous queen, the courtiers chose a new queen from those elves within and outside the Court who best embodied the ideals and ways of the elven race. For all the centuries of her reign, each queen led her people not through temporal might or the power of coin, but by example. Her words and deeds guided and inspired the elves of all the world. From her seat upon the Rose Throne, in the Chamber of Voices in her magnificent palace where she held audience, the queen proclaimed true elven ways, and all elves followed her.

Upon her accession, each queen had a new Rose Throne crafted especially for her. No two Rose Thrones looked alike. From each to each, only the Name endured. In the years since discover-

ing the corruption of Wyrm Wood, I have wondered if the Rose Throne might not have some connection with the terrible Ritual of Thorns. It is my devout hope that this is not so; the thought of our former beauty and grandeur having anything to do with the present, twisted mockery of it chills my heart. Still, the image is there, for every rose has a thorn, does it not?

I find it hard to believe that Liandra has not heard the tales that the Rose Throne gave Queen Alachia the idea for the Ritual of Thorns. Though I have not seen Alachia's throne, others have told me that the back of it carries the carved image of an elven queen adorned with climbing roses.

—Karon Foll, Elven Scholar

As the avatar of all that is truly elven, the Elven Queen wields potent magics surpassed by none other in her realm. Many are ceremonial magics, used at the Festal Days of the Court calendar. Others protect and preserve the person of the queen. In one of the few examples of which I may freely speak, magic enables the Queen of the Elven Court to outlive her fellow rulers of the lesser courts by many years. Queen Alachia of Blood Wood was born before the Scourge, as was I. Yet the five centuries between the sealing of the kaers and this day weigh but lightly upon her.

The Calamitous Passing of Queen Dallia

For hundreds upon hundreds of years, the rule of the Elven Court passed unbroken from queen to queen. And as I have said, the queen ruled over not only the elves of the land that we now Name Barsaive, but over all the elves of the world. But time and distance make strangers of us all, and so it was between the Elven Court and the faraway realm of Shosara. In the reign of Queen Dallia, the elves of Shosara began to stray from the ways of the Court, choosing to obey the queen's edicts only when convenient. They remained loyal to her, in their way, and honored her in their hearts as a grown child honors his mother; but like such a child, they desired independence. How, they asked, could the queen fully understand life in the northern lands, when she had never seen those places?

When Queen Dallia heard that the elves of Shosara had begun to create traditions and customs not sanctioned by the Elven Court, she made preparations to visit Shosara in order to better understand the minds and hearts of her northern subjects. But alas, her compassion was to have an ill reward. No sooner had the royal caravan departed Wyrm Wood, than they were set upon by the dragon Alamaise. The dragon railed at Queen Dallia and her retinue, demanding restitution for the supposed crimes of the Elven Court. The queen tried to assuage the dragon's anger, but could not convince him of her people's innocence. In his rage, Alamaise slew Queen Dallia, leaving the Court bereft of its leader.

Though Liandra reports the dragon's murder of Queen Dallia as fact, it is only a tale that may not be true. I have heard another story of Dallia's death, much told among dwarfs, that the queen and her retinue died in a sudden storm sent by the Passions to punish them. Punish them for what, the tale does not tell.

—Karon Foll, elven Scholar



The Coming of Queen Failla

For two years, the Elven Court remained leaderless, for none among the courtiers was worthy to serve as queen. Some among the Elven Court even began to whisper that Alamaise was right, that the Court must have committed some dreadful crime for the Universe to allow such a calamity as the slaying of the queen. The faint-hearted whisperers were silenced, however, when Queen Failla of the Western Kingdoms came to Wyrm Wood to claim the throne. No other claimant could prove herself worthy to lead the Elven Court, and so Queen Failla ascended the Rose Throne amid much rejoicing.

But where Queen Dallia had shown patience toward Shosara, Queen Failla chose another course. During her reign over the Western Kingdoms, Queen Failla had kept unbroken faith with the Elven Court, obeying the Elven Queen's every whim as though the existence of the elven people depended on it. She found even the smallest glimmer of disobedience shocking, even insulting. Mere weeks after her accession, Queen Failla sent word to the leaders of Shosara that to continue with their unsanctioned ways risked retribution—perhaps even the dreaded, formal sundering known to all elves as Separation.

Of the Separation of Shosara and the First Splintering

Shosara's queen pleaded with Queen Failla for patience and compassion, and her pleas were echoed by Queen Failla's favored advisor, Elianar Messias. Messias argued that the queen would serve her Shosaran subjects best by allowing the northern kingdom to loosen the cultural shackles that bound it to the Elven Court, but Queen Failla refused to hear him. Blindly convinced of her own rightness, Queen Failla declared Shosara Separated from the Elven Court. When Messias openly opposed her action, the queen banished him from the Court for a hundred years. Messias traveled to a monastery in the Delaris Mountains, to the southwest of Wyrm Wood, where he discovered the *Books of Harrow*.

The rest of Messias' tale—the dawn of the Theran Empire and the coming of the Scourge—is one that every child of Barsaive knows, and so I will not repeat it in this text.

To readers interested in pursuing the story of Elianar Messias, the Books of Harrow, and the terrors they foretold, we recommend An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive and the writings of Jallo Redbeard. Both works are available from the Great Library of Throal.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

The Separation of Shosara and the banishment of Messias, meant to safeguard the unity of elven culture, instead marked the beginning of its splintering. Contrasting Queen Dallia's compassion with Queen Failla's hard heart, many elven kingdoms in the land that would become Barsaive began to question Failla's edicts.

Though none dared defy her openly, they questioned and wondered in secret. For the first time, a great many of the world's elves began to doubt the rightness of their queen.

The Tumultuous Reign of Alachia

Queen Liara succeeded Queen Failla and ruled the Court with the iron hand of her predecessor. Still none rebelled, for none dared risk Separation, but more and more questioned the edicts of the Elven Queen. Upon the death of Queen Liara, Queen Alachia ascended the Rose Throne, and for a time it seemed that Queen Dallia had come again. Alachia had seen the signs of dissent among the elven people, and though she would not allow independence, she clothed the iron hand of Queens Failla and Liara in a glove of velvet.

Soon after her accession, Queen Alachia took steps to make the Elven Court a shade or two more open to the desires of elves in other, faraway lands. By so doing, she made the Court's ways even more desirable to the elven people than they had been before and soothed the troubled hearts of the dissidents. Her efforts were rewarded when all the world's elven kingdoms, save for Shosara, swore new oaths of devotion to Alachia and her court.

With the passing of time, the praise that Alachia had won and the influence she wielded kindled in her great vanity, a vainglory that would have momentous and calamitous consequences for the elven people. As the Elven Court's influence over the world's elves grew stronger and its culture grew richer, Alachia came to believe that the elven people surpassed all other Namegivers. She even began to wonder if the Elven Court should rule over the lands of other races.

In truth, many elven queens have shared this belief, but only Alachia acted on it.

—Karon Foll, Elven Scholar

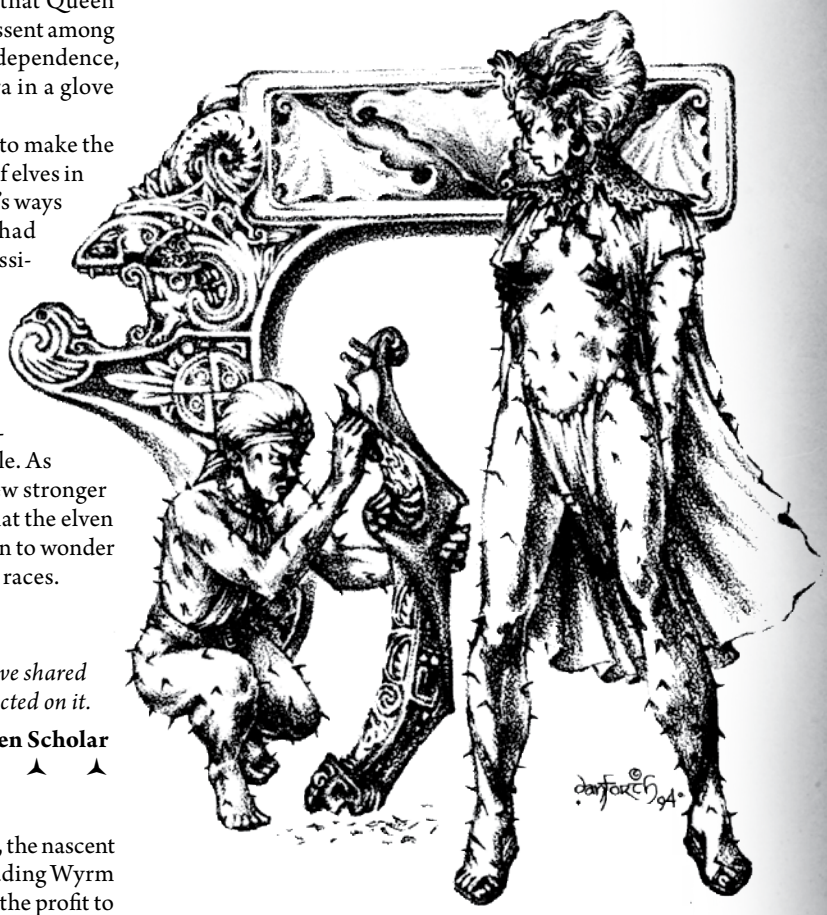
Fifty years or so after the beginning of Alachia's reign, the nascent Theran Empire began to trade with many realms, including Wyrm Wood, for the precious magical metal, orichalcum. As the profit to be had from orichalcum grew, so did the lust to possess it, and in time a troll raid on Shosaran orichalcum stores sparked the terrible battles of the Orichalcum Wars. The dwarf kingdom of Scytha and countless other nations made war against the Elven Court, which prevailed against its enemies only after great struggle. Queen Alachia, furious that any would dare attack her court, determined that her people would never submit to the rule of any other.

When the Therans used the ongoing fighting as an excuse to close their iron grip over most of the peoples of Barsaive, Alachia resolved to hold her people's sovereignty no matter what the cost. This resolve set the stage for the momentous events that scholars of history call the Elven Schism.

Of the Schism and the Scourge

Having translated the *Books of Harrow* and learned of the coming Scourge, the Therans devised the *Rites of Protection and Passage* to guard against its ravages. The Therans then sent envoys across all the lands of Barsaive, offering to share their defenses against the coming Horrors in exchange for loyalty and subservience to the Theran Empire. Most of Barsaive's kingdoms and city-states accepted the Therans' bargain, fearing the Horrors more than they feared enslavement. Queen Alachia alone steadfastly refused to accede to Theran demands. Proudly, she spurned their aid, declaring that the elven people needed no Theran magics to protect them.

When news of Alachia's action reached the other elven realms, elves outside the Elven Court faced a terrible choice: to support their queen and risk destruction, or to accept Theran protection and break with the Elven Court. In her vanity Queen Alachia believed her subjects would follow her; but most forsook her and bargained with the Therans out of sheer terror. Bereft of the loyalty of so many of her subjects, Queen Alachia was left to rule over an Elven Court much diminished in power. Her refusal to accept Theran protection from the Horrors splintered the elven people into countless separate kingdoms and provinces, each left to find its own path through the ravages of the Scourge.



Queen Alachia also chose a path; one which destroyed the Elven Court in all but Name. She chose to build a wooden kaer, hedged about with elven magics, and placed all her faith in it, despite warnings from elven scholars outside the Court that such a kaer would fail. It did, and the Court's next step along the path of survival has deprived all the elven people of their very soul. I will speak no more of the Corruption of the Elven Court itself, for all know that tale and it pains me to tell it. Instead, I shall speak of the effects of the Corruption on the elves of present-day Barsaive.

The Corruption of Wyrm Wood Revealed

During the long centuries of the Scourge, many elves outside Wyrm Wood sustained themselves with the hope of rejoining the

Elven Court at the Scourge's end. Knowing that such a traumatic event as the ravaging of the world by the Horrors would do much harm to the elven people and their ways, the world's elves hoped to aid the Elven Court in restoring the beauty and grace of elven culture. Naively, the elves believed that Queen Alachia would forget her anger against her rebellious subjects, forgiving them for a transgression born only of the need for survival. Even the most skeptical of the elves outside Wyrm Wood believed that Alachia's offended pride would be soothed by the opportunity to reclaim the role of the elven people's cultural heart.

Alas for the vain hopes of my people! The rejoining and restoration of which they dreamed has not yet, and may never, come to pass. The Horrors had left the world a scarred, twisted mockery of its former beauty, and Queen Alachia's vanity had wreaked far worse harm on herself and the Elven Court. In a misguided effort to stave off the Horrors, Alachia and her courtiers made virtual Horrors of themselves. They caused thorns to grow from within their flesh, which inflicted never-ending agony upon them. Once-beautiful Wyrm Wood became Blood Wood, a place of tainted loveliness and seductive corruption.

News of Wyrm Wood's dreadful transformation did not reach the world outside the wood for some time. Travel through Barsaive in the first years after the Scourge often proved both difficult and dangerous, and those few who reached Blood Wood often died at the hands of blood elves protecting their domain. The blood elves themselves had little interest in making contact with the outside world and so the rest of Barsaive knew little of the awful change that the Scourge had wrought. At length, those travelers who reached Blood Wood and escaped alive (or persuaded the blood elves that they meant no harm) brought word of the changed Elven Court to the dwarf kingdom of Throal. As word spread from Throal throughout Barsaive, the elves outside Blood Wood learned the bitter truth that their heart and soul was lost to them. The hopes of a reunified elven people that lay in every elf's heart and mind became yet another victim claimed by the Scourge.

What the Corruption Wrought upon the Elven Court

The Scourge and Queen Alachia's terrible choice have changed the role of the Elven Court drastically and perhaps permanently. Before the Scourge, the heart of the elven people and culture beat strongly and soundly. The Court gave a home to elven artists, musicians, craftsmen, and Troubadours from all over the world. From every elven realm, the greatest practitioners of every elven art made pilgrimage to Wyrm Wood to display their prowess, exchange tales of their endeavors, and to offer their wisdom and experience to others. And it was not only the elves who came, in those far-off glory days. The Court opened its heart and hearths to travelers of all the Namegiver races, eager to share the wonders of elven ways with all who sought to know of them.

The Court also gave birth to all rituals observed to this day by the elven people, and those who lived there practiced them with the full regality and beauty that other elves elsewhere had often laid aside. Elven families from many realms asked that the rites of birth, pronouncement, and passage take place in the Elven Court. To have this favor granted was considered among the greatest honors that an elf could receive. And, as befits the soul of a people, the Elven Court served as guardian and recorder of elven history, keeping records of significant events that occurred within every elven realm. The lesser courts and kingdoms knew only their own history and perhaps that of their nearest neighbors, but the Elven Court knew all that had befallen both the greatest and least of its subjects.

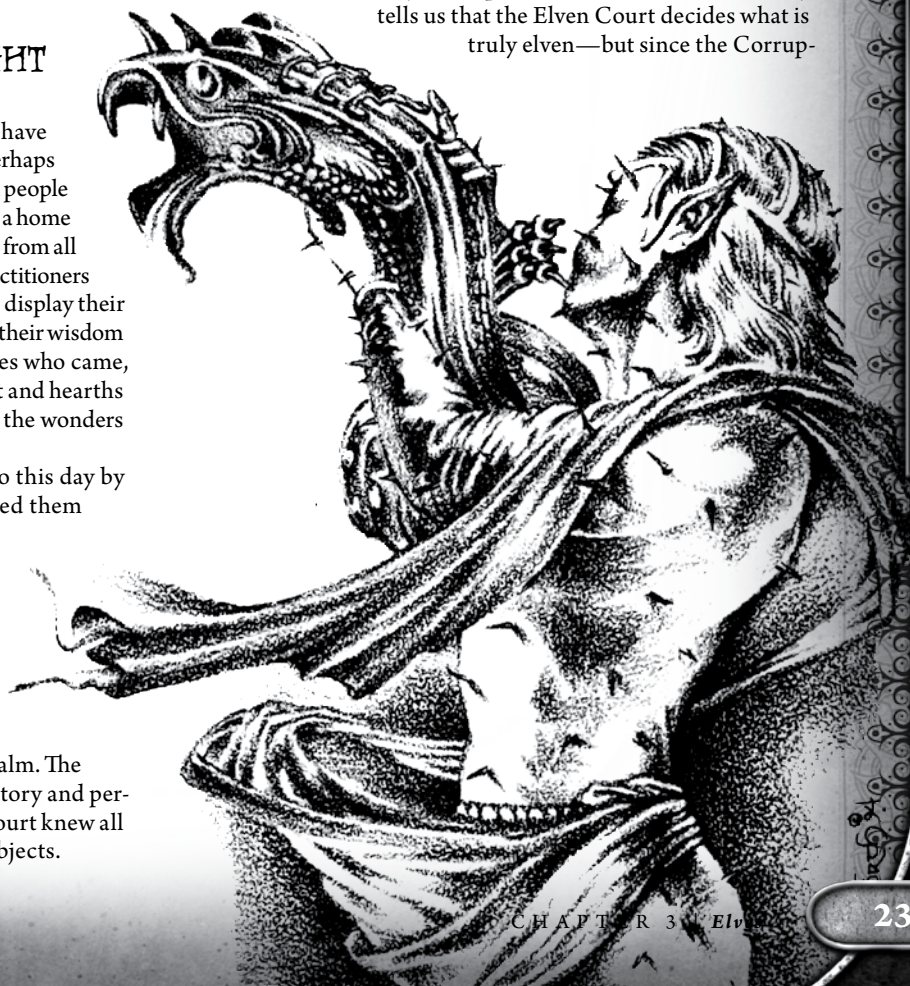
Of the Court in the Years After the Scourge

The most pronounced of the changes wrought by the Scourge lies in the physical corruption of the elves of Blood Wood. The thorns that pierce the flesh of the blood elves make the skin crawl to look upon them, marring the true elven beauty that they once possessed. My people are truly beautiful, in spirit and in flesh. The blood elves are repugnant, twisted images of true elves. Perhaps even more horrible, their bleeding thorns and constant anguish have not robbed them of their loveliness, but instead changed it from a wholesome beauty to the seductive appeal of pain. That agony can attract the heart is perhaps the most terrible truth that the blood elves' existence has revealed to the elven soul.

Just as the Ritual of Thorns marred the faces and bodies of the blood elves, so has their never-ending pain blighted the arts practiced among them. They continue to paint, sculpt, make music, dance, and use magic as elves always have, but their creations are tainted by the terrible harm they have wrought upon their inmost souls. If a blood elf paints a flowering tree, a close look at his painting shows that the trunk is decaying from the inside and the blossoms are tainted by blight, worms, or the brown stain of rot. If a blood elf sings or plays, his sweet, unearthly notes soon begin to subtly grate upon the ear. Though the sound he creates is still beautiful, it is unnatural. So it is with all the elven arts as practiced by our unwholesome brethren; they retain the outward beauty of all things elven, but at the heart of them lies rottenness. The blood elves can no longer see the loveliness of the world untainted by agony, and their twisted vision infects everything they touch.

Most of the elves of Barsaive and of elven realms throughout the world have forever forsaken the Elven Court. They no longer consider Alachia's blighted realm part of elven culture, let alone its heart. But this belief holds within it a sad paradox, for all elves secretly wish that the Court was yet whole. Though it pains any true elf to admit it, we all long for the restoration of the Elven Court.

From our earliest childhood, we are raised to revere our ways and uphold our traditions. Our history tells us that the Elven Court decides what is truly elven—but since the Corrup-



tion, no elven nation, city, or kingdom has yet taken up the Elven Court's fallen mantle. Without the Elven Court we have no heart, and yet we cannot accept its evil ways.

Ever since the Scourge, of course, Queen Alachia has insisted that her court remains the true heart of elven culture and that she remains queen of all the world's elven folk. Most elves outside Blood Wood reject these pronouncements; we believe that Alachia forsook her right to the Rose Throne the instant that the first thorn pierced her skin. Yet without our queen and court we are lost, each elf forced to seek his own light in the darkness. I and many others rightly fear such a fate and long for the day when we can once again pledge our loyalty and love to the Elven Court. Toward that end, many among us actively work toward the Court's restoration.

A Discourse on Elven Spiritual Beliefs

Elves are a deeply spiritual people whose beliefs, traditions, and culture embody their truest selves. Our solemn joy in our existence in the world makes us quiet and contemplative, and because so few other races share our depth of understanding, we find it easiest to keep our thoughts and feelings close to our hearts.

Sadly, our silence and need for privacy foster the illusion of the dispassionate, analytical, even cold-hearted and indifferent elf. In truth, we are much different than we seem. Elves bring deep feeling to all that they do, but where other races demonstrate their feelings with action, elves do so through devotion and discipline.

It is difficult to express our beliefs in a few simple paragraphs, and so I have devoted considerable space to this all-important subject. An elf begins to learn of the spiritual Paths in infancy, and his journey along them never ends.

Of the Journey and the Wheel

An elf sees all life as a journey of discovery, change, growth, and ascendancy. Throughout his life, the elf treads a metaphysical pathway represented by the *Draesis ti'Morel*, the Wheel of Life.

The Wheel contains five Paths, each corresponding to a different stage of life. As an elf ages, his journey along the Wheel leads him through each Path until he reaches the Wheel's heart. At this still center of being, he prepares for ascension into the metaplanes, to the mystical place known as *Tesrae ke'Mellakabal*, the Citadel of the Shining Ones.

Each Path represents ever-greater spiritual maturity. Though a few elves disagree, most accept the following five Paths: *Mes ti'Meraerthsa*, the Path of Warriors; *Mes ti'Telenetishsa*, the Path of Scholars; *Mes ti'Cirolletishsa*, the Path of Travelers; *Mes ti'Perritaesa*, the Path of Sages; and *Mes ti'Raeghsa*, the Path of Lords. Each Path has certain regalia and rituals associated with it that mark its Followers. I discuss these below, within the text dedicated to each Path.

On the Following of a Path

As an elf walks along the Wheel of Life, he is said to be Following one of its Paths. He Follows each Path in order, from *Mes ti'Meraerthsa* to *Mes ti'Raeghsa*. Though each Follower is meant to tread the Path of Lords before he dies, any elf who dies untimely can still find a place in the Citadel of the Shining Ones.

Elven *Eoerin*, scholars of the Paths, continue to dispute the point at which an elf ceases to Follow one Path and takes his first steps on another. Some believe that an elf steps onto the next Path upon achievement of the Eighth Circle in the Discipline that elf has chosen to represent his journey along that Path. Among holders of this view, known as *Sa'mistishsa*, or "strict Followers," an elf embarking on a new Path must take a new Discipline to represent the next stage of his journey. At this time, known as the *Chaele ti'Désach*, the Days of Change, the elf may change not only his Discipline but also his mate if he chooses. I will speak more of this latter custom in the text devoted to marriage rituals, further on in this work.

Other *Eoerin* take a less literal view of the change in Paths. They believe that because the Paths represent a journey of the spirit, the change from one to another need not have any physical manifestation. An elf may therefore Follow all the Paths within the same Discipline, remaining with the same mate (if he has one). According to holders of this view, known as *Dae'mistishsa* or free Followers, the Follower alone knows when he has stepped onto the next Path, though the transition is often marked by a significant event.

For myself, I cannot say which view is right. Each elf must choose his own belief in this matter, and all Followers respect each other's choice. One way or another, we all walk along the Wheel.

Liandra is either terribly naïve or deluding himself. Some elven communities are so strongly Sa'mistishsa *or* Dae'mistishsa *that they drive out any elf who thinks otherwise. Particularly fanatical people on either side, many of whom are questors, see the other view as outright heresy and react accordingly.*

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records





Of the Different Paths

For each of the five Paths that lead to the transformation and ascension of the elven spirit into *Tesrae ke'Mellakabal*, at least five specific associations (and sometimes six or seven) are sacred to Followers.

These associations are colors, regalia, elements, hours, age, and—among different sects of Followers—Passions and Disciplines. I will endeavor to explain each of these associations below.

On the Meaning of Colors

A Follower displays his Path in the colors of his clothes, so that others may know his Path and show him the respect due him.

On the Meaning of Regalia

Sigils, symbols, designs, jewelry, and sacred objects also show a Follower's Path. The specific regalia chosen can vary greatly from Follower to Follower.

On the Meaning of Elements

Each Path has a certain element associated with it: earth, air, fire, water, or wood. These elements and anything made of them are of great significance to the Follower of that element's Path.

On the Meaning of Hours

Certain times of day have meaning for Followers of a given Path. During these sacred hours a Follower must perform a special Path ritual, similar to an adept's Karma ritual but focused on the Follower's Path. The brief ritual, a mere ten minutes in length, reinforces the Follower's dedication to his Path.

On the Meaning of Age

The age associated with each Path serves as a guideline to the time of life at which each elf should reach a certain Path. Many reach a given Path earlier than the given age; some reach it later. Many *Dae'mistishsa* see the birthday that marks the given year as the point of transition from one Path to the next.

On the Meaning of the Passions

Some *Eoerin* and Followers, but not all, believe that a particular Passion guides the Follower in his journey along each Path. Others believe that all the Passions watch over a Follower as he journeys. Most elves believe the latter; those who hold to the former belief are called *Beletre*, the Passionate.

On the Meaning of Disciplines

At the heart of the debate between the *Sa'mistishsa* and the *Dae'mistishsa* is the question of which Discipline a Follower takes during his walk along a given Path. The *Sa'mistishsa* believe that a Follower may adhere to only one, specific Discipline for each Path, while the *Dae'mistishsa* believe that a Follower may espouse any Discipline at any time during his journey as long as that Discipline allows him to adhere to his Path's philosophical precepts. Interestingly, a few of the *Dae'mistishsa* believe that only certain Disciplines are acceptable for each Path. I have noted the Disciplines commonly accepted by *Sa'mistishsa* and certain *Dae'mistishsa* in the descriptions of each Path, below. *Mes ti'Raeghsa*, the Path of Lords, has no specific Discipline associated with it. The Follower of this Path advances in all areas, broadening his knowledge until he is ready to ascend to the metaplanes.

Mes ti'Meraerthsa

The colors of the Path of Warriors are dark earth shades such as black, brown, gray, or deep red. Followers of this path wear regalia that often include clothing cut along sharp lines, embroidery or jewelry designs with hard edges and angles, and swords or other



weapons. The element of this Path is earth, and its hour is midnight. Each Follower begins with this Path, and may walk it at any time between his coming of age and his sixtieth year. Some elves believe that the Path of Warriors belongs to Thystonius, Passion of Valor and Conflict. The *Sa'mistishsa* associate the Warrior Discipline with this Path, and many *Dae'mistishsa* also recognize the Disciplines of the Beastmaster and the Thief.

The Warrior's Path tests an elf's physical strength and abilities. While following this Path, each elf discovers the limits of his body. Emotions rule over reason, and instinct reigns over intellect. As the Follower walks this Path, he learns of the wonders and dangers of the world. He has little time for philosophy and debate, acting and reacting too swiftly for thought.

Mes ti'Telenetishsa

The colors of the Path of Scholars are bright, rich shades of red and yellow. Favored regalia include rich embroidery, textured artworks, and symbols of fire, the sun, and the like. The element of this Path is fire, and its hour is midday. An elf begins to Follow this Path between the ages of 60 and 120. Some elves believe that Floranuus, Passion of Revelry, Energy, Victory, and Motion, guides their steps on this Path. Its Disciplines include the Elementalist (according to the *Sa'mistishsa*) and the Archer, Cavalryman, and Swordmaster (according to certain Dae'mistishsa).

The Follower who walks this Path begins to explore his inner nature. The Scholar's Path is not a call to introspection, but rather an exploration of the reasons behind action. The Follower of this Path examines purposes, defines motives, and reveals intent. Though he still acts in the physical world, he acts with deliberation and purpose. Along this Path, the Follower begins to perceive much of the inner workings of the world and of his own, inner self.

Mes ti'Cirolletishsa

The colors of the Path of Travelers are light shades of the sky and seas, especially blues, whites, and greens. Favored regalia include dramatic, flamboyant artworks and designs, musical and writing instruments, and the like. The element of this Path is air, and its hour is the sunrise. An elf commonly walks this Path between the ages of 120 and 180. Many elves believe that Astendar, Passion of Love, Art, and Music, watches over this Path. Its Disciplines include the Troubadour (accepted by the *Sa'mistishsa*) and the Illusionist and Weaponsmith (accepted by certain Dae'mistishsa).

The Follower who walks this Path moves from the inward soul to the outward world. Where in the *Mes ti'Telenetishsa* the Follower explored the inner relationship between thought and action, along the Traveler's Path the Follower discovers the relationships between actions or between expression and inspiration. As he walks this Path, he begins to touch upon the deeper patterns that link all things in the Universe. Many Followers of the *Mes ti'Cirolletishsa* find themselves near centers of power or deeply involved in adventure. In places of power and peril, the Follower can see many connections in the physical world through tales, song, and legends.

Mes ti'Perritaesa

The colors of the Path of Sages are rich and deep, such as dark blues and reds, gold, and black. Favored regalia include symbolic, abstract works of art, especially those that incorporate detailed designs and mystical symbols. The element of this Path is water, and its hour is sunset. An elf commonly Follows this Path between the ages of 180 and 240. Some elves believe that Jaspree, Passion of Growth, Care of the Land, and Love of the Wilderness, guides Followers of this Path. The accepted Discipline among the *Sa'mistishsa* is the Wizard; some *Dae'mistishsa* also accept the Discipline of the Nethermancer.

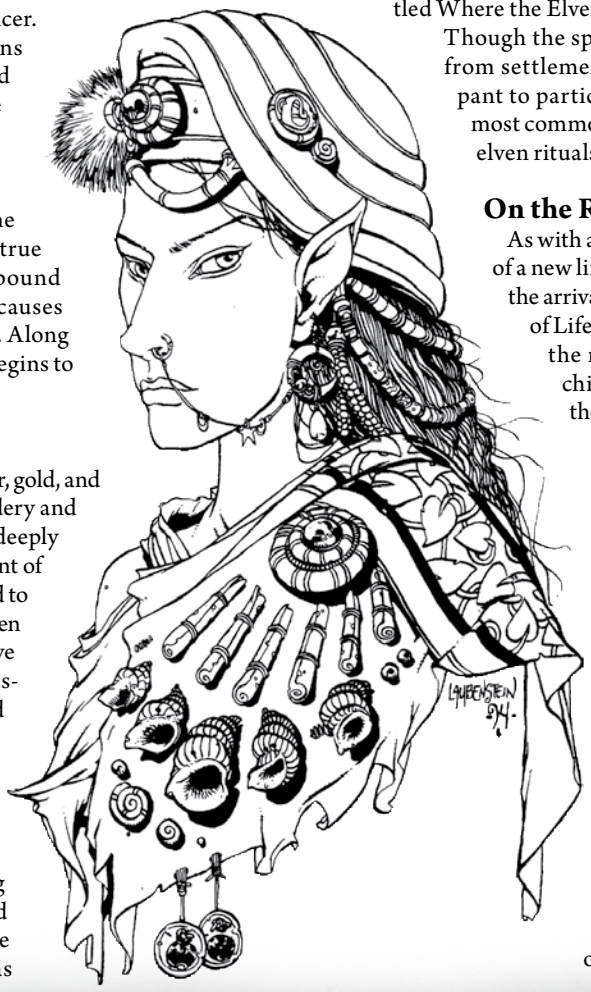
The Follower of the Sage's Path turns inward once more, finding the inner world far more complex than the outer one. The Follower begins to explore the inner connections between all things, seeing patterns and defining truths once hidden from him. The cycles of nature become clear, and he begins to understand the true workings of the world. Revelations abound as the Follower perceives the hidden causes behind seemingly unconnected events. Along this Path, the elven spirit emerges and begins to move toward the Center.

Mes ti'Raeghsa

The colors of the Path of Lords are silver, gold, and bronze. Favored regalia include embroidery and artwork of simple designs that include deeply significant personal symbols. The element of this Path is wood, and all hours are sacred to it. An elf commonly treads this Path between the ages of 240 and 300. Some elves believe that this Path belongs to Mynbruje, Passion of Justice, Compassion, Empathy, and Truth. All elves, whether *Sa'mistishsa* or Dae'mistishsa, accept all Disciplines as associated with this Path.

The Follower of the Path of Lords achieves true harmony, bringing the body into balance with the mind. Having achieved mastery of himself and the world he inhabits, all the world's mysteries are the Follower's to ponder and control as he seeks the final balance of self and spirit. Once he has achieved this balance, the gates to the metaplanes will open, so that he may make the final journey to *Tesrae ke'Mellakabal*.

Mes ti'Raeghsa is a Path of great calm, but also of great power. The Follower uses all that he has learned to prepare himself for entrance to the Citadel of the Shining Ones. No one knows when the gates to *Tesrae ke'Mellakabal* will open for him, so the Follower must always be ready.



For an elf as well acquainted with the ways of other races as Liandra seems to be, I find it interesting that he takes every detail of elven spirituality as objective fact rather than a subjective way of explaining the elves' place in the world. He writes as though elven spiritual beliefs are "true," and everyone else's are by implication less true. Have Liandra's writings about this subject had another hand in them, perhaps?

—Jerriv Forrim

Of Elven Rituals

Rituals mean much to the spiritual life of an elf. Performed at such pivotal moments in life's journey as birth, Naming, coming of age, marriage, death, and many other occasions, most of these rituals involve magic. Because most elves prefer to share their deepest mysteries and most sacred traditions only with their racial kindred, few rituals are performed in racially mixed villages and towns. Instead, the participants often travel to an elven settlement, to be among their kin in the heart of nature. (I will speak more of elven settlements further on in this text, in the section entitled Where the Elves of Barsaive Dwell.)

Though the specific details of many rituals vary from settlement to settlement and from participant to participant, I have described below the most common variations of the most significant elven rituals.

On the Rites Surrounding Birth

As with all Namegivers, elves value the birth of a new life beyond all other things. To an elf, the arrival of a new Follower along the Wheel of Life is cause for great celebration. From the moment of quickening, when the child first moves in its mother's womb, the expectant mother is showered with gifts and loving attention by all her kindred—indeed, by every member of the settlement, if she dwells in one. The sacred rites of birth, however, do not begin until the tenth month of the woman's confinement.

In the final month before the expected birth of the child, the closest kinswoman of the mother-to-be comes to live under her roof. This kinswoman, called the *dresner*, or "assistant," aids the expectant mother and fulfills most of her duties in the household. If an expectant mother has no close kinswoman, a dear female friend may act as *dresner*. At the time of birth, the *dresner* and the midwife

help the expectant mother walk to the birthing room. Once the door to the birthing room is shut, none but these three women may enter it until the child is born. To assure the special blessing of the Passion Garlen upon the newborn babe, the midwife clothes herself in the sigils of the gracious Mother Who Cares for All.

While the mother, her *dresner*, and the midwife labor to bring the child into the world, relatives and friends begin the ritual known as *Ar'laana*, or "the Wait." As early as a full week before the birth, these favored ones gather in the expectant family's home or a house nearby and pass the time telling tales and singing songs of the awaited child's ancestors. They also invent fanciful stories of the child's future exploits. To represent the child's first steps along the *Draesis ti'Morel*, every elf present during the *Ar'laana* adds some ornament or stitchery to a pair of boots crafted for the coming infant.

Once the child is born, the midwife takes it to its father. Whether presented with the child during day or night, sunlight or storm, the father carries his infant son or daughter out of doors and shows the new youngling the sky. As he holds the child up to the elements, the father announces the birth of a new Follower to the world.

On the Rite of Pronouncement

Each elven child is Named within three days of its birth, in the ritual known to elves as the Rite of Pronouncement. In my childhood, before the Scourge, Naming did not take place for twenty-one days in order to give the parents time to choose the child's Name well. The deprivations of life in the kaers, however, led us to shorten the time lest too many children die un-Named.

The child's parents choose three witnesses for the Rite of Pronouncement. Though all elves in the community may watch the proceedings, the witnesses play a special role. They bear witness to the child's Naming and also swear to care for and safeguard the child whenever its parents cannot. This responsibility lasts until the child takes part in the Ritual of Passage, which marks his transformation from child to adult.

The parents spend much of the three days between birth and Naming in seclusion, meditating on their hopes and dreams for the newborn babe and keeping their love for it uppermost in their thoughts. In this way, the parents ensure the choice of the right Name for the child, a Name that often represents some aspect of the infant's lineage. Once the Name is chosen, the parents bring the child to a place in the settlement that holds some significance for them. The witnesses and other attendees follow; when all are gathered, the parents pronounce the Name of the child to the witnesses. Each witness in turn then speaks the child's Name and pledges to protect the child until the time of his Ritual of Passage. After this swearing of vows, the child's mother produces a small piece of fruit, either plucked from a nearby tree or brought with her to the Naming place. This fruit, called the *masa'e*, or "birth seed," is shared by parents, witnesses and child, with one bite for each. The sharing of the *masa'e* symbolizes the new life now shared between the ritual's participants.

On the Ritual of Passage

When an elf reaches the age of twenty years, he enacts the Ritual of Passage. Upon completion of this ritual, the newly adult elf takes complete responsibility for his own life's journey along the Paths of the Wheel. If he wishes, he may seek a mate, though few elves do so early in adult life. Indeed, many elves leave home soon after the Ritual of Passage, intending to help heal the world of the devastation left by the Scourge.

The Ritual of Passage takes place in two stages, with the first stage beginning seven days before the elf's twentieth birthday. From dawn until dusk on that day, the elf fasts, drinking water or a little wine if he desires, but partaking of nothing else. At dusk the elf goes



out into the woods to sleep, and before slumber overtakes him he turns his thoughts to what he wishes to make of his life. Throughout the night, the elf dreams of his future. He returns to his home with the dawn and begins to make some item that represents his dreams. An elf who dreamed of becoming a healer might make a medicine pouch, an adventurer might make a weapon, and so on. Whatever the item, the elf must finish it by sunrise on his birthday. As he works, the elf thinks of his vision and discovers within himself his new, adult Name.

On the elf's twentieth birthday, the second stage of the Ritual of Passage takes place. The elf, his parents, and the witnesses from the elf's Rite of Pronouncement travel to a secluded place deep within the forest. The elf speaks in turn to each of the witnesses and to his father and mother, thanking them for the love and guidance they gave him throughout his childhood. Before them all, he declares himself an adult no longer in need of protection and tells them his new Name. Each of them speaks the elf's new Name, thereby welcoming him formally into the adult community.

In many elven settlements, the fasting day and the night of dreaming in the forest is combined with a challenge or test of courage. If the elf fails such a test, he must wait a year and a day before beginning his Ritual of Passage again. These ritual challenges are especially difficult because no elf who faces them has received any training as an adept; the changing of his Name between childhood and adulthood would cost him anything he had gained in such training before reaching adulthood.

On the Two Rituals of Marriage

Though marriage rites among elves remain strikingly similar from settlement to settlement, the ways surrounding them differ considerably between the *Sa'mistishsa* and the Dae'mistishsa. Among the former, an elf may change his mate at the same time that he changes his Path and his Discipline; among the latter, the choice of a mate lasts for a lifetime.



Whether *Sa'mistishsa* or Dae'mistishsa, an elf wishing to marry must first court the mate of his choice. Courtship takes many forms; an elf may compose songs or poems praising the object of his love, or may fashion a special jewel for the loved one to wear. Often, a simple flower can become a token of undying affection (I speak more of this below, in the section entitled The Custom of the Flower of Desire). If the courting elf finds his affection returned, he must then seek permission to marry from the loved one's parents or guardians. In almost all cases, permission is freely granted, and the two families to be joined begin the preparations for the wedding feast.

In the marriage rite, the young couple pledge their love and fidelity to each other before their parents or guardians. In most elven communities, the vows take the form of a song, with the man and the woman writing alternating verses. The wedded pair wear garments of leaves and flowers sewn together, with crowns of roses upon their heads. Once they have sung their vows, the woman takes a rose from her crown and gives it to her newly made husband. He in turn takes a blossom from his crown and gives it to his wife. The exchange of flowers seals the marriage contract, and the newly united families give the word for the feasting to begin. All members of the elven settlement are invited to the feast, which can last for one day or several, and which includes ballads sung and tales told in the newly married couple's honor. At the first breaking of bread, husband and wife weave the stems of their marriage roses together. They will preserve the twined flowers until one of the couple dies, or until one reaches the *Chaele ti'Désach* and chooses to end the marriage.

The *Sa'mistishsa* believe that the ending of one Path and the beginning of the next must be made manifest through great change in all areas of life. During the *Chaele ti'Désach*, elves who have married go into seclusion together to determine whether or not their lives are changing in complementary directions. If both partners agree that they are, they remain married until the next *Chaele ti'Désach*. If one or both of the pair discovers that their Path change requires a new mate (or no mate), the two engage in the ritual known as *Ke Seorach*, the Sundering.

All members of the settlement must witness this ritual, which is held at the site of the couple's wedding. Before the rite, the elf who is changing Paths chooses an Oathtaker from among his family, guardians, or friends. The Oathtaker must be Following the Path that the changing elf is about to tread. When all have gathered for the Sundering, the married couple stand before the Oathtaker. Each declares their intention to end their marriage and the reasons for it, and then together they hand the twined marriage roses to the Oathtaker. The Oathtaker gently separates the roses, handing one to the husband and one to the wife. The couple then throw down their roses and grind them to powder under their heels. This act symbolizes the Sundering, and from that moment the married pair are no longer husband and wife.

Among the Dae'mistishsa, the Sundering is regarded as an unfortunate holdover from less enlightened times at best, and as a deep disgrace at worst. Because *Dae'mistishsa* elves mate for life, many choose not to marry until at least the last few years of their first century. Though such late marriage may sound strange or even unnatural to other, less long-lived Namegivers, the reader must understand that marriage for an elf does not mean what it means for so many other races. For humans, t'skrang, windlings, dwarfs, and so on, marriage often means siring and bearing children as well as providing companionship. For elves, this is not so. An elven marriage exists for the purpose of providing companionship of the heart and soul as well as the body, and the begetting of children can just as well occur without marriage as with it.

In a human family, for example, a child whose mother is not married to its father can be said to have no father because the man who sired the child does not necessarily help to raise it. Among elves, anyone who begets a child helps to raise that child, whether married to the child's mother or not. We elves call the tie between unmarried parents the *niach mawr*, or the "child bond." Though *niach mawryn* often regard each other with friendship and affection, they are not soul-mates in the way that a married couple are, and may freely and easily break their bond when their child is grown to legal age. The *niach mawr* is particularly important among the Dae'mistishsa, whose members frequently choose not to marry until they are past childbearing.

The Custom of the Flower of Desire

When an elf desires another elf of his acquaintance, the suitor customarily shows that desire by wearing a single flower pinned to the clothing or tucked into the hair. He wears the flower until it withers, or until the object of desire responds to it in some way. By custom, each of those who know the wearer of the flower must determine if he is the desired one. The wearer of the flower need not state his preference; indeed, this custom works particularly well for elves who feel a certain delicacy about approaching the objects of their affections.

Persistent suitors frequently replace the flower with a new blossom once it has wilted; if the suitor leaves the withered flower in place, that act indicates a love that goes beyond desire.

The reader should note that sexual contact between elves is common, with or without the bonds of marriage or family. In some settlements, such displays of physical desire even take place before an elf goes through his Ritual of Passage. The elves tend to regard such fleeting relationships as learning experiences, though they do frown on those who take too many liberties with others' affections.

—Thom Edrull

On Rituals Associated With Death

Where many races regard death as a tragedy to be spoken of only when necessary, elves believe that the spirit of a fallen elf lives on in the memories and deeds of his loved ones. For this reason, elves speak often and with joy of their dead brethren, because only through such speech can the fallen live on in spirit. Though elves do see sadness in death, the sorrow is for the living, who will miss the physical presence of the loved one who has gone before. It is a gentle grief and carries no fear of death with it.

At the death of an elf, his loved ones perform the Ritual of Everlife. Many aged elves anticipate their deaths and spread word of their impending demise so that their families and friends may more easily prepare for the ritual. Because the Ritual of Everlife must include all those close to the deceased, this ritual often includes those not elven among its number. The Ritual of Everlife is the only elven ritual to do so.

The ritual takes place at midnight, in a place far from any habitation. Each participant holds a single darkened source of light: a candle, a torch, or a light quartz crystal. Beginning with the mate of the deceased or his closest living relative, each participant shares a favorite memory of the departed. As each speaks, he lights his candle, torch, or crystal. The mate or chosen relative steps into the center of the softly glowing ring of light and speaks of the tales of the deceased that he will share with others, and which heirlooms the deceased has chosen to pass on to descendants. Once the mate or relative has finished speaking, all extinguish their lights as they speak aloud the deceased's Name in unison. In the renewed darkness, all participants leave the ritual site, none speaking a word to another.

An elf will always choose to die out of doors, within the bosom of nature. Should an elf fail to receive the Ritual of Everlife after his death, he still lives in spirit as long as even one person lives who remembers him in thought, word, or deed.

The Gift of the Ancestral Item

When an aging elf senses the approach of his death, he customarily makes a gift of one of his pattern items to someone in the youngest generation of his family. This gifting symbolizes the faith that the older generations place in the youngest: that the young will uphold elven traditions and customs. A young elf who receives such a gift regards it as a precious heirloom. To lose it, or worse, to cast it aside, is a fearsome omen of calamity.

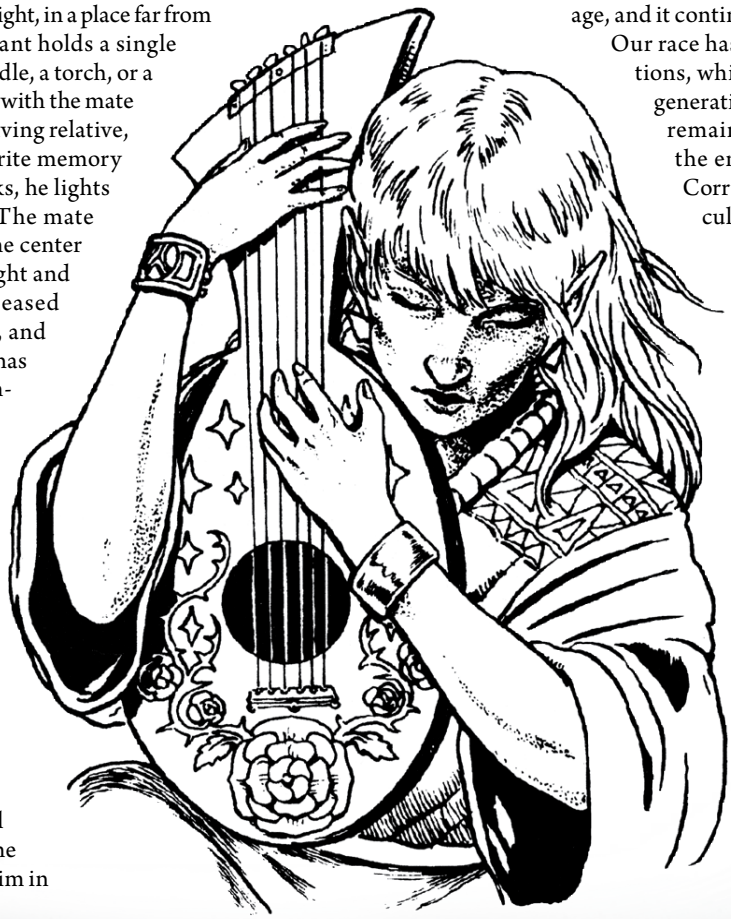
Creating New Life from Death

In the years since our emergence from the kaers, the custom of creating new life from death has sprung up among many elven settlements. When an elf loses a good friend, he plants the seed of a tree in that friend's Name. Once he has done so, he must return in a year and a day to see if the seed has sprouted. If it has not, the elf must plant another tree. Once the tree begins to grow, the planter Names it after his departed friend. Though it is not required that he return again to the tree, it is customary that the elf continue to watch over his living memorial. To my knowledge, no elf has engaged in this custom for a family member, nor has it ever replaced the Ritual of Everlife.

Of the Elven Arts and Crafts

Unlike many other Namegiver races, elves nurture and perpetuate their arts and traditions from generation to generation. From his earliest days, each elven child learns of the arts of his people. He learns to paint, sculpt, dance, and sing even as he learns to walk and speak. This immersion in the elven arts ensures that each elven child keeps his people's traditions and heritage foremost in his thoughts from an early age, and it continues throughout each elf's life.

Our race has an ancient history and traditions, which we must hand down to all generations. Only by so doing can we remain a people. In the years since the ending of the Scourge and the Corruption of the Elven Court, this cultural preservation has become even more vital to our spiritual survival.



In truth, most races teach their children of their traditions at an early age. Dwarfs certainly do.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Elven parents sire few children, but our long lives allow us to share our history, traditions, and culture with each succeeding generation firsthand in a way that other Namegivers cannot. I, for example, am the father of one child, who is the mother of one,



who in turn is father to one more, and so on. I am the eldest of five generations within my family and have shared my knowledge of elven traditions with my daughter, my grandson, and with each generation born since. My daughter has taught what she knows of elven culture to her son, who has taught it to his son, and so on.

Without *reth'im*, elves are no different from any other Namegivers. Unfortunately, the centuries spent underground and the Corruption of the Elven Court have harmed our culture and traditions. Because so much of our culture has its wellspring in the beauties of nature, many traditions could not be observed within the shelters. Now that our long imprisonment under the earth has ended, each elf devotes his life to restoring and re-creating our lost elven ways, as well as preserving those traditions and arts that have survived.



Reth'im *is the Sperethiel word for elven culture. Translated into Throalic, the word means "to be elven." Liandra's view of* reth'im *is shared by all elves of my acquaintance, and they are many.*

—Karon Foll, Elven Scholar

We elves consider ourselves the truest children of nature, and so we attempt to emulate its beauty and majesty in everything that we create. In the elven view, all the world's wonders exist in harmony and balance. Each work of art we create, each song we compose, and each legend or tale we share reflects this balance and in some way connects to all the other arts and crafts that we practice. As an example, an elven Weaponsmith does not simply forge a sword that balances well, fits easily in the hand and kills swiftly when it must. An elven sword is all of those things, but it is also a sculpture of surpassing beauty. In it, art and craft meet and become one.

Of Diverse Elven Arts

The expression of the soul through various arts is a part of each elf's life from birth. This lifelong artistic training has given elven art a deserved reputation for unsurpassed beauty throughout Barsaive and the world. Because elven artistic endeavor takes so many forms, in the interests of brevity I have confined my text to observations on the most significant of the elven arts.

On the Noble Art of Painting

Elven painters tend to use a wide palette of colors, from sapphire blues and forest greens to fire-bright yellows and reds. The most common subjects of elven paintings are the many complex and beautiful forms of nature, and portraits of those who have achieved distinction among our people. Natural subjects include such beauties as a running stream or brook, the leafy canopy of the highest trees in a forest or jungle, an open field caressed by the sun, and so on. These subjects sound simple, but in truth they are not. The elven artist chooses them in order to test his artistic skill against the inherent difficulty of accurately portraying the full beauty of such "simple" wonders.

As for elven portraits, these paintings bring out the inward soul of the subject as well as depicting outward features. In the days before the Scourge, elven artists considered it an honor beyond price to be allowed to paint the portrait of the Elven Queen. As with many other aspects of elven culture, the Scourge and its aftermath have touched the art of painting. In many purely elven settlements, elven artists portraying the Horrors or the Corruption choose not to depict such dreadful subjects realistically, but instead to create images that symbolize them. Instead of painting a Horror's true appearance, such artists use certain colors, particularly dark grays and mottled browns and blacks, to represent the Horrors.

Some artists portray a corrupted soul by giving such a subject a deeper shadow than other figures in the painting, or no shadow at all. A variant of this symbolic style has begun to appear in elven music, which I discuss below.

On the Creation of Sculpture

Most elven sculptors prefer to work with wood, as this abundant element is dearest to our hearts. On occasion, an elf sculpts with stone or even gems, and in some particularly elaborate pieces, even uses bronze or copper.

Elven sculpture most often symbolizes elven spiritual beliefs; the Passions and their symbols are frequent subjects, as are aspects of spiritual Paths unique to the elven race. Intricate, complex designs, frequently calling to mind some aspect of the natural world, are a hallmark of the elven sculptor's art. Only the windlings come near to matching the quality of elven work in this regard, using their smaller hands and fingers to great effect.

On the Creation of Tapestries

Elven embroidery, a popular method of decorating clothing, reaches its most noble expression in the making of vast tapestries that depict battles, legends, and tales.

A famed example of this unique art, a finely stitched brocade hanging that depicts the grandeur of the Elven Court during the reign of the much-beloved Queen Dallia, is said to lie within Alachia's palace in Blood Wood. Queen Failla ordered the tapestry removed after the Separation of the realm of Shosara, and legend

has it that Queen Failla ordered it burned. Most reputable scholars, however, insist that Alachia keeps the tapestry hidden within her private chambers.

On the Beauty of Elven Music

Of all the elven arts, elven music is best known throughout Barsaive for its unmatched loveliness and lyricism. The sweet sound of an elven air can calm even a frenzied troll or ork, and the royal musicians of the Kingdom of Throal love to play elven chamber music above all other types. It is said by many, and not only by elves, that the beauty and emotion of elven music makes even the Passion Astendar weep for joy at hearing it.

The elves gave all Namegivers both the bardic tradition and the means for writing music, and many elves say that Astendar first gave these arts to us. An elven composition, whether sung or simply played, is marked by sweeping melodies and rich, resonant harmonies. Because elven songs cover a wide vocal range, it takes considerable talent to sing one. Fulfilling the elven ideal of balance, the multiple harmonic lines common to elven compositions weave around and support the melodies at heights and depths beyond the ability of even elven ears to detect.

Among the many innovations that elven composers have produced is the combination of as many as ten or more different instruments rather than the combination of one or two instruments and a voice that is common to most races. Elven composers customarily combine five to ten instruments, producing a palette of sound which the composer uses much as a painter uses his color. Another innovation, one that owes its beginning to the ravages of the Scourge, is a symbolic style of composing that much resembles the similar style used in painting. In compositions inspired by events since the Corruption of Wyrm Wood, composers have begun to use certain themes or motifs to represent specific individuals, forces, or occurrences. Many musicians represent the Horrors, for example, with low-pitched instruments, somber melodies, and dissonant chords.

As well as composing melodies of heartbreaking beauty, the elven people create the most beautiful songs heard in all of Barsaive. Most elven songs speak of the glories of nature and of elven spiritual beliefs. So beautiful and finely wrought are the lyrics of these songs that even when translated from *Sperethiel* into less exalted tongues, they lose only a little of their loveliness and purity.



Despite Liandra's overblown opinion of elven music, other races do create tunes worth listening to. Give me a good troll song any day—or better yet, a windling history song. No elf can match the sheer gorgeousness of the windlings' wing-hum!

—Chag Skat, Troll Troubadour



Of the Close Relation Between Music and Poetry

All elven lyrics take the form of verse, of course, and much of elven poetry is set to music. Where the two arts differ most is in length. Most lyrics are shorter than poems, and lyrics often contain repeated refrains. True poetry, by contrast, rarely contains repeated verses and is often several verses longer than most songs. Of course, exceptions do exist to these rules. The ballad of the Knights of the Crimson Spire takes several hours to sing in its entirety, whereas the poem of the healing of Blood Wood that most elves speak before breaking bread is a mere twelve lines in length.

In most elven poetry, each verse conveys a single idea, emotion or thought. Needless to say, poems pertaining to sweeping events or complex subjects need many verses in order to fully convey the poet's intent to the reader.

On the Most Noble Art of Dance

Elven dance is a wonder to behold, one of the most graceful and elegant spectacles that one can be privileged to witness. Many dances created by elves combine movement with music and illusion magic to create flowing, ever-moving pictures of hypnotic beauty. Of all the Namegiver races, only windlings come close to matching elven dancers for intricacy and grace of movement, and even then only because their wings allow them to move in ways that we elves cannot.

In many elven settlements, dancers use their art to tell stories and legends, much as the windlings do. Such artists combine dance, lyrics, and music to tell epic tales of elven legend and history. I had the privilege of watching many such epic tellings during my years in the kaer, and these exhilarating, emotional performances did much to keep the lights of elven hearts burning in those dark days. In the years since our emergence from the kaers, such remembrances of our glorious past have become even more vital as a lifeline to pure, untainted elven culture.

On the Arts Magical

Magic permeates the arts as much as it does every other aspect of elven life. Though not all elves become adepts or magicians, all learn magical skills during the course of their lives, and almost all use such skills in their chosen art forms. Dancers and some gifted Songsmiths, for example, create fantastic magical illusions during performances of their works. I know of several painters who use magic to make images or figures in their paintings move. In yet another example, many elven magicians embroider powerful magical sigils on their robes. Magic is also an art form in its own right, frequently used by so-called "minor" adepts in map reading and navigation, farming, and other tasks often considered not magical among other Namegivers.

In the years since the Corruption of Wyrm Wood, many untainted elves have avoided the use of blood magic, at least partly because of rumors that the Ritual of the Thorns was a blood-magic rite. Many elven settlements regard blood magic as so unsafe and repugnant that they forbid its use. Others allow it, but only under specific, limited circumstances.

A Discourse on Crafts

The distinction commonly drawn between arts and crafts means less to elves than to any other race, because elven craftsmen create their wares with an eye to beauty as well as function. Just as elven swordsmiths forge swords worthy of display in a royal audience hall, so do all elven crafts from armor to clothing to pottery exhibit uncommon beauty as well as cunning workmanship. I describe a mere handful of famous elven crafts below.

On the Glories of Elven Architecture

Many races prefer to beautify the insides of their homes rather than brightening a drab or plain exterior, but elves prefer beauty in all things. Elegant and practical, elven dwellings and other structures are often decorated with elaborate carvings and sculptures built into the walls and roof. Prominent elven buildings, such as the homes of those who govern cities and towns, are so elaborate as to rival the finest Theran architecture and design. In many elven settlements, of course, the ornamentation on the facades of buildings so closely mimics natural forms that only the eye of an elf can truly see it. The Queen's Palace in Blood Wood remains perhaps the finest example of this "naturalistic" style of building. The palace is supported by eight enormous trees, and its walls and roof are woven of branches, vines, leaves, and the shimmering petals of violets and white roses.

On the Forging of Weapons and Armor

An elven craftsman makes each of his weapons and armor a work of art, but every decoration and ornament adds to the weapon's or armor's strength and resilience. Elven armor and weapons represent the ideal balance between beauty of form and efficiency of function.

Much of the decoration on elven arms and armor consists of runes in *Sperethiel* etched into the item's surface. From the time of the Scourge onward, as the dwarfs' Throalic tongue gained prominence among all the peoples of Barsaive, elven Weaponsmiths have combined the *Sperethiel* runes with Throalic symbols and icons.

On the Making of Clothing

Like all things of elven make, elven clothing is exquisite in both appearance and workmanship, whether simple or elaborate in pattern or design. In the dying of cloth, elven clothiers use as wide a range of beautiful hues as does an elven painter. The beauty of these colors requires a cloth fine enough to be worthy of them, and elven clothiers weave a fabric of a quality that no other weavers can match. Indeed, the cloth known as elfweave feels as soft as the petals of a flower or the kiss of a cloud and retains its luster far longer than any other cloth made in Barsaive.

Each garment made of such cloth is cut with an eye to beauty, hiding all flaws and bringing out the hidden loveliness of the wearer's body or coloring. (To those orks and dwarfs who claim that an elfweave robe never looks quite right on them, I can only say that some flaws are beyond the ability of even an elven clothier to hide.) Many elven garments are embroidered with intricate designs, using every color of thread imaginable. Some thread even resembles tiny bands of metal and gemstones. The combination of beautifully wrought stitchery, elegant cut, and finely woven and dyed fabric has made elfweave garments much desired among all the civilized folk of Barsaive.

On the Unique Beauty of the Elven Language

The elven language, called *Sperethiel*, is as beautiful to hear as the most melodious elven song. Its beauty lies not only in the grace of its sounds, but also in its complexity. Any truly devoted student of languages must surely admire the elegance of *Sperethiel's* intricate construction, especially when compared to the common and somewhat clumsy Throalic tongue. From his earliest days, every elven child learns to speak *Sperethiel*, just as he learns to paint, sculpt, dance, make music, and make magic. Though *Sperethiel* graces the ear in whatever form it is spoken, the language is expressed most beautifully in song, where its flowing sounds combine with sweet melodies and harmonies to create the loveliest songs in Barsaive.

Though almost all elves can speak *Sperethiel* fluently, alarmingly few can write it fluently. The reason for this loss seems foolish—indeed, it arose from a problem so insignificant that no one foresaw it. A simple shortage of parchment on which to write and practice the intricate *Sperethiel* runes came near to costing us a significant part of our culture! When we built the kaers to escape the Horrors, each kaer had only so much space for storage, and foodstuffs were judged more vital than writing tools. But without those tools, succeeding generations of elves could not learn to write the tongue of their people. In the years since our emergence into the light, elven scholars have made every effort to revive our written language and have met with some success. Many true elves consider it a sad circumstance that written *Sperethiel* is preserved in its purest form in the Elven Court, whose tainted inhabitants speak and write only the elven tongue. This state of affairs so perturbs many inhabitants of elven settlements that they have made a serious effort to re-learn our ancient language.

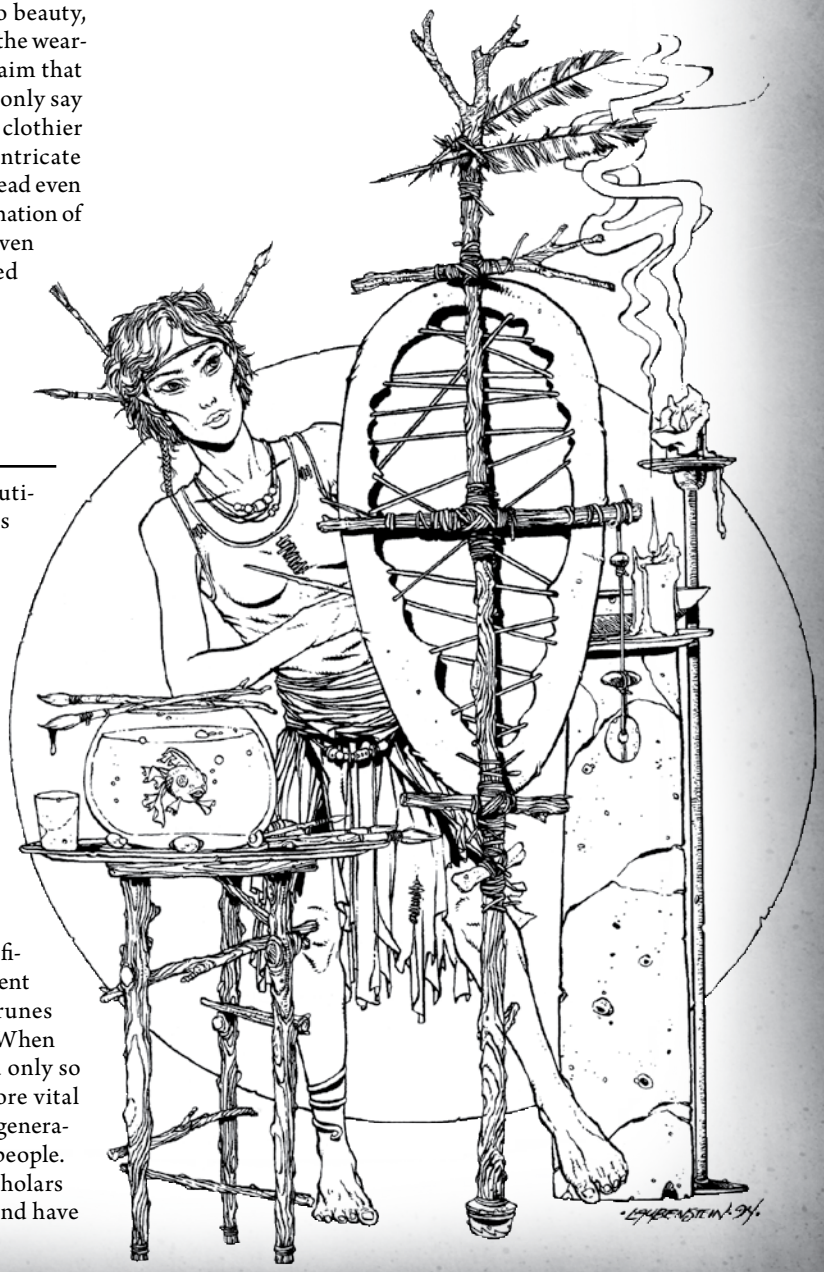
I have heard tales of a language that gave birth to *Sperethiel*, though I cannot vouch for the truth of the rumors. This language, supposedly spoken within the Elven Court and elven kingdoms throughout the world in the days before Alachia's reign, is said to exceed *Sperethiel* in both complexity and elegance. As a scholar, I should dearly love to find evidence of such a linguistic wonder!

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The loss of written Sperethiel disturbs many elven scholars. All peoples share, teach, and learn their cultures through their languages, and so without written Sperethiel the elves are missing a vital part of their traditions.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

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In fact, many elven scholars consider the virtual replacement of written Sperethiel by written Throalic as a dreadful violation of elven tradition and custom.

—Karon Foll, Elven Scholar

On the Telling of Stories and Legends

Storytelling, whether in verse or prose, is among the most valued of elven arts. My people's many stories include true accounts of events from elven history, legends, tall tales, and fables crafted to illustrate important beliefs held by the elven race. As with the legends of other races, most elven folklore and tales have their origins in truth of some kind, whether literal or symbolic. Of the countless number of elven tales of heroes, tragedies, and triumphs, I have cited two examples below, one a well-known story of a legendary place and the other a fascinating tale currently making its way around Barsaive's elven settlements.

The Legend of the City of Spires

In the bright days before the Scourge darkened the land, there arose in the northwest a shining city. The elves who built it Named it Sereatha, the City of Spires, so called for the gleaming towers of alabaster and marble that surrounded the city and towered over every other building within its walls.

Within these shining towers lived the city's many adept guilds, all sworn to protect the city and to preserve the best and truest of elven arts and ways. Those adepts who followed a Passion Named their spire for that Passion. Other guilds Named their spires for the elven ideal dearest to their hearts. All who lived in Sereatha spoke these sacred Names often, and with joy. The Universe, hearing their words, lent its magic to deepen the truth of the Names they spoke.

Three adept guilds claimed the greatest renown, not only in the City of Spires, but throughout all the lands surrounding it. The Swordmasters of the Swords of Justice followed the ways of Mynbruje, Passion of Justice, Compassion, Empathy, and Truth. It was they who kept the laws of justice in Sereatha, and their members often traveled the land restoring the justice and mercy of Mynbruje to those kingdoms that had strayed from them. The Learners' Guild, a society of scholars, Wizards, and Troubadours devoted to the Passion Floranuus and the Path of Scholars, studied the ancient ways of the elven people and deepened the elves' knowledge of their innermost selves. And the Warriors and Swordmasters of the Knights of the Crimson Spire pledged their lives and hearts to the preservation and protection of elven culture and traditions.

During the most glorious days of elven culture, the City of Spires surpassed in beauty, grace, learning, and power every elven realm save the Elven Court at Wyrm Wood. Many an elf traveled far to reach the beautiful city, content to spend all his days practicing his art under the shadow of the spires. Musicians, dancers, painters, sculptors, tapestry weavers, artisans, and magicians all came to Sereatha to learn from and teach others. It is said that the people of Sereatha often held contests to determine who among all the world's elves was best at his art, and that the greatest of elven Troubadours learned their craft in that wondrous place.

Alas, the Scourge has taken the City of Spires from the elven people, as it has taken so much else. No one knows the fate of Sereatha, nor of any of those who dwelt in it. We have but a single, faint hope that the city may have survived the Scourge intact; a few travelers to Barsaive from the northern and western lands have spoken of the Knights of the Crimson Spire, saying that members of the guild still live in those places. They also say that the Knights have come to Barsaive to help rid our land of the Horrors that remain.



How the Everliving Flower Came Again to Wyrm Wood

In the depths of Blood Wood, Named Wyrm Wood until the Corruption, lived the Elven Queen's chief adviser, Takaris. Now, Takaris knew the tale of the Everliving Flower, the treasure that many claimed the Therans had stolen from the elves. It so happened that Takaris, who made it his business to know of the world outside the wood, heard rumors that the Everliving Flower had survived the Scourge and could be found within the ruins of the Forgotten City of Parlainth. Takaris wished to determine the truth of these rumors and to recover the lost treasure if they proved true. But his queen, unable to face the condemnation of the other Namegiver races, had forbidden direct contact with the outside world.

Takaris had also heard of a certain prophecy; namely that the return of the Everliving Flower to Blood Wood would be the sign of the tainted court's redemption. If the Everliving Flower returned to its rightful home, Blood Wood could begin to become Wyrm Wood once more. Takaris, ashamed of the blight upon himself and his kindred, desired this redemption above all things. And so, in loving defiance of his sovereign's will, he secretly sent word to the city of Haven for a band of elven heroes to venture into Parlainth and reclaim the lost treasure.

The Passions fulfilled Takaris' unspoken desires, and three mighty elven adventurers answered his call for aid. The first was Le'ara, Swordmaster of Balihan; the second was Kes'turah, Beastmaster of Ennyskiel; and the third was Seosamh, Elementalist of Urupa. Together, these three brave heroes ventured into the Horror-ridden depths of the ruined city of Parlainth, in search of that which would redeem their tainted kin and restore to the elven people the glorious heart they had lost.

The three faced and conquered many perils, until at length they came to a chamber whose walls were painted with runes that dizzied the eye and turned the stomach when any tried to read them. No magic could breach the chamber's sealed door, and Seosamh's astral sight revealed naught but a chill, black abyss with a tiny, warm glow at its heart. When Seosamh told his companions of this vision, they knew that they had found the Everliving Flower, and also the fearsome Horror that guarded it.

The Horror appeared to them in a cloud of bone-chilling mist, enveloping them all in a desperate attempt to slay them. It called every loathsome creature under its control to aid it, but to no avail.

The three heroes slew every foe that the Mist sent, though it cost them dear in blood. Indeed, Kes'turah took a deadly wound, but dispatched her enemy even with her last breath. As Kes'turah died fighting and Le'ara battled the dreadful creatures that remained, Seosamh cast the spell that defeated the Mist. Upon the destruction of the Horror, the door to the sealed chamber fell open, and Le'ara took up the Everliving Flower from its resting place.

"As we have spent blood to claim you," she said, "so will you redeem the blood shed by our kindred."

Le'ara and Seosamh departed the ruins of Parlainth with the treasure and the body of their fallen companion and returned to Haven. After performing the Ritual of Everlife for Kes'turah, they traveled to Blood Wood with the Everliving Flower and presented the treasure to the Elven Queen. Alachia, sore angered that her trusted adviser had flouted her wishes, demanded of Takaris why he had dared to contact outsiders in a matter that so deeply touched the Elven Court.

Takaris bent his knee humbly before her and said, "Hear me, gracious sovereign. I know that I have transgressed, and I beg Your Majesty's pardon. But how could I send any of our own to reclaim the Everliving Flower? You know well how the other Namegivers of Barsaive regard us. Indeed, you have forbidden any blood elf to set foot outside Blood Wood, and I know of none who would disobey you. These outsiders were my only hope, and they are elven, my Queen. Though not of the court, they are our kin, and this matter concerns them also."

"They will not bow the knee to me, as all elves should," Alachia replied.

"That is true," said Takaris. "But they have brought you a gift beyond price. They have returned the Everliving Flower to its rightful home, so that our healing may begin. Is this not worth more than a few words of loyalty?"

Hearing Takaris' words, Queen Alachia understood what he and the elven heroes had done. So moved was she by this knowledge that she forgot her anger and forgave Takaris his disobedience. The Everliving Flower now resides within the Queen's Palace, and it is said that its magic has begun to slowly heal the wounds of Blood Wood.



According to news from Haven, the Everliving Flower has indeed been recovered from the ruins of Parlainth. The circumstances, however, differ considerably from the above account. For one thing, it was not simply elven adventurers who recovered the lost treasure, but heroes of many races working together.

—Thom Edrull



Where the Elves of Barsaive Dwell

In the years since the Scourge, the elves of Barsaive have come out of their kaers to dwell in all manner of cities, towns, and villages, often alongside other races. As with most of the Namegivers, the Scourge taught the elves the value of living amid neighbors of all races. Though purely elven settlements do exist, they are much less common than they were in my childhood days. Of all the changes wrought by the Scourge, the mingling of the races is one of the few to bring good to Barsaive.

As a child, I did not understand why people of other races were not welcome in our village. I understood only that my elders seemed not to like them. The coming of the Horrors at first made people even more suspicious of the stranger. I was told not to trust others, because a stranger might carry a Horror's influence with him. Over time, as the great labor of building the kaers took more time and resources than any of our villages could muster, our village leaders were forced by circumstance to accept the aid of other races in nearby settlements and to aid them in turn. By the time of the sealing of the shelters, we had learned to trust the neighbors who had helped us, and we welcomed them into our kaers in the hope that greater numbers might aid in keeping the Horrors from destroying us.

Though the building of the kaers sowed the seeds of unity between the races, the dwarfs' *Book of Tomorrow* brought those seeds to full flower. All Barsaivians, regardless of race or realm, knew and shared its words and endured the Scourge by embracing the book's ideals. When it came time to re-enter the world, the varied races of Barsaive shared a true common ground.

Once we re-emerged into the world, the need to survive and to rebuild our beloved, ravaged land brought Barsaive's people together again. The return of the Therans both tested and strengthened our fragile, newfound unity. Led by the dwarfs of Throal, who had shown us the path to a united land, Barsaive's many races joined to throw off the Theran yoke and drive our hated, former overlords back to a tiny corner of southwest Barsaive. Had we remained diverse nations separated by mistrust, the Therans might have easily reclaimed Barsaive for their own.

Of course, there remain differences among the Namegiver races, and so there should. Unity does not mean uniformity, and there is no reason why an elf should live as an obsidiman does (or vice versa). The great good of our unity is the fact that the Namegivers of Barsaive can live in harmony no matter what our differences of custom, because we have learned not to see those differences as things that must divide us. In the spirit of this new unity, many elves have chosen to live among other races in towns, cities, and villages across the land. And those elven settlements that still exist work and live in peace with villages inhabited by other Namegiver races.

Of Elven Settlements

Most purely elven settlements in Barsaive are found within its forests and jungles. Elves regard such places as the truest avatars of nature, and so prefer to live within them. Most elves use elemental magic to create their villages, many of which blend so well with their natural surroundings that one can walk into the center of an elven village without seeing it.

Those elves who wish to live away from other Namegivers value their privacy and guard it well. Every elven settlement that I have ever heard of posts sentries at its borders, almost always adepts of the Beastmaster, Scout, Thief, or Warrior Disciplines. In some realms, the elven adepts who serve as sentries follow a Discipline known only to elves, that of the Woodsman. This esoteric Discipline teaches union with nature and all the world's plants and animals. Whatever the Disciplines followed by these sentries, they always know precisely who or what may be approaching their village. Rather than harm such unexpected travelers, the sentries send word to the village leaders, who then decide how to deal with the outsiders. In a few sad cases, however, a settlement's desire for privacy is so strong that the sentries attack and drive off intruders on sight.

Many elven settlements rival some of Barsaive's larger cities in size and are far more beautiful. Almost one in four true elves lives in these settlements. Though few in number, these elven cities play a vital role in the spiritual survival of the elven people. For though many of us choose to live in towns, villages, and cities inhabited by other Namegivers, we all retain our link to nature and value our brethren who live within nature's heart. These elves, who prefer the company of an oak tree to an ork Cavalryman or a blossoming flower to a human Troubadour, will most surely preserve true elven culture against the ravages of time and the warped ways of Blood Wood. If the Universe truly favors the elves, the woodland



settlements may even restore elven arts and traditions to their former glory.

These elven cities also serve another important purpose in elven life by providing a site for rituals of birth, Naming, coming of age, marriage, and death. (I have spoken of these rituals earlier in my text, in the section entitled **Of Elven Rituals**) Holding these sacred rituals in the elven settlements serves to link the elves of these villages with their kindred who live among the other races of Barsaive. Most elven families have ties with one or more woodland settlements and on special occasions visit their kin and join in elven rituals and festivities.

This practice of holding our most significant rituals and festivals only among our elven kin in the forests often leads others to think us secretive and aloof. Though it is true that we hold our traditions sacred and secret, I ask what race does not hide something of itself from those who are not of its blood? Surely it is our right to preserve the history and traditions of our race as we see fit. Indeed, the Corruption of the Elven Court has made that need more urgent. Without the Court to act as the protector of elven culture and tradition, every elf must take this duty upon himself.

Of Elves and Other Namegivers

As is true of many other Namegiver races, elves as a race tend to share certain attitudes toward our fellow Namegivers. Sadly, the Corruption has led many races to mistrust elves, and this unwarranted suspicion has in turn affected the elven view of other races. Though we still desire to live in harmony with all Namegivers, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain tolerance in the face of distrust.

Many Barsaivians unfortunately see all elves as blood elves, and believe that we share the blood elves' corruption even though our bodies have no thorns. Unfortunately, too many outsiders fail to understand that most true elves have as little love as they do for the elves of Blood Wood, kindred or no. Blood Wood is a scar not only upon the world, but upon the soul of the elven people, and we more than any feel the pain of it.

For our part, I admit that we elves often do too little to change others' minds. We remain reserved and silent, even though we know that others mistake our quietness for arrogance. Perhaps we should open our hearts more, but we find it difficult to do so. After all, how can we truly share our spirits with those who do not understand us? And if they do not understand, is it not better to keep silent than to force our beliefs and ideas down others' throats?

The dwarfs tend to show the greatest distrust toward the elven people. Though the elves value the dwarfs' contribution toward freeing Barsaive from Theran domination, many of my people believe that the dwarfs' practical view of the world has left them bereft of spirit. As for humans, too many of them adopt the kind of arrogance toward others that we elves are said to have. I myself have made many human friends throughout my long life, but many more humans that I have met dismissed my worth at the first sight of my pointed ears. One of my friends, the human scholar Kallarian of Jerris, believes that his race pretends to belittle others in order to feel worthy of life themselves. If so, I can only feel sorry for them; to be unsure of your own worth is a tragedy, one that I know from personal experience.

About such primitive races as orks and trolls, I can say little. Elves have so little in common with these young, often brutish peoples that friendships between us are difficult to foster and maintain. I do not, however, condemn their primitive natures as some of my brethren might. Orks and trolls are what they are, and it is to be hoped that in time they will outgrow the more barbaric of their ways.

I think it odd that the race that shares blood with the denizens of Blood Wood can call any other race barbaric.

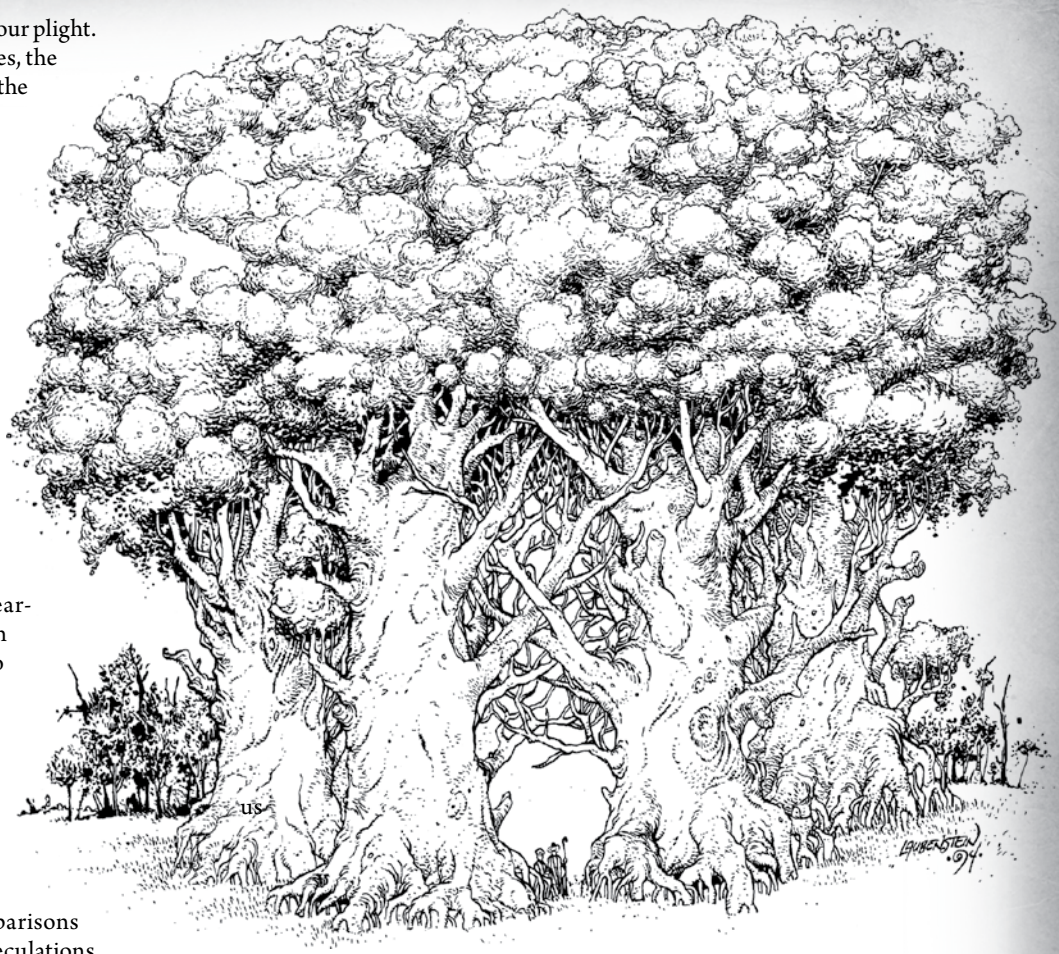
—Karoar, Ork Troubadour

The solemn obsidimen seem to share a depth of spirituality with elves, as well as the love of the natural world that shapes our very souls. More than any other race, the obsidimen understand how the Corruption of the Elven Court affected us, and they empathize with our loss. Some elves see their compassion as pity and therefore angrily reject it, but most of my brethren appreciate the sympa-

thy that the obsidimen feel for our plight. Alone of all the Namegiver races, the obsidimen seem to understand the pain of losing a people's soul.

The t'skrang also share our spiritual nature, though their spiritual depth takes a different form than that of the elves. The t'skrang ideal of haropas resembles the state of balance, harmony, and power that all elves strive for, but where the t'skrang seem to embrace physical courage and even recklessness as a means of developing the soul, elves regard such physical challenges as merely the first, brief step on the five Paths that form the Wheel of Life.

Windlings share both appearance and a love of nature with elves, as well as the need to live a life of feeling. To the eyes of many Namegivers, windlings resemble tiny winged elves. Indeed, so much do they resemble that some scholars insist we are kin. For myself, I do not believe it, and would advise others not to make such comparisons aloud. Most elves find such speculations insulting; windlings are certainly an admirable race, but they are not elf-kin. To be elven is to see and hear and know certain things kept hidden from the hearts and minds of others, and the often-flighty windlings have not the depth to share such perceptions. It is possible, however, that they may one day develop something like it. Their reverence for nature and affinity for elven company certainly bode well. Both windlings and elves are capable of deep feeling, but where windlings exhibit a love of everything in life, we elves are selective about the object of our devotions. Also, unlike a windling, an elf does not lose interest and transfer his loyalties to some other thing or person or place or way of being. The devotion of an elf knows no bounds. All else becomes of lesser importance.



Few other Namegiver races understand how much an elf's loyalty can consume him. Even windlings feel a mere shadow of elven devotion to a cause. They, like other Namegivers, often mistakenly judge us aloof and arrogant. In truth, most elves feel anything but aloof toward windlings; we enjoy their company. Because they share so much with us, albeit in faint glimmerings of understanding, many elves regard windlings as one might a delightful child.

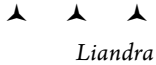
Of True Elves and Blood Elves

Whether we will or no, the ties of kinship still exist between the true elves of the world and our tainted brethren of Blood Wood. Because of these ties, no elf of Barsaive—or of any realm—can ever put the awful reality of Blood Wood from his thoughts. The wood and its denizens are a blight on our world, for which all elves must bear some part of the burden. However much we untainted ones may wish to deny it, Queen Alachia was as much our queen as the ruler of the blood elves. It was our queen who chose to refuse the Therans' demands, who chose the soul-destroying Ritual of Thorns, and who has since embraced the dreadful thing that she and her folk have become. And though we true elves no longer heed her edicts, in a sense Queen Alachia still belongs to us.

We feel these unwanted ties of kinship even more strongly through the judgment of others. Most of the world still looks to the Elven Court to judge what elves are, and far too many condemn us all as soulless. Far too many make no distinction between the elf who bears thorns and the elf who does not. We cannot escape the Elven Court, despite our efforts to divorce ourselves from it.

The truly tragic and frightening consequence of Alachia's terrible choice becomes clear when one considers the way in which the blood elves regard their purer kindred. Where we see them as the embodiment of corruption, they see us as unenlightened. Their souls have become so steeped in blood and pain that they have embraced their dreadful transformation as enlightenment. They celebrate it! Many true elves fear that the blood elves will someday act on their belief that they alone know the truth and will attempt to force us to adopt their ways.

Such a catastrophe is one that any true elf would give his very life to prevent.



Liandra has raised a disquieting possibility. Will the blood elves act to subvert their brethren, or is Liandra simply voicing his worst fears? Unfortunately, even I could not safely ask the elves of Blood Wood this question.

—Karon Foll, Elven Scholar



CHAPTER FOUR

AN ESSAY ON HUMANS

Humans are perhaps the most diverse and fascinating of all the Namegivers. Indeed, we found almost twice as much information on humans as on any other Namegiver race during the compilation of Volume III of this work. The following excerpt from this volume paints a fascinating picture of the unique nature that has made this peculiar race a favorite topic of study for Barsaivian scholars. Of the multitude of documents we obtained that discuss humans, I thought this essay by Kallarian of Jerris especially well suited for this anthology. Though the author writes from a human's view of the world, his vision seems largely unclouded by the distorting lens of racial pride, and his words honestly explore the human race's true nature.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

ON BEING A HUMAN IN BARSAIVE

Of all the Namegiver races, the human race provokes the greatest number of different, often hastily formed opinions from Barsaive's other Namegivers. Elves think us crude. Dwarfs, obsidimen, trolls, and orks think us fragile. The lizard-like t'skrang and ethereal windlings call humans slow moving and dimwitted. Yet in my fifty years of wandering through our ravaged land, I have found no race more diverse, more colorful, or more dangerous of all that walk, fly, or slither across the earth than the Namegiver race called man.

My name is Kallarian, and some call me a sage. Once I lived in a kaer in the Scol Mountains. Now I pass my twilight days in Jerris, in the long shadow cast by our uninvited Theran guardians. I dedicate this work to those who come after me. May they learn from it what it was to be a human in Barsaive in the aftermath of the Scourge.

ON THE COMMON BEGINNING OF ALL NAMEGIVERS

Long before elf ears grew into points or the flesh of obsidimen hardened into stone, all sentient creatures that walked the earth were human. To the many who consider such an idea foul heresy hear me out before you tear this page from the book. I have visited the libraries of the ancient realm of Landis and discovered the startling truth in the records. The archives of Landis tell us that all Name-giving races we know of were born of magic acting upon the human bloodline.

It is the magical energies of the world that have created and that preserve elves, dwarfs, obsidimen, trolls, orks, windlings, and even t'skrang. Without magic, all Namegivers would swiftly return to their common, human form.

I believe that the tendency to become another race lies dormant within many humans, and these tendencies manifest when the tide of magic rises high in our world. I do not pretend to understand why this is so, but I believe that it explains human versatility and adaptability in comparison with other Namegivers. As for how it began, the Passions that inhabit our world may hold the key to the mystery.

Many sages believe that the beings we call the Passions once formed a single entity. In many things, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but not so the Passions. According to several ancient texts written by human scholars, this original, single being was far from omnipotent and found the many tasks that faced it overwhelming. To better attend to the needs of the mortal world that it loved, the being sundered itself into many parts. It became the thirteen Passions known in Barsaive, and each Passion devoted itself to a particular task or realm of influence.

Kallarian seems to have accepted as true the belief that Death is the thirteenth Passion. From such a flawed beginning, I think it best not to put too much faith in the rest of this document.

—Jerriv Forrim, Scribe and Scholar of the Library of Throal

At the same time that the separate Passions came into existence—perhaps because of this cosmic sundering—the level of magic in our world rose significantly. Human mothers began giving birth to babes with pointed ears and long faces or stout bodies and dense body hair. Seeing some of these infants as evil—those that would have become orks and trolls—their human parents unfortunately slew them. But as these unusual births became more common, humankind began to accept its strange and wondrous children, and created many a tale to explain their conception.

Within a generation, men and women who had lived their entire lives as humans began to transform. Human husbands and wives suddenly hardened into obsidimen or shrunk into windlings; friends and neighbors evolved into elves or mushroomed into huge orks and trolls. Each different race of Namegiver swiftly joined its kin and, as is the sad way of mortals, began to war against the others.

I think not! As an elven trader, I find the very suggestion that my people evolved from mere humans absurd! We elves have nothing in common with such crude and dishonorable folk! I protest this disgraceful human slander against our noble race!

—Grimmas, Merchant of Iopos



These wondrous and tragic events occurred before written history, so no one can say for certain who ended the Great Namegiver Wars. I have heard sages from every race claim that honor for their own. I cannot say who is right, but it hardly matters. The only truth that does matter is that someone had the wisdom to end the bloodshed, and that the prejudices that spawned such an insane conflict have thankfully faded from our psyches along with the very memory of race war.

If this is an example of human scholarship at its best, it's a wonder they survived long enough to give birth to the rest of us.

—Grimmas, Merchant of Iopos

On the Versatile Nature of Humans

To those still inclined to reject the notion that all Namegivers share a common, human ancestry, I bid you consider the unmatched versatility of the human race. Of all the world's Namegivers, only humans can learn talents and skills widely disparate from their chosen Disciplines. The longer-lived elves, dwarfs, and other Namegivers, by contrast, can only learn certain kinds of magical and non-magical skills. I know a human Swordmaster, for example, who can pick locks. An elven Thief of my acquaintance, however, has labored in vain to learn the Whirlwind maneuver for many years. Some scholars explain this so-called Law of Versatility by theorizing that our fellow Namegivers are finely tuned, but limited, extensions of humanity. Magical energy heightens the particular attributes of a Namegiver race, but also limits the number of inborn abilities its members possess. And even these heightened attributes often express themselves as racial abilities, such as the ability to see in the dark or meld into a Liferock. Because humans carry within them the potential to become other Namegivers, they also have an affinity for a wider range of abilities.

The idea that all Namegivers derive from human stock provides the best answer to the puzzle of human versatility. For just as humans are the progenitors of all the Namegivers, the human ability to wield magic in varied ways is the font from which all the Disciplines spring. Magical texts describe how the Disciplines as we know them grew more sharply defined over time, as the adepts following these paths focused on certain talents in preference over others. And so, just as the human bloodline holds within it the seeds of all the other races, human magic contains the potential for all Disciplines.

In a particularly interesting example of the Law of Versatility, humans demonstrate a greater ability to adapt to their surroundings than does any other Namegiver race. Humans live in most any climate, whereas the other races have marked affinities for specific surroundings. The t'skrang prefer the rivers and the hot, steamy swamps; dwarfs and trolls prefer mountains; and elves love the woodlands above all other places. Humans have no such affinity and feel as much at home by the shores of the Aras Sea as in the foothills of the Thunder Mountains. In where they live, as in all else, humans demonstrate a versatility shared by no other Namegiver race.

Human versatility with magic more likely has to do with the way humans view the world than with any special place humans occupy among Namegivers. Magic is everywhere in the world and touches us all equally. It shows no prejudice with regard to where it bestows its powers. If the opposite were true, surely the Horrors would not possess such powerful magic—unless one is prepared to believe that the life-giving universe secretly desires to destroy its own creations?

—Derrat, Wizard of Yistaine

On the General Nature and Ways of Humans

Though humans vary as greatly as do the Horrors that ravaged our world, members of my race nevertheless share many common traits. Our appearance, our physical nature, many of our customs, and much of the way in which we view the world remain the same or similar in otherwise vastly different human cultures.

On the Physical Nature of Humans

In many ways, humans resemble the other Namegiver races. A heart beats within each human breast, humans have two arms and two legs, and we see with eyes, hear with ears, smell with noses, and taste with tongues. The greatest difference between humans and other Namegivers is outward, in skin color and texture. Human skin is thin and frail compared to the thick, rubbery flesh of orks and trolls, and as thin as the finest paper compared to an obsidiman's rocky hide. Compared to the silky skin of the elves, however, frail human skin is pitted and rough.

From accounts written in the years before the Scourge, I have learned that the color of human skin varied much more widely in ancient times than it does nowadays. The humans of the South had skin the color of bronze, and northern-dwellers had pale, pink

skin that looked as if only thin winter sunshine ever touched it. In the wake of our four centuries spent living beneath the earth, these once-bright skin colors have paled considerably. The bronze-skinned Dinganni have faded to the pale tan of unworked leather, and the deep ochre skin of the Vorst has faded to the wan yellow of weak sunlight.

Interestingly, the same humans that can so quickly distrust their fellow Namegivers because of differences in appearance do not regard a difference in skin color as significant. Humans from Throal may draw steel on fellow humans who serve the Therans, and vice versa, but for one man to distrust another solely because he was brown and the other was pale would invite ridicule from all who heard of it.

On the Nature and Roles of Men and Women

The human race is divided almost equally between male and female, with the balance weighted slightly toward the female side. Ancient records tell us of dominance by men over women or by women over men in different times and places, but just as the races have learned to live equably together, so too have the sexes.

In most human communities, men and women both raise food, make and trade goods, heal the sick, head villages, hold public office, and serve in local militias with equal chances for advancement. Because in many towns and villages the women do more of the childrearing, however, men in the militia slightly outnumber women. Often, I have found women wiser and more patient than my more brash, coarse gender, and so perhaps it is as well for human children that their mothers frequently have the raising as well as the bearing of them.

On Marriage and Childrearing

Most humans choose a single mate, though they do not always stay with their first choice. Few communities require anything more than a formal declaration of separation to members of a married couple's families if a husband or wife wishes to leave a marriage. After one partner or another has made such a declaration, most couples split their belongings and part ways. The only exception to this customary simplicity occurs in the case of a political marriage, a custom practiced almost exclusively among inhabitants of Barsaive's larger cities. Though most of these marriages take place and can be dissolved with the mutual consent of the married couple, they and their families must spend considerable time negotiating the circumstances of the split so that innocent lives are not adversely affected.

Though many older villages and settlements require formal ceremonies and a written record to recognize a marriage, less well-established towns and nomadic tribes regard any couple who have lived together for at least three or four years as married. Whether or not a marriage is formalized, the birth of a child usually engraves the relationship in stone.

Human women carry their unborn children for nine months, and most women only give birth to one child at a time. Cases of twin births occur on occasion, and I have read of women who carried three or four babes at once. Such multiple births, however, are highly unusual. In the best circumstances, human children are sheltered until they reach an age between their fourteenth and sixteenth years. At that time, they are considered of age and must make a contribution to the family welfare. In most cases, a newly grown son or daughter helps a parent in his business; on occasion, a young adult may take up arms in the local militia.

One child at a time they may have, but they never stop having them! These human women constantly stay pregnant! Their screaming whelps drip off their arms like a vile fungus, always whining for toys and treats. Elven women rarely bear more than one child in a lifetime. We have time to teach our children discipline and respect!

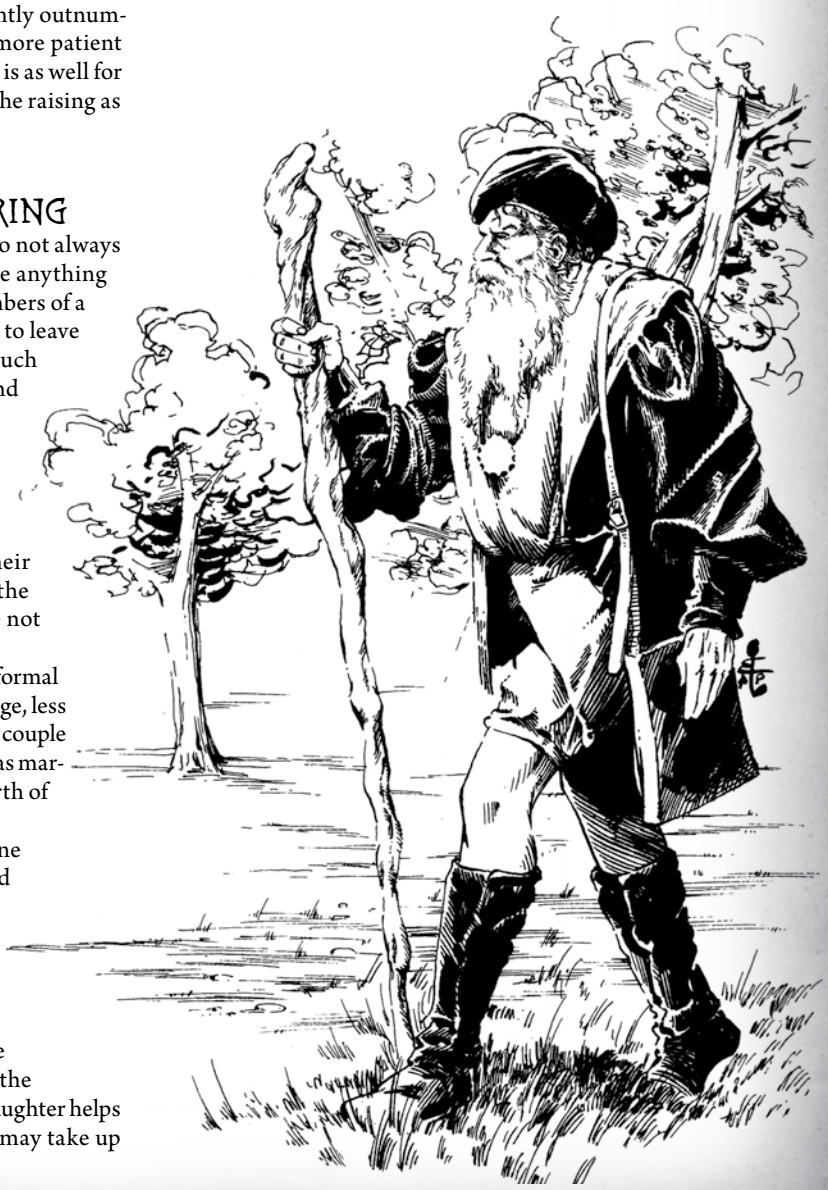
—Grammas, Merchant of Iopos

I have visited many elven settlements, and find few things more obnoxious than spoiled, self-indulgent elf brats. They believe all adults exist to serve their whims, or to serve as the butt of their often dangerous pranks. I'll take a human "screaming whelp" any time, thank you!

—Staunchus Fosworth, Merchant of Throal

On Naming Rituals

Soon after birth, each human child receives from his parents a Name that remains with him for the rest of his life. Because this Name is his first possession and everyone who knows him in child-



hood calls him by it, it contains great power. Some humans earn other Names throughout their lifetimes, but only with the greatest of heroes or the worst of villains are these Names as powerful as those they were born with. All human cultures and nations have a Naming ceremony of some kind, though the details vary from one settlement to the next. One tradition found throughout Barsaive is the marking of the infant with the symbol of a Passion, usually Garlen. A parent or other leader of the rite then pours pure water over the babe's marked forehead or abdomen until the symbol washes off. Legend has it that the Passion's sigil actually passes through the infant's skin and remains with him for the rest of his life, bestowing some of the Passion's virtues on the child.



Though the legend is more than likely untrue, many populations still perform the ritual. They feel it cannot hurt.

—Derrat

First he decides that we are all their descendants, then blames the Passions for his race's own failure to behave in a civilized manner!

—Grimmas, Merchant of Iopos

Civilized, indeed! It may interest readers to know that Grimmas has spent years studying humans—so that he might trick them into paying his exorbitant prices. Friend Grimmas owns the largest black market in Barsaive, selling "elven" crafts, weapons, and talismans for many times their true value.

—Staunchus

Humans also tend to be far more wary of others than the realities of life warrant. Though many people put this sense of inadequacy down to the physical disadvantages humans have with regard to other races, I believe that the size of Barsaive's human population also plays a role.

Though humans live in almost every place in Barsaive and outnumber such fellow Namegivers as elves, windlings, trolls, t'skrang, and obsidimen, humans are far fewer than dwarfs and orks. Dwarfs, in fact, make up nearly a third of Barsaive's people, while humans measure only half that number. This sense of being outnumbered by the dwarfs, who play such a prominent role in Barsaivian life, and the orks, whose sheer physical power often outmatches a human's, does much to explain my race's unwarranted fears.

Enough! We elves number a mere half of these whining humans, yet our civilization is the greatest in Barsaive!

—Grimmas, Merchant of Iopos

On Human Spiritual and Other Beliefs

Like every other Namegiver race in Barsaive, humans hold certain beliefs, both about matters spiritual and about themselves. The belief we hold about ourselves that most greatly affects us is a certain insecurity about our place in the world, for which many a human feels he must compensate. In many ways, humans seem to spend their lives testing themselves, proving themselves. I theorize that this need to test and triumph comes from a tendency to see ourselves, albeit unwillingly, as a less-advantaged race.

Orks and trolls are stronger than we, dwarfs and obsidimen able to endure more, elves and windlings swifter, and t'skrang fiercer warriors. But what we humans lack in brawn and speed, we make up for through sheer force of will. A human tries harder, fights longer, and gives his life more readily than any other Namegiver, at least when speaking in general. Many humans see such behavior as noble, even if it kills them; they feel a need to best those around them regardless of any natural handicaps they possess.

To my mind, this sense of insecurity and need to prove our utility springs from our subconscious knowledge that we are the wellspring of all Namegiver races. We wonder, I think, why the Universe chose not to transform us into a more powerful or exotic race. We are unfortunately prone to see ourselves as ordinary, and I believe that unconscious jealousy or even fear makes many humans naturally defensive.

Defensive? Pathetic! This Kallarian is no better than any other human, explaining everything from the human point of view.

On the Desire to Control Our Destiny

One of the strongest human traits, for good or ill, is our desire to manipulate those around us. Sometimes this desire can make a man do great good for others. If the desire for power leads a man to seek office, as mayor of a hamlet, perhaps, the man must perform well and keep the trust of those he leads in order to stay in office. Such a man assumes power over others, but must respect the wishes of his people to sustain it. If he acts with honor and compassion, he can easily keep what he has gained.

On the other side of the coin, if a man cannot easily attain the power he desires, he often turns to violence or corruption. A man might attain office not by earning the respect of those he wishes to govern, but by bribing a certain number of his fellows to impose his will on every citizen, or by making false promises. Once in office, such a man fails to keep his promises, and the people protest against his rule. To stay in power, the ruler spends money meant for the public good to hire ruffians, so that he may keep dissenters quiet.

Such a response only makes the people despise him more, and so he raises taxes in order to hire more minions. This act earns him even more enmity, and this pattern continues until the ruler either steps down or is overthrown.

The sad fact that such things happen often among humans indicates the strength of our desire for power and superiority over our fellows. Though members of other races than humans also crave power, more humans desire it more often than does any other race as a whole.

On the Human View of Death

In perhaps the greatest irony of human beliefs about death, we humans seem to respect life only after it has ended. If Death truly exists as an entity, rather than simply as a fact of mortal life, humans excel at feeding its ravenous appetite. Wars over the boundaries of kingdoms, control of orichalcum, and petty local politics consume our youths by the thousands. Too often, no sooner does one conflict end than another looms on the horizon.

Every group of humans that I have encountered enacts a ceremony for the dead; not surprising for a race so prone to settling a dispute by killing the enemy. Some incinerate their dead in elemental fire, others bury them in earth, and still others give them over to the blue depths of the sea. In most mourning ceremonies, a mate, child, or friend speaks of the dead person's accomplishments, and all who have attended the ceremony add their own words of farewell. The simplicity of the death ceremony belies the emotional weight of it. Unlike such fatalistic races as elves, who regard death as a doorway to a higher plane of existence, humans see death as a tragic event. Human death ceremonies allow the bereaved a final testament to a loved one's life and endeavors, and so help them to overcome the pain of their loss.

On Human Belief in the Passions

As do other Namegivers, humans hold the Passions dear in their minds and hearts. But where other races often revere one or a few of the Passions over the rest, most humans hold all twelve (or thirteen) Passions in equal esteem. I believe that this equal reverence, like many other aspects of being human, springs from the human race's unique versatility. It is yet another way in which we humans can see and reach beyond the bounds that often restrict other Namegivers.

Of course, not all humans revere all the Passions. Indeed, many of the cults dedicated to the Mad Passions owe their beginnings to humans swayed by the ideals and emotions embodied only by those Passions. Sadly, many of these cults and other secret societies stem from the actions of humans wishing to further their own ends at any cost. The creation of destructive cults and secret societies is among the worst manifestations of my race's otherwise noble desire to prove itself worthy of the world.

On Human Crafts and the Need for Utility

The human need to be worthy, to be of use, shapes the way we see the world and determines the nature of our crafts. Unlike many Namegivers much enamored of outward show, humans build and create objects to fulfill a purpose, rather than to impress the eye. A human Weaponsmith may forge a blade that looks plain and drab to dwarf or elven eyes, but such a blade is as durable and deadly as any made in Barsaive. Indeed, many human craftsmen eschew art altogether in the making of swords, armor, pottery, and suchlike, regarding decoration of such objects as a frill. If you want art, a human may say, then look for it in a painting or a sculpture. If an item has any other function than to please the eye, art has no place in it.

Of course, many buyers mistake ornamentation for worth, and believe human-made wares of lesser quality than similar items crafted by members of other races. As is true of many things in this world, appearance belies reality. Human-crafted items are often equal to, or even better than, more decorative items available throughout Barsaive.

On the Places Where Humans Dwell

More than half of the humans of Barsaive dwell in small towns, villages, or such large cities as Travar and Iopos. The rest live in small enclaves of several families each, settlements really too small to be called villages. No matter the size of their community, many humans live with neighbors of all races—orks, dwarfs, trolls, elves, and t'skrang. A few human towns also boast windlings and obsidimen among their number, though these unusual races are so few in number that few villages or towns can claim a substantial population of either. Aside from the human cultural enclaves that I describe later on in this essay, human settlements (in the sense of purely human communities) are quite rare.

Many types of humans live throughout Barsaive, and their ways are often significantly shaped by the world around them. Humans who live in the wildest and most dangerous places tend to be as savage as the lands in which they dwell, while those nearer cities and towns tend toward more so-called "civilized behavior." I say so-called because the civilized humans are not necessarily better or kinder than their more isolated brethren. In fact, many city dwellers show far more cruelty and cunning in their dealings than humans native to the wild lands. Certain races, such as elves, regard the ability to scheme as a hallmark of sophistication, and many humans share this view. I am not so sure. I believe that a city-dweller's cunning rests on the simple fact that in a "civilized" setting, he has little to test himself against save his fellow Namegivers.



On Human Architecture

Human architecture varies as greatly as every other aspect of human culture. In Theran lands, humans build great buildings adorned with carved pillars and magnificent sculptures, while human dwellings and businesses in Throal are built of plain stone along practical, almost box-like lines. Because many humans in Throal wish to make a clear distinction between their homes and places of business, the roofs of dwellings are often arched, while those of businesses are flat.

Village dwellings vary greatly, according to the materials available nearby. Along the Serpent River, humans build their homes of wood from the abundant trees, raising them up on tall timbers that reach well above the river's flood line. Humans dwelling in the Thunder or Delaris mountains often build homes on plateaus, or even carve cave-houses into the sides of cliff faces.

Many humans reject outward show in their dwellings, preferring to attract attention by their dwellings' contents. Most humans reserve things of beauty and luxury for the insides of their homes. A human only invites those he considers friends into his home, and therefore displays his luxuries only to those who find him worthy without them. In extreme cases, a crumbling and ill-repaired exterior may hide a luxurious, even decadent interior.

On Diverse and Unique Human Cultures

In our own time, human men and women are identified by their homeland rather than by the bloodline to which they belong. Humans from Throal are Throalic and those who hail from Thera are Therans, no matter whether they have Dinganni, Vorst, Galeb, or other blood running through their veins. According to the records of Landis, however, many distinct human peoples existed before the Scourge. Though the crossbreeding between these peoples in the kaers has largely abolished pure bloodlines, several culturally distinct peoples still remain in Barsaive. Some are remnants of ancient civilizations, and others are new peoples brought into being by the centuries spent in the kaers.

In order to understand the origins of these cultures, one must first understand the nature of kaer society and how it formed. When the Therans gave the *Rites of Protection and Passage* to the various kingdoms of Barsaive, small villages and hamlets within those principalities often banded together to build a single kaer. This melding of villages led intermarriage between members of different human bloodlines, and so in these kaers the people either blended into new cultures, or retained the cultural characteristics of the dominant bloodline but lost such physical markers as skin color or eye shape. Other human settlements, such as large cities or isolated villages, built their own kaers, and their bloodlines and cultures remained largely unchanged by outside influences.



The following six populations that emerged from the kaers exemplify both the blended and the untouched human bloodlines, all influenced by the four centuries that the Namegivers spent buried alive.

Of the Cathan People

The Cathan live in the Servos Jungle and take their Name from the Cathan word for jungle: *c'athe*. Significantly smaller than most humans, Cathan males stand a mere five feet tall, females perhaps five feet and three inches. Their olive skins are extraordinarily tough, and many scholars believe that this trait came from countless generations of living half-naked in a jungle filled with thick underbrush. Their hair is a mottled brown, and little of it grows on their sinewy bodies.

A primitive race of hunters and gatherers, the Cathan are perhaps the only known people to have survived the Scourge without Theran aid. Without advice from Thera, Throal, or any of the other "civilized" nations of the world, the Cathan built kaers in the maze of natural caves under the floor of the Servos Jungle. When the Horrors descended on Barsaive, the Cathan fled to their underground havens, and their Shamans worked powerful magic to seal the cave entrances. Upon the ending of the Scourge, the Cathan returned to the surface and took up their lives anew as if the intervening four centuries of hiding had never happened.

How the Scourge Touched the Cathan

As they did in ancient days, the Cathan tribes roam the Servos Jungle in small bands of forty to one hundred. The able spend most of the day gathering roots and berries, hunting when they can. The rest watch after the children, preserve meat and grains for storage, repair shelters, and perform other, similar tasks. Though the Cathan have attempted to rebuild their ancient ways, the years of the Scourge did not leave them unscathed. One of their Shamans, a woman Named Mathari, spoke of the Scourge to me one night, and her words convey the dreadful nature of the hiding as my own cannot. (Note that in the following excerpt, the Cathan word *gitta* means "Horror," and the word *tulan* refers to a "Wizard.")

"We went beneath the earth when the *gitta* came. They ate at the jungle like locusts; we found little left when we awoke to true life again. Many times during our little death, the *gitta* broke through the very earth to get at us. Our Warriors fought the creatures off long enough for the *tulan* to close the wound in the rock, but many brave soldiers died. Once, the *gitta* possessed many of our *tulan*. Our wise men did not know of this evil for many years and so could not rid us of them by tearing out their hearts."

The Cathan's dark years beneath the earth served to intensify a way of thinking already made necessary by the everyday savagery of life in the Servos Jungle.

Among the Cathan, every action and every decision springs from the need for each individual to survive. A Cathan captured by an enemy tells them anything they ask about his camp, his friends, even his own family if he believes it will preserve his own life, and the people he has betrayed expect no less of him. Many others find such a worldview incomprehensible at best, appalling at worst. Before judging them too harshly, however, I would ask the reader to consider the reality of Cathan life.

The everyday fight for survival is so harsh for the Cathan that any act short of killing each other to ensure that survival is acceptable and even approved among them. If a Cathan tricks another out of his last fruit, the first Cathan has proven his mental superiority. The loser of the fruit has been foolish, and so deserves whatever fate awaits him. Only by testing themselves constantly in this way can the Cathan prove their ability to withstand the jungle's dangers.

The Cathan also exhibit an overwhelming, innate curiosity that can sometimes overcome the survival instinct in even the wisest of them. Up to a point, of course, their curiosity helps them to survive, because anything they learn may be of use. The Cathan see wonder in all things and wish to understand every new thing that they see. When I visited a Cathan village in the course of writing this essay, I held them in thrall for hours by the simple act of writing these words. They watched in fascination as the ink from my quill slowly leaked onto the paper, and asked why I was tattooing these pages. I told them that my "tattoos" would tell others all about the Cathan, information which provoked a long and animated discussion among them. The tribe I visited told me of what one might call "educated" Cathan, men and women who have left the tribe to explore the world outside the Servos Jungle. I cannot but wonder what will happen when these clever people discover the vices of their brother humans, and I greatly fear that their curiosity in this regard may spell the end of their simple society.



A tribe of these savages would make admirable watchdogs for the borders of a noble's estates. Someone should put them to useful work!

—Grimmas, Merchant of Iopos

Readers, do not judge elves by Grimmas' example. Like any race, we have good and evil people among us. Grimmas is one of the latter. He succeeded in capturing and selling a tribe of Cathan to a noble in Blood Wood, and the blood elves have taught these simple people to behave like ravening dogs of war. To make some amends, I have taken it upon myself to rid the world of Grimmas.

—Derallis Laix

During the rest of my visit, the Cathan told me of all the wonders of their forest and related several of their ancient myths. I have recorded one of them below, which I believe reveals something of Cathan ways of thinking. The Cathan have a collection of stories about a wise youth Named Duzami and a cantankerous old man known only as the Screaming Elder. I surmise that Duzami is a symbol of their survival instinct, while the Screaming Elder embodies those traits they regard as vices. In this particular tale, the fault is failure to mind one's own business.

The Tale of Duzami and the Great Race

One day, the village held a great race. All the young men and women competed, and many of the people made bets on the runners they believed would win. The race was very close, and Duzami, the village's swiftest runner, ran ahead of only one other man. When Duzami passed the finishing tree that many others had touched before him, he did not seem winded, nor was there the sheen of sweat on his skin. The Screaming Elder walked up to Duzami and cursed him, for he had bet all of his food that Duzami would win. But Duzami only shrugged at the Screaming Elder and walked away.

That night, a terrible *gitta* rampaged through the jungle. Every Cathan in the village fled from the thing, including Duzami and the Screaming Elder. As Duzami ran, he saw that the Screaming Elder was right behind him, shouting angrily at him as always.

"Why do you not run faster, Duzami?" the Elder shouted. "The *gitta* is right behind us!"

Duzami did not speak, but kept up his steady pace. When he heard the *gitta* catch the Screaming Elder, Duzami yelled over his shoulder, "You do not have to be first to win the race. You must only outrun one man."

Too late, the Screaming Elder recognized Duzami's wisdom as the *gitta* ate him.

On Cathan Spiritual Beliefs

The Cathan have their own religion, serving a spirit they call the God of the Tree. I believe that the Cathan "god" is the Passion Jaspree, who sees the Cathan as caretakers of the Servos Jungle and commands them to protect it from fire and other harm. Because the Cathan see this duty as part of their own survival, they willingly fulfill Jaspree's commands. In etchings that I have seen, made by Cathan holy men, Jaspree takes the form of a giant tree. A knothole serves as his mouth, mighty branches are his arms, and his eyes are huge yellow slits in the trunk, well above the tallest man's head.

A Few Interesting Aspects of Cathan Culture

The Cathan are both curious and friendly, as long as friendship does not imperil survival. Though they hunt well, they have little talent for warfare, and the heroes in many of their campfire tales run from threats or slay enemies from ambush. Perhaps predictably, the Cathan see killing from ambush not as murder, but as an efficient use of resources to protect their tribes from danger. To make such killing easier, the Cathan tattoo their olive skins with

elaborate patterns in white pigment; this patterning helps them blend with the light-dappled leaves of the underbrush.

A young Cathan rarely goes anywhere without his bow, which he uses to bring down prey from high branches. The Scourge left the Cathan with one positive legacy that improved their hunting; because they spent their time underground almost entirely in the dark, many of the last few generations of Cathan have been born with the ability to see in very little light. To catch large fish and reptiles, Cathan Warriors will often tie strands of giant spider webs to their arrows, using the lines to drag in the catch. I saw one Cathan kill an enormous, swimming reptile with a single shot; I suspect his arrow was poisoned, though I know not with what.

A Discourse on the Dinganni

The Dinganni travel the plains between Kratas and the Mist Swamps. They take their Name from their word for a slow-running river, *d'inga*. When applied to themselves, the word "Dinganni" means "wanderer." Despite their relative poverty and the constant danger they face in their roamings, the Dinganni are one of the most hospitable and friendly peoples in Barsaive. A Dinganni always welcomes a stranger into his camp, offering food and water in exchange for news or campfire tales.

A tall people, the Dinganni also have large builds; indeed, they nearly match the bulk of orks. In temperament, the Dinganni tend to be quiet, friendly, and respectful. When angered, they often use their height to intimidate opponents, hoping to extract an apology for an offense without resorting to violence. Once weapons have been drawn and blood spilt, however, a Dinganni attacks without mercy. The Dinganni believe that to let an offender go free only encourages him to repeat the offense.

When not girded for hunting or war, the Dinganni wear soft leather hides decorated with bone jewelry. Though primitive, their garb is anything but rough; indeed, I have seen no more finely worked leather even in the bazaars of Bartertown. The Dinganni offer excellent proof that primitive and simple do not mean savage; one has only to speak with them to see their intelligence and compassion.

On the Origins and Daily Life of the Tribe

The Dinganni revere freedom, and the life of the kaers suited them ill. At the end of the Scourge, they vowed never to live within walls again and have forsaken cities and villages ever since to live the life of wanderers. They have prospered since that day, and the Dinganni people now number more than a thousand.

The Dinganni tribe comprises seven or so wandering bands, each anywhere from seventy-five to two hundred in number. Through hard experience the Dinganni have learned that allowing any band to grow too large can devastate the land around them, and so if a band exceeds 200, some of its members leave to seek a new foraging ground. All bands are considered part of the tribe, and little enmity exists between them. They live in tents made of beautifully tanned hides lashed to stout sticks; during my stay with the tribe I weathered more than one storm in warmth and comfort beneath a tent-hide roof.

Though every Dinganni child learns to ride a horse soon after leaning to walk, only ten to twenty people in each band have steeds to ride. The horses belong to those riders with the greatest skill whose mounts also show an affinity for them. The Dinganni believe that their horses are near humans in intelligence and pay close attention to their preferences. A Dinganni rider can fire a bow and wield a spear from horseback, skills they use to hunt and to fight off any enemies foolish enough to attack them.

Reflecting the harsh realities of a nomad's often dangerous life, every adult Dinganni carries a longbow and a long knife, and even children as young as eight years carry small daggers. A privileged few carry metal blades, but the scarcity of metal in the Dinganni lands forces most to make do with knives of stone or bone. Having seen them use such blades to skin a jaguar, I can testify to their sharpness. Under no circumstances do the Dinganni draw weapons against each other.

On the Dinganni Code

The laws that comprise the brief Dinganni Code allow the members of the tribe to live in harmony with each other and the land.

All must follow the code or be cast out of the tribe. The five laws of the Dinganni Code are as follows:

- One will never cause harm to another member of the tribe.
- One will never steal what belongs to another.
- One will learn the ways of war, so that he may protect the tribe.
- One will never kill the creatures of the air, for they are our kindred.
- Death awaits him who betrays the tribe to enemies.

Though far shorter and simpler than any other text of law that these old eyes have read, the code of the Dinganni contains far more wisdom than the complicated laws of Throal.

The law against harming flying creatures springs less from a belief that such creatures are sacred than from the Dinganni tribe's love of freedom. Birds and other flyers, particularly the hunting hawk, are in a sense living symbols of the Dinganni people, and a tribesman would no more kill a bird than an ork scorcher would defame the standard of his warlord. The Dinganni design much of their armor with an avian motif, adding beaks to their helms and painting flying birds on their leather armor. On the rare occasions when they make war against others, many of them wear manes of brightly colored feathers. One of their favored weapons is inspired by the hunting hawk: the talon, a set of bone claws strapped to the wielder's forearm that extend far beyond the knuckles. The Dinganni are deadly proficient with this weapon; I saw one hunter use it to tear the spine from a full-grown swamp lizard.

A weapon designed to pry flesh from bones! How unspeakably vulgar! If humans spent half as much time trying to better themselves as they do trying to kill each other, they might yet attain a modicum of civilization—but I cannot believe it will ever happen!

—Grimmas, Merchant of Iopos

Any violation of the precepts of the code leads to banishment or death, and no circumstances can soften these penalties. During my visit, I witnessed the trial of a youth accused of stealing my own carving knife! I use it only to skin small game and peel fruit and could easily have replaced it, but my words to that effect mattered not to the tribesmen. After the boy's banishment had been pronounced, even his parents turned their backs to him, deafening their ears to his pleas for their help. The oldest and wisest of the horsemen tossed a bag of dried meat and fruit, a bone knife, and a waterskin at the boy's feet, and from that moment no tribesman spoke to or even looked at him.

Though I shall never tell my Dinganni friends of this, the boy sought to slay me in revenge. I had left the tribe to return to Throal and sat camped beneath the open night sky, ready to feast on the dried meat and fruits that the tribe had given me. The boy crept up soundlessly behind me, but the bright moon cast his tall shadow on the earth as he closed for the kill. Forewarned, I struck first. It still saddens me that the carving knife the boy tried to steal wound up between his ribs.

On the Strange Origins of the Galeb-Klek

The Galeb-Klek are an interesting example of a new people created from a blending of distinct human bloodlines during the Scourge. According to tomes in Landis that date from before the Scourge, the ancient Galeb were a short, stout people with craggy faces and ruddy skin. The Name Galeb means "boulder" in the tongue of Landis and refers to this people's short stature, stocky build, and rocklike strength.

The Klek differed greatly from the Galeb, being tall and lithe of build and tending toward pale hair, skin, and eyes. My mate, Shadras, is one of the few Klek of pure bloodline still living, according to the voluminous records of her family historian. Slightly taller than myself and extraordinarily agile, Shadras made her livelihood as a dancer in Iopos. She has had silver hair since the age of twenty, and her eyes are of a pale gold color much like a hawk's. The Name Klek derives from the word *kahlek*, meaning "vine," and came to mean "dexterous" in the tongue of Landis. Though a few Galeb and Klek still exist as distinct bloodlines, most of the descendants of these peoples owe their heritage to both. Many scholars, myself included, regard the Galeb-Klek as a new people.

In the years before the Scourge, the kings of Landis determined the best sites for kaers within the kingdom and sent the people of Landis' villages and towns to build and live in them. Several large villages in the foothills of the Delaris Mountains were told to build a kaer nearby, that all these villages would share. Half of these villages were Galeb, the other half Klek.

Now, the Galeb were a warlike people and had often coveted the beauty of the Klek, as a greedy noble covets a valuable bauble. Many among these Galeb villages admired the Theran practice of slavery and took slaves from those villages that they defeated in war. Throughout the history of Landis, these Galeb villages had only refrained from making war against the Klek because the Galeb feared that their Klek neighbors would call upon their kin in the other parts of Landis to liberate them. Apart from desiring them for their beauty, the Galeb knew little of the Klek and did not know that violence was unheard of among them.

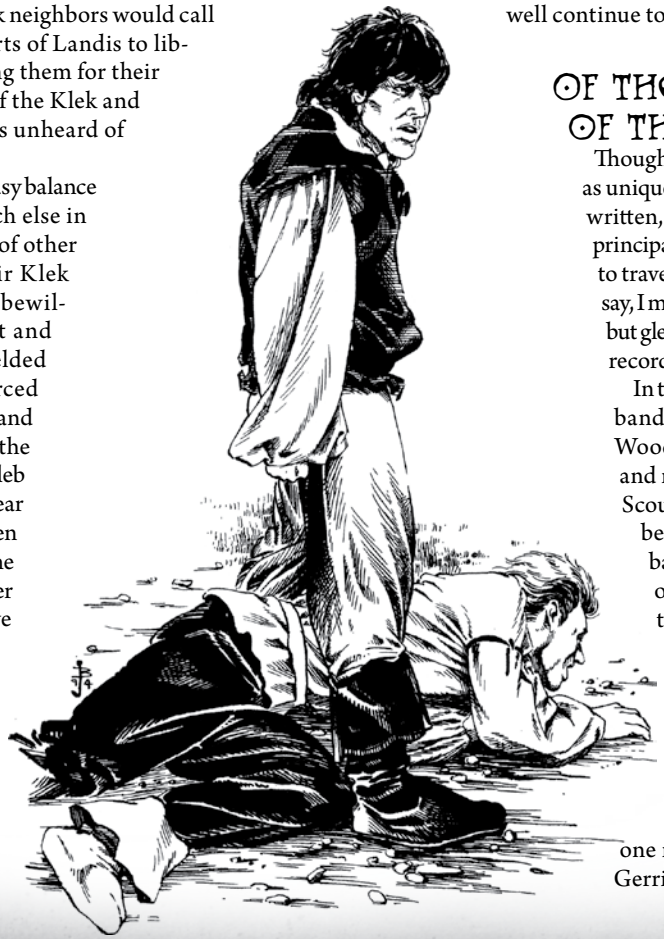
The Scourge changed this uneasy balance of power, as it changed so much else in Barsaive. The Galeb, deprived of other foes to war against, took their Klek neighbors captive. The Klek, bewildered at this armed conquest and unable to respond in kind, yielded without a fight. The Galeb forced the Klek men to farm for them and carve chambers for them from the rock walls of the kaer, and the Galeb men forced the Klek women to bear them children. When the children of the two peoples came of age, the Galeb married them to each other to ensure a steady supply of slave labor for the kaer.

Now, the first generation of Galeb-Klek, born to purely Klek mothers, were raised by them and learned from them in secret the arts of reading and writing. They taught these arts to their children, and each generation of Galeb-Klek passed on this forbidden knowledge to the next. Each generation also nursed within their hearts a desire for freedom, and for revenge against their oppressors. As the centuries of the Scourge passed, fewer and fewer pure Galeb or Klek were born, until the Galeb-Klek "slave race" far outnumbered their Galeb masters. Aided by the few remaining pure Klek, the Galeb-Klek rebelled a generation before the Scourge's ending, and emerged a free and sovereign people into the light of the new Barsaive.

On the Nature and Ways of the Free Galeb-Klek

Though caused by unfortunate circumstances, the melding of the Galeb and Klek bloodlines has had fortunate consequences for Barsaive. The unique characteristics of the Galeb and the Klek have combined to produce a people both dexterous and amazingly strong, with the lithe build of elves and the endurance of orks. The Galeb-Klek are somewhat taller than many other humans, but often by a mere few inches. They have retained the Galeb ruddy complexion, though their skin tone is a much paler shade than that of their Galeb forebears. Muscular and well proportioned, the Galeb-Klek in many ways combine the best traits of their progenitors.

This fortunate blending carries over from their physical natures into Galeb-Klek minds and hearts. They have retained the patience, forbearance, and gentle nature of their Klek ancestors, but their Galeb blood and their awful history of enslavement have tempered their gentleness with an iron will to fight when necessary. After the Scourge ended, the Galeb-Klek dispersed throughout Barsaive and so have less in the way of a distinct culture than many peoples bound together by geography. But I have noted that many Galeb-Klek show a marked preference for the bright colors and loose tunics favored by the Klek, and they revere learning above all else. This strong, handsome, educated, freedom-loving people have provided more than a few of Barsaive's heroes in the brief generation since emerging from the kaers and may well continue to do so.



Of the Outlaw Riders of the Scorched Plain

Though the Riders of the Scorched Plain are as unique a people as any other of which I have written, I have included them in this treatise principally because they pose a certain danger to travelers in northern Barsaive. Needless to say, I myself spent no time among these people, but gleaned what I know of them from ancient records and modern-day tales.

In the years before the Scourge, this bandit band roamed the plains between Wyrm Wood and Lake Vors, waylaying travelers and relieving them of their goods. As the Scourge drew nearer and the first Horrors began to arrive in Barsaive, the roving bandits schemed to get the knowledge of how to build a kaer. Knowing that the Therans would never willingly offer their *Rites of Protection and Passage* to a band of outlaws, the cutthroats stole the plans through treachery and built their kaer in a maze of hidden caves by the shores of Lake Vors. To understand how the Riders accomplished their treachery, one must know the history of their king, Gerrik of the Mask.

The Tale of Gerrik of the Mask

Beginning in the last century before the Scourge, the Riders of the Scorched Plain concentrated their thieving (and occasional murdering) on trade caravans plying the routes into Blackcliff, a proud and rich city that lay on the edge of Lake Vors. The Riders had a knack for waylaying the most valuable cargo at the most opportune times, and the city's merchants were sorely distressed that Blackcliff's leader, Warden Garshin, seemed to have no luck in catching the Riders' mysterious leader.

Warden Garshin had served Blackcliff for more than fifteen years, and the people loved him well. Even the merchants, though disturbed by his inability to catch King Gerrik of the Mask and put an end to the Riders' depredations, granted that in all other things he was a just and able ruler. None in Blackcliff suspected the dreadful truth: Warden Garshin was none other than the bandit king.

When leading his people on raids, Gerrik wore a mask to hide his face, and the Riders' raids brought them untold plunder because "Warden Garshin" told them which rich caravans to strike. Warden Garshin might well have continued his charade until his death, had not the Scourge demanded drastic action of him.

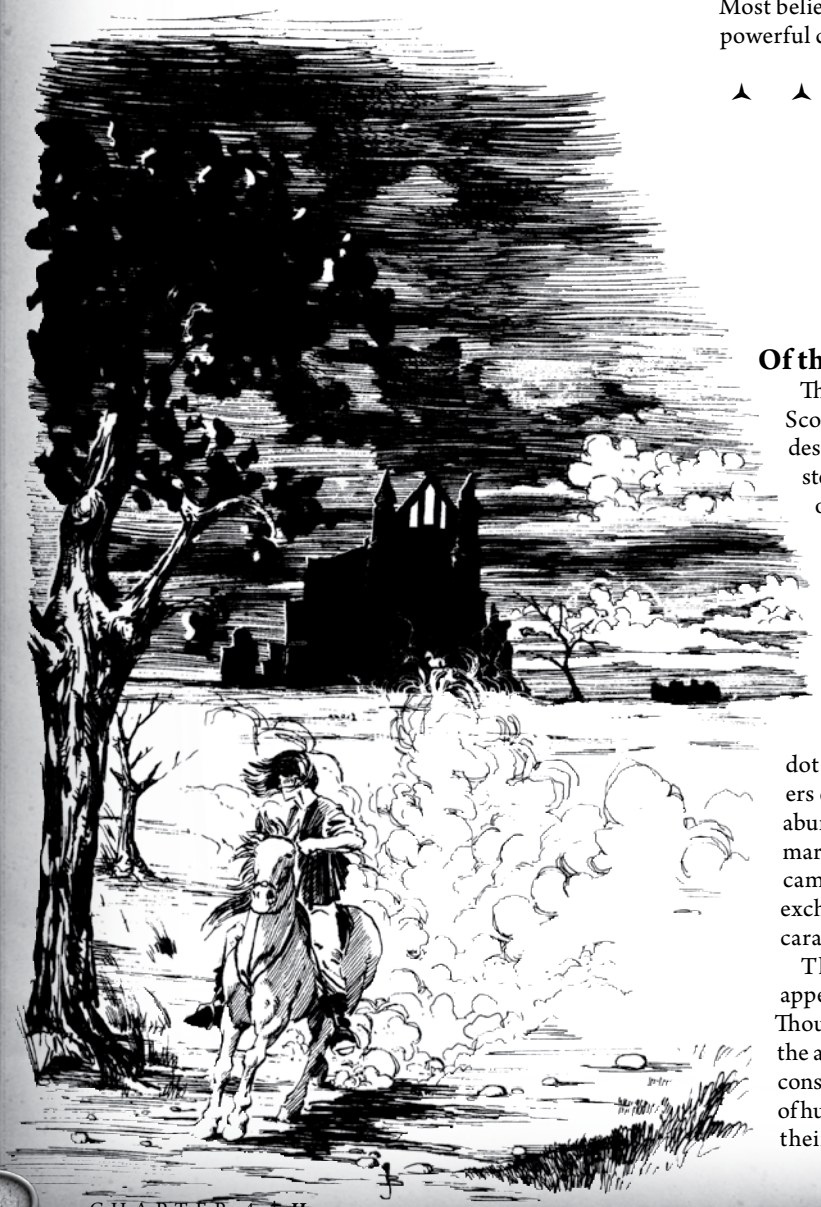
Gerrik loved his bandit followers and was determined to gain for them the safe haven of their own kaer. When a Theran emissary arrived in Blackcliff bearing the plans for building and magically warding a kaer, Gerrik murdered him in his sleep, then escaped with the plans to the bandit encampment in the wilderness. Taking his Riders with him, Gerrik fled into the Scol Mountains. In the foothills of those forbidding heights, the vagabonds built their kaer.

The remaining authorities in Blackcliff, meanwhile, sent a panicked message to Thera telling of their plight. They had already delayed too long in accepting the empire's distasteful bargain, and the theft of the kaer plans proved their undoing. As the Horrors began to appear in force, the doomed citizens of Blackcliff tried everything they knew to protect themselves, to no avail. The Horrors fell on them like a black rain and devastated the city.

These days, little remains of Blackcliff save for the following inscription on the keystone of the city's prison, damning Gerrik of the Mask to the darkest of fates. The inscription is known as the Curse of Blackcliff.

The Warden let the foul creatures reign,
The Coward led the cursed into the hills,
The Scarlet Mask left us to our cruel fate,
But Garshin stays forever in dead Blackcliff.

Among residents of villages and settlements near Lake Vors, rumors persist that a wailing man wearing a tattered mask haunts the ruins of Blackcliff. A few believe that Gerrik still lives, close to five centuries after his disappearance into the Throal Mountains. Most believe that his spirit haunts the ruins, trapped there by the powerful curse of the innocents that he condemned to death.



Some legends insist that the kaer built by Gerrik and the Riders remains sealed in hidden caves near Lake Vors, and that Gerrik still lives within it. Other rumors claim that the bandits have made a raiders' fortress of the kaer.

—Jerriv Forrim

Of the Riders Since the End of the Scourge

The depredations of the Horrors showed the Riders of the Scorched Plain the truly dreadful consequences of evil and destruction, and so the Riders of today rarely kill those they steal from. Their number has recently passed one thousand, of which perhaps a tenth actually ride out to raid caravans. Most often, bands of ten to twenty Riders waylay lone travelers or extort money from nearby villages. Because their livelihood depends on stealing, they do not regard it as a crime. Indeed, a clever scheme for parting a traveler from his belongings is met with the greatest approval.

Aside from those Riders who actually go raiding, the rest of this strange clan lives in wet-season camps that dot the woods south of Lake Vors. These woodland dwellers do not openly proclaim their ties to the Riders, but the abundance of horses and stolen goods in their encampments mark them as the homes of this odd, bandit nation. The Rider camps gladly share food and wine with passing strangers in exchange for information, especially news of trade routes, caravans, and wealthy travelers in the area.

The people who emerged from the Riders' kaer vary in appearance, but most are of average height and solid build. Though they are no more muscular than other men, many of the archers among them have well-developed forearms from constant use of the longbow. Though the original Riders were of human stock, outcasts from many other races have swelled their ranks in the years since the Scourge. These days, an

obsidiman Named Grannic is particularly infamous in Throal for striking the dwarf kingdom's land-barges. Most Riders favor the dwarf sword or longbow, and a few wield spears. Some horsemen use lances stolen from ambushed patrols, because acquiring such weapons is a mark of courage among them. They wield lances with little true skill, however.

The hardiest of the Riders spend anywhere from two to three seasons of the year roaming the plains north of the ruins of Blackcliff. They spend the rest of the year in the wet-season camps repairing their weapons, plotting new escapades, and occasionally hiding from authorities. While roaming the plains, the Riders steal what they can. Often they disguise themselves and enter the cities of Throal, where they sell their stolen goods, spend money, and make mischief. Some believe the Riders a romantic, lusty lot, but most shun them as common thieves.

On the Strange History of the Scavian People

Many generations before the Scourge blighted our land, the mighty city of Scavia arose between the Scarlet Sea and the Mist Swamps. Built on ruins of a truly ancient civilization, of which its citizens knew nothing, the city of Scavia grew in power and riches for many years.

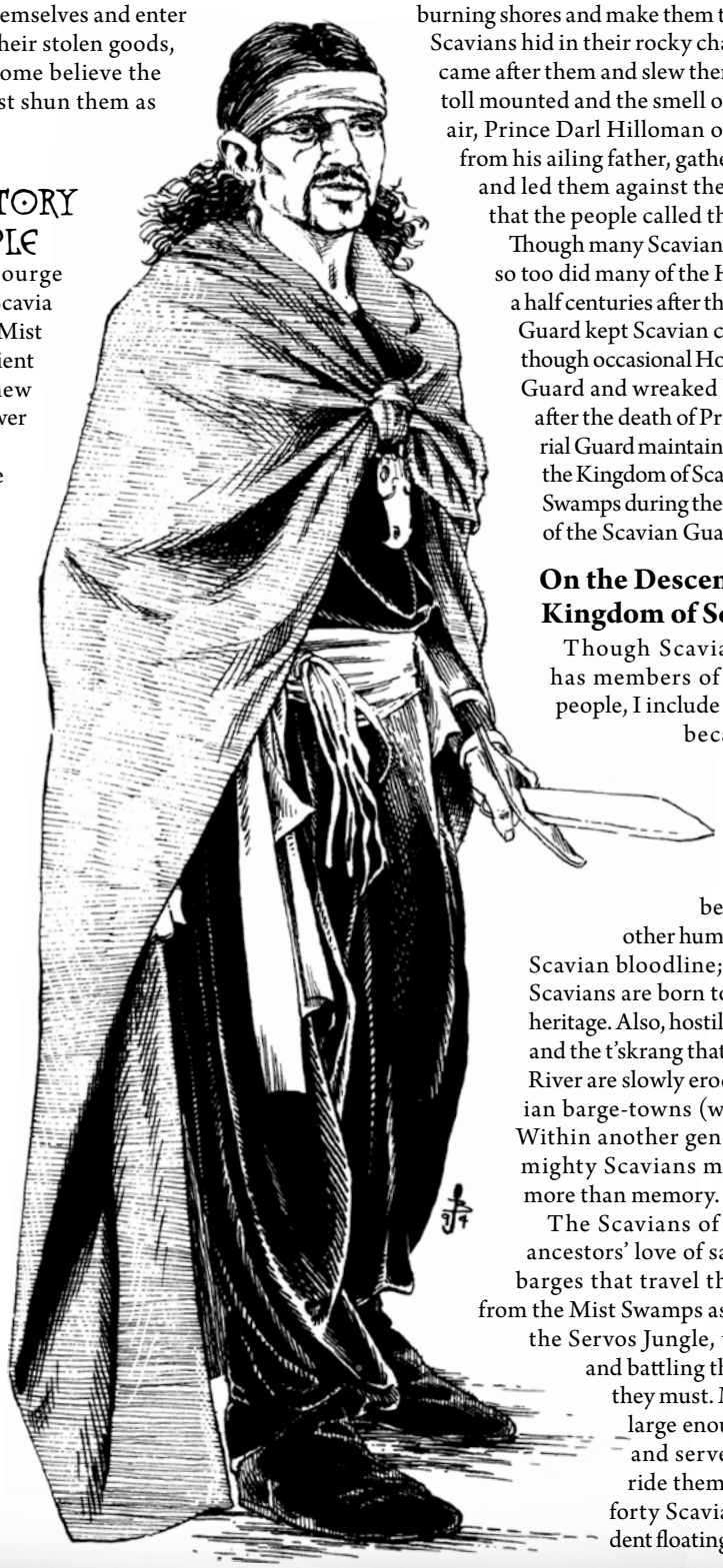
Like their unknown ancestors, the Scavians loved ships, and they ruled undisputed over the Scarlet Sea and the narrow strait between the Scarlet Sea and Death's Sea known as Dead Man's Gullet. In barges of stone warded with enchantments, the Scavians mined the Scarlet Sea for elemental fire, keeping close the secret magics they used. Only the shipbuilders knew of them and taught the magics to a chosen few.

When the King of Scavia accepted the *Rites of Protection and Passage* from the Therans, he chose to build Scavia's kaer in Dead Man's Gullet. He knew that the cliffs of that pass were riddled with vast mazes of caverns and passages, and that lava from the Death's Sea blocked the lowest caves. The Scavians mistakenly believed that the layers of molten stone would protect them from the Horrors, and that they need only build and ward strong walls and a roof for their kaer. Earlier than most other city-states in the realm that became Barsaive, the Scavians began to build their magnificent kaer in the cliffs of Dead Man's Gullet.

Because their wise monarch had begun the building so early, the Scavians had time to build one of the most beautiful, unique kaers in Barsaive. Within a mere five years, Scavian workers had carved canals beneath the kaer proper and flooded them with lava, and sculpted elaborate dwellings up the cliff sides. Sadly, the King of Scavia did not know that many of the Horrors found the molten sea as hospitable as we might a cool pond. The Theran wards kept the Horrors from entering the Scavian kaer from above ground, but nothing could stop many of them from swimming up through the fiery canals and breaching the magnificent city's defenses from below.

At first, the dreadful creatures simply eyed the Scavians from the blazing canals and devoured any vessel that came too near them. When they tired of this macabre game, the Horrors used their power over human minds to lure the kaer's residents to the burning shores and make them throw themselves in. The Scavians hid in their rocky chambers, but the Horrors came after them and slew them with fire. As the death toll mounted and the smell of burning flesh filled the air, Prince Darl Hilloman of Scavia took command from his ailing father, gathered the Imperial Guard, and led them against the Horrors in a campaign that the people called the Retribution.

Though many Scavians died in the Retribution, so too did many of the Horrors. In the three and a half centuries after the campaign, the Imperial Guard kept Scavian citizens from destruction, though occasional Horrors slipped through the Guard and wreaked havoc on the kaer. Even after the death of Prince Hilloman, the Imperial Guard maintained their vigil. And though the Kingdom of Scavia sank beneath the Mist Swamps during the Scourge, the noble Order of the Scavian Guard exists to this day.



On the Descendants of the Kingdom of Scavia

Though Scavia always had and still has members of other races among its people, I include Scavians in this treatise because the vast majority of them were (and still are) of human stock. Their numbers, however, are decreasing. Scavian humans have begun to intermarry with other human peoples, thinning the Scavian bloodline; every year, fewer pure Scavians are born to carry on their people's heritage. Also, hostility between the Scavians and the t'skrang that travel the lower Serpent River are slowly eroding the number of Scavian barge-towns (which I describe below). Within another generation, I fear the once mighty Scavians may dwindle to nothing more than memory.

The Scavians of our time exhibit their ancestors' love of sailing. They live on vast barges that travel the lower Serpent River, from the Mist Swamps as far north as the edge of the Servos Jungle, trading where they can and battling their t'skrang rivals when they must. Many of these barges are large enough to be called villages, and serve as such for those who ride them. Each of the more than forty Scavian barges is an independent floating town, providing a home

for four to ten extended families. The population of each barge, therefore, numbers between thirty and one hundred. Though most Scavians are human, the rest are an odd mix of elves, dwarfs, and even occasional windlings.

The head of each town, known as the helmsman, is usually the patriarch of the largest family aboard. In cases where the helmsman has died raiding the t'skrang, I have seen the helmsman's woman take command, and all obeyed her orders without question. The Scavians appear to have a stricter separation of roles and responsibilities between men and women than do many other human cultures, at least with regard to fighting. But their women serve equally well as sailors, and I had no sense that they value women less because fewer women wield swords.

Both men and women among the Scavians dress in flamboyant colors, particularly favoring scarlet and brilliant white. Both genders also wear their hair long and often wrap scarves around their heads to keep the long strands from blowing into their eyes as the winds whip over the decks of their barges. Though both men and women wear jewelry, the men are particularly fond of it, especially of earrings and bracelets. The Scavians regard ornaments taken from conquered or slain foes as badges of honor, and many a helmsman wears ornaments at the neck and wrists that together might weigh as much as ten pounds.

The Scavians with whom I stayed seemed all too aware of their people's dwindling numbers and therefore fought against any threat —whether real or perceived—with a ferocity that borders on recklessness. Having survived a vicious river battle between the Scavians and a fleet of t'skrang merchant vessels, I can tell you that no other folk in Barsaive could have fought so bravely—or taken so many foolhardy risks. Indeed, the Scavians (to my way of thinking) even surpass the t'skrang in this regard.

Sadly, the Scavians have come to see the t'skrang with whom they share the lower Serpent River as a threat to their very existence rather than as mere trading rivals and have embroiled themselves in a race war of sorts with the serpent-men. The Scavians truly hate the t'skrang and will kill a defeated one rather than take him prisoner.

The Scavians see themselves as a besieged people and so teach even their small children to be deadly marksmen with the crossbow. Adult Scavians use all manner of weapons, including magical fire cannons mounted aboard their tremendous barges. The long centuries of the Scourge have cost them their ancient knowledge of how to forge the fire-resistant vessels that enabled their forebears to sail the Scarlet Sea. One man I met claimed that his grandsire ten times removed had been a shipwright in Scavia, but said that the family had long ago sold the manuscripts that held the old shipwright's magical knowledge. (To be frank, I place little credence in his tale.)

Some believe that the builders of the first Scavia sailed on seas of water, but this claim is preposterous. All records that we possess from ancient days speak of the Scarlet Sea as a sea of molten stone.



On many occasions, the Scavians have come into conflict with the House of the Nine Diamonds, a t'skrang aropagoi that controls most of the lower Serpent River. Interested readers may wish to refer to Volume VII of this work, devoted to the t'skrang.

—Thom Edrull



On the Evils That Befell the Vorst

The Vorst, a once-proud people who built thriving cities in the lands east of Lake Ban before the Scourge, have become a grim and fatalistic lot. They suffered greatly during the Scourge; a Horror breached their kaer in a most subtle and awful manner many generations after they had sealed themselves in what they believed was a safe haven. The Vorst survived, but paid a dreadful price.

One aging Vorst to whom I spoke, a man Named Cho Shimmus, fought this Horror in his youth. I have recorded his horrible account as I remember it.

The Corrupting of Kaih Lia

"The dark time we know as the Long Death began nearly four hundred years after my people went below ground. It began with our greatest Wizard, Kaih Lia, who often used his mystical powers to spy out the ravaged lands above our kaer. Alas, Kaih Lia was old, and a Horror found his aging mind as easy to vanquish as a young Warrior might have found Kaih Lia's frail body. This Horror entered Kaih Lia's mind and ate his soul as if it were an overripe fruit. The Horror then inhabited Kaih Lia's empty shell. When we knew what had happened, we mourned Kaih Lia and Named our enemy Tendris'al, or Black Mind. But it took us many years to see the dreadful truth, and we nearly saw it too late.

"Over the years, the Black Mind began to sow the seeds of madness among my otherwise enlightened folk. Our art, once bright and joyful, turned to morbid scenes of the macabre. Our buildings became warped and ugly, our stories told of blood, murder, and betrayal. The Black Mind meant to drive us all insane, and its malign scheme might have succeeded had not the Disciples of the Black Mind, a group of guards utterly devoted to Tendris'al, breached one of the kaer's main passageways to let in the rampaging Horrors.

"Those of us who remained sane fled to a retreat deep within the kaer, from which we fought an endless battle with our dreadful foes. They could not kill us all, nor could we slay enough of them to retake the kaer and rebuild our sanctuary. Our retreat, perhaps the size of a small keep, became our prison for eleven years—two hundred of us remained locked within its magical walls like sheep in a pen.

"The Warriors among us often raided the outer kaer in attempts to steal food from the rampaging Horrors. We lost many men to these desperate forays. I survived several of them and would sooner die than suffer such experiences again. Mindless spirits lurked in every corner of our home, along with even worse beings. Intelligent Horrors, things with red eyes and bony hands, also lurked in the shadows—we called these walking nightmares the Plotters and feared them above all others. They knew how to set traps for us and often directed the actions of their less intelligent kin. We dared not confront these Horrors in pitched battle, for we could not afford to lose.

"The Horrors wreaked havoc on our kaer, and this destruction posed its own dangers for us. The great inner cliffs, that once gave homes to so many of our people, had been broken and crushed as an enemy's battle-axe might crush a skull. Often, we had to climb the pitted and scarred cliff faces in search of food; more times than I can count, a sickly arm lashed out from the crumbling windows and broke or cut our ropes. My comrade Cho Kether lost his life that way, as he scaled the cliff wall a scant finger-length from me. A Horror snapped his rope in twain, and Cho Kether plunged to his death. I still hear his screams on sleepless nights. Our best bowmen guarded the climbers, but all too often an arrow missed its mark. On every raid, we knew that half of us would meet death. I accepted that risk, but I curse the Horrors that made us pay such a dear price for our lives."

I have heard more of the Horror Tendris'al than Kallarian seems to know. Rumors persist that the Horror still lurks in the depths of the old Vorst kaer, and that Tendris'al's possessed disciples still serve him. I know of at least two groups of adventurers that have gone into the kaer in search of treasure, but I know of only one survivor: a dwarf, Bannon by Name. He passed on the rumors of the Horror to me, but would say little else. He spends his days wandering from tavern to tavern in Bartertown, often in a drunk stupor, presumably living off what little spoils he carried when he fled the Vorst kaer. If Bannon found treasure in that awful place, what more might lie beneath those haunted ruins? And what dreadful thing guards it?

—Staunchus



Of What the Scourge Wrought on Vorst Society

When the dwarfs of Throal reached the Vorst's inner retreat, they found less than 100 survivors, many of them children. The terrible experiences they suffered have been burned into the racial memory of all the Vorst, and have shaped every aspect of their lives. They extended civility to me when I visited their one, small village, but without warmth. And they never ceased to watch me, waiting for a hint of betrayal.

The village, Named Vorst after its inhabitants, comprises thirty homes and nestles on the eastern shore of Lake Ban. Extended families in this tiny settlement link their stone-walled, wooden-roofed huts together by way of crude, underground tunnels. The tunnels hide their movements from prying eyes, a concealment that they value.

The Scourge taught the Vorst to leave nothing to chance. Their every action is done thoroughly, even excessively, with a furious energy. They build walls, not of one row of stones or bricks, but of double or even triple rows, cementing them with fire-hardened mortar. They roof their houses with no other wood save the stoutest oak. If one of them slays a foe in battle, the victorious Vorst Warrior dismembers and burns the body, then scatters the ashes over the earth. I believe this behavior stems from their dreadful imprisonment in their ravaged kaer, when the slightest neglect of a precaution might lead to untold deaths at the hands of the Horrors. Were the Vorst to put their fierce determination to bettering their lot, they might yet become as proud and mighty as were their ancestors. As long as the grim will to survive is the only thing that sustains them, I fear that the glory of the ancient Vorst culture can never return.

On the Appearance and Dress of the Vorst

Only the physical nature of the Vorst has remained the same since the Scourge. A small but sturdy people, the Vorst have thick, tough, yellow-tinged skin and thick, black hair. Most wear their hair cut short; those few Vorst men who grow beards keep them short as well, lest long hair or beards somehow impede them in combat.

Vorst dress, once elaborate and beautiful, has become simple and drab. Vorst men wear tight-fitting garb that does not restrict or entangle their limbs, and the slighter Vorst women wear somewhat looser tunics and trews to make themselves look bigger. Weapons have become everyday ornaments, and a Vorst would as soon appear without one as I might go naked in a blizzard. Many of the men carry great axes with blades as sharp as a Vorst Warrior's stare. Men and women both bear barbed swords, which (as Cho Shimmus told me) can tear out a foe's guts at a stroke.

The bow is another favored weapon among them, and many wrap their arrows in oiled cloth, allowing them to be easily set alight. Their arrows also often sport barbed heads. The brutality of their weapons clearly shows the dreadful legacy of fear left to the Vorst by the frantic, eleven-year struggle they waged against the Horrors beneath the earth.

CHAPTER FIVE

ON THAT CURIOUS RACE KNOWN AS OBSIDIMEN

Although Merrox explains how this treatise came to be, I would like all who read this to know that I in no way endorse this hodgepodge of doubtful suppositions and secondhand information. I am appalled that my otherwise competent comrades allowed such an inferior, patched-together text to find its way into my greatest work, Denizens of Barsaive.

• Jerriv Forrim, Archivist and Scribe •

At first glance, producing a tome on the obsidimen did not seem like a daunting task. After all, they are our fellow Namegivers. We know what they look like and where to find them, and many of us count them as friends. But we possess few actual facts about them. We hear them use words whose meaning we can only guess at: Brotherhood, Liferock, Emergence, the Dreaming.

I called a meeting of the scholars and librarians of Throal, including my good friends Karon Foll and Derrat of Yistaine, to determine what this esteemed body of learned people knew about the obsidimen as a race. The answer was distressing: between us, we knew only hearsay, rumors, and secondhand information! Not only could we not answer any questions about the obsidimen, we could not even agree on whose information was closer to the truth.

As we spoke, more questions arose. Had anyone ever seen an obsidiman child? Where is a Liferock? Why are there no villages of obsidimen? How did they survive during the Scourge? Do they really live a thousand years, as is claimed? The sad truth is, we know more about the workings of the Theran Conclave and the nature of Great Dragons than we know about our friends. It is true that obsidimen rarely write, but I still do not understand how the Great Library of Throal could possess so little information about this race. As Master of the Hall of Records, it fell to me to rectify this shocking omission.

I sent out Messengers (obsidimen, ironically enough) to find my good friend Domasae, an obsidiman and a Troubadour by training. Four months later, I received word that Domasae was in Bartertown and looking forward to talking with us. We met Domasae at the Glistening Orb, the most luxurious inn in Bartertown. Karon Foll, Daron Fenn, Kern Redhand, and twelve scribes accompanied me; Jerriv Forrim was to attend, but fell ill at the last moment. The number of scribes may seem excessive, but obsidimen can talk for days without stopping and we feared exhausting those keeping the record of our conversation.

My friend greeted us in a jovial mood, nearly breaking Kern's hand when introduced to him. "It is the dream of every Troubadour," Domasae said, "to have his words heard by such an esteemed audience as yourselves. What wisdom can I possibly have that you do not already possess?"

"You underestimate your abilities," I said. "It seems that those you feel so honored to meet have fallen ridiculously short as chroniclers of your race. We hope you can help us understand the nature of obsidimen."

Domasae laughed. "Such a simple request. You did not need to bring an army to hear that. It is the nature of obsidimen to learn all things, to try to discover and understand the nature of the Universe. Have you any other questions?"

I explained that we were hoping for a bit more information and asked if we could question him about some other aspects of obsidiman life. For the next three days Domasae told us everything except what we wanted to know. He spoke of his adventures in Parlainth, his expedition into the Wastes, his bizarre exploits with a windling Named Perth and a thundra beast in Urupa, and of his uncontrollable urge to wrestle with t'skrang. Every question we asked seemed to remind him of yet another story. By the end of the third day we feared asking him anymore.

At one point, lack of sleep and sheer confusion caused me to shout at my friend. "Why are you telling us this drivel? We need to know about obsidimen, not your crazy adventures! Don't you understand how important this is?"

Unoffended by my outburst, Domasae laughed. "But my friend, I told you three days ago about the nature of obsidimen. All these other questions are meaningless. Now let me tell you about the last time I saw a dwarf as angry as you.

I tell this story not as an excuse for what follows, but rather as an apology. The dearth of facts about obsidimen seems to spring from the nature of the obsidimen themselves rather than any scholar's lack of effort. We worked harder trying to find information for this tome than on any other volume of Denizens of Barsaive. We talked to obsidimen and those who knew them. We inspected every journal, history, adventurer's log, and magical tome to find what we could. We traveled from Jerris to Haven and from Blood Wood to Urupa in order to find facts, stories, legends, and perceptions that will help us to better understand our friends. I can only offer this final text, with the caution that we may never fully understand the nature of the obsidimen.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, 1506 TH

A First Encounter with an Obsidiman

—From the adventuring journal of Kallea Ros, human Archer of the village of Gawan

I saw my first obsidiman in the morning of my third day on the road. My brothers, intimidated by our father's wrath, had refused to go adventuring with me as they had promised, and so I had determined to strike out for Bartertown alone. In the shadowed comfort of my bed two nights before, it had seemed eminently possible that I could survive the five-day journey to the gates of Throal and find a place with some like-minded folk interested in an adventuring companion. In the cold light of day, with food already running short and no one to turn to for help, my break for freedom from my sleepy village looked like what Father had called it: the whim of a headstrong, idiot girl too young to know herself for a fool. I was beginning to think about returning home and braving my father's anger (and people's scorn) when I saw the rock-man.

Rock was what I took him for, at first. He was hunched over on the ground with his back to me, presenting to my view a vaguely triangular hump of rose-flecked brown stone. Beside him lay what appeared to be a pile of old clothes. My first thought was that someone had gone for a swim in the pond that I knew lay at the edge of the nearby woods, leaving his clothes by a boulder and his sword belt and satchels draped over the rock. I walked closer, cautiously, and snapped a twig beneath my boot. At the sound, the boulder moved, turning to face me and seemingly growing a head and arms out of nowhere. I nearly fainted from the shock, but made myself stay conscious by an act of will. I knew not but what this strange, living boulder meant me some harm, and so could not afford to escape into sweet oblivion. We stared into each other's eyes, and I saw that his were the deep gold of summer sunlight on a wheat field. I also saw that those golden depths held fear equal to my own.

Slowly, I extended my hands toward him, palms turned upward so he could see that I carried no weapon in them. "I mean you no harm," I said slowly, unsure whether such a strange being as this could understand me. He regarded me warily, then repeated my gesture. "Amalek," he said. His voice rumbled like distant thunder. "Can you help me?"

Shock and wonder washed through me—this strange rock-creature could not only speak Throalic, but he had told me his Name! Of course, it could not be his true one—no one would be so foolish as to reveal that—but even the giving of a calling-Name to a stranger bespoke great trust in me. Or great confidence that I could not possibly hurt him. I nodded to let him know that I would help him if I could. He beckoned me forward; as I drew closer, I saw that he was kneeling beside a long, shallow hole he had been digging. Uneasily, I looked over at the bundle of clothes. It was the body of a dwarf, slain by the dark arrow shaft protruding from his back.

"He was my companion," said the rock-man. The ache in his deep voice made me want to cry. "We were five, once. Rhogam was the last. It is the way of his people to bury their dead—but my strength is running out of me like water. Will you help me finish Rhogam's grave?"

I then saw what I had not noticed before; the rock-man's left side, farthest from me, was covered in something dark and slick. It had not the look or smell of human blood, but it welled from somewhere deep within the long gash that snaked its way down his body. Wordlessly, I knelt beside him and began to scrabble at the soft earth with my hands.

We deepened the grave enough to prevent roaming packs of wolves from getting at the body, and I attempted to lift the dead dwarf. It was too heavy for my feeble arms, and after several minutes of struggle the rock-man slowly rose and came to my aid. Standing, he towered over me; he must have reached seven feet at least, almost as tall as the tableland on which my village was built. He moved with difficulty, as if in great pain. Together we carried his dead friend to the grave and laid the body gently within, then covered it with earth.

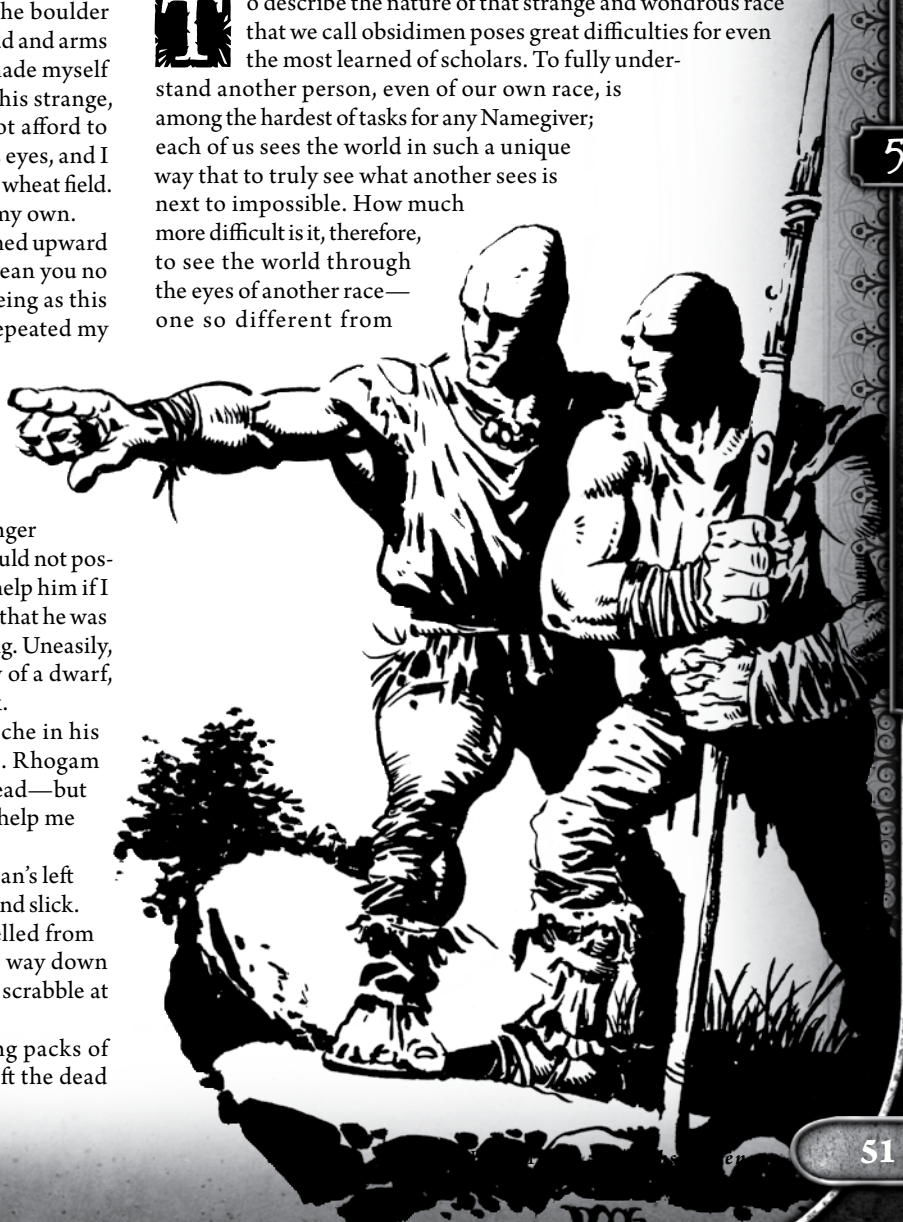
By the time we finished, the rock-man had grown alarmingly weak. I offered to stay with him if he wished, or to bring the healing woman from Gawan but he said no, his injuries could not be healed by any save the Liferock. I did not understand what he meant by "Liferock." He thanked me for my aid with grave courtesy, then divested himself of everything he carried save a small, rose-flecked brown pebble and a silver drinking flask. He bade me take what was left of his food and supplies as payment for my trouble; before I could protest, he had limped away across the meadowland and disappeared into the fringes of the forest.

I went on my way, toward Bartertown. In a world of such wonders as living rocks, how could I turn back to Gawan?

On the Nature of Obsidimen

—Excerpted from Concerning the Rock-Men of Barsaive, a treatise written in 1499TH by the renowned elven scholar, Morwen Wellspring

To describe the nature of that strange and wondrous race that we call obsidimen poses great difficulties for even the most learned of scholars. To fully understand another person, even of our own race, is among the hardest of tasks for any Namegiver; each of us sees the world in such a unique way that to truly see what another sees is next to impossible. How much more difficult is it, therefore, to see the world through the eyes of another race—one so different from



ourselves that we cannot even find much in the way of common ground from which to start?

Nevertheless, in the cause of furthering our understanding of one another, I have set down in this treatise the many things I have learned regarding the physical nature of obsidimen. I have but scratched the surface of the subject, of course; for every fact that I have learned, there are at least a dozen that remain mysteries to me! I beg that the reader will keep this in mind.

On Appearance and Physical Nature

To other eyes, obsidimen appear to be made of stone. In truth, obsidimen are made of a kind of flesh in many ways similar to our own. They bruise and bleed; they require air to breathe, food to eat, and water to drink. They are in fact composed of elemental earth and astral spirit, which together form a substance that outwardly resembles stone. The earthen portion of their physical nature gives them great endurance; though they must eat and drink to live as others do, they need far less of such sustenance to keep body and soul together. (I find it fascinating that obsidimen rarely eat the flesh of animals, preferring to eat vegetables, fruits, and grains that have their roots in the earth.)

Obsidimen are striking in appearance, standing seven feet tall or so and boasting impressive breadth. Despite their enormous size, they move with extraordinary grace; an obsidiman's sense of rootedness in the earth gives him a confidence and sureness of foot that shows itself in the language of his entire body. Skin color and texture adds to this race's striking looks, and deepens their resemblance to living rock. Obsidiman skin is rough, sometimes even pitted or weathered after the manner of stone worn by sand and wind. In color, most obsidimen are black, gray, or some shade of brown. Less common are red and orange hues, jade green, and even chalk white. When an obsidiman merges with his Liferock, his coloring may change to match the Liferock, if in fact it does not match already. In such a merging, an obsidiman blends with his Liferock until his body is indistinguishable from it.

Obsidiman heads are most curious, tending as they do toward shapes so elongated that they appear amusing to many other Namegivers. Many obsidimen, of course, have heads with what we might call normal shapes; that is, shapes more closely resembling the heads of other Namegivers. The elongated head shapes are so distinctive, however, that the race has come to be known for them. The obsidimen themselves consider an elongated head a mark of distinction; indeed, only those with elongated heads ever wear *horkla*, the netlike headpieces that denote significant status or power.

Obsidiman eyes are also quite different in appearance from those of other Namegivers. Most obsidimen do not have a white outer eye with a colored pupil; instead, the whole eye is of the same color. Obsidiman eyes are often some shade of yellow, gold, or red, occasionally blue or green. A few obsidimen have the two-colored eyes common to other Namegivers, but I know of no reason for the difference.

On the Question of Obsidiman Gender

Among the most curious aspects of the obsidiman's physical nature is the lack of two genders. Where other Namegiver races have male and female members, obsidimen are both—or perhaps neither. (The few times I have attempted to ascertain which of those statements reflects the truth, my obsidiman hosts have met my questions with stares of blank incomprehension.) Not surprisingly, this single gender makes for significant differences between the lives of obsidimen and other Namegivers; obsidimen do not pay court or marry, do not reproduce as we do, and do not form families as most of us think of them. (I will speak more of this in a later section.)

By common practice, most other Namegivers refer to obsidimen as if they are male; the closest translation of the obsidiman word for family is "Brotherhood" in Throalic, and they refer to members of their unusual "families" as "brother." In response to the perceptions of others, most obsidimen who live among other races dress and act like male members of the most prevalent race around them. Some, however, choose to adopt a female identity; they dress and act like women of other races, and refer to themselves as such. As far as I can tell, obsidimen as a race do not care by which gender others identify them; indeed, they find the preoccupation with "male" and "female" roles among some Namegivers highly amusing nonsense.

The first time I saw a female obsidiman I could not help but stare. She seemed to be a Swordmaster, and her armor covered her body as if she were a human female. I followed her as she walked through Bartertown, continuing to watch her until I nearly wound up on the sharp end of her blade. I believe she thought I intended to make her an indecent offer.

—Kern Redhand



On Feelings and Behavior Among Obsidimen

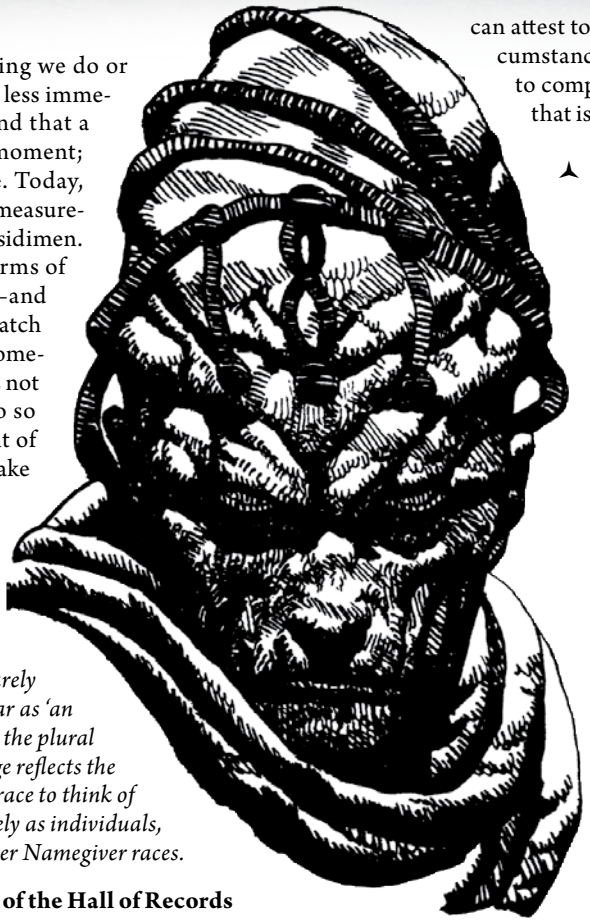
—Transcribed from the speaking of Omeyras, obsidiman Troubadour of Urupa

The emotional nature of obsidimen … friend Ardinn, you have asked me a most difficult question. You are curious, of course, because our slowness and calmness are so alien to the heights and depths of emotions through which shorter-lived Namegivers such as yourselves live your lives. This difference in lifespan is the crux of the differences between us. You and yours, my friend, have such brief lives compared to ours that you cannot help but feel each passing moment more intensely.

Obsidimen have long lives. We begin to Awaken, what you would call "coming of age," at 100 years, and often live for seven or eight centuries afterward. It is not unusual for obsidimen to reach 900 years of age—a span of time nearly equal to fifteen ork lifetimes and three times the usual lifespan of elves, the longest living of our fellow Namegivers.

Some elves claim to have lived as long as some obsidimen, or even longer. I find such claims dubious, at best.

—Karon Foll



Our long lifespan makes everything we do or dream of doing infinitely less urgent, less immediate. Unlike you, we do not demand that a certain thing be done at a specific moment; for us, a task is done when it is done. Today, tomorrow, next week, next month … measurements such as these mean little to obsidimen. You others are always thinking in terms of time—yesterday, today, tomorrow—and always worrying that tomorrow will catch up with you before you accomplish something. For obsidimen, tomorrow does not loom as a threat; we look forward to so many tomorrows, we have lost count of them. Hardly surprising, is it, that we take life so calmly?

Astute readers may notice an oddity of Throalic usage in the transcripts from our obsidiman contributors. Obsidimen, it seems, rarely refer to themselves in the singular as 'an obsidiman.' Instead, most use the plural form, 'obsidimen.' I suspect this usage reflects the tendency among members of this race to think of themselves as a whole rather than solely as individuals, as is common with most other Namegiver races.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Indeed, many obsidimen find the urgency of other races comical. Other Namegivers, alas, often find our sense of humor incomprehensible; they cannot imagine what we find amusing in the frantic pace of their lives that to them is so serious. Please believe me when I say that our amusement at your antics is not meant to mock you; it is simply our way of delighting in the differences between obsidimen and others, whom we call energy wasters. You live at such a frantic speed, so concerned with your place in the Universe and so often convinced that your own little lives are the most important things in it.

We know better—or perhaps I should say, we know differently. We have lived much longer than you have, and so have learned that no one life can possibly matter more in the grand scheme of things than Life itself—the great dance of living things that the Universe set in motion for the sheer joy of watching it. All of us are no more than different parts of Nature, and those things we might consider urgent often matter little to the workings of the Universe.

We are not fatalistic, believing everything to be pre-ordained; rather, we recognize that the role of Namegivers in the Universe is less grand than many prefer to believe. We are like the aging father whose son wishes to leave home in search of adventure, convinced that if he does not leave this very day he will die of boredom. The father knows that his son will not die—that even if forced to give up his adventuring dream, he will find a way to live and be happy. The father knows this because he was like the son once; he lived longer, and learned wisdom.

Our willingness to let time pass slowly should not mislead anyone into believing that obsidimen are lazy or incapable of swift action. Should the need arise, we can move more quickly and decisively than any other Namegiver. Anyone who has ever encountered a dangerous beast or a Horror while in the company of obsidimen can attest to the truth of that. And even when circumstances do not require us to be the swiftest to complete a task, we put forth all the effort that is needed to do what must be done.

Obsidimen are among the best messengers for hire in Barsaive. If you want speed, hire a non-adept windling—but realize that your message may go astray. If you want a message to arrive intact but do not care when it reaches its destination, hire an obsidiman. He may take his time, but nothing will stop or distract him.

—Jerriv Forrim

Most of our fellow Namegivers recognize our steadfastness and hard-working nature; indeed, our willingness to suffer any hardship rather than fail to fulfill a promise has caused many to call obsidimen the most reliable race in Barsaive. Others call us honorable and trustworthy, and in most cases these appellations are true. In all fairness, however, I must admit that some of my race are less than honorable. Not many, I think—but I would not mislead any readers of this document into thinking that every obsidiman is the paragon of virtue that we seem to be in others' eyes.

Though obsidimen are known for a calmness and even temper that other races often envy, anyone who manages the feat of provoking us will find obsidimen the fiercest of opponents. We obsidimen can hold our tempers in check much longer than can many other Namegivers simply because we find so many things insignificant that others regard as deadly insults. Once provoked to anger, however, we act with great ferocity.

I have heard a human saying about us that sums up this truth: "Beware the still rock, for it may become an avalanche." As to what provokes us, I can give no simple answer. Like individuals of other races, obsidimen carry differing ideas of what is tolerable and what intolerable. I can enumerate some things that all obsidimen abhor: wanton destruction of nature—especially trees—and unkind remarks or threats to Liferock or Brotherhood. These things we will fight against to the death if need be.

I was present when a drunken ork made the mistake of ridiculing the Liferock of an obsidiman Warrior with whom I am acquainted. Before the hapless ork or any of his companions could raise a hand in defense, my obsidiman friend had grabbed the drunkard by the throat and crushed his windpipe.

—Thom Edrull

Above all, obsidimen are curious. We seek to learn about other Namegivers, about the nature of magic, about any idea that can be expressed in writing or in thought.

Why are dwarfs driven to build? Why do windlings seek change? Why must orks squeeze every ounce out of life each day? Why does the Universe create life whose role is to consume and destroy other life? Why are we born of earth and other Namegivers are not? Why is the sky blue and grass green?

In search of answers to these and other questions, obsidimen venture out into the world.

In order to most clearly illustrate this important point from the fragmentary sources available, I have chosen a letter from Juliak Merris, a well-known obsidiman merchant in the city of Travar, to the Elder of his Brotherhood. This piece of writing, to my mind, most clearly conveys the reasons why some few obsidimen feel driven to spend large portions of their immensely long lives among those of us that they call "energy wasters."

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On the Reason for Venturing into the World

To my dearest brother and Elder Jarrikos from Juliak, greetings.

Upon receiving this missive you will wonder, no doubt, why I have chosen to answer you in this way. Look in your heart, my most respected brother, and you will see the reason. Much to my regret, I cannot return to the Brotherhood at this time. I miss the comfort of your constant presence very much; yet for the time being, my place is in Travar with its multiplicity of worthy Namegivers. They need my help, Jarrikos; I must stay with them for as long as they need me. Therefore, I write to you as one of them would, that you cannot mistake my intent.

Knowing that my decision may anger you, or at least cause you sorrow, I will tell you my reasons in the hope that such honest speaking from your loving brother will ease your heart. Have you heard anything of what has been happening in Travar? The city has suffered a plague of flying Horrors that have all but crippled the shipping business, including my own merchant house. We have fortunately rid ourselves of the flying demons, with the help of a band of bold adventurers who risked their lives on our account, but there remains much rebuilding to be done. I could cut my losses and return to the Brotherhood, if I were thinking only of my own good. But so many livelihoods depend upon me; so many of our fellow Namegivers work for me to earn the coin with which they purchase their daily sustenance. What are they to do, if I do not rebuild my business? What are they to do if I take the easy road and return to my brothers in the wilds? I cannot hurt them in that way, Jarrikos. I have come to love them far too much.

Yes, love. When first I left the Brotherhood to see the wider world, I sought the company of other Namegivers out of simple curiosity. You will no doubt tell me that curiosity is among our highest virtues because it separates a Namegiver from those living things that care only for survival, and as any obsidiman would, I agree with you. As our saying goes, "The Universe is a puzzle, of which we are all a part. How can we know our place in the puzzle unless we first come to understand all the other parts?" Yet over the many years of my acquaintance with the other races of Barsaive, I have come to realize that more than curiosity can—and must—shape our dealings with them. Would it surprise you, Jarrikos, to know that I call many of the good people of Travar my friends? I speak not of the idle affections between drinking companions, but of a regard as genuine as the feeling I might have for another obsidiman. The only folk I care for more than my Travarian friends, Jarrikos, are you and the others of my own Brotherhood. I began by finding other Namegivers delightfully puzzling, and learned to find them admirable. Swift and hasty they may be, but their hearts are as bold and their souls as steadfast as that of any obsidimen I ever knew—even our own brethren. If you could have seen the courage with which one little band of adventurers faced down the terrible flying Horrors that menaced us—and they had no livelihood in Travar to protect! They could simply have packed up and gone elsewhere!—you would understand why I have come to love these fascinating, wasteful, oddly endearing folk so much. Truly, Jarrikos, there is much that other races can teach

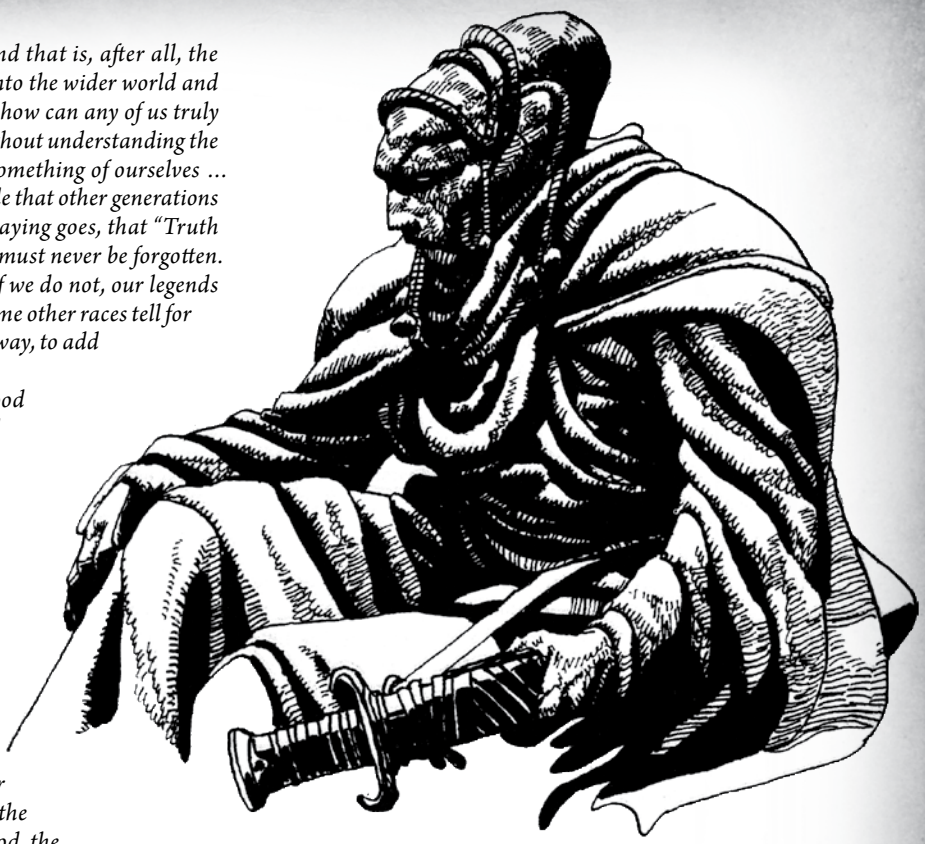


us, about the world and about ourselves. And that is, after all, the only real reason for an obsidiman to go out into the wider world and live among strangers, is it not? To learn? For how can any of us truly understand our own place in the Universe without understanding the places of others? I know our legends tell us something of ourselves … but they only tell us the truths about our people that other generations of obsidimen have learned. I believe, as the saying goes, that "Truth is greater than Time." The truths of the past must never be forgotten. But each of us must somehow add to them. If we do not, our legends become no more than pretty stories such as some other races tell for idle amusement. I suppose I am trying, in my way, to add my truth to the knowledge of our race.

I promise you I will return to the Brotherhood one day. And it goes without saying that should you need me to take my place as Elder, I shall be there with the speed of thought. Until then, beloved brother, I must continue to learn.

Yours with great affection,

Juliak Merris, Merchant of Travar



The following section concerns many aspects of the lives of obsidimen that other Namegivers find most difficult to fathom: the importance of Liferock and Brotherhood, the significance of the Dreaming, and the peculiarities of obsidiman birth and death. Omeyras of Urupa and the merchant Omasu of Travar gave us invaluable help, explaining much of these things themselves as well as pointing us toward other valuable sources. Readers will note that the obsidiman rituals described below commemorate many of the same turning points in life as ours do—birth, coming of age, death—but in a strikingly different manner than that to which we are accustomed. I advise keeping in mind that the often startling differences between obsidiman customs and those of other Namegivers arise from the innate differences between our natures and theirs.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On the Obsidiman Way of Life

An Obsidiman Myth of Creation

— From *An Account of Life Among the Obsidimen*, by the renowned human scholar, Yanno Mammo

The following tale, which I recorded from an obsidiman storyteller in the year 1487 TH outside the village of Kham Bulh, seems to me to convey the way in which obsidimen see their place in the world. Different Brotherhoods across Barsaive recount slightly different versions of the story, but all contain the same basic elements.

In the beginning All was One.

The Earth, Sun, and Moon had no face. The spirits of the Air, the spirits of the Sea, the spirits of the Fire had no face. The Trees, the Namegivers, the beasts, the obsidimen had no face. All were One in the Great Liferock, the endless ocean of molten stone.

Then the Spirit-That-Pervades-All merged with the Great Liferock, and the endless ocean of molten stone split into a chaos of fiery drops whose number could not be counted. For seven days and nights the drops scattered. Some continue to scatter today—these are the stars, the tiny dots of fiery stone that light the sky in the darkness of night, a constant reminder of the chaos that gave birth to all.

After seven days and nights had passed, the hottest of the drops joined together to form the Sun, brother of the Earth. These drops have never cooled, and so the Sun burns still in the sky, a reminder of the featureless molten expanse of the Great Liferock from which all Emerged.

The first drops to cool formed the Moon, sister to the Earth. The Moon still burns itself out in the sky today—glowing bright only to fade into blackness. In this way, the Moon teaches that the light burns out in all one day—but we return to the Liferock to be born again.

Next, the Earth herself formed. As her skin cooled, molten stone inside her pushed itself out and became the spirits of the Air, the spirits of the Sea, and the spirits of Fire. As the days passed, the Earth began longing to return to the Great Liferock, just as the obsidimen longs to return to his Liferock. In her yearning, she stretched toward the fiery stars and the Trees emerged from her. Still, her yearning to return to the Great Liferock continued to burn within her, and soon the Namegivers emerged from her.

The obsidimen formed first and so will remain always the older brothers to the other races of the world. Because of this, obsidimen must watch over the Earth, just as the Elders of a Liferock must return to their Liferock when it is their time and watch over their new brethren. Finally, the beasts emerged from the Earth, so that the obsidimen might observe and see the harmony of spirit and flesh that pervades all.

And so the Sun, the Moon, and Earth; the spirits of the Air, Sea, and Fire; the Trees, the Namegivers, and the beasts—all have different faces, yet all are but drops of the Great Liferock. And the same light, the Spirit-That-Pervades-All, flows through everything.

On the Brotherhood as Family

—Transcribed from the speaking of Omasu, obsidiman merchant of Travar

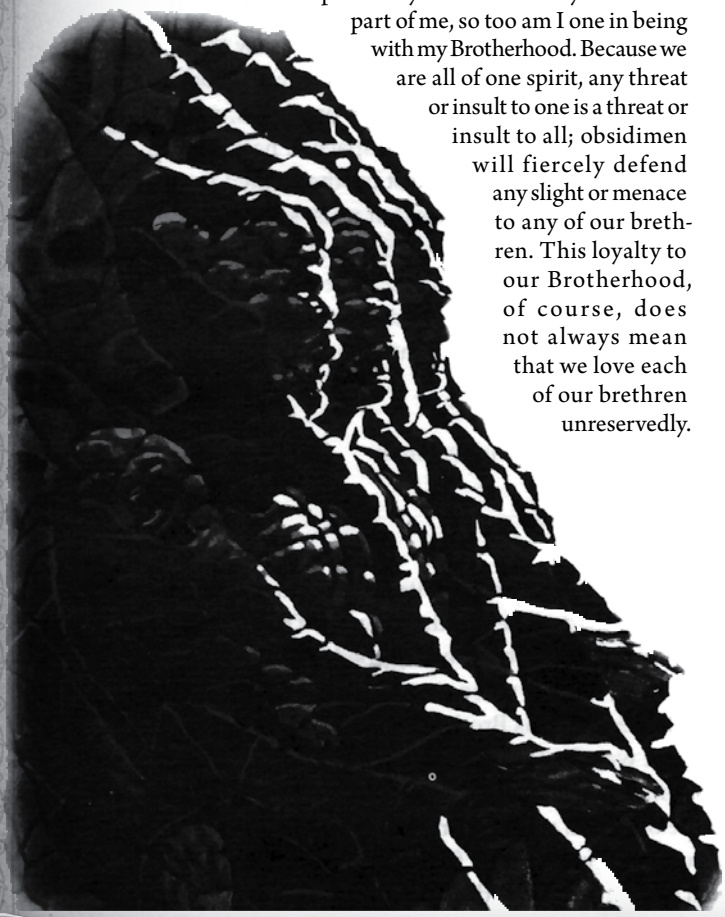
Obsidimen do not have families as most other Namegivers define the word. Rather than having a mother, father, sisters, and brothers, we have what we call our Brotherhood, those obsidimen who arose from a single Liferock. Into this community each of us Emerges at our Awakening, and the members of our Brotherhood teach us from the moment of our Awakening until we learn our Names. The Brotherhood is family, friends, our heritage, and our future. Other Namegivers pass on their heritage and look for their races' survival to their children, the next generation, but obsidimen do not have multiple generations within a Brotherhood as others do. Instead, each Brotherhood is a continually growing community. New members Emerge and older members rejoin the Liferock; in this way the Brotherhood's members change. Throughout the passage of time, the Brotherhood endures.

Some Brotherhoods divide their members into generations. Most often those Brotherhoods whose members all Emerged under the guidance of a given pair of Elders. Once either of these Elders dies, the Brotherhood counts all obsidimen who Emerge henceforth as of a new generation.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

The Nature of the Brotherhood

Obsidimen are forever connected to those of their Brotherhood because all those of a single Brotherhood share the elemental spirit within that Brotherhood's Liferock. As I am a part of my Liferock and my Liferock is part of me, so too am I one in being with my Brotherhood. Because we are all of one spirit, any threat or insult to one is a threat or insult to all; obsidimen will fiercely defend any slight or menace to any of our brethren. This loyalty to our Brotherhood, of course, does not always mean that we love each of our brethren unreservedly.



Obsidimen are as prone to what one might call "sibling rivalry" as any other Namegiver race. Members of a Brotherhood may often dispute and disagree with each other, but these disputes do not detract from our loyalty to each other. Obsidimen and their brethren are like two sons of the same mother who have their differences of opinion, yet would sooner die than desert either their mother or each other when solidarity is needed.

As well as making us profoundly loyal to our brothers, this connection of the spirit gives us certain responsibilities to them throughout our long lives. All members of a Brotherhood, for example, must educate newly Emerged obsidimen throughout the twenty years of their Awakening. Later teachings, such as specific rituals and customs of our people, are reserved for elder members of the Brotherhood, while only the Elders of the Brotherhood know and may teach to their successors the most important of our traditions.

The Elders of a Brotherhood are its two eldest living members. When an Elder dies, the position of Elder passes to the next eldest living member of the Brotherhood so that no Brotherhood is ever without two Elders. The following of this tradition prompts many obsidimen to return to their Liferock as they age, forbearing to bind themselves to those outside their Brotherhood in any way lest an oath conflict with their sacred duty to become Elders in the fullness of time. The following tale, much beloved by those of my Brotherhood, illustrates the importance of the Brotherhood bond over every other we may make during our lives.

I have heard tales sung by Troubadours of other races—not obsidimen—of something called the Great Brotherhood. They say that this Brotherhood partakes of all the elemental spirits residing in all the Liferocks throughout Barsaive and the world. I do not know if these tales are true.

—Lessar Murragh, Troubadour of Kratas

The Tale of Ryuth, Triann, and Skartk

Not so many years ago, three companions traveled the length and breadth of Barsaive, helping to heal the land of the wounds inflicted on it by the Scourge. The first of these companions was a human Wizard Named Triann, the second an ork Beastmaster Named Skarth, and the third an obsidiman Warrior Named Ryuth. Now these three shared countless triumphs and tragedies; many of their friends died at the hands of Horrors and their spawn, yet these three lived on. After years of adventuring, Triann proposed that the three seal their friendship and celebrate their survival with a blood magic oath. Ryuth refused his friends, saying, "I may not swear myself to you. There may come a day when I must abandon you both, though I love you as dearly as life."

At Ryuth's words, Triann and Skarth felt betrayed, as if Ryuth had already abandoned them. They remonstrated with him, as much in sorrow as in anger, demanding to know how he could possibly abandon those who had saved his life many times over. But Ryuth could not tell them. The three continued adventuring together for a time, but Triann and Skarth no longer trusted Ryuth in the way they once had.

One day, Ryuth told his friends that he must leave them. At first believing that their subtle mistrust was driving him away, the Wizard and the Beastmaster felt ashamed. They asked him why he must go, and Ryuth replied, "My Liferock has called me. I must return to it without delay." Then Triann and Skarth were greatly confused, for they knew nothing of the Liferock's hold on obsidiman's hearts. Seeking understanding, they asked if they might accompany Ryuth on his journey, and he graciously

accepted their offer. During the long days of travel, Ryuth told his friends that an Elder of his Brotherhood had died, and that it was Ryuth's duty to take the fallen Elder's place. He had felt the death of his brother from across Barsaive, and knew the time had come to do what he must for his Brotherhood.

When the three reached Ryuth's Liferock they parted company forever, as Ryuth rose to fulfill his duty.

On the Significance of the Liferock

—Transcribed from the speaking of Omeyras of Urupa

I cannot possibly explain in a way that other Namegivers will understand the central place of the Liferock in our lives. I will tell you what I can, so that you and those who read this may understand at least a little of the Liferock that shapes the ways and ideals of obsidimen. Any deeper knowledge of our Liferock, you must discover for yourselves.

Every obsidiman in all the world can tell you (if he chooses) the Name and place of his Liferock and the Names of all obsidimen who have ever sprung from it. We can no more disregard our Liferock than a dwarf might disregard his parents, or an elf his ancestral lineage. The Liferock brings us into the world, shapes what we are, and allows our race to endure. Like our fellow Namegivers, obsidimen are reluctant to speak too freely of a thing as close to our hearts as is our Liferock; for this reason, many of the other races do not know what a Liferock is. Insofar as the tradition of my people allows it, I will describe what the Liferock is and what it is not.

Most other Namegivers believe that the Liferock is the largest rocky area or structure within four hours' walk of an obsidiman's birthplace. Indeed, obsidimen often refer to their Liferock in this manner. The Liferock is, however, considerably more than simply a large rock formation. Obsidimen are born (as others might put it) within four hours' walk of their Liferock because the rock itself is necessary for our existence. Obsidimen cannot come into being except within this short distance from a Liferock.

Though it may look like ordinary stone to other races' eyes, a Liferock contains a living elemental spirit of the earth. This spirit becomes a part of every obsidiman who emerges from the Liferock, and his flesh is part and parcel of the rock itself. In flesh and in spirit, obsidimen are forever one with our Liferock. In addition to being the source of Emergence, or birth, a Liferock is also the core of the Brotherhood, our refuge from the world when necessary, and the place where all obsidimen choose to die.

Unfortunately, no information about the true physical nature of Liferocks exists anywhere among our records. If it had, we would certainly have included it in this document. The Library of Throal would be most grateful to anyone who can remedy this lack.

—Thom Edrull

Our oneness with the Liferock makes us loyal to it even unto death, in a way akin to a dwarf's loyalty to his family or an elf's undying fealty to the past glory of the Elven Court at Wyrm Wood. All obsidimen feel this intense loyalty and love toward their Liferock, save those unfortunate few driven insane by the touch of Horrors or by prolonged self-Dreaming.

Like all of my brethren, I have heard tales of obsidimen who have forsaken their Liferock and Brotherhood, but such tainted individuals are mercifully few. I have never personally known one.

The following brief text comes from The Compleat Magical Arts, a definitive magical treatise dated 435 TH.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On Names and True Patterns in a Liferock

A Liferock is most often Named by the members of the Brotherhood that arose from it, and they keep this Name a closely guarded secret. As with all other Named things, the Liferock has a True pattern, determined by its Name, and so knowledge of the Name gives power over the True pattern. A Liferock, however, houses a spirit made of many spirits, and so its True pattern is made of many smaller True patterns. These patterns belong to the Brotherhood who emerged from the Liferock and they are connected to the Liferock's greater pattern, just as the obsidimen themselves are connected to the substance and spirit of the Liferock. Therefore, to learn the Name of the Liferock confers power over the True patterns of all the obsidimen connected to it.

It may be that the obsidimen of a Liferock's Brotherhood are each pattern items of the Liferock. Such a connection would be all the more reason to keep the Name of one's Liferock secret.

—Derrat, Wizard of Yistaine

On Birth and Coming of Age

—From An Account of Life Among The Obsidimen, by the renowned human scholar, Yanno Mammo

Obsidimen refer to the long process of what we would call birthing, childhood, and coming of age with a single word: Emergence. This event occurs in three stages: the Emergence Ritual, First Merging, and Awakening. The Emergence Ritual corresponds most closely to birth, though it is unlike any birth that I have ever seen. According to my friend Hrauth, who has told me much of obsidimen ways, a new obsidimen emerges when the Liferock deems it so. As to how and why the Liferock creates a new obsidiman, Hrauth tells me that only the Council of Four has such wisdom. When a new obsidiman is to Emerge, the Liferock summons the Elders of the Brotherhood to the Brotherhood's birth cave, always within four hours' walk from the Liferock. Once the body Emerges, the Elders bring it to the Liferock for the First Merging.

By way of comparing the Emergence Ritual and First Merging with birth as I understand it, Hrauth related to me the following tale of a troll birth he had witnessed.

Observations on Rituals Surrounding Birth

I confess that the Emergence of my friend Vald'har's child was one of the more bewildering aspects of troll life that I ever witnessed—and that is saying something, for almost everything Vald'har's clan did I found bewildering. Fascinating, to be sure, but alien to me in many respects. I knew, of course, that the Emergence of a troll would of necessity be different from that of obsidimen, but I had not truly considered how different it would seem.

The first strangeness was that no one knew precisely when the child would Emerge. Obsidimen always know when new life is to Emerge from the Liferock, down to the very second (as other Namegivers measure such things). The Liferock itself tells the Elders of our Brotherhoods when Emergence will happen, and where they may find the birth cave from which our new brother's body will come forth.

The Emergence of the new troll came suddenly, taking everyone by surprise. Vald'har's wife made an odd grunting sound and then stood up slowly, a look of pain on her face. The pain I did not understand; our Liferock feels no pain when bringing forth obsidimen. I felt sorry for Vald'har's wife, that she should suffer during something as wondrous as Emergence.

The second strangeness was the swiftness of it all. I had expected that Emergence would take several days, at least; among us, the first stage of Emergence alone can take a moon-cycle of time from beginning to end. And that does not include any of the First Merging, wherein a new obsidiman receives his elemental spirit, but only the Emergence of the physical shell! I knew the troll's Emergence would be faster, but did not expect that it would take scarcely a heartbeat of time. Also, there was no chanting. When the youngest of my Brotherhood Emerged, our Elders chanted and sang to aid him. The trolls sat mostly silent and drank.

Then suddenly, Vald'har entered his house and came outside with a squirming bundle in his arms. He thrust it at me, and for a moment I was confused; what was this tiny thing that kicked and flailed and made such a noise? Surely not Vald'har's Emerged one! I had forgotten that the newly Emerged among other Namegivers have not attained their full growth. Among us, the newly Emerged are what others would call "full grown." They are as large as any obsidiman, possessed of the same appearance, able to stand and move with the same degree of skill. The youngest of my brethren certainly did not engage in such random swinging of limbs, nor make such meaningless sounds, as did Vald'har's newly Emerged troll-child!

Then came the greatest strangeness of all. There was no First Merging! Among us, the First Merging is a vital part of Emergence and takes a hundred years. Such a length of time is needed for the melding of an obsidiman spirit to the shell of his body. And a new obsidiman must learn much in that time. During the First Merging the Liferock teaches him its Name and history, the Names of all his brothers, and everything of significance that the Emerged one's Brotherhood have ever learned about the world. I worried that my friend's child was missing such an important experience, until I remembered that other Namegivers Emerge with both spirit and flesh, and are born knowing nothing of their lineage or their history. This seems most strange to me, that others can Emerge without a scrap of the knowledge that we must take a hundred years to acquire from our Liferock.



Obsidimen appear fascinated with children of the other Namegiver races. An obsidiman will "play" with children for hours, allowing them to climb on his rock-like body, never ignoring their prattle, never getting bored. Many believe this wonder stems from the lack of obsidimen children. I wonder if perhaps obsidimen simply yearn to see the world through the innocent eyes of the child? Interestingly, children never seem to fear obsidimen. It is as if a bond exists between the children and the obsidimen that others may never understand.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records



On the Ritual of Awakening

—From the writings of Karon Foll, Scholar of the Library of Throal

I was privileged to witness the Awakening of an obsidiman, the rock-brothers' equivalent to our own rituals of Naming and coming of age. I found it a most fascinating experience, quite different from the ways practiced among my own race. Elves and most other Namegivers regard Naming and coming of age as marking two different milestones along the road that we call existence; the obsidimen see the two as so intimately intertwined that they are essentially a single, long, drawn-out event. (Long and drawn out by our standards, that is. We elves are a long-lived race compared to many, but the lives of obsidimen make our centuries seem as brief as a single day. To the rock-brothers, the twenty-year span that they call Awakening is perhaps the equivalent of an hour or two.)

I traveled with the sixteen members of the Brotherhood to the Liferock from which their youngest brother would soon awaken. It was a happy journey; the Brotherhood spoke little, but hummed a joyous melody whose lowest vibrations I felt through the soles of my feet. The very air seemed charged with their happy anticipation of the ritual to come. My particular friend among this Brotherhood, Ovalos, smiled at me often. The glow in his dark eyes made me think of the breathtaking beauty of a still lake in the moonlight.

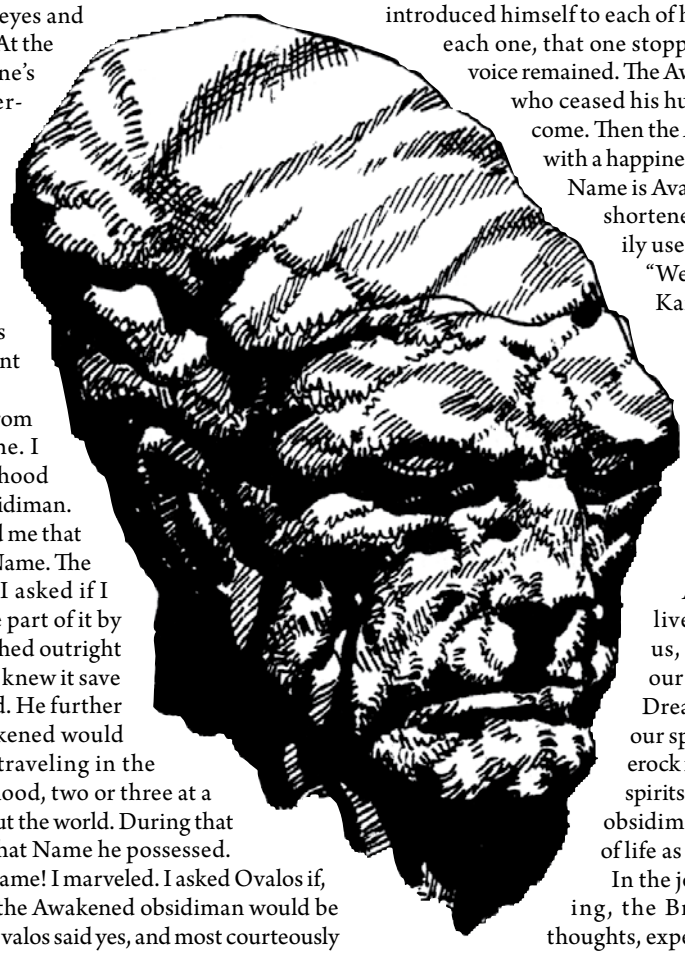
As we drew near to the Liferock, the Brotherhood halted. Their melody ceased, and an excited murmur flowed among them like a sudden wind among the tall trees. The two Eldest of the Brotherhood continued toward the Liferock, a sturdy outcropping of red-tinted sandstone. Upon reaching it, they leaned against it and—there is no other word for it—melted into the outcropping as a pat of butter melts into a fresh, hot loaf of bread. As their bodies flowed into the Liferock, a shimmer of music echoed in the air. To this day, I cannot remember the tune of this music, save that it was the most indescribably lovely thing I have ever heard. It seemed to me that the Liferock was singing.

Around me, the Brotherhood began once more to hum. This melody I could follow; after several seconds of hesitation and an



encouraging look from Ovalos, I joined in the wordless song. Being framed by Nature for a tenor, I sang two octaves or so above my friends. My high voice sounded thin and strange next to their deep rumbling, and a few of them cast amused glances my way. But I did not mind their laughing at me, for I felt they meant it in a spirit of friendliness.

We had hummed for several hours and my throat was beginning to ache, when the "singing" of the Liferock rose sharp and loud above our melody. The Brotherhood's hum fell abruptly silent. Before us, the red of the Liferock deepened almost to the color of blood, and it seemed to me that I could see the very life energy moving within it. Then the rock began to flow outward, and the shapes of three obsidimen resolved themselves from it. The two Elders stood with the Awakened one between them, who blinked his golden eyes and looked around him in wonder. At the movement of the Awakened one's head, the assembled Brotherhood gave a mighty shout of joy; they swarmed toward him and engulfed him, dancing around him and spinning him in wild circles. Over and over, they said a word that I cannot remember well enough to write down, but that Ovalos had taught me. The word meant "welcome!"



At length, Ovalos broke off from the mad dance and came to me. I asked who among the Brotherhood would Name the Awakened obsidiman. Ovalos looked amused and told me that the Awakened already had his Name. The Liferock had given it to him. I asked if I might know it, or at least some part of it by which to call him. Ovalos laughed outright at that, and he said that no one knew it save the Liferock and the Awakened. He further explained to me that the Awakened would spend the next twenty years traveling in the company of all of the Brotherhood, two or three at a time, learning at first-hand about the world. During that learning, he would discover what Name he possessed.

Twenty years to learn one's Name! I marveled. I asked Ovalos if, at the end of the twenty years, the Awakened obsidiman would be what my folk would call adult. Ovalos said yes, and most courteously invited me to return to this spot twenty years hence to witness the end of the Awakening. I accepted with great joy and gratitude.

I met the Brotherhood near their Liferock, having most peacefully and profitably spent the twenty years since last we met. They exuded an almost fierce joy, greater even than the happy delirium with which they had greeted the beginning of their brother's Awakening. The Awakened one arrived last, accompanied by the two Elders of the Brotherhood. We all walked up to the Liferock and gathered around it in a loose circle, but we did not touch it.

The Brotherhood began to hum, a different melody than the one they had sung before. Their chant had a strong rhythm, one that I could scarcely help tapping my foot to. The rhythm spread throughout my body, and I saw (to my astonishment) that we had all begun to sway in time to the music. Above the pounding beat, the Eldest spoke. Throughout that morning, his words washed over us like the thundering roar of the ocean. Suddenly, at the precise moment when the noonday sun stood overhead, the Eldest fell silent. The Awakened one stepped out of the circle, and set one hand and one foot upon the Liferock. Then the Awakened one began to chant. I recognized some of the words; he was thanking the Liferock for having given him birth, and thanking his Brotherhood for having taught him the true meaning of the knowledge with which he had first Awakened. (Ovalos later explained to me that when an obsidiman first Awakens, his Liferock has told him everything about his Brotherhood, his lineage, his Liferock itself, the obsidiman race, and his own inner essence—but such knowledge has only half its meaning without experience in the world. It was this experience that his brethren gave him during the twenty years of wandering.) Finally, the Awakened spoke his Name. The sound of his Name went on for quite some time. Then the Awakened fell silent, and the Brotherhood sang with him a single soft, sweet chord. The Awakened stepped away from the Liferock and introduced himself to each of his brethren in turn. As he spoke to each one, that one stopped singing, until only the Eldest's voice remained. The Awakened said his Name to the Eldest, who ceased his humming and spoke the word of welcome. Then the Awakened one came to me, smiling with a happiness as bright as the summer sun. "My Name is Avaleh," he said, calling himself by the shortened Name that obsidimen customarily use with other Namegiver races.

"Welcome," I answered. "My Name is Karon Foll."

On the Time Known as the Dreaming

—Transcribed from the speaking of Omasu of Travar

At certain times in obsidimen's lives, or whenever the fancy strikes us, we merge with our Liferock and our Brotherhood in a state we call the Dreaming. In the Dreaming, we rejoin our spirits directly to the spirit in the Liferock from which we came, and also to the spirits of our brothers present with us. For obsidimen, the Dreaming is as much a part of life as sleeping, eating, and resting.

In the joining of spirits during the Dreaming, the Brotherhood of a Liferock share thoughts, experiences, and strengths. In this way, we obsidimen keep our history alive. Because even obsidimen can only absorb so much knowledge, however, we retain and pass on only such information as pertains to the Liferock, the Brotherhood, and tales and legends of our brethren and race. Each Liferock and Brotherhood remembers its own history, while all the Liferocks together remember the history of obsidimen. Dreaming with the Liferock also takes place between members of differing Brotherhoods; this is one of the ways in which we share stories from Brotherhood to Brotherhood.

Dreaming Without a Liferock

Obsidimen can enter the Dreaming away from the Liferock by merging with each other, in which the bodies and spirits of two or more obsidimen become one. Such joining of spirits without the sheltering presence of the greater spirit of a Liferock poses great hazards; to accomplish it, we must draw on the strengths of each other's spirits, a draining experience that eventually may weaken our minds' grip on reality. Obsidimen may maintain such a Dream-

ing for up to ten years (as other Namegivers measure time) without ill effect. Beyond that time, however, the drain of sharing spirits begins to take its toll on the participants, until the constant drain drives them mad. This fate unfortunately befell many obsidimen unable to reach their Liferock before the Scourge descended. According to tales and legends, the madness of prolonged self-Dreaming can be cured by the Council of Four, the guardians of obsidimen ways who live within the Valley of Elders.

The so-called Council of Four and Valley of Elders are described further on in this text; unfortunately, our fragmentary sources do not give us much detail.

—Thom Edrull

Some obsidimen enter the Dreaming in this way to seal oaths and promises, using the Dreaming as other Namegivers use blood magic oaths. Obsidimen swear such a Dreaming oath during a five-day ritual, in which the participants enter self-Dreaming and make their pledges to each other. I regret that I cannot speak more of this ritual; it is one of our sacred ways, and so must be hidden from outsiders.

Dreaming During the Scourge

Almost all obsidimen alive today Emerged just before or during the Scourge. Of those born during the Scourge, many were kept from completing their First Merging by their elder brothers until the dark times ended; the older obsidimen thus spared their younger kin the pain of witnessing the Horrors' ravaging of the world. Most of those born before the coming of the Horrors hid from them in the Dreaming.

While other Namegivers frantically built their kaers and citadels in which to weather the coming catastrophe, most obsidimen simply returned to our Liferocks and merged with them. This Dreaming, however, was different from the Dreaming that most of us enter now. Rather than simply melding into the Liferock's surface, we flowed deep into its inmost structure, knowing that the hard stone would remain largely impervious to the physical assaults of the Horrors. Our astral protection from the destroyers-of-life came from the act of becoming one with the spirit of the Liferock; as our smaller spirits merged with its greater spirit, we created a whole larger than the sum of its parts, with the power to act as an astral barrier in the same way as the Therans' *Rites of Protection and Passage*. In most cases, this barrier withstood the Horrors' astral onslaught.

Sadly, some Brotherhoods succumbed. The Horrors managed to crack the outer shell of some Liferocks and slaughter those within; the spirits of other Liferocks gave way before the Horrors' dreadful might. Some obsidimen, unable either to reach their Liferock or find shelter in another race's kaer, joined together desperately in self-Dreaming in the hope of riding out the Scourge. Their bodies survived in this way; their minds, alas, became fertile feeding grounds for the Horrors and their minions.

Those obsidimen unable to return to their Liferocks but fortunate enough to find shelter with other Namegivers entered their own odd form of the Dreaming; most of these lapsed into hibernation a few years after the sealing of the kaers. According to a few accounts, some Brotherhoods chose to reinforce their protection by building citadel-like domes around their Liferocks, thus combining Theran safeguards with their own natural defenses. All of these of which we know survived the Scourge intact.

The following is an excerpt from an ancient treatise dictated in the fourth century TH by the famed obsidiman scholar Emalhas to his windling scribe Donnacha. Emalhas is one of the few obsidiman scholars ever to have lived; on behalf of the Great Library, I thank Omasu of Travar for his selfless donation of this priceless text.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On the Final Return to the Liferock

Unlike many Namegivers, we obsidimen do not fear death. We welcome it when it comes, for death to an obsidiman is something of a homecoming. Indeed, the obsidiman word for death—*olriutaquan-otskirrocletl*—literally translates as "return to the Liferock after walking among the others." Because every obsidiman receives part of the elemental spirit of his Liferock when he Emerges, he remains intimately connected to his Liferock even though he may live far away from it for hundreds of years among the other Namegivers of Barsaive. When the obsidiman "dies," his spirit returns to his Liferock and rejoins the elemental spirit that dwells within it—he literally comes home to the place of his birth (to use a term closer to others' experience). The obsidiman no longer exists as an entity separate from the Liferock. His physical body becomes part of the Liferock, and the elemental spirit of the Liferock absorbs his spirit. And from the renewed spirit of the Liferock new obsidimen Emerge, thus completing the never-ending cycle of Return and Emergence. It is as simple as our old proverb: "As those of the Brotherhood Return, so do new among the Brotherhood Emerge."

The cycle of Return and Emergence does not mean that each obsidiman spirit re-Emerges many times over the centuries. Instead, when one of us Returns to the elemental spirit of the Liferock he becomes wholly a part of the greater spirit. When a new obsidiman Emerges, the Liferock forms a new spirit from its elemental essence; this new spirit melds with the physical body created during the Ritual of Emergence.

A most learned obsidiman of Bartertown once explained Return and Emergence in this way: the Liferock, he said, is like a large lump of clay, from which small amounts are drawn and figures carved. Eventually, the figures are returned to the lump of clay and new figures are formed from the same source.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On the Desire to Return in Body

All obsidimen wish to be returned to the Liferock and the care of the Brotherhood when we die. Only by returning physically to the Liferock can we be certain that our bodies will rejoin it as our spirits do. Whether or not obsidimen return in body as well as in spirit, the earth is abundant enough to let new obsidimen Emerge. But it is our way to Return to the Liferock at death so that we may renew our race in body as well as in spirit. Indeed, this need to Return is so strong that aged obsidimen often choose to return to their Liferock when they sense that their time of Return draws near. They may even enter the Dreaming, thus ensuring that their bodies will be within the Liferock at the time of their spirits' passage into it. Among many Brotherhoods, it is the custom for Elders to spend much of their time in the Dreaming, in anticipation of their Return.

When one of our Brotherhood Returns, his death strengthens the elemental spirit in the Liferock, which then calls out to its Brotherhood in mixed sorrow and gladness. This call tells an older member of a Brotherhood when he must become an Elder. It tells all the brethren that they must gather to fittingly mark the passing of one of their own.

On the Ritual Surrounding a Return to the Liferock

—From the writings of Coiras Broadback, khavro'am of Medhina

The death of the Eldest was, strangely enough, a happy occasion for the Brotherhood. Perhaps "happy" is the wrong word; certainly my obsidimen friends conducted themselves with a solemnity that even the gloomiest-minded soul would have found fitting. But their solemnity held joy within it; they did not grieve for their brother or for their own loss of him. Rather, the solemnity of the occasion derived from its sacredness.

The ritual marking the Eldest's death was a simple affair. It seems the Eldest had felt his approaching death—or, as the rest of the Brotherhood put it, "he knew that the time of his Return drew near"— and several days before his actual "death" had merged with the Liferock in what obsidimen call "the Dreaming." The Brotherhood simply surrounded the Liferock, each of them touching it with one hand, and chanted. The new Eldest began the chant, singing a single melody line that continued unbroken for the space of half an hour. Then he began to repeat the line, and had sung no more than thirty syllables when the next eldest brother joined in. Each of the brethren, from oldest to youngest, sang their way through several lines of melody, in what must surely be the longest, most complex, and most moving example of round-singing that these old ears have ever heard. I am no scholar of music, and so I cannot even begin to write down the notes of their death-chant. After listening to it for half the day, however, I found I could discern words; though whether they had sung all morning without words or I had simply failed to perceive them, I cannot say. I attempted to translate the words of the chant, and include a fragment of my poor efforts below:

It is the time
it is the time
it is the time of Return
Ahivras, our brother, has gone from the world
but not from his brethren/not from his brethren
Rejoice for Ahivras
rejoice for our brother
our Eldest is one with our heart
The Liferock surrounds him
the Liferock reclaims him
the Liferock becomes him

The Brotherhood ceased their chanting eight days later. In all those days and nights of song, they had not once repeated a single word or melody line, save for the repetition with which they had begun their round. They stood in the silence, with an expectant air. Olihos, who had become Eldest upon the Return of his brother, stepped into the center of the circle of obsidimen and began to speak a series of long, rolling syllables that I did not recognize. After several minutes, I realized that Olihos was speaking the Name of the obsidiman who was to become this Brotherhood's new Elder. When Olihos ceased speaking, the new Elder stepped forward, and I saw that it was the Troubadour Eyorus. Olihos held out his right hand to Eyorus, who took it. Together they walked to the vast pillar of granite that was their Liferock, and arranged themselves so that one of them stood on one side of it and one on the other, all without breaking their handclasp. Without a sound, both of them rippled and flowed into the Liferock, wherein they remained for several weeks. The Brotherhood told me that Olihos had taken Eyorus into the Dreaming, by which custom each obsidiman in time becomes an Elder.

On Obsidiman Culture and Myths

—From the opening remarks made at the annual Troubadour gathering in Bartertown, 12–22 Mawag, 1505 TH

In the obsidiman cosmology, all things descend from the primordial sea of molten stone called the Great Liferock. The Earth, Sun, Moon, all plant and animal life, even the Namegivers themselves—all have a common ancestry, and so all things form a single whole, animated and united by the Spirit-That-Pervades-All.

Thus, the obsidiman seeks to experience the Spirit as fully as possible, to attune himself to this grand cosmic harmony. And because all phenomena are manifestations of the Spirit, the obsidiman seeks to live in the Spirit by experiencing and studying all things. And so the obsidiman studies the other Namegivers, the nature of magic, and virtually any idea that can be expressed in either written form or thought. Or he might live with other Namegivers, or adventure, or fight the Horrors. Each individual obsidiman's life becomes a quest for knowledge, a search for consciousness. Similarly, obsidiman culture can be viewed as a document of this same quest. Obsidiman art, craft, music, and most importantly, myths and folklore record and embody the race's search for understanding.

Mythology and folklore are probably the most important means obsidimen use to teach and transmit the obsidiman way. Liferocks, Brotherhoods, "lost" obsidimen, the origins of the Universe, the First Brotherhood, the Last Liferocks—all of these topics are frequent subjects of obsidiman myths and tales. The obsidimen use these tales to explain the world and the place of obsidimen in it.

New obsidimen learn many of these tales during the First Merging. Generally, the Elders of the Brotherhood recount the stories, or different members of the Brotherhood may adopt particular tales and recount them for new obsidimen. Important stories include the tale of Orkaon, which teaches the importance of learning, and the story of Briaaggon the Braggart, which demonstrates the dangers of ego and self-importance.

The Council of Four ensures the uniformity of these teachings and traditions. The origins of the council remain unknown, but many observers believe the group may be as old as the obsidiman race. Each member of the council corresponds to one of the four universal elements of the obsidiman cosmology: fire, water, air, and earth. Tradition requires every obsidiman to make a pilgrimage to the Valley of the Elders and enter the Dreaming with the Council of Four at least once during his life. Apparently, the council examines the obsidiman's beliefs during this Dreaming and corrects any deviations from accepted ways that he may exhibit. In this way, the council shapes the development of obsidiman traditions and culture.



Many scholars express skepticism about the existence of the Valley of the Elders, the legendary stronghold of obsidiman culture. Most claim that stories of the mountain city, which seem as old as Barsaive itself, are based on an ancient obsidiman fable rather than on a real city. Obsidimen refuse to confirm or

deny the existence of the site. Whatever the truth, stories of the mysterious "City in the Clouds" continue to circulate throughout Barsaive, and explorers continue to search for the city. The first of the following passages is excerpted from what is reputedly the only known description of the valley. The origins of the text remain unknown. The second is a tale recounted to me by Omeyras of Urupa

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Concerning the Valley of the Elders and the Council of Four

I cannot remember how long our journey took, for after the first two weeks or so I lost track of the time. We might have walked under the thick black canopy of trees for days, perhaps for weeks. The sunlight did not reach the ground, and so we could mark the time only by our own weariness. Silently, I prayed to the Passions for relief from the monotony. Later, I cursed myself for those requests when Kon the dwarf fell ill with a fever and died before our eyes.

By the time we reached the edge of the forest each of us had retreated into our own thoughts. Even the Universe herself seemed to mock us, for when we emerged from the dark woods we found jagged mountain peaks enshrouded in cold, wet fog. The sky was a mass of formless gray that seemed to lighten during what we came to call "day" and darkened slightly during our "nights."

Then, just as it seemed the Passions had forsaken us, we reached the crest of an icy peak and beheld a valley of emerald forests. Countless azure lakes dotted the green like beads of lapis lazuli, glittering in the sunlight that streamed through a patch of open sky hovering over the valley. A wide, meandering river connected the patches of blue, and four massive rock faces rose from the corners of the valley floor like giant sentinels. We stood in silence for several minutes, mesmerized by the sight. I stared at the stone structures, and a vague uneasiness began to flutter in the pit of my stomach. Something about them seemed unnatural. Their spacing seemed too regular to be the work of nature, and their smooth faces—though obviously weathered by thousands of years of wind and rain—looked almost chiseled. Dread and awe flooded my heart as I realized those massive pillars had been made by Namegivers.

I studied the nearest one and made out a large carving across one of its sides that unmistakably depicted flames. I looked over at another and recognized waves cut into its face. At that point the words of the ancient-looking elf came back to me. "And there the four elements reside—Air, Water, Fire, and Earth—each housed in a temple of stone."

We had found the City in the Clouds, the Valley of the Elders.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Omeyras of Urupa

Soon after the first obsidimen emerged from the Great Liferock, they set out to explore their new home, scattering across the lands like the dried seeds of a thundrahead flower carried on the wind. For countless moons the obsidimen remained dispersed, traveling alone among the mountains and the forests, the rivers and the jungles, the deserts, and across the oceans of the Earth. Those obsidimen encountered countless villages and cities inhabited by dwarfs, t'skrang, orks, trolls, and humans, all with strange and wonderful ways and thoughts. Many of these obsidimen began living among the Namegivers they encountered, eager to learn their customs that they might better understand the harmony of all things.

Sometimes, these obsidimen encountered other stone men during their travels, and they would share their new understandings in the Dreaming. But as the world grew older, the obsidimen found their words held less meaning for each other. Soon, stories of obsidimen who had lost their way, who no longer respected the Spirit-That-Pervades-All, began to appear.

Then, moved by some mysterious impulse, the scattered stone men all began returning to the Valley of the First Liferock, from which all obsidimen had Emerged. From the mountains and jungles, the forests and rivers; from the plains and the seashores the obsidimen returned to the Valley.

When all had gathered, they entered the Dreaming. During that time, the Spirit-That-Pervades-All spoke to the obsidimen. "Like thundrahead seeds on the wind you have scattered, carried to the corners of the Earth. Some of you fell in strange soil and foreign climes and sprouted strange new flowers and leaves until you could no longer be called thundrahead flowers. If this continues, the day may come when no one remembers what a thundrahead flower looks like, a day when no one remembers the true meaning of the obsidiman way."

"Remember you are brothers in the Liferock. As with all things, the Spirit-That-Pervades-All flows through you. Remember you are children of the Sun and the Moon, and brothers to the spirits of the Air, Water, Fire, and Earth. So that you may not forget the ways of the obsidimen, each of you must return to this valley during your years among the Namegivers. The four eldest of you, the first who Emerged from the Liferock, will reside in this valley. This Council of Four will sit in place of the spirits of the Air, Fire, Water, and the Earth, and hold the obsidiman way in their Dreamings. When each obsidiman returns to the valley, he will merge with the four so that the ways of the obsidimen will remain, so that the thundrahead will always recognize the thundrahead even if it sprouts new flowers."

Then thunder rumbled through the valley, ending the Dreaming. Sheets of black rain blocked the sun, and for four days all was darkness. When the storm finally passed, four great towers of stone stood in the corners of the valley. The first tower's face showed seeds carried on a wind—we call this tower the Temple of the Air. The second tower's face showed flames and the third tower's face, waves. We call these the Temple of Fire and the Temple of the Waters. A carving of a field with trees, Namegivers, and beasts emerging from it decorated the face of the last tower, the one we call the Temple of the Earth.

And to this day, obsidimen return to the Valley of the Elders, to join in the Dreaming with the Council of Four that none may ever forget the ways of the obsidimen.

The following passage comes from an address by the famed elven art critic, Vasaarius, delivered at the Royal Academy of Wyrm Wood centuries before the Scourge. Apparently, the assembled audience and the scribe who recorded the address showed little sympathy for Vasaarius' provocative ideas, for the scribe notes that after Vasaarius' views on so-called obsidiman 'art' became clear, the assembled students and artists began to rebut him with raised voices. When Vasaarius continued undisturbed, many began wrenching the seats from the amphitheater rows and flinging them toward the speaker in a show of justifiable anger at the ridiculous ideas he was expounding. Eventually, two guards escorted the evil elf from the stage.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On Artistic Endeavor

The idea of obsidiman art has long been a subject of speculation among the Namegiver races of Barsaive, elves included. Sadly, most such discussions conclude by dismissing the idea that obsidimen create anything that can truly be called art. And if such critics allow that obsidimen do produce art, they usually accompany such pronouncements with condescending commentary on the "primi-

tive" nature of such works and exhortations that obsidiman artists continue their work in the hope that one day their creations may match those of other Namegiver races.

I, however, would suggest that obsidimen do indeed create works of art. Furthermore, I would posit that obsidiman art is among the most advanced and important—quite possibly the most advanced and important—art being produced in Barsaive. And I also suggest that the easy dismissal of obsidiman works speaks more of the provincial, chauvinistic, narrow-minded attitudes of Barsaivian art critics than of the works themselves. But perhaps I judge our critics too harshly, for obsidiman art is truly unlike that of any other Namegiver race. Indeed, the very characteristics that give it unique power make it difficult for the average Barsaivian to comprehend and appreciate it. I truly hope my address today may in some small way remedy this unfortunate situation.

To understand and appreciate any art, first one must understand the origins and motivations of such art—the soil and seeds from which the works spring, if you will. In the case of obsidiman art, the deeply held belief in the harmony of all things forms the soil. The never-ending quest to more directly experience and live this harmony, to strip away all that separates the individual from it, forms the seed of all obsidiman art.

Obsidimen believe that all natural phenomena are manifestations of a grand cosmic harmony. As an outgrowth of this belief, the individual obsidiman continually strives to make himself a conduit through which harmony can manifest. The obsidiman artist strives to subsume his own individuality so that this cosmic harmony can flow through him and manifest in his work. Thus, the obsidiman artist would never "sign" a work to proclaim it the creation of a single individual. Because most other Namegiver races value the individual voice or vision above all in their arts, they see the anonymous nature of obsidiman art as a serious deficiency, as proof of its primitiveness, or even evidence that it is not really "art" at all.

The same soil and seed—belief in a universal harmony and the attempt to live in this harmony—produces art with a seemingly detached, unemotional viewpoint. Again, these qualities are often viewed as serious deficiencies by other Namegivers, who seem to value the passionate, emotionally charged viewpoint of the individual in all arts.

The soil and seed of harmony seems to account for the forms that obsidiman art takes as well. While much of the art produced by other Namegiver races tends toward representational works that celebrate the individual, obsidiman art is concerned with a metaphysical reality that, paradoxically, manifests itself through natural phenomena but at the same time transcends it. Representational art, the "realistic" reproduction of natural phenomena, is redundant in the eyes of the obsidiman artist, for such works only become another veil separating the viewer from universal harmony. Instead of representational works, the obsidiman artist strives to create pieces that function as natural phenomena themselves; that become objects of contemplation through which the viewer may directly experience universal harmony. Thus, obsidiman works are usually abstract or extremely similar to natural phenomena, for this is the only way to truly express the timeless truth of existence. The uniqueness of these forms causes many other Namegiver races to fail to recognize obsidiman works as art. For example, an obsidiman artist might carefully select and plant a grove of trees or cultivate a trout pond and declare it art.

The perpetual growth and decay of such sites through the years might seem an ideal expression of universal harmony to an obsidiman. But another Namegiver would likely see no more than a "simple" grove or brook. And the abstract nature of much obsidiman art leaves many Namegivers scratching their heads, attempting to discern the "subject" depicted in the work rather than experiencing the work as a natural phenomenon worthy of contemplation in its own right.



On Obsidiman Craft

Obsidimen seem unlikely craftsmen. Their large hands seem ill suited to fine handiwork, and their seeming preoccupation with the metaphysical would seem to preclude much interest in physical objects. Yet the stone men produce objects of perhaps the finest craftsmanship in all of Barsaive. I believe this results from the obsidiman sense of time and their striving for harmony in all things.

As you may well know, obsidimen are among the longest living of all the Namegivers. Because they see their physical life as merely a transitory stage in their existence, they do not concern themselves with the time a task may consume. Indeed, obsidiman craftsmen have been known to spend years creating a single item. To other Namegivers, this may indicate infinite patience or incredible laziness, yet none can dispute the quality of the finished piece of handiwork.

I believe that the notion of universal harmony contributes to the wonderful craftsmanship of obsidimen as well as their art. The obsidiman views all objects—even things as simple as water jugs or spinning wheels—as embodying this harmony, and so even these seemingly mundane pieces become something akin to sacred objects. When seen in this light, it seems perfectly appropriate for an obsidimen craftsman to spend years on a single project. Also like the obsidiman artist, the obsidiman craftsman seeks to transcend his own ego when fashioning a piece. Ideally, the item dictates its

own design rather than the vanity or cleverness of the craftsman.

As a result of these ways of looking at the world, obsidiman craftsmen produce simple items whose unadorned design and uncompromising craftsmanship gives them a stark beauty many often overlook. To more fully illustrate this point, I give you the words of an obsidiman craftsman to his apprentice: "Your works should resemble natural objects. A bird has wings because it must fly, not because wings are pleasing to look at, even though they may be so. A river flows in a particular path because it is the fastest way to the ocean, not because its creator plots it so. When you fashion an object, let the task of the object determine its design and materials. Do not add adornment for its own sake; do not create designs to demonstrate your skill or cleverness. When you make a hammer, make a hammer and nothing else. When you make a sword, make a sword and nothing else."

To illustrate how the obsidiman view of time affects obsidiman craftsmanship, I have chosen the following set of letters. As the reader will note, the obsidiman view of time has a profound effect on almost everything they do.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

14 Strassa 1491

Greetings Gendellius,

I am writing regarding the commission we discussed earlier this month. I was reviewing my books and realized that in my excitement at the prospect of the fine sword you are crafting for me, I neglected to ask you when the piece will be finished! Please do not misinterpret this missive as an attempt to hurry your work—I merely wish to know when you expect to finish the sword.

Peace and prosperity always, Torko

4 Veltom 1491

Greetings Torko,

As we discussed when you commissioned the sword, estimating the time consumed by such a work is very difficult. In most cases I do not even try. One cannot hurry the delicate work of fashioning a true, balanced sword, a simple fact a knowledgable dwarf as yourself must realize. But I realize most Namegivers lack the patience of the obsidimen, and so I will tell you I expect to work at least another six months before the sword is ready.

Yours in harmony, Gendellius

Teayu 1491

Greetings Gendellius,

Eight months have now passed, and I am writing to inquire after my sword. I trust you have already finished or at least are near completing the work and would greatly appreciate word from you regarding the matter.

Peace and prosperity always, Torko



Teayu 1491

Greetings Torko,

I apologize for not writing you sooner, but as you may well know, we obsidimen do not feel time's passage with the same urgency other Namegivers do. To answer your question: no, I have not completed the sword. The work is progressing steadily, however, and I will write you when I finish the task, you can be assured. I ask again for your patience, and I promise that you will judge the finished weapon well worth the wait.

I remain yours in harmony, Gendellius

Teayu 1492

Greetings Gendellius,

More than a year has passed since we last communicated, and I am anxious to hear news of my sword. This time I know it must be finished, and I look forward to seeing the fine piece of craftsmanship I know it must be.

Peace and prosperity, Torko

Teayu 1492

Greetings Torko,

Thank you for your continued interest in my progress on the sword. However, I must again beg that you be patient for I am still fashioning the sword, and at this time I cannot estimate when I will complete my work. Please trust that I will not delay informing you when the sword is completed and rest assured it will not disappoint you.

Yours in harmony always, Gendellius

Doddal 1493

Gendellius,

Last week I was reviewing old records and realized that nearly three years have passed since I first commissioned the sword that I trust you have long finished. Please contact me so that I may take possession of the weapon and compensate you for your work.

Peace and prosperity, Torko

P.S. If for some unforeseen reason you have not yet completed the sword, I must ask you to release me from our contract. My business has not been doing well lately, and I fear I may not be able to guarantee payment for the piece if this situation does not change in the near future.

Doddal 1493

Greetings Torko,

Rest assured I have not forgotten your sword. In fact, I have been devoting the majority of my time to the project, and the weapon is progressing beautifully. In regard to your concern about payment, worry not. The sword itself provides enough incentive to continue, and we should not concern ourselves with circumstances that have not yet arisen. Again, be assured I will inform you immediately when I have finished the piece.

Yours in harmony, Gendellius

Rua 1502

Greetings Torko,

I am writing to tell you that I have completed your sword. Please contact me so that I may deliver it to you as soon as possible. At the risk of sounding boastful, I must say that the Spirit-That-Pervades-All must have truly guided my hand, for the sword turned out beautifully.

Yours in harmony, Gendellius

Rua 1502

To Gendillius of Travar

Dear Sir,

Please forgive me for not replying to your letter earlier. Apparently, you did not know my father died nearly three years ago. I have tried to resolve any agreements left unfinished by his death as promptly as possible, but I was unable to locate his correspondence with you immediately. Although he is unable to receive the sword himself, as the proprietor of Torko and Son Mercantile House I would be interested in seeing the piece and perhaps purchasing it. I await your speedy reply.

Peace and prosperity, Snorko

On Meaningful Adornments

—Transcription of the words of Domasae, obsidiman Troubadour

In general, obsidimen prefer to wear as little clothing as possible. Our sturdy, rocklike bodies protect us so well from cold, heat, and inclement weather that we need not wear clothing for those reasons, as other Namegivers do. As for adornment, obsidimen adorn themselves with clothing only for ritual occasions. Our ritual dress is elaborate (as others judge such things); to do honor to the ritual, we wear such things of beauty as robes of rich fabric and the woven headpieces that we call *horkla*. In many cases, the color or embroidery of a *horkla* symbolizes the individual's affiliation with his Liferock. A few obsidimen wear *horkla* most of the time, but only those with significant status in their Brotherhoods.

The other form of adornment meaningful to obsidimen is body painting. Common patterns in body paintings symbolize those things in life with deepest meaning for the wearer: his beliefs, his Brotherhood, his friends, nature, and magic. Occasionally, a body painting includes symbols of the wearer's Liferock and his connection to it. Of course, finding deep meaning in all body painting is a challenge for other Namegivers; they often do not know enough of our culture to pick out the significant symbols from the pretty, but meaningless, abstract designs surrounding them.



On the Wondrous Complexities of Obsidiman Language

On How the Perception of Time Shapes the Spoken Word

Regarding the following section, I spoke to Omeyras of Urupa; that worthy gentleman, however, took half a day simply to explain a few points about the sound and structure of the obsidiman spoken tongue. To have listened to a complete discourse on language from Omeyras would have taken several months at least, time that I do not possess to spend upon the subject. I have, therefore, sought out every scrap of pertinent information I could find on the obsidiman spoken and written languages and added it to what Omeyras told me. As to editing the content of this section for evenness of tone, I confess that monumental task to have been quite beyond my skills (and my inclination!). My readers, therefore, will pardon me if the following discourse seems disjointed. Many voices speak within it, and it was impossible to make them all sing the same tune.

—Written by the hand of Ardinn Tero, Scholar of the Library of Throal

Understand that our perception of time shapes our language more than anything else. All our other Namegiver brothers see time as a flood that sweeps along everything it touches in a few brief, breathless hours. You live swiftly and speak swiftly. We obsidimen see time as the flow of a mighty river, never ending and never changing. Our lives flow on for centuries, and our words, too, flow like the river whose movement never ceases.

If I speak a simple greeting to a brother obsidiman, it may last for several of what you call hours. These hours you would grudge, seeing them as a waste of the time you hold so precious. For one of my race, those hours pass in the blink of an eye. Because we see time in this way, it is common for two obsidimen to spend as much as a day or two simply exchanging pleasantries before arriving at the meat of a conversation.

Even the sound of our language reflects the different ways in which we perceive time. Your quick words rattle and clatter like

pebbles shaken in the hand. They are sharp, rough, hard edged; in them, we hear the sound of things breaking.

Our words flow like water, smooth and liquid, one sound into another into another. Those parts of a word that you call syllables (now that is a fine, smooth word of yours, Ardinn—syl-la-ble!) flow together into a single whole as drops of water merge to form a pool.

On the Structure of the Obsidiman Tongue

We do not have many of what you call the parts of speech, the different kinds of words that you call nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and articles. (I have read the Throalic grammatical lexicon you recommended, Ardinn, and found it most strange. You divide meaning in so many ways! Truly, your people have a strange genius for cutting wholes into parts. This word belongs to this group and serves this function, that kind of word belongs to a different group and serves a different function… Why do you bother with such complexities? Why not simply let a phrase mean what it means, without breaking it into pieces and defining each one? But I am digressing. I apologize.)

In a language like Throalic, you need words like "red," "bright," "slowly," "pretty," and so on to help you convey meaning. For you, "the pretty woman" has a different meaning than "the woman," even though you use the word "woman" in each of those phrases. By contrast, a single word in the obsidiman tongue conveys more than a single word in any other Namegiver language.

I will give you an example so that those for whom you write this may understand. The obsidiman word "*raallehemaraweoroniyalinn*" means "sunrise" in Throalic. But it also means "the rebirth of the sun's light from the darkness of the inner earth wherein it has slept." With one of our words, we express—how many is it—seventeen of yours? Our word for "sunrise" does not simply say what sunrise is; it describes fully the beauties of the sun's return from darkness. For an obsidiman, "sunrise" does not express the true meaning of the event that it describes. At best, such a word is a pale shadow of the idea it embodies.

Because each of our words expresses so much of the truth of each idea, our language has more words than those of other Namegivers. A speaker of Throalic, for example, uses the single word "rock" to describe all kinds of rock that exist in the world. The obsidiman tongue does not contain a single word for rock; instead, we have a separate word for each different kind of rock. "Red clay" is *makorialamanakea*, meaning "soft red earth that sticks to what it touches." "Granite" is *loroweliaramehokorin*, meaning "the hard gray bones of the earth that none can shatter." To a speaker of Throalic, the two words "red clay" convey to him perfectly the same idea as "soft red earth that sticks to what it touches." For an obsidiman, however, the meanings of our different words for rock are so specific that they each convey a different idea; we cannot use one to understand another. We must have a different word for each truth.

The complexities of sound and meaning in obsidiman words, in addition to their length, make it difficult for many other Namegivers to speak our tongue. Those accustomed to short, sharp words often find our long words with their many sounds difficult to remember and pronounce, and the extremely specific meaning of many words is alien to those whose native language allows for so much vagueness. A man used to saying "rock" to mean both a pebble and a boulder will not find it easy to have to say *marelliyorakenui* for "the small pebble with quartz flecks in it," *marellowekaheorin* for "the red pebble as large as a dwarf's thumb," and so on! Adding to the difficulty for those who wish to speak obsidiman is the fact that few obsidimen speak their own language around other Namegivers. Instead, we prefer to use Throalic, or ork, or t'skrang, or whatever language our companions speak. We believe that learning a person's language enables us to learn the most important things about him: who he is, what he holds dear, why he values the things he does, and so on. More than anything else, an obsidiman wishes to learn about others, for in so doing we learn to understand ourselves.



Here Omeyras launched into a long, rambling tale to illustrate why obsidimen wish to learn about others. I confess I soon lost the thread of what he was saying, and therefore chose to omit his words on that subject. For the following section on the written language of obsidimen, I have chosen two sources that I believe illustrate those points most necessary for our understanding of the subject. The first is an excerpt from the journal of the Six Silver Hands, a most brave adventuring band who number an obsidiman among them; the second is a work by the famed khavro'am scholar, Coiras Broadback, who spent forty years of his life among the obsidimen.

—Written by the hand of Ardinn Tero,
Scholar of the Library of Throal

—Scribed this day by Tadhg Manystones,
Ork Beastmaster of the Six Silver Hands

Been traveling for twelve days at least, we had, goin' from the gates of Throal northeast toward the Caucavic Mountains. Elf magicker swore up and down we was followin' Astendar, headin' the right way for Parlainth. Across the wilds, through the mountain passes, and over a bit o' the Serpent River, and we'd be in Haven, ready to go treasure huntin'. So that elf said. *Buunda* to him, I say. Knew we never shoulda taken on no stranger to read our map for us when M'kele died of marsh fever. But that's another tale.

Food was getting low, so me and Hammerfist, our dwarf Archer, say we go huntin.' Most everybody think we got a good idea, so we camp for a day and set out. Me, Hammerfist, and Araulos, obsidiman Warrior. Good fella, Araulos. Move pretty fast when he need to, for a fella made of rock. So we spot ourselves a bear and start trackin' it, with me figurin' how best to make the bear stop where we can get the best shot. Bear goes through a cut in the rock, disappears.

We start to follow, when Araulos stops us. Grabs me and Hammerfist by the arm, hard. Me, I get mad. We lose the bear 'less we move, I say. What your problem, Araulos? He nods his big, rocky head at the mountain slope in front of us. Look, he say. So I look. So what, I say. Big cliff with rocks piled on top. What else we gonna see in the Caucavics?

Araulos shakes his head slowly. Look at rocks, he say. I see one big rock with round sides and a flat top, and another long, flat rock with a point like a big arrowhead. Arrowhead rock look like it used to sit on top o' the big rock, like a table top. Only now, the arrow point's stuck in the earth like a giant smashed it down.

I look at Araulos, scratchin' my head. Message, he say. My brother left those rocks as a warning.

Warning of what? say Hammerfist.

Of a Horror that makes illusions, Araulos say. The Horror makes pictures in our minds for us to follow, then it traps us in a canyon and throws rocks down on us. Landslide. Not enough to kill us-just enough to pin us down, keep us trapped there till we starve to death.

You get all that from a pile o' rocks? I say.

Araulos grins at me, but his eyes look sad. Sure, he say. You think obsidimen write with a stylus like you little folk? And he show me his big hand.

Then the bear come back—and Hammerfist, he takes a shot at it. Araulos shouted to stop him, but too late. The arrow struck true; hit the bear in the throat. We hear an awful howling, like someone being pulled apart. Bear turns into little, faceless thing; Hammer-

fist starts screaming. Drops of blood spout on his skin, like ugly red flowers. Araulos and me, we do the only thing we can. We run to warn the others. Behind us, we hear the Horror laughin'.

What happened to your brother? I say when we get back to camp.

Nobody knows, Araulos say.

A Discourse on Writing Among the Obsidimen

To those of us accustomed to thinking of written language as simply the tangible expression of the same tongue that we speak, it may come as a great surprise to learn that written language among the obsidimen can be quite different from their spoken tongue. It may come as a further surprise to some that obsidimen use written language at all; after all, the sheer size of their hands precludes easy use of such conventional writing tools as a stylus or quill. Further, the length of their words and their propensity to take hours to express simple greetings would seem to indicate a need for miles of parchment in order to write a single letter! In this treatise, I will endeavor to explain the development and use of written language among this most unusual Namegiver race.

Like other Namegivers, the obsidimen developed written language for practical reasons. All language is a means of communication; when physical distance or the passage of time makes it inconvenient or impossible to communicate in the spoken word, writing must take its place. Unlike other Namegivers, however, obsidimen use written language for only a few specific purposes. They do not, for example, write letters, treatises, legal documents, merchant's records, or any of the everyday articles for which we dwarfs commonly use Throalic. Instead, they have developed a simple written language in which they record tales and legends, and a more complex form of writing that plays an unusual and important role in obsidiman culture.

In addition to their more conventional written tongue (of which I will speak further on in this treatise), obsidimen use a highly unusual form of writing to convey certain things that cannot be spoken. They do not form what we would recognize as words, but rather write in pictographs, whose appearance symbolizes for them diverse feelings, ideas, nuances, and other shades of meaning that cannot be made intelligible except through the use of these pictures.

In Throalic and every other written tongue with which I am familiar, each letter represents a sound; we make words by stringing these sounds together and giving certain collections of sounds a certain meaning. For example, I call myself a "dwarf," a word composed of five letters which make the following sounds: "duh, wuh, ah, arh, fuh." By themselves, the sounds (and letters) mean nothing; only when strung together to form the spoken and written word "dwarf" do they refer to a member of my race.

An obsidiman pictograph, by contrast, does not represent any sound, and so a "word" in this language does not consist of a series of pictographs. Each pictograph is, in itself, a direct representation of the idea, feeling, and so forth that the obsidiman writer wishes to convey. Indeed, in many cases a single obsidiman pictograph expresses a whole and complete idea that would take us several words to express, such as "the Liferock is near" or "the Universe cares for all its children."

Obsidimen make their pictographs of diverse elements of nature: rocks, mounds of earth, trees and other plants, water, and so on. Not surprisingly, their pictographs are often very large! The sheer size of obsidiman writing contributed to the development of each pictograph as a sigil with many related meanings; even on a wide hillside or open plain, writers rarely had room to inscribe rows upon rows of huge pictographs, and so they could only express complex thoughts by making each pictograph mean several things simultaneously.

I have seen obsidimen create pictographs by arranging sizable boulders in certain patterns around one another, by scattering rocks in patterns among trees, by planting flowers of certain colors into beds of certain shapes, even by damming a small creek in order to change its course! These undertakings involve considerable effort, even for such immensely strong folk as our obsidiman brothers. The obsidimen do not, therefore, use this written language to express things of little import, such as social pleasantries or gossip. As their own saying has it, "An obsidiman speaks when he will, writes when he must."

On the Writing Down of the Spoken Tongue

The simpler of the written obsidiman languages resembles the writing of other Namegivers—that is to say, it is composed of letters that represent the spoken word.

For those who wonder why the obsidimen do not simply use this language to write whatever and whenever the fancy strikes them, I bid them consider the structure of the spoken tongue on which this "simple" written language is based. A word in obsidiman is an entire phrase; it includes most or all of the parts of speech that other Namegivers think of as nouns, verbs, articles, and adjectives. Each of these words is extremely long, and crafting grammatical sentences with them (as obsidimen understand grammar) requires careful thought and much labor.

In addition, an obsidiman's large hands prevent him from forming small letters; indeed, the smallest that I saw was nearly the size of my two hands put together. To use such a language for everyday things is less than convenient, and so most obsidimen do not bother with this kind of writing. They have written down their most cherished legends, however, so that the tales will live long after the last obsidiman has vanished from the earth.

An obsidiman uses the languages of other races to write what matter he wishes whenever he sees fit, for the following simple reason. An obsidiman writing a letter or some such thing in a tongue such as Throalic is not (except under highly unusual circumstances, I would imagine!) actually writing the words himself; he is speaking them to someone of a race with smaller hands, who is writing them down. Therefore, the difficulty of writing in his own tongue does not apply.



The following document is a letter attributed to Omasu, owner of the Overland Trading Company, the largest such business in Barsaive. Omasu himself denies writing it, but he admits to having heard tales similar to the one it contains. My friend Domasae has also told me similar tales. The original letter is in dreadful shape; the ravages of time have unfortunately made the Names of the sender and recipient illegible.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Attributed to …? May be true? It seems the Great Library of Throal has been reduced to spreading rumors.

—Jerriv Forrim



On Dealings with the World and its Residents

I have observed that in order to trade at a profit, one must understand with whom one trades. The only way to understand one's customers is to know them, which means seeing beyond their skins into the very nature of their being. I know a tale about the Namegiver races that may help you in this regard.

The First Obsidiman was born into the world naive. He only knew of the world from the rock and the trees and the wind. When he

came upon the other Namegivers, he studied them from afar and learned their habits and their ways. He did not know their Names, and so he Named them.

First, he saw the dwarfs. He watched as they took nature and shaped it to their needs. He saw them build cities, invent machines, make weapons, and he marveled. He saw that the dwarfs were never content to create a thing; they always tried to make their creations better. They loved not the object they built, but the act of building. And so he Named them *Mbaztzik*, "the Builders."

The elves glowed with the beauty that comes from the heart of the forest, a beauty full of life and death. They seemed to capture life in the objects they made. They brought the forest to life and carried that life with them wherever they went. And so the First Obsidiman Named them *Gawinauttop*, "Souls of the Forest."

The First Obsidiman watched as the rock that was his mother nurtured the trolls. They lived where no one else could, creating life from the barren stone. This life gave them strength that others lacked, a rocklike strength of body and will with which they commanded respect. And so the First Obsidiman Named the trolls *Llakoozaxe*, "Rock Brothers."

The t'skrang amazed the First Obsidiman. They lived with the river inside them, one with the water they sprang from. In each t'skrang the spirit of the Serpent River lived, and in the spirit of the Serpent lived the soul of the t'skrang race. The t'skrang shared the Serpent River's many moods: calm and boisterous, dangerous and nurturing. And so the First Obsidiman Named them *Jilojuttop*, "Souls of the River."

The First Obsidiman felt sorry for the windlings, who lived in the air and never gained the wisdom of the rock or the tree. They had only the wisdom of the wind, and they were not always reliable. But the windlings did not care—what the wind knew was enough for them. Like the wind, they seemed to be everywhere at once, living off each breeze and relishing every moment. Like the wind, they cared nothing for the past and the future, but lived always in the present. And so the First Obsidiman Named them the *Tiruplaxi*, "Wind Spirits."

The First Obsidiman then saw a restless race, one with all the abilities of the others but without direction. This race, the humans, could build like the dwarfs, create beauty like the elves, had the trolls' strength of will, and could understand the wind and the river like the windlings and the t'skrang. This race amazed and saddened the First Obsidiman, because he saw how they wasted their uniqueness and changeability in a hectic quest to perform one more deed, learn one more truth, create one more object, build one more monument, conquer one more person or place. The humans he Named *Gzateemij*, "the Lost Ones."

Last, the First Obsidiman saw a race no one wanted. This race, the orks, everyone used and everyone despised. The First Obsidiman watched the orks live each day to the fullest, showing a passion no other race could match. They lived for each moment and savored each breath, wandering across the face of Barsaive in a constant search for new hardships against which to test their mettle. And the First Obsidiman Named this race *Yizloatzik*, "the Roamers."

I hope you have understood this story, and that its insights will strengthen your position in future negotiations. I hope you will be a better negotiator than your predecessor, may the Passions guard his soul. May the Passion Chorrolis watch over your dealings, as always.

It is interesting that the story does not mention the most powerful Namegivers, the dragons. Those few who have studied the obsidiman language in any depth tell me the word for dragon is ozikilnemburahe, meaning, master of those they watch.

—Kern Redhand

The following text is excerpted from an ancient tome, On the Nature of the Races, by Kiaric Nemiz, scribe and advisor to the governor of the city of Nexim. I feel it necessary to apologize for the tone of this text; indeed, its main value lies less in what it says than in the insight (however shameful) it gives into the thinking of certain folk many years before the Scourge. Because it is one of the oldest writings on obsidimen, I felt obligated to include it. However, no self-respecting dwarf would support any of the sentiments expressed in it—certainly we of the Great Library do not.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

It seems that the "Rock-Men," or obsidimen as they are sometimes called, belong more properly to the uncivilized races. They have built no cities, or even villages. Like orks, they seem to call every place home even when they have no right to, and they are content to sleep at night under the stars instead of under a solid roof like civilized folk. Curiously enough, however, the Rock-Men spend little time in the company of orks. Indeed, they seem to shy away from them, which suggests to me that perhaps they feel less kinship with the filthy orks than their habits indicate.

I have heard trolls call obsidimen "brother," and would guess they do so because obsidimen resemble the mountains from which the trolls come. Of course, trolls constantly assume a kinship with any other race in order to justify their own uncivilized ways. Though obsidimen appear to enjoy the company of trolls, they rarely show the brutishness of the Mountain Dwellers. I have even heard of obsidimen who fought trolls for insulting their rock. Rock seems important to obsidimen, and they often take offense at the merest mention of it. From this I surmise that obsidimen have not wholly left behind a troll-like, animal nature.

Both orks and trolls seem to respect the Rock-Men, insofar as those two barbaric races can show respect to anyone. For example, the barbarians do not show the same animosity toward obsidimen as they do toward the other races. Is it only that obsidimen have nothing the orks or trolls want, or is there some deeper reason?

In a most curious phenomenon, trolls seem to feel calmer around obsidimen. Something about the presence of their "Rock-Brothers" makes them less prone to the quick temper and wanton destruction that defines their race. Many dwarf innkeepers gladly accept a troll as a guest if an obsidimen is already there.

Obsidimen seem to greatly enjoy Barsaive's most unique races, the pirate t'skrang and the trickster windlings. I admit, I cannot fathom this attraction. Windlings and t'skrang act so rashly and rudely that one must wonder what the slow, calm obsidimen see in them. Can it be that these creatures of rock yearn to be free of their lumbering bodies and to live without restraint?

In my travels throughout Barsaive, I have seen far too many people who still believe these slanders and half-truths. What excuse is there in our day and age for such ignorance?

—Karon Foll

I have seen firsthand how much obsidimen enjoy the company of t'skrang and windlings. Before I achieved my present position and status, I traveled with my obsidiman friend Domasae for sixteen years throughout Barsaive. I humbly present the following excerpt from my own adventuring journal.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Domasae cradled a barrel of fine elven wine in one arm and a whole roasted pig in the other. Milled flour covered his body; through its pale color, he beamed at me. I braced myself for trouble. "I hope your stubby legs can keep up," he began, breaking off as a distant sound caught our attention. Coming toward us, laughing and screaming, were two figures trailing floury dust. As they drew closer, I saw that one was a t'skrang and the other a windling.

The t'skrang whacked me with his tail as he ran past. "Hurry up, Stubby—if they catch you, we're all doomed."

"If who catches me?!" I yelled at Domasae, who was still smiling in that unnerving way.

He pointed. I looked. At least fifty armed, angry men pounded toward us, hot on the trail of my companion and his new friends.

"Thirty men, I'll wager," said the windling before I even had time to close my gaping mouth. "The most we ever had come after us. Today may be the happiest day of my life!" As she spoke, the windling swooped past my head and hovered between Domasae and me.

"Thirty!" whooped the t'skrang. "You insult our talents, Breeek. If there are no more than thirty, I'll sell my tail. At least forty good citizens of this fair town are pursuing us." The t'skrang clapped his tail on my shoulder in a comradely gesture.

"Forty!" The windling spun dizzily in the air. "Hear that, Stumpy? In't grand?"

Never did I wish to take the life of another Namegiver as much as I did then. "Call me Stumpy again, and I'll crush your tiny …"

Domasae cut me off, still smiling. "We have no time for these pleasantries, I fear." He pointed to a door I had not even noticed and gestured us inside. "I have paid well for this room. We'll be safe here."

The rest of the night was one long nightmare. I sat in the corner and shook, fearing the city watch would burst in at any moment. My concern became the mark of many a jest by the three fugitives with whom I shared this horrific evening.

Worst of all, I felt betrayed by my best friend.

When morning at length arrived, I decided it was in my interests and health to end my relationship with Domasae. It took all my courage to tell him what I felt about the night. When I told him that his idiotic actions with those ruffians were beyond my comprehension, a shocked and hurt Domasae responded by saying harshly, "Those ruffians, as you call them, are two of my oldest friends."

That pronouncement made me stare at him, dumbfounded. He caught himself and sighed. "Ah, Merrox, if I could only make you understand! You have adventured with me; you know my reasons and action better than others. Yet sometimes I fall prey to the same conflicts, doubts, and insecurities as any other Namegivers. In this regard you cannot help me, though you are my dearest friend. You worry daily over things I take for granted, but if I shared with you my three hundred years of troubles I would crush your spirit and leave you questioning the very world's existence. It is for the health of my spirit and my heart that I seek the company of those who live carefree; those who live each moment as if excitement could answer all life's questions. This way, I remind myself that life is not always serious. We should worry over some things, but not worrying is a part of life, too." He looked at me very seriously and continued. "I mean this without insult, Merrox—it would do you good to drink a pint of ale with my friends someday."



Needless to say, our next meeting with Breeek and Mybelluma proved great fun—for me.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records



On Obsidimen and the Disciplines

—From a speech given by the obsidiman Illusionist Kolarat to adepts-in-training at the School of Magic in Urupa

Many a time, I have heard young men and women like yourselves pity the obsidimen because you believe more doors are closed to us than to the other races. Because our race has no Archers or Thieves, no Cavalrymen or Beastmasters, you think we cannot manipulate magic half as well as your races can. I tell you now, you will not long remain so ignorant. If you leave here knowing nothing else about obsidimen, you will learn that we can command both the physical and magical worlds as well and in some cases better than others.

We have come to understand many of the forces of magic that make the age we live in so wondrous and dangerous. But even magic cannot overcome some things. It takes more than magic to hide an obsidiman's hand as he reaches for a coin purse or picks a pocket. It takes more than magic for an obsidiman to move stealthily and quickly through the underbrush. It takes more than magic to create an animal that obsidimen may ride with ease. We tried to follow such Disciplines hundreds of years before the Scourge, but found that we could not perform the tasks necessary to them. It was not magical aptitude we lacked; it was the nature of the physical world and the size of our bodies that prevented us.



I have heard windling Troubadours tell wonderfully funny stories about attempts by obsidimen to take up Disciplines for which their large bodies were unsuited. Instead of taking offense as many other might, obsidimen laugh at these stories until the tears come. Two common ones most often told by our winged brothers involve the obsidiman Thief who tries to steal from a caravan and the obsidiman Cavalryman who tries to find a mount.

—Daron Fenn



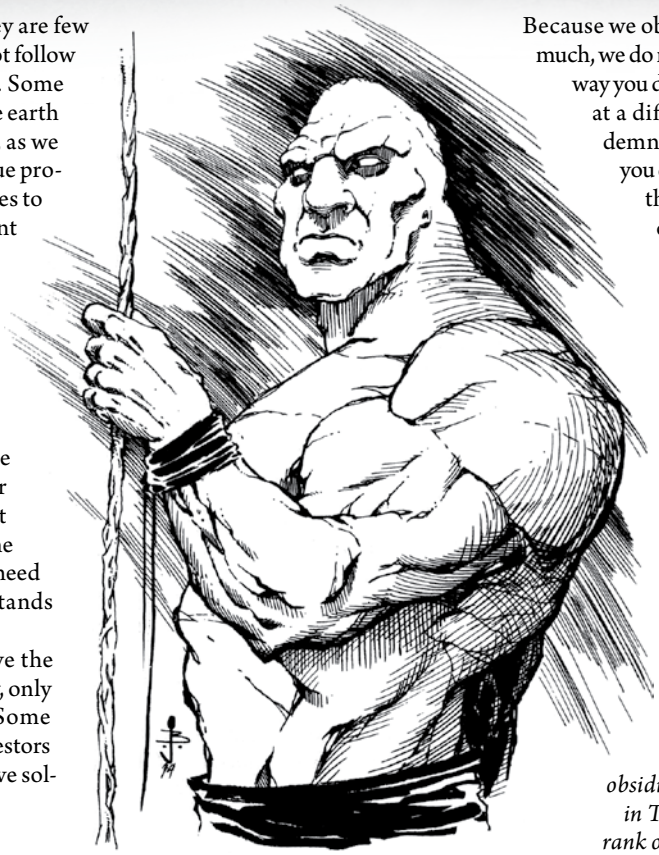
The sages say, know your strengths and weaknesses. Ours we learned long ago. Our bodies are strong, like the rock they resemble—stronger than the bodies of the other Namegiver races. Because our strength comes from our physical nature rather than from magical talents, obsidimen may choose to become spellcasting adepts and still maintain great strength. For example, though I am "merely" an Illusionist, I can vanquish any Journeyman Warrior or Swordmaster in unarmed combat and can easily hold my own with a weapon. Many a foe fool enough to challenge obsidimen are crushed beneath our heels as easily as beneath the weight of our spells.

Our physical strength mirrors our strength in magic. We revere magic because it flows through us and is part of our innermost being. Elemental earth magic infuses us from the moment of our creation, and some say that because of this we feel magic more strongly than most. But though it is a part of us, we do not comprehend all the facets of its nature. Like you, obsidimen study the ways of magic so that we may understand it better.

Our affinity for magic, coupled with the size of our bodies and our physical strength, predisposes obsidimen to follow the spellcasting or physical combat Disciplines. Elementalist, Illusionist, Wizard, Warrior—all such Disciplines call us most strongly. We also follow the Troubadour Discipline, because only we can properly tell the stories of our people. I have never known obsidimen to become Sky Raiders or Air Sailors, because no obsidiman wishes to leave the living earth from which he sprang. We do not wish to risk losing our earth essence. Some call such notions superstitious, but sometimes it is best not to tempt fate for the luxury of a few moments in the sky. It is our nature to remain on the ground, as it is the nature of windlings to fly or t'skrang to swim or dwarfs to build.

A final word of caution: though they are few in number, obsidimen exist who do not follow the Disciplines common to our race. Some rare individuals live out the ways of the earth in the strictest sense. These Purifiers, as we call them, consider themselves the true protectors of nature and devote themselves to purifying the land of the lingering taint of the Scourge. In and of itself, this cause is a noble one. But many Purifiers seek to destroy not only Horrors and their constructs, but any living creature they believe defiles the purity of life. I have known some Purifiers to butcher thorn elves, even drive off or kill simple farmers because they plowed up the land to plant their crops. Most Purifiers, of course, do not go to such extremes in interpreting the requirements of their Discipline. One need not fear them, as long as one understands them and treats them with caution.

The Purifiers answer to no one save the spirit of the earth that is their only ally, only friend, and only reason for being. Some Purifiers find companionship with questors of the Passion Jaspree, while others live solitary lives.



Kolarat paints a negative picture of the Purifiers, but I know many who are kind and compassionate. These obsidimen try to heal the wounds of the Scourge and stop any new corruption from occurring. The few Purifiers in Bartertown and Throal are well respected, though they do tend toward single-mindedness when compared to other obsidiman adepts.

—Ardinn Tero

I believe both Ardinn and Kolarat are correct. I found my first meeting with a Purifier extremely unpleasant. Because I am an elf, the Purifier made me prove I had not been corrupted by my "brothers" in Blood Wood. It is a terrifying experience to prove your innocence to one who already believes you guilty. Since that time, I have met other Purifiers who exhibit the warmth that Ardinn speaks of. Like Kolarat, I advise caution in dealing with them.

—Karon Foll

The following is from comments made by the obsidiman Troubadour Domasae on his people's feelings toward Thera and the Passions.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On Obsidimen and Thera

For the most part, obsidimen have little to do with Therans. We are not concerned with garnering power or wealth, and so associate little with those who do. It is true, however, that the search for understanding of all things in the Universe has led some obsidimen to live among the Therans. I lived among the Therans for a century and a half or so. I found them powerful, clever, and capable of discovering the very essence of magic. But I also saw how easy it is to fall prey to Theran ways of thinking.

Because we obsidimen live long lives and see much, we do not see good and evil in the same way you do. We see the ebb and flow of life at a different pace, and so do not condemn the Therans with the fury that you do. We do not, however, condone their actions. We believe life is precious; a belief the Therans do not share. Because of this important difference, an obsidiman cannot ever truly join their society no matter how long he lives among them.

I have heard many stories of a single Brotherhood of obsidimen who swear allegiance to the Therans and view the world as they do. When I broached this topic with Domasae, he reacted quite oddly, snapping, "The rumors are false." He refused to discuss either that issue or the rumors of fugitives, obsidimen who have reportedly lived in Thera long enough to gain social rank or access to high officials. When these fugitives leave their Theran lives to continue their search for knowledge, Thera regards them as traitors and pursues them. I have heard it said that captured fugitives have their skin made into armor.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On Obsidimen and the Passions

Most obsidimen do not respond to the Passions with the same fervor as other Namegivers. For my own part, the Passions hold little interest for me because each of them represents only one path to knowledge. As an obsidiman, I wish to tread all paths. Though I value the Passions as part of the Universe, I consider them more a distraction than anything else, and the sheer narrow-mindedness of some of their followers distresses me. But I must also accept the Passions and their questors as additional threads of knowledge that weave the patterns of life.

Some obsidimen, though not many, become questors of a Passion. The following letter from Watheos, one of my Brotherhood, shows what led him to choose the questor's way.

Dear Domasae,

You asked me why I wear the bright red robes of Floranuus, traveling the countryside and reviving those who have lost hope. My brother, I do it because I seek harmony with the Spirit-That-Pervades-All, that which cannot be seen or touched. And the Spirit seems especially strong in those who follow the Passions. Whether pleasure-lovers who follow Astendar or the sad, black-garbed, and paper-laden followers of the Mad Passion Dis, the Spirit seems especially strong among these Namegivers. To be honest, they pique my curiosity. You have told me yourself that the best way to learn about a thing is to experience it, and I believe experience the only way to truly learn.

For the sake of experience, I have followed the path of Floranuus for the past fifty years. For the sake of experience I followed

Astendar for a century before that, and I followed Raggok before that. Truly, it is a pity Raggok went mad. He was a fine Passion before tragedy befell him.

You are laughing now, my brother. I can almost hear you. Think of it this way, then: questing for a single Passion is like trying to understand an orchard by studying a single tree…

I cannot say whether Watheos' reasoning holds true for all, or even most, obsidimen. Our search for knowledge takes us in many directions; who is to say that in a century or two I will not be wearing the robes of Floranuus as my brother does?

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In reading this section, the reader should keep in mind that customs among obsidimen differ between those who live in the wilds and those few who have chosen to spend their days in Barsaive's towns and cities. The customs of the city-dwellers, however, all somehow derive from the ways of their wilderness brethren, or from the unusual nature that all obsidimen share.

—By the hand of Ardinn Tero

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On Diverse Customs Among Obsidimen

Regarding the Custom of the Sending

—Transcribed from the speaking of Omeyras, Troubadour of Urupa

It is unusual, though by no means disapproved of (as I understand unusual acts often are among other races), for obsidimen to leave their Brotherhood and dwell for some years in towns or cities among the energy wasters of Barsaive. For those of my people who choose to spend such a span of time in the company of other Namegivers, we mark this choice by the ritual we call the Sending.

In the dim light that heralds the rising of the sun, the Brotherhood gathers around the Liferock. All merge with it for a brief time (a week or so, by dwarf reckoning), communing with each other in the Dreaming. We do this because we know it will be many, many years before we can share the Dreaming with our departing brother again. At the end of that time, the *rohoreyamaliyakhur* (he who sojourns among the swift) is the first to leave the Dreaming. One by one, the Brotherhood follows him, until all have left the Liferock. Then the Brotherhood begins to dance, slowly at first, but with gathering speed. The *rohoreyamaliyakhur* leads the dance, and must always move faster than his brothers; in this way, he shows that his path will lead him among those who are swept along on the currents of a swifter time. As the members of the Brotherhood tire, they slow and become still. Soon only the *rohoreyamaliyakhur* is still moving. When the last of the Brotherhood is still, the *rohoreyamaliyakhur* slows his dance until it becomes a walk, then walks away from the Liferock in the direction of his choosing. Members of the Brotherhood call their goodbyes to him, filling his ears with their voices as a reminder that though he travels far from them, he is yet their brother.

That is how my brethren performed the Sending for me.

Observations on Gatherings

—From the personal journal of Lianar Evensong, elven Troubadour

It was on the way into the town of Cashelne, four days' walking from the city of Travar, that an extraordinary adventure (of a sort) befell me. I had walked for many miles, and with twilight drawing on was hurrying to reach the town in hopes of finding a good inn with a soft bed. The land is rough thereabouts, with the bones of the earth showing through the sparse-grown hillsides, and so I initially ignored the several pillars of rock that seemed to surround the outskirts of Cashelne. Then one of them moved, and sheer astonishment drove all thoughts of supper and bed from my mind. As another and still another of the rock pillars moved from Cashelne's outermost streets into the wild lands wherein I still stood, I recognized the "rocks" for obsidimen. Curious to see what they would do, I stepped behind a nearby thorn bush and watched them through its loosely knit leaves.

As the obsidimen drew closer to my hiding place, the ground shook gently under their heavy tread. I began to hear their deep voices, calling to one another in their flowing, musical tongue. I understand a fair amount of obsidiman, having worked for many years as a caravan guard alongside Vespaysa—the finest obsidiman Warrior it has been my privilege to meet. It seemed that members of three different Brotherhoods of obsidimen had met in Cashelne, and they were holding a Gathering to celebrate. I had heard of Gatherings, wherein obsidimen exchange stories and knowledge they have acquired in the many years since they last met. But I had never been privileged to see one. (A cousin of mine once claimed to have seen a Gathering of obsidimen on the streets of Bartertown, but as he offered no details, I chose not to believe him.)

When all had assembled, the crowd of obsidimen (forty of them, at least) fell silent. They passed a silver flask from hand to hand; as each one took it, he raised it and spoke a welcome, then drank. Once they had all greeted each other, a true miracle began to unfold. First they huddled close to one another until all were touching; then, one by one, their bodies flowed and melded into each other like softening butter. Where there had stood several obsidimen, there now stood a single vast mass of stone.

As they merged I heard a breath of music shimmering in the air, beginning with a sweet baritone note for which my village's best musician would have performed blood magic. Each merging obsidiman body sounded another note, until the song of the rock built from a melody to a simple counterpoint to a full-throated chord of indescribable loveliness. The ground shook again, very gently, and I realized that certain of the notes were causing the quaking. They were pitched too low for my ears to hear, so low that the sound traveled through the earth and I felt it through the soles of my feet.

After perhaps an hour or so, I ventured closer to the merged obsidimen (greatly astonished at my own daring!). Any lingering fear I felt of possibly angering them vanished; they were clearly oblivious to my presence. And wonder of wonders, though they had all become one mass of stone, I could still see their individual shapes, as if Barsaive's finest sculptor had etched the outline of each obsidiman with a delicate chisel. So close to them, I felt as if I was falling into their glorious Gathering music. My last dazed thought before I allowed it to sweep me away was, "So this is what Vespaysa meant by the beauty of the Dreaming…"

At some point I must have fallen asleep. I awoke in the lee of a small hill several miles from Cashelne, my traveling gear and my harp piled around me and my cloak wadded up beneath my head as a pillow. For a moment I wondered if the Gathering had been a dream; then I saw beside me a sigil made of piled stones. It was one of the few obsidiman pictographs that Vespaysa had taught me, and its maker had thoughtfully rendered it small enough that

I could see it whole by standing at one edge of it. The sigil read, as near as I can remember, "Let no stranger witness the Dreaming; it belongs to us alone."

On Customs Common to Obsidimen in Towns and Cities

—Transcribed from the speaking of Omeyras, Troubadour of Urupa

As with other Namegivers whose ancestral traditions and ancient customs may no longer hold the same meaning in their daily lives, we obsidimen who have chosen to settle among more swift-moving folk have also had to change certain of our ways to fit our circumstances… and have had to develop our own customs for those situations that our brethren in the wilds never face.

All of our customs, however, derive their deepest meaning from those things around which every obsidiman's life revolves: togetherness, connection with one's Brotherhood and Liferock, reverence for nature, and the desire to learn about all the marvels that exist in the world.



On Linking One's Home to the Liferock

For obsidimen in the wilds, it is a relatively simple thing to return to their Liferock because many of them rarely journey far from it. For those of us who live in Barsaive's cities, and those who go adventuring across the length and breadth of our land, to reach the Liferock is a deed fraught with danger. To make such a journey costs us time and effort as well as risking our lives, and so we cannot afford to do it often.

Yet an obsidiman must never forget his bond to his Liferock; indeed, love for the Liferock is the core of our being. Those of us who cannot often go to our Liferock physically must somehow go there in spirit, if only to keep our souls' balance in the frenetic, unstable world in which we have chosen to live. Therefore, it is customary among city-dwellers such as myself to build the entrance to our dwellings from some stone that physically resembles our Liferocks in color, texture, and shape. In this way, we remind ourselves of our Liferocks, and also symbolically enter the Liferock whenever we cross our own thresholds.

Those with no permanent place to call home, such as caravan guards, hired messengers, and adventurers, remind themselves of their Liferocks by carrying with them a piece of stone that resembles the Liferock that gave them birth. Many such obsidimen believe that their "lifestones" act as charms to ward off danger, or at least guarantee that an obsidiman unfortunate enough to die far from his Liferock will somehow return to it.

Most obsidiman adventurers I know regard the loss of their lifestone as the greatest misfortune that could possibly befall them.

On the Gathering Tree

Whenever a city-dwelling obsidiman has the good fortune to meet and Gather with fellow obsidimen, he afterward plants a Gathering tree near his dwelling as a way of thanking the Spirit-That-Pervades-All for allowing him a chance to enter the Dreaming.

Why a tree, you ask? A tree, friend Ardinn, belongs to two elements of nature at once: the earth from which it grows and the air in which its leaves dance. This connection to two elements makes it doubly sacred to obsidimen. Therefore, to plant a tree in honor of a Gathering shows the great esteem in which an obsidiman holds these occasions and symbolizes his gratitude to the Universe for the knowledge he has acquired in Gathering with his fellows.

On the Sharing of Water

The ceremonial sharing of water is a custom common to all obsidimen, whether of the cities or the wilds. Whenever two or more obsidimen meet, we call a welcome to each other and then share a drink of cool spring water, the finest liquor of nature. By sharing this precious element, we symbolically share the essence of life.

It is only natural for obsidimen to share the water of life, as we are already bone of each other's bone and flesh of each other's flesh. For an obsidiman to share spring water with one of another Namegiver race, however, is an unusual occurrence, and confers the highest mark of honor that we can bestow upon one not of our race. An obsidiman may share a cup of wine, a flagon of ale, or a cup of tea with anyone he pleases and mean nothing more by it than good fellowship, but to share the water that wells from a spring in the earth from which we sprang is to call another Namegiver a brother of the soul.

For obsidimen in the wilds, spring water is easy to find. Indeed, except for such barren areas as the Wastes, it would be unusual not to find a spring within half a day's walk of any place where obsidimen might meet. Therefore, it is no hardship for obsidimen to refrain from quenching their thirst until both may drink from the first spring they reach. City-dwellers and those traveling through lands where water is scarce carry a flask of spring water with them, to be drunk only upon meeting a fellow obsidiman unless their circumstances become truly dire.

CHAPTER SIX

REVELATIONS ON THE NATURE OF ORKS

Our search for information on each of the Namegiver races led us to some rather unusual sources, as the following document illustrates. This account is a transcription of a conversation between the elven scholar Lonairr Goldensong and an elderly ork woman Named Mereelva Gadj. The city guards found this manuscript on the body of an elven man discovered in a rather unsavory district of Bartertown. When the constabulary disposed of the man's belongings, it was thoughtful enough to offer this document to our library in Throal, where the text remains.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

You want to know what it means to be an ork in Barsaive? Well, sit down, you handsome young thing, and I'll tell you more about orks than you thought there was to know. You name it, I've done it: ridden with the cavalry, raided with the nomads, run with gangs of Thieves. I've had tea with a dragon, found the Golden Wheel of Parlainth, felt the hot breath of Death's Sea on my cheeks as I mined for elemental fire. I've looked Horrors in the face and cheated them of their prey. I've saved lives and loved more men than I can count—and not just orks, either.

There you go, laughing. Your imagination fails you. You see only my coarse gray hair, tangled and matted; my face dotted with warts and wrinkles; my gnarled, twisted hands. You cannot see Mereelva Gadj, heroine. You see just another ork.

Do not pretend to misunderstand what I say. I know all the Names. I've heard them all and I won't bother repeating them for you because even the youngest Namegiver can recite them. No matter what great deeds I've accomplished in Barsaive's Name, I know when I walk into any new place I'll get the look. Human mothers hurry their children to safety. Dwarf elders sniff the air in contempt. Silly elven girls giggle behind my back. When I was younger, I fought these insults. I confronted the fearful, the smirkers. I told them who I was and the deeds I had performed. I no longer bother, for I learned that it is the ork's lot to be the scapegoat for other Namegivers; we're the ugly other that all look down their noses at and blame their misfortunes on. Folk I would not trust with a pail of stajian slop call us dishonest. Scum who refuse to raise a finger to feed a hungry child call us unfeeling and lazy. The unwashed call us dirty; the deformed call us ugly.

You protest. You say you are not this way. Perhaps this is true. I have fought beside comrades of many races and would die for them as quickly as for my own children. But tell me honestly—did your mother never warn you to avoid the company of orks? Your father tell you that orks are bad? Did your childhood friends never repeat the ugly Names? You heard these vile lies before you were old enough to think, as did every *Ujnort* I've ever met.

Ujnort? *Ujnort* is our word for non-orks. It means "they who will not understand." Unfair? Do not speak to an ork of unfairness, for no Namegiver lives closer to the dirt. Why? Because you try to keep us there.

Look again at the ragged features you claim do not disgust you. How old do I look to you? A human would say seventy, eighty. A dwarf, more than a century. An elf would guess near to 350 years old. But I am a mere fifty and will likely be dead within the year. Fate itself short-changes the ork.

Bitter? Not at all. I speak only the facts. I feel no regret. I have spat in the eye of fate, given death the *buunda*. Others will sing songs of my life long after I am food for worms. Destiny dealt me a bad hand, and still I tore victory from it. I am an ork, and you can never understand what that means. But if you'll lean closer so I don't have to talk so loud, my pretty young boy, and if you order me another flagon of *hurlg*, perhaps I can try to explain anyway.

ON PRIZING FREEDOM ABOVE ALL

Long before the Theran dogs—excuse me while I spit to the right—came to Barsaive, long before the Scourge, before the kaers, we were slaves. Why? I cannot say. Perhaps because the other Namegivers found our faces brutish and therefore thought we were simple savages to be worked like animals. Perhaps we were fewer then than now, and we were outnumbered. Perhaps we lacked the fearsome weapons and magics of the other races.

Maybe each of these reasons is a part of the answer. But one thing seems certain: our ancestors must have wanted to be slaves. They must have turned their backs on freedom. Weak and contemptible, that's what they were. I burn with shame to think of it. No one can have his freedom stolen from him unless he surrenders it.

In those disgraceful days, one ork alone still had her spirit: Hrak Gron. Her parents were slaves, her grandparents, her great-grandparents. Yet the spirit of freedom lived bright within her. Gron watched her father whipped to death, her mother mistreated in ways I will not speak of. She resolved to fight or die. Her masters had left her nothing but her mind, her free mind. And so she spent every waking moment honing her mind into a weapon, a red-hot brand of justice. Hrak Gron became the first follower of the Liberator Discipline, which she created from nothing more than her

hunger for freedom. Then she taught this fierce Discipline to the others on her farm, and they rose up and slew their masters. Then Hrak Gron and her Company of the Free traveled to the next farm, where more blood was spilled. Freedom spread like fire in dry grass, and soon the Great Uprising engulfed all of Barsaive. Many died on both sides, but my people died on the side of right. Hrak Gron herself fell in the final Battle of Grallan Field, but when the killing ended, the slavers abandoned their claims to us and we took our rightful place among the Namegivers.

Hrak Gron, like the Liberators she trained and the Liberators who fight today, used no weapons but her mind and her love for freedom. However, it is said that her scattered bones are relics of great power, and I know many an ork who has died in search of them.

Once I spoke to a scholar of Throal who said Hrak Gron never existed. The dwarf claimed that dozens of slave leaders and dozens of slave revolts gradually became one in the legend of the Great Uprising. He claimed the great march to freedom was not the "simple, childish story" I have just told. I broke his fingers.

Our history has left a fierce love of freedom in the hearts of all self-respecting orks, a love tempered in blood. Still, other orks have turned their backs on their heritage and joined slaver bands. I have even seen nomad tribes turn on one another and sell their rivals into slavery. Some of these wretches are merely misguided or foolish, and reminding them of Hrak Gron's legacy is enough to make them stop their evil ways. But more dedicated orkish slavers cannot be cured. My axe has bitten deep into the skulls of many such villains.

Like any race, we have our share of evildoers and blackguards. Those who abandon our ways become the most dangerous orks: the crazy killers and the honorless mercenaries. We call these wretches *turgma*. *Turgma* have become the brutes that other Namegivers believe us to be. For while other races are judged by their heroes, the orks are always measured by their outlaws.

On Living and Dying Well

As I told you, I am already fifty and will soon be dead. But many orks I know do not live even this long. Almost all of my brothers and sisters are gone and I have outlived three of my ten children. Why? Because they did not fear risk or danger! The ork does not look at his short lifespan and decide to cower in a corner, hoarding his years like a miser counting coppers. We have much living to pack into the meager number of years we are given. Why fear death, when we know it comes all too soon anyway? Give death the *buunda*! Defy it! The ork knows that life is never sweeter than in the moment the club swings so close to his head that his hair blows back from the breeze. And if he's a little too slow, and that club dashes his skull into a thousand bits? What of it? He lived up to that moment. What could be a better way to die?

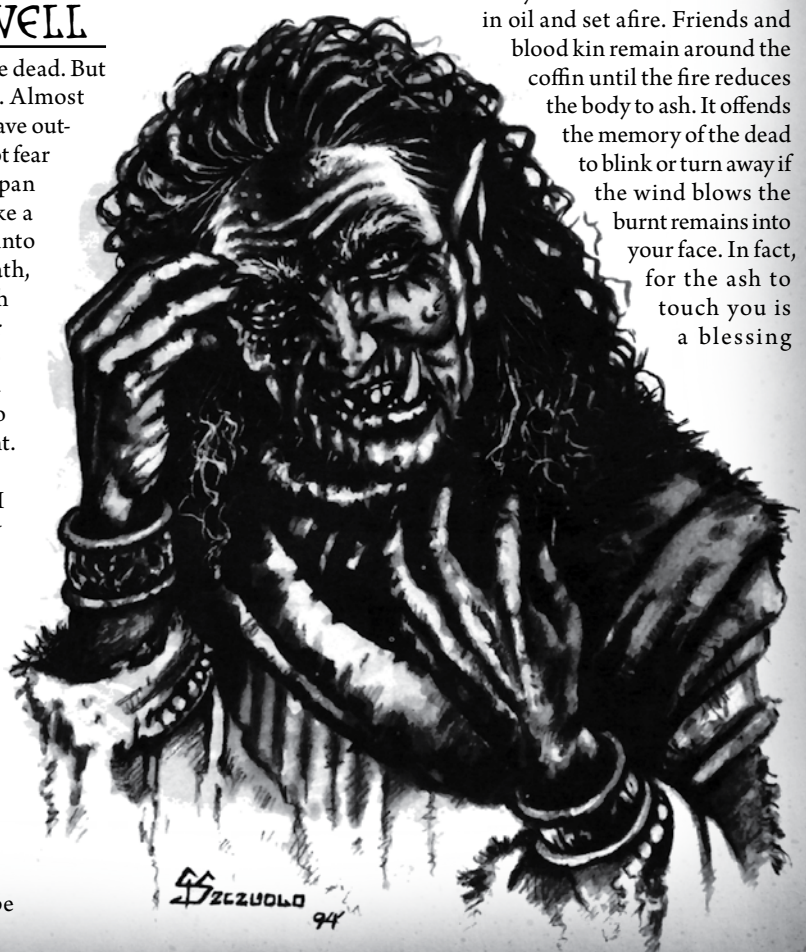
When an ork makes a decision, he always thinks, if I die doing this, will my death make a good tale? Will my brothers, sisters, and children speak of it with pride? Or will it shame them? This is why few orks bother with such nonsense as reading and writing. Who wants to be remembered for nodding off into death while reading a useless poem? Even adventurers like me think always of how our death tales will sound. I spent many years clattering about in kaers, searching for treasure. Never once did I volunteer to open a door or chest that might have a trap to catch me. Who wants the tales and songs of his life to celebrate his getting sliced up or magicked to death by an object? Where's the legend there? Yet, when it came time to fight, I never shirked. I fought for point position. To be peeled like an onion by a Theran mage, or suffocated by a bog gob—now that's a hero's death!

Do nothing halfway, that's the ork creed. Anything else is a waste of time. And orks have no time to waste. If you're going to choke to death, make sure it happens because you've gorged yourself at a banquet, not because you're nibbling on nuts and berries! If you're going to die from a fall, let it happen because someone pushed you, not because you tripped! Better to be killed by a poisonous snake than a poisonous mushroom. And a ten-foot snake is better than a three-foot one! The ideal death is to be burned to ash or sucked into quicksand or something like that. Every ork wishes for an empty coffin at his funeral—it means he took such great risks that nothing is left of him to tell the tale!

To celebrate death, we orks gather around the coffins of our fallen comrades—empty or not. *Ujnort* comrades of the fallen take places of honor, and the dead ork's family and friends recount his greatest exploits—not just fights and adventures, but great seductions, the times he devoured amazing amounts of food or drink, his best songs, the cleverest bargains he made, and the merchants he got the better of. An ork's death is his final exploit, and so it had better be impressive. Nothing displeases an ork like the thought that his death will sound foolish or worthless by comparison to everything else.

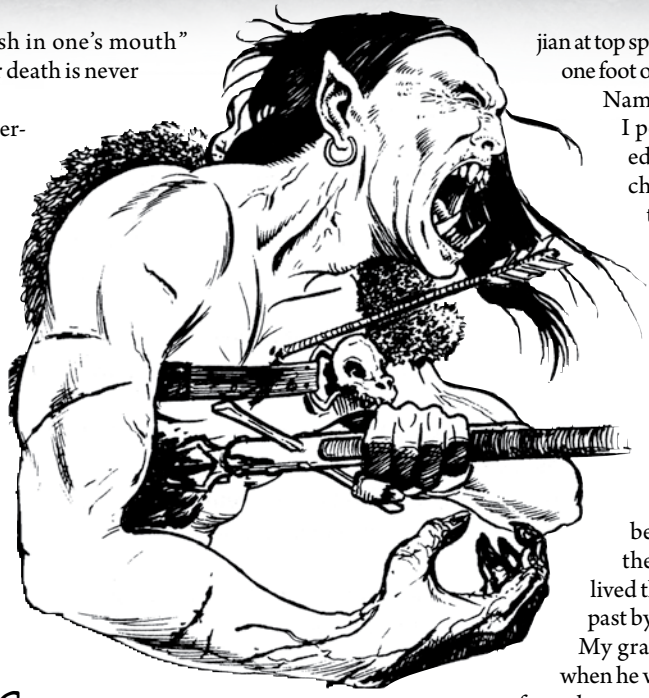
Outsiders call orks savage and uncivilized because our funeral speeches celebrate the vividness and fervor of a dead ork's deeds rather than their goodness. An evil slaver can have as many exploits recounted at his funeral as a courageous Horror fighter. We believe in working hard to correct another ork's evils while he lives—with an unsheathed sword if necessary. But once he dies, his evils no longer threaten anyone. And why shame his family for the evil he did? Better to celebrate the best of him and try to forget his crimes. There have been too many *turgma* among us in this troubled century; it is not good to dwell on the things they have done.

After the recitation of the exploits, the body—if one exists—is soaked in oil and set afire. Friends and blood kin remain around the coffin until the fire reduces the body to ash. It offends the memory of the dead to blink or turn away if the wind blows the burnt remains into your face. In fact, for the ash to touch you is a blessing



from the deceased. "To have ash in one's mouth" is the essence of being an ork, for death is never far from any of us.

But an ork funeral is no stoic ceremony. When an ork mourns, his wail should carry to the clouds. He should tear his clothing, cut his own flesh. If the body is burning before him, he should throw himself on it. The burns we suffer this way let us share the final pain of our dead comrade; they are a remembrance of him to display proudly to others. Understand this, my little elf: we do not mourn so passionately because we fear death. We mourn for ourselves, because we feel the pain of absence.



On Seizing Life and Shaking It

Not long before an ork child comes screaming and hungry into the world, its mother has a vivid dream—there is no mistaking it when it comes. In this dream, which we call the *vravraka*, she sees the Name Day ritual that the child demands and the Name it desires. If no dream comes, the mother knows the child will be stillborn. When I was pregnant with my first child, I dreamed that I walked through a forest with my babe and came to a patch of briar and thorn. The thorns drew close and drank my blood, but I carefully shielded my child from the grasping plants until I came to a fork in the trail. Then the babe spoke to me.

"I am Dakarga Bral, your son," he said. "You shall give the struggle I demand from you. Lay me down at the fork and unwrap me. The fork represents two paths I must choose from. One is domination, the other subjugation. May I choose wisely in my life.

"When you Name me Dakarga Bral, I shall be naked to the world and helpless. You shall snap a thorn and cut the tender soles of my feet with it, to show me that my way shall never be easy and that the earth does not welcome my tread. Then lift me above the fertile soil so that my blood drips into it. This will show my answer to the unfriendly ground: choke on my blood! *Buunda*! I will shackle you to my will!"

I awoke from the dream and described it to my husband, Kergbag. In the morning we set out to find the briar patch. After two weeks I was near panic, but of course we found it the day before I gave birth. Soon afterward I walked along that path, the babe who would become Dakarga Bral swaddled as he had been in my dream.

When I came to the fork, I spoke to the babe:

"You are Dakarga Bral, my son," I said. "I shall give you the struggle you demand from me." I continued to echo his words—fill them in when you write your book, boy—and I followed his instructions, cutting his feet and letting the blood soak into the earth. From that ritual, I expected Dakarga Bral to become an Elementalist. In fact, he became a merchant and now deals in elemental earth.

Though all Naming rituals are different, most have a few things in common. The mother is always present, though she is not always alone with the child, as happened in each *vravraka* I received. In each *vravraka*, the child speaks words that someone later repeats to it during the ritual. Most *vravraka* contain some symbolic threat of violence to the babe. In my own Naming ritual, my father and mother road a stajian at top speed along a cliff face while holding me by one foot over a gorge. Babes sometimes die in their Naming rituals, though this rarely happens. I personally know of only one such tragedy. Though the mother bore many more children, the father grew so despondent that he opened himself to possession by a Horror.

On Rebellion and Change

Ninety years have passed since the end of the Scourge. As an elf, you probably remember the kaer days, or your father does. If you were human, your grandfather would likely remember. Some obsidimen I've met told me of their lives before the Scourge—they had lived that long ago. But orks are not tied to the past by such memories; our lives are too short. My grandfather was a robust man of twenty when he ventured from his kaer. He died at forty-four, eleven years before I was born. His daughter, my mother, died in her forty-eighth year. My children and grandchildren know even less of our past than I do. The ork is a child of today, spreading out into the new world and remaking it unencumbered by past generations.

The ork does not restrain his feelings. His blood is thick with ambition, and he does not hesitate to grab destiny by the throat and shape it to his demands. He always rebels—against fate, against death, against anything that stands in his way. And what is the most immediate obstacle to a young ork's ambitions? His elders, of course. The ork who does not fight his mother and father isn't worth his tusks. Any responsible ork parent provides the rebellious child with what he needs: unyielding opposition to his childish demands. In this way, ork parents prepare their child for the obstacles he will face when he ventures out into the world.

Because ork generations come and go so quickly, each one seeking to overthrow the ways of the last, ork ways are ever changing. Almost anything said about orks today will not hold true in twenty years. The fashion in everything from music to weapons changes completely every few years, spreading through Barsaive at the speed of a maddened stajian. When an ork speaks of an ancient tradition, he refers to something his father dreamed up. The achievements of his grandmother's generation might as well be prehistoric.

I tell you this to explain the differences between the Three Ways in which most orks choose to live: the city ork, the raider, and the Cavalryman.

On the Three Ways of Orks

We orks call city living, raiding, and life in the cavalry the Three Ways, though most orks call their own way of life the One Way. These divisions are stupid and misleading—I myself at one time or another have followed all three paths. But many orks divide our race this way, so you should know what they're talking about even though they're full of *quaalz*. Full of *quaalz*? That means stupid, foolish, thickheaded idiots. They're full of *quaalz* because Cavalrymen and raiders call each other "uncivilized" and both heap scorn on the city ork. But neither of what you'd call "ork scorchers," the cavalry or the raiders, is any kind of ancient tradition! Go back four generations and every ork was as "civilized" as any dwarf.

You look puzzled, boy. Imagine the time just before the Scourge. Word had spread that anyone who wanted to survive had to build kaers or turn their cities into citadels. Orks were among the first to

throw themselves into the hard work of building. Name a kaer that survived, big or small, and you can bet orkish backs bent to build it. In exchange for their labor, the orks got the right to take refuge in the kaers. Suddenly orks who might have been fearless stajian riders with red-stained blades became builders instead. Once in the kaers, orks spent four centuries underground, with nary a mount to ride or battlefield to fill. That's twenty generations! And I look at my children and grandchildren and can't figure them out, they've got so many different ideas of what an ork should be!

Think about it, boy: the orks in the kaers went through dozens of ways of thinking and living, but none of them involved making war. Who's going to make war in a big cave underground? Maybe they remembered fierce warriors, but more likely somebody just invented those memories. The generation that could finally leave the kaers must have loved the stories of the raiders and fighters, and so they rounded up some mounts and took up the "ancient ways" they'd just invented!

In some ways, though, it doesn't matter how ork scorchers began. The way of the Cavalrymen and raiders fits our world today. With all this land to fill in a dangerous world where an ork can win glory with a sword, the day of mercenaries and raiders is here. When times change and the trail to power lies somewhere else, you can bet the swiftly moving feet of orks will trample it first.

You see now, why the rivalry between the Cavalryman and the raider is so stupid? But just try to explain the truth to either pack of thickheads and you'd best get ready to parry a few blows. The raider thinks he's following the ancient ways of the first orks and believes the Cavalryman is selling out to the other Namegivers who enslaved us. Me, I ask what the raider thinks his great grandsires were doing in the kaers with all those other races. And the Cavalryman, he finds the "primitive" ways of the raiders embarrassing. Well I've fought with and against both kinds of ork warrior, and I can tell you that when he's standing over you, ready to crush your head with a flail, the Cavalryman is no less primitive than the raider. Full of *quaalz*, both of 'em.



The city ork, he who the "great warriors" despise, lives a way more like the way most orks lived for centuries. You know who I mean, little elf—I mean orks who live in towns and villages with other Namegiver races. These orks came out from the kaers, built houses, and kept on living with the same families they'd called neighbors all along, carrying on whatever trade they'd practiced underground. Truth be told, most orks are city orks and don't care a gob of spit for all this *quaalz* about how a "true ork" should act. City ork, he wants to get ahead and get along with his neighbors. He'll call humans, dwarfs, or anyone else, his friends—if they let him.

There's a hurtful truth for you, boy. No city dweller can forget he's an ork for long. He takes too much *quaalz* from others, who still look at him and see an ugly brute fit only for dumb labor, or who quake in fear as he passes. And look at the magistrates of any city. How many orks do you see? A handful, maybe. There are more orks in Barsaive than any other race except dwarfs—in a century we'll outbreed them! Yet still we're less than any other Namegiver race in Barsaive! No wonder, is it, that even the meekest ork shop clerk dreams of running with the raiders, of smashing his boss' face and burning his business to the ground. No matter how many of us prove ourselves better than the rest of you, we'll get the short end of the sword. Understand now, boy, why orks have short tempers and long, vengeful memories?

You other Namegivers are like the cavalry and the raiders—you need someone to look down on. And we're it, for no good reason except that it has always been that way. You look on us and see the worst things about yourselves. Despising us makes you feel better, but we orks are tired of it. Someday you will recognize our achievements—or we will make you eat them. So don't scratch your head in wonder when an ork you meet gives you a wary look, when he assumes your laugh is aimed at him, when he treats your offer of friendship with scorn. We orks make our own hasty judgments about other races. We learned that from you.

On the Burning Heart of Gahad

Mind you, I don't claim that orks are misunderstood wildflowers. My people deserve our reputation for violence; it's just that most folk act like we are the only ones who ever lash out. And that, my little elf, is a lie.

The ork's reputation for violence grows from his passionate nature. You may say that your heart is full of love, or full of spite. When you say this, you are speaking poetry. When an ork says it, he means it. If you arouse me to desire or fury, I feel it in my heart as intensely as you would feel a fever in your head or poison in your gut. We call this sensation gahad. If you awaken my gahad, expect me to act on my emotions. I can try to resist gahad, but resisting sets my brain to boiling and curdles my stomach. I am not speaking in any of your elf metaphors—it hurts when an ork resists gahad. We believe that such resistance shortens life. An able-bodied ork who suddenly drops dead at forty is said to have swallowed his gahad one time too many.

Anything that makes an ork want to do something, good or bad, can give rise to gahad. Some impulses we can never resist, though these are different for each ork. Me, I'm bad with insults, particularly slurs against my race. So my gahad impulse is inconvenient, because a racial insult is usually the first thing an *Ujnort* says to get a rise out of an ork who should be acting calm and cool. But

when you must choose between the smart thing to do and what your gahad wants—well, smart usually loses. If I don't follow my gahad, it takes revenge later, clouding my mind or sending pain like arrows at the worst possible time. Happened to me in the middle of a fight once.

On the other hand, some things ruffle up most orks but don't bother me at all. I can be starving in the wilderness, but I've never had gahad over food. I don't feel gahad when others steal from me, either. I've tracked down and thrashed my share of thieves, but gahad never made me do it. And I've met other orks who can shrug off the worst *Ujnort* insults with a grin, if you can imagine that!

Let me tell you when an ork's suffering from gahad, so you'll know to get out of his way. His features get tight and his lips or cheeks twitch. Of course, an *Ujnort* like you might miss these signs; I've seen *Ujnort* provoke orks into gahad without knowing it many a time. But any ork who can count past two can see gahad in another of his kind.

Once I heard a wise ork say that gahad is a gift from Hrak Gron. The wise one said she believed orks had been enslaved because they were meek and mild, preferring to surrender and accept the shackles rather than fight and risk dying. But Hrak Gron was born with gahad in her breast, unable to accept the abuse of her masters. Gahad made her yearn for freedom and led her to create the Liberator Discipline, which spread gahad among orks and fired their spirits during the Great Uprising. Today we carry gahad in our hearts to remind us that we are orks. Gahad reminds us that we have freedom because we fought for it, and we must not surrender it. That is why the ork trusts his heart above his mind. Our minds led us into slavery; the heart, the dwelling place of gahad, led us to freedom.

On Orks and the Passions

Once, during my days in the Metal Fist raider tribe, I heard someone say that the Passions made orks because other Namegivers didn't really understand how the Passions wished to be worshipped. The other races all speak of Passions, but they do not feel them clutching their hearts the way we do. Other races talk about following the Passions; we feel them inside us. They are like the food we eat or the air we breathe. They become part of us.

No ork can tell another what the truth of the Passions really is, because we each experience the Passions for ourselves. I have felt close to each of the Passions at different times—yes, even the Mad Passions. I will listen to no fools prattling on about their ideas of the Passions, for I have felt their very breaths on the back of my neck. I have smelled the sweet air that surrounds Astendar and the choking, dusty reek of Dis. But I would not argue with another ork who said he thought Astendar smelled more like a tree struck by lightning; or Dis like a damp and dirty rag. What passes between an ork and a Passion is the ork's own business—only *Ujnorts* are cloddish enough to ask uninvited questions about these matters. If one does share experiences with the Passions, it is only with a lover or the closest of comrades.

Feeling the breath of the Passions is not the same as meeting them. I have never run into a Passion directly, though I know others who have. Experiencing the breath is more like feeling a presence, being aware of a smell or a fleeting glimpse of something in a shadow or glint of light. Or it can be the sensation that someone is watching you from the inside. These sensations make an ork feel strong and proud, except when one of us feels the gaze of a Mad Passion on his spirit. Such experiences are terrifying. I confess this frankly and without shame, and believe me, boy, no ork speaks easily of fear and doubt.

Sometimes I think *turgma* are orks who have done the wrong thing when the breath of a Mad Passion comes, who have surrendered to their fears and to the Corrupted Ones. I have heard it said that an ork who enslaves himself to the touch of a Mad Passion can never again feel the other Passions within him. But of course, none can say if this is so. No ork, not even a *turgma*, would dare admit to such a surrender.

Though we do not waste our time prattling about the Passions, we tell our children tales of them. These stories explain the strange sensations of the Passions' nearness and teach the child what to do when they come. Especially, the child must be taught to resist the touch of the Mad Passions. From these tales you can see what orks expect when a Passion comes to call.

The ork knows Astendar as *Mera-a-a-arg*. *Ujnort* never pronounce this correctly; none of you know how to roll the "a" sound like a purr in the back of the throat. This sound is the orkish sound of desire. The Name means literally "He Who Is She" or "She Who Is He"—either Name will do. *Mera-a-a-arg's* role as an inspiration to Troubadours and storytellers is important, but the ork most often feels the touch of He Who Is She when in the throes of desire. Orks are ardent followers of the ways of love; we are greater lovers than fighters. You find that idea amusing, little elf? Why? Because I am ugly, and ugly folk cannot be lovers? Let me tell you something, boy. I called you handsome when we began talking, but next to any one of my mates, you're a scrawny babe. So don't talk to me about ugliness or loving until you've had an ork. When a female ork looks on a likely male and both feel *Mera-a-a-arg* filling their chests with gahad, they cast aside their other longings to make room for their desire. Orks feel no regret in matters of love. When men have left me, I do not blame them, for it is *Mera-a-a-arg's* doing. Nor can I blame *Mera-a-a-arg*, for She Who Is He will visit me soon and provide a replacement for the lover she has taken away.

Grenkaklank is our Name for Chorrolis. Other Namegivers know him as a jealous wretch. We see him as a charming scoundrel, an uncle who comes to call and steals a few petty possessions. Sometimes we hear his insinuating whisper in our heads, sometimes in the clanking of coins or the rustle of jewelry. His seductive words come when we look on some material object that will do us no good, and suddenly we must have it nonetheless. He makes us single minded in pursuit of these things and then laughs at us when we get them, for no item is as attractive in one's own hand as it is in another's. *Grenkaklank* teaches us that the pursuit, the striving, is more important than winning the prize. Once we possess the desired object, he tells us it means nothing and gives us another target. So beware when you negotiate a mercenary contract or trade agreement with a flinty-eyed ork, for *Grenkaklank* may be whispering him instructions.

Before Dis went mad, we knew her as *Kawjujwak*, the Passion of order. We had little use for her then, and we have none for her now that she has become a Passion of slavery. Anyone who follows *Kawjujwak* is an enemy of all orks.

Floranuus is *Prakarool* in our language. Many orks have a soft spot in their hearts for *Prakarool* and his questors, for they follow their hopes and desires with little regard for tomorrow. Still, his followers tend to be as naïve as elves (like you, boy!), and many of us cannot take them seriously. *Prakarool* features in many of our folk tales, where he shucks off his flame form and becomes an absurdly attractive ork of either sex.

We call Garlen *Muvuul*. We orks must spawn many children to survive, and so our women in particular call on *Muvuul*—I know I often whispered her Name during difficult pregnancies. Though we may speak more of those Passions you know as Lochost and Thystonius, *Muvuul* is the most deeply loved Passion among us. Many orks will challenge to the death anyone foolish enough to scoff at *Muvuul*.

Jaspree is *Greeb* in Orkish, and Barsaive's handful of ork farmers honor his ways. Orks who do not work the soil pay *Greeb* little mind. We tell fewer stories about *Greeb* than the other Passions, and our beliefs about him are much the same as those of the *Ujnort*.

We orks claim Lochost as our patron Passion, calling her *Blork* in our own language and honoring her by swearing oaths in her Name. Liberators especially revere *Blork* because she inspired their Discipline in the heart of the great Hrak Gron. *Blork's* association with our great hero makes us think of her as female, though the Passion also appears as a man. Liberators and questors of *Blork* together often destroy slavers. We have a saying that you can always tell a *turgma*, because he is ashamed to praise *Blork*.



According to our legends, Mynbruje, or *Mikbruug*, once served only the other Namegivers and paid no heed to the needs of orks. Just before the Great Uprising, Hrak Gron spoke to *Mikbruug* and convinced her that the bondage of our people was the greatest injustice in Barsaive. *Mikbruug* gave Hrak Gron several gifts, but decreed that she and those who followed her Discipline would lose their talents if they turned their backs on the ideals of justice. To this day, Liberators must follow a code of honor if they wish to remain adepts. Most orks still think of *Mikbruug* as a distant Passion who uses arguments too far from the emotions of everyday life for a sensible ork to understand, but we revere her nonetheless.

Your Name for the Mad Passion Raggok is an orkish one. Even before he went mad he was a fierce Passion, and he held the hearts of many orks. Many *turgma* still pay him heed, mistaking his cruelty for courage and his vengeance for justice. I have heard Raggok blamed for leading many orks astray. Indeed, most orkish lackeys, prison guards, and torturers pay him homage.

Many *Ujnort* assume that *Tranko*, or Thystonius as you call him, is our most revered Passion, the one we call on in times of war and desperation. Though he is indeed a worthy Passion and due great respect, we find him less stirring than *Blork* because *Tranko* cares more for the ideal of the warrior than for the righteousness of a cause. *Tranko* is the patron of the mercenary ork, who calls on him for skill and luck before entering a battle he does not care about. When an ork fights for his freedom or his people, he calls on *Blork*, not *Tranko*, for spirit and determination.

Upandal, whom we call *Jrikjrikjrik*, gladdens the hearts of orks who have become builders. These days, of course, most orks have little interest in building. We built too much in our past and received nothing for our labor. Our masters forced us to work when we were slaves, and though we lent backs and muscle to the construction of the kaers, we got scant thanks or respect for it.

Vestrial—or *Yelubo*, as we knew him once—was a beloved Passion before his madness. We avoid saying his name now, though many *turgma* shame us by following his ways. A dwarf once told me that many of the funny stories we now tell of *Grenkaklank* and *Prakarool* once featured *Yelubo*. Perhaps if we steal his tales, his power will wither, and his strangely wise antics and the boons he once granted will settle on the shoulders of *Grenkaklank* and *Prakarool*.

On Ork Ways and Customs

I heard another scholar—one not so pretty as you, boy—say once that the truth of a people is not in their grand pronouncements and philosophies, but in how they weave their cloaks and in the games they play. You want me to talk of these things, don't you? You are tired of hearing about freedom and slavery and the need to fight the *Ujnort* who despise us. Very well, little elf; we'll talk of gentler subjects. But when you write your book, remember two things: nothing true of one ork is true of all orks, and nothing true of all orks will be true for long. I am old now, and the things I knew are being thrown aside by a new generation—as they should be.

On Arts Among Orks

An ork loves a good performance. He likes to see a dancer, Troubadour, or teller of tales throw his soul into his art and come out dripping with sweat. Of all the arts, we love storytelling most. A truly great taleteller can be a rude t'skrang one moment and a steely eyed Liberator the next. Of course, we don't build walls between different arts, as you do. Among orks, the best performers can juggle and tell a tale and dance and play music all at the same time.

Orks love to dance, boy. We dance as a prelude to our greatest art, the art of love. A good ork band of musicians takes the same old instruments you're used to hearing elves and dwarfs play—lutes and horns and drums—but makes them sound more alive, makes them grab at your gut and heart. No elf can make the sound an ork Troubadour can, not even with the same instrument.

We don't care for other arts. Painting, sculpture; they are a waste of our precious time because they give us nothing. Pictures are good only to put on shields and scare one's enemies. Fighting is beautiful, children are beautiful—how can a lifeless sculpture or a glass vase be beautiful?

On Ork Craftsmanship

Orks have no need for frills and decorations. Who lives long enough to waste time carving little vine leaves into a wooden tankard, or curlicues into a saddle? If you want to make an ork laugh, show him your sword and helm all decked up in jewels and gold! He'll laugh even harder as his plain, respectable broadsword knocks the decorations off your helmet!

Some younger orks, mostly in the cavalries, have taken to using such fancied-up objects—bought or taken from others, not made by orks. They think it shows they're moving up in the world or something like that. In my day an ork would be ashamed to use anything but a simple, honest weapon or tool that does what it was made to do and no more.

On Styles of Dress

Ork clothing changes fastest of all. A fashion can start one day in Kratas, be everywhere in Barsaive within a year, and forgotten by the next harvest-time. Clothing divides the young strivers from old fools like me, divides the so-called primitives from the supposedly civilized.

Ork warriors in the same cavalry try to wear the same clothes; they think everyone looking the same makes them look like real soldiers. Right now, they love sparkling bits of brass and copper sewn in their tunics, arranged in fancy patterns by rank. Year by year, they wear more and more of these studs; this year, Terath's Chargers wore small spikes on their shoulders. Take it from me, boy—within another year, the spikes will get bigger and semiprecious stones will replace brass and copper. Got to keep looking better and better, those Cavalrymen. Hah!

Scorcher raiders prefer the "primitive" look of animal hides and leathers and furs, all dyed in garish, clashing colors. Pieces of armor and clothing taken on raids are prized, too, if they look mismatched and damaged. More full of *quaalz* than anybody, raiders—they dress like the village fool and think they look frightening. Younglings among them decorate their tunics and cloaks with little chunks of animal bone now. Older scorchers also believe that dirty and shabby things are better than clean, but this fashion seems to be fading away. Someone finally remembered that properly cared for clothes and gear last longer.

City orks mostly wear dwarf clothing, cut to fit a more handsome figure. These garments are usually made of garishly patterned cloth, sewn with colored thread. I've lately seen young orks tattoo their faces with false beards and mustaches— men and women, both! Idiotic, I think—but then, I'm an old fool. I've even seen young cavalry bravos with these tattoos, as well as a few raiders.

You're shaking your head, boy. Don't understand? I guess no one can explain an ork's tastes.

On Weapons and Armor

I never met a weapon I didn't like. An honest broadsword or spear pleases me as much as a young lover, and it's more loyal to boot. An ork doesn't waste time picking and choosing his weapons—he'll pick up anything and use it. Cavalrymen care for their weapons better than raiders because they feel respect for their trade. Raiders don't take the trouble—they believe no weapon is so fine you can't steal another one somewhere.

An ork wears whatever armor he can afford, and he will take it a piece at a time if he can't buy a whole suit. As soon as a fighting ork gets a piece of armor, he marks it as his own, with studs if he's in the cavalry or bits of bone and gouges if he's a raider. You wonder why we bother to buy the best we can? You think we're stupid, boy? We may not fear dying, but we won't seek it foolishly by wearing worthless armor into battle. Where's the glory in dying because your armor fell apart?

The only orks who don't wear the best armor they can buy are Liberators. But then, a Liberator needs no better armor than a hard stare and a threadbare tunic. These orks can use their Discipline's talents to cloak themselves in an armor of the will, and they pride themselves on looking like the pathetic slaves they rescue. Some of them wear normal armor when they're not sneaking into enemy strongholds and posing as slaves.

On Ork Architecture

Most orks are happy to leave building to the *Ujnort*. After all, erecting a great hall or tower can take longer than an ork's lifetime! Better to spend time on enjoying a thousand things than on a single task.

Don't misunderstand me, boy—we know how to build. Orks work on construction crews if the pay is good (or if our skins depend on it, like when we built the kaers). But unlike you *Ujnort*, we're satisfied with a tent or bedroll under the stars. Indeed, raiders snort with laughter if they see an ork put up a lean-to! City orks live however they like and however they can—I've seen them in every kind of dwelling from hovels made of discarded planks to the vast palaces of merchants.

On Mannerly Behavior Among Orks

You want to know how to get along in the company of orks? Just a few simple rules, boy. Write them down.

- Say what you think in plain talk, without weasel words.
- Don't eat with one hand when you can eat with two.
- Never be the first at the table to stop drinking, and always belch afterward.
- Never wake a sleeping ork unless his life depends on it.
- If you tell an ork he stinks, expect him to take it as a compliment. Don't expect him to wash.
- Spit to your left to show respect, to your right to show disrespect.
- Don't cover your mouth when you cough—it shows you're ashamed of your body.
- When you greet or bid farewell to an ork in friendship, throw both arms around him and bite him on the neck, as he does the same to you. If you bite too lightly, you may offend him by implying that his flesh is too good for your tongue. If you bite too hard, you offend because you want to cause him injury. Never greet an ork by shaking his hand or offering him your upturned palm—such gestures show your contempt of us, because you have not bothered to learn our ways.
- Never wish an ork luck—by doing so, you imply that he'll need it. Instead, say "May Hrak Gron be with you." If the ork you are speaking to is a *turgma*, of course, the mention of Hrak Gron's Name will remind him of his shame. He will probably attack you—feel free to slay such a one.
- Never remind orks of their race's past as slaves, unless you were once a slave and those you are speaking to know this.

Among ourselves, we live by two other rules: no regrets, and no grudges. If you don't like something I do, tell me. If your words make sense, I will change my ways. If they do not, I will continue as I am. Either way, neither of us apologizes. You are not sorry for mentioning it, and I am not sorry for doing what I did. Life is too short to feel regret. If you do something bad, fix the problem; don't go about moaning about regret. Holding grudges is pointless also. If you get my gahad boiling, I confront you and we resolve it then and there. If we cannot reach agreement, we fight to first blood and our weapons decide what our words cannot. Once we solve a problem, we forget it. And if the problem is too big to forget, one of us kills the other and life goes on. What could be simpler?

On Customs of Love, Marriage and Family

My people have a saying that the fiercest fires burn out fastest. Orks love passionately, but briefly; we take on many mates throughout our lives. When a male and female share the ways of love, they are married and they share family obligations. Unlike you *Ujnort*, we require no ceremony to mark this relationship, though we often hold huge feasts to celebrate such unions.

The obligations of marriage are simple. First, neither partner may risk his or her life without the consent of the other. Second, partners must share any money or spoils they gain with each other. And last, the married ork must consider the previous children of a mate as his or her own and treat them accordingly. These bonds do not dissolve when an ork moves on to a new mate; I still keep in touch with the children of my former mates, born of other ork women.

Most orks have at least six children, and so our family customs create a vast web of relationships in the community and foster strong loyalties among us. The previous child of my mate is my *lelkrarg*; I am his *dramar*. I owe advice and aid to my *lelkrarg*s in exchange for their respect and obedience. Because each *lelkrarg* has many *dramar*, my interest in raising a *lelkrarg* well connects me with many other adults in my community.

On the Ways of Men and Women

All orks know that women are better than men. Our greatest hero, Hrak Gron, was a woman. Women can do all the things men can—hunt, raid, fight, build, sing, steal, drink, eat, haggle—and we can bear children. But we are smart enough not to lord our superiority over our men too much. We let them help make decisions, too. And bearing children takes six months, so we let the men go off and do things while we wait for the precious child to arrive.

As for dividing tasks by the sex an ork is born with, such a notion is laughable! The strength of a sword arm and sharpness of mind are better tests than sex of who is fit to lead.

On How Orks View Other Races

We orks know what most of you *Ujnort* think of us. You think we're savages, killers, thieves, idiots—don't try to deny it. You surprised, pretty boy, that we think as well of you as you do of us? Surprised? But unlike you, we orks are not blinded by our prejudices. All the *Ujnort* have some good in them, though they keep it well hidden from the ork.

On one hand, dwarfs don't fancy around with flowery lies and weasel words. They say what they think—sometimes, anyway. On the other hand, they pretend to love justice and freedom but kept us as slaves for centuries. And they lust for power over all of Barsaive. To them, orks are pawns in their game, meek and obedient pawns they can sweep into a corner when they need us no more. The empire they dream of would fit us better than the Theran yoke, but no empires at all would be better still.

It is to our everlasting shame that we enslaved the orks. But may not dwarfs, like other Namegivers, be forgiven their errors? As for treating orks as pawns, or desiring power over all Barsaive, that is errant nonsense. We want only the "power" to bring justice to all Namegivers.

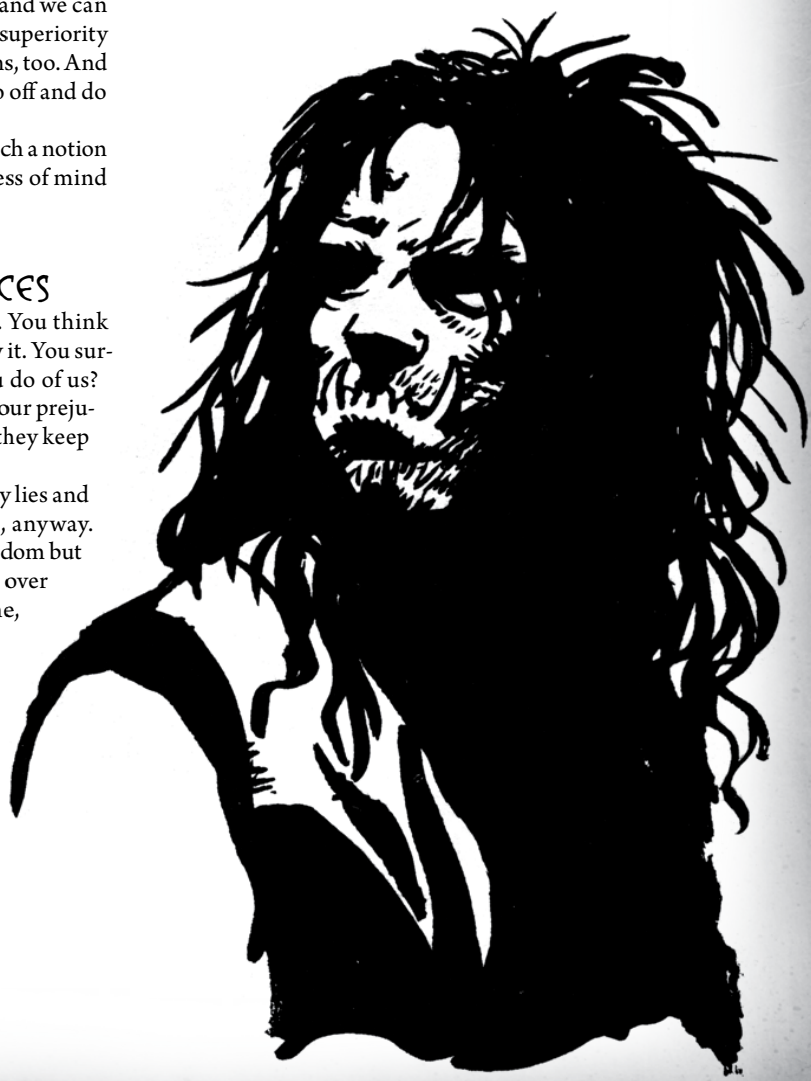
—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Elves, now, they cannot be trusted. They're so deceitful even their own hearts lie to them. They never know what they really feel and wouldn't tell you if they did. They sneer at what they call our ugliness and at our honest ways, preferring empty-headed beauty and underhanded intrigue. Not all bad, though, the elves. They don't share the dwarfs' dreams of power, and some of them are handsome even if they do cause trouble. Like you, pretty boy!

Humans confuse orks. Humans confuse everybody. A human in ork company is often a better ork than the orks are. But put him with elves and he starts looking at you like you're lower than a horse's leavings. Put him with a dwarf and he wants to impose his order on you. Humans are like snowflakes: no two are alike, and they melt when you throw them in the fire. That was a joke, pretty boy! Best thing to remember about humans is to keep a sharp eye on them—puzzle out what they're up to, what they want. You got to watch carefully, because a human will change himself however he must to win. Clever folk, though, humans. We orks admire that.

Obsidimen are strange and slow. Even though they live so much longer than we do, we pity them, for they never feel our fierce joy in life. Best thing about an obsidiman is that you can trust him all the time. Once you puzzle him out, he won't change. We have a saying that describes obsidimen best: you can trust a rock, but it's not much fun to drink with one.

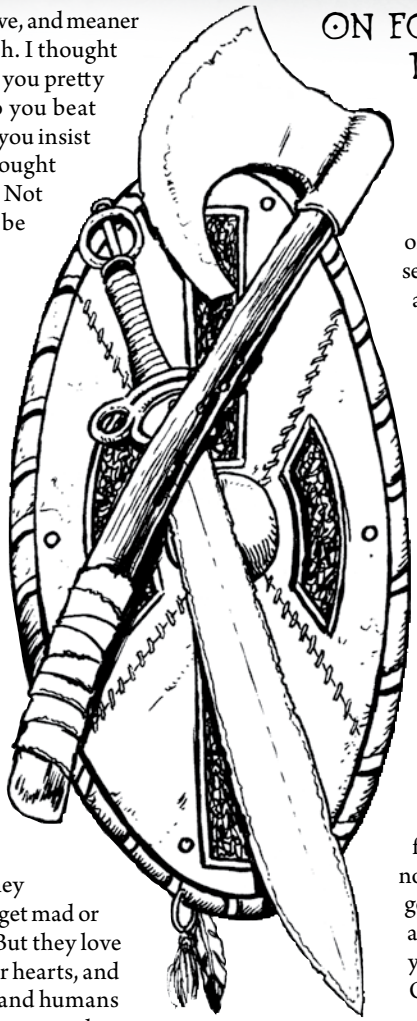
Everything bad you ever heard about orks is true of trolls. They are vicious killers with no honor, savage beasts in a Namegiver's



form. Ever known a troll who wasn't stupid, destructive, and meaner than ale brewed from snake venom, pretty boy? Hah. I thought not. They should have been the slaves, not us—but you pretty weaklings of Namegivers feared to fight them. So you beat the orks down instead. All right, pretty elf; because you insist on asking, I'll admit I know a few trolls who have fought their cruel natures and become honorable and brave. Not many, mind you. You ask me, most trolls deserve to be thrown in a tar pit to drown.

T'skrang are entertaining, but flighty. I fought side by side with t'skrang who risked their lives just to look stylish in battle. Stylish! Have you ever heard of anything so stupid? Worrying about how prettily they can swing a sword when they should be plowing straight through the enemy and killing them. If you kill your enemy, who cares what you look like doing it? But a t'skrang's heart is in the right place, even when he knows less about ork ways than a baby knows of the world. Too bad you can't rely on them to do the sensible thing when a crazy thing is possible instead. People tell me the t'skrang who stay in their own villages are reasonable enough, but the wanderers and adventurers I've met were just plain crazy. Funny, though. Watching them fight, I sometimes split my sides laughing.

Windlings can make you crazy in a few heartbeats. They think everything they say is funny even if it hurts you, and they never know when to shut their yapping mouths. Fly around like gnats, they do, especially when you want their attention. They can't settle down and listen to a plan, and they cry or get mad or just fly away when you try to talk sense into them. But they love freedom almost as much as orks do. They follow their hearts, and they can seize life and shake it in a way that dwarfs and humans and such only dream of. For that, I admire windlings even when they get my gahad boiling.



Obviously, our ork author's prejudices are showing. Still, these biased assumptions give useful insight into the orkish mind.

—Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Great Library of Throal

On Food and Drink Dear to Orks

Orks love to feast on honest food that weighs heavy in the gut. When I have a meal, I want to know I ate something. If you can't cover it in batter and boil it in oil, don't serve it to me. And if you want an ork to think you're a poor excuse for a host, serve him vegetables with no meat. You Name a meat, we like it. Nothing tastes as rich as meat; nothing else has the taste of lifeblood lingering in it. And why bother eating anything that doesn't taste of life itself, unless you can't get anything else?

Besides the meat we love, orks eat plenty of *quaalz*, the wondrous bean that you *Ujnort* claim is only fit for animals. Too bad for you that your taste buds can't take the burn of *quaalz* in gravy—there's nothing so good in the world, pretty elf! Except a nice, batter-covered chunk of oil-dripping meat, or a huge flask of *hurlg*. Don't grimace at the sound of that word, boy! Would you like it if I spat on your flower-scented elven wine that your folk love so much? *Hurlg* is a true ork's drink, made of grain and animal fat. We ferment it in barrels for weeks, until it curdles the inside of your nose when you smell it. That's how you know good *hurlg*, boy. And I know exactly why you and other Namegivers don't like it: because you can't keep up with us when we drink it. One little glass knocks elves like you flat!

Speaking of *hurlg*, my head is swimming. Can't drink as much as I used to, now I'm so old. Take me home now, pretty boy, and take your sword out of its sheath. See those ruffians at the table across the way? I've been giving them the *buunda* all night. They'll follow us out, boy, or I'm no ork. You take the skinny one with the twitch; I'll get the two beefy ones and the troll with the cudgel. A good scrap makes a stirring prelude to passion, don't it?

CHAPTER SEVEN

ON THE NATURE AND WAYS OF TROLLS

The following is excerpted from an incomplete treatise written in 1499 TH by Vrayma Dawnharrow, a troll scholar of considerable note. Such a scholar is a rare find indeed; many trolls see little value in the written word, regarding writing as a medium that lacks the life (and therefore the truth) of their own lively, rich oral tradition. Of those trolls who are scholars in the Throalic sense of the word, meaning researchers and authors rather than taletellers, most succumb to the romance of the different and study other Namegiver races. Vrayma Dawnharrow is one of the few who writes about the ways of trolls … and given the unfortunate tendency of many other Namegivers to sum up trolls as bone-headed warmongers, we felt that only a troll could do the troll race justice in this work.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

My Name is Vrayma Dawnharrow of clan Burntclaw; by profession, I am a storyteller and scholar. Many a long year ago, I left my family home atop Mount Mar'ak in the Twilight Peaks and followed my Troubadour Discipline in search of tales and stories about all the Namegiver races of Barsaive. In my travels I have met many whose ways I found both strange and wonderful, and yet no other Namegiver race seems quite so strange and wonderful to me as my own too-often-misunderstood people.

I personally experienced the consequences of this misunderstanding almost everywhere I went. For every stranger who treated me kindly and shared what he had with me, I met another who shrank from me in fear or mocked me to his companions when he believed I could not understand him. I discovered, to my sorrow, that many of our fellow Namegivers mistakenly believe trolls uncivilized, arrogant, quick to anger, ignorant, and utterly lacking in intellect or spiritual virtue. Even those who came to know me, or knew other trolls as friends too often merely believed us somehow "different" from the rest of our race. To correct these misperceptions of the troll people on the part of friends, enemies, and those yet strangers to me, I have chosen to write this text for all to read, so that my fellow Namegivers may come to better understand the ways of trolls.

Many of the ignorant assumptions made about trolls are both accurate and wildly inaccurate, a notion that may confuse many of my readers. But if you are to understand us at all, you must first understand that almost nothing can be said truly of trolls that does not contain a seed of falsehood, and almost no lie can be told about us that does not contain a kernel of truth. The troll race embodies many contradictions, a truth that we recognize. We call ourselves *trua'a'ul*, a troll word that defies accurate translation into the tongues of other races. The closest I can come to it is "the People of Two," or "the Dual People." Our recognition and celebration of the duality at the core of our being is what makes us trolls, and also what makes us among the most fascinating Namegiver races in Barsaive.

A WORD ON GENERALIZATIONS

Before I continue, I must comment on generalizations. Statements of supposed truth that encompass an entire race are by nature foolish and sometimes downright dangerous, as the following tale illustrates.

A human merchant of my acquaintance with a less than savory past and a sharp eye for a bargain made a point of studying the ways of Barsaive's peoples in order to more easily part them from their coin. (Indeed, we met in the Great Library, where he attempted to persuade me to sell him one of Jerriv Forrim's treatises on the t'skrang for twelve pieces of silver. Naturally, I declined.) Several months later, I saw him again, in a Bartertown tavern, celebrating his release from a day-long stint in a Throalic jail. It seems that while traveling the lowlands near the Serpent River, he met a band of sturdy orks clad in plate armor and bedecked with fearsome horned helmets, all astride the backs of monstrous great thundra beasts. Now, he had read in a parchment in the Great Library, that ork scorcher bands (for such he took these fellow travelers to be) admire toughness and the braggart's style, and they will often let a stranger pass by them on the road unmolested if he acts the part of the bluff rogue with sufficient conviction. This my merchant friend determined to do, and so he rode out from the concealment of the bush where he had hidden, pulled up his steed so that the poor animal blocked the road and drew his broadsword, saying to the scorchers with a proud glare and a curled lip, "I am Menach'me, and this is my road. Pay me tribute, and I will let you pass. Refuse, and prepare to die!"

As Menach'me was only one human and the orks numbered ten stout fellows, his challenge was certainly an audacious one. It had, however, the opposite effect to the one he had foreseen. The leading ork, a strapping young fellow sporting the scars of countless battles, frowned at Menach'me's declaration and said, in a tone as soft and an accent as elegant as an elven courtier from the ancient tales of Wyrm Wood, "I care little for your tone, good sir. It is against the law of the land to bar the way of the traveler on the high road and

to demand payment for passage compounds the crime. Will you give way, or must we arrest you?"

Well, Menach'me was struck dumb with amazement, and he could not find a voice to reply for several seconds. The small band of Terath's Chargers (for such they were, though Menach'me did not yet know this) mistook his silence for defiance and surrounded him with weapons drawn. They took his sword from him, plucked him from his horse, tied his hands and feet, draped him in front of the leader's saddle, and marched him to Throal (where they were bound) to stand trial for his offense. The ork leader who had taken him was, of course, none other than the famed Earal Bloodstroke, Terath's own son and a devoted ally of Throal. Menach'me discovered this on the long journey to the dwarf kingdom, during which Earal conversed most eloquently and wittily with him on the diversity of the orkish peoples of Barsaive. Menach'me's part in the dialogue was, perforce, considerably restrained by his position, which prevented him from much speech save grunting into the thundra beast's withers. He has gained, I think, a unique appreciation for just how much like a stable a sweating thundra beast smells.

Though this cautionary tale speaks of orks, the lesson in it applies particularly well to trolls. In writing a treatise on all trolls, I cannot help but write in general terms of troll ways and behavior despite the risk of offending my brethren by doing so. Therefore, the reader must remember that the customs I shall relate, while true of certain individuals, clans, and trollmoots, are not true of others. A behavior or style of address that is the height of polite fashion in the moothome of one clan may be a mortal insult in a moothome only two valleys distant. I have made my best effort to describe the most widespread beliefs and behaviors, and also to point out those things that vary most greatly from moothome to moothome. Still, I caution all readers of my work not to risk their lives by believing in the absolute truth of what they find in this treatise.

On the Dual Nature of Trolls

To be a troll in Barsaive is to live a dual life, as our self-given Name suggests. Outsiders often see in trolls both violence and contemplation, white-hot fury and quiet joy, these different extremes seeming to occur from one moment to the next. Our violence and stillness, rage and joy come to us from the two ideals by which all trolls strive to live. The common, Throalic tongue Names these ideals honor and spirituality. In the dwarf language, our ideals become simple words, easy to say and easy to grasp. In truth, however, troll honor and spirituality are far more complex than such simple Names imply. As is true of so many of the ways of trolls, our honor and spirituality contain many facets that defy accurate description in the languages of other Namegivers. I shall endeavor to explain these ideals more fully, so that others may come to understand our ways.

On the Many Meanings of Honor

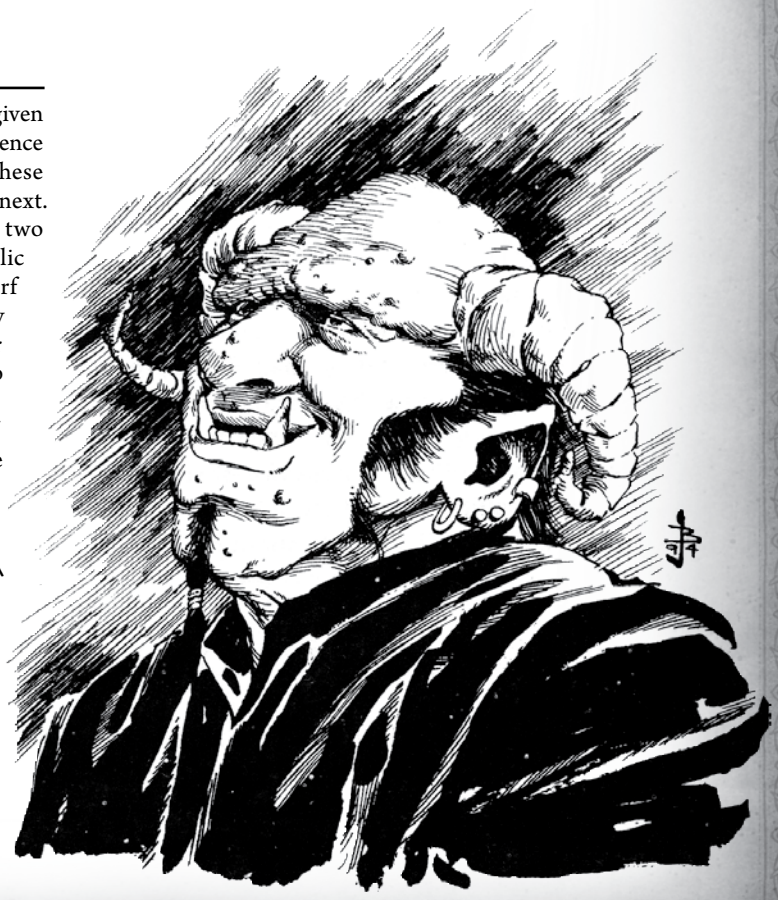
Most other races recognize that trolls are governed by honor, but they do not understand the many things that honor means to us. In some ways, for a troll to explain the distinctions between the various meanings of troll honor is like a bird trying to explain what it is to be a bird. Paradoxically, only a troll can even attempt to explain honor, because only a troll understands it.

What a troll calls "honor" actually encompasses two ideas: honor and pride. Troll honor combines recognition of abilities with a sense of dignity and personal worth. Our honor tells us who we are and what we can accomplish. Without it, we have nothing by which to know ourselves and nothing to give to the world; we are Nameless and useless, and might as well die. The troll language has no single word for this concept of honor. Instead, we use three words: *katorr*, *kat'ral*, and *katera*, the meanings of all of which are simultaneously related and separate.

Katorr translates most closely as personal honor, the pride an individual troll feels in herself. *Kat'ral* refers to the honor of a troll clan, and *katera* might best be translated as racial honor. These three kinds of honor are intertwined like the strands of a rope, woven so closely together that they blend into a single thing … and yet, all the strands remain separate. The exquisite intricacies of the links between *katorr*, *kat'ral*, and *katera* are central to the life of a troll.

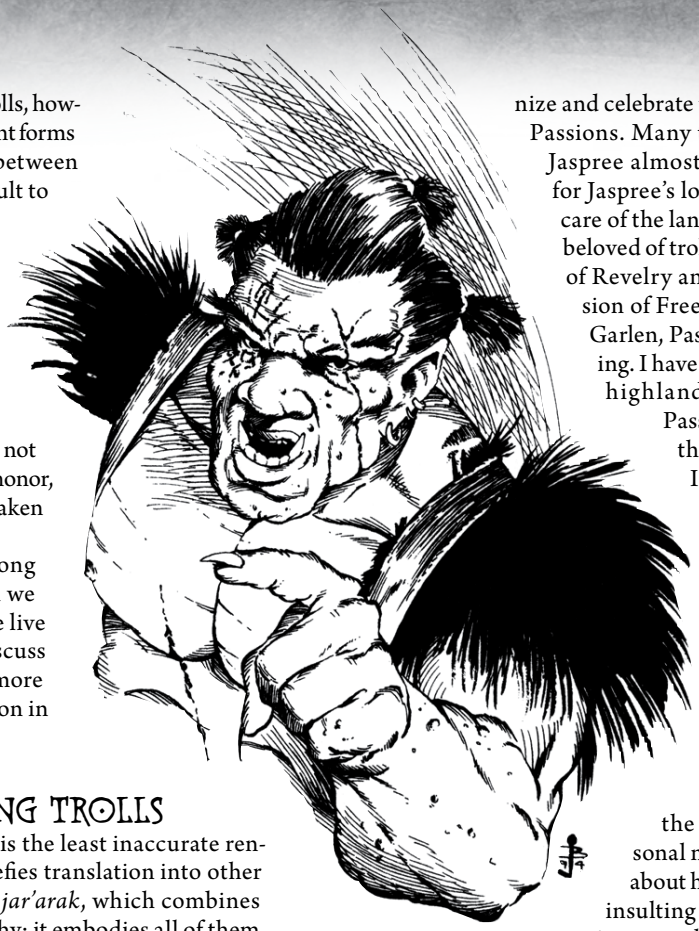
Because of the connections between the different kinds of honor, a slight or an enhancement to one kind of honor can affect the other kinds. Depending on the circumstances, for example, an insult to an individual troll might slight that troll's *katorr*, *kat'ral*, *katera*, or all three. A troll insulted by another troll suffers a slight to her *katorr*, her personal honor. If the giver of the insult is of another clan, the insulted troll's clan honor suffers as well. Only if the offender is of another race, however, does an insult to *katorr* or *kat'ral* also besmirch the honor of the troll race as a whole. If an insulted troll clears herself of the dishonor done her by the insult, she increases her personal and her clan honor. If one troll insults another who then wipes away the stain on her *katorr* or *kat'ral* in a particularly admirable way, the once-dishonored troll increases not only *katorr* and *kat'ral*, but *katera* as well.

The intertwining of the three kinds of honor goes far to explain why trolls so often seem unpredictable and prone to violent explosions of temper. For one who cannot understand how even an unintentional slight to an individual troll dishonors the entire troll race, the fury provoked by such a slight seems extreme. Someone gives one of us minor offense, as he sees it, and we react as if he had done us a wrong so grave that all our generations must cry out against it. It is no wonder, then, that so many Namegivers believe



trolls cannot control their anger. For trolls, however, the distinction between the different forms of honor is as clear as the distinction between the sky and the earth. We find it difficult to believe that our fellow Namegivers do not see honor as we do; indeed, some trolls suspect that other races' inability or unwillingness to understand honor might be a thinly veiled insult to the troll race. I and others like me know otherwise, and we no longer see insults in other races' simple ignorance. I caution my fellow Namegivers, however, not to discuss too deeply the matter of troll honor, lest a question innocently intended be taken as a severe slight to *katera*.

The many meanings of honor among trolls have shaped the ways by which we live with each other, as well as how we live with other Namegiver races. I shall discuss the effects of honor on everyday life more fully in The Society of Trolls, further on in this text.



On Spirituality Among Trolls

Like honor, the word "spirituality" is the least inaccurate rendering of a troll ideal that virtually defies translation into other tongues. Our word for spirituality is *jar'arak*, which combines elements of religion, art, and philosophy; it embodies all of them, and yet is more than any of them. *Jar'arak* is the way a troll sees the world—with his mind, heart, and soul.

Like the innermost essence of trolls, *jar'arak* is a paradox. It implies frenetic activity, ceaseless and active striving to become all that one can become. It also implies calm, contentment, and peace. Through *jar'arak*, trolls gain a sense of oneness with the world around them. *Jar'arak* is not, however, the contemplative state through which other races often find "oneness." *Jar'arak* may manifest in stillness, but also in violent action. A troll who falls into sudden, rapt contemplation of a beautiful sunset and a troll who roars out his savage joy at the height of battle are both experiencing *jar'arak*. Through stillness and action, both are one with the Universe. A troll in the grip of *jar'arak*'s peace senses every connection between all the elements of nature, a deep and wondrous joy in existence that we call "hearing the rocks sing." A troll experiencing *jar'arak* in the white heat of battle rage also feels a joyous oneness, but with his body, his weapon, and his opponent rather than with nature.

In pursuit of the peaceful aspect of *jar'arak*, many trolls observe and often befriend obsidimen. We find the serenity of the obsidimen calming and deeply moving, because we believe that our rock-brothers have learned to embody the peace of *jar'arak*. They live it in their every waking moment. If we learn from their example, we can increase our own experience of this peace.



I have discussed jar'arak at length with my many troll friends, and still I fear I shall never fully understand it.

—Thom Edrull



Trolls and the Passions

Most highland trolls, and some in the lowlands as well, revere the ideals of Thystonius above those of all other Passions. Even the most devoted troll questors of Thystonius, however, recognize and celebrate the existence of the other Passions. Many trolls revere the Passion Jaspree almost as much as Thystonius, for Jaspree's love of the wilderness and care of the land. Among other Passions beloved of trolls are Floranuus, Passion of Revelry and Victory; Lochost, Passion of Freedom and Rebellion; and Garlen, Passion of Hearth and Healing. I have heard claims that certain highland clans follow the Mad Passion Raggok, focusing on the ideal of vengeance, but I personally know nothing to confirm or deny this. Most trolls of my acquaintance, however (and they are many!) would see reverence for Raggok as an abomination.

Those curious about the beliefs of individual trolls are advised to be cautious. Belief in the Passions is a highly personal matter, and to ask another about her beliefs is a flagrant and insulting invasion of privacy. Likewise, openly discussing one's own private beliefs about the Passions is an assault on the privacy of the listener.



Dawnharrow speaks at length on troll notions of privacy further on in this document.

—Thom Edrull



The Society of Trolls

Troll society is a difficult thing to sum up. All trolls are fiercely loyal to family and clan, regarding the honor of family as part of their personal honor and the honor of the clan as its own kind of honor. Beyond this generality, however, the ways in which we live together have always varied from clan to clan and moot to moot, and the centuries of the Scourge broadened those differences. The highland troll strongholds in the Twilight Peaks, called *ga'ar* in the troll tongue, tended to be smaller than the kaers built by other races in Barsaive's lowlands. The impending threat of the Horrors' arrival made many clans see the wisdom of allying with other clans into a trollmoot (*altrua'agoral*); the deadliest of age-old rivals recognized that strength lay in numbers. Certain clans, however, could not set aside old enmities even to aid in their own survival. Alliances between trolls, therefore, rarely included more than three clans, and so the *ga'ar* housed only three clans at most. Indeed, many *ga'ar* sheltered only one clan.



I've heard tell of many ga'ar that also took in no'a'g'ral, other Namegivers adopted into the clan as trolls-by-choice. Trolls outnumbered other folk in most, though.

—Chag Skat



Also, many trolls live only to the age of fifty or so, a shorter span of years than any other Namegiver race save for orks. Many trolls are parents by the age of fifteen and grandparents by the age of thirty. Thus, troll generations are shorter than those of most other Namegiver races. Therefore, the Scourge lasted more generations for the trolls than for all other Namegivers save orks. The comparatively brief years of troll life, added to the small numbers living in each *ga'ar*, intensified the isolation of clan from clan during the Scourge.

Over the centuries spent underground, many clans and troll-moots developed along lines quite different from those of their racial brethren. Since our emergence from the *ga'ar* and lowland kaers, those differences have remained, even among clans and settlements separated only by short distances. Contact between these different clans and moots might bring our different ways into closer harmony, though the re-emergence of old rivalries and hatreds between clans will slow down our learning from each other. Therefore, significant differences will continue to exist among troll clans for many years.

The greatest division within the society of trolls, and yet the one that other Namegivers know least about, is the vast difference between highland and lowland trolls. These two groups think and act differently in almost all facets of life, yet most other Namegivers still judge all trolls based on what they know (or think they know) about highland trolls. In the service of truth, I present my knowledge of both highland and lowland troll societies.

On the Ways of Highland Trolls

These troll clans live in the mountains, building their villages among the highest mountain slopes and peaks. The most famous highlanders are the crystal raiders, but the crystal raiders are not the only highland trolls in existence—far from it. Though the crystal raiders share many traits with their mountain-top brethren, they have also developed many traditions that have no part in the lives of other highland trolls.

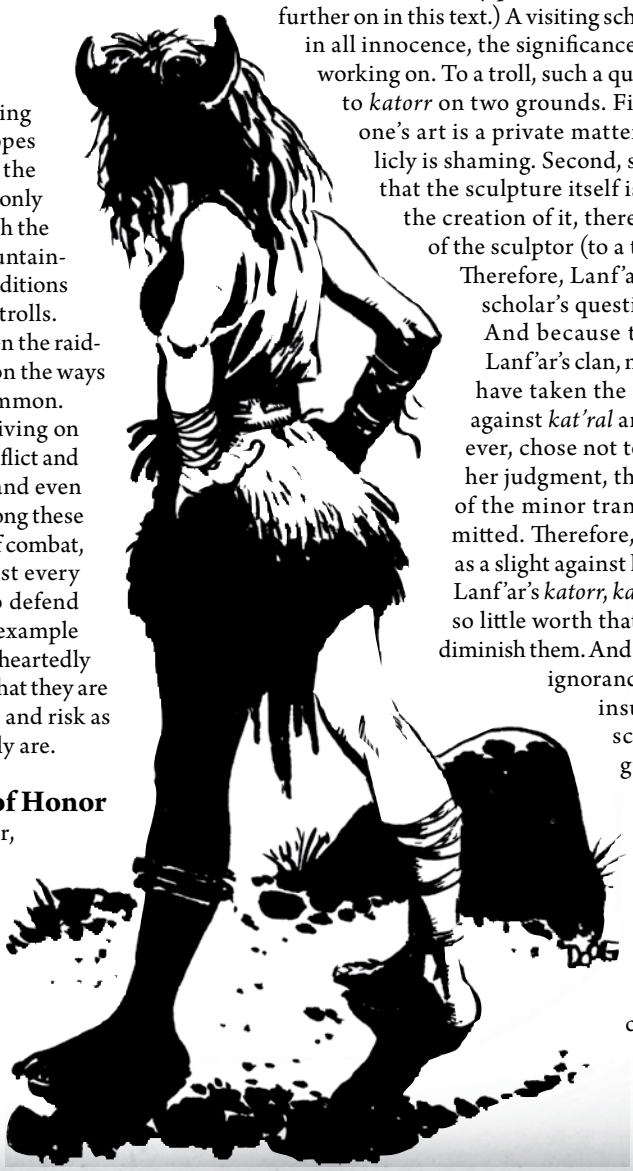
But before speaking of the differences between the raiders and other highland clans, I shall discourse on the ways and customs that all highland trolls hold in common.

Most highland troll clans base their way of living on the ideals of Thystonius, Passion of Physical Conflict and Valor. As might be expected, fisticuffs, fights, and even duels to the death are common occurrences among these rough and brawling societies. Thystonius' love of combat, particularly physical combat, permeates almost every aspect of a highland troll's life. Trolls fight to defend honor, but also to emulate the Passion whose example they most revere. By throwing themselves wholeheartedly into conflict, the trolls of the highlands believe that they are living life to the fullest; they revel in challenge and risk as the truest, best way to become all that they truly are.

On Ways of Dealing with Conflicts of Honor

Other races who place great value on honor, such as the t'skrang, regard honor almost exclusively as a personal matter. Among such folk, only the individual may judge whether or not an act or word has dishonored him. Whatever he believes holds true, and no higher authority may contradict his judgment. Among the t'skrang, therefore, even a blatant insult may not dishonor the recipient of it if he refuses to acknowledge the offense.

Among trolls, this is not so. An individual troll can, of course, judge the honor and dishonor of her actions or the actions of others against him, and may decide for himself whether his *katorr*, *kat'ral*, or *katera* has been slighted. The links between personal, clan, and racial honor, however, mean that the individual troll's immediate family and clan must also judge matters of "individual" honor.



The feel of a well-aimed axe swing striking its mark, the sound of bone splintering—these are the hallmarks of justice and truth. We trolls do not settle our differences with fancy words or solutions; actions do not lie. Outsiders may call us impatient and hostile, savage and stupid, but they do not understand our ways. Yes, some trolls are arrogant and hostile, but most of us fight to defend our honor and to give glory to Thystonius. And even the most boisterous, bare-knuckled raider clan does so according to strict rules of conduct handed down by honorable trolls for generations.

—Belwharg of the Stoneclaws

A tale may best serve to illustrate this point. I knew a troll Named Lanf'ar, whom some might have called a sculptor. (Among trolls, there are no "artists by profession"; I will speak more of that further on in this text.) A visiting scholar once asked Lanf'ar, in all innocence, the significance of a sculpture she was working on. To a troll, such a question is at least a slight to *katorr* on two grounds. First, the significance of one's art is a private matter, and to parade it publicly is shaming. Second, such a question implies that the sculpture itself is more important than the creation of it, thereby devaluing the work of the sculptor (to a troll's way of thinking). Therefore, Lanf'ar could have taken the scholar's question as a personal slight. And because the scholar was not of Lanf'ar's clan, nor a troll, she could also have taken the question as an offense against *kat'ral* and *katera*. Lanf'ar, however, chose not to take offense at all. In her judgment, the scholar was unaware of the minor transgression he had committed. Therefore, to regard his question as a slight against honor would imply that Lanf'ar's *katorr*, *kat'ral*, and *katera* were of so little worth that a minor offense could diminish them. And to punish the scholar for ignorance as if he had intended insult would dishonor the scholar by making him guilty of a transgression he did not commit, and thereby also dishonor Lanf'ar. After all, does not one who dishonors another also dishonor himself?

Unfortunately, certain other members of Lanf'ar's family witnessed the incident and

believed that the scholar's question sorely besmirched Lanf'ar's personal honor. Because the actions of one family member reflect on the others, Lanf'ar's family considered Lanf'ar's lack of action as slighting their personal honor. They believed that *katorr* and *kat'ral* required Lanf'ar to kill the scholar for his unbelievable rudeness to the family and to the clan. Had the scholar phrased his question in sufficiently broad terms, asking what Lanf'ar's geometrical sculpture signified to the troll race, Lanf'ar's family might even have concluded that the scholar had besmirched Lanf'ar's (and their own) *katera*, and that Lanf'ar had further insulted racial honor by refusing to settle the score. Clearly, different notions of honor and dishonor exist among trolls, and these differences carry their own far-reaching consequences. The response to such differences in judgment of honor varies from clan to clan and individual to individual. Some trolls might respond as Lanf'ar's family did, treating Lanf'ar as the source of the dishonor and instantly challenging her to a duel to the death. Indeed, particularly inflexible trolls might have dispensed with the challenge and simply gone for her throat. Others might have given Lanf'ar the opportunity to redeem herself by informing her, with varying degrees of respect and politeness, that they found her actions detrimental to their honor.

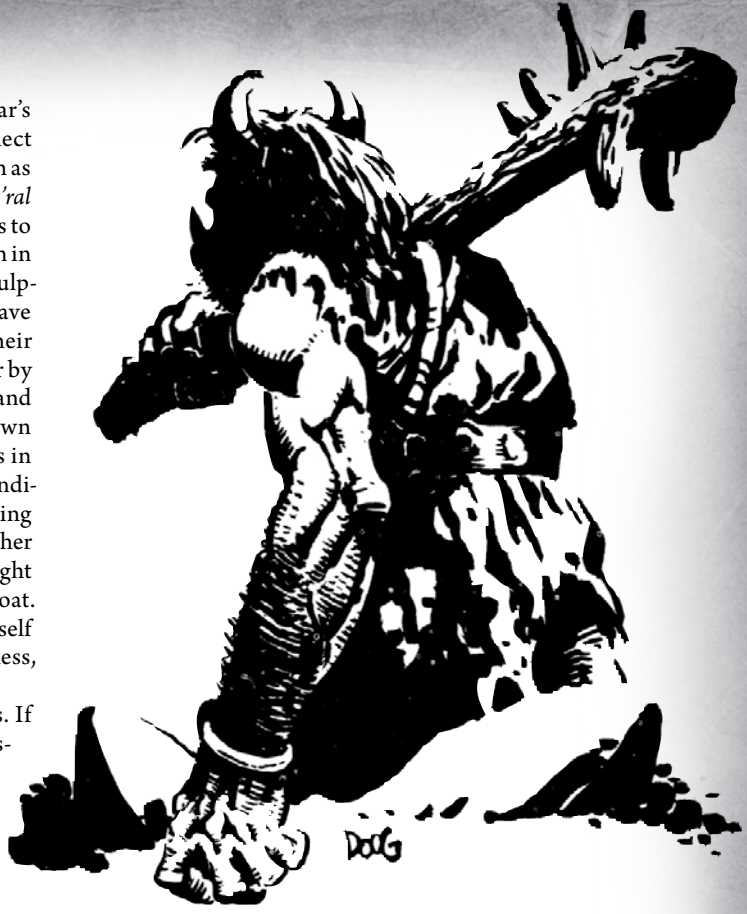
Lanf'ar might have responded to such talk in several ways. If she did not understand the true import of the scholar's question, she may not have realized how insulting it was. She might, therefore, have accepted others' claims of dishonor, thanking them for pointing out the insult she missed and then slaying the scholar to redeem his slight. She might also have interpreted the other trolls' statements as an accusation that she could not distinguish honor from dishonor. Such an implication is a grave insult; Lanf'ar would likely have responded with a blow, a challenge, or an all-out attack against those who differed with her.

If Lanf'ar disagreed with others' claims of dishonor yet did not interpret their statements as an affront to her own honor, she would face yet another series of choices. She could not simply shrug and agree with them; acquiescing to something she believed untrue would diminish her *katorr*. By the same token, however, the trolls who witnessed Lanf'ar's actions could not agree with her notion of honor without loss of *katorr*. For minor matters, the two sides might simply agree to disagree, and discuss the matter no further. This rarely happens, of course, because few trolls regard any matter of honor as minor. In Lanf'ar's case, the trolls who overheard the scholar's original question would doubtless feel driven to avenge their slighted honor by killing the scholar. For her part, Lanf'ar would likely uphold her honor by defending the scholar, who in her eyes is blameless.

In most such disagreements, both sides take the matter to the clan chieftain or to a questor that both sides trust to mediate the dispute. This leader must decide which side is in the right. The side declared wrong may choose to publicly recant and apologize to the opposing side—but few trolls would willingly do so. The "wrong" side still believes it is right, regardless of the chieftain's judgment, and therefore cannot change its position without losing *katorr*. If those judged wrong cannot recant, they must accept banishment.

On Becoming an Outcast

An outcast troll undergoes a ritual known as *Era'ka*, the Severance. Because the Severance is a deeply upsetting ordeal for both the banished and the banisher, only the clan chief or resident questor of Thystonius and the troll to be outcast attend the ritual. No chieftain or outcast has ever spoken of what happens during *Era'ka*; all any troll save the banished or the banishers know is that during *Era'ka*, the outcast loses his horns. And because a troll's horns never grow back, the outcast is marked for life. No member of any highland troll clan will speak to an outcast or even acknowledge his existence. And should an outcast ever return to his moothome, tradition requires any member of his clan to slay him on sight.



The different words used to describe an outcast reflect two conflicting views among trolls of what banishment means. Most trolls call an outcast *da'a'ka'uli*, literally, "one who has no honor." Those who particularly despise the outcast may use the casual insult *kava*, which literally means "mud" and implies that the outcast's honor is mud. An outcast, by contrast, always calls himself *er'ka'a'kul*, "one who has sacrificed for honor." And though many members of the outcast's clan may regard his banishment as shaming, the outcast himself sees no personal disgrace in his fate.

Highland trolls have practiced Severance since the ancient times before the Scourge, when outcasts gathered in small settlements. According to many of our oldest tales about outcasts, many of them established their own villages and even clans. The fate of these settlements during the Scourge remains a mystery.

I am er'ka'a'kul, and I care not who knows this. It brings me honor, not shame. I have spoken the truth, though many did not want to hear it. And though my words earned me only banishment from my family and clan, I cannot recant them, knowing they were true. I would dishonor myself if I forsook them now. Now tell me—are these the actions of a dishonorable troll?

—Jarth'd

On Highland Troll Clans

Each highland clan, or *g'ral*, is made up of several families, or *g'ralnakh*. The *g'ralnakh* of a clan live together in villages much as other Namegivers do; we give our villages the name "moot," meaning "meeting" or "gathering." At the heart of each moot stands the moothome, or *alheim*. This building, sometimes referred to as a "longhouse" by other races, serves as the meeting place for the

entire clan or village as well as the home of the clan chieftain and his family. *Alheims* are much larger than most troll buildings. An *alheim* usually contains a vast common room with a fire pit in the center and a simple chimney hole above it, and a second room for the chieftain and his family.

The families of each troll clan meet in a clan moot, or *trua'g'ral*, held in the moothome or on the slopes of the mountains where the clan lives, depending on the time of year and on the custom prevailing in the clan. Some clans hold *trua'g'ral* as frequently as once every month. Others hold a moot only when circumstances require all members of the clan to meet and discuss important issues. A gathering of many clans is known as a trollmoot, or *altrua'agoral*, which means "clan of the people of one mountain." These events were rare before the Scourge and have become even rarer since our emergence from the *ga'ar*. A trollmoot is more than a simple gathering. In a trollmoot, the chieftains of two or more clans pledge loyalty to one another for themselves and all their people. Once bonded in a trollmoot, the clans remain allies unless all the chieftains in the moot agree to revoke their mutual allegiance. To break a trollmoot by attacking members of a clan to which one's own clan is bonded is a grave affront to *katorr*, *kat'ral*, and *katera*.

Many of the crystal raider tribes in the Twilight Peaks are trollmoots, formed just after the ending of the Scourge.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Many highland villages express their dedication to Thystonius' ideal of combat by choosing a questor of the Passion as their chieftain. In other clans, such a questor may act as the chieftain's advisor. This advisory role ranges from a purely symbolic post to the position of true power in the clan. Whatever authority they give questors of Thystonius, all clans revere such people.

Most often the chieftain is the strongest member of the clan, proven so through physical tests and trial by combat. Once chosen, the chieftain must face the Rite of Challenge from anyone in the clan at any time, except during battle with an enemy from outside the clan. Under the Rite, any troll wishing to supplant the chief formally challenges him to a duel in front of at least three witnesses. After speaking his challenge, the would-be chieftain may attack immediately or allow the chieftain to specify a time and place. The chieftain may refuse the challenge, but only at the price of a grave slight to his honor.

In modern times, the Rite of Challenge in many clans is only a faint, symbolic echo of the ancient ritual. During the Scourge, when the leadership skills of a chieftain became more important than his prowess in battle, many highland moots developed a tradition of hereditary leaders. In these clans, the Rite of Challenge became a symbolic contest used as a face-saving way of expressing disagreement.

Adherence to the ideal of combat also fuels the almost constant wars that rage throughout the troll clans of the Twilight Peaks. Trolls would prefer to war with other races, whom we call *no'a'ul* (with the exception of obsidimen, whom I shall discuss later). Whenever possible, the highland clans fight their wars against *no'a'ul* attackers bent on challenging troll dominance of the high peaks. Yet when enemies of other races are absent, when even the hated Therans do not attack (and by their absence, deny highland trolls a chance to test their mettle against the loathed slavers), the Dual People cannot deny themselves the chance to drink life to its dregs through combat.

In the absence of other enemies, then, trolls have no choice but to make war with each other. The only other alternative is to make no war at all … a slight against Thystonius' *katorr* that no troll would ever dream of committing.

On the Unique Customs of Crystal Raiders

Crystal raiders are the highland clans who launch airship raids against Therans, other Namegivers' settlements, and each other from their homes in the Twilight Peaks. Troll scholars and others still argue over the derivation of the Name "crystal raiders." Some sages claim the Name arose from the raiders' practice of mounting large, many-faceted crystals in the figureheads of their drakkars. This supposed custom, however, appears only in an excerpt from an ancient scroll, penned before the Scourge, describing the "glittering eyes" of an attacking drakkar. The eyes referred to might well be those of the drakkar's crew, or its captain, or might even be wholly symbolic. Certainly I have never seen or heard of a drakkar with crystalline eyes.

Others claim that the Name "crystal raider" dates back to the Orichalcum Wars, as impure orichalcum sometimes appears crystalline, and many highland clans made a practice of stealing it whenever they could. I believe that the Throalic word "crystal" is actually a corruption of the troll word *kera'astol*, which means both "berserker" and "searcher for truth."

This double meaning is particularly appropriate—highland trolls are all fierce fighters, and the crystal raiders in particular regard Thystonius' ideal of combat as embodying perfect, universal truth.

I have never heard of impure orichalcum.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

No highland troll, of course, refers to himself by the Throalic Name "crystal raider." They Name themselves *tro'o'astia*, which translates literally as "thunderhead" or "omen of doom." For the convenience of readers unfamiliar with the troll tongue, I shall continue to refer to the crystal raiders by their common, Throalic Name.

Many crystal raider villages are completely inaccessible, save by air. These isolated settlements often lie in high passes or the so-called hanging valleys left behind by glaciers, and so they have just enough arable land in which to grow crops and tend herds that keep the villagers alive. A few lack enough land to feed themselves and must steal what they need to survive. The need for survival is one reason why crystal raiders raid; another equally powerful motive is the raiders' interpretation of the ideals of Thystonius.

During the Battle of Sky Point, Theran troops massacred countless crystal raider moothomes. Ever since that centuries-old battle, the raiders' racial, clan, and personal honor have required them to strike at Therans and their vassals whenever possible. They will set aside any other conflict or interest to hurl themselves into battle against Theran forces. Even against overwhelming odds, they will strike and strike again, asking no quarter and giving none, until the foe has fled or died or the clan drakkar crashes on the teeth of the mountains.

Against any other enemy, the crystal raiders might reach a compromise that satisfies honor; against the Therans, battle can only end in death for one side. Flexing even the most untenable position is a dishonor worse than death when fighting Therans, and allowing anything to prevent the clan from engaging a Theran enemy requires immediate, extreme atonement.

Not surprisingly, many crystal raider clans see their drakkars as embodiments of clan honor. A stain on the drakkar's hull besmirches the clan's honor; adjustment to the vessel's rigging that makes it more maneuverable in battle enhances the clan's

honor. Among clans who regard their airships in this way, damage or even a verbal insult to the drakkar dishonors the entire clan. And so those who meet a clan of crystal raiders for the first time should refrain from derogatory comments about the clan's drakkar no matter how much the vessel might seem to deserve them.



No troll or any Namegiver is closer to the heart of Thystonius than we who ride the winds into battle. Our highland brethren may give glory to the Passion by spilling blood, but only we face the deadly winds that whip the snowcapped peaks, winds that have reduced many a drakkar to firewood. Because we face greater dangers, we grow stronger than any other trolls—and the blood we spill gives greater glory to Thystonius.

—Yggerg of the Stoneclaws

On the Earthbound Highland Clans

The earthbound highland clans are less well known than the crystal raiders but far more numerous than the *tro'o'astia*. Like the raiders, these clans live in the high, rugged mountain peaks and devote themselves to living the ideals of Thystonius. Some even possess airships. But unlike the crystal raiders, the earthbound clans use their vessels for trade or exploration rather than war. They live on the few crops hardy enough to survive the high mountains and on their goat and rock sheep herds. A handful live by hunting and gathering.

The earthbound troll clans make war as frequently as the crystal raiders, as they also believe that one best embodies the ideals of Thystonius through battle. In fact, earthbound clans attack each other more frequently than raiders do. The drakkars of the *tro'o'astia* enable them to range further afield in search of worthy foes, but the earthbound clans can only attack enemies within a few days' march of their moothomes. Particularly hostile earthbound clans often prefer to attack crystal raider clans. Attacking such powerful foes brings much honor, even if the earthbound clan loses.

On Lowland Trolls

Lowland trolls dwell in the lowlands of Barsaive, often in villages with other Namegiver races. Although many lowland trolls revere the traditions and customs taught them by their highland ancestors, most have reinterpreted those traditions to better fit in with their non-troll neighbors. For this reason, the lives of lowland trolls resemble those of their non-troll neighbors much more closely than those of highland trolls.

For example, many lowland trolls have reinterpreted the concept of the troll "clan" to include the people of their villages. Those who live outside the village are not of the clan, including blood kin. Most trolls find this contradiction quite vexing and avoid it by staying close to their villages.

Lowland trolls have reinterpreted the meanings of *katorr*, *kat'ral*, and *katera* as well—often in ways that highland trolls would find bizarre. *Katera* and *kat'ral*, particularly, have undergone great changes. As members of villages with many races, lowland trolls have grown accustomed to the traditions of other Namegivers and are much more tolerant of behavior that would insult the honor of a highland troll. For example, if a dwarf asks a lowland troll craftsman what he is making, the lowland troll will not see such a question as insulting his skill. Instead, he will recognize it as the dwarf's attempt to show him the respect of one craftsman to another.

Lowland trolls tend to place greater emphasis on *katorr* than their highland brethren, but they have also devised ways of avenging slights that most highland trolls would find utterly inadequate. Where a highland troll might avenge a slight to *katorr* with a bellow and a furious assault, a lowland troll would likely avenge his honor by besting the offender in a public argument or in some other manner without injuring or killing him.

—Excerpted from a tale told in the village of Calydon

"You must know something that the rest of us do not, or perhaps you are planting special troll beans," Selsior said as he watched Hammerbone tend to his fields. The elf smiled as he continued to chide his neighbor, a burly troll who had recently taken to farming. The daily taunting had become a pleasant amusement for Selsior, and despite warnings from his friends, he could not resist the easy target Hammerbone presented.

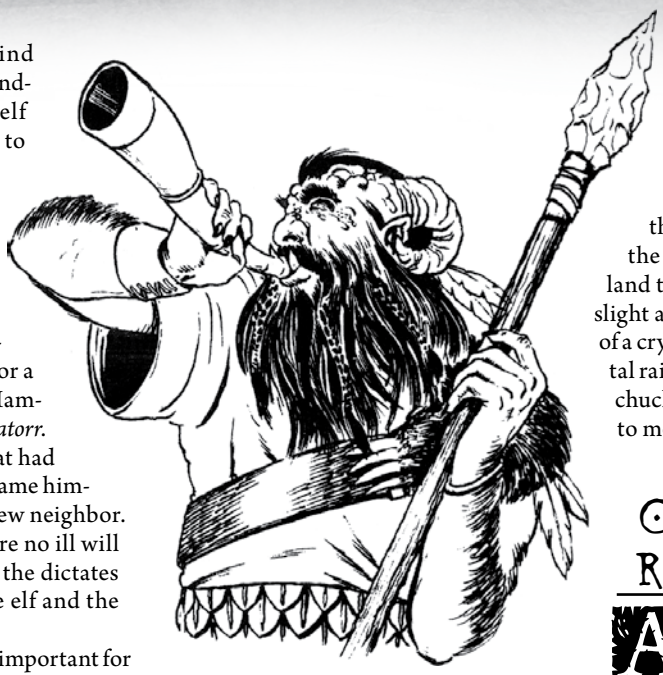


The troll continued to work, not bothering to acknowledge his new neighbor's taunts. It was somewhat late in the growing season to be planting beans, Hammerbone realized now, but none had bothered to tell him earlier and he did not think to ask for advice. He could not blame any other for his own ignorance, but now the pesky elf's words were beginning to irritate him like a stubborn bur caught in a sandal. Laugh all you want, Hammerbone thought, but I will avenge my *katorr*. As the weeks passed, Hammerbone continued to tend his bean field in silence. And each day Selsior stood by the small stone fence that separated their farms, entertaining himself at his neighbor's expense. How could anyone fear this troll? He is nothing more than a large bumbling dog, Selsior thought. He does not even realize when he is being insulted!

As harvest time approached, Selsior's amusement grew. Hammerbone continued to keep his silence, but after tilling his fields he visited his brother, a brick maker.

Imagine Selsior's surprise when he rose from his bed on market day, full of

smug satisfaction, only to find four sturdy brick walls surrounding his wagon! The furious elf spent half the next day trying to hire a market wagon from one of his neighbors, but all of them were already going to market, their wagons fully loaded with their own crops. And so Selsior missed market day and ended up selling his crops to local villages for a handful of coppers, and thus Hammerbone avenged his slighted *katorr*. The elf, of course, realized what had happened, but he could only blame himself for underestimating his new neighbor. Hammerbone, for his part, bore no ill will toward Selsior after satisfying the dictates of his *katorr*. And in time, the elf and the troll became friends.



The ideal of *jar'arak* remains important for lowland trolls, but they seldom seek *jar'arak* in the heat of battle. Instead, the lowland troll seeks *jar'arak* almost exclusively in peaceful contemplation or in battling something other than a Namegiver foe. Indeed, most lowland trolls follow Thystonius' ideal of combat by fighting the weeds that threaten to choke their crops, or the oft-barren earth that yields nothing easily, or (in the case of a blacksmith) the metal that resists being formed into tools and weapons. For many lowland trolls, simply living among other Namegivers in a world not made for trolls provides enough challenge to satisfy their need to strive. They have no need to seek out enemies from neighboring villages against whom to test themselves; it is enough to test themselves against the ways of the other Namegivers among whom they have chosen to live.

But no matter how hard they may try, trolls never fully become a part of the world of other Namegivers. Many other races believe without question generations' worth of tales about the "primitive and savage" crystal raiders and assume that all trolls spend their lives brawling, stealing, and killing. Such folk expect every troll to be arrogant, impatient, brutal, and bad tempered; many either fear or despise trolls and act accordingly. It is quite a challenge for a calm, self-disciplined troll not to act out his anger and disappointment at such treatment by fulfilling others' worst expectations.

A troll's size and appearance pose additional problems. Humans, dwarfs, t'skrang, elves, orks, and windlings can never forget that their troll neighbor, gentle soul though he may be, stands almost nine feet tall and weighs 500 pounds! Every time a troll crouches to pass through a doorway, or cannot take a stool at the bar without crushing it, or shatters the soup bowl he is using as a teacup with an incautious gesture, he reminds his neighbors that he is not like them. He reminds them, in fact, that he can crush their bones as easily as a chair or a soup bowl should he wish to do so. Only the obsidimen suffer no fear of a troll's size and bulk. As to appearance, a troll's skin is marked with *trolthelia*, deposits of asymmetrical bonelike matter. To all too many lowlanders, the apparent distortions of feature and unbalanced horns created by *trolthelia* make trolls look like monsters.

These obstacles to integration in Barsaivian society—and the prejudices of other Namegivers—lead many lowland trolls to cling to every highland custom they possibly can. A family of trolls living in a human-dominated village, for example, may have lived in the lowlands for scores of generations after riding out the Scourge in a dwarf-built kaer and may have forgotten almost every custom that defines the life of a *tro'o'astia*. They might follow human Naming rituals and pay court in the manner of their human neighbors. But the same family is likely to zealously practice any highland social custom it still possesses as a way of retaining *katorr* and *kat'ral* in the face of human prejudices. Therefore, the reader should not assume that a lowland troll will not avenge even the faintest slight against his honor with all the ferocity of a crystal raider. A jest that would set a crystal raider at the jester's throat might elicit a chuckle from a lowlander—or a challenge to mortal combat.

On the Various Rituals of Life

As do other Namegivers, trolls commemorate the various turning points in their lives with rituals. Where other Namegivers tend to perform their rituals in public, however, most troll rituals take place within the home, attended only by family members and perhaps a few privileged friends.

Because so few troll rituals involve the entire clan or the trollmoot, many rituals vary greatly between families, even in the same clan. Many home-centered rituals change from generation to generation, as the presiding family elder feels appropriate. All troll rituals, however, in some way share certain elements, though they may use different symbols to express them. In the descriptions below, I have drawn on my knowledge of my own family's rituals, as well as attempting to highlight common elements.

Dawnharrow is not quite correct in her assumption that other Namegivers perform largely public rituals. Dwarfs also perform the vast majority of rituals at home.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On the Ordeal of Birth

Only female trolls may attend the birth of a child. Where other Namegiver races encourage or even demand the father's presence in the birthing room, trolls bar the door against him. For a troll woman, birth is the greatest ordeal she will ever face; it demands more of her than combat, or flying an airship, or anything else she may do. For the child, birth is its first of many ordeals endured when it has the least strength to draw upon. In the troll view, the mother and child must survive the ordeal of birth alone, proving to the Passions and to all witnesses that they have enough innate strength and determination to be worthy of continued life.

The father is excluded from the birthing room because he would find it impossible not to intervene if the birth turned difficult, and in our tradition, such intervention would greatly dishonor the father, mother, and child. Better that mother and infant die in childbirth than suffer such disgrace to self, family, clan, and race. Also for the sake of honor, the female family and friends attending the mother-to-be may give her no aid, save for verbal encouragement. They may support her with their presence, but they may not intervene in the actual birth.



When the first pangs of labor begin, a troll woman sequesters herself from her husband or husbands in a separate room of the family's house or in a special birthing room of the moothome. There, attended by her co-wives, sisters, and closest female friends, she gives birth. Meanwhile, the father sits outside the door of the birthing room with co-husbands and his closest male friends, drinking an extract from a lichen-like plant that we call mountain hardsage. This bitter brew causes painful stomach cramps, symbolic of the labor pains suffered by the birthing mother. By drinking hardsage, the male troll shares the ordeal with his wife in the only honorable way he can.

Once the child has taken its first breath, one of the birth attendants gives a surreptitious signal to the waiting father. The father then forces his way inside the birthing room while the attending women symbolically resist his entry. The father always defeats this resistance, thereby symbolizing that the bonds of family give him the strength to overcome any obstacle. Having finished the ritual as honor requires, the happy father can finally take his child in his arms.

For two moons after the birth, the father shows gratitude to his wife for their child by becoming her personal servant and granting her slightest whim.

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The clan had released the elf no'a'g'ral from his obligation under the birthing tradition, but none could dissuade Tarlan Skybow from performing the tradition when one of his wives became pregnant with his child. Knowing full well that he would not survive the hardsage extract, Skybow drank it alongside his co-husbands. Wracked with the agony of the cramps, Skybow lived just long enough to gaze into the eyes of his newborn child…

— Excerpt from a tale told by certain clans in the Twilight Peaks

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On Names and Naming

Trolls have three Names: two personal, the third identifying their clan.

A troll's first Name, like a human's or dwarf's "given" Name, is associated more or less uniquely with that individual. Often, though not always, it has some meaning in the language from which it derives. My own Name, Vramya, for example, means "the early morning just before dawn." The second Name is often descriptive, as in "Longfang," or symbolic, as in "Dawn over the Mountain." The derivation of the second Name varies from clan to clan; in some clans it indicates the family, or *g'ralnakh*, to which a troll belongs. In others, it merely serves as a second personal identifier. Two offspring of the same line marriage might share the second Name, G'dan, for example, as with my two cousins Vrin G'dan and Nobo G'dan. Alternatively, two such offspring might have different second Names describing something about each of them—L'lan Goldeneye and Do'an Mistwalker, for example.

The third Name, to trolls the most important yet also the least used, identifies an individual's clan. Most trolls know each other's clan affiliations and so need not speak their clan Names, though clan Names often find their way into boasts. When dealing with other races, a troll will often omit his clan identifier, either to avoid confusing the other person or because he feels that those of other races do not deserve the honor of knowing the clan except under special circumstances. When one troll identifies himself fully to another, he speaks his clan Name first, saying "I am Granitebone Lanf'ar Goldtusk." If he deigns to mention his clan to a member of a different race, he will speak the clan Name last saying, "I am Lanf'ar Goldtusk of Clan Granitebone."

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Trolls often hold at least two different personal Names during their lives; one as children and another after they have attained the Age of Passage. Vramya discusses this in more detail below.

—Thom Edrull

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On Naming Rituals

Troll Naming rituals are intensely personal events of which the participants will not willingly speak. I may not speak of the rituals within my own family, even obliquely, lest I offend against *kat'ral* and *katera*. With apologies to my readers, I will confine myself to those few elements common to all troll Naming rituals.

On the first full moon after the birth of a child, the parents gather with their co-wives and co-husbands, either in the family home or in the moothome (which is always cleared for such an important event). Depending on the clan and the family, a questor of Thystonius might also be invited to take part. As the sun begins to sink below the horizon or the surrounding mountain peaks, one member of the family stands guard outside the door of the building, armed with an axe and carrying a horn. When the sun disappears behind the earth, the guard raises the horn and winds it, letting its mournful note echo across the village and ring from the surrounding mountain slopes. The sound of the horn heralds the beginning of the Naming ritual, called *g'tarr* ("the Holding").

Other Namegiver races should know that any attempt to question a troll on the matter of the Holding is a deadly insult to all three kinds of honor. Because the Holding is so private, the actual details of this ritual more than any other vary greatly between clans and families. The taboo against discussing *g'tarr* holds true even among trolls, and so members of one family often know nothing of another family's Naming ritual. Only members of a single family will speak to each other of the *g'tarr,* that each generation may know how to perform its own Holding.

The Holding grants a newborn his two personal Names. Before the Holding, the baby has only his clan Name. A young troll bears the two Names given in the Holding until he reaches the Age of Passage, when he chooses the two Names he will carry as an adult.

As a response to great personal shame, a troll will sometimes give up his Names and demand that his family perform another *g'tarr* for him. He takes a new Name during the ritual, symbolically becoming a new person, and so free from his dishonor. Because a change of Name means the loss of so many abilities and Disciplines acquired during adulthood, no troll will undertake this second *g'tarr* lightly. I know of only one instance in which a troll has undergone a third *g'tarr*. In most cases, a re-Named troll who suffers a second insurmountable loss of *katorr* can only expunge the taint from self, clan, and race by dying in battle against the strongest, most daunting foe he can find—very often, a Horror. In other cases, a dishonored troll refuses a second or third *g'tarr* and instead becomes an outcast.

On the Age of Passage and Its Rites

The Age of Passage marks a troll's transformation from child to adult. Most clans place the Age of Passage at the eleventh anniversary of a troll's Holding, just before a troll reaches full physical maturity. The adult-to-be, called a *ro'ona* ("candidate"), discusses a suitable Rite of Passage with his family. Upon the completion of the rite, he becomes a true adult and a full member of the clan.

As with most troll rituals, the exact nature of the Rite of Passage varies greatly. It may be a harrowing and dangerous quest, such as the custom among some crystal raiders of sending a *ro'ona* to single-handedly raid a rival clan's village and return with an item valued by that clan's chieftain. It may also involve a highly personal and introspective ordeal—I spent four days and nights alone in a cave high in the mountains, meditating on the responsibilities of adulthood. Every Rite of Passage must somehow involve a test of strength of body or mind, but its exact nature cannot be decreed by the clan chieftain or the clan as a whole. Only the family and the *ro'ona* may choose the ritual that the young troll will undergo. When the *ro'ona* sets out to perform his rite, the rest of his family symbolically turn their backs on him, declaring to each other and to the clan that their child is dead. Between the time that the family chooses the rite and the return of the successful *ro'ona*, no one speaks the *ro'ona*'s personal Name. If someone must address him, the *ro'ona* is called by his clan Name as if he were newborn and un-Named.

Upon his return from the rite, the *ro'ona* closets himself with his family for a private ceremony similar to the *g'tarr*. This ritual is called the *tarr'a'on*, or "the Claiming," signifying that in this Naming the new adult will actively claim his new status. As in the *g'tarr*, a guard stands watch at the door and sounds a horn to announce the sinking of the sun below the horizon. As the horn's last note fades into the twilight air, the *ro'ona* declares the new personal Names he has chosen for himself. By this act, the *ro'ona* claims adulthood.

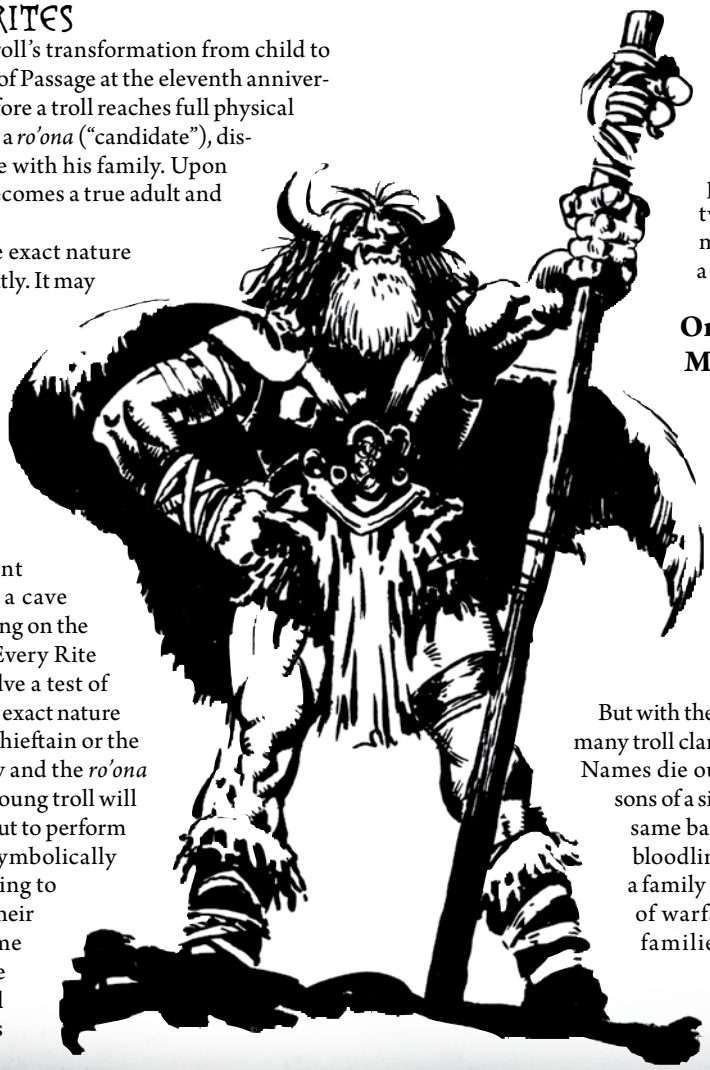
By choosing new Names, the young adult symbolically takes on new responsibilities. The parents have no say in what Names the *ro'ona* chooses, and often the new adult rejects childhood by putting aside the Names his parents gave him. The greatest compliment that a new adult can give his parents, however, is to take as his adult Names the Names given him eleven years earlier.

By this gesture, the new adult acknowledges that his parents raised him well and with honor. If a *ro'ona* chooses his childhood Names as adult Names, he retains any Disciplines gained during his childhood. If he changes his Names, he loses those achievements.

After the *tarr'a'on*, the entire clan welcomes the new adult in a wild, rambunctious party that lasts long into the night.

On Marriage Customs

The most unusual and distinctive marriage customs among my people are practiced by highland trolls; lowland-dwellers tend to adopt the marriage customs of the other races among whom they live, so as not to stand out. Unlike most other Namegiver races, highland trolls rarely take a single mate. Instead, a marriage includes several partners; one woman may have two or more husbands, or several men and women may be joined in a line marriage.



On the Evolution of Line Marriage

Troll legends tell us that many hundreds of years ago, long before the Scourge and even the Orichalcum Wars, most trolls married in the same way as other Namegivers. A man and a woman mated, raised children, and passed their family Name and lineage in this way from generation to generation. But with the advent of the Orichalcum Wars, many troll clans and families saw their ancient Names die out. All too often, the father and sons of a single family would be slain in the same battle, forever ending many noble bloodlines. In an attempt to ensure that a family might endure throughout years of warfare, two and sometimes three families within a single clan began joining together as one family, increasing both their numbers and the likelihood that

some scions of that family would survive and carry on. These joinings came to be called line marriages. Because far more men than women died in battle, the women took charge of the line marriages. All the wives together chose new members of the family as needed, adding both husbands and wives.

Within several years, the line marriage spread throughout most of the troll clans and moots in Barsaive. Even after the Orichalcum Wars ended the tradition of the line marriage continued; current members of the families involved had never known any other way, and the marriages had preserved family lineages that otherwise would have died out. Over the centuries, the tradition of line marriages has become an important part of troll society and culture.

The greatest advantage of a line marriage is its virtual immortality. Barring utter catastrophe, a line marriage will endure forever as new members marry in. Should a co-spouse die, other family members mourn for a suitable period and then invite a new spouse to take the departed one's place. In this way, the family can care for and shelter generations worth of children and grandchildren. The line marriage also allows those trolls who care about conserving wealth within the family to do so. I know members of certain line marriages who can prove without doubt that their families have endured for more than a millennium!

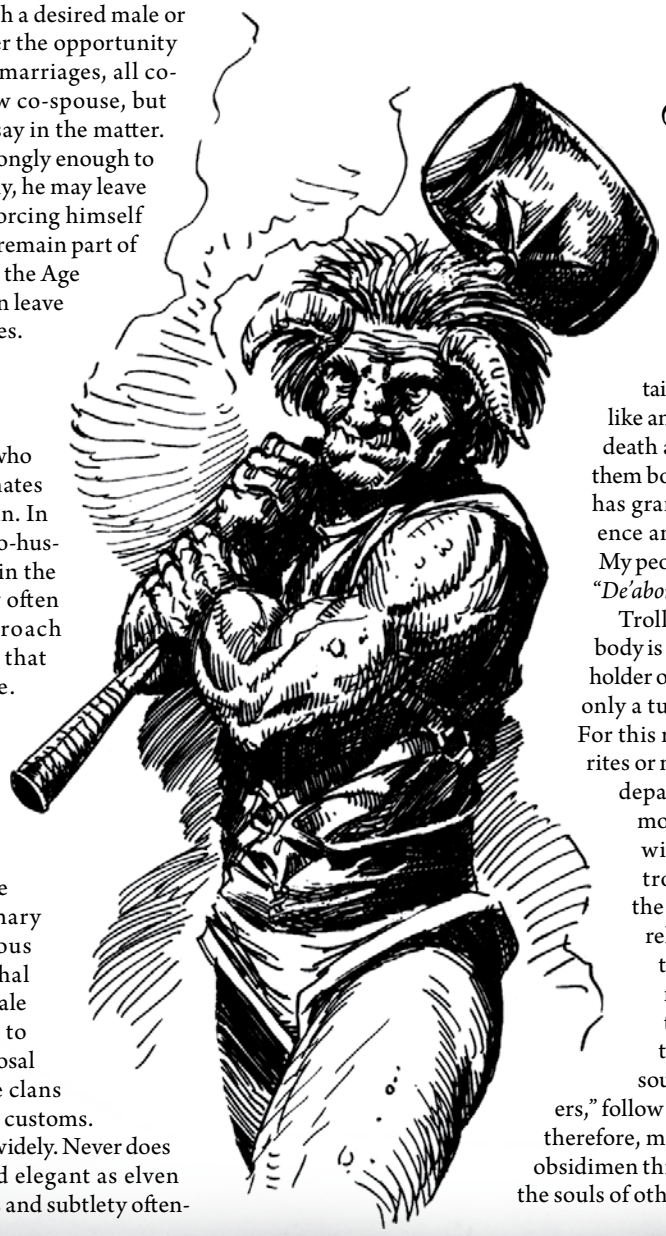
Additions to the marriage are simple; one or all of the co-wives approach a desired male or female and offer him or her the opportunity to marry in. In most line marriages, all co-wives must agree on a new co-spouse, but the co-husbands have no say in the matter. If a co-husband objects strongly enough to a new member of the family, he may leave the marriage, thereby divorcing himself from the family. Children remain part of the family until they reach the Age of Passage, when they often leave to make lives for themselves.

On the Custom of Paying Court

It is always the co-wives who approach potential new mates and invite them to marry in. In most line marriages, the co-husbands have no official say in the process, though they may often ask the co-wives to approach other women that this or that husband finds desirable. Most male trolls are satisfied to request rather than demand, and acknowledge the justice of allowing the women control over the marriage whose maintenance is their primary responsibility. In a curious sidelight to this matriarchal slant among trolls, the female almost always pays court to the male and makes a proposal of marriage, even in those clans that follow other marriage customs.

Styles of courtship vary widely. Never does it become as intricate and elegant as elven courtship, but its calmness and subtlety oftentimes defies the preconceptions of others about the ways of trolls. A troll may court another troll by cooking his favorite meals for him, or making him a particularly fine piece of clothing, or by inventing and telling heroic tales about him. The telling of tales is a particularly popular method of courtship, as the actual hero of the story is only referred to obliquely. The troll being courted must guess, by means of clues woven within the tale, whether or not he is its hero. If he fails to guess and the woman thinks better of her choice, she may withdraw her courtship without dishonor to him or to herself. Likewise, if the object of affection does not desire the love of the storyteller, he may deliberately fail to recognize himself as the hero, and thus gently reject the woman's courtship without shaming her.

Of course, many trolls prefer more robust styles of courtship. For some, the most enjoyable courtship consists of constant boasting so loud and forceful that an outsider might find it difficult to distinguish between a passionate courtship and a personal feud simmering on the verge of violence.



This philosophy is similar to the orkish ideal of seizing life and shaking it.
—Thom Edrull

On the Troll Acceptance of Death

Most other races view death as sad, even tragic. Few trolls view death in this way. A troll sees dying of old age, or death in battle, as a fitting end to a life well lived. Death is like sleep after toil, a reward for hard and honest labor, a closing of the great circle that is life, and certainly not to be feared. It cannot be sidestepped like an attacker's blow; death comes to us all. For death and life to have meaning, we must accept them both; we must live out the years that destiny has granted us, wringing every ounce of experience and challenge, joy and growth from them. My people have a saying that sums up this feeling: "*De'abor abora*," or "While we live, let us live."

Trolls believe that once the spirit is gone, the body is simply a husk. It no longer has value as the holder of a person's soul, just as my tunic becomes only a tunic like any other as soon as I discard it. For this reason, trolls have no elaborate funerary rites or memorial services. Those who mourn the departed do so in their own hearts, and they mourn not the death, but the fact that they will miss the one who has gone on. Many troll clans follow the custom of burning the dead, but for cleanliness rather than as a religious rite. The souls of the dead are said to merge with the rock of the mountain, making their way slowly over millennia to the heartrock of the world, wherein they reside forever. Trolls believe that the souls of obsidimen, our *ago'al*, or "rock brothers," follow the same course; the spirits of dead trolls, therefore, may share the peace and contemplation of obsidimen throughout eternity. Few trolls believe that the souls of other Namegiver races such as dwarfs, elves,

and such journey to the heartrock; most trolls care little what happens to the souls of other races after death.

The only tangible memorials of importance to trolls are bequests. Family heirlooms, often weapons but also other items, pass from generation to generation, gaining significance and value with the years. Acknowledging that death may come in battle at any time, most trolls make bequests shortly after reaching adulthood, changing those initial bequests when they acquire some new possession, or when a recipient dies, and so on.

A bequest represents the only permanence in our fleeting, impermanent lives, and so to lose or give away a bequest is one of the greatest dishonors a troll can commit. Giving away a bequest is particularly shaming, as it suggests that the troll guilty of this act does not value the giver or the honor done him by the bequest. Many bequests also have a particular purpose, and fulfilling that purpose carries great honor. To deny it carries equivalent dishonor. One troll tale tells of an heirloom axe meant to slay a Horror. Each recipient of the axe was honor-bound to seek out a Horror and attempt to kill it with the axe. The honor given thereby, however, came from the act of striving to fulfill the axe's purpose, not necessarily from succeeding in finding (and much less killing) the Horror.



On Diverse Aspects of Troll Culture

Many aspects of troll culture are fascinatingly different from those of other Namegivers. The cultural heritage of the troll people affects every troll in some way, even those lowland trolls who have shed almost all of their ancestral highland traditions. Our tales and heroes, our arts, and our craftsmanship are among the truest expressions of who we are as a race, and all are therefore bound up with the heart of a troll's existence: honor.

On Tales and Heroes

The honor of the troll race and of individual clans is tied up in tales and myths. More so than any race, with the possible exception of dwarfs, trolls take the stories of our people seriously. At any trollmoot, clan moot, or family gathering, tales familiar to everyone present play a vital part. For a troll, an old tale is more than an old tale. It is a part of him, known to him as if its events had occurred in his presence mere hours instead of decades or centuries ago. What happened to our ancestors happened also to us. Our tales, therefore, remind everyone present of *katera* and of the great events that shaped our race's history and teach us again what it means to be a troll.

A perennial favorite at gatherings is our creation story, which tells us our place in the world we love. I include it for readers interested in its insights, both into how we trolls see ourselves and how trolls see other races.

The Tale of Our Creation

Before the beginning of time, all was chaos. Air and earth, fire and water, darkness and light mingled together like the blood of many clans. They knew no separation, but partook of each other and fought to consume each other. The sun, the moon, the stars, these things lived not. There was only chaos, and Griahk'kan.

Now Griahk'kan was the Spirit of All Things, and so contained all things within Her. She was the chaos and all that warred within it. And She gave form to the chaos, making Her flesh the earth, Her heart the rock, Her blood the water, Her breath the air, and from the light in Her eyes the fire. Her right eye became the Sun; Her left, the Moon. But the Sun and the Moon envied each other, for each wished to rule the skies. And they called challenge upon each other and struck; and when they drew each other's blood, the stars came into being. And Griahk'kan chastised the Sun and Moon, saying, "Because you cannot live as brother and sister, you will forever live apart." And She made the Sun the Lady of the Day, and the Moon the Lord of the Night. This parting made them sad; they wept, and swore to be together again. But Griahk'kan had spoken the Word and made it Truth, and She would not unspeak it. That is why, to this very day, the Sun and Moon chase each other across the skies from day into night into day again; they strive to meet and embrace, but cannot.

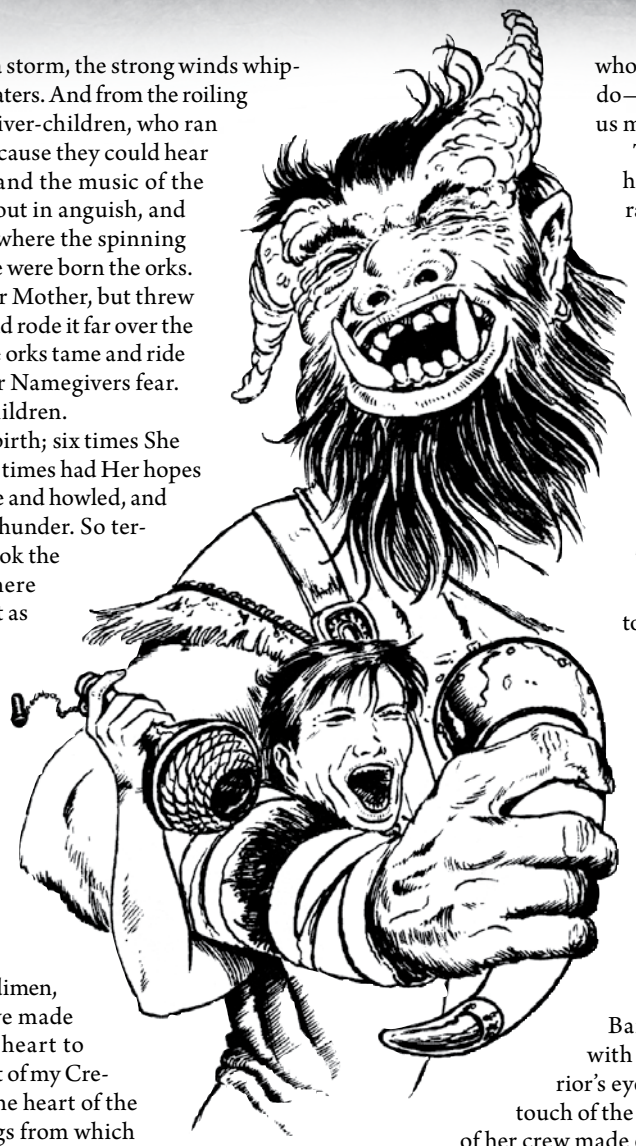
Now Griahk'kan loved Her creation, but was saddened because She had no true children. The birds and beasts She made could not speak to Her, and so could not return the love She gave them. Griahk'kan sighed, and Her sighs became clouds of vapor. And from the clouds came the winged ones, the windlings who float upon the breath of the world. Seeing them, Griahk'kan was overjoyed, and called to them; but they could neither hear nor answer, any more than the wind hears. And Griahk'kan wept, for still She had no true children.

Her weeping became a gentle rain that brought the blades of grass peeking up through the dark earth. And the grass grew heavy with seed, and where the bending seedpods touched the earth, there were born the elves. And Griahk'kan called out to them, but they heard only the whisper of the grasses and the falling leaves. And the Spirit of All Things wept harder, for still She had no true children.

Her tears sank deep into the earth and from where they sank, the first humans sprang. Her tears struck the bare rock as a hammer strikes an anvil and where each tear struck, a dwarf appeared. And Griahk'kan called to these as well, and for the barest of moments they stopped to listen. But the whistling of the wind stopped their ears, and they ceased to hear Her voice. Still Griahk'kan had no true children.

Her grief grew wild and became a storm, the strong winds whipping up foaming waves across the waters. And from the roiling waves were born the t'skrang, the river-children, who ran laughing from Griahk'kan's call because they could hear no difference between Her voice and the music of the crashing waves. Griahk'kan cried out in anguish, and Her cry became a whirlwind. And where the spinning wind-cloud touched the earth, there were born the orks. The orks heeded not the call of their Mother, but threw their arms around the whirlwind and rode it far over the horizon. That is why, to this day, the orks tame and ride the thundra beasts that many other Namegivers fear. But still Griahk'kan had no true children.

Six times had Griahk'kan given birth; six times She had hoped for true children, and six times had Her hopes been dashed. She lifted up Her voice and howled, and her cries became the first claps of thunder. So terrible were they that their sound shook the earth; after each booming roar there descended a silence as deep and soft as the darkness just before sunrise. And from that beautiful, silent peace were born our elder brothers, the obsidimen; from the roar of the two thunderclaps came the Dual People, the trolls. And Griahk'kan called to Her storm children, to our brothers and to us, and we children of the storm answered Her. And Griahk'kan laughed for joy, for She had at last borne Her true children.



And She said to the trolls and obsidimen, "Because you alone of all that I have made have the ears to hear Me and the heart to know Me, I will give to you the heart of my Creation. Yours is the eternal rock at the heart of the earth, the high mountains and crags from which spring the purest waters and the clearest air. And you shall dwell in My heart's land for all your generations." And so it is to this day that the trolls dwell in the mountain peaks, in the clear, sweet air where Griahk'kan's voice calls most clearly to us. And so it is that of all the Namegiver races, only we trolls and our elder Rock-brothers return to the heartrock when we die. We alone return to our Foremother, for we alone know Her.

Other Tales of Wonder

Two kinds of tales are most commonly told: the *norr* and the *se'alla*. The word "*norr*" translates roughly as "tapestry"; this kind of tale is an epic, recounting some turning point in the history of the troll race or the world. One favorite *norr* among crystal raiders recounts those clans' actions in the Orichalcum Wars; others retell the tragic events later known as the Battle of Sky Point. I have transcribed one of the latter below, as told by the Skytoucher clan with whom I sojourned years ago. *Norr* act as reminders of past honor and also as cautionary tales. The latter almost always end with the invocation "*Ka'akoran*!" which translates roughly as "Lest we forget!"

The *se'alla* is a tale concerning the life and achievements of a single hero. The word "*se'alla*" means "facet," as in the facets of a jewel, and each *se'alla* tells us of one such "facet" making up a hero. Unlike heroic sagas common to other races, the troll *se'alla* does not speak only of the hero's greatest achievements; often they speak of his failures or of seemingly immaterial facts of his life. By examining such things, trolls learn to see our heroes as real people who share the same weaknesses that we do—and we also learn that any one of us may be such a hero.

To warrant a *se'alla*, a hero must have significantly affected the troll race. Obviously, the vast majority of *se'alla* are about trolls. The most popular are Nioku, the famed troll Archer, and Vaare Longfang, captain of the lost airship, *Earthdawn*. A few well-known *se'alla* also tell of the lives of *no'a'g'ral* and the ways in which they earned the respect of the troll race.

Norr Ge'thera'in (The Tale of the Therans)

In the old days, the people of Skytoucher Mountain were strong. In the old days, the people of Skytoucher Mountain had many children and no hungry mouths. In the old days, the people of Skytoucher Mountain looked out from the peaks over all that they saw, and it was theirs. None could surpass them in the arts of war, and all honored them as first among the troll-moots of the Twilight Peaks.

The people of Skytoucher Mountain built the finest airships from the hearts of the noblest trees in Barsaive. The wooden keels gleamed with the hard, fierce glow of a troll Warrior's eye. The ships flew true at the lightest touch of the steersman's hand, and the strength of her crew made every ship fly through the air faster than an arrow shot from a crossbow. None could match the Skytoucher ships for beauty, strength, and deadly threat to the heart of the enemy.

The people of Skytoucher Mountain grew ever stronger, until they had become so powerful that they had no enemy against whom to test their strength. And this saddened them, for without a foe to match in combat, they could not know the deepest blessings of Thystonius, Passion of Valor. But when the chiefs of the Skytoucher clans gathered around a council fire to speak of this matter, a stranger arose from among them and demanded to be heard.

A tall troll he was, this stranger, so tall that his war helm brushed the low-hanging clouds. His skin was as dark as the black-glass rock, and each of his horns was as thick as the trunk of a thorn tree. He wore a suit of crystal armor more finely wrought than the best the Skytoucher armorers could make, and he bent not under its weight. Taking up the Speaking Stick, he thumped it thrice upon the ground and told the chiefs who their enemy was. He Named them Thera'in Mhakkorh, the Theran magicians who turned life to death at a touch. And when the stranger dropped the Speaking Stick, the chiefs chattered excitedly among themselves like younglings on their first raid. Some rejoiced that the Skytoucher clans had found a worthy foe, while others wondered aloud if the Thera'in Mhakkorh could take the life of the trolls. They determined to ask more of the stranger, but when they sought him, they found that he had vanished as the dawn mist into the sky. Then all knew that they had beheld Thystonius, who had commanded them to fight the magicians of Thera.

And the chiefs gathered the Skytoucher clans together for a great trollmoot, such as had not been seen among the people for a hundred generations. All the people came, from the oldest sire to the newborn child, and listened as the chiefs spoke of the Therans. Then the chiefs asked, "What shall we do? Shall we fight them, as Thystonius has commanded? Or shall we stay safe on the mountain, lest we die at their touch? Is it to be war or no?"

And a silence fell among the people for the space of three heartbeats. At the fourth heartbeat, there arose from the gathered clans a mighty roar, as from the heart of a winter storm. "WAR!" they cried. "WAR WITH THE THERA'IN! WAR!!"

As the last echo of the shout died away, a tiny child lifted up his voice in wonder and pointed toward the sky. The people looked up and beheld a sight that no troll had seen or dreamed of seeing: an airship built not of wood, but of stone. Behind the first airship came another, and another, and another, until the skies above the trollmoot were black with them. From their masts flew banners of black and red and gold, covered in strange symbols without meaning. The stone ships hung in the air, silent and still. In the silence the people began to whisper: "Thera'in Mhakkorh. Thera'in Mhakkorh."

From the stone ships came a voice, cold and commanding, cursing the clans in words that none could understand. The Thera'in curse brought the fires of the heavens down upon our heads. Lightning from the stone ships struck our houses, our ships, our young Warriors, our old ones, our children. Where the lightning struck, it burned, blackening wood and stone and flesh alike. The screams of the people filled the air, silenced only when none were left alive to scream.

And the Thera'in Mhakkorh looked down on the dead of the proud Skytoucher clans and smiled the cold smile of the blizzard that kills with its beauty.

That is what happened when the Therans came. Lest we forget!

Se'alla Ge'Vaare Longfang

Harken to the tale of Vaare Longfang and her sister, Alih'ar. Now Vaare and Alih'ar were born only a year apart, and they loved each other dearly. Each shared all things with the other, and each taught her children to call the other "firstmother." (In the ancient troll tongue, the two words for "mother" are *ghe'ak*, meaning "firstmother," and *ghe'orh*, meaning "secondmother." Children of line marriages call their birth mothers *ghe'ak*, using *ghe'orh* to refer to the other wives in the marriage.)

One day, the sisters went out to patrol the kaer. They had heard rumors that a Horror had breached the lowest level, and as leaders of the moothome it was their right to battle the enemies of their clan. As they walked, Alih'ar said, "I hope the Horror is waiting for us. I will strike off its head and chop off its hands, so that it can never harm any of the Longfang clan."

But Vaare said, "I hope there is no Horror. Are you not ashamed to wish that one would appear in the same dwelling as our own children?" And Alih'ar fell silent, but she felt anger in her heart because Vaare had rebuked her.

As they descended, the light quartz in the walls dimmed around them. Soon it had grown so dark that they could no longer see the path. Vaare took out firestones and tried to light a torch, but the wood refused to catch. "This is unnatural," whispered Vaare, and her voice shook.

Alih'ar said, "Are you afraid?" And her voice was no longer warm and deep, but cold and thin and bitter like the winter wind. She began to laugh, then drew her broadsword and struck at Vaare. Vaare blocked the blow, and Alih'ar's sword split the unlit torch in two. Then Vaare knew that a Horror had darkened her sister's mind. She drew her own sword, and they fought without stopping for the space of three days. Blood poured from a thousand cuts in Alih'ar's hide, but the Horror maddened her and she would not yield. At last, Alih'ar struck Vaare across the back of her leg; Vaare fell, howling in pain.

As Alih'ar raised her sword to deliver a killing thrust, Vaare grabbed the blade in her bare hands and twisted it from her sister's grasp. The sword's edges cut her palm to the bone, but she was battle-maddened and did not heed the pain. She thrust blindly upward with the sword, and the tip bit deep into Alih'ar's eye.

At its touch, Alih'ar screamed and stumbled backward, clutching her bleeding face. Vaare struck again and again, until she had beaten Alih'ar to her knees. The Horror spoke through Alih'ar, cursing Vaare and screaming. As Vaare raised Alih'ar's sword to stab her sister through the heart, Alih'ar grabbed the blade and pulled it upward. The Horror's curses fell silent, and Alih'ar whispered, "Kill it as I said I would kill it, or the Horror will possess me forever!"

Vaare raised the sword, and with a single, mighty blow cut off her sister's head. The head rolled away over the rocky slope, a steady stream of curses pouring from its mouth. Alih'ar's body lurched after the head, but before it could escape her, Vaare raised the sword again and chopped off her sister's hands. A green mist arose from Alih'ar's body, almost choking Vaare with the foul smell of stagnant water. With a final, furious howl, the mist vanished.

Vaare looked down at the battered body of her beloved sister and wept. Then she turned and ran through the kaer, howling her sister's Name as tears spilled down her cheeks. When she reached the upper levels, her husbands asked her, "Where is Alih'ar?" But she could not speak. She could only howl and cry. And when she tried to cast away Alih'ar's sword, she found that it had grown fast to her hand.

On the Creation of Art

The troll tongue does not have a word for "artist," meaning one who creates art as distinct from someone who does not. To trolls, art is part of life. Everyone creates art; perhaps not all the time, but certainly at many times during their lives. To a troll, calling someone an artist as opposed to non-artists makes as much sense as calling some people "breathers" as opposed to "non-breathers." The latter is foolish, of course; all people breathe. So do all trolls create art.

Most trolls, save those who learn from other races, do not understand one who calls himself a professional artist and sells his works. Trolls have no interest in owning works of art created by another, and do not understand why anyone would want to buy their art. What value can art possibly have, except to its creator? We believe that the tangible, physical work of art matters much less than the process of creating it. Though trolls do sometimes keep and cherish works of art they have made, the value of such a work lies in the fact that it symbolizes creation. An offer to buy a troll's art is for many trolls a mortal insult. If someone buys my art, he takes from me something that only I can appreciate at its true worth; he therefore cheapens it, and by extension cheapens me.



Some trolls might consider such an offer as cheapening the entire troll race, and thus a slight to their katera as well as to personal and clan honor.

—Thom Edrull

The troll view of art as something that everyone does rather than a pursuit reserved for experts using special tools, materials, and techniques, affects the nature of trolls' artistic works. Though a few trolls produce elaborate sculptures, paintings, and so on, most elaborate troll art consists of small carvings of wood or stone. These items can be worked on in a spare moment between everyday tasks,

or carried along on a drakkar voyage on the chance that the artist can continue the work while aboard.

Considering that the trolls' creation myth tells them that their mystical Foremother gave them the rock of the mountains for their own special home, it is logical that they consider stone a nobler material than any other. Trolls reserve stone for works that have the greatest significance for them.

—Jerriv Forrim

Usually these carvings are either geometric figures that combine elements of circles and squares or they are realistic depictions of Namegivers. Abstract representations of real objects, a style much favored by certain elven nations, have no place in troll art. A troll geometric sculpture is not intended to represent anything in the physical world. Some scholars suggest that geometric works represent spiritual and philosophical truths of the troll race, but no troll has confirmed or denied this assertion. Indeed, most find the very question insulting. Our art is a private matter; asking a troll, "What does this piece mean?" or "What is that supposed to be?" is a good way to start a fight.

It is interesting to note that to the eyes of all other Namegivers save dwarfs, troll artwork looks somehow wrong. Details appear to be missing or inappropriately applied, a supposed "flaw" most noticeable in troll paintings. In truth, the flaw lies not in the artwork but in the sight of the beholders. Trolls (and also dwarfs) possess heat sight, enabling them to see colors invisible to others' limited vision. When a troll contemplates a rainbow, for example, he sees three bands of color beyond the band of red that all races see. Many troll painters use pigments different from those employed by artists of other races, pigments that only our eyes can see truly.

On Craftsmanship among Trolls

Troll craftsmen tend to emphasize use over artistic merit or beauty in making clothing, weapons, and other objects. Unlike art, the crafting of a useful object must produce that object: a sword, say, or a pair of trousers. In art, the act of creation is paramount; in craft, the tangible end result is far more important.

The creation of items of clothing, weapons, and houses is a necessary task that must be finished swiftly in order to fill a need. Once the item has been crafted to suit its purpose, there is no need to add anything to it.

In this trolls differ with many other races—in particular, elves and t'skrang—who meld craftsmanship and art in virtually all their pursuits.

—Jerriv Forrim

On the Manufacture of Clothing

To others' eyes, a troll's unadorned clothing appears so simple as to be called primitive. Sheepskin, leather, and coarse wool are favored materials, particularly among highland trolls who can use little else. Crystal raiders often steal cotton cloth or silk, which they use for both clothing and airship banners.

Most highland trolls wear sheepskin leggings and wool shirts, a heavier sheepskin jerkin or a leather vest or jacket, and calf-high boots of butter-soft leather. Individuals may choose to embellish their clothes with small carvings they have created, made of stone, wood, or metal. Though the clothes themselves are undecorated otherwise, the workmanship is very fine, particularly if an article of clothing is intended as a courting gift. A leather vest, for example, may be plain in appearance, but its maker will take great pains to work the leather until it is as soft and supple as a baby's skin.

Weapons and Armor

An immensely tall and strong race, trolls favor weapons that use both their strength and the great leverage they can muster with their long limbs and superior height. Axes, warhammers, huge broadswords, and two-handed swords are the troll's favored weapons. Because a troll finds it easier to bring his full strength to bear in the swing of an axe than in a sword thrust, troll Warriors prefer blades that strike with the edge rather than the point. Troll Weaponsmiths, therefore, lavish more attention on the forging of a sharp and lasting edge than on making the needle-sharp points favored by t'skrang smiths.

Like everything else of troll crafting, troll weapons are simple in design, lacking the elaborate decorations that other races often add to their weapons. A troll Weaponsmith would not consider creating something as intricate as a t'skrang swept-hilt sword with its basket-shaped guard of interwoven metal strands. Such a guard does have a use-blocking the enemy's blade from one's throat—but the effort involved in making it is far out of proportion to its usefulness. For all their simplicity, troll weapons do not completely lack artistic merit. Their simplicity gives them a harsh beauty of line and proportion, a beauty that owes something to the sheer power that the weapons embody. Individual trolls occasionally embellish their weapons by engraving simple geometric designs into the metal. I know of one highland clan that uses a technique they call "acid etching" to produce designs almost elegant in their simple grace.

Highland trolls most often wear padded and hardened leather armor, occasionally with plates of cold-hammered iron sewn in it to protect vital areas. Chain and plate mail are rare because of the sheer effort involved in mining metal ore, refining it, and forging the mail's delicate pieces. Crystal raiders often wear metal armor that they have taken from targets or rivals. Because most armor gained in this way is designed for smaller races, crystal raiders build their elaborate suits of chain or plate mail by breaking apart and reforging several captured pieces of armor.

Often, chieftains and other distinguished troll Warriors wield weapons with blades hewn from living crystal mined from the peaks, and plate armor fashioned from the crystal. The amount of work required to mine the material and fashion the items make these weapons and armor rare, and trolls value them highly for their superior strength and the status they confer on a Warrior.

Tools and Other Diverse, Useful Items

For every other kind of useful object, troll craftsmen use stone, wood, and (to a lesser degree) cold-hammered metal. Items personally important to the craftsman, such as his tools, he will almost always make of stone. A troll magician, for example, might etch the spells of his grimoire on several square pieces of slate.

What little embellishment exists appears as geometric designs, which may or may not symbolize something to the maker or user of an item.

Even the lowland trolls regard stone as symbolic of the troll race. A lowland troll magician might use parchment for his grimoire, like any other Namegiver, but he will acknowledge its personal worth to him by embedding stones in the leather cover and binding.

—Derrat, Wizard of Yistaine

On the Building of Troll Habitations

Because lowland trolls employ the building methods and styles most common to the other Namegivers around them, I will discourse on the craft of architecture among highland trolls. Highland dwellers construct their homes out of stone, using blocks roughdressed with simple tools or unworked stones collected from the surrounding area. Buildings are square or rectangular, of one story or perhaps two at most, with thick walls that can resist the fierce winds that scour the mountain peaks. Where wood is available, trolls use it to build steeply slanting roofs that prevent the piling up of snow. In areas where wood is scarce, the stone roofs are flat; villagers must clear snow from their homes regularly, lest it pile up heavily enough to collapse the structure.

The highland troll clans are among the only people in Barsaive who must contend with snow and ice. Most of Barsaive has not seen snow since before the Scourge.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Troll buildings have few windows to protect the inhabitants from the sharp winds and driving rain common in the highlands. A typical troll house has two doorways to allow for swift egress in case of frontal assault. Where wood is available, heavy doors and shutters are built of it, often bound by iron to make them more difficult to break. Those clans living where wood is scarce make their doors and window shutters of thick, waterproof oilskin curtains, sewing small rocks into their lower edges as weights so they will not flap wildly in gales.

A typical troll home consists of a single large room, wherein the entire family resides. Trolls see little need for the kind of privacy dear to other races, in which one goes off into another room to be alone. Like obsidimen, trolls find privacy within themselves; a troll can be "alone" even when surrounded by dozens of others simply by refusing to acknowledge them. (I will speak more on this subject in On Finding Privacy Within, later on in this text.) Most homes, however, curtain off a private area for use as a birthing room; some even have small, separate chambers for this purpose. Lowland trolls tend to set aside a birthing chamber as well.

Certain clans do not build at all, preferring to live in natural caves within their mountain territories. During the Scourge, all trolls lived in caves; the kaers, or *ga'ar,* were cave mazes carved deep in the living heart of the mountains. Many trolls traveled forth from the highlands to learn excavation techniques from the dwarfs in the years before the Scourge; several other clans invited dwarf miners and stoneworkers to join their clans as *no'a'g'ral* and share the shelter they had helped to build. Today, a few troll clans still live in their *ga'ar.* Most, however, gladly left the caves behind to live in stone houses under the infinite sky.

On Matters of Manners and Social Custom

Troll customs are often difficult for our fellow Namegivers to understand, but such understanding is vital for any who wish to build ties of friendship with those of my race. Our sensitivity to honor makes us quick to anger by many races' standards, and one unfortunate enough to inadvertently insult a troll on first meeting him may not live to see an opportunity to apologize.

In the hope that my work may prevent such mischance, I will discuss certain customs and ways of thinking considered mannerly and appropriate among trolls.

On Finding Privacy Within

Because so much of our lives involves the constant presence of family and clan, and our ties of kinship determine so much of what we do, trolls highly value privacy as a counterweight to our dealings with others. Much of troll life does not allow us to be physically alone, and so trolls have learned to consider privacy and solitude a state of mind. A troll can be alone and private in the midst of a crowded, noisy moothome simply by ceasing to attend to what goes on around him. Those who believe us by nature impatient and easily angered might find it amazing to see how much annoyance a troll can endure without a flicker of response. I have seen trolls sitting by the fire pit of a moothome while arguments and even Rites of Challenge rage around them, as calm and placid as if they sat on a mountain peak a day's ride from the nearest other living being. I have also seen the rage provoked when the tumult exceeded their ability to ignore it, shattering their privacy. We call this kind of solitude *dom'an*, or "privacy within."

Deliberately intruding on another's privacy is a great affront to that person's *katorr.* Only the foolish will force their presence on another, unless one intends to goad another into fighting.

On Nudity as a Violation of Privacy

In an interesting outgrowth of *dom'an*, troll culture developed a taboo against nudity. Privacy within derives much of its value from the peaceful aspect of *jar'arak*. A troll practicing *dom'an* is embodying introspective *jar'arak*, and to break that introspection is a serious offense against *katorr.* Over time, any act that might distract a troll from *dom'an* was considered an unforgivable inva-



sion of privacy. Nudity, as an act of complete exposure, became a particularly blatant invasion of *dom'an*, and trolls therefore learned to shun it.

To this day, most trolls consider it shameful to be seen unclad or to see unclad any but a parent or spouse. In crowded quarters, however, such as in a *ga'ar* or in the moothome when a clan shelters from attack, one often cannot avoid seeing others' nakedness or appearing before them naked. In order to abide by the taboo, therefore, the seer and the seen must not acknowledge what has happened between them. If both wrap themselves in *dom'an*, the privacy within, neither suffers any shame or dishonor. Many troll clans even have a saying recognizing this: "In the *ga'ar*, nakedness is often seen but never noticed."



On the Significance of Horns

Trolls impart to our horns far greater significance than most other Namegivers realize. In our view, a troll's horns are as much a part of him as his hair, his eyes, or his voice. By their appearance, horns say much about a troll's inner spirit.

Trolls believe that the Universe gave us horns to set us apart from the other Namegivers. Long, large, and thick horns are often thought to be a sign of special kinship with Thystonius, the favored Passion of trolls. Such horns imply a strong soul, eager for challenges and conflicts. Smaller, thinner horns are thought to signify an affinity toward the more peaceful aspect of *jar'arak*, though they are no less valued than the larger horns common to a more warlike nature. Of course, the size and shape of horns do not always signify what many believe they do. I know several trolls who exhibit attitudes and behaviors opposite to those one might expect judging by their horns.

Most trolls allow their horns to grow naturally, but certain highland clans force their horns to grow in a predetermined fashion. Such a custom is especially prevalent in clans where leadership is determined by bloodline. Chieftains in these clans often forcibly shape the growth of their children's horns so that the appearance of the horns will appropriately mark the clan's future leader. In some clans, the chieftain molds his eldest child's horns to mirror the precise shape of his own, as a visible sign that the child is destined to lead the clan.

Because a troll's horns are so much a part of who he is, any insult to a troll's horns is an attack on his personal honor. Because a troll's horns do not reflect on the clan, however, slights against them do not besmirch *kat'ral*. They may, however, be construed as an affront to the honor of the troll race.

Any troll who has lost his horns is shunned by all highland troll clans and by most lowland trolls as well. In fact, most trolls do not consider a hornless troll to be a troll any longer. The only trolls I know of who have lost their horns are those cast out of their clans through the Ritual of Severance (which I discussed earlier in this text). To lose one's horns by mischance is certainly possible, though I know of none who have suffered such misfortune.

A few trolls living in the lowlands of Barsaive have also adopted the custom of horn shaping, but for mostly cosmetic reasons.

—Kern Redhand,
Historian of Throal

On Greetings and Partings

Members of races accustomed to greeting one another with inquiries as to health or happiness ("How fare you?" among certain dwarfs, for example, or "Is the world bright in your eyes?" among the windlings of northeastern Barsaive) may find it disconcerting that trolls dispense with such greetings. In our view, such inquiries are insincere, because the person asking rarely cares to hear a truthful answer. Truly, how many of us will sit still for the answer after asking a talkative old dwarf how things go with him? Also, many trolls see such questions as implying weakness on their part. They may interpret a simple "Are you well?" as a suggestion that they are incapable of enduring life's hardships without help from another. Rather than inquire about health or happiness, a troll will say "*Vod'arr*!" This greeting translates roughly as "I see you" or "You are here," and simply recognizes another's presence without offering oblique insult.

Similarly, trolls tend to scorn other races' partings as meaningless benedictions and empty wishes for future health and happiness. The most common farewell among trolls, "*Ter'vo'an*!" translates literally as "We part," with an implication that we may meet again in the future.

On the Curious Custom of Boasting

Boasting, or *druv'a* ("claims of honor"), plays an important role in relations between trolls. On meeting another troll for the first time, an individual troll invariably makes a loud boast enhancing some aspect of his honor. The actual nature of the boast depends on the circumstances of the meeting, which are always clear to trolls. Other Namegivers, however, miss the nuances of troll relationships and daily life, and so they find the circumstances surrounding boasting unpredictable.

The following three *druv'a* represent the three types of troll honor. If a troll says, "To challenge me is to call down the lightning on your homes," he is enhancing *katorr*. The statement that "the honor of clan Granitebone will live through the ages" enhances *kat'ral*. And a troll who boasts, "My people have bred powerful Warriors for as long as the sun has shone in the sky," enhances *katera*.

The first *druv'a* demands an immediate response in kind, a point of good manners that other races often miss. Ignoring the boast or trying to calm an apparently irate troll is the worst possible response; such an action dishonors the troll who offered the *druv'a* by implying that his boast does not warrant attention. Failing to respond in kind tells the boaster that he has no honor and that his *druv'a* has no value.

Trolls who know each other well also occasionally exchange boasts, but they will only boast to someone of another race that they consider a worthy adversary or a close friend (as trolls see little difference between the two).

I once saw a human Swordmaster exchange boasts with a troll Sky Raider. They screamed at each other across a tavern table for almost an hour, their boasts growing steadily more outrageous and more provocative. They seemed to enrage each other, showering each other with swaggering threats of increasing violence until I feared murder might be done. When both became too hoarse to continue, they glared at each other, panting with fury, gripping the hilts of their weapons so tightly that their knuckles turned white. I had scarcely taken a step toward the door, intending to call a constable, when the two antagonists clapped each other on the back, croaking with laughter. They then proceeded to get roaring drunk together. As I heard later, the incident sealed a lifelong friendship between the two. I confess myself most bewildered by the ways of trolls … I swear my hearing has been less keen than it should be since that evening.

—Jerriv Forrim

On the Importance to Troll Relations of Drinking

Trolls love to drink strong mead, and they can quaff prodigious quantities of it. Trading *druv'a* and outrageously exaggerated tales of adventure over flagons of liquor is an important way that trolls express feelings of friendship. For someone of another race to be invited to join such a drinking and bragging fest is a great honor; to refuse such an invitation is often interpreted as a slight against the *katorr* of the troll who offered it. Recognizing that the other races do not share their prodigious capacity for alcohol, most trolls do not hold drunken indiscretions against their smaller-born companions (at least, not as frequently as they might). A friend, colleague, or *no'a'g'ral* who has drunk himself merrily insensate with a band of trolls will usually wake to find himself better friends than ever with his large companions. Of course, anyone considering drinking mead with highland trolls should know that certain clans add small amounts of mountain hardsage to their mead to give it a bitter taste that they find pleasant. The amount used is too small to cause cramps in troll-sized drinkers, but other races may find themselves incapacitated by painful cramps.

Obsidimen are the only race that can match, let alone exceed, a troll's capacity for liquor. Trolls often invite *ago'al* ("rock brothers") to join in their drinking bouts, and they drink themselves into a stupor trying to match the seemingly bottomless capacity of their obsidimen friends.

Apparently, trolls interpret a smaller Namegiver's attempt to match them drink for drink as a way of emulating their capabilities, and thus a compliment to katera.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On Trolls' Views of Other Races

Many highland trolls, and some lowlanders as well, have strong opinions about other Namegiver races. These opinions are not always complimentary, and a member of another race who wishes to befriend a troll will often have to overcome the troll's view of him. I caution the reader, however, not to ascribe the opinions given below to all trolls. These views of other Namegivers are common but by no means universal among my people. For any who may be offended by the plain speaking that follows, I apologize in advance—and I ask those readers to consider the fierce prejudice against trolls that often has given rise to our prejudices against others.

Obsidimen are the only race that all trolls view unreservedly as friends and brothers. Indeed, our creation myth teaches that trolls and obsidimen were born of the same primal thunderstorm, and that the obsidimen alone share our ability to truly hear the voice of Creation. Indeed, many trolls treat obsidimen with something like reverence, offering them such great respect and honor that the obsidimen become embarrassed. Many troll clans build their villages near obsidiman Liferocks, so that they may partake of our rock brothers' inner peace by living near them. To all trolls, an obsidiman deserves respect as the embodiment of the peaceful aspect of *jar'arak*.

With regard to other races, trolls' opinions vary. Unfortunately, many regard other Namegivers as inferior because their bond with the earth is less strong (to a troll's way of thinking). Sometimes this sense of troll superiority is benign, if irritating to the recipients of it. For example, some trolls view orks as "little brothers" and would never do anything to harm them. (Orks, of course, find trolls' patronizing behavior toward them intensely annoying, and who can blame them?) Other manifestations of troll superiority are

far less benign. For example, many trolls view windlings as hardly fit to be called Namegivers. It is a sad truth that windlings, simply by behaving in their natural manner, cannot help but offend trolls more deeply than can any other Namegiver race.

Windlings love to joke and tease and often show friendship by making fun of one another. To a troll, for whom even an innocent question from one ignorant of our ways may be a grave slight to our honor, almost everything a windling says is an insult to *katorr*, *kat'ral*, or *katera*. Honor is so dear to us that we must take extreme care in teasing each other, lest we offend against standards of honor that we know as intimately as we know our own souls. How much more perilous, then, is it for a windling to tease us! They need not even mock us intentionally; simple physical differences often serve to shame us. A windling can fit through a door that may not admit a troll, or perch easily on a stool that a troll can scarcely touch without breaking. The fact that a windling can do what we cannot is taken by far too many of my race as an unflattering comment on our size. Therefore, the one difficulty that trolls and windlings have in common—failure to fit in a world not designed for our comfort—too often becomes another reason to dislike each other rather than a cause for mutual sympathy.

Many trolls regard elves almost as poorly as they do windlings, but for a different reason. If we are honest with ourselves, we trolls realize that most windlings offend us without meaning to—at least at first. If we and they both took the time to try to understand each other, we might smooth out our differences and become friends. I hold little hope of reaching such accommodation with elves; unfortunately for both our races, many elves bear intense prejudice against trolls because of our appearance. An elf loves beauty above all things, even (perhaps) above his own life. In the eyes of most elves, trolls are ugly; they see us as an affront to the loveliness of nature, and therefore abhor us. Not surprisingly, we trolls respond in kind to such unthinking bigotry and often despise all elves because we assume that they despise us. If we tell ourselves that the elves as a race are worth nothing, we rob their disdain of its sting; for who can be dishonored by the scorn of a worthless Namegiver? This mutual prejudice sadly robs us of the chance to truly know one another. If the elves of Barsaive could bring themselves to look past what they call our monstrous aspect and learn more of what trolls are, they would find much in us that even an elf might call beautiful.

With regard to dwarfs, many trolls show at least a grudging respect for their artistry with metal and stone. Indeed, some troll clans view dwarfs with great friendliness, having taken in dwarf stonemasons as no'a'gral just before the Scourge. Other trolls, however, find the dwarfs' curiosity fertile ground for slights to honor. This judgment is particularly prevalent among those trolls who have dealt with dwarfs in buying and selling. Most highland trolls view commerce differently than do dwarfs and that other great merchant race, the t'skrang. As with the windlings and their joking, these different viewpoints offer numberless opportunities for mutual misunderstanding. Dwarfs and t'skrang pride themselves on their ability to haggle over price, hoping to extract more than a good is worth from the purchaser or to whittle the seller's price as low as possible. Trolls find haggling highly insulting; a troll with something to sell sets a price for his goods that he considers them worth. To offer less implies that the goods are of little value, or that the troll in question is a dishonorable blackguard who has set his price unreasonably high. Furthermore, to haggle implies the buyer's belief that the troll does not have the firmness to hold out for the price he desires. Traders and adventurers used to sharp bargaining for goods and services should reconsider such practices when negotiating for passage aboard a crystal raider's airship.

Many trolls view t'skrang with the same jaundiced eye as dwarfs if they have had to buy from or sell to the lizard-folk. Trolls who have met t'skrang under other circumstances may find their flamboyance amusing or insulting, depending on the individual troll's interpretation of the ideals of Thystonius. Some trolls appreciate the t'skrang ideal of *haropas*, seeing their willingness to take any risk for any reason as doing honor to the Passion of Valor. Other trolls regard t'skrang flamboyance as a backhanded mockery of Thystonius; to these, conflict and bravery are serious matters that should be approached with a serious demeanor. To laugh in the face of danger, as many t'skrang do, makes light of combat and therefore becomes a slight to troll honor.

As for humans, many trolls find them confusing. Humans are less predictable than any other Namegiver race; in everything from height to hair color to the talents they possess, humans vary more than anything save the world itself. Some trolls see this variability as an embodiment of the world's dazzling variety and therefore regard humans more positively than not. But most see the wide range of human differences as evidence of instability. Because we trolls prize in ourselves the strength and stability of the mountains among which we live, many of us see "unstable" humans as decidedly inferior. Some trolls, in fact, find humans so unstable and bewildering that they shun human society.

A BRIEF TREATISE ON THE T'SKRANG

How this document found its way to the Great Library of Throal remains a mystery, for the t'skrang author begins by relating that the text was written at the behest of then Theran Overgovernor Kypros. From other references, we glean that the author was a Troubadour taken captive by the Therans, but we do not know the details of his captivity or if he ever returned to his own people. We may never know the tale of this scroll's journey to our archives, but its origins are less important than the wealth of information it contains. The author of this scroll dated it in the year 1044, using the Theran calendar system. That date would correspond to 1487 of our own Throalic calendar, indicating that this document was written 19 years ago..

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

In the beginning the Spirit Mother, the Great Encircler, took root in the Void that existed before time began. In time, she grew full of life and she planted four eggs into the emptiness of the Void. When the first egg opened, she was called Shivoam, the Birth Mother, the Serpent River. Then the second egg opened, and she was called T'schlome, the Light-bringer, the Sun. When the third egg opened, he was called Shivos, the Earth Father, the Land. And when at last the fourth egg opened, he was called Syrtis, the Night watcher, the Moon. And the Spirit Mother nursed her brood in the circle of her embrace, the circle without beginning, without end, which we call Houros, the worm that eats its own tail.

Now, Syrtis looked into the skies and saw the beauty of his sister, the Sun. He was filled with the longing of a man for a woman, and grew wings to follow T'schlome. When Syrtis caught up to her, the skies caught fire as T'schlome resisted. Seeds of flame rained down upon the earth, and where they broke open, out sprang the Fire-brothers, the dragonkind. Again Syrtis caught her, again T'schlome struggled against him. The Heavens trembled with the great storm, and from the clouds burst the Skysisters, the windlings. You can look up to the sky and see them chasing still, and with each new mating is hatched another star.

Shivos lay near Shivoam, and from their first mating came a small brood of eggs. And there was a sadness, for the shells did not shatter, the young did not break forth. With a second mating came a second egg brood, but once again no hatchlings came. And the River looked to her sister, the Sun, and the many children of Syrtis and T'schlome, and she sang and she wept. At the sound of her song, the eggs trembled, and at the touch of her tears they broke open. And the children of the first brood were called the River-daughters, the t'skrang. The children of the second brood were the Earthsons, the obsidimen. With each new mating of Earth and Water, a new mountain is born, a new river runs forth. These are the generations of the four Founders.

ON THE NATURE OF THE T'SKRANG

My Name is T'chal Siandra K'vechrialonika V'strimon, and for sixteen years, I was the weaver of the Yearsong in the Great House V'strimon. By order of my new lord, Overgovernor Kypros of Sky Point, I now undertake to recount all that I can of my people, the t'skrang. Though I have been given but short space, I will try to make my story both brief and concise, giving special attention to those matters that might be of particular interest to the Theran reader.

Short space? This scroll runs many, many pages. If this t'skrang thinks the space allowed was inadequate, the imagination balks at what length his t'skrang loquaciousness might have thought sufficient …

—Jerriv Forrim

If asked to describe the physical appearance of my people, most members of other races might say that the t'skrang are the lizard-men of Barsaive. But unless offense is intended, pray do not compare our race to creatures such as the lizard or snake in our presence. The t'skrang are a Namegiving race, and deserve to be treated as such. As with all the other races, all that sets us apart from the rest are certain unique physical characteristics. A typical t'skrang stands no taller than six feet, for example, an average comparable to that of the human race. It is our tails that make us longer, adding some six feet in length and another forty pounds to our weight. T'skrang skin is hairless and as supple as soft leather, and its color varies widely, from green to blue to russet red, often patterned with spots and stripes.

Among the Namegiving races only trolls show a wider range of natural physical variation. Some of my race also display spectacular crests of cartilage that sweep up from the base of the neck to the center of the skull. Others have spikes or plates on their tails or along their vertebrae, while still others have flattened, scoop-shaped snouts like ducks. A rare few are born with leathery membranes stretching from wrists to hip that can serve as wings. T'skrang mature at age ten, and seldom live past eighty years.

We t'skrang are creatures of sweeping motion and great passions. Indeed, for grace of movement, lightness of step, and innate sense of balance the t'skrang are often compared to the elven race. But it is not dancing that is our great delight, as it is with the elves. No, if the t'skrang have a favorite pastime, it is the spinning of tales and the pleasures of conversation. As the dwarfs are fond of saying, "Every t'skrang was born a Troubadour, and some wander from the art." No matter that the dwarfs intended the words as insult, we t'skrang have always taken them as high praise. Outrageous fictions produced at a moment's notice are a time-honored tradition among the t'skrang—and the more fabulous the tale, the greater the honor to the storyteller.

We t'skrang navigate the waters of the Serpent River in wondrous riverboats, trading up and down the river, and then returning to our underwater villages with needed goods and honestly won profits. Generations of expert haggling in pursuit of favorable trade has made my race tolerant and amicable, and we t'skrang bear no racial prejudice against the other Namegivers of Barsaive. Most dwarfs, especially those of Throal, seem unable to set aside their instinctive distrust of the t'skrang. But perhaps this is only a healthy suspicion for one's major economic competitor, for their attitude seems not to possess any rancor. The t'skrang themselves trade willingly with anyone who speaks a language they can understand.

Most t'skrang live on or near the Serpent River and its tributaries. Though Shivoam, the great mother goddess of the Serpent River, has blessed us with gills, we t'skrang can only remain underwater for ten minutes at a time before needing to come up for air. We prefer to swim near the water's surface, using our powerful tails to travel as quickly in the water as on solid ground. Water holds such importance for our species that bathing has evolved almost to the height of ritual. A t'skrang without his daily bath is a disgruntled t'skrang indeed!

If asked which two words of our own tongue best describe the t'skrang race, I would choose *niall*, our word for family, and *jik'harra*, usually translated as fearlessness or bravery. These two concepts encompass the true paradox of what it is to be born t'skrang, for a t'skrang spends most of his life torn between the craving to live surrounded by family in the village and the longing to sail the river, trying each day to find the truth of *jik'harra*. Strung between these contradictions, the t'skrang are like the taut string of a well-tuned *chitarra*. The music that emerges—that is the beauty of life for a t'skrang!



On the T'skrang of the Serpent River

Though t'skrang live all across Barsaive, the greater part live in and on the Serpent River. Because this group represents the center of our culture, much of what I describe is based chiefly on the Serpent-dwelling members of my race.

Of the Importance of the Niall

Each t'skrang takes great pride in the heritage and bloodline of his *niall*, or foundation. The *niall* is a large communal family consisting of thirty to sixty kin, from infants to ancients, all living under a single roof. Lineage is traced through the maternal line. When a woman takes a husband, the male leaves his familial home to join the *niall* of his mate.

Before I continue further, I must explain that a single *niall* does not a village make. Most villages consist of three to eight foundations. If the village owns a riverboat, the group is known collectively as a *t'slahyin*, or crew covenant. Sometimes, several *t'slahyin* join to form an *aropagoi*, or Great House. This is the way of the t'skrang, to gather in ever-larger groups.

Governing each *niall* is the six-member Women's Council. At its head is the foundation's eldest female, who is given the title of *lahala*, or Honored One. Tradition forbids men to sit on the Council, but in practice, wives and sisters commonly solicit the advice of their mates or siblings before attending a meeting.

T'skrang society is communal, with food, clothes, wealth, and village chores distributed fairly and systematically throughout the *niall*. I suppose this seems sensible to the sons of man, who rarely put ten kin under the same roof, but I assure you, even the t'skrang sometimes consider fifty relatives too many people with whom to share!

Each week, the Women's Council makes up a work list and posts it near the communal dining area. The list describes the tasks necessary for the maintenance of the foundation and assigns each task to pairs of members by Name. The Council, I should point out, makes certain that every member of the

foundation performs his fair share of the onerous tasks, such as fertilizing the crops, dredging the latrines, or scrubbing pots in the kitchens. An extra shift at such undesirable tasks is often assigned as punishment to members who commit minor offenses or who deliberately disrupt the fabric of life within the *niall*. Many riverboat crews insist that the Council always assigns the worst chores to returning crew members, but the Councilwomen merely smile and say that life on the river always makes crew act like hatchlings. At least, so went the customary exchange in my *niall*.

On the Honor of Being the Lahala

We honor the eldest female member of a foundation with the name *lahala*, or Honored One. The *lahala* holds considerable power within her *niall*. As head of the Women's Council, she arbitrates disputes within the family—and truth to tell, with forty relatives all living in the same house all the time, it takes a wise woman indeed to sort things out! The *lahala* also represents the *niall* in the village council, or Council of *Lahalas*, and in dealings with outsiders, and presides over the essential rituals of t'skrang life, including birth, Naming, marriage, and death.

When the time draws near for the current *lahala* to travel down the river to the sea, the next eldest woman is consecrated as Honored One in an intricate ritual of Thread Weaving and blood magic. The ritual grants to the new *lahala* all the racial memories of her predecessors, extending all the way back to the *niall's* first *lahala*. In becoming *lahala*, the elder lays aside her Name, breaking all threads attached to it and taking the Name of the *niall* as her personal Name. This ritual is called *k'soto ensherenk*; the Name-passing.

Only a woman may bear the title of *lahala*. Though they must sacrifice all they were previously, these Honored Ones seem to gain serenity from the grave responsibilities of their position, an inner peace that eases the sacrifice and teaches them the wise use of their authority. The rare *lahalas* who speak of *k'soto ensherenk* say that the racial memories are like a vast library of wisdom into which one may reach in time of need.

Because of the blood magic entwined in the nature of the Name-passing ritual, some risk does exist that a Horror-tainted *lahala* might corrupt the new *lahala*, but such an abomination has occurred only rarely. The ritual also prolongs the life of the *lahala* beyond the normal span by as many as thirty years. Other races may scoff at stories that some t'skrang live to ripe ages of one hundred years or more, but the *lahala* bear witness to the truth of these tales.

Of the Miracle of New Life

Very few t'skrang could tell you the Names of their mothers and this is why. The word *niall* means foundation, in much the same sense as the first row of stones form the base of a house, but it also means eggshell. T'skrang females lay eggs rather than giving birth live to their young, as do most other races of Barsaive.

A t'skrang egg is the size of a large hand-span, and twice that measure around the widest part. Sometimes speckled, sometimes plain, eggs range in color across a pastel spectrum. T'skrang women believe that the color of the eggshell predicts the destiny of the life within, but I have heard that scholars from other races speculate that the egg color is a product of the mother's diet, not of fate. T'skrang females may lay as many as ten eggs at one time, but seldom lay more than three times in a year.

The heart of any foundation is the hatchery, where eggs are kept moist and warm as they await coming to term. Once a t'skrang lays her eggs, she will carry them to the hatchery of her foundation as soon as possible. If females are traveling away from the foundation at the time they lay their eggs, they wrap them in cloth and protect them in a wicker basket known as a *creshenkta*. The sooner



the eggs arrive in the hatchery after being laid, the greater the chances of their fertility.

A foundation's hatcheries are the strict domain of the women—indeed, few men ever learn or understand what goes on inside. (By nature, of course, the men have invented all manner of outrageous tales about what the womenfolk really do inside the hatcheries.) The only thing men know for certain is that an egg takes eight to ten months to hatch. Near the end of each egg's hatching cycle, the women entrust its care to a male of the foundation. In most *nialls*, men vie with good-natured rivalry for egg-tending duty, while the women try to make the assignment of the honor as fair as possible. Because egg-tending is considered both a responsibility and a privilege, foundations never lack for volunteers.

The male t'skrang provides the milk a hatchling needs to grow and survive. Six to eight days before an egg's hatching, the eggtender's body chemistry changes, and he begins to provide a regular supply of milk for the hatchling. This change, known as *t'chai kondos*, or egg bonding, combines significant psychological, emotional, and magical elements. Hatchlings nurse for three months, during which the male carefully attends to the infant's needs and development. At the end of the first year, everyone in the foundation begins to take responsibility for the child's development, but the eggtender maintains a close relationship with his charge up to the child's second Name-day. Youngsters refer to their tenders as *chaida*, and the memory of an egg-parent can bring a sentimental tear to the eye of even the roughest river pirate. A t'skrang's feeling for his *chaida* is something akin to a human's love for his mother.

When a woman reaches egg-bearing age, she is brought to the hatchery and shown the fate of most t'skrang eggs. The eggs are covered with a rich ooze dredged from the river bottom and imbued with magic, then tucked into large cauldrons of heated mud. There they remain for up to a year and a day. After seven months, the women in the hatchery begin checking the eggs for signs of life by setting a bright light behind the egg. If the egg is fertile, the embryo appears as a dark shadow. Germinated eggs are watched

carefully, to properly time the assignment of an eggtender. Even ungerminated eggs are checked periodically to see if they are simply late bloomers. After a year and a day, ungerminated eggs are removed from the hatcheries to the kitchens, where they are used in various recipes.

We t'skrang have a saying, "Many are dreamed, few are born." This is the way we express the sad truth of our inefficient fertilization process. Only about one in every hundred t'skrang eggs germinates. Moreover, many women will never lay a good egg, while others will lay dozens. The t'skrang foundation is itself a direct response to our uneven, unpredictable fertilization pattern. By virtue of our social structure, no one knows whose eggs have hatched and whose have not, and thus the joys of child-rearing are known equally throughout the community.

Many *lahala* believe that the already low fertility rates of our race have taken a dramatic downward turn since the time of the Scourge. This subject is virtually taboo among my people, and it often proves dangerous for an outsider to raise the issue of t'skrang fertility in the presence of members of my race. The sons of man have a saying: "When t'skrang talk, nothing is forbidden." Whoever coined this phrase must never have tried to get a t'skrang to speak about the birth rate of his foundation.



On Growing Up T'skrang

The eggtender is charged with a hatchling's care from the moment it cracks its shell to the day it is weaned from the tender's milk. (Let the reader note that until the age of twelve years t'skrang are neither male nor female, but sexless, so the neutral "it" is indeed appropriate here.) Though half a year will pass before the hatchling learns to walk, every t'skrang is born knowing how to swim. The confines of every *niall* contain a large shallow pool where the newborns happily play. Of course, what is shallow water to a t'skrang hatchling could easily drown a human infant, so beware when ordering a t'skrang slave to give the baby a bath.

Humans eagerly await their children's ability to walk, while we t'skrang care far less about a hatchling's first step than his first swing. It is our custom to drape the interior of our dwellings with nets, rope ladders, and swing lines. It is in this maze that our children learn to swing and play, while visitors to our domes often stand aghast at the risks we encourage our hatchlings to take on the ropes.

Outsiders who have known only adult t'skrang are probably not aware that all t'skrang are born with a fear of heights that is as strong as their love for the water. Knowing that a hatchling must overcome this fear, we swell with pride at the sight of one swinging across the dizzying heights for the first time. All hatchlings must learn discipline in the face of fear. That lesson holds such importance that the t'skrang call it *jik'harra*, our word for bravery or fearlessness, literally translated as "brave passion."

Life is not all fun and games for the young t'skrang, however. In its third year, the hatchling begins to attend the foundation's school, a classroom that migrates from dwelling place to dwelling place throughout the village. The youngster's formal studies, which include spoken and written language, history, music, and mathematics, continue until the age of twelve. In my travels, I have found no other race that teaches mathematics so early or so thoroughly as the t'skrang. As with all other tasks, the teaching is done by a rotating staff of adults assigned to the work by the Women's Council. All adults share in teaching the hatchlings, and even the riverboat captains are drafted into instructing the hatchlings when they put into port for a few days.

At the age of seven, the hatchling joins the foundation's labor force, working alongside adults to perform the foundation's daily chores and the other tasks that maintain the village as a viable economic enterprise. The Council of *Lahalas* carefully assigns each hatchling to a full turn of duty; that is, each child spends at least a week at each of the village tasks. We do not expect children to work as hard or as long as adults, but neither do we allow them to grow up ignorant of their responsibilities. The Council reserves a number of especially undesirable tasks for disciplining unruly youngsters. At this stage, many villages group hatchlings from neighboring foundations by age and continue classes to the age of twelve.

T'skrang begin *kaissa*, the change from child to adult, at twelve years of age. This is the moment when hatchlings become male or female. The change from sexlessness to a specific gender, and from child to adult, is a difficult time for t'skrang, as I suppose it is for all younglings, regardless of race. Among the t'skrang, no one knows

the hatchling's sex until the onset of *kaissa*. On the one hand, this permits the child to grow up unrestricted by the expectations of a certain role in society. On the other hand, the lack of practice, so to speak, only serves to make the process stranger and more complicated for the hatchling. *Kaissa* can last for up to a year and a day, and during that time, there is nothing so moody, belligerent, or obstinate anywhere in Barsaive as that poor, confused hatchling. I have raised six, so I should know.

Moody and belligerent is a rather faint description of the humor of a t'skrang during kaissa. It is an unpleasant sight for an outsider to witness!

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Two t'skrang customs help hatchlings through *kaissa*. The first is the Festival of Names. Each year on the first day of spring, a foundation acknowledges its twelve-year-olds' passage to maturity by allowing each hatchling to take a Name of its own choosing. It often happens that a child will honor its egg-parent by adopting the *chaida's* Name as its own. In a simple, but moving ritual, the child stands before the gathered members of the foundation and states its new Name. (As this custom usually takes place before *kaissa* has even begun, a t'skrang name never even hints at gender.) Then, one at a time, the members of the foundation approach the hatchling, join hands, and exchange Names with the new adult. After the last foundation member has presented this honor, the ceremony transforms into a great celebration, in which it is each person's duty to get his new comrade outrageously drunk—at least, thus do I recall my own coming of age.

The second custom actually offers relief from the physical and mental chaos of *kaissa* by sending the hatchling off to the river for ship duty. These recruits are called *khamorro*, which means "he who scrubs the deck." As the Name indicates, *khamorro* draw the most demeaning, physically demanding tasks on the boat, while the adult t'skrang generally treat them like galley slaves. Despite this rigorous ordeal, most hatchlings leap at the chance to work on a riverboat and to live an adventure on the river. Fresh air and hard work offer the perfect distractions from the pangs of *kaissa*, and many *khamorro* return from ship duty without even realizing that they have completed the change.

On the Complexities of Village Life

The foundations of the Serpent River t'skrang join together in groups of four to twenty to form villages. The typical t'skrang village has five important features: the domes, the towers, the *refs*, the *t'slashina*, and the riverboat. Most outsiders do not realize that skilled t'skrang engineers produce these five structures using the five elemental substances. Indeed, Elementalist adepts of other races constantly request permission to study our villages to divine the true nature of their construction.

I shall start with the towers, for they are the visible evidence that people are living beneath the surface of the Serpent River. The towers of a t'skrang village consist of large, rounded spires of rock raised up from the bottom of the river using elemental magic. From shore, the towers look like thick, circular posts set into the river by a giant hand. Water sprays from their upriver faces as the Serpent's mighty current crashes against the stone. Although each village chooses a unique shape and structure, most towers rise at least 30 feet above the water's surface. Other towers, however, remain hidden below the surface of the water, for reasons I shall explain.



T'skrang builders arrange the village towers in groups of four set into a diamond pattern. The long axis of the diamond aligns with the river's current, and the two flanking towers usually lie just beneath the surface of the water. Larger villages link multiple diamonds together to form a larger pattern. House K'tenshin, or the House of Nine Diamonds, for example, takes its Name from the unusual configuration of its tower array: nine interlocking diamonds framed by sixteen towers. Villages that can afford fire cannons mount them on the tops of their towers to protect against marauders. The sides of the structures that face the inside of the diamond provide docks for our riverboats. The towers are hollow within, with a cunning system of ramps and pulley-driven lifts leading down to their bases.

The dwellings of the t'skrang lie partially buried under the muddy bottom of the Serpent, sheltered by domes scattered across the area within the diamonds and linked by underground tunnels. We live perhaps a hundred feet below the surface of the river, and many people wonder how we keep the air from going stale. Remember, some towers are submerged just below the water's surface. The force of the current moving swiftly across the tops and sides of these hollow towers creates a vacuum that draws air up through the tower, through the underground tunnels and through the domes, and also down through the towers that extend above the surface. This feat of engineering keeps our air fresh and clean. Visitors to our villages are always surprised to feel the constant pressure of a gentle breeze against their faces.

Each dome is large enough to house a *niall*, up to forty or more members of an extended family. At first glance many outsiders might consider a typical dome cramped and cluttered, filled with all sorts of outlandish structures. The space inside is usually divided by wooden beams, paper walls, huge sleeping baskets dangling from the ceiling, and a maze of ladders, nets, and rope swings crisscrossing in every direction. Most villages also build one especially large dome, sufficiently large to hold all members of the village during festivals and meetings.

A system of invisible, magical barricades called *refs*, an abbreviation of *refselenika*, protects the open spaces between the towers.

We fashion the *refs* from elemental water, shaping it into big, thick spikes sharp enough to rip a hole in the hull of a passing riverboat. Most villages also place *refs* in a pattern radiating outward from their towers to prevent approach from the water (perhaps considering the fire cannon too little protection). Sentries in the towers may raise and lower the *refs* so that boats can safely approach and then dock in the village. We also create a second kind of *ref* called a curtain *ref* that extends up to the surface of the river to deflect the force of the current away from the area inside the village diamond.

I have deliberately avoided describing the building material of the domes, because the choice of building materials varies. Primitive t'skrang in the far reaches of the Serpent's tributaries still use mud and sticks to build their domes. In times long ago, foundations on the main river constructed their domes of carefully hewn stone, and any dwarf who musters the courage to cross the open waters to visit our villages marvels at the fine workmanship and engineering skill of our ancient stonecutters. Long before the Scourge, the t'skrang discovered a method of weaving elemental air with elemental water to form beautiful, translucent structures unique in all of Barsaive. We call this kind of building material *durc*, and any adept with the talent to weave a *durc* can name his own price.



We call the space sheltered from the current by the combination of towers and *refs* the *t'slashina*, or village diamond. The surface of the water within the *t'slashina* is tranquil, still, and smooth as glass. On the river bottom, the nearly still water allows the village to use the fertile mud to grow crops. The curtain *refs* break up the force of the river's current, which would otherwise sweep both the planter and planted downstream. On the edge of the *t'slashina*, t'skrang fisherman cast their nets into the current of the Serpent River. The *t'slashina* forms the heart of t'skrang industry, for without it, my people would be completely dependent on trade for their daily bread.

Even the most productive villages find it hard to be self-sufficient. What cannot be grown or caught or created must be obtained through trade, and trade is only possible using the riverboat. So much has been made of the t'skrang and their riverboats that I think the people of Barsaive believe that my people live their entire lives, from birth till death, aboard ship. Quite possibly, they have drawn such a false conclusion from overhearing the talk of t'skrang sailors, some of whom behave as though they were full-grown the day Shivoam the Great River Goddess tossed them out onto the deck of a riverboat. The fact is, riverboats are just another thread in the pattern that is t'skrang, and no doubt there will be t'skrang left in the world long after the last riverboat engine sputters and dies and sinks to the bottom of the Serpent River.

This is a matter of perspective. The profit many t'skrang riverboats make through trade often seems more than enough to feed many small towns and villages.

—Ardinn Tero

OF THE T'SLAHYIN

Villages share responsibility for crewing a riverboat. These groups of foundations are bound together by an ancient tradition of oaths and regulations called *t'slahyin*, or crew covenant. A village can subsist on fishing and farming, but to truly prosper, the t'skrang also rely on trade. Since time out of mind, the t'skrang have depended on the extraordinary memories of our *lahalas* to maintain the tradition of *t'slahyin*, though my people have been attempting since the time of the Scourge to set down in writing the body of law that comprises it. It was House V'strimon that initiated this great task, which is now into its thirtieth volume, with much yet to be recorded.

Some t'skrang factions on the river propose using this document as the legal basis for regulating trade all across Barsaive, similar to the way the dwarf courts function in Throal. I personally believe that such an attempt would be disastrous, for one simple reason. The courts of King Varulus make judgments based on a cohesive system of general laws that can be applied to a variety of circumstances. The t'skrang covenants, on the other hand, are a collection of regulations that are much more specific than general, making it difficult to interpret them broadly. This system works for the t'skrang because of the wisdom of our *lahalas*, who can draw on centuries of practical experience in interpreting precedent.

Indeed, to apply the laws, ideas, and practices of the t'skrang crew covenant to all of Barsaive would be ludicrous!

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Perhaps the clearest example of the difference between dwarf law and t'skrang tradition is the simple concept of the covenant share. Each member *niall* of the crew covenant participates equally in the profits of its riverboat trade. In prosperous times, the whole village shares in the wealth, just as in lean times all share the burden of scarcity. Because no single foundation is big enough to crew an entire riverboat, this principle of equal shares keeps covenants together through all manner of tribulations—at least in theory.

The ship's captain is elected for a term of one season from among the ranks of all adult members of the village. Elections are a grand

affair, conducted with many speeches and much tail thumping before the village's gathered population. Every member of the *t'slahyin* over the age of twelve is expected to vote in the election in which two candidates are finally chosen.

The Council of *Lahalas* then decides which of the two will become captain. The chosen captain must assemble a list of officers within two hours, and each officer must choose five crewmen. That same day the Council of *Lahalas* reads the list aloud before the rest of the village, usually at the conclusion of a huge communal banquet, then the Council members take turns appointing additional crewmen to fill any vacancies.

Though a village may elect a new captain each year, most captains keep their position for many years by scrupulously and honestly fulfilling their part of the covenant. Because a captain often chooses the same officer core from year to year, captains and crews can remain on ships for decades despite a system designed for change.

The next step is the heart of the matter. Once a year, the people of the village gather to present the fruits of their year of labor to the crew council (the captain and his officers). Each trade offering is counted, verified, and added to the cargo manifest. After the cargo manifest has been declared, the Council of *Lahalas* presents a list of all the goods and materials the village must obtain through trade in the coming year. The two councils then forge the covenant, an oath that binds the crew to provide for the needs of the village by the time their ship returns from its journey while binding the village to receive the returning crew.

Once the crew council and the Council of *Lahalas* have completed the covenant, the riverboat sets out to trade on the river. The crew's first goal is to fulfill the terms of the covenant. Having accomplished that, they then turn to increasing the village's profits. This goal is usually accomplished by buying and selling goods along the river along with offering passage to merchants and adventurers seeking to travel any portion of the Serpent.



It is an interesting distinction that the profits brought home on the riverboat are shared by the t'skrang village, while most Throal trading companies only profit their owners.

—Ardinn Tero



On Life on the Great River

Life on the river is my people's great passion—the gentle rocking motion of a ship beneath one's feet, the ever-changing vista of the distant shore, the mystery and fascination of unfamiliar ports of call. The discipline of life in the village gives way to the joy and freedom we find on the Great Mother River we call Shivoam, the Serpent.

It is not that the details of life on the river are so distinct from life in the village. Just as the Women's Council manages the communal workload and task assignments in the village, the officer corps delegates shipwork. Instead of a *lahala* to act as final arbiter, the ship's captain performs that function. And though crew members may have more time to call their own while on board the ship, the riverboat is a cramped little world offering as little privacy as life in the domes.

Despite all this, the river provokes an undeniable change in the average t'skrang. His eyes gleam brighter, his tail swings more proudly, his voice booms, and his heartbeat quickens like a man whose heart has been struck by Astendar's darts. Our word for this feeling is *shivarro*, the river passion.

On the Aropagoi

The largest political units among the t'skrang are the *aropagoi*, or Great Houses. Just as a crew covenant consists of several cooperating foundations, so each *aropagoi* consists of numerous villages and crew covenants. Each Great House coordinates trade operations to the benefit of the crews and villages that compose it. The main purposes of the *aropagoi* are profit and trade advantage. Political ambition, especially as understood in Throalic and Theran terms of military alliance and land control, has no place among the t'skrang *aropagoi*.

Each of the *aropagoi* controls a section of the Serpent River and regulates trade and passage in that territory. The *aropagoi* do not control the entire length of the Serpent; some villages do not belong to an *aropagoi*, but most see the advantage of that system.

The core of each *aropagoi* consists of a central *niall* numbering as many as one thousand members. In its strictest sense, the word *aropagoi* refers to this central foundation, but over time has come to represent the entire allied structure. Unlike traditional foundations, membership in the central foundation is not based on a family relationship. Instead, each crew covenant nominates new members to the central foundation. Election to the foundation of an *aropagoi* brings distinction and honor to the t'skrang chosen, the kind of recognition from his peers that every t'skrang yearns for. Some estimates have nearly a third of all the t'skrang in Barsaive belonging to an *aropagoi* of crew covenants and foundations, but less than one in a hundred of these are true *aropagoinya*, that is, members of the central foundation.

Upon joining the central foundation, new members adopt an additional Name, the *g'doinya*. Usually more an epithet or label than a Name, the *g'doinya* is descriptive of its wearer, giving rise to such rubrics as "Seadreamer" or "Orkfriend." The *g'doinya* is rarely used outside the membership of a particular *aropagoi*. This taboo is so strictly observed that use of the *g'doinya* in other situations takes on deeper meaning. In combats between rival *aropagoi*, for example, opposing central foundation members speak one another's *g'doinya* as a way of announcing that they intend to duel to the death.

During a *g'doinya* ritual, the new member of the *aropagoi* foundation also receives a token of identification. Each *aropagoi* has a unique token, usually imprinted with the House symbol and colors. These tokens hold great value in the t'skrang river communities. Any non-t'skrang carrying an *aropagoi* token is accepted as having received the blessing of the House, and any t'skrang carrying one is accorded the same rights as a member of the *aropagoi*. Of course, carrying a stolen token into the *aropagoi* to which it belongs is almost as perilous as falling into the hands of one House while carrying the token of its rival. T'skrang consider possession of an *aropagoi* token under false pretenses to be a criminal act and punish offenders of their own race by cutting off their tails. For other races, an arm or a leg will serve equally well.

The eldest woman of the central foundation is called the *shivalahala*. The *shivalahala* receive the same kind of ancestral memories as the *lahalas* of the smaller foundations and are also believed to possess supernatural powers. The last documented case of an Elementalist casting a spell higher than Tenth Circle took place during the siege of House V'strimon in Lake Ban, when the *Shivalahala* V'strimon changed the elemental air to earth in every airship of the Theran fleet threatening her home. Theran ships may fly, but Therans left to their own devices are indeed subject to the laws of gravity.

The smallest of the five known *aropagoi* can field a fleet of thirty riverboats, including eight to twelve riverboats controlled by the central foundation rather than the crew covenants. Easily the most splendid vessels on the Serpent River, the *aropagoi* riverboats are armed to the teeth with fire cannons, powerful engines, and veteran crews. *Aropagoi* flagships patrol the river to keep the waterway near

their headquarters safe for trade. But some others trying to make a living on or near the Serpent consider the *aropagoi* to be little more than pirate federations who did not ask either their approval or participation in setting up these patrols. While it is true that *aropagoi* crews sometimes charge exorbitant tolls or wring exorbitant coin for protection services, they rarely engage in traditional "board-and-storm" pirate tactics except against ships of a rival House. Indeed, *aropagoinya* actively seek out and engage pirate ships as a preventive measure to protect their trade routes along the river. I can describe certain facets of each of the five *aropagoi*, but there is much I do not know and much I cannot say.

The great trading houses truly do help protect all vessels that travel along the length of the Serpent they control.

—Thom Edrull

Certain rumors hint at trade agreements even between different aropagoi. It is true, as this text says, that the t'skrang gather in ever larger groups.

—Jerriv Forrim

Syrtis *Aropagoi* is called the House of the Moon. Its colors are blue and silver, and its symbol is an S-shaped silver dragon set against a deep blue background. The token of the *aropagoinya* of House Syrtis is a silver ring with a cameo of a dragon set against a faience stone. The Syrtis central foundation gathers at Lalai Canyon, one of the ancient wonders of the t'skrang race. Steep and wide, this magnificent canyon was carved out where the Serpent River bends around the northern spur of the Throal Mountains. On the canyon's south face my people long ago carved out a city that rises above and drops below the surface of the river. That a small colony of obsidimen still lives here adds strength to the legend of the city's origins, which tells that it was constructed through the efforts of obsidimen and t'skrang working together. The *Shivalahala* Syrtis enjoys great renown as a prophetess.

The House of the Nine Diamonds, or K'tenshin *Aropagoi*, takes red and gold as its colors and the image of nine red diamonds against a gold background as its symbol. Every *aropagoinya* of K'tenshin wears in his left ear a token in the form of a large gold earring studded with rubies. The name of the House refers to the arrangement of its sixteen village towers, which form nine interlocking diamonds. K'tenshin boasts the tallest towers on the river, their extraordinary height making them visible for miles around. In addition to the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin's traditional duties, she also leads one of the more famous schools for Warrior adepts.

The name of my own house, V'strimon *Aropagoi*, roughly translates as the House of Reeds. Our colors are blue and green, and our symbol is a stylized clump of green river rushes against a background as blue as the river. We *aropagoinya* wear a simple bracelet of river reeds around our right wrists, a token that will remain green and supple for as long as its wearer remains alive. Our trading house lies in the center of Lake Ban and is called the Floating City. It is set on a floating island of interwoven reeds and is considered by the people of all Barsaive to be one of the province's most remarkable sites. The reed island measures nearly thirty feet thick, and is anchored to five towers arranged in the shape of a pentagon. *Shivalahala* V'strimon has a reputation as the most powerful Elementalist in Barsaive, and, among the leaders of the Great Houses, I suspect she possesses the greatest political ambitions. This headstrong woman also outranks other *shivalahalas* in pigheadedness, and though it is by her command that I sit here, a prisoner in this Passion-forsaken pit of a Theran dungeon, I love her dearly just the same.

Henghyoke *Aropagoi* is the House of the Otter. Its symbol is an otter carrying a silver egg in its mouth, and its colors are brown and white. The *aropagoinya* wear a platinum band around their necks as a token, and it is believed that they cannot remove the token without destroying it. Many theories attempt to explain the mystery of the *Shivalahala* Henghyoke, but my favorite is the version that claims that she is an Illusionist who has hidden her home with an enchantment.

Ishkarat *Aropagoi* is the House of the Wheel. Its colors are crimson and white, its symbol a white paddle wheel against a red background. As their token the *aropagoinya* carry a ritual dagger made of black obsidian. The only thing the other *aropagoinya* know of the Ishkarat's headquarters is that it lies on Lake Vors, for anyone not of the *aropagoi* is condemned to immediate execution if discovered in the city. Members of the Ishkarat generally keep to themselves, though members of associated crew covenants seem to be the usual gregarious group. Apparently, the only people who ever see or talk to the *Shivalahala* Ishkarat are members of the central foundation, and members of that select group become very surly if asked to discuss her. As a word of warning, I would mention that the most dangerous swordsmen on the length of the Serpent River are Ishkarat *aropagoinya*.

On Unique Items of Trade

My people practice many crafts and support several industries peculiar to our way of life, producing goods that command premium prices in the river trade. For those people in Barsaive who are not familiar with my people's skills and craftsmanship, I will describe a few of the more interesting and unique items created by the t'skrang.

Fish of Unsurpassed Delicacy

As I mentioned, t'skrang foundations catch fish by stringing mazes of nets between their domes. From there the fish are sent for processing with a secret combination of spices and magic, packed carefully in layers of reeds and preservative oils, then sealed in pottery or baskets for transport. The result is among the finest delicacies available in Barsaive, and with proper care the fish will last for months without spoiling.

As fish are the most profitable of our trading goods, we t'skrang take our fish recipes quite seriously. Revealing the secrets of a village's recipes is one of the few crimes punishable by the death penalty among our people. The t'skrang tell a story that one Overgovernor of Sky Point, a gourmet of great renown, became so enamored of the little yellowtail fish prepared by the Sokriosh village that he sent a raiding party to capture their cooks. After a short siege, Therans breached the village's defenses and enslaved the whole community. When one of the Theran crew let slip the purpose of the mission on the voyage back to Sky Point, the captives immediately launched a desperate, bloody rebellion. When the Therans finally put down the revolt, they were dismayed to discover that the first captives to die had been the cooks, who had preferred to take their secrets to the grave rather than divulge them under interrogation to the Therans.

Spices of Great Diversity

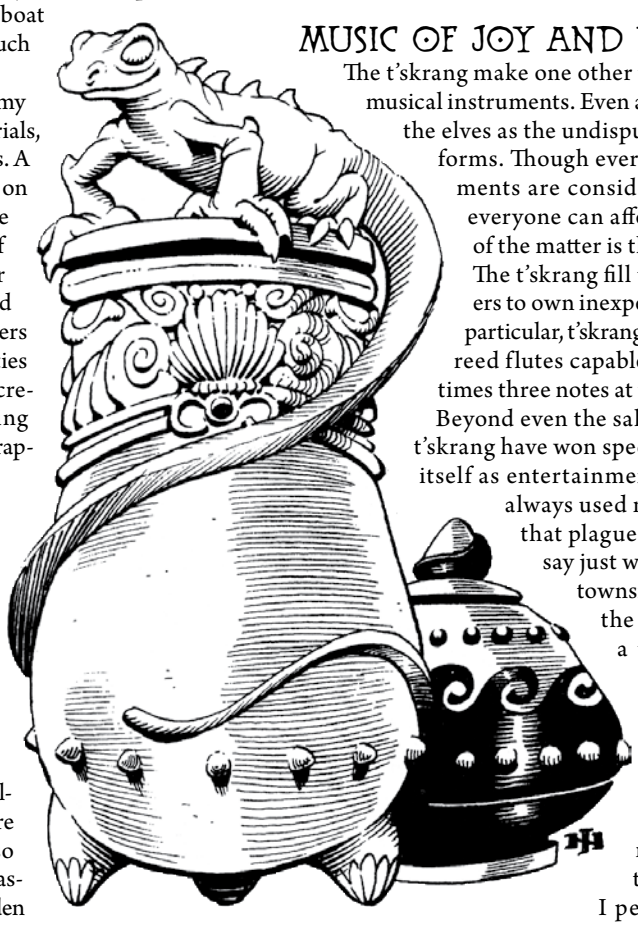
The t'skrang cultivate many of the spices necessary to prepare their fish in the fertile mud of the protected area between a village's towers. These same spices have other uses as well. The people of Barsaive are just rediscovering the virtues of t'skrang spices for their medicinal and curative powers. In many cases, however, the spices one buys from a t'skrang merchant represent mixtures of several compounded herbs and often require many intermediate preparation steps to

reach their final state. Indeed, two of the best-selling spices on the river, *d' janduin* and *kuratai*, provide a subtle variety of flavors and various side effects, depending on the village that made them. In the interest of maintaining an absolute monopoly over this facet of their trade, t'skrang rarely, if ever, sell unprocessed spices.

Rope of Incomparable Strength

Used for everything from kite string to ship hawsers, t'skrang rope is considered the best money can buy. Unfortunately, some t'skrang rope makers take advantage of this reputation to sell second-rate merchandise. Because ropes play such an important role in our society, whether for rope swings, boat lines, or netting, we t'skrang have had much practice in the making of rope.

Our many uses for rope have inspired my people to experiment with various materials, braiding styles, and even enchantments. A type of magical rope made exclusively on the Serpent River is *clingor*. As the Name suggests, this type of rope sticks to itself when commanded to, allowing the user to form perfect loops around poles and posts. Riverboat crews and mountaineers alike appreciate *clingor's* unique properties in their everyday work, but also for recreational *clingor* throwing contests during off-hours. And occasionally to use as a grappling hook or whip.



Basketry of Exceeding Cunning

Few people realize that more than fifty varieties of reeds grow along the Serpent—and the t'skrang have a word for each one. We weave reeds into countless shapes and sizes, creating many of the containers, utensils, and other items needed to make our lives easier. Many cultures in Barsaive use our baskets to store solid objects, but the t'skrang have also mastered the art of weaving watertight baskets. Lighter and more resilient than wooden barrels, these baskets keep food, wine, and ale safe from spoiling. Our weavers bring great skill to their art, weaving beautiful patterns into their creations by varying the texture and color of various types of reeds.

Fine Instruments of Writing

Our artisans also weave reeds into paper. Because it is so durable, t'skrang paper has become the standard for Barsaive's magic-wielders, though the finest paper in the land still comes from the reeds that flourish in the Mist Swamps. The same craftsmanship that produces watertight baskets is also used to create water-repellent paper, and a scroll made of t'skrang paper will last more than a month underwater without disintegrating or losing the ink inscribed on it.

Naturally, water-resistant paper is of little value unless used with inks that will not smudge or run. In another example of certain villages dominating the market, several t'skrang villages specialize in extracting the base for such inks from the glands of certain fish, creating a unique product with a large demand.

The folk of Sessipau village long ago discovered a way to make certain inks invisible except under special circumstances—for example, when the paper is soaked in blueberry juice or only under the light of a full moon. These conditions may seem frivolous, but, in truth, it was invisible ink which allowed House V'strimon to safely exchange diplomatic letters with the dwarfs of Throal during the Theran War.

Some of the finest products the t'skrang manufacture from reeds are pens. At the very moment of this writing, I am using a remarkable pen made by House Syrtis. The tip of the pen will last a year and a day, and the inkwell is built into the reed to provide a constant flow of ink to the tip. I have never used a better writing instrument in all my days, and I recommend it highly to the scholars who will doubtless someday be forced to copy this scroll ten times over.

Music of Joy and Profit

The t'skrang make one other type of trade item from reeds: musical instruments. Even as a Troubadour, I must bow to the elves as the undisputed masters of music in all its forms. Though everyone knows that elven instruments are considered the finest available, not everyone can afford to own one, and the heart of the matter is that music belongs to everyone. The t'skrang fill the basic need of all Namegivers to own inexpensive, tuneful instruments. In particular, t'skrang craftsmen create extraordinary reed flutes capable of expressing two and sometimes three notes at the same time.

Beyond even the sale of musical instruments, the t'skrang have won spectacular success selling music itself as entertainment. The riverboat crews have always used music to fill the tedious hours that plague any long voyage. No one can say just where or when it began, but the townsfolk in some community along the river's edge must have heard a t'skrang crew playing, and lured them off the boat with the promise of money. Today, some villages do only minimal trading, instead sending their riverboats to give performances in exchange for money or goods in town after town along the river.

I personally organized the first showboat for House V'strimon, which to this day remains one of the most profitable ships in the *aropagoi*.

Pottery of Beauty and Use

The deep mud of the Serpent River's bottom contains rich deposits of elemental earth that t'skrang potters use to create unique and wondrous things. These skilled artisans incorporate small quantities of this precious substance into their raw materials to make sturdy plates and cups that will stay warm for hours, lidded urns that do not shatter, and spouts for watertight baskets. The t'skrang also have developed unusual crockery that remains cool to the touch on the outside yet hot enough to cook food on the inside.

It is said that the obsidimen taught the t'skrang the art of working with glass in return for a quantity of elemental earth. I do no know whether the obsidimen still fashion art and other objects from glass, but certainly the t'skrang are still among the most serious practitioners of the art. One of the few t'skrang land caravans that operates on a regular schedule belongs to House K'tenshin, whose hardy prospectors scour the shores of Death's Sea for the rare pearlescent sand deposits that give K'tenshin porcelain its characteristic luminescence.

Art of Elemental Nature

The greatest source of pride for t'skrang artisans, and deservedly so, lies in their renowned elemental art. Statuettes carved of elemental water, bead necklaces that change shape and color as the wearer moves, spiral-shaped bracelets that flow up and down the wearer's arms—all these are marvels of t'skrang skill. Villages that have lost their riverboat to piracy, mutiny, or accident often manage to sustain themselves by selling and trading such jewelry. Whenever possible, Great Houses offer such villages full membership in the *aropagoi* as *krohyin*, or trade covenants.

On the T'skrang Love for Art

While t'skrang take craftsmanship quite seriously, art stirs their souls. Indeed, t'skrang accord to fine art a reverence that is akin to the spirit of *haropas*, or communion with the Passions. Such artwork so affects the t'skrang that we enshrine the finest examples and dedicate them to the Passions. Beloved tales speak of riverboat crews who, in the course of a trade mission, discover a statue, painting, tapestry, magical talisman, or some other work of such arresting beauty that they do whatever is necessary—even to the point of selling everything on the boat—to bring it home to their village. Other common tales describe crews risking life, limb, and ship to steal objects of beauty and wonder from their rightful owners. It is quite true that t'skrang sometimes hold an unusual notion of ownership.

If anything good can be said to have come of the Scourge, the truly impressive leaps forward in complexity and craftsmanship of artistic endeavors would be that thing. When the citizens of Barsaive decided that the mental focus and creativity needed to create a work of art provided proof that a person had not been corrupted by the Horrors, their artistic efforts not only proliferated but reached unexpected and wondrous levels of skill and beauty. Even the simplest, most utilitarian items are created with a careful eye to detail. But beyond mere intricacy, the t'skrang appreciate the artful combination of elegance and utility. In fact, a shared taste for beauty in functionality may be one of the keys to the successful commerce between t'skrang and dwarfs.

Where other races believe that the person who makes a new and original object in some way holds special rights to profiting from his creation, the t'skrang find no shame in faithfully copying another artist's work as long as the final product is well crafted and beautiful. As might be expected, this has led to some ill will between master artisans of other races and the admiring t'skrang who copy their work. When a t'skrang sees something in the world that pleases his eye, he is as likely to try and copy it as he is to offer to buy it. And the object's creator usually becomes further outraged when the t'skrang begin large-scale production of their work.

One example of the strain this can cause is clearly illustrated in the case of the earthenware necklaces known as "shapeshifters." A human Named Erin Laszlo of the riverside town of Tansiarda claims that his family has been fashioning elemental earth into ever-changing jewelry for three generations. He made the mistake of demonstrating the secret of these necklaces to the captain of a riverboat from House Ishkarat whose hobby was elemental magic. Two years later, an Ishkari trade covenant began producing a thousand of these trinkets each year. Today, Erin Laszlo no longer earns enough to feed his family because the Ishkari flooded the market and drove down the price for this jewelry. No doubt King Varulus and his legal system could sort out this dilemma, but not without interfering with Ishkari profits—and declining profits are exactly the sort of thing that keeps riverboat captains from supporting the widespread adoption of Throal's laws.

On the T'skrang Beyond the Serpent River

Over the past century, the t'skrang have spread far afield from the banks of the Serpent, joining communities all across Barsaive. It may surprise the reader to learn that the loudest supporters of Throalic influence in Barsaive are these t'skrang foundations thriving in Barsaive's towns and trading posts. T'skrang, more so than other races, readily recognize that trade controlled by the Theran Empire would be lopsided and barely profitable.

Most every town in Barsaive founded since the end of the Scourge possesses a t'skrang area. Humans unfairly complain that town t'skrang cluster together too much and refuse to live among their fellow races, but other races usually do not understand that our large, extended families virtually require communal living arrangements. Town t'skrang tend to live in dwellings connected like rabbit warrens and centered on the hatcheries and the gathering circles. If the town lies near a river or lake, the t'skrang will build their homes as close as possible to the shore, using stilts to extend their homes over the surface of the water when allowed. If the town lacks open water, the t'skrang often take to the trees, sometimes collaborating with windlings to build truly remarkable dwellings. Where the forest meets the river's edge at Axalalail on the Coil River, the t'skrang and the windlings have created one of these astounding structures and Named it the Swinging City. More than one elf has expressed a grudging wonder at its beauty.

The town t'skrang have introduced the other Namegivers to many new enterprises. The very idea of what we call a trisnari, an inn that provides food but no rooms for guests, was enough to send most folk into gales of laughter. Despite this initial reaction, t'skrang trisnari now command a loyal following in larger towns, and many humans seek advice on establishing such businesses for themselves. It was t'skrang engineering that first dammed streams and set that power to work milling seed to flour. And, of course, the idea of the "covenant share," where all who help create a community's profit share in that profit, has spread from the foundations into the mines and merchant caravans, opening up the possibilities of entirely new methods of business and trade.

My impression of town t'skrang is that, as a group, they seem less high strung than their compatriots on the river. In the towns, our race's emphasis on *jik'harra* and *p'skarrot* gives way to acceptance and cooperation. Some *aropagoinya* claim that t'skrang grow soft with city life, but their words are little more than beating a shield with one's spear. We survived the Scourge, and now less action and more introspection might do our race some good.



Jik'harra and p'skarrot are two of the four aspects that comprise the t'skrang concept of haropas, or communion with the Passions, or enlightenment. The author describes these in detail as part of that discussion.

—Thom Edrull



On Those T'skrang Known as the Pale Ones

The tributaries of the Serpent River flow from sources deep within the heart of the mountains of Barsaive. As with all parts of the Serpent, t'skrang live on these underground rivers. Known as the Pale Ones, these t'skrang shun the light of the sun and have never tasted the wind. Their Name describes the tone of their skin, which is much lighter than the range seen among other t'skrang.

Some have silvery scales like a fish, others actually glow with luminescence. Many legends say that their huge popeyes are blind and that they use other senses to "see," but I have met the Pale Ones myself, and I assure you that their vision is as keen as any dwarf's in the dark. They also rely on their extraordinary sense of taste for information about their surroundings by rapidly flicking their long forked tongues in and out of their mouths.

The dwarfs consider the Pale Ones something of a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the Pale Ones' boats and extraordinary knowledge of the underground waterways provide dwarf miners with readily available transportation for their ores. On the other hand, the dwarfs' endless quest for new veins of minerals inevitably invades the Pale Ones' territory, arousing bitter hostility toward the dwarfs. Tribes of Pale Ones often wage hidden, vicious wars against those same mining dwarfs for whom they have been providing transport services.

Like the dwarfs, my own reaction to the Pale Ones was decidedly mixed. Throal requested a legate from House V'strimon to negotiate with a group of underground t'skrang living near Razhikhul. I do not recall how my Name came up before the Council as a candidate for the task, but I'd had a falling out with the *shivalahala* over some triviality shortly before, and I was inconveniently close at hand. I spent two lightless months lost in the mines of Razhikhul (dwarf guides notwithstanding) before we caught even a glimpse of a Pale One. By that time, of course, they considered me guilty of dwarf sympathies by association. The next day, following a merry, night-long game of hide-and-seek, I found myself a bound captive in the Pale Ones' camp, my erstwhile dwarf retinue roasting over a fire in preparation for the forthcoming victory feast.



No other legends or firsthand accounts we have collected concerning the pale race of t'skrang so much as hints that they eat other Namegivers. I suspect our author was delirious with pain from an injury, or suffering the effects of some herb or potion used by these underground t'skrang, or that the roasting was a type of torture.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

When the Pale Ones capture a t'skrang from another tribe, they will, by custom, set him free if he can spin a tale that no one among them has heard before. They say that every t'skrang loves a good story, but my task was not so easy as it first appeared.

Accomplished Troubadour though I am, I was unable to find a tale that someone among the audience could not finish. The Pale Ones may live forty leagues beneath the surface of the earth, but they know their legends. The War Against the Elves, the Breaking of the Earth, the Old Man of the Nets, the Founding of Thera, the Coming of the Horrors—all these tales they knew by heart.

Just as I despaired of finding a story they did not know, the perfect solution came to mind. I made up a tale out of whole cloth, relating details of the voyage of Vaare Longfang and the fate of her ship the *Earthdawn*. The tale won me my freedom, and incidentally, in the light of day the same song won me first prize at the Lernaean bardic contest. But this is all somewhat off the sweep of the current! I so impressed the Pale Ones with my tale of the fall of the *Earthdawn* that they insisted I must meet their king. They took me down the deep watercourses that run through the depths of the mountains of Throal in their boats, which are themselves marvelous affairs. These craft float on inflated, watertight bags that the Pale Ones fashion from the dried intestines of a subterranean creature they call *iyoshkira*. It must be that they cure these skins in a way that makes them tough enough to resist puncture, because the floats held up even when I tried the sharp edge of a sword against them. Using the bones of the *iyoshkira* as a frame for the boat, the Pale Ones stretch tightly woven mats across the frames to make a raft. These t'skrang rely on their knowledge of the currents to take their boats where they want to go, but willingly jump into the water and tow their raft by swimming when necessary.

Far below the Throal Mountains, deeper even than the dwarfs have yet delved, the underground rivers drain into a system of vast caverns to form lakes and seas. The Pale Ones call this place Shuss Halima, which roughly translates as "glittering home." The glitter refers to the light given off by a phosphorescent moss that flourishes in the warmth and humidity of the caverns.

I have never seen a stranger place in the world, for all manner of flora and fauna thrive there, the likes of which I could barely have imagined—plants with leaves colored every hue but green, mushrooms that grow tall as trees near the water's edge, and fish that burn like fireflies moving under the surface of the water.

The greatest surprise of my journey to the glittering caves, however, was the discovery that the king of the Pale Ones was no t'skrang! My escort maneuvered our craft out to the center of a brightly lit lake where the king held his court. The walls of the cavern all around the lake shore were carved into homes for the Pale Ones, and the place rang with the bustle of busy t'skrang and darting boats. As we waited patiently in the center of the lake, a fleet of boats sailed toward us, each laden low to the water line with food.

Suddenly, our raft pitched uneasily, the waters churned, and less than ten feet away surfaced the head of a dragon, its jaws alone large enough to swallow every boat present in a single gulp. This was Earthroot, King of the Pale Ones. My audience was mercifully brief.

Though most legends tell that dragons loathe the water, I suspect

this one arranged his lair underwater because it was the only way to support his immense weight. Earthroot is quite fond of fine foods, and his court is less preoccupied with governance than with the provisioning and feeding of their king. Apparently Earthroot protected the Pale Ones from the Horrors during the Scourge, and so the t'skrang treat him with worshipful respect. He seemed most amicable for a dragon, and I did more than merely survive my encounter with him—I extracted certain concessions from him regarding the dwarfs, allowing me to fulfill my mission and the Pale Ones to return me to the land of the sun.

Our scholars have given this tale careful scrutiny, as it contradicts many commonly held theories and beliefs about dragons. As with most matters, however, the whole truth remains elusive.

—Jerriv Forrim

Of the T'skrang Who Fly

On rare occasion, a hatchling is born with a thin membrane, which we call the *k'stulaa*, that stretches from wrist to hip on each side of his body. During the Scourge, the women tending the hatchery considered such a birth a bad omen for the foundation, and for very simple reasons. Children of the *k'stulaa* become completely unmanageable when they enter *kaissa*. They think only of flight and the promise of the open sky and lose the ability to speak our language. It is very strange to see a t'skrang at a loss for words! During the Scourge, when no one was permitted to leave the village domes, many *k'stulaa* went mad locked up in the kaers.

My fifth hatchling was *k'stulaa*. Other than having an unusual advantage when swinging on the ropes of our dome, Gamal was very much the same as any other hatchling. Sometime during her eleventh year, however, she began to change. Instead of performing her assigned tasks for the village, she would be discovered on the roof of a village tower. Neglecting her chores won her nothing but punishment, but the disciplining she suffered only made Gamal more distant and unapproachable. One day the sentries fished her out of the river after she had jumped from the tower in an attempt to fly.

No sooner had she healed from her injuries but she tried again. I tried to find a post for her on a riverboat as a *khamorro* in hope that the usual distractions from *kaissa* would help her, but no crew would take her. No one quite knew how Gamal survived her fourth fall, but witnesses say she leveled into a glide after checking her fall with her wings, only to crash headlong into a neighboring tower. After that, we were so afraid that she would die in the attempt to fly that we kept her virtually imprisoned in the village. She became violently ill, then forsook speech altogether and began to twitter and whistle like a bird.

At my wit's end, I implored an old comrade in arms, a windling Named Jennalee, to teach Gamal to fly. A few days under Jennalee's tutelage settled Gamal down dramatically, and we even managed a brief conversation, though it consisted mostly of Gamal babbling uncontrollably about the joys of flight. Jennalee called Gamal's obsession the "flight passion;" apparently many young windlings experience a similar phase as a youngster.

A few weeks into Gamal's "training," Jennalee suggested that the three of us take a trip to the southern spur of the Throal Mountains. Though Gamal could successfully glide for long distances, she was as yet unable to take off from the ground under her own power, and Jennalee guessed that the mountain heights would provide the perfect remedy for Gamal's insatiable flight passion. I was so impressed with the changes in Gamal since my friend had taken her in charge that I arranged passage on the next boat going upriver.

Gamal herself made an extraordinary impression on the crew of the *Waverider*. Each day of our journey, she would soar off the top deck under Jennalee's guidance. Most t'skrang are terrified by the idea of flight, and Gamal's relentless, exuberant pursuit of the experience made the crew believe that the child possessed a heroic measure of *jik'harra*.

When we left the river and headed into the mountains, I agreed with the crew. Jennalee would scout ahead in the mornings for a nearby pinnacle or cliff, then Gamal and I would follow her up outrageously difficult terrain. No sooner would we reach the top than Gamal would run and throw herself over the precipice. Standing a safe distance from the edge, I would struggle against dizziness and even vertigo to watch Gamal find her wings and rise toward the clouds. I cannot lie to you. Never once did I feel the least desire to join Gamal, to hang poised between earth and sky, but her limitless joy made me believe that this was what the sages meant when they said, "*Haropas* resides in the heart that embraces every fear and every passion."

Near sunset of our fifth day in the mountains, the *k'stulaami* entered our camp. Each of the strangers was a t'skrang with the *k'stulaa*, and they had tattooed their wingflaps with intricate patterns and pictures in a way that bore a striking resemblance to the decorations on the robes of a magician. At first, they said very little, but after sharing our evening meal, they began speaking to Gamal in the same birdlike language that she had used when confined in the domes. The next day, they led us to a well-used footpath that climbed one of the highest mountains in that region. The path soon narrowed to a precarious ledge along a frightening precipice that curved away out of sight. Afraid to look down, we gazed at the sky, and could see what appeared to be a family of eagles circling majestically in and out of the clouds.

As we rounded a bend in the path, we entered the cliff dwellings of the *k'stulaami*. The home of these winged t'skrang is carved deep into the face of a sheer cliff rising thousands of feet high. The *k'stulaami* need take only two steps out their front door and they have launched themselves into thin air. Several hundred of them lived in this place, but it seemed large enough for a city of several thousand. Our guide introduced me to a wizened t'skrang woman who called herself the *Shivalahala* Sesslakai. She said that before the Scourge, hers was one of the Great Houses of the t'skrang, the House of the Spirit Wind. With the coming of the Horrors, however, the *aropagoi* had dwindled, for her house depended on the people of the river to send *k'stulaa*-born hatchlings to their mountain citadel.

The *Shivalahala* did not yet know that the Scourge was ended, for Sesslakai *Aropagoi* had never acquired one of the elemental clocks that signaled the retreat of the Horrors back to the infernal domain from which they came. Our visit, therefore, proved to be an occasion for great celebration. Jennalee and I received a hero's welcome as the bearers of glad tidings and were sent off with more gifts than we could possibly carry.

My dear Gamal, of course, stayed with the *k'stulaami* in their cliff dwellings, and no doubt is there still, tossing herself off the edge of the world with nothing but a scrap of skin between her and a steep plunge to the ground. I still shudder to think of it, but what's a *chaida* to do? Hatchlings grow up, you know.

Since the time this account was written, several of the river aropagoi and some merchant companies in Bartertown have established trade covenants with the House of the Spirit Wind.

—Ardinn Tero



Of the T'skrang Who Live in the Jungle

Under the green canopy of the Servos Jungle live tribes of t'skrang who remain close to their origins. For the jungle t'skrang, there are no crew covenants, no riverboats. Their domes are huts made of mud and sticks, half-submerged in the shallow waters of the Serpent's tributaries.

They struggle to survive by hunting the jungle's most fearsome creatures with their stone-tipped spears. I know of no other people in Barsaive, except perhaps the Tamers of the Liaj Jungle or the Cathan of the Servos, who live in such a primitive state.

Their crude weapons do not prevent the jungle t'skrang from being accomplished hunters, and many of the finest hides and furs in Barsaive pass through the trading posts that the river t'skrang maintain in the jungle. As I may have mentioned before, the *Shivalahala* V'strimon has not always treated me with the greatest respect, and one particularly bitter argument landed me a tour of duty at a Servos trading outpost.

I remember that on the voyage downriver, the crew of the riverboat took perverse delight in telling stories about the jungle cannibals, how they sharpen their teeth on a whetstone, how they have a special knack for curing the hides of Namegivers. I spent most of the spring trading for a stack of hides, all the while wondering if one of them could have belonged to a t'skrang. That summer the Therans mounted the campaign for Travar, and the trading post was overrun by the Theran navy, as were most other civilized settlements on the Serpent below Lake Pyros. Much to my surprise, the jungle t'skrang opened their homes to those who had lost their shelter in the Theran action and found themselves homeless in the Servos. During my stay with the jungle t'skrang, I learned a deep and lasting respect for these people we are too quick to dismiss as mere primitives.

The domes of the jungle t'skrang are much smaller than ours on the great Serpent, but they make up in sheer numbers what they lack in size. The village of a hundred t'skrang where I and my companions found sanctuary contained more than forty-four domes connected by underground tunnels. Most married couples lived alone in a dome. The community used a central hatchery, but quite unlike the anonymity of motherhood in my foundation, the women of the jungle tribes personalize their eggs by painting them with patterns that identify the parentage of each egg.

We were able to follow the course of the Theran campaign throughout the summer by way of the drum signals the jungle t'skrang use to relay messages over long distances. Five feet in diameter, each drum requires three skilled musicians to create a proper message, and the drumming itself is complex and pleasing to the ear. The drumming constitutes an amazingly comprehensive language, and carries for miles through the humid jungle air. We could easily plot the exact numbers and locations of Theran troops throughout the jungle as signals converged from miles away in every direction.

Of course, sorting out and interpreting the signals was another art in itself, but I found the whole concept so intriguing that I was inspired to apply serious effort to learning as much as I could.



The idea of communication through music is also used by windling Wind-dancers, Troubadours who use their wings to create communications. This information lends further support to theories of greater similarities than differences between the races.

—Thom Edrull



The Theran troops rarely came near the community where I was living, but one day the drums told us that a Theran vedette had gone to ground about three miles beyond the river. Before I could suggest that my companions and I investigate the situation, the tribe's *lahala* called for a hunting party, and I quickly understood that the Therans were our prey. The end of the Scourge had brought the Therans of Sky Point out in force to scour the villages of the Servos in search for slaves for their domain. But Therans who commit the error of entering the Servos unprepared seldom leave the jungle alive.

Still, as our war party jogged through the dense jungle undergrowth toward the fallen airship, I doubted that forty t'skrang armed with primitive weapons and no armor could actually threaten the Overgovernor's trained soldiers. But by the time we reached our target, seven other equally large hunting parties had also arrived. The airship squatted in the jungle growth like a poorly engineered fortress, and the faces of the sailors manning the fire cannons all

along the decks clearly showed their terror. I remembered the stories of the riverboat crew, and wondered what tales the Therans might also have heard about the "jungle cannibals."

Rendered completely invisible by the lush vegetation, we crouched among the trees and waited. After a time, the Therans sent ten men and a brigade of slaves out to find fresh water. I expected simple, straightforward war tactics such as an immediate, full-strength attack from the jungle t'skrang, but instead they shadowed the supply party as it hacked its way toward a stream. A small team of t'skrang ranged out in front of the main body of our force, setting cunning snares that snatched the Theran soldiers one by one, but left the slaves unharmed. When only one sailor remained, forty hunters uttered shrill war cries in unison and swung out of the trees, sending the soldier back to his ship in a blind panic. We freed the slaves and gave each a spear, then returned to our posts out of sight of the ship and waited for nightfall.

While we waited, the jungle t'skrang gathered leaves and sticks and mosses and began to craft their battle masks. I felt tempted to laugh at the crude results of their labor, convinced that the leaves would fall into the Warriors' eyes, the sticks would catch on the surrounding branches and vines, and that the whole contraption would peel off their faces before the first exchange of melee. But as twilight crept through the trees and the weird sounds of the jungle's night-dwelling creatures swelled into full chorus, the Warriors slipped their masks over their faces, and it suddenly seemed to me that I was gazing not upon t'skrang, but upon the visages of hundreds of Horrors.

I have fought in battles before that one and since, and many times have I heard the screams and shouts of dying men. But never have I heard men's voices so filled with terror and despair as I did that night. The t'skrang spared a few Theran lives, for their own ends. A few survivors they dragged up the river, leaving them where a passing Theran patrol might pick them up a few days later. In my opinion, those survivors were surely as mad as any Namegiver touched by a Horror.

The events had turned my thoughts to the Scourge, and when we returned to the village I asked the *lahala* how her people had survived the time of Horrors without benefit of either a citadel or a kaer. She looked at me sadly and said only, "For us, the book of memory is closed. We do not speak of the time of darkness, nor can we reach beyond to the bright days that came before, except to say we bled and we wept, bled and wept."

The jungle t'skrang are indeed cannibals, my friends, but they do not hunt to eat. The foundation took those of their members who had fallen in battle against the Therans and prepared the bodies of those who shed blood at their dying for the feast. The whole tribe came to the victory feast and ate the flesh of their fallen sisters and brothers. Much to the horror of my companions, I joined the feast. As I ate, the shadows of the surrounding trees came to life, the sounds of the jungle took on meaning, and I felt a drumbeat as though the earth itself was stretched taut and some dark gods were beating upon it. The feasting gave way to a dance. The things that happened during the dance I will not describe here; songs were sung that I will not sing; and stories were told that I will not retell. I can only say, "We bled and we wept."

And that is all I will say about the jungle t'skrang. My memories of these members of our race hold my heart in a powerful grip that I will feel until the end of my days. Though I returned to V'strimon the next spring and begged the *shivalahala* to send me back to that tiny trading post in the Servos Jungle, I was sent instead to the court of King Varulus III in Throal, and I have never stepped foot in the jungle since.

On the T'skrang Love for Language

The t'skrang firmly believe that no other Namegivers love the spoken word as well as we do. The elves gave us the bardic tradition, of course, but where elves devote their most passionate efforts to poetry and philosophical discourse, we t'skrang more often wax ecstatic over trivial conversation, as long as wit and humor prevail. Dwarfs, being a taciturn lot, are fond of saying, "An elf will bore you to tears, but a t'skrang will talk you to death." Though I have never seen a dwarf die from listening to too much talk, I freely admit that my people often speak when silence would suffice.

Like most Barsaivians, the t'skrang embraced the ideals of the *Book of Tomorrow*, and so speak Throalic quite fluently. This greatly benefits our trade efforts, because at least half of Barsaive's population cannot even pronounce the complex sounds of T'skrang, much less muddle their way through our difficult syntax. During the Scourge, our language developed as many dialects as there are villages on the river, making our native tongue even more difficult for an outsider to learn. Still, we cling to the ancient racial language, even in our settlements above water and among other Namegivers. Certain concepts, such as *t'chai kondos* and *jik'harra* and *haropas*, simply fail to translate.



My people also retain our own written language, though we use the simpler dwarf script for everyday tasks. The T'skrang script consists of pictures and is an art form in itself. One can express distinct moods and subtle innuendo using the brush strokes of certain key characters in a phrase. Masters of T'skrang script often deliberately leave the exact interpretation of many words in a manuscript to the reader's imagination. From personal experience, I assure you it is no small feat to piece together the right words to an ancient spell from a t'skrang Elementalist's grimoire, especially with a hungry Horror knocking at your door.

Though fewer t'skrang know our written language than ever before, we can still take credit for the widespread use of two systems of notation. The first, our numerical system, greatly simplifies arithmetical calculations, and many people who trade with the t'skrang learn this system. Jen Damritsar Syrtis found a way to translate some of the classic t'skrang mathematical texts into Throalic using a limited set of the original t'skrang characters, a system we expect to continue to spread across Barsaive. Because our number system represents an important part of our culture, more adult t'skrang can use it than can read our texts.

Our method of musical notation, which is closely tied to our number system, makes it possible to easily and concisely write out multiple instrumental parts simultaneously. As a Troubadour, I admit that the elves originated formal musical notation, but their system can hardly be called either effortless or concise.

On Customs Peculiar to the T'skrang

All t'skrang, regardless of their physical location or lifestyle, share several customs collectively. Though Naming rituals, marriage rites, and death rites are common in other Namegiver races, the customs applied to tail etiquette are unique to my people.

Of Living in Harmony with a Tail

The t'skrang believe that all other Namegiver races must somehow have angered the Passions, which is how they come to be born without tails. Indeed, many foundations along the river maintain the ancient practice of cutting off the tails of individuals who commit minor acts of lawlessness. Such a mark no t'skrang can conceal, but it is an injury easily survived and soon recovered—our tails grow back after a year or so.

The reader might then think, quite logically, that the t'skrang consider all other people criminals. That is not so. We simply find it difficult, in fact, nearly impossible, to grasp what it would be like to be born without a tail. How does one run and keep one's balance without a tail for counterbalance? Without a tail to lean on, how does one rest feet weary of standing in one place? And why learn to swim unless one has a tail to sweep through the water and propel oneself forward? A tail is such a useful thing, yet others seem quite happy to be born without one. We have a saying, "The tailless hatchling nonetheless learns to walk."

Naturally, other Namegiver races have very little awareness of tail etiquette. In crowds, someone invariably forgets that our tails occupy the four to six feet directly behind us. Because a t'skrang's tail constantly moves, the offending fellow usually takes a swift jab in the ribs or a slap to the head, all because he's in too much of a hurry to be polite. Unfortunately, cities seem full of folk ready to start a fight on the slightest pretext, even over an involuntary reflex—a completely barbaric attitude, really.

Non-t'skrang must understand the most important principle of the tail: if a tail obstructs your way, never attempt to move that tail yourself. To "pull someone's tail" is to challenge a t'skrang to a formal duel, and enough high-strung t'skrang follow the Discipline of the Swordmaster to make taking hold of any t'skrang's tail a calculated risk. Furthermore, to be "handed one's own tail" means to insult a t'skrang beyond recourse or retribution. Both these considerations mean it is difficult to escape from a tail-holding situation without a fight. My advice to those who will listen: if a tail obstructs your way, ask the owner's pardon and wait for the tail to move of its own accord.

When a t'skrang's tail lies still, it is usually a sign of impending violence or other emotional distress. Indeed, one sure sign of a t'skrang who will kill casually and in cold blood is that the individual's tail remains relaxed and mobile right up until the moment he attacks. Beware such folk, for they are not completely right in the head.

A t'skrang who suddenly slaps his tail on the ground is amused, and dragging one's tail back and forth in the dust means one is tired. A t'skrang who comes to you holding his tail in his hands wishes to formally surrender. A t'skrang who points his tail at you from between his legs is making an obscene gesture. (I'll say no more, for children may someday read this.)

A t'skrang's tail never stops growing. As a result, the tip of the tail regularly becomes brittle and breaks off. This is not at all painful or a sign of ill health, for there is very little blood flow to the tip of the tail. In fact, a t'skrang can lose three or four feet of tail in combat and regenerate most of that length within a year.

A passerby in the city once stopped me to return a piece of my tail that had just fallen off in the crowd. I must admit that I had no idea what to say. Was I being "handed my own tail"? The fellow, a young dwarf by the Name of Ghizhon, seemed quite sincere in his concern for my loss. But I would hardly stop a son of man on the streets in the interest of returning to him a handful of his fingernail clippings. The best advice I can give you is to leave a fallen tail lie.

No t'skrang would consider this accounting of the tail complete without some reference to our race's fighting styles. The more bloodthirsty among us prefer to dwell on the martial advantages of the tail attack rather than attending to the social aspects of the tail I have described. As Warrior Shen Harsi once put it, "The tail is just another weapon," and for every crew covenant on the river there seems to be a school of the Warrior arts willing to use the tail a bit differently. For example, in the celebrated Ch'tard fighting form, the Warrior straps a four-inch knife blade to the end of the tail. Never stand behind a Ch'tard in a crowd, for he is likely to cut your throat without realizing his mistake. The Edo school focuses on strength and suppleness, and students of that style can use their tails like crude tentacles to grab stray ankles or weapons. The Skora wear special pieces of armor on the ends of their tails and use them almost exclusively to parry.

A t'skrang's tail serves as a source of pride and practical utility, and represents everything courageous and unique about the t'skrang. When an egg parent wants to brace a hatchling against anxiety or danger, he always says, *choth edo k'tan var,* which means, "Up tail, out of the mud!"

Of the Ways and Honors of Naming

An old t'skrang riddle states, "Before it starts, it has two. It then changes and picks three. Honored makes four but sometimes just one. What is it?" The answer is a t'skrang's Name. All t'skrang begin life with two Names, one chosen by their egg parent before the hatchling breaks its shell, and the second the Name of the foundation into which it is born. At *kaissa*, when the hatchling becomes an adult, it chooses its third Name. A t'skrang who earns the honor of entering an *aropagoi* gains a fourth Name. The honored t'skrang who undergoes *k'soto ensherenk* and becomes a *lahala* accepts the foundation's Name as her only Name.

Our personal Names may seem complicated to outsiders, but the Names we give our boats reach pinnacles of complexity. Once every twelve years, we honor the Passions by adding a new Name

to each riverboat's lineage. Though few riverboats survived the Scourge, we honor those earlier crews and their ships by giving their Names to newer riverboats. Because some of the resulting Names have existed for centuries, a formal reciting of a boat's Name may last nearly an hour. Some ship Names consist of nothing more than lists of the Names of famous captains, while others chronicle events in the history of the village. Others, when spoken, please the listeners' ears as poems and stories.

Another type of Naming ritual offers a way to honor the *niall* each year. Much to the misfortune of future generations, this ceremony, called the Yearsong, is rapidly fading from the traditions of our society. Couched in a highly formal bardic style, the Yearsong condenses into five lines of ten syllables each, the most important events that have occurred in a foundation over the course of a year. In winters past, the *lahala* chose one member of the foundation and honored him by asking that member to compose the Yearsong. The final version is sung on the first day of spring at the crew election. The *lahala* always memorizes the Yearsong, so that all future *lahalas* will know it through the ritual of *k'soto ensherenk*.

On the Reasons for Mating

Courtship and marriage play a small part in t'skrang society. It is far easier to say what marriage does not mean to a t'skrang than to describe its effect on his life. Because the t'skrang value every egg as a potential hatchling, we do not discourage coupling outside of marriage. And because we live from birth to death as part of an extended family, we need not marry simply to have a helpmate. Finally, because our political organizations create collective prosperity rather than personal power, there is nothing to be gained by arranging marriages between members of *aropagoi*.

To outsiders, t'skrang hatcheries and foundations seem to make marriage between members of our race unnecessary. They arrive at this conclusion quite naturally—people of one race who observe the rituals of another rarely understand the nuances. Astendar blesses each race in individual ways, and the t'skrang are no exception. Marriage offers a t'skrang the chance to create a hatchling in the women's every season as well as an opportunity to discover the joy found only in the most intimate emotional and mental relations between men and women.

Because our race suffers from an erratic fertility rate, it becomes very important for a man and a woman to couple each time the female's body creates eggs. Marriage makes such regular fertilization possible; an unmarried woman who comes into her cycle cannot feel so sure that her potential hatchling will have a chance to achieve life. Because t'skrang sexual urges are driven by the phases of the moon, a woman's cycle is fairly easy to predict, but even for the t'skrang, mating is a larger, more complex issue than the availability of the nearest male and female.

Frankly, it seems to me that human men will cheerfully go at anything with two legs and long eyelashes. Further, I am always surprised by how quickly humans conclude their business. I traveled with a long-married human couple while mapping the passes through the Tylon Mountains, and found their sexual behavior very illuminating. I watched their eyes meet over the evening campfire, exchanging what at first seemed cryptic glances (I later understood their meaning), followed immediately by them retiring to their tent. They would return to the fire a scant fifteen minutes later, smiling and flushed with exertion. For a t'skrang couple, reaching the stage of moving into the tent would take at least an hour, and they would remain there until sunup.

Coupling between two t'skrang takes place for a very practical purpose, and so, over the centuries, we have created elaborate rituals to reflect the special meaning the act has for our race. These rituals remind us each time of the great privilege and responsibility we carry for creating hatchlings, and allow us to periodically reaffirm our marriage relationships.

When a t'skrang couple marries, the husband leaves his foundation to enter the foundation of his wife. When possible, both foundations gather to celebrate the marriage ritual, though the t'skrang passion for travel often means that t'skrang from different villages and *aropagoi* meet and marry. In this case, each foundation celebrates separately, the man's foundation sending him off, and the woman's foundation welcoming the couple. A married couple then joins the extended family of the woman's foundation and shares the communal quarters.

Town t'skrang are currently experimenting with providing separate housing for families within a foundation while maintaining a central hatchery, and so far the system seems to be working. In my opinion, however, the immediate presence of an extended family is sometimes the only thing that can help a couple through a difficult patch in an unhappy marriage, of which the t'skrang have their share.

Of the T'skrang Rituals at Death

When a t'skrang dies, the foundation gathers to remember the dead. If he dies on the river, the crew performs the passing ritual. Presided over by the *lahala* or captain, depending on the circumstances, the passing ritual consists of each mourner telling a story about the deceased. Because the ritual allows foundation members to express their grief, no one judges the tales told, and no one censures those whose stories fall short of usual t'skrang standards. Some of the finest t'skrang stories ever told have sprung full-blown from the speaker's mouth during a t'skrang memorial service, the truth and fiction, humor and pathos of the tale welling up from the inspired heart of the mourner. The only rules governing events at the ritual are that one should tailor the length of one's tale according to one's intimacy with the deceased, and that all in attendance must speak.

When every member present has told a tale, we burn the body in elemental fire, place the ashes in a small paper boat, and let the current of the Serpent carry it away. The ritual ends when the *lahala* or captain pronounces the words, *amotla shivoam ga'nai*, which means, "down the river to the sea." The tiny boat carries the ashes to the end of the Great River to Death's Sea, where the Passions have imprisoned Death and the waters change to molten earth.

The death of a *lahala* is observed somewhat differently. Because *lahala* usually know the time and place of their own passing, they plan their own passing ritual and arrange for the *k'soto ensherenk* to transfer their ancestral memories to the next eldest female in the foundation. No one can say how the *lahala* know such things. Instead of the living spinning tales of the dead at the *lahala*'s passing ritual, the new *lahala* tells a story about each of the gathered mourners by drawing on the memories of her predecessor. The foundation then carries the old *lahala*'s body into the part of the *t'slashina* where the village grows its crops; here they bury the body in the thick mud of the river bottom.

I do not know why we honor the passing of the *lahala* in this fashion, but it may be to help the members of the foundation to understand and accept the passing of the Honored One, and to reinforce the cyclical nature of life.

A Discourse on the Subject of Haropas

Haropas is the word the t'skrang use to describe a state of being in complete communion with the Passions—and even that definition fails to create an accurate idea of the concept. In his own attempt to clarify the meaning, Mitlas of Kratas translated *haropas* as "purity," but mankind's idea of purity is more unyielding and self-righteous than any philosophical view the t'skrang would accept. One thinks of questors as pure, for example,

dedicated to a single Passion. *Haropas* allows us to embrace all the Passions at once, taking us outside ourselves and the present moment to experience something more. Obsidimen use a word that we can neither pronounce nor write to describe an apparently similar concept, and they seem satisfied with the word "enlightenment" when speaking of this experience with other races. Perhaps *haropas* is the t'skrang path of enlightenment, and perhaps not.

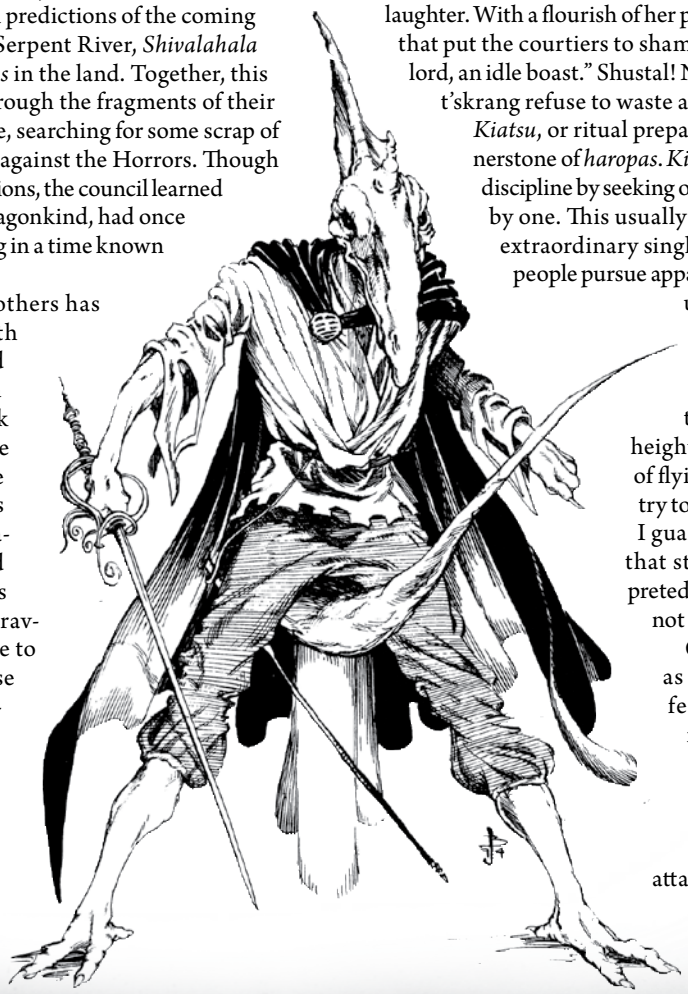
The t'skrang base their notion of *haropas* on four more fundamental ideas: *jik'harra*, *kiatsu*, *p'skarrot*, and *kyaapas*. Loosely translated, these mean fearlessness, discipline, measure or destiny, and balance. As these are the four cornerstones of the t'skrang view of life, I shall at least attempt an explanation.

The t'skrang word *jik'harra* was originally translated by the dwarfs as "bravado." As the general understanding of bravado relies on the idea of pretense, of a mere show of fearlessness, this translation is unfortunate. Indeed, from an outsider's point of view, the bluster, swagger, and headlong recklessness of a typical t'skrang riverboat crew member must seem absurd. The actual meaning of *jik'harra* is quite different. Breaking the word down into its component parts, *ji* means courage and *k'harro* means the heart, but we also use *k'harro* to describe the Passions. Thus, *jik'harra* means a courageous heart, a brave passion. To live according to *jik'harra*, all t'skrang must strive to live beyond the reach of fear.

Most Barsaivians believe that the effortless, almost casual devastation the Horrors caused during the Scourge should have made it more difficult, if not impossible, for the t'skrang to embrace *jik'harra* and live beyond fear. Yet many say that the years spent in hiding made my people more fearless, not less. The lessons humankind learned from the Scourge make the foolish bravado of the t'skrang seem sheer effrontery. The t'skrang, of course, know the truth of how we survived the Scourge with our *jik'harra* intact.

As the tale goes, when the Theran predictions of the coming Horrors reached the banks of the Serpent River, *Shivalahala* Syrtis called together all the *lahalas* in the land. Together, this Great Council of *Lahalas* sifted through the fragments of their collective memories of the First Age, searching for some scrap of knowledge that would help defend against the Horrors. Though this effort failed to produce any solutions, the council learned that the race of Firebrothers, the dragonkind, had once before come to the aid of the t'skrang in a time known as the Spreading Fear.

Asking for aid from the Firebrothers has ever been a proposition filled with risk, and one unlikely to yield many rewards. Keeping this truth in mind, but determined to seek help from any possible source, the Council at Syrtis fashioned twelve riddles to both entertain the dragons and glean from them the information the Council desired. Armed only with these pleading questions disguised as riddles, emissaries traveled to dragon lairs across Barsaive to learn what they could. Few of these ambassadors returned to their foundations, and only one returned bearing a message. The Esteemed Suthparalans answered our cry for help with a cryptic message known as the Thirteenth Riddle of Suthparalans. It states, "The Horrors know what you most fear—do you, 0 river daughter? The river cannot hide you, the Therans cannot bind you, the kaers cannot hold you. What is left for you, courageous heart?"



The answer to this riddle reveals a closely held secret. The kaers and citadels were built to keep the Horrors out, but could never have held a restless t'skrang within. Further, we saw no way to alter our river-bottom homes to withstand such a siege and still provide the fresh air and food needed from outside.

The Council solved the great riddle, and the dragon Suthparalans taught them magical rituals that allowed us to hibernate throughout the dark centuries of the Scourge. These rituals, and the Theran *Rites of Protection and Passage*, guaranteed that the t'skrang would survive the Scourge without being forced to endure centuries of confinement. When the Scourge ended, we woke from our slumber and, like many others across Barsaive, began to re-explore our world. While the vast majority of Barsaivians were forced to spend years cowering in their kaers and citadels, we t'skrang emerged unscathed, unchanged, ready to confront the Horrors, our *jik'harra* intact.

It is said that when the *Earthdawn* and its crew returned home to Throal after its first voyage, the ship carried the *Lahala* Desti-denvis and an embassy from V'strimon *Aropagoi*. When the *lahala* received an audience with the court of Varulus, the king immediately asked if the t'skrang had encountered the Horrors since emerging from their kaers on the river.

"I left V'strimon on the first of spring, and we had slain five by that time," said Desti-denvis.

The tale tells that the court fell silent as the deepest water, then Varulus laughed, a great dwarf guffaw from deep in his belly. "After all these years, still none can match the t'skrang for an idle boast or an impossible tale!"

The expression on the face of Desti-denvis was enough to curdle milk, and the entire court of Throal burst into embarrassed laughter. With a flourish of her plumed hat and a sweeping bow that put the courtiers to shame, she replied, "As you say, my lord, an idle boast." Shustal! Nothing more need be said. We t'skrang refuse to waste a good tale on the skeptic.

Kiatsu, or ritual preparation, represents another cornerstone of *haropas*. *Kiatsu* forces a t'skrang to achieve discipline by seeking out and confronting his fears one by one. This usually helps explain to outsiders the extraordinary single-mindedness with which my people pursue apparently irrational acts. We often use swinging, climbing, and back flips to achieve *kiatsu*, not because such deeds are difficult, but because most t'skrang instinctively loathe heights and shudder at the thought of flying. If this seems unbelievable, try to coax a t'skrang onto an airship. I guarantee that unless you suggest that staying behind might be interpreted as an act of cowardice, you will not succeed.

Confronting one's fear takes as many forms as t'skrang have fears. A quiet, retiring fellow may sell goods in the marketplace to confront his fear of strangers. A homebody might undertake a long and perilous journey to dispel his attachment to familiar places and faces. T'skrang may be as fallible as the next race—much as it pains us to admit that

fact—and many a traveler on the road to *haropas* steps over the line from discipline to vanity.

The always present pitfall of vanity finds ample reinforcement in *p'skarrot*, the third cornerstone of *haropas*. Like most words in our language, *p'skarrot* has two meanings. The first is "measure," a word that applies to our food preparation and recipes to indicate ingredients added to taste. *P'ska nala p'skarrot* means "a little of this, a little of that." In a philosophical sense, *p'skarrot* represents the measure of the man. To take the measure of a man, however, one must compare the individual to something. In many other societies, the basis for comparison turns out to be someone, rather than something else—I am a greater man than he, but not so great as that other. T'skrang measure themselves by nothing less than the universe itself. The universe presents a challenge, and the t'skrang prepares himself to meet it. To be equal to that challenge—that is *p'skarrot*!

The second meaning of *p'skarrot* is "destiny," though the t'skrang view destiny in a different light than other races. The sons of man often speak of destiny in terms of divine providence, as if the Passions cared to plot men's lives on some etheric mandala board. The t'skrang believe that each man casts his destiny like a net into the waters. The events that befall us are like fish caught in the net: beautiful, nourishing, and sometimes strange.

For the t'skrang, building one's destiny requires craftsmanship. Woven well, the destiny net catches big fish. A man with a weak net goes hungry. Unfortunately, the necessary craftsmanship is often accompanied by a sense of self-importance that gets in the way of true learning. It is the current fashion among young t'skrang to choose a rival for life and then call the struggles against that opponent *p'skarrot*. Mind you, I realize that they borrowed this idea from the alleged ork custom of striving against a life enemy, but these hatchlings should not then insist that the tradition belongs to our ancestors. Further, I hear that many young t'skrang choose an elf as their rival, basing their choice on our epics of the t'skrang War Against the Elves. It's all piddlefinnegary in the first degree, I say! A specific someone offers far too little challenge to a t'skrang seeking the true meaning of *p'skarrot*; he must struggle against a larger, more impersonal force to truly achieve this aspect of *haropas*.

The fourth cornerstone of *haropas* is *kyaapas*, or balance. In this sense, *kyaapas* refers to the balance between the individual and society. T'skrang live in a communal society more tightly woven than any other in Barsaive. The qualities that make up *haropas*—discipline, fearlessness, and destiny—often conflict with close-knit clanishness. *Kyaapas* recognizes this natural tension and calls for balance.

The t'skrang must evaluate every moment of their lives for *kyaapas*, because the balance can change quickly. The last tale of Yustraa Piaan plainly illustrates this point. It is said that, disguised as a hunter and armed only with a hunter's bow and arrows, Yustraa Piaan traveled alone to his home after an absence of ten years. Upon arriving, he learned that during his absence his beautiful wife had been besieged by the attentions of some three dozen men, each of whom was eagerly awaiting her announcement of which one would take Yustraa's place in her bed. Yustraa went to greet his wife, but so changed was he by his journeys that she did not recognize her husband in the man standing before her.

Struck by this strange turn of events, Yustraa says, "My life has fallen out of balance. What power in the world can right it?" He returned to the great hall where the suitors were feasting, and fell upon them suddenly to avenge the dishonor they caused his wife. Soon his wife was cutting a path to his side, having realized that the stranger who had greeted her was actually Yustraa, her beloved mate. Everyone in the hall perished that day: the suitors, Yustraa, and his wife. Yustraa's fate is what t'skrang mean by the price of *haropas*. Communion with the Passions is not for the timid, my friends.



On the T'skrang and the Passions

Because *haropas* implies direct contact between the individual and the Passions, the Passions themselves figure prominently in t'skrang spiritual tradition. What does it mean to "commune" with a Passion? Ah, my friend, that is a question against which t'skrang philosophers have beat with their intellectual swords ever since first we learned the power of Namegiving; is it true communication, measured with words? When we achieve *haropas*, does the spirit of the Passion enter into us, as the questors believe, or do we rather enter the spiritual place wherein the Passions dwell? Indeed, if true *haropas* is communion with all the Passions, what use is there in trying to answer these questions at all? I do not suppose we will ever really know, but it makes for exciting discussions.

Every village keeps a shrine to each of the twelve Passions, usually in the oldest foundation dome. The village always keeps a small offering of food and drink on a table in each shrine in case the Passion should choose to visit, although I suspect the Passions require little in the way of sustenance. It is, I suppose, the intention that counts. Also within these shrines the t'skrang will place the most beautiful works of art they can find. As I have mentioned before, we believe that the feelings evoked by certain works of art originate with the Passions, so that collecting these works in shrines is only logical.

A village shrine is open at all times to all people, and even the smallest shrines enjoy considerable traffic. They are places for quiet introspection, and in the close confines of the village, a rarity indeed. Traditional ceremonies such as marriage, Naming, and the blessing of the annual riverboat journey are celebrated in the shrines, as well as the customary Barsaivian festival days dedicated to each of the twelve Passions. It is quite true that most t'skrang shrines still dedicate altars to the three mad Passions of Dis, Raggok, and Vestrial. The icons to these Passions we keep covered in black cloth, but we still remember them by their old

names: Erendis, Rashomon, and Vestrial. Their holy days are no longer celebrated, but on Midwinter's day, we gather to mourn their passage into madness.

The Passions upon whom the t'skrang most often call are Thystonius, Chorrolis, and Upandal. We name Thystonius the Guardian of *Jik'harra*. He fills the heart with valor and lends his strength to the battle-ready. Chorrolis, of course, is the Father of Trade, and before any riverboat leaves the dock, we ask for his blessing. Upandal aids all our efforts in building and repairing everything from crafts to fire cannons.

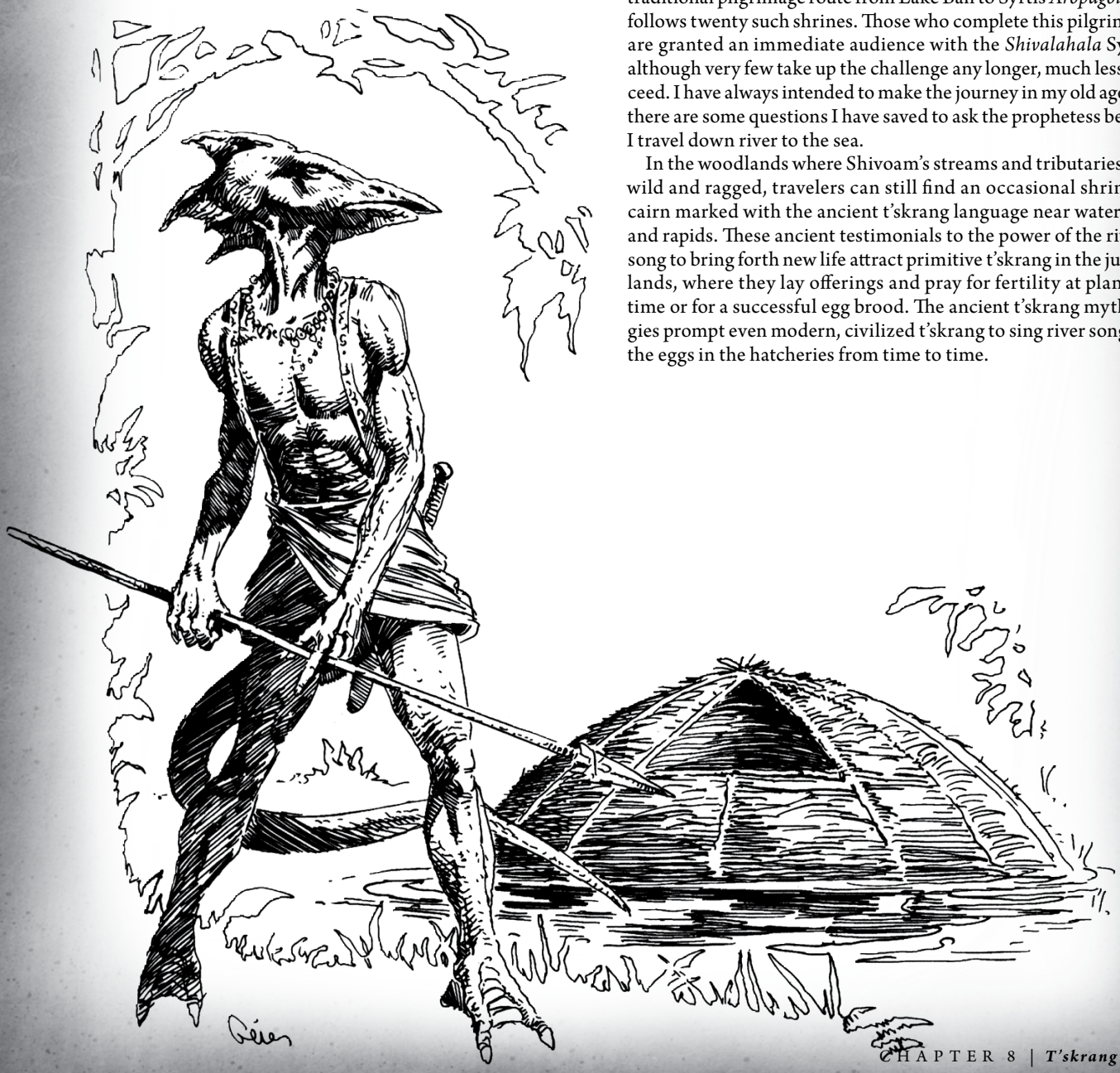
Very few t'skrang questors roam the world, probably because our stories and traditions portray the questor's single-minded dedication to a single Passion as an invitation to madness. Do not misunderstand; we share the Barsaivian reverence for questors, and no one dedicated to the Passions (saving of course the Mad Ones) is ever refused village hospitality. We simply do not encourage our hatchlings to become questors. Those t'skrang who do take up the questor's vestments nearly always choose Upandal, the Maker. The reason is quite simple: it was Upandal who gave the t'skrang the fire engine that drives our riverboats.

On the T'skrang Reverence for the Old Ways

The concept of *haropas* gives a special quality to the t'skrang relationship with the Passions. But underneath this abiding respect for the powers of the heart, t'skrang have also kept alive an ancient mythology and iconography based on the five elements. Though t'skrang acknowledge the worship of the Passions as a superior and more meaningful path, the old ways continue to surface from time to time, in oaths and superstitions, and in strange tales told late in the night. The t'skrang think of themselves as one of the elder races, along with the obsidimen, windlings, and dragonkind. They hold the other three elder races in the greatest esteem, especially the dragonkind. As proof of their great and old regard for the windling race, t'skrang will sometimes build their dwellings with windlings in forests near the river's edge. Their respect for the other eldest race shines through in the fact that the lore of every t'skrang *niall* advises that there is no truer companion in adventure than an obsidiman.

Some of the older villages along the river keep small shrines along the shore that protect huge footprints embedded in the mud of the Serpent. We call these places Founder's shrines, and maintain a traditional pilgrimage route from Lake Ban to Syrtis *Aropagoi* that follows twenty such shrines. Those who complete this pilgrimage are granted an immediate audience with the *Shivalahala* Syrtis, although very few take up the challenge any longer, much less succeed. I have always intended to make the journey in my old age, for there are some questions I have saved to ask the prophetess before I travel down river to the sea.

In the woodlands where Shivoam's streams and tributaries run wild and ragged, travelers can still find an occasional shrine or cairn marked with the ancient t'skrang language near waterfalls and rapids. These ancient testimonials to the power of the river's song to bring forth new life attract primitive t'skrang in the jungle lands, where they lay offerings and pray for fertility at planting time or for a successful egg brood. The ancient t'skrang mythologies prompt even modern, civilized t'skrang to sing river songs to the eggs in the hatcheries from time to time.



CHAPTER NINE

A TALE OF WINDLINGS

A great number of the writings we have collected concerning windlings, including the following text that begins Volume VIII *of this work on the denizens of Barsaive, were written by members of other races. Many windlings view the written word as merely a means for keeping trade records and other dry but necessary documents, and therefore not a fit medium for the story of a race. For such a lofty subject as what it means to be a windling, our small, winged brethren would prefer to compose an epic song or create a wondrously complex dance rather than reduce the tale to a written history. To begin this volume on windlings, we have instead chosen the writings of a troll Troubadour who has given us a surprisingly complete and perceptive portrait of the windling race.*

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

My Name is Chag Skat, Troubadour of the village of Donok, near the foothills of the Caucavic Mountains. I tell stories and sing songs for meat, bread, and sometimes coin—when folk can afford it. Being a troll, I tend to draw a crowd; most people can't quite believe that a troll musician exists, let alone a troll musician who's good at his craft.

But I am good at it, friend, and I'll tell you why: because I love it. I love wandering all over Barsaive, which is my own beautiful land as much as any other Namegiver's, and seeing all the wonders there are to see. Folk in Donok laughed at me or called me soft in the skull, but I wanted to see more than high mountains and hear more than deep troll voices all my life. Don't misunderstand me—I love my own folk as dearly as I love my life. But I love the world too, and everything in it. The Universe gave us a place full of variety to live in, and I say why waste it by staying home?

There is a point to all this blather about myself, in case you wondered. A good Troubadour always gives folk a little background to a story when they need it, and I thought plenty of folk might want to know why in the Name of the Universe a troll Troubadour would spend the greater part of a year living among windlings. I'll tell you why, friend. Because they're different, and I wanted to know about them. And now I do. And the Great Library of Throal even paid me a pretty sum to include my work in their great book about all the peoples of Barsaive! Me, a troll, whom too many ignorant folk might think has no more learning than a thornbush. I owe that to my friends in clan Lisvara. They're good folk, windlings. I like them. But I tell you, friend, I've never seen any folk so small in my life!

ON THE NATURE OF WINDLINGS

In my travels, I've met folk of every Namegiver race. Of us all, windlings are the smallest: tiny, winged, humanlike creatures with small, nimble fingers and sweet voices. The beauty of sunlight shining through their wings is truly a wonder to behold. Of course, being so small in a world made for larger folk (though not made quite large enough, if you ask me) turns everyday life into a challenge for these little ones in a way most other folk couldn't begin to understand. I understand a bit, from the opposite side of the coin, because trolls like me have to cope with beds and chairs too flimsy to hold us up, doorways so small that we bruise our shoulders and crack our heads, and so on. But even I find life easier than a windling might.

Go on, friend, imagine it just for a moment. See yourself reading my words in the Great Library of Throal, and wanting to read the next page. Imagine having to get up, fly over to the edge of the book (which is almost as big as you are), grab the edge of the parchment, and heave it up and over. Or imagine walking into a tavern at the end of a long, hard day on the road, desperate for a drink, and finding out that the tavern-keeper's smallest cup is so big that you can only heft it using both hands, and even then you're likely to bathe in your ale while trying to get some down your parched throat, eh, friend? That's the kind of challenge a windling faces every day, unless he stays home where things are his size. And that's why a windling likes nothing so much as a challenge. Some people might sulk and whine that the world wasn't made exactly to suit them. Not windlings. A windling takes it in his stride, and even prides himself on coming up with the cleverest or most amusing way to get around his difficulties.

To give you a bit of an idea of who windlings are and how they think, I give you the words of Woohrt, a windling Thief who stood me to several rounds of good, stout ale in a Kratas tavern. (Drank me under the table, as it happens. Never judge a windling by his size…)

"You amaze me, friend Chag. A grounder like you, taking such an interest in the ways of my people? Such curiosity— you might almost be a windling yourself! With wings as big as riverboat sails, of course … there now, don't scowl. I meant no harm. You know how my windling tongue likes to run away with me. If you will permit me, I shall salve your wounded feelings with another mug of ale. Wench! Another for my oversized friend … and a small glass of *keesris* for me."

"So you wish to know of windlings, eh? I will tell you the most important difference between a windling and any other Namegiver. We, my grounder friend, can fly. I know perfectly well that I have stated the obvious. I said it because most people never think what it means. A windling can fly—four little words that mean so infinitely much to our ways, our joys, our very existence as a people. Do you know why I call you grounder? In the windling tongue, the word is '*kooweesh*,' and it means a prisoner of the earth—a slave to the

kiss of the ground. You grounders cannot soar above the ground, as we can. We windlings can escape the bonds of earth. We can become a part of the air, seeing the world in a way that no one else can. Because we can fly, we have a kind of freedom that wingless folk can only dream of."

"When you fly, the earth beneath you and the sky above you change from moment to moment. Imagine the glory of flight, friend Chag—feel the wind rushing past your ears, playing gently with your hair like a lover's fingers, caressing every inch of your skin like a cool bath on a warm morning. Imagine the sky turning above you like a vast, blue wheel shot through with white clouds, as you spin and dip and soar and even turn somersaults to express your joy at the sheer beauty of the day. Imagine the land of Barsaive, stretched out below you like a tapestry—the emerald forests giving way to the tawny gold of the plains; the folds of the hills like patterns woven into rich, padded silk; the mountains rising like beads of jet or smoky topaz from out of the fabric of the whole. Imagine all that beauty, each picture changing by the moment into something even more beautiful and wonderful. Such is the life of a winding, my curious friend. Every moment brings its own beauty, and everything new is a wonder."

"We love anything new or interesting, even if it is also dangerous. Indeed, a little danger adds spice to life. Many windlings wander the world in search of the new and different, much as you are doing. (By the Universe, friend Chag, you could almost be a windling!) I have known windling wanderers who happened upon some other race's quaint custom, which so impressed their kin in the telling that the entire clan adopted the custom. Until, of course, a new and more interesting one came along to replace it!"

"A windling will try absolutely anything at least once, and count it worth the doing even if it hurts him. Many of our fellow Namegivers think us addle-brained for behaving so, but we are the ones that gain by it. You see, a windling learns more of the world by seeking new experiences and meeting new people—and the more we know of the world, the easier it is for us to survive its challenges. This world of ours, alas, was not made with the needs of small beings in mind. But you are a troll, and so you know whereof I speak. This world was not made for your folk, either."

"Friend Chag, you and I really do have an extraordinary amount in common."



On Windling Appearance and Anatomy

Anybody who's seen a windling knows what they look like, of course. Little folk they are, about the size of my forearm, with wings as delicate and fine as gossamer. Ever seen a leaf after a beetle's chewed through it and left only the veins of the leaf behind? Windling wings look a little like that. Like the veins of a leaf, but shimmering as if overlaid with spun glass. With their slender bodies and pointed ears, windlings look a little like elves. In fact, I've heard tell that some sages and scholars think windlings and elves are distant kin. I even heard some poor ork in a village marketplace sneer at a flock of departing windlings as "bitty elves with wings," at which point the windlings swarmed around the ork's head and thumped him soundly with small cudgels. Not that windlings have anything against elves, mind—they're just proud to be windlings and take offense at being called anything else.

Windlings can fly, of course, and they also have a keen sense of smell. I've seen windlings who could tell you what's in someone's pocket just from getting a good snoutful of the air nearby. I watched them for a full year, and I think they use that sense of smell to navigate through the air. Almost as if they smell what's in the way before they see it. (I'd like to see what happens if a windling with a head cold tries to fly!)

On the Unique Nature of Windling Sight

They can see perfectly well, of course. No trouble at all with a windling's vision. Matter of fact, they can see one thing that other folk can't: magic. Most Namegivers who want to see magic have to be Wizards or follow some Discipline much like Wizardry to do it. They've got to work hard, learning the right spells and all. But windlings are born seeing magic. They can see it as easily as I can see in the dark, or a human can see the nose on his face in a mirror. They see magic so easily because they're closer to it, more a part of it than any other folk. Of course, the magic of the world is in all of us; no one knows that better than me, who's been so many places and seen so many different sights. But the magic seems stronger in windlings, somehow. Maybe it's because they alone can touch the sky as well as the earth, and so they have two elements belonging to them, instead of just the one that most of us have.

Of Birth and Growth

A baby windling's a rare and wondrous thing, small enough to fit in the palm of my hand, wings and all. Windlings learn to fly at about ten days old, and by the time they've lived a year they're as clever as a three-year-old troll child or a five-year-old human. And can they get into mischief! Take the normal curiosity of the adult windling, then imagine it as three or four times as much. That's how curious windling children are. They can't keep their little hands out of anything, and the only thing that slows them down is the sheer fatigue of flying. Their parents don't say a word against them, no matter what they do. To their way of thinking, a curious and mischievous child is more likely to meet the world's challenges well, so windling parents encourage such behavior. Windlings also love children all the more because they have so few.

A windling comes of age at about his thirtieth year and usually chooses a mate before turning forty. Most windling couples have only one child during their entire lives, which can last as long as

170 years. Some have two children, but it's the rare windling pair lucky enough to have three. No one knows why. More males are born than females, and that, too, is still a mystery. Of course, most windlings don't bother their heads with the whys and wherefores of such things. They simply see these facts of windling life, like everything else: as a challenge to be met. They cope with their small numbers of offspring by caring for each one as though it belonged to them. As for all the extra windling males, the little folk have come up with an interesting mating custom that keeps down the number of mateless males. I'll tell more of that custom later on.

Female windlings can only conceive children for 20 days during the fall of the year, and they carry the babe for six months. All windlings are therefore born in the spring, within 20 days of each other. A carrying mother can fly as easily as any other windling until her fifth month or so. For the final month she stays home, lying in bed and reveling in being waited on hand and foot until the babe is born. Not just her mate waits on her, either. The whole clan plays along, as excited and happy about the coming birth as a t'skrang merchant who's just made his first profitable trade.

On How Flight Makes a Windling

As the Thief Woorht told me, flying is a windling's heart and soul. A windling unable to fly is a cripple, like a troll both blind and lame. In my year with clan Lisvara, I learned that flying makes windlings different from the rest of us in more ways than one. When a windling flies, he has to see in a special way. It's not enough to see the path ahead of him and the road behind; he also has to see what's above him, below him, and all around him. This way of seeing spills over into the way a windling thinks—instead of seeing only one or two sides to a question or problem, he sees three or four or even five. Some folk call windlings soft in the skull because they flit from idea to idea as fast as they fly from place to place. I tell you otherwise, friend. A windling sees much more, in more different ways, than members of any other Namegiver race. If you ask me, the rest of us could learn a thing or two from the windlings.



Though most windlings hide it well, flying tires them out as much as running or swimming might tire a human or an elf. Most windlings can fly easily for a quarter of an hour or so, but then must rest awhile before soaring away from the earth again. They like best to rest on the shoulders of larger Namegivers, getting comfort and company at the same time. Windlings who serve in local militias often use war dogs or large lizards as mounts, to keep from having to fly throughout a battle.

A windling's wings look more fragile than they are, which ought to surprise no one. Anything meant to carry a twelve or thirteen-pound body through an element as light as air needs to be tough. The one thing a windling wing can't stand up to is water. A wet windling wing gets heavy, making it harder to fly. Worse yet, the water softens the wing to the point where it might tear—and if that happens, the windling might as well forget about flying out of danger.

I saw what happened once to a windling whose wings got wet. He was flying too near a human village in a light drizzle that suddenly turned to a blinding downpour. A farmer's dog got the scent of him and started barking and snapping and slipped his rope just as the heavy rain started falling. The windling didn't have a chance. I shouted and threw stones, but the dog was on him in a heartbeat. The beast shredded the windling's wings to ribbons, then lost interest and left the poor creature lying in a twitching heap. I went to him, but all I could do was wrap him in my cloak so that he could at least die in a little comfort. I've seen some dreadful sights in my time, but that's the one that still gives me nightmares.

On the Ideals Dearest to Windlings

Those who know little of windlings often think them foolish, or even get angry because they do not understand them. "Why can't windlings take life calmly and let things be?" they ask. Why can't they act one way all the time, like other decent folk? Why can't they understand that life is a serious business? Why can't they ever keep still?

Well, friend, they have their reasons for being as they are, just as any other Namegiver does. A windling loves change, freedom, and feeling above all else. What's more, he sees these three ideals as different parts of the same thing.

Change is freedom made real, and freedom makes change possible. And feeling—love and joy and anger and pride as deep and rich as the blue of the sky—makes a windling's freedom sweet and gives each change meaning.

Of the Value of Change

The windlings of clan Lisvara have a saying that any windling anywhere would agree with: "Any day without a new experience is a day not lived." In a windling's view, just as nature grows and changes, so must he. Windlings show their love of change by borrowing customs from other Namegivers, the more often the better. When I told clan Lisvara that my people build snug homes by digging them out of the hillsides, the whole clan spent the next month lining the insides of all their hollow-tree dwellings with earth (grass side up, of course). Another time, my friend Keerht came back from a day at a nearby village fair, and told his clan he'd seen a human male bowing to a human

female. For weeks after that, all the clan males went around bowing elaborately every time they met a windling female. (Then Keerht spent an evening in the village tavern, and saw a human male grab a tavern wench by the waist and sit her on his lap. The male windlings tried to adopt that little custom, but the females were having none of it. They got the males back to bowing right quick.)

Scholars talk of change meaning freedom to windlings, and of course that's true. For myself, I think windlings love change so much because they love nature. So many different sights and smells and sounds, so many different beauties and dangers and wonders, exist in nature for any wishing to seek them out. The windlings see themselves as nature's most beloved children and want to be as much a part of their mother as they can.

Of the Windling Love of Freedom

Love of nature also explains why windlings love freedom. For a race born and raised in the woods and wild lands, to be held captive is worse than dying. Many windlings so dislike any feeling of captivity that they avoid living in Barsaive's cities and towns. To them, walls and ceilings made by any hand but nature's feel like a prison. Even the ones who do live in so-called "civilized" towns alongside other Namegivers try to keep their sense of freedom by moving from place to place, rarely staying in one town or village for very long. Most windlings live like clan Lisvara: in settlements deep within Barsaive's forests and jungles.

On Living a Life of Feeling

Along with the love of change and freedom, windlings teach their children to love life and live it fully. Why live free, they say, unless you use that freedom to experience and revel in everything? A life without feeling is unknown to windlings. Everything they do, they do with a fervor that might make a Passion dizzy. If a clansman dies, they mourn his loss as if the world had ended. Where other races make merry for one day at a fair or festival, a windling celebration lasts for many days, over something as ordinary (at least to other folk) as a good pressing of wine or a successful hunt. A windling becomes enraged over a slight that would make another Namegiver feel only a moment's anger. Despite their miniature size, these folk do nothing in small measure. Other folk seek change, but windlings embrace it. Other folk enjoy freedom, but windlings revel in it.

Of Diverse Windling Customs

I have spoken of some of the windlings' ways and will now speak more of them. It should come as no surprise that windling ways differ greatly from the ways of trolls! Windlings live by hunting and gathering the fruits of the land, which they believe nature creates especially for them. When I have tried to explain to windling friends what farming is, they broke out into hoots and shouts of laughter—they kept asking me why anyone would bother with all that work.

Races used to toiling for their bread may think the windlings downright careless about the getting of food, but windlings are never wasteful. They hunt or gather what the clan needs each day, using every scrap of what they find or kill. When planning for a feast, they gather twice or three times as much food as necessary and store some, but otherwise they make little provision beyond each day's needs. (A windling feast is a marvel. I will speak of those later.)

On Coming of Age

A windling comes of age in his thirtieth year. For the coming-of-age ceremony of the Lisvarans and most other windling clans in Barsaive, the windling must fly to some perilous place and return



with a token that proves he has faced and mastered danger. Most windlings, though not all, use their flying skills in the coming-of-age ritual.

Once the windling returns with proof of his courage, the clan tattoo master designs a tattoo for the clan's new adult. The new adult windling may now take a mate, start a family, and practice a trade.

Of Mating and Family Life

Windlings mate for life and raise their children in common. Every member of the clan teaches each child what he knows of the world. A female windling Warrior may teach her son how to fight; a male windling artist may teach the child how to create tattoos; and so on. (I will speak more of windling clans further on.)

Windlings go courting in the spring; the same season in which every windling child is born. If a windling male and female strike each other's fancy and the male has no rivals, the pair take betrothal vows for a year and marry in the following spring. If more than one male wants to wed a female, the clan holds a contest that they call a *sleerah*. I saw one such contest myself, when my friend Keerht courted a little lass Named Shelah. (Such rivalry is common, because there are so many more male windlings than females. The windlings invented the *sleerah* to solve the problem of too many males wanting mates they can't have—it's ingenious, but brutal.)

In the *sleerah*, the males attempt tasks of great difficulty and danger, witnessed by fellow clansmen who watch from a safe distance. Often, the stunts become so dangerous that unlucky male windlings die during the contest. As it happens, one of the four rivals for Shelah died trying to capture and ride a wild eagle; it threw him off suddenly, not a fingerspan from the top of a bramble thicket. The poor fellow had no time to right himself and died impaled on the thorns. Of course, the clan stopped the *sleerah* long enough to hold a mourning feast. They did the poor lad proud—bewailing his loss, praising his daring, and eating and drinking to his departed spirit for close to three days. Then they started right up with the *sleerah* again, each of the remaining three rivals still just as mad to win the hand of pretty Shelah. Much as I like windlings, sometimes they bewilder me.

Once every rival has completed the contest (in one way or another, if you take my meaning), the female chooses her mate from among the surviving males. She needn't choose the one who succeeded at the most tasks, either. The tasks of the *sleerah* show the female how each male stands up to danger and frustration and also let

her know how well he solves problems. An arrogant male who fancies himself the winner often loses out, because the female finds a humbler "loser" more appealing as a mate. That's how Keerht won Shelah—he'd managed to snag his eagle and was just climbing up its leg to swing up onto its back when he saw his friend Tesarh fall past his eagle's talon and tear a wing. They'd had hard words over both wanting Shelah, but old friendship won out. Off the eagle's leg went Keerht, diving down to catch Tesarh and carrying him to safety. That act cost Keerht success at eagle-riding, but it impressed Shelah more than any feat of daring could have done.

A windling can marry within his own clan, but because the clan is so small, he often finds few partners to choose from. Many windlings, especially the extra males, choose to mate outside their birth clans. When such a mating takes place, the new couple joins the male's clan, and the female windling is formally adopted into it. Being windlings, they naturally throw a welcoming feast, which lasts for five to seven days. Needless to say, the custom of marrying out of the clan is well regarded in windling society! Both clans get a feast out of it—the one to see the couple off, the other to welcome them home—and most times, the male's clan gets a new female member who may bear children. The female's clan loses a woman, of course, but they also have one less extra (and possibly discontent) male. Both clans claim the children of such mates as kin, and very often foster them back and forth during their childhood years.

Though all windling adults help to raise the clan's children, each child's kin-parents (mother and father by blood) choose another mated couple soon after the child's Naming to join with them in acting as the infant's closest caregivers. To put it in terms that other races might more easily understand, each baby windling has four parents and a vast number of loving uncles and aunts!

On the Ritual of Naming

The birth of a windling child is a rare, and therefore precious, event. Windlings celebrate a birth for ten days, ending the feasting with a Naming ritual. The nobles of clan Lisvara let me watch one, and I have written the words of the ritual as I remember them.

By the time a newborn windling reaches his tenth day, he has learned to fly, though not with an adult's skill. The child's kin-parents, the clan noble (the leader), and the rest of the clan gather near the clan's central dwelling—often a hollow tree—at dusk and catch a horde of fireflies, then set them loose within the leafy tree branches. His way lit only by the glow of the fireflies, the young windling must weave through an obstacle course of leaves, branches, and barriers woven of leaves and vines. The course always has four sharp turns in it: one each for the North, the South, the East, and the West.

When the child clears the north turn, his kin-father says: "From the North comes cold wind and driving rain. May the sun always warm your flight, and may your wings always be dry."

When the child clears the south turn, his kin-mother says: "From the South come warm and gentle breezes. May the air always fill your wings and lift you to new heights."

When the child clears the western turn, the clan noble says: "The West brings the end of day and the coming of night. May you see many sunsets."

When the child clears the eastern and final turn, all adults say: "As the new day starts in the East, so a new dawn begins for you. From henceforth, you are Named (Name). Though you may earn other Names, this Name is your beginning. You need not live up to this Name, for it is yours by birthright. May your heart ever be as light as your wings. Always remember that the two things no one can ever take from you are your wings and your Name."

Once the child completes the ritual, he and the clan adults recapture all of the fireflies. At the evening's feast in the child's honor, the newly Named windling must eat all of the fireflies; by this, he shows that he is light of heart.

On Language and Windling Humor

Windlings are famous—or infamous, depending on whom you speak to—for their sense of humor. These lighthearted folk love to tease, and the more serious the target of their joking, the better they like it. They mean no harm by it, but they see it as part of a windling's place in life to show others the humor in it. If a windling can make you smile with his teasing, he's happy—and if he provokes anger, that also makes him laugh because he finds the seriousness of other races so foolish.

I admit that sometimes my windling friends laughed at things that might well shock right-thinking folk. They shocked me, once or twice. Once, some of the windling lads and I went to a tavern in a nearby village, and saw a drunken ork die in a silly accident. A scorcher, he was, boasting about the gold and gems he'd stolen from a rich merchant. He bobbled around in his hobnailed boots, showing us all his brilliant swordsmanship (which was anything but, mind). A too-vigorous swing of his sword sent him pitching heels over head into an oak table. Knocked the table over, he did, and the pitcher of ale on it crashed down on top of his head. He lay there for several heartbeats, the ale dribbling into his slack mouth, and the windlings laughed until tears ran down their cheeks. Only after he'd lain there for several minutes without moving did anyone realize he'd broken his silly neck. At that, of course, my windling friends wept from sadness—and a little shame, I think, that they'd been laughing at a dead man.

Most of the misunderstanding about windling humor comes from the simple fact that windlings think differently about what to take seriously and when. Small-minded, easily angered folk call windling humor malicious, but they know nothing about it. Windlings find almost everything funny, and that simple fact has kept them a joyful, lively folk instead of a whining, poor, and miserable one. Windlings laugh at each other all the time, and most of them can't quite believe that anyone might truly feel angry over "a bit of harmless joking."

A windling sees teasing and joking not as hurtful things, but as signs of affection. He'll laugh at his own foolishness as much as at any other's and sees no harm in either.

On the Curious Custom of Insult Contests

Windlings often hold insult contests just so that they can poke fun at each other. In an insult contest, two windlings insult each other's looks, manners, clothing, achievements, and anything else they can think of, dreaming up the funniest and most accurate insults under the watchful eye of a moderator. The moderator judges the appropriateness of each insult, and the windling who delivers the cleverest insults that are also on the mark wins the contest.

Though outsiders might find such teasing cruel, the windlings themselves think otherwise. No windling would dream of taking offense at an insult made during one of these contests. (One interesting thing I noticed: not a single windling ever called another one "short." I guess they just might take offense at that!)

On the Pleasant Diversion of Joke Contests

Windlings also hold joke and pun contests, in which two windlings trade inventive turns of phrase or outrageous jokes about a single topic, chosen by a third windling who judges each pun. The first windling who can't come up with a good joke or pun loses, and often must stand the winner to a round of drinks.

Windlings love any kind of play, especially wordplay, and the combination of clever words and quick thinking make joke contests one of the most popular windling customs. The average windling, by the by, makes twice the Troubadour that another Namegiver might hope to be. As a Troubadour myself, I know of what I speak.

On the Wonderful Amusements of Tall Tale Competitions

Even more beloved than joke contests is the telling of tall tales. A windling proverb says, "If your stature is small, let your words be big," and every windling I've ever met believes in every word of that old saying. In the tall tale competitions, windling humor and love of storytelling reach their greatest heights.

Two windlings each have a set time in which to tell an outlandish tale, but one with a grain of truth just large enough to make the listeners wonder if it truly happened. If anyone doubts that windlings can lie with the skill of a master craftsman, come and hear one of these contests. They weave together truth and falsehood, reality and exaggeration as a master basketmaker weaves his reeds.

I tell you honestly, I envy this windling skill; would that I could spin such outrageous stories from only a seed of truth.

On Other Windling Revels

In addition to insult, joke, and tall tale contests, windlings hold revels at the slightest excuse. They may hold a feast for such important occasions as a Naming ritual or a wedding, or for such minor (to other folk) occasions as the building of a new shelter or even a lovely morning. The harvesting of *keesryps* is a favorite occasion for a week-long revel; I will speak more of that when I tell of windling wine, further on.

Most windling revels begin at sundown and last for three days, featuring all manner of eating, drinking, tale-telling, and music. An open-hearted and curious folk, windlings who live near towns or villages where other Namegivers dwell often invite their neighbors to these revels. They take special delight in making the strangers tell tales of their own people.

On the Custom of Windling Vengeance

Folk who think of windlings as frivolous, fun-loving, and harmless might be more than a bit surprised to learn that windlings are quick to anger. Windlings not only get angry, friend, they stay angry. Not a Namegiver race in Barsaive holds a grudge as long or as well as windlings. It makes no matter whether you offend them on purpose or by misadventure— you'd best apologize right quick, or you've trouble on your doorstep.

Windlings rarely, if ever, offend each other. Certainly, I never saw any member of clan Lisvara raise a hand to another in anger. But if another Namegiver gives offense or injury to a windling and speaks no word of apology, the offended windling gathers his kin and close friends to help him avenge the slight. I've heard angry windlings talk of the punishments they meant to inflict, and I'd not face them for all the coin in Barsaive. For a mild offense, the avengers confine their punishments to embarrassing practical jokes; anyone foolish enough to seriously cross a windling may well be dead within days.

I once heard a band of windling avengers plotting to send some poor dwarf over a cliff by flying around his head like angry wasps until they herded him to his death (though Keerht later told me that few windlings go quite that far).

Luckily, making peace with a windling is easy. They are quick to see the funny side of even the deadliest insult, and they swiftly forgive anyone who honestly admits his fault. A public apology or a gift of food or wine easily wins them over.



Never threaten a windling unless you want a lifetime of harassment. I tried it once. Stupid idea. Threats just make them angrier.

—Karok, Troll Warrior of Kratas

Of Windling Clans and Nobles

The Troubadour Telourian once said, "Windling society is like troll glassware. No one can imagine them creating any, and no one has ever seen it." I pity Telourian, I really do. He's an elf, and sad to say, he's saddled himself with the sense of superiority that keeps plenty of elves in Barsaive from ever learning anything. Not all elves are like that, mind, but too many are. Well, I hate to break it to poor Telourian, but windlings do have a society. (And trolls make fine glass, by the by. It's so fine, we'd rather keep it than give it to anyone else.) Too many folk think that because windlings borrow customs from others whenever they like that they don't have their own way of doing things. But they do, friend, and it's just as good a way for them as any of ours are for us. Where we live in villages or moots, they live in clans. And where we have headmen or chiefs or even kings, they have nobles.

As a small people, the windlings prefer to keep their living arrangements at a size they can easily manage. A windling clan numbers six or seven families, usually 30 or so individual windlings, of which at most seven or so are children. The clans build dwellings about 15 feet off the ground in clusters of trees, well out of reach of dangerous animals. Each member is fiercely loyal to his own clan, even more so than windlings across Barsaive are to each other, and because the clan adults care equally for all the children, they all regard each other as closely as we regard our blood kin. Though each windling child knows which clan members are his own blood, known to him as kin-mother and kin-father, he feels the same closeness and love for all of his elders.

Each clan has a clansong, which Names each member of the clan, tells a little of him, and Names his kin-parents, mate, and kin-children. With the birth of each new windling child, the clan adds a new line to the song. The noble of clan Lisvara allowed me to write down a fragment of their clansong, which follows:

Clan Lisvara, clan Lisvara, we sing of clan Lisvara unto all generations.
Great Shurah, our foremother, kin-sister to Relft the Thief, kin-mother to us all.

Swift and silent Relft, the Thief, kin-brother to Laarh the Archer, kin-father to Keerht and Mhari.
Laarh the Archer and Windmaster, mate to healer Gheeria, kin-father to Shelah.
Keerht, Wind-dancer and Troubadour, kin-brother to Mhari, new-mated to Shelah.
Mhari the Beastmaster of great and surpassing skill, kin-child to Gheeria.
Gheeria, Garlen's beloved, mother of two children, kin-daughter to Sheorh …

(Since leaving the windlings, I've tried to perform a clansong in a few taverns—even once for King Varulus himself, can you believe it?—but a troll's deep voice can't match the sound of a windling's trill.)

Whenever a dispute arises among clansmen or between clans, the windlings look to their clan's noble for guidance. These clan rulers (of a sort) earn their positions as leaders not through age or might or riches, as is true of many Namegivers, but by persuasion. A windling who can convince the greatest number of his clansmen that he will lead them well and do right by them all without thought for his own gain becomes a noble. Most windlings prefer a leader who has a mate and children, but any member of the clan can hope to become its leader.

The clan leader keeps his power until he loses the support of the clan, and even then may hold it for a time until a better candidate appears. If a leader loses the support of his followers, they still obey him, but grudgingly. Often, they refuse to finish any task the noble assigns them. When another candidate appears, the clan switches its allegiance, and the new noble takes power without much fuss.

On the Curious Rite of Listening

When a noble speaks, he can invoke the Rite of Listening, a strange custom whereby all windlings in the clan must stop what they are doing to listen to the noble until he has finished speaking. I call this custom strange because, though all must listen, they may cease listening (or even choose a new noble) if the noble who invokes the rite has nothing of interest to say. The noble can command attention, and yet he does not command attention. Truly, it is a most curious custom, and I have yet to understand it!

Of Other Honorable Posts Within Windling Clans

In addition to the nobles, most windling communities have Windscouts, Windmasters, and Wind-dancers. Windscouts safeguard the clan against airborne perils, patrolling the skies and alerting their fellow windlings to any threat they see. Windmasters serve along with other warriors as the clan's soldiers, both in the air and on the ground; the Windmasters receive special training in the use of flight in battle.

Certain windling Warriors, called the *harresa-tis*, or "hardy ones," serve as land and air cavalry. The *harresa-tis* alone among Warriors wear windling-sized ring mail, crystal plate mail, or metal armor, and use shields the size of a human's buckler. The *harresa-tis* wield windling bows, windling broadswords, and spears, which they use as lances, and they wear helms made from the skulls of wild beasts. The ground cavalry ride beasts known as kues, which look as if they were mothered by a wildcat and fathered by a lizard. Airborne cavalry ride zoaks; furred creatures that resemble bats. Despite their small size, they make dangerous enemies. The sight of the *harresa-tis* arrayed for battle can make even the biggest opponent think better of attacking, assuming he's got any sense.

Wind-dancers are much like Troubadours and have a special gift for becoming one with nature. They preserve windling culture and history, creating elaborate songs and dances to tell tales of momentous events. (I can hear some of my fellow Namegivers laughing at the very thought of windling culture, but even the ever-changing windlings have certain ways that are all their own. Were I as ignorant of windlings as some folk are, I should not laugh too hard.)

According to windling legend, a queen rules over the nobles and all the clans. My friends in clan Lisvara tell me that most windlings don't truly believe in the queen; they even hinted that the Windling Queen is a joke, started by the windlings themselves. One Wind-dancer (whom I'll not Name for his own safety) told me that the Windling Queen is a satire of the Elven Queen, Alachia, who has the cheek to demand the loyalty of all faerie creatures. (Then again, the Wind-dancer might have been pulling my leg; windlings love to do that. I could understand if his tale were true; in my opinion, high-and-mighty Alachia expects more than any decent person can stomach.) Nobody has ever seen the Windling Queen, let alone had an audience with her.

On Diverse Windling Arts and Crafts

Too many folk believe that the windlings' changeable nature means that they have no true arts or crafts. I've even heard folk claim that windlings can't possibly build or make anything because of their small size, though why small people shouldn't be able to build houses, work metal, and suchlike just as well as larger folk is a mystery to me. Of course, the ignorant will believe anything. Some point to the many Weaponsmiths and armorers of other Namegiver races that make windling-sized battle gear as "proof" that windlings make nothing of their own. I can tell you otherwise. Windlings are builders and smiths, craftsmen and poets, and every other kind of artisan that exists in Barsaive.

Many of the best shops and merchant stalls in Bartertown and other cities sell windling-sized goods, though at high prices. Of course, the workmanship is perfect, and the high price comes from the sheer labor needed to make small weapons and decorative items. Blessed with nimble fingers, sharp eyes, and quick minds, windlings make decorative goods that are prized throughout all Barsaive. Most windlings use the bounty of nature to create their goods: a bird feather, a piece of quartz, a bit of amber, a rosebud, and so on. An inspired windling craftsman can create a thing of such beauty that it hurts one's heart to see it. Clan Lisvara's finest craftswoman, old Lharial, made me a wind chime as a parting gift, and it is a beautiful thing! The pieces look like spun glass, etched with spiraling leaves and vines, and they ring with a sound like silver bells. I've never seen anything so lovely in all my life. When I told Lharial so, she told me tales of windling artisans whose works would make her wind chime look like a mud sculpture.

Of Windling Dwellings

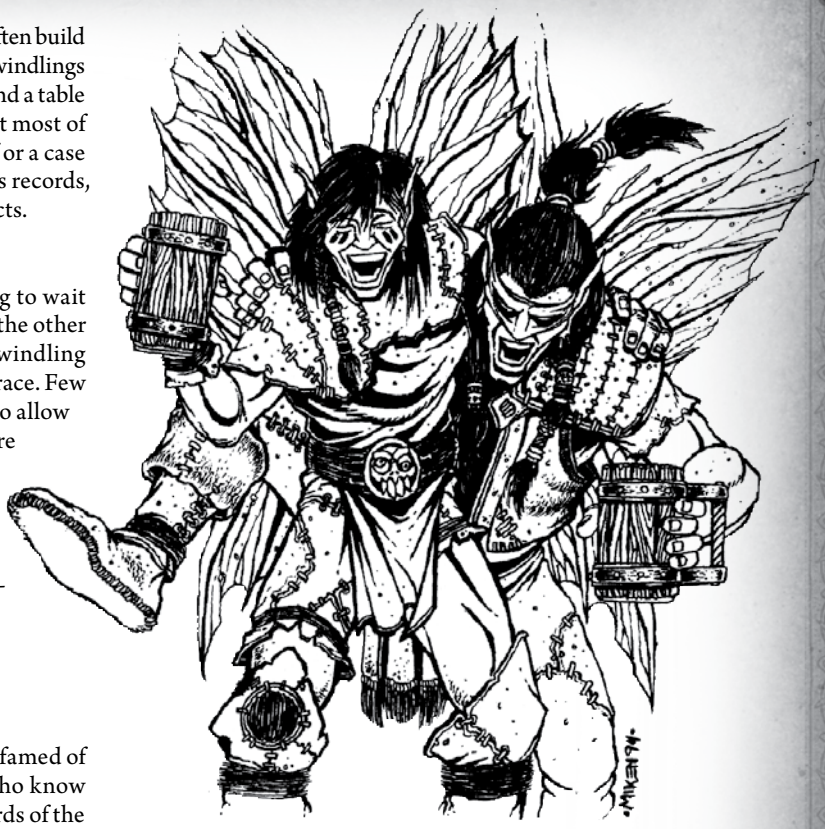
An old windling proverb says, "Live with nature, not against it." Taking this old saying to heart, windlings build little. Most often, they live in the highest and leafiest branches of trees, using leaves as roofs and walls to shelter them from bad weather. Sometimes, they build lean-tos of small branches and leaves against thicker branches or tree trunks. Windling clans such as clan Lisvara, which have chosen to settle in one place, dwell in the trunks of wide, tall trees, using natural hollows where they find them and carving out more when they need to. These tree-homes are the hearts of the clans; the windlings practice their many crafts and hold important ceremonies there.

A few windling clans build tall towers of thin ceramic, which hardens to be almost as strong as wood. Often as tall as five trolls, these

towers look like windling kaers. City-dwelling windlings often build shelters in the second-story eaves of various buildings. All windlings prefer simple furnishings; a few hammocks for sleeping and a table or two for holding food and drink at mealtimes is all that most of them need or want. A windling Wizard may build a shelf or a case to hold his books, or a merchant may need shelves for his records, but most windlings prefer to live unencumbered by objects.

A Brief Discourse on Windling Kaers

The windlings built only a few kaers, often preferring to wait out the long centuries of the Scourge in the company of the other Namegivers whose ways they found so entertaining. A windling kaer, of course, is a nightmare for an explorer of another race. Few walkways or doors in those tall towers are large enough to allow any other Namegiver to pass, and all the rooms within are built for a windling's small size. Also, because windlings are most accustomed to flying, the many levels of their towers have doors in ceilings and floors. Makes perfect sense for a race that moves about by flitting through the air—but for a grounder, limited to the use of his feet, getting through every door means a tiring climb.



Of the Crafting of Weapons and Armor

Of course, windling weapons and armor are the most famed of all windling creations. More than a few Namegivers who know nothing else about windlings have heard the famous words of the windling Weaponsmith Galassa: "Even a dragon screams if someone pokes a needle in its eye." The two most common windling weapons are the bow and spear, which resemble the larger versions that other Namegivers use. Windlings also carry swords and daggers, made especially for their small hands to wield.

Nets and blowguns are weapons much favored by the hunters of clan Lisvara, who use them with great skill. The nets are made of many closely woven strands of a thin, tough fiber that the windlings call *sadoor.* Folded into small squares for carrying, when released, the nets expand to nearly half my height (and I'm close to nine feet tall). The nets can trap anything the size of a human or smaller, but won't hold any creature the size or strength of a troll or an obsidiman. The blowgun, prized for its silence and simple construction, allows the windling hunter or warrior to attack from out of harm's reach.

Windlings most often use both nets and blowguns with poisons. They soak *sadoor* nets in a liquid that can paralyze at a touch, and dip blowgun darts in either the same poison or a stronger, lethal one. This use of poison is another thing about windlings that some other Namegivers don't like; they call it dishonorable, a foul tactic that no one can fight. The windlings, for their part, claim that poison helps them bring down large animals or evens the odds for them in battles with larger enemies. Windlings rarely wear heavy armor, preferring to fly light so that they can move swiftly. They also prefer armor made of leather, which they often buy in bulk from merchants and tailor to fit their small frames. Save for the *harresa-tis,* I have never seen a windling use a shield; most windling Warriors keep their hands free to make maneuvering in flight easier.

Of the Working of Metal into Jewelry

Though they favor using natural items like feathers, flowers, and such, windlings also work precious metals and gems into beautifully wrought jewelry. My windling friends like to claim that Queen Alachia demands from them a monthly tribute of windling jewelry, and after seeing theirs, I believe that tale. Windlings use their small fingers to shape the metal into finer detail than Namegivers with larger hands can make.

Above all, most folk desire windling brooches, which are most often a single gem mounted in copper, silver, or gold. Windling craftsmen carve delicate patterns on the facets of the gem and shape the mounting into graceful spirals, knotwork, and other designs made to resemble woodland plants. Wizards especially prize these brooches, often using them to create blood charms, cloaksense brooches, and other magical items. Like everything else of windling make, such jewelry costs a quarter again as much as adornments made by other craftsmen.

Of the Art of Tattooing

My friend Shehwar, clan Lisvara's tattoo master, is fond of asking what canvas for art could possibly be better than living skin. Many of Barsaive's Namegivers tattoo their bodies, and windlings are no exception.

Because of their nimble fingers and eye for fine detail, windling tattoo masters are among the best in Barsaive. Of course, the customer of a windling tattoo master had best make a good first impression. The demands of their difficult work make many windling tattoo masters touchy and easily annoyed, and they can take spectacular revenge on those who slight them.

Shehwar told me the tale of Doolsek, a bad-tempered ork who forced a windling tattoo master to make a design on his back and then refused to pay for it. Knowing that the offended artisan might well tattoo something other than what Doolsek had demanded, the ork inspected the work in a mirror. To his relief, he saw exactly the tattoo he wanted. Of course, Doolsek didn't know that he had bullied an Illusionist.

As soon as Doolsek left the tattoo master, the illusion faded, leaving behind a filthy insult against the elven race. A few days later, while bartering with elven Warriors for passage across a road, Doolsek felt warm and took off his shirt off to cool himself. The elves, seeing the tattooed insult on Doolsek's back, used the ork as target practice for their arrows.

Of Windling Garb

Windlings wear simple lightweight clothing, often stitched with cured leather. As flyers, windlings prefer to travel light and refuse to wear any clothing (such as fashionable hats) that serves no real purpose except as decoration for the body. On their feet, windlings most often wear sandals or soft, light, ankle-high boots. Not a windling alive would ever wear boiled-leather boots like mine; indeed, my friend Keerht once asked me if I wore such heavy boots to keep from floating off the earth. "For you have no wings," he said earnestly, "and therefore could not make yourself go in any direction you might wish. I can see where such a fate might frighten you, friend Chag." (After a time, I stopped wearing the boots except to go on long tramps, and Keerht took to sleeping in them. Once I nearly put them on with him still inside, but that's another tale.)

The few windlings desperate enough to fly in foul weather wear huge, hooded cloaks large enough to cover their wings. Because water is such a danger to a windling's wings, these little folk take every possible precaution against getting them wet in rain or snow.

Of the Art of Windling Dance

When asked whether music or dance means more to a windling, the Troubadour Windsong, about whom windlings still tell legends, is supposed to have said, "Why not ask which wing does a bird need most to fly, its left or its right?" Windling dance is a marvel above all marvels, blending intricate movements of arms, legs, and wings into breathtaking beauty. In some of the movements, their wings catch the sunlight, creating brilliant colors that blend with the dance.

Many of their dances are old and established, but windlings also enjoy improvising ones from the steps of the old. Windlings love dancing so much that they do it on any occasion—weddings, funerals, victory celebrations, or even to celebrate a fine mug of ale.

On the Unique Beauties of Windling Music

Windlings love music as much as they love dancing and see the two arts as sides of the same coin. They create melodies without words and also epic ballads; indeed, they love songs, and often quote the Troubadour Windsong's famous words that "Poetry is but good music with the melody left out." Windlings have created many wind instruments, but they love pipes and flutes above all because these delicate instruments let them play a jolly jig one minute and a dirge the next.

Rather than tell stories of their past as other races do, windlings sing and dance them. Poetry, epic tales, and all their history are performed with musical accompaniment. To windlings, the only true way to tell their people's history is to sing the ancient songs and dance the ancient steps.

I was lucky enough to watch Keerht and his friends dance and sing a story of the regiment of dwarfs that saved clan Lisvara from a horde of advancing ogres. Three windlings played different tunes that fit together like well-woven reeds in a basket: one for the dwarfs, one for the ogres, and one for the beleaguered windlings. As these three played, the rest of the performers danced the parts of the dwarfs and ogres. When the tale reached the battle, I saw with delighted surprise that the dance steps mimicked the troop movements of both sides.

On the Telling of Windling History

According to a windling proverb, "If it cannot be sung about, it is not worth remembering." Windlings keep few written records of their history, preferring to remember their people's stories through song. Though most windlings know how to read and write, they consider writing a dull activity, suited for trade and such, but not for anything so meaningful as the history of the windling race. When I asked for writings on the history of clan Lisvara, the clan noble first greeted such a suggestion with hoots of laughter, and then asked me, "How should we remember the old stories for our children, unless we sing them around the fire for each new generation?"

Most other Namegivers cannot sing windling songs properly, having not the light, trilling voices that the little people have. Elven voices, with their light, clear tones, come closest to sounding like windlings, though even the greatest of the elven Troubadours has yet to devise a way to mimic the hum of a windling's wings. One Troubadour I know has made a stringed instrument she calls a *kahevar* that sounds a bit like the windling hum, but even it misses the mark by a fair length.

As far as I can tell, windlings do not have a legend of their creation, though some songs tell of the windlings' home in a magical woodland on the far side of Blood Wood, away from the Kingdom of Throal. Thus far, no windling explorer has found such a place, or at least, no windling has lived to bring the tale back to his folk. The windlings do have a few tales of the Scourge, most concerned with the warning signs of its coming and the anguish of living below the ground or in sealed citadels, shut away from the glories of nature.

Many windlings spent the Scourge in kaers built by other Namegivers, taking shelter in eaves and ceiling beams. The natural exuberance and humor of windlings dwindled during that dark time, as the windlings felt themselves dependent on the good will of their fellow Namegivers. Not surprisingly, they wished to avoid the slightest risk of offending their larger brethren and so often had to hide their true nature. Though some might wish they had stayed subdued, I say thank the Passions that the windlings have become themselves again since the retreat of the Horrors. Barsaive would be a colder, lonelier place without their warmth and laughter.

On the Making of Windling Wine

The windling race sees the making of liquor as an art. Windling clans from Barsaive's lowlands, including clan Lisvara, brew a potent wine from a berry that grows in their lands, called keesryp in the windling tongue. These tiny bright blue fruits grow in shrubs at the base of large trees and contain a sweet, refreshing juice. The sky-blue wine brewed from *keesryps* is known as *keesris*, and is much sought after among elves, humans, and t'skrang. Most orks, obsidimen, and trolls find it too weak for getting properly drunk, though I began to acquire a taste for it after living among windlings for so many months. Still doesn't get me drunk, mind, but it does make me cheerful. Most dwarfs, of course, would as soon drink water as *keesris*—but then, they've got ale strong enough to kick a thundra beast's teeth in by comparison, so it's no wonder. Windlings, of course, can get as merry as a jester on a mere thimbleful of the stuff, and they drink it at the slightest excuse.

The keesryp ripens in the tenth month of the year, and the windlings make a great occasion of gathering the berries. Many a lowland clan gathers in the same stretch of woodland for the berry harvest, and they spend days on end picking *keesryps*, feasting, drinking, and sharing tales by the night-time fires.

On the Nature of Windling Trade

Though a few windling clans have observed other folk in the pursuit of wealth and have chosen to follow their ways, most windlings have little use for making money except as a means to survival. It's the rare windling who piles up riches as an end in itself. Most windling clans barter for anything they need from the caravans that pass by their settlements. In Barsaivian cities, of course, windlings have merchant establishments just as any other Namegiver might.



A few windlings own thriving businesses in cities and trading posts across Barsaive, some to meet different kinds of folk and learn their ways, and some to give comfort to other windlings who may be passing through. These latter like nothing better than to offer their own a friendly face and a little bit of home. A windling innkeeper has rooms for larger folk, of course, but almost always has plenty of rooms built for windlings. Most of these have windling hammock beds, and some even have small lean-tos along the eaves of the inn where the innkeeper's fellow windlings can stay in comfort.

Having stayed in such establishments, I find them just as good as any other. In fact, windling innkeepers are among the most hospitable folk in Barsaive. To those who think of windlings as folk who live to insult other races, try staying in a windling-run inn. Oh, and don't start off by insulting the innkeeper. He'll take that from a fellow windling, but not from anyone else unless he's already decided to call you friend.

As for windling Thieves, they ply their trade not for coin, but for the thrill of living a Thief's life. (Cold comfort, of course, for the victim whose pockets the Thief has lightened.)

On Windling Spiritual Beliefs

Most windlings have little to do with the kind of worship of the Passions common to other Namegiver races. A human or an elf or a dwarf might go to a temple of Garlen, say, or Floranuus, on a certain day and swear to perform certain acts of devotion in return for the Passion's interest in his affairs. Not so a windling. For windlings, the Passions are not to be found in a building or in any one place, but in every place. To feel the Passions' presence and be with them does not require any other act of worship than to listen with a quiet heart. Windlings see the Passions as the source of all that they are and believe that they can touch the Passions at any time. They see no need to set aside holy days or feasts for worship, as others do, but believe that the Passions exist to be called upon in times of need.

Many windlings, however, hold a special place in their hearts for Floranuus, the Passion of revelry, energy, motion, and victory; and for Lochost, Passion of rebellion, change, and freedom. These two Passions between them embody the ideals that windlings hold most dear, and the qualities that they most prize. I have heard tell of a few windling questors of Floranuus, though they are extremely rare.

Of Windling Beliefs About Death

Though no sane Namegiver looks forward to death, windlings possess the strongest will to live of any Namegiver race in Barsaive. A windling sees death as a state without change and fears it beyond almost any other fate. Other races may find comfort in

the thought of an afterlife, but promises of "a life to come" mean little to windlings. They love life so much that they cannot conceive of anything better. The Troubadour Windsong said it best: "A windling always moves, always changes, always laughs. Death is final. In it there is no change, no laughter, no movement. Death we do not speak of. Let us set our minds instead on the present and celebrate our lives." Indeed, windlings rarely use the word "death," instead speaking of the "final change," "flight's end," "riding the astral wind," and "becoming one with the sky."

This fear of death might seem odd, given the windlings' love of risks, but in truth it only adds spice to life's hazards. When a windling takes a risk that others deem foolish, he is living his life at its fullest; in windling belief, one never values a thing so much as when one may lose it. Some folk, of course, claim that windlings take such risks because they are too weak minded to recognize the consequences. They say that windlings get away with defying death as often as they do because the possibility of dying never crosses their tiny minds. Well, if those ignoramuses can tell me how a people who think so little of the future can possibly raise children as carefully as they do, or even why they care so much about the coming generations, then maybe I'll think about agreeing with them.

Let me point out that for all their love of risk, no windling ever does anything truly soft headed, such as diving into the open maw of a dragon or flying unarmed and naked into a horde of axe-wielding ogres. Windlings simply deem different things risky than do most of the rest of us.

When a windling dies, his clan members and close friends gather together, acknowledge the passing of the loved one, then burn the body and scatter the ashes to the wind. After this brief death ritual, the clan throws a feast to remember their fallen brother by telling stories of his life and drinking huge amounts of *keesris*. As a windling sees it, the only way to escape the awfulness of death is to make a funeral a merry occasion. The clan includes the death of their fellow in the clansong, but makes no other record. This lack of records drives many a scholar to distraction, should he try to determine a windling's lifespan or the year in which a notable windling lived.

Not surprisingly, windlings find undead beings particularly repugnant. Not only do such awful beings remind windlings of their own mortality, but they are an abomination of nature and thus doubly offensive to beings who so revere nature as do the windlings.

On the Manner of Windlings Toward Other Namegiver Races

I have touched on this subject earlier in my tale, with regard to windling humor and the many ways in which folk who know little of windlings misinterpret it. Sad to say, too many folk in Barsaive misunderstand not only windling humor, but many windling ways of thinking and acting. I can only hope that my small work does its part to broaden narrow minds by explaining some of the reasons why windlings behave as they do. After all, haven't they a right to their ways, just as any of us have to ours?

To give you an idea of just how small minded some folk are, I give you the following journal entry. I'm ashamed to say it was written by one of my own race, who hates windlings for the same silly reasons that too many of my folk do. (Which is to say, no reason at all—but I'll say more of that soon enough.) You have to feel sorry for someone who thinks as this poor fool does, getting angry and hateful because not every Namegiver behaves as he thinks is proper. Not all trolls are like this one, believe me.

Windlings? You want to know what I think about windlings? By the Passions, I can't stand the little gnats! 'Tisn't a matter of size; not at all. Not a bit of it. Live and let live, I always say. Trouble is, those little flying pests won't let me alone. They're the ones who judge others by size. I'm too big and clumsy for them, and the little insects never give me any peace because of it!

Me, I think those little gnats secretly hate being so small. So they try to make up for it by playing the fool, laughing at everything, but especially at bigger folk. Guess who they like to pick on most? The biggest Namegivers, that's who. 'Course, they don't tease obsidimen much, because it takes an earthquake, a fire, and a flood all at the same time to rouse the rock-men. No fun teasing a stone, is it? So which very tall, very large race is left to tease? That's right, friend. Trolls. Like me. Before anyone calls me ignorant, let me say that I've traveled a bit. I've met so many windlings in so many places that I've lost count, and every single one of them has made jests about my size. Oh, we start off civil enough, but sooner or later some little winged rat makes a joke at my expense. Naturally, I get annoyed. Wouldn't anyone? 'Course, that really sets the little beasts off. They laugh and snigger and joke, each mean jest more hurtful than the last, until even a patient fellow like myself can't stand it anymore. I tell you, I'd like nothing better than to grab the little beasts and squeeze them until their little heads pop off!

—From the journal of Targ Boneslicer

So now that you've read the words of friend Targ, you tell me. Who judges whom by size, eh?

Of course, there's a grain of truth to some folks' dislike of windlings. Their joking can get under the skin and they have other ways that to them are just ordinary, but that others may take offense at. Windlings place little value on privacy, to give one example, and often ask blunt questions about things that most others would call none of their affair. They also tell you exactly what they think, sometimes even if no one asks them. A windling sees no sense in hemming and hawing; if he has a thing to say, he says it. If he hurts someone's feelings, no matter. A simple apology makes things right again, so why waste time sparing folk hard truths? Of course, in thinking this way, the windlings make the mistake of believing that other folk accept apologies as easily as they do. Not all races are as quick to forgive.

Windlings also have little of what other folk call manners. They adopt what customs amuse them and drop them if something new catches their fancy. Except for the ideals that shape a windling's soul, little about them remains unchanging. What use do such changeable folk have for the kind of grand manners beloved by elves, say, or for the tangled web of trade manners common to dwarfs and t'skrang? A windling has those kinds of manners for as long as he enjoys having them, and no longer. This drives some folk wild, because they persist in believing that a windling who doesn't respect their customs of politeness means to insult them. Of course, no such thing is true—windlings are just behaving like windlings, just as trolls behave like trolls and dwarfs behave like dwarfs and so on. If a windling really means to insult you, he won't just act with what you'd call bad manners. He'll call you "dirt-kicker" or "mud-clod" to your face, and more than once.

One good point about windlings that too many overly judgmental folk overlook is their interest in making friends with folk from all the Namegiver races. I'd rather be with friendly folk like that than with races like elves, who look at you as if you're dirt underfoot unless you've got pointed ears!

On the Windling View of Dwarfs

A dwarf is a creature of serious mind, which most windlings don't understand. Oh, they can be serious about the things they consider truly important, like change and freedom, but to be serious about everything? Such a way of thinking and living would drive a windling mad within a day. Dwarfs interest windlings precisely because of their relentless seriousness and love of complexity. But these qualities also make them the ready target of a windling's teasing. "Plodders," the windlings call them sometimes, or stoneheads, because of the dwarfs' love of rock and earth. Many windlings see a kinship between windlings and dwarfs, because dwarfs are the nearest to windlings in size. Believing that the dwarfs understand the difficulties of living in a too-large world in a way that no other folk do, most windlings regard every dwarf as a friend.

On the Windling View of Elves

Windlings delight in the company of elves, cherishing their beauty and the closeness to nature that both races share. Of course, elves come in for their share of teasing, mostly because of their insistence on a manner so grand that it makes a king seem like a gutter thief. (A ripe target for jokes, eh, friend?) The elves of Blood Wood, however, windlings loathe. A windling regards the blood elves as a crime against nature, because they have taken the gift of life and turned it to constant torture. No self-respecting windling gives a moment's credence to Queen Alachia's claim of sovereignty over them. In fact, many a windling Troubadour earns a living telling wickedly funny stories that poke fun at "Her High and Mightiness."

On the Windling View of Humans

Humans come in more shapes and sizes than any other Namegiver race, and this dazzling variety delights the windling mind. Loving the new and different as they do, windlings find humans in all their many guises the most fascinating race in Barsaive. Of course, a fair number of windlings mistakenly assume that such diverse people have a free spirit to match and tend to find out otherwise the hard way.

Many windlings seek out human traveling companions, taking up with the first one who strikes their fancy. A windling will watch his human friend closely, mimicking actions that interest him and will stay with his companion until he no longer finds anything new or diverting in the company. If the windling loses interest, he abandons the human with no more than a simple farewell. This casualness irks many humans, who mistakenly see it as a sign that windlings do not value human friendship. In truth, a windling always remembers his traveling companions. If any human with whom a windling has wandered should turn up at the windling's settlement, the windling goes out of his way to show his friend the best of the clan's hospitality.

A windling's abrupt departure from a companion does not mean that he feels no friendship, but simply that windlings dislike elaborate goodbyes.

On the Windling View of Obsidimen

An obsidiman's rocklike slowness and calm fascinates the swift-moving, emotional windlings. Indeed, there are probably no two races in Barsaive so different from each other as windlings and obsidimen. Plenty of folk from other races might find such great differences good cause to be wary, but not so windlings. For them, differences are a thing to celebrate, the greater the better. (I ask you, how can anyone dislike folk with that kind of courage?)



Everything about an obsidiman—his slowness, his great height, the fact that he is made of living rock—interests a windling. Many windlings find their interest returned, which truly delights them—they find it funny that such a solemn, incurious folk as the obsidimen find them fascinating. (After all, a windling takes his own ways for granted just as much as anyone else does.) This interest in each other binds windlings and obsidimen together in a curious way and often leads to firm friendships between members of both races. In fact, the only obsidiman that won't draw a small crowd of interested windlings is a drunken one. Being no fools, windlings stay good and far from a reeling rock-man. No sense getting crushed underfoot by an obsidiman gotten happy on strong dwarf stout, is there?

The one thing about obsidimen that truly puzzles windlings is the rock-people's refusal to either tease back or get angry at windling jests. Accustomed as they are to other Namegivers getting upset and going off for a good sulk, they expect the same reaction from obsidimen. They don't get it, of course.

Nothing much gets to a rock-man. An obsidiman stays as calm as a glass ocean, no matter what jests a windling makes at his expense. Most windlings find that calmness the most fascinating thing of all.

On the Windling View of Orks

Windlings have a funny view of orks, most often dependent on the ork in question. Long ago, Barsaive's other Namegiver races enslaved the orks, all save the windlings (who'd rather die than enslave anything).

Windlings have a special sympathy for orks because they suffered through a windling's worst nightmare. Or at least, windlings want to sympathize. Trouble is, plenty of orks want nothing to do with windlings. Quite a few orks forget that the windlings ever treated them different than everyone else, and those who remember that the windlings alone did not make them slaves often blame the windlings for not forcing the other Namegivers to stop the horrid practice. Many orks have foul tempers and take offense at windling jokes more easily than any other folk. Well, there's only so long a windling can take being shouted at before he stops teasing for friendship's sake and starts teasing to hurt. Too many orks make windlings angry, and too many windlings vent their anger without thinking. No wonder, is it, that these two races get along about as well as a dragon and an elf.

Though I've known windlings and orks to be friends (a windling can make friends with anyone if he's a mind to), the ork always has uncommon patience and the windling, uncommon restraint.

On the Windling View of Trolls

Well, here's a sensitive subject and no mistake. Ask anyone in Barsaive what they think windlings think about trolls (and vice versa), and they'll tell you that trolls and windlings loathe each other. What they can't tell you is the reason why. In truth, and I hate to say this, we trolls have brought the windlings' dislike upon ourselves. My own folk'll likely call me a traitor to my kin for saying so, but it's true. From my year with clan Lisvara, I've learned that windlings in general are interested in everything and want to make friends with everyone. Ask yourself for a moment why a friendly, curious, openhearted people like windlings would dislike, even hate, an entire race. Because we're bigger than they are, as Targ Boneslicer thinks? Hardly. Windlings love obsidimen, and the rock people are almost as big as us trolls. Because we're different from them? Wrong again, friend. Windlings love differences—there's nothing they like so much as the unfamiliar. No, the enmity between trolls and windlings stems from the simple fact that trolls as a race have never had any use for windlings and had the poor manners to let them know it. Little, we call them, as if smallness were an offense. Flighty, foolish, soft in the skull, puny, cowardly, no use in a pinch—trolls call windlings all of these things and worse. Well, a windling won't take being insulted, and it would never occur to the average troll that he might owe a windling an apology for insulting him. We trolls have given windlings reason to hold a whopping grudge against our folk, and that's exactly what they do.

As proof of my point, I offer my own experience with clan Lisvara. The windlings accepted me, opening their hearts and hearths in spite of their grudge, because the simple fact that I wanted to learn their ways meant (to their way of thinking) that I had "apologized" for my folk's longstanding insults to the windling race. Like the generous folk they are, they accepted my "apology" at once, forgave me any wrong any troll had ever done them and treated me like a sworn brother for as long as I stayed with them. And if I ever go back, as I hope to, they'll welcome me home as if I were kin to them.

On the Legend of Mraga and its Meaning

When I asked my windling friends why they so disliked most trolls, the Wind-dancer Sheorh told me the legend of the troll king, Mraga. I give you her own words, as I remember them.

"Long ago, in a time so distant that the Scourge was yet unheard of, Mraga ruled over the troll kingdom of Ustrect. Now in those days, the great windling artisan, Windeyes of clan Deosylh, lived near to Ustrect, and she crafted jewels and swords of great beauty and cunning. Word of Windeyes' wonderful works reached the ears of King Mraga, and he determined to see her creations for himself. But all he knew of Windeyes was her Name—that she was a windling, he knew not.



"So Mraga issued a proclamation, that all traders and merchants in Ustrect who sold jewelry, weapons, and any other metalwork should come to his court. And of each of them, he asked, 'Are you Windeyes?' And each of them said, 'No, my lord, I am not.' And when he asked, 'What can you tell me of Windeyes?' each of them said, 'Only that she is the greatest worker of metal in all the world.'

"Mraga extended his royal command to all merchants, traders, and artisans who passed through Ustrect. Of them, he asked the same questions, and they all gave him the same answers. He wrote letters and sent embassies to all the other peoples of nearby realms—the dwarfs, the elves, the obsidimen, the orks, the humans, the t'skrang. To all he wrote, save for the windlings, seeking Windeyes. All gave him the same answer: Windeyes, the greatest worker of metal in all the world, dwelled not among their folk.

"At length, Windeyes herself heard of King Mraga's search and took pity on the troll king. 'I will go to Ustrect and show him my finest work. I will make him a gift of it, in return for his having so honored me that he would seek me the length and breadth of the world.' So saying, Windeyes packed a bag full of her finest creations, brooches and bracelets and daggers and swords of surpassing beauty, and went to Ustrect.

"When King Mraga saw her in his great audience chamber, he scowled at her and demanded to know her business with him. 'I am Windeyes,' she told him. 'I have heard that you wish to see my work. Therefore, see what I have brought you.' And she opened her bag and presented to King Mraga her most beautiful creations. 'Choose one, great king. You have honored me by seeking me so earnestly, and I would make you a gift of equal worth.'

"But Mraga laughed until the ceiling echoed with the sound. 'Take a gift from a windling?' he said. 'I will take no gift from a liar like you. You are not Windeyes. You cannot be the greatest worker of metal in all the world—no mere windling could accomplish so much! Do you truly expect me to believe that your foolish, flighty race knows enough of any craft to create the simplest object?' And his eyes were darkened by scorn, for he looked at Windeyes' creations and saw not their beauty. He swept them aside with his booted foot, saying, 'Take these stable-sweepings out of my sight, before I have you killed for your presumption! Windeyes, indeed!'

"So Windeyes gathered her treasures and left Ustrect. But she left one treasure behind, just as she said she would: a jeweled dagger, buried in King Mraga's throat."

I had never heard this tale, until Sheorh told it. No troll of my acquaintance has ever heard it, or any of the countless others like it known to each windling clan. Sheorh spent many a year traveling around Barsaive, collecting the troll legends of other windling clans, and she tells me that every clan has its own version of a tale in which a troll grievously insults an honored windling for no good reason. She thinks, and I agree, that the tale springs not from a real event, but simply from the trolls' longstanding disdain for the windling people.

On the Windling View of T'skrang

T'skrang share with windlings a flair for drama and a zest for life, and so windlings regard the t'skrang as brothers of the soul. Despite the fact that most t'skrang dwell near and in water, an element hazardous to windlings, the little flyers often make companions of the most flamboyant t'skrang they can find. T'skrang also share the windlings' sense of fun and often answer windling jests with jokes and friendly insults of their own. Of all the Namegiver races, the t'skrang come closest to understanding the affection that underlies a windling's incessant teasing and therefore will play along with their windling companions. In their joy at finding a race as playful as themselves, windlings often treat t'skrang with special courtesy.

How Windlings View the Theran Empire

Though almost everyone in Barsaive hates the Therans, the freedom-loving windlings especially despise the Theran Empire. Resting as it does on a foundation of slavery, the Theran Empire strikes most windlings as an offense against life, the Passions, and every moral value that decent folk hold dear.

Theran slavers, especially, rouse windlings to a kind of hate and fear that they feel for no one and nothing else in this world. The little folk's longstanding dislike of trolls is a mere moment's tiff compared to their loathing of the Theran slave trader. Windlings fear slavery as they fear nothing else, save for the Horrors. Whether the slavers hunt windlings or other Namegivers makes no difference; a windling will fight just as hard to save another Namegiver from capture by a slave driver as he would fight for a fellow windling.

Lucky for the windlings, few Therans want windling slaves. Every so often, possession of windlings becomes a fashion, but it rarely lasts more than a few months. Rich Therans with visions of windling artisans forced to craft jewelry for them, or flocks of windling messengers carrying their express commands all over the streets of Vivane or Sky Point soon find their newly bought windlings sickening and dying from the misery of living in chains. Some say that a captive windling simply wills himself to die, and indeed, it's the rare windling who survives the Theran slave life for more than ten or fifteen days.

The Theran Empire's airship fleet offends most windlings almost beyond reason. As children of the air, Barsaivian windlings find the Therans' presence in their best-beloved element a revolting intrusion. They react with the kind of disgust that a troll or a human might at finding maggots in his drinking water. Often, windlings relieve their outraged feelings by sabotaging Theran airships. Such acts are a popular test of courage during mating season.

On the Curious Nature of Theran Windlings

Theran windlings do exist, of course, however much our windling brethren in Barsaive would like to think otherwise. Every Barsaivian windling I've ever met finds the very thought of Theran windlings deeply shaming, and few will own them as kin. This reaction, from a people whose loyalty to all windlings everywhere is only exceeded by their fierce love for their own clansmen, shows just how much the little folk despise the few of their number who take on Theran ways.

The windlings of Barsaive despise their Theran kin for a single, overwhelming reason. Theran windlings accept slavery, thereby throwing away one of the highest ideals of windling culture as if it had no more worth than a clod of mud. Theran windlings think of themselves as Therans first and windlings second, and so manage to tell themselves comforting lies about the slavery and misery that prop up the Theran Empire. Believing that Therans are naturally better than any other folk on the earth, they say that Barsaivians and others are not worthy of the freedom that all windlings love, and so it is right to enslave them.

As it happens, I had an interesting encounter with a Theran windling during a stay at an inn near Vivane. (Not in Vivane, of course—I've not much love for the Therans, myself, no matter how much coin they pay.) In the course of our conversation (which was brief enough—I was naught but benighted, Barsaivian scum to him!), I asked him if he'd ever seen a windling slave, and how that made him feel. He answered that any windling of Barsaive foolish enough to get caught by the slavers clearly didn't deserve freedom, and that it was better such a windling should die than live to breed more fools. (He would have warmed to his subject, but I shut him up by pouring his ale pot over his head and gorgeous suit of clothes. If I ever see him again, I just might pop his little head off.)

CHAPTER TEN

GAME INFORMATION

While a Discipline is most of what makes an adept, we have a heritage that goes back to before we uncovered our magic. Sometimes, these are intertwined.

• Marelle of Glimmerdeep •

This chapter compiles additional rules for the different Namegiver races of Barsaive, material to enhance the experience of roleplaying a member of one of the Namegiver races, as well as rules for the new Disciplines found in later chapters. These new rules supplement the description of the races found earlier in this book. Players and gamemasters are free to disregard some of the rules presented below where a character deviates from the typical ways of his race or where they are more comfortable with the more basic rules presented in the ***Player's Guide***.

DWARFS

The following special rules apply to characters of the dwarf race. Players should also be aware of the roleplaying hints and common Discipline choices presented in the ***Player's Guide*** on p. 19.

SKILLS

In order to roleplay the dwarf affinity for craftsmanship and building, players creating dwarf characters may choose to give their characters a rank in some form of the Craftsman skill in place of one Knowledge skill.

The close relationship between crafts and artistry in dwarf workmanship means that a dwarf's Artisan skills will most likely complement his Craftsman skill. A dwarf who possesses the Woodworker specialization of the Craftsman skill, for example, might also have the Artisan skill of Wood Carving so that he can decorate the objects he fashions from wood.

MOUNTS

Because of their short stature, most dwarf Cavalrymen prefer sturdy ponies, troajin, or huttawa to full-sized horses, or else they ride the ostrich-like huata.

HUATA

Attributes

DEX: 7	**STR**: 6	**TOU**: 5
PER: 4	**WIL**: 7	**CHA**: 3

Characteristics

Initiative: 7	**Physical Defense:** 9
Actions: 1	**Spell Defense:** 6
Attack (2): 9	**Social Defense:** 6
Damage:	**Physical Armor:** 3
Bite (2): 8	**Mystic Armor:** 4
Death: 31	**Recovery Tests:** 2
Unconsciousness: 22	**Knockdown:** 6
Wound Threshold: 8	**Movement:** 8

Powers

Maneuver [S] (2): 9, Sprint [S] (2): 2

[S] General skill

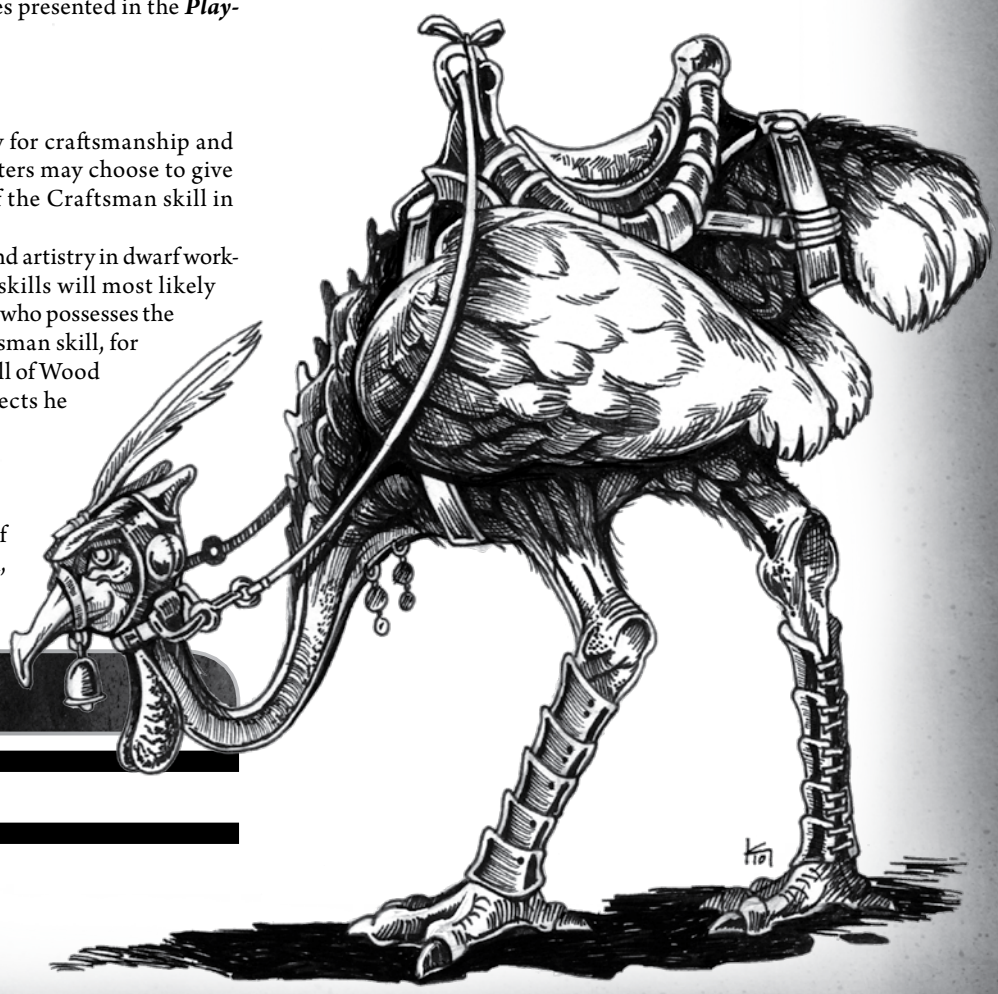
Legend Award

First Circle

Commentary

These creatures resemble flightless birds weighing about 80 pounds. Huatas stand about 6 feet tall, with necks extending further by just over half their height. Dwarfs value these creatures for their running speed and maneuverability. From a distance, crakbills (see the **Creatures** chapter on p. 164 of the ***Gamemaster's Guide***) are often mistaken for wild huatas, an error that occasionally results in the viewer becoming a meal, rather than the owner of a new mount.

The following statistics relate to the care and feeding of the huata when purchased as a mount (see **Mounts** in the **Good and Services** chapter on p. 270 of the ***Player's Guide***).



HUATA

Feed Cost: 3 cp
Carrying Capacity: 125
Weight: 80
Cost: 110
Stable Cost: 3 cp
Speed: 8
Lifespan: 30
Availability: Unusual

NAMES

Dwarfs usually have two Names. The first Name is chosen by the dwarf's parents, the second by the most significant grandparent. It is common for a young dwarf to share one of his Names with a grandparent or parent.

Sample Names

Agnar, Bariv, Dagnus, Egin, Fignus, Glorin, Hofur, Jaella, Kordur, Learka, Lognar, Maera, Noran, Ogus, Paranur, Renar, Riyla, Seadda, Sunar, Tusur, Ulrun, Vignor, Vunar, Ysilla, Zognar

QUESTORS

Dwarfs commonly quest for Upandal and Mynbruje, and sometimes for Chorrolis. Of the Mad Passions, dwarfs most often quest for Dis.

ELVES

The following special rules apply to characters of the elven race. In addition, players should be aware of the roleplaying hints and common Discipline choices presented in the ***Player's Guide*** on p. 20.

NAMES

The Names of elven infants often represent an aspect of their lineage, and are chosen by the parents. Elves commonly undergo the Ritual of Passage at the age of twenty, during which they choose their own Names.

Sample Names

Aeraias, Beshar, Caluath, Dremnin, Eirdeth, Eytherian, Fithvael, Gaelin, Hareth, Iathi, Jaren, Kermanthil, Luevia, Maralan, Nai'ara, Noarethal, Pyrail, Rhyvain, Siluath, Tiathar, Tyrnea, Uthwyn, Vilmir, Yalathael, Zydan

QUESTORS

Elves commonly quest for Jaspree and Astendar, and sometimes quest for Mynbruje. They will quest for all Mad Passions, but most rarely for Raggok.

THE JOURNEY AND THE WHEEL

The elves hold a unique spiritual belief they call the Journey and the Wheel, which states that as an elf ages, his spirit must Follow five Paths before ascending into the metaplanes. Most elves believe in the growth process represented by the Journey and the Wheel, although since the Scourge, fewer observe all of the traditions associated with these beliefs.

If a player chooses for his elven character to Follow the Paths, he must also choose the view he embraces, that of the Sa'mistishsa (strict Followers), or that of the Dae'mistishsa (loose Followers). This distinction makes an important difference in the growth and advancement of the character.

Sa'mistishsa

Those who embrace the view of the strict Followers believe that as an elf ages and travels along the Paths, he must follow a new Discipline on each Path.

When a character who follows this view chooses a new Discipline as he moves onto the next Path, he must abandon the talents and skills of his old Discipline and all the ranks and advantages it conveyed and begin again with the new Discipline. The experience of the old Discipline still exists as part of the character's knowledge and background, but until he reaches the Path of Lords, it remains unavailable to him.

In this case, the player may create a First Circle elven character and choose to place him on a Path further along the Wheel, such as the Path of the Traveler or the Sage. In this case, the player may completely flesh out the Disciplines the character would have followed while journeying on earlier Paths so that all those talents and skills become available when the character reaches the Path of Lords.

When a character begins his journey on the Path of Lords, he may once again use the talents and skills of his previous Disciplines at the same Circles and ranks as when he changed Paths and can continue to increase the ranks of those talents and skills as normal.

Dae'mistishsa

Elves who embrace the spiritual view of the loose Followers suffer no game restrictions, but we do suggest a consideration for roleplaying these characters. As the character travels on each new Path, his view of the world should change slightly to reflect the focus of his current Path. For example: an elven Elementalist who follows the Path of Warriors would certainly act differently than one who follows the Path of Sages.

In addition to allowing the player to stretch his roleplaying abilities, this adjustment in world view makes it plausible for the character to change the way he treats his fellow adventurers and alter his role in the group.

HUMANS

The following special rules apply to characters of the human race. In addition, players should be aware of the roleplaying hints and common Discipline choices presented in the ***Player's Guide*** on p. 21.

ETHNIC SUBGROUPS

Use the following guidelines for the human ethnic subgroups known as the Cathan, Dinganni, Galeb-Klek, the Riders of the Scorched Plain, the Scavians, and the Vorst:

Cathan

Roleplaying a Cathan character poses great challenges. This ethnic group appears to be naturally curious about most things, but does not believe in taking risks. Because Cathans spend their lives in a dangerous environment that forces them to constantly look out for their own welfare, they simply never think to offer help to someone else unless asked. Living in the Servos Jungle makes them self-sufficient, and they assume others possess the skills necessary to survive without help. The Cathan do believe in teamwork, however, and will lend their efforts to the common good until personal risk becomes too great. The Cathan may be roleplayed as child-like—they must be coaxed into doing dangerous deeds and then persuaded that the treasure or goal outweighs the risk involved.

Cathan characters should begin the game with Rank 1 in each of the Climbing, Hunting, and Missile Weapons skills. Players may find several drawbacks to playing a Cathan. They rarely wear any armor heavier than leather, prefer spears and bows to heavy

swords or axes, and most of Barsaive treats them as savages. Playing a Cathan requires a player to accept a fairly narrow scope of roleplaying, as that character's dominant (and perhaps only) traits should be curiosity and self-preservation.

Cathan characters rarely follow the Cavalryman, Sky Raider, Swordmaster, or Wizard Disciplines.

Cathan characters have Starting Attribute Values different from other humans, they are as follows:

Starting Attribute Values		
DEX 11	**STR** 9	**TOU** 10
PER 10	**WIL** 10	**CHA** 10

Dinganni

A player may choose to have his human character originate with the Dinganni ethnic group. The Dinganni mindset rarely lets them follow Disciplines like the Illusionist, Sky Raider, Thief, or Wizard.

Most Dinganni will leave their tribe under two circumstances only. The first is to learn the ways of other races and then return to introduce different ideas and technologies to the tribe. The second is exile, which would force the character to leave the tribe. Gamemasters and players should work together to find a convincing reason why a Dinganni character left his tribe. For example, a Dinganni character heeding the call of the Thief would get exiled because of that.

Dinganni characters have Starting Attribute Values different from other humans, they are as follows:

Starting Attribute Values		
DEX 10	**STR** 10	**TOU** 11
PER 10	**WIL** 10	**CHA** 9

Galeb-Klek

Characters with Galeb or Klek blood show obvious physical distinctions if compared to one another, but otherwise look much like other humans. The children of the Galeb and Klek ethnic groups are called the Galeb-Klek.

The upbringing of the Galeb-Klek is more enlightened than that provided by many other human groups. Their mothers and fathers, direct descendants of the original crossbreeding, are considered intelligent and sensitive, which makes them effective educators as well as good parents. Galeb-Klek try to uphold good and protect the innocent whenever possible. They need not endanger themselves unnecessarily to do so, but neither would they perpetrate a second wrong to make a right.

Players may choose to contradict the Galeb-Klek stereotype. A nonconformist Galeb-Klek implies a person who lacks honesty or scruples, and such a character would probably be disowned by his parents and friends. New acquaintances who discover his ethnicity will trust him more easily than might be expected, and will feel a greater need for revenge if betrayed.

Because the denizens of Barsaive are rediscovering their world and each other, each race has the opportunity to prove or disprove its reputation as set forth in the Book of Tomorrow. The Galeb-Klek currently enjoy a great deal of respect. The actions of a Galeb-Klek player character will determine if the Galeb-Klek's reputation continues to be deserved.

Most Galeb-Klek characters have Starting Attribute Values as other humans, but some still lean towards one side of their heritage and resemble this side more than the other.

Characters leaning towards the galeb side of their heritage use the following set of Starting Attribute Values:

Starting Attribute Values		
DEX 9	**STR** 11	**TOU** 10
PER 10	**WIL** 10	**CHA** 10

Characters leaning towards the klek side of their heritage use the following set of Starting Attribute Values:

Starting Attribute Values		
DEX 11	**STR** 9	**TOU** 10
PER 10	**WIL** 10	**CHA** 10

Riders of the Scorched Plain

The Riders of the Scorched Plain represent a closed, mostly despised subculture of humanity. They survived the Scourge at the cost of innocent lives, a circumstance that others find difficult, if not impossible, to forgive or forget. A Rider must be an exceptional person to break away from this group and make his way successfully among the rest of society, or to remain a part of the subculture and earn acceptance in the outside world.

The fact that individuals of other races belong to the Riders proves that there are as many stories to explain the Riders as there are Riders. A player who wishes to play a Rider of the Scorched Plain must justify his separation from his people.

Rider characters should begin play with the Animal Handling and Charge skills at Rank 1. They may choose any Discipline normally available to humans.

Scavians

Scavian characters are pirates, sailors, and above all else, swashbucklers. They love the open seas, danger, and the glory of the fight. On the surface, Scavians and t'skrang share many characteristics. Scavian characters should begin play with Rank 1 in each of the Sailing, Swimming, and Melee Weapons skills.

They usually do not follow the way of the Cavalryman. They sometimes become Sky Raiders by earning the respect of troll Sky Raiders through exceptional displays of leadership during battle. At the gamemaster's discretion, Scavian characters may pursue the Boatman Discipline, even though this is normally restricted to t'skrang only.

Vorst

Vorst characters pursue every action to the fullest extent possible. If the character builds a raft, he lashes the timbers twice as many times as needed, melts tree-gum between the timbers, and bakes it in the sun for several days before he even considers putting it in the water. In game terms, most actions performed by a Vorst (including Karma rituals) usually take one and a half times longer than normal to complete. Certain commonsense exceptions to this rule apply: they cast spells during combat as quickly as possible, for instance, but many other opportunities for roleplaying this Vorst characteristic will arise during play. Players and gamemasters should use Vorst zealousness as a roleplaying tool, however, and not allow it to impede the flow of the game.

In combat, Vorst are merciless. They dismember and cremate fallen foes, and any weapons or armor they reject they bury or toss into a lake to ensure they cannot be used by others. Vorst rarely follow the Disciplines of Cavalryman, Illusionist, and Troubadour (they disdain such foolish merriment).

Vorst characters have Starting Attribute Values different from other humans, they are as follows:

Starting Attribute Values		
DEX 9	**STR** 10	**TOU** 11
PER 10	**WIL** 11	**CHA** 9

NAMES

Humans receive their Names from their parents, keeping them for the rest of their lives.

Sample Names

Alvar, Baldred, Celina, Delmor, Elwind, Fenwill, Galdora, Honguth, Hyram, Igna, Kelandra, Lamand, Melgador, Nahindra, Ophelia, Pandur, Quelana, Rigus, Santorano, Timbur, Ulgur, Vendar, Wilbur, Xandir, Zidan

QUESTORS

An equal number of humans quest for each of the Passions, including the Mad Passions.

OBSIDIMEN

The following special rules apply to characters of the obsidiman race. In addition, players should be aware of the roleplaying hints and common Discipline choices presented in the ***Player's Guide*** on p. 21.



BLOOD MAGIC

Obsidimen refuse to use most blood magic, making an exception when using blood pebble and living crystal armor. An obsidiman only rarely swears a blood magic oath with another Namegiver. Because such an oath magically connects the True Patterns of the participants and because all obsidimen in a Brotherhood are of the same spirit, connecting the True Pattern of one obsidiman to another Namegiver automatically connects the oath-swearer to the entire Brotherhood.

Such a deed is anathema to the Elders of most Brotherhoods and also to the Council of Four, whose members act as the guardians of obsidiman ways and traditions. Only under certain rare circumstances is it appropriate for an obsidiman to swear a blood magic oath with a member of another Namegiver race. In addition, all obsidimen know that they may one day be called to serve as an Elder of their Brotherhood, which would force them to violate any lifelong oaths sworn with any not of their race.

Obsidimen use a unique ritual to swear blood magic oaths among themselves. The participants merge and remain together in the Dreaming for five days, during which time they swear oaths of blood magic to one another. In game terms, this ritual has the same effects as normal blood magic oaths, but it can only so bind two obsidimen.

LIFEROCKS AND BROTHERHOODS

The profound loyalty an obsidiman feels toward his Liferock and Brotherhood affects game play in specific ways. An obsidiman character will do anything to protect his Liferock and Brotherhood, even sacrificing his life in their defense. If an obsidiman's Liferock comes under attack, the Liferock sends a call for help to all the members of its Brotherhood through the elemental spirit they all share. Every member of the Brotherhood must respond to this call in whatever way possible. Those in close proximity to the Liferock must return to it immediately and defend it, and even those several days' travel away must return as soon as possible. In the same way, an obsidiman must aid any member of his Brotherhood who needs his help.

When a player character's Liferock is threatened or a member of his Brotherhood dies, the player character must make a Perception (4) Test. If the test succeeds, the obsidiman hears the call of his Liferock and knows that it is threatened or that one of his Brotherhood has died. An Excellent or better result tells the character which of his brothers has died.

If the test fails, the character will receive the call (and learn the Name of his fallen brother, if applicable) sometime within the next two days. As a penalty for his failure to devote a sufficient part of his awareness to his Brotherhood and Liferock, the player character should hear the call at the most inopportune time; say, in the middle of a battle. No obsidiman can say why such a call always seems to interrupt

some other important event, though some consider it punishment exacted from an obsidiman too involved with his own affairs to hear his Liferock.

Becoming an Elder

An obsidiman player character may become one of his Brotherhood's Elders if an Elder dies and the player character is the next oldest of his Brotherhood. Whenever an Elder dies, the Liferock calls to its Brotherhood and tells the next oldest obsidiman that he must serve as the next Elder. To take his place as an Elder, the character must return to his Liferock and quit adventuring.

Obsidiman Gatherings

During a Gathering, obsidimen celebrate meeting others of their kind. A Gathering always involves at least two Brotherhoods and lasts three to four hours. The participants merge with each other in the Dreaming and share tales, stories, and knowledge, all the while beyond the reach of the outside world. Most Gatherings occur outdoors in secluded places where the obsidimen can blend in with their surroundings and remain unnoticed by those of other races.

Though Gatherings happen very rarely, if such a meeting is in progress when a participant hears a call from his Liferock, all those involved in the Gathering hear the call. If the Liferock is calling its Brotherhood for protection or defense, all Gathering members may join the journey, though they have no obligation to do so.

Armor

While any obsidiman would be perfectly able to wear any suit of armor (provided it was tailored to his size), most of them generally refuse to do so, for the same reason that obsidimen prefer to wear as little clothing as possible.

Most obsidimen feel that surrounding their bodies with dead material puts a barrier between them and nature, which is the reason why they prefer to wear only living armor that is a part of nature due to being alive. Most obsidiman consider stone armor close enough to the earth to be worn in times of need, but some brotherhoods may as well consider it lifeless, as the stone has been cut out of the earth.

Names

Obsidimen receive their Names during the Awakening, given to them by their Liferock. Over the course of two decades, the Awakened learns about the world from fellow brothers, and during this time he discovers the Name that was given to him.

Sample Names

Amaltham, Belarus, Cedrok, Domnur, Erathun, Forr, Gothus, Haralayelus, Imodun, Jarralak, Korum, Laramanus, Monuk, Nostrus, Ophranim, Physt, Quaron, Redurus, Sogun, Torukor, Uhnar, Voltor, Wethysor, Xamdar, Ygasu

Questors

Obsidimen rarely become questors of any of the Passions, and when they do, they normally only quest for Mynbruje and Jaspree. Obsidimen rarely quest for any of the Mad Passions.

Orks

The following special rules apply to characters of the ork race. In addition, players should be aware of the roleplaying hints and common Discipline choices presented in the ***Player's Guide*** on p. 22.

Names

Before an ork is born, his mother dreams the vravraka, where she sees the child demanding the Name it desires. Tribal orks usually add descriptive Names hinting at their deeds, ideals, or virtues to this Name over the course of their lives.

Sample Names

Aluk, Brog, Curst, Drognur, Ekarr, Faghn, Gors, Garon, Horak, Jurok, Kartos, Kia'k, Lorga, Mornur, Nago, Orkal, Pahok, Quan, Ristar, Tok, Uvul, Ulag, Venag, Y'lomm, Zugrut

Questors

Orks will most often quest for Lochost and Thystonius. Orks rarely quest for the Mad Passions and almost never for Dis.

Trolls

The following special rules apply to characters of the troll race. In addition, players should be aware of the roleplaying hints and common Discipline choices presented in the ***Player's Guide*** on p. 23.

Karma Rituals

A troll's concept of privacy affects the circumstances under which he will perform his Karma Ritual. Unless an individual troll's Karma Ritual specifically requires the presence of another, as in a Troubadour's ritual, he will do everything in his power to avoid performing the ritual in front of someone else.

Other Namegiver races often misunderstand the motivation behind this obsession with privacy; they tend to believe that trolls feel shamed if someone witnesses their Karma Ritual because they themselves are somehow ashamed of it. In fact, trolls believe that performing something as personal as a Karma Ritual in front of someone else places a burden on the witnesses that might shame or embarrass them.

Names

Highland trolls have three Names. A troll's first Name, like a human's or dwarf's "given" Name, is associated more or less uniquely with that individual and often has some meaning in the language from which it derives. The derivation of the second Name varies from from clan to clan and moot to moot. In some clans it indicates the trolls family or clan; in others, it merely serves as a second personal identifier. The third Name identifies the troll's clan or moot. The major trollmoots are located in the Twilight Peaks: the Stoneclaws and the Swiftwinds to the East, the Blood Lores and Blackfangs to the West, and the Ironmongers and Thundersky trollmoots in the central peaks.

Lowland trolls are known to follow human Naming rituals and pay court in the manner of their human neighbors.

Sample Names

Bormak, Crygath, Dogul, Emkor, Fograk, Ganlor, Holdur, Irrgam, Jorkaw, Kaan, Lorrm, Mongur, Narkys, Orrguth, Osker, Pawkarr, Quindor, Rothur, Starrk, Tahst, Twak'dar, Urdon, Vigord, Wrogath, Zisgul

Questors

Trolls will most often quest for Thystonius, the favored Passion of trolls. They will occasionally quest for Jaspree and Lochost and almost never for the Mad Passions.

T'SKRANG

The following special rules apply to characters of the t'skrang race. In addition, players should be aware of the roleplaying hints and common Discipline choices presented in the ***Player's Guide*** on p. 23.

ETHNIC SUBGROUPS

While most often players will end up playing t'skrang characters from the Serpent River, some may choose to play characters from the other types of t'skrang described in this chapter. The following are brief guidelines for players choosing to use this option.

Jungle T'skrang

Jungle t'skrang live in a primitive fashion, preferring their lives within the jungle to the so-called civilized societies found across Barsaive. Jungle t'skrang find other Namegiver races, with their preference for living inside various structures, difficult to understand, and so distrust them to a degree. Their partiality to living in the bosom of nature sometimes leads them to resist their companions' plans to shelter in villages and towns.

Jungle t'skrang rely on relatively primitive weapons and armor, most often choosing spears, slings, or staves, and refuse to wear metal, living crystal, or blood-pebble armor. They also disdain the use of shields. Some tribes of jungle t'skrang use nets and other weapons of entanglement made from vines, equivalent to nets and bolas.

The Pale Ones

The Pale Ones also live a more primitive lifestyle than other Namegivers. Unlike their jungle counterparts, however, the Pale Ones fear open spaces and the outdoors, preferring to remain indoors as much as possible. When traveling outdoors, the Pale Ones become distracted by the unusual, rather frightening sensations of being without shelter and often perform their duties within a group less effectively.

Like jungle t'skrang, Pale Ones rely on relatively primitive weapons and armor, but pick up the use of swords and knives quickly.

Pale Ones gain Heat Sight (***Player's Guide***, p. 20) as an additional Racial Ability.

Winged T'skrang

Most *k'stulaami*, or winged t'skrang, born to the t'skrang society of the Serpent River leave their homes around the time they become adults at age 12. The *k'stulaami* are born with a passion to fly that consumes their nature, even changing their language. The Serpent River t'skrang find these t'skrang difficult to live with and understand, and so it is that most *k'stulaami* find their way to a large community of their kind that lives in the Throal Mountains. These t'skrang rarely choose to travel across Barsaive and live among the other Namegivers, but some do so in order to keep abreast of world events and technological and magical developments. Most Namegiver races consider the *k'stulaami* to be oddities and freaks, but these attitudes are based on tales and folklore recounted by t'skrang storytellers. Given the opportunity to relate to other races, *k'stulaami* get along well with all but the t'skrang of the Serpent. Many *k'stulaami* resent the Serpent River t'skrang for treating them as mutants rather than kin.

K'stulaami use many types of weapons, often developing unique ways of fighting using weapons taken from adventurers who bother or harass the *k'stulaami* community. They use only the lightest types of armor, so that they can glide unimpeded.

K'stulaami gain the Gliding ability as an additional Racial Ability:

Gliding: The character can glide through the air after leaping from a position higher than his body height. He can perform his movement for the round in a glide rather than walking. Without any further tests being made, the character can glide 1 hex horizontally for every hex of downward movement. Learning the Gliding skill (p. 228) can increase the character's ability to glide under certain circumstances. A successful Gliding (5) Test allows the character to glide 1 hex horizontally per Result Level achieved (starting with Average) for every hex moved downward. The gamemaster modifies the Difficulty Number for the Gliding Test according to wind speeds. Very strong wind can hamper the character's aerial maneuvers. Just as well, not enough wind disrupts the character's lift, granting only the most basic gliding movement. In very strong winds, though, the gamemaster may allow a Gliding Test to remain stationary, although this prohibits most other movement, for example combat, as the character has to fully focus on maintaining his position. Gliding can be combined with movement combat options, but not with talents that alter movement, such as Sprint or Gliding Stride.



NAMES

A t'skrang begins life with two Names, one chosen by its egg parent before the hatchling breaks its shell, and the second the

Name of the foundation into which it is born. At *kaissa*, when the hatchling becomes an adult, it chooses its third Name, sometimes a descriptive Name or self-styled title. A t'skrang who earns the honor of entering an aropagoi gains a fourth Name, although it often replaces the foundation Name where the foundation is a recognized and known part of the aropagoi anyway. An honored t'skrang who undergoes *k'soto* ensherenk and becomes a *lahala* accepts her foundation's Name as her only Name. T'skrang Names are often difficult to pronounce for outsiders.

Sample Names

Aysusul, Ayapagoam, Aychasu, Ch'isha, D'zurr, Gris'kall, Ka'Daiyen, Kar'rath, Kricklas, Kenshan, Rh'gullian, R'ressnosh, San't, P'shalmar, Schlome, Shisa'kas, Ss'kala, Syrkhan, T'aysta, T'sabur, T'shystalan, Vash'sten, V'stogas, Yoke, Z'rrt'shulam

Questors

T'skrang commonly quest for Chorrolis, Thystonius, and Upandal. They will rarely quest for the Mad Passions, and of those most often for Vestrial.

Windlings

The following special rules apply to characters of the windling race. In addition, players should be aware of the roleplaying hints and common Discipline choices presented in the ***Player's Guide*** on p. 24.

Alternative Talent Choices

Because of their racial abilities, most windling characters have no use for talents such as Climbing, Gliding Stride, or Great Leap.

When a windling adept receives one of these talents – or a similar one both player and gamemaster feel is redundant with the windling's ability to fly – as a Discipline Talent or Talent Option, he may replace it with the Wind Catcher or Wind Dance talent, or learn a Talent Option of the gamemaster's approval available at his current Circle in place of that talent if it is a Discipline Talent.

Combat Tactics

Windlings' lighter physical make-up and the impracticality of trying to fly in heavy armor make it possible for attackers to bring down a healthy windling combatant with one solid blow. Windlings generally attempt to offset this disadvantage by using a unique series of tactics and talents in combat situations, the most prominent of which is a rapid swooping attack. A windling takes advantage of his flight capability to plunge toward an enemy, hit his opponent with a single blow in an area of vulnerability, then race into the sky out of harm's way before his stunned opponent can react and retaliate. Use of this tactic requires the use of the Splitting Movement combat option (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 226 of the ***Player's Guide***).

In keeping with their preference for distance attacks, windlings usually use weapons such as bows, spears, and blowguns and often coat their weapons with poisons and other drugs to gain an additional advantage.

Windlings prefer to strike from concealed positions, waiting until they have the advantage to attack, much in the style of guerrilla warfare—adepts of the Windmaster Discipline employ this tactic to their advantage. However, most windlings find more honor in neutralizing an opponent's fighting capability than in killing. A windling who disables an opponent gains stature as a fighter of great skill, and if he can add a humorous or embarrassing element to the disabling, so much the better.

Names

A windling receives his Name from his parents and kinparents.

Sample Names

Aylaa, Buukh, Cydiilya, Daalan, Ekidii, Faylaa, Ghooru, Gesaale, Hakudaa, Ijundaa, Joorn, Kaarth, Leeth, Manataas, Nyataij, Osildaas, Poosim, Qendaar, Pooth, Syildijan, Tinsoo, Ukayaar, Vaylaa, Xastiin, Zorisanaal

Questors

Windlings rarely become questors, but those who do commonly quest for Lochost and Floranuus. Of the Mad Passions, they will usually only quest for Vestrial.

New Disciplines

The following rules and guidelines apply to the new Disciplines introduced in this book.

Racial Restrictions

Many of the Disciplines presented here show a "Racial Restriction:" characteristic in their Game Information entry. Racial Restrictions are an optional rule for the Disciplines presented in the ***Player's Guide*** (see p. 40 there), but apply as a standard rule where listed with a Discipline in this book. Disciplines that have a Racial Restriction limit that Discipline to only one race in availability, the Discipline is an expression or extension of that race's culture or physical traits. For example, the Taildancer Discipline reads "Racial restriction: T'skrang" which means only t'skrang can learn this Discipline (as it requires an understanding of Tail Combat).

For some Disciplines, the player and gamemaster can work together to allow certain exceptions to these Racial Restrictions based on character background, though. While it is unlikely a non-t'skrang would grow up with a tail to become a Taildancer, it is feasible that a non-dwarf character could become a Traveled Scholar if he grew up among dwarfs, or even just benefited from Throal's good schooling system, if his mindset includes the dwarf trait for building up knowledge. Just the same, it is even suggested that Scavian humans are allowed to become Boatmen, normally reserved for t'skrang. New races, either from future Earthdawn products or designed by the gamemaster, may also be eligible to learn the Disciplines presented in this book because of physical traits. The same is true for cultures different from those present in Barsaive or presented in official **Earthdawn** products.

New Disciplines' Roles

The Disciplines introduced in the ***Player's Guide*** represent the most common Barsaivian Disciplines and the ones best known by inhabitants of the province, as well as the oldest ones. Some of the Disciplines presented here are relatively new additions to the way of the adept, even if they are already centuries old, or are encountered less frequently or in certain areas only. Gamematsers can derive these traits from the Disciplines' and races' descriptions in this book. As an additional guideline on how Barsaivians react towards or have knowledge of these Disciplines, refer to History and Role and Public Acceptance on p. 176 of the ***Gamemaster's Companion***.

Gamemasters can have gamemaster characters more easily mistake one of the newer Disciplines for another, better known one, or can make it more difficult or costly to find tutelage in one of these new Disciplines.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ON THE BOATMAN'S JOURNEY

The following document is a transcript of a conversation with Ssh'kasta, a captain in service of House Syrtis. Her ship was in port at Tansiarda, where I was able to meet her a few days after she had won a battle against renegades trying to sabotage the bridge construction. Ssh'kasta was a remarkable t'skrang to meet; she didn't mention the battle with even a single word.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

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And why should she mention the battle? Ssh'kasta is fighting against her own house—the renegades are from the Wavram niall, which is also part of the Syrtis aropagoi. There is no pride in fighting dirty battles.

—Melor Tuk, Member of the Royal Guild of Engineers

ON A PURPOSE MOST FINE

I once heard a philosopher ask if a fish knows it is in water. The answer is simple for a t'skrang: of course! We are always aware of the water around us. Are orks confused by the presence of the air that fills their lungs? I should think not! But there is in that philosopher's question something worth thinking about. While we obviously know we are tied to the water, many t'skrang do not give water any further thought.

And how can they forget our mistress so quickly? Our riverboats bring us fame from across Barsaive, and our great cities in the waters are the envy of every dreaming architect. But you see, when you live each day amid such splendors, you start to forget that they are special. So to the philosopher's fish, water is not unknown, but it is certainly forgettable. Or so it would be to most fish, and most t'skrang.

How my people would bristle at my fishy comparison! But I am not one to say things that are confounding. I call a fish a fish. That is what makes me special, you see. I see things that are right in front of me. I am a Boatman, and because of this, I will never forget the water. The river lies before me like a map and a guide in one. I have spent years learning to read her bends and surges. I will spend years more. The funny thing is, I know I will never know all of her secrets. That might just be my favorite part.

There is an adage among t'skrang, where heroes are easily made: "Swordmasters get the glory. Elementalists get the fortune. Boatmen get them home." I can speak for no others, but for this Boatman, that is just as it should be. I have glory enough in riding the river and fortune enough in seeing the sunrise reflected from the waters that embrace my ship. I am content to ferry the heroes of other tales, because I see the water for what it is. I see my purpose in all of this. Like all t'skrang, I have the river in my blood. Unlike many others, I thank the river for her gift.

A BRIEF COMPLAINT REGARDING THE SKY

I hope you can indulge me in one small conceit. I savor the thrill of adventure as much as any t'skrang, and I know that the river, for all of her majesty, has a course she will always run. This, I imagine, is why those with greater magic than mine take to the sky. But I must know, what can the sky offer that steals so many of you away? The sky can stand still, as easily as a breeze can stop blowing. The river is always moving. The river wants to take you where you want to go. Why go to all the trouble of wrestling the sky into submission when the river will gladly give you a ride?

Please forgive my curiosity. I have never flown. The water in the sky is too thin for my comfort. Rain is a river without a course.

Quite unsettling, if you ask me.

ON DUTY

Fishermen fish the rivers and lakes, bringing food to their families. Captains steer their riverboats up and down the Serpent, bringing passengers and goods to their destinations. Soldiers defend the cities of our people with trispear and sword. Each has a duty, and each does his duty with the passion that fate has given our race.

For Boatmen, our passion is a bit muddled. We fish, we steer, and we fight. Our purpose is the river, moving forward always. But our duty is to more than the river. Our duty is to family, friends, and house. These are things, you may note, that are not always moving forward. Homes do not often drift downstream with the river's wish, and friends can not easily give up their responsibilities and travel the ever-changing road. How can our purpose and our duty work in the same heart?

Rather than travel a fixed route, most riverboats have a region they cater to, usually between the Serpent Lakes. There are a good number of ships, however, that simply go wherever the river takes them.

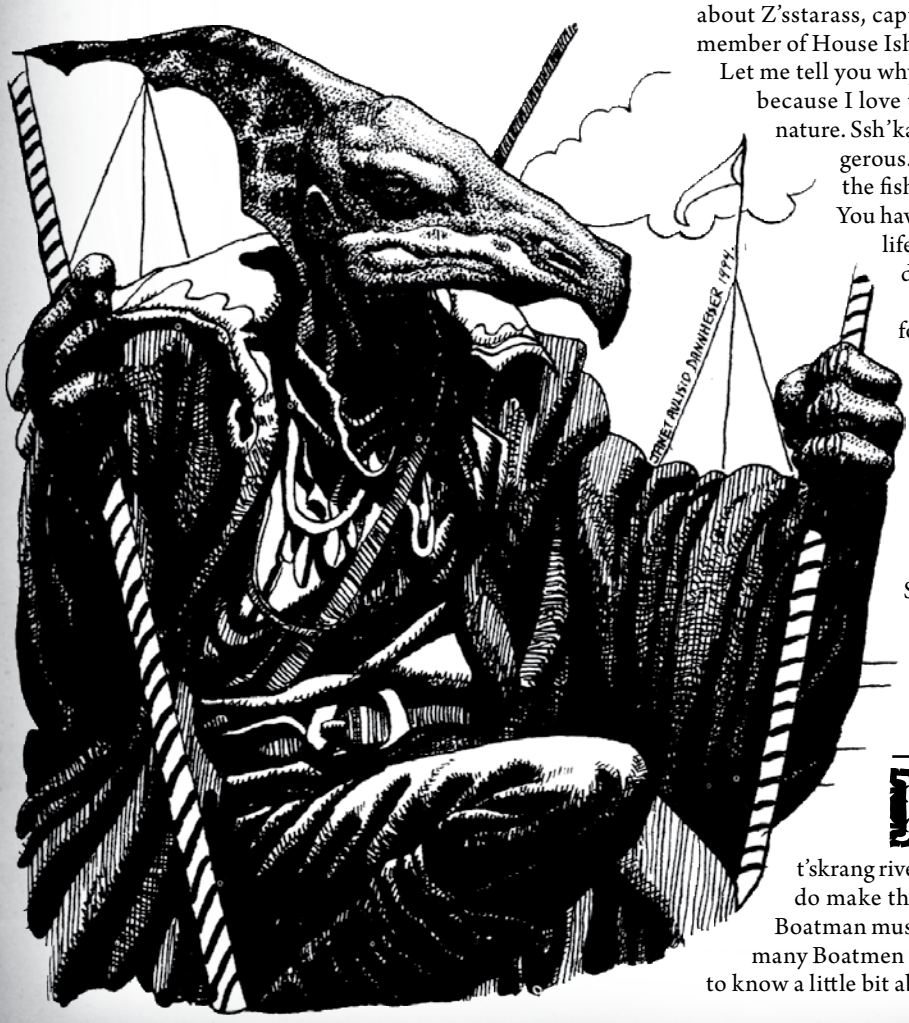
—K'shstai K'van, Captain of the Silverstorm

The river gives us an answer. We will always move forward, fishing, steering, fighting, and exulting in the joys of each day. But just as each river, including the mighty Serpent, is birthed from a source, so too are Boatmen. Our duty is to be as the river, always changing yet always honoring the places from which we come. The river would have us no other way.

On the Shedding of Fear

There are many words to describe the river, and many words to describe the Boatman. But rather than bore you with the flexibility of my education, I think the best term to express our commonality is *jik'harra*. Oh, it is widely known that among t'skrang, fear is really more of an itch. We ignore it as often as we give in to it, our nature being what it is. But for the Boatman, the first lesson is to cast aside fear. It serves no purpose. On the wide blue road, it is a harsher enemy than any sea snake. Fear is the only thing that can turn the water against you.

I speak of many things, and I am grateful that you indulge me in this. But I have been many places in my travels along the river. I have seen many things as well; things that break my heart and leave me in awe—sometimes both at the same time! In all of these times and places, I have used my many abilities. I have read the river, and I have fought with a ferocity that would chill your flesh. But in every case, there was only one of my gifts that served me faithfully. Fearlessness is all we have, when the river is miles away and the dust clings to our skin. When we shed our fear, we take away the handle at which the dark things of the world grasp. We become slippery, like fish.



I told you. I see things as they are. A dwarf is a dwarf. A t'skrang is a t'skrang. And a Boatman is a fish. At least in my dreams, if nowhere else.



The following addendum was said to be written by Z'sstarass, captain of the feared pirate riverboat, Silver Serpent, and member of House Ishkarat. While we cannot verify the truth of this claim, we deemed it a useful addition because piracy is common on certain reaches of the Serpent River.

—Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records



On Piracy

Only after I read the words of the famous (ha!) Ssh'kasta did I understand why House Syrtis has been struggling so hard these last years. When members of our Discipline are satisfied with the lives of fishermen and ferryboat captains, how can they build up glory, wealth, and a legend? How can they reach fearlessness? By fishing? I certainly want to see that fish!

Even the least deckscrubber in my crew is a better example of how to live a life of excitement, adventure, and *haropas* than Ssh'kasta. Some people call me a pirate (heck, there's a bounty on my head!), but I'm not afraid. I don't even care. Only by becoming a pirate was I able to live a life full of adventure and become a legend. No one will remember fishermen like Ssh'kasta once they're gone, but how many Namegivers of Barsaive have heard about Z'sstarass, captain of the feared *Silver Serpent* and proud member of House Ishkarat?

Let me tell you why I follow the path of the Boatman. It's not because I love travelling on the river—that's a t'skrang's nature. Ssh'kasta says life on the Serpent is harsh and dangerous. Well, I'm one of those dangers; at least for the fishermen and ferry captains of House Syrtis! You have to become the villain if you want to live a life of fearlessness, facing the ones fighting the danger!

When my ship goes alongside another ship for boarding, I enjoy life and lose my fear at that very moment. It is the ultimate challenge and the reason why I chose to become a pirate; not only do I serve my house in this way, I live like a true Boatman. The river itself isn't dangerous; it is a part of life. Remember that the next time you meet a Boatman. True Boatmen are not a bunch of fishermen—we're the best fighters on the Serpent, and we're ready to prove it!

Game Information

Boatmen serve aboard the countless t'skrang riverboats of the Serpent River. Not every crew member of a t'skrang riverboat follows this Discipline, but those who do make the best officers and captains on the river. A Boatman must know the river, his crew, and his ship; but many Boatmen choose this Discipline out of a fierce desire to know a little bit about everything else, too.



Important Attributes: Charisma, Dexterity

Racial Restriction: T'skrang

Karma Ritual: To begin his Karma ritual, the Boatman should be moving somewhere on the surface of a body of water (or imagine himself as such), whether on a boat or swimming under his own power. He must fix his gaze on a point on the shore and remain focused on that point until his movement carries it beyond his view. During this time, he must concentrate and remove all fear from his mind. When the ritual is complete, he says aloud: "*I have passed beyond my fear*".

Artisan Skills: Storytelling, Wood Carving

Half-Magic: The Boatman's uses for half-magic include the maintenance, repair, and construction of riverboats; knowledge of riverboat designs; and recognition of different types of boats, commonly followed trade routes, and riverboat crew complements. Boatmen gain access to the Read River, Sailing, and Navigation skills via half-magic while aboard riverboats. Because working on a riverboat requires a high degree of athletic ability, Boatmen may make Half-Magic Tests to swing from rigging or avoid obstacles while moving around a riverboat.

Crew Covenant

Boatmen serving aboard t'skrang riverboats use similar ways to identify an individual's rank aboard ship as Air Sailors (see **Chain of Command** on p. 18 of the ***Player's Companion***). Because such crews are mostly t'skrang and often stem from the same village, individual crews may use t'skrang equivalents of the different ranks or have different names for the ranks by traditions. For example, the lowest rank may be called "hatchling" instead of "deckhand". Ranks that indicate command of a fleet, such as "admiral" are uncommon outside the aropagoi and often replaced with "Trade Master" or a similar indication of experience in commanding a trade expedition.

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Avoid Blow, Haggle, Speak Language, Throwing Weapons, Unarmed Combat

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Climbing, Karma Ritual, Melee Weapons, Pilot Boat, Swimming

Novice

Talent Options: Durability (6/5), Evaluate, First Impression, Heartening Laugh, Maneuver, Missile Weapons, Swift Kick, Wound Balance

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Cast Net

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Read River

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Dexterity-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [River Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Acrobatic Strike, Conceal Object, Engaging Banter, Great Leap, Lasting Impression, Mystic Aim, Surprise Strike, Tiger Spring

Fifth Circle

Flow of *Kiatsu*: After having used at least half of his Movement Rate, the adept may take 2 Strain to get a +2 bonus to Knockdown and Attack Tests until the end of the round while aboard a riverboat.
Discipline Talent: Swing Attack

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Charisma-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Lion Heart

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Action Tests made aboard a riverboat.
Discipline Talent: Second Weapon

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Disarm

WARDEN

Talent Options: Critical Hit, Detect Falsehood, Eagle Eye, Pin, Rally, Second Attack, Shield Beater, Whirlwind

Ninth Circle

Strength of *Jik'harra*: For 2 Strain, the adept draws on his understanding of *jik'harra* to repeat a previously failed test to resist fear or intimidation. Strength of *Jik'harra* does not grant a test where no opportunity exists, only to repeat a failed one.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Lion Spirit

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Defense

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Life Check

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Infuse Blade

MASTER

Talent Options: Aura Armor, Champion Challenge, Ethereal Weapon, Missile Twister, Quick Shot, Water Dancing

Thirteenth Circle

Forging *P'skarrot*: The adept declares his destiny, the ultimate challenge, the best possible thing he sees himself achieving in his lifetime. He may take 1 Strain to spend 1 additional Karma Point on any one test made when trying to fulfill the destiny. Only one destiny may ever be declared. If the adept fails to achieve it, he subtracts –1 from his Karma Step. If he succeeds, he receives a +2 bonus to his Reputation towards t'skrang.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Mind Blade

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +2 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Vitality

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Second Chance

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Motion is at the core of the Boatman's way. Adepts of this Discipline share a love for competition and keep moving forward. Boatmen share a close relationship with the river, sharing its ever-flowing nature by becoming restless wanderers on Barsaive's river lanes. This bond is natural to the t'skrang, which is the reason why there are so many t'skrang practicing this Discipline.

Like Air Sailors, Boatmen usually have a strong sense of obligation to their crewmates. A riverboat's crew has to work hand in hand, so Boatmen tend to fit in with anyone, even in port. Most Boatmen dream of owning a riverboat, which often becomes a driving goal in the adepts' lives.

DISCIPLINE VIOLATIONS

Boatmen most often suffer talent crises when they let things stop moving forward. Taking action and moving on is a central part of their nature. As a result, adepts of this Discipline rarely sit down to develop elaborate plans.

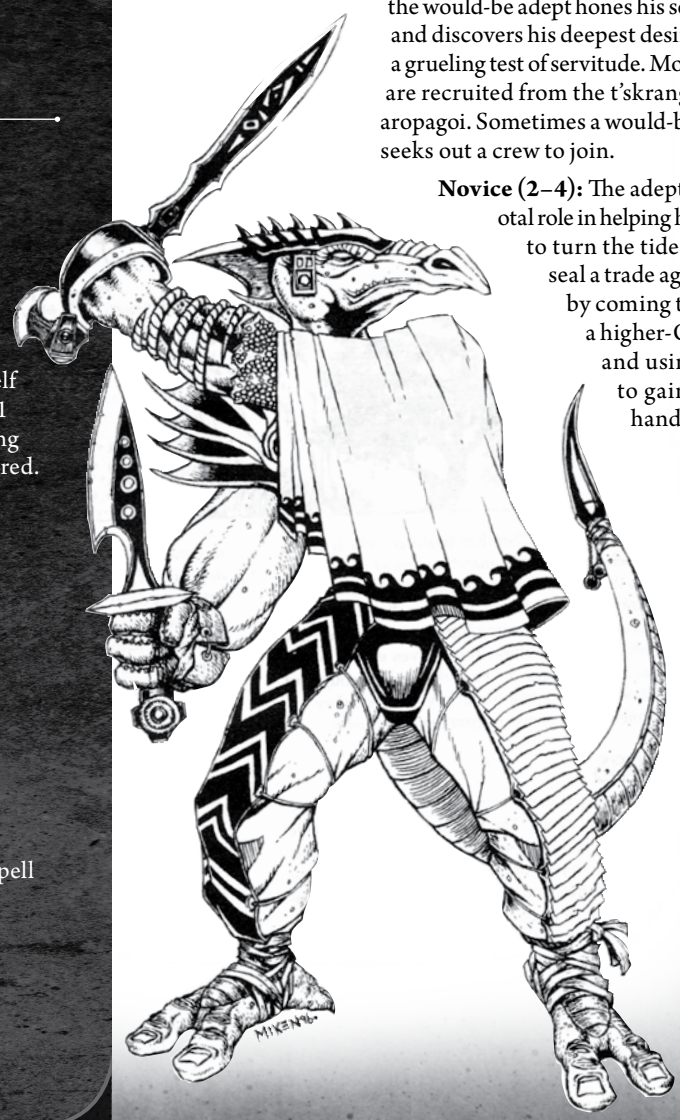
A Boatman staying put for an extended duration often feels off-balance and tired. Without action, he is ripe for a talent crisis.

RITUALS OF ADVANCEMENT

Boatman rituals and tests for advancement resemble those used by Air Sailors, traditionally focusing equally on physical and mental prowess. Often the Boatman must bring back a trophy to prove that he successfully completed the ritual.

Recruitment: To be accepted as a recruit, the would-be adept hones his sense of duty and discovers his deepest desires through a grueling test of servitude. Most Boatmen are recruited from the t'skrang nialls and aropagoi. Sometimes a would-be Boatman seeks out a crew to join.

Novice (2–4): The adept takes a pivotal role in helping his riverboat to turn the tide in battle or seal a trade agreement, or by coming to the aid of a higher-Circle adept and using panache to gain the upper hand.



Journeyman (5–8): The adept must somehow rescue his riverboat from obstacles or danger. For example, he may have to navigate the riverboat through treacherous rapids without damaging it, or steer it through enemy territory without being noticed.

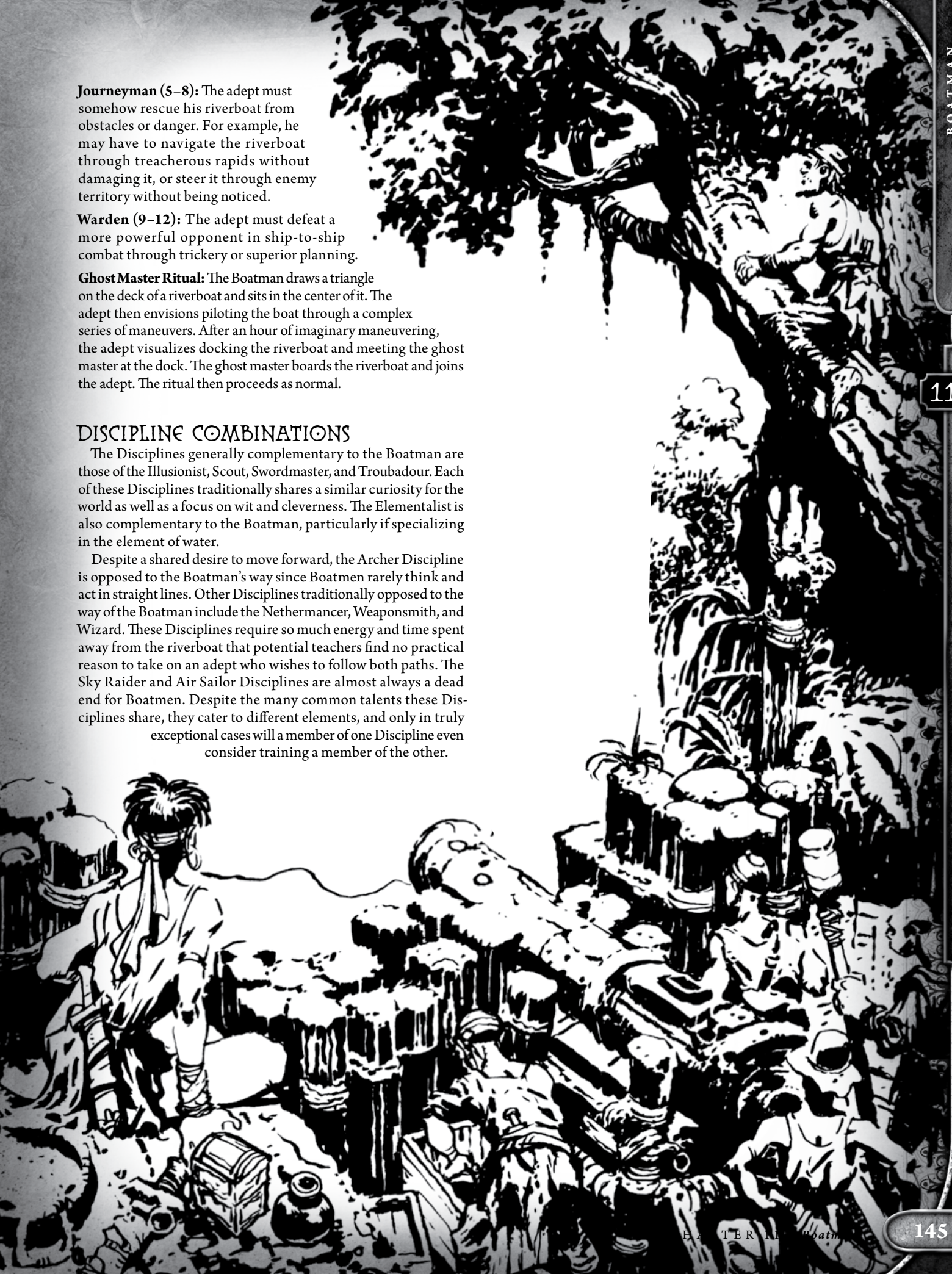
Warden (9–12): The adept must defeat a more powerful opponent in ship-to-ship combat through trickery or superior planning.

Ghost Master Ritual: The Boatman draws a triangle on the deck of a riverboat and sits in the center of it. The adept then envisions piloting the boat through a complex series of maneuvers. After an hour of imaginary maneuvering, the adept visualizes docking the riverboat and meeting the ghost master at the dock. The ghost master boards the riverboat and joins the adept. The ritual then proceeds as normal.

DISCIPLINE COMBINATIONS

The Disciplines generally complementary to the Boatman are those of the Illusionist, Scout, Swordmaster, and Troubadour. Each of these Disciplines traditionally shares a similar curiosity for the world as well as a focus on wit and cleverness. The Elementalist is also complementary to the Boatman, particularly if specializing in the element of water.

Despite a shared desire to move forward, the Archer Discipline is opposed to the Boatman's way since Boatmen rarely think and act in straight lines. Other Disciplines traditionally opposed to the way of the Boatman include the Nethermancer, Weaponsmith, and Wizard. These Disciplines require so much energy and time spent away from the riverboat that potential teachers find no practical reason to take on an adept who wishes to follow both paths. The Sky Raider and Air Sailor Disciplines are almost always a dead end for Boatmen. Despite the many common talents these Disciplines share, they cater to different elements, and only in truly exceptional cases will a member of one Discipline even consider training a member of the other.



CHAPTER TWELVE

THE CALL OF THE HORROR STALKER

I have taken the liberty of transcribing a discussion that I was lucky enough to have with Gierden Deeptunnel, a frequent patron of the Rambling Road Tavern. Gierden appeared glad to enlighten me to the ways of his Discipline, so long as my questions did not interfere with the enjoyment of his dinner and pint. To my surprise, I found him to be quite matter-of-fact about his line of work rather than displaying the reckless and passionate demeanor I had believed was necessary to lead the type of dangerous lives that those of his kind do.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

People figure we're all mad. You'd have to be mad to do what we do, right? Spend your whole life huntin' down all manner of vile nastiness. Yeah, so I'm mad. What of it? I'm mad my world's been ravaged by Horrors, mad my friends have been killed and tortured, and mad my folks were stuck in a little dug out kaer for some four hundred years plus, up 'til now.

I figure I've pretty well earned the right to be mad. If you'd seen what I have, well, you'd be mad, too—but maybe in a different sort of way. Work's no picnic to be sure, but there's a job that needs doin' and I reckon I'm one to do it. It may be that most of Barsaive's full and content lookin' over their shoulders and livin' in fear of what's out there, but me, I prefer to look my fears in the eye.

ON ANSWERING THE CALL

Been plenty of pain, misery, and death since Horrors came to our world. Most Namegivers who go out looking to be Horror Stalkers know this intimately. There's a sense of despair that comes when you feel that there ain't nothing you can do about it. Well, maybe there is and maybe there ain't, but those who become Horror Stalkers choose to believe that a difference can be made, one life and one Horror at a time. Now it could be your life that seals that belief, but it's a small price to pay to the Horror Stalker.

These are dark times, and hope's near all used up. People want to hear about great deeds and flashy displays of valor to make 'em feel good. Well, that ain't what we do. What we do is more basic, more essential: we give them a sense of security. 'Cause whether they like us or not, at least they know there's someone out there cleaning up the filth left over from the Scourge, making sure it don't wind up on their doorsteps.

Now don't you misunderstand me. It ain't about winning the battle; it's about caring enough to fight the war. Everyone's felt loss since the Scourge began, and us Horror Stalkers know that better than anyone. But it ain't about vengeance; it's about protecting those who can't protect themselves. It's about fighting for those you care about: friends, family, communities. See that barkeep over there? He's scared to death of me, but it's about him, too. I'd go up against a Horror for all of you, as sure as I'm sittin' here now, 'cause I know what loss is and I know that a monument don't make a hero.

Can you call what we do heroic? Sure, we'd like that! But it ain't really about being a hero, so don't you go off on that tangent. We do what we do 'cause it's needed. Truth is, most of us don't expect to live long enough to think about coming home to no parades or pretty balls in our honor. We're exterminators of a sort—we get word of some infestation, and off we go to take care of things. Now, I won't say that there's no joy or pride in taking care of some throwback from a netherplane, I'd be lying if I said there wasn't, but it's just the perk of a job well done.

Maybe one day we'll get rid of Horrors all together, but for now there's plenty of work left to be done.

ON THE NATURE OF TRAINING

Now some who come to be Horror Stalkers actually want to make a difference and protect people, and we train those right quick since we have such a high rate of attrition, but there are always others who show up frothing at the mouth.

I've had plenty of young'uns comin' up to me for training, all whipped up about goin' out and getting revenge for what some Horror done to someone that mattered to them. They're set to thinking that it's all about winning the fight and comin' home all victorious with some Horror's head in their hands as a trophy. They figure it'll dull the pain from their past. And those who are full of such commotion, those who do get accepted to be trained, begin to understand right quick that comin' home is trophy enough.

Killin' a Horror, yeah, it feels mighty good, but the truth of it is that there ain't *nothin'* that dulls the pain, no matter how many Horrors you've killed.

Trust me, I know.

On the Use of Tools

Enough about me though. Here's some clarification for you about how we take down these monstrosities that we fight. It ain't about goin' out and waving a sword around, hoping you kill the Horror before it kills you. It ain't about the brawn; it's all in the brains and the wits—that's what helps us in our fight. There ain't no one who goes climbing a mountain without knowledge of how to climb. Sure you need pitons and rope, but you'd best know how to use 'em before you start climbing. As a Horror Stalker, you have to always be at the top of your game, 'cause with Horrors there ain't no such thing as mercy. You've got to be sure you make every second count and use every tool at your disposal to get the job done one way or another—and that includes usin' your head.

Every Horror Stalker knows the reason why he's out there fighting—it's 'cause there are a lot of people counting on him, so he'd better get it right, even if he dies tryin'. "Know yourself, know the risks, and know your enemy," 'fore you tangle with him—words to keep on living by. You never know what you'll find, but the smart ones do their research. Learn to be smart first, or plan on being dead later.

Go ahead and ask, I can tell you all about most types of nastiness, and those I can't, I reckon I can point out someone who can. Now, that's another thing most forget: getting help from others. Sure, I can look a Horror in the eye and not flinch, but where the big 'uns are concerned, I'd have to be as daft as you think I am to go it alone. Only a fool thinks he doesn't need anyone but himself, so when help's offered or can be found, the smarter Stalker goes ahead and accepts it. Just know that the job don't change none—you've got to protect those who help you out, too.

On Our Place in Society

So, you see, Horror Stalkers are working types, not really up for all the frills. We walk in the same darkness that Nethermancers do—linked fair or foul with Horrors. Since it's pretty well accepted that we fight them, we might get a little more slack from folks, but really it's a dirty business. Spend enough time around Horrors and, yeah, some of that taint will rub off on you, marked or not. We have a habit of making folks uneasy and I'd be surprised, and a little suspicious, if they weren't. You see, a good Horror Stalker keeps his eyes open for Horrors and constructs and the like, but he also keeps an eye on all Namegivers he runs across. There's been plenty of trouble stirred up by folks who have gone and gotten themselves Horror-marked.

As a Horror Stalker, you keep your eyes and ears open, because there ain't a place I know of that hasn't had Horrors crawling all over it at some point—and that means that your enemy could be anywhere. You try to know what you're getting into, but there are always surprises. Could be that I'm dead soon as I get up off this bar stool and walk out that door over yonder, it's a rough world to be sure.

On the Dangers of Stalking

So, you've been listening to me rattle on this whole time about how dangerous it is to be a Horror Stalker and I reckon by now you're back to thinking that we're a little crazy. So, let me tell you friend, I understand full well that there's always a chance that when I leave to go hunting I won't be coming back. That's the nature of what I do. Death's a part of living to be sure, but so is taking chances. I don't worry about death as much as you'd think—in fact, I'd count myself right lucky if that was the worst that happened to end my days. There's much worse that can happen to one dealing with Horrors than dying. There's being Horror-marked and controlled or being brought back from the dead to do the Horror's dirty work … I've seen far more than you'd ever care to hear about, trust me.

Since death is just something we accept as fact, I wager we might seem to others as though we go looking for it. The truth is, we're champions of life. We revere life so completely that we are willing

to put our own on the line every day so that others can live out their lives without fear. It ain't about choosing death over living; it's about choosing freedom and virtue over control and corruption.

Of the Fight Against Fear

Everyone thinks it's about fightin' some Named menace, but I'll tell you the truth. What I fight against might look like a Horror, but really it's my own fear—the Horror just so happens to be in my way. You see, fighting the Horror isn't the hard part, it's fighting yourself. When you face a Horror, every little bit of sanity in you rebels; it tells you you're crazy, it tells you to run, it tells you to go save yourself.

The Beastmasters call it "survival instinct," but as a Horror Stalker you have to find that little bit of strength in you that tells you all the terrible things that will happen if you listen to that instinct, so you stand there and face it 'cause in the end it ain't about you at all, it's about everyone else.

A Horror Stalker must master himself and his fears and emotions to do what he does. When you learn the true meaning of courage, determination, sacrifice, and single-minded purpose, it's then that you've won the battle. Horrors want us to be weak and afraid of what we are and what we might do; we fear them because we fear ourselves. By accepting our part in life we find that no fear for ourselves is warranted. Conquer yourself, and you will know that the Horrors aren't invincible but can be beaten as well.

Even if I wake up down in Death's realm, I know that I'll be remembered by my comrades and what I was out doin' will be remembered too. I ain't gonna be one to cower in some dank corner of my home, and I ain't gonna show others that it's acceptable neither. If that makes me mad in your eyes, friend, then you just go on and call me mad, 'cause I'm mighty proud of what I do. I'll be on my way out now; got word of somethin' not quite right prowlin' about in town.

Don't you worry none, I've got a feelin' I know what I'm fixin' to go up against. I'd be happy to have another round with you tomorrow and tell you all about it if you're game. And when you happen to find a construct or two lurkin' about on your way back in that I missed, you be sure to let me know and I'll take care of the little buggers for you, free of charge.

Game Information

Nearly all Namegivers stand against the evil of the Horrors in one way or another, but only those who follow the way of the Horror Stalker actively seek out and destroy these entities. Followers of the Horror Stalker Discipline go about their dangerous business in a most disturbing manner: they allow themselves to be Horror-marked and use that connection to track the dreadful entities and do battle with the enemy.

Though considered insane by many, this tactic has proved time and time again to be one of the most effective (if suicidal) ways to find Horrors and permanently dispatch them.

Important Attributes: Perception, Willpower

Karma Ritual: To begin his Karma ritual, the adept paces out a small circle, outlining it with salt. He then begins the Litany, Naming Horror Stalkers who fell in battle and then Naming all the Horrors known to have been struck down by them. After finishing his recitation, the adept spends several minutes contemplating any Horror marks he possesses. Once satisfied that everything is in place, the adept offers up a small praise to the fallen Horror Stalkers. Finally, he rubs out the salt circle and draws his weapon, aiming or pointing it in the direction where he believes the nearest Horror lurks.

Artisan Skills: Scarification, Tattooing

Half-Magic: Horror Stalkers may use half-magic when seeking knowledge of Horrors, Horror constructs, the Scourge, kaers and citadels, and magic used by Horrors or devised to protect against them, as well as the Names and legends of those who have fought the Horrors and paid the ultimate price.

Horror Stalkers may also make Willpower-based Half-Magic Tests to resist the lure of Horrors and any effects placed upon them



against their will, if resisting them is not covered by any of their other abilities.

They may make Perception-based Half-Magic Tests to detect the presence of Horrors or Horror Constructs within 30 yards (15 hexes). The Detection Difficulty for sensing them is the Horror's or construct's Spell Defense (determined by the gamemaster). If the test succeeds, the adept senses the target's presence, though not its exact location or nature. The gamemaster may choose to make this Half-Magic Test on behalf of a Horror Stalker character at any time, as this innate sense is always active. The ability does not detect Horror marks, but at the gamemaster's discretion may pick up lingering traces of Horror corruption in a place.

Roleplaying Hints

Horror Stalkers are desperate men and women serving a desperate cause, driven people with clearly defined goals. There are as many reasons for becoming a Horror Stalker as there are Horror Stalkers, but all adepts of this Discipline share an almost insane devotion to purging the Horrors from the earth. Each and every one knows that he will eventually die in the pursuit of his goal, but that's a fact he takes for granted. While some Horror Stalkers act out of personal interests, most of them have nothing to lose and follow the Discipline for the greater good that is the survival of all Namegivers.

Because of their goals and the methods they use, Horror Stalkers are both respected and feared by the general population. Like Nethermancers, many Horror Stalkers are loners, often alienated from society. Many Horror Stalkers feel it's better for everyone if they live like outcasts rather than constantly putting the people around them at risk. Some Horror Stalkers lead like-minded groups of Horror hunters into battle, and some join societies devoted to that goal, like the Grim Legion.

Most Horror Stalkers have a clear-cut view of good versus evil—the Horrors are parasites that bring pain and corruption into this world. Some Horror Stalkers are paranoid to a greater or lesser extent, and follow a regimen of self-control to keep their baser impulses from controlling them (and thus giving a Horror a potential foothold). This philosophy is reflected in their training; there are no schools or guilds that train Horror Stalkers in return for payment, as is the case with most other Disciplines. The need for secrecy combined with their loner nature makes Horror Stalkers a rare sight.

Horror Stalkers are tough and show great prowess in combat; when fighting the nastiest enemies the universe has to offer, this is a requirement. Horror Stalkers never give up or back down until their enemies are destroyed, but contrary to popular belief, Horror Stalkers usually aren't suicidal. While they love picking fights, they rarely pick fights they cannot win. Horror Stalkers study their enemies closely, and try to get an edge through this knowledge. A patient Horror Stalker can wait years for victory against his target.

Discipline Violations

Failing to act against a Horror's influence may trigger a talent crisis, unless it serves a greater goal or is overshadowed by a greater task that has to be performed by the adept. Apart from that, there is virtually no excuse to let the enemy live and corrupt the world. The severity of such a violation depends on the nature of the Horror involved. If the Horror is Named and outmatches the Horror Stalker's abilities, all he would need to do is make sure that the right people take care of the problem.

The most common Deed of Atonement is the destruction of the Horror and its henchmen, which is often easier said than done. The Horror Stalker must often prove himself in front of others to regain the full power of his abilities.

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Acrobatic Strike, Climbing, Silent Walk, Tracking, Unarmed Combat

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Astral Sight, Call of Harrow, Karma Ritual, Melee Weapons, Steel Thought

Novice

Talent Options: Avoid Blow, Durability (8/6), Heartening Laugh, Maneuver, Parry, Shield Charge, Sprint, Throwing Weapons

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Abate Curse

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Bear Mark

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Horror Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Direction Sense, Research, Resist Taunt, Second Weapon, Steely Stare, Temper Self, Tiger Spring, Wound Balance

Fifth Circle

Spiritual Sanctuary: The adept can never be raised as an undead or be turned into a Horror Construct, neither while alive, nor after death. If the adept falls under a Horror's control, he is allowed to first perform a Dying Act (***Player's Guide***, p. 126), with the following special rules: The Dying Act stretches over an entire turn that the adept immediately takes, the adept may distribute his remaining Karma Points towards any test during that turn, and he cannot change his mind to not perform the Dying Act.
Discipline Talent: Lion Heart

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Perception-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Bane Strike

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on any test made against a Horror, and on any test made to resist or evade a Horror's attacks, spells, or powers.
Discipline Talent: Life Check

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Second Attack

WARDEN

Talent Options: Critical Hit, Crushing Blow, Defense, Frighten, Rally, Resist Pain, Temper Other, Vitality

Ninth Circle

Horror Trap: Taking 2 Strain, the adept makes a Horror Weaving Test against the Spell Defense of a Horror he can see. If successful, the target is magically bound to the adept and pulled onto the same plane (from the astral into the physical plane, for example). The adept specifies a distance of up to Horror Weaving Rank hexes (twice this in yards). If the target wants to move farther away or onto another plane, he has to spend a Standard Action and succeed at a Willpower Test against the adept's Horror Weaving Step. Horror Trap lasts 10 minutes, until the adept ends it, or until the adept loses consciousness.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Lion Spirit

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Detect Influence

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Social Defense.
Discipline Talent: Suppress Influence

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Netherwalk

MASTER

Talent Options: Ethereal Weapon, Mind Blade, Multi-Strike, Second Chance, Vital Strike, Wound Transfer

Thirteenth Circle

Wrath Manifest: The adept takes 2 Strain and attacks a Horror by physical means, but the attack opposes Social Defense. If successful, instead of dealing normal Damage, the adept makes a Willpower Test to determine Damage. No armor protects against this damage. Bonuses from Call of Harrow, Bane Strike, or the ability to spend Karma Points can be used to enhance Wrath Manifest damage, but not abilities that rely explicitly on physical combat or physical attacks. Wrath Manifest is typically used when using Confront Horror. Wrath Manifest can only be used once per round, and no other attacks can be made that round.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Confront Horror

Fourteenth Circle

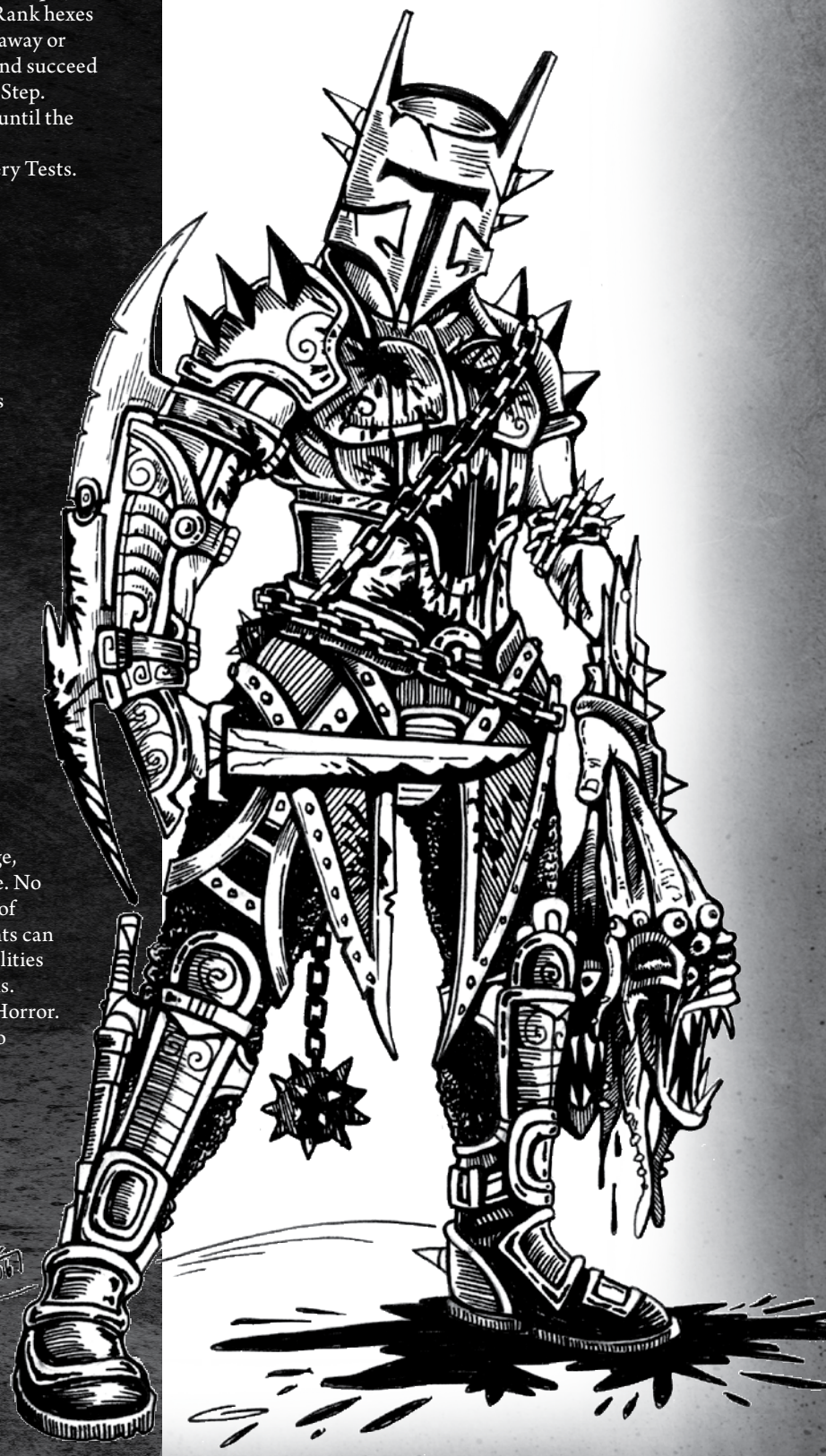
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Aura Armor

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Social Defense.
Discipline Talent: Astral Web

RITUALS OF ADVANCEMENT

Horror Stalker rituals most often deal with hard facts. Past deeds not only show that the adept is capable of taking on the enemy and staying alive, they directly demonstrate the adept's prowess of eradicating Horrors and their spawn. The Names of the fallen get recited by other Horror Stalkers, making sure that their deeds are never forgotten. However, all Horror Stalkers must constantly prove that they



are free of taint before receiving further training. Horror Stalkers only charge for training in the rarest cases.

Recruitment: Horror Stalkers care about their numbers, but finding Namegivers with the needed strength of will and determination is a daunting task. As a result, Horror Stalkers often recruit and initiate their numbers on the battlefield and places where the Horrors have left survivors.

Novice (2–4): Horror Stalkers at these Circles usually take on Horror spawn, fighting constructs, cultists, and Horror-marked Namegivers. Trophies of these battles often serve as proof ensuring further training.

Journeyman (5–8): Journeyman Horror Stalkers are powerful enough to take on minor Horrors, and their efforts at rooting them out rarely go unnoticed by the public. Any Horror Stalker who has defeated a Horror of this power is worth his training.

Warden (9–12): Only Wardens and Masters dare to confront a Named Horror directly and get away with their lives. Their deeds are the stuff of legend, and their training is not only a matter of honor but a requirement to reach the greater goal.

Ghost Master Ritual: The Horror Stalker paces out a large circle outlining it with salt and begins a Litany similar to the one recited when performing a Karma Ritual. However, instead of Naming a number of Horror Stalkers, he recites the deeds of his ghost master only, Naming all the Horrors known to have been struck down by him. After finishing his recitation (which often takes more than an hour), the desired ghost master appears within the salt circle and the ritual proceeds as normal.

Discipline Combinations

Many Horror Stalkers learn the Discipline as a second Discipline, driven by a burning revenge for the loss of those who were dearest to them. Many Horror Stalkers get initiated at sites of destruction where the Horrors have left survivors—lost kaers being a prime example.

The Nethermancer and Weaponsmith Disciplines are almost perfect matches for the Horror Stalker since both feature similar mindsets. The Nethermancer seeks knowledge of the astral realms and their denizens, and the Discipline also deals with conquering fear. The Weaponsmith is typically strong willed, seldom backs down, and is able to create and maintain the necessary tools of war needed to fight the Horrors.

The Wizard, Scout, Archer, Illusionist, and Warrior Disciplines are also good matches for the Horror Stalker. The Wizard tries to unravel the secrets of the world, and his knowledge helps to understand the enemy better. The Scout mindset allows the Horror Stalker to see the influence of Horrors in the environment and adds an element of stealth the Horror Stalker lacks. The Archer's traditionally direct approach matches the Horror Stalker's seek-and-destroy approach to fighting the Horrors. Illusionists offer fantastic abilities to deceive the enemy, and are usually concerned with finding the truth—a useful focus for rooting out Horror influence. Finally, the Warrior complements and greatly improves the Horror Stalker's prowess in combat, and his dedication to winning the battle complements the Horror Stalker's single mindedness.

Bonds and social dependence often oppose the Horror Stalker's mindset—friends, relatives, and companions are prime targets for a Horror's corruption, and putting those at risk is something Beastmasters, Air Sailors, and Cavalrymen generally try to avoid. The Swordmaster's view of the world often opposes the Horror Stalker's mindset since Swordmasters typically live for the flashy fight, not the kill. Troubadours generally prefer to live and talk about their experiences and those of others, while Horror Stalkers don't generally care about such things.

Most other Disciplines are neutral to the Horror Stalker's mindset, but their abilities make for great second Disciplines. Elementalists feature offensive spells and have the ability to create enchantments that help against the Horrors, but they seek balance in the world which can't be achieved by single-mindedly focusing on the opposition. Sky Raiders live in battle, but are usually focused on the survival of their crew and moot. The Thief mindset (especially that of the selfish Thief) fits the loner attitude of the Horror Stalker and offers abilities to circumvent traps and sneak past the opposition, but the straightforward approach of confronting an enemy generally opposes the Thief's tendency to hide in the shadows. Followers of these Disciplines typically don't become Horror Stalkers unless they have strong reason to.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SHAPING YOUR OWN PATH: THE JOURNEYMAN

The following account was written by a Journeyman well known to us. We asked him for a treatise on his Discipline, to shed some light on these rare human adepts that seem to completely embrace their versatile nature. Since he feared he might doom himself for revealing secrets that some in his community wish to keep concealed, he insisted his Name not be mentioned.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

There are many legends, stories, half-truths, and outright fabrications concerning those adepts following my Discipline. That is understandable; few followers of the Journeyman's path ever refer to themselves as such, and few of that number feel the need to alleviate these mysteries. Some of my Discipline go even further, intentionally clouding the truth to discourage scrutiny.

ON THE LIMITATIONS OF TRADITION

The path of a Discipline is defined by tradition. Before an aspiring adept begins his apprenticeship, his potential for a Discipline is imbued onto his spirit. He either seeks out the path to that Discipline, or vice versa, and his pattern forms to match that path during his training and advancement. The path of such a Discipline rarely bends, so it is the adept that molds himself into that path.

By contrast, the path of the Journeyman is akin to an artist's canvas: open, undefined, laden with innate possibility—it is a journey through life. Humans have the unique capacity to try different things, to be a "jack of all trades." Journeyman adepts are living, breathing personifications of human versatility and adaptability.

This is not to disparage adepts who follow the predestined Disciplines; their paths are no less genuine than ours. It is merely the way chosen that differs. While those adepts shape themselves around their chosen paths, a Journeyman merely lives, and chooses the path that fits him best.

We are gifted with the ability to alter the path we walk. This flexibility is limited— tradition still defines the way an adept follows. Since a Journeyman begins with no defined path, however, he has more directions to choose from. In embracing the path of the Journeyman, we abandon the stricture of other Disciplines.

These words clearly illuminate the self-justifying delusions common to practitioners of this so-called Discipline. These 'Journeymen' are flightier than any windling, and lack the dedication and strength of will to follow the path of a true adept. In order to make themselves feel better in the face of their failure, they call us hidebound and limited by our fine traditions!

—Attik Trubale, Wizard of Erol Enacra

ON INDIVIDUALITY

Because of our very nature, no two Journeymen are alike. Of course, there will often be similarities among Journeyman adepts, but the way in which one views his experiences defines who the Journeyman is. Other adepts may have slightly different perspectives on a shared Discipline, but the basic tenets of their ideology remain the same. Each Journeyman, however, is truly unique.

To elaborate my point, I differ a great deal from my mentor. A Warden of our Discipline and questor of Floranuus, he is a bundle of life and energy who loves to wander. He carries only a bow and has learned his craft from a number of Archers and Scouts. Where he is a wanderer and traveler for wandering's sake, I am a scholar and seeker of knowledge. When I started out I learned several useful abilities from a Wizard at the Great Library where I was researching the history of my people.

I have met many interesting individuals on my journeys and learned many different things. At one point I was serving on an airship where I was taught to fall safely to the ground like a leaf in the wind, an ability incongruous with the scholastic teachings of my earlier career.

In essence, this is what defines a Journeyman: no single thought pattern, mindset, or mentality. A Journeyman does not define his Discipline by adhering to tradition; quite the opposite in fact.

A Journeyman is defined by the events and situations that he experiences during the course of his life. With each new ability comes a new tale to be told, along with the memories and emotions attached to it.

Don't let the writer's choice of words deceive you—women are just as capable of following the Journeyman's path. In fact, the mind of a woman is better suited to the flexibility of thought required than any man's!

—Anonymous

On the Sharing of Knowledge

No doubt many humans reading this know how reluctant non-humans can be to impart knowledge of their Discipline onto those of our race, simply because we are human. Some narrow-minded representatives of the other Namegiver races even envy us, or at least feel it unwise to give knowledge to a human that may be used against them later. Even some humans I have met are reluctant to teach their abilities to another human, especially once they learn they are teaching a Journeyman. Such jealous distancing makes the path of the Journeyman all the more difficult to walk.

As a brief yet relevant aside, I have a bit of advice for all humans, Journeyman and non-Journeyman alike: when trying to gain knowledge of a talent from another adept, human or otherwise, it is my experience that a combination of charm, coin, and proving one's worth is the easiest way to warm those who would otherwise balk at such a request. Threats never work, and such an approach may make an enemy of a potential teacher. Personally, I prefer to gain one's trust through previously won favors. And if you happen to travel with an adventuring party, so much the better—that gives many opportunities to learn from trusted allies. Just don't abuse this resource, as the well may run dry.

Of Our Bond With Other Races

For those that have not had the privilege of reading the *Denizens of Barsaive* collection, I suggest that you do so. That work goes into greater detail on the human race that may aid in the understanding of our path. A few followers of the Journeyman's path have learned to express the kinship of all Namegivers to the human race with a unique ability that allows a Journeyman to gain the vision of a troll, the passion of an ork, the toughness of an obsidiman, or the agility of a windling. Just as the Journeyman's path can draw from all Disciplines, this ability draws from all Namegiver races, and they find kinship and oneness in the Journeyman.

It is a shame that humans continue to delude themselves that the other Namegiver races rise from their common stock. As if the noble grace of an elf could descend from such blood!

—Illuriel Va'na'tella, Protector of Aidella's Grove

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

First Circle
Discipline Talent: Karma Ritual
Talents: 5 Talents

Novice

Second Circle
Defense: The adept adds +1 to one of his Defense Ratings.
Talents: 2 Talents

Third Circle
Talents: 2 Talents

Fourth Circle
Karma: The adept chooses one of his Attributes, he may now spend 1 Karma Point on Attribute-only Tests made for that Attribute.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Journey Weaving]
Talent: 1 Talents

Journeyman

Fifth Circle
Choose the Path: For 1 Strain, the adept may treat one of his talents as a Discipline Talent until the end of the round.
Talents: 2 Talents

Sixth Circle
Karma: The adept chooses one of his Attributes other than that chosen at Fourth Circle, he may now spend 1 Karma Point on Attribute-only Tests made for that Attribute.
Talents: 2 Talents

Seventh Circle
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on tests made to learn something new or made to gain access to new knowledge or abilities.
Talents: 2 Talents

Eighth Circle
Defense: The adept adds +1 to one of his Defense Ratings.
Talents: 2 Talents

WARDEN

Ninth Circle
Morphism: After studying with a member of another race for a week and performing a ritual causing 3 Permanent Damage Points, the adept may gain one racial ability of that race. The racial ability must not require an anatomical feature very different from human physique to work, but at the same time, the adept's appearance will change towards that of the race the ability originated with. For example, the adept cannot learn a windling's Flight or a t'skrang's Tail Combat due to lacking wings or a tail, but he can learn an obsidiman's Natural Armor ability, whereupon his skin will take on a more stone-like appearance. The adept can learn one additional racial ability at Twelfth and one at Fifteenth Circle by repeating the procedure.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Talents: 2 Talents

Tenth Circle
Defense: The adept adds +1 to one of his Defense Ratings.
Karma: The adept chooses one of his Attributes other than those chosen at Fourth and Sixth Circle, he may now spend 1 Karma Point on Attribute-only Tests made for that Attribute.
Talents: 2 Talents

Eleventh Circle
Defense: The adept adds +1 to one of his Defense Ratings.
Talents: 2 Talents

Twelfth Circle
Defense: The adept adds +1 to one of his Defense Ratings.
Characteristic Bonus: The adept chooses a Characteristic Bonus (see p. 155).
Talents: 2 Talents

MASTER

Thirteenth Circle
Path of all Paths: The adept performs his Karma ritual for the day, but instead of gaining Karma, spends up to 15 Karma Points, Strain, or a mix of both. For the next 24 hours, he gains a talent of his choice that is a Discipline Talent for a Discipline he has studied with at a Rank equal to the sum of Karma Points and Strain spent. This talent is not a Discipline Talent for the adept and cannot be used to advance in Circle. The adept can have only one such talent at a time.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to one of his Defense Ratings.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Talents: 2 Talents

Fourteenth Circle
Defense: The adept adds +1 to one of his Defense Ratings.
Characteristic Bonus: The adept chooses a Characteristic Bonus (see p. 155).
Talents: 2 Talents

Fifteenth Circle
Defense: The adept adds +1 to one of his Defense Ratings.
Characteristic Bonus: The adept chooses a Characteristic Bonus (see p. 155).
Talents: 2 Talents

These common humans, Journeymen, have certainly learned to master nature's gift to your people. How about that?

—Jelarus, dwarf Troubadour

Only few Journeymen exist, and so the number of those who have the ability to master the path of other races is smaller still. It requires great study of a race to gain one of the race's abilities, and so the few Journeymen fortunate enough to reach this crossroads on their paths gain a greater understanding of what holds us all together, and a greater understanding of their own race and self.



GAME INFORMATION

Adepts of the Journeyman Discipline are rare in Barsaive. Available only to humans, this Discipline takes advantage of that race's versatility and adaptability and enables its followers to use powerful magic outside the relatively narrow focus of a standard Discipline.

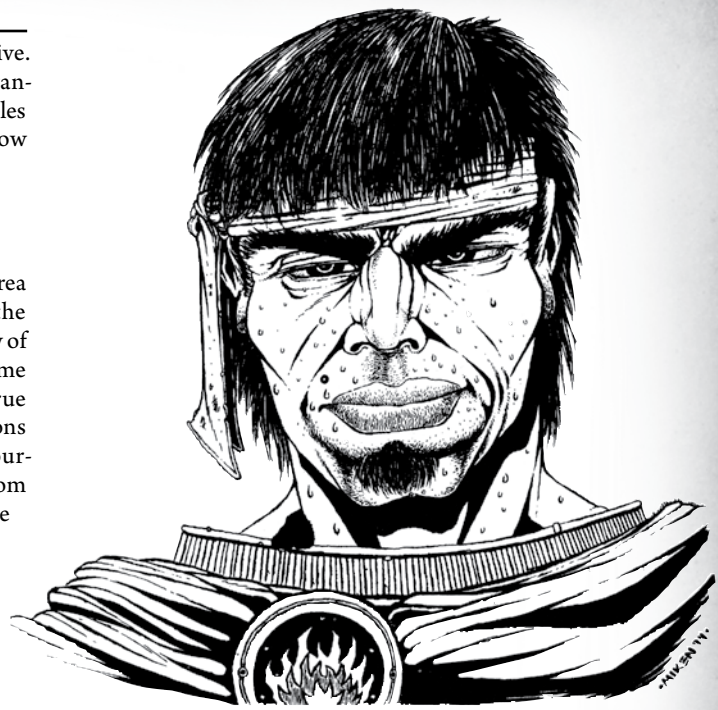
Important Attributes: See Talents and Abilities, p. 153.

Racial Restriction: Humans

Karma Ritual: The Journeyman sits alone in the most barren area in the vicinity. He imagines the world as viewed by each of the other Disciplines, one at a time, and considers the limited view of the world each perceives. He imagines the world again, this time through the eyes of his own Discipline, and remembers the true diversity of the world. He rises and mimics the common actions of adepts who follow those Disciplines whose talents the Journeyman has learned. He may gesture like the Swordmaster from whom he has learned Melee Weapons, for example, or like the Wizard from whom he has learned Spellcasting. The ritual ends when the Journeyman has mimicked a talent of each Discipline he has studied.

Artisan Skills: Any

Half-Magic: Journeyman characters can use half-magic to learn about and recognize the ways of different Disciplines, races, and cultures, as well as knowledge of any Disciplines, races, and cultures he is already familiar with.



SPECIAL RULES

Of all Disciplines, the Journeyman is the rarest and most difficult to follow. The Journeyman Discipline allows each player to tailor the specifics of the Discipline to the type of character desired.

Rather than providing specific talents and Characteristics Bonuses, players can choose most of their abilities and benefits in a pattern similar to that of other Disciplines. The following rules apply to the different areas of choice.

Talents

Journeymen have only two Discipline Talents, Karma Ritual and Journey Weaving. They may learn additional talents at each Circle as indicated (five talents at First Circle, one talent at Fourth Circle, two talents at every other Circle); these talents are learned from a trainer in the same way as other adepts learn Talent options or learn a talent via Versatility.

Journeymen increase their Death and Unconsciousness Ratings by (6/5) when learning the Durability talent, because like other Disciplines, the effects of Durability are tied to the Discipline the adept follows, not the one it was learned from.

Journeymen do not receive the human racial talent of Versatility; they can never have a rank in Versatility. The Journeyman Discipline is the ultimate refinement of Versatility into a Discipline.

Circle-Advancement

Journeymen do advance in Circle more freely than other adepts. While adepts of other Disciplines use their Discipline Talents to advance in Circle, a Journeyman adept freely chooses most of the talents used to advance. A Journeyman must know five talents from First Circle and one talent from every Circle thereafter at the minimum rank to be eligible to advance. He can freely choose these talents, except that Karma Ritual and Journey Weaving must always be chosen.

In comparison to other non-magician Disciplines, Journeymen lack four Discipline Talents at First Circle and one Discipline Talent at Second Circle, Third Circle, and every Circle from Fifth Circle onward. Journeymen choose these "missing" talents temporarily to have a total of five talents at First Circle and one at every Circle thereafter. The talents chosen can be different in later Circle-advancements. If the Journeyman has enough talents at the minimum required rank, he automatically advances, without requiring a trainer.

Jalome is a Fifth Circle Journeyman aspiring to advance to Sixth Circle. He checks his list of talents and determines that to advance to Sixth Circle, he needs to have a rank of 6 in the following talents: Karma Ritual and four other of his six First Circle talents, one of his two Second Circle talents, one of his two Third Circle talents, his Fourth Circle Journey Weaving Talent, and one of his two Fifth Circle talents.

Multi-Disciplining

Journeymen follow no set path; it is incompatible with their frame of mind. If they ever tried, the path of another Discipline would disrupt the magic of the Journeyman. Because of that, Journeymen cannot take on additional Disciplines, nor can Journeyman be learned as an additional Discipline.

Defense and Characteristic Bonuses

Journeymen choose the bonuses to Defense Ratings and Characteristics imparted by their Discipline at the Circles indicated.

When they receive a Defense Bonus, they can choose to add +1 to any of their Defenses, Physical, Social, or Spell, but no Defense may be chosen more than four times.

When they receive a Characteristic Bonus, they can choose to add +1 to their Initiative Step, add +1 Recovery Test per day, or gain Durability (7/6). The Durability change is immediate and for all ranks in Durability (not from the current rank onwards), but it can only be chosen once (choosing it multiple times provides no further benefits).

Roleplaying Hints

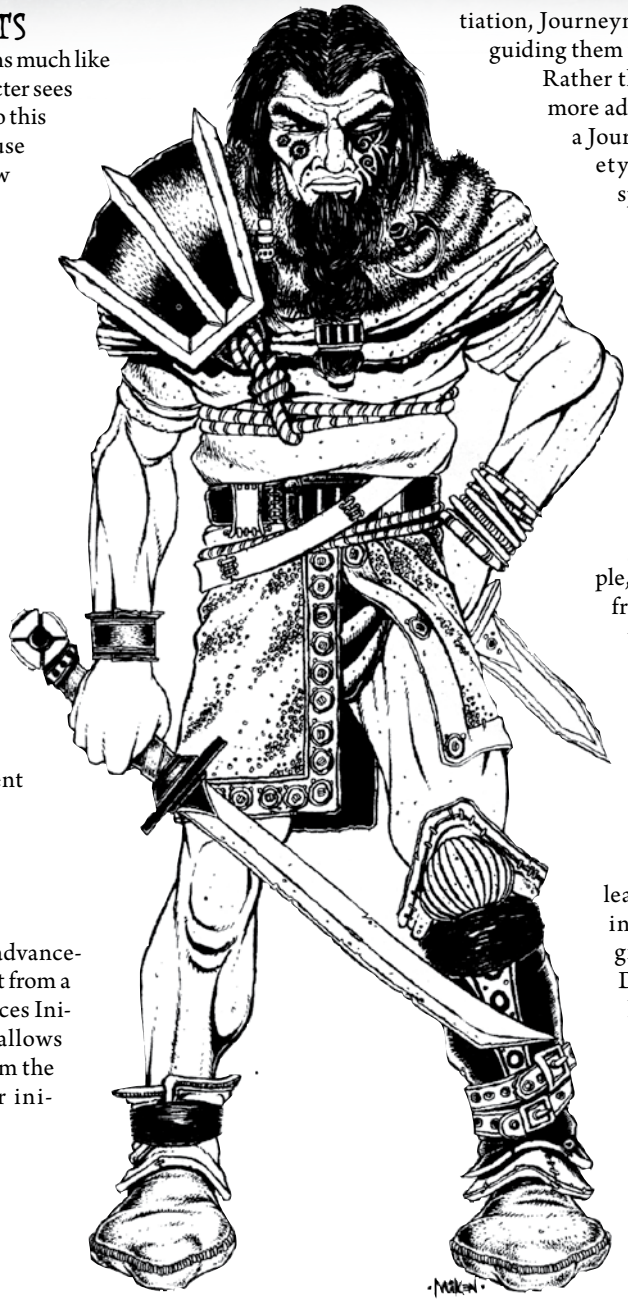
An adept's Discipline functions much like a filter through which the character sees the world. By acting according to this worldview, he is able to better use magic. Journeyman adepts view the world as a field of magical possibilities, of which they are able to learn to use a limited variety. As a result, there is no such thing as a stereotypical Journeyman; every single adept of this Discipline is as unique as the Discipline itself.

Discipline Violations

Journeyman characters may suffer a talent crisis if they focus too much on a single Discipline. For example, if the number of talents learned from a single Discipline makes up at least half of a Journeyman's total talents, he might suffer a talent crises.

Rituals of Advancement

Journeymen do not employ advancement rituals or ceremonies apart from a recruitment ritual that introduces Initiates to their Discipline and allows them to follow their calling from the beginning. Apart from their initiation, Journeyman adepts don't have a single mentor guiding them through their lives.



Rather than learning talents from increasingly more advanced members of his own Discipline, a Journeyman studies with masters of a variety of Disciplines, learning something specific from each. These masters may require some form of test similar to an advancement ritual that proves the adept's aptitude or conviction towards learning a new talent, but they may as well not.

Ghost Master Ritual: Journeymen perform the ghost master ritual not for Circle-advancement, but to learn talents as if from a real tutor. This ritual is always performed as customary for the desired ghost master's Discipline. For example, a Journeyman wanting to learn talents from a Scout ghost master must perform the ritual for that Discipline. While the Ghost Master Ritual Talent Knack is normally specific to a single Discipline and allows access to ghost masters from that Discipline only, the Journeyman's version of the Talent Knack (the one learned for the Journey Weaving version of the Thread Weaving talent, not any learned for other types of Thread Weaving the adept might have picked up) grants access to ghost masters from all Disciplines, provided the Journeyman has studied that Discipline's ways, for example by learning one of its talents or speaking to an experienced follower of that Discipline.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ON THE REBELLIOUS RAGE OF THE LIBERATOR

The following account is an excerpt from the journals of Faran Sharpthought, a human Weaponsmith from the province of Vivane. The following document details his escape from slavery, aided by a Liberator. Our attempts to find a member of this rare Discipline have been largely unsuccessful at the time of writing; thus Faran's story proves a valuable addition to this volume.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

ON HOPE'S CHAMPION

Being in the quarry felt like taking a walk on the shores of Death's Sea. Day after day, the questors of Dis had us in the scorching heat of the sun, chipping away at the stone and ferrying huge blocks for transportation to Great Thera—probably for some noble's mansion, so he could boast at dinner parties of the vast amounts of gold he had spent to have his glorious home constructed on the island of Thera. Never mind how many lives had been wasted in the construction of that new home, for our Theran masters quantified us in gold anyway. I had been there only five months after running afoul of some slavers on my travels. Some of the poor souls in that quarry had been there for more than three years. Only the Passions know how they stayed alive for so long.

Every day I wished for death, just to be released from my misery. From sunrise to sunset I choked on dust, the sun scorching down on me, addling my wits. My body repeated the same actions over and over, an automaton working itself to death, to be replaced by another life that would be ground into nothing. In that quarry I saw Namegivers die day after day, some of them I had come to know as friends. My old mentor used to say, "When hope has no champion, evil rules all."

Then hope's champion revealed himself.

He was an ork Named Dakar. The slave masters brought him in one day and they had to beat him senseless before he stopped fighting back. He was huge in breadth of chest and shoulder, with powerful arms, a bull-like neck, and a temper as short as his biceps were large. I'm still amazed he never died from the beatings. He had one every day and his captors often went away with cuts, bruises, and broken bones of their own. Dakar was not an easy ork to tame.

On the third day after his arrival, as he sat up in the cell that housed twenty of us, he spoke.

"We getting out," he said in broken Throalic. "We leave when bread comes."

How many times had we voiced such a dream? How many times had we spoken of throwing off the yoke of our captors? Nobody listened to him and we waited for our meager dawn rations. When they came, Dakar exploded into action.

My jaw dropped as a sword of sheer force appeared in his hand, dark and brooding like his temper. I watched amazed as the jailer, who had loved beating Dakar so much, slammed against the wall without Dakar even touching him. I heard bone break and cartilage crunch as wounds identical to Dakar's materialized on the jailer as though beaten by invisible fists. He jerked and spasmed like a broken marionette, then fell to the stone floor with blood running from his ears, nose, and mouth.

Dakar looked at me and grinned—an expression that told of the violence about to be unleashed. I shuddered in anticipation of



what I was about to witness. As guards poured in, the crazed ork became a cyclone of blood and gore, chopping his way through the Therans.

"Now we let all out," he said, grinning despite being drenched in Theran blood. He didn't even use keys; locks broke open under his fearsome gaze. Lochost was abroad and at that moment, Dakar became the living avatar of the Passion.

He was freeing us all.

On the Spark of Rebellion

The slave rebellion began with a single spark but the flame that grew from it was a mighty inferno. The slaves were many, but their numbers were useless until the possibility of freedom took root in their hearts and minds. It was Dakar that lit the fires, his roar of defiance fuelling everybody's desire to be free. The memory still exhilarates and terrifies me; I still recall the metallic stench of Theran blood that flowed that dawn. At the heart of it all was Dakar, his sword of force replaced by a huge sledgehammer from the quarry—a deadly weapon of war in his experienced hands. I will not describe how Dakar dealt with the questors of Dis; the memory is too gruesome for me to articulate.

That one ork freed us all—not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. With his fire fuelling our own, we became free Namegivers. A number of us died under the panicked blades of Theran guards, or from the fiery bloom of a magician's spell, but they died free. They did not fade from existence as passing shadows, or broken shells that had once been Namegivers. Instead they fell fighting for the freedom that was their right as creatures of this world.

How to deal with slavers? Every Liberator finds his own way in this matter, because our main concern is to free Namegivers, not to kill slavers. Some of us do kill every slaver possible, wanting to punish them for their crimes against life with death. Some prefer to fight as little as possible, so as to not endanger the often weakened slaves, or because they follow more silent ways. Between these two is where most of us stand. Killing some slavers where necessary gives the remaining ones a good hint about how to change their ways, showing them what enslaving people will get them.

—Harg the Hungry, Liberator

On Lochost's Children

When the guards were dead and we were ready to leave the quarry, curiosity overcame me. I speak fluent or'zet, and found Dakar, almost a beast as the roar of defiance tore from his throat, a passionate (as all orks seem to be) and deeply intelligent individual. I asked him of his Discipline and when he told me he was a Liberator I asked him what that meant.

"Slavery is not just about forcing Name-givers to endlessly perform menial, drudging, repetitive tasks. It is not simply about physical restraint. Slavery breaks the spirit of an individual so only the physical shell remains. Slavery destroys identity and obliterates self-respect. It creates a fatalistic ethos that accepts misery and the body simply goes through the motions, without conscious thought."

I must admit the eloquence of the ork astounded me. Never had I heard such a wide vocabulary from an ork that otherwise seemed a natural born killer. Anyway, I digress.

Liberator Gatherings

Liberators often organize in small groups called Gatherings. More loosely assembled than comparable organizations of other Disciplines, Liberator Gatherings consist of adepts working in the same area, of adepts in long-standing relations as master and trainee, or both – though as is typical for orks, Gathering membership might change as these relations or locations change.

A member of a Gathering can often expect cheaper or free training from other members of the group, but is expected and entitled to mutual support in larger operations members bring in front of the Gathering. Some Gatherings have made a Name for themselves for their large-scale operations against the Therans, and some have even formed Group True Patterns.

A number of Gatherings allow members other than Liberators, most often questors of Lochost or individuals who have sworn blood oaths or taken on quests to fight slavers. Even such liberal gatherings prefer ork members, however.

"When the spirit of Namegivers is enslaved, it is impossible for the slaves to lift their hearts and minds from despair. They need a spark to find that desire for freedom, to rebel against the 'masters' that have no right to make them endure such misery. For this purpose, Lochost gave the orks the Discipline of the Liberator, for only the orks have ever truly been able to stand as individuals and say 'No, I will not be beaten'. We have suffered more than most at the hands of the hated slavers and the fires of our passion keep Lochost burning in our bellies. As Liberators, we bring this fire to those who have lost hope."

He continued as we walked, the freed slaves behind us looking at Dakar with mute awe. He was such a massive ork that he had a frightening aspect about him, but with the heat of battle behind him and the slavers dead at his feet, he became a charismatic, smiling individual that I couldn't help but warm to.

"It's not just about freeing the slaves physically. If you just let them out and sneak them away, they will still have that shattered self-respect. But if you raise them up, fire them with desire and lead by example, then you free their spirits and that, my friend, is more important than physical freedom. You must be free here," he said, slamming his huge fist against his chest.

"If you are free in your heart, even if you die you will be free. A Liberator's strength is based on a Liberator being incarcerated with the slaves he intends to free. You raise them up until the desire to be free comes from within. Once Lochost's flame is ignited, it is impossible to quench the fires of freedom. Once ignited, that fire grows in strength and ferocity. Once ignited, all that is required is to give that desire for freedom a direction."

A thought struck me.

"Dakar, how many times have you done something like this?" I asked. "How many times have you been caught and freed the slaves you have been imprisoned with?"

Dakar grinned. "This was number fifteen."

I was aghast. "And how many slaves have you freed?"

Without hesitation he answered. The numbers were clearly important to him. "With you and your fellows here, seven hundred and forty six."

Incredible is it not? One single ork is responsible for renewing the lives of over seven hundred Namegivers. When Dakar finally passes from this mortal coil, this number will become an epitaph that says everything that ever needs to be said about this one single Liberator. He saved my body, my heart, my mind, and my soul. I will always be thankful to him and all of his brothers and sisters that follow this selfless path.

I feel privileged to have known an ork that is, without any shadow of a doubt, worthy of the title 'Hero'. To know that there are more like him abroad in this world has taught me a great deal about the orks as a race.

If this Discipline belongs to the orks alone, then they truly are the children of Lochost and they will be offered my hand in friendship wherever I walk.

Numbers are important to us, as they impress others. But they are not that important. We merely show everybody that there is a way to free slaves. In turn, the freed slaves tell the people they know that life as a slave is horrible and that something has to be done. Often, they are encouraged to free slaves too—although not using our ways, but their own. There is more to that number than just people returning home, you see?

—Harg the Hungry, Liberator

GAME INFORMATION

A follower of the Liberator Discipline emulates the ork hero Hrak Gron, who freed her people from slavery in the Ork Uprising centuries ago. Liberators fight all whom they consider slavers and tyrants in order to free every falsely imprisoned Namegiver. Single-mindedly righteous, they spend their time either actively engaged in these pursuits or in making themselves better able to carry out their self-imposed mission. They may adventure, but only to secure money or magical weapons to help fight their enemies, or to trade services with heroes who may aid them in their struggle.

Important Attributes: Charisma, Willpower

Racial Restriction: Orks

Karma Ritual: To begin his Karma ritual, the Liberator curls up in the smallest space he can find and binds himself hand and foot with slipknots, then meditates for 30 minutes on the exploits of the hero Hrak Gron as told in song and story. At the climax of the ritual the Liberator leaps to a standing position, breaks the slipknots, and then mimes Hrak Gron's famous slashing of her master's throat while reciting the words to the *Shout of Justice*.

Artisan Skills: Acting, Singing

Half-Magic: Liberators can use half-magic when gathering intelligence to inspire a rebellion, for knowledge of slaver tactics and strategy, and to recall events of the Great Uprising and Hrak Gron's life.

TALENTS AND ABILITIES

INITIATE

Talent Options: Acrobatic Strike, Avoid Blow, Disguise Self, Silent Walk, Unarmed Combat

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Freedom Search, Karma Ritual, Lock Picking, Melee Weapons, Shackle Shrug

NOVICE

Talent Options: Conceal Object, Durability (8/6), Fireblood, Heart of Freedom, Heartening Laugh, Surprise Strike, Throwing Weapons, Tiger Spring

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Free Mind

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Shout of Justice

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Charisma-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Freedom Weaving]

JOURNEYMAN

Talent Options: Dead Fall, Disarm, Heal Slave, Leadership, Lion Heart, Resist Taunt, Second Attack, Temper Self

Fifth Circle

Shield of the Weak: Taking 1 Strain and succeeding at a Charisma Test against a slaver's Social Defense, the adept subtly influences the slaver to leave one of his victims alone. The slaver's attention turns to the adept instead. On an Excellent Result, the adept may choose to influence the slaver to leave him alone too.
Discipline Talent: False Shackles

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Hoard Blows

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on any test made against a slaver or made to resist a slaver's abilities.
Discipline Talent: Mind Blade

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Power Mask

WARDEN

Talent Options: Champion Challenge, Critical Hit, Frenzy, Life Check, Pin, Resist Pain, Steel Thought, Temper Other

Ninth Circle

Freedom Quest: Taking 2 Blood Magic Damage, the adept takes a vow to free a specific Namegiver, group of Namegivers, slaves at a specific facility, or Namegivers enslaved by a specific slaver. For a year and a day or until his objective is achieved, the adept adds a +3 bonus to any test made to fulfill the quest. At the end of this time, the damage may be healed. The adept can only have one quest active at a time.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Prison Call

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Mind Armor

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Escape Divination

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Impossible Hide

MASTER

Talent Options: Blood Guilt Weapon, Chameleon, Echo Location, Ethereal Weapon, Multi-Strike, Rushing Attack

Thirteenth Circle

Heart of Rebellion: Taking 1 Strain, the adept designates one of his talents and makes a Freedom Weaving Test against the Spell Defense of a target. If successful, the adept weaves a temporary thread to the target that imparts a +5 rank bonus to the designated talent whenever the adept and the target cooperate to fight slavers or free slaves. The thread does not count against the normal limits for threads, but the adept can only have Freedom Weaving Rank threads of this type active at a time, and a target can only benefit from one such thread. The thread lasts for 24 hours.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Second Chance

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Vitality

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Vital Strike

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Liberators are rebels and infiltrators, attracted to places where oppression or inequity rules. They like to challenge the status quo, and value freedom over everything. Most Liberators focus on doing things first-hand and with martial prowess, preferring to meet their enemies face-to-face. In any case, Liberators keep their calling a secret, only revealing themselves once they manage to carry the spark of rebellion into a slaver's camp.

In some rare cases—usually those where the Liberator also becomes a questor of Lochost—they agitate for change in pursuit of equality and Namegiver dignity, opposing Theran rule and slavery. Others propose political reforms in established communities and within the kingdom of Throal, acting as devil's advocates in an effort to ensure that those in power continue to govern responsibly.



Discipline Violations

A Liberator may suffer a talent crisis if he aids in the enslavement of another Namegiver, turns a blind eye to slaving, knowingly associates with slavers except as part of a ruse to defeat them, or harms or kills a slave except in self-defense. The Liberator Discipline does not demand that its adherents take reckless or suicidal action but does expect heroic efforts.

The gamemaster should try to create a logical, cohesive set of standards for determining Discipline violations. A character's decision to turn down a mission against one group of slavers because he is busy pursuing another gang should not put him in violation of the Liberator Discipline.



Rituals of Advancement

Liberators do not observe formal advancement rituals, as their deeds usually speak for themselves. A Liberator who cannot confirm sufficient deeds for his level of capability is often not trained until he does. This tradition ensures there are few Liberators preaching high ideals, but not following through with their actions.

Recruitment: Liberators are often recruited from the ranks of freed slaves, usually those who stood out during their escape. When a Liberator notices a potential student, he often holds back helping him, to find out how well his candidate can do on his own once the spark of rebellion has entered his mind.

Ghost Master Ritual: The Liberator walks into an abandoned prison cell, cellar, or cave and sits with his back against the wall as if he were a prisoner. After an hour another prisoner appears sitting beside him. If the Ritual of the Ghost Master Test succeeds, the Liberator and the ghost master talk about how to plan their escape. The ritual proceeds as normal once both leave their prison.

Discipline Combinations

Liberators often choose to follow the path of the Air Sailor because of its focus on teamwork and coordination. It also appeals to Liberators hoping to free those enslaved on Theran airships. Following the way of the Beastmaster appeals to those seeking to free animals mistreated by their owners (those forced to fight in arenas, for example).

Other common choices include the Archer, Scout, Illusionist, and Warrior Disciplines, which offer talents that enhance the Liberator's abilities to help and free others. Liberators who choose the Weaponsmith as a secondary Discipline often concentrate on the art of creating and concealing small weapons for use in raids on slave camps. Some Liberators follow the path of the Elementalist or Nethermancer and attempt to liberate trapped or bound spirits and elementals.

Liberators don't usually care for a flashy show and usually refrain from the ways of the Swordmaster or Troubadour. Liberators also have little use for Wizards, who traditionally prefer study to action. While Disciplines like the Thief and Sky Raider offer useful abilities, they don't appeal as secondary Disciplines because their attitudes often oppose the Liberator's goal of helping others. Likewise, the bond shared between a Cavalryman and his mount makes this Discipline unattractive to a Liberator adept.

CHAPTER FIFTHTEEN

ON THE DEDICATION OF THE MESSENGER

The following is the account of Fey'tha, an obsidiman Messenger of some renown. The pretense for his delivery of this document was the only way I could secure his agreement to contribute to this work. I have little doubt that you'll agree his account is worth the balance of the charge, as I had not enough with me to fully secure his services.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

Dedication, focus, and oneness of purpose are at the heart of the Messenger's Way. Reliability is our currency, how we measure our value, much as honor among Warriors and *katorr* among trolls.

Scouts and Messengers use some of the same gifts, but our focus makes all the difference. We do not trek through the wilderness for the sake of exploration, nor do we flow among the citizenry for the sake of doing so. The means is most certainly not the end. We may at times take pride in our ability to move and blend in with the world, but this is not the point of it. We don't travel just because the world is out there; just as that mountain over there is no more a reason in itself to climb its slopes. There must be a purpose and direction in doing such things or they do not serve the good of other Namegivers and the good of our world. A higher calling is needed for many of my kind to leave their Liferocks for very long, at least in our terms.



ON THE BECOMING AND THE VOW

Becoming a Messenger is a great honor among my kind; it is not something to be lightly pursued however. For not all are destined to be Messengers. There are many ways to find one's aptitude for the Discipline's tenets. Some begin carrying news from one Liferock to another, others carrying the tales and legends of lost companions and friends. A Messenger will look deep into the heart of other obsidimen around him and seek those to instruct in the Way. When he finds one, the Messenger will send the recruit with a request to another Messenger, wherever he might be. The receiving Messenger will size

up the recruit and send him onto another. This continues until one of them sees that the recruit not only has the desire, but the drive to be a true Messenger. Then he teaches the recruit the Vow, which the recruit spends his return trip mulling over. Once he recites the Vow before his initial teacher he makes it his own, becoming one of us, for he has shown his worthiness.

On Oneness of Mind and Heart

Our Discipline trains us to center ourselves, to look deep into our hearts and know why we do what we do, and through doing so refine and deepen our sense of purpose. Like a Weaponsmith sharpening a blade, we sharpen our resolve. This requires periods of intense meditation as much as it requires a deliberateness and forcefulness of action. While it may seem counterproductive, and is a jest of those ignorant of our true nature, this requires a solemn patience that is the opposite of hurrying. We know not the trials that will face us, and to have one's mind unprepared can leave it to waver at the worst possible times. The importance of our purpose requires such determination.

This inwardness reveals itself in other ways as well. While the Scout opens himself to everything around, there is risk in that. There is much to distract and rob one's attention. The Messenger does indeed open his senses and take in the world, but holds onto the good and casts aside the bad. The irrelevant pieces must be sifted out and discarded, so the good can be kept. I have learned much of the peoples of this land and taken in much of its beauty and its pain, but such things as these never rise to the same level as the principles of the Way or the task at hand, for it is a more important task than many even begin to understand.

Not every Messenger is as stoical as Fey'tha. I myself was drawn to the Discipline at first by the call of the world and its many wonders, before I fully understood the Great Task.

—Jareth, Messenger of the Liferock of Dufor

On the Centrality of the Missive

How important can one missive be or what is worth such single-minded devotion, you may ask. You verbose dwarfs should know best of all: words. Words are power. Just as Names and knowledge of patterns, words convey power. Even magicians record the most powerful spells in symbols; just another way of getting at words!

We find ourselves the bearers of such power. Civilization itself rests on the spread of knowledge. Trade agreements, news of far away lands, romantic lovers' exchanges, far-reaching treaties, and much, much more course along the paths and roads of this land. That is our passion, our quest: to spread knowledge and the power it holds, one missive at a time. Few of you hurried, distractible races have the patience and focus to consistently deliver the most important messages time and again. Such precious cargo requires one to have no regard for oneself, other than is necessary to make the journey, missive intact. Only those connected to the stability of the earth itself can promise this, and not only promise, but deliver.

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Book Memory, Climbing, Melee Weapons, Read/Write Language, Wilderness Survival

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Avoid Blow, Direction Sense, Karma Ritual, Navigation, Speak Language

Novice

Talent Options: Book Recall, Detect Weapon, Durability (6/5), Haggle, Search, Sense Danger, Silent Walk, Throwing Weapons

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Conceal Object

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Sprint

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Perception-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Message Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Air Speaking, Anticipate Blow, Detect Trap, Disguise Self, Gliding Stride, Mimic Voice, Trick Riding, Wound Balance

Fifth Circle

Encrypt: For 1 Strain, the adept can make a selected tract of text unreadable by running his hands over the text. The text becomes incomprehensible to anyone other than the adept. The adept can reverse this process by re-using the ability.
Discipline Talent: Temper Self

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Resist Taunt

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on tests made to defend against an outside influence that might prevent him from delivering a message.
Discipline Talent: Steel Thought

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Safe Path

WARDEN

Talent Options: Fast Hand, Life Check, Lifesight, Lion Heart, Missile Twister, Plant Shelter, Poison Resistance, Tiger Spring

Ninth Circle

Endurance: Taking 2 Strain, the adept may travel without rest or sleep for 24 hours. He may use this ability consecutively for up to Message Weaving Rank times.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Lion Spirit

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Charisma-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Safe Thought

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: True Sight

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Chameleon

MASTER

Talent Options: Defense, Detect Falsehood, Ethereal Weapon, Multi-Tongue, Stone Skin, Truth Skit

Thirteenth Circle

One with the Message: Taking 3 Blood Magic Damage and performing a minute-long ritual, the adept incorporates a message into his physical and astral form, it becomes one with him for a year and a day or until the ritual is repeated. Physical traces of the message, such as the parchment it is written on, merge into the adept and cannot even be perceived astrally. Non-physical parts, such as knowledge of the message's content, merge into the adept's pattern and cannot be remembered by him. Once the message is recovered, the Blood Magic Damage may be healed as normal. Should the adept die while he is one with the message, the message is lost.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Elemental Walk

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Second Chance

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Echo Location

This is the call, the destiny that draws us on our way, draws us to serve Namegivers across the lands and to enrich the fabric of the world in doing so. The very lifeblood of society is carried daily in our hands. While I at first pondered the importance of this, upon reflecting I saw the opportunity to spread the word of our Discipline, our calling. To help others see and understand our service, our giving of ourselves for the good of others.

On the Reliability of Other Namegivers

On Messengers among other races I should add some information now, having explained how the Messenger serves civilization, and helps to maintain it. In former times, we Messengers were only found among obsidimen, and even today most followers of this Discipline are members of my race. We developed the Discipline to make communication between our Liferocks easier, as they tend to be far apart. But as the other races spread their spheres of influence, they, too, had the need for communication over long distances, for couriers and Messengers. So we taught them our ways, because civilization is not exclusive to our people, but something that is shared between all Namegivers.

No wonder the path of the Messenger spread to other races. It strengthens the threads connecting us all, thereby also connecting the bond between the races. It furthered its own distribution, after a fashion.

—Kolear, Human Journeyman

Most often, an historic event marked the introduction of this Discipline into a race. For example, the Way of the Messenger appealed to dwarfs during the delivery of the *Book of Tomorrow* to kaers throughout Barsaive. Much earlier, the elves of Wyrm Wood spread throughout Barsaive and formed many small communities. The trolls, always close to us, learned our ways when they formed their moots.

There are differences and similarities between the Messengers of old and those of the present. While a follower of the traditional path of the Messenger sticks to delivering a missive someone else gave him, today's Messenger finds his missive on his own—such as spreading news to the people, thereby connecting all Namegivers. All Messengers, however, share some common traits. They are a calm and dedicated people, sometimes even stubborn—at least in accomplishing a task. A common saying is that all Messengers are obsidimen at heart.

Connecting all Namegivers is a purpose found in my own Discipline, too. I suppose where we focus on the common past of our people, the Messenger focuses on our present. In common, we have our dedication to the future.

—Jelarus, dwarf Troubadour

On Trust

Now I assure you, you should not fear what you write or how well it is sealed, I shall not look if you but ask. Our very Names are at stake. No Messenger adept would even consider revealing a message to any but the intended recipient. That is our code and is intimately connected with our purpose. Some messages are even too dangerous to risk putting to such parchment as you have before you. That is our specialty. We are trained to commit every accent, every intonation to memory if need be, even in tongues we know not the meaning behind.

Let me share a story with you, a legend among my kind in fact, of the Messenger who bore the secrets of defeating a dreadful Horror to a faraway land. This Horror waylaid him on his journey, seeking to destroy the message and shore up its weakness. Little did the wretched Horror know what it held. After an eternity of grueling torture it finally tossed the near-dead obsidiman away, convinced he was broken and mad. The dying obsidiman began to drag himself away, even as the Horror laughed on. Not long after, the same Horror met its end at the hand of the heroes of that land, for the message was delivered even after so long. We hold our secrets closer than all else. This is a picture of the trust we strive to deserve, both to keep the message safe and to ensure its delivery whatever the cost.

This trust comes out in our dedication to truth as well. The messages we bear come with a trust to the truth of them as well as their accuracy. Many a message I have outright refused to deliver as I knew it to be false. As one grows in the ways of a Messenger, one can sense such things: deceptions, misdirections, outright lies. Misinformation is worse than none at all. The spreading of lies can bring only harm.

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Such lofty ideals are not the only way to be a Messenger. My master taught a much more pragmatic approach.

—Dothur, Novice Messenger of Throal

▲ ▲ ▲

On the Overcoming and the Finding

It takes a great deal of foresight and tenacity to keep striving no matter the odds. One has to persevere to overcome the many obstacles in one's path. However, without careful planning and meditation this striving may well be for naught. Reflection is needed, beyond simple plodding toward one's destination. Let me tell another story, this time one of my own.

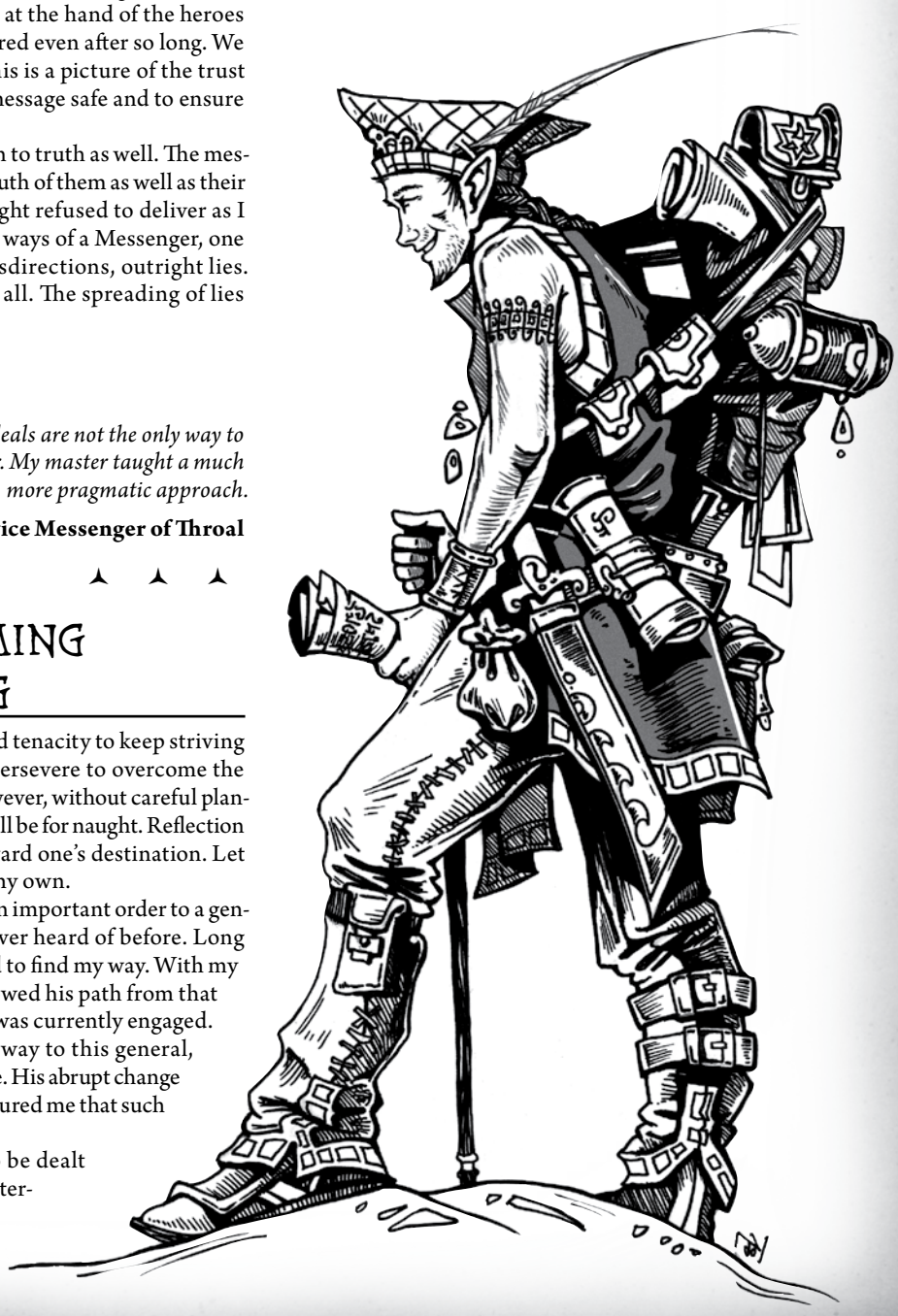
I was once commissioned to deliver an important order to a general in a Theran province that I had never heard of before. Long meditation gave me the clarity I needed to find my way. With my recipient firmly in my mind's eye I followed his path from that province to the battlefield on which he was currently engaged. Through the raging battle I fought my way to this general, finally bowing and extending my package. His abrupt change in demeanor and action once again reassured me that such struggles are my call and my privilege.

You see, there are many obstacles to be dealt with. Finding one's way quickly in new territory is a challenge in itself. Battles, plagues, floods, chasms—any number of hazards can lie before you, each needing to be overcome in turn. You must fight and not heed the wounds, march on and not seek for rest, and toil through adversity without seeking reward, save that of fulfilling your calling.

Opening one's awareness to such a specific, yet distant, goal can be quite a taxing affair. You need to remain focused on where you are, while always keeping your goal in mind. This is the focus and determination needed to walk on the path of the Messenger, the path between location and destination, the path that grants us our magic.

Game Information

Messengers are determined and reliable couriers carrying important information from one place to another. While the path of the Messenger was originally developed by obsidimen, other races have learned to follow this path as well, albeit often with a different emphasis.



Trolls see the delivery of a message as a physical challenge, honoring Thystonius and proving their *katorr*. Elves see the Way of the Messenger as an opportunity for cultural exchange and a path to a new unity. Dwarfs, especially those of Throalic origin, prefer to spread knowledge throughout Barsaive. T'skrang like to spread news along the roads and rivers, thereby "telling the tales of the present." Humans fill all of those roles equally, emphasizing travel and change in practicing this Discipline. Obsidimen still make up the biggest percentage of Messenger adepts, however, and enjoy the reputation of being the most reliable.

Important Attributes: Perception, Willpower

Karma Ritual: To begin his Karma ritual, the Messenger meditates over a short piece of text and selects one of his companions to hide somewhere within 10 minutes' walk of his starting point. The Messenger then visualizes his companion and starts seeking him out. If he manages to recite the text in front of his target within the next half hour, the ritual is complete. An alternative version of this ritual allows the Messenger to select a place known to himself or one of his companions within 20 minutes' walk.

Artisan Skills: Runic Carving, Wood Carving

Half-Magic: Messengers may use half-magic for knowledge of travel routes, customs of the delivery trade, and of different types of messages and how to convey, hide, find, encrypt, or decrypt them. They may make Toughness-based Half-Magic Tests in place of Fatigue Tests and gain access to the Mapmaking and Wilderness Survival skills via half-magic.

Roleplaying Hints

Messengers are known for their reliability and determination. They don't give their word lightly, but they usually live up to it no matter the cost. Messengers don't make their journeys in order to explore the world; they travel because they have to. Staying focused and 'on target' means being in accord with this Discipline.

Messengers aren't loners, however, and enjoy the company of other Namegivers. Many Messengers join merchant caravans or adventuring parties because traveling in groups is the best method to avoid danger and direct conflict. Though Messengers can fight, they usually avoid combat if possible.

Discipline Violations

A talent crisis is a confusing experience for a Messenger. He generally feels cut off from the world around him, becoming lost and disoriented. As usual, the exact triggers for a talent crisis vary with each adept's personal vision, but common violations include the Messenger deviating from his planned route, or losing or failing to deliver a message.

As a Deed of Atonement, the Messenger usually finds a way to retrieve the missive and deliver it at a later time. For example, an adept whose package was stolen in an ork scorcher raid might devote himself to seeking the scorchers out and retrieving the package.

Rituals of Advancement

Like those of some of the other Disciplines, Messenger advancement rituals are based on experience and past deeds that serve as an indicator of the adept's increased ability. As the adept advances through the Circles of the Discipline, the importance of his deliveries increases, making each journey more challenging.

Recruitment: To take the Messenger's Vow is a great honor among trolls and obsidimen, and usually happens after the character has proven that he possesses that relentless desire to serve as a courier. Recruitment proves more difficult for other races, as instructors often find their characters harder to judge. Often, though, adept Messengers are recruited from the ranks of non-adept couriers.

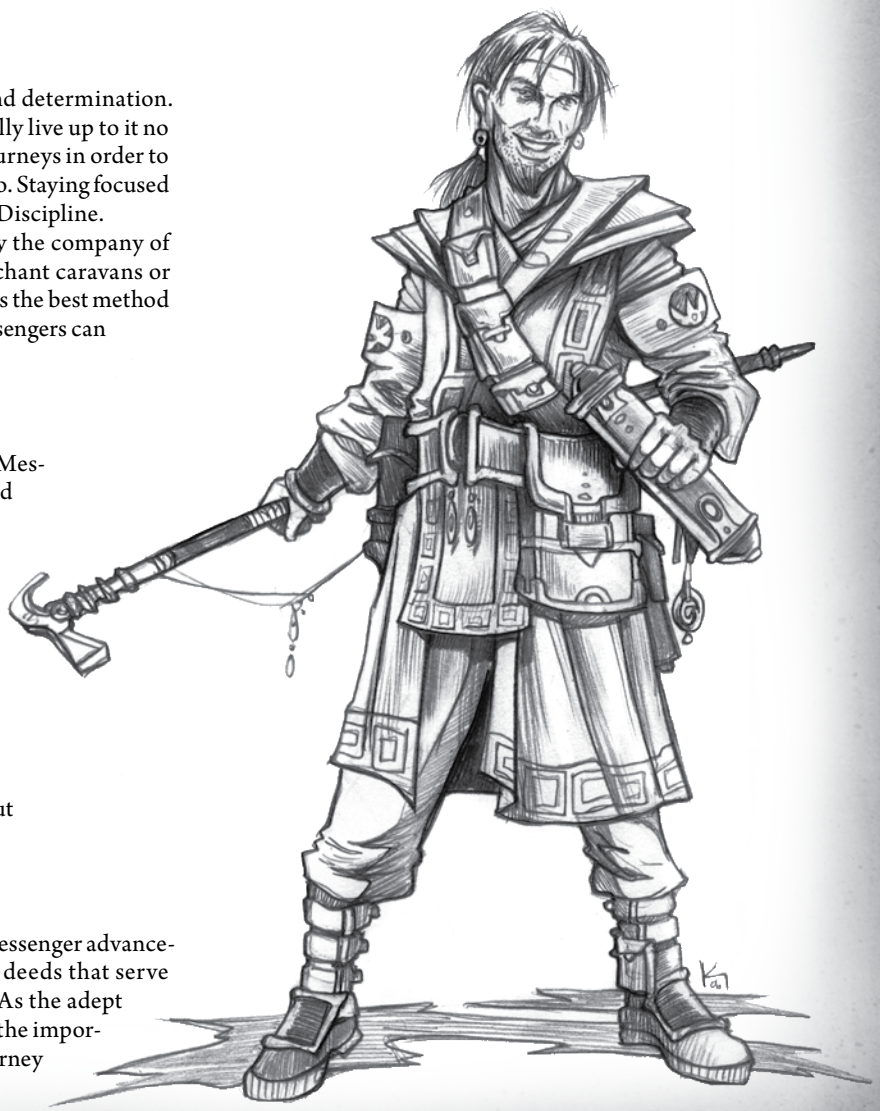
Ghost Master Ritual: The adept meditates on delivering his request to his chosen ghost master. During the meditation, he lives through a journey, overcoming any and all obstacles in the process. When the adept reaches the ghost master the ritual proceeds as normal.

Discipline Combinations

Messengers who wish to acquire multiple Disciplines are most likely to adopt paths that enable them to overcome obstacles in their way. For example, a Messenger might pick up the Warrior Discipline to enhance his combat prowess, or learn the way of the Elementalist to use spell magic.

The Troubadour and Illusionist Disciplines are popular among Messengers, since they help to spread legends and deliver news from town to town.

The Nethermancer, Wizard, and Weaponsmith Disciplines generally don't complement the Messenger's Way, as they focus on research and creation.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ON THE SEVERANCE OF THE OUTCAST WARRIOR

The following text was transcribed from a conversation with Ko'charro, whom I met in a tavern in Kratas. The huge gray-bearded troll with sawn-off horns quickly caught my eye. I have always enjoyed the company of trolls, so I bought him a mug of ale and we started talking. He follows a rare Discipline, which may be hard to grasp for non-trolls, due to the trolls' unique understanding of honor. This is an attempt to give our readers a glimpse of the difficulties an Outcast Warrior has to face every day.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

I don't think that you've heard my Name before? Unless you've traveled the Twilight Peaks some years back, that is. I was once a member of a trollmoot famous for its spectacular raids. I won't talk about them, but be assured that we brought fear into the hearts of many Therans.

Most Namegivers think that an adept from the highlands must be a Sky Raider or Warrior. This is largely true, as many troll adepts follow one of these Disciplines. I am a warrior, too. But the path I follow is different. I am an *er'ka'a'kul*—an outcast.

Outcast Warrior is not exactly an honorable title, if you know what I mean. An outcast has disagreed with the chief of his clan in a question of honor so severe that the only choices for him were to be exiled or killed. I won't talk about what made me lose my honor in the eyes of my old moot—that's a very personal topic and it's unlikely you would understand.

However, it is important to understand that the concept of honor is very important for a troll, especially for a highlander like me. A troll has to think twice about every insult he faces. What my brothers don't realize is that most other Namegivers simply lack an understanding of our culture and they're insulting us unknowingly. It's not a good idea to lash out at every Namegiver who's insulting you—a lesson I learned the hard way.

ON THE SEVERANCE

I once was part of an important family and known as a brave Warrior, and took my place in a lot of successful raids. Tales and legends about me and my deeds would have been told after my death, that's for sure. But one day the chief of my clan and I had a dispute about a Theran whom I captured as a *newot* during a raid on a mining vedette. This dispute forced me by my *katorr* to go into exile. I underwent the Ritual of Severance and had my horns sawed as a sign of my exile and my dishonor—in the eyes of my chief and my moot, at least.

▲ ▲ ▲

I guess I know why Ko'charro was exiled by his clan. He wasn't satisfied with the treatment of the Theran newot. *Ko'charro treated him fairly and with the respect a* newot *deserves, while a lot of other trolls didn't treat him any better than a slave; with no respect at all. A* newot *usually has the opportunity to one day become a full member of the moot, but Ko'charro was sure that this newot would never get the chance to do so.*

—Doroteia Filomena, Merchant of the City of Claw Ridge

▲ ▲ ▲

A Theran can't understand the concept of honor, even less our view of it! Ko'charros's moot only accepted the Theran newot because of Ko'charros's reputation.

—L'charak Meatgrinder Thundersky

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The ritual wasn't easy—my own father had to saw off my horns since my *katorr* and his *kat'ral* demanded it. The other option was a duel to death, which was unacceptable for both of us; never should a father fight against his son! The Severance gave me the chance to stay alive and not lose my personal honor—despite the fact that I was dishonored in the eyes of my moot. Told ya, I don't expect little folk to understand. To me, it was a last nod to the great deeds and the many battles I performed for my moot.

I have to make clear one very important point: although my moot views me as a troll without honor, *kava*, I don't share this view. In my eyes, I have proven my honor when I chose to be exiled and cast out by my people. I sacrificed my life in the moot to keep my self-respect, and spared my father the pain of fighting against me. It was a sacrifice for those I love, and I'd do it again if I had to. Never forget this.

ON LIFE IN EXILE

Every member of my moot is bound by his honor to attack and kill me on sight, so I left the Twilight Peaks behind and traveled into the lowlands of Barsaive.

I wandered away from the mountains, my home, and the life I knew since childhood. It wasn't easy to find trustworthy com-

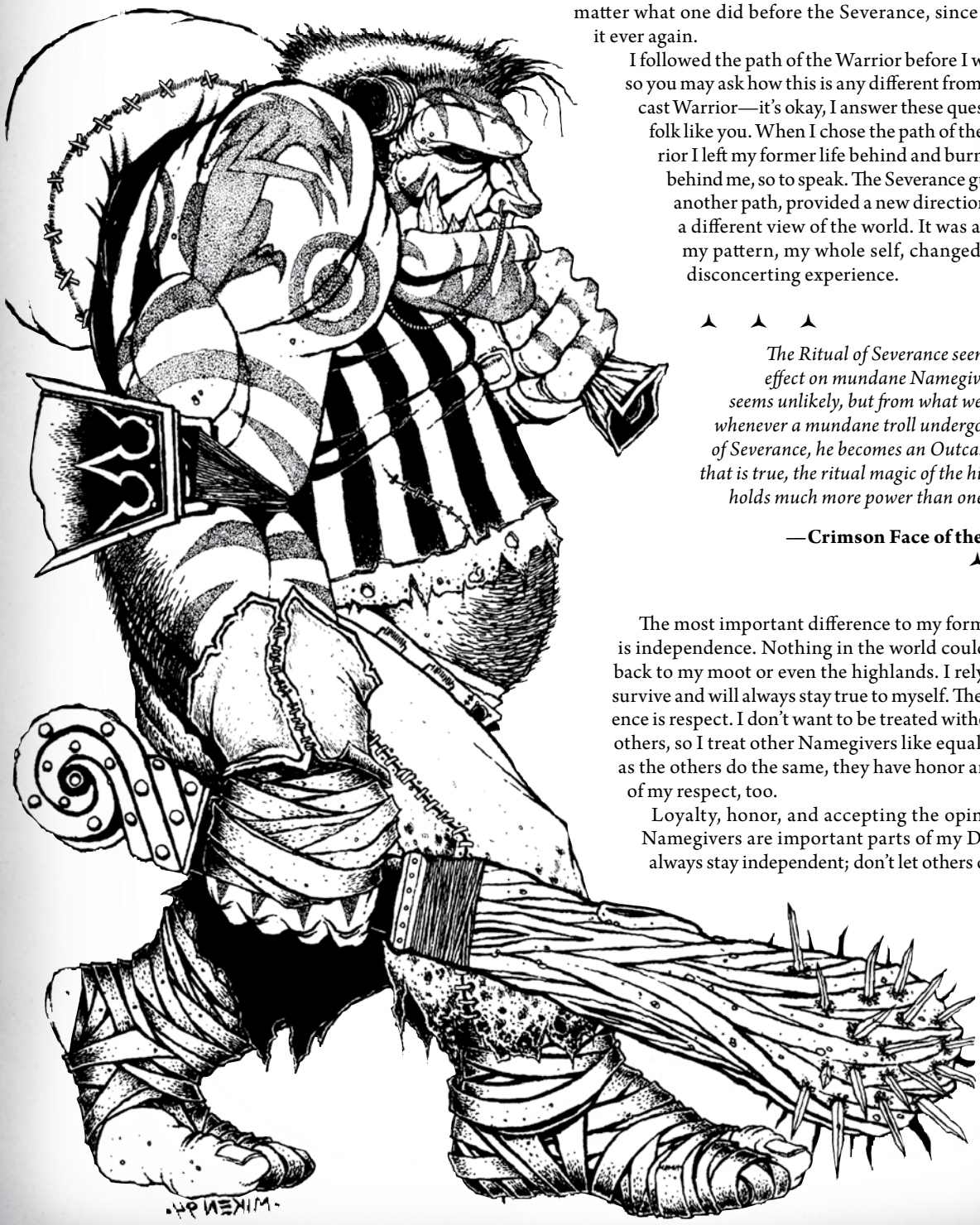
panions among the little folk, and I had to learn a lesson or two regarding my *katorr*. Back in the mountains, I would have let my axe do the talking with every Namegiver asking about my horns, but in the lowlands that would have been unwise—especially I was often the only troll in the village or town that I just entered as a stranger. Other Namegivers are ignorant about honor and simply unable to understand the ways of a troll—even most of the lowland trolls don't know what I am talking about! I never forget an insult, however. An insulting Namegiver ignoring my warnings is likely to have a conversation with my axe sooner or later. I don't have to attack, by the way, but it's the simple language most people understand.

It took a while, but I eventually found other travelers who respected my heritage and agreed to wander the world together. These few souls will have my loyalty and trust forever. Remember this the next time you meet a troll with sawed-off horns: treat him with respect and you'll be treated in the same way.

On the Path of the Outcast

Being an Outcast Warrior is no path to choose lightly. The Severance not only requires us to leave our moots behind, it requires us to leave our old lives behind. It does not matter what one did before the Severance, since one won't do it ever again.

I followed the path of the Warrior before I went into exile, so you may ask how this is any different from being an Outcast Warrior—it's okay, I answer these questions for little folk like you. When I chose the path of the Outcast Warrior I left my former life behind and burned all bridges behind me, so to speak. The Severance guided me onto another path, provided a new direction and gave me a different view of the world. It was a strange time: my pattern, my whole self, changed—a slow and disconcerting experience.



The Ritual of Severance seems to have an effect on mundane Namegivers as well. It seems unlikely, but from what we could gather, whenever a mundane troll undergoes the Ritual of Severance, he becomes an Outcast Warrior. If that is true, the ritual magic of the highland trolls holds much more power than one might think.

—Crimson Face of the Sixth Order

The most important difference to my former Discipline is independence. Nothing in the world could make me go back to my moot or even the highlands. I rely on myself to survive and will always stay true to myself. The second difference is respect. I don't want to be treated without respect by others, so I treat other Namegivers like equals–and as long as the others do the same, they have honor and are worthy of my respect, too.

Loyalty, honor, and accepting the opinions of other Namegivers are important parts of my Discipline. But always stay independent; don't let others decide for you.

On Training

As you might guess, it's not easy to advance in my Discipline after leaving the Twilight Peaks, since outcasts don't exactly gather at the next corner. Those Outcast Warriors that remain in the Twilight Peaks are a bunch of truly dishonored trolls in my eyes (and I have the scars to prove their dishonor), so I had to travel through half of Barsaive to find another member of my Discipline that I could respect. I had to prove my honor to convince my teacher to train me, but since I am still a troll of honor, it worked. However, he taught me the ritual required to converse with the spirits of other exiles long dead, so I usually seek tutelage in the realms of the dead.

For those who seek tutelage in the Twilight Peaks … well, there are other exiles living in the region who have banded together to survive, but they aren't a welcome sight, even for other outcasts.

A lot of outcasts get killed by highland trolls as it's easy for them to spot an outcast because of his sawed-off horns. It's not easy for the outcasts to thrive in the mountains with the troll-moots so close, but somehow they manage to make a living. I have met different types of Outcast Warrior groups. Some have been ruthless killers, while others still are truly honorable trolls. But an Outcast Warrior wandering through Barsaive is a rare sight. I chose this path for myself, but not many of my brethren do so.



These outcast communities can be found in the Ashen Hills, where living conditions are harsh and not much better than in the Wastes. These trolls make a living off the excellent crystal that can be found there. They sell it to merchants who don't know or don't care about the fact that they're dealing with kavas. *The trolls (and the few other Namegivers living with them) are hard-working and earning people, but tend to be hostile towards outsiders. To no one's surprise, in fact. But once you've won their trust, they'll be your friends forever.*

—M'jontass, t'skrang Adventurer



We trolls of the Ashen Hills may be seen as kavas *by our highland brethren, but we don't care about them anymore. Hiding deep in the caves and selling crystal to greedy merchants is not always easy, but what would be the alternative? Leaving the Twilight Peaks to live among little people and lowland trolls? Pah! Never would I do so! And neither would any of the other outcasts here. We still have our honor and that's all we need.*

—Krij'gerak of the Scorched Mountain, Outcast Warrior



Game Information

Outcast Warriors, or *er'ka'a'kul* (as they refer to themselves), are highland trolls who have left their clans because of a disagreement over a point of honor. Though an outcast's clan considers him disgraced, he sees himself as having proved his honor by submitting to the ritual known as the Severance (including allowing his horns to be sawed off) rather than giving in to someone else's opinion.

Important Attributes: Strength, Willpower

Racial Restriction: Trolls

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Acrobatic Strike, Climbing, Parry, Wilderness Survival, Wood Skin

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Avoid Blow, Battle Shout, Karma Ritual, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Combat

Novice

Talent Options: Anticipate Blow, Durability (9/7), Great Leap, Maneuver, Missile Weapons, Sprint, Throwing Weapons, Tiger Spring

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Shield Charge

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Swift Kick

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Strength-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Kava Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Cobra Strike, Disarm, Down Strike, Earth Skin, Endure Cold, Resist Taunt, Sense Danger, Temper Self

Fifth Circle

***Katorr's* Rebuke:** When a target questions or doubts the adept's personal honor, the adept may take 1 Strain to get a +2 bonus to an Action Test he makes against the target to resist being taunted, set things straight, or avenge the slight. This ability can only be used once per target per encounter.
Discipline Talent: Fireblood

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Life Check

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on close combat Damage Tests.
Discipline Talent: Steely Stare

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Second Attack

WARDEN

Talent Options: Champion Challenge, Critical Hit, Impressive Strike, Lion Heart, Matrix Strike, Steel Thought, Vitality, Whirlwind

Ninth Circle

Truce: Taking 3 Strain, the adept calls a truce against a Namegiver he is touching by making a Kava Weaving Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, the adept and target are peacebonded for 24 hours. If one of them attacks the other, he takes the same amount of damage he causes the other.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Resist Pain

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Toughness-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Shield Beater

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Body Blade

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Weapon Breaker

MASTER

Talent Options: Earth Armor, Ethereal Weapon, Mind Blade, Missile Twister, Second Chance, Stone Skin

Thirteenth Circle

Honorable Reputation: The adept's understanding of honor allows him to prepare for a feat great enough to posthumously rehabilitate him in the eyes of the world. At any time after learning this ability, he may declare a heroic deed he just performed to be his legacy. After his death, he will be remembered for it, not the incident that made him an outcast, the deed will be seen as atonement for the original infringement, and he will be rehabilitated in the eyes of his clan. In the meantime, he will remain outcast, but receive a +3 bonus to his Reputation.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Storm Shield

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Vital Strike

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Multi-Strike

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma ritual, the Outcast Warrior holds his weapon before his face and meditates on it for fifteen minutes. Using that weapon, he then performs a stylized ritual set of movements that symbolize combat against a dozen foes. The tempo of this ritual battle starts slowly and steadily accelerates until the Outcast Warrior's movements become almost a blur. The battle lasts for another fifteen minutes, at the end of which the adept must wipe his sweat from the weapon using his own clothing.

Artisan Skills: Weapon Rune Carving, Wood Carving

Half-Magic: Outcast Warriors can use half-magic when caring for or repairing their weapons and armor, and for knowledge of troll raiding tactics and strategy (recognizing the weaknesses of a target when planning a raid, for instance). Outcast Warriors may also make Willpower-based Half-Magic Tests to defend against social slights made against their honor.

SPECIAL RULES

The Ritual of Severance enables a troll adept to abandon his former Discipline and become an Outcast Warrior, take on Outcast Warrior as an additional Discipline, or designate Outcast Warrior his First Discipline (his former Disciplines become additional Disciplines in the order they were learned, the former First Discipline becoming the Second Discipline, and so on). The ritual counts as the initiation into the Discipline. If the character becomes an adept through this act, buying talent ranks follows the procedure for generating characters. If the character already is an adept, he buys talent ranks as described for learning a new Discipline.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

An Outcast Warrior sees no shame in his sawed-off horns and often displays the stumps proudly. Due to their exposure to other Namegivers, most Outcast Warriors are aware that their concept of honor is often incomprehensible for the other races and aren't as easily insulted as their former clan members.

Most Outcast Warriors keep to themselves, though they offer unshakable loyalty to those rare Namegivers who earn their respect. Likewise, almost all Outcast Warriors appreciate being treated with respect and honesty by others. Cheating or insulting them badly is generally not a good idea and almost always provokes retaliation. An Outcast Warrior's sense of honor usually means that he will die defending his honor, but he won't stupidly sacrifice himself to avenge a slight or insult against his honor.

DISCIPLINE VIOLATIONS

An Outcast Warrior provokes a talent crisis if he returns to the way he lived before the Severance. For example, extensively using the talents of his former Discipline (excluding those also available to him as Outcast Warriors) may cause the adept to suffer a talent crisis. The severity of the violation depends on the nature of the specific offense and is determined by the gamemaster.

An Outcast Warrior who betrays the interests of his group, breaks a promise sworn to on his honor, or cold-bloodedly murders a defenseless opponent may also suffer a talent crisis. Restoring his honor is usually an appropriate Deed of Atonement.

RITUALS OF ADVANCEMENT

Since their numbers are small, Outcast Warriors do not observe formal Rituals of Advancement and similar ceremonies. The conditions for training depend on each master and usually involve a test proving the student's honor. The practice of the Ritual of the Ghost Master is a common way for wandering Outcast Warriors to advance to higher Circles.

Recruitment: Any troll submitting to the Ritual of Severance becomes an Outcast Warrior. This ritual is only enacted on a disagreement over a point of honor and enables the troll to leave his clan and save his personal honor.

Ghost Master Ritual: The Outcast Warrior summons a ghost master by mentally fighting that master within a circle. After an hour of meditation and reciting the deeds of the master, the master materializes and enters ritual combat with the Outcast Warrior. Once the ghost master wins the fight, the ritual proceeds as normal.

DISCIPLINE COMBINATIONS

Outcast Warriors rarely take on additional Disciplines, but those who do usually seek an opportunity to expand their abilities in a related field. The Weaponsmith is the most natural choice because of the Discipline's focus on willpower and to help the Outcast Warrior improve the lethality of his weapons. The Cavalryman Discipline is appealing because of the strong bond connecting the adept and his mount.

Outcast Warriors have a particularly hard time adopting the Swordmaster and Troubadour Disciplines, since both require a love of performance that most Outcast Warriors do not share.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

ON THE CLEANSING PATH OF THE PURIFIER

The following text is a transcribed conversation with the obsidiman Purifier, Alathar. To some, he is a zealot relying on violence to cleanse the corruption in the world. To others, he is a benevolent healer of the land. Some Namegivers call Purifiers nature's avengers, though this label owes more to fanciful exaggeration than fact.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

It has been said of my people that we are slow to act. To the softer races, we seem ponderous and introspective. Like mountains, we are regarded as being slow to change and even slower to yield. My brothers and I see the truth in these thoughts, even as we see the error in their jests.

A mountain is implacable and unmoving, but look at what happens when it turns into a raging volcano. None outside of the obsidimen Brotherhoods can possibly know the fire burning in our veins. Our strength, our endurance—these are gifts that we use sparingly, when a cause requires them. It is this fire in our veins that makes the Purifier a force equal to that of nature herself. In imagining this, you may begin to feel the power of the Purifier.

ON THE TRUTH OF THE EARTH

The Earth is sacred. While we obsidimen hold this truth closer to our hearts than many others, every Namegiver knows this. When the dark times of the Scourge came upon the land, where did the peoples of our world seek shelter? Within the Earth. Even the Horrors pale before the strength of unmolested Earth. From this Earth, our people arise.

We can be rash, and we can be quick to judge. It is a failing rare among our race but common among our kind. It takes a certain type of soul to rise from the Liferock aware of the pain in the Earth's heart. If the Scourge was hard for men and elves, imagine the pain it brought to those of us whose every breath resounds with the sensations of the world. The land changed in those dark nights. Mountains vanished and hills were torn from their roots. No living thing could survive the devastation that the Earth endured, for with lesser pain men are broken. The Purifiers are not warriors; we are healers. But we can not mend the broken heart of the Earth until we have excised the bitter thorns that still pierce her flesh. And so we must be healers with heavy hands.

ON OUR ROLE IN THE WORLD

The Horrors wrought many changes to the world. Some wounds have begun to heal, and to cure them would be to tear at the scabs that shelter the Earth from her pain. Where the land is broken and the shape of the world has changed, there can be no purification. But where the infection roams free, spreading as a disease of the heart, we can shake the foundations of the world.

Stopping the pain of the world around us is no easy task. The healing of centuries of pain is a hard-pressed battle, but it is one that the Earth has armed us well to face. Our calling gives us the means to heal the corruption sown by Horror and Namegiver alike. I can see both plainly and into the world beneath the world, or astral space as some Namegivers call it. I can harness my body to become as hard as a mountain, and as deadly as an avalanche. I can speak with elementals and not only find out what is causing corruption in a place I travel through, but request assistance to heal it as well.

It is the rage that relegates our kind to the shadows of obsidimen lore. They do not dwell upon us, their unenviable kin. We must bring ourselves to a state of being that the average among our race would never condone. We must let the pain in the Earth give us strength; we must let the rage give us power. So the tales will always be cautionary. The stories will always warn the youngest to be wary of our hearts' wrath, to be mindful of the world that cries out around us. The stories will remind the obsidimen of tomorrow that they do not need to be creatures of anger and creatures of vengeance. And this is true—they need not. We will do it for them. The Purifiers will always stand strong, ready to do the things that must be done, even when for this we must be forgotten.

Call us mad if you must, but never doubt that few are as devoted to cleansing the blight of the Scourge as the Brotherhood of Purifiers. The corruption that plagues the world runs deep, and we will not rest until every scrap of that darkness is gone and the Earth can rest in the serenity she deserves.

The Horrors must fall. There can be no pity, no hesitation. The dark works done in the Name of the Horrors must not stand. Tainted settlements must be razed. Corrupted kaers must be set aright, their inhabitants laid to rest or purged of the darkness. What we cannot accomplish through force we must accomplish through perseverance. What we can accomplish through neither we must c onquer through faith. The Earth shall guide our hands. The Passions shall whisper their words to our dreams.

—Coreon Azhatus, Purifier

On the Need for Balance

Harmony in nature is when all is in balance; however, it seems the majority of Namegivers cannot see this. Horrors are not the only beings that can corrupt a land. While corruption by Namegivers is never akin to a Horror's, the effects can be just as devastating. Where a Horror's corruption is malicious and with intent, Namegivers often corrupt through ignorance: a farmer allowing his cattle to eat every blade of grass, leaving none for other animals; a man cutting down all the trees of a forest, so he can make a home; or a village damming up a river so that it cannot reach its destination, thus depriving those people and animals living downstream of the river's life-giving bounty.

Horror or Namegiver, to alter the Earth in such a way as to have adverse effects is corruption, and will not be allowed. Is it the Purifier's job to kill all those who would defile the land? No. It is ours to educate those without the knowledge, to help those without the means, so harmony can be restored. Food, water, and shelter are the needs of life, but these needs can be gained without ruining the harmonious balance of nature. If education and other aid does not sway a person to stop his heinous acts of defiling the Earth then what is a Purifier to do? The answer is never simple. The way of the fist is an easy path, one I relied on in my younger years. Harming another Namegiver to restore the balance will weigh heavily on the conscience of any Purifier, but this is the burden we carry. Is one life, or even many lives, worth more than the world? No. Without the Earth, there is no life. We do what we must so the Earth may live, so all may live.

Damage to the Earth inflicted by Horrors and damage inflicted to the Earth by Namegivers aren't necessarily two different things. Nature can heal itself, but where it does, it can be hurt by those Namegivers who do not understand. Some of us are preservers of such places. I'm protecting a young forest so it can grow to the size it had before the long night, for example.

—Oth, Purifier

Regarding the Blood Wood

A harder path for we who fight the darkness lies in the matter of the elves of the Blood Wood. Once their devotion to the world was near equal to our own, but that was long ago. They made choices in the dark night of the Scourge which cannot be undone. They made of their sacred trust, the Wyrm Wood, a mockery. For this, they must be cleansed. Men call us mad for speaking such things. The innkeepers and merchants of

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Acrobatic Strike, Avoid Blow, Battle Shout, Sprint, Wilderness Survival

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Body Control, Clay Skin, Karma Ritual, Unarmed Combat, Wound Balance

Novice

Talent Options: Creature Analysis, Durability (7/6), Heartening Laugh, Maneuver, Swift Kick, Throwing Weapons, Tiger Spring, Tracking

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Lifesight

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Spirit Talk

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Strength-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Earth Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Astral Sight, Earth Skin, Great Leap, Lion Heart, Resist Taunt, Steel Thought, Steely Stare, Temper Self

Fifth Circle

Cleanse: Taking 1 Strain and performing an hour-long ritual, the adept cleanses a 50-yard/25-hex radius area from astral taint and corruption, such as that caused by Horrors. Once the ritual is complete, the classification of the astral region (***Player's Guide***, p. 110) improves by one degree.
Discipline Talent: Earth Bond

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Toughness-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Life Check

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on unarmed Damage Tests.
Discipline Talent: Crushing Blow

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Momentum Attack

WARDEN

Talent Options: Critical Hit, Frenzy, Lion Spirit, Matrix Strike, Metal Ward, Poison Resistance, Resist Pain, Spirit Strike

Ninth Circle

Earth's Avenger: The adept focuses his anger over destruction of nature into powerful blows. When attacking a target who has harmed nature or is evidently going to do so, the adept may take 1 Strain to add a +3 bonus to an unarmed Damage Test against the target or his allies.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Safe Path

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Plant Shelter

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Vitality

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Earth Armor

MASTER

Talent Options: Chameleon, Detect Influence, Moving Earth, Rushing Attack, Stone Skin, Whirlwind

Thirteenth Circle

Sanctify: The adept may designate a healthy, untainted natural area off-limits to those that would harm or corrupt it, either by action or their mere presence. The adept takes 3 Strain and spends a Standard Action declaring an area of up to 100 yards around him a sanctuary. A target that would harm the natural environs takes the adept's Earth Weaving Rank Damage Points every round the target is inside the sanctuary. Sanctify lasts for 24 hours. The adept may extend the sanctity to a year and a day by taking the Strain as Blood Magic Damage, and may permanently sanctify it by taking it as Permanent Damage.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Second Chance

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Vital Strike

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Elemental Walk

the world can not understand. Curious they should think of us as such, when it is their hushed whispers that goad us on. Namegivers have reviled the elves of the Blood Wood since they first stepped into the light of the reborn world. How could they not? Even the corrupt and the blind know an abomination when it stands before them, even when it is shrouded in the ageless beauty of the elves. Only we have the strength of will to do what must be done.

On Purifiers and the Passions

Why do most Namegivers have such single-minded visions of things? Why is it if a Purifier, the guardian and healer of the Earth, were to follow a Passion it would only be Jaspree? As a follower of Lochost, I find this



assumption insulting. While mainly the Passion of Freedom, Lochost is also the Passion of Change and New Ideas. Her teachings help me inspire Namegivers corrupting the land they live on to change their ways, as well as find new ways for them to exist in harmony with the Earth rather than in discord. A person who dominates another and bends him to his will is called a slave master and the person he dominates his slave. So, if a person dominates, controls, and changes the Earth to do something unnatural, is that person also not a slave master, and the Earth his slave?

Is it also so hard to see all the Earth as our home? Why wouldn't a Purifier call on Garlen for inspiration and help to heal the Earth? Also, is it not an injustice to disrupt the natural harmony of the world? If Mynbruje seeks justice for wrongs committed by one Namegiver against another, why wouldn't he seek justice for wrongs against the Earth?

Only the narrow-minded think that a Purifier would also think so narrowly. As each rock is different so is each Purifier. Our methods and beliefs vary. It is only our goal that is the same.

Game Information

Purifiers dedicate themselves to healing the scars left upon the world by the Horrors, the Scourge, and any others who would defile its beauty.

Important Attributes: Strength, Toughness

Racial Restriction: Obsidimen

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma ritual, the Purifier finds a solid object such as a large boulder or cave wall on which to focus, then chants to put himself into a trance. During the next half hour, the Purifier conjures mental images of the unjustified pain and suffering he has witnessed during his lifetime. As he remembers these things, he strikes the solid object with his bare fists, slowly increasing the tempo of the pounding until his hands move faster than the eye can follow. He ends the ritual by renewing his oath to protect the world and fight for its renewal.

Artisan Skills: Body Painting, Stone Carving

Half-Magic: Purifiers use half-magic for knowledge about all aspects of nature and when preserving natural environs, but also for knowledge of all that tends to currupt nature, including the Horrors and misdeeds of Namegiver civilization. They gain access to the Navigation and Wilderness Survival skills via half-magic.

Roleplaying Hints

Purifiers see life as an endless cycle of death and rebirth, and accept both as having equal worth. While they fight against marauders who would destroy any living thing, they understand that Namegivers need to sow fields in order to eat, and that some forests must die to support other life. Purifiers tend to avoid heavily populated areas, preferring areas unmarred by habitation.

Purifiers are willing to go to extremes to express the obsidiman race's love of nature and the Earth, sometimes acting with extreme aggression against any whom they believe to have defiled the Earth. In all other aspects most Purifiers very closely resemble other obsidimen, however. Only when they see the Earth harmed in some way do they give in to their righteous rage, showing an even more intense anger than a typical obsidiman at a slur against his Liferock.

Discipline Violations

Purifiers try to remain in tune with the Earth, respecting nature in all its forms and placing the harmony in nature before other considerations. Purifiers may bring on talent crises by purposely harming the balance of nature, or purposely polluting or harming a given area. The severity of the violation depends on the nature of the specific offense.

Rituals of Advancement

Purifiers observe a number of traditional advancement rituals. To gain recognition of his advancement to higher Discipline Circles, a Purifier usually displays an increased understanding of the natural world and his ability to protect others from harm.

Recruitment: Purifiers frequently pay visits to Liferocks other than their own to find new Initiates. On occasion, the elders of a Liferock send a potential recruit to another Brotherhood known to have a Purifier among its ranks.

Novice (2–4): The adept demonstrates his ability to foster a small patch of land for one week or more.

Journeyman (5–8): The adept must protect a small patch of land or herd of animals from casual or deliberate harm.

Warden (9–12): The adept must reverse the effects of the Scourge on a considerable patch of terrain or free a considerable number of creatures or Namegivers from the taint of the Horrors.

Ghost Master Ritual: The Purifier must meditate alone in the wilderness while sitting near a dead tree or the remains of a dead animal. The obsidiman becomes one with his surroundings, slowly changing his appearance to become a weathered old rock. As soon as that happens, the ghost master appears and the ritual proceeds as normal.

Discipline Combinations

The Purifiers' single vision of healing corrupted lands throughout the world does not often let those who follow this path take on another Discipline. However, if a Purifier were to acquire another Discipline it would only be because it somehow aided in bringing about an end to the corruption wrought by the Horrors. The Disciplines best suited to this task are the Elementalist and the Shaman. While a Purifier relies mainly on his physical prowess to overcome Horrors and Namegivers corrupting the land, Elementalists and Shamans try to maintain the balance of nature and the elements by using their spells and conjuring spirits. The Weaponsmith and Horror Stalker Disciplines are also common choices for a second Discipline, because adepts of both are typically headstrong and never back down.

The Nethermancer and Wizard Disciplines are neutral to the Purifier; while they try to unravel the secrets of the world, and their knowledge helps to understand astral space and corruption better, their theoretical approach is not as appealing to the action-driven nature of the Purifier. Purifiers have a particularly hard time adopting the Illusionist and Troubadour Disciplines. The Illusionist relies on deception, which is anathema for the Purifier, and the Troubadour Discipline requires a love of performance that most Purifiers do not share.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ON THE SHAMAN'S JOURNEY

Shamans are a rare sight, and one cannot expect to meet one every day, not even in populated cities like Bartertown or Travar, where adepts of many kinds walk the streets and fill the taverns. However, contrary to common belief, their numbers aren't few. Shamans simply do not live in cities, and have no need to do business in such places. The following text is a transcribed conversation with the Shaman, Gronish'Va, from the Broken Horn ork tribe, who accompanied his chieftain on a journey to the Halls of Throal and was kind enough to elaborate on his Discipline.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

We Shamans work our magic through nature. Nature is weaker in a city than in a jungle or in the mountains. This is because the city is built of nature taken apart, trees trimmed down to beams and clay turned to bricks. Of what the city offers to others, be it weapons, supplies, or shelter, we need none. Most Namegivers out in the wilds return to the cities for all the benefits they can get there: the healing they need, the repairs that have to be made, the food they have to buy, and the bath they want to take. We Shamans can find all of that in the wilderness. Yet more importantly, we prefer the contact with nature that lies in gathering our own food or building our own shelter. These are the fundamentals of our way of life. We want to be close to nature, and we produce the things we need on our own.

ON OUR WAYS

Our wish to be close to nature means more to us than just feeling comfortable in a forest or enjoying the breeze by the seaside. We don't spend our time deep in the jungle or walking the plains for the view–well, not only. We are there to be at the heart of all that brought life to this world, in the center of creation itself.

We see the diversity in existence, the differences between every single leaf on a tree, and the importance every one of them has. We see the fox eat the rabbit. We see the rabbit breeding fast enough to survive as a species. Just as intended. However, the rabbit tries to escape nevertheless and the fox catches enough of them anyway. They work against each other, and yet there is a harmony, a balance. If you perceive things this way, you will understand the miracle that lies in this seemingly chaotic and unplanned exchange of action between plants and animals and Namegivers: it all works out in the end without falling apart. Unlike other Namegivers, we do not try to escape it. On the contrary, we try to become part of it. We are not better than plant or animal, we just have a different role.

But I do not want to raise us above everyone else where nature is concerned. We are not alone, and there are other reasons why we tend to avoid civilization.

ON OUR ROLE IN THE TRIBE

Most Shamans are part of communities living in the wild hinterlands of Barsaive. You city folk often call them tribes, so I will use this expression, although many refer to themselves using other Names. The tribes of Barsaive are each following their own, individual way. However, most of them recognize the special role our Discipline has. This is because the tribes depend on nature to survive. They do not sow, but gather. They do not breed, but hunt. In the Shaman they find an individual who understands nature as the source of all creation. With this greater understanding of the force that nourishes one's life day by day come other responsibilities.

A Shaman has a special position in the tribe. Tribesfolk approach the Shaman for guidance, and the Shaman has to accept the responsibilities his advice carries. A Shaman is often the spiritual leader of his tribe, depending on the tribe's customs. Some tribes do not even have leaders at all, except in desperate times of war or other catastrophes. Others elect their leaders, and some are led by those who inherited their position. Depending on how strong other leaders are, the authority of a Shaman varies in weight. But in contrast, the Shaman always receives his position because of his abilities–the gift of sharing a bond with nature. This gift doesn't fall from the sky, however; it has to be earned, just as the fox has to earn his rabbit.

ON BECOMING A SHAMAN

That being said, be assured that you cannot become a tribe's Shaman just by practicing this Discipline. You have to look after and guide the tribe to be recognized as a figure of authority. This makes the process of initiation and advancement a long and arduous one.

The gift of the Shaman usually manifests very early, often during adolescence. Shaman tutors may discover this gift in a child displaying great understanding of, or just fascination with, nature. Some potential Initiates manifest powers unique to our Discipline. From the day of discovery, the Shaman takes the student under his

wing, looking for further proof of the gift, educating him during the process. As soon as the Shaman is convinced the student has the potential to become an adept, he offers to initiate him. Becoming a Shaman's apprentice not only means earning respect from the Shaman, but also from tribe, friends, and family, which often serves as encouragement to follow the Shaman's path steadily—for it can be disturbing.

It is difficult to understand or appreciate that nature treats some of its creations harshly for the benefit of others, and then reverses these roles on a whim. Believe me, all this is for the best; the fire that burns down and kills the trees clears fertile ground for other plants. We love nature and all of its creations above everything else, and yet we have to hunt the deer and pick the fruit from the living tree. Becoming a Shaman means discovering a world of contrasts. The role of the master is to help his apprentice to understand and support the harmony in all this, just like a master musician might help his student compose a melody. Notes or creations of nature—both form something bigger if put together. Understanding the parts means understanding the whole. Understanding the whole helps with decision and action.

On the Journey

At some point, a Shaman decides that he cannot teach his apprentice anything more. The apprentice has to see more of the world, more of nature, and is sent on a journey. This usually happens a few months after initiation. The apprentice travels the land of his own will and decision, returning home from time to time to share his experiences with his master. His abilities will grow, and eventually he will return to take the place his tribe has reserved for him. It's important that the student travels as far as he can, so that he sees all nature has to offer. Even if he chooses to spend the remainder of his life in a desert, he has to gain knowledge of the mountains and the forest and the sea, as they are all connected to each other.

▲ ▲ ▲

At this point, it is important to state that while Shamanism is practiced mainly by jungle tribes, it is not bound by a place to live. Shamans can be found where nature is.

—Kerlak, Brother to Rock and *garahamite*

▲ ▲ ▲

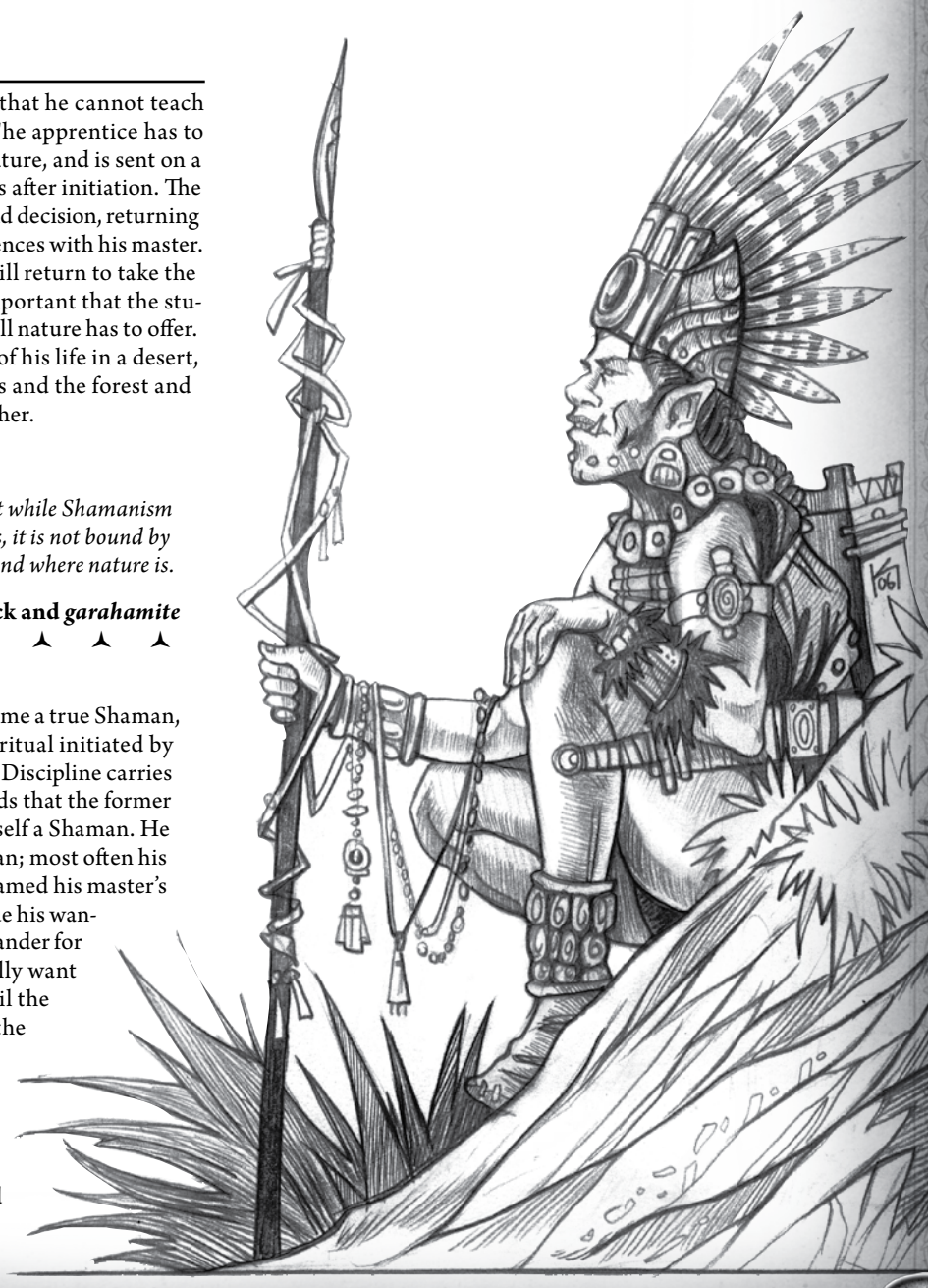
After his journey, the apprentice has become a true Shaman, and often receives recognition in a formal ritual initiated by his peers and other wise men. Although the Discipline carries this Name, it is only from this point onwards that the former apprentice has earned the right to call himself a Shaman. He may not instantly become the tribe's Shaman; most often his master still has that position. He may be Named his master's successor, seek out another tribe, or continue his wanderings—very often, Shamans choose to wander for the rest of their lives. These Shamans usually want to see even more, or don't want to wait until the time of succession comes (which is often the case with new Shamans who were second or third apprentices to their masters).

The wandering Shaman is the one you will most likely meet. Such wanderers are curious fellows, eager to see as much as they can, discovering everything they have been told of. Even moreso, they are eager to discover things they have not heard of before.

On the Harvest of Magic

Magic and nature are inseparable forces; they are one. You cannot hold sway over magic or beg it to do your bidding. Compare it to an apple. It will fill your stomach neither if you command it to, nor if you beg it to. You have to pick it from the tree and eat it yourself. Its nourishing power is there for you to harvest, but you have to do so on your own.

It's just the same with spirits. Elementals are physical embodiments of the very building blocks of nature. We do not summon them, because we revere nature as a whole rather than its single parts. We appreciate them for what they are, but they are of no use to us. Likewise, ally spirits only contain the essence of our ancestors and other beings long departed. Summoning them would mean to not only disturb their peace, but to sever them from where they belong: the Netherworlds. The spirits we talk to don't exist in the elemental planes or the Netherworlds; they belong to this world like this tree or that rock or the Shaman that asked them for their aid.



I once had a discussion with a Shaman while my group and I rested at a jungle village. He told me that the circle of death and rebirth is eternal and that Namegivers shouldn't interfere—just in the way they did during the Scourge, using the Rites of Protection and Passage to avoid their natural fate. In his opinion, building kaers was a big mistake; the Scourge should have wiped out all Namegivers to start a new cycle of life. A scary thought, and I couldn't get rid of the feeling that this Shaman would do anything to make another Scourge happen.

—Sil'vana, Elementalist of Claw Ridge

GAME INFORMATION

Shamans gain their magical abilities by observing how the elements of nature and the forces of magic interact. Practiced chiefly by members of Barsaive's primitive tribes such as the Cathan of the Servos Jungle, the Tamer tribes of the Liaj Jungle, and some ork scorcher tribes, Shamans learn their spells by studying nature, not from dusty tomes or scrolls.

Important Attributes: Perception, Willpower

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma ritual, the Shaman must be outdoors and at least 100 yards from the nearest building or Namegiver-made structure. Before beginning the ritual, the Shaman picks up a nearby leaf, twig, or live insect to serve as a symbol of nature for the ritual. The Shaman then sits quietly and centers his thoughts. He focuses his introspection on the symbol of nature he holds in his hands and meditates on the relationship between magic and nature. After half an hour has passed, the Shaman eats the symbol, thereby symbolically binding himself to nature.

Artisan Skills: Sculpting, Tattooing

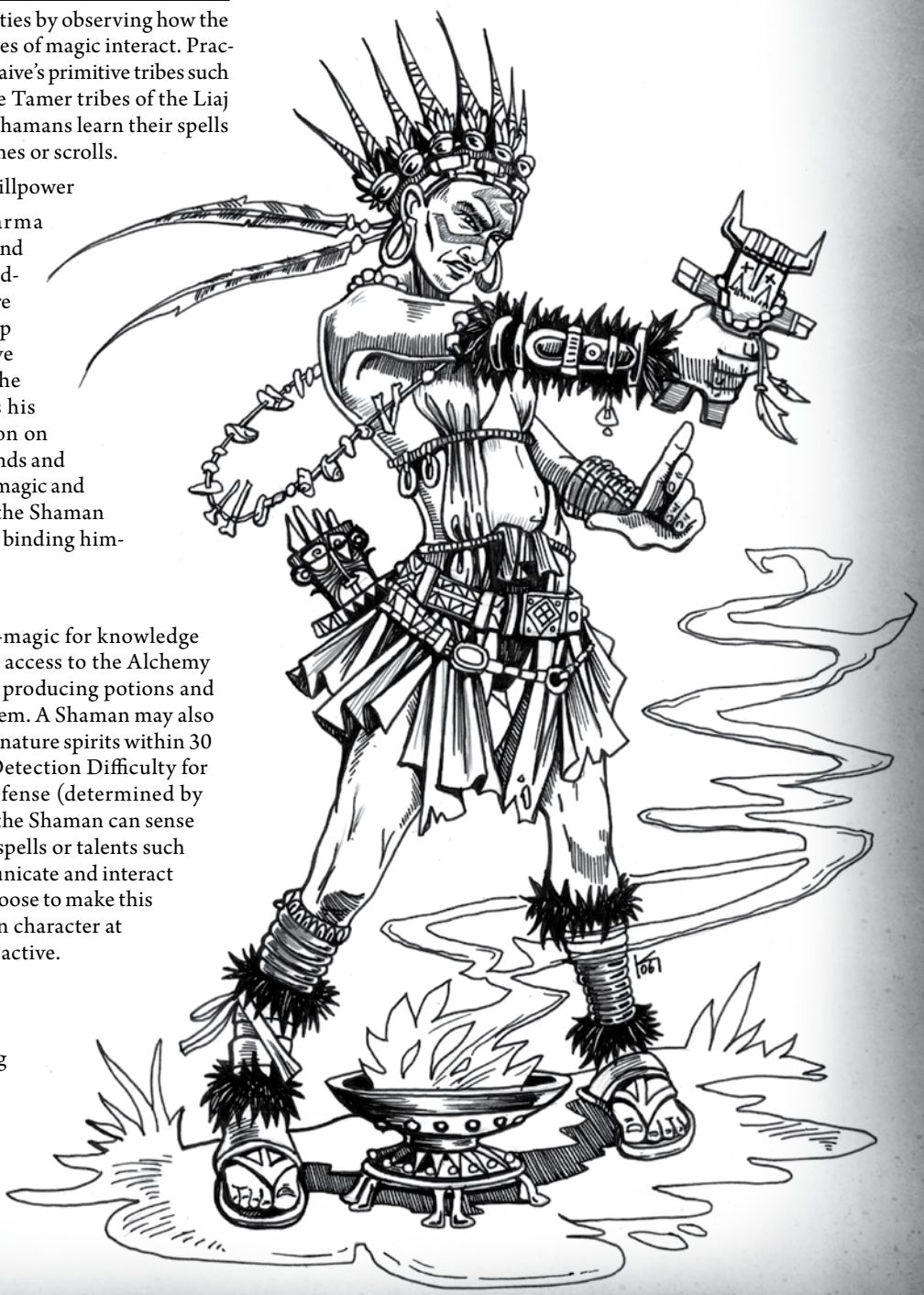
Half-Magic: A Shaman may use half-magic for knowledge of all aspects of nature. Shamans gain access to the Alchemy skill via half-magic for the purpose of producing potions and salves, and to gather ingredients for them. A Shaman may also use half-magic to sense the presence of nature spirits within 30 yards (15 hexes) of his location. The Detection Difficulty for sensing a spirit is the spirit's Spell Defense (determined by the gamemaster). If the test succeeds, the Shaman can sense the presence of the spirit, and can use spells or talents such as Spirit Hold or Spirit Talk, to communicate and interact with the spirit. The gamemaster may choose to make this Half-Magic Test on behalf of a Shaman character at any time, as this innate sense is always active.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Many Shamans see their role as a living bridge between the wilderness and civilization. The Shaman connects with the denizens of both realms while maintaining harmony between the two. The forces of nature often work against each other, and create a seemingly chaotic and unplanned exchange of action, sometimes causing the Shaman to behave in ways others regard as odd and distracting.

Many tribal Namegivers consider Shamans superior to themselves and seek their guidance. Often, they enjoy this elevated position and gladly take spiritual responsibility for their tribes. Other Shamans take on the role of the teacher for their tribes, educating children and adults alike about the ways of nature. This is a habit they can hardly shake off, and many Shamans who are members of adventuring groups tend to correct misconceptions about the ways of nature and are eager to explain these ways to Namegivers who don't seem to understand them.

Because Shamans are generally curious, they tend to travel a lot after becoming initiated in their Discipline, often returning to their tribes when the time comes to take over the position of their former tutors.



Discipline Violations

Shamans try to remain in tune with nature, respecting it in all its forms and placing the harmony between civilization and the wilderness before other considerations. Shamans may bring on talent crises by purposely harming this balance in favor of civilization or purposely polluting or harming a given area. The severity of the violation depends on the nature of the specific offense.

Rituals of Advancement

Shamans observe a number of traditional advancement rituals. To gain recognition of his advancement to higher Discipline Circles, a Shaman usually displays an increased understanding of the natural world by displaying the use of new fetishes.

Recruitment: A Shaman seeking an apprentice watches for likely candidates in his tribe or on his travels. When he finds a potential adept, the Shaman tests him in some way. For example, a Shaman may invite the candidate to share the experience of seeing or feeling a natural event or feature: a rainstorm, a surging river, a forest, or even a campfire. In the course of ordinary conversation, the adept casually asks the candidate to describe what he sees. Candidates who answer with unusual sensitivity undergo more obvious tests; the Shaman may summon a nature spirit and ask the candidate to converse with it. If satisfied by the candidate's responses, the adept initiates the candidate.

Novice (2–4): The Shaman presents a fetish of the new Circle and casts the contained spell in the presence of an elder.

Journeyman (5–8): The adept must summon a nature spirit. The adept must personally locate and persuade the spirit to appear. This may be more difficult than it sounds, because enlisting a nature spirit's cooperation often requires the adept to fulfill a request or execute a task for the spirit.

Warden (9–12): The adept must summon a Named nature spirit and persuade it to perform a service for an elder. The spirit is traditionally determined by the elder.

Ghost Master Ritual: The Shaman must meditate in the wilderness and converse with a nature spirit. The Shaman then asks the spirit to seek the desired ghost master. After an hour, the ghost master appears and the ritual proceeds as normal.

Discipline Combinations

The Disciplines most likely to appeal to a Shaman are the Beastmaster, Cavalryman, and Scout, each of which emphasizes a relationship with animals or the natural world. Other Disciplines traditionally require an adept to focus energy and attention on a single aspect of his personality, instead of mastering his whole self.

The traditional spellcasting Disciplines rarely appeal to Shamans as second Disciplines because of their emphasis on manipulating magic and book learning.

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Creature Analysis, Silent Walk, Speak Language, Spell Fetish, Tracking

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Create Fetish, Karma Ritual, Spellcasting, Spell Fetish, Thread Weaving [Shamanism], Wilderness Survival

Novice

Talent Options: Arcane Mutterings, Borrow Sense, Dominate Beast, Durability (4/3), First Impression, Heartening Laugh, Spell Fetish, Spell Fetish

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Astral Sight

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Spirit Talk

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Spirit Hold

Journeyman

Talent Options: Cold Purify, Empathic Sense, Enhanced Fetish, Enhanced Fetish, Fire Heal, Steel Thought, True Sight, Willforce

Fifth Circle

Land and Sea: Taking 1 Strain, the adept gains a +2 bonus to a Climbing or Swimming Test.
Discipline Talent: Summon [Nature Spirits]

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Perception-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Blood Share

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Spell Effect Tests.
Discipline Talent: Leadership

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Safe Path

WARDEN

Talent Options: Armored Fetish, Armored Fetish, Bestial Toughness, Detect Falsehood, Enduring Art, Howl, Poison Resistance, Spirit Dodge

Ninth Circle

Cloak of Sky and Water: Taking 2 Strain, the adept can safely fall from up to Shamanism Rank x 5 yards height (and subtract this height to determine Falling Damage) or breathe water for Shamanism Rank minutes. Cloak of Sky and Water cannot be used continuously, only once in any given situation.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Bargain with Summoned Creature

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Action Tests made by a spirit or creature under his control.
Discipline Talent: Summoning Circle

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Social Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Charisma-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Plant Shelter

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Animate Object

MASTER

Talent Options: Bestial Resilience, Chameleon, Elemental Walk, Second Chance, Shard Fetish, Shared Fetish

Thirteenth Circle

Pinnacle of Comprehension: Whenever making an Action Test to interact with something natural, the adept may spend 1 additional Karma Point on the test.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Wound Transfer

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Netherwalk

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Social Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Multi-Weaving

SHAMANISM SPELLS

The following spells are available to Shamans. Even though the spells listed below are available to magicians of other Disciplines, Shamans cannot learn spells from magicians of other Disciplines nor can they teach spells to magicians of other Disciplines. The methods by which Shamans learn Shamanism spells are too unique to allow for any sort of successful crossover.

Page numbers (in parentheses) refer to the full spell descriptions in the ***Player's Guide*** (PG) and ***Player's Companion*** (PC) as indicated.

First Circle

Air Armor (p. 146, PG)
Assuring Touch (p. 148, PG)
Bone Dance (p. 155, PG)
Catseyes (p. 157, PG)
Crunch Climb (p. 160, PG)
Earth Blend (p. 165, PG)
Earth Darts (p. 165, PG)
Insect Repellent (p. 178, PG)
Moonglow (p. 185, PG)
Plant Talk (p. 189, PG)
Purify Earth (p. 190, PG)
Purify Water (p. 190, PG)
Quicken Pace (p. 191, PG)
Resist Cold (p. 192, PG)

Second Circle

Gadfly (p. 173, PG)
Gills (p. 174, PG)
Hunter's Sense (p. 176, PG)
Icy Surface (p. 177, PG)
Path Home (p. 188, PG)
Small Slayer (p. 197, PG)
Vines (p. 207, PG)
Weather Cloak (p. 208, PG)

Third Circle

Astral Sense (p. 150, PG)
Behind Eye (p. 152, PG)
Catwalk (p. 157, PG)
Death Trance (p. 161, PG)
Dispel Shamanism Magic* (p. 163, PG)
Fog of Fear (p. 172, PG)
Ice Mace and Chain (p. 176, PG)
Mind Fog (p. 185, PG)
Ork Stoke (p. 187, PG)
Plant Feast (p. 189, PG)
Puddle Deep (p. 190, PG)
Soothe the Savage Beast (p. 198, PG)
Sunlight (p. 203, PG)
Thrive (p. 204, PG)
Water Wings (p. 208, PG)
Winds of Deflection (p. 209, PG)

Fourth Circle

Air Blast (p. 146, PG)
Blizzard Sphere (p. 154, PG)
Buoyancy (p. 156, PG)
Circle of Well Being (p. 158, PG)
Conceal Tracks (p. 159, PG)
Dust Devil (p. 165, PG)
Falcon's Cloak (p. 168, PG)

Fourth Circle (continued)
- Fatal Food (p. 169, PG)
- Friend or Foe (p. 173, PG)
- Great Sticky Vines (p. 174, PG)
- Hair Frenzy (p. 175, PG)
- Hunger (p. 176, PG)
- Karmic Connection (p. 180, PG)
- Last Chance (p. 181, PG)
- Lighten Load (p. 182, PG)
- Relax (p. 191, PG)
- Root Trap (p. 193, PG)
- Thorny Retreat (p. 204, PG)
- Uneven Ground (p. 206, PG)

Fifth Circle
- Bond of Silence (p. 155, PG)
- Ironwood (p. 179, PG)
- Nutritious Earth (p. 187, PG)
- Resist Poison (p. 192, PG)
- Sanctuary (p. 194, PG)
- Spiritual Guidance (p. 200, PG)
- Wither Limb (p. 209, PG)

Sixth Circle
- Bone Shatter (p. 155, PG)
- Ease Passage (p. 166, PG)
- Foreseeing (p. 172, PG)
- Living Wall (p. 183, PG)
- Recovery (p. 191, PG)
- Sleep (p. 197, PG)
- Stench (p. 201, PG)
- Tossing Earth (p. 205, PG)
- Tree Merge (p. 205, PG)

Seventh Circle
- Beastform (p. 151, PG)
- Blood Boil (p. 154, PG)
- Calm Water (p. 156, PG)
- Cloud Summon (p. 158, PG)
- Death Rain (p. 161, PG)
- Dream Sight (p. 164, PG)
- Earth Q'wril (p. 165, PG)
- Lightning Cloud (p. 182, PG)
- Rebel Limb (p. 191, PG)
- Steal Strength (p. 201, PG)
- Walk Through (p. 207, PG)
- Whirlwind (p. 209, PG)

Eighth Circle
- Dreamsend (p. 164, PG)
- Other Place (p. 187, PG)
- Peacebond (p. 188, PG)
- Waterspout (p. 208, PG)
- Wither Away (p. 209, PG)
- Wound Mask (p. 210, PG)

Ninth Circle
- Cloud Banish (p. 138, PC)
- Glowing Swarm (p. 145, PC)
- Moon Shadow (p. 146, PC)
- Reattach Limb (p. 147, PC)
- Tell Tale (p. 150, PC)
- Water Wall (p. 152, PC)

Tenth Circle
- Damage Transfer (p. 140, PC)
- Death Vow (p. 140, PC)
- Eclipse (p. 142, PC)
- Eternal Day (p. 143, PC)
- Journey to Life (p. 145, PC)
- Onion Blood (p. 147, PC)
- Weather Change (p. 152, PC)

Eleventh Circle
- Wood Blade (p. 152, PC)

Twelfth Circle
- Alter Form (p. 135, PC)
- Crop Blight (p. 139, PC)

Fourteenth Circle
- Council of the Forest (p. 139, PC)

Fifteenth Circle
- Call Forth the Maelstrom (p. 137, PC)
- Purify Forest (p. 147, PC)

NATURE SPIRITS

Nature spirits are living incarnations of nature's forces and can only be summoned by Shamans. Nature spirits can only exist in environments personified by them—for example, a lake spirit only exists within a lake, and a forest spirit only in a forest—and each only holds power within its environment. A nature spirit can't leave its environment, although its territory sometimes extends into the territory of others. For example, the area where a forest extends onto the foothills of a mountain range could sustain both forest and mountain spirits.

Nature spirits generally prefer to remain in their astral forms, and only physically manifest if they have to. When they do, they usually appear in shapes that mimic their summoner, but composed of their home terrain. For example, a spirit of the plains may appear as a man made of grass, while a mountain spirit may appear like a craggy humanoid of living rock similar to an obsidiman.

Nature spirits are sometimes confused with ally or elemental spirits, but only a fool would treat them as such. Unlike ally and elemental spirits, nature spirits contain the essence of nature itself, and are part



of this world rather than coming from a different plane in the depths of astral space. Because of this, most Shamans summon these spirits with extreme care and the utmost respect.

Special Rules

Summoning nature spirits involves a few restrictions unique to these types of spirit. In addition to the regular summoning rules presented on p. 211 of the ***Player's Guide***, Shamans must meet the following requirements when summoning nature spirits:

- A nature spirit can only be summoned in the territory to which it is tied. For example, a forest spirit can only be summoned if the Shaman is within a forest.
- Shamans may only summon and ask services of a single nature spirit of each type at any one time. It is possible to summon nature spirits of different types, however. For example, in the aforementioned area where a forest extends onto the foothills of a mountain range, a Shaman may summon both a forest spirit and a mountain spirit, but not two forest spirits.
- A Shaman may not ask for the services of a spirit if he is outside the spirit's territory, although the spirit will finish a task if the Shaman leaves the territory before the task is complete. The same is true should the Shaman die or fall unconscious; the spirit will complete its tasks and then depart.

Game Information

Nature spirits appear in a multitude of guises, based on the territories to which they are tied. **Spirits of the Beasts** are tied to animals and creatures, and appear near herds, burrows, and nests. **Spirits of the Land** are tied to deserts, forests, mountains, and open plains. **Spirits of the Sky** appear in lofty heights, mists, and storms. **Spirits of the Sea** live in lakes, rivers, seas, and swamps.

Strength Rating 1–4

DEX: 5 **STR:** 5 **TOU:** 5
PER: 5 **WIL:** 5 **CHA:** 5

Initiative: 6
Actions: 1
Attack: 5 + SR
Damage:
Unarmed: 5

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 5 + SR
Social Defense: 5 + SR
Physical Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: SR

Death: 32
Unconsciousness: 24
Wound Threshold: 8

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 5
Movement: 6

Legend Award: SR Circle

Karma Points: 2 × SR **Karma Step:** 3 + SR

Powers:
Aid Summoner (SR), Astral Sight [T] (PER + SR), Confusion (WIL + SR), Manifest (SR), Soothe (CHA + SR), Spellcasting [T] (PER + SR)

Strength Rating 5–8

DEX: 9 **STR:** 9 **TOU:** 9
PER: 9 **WIL:** 9 **CHA:** 9

Initiative: 10
Actions: 2
Attack: 9 + SR
Damage:
Unarmed: 9

Physical Defense: 12
Spell Defense: 11 + SR
Social Defense: 11 + SR
Physical Armor: 9
Mystic Armor: SR

Death: 48
Unconsciousness: 41
Wound Threshold: 14

Recovery Tests: 4
Knockdown: 9
Movement: 6

Legend Award: SR Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Karma Points: 2 × SR **Karma Step:** 3 + SR

Powers:
Aid Summoner (SR)
Confusion (WIL + SR)
Soothe (CHA + SR)
Astral Sight [T] (PER + SR)
Manifest (SR)
Spellcasting [T] (PER + SR)

Strength Rating 9–12

DEX: 13 **STR:** 13 **TOU:** 13
PER: 13 **WIL:** 13 **CHA:** 13

Initiative: 14
Actions: 3
Attack: 13 + SR
Damage:
Unarmed: 13

Physical Defense: 17
Spell Defense: 16 + SR
Social Defense: 16 + SR
Physical Armor: 13
Mystic Armor: SR

Death: 64
Unconsciousness: 57
Wound Threshold: 19

Recovery Tests: 6
Knockdown: 13
Movement: 6

Legend Award: SR Circle (Group)

Karma Points: 2 × SR **Karma Step:** 3 + SR

Powers:
Aid Summoner (SR)
Confusion (WIL + SR)
Soothe (CHA + SR)
Astral Sight [T] (PER + SR)
Manifest (SR)
Spellcasting [T] (PER + SR)

Strength Rating 13–15

DEX: 17 **STR:** 17 **TOU:** 17
PER: 17 **WIL:** 17 **CHA:** 17

Initiative: 18
Actions: 4
Attack: 17 + SR
Damage:
Unarmed: 17
Physical Defense: 22
Spell Defense: 21 + SR
Social Defense: 21 + SR
Physical Armor: 17
Mystic Armor: SR

Death: 80
Unconsciousness: 73
Wound Threshold: 23
Recovery Tests: 8
Knockdown: 17
Movement: 6

Legend Award: SR 13: Fourteenth Circle (Group); SR 14: Fifteenth Circle (Group); SR 15: Fifteenth Circle × 2 (Group)

Karma Points: 2 × SR
Karma Step: 3 + SR

Powers:
Aid Summoner (SR)
Confusion (WIL + SR)
Soothe (CHA + SR)
Astral Sight [T] (PER + SR)
Manifest (SR)
Spellcasting [T] (PER + SR)

Rules

Depending on their native territories, nature spirits have a number of different abilities and traits, as listed below. In addition to the powers listed above, choose a number of additional powers for each spirit equal to the nature spirit's Strength Rating.

The Nature Spirit Powers Table shows an overview of all powers available to nature spirits. The gamemaster determines the exact powers that a nature spirit possesses, to suit his game and campaign.

Spirits of the Beasts: Spirits of the Beasts have access to creature powers (see ***Gamemaster's Guide*** p. 149).

Spirits of the Land: A physically manifested spirit of the land can form a spear made from the most dominant material found in its territory and throw it at a target. In the case of a forest spirit, the spear might take the form of a wooden stick. For a spirit of the mountains, it might be a rock. This works like the Spear power (***Gamemaster's Guide***, p. 216), but is not an elemental power.

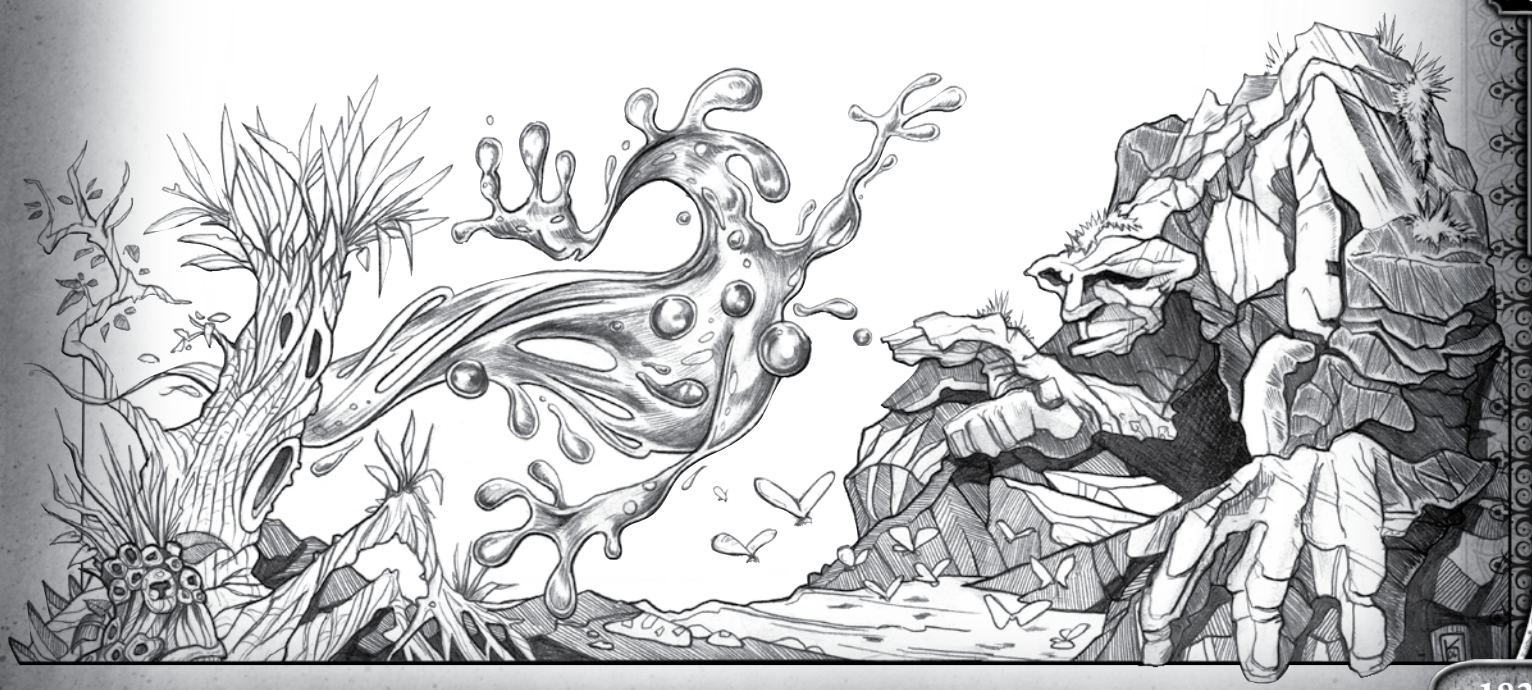
Spirits of the Sky: Attacking a manifested spirit of the sky with most non-magical, ordinary weapons (such as a sword or a bow) is useless. All damage inflicted by such weapons is ignored. Because air can rarely be seen, a spirit of the sky may become invisible at will; the spirit makes a Spellcasting Test, the result of which becomes the Detection Difficulty for any attempts to detect it.

Spirits of the Sea: A spirit of the sea can drown a target, causing the victim to take damage each round. This works like the Engulf power (***Gamemaster's Guide***, p. 214), but is not considered an elemental power.

NATURE SPIRIT POWERS TABLE

Power Name
Aid Summoner
Confusion
Creature Powers*
Detect Trap
Detect Weapon
Durability (6/5)
Empathic Sense
Find
Haggle
Karma
Manifest
Share Knowledge
Soothe
Spellcasting
Spells
Talents

* Spirits of the Beasts only



CHAPTER NINETEEN

ON THE CALL OF THE SONGSMITH

The following manuscript was written by Gathlael Eleas, a traveling Songsmith who visits Throal frequently. We have left it unchanged as the calligraphy is of very high quality, suitable to a member of this Discipline. I propose to create a copy of the text, so that we can put the original on public display in the main hall of the Great Library.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

You are mistaken if you think our main occupation is singing, just because we are called Songsmiths. You are also mistaken if you think we sing to great extent, or that we sing better than a regular elf. The world gave us our Name because the song is the universal expression of art and beauty. Every Namegiver able to speak is able to sing, too; you do not need any tools to do it. Nor do you need pen and paper; it is not necessary to be able to read or write at all. Likewise, you do not need instruments or space for dancing; you do not even need to be able to move. You do not need carving tools or brush and paint; you do not even need hands. Singing is the form of art that the biggest number of Namegivers can practice next to storytelling. Singing and storytelling are related anyway; everything is. So if you cannot define us as singers, what is a Songsmith then?

ON THE CALL OF BEAUTY

We Songsmiths are individuals who fill our lives with art. We do not only practice art; we incorporate it into everything we do. It is hard to explain, indeed, so let me tell you that the path of the Songsmith is often the second one we choose. Whether adepts or not, most of us have done something else before we heard the call of the Songsmith. I was a cabinetmaker, or common joiner, before I heard my call. I created furniture for a living, but with time I realized I wanted to make it more beautiful, more sophisticated. Simply put, I looked for new challenges, and I found them in improving the abilities I already had. It was then I heard the call of the Songsmith.

Ghisara, a friend of mine, was a Swordmaster adept before she became a Songsmith. While walking her path, she discovered that she preferred to integrate her combat moves into a dance. Practicing the sword dance more and more, she eventually approached the path of the Songsmith.

I hope this clarifies that there are not any 'pure' Songsmiths. The Songsmith is an individual refined from another profession or interest. In other words, the Songsmith makes common things more beautiful. Because of that, we are all very different in occupation and thinking, but alike at heart and in spirit. Let me tell you where we are different first, for it might help you see the things we have in common.

ON OUR DIFFERENT FORMS

We create works of great renown. Non-elves probably won't know about the different forms of art or what art form is typical for a Songsmith. Well, in short: anything—it's up to individual taste and talent. We always learn several forms, though, because all of them are related to each other. A common example, and the easiest one to grasp, is the poem. Given the right melody and rhythm, you can also sing and maybe even dance to it. And so on.

The Performer is the most common Songsmith, focusing on arts of entertainment like singing, dancing, acting, and of course playing instruments. Performers often work together among themselves or with other artists and adepts like Troubadours or Illusionists to create their performances. Some Performers even focus on directing the efforts of other Namegivers, creating a grand composition. However, these performances seldom get as inappropriately pompous as those of the non-elf races.

Craftsmen Songsmiths focus on producing genuine items. These can be anything, from adornments for one's self or one's household, to furnishing, to common items like clothing, pots, or weapons. The difference between a regular craftsman and a Craftsman Songsmith is that the latter cares much more for the beauty and elegance of the items he crafts. While a regular table will be a plain and functional item, a table created by a Songsmith will be a marvel of carvings, careful painting, and perhaps featuring an uncommon shape or matching centerpiece. Craftsmen Songsmiths either learn arts that fit together for working on a common material, like the weaving, dyeing, tailoring, and embroidery of clothes, or they spread their choices wide to create many different items that fit a common theme, such as clothing, arms, and armor bearing the same ornaments.

Poet Songsmiths call the written word their domain. They not only write poems, but everything else imaginable, as long as it is written art. They are playwrights and even creators of songs, but in contrast to the Performer they do not consider singing the most important part. Their joy is in the writing, which they consider art for eternity. Many never sing their songs at all. The same applies for music, which some are eager to compose, but not to play. They experience their art in their minds, upon creation. Some

few Poet Songsmiths specialize in arts that do not seem as such in the first place—writing letters, for example, or even legal texts and contracts.

I am a Sculptor Songsmith. As with the other groups, Sculptors do more than our Name suggests. Sculptors differ from the Craftsmen in that our art is only for adornment and education. This includes sculpting, but also painting, tattooing, and body-painting. This is a short list in comparison, but one has to consider that there are hundreds of forms of sculpting—because this art form includes modeling and carving every material imaginable. On the other hand, we have much in common with the Craftsman where jewelry and the like are concerned, and many of us call ourselves Craftsmen because of that.

There are, of course, Songsmiths that do not fall into one of these four categories, or that do not want to. Some, when they have mastered one form, learn the next one that fits their mood. Others intentionally learn a diversity of arts because they are convinced that only by mastery of many different forms is one a true Songsmith. The forms of art a Songsmith learns may also depend on the path he walks on the Wheel of Life, and some change their roles when walking on different paths. The Performer and the Sculptor are most often chosen on the paths that open themselves to the world, while the Craftsman and the Poet focus on one's self. You see why I call myself a Sculptor instead of a Craftsman? Because I began to walk on the Path of the Traveler when I heard the call of beauty.



On the Common Soul

As I told you before, while we all are different from an outside perspective, we are alike in our hearts. You will notice that though we all practice our art in a different form, we share a common goal: creating beauty. By that, we not only fill our own lives with joy, but those of others, too. Our greatest reward is the sparkle in the eyes of the person receiving one of our works, realizing that it is not just a tool or other needed thing, but also something that wakes the appreciation of beauty common to all elves and many other Namegivers. However, we do not like those who display our works as just another symbol of their status or wealth. The love for beauty is something pure, something true that lies in one's heart, and should not be corrupted by the overly pronounced ego of a weak spirit.

Now I expect the reader to ask if we should be the ones judging such behavior, or drawing a border between good and bad appreciation, if there is any such thing. It is not easy for me telling you this, but since it is a great shame and heavy on the heart of our Discipline, I will tell you of the past, so many can learn for the future.

Songsmiths of the Past

In the past, many Songsmiths thought it fitting to judge right from wrong in the matter of art, because who if not them could understand it? It was not entirely their fault; they were lured into this by a power that wanted to profit from their works: the elven queen. The queen and her court defined all of elven culture by the lifestyle of their small community, and they needed tools to carry it to the rest of the world. The Songsmiths acted as the ears and the mouths of queen and court, while adepts of other Disciplines were her eyes and hands. The queen's mouths delivered her messages, both as couriers carrying news and laws from Wyrm Wood and as the ones displaying Wyrm Wood's culture, leading the way by example. The queen's ears heard elves in distant places speak their opinions of her rule, and they observed how elves practiced their arts and judged if they did so in an acceptable way. Acceptable to the queen, that is.

Our Discipline was ideally suited to fulfill these tasks, because we unite both performance and communication. We could deliver good and bad news, gossip, and the court's culture equally well, being the friendly face of distant Wyrm Wood. Our many professions enabled us to judge the many forms of art the elven settlements practiced, even in the adornment of simple items. Our wandering nature provided the ideal excuse to come and go, and we were welcome everywhere. Only too late did we discover that we were the tools in a hand enslaving everyone's minds, so unbefitting our free spirits and those of others. We, who praised individuality above all through our art and conviction! It sounds like a joke, but to the Songsmiths of the present, it is a bitter one.

Songsmiths of the Present

We learned from our mistakes. It is unknown whether we discovered a new path, or if we began to walk old ones again, but today we know that strength and beauty are found in variety, the variety of many styles by individual artists. Conformity is a corruption of elven culture, of every culture. You can see that in the Blood Wood, where Songsmiths still act as agents of the queen. The blood elves' reluctance to free themselves from their thorns, perhaps even against the will of the queen, stems from their cultural stagnation to no small extent. They were taught to accept. Accepting the court's culture was merely a first step, but now they accept every fate the queen has decided upon. So if I can tell you anything else about modern-day Songsmiths, it is that many criticize the corruption of elven culture the Blood Wood practices. I cannot speak for all Songsmiths, what with all I have told you about individuality, now can I?

Regardless, every Songsmith serves a purpose in the fight for true elven culture, whether he opposes the old ways explicitly or not. Whether we travel the lands or stay at home to perform our arts, we establish a new elven culture; we strengthen a culture independent from the Blood Wood and even from the ways of old Wyrm Wood.

Game Information

The Songsmith Discipline focuses mainly on the arts. As capable of performing as the Troubadour, Songsmiths employ magic to enhance their performances. They are also able to create fine elven art unique to their culture.

Important Attributes: Charisma, Perception

Racial Restriction: Elves

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma ritual, the Songsmith must make use of an Artisan skill. For the next 30 minutes the adept becomes completely immersed in his task. However, at the end of the ritual, the adept intentionally fails to perform his craft and breaks the created item or stops his performance.

Artisan Skills: Any (see **Special Rules**, below)

Half-Magic: Songsmiths use half-magic for knowledge of elven culture, traditions, and elven regional etiquette. They may use half-magic when caring for their tools and instruments and to recognize different types of tools and instruments used for practicing other forms of art and craft. Songsmiths also use half-magic to determine the artistic or monetary value of a piece of art, to determine the value and level of craftsmanships of functional items, and determine the creator of art or pieces of craftsmanship.

Special Rules

Songsmiths learn and develop Artisan skills using magic. Adepts of this Discipline can purchase and improve Artisan skills for the same Legend Point cost as for Novice talents. For more information on Artisan skills, see the **Skills** chapter on p. 88 and p. 93 of the ***Player's Guide***.

Roleplaying Hints

Songsmiths are artists at heart and perfectionists at the core of their soul. The Songsmith Discipline has an even better reputation among the elves than the Weaponsmith—and is consequently far more common among their folk.

However, the Songsmith has another purpose as well, which has been lost with the corruption of Wyrm Wood: Songsmiths once acted as agents of the Elven Queen, both by preserving elven culture and through other means. Songsmiths of the present day are a pale shadow of what they once were, though there are blood elf Songsmiths still fulfilling their original purpose.

The Different Forms

Optional Rule: Gamemasters wishing to differentiate between the various types of Songsmiths may restrict the types of Artisan skills taught to them at a reduced cost. Artisan skills not listed for a specialist Songsmith must be purchased using the standard Legend Point costs. Alternatively, the lists can be used as indicators for fields of expertise, examples of general types of artistry falling under one of the four forms.

Performer Songsmiths may only learn the Acting, Dancing, Entertainer, Juggling, Musician, and Singing skills at a reduced cost.

Craftsman Songsmiths may only learn the Basket Weaving, Cooking, Craftsman, Craft Armor, Craft Weapon, and Mapmaking skills at a reduced cost.

Poet Songsmiths may only learn the Acting, Musician, Poetry, and Storytelling skills at a reduced cost.

Sculptor Songsmiths may only learn the Body Painting, Carving, Embroidery, Runic Carving, Sculpting, and Tattooing skills at a reduced cost.

Discipline Violations

A Songsmith's duty to create art lies at the heart of the Discipline, and all Songsmiths share a sense of perfectionism. Thus, creating imperfect art or not finishing a piece of artwork may cause a talent crisis. Also, nearly every Songsmith understands his ambassadorial role regarding elven culture. A Songsmith may violate his Discipline by turning aside from that role, triggering a talent crisis.

Deeds of Atonement appropriate to Songsmiths usually involve creating or performing something truly exceptional.

Rituals of Advancement

Songsmith rituals usually involve the display of a learned art form, like a musical performance of some kind, participation in a play, the recital of a poem, or even storytelling.

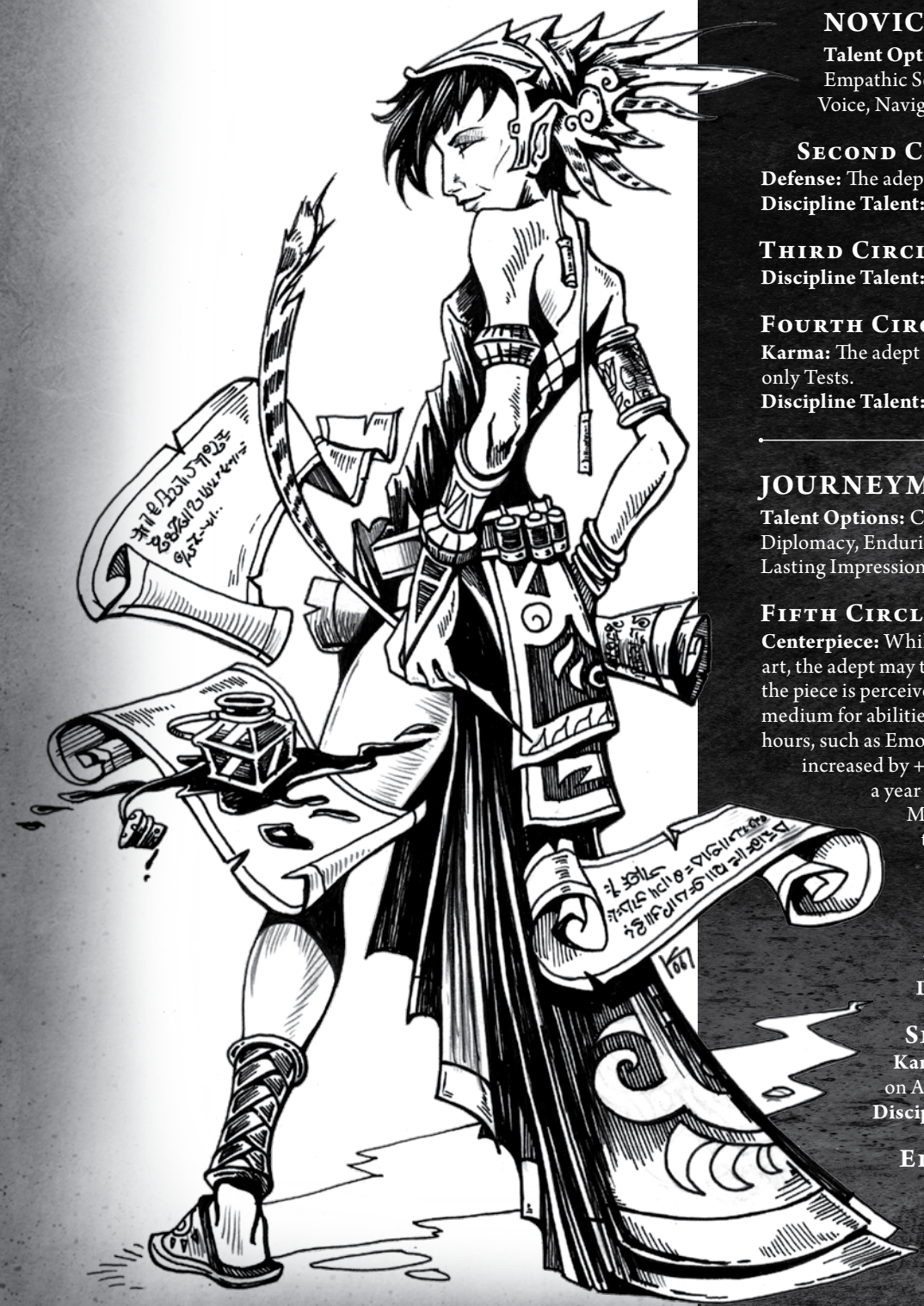
Recruitment: Potential Songsmiths are often found among the artisans in the elven communities of Barsaive's forests and jungles. Many adepts find themselves on the path of the Songsmith once they have learned another Discipline, realizing that they tend to practice their talents as an art form. To those who excel, an elder Songsmith may offer apprenticeship.

Novice (2–4): The adept helps an elder Songsmith to craft an item. The elder grants the adept the freedom to design a part of the item on his own, to give him an opportunity to demonstrate a talent from the new Circle.

Journeyman (5–8): The adept creates a piece of art based on the experiences of his most recent adventure and presents it to an elder of Ninth Circle or higher.

Warden (9–12): The adept must find and take possession of an item lost before the Scourge, restore it to good condition, and then display it to a group of elders.

Ghost Master Ritual: The adept roughly recreates a piece of art originally designed by the desired ghost master, then meditates over it. Over the course of an hour, the item develops a supernatural resemblance to the original. The ghost master appears and takes the item into his possession. The ghost master ritual then proceeds as normal.



TALENTS AND ABILITIES

INITIATE

Talent Options: Avoid Blow, Item History, Melee Weapons, Missile Weapons, Speak Language

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Emotion Song, Evaluate, First Impression, Karma Ritual, Performance

NOVICE

Talent Options: Disguise Self, Durability (6/5), Empathic Sense, Etiquette, Forge Weapon, Mimic Voice, Navigation, Read/Write Language

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Discipline Talent: Haggle

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Engaging Banter

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Charisma-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Art Weaving]

JOURNEYMAN

Talent Options: Conceal Object, Detect Weapon, Diplomacy, Enduring Art, Graceful Exit, Inspire Others, Lasting Impression, Lip Reading

Fifth Circle

Centerpiece: While creating or performing a piece of art, the adept may take 1 Strain to magically enhance how the piece is perceived. When using this piece of art as a medium for abilities that convey a bonus during the next 24 hours, such as Emotion Song or Performance, the bonus is increased by +1. The adept can extend this period to a year and a day by taking the Strain as Blood Magic Damage, or make it permanent by taking it as Permanent Damage.
Discipline Talent: Bedazzle

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Perception-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Resist Taunt

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Artisan Tests.
Discipline Talent: Steel Thought

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Discipline Talent: True Sight

WARDEN

Talent Options: Abate Curse, Blade Juggle, Defense, Forge Armor, Hypnotize, Lion Heart, Power Mask, Slough Blame

Ninth Circle

Critic's Verdict: Taking 3 Strain, the adept voices a negative opinion on the artistic effort or performance of a target, then makes an Art Weaving Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, any benefit the target gained through making the effort, including any benefits from abilities used to gain an advantage from the artistic effort, are negated, their effects immediately end.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Detect Falsehood

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Bardic Voice

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Thought Link

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Safe Thought

MASTER

Talent Options: Animate Object, Astral Pocket, Blood Guilt Weapon, Infuse Armor, Infuse Weapon, Second Chance

Thirteenth Circle

Masterpiece: The adept creates an original work of art or craft, upon completing it taking 3 Permanent Damage. Whenever he uses his work in conjunction with or as a prerequisite for an ability imparted by his Discipline or an Artisan skill, he gains a +4 bonus to any tests made.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: First Ring of Perfection

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Truth Skit

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Aura Armor

Discipline Combinations

Songsmiths rarely follow a single Discipline, as most adepts tend to become Songsmiths after mastering their primary Discipline.

That being said, there aren't any restrictions for Songsmiths seeking to acquire a secondary Discipline—almost every ability can be practiced as an art form one way or another.



CHAPTER TWENTY

ON THE RHYTHM OF THE TAILDANCER

The following account was transcribed from a conversation with C'hali Teres'za Vosvard Ippikos, a Taildancer from the War College of House K'tenshin. She visited Throal protecting a group of diplomats a few weeks before the Battle of Prajjor's Field. Due to the tension that exists between her house and Throal, C'hali's time for our questions was somewhat limited. We hope to meet her again at some point in the future, if the swelling conflict at Lake Ban can be settled peacefully.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

ON THE JOY OF BEING BORN WITH A TAIL

I can only quiver with delight that I was born a t'skrang, a child of Shivos and Shivoam, and that I was born with the great gift of having a tail through their union. Surely all the races have their own uniqueness; but I would trade my tail for none of these. My tail allows me to touch and feel the world from a different perspective. I can use my tail as a counter while moving for improved balance, or to rest my weary legs by leaning on it. When I swim, my arms and legs work in union with my sweeping tail to achieve swimming speeds the other races can only dream of. It seems to me that the other races have perceived only half of what it feels like to truly swim.

Of course, it is like this for all t'skrang. But it is even more so for the Taildancer. The Taildancer seeks to gain a true mastery of his tail. To us, the tail is a third arm and a third leg all in one, and yet it is neither. My tail truly acts as my versatile fifth limb, allowing me to multitask like none of the other races can, whether in dancing, combat, swimming, or even doing routine daily tasks. The most powerful Taildancers have learned how to improve the use of the tail even further through magic and are able to use it as a third hand to grab and manipulate unwieldy objects that other t'skrang could never hold with their tails.

ON MOCKERIES OF THE TAIL

I have heard many strange stories since the arrival of members of House Carinci from the far away land of Thera. The most disturbing tales I have heard center around whole arms and even tails partially or completely made of living crystal. Some use these crystal limbs to replace those lost in battle. Others mock us t'skrang, by attaching these limbs to their backs, attempting to gain a fifth limb. This is not an extra arm, leg, or even a tail at all. It lacks the true feelings of touch that the body should feel, and its control is through magic not mind. If the Passions meant for them to have a fifth limb they would have been born with one, it's that simple.

ON THE TRAUMA OF TAIL SEPARATION

Most t'skrang find it merely inconvenient—and painful, of course—for their tails to be partially or fully cut off, since the t'skrang tail regenerates in about a year. Becoming separated from one's tail is to lose a part of one's sense of touch, one's balance, and one's swimming speed and technique. But it is more than inconvenient for us Taildancers, since it's impossible to continue to learn to master the use of our tails when they are not present! For this reason we Taildancers learned how to use magic to regrow our tails at an almost impossible rate. What should take a year is cut down to a matter of days.

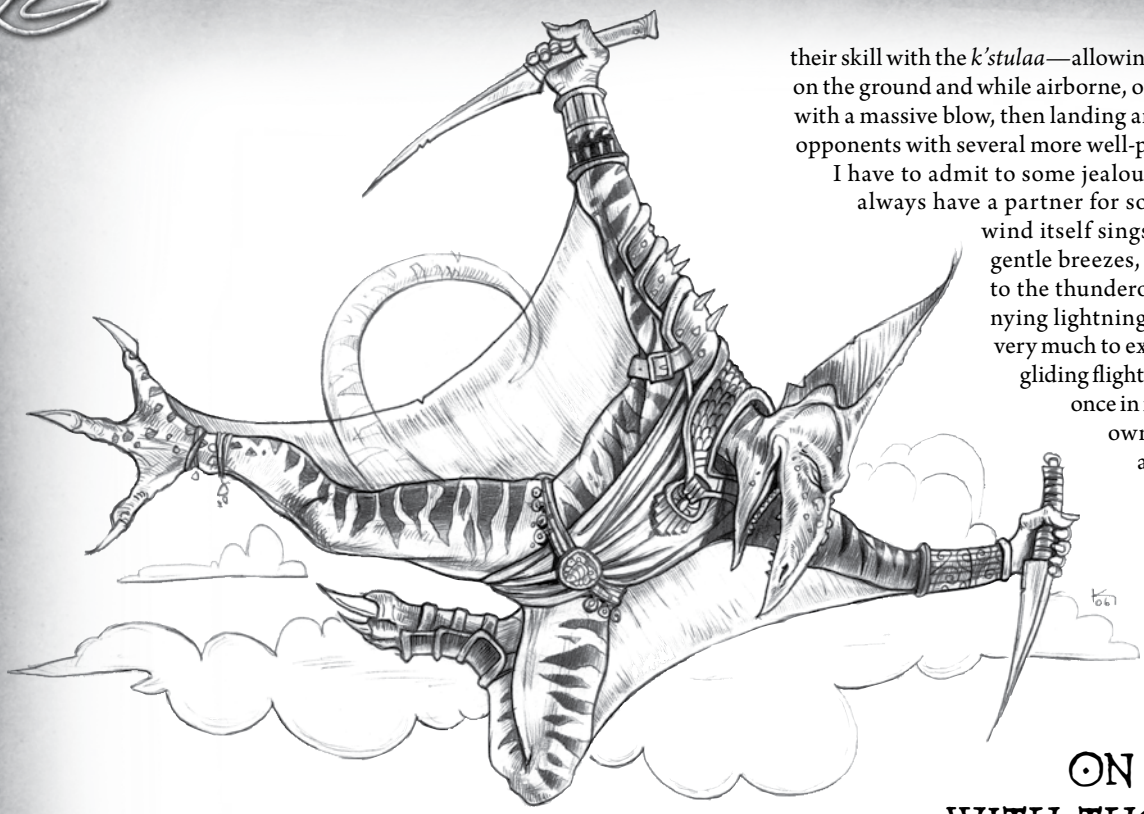
Unfortunately, the magic is as hard to master as it is useful. I remember how much I sulked after I lost my tail during a training session at the War College. I was irritable and impossible to get along with that year. Unable to work on mastering the use of my tail, I focused on the other aspects of my Discipline, specifically dancing and combat.

And now I look back on the experience of living without my tail for a year and appreciate the lessons I learned while coping without it. Of course, it was like I had to relearn how to do everything all over again: walking, running, climbing, and even swimming. Now I know what it feels like to be tailless, and I do not care to repeat the experience.

IN SEARCH OF A PARTNER

Taildancers are always in search of competition and conflict. But at the same time, we also understand that is why we must seek a partner, for without one competition is impossible. Thus we also respect the spirit of cooperation as well. In order to dance, one must have a dancing partner. In order to fight, one must have an opponent. And for a proper dance one must have singing and music.

We Taildancers aren't musicians (we leave that to the Troubadours); we would rather dance to the music instead. We thoroughly



their skill with the *k'stulaa*—allowing them to fight while on the ground and while airborne, often swooping down with a massive blow, then landing and finishing off their opponents with several more well-placed tail attacks.

I have to admit to some jealousy of them, for they always have a partner for song and dance. The wind itself sings its own song from gentle breezes, to howls from gales, to the thunderous booms accompanying lightning. I would have liked very much to experience the natural gliding flight of the *k'stulaami* just once in my life. In spite of my own fear of flying, such a thing might even be worth the cost of exile from my beloved House K'tenshin for being born a *k'stulaami*.

enjoy dance competitions, court dancing, and ballroom dancing, seeking to make our partners and ourselves the center of attention. Using our tails for balance and flair, we are able to perform movements deemed impossible for the other races.

But what of the battlefield, where there is no singing or music? If you care to listen to it, you'll find the battlefield is full of song and music! The clashing of swords and whizzing of arrows, the shattering of mace into mail, the drumming of thundra beast hooves from cavalry charges—each battle has its own distinct music. The Taildancer can hear and distinguish the battlefield's melodies, dancing to the rhythm as well as we would to the songs of the finest Troubadour in Barsaive. On the battlefield, we seek partners worthy of our tail dance. We'll test them with our wits and our movements to see if they can match us until we find a worthy partner to dance with.

We disdain killing in combat, however. It is just too hard to dance with a partner who isn't moving. We believe that glory is shared between two opponents locked in a fight—and although we ensure that our dance is at the center of attention on the battlefield, that attention should be as much on ourselves as on our partners.

On the Deathwings

And then there are *k'stulaami*, who are blessed by Syrtis to have the natural ability to soar and glide without the aid of anything except their *k'stulaa*. The *k'stulaami* Taildancers of the House of the Spirit Wind form an elite fighting unit called *jik'harra k'stulaa t'syrtis*, which roughly translates to "Deathwings" in your dwarf language. Honing his gliding abilities and enhancing them with magic, a *k'stulaami* Taildancer can control his flight to appear as graceful as an eagle, or swoop down like a deadly espagra. The *k'stulaami* Taildancer partners with the wind to perform his dances in midair through gliding, and can perform spectacular feats in combat by using his gliding abilities to maneuver and dance around his foes. Perfecting their mastery of the taildance, the Deathwings gain a number of abilities improving

On Fighting with the Tail

There are three main styles of fighting with the tail taught at the War College. The Ch'tard style focuses on the use of a four-inch knife blade attached to the tail. The Skora style focuses on the use of a specially modified piece of armor on the tail to parry with. Both styles are usually taught to Swordmasters and Warriors, as these are quite easy to learn. Taildancer initiates tend to pick up the Skora style since its use helps in protecting the tail from injury. The Edo style, which focuses on using the tail's natural flexibility and reach with unarmed combat to catch opponents off guard, is almost exclusively taught to Taildancers. Edo allows a t'skrang to make full use of a tail without attaching anything to it. I practice the Edo style myself and even teach it to new students at the War College.

K'stulaami Taildancers have their own style of fighting. I have heard that some of them use grotesque blood magic to make their tails grow spikes made of living crystal. Although this seems more exotic than the Ch'tard style, the purpose is similar. The *k'stulaami* also tend to use swooping attacks using their natural gliding ability to outmaneuver foes similar to windling flight techniques. Unlike windlings, however, *k'stulaami* are able to use this maneuverability only a handful of times to deliver a few well-placed strikes as they float down to the ground.

On Haropas and the Taildancer

Why does the Taildancer fight and dance? All Taildancers fully embrace the four pillars of *haropas*: *jik'harra*, *kiatsu*, *p'skarrot*, and *kyapaas*. In the Name of *jik'harra*, we accept all of the challenges of the Passions. In the Name of *kiatsu*, we challenge our own fears (such as my own fear of heights) to overcome them. In the Name of *p'skarrot* we take measure of our partners and ourselves when dancing and struggling with challenges. Finally, *kyapaas* teaches us the need for balance between personal ambition and loyalty. Thus all Taildanc-

ers fight and dance as much for the protection of their houses as for themselves. By teaching the taildance to new recruits at the War College, I ensure the survival of the Edo fighting school, and in turn the students will fight for the continued survival of House K'tenshin.

Many *k'stulaami* Taildancers travel the land accepting the challenges of *jik'harra* and say they fight to protect the House of the Spirit Wind as part of *kyapaas*. Most do not understand how one could be far away from their house and still be protecting it. The House of the Spirit Wind was once considered lost, but after it was rediscovered *k'stulaami* Taildancers started traveling Barsaive to spread the tale of their house. Although they do not physically protect their house's borders by staying home, their continued presence in Barsaive preserves the House of the Spirit Wind in the collective memory of Barsaive. Societies that are forgotten rarely survive. One has only to look at the terrible ruins of the once-forgotten Parlainth to remember this lesson.

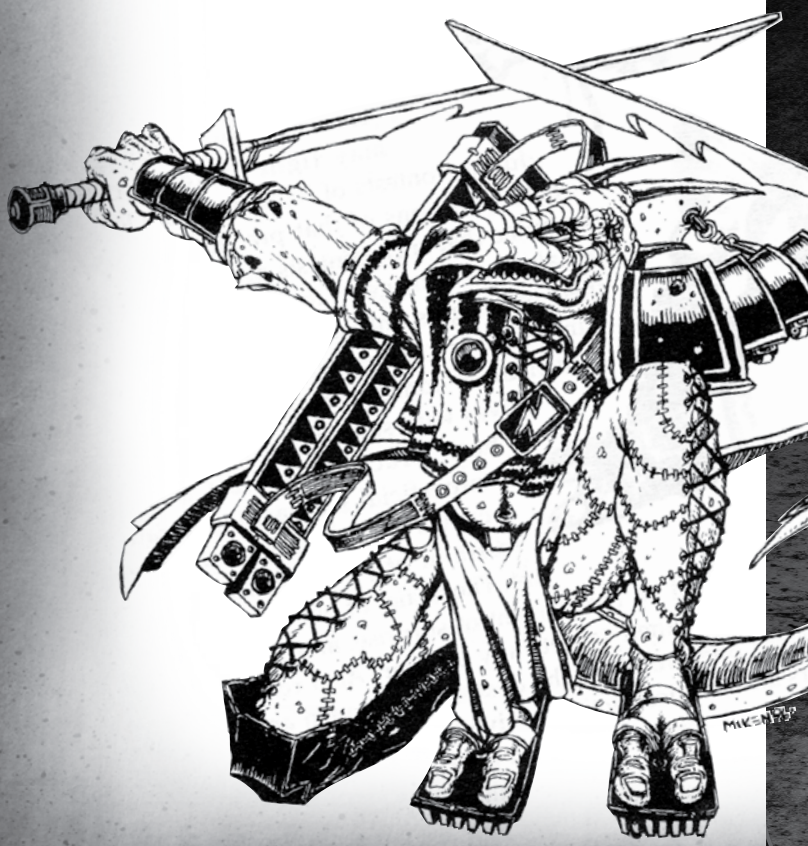
Game Information

Adepts of the Taildancer Discipline are masters of dance and combat. Available only to t'skrang, this Discipline takes advantage of that race's tail attack to greatly expand its combat options. Taildancers greatly enjoy finding new ways to use their tails in combat, and employing new uses for the tail while formulating new dances.

Important Attributes: Dexterity, Strength

Racial Restriction: T'skrang

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma ritual, the Taildancer first imagines an ideal dance partner and musical accompaniment. For the first fifteen minutes of the ritual, the Taildancer focuses on court and social dances using his tail without fighting in them. The first dances of the ritual are basic with more



Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Impress, Parry, Swimming, Taunt, Wound Balance

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Acrobatic Strike, Avoid Blow, Karma Ritual, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Combat

Novice

Talent Options: Anticipate Blow, Detect Weapon, Durability (7/6), Great Leap, Sprint, Surprise Strike, Swift Kick, Throwing Weapons

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Maneuver

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Tail Dance

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Dexterity-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Tail Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Dead Fall, Distract, Gliding Stride, Graceful Exit, Life Check, Lion Heart, Second Weapon, Tiger Spring

Fifth Circle

Regrow Tail: By taking 1 Blood Magic Damage, the adept can force his tail to regrow over the space of just one week. The adept must rest while the tail regrows, and can do very little else besides drink, eat, and sleep. The Blood Magic Damage can be healed a year and a day after the tail has fully regrown.
Discipline Talent: Engaging Dance

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Strength-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Air Dance

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Damage Tests for attacks made with his tail.
Discipline Talent: Momentum Attack

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Disarm

Warden

Talent Options: Critical Hit, Eagle Eye, Mind Blade, Resist Taunt, Rushing Attack, Shield Beater, Spirit Strike, Weapon Breaker

Ninth Circle

Prehensile Tail: The adept's tail becomes more flexible, to the point where he can use it like he could use a hand. He can simply grab weapons and other items with it, instead of having to tie them to the tail. He is still limited by the regular Weapon Size restrictions, but a weapon grasped with the tail does not use the rules for Attached Weapons any more.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Whirlwind

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on any Attribute-only Test involving the tail.
Discipline Talent: Body Blade

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Impressive Strike

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Defense

Master

Talent Options: Ethereal Weapon, Gain Surprise, Missile Twister, Resist Pain, Second Chance, Vitality

Thirteenth Circle

Formidable Assessment: Taking 3 Strain, the adept makes a Tail Weaving Test against an opponent's Spell Defense to analyze that opponent's 'dancing' style. For every Result Level achieved, starting with an Average Result, the adept gains a +1 bonus to Attack Tests against the opponent for 24 hours. The adept may choose to take the Strain as Blood Magic Damage to extend the duration to a year and a day.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Water Dancing

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Multi-Strike

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Vital Strike

intricate ones following, and usually the first part of the ritual ends with a dance the Taildancer has invented himself. For the final fifteen minutes of the ritual, the Taildancer imagines his ideal opponent and the sounds of battle. He fights his imaginary opponent, starting with basic fighting techniques and then moving on to complicated tail attacking and parrying, and complex, whirling combat maneuvers. The ritual ends with the Taildancer defeating this foe.

Artisan Skills: Body Painting, Dancing

Half-Magic: Taildancers use half-magic to identify another Taildancer's fighting techniques, including which prominent Taildancers may have shaped the individual's style. Taildancers use half-magic for knowledge of dances and gain access to the Etiquette skill via half-magic for situations that involve dancing.

Special Rules

Taildancers choose one of the three t'skrang schools of tail combat when initiated into their Discipline, and the Taildancer's magic makes the most of the school chosen, improving that schools particular fighting style. They receive the following bonus, depending on which school they follow:

Edo Taildancers add a +1 bonus per Discipline Status Level to Damage Tests made with an unarmed, unarmored tail (+1 at Initiate, +2 at Novice, +3 at Journeyman, and so on).

Ch'tard Taildancers can use tail weapons of up to Size 3.

Skora Taildancers double the defense bonus from the Tail Parry combat option if their tail is armored.

Specialists

If the gamemaster wishes to differentiate between regular and *k'stulaami* Taildancers, he may do so by making the following changes to the base Discipline: *k'stulaami* Taildancers replace the Swimming talent with the Gliding talent as an Initiate Talent Options, and replace Surprise Strike with the Down Strike talent as a Novice Talent Option.

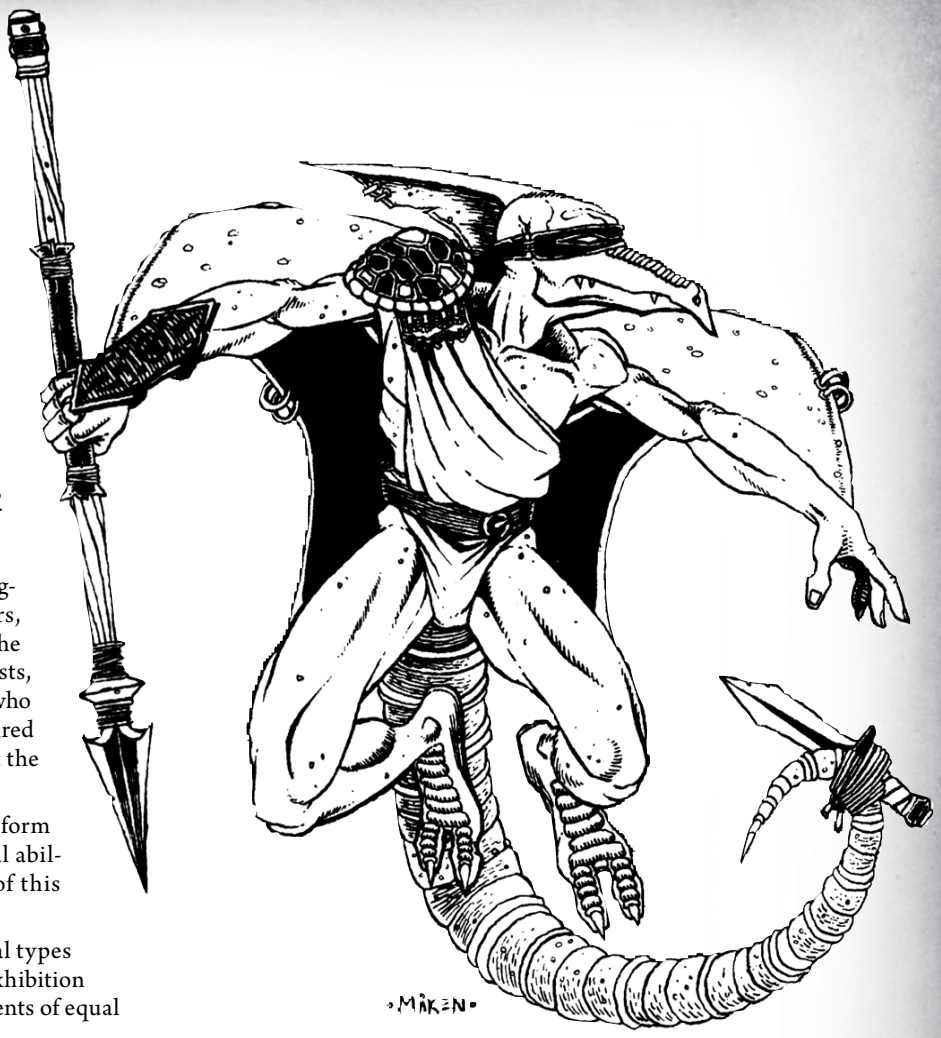
Roleplaying Hints

Taildancers are talented fighters and love to "show off" their unique combat abilities. Like the Swordmaster, a Taildancer will often perform a spectacular maneuver more for showmanship than for its effectiveness in defeating an opponent. Unlike Swordmasters, Taildancers usually want their opponents to look good as well, so they often ham it up when their opponent gains an advantage, acting more hurt by an opponent's blows than they actually are, or trying to fall with style when knocked down. Some even go so far as flopping to the ground after being struck.

Discipline Violations

Taildancers must remain true to the taildance; they risk suffering talent crisis if they sway from its calling. A Taildancer not using his tail in favor for other weapons in combat may invoke a talent crisis, but if the Taildancer had lost his tail due to trauma and is in the process of growing it back the use of another melee weapon will not constitute a violation. However, only using a hand-held melee weapon while the Taildancer has a fully functional tail can invoke

a Severe violation. Followers of the Edo school risk suffering a talent crisis should they attach weapons or armor to their tails.



RITUALS OF ADVANCEMENT

Taildancer rituals and tests for advancement often combine feats of bravery and endurance with showmanship.

Recruitment: Those t'skrang who have been chosen to attempt initiation as Taildancers are handpicked from the most brave and daring of the young t'skrang, usually those that make extensive use of their tails.

Novice (2–4): Taildancers engage in regular contests of skill against their peers, usually staged at public festivals along the Serpent River. Elders supervise all contests, and afterward acknowledge those adepts who demonstrated mastery of the talents required to rise to the next Circle, whether or not the adepts won their contests.

Journeyman (5–8): The adept must perform the taildance with an opponent of equal abilities, supervised by a respected elder of this Discipline.

Warden (9–12): Choosing one or several types of difficult terrain, the adept stages an exhibition of the taildance with a number of opponents of equal or lesser skill.

Ghost Master Ritual: Like a Swordmaster, the Taildancer summons a ghost master by mentally fighting that master within a circle. After an hour of unarmed combat, the mental image materializes as the master, who handily defeats the Taildancer. The ritual proceeds as normal.

DISCIPLINE COMBINATIONS

Taildancers rarely take on additional Disciplines since this would take away time from training with their tails. However, when they do choose another Discipline, they usually combine the taildance with the way of the Elementalist, Illusionist, Troubadour, or the Scout. Those who become Elementalists often specialize in the element of air, and use this mastery of the air element to create unique types of dances. The Illusionist and Troubadour Disciplines appeal to the Taildancers' love of performance, allowing them to greatly enhance their acting in combat, and use illusion spells to make their dances more aesthetically pleasing. The enhanced perceptions of the Scout allow Taildancers to greatly enhance the sense of touch of their tails and perceive the world in a different way.

Taildancers and Swordmasters don't mix well. The Taildancer prefers an equal in a fight, and the Swordmaster does not care who the opponent is, often embellishing fights and deeds against weaker foes, fights the Taildancer would likely just ignore. For the Taildancer, there is no competition or challenge in fighting a weaker foe. The same is true of the Taildancer's opinion of the Warrior Discipline, although the outlook of the Warrior tends to be too pragmatic for the Taildancer to grasp.

Disciplines that require a lasting partnership and bond are often difficult for the Taildancer to follow. The Taildancer prefers to dance with many partners instead of one. Thus it is rare for a Taildancer to ever choose the path of the Air Sailor, Boatman, Cavalryman, or Sky Raider. The Taildancer's love of performance means that Disciplines like the Nethermancer, Thief, Weaponsmith, and Wizard, the followers of which spend life in the shadows, toiling in forges, or buried in books, spend too much time away from the stage to be of interest to him.

CHAPTER TWENTYONE

TO GO AND SEE FOR YOURSELF: THE TRAVELED SCHOLAR

This manuscript was prepared by the late Tarliman Joppos, holder of the Chair of City Lore in the Hall of Records, before his voyage to Thera and subsequent demise. In honor of his memory, I have left it unedited. I also felt that attempting to improve the manuscript of a Traveled Scholar would be an act of great arrogance, in a way saying that I could perform the tasks of his Discipline better than he could. For one adept to judge another so would be nearly unforgivable.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

Knowledge is the one possession that cannot be stolen. The price of knowledge can be beyond measure. Every Discipline relies on it. Without knowledge, and the study time required to gain it, the Swordmaster would hack blindly and the Weaponsmith would not be able to turn out so much as a nail, much less a weapon worthy of an adept.

The Traveled Scholar goes beyond this, to the direct pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. There is a purity within the Discipline, an essence of the seeking after truth, that is found in no other Discipline. We journey far afield, put ourselves at risk of life and limb, spend fortunes on expeditions, and travel into regions other Namegivers shudder to think of, all to slake our endless thirst for knowledge.

And, Passions willing, we come back, and report our findings. We fill the libraries with the treasures we have recovered. We share our booty freely, knowing that knowledge is the one thing that one can give away and still have.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PATRONS

Travel is not only in our Name. It is in our nature. Unlike other academics (and I am not speaking ill of them) we do not spend all of our time in the library or the study hall, reading the works of others and thinking about the logical extrapolation of their ideas into further conclusions. No, we go forth and gather new information. It is not enough to know. We must see for ourselves. There is no substitute for first-hand observation, nothing that can take the place of being there and experiencing.

So we set forth from our libraries, our homes, our villages and towns and cities, and we go. Where is determined by our interests, by the fire that burns within us and the thirst that pulls us onward, and sometimes by our patrons, when we have them. Suffice it to say that expeditions are expensive, and that we frequently seek sponsorship for our travels. While a Traveled Scholar can turn a bit of coin along the way, selling copies of his works to libraries and other scholars, and performing the odd bit of research, going off into the wild requires supplies, pack animals, guards, and fellow adepts if the expedition is going off into dangerous territory. And what isn't dangerous these days? All of this requires substantial amounts of coin, more than the average Traveled Scholar is likely to see as the reward for his work on his own. Therefore, we seek patronage, the support of wealthy individuals who either stand to profit from what we find out, or who, like us, prize the results of such expeditions for their own sake. The resulting papers and books are normally dedicated to them, in gratitude for their support.

▲ ▲ ▲

Never take a patron who insists on editing rights to your work, or who may prevent it from being published. Such people are always up to no good. The suppression of knowledge is one of the worst of evils, being very nearly on a level with the corruption of the soul sought by the Named Horrors. Be careful in the selection of your patron that you choose a person with a good heart, and who is willing to stay with you through publication and public dissemination of the fruits of your labor.

—Turlavin Martov,
On Becoming a Scholar (1382TH)

▲ ▲ ▲

ON THE JOYS OF TRAVELING

Sometimes an expedition is not required. The Traveled Scholar may journey by himself, or with just a few trusted companions, who either take care of their own expenses, or are not expensive in and of themselves. In my case, I have journeyed this way for much of my life, seeing the world with only my

two guards, Renaldo and Urgruk, by my side. Sturdy men of simple tastes, I have prized their company for their interest in seeing my work done, and their willingness to accept a slightly lower standard of living than the usual mercenary guard. I am a man of simple tastes myself, much more likely to take my noon meal from a street vendor than at a wineshop, and content with journeybread, dried meat, and water when in the field. Hot meals can wait until I have returned to the Hall of Records, and have the leisure for them while preparing my work for submission to the library.

Privation is part and parcel of being a Traveled Scholar. One must be sturdy, able to travel on foot for great distances and to endure with little food and a heavy pack. One must be determined, to see one's work through when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. One must be able to get by on little or no coin, being resourceful enough to survive on what can be found or worked for along the way. And above all else, one must be reliable, able to deliver what has been promised no matter the personal cost. I have known Traveled Scholars who have returned from afield with limbs missing, sick from hunger and thirst, most of their equipment and sometimes their entire worldly possessions lost, but with their notes still intact, able to deliver their results and make one more addition to the world's stockpile of knowledge. Perhaps this is why only dwarfs follow the Discipline. We are the only race stubborn enough to endure what we endure, for a prize that cannot be easily held in the hand, and whose worth cannot be readily assessed in silver.



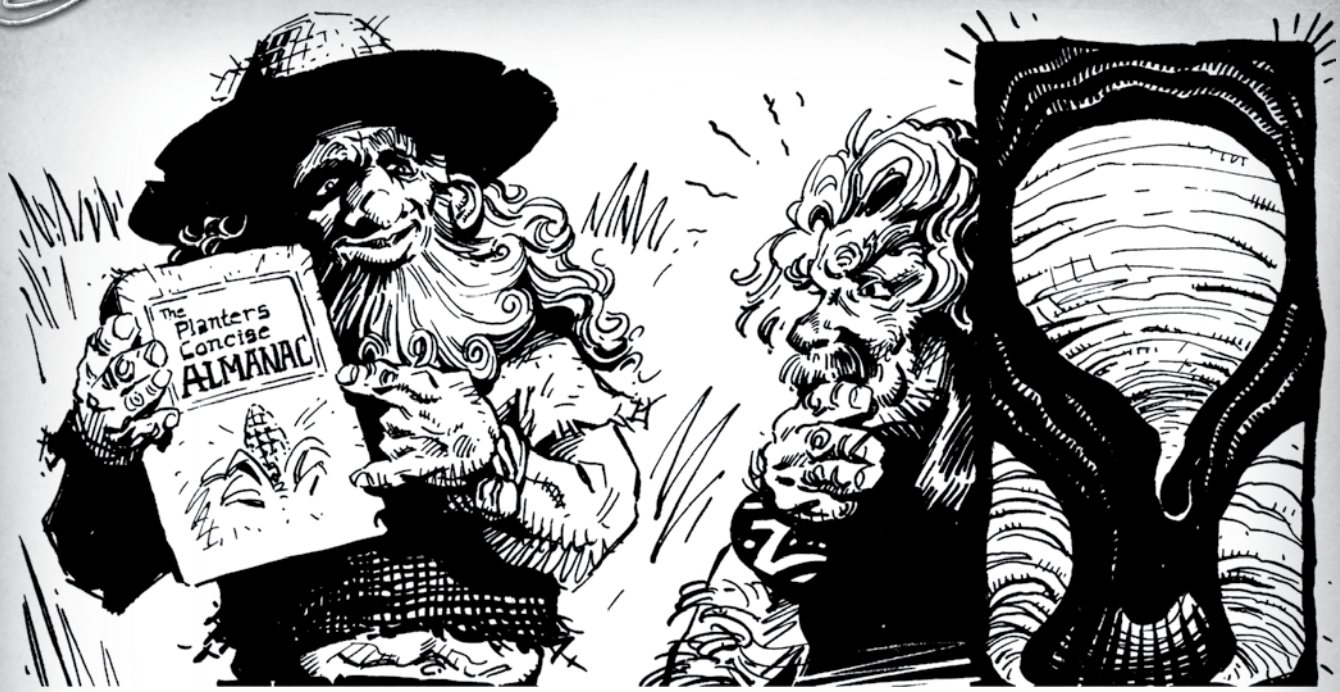
On Seeking the Truth

What measures our value, and the value of what we have done, is respect. It is enough for us to be held in high esteem by our colleagues. All of the awards, the ribbons and medals, the coin and jewels; all pales into insignificance when compared to the applause of one's peers at the end of a presentation. The acclaim of the public is a grand and glorious thing. The acclaim of the academic world is greater. To be judged a great man by the populace, and set on high, can be embarrassing, and can even interfere with our studies, when the duties of high position prevent us from haring off after an idea. Our fellow scholars, however, understand what is truly important. They know that the quest for knowledge must always take precedence, even over our personal lives, our relationships, and our lives themselves. The respect accorded us from those who truly understand this quest means more to us than anything else in the world.

Conversely, to lose that respect, or to be treated with derision by our peers, is the worst shame that we can possibly imagine. No Traveled Scholar would ever risk that without the greatest of reasons. Faking one's research is unheard of. Presenting a paper not your own without giving proper credit is a heinous crime. Turning back from a journey before the goal is achieved is shameful—a sign of personal weakness that puts your Discipline itself in doubt. Pursuing an idea deemed heretical, unfounded, or ridiculous is done only when driven by the greatest of personal conviction, when the Traveled Scholar is possessed of unique knowledge that convinces him that the popular view held by his colleagues is without a doubt incorrect, and he is convinced utterly that he has the capability to prove himself right. This is the one area where we exercise the most caution in our lives.

Most of the greatest advances in the world have been made by those rare individuals willing to ask the hard questions, willing to face the possibility of catastrophic failure, willing to put themselves on the line once and for all in order to seek a higher truth. This level of risk, however, requires substantial consideration. Many Traveled Scholars have retired from their journeys, taking up sinecures as librarians and private researchers, ending their lives scribbling repetitive monographs on their earlier adventures, rather than confront such a risk. Those few who have taken the risk have either met with appalling doom, or been acclaimed by the greatest of heroes of our race. Their Names have been remembered, either as terrific fools or with the highest of honor. And all it takes is for one chance to go well or awry. It is no wonder that Traveled Scholars find little excitement in cards or dice. We gamble with our academic reputations and our lives.

All of this grand and glorious talk masks one of the underlying realities of our Discipline: writing. To make your living writing is



an act of tremendous arrogance. You are in effect saying to others that the way in which you say things is so spectacular that they should pay you to write them down. It's no wonder that Traveled Scholars and other academics have such strong conflicts with each other, and are so well known for being stubborn and intransigent. This stubbornness, however, is necessary to keep us at our task. The personal conviction that we are right in our beliefs, that we have the answers, that we can indeed say it better than anyone else, is what keeps us at our desks, scribbling away into the small hours.

Writing is an effort of will equaled only by the Weaponsmith forging a masterwork, or the painter producing his greatest art. Days, months, even years of effort may go into our work, all to end with a paper that may take less than a day to read. We draft our copy, edit it, and revise it; we check our facts and revise again. We ask our closest friends to read our drafts, and revise again based on their critique. We submit our work to review committees, and revise yet again based on their findings. Finally, at last, we present our work to our peers, and find out whether or not it was all worth anything. Imagine the crushing defeat suffered by a Traveled Scholar who has spent five years in the field doing research and another year writing his paper, only to present it to laughter and derision because he made a fundamental error. We guard our work as if it were our children. We protect it, cherish it, and lavish our affection on it. We spend our every waking hour thinking about it, writing, crossing out, writing again, tossing the paper into the fireplace, writing yet again. Small wonder that we are not the most social of Namegivers. We simply don't have the time for other people. Our writing and our research always come first.

In the end, what matters is the truth. Our task is to seek it out, and to bring it to our peers and to our people. We must find out. We must see. We must report our findings. The Traveled Scholar lives not for coin, or glory, or honor, but for respect and for the truth.

On the Dark Side of Academia

Traveled Scholars rarely have families. Our Discipline keeps us wandering, or cloistered in the research hall. We are either gone from our homes or shut away, writing. In either case, we're simply not around enough to meet the right person, to raise children, and to have families of our own. Those rare individuals who manage to balance family life against their Discipline often produce the next generation of scholars, their example as parents overshadowing the influence of grandparents for the choice of field of endeavor for their children.

You've heard the saying, "publish or perish"? Well, it's true. Either you present a paper at least once a year, or you lose regard among your peers, and lose the notice of the Wardens. And if you're presenting only once a year, it had better be something terrifically interesting, a theory that sets people on their collective ear. Fail to produce, or worse, fail to be interesting, and you'll find that masters are hard to come by when you want to advance in your Discipline.

Conversely, if you publish too often, you may find yourself tagged as a show-off. Nobody likes someone who's constantly trying to outperform everyone else. Beyond that, your work is likely to be taken less seriously, with people under the impression that you've chosen quantity over quality.

Then there's the competition. There are only so many Traveled Scholars, so getting the attention and time of one of the higher-ups for a review panel can be tough. People will resort to some nasty tricks to ensure their place in line. I've seen people's papers outright stolen, replaced with drivel, or otherwise sabotaged; apprentices finding their bedchamber doors mysteriously locked so they miss an appointment; wine spilled on someone when he's wearing his best robes; and all sorts of other backstabbing and misbehavior. The whispering campaigns are the worst. You hear things, you know, and gossip gets around. Word starts up that you've forged a reference in your latest work, and there's no way to quickly prove the rumor false because the original work is in a library off in Travar. Then people start wondering about what else you may have forged. Worse, you may be suspected of plagiarism, of stealing someone else's work and passing it off as your own. Get a bad reputation, deserved or not, and your career is pretty much over.

In Conclusion

There's a great deal of hard work involved in being a Traveled Scholar. You must be able to gather knowledge, come up with original theories, and expound them to your peers. You have to be able to survive on your own, travel great distances and into substantial peril, and then return to report what you've

found. You have to be able to find your way in areas no other Namegiver has yet explored, and then be able to find your way back. You have to be tough enough to survive not only the dangers on the road and in the unexplored wilderness, but among your own peers, who may be more dangerous than anything you find outside the Hall of Records.

Game Information

Dwarfs who follow the Traveled Scholar Discipline choose to learn about the world through experience combined with study, rather than by study alone. An adept of this Discipline spends much of his life journeying across Barsaive in search of experiences that will enhance his understanding of the world.

Important Attributes: Charisma, Perception

Racial Restriction: Dwarfs

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma ritual, the adept sits alone and reads the pages he wrote in his traveling journal over the past two days. As he reads the text over and over again, he meditates on the events about which he wrote. He reads and meditates for 30 minutes, after which time he awakens from his reverie and writes down what he gleaned from this exercise—usually additions and corrections to his journal.

Artisan Skills: Calligraphy, Manuscript Illumination

Half-Magic: The Traveled Scholar may use half-magic to produce the materials and presentations required for his Discipline. This includes paper and parchment, ink, quills, drawing chalk and charcoal, scrolls (including the woodcarving required to make the handles at each end), scroll and map cases, bookbinding, calligraphy, and illustration. Traveled Scholars also gain access to the Navigation and Mapmaking skills via half-magic.

Special Rules

Traveled Scholars learn and develop Knowledge skills using magic. Adepts of this Discipline can purchase Knowledge skills for the same Legend Point cost as for Novice talents. For more information on Knowledge skills, see the **Skills** chapter on p. 89 of the ***Player's Guide***.

Specialists

The Traveled Scholar knows a spy specialization similar to the character type described on p. 219 of ***Kratas: City of Thieves***.

Rather than stealing secrets for personal gain, the spy Traveled Scholar sets out to make information public. In some fields of work, information is kept hidden from the public, and the spy Traveled Scholar sets out to end this state of academic misery. Then there are those who acknowledge the need for secrecy, for example in matters of national security, but believe that knowledge must be made accessible to certain circles. Many of the latter group work for the Kingdom of Throal.

At First Circle, the spy Traveled Scholar swaps placement of the Search and Item History talents (Search becoming a Discipline Talent, Item History becoming a Talent Option). The First Circle Talent Options of Conversation and Navigation are replaced with the Silent Walk and Bribery talents (***Kratas: City of Thieves***, p. 224). Arcane Mutterings and Disarm Trap swap their availability (Arcane Mutterings becoming available from the Warden Talent Options, Disarm Trap becoming available from the Journeyman Talent Options).

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Conversation, Etiquette, Evidence Analysis, Navigation, Search

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Item History, Karma Ritual, Read/Write Language, Research, Speak Language

Novice

Talent Options: Abate Curse, Astral Sight, Avoid Blow, Creature Analysis, Durability (6/5), Evaluate, Haggle, Lock Picking

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Discipline Talent: Book Memory

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Book Recall

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Perception-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Lore Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Arcane Mutterings, Conceal Object, Detect Trap, Direction Sense, Graceful Exit, Resist Taunt, Spirit Talk, Steel Thought

Fifth Circle

Quest for Knowledge: While traveling to actively search for specific knowledge or information (rather than traveling and taking in any knowledge) the adept may take 2 Strain to get a +2 bonus to any one test made to overcome obstacles or keep traveling, such as Climbing, Fatigue, or Swimming Tests.
Discipline Talent: Applied Sciences

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Charisma-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Lip Reading

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Knowledge Tests.
Discipline Talent: Safe Path

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Discipline Talent: True Sight

WARDEN

Talent Options: Disarm Trap, Endure Cold, Hypnotize, Lion Heart, Mind Wave, Poison Resistance, Sense Magic Item, Thought Link

Ninth Circle

Indexing: When in a library or similar place that stores knowledge, the adept may make take 2 Strain and make a Lore Weaving Test against the highest Spell Defense of any object holding knowledge (books, stone tablets, scrolls, etc.) or the Spell Defense of the place, whichever is higher. If successful, he forms a mental index of the knowledge stored, and can quickly find anything specific to look for. This ability only includes sources the adept can understand, both for determining the Difficulty Number and for the contents of the index.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Safe Thought

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Detect Falsehood

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Truth Skit

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Bardic Voice

MASTER

Talent Options: Astral Pocket, Defense, Detect Influence, Elemental Walk, Life Check, Plant Shelter

Thirteenth Circle

Wisdom of the Ages: Taking 3 Strain, the adept taps into the legends of past scholars to access their knowledge. For 24 hours, he gains a +5 rank bonus to a Knowledge Skill of his choosing (which means he gains it at rank 5 if he does not have it at the time), and this skill counts as a magical ability for the duration. He can only gain a skill a past Master Traveling Scholar once possessed with this ability, which usually precludes skills that are specific to recent events. Once the adept dies, his own Knowledge Skills become available via the Wisdom of the Ages for as long as the adept's legend is remembered.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Second Chance

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Multi-Tongue

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Earth Armor

Roleplaying Hints

Most Traveled Scholars love to talk. They will go on for hours about what they've seen, what they expect to see, and what they think about it all. They usually carry the dwarven love of discussion to its ultimate end, being willing to argue about anything just for the sake of the argument.

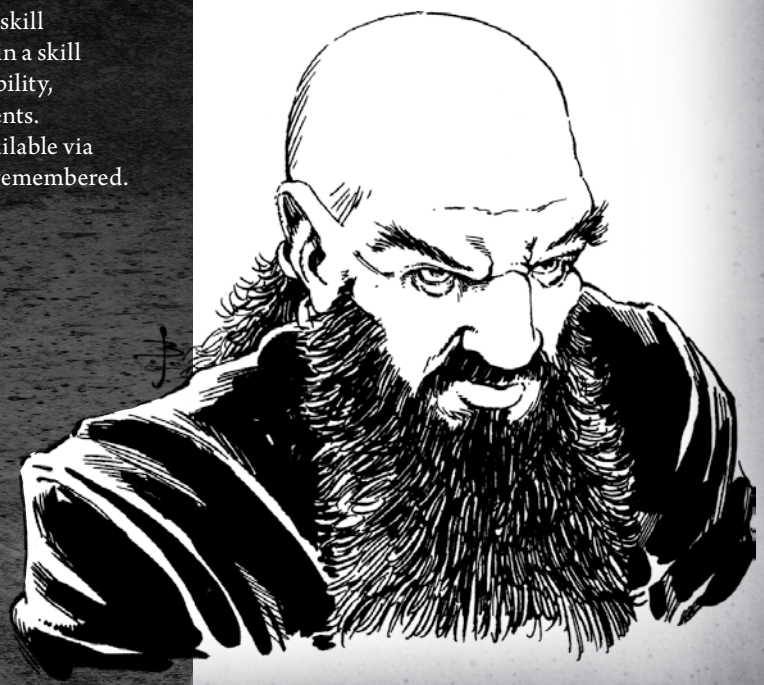
Their curiosity often leads them into dangerous situations without a second thought, never mind the fact that there are fire eagles, or poisonous gases, or a Horror up ahead. The possibility of an undiscovered secret will lead the Traveled Scholar straight on, heedless of peril to life or limb.

While most dwarfs love to give advice, seeing themselves as the elder siblings of all the other races, Traveled Scholars go this one better. It doesn't matter what your field of endeavor is, a Traveled Scholar probably knows more about it than you do. If he doesn't, chances are he'll harass you with a million questions, ferret out every scrap of information, and wring you dry before moving on to the next subject of interest.

Discipline Violations

A Traveled Scholar risks talent crises when passing up a chance to learn something new. This will range from Minor all the way up to Heinous, depending on how rare and fragile the opportunity is. Deciding to go for an ale instead of attending a scholar's presentation on *hach'var*, only the third presentation on that subject this week, is a Minor violation at best. Refusing to go see the night-blooming bloodflower of Cravic Peak, which only blossoms once every twenty years, and then only if there's a full moon on the proper night, would be a Heinous violation.

Relying on second-hand sources of information may also be a violation. A Traveled Scholar must go and see for himself. Using a second- or



third-hand source as a guide, in an attempt to find the original item or event or place, is not a violation. If it were, Traveled Scholars couldn't use maps. Likewise, failing to provide information when it's asked for constitutes a violation. Demanding recompense for information that's hard to come by does not. If someone wants to know a secret that took you five years to learn, and cost you three friends into the bargain, it's only fair that they should offer a substantial amount of gold in return. On the other hand, a Traveled Scholar would never charge for directions from the Grand Bazaar to the Hall of Records. For one thing, that's public information to begin with, and for another, it's in everyone's best interest to know how to get to the Hall of Records.

RITUALS OF ADVANCEMENT

One of the most critical parts of advancement in the Discipline is the presentation of one's findings. It is not sufficient to go and to see. One must report back, and add to the collective knowledge of one's people.

Recruitment: Within every Namegiver lies a thirst for knowledge. Those individuals that find greater challenge in the library than on the training grounds, those that continually ask questions, those poking their noses into everything; if those people come to the attention of a scholar, or even a Traveled Scholar, they are approached regarding training. Often, this begins in childhood, with the young apprentice serving at the Hall of Records or in a lesser library or hall of study. A Traveled Scholar takes the Initiate on his first journey. In the process, potential adepts awaken to the magic of the Discipline, and are trained to reach the First Circle. Sometimes this requires more than one journey, sometimes confronting dangers of some peril.

Novice (2–4): The apprentice must present a paper to an audience of five or more Namegivers, which must include two or more Traveled Scholars of Novice status or higher. A Traveled Scholar of Journeyman status or higher must sit in judgment of the paper and its presentation.

Journeyman (5–8): The apprentice must have written a paper that has been accepted by a library as part of its collection. This is preferably the Great Library of Throal, but can be any library of reliable nature and good stature, such as those found in Travar and Urupa.

Warden (9–12): For each Circle, the adept must have sat in judgment of one or more apprentice presentations, depending on the master doing the training. For each Circle at Warden rank, the Traveled Scholar must write a book. Once the book is approved by the Warden's peers, it must be submitted to and accepted by a library as part of its collection (preferably the Great Library of Throal, as mentioned above).

Ghost Master Ritual: The Traveled Scholar spends an entire hour writing the ghost master's history onto the ground, until the writing forms a circle. On completion of the circle, the ghost master appears and the ritual proceeds as normal.

DISCIPLINE COMBINATIONS

The Traveled Scholar works well with other Disciplines that take a direct approach on seeking the truth, and that prize knowledge. Therefore, adding the Elementalist, Nethermancer, or Wizard Discipline meshes well with the adept's existing view on the world.

The academic focus of the Traveled Scholar does not work well with Disciplines that center themselves on the wild, such as the Beastmaster, Cavalryman, and Scout Disciplines. That same focus, however, blends well with the Troubadour. While the Traveled Scholar relies on direct action, going and finding out for himself despite the risks of being out in the field, Disciplines that put action first and knowledge second don't fit with the Traveled Scholar without some serious convolutions in the personal vision. These include the Sky Raider, Warrior, and Swordmaster Disciplines.

The Traveled Scholar relies on truth as the core of his Discipline. Therefore, Traveled Scholars rarely become Illusionists or Thieves. Even though Illusionists exist to reveal the truth, they do so through deception, and deliberately misguiding someone who seeks the truth conflicts directly with the nature of the Traveled Scholar.



CHAPTER TWENTYTWO

ON THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE WINDDANCER

The following account is based on a set of notes I took while interviewing Gheela, who was visiting Throal with a group of other windling clan members. I was able to talk to her alone for a while, and it seemed reasonable to use my study room for this purpose. Like many others present at the time, I assumed she was a Troubadour. The following document testifies that my assumption was incorrect and that the differences between the Troubadour and Winddancer Disciplines are far greater than I expected.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

Did you ever find a Troubadour or Illusionist performance boring, at least to some extent? No? Then you aren't a windling. I'm asking because most Namegivers take me for a Troubadour like you did. Of course, I'm not—I am a Winddancer. But you knew that, otherwise we wouldn't be having this conversation. And you wouldn't be writing it down, which proves you're no Troubadour and no windling, unless you're a brilliant Illusionist posing as a dwarf.

Well, let's begin with that then, writing things down.

RECORDING HISTORY, AFTER A FASHION

You ground-stompers all seem fascinated with written words. I know; reading is the only way to enjoy a good tale without a storyteller present. But is it really as good as the experience itself, being the audience, feeling the vibrations of voices in the air? Of course not. This is one of the reasons why we windlings do not care so much about books (the others being that books are quite heavy and don't withstand weather very well).

Many Troubadours seem to appreciate books both new and old, and as you might know yourself, many spend a great deal of time learning the tales in them by heart to recite them without flaw. Boring, isn't it? Telling a tale for a lifetime without any notable changes, always the same? It will come out of someone's ear, that's for sure. What about the mood of the day, or the mood of the audience? I know, what I am saying is unjust and probably too generalized, so I apologize. But it is true to a certain degree, isn't it?

So we do not use books and don't record history. And yet, we are considered historians by your standards. Look at it like this: a history record is something you put on a shelf somewhere, where the chances are good that it gets forgotten. We, on the other hand, talk about history. Every race of Barsaive has oral tradition to some extent, but for us, telling history is *living* it. We make history a part of the present, and by this act, we make it a part of everything we do.

How does that work, you might ask? Most windlings talk about the past—some of them a little too much. Granted, many of us tend to exaggerate. We Winddancers tell history in a more objective manner. This is why we seem so serious to other windlings in contrast. Other races don't see the difference, though. And Troubadours are even more serious anyway, I think.

In essence: there can't be any truth in windling history. Anything you hear might have a kernel of truth in it, but just as well might not.

—Geerian, Traveled Scholar

But I have told you so much about history now, perhaps you are bored yourself. Take it lightly, we rarely get our mind out of it, for it's something our clans expect us to care about deeply. Thus, let's talk about something that puts us in a different light.

ON THE LANGUAGE OF FLIGHT

When we perform, the performance almost never consists of a single art form alone. In most cases, we use as many forms and styles as possible to entertain and educate our audience. We sing, we speak, and we play instruments. And yes, we dance. You might be able to understand the music, but a ground-stomper who understands a windling's dance is a rare sight.

Our dance takes place in the air, naturally, and we Winddancers excel at this, because we understand the language of flight and, in contrast to most other windlings, can speak it intentionally. You see, most Namegivers can read feelings of joy or grief in another's face, and even more if they have an aptitude for it. Windlings not only express feelings in their face, but also in the way they fly. A sad windling tends to fly slower than usual while letting his head hang down, for example. If a windling is in a nervous mood, his body usually has an angle, with his arms alongside it, while looking straight forward. We Winddancers are masters when it comes to figuring out someone else's emotions.

We also master the expression of any emotion that way, by adjusting our flight. This is perhaps the most intricate windling art, because it is difficult for us to hide our true emotions, especially in the language of flight. When a Winddancer performs, the song expresses the story, his movement expresses the actions of the characters, and the language of flight expresses emotions. Add instruments to that, or the hum of our wings. A Winddancer is a whole group of artists all by himself: singer, musician, dancer, storyteller, actor. Ever seen someone else able to do this? Of course, it's not that no one has tried before.

On Our Ever-Changing Ways

We windlings love life, and try to enjoy every moment of it. We're experiencing it and revel in our freedom of being able to do so. It could be said that windlings are able to live life to the fullest, just like an ork. We smell better and live longer, though.



Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Air Speaking, Avoid Blow, Impress, Melee Weapons, Speak Language

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Conversation, Etiquette, Karma Ritual, Taunt, Wind Dance

Novice

Talent Options: Distract, Durability (6/5), Emotion Song, Empathic Sense, Engaging Banter, Haggle, Heartening Laugh, Mimic Voice

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Discipline Talent: Diplomacy

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Bird Song

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Charisma-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Dance Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Arcane Mutterings, Dead Fall, Enduring Art, Fast Hand, Inspire Others, Item History, Lasting Impression, Lip Reading

Fifth Circle

Judgment Call: For 1 Strain, the adept may make a call to settle a dispute, determine the winner of a contest, confirm the accuracy of history or legend, or settle any similar disagreement. He makes a Charisma Test against the highest Social Defense among all participants and if successful, all involved will respect his call for the moment if it does not have any obvious flaws or is not obviously made for the adept's advantage.
Discipline Talent: Resist Taunt

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Perception-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Graceful Exit

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Interaction Tests.
Discipline Talent: Leadership

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Discipline Talent: Hypnotize

WARDEN

Talent Options: Incite Mob, Lion Heart, Mind Wave, Rally, Safe Thought, Song of Deflection, ~~Mind Wave,~~ Thought Link, True Sight

Ninth Circle

Captivate: Taking 3 Strain, the adept makes a Dance Weaving Test against the highest Social Defense amongst a target group, +1 per additional target. If successful, the targets focus all their attention on the adept and act according to his actions. They attack him if in combat, listen to him at a recital, and so on. Targets may be distracted by appropriate events, however. If they are attacked by other characters or if loud noise interrupts the recital, for example, their attention veers away from the adept. This ability lasts Dance Weaving Rank rounds, although targets may keep focusing their attention on the adept afterwards.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Slough Blame

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Dexterity-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Bardic Voice

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Detect Falsehood

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Truth Skit

MASTER

Talent Options: Animate Object, Blood Guilt Weapon, Champion Challenge, Detect Influence, Echo Location, First Ring of Perfection

Thirteenth Circle

Wing Mastery: The adept can now use his wings as his primary method of movement, he can fly all day long without the need for tests or risk of Strain, as long as his wings are relatively dry. Once they become soaked, the adept's ability to fly is determined by the rules that were previously used for dry wings (requiring a test after 20 minutes and then in intervals of 5 minutes, and wet wings do not cause the adept to become Harried).
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Multi-Tongue

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Second Chance

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Aura Armor

I don't see the negative aspects, really. Your tiny noses aren't even able to experience the full range of an ork's odor. Could be that our lives are shorter than yours because of that, but they're worth every minute…
—Norum Bok, Ork Cavalryman

Life is an ever-changing thing, and nothing remains as it is over time. Windlings embrace this and show their love of nature by mimicking the customs of other folks as often as they can. We Winddancers take this to the extreme and go out to explore new cultures and traditions unknown to us.

Change and freedom are the same to us. We love diversity because nature is diverse. We love change because nature changes. Nature and its children have a lot to offer: different landscapes, different people, different creatures, different customs, different traditions and rites. Nature loves us and has gifted us with this rich world to experience. We want to see it all and honor this present.

Our greatest joy is taking to the air, though. We have adjusted our lives to it. Not only do we build shelters in the trees and hunt from the air, it defines how we act—especially windling adepts. A windling Beastmaster tends to work with the creatures of the air, windling Archers always have the higher ground and so on. Windlings know more about the air than any other Namegiver (save perhaps a dragon). The air carries our voices and ourselves during performance. We have learned to understand this element: its ways, moods, and even its personality.

Although our ability to fly must seem outstanding to most Namegivers, we often think of ourselves as guests in the realm of other forces native to this element. Our flight is not strong enough to carry us for extended periods. In contrast, most birds can fly for hours, and air elementals can hover above the ground without effort. That is why we enjoy flying so much—it's a gift that we don't take for granted. We're sharing this realm with birds, insects, and the spirits of air, and we are able to live in harmony with them and learn many things along the way.

Air is an element of change, joy, vigor, intellect, and communication.

On Rites and Traditions

Let me add something, for it might not yet be obvious to you ground-stompers. Among our people, we not only serve as artists and keepers of history, but also as keepers of the rites and traditions to which our culture gave birth, and those of other cultures we embraced as our own. For us, there's not much of a difference between tradition and art—the *Dance of Spring*, the *Song of Welcoming*, or the *Thanks to Jaspree* all include singing, dancing, storytelling, and acting. Only a selected few windling rites consist of a single form of art, like the *Ritual of Naming* or our clan songs.

Our knowledge of traditions often grants us the role of judge in our clans. Not in the same sense most ground-stompers understand, for crime is rare among our people. Our role is more like that of a referee. Whenever possible, windlings seek out Winddancers to judge contests

of insults, jokes, or storytelling. We do help with making more serious decisions, however; as advisors to a female during *sleerah* or coming up with a test of courage for the coming of age of a young windling, for example.

Game Information

Winddancers specialize in using aerial motion to communicate and entertain. Winddancers are usually the ones discovering new cultures and bringing the traditions belonging to those cultures back to the windling clans. Other races commonly confuse Winddancers with windling Troubadours.

Important Attributes: Charisma, Perception

Racial Restriction: Windlings

Karma Ritual: A Winddancer must "hum" a favorite tune, using only the vibrations of his wings, while dancing in an intricate pattern consisting of both flying and ground moves. The song must be at least 20 minutes long. When the song is finished, the ritual is complete.

Artisan Skills: Dancing, Musician

Half-Magic: Winddancers may make Half-Magic Tests whenever they perform for audiences, and also for knowledge of legends, myths, rites, traditions, and folklore of windling culture or cultures they have studied personally.

Roleplaying Hints

While most windlings are naturally curious, a Winddancer's curiosity about the world and other cultures is especially inquisitive, and members of this Discipline have an intense desire to share what they have learned with those around them. As a result, Winddancers tend to travel a lot, seeking knowledge that they can bring home. A Winddancer rarely passes up a chance to learn something new about a particular place or custom, and often seeks out travelers or adventurers to learn the stories of their exploits. Winddancers also love to perform and entertain, enjoying being at the center of everyone's attention.

Discipline Violations

A Winddancer's duty to preserve windling culture by keeping a rich oral tradition lies at the heart of the Discipline. A Winddancer may violate his Discipline by turning aside from that role; continually neglecting to learn new tales and traditions may trigger a talent crisis.

Rituals of Advancement

Winddancer rituals usually include the recital of legends or past events, often performed in singing or dancing, or a combination of both.

Recruitment: Winddancers are often found among the artists of the various windling communities scattered across Barsaive. Potential adepts show a higher than usual interest in exploring the rest of the world.

Novice (2–4): The adept assists an elder of higher Circle in a performance displaying the habits of a different culture. The elder allows the adept to shape the performance and integrate his own experiences with the culture in question. The elder acknowledges the adept's new Circle following the performance.



Journeyman (5–8): The adept recounts his most recent adventure to a large audience that includes an elder of Ninth Circle or higher. The account should include use of appropriate talents and Karma. The elder acknowledges the adept's advancement following the performance.

Warden (9–12): The adept hosts a banquet and invites every windling in the area. The adept's performance marks the party's climax. When all Winddancers in the audience rise in a standing ovation, the ritual is complete.

Ghost Master Ritual: The adept impersonates the desired ghost master and recites his history to entertain an audience, performing an hour of the master's repertoire. During the performance, the adept develops a supernatural resemblance to the master. As soon as the audience leaves, the ghost master ritual proceeds as normal.

Discipline Combinations

Winddancers usually choose a life of adventure, and often take a second Discipline to augment their abilities. Although the Scout, Swordmaster, and Weaponsmith Disciplines are common choices, strong fighting Disciplines such as the Warrior or Windmaster are rarely chosen. Winddancers are also drawn toward Disciplines that revere or preserve knowledge, like the Wizard, or other Disciplines that have an affinity for performance. The Illusionist is a popular choice, because such abilities can greatly enhance a Winddancer's performance.

Solitary Disciplines like the Thief and Archer don't generally appeal as a secondary Discipline to Winddancers.

CHAPTER TWENTYTHREE

OF THE WINDMASTER'S WITS

The following document is a compilation of an attempted conversation with Kowaa, a windling Windmaster from Glenwood Deep. While our scribe has removed extraneous amounts of other things we talked about, he has endeavored to keep a number of remarks made by Kowaa, in order to preserve the windling's attempts to steer the conversation away from the main topic: the nature of the Windmaster, a Discipline practiced by those among the windlings who have developed their flying abilities into a unique fighting style.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

Well, where to start? I'm sure you know a lot about my race, our culture, our beliefs, our view of other races, and probably how our ability to fly influences every aspect of our existence. No surprise, even for an old gray-bearded dwarf like y … pardon me? Yes, kidding of course. Why haven't other races got a sense of humor? Sometimes you dwarfs are no better than a pack of clumsy trolls. Where was I? Oh yes, our ability to fly. It's obvious that this ability, combined with our graceful yet somehow weak physical bodies, allowed us to develop unique fighting styles. A windling is always in danger in combat. Sure, everybody involved in combat is in danger, but for a windling, most fights are life threatening. Not only can a single blow injure us severely, but it can knock us down to the ground, where we are not very agile and can hardly avoid the blows and kicks of opponents. From first-hand experience, I can safely say that falling injured to the ground from a height of ten feet or more hurts, really hurts. That's the situation my master called "taking two hits at once". Windlings soon came up with two ways to avoid direct melee combat. One was shooting with arrows–preferably poisoned–from a safe distance. Spellcasting is essentially the same—but while only few windlings become spellcasters, most of us are able to fire an arrow into a troll's eye. The other way is more dangerous, but also more exciting. It's the way of the Windmaster.



HIT AND FLY

Maybe you've seen one of these troll Sky Raiders tapping into the magic of his Discipline to get high above his enemy and strike down with a devastating blow. How crude does that look? A windling doesn't even need to use magic for that, thanks to our ability to fly. Granted, such a strike is usually a lot less devastating when performed by a windling. That others don't think us capable of it is quite an advantage, believe me.

So we know that striking from above increases the power of a blow, and Windmasters improve upon this technique, taking it to a new level, diving in for the kill. Thus, the first lesson of our Discipline is the Rush. We strike out of the dark, out of hiding places such as trees, from where our enemy least expects it. From above. A swift attack and a swift retreat out of the reach of most opponents—that's the way a Windmaster fights. Diving out of the cover of a tree directly to hit an opponent hard before he realizes

what hit him makes us tiny people mighty. Also, everything we do is about speed. I can't allow my opponent to be prepared for my charge on him, and I can't allow him to see where I go after rearranging his teeth. Obviously, enemy archers are a threat even for a Windmaster, so we try to stay out of sight and dodge their arrows if necessary. A well-hidden Windmaster is a living Windmaster—and a victorious one!

Of course, these factors don't apply to combat only; they also influence our way of thinking in general. They show us that, when acting, one better have a plan on how to get away with it—preferably fast, or all the action is over. Naturally, there are different ways to fly, just like there are different ways to walk. Opponents and battlefields differ, so we employ other fighting techniques as well.

Of Dancing on Air

In general, we rely a lot on speed during a fight. The ability we call the Dance is the pinnacle of this tactic. It's more dangerous than the Rush, but also more fun against clumsy opponents, and sometimes simply necessary, due to limits of space. Imagine that you might have difficulties following your opponent's movements in combat. He steps left and right, he moves forward and back. If you fight a windling, add up and down to that (and add a lot of speed since we fly faster than most people run). The Dance is all about moving around the opponent–nothing's more fun than to fly around the head of an enemy (especially if it's a troll, that's for sure!), distract him with your speed, and hit him with a series of blows, while he struggles with his inability to hit you and becomes too distracted to notice where the next attack will come from.

Dodging is essential for every fighter who wants to live another day. However, most Namegivers are able to take a couple of hits while we windlings have a much harder time. That makes it even more important for us to dodge attacks all the time–that's stressful, sure, but the safest way to stay alive. Of course this limits our capacity to strike often.

Obviously windlings aren't the strongest race in Barsaive, but death can come in a thousand small stings as well as in a single devastating blow. The latter is the method of brute trolls and looks rather crude, at least compared to a dancing Windmaster like me. A Windmaster is able to deliver many tiny cuts, which may be unnerving at the beginning, but become more and more dangerous for his victim–until it is finally defeated (either by the damage of all the attacks or from being unable to hold up continuously). I won a great number of fights with this technique, avoiding all attacks of my opponent while attacking him swiftly. This knocks him out eventually, although I prefer to quickly fly out of my enemy's range! But sometimes this is not possible, and the opponent is quicker than expected.

As with the first lesson, the Dance also is taught to us as a way of thinking. I'll tell you what my master always told me, as generations of Windmasters speak through him:

> *"In a fight, be nimble, be flexible. Change your direction often and let none be barred to you. Better than to strike your opponent is to not let him know what you will do. Fight this way, and you will likely win. Think this way, and you will have won before you confront your enemy."*

That's what I call the Dance of the Mind. You reach perfection in it by not knowing what you'll do yourself. Sounds like random behavior, but it's much harder than you think. You have to plan for the moment, so your body can't give away your intent. You make decisions, you lay out plans, but you do so on the fly. Literally.

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Acrobatic Strike, Silent Walk, Sprint, Unarmed Combat, Wood Skin

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Air Dance, Avoid Blow, Dive Attack, Karma Ritual, Melee Weapons

Novice

Talent Options: Distract, Durability (9/7), Fireblood, Surprise Strike, Swift Kick, Taunt, Throwing Weapons, Wind Dance

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Anticipate Blow

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Buzz

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Toughness-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Wind Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Disarm, Earth Skin, Lion Heart, Resist Taunt, Second Weapon, Tactics, Tiger Spring, Wound Balance

Fifth Circle

Dive Mastery: When performing a Swooping Attack (***Player's Guide***, p. 234), the adept does not suffer test penalties from using the Splitting Movement combat option (but still takes Strain).
Discipline Talent: Spot Armor Flaw

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Dexterity-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Life Check

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on melee weapon Damage Tests.
Discipline Talent: Momentum Attack

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Second Attack

WARDEN

Talent Options: Defense, Pin, Poison Resistance, Resist Pain, Rushing Attack, Spirit Strike, Steel Thought, Vitality

Ninth Circle

Wind Dodge: At the beginning of the round, the adept may take 2 Strain to enact a series of rapid flying movements, disturbing a chosen opponent's attacks and at the same time sneak past the opponent's defenses. The adept forfeits all movement for the round except to follow the opponent should he move away. The opponent requires a Result Level one higher on close combat Attack Tests to hit the adept, while the adept ignores any Deflection Bonus the opponent might benefit from.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Critical Hit

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Impressive Strike

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Shield Beater

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Mind Blade

MASTER

Talent Options: Chameleon, Gain Surprise, Missile Twister, Second Chance, Show Armor Flaw, Stone Skin

Thirteenth Circle

Wing Mastery: The adept can now use his wings as his primary method of movement, he can fly all day long without the need for tests or risk of Strain, as long as his wings are relatively dry. Once they become soaked, the adept's ability to fly is determined by the rules that were previously used for dry wings (requiring a test after 20 minutes and then in intervals of 5 minutes, and wet wings do not cause the adept to become Harried).
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Ethereal Weapon

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Vital Strike

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Multi-Strike

ON FEAR, FRUSTRATION, AND DECEPTION

The third lesson is a combination, or a consequence, of the first two lessons. While the first two can also be employed for thinking, this one requires you to think first, and let your thought guide your actions. It's not tactics I'm talking about; it's what we call the Shroud.

Many Namegivers are unnerved by us, because we tend to speak fast and fly around a lot during a conversation. Windmasters do that in a fight, hoping to fool our enemies long enough that they make mistakes. And mistakes during a fight are the first step on the road to defeat—a lesson every Warrior learns during his first days of training. We try to confuse our enemies and bind them in some way, so they have to think twice about dealing with us—which makes them vulnerable to our companions' attacks. Because of this, a Windmaster is a very team-oriented fighter. Many of our enemies have learned this the hard way.

Next to distraction, thanks to our unnerving nature—I just take it for granted, you know; it's true to some degree—we can be a real pain in the neck. When attacking and retreating before any counterattacks become possible won't frustrate our opponent, the scorn that comes with attacking out of a hiding place undoubtedly will. Fear and uncertainty are weapons. Attack, then hide—your opponent will not know when or from where you will strike again. This will gnaw his courage away, and without courage, he will be urged into defense. If the opponent has lost his bearings, his calm, and his confidence, he has lost the fight.

This is a most brutal way to fight, laying heavy attacks on the mind of even the strongest warrior. While I was with clan Kareetha, a band of scorchers was passing through their forest. The clan, lead by a Windmaster, attacked them once, only briefly. Then they flew away to get something to drink. An hour later, they attacked again, doing only a single charge each. An hour later, a third time. None of the windlings was hurt, and the scorchers only had minor wounds. But they were frightened to a level of paranoia. I have never seen such a thing again, nor seen such fear.

—G'krall "Whip" V'strimon

ON MINDS FIGHTING

Some people I have met over the years claim that the fighting methods of windlings, and especially Windmasters, are lacking honor. But hey, for me they just show the intelligence of my race. Opinions vary on this topic, though. I once discussed this with a troll, but soon became bored (and that means a lot, as I'm not bored easily)! Other people simply do not understand our way to fight. Although we act physically in combat, at the heart of our Discipline is the battle of wits. You remember how I told you that the Dance and the Rush were actions implying ways to think? And that these actions are planned according to the Shroud, a way of thinking, in the first place? You never wondered that, between the lines, I told you we have several ways of thinking! Isn't that unusual? How can this even work?

It works because I was talking about weapons, about the tools of our trade. Our strength is limited and our weapons are smallish compared to those of you grounders. So we grew to value others, the weapons of our mind. And they differ as much as a spear differs from a sword, although they have the same goal as spear and sword do. We Windmasters are not taught a single way to think, or a single

philosophy, for that matter. We are not told to become one with our sword, or anything similar. We are just taught to think. One of the basic principles of being a Windmaster is:

> *"Do not act according to the same single, dogmatic principle no matter what you are doing, but act according to the situation! Live by different ways of thinking!"*

That's more fitting for windlings, don't you think?

GAME INFORMATION

A Windmaster develops the windling aptitude for aerial movement into a way of fighting and possesses special knowledge of how best to use his wings in combat. More than any other Warrior, Windmasters fight equally well on land or in the air.

Important Attributes: Dexterity, Toughness

Racial Restriction: Windlings

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma ritual, the Windmaster must trace a target circle on the ground of no more than one foot in diameter. After focusing on his target from an airborne position until flying begins to tire him, the Windmaster makes a flying start from no less than 40 yards away from the target, and no lower than 10 yards off the ground. The Windmaster must then swoop down on the target at full speed and drive his weapon into the circle. When the Windmaster accomplishes this feat, the ritual ends.

Artisan Skills: Body Painting, Wood Carving

Half-Magic: Windmasters use half-magic for knowledge of guerrilla and ambush warfare; history and legends of windling raids and battles; and traditional windling fighting styles and equipment. They use half-magic to care for their armor and weapons and gain access to the Tactics skill via half-magic.

SPECIALISTS

The Windmaster knows a slasher specialization similar to the character type described on p. 223 of ***Kratas: City of Thieves***.

While windlings already use smaller weapons that other Namegivers, they often compensate for it by using two-handed weapons. Windmasters who are more comfortable with one-handed weapons and very close combat fighting have specialized their Discipline to take advantage of their ability to get into an opponent's cover and specialized to fight larger opponents to defend their clan.

Slasher Windmasters learn the Close In talent (***Kratas: City of Thieves***, p. 224) instead of Dive attack at First Circle. Momentum Attack and Second Weapon trade places (Second Weapon becoming the Seventh Circle Discipline talent, Momentum Attack being available from the Journeyman Talent Options).

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Many people mistake Windmasters for Warriors, but that's only partly true. Even though both Disciplines value their combat abilities, the key difference between a Warrior and a Windmaster is the way in which each approaches life: the way of the Warrior is the way of action, that of the Windmaster the way of thought. For a Warrior, body and instinct are key to survival on the field of battle. For the Windmaster, it is all about wits and intellect.

A Windmaster cannot end a fight as quickly as a Warrior, so he can't usually get things done in the simplest, most straightforward manner possible.

Windmasters are strategists, experts in overcoming obstacles that appear overwhelming to others. This applies to all problems a Windmaster faces, and despite his combat abilities, fighting is usually the last solution a member of this Discipline will think of.

Nearly all Windmasters value loyalty, whether to comrades or employers. Windmaster characters in adventuring bands tend to feel loyalty toward members of their group, even members they may personally dislike.

DISCIPLINE VIOLATIONS

Many different actions may violate the Windmaster Discipline and provoke a talent crisis. A Windmaster who acts without a proper strategy—either out of personal vengeance or hatred, becoming paralyzed by indecision, betraying the interests of his group or creating disunity within it, or cold-bloodedly murdering a defenseless opponent—may suffer a talent crisis. A Windmaster who fails to eliminate a traitor to his group has almost certainly committed a Discipline violation. Taking down the traitor would be an appropriate Deed of Atonement.

RITUALS OF ADVANCEMENT

Due to the windling's nature, Windmasters rarely belong to organized orders. Instead of following standard promotions and appropriate ceremonies, Windmasters develop new advancement rituals whenever they get a chance to. Windmasters demonstrating mastery of the talents required to rise to the next Circle under the supervision of an elder are usually allowed training. However, this display must usually impress the observing elder to convince him that the adept is worthy of training.

Recruitment: Organized Windmaster groups are usually found in the area known as Glenwood Deep, where they continuously visit and protect windling settlements. Becoming initiated usually requires an extraordinary display of wits leading to the defeat of an enemy.

Ghost Master Ritual: The Windmaster travels to or around the area where the ritual is to take place, looking out for the ghost master. The ghost master surprises and ambushes the Windmaster at a place appropriate to the ritual, demonstrating his superior wits. The ritual proceeds as normal.

DISCIPLINE COMBINATIONS

Windmasters frequently adopt the Illusionist and Thief Disciplines. Both rely on deception, which the Windmaster needs to be successful. The Weaponsmith is another natural second Discipline for Windmasters because of the opportunity that Discipline gives them to improve the lethality of their weapons.

The Archer and Cavalryman Disciplines may also appeal to Windmasters to further increase their prowess in combat. The Swordmaster Discipline is often regarded as too flashy and prone to taking unnecessary risks. Other Disciplines are regarded as neutral, and may or may not be of use to the Windmaster, depending on where his interests lie.

CHAPTER TWENTYFOUR

ON THE NATURE OF THE WINDSCOUT

The following transcript comes from a conversation with Jeeth, a windling Windscout from Urupa. Although he was born in a city, he spent most of his life traveling Barsaive. Jeeth provides his services as a guide and pathfinder for all kinds of explorations. When not on a tour in the wilderness, he can be met in the Gate Tavern near the Grand Bazaar of Throal.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

That my Discipline has the word "scout" in it is one if the biggest curses possible for a, let's say, 'freelance operative' like me. When people come looking to hire an adept for a certain task, they might have heard my Name but probably won't know anything about my Discipline. Upon hearing that I'm a Windscout, they usually think I'm a flying Scout, and want to hire me to do some sneaky work because Thieves are not to be trusted. Well, these people come for nothing. That's why I'm doing this; it makes my life easier. We are no Scouts; we aren't even close. The Scout, you see, is one of the worst lot you can imagine, self-centered beyond comparison.

WHERE THE SCOUT IS WRONG

Why wrong? Because of false presumptions on the part of his philosophy, of course. See, the Scouts say they become one with their surroundings. Becoming one with the world, what a foolish thought! Everybody living is part of the world already. How can we become more part of it? Scouts become so immersed in it that they are hardly noticed. You see where this leads? There are just two things in existence, the Scout and the world, and the Scout has the special ability to become part of the world! There is no tree, and there is no Jeeth and no Thom, there is only the rest of the world and the Scout standing out of it. How egocentric is that? The worst part is that Scouts perceive all things in the world as single objects, as if they were just some sorts of scenery to act in. They look for you if they want something, but otherwise you aren't important to them. They wish to be left alone, because they think they are the all-seeing ones among the blind. Become one with the world … ha! They've lost themselves, I'd say. Reality is composed of individuals; it's not a whole, unified thing you can immerse yourself in.

See, this is why you hire a Windscout when you want a job done: because to him, you and other Namegivers are important. But that's not the only reason.

Thom, dear friend, you owe us an explanation. How far did the Great Library fall to include scripts intended as some form of advertisement for the services of a certain Discipline in such a tome?

—Hennan of Greenbows

WHERE WE ARE BETTER

We Windscouts are not the stealthy types. Well, we can be if we have to, but it's not our primary concern—it's not in our nature. Do you think of stealth when you think about a windling adept? Even windling Thieves grab your purse in the middle of the crowd and fly away as fast as they can. That's the way windlings are.

What we lack in pretending to be a part of the scenery, we compensate for with our keen senses, and yet more importantly, with our unique way of looking at the world. Whenever we want to examine a situation, we don't try to become part of it. We take a step back and try to see the whole—which is best done from above. If you're in the middle of things, you'll only see what's in front of you (unless you happen to have eyes in the back of your head, but even that won't get you far). A Scout sees the trees, but he can't see the forest. Namegivers have built watchtowers and used airships to spot an enemy's army from afar, before they arrive on their city gates.

We Windscouts observe what's going on before deciding how to act. One of my first tests arranged by my master was to find a water strider on the lake close to our village. I looked at the lake, but saw none. I flew up high, because I thought perhaps the lake was shaped like a water strider, and my mentor wanted to show me how important an elevated position was. Not the case. I approached him, told him I couldn't find anything. He told me to think about it. I had to distance myself not physically, but mentally, I had to think if what I was supposed to look for was likely to be found at all. The solution was easy: it was rain season, and water striders wouldn't come to the lake at this time. Had I only thought about

it without looking, I wouldn't have passed the test. I couldn't possibly know for sure, and my mentor could have placed one of these creatures there for me to spot it. In addition, if I thought of it as impossible, but had seen it with my very own eyes, I would have been obliged to make sure it was real and not some illusion made to trick me. Sounds quite complicated, I know. You've got to do everything possible, look and think about every situation, and be sure of everything.

My point is that we are objective. Windscouts don't take things for granted, and we distance ourselves from things so we can analyze them. It is that step back that makes our way unique. We don't act on instinct; we act on intelligence. Of course, intellect is more difficult to master than instinct, and so it is the primary part of our training. Magical abilities won't help you there for everything; part of being a Windscout is to get things straight without any magic.



It should be noted that we are not superior by our higher ground in every regard. When we hover above the land, we do not feel the touch of the soil and do not feel the wind that might blow differently a hundred yards below us. We have to compensate for this by examining the ground below and taking an educated guess, unless we want to go down to see for ourselves, thereby losing the advantage of our elevated position. That is why we seem quite



Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Melee Weapons, Missile Weapons, Navigation, Silent Walk, Sprint

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Avoid Blow, Evidence Analysis, Karma Ritual, Tracking, Wilderness Survival

Novice

Talent Options: Animal Bond, Anticipate Blow, Creature Analysis, Durability (6/5), Detect Trap, Lifesight, Speak Language, Throwing Weapons

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Search

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Scent Identifier

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Perception-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Scent Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Direction Arrow, Disarm Trap, Mystic Aim, Sense Danger, Spot Armor Flaw, Surprise Strike, Wind Dance, Wound Balance

Fifth Circle

Step Outside: Taking 1 Strain, the adept gains a +2 bonus to any test made to observe a situation, encounter, or area. He cannot be part of it, and he must perceive all of it at once. This ability lasts for 10 minutes.
Discipline Talent: Bird Song

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Dexterity-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Endure Cold

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on any test to gather information where his sense of smell supplements his other senses (but is not a necessity).
Discipline Talent: Sense Poison

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Safe Path

WARDEN

Talent Options: Air Dance, Animal Possession, Bestial Resilience, Bestial Toughness, Dive Attack, Life Check, Lion Heart, Thought Link

Ninth Circle

Reconnaissance: For 2 Strain, as a Free Action, the adept may transfer one advantageous bonus or condition from himself to an allied character or creature until the end of the round. This may be one of the following: not suffering from a situational modifier (i.e., not being Surprised), gaining access to a beneficial effect (i.e., the effects of Spot Armor Flaw), or bonus from one of the adept's abilities (i.e., the Defense or attack bonus from Anticipate Blow, but not both). The adept loses the benefit or suffers from the situational modifier himself (is Surprised, for example) until the end of the round, as applicable. The adept must have a means of communicating with the target ally, though the communication can be as minimal as a yell or pointing a finger.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: True Sight

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Chameleon

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Plant Shelter

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Defense

MASTER

Talent Options: Elemental Walk, Ethereal Weapon, Missile Twister, Multi-Tongue, Netherwalk, Show Armor Flaw

Thirteenth Circle

Wing Mastery: The adept can now use his wings as his primary method of movement, he can fly all day long without the need for tests or risk of Strain, as long as his wings are relatively dry. Once they become soaked, the adept's ability to fly is determined by the rules that were previously used for dry wings (requiring a test after 20 minutes and then in intervals of 5 minutes, and wet wings do not cause the adept to become Harried).
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Echo Location

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Second Chance

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Develop Animal Sense

erratic to others and why we are coming and going, back and forth: to get the information we need and put it into context with the greater picture.

—Guunth, Windscout of Clan Fiiea of Glenwood Deep

WATCHING WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED

A popular belief regarding our Discipline's Name is that it features the word "wind" because we are Scouts in the wind, native to the element of air. But we don't need the wind to carry us; no—you don't need wind if you have wings and muscles. We need wind to see and to perceive the world. The wind carries smells far and wide; farther than you can see and hear. And while the latter senses are more accurate on a general level, smell has the advantage of reach and persistence.

You can't tell how many apples are on a tree by its smell alone, but as a Windscout, you can smell the tree before you see it—and be able to find it. Also, smell lingers, and if you pluck all the apples from the tree, their scent will still be there when I come by, telling me you took the fruit, and even letting me find them and you if I desire.

Smell is also something others pay little attention to, because most people have a weak sense of smell, and because they even tend to ignore it most of the day. The Namegiver in front of me might look like an ork, but if his smell tells me he is a t'skrang, he might actually be an Illusionist. If I don't open my nose because the tavern that Illusionist is sitting in reeks of stale beer after its many hours of business, I'd never know!

For a Windscout, a scent is as solid as the footprint in the mud is to a regular tracker.

OF KNOWING YOUR STRENGTHS

In our own lands, Windscouts are the best hunters and gatherers you can find. And they are the best warriors, too. Well, technically windling Warriors are the best warriors, but many clans don't distinguish between hunters and warriors. We can spot any prey and follow it. We can find any fruit and tell by its smell if it's barely edible or ripe. And we can watch our lands for intruders, and if there seems to be a fight, we can support every other windling fighter with our reconnaissance. Because we are few in number, we direct our attention to those tasks others can't fulfill. A Windscout doesn't waste his time picking the fruits from the first tree he finds—the harvest is done by other clan members while the Windscout searches for more trees.

That's true in more dangerous situations as well. Although I am quite a capable fighter, I have rarely let my blades speak in the battles I have witnessed. Instead, I provided insights to my comrades. Doesn't mean I never swung my swords, but when I did it was mostly because the situation didn't allow me to tell my friends what had to be done, or doing so would have negated the advantage of surprise. Archers, Swordmasters, Warriors–they



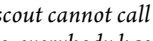
all know their field of expertise better than any Windscout ever could. Part of being a Windscout is to realize that others are more specialized.



Well, there are of course situations where a Windscout cannot call upon another's arm to lift his mug. Some fights, everybody has to do alone. I faced a Windscout in a tournament in Urupa—and lost. He was an inferior fighter where martial skills were concerned. What he did was to look at the tourney chart, think of all opponents he could face and take his time to examine each and every one of them, starting days before the first fight. He knew what armor they were wearing and where it had weak spots or where it was too rigid. He knew their weapons, and even what they had eaten and what they drank prior to the fight. He knew if they were impaired by any old injuries. As a result, he knew more about his opponents than they knew about themselves. It is no wonder Jeeth doesn't go into the specifics here. I normally wouldn't know about these things either.

Lucky me, I claimed victory over the Windscout I spoke of in a drinking contest at the same tournament.

— G'klak Mooneya Syrtis



GAME INFORMATION

Windscouts excel at tracking creatures that travel through the air. Like Scouts, they show great skill in exploration and make excellent guards against all kinds of danger due to their highly developed sense of smell.

Important Attributes: Dexterity, Perception

Racial Restriction: Windlings

Karma Ritual: To begin his Karma ritual, the Windscout must fly a circular pattern at a height of 3 yards off the ground, hovering at the four cardinal compass points (north, south, east, and west). At each point, the Windscout must inhale a lungful of air and focus on separating the different scents it carries. When he has identified any scents present, the Windscout exhales and flies to the next compass point. The ritual is completed once the Windscout reaches the final compass point and exhales.

Artisan Skills: Body Painting, Dancing

Half-Magic: Windscouts may use half-magic to recognize scents, tracks, and trails left by different types of animals, plants, and Namegivers in wilderness environments. They also gain access to the Search, Detect Trap, and Navigation skills via half-magic.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Windscouts have a knack for analyzing things, they tend to take a step back and look at the whole rather than the pieces before they act. Of course, their curious nature prompts them to stick their tiny noses literally everywhere, just to collect information.

Windscouts consider themselves to be part of the world, and try to put their abilities to the best use for everyone's benefit, complementing others as best as they can.

DISCIPLINE VIOLATIONS

Windscouts most often suffer talent crises when they act on instinct or listen to what their guts say. A Windscout who acts without taking a look at the big picture first is ripe for a talent crisis. However, the same is true for Windscouts that go off on tangents too often, overcomplicate matters, or otherwise forget their overall goals and head towards a random dead end. As usual, the exact triggers for a talent crisis vary with the adept's personal vision.

RITUALS OF ADVANCEMENT

Advancement rituals vary widely among the windling clans and usually involve challenges of body and mind to allow an adept to demonstrate his advancement in the Discipline. A higher Circle Windscout (often the same one who trained the adept) sets the adept some task or challenge that will require him to demonstrate his newly learned abilities.

Recruitment: Whenever a Windscout encounters or hears of a young windling who has the sharp mind and wits needed to enter the Discipline, he recruits the new student by challenging him to chase the Windscout through a forest or jungle. If the candidate succeeds, he can become a recruit, if he wishes so. Recruits often work under a master's tutelage for years before they reach First Circle.

Ghost Master Ritual: The adept meditates on his chosen ghost master with closed eyes. During the meditation, he sees a vision of the various places where the ghost master lived throughout his life, with sketchy details that he perceives using several senses in addition to sight. The adept must gain a clear picture of who the ghost master was in the process. When the adept opens his eyes, the ghost master appears and the ritual proceeds as normal.

DISCIPLINE COMBINATIONS

Because the Windscout Discipline requires abilities similar to those of Air Sailors, Archers, Thieves, and Warriors, these Disciplines are common secondary choices. The Cavalryman is another complementary choice; it grants greater mobility, and expands the Windscout's perceptions to include those of his bonded mount. Their kinship with the natural world often draws Windscouts to the Beastmaster Discipline as well.

While most other Disciplines are neutral to the Windscout, the Illusionist Discipline is the only one that directly opposes the Windscout's view of the world, as it employs deception to shroud reality.

CHAPTER TWENTYFIVE

ON THE WOODSMAN'S ROOTS

The following account is a transcript of an exclusive lecture held among a group of elves here in the Great Library. We asked the lecturer, a charismatic individual Named Cilar, for his permission to publish this material, and he had no provisions against it. I think it's worth mentioning that Cilar appeared to be older and wiser than any other elf I've met before, and he also hints at his old age in the text provided below. We don't know where Cilar went afterwards, but it might pay to seek him out to find answers regarding other questions.

• Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe •

I have been a Woodsman for most of my long life. Now I am nearing the final ascension and I want to share my experiences with you young ones present here and elsewhere. You do not know all of our ways, living in a city-state like this. You probably have never even seen an elven settlement in the deep forest, but some of you might have the potential to become its guardians. It would be a waste for the world and yourselves if you never had a chance to discover such potential, for it can fill a life with meaning that can hardly be explained.

ON HUNTING

It has been said that the Woodsman evolved from the hunters of old. Whether this is true or not, our Discipline shares many similarities with hunters. You see, hunting is not about killing as much deer as possible for a quick profit. In the old times, game was necessary to survive, as there was less land available and magical farming methods were not developed to their current extent. So it was important to the hunter that he only took what was needed, and maybe saved something up for later. This required him to strike with caution, and he had to think about his actions. The same is true for the Woodsman. We never act lightly. This is good news for you, because you can have a heated argument with a Woodsman and do not have to fear it will lead to a brawl or even bloodshed if you say an offensive word or two. But there is a downside as well: if you have made a Woodsman your enemy, he will act like a hunter. A hunter stalks his prey, and will plan his moves to an extent where he is unlikely to fail. A hunter would not allow himself to fail, because failure threatens his survival. The same is true for us, especially in the defense of elven settlements. You can pass through our lands without knowing that we are watching you, always prepared to strike if the need arises. If you don't pose any danger, you'll leave our territory without being harmed, and probably without realizing that we've been there.

We always choose our actions wisely and always think twice about how to carry them out because our actions are irreversible. As a long-lived race, we will have to suffer from our mistakes for a long time, and so it is obvious we avoid them in the first place. If we care for a grove of trees and realize that the trees stand too close to each other, we won't just pick one on a whim. We observe before we choose which one to fell and why. Taming an animal? The same, as it makes no sense taming a random animal, but to identify the most promising first.

ON OUR ORIGIN

Before the Scourge, Barsaive was covered with forests. Today we still have our major jungles and the Blood Wood, but many other forests were decimated during the Scourge. Trust me; I have seen them, centuries ago. Half of what are plains today were filled with trees back then. We lived there, in the forests, and many elves never left the woods in their lifetimes. No need to go elsewhere, no need to allow anyone else on our lands. You can observe this even today, with the Blood Wood as a major example. Their terrible thorns are not the only reason the blood elves keep to themselves: they are following our ancient ways.

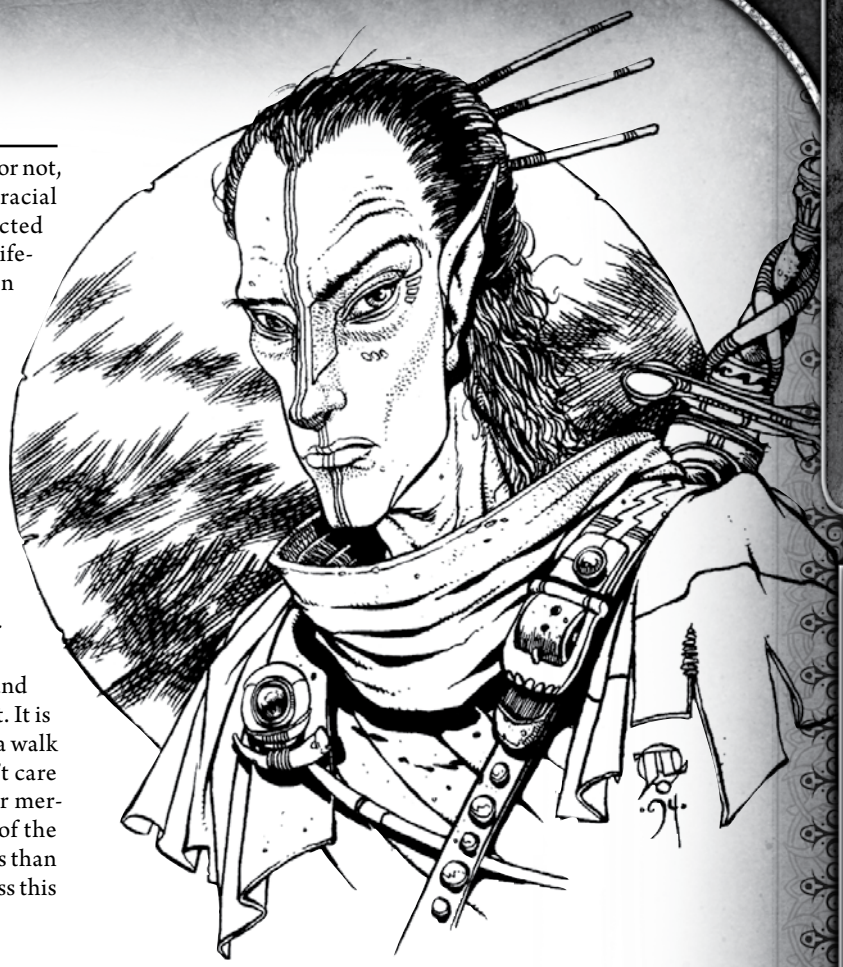
Barsaivian culture was different before the Scourge, too. We did not live closely with the other races; we did not even share a language. We elves always preferred to remain separated from the other races because our culture was centralized—elven settlements did not care how their neighbors handled things, but looked to Wyrm Wood for cultural guidance. The Elven Court was a part of our identity, and denying one's heritage meant denying one's self in front of everyone, making one an outcast of society. This was the way of things—and most of the time, elves across the world did not have a problem with it. How established the dominance of the queen and her court over elven culture and general life were, is reflected in the Schism. A whole culture divided by a small dispute over some boats built in a human fashion.

Combine all of this and you will understand that we elves preferred living in our very own world. Is it surprising that we developed a Discipline that has its unique place in this world of ours? The Woodsman was born of our culture, out of seclusion. This special link influences Woodsmen to this day.

On Responsibility

Where other Disciplines, unique to a single race or not, often take action outside of their cultural or racial background, the Woodsman remains connected to elven life. Purifiers roam the land, far away from their Life-rocks, acting for the good of everyone, not just the obsidiman race. Scouts explore every region; Elementalists seek places of elemental magic across Barsaive. We Woodsmen are no generalists. We prefer the forest, and often stay close to our homes, to the many settlements that dot the woods, forests, and jungles of our province. Like the t'skrang keeping to their riverboats and the unstoppable stream of the Serpent River; the majority of Woodsmen don't travel far from home, at least not often. We stay close to our communities because they are all we have left, since our separation from Wyrm Wood. We stay close to them because we want to defend and enjoy this one place that is so vital to each of us, that small village that substitutes for a court long lost.

I am sure you think of an adept as a person who travels and experiences adventures. This is true, but not for every adept. It is not only the Woodsman who stays close to his home. Take a walk through your city, and you will find many adepts that don't care much for adventuring. I know for a fact that some of your merchants and your very own librarians are adepts. The way of the adept brings responsibilities. There are more responsibilities than simple exploration and Horror slaying. The reason why I stress this is our role as guardians, of which I shall speak soon.



On Choosing Your Own Path

We choose our own path in life. As you might know, many elves follow the *Draesis ti'Morel*, the Wheel of Life, a series of paths each expressing a certain view of life. Among these, there are paths that focus inwards, on discovering one's true self. Other paths focus on the outside, on the world and other people. When following the latter paths, many Woodsmen leave their homes to explore the world. Not all of them do, nor do all follow the paths in the same way. For these adepts, my earlier words become less important; they know that they will return home on a later path, so they leave their settlements, bearing the pain that originates in leaving behind what they love, reveling in motion and exploration. They still accept their role as guardians, but they see it in another light, for it has three sides.

On Guardians

We Woodsmen are the guardians of our villages, our lands, and elven culture. Our role of being guardians of all elves became less important when our culture was split by the Schism and the Scourge, but remains true to this day. Guarding a village or our lands is a simple concept everyone understands. The forests are not only filled with predators, but also neighbor the territory of others. Our presence makes our neighbors realize that they cannot simply take what they want. We patrol our borders, and by knowing our land well we ensure that others don't take what they want in secret. Being watchful means being ready to protect what is ours.

Protecting our culture, the diminished goal, is enclosed in the other two. By protecting ourselves, we preserve our culture and ourselves. Before the Scourge, many Woodsmen were sent out from Wyrm Wood to faraway villages and settlements as representatives of elven culture. While the Discipline is still practiced in Blood Wood, Woodsmen throughout Barsaive now see their role as guardians of culture from a different perspective. Many try to re-establish our unity, so the elven culture as a whole is not lost. They travel throughout the lands to spread the word about our culture, singing our songs, telling our tales, and teaching elven ways to those that have forgotten and those that didn't have the opportunity to learn them.

I am on a journey like this, too. You do not need to be in a forest to be a Woodsman.

Cilar is considered one of the passive ones among us, undoubtedly because he has practiced our Discipline so long that he once walked the "ancient ways" himself. Others take a more active role. We do not see elven culture as something that has to be preserved by talking, but re-established by action. Some act as messengers connecting the communities, bringing them closer together, in some places even uniting them. Others actually accepted the challenge of the corrupted blood elves, either trying to seek a cure for Wyrm Wood or to limit the corrupted queen's influence throughout the province.

—Gerhan



Do not underestimate what Cilar does, young friend. If you think his methods are too passive and without results, you clearly think for the moment only. Cilar has seen all there was to see, and has collected knowledge over centuries. He teaches our ways to the young elves, he takes them out to the woods to experience themselves, and he reveals his own shame so that others do not repeat mistakes of old. By strengthening the ancient ways and by leading them onto a path that should have been ours a long time



ago, he strengthens all that is elven against the touch of those corrupt in body and mind. He sows what will be harvested a hundred years from now and will build a force where you waste yours.

—Marelle of Glimmerdeep

Blind children, talking about the color of a light that has none! Understand your ways are betrayal to your people and your Discipline. Your heresy will not go unanswered, and if your heart does not see the true way, you have no need for it anymore.

—Guardian Bird

GAME INFORMATION

Woodsmen are trained in magic relating to nature and its forms, including animals, plants, and the five True Elements. Woodsmen usually begin their careers as sentries for elven cities and communities that lie within the forests and jungles of Barsaive. Elves practicing this Discipline usually live only in and around the wooded areas of the land, and so finding a teacher for training can be costly and difficult.

Important Attributes: Dexterity, Perception

Racial Restriction: Elves

Karma Ritual: The Woodsman must be alone, deep within the forest. He sits with his eyes closed in meditation and imagines walking through the forest toward a specific destination, at least 15 minutes' walk from the spot where the Woodsman sits. The Woodsman visualizes the path he walks and any landmarks along the way. Once he has reached the destination in his imagination, the Woodsman stands and walks to this spot, keeping his eyes closed during the entire journey. When he reaches his destination, the ritual is complete.

Artisan Skills: Body Painting, Wood Carving

Half-Magic: A Woodsman may use half-magic for knowledge of animals; animal tracks; and abnormal behavior among animals, creatures, and plants. Woodsmen gain access to the Wilderness Survival and Hunting skills via half-magic.

SPECIALISTS

The Woodsman knows an assassin specialization similar to the character type described on p. 222 of ***Kratas: City of Thieves***.

The assassin Woodsman is said to have originated with adepts in the service of the queens of what is now Blood Wood, acting in their role as guardians—for very special tasks, such as confronting extremely dangerous creatures or eliminating outside threats, as well as those deemed to be internal threats to the fabric of elven culture.

Assassin Woodsmen receive Surprise Strike instead of Wood Skin as their Second Circle Discipline Talent. Their Mystic Aim and Animal Bond talents trade places (Mystic Aim becoming available from the Novice Talent Options, Animal Bond from the Journeyman Talent Options). Assassin Woodsmen do not gain access to Wilderness Survival via half-magic, instead they gain access to Alchemy for the purpose of producing poisons and countermeasures to poisons only.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Woodsmen always think twice about everything they do and try to plan their actions in advance whenever possible. Before making decisions, most Woodsmen will observe and analyze a situation. Because of their role as guardians, Woodsmen are respected by the elven population.

Most Woodsmen keep to themselves, however, though they offer unshakable loyalty to their settlements and the elven race in general.

While most Woodsmen lead small groups of other elven guardians to protect their settlements from harm, some wander from community to community to spread and preserve the elven ways. These Woodsmen often take the task of preserving elven culture very seriously and travel across Barsaive, carrying with them and spreading knowledge, news, tales, and songs of elven communities and elven life.

Discipline Violations

A Woodsman may violate his Discipline if he acts without thinking, such as reacting with an extreme emotional response. Woodsmen most commonly suffer from a talent crisis when in unfamiliar situations, or when they lose control of a situation.

A Woodsman's duty to preserve elven culture and share it with others lies at the heart of the Discipline. A Woodsman may violate his Discipline by turning aside from that role, triggering a talent crisis.

Rituals of Advancement

Most elven communities in Barsaive have a small group of Woodsmen at their service. These groups have formal ceremonies and promotions to recognize their advancement in the Discipline. For traveling Woodsmen outside of such a group, a higher Circle Woodsman (often the same one who trained the adept) sets the adept some task or challenge that will require him to demonstrate his newly learned abilities.

Recruitment: Woodsmen often teach their children their Discipline, but also keep an eye open for other young elves who have what it takes to enter the Discipline.

Novice (2–4): When their masters judge that adepts are ready to advance to these Circles, the adepts must prove that they have mastered the talents required for advancement to the next Circle in front of an elder. These trials traditionally take place in the wilderness.

Journeyman (5–8): The instructor of a Woodsman stages a fake raid on the settlement the student swore to protect. The prospective Journeyman must organize a suitable defense strategy and prevent the raiders from being successful.

Warden (9–12): The adept must defeat a more powerful opponent in a direct confrontation through trickery or superior planning.

Ghost Master Ritual: The adept meditates on his chosen ghost master and envisions a scavenger hunt to track him down. The adept must overcome any and all obstacles in his path. When the adept finally catches up, the ghost master appears and the ritual proceeds as normal.

Discipline Combinations

Because the guardian nature of the Woodsman Discipline requires abilities similar to that of a Warrior, that Discipline is a common secondary choice. The Cavalryman is also complementary, as it grants greater mobility and expands the Woodsman's perceptions to include those of a bonded mount. Many Woodsmen feel a kinship with the natural world that draws them to the Beastmaster Discipline. The Archer Discipline may also appeal to a Woodsman, as it increases his prowess in combat.

Talents and Abilities

Initiate

Talent Options: Climbing, Melee Weapons, Sense Danger, Throwing Weapons, Wilderness Survival

First Circle

Discipline Talents: Avoid Blow, Karma Ritual, Missile Weapons, Silent Walk, Tracking

Novice

Talent Options: Animal Bond, Borrow Sense, Creature Analysis, Durability (7/6), Detect Trap, Parry, Search, Sprint

Second Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Wood Skin

Third Circle

Discipline Talent: Wound Balance

Fourth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Perception-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Forest Weaving]

Journeyman

Talent Options: Detect Weapon, Dominate Beast, Empathic Sense, Evidence Analysis, Frighten Animals, Maneuver, Mystic Aim, Spot Armor Flaw

Fifth Circle

Hunter's Strike: If the adept has tracked or shadowed a target through or in a forest or similar area of dense foliage, he may take 1 Strain to get a +2 bonus to all tests made against that target in the first round of combat. If tracking multiple targets, the adept specifies one when declaring use of this ability.
Discipline Talent: Anticipate Blow

Sixth Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Dexterity-only Tests.
Discipline Talent: Safe Path

Seventh Circle

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on another character's Action Tests for a defensive ability.
Discipline Talent: Stopping Aim

Eighth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Discipline Talent: Lion Heart

WARDEN

Talent Options: Bestial Toughness, Critical Hit, Frenzy, Life Check, Plant Shelter, Quick Shot, Tiger Spring, Warp Missile

Ninth Circle

Guardian's Service: Taking 2 Strain, the adept may take penalties to his Defense Ratings and have an adjacent target receive an equal amount of bonuses to his Defense Ratings until the end of the round or until the target is no longer adjacent to the adept. The sum of the penalties taken cannot exceed the adept's Forest Weaving Rank.
Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.
Discipline Talent: Missile Path

Tenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Trace Missile

Eleventh Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Discipline Talent: Woodspeak

Twelfth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Chameleon

MASTER

Talent Options: Bestial Resilience, Defense, Ethereal Weapon, Pin, Poison Resistance, Resist Pain

Thirteenth Circle

Forest Sense: If the adept has spent at least one week in a forest or similar area of heavy foliage, he may take 4 Strain to extend his senses to cover an area no larger than his Perception Step in miles for 24 hours. The adept perceives anything within this area as if present if he concentrates on a particular spot, or has a vague awareness of what's happening if concentrating on the whole area. He can also perform a mental search of the area, which takes one hour.
Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.
Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.
Discipline Talent: Rushing Attack

Fourteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.
Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.
Discipline Talent: Woodwalk

Fifteenth Circle

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.
Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.
Discipline Talent: Second Chance

Woodsmen tend to avoid the Illusionist Discipline, which alters reality rather than accepting and embracing it. The Nethermancer, Wizard, and Weaponsmith Disciplines generally don't complement the Woodsman's way, as they focus on research and creation. The Swordmaster Discipline is often regarded as too flashy and prone to taking unnecessary risks.



CHAPTER TWENTYSIX

TALENTS

That was an interesting display of your abilities, friend. However, it doesn't impress me much—I've seen better and more creative uses of the same powers. If you want to hire aboard a ship like this, get some more practice or look elsewhere.

• Peeron Swiftwater, Boatman •

Talents are capabilities powered by an adept's ability to tap into astral space and draw magical energy into the physical world; how he uses those energies makes him unique in his Discipline and helps him live according to that Discipline. Though the talents an adept may learn are limited by his Discipline, how effectively and creatively he uses them is limited only by your imagination.

While the individual **Discipline** chapters list the talents available to adepts of each Discipline, this chapter describes those talents.

TALENT DESCRIPTIONS

The following talents are available to the Disciplines presented in this book and appear in the same format as those described in the **Talents** chapter of the ***Player's Guide***.

APPLIED SCIENCES

Step: Rank+CHA **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

Applied Sciences allows the adept to turn pure facts into a genuine advantage. The adept must previously have gained or remembered relevant information about a target, such as through a Knowledge Test or talents such as Book Memory, Creature Analysis, or Astral Sight, and then make an Applied Sciences Test against the target's Spell Defense or a Difficulty Number of 6, whichever is higher. For every Result Level achieved on the test, starting with an Average Result, the adept may impart a +1 bonus to one specific type of Action Test made against or in conjunction with the target to up to Applied Sciences Rank characters, including himself. The adept must communicate information to characters receiving a bonus, although they do not need to have or gain a deeper understanding of the matter, the talent's magic and the companions' confidence in the adept allow for the bonus, not the actual knowledge imparted.

Kravan and his companions face the challenge of climbing a cliff in the Caucavic mountains. Consulting An Analysis of the Rock Formations in the Southern Caucavic, a book gifted to him by an old scholar from Travar, Kravan learns that much of the stone on this side of the peaks is brittle and not fit to be quarried. As this may be relevant to climbing the cliff—the stone might crumble under their very hands—Kravan makes an Applied Sciences (6) Test, scoring a 14. He tells his comrades to watch out for the brittle stone, and the group continues on to climb the cliff gaining a +3 bonus to Climbing Tests.

ARMORED FETISH

Step: Rank **Action:** NA
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

Shamans use the Armored Fetish talent like other magicians use their Armored Matrix talent, the special rules explained for the Create Fetish talent (p. 219) and Spell Fetish talent (p. 221) apply, and the attuned fetish has a Physical Armor Rating equal to the Armored Fetish Rank.

BANE STRIKE

Step: Rank **Action:** Free
Karma: No **Strain:** 2

Bane Strike increases damage inflicted on Horrors or Horror Constructs. On a successful attack against a Horror or Horror Construct, the adept may add his Bane Strike Rank as a bonus to the Damage Test.

BEAR MARK

Step: Rank+WIL **Action:** Free (see text)
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

Bear Mark allows an adept to avoid the effects of Horror marks. When the adept becomes Horror-marked, he may make a Bear Mark Test against the Horror's Spell Defense. If successful, the adept has isolated the Horror-mark and cannot be affected through it, and he suffers no ill-effects from being Horror-marked. If the test fails, the adept may re-attempt the Bear Mark Test whenever the Horror uses its powers through the Horror-mark. If successful, the Horror's attempt fails, although the mark is not isolated and the adept suffers other ill-effects from being Horror-marked. On an Excellent Result, he manages to isolate the Horror-mark as if he had succeeded on the first test. The adept can isolate a maximum of Bear Mark Rank Horror-marks with this talent. He may choose to stop isolating a Horror-mark to instead isolate a new one.

Bear Mark also allows the adept to exploit the Horror's connection to him towards his own ends. If he knows a magical ability that allows him to track or locate a target, he may use an isolated Horror-mark to fulfil any requirements that ability has to establish a connection to a target. For example, the isolated Horror-mark counts as an item associated with the target for the Direction Sense talent.

Bedazzle

Step: Rank+CHA **Action:** Free
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

Bedazzle enhances another, non-artistic ability to make its use appear more beautiful or impressive. After successfully using another ability, the adept may make an immediate Bedazzle Test as an Interaction Test (***Gamemaster's Guide***, p. 95) against a single target who witnessed use of the ability. Bedazzle can only be used once per round, and the target of the Interaction Test must be capable of appreciating the adept's actions for what they are—animals are not normally impressed with artistry, for example. Bedazzle only affects activities, not the result of an activity.

Syalal is locked in battle with several enemies of the Court. Striking one of them by use of her Melee Weapons talent, she decides to make the blow look that much more perfect, and uses Bedazzle. She chooses the Intimidation interaction for her Bedazzle Test, and tries to make one of her enemies stop attacking. Her Bedazzle Test achieves only an Average Result, so while her opponent stops attacking, it will only be for one round.

Bird Song

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 1 (see text)

This talent can only be learned by windlings. Bird Song allows an adept to communicate with creatures of the air, including birds, insects, and even spirits from the domain of air. A target is considered viable if it can naturally fly at least as well as a windling, either for similar or longer durations or with similar or better maneuverability.

To communicate, the adept makes a Bird Song Test, the Test Result limits the conversation's level of detail as described for the Speak Language talent (***Player's Guide***, p. 80). The conversation may last up to Bird Song Rank hours, but higher levels of detail may require additional Bird Song Tests, causing additional Strain. The mode of conversation depends on the target. Conversing with birds may require the character to twitter or chirp, while insects may require the adept to fly to communicate non-verbally (which may cause Strain from flying for prolonged periods). Using Bird Song does not ensure the target is willing to communicate, nor does it bestow intelligence on the target, which may make some targets hard to understand.

Body Control

Step: Rank+STR **Action:** Simple
Karma: Yes **Strain:** 0

Body Control hardens the parts of the adept's body used for unarmed strikes. Until the end of the round, the adept makes Body Control Tests as his Damage Tests in unarmed combat. Body Control does not enhance damage for attached weapons. Abilities that substitute for the adept's Strength Step substitute for the Strength Step when determining the Body Control Step.

Buzz

Step: Rank+DEX **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

This talent can only be learned by windlings. The adept sacrifices his Standard Action to confuse a chosen opponent with erratic maneuvers. He makes a Buzz Test, the result replacing his natural Physical Defense against that opponent until his turn in the following round. If the adept successfully avoids all attacks by that opponent until that turn, the opponent incurs a penalty to his Defense Ratings equal to the Buzz Rank until the end of the round. The adept must stay adjacent to the opponent during both rounds (if the opponent moves away, he must follow), or the effects of Buzz end.

Call of Harrow

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

The Call of Harrow talent represents magical understanding of Horrors and their magic. It works like the Creature Analysis Talent (***Player's Guide***, p. 64), but is limited to target Horrors and Horror Constructs. In addition to providing information, however, the talent also conveys a +1 bonus to all Action Tests made against a target per Result Level achieved on the Call of Harrow Test, starting with an Average Result, for Call of Harrow Rank rounds.

Krarg, who has a Call of Harrow Rank of 5, uses the talent against a Horror, achieving a Good Result on the Talent Test. He can now ask two questions about the Horror, as described for Creature Analysis, and gains a +2 bonus to all Action Tests against the Horror for 5 rounds.

Cast Net

Step: Rank+DEX **Action:** Free
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

Cast Net allows an adept to use a small hand-held net as a special parrying tool. When attacked in close combat, the adept makes a Cast Net Test against his opponent's Attack Test result. If successful, the adept has parried the attack. On an Excellent



Result, the adept has also entangled his opponent's weapon (or appendage, for unarmed attacks), the Entangling Difficulty (***Player's Guide***, p. 229) equals the Cast Net Step. If the adept holds on to the net, he adds the Cast Net Rank as a bonus to Disarm Tests against the opponent and weapon he has entangled. The adept can only hold on to one entangling net at any time, and cannot use Cast Net to parry while doing so. Cast Net can otherwise be used Rank times per round, but only against attacks the adept is aware of.

Any net of convenient size can be used with Cast Net. The adept can improvise a net from items such as cloaks or blankets, but Cast Net Tests are made at a –2 penalty for such items. Normal nets and improvised nets do not count as weapons, although Boatmen have developed special weapons with improved qualities that do (see **Boatman Nets**, p. 232)

CLAY SKIN

Step: Rank+TOU **Action:** Standard
Karma: Yes **Strain:** 0

The Clay Skin talent increases an adept's resistance to damage by causing his skin, and portions of his muscles and ligaments, to become tougher. Clay Skin works like the Wood Skin talent (***Player's Guide***, p. 86), but the adept's skin takes on the appearance of clay or mud.

CREATE FETISH

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

Shamans keep their spell patterns in fetishes, small items representative of the spells they contain. The adept uses Create Fetish to learn and transcribe new spells, it is the Shaman's equivalent of the Read/Write Magic Talent (***Player's Guide***, p. 78). To learn a new spell, Create Fetish is used as described for the Read/Write Magic talent; except Create Fetish cannot be used to read magical writing, runes, or glyphs. If successful, instead of transcribing the spell into a grimoire, the adept places its pattern in a small item called a fetish that he has previously crafted. The physical form of a fetish is usually related to the spell stored within it, and only one spell can be stored within any one fetish. The adept's collection of fetishes represents his grimoire, and follows the rules for grimoires. Losing a fetish is equivalent to losing a spell from a grimoire. Spells learned in this manner can be cast using raw magic, by attuning the fetish like a grimoire, or by attuning it to a Fetish Talent (see **Spell Fetish**, p. 221) to cast it in a process identical to Matrix casting. Spells learned with Create Fetish cannot be attuned to Spell Matrix Objects.

When casting a spell from a fetish, the adept has to hold it and employ it in gestures a spell may require. Because fetishes are physical objects, they can be attacked in physical combat. To hit a typical fetish, the attacker requires a Good Result on a Called Shot against the adept (attacks against atypically large fetishes may be easier). Fetishes are fragile, and have a Death Rating equal to the Circle of the spell stored + 5, and no Armor Rating.

DIVE ATTACK

Step: Rank+STR **Action:** Free
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

This talent can only be learned by windlings. Dive Attack increases the effectiveness of attacks following a downward movement towards the target, including Swooping Attacks (***Player's Guide***, p. 34). When the adept performs a successful attack after moving d0wn onto a target, he may substitute the Dive Attack Step for his Strength Step on the Damage Test for the attack directly following the move.



EARTH BOND

Step: Rank+TOU **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

This talent can only be learned by Obsidimen. The Earth Bond talent increases the natural connection obsidimen have with the earth and allows an adept to either heal by drawing upon earth's power, or to nurture the earth and allow it to recover from damage. The adept must be touching or standing on natural ground to use Earth Bond.

When using Earth Bond to heal himself, the adept spends a Recovery Test, then makes an Earth Bond Test and reduces his Current Damage by an amount no higher than the result. Doing so saps life energy from the surrounding area.

When using Earth Bond to nurture an area, the adept spends a Recovery Test, then makes an Earth Bond Test and suffers a number of Damage Points of his choosing no higher than the result, this damage cannot cause Wounds. Doing so enriches the surrounding area with the adept's life energy.

The affected area is the one within Earth Bond Rank yards of the adept. The effects the transfer of life energy has on an area are determined by the gamemaster. It is suggested that a transfer of double the Earth Bond Rank Damage Points causes small but visible effects in a moderately fertile area (a number of leaves turning brown, for example), with effects worsening the more barren the area, but hardly being noticeably in very fertile environs.

Engaging Dance

Step: Rank+CHA **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

Engaging Dance allows the adept to direct his opponent's movements by taking the lead in a choreographed combat. The adept makes an Engaging Dance Test, comparing the result against the Social Defense of both his opponent and any onlookers. If the test is successful against the opponent, he has to match his movement to the adept's for Engaging Dance Rank rounds, effectively allowing the adept to control the opponent's movement in a way that keeps the opponent adjacent to him. If the opponent does not match his movement, he trips and is Knocked Down, although Engaging Dance ends. The adept must not move in a way that would prohibit the opponent from following, though, for example by moving faster than the opponent can. Onlookers against whom the test is successful cannot interfere with the 'dancing' opponents by attacking them or using other abilities against them specifically, those against whom the test is not successful may, but this ends the talent's effects immediately. The adept may only be engaged in a dance with one opponent at a time.

Enhanced Fetish

Step: Rank **Action:** NA
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

Shamans use the Enhanced Fetish talent like other magicians use their Enhanced Matrix talent, the special rules explained for the Create Fetish talent (p. 219) and Spell Fetish talent (p. 221) apply.

False Shackles

Step: Rank+DEX **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

False Shackles allows an adept who escaped his shackles to keep his escape secret. The character arranges his shackles so that they appear to be in place, mimicking the stance and movements of a bound prisoner. The character then makes a False Shackles Test, the result of which becomes the Detection Difficulty for attempts made by those checking to see if the character remains safely bound. Any minor damage to the shackles is covered by illusion magic, but a physical examination of their strength will reveal they have been broken.

The effect lasts for up to False Shackles Rank hours or until the adept does something obviously impossible for a bound character to accomplish.



Free Mind

Step: Rank+CHA **Action:** Sustained
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

The adept awakens the desire to be free through logical or emotional appeals. The adept speaks to one or more targets who have accepted their lot as a slave or similarly oppressed individual, then makes a Free Mind Test against the highest Social Defense among the targets, +1 per additional target. If successful, the targets' acceptance of their lot in life is broken, and their normal desire for freedom restored. On a Good Result, the targets are willing to take action to win their freedom even if they normally would not, as long as the adept acts alongside.

Freedom Search

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Sustained
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

Freedom Search allows an adept to determine whether a target Namegiver ever was a slave or slaver. The adept briefly studies the target, then makes a Freedom Search Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, the adept learns whether the target currently is or ever was a slave, slaver, or both.

Gliding

Step: Rank+DEX **Action:** Simple
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

This talent can only be learned by k'stulaami. Gliding is used to make tests to move under power of the *k'stulaami* Gliding racial ability (p. 139).

Heal Slave

Step: Rank+WIL **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

The adept heals an enslaved or oppressed Namegiver. He touches the target, spends one of his own Recovery Tests, then makes a Heal Slave Test, reducing the target's Current Damage by the result.

Heart of Freedom

Step: Rank+WIL **Action:** Standard
Karma: Yes **Strain:** 1

This talent can only be learned by orks. Heart of Freedom allows the adept to confer the potential for *gahad* (***Player's Guide***, p. 22) on a non-ork character or intensify an ork's *gahad*. The adept makes a Heart of Freedom Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, a non-ork target receives the *gahad* ability for Heart of Freedom Rank days. A target determines *gahad* triggers when first targeted by Heart of Freedom. Subsequent uses impart *gahad* with the same triggers. If successful against an ork, the target's tests to resist *gahad* require a Result Level one higher than normal, but the Action Test bonus for giving in to *gahad* is +3.

HOARD BLOWS

Step: Rank+WIL **Action:** Free
Karma: Yes **Strain:** 0

Hoard Blows allows the adept to retaliate for slavers' attacks against him at a later time. When physically attacked by a slaver, prison guard, or similar oppressor, the adept may 'save up' or 'hoard' the blow. He notes the attacker, date, and amount of Damage Points taken from the attack, but otherwise suffers the damage as normal. At a later time, whenever the attacker is within 30 yards of him, the adept may make a Hoard Blows Test against the attacker's Spell Defense. If successful, the attacker suffers damage equal to the amount the adept originally took, and the hoarded blow is 'used up'. If the Hoard Blows Test is unsuccessful, the hoarded blow is also used up.

The adept may at any one time save Hoard Blows Rank attacks, and any one attack may be saved up for Hoard Blows Rank days. The adept may use Hoard Blows only once per round, either to save a blow or retaliate with one. He may save multiple blows by the same attacker, but only retaliate one at a time.

MISSILE PATH

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Simple
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

This talent can only be learned by elves. Missile Path allows an adept to magically clear foliage between him and his target to let ranged attacks pass through. The adept must perceive the target in some way (catch a glimpse of him, hear him breathe, etc.), then makes a Missile Path Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, a narrow passageway opens and the adept may make ranged attacks through this passageway until the end of the round or the target moves. Neither concealment nor cover applies to the adept's attack or provides a benefit for the target, while the target's sight may still be limited.

PILOT BOAT

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Sustained
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

The Pilot Boat talent represents the art of maneuvering the fire-engine powered t'skrang riverboats along the Serpent River. It is used as described for the **Pilot Boat** skill (***Player's Guide***, p. 100).

PRISON CALL

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Standard
Karma: Yes **Strain:** 0

This talent can only be learned by orks. Prison Call allows the adept to sense the presence and location of imprisoned Namegivers. The adept makes a Prison Call Test, sensing the location of any imprisoned Namegiver within Prison Call Rank times 25 yards whose Spell Defense is equal or lower. The way in which the adept determines the location is not by absolute knowledge, but rather by an intensification of his *gahad* when moving towards the target. The effects of Prison Call last for Prison Call Rank hours. Prison Call does not distinguish between those imprisoned justly or unjustly, and does not convey any details of a prison's layout.

READ RIVER

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

Read River allows to guide a riverboat through treacherous waters or gather information from watching the currents. It is used as described for the Read River skill (***Player's Guide***, p. 100) but takes only a Standard Action.



SHARED FETISH

Step: Rank **Action:** NA
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

Shamans use the Shared Fetish talent to attune multiple fetishes like other magicians use their Shared Matrix talent, the special rules explained for the Create Fetish talent (p. 219) and Spell Fetish talent (below) apply.

SHOUT OF JUSTICE

Step: Rank+CHA **Action:** Standard
Karma: Yes **Strain:** 0

A Shout of Justice is a battle cry that an adept uses to strike fear into the hearts of slavers and encourage the oppressed. The traditional Shout of Justice is a litany attributed to Hrak Gron, but an adept may substitute his own words of vengeance if he wishes. The adept makes a Shout of Justice Test. The result is compared to two Difficulty Numbers. The first is the highest Social Defense among all slavers in earshot, +1 for each additional slaver. The second is the highest Social Defense among all slaves and oppressed within earshot, +1 for each additional slave. For each Result Level achieved against the respective Difficulty Number, starting with an Average Result, slavers receive a –1 penalty to all their Action Tests and slaves receive a +1 bonus to all their Action Test for Shout of Justice Rank rounds.

SPELL FETISH

Step: Rank **Action:** NA
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

Shamans attune the spells stored in their fetishes (**Create Fetish**, p. 219) to the Spell Fetish talent like other magicians attune one of their spells to the Spell Matrix talent. With the exception



that the fetish needs to be held by the magician to attune and cast the spell stored within it, Spell Fetish provides the same benefits and follows the same rules as Matrix Casting (***Player's Guide***, p. 134). Once attuned, the Spell Fetish talent stays attuned without requiring the fetish to be held, but the fetish needs still to be held to cast the spell. An attuned Spell Fetish talent acts like a Spell Matrix talent for purposes such as being attacked, for example with the Matrix Strike talent, but an un-attuned Spell Fetish talent cannot be attacked.

SUPPRESS INFLUENCE

Step: Rank+WIL **Action:** Standard
Karma: Yes **Strain:** 0

Suppress Influence allows the adept to suppress a magical power, either suppressing the effects a power has on a target, or prohibiting a target from using a power. Suppress Influence can suppress the powers of creatures, Spirits, Horrors, Horror Constructs, Dragons, and Dragon-like creatures.

To suppress the effects a power has on a target, the adept must be within Suppress Influence Rank hexes (twice this in yards) of the target affected by the power, then makes a Suppress Influence Test against the Spell Defense of the entity who used the power. If successful, the power is rendered inactive for Suppress Influence Rank rounds. This use only suppresses the effects for one target, but multiple targets can be treated consecutively.

To prohibit a target from using one of its powers, the adept must be able to see the target, specify the power to suppress, then make a Suppress Influence Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, the target is unable to use the power for Suppress Influence Rank rounds. Powers that have a permanent effect, such as Durability, cannot be suppressed.

SWIMMING

Step: Rank+STR **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 0

Swimming allows the adept to hold himself over and travel through water. This talent works as described for the Swimming skill (***Player's Guide***, p. 102), but uses a Standard Action only every other round (starting with the round the first Swimming Test is made).

TAIL DANCE

Step: Rank+DEX **Action:** Simple
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

This talent can only be learned by t'skrang. Tail Dance enhances the adept's options in tail combat by modifying the rules of the Tail Attack and Tail Parry combat options. The adept must have a higher Initiative than his opponent(s) to use Tail Dance against them.

When using the Tail Attack combat option, the adept makes a Tail Dance Test against the Physical Defense of the opponent he wishes to target with the additional tail attack. If successful, tail attack does not cause any penalties this round.

When using the Tail Parry combat option, the adept makes a Tail Dance Test against the highest Physical Defense of all opponents in close combat range. If successful, either does tail parry not require a weapon or piece of armor attached to the tail, or the defense bonus can go up to +5, for an equal penalty, if a weapon or armor is attached. Using Tail Dance to enhance a tail parry allows the adept to announce or modify an announced use of the Tail Parry combat option mid-round.

C'hali stands unarmed before three opponents and needs to boost her defense. She cannot announce a tail parry at the start of the round because she lacks equipment. Winning Initiative and succeeding at her Tail Dance Test, however, she can now use tail parry despite not being equipped, and despite the normal rule that combat options must be announced at the start of the round, because Tail Dance's special rules allow for it. She chooses the maximum defense bonus of +3.

WIND DANCE

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Simple
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

Wind Dance is the art of reading a windling's flight or modify one's flight to convey messages or emotions. Non-windlings can learn Wind Dance to read flight, but have to be able to fly to convey messages or emotions. If the character does not possess natural wings, Wind Dance Tests to convey messages or emotions are made at a –3 penalty.

To convey a message or emotions while flying, the adept makes a Wind Dance (5) Test, success depends on the Result Level achieved. An Average Result conveys basic emotions or messages, such as expressing anger or giving a short command. A Good Result conveys more specific emotions or allows for general conversation, such as



expressing fear of Horrors or giving a forecast of tomorrow's weather. An Excellent Result expresses very complex, even conflicting feelings and the relations between them or allows to convey detailed information, such as expressing the joy of no longer feeling fear of the Horror after a glorious victory or giving instructions to mix the red body paint used by one's clan. An Extraordinary Result allows for any topic to be expressed. Conveying messages takes as long as speaking them, so a wind dance may require longer than one round to perform. Conveying emotions does not convey the character's actual emotions (these are apparent from the character's flight, see below), but fakes the emotion, and can be used to mislead onlookers.

To read a character's flight, the adept makes a Wind Dance Test against the target's Social Defense. If successful, the adept learns the target's real emotions depending on the Result Level achieved, as described above, and if the target tries to hide his true emotions. If the target performs a Wind Dance to communicate emotions or messages, the adept makes a Wind Dance (5) Test, and if successful reads whatever emotion or message the target wishes to convey for Wind Dance Rank minutes.

WOODSPEAK

Step: Rank+PER **Action:** Standard
Karma: No **Strain:** 1

Woodspeak allows an adept various forms of communication with a forest's inhabitants, including the spirits living within it. Woodspeak is used like the Spirit Talk talent (***Player's Guide***, p. 81) for the purpose of communicating with wood or forest spirits. In addition, the adept can employ simple plant spirits to deliver messages within the confines of the forest, but the recipient must be able to understand the spirit delivering the message (for example by knowing Elemental Tongues, Spirit Talk, or Woodspeak). To deliver a message, the adept makes a Woodspeak (10) Test, every Result Level, starting with an Average Result, allows transmission of 20 words.

WOODWALK

Step: Rank+WIL **Action:** Sustained
Karma: Yes **Strain:** 1

This talent can only be learned by elves. Woodwalk allows an adept to travel large distances within a forest by briefly merging into the forest's pattern, separating himself from it at another location. The adept touches a plant and concentrates on the forest's pattern for one minute, then makes a Woodwalk Test against 10 or the forest's Spell Defense, whichever is higher, requiring an increasing Result Level depending on the astral region: An Average Result in a Safe region, a Good Result in an Open region, and so on (see **Astral Regions** on p. 110 of the ***Player's Guide***). If successful, the adept melds into the touched plant, re-emerging from another at the start of the next round. The adept may specify the exact plant to re-emerge from if he is familiar with it, otherwise he can specify a place within the forest or the distance he wishes to travel. The maximum distance the adept can travel is Woodwalk Rank miles; if the adept has woven a thread to one of the forest's pattern items, there is no maximum distance, except he must re-emerge within the same forest.

CHAPTER TWENTYSEVEN

TALENT KNACKS

While every adept can use the basic magic of his Discipline, only the truly skilled ones can bend their his innate magic to develop new forms of existing talents.

• Hat'schi, Windling Wizard •

Talent knacks are specializations that enable adepts to use their Discipline talents to create specific effects. By widening the scope of what talents allow characters to do, knacks flesh out the types of actions adepts can perform when using their talents, and create greater opportunities to make each character unique.

TALENT KNACK DESCRIPTIONS

The following talent knacks are available to the Disciplines presented in this book and appear in the same format as those described in the **Talent Knacks** chapter on p. 118 of the ***Player's Companion***.

BACKLASH

Talent: Tail Dance
Rank: 6 **Strain:** 2

Backlash allows the adept to turn the tables on a target sneaking up on him from behind. If the adept notices the target, he makes a Tail Dance Test to set the target up for a nasty surprise. Instead of the normal effects of Tail Dance, the result becomes the Difficulty Number for the sneaker to notice that the adept knows he is there. If the target does not notice he is being set up, and once the adept acts, the target is Surprised as the adept performs an attack with his tail. This attack does not suffer any penalties (including penalties for not seeing the target), but it does count as the adept's additional tail attack for the round.

BEAUTY OF BLOODSHED

Talent: Art Weaving
Rank: 7 **Strain:** 4

Beauty of Bloodshed allows the adept to make combat a form of art so terrible to look at that it influences his opponents' behavior. At the beginning of combat, the adept makes an Art Weaving Test to tie the elegance of his movement to the terror of killing, comparing the result against the highest Social Defense among all his opponents, +1 for each additional opponent. If successful, the adept gains a +1 bonus per Result Level achieved to all Action Tests he makes in physical combat against those opponents for Art Weaving Rank rounds. Affected opponents not attacked by the adept must succeed at a Willpower Test against the Art Weaving Result to attack the adept.

The powers of Garlen or her questors cannot heal injuries received or Strain taken by the adept during a fight in which he used this knack, nor can they heal the Strain damage taken to activate the knack. This includes healing aids made by a questor of Garlen. At the gamemaster's discretion, a questor of Garlen using this knack—or even just learning it—can be treated as described under **Failing to Act** or even **Falling Out of Favor** (***Player's Companion***, p. 174).

BLUFFING DIVE

Talent: Dive Attack
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 2

The adept causes fear in a target opponent instead of striking him by performing an airborne attack that looks worse than it actually is. The adept sets up a Dive Attack as normal but if the Attack Test is successful, makes a Dive Attack Test against the target's Social Defense instead of a Damage Test. If the Dive Attack Test is successful, the target is struck with fear. On an Average Result, he will not move. On an Excellent Result, he will flee as fast as possible on his next turn. The effects last for Dive Attack Rank rounds. Each round, the target may make a Willpower Test against the Dive Attack Step to end the effect.

BODY ARMOR

Talent: Body Control
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 1

Body Armor allows the adept to shift the effects of Body Control from offense to defense. When activating Body Control, he may take a penalty of up to his Body Control Rank to Body Control Tests. He receives bonus to his Physical Armor Rating equal to that penalty.

Cruzeon activates Body Control and decides to use Body Armor. He has a talent rank of 8, a Strength Step of 9, and thus a Body Control Step of 17. He decides to take a –4 penalty to Body Control Test. Until the end of the round, he only uses Step 13 to make Body Control Tests, but adds +4 to his Physical Armor.

BRANDMARK SERVANT

Talent: Detect Influence
Rank: 7 **Strain:** 2

The Brandmark Servant talent knack allows the adept to visibly brandmark the servant of a Horror. The adept makes a Detect Influence Test as normal. If successful and the test reveals taint, the adept may spend the Strain to brandmark the target as a servant of the Horrors. The mark usually appears on the target's forehead, but can be placed wherever the adept wishes.

BREAK LOCK

Talent: Lock Picking
Rank: 6 **Strain:** 2

The Break Lock talent knack gives the adept a chance to destroy a lock when attempting to open it. When using Break Lock, the lock can be picked as normal, but on a Result Level one higher than normal, it is destroyed.

BROADSIDE

Talent: Pilot Boat
Rank: 8 **Strain:** 4

If the adept is the captain of a riverboat, the Broadside talent knack gives him an advantage when attempting the Firing maneuver. It is used as described for the **Assault** talent knack (***Player's Companion***, p. 122), using the Pilot Boat talent for the test, but works on and against riverboats instead of airships.

CLAY BLEND

Talent: Clay Skin
Rank: 8 **Strain:** 2 (see text)

Clay Blend allows the adept to blend with earth or stone surfaces when using Clay Skin by adapting the visual effects of his clay skin to the surface. The adept stands against the surface, using Clay Skin as normal. The Clay Skin test result doubles as the Difficulty Number to detect the adept for Clay Skin's duration or until he moves.

While Clay Blend is active, the adept may also enter a state close to hibernation by taking 2 additional Strain. If he does, he remains perfectly still without any effort and can even sleep in the Clay Blend, and adds his Clay Skin Rank to his Defense Ratings to defend against effects that would disturb his calm state (such as a Taunt or the Pain spell).

COLLECTIVE BEATING

Talent: Hoard Blows
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 1 (see text)

Collective Beating allows the adept to retaliate with all blows hoarded from a target attacker at once, instead of retaliating with one per round. He makes a Hoard Blow Test as normal, but takes 1 Strain per blow used.

COVER

Talent: Avoid Blow
Rank: 6 **Strain:** 1

The Cover talent knack allows the adept to intercept a close or ranged combat attack directed against an adjacent ally or a ranged combat attack against an ally if the adept is adjacent to or in the path of attack. The adept makes an Avoid Blow Test against the Attack Test Result. If successful, the attack hits him instead of the ally. The attack results in an Armor-Defeating Hit on a Good Result against the Avoid Blow Test Result. Cover can only intercept one attack per round, but may be attempted multiple times.

DIVE

Talent: Swimming
Rank: 8 **Strain:** 2

Dive allows the adept to hold his breath longer. The adept can hold his breath for a number of minutes equal to the result of a Swimming Test instead of Toughness value rounds (see **Drowning** on p. 109 of the ***Gamemaster's Guide***). Dive cannot be used continuously, the character must breathe normal air in between uses (even if a t'skrang).



DRAGGING PARRY

Talent: Cast Net
Rank: 8 **Strain:** 2

Dragging Parry allows the adept to parry an attack while holding on to an entangled weapon. The attack to be parried must be made by the character holding the entangled weapon or a character adjacent to him and the adept. The adept makes a Cast Net Test as normal, requiring a Good Result. If successful, he drags the entangled weapon in the way of the incoming attack, parrying it. He continues to entangle the same weapon, he cannot entangle the weapon used for the attack avoided with Dragging Parry.

Endure Heat

Talent: Endure Cold
Rank: 5 **Strain:** 0

The adept may now also use Endure cold to protect himself from heat and fire damage.

Fake Thought

Talent: Safe Thought
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 2

The Fake Thought talent knack allows the adept to provide false information in place of a hidden thought instead of vague ones. Tests made to obtain the information gather the fake information if they would have succeeded without the Safe Thought Defense bonus, but gather the real information if they succeed against the Defenses increased by Safe Thought.

Fast Grab

Talent: Disarm
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 2

Fast Grab allows the adept to grab an opponent's weapon on a successful Disarm Test rather than send it flying. The adept must be able to hold the weapon to use Fast Grab, and the Disarm Test requires a Result Level one higher than normal to succeed.

Fast Talk

Talent: Conversation
Rank: 6 **Strain:** 2

The Fast Talk talent knack allows the adept to confuse a Namegiver with whom he is having a conversation. The adept makes a Conversation Test as normal. If successful, instead of improving the target's Attitude, he confuses the target. The target is Harried until the conversation ends. The Harried modifier applies to the target's Social Defense. The adept can only Fast Talk one target.

Hiking

Talent: Woodwalk
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 3

The Hiking talent knack allows the adept to carry another person with him when using the Woodwalk talent. To take someone along using Woodwalk, the adept must achieve a Result Level one higher than normal on the Woodwalk Test.

History Skit

Talent: Truth Skit
Rank: 11 **Strain:** 4

History Skit allows the adept to recreate any even from history, no matter how far back, without the original participants. He requires a Pattern Item of each original participant and stand-ins for them. The Difficulty Number for the Truth Skit Test is the highest Social Defense of the original participants at the time the event occurred.

Hoard Spells

Talent: Hoard Blows
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 1

Hoard Spells allows the adept to hoard damaging magical attacks. Every time the adept hoards a magical attack, he takes 1 Strain. Retaliating with a hoarded magical attack works like retaliating with a physical attack and does not cause additional Strain.

Hoarded Haunting

Talent: Hoard Blows
Rank: 8 **Strain:** 2 (see text)

Hoarded Haunting allows the adept to let Wounds caused by a hoarded blow he retaliates with haunt a slaver. If the adept uses Hoarded Haunting to retaliate with a hoarded blow and the target suffers a Wound, the Wound can be healed as normal, but breaks open again any time the target beats a slave during the next Hoard Blows Rank weeks, causing Damage Points equal to the target's Wound Threshold. The adept may extend the effects of Hoarded Haunting to a year and a day by taking the Strain as Blood Magic Damage, but he must take it for every Wound inflicted.

Incite Monologue

Talent: Engaging Banter
Rank: 7 **Strain:** 3

Incite Monologue allows the adept to keep a target talking without needing to concentrate on the Engaging Banter. The adept makes an Engaging Banter Test as normal, but does not need to concentrate or even stick around for the target to receive penalties. The banter's Duration decreases to Rank rounds, however.

Lasting Performance

Talent: Performance
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 2

Lasting Performance allows the adept to increase the Duration of Performance to Rank days. The result Level achieved is reduced by one to determine the Interaction Test bonus (a Good Result will usually yield a +1 bonus, for example).

Lay of the Land

Talent: Lifesight
Rank: 5 **Strain:** 1

Lay of the Land allows the adept to perceive the state of health of an area rather than individual beings within it. The Range of Lay of the Land can be up to Lifesight Rank x 100 yards, but the adept may target a smaller area. He makes a Lifesight Test against the highest Spell Defense of locations within the selected area or 10, whichever is higher. If successful, the adept gains an impression of the health of the area and its corresponding astral space. Small irregularities (like a single dead tree) escape his notice, but larger ones (like a tainted pond) he notices. He does not gain an impression of anything that is in the area only temporary, like animals wandering through it.

Locate Horror

Talent: Bear Mark
Rank: 7 **Strain:** 4

The adept can track a Horror that has Horror-marked him. He uses his Bear Mark talent like the Direction Sense talent (***Player's Guide***, p. 65), the Horror-mark serving as the required item.



MIND READING

Talent: Lip Reading
Rank: 11 **Strain:** 1

The Mind Reading talent knack allows the adept to eavesdrop on another character's current thoughts. The adept makes the Lip Reading Test against the target's Spell Defense (not Social Defense), and if successful can then listen to the target's thoughts for Test Result rounds (not minutes). Listening in on the thoughts requires the adept to see the target and spend his Standard Action that round, but not concentrate continuously.

MYSTIC MIND ARMOR

Talent: Mind Armor
Rank: 8 **Strain:** 2

Mystic Mind Armor allows the adept to create a mind armor that provides a Mystic Armor Rating. The adept may distribute his Mind Armor Rank between his Physical and Mystic Armor Ratings.

SCORN

Talent: Performance
Rank: 7 **Strain:** 2

Scorn allows the adept to make a fool of one member of his audience. If the adept's Performance Test is successful, instead of the adept gaining an Interaction Test bonus, the target incurs it as a penalty to his Interaction Tests against other members of the audience.

TAIL SWEEP

Talent: Unarmed Combat
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 2

This talent knack can only be learned by t'skrang. Tail Sweep allows the adept to trip an opponent with his tail. It is a variant of the Attacking to Knockdown Combat Option, but does not need to be announced, nor can it be combined with the combat option. The adept attacks with his tail with an Unarmed Combat Test, requiring a Good Result. If successful, the adept makes an unarmed Damage Test. The result (which is not modified for armor) is the difficulty for the target's Knockdown Test. The target does not take damage.

THREATENING AURA

Talent: Power Mask
Rank: 9 **Strain:** 2

Threatening Aura allows the adept to create the appearance of possessing more powerful magic than he actually does instead of hiding his magic. He makes a Power Mask Test, the result is the Difficulty Number to see through this illusion. Onlookers who do not beat the Difficulty Number perceive obvious magical effects as well as the adept's astral characteristics in whatever way the adept desires (he may describe visual effects, give numbers for steps, ranks, or Circles he wants effects to look like, and so on). When dealing with characters who do not see through the Aura, the adept gains the Reputation (***Player's Guide***, p. 244) appropriate to his Threatening Aura, but at least +1 more than he normally has.

TREETRAP

Talent: Forest Weaving
Rank: 7 **Strain:** 2

Treetrap allows the adept to use his connection to and knowledge of the woods to lay an ambush. He makes a Forest Weaving Test against the Spell Defense of the wooded area he and up to Forest Weaving Rank x 5 allies want to hide in. For every Result Level achieved, starting with Average, the adept and his allies add +1 to the Difficulty Number to be detected and +1 to the first Attack Test they make against Surprised opponents.

WIND SHOUT

Talent: Wind Dance
Rank: 7 **Strain:** 2

Wind Shout allows the adept to make Namegivers without the Wind Dance talent or skill understand a message woven into his flight pattern. The Result Level required on the Wind Dance Test is one higher than normal.

WOOD WINGS

Talent: Wood Skin
Rank: 6 **Strain:** 1

This talent knack can only be learned by windlings. Wood Wings allow the windling to waterproof his wings when using Wood Skin. In addition to the normal effects of Wood Skin, the windling's wings cannot become soaked while the talent's effects last.

CHAPTER TWENTYEIGHT

SKILLS

Mundane you call me. Okay, I'll admit that I may not be adept material. Or at least, I've never had the chance to prove I could be. Still, magic or not, you can't deny that experience counts. And experience is something I have plenty of.

• Cadway Sanam, First Mate •

Skills are similar to talents, except they do not require magic to learn and use. Instead, a character must invest considerable time, effort, and money into acquiring and improving them.

With the exception of those skills noted as being limited to specific races, the skills in this chapter are available to all characters and supplement those presented in the **Skills** chapter on p.87 of the ***Player's Guide***.

Some skills can also be used with the rules for Default Skill Use (see p. 87 of the ***Player's Guide***).

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Except as noted, the following skills are available to all characters and appear in the same format as those described in the **Skills** chapter on p. 87 of the ***Player's Guide***.

BUZZ

Step: Rank+DEX **Default:** No
Action: Standard **Strain:** 0

This skill can only be learned by windlings. The character sacrifices his Standard Action to confuse a chosen opponent with erratic maneuvers. Buzz is used as described for the **Buzz** talent, p. 218.

CAST NET

Step: Rank+DEX **Default:** No
Action: Free **Strain:** 1

Cast Net allows an adept to use a small hand-held net as a special parrying weapon. This skill is used as described for the **Cast Net** talent, p. 218, but only once per round, and does not add bonuses to Disarm Tests.

DIVE ATTACK

Step: Rank+STR **Default:** No
Action: Free **Strain:** 1

This skill can only be learned by windlings. Dive Attack increases the effectiveness of attacks following a downward movement towards the target. It is used as described for the **Dive Attack** talent, p. 219, but requires the character use at least half his Movement Rate before the attack.

FALSE SHACKLES

Step: Rank+DEX **Default:** No
Action: Sustained **Strain:** 1

False Shackles allows a character who escaped his shackles to keep his escape secret. This skill is used as described for the **False Shackles** talent, p. 220, but requires more effort to arrange the shackles (a Sustained Action), and cannot use illusion magic to cover damage to shackles.

GLIDING

Step: Rank+DEX **Default:** Yes
Action: Simple **Strain:** 0

This skill can only be learned by k'stulaami. Gliding is used to make tests to move under power of the *k'stulaami* Gliding racial ability (p. 139).

TAIL DANCE

Step: Rank+DEX **Default:** No
Action: Simple **Strain:** 1

This skill can only be learned by t'skrang. Tail Dance enhances the adept's options in tail combat by modifying the rules of the Tail Attack and Tail Parry combat options. It is used as described for the **Tail Dance** talent, p. 222.

WIND DANCE

Step: Rank+PER **Default:** No (see text)
Action: Simple **Strain:** 1

Wind Dance is the art of reading a windling's flight or modify one's flight to convey messages or emotions. It is used as described for the **Wind Dance** talent, p. 222. Windlings may read another windling's flight without this skill using the rules for Interaction (Insight) Tests (***Gamemaster's Guide***, p. 95), but knowing the Wind Dance skill makes reading flight easier.

CHAPTER TWENTYNINE

GOODS AND SERVICES

Best axes this side of the Serpent! Yes, indeed sir. Just feel the edge on this blade. Test it out. See! Slices through that apple like it was made of air! And I see you are a man of means and can afford such a fine weapon. Oh. It's a sword you're after…

• Brampton Byrn, Weapon Vendor •

This chapter provides new goods and services unique to each race, including their prices, any restrictions on their use, and directions for purchasing them.

ARMOR

The following armors are made by the Namegiver races presented in this book and appear in the same format as those described in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 254 of the ***Player's Guide***. Some of the armors presented here are alternate versions of armors found in the ***Player's Guide*** that have their metal components replaced with other materials. The rules for creating armors from different materials are presented later in this chapter (see **Alternative Crafting Materials**, p. 237).

BONE MAIL

Bone mail armor consists of a suit of leather armor bearing an assortment of bones on its outside. Styles differ greatly, and usually reflect the cultural background of the creator. Some suits feature an interlaced mesh of small bones, others feature larger bones with hardened leather inserts between them, and others are made exclusively from skullcaps. Bone mail grants a +1 bonus to Interaction Tests made to intimidate a target.

SKELETON

A dedicated form of bone mail, skeleton armor features the same leather base, but the bones are chosen more carefully, often with artistic intent. Skeleton armor employs larger bones matching the skeleton of the wearer in the region where they are sewn on. The wearer's torso is often covered with ribs, the shoulder with shoulder blades, the back with a spine, and the helmet is made from a skull. As the bones used for the armor have to be larger than those of the wearer, they usually come from creatures. Skeleton armor grants a +1 bonus to Interaction Tests made to intimidate a target.

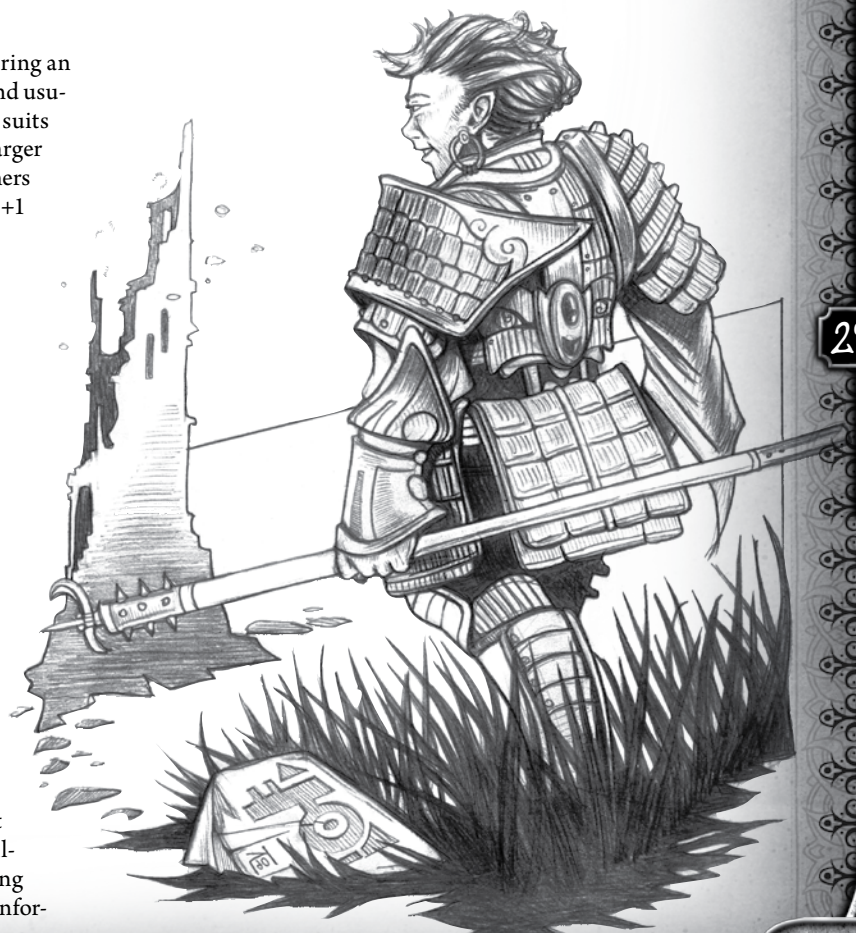
SKORA MAIL

The *d'san skora* is a piece of armor made for protecting a t'skrang's tail, like a gauntlet, and is used by t'skrang who follow the teachings of the Skora School of Combat. Most t'skrang wishing to protect their tails tend to use combat styles taught by the Skora School, especially among Tail-dancers. The *d'san skora* was created to assist in the t'skrang defensive art of tail parrying and makes it more effective. Unfortunately, it is quite heavy in use, making it awkward to attack with. Tail attacks receive a +1 bonus to Damage Tests, but a –2 penalty to Attack Tests.

Besides counting as equipment making tail parrying more effective (see **Tail Dance**, p. 222), skora mail provides a +3 equipment bonus to Parry Tests if the tail is used to parry. Skora mail does not provide a Physical Armor Rating, it works in conjunction with normal armor.

STONE DISK

Stone disk armor is similar to regular ring mail, but features stone disks in place of metal rings. The disks are much heavier and tend to break more easily than metal rings, but replacement is relatively simple and can be done with stonecarving and sewing tools. Obsidimen usually consider stone disk armor living armor.



ARMOR TABLE

Armor	Physical Armor	Mystic Armor	Initiative Penalty	EDN	Cost	Weight	Availability
Bone Mail	5	0	1	—	100	20	Rare
Skeleton	6	0	2	—	360	20	Rare
Skora Mail	0	0	0	—	35	10	Unusual
Stone Disk	6	0	3	—	55	60	Unusual
Stone Net	7	0	4	—	90	80	Unusual
Thundra Skin	7	1	2	13	1,000	40	Rare
Trim Wood	5	0	2	—	55	30	Average
Wood Tile	6	0	3	—	90	40	Average

EDN: The armor's Enchanting Difficulty Number (see the ***Player's Companion***). If the item requires True elements to be woven into it separately, the type of element is noted in superscript (A = True air; E = True earth; F = True fire; W = True water; Wd = True wood). See **Weaving True Elements Into Patterns** in the **Enchanting** chapter of the ***Player's Companion***).
* The second Initiative Penalty is used when the cloak is worn over other types of armor (see text).

Stone Net

Stone net armor resembles a very loose suit of chain mail, but also bears some similarity to blood pebble armor. Stone marbles are drilled and threaded onto metal wire, or sometimes hemp or silk, to form a net capable of bearing the stones. While not as dense as regular chain mail, this armor provides effective defense against even large weapons. Stone net armor has to be worn over clothing to be fully effective. Obsidimen usually consider stone disk armor living armor.

Thundra Skin

Common among ork cavalry and scorcher bands, this armor is made from the thick hide of a thundra beast. It retains most of the creature's natural resiliency and is enchanted with True water to enhance and preserve its flexibility.

Trim Wood

Trim wood armor has a base of rigid leather reinforced with wooden strips. The wood trimming is not very dense, but offers especially good protection against cutting weapons. It is considered very durable in consideration of its light weight and simple manufacture. Trim wood grants a +1 bonus to Interaction tests made to ask a small favor from targets who would connect a suit of wooden armor to a wearer's respect or appreciation of nature (such as elves and many tribesfolk).

Wood Tile

Wood tile armor bears a close resemblance to crystal scale mail, featuring overlapping wooden strips on a base of soft leather and cloth. The wooden strips are quite broad and come in two layers, giving the armor its name. The wooden strips are not fixed on all edges, so as to better protect against hard impacts. As a result, the armor often rattles when the wearer is moving faster than a walk. Wood tile grants a +1 bonus to Interaction tests made to ask a small favor from targets who would connect a suit of wooden armor to a wearer's respect or appreciation of nature (such as elves and many tribesfolk).

Blood Charms

The following blood charms are made by the Namegiver races presented in this book and appear in the same format and follow the same rules as those described in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 257 of the ***Player's Guide***.

Bind Will

This charm is a creation of the Therans, and was developed to break the wills of unruly but valuable slaves. Slavemasters usually apply these charms to adepts. A bind will charm consists of interlinked iron and lead rings forming a chain. At either ends of the chain are barbed hooks that inflict 2 Blood Magic Damage that bind the charm to the wearer. Its effect is to suppress the free will of the person forced to wear it: once the charm is attached and activated, the victim suffers a –5 penalty to his Social Defense, and is required to make a successful Willpower (10) Test to disobey any command given to him.

Victims are usually kept bound until the charms take effect (24 hours, like other blood charms). Once released, they can attempt to remove the bind will charms, but the charms' suppression of their will makes this difficult—removing a charm requires a successful Willpower (15) Test, and may only be attempted once per week. Eventually the charm completely breaks the will of the victim: after every three attempts to remove the charm, increase the Result Level required on the Willpower Test by one level (to a maximum of Extraordinary). Most Namegivers who have worn a bind will charm for a year will have undergone a permanent change in personality, and no longer need a charm to accept their slave status. The bind will charm is usually removed at this point.

Simply possessing one of these charms is a criminal offense in Throal; using one is a serious crime. Oddly, questors of Dis generally disapprove of these charms, because they believe the charms remove the achievement of breaking another's will with their own.

Crystal Spikes

Often referred to as "blood spikes" by the t'skrang, these crystal shards are implanted into the recipient's limb and grow into crystalline spikes within one to three days. Once fully grown, they can be used as a weapon in unarmed combat. A single charm causes 1 Blood Magic Damage and grants a +1 bonus to unarmed Damage Tests when that limb is employed.

A character can have more than one charm implanted. The maximum number of spikes that can be implanted into a limb is equal to the largest one-handed weapon Size that limb could hold (1 for a windling's arm or leg, 2 for a t'skrang's tail, 3 for a human's arm or leg, 4 for trolls and obsidimen, and so on; see p. 248 of the ***Player's Guide***). The Blood Magic Damage and the Damage Test bonuses are cumulative. If the gamemaster is using the optional rule for **Blood Charm Depatterning** (see p. 258 of the ***Player's Guide***), the Depatterning Rating for crystal spikes is equal to half the number of spikes that the character has embedded, rounded up.

BLOOD CHARM TABLE

Charm	DR	EDN	Cost	Weight	Availability
Bind Will	1	13	1,000	1	Very Rare
Crystal Spikes	.5	12	250	1	Rare
Potion Charm	0	9	100	1	Rare

DR: The value added to the character's Depatterning Rating (see the ***Player's Guide***, p. 258).
EDN: The item's Enchanting Difficulty Number (see the ***Player's Companion***)

These charms are mostly used by t'skrang to implant in their tails, as they may hamper a character's ability to wear armor, gauntlets, and certain types of clothing, except if custom-tailored.

Potion Charm

Potion charms consist of a hollowed-out piece of crystal, just large enough to fill with the amount of liquid a potion or similar healing aid usually comes in.

Potion charms cause 2 Blood Magic Damage to the wearer, and must be filled with a potion or similar liquid before being attached to the wearer. Activating the charm is a Free Action and triggers the potion's effects by releasing it into the wearer's bloodstream, but also renders the charm inert, filling it with blood. Once used, the charm must be removed and emptied of blood before it can be refilled with a new solution. The character must heal the Blood Magic Damage before he can use the charm again.

Common Magic Items

In addition to the common magic items found in the ***Player's Guide***, the following magic items are found among Barsaive's various Namegiver races.

Clingor Rope

Two yards of one or both ends of a clingor rope (see p. 109) are enchanted in a fashion that they stick to themselves, but nothing else, after a command word is spoken. For safety reasons, a different command word is required to make the rope stop stick to itself, and the user also needs to touch the rope while speaking the words. Under normal circumstances, the user guides the rope around poles or masts to form a loop, but experienced riverboat crew can hurl it to wind around objects or even opponents.

Clingor rope can be used in a weapon-like fashion, either in melee or thrown combat, to entangle an opponent with an Entangling Difficulty of 12. Attack Tests require a Result Level one higher than normal to hit and to entangle (which means that under normal circumstances, clingor only causes entanglement, and only on an Excellent Attack Test Result). Clingor has the same thrown Ranges as a dagger.

Dry Bag

Common among the t'skrang of the Serpent River, dry bags resemble normal bags and backpacks with True water woven into them. The kernels of True water used to enchant a dry bag essentially seal it against outside moisture. This ability works constantly, but has an unfortunate side effect. Because of its nature, the True water will keep moisture inside the bag as effectively as it keeps it from entering. This means that the bag will take a very long time to dry out should water or liquid get inside.

Ground Boots

These heavy boots have True earth woven into the soles. Obsidimen often wear them when they have to travel by air, because the boots allow the obsidimen to maintain a link with the earth no matter how far away the ground is. Ground boots make the wearer harder to knock over, granting him a +2 bonus to any Knockdown Test, but weigh down his feet and slow him down in combat, where he incurs a –1 penalty to his Initiative and his Movement Rate. If he has a Strength value lower than 15, these penalties are at –2; if he has a Strength value lower than 10, they are at –3.

COMMON MAGIC ITEMS TABLE

Item	EDN	Cost	Weight	Availability
Clingor Rope, per end*	14	120	1	Rare
Dry Bag	13^{W}	250	3	Unusual
Light Bag	16^{A}	500	3	Rare
Ground Boots	13^{E}	300	10	Very Rare
Scarless Piton	16^{E}	150	1	Very Rare
Theft-Proof Pouch	14^{E}	150	1	Rare

* Does not include the Cost of the rope, add the Cost for the entire length (***Player's Guide***, p. 268).
EDN: The item's Enchanting Difficulty Number (see the ***Player's Companion***). If the item requires True elements to be woven into it separately, the type of element is noted in superscript (A = True air; E = True earth; F = True fire; W = True water; Wd = True wood). See Weaving True Elements Into Patterns in the Enchanting chapter of the ***Player's Companion***).

Light Bag

Light bags resemble normal bags and backpacks with True air woven into them. A light bag appears and weighs the same as an empty normal bag or backpack of the same size. A light bag has the same capacity as a normal bag or backpack of similar size, but weighs only half of the actual weight carried inside it.

Scarless Pitons

Often used by Thieves or Namegivers concerned about leaving behind traces of where they've been, these pitons are a fusion of metal and True earth. On a command word, they fuse into any stone they are held against, with no hammer required. On another command word, the piton can be pulled free from the stone, leaving no mark behind. Each piton holds up to 2,000 pounds of weight.

Theft-Proof Pouch

This belt pouch has True earth woven into the lining. On purchase, the pouch is linked to the buyer with blood magic (inflicting 1 Blood Magic Damage). If anyone else handles the bag, the True earth makes it heavier than a thundra beast. Only the rightful owner can pick up and handle the bag without difficulty. Someone else just touching the bag while it's in the rightful owner's possession will not trigger the effect.

Messenger Services

Messenger adepts often charge for their services, and their prices are usually higher than those of their mundane counterparts, depending on the situation and the message involved. As a rule of thumb, the base price for hiring a Messenger adept is determined by multiplying the cost of a mundane messenger by the adept's Circle (see **Trade Services** on p. 269 of the ***Player's Guide***). For example, where a mundane messenger would charge 50 silver pieces for delivering a message from Iopos to Jerris, hiring a Fifth Circle Messenger would cost 250 silver pieces instead. Of course, the Haggle talent or skill may be used to settle on a final price.

Potions

The following potions are not widely available in Barsaive, and demand usually outstrips supply. All of the potions described below are sold in clay or ceramic vials, each holding one dose.

Brew of the Berserkers

This potion was developed by the Vorst during the Scourge. When imbibed, the brew of the berserkers causes the drinker to

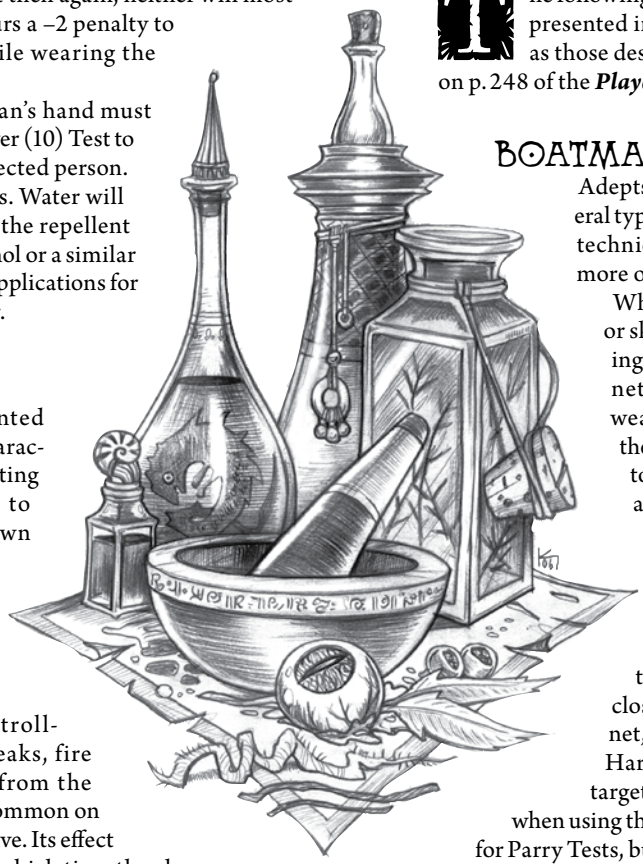
enter into a state of intense rage. The potion's effect lasts for 10 rounds, during which time the character *must* use the Aggressive Attack combat option, although he does so without suffering the Strain cost (see p. 222 of the ***Player's Guide***).

The character may only use another combat option if he first succeeds at a Willpower (9) Test.

Bug Repellent

This foul-smelling salve is commonly used by the Cathan to keep insects from harassing them. The salve is spread over the exposed parts of the body. Normal bugs will no longer bother the protected individual—but then again, neither will most people (the character incurs a –2 penalty to his Interaction Tests while wearing the repellent).

Insects larger than a man's hand must make a successful Willpower (10) Test to be able to approach a protected person. This effect lasts for 4 hours. Water will not remove the salve, but the repellent can be removed with alcohol or a similar solvent. One jar holds 10 applications for a human-sized Namegiver.



Equilibria

Elven alchemists invented this brew to improve a character's sense of balance, granting the imbiber a +3 bonus to any Climbing or Knockdown Tests he makes. The potion's effect lasts for 10 combat rounds.

Fire Water

Common among the trollmoots of the Twilight Peaks, fire water protects the user from the effects of natural cold—common on the mountaintops of Barsaive. Its effect lasts for 10 hours, during which time the character adds +3 to his Physical and Mystic Armor against damage from cold-based attacks and a +3 bonus to tests to resist effects of cold environments.

Ice Water

Common among the trollmoots of the Twilight Peaks, ice water protects the user from the effects of natural heat, even such diffuse magical heat as given off by the lava of Death's Sea. Its effect lasts for 10 hours, during which time the character adds +3 to his Physical and Mystic Armor against damage from heat-based attacks and a +3 bonus to tests to resist effects of hot environments.

POTION TABLE

Item	EDN	Cost	Weight	Availability
Brew of the Berserkers	19	250	1	Rare
Bug Repellent	11	150	3	Unusual
Equilibria	15	150	1	Very Rare
Fire Water	9	100	1	Rare
Ice Water	9	125	1	Rare
Quicksilver	15	300	1	Very Rare

EDN: The item's Enchanting Difficulty Number (see the ***Player's Companion***).

Quicksilver

Another potion often found in Vorst settlements, quicksilver increases the reflexes of the imbiber, granting him a +3 bonus to any Initiative Tests he makes during the next 5 combat rounds.

Weapons

The following weapons are made by the Namegiver races presented in this book and appear in the same format as those described in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 248 of the ***Player's Guide***.

Boatman Nets

Adepts of the Boatman Discipline developed several types of nets for use with their special defensive techniques, some of which can be employed in a more offensive manner.

When used for parrying with the Cast Net talent or skill, boatman nets have a chance of entangling the attacker's weapon. And while boatman nets are not large enough to be entangling weapons themselves, a character who knows the Cast Net talent or skill is proficient enough to entangle an opponent's weapon only with a Called Shot; this attack does not trigger a Damage Test. The Attack Test requires a Good Result, as normal for Entangling Weapons (***Player's Guide***, p. 229). The Entangling Difficulty is the Cast Net Step, regardless of the ability used to make the Attack Test. If the attack is in close combat, the character may hold on to the net, as described for Cast Net, and the target is Harried as normal. If a thrown net entangles a target's weapon, the target is considered Harried when using the weapon only (i.e. attacking with it, using it for Parry Tests, but not when using an ability like Avoid Blow that works independently from the weapon).

Casting Nets

The net most often found among Boatmen is the casting net. As a normal net is easily sliced to ribbons by an opponent's blade, the t'skrang reinforce their nets with wire or similar materials resistant to cutting. Such specialized versions are proper for repeated "casting" in combat, the target cannot add the Damage Step of any one-handed weapon he has to the test made to break free.

Barbed Nets

Of the more offensive tools used by Boatmen, the barbed net is a prominent one. It is a casting net with added barbs, spikes, and blade fragments. Unlike a casting net, it can be used offensively to cause damage, and a failed attempt to break from entanglement causes the victim 2 Damage Points.

Throwing Nets

Trying to be as versatile as possible in combat, Boatmen developed throwing nets to entangle their opponents' weapons from afar. Throwing nets double as casting nets for use as melee weapons, but use their own characteristics where applicable.

Barbed Throwing Nets

Barbed throwing nets are a fusion of throwing nets and barbed nets, and like barbed nets cause damage to a target who failed his test to break the entanglement. Barbed throwing nets double as barbed nets for use as melee weapons, but use their own characteristics where applicable.

Charge Swords

A charge sword (or *tuuvool*) is a curved blade designed for use as a cavalry weapon. Long weapons have disadvantages in various situations, so ork scorchers developed this as a weapon that is really only usable from horseback. The center of gravity of the *tuuvool* lies in the blade, whereas a regular broadsword is balanced at the hilt. To accomplish this, the tip of the blade is wide and heavy; this reduces the potential for using the *tuuvool* for stabbing, but the weapon is intended for cutting anyway.

The weapon grants a +1 bonus to the Damage Test if the wielder attacks from the back of a mount or a similar position where he has the higher ground. In all other situations, it inflicts normal Damage, but the wielder suffers a –1 penalty to Attack Tests made with the blade.

Ch'tard Weapons

Ch'tard weapons are a family of bladed weapons made specifically for attaching to a t'skrang's tail. They are mainly used by t'skrang following the teachings of the *Ch'tard* School of Combat. Among those who follow the *Ch'tard* School of Combat are many Swordmasters and Warriors and some Taildancers (mostly *k'stulaami*, as non-*k'stulaami* Taildancers usually follow the teachings of the Edo School, preferring unhindered use of their tails). Air Sailors, Boatmen, and Sky Raiders do not use *ch'tard* weapons, as their use in the close quarters of an airship or riverboat can be as deadly to crewmates as it can to enemies. The major drawback of *ch'tard* weapons is that the tail blade may unintentionally stab anyone behind the bearer, enemy or ally, meaning that *ch'tard* users often fight alone on the field of battle. Donning a *ch'tard* weapon takes two combat rounds. Note that *ch'tard* weapons are Attached Weapons (***Player's Guide***, p. 248) and usually require use of Unarmed Combat.

Ch'tard Thorns

A *ch'tard chok* is the size of a dagger and is made for using the tail to stab, much like the stinger of a scorpion. *K'stulaami* Taildancers using the *ch'tard chok* often mimic the fighting techniques of shadowmants and wyverns, making downward gliding tail attacks by lashing out at ground-based foes with their tails.

Ch'tard Blades

A *ch'tard nik* is a blade the size of a short sword, and features two distinct designs. It is either a straight blade that allows stabbing thrusts, or a curved blade that employs slashing attacks.

Ch'tard Danceblade

A *ch'tard lom* is an upsized version of the *ch'tard nik* and, due to its Size, can only be mastered by Taildancers following the *ch'tard* school (see **Special Rules** for the Taildancer, p. 192).

Dancing Blades

The dancing blade (or *g'lom moyna*) is similar in appearance to a hawk hatchet, except it is somewhat heavier and doubles as a melee weapon. Dancing blades are often used in pairs, so that one weapon remains in hand after the other one has been thrown. Taildancers, who are known to gain great control over their tails, can sometimes be seen using three *g'lom moyna* at once. Fighting with a *g'lom moyna* is difficult and considered a form of art among t'skrang. Its use is not without danger, as half of the blade always faces the wielder and he may harm himself with it as the result of a botched attack. *K'stulaami* Taildancers who alter the *g'lom moyna's* design for their own needs may double the weapon's range if they whip their weapons towards their targets with their tails when gliding.

MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

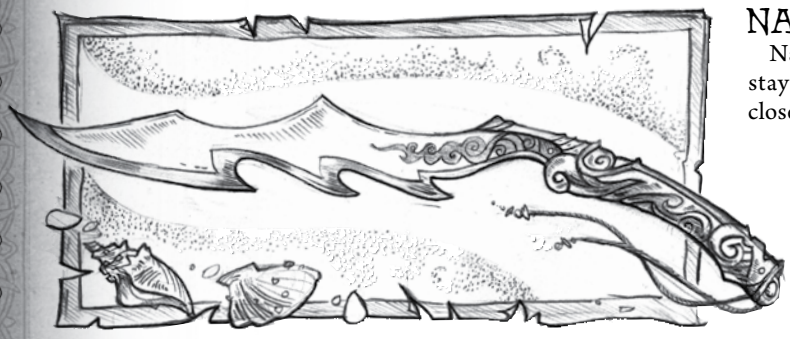
Weapon	Damage Step	STR Min.	EDN	Size	Cost	Weight	Availability
Barbed Net	2	9*	—	3	30	3	Rare
Casting Net	—	5	—	2	5	2	Unusual
Charge Sword	5	15	—	3	20	5	Unusual
Ch'tard Blade	4	10	—	2	45	3	Rare
Ch'tard Danceblade	5	13	—	3	75	4	Very Rare
Ch'tard Thorn	2	7	—	1	15	2	Rare
Dinganni Talon	3	11	—	2	45	2	Very Rare
Flowing Blade	5	11*	—	3	35	4	Rare
Nailboot	1	5	—	1	30	1	Very Rare
Stone Maul	8	21	—	7	500	13	Very Rare
Throalic Ornamental Dagger	2	4	—	1	30+	1	Rare
Path Staffs							
Lord's Staff	5	7*	14^{Wd}	5	—	5	—
Sage's Staff	4	7*	14^{W}	5	—	5	—
Scholar's Staff	4	7*	14^{F}	5	—	5	—
Traveler's Staff	4	6*	14^{A}	5	—	4	—
Warrior's Staff	5	10*	14^{E}	5	—	6	—
Wrist Blade	3	5*	—	2	30	1	Unusual

EDN: The item's Enchanting Difficulty Number (see the ***Player's Companion***).
* A minimum Dexterity Value of 9 is required to use a barbed net. A minimum Dexterity Value of 15 is required to use a flowing blade. A minimum Dexterity Value of 7 is required to use a path staff or wrist blade.

MISSILE AND THROWING WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	Damage Step	STR Min.	Size	Short Range in yards (hexes)	Long Range in yards (hexes)	Cost	Weight	Availability
Barbed Throwing Net*	2	10**	2	2–8 (1–4)	9–16 (5–8)	45	2	Rare
Dancing Blade*	4	10	3	2–12 (1–6)	13–24 (7–12)	110	3	Very Rare
Servos Blowgun	3	11	4	2–16 (1–8)	17–32 (9–16)	10	1	Rare
20 Servos Blowgun Darts	—	—	—	—	—	8	1	Rare
Throwing Net*	—	9	2	2–10 (1–5)	11–20 (6–10)	10	1	Unusual

* Can also be used as a melee weapon, see the item's description.
** A minimum Dexterity Value of 9 is required to use a barbed throwing net.



Dinganni Talons

A Dinganni talon consists of three curved or angled blades, strapped to the forearm in a parallel manner. The weapon mimics the talons of a bird of prey, which are creatures to which the Dinganni feel close. It does not seem as deadly as other weapons, due primarily to its size, but an experienced fighter can cause serious wounds to his enemy. The talon is considered a horrible weapon by many Namegivers, and having one strapped to one's arm is considered equivalent to carrying a drawn sword. The Dinganni, however, consider the weapon to cause no offense when worn by one of their warriors; the talon is as much a part of the warrior as it is part of a bird of prey. The talon is an Attached Weapon (***Player's Guide***, p. 248).

If an Attack Test made with a talon achieves an Extraordinary Result and the Damage Test results in a Wound, the attacker may make an additional Damage Test, as he cuts through the victims body while pulling the talon out again. No armor protects against this damage. On a result of all ones, one of the blades is torn off, lowering the talon's Damage Step by –1. If all three blades are torn off, the weapon is ruined.

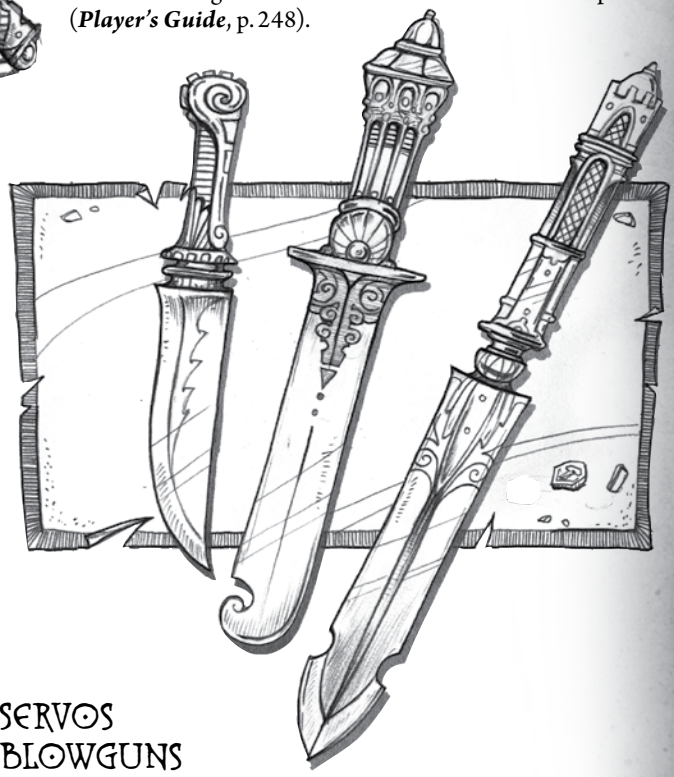
Flowing Blades

Flowing blades, or *t'shiv nika*, represent a minor school of t'skrang swordsmanship, employing curved blades instead of long, straight, pointed ones. A *t'shiv nika* is swung in wide, flowing movements without pause. This style mimics the steady and constant flow of the river. The *t'shiv nika* not only expresses the t'skrang's love for the river, but stresses stances and positioning in fight. As the blade moves far and wide in many directions, the opponent has difficulties following it without losing steady sight of the bearer. The bearer, on the other hand, has to time his movements to have the blade in the right place at the right time for his own defense and the perfect blow.

Whenever the wielder successfully uses the Maneuver talent or skill, his opponent becomes Harried, in addition to the regular effects of Maneuver.

Nailboots

Nailboots are a favorite weapon for windlings who prefer to stay as high as possible in the air while attacking an enemy in close combat. A *neeparth* (as a nailboot is called in the windling language) is a regular leather boot tipped with a 3-inch-long thorn. Windlings wearing these boots usually swoop down on their victims to deliver a kick or two before flying up out of reach again. The nailboot is an Attached Weapon (***Player's Guide***, p. 248).



Servos Blowguns

The *t'hyan* is used by many of the tribes in the Servos and Liaj Jungles, and is prominently used by the t'skrang and tamer tribes. It is much longer than the blowguns used outside of the jungles, usually between four and six feet in length, and serves primarily as a hunting tool. Due to the special form of their mouths, t'skrang cannot use blowguns designed for other Namegivers, and vice versa. These blowguns fire darts 4 to 6 inches in length. The darts are usually coated with poison of varying type.

Stone Mauls

An obsidiman Stone Maul (*maretosinocamuina* in their language) appears like a large piece of stone strapped to a stick, but is carefully carved from a *makellojeroaluinosoma*, a stone that has been in the vicinity of the Liferock for several centuries. These stones have absorbed some of the Liferock's force and have a strong magical connection to the earth. This kinship elevates the stone's impor-



tance for obsidimen, and they treat this weapon with great respect.

When Attacking to Knockdown (***Player's Guide***, p. 222) with a Stone Maul, the Difficulty Number for the target's Knockdown Test increases by +2. The weapon loses this power if it has not been near its corresponding Liferock for more than a year and a day. The power can be regained if the weapon remains near its Liferock for a full week.

Scholars vigorously debate if the powers of stone mauls are magically linked to obsidimen or not, as some trolls have also been known to use them with effect.

Throalic Ornamental Daggers

Throalic dwarfs grew more and more metropolitan over the centuries, eventually abandoning the dwarven custom of personal armament. By the time of the Scourge, larger weapons had disappeared from daily life almost completely, except where needed due to one's profession.

The *lech'magat*, an ornamental dagger, became the substitute for the *feraka* ("the warrior's first weapon"). It is given to a young dwarf by his family when he reaches a certain age or maturity. Although usable in combat, the *lech'magat* is mainly worn like jewelry and is considered a status symbol and heirloom in dwarven families, a parent or grandparent giving his or her *lech'magat* to the eldest child when the child comes of age or has his first child. Needless to say, prices for these weapons vary greatly, as does the way different Throalic families handle the tradition.

Path Staffs

Some elven communities and families practice the tradition of giving a path staff to an elf beginning his journey on a new path of the Wheel of Life. Form and function serve a meaning, and there is a different type of staff for every path. Path staffs (or *melaan ti'mes* in Sperethiel) resemble regular quarterstaffs, but are much heavier and sturdier. This is to symbolize that everything that is a burden today can be a support tomorrow, and vice versa.

Path Staffs are not intended for use as weapons, but can be employed as such. Each staff is enchanted with True elements, mirroring the element of the specific path. The enchantment makes the staff flexible and sturdy, and it will never break under normal circumstances, "as the walker on the path shall bend, but never break." It also bestows additional benefits as noted in the descriptions below, although scholars debate whether these actually stem from the enchantment or the wielder's connection to the Wheel of Life itself, as they do not seem accessible to just anyone.

Path staffs cannot be bought. An elf respecting the tradition will not use a path staff if it did not come as a gift to him when walking a new path. Path staffs are returned to the community when an elf finishes walking a path, whereupon he receives a new one. There are exceptions, however. Some staffs are very old and have been used by elven adepts for centuries. These staffs have the potential to become legendary items, carrying a part of the legend of all of their former owners in them. Such staffs, rare as they are, are never given without serious consideration, and their use has to be earned by the prospective bearer. Exploring such a staff's secrets without help from the elven community is regarded as a display of worthiness.

Unless otherwise noted, path staffs count as quarterstaffs.

Warriors' Staffs

Warriors' staffs are enchanted with True earth and are longer and thicker than most quarterstaffs. This increases the minimum Strength value required to use such a staff as a weapon, but also increases the damage the staff causes.

Scholars' Staffs

Scholars' staffs are enchanted with True fire. Holding one in hand while meditating bestows a state of higher physical relaxation and mental energy, adding a +1 bonus to any Perception Tests made by the bearer to gain insight into a problem or situation he is thinking about.

Travelers' Staffs

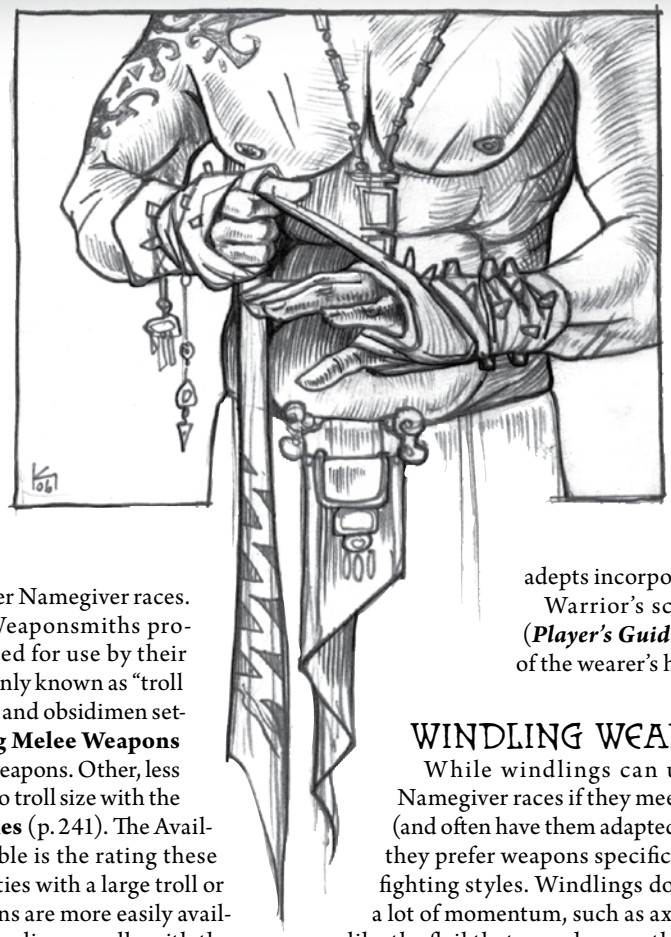
Travelers' staffs are as light as regular quarterstaffs. Enchanted with True air, they enable their bearers to travel for one additional hour each day without suffering from the effects of Fatigue (***Gamemaster's Guide***, p. 121).

Sages' Staffs

Sages' staffs are enchanted with True water; holding one in hand while meditating calms the spirit, adding a +1 bonus to any Perception Tests the bearer makes to discover the connection between two or more events, facts, persons, or similar things.

Lords' Staffs

A lord's staff is a rare sight. The True wood used in its construction bestows all of the benefits of the other types of staffs.



Troll Weapons

Trolls and obsidimen can use much bigger weapons than the other Namegiver races. Naturally, troll and obsidimen Weaponsmiths produce many different weapons suited for use by their races. These large weapons, commonly known as "troll weapons," are usually found in troll and obsidimen settlements. **The Troll and Windling Melee Weapons Table** lists the most common troll weapons. Other, less common choices can be converted to troll size with the rules for **Alternative Crafting Styles** (p. 241). The Availability Rating indicated on the table is the rating these weapons have outside of communities with a large troll or obsidiman population, troll weapons are more easily available where many trolls or obsidiman live, usually with the Availability of their human-sized counterparts.

Most Weaponsmiths can forge these weapons on request. Some troll or obsidiman Weaponsmiths are known to keep a limited supply and assortment of troll weapons in stock, as they find it easier to practice or work on them for their own enjoyment.

Warrior's Scarves

Sa'nioch ti'maeaerth translates to "hard bandages of the warrior." These simple-looking lengths of cloth developed from scarves elven warriors tied around their hands to protect them during *carromeleg* training, the elven martial art of unarmed combat.

While the inside of the bandages is lightly padded, the outside features metal plates embedded along the area covering the backs of the hands, as well as other key areas of the body used for striking or blocking. While a metal gauntlet would fulfill the same role, elves prefer to keep the use of their hands and fingers as unimpeded as possible, to allow them the use of a bow. Blood elf designs replace the metal plates with rivets and studs, and often further enchant the bandages to not tear at their thorns.

Donning a *Sa'nioch ti'maeaerth* is a complicated procedure, as the bandages are wrapped in a fashion that grants full use of all fingers. This is often performed in a ritual carried out before major battles, keeping the elf's mind free and helping to achieve a more combat-oriented state of consciousness. Many elven adepts incorporate it into their Karma rituals.

Warrior's scarves are Attached Weapons (***Player's Guide***, p. 248) and also protect most of the wearer's hands like gauntlets would.

Windling Weapons

While windlings can use weapons made for other Namegiver races if they meet the requirements to use them (and often have them adapted, see the ***Player's Guide***, p. 247), they prefer weapons specifically designed for their size and fighting styles. Windlings do rarely use weapons that carry a lot of momentum, such as axes or maces, and shun weapons like the flail that may damage their unprotected wings if out of control. **The Troll and Windling Melee Weapons Table** lists the most common windling weapons. The Availability Rating indicated on the table is the rating these weapons have outside of communities with a large windling population, windling weapons are more

TROLL AND WINDLING MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	Damage Step	STR Min.	Size	Cost	Weight	Availability
Raid Spear	7	16	7	10	12	Unusual
Troll Battle-Axe	8	17	6	45	8	Unusual
Troll Dagger*	3	7	1	2	2	Unusual
Troll Flail	6	13**	4	45	7	Unusual
Troll Mace	5	16	4	25	7	Unusual
Troll Pole-Axe	9	19	7	190	13	Rare
Troll Quarterstaff	5	9**	6	7	5	Unusual
Troll Spear*	5	12	4	12	4	Unusual
Troll Sword	6	13	4	50	6	Average
Troll Two-Handed Sword	9	18	7	160	9	Rare
Troll Warhammer	8	18	6	120	10	Rare
Windling Dagger	1	2	1	1	2 oz.	Unusual
Windling Pole Arm	4	7	2	55	2	Unusual
Windling Quarterstaff	2	3**	2	7	1	Unusual
Windling Spear	2	4	1	25	8 oz.	Unusual
Windling Short Sword	2	4	1	30	8 oz.	Unusual
Windling Sword	3	6	1	45	1	Unusual
Windling Two-Handed Sword	4	7	2	150	2	Unusual

* Can also be used as a throwing weapon by trolls and obsidiman, Ranges are identical to their namesake weapons.
** A minimum Dexterity Value of 7 is required to use a flail or quarterstaff.

easily available where many windlings live, usually with the Availability of their human-sized counterparts. Windling weapons with limited grip-space (swords, daggers) cannot normally be used by larger races, non-windlings receive a –3 penalty to Attack Tests when using such weapons.

Most Weaponsmiths can forge windling weapons on request, and windling Weaponsmiths keep a limited supply and assortment of windling weapons in stock, as they find it easier to practice or work on them. Many limit themselves to windling weapons or weapons of Sizes 1 and 2 entirely, though.

Wrist Blades

The wrist blade is a modified dagger; the blade is fixed along a length of wood or metal, which in turn is fastened with straps to the bearer's wrist. Alternatively or in addition to the straps, a handgrip set perpendicular to the blade allows the wielder to control the weapon and to deliver slashing and punching blows. They are popular among t'skrang.

The key advantage of the wrist blade is stability. If the weapon is strapped to the arm, the Difficulty Number for attempts to disarm the wielder is increased by +2. Wrist blades are Attached Weapons (***Player's Guide***, p. 248), no matter whether strapped to the arm or handled at the grip.

Alternative Crafting Materials

The majority of Barsaive's weaponsmiths and armorers work in metal, producing steel swords, iron maille, or bronze spear tips. And while they know how to craft a quarterstaff, an arrow's shaft, or a shield from wood, how to pad a suit of cloth armor or harden leather to tightly fit an adventurer, they default to metal for the business ends of their deadliest weapons and the plates they sew onto a leather base to make their toughest armor. The majority of Barsaive's craftsmen bet on metal to equip the armies of Throal, the adepts they send to battle Horrors, or the local city watch.

There are, however, exceptions. Some craftsmen don't have access to metal. Some cultures prefer other materials. And some Weaponsmiths are drawn to another material, one they feel more akin to.

This section provides rules on how to replace metal with other materials in weapons and armor, guidelines how the choice of a favored material other than metal affects character development of Disciplines such as the Weaponsmith, and information on why and how some cultures use materials other than metal. These materials are called "alternative materials," and in this book the alternative materials of bone, crystal, stone, and wood are introduced.

Training

When a character learns the Craft Armor or Craft Weapon skill, he picks up on his trainer's techniques, learning to work the material the trainer considers basic. The same is true for Weaponsmiths gaining access to half-magic crafting while initiates, although the material they learn to primarily work has either a greater impact on them, or requires them to find a teacher working with that material in the first place.

A craftsman is considered trained in the use of one of the five weapon and armor materials (bone, crystal, metal, stone, or wood) when learning one of the crafting skills or becoming initiated into a crafting Discipline. His instructor must be trained in the material, and many instructors only teach how to work the material they favor, even if they are proficient in the use of others, to beginners. Metal is considered the default material, and charac-

Specializing Crafters

Optional Rules: The rules for learning to craft alternative materials as presented here eventually allow a craftsman to master all the basic materials without much additional expenditure, at least in Legend Points. We want to leave it up to you to determine the place and influence alternative materials have in your game, and so the amount of auxiliary rules and in-game requirements to learn crafting alternative materials is kept low. Below, you'll find a series of rules options to modify the basic rules, each of which has an impact on your game world and the characters living in it.

True Specialists: With this option, craftsmen cannot train to craft alternative materials, the material they initially picked up is their favored material, and crafting other materials is always more difficult. This option is best used to connect the materials to a character's social and racial background and to employ a material's effect on character development (see the individual **Material Descriptions**, p. 238). It limits character development during play, though, and may be more suitable to games that do not have player character crafters (as a means to individualize gamemaster character crafters) or where the group favors planning characters from the ground up with extensive backgrounds.

Material Knacks: This option adds a Legend Point cost to alternative material training by making training available via a mechanic similar to talent knacks (as crafting is handled via skills, there can't be any actual talent knacks). Learning an alternative material requires a minimum rank in the skill (or Half-Magic Rank, a minimum Circle halved), and incurs a Legend Point Cost based on that rank. You can make all materials available on the same Rank, or make learning successive materials harder by requiring a higher rank for the second, still higher rank for the third material, and so on. This option works best to represent that crafting versatility is an effort beyond simply becoming better by raising a skill rank. The actual rank requirements and Legend Point cost depends on how much effort you want to require.

Generalists: You can also drop all training requirements for alternative materials, enabling crafters to produce items from all materials equally well. This option reduces a crafters connection to any one material, also reducing impact on character design and development. The focus of alternative materials shifts towards regions and races, as availability of materials and cultural context remain important.

Adept Special Rules: You can also decide to handle crafting adepts differently from skill-users, their magical crafting enabling them to more easily use alternative materials, or requiring more focus from them. You can use any of the other options for them only, or for the skill-users only, or come up with something in-between.

ters created prior to the release of these rules are assumed to have learned metal working if the player and gamemaster do not agree on something different. The character crafts weapons and armor from the material he is trained in using standard rules, but finds it harder to craft other materials (see **Crafting Alternative Materials**, p. 239) until he is trained in the use of such materials. Note that all craftsmen, regardless of what material they are trained in, can craft basic armor and weapon components from wood, such as shields or shafts, but also all-wood weapons found in the ***Player's Guide***, such as bows or staffs. A material is considered "alternative" only where it replaces metal. Likewise, leather, cloth, and similar materials are considered basic and part of all craftsmen training regimes, as is using alternative materials to decorate weapons and armor.

ARMOR CONVERSION TABLE

Armor	Physical Armor	Mystic Armor	Initiative Penalty	Cost	Weight	Availability*
Bone	–1	—	–1	200%	50%	+2 Ratings
Crystal	–2	equals Physical	–1	500%**	150%	+2 Ratings
Stone	—	—	–1	50%	200%	+1 Rating
Wood	–1	—	—	50%	100%	—

* The maximum Availability Rating is Very Rare, the minimum Everyday.
** Crystal armor costs a minimum of 50 silver pieces.

WEAPON CONVERSION TABLE

Weapon	Damage Step	STR Min.	Size	Cost	Weight	Availability*
Bone	–1	–3	max. 3**	150%	50%	+1 Rating
Crystal	—	+2	—	500%***	150%	+2 Ratings
Scorcher Blade	—	+2	—	90%	125%	+1 Rating
Stone, blade	—	+2	—	75%	200%	+1 Rating
Stone, blunt	—	+3	—	50%	200%	—
Troll	+1	+3	+1	125%	125%	+1 Rating
Vorst	—	+1	—	400%	110%	+2 Ratings
Wood	–1	–1	—	75%	75%	—
Wood, makeshift	–1	—	—	30%	75%	-1 Rating

* The maximum Availability Rating is Very Rare, the minimum Everyday.
** Applies only to the part of the weapon actually made from bone, see description.
*** Crystal weapons cost a minimum of 25 silver pieces.

Gaining training in an alternative material requires a character to improve his crafting ability under tutelage of a master trained in the use of the material. When relying on skills, this means taking training for rank improvements with a trainer who knows the material. When crafting comes as part of a Discipline, such as with the Weaponsmith, it means training for Circle-advancement with a trainer proficient in the material. Being trained in a material does not incur additional Legend Point costs, but the character may have to spend additional time looking for a suitable teacher, and may have to pay more silver if a teacher for the desired material is rare in the area.

Training in a material or a favored material can be indicated as part of the skill or Discipline name. For example, the skill's name can be expanded to include the material ("Craft Bone Weapon"), or the materials the character has trained with can be listed as for Language skills ("Craft Weapon [Metal, Bone, Crystal]"). Craftsmen and especially Weaponsmiths may identify themselves according to their favored material in a way similar to Swordmasters, who may identify themselves as Axemasters, Staffmasters, and so on. The typical terms are Bonesmith, Crystalsmith, Metalsmith, Stonesmith, and Woodsmith. For Weaponsmiths, the favored material may influence character development, see **Material Descriptions** below.

Material Descriptions

The following descriptions detail how the alternative materials of bone, crystal, stone, and wood are used, as well as who uses them and how they may affect character development and roleplaying options of the character crafting them. Note that metal is not specifically detailed, metal is the default material and covered by standard rules, setting information, and Discipline descriptions.

Bone

Bone is the lightest of all the materials used for making weapons and armor. It has a great tolerance for compression, but can be broken easily if leverage is applied. This makes it ideally suited for stabbing, as with a spear or arrow, but little else. Bone has a prominent role throughout Barsaive where metal is not available.

Weapons with bone parts of limited size, like spears and arrows, are as effective and durable as metal weapons, although they do not profit from bone's lower weight. They are the most common ones throughout the province where metal is rare. Bone knives and bone daggers are often used in rituals and serve as indicators of status in many primitive Barsaivian societies. In specific cases, the source of the material is important. Larger all-bone weapons such as swords are rarely produced because they break easily and do less damage than metal weapons. However, windlings prefer them so they can have a melee weapon of satisfying size and range, even if it is less harmful to their opponents.

Bone is widespread among many tribes and clans for all sorts of tools and adornments, as using every bit from a hunted animal fits their lives in harmony with nature and the balance of life. Some scorcher tribes make ceremonial weapons from the bones of thundra beasts. It is known that some tribes use the bones of their dead; for others, carrying a weapon carved from the bones of fallen enemies is a sign of strength. Of all the races, windlings favor bone the most, because of the material's low weight and due to the fact that the process of carving it does not require much strength.

Bonesmiths tend to be careful individuals, as they have to choose wisely which parts of a skeleton to use, and from what direction force can be applied when working the material. Bone cannot be formed as much as metal or wood, and is not as homogeneous as crystal or stone. Bonesmiths are used to making the most out of any given situation, more so than other craftsmen. Their profession often brings a deep respect for all creatures with it, although some simply see them as a source for their needs.

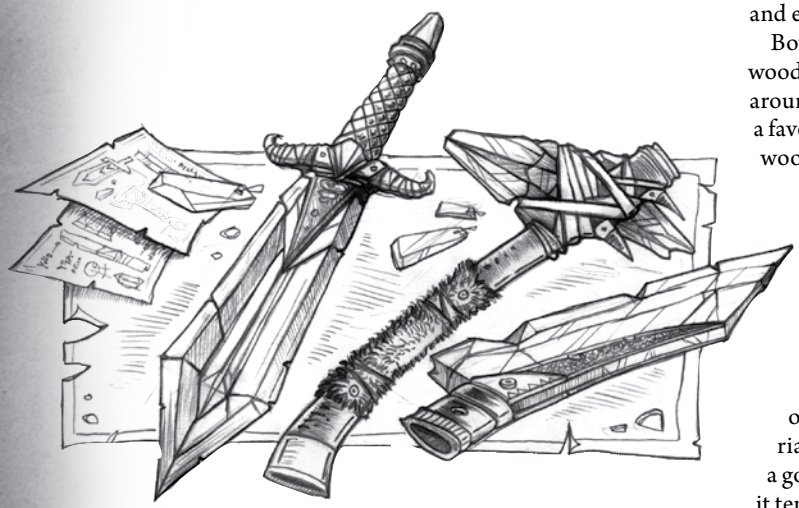
Crystal

Crystal is the best known non-metal material for all sorts of weapons and armor, although it is the rarest material available. Countless legends and stories about the crystal raiders have made this mate-

rial famous, even attributing qualities to crystal it does not regularly have, like tremendous potential for damage or even magical effects. Crystal works nearly as well as metal; it just is slightly more rigid and somewhat heavier. Ironically, it is used in the Twilight Peaks because there is plenty of ore, but no resources for refining metal. Crystal has a tendency to keep a keen edge, even renewing it through use, which makes it perfect for creating bladed weapons.

Crystal weapons are most often seen in the hands of highland trolls, who have a longstanding tradition in crafting them as well as control over the best sources of living crystal. But even to them, living crystal is not as easily available as tales and legends tell, and so crystal weapons are no staple in the Twilight Peaks. Crystal weapons are given to outstanding and important individuals only, and in a Sky Raider's career he will probably receive one only after several very successful raids in which he has played an important role. Trolls generally do not give their crystal weapons away, and if they spot a non-troll bearing a troll-fashioned crystal weapon, he had better have a good explanation as to why he is worthy of it. Crystal armor is handled even more restrictively, as it requires more living crystal to be produced. The same is true for larger weapons, as it requires larger individual pieces, which are rare.

Crystalsmiths are highly honored individuals among the troll clans and moots, and the crystal raiders even show great respect to a non-troll Crystalsmith. Becoming a Crystalsmith requires



patience, being one even more so. Harvesting living crystal is not only a time-consuming process, crystal can be rather treacherous while it's being worked—it might splinter or break without any fault on the Crystalsmith's part. Careful study of the crystal and a tolerance for failure are required. But Crystalsmits are rewarded for their troubles: once the work is done, the result is a weapon matching a metal weapon in sharpness and rigidness, but exceeding it in beauty.

Stone

Employing stone is one of the simplest ways to produce a powerful weapon. Binding a large stone to a stick results in a makeshift mace—a weapon more dangerous than the stone or the stick alone. While a stone mace is the crudest stone weapon available, it is not the only one. Though it is not always the best choice, stone is widely used to make weapons simply because it is easy to find and usually very cheap; looking for a suitable stone to be used as the head of a mace may take some time, but is usually faster than forging the whole thing from metal. Stone is often used for large weapons, making good use of the material's natural weight. Because of the material's weight, stone armor other than blood pebble is a rare sight.

Obsidimen have a natural affinity for working with stone. Apart from their close relationship to the material, they have the proper strength to carry and use a bulky warhammer made of stone. More numerous, though, are Stonesmiths of the highland trolls. Where crystal is a preferred material, it is much rarer than stone—which is what mountains are made of, after all. Many highland trolls begin their training as Stonesmiths and only few are able to try working with crystal later in their careers.

Stonesmiths tend to put much more work into finding the proper stone than into actually working it. They seek stones that are perfect for use in creating a certain weapon, measuring a stone's True form. They develop a knack for such judgment calls with time, and tend to extend it to other situations. A Stonesmith learns about different types of stone and knows which type is best suited for a particular weapon.

Wood

While all Weaponsmiths learn to work wood for shafts and hilts of all kinds of weapons, Woodsmiths focus on using this material. Some wooden melee weapons are widely used throughout Barsaive, including clubs, quarterstaffs, and bows. Wooden swords and axes are usually created for training or tournament purposes, as they do not reach the lethality of other weapons—wood simply cannot hold an edge as keen as metal or crystal. Woodsmiths also craft and enchant bark and fernweave armors.

Bows and bowmaking are deeply rooted in elven culture, since wood can often be found in abundance and in many different types around their settlements. Crafting wooden weapons is generally a favored pastime throughout the forested areas of Barsaive, and woodcarving is often practiced in that manner.

Woodsmiths appreciate regular practice, acknowledging wood as the element of learning. And though it seems a makeshift wooden weapon can be made quite quickly, Woodsmiths often put a great deal of time into crafting more useable weaponry, as wood needs to be dried for extended periods and fire hardened slowly after crafting. Woodsmiths are used to beginning work on a weapon or set of armor a long time before it can actually be used, and often work on many different items at once. Due to the material's good combination of weight and flexibility, wood poses a good alternative to metal. The downside of using wood is that it tends to break quite easily.

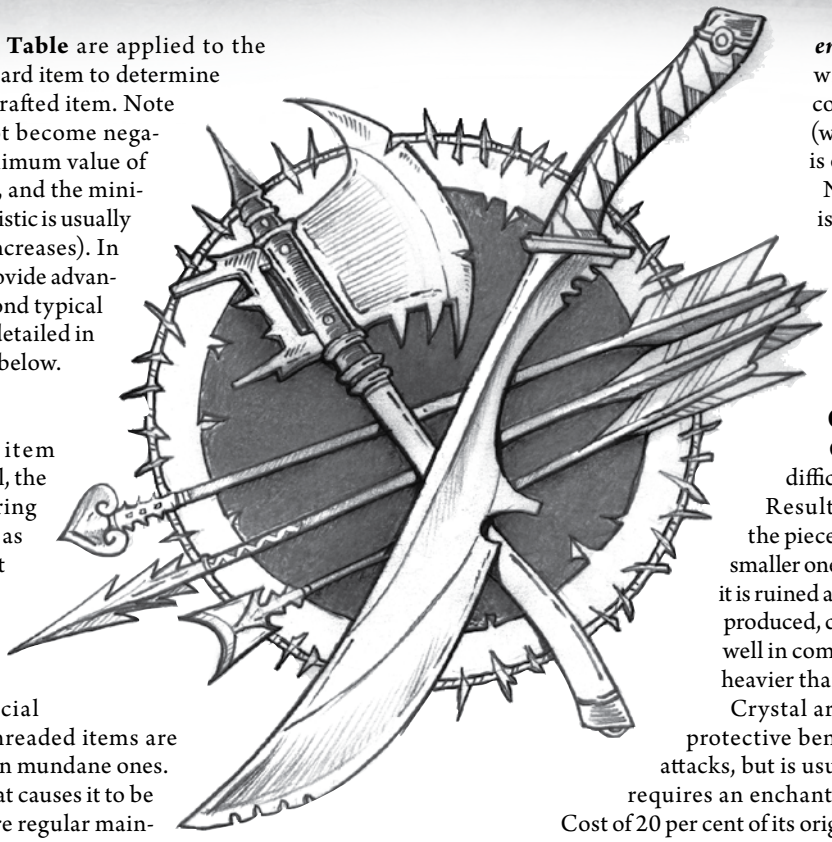
CRAFTING ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

Characters use their Craft Weapon and Craft Armor skills to produce weapons and armor from alternative materials; Weaponsmiths may use half-magic to craft both weapons and armor, while Archers may use half-magic to produce ranged weapons only (see the **Half-Magic** sections for these Disciplines in the ***Player's Guide***). Except where otherwise noted, the standard rules for these skills apply.

Characters untrained in handling one of the alternative materials require a Result Level one higher on any test made to produce an item from the material in question. Repairing or modifying an item requires a Result Level one higher only if it involves working the material. For example, fastening a stone spear tip to a new haft does not involve working the stone and can be done by any smith, but re-sharpening it or re-working it into an arrowhead requires working with the material, and requires training or a higher Result Level. Likewise, the higher Result Level is not required when making any other test towards an item, such as casting a spell on it, enchanting it, using talents such as Forge Weapon, and so on.

If the crafting test is successful, an alternative material item is created. It is usually based on a normal item made from metal, and then the modifiers from the **Armor Conversion Table** or

the **Weapon Conversion Table** are applied to the characteristics of the standard item to determine the characteristics of the crafted item. Note that characteristics cannot become negative values or zero, the minimum value of a characteristic is usually 1, and the minimum increase in a characteristic is usually also 1 (in case of minute increases). In addition, some materials provide advantages or disadvantages beyond typical weapon characteristics, as detailed in the materials' descriptions below.



Enchanting

When enchanting an item from an alternative material, the Result Levels required during the enchanting process are as normal, training does not apply to enchanting, only to the production of the item. Threaded items made from an alternative material may require special consideration, though. Threaded items are said to be more durable than mundane ones. If an item is of a material that causes it to be damaged easily or to require regular maintenance, enchanting the item to become a threaded item usually makes it durable enough to no longer be limited in that fashion.

Material Properties

Bone, crystal, stone, and wood are the four basic alternative materials presented in this book. The individual materials' descriptions below list special rules that apply when crafting that particular material or using an item made from it. As a rule of thumb, items made from alternative materials are in some way physically inferior to metal items, but offer benefits metal items do not have.

Future products may introduce additional materials, or materials that are subsets of one of the four basic materials and may have additional characteristics. For example, special types of wood or bones from specific creatures that have additional or special properties. The gamemaster is also encouraged to introduce his own subsets of materials or allow loot and trophies taken from creatures to display special properties.

Bone Items

Bone weapons are light, but have limited design choices. Bone does not easily maintain large homogenous edges and breaks easily. As such, it is best used for pointed thrusting weapons and at a limited Size (based on the Size of parts made from bone, not the overall Size of the weapon, as it may include other materials). If rules for negative side effects on Pathetic Results are used, bone weapons should break on such test results against an opponent wielding or wearing a weapon or armor from a harder material. The conversion modifiers from the table and other special rules are used only if bone makes up a major part of a weapon's mass. A bone spear tip, for example, is small enough to neither reduce the weapon's weight substantially nor break too easily, so the weapon's normal characteristics are used. A bone short sword, on the other hand, has all special rules and modifiers applied.

Bone armor has a dire appearance, granting the wearer a +1 bonus to Interaction (Intimidation) Tests. It can be repaired quickly, at a rate of three points of Armor Rating per day (***Player's Guide***, p. 256), and without high material cost if bones are at hand (which, on the battlefield, is often the case).

Note bone as a material is not limited to parts of the internal skeleton – carapaces or antlers are part of the bone material group, for example.

Crystal Items

Crystal weapons are difficult to carve. On a Poor Result on the crafting test, the piece of crystal breaks into smaller ones (on a Pathetic Result, it is ruined as usual). If successfully produced, crystal weapons handle well in combat, but are somewhat heavier than metal weapons.

Crystal armor is praised for its protective benefits against magical attacks, but is usually living armor and requires an enchantment once a year at a Cost of 20 per cent of its original value, or it looses its Mystic Armor Rating until so enchanted.

Stone Items

Stone weapons come in two categories, blunt weapons and bladed weapons. Blunt weapons include warhammers and maces, and while heavy, work just as well as metal. Bladed weapons like swords are a different matter. They tend to chip, and require at least 10 minutes of work and a successful Craft Weapon Test or other skill test related to working stone after every full-fledged fight. The Difficulty Number is the weapon's base Damage Step. Until a successful test is made, the weapon's Damage Step is reduced by –1, with a minimum Damage Step equal to the weapon's Size (the weapon becomes blunt). A Pathetic Result on this test ruins the weapon.

Stone armor can be worn by obsidiman, who may consider it living armor. Stone armor is easily repaired, at a rate of two points of Armor Rating per day (***Player's Guide***, p. 256), and material costs are low in most areas.

Wood Items

Wood weapons are light, but do not hold an edge well. Wood is primarily used for bowmaking, but some melee weapons are easily produced from wood. Wood can be quickly made into makeshift weapons, such as sharpened sticks for spears. The gamemaster determines the time required to produce makeshift weapons. Such weapons decay rapidly, though, as the wood is not properly hardened. If rules for negative side effects on Pathetic Results are used, makeshift wooden weapons should break on such test results against an opponent wielding or wearing a weapon or armor from a harder material. Wood is also often used to construct waisters, training weapons mimicking their regular counterparts, such weapons usually handle like clubs or quarterstaffs.

Wooden armor may be greeted favorably by elves and many of Barsaive's more savage tribes, under such circumstances granting the wearer a +1 bonus to Interaction Tests made to ask a small favor from such groups. Repairing wooden armor can be cheaper when materials can be locally harvested.

ALTERNATIVE CRAFTING STYLES

Alternative crafting styles provide rules to modify characteristics of weapons and armor, similar to using alternative materials. The result of using an alternative crafting style will be closer to the original item, though, and is less restricted than crafting alternative materials. Usually, a crafting style has no impact on a Weaponsmith's philosophy, but it may reflect the culture he has trained in or lives in. The rules for crafting styles are similar to those for alternative materials, but less unified, with different styles possibly having very different sets of rules. In many instances, alternative styles and alternative materials can be combined, most prominently by troll smiths who produce oversized weapons from stone and crystal. Some styles may just add additional color to regions, races, or societies without any obvious benefits, and players and gamemasters are encouraged to develop their own crafting styles for player characters or for gamemaster characters and locations regularly employed in their game.

Items are converted for crafting styles by applying modifiers from the Armor Conversion Table and Weapon Conversion Table. As with alternative materials, note that characteristics usually do not become zero or even negative, and that the minimum for most is 1. Also, the minimum increase to a characteristic is 1 in case of minute increases.

SCORCHER BLADES

Scorcher blades are Named for the ork tribes producing them, although not all tribes producing scorcher blades are actually scorchers, and not all scorcher blades are actually bladed weapons. Scorcher blades are heavier versions of weapons otherwise considered to be elaborate, especially swords, but also spears. The scorcher versions of these weapons appear more basic and sturdy, but to most people also more crude and primitive. They usually lack any adornment. Orks find it easier to produce weapons like these in their camps, and also appreciate the extra weight that makes otherwise lightweight weapons feel more potent.

Some ancient dwarf weapons (and some from outlying communities) follow a similar pattern. They are often called scythan (or, respectively, *garahamite*) blades, but contrary to scorcher blades, are often adorned and have a nicer, if antiquated, appearance.



HANDLING CONVERSIONS

When converting weapons or armor for an alternative material or an alternative crafting style by applying the modifiers from the tables, or when considering if an item can be converted in the first place, please consider the following:

There are a considerable number of weapons and armors in **Earthdawn** products already, and a set of rules that would cover all eventualities, including items developed for future books, would be a small book of its own (or alternatively, a book full of new weapon and armor tables). Thus, we leave it to your good judgment to decide on a case-by-case basis what weapons or armors can be converted, and to nudge the characteristics of the resulting item into one direction or another if necessary after comparing them to existing items. In some instances, your interpretation of Barsaive plays a role in this. For example, is the bow mounted on a crossbow generally made from metal in your Barsaive, or are there wooden versions? If the former, you could apply the wood material modifier, if the later, you couldn't.

The rules and modifiers are designed with the intent of replacing metal items (for alternative materials), replacing very typical player character items (for alternative styles), and to be used on melee weapons. They do not work perfectly on all items, and in case of weapons, may not work that well on ranged weapons or atypical weapons with very low basic characteristics (where they may result in values that seem out of proportion, especially if you combine several modifiers). Neither are they supposed to provide an advantage in every case, even if they have disadvantages that would seem to call for an advantage elsewhere. Alternative materials and crafting styles are more about adding color and character development options to your game than about simply providing additional or better items. When making any judgment calls, this should be your angle of attack.

Troll Weapons

Trolls and obsidiman can use larger-Size weapons than the other Namegiver races. They can wield weapons of up to Size 7, and can use Size 4 weapons one-handed. These rules provide information on how to convert smaller weapons to these Sizes, and also how to convert weapons of any Size to troll and obsidiman proportions to allow players more options to choose from.

The most common troll weapons are listed on the **Troll and Windling Melee Weapons Table** (p. 236). Other weapons, including ranged weapons, can be converted into troll weapons by applying the modifiers from the **Weapon Conversion Table** (p. 238).

Troll weapons can be made from alternative materials, in which case both the troll weapon and the appropriate material modifier are applied, the troll weapon modifier is applied first. The most common troll weapons that use alternative materials are made from stone or crystal by the highland and raider trolls clans, they are often called highlander weapons for that reason.

Any smith can produce troll weapons without special training, as they are simply oversized versions of normal weapons. Despite the term troll weapons, obsidimen produce and use them; the term only reflects that there are more trolls than obsidimen in Barsaive. Troll weapons are primarily melee weapons, but some are ranged weapons, mostly thrown ones, can be modified and in some places bought from stock.

Note that weapons already including "Troll" as the first word of their name already have this template applied or are of special design to already be troll-sized, so they cannot receive this modification again, nor can any weapon receive it twice.

Vorst Weapons

Vorst are famed for their barbed and hooked melee weapons that literally tear their enemies apart, causing horrific wounds. Craftsmen can learn to produce these weapons the same way they can learn crafting an alternative material (see **Training**, p. 237). Vorst characters starting with a crafting ability can automatically craft Vorst weapons.

Vorst weapons take four times as long to produce as normal, have the modifiers from the **Weapon Conversion Table** applied, and provide the following additional benefits:

Vorst melee weapons cause Bleeding Wounds (***Player's Guide***, p. 222), as the barbs cause additional damage when pulled out of or along the victim's body. On any Damage Test that generates a bonus die, however, the hooks are caught so deep in the enemy or his armor that the attacker has to make a Strength Test against the target's Toughness Step. If this test fails, the attacker loses hold of his weapon and is disarmed.

Vorst missile weapon ammunition is difficult to remove from a victim that receives a Wound from them. Safely removing a barbed projectile requires a successful Physician (8) Test. If the test is failed, the projectile is removed, but inflicts 2 Damage Points to the patient in the process. No armor protects against this damage. At the gamemaster's discretion, a victim's movement may tear at the projectile, which counts as a failed test (the projectile is ripped out, causing damage).

There are no Vorst versions of throwing weapons, missile weapons other than ammunition, and some designs or materials may not be adaptable to Vorst style (there may not be Vorst quarterstaffs, for example).



CHAPTER THIRTY

LANGUAGE GLOSSARIES

Im a imya? *Is that even a question?*

• Thom Edrull, practicing Sperethiel •

The following glossaries include words and phrases with which the wise traveler should become familiar.

ABBREVIATIONS

adj. = adjective
adv. = adverb
conj. = conjunction
(for) = formal
(inf) = informal
(ins) = insulting
interj. = interjection
mod. = modifier
n. = noun
prep. = preposition
v. = verb

DWARF

The dwarf language is used throughout the entire province of Barsaive. The most common dialect is Throalic, an amalgam of older dwarf tongues such as Scythan and the ancient tongue of the city-state of Ysdragyl. References to Throalic as a language are always for the dialect of the dwarf tongue predominent in Barsaive. The following glossary includes dwarf words and phrases which are described or referenced in the chapter entitled **On That Remarkable People Known as Dwarfs**, on p.8.

b'jados *n.* Adventurers who periodically serve a trading house in exchange for a retainer and other benefits. Literally, "trading house heroes."

buundavim *n.* Bartertown slang for a member of an extortion or smuggling gang. Combines the Throalic word for "employee" with a vivid ork curse.

chav'ao'ros *n.* Series of meetings through which the people of Throal communicate their political will to the king. Literally, "forums within forums."

cirivados *n.* Member of a specialist team of adepts working for the Eye of Throal; literally, the tile with the highest point value in a popular Throalic board game.

dahnat *n.* The area of Throal occupied by those in the lowest income bracket.

Garahamite *n.* In honor of Garaham, one of the founders of Throal. A resident of Throal's mountain settlements

hach'var *n.* An elaborate Throalic team sport in which players attempt to knock balls into small holes in a wall of the court guarded by the opposing team.

huata *n.* An ostrich-like beast used as a mount.

j'havim *n.* An employee or associate of a trading house, but with no influence over policy.

j'ha-olzim *n.* A coordinating body for *olzim* of a given Passion (see *olzim*).

khav'r *v.* (Scythan) To read. Root word from which the term *khavro'am* is derived.

khavro'am *n.* (Scythan) An ancient Scythan word loosely translated as "the learned." Used in Throalic society to describe scholars and sages.

mado'yeh *n.* A two-hour break for food and social interaction in the middle of the Throalic business day, customarily starting at the thirteenth hour.

neden *n.* Crossroads. The late Varulus III chose this word as a Name for his son, the heir to the throne and current king of Throal.

olzim *n.* A social organization by which members pay homage to one of the Passions.

un'hayedah *n.* A ritualistic acrobatic sport practiced only by dwarfs of Throal, most of them members of the Ja'kotton philosophical movement.

wedshel *n.* The area of Throal occupied by the middle classes; the largest percentage of Throal's population falls into this classification.

wech'nes *n.* Exhibiting an interest in other people's negative traits without a balancing interest in their good qualities. A dwarf with a tendency to *wech'nes* is looked down on as a gossip.

wurika *n.* (Scythan) Ancient Scythan word for trickery.

Sperethiel

The elven language, called *Sperethiel*, is commonly used in most elven settlements and serves as the official language for all elven rituals. In *Sperethiel*, context and intonation give words a wide range of subtle meanings and implications. Conventions of speech and address allow further shadings of meaning that reflect the relative status of the speaker and the listener. A person speaking *Sperethiel* would not say the same thing to a social superior in the same way as he would speak to someone of equal or inferior status, for example. The following glossary includes elven words and phrases which are described or referenced in the chapter entitled **On the Remarkable History of the Elven People**, on p.20.

a *conj.* Or.

belet *adj.* passionate

Beletre *n.* The Passionate.

carronasto *n.* Stillness; non-motion.

celé *n.* A non-elf.

celénit *n. (ins)* Insulting form of celé.

cirolle *v.* To travel.

co *prep.* To. Shifts to con before a vowel.

dae *adj.* Loose.

daron *v.* To die.

draesis *n.* Wheel.

eidolon *n.* 1. Literally, "phantom." 2. Eidolon. The elven Name for the site of an ancient elf kaer at the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent rivers.

Eoerin adj; *n.* Wise; scholars of elven spiritualism.

faskit *n.* Legal code; law.

goro *n.* Outsider, one who is not a subject of the elven court; a stranger.

goronagee *n.* One apart, especially an elf not part of an elven group.

goronagit *n. (ins)* Insulting form of *goronagee*.

goronit *n. (ins)* Barbarian.

-**ha** *adj.* Suffix indicating emphatic repetition

heng *v.* To speak or understand a language.

heron *v.* To be alive; to exist.

im *v.* To be.

imiri *n.* Memory of something, memorial.

-**it** Derisive suffix, becomes *-nit* after a vowel.

kahevar *n.* A stringed instrument that sounds similar to the hum of a windling's wings.

ke "of the", changes to *k'* before a vowel

li *(for)* Interrogative affix.

li-ha "Isn't that so?"

llayah *adv.* Literally, "I agree with you" or "I will do it."

makkaherinit *n.* A young and foolish person.

makkalos *n.* Stupidity.

makkanagee *adj.* Willfully stupid.

medaron *n.* Death.

meleg *v.* To feel in a physical manner.

Mellakabal *n.* "Shining Ones"; used exclusively in the context of *Tesrae ke'Mellakabal* (Citadel of the Shining Ones).

meraerth *n.* Warrior.

mes *n.* Path.

milessaratish *n.* Servant-soldier.

mis *v.* To follow.

mistish *n.* Follower.

morel *n.* Life.

nagé *adj.* Willful.

nagee *adv.* Willfully.

od *conj.* And.

ozidan *v.* To leave behind.

pechet *prep.* Except for.

perest *v.* To have.

perritaesa *n.* Scholar.

qua *(inf)* Interrogative affix.

raé *n. (inf)* An elf.

raegh *n.* Lord (non-specific).

raén *n. (for)* One who is of the people, an elf.

resp *v.* To listen.

reth *n.* Elf. Literally, "listener of harmony."

reth'im *n.* Elven culture. Literally, to be elven.

-**ri** Interrogative suffix, also used rhetorically. ("Is that not so?'')

rillabothien *n.* An unresolved chord in music. Poetically, an unresolved situation in a relationship.

rinellé *n.* Rebel; deserter.

sa *adj.* Strict.

sallah *n.* Silence, non-speech.

samriel *n.* Discomfort, implying necessary discomfort as in medical treatment.

se Positive beneficial prefix.

serathilion *n.* Demanding desire; attraction that cannot be denied.

serulos *n.* Machismo; childish masculinity.

se'seterin "Bright morning" (good morning).

shay *n.* Forest.

sielle *adv.* Yes. Literally, "it is the way of things."

speren *n.* Harmony; peacefulness.

sperethiel *n.* 1. Speech. 2. Sperethiel. The name of the elven language.

teheron *n.* Life; existence.

téch *interj.* Common curse word equivalent to "damn."

teleg *v.* Maintain a condition (*telego carronasto*, "keep still").

telene *v.* To learn.

tesrae *n.* citadel or holding.

thelem *n.* Law of nature.

thiel *n.* Music. Poetically, a pleasant sound.

ti *prep.* Of. Shifts to t' before a vowel.

-**tish** *adj.* Suffix. One who, as in "one who" (verbs) or "one who is a" (noun). An 'i' is often inserted between consonant and suffix, as in telegitish, "keeper."

veresp *v.* To reply, to answer.

versakhan *n.* An enemy.

wineg *n.* An ork or troll. (Insulting, as in "troglodyte.")

-**ya** *mod.* A negator suffix.

HUMAN

The following glossary includes human words and phrases which are described or referenced in the chapter entitled **An Essay on Humans**, on p. 45. Most of these are specific to cultures (dialects) and are noted as such with each term.

c'athe *n.* (Cathan) Jungle. Also the root word from which the Cathan derive their name.

d'inga *n.* (Dinganni) Literally, "slow-running river." The root word from which the Dinganni derive their name.

Dinganni *n.* (Dinganni) Wanderer.

Galeb *n.* (Galeb, Landis) Boulder. The root word from which the Galeb derive their name.

gitta *n.* (Cathan) Horror.

kahlek 1. *n.* (Klek) Vine. The root word from which the Klek derive their name. 2. *adj.* (Landis) Dexterous.

tulan *n.* (Cathan) Wizard.

OBSIDIMAN

Obsidiman is an intricate language, with words that describe not only an object, but the characteristics of that object. The following glossary includes obsidiman words and phrases which are described or referenced in the chapter entitled **On That Curious Race Known as Obsidimen**, on p.50.

Gawinauttop *n.* Elves. Literally, "Souls of the Forest."

Gzateemij *n.* Humans. Literally, "the Lost Ones."

horkla *n.* Netlike headpieces woven from rope or cloth.

Jilojuttop *n.* T'skrang. Literally, "Souls of the River."

Llakoozaxe *n.* Trolls. Literally, "Rock Brothers."

loroweliaramehokorin *n.* Granite. Literally, "the hard, gray bones of the earth that none can shatter."

makorialamanakea *n.* Red clay. Literally, "soft, red earth that sticks to what it touches."

marelliyorakenui *n.* Literally, "the small pebble with quartz flecks in it."

marellowekaheorin *n.* Literally, "the red pebble as large as a dwarf's thumb."

Mbaztzik *n.* Dwarfs. Literally, "the Builders."

olriutaquanotskirrocletl *n.* Death. Literally, "return to the Liferock after walking among the others."

ozikilnemburahe *n.* Dragon.

raallehemaraweoroniyalinn *n.* Sunrise. Literally, "the rebirth of the sun's light from the darkness of the inner earth wherein it has slept."

rohoreyamaliyakhur *n.* Literally, "he who sojourns among the swift." The title given to the first obsidiman to leave the Dreaming.

Tiruplaxi *n.* Windlings. Literally, "Wind Spirits."

Yizloatzik *n.* Orks. Literally, "the Roamers."

OR'ZET

The ork language has changed markedly over the years, with the shorter syllables of the ancient tongue *Or'zat* replaced by the longer words of the modern *Or'zet*, which was heavily influenced by Throalic before and during the Scourge (mainly through translation of the *Book of Tomorrow* into *Or'zet*). The following glossary includes ork words and phrases which are described or referenced in the chapter entitled **Revelations on the Nature of Orks**, on p.73.

ah *conj.* Of. Usually omitted in favor of simply connecting the two words with an apostrophe.

bat *n.* Daughter. Usually seen as Bat' ("daughters of-").

bot *n.* Son. Usually seen as Bot' ("sons of-").

Blork *n.* The passion Lochost. Also used in his honor as an expletive.

buunda *interj.* Expletive, often accompanied by an obscene gesture to show contempt for the recipient. Used in conversation without the gesture as in, "I give you the buunda, supercilious elf!"

Cara Fahd *n.* Literally, "heroic sacrifice." The Name of the ork kingdom.

cerri *n.* Literally, "battle siblings." The training groups and small fighting units of the Thunderers' cavalry. *Or'zet* has no separate words to distinguish brother and sister.

djoto *n.* Literally, "the way of life." The code of honor followed by the Metal Fist scorcher tribe.

dramar *n.* The new mate of an ork's mother or father, to whom a child owes respect and obedience, and from whom he can expect advice and guidance.

drundeah *n.* Literally, "execution." A game in which the participants spear wild pigs or war hostages. Children play a tag-game version.

egrand *n.* Protector. Seen most commonly in the phrase *Egrandu ah Cara Fahd*, the official *Or'zat* title for the Protectors of Cara Fahd and wielders of the Blades.

Emdachot n.Literally, "steadfast." The elite military group of ancient Cara Fahd.

eunabo *n.* Literally, "the choice of the herd." Broken Fang ritual in which a horse chooses his cavalryman.

gahad *n.* Sensation similar to intense heartburn, triggered by certain impulses on which an ork must act or suffer loss of concentration and physical discomfort. Refusing to follow *gahad* often leads to what is known as a *gahad* hangover.

Grallen Field *n.* The field where Grak Hron died. Also where the ancient city of Cara Fahd is located.

greeah *n.* Silent twitching to take the edge off imminent **gahad**.

Greeb *n.* The Passion Jaspree.

Grenkaklank *n.* The Passion Chorrolis.

grumog-agu *n.* An unarmed wrestling match in imitation of the fighting of slaves.

grumoge *v.* "To wrestle."

havuut *n.* Literally, "blind man." Someone who clings to tradition for no reason.

hez *n.* Fang.

Hez'Blork *n.* Literally, "Fangs of Lochost." An order of liberators who free slaves and spy for Cara Fahd's government.

hua *n.* A relay race where the participants are tied together at the wrist and throw their partners over each others' shoulders.

hurlg *n.* Alcoholic beverage made from fermented rye, mixed with animal fat. Beloved by orks, feared by others. The type of fat determines its quality, from low-grade cat fat to celebratory thundra fat.

Jrikjrikjrik *n.* The Passion Upandal.

Kawjujwak *n.* The Passion Dis; the Name used before she went mad.

kart *n.* Young boy.

karvusta *n.* Literally, "silent eyes." The Cara Fahd government corps of spies.

ken *n.* Young girl.

kukra *n.* A dance involving rapid and elaborate foot movements and a strong drumbeat.

lelkrarg *n.* The child of an ork's former mate, or the child of a present mate by another ork.

lukro *n.* A fertility dance dedicated to Jaspree that involves a lot of touching and swaying movement.

Madjork River Valley *n.* The site of the legendary Battle of Grallen Field. Which, if any, of the existing rivers was the Madjork is unknown today.

magnun *n.* (plural magnu) Volunteer.

Mahuta *n.* The Chosen of the Passions. Orks across Barsaive passed down the legend of a Mahuta who would reappear among their race in the orks' greatest time of need. By the time Krathis Gron was born, few remembered this legend.

Mera-a-a-arg *n.* The Passion Astendar.

Mikbruug *n.* The Passion Mynbruje.

Muvuul *n.* The Passion Garlen.

Namdroth *n.* Literally, "strength preservers." A mysterious tribe/kaer/order of warriors who claim to live in the uncorrupted manner of old Cara Fahd.

ni-basaal-cutcro *n.* Literally, "stealing passage from the Passions." The rite of passage into adulthood for members of Rejruk's Foxes.

Nko-Gu *n.* Metal Fist.

nroto *n.* Horror Stalker. Also an order of Horror Stalkers maintained by Krathis to guard against corruption.

Or'zat *n.* "Old tongue of Cara Fahd." Ancient ork language, characterized by use of mainly one- and two-syllable words.

Or'zet *n.* "Traveler's Orkish." The modern ork language, heavily influenced by Throalic and characterized by more complex grammar and longer words.

Prakarool *n.* The Passion Floranuus.

quaalz *n.* Type of kidney bean, a staple of the ork diet. Also used colloquially to indicate foolishness, as in "He's full of *quaalz*."

Raggok *n.* The Mad Passion's Name is an *Or'zet* word.

rek *n.* School.

rekart *n.* Metal Fist training for boys.

reken *n.* Metal Fist training for girls.

Rohodo *n.* Fertility festival involving *lukro*, drumming, and "private celebration."

rutra *n.* A martial sport developed from ork boxing. It includes kicks and can quickly become deadly.

shpita *n.* Literally, "slaps." *Gahad*-baiting contests in which contestants taunt and slap each other to see who loses his temper first.

skraacha *n.* "Scorcher," though it connotes living every day with passion, amazing deeds and extreme measures, uncompromising even in death.

Tranko *n.* The Passion Thystonius.

turgma *n.* A deviant ork; one who engages in acts of slavery, fails to seek out grand deeds, engages in blood betrayal, and so on.

turgan *n.* City ork.

tussdi *n.* A sport similar to lacrosse, jousting and frenzied mob stompings.

ujnort *n.* Literally, "they who will not understand." Non-orks.

uyataa *n.* An extremely potent hot pepper. 1. (Or'zat) Means "green agony" 2. (Or'zet) Means "scorned woman."

vravraka *n.* The dream of a pregnant woman in which the unborn child specifies the details of his own Naming ritual.

vrukart *(inf) n.* Literally, "mate-boy." Boyfriend.

vruken *(inf) n.* Literally, "mate-girl." Girlfriend.

vut *n.* Dung. Used as an expletive.

Wejoto *n.* The mine in the Tylon Mountains where Krathis Gron was born. Named by the Metal Fist, it means "against the way."

Wurchaz *n.* Literally, "Claw Ridge." The fortress built at Claw Ridge.

yerz'eth *n.* Literally, "nest money." The fund from which any ork in Cara Fahd can request supplies.

TROLL

The following glossary includes troll words and phrases which are described or referenced in the chapter entitled **On the Remarkable Nature and Ways of Trolls**, on p.82.

abo *v.* To live.

Abora! *interj.* A common toast, meaning "Let us live (life to the limit)!" This phrase is a cognate of an ancient dwarf toast which translates as "Let us drink life to the dregs!"

Abor'a'kaf *interj.* Crystal raider saying, meaning "Life is struggle."

ago'al *n.* Literally, "rock brother." Obsidiman.

ago'atol *n.* Literally, "stone worker." Stonesmith.

ago'chad *n.* "Fire stones," a type of living crystal.

ago'frod *n.* "Ice stones," a type of living crystal.

alheim *n.* Literally, "brother home." Moothome.

altrua'agoral *n.* Literally, "clan of the people of one mountain." Trollmoot.

b'ruar *n.* An instrument, usually fashioned from the horn of a thundra beast.

chad *n.* Fire.

da'a'ka'uli *n.* Literally, "one who has no honor." Outcast.

De'abor abora *interj.* "While we live, let us live!"

dom'an *n.* The privacy within.

druv'a *n.* Literally, "claims of honor." Boast.

Era'ka *n.* The Severance, a formal ritual through which a troll is cast out of his clan.

er'ka'a'kul *n.* Literally, "one who has sacrificed for honor." The name by which an outcast calls himself.

frod *n.* Ice.

ga'ar *n.* Kaer. Often applied to any troll settlement.

ga'i! *interj.* Literally, "of the rock!"; meaning something as solid and noble as rock. Positive or approving expression, equivalent to "Well done!" or "Excellent!"

g'ral *n.* Clan.

g'ralnakh *n.* Family.

Griahk'kan *n.* The "Spirit of All Things," who created the world and all Namegivers, including the trolls.

g'tarr *n.* Literally, "the Holding." A Naming ritual.

h'kradt *n.* An ancient crystal raider ritual, usually performed before boarding airships prior to battle.

jar'arak *n.* An important troll ideal embodying elements of spirituality, religion, art, and philosophy.

jar'a'uli *n.* Trolls of the Kava moot, or "People of Passion."

Ka'al'abor *interj.* Literally, "Honor is the brother of life." Troll expression.

katera *n.* Racial honor.

katorr *n.* Personal honor.

kat'ral *n.* Clan honor.

kava *n.* (ins.) Literally, "mud." Outcast.

kera'astol *n.* Berserker; also a searcher for truth.

ker'ago'atol *n.* Crystalsmith. Literally, "bright stone worker."

kun'dal'in *n.* Literally, "spine." The keel of a ship.

newot *n.* A slave captured by honorable means in raiding.

no'a'g'ral *n.* Adoptive member of a clan; member of another race who has been granted honorary status as a troll.

no'a'ul *n.* Member of another Namegiver race.

norr *n.* Literally, "tapestry." Epic tale that recounts events of great importance to the history of the world and/or the troll race.

ro'ona *n.* A troll who has reached the Age of Passage but not yet undergone the associated rite. Translates roughly as "candidate."

scol *adj.* Old or ancient.

se'alla *n.* A tale about the life and achievements of a single hero, usually a troll.

tarr'a'on *n.* Naming ritual performed after a troll has undergone the Rite of Passage.

Ter'vo'an! *interj.* Literally, "we part." Troll farewell.

trolthelia *n.* Skin deposits of asymmetrical bonelike matter common to trolls that give their faces and bodies a rough or bumpy appearance.

tro'o'astia *n.* Crystal raider. Translates roughly as "thunderhead" or "omen of doom."

trua'a'ul *n.* Literally, "the Dual People." Name of the troll race.

trua'a'uli *n.* Literally, "of the Dual People." A troll.

trua'g'ral *n.* Clan moot.

Va! *interj.* Literally, "Mud!" Multipurpose interjection and expletive.

va'a'uli *n. (ins)* Literally, "of the mud people." Member of another Namegiver race.

vig *n.* The troll chosen by a drakkar captain as his second-in-command should he die in battle.

Vod'arr! *interj.* Literally, "I see you." Troll greeting.

T'SKRANG

The following commonly used t'skrang words and expressions are described or otherwise referenced in the chapter entitled **A Brief Treatise On The T'skrang**, on p.101.

amotla shivoam ga'nai Literally, "down the river to the sea"; the t'skrang euphemism for death. The phrase also refers to the custom of sending the ashes of t'skrang dead down the Serpent River to Death's Sea.

aropagoi *n.* The five t'skrang trading foundations that control the bulk of trade on the Serpent River.

aropagoinya *n.* A member of the central foundation of an aropagoi.

atlosh t'zdram *n.* Literally, "the Great Game"; the t'skrang version of chess, played on a brightly colored mandalic board. Also, a popular epithet for the game of politics.

bakshevas *n.* Literally "taking the tenth part," an outdated toll system enforced on isolated stretches of Barsaive's rivers.

castellan *n.* An official responsible for the military defenses of a t'skrang city.

chaida *n.* A hatchling's egg-parent.

choth edo k'tan var *interj.* Literally, "up tail, out of the mud"; an admonishment similar in meaning to "chin up" or "stiff upper lip."

chreostomas *n.* Literally, "tree-herders"; the name used by the t'skrang tribes of the Servos Jungles when referring to themselves.

clingor *n.* A type of sticky rope.

corvus *n.* A heavy, spiked gangplank commonly attached to an Ishkaratan warship; used during boarding actions against enemy vessels.

d'janduin *n.* A potent spice that gives food "hotness."

diktos *n.* An administrator charged with supervising the activities of an *aropagoi's* associated foundations.

dreveki *n.* A type of small, sail-driven t'skrang fishing boat common along the waterways of the Serpent River system.

duari *n.* A type of barrel used as a standard unit of measure by Serpent River traders.

g'doinya *n.* The secret foundation name of an *aropagoinya*.

hai jik'hai *interj.* Acknowledgment of an extreme act of bravery.

Haropakilea *n.* Literally, "Flower of Haropas"; an enclosed underwater garden that lies at the intersection of the Inner Tower domes of House K'tenshin's Sixteen Towers.

haropas *n.* Enlightenment; communion with the Passions.

Houros *n.* Literally, "the serpent that eats its own tail"; the t'skrang symbol for the universe.

iyoshkira *n.* Subterranean creature from which the Pale Ones craft their boats.

jik'harra *n.* Fearlessness; literally, "brave passion."

kaissa *n.* The phase in a t'skrang's life in which it changes from neuter to either male or female.

khamorro *n.* Literally, "deck scrubber"; an adolescent t'skrang apprentice aboard a riverboat.

k'harro *n.* Passion; heart.

kiatsu *n.* Preparation; one of the four pillars of *haropas*.

Krohyin (also, k'rohyin) *n.* Trade covenant; *aropagoi* organization for producing and gaining specific trade goods.

k'soto ensherenk *n.* The Name-passing ritual, used to pass ancestral memories between foundation leaders.

k'stulaa *n.* A flap of skin that extends from a t'skrang's wrist to hip. A rare physical trait among this race.

k'stulaami *n.* Name for the winged t'skrang.

kuratai *n.* A popular t'skrang spice.

kyaapas (also, kya'apas) *n.* Balance, especially referring to the balance between *jik'harra* and family obligations, or between niall and *aropagoi* loyalties.

lahala *n.* Honored One; usually the eldest female in a foundation.

niall *n.* Foundation; an extended family of 40 to 60 t'skrang.

niall dynasthai *n.* Literally, "powerful foundation." A V'strimonian fraternal order dedicated to supporting one of the twenty mothership in House V'strimon's fleet.

p'skarrot *n.* Measure; destiny.

refselenika *n.* (Abbr. refs) Barriers constructed of elemental water that protect a village.

shimoram *n.* Literally, "eye blink." A type of small, highly maneuverable, keeled V'strimonian warship.

shivalahala *n.* The *lahala* of an *aropagoi* central foundation.

shivarro *n.* Literally, "river passion"; a word to describe a t'skrang's fundamental attraction to life on the river.

Shivoam *n.* T'skrang goddess of elemental water; also, the Serpent River.

Shivoam v'nokamai daureis Literally, "the spirit of the river requests a gift." The traditional greeting used by a riverboat captain attempting to extract *bakshevas* from another vessel.

Shivos *n.* T'skrang god of elemental earth.

shustal *interj.* Exclamation meaning "No more need be said."

Syrtis *n.* T'skrang god of elemental air; also, the moon.

t'chai kondos *n.* Egg-bonding. A magical ritual that binds a male eggtender to a hatchling for life.

tessesta *n.* The t'skrang tradition of exchanging gifts with departing comrades-in-arms.

Tikka K'rohyin *n.* House V'strimon's Council of Trade Covenants.

Tikka K'slahyin *n.* House V'strimon's Council of Crew Covenants.

T'schlome *n.* T'skrang goddess of elemental fire; also, the sun.

t'slahyin *n.* Crew covenant.

t'slashina *n.* The village diamond, that part of the village enclosed by the *refs* and the towers.

t'sleetha-t'sleethi Slowly and more slowly; take it easy.

trisnari *n.* An inn that serves food but does not provide lodging; a restaurant.

velos *n.* A cannibalistic, t'skrang-like Namegiver race native to the Servos Jungle.

vors *adj.* Deep.

WINDLING

The following glossary includes windling words and phrases which are described or referenced in the chapter entitled **A Tale of Windlings**, on p.120.

harresa-tis *n.* Literally, "hardy ones." Windling warriors who serve as both land and air cavalry.

keesris *n.* The wine brewed from *keesryps*.

keesryps *n.* Tiny, bright blue fruits that grow in shrubs at the base of large trees and contain a sweet, refreshing juice. Used to brew *keesris* wine.

kooweesh *n.* Literally, "prisoner of the earth." Windling word for those who cannot fly (grounders).

sadoor *n.* A thin, tough fiber woven to create nets.

sleerah *n.* A windling mating ritual.

FIRST CIRCLE T'SKRANG BOATMAN



"My job as a Boatman is to protect the riverboat, the key to caring for and protecting my people and my niall. *Most think that protection is only in the now, like an adventurer who saves a child from immediate danger. But if that child hungers because no one cares for it afterwards, and will starve to its death, did the adventurer really save it? The Serpent River gives us all the water, food, and even shelter that we will ever need. But just because the food is there, it does not ensure our survival. I must go catch the fish that will feed our people. I must collect goods to sell at ports. And the only way to get to port and the best fishing spots is with a sturdy riverboat.*

"Just getting the money and fish for our people and niall is not enough, however. The return home is often even more difficult than the journey to port. Some nialls refuse to survive through honest hard work and turn to piracy instead, stealing the fruits of labor from others. On the return home, protecting the cargo becomes as important as defending the riverboat itself. I must succeed at this journey every year, so that my niall *and my people will continue to thrive."*

DEX (17): 7 **STR** (13): 6 **TOU** (13): 6
PER (13): 6 **WIL** (11): 5 **CHA** (16): 7

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 9 **Death:** 35 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 5 **Spell Defense:** 7 **Unconsciousness:** 27 **Knockdown:** 6
Mystic Armor: 1 **Social Defense:** 9 **Wound Threshold:** 9 **Movement:** 6

Karma Points: 4/4

Boatman Talents: Avoid Blow (1): 8, Climbing [D] (1): 8, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons [D] (1): 8, Pilot Boat [D] (2): 8, Swimming [D] (2): 8

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Creature Lore [K] (2): 8, Fishing (2): 8, Maneuver (2): 9, Read/Write Language (2): 8—(Dwarf /Throalic, T'skrang), Speak Language (2): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, T'skrang), Storytelling [A] (2): 9, Throwing Weapons (2): 9

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Padded Leather (Phys 4), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0, Shatter 17)

Weapons: Flowing Blade (Damage 11), Dagger (Damage 8), Spear (Damage 10)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger/Spear 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Fishing Kit, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 2 silver and 2 gold pieces

Notes: Has the Tail Combat racial ability

FIRST CIRCLE VORST HORROR STALKER



"The Horrors tried to kill my people. They breached Kaer Vorst and tried to kill us to the last man, woman, and child. But we were too strong to die in that hole. We fought back and defeated the Horrors that tried to end us forever. We promised ourselves that we would never be that weak again. We developed the weapons and tools we would need to defeat our enemies for good.

"Now the tables have turned. The hunted becomes the hunter. I will kill every last undead, construct, and Horror that I see. I will give the release of death to those turned and corrupted by the Horrors. And as for the Horrors, I will do to them what they tried to do to my people: make them extinct from this world. If I should fail, another will pick up my sword and complete the task."

DEX (13): 6 **STR** (12): 5 **TOU** (13): 6
PER (16): 7 **WIL** (16): 7 **CHA** (9): 4

Initiative: 5 **Physical Defense:** 7 **Death:** 35 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 6 **Spell Defense:** 9 **Unconsciousness:** 27 **Knockdown:** 5
Mystic Armor: 3 **Social Defense:** 6 **Wound Threshold:** 9 **Movement:** 6

Karma Points: 5/5

Horror Stalker Talents: Astral Sight [D] (1): 8, Call of Harrow [D] (1): 8, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons [D] (2): 8, Silent Walk (2): 8, Steel Thought [D] (1): 8, Versatility (0)

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf /Throalic, Human/Vorst), Scarification [A] (2): 6, Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human/Vorst), Tactics (2): 9, Throwing Weapons (2): 8, Vorst History [K] (2): 9, Wilderness Survival (2): 9

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Hide (Phys 5; Myst 1; Init 1), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17)

Weapons: Vorst Short Sword (Damage 9), Dagger (Damage 7)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 2 copper, 7 silver, and 1 gold pieces

Notes: Has the human Versatility racial ability.

First Circle Human Journeyman



"So many folks limit themselves to a single point of view—how sad for them! Every one of us is part of the rich and varied tapestry of Barsaive, and that variety and diversity is our greatest strength – if only we put it to use. By walking a mile in another's boots, I come to understand them. Your path and mine are heading in the same direction… Why don't we share the road for a spell? We'll share stories and experiences, and come to know and understand each other. Together we will encourage the fledgling unity that Barsaive has so far seen to grow and prosper."

DEX (16): 7 **STR** (13): 6 **TOU** (15): 6
PER (13): 6 **WIL** (12): 5 **CHA** (11): 5

Initiative: 6 **Physical Defense:** 9 **Death:** 38 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Physical Armor: 5 **Spell Defense:** 7 **Unconsciousness:** 30 **Knockdown:** 6
Mystic Armor: 1 **Social Defense:** 7 **Wound Threshold:** 10 **Movement:** 6

Karma Points: 5/5

Journeyman Talents: *Claw Shape* (1): 7, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Missile Weapons (1): 8, Silent Walk (1): 8, Tracking (2): 8, Unarmed Combat (2): 9

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Creature Lore [K] (2): 8, Hunting (2): 9. Melee Weapons (2): 9, Read/Write Language (2): 8—(Dwarf /Throalic, Human), Speak Language (2): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human), Wilderness Survival (2): 8, Wood Carving [A] (2): 7

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Weapons: Dagger (Damage 8), Longbow (Damage 10), Quiver (20 arrows)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes, Longbow 40–80 yards/20–40 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Carving Tools, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 1 silver piece

Notes: Because of the unique nature of his Discipline, the adept does not have access to the human racial ability of Versatility.

First Circle Ork Liberator



"I will continue the legacy of Hrak Gron. My gahad will always burn brightly for Blork! Slavery will not end until the Theran Empire falls, and perhaps the trollmoots as well. Yes, the trollmoots, as newot is just another Name for slave. We Liberators do not have the power to stop either Thera or the trolls on our own, however. I can only hope that one day, the Nation of Cara Fahd will find the strength to bring an end to the Theran Empire; and one day the trolls realize how much the newot practice makes them the same as their most hated enemies, or they are all defeated as Ustrect was defeated. Until that day comes, I will do my best to help those cruelly enslaved by Thera and the trolls.

"I will track and hunt slavers without mercy. I will raid the caravans and camps of slavers, but not for money as other orks. The cargo of a slave caravan is more precious than gold; each life I can save from slavery and oppression is priceless. Saving them is not enough though; I must return them to their interrupted lives. Seeing the joy on the faces of reunited family members and friends is more than worth the dangerous task of rescuing them."

DEX (16): 7 **STR** (13): 6 **TOU** (14): 6
PER (10): 5 **WIL** (15): 6 **CHA** (10): 5

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 9 **Death:** 36 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Physical Armor: 4 **Spell Defense:** 6 **Unconsciousness:** 28 **Knockdown:** 6
Mystic Armor: 2 **Social Defense:** 6 **Wound Threshold:** 10 **Movement:** 6

Karma Points: 5/5

Liberator Talents: Avoid Blow (1): 8, Freedom Search [D] (2): 7, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Lock Picking [D] (1): 8, Melee Weapons [D] (1): 8, Shackle Shrug [D] (2): 9

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Acting [A] (2): 7, Avoid Blow (2): 9, Climbing (2): 9, Read/Write Language (2): 7—(Dwarf /Throalic, *Or'zet*), Speak Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Or'zet*), Tracking (2): 7, Twilight Peaks History [K] (2): 7, Unarmed Combat (2): 9

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Leather (Phys 3), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17)

Weapons: Mace (Damage 10), Dagger (Damage 8)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer Kit, Climbing Kit, Traveler's Garb, Trail Rations (2 weeks), Water Skin

Loot: 8 copper, 3 silver, and 1 gold pieces

Notes: Has the ork *Gahad* and Low-Light Vision racial abilities.

First Circle Elf Messenger



"Yes, I am the Messenger! Were you expecting an obsidiman? Sure, they are reliable, but they are also slow. I am swift and nimble and able to avoid obstructions with ease. And although I am no troll, I am no stranger to honor. My word is my bond and if I give it, the message will get through. I certainly won't get inquisitive about the contents or the people for whom I deliver messages for, like those dwarfs. I simply enjoy traveling throughout the land of Barsaive and I can provide a valuable service while I travel.

"That said, I do have some abilities that separate me from other Messengers. I know the ins and outs of the city and I especially know how to handle social functions. You need a message delivered discreetly in the middle of a ballroom dance? I'll deliver it with grace and style. I'd like to see an obsidiman do that!"

DEX (16): 7 **STR** (10): 5 **TOU** (10): 5
PER (17): 7 **WIL** (16): 7 **CHA** (13): 6

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 9 **Death:** 31 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 5 **Spell Defense:** 9 **Unconsciousness:** 22 **Knockdown:** 5
Mystic Armor: 2 **Social Defense:** 7 **Wound Threshold:** 8 **Movement:** 7

Karma Points: 4/4

Messenger Talents: Avoid Blow [D] (1): 8, *Direction Sense* [D] (2): 9, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons (1): 8, Navigation [D] (2): 9, Speak Language [D] (1): 8—(Human)

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Climbing (2): 9, Court Dancing [K] (2): 9, Dancing [A] (2): 8, Etiquette (2): 8, Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*), Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*), Streetwise (2): 9

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Padded Leather (Phys 4), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17)

Weapons: Short Sword (Damage 9), Dagger (Damage 7)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Climbing Kit, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Trail Rations (2 weeks), Traveler's Garb, Water Skin

Loot: 5 copper, 7 silver, and 1 gold pieces

Notes: Has the elf Low-Light Vision racial ability.

First Circle Troll Outcast Warrior



"You see my severed horns, taunt me as kava, *and judge me as a troll without honor. But what do you know? I am more honorable than all of the members of my former moot. Never make the mistake of judging a Namegiver by his first impression or appearance!*

"Life for an er'ka'a'kul *is never easy, but I chose this path and walk it proudly. I prove my honor every day, with every deed I do and every word I say. Few Namegivers try to understand me—and fewer again are able to do so. But those individuals that make the effort are true friends to me and I will do everything in my power to help them whenever necessary."*

DEX (13): 6 **STR** (19): 8 **TOU** (15): 6
PER (11): 5 **WIL** (16): 7 **CHA** (13): 6

Initiative: 5 **Physical Defense:** 7 **Death:** 38 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Physical Armor: 6 **Spell Defense:** 7 **Unconsciousness:** 30 **Knockdown:** 8
Mystic Armor: 3 **Social Defense:** 7 **Wound Threshold:** 10 **Movement:** 7

Karma Points: 3/3

Outcast Warrior Talents: Acrobatic Strike (1): 7, Avoid Blow [D] (1): 7, Battle Shout [D] (2): 8, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons [D] (2): 8, Unarmed Combat [D] (1): 7

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Climbing (2): 8, Crystal Carving [A] (2): 8, Read/Write Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, Troll), Speak Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, Troll), Throwing Weapons (2): 8, Trollmoot History [K] (2): 7, Wilderness Survival (2): 7

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Hide (Phys 5; Myst 1; Init 1), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17)

Weapons: Broadsword (Damage 13), Crystal Troll Dagger (Damage 11), Spear (Damage 12)

Weapon Ranges: Troll Dagger/Spear 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Carving Tools, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 2 copper, 5 silver, and 1 gold pieces

Notes: Has the troll Heat Sight racial ability.

First Circle Obsidiman Purifier



"Many Namegivers dedicate their lives to fighting the Horrors and freeing Barsaive once and for all. The Horrors raged across our lands for many centuries and raped the Earth in many ways. But how many Namegivers really care about nature and the Earth, which both really suffered during the Scourge? I do.

"I vowed to heal the Earth and nature as well as to cleanse Barsaive of the Horrors' remnants. I purify rivers, make poisoned fields fertile, plant new trees; I help nature to fight off what the Scourge did to it. It is a lonely life. I travel a lot and find most of my work in remote areas where only few Namegivers live. But I know it is worth the effort. There are others who think like me and have chosen my Discipline, but we need to become stronger, for without nature, Barsaive cannot continue to exist."

DEX (13): 6 **STR** (21): 8 **TOU** (19): 8
PER (11): 5 **WIL** (12): 5 **CHA** (11): 5

Initiative: 4 **Physical Defense:** 7 **Death:** 43 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Physical Armor: 8 **Spell Defense:** 7 **Unconsciousness:** 35 **Knockdown:** 8*
Mystic Armor: 1 **Social Defense:** 7 **Wound Threshold:** 15 **Movement:** 5

Karma Points: 3/3

* Has the Wound Balance talent

Purifier Talents: Acrobatic Strike (2): 8, *Body Control* [D] (1): 9, *Clay Skin* [D] (1): 9, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Unarmed Combat [D] (2): 8, Wound Balance [D] (1): 9

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Horror Lore [K] (2): 7, Melee Weapons (2): 8, Read/Write Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, Obsidiman), Speak Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, Obsidiman), Stone Carving [A] (2): 7, Throwing Weapons (2): 8, Wilderness Survival (2): 7

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Body Shield (Phys 5; Init 2; Deflect 4/0; Shatter 21)

Weapons: Quarterstaff (Damage 12), Stone Troll Dagger (Damage 11), Spear (Damage 12)

Weapon Ranges: Troll Dagger/Spear 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Carving Tool, Trail Rations (2 weeks), Traveler's Garb, Water Skin

Loot: 3 copper, 7 silver, and 5 gold pieces

Notes: Has the obsidiman Increased Wound Threshold and Natural Armor racial abilities.

First Circle Cathan Shaman



"I am tulan *or Shaman as you say. I very important in my family or, as you say, tribe. When the* gitta *came, we went into the roots of c'*athe *to flee. During little death, it was ancestors who used Shamanism to seal the entrances to earth, to grow food, and light way in the dark. When we awoke to true life, ancestors taught the people the ways of the* c'athe *again, as master taught me in turn. I learned all to know about home* c'athe*, but master say I know nothing. He say he fierce like skeorx mother protecting whole family. I skeorx cub—may know lot about* c'athe*, but nothing of world. Now I bigger, time to fly first time like jungle griffin baby and leave nest of Servos and family.*

"So I leave for big land of Barsaive. I explore plain by wagon and foots, sea by raft, and sky by air canoe. I talk to people who live on land, sea, and air, and observe natural world outside of home. As my understanding grow, I master nature magics and learn even more from nature spirits. After learning all I can, I return to family as elder tulan*, protect family, and teach younglings our ways."*

DEX (14): 6 **STR** (9): 4 **TOU** (14): 6
PER (16): 7 **WIL** (16): 7 **CHA** (9): 4

Initiative: 6 **Physical Defense:** 8 **Death:** 36 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Physical Armor: 3 **Spell Defense:** 9 **Unconsciousness:** 28 **Knockdown:** 4
Mystic Armor: 2 **Social Defense:** 6 **Wound Threshold:** 10 **Movement:** 6

Karma Points: 5/5

Shaman Talents: Create Fetish [D] (1): 8, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Spellcasting [D] (2): 9, Spell Fetish [D] (1): 1, Spell Fetish (1): 1, Thread Weaving [Shamanism] [D] (1): 8, Versatility (0): 0, Wilderness Survival [D] (1): 8

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Climbing (2): 8, Horror Lore [K] (2): 9, Hunting (2): 8, Missile Weapons (2): 8, Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human/Cathan), Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human/Cathan), Wood Carving [A] (2): 6

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Shaman Spells: Bone Dance, Crunch Climb, Earth Blend [F], Earth Darts [F], Plant Talk, Purify Earth, Purify Water

[F] Attuned to spell fetish

Armor: Leather (Phys 3)

Weapons: Dagger (Damage 6), Shortbow (Damage 7). Quiver (20 shortbow arrows)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes, Shortbow 30–60 yards/15–30 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Booster Potion, Carving Tools, 7 x Spell Fetishes (1 per spell), Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 3 copper, 3 silver, and 3 gold pieces

Notes: Has the human Versatility racial ability.

First Circle Elf Songsmith



"What separates us as Namegivers from the beasts is our ability to create, and in reth'im the beauty of an object is just as important as the function. If art is not so precious and unique to us Namegivers, why is it the first thing that the Horrors' taint takes away in their attempts to destroy us? A life without beautiful art and crafts is unthinkable to an elf.
"I teach the legends and history of our people through my songs and compositions. I nurture the hearts and minds of elven children so that they can preserve our heritage and traditions and teach them to the next generation. It is a difficult task, made even more so by the Scourge and the Schism, but it is my duty to protect the elven culture."

DEX (14): 6 **STR** (13): 6 **TOU** (11): 5
PER (16): 7 **WIL** (14): 6 **CHA** (16): 7

Initiative: 6 **Physical Defense:** 8 **Death:** 32 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 5 **Spell Defense:** 9 **Unconsciousness:** 24 **Knockdown:** 6
Mystic Armor: 2 **Social Defense:** 9 **Wound Threshold:** 8 **Movement:** 7

Karma Points: 4/4

Songsmith Talents: Emotion Song [D] (1): 8, Evaluate [D] (1): 8, First Impression [D] (1): 8, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons (2): 8, *Performance* [D] (2): 9

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Avoid Blow (2): 8, Legends and Heroes [K] (2): 9, Music [Instrument] [A] (2): 9, Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*), Research (2): 9, Singing [A] (2): 9, Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*)

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Padded Leather (Phys 4), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17)

Weapons: Short Sword (Damage 10), Dagger (Damage 8)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Booster Potion, Musical Instrument (your choice), Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 2 copper, 7 silver, and 1 gold pieces

Notes: Has the elf Low-Light Vision racial ability.

First Circle K'stulaami Taildancer



"Oh I'm sorry! Did I startle you by landing? I just can't help myself really. I see a magnificent tower, mountain, or spire, and I must climb to its zenith and jump off. I can glide through the use of my k'stulaa, *but it is not an easy process since it requires that I catch the wind or risk falling to the earth. But this makes every flight so exciting! Even if I climb the same spot, a difference in the air can make for a new experience each time. I dance with the sky on each flight.*
"I travel Barsaive to spread the Name of the House of the Spirit Wind. Every t'skrang who knows of my house will bring her children of the k'stulaa *to our house, so that they can be nurtured in a place suited for their needs. More t'skrang will in turn grow up to protect my house like I do. I also travel to seek challenges. Each place brings new terrain to climb and new winds with which to dance. With my gliding and lashing tail from above few can truly challenge me on the ground, which is why I prefer to dance with others who can fly.*
Windlings, with their intricate flight patterns and maneuvers, make great partners!
I will perform the taildance with any worthy opponent!"

DEX (17): 7 **STR** (16): 7 **TOU** (14): 6
PER (11): 5 **WIL** (11): 5 **CHA** (13): 6

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 9 **Death:** 36 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Physical Armor: 3 **Spell Defense:** 7 **Unconsciousness:** 28 **Knockdown:** 7*
Mystic Armor: 1 **Spell Defense:** 7 **Wound Threshold:** 10 **Movement:** 6

Karma Points: 4/4 * Knows the Wound Balance talent

Taildancer Talents: Acrobatic Strike [D] (1): 8, Avoid Blow [D] (1): 8, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons [D] (2): 9, Unarmed Combat [D] (2): 9, Wound Balance (1): 8

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Climbing (2): 9, Creature Lore [K] (2): 7, Dancing (2): 8, Gliding (2): 9, Read/Write Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, T'skrang/*K'stulaami*), Speak Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, T'skrang/*K'stulaami*), Taunt (2): 8

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Leather (Phys 3)

Weapons: Ch'tard Thorn (Damage 9), Dagger (Damage 9)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Climbing Kit, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 6 silver and 3 gold pieces

Notes: Has the t'skrang Tail Combat racial ability.

First Circle Dwarf Traveled Scholar



"Why is it that non-dwarf Namegivers are always so bothered by a few questions? If you never ask questions, how will you find answers? Most of you act like we know all there is to know, just because the Great Library of Throal is at our fingertips for a few paltry silver pieces. I know the entrance fee is prohibitive to the poorest folk, but the knowledge the library contains truly is priceless. Adventurers often risk everything on the information found in there. However, they sometimes make the mistake of trusting sources, even pre-Scourge sources, word for word—mistakes that often cost lives. The fact is that Barsaive has changed since those words were written to parchment. Barsaive awaits rediscovery and just about every pre-Scourge document in the library needs to be checked for accuracy against the present reality. The hazards of the journey are great, as Barsaive is dangerous and the Horrors still linger here. The knowledge that we return with is important, as this new information may save the lives of other adventurers like you some day."

DEX (11): 5 **STR** (12): 5 **TOU** (13): 6
PER (16): 7 **WIL** (14): 6 **CHA** (15): 6

Initiative: 5 **Physical Defense:** 7 **Death:** 35 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 5 **Spell Defense:** 9 **Unconsciousness:** 27 **Knockdown:** 5
Mystic Armor: 2 **Social Defense:** 8 **Wound Threshold:** 9 **Movement:** 5

Karma Points: 4/4

Traveled Scholar Talents: *Item History* [D] (2): 9, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Read/Write Language [D] (1): 8—(*Or'zet*), Research [D] (2): 9, Search (1): 8, Speak Language [D] (1): 8—(*Or'zet*)

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Calligraphy [A] (2): 8, Conversation (2): 8, Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*), Scourge History [K] (2): 9, Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*), Streetwise (2): 9, Throal Politics [K] (2): 9

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Padded Leather (Phys 4), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17)

Weapons: Dwarf Sword (Damage 9), Dagger (Damage 7)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Painting Tools, Trail Rations (2 weeks), Traveler's Garb (w/Embroidered Robe), Water Skin, Writing Kit

Loot: 1 copper, 7 silver, and 3 gold pieces

Notes: Has the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

First Circle Windling Winddancer



"See? Watch closely so you can capture what I'm saying. No, not what I'm speaking. You have to look beyond my words to see what I'm really telling you. Someone once said 'a dancer paints a thousand words on the canvas of her audience.' Wise words. That was probably a Wind-dancer. I can tell you more with my movements than a book can. Watch this. Got it? Now, listen. Hear beyond the droning of my wings. Ah! You're getting it now aren't you?
"There's more to windlings than flagrant frivolity. Some of us have serious things to do. Did you think our society was based solely on practical jokes and fine wine? Not at all. We have our custodians and scholars as well. Our traditions are as important—perhaps more important—to us than yours are to you. Now. Watch. See the nuances? Listen closely. Tonal change. Inflection … and I'm almost done. It's a shame you don't have wings. You could join me and we could dance history together."

DEX (11): 5 **STR** (6): 3 **TOU** (9): 4
PER (16): 7 **WIL** (12): 5 **CHA** (19): 8

Initiative: 5 **Physical Defense:** 9 **Death:** 28 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 3 **Spell Defense:** 9 **Unconsciousness:** 19 **Knockdown:** 3
Mystic Armor: 1 **Social Defense:** 10 **Wound Threshold:** 7 **Movement:** 3/8*

Karma Points: 6/6

* Flying Movement Rate

Winddancer Talents: Astral Sight (1): 8, Conversation [D] (1): 9, Etiquette [D] (1): 9, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons (1): 6, Taunt [D] (1): 9, Wind Dance [D] (2): 9

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Barsaive History [K] (2): 9, Buzz (2): 7, Dancing [A] (2): 10, Maneuver (2): 7, Missile Weapons (2): 7, Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Windling), Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Windling)

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Leather (Phys 3)

Weapons: Windling Spear (Damage 5), Windling Bow (Damage 6), Quiver (20 windling bows)

Weapon Ranges: Windling Spear 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes, Windling Bow 24–48 yards/12–24 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Booster Potion, Trail Rations (1 week),Traveler's Garb

Loot: 9 copper, 4 silver, and 1 gold pieces

Notes: Has the windling Astral Sight, Flight, and Increased Physical Defense racial abilities.

FIRST CIRCLE WINDLING WINDMASTER



"Catch me if you can! Ha! Is it annoying that I fly around your head all the time? I'm sure it is. But be assured that you're not the first one to underestimate my magic. Indeed, isn't what I'm doing here magical? I planned to distract you long enough to hit you with my poisoned spear—and it worked! Before you fall asleep, listen to my words; they might save you next time we cross paths. If I don't come up with a different plan, that is.

"Never act without first formulating a good plan in your mind—and a second one, just to be sure. Careful planning, deception, and distraction are the tools of my trade. I can't stand against a troll in a fight one on one, but I can distract him so that my comrades can cut him down. Or so that he doesn't see my real intentions. When we meet again, above all, be flexible, be in motion, be a windling! Sleep well!"

DEX (17): 7 **STR** (7): 4 **TOU** (12): 5
PER (11): 5 **WIL** (15): 6 **CHA** (13): 6

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 11 **Death:** 34 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 4 **Spell Defense:** 7 **Unconsciousness:** 26 **Knockdown:** 4
Mystic Armor: 2 **Social Defense:** 7 **Wound Threshold:** 9 **Movement:** 3/8*

Karma Points: 6/6 * Flying Movement Rate

Windmaster Talents: Air Dance [D] (1): 8, Astral Sight (1): 6, Avoid Blow [D] (1): 8, Dive Attack [D] (2): 6, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons [D] (1): 8, Silent Walk (1): 8

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Body Painting [A] (2): 8, Conceal Object (2): 9, Creature Lore [K] (2): 7, Maneuver (2): 9, Read/Write Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, Windling), Speak Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, Windling), Wind Dance (2): 7

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Padded Leather (Phys 4)

Weapons: 2 x Nailboots (Damage 5), Windling Spear (Damage 6)

Weapon Ranges: Windling Spear 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Painting Tools, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 2 copper, 8 silver, and 3 gold pieces

Notes: Has the windling Astral Sight, Flight, and Increased Physical Defense racial abilities.

FIRST CIRCLE WINDLING WINDSCOUT



"Cunning beasts, crojen. The wind tells me this is a shortcut to its lair—you can smell our destination clearly. We should continue north. So you think we're traveling in the wrong direction? Why is that? Because those tracks on the ground over there told you? Would I be considered rude if I told you that you were wrong? Yes, I know your human tracker thinks we are on the wrong trail, that the spoor indicates our prey went south. I'm telling you that he is wrong. Don't rely on your eyes alone—they are too easy to fool. Use your nose as well. Back up what you see with more facts. Use all of your senses.

"Shall we consider what your 'other expert' has shown you? Have a look. Yes, the bushes are broken. An animal passed through here recently. And on the ground it has left obvious droppings. Crojen, the human says. Hmph. Pick it up. Use your nose. Sniff it. Does that smell like crojen to you? Can't tell? I thought so. Drop that and clean your hands—we don't want to risk infection. Now, face north and take a deep breath. Smell the air. Filter it through your nostrils. Fill your mouth and taste it. Smells different, yes? Good. North we travel. Now, and in haste if you please. Why is that? Because those droppings aren't crojen, they are skeorx. Probably a hunting pair. And while I could just fly away from trouble, I don't like my clients to be eaten by wild animals simply because they ignore their own senses."

DEX (17): 7 **STR** (7): 4 **TOU** (10): 5
PER (17): 7 **WIL** (11): 5 **CHA** (13): 6

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 11 **Death:** 31 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 3 **Spell Defense:** 9 **Unconsciousness:** 22 **Knockdown:** 4
Mystic Armor: 1 **Social Defense:** 7 **Wound Threshold:** 8 **Movement:** 3/8*

Karma Points: 6/6 * Flying Movement Rate

Windscout Talents: Astral Sight (1): 8, Avoid Blow [D] (1): 8, Evidence Analysis [D] (1): 8, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Melee Weapons (1): 8, Tracking [D] (2): 9, Wilderness Survival [D] (1): 8 [D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Buzz (2): 9, Creature Lore [K] (2): 9, Hunting (2): 9, Missile Weapons (2): 9, Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Windling), Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Windling), Wood Carving [A] (2): 8 [A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Leather Armor (Phys 3)

Weapons: Windling Spear (Damage 6), Windling Bow (Damage 7), Quiver (20 windling bows)

Weapon Ranges: Windling Spear 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes, Windling Bow 24–48 yards/12–24 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Booster Potion, Carving Tools, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Loot: 1 copper, 1 silver, and 1 gold pieces

Notes: Has the windling Astral Sight, Flight, and Increased Physical Defense racial abilities.

First Circle Elf Woodsman



"The forest is my home, and I am guardian of it and my people. Some Namegivers think that the Woodsman and Purifier Disciplines are similar since they both care about nature deeply. I assure you that they are not. The Purifier cares about nature as a whole. So do we. But where we separate is while a Purifier takes care of a forest, we Woodsmen also care about those living in the forest.

"I must protect the forest, since if it were to be burned or cut down, my village that depends on it would be displaced, without a home. I must also protect the animals and the trees bearing fruit, for if they were all hunted down or gathered all at once, my people would starve. But if I do not hunt and gather, my people will also starve. Thus I must hunt, but never to excess, and must prevent poachers from taking game that is ours. And thus I must protect the trees, but also pick their fruits and harvest their lumber. Whatever I do, I have to apply good measure and knowledge to my actions. Initiate Woodsmen must be trained to hunt to continue to provide for my people in the future. I defend the fragile balance of forest life that the elves depend on."

DEX (17): 7 **STR** (13): 6 **TOU** (12): 5
PER (16): 7 **WIL** (12): 5 **CHA** (13): 6

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 9 **Death:** 34 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Physical Armor: 3 **Spell Defense:** 9 **Unconsciousness:** 26 **Knockdown:** 6
Mystic Armor: 1 **Social Defense:** 7 **Wound Threshold:** 9 **Movement:** 7

Karma Points: 4/4

Woodsman Talents: Avoid Blow [D] (1): 8, Karma Ritual [D] (1): 1, Missile Weapons [D] (2): 9, Sense Danger (1): 8, Silent Walk [D] (1): 8, Tracking [D] (2): 9

[D] Discipline talent / *Requires Karma*

Skills: Animal Bond (2): 8, Body Painting [A] (2): 8, Climbing (2): 9, Melee Weapons (2): 9, Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*), Snares and Traps [K] (2): 9, Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*)

[A] Artisan skill; [K] Knowledge skill

Armor: Leather (Phys 3)

Weapons: Dagger (Damage 8), Shortbow (Damage 9). Quiver (20 shortbow arrows)

Weapon Ranges: Dagger 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes, Shortbow 30–60 yards/15–30 hexes

Equipment: Adventurer's Kit, Climbing Kit, Hunting Dog, Painting Tools, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb, Water Skin

Loot: 4 copper, 7 silver, and 1 gold pieces

Notes: Has the elf Low–Light Vision racial ability.



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The Namegivers





Eight Namegiving races dwell in the land of Barsaive, each with its own culture and traditions. Despite their differences, they are bound by shared experiences, beliefs, and love for their land.

The stout and stubborn Dwarfs, the spiritual Elves, the versatile Humans, the ancient Obsidimen, the passionate and savage Orks, the fierce and honorable Trolls, the flamboyant T'skrang, and the mischievous and unpredictable Windlings: together they embody the heart and soul of Barsaive.

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FASA Corporation
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RedBrick limited
www.earthdawn.com
ISBN 978-1-906508-60-9
9 781906 508609
US$39.95