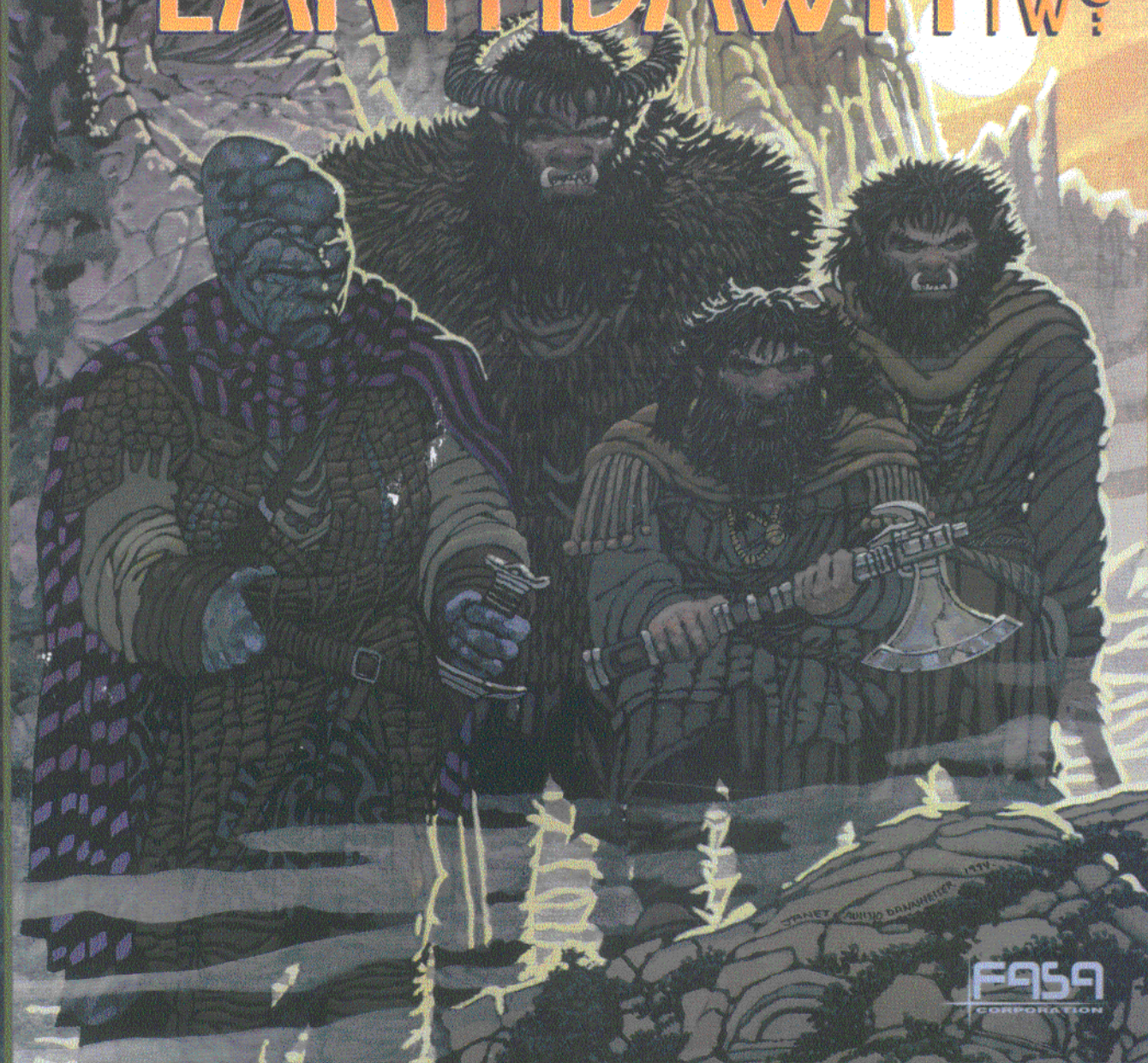


EARTHDAWN™

DENIZENS™ OF EARTHDAWN VOLUME TWO

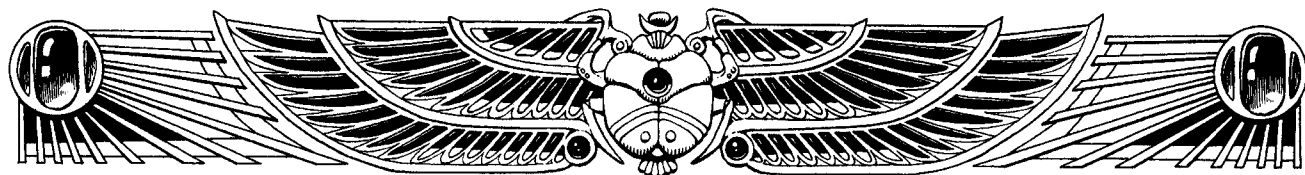


A N E A R T H D A W N S O U R C E B O O K

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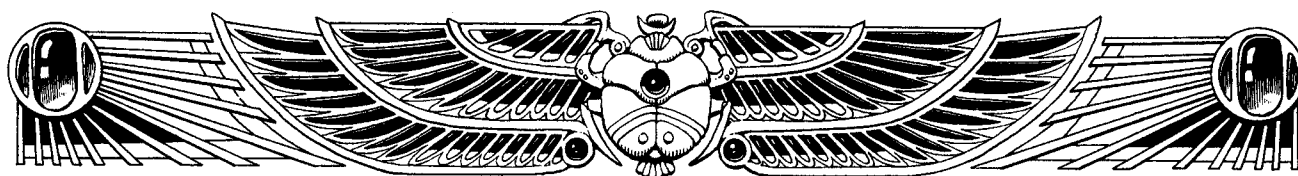
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CONTENTS

ON THE WRITING OF THE DENIZENS OF BARSAIVE	5	On Meaningful Adornments	45
ON THAT REMARKABLE PEOPLE KNOWN AS THE DWARFS	6	On the Wondrous Complexities of Obsidiman Language	45
On Being a Dwarf in Barsaive	6	On How the Perception of Time Shapes the Spoken Word	45
On Dwarfs as Builders	7	On the Structure of the Obsidiman Tongue	46
On the Making of Tools	7	A Discourse on Writing among the Obsidimen	47
On the Importance of Building All Things in One's Home	7	On Dealings with the World and its Residents	48
On Connections between Craftsmanship and Artistry	7	On Obsidimen and the Disciplines	51
On the Reasons and Source of Trade	9	On Obsidimen and Thera	53
Building the Intangible	9	On Obsidimen and the Passions	54
On Loyalty among the Dwarfs	9	On Diverse Customs among Obsidimen	54
On the Claims of Family	9	Regarding the Custom of the Sending	55
On Tribal Loyalties	10	Observations on Gatherings	55
On Loyalty to Nations	11	On Customs Common to Obsidimen in Towns and Cities	56
On Fealty to the Kingdom	12	REVELATIONS ON THE TRUE NATURE OF ORKS	58
On the Place of the Dwarfs in Barsaive	14	On Prizing Freedom above All	59
On the Meaning of Dwarf Fables	15	On Living and Dying Well	60
On the Manner of Dwarfs Toward Other Name-givers	16	On Seizing Life and Shaking It	61
On the Culture of Dwarfs	17	On Rebellion and Change	61
On Artistic Endeavor and Craftsmanship	17	On the Three Ways of Orks	62
On Rituals Marking the Passage of Life	17	On the Burning Heart of Gahad	64
On How Affinity for the Earth Shapes Behavior	19	On Orks and the Passions	65
On the Importance of Language and the Law	19	On Ork Ways and Customs	67
On the Fascinating Ways of the Khavro'am	21	On Arts among Orks	67
ON THAT CURIOUS RACE KNOWN AS OBSIDIMEN	23	On Ork Craftsmanship	67
A First Encounter With an Obsidiman	24	On Styles of Dress	67
On the Nature of Obsidimen	25	On Weapons and Armor	68
On Appearance and Physical Nature	25	On Ork Architecture	68
On Feelings and Behavior Among Obsidimen	26	On Mannerly Behavior among Orks	68
On the Reason for Venturing Out into the World	28	On Customs of Love, Marriage, and Family	69
On the Obsidiman Way of Life	29	On the Ways of Men and Women	69
An Obsidiman Myth of Creation	29	On How Orks View Other Races	69
On the Brotherhood as Family	30	On Food and Drink Dear to Orks	70
On the Significance of the Liferock	31	ON THE REMARKABLE NATURE AND WAYS OF TROLLS	71
On Birth and Coming of Age	33	A Word on Generalizations	71
On the Time Known as the Dreaming	36	On the Dual Nature of Trolls	72
On the Final Return to the Liferock	37	On the Many Meanings of Honor	73
On Obsidiman Culture and Myths	39	On Spirituality among Trolls	73
Concerning the Valley of Elders and the Council of Four	39	The Society of Trolls	74
On Artistic Endeavor	41	On the Ways of Highland Trolls	75
On Obsidiman Craft	42	On Lowland Trolls	81
		On the Various Rituals of Life	82
		On the Ordeal of Birth	82





On Names and Naming	83
On the Age of Passage and Its Rites	84
On Marriage Customs	85
On the Troll Acceptance of Death	86
On Diverse Aspects of Troll Culture	86
On Tales and Heroes	87
On the Creation of Art	90
On Craftsmanship among Trolls	91
On Matters of Manners and Social Custom	93
On Finding Privacy Within	93
On the Significance of Horns	94
On Greetings and Partings	94
On the Curious Custom of Boasting	95
On Trolls' Views of Other Races	96
GAME INFORMATION	99
Roleplaying Hints	100
Dwarfs	100
Obsidimen	101
Orks	102
Trolls	103
Disciplines	105
New Disciplines	105
Liberator	106
Outcast Warrior	108
Purifier	110
Traveled Scholar	112
New Talents	114
Body Control	114
Escape Divination	114
False Shackles	114
Free Mind	114
Freedom Search	115
Freedom Song	115
Heal Slave	115
Heart of Freedom	116
Heart of Rebellion	116
Hoard Blows	116
Impossible Hide	117
Mind Armor	117
Mind Blade	117
Power Mask	118
Prison Call	118
Ritual of Atonement	118
Shackle Shrug	118
Shout of Justice	119
Questors	119
Special Rules	119
Dwarfs	119
Obsidimen	119
Orks	121
Trolls	122

DENIZENS OF EARTHDAWN

Volume 2

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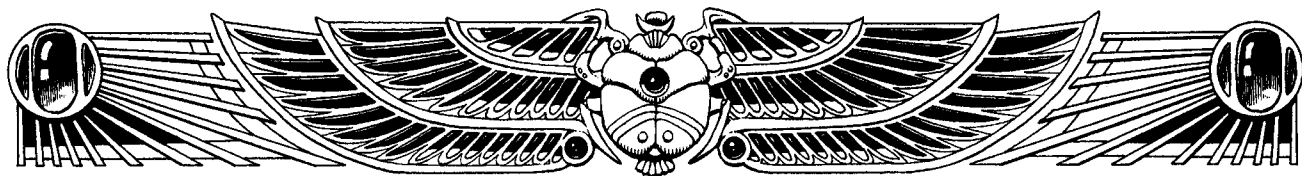
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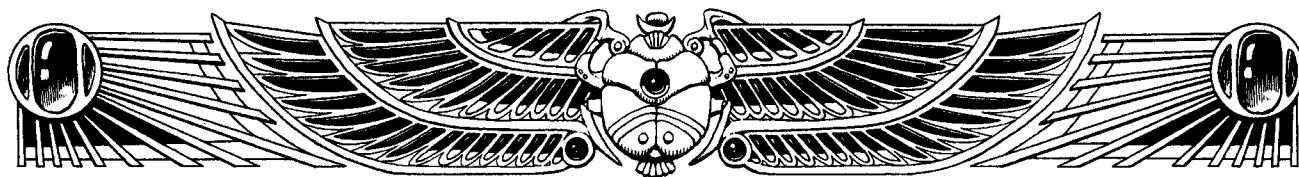
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ON THE WRITING OF THE DENIZENS OF BARSATIVE

How many of us can claim friends or acquaintances of every Name-giver race other than our own? Indeed, in the aftermath of the Scourge that isolated many of us in our own racial enclaves, how many of us have any knowledge of another race other than the superficial? Who but the dwarfs know what it means to truly love the work of their own hands? Do any folk but the orks know in their bones the injustice of slavery and the value of freedom? Who but the trolls will sacrifice all for honor? Do any but obsidimen hear the song of the earth in their hearts? Few Barsativians can answer these questions, but all of us should have such knowledge. In order to give us a truer understanding of each other, I and my assistants have created this remarkable work, entitled *Denizens of Barsative*.

During the compilation of *An Explorer's Guide to Barsative*, I and my colleague Jerriv Forrim traveled extensively throughout the land and met many Name-givers of whose ways we knew little or nothing. It came to Jerriv and me that our ignorance of our fellow Name-givers was no less inexcusable than our former ignorance of the wonders and dangers of Barsative, and so we determined to somehow correct that fault. Together, we conceived the idea of writing several volumes on the nature and ways of Barsative's Name-giver races, each volume devoted to a particular people.

We presented our idea to Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, who swiftly saw the wisdom of our proposal and graciously acceded to it. Undaunted by the magnitude of the task before us, we fell to with a will. To my great sorrow, poor Jerriv soon found the long hours and hard work too much for his frail constitution. Though he went to great lengths to deny the seriousness of his condition, often insisting on working almost as late as I did in an effort to prove his fitness, it became clear to me after only a few weeks that his health could not bear the strain. Indeed, it was not long after the last meal we shared that he collapsed—his health had become so precarious that even a simple meal of baked t'skrang fish did not agree with him. I took him at once to the healers, with whom he yet remains. He was so weak he could barely talk, but he could not be induced to lie down quietly and take his medicine until he had extracted a promise from me to take on the burden of completing our great work.

Finding myself solely responsible for this great project, I spent many months sifting through countless historical records, travelers' journals, treatises, scholarly essays, and firsthand accounts, attempting to distill these diverse sources into accurate, interesting, and complete portrayals of each Name-giver race. I have labored to decipher and read a veritable mountain of documents, both in the Library of Throal and outside it. Though the task has been grueling, I can say with confidence that the information in these volumes constitutes an informative, complete, and fascinating record of the nature and ways of the Name-givers of our world. If anyone in Barsative cares to know something of a race other than his own, I bid him come to the Great Library and peruse this great work—he will find no better source in all the land.

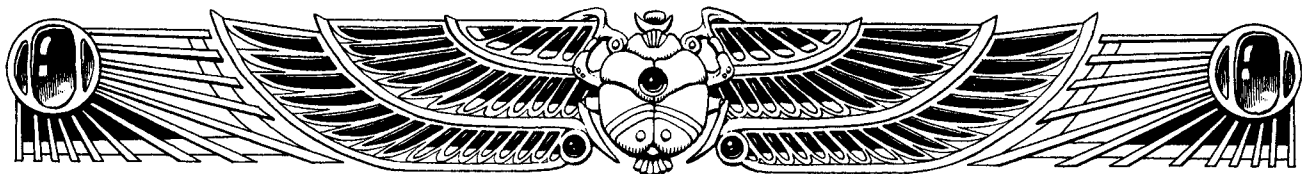
The eight volumes of *Denizens of Barsative* describe the races of our land in alphabetical order; from Volumes 1 to 8, their subjects are Dwarfs, Elves, Humans, Obsidimen, Orks, Trolls, T'skrang, and Windlings. I remind all readers of this work that every individual sees the world through his own eyes. Though I have tried to pass on only verifiable facts, the nature of the material is such that facts cannot be separated from the attitudes of the writers. This work, therefore, may contain some inaccuracies that reflect each contributor's particular turn of mind.

During the final stages of the compilation of this work, I was most ably assisted by many of the archivists and scribes who were my colleagues in the creation of *An Explorer's Guide to Barsative*. It is with great gratitude that I acknowledge their contributions. As with the aforementioned work, my colleagues and I—and occasionally other readers—have added marginal notes where appropriate in order to clarify points made in the text.

The greatest measure of my gratitude, of course, goes to my poor friend Jerriv Forrim, whom sad circumstance has relegated to a relatively minor role in the very work he helped bring to fruition. I believe that he will be more than happy with the final form of this work, and I wish him the good health in which to read it for many years to come.

—Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records, 1506 TH





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 of the Great Library of Throal, 1506 TH



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 Name-giver 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.

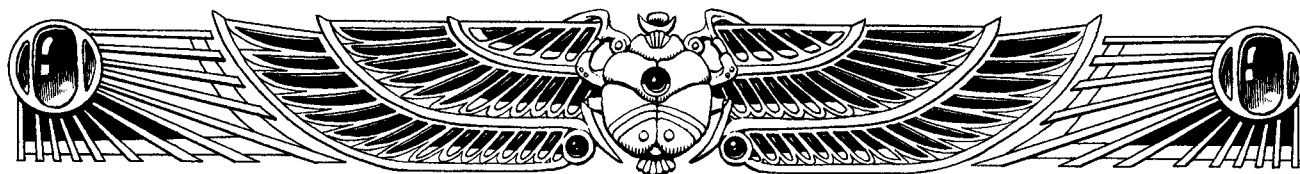
ON BEING A DWARF IN BARSAIVE

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the dwarfs of Barsaive is their view of themselves as "elder brothers" to their fellow Name-giver races. Some believe this view of the world stems from the dwarfs' position as the most populous of the Name-giver 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 Name-giver 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 Name-givers 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 toolmaking 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 toolmaking, 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 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

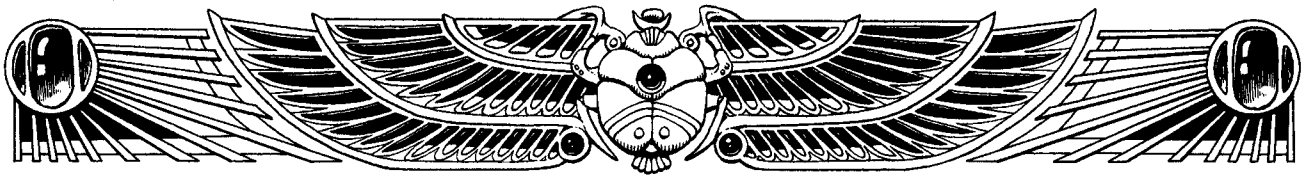
Whereas many races draw a sharp distinction between art and craft, a dwarf sees no separation between the two. Dwarfs believe homes, clothing, tools and the like should be well made, useful, and pleasing to look at. In a dwarf’s eyes, useful but ugly items show little skill; beautiful but impractical 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 Name-givers.

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 ANYONE’S.

—RIORAN,
WEAPONSMITH
OF JERRIS





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.

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 Scythia 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 Name-givers (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 particularly 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 Name-giver 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

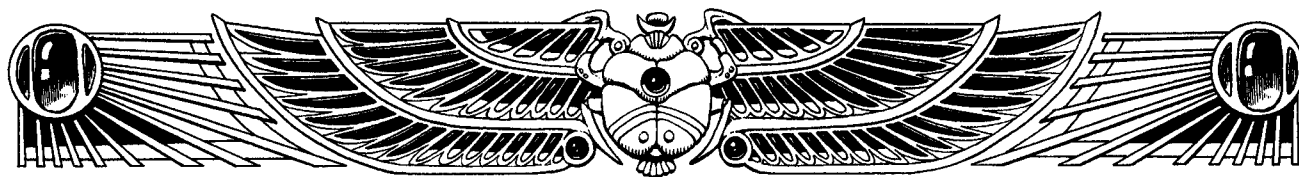
a home's design that perfectly combine craft and art in the dwarf manner. Compared to many human dwellings, of course, a dwarf home still seems abundantly ornamented. Only careful comparison between the house and the things in it allowed me to notice a difference.

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 brown, 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 Garden on household items because of that Passion's connection with the home.

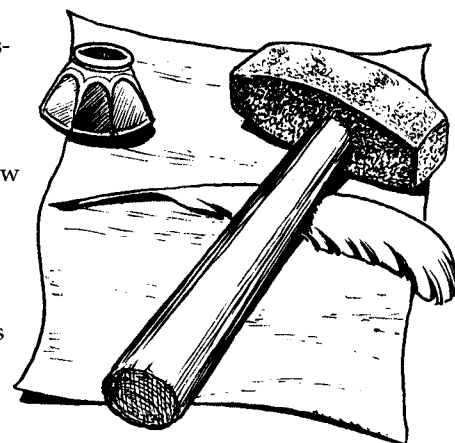
ON THE REASONS AND SOURCE OF TRADE

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.



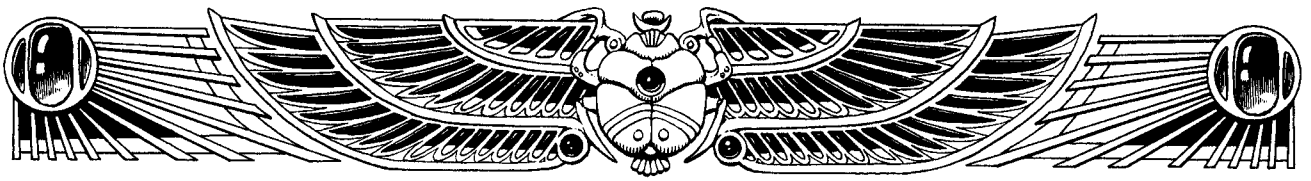
ON LOYALTY AMONG THE DWARFS

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, 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 Name-giver 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.

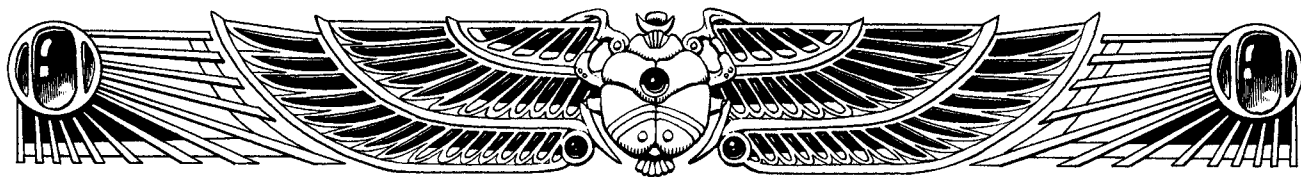
The special relationship between grandparent and grandchild begins at the grandchild's birth, when the grandparent chooses one of the child's Names. At certain times during childhood—the first month, and the tenth and sixteenth birthdays—the grandparent gives the child a gift that symbolizes something 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers, 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 death blow to tribal loyalty as a source of conflict, and the dwarfs emerged from the kaers free of their ancient tribal hatreds.

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 Scythia

The downfall of Scythia 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, Scythia 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 Scythian domination. The constant warring eventually took a dreadful toll on mighty Scythia, costing it virtually an entire generation of men and women.

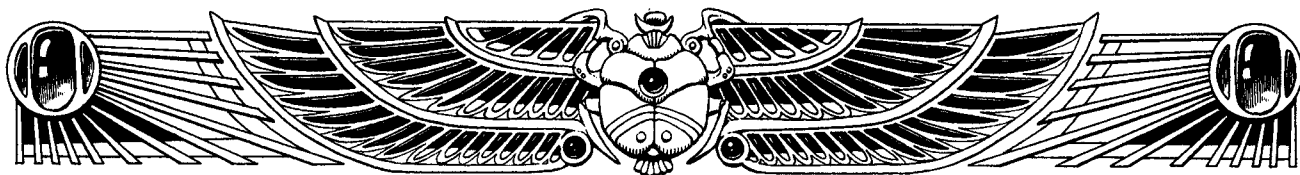
OH REALLY? WHAT ABOUT THE LITTLE BAND OF MALCONTENTS TRYING TO STIR UP TROUBLE FOR KING VARULUS? THEY ARE HUARI FROM THE EASTERN END OF THE THROAL MOUNTAINS, EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM. THE ROYAL FAMILY OF THROAL ARE MISHWAI, A TRIBE THAT HAS LIVED IN THE WESTERN THROAL MOUNTAINS SINCE BEFORE THE KINGDOM'S FOUNDING. AND WHO DO YOU SUPPOSE HAD A BLOOD FEUD WITH WHOM, RIGHT UP UNTIL THE SCOURGE BEGAN?

—TIRAS, WIZARD OF BETHABEL

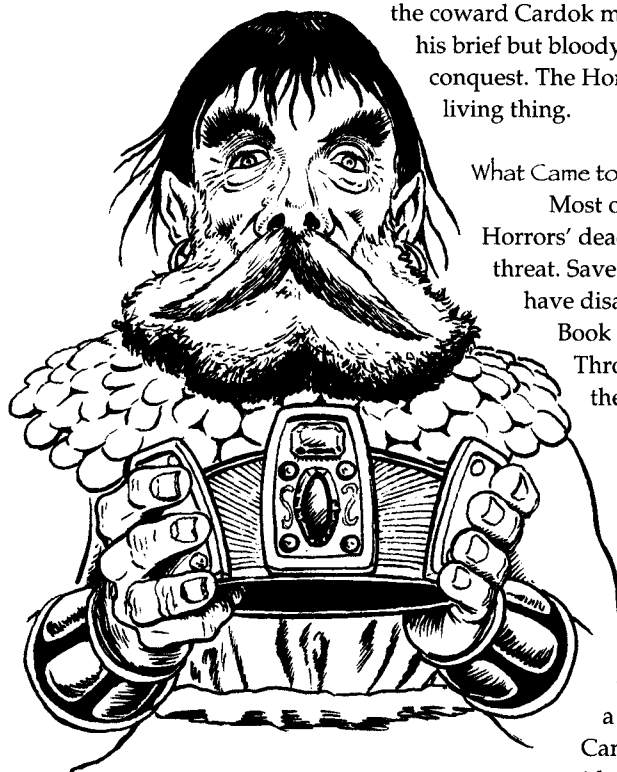
I FEAR FRIEND TIRAS'S SCHOLARSHIP IS FAULTY. I AM OF HUARI ANCESTRY AND HAVE HEARD NOTHING OF BLOOD FEUD IN ANY OF MY TRIBE'S HISTORY. I AM JUSTIFIABLY PROUD OF MY TRIBE, BUT MY LOYALTY LIES WITH MY KING, NO MATTER WHAT HIS TRIBAL ORIGINS.

—MERROX





Under the leadership of the visionary King Cardok, Scythia signed peace treaties with K'rzon and Killea. Alas, the bright day of peace proved all too brief when a mysterious plague struck Scythia'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 bloodlust whetted by that dreadful act, the people proclaimed a new king: Ragnar, a petty warlord from Scythia's outlying lands, who claimed that the Passion Thystonius had sent the plague to punish Scythia for letting the coward Cardok make peace with Scythia's enemies. Ragnar made war throughout his brief but bloody reign, even neglecting the building of Scythia's kaer in his lust for conquest. The Horrors fell upon defenseless Scythia like a black rain, killing every living thing.



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 Name-givers in it as their kin.

The only other dwarf nation that exists in the modern day is Scythia Keor, roughly translated from the ancient Scythian tongue as "Scythia Reborn." In fact, Scythia Keor is less a true nation than a collection of loosely allied villages in the lands that once formed ancient Scythia. The villagers dream of re-establishing that fallen kingdom as a free republic open to all Name-givers and governed by dwarfs. According to local lore, the headman of the village of Cramna, Rollo Redbeard, is actually a scion of the Scythian 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

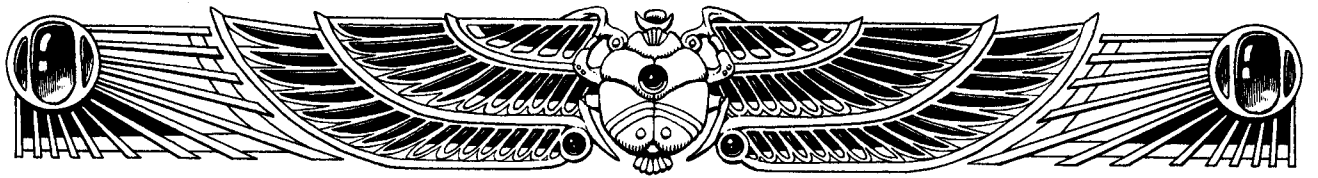
agree with Throalic aims. Redbeard styles himself First Republican of Scythia Keor and visits King Varulus III in Throal every autumn with mounted escorts and pennons flying. But despite these pretensions to power, the hamlets of Scythia Keor stand little chance of ever becoming a power to be reckoned 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.

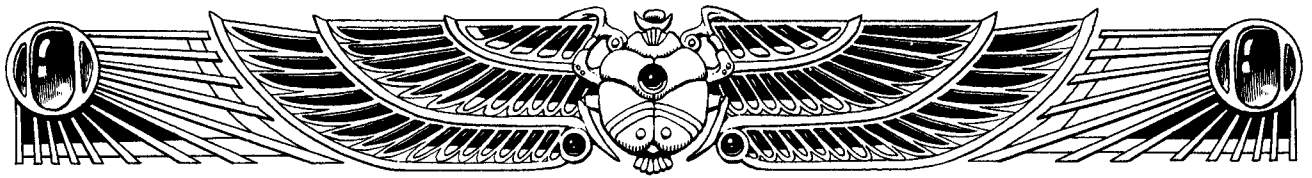
FIRST
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REDBEARD IS A
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YEAR! HOW DARE
THIS HUMAN
THROAL-TOADY
SUGGEST OTHER-
WISE?
—MORGA
LONGBLADE OF
CRAMNA

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?







CARDOK AND ALL
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NOT A SCRAP OF
DOCUMENTED
EVIDENCE
SUGGESTS
OTHERWISE.
—MERROX

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 Scythia, 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, Thera-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.

ON THE PLACE OF THE DWARFS IN BARSAIVE

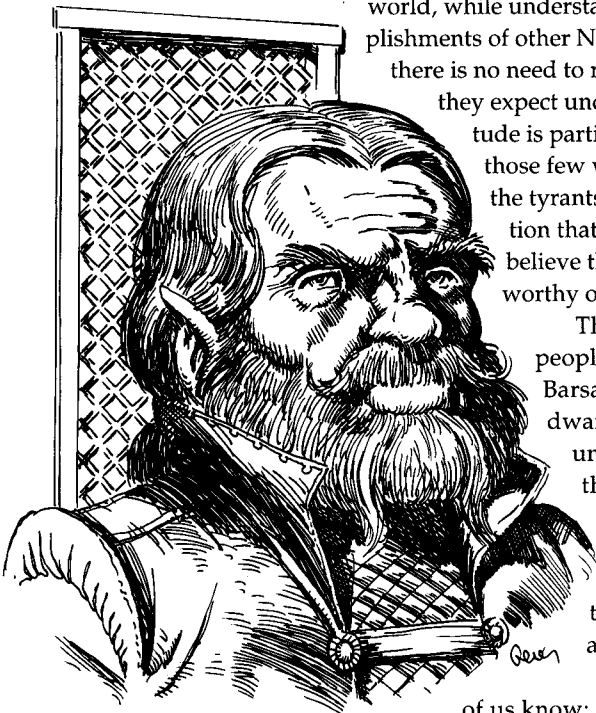
Many dwarfs of Barsaive see themselves as the natural leaders of our land—not by might or right of conquest, as the hated Therans ruled, but by their example to their fellow Name-givers. In a dwarf's view, his people are Barsaive's builders, the practical folk who gave Barsaive a common language, liberated 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.

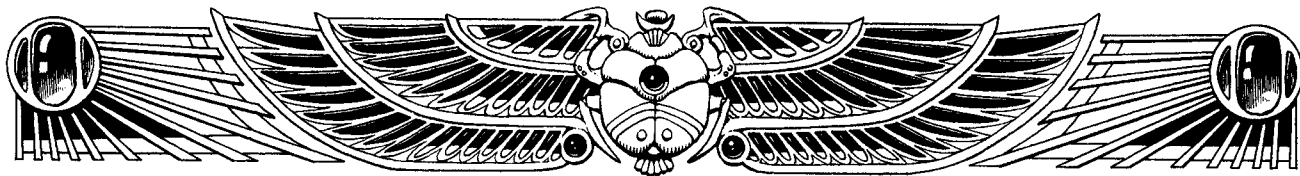
Therefore, it is only right that the other Name-givers should follow the dwarfs' lead. This way of seeing the world, while understandable and perhaps even true, unfortunately belittles the accomplishments of other Name-givers. The dwarfs have given Barsaive much, but as some say, there is no need to rub their fellow Name-givers' 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 becoming 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 Name-givers 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 Thera 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

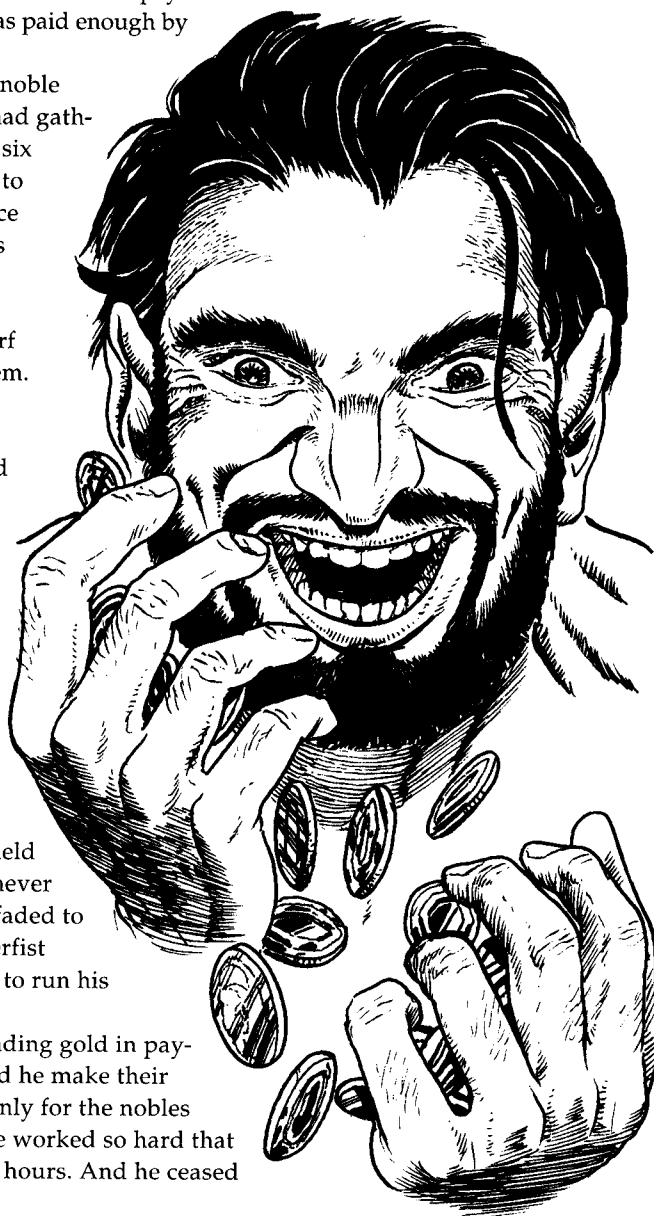
Long ago, when the world was young, a young blacksmith named Copperfist lived in the village of Rossel. A fine blacksmith, Copperfist took fair pride in his work. He could make anything, from a horseshoe to a plowshare to a fine sword blade, and what's more, Copperfist could make it twice as well in 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.

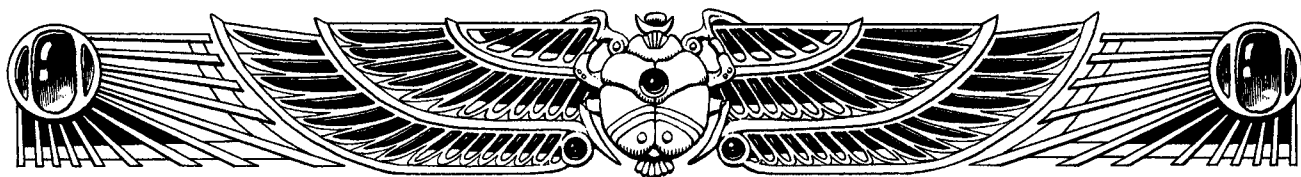
Copperfist's fame spread until it reached the ears of a noble prince, whose sword had been broken in war. The prince had gathered up all the pieces of his blade but one, and for nigh on six years, no blacksmith in the prince's lands had proved able to forge a proper replacement for the missing piece. 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, 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 NAME-GIVERS

Those Name-givers 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.

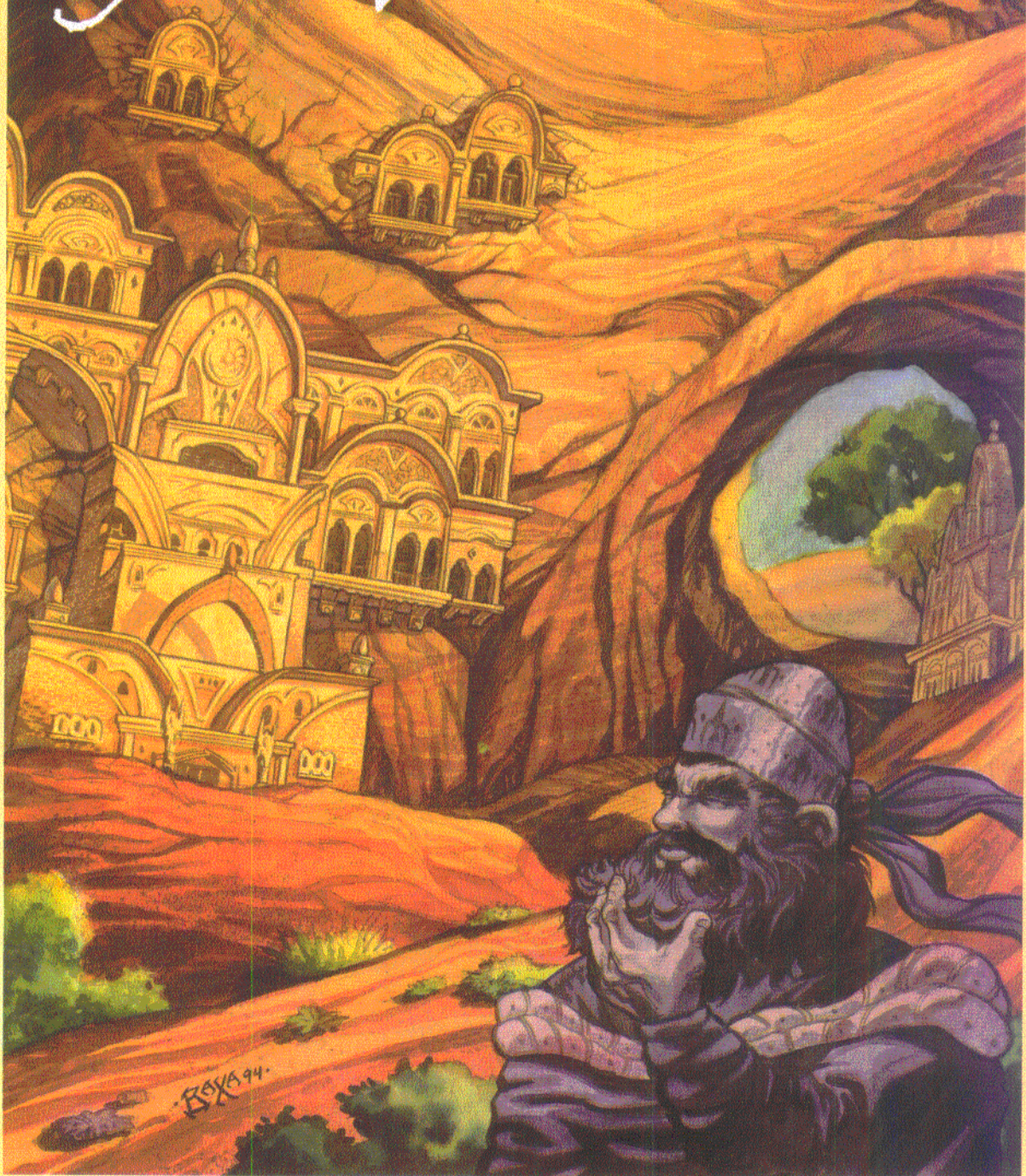
A dwarf's code of hospitality dictates also that he inquire after his guest's family, friends, neighbors, business, and personal prospects to a degree that other Name-givers often find intrusive. Subjected to such an inquiry with the utmost friendliness by Merrox of Throal over a bottle of stout ale 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 Name-givers 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.

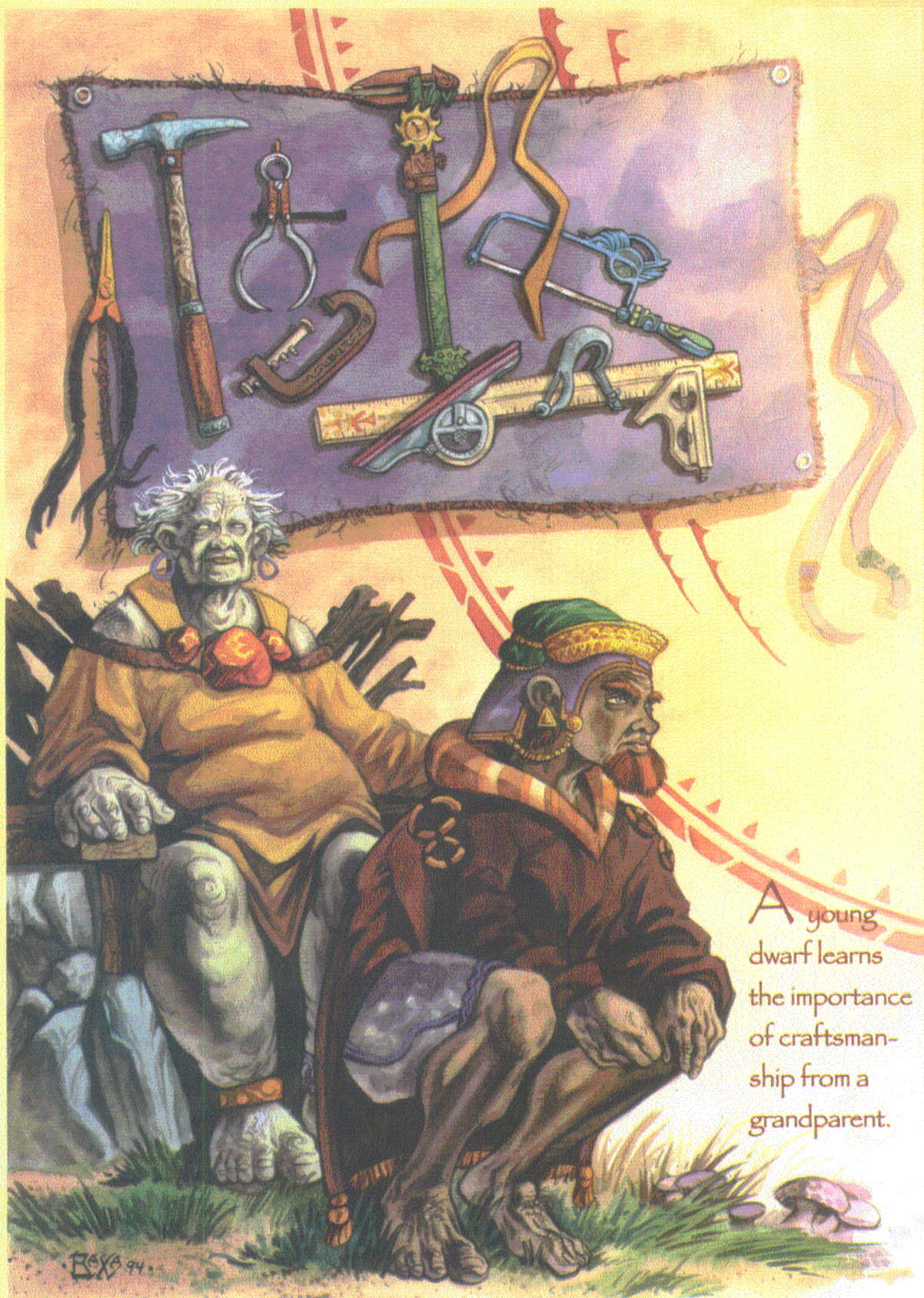


Dwarfs




Dwarfs artwork by Tom Baxa

A DWARF ARCHITECT CONTEMPLATES EXPANDING HIS HOME, CARVED INSIDE A MOUNTAIN.



A young
dwarf learns
the importance
of craftsman-
ship from a
grandparent.



A dwarf warrior with his face painted for battle.

Elaborate carvings and inlaid stone grace the surfaces of a dwarf hammer and battle axe.



A dwarf
death window.



A young
dwarf in the
"summer
house" of his
grandparents.

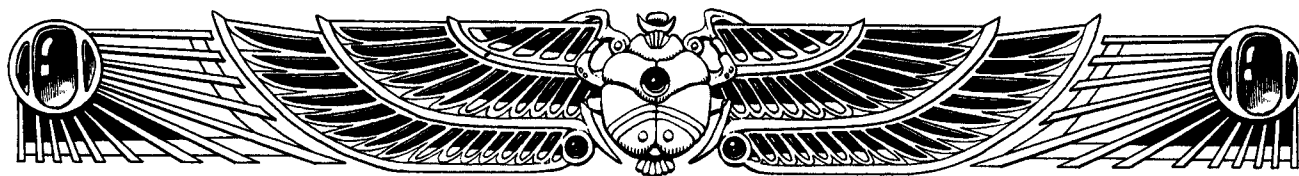


Grandparents
participate in
the dwarf
Ritual of
Naming.

At the age
of sixteen
dwarfs enter
adulthood.



BOX 599



But that is the crux of the problem. The dwarfs see themselves as the elder brothers of Barsaive's other Name-giver 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 Name-givers. And when those Name-givers 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers. 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 Name-givers 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

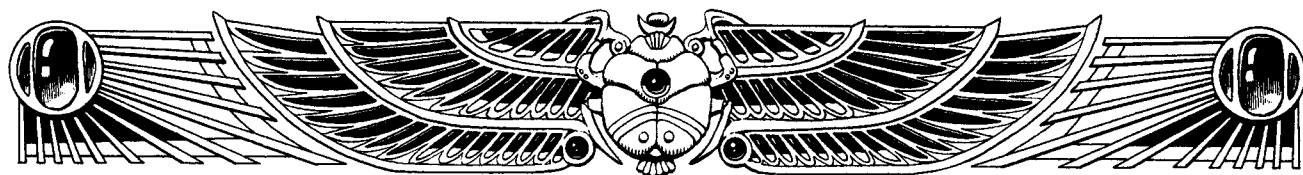
Like their fellow Name-giver races, dwarfs commemorate significant events in their lives with rituals. In the following text, I describe the most important of these rituals—those that celebrate a dwarf's birth, Naming, and death.

Unlike other Name-givers, 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 Name-givers, 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 Scythia, 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

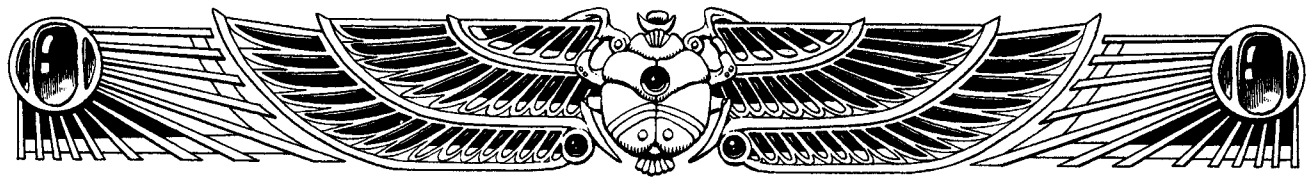
When an aging dwarf approaches death, he bequeaths his possessions to surviving family members. Though evidence suggests that such bequests were once given orally, as part of a ritual in which the family gathered around their dying elder and he spoke to each of them in turn, frequent disputes between 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 bequesting 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 or she will follow. Legend claims this tradition began in the ancient Kingdom of Scythia, 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 their 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 before him, 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 are 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 King Varulus III has broken that 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 cavalymen 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

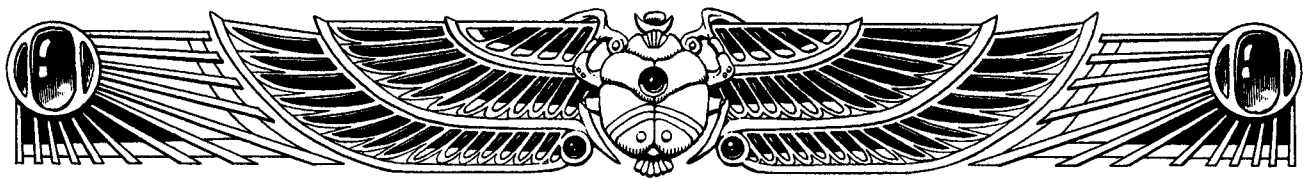
The *Book of Tomorrow* contributed greatly to the spread of the Throalic tongue throughout Barsaive as well. The language we know as modern Throalic developed from two older, related dwarf tongues spoken in the Kingdom of Scythia and the long-vanished city-state of Ysdragyl. The languages of the two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

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—MERROX





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SERVED THE DWARFS
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—BONESNAPPER
OF KRATAS

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 Name-giver 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.

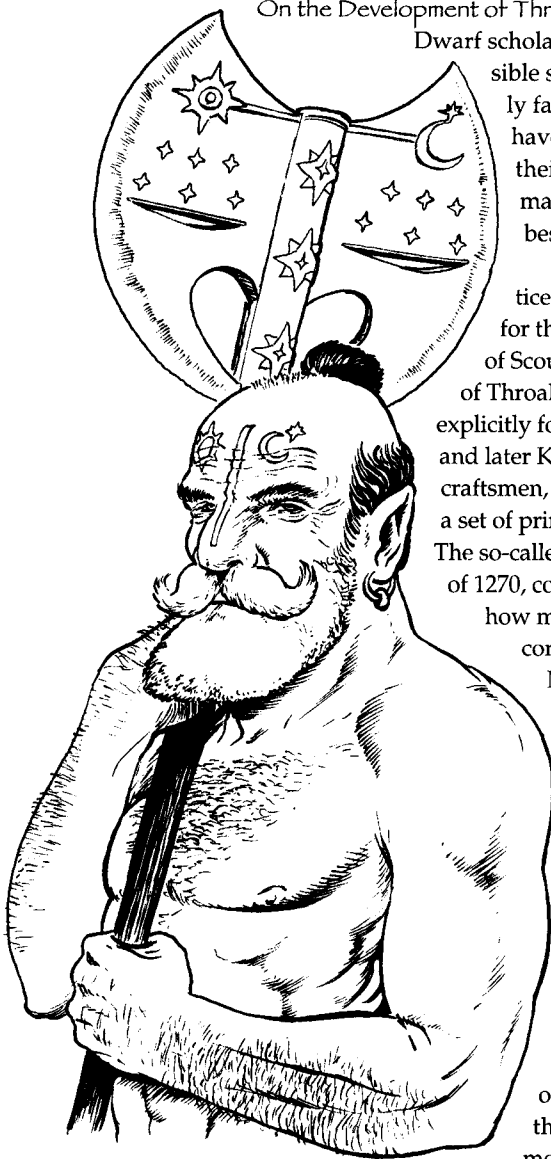
On the Development of Throalic Law

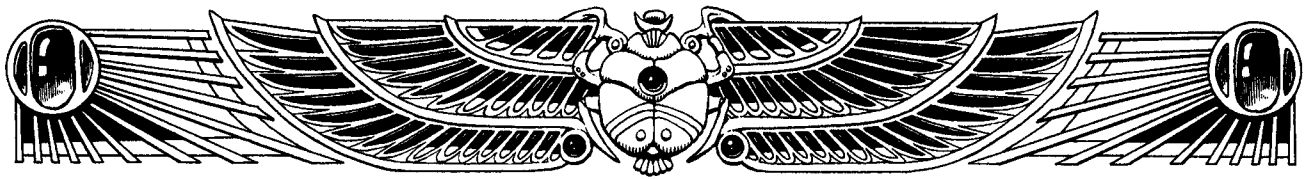
Dwarf scholars have always been numerous, and their writings cover almost every possible subject, from magic to medicine to metalworking. Dwarf literature—mostly fables and the occasional heroic saga—is also renowned. Poetry, alas, they have neglected somewhat for reasons I cannot fathom. Dwarf poets 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 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 Name-giver. 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 1050, 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 1270, 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 Name-giver 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 Scythia 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 Scythian 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 Scythian translation of the name means "People of the Law." I believe that both meanings are true, and that the named book referred to is, in fact, the ancient Scythian 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 Scythian word loosely translated as "the learned." The name *khavro'am* is derived from Scythian 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

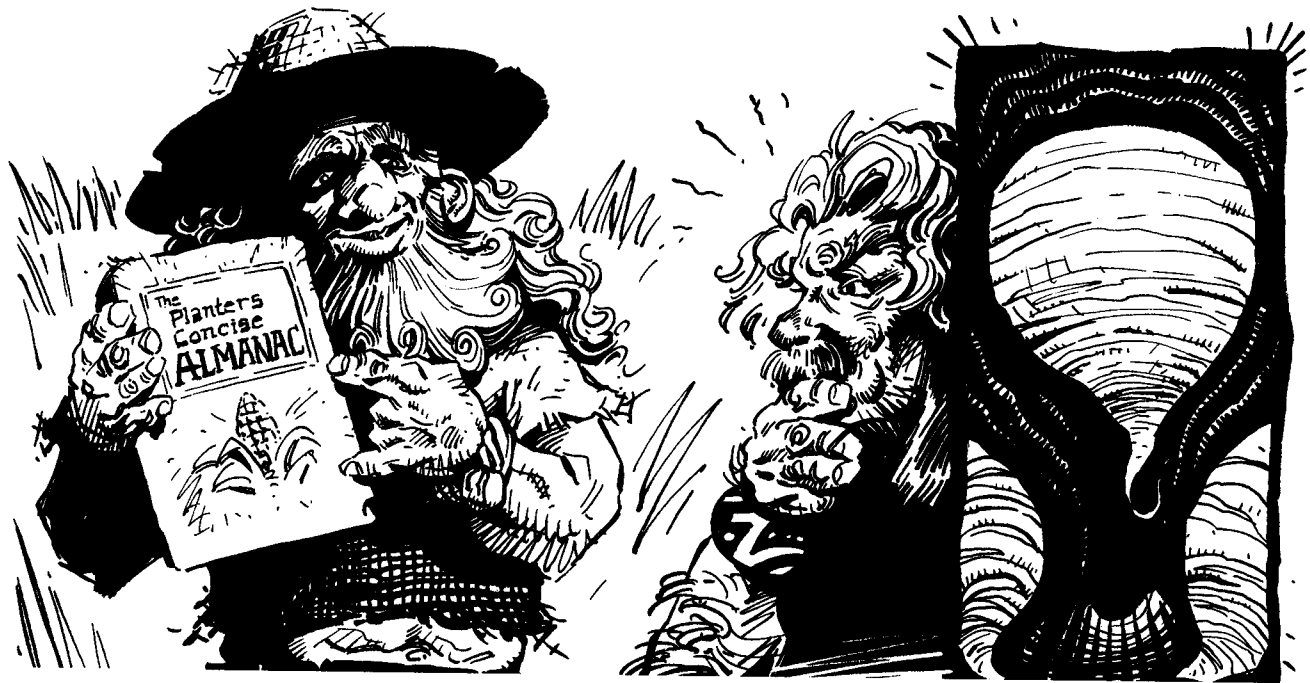
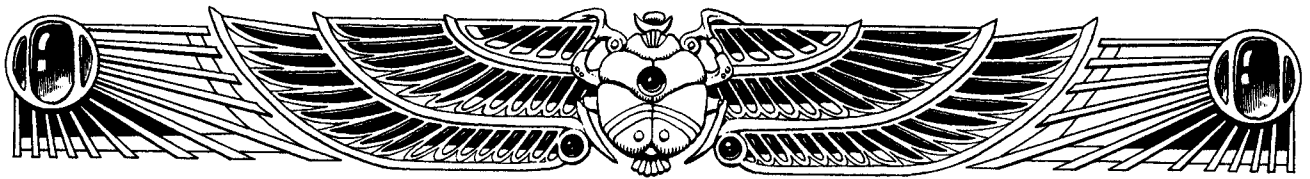
Corby Dellock was a learned young dwarf, so learned that he had read the whole of *Koligin's Magical Principles* and *Red Bull's Cautionary Tales* by the time he turned sixteen. He could read for hours at a time without getting tired, and he spent so many copper pieces on candles that his parents were 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 leatherbound 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.

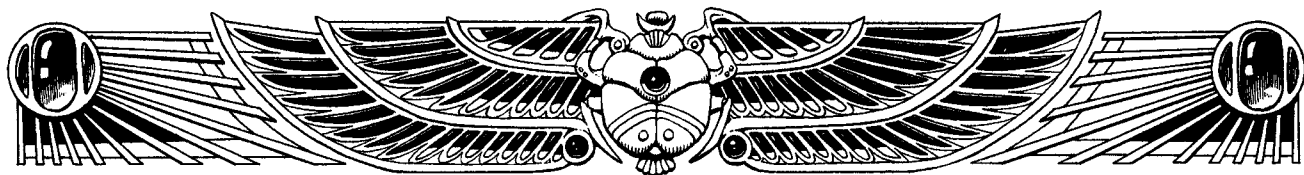
As Corby and his mother and father sat by the fire that winter, munching on crisp turnip slices, Corby's mother asked him what crops he meant to plant come spring. "If it's all the same to you, Mother, I think I'll plant a fine crop of words," Corby said.

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.





ON THAT CURIOUS RACE KNOWN AS OBSIDIMEN

At first glance, producing a tome on the obsidimen did not seem like a daunting task. After all, they are our fellow Name-givers. 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 Vistaine, 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.

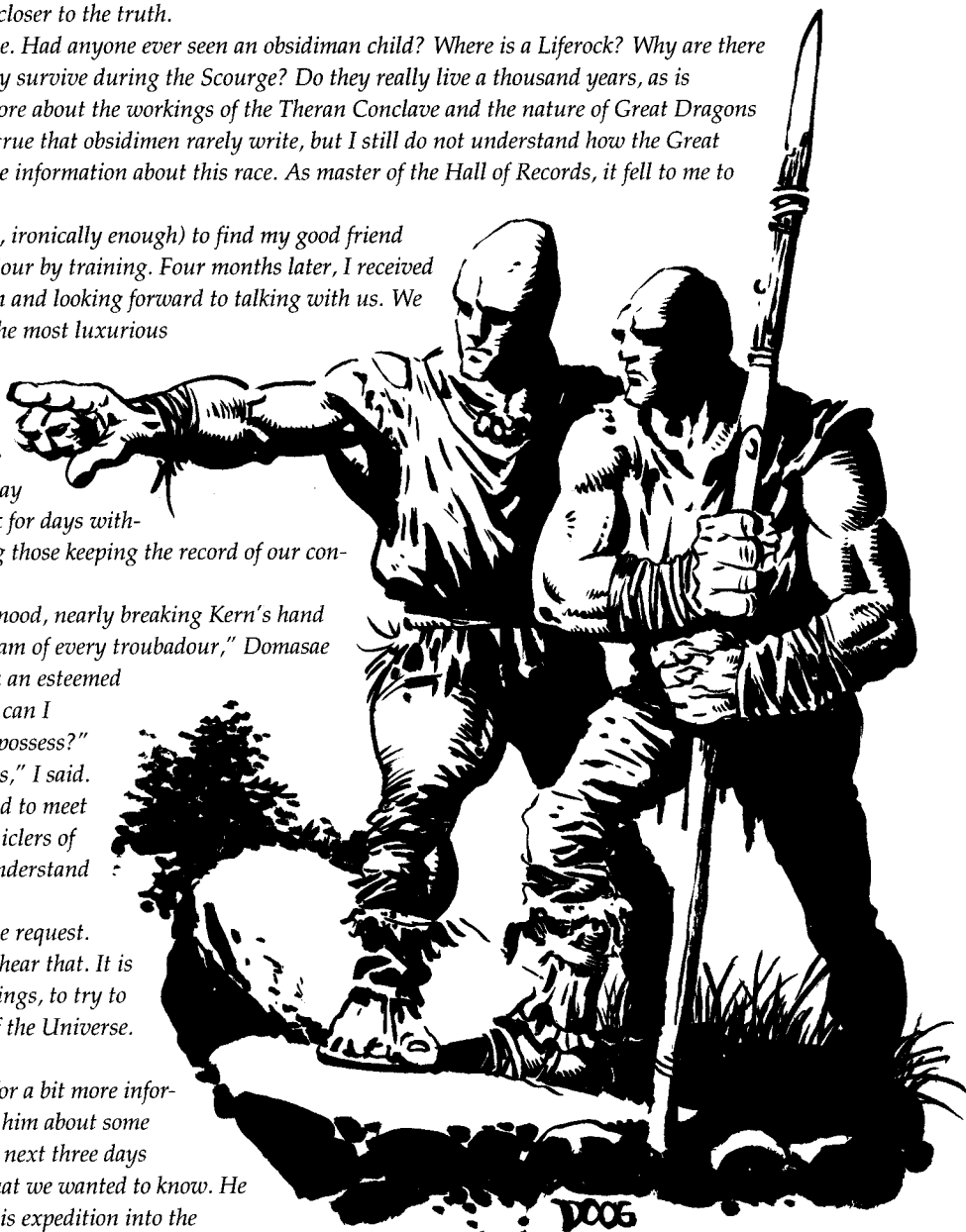
I sent out messengers (obsidimen, ironically enough) to find my good friend Domasae, an obsidiman and a troubadour by training. Four months later, I received word that Domasae was in Bartertown and looking forward to talking with us. We met Domasae at the Glistening Orb, the most luxurious inn in Bartertown. 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.

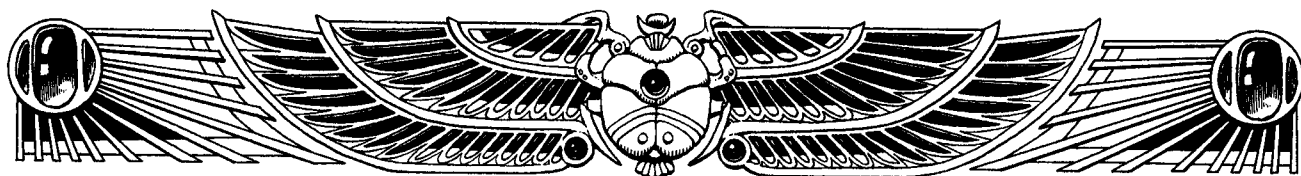
My friend greeted us in a jovial mood, nearly breaking Kern's hand when introduced to him. "It is the dream of every troubadour," Domasae said, "to have his words heard by such an esteemed audience as yourselves. What wisdom can I possibly have that you do not already possess?"

"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 any more.

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.

—Most Humbly Offered by Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, Second Day of Straasa, 1506 TH



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 of the Hall of Records

A FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH AN OBSIDIMAN

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

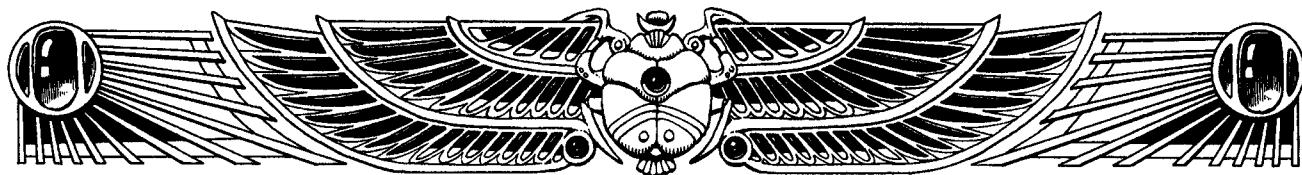
I saw my first obsidiman in the morning of my third day on the road. My brothers, intimidated by our father's wrath, had refused to go adventuring with me as they had promised, and so I had determined to strike out for Bartertown alone. In the shadowed comfort of my bed two nights before, it had seemed 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 wheatfield. 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 scabble 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

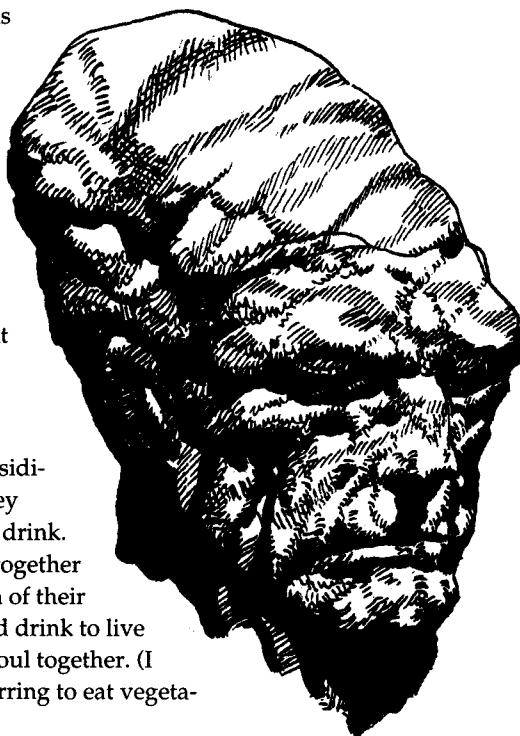
—Excerpted from *Concerning the Rock-Men of Barsaive*, a treatise written in 1499 TH by the renowned elven scholar Morwen Wellspring

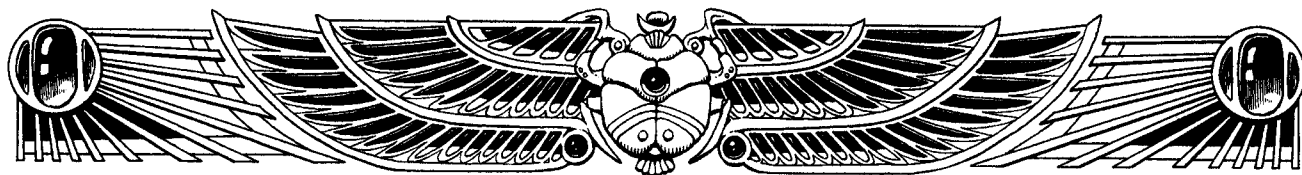
To describe the nature of that strange and wondrous race that we call obsidimen poses great difficulties for even the most learned of scholars. To fully understand another person, even of our own race, is among the hardest of tasks for any Name-giver; each of us sees the world in such a unique way that 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, grey, 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.

A complete discourse on Liferock appears later in this compilation.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Obsidiman heads are most curious, tending as they do toward shapes so elongated that they appear amusing to many other Name-givers. Many obsidimen, of course, have heads with what we might call normal shapes; that is, more closely resembling the heads of other Name-givers. 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 Name-givers.

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 Name-givers, but I know of no reason for the difference.

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 WAS A
HUMAN FEMALE. I
FOLLOWED HER AS SHE
WALKED THROUGH
BARTERTOWN, CON-
TINUING 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 the Question of Obsidiman Gender

Among the most curious aspects of the obsidimen's physical nature is the lack of two genders. Where other Name-giver 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 Name-givers; 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.)

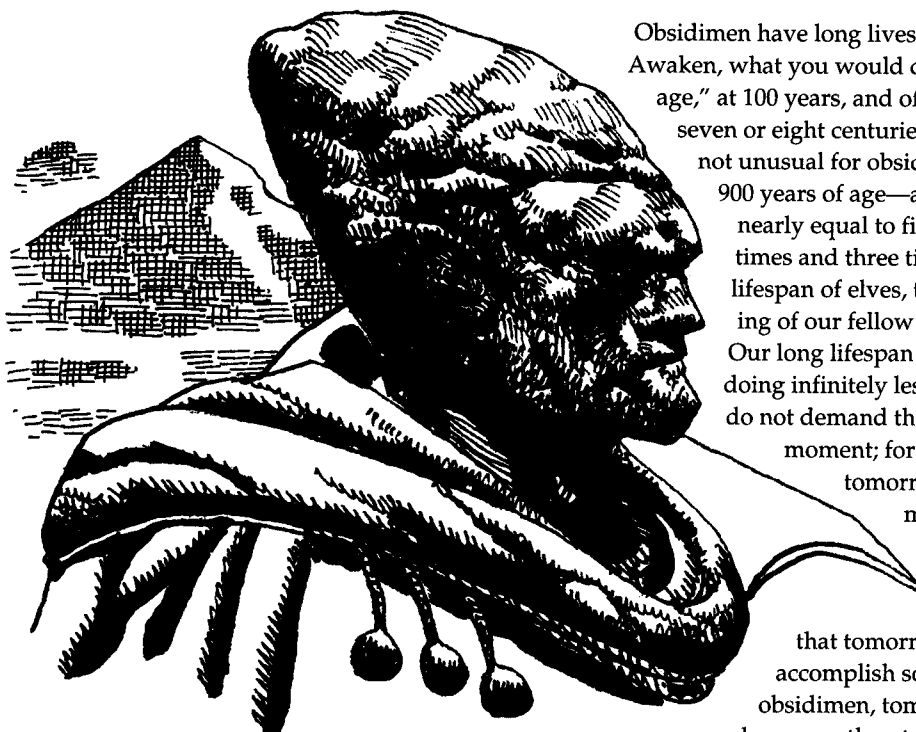
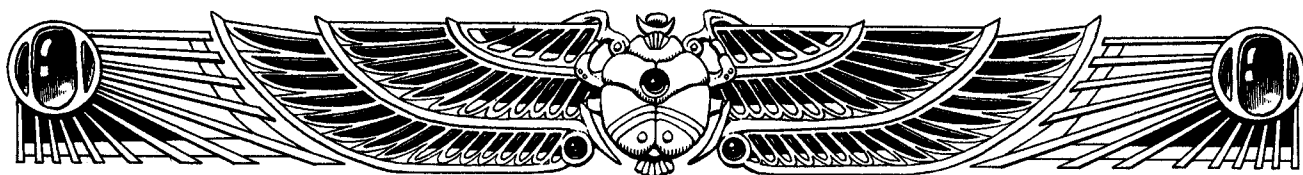
By common practice, most other Name-givers refer to obsidimen as if they are male; the closest translation of the obsidiman word for family is "Brotherhood" in Throalic, and they refer to members of their unusual "families" as "brother." In response to the perceptions of others, most obsidimen who live 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 Name-givers highly amusing nonsense.

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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers.

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

ward to so many tomorrows, we have lost count of them. Hardly surprising, is it, that we take life so calmly?

Indeed, many obsidimen find the urgency of other races comical. Other Name-givers, 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 Name-givers 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 Name-giver. 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.

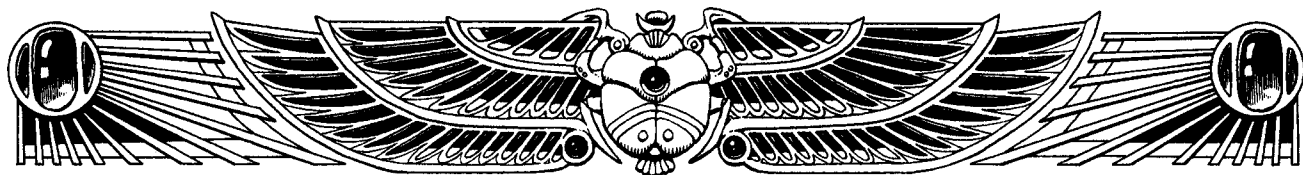
SOME ELVES
CLAIM TO HAVE
LIVED AS LONG AS
SOME OBSIDIMEN,
OR EVEN LONGER.
I FIND SUCH CLAIMS
DUBIOUS, AT BEST.

—KARON FOLL

ASTUTE READERS MAY
NOTICE AN ODDITY OF
THROALIC USAGE IN
THE TRANSCRIPTS
FROM OUR OBSIDI-
MAN CONTRIBUTORS.
OBSIDIMEN, IT SEEMS,
RARELY REFER TO
THEMSELVES IN THE
SINGULAR AS “AN
OBSIDIMAN.”
INSTEAD, MOST USE
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I SUSPECT THIS
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THAN SOLELY AS
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COMMON WITH
MOST OTHER
NAME-GIVER RACES.

—MERROX,
MASTER OF THE
HALL OF RECORDS





OBSIDIMEN ARE
AMONG THE BEST
MESSENGERS-FOR-
HIRE IN BARSAIVE. IF
YOU WANT SPEED,
HIRE A 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 DES-
TINATION, HIRE AN
OBSIDIMAN. HE MAY
TAKE HIS TIME, BUT
NOTHING WILL
STOP HIM OR DIS-
TRACT HIM.
—JERRIV FORRIM

I WAS PRESENT
WHEN A DRUNKEN
ORK MADE THE MIS-
TAKE OF RIDICULING
THE LIFEROCK OF A
OBSIDIMAN WARRIOR
WITH WHOM I AM
ACQUAINTED.
BEFORE THE HAP-
LESS 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

Most of our fellow Name-givers 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 Name-givers 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.

Above all, obsidimen are curious. We seek to learn about other Name-givers, 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 Name-givers 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.

ON THE REASON FOR VENTURING 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."

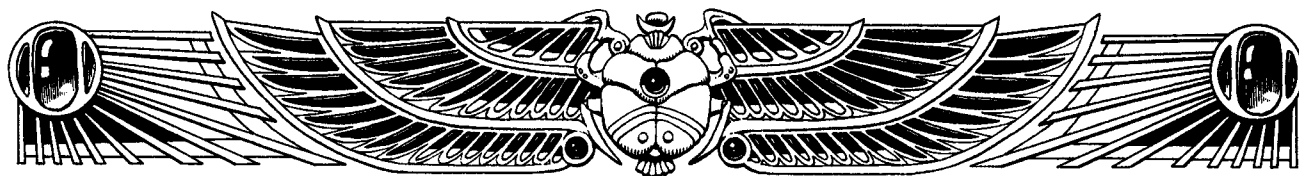
—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

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 Name-givers. 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers out of simple curiosity. You will no doubt tell me that curiosity is among our highest virtues because it separates a Name-giver 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 Name-givers 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 place 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

ON THE OBSIDIMAN WAY OF LIFE

The following section concerns many aspects of the lives of obsidimen that other Name-givers 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 Name-givers arise from the innate differences between our natures and theirs.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

AN OBSIDIMAN MYTH OF CREATION

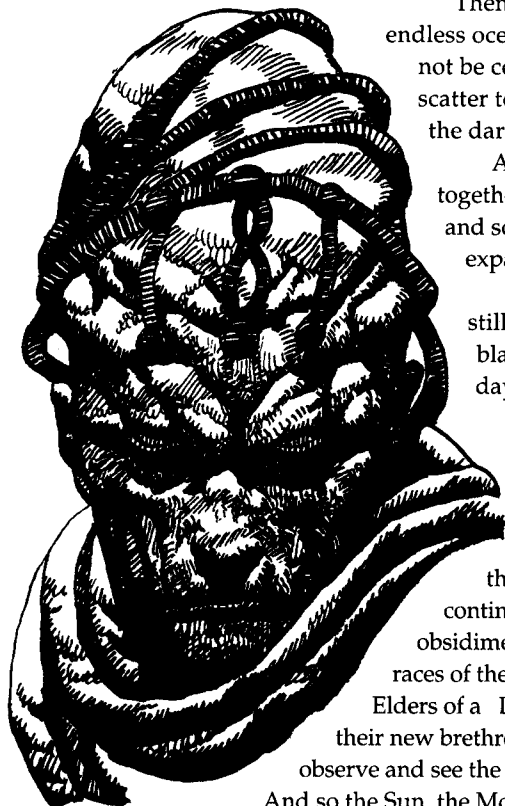
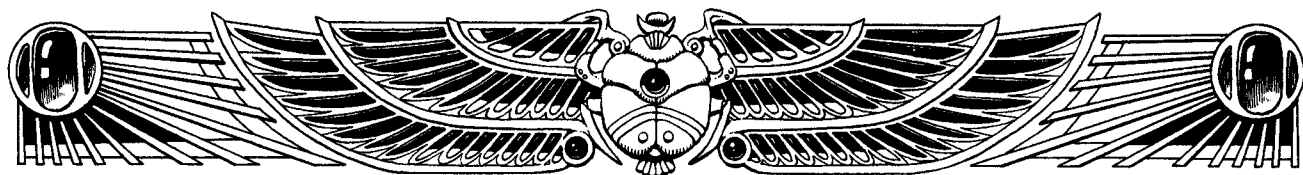
—From *An Account of Life Among the Obsidimen*, by the renowned human scholar Yanno Mammo

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 Name-givers, 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers; 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.

SOME
BROTHERHOODS
DIVIDE THEIR
MEMBERS INTO GEN-
ERATIONS, 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 OBSIDI-
MEN WHO EMERGE
HENCEFORTH AS OF A
NEW GENERATION.
—MERROX

ON THE BROTHERHOOD AS FAMILY

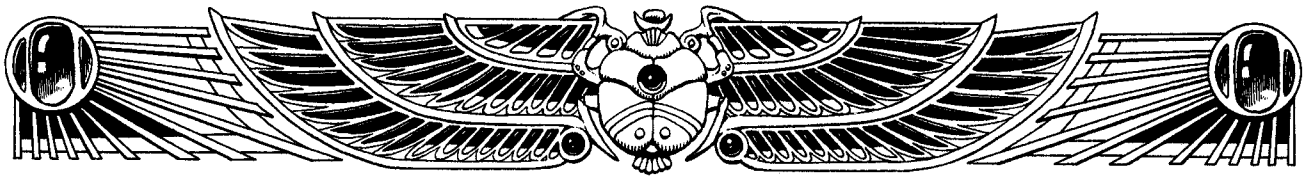
—Transcribed from the speaking of Omasu, obsidimen merchant of Travar

Obsidimen do not have families as most other Name-givers 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 Name-givers pass on their heritage and look for their race's 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.

The Nature of the Brotherhood Bond

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 Name-giver 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.

The Tale of Ryuth, Triann, and Skarth

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 obsidimen’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

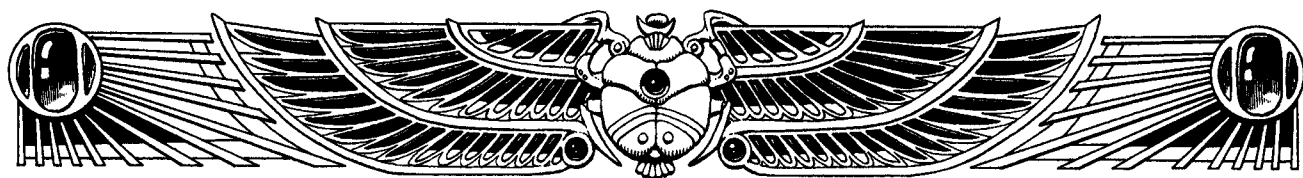
I cannot possibly explain in a way that other Name-givers will understand the central place of the Liferock in our lives. I will tell you what I can, so that you and those who read this may understand at least a little of the Liferock that shapes the ways and ideals of obsidimen. Any deeper knowledge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

I HAVE HEARD
TALES SUNG BY
TROUBADOURS OF
OTHER RACES—NOT
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SPIRITS RESIDING IN
ALL THE LIFEROCKS
THROUGHOUT
BARSAIVE AND THE
WORLD. I DO NOT
KNOW IF THESE
TALES ARE TRUE.

—LESSAR
MURRAGH, HUMAN
TROUBADOUR
OF KRATAS





UNFORTUNATELY,
NO INFORMATION
ABOUT THE TRUE
PHYSICAL NATURE OF
LIFEROCKS EXISTS
ANYWHERE AMONG
OUR RECORDS. IF IT
HAD, WE WOULD CER-
TAINLY HAVE
INCLUDED IT IN THIS
DOCUMENT. THE
LIBRARY OF THROAL
WOULD BE MOST
GRATEFUL TO ANY-
ONE WHO CAN REM-
EDY THIS LACK.
—THOM EDRULL

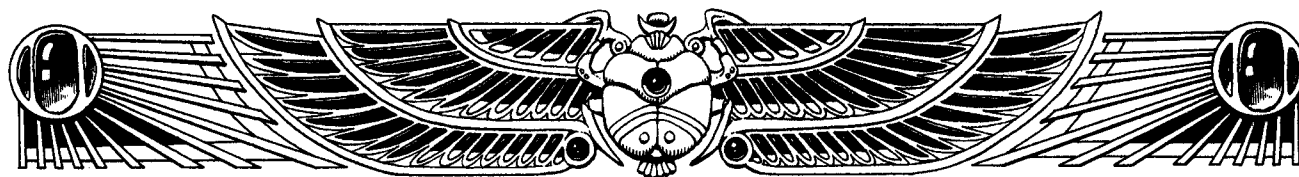
fellow Name-givers, obsidimen are reluctant to speak too freely of a thing as close to our hearts as is our Liferock; for this reason, many of other races do not know what a Liferock is. Insofar as the tradition of my people allows it, I will describe what the Liferock is and what it is not.

Most other Name-givers believe that the Liferock is the largest rocky area or structure within four hours walk of an obsidimen'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 obsidimen 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.

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 Wyrn 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.





On Names and True Patterns in a Liferock

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

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

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.

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 Name-givers 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.

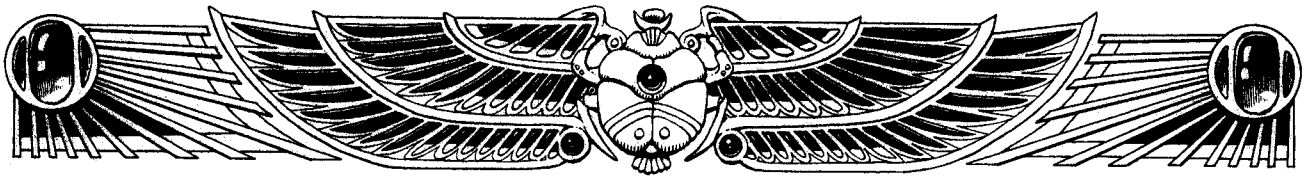
The second strangeness was the swiftness of it all. I had expected that Emergence would take several days, at least; among us, the first stage of Emergence alone can take a moon-cycle of time from beginning to end. And that does not include any of the First Merging, wherein a new obsidiman receives his 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 Name-givers have not attained their full

IT MAY BE THAT THE
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THE NAME OF ONE'S
LIFEROCK SECRET.

—DERRAT,
WIZARD OF YISTAINE

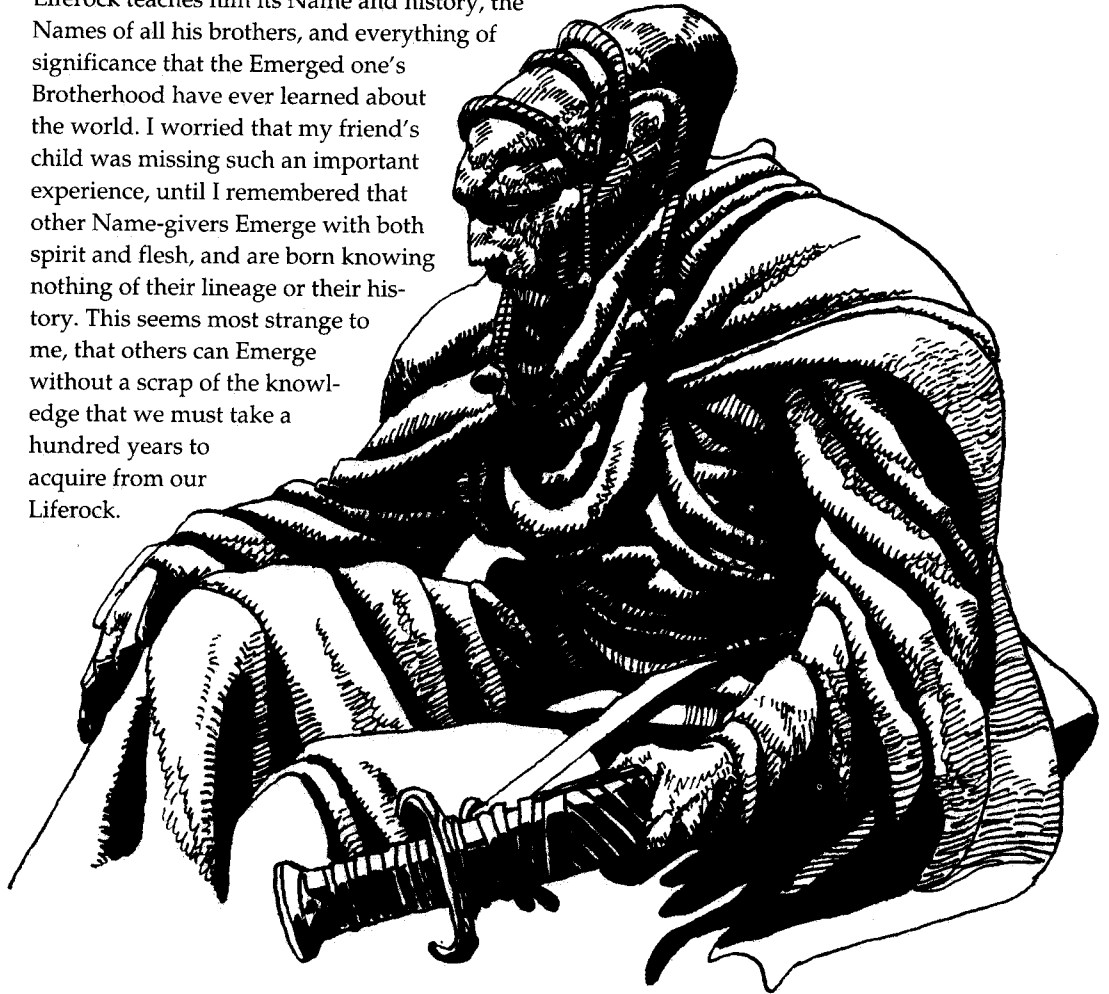




OBSIDIMEN
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UNDERSTAND.
—MERROX

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 Name-givers 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.

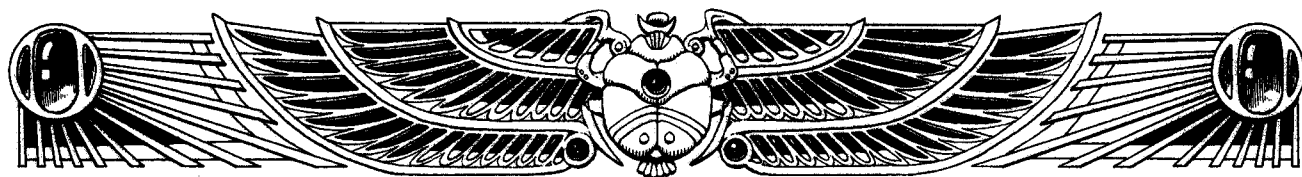


On the Ritual of Awakening

—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 Name-givers 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!”

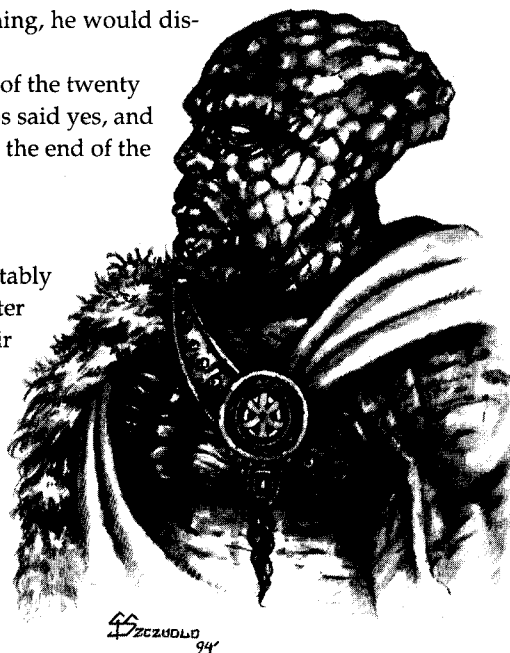
At length, Ovalos broke off from the mad dance and came to me. I asked who among the Brotherhood would Name the Awakened obsidiman. Ovalos looked amused and told me that the Awakened already had his Name. The Liferock had given it to him. I asked if I might know it, or at least some part of it by which 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.

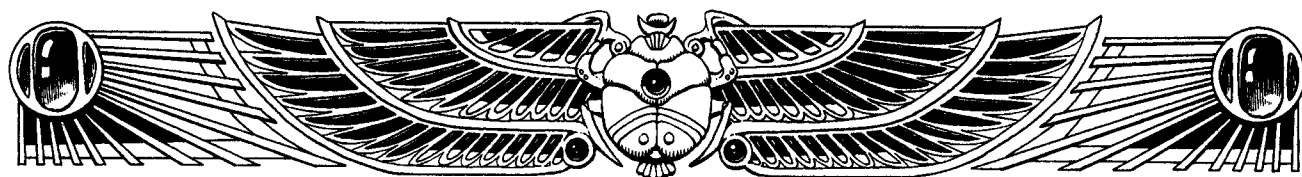
Twenty years to learn one’s Name! I marveled. I asked Ovalos if, at the end of the twenty years, the Awakened obsidiman would be what my folk would call adult. Ovalos said yes, and most courteously invited me to return to this spot twenty years hence to witness the end of the Awakening. I accepted with 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 Name-giver 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 Dreaming for up to ten years (as other Name-givers 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.

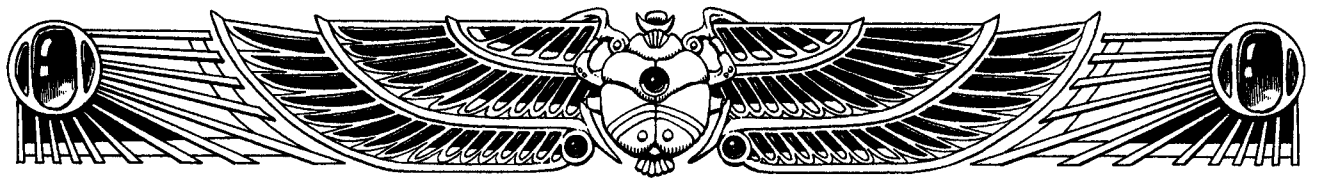
Some obsidimen enter the Dreaming in this way to seal oaths and promises, using the Dreaming as other Name-givers use blood magic oaths. Obsidimen swear such a Dreaming oath during a five-day ritual, in which the participants enter self-Dreaming and make their pledges to each other. I regret that I cannot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

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 EDNULL

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 Name-givers frantically built their kaers and citadels in which to weather the coming catastrophe, most obsidimen simply returned to our Liferock and merged with it. 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.

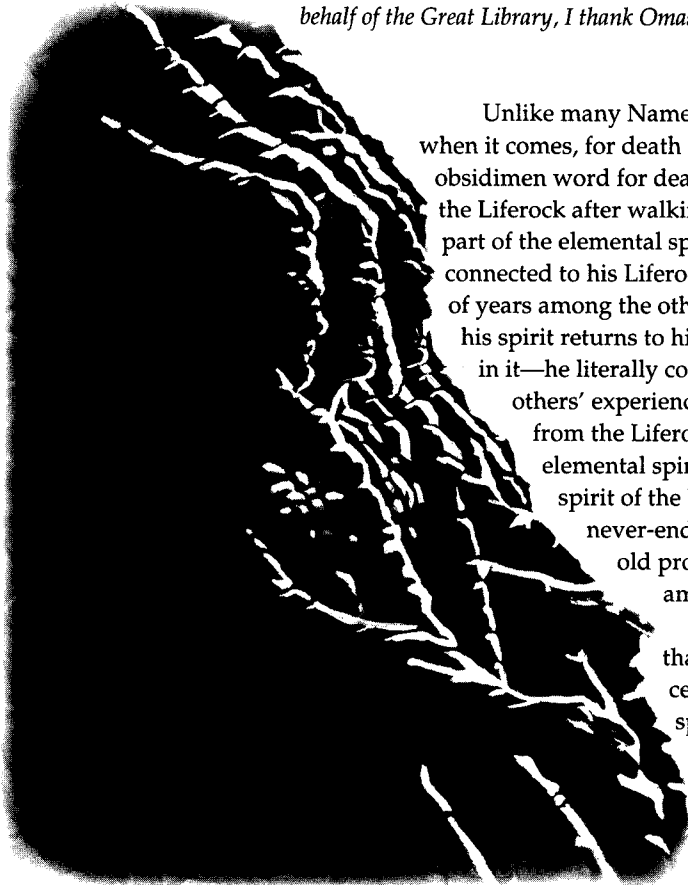
Sadly, some Brotherhoods succumbed. The Horrors managed to crack the outer shell of some Liferocks and slaughter those within; the spirits of other Liferocks gave way before the Horrors' dreadful might. Some obsidimen, unable either to reach their Liferock or find shelter in another race's kaer, joined 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 Name-givers entered their own odd form of the Dreaming; most of these lapsed into hibernation a few years after the sealing of the kaer. 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.

ON THE FINAL RETURN TO THE LIFEROCK

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.

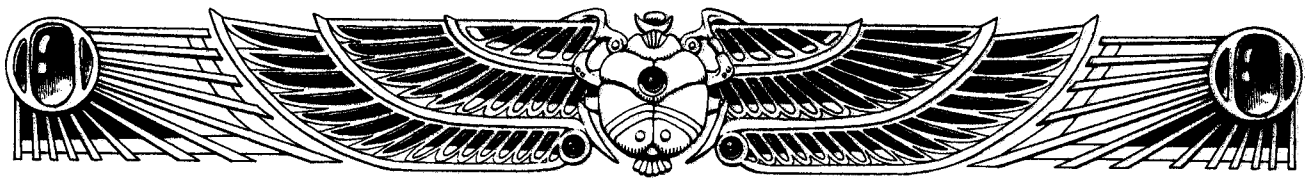
—Merrox



Unlike many Name-givers, we obsidimen do not fear death. We welcome it when it comes, for death to an obsidimen is something of a homecoming. Indeed, the obsidimen word for death—*olriutaquanotskirroctel*—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 Name-givers 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 spirit's 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

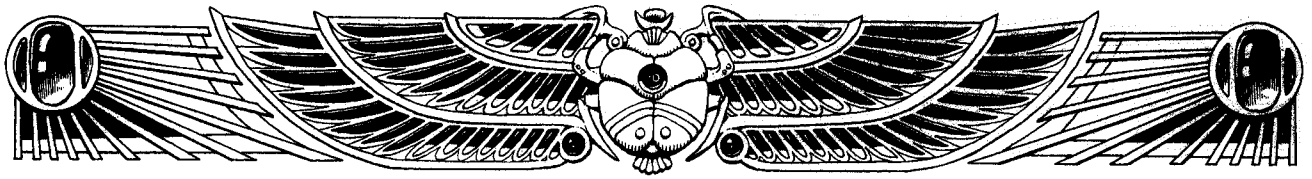
Ahivras, our brother, has gone from the world/but not from his brethren/not from his brethren

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 Mawrag, 1505 TH

In the obsidiman cosmology, all things descend from the primordial sea of molten stone called the Great Life Rock. The Earth, Sun, Moon, all plant and animal life, even the Name-givers 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 Name-givers, the nature of magic—virtually any idea that can be expressed in either written form or thought. Or he might live with other Name-givers, 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.

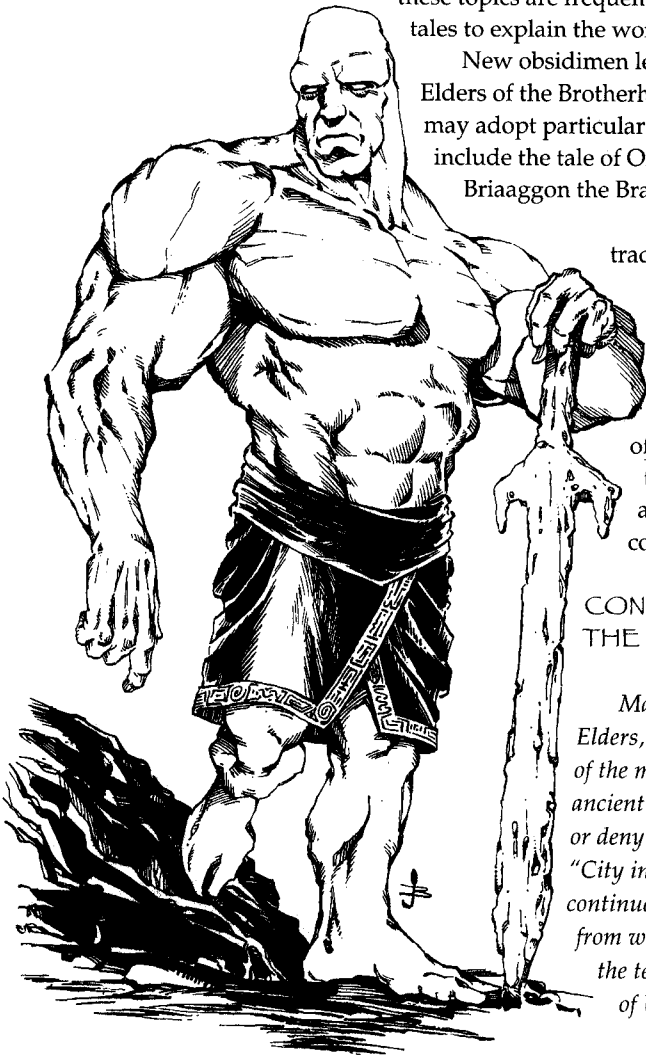
New obsidimen learn many of these tales during the First Merging. Generally, the Elders of the Brotherhood recount the stories, or different members of the Brotherhood may adopt particular tales and recount them for new obsidimen. Important stories include the tale of Orkaon, which teaches the importance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

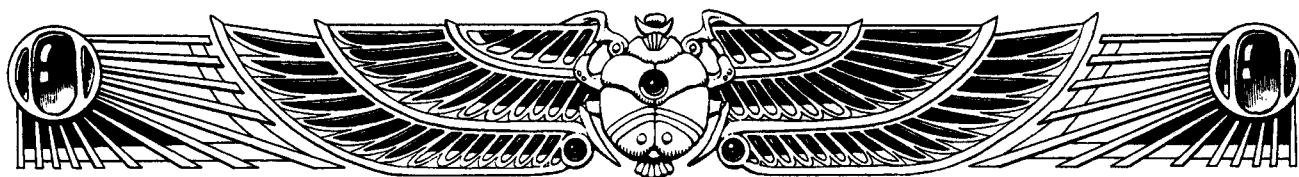
The Council of Four ensures the uniformity of these teachings and traditions. The origins of the council remain unknown, but many observers believe the group may be as old as the obsidiman race. Each member of the council corresponds to one of the four universal elements of the obsidimen cosmology—fire, 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.

CONCERNING THE VALLEY OF THE ELDERS AND THE COUNCIL OF FOUR

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





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 Name-givers.

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 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 Name-givers 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.

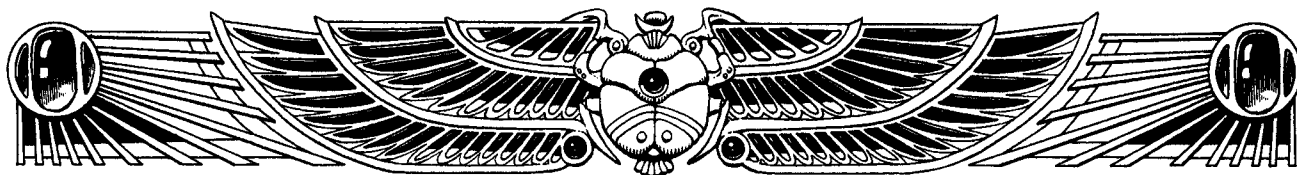
Then, moved by some mysterious impulse, the scattered stone men all began returning to the Valley of the First Liferock, from which all obsidimen had Emerged. From the mountains and jungles, the forests and rivers, from the plains and the seashores the obsidimen returned to the Valley.

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 Name-givers. 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, Name-givers, 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.

ON ARTISTIC ENDEAVOR

The following passage comes from an address by the famed elven art critic Vasaarius, delivered at the Royal Academy of Wyrn 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

The idea of obsidiman art has long been a subject of speculation among the Name-giver 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 "primitive" 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 Name-giver 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 Name-giver 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.

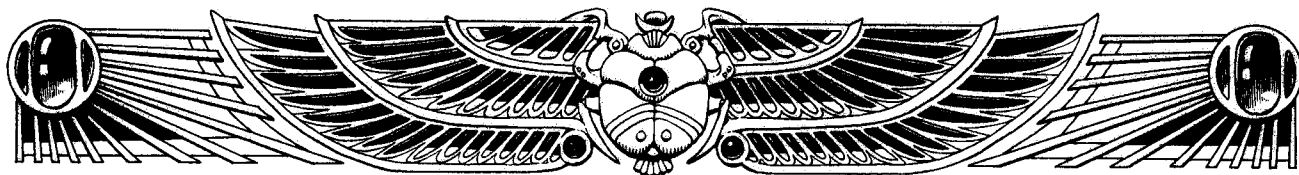
To understand and appreciate any art, first one must understand the origins and motivations of such art—the soil and seeds from which the works spring, if you will. In the case of obsidiman art, the deeply held belief in the harmony of all things forms the soil. The never-ending quest to more directly 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 Name-giver 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 Name-givers, 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 Name-giver 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 Name-giver 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 Name-giver would likely see no more than a "simple" grove or brook. And the abstract nature of much obsidiman art leaves many Name-givers 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 Name-givers. 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 Name-givers, this may indicate infinite patience or incredible laziness, yet none can dispute the quality of the finished piece of handiwork.

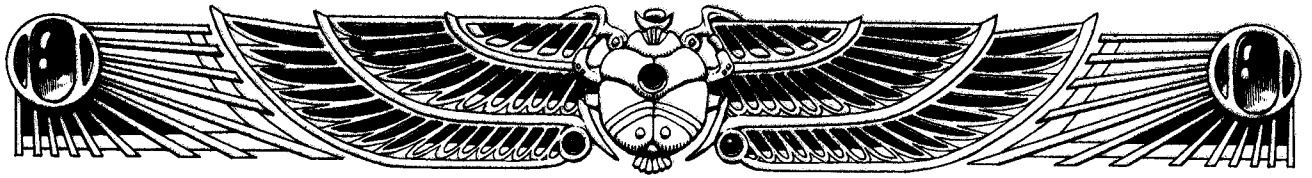
I believe that the notion of universal harmony contributes to the wonderful craftsmanship of obsidimen as well as their art. The obsidiman views all objects—even things as simple as water jugs or spinning wheels—as embodying this harmony, and so even these seemingly mundane pieces become something akin 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 knowledgeable dwarf as yourself must realize. But I realize most Name-givers 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 Name-givers 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

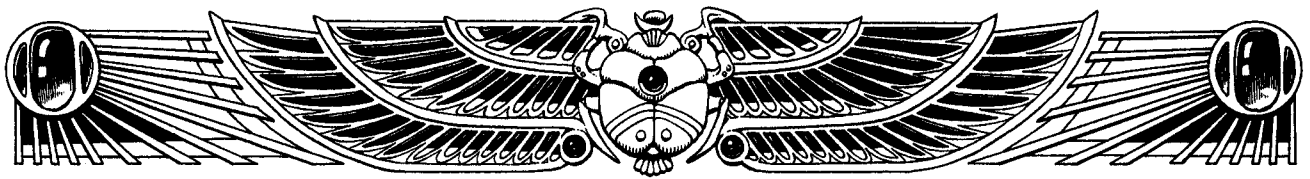
Teayu 1492

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.

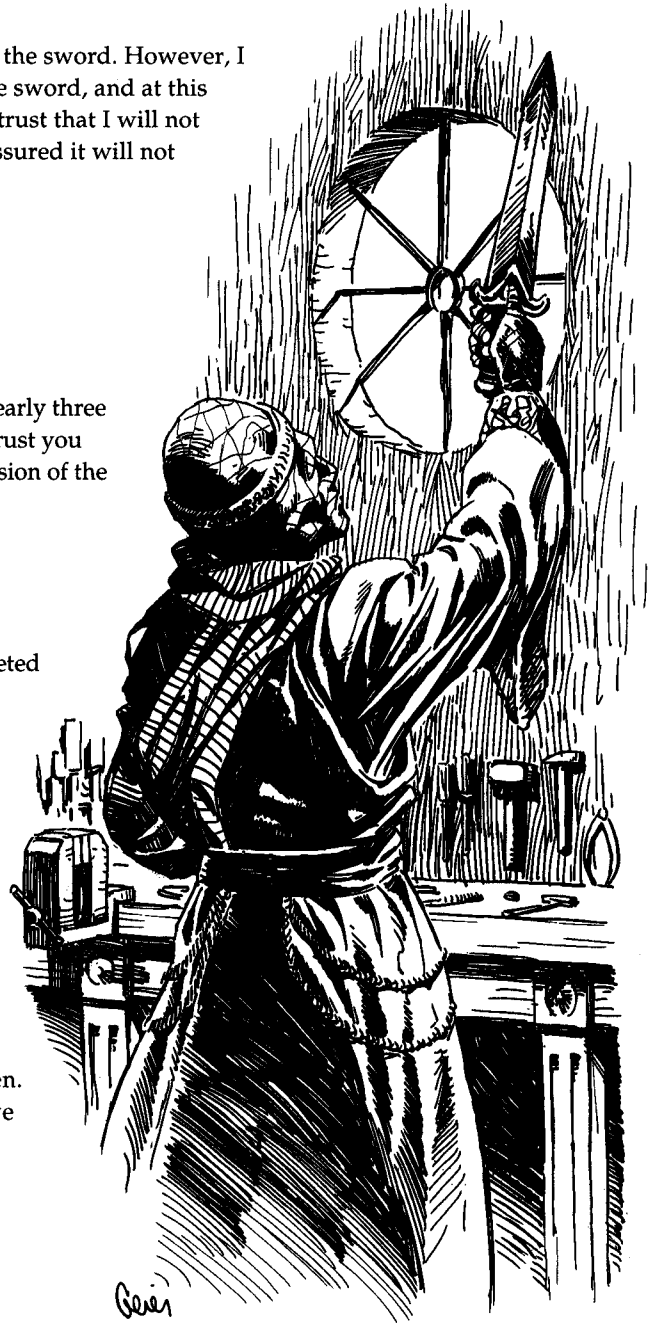
Yours in harmony,
Gendellius

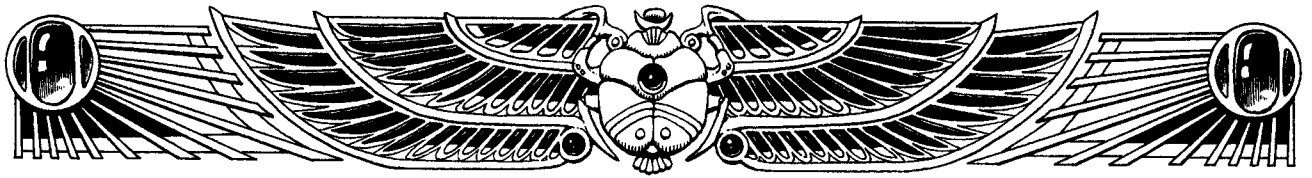
Rua 1502

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 Gendellius 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 Name-givers 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 the 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 Name-givers; 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

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

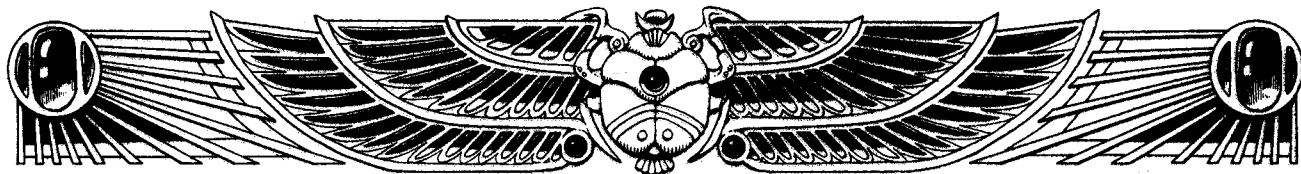
ON HOW THE PERCEPTION OF TIME SHAPES THE SPOKEN WORD

Understand that our perception of time shapes our language more than anything else. All our other Name-giver 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 Name-giver language.

I will give you an example so that those for whom you write this may understand. The obsidiman word "*raallehemarawe-oroniyalinn*" 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 Name-givers. 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 *lorow-eliaramehokorin*, 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, makes it difficult for many other Name-givers 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 Name-givers. 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 them: who they are, what they hold dear, why they value the things they do, 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.

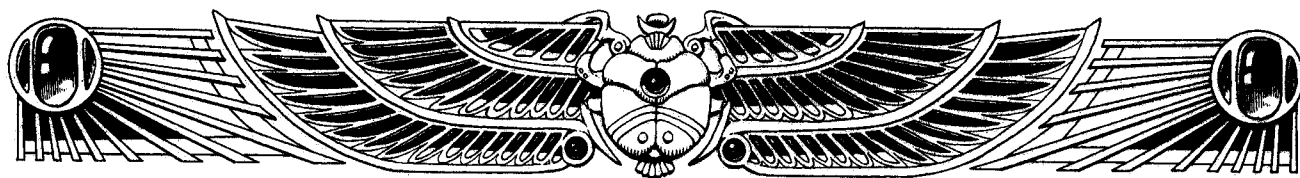
For the following section on the written language of obsidimen, I have chosen two sources that I believe illustrate those points most necessary for our understanding of the subject. The first is an excerpt from the journal of the Six Silver Hands, a most brave adventuring band who number an obsidiman 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

—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 Caucavik





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 Caucaviks? 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; Hammerfist 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

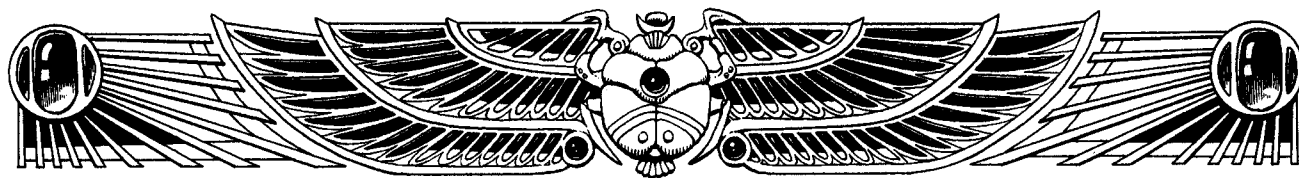
To those of us accustomed to thinking of written language as simply the tangible expression of the same tongue that we speak, it may come as a great surprise to learn that written language among the obsidimen can be quite different from their spoken tongue. It may come as a further surprise to some that 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 Name-giver race.

Like other Name-givers, the obsidimen developed written language for practical reasons. All language is a means of communication; when physical distance or the passage of time make it inconvenient or impossible to communicate in the spoken word, writing must take its place. Unlike other Name-givers, 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 Name-givers—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 Name-givers 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.

ON DEALINGS WITH THE WORLD AND ITS RESIDENTS

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.

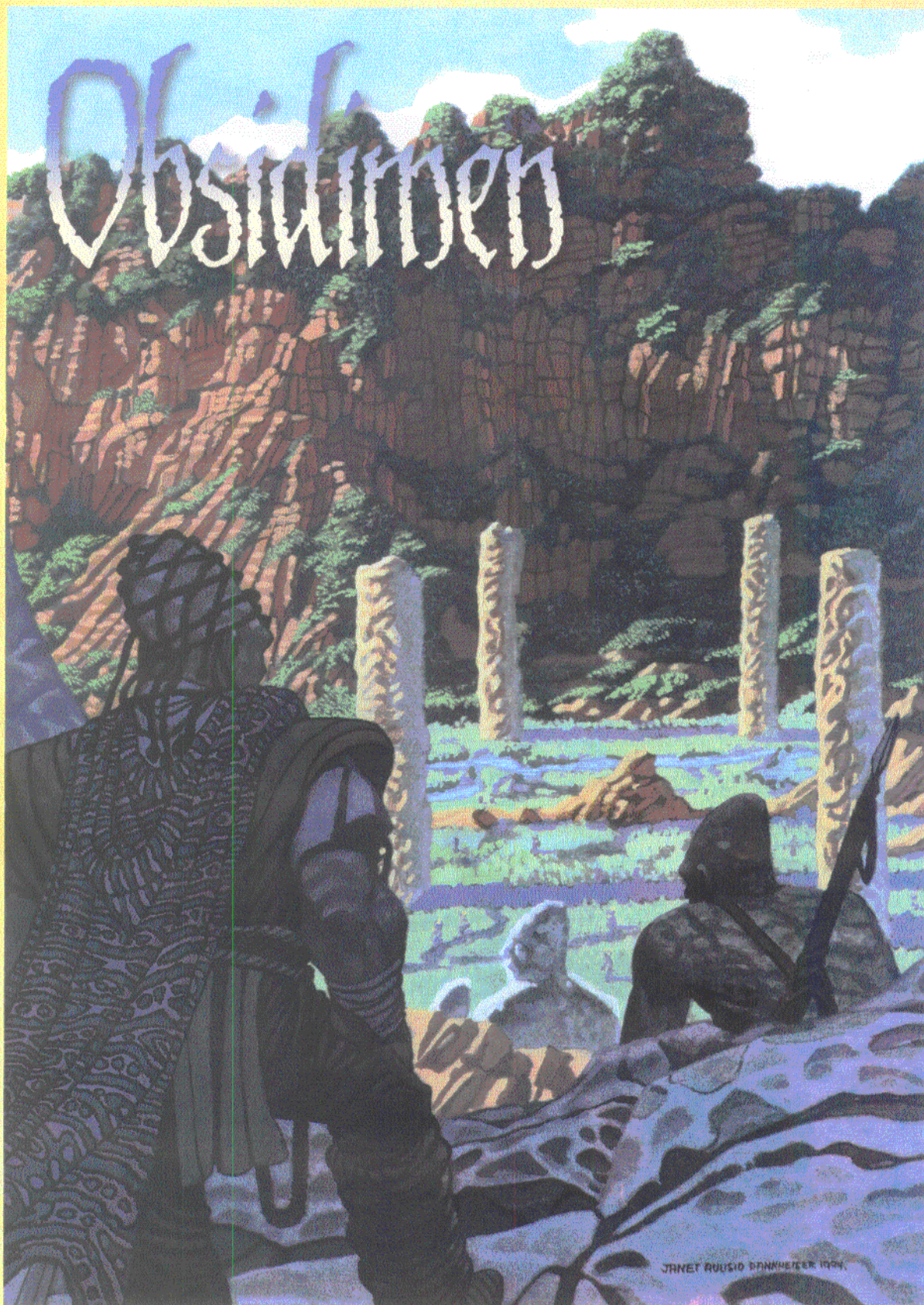
—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

"ATTRIBUTED
TO...? "...MAY BE
TRUE"? IT SEEMS
THE GREAT LIBRARY
OF THROAL HAS
BEEN REDUCED TO
SPREADING RUMORS.
—JERRIV FORRIM

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 Name-giver 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 Name-givers, he studied them from afar and learned their habits and their ways. He did not know their Names, and so he Named them.





JANET AULISIO DANNHEISER 1994

Obsidimen artwork by Janet Aulisio Dannheiser

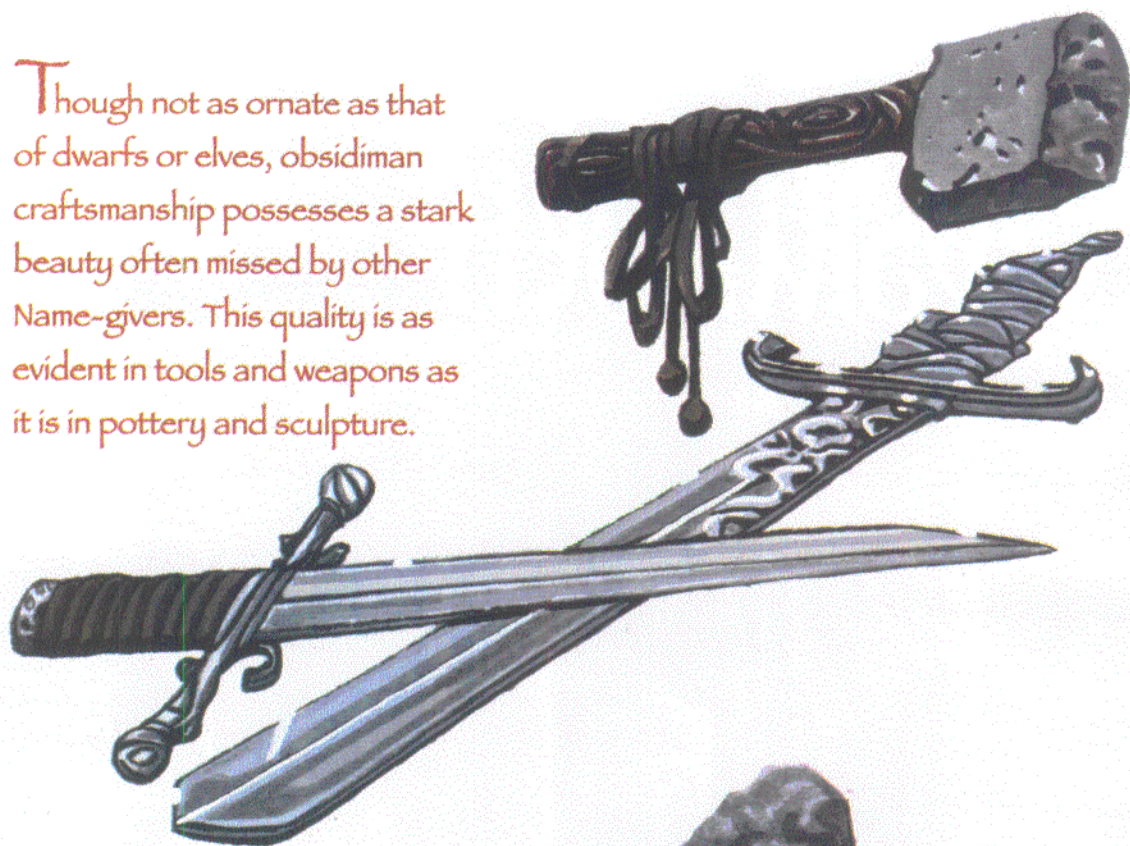
A GROUP OF OBSIDIMEN ARRIVING AT THE LEGENDARY VALLEY OF ELDERS.



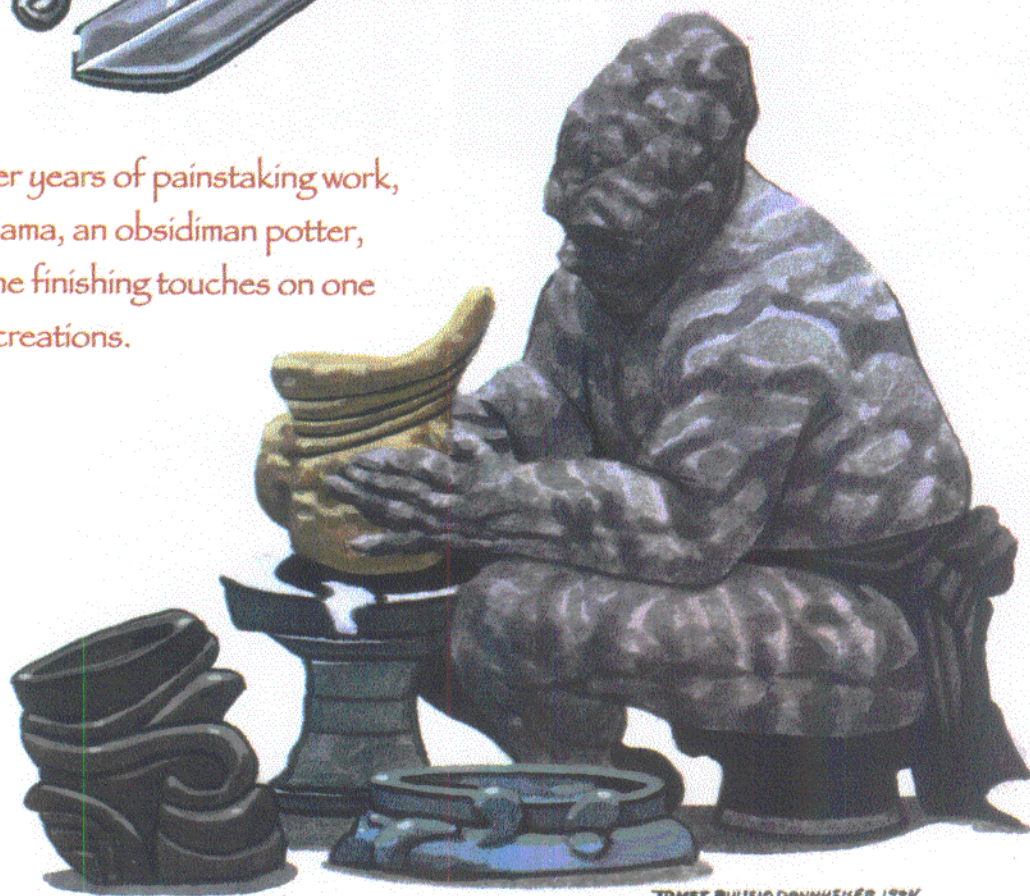
JANET AVILISO DANNHAGER 2004.

A BROTHERHOOD STANDS WITNESS TO THE RITUAL OF EMERGENCE.

Though not as ornate as that of dwarfs or elves, obsidiman craftsmanship possesses a stark beauty often missed by other Name-givers. This quality is as evident in tools and weapons as it is in pottery and sculpture.



After years of painstaking work, Ottaniama, an obsidiman potter, puts the finishing touches on one of his creations.



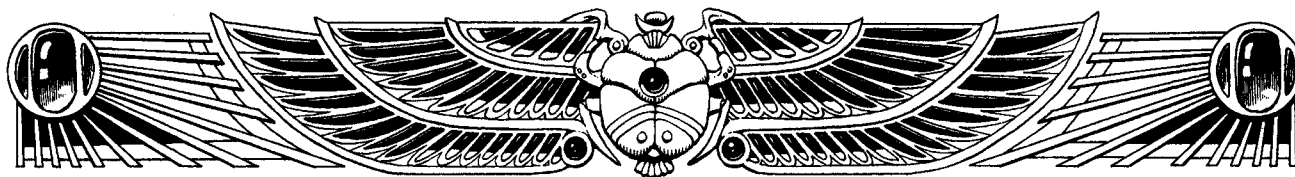
JAMES MULISIO DANNHEIMER 1998

Ceremonial horklas and robes are worn by the Elders of most Brotherhoods.



JANET AULISO DANNEBER 1994

A remarkable example of obsidiman body painting.



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 *Mbaz-tzik*, "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
NAME-GIVERS, THE
DRAGONS. THOSE FEW
WHO HAVE STUDIED
THE OBSIDIMAN
LANGUAGE IN ANY
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WORD FOR DRAGON IS
OZIKILNEMBURABE,
MEANING "MASTER
OF THOSE THEY
WATCH."

—KERN REDHAND

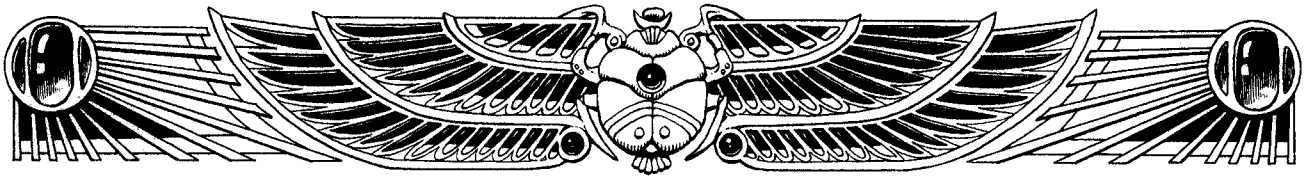
The following text is excerpted from an ancient tome, On the Nature of the Races, by Klaric Nemiz, scribe and advisor to the governor of the city of Nexim. I feel it necessary to apologize for the tone of this text; indeed, its main value lies less in what it says than in the insight (however shameful) 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





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

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 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 inn keepers 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 sees in them.

Can it be that these creatures of rock yearn to be free of their lumbering bodies and to live without restraint?

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 it grand?"

Never did I wish to take the life of another Name-giver 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."

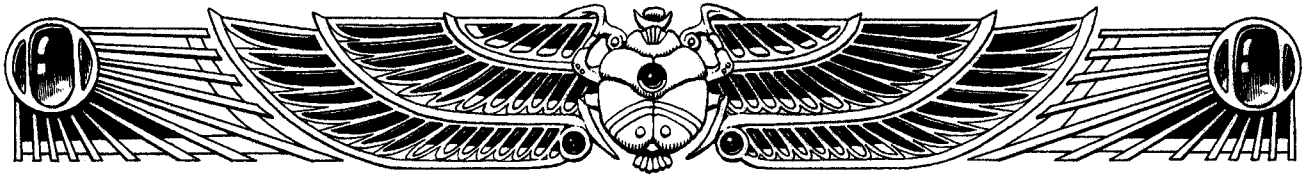
The rest of the night was one long nightmare. I sat in the corner and shook, fearing the city watch would burst in at any moment. My concern became the mark of many a jest by the three fugitives with whom I shared this horrific evening.

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 Name-givers. 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."

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 calvarymen 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 fol-

low 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.

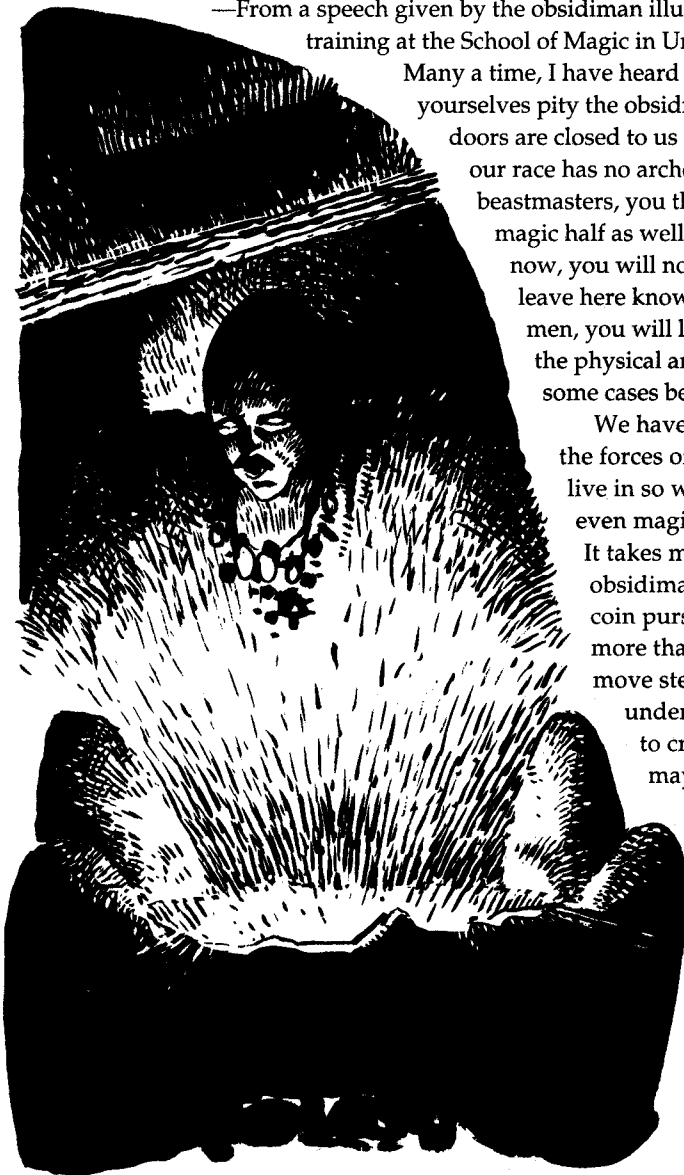
The sages say, know your strengths and weaknesses. Ours we learned long ago. Our bodies are strong, like the rock they resemble—stronger than the bodies of the other Name-giver races. Because our strength comes from our physical nature rather than from magical talents, obsidimen may choose to become spellcasting adepts and still maintain great strength. For example, though I am "merely" an illusionist,

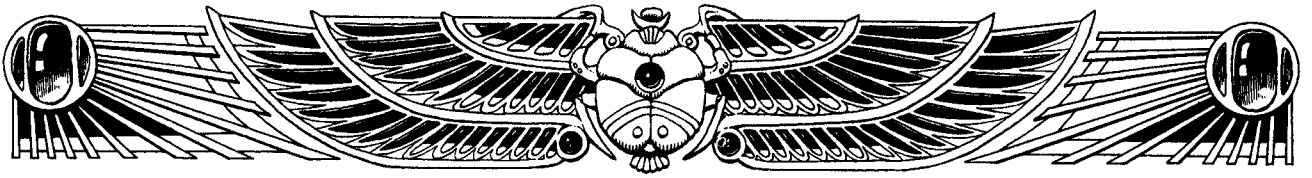
NEEDLESS TO SAY,
OUR NEXT MEETING
WITH BREEEK AND
MYBELLUMA PROVED
GREAT FUN—FOR ME.

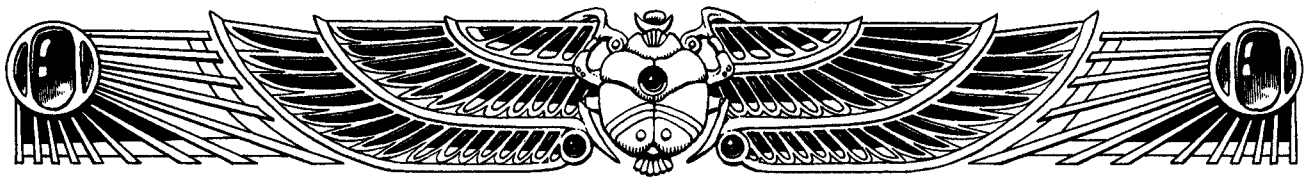
—MERROX

I HAVE HEARD
WINDLING TROUBA-
DOURS TELL WON-
DERFULLY FUNNY
STORIES ABOUT
ATTEMPTS BY
OBSIDIMEN TO TAKE
UP DISCIPLINES FOR
WHICH THEIR LARGE
BODIES WERE
UNSUITED. INSTEAD
OF TAKING OFFENSE
AS MANY OTHERS
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 CALVARY-
MAN WHO TRIES TO
FIND A MOUNT.

—DARON FELL







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 inmost 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.

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.

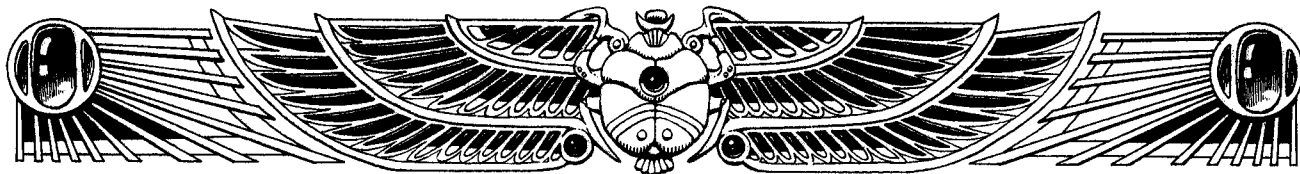
—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

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, one cannot ever truly join their society no matter how long one 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 Name-givers. 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,

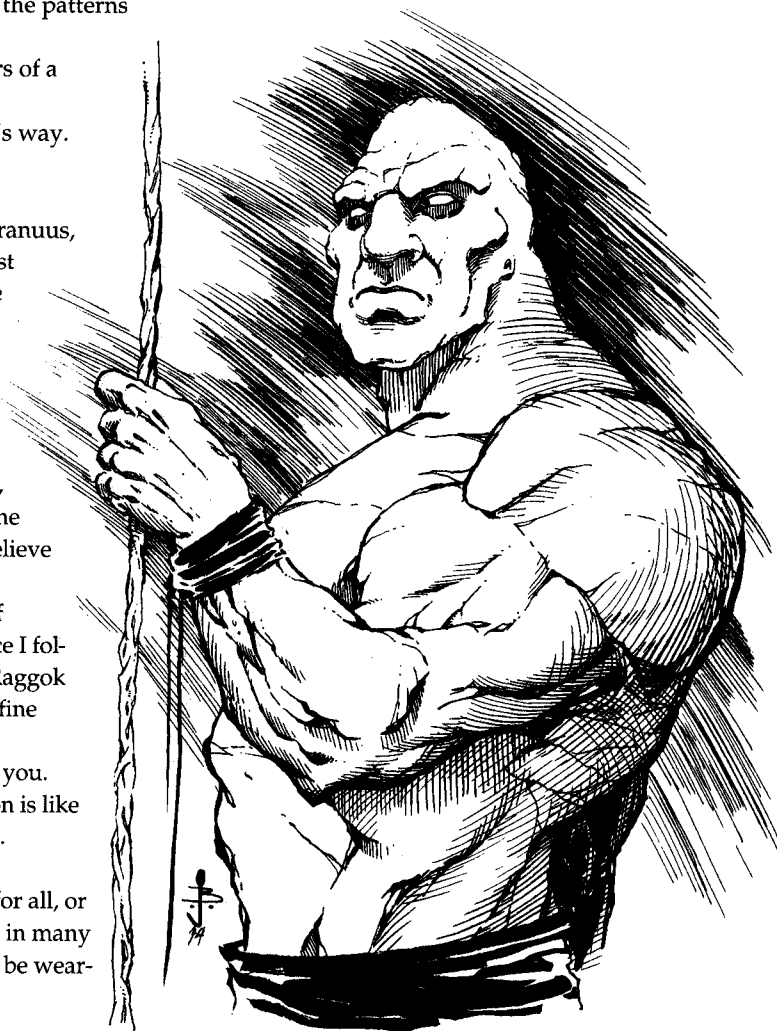
You asked me why I wear the bright red robes of Floranuus, traveling the countryside and reviving those who have lost hope. My brother, I do it because I seek harmony with the Spirit-That-Pervades-All, that which cannot be seen or touched. And the Spirit seems especially strong in those who follow the 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 Name-givers. 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?

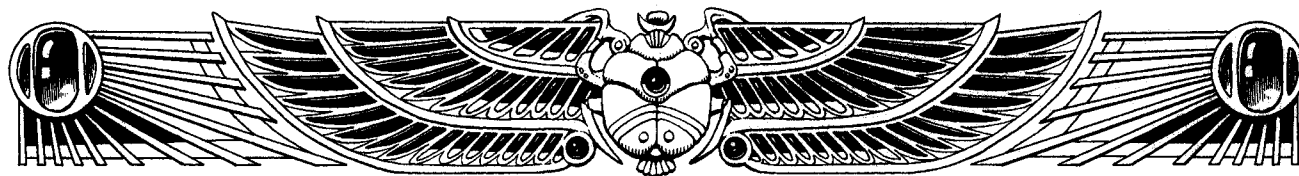


ON DIVERSE CUSTOMS AMONG OBSIDIMEN

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





REGARDING THE CUSTOM OF THE SENDING

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 Name-givers, 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. 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.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Omeyras, troubadour of Urupa

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 thornbush and watched them through its loosely knit leaves.

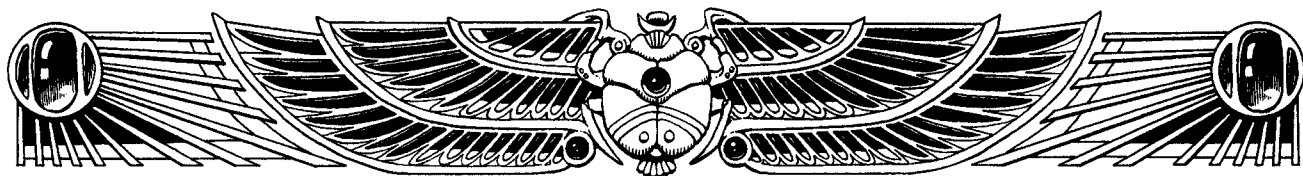
As the obsidimen drew closer to my hiding place, the ground shook gently under their heavy tread. I began to hear their deep voices, calling to one another in their flowing, musical tongue. I understand a fair amount of obsidiman, having worked for many years as a caravan guard alongside Vespaysa—the 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 of Urupa

As with other Name-givers 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

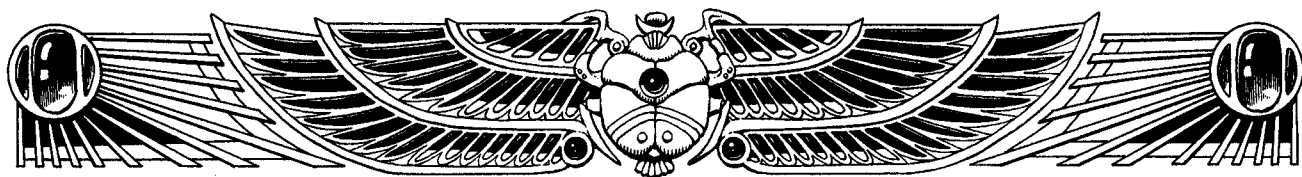
Liferock is a deed fraught with danger. To make such a journey costs us time and effort as well as risking our lives, and so we cannot afford to do it often.

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

On the Gathering Tree

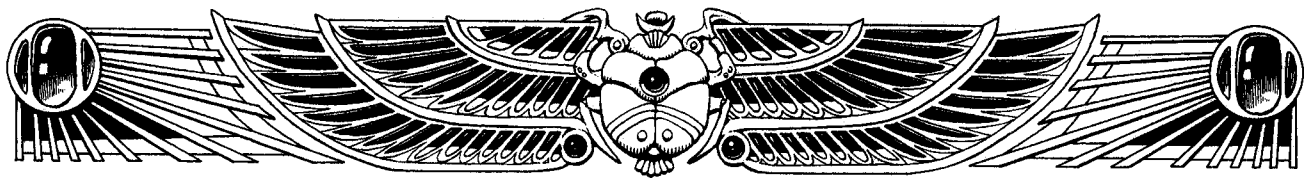
Whenever a city-dwelling obsidiman has the good fortune to meet and Gather with fellow obsidimen, he afterward plants a Gathering tree near his dwelling as a way of thanking the Spirit-That-Pervades-All for allowing him a chance to enter the Dreaming. Why a tree, you ask? A tree, friend Ardinn, belongs 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 I hold these occasions and symbolizes my gratitude to the Universe for the knowledge I have acquired in Gathering with my 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 Name-giver 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 Name-giver 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.





REVELATIONS ON THE TRUE NATURE OF ORKS

Our search for information on each of the Name-giver 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 of the Hall of Records, 1506 TH



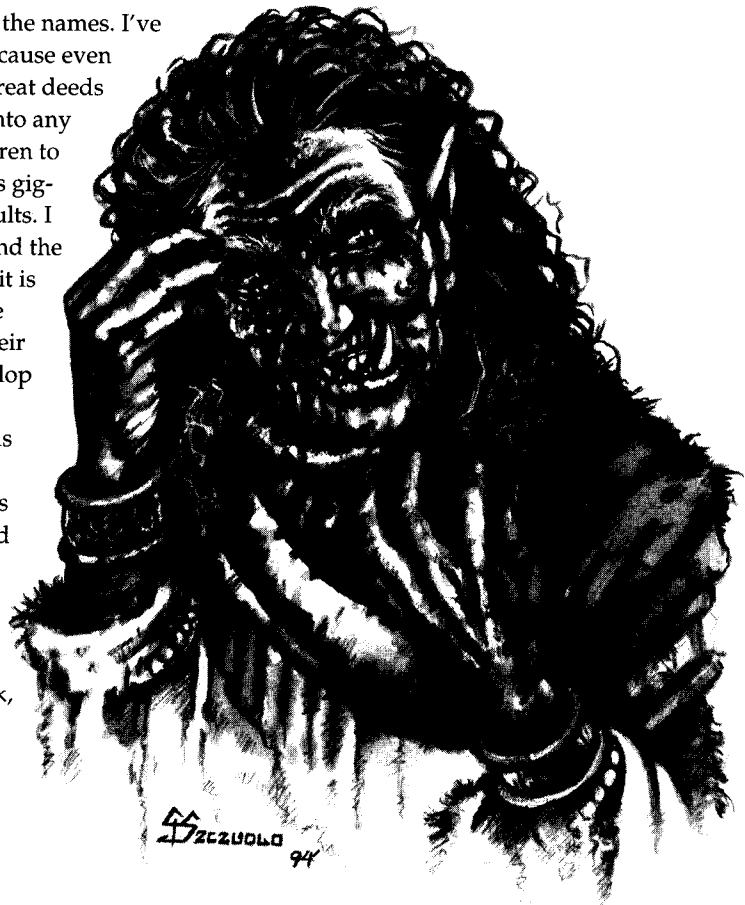
You want to know what it means to be an ork in Barsaive? Well, sit down, you handsome young thing, and I'll tell you more about orks than you thought there was to know. You name it, I've done it. Ridden with the cavalry, raided with the nomads, run with gangs of thieves. I've had tea with a dragon, found 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.

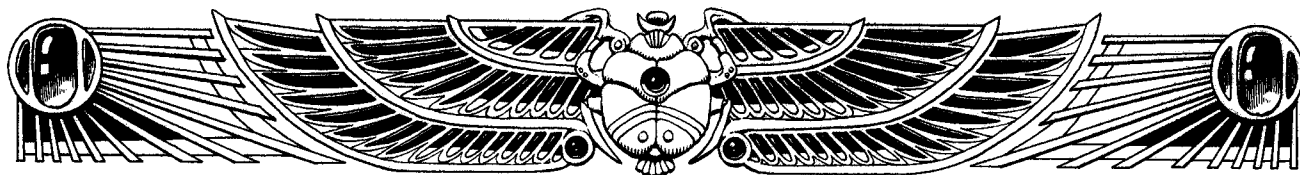
There you go, laughing. Your imagination fails you. You see only my coarse gray hair, tangled and matted; my face dotted with warts and wrinkles; my gnarled, twisted hands. You cannot see Mereelva Gadj, heroine. You see just another ork.

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 Name-giver 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 Name-givers; 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 Name-giver 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 be dead within the year. Fate itself shortchanges the ork.

Bitter? Not at all. I speak only the facts. I feel no regret. I have spit 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 Name-givers 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.

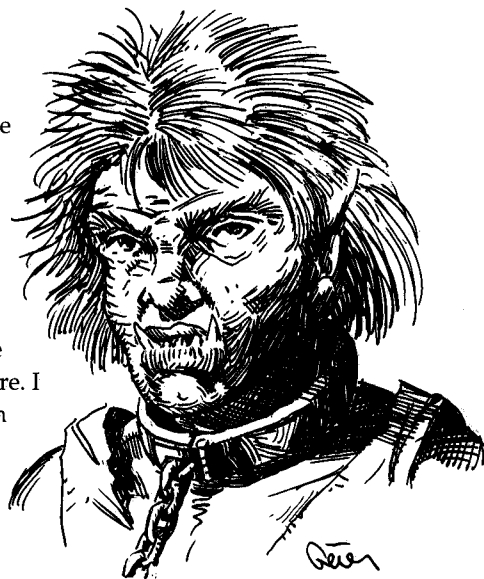
In those disgraceful days, one ork alone still had her spirit—Hrak Gron. Her parents were slaves, her grandparents, her great-grandparents. Yet the spirit of freedom lived bright within her. Gron watched her father whipped to death, her mother mistreated in ways I will not speak of. She resolved to fight 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 Name-givers.

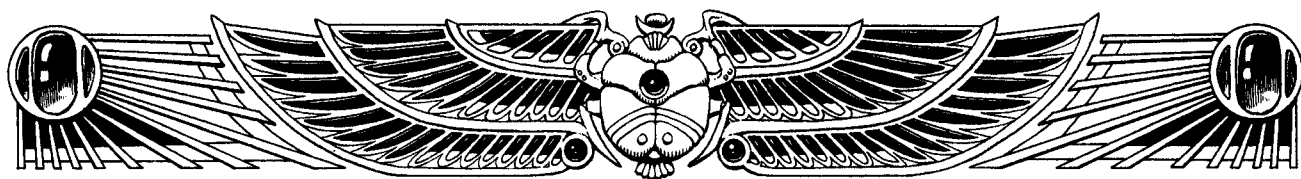
Hrak Gron, like the liberators she trained and the liberators who fight today, used no weapons but her mind and her love for freedom. However, it is said that her scattered bones are relics of great power, and I know many an ork who has died in search of them.

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 Name-givers believe us to be. For while other races are judged by their heroes, the orks are always measured by their outlaws.





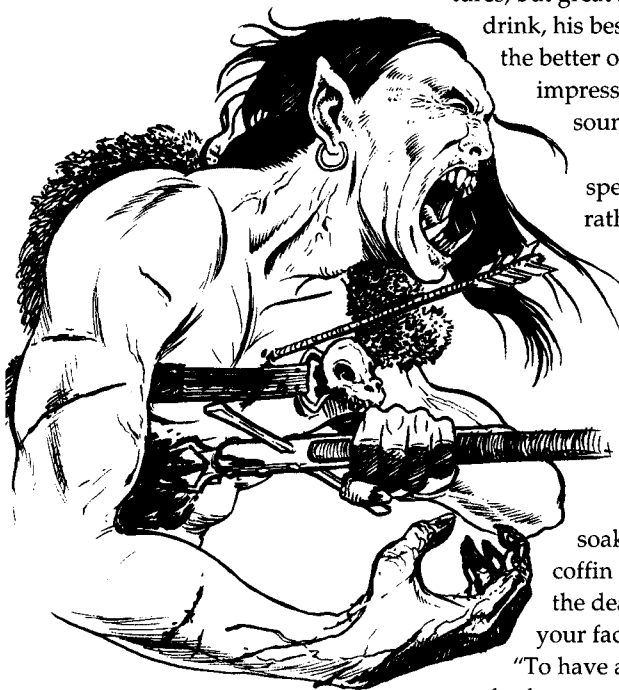
ON LIVING AND DYING WELL

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 your head that your hair blows back from the breeze. And if you're a little too slow, and that club dashes your skull into a thousand bits? What of it? You 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 her funeral—it means she took such great risks that nothing is left of her 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.

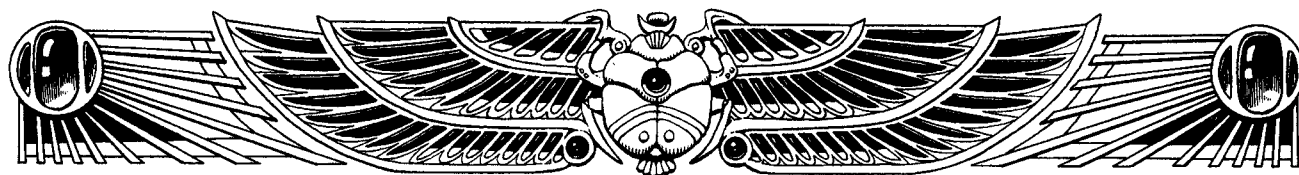


Outsiders call orks savage and uncivilized because our funeral speeches celebrate the vividness and fervor of a dead ork's deeds rather than their goodness. An evil slaver can have as many exploits recounted at his funeral as a courageous Horror fighter. We believe in working hard to correct another ork's evils while he lives—with your 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 elemental. In fact, he became a merchant and now deals in elemental earth.

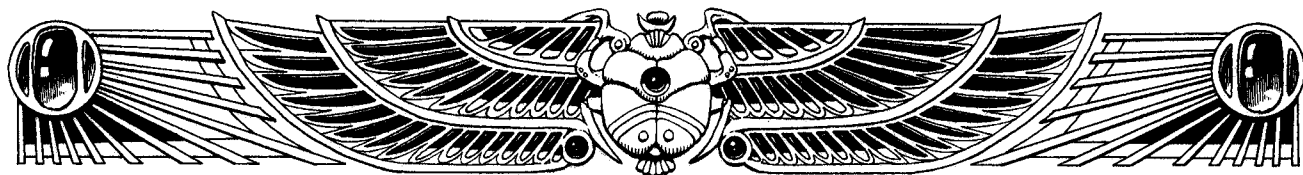
Though all Naming rituals are different, most have a few things in common. The mother is always present—though she is not always alone with the child, as happened in each *vravraka* I received. In each *vravraka*, the child speaks words that someone later repeats to it during the ritual. Most *vravraka* 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. Babies 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*.

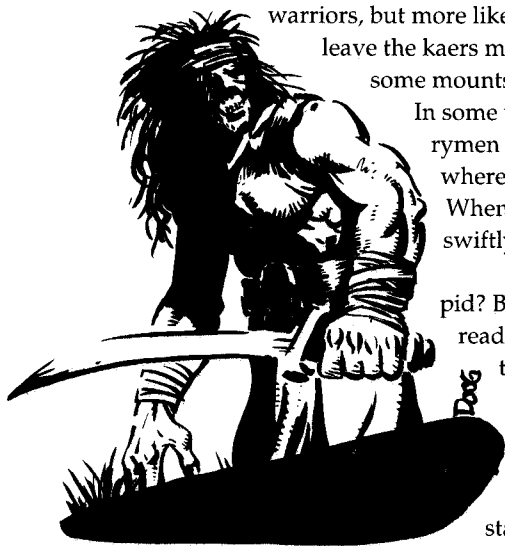
Full of *quaalz*? That means stupid, foolish, thickheaded idiots. They're full of *quaalz* because cavalrymen and raiders call each other "uncivilized" and both heap scorn on the city ork. But neither of what you'd call "ork scorchers," the cavalry or the raiders, is any kind of ancient tradition! Go back four generations and every ork was as "civilized" as any dwarf.

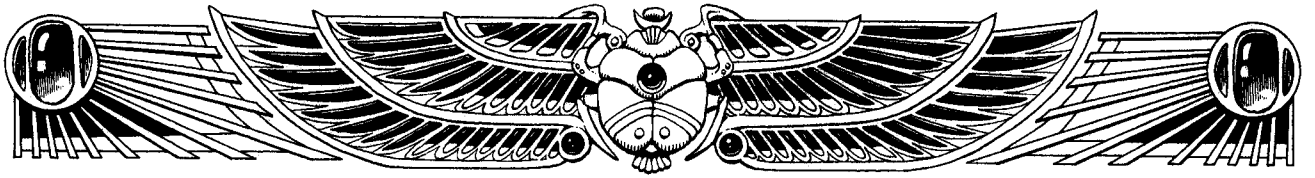
You look puzzled, boy. Imagine the time just before the Scourge. Word had spread that anyone who wanted to survive had to build kaers or turn their cities into citadels. Orks were among the first to throw themselves into the hard work of building. Name a kaer that survived, big or small, and you can 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!

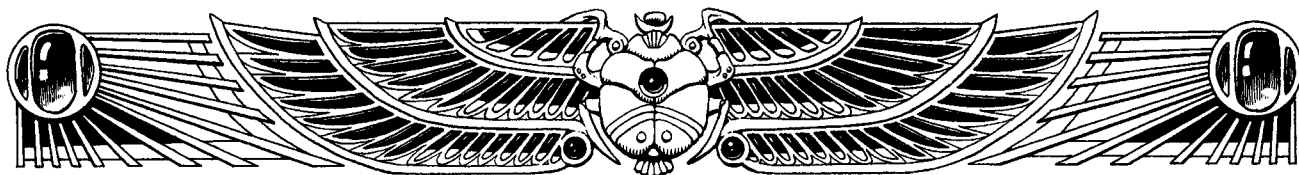
Think about it, boy—the orks in the kaers went through dozens of ways of thinking and living, but none of them involved making war. Who's going to make war in a big cave underground? Maybe they remembered fierce warriors, but more likely somebody just invented those memories. The generation that could 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 Name-givers 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.



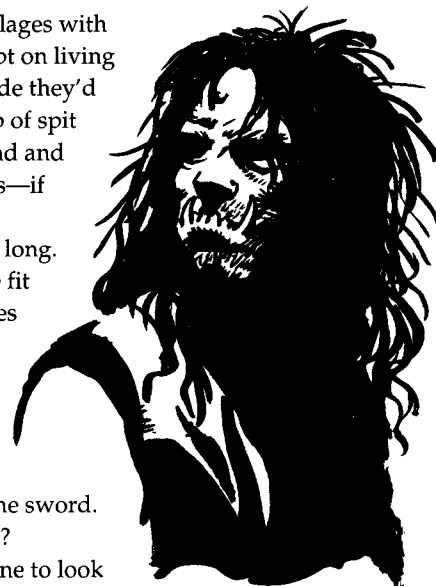




The city ork, him the “great warriors” despise, lives a way more like the way most orks lived for centuries. You know who I mean, little elf—I mean orks who live in towns and villages with other Name-giver races. These orks came out from the kaers, built houses, and kept on living with the same families 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 Name-giver 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 Name-givers 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.

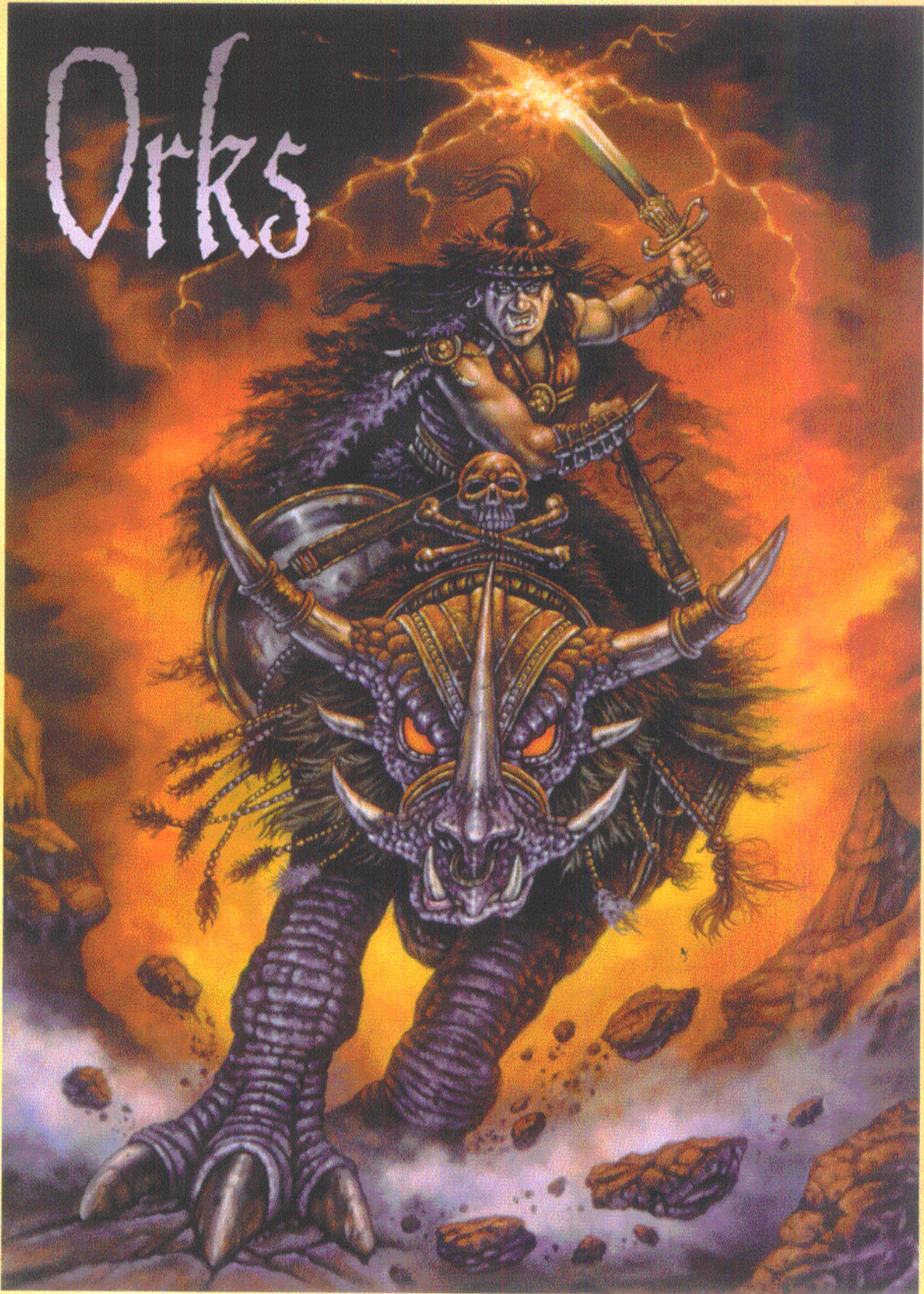
Anything that makes an ork want to do something, good or bad, can give rise to *gahad*. Some impulses we can never resist, though these are different for each ork. Me, I’m bad with insults, particularly slurs against my race. So my *gahad* impulse is inconvenient, because a racial insult is usually the 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.



Orks



Orks artwork by Tony Szczudlo

CRACKSKULL IRONFANG OF THE THUNDERER CAVALRY CHARGES INTO BATTLE.



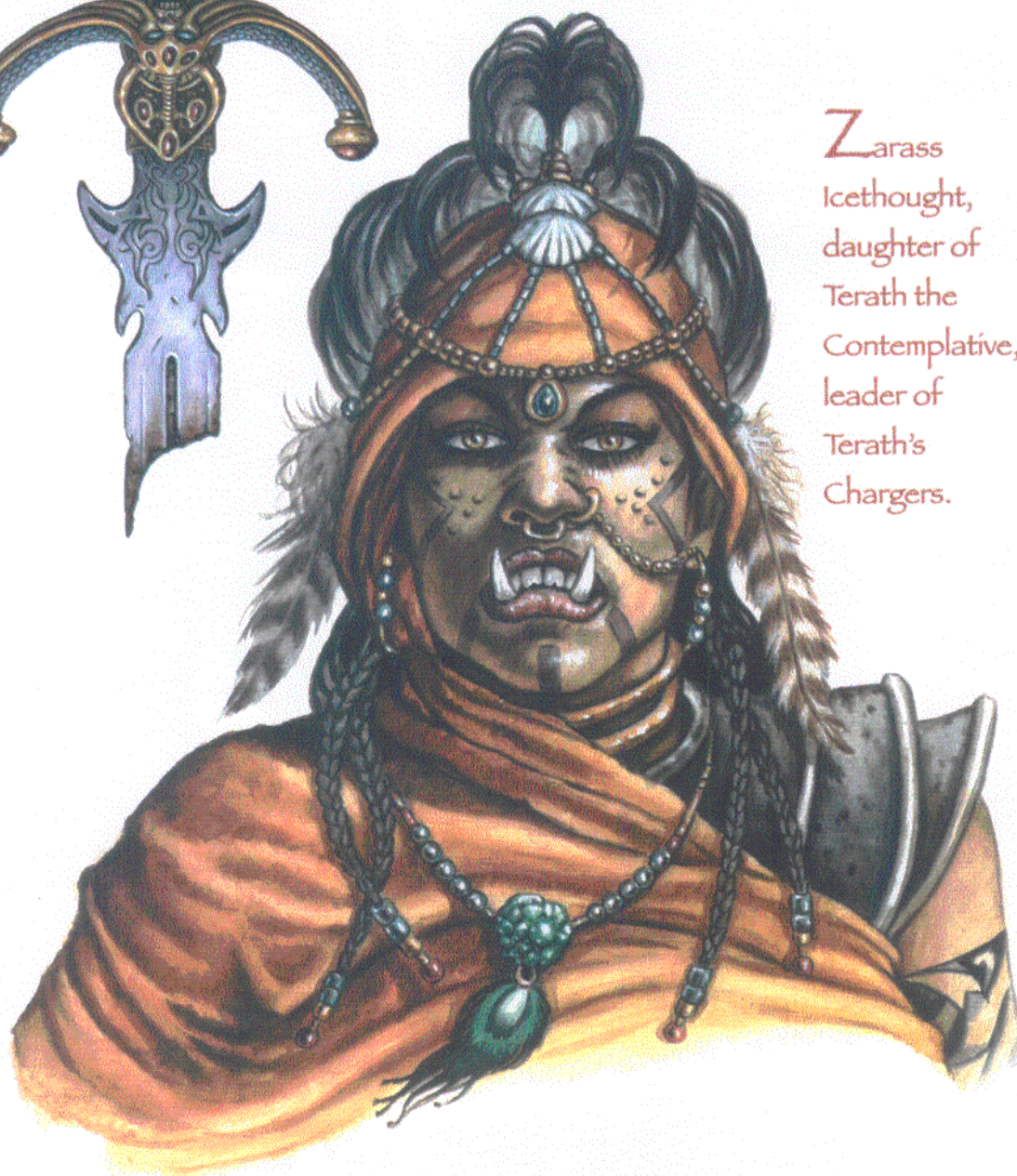
The human merchant Sudlow learns first-hand the dangers of triggering an orks' gahad.



A ceremonial war horn from the ancient ork lands of Cara Fahd.



The Broken Sword
of Takkan the Slayer,
who destroyed the
Horror of Algothra.



Zarass
Icethought,
daughter of
Terath the
Contemplative,
leader of
Terath's
Chargers.



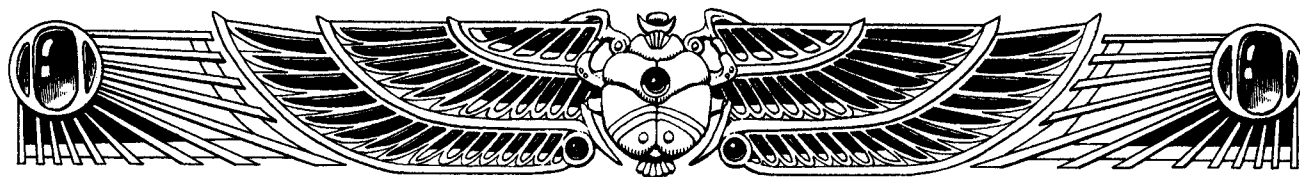
Ork cavalryman artisans often craft their works from the remains of slain mounts.



The Oath Cup, used for sealing truces among the warring ork tribes.

Charok Redhand, leader of the Broken Fang Tribe.





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 Name-givers 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.

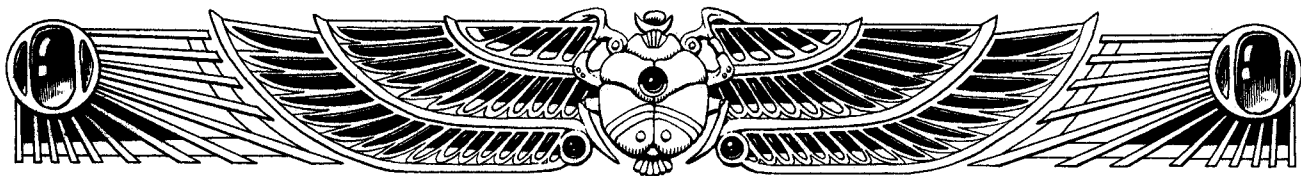
Sometimes I think *turgma* are orks who have done the wrong thing when the breath of a Mad Passion comes, who have surrendered to their fears and to the Corrupted Ones. I have heard it said that an ork who enslaves himself to the touch of a Mad Passion can never again feel the other Passions within him. 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 nattering 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 Name-givers 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 *Kawjuwak*, 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 *Kawjuwak* 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 naive 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*.

Jaspre 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 *Blor* in our own language and honoring her by swearing oaths in her name. Liberators especially revere *Blor* because she inspired their Discipline in the heart of the great *Hrak Gron*. *Blor'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 *Blor* together often destroy slavers. We have a saying that you can always tell a *turgma*, because he is ashamed to praise *Blor*.

According to our legends, *Mynbruje*, or *Mikbruug*, once served only the other Name-givers 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

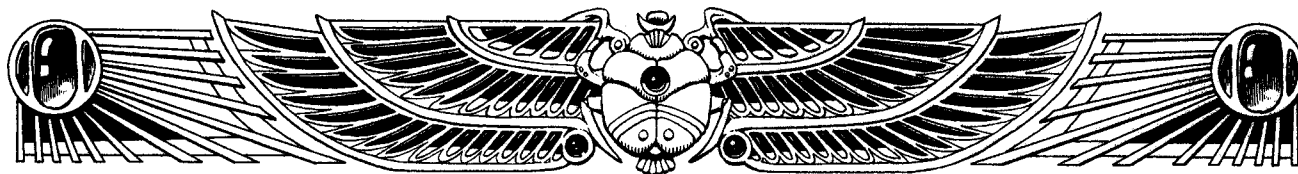
Barsaive. *Mikbruug* gave *Hrak Gron* several gifts, but decreed that she and those who followed her Discipline would lose their talents if they turned their backs on the ideals of justice. To this day, liberators must follow a code of honor if they wish to remain adepts. Most orks still think of *Mikbruug* 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 *Blor* 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 *Blor*, 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 one thing. 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 story telling most. A truly great tale teller 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 your 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.

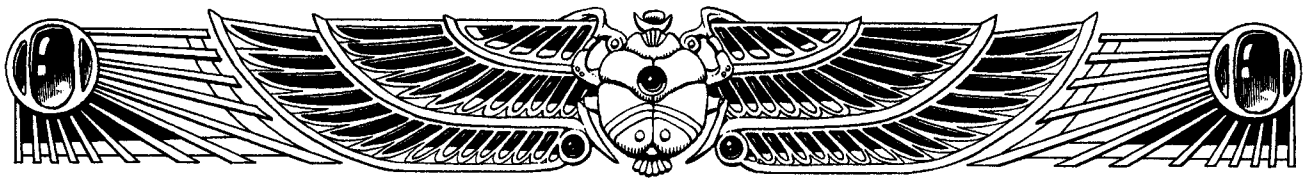
ON STYLES OF DRESS

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 cavalymen. 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.

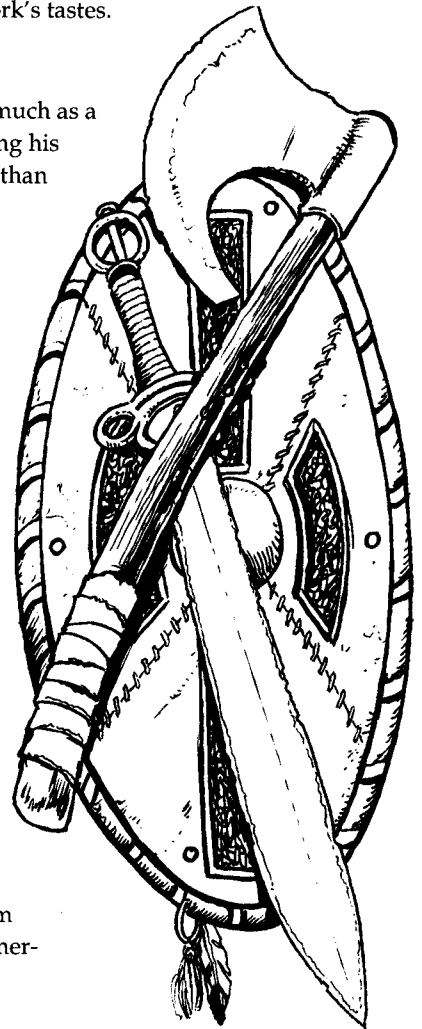
ON ORK ARCHITECTURE

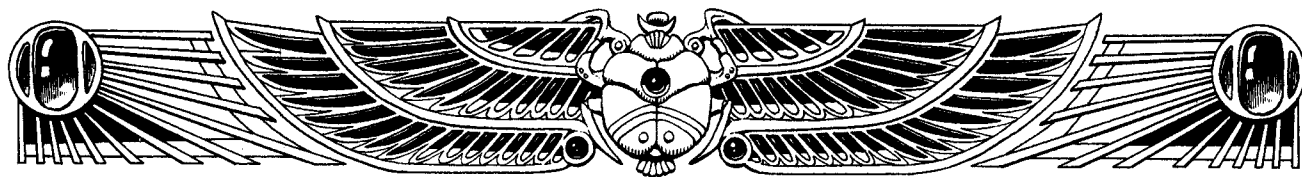
Most orks are happy to leave building to the *ujnort*. After all, erecting a great hall or tower can take longer than an ork's lifetime! Better to spend time on enjoying a thousand things than on a single task. Don't misunderstand me, boy—we know how to build. Orks work on construction crews if the pay 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 apologize. 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 or her *dramar*. I owe advice and aid to my *lelkrargs* 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 also. 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 or 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.

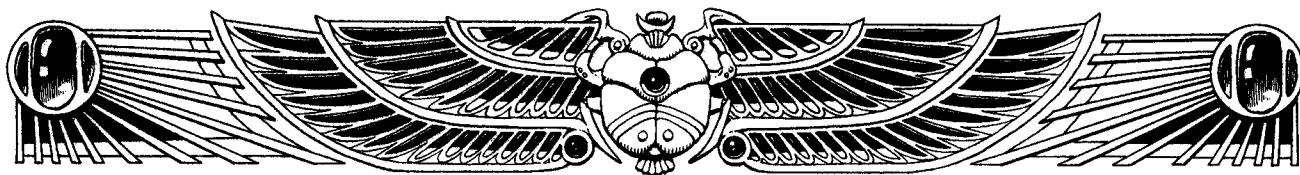
On one hand, dwarfs don't fancy around with flowery lies and weasel words. They say what they think—sometimes, anyway. On the other hand, they pretend to love justice and freedom but kept us as slaves for centuries. And they lust for power over all of Barsaive. To them, orks are pawns in their game, 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.

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!

IT IS OUR EVERLASTING SHAME THAT WE ENSLAVED THE ORKS. BUT MAY NOT DWARFS, LIKE OTHER NAME-GIVERS, BE FORGIVEN THEIR ERRORS? AS FOR TREATING ORKS AS PAWNS, OR DESIRING POWER OVER ALL BARSATIVE, THAT IS ARRANT NONSENSE. WE WANT ONLY THE "POWER" TO BRING JUSTICE TO ALL NAME-GIVERS.

—MERROX,
MASTER OF THE HALL
OF RECORDS





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 the 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 obsidimen 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 Name-giver'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 Name-givers 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 they know 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.

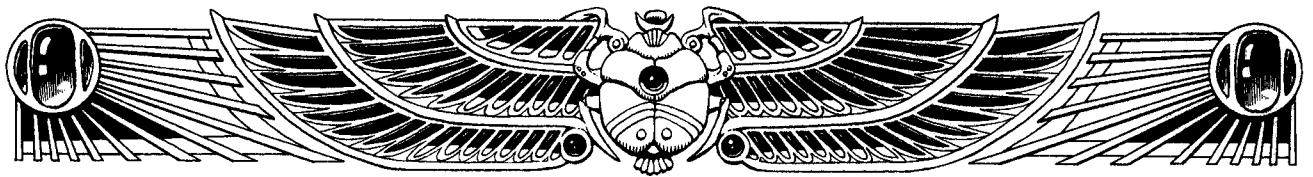
ON FOOD AND DRINK DEAR TO ORKS

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 spit 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 Name-givers 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?





ON THE REMARKABLE 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 tale-tellers, most succumb to the romance of the different and study other Name-giver races. Vrayma Dawnharrow is one of the few who writes about the ways of trolls ... and given the unfortunate tendency of many other Name-givers 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 of the Great Library of Throal



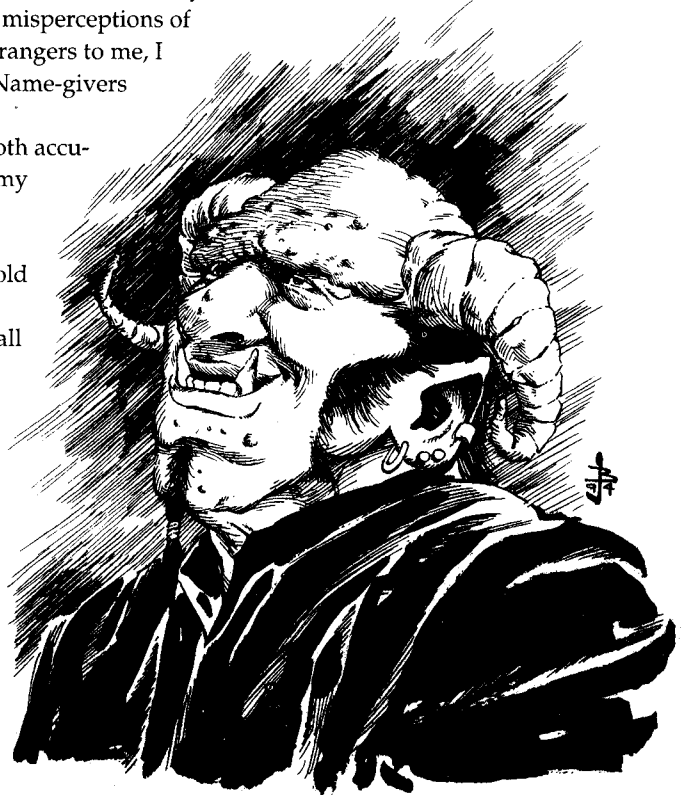
My Name is Vrayma Dawnharrow of clan Burntclaw; by profession, I am a storyteller and scholar. Many a long year ago, I left my family home atop Mount Mar'ak in the Twilight Peaks and followed my troubadour Discipline in search of tales and stories about all the Name-giver races of Barsaive. In my travels I have met many whose ways I found both strange and wonderful, and yet no other Name-giver race seems quite so strange and wonderful to me as my own too-often-misunderstood people.

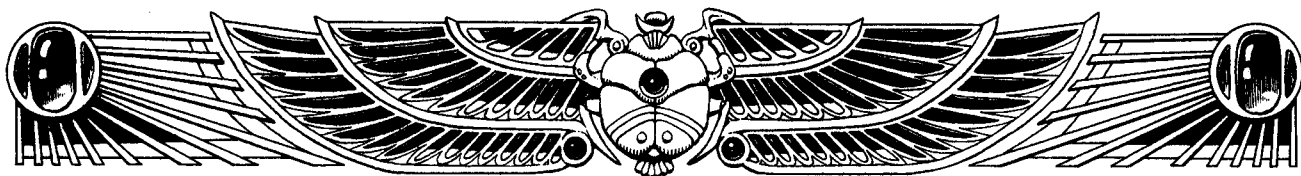
I personally experienced the consequences of this misunderstanding almost everywhere I went. For every stranger who treated me kindly and shared what he had with me, I met another who shrank from me in fear or mocked me to his companions when he believed I could not understand him. I discovered, to my sorrow, that many of our fellow Name-givers 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 Name-givers 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 Name-giver races in Barsaive.

A WORD ON GENERALIZATIONS

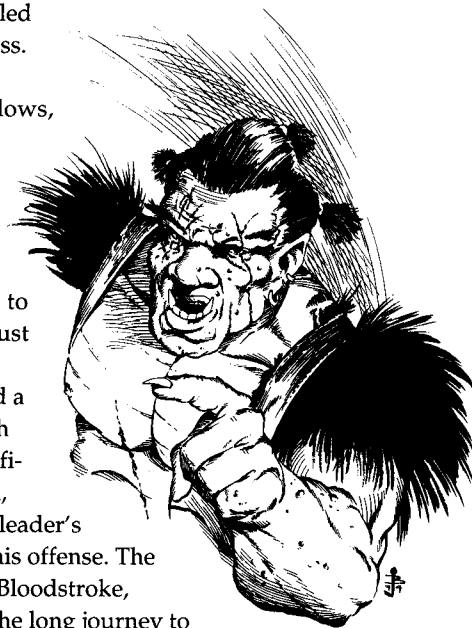
Before I continue, I must comment on generalizations. Statements of supposed truth that encompass an entire race are by nature foolish and sometimes downright dangerous, as the following tale illustrates.





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 daylong 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 Wyrn 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?"



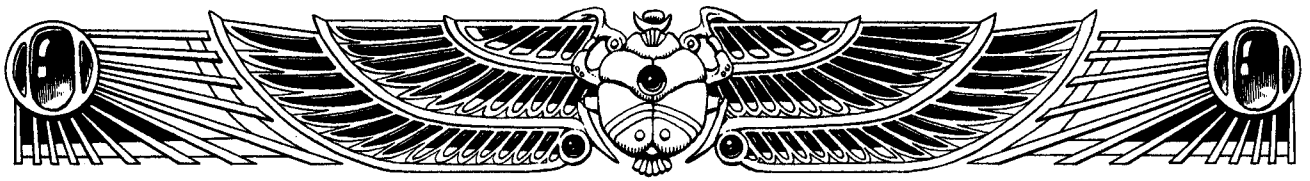
Well, Menach'me was struck dumb with amazement, and he could not find a voice to reply for several seconds. The small band of Terath's Chargers (for such they were, though Menach'me did not yet know this) mistook his silence for defiance and surrounded him with weapons drawn. They took his sword from 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 Earyl 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 Earyl 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 moot of one clan may be a mortal insult in a moot 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 moot to moot. 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 that all trolls strive to live by. 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 Name-givers. 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.

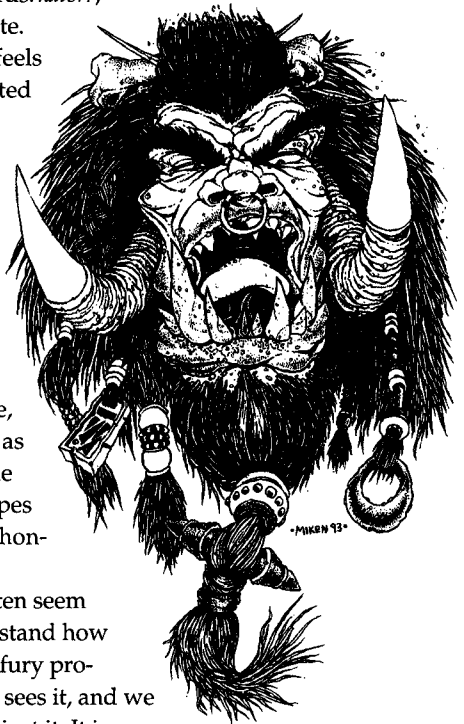
Because of the connections between the different kinds of honor, a slight or an enhancement to one kind of honor can affect the other kinds. Depending on the circumstances, for example, an insult to an individual troll might slight that troll's *katorr*, *kat'ral*, *katera*, or all three. A troll insulted 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.

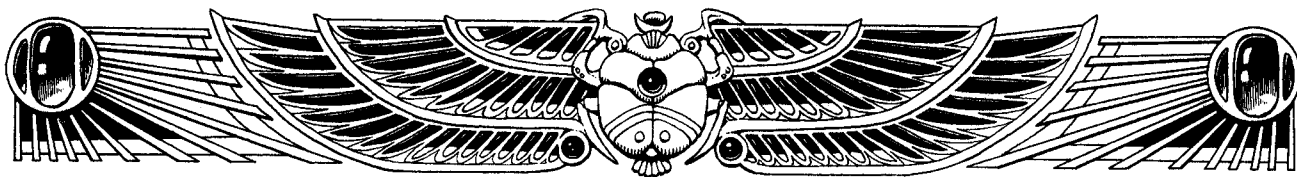
The intertwining of the three kinds of honor goes far to explain why trolls so often seem unpredictable and prone to violent explosions of temper. For one who cannot understand how even an unintentional slight to an individual troll dishonors the entire troll race, the fury provoked by such a slight 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers, 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 Name-giver 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 her mind, heart, and soul.





I HAVE DIS-
CUSSED JAR'ARAK
AT LENGTH WITH MY
MANY TROLL
FRIENDS, AND STILL
I FEAR I SHALL
NEVER FULLY
UNDERSTAND IT.
—THOM EDRULL

Like the inmost 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.

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.

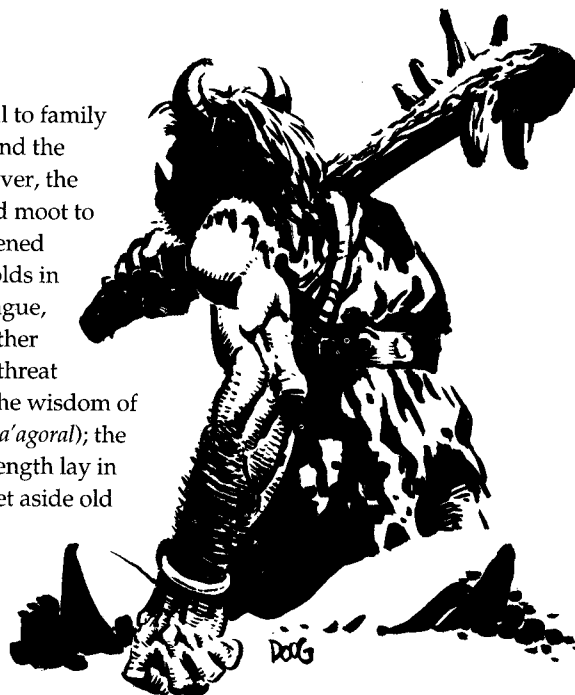
DAWNHARROW
SPEAKS AT LENGTH
ON TROLL NOTIONS
OF PRIVACY FUR-
THER ON IN THIS
DOCUMENT.
—THOM EDRULL

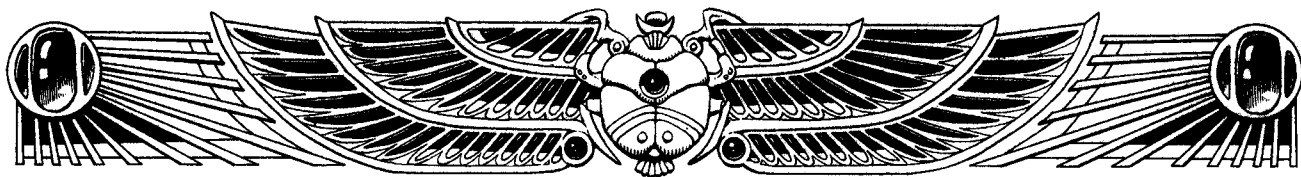
THE SOCIETY OF TROLLS

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
NAME-GIVERS
ADOPTED INTO THE
CLAN AS TROLLS-BY-
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OUTNUMBERED
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MOST, THOUGH.
—CHAG SKAT





Also, many trolls live only to the age of fifty or so, a shorter span of years than any other Name-giver 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 Name-giver races. Therefore, the Scourge lasted more generations for the trolls than for all other Name-givers 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 trollmoots 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers 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 mountaintop 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

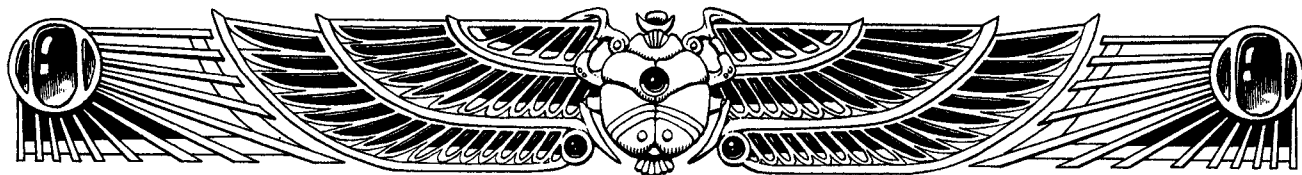
Other races who place great value on honor, such as the *t'skrang*, regard honor almost exclusively as a personal matter. Among such folk, only the individual may judge whether or not an act or word has dishonored him. Whatever he believes holds true, and no higher authority may contradict his judgment. 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 her, and may decide for herself whether her *katorr*, *kat'ral*, or *katera* have 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.

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

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 STU-
PID. 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
HANDLED DOWN BY
HONORABLE TROLLS
FOR GENERATIONS.
—BELWHARG OF
THE STONECLAWS





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?

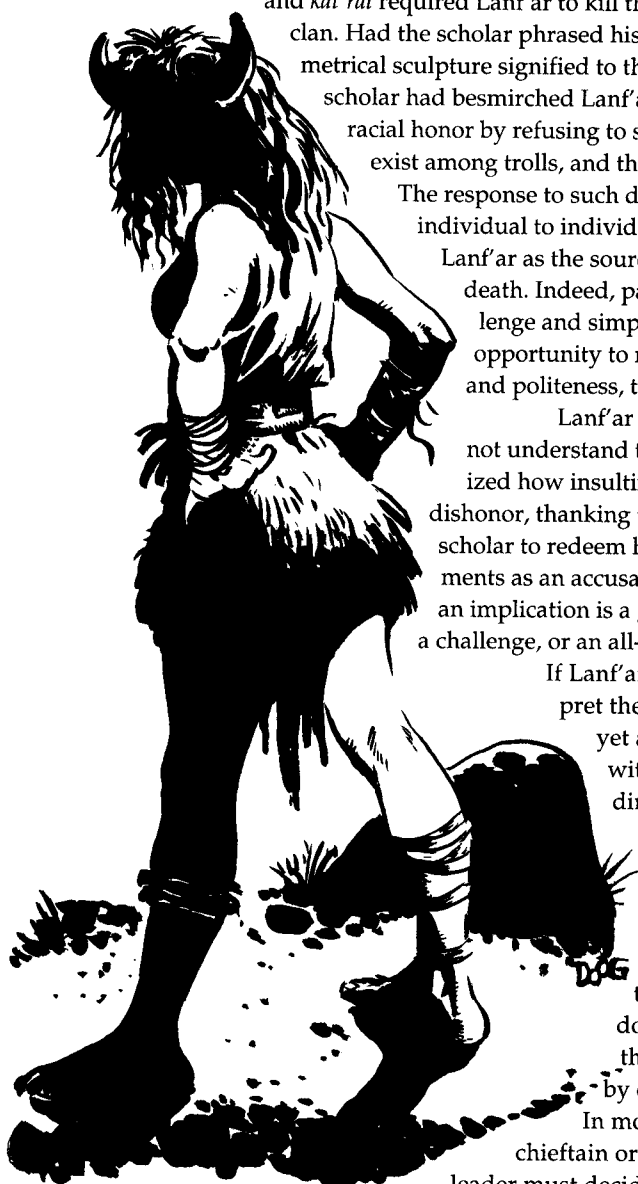
Unfortunately, certain other members of Lanf'ar's family witnessed the incident and believed that the scholar's question sorely besmirched Lanf'ar's personal honor. Because the actions of one family member reflect on the others, Lanf'ar's family considered Lanf'ar's lack of action as slighting their 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.

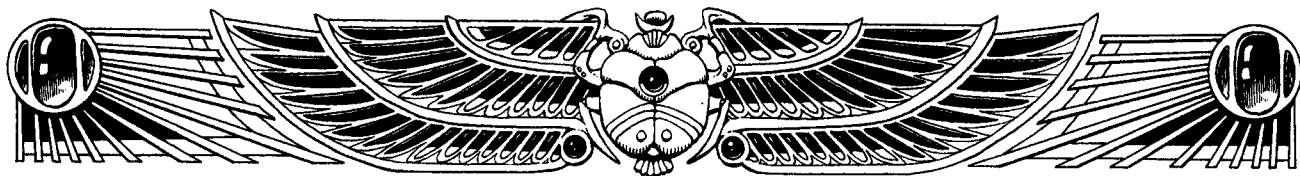
The response to such differences in judgment of honor varies from clan to clan and individual to individual. Some trolls might respond as Lanf'ar's family did, treating Lanf'ar as the source of the dishonor and instantly challenging her to a duel to the death. Indeed, particularly inflexible trolls might 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 Thystonium 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.

On Highland Troll Clans

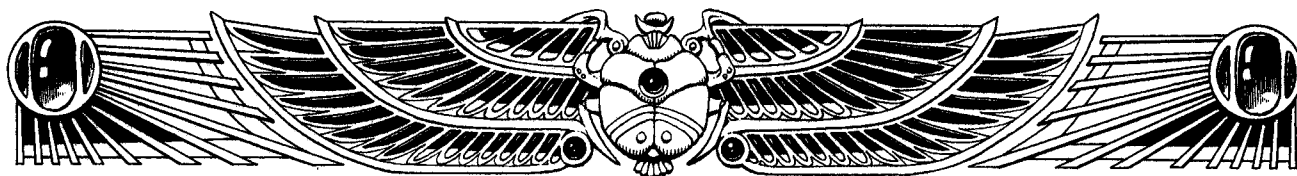
Each highland clan, or *g’ral*, is made up of several families, or *g’ralnakh*. The *g’ralnakh* of a clan live together in villages much as other Name-givers do; we give our villages the name “moot,” meaning “meeting” or “gathering.” At the heart of each moot stands the moothome, or *alheim*. This building, 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 or her family. Alheims are much larger than most troll buildings. These buildings usually contain 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 *tru-a’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 *tru-a’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 *altru-a’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

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 CAN-
NOT RECANT THEM,
KNOWING THEY
WERE TRUE. I
WOULD DISHONOR
MYSELF IF I FOR-
SOOK THEM NOW.
NOW TELL ME—ARE
THESE THE ACTIONS
OF A DISHONOR-
ABLE TROLL?

—JARTH’D





MANY OF
THE CRYSTAL
RAIDER TRIBES IN
THE TWILIGHT
PEAKS ARE TROLL-
MOOTS, FORMED
JUST AFTER THE
ENDING OF THE
SCOURGE.
—MERROX,
MASTER OF THE
HALL OF RECORDS

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 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 name 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 on 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 on 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 Name-givers' 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,

I HAVE NEVER
HEARD OF IMPURE
ORICHALCUM.
—MERROX,
MASTER OF THE
HALL OF RECORDS

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.

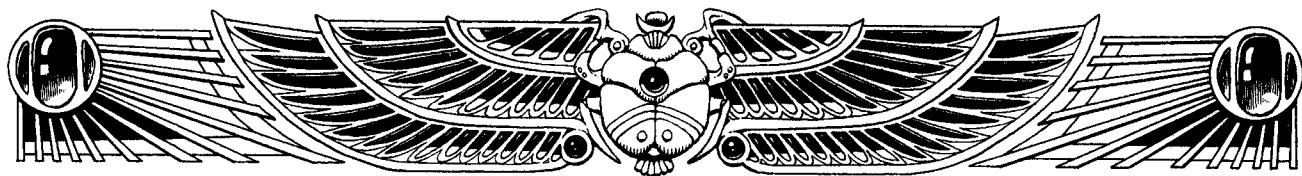
Others claim that the name "crystal raider" dates back to the Orichalcum Wars. As impure ore, orichalcum sometimes appears crystalline, and many highland clans made a practice of stealing it whenever they could. I believe that the Throalic word "crystal" is actually a corruption of the troll word *kera'astol*, 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

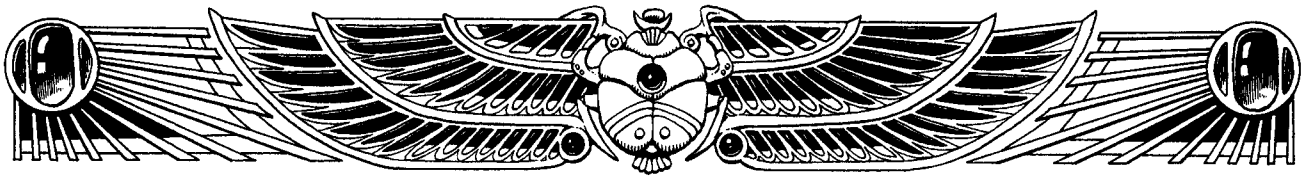
regard Thystonius' ideal of combat as embodying perfect, universal truth.

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.







NO TROLL OR ANY
NAME-GIVER 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

During the Battle of Sky Point, Theran troops massacred countless crystal-raider moot-homes. Ever since that centuries-old battle, the raiders' racial, clan, and personal honor has 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.

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 their goat rocksheep 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 moot-homes. 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 Name-giver races. Although many lowland trolls revere





Trolls artwork by Jeff Laubenstein

KRAGG BONESNAPPER CONFRONTS THE MIGHTY HORROR Hko-XETH IN THE BADLANDS.



TROLL BATTLESHIPS ESCORT A MERCHANT SHIP THROUGH HOSTILE TERRITORY.

Sounding the horn
signifies the beginning
of the G'tarr
(the Holding).



Examples of
Troll weaponry and
craftsmanship.

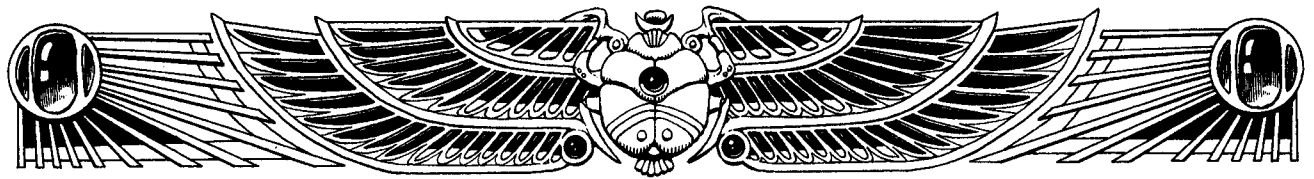


A troll co-wife
courts a potential
new addition to
her line marriage.



Troll horns and
facial features
vary widely
among clans
and families.





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 Name-givers 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.

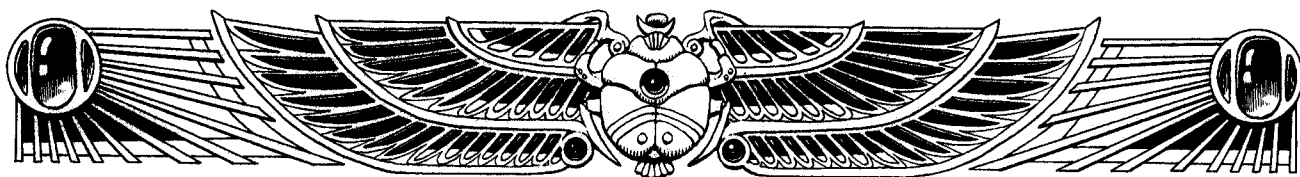
Imagine Selsior’s surprise when he rose from his bed on market day, full of smug satisfaction, only to find four sturdy brick walls surrounding his wagon! The furious elf spent half the next day trying to hire a market wagon from one of his neighbors—but all of them were already going to market, their 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 Name-giver 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers. 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 Name-givers—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

DAWNHARROW IS
NOT QUITE CORRECT
IN HER ASSUMP-
TIONS THAT OTHER
NAME-GIVERS PER-
FORMING LARGELY
PUBLIC RITUALS.
DWARFS ALSO PER-
FORM THE VAST
MAJORITY OF RITU-
ALS AT HOME.

—MERROX

As do other Name-givers, trolls commemorate the various turning points in their lives with rituals. Where other Name-givers 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.

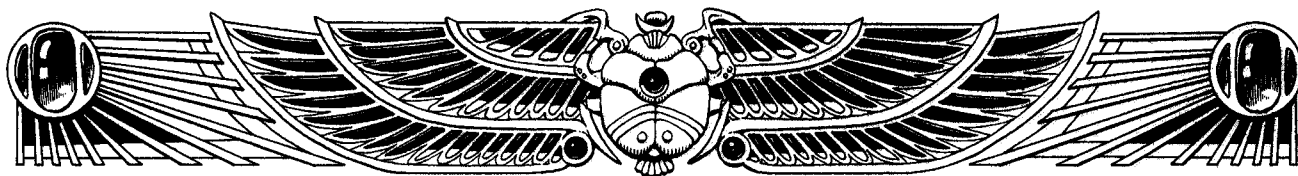
Because so few troll rituals involve the entire clan or the trollmoot, many rituals vary greatly between families even in the same clan. Many home-centered rituals change from generation to generation, as the presiding family elder feels appropriate. All troll rituals, however, in some way share certain 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.

ON THE ORDEAL OF BIRTH

Only female trolls may attend the birth of a child. Where other Name-giver 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.

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 Lan'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 Lan'ar Goldtusk of Clan Granitebone."

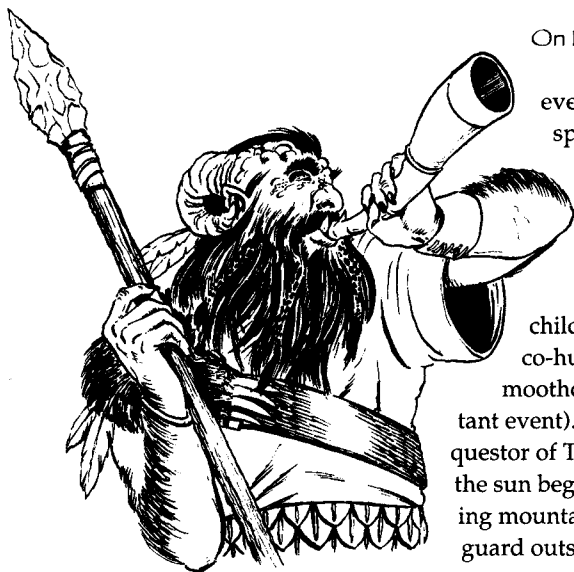
On Naming Rituals

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 Thystonium 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 ax

—EXCERPT FROM A
TALE TOLD BY CER-
TAIN CLANS IN THE
TWILIGHT PEAKS ...

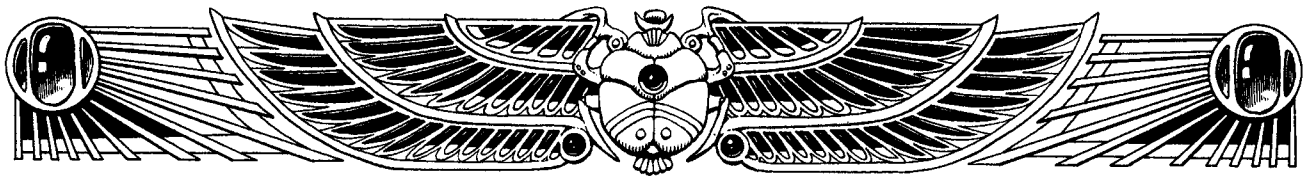
THE CLAN HAD
RELEASED THE ELF
NO'A'G'RAL FROM
HIS OBLIGATION
UNDER THE
BIRTHING TRADITION,
BUT NONE COULD
DISSUADE TARLAN
SKYBOW FROM PER-
FORMING THE TRA-
DITION WHEN ONE
OF HIS WIVES
BECAME PREGNANT
WITH HIS CHILD.
KNOWING FULL WELL
THAT HE WOULD NOT
SURVIVE THE HARD-
SAGE EXTRACT,
SKYBOW DRANK IT
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WRACKED WITH THE
AGONY OF THE
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ENOUGH TO GAZE
INTO THE EYES OF HIS
NEWBORN CHILD ...



TROLLS OFTEN
HOLD AT LEAST TWO
DIFFERENT PER-
SONAL 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





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 Name-giver 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 her two personal names. Before the Holding, the baby has only her clan name. A young troll bears the two names given in the Holding until she reaches the Age of Passage, when she chooses the two names she 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

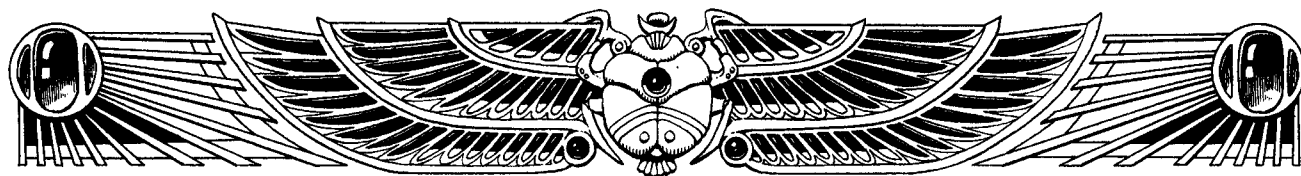
The Age of Passage marks a troll's transformation from child to adult. Most clans place the Age of Passage at the eleventh anniversary of a troll's Holding, just before a troll reaches full physical maturity. The adult-to-be, called a *ro'ona* ("candidate"), discusses a suitable Rite of Passage with 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 unNamed.

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 Name-giver 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 Name-givers. 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.

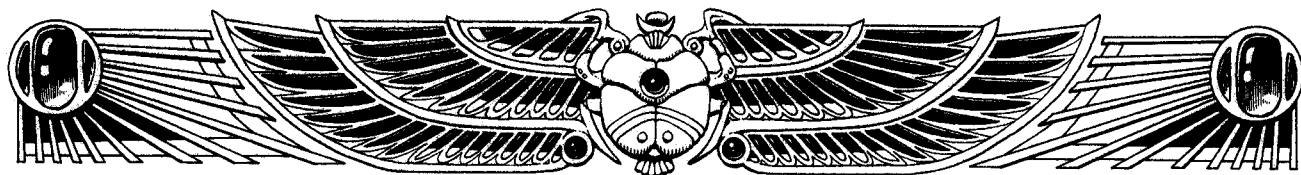
The greatest advantage of a line marriage is its virtual immortality. Barring utter catastrophe, a line marriage will endure forever as new members marry in. Should a co-spouse die, other family members mourn for a suitable period and then invite a new spouse to take the departed one's place. In this 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.

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—THOM EDULL

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.

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 Name-giver 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.

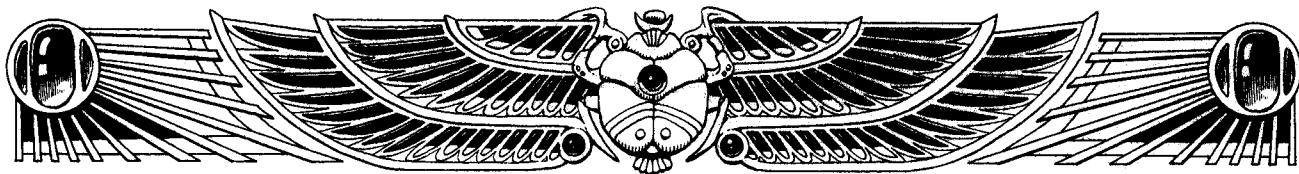
The only tangible memorial of importance to trolls are bequests. Family heirlooms, often weapons but also other items, pass from generation to generation, gaining significance and value with the years. Acknowledging that death may come in battle at any time, most trolls make bequests shortly after reaching 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 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 (much less killing) the Horror.

ON DIVERSE ASPECTS OF TROLL CULTURE

Many aspects of troll culture are fascinatingly different from those of other Name-givers. 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 troll-moot, 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 her, known to her as if its events had occurred in her 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

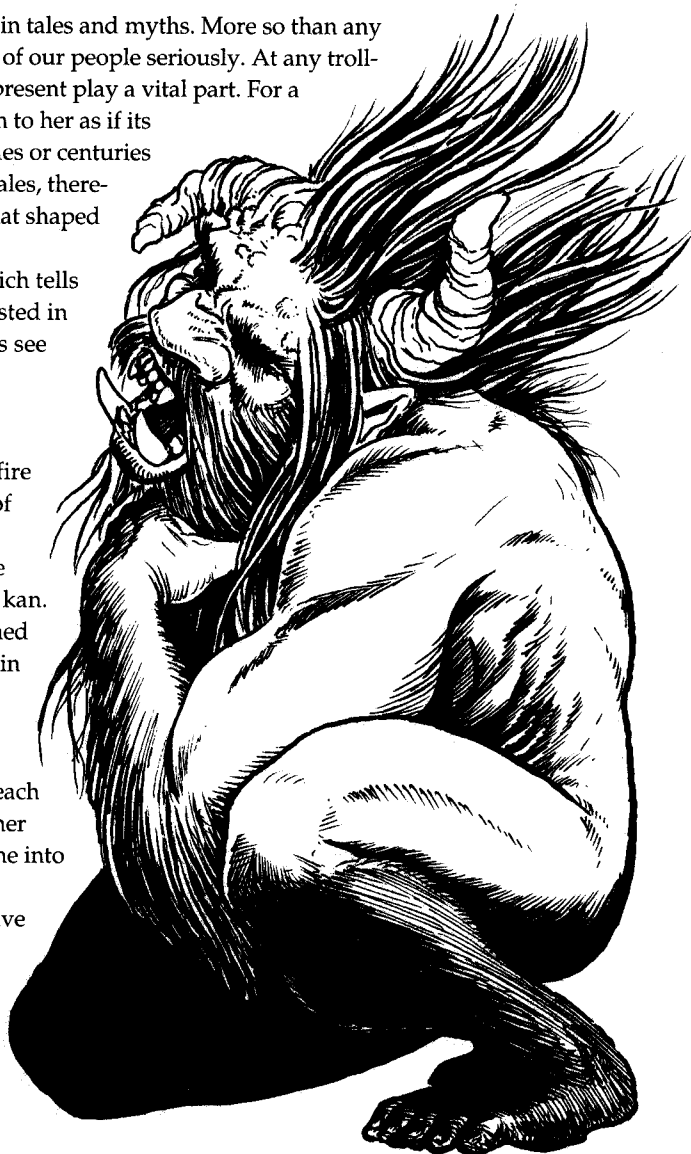
Before the beginning of time, all was chaos. Air and earth, fire and water, darkness and light mingled together like the blood of many clans. They knew no separateness, but partook of each other and fought to consume each other. The sun, the moon, the stars, these things lived not. There was only chaos, and Griahk' kan.

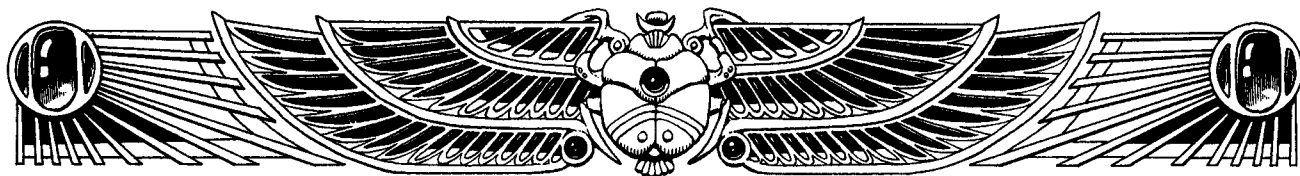
Now Griahk'kan was the Spirit of All Things, and so contained all things within Her. She was the chaos and all that warred within it. And She gave form to the chaos, making Her flesh the earth, Her heart the rock, Her blood the water, Her breath the air, and the light in Her eyes the fire. Her right 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 Name-givers 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 was born our elder brothers, the obsidimen; from the roar of the two thunder-claps 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 Name-giver 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 her failures or of seemingly immaterial facts of her 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.

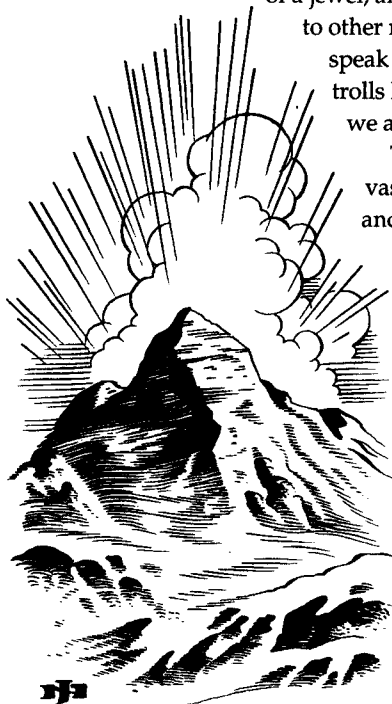
To warrant a *se'alla*, a hero must have significantly affected the troll race. Obviously, the vast majority of *se'alla* are about trolls. The most popular are Nioku, the famed troll archer, and Vaare Longfang, captain of the lost airship *Earthdawn*. A few well-known *se'alla* also tell of the lives of *no'a'g'ral* and the ways in which they earned the respect of the troll race.

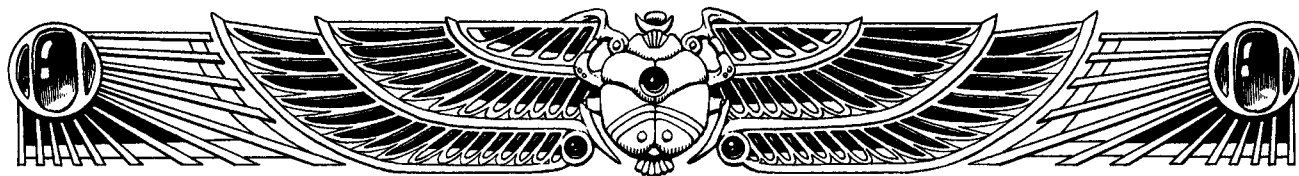
Norr Ge'Thera'in (The Tale of the Therans)

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 trollmoots 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."

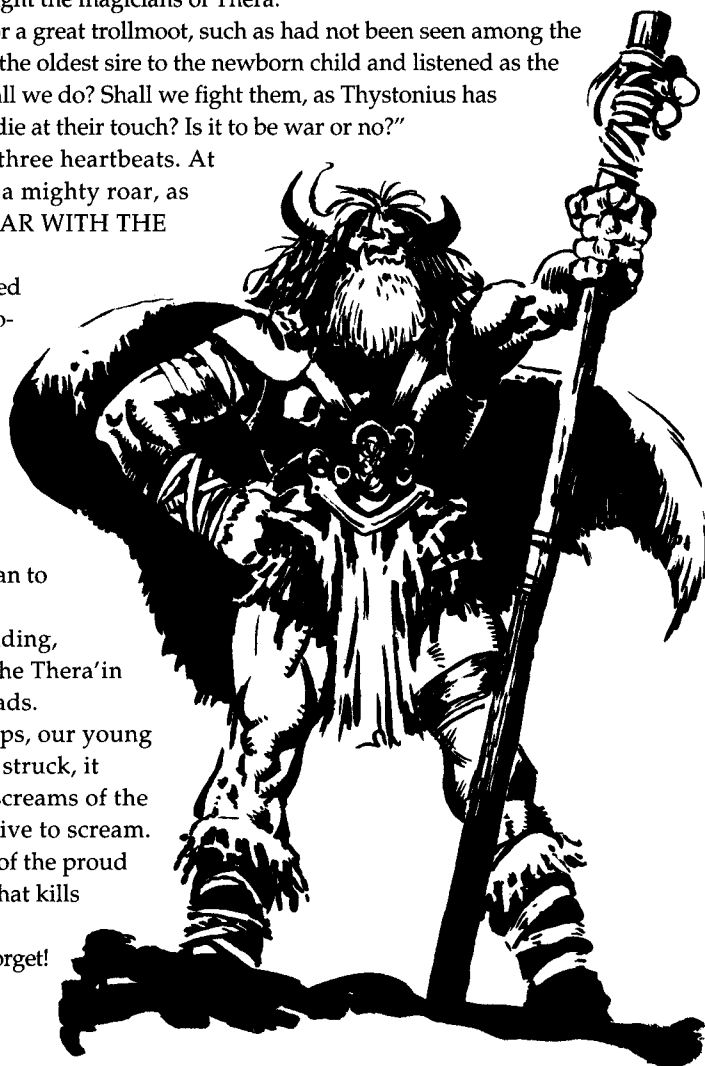
From the stone ships came a voice, cold and commanding, cursing the clans in words that none could understand. The Thera'in curse brought the fires of the heavens down upon our heads. Lightning from the stone ships struck our houses, our ships, our young warriors, our old ones, our children. Where the 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.

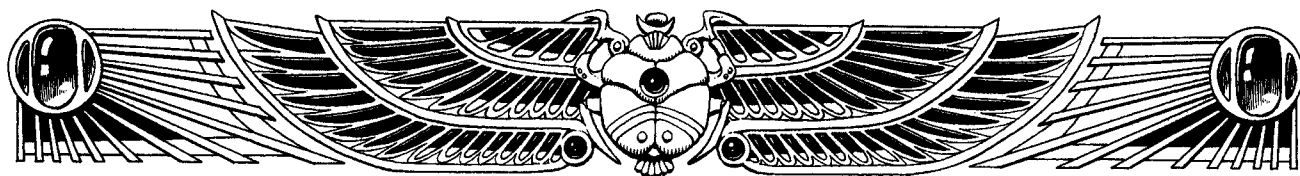
And the Thera'in Mhakkorh looked down on the dead of the proud Skytoucher clans and smiled the cold smile of the blizzard that kills with its beauty.

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.

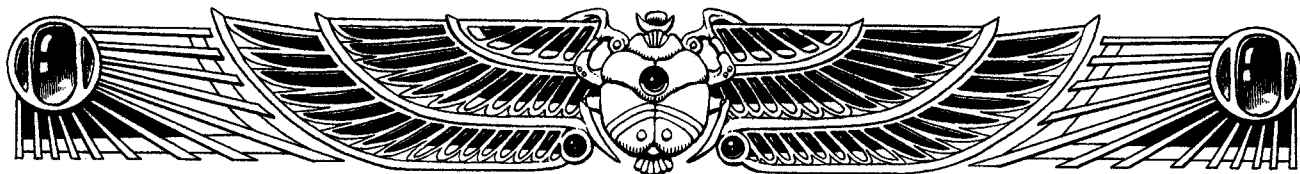
Most trolls, save those who learn from other races, do not understand one who calls himself a professional artist and sells his works. Trolls have no interest in owning works of art created by another, and do not understand why anyone

would want to buy their art. What value can someone else's 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.

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.

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—THOM EDRULL



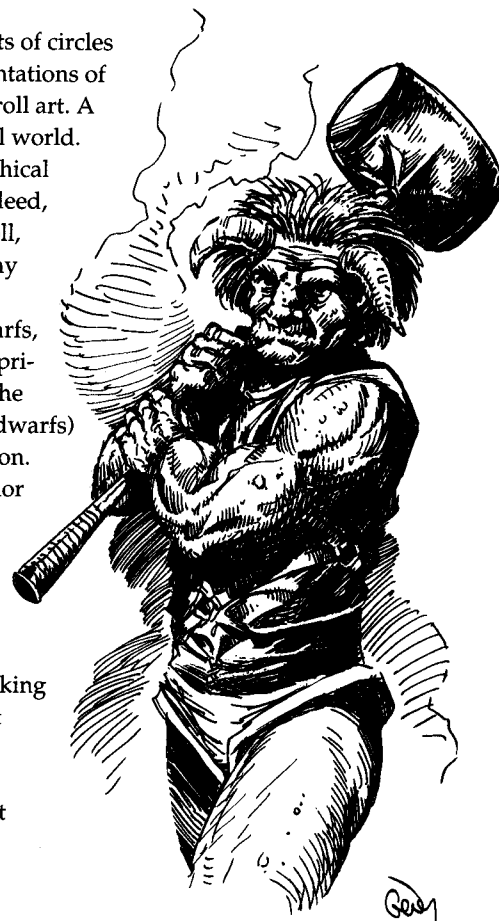


Considering that the trolls' creation myth tells them that their mystical Foremother gave them the rock of the mountains for their own special home, it is logical that they consider stone a nobler material than any other. Trolls reserve stone for works that have the greatest significance for them.

—Jerriv Forrim

Usually these carvings are either geometric figures that combine elements of circles and squares or they are realistic depictions of Name-givers. 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 Name-givers 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, she 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.

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.

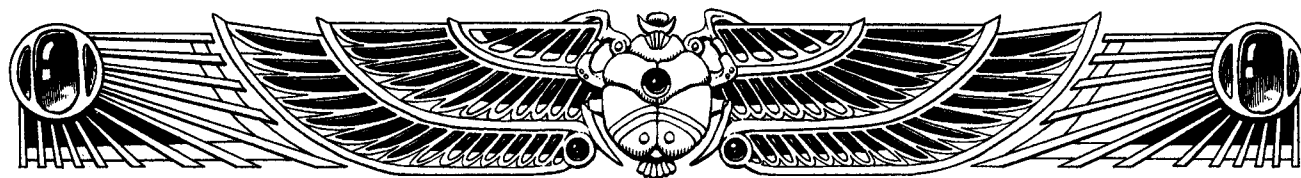
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WHO MELD CRAFTS-
MANSHIP AND ART
IN VIRTUALLY ALL
THEIR PURSUITS.

—JERRIV FORRIM

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 weapon embodies. 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.

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AND BINDING.
—DERRAT, WIZARD
OF YISTAINE

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 of their 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, chieftans 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.

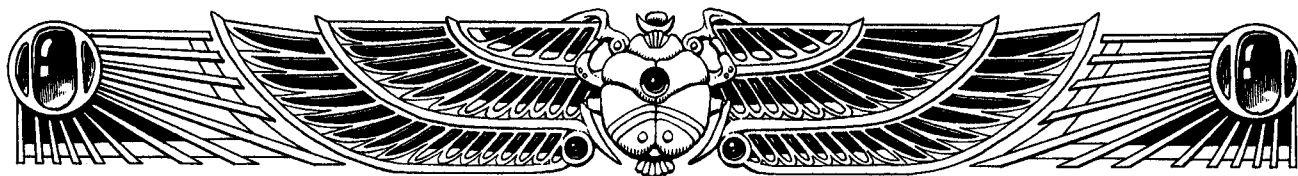
On the Building of Troll Habitations

Because lowland trolls employ the building methods and styles most common to the other Name-givers around them, I will discourse on the craft of architecture among highland trolls. Highland dwellers construct their homes out of stone, using blocks rough-dressed 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.

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.

Most troll homes consist 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 Name-givers 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 her 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."

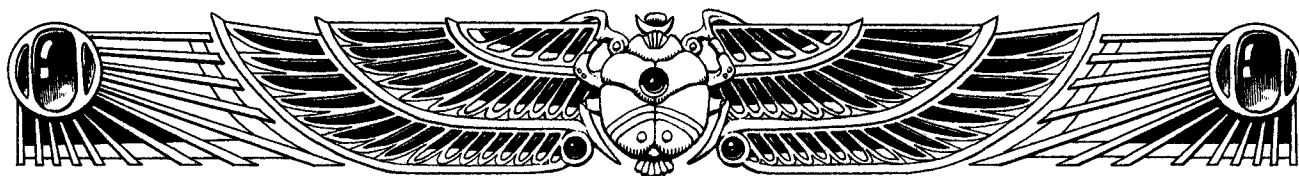
Deliberately intruding on another's privacy is a great affront to that person's *katorr*. Only the foolish will force their presence on another, unless one intends to goad another into fighting.

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 invasion 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers. 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.

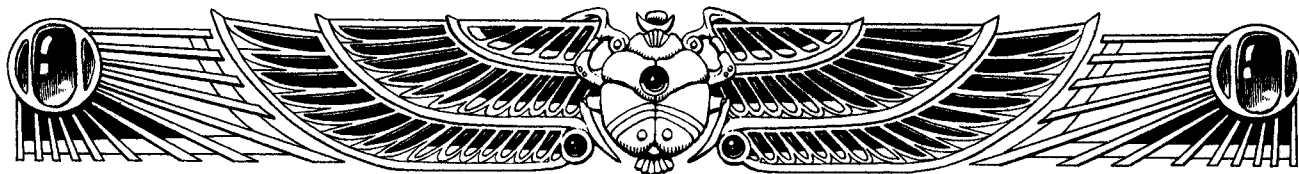
Any troll who has lost his horns is shunned by all highland troll clans and by

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 clan 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.

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 Name-givers, 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.

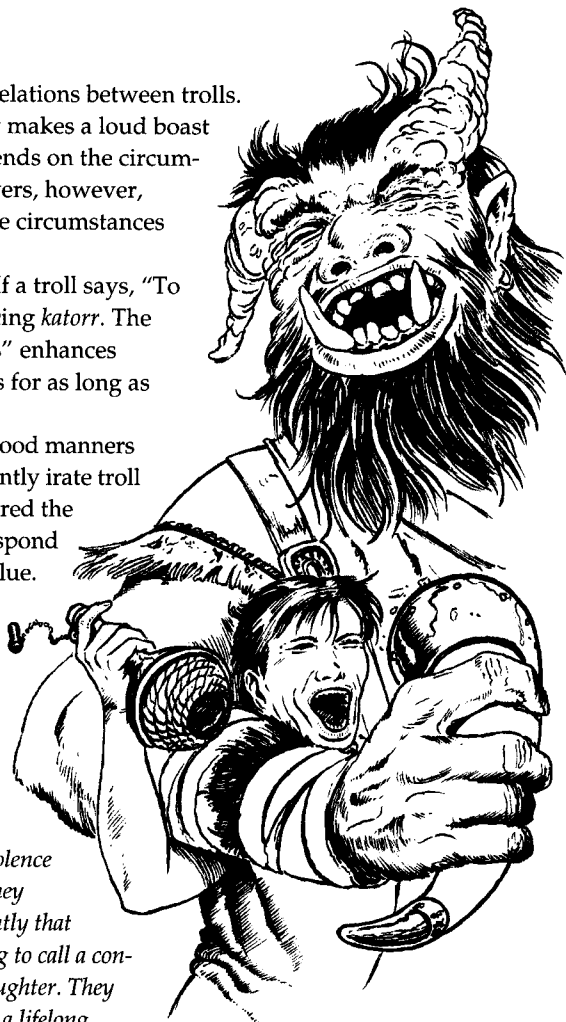
Trolls who know each other well also occasionally exchange boasts, but they will only boast to someone of another race that they consider a worthy adversary or a close friend (as trolls see little difference between the two).

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

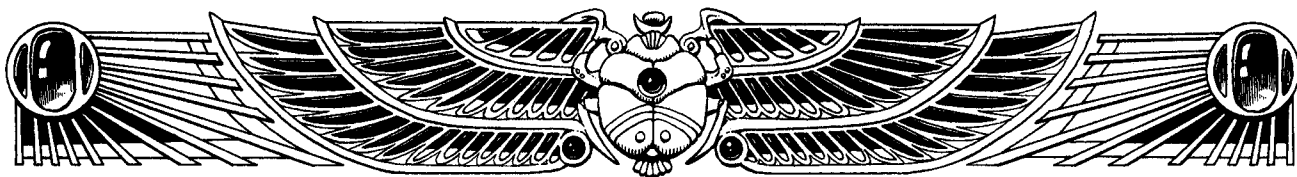
On the Importance to Troll Relations of Drinking

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 boon 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



apparently, trolls interpret a smaller name-giver'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





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.

ON TROLLS' VIEWS OF OTHER RACES

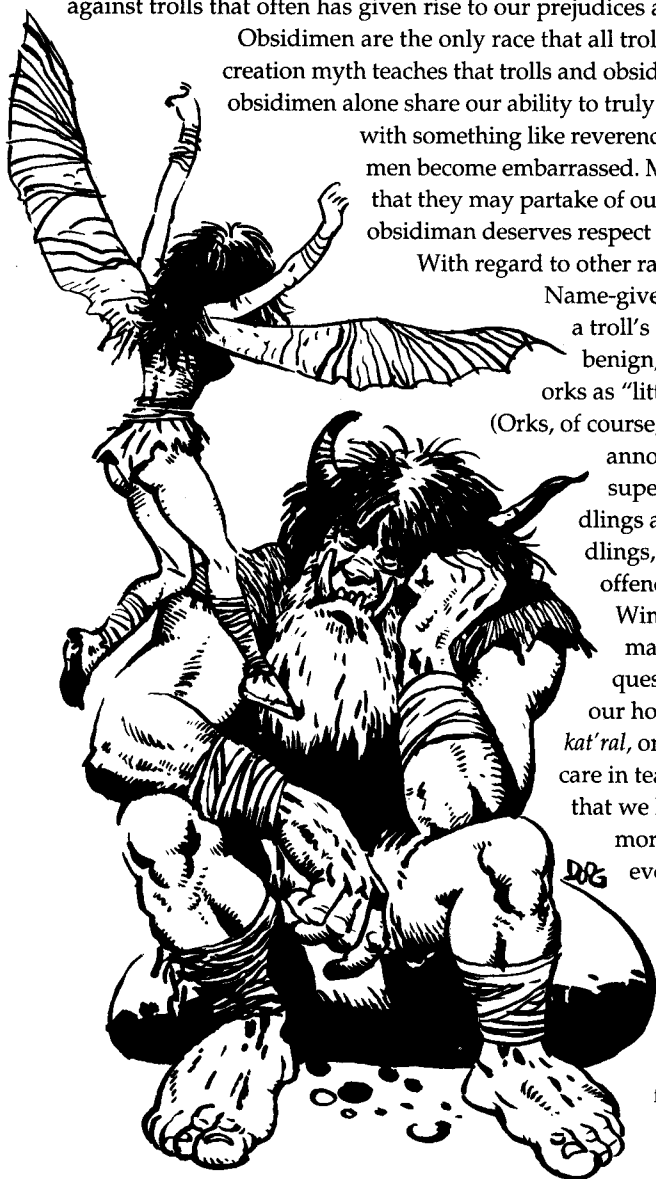
Many highland trolls, and some lowlanders as well, have strong opinions about other Name-giver races. These opinions are not always complimentary, and a member of another race who wishes to befriend a troll will often have to overcome the troll's view of him. I caution the reader, however, not to ascribe the opinions given below to all trolls. These views of other Name-givers 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 often fierce prejudice against trolls that often has given rise to our prejudices against others.

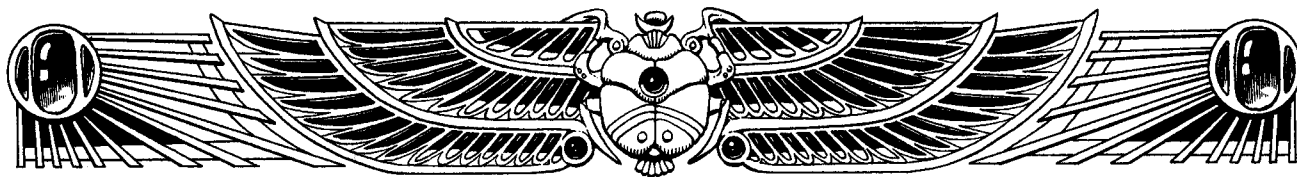
Obsidimen are the only race that all trolls view unreservedly as friends and brothers. Indeed, our creation myth teaches that trolls and obsidimen were born of the same primal thunderstorm, and that the obsidimen alone share our ability to truly hear the voice of Creation. Indeed, many trolls treat obsidimen 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 Name-givers 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 Name-givers. 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 Name-giver 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.



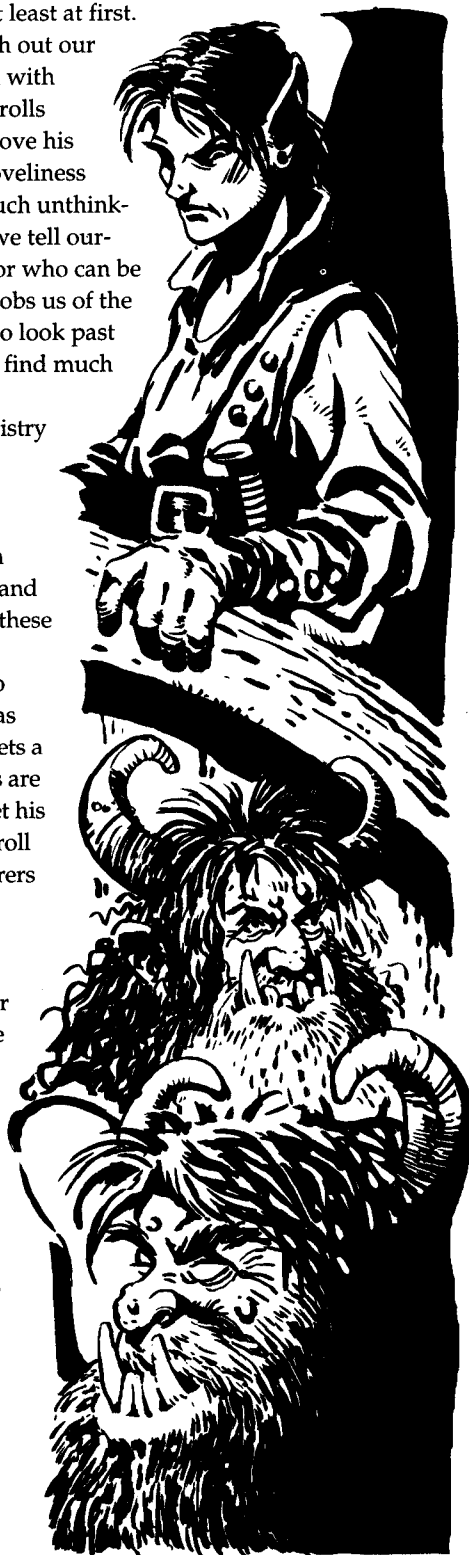


Many trolls regard elves almost as poorly as they do windlings, but for a different reason. If we are honest with ourselves, we trolls realize that most windlings offend us without meaning to ... at least at first. If we and they both took the time to try to understand each other, we might smooth out 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 Name-giver? 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.

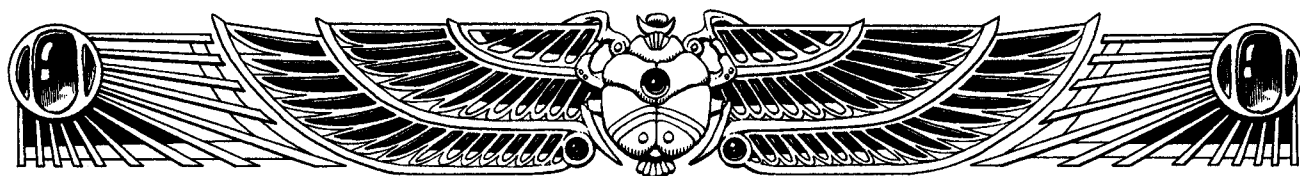
As for humans, many trolls find them confusing. Humans are less predictable than any other Name-giver race; in everything from height to hair color to the talents they possess, humans vary more than anything save the world itself. Some trolls see this variability as an embodiment of the world's dazzling 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.



DENIZENS OF EARTHDAWN VOLUME TWO



GAME INFORMATION



GAME INFORMATION

Did you say this is just a game? Return to your cubicle and remove your belongings!

Rafkallon of Elliv Skralc

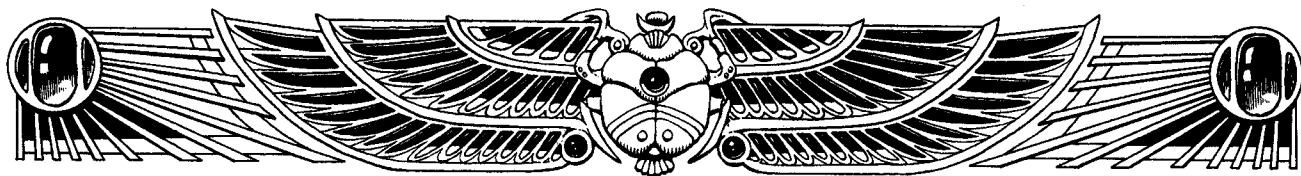
Denizens of **Earthdawn, Volume II**, provides gamemasters and players with a wealth of detail regarding four of Barsaive's Name-giver races. The information on each race appears as an excerpt from one volume of an eight-volume set, originated by the Library of Throal, each volume dedicated to exploring all aspects of one race. This book describes dwarfs, obsidimen, orks, and trolls. A previous book, **Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I**, described elves, humans, t'skrang, and windlings.

Gamemasters need the **Earthdawn** rulebook to use this book, and we also recommend the **Earthdawn Gamemaster's Pack** and the **Earthdawn Companion**. Though the information in **Denizens, Volume II**, creates a rich and diverse background for each of the races discussed, the general information provided in the **Barsaive Campaign Set** further fleshes out the **Earthdawn** universe, and so players and gamemasters may find that set useful as a backdrop to this book.

The fictional sections of this book illustrate how the dwarfs, obsidimen, orks, and trolls of **Earthdawn** interact with their world, where and how they live, their cultural traditions and biases, their relationships with other races, and so on. Our goal in providing this information is to help players roleplay characters of these races by describing each through the eyes of the people of Barsaive.

The **Game Information** section provides new game rules for these four races, including new Disciplines and talents, race-specific skills, new equipment, and rules for gaming certain racial characteristics. In some cases, these rules expand on those provided in the **Earthdawn** rulebook (**ED**) and the **Earthdawn Companion** (**Companion**). This section also offers specific suggestions for roleplaying characters of each of these races, drawing on the broadest characteristics of each race as described in the fiction.





ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Creating a detailed, cohesive character personality and background can be the most troublesome part of creating a character. This task can be especially difficult if the player is designing a character belonging to a fictional race for which no background exists in other literary sources. For example, though the dwarfs in *Earthdawn* have a very specific world view and attitude toward other races, players can easily draw specific traits for their dwarf characters from other fantasy books, while no such resource exists for players trying to create an obsidiman. The following summaries of the stereotypic characteristics and underlying motivations of dwarfs, obsidimen, orks, and trolls provide basic sketches with which to effectively roleplay a character of each race. These stories also help players fill in further details about Barsaive, the world of *Earthdawn*, and the inhabitants who share that world.

While relying on the broadest features of a race to make initial decisions about how a character thinks and acts is an easy and efficient way to begin to build a character, it is equally important to acknowledge that not all members of a race will act according to those common precepts. Not all orks, for example, revere the story of Hrak Gron or define themselves by their race's history of enslavement. Likewise, some trolls care nothing for the honor of their clan and race, preferring to do whatever is most expedient in any situation.

If a player chooses to give her character the common ideals and attitudes of a race, one of the easiest ways to do so is to choose specific personality traits to represent those ideals and attitudes. We suggest in the rulebook (pp. 59–61, ED) that players choose personality traits for their characters that reflect the character's Discipline. This same device can be used to explore the unique aspects of a character's race. For example, a player creating an ork character may choose the personality traits of "passionate" and "energetic" to represent the orks' ideal of seizing life by the throat, while an obsidiman character may possess the traits of "private" and "pensive" to represent that race's steadfast nature and constant search for learning.

DWARFS

The three aspects central to dwarf characters are the dwarfs' view of themselves as builders, their sense of loyalty, and their connection with the earth.

Dwarfs love to build, and they take immense pride in their ability to construct anything from a house to a poem to a system of government. They particularly love to work with their hands and are taught at least one craft from a



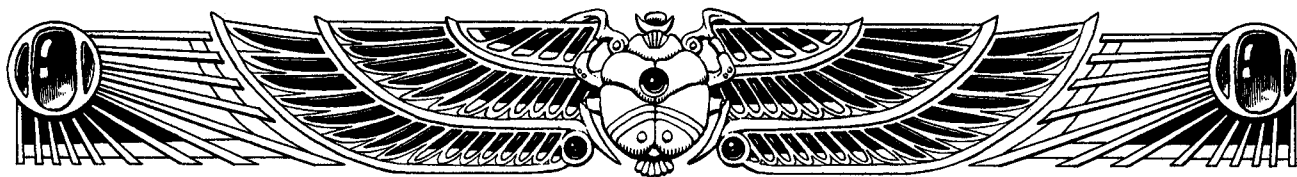
very early age, becoming extraordinary craftsmen by the time they reach adulthood.

Special rules for dwarf craftsmen also allow such characters to forfeit a knowledge skill in exchange for any type of Craftsman skill. When designing a dwarf character, the player should decide what craft he specializes in, or if he specializes at all.

Virtually all dwarfs, whether craftsmen or not, own tools of some kind. As a natural extension of a dwarf's love of building, a dwarf craftsman values his tools very highly. Adepts count as their tools not only the appropriate artisan tools, but also their weapons, armor, and adventuring equipment, taking as good care of them as of chisels, quills, and needles. A player might decide that his or her character exhibits this trait as a personality quirk; perhaps the character cleans his tools every day without exception, pursuing that task as devoutly as his karma ritual. Such a roleplaying quirk might have interesting consequences for adventurers exploring a ruined kaer or citadel. Another way of expressing this trait might be to have a craftsman character be extremely sensitive about his tools. Perhaps he becomes agitated whenever someone else touches them or asks to use them; he may even go so far as to treat his tools better than his traveling companions!

Loyalty is another trait that influences almost every aspect of a dwarf's life. Depending on where a dwarf hails from, he may feel intense loyalty to family, tribe, nation, and/or kingdom. A dwarf born and raised in a village in the hinterlands may feel no loyalty to a kingdom such as Throal, but he will owe strong allegiance to his family and perhaps to his tribe. A dwarf from Throal might show as





much loyalty to that kingdom as to his family. In general, dwarfs feel less strongly about tribal and national loyalties since the Scourge, but those loyalties still may show up as bouts of good-natured rivalry between dwarfs of different tribal or national backgrounds. Determining where a dwarf character's loyalties lie can serve as an excellent roleplaying hook, particularly when attempting to resolve ethical dilemmas.

Players should give careful consideration to a dwarf character's family, as it is to family that most dwarfs owe their primary loyalty. Is the character married? Is he or she a parent or grandparent? Is the character the eldest or youngest or a middle child? If forced to choose between supporting two family members, whom will the character choose, and why? Every dwarf character must also deal with the common belief among other Name-givers that all dwarfs feel loyal to Throal. Many dwarfs loudly and frequently oppose the doings of the dwarf kingdom; some see Throal's actions as harmful and feel more loyalty to the province as a whole than to the Throalic government. Because other characters automatically will perceive a dwarf character as loyal to Throal, the player should decide what his character actually thinks and feels about that kingdom.

A dwarf's affinity for and connection to the earth also presents interesting possibilities for roleplaying. Most dwarfs prefer to live beneath the earth, or at least on it. Few consent to live in a set of rooms above the ground floor of a building, for example, even temporarily. Many dwarf travelers insist on ground-floor accommodations wherever they stay, willingly paying extra for such a room if necessary. On the same general principle, dwarfs also dislike riding horses, mules, or any other animal, or traveling over open water. By walking, a dwarf stays connected to the earth; riding separates him from it. This preference for walking may slow down a dwarf's traveling companions unless they can reach some compromise. Many dwarfs will ride in a cart or wagon of dwarf craftsmanship and will gladly pay to hire one; airship travel makes a dwarf somewhat uncomfortable, but he can deal with not being able to touch the earth as long as he can see it. Most dwarfs refuse pointblank to travel over large bodies of open water because such a journey takes them out of sight of the earth as well as out of touch with it.

The sheer numbers of dwarfs living in Barsaive and the pervasiveness of their language also should affect the players' roleplaying. Because dwarfs are more populous than any other race in Barsaive, player characters should expect to find dwarfs living in almost every corner of the province. The number of dwarfs in Barsaive allowed them to develop a larger, more complex society than any other race; that,

and the elevation of their Throalic language to the province's common tongue, prompts most dwarfs to consider their race as the "elder sibling" of the other races. This attitude also may serve as a broad hook on which to hang a character trait; the big-brother routine can come across as particularly grating or condescending, among other things.

Players can use the pervasiveness of the dwarf language in a number of ways. A dwarf will be able to communicate with the local folk in his own native language almost everywhere he travels because virtually everyone in Barsaive speaks Throalic, and most know it better than they do their own languages. Even in the few racially pure areas that use a different primary language, the inhabitants know Throalic well enough to understand it. This easy communication can make traveling across Barsaive less hazardous in many circumstances, though using Throalic in lands occupied by the Theran Empire can buy a dwarf character considerable trouble. The widespread use of Throalic leads some dwarfs to become complacent about learning other languages; these few never bother to learn any other tongue. Players who wish their characters to speak only Throalic should consult **Special Rules**, p. 119 of this section, for guidelines.

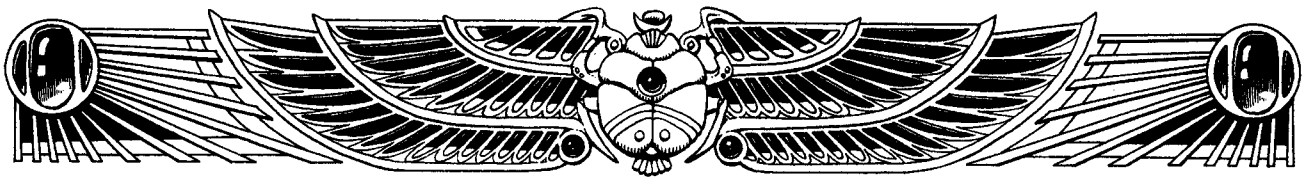
OBSIDIMEN

Because the nature and ways of obsidimen are most alien to human experience, even the most advanced roleplayers will find portraying a seven-foot-tall, 900-pound, stonelike being a challenge.

Though often called rock-men, obsidimen actually are formed of a unique blend of solid earth and an elemental earth spirit. Like any other Name-giver race, they need air to breathe and food and drink to survive. They can be wounded, even killed; a sword slash will make an obsidiman bleed as readily as any other type of character. Though a part of every obsidiman comes from astral space, they have no more insight into the workings of the astral plane than any other Name-giving race in Barsaive. Their dual nature as beings part physical and part spirit is simply what they are. At best, the elemental component of an obsidiman's being inclines him toward a spiritual outlook on life, giving him an instinctive understanding of his small part in the universe around him. Curious by nature, many obsidimen are motivated by this self-knowledge to travel the world, seeking knowledge of all its aspects in order to better understand their role in the universe.

Though other Name-givers commonly refer to obsidimen as "he," this race has no gender in the human sense of the term. Obsidiman adventurers, who spend considerable time with other Name-givers, often adopt behaviors





common to men or women of other races to make their companions more comfortable, but each obsidiman character chooses to be "male" or "female." Players who wish to roleplay female obsidimen, therefore, may do so.

An obsidiman's Brotherhood and his Liferock represent to him what loved ones and friends are to humans. The Liferock serves as an obsidiman character's "parents," and his Brotherhood as his family. An obsidiman will react to any threat or affront to either with fierce, often violent, anger. Though even-tempered and level-headed in most instances, an obsidiman goes briefly berserk in defense of his Liferock and Brotherhood. An obsidiman roused to anger or action stands among the fiercest of the Name-givers, easily rivaling orks and trolls.



Obsidimen rarely react angrily to personal insults; few obsidimen care to waste the time and energy required for anger on the fleeting sting of an insignificant word. Any insult aimed at the Brotherhood or Liferock, however, denigrates all that an obsidiman most loves, and so no obsidiman will let such a taunt pass. Some obsidimen take such insults as affronts against the earth itself, which further fuels their outrage.

Because an obsidiman is part and parcel of the earth, his connection to nature is stronger than that of other Name-giver races. Obsidimen rarely take any natural phenomenon for granted, but appreciate them all as

wonders. They take great joy in the sight and smell of a flower bed coming into bloom, the music of a wildly rushing river or waterfall, or the violent beauty of a raging thunderstorm. Obsidimen particularly love trees; trees are made of wood and an elemental wood spirit, and obsidimen therefore regard them as brothers. Any defilement of nature rouses obsidimen to anger as fierce as if their Liferock had been harmed.

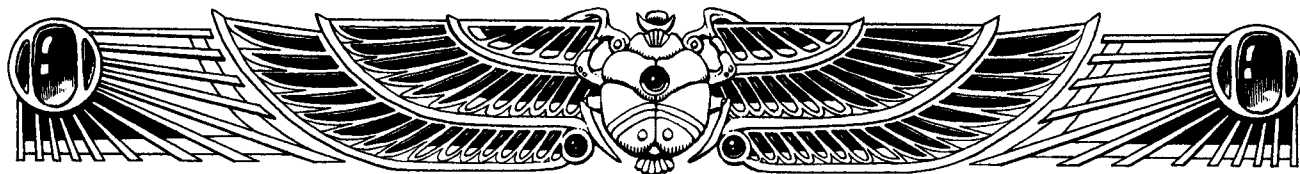
Obsidimen feel intense curiosity about the behaviors of the other Name-giver races, whom they fondly refer to as energy-wasters. Because obsidimen live for 900 years, they perceive time differently than those with shorter lifespans, and so they do not understand the pace at which other races live. They find particularly puzzling the urgency with which other races often insist on performing tasks; when told that a certain thing must be done quickly, obsidimen wonder why the task could not wait until the next day or even later. When necessary, however, the slow-moving obsidimen act with an immediacy that other Name-givers find impressive.

Obsidimen also find other behaviors common to their fellow Name-giver races incomprehensible but fascinating, including the intense emotionalism of t'skrang and windlings, the "unbalancing" aggression common to orks and trolls, the dwarfs' insistence on tinkering with everything in their path, and the fear of death among most races. Obsidimen also admire many of the other races' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors: the love of nature felt by elves and windlings, the trolls' and dwarfs' affinity for the earth, the orks' desire to experience all possibilities to their fullest, the dazzling versatility of humans who can learn so much of the world, and so on.

ORKS

Of the Name-giver races, orks fell first to enslavement by their fellow Name-givers in Barsaive as well as by the Therans. Though the orks became a free people centuries ago, their ancestors' slavery left its mark on the race. In general, orks are extremely sensitive to any suggestion that other Name-givers regard them as less than equals. Though most Name-givers no longer regard orks as lesser beings, the few who still do justify (at least in an ork's mind) the race's view of itself as the perennial subject of racist bigotry. In addition to giving them a hair-trigger sensitivity to slights, the orks' experience of slavery gave them an intense love of freedom. They despise slavers as they despise few things, and many orks spit by reflex at any mention, however oblique, of the Theran Empire.





The orks' history of enslavement combined with their relatively short lifespan prompts this race to value and embrace what they call "seizing life and shaking it" in an effort to experience fully every possibility allotted to a single lifetime. An ork who attempts a new experience or skill and fails dusts himself off and tries again. And again. And again, until he either succeeds or dies. For an ork, to die with some task left undone or some potential left unfulfilled is the only real failure.

A player designing an ork character must account for the racial peculiarity known as *gahad*. A physical sensation similar to intense heartburn, *gahad* is a feeling all orks experience in response to certain, specific stimuli. When *gahad* occurs, the ork must act on his or her immediate impulse or else face the misery of a *gahad* hangover. Each ork has different specific impulses that trigger *gahad*, but all orks suffer at least two stimuli that trigger *gahad* and two that never trigger any response. For example, an ork may suffer *gahad* whenever he hears any negative comment about himself or his family, but easily shrug off even the vilest insult to the ork race. For guidelines on using *gahad* in roleplaying, see **Special Rules**, p. 119 of this section.

TROLLS

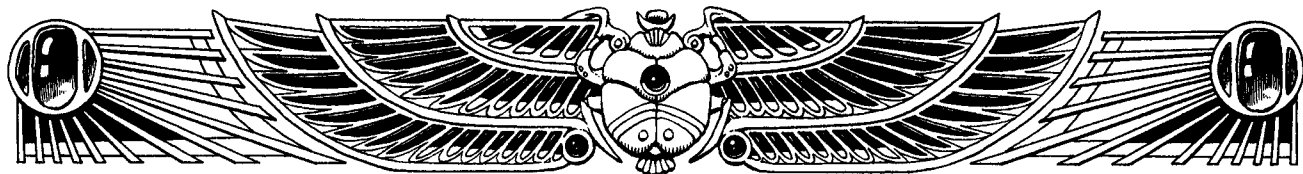
To characters of other races, trolls seem contradictory, contrary, confusing, and unpredictable—sometimes even psychotic. From his own point of view, however, a troll's every action and attitude results from a perfectly logical, understandable, and correct mindset. If others find his behavior volatile and bewildering, they simply fail to understand the one thing dearest to a troll's heart: honor.

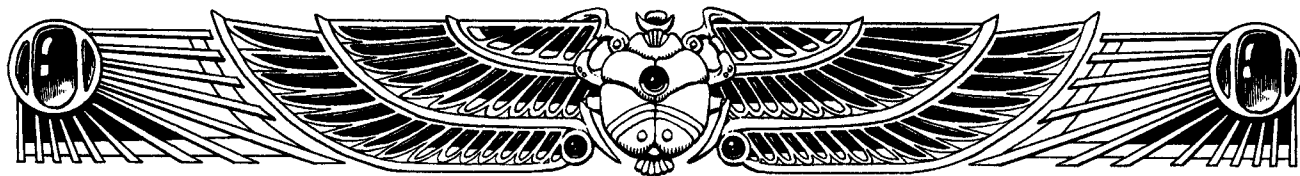
A player roleplaying a troll must analyze everything that happens to him and around him in terms of personal, clan, and racial honor, from the greeting of a fellow traveler to the drunken muttering of a nearby dwarf in a tavern. Such a character may choose to not violently avenge every slur to his honor in order to devote his efforts and attention to more important things, but he hears every slight and he never forgets. If a character repeatedly insults a troll, deliberately or otherwise, the troll eventually will take action.

A troll born and raised in a lowland city, town, or village generally considers clan and racial honor less important than personal honor. A lowland troll understands and feels some sense of clan and racial honor, but only personal honor retains its highest value. For highland trolls, particularly sky raiders, all three aspects of honor carry equal and overwhelming importance. These characters may even take offense on the grounds of all three at the same time.

Players designing troll characters must also take into account that almost everything in the world outside of a lowlander's own home or a highlander's own clan is built for smaller and lighter people. On his home ground or in combat, a troll can be graceful and lithe despite his height and bulk; in the average lowland tavern or shop, he seems to be the clumsiest oaf in Barsaive. The difficulties of coping with size offer endless possibilities for players interested in roleplaying a little slapstick to lighten things up.







DISCIPLINES

Though each of the races described in this book may follow many different Disciplines, if such a thing as statistical analysis existed in **Earthdawn** it would show that each race tends to follow certain Disciplines more than others. For example, dwarf characters rarely become cavalymen or sky raiders, even though that race may follow both these Disciplines according to the **Earthdawn** rules. This section lists the Disciplines most commonly followed by members of each race and lists new, racially specific Disciplines.

Dwarfs: Dwarfs most often follow those Disciplines focused on study or building, two activities they value highly. This includes all four of the magician Disciplines and the weaponsmith Discipline. Many dwarf adepts also follow the Discipline of the warrior. Somewhat fewer dwarfs follow such specialized Disciplines as the archer, beastmaster, swordmaster, thief, and troubadour. Very few dwarfs follow Disciplines that take them away from contact with the earth, such as the air sailor, cavalryman, sky raider, and scout Disciplines. The Discipline of the traveled scholar, p. 112, is unique to dwarfs and somewhat rare.

Obsidimen: Obsidimen follow the fewest Disciplines of any Name-giver race because the requirements of many Disciplines run counter to an obsidiman's physical and emotional nature. Obsidimen most often follow those Disciplines that require a love of learning and a strong connection with the earth. Most obsidimen adepts follow the elementalists, wizard, or warrior Disciplines; many also follow the illusionist, nethermancer, troubadour, and weaponsmith Disciplines.

A rare Discipline unique to obsidimen is the purifier Discipline, p. 110. These self-appointed warriors of the earth mostly inhabit those areas where Barsaive's wilderness remains untamed.

Orks: Orks tend to follow Disciplines that allow them to seize life and live each moment to the fullest. Most ork adepts follow the beastmaster, cavalryman, scout, thief, and warrior Disciplines; somewhat fewer orks become elementalists, illusionists, nethermancers, sky raiders, swordmasters, and troubadours. Very few orks follow the air sailor, archer, weaponsmith, and wizard Disciplines. Only orks may follow the new liberator Discipline, p. 106.

Trolls: Most troll adepts choose to follow the most active, aggressive Disciplines, namely, the sky raider and the warrior. Some trolls also follow such specialized Disciplines as beastmaster, cavalryman, scout, troubadour, and weaponsmith. Few trolls become air sailors,

archers, elementalists, illusionists, nethermancers, or wizards. A rare few trolls follow the new outcast warrior Discipline, p. 108.

NEW DISCIPLINES

This section describes several new Disciplines unique to characters of certain races. Only members of the race listed under Racial Restrictions may follow these new Disciplines.

The new Disciplines appear in the same format as those described in the **Earthdawn** rulebook and the **Earthdawn Companion**. They were designed according to the guidelines for creating new Disciplines on pages 137–51 of the **Companion**, with a few minor exceptions, mainly that certain Disciplines offer more talents at a given Circle than is recommended by the **Companion** guidelines.

Though the **Companion** expanded the original thirteen **Earthdawn** Disciplines to allow characters to reach Fifteenth Circle, adepts of these new Disciplines may only reach as high as Tenth Circle, and sometimes lower. Because these Disciplines offer a narrower focus than the original Disciplines, they offer fewer special abilities and, overall, less power.

The asterisk following certain talents indicates new, racially specific talents described in **New Talents**, p. 114.

Durability and Thread Weaving

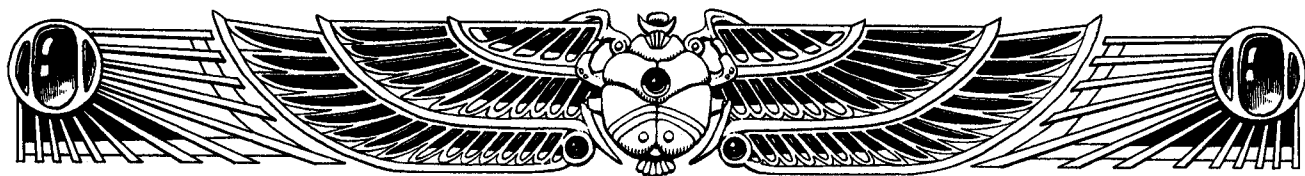
The bonuses to a character's Death and Unconsciousness Ratings for ranks in the Durability talent appear in parentheses following Durability. For example, Durability (6/5) means that for each rank of Durability, the character adds 6 to his Death Rating and 5 to his Unconsciousness Rating.

Each new Discipline offers the Thread Weaving talent, listed with the appropriate name for the talent in parentheses. For example, the Thread Weaving talent for the liberator Discipline is called Freedom Weaving.

Discipline Talent Notes

The notation (D) indicates Discipline talents (p. 95, ED) for each of the following new Disciplines.





LIBERATOR

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 Name-giver. 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 for their operations or magical weapons to fight their enemies, or in order to trade services with other heroes who may aid them in their struggle.

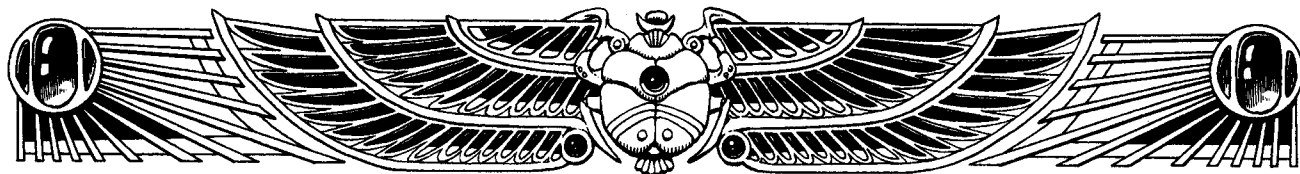
A liberator loses his or her talents if he aids in the enslavement of another Name-giver, turns a blind eye to slaving, knowingly associates with slavers except as part of a ruse to defeat them, harms or kills a slave except in self-defense, or kills a former slave except in self-defense. The gamemaster determines whether a liberator violates any of these strictures. The liberator Discipline does not demand that its adherents take reckless or suicidal action but does expect heroic efforts and actions. The gamemaster should try to create a logical, cohesive set of standards for making these decisions. 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. Note that liberators who lose their abilities can regain them by performing a Ritual of Atonement (see **New Talents**, p. 118 of this section).

In general, only orks may practice this Discipline. Other Name-givers, most notably Throalic dwarfs, have tried but failed to learn its techniques. Most orks believe that other races cannot be liberators because they spent far less time as slaves to the Therans than the orks served as slaves to all other Name-givers, and therefore others cannot summon up the necessary fire and drive to power the Discipline's talents. By virtue of their Versatility talent, some humans have successfully learned to use a few liberator talents, but they must follow the Discipline's requirements as rigidly as any ork. Gamemasters who choose to expand this Discipline beyond the ork race should design an epic quest for his group to discover the secret of being a non-ork liberator.

Important Attributes: Willpower and Dexterity

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, then mimes Hrak Gron's famous slashing of her master's throat while reciting the words to the Shout of Justice.

Artisan Skills: Acting

FIRST CIRCLE

Talents

- Freedom Search*
- Karma Ritual
- Melee Weapons
- Mind Armor*
- Mind Blade*
- Ritual of Atonement*

SECOND CIRCLE

Talents

- Durability (7/6)
- Free Mind*
- Unarmed Combat

THIRD CIRCLE

Talents

- Heart of Freedom*
- Shackle Shrug*

FOURTH CIRCLE

Karma: The liberator may spend a Karma Point on any action using Willpower only.

Talents

- False Shackles*
- Thread Weaving (Freedom Weaving) (D)

FIFTH CIRCLE

Physical Defense: Increase the liberator's Physical Defense by 1.

Talents

- Lion Spirit
- Lock Pick

SIXTH CIRCLE

Social Defense: Increase the liberator's Social Defense by 1.

Talents

- Dead Fall
- Freedom Song*

SEVENTH CIRCLE

Spell Defense: Increase the liberator's Spell Defense by 1.

Talents

- Power Mask*
- Shout of Justice*



EIGHTH CIRCLE

Karma: The liberator may spend a Karma Point on any test made against an opponent's Social Defense.

Talents

- Heart of Rebellion*
- Prison Call*

NINTH CIRCLE

Initiative: Increase the liberator's Initiative dice by 1 step.

Talents

- Escape Divination*
- Hoard Blows*

TENTH CIRCLE

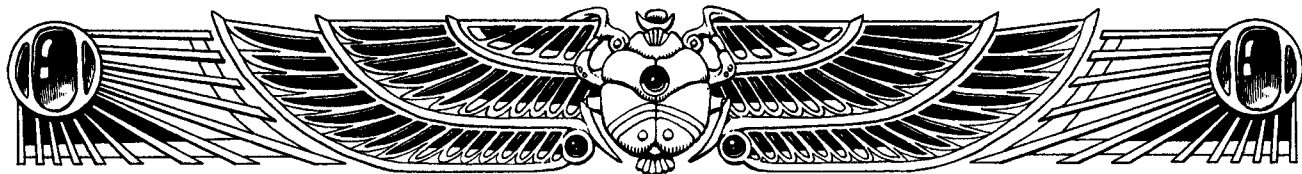
Karma: The liberator may spend a Karma Point on a Recovery Test.

Recovery Test: The liberator gains an additional Recovery Test per day.

Talents

- Heal Slave*
- Impossible Hide*





OUTCAST WARRIOR

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 their clans consider them disgraced, the outcast 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 give in to someone else's opinion. Most outcast warriors keep to themselves, though they offer unshakable loyalty to those rare Name-givers who earn their respect.

Important Attributes: Strength, Toughness, and Willpower

Racial Restrictions: Trolls only

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma ritual, the outcast warrior holds his weapon before his face and meditates on it for 15 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 15 minutes, at the end of which the outcast warrior must wipe his sweat from the weapon using his own clothing.

Artisan Skills: Rune Carving, Weapon Rune Carving, Wood Carving

Notes: The outcast warrior uses the same Discipline talents as the standard warrior Discipline.



FIRST CIRCLE

Talents

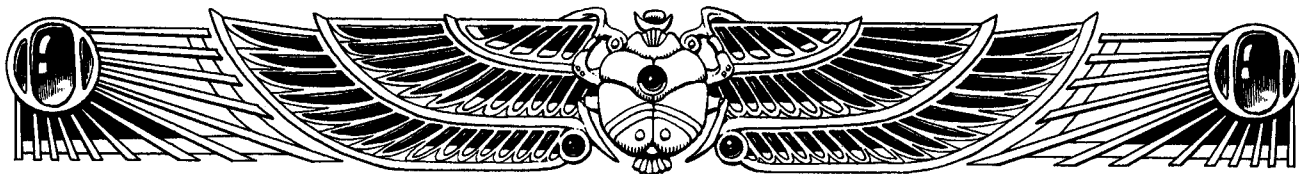
- Avoid Blow (D)
- Battle Shout
- Karma Ritual
- Melee Weapons (D)
- Taunt
- Unarmed Combat (D)

SECOND CIRCLE

Talents

- Anticipate Blow (D)
- Durability (9/7)
- Shield Charge





THIRD CIRCLE

Talents

- Swift Kick (D)
- Throwing Weapons

FOURTH CIRCLE

Karma: The outcast warrior may spend a Karma Point on any action using Willpower only.

Talents

- Fireblood
- Thread Weaving
- (War Weaving) (D)

FIFTH CIRCLE

Karma: The outcast warrior may spend a Karma Point on any action using Strength only.

Talents

- Battle Bellow
- Gliding Stride (D)

SIXTH CIRCLE

Physical Defense: Increase the outcast warrior's Physical Defense by 1.

Talents

- Down Strike (D)
- Steely Stare

SEVENTH CIRCLE

Recovery Test: The outcast warrior gains an additional Recovery Test per day.

Talents

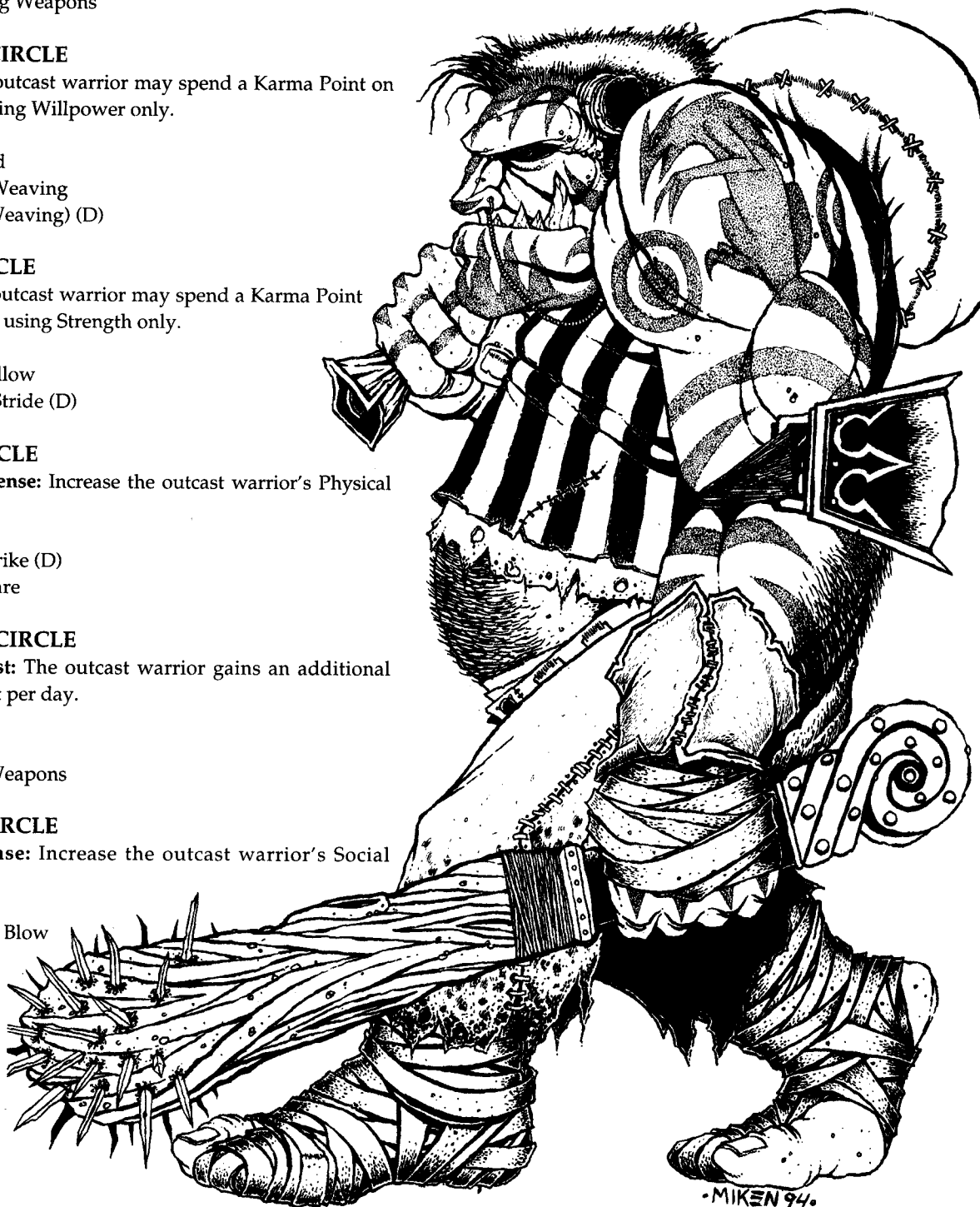
- Disarm
- Missile Weapons

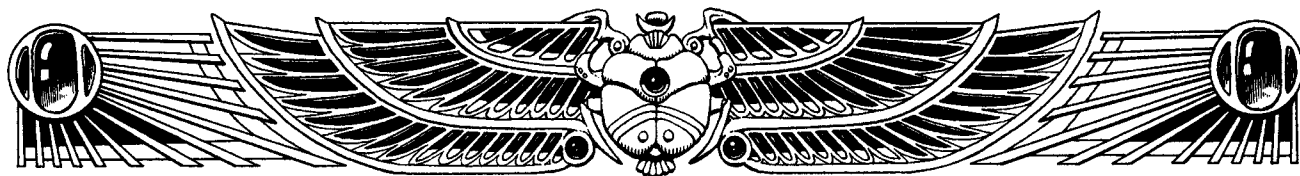
EIGHTH CIRCLE

Social Defense: Increase the outcast warrior's Social Defense by 1.

Talents

- Crushing Blow
- Momentum
- Attack





PURIFIER

Purifiers dedicate themselves to healing the scars left on the world by the Horrors, the Scourge, and any others who would defile its beauty. Willing to go to extremes to express the obsidiman race's love of nature and the earth, purifiers tend to avoid heavily populated areas, preferring areas unmarred by habitation. Some Name-giver races call purifiers nature's avengers, though this label owes more to fanciful exaggeration than fact.

Though they act with extreme aggression against any who they believe to have defiled the earth, in all other aspects most purifiers very closely resemble other obsidimen. 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.

Important Attributes: Strength, Dexterity, and Toughness

Racial Restrictions: Obsidimen only

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: Crystal Carving, Stone Carving, Wood Carving

FIRST CIRCLE

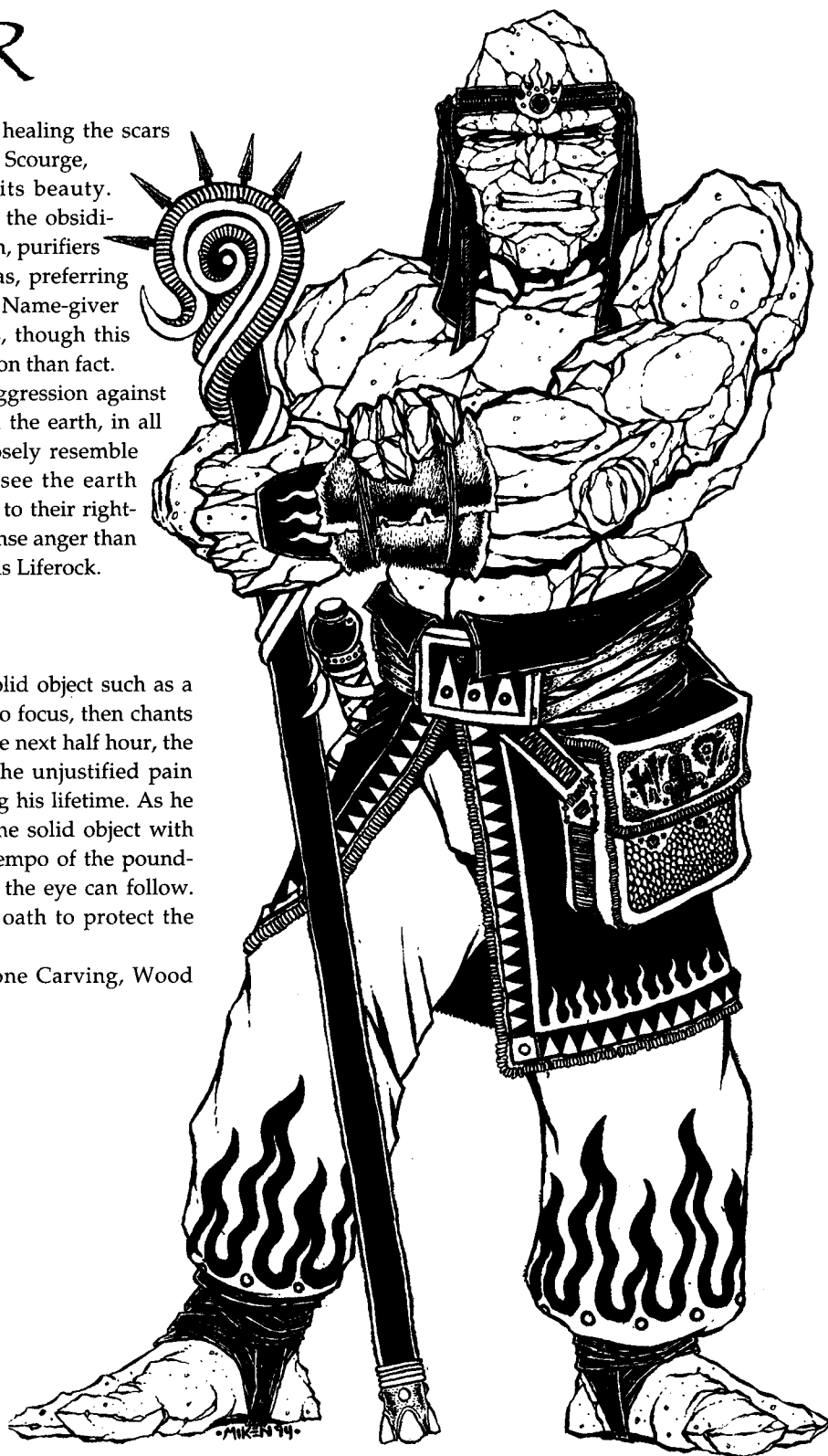
Talents

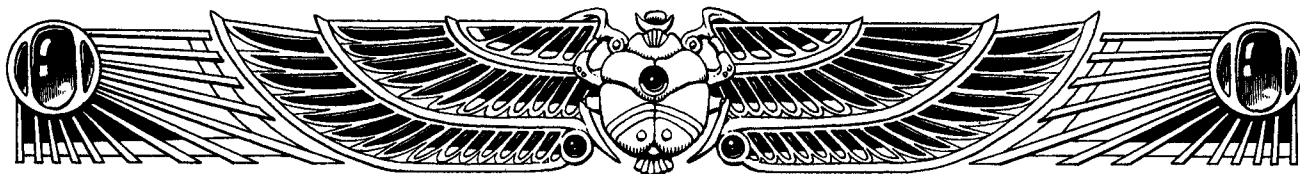
- Astral Sight
- Battle Shout
- Body Control* (D)
- Karma Ritual
- Unarmed Combat (D)
- Wound Balance

SECOND CIRCLE

Talents

- Creature Analysis
- Durability (6/5)
- Fire Blood





Talents

Elemental Tongues
Swift Kick

FOURTH CIRCLE

Karma: The purifier may spend a Karma Point on any Damage Test.

Talents

Clay Skin (Wood Skin)
Thread Weaving (D)

FIFTH CIRCLE

Focused Strike: At a cost of 2 points of Strain, the purifier may focus all his energy into a powerful strike. When the purifier makes a successful attack using his Unarmed Combat talent, he may add his Willpower step to his Damage step for the Damage Test. The purifier may not use this ability when attacking with a weapon or in consecutive Combat Rounds.

Talents

Battle Bellow (D)
Riposte

SIXTH CIRCLE

Physical Defense: Increase the purifier's Physical Defense by 1.

Talents

Life Check (D)
Unshakable Earth (D)

SEVENTH CIRCLE

Recovery Test: The purifier gains one additional Recovery Test per day.

Talents

Earth Skin
Second Attack

EIGHTH CIRCLE

Spell Defense: Increase the purifier's Spell Defense by 1.

Talents

Crushing Blow (D)
Lion Heart

NINTH CIRCLE

Karma: The purifier may spend a Karma Point on a Recovery Test.

Talents

Bestial Toughness
Steel Thought
Tiger Spring (D)

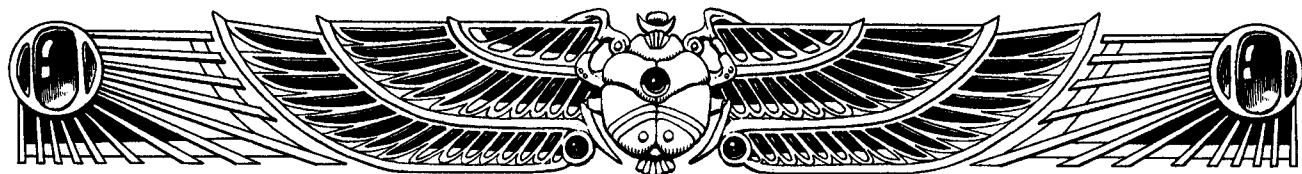
TENTH CIRCLE

Initiative: Increase the purifier's Initiative dice by 1 step.

Talents

Body Blade (D)
Whirlwind





TRAVELED SCHOLAR

Dwarfs who follow the traveled scholar Discipline choose to learn about the world by 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. Dwarfs can study this Discipline only in the Kingdom of Throal.

Before he reaches the First Circle of the traveled scholar Discipline, an adept must have already learned how to read and write well and how to conduct research; by this time he also has developed the traditional scholar's love of books and intellectual pursuits. Once the adept reaches the First Circle, he begins his journeying across the land. A traveled scholar often joins trading caravans or adventuring bands to search out the wonders and terrors of the world. Many traveled scholars work as scribes, recording the exploits of wealthy merchants, explorers, and riverboat and airship captains. The fact that traveled scholars seldom remain in one place for long makes it difficult for them to train and advance through the Circles of the Discipline.

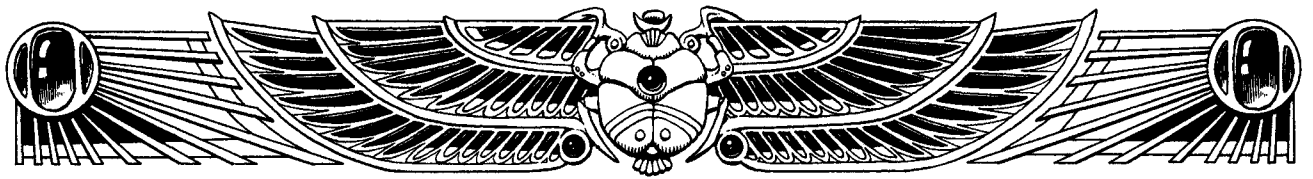
Most traveled scholars spend at least a few months of the year in the larger cities of Barsaive such as Travar, Bartertown, and Iopos. These places serve as centers of learning and information as well as hubs of fascinating activity. Every year, the traveled scholar makes a journey to the Great Library of Throal in order to share with its librarians all that he has learned in the past year as well as news from all across Barsaive: new legends from the Forgotten City of Parlainth, word of Theran activity in the south of the province, and so on.

Important Attributes: Perception, Willpower, and Charisma

Racial Restrictions: Dwarf only

Karma Ritual: The traveled scholar 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 insights gained from the events about which he wrote. He reads and meditates for 30 minutes, after which time he awakens from his reverie and writes down the new insights gleaned from this exercise.





Artisan Skills: Embroidery, Runic Carving, Wood Carving

Notes: Traveled scholars begin the game with one rank in the Research skill, a bonus rank that costs the character nothing. Because so few traveled scholars exist, increase the training times and costs listed in the **Building Your Legend** section of the **Earthdawn** rulebook by 10 percent.

FIRST CIRCLE

Talents

- Karma Ritual
- Melee Weapons
- Read and Write Language (D)
- Read and Write Magic
- Steel Thought
- Weapon History (D)

SECOND CIRCLE

Talents

- Durability (6/5)
- Item History (D)
- Speak Language (D)

THIRD CIRCLE

Talents

- Astral Sight
- Book Memory

FOURTH CIRCLE

Karma: The scholar may spend a Karma Point on actions using Perception only.

Talents

- Book Recall (D)
- Thread Weaving (Scholar Weaving) (D)

FIFTH CIRCLE

Karma: The scholar may spend an additional Karma Point on Item History or Weapon History tests.

Talents

- Empathic Sense
- Evidence Analysis (D)

SIXTH CIRCLE

Social Defense: Increase the scholar's Social Defense by 1.

Talents

- Avoid Blow
- Haggle



SEVENTH CIRCLE

Spell Defense: Increase the scholar's Spell Defense by 1.

Talents

- Engaging Banter
- First Impression

EIGHTH CIRCLE

Fast Reading: This ability allows the scholar to read written texts in half the time normally required at a cost of 2 points of Strain. The scholar may use Fast Reading once per day but cannot use it to read magical texts such as grimoires.

- Arcane Mutterings
- Graceful Exit

NINTH CIRCLE

Karma: The scholar may spend a Karma Point on actions using Willpower only.

Talents

- Lifesight
- Memorize Image (D)
- Multi-Tongue (D)

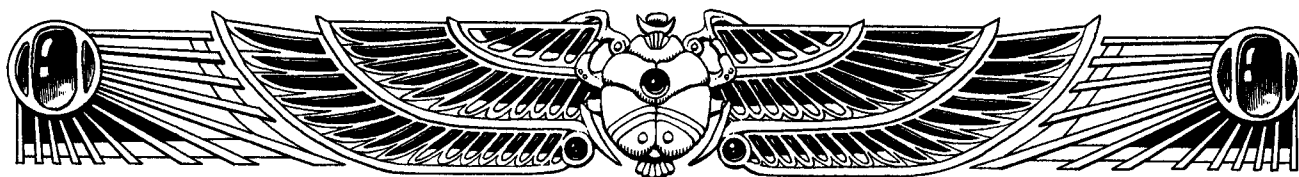
TENTH CIRCLE

Recovery Tests: The scholar gains an additional Recovery Test per day.

Talents

- Hypnotize
- Slough Blame





NEW TALENTS

The following talents are available only to characters of the races listed with each talent. These talents appear in the same format as those provided in the **Earthdawn** rulebook and the **Earthdawn Companion**, with an additional category of Race Restriction.



BODY CONTROL

Step Number: Rank + Strength **Skill Use:** No
Action: No **Strain:** 1
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: Purifier Obsidimen only

The Body Control talent allows a purifier to harden his hands when making unarmed attacks. The character uses his Unarmed Combat step for Attack Tests while using Body Control, and uses his Body Control step for the Damage Test. He may add Karma dice to the Damage Test. The effects of Body Control last until the purifier makes a successful attack. The purifier may use this talent in consecutive combat rounds at a cost of 1 point of Strain each round.

ESCAPE DIVINATION

Step Number: Rank + Perception **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** 1
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: None Orks only

Imprisoned or trapped liberators may use the Escape Divination talent to determine the best exit from their current confinement. The character must meditate uninterrupted for half an hour; at the end of that time, he receives a mental impression of the escape route that may affect any of the liberator's five senses, alone or in combination.

In order to determine how distinct an impression he received, the character makes an Escape Divination Test against the Spell Defense of whoever imprisoned him. An Average success provides one murky bit of information, a Good success provides two obscure clues, Very Good an easy clue, Excellent two easy clues, and an Extraordinary success offers complete and clear information for a trouble-free escape.

FALSE SHACKLES

Step Number: Rank + Dexterity **Skill Use:** Yes
Action: Yes **Strain:** No
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: None Orks only

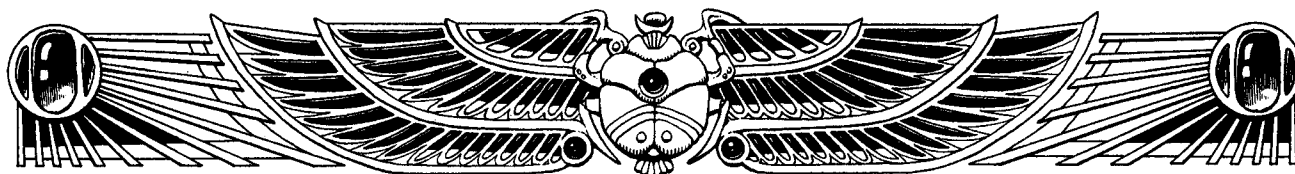
This talent offers a particular advantage to a character who escapes his shackles but wishes to keep his escape secret. The liberator arranges his shackles so that they appear to be in place, mimicking the stance and movements of a bound prisoner. The character then makes a False Shackles Test. The result is the Difficulty Number for all Perception Tests made by characters checking to see if the liberator remains safely bound. The effect lasts for a number of hours equal to the liberator's rank in the talent or until the liberator does something obviously impossible for a bound character to accomplish.

FREE MIND

Step Number: Rank + Charisma **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** None
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator Orks only

To use this talent, the liberator must command the attention of a single slave, prisoner, or lackey of a slaver. He then uses logic, emotional appeals, and his personal confidence and determination to reawaken the subject's desire to be free. Liberators should reserve the effort required to perform Free Mind for slaves or prisoners resigned to their fate; there is no need to perform it on a slave who already aches for freedom. The liberator makes





a Free Mind Test against the subject's Social Defense. If the test is successful, the slave becomes a willing rebel, and the liberator need not overcome the slave's Social Defense in order to impart the benefits of the Freedom Song and Heart of Rebellion talents (following). Gamemaster characters who are successful subjects of the Free Mind talent generally cooperate with the liberator's plans to escape, provided that the plans make sense and do not require unreasonable risk.

A liberator can also use the Free Mind talent to win over prison guards and slavers' lackeys to the liberator's cause, but only if the lackey in question stands to gain by changing his allegiance—if he is poorly paid, living in bad conditions, or subject to harsh discipline by his superiors, for example. An uneducated orkish thug who already hates his bosses makes a likely target for this talent, while aristocratic Therans making buckets of money from the slave trade seem immune to it. When attempting to use Free Mind against slavers' lackeys, the player character must apply a -3 step modifier to the Free Mind Test.

The time needed for the Free Mind talent to work depends on the success level of the Free Mind Test. On an Average success, the process takes an hour; a Good success, 40 minutes; an Excellent success, 20 minutes; and an Extraordinary success, 10 minutes.

FREEDOM SEARCH

Step Number: Rank + Perception	Skill Use: No
Action: Yes	Strain: None
Requires Karma: No	Race Restriction:
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator	Orks

By carefully studying a Name-giver using the Freedom Search talent, a character can determine if the subject has ever been either a slave or a slaver. To use this ability, the character makes a Freedom Search Test against the subject's Spell Defense. If the test fails, the character cannot determine the past status of the subject. If the subject has been both a slaver and a slave, successful use of the talent reveals which he has been most recently. A result of all ones produces a false result (see **Rule of One**, p. 34, ED); the liberator believes slaves were slavers and vice versa. For subjects who have been neither, the liberator believes they were slaves if the result adds up to an even number and slavers if the result adds up to an odd number.

FREEDOM SONG

Step Number: Rank + Charisma	Skill Use: No
Action: Yes	Strain: None
Requires Karma: No	Race Restriction:
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator	Orks only

The Freedom Song is based on a folk melody heard throughout Barsaive in many different contexts: as a drinking song, a romantic melody, the music for topical songs parodying political leaders, and so on. When sung with a set of lyrics attributed to Hrak Gron, the song becomes a powerful indictment of slavers and a cry for freedom. A liberator who sings these lyrics imbues them with magical power, inspiring all slaves within earshot to take heart and believe that they can rise up against their masters. The sound of the Freedom Song frightens those slaves resigned to their fate.

To use the Freedom Song talent, the liberator makes a Freedom Song Test against the highest Social Defense among his listeners. If the test is successful, the power of the song helps those within earshot to overcome their fears and rouses them to open rebellion. In game terms, slaves hearing a successful Freedom Song can substitute the liberator's Willpower Attribute value for the Attribute value of his or her choice. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the liberator's rank in the talent.

Whether successful or not, whether sung by a liberator or not, the Freedom Song prompts all but the most ignorant guards to launch an attack on any slaves singing it until they stop. Singers in a group of slaves will be separated from the group for punishment, and so only the foolish will sing the song except as a prelude to immediate revolt.

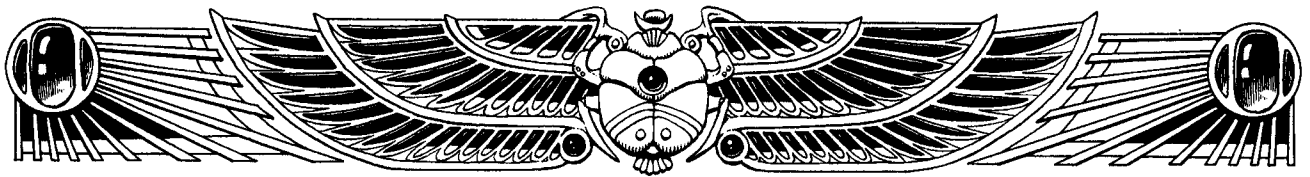
HEAL SLAVE

Step Number: Rank + Willpower	Skill Use: No
Action: Yes	Strain: 1
Requires Karma: Yes	Race Restriction:
Discipline Talent Use: None	Orks

Liberators can use the Heal Slave talent to heal enslaved Name-givers or those escaping unjust imprisonment who received their injuries at the hands of their captors. The liberator makes a Heal Slave Test against the subject's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the recipient gains bonus Recovery Tests according to the success level. An Average or Good success yields 1 bonus Recovery Test, a Very Good or Excellent success gives 2, an Extraordinary success provides 3 additional Recovery Tests. The target of the healing must use these bonus Recovery Tests within a number of hours equal to the liberator's rank in the Heal Slave talent, or he loses them.

If the liberator already used the Free Mind talent on the target of Heal Slave, the target may voluntarily lower his Spell Defense to aid in healing. Otherwise, he will subconsciously sabotage the healing attempt (by maintaining his normal defenses) because recovering too quickly from a captor's assault is an oblique way of disobeying him.





HEART OF FREEDOM

Step Number: Rank + Willpower **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** None
Requires Karma: Yes **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator Orks only

This talent allows the liberator to confer the potential for *gahad* (see p. 121) on non-ork characters. To use this ability, the liberator makes a Heart of Freedom Test against the subject's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the potential for *gahad* lasts for a number of days equal to the liberator's rank in the Heart of Freedom talent. If the subject is a player character, the gamemaster should ask the player to describe which stimuli will make him susceptible to *gahad* and to which impulses he is immune. If the same character is subjected to Heart of Freedom again at a later date, the same vulnerabilities and immunities apply.

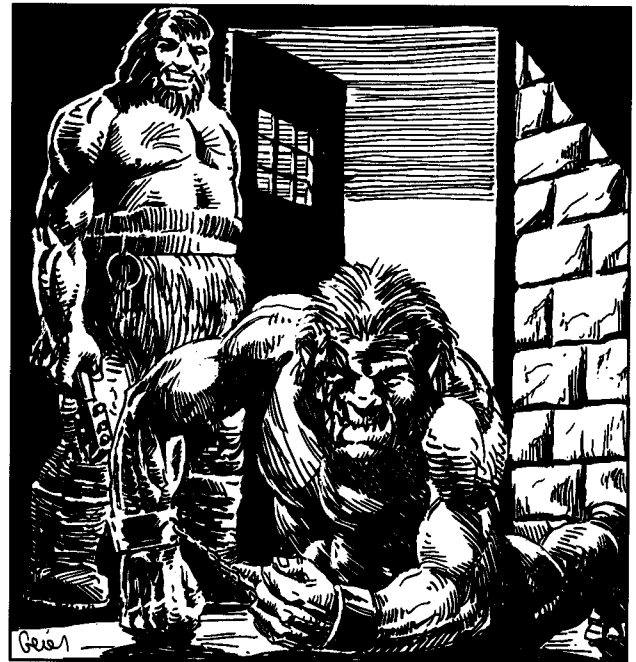
Unlike most liberator talents, the adept can use Heart of Freedom on any Name-giver, not just on slaves or slavers. Some scholars use this fact to support their contention that Hrak Gron touched off the Uprising as the first phase of a plan to make all of Barsaive more orkish.

HEART OF REBELLION

Step Number: Rank + Willpower **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** None
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: None Orks only

A liberator using the Heart of Rebellion talent declaims a stirring speech first attributed to Hrak Gron in the days of the Ork Uprising. Backed by the unshakable conviction of a dedicated liberator, these words can stir the hearts of all the downtrodden and oppressed, giving them the courage to rebel against those who exploit them. Because many slaves and other oppressed folk have accepted their servitude and may even believe it right and just, the liberator must make a successful Heart of Rebellion Test against the highest Social Defense among his group of hearers for the talent to take effect.

Those benefiting from Heart of Rebellion substitute the liberator's Willpower step for their own when making Willpower Tests against attempts by slavers or other oppressors to cow them with threats, arguments, or intimidation. The effect lasts for a number of minutes equal to the liberator's rank in the talent.



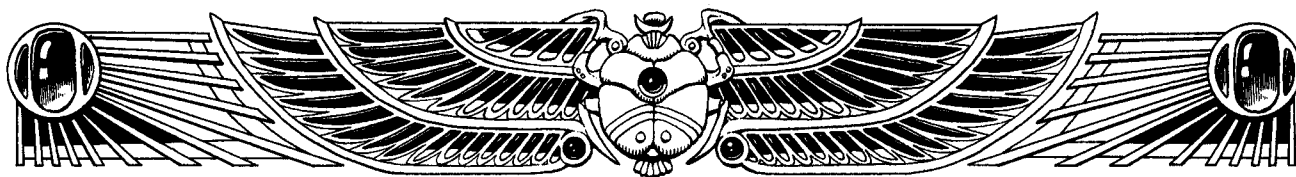
HOARD BLOWS

Step Number: Rank + Willpower **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** 0
Requires Karma: Yes **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: None Orks only

The Hoard Blows talent enables a character struck by a slaver or prison guard to "save up," or hoard, the blow. Though the character suffers full damage from the attack, he can at a later point direct the force of the blow against his original attacker through sheer force of will. This effect lasts for a number of days equal to the character's rank in the talent. To determine whether a redirected attack hits its target, the character makes a Hoard Blows Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the target suffers the same damage he inflicted on the character with the original blow, not including any protection the character received from armor. Physical armor gives the target no protection against the redirected blow; mystic armor does.

To unleash the effect of this talent, the character must be standing within striking distance of the target, though he need not touch the target. If he wishes, the character may hoard more than one blow from the same attacker and inflict the accumulated damage all at once. He may also hoard blows from more than one attacker, but he must redirect each blow against the one who first delivered it.





IMPOSSIBLE HIDE

Step Number: Rank + Willpower **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** None
Requires Karma: Yes **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: None Orks only

The Impossible Hide talent allows the liberator to hide behind or under objects much smaller than himself, as long as the object is larger than an inch high or wide; for example, a rock, a stick, a large cockroach, or the hand of a cooperative Name-giver. To use this ability, the character makes an Impossible Hide Test. The result becomes the Difficulty Number for Perception Tests made by those looking for the character or scanning the area in which he is hidden. If the result of any such Perception Test does not exceed that Difficulty Number, searchers pass by the character unless they actually lift up the object behind which the character is hiding. If someone finds the hidden character in this way, the character seems to shoot out from behind the object, startling the searcher and automatically giving the liberator Initiative over the searcher in the next Combat Round. The effects of the Impossible Hide talent last for a number of minutes equal to the Impossible Hide Test result, or until the character is either discovered or comes out of hiding.



MIND ARMOR

Step Number: Rank + Willpower **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** 2
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator Orks only

The Mind Armor talent allows the liberator to fashion physical armor from sheer willpower at a moment's notice. To use this ability, the character makes a Mind Armor Test against the Spell Defense of the first opponent the liberator plans to engage in combat. The Physical Armor Rating depends on the success level achieved. An Average success yields 6 points; a Good success, 8 points; an Excellent success, 10 points; and an Extraordinary success, 12 points. Mind Armor appears as shimmering air around the character and weighs 4 pounds per point of protection. Mind Armor fits together in such a way as to allow the liberator to move, similar to real armor. A skillful opponent can penetrate Mind Armor with an Armor-Defeating Hit as if it were real armor. Mind Armor provides no mystic armor protection. Each use of Mind Armor lasts for a number of minutes equal to the liberator's rank in the talent.

MIND BLADE

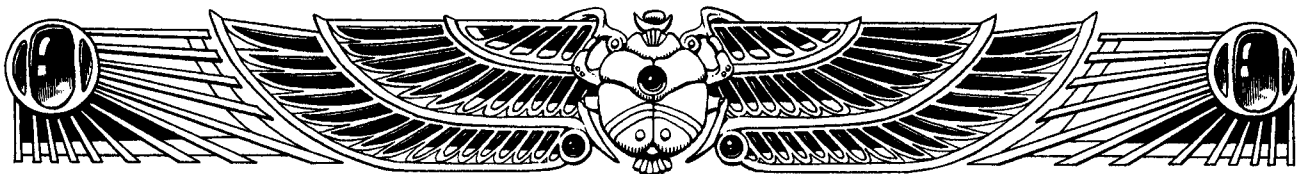
Step Number: Rank **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** 1
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator Orks only

The Mind Blade talent allows a liberator to create a weapon out of willpower and thin air. The weapon appears as a distortion of the air (similar to the way air shimmers above a heat source) shaped like a bladed weapon. The precise size and shape of the weapon corresponds to the liberator's rank. At Rank 1, the blade resembles a small knife; at Rank 2, a dagger; at Rank 5, a broadsword. To strike with a Mind Blade, the character uses his or her Melee Weapons step; no Strength minimum applies. The blade's Damage step equals the character's talent rank. The character may spend Karma for the Damage Test. The weapon lasts for a number of hours equal to the character's talent rank, but he or she may dispel it before that time elapses.

POWER MASK

Step Number: Rank + Willpower **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** 1
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: None Orks only





The Power Mask talent allows a liberator to disguise his or her true nature from both mundane and magical detection. When creating a Power Mask, the player makes a Power Mask Test and records the result. The character is surrounded by a misleading astral aura that prevents users of magic from identifying him as a liberator or even an adept. Any time a magician makes a test to detect the character's magical ability and the result does not exceed the result of the Power Mask Test, the liberator appears as a lowly wretch with hardly any spark of life energy at all. For characters making regular Perception Tests to see if the masked character is acting suspiciously, the masked character appears as nothing more than another downtrodden victim unless the Perception Test result exceeds the result of the original Power Mask Test. A Power Mask lasts for a number of days equal to the character's talent rank, and may be renewed when it expires.

PRISON CALL

Step Number: Rank + Perception **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** No
Requires Karma: Yes **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: None Orks only

The Prison Call talent allows a liberator to detect the presence of prisoners or slaves in a building or structure within a range of hundreds of yards equal to the user's talent rank. To use this ability, the liberator makes a Prison Call Test against the highest Spell Defense of any slaves or prisoners present in the building. If the test is successful, the liberator senses the presence of slaves inside. The effect of Prison Call lasts for a number of hours equal to the user's talent rank, after which he may renew it.

Prison Call does not tell the liberator the prisoners' location but simply intensifies his sensations of *gahad* whenever he travels in the prisoners' direction. When the feeling of *gahad* diminishes, the liberator knows he has stepped off the path; when it strengthens, he knows he is getting closer. If there is more than one prisoner or group of prisoners within the area of effect, Prison Call indicates the nearest group. The talent does not distinguish between the justly and unjustly imprisoned, nor does it account for the easiest route into the prison. For example, if the occupied cell lies on the far side of a wall but can only be reached by walking away from the wall into a winding corridor, the liberator's *gahad* pulls him toward the wall rather than the corridor.

RITUAL OF ATONEMENT

Step Number: Rank + Willpower **Skill Use:** No
Action: Yes **Strain:** 10
Requires Karma: Yes **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator Orks only

If a liberator violates the strictures of his Discipline, he must perform the Ritual of Atonement to regain the use of his talents. The ritual takes roughly 3 hours, must be performed in a former prison or slave pen, and requires extensive chanting and self-mortification at a heavy cost of Strain. If a liberator successfully completes the ritual, he regains the use of his talents but must immediately set out to atone for his original failure. For example, a liberator who helped enslave someone must rescue that individual. If the liberator wrongly killed someone, he must pay reparations to the victim's family or honor the dead. If a liberator allowed slavers to pass by unmo- lested, he must pursue them and bring them to justice.

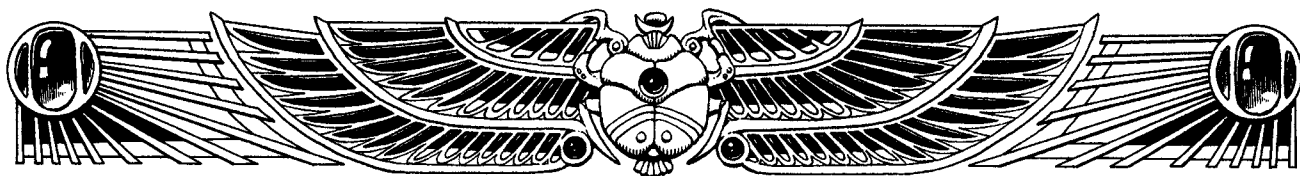
A liberator may also perform the Ritual of Atonement on a former slaver who wishes to expunge guilt for his or her misdeeds. In this case, the recipient rather than the liberator suffers the Strain. If the penitent successfully completes the ritual, he or she no longer appears as a former slaver to anyone using the Freedom Search talent for a number of days equal to the liberator's talent rank. If the penitent takes positive action against slavers during this time, the effect becomes permanent.

SHACKLE SHRUG

Step Number: Rank + Dexterity **Skill Use:** Yes
Action: Yes **Strain:** 1
Requires Karma: No **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator Orks only

The Shackle Shrug talent allows the character to escape from bonds around his hands or feet by gradually straining against them and using extraordinary flexibility to extricate his wrists or ankles from openings too small to wriggle out of normally. To use this talent, the character makes a Shackle Shrug Test against a Difficulty Number based on the type of bindings. Twine or string, for example, carries a Difficulty Number of 5; rope tied by an inexperienced captor has a Difficulty Number of 7; rope tied by an experienced jailer, a Difficulty Number of 9; steel shackles, 11; magical shackles, 13. Because it is always easier to escape from shackles that bind the wrists than those around the ankles, add 2 to the Difficulty Number if the shackles bind the feet.





These Difficulty Numbers assume the character succeeds at his attempt to break his shackles within the first half hour. For every additional half hour that the character spends working at the shackles, add 1 step to the Shackle Shrug step.

SHOUT OF JUSTICE

Step Number: Rank + Charisma **Skill Use:** Yes
Action: Yes **Strain:** None
Requires Karma: Yes **Race Restriction:**
Discipline Talent Use: Liberator Orks only

A Shout of Justice is a battle cry that a liberator uses to strike fear into the hearts of slavers. The standard Shout of Justice is a litany attributed to Hrak Gron, but a liberator may substitute his or her own words of vengeance if he wishes. To use this talent, the character must make a successful Shout of Justice Test against the highest Social Defense of the slavers in the target group. The Shout intimidates slavers who hear it, reducing all their actions by a number of steps equal to the success levels achieved above Average. For example, a Good success (1 level above Average) reduces the slaver's actions by 1 step; an Excellent success (2 levels above Average) reduces them by 2 steps. The liberator may use this talent to affect one slaver for every rank he possesses in Shout of Justice.

QUESTORS

The members of each Name-giver race tend to become questors for a few specific Passions. This does not mean that some races only believe in select Passions, only that certain Passions more often inspire members of a given race to become questors than do other Passions. For example, dwarf questors show an affinity for Mynbruje and Upandal, which reflects their love of knowledge, justice, and building. In keeping with their racial desire for freedom, orks most often quest for Lochost, the Passion of Rebellion, Change, and Freedom. Because health and the home carry great importance for all the races, they may all become questors of Garlen.

Some members of all Name-giver races quest for the Mad Passions, though these questors remain rare. Among those who devote their energies to the Mad Passions, members of each race tend to quest for only one of the three. The following guidelines will help players choose an appropriate Passion for characters who become questors.

Dwarfs: Commonly quest for Upandal and Mynbruje, and sometimes for Chorrolis. Of the Mad Passions, dwarfs will only quest for Dis.

Obsidimen: Obsidimen very rarely become questors of any of the Passions, and only quest for Mynbruje and Jaspree. Obsidimen never quest for any of the Mad Passions.

Orks: Orks will most often quest for Lochost and Thystonius. Orks rarely quest for the Mad Passions and never for Dis.

Trolls: 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.

SPECIAL RULES

The races described in this book all possess unique characteristics, represented in game terms by the following special rules. These rules include special forms of blood magic unique to obsidimen, rules for playing out *gahad*, guidelines for creating piecemeal armor, and glossaries of the ork and troll languages. Unless otherwise noted, rules listed for each race apply only to characters of that race.

DWARFS

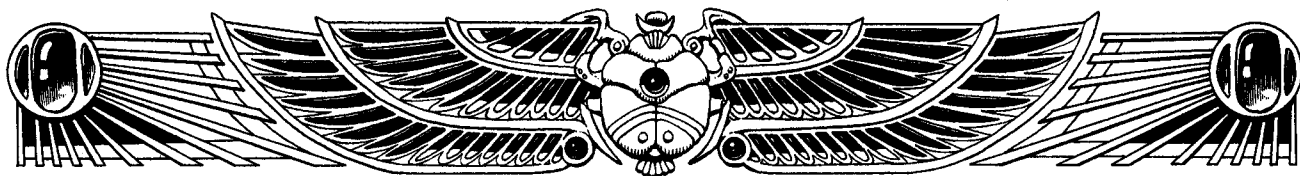
In order to roleplay the dwarf affinity for craftsmanship and building, players creating dwarf characters may choose to give their characters a rank in some form of the Craftsman skill in place of one knowledge skill. The close relationship between crafts and artistry in dwarf workmanship means that a dwarf's artisan skills will most likely relate to his or her 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.

Because the Throalic language serves as the common tongue of Barsaive, players creating dwarf characters may forfeit the character's second language skill and add another rank to a knowledge or artisan skill (but not to a character's Craftsman skill, if he chose that skill).

OBSIDIMEN

The special rules for obsidimen include game information for obsidimen blood magic rituals as well as guidelines for roleplaying ties to a Brotherhood, loyalty to the Liferock, and participation in Gatherings.





Obsidimen and Blood Magic

Obsidimen decline 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 Name-giver. 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 Name-giver automatically connects the oathswearer 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 Name-giver 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.

Roleplaying Loyalty to the Liferock and Brotherhood

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 Test against a Difficulty Number of 4. If the test is successful, the obsidiman hears the call of his Liferock and knows that it is threatened or that one of his Brotherhood has died. In the latter case, an Excellent success or better tells the character which of his brothers died.



If the test is unsuccessful, 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 as punishment exacted from an obsidiman too involved with his own affairs to hear his Liferock.

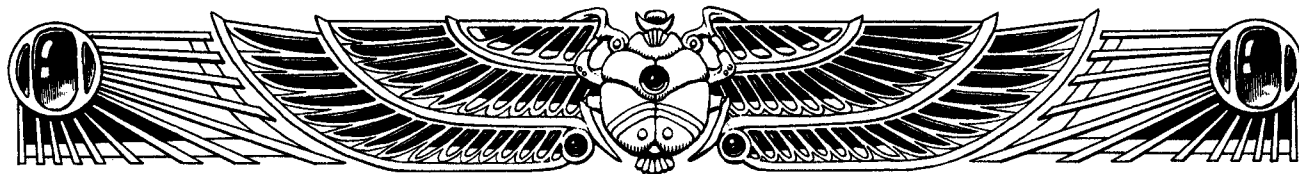
Becoming an Elder

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 travel to the Liferock and merge with it in the Dreaming. For more information on becoming an Elder, see the **Obsidimen** section of this book, p. 23. Players and gamemasters should note that obsidiman player characters will rarely, if ever, become Elders (after all, then they would have to 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 a secluded place 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.

ORKS

The special rules for orks include guidelines for *gahad* and a glossary of the ork language.

Rules for Gahad

As described in the **Orks** section of this book, p. 58–70, *gahad* is a sensation similar to intense heartburn triggered in orks by certain circumstances or situations. Each ork character experiences *gahad* in response to unique circumstances or stimuli.

Players creating ork characters should specify two impulses that always trigger a *gahad* response and two events that will not trigger *gahad* under any circumstances. The player should sum up each impulse in a sentence; for example, “Grisalk becomes enraged when someone insults the Passion Muvuul,” or “Grisalk is never bothered by attraction to the opposite sex.” Gamemasters may use this bit of characterization as part of a story by occasionally building adventures or encounters around situations that trigger *gahad*.

An ork may suffer a *gahad* attack when placed in any situation that makes her subject to acting on impulse, unless the player specifically declares a certain impulse one of his or her two immunities. When a *gahad* attack comes on, the character must make a Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number determined by the nature of the temptation. For the character Grisalk used as the example previously in this discussion, an ambiguous comment that may or may not be construed as a slight against Muvuul is Easy to resist; resisting a blasphemous obscenity becomes Heroic. If the ork fails the Willpower Test, he or she must either act on the impulse that triggered *gahad* or face nasty consequences.

If a character resists *gahad*, he or she suffers a *gahad* “hangover” within 3D6 hours. The distracting physical sensations of the hangover may manifest as feeling cotton-headed, localized aches and pains, or even hallucinations of the object of desire or hatred. The gamemaster

chooses the symptoms of the *gahad* hangover based on the impulse the character is resisting. In any form, the hangover reduces all steps by 1 per level of Difficulty in resisting the impulse: 1 step for Easy, 2 for Average, 3 for Hard, 4 for Very Hard, and 5 for Heroic. A *gahad* hangover lasts roughly 30 minutes per Difficulty level.

Glossary of Ork Language

The following glossary includes words and/or expressions commonly used by orks in Barsaive. Many of these words appear in the **Orks** section, p. 58–70 of this book.

adj. = adjective

adv. = adverb

conj. = conjunction

(for) = formal

(inf) = informal

(ins) = insulting

interj. = interjection

mod. = modifier

n. = noun

prep. = preposition

v. = verb

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!”

dramar *n.* The new mate of an ork’s mother or father, to whom a child owes respect and obedience and from whom he may expect advice and aid.

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.

Greeb *n.* The Passion Jaspree.

Grenkaklank *n.* The Passion Chorrolis.

hurlg *n.* Alcoholic beverage made from fermented rye, mixed with animal fat. Beloved by orks, feared by others.

Jrikjrikjrik *n.* The Passion Upandal.

Kawjujwak *n.* Ork name for the Passion Dis, used before she went mad.

lelkrarg *n.* The child of an ork’s former mate, or the child of a present mate by another ork.

Mikbruug *n.* The Passion Mynbruje.

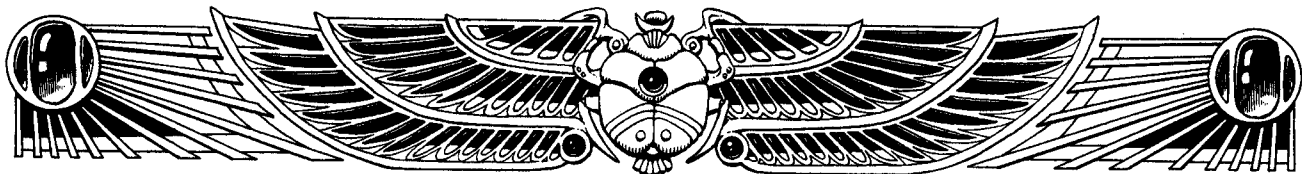
Muvuul *n.* The Passion Garlen.

Mera-a-a-arg *n.* The Passion Astendar.

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*."

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.

ujnort *n.* Non-orks; literally, "they who will not understand."

vravraka *n.* The dream of a pregnant woman in which the unborn child specifies the details of his own Naming ritual.

TROLLS

The special rules for trolls offer guidelines for creating and using piecemeal armor, troll attitudes toward Karma rituals, and a glossary of the troll language.

Creating Piecemeal Armor

If such a thing is available and they choose to do so, adventurers wear complete suits of armor. If obtaining a complete set of armor becomes difficult, as is often the case for Barsaive's trolls, a character may make do by combining bits and pieces of different types of armor into a whole suit. Suits constructed in such a way are commonly referred to as piecemeal armor. The following rules

govern the creation, properties, and use of piecemeal armor. Though only trolls usually wear such gear, characters of any race may use piecemeal armor with the gamemaster's approval.

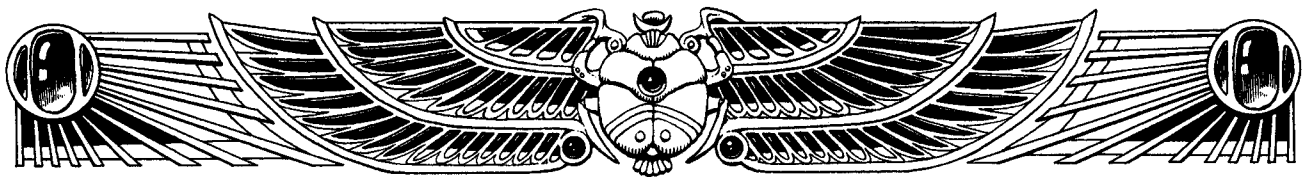
Note that individual pieces of living crystal, obsidian skin, and blood pebble armor cannot be combined under any circumstances with other types of armor; the nature of such armor makes it impossible to use effectively in pieces.

When combining different types of armor into a piecemeal suit, players must account for the size, Armor Ratings, Initiative penalties, and the cost of purchasing armor pieces. Rules for each of these factors appear below.

Armor Size and Points: Each piece of armor that can make up a piecemeal suit must be designated as large, medium, or small. These three sizes represent the portion of the wearer's body that the piece of armor covers. Large pieces, such as a breastplate or full leggings, cover at least half of the body. Medium pieces cover less than half of the body. Small pieces, such as shoulder guards, forearm guards, and helms, cover less than one fifth of the body.

Each piece of armor used to create a piecemeal suit is worth a certain number of Armor Points. These points serve only to limit the possible combinations of armor in a





piecemeal suit, and have no relationship to Armor Ratings. Each large piece of armor is worth 3 Armor Points, each medium piece of armor is worth 2 Armor Points, and each small piece of armor is worth 1 Armor Point. The total Armor Points of a given piecemeal suit must not exceed 5; within that limitation, a character can combine different types and sizes of armor in any way he wishes. For example, a character can combine 1 large piece of armor with 1 medium piece of armor or 2 small pieces of armor.

Players need not use all 5 Armor Points when creating piecemeal armor. In fact, piecing together less than the full complement of armor may allow the character to avoid the most severe Initiative penalties for combining different armors (see below).

A single set of piecemeal armor can never contain more than two pieces of the same type of armor. Note, however, that 2 small pieces of any type of armor count as 1 medium piece of the same type, and 1 medium plus 1 small piece of the same type of armor together count as 1 large piece of that type. For example, 2 small pieces of chain mail count as 1 medium piece; a medium piece of chain mail plus a small piece count as 1 large piece of chain mail.

These rules assume that characters choose pieces of armor of the appropriate size for their race to create a piecemeal suit. A large piece of troll-sized armor, for example, is far too large for most other races to use; likewise, only a windling can feasibly wear a small piece of windling-sized armor. To determine the weight and cost of armor for windlings and trolls, use the rules on p. 254 of the *Earthdawn* rulebook, but use the costs listed in the Piecemeal Armor Price Table, p. 124, as the base cost.



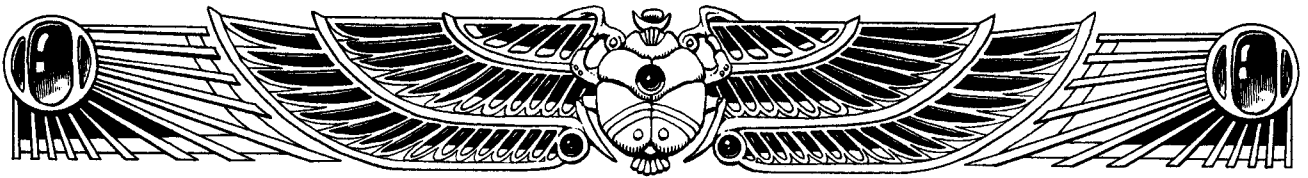
Bryan is creating a troll character from the highlands and wants his troll to have a set of piecemeal armor. He decides to combine three pieces: a large piece of ring mail and two others. A large piece of armor is worth 3 Armor Points, so Bryan can only add on 2 additional small pieces or 1 medium piece. He chooses 1 small piece of hardened leather armor and 1 small piece of padded leather armor, for a total of 5 Armor Points.

ARMOR RATINGS TABLE

Armor Type	Small	Medium	Large
Chain Mail	2/0	3/0	3/0
Crystal Plate	2/1	2/1	3/2
Crystal Ringlet	1/1	1/1	2/1
Fernweave	1/0	1/1	1/1
Hardened Leather	1/0	1/0	2/0
Hide	1/0	1/0	2/1
Leather	1/0	1/0	1/0
Padded Cloth	1/0	1/0	1/0
Padded Leather	1/0	1/0	2/0
Plate Mail	2/0	3/0	4/0
Ring Mail	2/0	2/0	3/0

Armor Ratings: Most suits of armor are built to be worn as a whole rather than divided into many smaller pieces. Therefore, using most types of armor in piecemeal fashion significantly decreases their effectiveness, particularly the protection represented by the Mystic Armor Rating. The Armor Ratings Table lists the Physical and Mystic Armor Ratings for small, medium, and large pieces of each type of armor. In each column, the number to the left of the slash represents the Physical Armor Rating for each piece, and the number to the right of the slash represents the Mystic Armor Rating. Once a character has created his piecemeal suit, add together the ratings for each piece to determine the suit's total Physical and Mystic Armor Ratings. Players and gamemasters should note that characters wearing piecemeal armor may use shields according to the normal rules.





Bryan creates a suit of piecemeal armor for his troll character using a large piece of ring mail, a small piece of hardened leather, and a small piece of padded leather. Consulting the Armor Ratings Table, he sees that the large piece has a Physical Armor Rating of 3 and a Mystic Armor Rating of 0; the 2 small pieces have Physical Armor Ratings of 1 and Mystic Armor Ratings of 0. Therefore, the total ratings for this suit of armor are Physical Armor 5 and Mystic Armor 0.

INITIATIVE PENALTY MODIFIER TABLE

Armor Type	Small	Medium	Large
Chain Mail	1	2	2
Crystal Plate	2	3	4
Crystal Ringlet	0	1	2
Fernweave	0	0	0
Hardened Leather	0	0	1
Hide	0	0	1
Leather	0	0	1
Padded Cloth	0	0	1
Padded Leather	0	0	1
Plate Mail	1	2	3
Ring Mail	0	1	2

Initiative Penalties: Like standard armor, piecemeal suits often restrict the wearer by their weight or by inhibiting the wearer's flexibility. The Initiative Penalty Modifier Table reflects such restrictions applicable to the various sizes and types of armor pieces available. As with Armor Ratings, add together the modifiers for each piece to determine the total Initiative penalty for any suit of piecemeal armor.

After choosing the different types and sizes of armor for his piecemeal suit, Bryan must determine his armor's total Initiative penalty. According to the Initiative Penalty Modifier Table, a large piece of ring mail has a modifier of 2, while the 2 small pieces each have modifiers of 0. This gives Bryan's suit of armor a total Initiative penalty of 2.

Purchasing Armor Pieces: If a character cannot acquire the various pieces of armor for a piecemeal suit by removing armor from dead opponents or finding it in kaers or citadels (the way most highland trolls acquire their armor), he or she must purchase individual armor pieces. Because most makers and sellers of armor prefer to sell whole suits rather than separate pieces, buying

PIECEMEAL ARMOR PRICE TABLE

Armor Type	Small	Medium	Large
Chain Mail	30	60	90
Crystal Plate	2,000	4,000	6,000
Crystal Ringlet	85	165	250
Fernweave	20	42	65
Hardened Leather	7	15	20
Hide	10	18	25
Leather	2	3	5
Padded Cloth	40 cp	70 cp	1
Padded Leather	4	7	10
Plate Mail	500	1,000	1,500
Ring Mail	20	40	55

armor bit by bit is an uncommon practice. To reflect this fact, individual pieces of armor are considered Unusual with regard to Availability (see pp. 248–250, ED).

If players want their characters to begin the game with a suit of piecemeal armor, they must pay the costs listed on the Piecemeal Armor Price Table from their starting funds (120 silver pieces). Characters may only create piecemeal armor suits before beginning play with gamemaster approval.

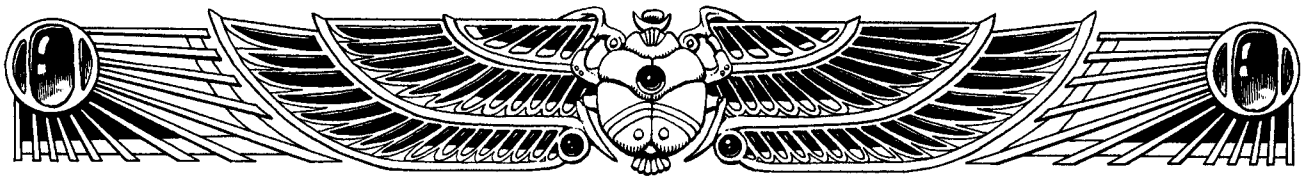
Unless otherwise noted, prices are in silver pieces.

Bryan determines the cost of his armor by consulting the Piecemeal Armor Price Table. The large piece of ring mail costs 55 silver pieces, the small piece of padded leather armor costs 4 silver pieces, and the small piece of hardened leather armor costs 7 silver pieces, for a total cost of 66 silver pieces.

Trolls and 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 adept's ritual, he will do everything in his power to avoid performing the ritual in front of someone else. Other races 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.





Glossary of Troll Language

The following glossary includes troll words and phrases with which the wise traveler should become familiar.

adj. = adjective
 adv. = adverb
 conj. = conjunction
 (for) = formal
 (inf) = informal
 (ins) = insulting
 interj. = interjection
 mod. = modifier
 n. = noun
 prep. = preposition
 v. = verb

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!")

ago'al *n.* Obsidiman. Literally "rock brother."

alheim *n.* Moothome. Literally "brother home."

altrua'agoral *n.* Trollmoot. Literally "clan of the people of one mountain."

da'a'ka'uli *n.* Outcast. Literally "one who has no honor."

De'abor abora *interj.* "While we live, let us live!"

dom'an *n.* The privacy within.

druv'a *n.* Boast; literally "claims of honor."

Era'ka *n.* The Severance, a formal ritual through which a troll is cast out of his clan.

er'ka'a'kul *n.* The name by which an outcast calls himself. Literally "one who has sacrificed for honor."

ga'ar *n.* Kaer. Often applied to any troll settlement.

ga'il *interj.* Positive or approving expression, equivalent to "Well done!" or "Excellent!" Literally "of the rock!", meaning something as solid and noble as rock.

g'ral *n.* Clan.

g'ralnakh *n.* Family.

g'tarr *n.* Literally "the Holding," a Naming ritual.

jar'arak *n.* An important troll ideal embodying elements of spirituality, religion, art, and philosophy.

katera *n.* Racial honor.

katorr *n.* Personal honor.

kat'ral *n.* Clan honor.

kava *n.* (ins.) Outcast. Literally "mud."

kera'astol *n.* Berserker; also a searcher for truth.

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 Name-giver race.

norr *n.* Epic tale that recounts events of great importance to the history of the world and/or the troll race. Literally "tapestry."

ro'ona *n.* A troll who has reached the Age of Passage but not yet undergone the associated rite. Translates roughly as "candidate."

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.* Troll farewell. Literally "We part."

trolthelia *n.* Skin deposits common to trolls that give their faces and bodies a rough or bumpy appearance.

tro'o'astia *n.* Crystal raider.

trua'a'ul *n.* Name of the troll race. Literally, "the Dual People."

trua'a'uli *n.* A troll. Literally "of the Dual People."

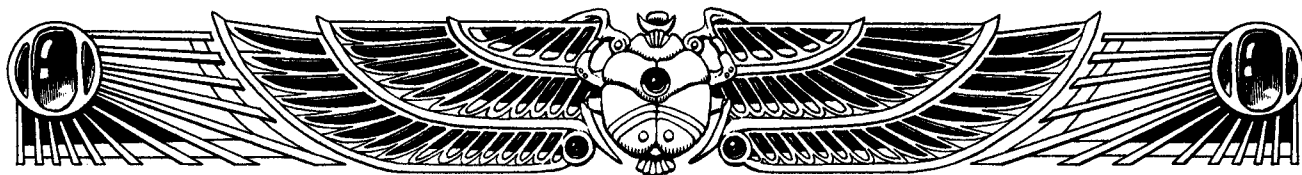
trua'g'ral *n.* Clan moot.

Va! *interj.* Multipurpose interjection and expletive, literally meaning "Mud!"

va'a'uli *n.* (ins) Member of another Name-giver race. Literally "of the mud people."

Vod'arr! *interj.* Troll greeting. Literally "I see you."





INDEX

You call this index complete?! I can't even find an entry for quaalz!

Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, addressing his new apprentice

A

Adulthood, dwarfs, 17
Advice giving, 16–17
Age of Passage, 84–85
Airship raids, 78, 80
Alheims, 77
Architecture
 dwarf, 8
 orks, 68
Armor
 initiative penalties, 124
 orks, 68
 piecemeal, 122
 purchasing, 124
 ratings, 123–24
 size and points, 122–23
 troll, 91–92
Arts
 dwarf, 7–9, 17
 obsidiman, 41–42
 orks, 67
 troll, 90–91
Astendar, 47, 54, 65
Awakening, 30, 31, 34–36

B

Banishment, 77
Bartertown, 14, 16, 23–25, 39,
 55, 72
Bequests, 86
Bethabel city, 6
Birth
 of dwarfs, 17–18
 of obsidimen, 32–34
 of orks, 61
 of trolls, 33–34, 82–83
Birthdays, 17–18
Birthing chamber, 93
Blood magic, 120
Bloodstroke, Earal, 72
Blork, 66
Boasting
 human, 95
 troll, 95–96

Body control, 114
Bonesnapper of Kratas, 20
Book of Tomorrow, 12, 14, 19–20
Briaaggon the Braggart, 39
Brotherhood, 23, 26, 28, 29
 awakening, 34–36
 Elders of, 28, 31, 33–36, 38,
 120
 Eldest, 38
 family nature of, 30–31
 loyalty to, 32
 nature of bond, 30–31
 sending custom, 55
Building
 by dwarfs, 7–9
 by orks, 62, 66, 68
 by trolls, 92–93
Burntclaw clan, 71

C

Calydon Village, 81
Cashelne Town, 55, 56
Caucavik Mountains, 46–47
Cavalryman, orks as, 62
Chorrolis, 49, 65–66, 119
Citadels
 obsidimen, 37
 Throalic language, 20
City in the Clouds, 39–40
City orks, 64
Claiming, 84
Clans, 83
Copperfist fable, 15–16
Corrupted Ones, 65
Council Compact, 20
Council of Four, 36, 39–41
Courtship, trolls, 85–86
Craftsman
 dwarf, 7–9, 17
 obsidiman, 42–45
 ork, 67
 troll, 91–93
Cramna Village, 12
Creation

 obsidiman, 29–30
 troll, 87–88
Crystal raiders, 78, 80, 91, 92
Culture
 dwarf, 17–22
 obsidiman, 39–45
 troll, 86–93
Customs
 dwarf, 6–9
 obsidiman, 54–57
 troll, 93–97

D

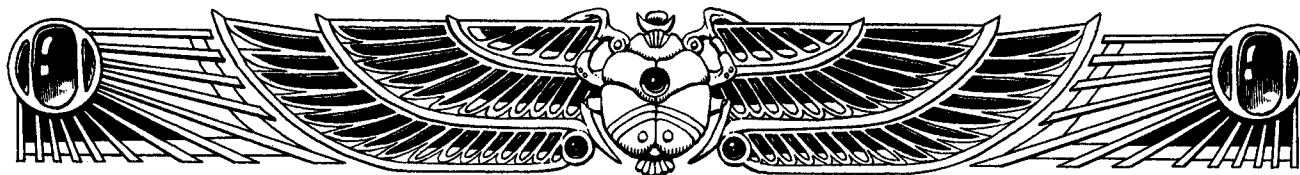
Death
 dwarf ritual, 18
 obsidiman ritual, 37–38
 ork view of, 60–61
 troll ritual, 86
Dis, 65–66, 119
Disciplines
 dwarf, 19, 105
 liberator, 59, 65, 106–7
 obsidiman, 51, 53, 105
 ork, 68, 105
 outcast warrior, 108–9
 purifier, 110–11
 traveled scholar, 22,
 112–13
 troll, 105
Domasae, 23–24, 45, 48,
 50–51, 54
Dragons, 23
Drakkars, 78, 80
Draoglin Plague, 12
Dreaming, 23
 Council of Four, 39–41
 Name-giver witness to, 56
 obsidiman, 36–38
 ork, 61
Dress
 of dwarfs, 8
 of orks, 67–68
 of trolls, 91
Drinking

 obsidiman, 96
 ork, 70
 troll, 95–96
Druv'a, 95
Dwalithi Tribe, 11
Dwarfs, 28
 advice and, 16–17
 architecture and, 8
 arts and crafts of, 7–9
 building by, 7, 9, 49, 93
 burial of, 25
 business and, 8
 culture of, 17–22
 Disciplines of, 22, 105
 dress of, 8
 earthen affinity of, 8, 19
 excavation and, 93
 fables and, 15–17, 21–22
 family and, 6, 9–10
 hospitality of, 16–17
 intermarriages and, 11
 khavro'am, 21–22
 language of, 19–20
 laws of, 19–20
 leadership qualities of, 14
 loyalty among, 9–14
 ork view of, 69
 questors, 119
 roleplaying hints, 100–1
 special rules, 119
 Therans and, 11, 19–20
 tool making, 7
 trade network of, 9
 tradition and, 10
 troll view of, 97
 weapons by, 9
 writing by, 47–48

E

Earthdawn (ship), 14, 88
Earthen affinity
 dwarf's, 8, 19
 obsidiman's, 28
 troll's, 96





Elder brothers, 17
Elven Court (at Wyrms Wood), 32

Elves
forest souls of, 49
lifespan of, 27
manners of, 16
ork view of, 69
troll view of, 97
Emergence, 23, 33, 37–38
Era'ka, 77
Escape divination, 114

F

False shackles, 114
Family
dwarf, 9–10
obsidiman, 30
ork, 69
troll, 85–86, 89
Fenn, Daron, 23
First Merging, 33–34, 36, 39
Floranuus, 54, 66, 74
Food, ork, 70
Freedom
orks and, 59
search for, 115
Free mind, 114–15

G

Gahad, 64–65, 70, 121
Garlen, 66, 74
Gathering, 120–21
ritual, 55–56
tree, 57
Gawan Village, 25
Gendellius' letters, 43–45
Glistening Orb Inn, 23
Glossary
ork, 121–22
troll, 125
Grallan Field Battle, 59
Grandparent, dwarf, 10, 19
Granitebone clan, 95
Great Dragons, 23
Great Library of Throal, 6, 9, 14, 20, 22, 23
Great Liferock, 29–30, 39, 40
Great Uprising, 59, 66
Greetings
dwarf, 94
troll, 94–95
windling, 94
Gron, Hrak, 59, 65, 66, 69, 106

H

Harmony, 41–42
Heal slave, 115
Heart of freedom, 116
Heart of rebellion, 116
Highland trolls, 75–80, 92
Hoard blows, 116

Holding, 84
Homes
dwarf, 8–9
obsidiman, 56–57
troll, 92–93
Honor, 72–73, 75–77
Horkla, 26
Horns, troll, 94
Horrors
arrival of, 74
dwarfs and, 8
flying, 28
illusions of, 47
obsidimen and, 27
Scourge, 8, 10, 11, 36–37
Scythia, 12
touch of, 31, 32
trolls and, 90
Huari, 11
Huata bird, 19
Humans, 17
dwarf interaction with, 16
lost ones, 49
orks view of, 70
trolls view of, 97

I

Imperial period, 19
Impossible hide, 117
Intermarriages, kaers and, 11
Iopos, 14

J

Jar'arak, 73–74, 81–82, 93, 94
Jarrikos, Elder, 28–29
Jaspree, 66, 74, 119

K

Kaer
dwarf, 10–12
obsidiman, 37
ork building, 62
Throalic language and, 20
troll and, 75, 93
Kaisthi Tribe, 11
Kalithi Tribe, 11
Katera, 73, 75, 81, 87, 95
Katorr, 73, 75, 76, 81, 93, 95
Kat'ral, 73, 75, 81, 95
Kham Bulh Village, 29
Kharma Ritual, 124
Khavro'am, 21–22, 38
Killea city-state, 11–12
King Cardok, 12, 14
Kingdom loyalty, dwarf, 12, 14
King Ragnar, 12
King Varulus I, 11, 14, 19–20
King Varulus II, 19, 20
King Varulus III, 12, 19
Kon, 40
Kratas, 14, 31
K'rzon city-state, 11–12

L

Landis Kingdom, 6
Lan'ar, 75–76
Language
dwarf, 19–20
obsidiman, 45–48
ork, 65–66, 121–22
troll, 125
Law
of dwarfs, 19–20
Throalic development of, 20
Letters, obsidimen, 43–45
Liberator, 59, 65, 106–7
Library of Throal, 6, 9, 14, 20, 22, 23
Liferock, 23, 25–31, 96
awakening, 35–36
Brotherhood elders and, 31
dreaming without, 36–37
emergence, 33–34
Great, 29–30, 39, 40
loyalty to, 120
names, patterns of, 33
obsidimen homes, 56–57
return to, 37–38
Scourge and, 37
sending custom, 55
significance of, 31–33
Lifestones, 56–57
Line marriage, 85–86, 89
Literature
of dwarfs, 20
of obsidimen, 43–45
Lochostr, 66, 74, 119
Longfang, Alih'ar, 89–90
Longfang, Vaare, 88, 89–90
Love, ork, 69
Lowland trolls, 80–82
Loyalty, dwarf, 9–14

M

Mad Passions, 54, 65, 66, 74, 119
Magic
obsidiman, 51, 53
Scourge, 19
Marriage
line, 85–86, 89
ork, 69
troll, 85–86
Menach'me, 72
Merris, Juliak, 28–29
Metal Fist Tribe, 65
Mind armor, 117
Mind blade, 117
Mishwai, 11
Moot, 77
Moothome, 77
Mount Mar'ak, 71
Mynbruje, 66, 119

Myths

dwarf, 15–16, 21–22
First Obsidiman, 49–50
obsidiman, 39–45
troll, 87

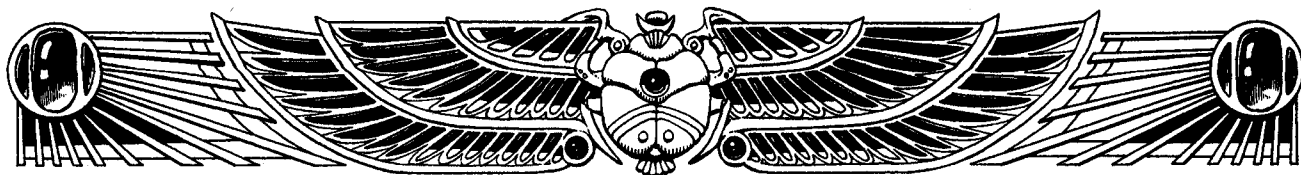
N

Name Day, 61
Name, obsidiman, 35
Name-givers
Barsaive, 14
dwarf view of, 12, 14, 16
obsidiman view of, 28–29
Therans and, 11
Naming
dwarf, 10, 17–19
elder brother, 17
troll, 83–84
National loyalty, dwarf, 11–11
Neden, 19
Nioku, 88–89
Norr, 88
Nudity, 93–94

O

Obsidimen, 23–24
adornments of, 45
appearance, physical nature of, 25–26
arts and crafts, 41–45
awakening, 34–36
Brotherhood of, 30–31
culture of, 39–45
customs of, 29, 54–57
death of, 37–38
Disciplines of, 51, 53, 105
dreaming, 36–37
emergence, 33–34
feelings, behavior of, 26–27, 48–54
first encounter with, 24–25
gatherings tree, 55–57
gender of, 26
homes of, 56–57
language of, 45–48
Liferock of, 31–33, 37–38
lifespan of, 27
myths of, 39–45
nature of, 25–28
orks view of, 70
Passions and, 54
promises by, 28
questors, 119
roleplaying hints, 101–2
Scourge, 49–50
special rules, 119–21
Thera and, 53–54
trolls view of, 86, 96
water sharing, 57
Omasu, 30, 36, 37, 48
Omeyras, 26, 31, 39, 40, 45, 46, 55, 56





Orichalcum Wars, 78, 85
Orks, 17, 28, 58–59
 birth of, 61
 customs of, 49, 67–70
 family and, 69
 food and drink of, 70
 freedom and, 59
 language of, 65–66,
 121–22
 Liferock ridiculing, 28
 lifespan of, 27
 living, dying well, 60–61
 nature of, 58–59
 passionate nature of,
 64–65
 passions and, 65–67
 questors, 119
 rebellion and change,
 61–62
 roleplaying hints, 102–23
 special rules, 121
 Terath's Chargers, 72
 three ways of, 62, 64
 trolls view of, 96
 view of others, 69–70
 women's superiority in,
 69
Outcast Warrior, 108–9

P

Parlainth, 23, 47
Parlainth, Golden Wheel of,
 58
Passions, 7–9, 12, 40
 dwarfs and, 8, 9
 obsidimen and, 54
 orks and, 65–67
 questors of, 119
 trolls and, 74
Perth windling, 24
Pictograph, 48, 56
Plague, Draoglin, 12
Power mask, 117–18
Pride, troll, 73
Prison call, 118
Privacy
 obsidiman, 55–57, 92,
 120–21
 troll, 92–94
Purifier, 53, 110–11

R

Raggok, 54, 66, 74
Raider, ork, 62
Rebellion, 61–62
Return, 37–38
Rite of Challenge, 78, 93
Rite of Passage, 84–85
Rites of Protection and
 Passage, 37

Ritual

 of atonement, 106, 118
 awakening, 34–36
 dwarf, 17–19
 emergence, 33–34, 37–38
 gathering, 55–56
 naming, 61
 return to Liferock, 37–38
 sending, 55
 of Severance, 94

Ro'ona, 84
Rossel Village, 15–16
Royal Academy of Wyrn
 Wood, 41

S

Scholars, dwarf, 21–22
Scourge
 before, 51, 77, 78, 85
 Book of Tomorrow, 19
 dwarfs and, 8, 10–11, 14,
 17–18, 97
 law and government after, 9
 obsidimen and, 36–37
 ork view of, 61
 tale of Ryuth, Triann, and
 Skarth, 31
 Therans and, 6, 20
 trolls and, 75, 93, 97
Scythia Keor, 12, 14
Scythia Kingdom, 8
 downfall of, 11–12
 dwarf bequeathal in, 18
 dwarf children's plague in,
 17–18
 language of, 19
 Throalic law and, 20

Se'alla, 88
Self-Dreaming, 32
Sending ritual, 55
Serpent River, 47, 49, 72
Severance ritual, 77
Shackle shrug, 118–19
Shout of justice, 119
Skarth, 31
Sky Point Battle, 80, 88
Skytoucher Mountain, 88–89
Solitude, 93
Speaking Stick, 89
Spirit of All Things, 87–88
Spirit-That-Pervades-All, 29–30,
 39, 40, 54

Spirituality
 of obsidimen, 29–30, 39, 40,
 54
 of trolls, 72, 73–74
Storytelling
 dwarf, 15–16, 21–22
 obsidiman, 31
 troll, 81, 88–90
Summer house, dwarfs and, 10

T

Talents, 114–19
Temple of the Air, 40
Temple of Fire, 40–41
Temple of the Waters, 41
Terath's Chargers, 72
Thera, 11, 12, 19–20
 magicians of, 89
 obsidimen and, 53–54
Theran Empire, 11, 14, 78
 arrival of, 89
 Conclave, 23
 dwarf loyalties and, 11
 Navy, 12
 Rites of Protection and
 Passage, 37
 Scourge and, 14, 19, 20
 Sky Point Battle and, 80
 tale of, 88–89
Three Ways, 62, 64
Throal, Kingdom of, 6, 8, 9, 72
 dwarf allegiance to, 12, 14
 gates of, 46
 Great Library of, 6, 9, 14,
 20, 22, 23
 justice in, 14
 Keeper of Hall of
 Records, 5, 14
 language of, 19–20, 46
 law of, 20
 Royal Family of, 11
 unity of, 19–20
Throal Mountains, 11
Thundra beast, 24
Thystonius, 9, 12, 66, 74, 78,
 80, 83, 89, 94, 97, 119
Time, obsidimen on, 45–46
Tool making
 dwarf, 7
 troll, 92
Torko's letters, 43–44
Trade network, 9
Tradition, dwarf, 10
Travar City, 28–29, 30, 37, 55
Traveled scholar, 22, 75–77,
 112–13
Tribal loyalty, dwarf, 10–11
Trolls, 17
 age of passage, 84–85
 arts and crafts, 90–91
 culture of, 86–93
 customs of, 93–97
 death and, 86
 Disciplines for, 105
 dual nature of, 72–74
 emergence of, 33–34
 highland, 75–80
 honor and, 72–73
 Kharma rituals, 124
 language of, 125
 lowland, 80–82
 manners of, 93–97

 marriage of, 85–86
 naming and, 83–84
 nature and ways of, 71
 obsidimen views on, 70
 outcasts, 77
 Passions and, 74
 physical characteristics of,
 82
 questors, 119
 rituals of life, 82–86
 rock brothers, 49, 50
 roleplaying hints, 103
 special rules, 122–25
 society of, 74–82
 spirituality, 72, 73–74
 tales of, 88–90
 views on others, 96–97
Trollmoot, 74–75, 77–78
T'skrang, 24, 50–51
 honor of, 75
 manners of, 16
 orks view of, 70
 river souls, 49
 trolls view of, 97
Turgma, 65–66
Twilight Peaks, 71, 74, 78, 88

U

Universe
 Name-givers in, 27
 puzzle of, 29
Upandal, 7, 66, 119
Urupa, 24, 26, 31, 39, 40, 45,
 56

V

Valley of Elders, 36, 39–41
Vestrial, 67

W–Y

Warriors, dwarf-made
 weapons and, 9
Wastes, 24
Water sharing, 57
Weapons
 of dwarfs, 9
 of orks, 68
 of t'skrang, 92
 of trolls, 91–92
Wellspring, Morwen, 25
Windlings, 28, 50–51
 orks views of, 70
 trolls view of, 96
 wind spirits, 49
Wyrn Wood, 72
 Royal Academy of, 41
Ysdragyl, 19–20





THE NAME GIVERS.

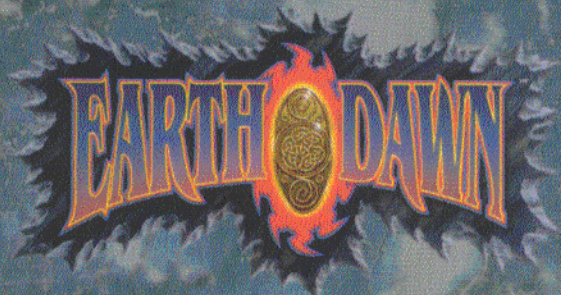
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