

EARTHDAWN[®]

THE WAY OF WAR



MAKERS OF LEGEND VOLUME ONE



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ON THE COMPILATION OF THE MAKERS OF LEGEND	4
Archers	5
The Beautiful Arc of Archery	6
An Urban Bowman	8
The Eyes of an Archer	11
The Pinnacle of Name-giver Achievement	14
Cavalrymen	16
Becoming Familiar With the Saddle	17
To Ride Many Steeds	20
Riding the Skies	21
On the Solitary Outrider	24
Sky Raiders	28
Dare to Be a Bold Sky Raider	29
Against the Theran Dogs	31
On the Nature of the Sky Raider	35
The First Over the Side	37
Swordmasters	40
To Match Wood Against Steel	41
The Game of Swords	45
Quick of Steel and Tongue	47
One With the Blade	50
Warriors	52
A Life in Service of the Cause	53
To Walk the Path of Warriors	55
The Silent Way	57
The Peace Patrol	60
Zhan Shi	63
New Talent Knacks	69
Archer Talent Knacks	70
Cavalryman Talent Knacks	71
Sky Raider Talent Knacks	73
Swordmaster Talent Knacks	75
Warrior Talent Knacks	77
Zhan Shi Talent Knacks	79
Index	80

WAR OF WAR: MAKERS OF LEGEND VOLUME 1

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INTRODUCTION



ON THE COMPILATION OF THE MAKERS OF LEGEND

King Varulus the Third is often quoted as saying, "The Heroes of Today are the Legends of Tomorrow," and none are greater Heroes in Barsaive than Adepts. While the Great Library has sought to explore what it means to be an Adept and the nature of the Adept's Way, it did so primarily through the eyes of a single representative of any given Discipline. With these volumes, the Makers of Legend series, the Great Library will seek to expand on the understanding of the most common Disciplines in Barsaive, as well as give some insight to Disciplines that are prominent in other lands. We have sought to perform this task by interviewing a number of different Adepts from each Discipline, or in some cases had the transcript of a Discipline's training sent to us.

If but one thing is learned from this compilation, it should be this: while each Adept sees the world through the eyes of their Discipline, no two individual's opinions on what it means to be of a Discipline will be exactly the same. Each Adept experiences their talents in a different way. Not only do a Warrior and a Weaponsmith have a different insight when using their common talent with melee weapons, two Warriors will also have differing views on their talents—though their views will likely be far more similar than a comparison between those of Adepts of different Disciplines. So vast are the possible differences in individuals' interpretations of their Disciplines that one who studies the broadsword to the exclusion of all other weapons, and one who prefers to fight with staff, axe, or whatever other means of war they have at their disposal may both call themselves Swordmasters.

Although this series provides a variety of different viewpoints on what it means to be a particular type of Adept, it is by no means the final word on the issue. Indeed, it may only be little more than a prologue. Collected in these pages are the viewpoints of a handful of Adepts. But just as thousands of Adepts are in Barsaive, likewise there are thousands of opinions on what it means to follow a Discipline.

- Thom Edrull, 1513TH

CHAPTER 1 ARCHERS



THE BEAUTIFUL ARC OF ARCHERY

The subject of this entry was in need of some biographical reflection. Her many years of service and heroism have earned her words the right to be respected.

—Thom Edrull

FINDING MY ARC

The discovery of Adepthood takes different forms for each Name-giver. My path may be typical, or it may be unusual, depending on who you are and where you are from. Now, to me, it does seem inevitable. My life went from nearly aimless to extremely precise. From mysterious to clear, cutting through the distractions and confusion until I reached the target. I became an Archer.

THE PULL OF THE STRING

I discovered my talent for Archery through hunting. My birthplace, like many others, was not a city or major kaer, so we had to supply food for ourselves. My father made me a simple bow to use to help on the hunt when I was old enough. I learned quickly and was soon a better shot than my older brothers. One day, while out in distant woods, we encountered another hunter, or at least he appeared to be. There was something odd about him; his eyes seemed to see everything moving about him and his feet always moved him in the right direction.

He said his name was Gerron and he traveled across the region. We shared the hunt that day, and I sensed a kindred spirit, but could not explain why or how. We had never met before and his family was not from the area. Still, there was something about him I could not ignore. He never wandered or looked lost, even when we came to a crossroads or an obviously untraveled area.

It's most interesting that we're not told this Archer's Name. Edrull suggests she is a hero of the realm, but perhaps her deeds are those best left to the shadows.

—Neldrim of Vivane

THE AIM

The next season, Gerron and I met again. I was alone this time, having a strange urge to track some difficult prey across some rough terrain, both for the challenge and to get away from the village for a time. I came upon him, or he came upon me, at a crossroads where I had lost the trail.

We talked. He had also felt a need to go out and find something, but he was not sure what. Now, I know he was lying, at least in part. Now, I know he was there to find me, but at the time I could not see that. We Archers are rare liars. False words do not have good arcs.

While Archers may be straightforward, don't think they never lie. Ask anyone who's dealt with Collin Blackarrow.

—Bemetra Hempa

We spent the day talking and searching. Somewhere along our journey he asked me to take a shot at a small bird on a far off branch. When I asked him why I should waste an arrow on such a task, he nodded and answered that he simply wanted to see if I had

gotten any better since the last time he had seen me. Sensing my objection, or perhaps never intending for me to shoot an innocent bird, he selected an abandoned nest on another tree.

My youth and pride perhaps got the better of me then, so I took the shot, my arrow cutting the small nest in half and sailing on to the next tree. He nodded and said "Good Shot." I then wanted him to make a difficult shot. I picked out a dangling leaf from the end of a distant branch. Perhaps he was just humoring me, but he calmly aimed and made the shot, the arrow piercing the leaf, taking it off the branch, both flying on for several more yards until it struck the ground.

Then something quite extraordinary happened. I complimented Gerron on his shot, and he smiled, snapped his fingers, and the arrow flew back to him! I'd never seen that before. When I asked him how he did that, he simply said he was an Archer. I knew then that I wished to be an Archer as well.

THE RELEASE, THE SHOT

I spent the next year with him, in a blur of training: thinking, meditating, traveling, and even occasionally, some shooting. That may sound odd, but Gerron was a methodical teacher and did not see much point in having his apprentice loose an arrow into the air if she did not know exactly what she was doing. Judging by some of the bowmen I see out in the world, I wish there were more like Gerron teaching.

Low key and arrogant. Quite a combination.

—Pertoria Block

We worked in the mountains, forests, fields, cities, and towns. I was alone at times and with him at others. The pursuit of a target was as important as the shot. The terrain itself could be an obstacle to arc over or around. An Archer must be able to find his mark anywhere.

Gerron showed me many things: how to see, how to run, how to track, how to move, how to make and care for a bow and crossbow, how to aim, how to see the true target, and how to make every shot count.

And I do mean show, for that is how he taught. I had to become aware of the path to excellence for each of these. I had his guidance of course, but we each must show that we are worthy of our tools and training. I had to reason and discover the answers to his questions myself; he helped little at first and even less as time went on. Our path finds us as much as we find it. Gerron was able to help unlock the knowledge and wisdom of the Way of Archery in me, and, in turn, I was able to connect to the Way. He set me on the arc but I had to ride it to the end.

The way she speaks of Gerron, I wonder if he was more than just a mentor.

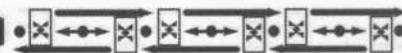
—Berabus T'lon

He used to say, "Aim with your eye, aim with your hand, and aim with your heart, and you will never miss."

Her last words are Truth, no matter the delivery.

—Jarren Swiftwind





THE DIRECT AND CURVING WAY

Oaken Aveldel, the esteemed writer from the previous edition of this volume, talked often of Archers moving in the straight line, from shooter to target. While I have the utmost respect for him and have no doubt that his story will be told by my grandchildren, it is not the only view, or even the most correct one.

Well, our author seems a condescending lass, or this Gerron he speaks of strung her ego too tight.

—Kelperia of Iopos

CONCERNING ARCS

As an Archer, I see the world through arcs. The world itself is laid on a curve, and so is our path. The world is made of arcs. The world is an arc. If I were walking through the woods and a tree were right in front of me, I would not try to go through it, but turn my course to go around it. Such is the case in all things.

When hunting prey or approaching an enemy, following directly can cause them to flee faster or notice your pursuit too soon, which can ruin your chance at a shot completely. The arc is the path of life, of any task or pursuit. It has a beginning, builds, reaches a climax, and then falls to conclusion. This is true of an arrow in flight, the history of kingdoms, of love, of the plot of a fine story, and even of our own lives.

Lines are at rest. Arcs are alive and moving. Lines are simple; they have a beginning and an end, go from start to finish, are easy to move along, and are low and quiet. But they have no depth. We need the pull of life to give a line shape, to create our arc. The bow itself is constructed as an arc, not a line. The straight line of the string only exists at rest, when the bow is not used, when there is no target, when there is no conflict or challenge. Even the string of the bow bends with an arrow drawn. The arc of the bow becomes more pronounced, to match the path of our arrows.

If a problem cannot be solved, do not head straight into it. That will only lead to failure and frustration. Unsolvable problems must be worked around. Sometimes the best tactic against resistance is to simply go around it, in an arc, not a line.

The arc is beautiful. The arc is the path. The arc is life.

THE GLORY OF PURSUIT

The pursuit is a "special" arc. It is a journey, a hunt, a discovery. It is the path to our goal, the road to our glory. It may be our mission, our ambition, our revenge, or our salvation. These are targets.

If you are not pursuing something, then you are standing still. Perhaps not literally, but metaphorically. Our lives advance with our pursuits. We pursue a sense of discovery, by climbing over the next hill or becoming an apprentice. We pursue our dinner with the hunt. We pursue our enemies on the battlefield; we pursue their death and help them find their way to the afterlife, just as they would do for us. We pursue the truth with questions and deductions. We pursue a lover with sweet words and gentle deeds.

I have pursued many things in my life. I pursue the glory of my lord by pursuing his enemies. My victory is his victory. His targets travel their arcs to become my targets. My mission and my duty become my arcs. I see them through to the end. My arc is defending my home, standing watch for enemies only I can see, assuring that



their arcs do not cross my nation's path in a harmful way. If they do, my duty is to move their arc away or end it.

All arcs intersect. If yours and mine met, it might result in your death, my death, this interview, our traveling together, a new friendship, a conflict, or a resolution.

CONCERNING TARGETS

We should thank our targets, for without them we would not have reason to ready our weapon or give chase. An Archer without something to aim at or for is like a pen without paper on which to write. Targets complete arcs, give them meaning. The sound of an arrow hitting its mark is the final note of the song of its flight.

A target need not be an opponent. When I call an arrow back to me, I am the target of the arrow's path. When I am hunting game, the prey's den is my target. A lost item is the target of a search. When I question a criminal, his plans or the identity of his master is my target.

We should all see our lives as a series of targets and arcs to those targets. It is really quite simple, yet so many choose to fight it. Even the abstract may be targets. The Name of a familiar yet forgotten face in a crowd is the target of many a well-traveled Adept. The answer to a riddle may be the target of one's thoughts. The emotions in a fine poem are the target of both its composer and its reader.

This flow from source to target forms the arcs of our lives. As you have no doubt realized, these flows are not always straight lines. The placing of a Name to a face, for example, often travels a rather circuitous route through our memories before landing on the matching words. A poem takes our hearts on a ride past many stops—regret, joy, sadness—before reaching its conclusion of hate, sympathy, love, or remorse.

Many people say Archers see the world as being full of shooters and targets. That is true, but most do not understand what that means.



BEING AN ARCHER

Being an Archer requires strength and love. It is a path of patience and determination. It may be a lonely arc, but we all must travel alone at the core and in the end.

I can see above the crowd. My target becomes visible in the sea of faces or trees or beasts. Perception is key. Knowing our charge, our mission, and our goal. Doubt is an Archer's true enemy. We cut through confusion, find the light in the dark, cut through illusions and distractions.

Clarity of purpose is what an Archer brings to a party of heroic Adepts or to a mission against an enemy. Warriors understand the need to be free of distractions and misplaced sentiment, though not all. An Archer sees the connections, knows the solution to the problem, and sees the path to the end. An Archer will give a precise order to his troops, with a set target and plan of attack. An Archer will follow an order with precision and determination and will often find a more suitable means to complete the task.

Do not take an Archer's roundabout path for aimlessness. Archers are never aimless. Here, too, there is an arc. Tomorrow is always a target. Do not stand in the way of our goals. We may go around you, or we may go through you, or we may make you our new target. Perhaps our intersecting arcs will only result in your new understanding, or perhaps your arc may end. Only the Passions and your choices will decide.

I know a specific example would help illuminate my words, but my course in life does prevent me from speaking too freely on such matters. Perhaps in the future I may tell more. I have spoken plainly and cannot help those who do not understand. For now, I leave you with this tale that may help.

A merchant prince traveled in the desert to deliver a rare spice to his favorite customer. Coming over a dune, he saw a beautiful oasis. It was away from his path, but the sun was bright that day, and he was hot and thirsty. He rushed to where it was, shimmering in the sun, only to come upon a place where the sun had melted the sand into glass. Now, exhausted, he risked death in the desert. Had he kept his pace toward the oasis, he might have spotted the illusion soon enough to continue on his course without risking misfortune. Or, if he had stayed on his course to start, he would have reached his destination or perhaps found other shelter from the scorching sun. The arc of illusion cut across the arc of his purposeful journey. He rushed in headlong and was now part of the arc of life in the desert, which is often short.

After reading this entry, I think this Archer may be Ashela Roben, who slew the Theran Captain Kallo Geshtros during the battle for Vivane, turning the battle on a key front. Interesting that Throal would allow such a voice for one of its assassins.

- Hilbert Hightower

I know this Gerron she speaks of. He had a female apprentice some 30 years ago who talked like this one. Her name was Pa'Bil, and she often spoke of arcs.

- Onyx Marblehead

You're all assuming they didn't change the gender to keep the Archer's identity hidden.

- Jinto

AN URBAN BOWMAN

The following words are of Tam Nansen, the Archer who organized The Test of The Arrow, an annual competition in Fallam. I humbly submit that they describe a vision of the Archer Discipline that is most certainly not out of place in the towns and cities of Barsaive.

—Maxes Roan, Troubadour, Historian for His Majesty's Exploratory Force

I had walked into the public house, and I knew right away it was going to be trouble. At least four other Archers were already in residence in the common room, and they all looked like roadweary idiots. Really, you come into town with an Elven Warbow, and you don't think you're going to stand out a little? Sure, if you're out killing espagra, it's great, but we have enough problems with the Swordmasters fighting over who's prettier and the Sky Raiders fighting over who can take the biggest hit. Can you imagine what a couple of drunken Archers, deciding that it's time for a flame arrow fight at the bar, looks like? And it's the same every year; they trickle in one or two at a time with their "adventuring" friends – little more than grave robbers half the time – and ready to fight about....

Sorry, I digress. You asked me how we handle everyone who comes in for the competition. It's easy. If this was one of those stupid books we get out of Bartertown every season—you know "The Grand Adventures of So-and-So,"—I guess I would have walked in, beat the snot out of the biggest one in the room, and made them a lesson. That's books for you. I just went up, and to no one in particular said, "Wow, I guess everyone has forgotten it's a 15-point deduction for having your bow out in public before the competition. Now where did I put my quill...."

Two minutes of fumbling in my belt pouches later, and everyone had taken their equipment up to their rooms. Now the worst I had to worry about was the sheriff riding me for whatever fights broke out. I could live with that.

That's something you got to remember about a bowman – we know not every problem has to be handled head-on. I don't mean to be preachy, but you asked and all. Sure, some things you gets to nock an arrow and pop at 10 feet away, but I've killed more idiots who thought they were safe "behind cover" who not once looked up and noticed how exposed they were. You take the roundabout method sometimes, but it gets you there.

One would hope that by now the readers of this tome have realized that quite often the arc to a target is not a straight line.

- Jeri Silvermane

What else... you wanted to know what I'm doing living in a city, right? No more than 30 yards of straight shooting in any direction, right? That's why I stay on the wall when there's trouble, or up in the tower. Sure, there's the risk from the occasional spellcaster, but I'm up and away from most of the grunts, and you shoot the spellcasters and Sky Raiders first. Passions above, there's nothing like being on the wall and having one of them land right next to you... half a breath later you're pointing an arrow at their eye and them close enough to read the maker's mark down the shaft. They're thinking, "I can take him... maybe...." and you're concentrating, hard as you can, making the magic work for you. Half those trolls you've got to shoot four or





five times to put down, but a good shot at close range...FOOSH! Head, hair, and horns covered in fire, shaft halfway in.... It's not pretty. I had to do that a lot more often when I was younger. You can't just sprint off the wall—usually you've only got 20 yards of platform at a stretch, tops, and there's three or four other guys up there with you, counting on you to stop your share of the bad guys.

My first master, he always trained with the foot guards... it was amazing, seeing the old man down in the courtyard drilling day-in, day-out. We probably didn't have five Adepts in the entire guard then, including me and the other trainees. The old man would be down there, drilling the non-Adepts in sword, and pike once a month, twice when he felt feisty. He knew that they didn't have the options we do... thank Floranuus for everything I've learned over the years. Never did get the old man's skill with a sword, but I've learned the lesson nonetheless: have something to fall back on. I'll never forget, one day I'm on town patrol and this damnfool Elementalist decides he's going to give Kerric the innkeeper guff about not paying his bill. No sooner do I walk up to him then he snaps my bowstring with some stupid lamplighting spell. Puff! Twang! And he thinks I'm helpless. Friggin' hard to concentrate on spells after I nailed the sleeves of his robe to the bar with a pair of throwing daggers. Idiot was lucky all he got was a week in the stocks...once he sobered up he was a decent sort. Speaking of sober, looks like my drink is running low...fetch me another one if you want to keep me talking....

Ahhh... ok, that's better. What else? You seemed amazed that, out here on the frontier, I don't do more "adventuring." There's a certain kind of folk who go out digging in the Badlands and looking for fights. They're the kind who don't have two grandchildren in the competition tomorrow morning. I've placed memorial markers for more than my fair share of friends who didn't come back from trips like that. I intend to at least leave a corpse for my boys to plant, not just a tale of how I managed to get everyone else out before I went down. When I was younger there was just too much to do. We cleared the area around the town to almost 10 miles...every cave, every gully, every field. If it could hurt us, we hunted it down and killed it. Made sure that we dissuaded every creature that we could from coming near the fields. Plenty of heroic tales figuring out what it was that we saw the night before but couldn't bring down. Sure, we could close the town walls and just wait, but that's a fool's game—you'll loose two or three good men

letting the things out there just come at you on their own terms. Plus you've got to cover the farmers, not everything waits until after nightfall to come a-callin'. You go out, find them, keep them at range, and pick them off when you can. Then it's go home, get a good mulled drink, and take a bath. That's half the reason I started this competition....

Huh, whaddayamean you don't get it? Okay, we get a good half dozen competent Archers in every year who have never been here before. Plus some dozen or so who are returning. Lots of good, strong young women around here looking for someone interesting. Heck, lots of strapping young men too; that's how we hooked Marta last year. Poor boy—one of Steven's sons, Philip I think—never

knew what hit him. Next thing he knows he's got a wife, and I've got a new corporal in the guard. She reminds me of me when I was young; she likes to keep her head low and knows the important thing is that everyone comes home at the end of a watch. No unnecessary chances. Plus, we get a lot more trade and travel now. Nothing like getting an entire group of people in with one really busted-up comrade. Most of them are more than happy to work in exchange for lodging in the barracks and some time in the temple for their comrade. It's not steady, so you don't plan on it, but when it happens, who can object?

Fallam may be unique in that, given its size, it has families from all of the Houses of the Serpent River. It's not just Archers who have decided to settle down and make it their home.

- Laiyan Icecrest, Retired Master Gunner of the Astendar's Desire



'Sides, it's easy to teach them the rules of the guard: Stay awake when you're on watch, and anything that gets lit is fair game. Huh? Oh, okay, I see you don't get it. There's what, eight of us now...Archer adepts, I mean. Mostly, we're two on watch at any time. Something shows up that ain't Name-giver, it gets a flame arrow right up the...er, anyway. That's a clear signal to everyone else manning the wall. Even if you're barely able to draw a string or wind a crossbow, everyone up there gets a missile weapon. No friggin' sense being up there and not being able to do anything. We cut the spellcasters some slack on that rule, but they get 'em too, just in case. Anyway. Maybe you're new, maybe you're scared, maybe you're just stupid, all you got to do is remember that you target the moving, burning thing and shoot it until it's a stationary, burning thing. It's not a hard rule. It's when they breach the wall that it gets bad....

I lost a couple a men—oh, must have been two years ago now—when we got the attention of a Horror. Followed some damnfool adventuring group back from some kaer, looking to feed I guess. It had Marked them all and so we got five Adepts at the testing post who suddenly decided to charge. We had to let them get pretty close to see their artisan tests, not a lot of choice there. Anyway, they had a spellcaster, and that was the last we saw of the gate. That's another rule—spellcasters die first. They just can do too much collateral damage. Six of us, including myself, turned him into a pincushion before he could get any farther, but then they were in. You concentrate on one target as much as you can, but the ones that get too close get precedence. That's how you can tell well-trained guards—we don't go out to the testing post, we watch them from the gatehouse. When the Elementalist could only sing about death, loss, all of that, we knew he was Marked. I don't know what tipped him off that we had guessed, but as soon as he attacked, my five best and me had arrows in him. Crumpled like a rag doll, but like I said, he had time to splinter the gate, and his friends charge. We turned around and started firing into their backs, but their Warrior was quick, and was all over one of the footmen before we could do anything. You get into a situation like that, you've got two choices—everybody picks their own target and hopes the footmen hold up, or everybody concentrates fire. Especially with some of the Horror-tainted ones; you can't always be sure wounding them will slow them down—four Adepts will cut through four town footmen before you know it. The goal is giving the guys on the ground less to deal with as quickly as possible. Warriors are bad because they're quick, and tough. Not a good combination. Don't know what the other three were, never really found out proper, but they were slower and not jumping up to join us, so probably not Sky Raiders. We targeted the Warrior first and then finished off the rest. Lost two of the footmen outright, and a third never got back to being duty-ready. You forget sometimes how non-Adepts heal so slowly and so badly....

There have been other times when things have charged the gate, but they usually can't get through it easily. We've had beasts, bandits, and even some river pirates that have found out the hard way their worst enemy is an Archer with backup. You hold someone transfixed with Stopping Aim while the rest of your men turn them into porcupines. We had an espagra that flew over the village—no wall is going to stop those damn things. You could tell, looking into its eyes as it died that as much as it wanted to run, it was more afraid of getting skewered by me. Passions above, I wish we had another experienced Adept in the village—Marta's Fourth Circle and learning as fast as she can.

Well, it's late and you should get some sleep; the competition is starting in the morning. I'll be shooting an exhibition round before I join the mayor and sheriff in the stands. Should be great fun. Oh, if you're a betting man, my oldest grandson has some good odds. Goodnight.

Tam Nansen died in his sleep two days after I transcribed this. He was 87 years old. In his time, he saw his home grow from a village of a hundred Name-givers to a town of over a thousand. I won 10 silver betting on his grandson.

—Maxes Roan, Troubadour, Historian for His Majesty's Exploratory Force

GAME INFORMATION

Competition Shooting

The game mechanics for archery presented in *Earthdawn Second Edition* deal mainly with firing missile weapons in combat. While the rules allow Swordmasters, Warriors, and others to stage their grand tournaments to first blow landed, first blood drawn, or even last man standing, these kind of competitions do not easily lend themselves to Archers. Rather than demonstrate skill in duels, most archery contests are concerned with accuracy and speed.

There are generally two formats for archery competitions: a fixed number of shots at a target with no time limit, and as many shots as possible in a limited time frame. The first contest generally assesses one aspect of an Archer's talents and abilities, such as Mystic Aim or overall accuracy. The Strain caused by using Mystic Aim over and over again can become quite debilitating, especially in contests where there are a number of qualifying rounds, so Archers often "save themselves" for later rounds, or have healing magics nearby to assist. The second type of contest tends to be more mentally demanding, as the Adept is forced to weigh the benefits of accuracy (such as from Mystic Aim and taking the delay that it causes) against firing as many arrows as possible. Archers of the Seventh Circle and higher tend to excel in this latter type of contest, through use of the Second Shot, Quick Shot, or Multi-Shot talents, although again there is a high cost in Strain during long competitions.

Competitions can either be segregated by weapon type (i.e., longbowmen vs. crossbowmen, etc.), or mixed weapons competitions. Obviously, given the range differences, certain weapons will give a greater advantage than others.

Competition Target Difficulties

A competition target is generally a large bale of hay, bag of straw, footman's shield, or other object approximately three feet wide. In order to better gauge an Archer's accuracy, the targets are usually marked in four concentric rings. Points are usually scored as follows: 1 point for hitting the target's outer ring, 2 points for hitting the next innermost ring, 3 points for the next innermost ring, and 4 points for hitting the bull's-eye (the center circle).

The targets are usually placed at such a range that the base Difficulty Number for hitting them is 9. For each level of success above Average (Good, Excellent, Extraordinary, see p. 340 ED2), increase the closeness of the shot to the bull's-eye by one ring, with an Extraordinary success being a bull's-eye. In competition target shooting, the rules regarding calling a shot (p. 225, ED2) do not apply in the same way that they do in combat. An Archer who chooses to call a shot can increase the closeness of his or her shot to the bull's-eye by one ring. Targets can be placed at different range categories, depending on the type of competition and the weapons used, for an additional challenge.

Aiming

Adepts and non-Adepts alike can take extra time to aim more carefully at their targets. The character must spend a full round prior to making an Attack Test, aiming at a target within line of sight to gain the Aiming Bonus. Aiming adds 1 to the result of the subsequent Missile Weapons Test. Aiming and Mystic Aim cannot be used together.





THE EYES OF AN ARCHER

These are the words of the human Archer Lydian Breaker. Lydian has been blind since birth, and we at the Great Library found her perspective on the Discipline of the Archer to be quite different than what we are accustomed to. Indeed, until I heard her story from the troops returning through Landis, I wasn't even aware there could be blind Archers. However, there is no denying the fact that she is an Archer, and quite a talented one, at that.

— Presented for the edification of the reader by Blert Syrtis, Apprentice Archivist for the Library of Throal

I am flattered that the Library of Throal has gone to such lengths to find me and ask me to attempt to define for you, Seeker of Knowledge, what it means to be an Archer. I am limited in my scholarly learning; all I can remember from tomes comes from what my brother has read to me. However, despite my lack of familiarity with the medium, I hope that this story brings some understanding to one of the many paths of a life following the way of the bow or crossbow.

Lydian is referring here to her twin brother Named Lycian. He is also a follower of the Archer Discipline, but of the traditional path that we are accustomed to seeing here in Barsaive.

— Blert

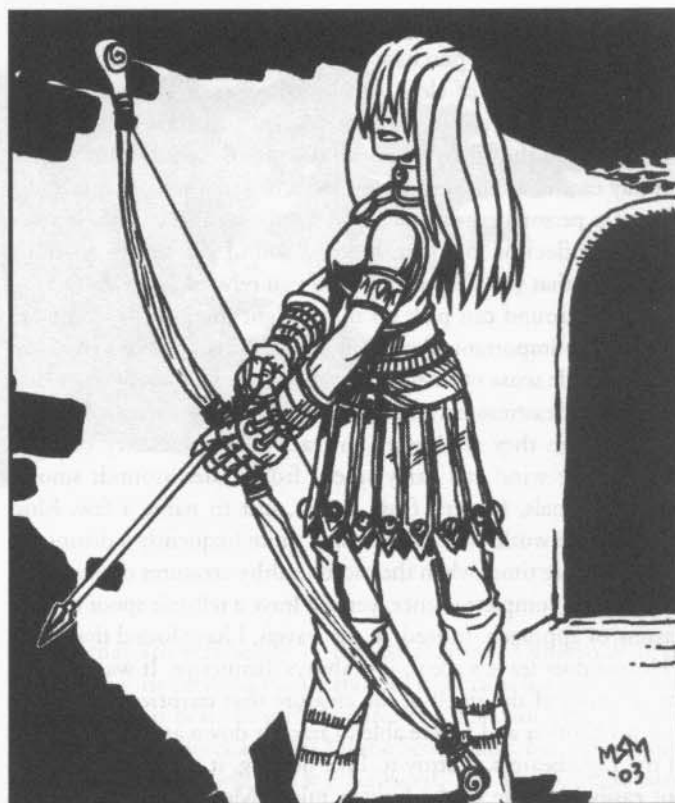
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ARCHER

Let us first look, then, at what comes to our mind with the very word "Archer." Do you see the stealthy hunter, slowly and patiently tracking his prey? When the first heroes returned with the secret of bow from the vaults of the Passions, it was used in just such a way, to provide food and clothing for their people. Perhaps this, then, is what it means to be an Archer. Or maybe the Legends that you have heard all your life have woven the image of a stalwart defender of kaer and city, ever-vigilant and willing to offer aid and strength of arms to their kingdom and companions?

Both of these visions are true, for both are Archers. At its core, the Pattern of the Archer remains constant throughout the land of Barsaive, perhaps, even the world. It brings to mind one skilled in the use of the bow and arrow or the crossbow and bolt. But is that all there is to an Archer? Yes, and no. To be an Archer means to undertake the path of understanding the secret of the bow. To do that, one must accept the bow or crossbow as part of oneself, and try to understand what it teaches. There is no single path that leads to understanding of this powerful secret taken from the Passions, and there will never be any one Name-giver who can understand every aspect of it. However, despite the myriad of ways one can be an Archer, I present my humble belief that there are two aspects that unite them all: observation and understanding.

It should come as no surprise that some of Barsaive's greatest investigators are Archers.

— J'Role, the Honorable Thief



WHAT IT MEANS TO OBSERVE

Simply put, observation is making oneself aware of something. This is the first step of the Archer, to learn how to observe. For most Name-givers, most of your direct observations come from your greatest sense: sight. If you will forgive the pun, while sight may be your most powerful sense when it comes to observing, do not let it blind you to all the ways you have to perceive your surroundings. There are six ways to observe this world around us: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and astral perception.

Let us start with the way in which I have the least useful experience, sight. If you are reading this document, then it is likely that you do not need any instruction from me on how to best make use of your sense of sight. On the other hand, it has been my experience that a majority of Name-givers, particularly apprentice Adepts, so rely on their sight that they ignore what they can learn from their other senses. Even my brother often fails to notice some of the subtler cues that his other senses provide. Consider then, your various senses as but one part of something larger, such as instruments in an orchestra or, from my brother's perspective, colors in a painting. While sometimes the cues for certain senses may be lacking, more often than not, all are used together to create a complete song or picture of what is around you. There is so much that goes on around us that we take for granted. You do not always need all of your senses, but you should know how to use what you have.

Unless under magically induced silence, if you listen properly, you will find there is never a time where you cannot hear something. There are some things you should learn to tune out, the beating of your own heart, for example, and the sound of your breathing. However, when you listen, you will find that you can be made aware of a great deal about the world around you. The sound your boots make against the ground hint at the material you trod upon. The wind will often mark objects in your path with a fitful whistle

when its path is blocked. The sound of your arrow as it flies and when it finally finds purchase can tell you much of its path and success. The sound of cloth, steel, or leather often marks where other Name-givers are (though be warned that those Adepts who have mastered the Silent Walk can disguise these as well if you do not pay careful attention). If you learn to listen well, you can also discern a person's nature or mood by the nuances of their voice and the inflection of their speech. Sound can tell you subtle differences that you might mistake if you rely solely on vision.

Just as sound can pick up things sight might miss, scent can also be very important. For the most part, Name-givers have lost the incredible sense of smell that many of the animals of our world have. Only Beastmasters and Scouts still know how to truly use this gift, although they are known to teach it to those they consider worthy. The wind can carry smells from miles around; smoke, people, animals, flowers, fruit, or rot, just to name a few. Most things in our world have a smell, and quite frequently a distinctive one. There are times when the more stealthy creatures of our world can move in complete silence, yet still leave a tell-tale spoor of their passing or approach. Indeed, in my travels, I have found that when a Horror does leave a scent, it is always distinctive. It was through the memory of the smell of the creature that terrorized our home that my brother and I were able to track it down and, with the aid of the Lightbearers, destroy it. Like hearing, it is a sense that does not easily translate to the human mind. Meditate on it. Practice with it by covering your eyes and ears with cloth, and limiting your senses as much as possible to where all you have to rely on is your sense of smell. It will not come quickly, but it is an invaluable tool of observation.

Taste and smell are linked in some fundamental way, but for the most part, taste is the least-used of my senses. Not that it is any less useful, mind; it is simply that there are few things out in the wilds of Barsaive that you should put anywhere near your mouth. Certainly not anything you suspect has been tampered with or created by Horrors. I have talked with many who use taste as part of their methods for observation, since it can distinguish nuances that smell cannot, so I mention it here to emphasize that all of your senses can be used when observing.

Our ability to touch is also a very important aspect of our ability to sense, but perhaps moreso for those without sight or in dark places. Through the use of touch, you can picture in the mind's eye more of the world around you than with any of the other senses (aside from perhaps sight or astral sense). The texture and solidity of the ground, the walls, and everything else around you can give you a true notion of your surroundings and objects in your path. Just as a silhouette is usually distinct to those that can see, the tracing with a hand of an object can create a permanent image in the mind. Perhaps I use touch most often to learn the contours and imperfections of each of my arrows. With experience, you will learn which grain of wood suits your aim best, as well as what heft is best supported by your bow. The subtle differences in the texture of the fletching also plays a large part in the path your arrow takes, and it is my opinion that only through the sense of touch can you find your best arrows.

All of your senses play a part in sensing astral space, and yet they fall short of describing exactly what it is. The astral plane is a whole different side of our world and a dangerous place since the coming of the Horrors. There are things you can learn in astral space that you

would never perceive in the physical plane, things that could save your life. I am no spellcaster, so I will not attempt to summarize what so many learned scholars have dedicated their lives to interpreting. However, as an Adept, you are capable of sensing, even in the minutest way, the astral plane. Use that. It is the only way you can be sure you know what you are up against or what you should actually be fighting when facing the Horrors.

UNDERSTANDING THE WAY

So now you have an idea what it is to observe. All Name-givers try their best to understand this world that we live in. Becoming aware of the world is the most crucial step in learning to understand it, even if only in your own terms. The magic of a Discipline works to match one's understanding of the world as their legend grows.

At the core of many Adepts' beliefs is the search for the truth. After all, doesn't it make sense that we only understand something when we see the truth of the matter? I have yet to meet an Archer that does not believe that the truth is part of what we ultimately strive for in our lives. However, what is this truth we seek? And once we have decided what it is, how do we find this truth that so many strive for? These are rhetorical questions that often require a lifetime to answer and are usually unique to the one seeking the answers. I still seek my own answers to these questions, for the path of a Name-giver can be just as full of unexpected obstacles as the path of an arrow. For all the questions you may have, the only answers you will find come from observation—perceiving the world.

There is no one truth. Take a simple statement believed to be truth like "Therans are slavers." This is not true. While there are Therans who are slavers, not all Therans are slavers. Lydian is right; seeking the truth is a lifetime path.

—Jhu'diz, Illusionist of the House of Reeds

While the path of understanding may seem a path more suited in your mind for a scholar than an Archer, it is understanding that ultimately grants you the control over yourself and your world. When you reach this kind of control, you come to realize that the bow or crossbow is simply an extension of your will, just as the Warrior and her weapons are one. As long as you remain true, then so will your aim. Once you have observed the target and the surroundings, once you know where and why you should loose the arrow, then from your understanding your arrow will know the way.

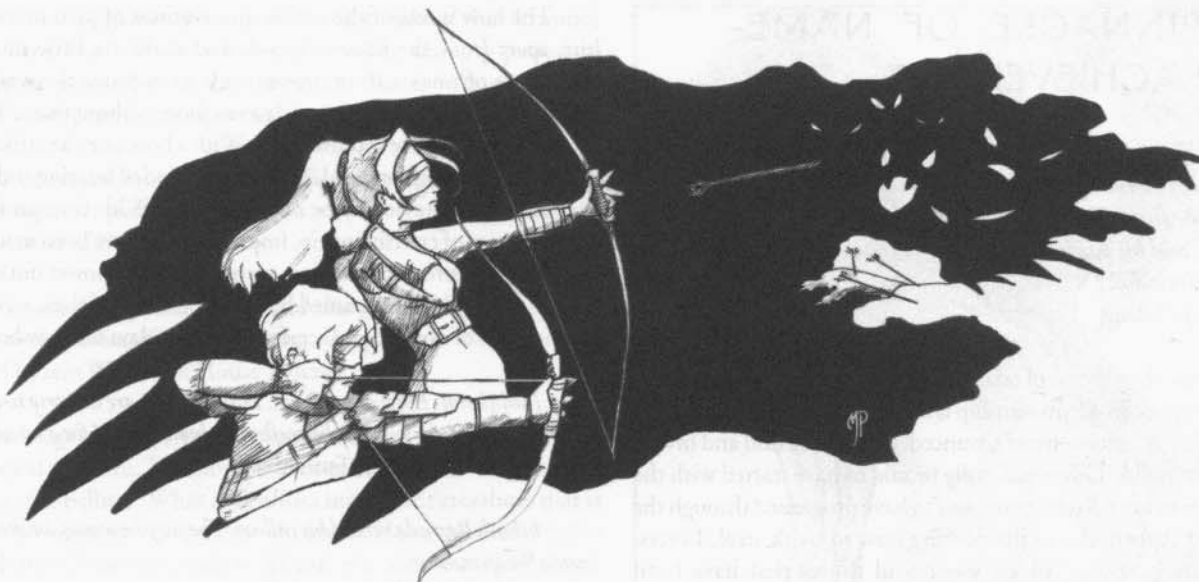
As simple as letting the arrow guide itself may sound, it is something that requires a lifetime of dedication to undertake. If you still doubt that such a thing is possible, ask any Archer you meet to demonstrate what we know as the True Shot. Then read this again. The secret of the bow was something we were given, but it is not a secret easily understood. I have faith, however, that if you try, you will succeed. I wish you perseverance and luck in your path. May the Passions bless you.

GAME INFORMATION

Lydian Archers

Archers who follow Lydian's particular path of archery need not be blind, but a blind archer suffers no Perception penalties





and can still have a high attribute rating. However, any character who is blind or deaf automatically fails any Perception tests against visual or auditory tasks, such as spotting or hearing someone moving through the forest, unless they are using an extra-sensory talent such as Mystic Sense. Additionally, blind characters suffer a -3 step penalty to melee and unarmed attacks, and a -5 step penalty to thrown and missile attacks—unless they use the Blind Fighting skill to reduce the penalty or a talent (like Mystic Sense, below) to overcome it completely. This path for the Archer is not new in the terms of this Age of Magic, but far from widespread. There are barely a handful of known Legends since the time of the Scourge that have followed this particular take on the Archer Discipline.

Lydian's path for an Archer differs greatly from the usual path of an archer, taking the emphasis from sight and vision and broadening it to sensing and intuition. Because of this, Archers who follow Lydian's path find that many of their Talents differ from the normal path of the Archer.

Any adept following this path for an Archer must make the following Talent substitutions:

Mystic Aim (D) with Mystic Sense (D) at first circle, and Stopping Aim (D) with Evidence Analysis (D) at fifth circle.

New Talent

Mystic Sense

Step: Rank + Perception Step

Action: Yes

Requires Karma: No Strain: 1 (or 2, see below)

Mystic Sense allows the character to magically assense the area around them. The character spends a round dedicated to sensing the presence of any living creature's within a radius of their Mystic Sense Step x 10 yards. The character rolls a Mystic Sense Test and compares it to the Spell Defense of the targets in the area she is sensing. The character becomes aware of the location of each of the living creatures whose Spell Defense she defeats, including plants (normally spell defense 2). For the cost of an additional point of strain, the Mystic Sense can also be used to detect unliving animated beings as well as

things that are exclusively in the astral plane. Otherwise, if the creature has no physical manifestation, it remains undetected, even if the character beats its spell defense. The detection is active for as many rounds as the character's Mystic Sense Rank, but only requires an action on the round that it is activated. The Mystic Sense talent allows the character to detect life through inanimate objects that would block sight, but can only sense life through a number of inches equal to the Mystic Sense test result. The character is aware of the inanimate objects she is sensing through.

Creatures that are sensitive to astral magics, such as most Horrors, will know they have been brushed by some astral sensing, even if they are not successfully detected.

Lydian spends a round performing a Mystic Sense Test. Her total Step is a 14, so she will attempt to sense all of the creatures within a 140 yard (14 x 10) radius of her. On her Mystic Sense Test, Lydian rolls a 19. Not only is she aware of all of her companions and the various trees, grasses, animals and bugs in the area around her, but she's detected that spirit that's been following her group in astral space if she spends an additional point of strain. However, the Wormskull lurking in a cave twenty feet below her remains undetected.

New Skill

Blind Fighting

Step: Rank + Perception Step

Every three ranks of the Blind Fighting skill reduces the penalty to attack steps when fighting in darkness or when blinded by one. Also, characters may make a Blind Fighting test in place of their Perception Test to hear people using the Silent Walk skill.

Grant is blinded by the Eyes Have It spell, and would normally receive a -5 step penalty to any attacks. However, Grant has 5 ranks of the Blind Fighting skill, which reduces his penalty by two steps. So, Grant's attacks are only at a -3 step penalty.

THE PINNACLE OF NAME-GIVER ACHIEVEMENT

The following are the words of Barrada, Master of Arms for the trading drakkar Stormclipper out of Jerris and noted crossbowman. Barrada was among the first who responded to the Library as we sought Adepts for this volume, and his passion for the project insured that his words were among those included.

— Thom Edrull

Craftsmanship: the art of taking raw materials and rendering them into something useful. Craftsmanship is the true hallmark of civilization. With time, crafts become more advanced, and people find and invent new things to build. This could easily be said to have started with the taming of fire in long distant times and to have progressed through the invention of the wheel and discovering how to work steel. Levers, pulleys, gears, screws... All are wonderful things that have been developed throughout history. Simple things that make work easier, and allow Name-givers to do things they would never have been able to do before. Craftsmanship affects everything in the world, from farming to cooking to hunting and warfare. It has been noted many times that the need for better armament has often been the spark that has lead to better crafts. It is the need for better weapons and armor that has refined metals, so that we have the steel that we do today. It is the need for highly maneuverable cavalry that led to the stirrup and other improvements in the saddle. And it is the need to attack at range that led to the development of the bow.

What would an Archer, and a crossbowman at that, know of the necessities of cavalry?

— Chott One-Tusk

Not all horse archers are Cavalrymen. A mounted Archer can make for a fearsome foe, and a trained crossbowman can fire as easily from horseback as a bowman.

— Seelaz, Outrider for Terath's Chargers



The bow is one of the earliest innovations of men that truly set him apart from the beasts. Swords and clubs are little more than extensions of one's self: improvisations to improve the weight and toughness of an arm or to grant claws to those without them. The bow is more elegant, more sophisticated. With a bow one can strike from a distance and with great speed, enabling the kind of hunting and warfare that could not previously be accomplished. With time and further advancement of craftsmanship, improvements have been made to the bow. These improvements allow men to get more power out of a bow than they could have dreamed before. The result of these advances is the pinnacle of non-magical craftsmanship today: the crossbow.

I think not. Even as we speak, Name-givers are constructing feats of architecture that far surpass the craftsmanship required for a crossbow.

— Ashter Turbin of Tansiarda

I think Barrada missed his calling. The way he writes, he should have been a Weaponsmith.

— Chott One-Tusk

I am an Archer, and while many of my brethren in the Discipline shun the crossbow for one reason or another, I find it foolish to use anything but the best tools at my disposal. I take every bit as much pride in every crossbow I've ever owned as any of them take in their bows. A single man can fashion a bow; indeed, frequently it is the Archer himself who crafts his bow. One man alone, however, cannot craft a crossbow. A crossbow is crafted of metal and steel and wire; it takes the work of an entire civilization to build a crossbow. A lumberjack must find the hardwoods, a miner must extract the metal, a smith must work it into a usable form, and finally, a specialist must take all of the components and bring them together to fashion an amazingly effective weapon. I believe it is this level of community involvement that makes the crossbow special among the weapons of the world.

There are notably fewer legendary crossbows in Barsaive than bows, and from my experience, less Thread crossbows than Thread bows as well. It is possible that because of the community involvement that Barrada mentions, it is more difficult for any one individual to give a crossbow a Name.

— Mestoph, Elven Nethermancer

The way that a crossbow is built does make it particularly easy to enchant. I've even heard rumors of Therans using crossbows tied with particular blood charms.

— Ferrik of the First Star Company

The crossbow is the great equalizer of the world. A sword or a club is only as effective as the wielder is strong or agile, and a bow requires a great amount of training so that a single arm has the proper amount of power to manage the pull of the string. With the use of pulleys, levers, or even simply the advantage of being able to use the muscles of all four limbs, the crossbow allows people to access power they could never previously have managed. Also, the crossbow requires less training to use at a novice level. There's no need to hold the string back for extended periods of time, or to learn how to bob and weave in response to your opponent's movements. One simply needs to ready the crossbow, aim down the bolt, and pull the trigger. I oversimplify, of course,



and there are many, many nuances to the crossbow that I cannot go into here, but you can see my point. The training period to make someone an effective threat is much shorter with a crossbow than with any previous weapon in history.

Which essentially means that any fool can pick up a crossbow and shoot himself in the foot with it.

—Arvael of Urupa

As opposed the special kind of fool that goes through the difficult training to shoot himself in the foot using a longbow.

—Dryzein Wureen of House Yilwaz

The design philosophy of the crossbow is used in the vast majority of shipboard weapons. The most obvious extension of the crossbow is, of course, the ballista. What is a ballista but a giant crossbow that is effective even against the greatest of vessels? However, even the fire cannon learned from the crossbow. The arc of a crossbow is very direct. One does not lob a bolt across a battlefield. A crossbowman shoots in a straight line. So it is with a fire cannon. Were it not for the crossbow to show Elementalists the way, the best an artillerist could hope for would be the erratic path of a lightning bolt.

Crossbows don't just scale upwards.

—Terricia

Let me dispel the thought that the crossbow is only a weapon that may be used in a city, or more specifically that a crossbowman is of little use outside of a city's walls. Nothing could be further from the truth. A crossbow can be used in tight quarters, which makes it an ideal weapon for delving into caverns or unearthed kaers. It is a superior weapon aboard an airship, and I expect a riverboat as well. The range of a crossbow gives it an advantage on deck, and once again, it excels in the cramped spaces that one finds belowdecks. Once it is loaded, a skilled crossbowman may fire his crossbow with a single hand, which allows him to react more quickly than a bowman, who must move his entire body to position for a shot.

A properly designed light crossbow gives its user the advantages of a Kratas Folding Bow at a tenth of the price.

—Jigrael the Quick, Thief and crossbowman

The philosophy inherent behind the crossbow is different than any other weapon. When the string is pulled back and placed on the catch, the effort is stored there and kept in place, waiting for the user to release it at will. This sort of stored work could change everything we understand about the world, and indeed it already has. This theory of stored work has already been put into practice by magicians, who learned from the crossbow how to hold Threads before they are needed. Wizards, the highly academic folks that they are, are still trying to understand the other implications the crossbow has. In the meantime, my crossbow works wonders for me and while I'm interested in the answers to these questions, not knowing them doesn't prevent me from being a remarkably effective Archer.

It has been said that the life of an Archer can be deconstructed into targets and arcs. If that were the case, then most crossbowmen would be direct and to the point. Some might even call them blunt—



and if it can be imagined, some even speak their minds more quickly than advisable. How is it, then, that a crossbowman may be as glib as any Troubadour or Swordmaster? It is because we can look beyond targets, and see designs and machinations. The crossbowman uses a weapon that was created by community, and the crossbowman sees himself as a member of a community. Whether that community is a city, an adventuring group, or the crew of an airship; a crossbowman remembers that he is a part of something larger than himself.

GAME INFORMATION

Theran Blood Crossbow and Charm

A Theran Blood Crossbow is a medium crossbow that has been tied to a particular type of blood charm. Each charm and crossbow combination is unique; each Blood Crossbow has only a single charm that will allow its magic to activate. The charm is a small gem placed at the wearer's wrist, and it attaches itself at the cost of 1 point of permanent damage. Once attached, the wearer's hand develops a pattern of veins that looks like a spider's web, and the Blood Crossbow develops streaks along its stock that look like blood vessels. By taking an additional 4 points of damage, the wielder of the Theran Blood Crossbow can add 6 steps to his or her Damage Test with the crossbow. This bonus cannot be used with the Flame Arrow talent. The damage bonus of a Theran Blood Crossbow may be used more than once, but the wielder must first recharge the magic of the crossbow by healing the 4 points of damage with a Recovery Test, in the same fashion as a Desperate Blow charm (page 205, ED2). The Theran Blood Crossbow costs 400 silver, and has a DR of 1.



CHAPTER 2 CAVALRYMEN



BECOMING FAMILIAR WITH THE SADDLE

These are the words of Sergeant Major Guyve Kenmar of the Arm of Throal, as recorded by Miar, the Windling Troubadour. Kenmar is one of the handful of dwarfs in Throal to have fought at both the Battle of Throal in 1449TH and the Battle of Triumph in 1512TH.

— Thom Edrull

There my beautiful Lightstep, now you feel a mite better yes? Pardon?

I am speaking to my steed of course, and you are? All right young Tehlin, meet my steed Lightstep.

Tehlin? Perhaps Lieutenant Tehlin Ludi? If so, I wonder what it took to silence his family's objections to this transcript being included.

— Gehar the Triumphant

It seems that Lightstep is familiar with you Tehlin. Ah, it seems you have been lax in your duties. Young Rushbright's coat is in dire need of brushing and his mane is tangled.

Oh alright, Lightstep. It also seems his forelegs are sore from your escapades today.

Perhaps you didn't understand me, young Tehlin. Grooms have no place caring for the hurts from which your steed suffers; it is you that should attend them.

Not your job? How long have you been an Adept?

Oh! So you have only felt the magic play through your bones recently. Well, that explains a lot, and so I will have to instruct you in the ways of your Adept nature. Oh, well I suppose that your first teacher did show you how to use your weapons, and even to do some of the impressive stunts you showed on the field today. More's the pity. Not enough students are picking up the true nature of our magic these days.

No, I am not trying to talk down to you, son, but take this comb and bring your mount over here, and I will show you some techniques that will make you and your mount much happier.

I fear that your teacher is missing some of the basics in your instruction, but I feel that it may be an expression of these chaotic times we live in. The conflicts with the Therans have made everyone on edge, and they would prefer to put out soldiers first and then worry about the Cavalryman's basic needs if they survive the day.

Do you know why you've come here? You can't tell me because you aren't sure yourself. You have been uneasy all evening, even though everything is seemingly fine. You find that your day's end has been unsettling. Young Tehlin, your steed has been—wait, not so rough with the comb! Work out the tangles carefully; use your fingers to loosen any knots. Sorry, where was I?

Oh yes! Your steed has needed attention.

Ahm, again we see the lack of your education.

No, stay calm and be assured I bear no malice. Now stroke your mount's neck to reassure him that all is well. Your anger is distressing to him, and he will feel everything you do.

Because he is your mount, he is a part of who you are. The magic of a Cavalryman is like no other Discipline, young man. It is

one of the only Disciplines where a Name-giver shares itself with another living creature – and, in fact, requires one.

Yes, I know that Beastmasters are the friend to beasts, and even partner to beasts, but your bond with your mount is special. Your mount is your lifeblood. Your Rushbright will bring your body to battle and will fight under you until he cannot fight anymore, but it will be your choice how your relationship develops.

It is unwise to so quickly dismiss the bond between Beastmaster and familiar.

— Qyuu

Well, that is a complex question and one worthy of you. I will tell you about the way of the Cavalryman. Not all want to hear what I have to say on this, though. I'll tell you this; many who haven't listened have ended up on a tragic road.

Ahh, good now that is a mane worthy of such a fine steed. Here, take this brush to his coat. Where was I?

Oh, the tragic road, yes. Beson was one of the prize students in a small camp where I had the opportunity to serve. His fierceness as a warrior was well known by all, and his cruelty matched it. His steed was poor Firebrand. The beast came from proud stock and was unmatched when Beson took him to his stable, but Beson had no care for the beast. He left it alone for days, with only his grooms to care for him. The beast became melancholy; its only pleasure was to run when Beson took him out for war. Beson was skilled and his magic was strong, but the bond they shared was never truly complete. Beson would even go so far as to beat poor Firebrand, something that must never be done.

Easy Lightstep...not so hard Tehlin...not so hard. Brush to keep the coat fine, and pull debris from the coat to give it health, don't try to scrape it off. Take your time.

Hehehe—of course its hard work, but look at your young Rushbright now, see how happy he is. Yes you feel it too, don't you?

Lightstep and I spend every evening with his grooming, don't we my fine stallion? A scratch over the eye makes you even more pleased some times, eh?

Well, I realize that, as the member of a royal house, you would not be so skilled in the arts of horse grooming. But, as a Cavalryman, there will be plenty of times when you will be on the road with no stables and no grooms. What then, young Tehlin? You are your mount's hands, and eyes, and mind.

Easy Lightstep! I didn't mean to imply you had no mind, but yours is more with running, mares, and fighting isn't it? Yes, you know it is the simple things that help keep us on track, and you may well be smarter than I, eh? After all I'm the one with the brush, and you are just standing there enjoying my attentions....

My apologies Tehlin, but what was I relaying to you before I touched on the finer points of grooming? Oh, Beson! That miserable rogue! I tell you he beat his poor Firebrand repeatedly, and once in my presence no less! That was when I was riding Peachtree, such a fine mare she was. I think she was sweet on Firebrand and that is why it touches me so, but regardless of that fact if she was or was not, Beson was awful. Not that Firebrand was much better after a year of such abuse.

Oh yes, steeds can take on the ways of their masters, and believe me when I say that there is no thing more awful than a steed that has



gone bad. They go a mite mad, you see, and can even turn on their riders.

No, I tell you it is not impossible! I have seen it! We were on patrol in the northern reaches when Beson spotted some scorchers up ahead, and called on us to engage. We rode forth with a thunderous noise and the merest sight of us caused them to panic. Soon the battle was joined in earnest and the confusion was great around me, but I saw it. By Lochost, I saw the deed. Firebrand was slow to turn and Beson clouted him on the ear with his sword pommel. Firebrand threw him in anger, then crushed his head beneath an iron-shod hoof.

Beson had his vengeance though on that bloody field. He used the blood bond to share his pain with his mount and both rider and mount fell that day through mutual betrayal.

I have heard of Cavalrymen who have had their steeds turn on them when they became corrupted by the Horrors.

—Quinn

They? Were the steeds corrupted, or the Cavalrymen?

—Dashin, Windling Swordmaster of Bartertown

Yes.

—The Crimson Face

No, I don't think that Rushbright would crush your head for brushing him too hard this once, but give him this apple to be sure.

What? Well that's a personal question to ask, but I suppose it's a fair one. I have in my time had four mounts. Some I know have never had more than one, and most never more than three. It is hard to lose so many dear friends and partners, even if it is only to put them out to stud or to breed them. It is painful to see them age or become infirm.

No, now, you need to rub Rushbright down. Here, watch where I apply this liniment, and you will need to do the same for your Rushbright. See these muscle bundles here, they are most important...yes, Lightstep, you like the muscle rub, don't you?

Their Names? My first mount was Peachtree; I named her so because that is where she found me when I was a lad, sleeping under a peach tree. I loved that mare so much it hurt. We did everything together, we swam and raced—oh, but she loved to race. But eventually, we joined up with the army of Throal when they asked for volunteers and we became warriors. In those days, still so soon after the opening of the Kaers, you couldn't have too many warriors to defend the settlements, and mounted warriors we were in high demand. Yes, high demand...

Oh, sorry. Well, Peachtree died, young man; she was struck down by a Horror construct attacking an outpost I was defending. Poor dear was struck by the thing, and it tore her flesh from her. It was awful. We finally got the Horror, but not before it had killed half of us. Some scars never heal, boy, losing a mount is one of them.

The second? Oh that one was Hickorystick. I got issued that horse from the army stables. He had already been war-trained, and they thought that giving me an older steed would help since I had trained Peachtree myself and gotten so attached to her. That is what happens when you have cavalry commanders who aren't Adepts, lad; they just don't understand the bond between the horse and rider.

Hickorystick was a fine steed, though not so playful as Peachtree. Ah, he was a stuffy horse, and much reserved, even in battle he would not rush into things. I learned, almost by necessity, how to use my bow while riding Hickorystick. Oh, he would charge alright; when the order was given, we would ride out into battle, but some steeds like to take a bit of their own initiative in combat. Not Hickorystick; he would keep back and only go where I led. Not a lot of enthusiasm with that one. He went out to stud, and I got a new steed. It was not as hard a parting as it had been losing Peachtree, but there is still a sense of loss when a Cavalryman lets any steed go.

Well, the Third was Ivory. Ivory was a royal stallion that I received after the siege of Teledor. You've never heard of that battle I suppose. No one ever hears of that battle. Hickorystick, myself, and maybe four others from our entire company came out of that one. Oh, it was on the borderlands, and the Therans sent out a legion to take a small town away from Barsaive. We were there holding down the area against them when our supply lines were cut due to Theran air navy activity. We were cutoff for nearly a month from our supplies, and no reinforcements could come.

Hickorystick and I were, if I must say so myself, instrumental in ending the siege. You see, we were in a patch of hills at the edge of the Delaris Mountains, and that rough terrain was not so good for the younger folk. Several mounts were suffering wounds to their legs, but as stuffy as old Hickorystick was, he was sure-footed as a mountain goat. We often would wait long enough to drop an arrow or two at the passing Theran patrols and lead them into ambush. Foot soldiers, however competent, find it hard to keep up with even the slowest horse on uneven ground. And it's harder to pursue when you are dodging arrows.

Ivory was my third mount, and one of near necessity. For all of Hickorystick's surefootedness, he had most certainly injured himself several times in the foothills and was more often than not coming up lame, for days at a time. A mount you can't ride is worthless, you know.



But I would not give him up, that is until they brought Ivory to me. The white stallion was a vision. Oh, the first time I saw him, I knew he would be mine. Hickorystick was taken to Throal in trade. It seems that the dwarfs wanted some sure-footed horses and had heard how my Hickorystick was in all ways superior on the rough ground, so they proposed a most fair arrangement. They give me Ivory to ride and partner with, and they put old Hickorystick out to stud with all the mares he could handle. I was almost sure that Hickorystick was more enthused about the mares than he was about staying in the fighting business.

Oh, but Ivory, that was a steed that one could never put to shame. Hold on there, do you feel the knot under your right hand? Massage it more gently and work it out with harder rubbing. As you go, work your way up to as hard as you can press.

No, Rushbright will let you know if you are pressing too hard. You need to feel him in your own time. You will soon know precisely how one another feels and that will sustain you through days and nights of lonely travel.

Ah, but you are right, it will take time. But this is part of your training as much as learning to use swords and ride over rough ground. The reason your Adept nature makes you a superior horseman will have more to do with the magical bond with Rushbright than your skills! Don't forget the lesson of Beson! That rogue was as good a fighter on horseback as anyone I had ever met, but he could not hold a candle to Peachtree and me when it came to our bond. He never took it to heart that you can do so much more when you bond than when you don't.

Ivory and I had that bond, and you and Rushbright will have it too. I see that even though you are sweating and working at the grooming that you are learning respect for your mount. You can feel the sore muscles and are feeling what he has given you today. You worked the poor thing into a lather and now he is sore, but you are feeling it too. That is why you are here.

No, I am not reading your mind. I've been there and felt it myself. I started on a farm and knew horses, so I knew what needed to be done, but you have been raised noble and have never seen your steed as anything but transportation or a platform from which to fight. A tool. But a tool doesn't move you out of the way from a spearman you didn't see. A tool doesn't whinny to distract you from your cares. A tool doesn't have the unconditional love that keeps the loneliness of the road and garrison from tearing you apart.

Ivory was nearly the best horse I ever met. Even-tempered in peace, but ferocious in war. I had to put heavier shoes on him to keep him from chipping his hooves on helmets. He was amazing, and he could run. We could run leagues in hours.

No, I am not exaggerating. I never knew why, but when we could run our magic let us fly across the ground. But there was always a price for that; it would take almost a day of rest to recover, and we nearly died more than once.

We once raced a drakkar to prove how fast we were, and we almost beat it. Almost.

He's being modest. It took quite some time for us to be able to overtake him.

— Drimsby

But, as things do, we both got old. Soon we weren't much up for battles anymore, and running just wasn't in my bones. There was a young squire who had just come into his magic who had been helping me groom Ivory for a while, and one day he asked if Ivory could be his horse.

Ivory was thrilled at having a young rider again. I had known that it could happen, but not since my younger days had I wanted so much to please my steed.

The greatest Cavalryman I've ever known? You mean besides me, right? Hehehe. It was Hafa, of the orks, who made me see when I was young how important a mount can be. During a battle, Hafa lost his steed to an arrow. Hafa wept over his poor Meeka. For two days, we heard the wailing from the battlefield and it drove us near mad, but on the sunset of the second day, there was a miracle. The magic brought Meeka back! Hafa was half-dead of exhaustion and Meeka was no better, but they both returned from battle two days after and within the month were back with us at full strength. Hafa and Meeka were the strongest pair I have ever seen before; they could move like wind, spin and change direction like a windling, or hit like an obsidiman.

What happened to them? Why, Hafa and Meeka retired back to their clan. In fact, it was Meeka who sired Lentor, who sired Lightfoot. My steed now, a young steed for an old man, but I've loved him since Hafa's grandson sent him to me.

Hold on, you will need some liniment for his forelegs and the muscles he stretched. You can use mine. Catch.

Heheheh. Yes, it is supposed to stink like that; it hasn't gone bad.

I know I am older than most in this war camp, but Lightfoot makes up for my mistakes with youth and strength. Believe me, when you and Rushbright age, you will polish fine.

Yes, I know the smell is offensive, but it is a collection of herbs that will soothe sore muscles, and your Rushbright here strained himself on that jump and turn you showed off with this morning. Now take a fingerfull and start to massage that leg while I work on this one. See how my hands rub and see how the tension is worked out as you massage?

Now, the most important thing, when you go to bed, sleep well, but keep your mind open to your steed. Sometimes you will share dreams, and, oh, they are fine. The dreams of running on the open plain are invigorating and I love them. I always awaken refreshed afterwards. Now, in the morning, Rushbright will be every bit as bright and cheerful as you.

You feel better now, don't you?

You know that you just couldn't sleep until you saw your partner, Rushbright, and gave him a good rubdown so he can sleep, too.

Yes, I knew it from the moment you walked in.

Goodnight.

Well, good Lightstep, you think that young man is going to turn out fine? Me too.

Oh, good eve, my lord.

Oh, all right. Tenendale, then.

That clenches it. This was almost certainly taking place in the Ludi stables.

— Gehar the Triumphant

Hehehe. Yes, that is my special liniment. You should know the smell well, as I suppose that Ivory needs more these days.

Yes, I spoke to him. I know he is his mother's child, but he has the magic. He'll be fine, and I am glad to have had a chance to meet him. I also am happy to meet you, young Rushbright. I knew your line the moment I saw you. You were assuredly of Ivory's line.

I know you don't approve of my position, my lord, but the offices of the army just don't suit me. I can't let Lightstep down, we have a few battles left in us, and the young men need an example.

No, I can't get to all of them. I got to one, and that will hopefully make two examples now.

Hehehehe. No, it wasn't just for you. He is going to be one of the best you know.

Here, catch. No don't eat it, the apple's for Ivory. It's a red one, his favorite.

Goodnight my lord.

Fine. Goodnight, Tenendale, you scamp!

Goodnight Lightstep. Let's run in the morning early. Yes...there's a good horse.

Close up the barn as you leave, young groom, and keep good watch.

Goodnight.

TO RIDE MANY STEEDS

Because the bond between the Cavalryman and his steed is such a strong one, it was my belief that adding the viewpoint of a Cavalryman who, by simple nature of his race, would see many steeds during his life would be a benefit to the readers of this volume.

—Thom Edrull

My name is Orrose Calantiri, an Unprotected Elf and a Cavalryman. I was born in a kaer to a family with a rich history of horse trainers and breeders. In the kaer, my family kept a small herd of horses, so that the bloodlines might be kept safe from the Horrors. Some of my grandfather's generation gave up their place in the kaer that we might have room for the horses. Perhaps you think my family mad to choose the life of a horse over the life of an elf. Understand, if you put any horse and any elf before me and said only one can live, I would choose the elf every time, as long as I knew that the horse did not represent the last of its line. Life is like a chain; all things are connected to those that came before us, even elves. You read this and you think you represent only yourself; however, you are wrong. You are only one link in a chain that extends back so far even the dragons cannot see its end. All races, all things are part of this woven chain, a Pattern of life, a map of the history of your people's- of all peoples'- bloodlines.

What is important is that those stories not be lost. Every single life carries the weight of its history and its ancestors with it. An individual is important, but the story is more important. That many die so that the rest may live is often the choice we face. The great struggle is to keep the story of life alive, to preserve the Pattern of our world. This is why we fight the Horrors. The Horrors crush life and strip the land of its merit because they are history-killers. Horrors want to subvert these chains of life and ultimately destroy them. They come from nothing, born to no mother of our world, and they go to nothing when the time of the Scourge passes. In each cycle, they attempt to destroy all life, and each cycle refines that life so that one day, the Horrors will come and find a land where nothing fears their kind.

He sounds more like a Troubadour than a Cavalryman.

—Haroun Brokentusk

This is why my family trains and breeds horses. For thousands of years, the Name-giver and horse have walked together in partnership. My family continues that tradition, strengthening the bond between us. We refine the horse as the horse refines us. As a young man, I showed excellent rapport with the horses, so it was no surprise to anyone when it was determined I was to be a Cavalryman. Since that time I have known many friends, fought many battles, and sat astride many a horse. In the passage of those years, I have lost both friends and horses. I shed tears for my losses, packed my gear, and moved on, feeling my life was richer for knowing them. This is the way of things with my people. We are not like our hardhearted cousins of the Blood Wood, who feel nothing but pain, and we are not like the orks, who spurn reason for the fiery emotions that course through their breasts. We choose to see life as it is, perfect and terrible in every way.

THE WAY OF THE CAVALRYMAN

The job of a Cavalryman is more than sitting on a mount and looking intimidating. Cavalrymen are not hired thugs on hoofs. Cavalrymen are heroes and heroines of legend. We represent a rare and wonderful mixture of Name-giver and beast choosing to cooperate and live in a harmony of beautiful motion and fury. From the smallest windling who sits astride a zoak to the ork screaming across the plains on horseback and everything in-between, we are the stuff of legends.

When I die and am mourned by my friends and family, may the sum of my life be that I was a brave elf who protected his land, his people, his family, and who brought the Calantiri bloodline that much closer to that of the horse that will be ridden by a Cavalryman on the day that the Horrors flee our world. I can ask no more than that.

The elf Cavalryman represents a different mode of thought concerning the relationship between a rider and mount. The clearest indication of this is that the elf Cavalryman does not have the near-fanatical devotion to a specific mount that is found in other Cavalrymen. There is still an obvious bond of love and devotion; however, there is also a level of practicality and detachment that is more common in Cavalrymen of my race than any other. This seeming lack of attachment to a mount is a practical adaptation for elves. Mounts, even with the aid of magic, would never be able to sustain the lifespan that an average elf can expect.

To prosper, the elf Cavalrymen have changed their relationship with their mounts. Instead of being linked to specific mounts, we have tied ourselves to the genealogy of our mounts. Instead of value being placed on the individual, the bloodline becomes the key. Unlike the normal Cavalryman, this dedication to the breeding and development of a family's mounts' lineage lasts many generations, and it can make an ork scorcher's devotion to her mount look like a passing interest. Families, houses, and guilds that are the stewards of a bloodline consider that line's survival everything. The loss of a bloodline is the loss of all purpose in life. The destruction of a bloodline is also the end of all who served it.

I wouldn't be so quick to compare an elf's devotion to an ork's.

—Garth Daxim, ork Thief



GAME INFORMATION

Elf Cavalrymen

Elf Cavalrymen may choose to replace Dominate Beast with Purify Trait at Sixth Circle.

New Talent

Purify Trait

Step: Rank + Willpower Step

Action: Sustained

Requires Karma: No

Strain: 15

Purify Trait is a powerful ability which allows Cavalrymen to improve the ability of their bonded mounts. To purify a trait a cavalryman must spend one full week emphasizing the trait in the bonded mount that they wish to improve. After one weeks time the cavalryman places her hand upon the body of the mount and spends one hour in concentration. An excellent success of the Purify Trait talent must be scored against the spell defense of the mount. If successful, one of the physical attributes of the mount can be raised by one step. A failure will lower the ability of both the mount and the adept one step for a week, and the Purify Trait talent may not be attempted again for that Attribute until the talent's rank is increased. Physical attributes are limited to Dexterity, Strength, and Toughness. Each use of the Purify Trait talent may only increase one physical attribute, and the Purify Trait talent may only increase each attribute once ever.

Berlina, the 8th circle Cavalryman Adept, wishes to raise her horse's Dexterity step from a 6 to a 7. She spends the week in skills training emphasizing her mounts Dexterity. At the end of the week she places her hands on her mount in the setting sun. Focusing her knowledge of the mount and its abilities she extends herself attempting to raise its Dexterity. She rolls a 13 on the Purify Trait test. At the end of the hour she finds herself and her mount sore, physically exhausted and badly in need of rest, but her horse's Dexterity step has increased.

RIDING THE SKIES

This entry is quite special. It is the words of a Theran, Ippikon Karameliko Arokka. Many readers may throw down the book at this point, but I ask you to read on. He is a Hippeirokken, one of their esteemed griffin riders. His story was told while under the care of a most generous Throallic healer. Arokka offers some insights into the Theran view of the Discipline of Cavalryman, and shares some of their magical secrets.

— Merrox

THE THERAN WAY OF RIDING

Most Therans Adepts, especially those that follow the Disciplines with martial magic, are in the military. Adepts in the military are not uncommon in any of the provinces, Barsaive included, but it is more common outside of Barsaive and within Thera proper. It suits us well enough. Our heroes are also patriots. Brilliant generals, swift Scouts, eagle-eyed Archers, swordsmen with quicksilver blades, and centurions with muscles and wills of iron all comprise our army and navy. Their glories and renown are carried with their legions and are displayed with



their medals and ribbons and on the Obelisks of Heroes in our public squares for all to see. While our renown is shared with our commanders and our fellow soldiers, our exploits travel far and wide throughout the Empire. A small sacrifice for so much support.

We ride with our cohorts. Our missions further the glory of the Empire. Our loyalty shines in our victory. We, our mounts, our legions, even the Empire, all are one. What glorifies one, glorifies all. What supports one, supports the others.

Support perhaps, but they cannot find their own glory. The Empire decides where they may go and whom they must fight. A true hero finds his own way.

— Pah'lor of Kratas

Our magic and power is our obligation to serve. As subjects of the Empire, we offer our talents as a gift to the realm, to further its glory and increase its power. For many, the military provides a meaningful life: shelter, training, service, renown, a legacy to pass down to the next generation. Yes, a soldier's life can be a good one.

THE BOND WITH OUR MOUNT

We care a great deal for our mounts; does that surprise you Barsaivans? While some Cavalrymen treat their mounts more like servants, the truly great ones treat them as partners. Our mounts are a great part of our life; there is a loyalty there that can even exceed our loyalty to our family or regiment or to the Empire, and for many it does.

Do not believe this Theran pig for a moment. While the griffin riders may be a special case, every Theran Cavalryman I've had the displeasure of meeting treats his mounts little better than any of his slaves.

— Borimon the Red

Our mounts carry us into battle and return us to home safely. They cry out with our pain and roar with our glory. They may be our property, but they are also our responsibility.

Contrary to popular myth, most Theran officers own their mounts. Those of the general cavalry are property of the Empire.

—Merrox

Their saddles hold us steady and carry our flags. Their hoofbeats brings panic to weak hearts, the shadow of their wings brings fright to the eyes, their shrieks announce the death of our enemies. On their backs, we lead them to our victory, our glory, our fame.

My own griffin is like a brother to me. Anyone who has lost a mount can tell you that it is like losing a family member or a close friend... perhaps even worse. The pain is as real, the memories as sharp. Ask any who Ride, they will tell you, or not, as they choose.

I have the responsibility to care for him, though it is no burden. We share a life; we are a unit. Our shared experience alone creates a bond, beyond the training and magic at work and our shared desire for victory in battle.

THE RITE OF CHOOSING

Like many aspects of being an Adept, my selection of a mount was a challenge. Quite literally, the Rite of Choosing a Mount is a challenge to the beast to join us on our ride. This is especially so for griffin riders.

As anyone who has encountered a wild griffin will tell you, they are not easily tamed. They are fierce and intelligent and do not take well to being subservient to anyone. I have heard that a tribe of humans in Barsaive even worships them.

When I decided to join the ranks of the Hippeirokken, I rode with other prospects to a griffin nesting area. It was in some high seaside cliffs that led to a lush valley, which the griffins used for hunting and play. They are magnificent creatures, and their graceful flight belies their strength.

These griffins were used to Name-givers watching them, so they paid us little mind until we began selecting suitable mounts from among the hatchlings. Our calls and shouts got their attention. Some of the mothers swooped down at us, trying to force us away from their chicks, but we held our ground.

I do think some of them could tell when they caught a soldier's eye. Perhaps it was a sign of that recognition between a rider and mount. Some of the younger recruits were nervous at their taunts and shrieks. I have heard tales of a griffin occasionally attacking a rider who panics and flees, or one who gets too close too soon.

Our captain drew an elaborate glyph on the ground, which the older griffins seemed to recognize. He then pulled a piece of fresh horsemeat from a sealed pouch and placed it within the glyph. That got their attention, yet seemed to settle them down. He then let out a screech that nearly deafened us all and pointed back to where we had stayed our horses. He whistled for our mounts, which dutifully came. At this, the griffins all took notice and one by one they set into our mounts and began to feast.

Several of us protested and moved to defend the horses, but our captain stayed our hand. He explained that we would either leave this pace by foot or by wing, and we understood.

So the Therans use bribery to convince the griffins to let them be ridden. Poor horses.

—Hammerfist Gebano

I know you would like to know the rest, but the rituals are sacred and those who do not Ride would not understand. Those who Ride do, and accept it.

BLOOD BONDS WITH MOUNTS

We Therans have much more sophisticated uses of blood magic than you provincials. Blood carries power; it is powerful magic in its own right. While every Cavalryman has a bond with his mount, and by sharing blood with it has a bond similar to the higher rituals performed between Name-givers that allows the two to ride as one and survive blows that would normally kill them separately, we Therans have transcend even that with our mounts.

The primal blood of the animal has a... purity, a strength of raw life, which powers the magic. I don't know all the details, but I suspect their closeness with nature and the elements allows for it.

Our mounts can use blood magic in a limited fashion. We have learned how to implant blood pebbles onto their coats, to implant living crystal into their claws; we even know more secret techniques that combine the True Elements to enhance our mounts and even ourselves. Our greatest heroes and generals even forge the bonds between themselves and their steeds with orichalcum, to create truly magnificent beasts.

Will the Therans stop at nothing in their ghastly experiments? Having a Name-giver use blood magic is bad enough, but on an animal that can't make its own decisions? They are truly a corrupted empire.

—Ujando Candlebright

Some mounts cannot handle the forces or are too sensitive or go too far out of loyalty and love and risk their Patterns for their riders. Those that can make proper use of the rituals and the magics are truly great steeds, giving their whole heart and charging to glory with magic to fend off foes and strike at the heart of our enemies.

TRAINING

Our training is much the same as for any cavalry: drills, group tactics, teaching the animals to remain calm in battle, teaching them commands, and so forth. Since we are an airborne force, there are key differences, so we do borrow tactics from others. We also teach the griffins how to fight on the ground, how to fly against the wind, and to hone their screams and the use of their claws. We build their endurance, channel their fierceness and cunning, and make them bolder. If you dismount a griffin rider, do not think your problems are over. You may have made your situation worse.

The training also gives us mounts that are much more disciplined than those I have witnessed in Barsaive. Perhaps it was the fear of facing a superior opponent or the lack of discipline of the rider, it matters not. Our mounts do not have such minds to wander off and "do their own thing," as you say. They remain true to our wishes and orders, as much part of the unit as we are.



RIDING A FLYING MOUNT

Nothing can match the thrill of flight. I think only windlings and dragons can describe it adequately and truly understand. We land-bound Name-givers can only experience it through others or by magical means. I am fortunate to ride a griffin, for I can experience the high open sky almost under my own power. No spell, no orichalcum wings, no airship takes me there. A great living, breathing beast soars into the sky under its own power, and I am there, guiding it, feeling its muscles move, feeling the same wind through my hair, sharing the same view with my own eyes.

There is nothing like the beauty of a squadron of griffins in flight. Their swoops, dives, and climbs are like a dance. They swim through the air, sure of their course. Working as a unit, they rule the skies.

I would offer a differing opinion.

—Icewing

Griffin riders take a few feathers from each year's molting and will often braid them into their hair or a saddle cord or an honor patch for their uniform or armor. It is a quick way to tell how long a flyer and mount have been together. It is traditional to be respectful toward a flyer with more experience than you. It has been said that some flyers will create long feathered braids to get respect beyond their years. For the young ones reading this account, this trick does not last long. Any flyer worth his wings can quickly spot such a falsehood and will act accordingly.

Talon clippings are also burned in a seasonal ritual to celebrate the bond between Name-giver and mount. This is similar to the cavalry bands of the steppes using old and worn-out horseshoes as charms of luck and symbols of long service.

THE RITE OF THE FLYING HERO

Flying mounts often die in a manner that does not allow for the Rite of the Hero. You may know of the tales of the great windling Hawkridger Kostral Huyaneck, whose hawk, Itari, was gravely wounded by an arrow. Kostral summoned the strength of ten windlings and flew the bird back to a nearby forest where it could die in peace, creating this version of the ritual as he went. It is said that Kostral grieved an extra year as he was still recovering from the fear of nearly losing his mount to the falling sky.

If circumstances dictate that the Rite of the Hero cannot be performed as is traditional, then this version of the rite takes on a remote and esoteric quality. It is an even more somber occasion, for it reflects the regret caused by not having a chance for farewells, in addition to the grief and pain caused by the loss of a mount. We flyers take care to offer thanks to our mounts and do not let disagreements linger, for our next flight may be our last. This can carry over to our other relations, for we are loathe to let any loose end go unresolved.

We always have something of significance to our mount with us, in case they are lost in battle and we must perform this special version of the Rite. Some flyers carve a scar or make a brand or tattoo of wings in flight to represent their fallen companion. The means are individual, like the pain felt.

Hippeirokken know well the Tale of Golari. One of our patrols was ambushed by raiders. One of the raider's sorcerers summoned a small storm that scattered our forces for a short time. Our own magicians were able to calm the storm, but not before it blew Golari several miles off, separating him from the force. Golari was brave and would not let wind and rain stop him. He and his griffin, Iokanis, flew back with all speed. His return to the battle was announced with one of his javelins impaling the troll captain of the brigands to the mast of his own ship, turning the tide of battle in our favor.

But the victory came at a price. The moot's sorcerer was still alive and, to his credit, loved his captain and sought to avenge his death. As the battle came to a close, he summoned a lightning strike that struck Iokanis and blasted Golari from his saddle. Even with their bond of blood, it was too much for the beast, and she fell to earth, her wings aflame. Golari was able to grab the passing airship and stop his own plummet, though his grief and pain tempted him to follow Iokanis. He clawed his way to a secure hold and let out a cry to the Passions that Iokanis would be avenged. Golari fought and killed six of the raiders, one for each of Iokanis' legs and wings.

The battle ended with only a single raider airship left intact. Golari and the rest of his cohort built an effigy for Iokanis, with each of the griffins offering a feather of their own for their fallen sister. Golari set it ablaze with his own featherband. They flew in formation around it, singing the songs of their cohort and of the glory of riders past. The fire consumed the ship, and it fell to the earth, following Iokanis' fiery descent.



GAME INFORMATION

Griffin Riders

While k'stulaami and t'skrang are the most common Hippeirokken, especially in the Seventh Fleet and the Eighth Legion under General Nikar, humans, orks, and elves also ride the flying mounts. Those non-k'stulaami and others who join the ranks of Griffin Riders before Third Circle learn Wind Catcher instead of Spirit Mount. They also learn Down Strike as a Discipline Talent at Ninth Circle. If a Cavalryman joins the Hippeirokken after Third or Ninth Circle, they cannot obtain these talents. These latecomers to the griffin riders often make use of other magic, such as the Blood Wings charm to keep from falling.

Mount Blood Charms

The Therans have learned how to use blood magic and the true elements to enhance their mounts, developing several charms to improve performance.

The charms work in much the same fashion for mounts as for Name-givers, except that animals will sometimes suffer Depatterning faster with the rituals. When implanting a new charm on a mount, make an immediate Depatterning Test. Assume the mount's Willpower attribute is the minimum needed to have their listed step number (see p. 144 ED2). The Blood Share talent can help with the shock, if used during the ritual. A successful Blood Share Test against the mount's Spell Defense will give the mount a +1 bonus to their Willpower step.

The mount versions of standard blood charms add +1 to the DR due to the more profound effects that such magic has on the animals' Patterns. Blood charms for mounts are more expensive than those for Name-givers, but rarely cost more than twice the listed cost.

Sample Mount Charms

Air Wings (DR 2): By weaving True Air through the wings of a flying mount, the Therans improve its aerial ability. Increase the mount's Strength and Dexterity by 1 for purposes of lifting and movement. The mount will fly 10% faster. This charm causes 3 points of permanent damage. Cost is 1200 silver.

Astral Sensitive Eye (DR 3): Replaces a mount's eye with an amber crystal that allows the mount to see into the astral space for the cost of 1 Strain. The charm costs 1 permanent point of damage and cannot be removed. It requires a month to properly acclimate the mount to the dual vision. Cost is 375 silver.

Blood Pebble Armor (DR 1): This charm grants +5 Physical Armor, +3 Mystic Armor, and -1 Initiative for 4 points of permanent damage. It takes a Weaponsmith 16 hours of steady work to implant a set of blood pebbles into the hide of a mount. Cost is 500 silver.

Breath of Water (DR 2): A charm made with True Air and True Water, it is implanted into the animal's lungs, allowing it to breath water equally well as air for Toughness minutes, at the cost of 1 point of Strain. The first few times it is used, a mount will panic until it makes a Willpower(7) test. The charm causes 2 points of permanent damage. Cost is 600 silver.

Crystal Talons (DR 1): The mount's natural claws or talons are replaced with living crystal, giving it a +2 step bonus to clawing and slashing damage. This charm causes 1 point of permanent damage and costs 100 silver per set.

ON THE SOLITARY OUTRIDER

Master Librarian,

Shortly after taking my leave of the staff-wielding Swordmaster Sarghus, I found myself in a caravaners' inn in Vorstown, waiting for a House Yilwaz caravan to arrive. A rowdy place, but comfortable and well furnished, the clientele included many ork scorchers and a number of other cavalry riders. Though I had journeyed forth from Throal to gather further stories of Adepts for the Library's latest tome, I was busy transcribing Sarghus' story at the time, and thusly did not have the opportunity to interview any of the riders present. Of course, inspiration from blessed Astendar comes when a Name-giver seeks it not, and thus it was.

The rowdy noise of the common room was easily ignored, but when it ceased, it jolted me out of my work as quickly as a scream. As I looked up, I saw that everyone in the room was staring at a human man standing in the doorway. The poor soul was dressed in naught but a pair of trousers, and looked to have walked many days to reach that place. He swayed in the doorway, his eyes scanning the room, but in his exhaustion, I truly doubt that he saw anyone. It was not until several members of Herok's Lancers came forward and welcomed him to their table. They pulled the human to a chair and ordered him food.

Surreptitiously, I watched the man, sensing that there was a tale to be heard. He ate food that one would feed an invalid at first—broth and weak tea—but he finished his meal with meat and ale. He talked quietly and intensely to his friends, his eyes flashing with anger. Judging by his state, it was clear that he had suffered some wrongdoing.

Perhaps I would have discovered the cause of his woe upon further investigation, except that at that moment, a trio of humans entered the room and, in doing so, revealed the cause of the man's misfortune for me. They did not wear the mark of any band, but I learned later that they were Riders of the Scorched Plains. Their leader wore a beautiful pair of espagrascale boots, and another carried a cunningly wrought crossbow. They entered casually, talking loudly and demanding food and drink.

The half-clothed man looked up at their entrance, clearly recognizing several of them. He turned to his compatriots and talked furiously, but in low tones. Several looked over at the Riders, and nodded in agreement. The leader of the Lancers asked the man a question, and the man pointed to the ork's quirt, a long strip of braided thong that hung at his belt. The ork seemed puzzled, but the man repeated the gesture, so the ork handed him the quirt.

The man took the quirt and strode over to the table of Riders with a purposeful step. Several looked up and saw him coming, but could not react before he had reached the table and lashed their leader across the face. The Rider fell from his chair, and the man backhanded the other one that had carried the crossbow. With a snarl, the half-dressed man grabbed that weapon and bashed the third in the face with its butt.

What followed was a tumbling melee that dissolved into a brawl between the man, the Riders, the Lancers, and anyone else who decided that a fight might liven the afternoon. I, for one, chose to join the innkeeper behind the bar. When the violence had ceased, the three riders had been beaten unconscious, and the man had received several



wounds. The Vorstown Guard arrived, and interrogation revealed that the Riders had stolen the man's gear, weapons, and steed. Several of the Lancers testified on his behalf, and the items and animal were returned to him, minus fees for damages and a fine for brawling. The Riders were run out of town by the collective gathering of horsemen in the tavern.

It was only afterwards that I managed to approach the man, as he was inspecting his steed, a beautiful bay mare, for damage. He had immediately put on the *espagra* boots. The quirt still hung from his belt, a gift from his Lancer comrade. I introduced myself and asked if I might hear his side of the tale. What follows is what he told me.

— Alanna Russ, Traveling Scholar

I am Named Lirel. I am flattered that you would think my story worthy of attention, but there is little that I can tell you that any member of the Lancers or one of the other worthy groups here cannot. As for the Name-givers that you ask about, they were thieves, plain and simple. They came upon me as I was checking the path between here and Servon, and asked to ride with me for company. When we got away from the river and jungle, and away from any settlements, they gave me a choice: my gear or my life. The fools should've killed me first. No one separates a Cavalryman from his steed for long, even an outrider.

An outrider? Oh, you've never heard of us. Well, not surprising. We don't crow about ourselves much. But if I mentioned Rejruk's Foxes, you'd know who they are, eh? Thought so. The Foxes are the best-known outriders, and the most numerous. Most of us work in much, much smaller groups.

An outrider is a Cavalryman that rides alone, or detached from the rest of a cavalry company. Sometimes we're called "point riders" or "flankers," but the job is essentially the same. We're the eyes of the cavalry.

Have you ever watched the Chargers or the Lancers or another company on the move? They move in mass, but if you watch, all move in the same direction, except for a small fraction that are running up and down the line. Some of those are messengers or aides to the various subcommanders. But the ones that go out first, before the company ever moves, and go off for hours, in all directions, those are the outriders.

A company cannot see what is at its feet, only what is in the distance. We outriders must go forth to see what is in front and to the sides of a company, and to tell the company of any dangers. We must be fast, smart, and sometimes silent. Some outriders follow the Scout discipline, but most follow the Way of the Cavalryman. The speed that a horse gives an outrider can be the difference between life and death, between victory and defeat.

Lirel lets his opinions of who makes the best outriders cloud the facts. There are easily as many Archers and Beastmasters as there are Scouts, and many of Rejruk's Foxes are Thieves.

— Zav, Outrider for Rejruk's Foxes

ON RUNNING SILENT

Like most Cavalrymen, we outriders see the world through two pairs of eyes, our own and our steed's. We live in a world that is full of the wind and of motion. Much of what we are is very much like any Cavalryman that rides. But we are also very different.

You have been in this town for a while, Scholar Russ, and you have seen the companies ride in and out. They are not quiet, are



they? No. No cavalry can be quiet; there are too many Name-givers, riding too many steeds. Even the windling aerial cavalry cannot be completely quiet without great effort, and those joyous souls are rare to make that effort without cause. The reason is merely a matter of numbers.

Companies consist of many Name-givers. That many Name-givers must make an effort to remain quiet. Too much effort to pay much attention to anything but being quiet. An outrider, however, almost always rides alone, with only his or her steed for company. And often, that solitude is accompanied by silence.

Silence equates survival, when you travel alone. You have the look of someone who has wandered Barsaive for a time; clearly, you understand that a traveler must remain quiet to avoid attracting the attention of things or people that might seek to do harm. Outriders learn this very early on, often before we set our feet in the stirrups of our first mounts.

However, silence is not our only tool. Speed is always of importance, as well. Outriders are responsible for keeping their company informed. Being quiet means nothing if the information and messages that an outrider delivers arrive too late. Because of this, we must be fast. The Foxes are already known for their specially bred horses, faster than any others, but most outriders know how to coax more speed from their mounts when it is needed. And the best of us have mastered the art of running silent, where an outrider and his mount can move as fast as they possibly can without being heard or, sometimes, even seen.

ON THE OUTRIDER IN A COMPANY

Outriders are most often members of a cavalry company. As I said, cavalries need outriders to be aware of their surroundings, and you will not find a company without a few outriders. But, we are different from the other Cavalrymen. Often, our way of silence carries over into our very being. Look for the quiet Name-givers,



less prone to boisterous talk and games, sitting at a cavalry's camp, those that are content to listen rather than talk, and you will most likely find the outriders.

We are also very independent. A Cavalryman comes to rely on his company, knowing that his fellows will guard his flanks during the charge and melee. Outriders can make no such assumptions. We go out alone, or in small numbers, and cannot rely on the other members of a company to be there. An outrider becomes self-sufficient and adaptable. Each rider and mount pair realizes that, ultimately, there can be no one that they can have complete faith in, save themselves.

Some outriders avoid traveling with companies, preferring to act as independents. Caravans are always in need of good scouts and point riders, and many cities rely on us to deliver messages as often as they rely upon skyships. More so, in some cases, since we are cheaper than hiring a skyship crew. Some outriders have had some falling out with their old cavalry; others, like myself, merely prefer to be independent and without obligations outside of a contract.

There are a number of other opportunities for Name-givers with the skills of an outrider in Kratas. Elsewhere as well, but in Kratas there's more honesty about what you'll be doing.

—Terricia

ON BECOMING AN OUTRIDER

How does a Name-giver choose to be an outrider? It's not much different from being a normal Cavalryman, really. Outriders simply find that they are much happier in quiet and solitude than in the company of other riders. As an outrider progresses through his studies and the ranks of a cavalry, he or she simply gravitates towards the scouting and messenger duties.

As for the actual act of becoming an outrider, the Joining is much as any other among Cavalrymen. Outriders, however, being

quieter souls, often are silent during the initial process. Rather than telling the foal of the glory that the pair will achieve together, an outrider generally stands quiet, supporting the foal, while showing that the foal also supports the Name-giver. In this way, the steed can understand that the outrider relies on it as much as it may rely on the outrider. As the primary traits and purpose of the outrider are silence and support of others, the foal is given an idea of what the future will contain.

The actual Rite of Joining, when the outrider and his or her steed become one partnership, differs very little from the traditional Cavalryman ceremony. Generally, there are fewer people present; only those trusted friends of the outrider may be honored by invitation. The apprentice rider and mount receive their marks from their teacher and mount, and the newly bonded pair rides forth. At this point, common custom dictates that the outrider must not only put distance between he and his steed and his teacher, but must also do it as quietly as possible. Once the pair is truly alone, then the outrider may give their partnership its secret Name.

ON THE MOUNTS OF AN OUTRIDER

Outriders value speed and silence over strength. Our partners are faster than the regular company steeds, but we sometimes choose a steed that trades stealth for speed. Most often, we ride horses, rather than thundra or other beasts. Most Name-givers who are familiar with cavalries are familiar with Rejruk's Foxes, especially now that the Great Library has spoken to the leaders of Cara Fahd. The Foxes have the best horses for an outrider, and many of us dream of acquiring such a steed.

Doubtless the Therans have blood charms for their outriders that improve their silence and speed.

—Jerrek, Elf Wizard

I'd love to see the look on a Theran outrider's face when his tormented beast still isn't the equal of one of our steeds.

—Zav, Outrider for Rejruk's Foxes

Name-givers of a smaller stature who choose to be an outrider have a greater range of available steeds. Dwarf outriders that I know prefer troajin, since the large cats are more silent than ponies or huttawa. Windling outriders are less likely to choose an unusual mount, since most of the windling Cavalrymen choose silent or fast mounts to begin with. However, I do know one, Qiint of the Servos Brush-Runners, who has a great owl for a partner.

Very few trolls seem to be inclined to be outriders. Perhaps it is their temperament, or maybe their sense of honor, but I think, personally, that it is their size. Troll Cavalrymen are rare as it is, and their steeds are massive, brawny, noisy beasts. Neither granlains nor firescales are suited to the way of an outrider. While a troll may scout for his cavalry, he must rely more on keen eyes than silence and speed.

ON THE TRAINING OF AN OUTRIDER

As I said, an outrider often drifts towards his position after he joins a cavalry. If there are no outriders in the company to begin with, then he is volunteered by his commander, because his quiet nature and perception make him best qualified for the job. If there are others among the company already, then they will notice him





and have him brought into their group. Either way, the outrider finds himself in the position almost without conscious effort.

This does not mean that the training of an outrider is easy. Masters train their apprentices in all the ways of the Cavalryman, but they also teach the outrider the art of perception. The bond of rider and steed is doubly emphasized, for not only does the outrider need to know what his steed feels, but also what it senses. A horse's nose is keener than a Name-giver's, and master outriders teach their students to know when a steed senses something that they cannot.

At the same time, they teach the apprentice how to ride fast and silent. Outrider apprentices are often sent through rocky terrain wearing blindfolds, and they are told to ride as fast as they can. Their masters ride close by to prevent them from harming themselves or their mounts. When the pair can ride through at a run, the apprentice understands how to sense what his mount senses. For silence, they are often told to run through underbrush or across dusty plains, where they must step away from their intimate bond and think outside their partnership to realize what others may hear or see. Almost all outriders learn how to help their steeds quiet their steps early on.

After the bond between steed and rider is strong, and they have been taught speed and silence, then they are taught how to fight. Many masters teach how to fight on the run. Outriders are often alone, and they must learn how to get away from ambushes. Other members of the cavalry are often drafted at this point, to masquerade as "bandits" and ambush the apprentice and master at odd times during the day. The apprentice learns to see ambushes before they happen and how to avoid the fight before it starts, as much as how to defeat or escape his enemies after the combat begins.

Finally, the apprentice is sent out on his first mission. Often, this is a small job; many apprentices serve as couriers or go on purchasing missions for their commanders. Before they leave, they are told to be as fast as they can going, and as quiet as they can returning. Their masters often trail them, following their path and keeping an eye on them. When they return, they are asked what

they saw and where. The more complete report that an outrider can give, the more likely his master will believe that his training is done.

ON THE OUTRIDER AS A SOLDIER OR HORSEMAN

Many Cavalrymen call themselves as either soldiers or horsemen. Such names are almost arbitrary—dependent on what part of their training they feel more comfortable with—and many outriders fall into the two camps as well. Soldier outriders, sometimes known as "ambushers," "hunters," or "bushwhackers," focus on attacks that can be made on the run. Often, they learn how to make deadly traps that they can lead their foes into as well. They have little use for maneuvering and prefer to strike from cover and then move away, leaving their enemies confused as to where they are. Far from the typical berserkers of the shock cavalries, soldier outriders often take a predatory air when engaged in hit-and-run tactics.

Horsemen outriders, known as "couriers," "express riders" or, simply, "horsemen," prefer to escape their opponents if they have to. Often, they will try to avoid foes that they know are there, instead of striking from surprise like the soldiers. If they must attack, they will often attack to unhorse their foes or stun them, so that they can move away with all possible speed. Often, these outriders are messengers or spies, and they consider their mission of delivering information to their commanders more important than personal glory. They focus on not only the speed of their mount, but also its ability to maneuver. Often, horsemen outriders will seek to lose their pursuers by riding through forests, brush, or across hazardous terrain. They often take the time to learn as much as they can about the land that their company travels through, so that they can be aware of deadfalls, hostile beasts, and other natural dangers, and these can serve to draw an enemy off their trail until the horseman can get away.

CHAPTER 3

SKY RAIDERS



DARE TO BE A BOLD SKY RAIDER

The subject of this entry, Tarn Buraak, an ork Sky Raider from the Tylon Mountains, was certainly one of the more... entertaining Adepts we interviewed for this collection. It was useful to see how a non-Troll from outside the Twilight Peaks views the Discipline.

— Ela Pono

THE LIFE OF RIDING ON THE WINDS

I've always found it kinda funny. They call it Air Sailing, but you can't just stick a sail on a ship and ride it on the breeze. It always requires some other work. But I supposed calling it Air Rowing wouldn't inspire nearly as many tales or legends or bring as many Name-givers to the Discipline. No, it wouldn't. Hmph. Just as well I suppose. Few enough have the passion and the fire in their hearts to be a Sky Raider.

At least we don't force the issue like the Therans. But they don't have the fire in their bellies to be Sky Raiders. Sure, they plunder and raid from their stone airships, but they do not relish the thought of parting the clouds with a mighty roar to strike down your foe. They burn what they find; they don't plunder or take much aside from slaves or orichalcum. We Sky Raiders don't waste such opportunities. If it's valuable, we liberate it from its unworthy holders and return it to our moot, where it may witness our glorious victories. Not doing it is an insult. It would set off my *gahad* and those of many of my brothers and sisters.

I sail the skies because I belong there. Like a Cavalryman on his horse or the smith at his forge or even some scholar like you at some musty old desk. It's my place. I own the skies when I sail. My ship is my second home. My crew are my brothers and sisters. The world is open to me. The air is cleaner up there, crisp and pure, easy to breathe. You can see far and wide. I see my enemies from far off, and if they're lucky they see me and know they'll die an honorable death. Ha ha! Lean over the rail of a ship and you swear you could jump off and fly. That's the life for me. *Abora!*

BEING NOT A TROLL

Unlike the Twilight Peaks, the Tylon moots have many non-trolls. It's a mixed community. All who work hard have a place. All who are brave enough can become a Sky Raider, and even earn a place on our ships. The weak and stupid will leave or die.

Orks have their place among Sky Raiders like anyone else has their place in a town or kaer. The trolls may have started it, but we orks feel it just as strongly, and our Fireblood burns hotter than the Scarlet Sea. My *gahad* takes me to the skies; where does yours lead you, Scholar? The trolls make us *no'á'gal* earn our place, which is as it should be. Life is a struggle, as we say; nothing worth claiming as your own comes for free.

We orks understand justice and strength, like the trolls, and I think they respect us for that, though there are still many differences, especially how we deal with insults. Unlike trolls, we can brush 'em off and move on easily, provided that they do not touch our *gahad*. Our thirst for freedom and our bravery and lust for life do suit us well to be part of the crystal raider clans. We share the trolls' understanding of a short life. Many mountain orks have earned respect from trolls just for surviving life up there.

Say what you want about the trolls, they have a better sense of belonging and of your place in things than most of us. I do wish that my own people had a better sense of such things. My people do not have a sense of history the way dwarfs or humans do. We have adapted to life in the moots. We carry the stories of our heroes with us. My moot has taken them as our funeral custom. Tales of bravery and daring surround the fires after one of our brothers has fallen in battle. And glorious tales they are, let me tell you! Told long into the night!

Mostly, trolls lead us, but there also many humans and orks and even dwarfs. We don't worry about petty things like politics or who sired you. Though blood will tell, your father's honor isn't yours... well at least not entirely. The moots don't bribe or make backroom deals like the Throalics or Iopans—no, nothing like those conniving Iopans. We're led by the strongest and bravest and most loyal. If you're the best at something, you do it. To do otherwise would betray the clan and your responsibility.

A DESIRE FOR GLORY

What's all that? Yes, yes, you folks always want to know how we Adepts get to where we are. Fine. At least my tale will be more interesting than some old Wizard or something.

Becoming a Sky Raider is hard, as it should be. The weak wouldn't survive this life. One doesn't simply decide one day to ride the skies for glory and become a Sky Raider. No, perhaps that's the way of Air Sailors with all their fancy dancing on the decks, but our way is fierce and bold and must be earned. We must show we have the strength to handle the oars and jump across a deck. We must stoke the fires in our hearts to fight through any pain. We must be brothers to all our crew, trusting one another with our lives and counting on everyone to work hard. This is what it takes to become a Sky Raider.

The Tylon Mountains are a good place to live and learn. My clan controls an area with many cliffs and treacherous slopes. I've been cliff jumping since I could run on both legs. I still have some of the old scars to prove it. Wanna see? No? Hrmph, your loss.

The jumping's watched by the captains. If you catch their eyes, you might be allowed near the ships or taken to the truly dangerous valleys away from our territory. I know more than one brave friend who met his glory at the bottom of those valleys. They died hearing the rush of the wind in their ears and bellowing over it, as it should be.

Those of us who wanted a place among their crews sparred and ran and bellowed mighty calls to glory and battle. I suppose we were no different from any children who play at soldier or pretend to be heroic Adepts. Whatever we were doing, it would stop when we would watch the ships go out and come back. Seeing the banners fly in the wind, I knew I would be on a ship someday, maybe even one of my own. Hmm, yes, that would be good.

What? No, not yet, but soon I'll be captain of my own ship. I've got a few good years left in me and there's a big sky left to conquer.

The Tylon moots play interesting games, but they will never have the true spirit of a raider from the Twilight Peaks.

— Noldor Blackfang



We'd all ask if any of the crew needed help loading or unloading; some of us even begged to clean their boots or mend rips in their armor. A few of them would let us, and we'd be happy for days. If they lent us a weapon to clean, we'd brandish it about pretending to do battle with monsters and rivals. Once in a while, the older hopefuls would get a broken blade or shield that was no longer useful handed down to them. Despite their appearance, they became treasured keepsakes. I still have the melted dagger Hogo Blacktusk threw to me after a particularly hard raid. I studied the effects of the sorcerous acid on the metal for days on end.

They sound like a pack of jackals.

— Mikolos Donitis

INITIATION

I was chosen by Captain Harkin Crag splitter, a human if you can believe that. And you can since I said it. If you think it's rare to be an ork who rides the skies, humans are doubly so in some parts, especially as captains. But he was a fine man, brave and strong as two humans, even many orks couldn't best him in the wrestling contests.

I wonder if the author fares well at the game, or if he's all talk?

— Sendrik

I'll never forget the day Crag splitter took me to his ship. It was the closest I'd been to one. It had just been refitted after a dangerous raid on some Iopans. The beams were new and you could smell the True Air, fresh and clean like the first wind of a storm. Even talking about it now takes me back....

He had me check the ties. I did it fast as I could, making sure the knots were secure like my life depended on it. When I ran back to him, he just stood there. My first thought was that I'd done it too quickly and, in my excitement, forgot something or missed a loose strand. But I stood firm; I would not have him think I was some

sniveling groundling. "Lines all checked captain!" I said with all the conviction I could muster.

He still just stared. It seemed like an eternity, his hard face not moving or betraying anything. I just stood there, daring not even to breathe or blink. Then he gave a slight nod, and said, "Yes, they are. Your job is to check the lines every morning and after we return."

"Yes, Captain!" I yelled. I was in shock. I didn't know what to do. He turned and went to his hut. I think if I had wings I'd have flown home, or to the gates of Thera to curse the First Governor himself. Heh, probably would have too. I ran to tell my family and friends. Now that was a great night. We had a feast that went well on past moonrise. I remember I slept outside so I'd be woken by the sun and not miss the morning check of the lines. I think that impressed Crag splitter.

TRAINING AND LESSONS

The next two years were hard ones. I worked harder and longer than I imagined was possible. Some of the trolls in the crew gave me no respect, some of the humans looked down on me, and even the other orks did not treat me as a friend or brother at first.

Even our dwarf, Toldo the Unshakeable, seemed to find a way to look down on me. I still haven't figured out how he did that. I just thank the Passions elves don't have the fire in their bellies for sky raiding. I'm not sure I'd have remembered my place with that much condescension flying my way.

This was my first lesson: respect must be earned. Brotherhood is a shared experience. Checking the lines wasn't the same as engaging in battle, but it was important. Once I understood this, I was more comfortable with my place. I didn't like the waiting for my turn, but that only made it sweeter when I got my chance.

The other apprentices and I formed our own brotherhood. We all wanted to earn a seat on the ships, but those only came when someone died or was too old or injured to sail, or, rarely, when a new ship was built or taken. That was part of another lesson: nothing in life is free. The price may not be coin or blood, but there's always a price to pay.

When the first of the apprentices I knew earned his place, we had a great feast with his family. We all wanted to see his new crewman's tattoo. Some of us would slap him on the shoulder to get him to wince with the pain. We created tales of his future deeds, asked him where he would fly, and promised to watch over his sisters if he should fail to return. I'm not sure he appreciated that as much as we did. Ha! We reveled in the stories he'd tell upon his returns. But soon, he wouldn't come to us after every raid, and then hardly at all. His brotherhood was the ship and crew; we were just apprentices. We had to respect him as a superior now. Another lesson.

It was much the same when I earned my place on the *Thorny Cloudbreak*. Ah, a fine ship that was. Took an entire Thera fleet a day and a night to take it down I tell you, and it did not go down alone.

HONOR

Like most Sky Raiders, the ideals of the trolls influence our lives. We have to live a life with honor; our *katorr* is what we make of it. Our ship and crew become part of our family, our clan, and its honor is very important, offending the *kat'ral* offends many people. Being a *no'a'gral*, I don't have *katera*, the trolls' racial honor, to



worry about, but I still stand tall and proud as an ork and will defend my moot to the death. Honor is the brother of life; the two are twined like a rope.

The state of the drakkar reflects on its crew, affecting their personal and clan honor. A drakkar that is not maintained shows that its crew is sloppy and does not care for themselves. If they can't even keep the paint on the hull intact, how can they possibly survive the Theran or Iopan navy?

Captain Crag splitter allowed me to share in the crew's *kat'ral* by making sure the ship's lines were set tight, a great honor. If one of the lines had come loose in the night, I would've been devastated, but I also would've insulted the captain and the crew's honor. And wouldn't have gotten to where I am today. See, even a simple responsibility like a securely tied knot can have great consequences.

Each of us has a job to do, which was another lesson in responsibility. A ship cannot fly by itself, a crew is not made up of one Name-giver, and Sky Raiders don't make up the whole moot. The ships are built by carpenters and Elementalists. Our tales are sung by Troubadours. There are guards to defend the moot on the ground and cooks to feed us. Failing in one's responsibilities is failing yourself, the crew, your family, even the entire moot. Not taking responsibility is worse than failure. No one would fault you for losing a hard-fought battle, but not taking the responsibility to right a wrong or defend your life with all you have is, well, wrong. It's an aberration to all we are; it's dishonorable.

THE ROAR AND RUSH OF THE WIND

There is nothing like the raw power of a gale wind in your face. The power of nature... ah, it stirs me like my *gahad*. I like strong food, bold action, daring raids, and passionate mates. I will dive into any worthy fight. To hold back is a sign of weakness and an insult to your cause or rapture or target. It is an insult to *gahad*.

Nature and raiding are harsh mistresses. They test you and challenge you every day. A Sky Raider survives; he rides on the winds and bends them to his will with the fire in his belly. My life is full for I have truly lived. How many can say that? Even if I were to die tomorrow, there would be no retreat. If Death wants to take me, he'll have to tear me out of the sky with his bare hands!

Air can be as turbulent an element as fire. Ask anyone who's sailed ahead of a storm front or been in a valley when the wind catches just right and blows down everything in its path. Or had to sail through a storm, with the only thing saving you from a long fall over a low rail was your own wits and a strong rope. The wind is like *gahad*; you must ride with it and control it, for if you fight it or let it master you, you may be destroyed.

THE WINDS OF BATTLE

Some of the *ujnorts* captains have held back at times during a raid or battle. Usually they were right to do so, as experience or intuition taught them that a new enemy would arrive or a second front was the best tactic. Like the wind, they went calm, shifted, and then rushed anew. It does not always please me, but I do strive to remember those lessons when I have a ship of my own.

But to those whom I may face down in the future who've read these words, do not think I will wait for you. I am *trol'o'astia*, an omen of doom. Be wary of me.



He's full of quaalz, that's what he is.

— Garth Daxim, ork Thief

AGAINST THE THERAN DOGS

This excerpt is from the logs of Leo Sarthain, captain of the drakkar Golron of the Stoneclaw moot. The Golron was destroyed in the Second Battle of Sky Point, and it was requested that the writings of her captain be remembered as part of this compilation.

— Thom Edrull

The darkness was not the worst part; it was the stinging realization that I was in chains that bothered me most. The stinging in my chest where the burns were healing was a reminder that, although I was felled in combat, it had been no easy thing for the enemy. I was sure that I was one of the few Name-givers that had survived a hit from a fire cannon.

The memory of my shield dissolving into ash in front of me as I was flung from the ship could not help but bring a smile to my face, and in the darkness I chuckled. "Well father, I guess I did something memorable after all, didn't I?" I was sure I heard my father's laugh in the breeze that pervaded the ship's interior. Theran capital ships were always a mite drafty.

The time passed and as they usually do, the door opened.

A deep rumble of a bellow filled my throat, but faded as I saw the eight soldiers outside flanking a tiny, gaunt fellow. I know men of importance when I see them and knew better than to take the chance of dying in unfamiliar territory. I would bide my time.

"Sky Raider...come with me." The small man's voice was high, and a mite effeminate for my taste, but the authority it held allowed for no argument. As I stood, I noticed one of the guards lift an inch into the air. Clearly, a Warrior who thought I was going to be trouble.

It's a pity Leo doesn't give more information on this "small man." There's not enough here for me to identify him—but one thing's for sure, he's no Air Sailor. Perhaps a Questor of Dis?

—Jeri Silvermane

"Calm down, the little Theran wants to talk to Big Leo, he talks to Big Leo." My eyes caught the anxious guard in their own web of authority. "You can strike with your fancy Warrior's tricks boy, but you'll be in pieces before you strike twice." My tusked smile took the guard back to the ground. One of the other guards chuckled and moved aside as I shrugged through the door. The guards were all in the same uniform of the Theran Navy, and it gave me honor that they were probably the greatest number of Adepts the Therans had aboard, and they were all to play guard for me while I was out and about in the ship.

"Good of you to join me with no trouble." The high voice traveled back to me between the first two guards that kept me effectively out of reach of the small man. "You will find us gracious hosts if you cooperate."

"Thank you kind sir, I will endeavor to entertain and delight you with my own brand of hospitality one day." I managed to reply gracefully as I followed. I'm sure he understood what I was saying.

"I trust you are in good health, all things considered of course?" The small man continued his conversation as we made our way farther down into the ship.

"More fit than after a night of revel at moot I'd say." I chuckled and nudged the guard next to me, whose armor crashed as he threw himself to the corridor wall spinning at the 'assault.' The young guard's face flushed red as he realized he had only been the victim of a rib poke and his knuckles grew white on his sword hilt.

"Boy...you are far too tense for guard duty," I commented in a dry and unamused tone. I held up my shackled hands and smiled. "I'm unarmed...go for it."

"Stand down!" The thin man practically shrieked in his anger.

"Sir!" The young guard jumped to attention away from the wall, his armor clashing again, this time drawing a snicker from one of the guards behind me.

"What is it about you Sky Raiders that makes my men so nervous?" The little man turned on his men and, with a milder screech that was supposed to be his equivalent to a deep commanding voice, said, "He is one man, felled by our Theran might, and completely cowed by our prowess. He is baiting you! Hoping that your training will fail you and then he will be dead before our chance to chat."

"Your lordship, we would never..." The young guard tried in vain to regain his composure but the Theran dignitary was having none of it.

"You are right!" he shouted at the guard with his voice raising a quite uncomfortable octave. "You will not disgrace your uniform by acting without my command!"

"Yes sir," The young warrior replied and held at attention.

I watched the display with amused interest, but was careful to keep my face neutral.

"Now, shall we mister...", the gaunt little Theran let his voice trail off as he made eye contact with me for the first time.

"Leo Sarthain, captain of the *Golron*." I let it flow from my tongue, my tusked jaw giving the words a deep bass timbre and letting them fill the hallway. "At your service...my lord." I made a small bow with a flourish.

Two of the soldiers were now visibly distressed, and one of them broke rank to whisper to his partner, "The *Golron* Terror?"

The "Golron Terror", indeed. I'm surprised Leo didn't claim that the guards soiled their breeches at the sound of his Name.

—Maar Stonehorn

"Now, now, young sir, that is a nasty rumor started by some of my more numerous victims; you must not believe everything you hear of Sky Raiders. It mostly isn't true." I smiled through my tusks and flexed my muscles. "For instance, they say that a Sky Raider can bellow so fiercely that his foes tremble in terror..." I drew in a deep breath, and the guards all panicked as no less than three swords cleared their scabbards. "It simply isn't true." I smiled and the guards relaxed a moment, however their commander was livid.

"You simpering fools!" He snarled and clouted one of the guards with his blade drawn about the ear with a garbled little fist. "You!" he snarled at me. It reminded me much of a small woman's lapdog snarling at a guard hound. "INSIDE!" The fist turned into a finger pointing into a small gallery with two chairs and a desk between.

I shrugged and strode into the small room, taking the chair behind the desk, which seemed the much more comfortable of the two and sat down. It was padded enough that it didn't even seem to strain under my weight.

"Thank you, my lord, for the invitation." I grinned as the soldiers surrounded me again. "You see, we Sky Raiders are not without our social graces."

The thin man sighed and pointed at the smaller, and obviously less comfortable chair. I briefly wondered if it would even be able to hold me. But, I was still enjoying my game, so I stood and then rolled over the desk and was in the chair, grinning like a cat as again the guards panicked.

"OUT!" the man screeched at the men. The guards beat a hasty retreat outside the door, with one remaining behind, obviously uncomfortable at having been abandoned.

I grinned at him and sized him up. He was the dependable sort and would have been a benefit to any commander, just smart enough to know what needed to be done and just brave enough to follow through. I liked him at once, but felt bad about what would most likely have to be done.

"Why are you still here?" The commander raised his fist as if to strike the soldier.

"Respectfully, sir, we haven't restrained the prisoner. He is a dangerous troll." The soldier didn't flinch as he explained his duty, and held up a large linked chain with a lock, motioning to the shackles and the ring in front of the chair.

"Very well!" The thin man spun around to hide his obvious discomfort at having been shown up and fell into his chair behind the desk. As the guard sighed and locked the shackles to the chain and then to the floor keeping me sitting in a most uncomfortable position, I sighed as I realized that the guardsman had some experience with the fine art of restraint.

"Now we can have our little chat." The man's eyes narrowed and he looked across the desk at me. My rumpled surcoat, singed across the center and edges likely gave the impression of a vagabond, but my burning eyes and sharpened tusks began to make the little man uneasy. To his credit he continued the attempt to be menacing.



"So, tell me about yourself, Leo." His nervous hands pulled out some parchment and began to look for his pen. His hands kept searching the desk and as he opened the drawer to seek it out, the guard stepped closer and held a hand out.

"Well, I suppose someone has heard the reputation of Sky Raiders as a little free with other Name-givers' things....," I said and gave up the sharp pen to the guard with an ingenuous smile. The guard sighed and handed it to the commander, obviously getting annoyed. He took his position behind me and pulled out a lead-filled sap.

I shook my head and sighed a second time. This was not going to go as well as I might have hoped. No, this was going to get ugly.

"Tell me about yourself, Captain Sarthain," the man repeated, as he inked the pen and prepared to take notes.

"Well, I am a simple troll. What do you wish to know?" I smiled toothily and waited.

"What is your standing among the clans?" The little man inquired.

"I am a captain of a drakkar, much like any other." Leo shrugged. "We all work to provide the livelihood of our families and clans. Much like your galleys that ply their trade, we are but simple hunter-gatherers eking out a living the best way we know how." I smiled and looked innocently at the inquisitive man behind the desk.

If Sky Raiders are hunter-gatherers, then I suppose scorchers are migrant horse breeders. Fah.

— Razi Garsun

"So, do you Sky Raiders have any naval organization?" The man asked, pressing.

"Sure we do! I am the captain, and on my ship my word is law! We are quite organized. I have my oarsmen, my sailors, and my carpenter, and all the other amenities required for a drakkar." I sat up straighter as I described my men, causing the chains that bound me to strain audibly. "We run watches and have a deep respect for the traditions and behaviors of all the sky navies in Barsaive."

"Really?" The small man seemed intrigued. "How so?"

"Oh, the key to a disciplined force in a hierarchical navy is traditions and regular schedules. The ships turning out for inspections promptly at dawn and drills on the hour—as the Theran navy demands—give us the best example for our forces to draw from." I went on, as if instructing one of my newly hired recruits. "Oh yes, you see it is the best and finest that the Therans have to offer, those fine stone ships that fill your skies, that give us our inspiration!" I smiled and led the man on. "We follow every regulation and watch schedule that we can, to be the best that our clans can do."

"You find our rigid discipline and adherence to tradition to be your inspiration you say?" The man seemed confused. "I've always been told that you raiders were an undisciplined rabble, but you claim otherwise?" The man asked in all seriousness.

The image of this commander eating up this tale like a granlain consuming hay amused me to no end, and I was suddenly taken aback by the stinging slap of the sap at the base of my neck. The blow was a good one and I was staggered for a moment.

The commander was horrified and stood in his chair. "Did I command you to strike him!?" He screeched in that annoyingly high voice that had begun to seriously grate on my nerves.

"No sir, but I...." The guard glared at me. "He's lying sir."



"What!?" The man's nostrils had begun to flare with his anger, making him look all the more like a dock rat. "What about?"

"Tell him, scum!" Another blow fell just below my longer horn, on the right side of my head, above where the first had fallen.

"I was only funning the little bugger!" Another blow. "Alright! Va! We Sky Raiders study your disciplined fleets – I wasn't lying about that – but we do so to find all that we never want in our own forces." I scowled over my shoulder at the man behind me. I found I was liking him less now. "Your guard here seems to know at least a little of our tactics and could most likely tell you plenty, but since he is obviously being retained for his more brutish abilities, let me tell you a few things about your precious navy."

I gracefully accepted a few more clouts on the head before being allowed to continue.

"Sky Raiders raid the more civilized lands because of the simplest of reasons: you have and we have not," I snarled at the Theran. "Your civil discipline washes the thirst for victory from your soldiers and takes the initiative to be bold from your officers." My eyes flashed in the dim light. "You have; I take."

"Now we see the true barbarism in the breed, sir," The guard had become a mite more bold now, taking an active part in the questioning. "You'll find no lax men on this ship!"

"No, I suppose I won't on this beautiful example of a Theran slaver escort ship. What is it, do you get demoted to slave if you fail, or are you simply flogged?" I taunted. "Your discipline is your weakness! Your soldiers fight amongst each other for promotion and advancement without thought to the whole! I've seen it. Your ships ply the same routes because they are ordered to, and your discipline makes sure we always know when to hit you." I buckled as I was struck a half-dozen more times. I began to feel sick and see spots before my eyes, but I refused to yield to unconsciousness.

"Sky Raiders start from birth! We are raised in the clans to rejoice in strength and our own power!" I laughed as the guard began to tire of striking me. "No Theran could take this kind of beating! You're weaklings!"

"Tell me why your nation is so disorganized and hateful!" The Theran interrogator had begun to allow his curiosity to reenter the questioning.

"We trolls are from the mountains. By themselves, those mountains are but single peaks, easily passed around. But within a range, they become a powerful barrier." I sighed, remembering my home "The mountains can kill you with their harsh ways."

"You haven't answered my question. Lorak, you have addled his brain with your blows!" The man accused.

Lorak is the boson of the Chained Wyvern, a slaving vedette. Before the War, her captain was Karhis Teig, but he was no small, gaunt man.

— Rimmon Freecaller

"No, you wanted your answer and so you shall have it! The mountains are the root of our nature! Where the land that touches the sky, there be the harshest lands there are, but they are our lands and they provide us home and hearth. But no wealth." I smiled with my tusks bared fully "The wealth we get from you."

"So you steal because of the mountains!?" The little man pulled his sleeves up, and snarled, "Preposterous!"

"You know nothing of mountains, do you? We rule the sky from our mountain peaks. Your traders fear us, your armies cannot reach us, and your navy in these monolith rock ships cannot outrun us. Look everywhere and you see our mark." My voice began to reverberate in the small chamber. "See the power of the sky in my eyes and feel the sky's fury in my voice!" My voice rose again, and the small man began to back away from me, his hands seeking a weapon in his robes. "My arms hold the sky's fury, and I burn with her fire in battle, and she heals me!" The rant continued.

And another claims of rulership of the sky. The air seems to have many princes, but then, the sky is rather large, isn't it?

— Terricia

"You travel the sky, but we clans love her! She is our mother, our lover, and our devout protector—you hear me, my sky! Show me your love and bring forth the instrument of my hate!" It was done; the bellow echoed throughout the ship and the darkness in the room grew great. The floor lurched, throwing the guard into my reach. Within a moment, a harsh kick had rendered the guard helpless. The thin man began to run for the door, but I was freed in a moment. He threw open the door, and the guards spilled in around him.

My shout was stunning. "Theran Bastards! Die!" My magic flowed into my bellow, and the soldiers were struck with fear. The first never felt the blow that ended his life as my crushing fist exploded through his head. As a poet might say, chaos ensued.

The soldiers fell like wheat to the reaper as I armed myself with the weapons of the fallen and slid between their blows like a shadow. I ended lives like a wraith. The ship rocked with the fury of thunder and lightning as true wrath fell upon the ship from my summoned storm.

I find it curious that he likens himself to a Horror Construct as he kills. It is a possible sign of a Horror Mark.

— Kaja Lyles

I knew Leo Sarthain, and he was no Horror's plaything.

— Serina Len

In moments, I was in the hallway, just in time to see the little man turn the far corner. I wasn't familiar with the interior of this type of ship, so catching my captor seemed to be as good an idea as any. I leaped down the corridor, covering a huge span in a moment and skidded around the corner to face another four guards. The first one was the young man from earlier, and on seeing me covered in blood and fully armed, panicked and turned into his fellows. The fight was mercifully short, and the pursuit was on again!

The corridors branched off, and, seeking the exit, I smelled for rain. I turned right and found myself out on the deck of the monstrous stone ship. Several guardsmen rushed me from the open corridors, these better armed, but it didn't help them at all. I beat back their shields and struck them as if they weren't even there.

I heard a now familiar screech down the corridor behind and turned to see the thin commander retreating. I took to the hunt with a vengeance. I swung around the corner snarling and found myself in a long corridor. The rat had found another slight-framed man and was hiding behind him, shaking.

The other seemed strangely unafraid as I began to rush forward. As I did, I was stunned by the darts of earth driving themselves into my unarmored body. The pain flooded through me, and I felt the magic's grievous effect. I fell to the deck and howled.

"Sky, my sky, my skin it bleeds! My blood! It burns for vengeance!!!" I cried, and my wounds became engulfed in flame. The little man squeaked and ran for the end of the corridor, leaving his spellcaster behind.

"Don't you run from ME!" I shouted in my wrath and drove my fist into the deck.

The ripple turned into a wave, throwing the magic man into the ceiling and knocking the sense from him, and flung the little man into the intersection of the corridors, but off his feet. He scrambled away as I began to pursue again.

The ship shook again, but this time from no lightning. I howled in triumph as I leapt on the little man, grasping him by the robes and tucking him under one arm. I turned and ran back toward the open deck. My eyes welcomed the sight of a drakkar peppering the deck with ballista and crossbow alike as I broke through the outer doors. The Theran ship was in shambles after the sudden storm, followed by a savage attack, and was unable to fight. However, some of the crew had managed to open a few gun ports and were attempting a pathetic counterattack of their own.

I never broke stride as the slick deck rumbled under my feet and bucked up like an unbroken stallion. I leapt into the air, into the rain and wind, my body flung up by an updraft. The little man and I slipped into the air and lighted onto the deck of the Drakkar.

"Leo!" my pilot, Glontag, cried from the tiller.

"Get us out of here!" I shouted

"Aye!" came the reply as the drakkar spun on the air currents and slipped into the clouds, leaving the Theran stonship in her wake.



"How is it I am not surprised you are alive, my captain?" Glontag laughed and was joined by the oarsmen and raiders.

"What? Have I ever died before?" I answered and then immediately followed up with, "How is it you found me?"

"Well Leo, you know these Therans, they love to take prisoners straight home so we set course for their outpost, and that storm you brewed up led us right to you."

"So who's your little friend there, Leo?" One of the trolls poked the little Theran playfully.

"Well our friend here wanted to learn about Sky Raiders!" I laughed, and then, taking a deadly serious tone, continued "And we are going to teach him."

"What's the first lesson, Rundig?" I asked the biggest Troll on my crew.

"We don't like Therans...", the troll rumbled as he ran a calloused thumb across his axe blade. "Can I have 'im Leo, I been a good sailor for you, but you know my brother, he was killed by these pasty little scumsuckers."

"Not unless he doesn't cooperate." I smiled and grabbed the little man by the ear and shoved him through a small hatch into a cabin below.

"Now then...I think I have a few questions for you." I smiled as I sat behind my small captain's desk.

The Theran suffered Depatternization during his first day of captivity. Whether this was an unfortunate circumstance of timing, or some means of keeping us from learning too many Theran secrets, I cannot say.

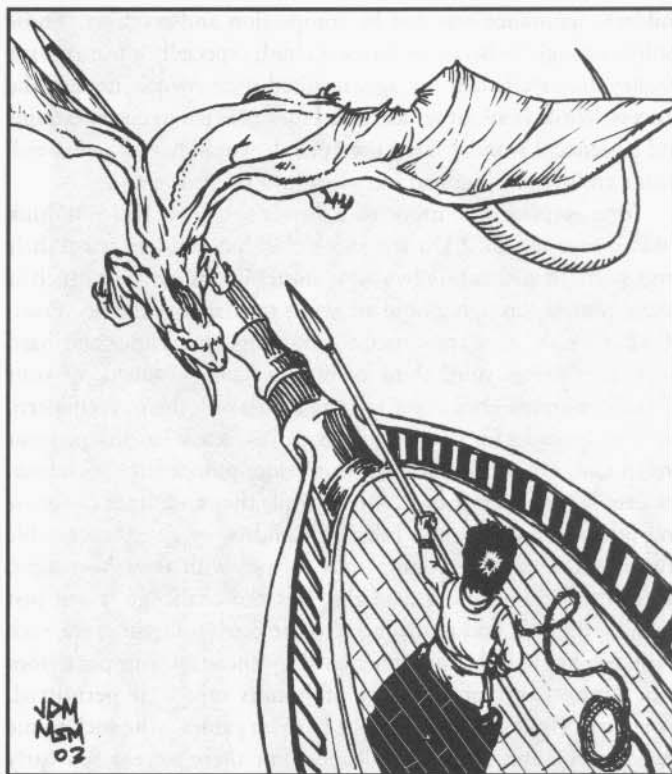
— Serina Len

ON THE NATURE OF THE SKY RAIDER

When I first encountered Sloan, I was taken aback by the sheer size and solid mass of the man. I have met many Adepts and other fighting men in my travels, and while I have met orks and trolls who are bigger, he is by far the largest human I have ever encountered. It came as no surprise to me then, when, over several bottles of mulled wine, I discovered that trolls high in the Twilight Peaks had raised him. The story of the destruction of his kaer as a boy and how a Sky Raider vessel rescued him are for another tale, but his perspective on life, being raised as a Sky Raider by Sky Raiders, is very interesting. I think it tells more of the highland trolls than many of the articles written about their various honors and of the importance of the interaction between shipmates. Indeed, it cuts right to very marrow of the word.

— Maxes Roan, Troubadour and Historian

One of the first things that I learned after being picked up by my foster father's ship was that, as a *newot*, my place was always last and my duties always the most menial. I also learned that the trolls who had rescued me were fair and respected dedicated labor. While my first few months on board the ship were mostly spent studying their language and emptying buckets I watched and learned much about how their ship worked. Even then, though I was little more than a child, I could see that each Sky Raider relied on the others, and trusted that they were doing what was needed.



Never confuse a newot for a slave. The Trolls are not slavers. Every newot captured in a raid may become a full member of a clan, regardless of their race.

— Feld'a'sar

Then one day, as we flew near the Tylon mountains, an *espagra* broke through the clouds and landed on our deck. One of the crew was quickly sent sprawling and without thinking I picked up his spear and screamed at the beast. Thystonius rewarded my bravery by sending me a half-dozen crewmen with axes. If he hadn't, I would be fertilizing the sides of those mountains, and not talking with you this night. After the beast had been dispatched, the captain asked me why I had done that. In my halting words I explained simply "the ship had been in danger, sir." While I understand the response now, as a boy, the cheers of the various trolls were fearsome, and I thought they might throw me overboard with the *espagra* corpse. Instead, the captain made me a bed in his room that night, and from then on I served him directly. By the time the *drakkar* returned home, I had seen the ship's maps and understood that my caretakers were no mere brutes, but were carefully patrolling, traveling across merchant lines and near caravan routes looking for worthy targets.

That first lesson was perhaps the most important that I ever learned—the ship must be protected, regardless of the risk. It took me many years to learn how precious each *drakkar* is to the moot, and how rare the honor of serving on one is. To let harm befall the ship, or by extension its crew, is unforgivable. To rise to its defense when none expect you capable of it is a mark of distinction and bravery.

You've talked about trolls' honors and how they interact with others. I won't insult you by reteaching those lessons, your reputation amongst *tru'dul* is known to me. It took me many more months to fully understand this as a child, but much like with all



children, ignorance was met by compassion and teaching. Those foolish enough to berate or strike a child, especially a human one smaller than trolls half my age, insulted their own honors in the process. While I cannot say all trolls I met were paragons of restraint and patience, I wonder if my own people would have done as well with a troll foundling, had our situations been reversed.

Your surprise as to my stature then is apparent. Did you think I was always like this? Do you think troll Sky Raiders attain their great strength and stature by magic alone? Foolishness. As much as magic courses through us and allows us to challenge the sky, much of what we do as a crew requires training, discipline, and hard work. Not things you'd think of in Sky Raiders, outside of your Throalic marines, eh? Let me tell you a little of it then. As children, we were brought up playing games of "hot rock" to sharpen our bodies and our minds. Near dusk, an elder pulls a large rock from the campfire and lets it cool. After a while they announce the game and hurl the rock down a hillside. Children of all ages scramble after it—it is easy for young trolls to spot with their heat sight, especially in the waning daylight. But the challenge is not just reaching the rock and returning it to the fire—sometimes the rock is still too hot to hold, and others will try and steal your prize from you. Almost any tactic, short of serious injury, is permitted. Obviously, I was at a disadvantage in these games—the rock to me was one of hundreds on a hillside—but there were a few early friends I had made who shared an extra snack with a hungry child, or who looked out for me at other times, whose opponents I seemed able to block or at least slow down. The point of the game to the children is to win, but the point for the elders—besides the plain joy in the contests of youth—is to see *how* you won. Were you the fastest? Were you strong enough to strip the rock away from a previous holder? Did you have allies that you worked together with?

These kind of games, along with the hard life of living in the mountains, serves to toughen up children, human and troll alike. Our bodies grew strong, our feet and our minds nimble, and eventually some of us were called to trials. By this point, I had been spending a month a season on board ship, and the rest of my time laboring at the mootome. While many of the not-yet-adults ("juveniles" is the wrong dwarf word I think, but you get the idea) were clearly going to pursue other paths—apprenticed to herbalists, scribes, even some of the spellcasters—those who showed promise as fighting Adepts were eventually identified. It still amazes me how they anticipated who would have the magical talent to be Adepts at times. Of course, there were others who were taken out on the drakkar when I was not on board, and if a child did poorly, seldom did they get a second chance. Sometimes they did not come back at all, though that was rare. It was easy, to see who had the temperament to live on a skyship. But how some of the Warriors or the Elementalists picked their students, in those rare times that they identified someone with the gift to learn their ways, I don't know.

An entire book could be filled with the trials of a spellcaster in the Twilight Peaks.

—Byraun, Elementalist and Questor of Jasprece

By that time I had grown stronger than most adult men, and still had a few years before I was to be chosen for a ship or sent into the world. A group of the moot's captains, other ships officers, and bosons

took to teaching us before we went with our first masters. What I thought at the time were contests were more ways for them to judge us, to see which of us they would train and initiate into the path of the Sky Raider. One I recall well—the wheelstone. They took half-dozen of us and we stood in a circle around a large millstone. There were ropes tied around the stone, and we were told to pick up a rope, lift the stone off the ground together, and hold on as long as we were able. While I know I am strong for a human, I was at a disadvantage and it showed; as we lifted the stone, I was the shortest and weakest of the six, and my end sagged sadly. I could tell the others were struggling to hold their sides aloft as well, and one of them mocked me, saying that I might as well drop out, as they knew I would not outlast them. Our judge and instructor for the day barked at him, "Fool! You know nothing!" and ordered me to drop my rope. Knowing that protesting would only get me in trouble, I did so, prepared to once again be shamed for my weakness. As I let go of the rope the stone crashed to the ground and the other five had their ropes jerked out of their hands. A few seconds later the dust cleared and the stone rested flat on the ground. "Together or not at all! The hands and feet can not argue; they must do together!" barked the instructor, and he sent us off to think on the lesson. The one who mocked me that day, well, she learned, and she's now my second-in-command. The other four I trained with all died at Sky Point. But we did learn that lesson and many besides. One I still use is the barrel exercise—the student unloads barrels and then reloads them, and then repeats the tasks over and over again, until finally they ask—or usually yell—about why they're doing such a tedious task. The answer is, of course, that it's to see how long you will do something stupid before asking why you're doing something stupid. We don't need little constructs onboard ship that mindlessly follow orders; you need to know what you're doing and why you're doing it. If something changes quickly, as in combat, you need to know if your actions will help or hinder the crew. That's why a drakkar full of Sky Raiders may look like a mobile drunken party to many people, but also why we're so efficient in battle. Wisdom is learning from others' mistakes, and once you are confident in yourself and your crew, it is easy to live life to its fullest challenge. Any Adept can teach a student to focus, to meditate, and to think on the center of their Discipline. To be a Sky Raider is not something that is solely an understanding of yourself. It is an understanding of others, in concert and in opposition. To know that our challenges, praise Thystonius, come not only from without but from within. To know, even as a child, that when the ship is in danger you fight, screaming your challenge at your enemy, is a starting point. To learn to work together, to take what life has to offer, and to celebrate that you met the challenge with full force are steps along the path.

My foster father eventually took me back on board his ship, not as a cabin boy, but this time as his apprentice. I learned to fight and to row, tasks that had been denied me up to that point. I was able to feel, to embrace, the magic of air sailing, and I rejoiced the first time an opponent wounded me and my blood boiled hot, searing my wounds closed. I learned that it is not in besting an opponent where the honor truly lies, but in the having the courage to face them and to look them in the eyes as you find whose skill is greater on a given day. I also learned that when your goal is "grab the biggest damn box you can and leap back to the ship" you can have a lot of fun laughing at merchants as you fly away from them. As I gained in skill, I was given more and more responsibilities. I've bored you enough already with how they teach you things as a crewman; the things you have to learn to be a good



commander are just a necessary and usually twice as painful to learn. We're all responsible for our own choices, and my choices now include the lives of my crew. But they're all well trained, they know their jobs, and each is as eager as I was the day I first boarded a ship as a crewman.

Sloan ended his tale there, but I asked him what had happened to him since. He looked at me, and said, "The War," and walked off to get more drinks. I gathered, across the next several hours, that his last posting prior to gaining his own ship was on one of the captured Theran vedettes that spearheaded the assault on Sky Point. It was then I realized that in the entire time we had talked he had not once mentioned attacking other Name-givers. Although he talked about the challenge of raiding, he always approached this as a matter of providing for the moot. He even once mentioned, "At least, unlike your Throalic taxes, our opponents get to show their honor and spirit". It was certainly clear that anyone or anything that attacked his skyship would be dealt with in an expedient manner, but unlike many of the stories I had heard from troll Sky Raiders, his joy was not in battle. I wonder how much of his early life, of being the smallest and the weakest amongst strangers, had shaped his ideas of honor. Skill and wit, over mere might, are obviously what give him an edge, but have we underestimated those that have produced such an Adept?

Our Throalic forces were stunned at the Second Battle of Sky Point when the captured Theran airships, manned by Sky Raiders from the troll moots, destroyed the pillars supporting the great fortress, rather than merely capturing it as planned. Those Sky Raiders survived, in the face of Theran genocide and Throalic opposition, not by strength, but by cunning and cooperation. When we gave them the means to exact retribution on a generations-old enemy—did we expect them not to use it? Or is the defense of the ship not something that translates to their homes, their moots, and to all of the crystal raiders in the end?

—Maxes Roan, Troubadour, Historian

THE FIRST OVER THE SIDE

In seeking Adepts with unique views on what it was to follow a given Discipline, we the librarians often had to search far and wide for news and rumors of these exceptional Name-givers. However, in the case of Seres the Scorched, he came to us.

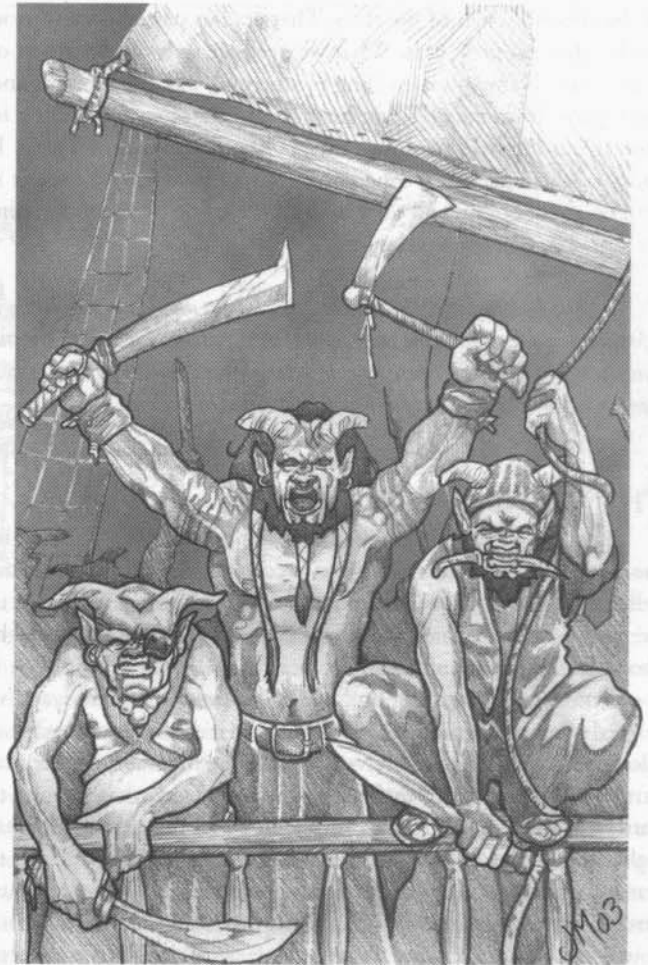
Admittedly, his reason for coming to the library was not related to our search. What Seres had been looking for was to have a few scrolls made to give to his criers. He hoped to use educated words to sway sympathy for the plight of the Jerrisian fugitives here in Throal, as well as drum up potential recruits for the outcast Falcons. However, in speaking with him, I would never have believed that this calm, quiet, yet intense troll was a Sky Raider until he told me as much.

More to my surprise was that he did not consider his view unique, since it was one that most Falcon marines are trained with. What follows here, in Seres' words, is the view of the Falcon-trained Sky Raiders.

—Presented for the edification of the reader by Blert Syrtis, Apprentice Archivist for the Library of Throal

THE SPIRIT OF THE SKY

I doubt the librarians will let you loose from their dusty confines with this scroll in your hands, but the next time you can, look to the sky, and think on what you see. Like the rivers and the



seas, the sky seems to have a spirit all its own. Unlike the water, the sky extends forever, unstoppable by mere boundaries and obstacles. It can be vicious when angered, bringing storms and high winds to try to destroy your ship or throw you from the very deck. When it is calm and unclouded, it's possible for you to see as far as your own eyes will allow. There isn't a way to be a Sky Raider without having a soul akin to the sky itself.

It has likely taken us ages, but Name-givers have learned to harness the sky's power for our own means. Elemental Air and its many uses are what gave us airships, and in some cases, the very magic to protect our kaers. Even non-magical things such as sails for ships and windmills have been discovered and put to good use.

When raw, natural skill is funneled into a direct task and given purpose, we find that truly amazing things can be accomplished. This is the very thing that Disciplines were meant to do with the magic and the spirit of the Adept. When the volatility and independence of the sky is given form and purpose in a Sky Raider, you have on your hands a power to be reckoned with.

If you didn't grow up hearing at least one tale of the troll moots and the Sky Raiders that fly defiantly in the face of the Theran Navy before the Scourge ever came, I'd say you weren't Barsaivan. Their deeds were the stuff of legends, whether by fame or infamy, and they were a power unto themselves. However, times change, and new days call for new legends.

Here, now, in our time, we need to take what we've learned from the past and improve upon it. Sky Raiders should no longer

be the roguish rebels of the skies. That era has passed—we've won our freedom, at great cost. What we need are stalwart defenders of what's ours. Name-givers willing to stop evil, like the Horrors and the Iopans, from encroaching further into Barsaive and willing to protect our lands from future threats like the return of Thera. If you take the fierce spirit inherent in all Sky Raiders and temper it with courage, honor, and duty beyond the scope of one mountain, we'll have our new legends.

While I understand Seres feels that the Iopans should not rule Jerri, it is foolish to mark them as the same level of threat as the Horrors. To try and gain sympathy for your cause by comparing your enemies to the greatest danger facing Barsaive only weakens that cause in my eyes.

—Quinn

THE HEART OF A SKY RAIDER

Those three principles—courage, honor, and duty—should be the guidelines that a Sky Raider uses to conduct himself. These are the values that separate a Sky Raider from being just another Adept out to live on the sweat and blood of others—the very values that have brought about the falling of the Thera Empire.

Courage is something no Sky Raider lacks. The best way I've learned of pinning words to courage is to call it the inner strength that allows you to do what you have to do. It's the mental fortitude that carries you through the challenges of combat and what you use to battle fear. Having courage lets you stand up for things you know are right, despite the odds. It's what allowed our province of upstarts to stand up to Thera and still find ourselves standing, free, when the dust settled. There are powers in this world that can seem to sap your courage from you for a short time—the spells of the Nethermancers, for example, or the powerful presence of some Horrors—but nothing can take it from you for good except yourself.

A Sky Raider without honor is no better than one of Uhl Denairastas' worthless lackeys; cold-blooded killers, willing to do whatever their master asks despite the cost to their land, their people, or their spirit. Honor is a Name-giver's personal moral code and what can make them worth the Name they've been given. There are traits you will not find in any Horror: dignity, dedication, and integrity. These

are some of the things that are supposed to separate us from them, and by the Passions, if you don't have them, you shouldn't try to tame the skies. A Sky Raider should always honor his word, once given, and always hold themselves accountable for what's rightly their responsibility. By the same token, a Sky Raider should make those that seek to escape their own accountability get their slimy skins nailed to the wall for it.

All of us can be part of something greater than ourselves, a thread in a greater Pattern. Whether you accept this or not is the choice you make. If you've accepted in your heart the honor of a Sky Raider, then you've already accepted your responsibility to be part of this Pattern and see that it does not unravel. This is what duty is. Your obligation to protect and provide for your family and kin. Your obligation to protect and fight for your home, kingdom or city. This is the main thing that has had to change with time and will always have to. As our numbers grow, so grows the layers of allegiance we owe to one another to keep our freedom. To make the Pattern of Barsaive a stronger one, we have to accept that our obligation extends to the greater whole, like we saw when Barsaive united to oust Thera.

These are principles that govern the heart of a Sky Raider and the spirit of the sky we ride upon. If you keep these values sacred, then the rest will come with training and meditation. Having the courage to uphold your honor, the honor to obey your duty, and accepting the duty to make this world a better one makes you a true Sky Raider.

THE ROLE OF THE SKY RAIDER

Make the world a better place. It's an old phrase that's lost much of its luster to misuse. Just how can someone whose entire life centers around airships and fighting change the world for the better? It's a fair question, but has no answer untainted by viewpoint. So I'll give you my opinion as both a Sky Raider and a Falcon. Yes, a Sky Raider's life is a violent one, like that of many Adepts. It's a sign of the times we live in. Sky Raiders are the fearless fighters you need wherever you are, be it sky, sea, ground, or underground. Sky Raiders live the life we have as well as we can, and we don't shirk away from danger or death. Because of that, we're the ones who can keep your skies safe, or make them places no sane Name-giver would want to be.

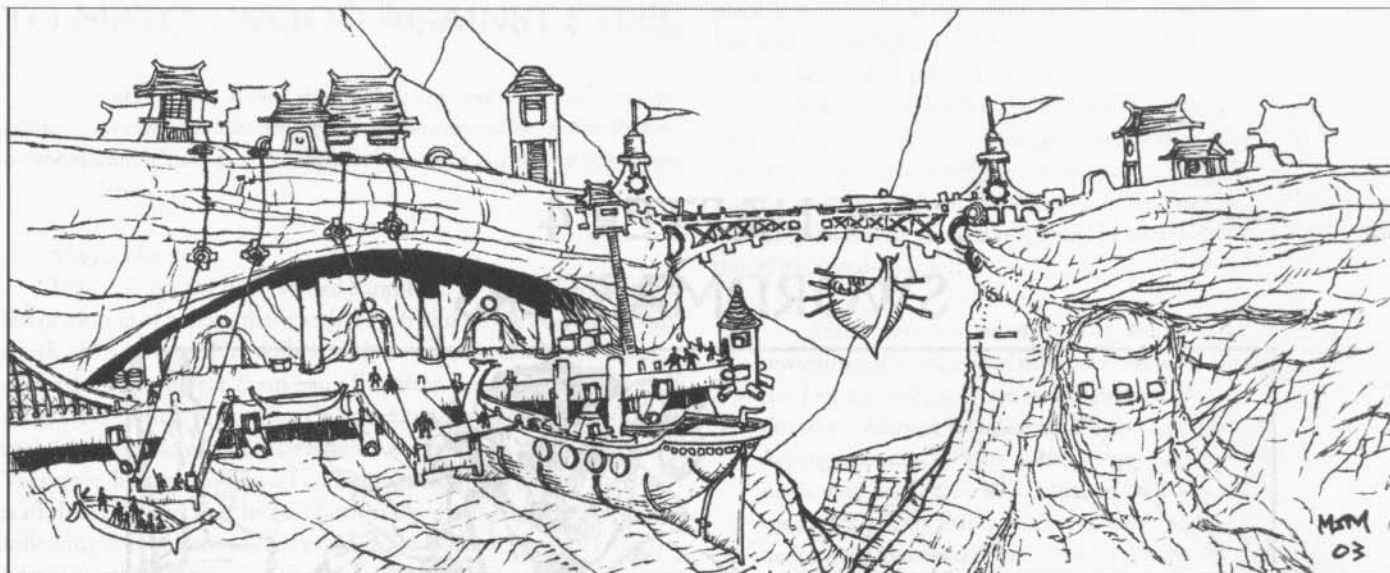
I'm sure all of the Sky Raiders who prey on the lowlands around the Twilight Peaks are just doing it to make the world a better one.

—Kallus, Patriot of Cara Fahd

Superiority of the skies is the crucial factor that decides whether we win or lose. I write "we" meaning Barsaive, but you can generalize or specify it how you like. The ground-pounders have their place and are just as crucial, but no standing army would be able to fend off the advance of even the smallest kila or stop it from bombarding a city flat with flame cannons and catapults. For that, you have to trust in the navies of our sundry kingdoms and city-states. What exactly are we winning or losing? Our way of life. Our lands. Our freedom. My mother and father were Thera slaves and, but for the grace of Lochost, so would I be. You may never have felt the chains on your feet, but I think all of Barsaive had a realization of just how close they were when the *Triumph* landed on the Ayodhya Liferock.

If you are going to fight any war, protect any territory, or hunt any Horror in the sky, you'd best have a Sky Raider with you. Air





Sailors can get you where you need to go, and they aren't too shabby when it comes to gunning another ship out of the sky; however, in naval combat, there will inevitably come a time for boarding. Even if you don't initiate it, the other ship's Sky Raider's will. This is what we're born for; this is what we excel at. The pulse of battle on the ground beats to the tune of the Warrior's heart, but the battle for the sky is the pulse of the Sky Raider's.

GAME INFORMATION

Falcon Marines

Seres and the majority of the Sky Raiders within the Falcons of Jerris were trained in Jerris and consider themselves to be marines, rather than raiders. The marines are a well-trained fighting force and among the elite of the Jerris navy. All members of active service drill for the better part of every morning, unless currently on assignment elsewhere. They emphasize education for standard battle tactics and organization, as well as physical training, with minimal difference between the training of the enlisted men and officers. Generally, there are no more than three to five marines to any given ship in the Jerris navy except in times of war, with the highest-ranking marine usually holding the position of tactical advisor to the ship's captain. The Falcon reserves, and sometimes even retired members, also gather with the rest of the marines once a month for a weekend of intensive training. The marines have never numbered more than a hundred.

The Falcon marines are a very close-knit organization that looks after its own. If an Adept is part of the Falcon marines—whether retired, in reserve, or adventuring—they will be welcomed back with no questions so long as they have done nothing to dishonor themselves, Jerris, or Barsaive in the eyes of the marines. In addition, members and former members are always welcome to the training, though their non-marine companions are not. In exchange for this benefit, all members are expected to heed Jerris' call if the Marshal ever has need for the services of those marines abroad. After all, it is their duty.

Due to the events and aftermath of the Second Battle of Sky Point, where Jerris became an Iopan protectorate (see Barsaive at War and Barsaive in Chaos for more details), there are currently two active groups that follow the way of the Falcons. One group is under the command of Hurin Durimar and Bith Vesten and still resides in

the Falcon training facilities in Jerris. The second group is under the command of Kos Steelgaze and has been given sanctuary in Throal after being labeled traitors. Seres the Scorched is among those in Throal and the main advocate of introducing fresh blood into the Falcons, despite the fear of Iopan infiltration.

If the character is a member of the Falcon marines, their training camps provide many willing teachers who will train their fellows in a variety of different talents and skills. Among the marines, it is rare to find those with the hostility toward human Versatility, and most non-Sky Raider human marines are encouraged to pick up talents such as Wind Catcher through their racial gift. The marine training negates the need to hire a mentor for the following skills:

- Detect Trap
- Detect Weapon
- Knowledge Skill: History of Barsaivan Conflict
- Knowledge Skill: Iopan Lore
- Knowledge Skill: Jerris Lore
- Knowledge Skill: Theran Lore
- Navigation
- Tactics
- Wilderness Survival

If the training is with the outcast Falcons in Throal, then a marine can learn Knowledge Skill: Throalic Lore without paying for a trainer.

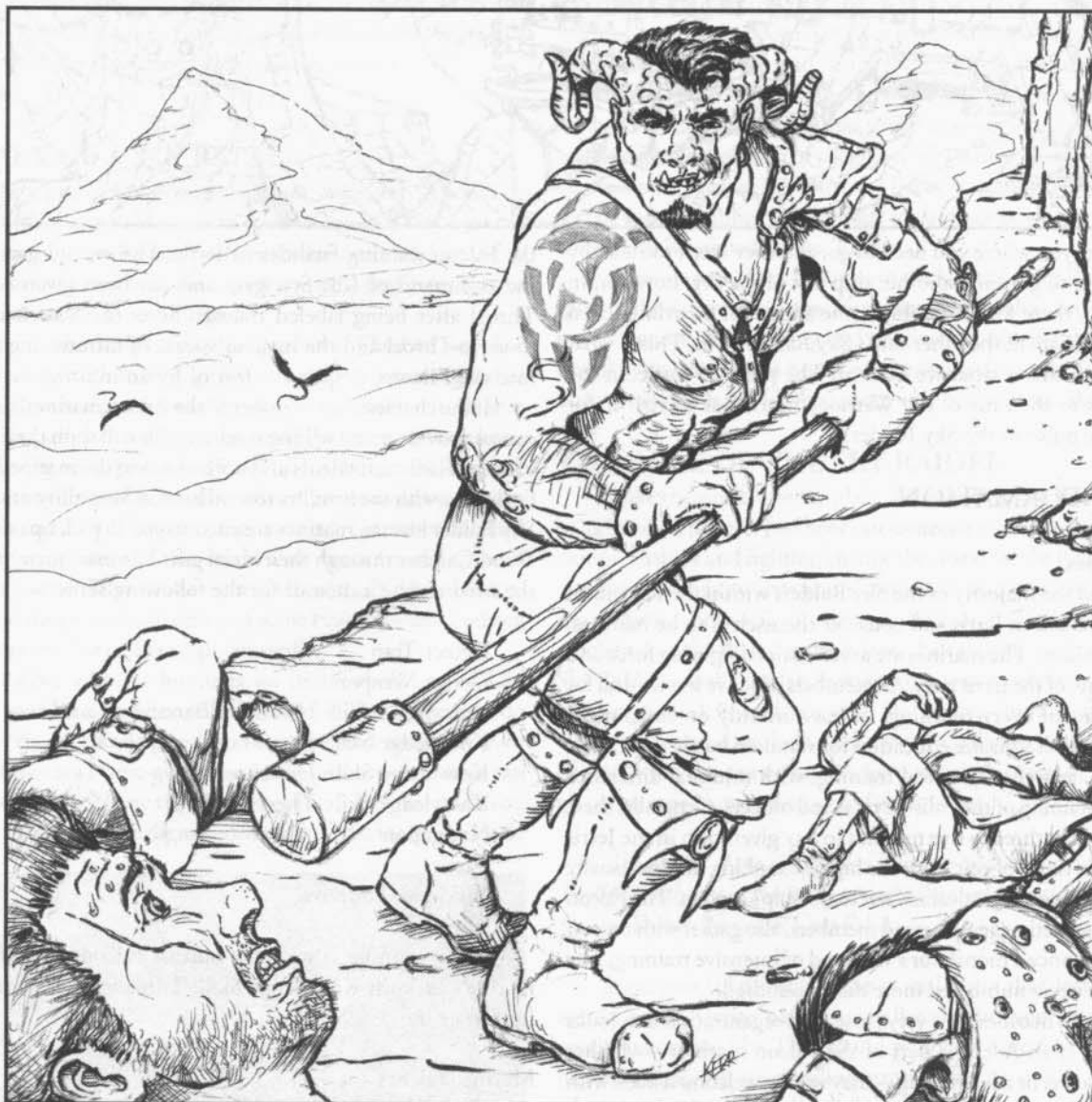
Marine Talents

The path of the Sky Raider among the Falcon marines is very different than their trollish counterparts. They tend less towards the noise and the fury of the troll moots, and more towards getting in, getting the job done, and getting back to their ships or taking the one they have boarded as fast as possible. Because of this, the development of their Adept powers tends to take a different route than what most of Barsaive considers to be the path of a Sky Raider.

At First Circle, the Marine may substitute Climbing for Battle Shout. At Fifth Circle, the Marine may substitute Lion Heart for Battle Bellow. The marine is not required to make either substitution.

CHAPTER 4

SWORDMASTERS



TO MATCH WOOD AGAINST STEEL

Alanna Russ, one of the Library's traveling researchers, delivered the following account. I will let her provide her own exposition, rather than do her the injustice of introducing events of which I have no personal knowledge.

— Merrox

Master Librarian,

I came across the troll Named Sarghus as he was dispatching the last of a group of bandits that sought to rob him on the Scorched Plain, south of Lake Vors. His skills and, I daresay, his choice of weapon allowed him to defeat them soundly. After demonstrating to each other's satisfaction that we were unmarked, I suggested that we keep each other company in our travels. Since we were both traveling towards Vorstown, he agreed. When I complimented his skill with the troll-staff, he explained that he had been trained as a Swordmaster. The following is a transcript of his explanation of this, reproduced to the best of my ability:

I am Sarghus, and I follow the path of the Swordmaster. You seem surprised, Scholar Russ. Did you think that we all used blades? Yes, I can see that; it is a common assumption. Do not fear, though; I am not offended.

"Swordmaster" is a poor Name for those Name-givers who study the dance, I fear. Those of us who walk this path most commonly use swords because swords are the most common weapons of war. Long ago, when the first of my Discipline embraced the dance of weapons and wits, they chose the sword. However, swords are not the only weapons that Thystonius and Upandal have given us.

Some Swordmasters would claim that our Discipline demands a sharp blade to accompany a sharp wit. But wit is not only sharp. It can also be barbed or even crushing. Their own choice of words betrays them.

ON THE STYLE AND SUBSTANCE OF THE SWORD AND STICK

I have seen my brethren duel, and I will be the first to admit that they are most impressive. A sword or other blade in the sun is a beautiful sight, and when the wielder can make it dance like it is alive, then it is even better. The flash of steel on steel and the attendant ring make a Swordmaster glad to be alive.

However, a good stick can be just as wondrous. A skilled stick-fighter can spin his weapon so fast that it hums like a Troubadour's lute. He can whip it through the air so fiercely that it whistles. My old master, Gwillem the Stick, had a staff with a flute carved into one end. When he fought, it would play as he swung it. One time, I saw him compose an airy little tune as he defeated a band of slavers. It was marvelous! He called it "Quarterstaff in Quarter Time."

A stick-fighter has reach that most swordfighters cannot match. Especially with the troll-staff, which is longer than anything except a lance or pole-arm. I can force my opponent back or trip him. A well-made staff will flex, and a stick-fighter can snap it at a target fast enough to impart great force. Furthermore, a stick is often underestimated as a weapon. Few opponents consider a simple

piece of wood to be as dangerous as a flashing blade. This assumption has cost many fighters their pride, as well as leaving them with broken bones and painful bruises.

A stick-fighter also has the benefit of a more solid grip on his weapon. Very few of the Swordmasters who chose a staff will be easily disarmed. And by spinning the staff, we can set up an effective and impressive defense. I have seen Master Gwillem riposte attacks out of a spin so quickly that you did not know he had hit his opponent until the other Name-giver fell.

Since there was enough room on the road, Sarghus demonstrated for me several maneuvers that a stick-fighter might use. I must admit that it was most impressive. He spun his staff so fast that it blurred, whirling it with first both hands and then looping it around his body with such speed as that I thought he might have been a Questor of Floranus. He snapped the end of the staff so quickly that it almost cracked like a whip, and with such control that he could pop leaves off of a tree branch without disturbing their neighbors. I had to concede that a stick-wielding Swordmaster was just as impressive as his blade-wielding kin.

Stick-fighters are often seen as more serious than sword-wielders. Our style and weapon influences our behavior. A more solid grip, a firm footing on the ground: these make us appear more practical than the typical sword-wielding Swordmaster. In truth, most stick-fighters are just as impulsive and daring as other Swordmasters, we simply dance to a different tune.

Another thing that might lead to this opinion is the fact that a staff is a more defensive weapon than a blade. And defense is rarely as flashy as a good attack.

— Xachary, Finalist, Haven Swordmaster Tournament of 1512TH

ON TRAINING IN THE STICK

Training is essential, no matter what your weapon of choice is. The goal of any Swordmaster, whether he uses the more traditional sword or the lesser-known stick, is perfection, and perfection can only be achieved with hours of training. There is a reason, you know, that it is called a "Discipline."

You have no doubt been told of how Swordmasters must deal with challenge after challenge from youngsters who think that they have the ability to become apprentices. Stick-fighters face fewer of these challenges, because very few see them as Swordmasters. There is less of the glitter in our style, because of our weapon of choice, and therefore, less to draw the young and eager to us.

This does not mean that we do not have our share of applicants. Most of ours, however, come to us quietly, without the brash challenges that the sword seems to inspire. Many are sent to us from other, more-traditional Swordmasters. Sometimes these are merely indirect insults, sent to taunt us by those who do not regard us as "Swordmasters." Sometimes the youngster will have the real potential for the stick. Sometimes, it is both.

We also have the occasional Name-giver who has seen a stick-fighter dance and believes that he or she has enough ability to do the same. However, the glove is rarely thrown down in the face of





a stick-fighter, although we have our own tradition among applicants. Most often, it is referred to as "None shall pass." A potential student will block his potential teacher's way, usually at a bridge, ford, or other limited path. His staff will, ideally, make it impossible for the stick-fighter to slip past him without combat. The limited nature of the path will add some spice to the duel, and if the applicant impresses the Swordmaster, then he will take him as an apprentice. But only after clearing the path, a process that often ends up with the student being bruised and, because of the popularity of bridges for this challenge, soaking wet.

Stick-fighters only train a few students at a time, usually no more than one. Like the dance of the sword, the dance of the stick is intensive and requires a great deal of attention from the teacher.

ON THE STICK ITSELF

Choosing a stick is almost as difficult as choosing to be a stick-fighter in the first place. A stick-fighter must choose what he is most comfortable with, and must understand that each type of staff has its own merits and disadvantages. Typically, sticks fall within three categories:

The Short Staff

The short staff is less than half the height of the stick-fighter. It is generally gripped in one hand. Many would say that such a weapon would be considered a club, or that it would be treated like a sword. Those who say so have never fought a master of the short staff. Clubs do their damage on the downswing and are clumsy weapons, but a short staff is balanced so well that a stick-fighter can spin it and change the direction of his swing in mid-strike. They are light and fast, and in the right hands, they can be dangerous. Their size makes it easier to wield them in close quarters, as well. Many stick-fighters carry a short staff as a spare weapon, and those who choose

to fight with two such weapons at once are most wondrous to watch. I have seen one, an ork known as The Drummer, beat out a tattoo on his opponent that was so fierce that the other fighter's metal armor and helm rang like a bell.

The Medium Staff

A medium staff is measured from the ground to a point between the heart and head of the wielder in length. This weapon is the most commonly seen, since it is, essentially, nothing more than a walking stick or quarterstaff. The medium staff has the advantage of reach over the short staff, as well as strength of construction, and less weight than the grand staff. Many masters of the stick begin their students with the medium staff, and once they have mastered the basic moves, teach them how to use the other two types.

Watch out for Kerros the Lame. He may only have one good leg, but he's a dangerous specialist in what Sarghus terms 'the medium staff'.

— Barthol Higgins, Royal Guard

I've heard that both of Kerros' legs actually work just fine.

— Shanalda of the First Star Company

The Grand Staff

This stick is more commonly called a troll-staff, since my race wield most sticks of this size. A grand staff is taller than of the height of the wielder, often much taller. Some choose to wield great long sticks that are two times their own height or more. This makes for an often-unwieldy weapon, but some have the strength to make such weapons sing with great force.

I should add that most trolls choose not to wield a staff more than a foot or so above than their own height. Longer sticks are hard to construct and hard to keep supple and properly flexible. Most grand staffs of extreme length are wielded by shorter Name-givers, such as humans or orks.

It should also be noted that these classifications are somewhat vague, and relative to the wielder's own size. What a dwarf stick-fighter may consider a grand staff, a troll would consider a short staff. And windling stick-fighters rarely wield anything that could be considered a weapon by a larger Name-giver.

ON THE SCHOOLS OF THE SWORDMASTER

Other Swordmasters have told you or other scholars of the three schools of the Dance. Many call them the Tripled Blades. I, of course, do not. Each school—Flattery, The Foil, and Contention—still are taught by the Masters of the Stick, but each differs as much as the sword differs from the stick.

Point (or Flattery)

Masters of the Stick use its tip to instruct in this school. The prospective student is first commanded to watch the tip of the staff as the teacher shows his moves. In speech, the point is that of the tongue, and the teacher shows how to speak as well as how to fight. Unlike the more common Flattery Swordmasters, students of this school eventually break away from their teachers' styles. Since there are few stick-fighters, our tournaments are not as numerous, and

there are few schools to copy from. Many Point students will seek out stick-fighters of other Disciplines, and often will copy Troubadours' wit to develop their style.

Counterpoint (or The Foil)

This school is sometimes called "The Block" as well. As with The Foil, the master teaches his student by showing him how block his strikes, both physical and verbal. Defensive maneuvers are learned first, with the teacher taking the role of attacker during sparring, but once the student is proficient, his master will reverse the roles, allowing him to learn the opening strikes that can often end a fray as quickly as it begins.

Often, Point and Counterpoint schools blend their methods of instruction. As I have said before, stick-fighters are less common than blade-wielding Swordmasters. Consequently, there is less division between our schools, and it is not uncommon to see Point and Counterpoint students training side by side, often under the same master.

Cross (or Contention)

The rare final school of training is no less common among stick-fighters than it is among those who dance with the sword. Since there are fewer stick-fighters overall, the number of teachers who use Cross are consequently very small. The style is essentially the same, pushing the limits of the student's abilities by constantly challenging him. Impromptu duels, both of weapons and words, are begun without notice.

I cannot hold with the opinion—generally held by those who teach in the school itself—that Cross is the most effective school. I have only met one student of this training, and I defeated him in a duel quite handily. He was skilled, this is true, but the poor fellow had been so overworked by his master that he was a jumpy bundle of nerves. A few feints, and he was defeated.

ON TOURNAMENTS

As Swordmasters (Passions, but that Name is poor!), stick-fighters are no less interested in proving their skills to each other, and to other members of our Discipline. Despite the derision that many pour upon us when we make an appearance, at least one stick-fighter can be found at each of the major tournaments that are held throughout Barsaive. If possible, every stick-fighter will make it to the Grand Tourney, if only to make a show of solidarity and to train with old or new teachers.

It is easy to find the stick-fighters among those attending tournaments. Among the sword-fighters leaping from balconies like oversized fleas, the axe-fighters with their deadly showers of weapons, and the knife-fighters who seem determined to lose all of their fingers, the stick-fighters seem to be relatively quiet. Most of my fellows seem content to greet each other with feet firmly on the ground. However, we are Swordmasters, and our Discipline demands grand demonstrations. Follow the sound of wood on wood, or look for the whirling blur of a staff in full spin, and you will find the stick-fighters at a tournament.

Stick-fighters compete in all events that Swordmaster tournaments include. If a stick-fighter has any say in the organization of the tournament, then the weaponless events will include the "staff-vault." This event is almost exclusively the venue of stick-

fighters, but other Swordmasters occasionally compete. An obstacle is prepared, usually a pit or gully, but sometimes a barrier will be used if it is available. Each contestant takes a staff that is at least twice his height and usually longer, couches it into a position over one shoulder and runs at the obstacle. When he is close enough, he angles the point of the staff into the ground and uses his momentum to vault over the obstacle. Barriers are usually harder to vault than pits, since the staff must bend more to throw the contestant over. Green wood is most often used for this sport, since it bends and flexes, but even that can be dangerous, if it breaks in mid-vault.

Of course, the true purpose of a tournament is to test one's skill against other Swordmasters. Once the order of competition is sorted out, the fighting can be fast and furious. Stick-fighters often use these opportunities to show the more conventional swordfighters that they are just as skilled, or better. Many stick-fighters will chose to duel a swordfighter "to apology" rather than to any other quarter, especially if the swordfighter has been particularly verbal in his derision of our style. Myself, I have had three swordfighters on their bellies, pinned by my staff, crying apologies for comments that they had made before the fight began.

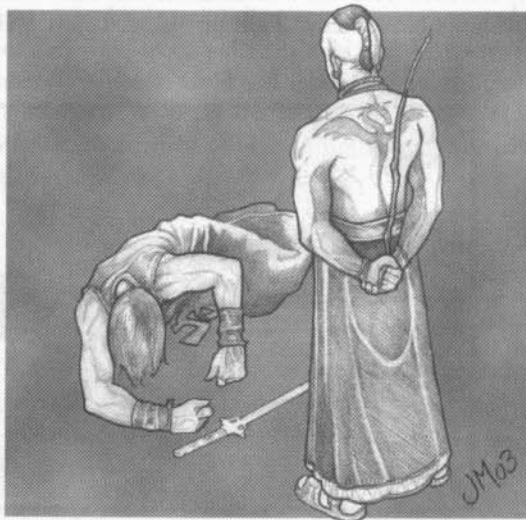
These apologies make for better bragging rights often than winning the tournament itself. Words are a weapon of all Swordmasters; forcing one to retract his taunts calls his wit and skill with such into question. If you have made the self-proclaimed "great duelist" Daramathos of Travar cry pardon for his words, what matter that you were defeated in the next round by some other Adept? The ability to hold this over the heads of swordfighters can easily open doors for a stick-fighter that might otherwise be closed. It can also make enemies of Adepts that might otherwise leave you be, but one must take the good with the bad, yes?

It's not surprising that they look for their victories where they can get them. No "stick fighter" has taken top ranking in any tournament of which I'm aware.

— Xachary, Finalist, Haven Swordmaster Tournament of 1512TH

Amusing that another Swordmaster who doesn't use a sword points this out.

— Daramathos of Travar



ON SPECIALISTS

Swordmasters often find themselves more inclined to one side or the other of the Discipline, either words or weapons. The bladesman and the gallant are common enough among those who dance with swords, and the stick-fighter is no different. However, in my experience, there appear to be more "sticksmen" than gallant stick-fighters. Perhaps it is our more solid style, or perhaps it is merely that fewer of us can see that wit can be crushing as well as sharp; I cannot say.

Gallant stick-fighters are just as focused on image as their blade-wielding counterparts. The few that I know choose the short staff as their weapon, feeling that short weapons allow for more elegant, controlled actions. Smashing scenery rarely promotes the image of a gallant, and many feel that longer sticks run the risk of damaging their "scene" and spoiling the image they present. Witty banter is fierce when wielded by a gallant stick-fighter, sometimes sharper than that which a blade-wielding one might use. Given that there are so few stick-wielding Swordmasters, and even fewer gallant stick-fighters, those that I have met feel that they must work all the harder to establish their reputations to their chosen public and the opposite sex.

Conversely, sticksmen are usually more contemplative than bladesmen. Like the bladesman, the sticksmen strives for physical perfection. Daily practice leads them in search of the unblockable strike or the perfect finishing move. However, sticksmen are few and far between, and the common sparring found between bladesmen and other Swordmasters often absent. Many sticksmen retreat from society, seeking to hone their skills in solitude. Such an environment leads them to be quiet folk, though none can doubt their fierceness in battle.

ON OTHER WEAPONS USED IN THE DANCE

Never assume that the stick is the only other weapon used in the Dance. Among those that follow my Discipline, there are many to whom the sword is simply the wrong weapon. Some choose other weapons out of necessity—swords are expensive—while others choose them out of chance—it may happen that there are no other Swordmaster to teach them. Still others are simply more comfortable with another weapon. It depends on the Name-giver in question.

In my travels, I have met Swordmasters that fight with axes, spears, and knives. I have even met one that wielded a long weighted

scarf, woven with fibers of metal to make it more durable. All of them possessed the same wit and surety of step that other, more traditional Swordmasters have been trained in. In short, Scholar Russ, the Swordmaster is not limited solely to the sword.

GAME INFORMATION

Types of Staff

Each length of staff is dependent on the height of the stick-fighter using it, but for a dwarf, human, elf, or ork, short staffs should be treated as clubs, medium staffs should be treated as quarterstaffs, and grand staffs should be treated as troll-staffs, using the rules found on pp. 198 of *Earthdawn Second Edition*. For windlings, treat a grand staff as a club for damage and size; everything else uses the same statistics as a sap. For Trolls, a grand staff does Strength + 5 damage, requires a Strength of 12, and has a Size of 6. For a troll, a grand staff costs 25 silver (as Sarghus said, it is difficult to find an appropriately strong piece of wood that long and straight).

Some stick-fighters that choose to use a two-handed staff (either the medium or grand staff), learn the following talent in place of Second Weapon at Fifth Circle. Keep in mind that if a Swordmaster learns Spinning Defense, then he or she cannot learn Second Weapon. He or she has, as a stick-fighter, chosen to walk a different path.

New Talent

Spinning Defense

Step: Rank + Dexterity Step

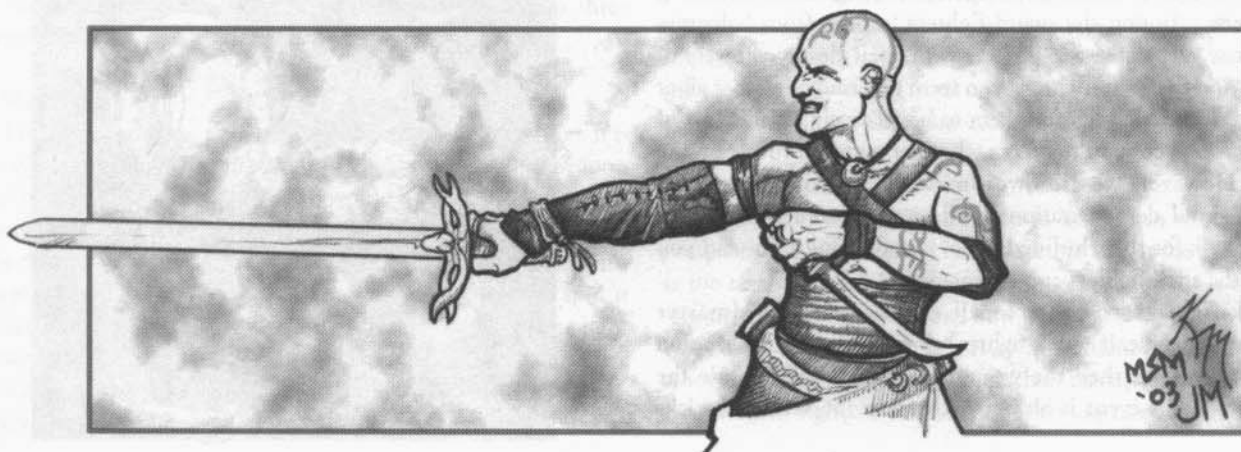
Action: Yes

Requires Karma: No

Strain: 4

The Spinning Defense Talent increases the Physical Defense of a stick-fighter. The character spends a round going through increasingly complex and fast spins and forms, confusing his attackers with the whirling gauntlet. Make a Spinning Defense Test, and increase the Physical Defense of the Swordmaster by his or her rank in Spinning Defense for a number of rounds equal to the test result.

Should the character be disarmed, or be placed in a situation where he cannot spin his staff (in tight quarters, for example), then any bonuses gained from Spinning Defense are lost, until the situation can be rectified. This talent can also be used by Swordmasters who choose to specialize in polearms or spears.



THE GAME OF SWORDS

Mistress N'tasha presents an interesting life. I was not really aware of her tradition until I spoke to her. Not your typical Swordmaster, but as I hear it, we'll be seeing more like her in the future. I may be speaking too soon, but it does give me hope.

—Derrat, Wizard of the City of Yestain

LIVE BY THE SWORD

I live my life on the stage of combat and the Sword is my prop. Well, not exactly, but so many people assume Swordmasters are all exhibitionist glory hounds, I figured I'd start with something more expected.

Truth be told, combat doesn't take place on a stage and a Sword's not a prop, at least not one worth wielding anyway. No, it's like a dance, and the sword is my partner. That's closer. Swordmasters, and some Warriors, understand. The rest of you will just have to follow along as best you can.

I do not fight just to fight, that is a waste of effort. My blade is unsheathed for a purpose. A Swordmaster who strikes at anything that moves deserves neither the title nor her blade. I do not strike from silence like a Thief, nor do I feel the need to announce my blows with a roar to the world like a Sky Raider. Passions! And they say we are vain?

When I draw my blade, it is to face a challenge, to right a wrong, to protect my charge or my friends, to avenge a heinous act, to serve honor, or to gain glory. Which is not to say I won't flash my blades for a good show....

The Life of the Sword has taken me to many places. I have met many people. I have been a bodyguard, a hunter, a watcher, a trainer, and other professions while honing my craft and my skill. I have studied the past, and I make a life for the future. I have found something greater through my Discipline, I know my role in the cosmos clearer than most, and I see myself as sharply as the edge of my blade.

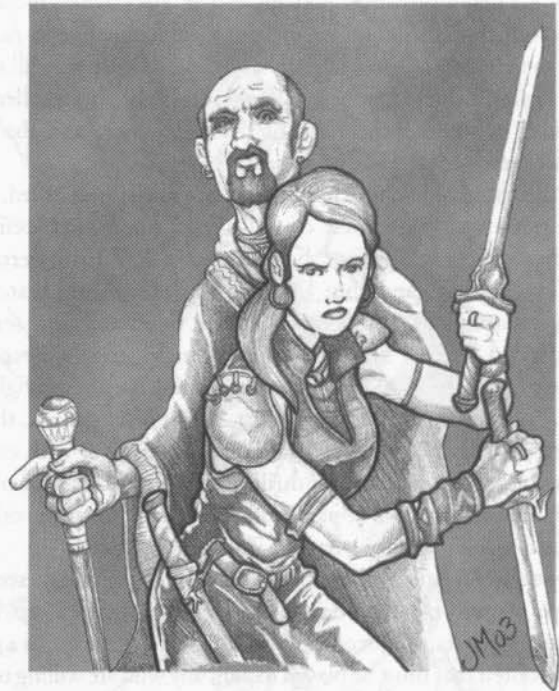
And just as I live by the Sword, that is how I hope to die. Yes, it would be nice to live out a long life and go peacefully in my sleep next to my spouse, but that is not the fate of a true Swordmaster. Being sent to the next life by the truest weapon in the world would be the way to go. Though it does not have to happen soon; I have much to accomplish in the coming years. Yes, too much to do to die just yet. Passions willing, your children will seek me out to fight for their honor.

WEAPON OF CHOICE

We Swordmasters do form a bond with our blades, as one would expect. But it is far different from some barbarian's favorite club or a soldier's trusty saber. I think some Archers may form a similar bond with their bows, though it doesn't really matter.

This bond with our weapon of choice goes beyond the mere weaving of threads, or sacrificing our blood, though that does play a significant part. Seeing the Pattern of a fine blade is like looking at the edge of the cosmos. The clean lines, the flow of power, the clarity of purpose. A sword is like no other weapon. It is pure, simple yet elegant. A sword requires skill to use, years of training to master. It inspires more than any other weapon.

More than a Warrior or others, we have a kinship with our blades. They are part of us and we a part of them. They cannot crash against armor, slice through flesh, or block another blade without us to wield



them. We cannot become who we truly are without them. Our Discipline is the path, and the sword is like a compass. My sword and I are partners, as I said, and we dance together. Though, unlike some of my less skilled and disciplined brethren, I always lead.

These Swordmasters sure love to talk about their steel. It's a wonder they have any time to fight.

—Vanir Drakeslayer

CONCERNING THE OLD WAY

The tradition I follow is called the Varondomakhar. Some of the readers may know it. For the rest, a quick explanation.

It is an old tradition, though it does seem new again in Barsaive. Some have called me a duelist, others a hired sword, others bodyguard, and others names that don't deserve repeating. I am compensated for my talent with a blade and dedication. There are some who scoff at this, but they will probably die in a cold dark kaer with no one to remember their deeds. Gold and reward does not make one any less of an Adept or hero, just as a soldier's pay does not diminish his victory on the battlefield. And I do not always take payment in coin or gems.

A true hero would not tie down their fate to another. N'tasha is a mercenary like any other.

—Halberton the Brave

If you never help another or have no cause, how can you call yourself a hero?

—Ularra Turningleaf



The tradition dates back before the Scourge, when Barsaive was still a Theran province, perhaps earlier. Back when the astral plane was uncorrupted, and we did not need magic just to survive against the Horrors. A time of glory and light that we may all some day see again. It does seem new to many, and it has been called the "new way" in some corners out of that ignorance, and the "old way" in others perhaps out of respect.

A Varondomakhar, or Kharios as we are sometimes called, lives for the game and the contest of skill. Yes, I know that seems to contradict what I said before, but it doesn't. A Warrior certainly would not call it a game, but I am a Swordmaster and matching blades with another has an element of fun no matter how serious the situation. I won't kill a foe with a single strike unless it is absolutely necessary. I want them to at least think they have a fighting chance. I'm nothing if not a good sport. If there's no contest, there's no glory, no honor. No one writes tales of a combat with only a single swing of the blade. The thrill of the fight, the rush of the clash of blades, the curses of pain from cuts and thrusts, the calls to honor and victory, that is what the Troubadours need.

My tradition is not only for Swordmasters, though we do seem to make up a majority of it these days. Many Warriors also are a part. Even Air Sailors, Archers, and Scouts join our ranks. We see life as a great game or contest that must be played to win; any who are willing to live by our way are welcome as brothers and sisters at arms. Even some spellcasters are in our ranks.

Kharios also live by a code of honor. Every game has its rules, and a life without any is simply chaos. Honor may seem archaic to some, and foolish given these dangerous times. It is neither. Honor is never old or wasted or "out of style." A bad code can be foolish, and slavish devotion to a code can be as well. Many of us have a simple code of loyalty and honesty and bravery. Some have a code of secrecy and brutal efficiency. It does vary.

We all have a code of service, either to a patron or a cause, and a code to our fellows. Oaths among the Varondomakhar are considered bonded in blood even without the benefit of ritual. We never lie or deceive each other. We may fight each other if our causes conflict, that is understood, and such a conflict must be made with the utmost care to ensure a fair challenge. We will never knowingly ambush another or deny them a quick and honorable death should they desire it.

Be wary when two of them conflict. My kharios refused to kill an assassin simply because they shared this bond, and the other snake did not want to die. That my guard even asked was bad enough. Be wary when hiring them.

— Barnabus

Our patrons will often seek out those of us with a code that suits their needs or temperament, or is a balance to their own natures. Our patrons will often be asked for their code, for their sense of honor. For some Varondomakhar, it doesn't matter, as long as they may follow their own; for others, it is felt that it does reflect upon us.

Sounds similar to the elf milessaratish. It wouldn't surprise me if there was a connection.

— Billiel Annof

LIFE AS A HIRED SWORD

Often a part of our role is winning acclaim on behalf of our benefactors in public contest. For example, I have fought several times at the Founding and other similar celebrations, placing very well, earning great respect and reward and improving the position of my patron. Other examples would be in defense of our patron's interests in the public square or in front of witnesses, usually at the expense of his rivals or to simply let it be known that his interests are watched and protected.

My service is in great demand. I was in fights that were stopped by a noble when he realized I was defending his rival's interests, for fear of offending or injuring me. He had little to fear on either count.

Life as the beneficiary of another has many aspects. Some of us will create a blood oath with our patron, often as part of our shared honor and to give us strength when defending them. A few long-term associations have an extensive bond. I have an elf swordbrother who formed a Group Pattern with his lord. I'd advise against anyone crossing either of them.

My life is sworn to face the challenges of my patron or my cause. I am honor-bound to stand for my side and my fellows. I may display all the flash and bravado of my Discipline, but do not think I am any less serious.

HONOR ON THE EDGE OF A BLADE

We have no doubts of our side, our station, or our allegiances. If we did, we could not serve as we do. How can I fight for a cause I don't believe in? Or defend someone I hate? Preposterous. If we find faults or doubts, we address them like civilized Name-givers. There are times when our faith and trust is betrayed and a correction must be made. Those are sad occasions. We share them with each other, so that we may know the unscrupulous and unworthy and refuse their patronage. And also to gain understanding and solace over the events.

One does not become a Varondomakhar lightly. We have to prove our worth to a current member of the order and be sponsored. The exact rituals and procedures are not important, they vary from region to region, though oaths and works of free service are a part.

You must be proved strong of mind and of heart. You must show you have honor and discipline and be able to judge people and places and events. Questors of Mynbruje are a part of the ceremonies, as is the sharp eye of experience possessed by the veterans.

We trade our credentials to each other by the line of sponsorship, much as many Adepts trace back the line of masters and apprentices. I would introduce myself to my fellows as "N'tasha, sponsored by Alogo Pindonan."

GAINING HONOR BY DEFENDING ANOTHER'S

As I said before, we have honor. Part of it is in defending our charges. Some use the term "master," which is fine, but do not confuse the tradition for one of slavery. No Varondomakhar has ever been a slave. A simple guard or servant may be a slave, but we must be free to choose our benefactors. It won't be a state of common service. Someone called me a maid with a sword, once. The world does not have to suffer their ignorance any longer.



She's only partly right. I've heard that Varandomakhar grew out of a slave bodyguard tradition. Somehow they were able to form a guild and their talents and choice of service gave them enough clout to become free. No Varandomakhar today is a slave, but I don't believe that was always so.

— Fewick Nodder

With our agreement, our honor is tied to our patron's. As he advances in stature or fame, so do we. As we gain victory and renown, it reflects well upon them. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement, which is why the tradition has survived for centuries.

Our introductions show our loyalty. I might say to one of my fellows, "I am N'tasha, and I defend the innocent in the Badlands." or "I am N'tasha who protects Urupa's Questors." In some social circles, it is also customary for our patrons to announce our service, especially if we are with them. So a noble might give an introduction like "I am Lord Zennar, guarded by Kharios N'tasha." The custom does vary greatly from region to region; I hear in Iopos and Thera proper it is more common with its own system of etiquette.

THE GLORY OF DEFENSE

We fight for others. Some call that heroic in and of itself. I have no disagreement with them.

It is more than that, though. The cosmos appreciates a kind deed. Death has many Name-givers throwing themselves at his doors; he'll hardly miss the spirits of those I am saving. The few extras I send his way more than make up for it, I'm sure.

My honor advances by defending my cause, be it to keep a noble alive or to guard a caravan from raiders or rid a market of slavers. I embody my cause, my victory and honor aid it, help it to grow, even help give it a Name of its own. When I defeated Grevino the Tall at the Founding, my patron, Lord Zennar, gained honor and his House gained standing with my victory, raising my position and fame even higher than if I had simply defeated him in a duel. He became part of my legend and I part of his. I improved my own abilities with the contest. Glory and honor were both served.

I notice she failed to mention that she did not win the Founding that year.

— Sabex Whiteclaw

She lasted far longer than you Sabex! And House Zennar was in it to gain ground on House Tosaar, which N'Tasha did for them excellently.

— Kollo Yinasti

When traveling with my patron, I am expected to watch his back and intercept challenges and keep him safe, if that is our agreement. One of my first patrons valued the life of his young daughter above his own. Our party was overrun by brigands, and he ordered me to escape with her as he fended them off. As much as it pained me, I did escape with her to safety. That was not an easy day. As a Swordmaster, I desired the challenge, and as a friend, I wanted to fight by his side, but the honor of my oath to him demanded that I run and protect her life with my own. The memory still saddens and angers me to this day.



QUICK OF STEEL AND TONGUE

The following is from an interview conducted with Heretha Windstrength, a windling "Gallant" Swordmaster who returned to Barsaive aboard the Earthdawn but is a native of the Theran Province of Arancia. Though she is Theran by birth, she fought on the side of Barsaive along with the rest of the crew of the Earthdawn at the Second Battle of Sky Point, and is recognized as one of the Heroes of Throal.

— Presented for the edification of the reader by Blerit Syrtis, Apprentice Archivist for the Library of Throal

Arrogance. That's what most people call it, but they're wrong. Arrogance is a false pretense, a delusional booster of confidence to help those whose abilities are found to be lacking when push comes to shove. People call me arrogant because they hear me speak of my own accomplishments so glowingly and speak so ill of the abilities of others. I say it because it's true. I say it because I want other people to know it, and because I like hearing myself say it. It is my duty (and great joy) in life to make sure everyone who knows me understands one thing: I am the best. Yes, of course I really look at it that way. Why do you bother to ask me how I feel about these things if you're going to constantly question me about my answer?

Actually, I'd say that "arrogance" sounds fairly accurate to me, but I'm not a Swordmaster, so perhaps I merely fail to understand.

— Mirial, Assistant to the Ambassador General

THE MASTER OF THE SWORD

Being a Swordmaster is more than just mastery of the blade; it's mastery of the entire martial act. Even those out there in the world who will tell you winning an engagement is about physical skill readily admit that there is also a mental component; if you go into the conflict believing you can't win, you most certainly won't. I like to take things one step further. I believe the mental component is far and away the most important part of the fight. Skill with the sword is crucial, of course, but if your opponent is distracted or his confidence is lacking, he can be defeated easily, even if he has several years of experience over you. What it really comes down to is what's in the mind. Everything else is just waving metal around. I'll say it again for clarity and emphasis: any fight, whether as a duel or for much more violent purposes, no matter the weapons involved, is simply a contest between the minds of the participants.

Becoming the best takes long practice both with the sword and with the mind. The principles are the same with both: keep your opponents attacks from hurting you and get as many of your own attacks as you can through their defenses. Now, this may sound weird to you, but hear me out. In a verbal exchange, you have all the same maneuvers that you may have in a normal swordfight. There's the opening jab, a simple quick insult to your opponent's honor. Follow that up with a quick slash to their pride, and you may have an opening to end the match with a lethal thrust at their dignity. An experienced opponent will not simply let you get away with this of course and will most likely either shrug off your opening maneuver with plenty of confidence or parry your insult with a quick disarming comment. However, a truly skilled opponent will be able to put a stop to your assault and turn it around against you; this is where the real fun begins. I've had many a verbal duel that lasted for hours on end, back and forth, to and fro. For periods of time, one side would look like it was about to win, only to have their feet pulled out from under them, thus upping the stakes. In the end, of course, I always come out on top. I said I'm the best, and that means never dueling an opponent I could not defeat. I know you think it all sounds very poetic, but I'm willing to bet I'd have you on your knees in fewer than fifty words if I wanted. I assure you that words can cut as sharp as any blade.

Were the titles of the sections chosen by the archivist, or by the speaker?

— Leonitus

They were suggested by Heretha.

— Blert Syrtis, Apprentice Archivist

As I expected. Hero of Throal or not, her words show her Theran heritage.

— Leonitus

Whenever I start any sort of formalized duel, whether it is a normal duel with swords or a verbal duel, I always leave my sword sheathed. I prefer to open the festivities with a volley of insults and taunts. If my opponent does not return the verbal assault, all the better; I'll spend the first little while dodging blows instead of returning them or parrying them, dodging to and fro in an attempt to frustrate my opponent and get his ire up. When the time does come, the drawing of my sword is the single most dramatic event of the entire fight. I have personally

developed more than a dozen special flourishes to use specifically at the moment that I draw steel. Once the duel has reached this point, of course, my opponent is usually so completely demoralized that the result is a foregone conclusion.

I saw you raise your eyebrow when I claimed to be undefeated. Why is that so hard to believe? I said I'm the best, didn't I? In my business, you have to be honest with yourself at all times, because the truth can be a very painful thing, a weapon that your opponent can bring to bear against you. If you are not comfortable with your own truths, then you will not survive. Being the best means one thing and one thing only: it means you are better than everyone else. It's saying these sorts of things that gets me labeled as arrogant, but the people who would say such things simply aren't comfortable with their own situation. They want to be called "best," but can't face the fact that on occasion, they have had to run from a fight they were afraid of, or even worse, have been severely defeated. You might have noticed that I've chosen my phrasing very carefully. This is, of course, no accident. I am the best at what I do, but this statement is not without qualifiers. I am the foremost Name-giver of my Circle at besting my opponents verbally. There are a few better, but only a fool duels a dragon.

That makes me the best at what I do, too. I'm the best ork Cavalryman of my Circle with a broken tooth in the Unforgivables. Put enough qualifiers on it, and anybody can be the "the best."

— Chott One-Tusk

Do not quickly dismiss any Adept who makes a claim of their skill. It is far more advisable to observe such an Adept yourself, and judge then. You may find that their claims are accurate.

— Nalus Freefall

It is not enough, however, just to know you are the best. Your opponent must be convinced that he is inferior to you. This may seem a fine point, but it is a critical one. You must grind your opponent's confidence, pride, and honor into the ground underneath your heel, and he must know you have done it. Show mercy, of course, but the point is that you do what you must to win the duel. You insult your opponent; you question their fortitude, their skill, and their lineage if necessary. Eventually, you will find their personal weak point and they will buckle quickly. Trolls are easy; they have a list of things they find deeply offensive as large as they are physically. Obsidimen, of course, are easy picking due to their overwhelming love for their precious liferocks. Orks are a little tougher, of course, but all you have to do is find that *gahad* and you're in. Be careful, they'll easily be the angriest of the bunch once you do find it, but get past the initial burst, and they're yours. Humans, dwarves, and t'skrang are tricky. Nearly everyone has their point of pride, but not everyone wears it on their sleeve, and it can sometimes be quite difficult to figure out. Best to stick to generically insulting comments while you figure them out. Windlings, of course, are the hardest of all. Our nature makes it difficult to find a topic we feel strongly enough about to get a reaction. I hope you'll excuse me if I don't give you any particular tips on ways to find these topics.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF STYLE

Many people find my next point to be superficial, but those same sorts of people find my entire outlook on life superficial, so you'll excuse me if I find their opinions irrelevant. If you're going to be a



Swordmaster, you need to dress like one. I find flashy, colorful clothing to be the best, it makes me stand out against the background and people take notice. A friend of mine, more of the Bladesman type, wears loose-fitting plain-colored clothing and his only visible adornment is his sword, which I will admit is a fine blade. He wears it because it allows him the most freedom of movement and the plain colors are less expensive. What he doesn't consider (no matter how much I tell him) is what his clothing says about him. From across a crowded bazaar, an educated eye can tell that while he is no man to be trifled with, he is also probably extremely boring with an obsession with that sword (he swears its his "soul blade" but he's not convincing me). The point is, what you are saying to people starts well before you ever open your mouth. Your appearance, from your hair to your shoes is, if nothing else, a sort of preface to anything from that point onward. Clothing should be functional but make a very specific statement about you. Never forget that your sword is a critical part of your ensemble, and while I don't believe you should compromise balance or quality, you should endeavor to find the sword that matches your look. If you don't have a sense of fashion about this sort of thing, get one; in the mean time, ask an Illusionist. They're all about appearances.

I notice she doesn't mention how she fares against her Bladesman friend in a duel.

— Daramathos of Travar

My Bladesman friend often asks me if I don't have more in common with Troubadours than I do with Swordmasters, and while his question belies the shortsightedness of his sword fixation, he may have something of a point. I have often thought that walking that path, even if only for a short while; it might expand and complement my own abilities greatly. Troubadours have a command for an audience and a way with manipulating emotions that is similar in many ways to my specialty. Learning how they use their magics could expand and complement my own abilities greatly. For now, though, I choose to retain my focus. Though I may use words as well as my blade, I am a Swordmaster.

THE WAR OF WORDS

So I've mentioned it a few times, let's talk about the verbal duel. Most certainly a tradition that dates back to the time in the kaers, the verbal duel is a contest between two Name-givers involving nothing but words (and possibly gestures). The first person to walk away from the duel, or to resort to physical violence, loses the contest. Of course, once violence has begun, the winner must defend himself at least as long as it takes for the witnesses (should there be any) to stop the attacker. The honor of winning the duel does no one any good if they're dead, but in any society that supports the verbal duel, a loser who kills his opponent, or even maims him, is likely to be shunned for the rest of his life. At Swordmaster tournaments, there are often large contests of verbal duels, and this is where my kind and I truly shine. Always pleasing to the crowds, these duels can be quite lengthy, but are a joy to all involved. Well, that's how I feel, but then I always win.

I was once challenged to a verbal duel by a troll Sky Raider who happened to be in the wrong place when I happened to accidentally spill my ale. He obviously had no idea who he was dealing with



when he offered the challenge, but I was more than willing to accommodate him. I had a couple of my companions clear an area in the middle of the tavern so that we could have a little breathing room for our duel, and as things got underway, we had the rapt attention of everyone present. At first, I was impressed, he made an opening move that wasn't at rafter-rattling volume, but I was unfazed. Of course my mother has slept with a lot of men, she's a windling. I retorted with a simple questioning of his strength, which I honestly didn't expect to get more than a chuckle out of him, but he immediately exploded in rage. I'd happened upon a sore spot early on, but chose not to pick at it. Things would be over too quickly that way. True to form, the duel went back and forth, he shouting things at the top of his lungs, and I issuing back evenly toned but increasingly more biting comments in return. The crowd at the tavern was really getting involved with the duel; different people were taking different sides, cheering and jeering as each side got in their respective shots. I was enjoying the duel, the Sky Raider was certainly trying to simply intimidate me into quitting (it's their way after all) while I neatly dissected his inner soul. In the end, I decided that I quite liked the fellow and decided not to humiliate him in front of his friends. After steering the duel in a certain direction, I cut in with a remark about his horns that was irresistibly humorous and set the entire tavern to rolling around on the floor laughing, including my opponent. After that, he conceded the duel and offered to replace my spilled ale. This sort of engagement is what I live for and it is an experience I wish I could share with everyone, but I realize not everyone has the capacity to do so.

Barsaive would be a better place for it if more duels ended with the participants becoming friends afterwards.

— Raelin

Some people criticize my methods by saying they are only of any use in a civilized environment. They maintain that a biting insult is no good if you're face to face with an espagra or similar brute. The only response I can give to this is that it is both correct and incorrect. Most unreasoning beasts can still be intimidated, and that's where the real magic of my talents comes into play. With experience, I have perfected methods of being able to intimidate Name-givers and creatures alike without them actually needing to understand anything I say. Of course, some creatures, such as Horrors, are beyond intimidation. That is when I must fall back to my still very considerable talents with just the sword. These incidents bore me, though, so I prefer to just stay in the city.

ONE WITH THE BLADE

These are the words of the t'skrang Elias Quicksilver, one of the most notable members of the "Blademaster" specialization of the Swordmaster Discipline. This interview was conducted just after Elias's questionable loss in the final round of the Bartertown Swordmaster Tournament.

—Ela Pono

ON LIFE AS A BLADEMASTER

I'd like to make it clear that I'm speaking to you only because I have nothing better to do at the moment. You've caught me at a rare instant. I've defeated or beaten by proxy just about anyone whom I would care to within a day's walk, and so unusually, I have some free time in my hectic schedule. I'm allowing you to pester me with questions only because the body of written work has an impermissible gap in it with respect to the noble and most capable Discipline of the Blademaster. The words of a noted Blademaster such as I should serve to rectify this oversight—be sure that you scribe them properly.

Yet another condescending testimony. It makes one appreciate those few Adepts who maintain a sense of humility.

—Mirial, Assistant to the Ambassador General

Elias is a Blademaster. Were you expecting eloquence?

—Sabex Whiteclaw

ON APPRENTICES

The path to being a Blademaster is a long one, and never painless. You will lose. You will lose so many times that you begin to wonder whether you will ever win. If you fail to learn from your defeats, then eventually you will die. There were many that wished to follow in my path, trace my footsteps to become a master of the blade. Two have become barely competent, able to at least go forth in the world and not embarrass me by carrying my name as their mentor. The others? I keep a trinket from each in a pouch that I carry. I show it to any who wish to learn from me, and tell them, "What you see here in this pouch is all that remains of those who asked what you have asked. My life is a dance on the edge of a cliff. Dance with me, and you may fall. Dance well, and you will be rewarded with skill incomparable. The choice is yours." Some have called me a murderer, saying that I have killed some of my students with the situations I've put them in. I didn't kill them. They were cut down by sloth, slaughtered by ineptitude, slain by their inability to learn the lessons they were given. I accept no blame for the

deaths of any who chose to learn from me, for it was just that: their choice. If anyone has the impression that the life of a Blademaster is a life of safety, they didn't get it from me. We master the blade, or we die by it.

ON ADVENTURING

Some Name-givers choose to go out and fight the perils of the world. There are some, even as we speak, scant miles away vying for their lives in some misguided attempt to "clean out" the Horrors. What a silly idea. If they merely left them alone, then the Horrors will eventually go away on their own, or confine themselves to their broken kaers and hidden sanctuaries. They always have before. When one invades a lion's den, should one be surprised when confronted by an angry lion? And the travel, the interminable travel, the tedious trekking over miles and miles of countryside that all looks alike. These are wasted hours! I travel only by airship, and only with the best of passengers. These misguided fools travel for three weeks to get to an ancient kaer that nobody cares about. Then they open it up. They either fight the resident Horror, who hasn't bothered anyone for centuries, or loot the ruins if it's abandoned. Then they take three weeks to travel back, probably having lost at least one or two of their number along the way. How pointless! A month and a half and a dead friend, and in return you've not affected the life of a single Name-giver. There can be money in it as well, true—but in the final analysis, would you not be better off working as a clerk? At least then, you could do something of worth. I don't adventure... but then, I've never claimed to be a "hero" either.

These are among the most shortsighted words I have ever read.

—Quinn

ON WEAPONS

There are those who say, "A Name-giver's weapon doesn't matter. It's the Name-giver behind the blade that matters." Tripe! If the weapon doesn't matter, then why don't airships use peashooters instead of those huge fire cannons? And trolls would use daggers instead of the sapling-sized axes they're so fond of. The weapon is every bit as worthy as the Name-giver. I can use any weapon that I can pick up, true—but I would not be as quick, as puissant, as nigh-perfect as I am with my blade Quicksilver. After years of fighting with it, caring for it, and protecting it as it protects me, it has become almost a part of me, and I would be less of a swordsman without it. Not that I couldn't defeat ten out of ten of the rabble that passes for Swordmasters these days, mind you. You should pick a weapon, and learn it. Know it as surely as you know the streets of your hometown. Treat it as you would your dearest friend, for steel is more trustworthy than any Name-giver and will save your life far more often. And it must be a sword. As any Wizard will tell you, there is a power in the Naming of things. How any "Swordmaster" can use a staff, or an axe, and think that he is not losing power from the inherent contradiction, astonishes me to this day. We gain our power from the ideals of the people. Who would idolize a club-wielding Swordmaster? A Swordmaster who Names his blade all but guarantees that it will become a Pattern Item the next time he increases his circle. If they do not use a sword, their weapon will become a Pattern Item only with the usual slow association with a Swordmaster's legend. Make your weapon a sword, only what you can carry in one hand. Why not a two-handed sword? Because



ours is the Discipline of finesse, of maneuver and control, and one does not finesse with fifteen pounds of metal. By choosing to hold your sword with both hands, you lose half of your fighting capability. In any real fight you experience, there will be a natural terrain. In a forest, trees and vines. In an inn, tables, chairs, even other patrons. With a free hand, one can do much. You can swing from a chandelier, move a table out of the way, even grab your opponent's clothing to pull him off-balance...but not when both your hands are occupied with a polearm. Some choose to use the glorified dinner plates that pass for shields. I love it when I fight somebody with a shield. They've taken a full third of their field of vision and chosen to trade it for some scant bit of armor, armor that won't even help them as my sword dances around their shield and through the gap in their vaunted plate mail. If they weren't so heavy, I'd carry a shield. I would. I'd offer it to any of my opponents in the hopes that they would handicap themselves with it. If they refused it, I'd know to take them seriously.

Elias doesn't mention that he has the luxury of keeping one hand free because he fights with sword and tail-blade.

— Maynn Glitterwing

ON LOSING, AND LEARNING

A Blademaster is never finished training. I'm not talking about spending hours out on the practice field attacking some wooden dummy who will perfectly simulate nothing you will ever need fight, or moving your blade in some archaic pattern that has been passed down through generations. I mean fighting. Dueling. Putting yourself on the line against your fellow Name-givers to see who is the better. Taking the chance that you will end the fight bleeding to death on the cobbles of some nameless alley. In those fleeting moments, in that minute or two of hard-fought combat against a worthy opponent, that is when you will know yourself. In those scant seconds of swordplay, you will learn more than you can in any number of hours in the classroom. Every stroke is a test of your bladework, every parry a test of your defenses. If you fight for a prize, then there comes too soon a point where the fight is not worth it. In a fight for your life? I prize nothing more than my life, and when that is the prize, I am most dangerous. If I had not just finished the tourney, I would be out right now challenging, cajoling, threatening anyone that I thought could provide me a suitable opponent. With the tournament this week, I've fought everyone of any worth in town, and I doubt there's anyone left that would provide me any difficulty.

At this point, I inquired as to how that could be when he had just lost in the final round to Dralt, the well-known human Swordmaster from Travar. Would he not provide a suitable opponent? He seemed to take offense at the idea.

— Ela Pono

Dralt? That preening dandy? Ha! He was no challenge to me. Prancing about like a show horse and shouting insults in that annoyingly high-pitched voice of his? Who could lose to him? That may be the opinion of the so-called expert judges, but anyone who saw that fight knows who would win if we were to meet on the street instead of in the confines of a made-up dueling circle. You must have seen a real fight or two, or at least read about them in



your treasured books—have you ever heard of one that confined itself to a perfect circle? Or stopped after each hit so that the judges could award points and to allow time for bets to be placed? Only in a fight like that could you ever see such a travesty as occurred today with my alleged “loss.” I have lost before, as you probably know. Truly lost, not simply denied a win due to baseless fiats such as those today. The reason I have lost is because I am still learning. As long as I live, I will improve myself. As long as I improve myself, I will one day catch up to the true masters of our profession, the ones who make life worth living for a Blademaster such as myself. If I had no one to challenge, no one to push me to be better than I am, no mountain to climb... then I would be as good as dead, and worthless as a copper coin.

ON CHALLENGES

And now you're going to ask, why don't I challenge Dralt? Fight him on the street, the way a real fight happens? Why should I? I know his style, I've taken his measure, and I've nothing left to learn from him. He holds no interest for me now. If he ever gets in my way, I will dispatch him as befits one of his status and will think nothing more of it. When you challenge someone, think of it as asking for a lesson. It is a dangerous school, but it is also the best. When they contest against you, they will show you how they fight, let you see how they view the art of the blade. You must learn from this. The art of the Blademaster is the learning art. You must examine their style, view it from every angle, and decide what of their technique should become part of yours. They will learn from you, as well. In a fight, it is not the stronger or the swifter that holds the advantage. Throughout our lives, we are all students. In the end, the best student wins.

I'll finish this with some words to all Blademasters, Adept and novices alike. I have not many challenges ahead of me. There are but few that can beat me, and each will fall in his time. This is my challenge to you. Find me. Fight me. Teach me. When I become the best, never let me take ease. Never allow me to sink gracefully into my retirement as so many others have done before me. Come at me again and again until you can defeat me. Let me live and die by the blade that I have taken as my own. Do me this service, and I swear this in return: I will do the same for you.

CHAPTER 5 WARRIORS





A LIFE IN SERVICE OF THE CAUSE

The following document was authored by Thorbin Dok, commander of a troop of the King's Halberdiers in the Arm of Throal and hero of the Second Battle of Sky Point. We are honored that the commander would take time out of his undoubtedly busy schedule to submit this material.

—Gideon Morrow, Archivist in Residence at the Library of Throal

To Mister Morrow:

You have asked of me the impossible. You have asked me to commit to paper the truth of a Soldier's heart. This I cannot do. What follows is simply the ramblings of an old dwarf. If it answers your inquiry, so be it.

There are many Warriors in Barsaive, but few Soldiers. The Soldier is not a mercenary though he is often paid for his services. The Soldier is not a thrillseeker though he often goes into harm's way. The Soldier is not a wanderer though he is often far from home. Instead, a Soldier is simply a Warrior with a Cause. He has embraced something larger than himself—be it defense of his home, his religion, or his king. Life may be a battlefield, but the Soldier is unconcerned with battle unless it furthers his Cause.

Barsaive has always known struggle, but with the Theran War a recent memory and with new enemies emergent on all sides, rarely has the Soldier's way found itself to so wholeheartedly embraced. There are few organizations that do not highly prize these Adepts. There are fewer organizations still that are not desperately short of them.

A Soldier's way is an austere and selfless road. Few truly follow it entirely. Those who manage to traverse its severe terrain rarely have to look far to find respect. But the Soldier must look far and wide to find someone who truly understands his way.

A Soldier is often mistaken for his trappings. But in truth, a Soldier is not defined by his army, his rank, or his uniform. What makes a Soldier is his Cause. A clear-minded soldier is always aware of his Cause.

A Soldier knows his place. There are those above him whom he serves. He must follow them with absolute loyalty. There are those below him who follow. They must obey every order. There are those he protects. There are those he serves with. And there is the enemy. A clear-minded Soldier knows who fills these roles.

A Soldier knows his mission. He will win the war. The war of life is made of many battles. Some of them will be lost. Some of them are not worth fighting. But the war must be won and the Cause upheld. A clear-minded soldier always understands his mission and how it will help win the war.

A Soldier knows his tools. War is won through conflict, and the Soldier strives to be the master of that conflict. The tool, be it a sword or a bow or a writing pen, must be respected if the war is to be won. The greatest tools a Soldier can wield are his wits. But even so, the tool is only a method, not the aim. Because of this, Swordmasters are only rarely Soldiers. Most have forsaken the war for the tool. A clear-minded Soldier knows that any tool is meaningless if the war is lost.

A Soldier values peace above all else. After all, it is the Soldier who must sacrifice the most to ensure victory. He dreams of the time when the war is won. There will be other wars after this one, certainly. The peace may be short-lived, but it must be enjoyed while it is here. But a false peace, a peace made when the enemy has not



been truly defeated, is no peace at all. A clear-minded Soldier knows what must be done to attain peace and never relents until the war is won.

A Soldier never kills without reason. Many wars cannot be won without bloodshed. So be it. Winning the war is more important than the life of the enemy. Winning the war is more important even than the life of the Soldier. But if bloodshed can be avoided then it should be. A clear-minded Soldier is ready to kill to win the war, but understands that killing is not the reason for the war.

Never? I think that's being more than a bit charitable.

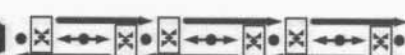
—Beffas of the Starlight Privateers

A Soldier needs neither uniform nor standard nor leader to remind him of his duty. A Soldier is tenacious and unrelenting in his search for victory. He fights to win the war regardless of his circumstances. If he is isolated and alone, he continues the fight. If the war seems utterly lost, he regroups and continues the fight another day. If he is captured, he tries to escape. A clear-minded Soldier realizes that ultimately there is only victory or death.

A Soldier understands that not every conflict is worthy of war. Some conflicts are petty or unimportant. Some conflicts are unworthy of his Cause. A clear-minded Soldier prefers peace and engages in war only when his Cause is threatened.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SOLDIER

It is very rare to find a Soldier that is truly alone. The Soldier is almost always part of some established organization or society. The Soldier may be far from his fellows or on a mission that requires isolation or part of an organization that has been destroyed, but rare is the Soldier who has always been alone.



The brotherhood is both the greatest strength and weakness of the Soldier. It is a strength because, united with other Soldiers, there is little that cannot be achieved. It is a weakness because many a soldier has died senselessly trying to rescue his brothers from impossible odds. In ballads, I have heard many a Troubadour sing of how a hero risked his life to not leave his brother behind. This is foolishness. If his brother can be saved, so be it. But a clear-minded soldier understands that the Cause is more important than the life of his brother. And if your brother is a true Soldier, he understands this as well.

Do not think that this means that a Soldier lightly makes the decision that the life of his brother cannot be saved. Many Soldiers have died trying to save the life of their brothers.

— Lieutenant Steb, 4th King's Halberdiers

When does a Soldier disobey the order of a superior? Only when that order is clearly in opposition of the Soldier's Cause. It is my sacred duty to defend Throal from all her enemies. That is my Cause. I would obey the orders of my king even if it meant my death. But if King Neden ordered me to destroy Throal, this order I would refuse. My duty is first to the Cause, and second to my commander.

Similarly, it is always the right of the Soldier to protest a stupid or inefficient order. The Soldier knows his superiors are not perfect. But once the Soldier has made his protest in a timely, appropriate, and coherent manner, then he must still follow his orders. After all, a clear-minded Soldier realizes that he too is not perfect, and the orders he protests may in fact be the best way to further the Cause.

When does a Soldier lay down his weapons and surrender? The only time that surrender is acceptable is when the Cause is better served by living to fight another day than by dying. A Soldier's life should never be expended foolishly. A Soldier who dies to avenge a point of personal honor has failed his Cause. His Cause is now lessened because he could not put aside his own pride.

When does a Soldier abandon his Cause? Never. If every citizen of Throal were slain and every city burned to the ground and every memory of her purged, still I would be her servant. The Cause is as much a part of me as my Name. It is this level of commitment I expect from all who serve beneath me, and it is this level of commitment that I demand from myself. The Soldier should never embrace a Cause lightly or frivolously, for when he does so, only death should part him. The Cause demands a level of fidelity that any marriage would envy. A Name-giver who can find it in his heart to abandon his Cause is not a true Soldier.

THE SOLDIER'S CHOICE

The War, the Enemy, and the Cause—the Soldier chooses none of these.

It is not for the Soldier to declare war or to choose his enemy. Those above him do this. If there is no one above the Soldier, then that Soldier is the Commander. The Commander declares war or chooses the enemy based solely on the needs of the Cause. And again there is no choice—only the deeper demands of duty.

The skeptic may insist that this is a fallacy. Didn't King Neden choose to go to war against Thera? Couldn't he have chosen to have done nothing? I will not say that Neden walks the path of the Soldier in all things, but in this regard he showed his Soldier's heart.

He had no choice. He could not remain faithful to his Cause and do nothing. Duty demanded the War. And every Soldier who served the Cause of Throal was compelled to follow him into battle.

Similarly, it is not for the Soldier to choose his Cause. The Passions do this. If the Cause is not in your heart, no amount of wanting will make you find it. If the Cause is there, then no amount of denial will make you lose it.

I wonder how many Warriors who see themselves as Soldiers are also Questors of Thystonius?

— Davin Grayeye

OF SOLDIERS AND MERCENARIES

There are many in the Arm of Throal who are not Soldiers. They wear the uniform of the soldier; they have even fought valiantly in our wars; and I mean them no dishonor or disdain, but they fight not for the Cause but for personal reward (either of personal honor or of money). These Warriors are important to the Cause of protecting Throal from her enemies. But they are not what I mean when I refer to those who follow the way of the Soldier. They are mercenaries, the servants of money.

Dok forgets that a brotherhood develops between those who fight together. In the thick of a battle, you're not thinking about the silver. In truth, you're often not even thinking about yourself. All that matters is the men next to you.

— Kowlar, the Proud Mercenary

You're more a Soldier than you give yourself credit for.

— Lieutenant Steb, 4th King's Halberdiers

As I said, they are useful tools towards my Cause. But they are ultimately an inferior tool when compared to the Soldier. An army of a thousand mercenaries could not defeat an army of a hundred Soldiers. There comes a time in any war when the Warrior must choose between serving his own life and serving the Cause. The mercenary will choose his own life. The Soldier will choose the Cause.

IN CONCLUSION

I hope I have conveyed some of what it means to follow the way of the Soldier. By now, you have likely either had one of two reactions to this information: joy or confusion. Perhaps you are glad that others follow the way of the Soldier because that means that there are those committed to keeping you safe amidst your books and scholarly pursuits. Perhaps you respect and value our way but would never travel it yourself. So be it. Perhaps you are confused at what would make a Name-giver commit himself so fully and entirely to any Cause. Perhaps to you it seems like fanatical foolishness. So be it.

Ultimately, there is only one way to understand the Soldier's path and that is to walk it. But perhaps this true of any Name-giver's way. So be it.

Sincerely,

Thorbin Dok, Commander of the 4th King's Halberdiers,
Servant of Throal, Soldier





TO WALK THE PATH OF WARRIORS

We're fortunate to have this monograph from Kelourin Silverleaf. He happened to be returning home during his Days of Change and due to a fortunate chain of events we were able to have this work for our collection. He's from a long line of heroes stretching back before the Scourge. This text provides some insight into the mysterious Wheel of Life, though not nearly enough for some readers, I'm sure.

— Derratt, Wizard of the City of Yestain

My Name is Kelourin Silverleaf. *Imar raen. Imar semeraerth. Civrallar Draesis ti'Morel. Miriat tela li? Thiesat tekio tore li?* (Translation: I am an Elf. I am a Warrior (of the paths). I walk the Wheel of Life. What does that mean? Who does that say I am? — Derratt)

THE FIRST STEP

I came to the Warrior Discipline after my Ritual of Passage, though I had been well-trained in the martial arts since childhood along with the classical arts and history. In that, I was much the same as many in my kaer and like many others throughout the world, elf and not.

The training is hard work and full of insight. Being an Adept is more than having magical talent, it is also a direction, a purpose, and a calling. One is not simply a warrior, but a Warrior. A Warrior must take responsibility for his own progress, be it martial or spiritual. Warriors must learn to swing the sword and axe, hold up the shield, plan and see the battlefield, size up an opponent, and steady the nerves and embolden the heart.

A Warrior must experience life and everything it offers. You must swing a sword to know how to strike with it. Warriors must practice in the natural world if possible; nature is a wonderful guide. Our weapons come from the earth; it is best to practice upon it. Feel and hear the course of the air as it is cut by a blade and move your shield quickly. Feel your body and your blades, know them until you can move all that you are and have on instinct.

A Warrior must care for himself and his weapons. Many apprentices learn the feel of a weapon by cleaning it and appreciate the heft of armor by mending it. Not to say we always dump such work on our squires, but they need to learn appreciation for the tools of our craft. A well-maintained blade and shield will save your life one day if your plans fail you.

We wield weapons and, even more, become one ourselves. That is the lesson; once we understand that, then our true journey begins.

Heed not his words. The Silverleafranelle are heretics, followers of a deviant kingdom. Elven strength is in our blood and in the wood of the trees. He does not walk the true Paths.

— Fesheti Elmspear

I WALK THE PATH OF THE WARRIOR

To walk the Paths is a calling; it shapes one's life and perception. The Path is a journey, not a destination. Many Warriors are quite spiritual, be they *Beletre ti'Thystonius*, or ascetic monks or defenders of some great truth, and they all have a higher purpose in mind, something to strengthen their spirit. For those elves who walk the Paths, it is the same. While we follow the Passions and the other divinities as any



Name-giver, we have a special sense of spirit that is our own. It was born with our race eons ago, perhaps during the Age of Dragons. It embodies the *Draesis ti'Morel*, the Wheel of Life, the great journey, from zero to infinity and back, from birth to death to rebirth. I walk the first of these paths, that of Warriors, *Mes ti'Meraerthsa*.

It has been a difficult and rewarding journey, with many challenges, many victories, and some defeats. Witnessing hope and despair, watching the world rebuild itself and seeing dear friends die. I have loved, lost, matched steel with the bravest and fiercest fighters in all of Barsaive, and confronted Horrors whose very Names would curdle milk. I have seen the glory of a new world, first seen from a newly opened kaer, I have been part of history, met Legends, and strived to build my own. Through it all I have strived to keep my feet on the ground, walking forward.

For *semeraerthsa*, passion and our deep emotions guide us. My own early career was driven by anger over what had befallen our world, my people, and my family. In time, I gained control over that anger, but was still driven by the fire in my heart to carve out a new life from the ruins left by the Scourge. A desire to make right what had gone wrong.

This drive, this fire, this passion led to spiritual awakening, something I know many of my people have not been able to share. The Wheel is indeed a great teacher.

We Elves have a natural desire to renew the land, so the scene of what was left after the Scourge when we emerged from our kaers and citadels was heartbreaking. As a Warrior, I strive to fight the corruption and the darkness that haunts our world; it is my duty and my honor.

I always thought elves were so detached. He seems to feel his life so much.

— Nimue



Yes, he does. A few fortunate Elves have their own gahad; he is one of them. Ask him about the recovery of his ancestral blade, Stormsilver, for a tale worthy of an ork's funeral pyre.

— Jeroval Irontusk

THE ART AND THE MYSTERY

Like the wood becomes the fire and the river becomes the sea, so to does the Warrior become the war. Despite what others think, Warriors are not killers or plunderers or bloodthirsty brutes. Some unfortunate few of our Discipline may act as such, but it is really a peaceful Discipline.

Warriors wield the sharp steel of a sword and the mind, hold the strong wood of a good shield and of a noble heart. The greatest weapons we carry are ourselves. It's our wits that guide us. A sharp mind will defeat a sharp blade every day. That is our art.

We do not wish to fight. That is our mystery, at least to those who are not Warriors. We know the way of war too well to be that foolish. A Warrior fights when he must and no more. We fight to win, for in war one side must lose and one side must win. There is no shame in it, no loss of honor; it simply is the way things are. Fight your best, do not yield until there is no way out, and you will not lose face in the eyes of a Warrior. If you wish a quick and clean death, and if you fought with all your heart then we will give it to you so you may perhaps win in your next life. Perhaps we will even meet again.

Death is not the end of every fight. An unconscious or disarmed foe ceases to be a threat. Victory may come with surrender, with the delay of our enemy, with showing him that a worthy challenger exists or by merely standing one's ground and saying "no more." We fight with our hearts and our wits as much as with a sword and shield.

THE RITUAL OF COMBAT

Combat is sacred. Not that it is a ritual to some deity or a grand sacrifice to the divine, but it is ritual. Like all important tasks, it has purpose, it has form, there are tools, and it is entered into seriously and with conviction—therefore, it is ritual.

Some corrupted souls do look upon the spilling of blood as a religious act and those *morkhan* deserve whatever misfortune befalls them. The death of another is never pleasant. Warriors seek the quick dispatch of foes to avoiding prolonging the unpleasantness. The ritual of war need not be long. We may take joy in victory, but not in death. Our foe will be reborn in time anyway.

Just as there are rituals for all important things, so to for combat. Warriors learn proper stances, correct ways to hold weapons, where to strike, how to move properly. It is a dance of blades as the Swordmasters say. But is it more than that. It is for life and death, the highest of stakes, though it is no game.

The field of battle is sacred space, the altar of life and death; walk onto it with purpose and treat it with respect. Every battle may be your last. Every battle may be your enemy's last. Such endings do not come lightly. We elves do not have the pessimistic view of the time after life as other races do, but we understand the solemnness of the occasion.

It has been said that war is a tool of kings. That may be the fate of soldiers under a flag, but to a Warrior, war is a sacred act. We bring defeat to our enemies and may lay down our lives to protect our friends

and brothers. It may be a tool, but it must be a tool with a higher purpose, else it is not worth the honor to fight it.

A Warrior may be a great conqueror or great defender, but whichever he chooses, he must do it with all he has, for honor demands it. If his heart is not in it, he will have no passion for his task and ultimately fail.

WALKING WITH THE ELEMENTS

The five elements are a guide and symbolize our actions. The *Samistishsa* call them the Five Steps. Air moves us quickly and clears our thoughts; Fire is passion and destruction and drive; we grow like Wood to achieve higher glory and understanding; Earth steadies us and keeps us in this world to see what is really here; and our emotions are like Water, calm before the storm of battle, yet a raging torrent that moves all aside when our cause is just and our steel sharp.

We call out challenges to our foes on the air and draw the steel of our blades from the earth and forge them in fire. We defend our sides with shields of wood from noble trees, and our blood runs hot like a summer flood in battle, moving our arms and legs to fight. We burst through all obstacles like a wave; like the running waters we can always find an opening. We stand tall like the mountain and shelter our friends like the branches of a mighty tree.

Even our many talents arise from elemental power. We dance on Air to strike quickly; we protect ourselves with Wood and Earth upon our skin.

Five is the four directions plus the center. A true Warrior covers all directions in his defense, is aware of all sides of a battle, sees all his enemies, and knows the quickest path to victory through it all. A Warrior may also strike in any direction, with any weapon, at any time. We are always ready.

REST AND ACTION

I will admit to my race having a reputation for cool detachment. I myself have restrained my reactions when necessary. But do not confuse temperance for indifference. Elves are long-lived, and we feel we can afford to take the long perspective on events. While others may be compelled to act, we will take the time to see more and know the inner workings. At times. We are also a passionate people; we feel deeply and if those feelings draw us to a course of action, we will take it with all our being.

A dearly departed companion told me that is why the elves have won all their wars—our Warrior generals can see the long lines of the battle and will wait for their time of victory.

Every Warrior knows the value of forcing your enemy's hand and of not committing too early to the battle. We also know the benefit of surprise and quick action and that sometimes doing something is better than doing nothing. It is no different on the Path.

We Warriors carry our banners high onto the field. We swing our blades with all our might; we drive for the heart of our enemies. We walk a path of action, but we know there is a time for it, and so we rest until our forces are needed. As in nature it is so in our life, both are needed. The wind does not blow constantly, the tide is not always high, the plants do not constantly grow, and we are not always awake. Experience requires contrast to truly learn.

In action we defeat our enemies, but in stillness there is understanding. The practice field may allow for inner thoughts to





work themselves out, but large strategy and spiritual insight sometimes require stillness. Quiet reflection under the trees to answer those questions of mystery that worry our sleep. Even at war, stillness is a tool—to hide from a sentry, to lull an opponent into letting down his guard, to feint an opening to draw in the enemy—all actions arising from stillness. Waiting for the moment. Even in stillness, you can hear the call of battle.

MEDITATIONS ON THE WHEEL

I will live a long life; at least, that is my hope. Barring my last battle, I have another two centuries left to live and learn and grow. My path is a spiritual one. Not like a beletre or spellcaster, it is simply our way. I know I walk the Wheel of Life; it has always guided me, especially in times of death that are well known to Warriors. All my experience is my lesson for this path.

The Wheel, like a shield, keeps us safe on our path. We move around it, on it, become one with it, and move to the center. Our path may be straight like a sword or curved like a bow. It may be quick like an ambush or slow like a winter's night. But we endure, for a Warrior will always survive. He will be the first to challenge life and last one standing when the end of the journey comes.

The practice of arms is a rite that carries us along the Wheel. The joy of body and weapon and shield moving as one furthers our journey. Losing all thought, all doubt, keeping only the surety of one move flowing into another. Sparring with another to hone one's skill to use in a real fight. To know when you will strike true, move swiftly, and emerge victorious or die gloriously—that is a perfection we seek. The perfection of the Wheel.

Mes ti'Meraerthsa is aligned with Earth—stable, strong, patient—and with the night—quiet, mysterious, cool. Yet it is the path of emotion: passion, action, living in the here and now. A contradiction perhaps, but there it is nonetheless. The Warrior is a Discipline of strength and action, well suited to this Path. Just as the Earth, we will stand our ground until the last, but we may also move with sudden destruction, as the earthquake or avalanche. Fire lives within the Earth, and Earth contains the Waters. It is all connected. We are simply more aligned to one than the other at times. We will erupt as the volcano, laying waste to all in our way, yet new life is created from the ashes. The flood will wash over a plain, sending all that stands into ruin, yet life grows from the remaining silt.

And when our final rest has come, know that great action was taken to get there. A Warrior does not go to the spirits easily. We may be willing to die if necessary, but we are also prepared to commit

ourselves to a legendary task to send a Warrior to the next life.

At times I wish I were an Elementalist, I could then probably explain it better in Throalic. It does seem I'm ready for *Mes ti'Telenetishsa*, to remove the dark cloak and step upon the Wheel again, to see the world anew.

I am Kelourin Silverleaf, and I have walked the Path of Warriors.

They may be more frail than some humans or orks, but don't think elves cannot be Warriors. I had the pleasure of testing my mettle against Kelourin. Don't underestimate his race. A Warrior is still a Warrior, no matter his stature.

—Dominu Skyclaw

THE SILENT WAY

The following is my transcript of an interview with Darran, the troll Warrior famous for his numerous successes against forces much more powerful than his own. While decried by some as cowardly or dishonorable, no one can deny the effectiveness of his use of surprise and stealth in the fight against the Therans. He has agreed to speak to me on the condition that his words be available to any Warrior who asks.

—Eryan of Jerris, Dwarf Scholar

Sit down, kid, and don't yap. I owe somebody a favor, and that's the only reason I'm here. I've spent far too many years giving back to my Discipline. I've mentored more Warriors than I can even remember, and most of them are dead. They didn't pay attention to me—didn't follow the rules. Didn't follow my rules.

OF DEATH

For a Warrior, the only thing worse than death is failure. Most end up doing both. They think that because their death was noble, that it was a success. Because they fought "bravely." They think courage is charging to your death against long odds. That's the easy way out. True courage comes from fighting your pride, swallowing your *katorr*, and dealing with the shame of running from a fight. It's not easy, but it keeps you alive. As long as you're alive, you can fight.

This troll has no honor.

—Drogar Firebeard Rocktapper





There are some things worth dying for. Problem is, those things change from person to person, and you can never be sure what that is. I was once deep in Theran territory, slowly making my way from an army camp where a Theran Stratego had just died in a mysterious explosion. This was back when I was trying to defeat the Theran Army by working my way through their officers. I think all I did was provide Thera with a bunch of younger, more alert commanders. That one was a loss. Anyway, I needed to get out of there fast, and so I picked a farm to steal a horse from—figured horses wander off all the time, so who's to care? The farmer, that's who. Dryan the farmer. I later found out his name, although he's not on my list. He came after me with a rake—can you believe that? A rake! He had no skill, no training, just sheer determination to keep me from stealing his horse. He even hit me before I recovered from the surprise of it all, gave me this nice scar on my shoulder. I had to beat him unconscious with my bare hands. I wish I could have recruited him instead. In the instant when I had jumped on the horse, he decided to fight. He had to know he was likely to lose, and that made him dangerous. I respect him for that. He knew what he was willing to give his life for, and followed through as best he could. Far too many Name-givers go adventuring these days with no concept of the decisions they might have to make. Is it worth leaving your companions to die to keep a Horror from slaughtering a town? Would you let yourself be tortured by Therans long enough for them to believe the lies you tell to mislead them? Let a Theran go free because you gave your word? I've answered all of these questions in my life, and I know what causes and principles are important enough to die for. Most of you don't, and when the time comes to choose, you'll freeze, agonize over the decision, and probably make the wrong choice. It's amazing how many Warriors would live longer if they took a while to just think about life, rather than running from one brawl to the next.

OF RULES

Here are the rules that have kept me alive. Following these rules will not keep you alive. You will just take longer to die. This is acceptable because in a fight, the last one to die is often the winner.

- Never fight an Archer at range, a Beastmaster up close, or a Cavalryman on his horse. Fight Swordmasters unarmed. Never let a spellcaster finish a spell. Fight no one on their own terms.
- Every night, decide where you will meet up if the camp is overrun.
- Always plan an escape route. Getting out is just as important as getting in.
- Never attack when or where it's expected.
- Let the enemy win small battles. They'll get overconfident and make mistakes.
- When in enemy territory, take the most difficult route. It will be the least guarded.
- Know the effective ranges of your opponents, spellcasters especially. Elementalists are dangerous to about 100 or 120 yards. Illusionists and Nethermancers need to be closer, about half that. With Wizards, it depends on what spells they like.
- What other people want is not always what is best. Always consider the results of your actions.
- Never follow a plan blindly. Always have a backup.
- Separate prisoners until they have been questioned. Compare their stories.
- Post sentries in pairs.
- Take risks only when the reward is great. Never die alone.
- Never travel so closely together that all of you can be hit by the same Fireball.
- If you must retreat, create a diversion. If the enemy retreats, follow carefully, for it may be a trap.
- While the high ground can be crucial in a fight, it means nothing to Windlings. Windlings always have the high ground.
- No weapon is as powerful as knowledge of your foe. If given the choice, I would rather know everything about my enemy than have half of them fall dead. Once you know your enemy, victory is certain.

OF PREPARATION

I've spent most of my life training. If you're smart, you'll do the same. Learn skills when you get the opportunity. You never know when you'll need to fire a fire cannon or rope together a raft. Being fast and good with a blade is wonderful, but it won't keep you from dying because you were stupid. If you're a human, then learn. I've heard troll Warriors make fun of human Warriors who "overuse" their ability to learn the talents of other Disciplines; they say it makes them "less of a Warrior". It's Warriors like those trolls that make me despair for the fate of my Discipline. A Warrior's job is not to be the ideal, not to be the hero that everyone wants them to be. A Warrior's job is to get the job done. If you give me an objective, it will be accomplished... although maybe not the way you had in mind. If you're the kind that likes to adventure with other Name-givers, then you should train them to fight as a group. A group can defeat a mob of individuals numbering five times as many, but it requires cooperation, and the knowledge of each other that can only come from long hours on the practice field.





I should add the last two sentences to the top of every contract the Exploratory Force signs. I don't like much of what Darran says, but he's right about a little bit of teamwork being able to save a lot of lives.

—Oergesol

OF ARMS AND ARMOR

Now, the choice of what to use and what to wear when adventuring as a Warrior is one that you can usually get a good argument started over. I've known several excellent Warriors, and all of them had a different opinion. Say you have a troll with a greataxe, and a troll with a dagger. Which one of them is going to be more dangerous? You don't know? Good answer. It's the Name-giver behind the weapon that truly makes the weapon effective. Every weapon is better at something, and every weapon is useful in the proper situation. There was once a Theran, very nervous, who had annoyed some of the higher-ups in Urupa with his actions. He wouldn't allow any weapons into his house and had every guest searched. I killed him with the shards of a ceramic dinner plate. My point is: no weapon is inherently "better" than all the rest. This is the real lesson: use the right equipment for the job, and keep your kit in good shape. If you're not going to take proper care of it, then why did you bother bringing it in the first place?

ON PLANNING

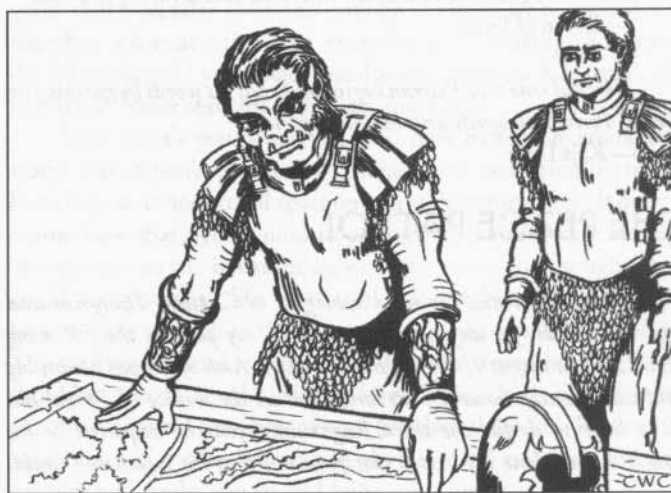
The most important thing you can possibly take with you into a battle? A well thought-out and flexible plan. A good plan will save more lives than any healer and can make ten men as effective as a hundred. It can snatch victory from the claws of defeat and makes the impossible possible. The opposite is exactly true as well. A bad plan, one that is straightforward and obvious or based on what you think instead of what you know, will cost you dearly. I've many friends, mostly in the Army and Navy, who would tell you themselves just how much poor planning has cost them... if they weren't all dead. Never go into a fight without an idea of what to expect or how to handle it. If you do, you may as well kill yourselves and save the enemy the effort. Reconnaissance is crucial. In any situation, there will always be a critical piece of information that will change the way you view the battle. In some cases, finding out the proper facts means you don't have to fight a battle at all.

There was this one time, back in my youth, when me and a few of my friends were brought in as the contract muscle for a group from Throal's Exploratory Force. Seems the explorers had tracked down the location of a pretty powerful Thread Item lost in some ruins out on the plains, in Scorchers territory. It was an oversized key, about a foot long, supposed to open some door somewhere to limitless treasure, untold riches—you know the story. This season, the area it was buried in belonged to the Broketooth scorchers, one of the smaller bands. They usually weren't much more than a nuisance but had been unusually active this year, and the raiding was starting to get out of hand. The explorers had their heart set on going in hard and fast, grabbing the key and then getting out of Broketooth land as quick as they could. I tried to point out that what they had in mind was exactly what the scorchers had been doing for a hundred years, and the scorchers were going to be a lot better at it than we would. "Fine," they said. "What do we need to defeat them?" Of course, they'd asked the wrong

question. They should have asked, "What do we do to get the key?" But I told them, wrote down for them exactly how many Throalic infantrymen and various support requirements they would need to fulfill to win a standup fight. They took it and sent it back to Throal. They must have been working for somebody pretty important, because they sent off the troops like they were filling an order at a tavern. I asked them what we should do while we were waiting for the reinforcements to show up. "We wait," they said. Getting paid to wait? Sounds like my kind of job. So we're planted in this tiny little town on the outskirts of civilization for weeks. With not a whole lot else to do, I ended up spending a good bit of time in the local pub. Turns out a few of the regulars that I got pretty friendly with were Broketoothers—decent enough guys, even if they would start a fight over the smallest slight. I started buying them rounds of the swill that passed for ale, and they started talking, complaining about how Ghartok, the leader of the Broketooth, had been in an especially foul mood lately. With a few more drinks, the story came out. A new merchant had taken over the old trade route by which Ghartok had gotten all of his trade goods, trading raw materials and plunder for the finished goods created in far-off cities. Unfortunately, this merchant was especially crafty and had gotten Ghartok to agree to complex contracts worded so that, while they appeared to be better for Ghartok and his scorcher than past deals, there were penalties and fees for almost every situation. The net effect was that Ghartok could barely afford the necessities for his scorcher, even with the increased raiding activity of the past months, and the contract had been sealed with a blood oath. While I was listening to this, a plan started forming in my mind. I asked them to take me to see Ghartok.

A little over a week later, I was waiting with Ghartok for the dwarf trader. When he arrived, I stepped forward, a scroll in my hands. Ghartok watched and waited as I explained our new position on the contract to the trader.

"Here's what it comes down to. I've explained to Ghartok's men over there that you're cheating all of them, and after the third or fourth explanation, they all agree. They've voted, and they're willing to follow him even if he becomes a blood betrayer. I've pointed out that if he kills you, someone else would quickly take over your trade route, and they would provide more favorable terms. So, now, the question is: are you willing to amend the contract according to our terms, or do I let Ghartok rip you apart?"



The trader agreed. Ghartok sent a few men with me to the ruins to recover the key. He agreed to cut back on the raiding and said if I ever needed anything to get in touch with him. A few weeks later, the Throalic captain showed up, with more men than I had even asked for. We exchanged pleasantries for a bit, and then he started to discuss the elaborate plan he wrote up on the airship ride. He brought out his maps, and I brought out the key. I loved the look on his face when he realized he'd come all the way from Throal for nothing. I wish I could have given it to him twice.

The captain was disappointed, but comforted himself with the fact that he could take care of the scorchers while he was here. He began to plan a military operation, and I provided as much advice as I could. It was a beautiful plan, and Ghartok thought so too when I told him about it. I heard the Throalic attack didn't succeed. Imagine that. Not only had I succeeded without a fight, I'd gained a new ally. This is what comes from knowing your enemy, focusing on your objectives, and good planning.

Interesting.

—Thorbin Dok

If that's not a warning against watching what you say, I don't know what is.

—Kowlar

But here's a warning: some have heard my words and taken me for an armchair Warrior, one who makes plans but never sees them carried out. Do not make that mistake. I never forgive those who offend me. No trespass goes unpunished. I carry a list—The Rolls of the Dead. It is how I keep track of all those who escape my justice. My roll call is nearly complete. The few Name-givers on it who still live are... difficult targets, to say the least. But I have never doubted that I will win in the end. Every day that passes grants me more knowledge. One day, when my enemies least expect it, they will fall. They will not know why, or who, but that is not important. I do not fight for pride. I do not fight for glory. I fight to win. You want to understand me? Then remember this: I'm a Warrior, not a fighter. Fighters win fights. Warriors win wars.

At the end of the interview, Darran's tone and indeed, his posture, changed from that of a lecturing scholar to a much more ominous manner, as if I had somehow offended him. I'm not sure what caused this change, but it made me very glad indeed that the interview was drawing to a close.

—Eryan of Jerris

I would note that Darran begins and ends his words by speaking on Death. Perhaps insignificant, but perhaps not.

—Kaja Lyles

THE PEACE PATROL

I must first and foremost apologize to Captain Thorgrim and you, the reader, for any mistranslation on my part in the following text. Captain Angus Thorgrim has served the Arm of Throal honorably and competently; however, his long years in the service of Throal has done little to de-fur the thick Rugarian accent he acquired in his youth. I have done my best to clarify as much as his speech as I could,

but despite aid from fellow archivists and some of the Captain's soldiers, could not do so completely, without removing his particular brand of bluntness.

Having said that, the following is something of a one-sided interview I had with the Captain on what it is to be a Warrior, since he and those that have apprenticed under him show a distinctly different view on the Warrior Discipline than Throal associates with the archetypical follower of that path. In general, I simply had to ask him what I was looking for. Once on his third ale, what he told me has been transcribed below as closely as possible from what I remember and from what could be derived from my copious notes. There were a few times I asked for clarifications, but for the most part, I have left my own questions out, as his speech flows of its own accord—even with my additional questions for clarification.

In parting, I must recommend that you purchase the Captain a drink, if ever presented the opportunity. While you may not be able to understand what he says, he has fought at the Battles of Prajor's Field and Triumph, and the Second Battle of Sky Point. When you can decipher his speech, he has quite a story to tell.

—Presented for the edification of the reader by Blert Syrtis, Apprentice Archivist for the Library of Throal

THE PLACE OF A WARRIOR

What is the place for followers of the Warrior Discipline? If the world were perfect, we'd have no place. There wouldn't be a path for us to follow. That's not the way it is though. Nor the way it will ever be. The world doesn't work like that. If you're lost in the wilderness, it's survival of the fittest. If you're lost in the city, it's still a place where you have to learn to fend for yourself or be left to the dogs. And before you finish that blustering, aye, that applies to Throal, too. Even as much as we don't want it to—just look at that stupid attempted coup.

It's the curse that comes from being a Name-giver. As long as there are Name-givers, there will be damned fools who think they've the right to do whatever they want, whenever they want, however they want, regardless of who it hurts. Trust me, lad, I spent the first nineteen years of my life as a slave, and after that I've seen more wars than you have stripes. And as long as there are bloody fools to follow the piping of the damned fools, we'll have wars. Blast it, man, look at the Passions! If they haven't got their act together, what chance have we got? Sure, it's a pretty bleak outlook, but it's also Mynbruje's own truth. Doesn't mean that there isn't any hope. Doesn't mean that there aren't things worth fighting for. As long as we still have some of the Passions on our side, it shows that the soul of this world hasn't completely gone out for the muckers. The others can go hang for all I care.

For any non-Throalic citizens reading this manuscript, the Royal Guild of Muckers are those responsible for waste disposal in the city of Throal.

—Thom Edrull

Where was I? Right. War. Wish we could blame that one on the Horrors, but we've had that as long as there've been Name-givers. It seems like a gift of the Horrors though, lad. War leaves scars on everything it touches. The land. The soldier. The civilian. The soul. It causes pain, despair, and remorse—usually on both sides. It's not clean; it's not glorious; and it's not something you really ever want to be





in. Not if you're sane. Sometimes, though...sometimes, it's a necessity. When someone isn't just hurting you, but your family, your friends, and your neighbors. Or killing. Like the Horrors with their foul corruption. Like the Therans with their chains of slavery. There's nothing pretty about war, but sometimes it's the only way to defend the rights you were born with. It's times like that when you need Legends. Heroes.

Patience, lad, let me finish. Yes, that's a time for Warriors, as well. Sad fact of the matter is that's the time when we usually shine. But the true purpose of a Warrior, lad—and you mind this—is to end conflict. We're violence incarnate, set here to keep ourselves in check and try and defend the rest of you from it. That's our place. That's our task. That's what a Warrior is to me.

BEING A WARRIOR

What's it like being a Warrior? It's being an avatar of conflict, youngling. All your life you're taught killing is wrong, and for good reason. Killing your own kind, or any Name-giver for that matter, goes against nature and the order of things. Killing is for necessity, for food, or for survival. Killing for sport, rage—or worst, for fun—is nothing but evil. Well, lad, a Warrior dedicates his life to learning how to do just that as quickly as possible—kill. Sure, sure, you can use non-lethal attacks all the time, all your life, but that means you haven't the making of a Warrior. And I'm damn proud of you if you've the heart and mind for such a thing. However, this world needs Name-givers that believe in something good and are willing to kill to defend it. It's that belief, that morality, which keeps a Warrior from being just another cold-blooded killer.

The morality of a Warrior varies from Name-giver to Name-giver, but most likely aligns without whatever Passion or Passions they've chosen to follow. I'm not going to say my way's better than any other with the exception of cold-blooded killers or any nutty blighter that follows a Mad Passion. You've got to find something in your life worth protecting. An ideal. A person. Your family. Your village or town. Your nation. Name-givers everywhere. Whatever means something to you. That's part of your shield, lad. That's what helps keep you from crossing the line and becoming what you're fighting against. Sometimes that alone's not enough. But it's a good start. The rest comes from discipline and will. Keeping yourself in check. Not putting in a killing stroke when you have the breathing room to be merciful, and it won't cost your squad mate his life.

Never killing those that aren't part of the fight. Learning to control yourself in the heat of battle.

Finding the primal spirit to fight is like opening a furnace in your soul, lad. It's hot, fast, and can consume things in its path before you've had a chance to think things through. It's rage, fury, passions, and a need to survive. A force older than anything out there, except perhaps the world itself. The Discipline of a Warrior teaches you to control that blaze, lad. Keep it from burning yourself and those around you. In the soul of every Warrior is a destructive force that doesn't give one whit about good or evil. It's up to that soul to harness that energy and channel it into something constructive. It's all up to the choices we make.

Thorgrim must have quite an internal conflict if this is how he sees his Discipline, but he still strives for peace.

— Cibonicus

Ask any Warrior you want what his or her greatest weapon is. If they aren't daft, they'll answer that it's themselves. A Warrior's heart and mind should be his greatest assets on the battlefield. You need your wits about you to understand the pulse of the battle, what's going on, and where you should be to best end the fight. Studying never hurt a Warrior, youngling—only helped. Your mind should be exercised like any other part of you. That should help give you the presence of mind to hold your sword when words are enough to keep a conflict from starting in the first place; Passions grant that Astendar gave you enough sense to string two words together without offending everything in hearing. You need discipline to hold your blade until your opponent has struck the first blow. Never start the fight, lad. Just finish it.

Then there's your body, lad. You have to keep it honed and ready. Just as you'd care for your weapon to make sure it's in the best shape so it doesn't fall apart on you at the wrong time. It doesn't matter how sharp your mind is, youngling, if you were a fraction of a second too late in executing whatever it was you thought of. It could cost you your life, or that of a fellow Name-giver. So you have to keep yourself in the best condition you can. Practice often. The weapon in hand is only as good as the person holding it—it shouldn't determine who wins or loses. Unless it's a Thread Item, of course. Don't get too big for your britches, there, lad. Remember your limits. If you've the measure of your mind and body through practice and study, you should know your limits, as well.



FINISHING THE FIGHT

Of course everything's a battle. Whether you accept that or not is your business, but no matter what you do, some force is working against another. It's just that combat is the easiest way to see it. Ever cracked that noggin of yours against a particularly hard puzzle? It's a struggle, isn't it? So, aye, you can apply what I said above to the rest of life's problems if you want to. Might even help. But what I use it for is finishing the fight. Which fight? Any fight that I think concerns me, or that I'm dragged into.

Aye, taking the first hit puts you at a disadvantage, lad. But that's the way of things. If you're to be a legend—a good one, mind—then you have to be the part, not just act it. The last thing the world needs is another idiot with a sword ready to smite everything in creation to prove how great he is. We need Warriors willing to die for something greater than that. Willing to put their lives on the line to defend someone who can't defend themselves, or who won't know it's coming. Maybe if Thera had more Name-givers like that, we wouldn't have had to see the things we saw at Vivane. Thera threw the first punch, lad. They always have. That's why I fight for Throal, and for Barsaive. Not every fight begins with a show of arms, you know. Some can just begin with taking things from you that shouldn't be taken. Like your freedom.

Anyway. The bottom line is for you to have something to believe in and defend. Stick to your beliefs, and fight for them when you have to. Don't ever start a fight, but when you get involved in one, finish it. Take the first hit, and then show them what you're made of. As harsh as this world is, you'll find that justice and mercy can prevail, lad, so long as you're willing to abide by them. Now, come on...put away that parchment. Our drink's getting warm.

GAME INFORMATION

Thorgrim Warriors

There are a smattering of Warriors across Barsaive that follow this particularly fatalistic view of the Warrior Discipline—the majority of which are the Throalic Peace Patrols trained by Captain Thorgrim himself. They depart from the standard Warrior in the sense that they are more willing to accept damage simply for the purpose of being able to make an effective counterattack. This mentality has altered the path of learning for the Adepts, allowing its followers to choose some different talents than the standard Warrior package.

Any Adept following this way for Warriors may (but are not required to) make the following Talent substitutions:

At Second Circle—Fire Blood for Anticipate Blow

At Third Circle—Accept Blow for Avoid Blow

At Sixth Circle—Disarm for Missile Weapons

At Fourth Circle, any Warrior following this particular path must take Counterstrike instead of Down Strike.

New Talents

Accept Blow

Step: Rank + Toughness Step

Action: No

Requires Karma: No

Strain: 1

The Accept Blow talent allows a character to roll with an incoming melee, missile, thrown, or unarmed attack directed at him in combat in an attempt to reduce the damage from it. Any time an opponent attacks a character with the Accept Blow talent, the character may make an Accept Blow Test to see if they can reduce the damage from the attack. If the result rolled by the character was at least equal to the opponent's Attack Test, then the opponent subtracts three steps from their Damage Step. For every level of success above average, the Accept Blow talent subtracts an additional three steps of damage. This means the character was able to brace himself for the attack, and roll with it in such a way that it grazed him. A character may use Accept Blow once per every attack directed at him in a round, so long as he is not immobile, and can be used in the same round as an Attack Test. Accept Blow cannot be used against blind-side attacks. If the character fails their Accept Blow Test, then the hit automatically becomes Armor Defeating.

Captain Thorgrim is being attacked by a Theran Warrior. The Theran Warrior rolls an Attack Test with his Melee Weapons Talent, and Thorgrim's player decides to attempt to use Accept Blow against it. The Theran Warrior gets a 16 for his attack, while Thorgrim gets a 28 for his Accept Blow Test. This is a Good success against a 16, so the Theran's damage step is reduced by 6 steps.

Counterstrike

Step: Rank

Action: No

Requires Karma: Yes

Strain: 1

The Counterstrike talent allows a Warrior to retaliate immediately against any successful Attack Test made against him before any Wound penalties apply from the damage. The attack can be any damaging attack—magic, melee, missile, a spell effect, thrown, or unarmed—but can only be retaliated against with a physical attack, and only if the character is within range of his attacker for his current weapon. The character must choose whether the Counterstrike step adds to the retaliating talent (Melee Weapons, Missile Weapons, Unarmed Combat, etc), or adds to the Damage step of that Attack Test if successful. The Counterstrike talent can only be used once per round.

After being successfully hit by the Theran Warrior for Step 7 damage, Captain Thorgrim decides to issue a Counterstrike. Since he is currently using his sword and the Theran Warrior is in melee range, he may do so. Before Thorgrim takes the damage, he decides to add his Counterstrike rank to his Damage step, and rolls a Melee Attack Test against the Theran Warrior. His Melee Attack Test is an 18, which is enough to hit the Theran Warrior. Thorgrim then rolls damage, adding his Counterstrike rank to the total step (Strength step of 7, Forge 2 Broadsword for 7, and a Counterstrike of 6) for a total of Step 20 damage. Having successfully dealt a Counterstrike, Thorgrim then takes the Step 7 damage, and any wound penalties it may have inflicted.



CHAPTER 6 THE ZHAN SHI



Gwai-fa, a dwarf crewmember of the Earthdawn from Cathay who has begun a school in Throal, gives us insight into her distinctly non-Barsaivan fighting Discipline, the Zhan Shi.

— Ela Pono

I have spent my lifetime studying the ways of the Zhan Shi, and I am myself still but a student. As there is a growing interest my Discipline, I shall attempt to address myself to the educated and intelligent reader, in the hope that they may in turn enlighten those beyond the walls of this Library. There are many difficulties in discussing the Way of the Zhan Shi. It is a Discipline born of a history not of Barsaive and that carries with it a mindset as foreign as its origins. Perhaps the most important truth of the Way of the Zhan Shi is that it cannot be accurately described in words. It is akin to trying to describe a sunset to a blind man.

A CONTEMPLATIVE DISCIPLINE

It has been said that the Barsaivan Warrior is a Discipline of action. In this, as in many other ways, the Zhan Shi is similar to the Warrior. In a combat, one cannot take the time to think, "Now I shall step aside and let my opponent's strike miss its mark." No, one must move, without letting the whims of thought distract your skill. However, it is also necessary for a Zhan Shi to place a foremost importance on his mind. If one speaks or acts with a defiled mind, then suffering is sure to follow. Thus, a Zhan Shi's training promotes, and seeks to perfect, wisdom.

According to the teachings of the Way of the Zhan Shi, for a Name-giver to be perfect they must develop equally both their compassion and their wisdom. To neglect the first is to become hard-hearted, and to neglect the second is to become a fool. To develop proper compassion, a Zhan Shi must maintain ethical conduct in word, deed, and livelihood. When one refrains from harmful speech, all that is left are words that carry meaning, truth, and benevolence. Words should be spoken at the proper time and place—if it is improper to speak, silence is noble. When one refrains from harmful deeds, all that is left are actions that are friendly, pleasant, and useful. When one refrains from a harmful livelihood, all that is left are professions that are honorable. To attain wisdom,



one must practice proper self-awareness, and with this awareness guide oneself. One must be aware of one's body, emotions, and thoughts; and one must have the will to prevent unwholesome states of mind from arising, and remove such states should they arise. Indeed, one must strive to perfect a wholesome state of mind.

I've seen Gwai-fa's school—her classes seem more pious than most olzims. Pretty unnerving, if you ask me.

— Pallansil

The spiritual aspects of Zhan Shi training include the benefits of developing personal discipline through a long process, overcoming the desire for wrongful actions and unwholesome emotions—such as the fear of physical confrontation—and building true confidence in one's abilities. But, one must see the teachings of the Way of the Zhan Shi as what they are, a guide rather than an end unto themselves. Too many concentrate overly much on developing proper wisdom, and in doing so, ignore the necessity of proper action. It is like they have used a raft to cross a dangerous river, and in seeing the usefulness of the raft, have decided to carry it on their backs for the rest of their lives. In truth, one's opponent is not the lone enemy; there is one's self as well. Not only must the enemy without be destroyed, but to do this one must also destroy one's own petty self-concerns and ultimately one's conscious mind.

A HISTORY OF CONFLICT

To understand how the Way of the Zhan Shi developed, one must understand its threefold roots. Zhan Shi was molded by the military, the Questors, and its own Legends. In ancient times, dragons sought to maintain their power by outlawing the use of weapons, and Legends arose among the people with a new fighting art that did not depend on the sword: the Way of the Zhan Shi. Each of these Legends had their own style of combat and their own followers. The dragons were quick to realize the power of these Legends, and some were made the generals of the dragons' armies. Hence, throughout the history of Cathay, the military, from guards of the palaces of the dragons to provincial commanders, were in the forefront of developing and utilizing the practical aspects of the Way of the Zhan Shi. But the Zhan Shi did not originate with the military, and many of the most powerful Legends were Questors. In Barsaive, it would be as if those who taught the Warriors how to battle spoke with the voice of your Passion of Truth, Mynbruje. And thus, a follower of Zhan Shi learns compassion and wisdom.

Cathay did not have the Theran wards against the Horrors. All of the people of Cathay weathered the Scourge under the protection of the dragons. The Legends of this age had no contact with each other, and taught their style of Zhan Shi in the seclusion of the province that each lived within. And now, hundreds of years later, as we have returned once more to the open land, the styles of Zhan Shi are as varied as the Legends who taught them. The method of fighting that I bring to Barsaive is but one style of Zhan Shi, but the spirituality of all who walk the Way of the Zhan Shi is one.

In Cathay, the Dragons rule openly, instead of behind the veil of a puppet kingdom.

— Speaker for the Hand

It is a small joy that I am the first to be able to take offense at the "Speaker," and refute his suggestion that Throal is any dragon's puppet.

— Ela Pono

ON MARTIAL PROWESS

One might question how a Discipline that stresses compassion and wisdom can also place emphasis on martial skill. It is the responsibility of the Zhan Shi to defend those who cannot defend themselves, be it from creatures, other Name-givers, or the Horrors. The Zhan Shi uses her techniques, and the virtues we have gained by studying these techniques, to help others—just as we ourselves have been helped by our studies of the Way of the Zhan Shi. Furthermore, the inner calm and resolution of proper thought allows the Zhan Shi to face danger without fear.

To properly defend one's self or one who cannot defend themselves in combat requires the Zhan Shi to be able to inflict grave damage upon his opponents, while receiving little damage in return. To achieve this end, one must have control over one's self, over both one's mind and one's body. Thus, the body is the ultimate weapon of the Zhan Shi, and any external weapons are used only as an extension of one's body. This reveals itself in the magic of the Zhan Shi, which does not favor talents that utilize weapons until the Zhan Shi is capable of tying Threads to them, and thus making them truly an extension of oneself.

Even the lowliest opponent can defeat you with a technique that you do not know how to defend against. Thus, the Zhan Shi studies the fighting styles of all of his opponents and does not rest until he has developed a proper defense. The following story is an example of this: A Barsaivan Swordmaster dueled a student of the Zhan Shi while the *Earthdawn* was in Cathay. While the Zhan Shi student was a fine swordsman, the Swordmaster is a Discipline that is aptly named, and the Swordmaster easily bested his opponent. The Legend who taught the student watched the fight and marveled at the skill of the Swordmaster. The Swordmaster then challenged the entirety of the school, boasting that there were none who could beat him. The Legend accepted his challenge, but dropped her blade when the duel began. In an instant, the Legend had brought the Swordmaster to the ground and held him quite immobile until he conceded his defeat.

THE NO-MIND OF THE ZHAN SHI

When one's opponent strikes, the Zhan Shi has already moved so that the opponent's blow will not hit its intended mark and has begun her own counterstrike. The Zhan Shi moves without effort and without stopping to think of her next maneuver. In battle, the Zhan Shi are like water, flowing through the course of a combat like a river across the land. Throughout it all, the Zhan Shi does not allow her emotions to guide her hand. She remains calm and practices proper thought—which, in combat, is not thinking, but acting. During a battle, the Zhan Shi enters the same state of mind they seek to attain through meditation.

In this state, the Zhan Shi is no longer concerned with herself as a Name-giver. She simply exists as a part of the battle. The Zhan Shi does not consider how she appears to observers. She does not consider what she will do after the battle has completed. Indeed, the Zhan Shi does not even reflect upon what technique will be the next she uses in the conflict in which she is engaged. The Zhan



Shi lets her training and her magic take over, trusting in the perfection of her abilities.

The reasons the Zhan Shi fights in such a manner are multifold. The State of No-Mind allows the Zhan Shi to react more quickly to new situations. Additionally, it allows her to more easily notice those changes in the situation of the battle. The reflexive training will allow the Zhan Shi to react to occurrences naturally, a reaction that could be far different than the one the Zhan Shi might have made if she were to dwell upon it. Thought in combat can lead to hesitation and fear. Emotion in combat can lead to recklessness. Thus, while in battle, the Zhan Shi distances herself from these states of consciousness.

Were it only that all Name-givers who follow the Way of Zhan Shi believed in these ideals. There were many in Cathay as ferocious as any scorcher or crystal raider. As more Zhan Shi are trained in Barsaive, I can only believe that we too will see perversions of the pure intent of this Discipline.

— Aldevalen Ueraven

Disciplines do not have intent, pure or otherwise. It is always the Name-giver. Don't forget that the Zhan Shi began much like the very scorchers and crystal raiders you mention.

— Nalus Freefall

ZHAN SHI GAME INFORMATION

Zhan shi are fighters who practice rigorous physical and mental discipline. They use the style of fighting arts developed by one of the Legends of Cathay, and their magic enhances their mind and their body. The Zhan shi follow a way of life that includes basic principles regarding the body, physical exercise, and meditation to achieve a state of perfect thought and action.

Important Attributes: Dexterity, Toughness, and Willpower

Racial Restrictions: None

Karma Ritual: To perform a Karma Ritual, the Zhan Shi sits cross-legged and meditates. The Zhan Shi first pushes aside passionate desires

and unwholesome thoughts, then suppresses active thought—maintaining only a feeling of joy. Then, the joy, which is an active sensation, disappears. As the Zhan Shi reaches the State of No-Mind, the Karma Ritual completes.

Artisan Skills: Dancing, Tattooing, Katas

FIRST CIRCLE

Talents

Anticipate Blow
Avoid Blow (D)
Body Control (D)
Karma Ritual
Throwing Weapons
Unarmed Combat (D)

SECOND CIRCLE

Talents

Astral Sight
Durability 8/6
Steel Thought(D)

THIRD CIRCLE

Talents

Cat's Paw
Trap Initiative(D)

FOURTH CIRCLE

Karma: The Zhan Shi may spend a Karma Point on any action using Willpower only

Talents

Melee Weapons (D)
Thread Weaving: Chi Weaving (D)

FIFTH CIRCLE

Damage: The Zhan Shi may spend 2 Strain to add their Willpower Step to their Unarmed Damage

Talents

Temper Self (D)
Snap Kick

SIXTH CIRCLE

Physical Defense: Increase the Zhan Shi's Physical Defense by 1

Talents

Lizard Leap
Resist Taunt (D)

SEVENTH CIRCLE

Recovery Test: The Zhan Shi gains an additional Recovery Test per day

Talents

Gliding Stride
Lightning Fist

EIGHTH CIRCLE

Spell Defense: Increase the Zhan Shi's Spell Defense by 1.

Talents

Fast Hand
Spot Armor Flaw (D)

NINTH CIRCLE

Recovery Test: The Zhan Shi may spend a Karma Point on a Recovery Test, or on a talent that substitutes for a Recovery Test.

Talents

Cobra Strike (D)
Cold Purify
Spirit Strike

TENTH CIRCLE

Initiative: The Zhan Shi adds 1 to their Initiative step.

Talents

Clever Hands
Defense
Life Check (D)

ELEVENTH CIRCLE

Physical Defense: Increase the Zhan Shi's Physical Defense by 1.

Social Defense: Increase the Zhan Shi's Social Defense by 1.

Talents

Missile Twister (D)
Pin

TWELFTH CIRCLE

Recovery Test: The Zhan Shi gains an additional Recovery Test per day.

Spell Defense: Increase the Zhan Shi's Spell Defense by 1.

Talents

Banishing Ward (D)
Prevent Blow (D)

THIRTEENTH CIRCLE

Karma: Increase the Zhan Shi's Maximum Karma Points by 25.

Initiative: The Zhan Shi adds 1 to their Initiative step.

Talents

Chameleon
Vital Strike (D)

FOURTEENTH CIRCLE

Physical Defense: Increase the Zhan Shi's Physical Defense by 2.

Social Defense: Increase the Zhan Shi's Social Defense by 2.

Talents

Champion Challenge
Pattern Strike (D)

FIFTEENTH CIRCLE

Spell Defense: Increase the Zhan Shi's Spell Defense by 2.

Seal Pattern: The masters of the Zhan Shi Discipline have the ability to seal another Name-giver's Pattern to block the use of their abilities. The Zhan Shi makes a Pattern Strike Test against the Spell

Defense of the target. If the Zhan Shi achieves an Excellent success, then she may spend 2 Strain to reduce the talent ranks of the target. She may reduce a total number of ranks equal to the result of the Pattern Strike Test. This reduction of talents lasts for a year and a day.

When examined astrally, the seal on the target's Pattern is very apparent. Only a Dispel Magic or the Zhan Shi's death can reverse the effects of a Sealed Pattern. Dispelling the Sealed Pattern requires a success level on a Dispel Magic Test equal to the success level on the Pattern Strike Test.

Talents

Breath of Fire
Zone of Will (D)

NEW TALENTS

Banishing Ward

Step: Rank + Willpower Step + 8

Action: No

Requires Karma: Yes Strain: 0

The Banishing Ward allows the Zhan Shi to Banish (see Summoning, ED2C, p. 104) spirits and elementals with an enchanted paper ward that is placed on the head of the spirit (or the center of the spirit if it does not have a head). Placing the Ward requires an Average success on an Unarmed Attack Test, or a Good success on a Thrown Attack Test. A Banishing Ward has the same range as a Flight Dagger (p 211, ED2). Preparing the paper ward requires a 10 minute ritual, and a Zhan Shi may keep a number of prepared wards equal to their Willpower step. The use of the Banishing Ward requires an Average success on the Banishing Test. If the Banishing Ward is used against Horrors or Horror Constructs, the Banishing Ward Test is used as a Damage Test against their Mystic Armor.

Body Control

Step: Rank + Strength Step

Action: No

Requires Karma: No Strain: 1

The Body Control talent allows a Zhan Shi to harden her hands and feet when making unarmed attacks. The character uses her Unarmed Combat step for Attack Tests and uses her Body Control step for the Damage Test. Because it is a Discipline talent, the Zhan Shi may choose to add Karma dice to the Damage Test. The effects of Body Control last until the Zhan Shi makes a successful attack. The Zhan Shi may use this talent in consecutive combat rounds at a cost of 1 point of Strain each round.

Breath of Fire

Step: Rank + Willpower Step

Action: Yes

Requires Karma: Yes Strain: 3

The Breath of Fire allows the Zhan Shi to bellow forth a gout of flame that targets everything within a 90-degree arc that extends for 10 yards, using the Zhan Shi's mouth as the center. The Zhan Shi makes a Breath of Fire Attack Test against the Spell Defense of every target within the arc. If the test is successful, then the Zhan Shi uses the Body Control talent for the Damage Test. The Damage Step of weapons within the area of effect are reduced by one, as are the Physical and Mystic Armor ratings of armor and shields



(see Damage to Weapons and Armor, ED2C p 205). Breath of Fire does not damage pattern or Thread items.

Clever Hands

Step: Rank + Dexterity Step

Action: Yes

Requires Karma: No Strain: None

The Clever Hands talent uses a combination of flashy unarmed maneuvers and levitation to snatch a weapon—or anything else they may be carrying—from an opponent's hands. After first declaring that she intends to use the Clever Hands talent, the character makes an Attack Test using the Clever Hands step. A successful result means the character has swiped the weapon or object from their opponent, and the character now holds it in their own hands. The Clever Hands talent cannot effect any weapon that is part of the target, such as an animal's claws.

Lightning Fist

Step: Rank + Dexterity Step

Action: Yes

Requires Karma: No Strain: 0

Lightning Fist allows a character to make an unarmed attack against multiple opponents in a single Combat Round. The limit on the number of opponents the character may attack is equal to the character's rank in Lightning Fist. The character makes a Lightning Fist test for each unarmed attack in succession. If the test is successful, then the Lightning Fist hits, and the character makes a damage test. The character may choose to use Body Control for this damage test, but the character must spend the strain for each use of Body Control. If a Lightning Fist test fails, then the attack misses, and the character can make no further Lightning Fist attacks this round. The character can not use Lightning Fist in the same round as they use another talent that grants them multiple attacks, such as Snap Kick. A character using the Lightning

Fist talent may use Split Movement (ED2, p 226) between attacks, but each Lightning Fist attack must be made against a different opponent. Lightning Fist cannot be used with Claw Shape.

Pattern Strike

Step: Rank + Willpower Step

Action: No

Requires Karma: Yes

Strain: 2

The Pattern Strike talent allows the Zhan Shi to strike at critical points in a target's pattern when using unarmed attacks, freezing her opponent in place if the target is a creature or Spirit, or shattering the Target if it is an inanimate object. To use Pattern Strike, the Zhan Shi must make a Good success on an Unarmed Attack Test, then in place of a Damage Test, the Zhan Shi makes a Pattern Strike Test against the Target's spell defense. The Pattern Strike must be declared before the Unarmed Attack Test is made. If the Pattern Strike test is successful against a Name-giver, creature or spirit, the target is paralyzed and cannot perform any actions (move, use talents, etc) for a duration of one minute per rank of the Pattern Strike talent. The target may make a Willpower test immediately, and once every additional round they are paralyzed, against the Pattern Strike Test step. If the Willpower test is successful, then the target breaks free of the paralyzation. Even after the target breaks free of the paralyzation, they are still at a -3 step penalty to all actions for the remainder of the duration of the Pattern Strike. A character cannot be affected by more than one Pattern Strike at once.

If the Pattern Strike is used against an inanimate object, compare the success level of the Pattern Strike against the spell defense of the object, or the character holding the object, whichever is greater. On an average success, the Zhan Shi can shatter breakable objects such as crystal, glass, or pottery. On a good success the Zhan Shi can shatter boxes or thin wood. An Excellent success allows the Zhan Shi to shatter wooden or crystal weapons, shields, and armor. An Extraordinary success allows the Zhan Shi to shatter stone and metal weapons, shields, and armor. The Pattern Strike cannot shatter pattern items or Thread items.

The Zhan Shi may not use Pattern Strike in the same round that they use any talent to gain multiple attacks, such as Lightning Fist or Snap Kick.

Prevent Blow

Step: Rank + Dexterity Step

Action: No

Requires Karma: Yes

Strain: 2

The Prevent Blow talent allows a character to make a flawless dodge of melee, missile, throwing, and unarmed attacks directed at her. At any time an opponent attacks a character with the Prevent Blow talent, the attacked individual may make a Prevent Blow Test to dodge the blow before it causes damage. If she rolls a result equal to or higher than the opponent's Attack Test, the character avoids the blow. When using this talent, the character must continue to spend Karma Points, 1 point at a time, until the Prevent Blow Test is higher than the opponent's Attack Test, or until the character can spend no more Karma Points. The character may only spend a number of Karma Points equal to their rank in Prevent Blow. Prevent Blow can be used in the same round as an Attack Test.

Snap Kick

Step: Rank + Initiative Step

Action: No

Requires Karma: No

Strain: None

The Snap Kick talent grants the character an extra attack when using Unarmed Combat. The character makes a Snap Kick Test as the additional Attack Test. Use the Character's Strength step as the Damage step for the Snap Kick attack. T'skrang may make this attack with their tails.

Zone of Will

Step: Rank + Willpower Step

Action: Yes

Requires Karma: No

Strain: 3

The Zone of Will allows the Zhan Shi to seal off an area around himself between 2 and 100 yards in diameter, at the Zhan Shi's discretion. While she must be within the Zone, the Zhan Shi need not be at its center. The Zhan Shi makes a Zone of Will test against the highest Spell Defense of all the beings or objects in the area of effect. If the test is successful, then a number of targets of the Zhan Shi's choice equal to the Zone of Will test result are trapped within the Zone of Will. Those targets cannot leave the Zone of Will unless they make a Willpower Test against the Character's Zone of Will Step, and they may use an Action to attempt this test once per Round. The Zhan Shi may choose to increase the physical and spell defense of any inanimate object (but not Name-giver, creature or spirit) within the Zone to the result of the Zone of Will test.

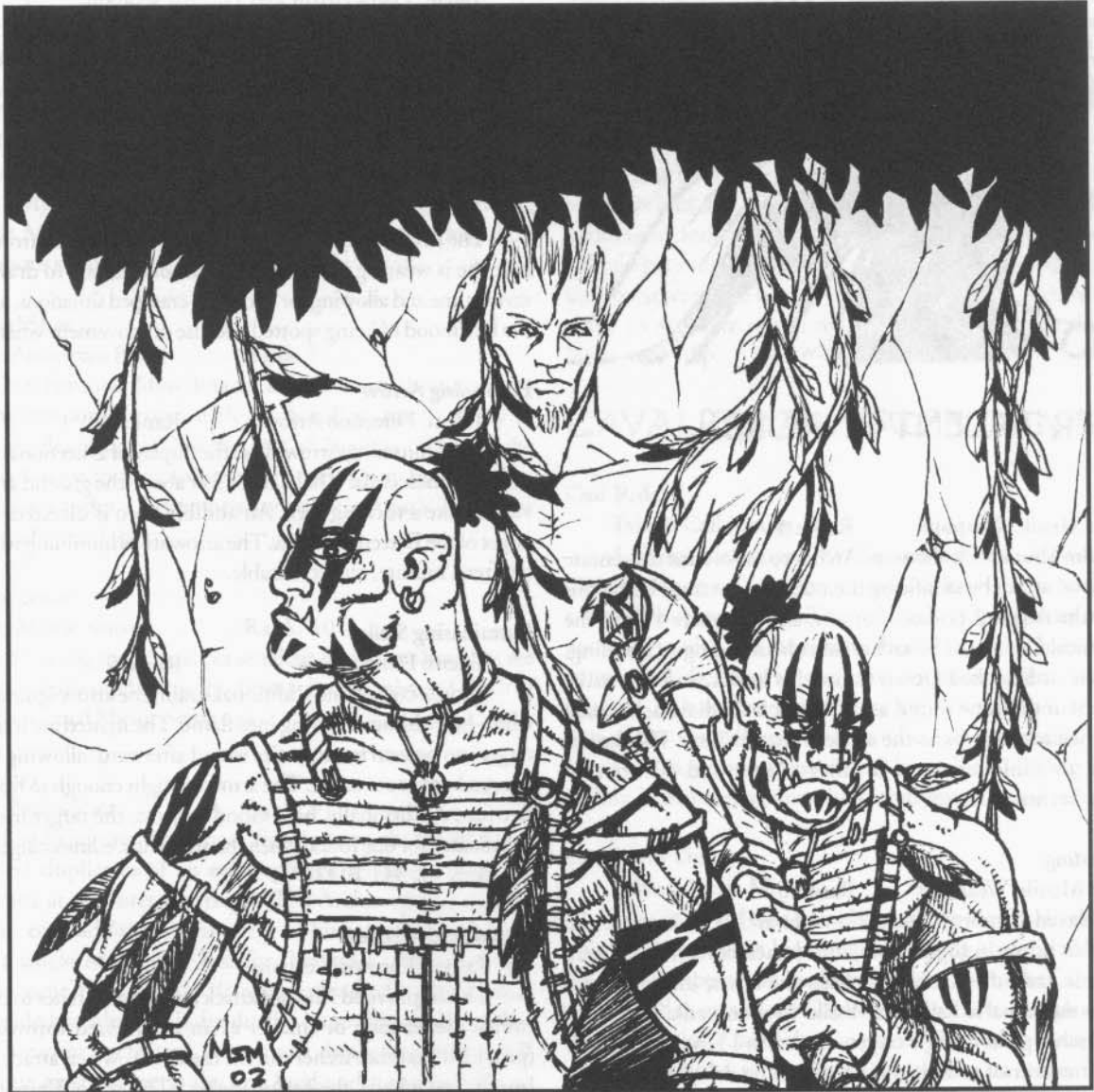
No being or object can enter the Zone of Will unless they succeed on a Willpower Test against the character's Zone of Will step. The Zone of Will lasts for 1 hour per rank of the Zone of Will Talent. The Zhan Shi can end the effects of the Zone at any time less than the maximum duration, and the Zone's effects end if the Zhan Shi dies or leaves the Zone. A Zhan Shi may only create one Zone of Will at a time. The visual effects of the Zone of Will talent are unique to each Zhan Shi. Some examples are a silver dome, a red glowing box, and a shimmering, nearly invisible wall of force.

Khang, the Master Zhan Shi, has a Willpower Step of 10 and 6 ranks of Zone of Will, and is preparing for a battle against a group of opponents. Once the battle begins, he erects a Zone of Will around himself, and rolls an 18 on his Zone of Will test. The highest Spell Defense among those he wishes to trap is a 10, so he may trap the target with the highest spell defense as well as 17 others in the Zone of Will. Those opponents outside the Zone must roll a 16 on a Willpower Test to be able to enter—or even fire arrows at him! They can, however, cast spells into the Zone of Will.



CHAPTER 7

NEW TALENT KNACKS





ARCHER TALENT KNACKS

Calm Shot

Talent: Missile Weapons **Rank:** 5

The Calm Shot knack allows an Archer to make a more accurate Missile Weapon attack by sacrificing their defensive stance. Using this knack costs the Adept 2 points of Strain, and subtracts 4 from the archer's Physical Defense. The archer must be standing or kneeling, but not prone or Knocked Down to use this knack, and can make no movement in the same round as the knack is used. Attacks made with this knack add 4 steps to the archer's Attack Tests. This knack can be used in conjunction with other knacks and talents that enhance the archer's aim.

Delayed Landing

Talent: Missile Weapons **Rank:** 6

The Delayed Landing knack allows an archer to increase the hangtime of an arrow in flight. Using this knack costs the Archer 1 point of Strain, and the Archer can keep the arrow in flight for a number of rounds equal to half their Missile Weapons rank. To use this knack, the Archer picks a single target, or an area 1 foot in diameter, declares the number of rounds the arrow will be delayed, and then makes a Missile Weapons Test against the target's Physical Defense plus 1 for each round the arrow is to be delayed. If the Attack Test is successful, the Archer fires the arrow, which strikes its target, regardless of their movement, the declared number of rounds later.

Targets that move under full cover, such as inside a building, treat the attack as an attack against a barrier (p. 235, ED2). If the arrow does enough damage to destroy the barrier, it continues on to strike its intended target. This knack can only be used with targets at long range or in open areas where the Archer can fire in a high arc to target closer objects.

Disarming Arrow

Talent: Impressive Shot **Rank:** 6

The Disarming Arrow knack allows the Archer to learn the Disarm skill with a Bow or Crossbow. Disarm: Bow and Disarm: Crossbow are two different skills. If the character is a Human or Multi-Disciplined and has the Disarm Talent instead of the skill, the Disarming Arrow knack will allow the Archer to use the Disarm Talent with a Ranged attack.

Flaming Missiles

Talent: Flame Arrow and Thrown Weapons **Rank:** 5

Normally the Flame Arrow talent may only be used with arrows and crossbow bolts. This knack allows the archer to use the Flame Arrow knack with thrown weapons as well. Use of this Knack destroys the thrown weapon.

Floating Reload

Talent: Call Arrow **Rank:** 3

The Archer may summon arrows or bolts directly from a quiver or case she is wearing into her hand without having to draw them out, saving time and allowing for reloads in cramped situations, and reducing the likelihood of being spotted because of movement when concealed.

Humming Arrow

Talent: Direction Arrow **Rank:** 3

The Humming Arrow alters the display of Direction Arrow. When the arrow descends, it halts three feet above the ground and begins to vibrate like a turning fork. An audible hum is directed towards the target of the Direction Arrow. The arrow stops humming when touched or after a minute, and is reusable.

Illuminating Strike

Talent: Flame Arrow **Rank:** 6

For the cost of one additional strain, the arrow ignites to become white-hot without bursting into flame. The lighted arc it makes to the target can be seen for an entire round afterward, allowing for directed fire at a hard to see target. The arrow is bright enough to read by within five feet. Additionally, on a Good Success, the target itself becomes illuminated for one round when the arrow hits, eliminating any visibility penalties (p. 341 ED2).

Improvised Missiles

Talent: Thrown Weapons **Rank:** 5

The Improvised Missiles knack enables an Archer to use any item twelve inches long or smaller as an improvised throwing weapon (provided that the Archer can lift the item). When attacking with an Improvised missile, the Archer makes a Throwing Weapons test; each test costs the Archer one point of Strain. The gamemaster determines the Damage steps of improvised missiles; they should generally range from 1 to 3, based on the size and weight of the object. All improvised missiles thrown using this knack have the same range as a standard dagger.

Mounted Archer

Talent: Thread Weaving **Rank:** 5

If an Archer's familiar is also the character's mount, then the Mounted Archer knack allows the character to give their familiar the





use of their Sprint talent, so long as the character is riding it. Use of the Mounted Archer knack costs 1 strain in addition to the normal Strain from the Sprint Talent.

Mystic Mapping

Talent: Mystic Sense **Rank:** 4

Mystic Mapping allows the character to maintain Mystic Sense hourly, at one-tenth of the range. For the cost of 1 Strain, the character maintains a field of detection around them equal to their Mystic Sense step in yards for an hour at a time. Mystic Mapping does not include the ability to spend extra Strain to see into the astral plane.

Mystic True Shot

Talent: Mystic Aim **Rank:** 5

The Mystic True Shot knack enables an Archer to combine the effects of Mystic Aim with the True Shot talent. To use the knack, the Archer takes 2 Strain in addition to the 1 required by Mystic Aim, and then makes a Mystic Aim Test. If the test succeeds, the Archer can add their rank in Mystic Aim to their True Shot step rather than their Missile Weapons step.

One-Handed Shot

Talent: Anticipate Blow **Rank:** 5

The One-Handed Shot knack allows a crossbowman (or Archer using weapons thrown with one hand) to react quickly to the changing tides of battle. For the cost of 2 points of Strain, the Archer gains 4 steps to their Initiative. However, any bolts fired or weapons thrown suffer a 2-step penalty to their Attack Tests, due to the speed of the attack.

Penetrating Sense

Talent: Mystic Sense **Rank:** 10

An Archer using the Mystic Sense talent may now choose to see through objects that would normally obstruct line of sight, at 1/10th of the range of a normal Mystic Sense test.

Rain of Arrows

Talent: Multi-Shot **Rank:** 8

Instead of firing multiple shots from a bow, the Archer may create magical duplicates of an existing shot, sending a flurry of arrows or bolts at the intended target. The Archer spends a point of Karma for each additional arrow, up to his rank in Multi-shot. He makes a single Multi-shot Test for the attack. All the arrows strike at the same time and do damage individually. Each arrow must be avoided or blocked individually. Note this knack cannot duplicate Thread or enchanted arrows; any duplicates created will be of the same general type as the one fired and non-magical.

Return for More

Talent: Bank Shot **Rank:** 5

The Archer may have the thrown weapon bounce back to her for the final "bank". The Archer must make a Dexterity(5) test to successfully catch the weapon, else it lands behind her. A Poor Failure means the weapon strikes her, figure damage normally.

Stored Strain

Talent: Thread Weaving **Rank:** 5

The Stored Strain knack allows an Archer who uses a crossbow to spend the Strain for his Talents long before they are used. When the character uses the Stored Strain knack, he spends 2 points of Karma and takes one Wound. The character may heal the Wound normally. Once the Wound has healed, the Archer then has a number of bonus Damage Points equal to his Wound Threshold that he can use to power any talents that are used with a crossbow. An Archer may never have more Stored Strain than their Wound Threshold, regardless of the number of times that they use the knack. Once the bonus Damage Points are exhausted, Strain from the Archer's talents cause damage as normal.

Thread of Recall

Talent: Threadweaving **Rank:** 7

Using the connection an Adept has to a weapon that he has woven at least one thread to, the character can call the weapon to his hands using levitation. Use of this knack requires an Action, and costs 1 Strain per round it is used. If the weapon is unhindered, it returns to the character at the rate of 15 yards per round. If the weapon must make an attribute test to return to the wielder, use the character's Willpower step.

CAVALRYMAN TALENT KNACKS

Call Ride

Talent: Call Mount **Rank:** 3

A knack developed by Theran officers, Call Ride allows Cavalryman to call as many mounts as his Rank in Call Mount on a Good Success who will travel to the Cavalryman at their best possible speeds. The mounts or their riders must have some strong connection, be they in the same squadron, share a blood oath, relation, or have been trained by the Cavalryman. If the rider of one of the Called mounts does not wish to travel to the calling Cavalryman, he may resist the call by making a Riding skill or Trick Riding Talent test against the Cavalryman's social defense.

Cavalry of One

Talent: Spirit Mount **Rank:** 6

The Cavalry of One talent knack allows the Cavalryman to conjure Spirit Riders to assist him in combat using his Spirit Mount talent. Spirit Riders appear as a shadowy combination of the Cavalryman who summoned them and the Cavalryman's mount, though a Spirit Rider is a single spirit. Use of the Cavalry of One knack costs one point of strain in addition to the normal Spirit Mount strain. The Cavalry of One knack allows the Cavalryman to summon a number of Spirit Riders equal to their Charisma step, but each must be summoned individually with the Spirit Mount talent. The Damage step of a Spirit Rider is equal to the character's Spirit Mount Talent Rank + 7. The Spirit Riders remain for the normal duration of the Spirit Mount Talent. Unlike a Spirit Mount, the Cavalryman himself cannot ride Spirit Riders summoned by the Cavalry of One knack.



SPIRIT RIDER

Attributes

DEX: 5	STR: 9	TOU: 5
PER: 4	WIL: 6	CHA: 2
Initiative: 7	Physical Defense: 8	
Number of Attacks: 1	Spell Defense: 8	
Attack: 9	Social Defense: 9	
Damage: *	Armor: 3	
Number of Spells: NA	Mystic Armor: 4	
Spellcasting: NA	Knockdown: 11	
Effect: NA	Recovery Tests: 2	

Death Rating: 24
Wound Threshold: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: NA

Legend Points: 100
Equipment: NA
Loot: NA

Charge of Wind and Fire

Talent: Charge **Rank:** 5

This talent knack calls upon elemental forces to make the Cavalryman's charge more effective. As the Cavalryman charges, a strong wind blows at his back, and his weapon is surrounded by a sheath of flame, adding 3 steps to his Charge Attack and Damage Tests. Use of the Charge of Wind and Fire knack costs 2 points of Strain. A character cannot both use the Aggressive Attack option and the Charge of Wind and Fire in the same round.

Good Grooming

Talent: Animal Bond **Rank:** 6

The empathic bond allows the Cavalryman to give his mount a free Recovery Test per day if the character has an uninterrupted hour with which to talk to and care for his steed. The bond is necessary to give the grooming Cavalryman the necessary insights to soothe the steed's ills and even to cheer it up.

Hard Riding

Talent: Trick Riding **Rank:** 5

The talent of trick riding can also be drawn out into marathon riding for long distances and uninterrupted movement. The Hard Riding knack allows a character to travel an additional 5 miles in an 8 hour period. The Cavalryman can lead mounted characters who do not have this Knack for the cost of one point of strain per mount that is being lead. This Knack may be used with the Lay of the Land knack.

Improvised Weapon

Talent: Melee Weapons **Rank:** 6

The Improvised Weapon knack allows a Cavalryman to utilize the Melee Weapons talent with any item that he can pick up. The Cavalryman instinctively knows the best way to wield it for maximum effect. The Gamemaster determines the Damage step of all improvised weapons, based on their size and material, up to Step 7. A good rule of thumb is to take the Size of the "weapon" and use that as the bonus to damage.

Lay of the Land

Talent: Empathic Command **Rank:** 5

The Lay of the Land knack allows the Cavalryman to choose the quickest route through an area he has already traveled before. For the cost of 1 point of Strain, the Cavalryman may reduce his and his companions' overland travel time by one-tenth for a period of 8 hours. Using this knack daily, a group can travel what would normally be 10 days of overland travel in only 9 days. This Knacks may be used with Hard Riding.

Lineage Sooth

Talent: Animal Bond **Rank:** 5

Lineage Sooth gives a cavalryman the ability to determine the lineage and history of any creature it is used upon. To perform this talent the cavalryman must run her hands on the body of the creature in question for a full minute with her eyes closed. At the end of this time the Cavalry man draws her hands into a cup like when drinking water and spends 4 strain. To succeed the cavalryman must beat the spell defense of the target with an Animal Bond Test. A failure will cause an additional 2 strain. When successful a small amount of blood will appear in the adept's cupped hands. The adept must then taste the liquid with her tongue. Once done this adept will know the health, physical qualities, lineage and a sense of the recent past of the target. This exact knowledge lasts until the adept spills the blood from their hands. Once the blood is spilt it will turn into glowing blue smoke and the adept will awaken as if from a trance.



Moving Saddle

Talent: Trick Riding **Rank:** 5

The Cavalryman may jump, slide, or fall into the saddle of his mount while it is moving. The Difficulty Number is based on how fast the mount is moving, the distance covered by the move, and the environment. Sliding down a roof to your horse that is trotting into position two floors below would be a Difficulty Number of 5. Jumping to your horse that is pacing the runaway caravan stage at full gallop would be a Difficulty Number of 10. Leaping off an airship onto your griffin that is swooping down to pick you up would be a Difficulty Number of 13.

Silent Mount

Talent: Trick Riding **Rank:** 3

An outrider must rely on either speed or stealth, and the Silent Mount allows for the latter. For the cost of 1 Strain Point per round of use, the outrider may guide his steed so as to make its movement more quiet. This includes riding over softer terrain, smoothing movements to reduce the squeak and jingle of the harness, and keeping the steed calm enough not to make any of its normal noises. The outrider may roll a Trick Riding Test, and use the result as the Difficulty Number for any Perception Tests to detect him and his steed. The outrider may only ride at the steed's Combat Movement, though, and the silence is broken if the outrider attacks, moves at Full Movement, or is seen.

Spirit Defense

Talent: Spirit Mount and Wheeling Defense **Rank:** 12

When using the Spirit Defense knack, the cavalryman may use his Wheeling Defense talent to increase his Spell Defense as well as his Physical Defense. Using Spirit Defense costs 3 Strain in addition to the normal Wheeling Defense Strain cost.

Swift Hoof

Talent: Trick Riding **Rank:** 3

First developed by the fastest riders of Cara Fahd, Rejuk's Foxes (see The Ork Nation of Cara Fahd), this talent knack has begun to spread out from Cara Fahd in the aftermath of the Second Battle of Sky Point. The Swift Hoof knack acts very much in the same way that the Sprint talent works for Archers; for 1 point of Strain per round of use, the Cavalryman can increase his mount's Full Movement by 10 yards and its Combat Movement by 5 yards. This knack may be used in the same round as an Attack Test. It should be noted that, despite the increased distribution of this knack among outriders who are not members of the Foxes, that tribe still refuses to teach it to any other ork cavalry in Cara Fahd. To them, it is a matter of pride.

Thread of Recall

Talent: Theadweaving **Rank:** 7

Using the connection an Adept has to a weapon that he has woven at least one thread to, the character can call the weapon to his hands using levitation. Use of this knack requires an Action, and costs 1 Strain per round it is used. If the weapon is unhindered, it returns to the character at the rate of 15 yards per round. If the weapon must make an attribute test to return to the wielder, use the character's Willpower step.

Unbalancing Strike

Talent: Melee Weapons **Rank:** 4

The cavalryman has become particularly adept at making attacks intended to knock down his opponent (see *Earthdawn 2nd edition* main rule book, p. 225). As a result, add two to the difficulty number of the knockdown test of any target struck by someone with this talent knack. Additionally, if this Knack is used while the Cavalryman is mounted, he may choose to use his mount's strength instead of his own. This talent knack may be used only with melee attacks that achieve at least an excellent success.

Wound Transfer

Talent: Blood Share **Rank:** 10

Developed by the Therans, this knack allows a Cavalryman to transfer a Wound that he has taken in mounted combat to his mount. If abused, the use of this knack will weaken the bond between rider and mount. The Cavalryman must make a Blood Share Test against the higher of the mount's Wound Threshold or Spell Defense. The transfer of the Wound doesn't transfer any damage, but any modifiers associated with the additional Wound take effect immediately.

SKY RAIDER TALENT KNACKS

Air Hammer Smash

Talent: Crushing Blow **Rank:** 7

By channeling his inner rage, the Sky Raider can send opponents flying with his mighty blows for 1 point of strain. On a Good Success or better, the Sky Raider can increase the difficulty of the Knockdown test by 3, or add 3 to the Damage test to shatter a shield. Even on an Average success, the opponent is staggered back 1 yard.

Air Legs

Talent: Air Sailing **Rank:** 5

Due to experience and knowledge of how a ship moves, Sky Raiders with this knack may use their Air Sailing talent to resist Knockdown Tests while on a moving airship.

Boarding Action

Talent: Climbing **Rank:** 4

The Boarding Action knack allows a Sky Raider Marines to make a Climbing Test at the end of any other movement action: Great Leap, Lizard Leap, Sprint, etc. For the cost of 1 Strain, the marine makes a Climbing Test against the surface he is attempting to adhere to with no penalties for momentum. For 2 Strain, the test also ignores any encumbrance penalties the marine may be facing. If successful, the marine is anchored to the surface and may begin climbing as normal at the start of next round. For the cost of 1 additional Strain per Step, the marine may add a step to the Climbing Test if the target of the test is the hull of an airship.

Note that while the marine suffers no penalties for the weight, whatever he is trying to adhere to still will. If he tries to adhere to branch that cannot support his weight, for example, then it will still break under his mass.

Deafening Strike**Talent:** Thunder Axe **Rank:** 6

For an additional point of strain, a successful Deafening Strike will create a loud clanging or smashing sound that will also deafen the target. The length of time the target is deafened is dependant on the success level of the attack as shown below:

Success Level	Duration of Deafening
Average	1 round
Good	1 minute
Excellent	1 hour
Extraordinary	1 day

Each use of Thunder Axe knack is cumulative. If a target is hit with two Thunder Axe attacks with Good results, and one with an Excellent; then the target is deafened for 1 hour and 2 minutes.

Enduring Attack**Talent:** Momentum Attack **Rank:** 8

This knack allows the sky raider make a Momentum Attack against any opponent who is directly engaged in melee combat with him. The sky raider makes their initial Attack Test and then may attempt a Momentum Attack Test against any of their remaining opponents. The sky raider may not split movement while using this knack. Many sky raiders have used this knack to finish off one opponent and begin carving up the next before their opponents ever knew what was happening.

Mrandin is fighting to hold a causeway while his friends escape when he is rushed by four guards, making him Harried. He makes an Attack Test against the first guard and scores an Extraordinary success. The damage test is applied and the hit takes all the fight out of the guard, who collapses at Mrandin's feet. The sky raider then follows through with his swing and attempts to plant his axe in one of the remaining guards. He rolls a separate Attack Test using his Momentum Attack step and rolls an Excellent Success. Not only is the second guard hit, it is an armor defeating hit. Seeing their friends so quickly dealt with, the unwounded guards begin to consider alternate careers in dry goods.

Fiery Stare**Talent:** Steely Stare **Rank:** 6

Instead of a cold hard stare, it is one of fire and passion and anger. The initial chill up the spine will turn to frozen nerves as he sees the burning embers behind the Sky Raider's eyes. The target must make a Willpower test against the Fiery Stare result or step back in fear of what the Sky Raider might do. If the Willpower test was below a Poor Success, the Sky Raider can make a free Intimidation test.

Flaming Wounds**Talent:** Fireblood **Rank:** 7

The Flaming Wounds knack allows a Sky Raider to use their Fireblood talent to heal a Wound rather than damage taken in combat. The knack must be used during the same round the Wound was inflicted. The Sky Raider makes a Fireblood Test against

a Difficulty Number equal to their Wound Threshold. If they achieve a Good or better success they heal the Wound. The attempt costs the Sky Raider 3 Strain Points whether the test is successful or not. This use of Fireblood costs the Adept a Recovery Test per standard rules. The Sky Raider must declare whether they are using the Flaming Wounds knack before making the Fireblood Test.

Flying Kick**Talent:** Great Leap **Rank:** 5

Flying Kick allows a Sky Raider to make a flying kick attack using their Great Leap talent. At least three yards must separate the Sky Raider and their opponent to use this knack. The character makes a Great Leap Test; the test result determines the distance they leap and also serves as the character's Physical Defense rating for the rest of the round. The Great Leap Test also takes the place of the usual Attack Test; if it succeeds, the Damage step for the attack equals the Sky Raider's Strength + 3 steps. This knack can only be used to make an unarmed attack, and each use costs the character 2 Strain Points.

Hard Glare**Talent:** Steely Stare **Rank:** 8

Many sky raiders consider this knack to be a sign of mastery of their Discipline, being able to intimidate even inanimate objects. The Hard Glare knack enables a sky raider adept to break inanimate objects with their Steely Stare talent. To use this knack the character makes a Steely Stare Test against a Difficulty number of 13 or the spell defense of the character holding the item, whichever is greater, and takes 4 Strain Points. With a Good success the sky raider can shatter small objects made of glass, crystal, pottery, or thin wood such as drinking mugs, light crystals, and the like. With an Excellent success the sky raider can shatter small wooden boxes or thin plans of wood. An Extraordinary success can shatter wooden and crystal shields, rendering them completely useless. Metal and leather are usually unaffected by this knack. The gamemaster determines if a given object is fragile enough to be affected by this knack. The Hard Glare knack cannot shatter Thread or Pattern items.

Retrieval**Talent:** Great Leap **Rank:** 4

When a Sky Raider wishes to use the Retrieval knack, they simply make a Great Leap test as they normally would, with the normal outcome for the distance of their leap. However, in addition to this, the marine may add the total of his Great Leap talent step to his Strength attribute for the purposes of calculating carrying capacity, for the cost of 1 strain per 50 pounds carried greater than the character's normal carrying capacity.

Retrieval is a knack almost exclusively in the hands of the Falcon marines. There were rumors that a Theran slaving vessel had somehow learned this knack through arcane means and had been using it to raid along the southern edges of Barsaive before the war. It was also rumored that the very same vessel was ambushed by a Jerris naval drakkar loaded with marines, and that every single slaver was tossed into Death's Sea along with their scuttled ship. There are no documented cases of anyone but the Falcon marines using this in combat, and then only for retrieving their fallen companions. However, the Iopans have taken an interest in what the Falcons are doing...





Ship Searching

Talent: Air Sailing

Rank: 5

A fine tuned Sky Raider can use this knack to add to his chance of navigating through an unfamiliar ship, or finding a particular location (like the Captain's Quarters). The knack comes from a standardized feel for airborne craft and stems from the air sailing talent. When a Sky Raider finds himself in an unfamiliar vessel he can use his airsailing test against the target number determined by the size of the vessel. Note that this Knack continues to work in the City of Triumph, as it was originally a Behemoth.

Airboat	difficulty 3
Drakkar	difficulty 5
Galley	difficulty 8
Galleon	difficulty 11
Vedette	difficulty 14
Kila	difficulty 17
Behemoth	difficulty 20

Smash of the Fiery Hammer

Talent: Crushing Blow

Rank: 7

By channeling his inner rage, the Sky Raider is able to inflict massive damage upon inanimate objects, such as closed doors, airship hulls, treasure chests, sheets of ice, shields, etc. For 1 points of Strain, the Sky Raider may spend an extra point of Karma on the damage test for each Success Level of the Crushing Blow Test.

Steady Stride

Talent: Wind Catcher

Rank: 4

A Sky Raider who knows how a ship will behave when struck, and its construction and other attributes, knows a ship in a storm will act in much the same way. The Wind Catcher Talent affords this knack in those who have learned not just to ride currents of air, but also to ride the same ripple effect upon a surface, or even the unpredictable movements of a storm-ridden deck. The steady stride allows a Sky Raider to make use their Wind Catcher Talent for their Knockdown Test against someone using buckle deck against him, and also allows him to use his Wind Catcher Talent to avoid falling from an airship or being thrown overboard in a storm.

Thread of Recall

Talent: Theadweaving

Rank: 7

Using the connection an Adept has to a weapon that he has woven at least one thread to, the character can call the weapon to his hands using levitation. Use of this knack requires an Action, and costs 1 Strain per round it is used. If the weapon is unhindered, it returns to the character at the rate of 15 yards per round. If the weapon must make an attribute test to return to the wielder, use the character's Willpower Step

SWORDMASTER TALENT KNACKS

Barbed Taunt

Talent: Taunt

Rank: 9

The Barbed Taunt allows a Swordmaster to so enrage their opponent that they waste effort in their attempts to overcome the Swordmaster. Use of this knack costs 2 points of Strain, and allows

the Taunt talent to have an additional effect. If the character's Taunt is successful, then the target of the Taunt has the Strain of any Skills or Talents increased by 1 for the duration of the Taunt's effects.

Break

Talent: Melee Weapons

Rank: 7

Break allows a stick or pole arm wielding Swordmaster to violently push his opponent out of melee combat. This involves the Swordmaster striking across the body of the opponent with his staff and extending it out and away, whipping his opponent away from him. Usually, the opponent is thrown to the ground by this attack. To use this knack, the opponent must be in melee combat with the stick-fighter for more than one round. In other words, the Swordmaster cannot do this as the opening move of a duel, although he can wait until after the opponent has attacked, and he does not necessarily have to take the hit without dodging or parrying the blow. When he is ready to use the knack, the Swordmaster makes a Melee Weapons test and takes 2 Strain Points. If the test succeeds, the foe has been knocked away a number of feet equal to the test result (or yards, if the opponent is a windling). If this Knack is attempted on a creature or object that weighs more than the character can lift, then it automatically fails. When the opponent lands, he suffers damage using the normal damage step for the weapon, as if the stick-fighter had struck him normally. If the Swordmaster wishes to knock the target into another combatant, it requires an Excellent or better success against the opponent's Physical Defense. Anyone struck by the opponent takes the same damage (i.e., the same roll, not a separate roll of the damage step dice). Opponents that are subject to the Break knack are considered Knocked Down, unless they make a successful Knockdown or Wound Balance Test against a difficulty equal to the Melee Weapons step of the character using the Break knack.

Call Weapon

Talent: Thread Weaving

Rank: 10

With this more powerful but shorter ranged version of Thread of Recall, the Swordmaster may use levitation to summon a weapon he has tied at least one thread to if he can see it and it is within a distance equal to his Melee Weapons rank in yards. Use of this knack requires an action, but it costs no strain. If the weapon must make an attribute test to return to the wielder, use the character's Melee Weapons step.

Deliver Weapon

Talent: Disarm

Rank: 5

With an extra Success Level on a Disarm Test, the Swordmaster can flip a weapon into his or someone else's hands. The maximum distance the weapon can be flipped is the Adept's Disarm step in feet.

Draw Fire

Talent: Maneuver

Rank: 5

By intentionally maneuvering into the fray, generally in front of another character, the Swordmaster may draw an attack away from another for 1 point of Strain. The Swordmaster's maneuvering makes him seem the more serious threat or an easier target. If the Maneuver Test beats the attacker's Spell Defense, he will direct his next attack at the Swordmaster instead of his original target.



Earth Block**Talent:** Disarm **Rank:** 6

When disarming an opponent, the Swordmaster will divert the weapon into the ground or nearby solid object (table, tree), causing it to stick there on a Good Success. The opponent must use an action to make a Strength test against the Swordmaster's Disarm Rank to pull it out. Use of the Earth Block knack costs 1 strain.

Flashing Blades**Talent:** Impressive Strike **Rank:** 5

Instead of declaring a strike, the Swordmaster makes some bold statement and draws his blades in a dramatic fashion, catching them on a bright light source, preferably the sun or a nearby fire. The Swordmaster can temporarily dazzle an opponent with a little magic and intimidation. The Swordmaster makes an Impressive Strike test against the target's Social Defense. This test does not strike the opponent or cause damage. Each level of success is a round the target will not attack the Swordmaster unless otherwise provoked. The first attack made against the Swordmaster thereafter is at -2 steps.

Improvised Weapon**Talent:** Melee Weapons **Rank:** 5

The Improvised Weapon knack allows a Swordmaster to utilize the Melee Weapons talent with any item that she can pick up. The Swordmaster instinctively knows the best way to wield it for maximum effect. The Gamemaster determines the Damage step of all improvised weapons, based on their size and material, up to Step 7. A good rule of thumb is to take the Size of the "weapon" and use that as the bonus to damage.

Language of Violence**Talent:** Speak Language and Taunt **Rank:** 7

The Language of Violence knack allows the Swordmaster to use their Taunt talent against creatures or Name-givers who do not understand the languages that the Swordmaster speaks. Use of the Language of Violence knack costs 2 points of Strain. The Language of Violence has no effect on creatures, Horrors, or Horror constructs that are immune to fear.

Lightning Reflexes**Talent:** Trap Initiative **Rank:** 4

The Lightning Reflexes knack allows the Swordmaster to react more quickly to ambushes as well as physical traps. For the cost of 2 Strain in addition to those caused by Trap Initiative, the Swordmaster may make a Trap Initiative Test instead of a Perception Test to avoid being Surprised.

Master of the Blade**Talent:** Melee Weapons **Rank:** 8

This knack allows the Swordmaster to use his intimate knowledge of a chosen weapon to succeed where others would have failed. When using a melee weapon that he has tied threads to, the Swordmaster can spend 3 points of Strain to add 1 to the result of his Melee Weapons Test. This knack can be used once for each thread the Swordmaster has tied to the weapon, and can be announced after the result of the Melee Weapons Test is known.

Mocking Laugh**Talent:** Heartening Laugh **Rank:** 5

With the Mocking Laugh knack, the Swordmaster belittles the abilities of those facing him with a derisive laugh. The Swordmaster makes a Heartening Laugh Test against the highest Social Defense among all of the opponents present. If the test is successful, all opponents suffer a -3 penalty to all Charisma-based Tests made against the Swordmaster. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to a character's rank in Heartening Laugh.

Reaching Block**Talent:** Parry **Rank:** 5

For 1 point of Strain, the Swordmaster may intercept a melee attack made at a nearby target. Unless the target is within reach of the Swordmaster, he must have some of his normal movement available to defend someone else.

Spinning Parry**Talent:** Parry **Rank:** 8

Swordmasters are fond of spinning their weapons in blurring displays of speed and strength. This knack allows one to use this speed to parry more than one attack when she is beset by multiple attackers. To use this knack, the Swordmaster makes a single Parry test and spends 1 Strain per extra attacker that she wishes to parry. To parry each attack, she must beat the attacker's roll on their Melee Weapons or Unarmed Combat Test, but the difficulty to beat each successive attack after the first cumulatively increases by 4. The Spinning Parry stops when there are no more attacks, or one of the attacks succeeds.

Alyssandra is being attacked by three orks, who are trying to surround her on the road. She is armed with a quarterstaff and loses Initiative, so the orks attack first. They roll 14, 18, and 9 on their Melee Weapon Tests. Alyssandra takes her Strain Point and spins her staff in an attempt to parry all three attacks. She rolls a 20 on her Parry Test, enough to block the first attack, but she needed a 22 (18+4) to block the second, and a 17 (9+8) to block the third. She would have blocked the third, but the second attack hit, ending the Spinning Parry. Alyssandra takes damage from the second and third ork's attacks.

Thread of Recall**Talent:** Theadweaving **Rank:** 7

Using the connection an Adept has to a weapon that he has woven at least one thread to, the character can call the weapon to his hands using levitation. Use of this knack requires an Action, and costs 1 Strain per round it is used. If the weapon is unhindered, it returns to the character at the rate of 15 yards per round. If the weapon must make an attribute test to return to the wielder, use the character's Willpower step.

Trap Weapon**Talent:** Parry **Rank:** 11

The Trap Weapon knack allows a Swordmaster to pin an opponent's weapon as it is being Parried. The opponent may choose to let the weapon fall, and take no further effect from the knack. Or, if the opponent chooses to hold on to his weapon, neither combatant can use their pinned or pinning weapon for the rest of the round. While





the opponent's weapon is pinned, the Swordmaster gains a +2 step bonus to his attacks against his opponent until the end of the round. At the beginning of any round, the opponent may take a 4 step penalty to his initiative to free his weapon from the pin. The Swordmaster can also release the pin at the beginning of any round with no penalty.

Victorious Salute

Talent: Champion Challenge **Rank:** 6

Using the Victorious Salute knack, a Swordmaster makes an impressive martial display as he defeats a foe. If the Swordmaster uses the Melee Weapon talent to defeat an enemy (usually by knocking them unconscious or killing them), he may spend 2 strain and make a Victorious Salute. This salute strikes fear into the hearts of those opposing the Swordmaster who saw his victory, and each receives a -2 penalty to their next Initiative check.

WARRIOR TALENT KNACKS

Coordinated Assault

Talent: Melee Weapons **Rank:** 5

Any two or more warriors who all possess this talent knack receive a +1 bonus on Attack and Damage steps when the warriors both attack the same target. This bonus only applies to melee weapons and only when the warriors are attacking the same target.

Counter and Throw

Talent: Anticipate Blow **Rank:** 4

The Counter and Throw knack allows a Warrior who has used Anticipate Blow successfully to spend 1 strain to gain the an additional 3 point bonus to his Damage Test when using Anticipate Blow only for the purposes of Attacking to Knockdown.

Fists of Granite

Talent: Earth Skin **Rank:** 7

Much in the same fashion as Wooden Knuckles (see below), the Warrior has learned to use Earth Skin not to toughen his entire body but instead to dramatically toughen only his fists. As a result, his unarmed attacks have a bonus of 4 Damage steps. Using this knack requires a use of Earth Skin and lasts for twenty-four hours or until the character ends the effect. During that time, Earth Skin cannot be used in its normal fashion. However, Wood Skin can be used as normal while Fists of Granite is in effect. While this knack is being used, the Warrior's fists appear bark-like with veins the color of dark earth.

This talent knack may only be purchased by a Warrior who has already purchased Wooden Knuckles (see page 78).

Following Strike

Talent: Unarmed Combat **Rank:** 7

The Unarmed Combat knack allows a Warrior who scores an Extraordinary success to spend 2 strain to make an additional Unarmed Combat attack against the same opponent at a 3 step penalty to his Unarmed Combat test. The Following Strike knack may only be used once per round, but it does not prevent the Warrior from using Second Attack or other talents that grant additional attacks.

Hawk's Descent

Talent: Down Strike

Rank: 5

The Hawk's Descent knack allows a Warrior to Down Strike silently, without the piercing cry usually required during the attack.

Improvised Weapon

Talent: Melee Weapons

Rank: 5

The Improvised Weapon knack allows a Warrior to utilize the Melee Weapons talent with any item that the Warrior can pick up. The Warrior instinctively knows the best way to wield it for maximum effect. The Gamemaster determines the Damage step of all improvised weapons, based on their size and material, up to Step 7. A good rule of thumb is to take the Size of the "weapon" and use that as the bonus to damage.

Intercept Blow

Talent: Accept Blow

Rank: 4

Intercept Blow allows a Warrior who has not acted yet on a turn, whether because he has held an action or because he has a lower Initiative, to attempt to intercept a strike directed at someone else within his Combat Movement by diving in front of the attack. The Warrior makes an Accept Blow Test as normal, and if successful, the outcome remains the same—they take the hit and calculate the damage reduction. However, the Warrior may not move for the rest of the round. If the Accept Blow Test fails, the person normally targeted for the attack takes the outcome of the attack as normal, whether hit or miss. The Warrior who rolled the Accept Blow Test loses the rest of his actions this round.

Last Minute

Talent: Life Check

Rank: 8

The Last Minute knack allows a Warrior to fight on past the point of no return. When a Warrior could usually use Life Check to heal damage, Last Minute allows a Warrior to instead put his pattern into a form of stasis for a number of rounds equal to his rank in Life Check. During this time, the Warrior is always conscious and takes no penalties from Wounds, but also cannot benefit from any healing magic. At the end of the knack's duration, the Warrior falls dead; keeping any further damage accrued during this time. This knack does not require a Recovery Test.

Long March into Night

Talent: Vitality

Rank: 5

The Warrior makes a Toughness(6) test and sacrifices a Recovery test to not need a night's sleep and continue to march or otherwise moderately exert himself for the next 8 hours. Each successive night this is done increases the difficulty by +2. If the test fails, the Warrior will fall into a deep sleep for the next 8 hours.

Non-lethal Strike

Talent: Melee Weapons

Rank: 3

The warrior has become particularly adept at making attacks that do only stun damage (see *Earthdawn 2nd edition* main rule book, p. 225). As a result, subtract two from the willpower step of the target when determining if they have resisted the damage inflicted from the attack. This talent knack may be used only with melee attacks that have achieved at least a Good result.



**Stance of Air and Fire****Talent:** Anticipate Blow **Rank:** 8

The Warrior gains a keen sense of his opponent's weaknesses and uses them to devastating advantage. By spending a point of Karma, which is not rolled, the Warrior may use the result of his Anticipate Blow Test until he is hit by the opponent, at which point the effects end immediately.

Strike and Return**Talent:** Thrown Weapons **Rank:** 5

For 2 points of Strain, a thrown weapon will return after it strikes. The Warrior must make a Dexterity(8) test to successfully catch the weapon or else it lands behind him. A Poor Failure means the weapon strikes him, figure damage normally.

Stunning Blow**Talent:** Unarmed Combat **Rank:** 5

When the Warrior has successfully hit his target with a Good success in unarmed combat, they may choose to stun their opponent instead of doing damage. The target must make a Toughness Test against the Warrior's Unarmed Combat step or be stunned for 1 round, 2 if the result was less than a Poor failure. When the target is stunned, they cannot perform any task that requires an Action. The use of this knack costs 2 Strain.

Thorn Skin**Talent:** Wood Skin **Rank:** 6

The Thorn Skin knack allows a Warrior under the effect of the Wood Skin talent to spend 3 points of strain to cause two-inch thorns to spring from the surface of his barklike skin. This knack must be declared when the Wood Skin talent is used, and lasts for the duration of the Wood Skin talent. These thorns provide a +2 Step bonus to all unarmed Damage Tests, and do an additional Step 4 damage every round the Warrior grapples or is grappled by an opponent. These thorns make it impossible to wear metal and crystal armors, unless they are Thread armor. Some Warriors claim that the strain caused by this Knack is not Life Magic, but is instead Blood Magic.

Thread of Recall**Talent:** Threadweaving **Rank:** 7

Using the connection an Adept has to a weapon that he has woven at least one thread to, the character can call the weapon to his hands using levitation. Use of this knack requires an Action, and costs 1 Strain per round it is used. If the weapon is unhindered, it returns to the character at the rate of 15 yards per round. If the weapon must make an attribute test to return to the wielder, use the character's Willpower step.

Tiger's Leap**Talent:** Tiger Spring **Rank:** 3

In any round that a Warrior could use Tiger Spring, he may forsake the Initiative bonus gained from the talent and instead add 10 yards to his Combat Movement for that one round, as he leaps at the opponent. They must still pay the Strain cost as normal. This talent knack cannot be combined with Sprint.

True Earth Skin**Talent:** Earth Skin **Rank:** 8

This knack acts similar to True Wood Skin (See Below), but the Warrior takes the appearance of earth instead. The concealment granted has the same effects as True Wood Skin, except that True Earth Skin allows the Warrior to hide in mud, on open ground, or among rocks.

True Wood Skin**Talent:** Wood Skin **Rank:** 4

The True Wood Skin knack allows a warrior using Wood Skin to spend 4 strain to truly take on the appearance of Wood, such as a small tree or fallen branch, making it much harder to detect a Warrior in the appropriate surroundings. The result of the Wood Skin check is used as the difficulty number of Perception tests to see the Warrior in the appropriate surroundings. This knack lasts for 1 minute each time it is used, and any movement on the part of the Warrior negates this effect. Use of this knack does not require the Warrior to use an additional Recovery Test.

Unbalancing Strike**Talent:** Melee Weapons **Rank:** 5

The warrior has become particularly adept at making attacks intended to knock down his opponent (see Earthdawn 2nd edition main rule book, p. 225). As a result, add two to the difficulty number of the knockdown test of any target struck by someone with this talent knack. This talent knack may be used only with melee attacks that achieve at least an Excellent success.

Warrior's Flourish**Talent:** Melee Weapons **Rank:** 5

Once per round, the Warrior may respond to a social attack, such as persuasion, taunts, or intimidation, by brandishing his weapon at the attacker, perhaps with a threatening flourish. This often causes uncertainty in even the most veteran taunter and gives the Warrior +2 to his Social Defense for that round. The Warrior's Flourish knack takes the place of an Attack action with the Melee Weapons talent. He is occupied with brandishing his weapon. This knack may not be combined with other talents that resist social attacks, such as Resist Taunt.

Wooden Knuckles**Talent:** Wood Skin **Rank:** 3

The Warrior uses the Wooden Knuckles knack to focus his Wood Skin talent on his hands. His fists become hard as dense wood, causing his unarmed attacks to gain a bonus of 2 Damage steps. Like Wood Skin, using this knack requires a Recovery Test and lasts for twenty-four hours. During that time, Wood Skin cannot be used again in its normal fashion. While this talent knack is being used the Warrior's fists appear as if they were made of bark.



ZHAN SHI TALENT KNACKS

Avoid Spell

Talent: Avoid Blow Rank: 11

The Avoid Spell knack enables the Zhan Shi to use her Avoid Blow talent to evade combat spells with visible effects that strike the spell's target, such as Earth Darts, Ice Spear, Ephemeral Bolt, and Razor Orb. The gamemaster determines the specific spells to which this knack applies. To use the knack, the Zhan Shi makes an Avoid Blow test at a cost of 2 Strain beyond the normal cost. If the test result exceeds the result of the attacking magician's Spellcasting Test, the Zhan Shi avoids the spell. A Zhan Shi cannot make more than one Avoid Blow Test per round to avoid a spell, and cannot use the Avoid Spell knack against Blindsight attacks.

Counter and Throw

Talent: Anticipate Blow Rank: 4

The Counter and Throw knack allows a Zhan Shi who has used Anticipate Blow successfully to spend 1 Strain to gain the an additional 3-point bonus to his Damage Test when using Anticipate Blow, only for the purposes of Attacking to Knockdown.

Fear Has No Hold

Talent: Resist Taunt Rank: 6

The Fear Has No Hold knack allows the Zhan Shi, for the cost of an additional point of Strain in addition to the normal Strain required for the talent, to use her Resist Taunt talent to avoid the effects of magical fear effects that target her Spell Defense.

Flow Like Water

Talent: Avoid Blow Rank: 4

When using the Flow Like Water knack, the Zhan Shi has learned to move with the force of a blow that strikes them. When they fail an Avoid Blow Test and are struck, they may make an additional Avoid Blow Test, spending the Strain for Avoid Blow as normal, against a Difficulty Number equal to the step number of the Attack Test of the opponent that hit them. If this Avoid Blow Test succeeds, then they are not Knocked Down by the blow.

Friend of Nature

Talent: Resist Taunt Rank: 8

The Friend of Nature knack allows the Zhan Shi to make a Resist Taunt Test against the Social Defense of a natural creature. If this Resist Taunt Test is successful, the creature will not attack the Zhan Shi unless the Zhan Shi attacks them. The Friend of Nature knack does not affect Name-givers, Horrors, Horror Constructs, Spirits, Drakes, familiars, or animals that have had the Animal Bond talent used on them. The Friend of Nature knack does affect magical creatures such as Firebirds and Lightning Lizards.

Improvised Weapon

Talent: Melee Weapons Rank: 6

The Improvised Weapon knack allows a Zhan Shi to utilize the Melee Weapons talent with any item that he can pick up. The Zhan Shi instinctively knows the best way to wield it for maximum

effect. The gamemaster determines the Damage step of all improvised weapons, based on their size and material, up to Step 7. A good rule of thumb is to take the Size of the "weapon" and use that as the bonus to damage.

Kip-Up

Talent: Great Leap Rank: 5

The Kip-Up knack allows a Zhan Shi to quickly regain their feet after a fall. Whenever the Zhan Shi is on the ground, whether there by being Knocked Down or any other reason, the Zhan Shi may spend 1 Strain to instantly stand without using an action.

No Mind

Talent: Avoid Blow and Unarmed Combat Rank: 10

When the Zhan Shi has attained a state of true No Mind in combat, they may react instantly when their opponents attack them. When the Zhan Shi has succeeded at an Avoid Blow Test, the No Mind knack allows the Zhan Shi to choose to make a retaliatory attack once per round using his Unarmed Combat talent for his Attack Test, and he may chose to additionally use the Body Control talent for his Damage Test. This retaliatory attack does not use an action. Each retaliatory attack requires the Zhan Shi to spend 3 points of Strain, in addition to any Strain she uses for the Avoid Blow and Body Control talents.

Slow Breathing

Talent: Body Control Rank: 4

The Zhan Shi is able to use her mastery of her body to slow her breathing and make better use of the air in her lungs. The character may extend the time she can hold her breath by a number of minutes equal to four times her rank in Body Control (See Suffocation, ED2 p 231). One minute of this time is lost every time the Zhan Shi performs a task that requires an action.

Stunning Blow

Talent: Unarmed Combat Rank: 5

When the Zhan Shi has successfully hit his target with a Good success in unarmed combat, they may choose to stun their opponent instead of doing damage. The target must make a Toughness Test against the Zhan Shi's Unarmed Combat step or be stunned for 1 round, 2 if the result was less than a Poor failure. When the target is stunned, they cannot perform any task that requires an Action. The use of this knack costs 2 Strain.

Thread of Recall

Talent: Theadweaving Rank: 7

Using the connection an Adept has to a weapon that he has woven at least one thread to, the character can call the weapon to his hands using levitation. Use of this knack requires an Action, and costs 1 Strain per round it is used. If the weapon is unhindered, it returns to the character at the rate of 15 yards per round. If the weapon must make an attribute test to return to the wielder, use the character's Willpower step.

INDEX

Accept Blow	62	Hawk's Descent	77	Thread of Recall	71, 73, 75-79
Aiming	10	Humming Arrow	70	Tiger's Leap	78
Air Hammer Smash	73	Illuminating Strike	70	Trap Weapon	76
Air Legs	73	Improvised Missiles	70	True Earth Skin	78
Air Wings	24	Improvised Weapon	72, 76, 77, 79	True Wood Skin	78
Astral Sensitive Eye	24	Intercept Blow	77	Types of Staff	44
Avoid Spell	79	Kip-Up	79	Unbalancing Strike	73, 78
Banishing Ward	67	Language of Violence	76	Victorious Salute	77
Barbed Taunt	75	Last Minute	77	Warrior's Flourish	78
Blind Fighting	13	Lay of the Land	72	Wooden Knuckles	78
Blood Pebble Armor	24	Lightning Fist	67	Wound Transfer	73
Break	75	Lightning Reflexes	76	Zhan Shi	65
Boarding Action	73	Lineage Sooth	72	Zone of Will	68
Body Control	67	Long March into Night	77		
Breath of Fire	67	Lydian Archers	12		
Breath of Water	24	Master of the Blade	76		
Call Ride	71	Mocking Laugh	76		
Call Weapon	75	Mount Blood Charms	24		
Calm Shot	70	Mounted Archer	70		
Cavalry of One	71	Moving Saddle	73		
Charge of Wind and Fire	72	Mystic Mapping	71		
Clever Hands	67	Mystic Sense	13		
Competition Shooting	10	Mystic True Shot	71		
Competition Target Difficulties	10	No Mind	79		
Coordinated Assault	77	Non-lethal Strike	77		
Counter and Throw	77, 79	One-Handed Shot	71		
Counterstrike	62	Pattern Strike	68		
Crystal Talons	24	Penetrating Sense	71		
Deafening Strike	74	Prevent Blow	68		
Delayed Landing	70	Purify Trait	21		
Deliver Weapon	75	Rain of Arrows	71		
Disarming Arrow	70	Reaching Block	76		
Draw Fire	75	Retrieval	74		
Earth Block	76	Return for More	71		
Elf Cavalrymen	21	Seal Pattern	66		
Enduring Attack	74	Ship Searching	75		
Falcon Marines	39	Silent Mount	73		
Fear Has No Hold	79	Slow Breathing	79		
Fiery Stare	74	Smash of the Fiery Hammer	75		
Fists of Granite	77	Snap Kick	68		
Flaming Missiles	70	Spinning Defense	44		
Flaming Wounds	74	Spinning Parry	76		
Flashing Blades	76	Spirit Defense	73		
Floating Reload	70	Stance of Air and Fire	78		
Flow Like Water	79	Steady Stride	75		
Flying Kick	74	Stored Strain	71		
Following Strike	77	Strike and Return	78		
Friend of Nature	79	Stunning Blow	78, 79		
Good Grooming	72	Swift Hoof	73		
Griffin Riders	24	Theran Blood Crossbow	15		
Hard Glare	74	Thorgrim Warriors	62		
Hard Riding	72	Thorn Skin	78		

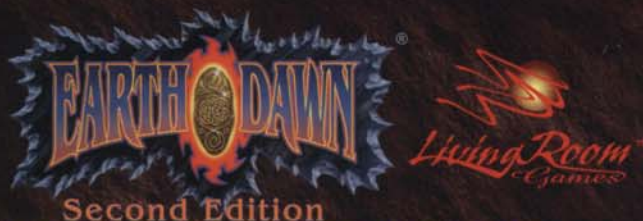


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Adepts are the heroes and legends of Earthdawn, fighting to reclaim their Scourge-ravaged land with the magic they wield. Some of these Adepts find their path defined by conflict and blood, a path known to some as the Way of War. Archers use their power to master the art of the missile weapon. Cavalrymen use their empathic bond with their mount to become fearsome fighters. Sky Raiders harness their magic to help them plunder the skies of Barsaive. Swordmasters are quick with both their well-handled weapons and their dangerous wit. Warriors use their talents to become the personifications of war. And the Zhan Shi introduces mastery of unarmed combat from distant Cathay.

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