

ELMORE SOVEREIGN STONE

The Taan



Jean Rabe & Janet Pack

PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Time Out DIVERSIONS



TAAN: SCIONS OF THE VOID



CREDITS

Conceptualization:

Larry Elmore, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman

Original Design:

Jean Rabe, Janet Pack

Design & Pathfinder® Conversion:

Tony Lee

Design Contribution:

Jamie Chambers, Timothy Kidwell, Margaret Weis, Nathan Ziolek

Cover Art: Larry Elmore

Interior Art: Larry Elmore, John Dollar, Les Evans,
Dan Frazier, Jim Holloway, Charles Keegan

Graphic Design & Layout: Billy Littlepage

Editing: Tony Lee

Publisher: Timeout Diversions



TimeOut DIVERSIONS





Designation of Product Identity: The following items are hereby identified as Product Identity, as defined in the Open Game License version 1.0a, Section 1(e), and are not Open Content: Any and all Timeout Diversions logos and identifying marks and trade dress, including all Timeout Diversions Product and Product Line names including but not limited to Sovereign Stone, the Sovereign Stone logo, Sovereign Stone Campaign Core Rulebook, Bestiary of Loerem, Codex Mysterium, Bahk, Taan, and Loerem; any locations, gods, historic events, magic items, organizations; and any and all stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, fiction, and dialogue; and all artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, illustrations, maps, and cartography, likenesses, poses, logos, or graphic designs, except such elements that already appear in the d20 System Reference Document and are already OGC by virtue of appearing there.

Open Content: Except for material designated as Product Identity (see above), the entire contents of this Timeout Diversions game product are Open Game Content, as defined in the Open Gaming License version 1.0a Section 1(d). No portion of this work other than the material designated as Open Game Content may be reproduced in any form without written permission.

Taan: Scions of the Void is published by Timeout Diversions under the Open Gaming License version 1.0a Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Pathfinder Roleplaying Game is trademark of Paizo Publishing, LLC. Timeout Diversions and its logo are trademarks of Timeout Diversions. Sovereign Stone is trademark of Elmore Productions, used under license. © 2014 Timeout Diversions.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4	Chapter 6: Taan Equipment.....	84
Chapter 1: Taan Characters.....	8	Taan Weapons.....	85
Taan	9	Taan Armor	87
Half-Taan.....	12	Taan Goods.....	89
New Skill	13	Chapter 7: Dagnarus's Army	90
New Feats.....	14	Taan Forces.....	91
Chapter 2: Taan Society.....	16	Important Taan Nizams	94
Social Structure.....	17	Current State Of Affairs.....	99
Feuds And Disputes	26	Chapter 8: Prestige Classes.....	102
Chapter 3: Taan Culture	30	Avenging Hand	103
Art And Craft.....	31	Black Veil Shaman.....	104
Stone Lore.....	32	Feral Warrior.....	106
Taanic: Language Of The Taan.....	33	Weapons Master	107
Taan Legends	36	Chapter 9: Bestiary	110
The Bahk.....	38	K'let	111
Food Hierarchy.....	39	Lnskt.....	113
Duels	40	Nb'arsk	115
Ailments And Weaknesses.....	41	Zarg Tree.....	116
Medicine.....	44	Chapter 10: Adventures.....	118
Death: Then And Now	46	Grave Robbers	119
Chapter 4: Taan Religion	50	Ring Of Terror.....	120
The Old Ways.....	52	Dagnarus's Hit Squad	121
The Old Ways Forsakened	56	A Taan By Any Other Color.....	123
Sacred Relics Of Dagnarus.....	61	Mercantile Exchange.....	123
Sacred Sites.....	62	Spy For A Day.....	125
Chapter 5: Taan Magic.....	66	Search For The Black Sword	126
Stone Enchantments	68	The Wrong Side	126
Stone Enchantment Descriptions....	70	Sacred Site	127
New Void Magic Spells	73	Open Gaming License.....	130
Magic Items And Relics.....	80		



The Taan


Introduction



Dagnarus, God of the Rock

I have survived trials that the gods themselves could not conceive. I have lost my nation. I have lost my people. I have lost the Sovereign Stone. I am now a legend used by parents to frighten their children.

The children will not be the only people frightened. For I have found the scourge of Loerem, those who will conquer all in my name. I am their God, the God of the Rock, the God of Light and Dark, the only God. And all Loerem will come to believe me a god too! Or they will perish!



Dagnarus, Lord of the Void, was the second son of King Tamaros, of glorious memory. Angry at fate for having denied him the kingship, which went to his elder brother, Dagnarus gave his soul to the evil of the Void and declared war upon his own people. He led his army to the city now known as Old Vinnengael, where a terrible battle ensued.

The forces of Dagnarus, led by Shakur, the undead Vrykyl who no man without blessed weapons could slay, seized control of the city. Dagnarus sought his despised brother, King Helmos, and found him in the sacred sanctum of the Temple of the Magi, the Portal to the Gods. Dagnarus demanded that his brother hand over to him the Sovereign Stone, the sacred jewel that had been a gift of the gods to the human race. Helmos refused. They fought there, and Helmos was slain. Dagnarus took possession of the Sovereign Stone.

Already unstable due to the surge of Void magic, all magic in the world was disrupted. The Portal to the gods was destroyed. The Portals that led from Old Vinnengael to the realms of the other races splintered and scattered throughout the world like sticks that a child has thrown down in a game.

The city of Old Vinnengael was obliterated. Many thought Dagnarus had been destroyed as well. Not so. Although more than strong enough to kill any normal human, the magical blast wasn't powerful enough to end Dagnarus. Every time he created a Vrykyl, he stole the life force from the person and took it for himself. Thus he had well over twenty lives when the Portal hurled him across the continent. When he

woke, he was disoriented and badly hurt, but still alive.

A dazed Dagnarus was confronted by a beast the likes of which he had never seen. It is now believed that this creature was a bahk, a gargantuan never before encountered in this part of the world.

The bahk are fascinated by magic, they hunger for it. This bahk had never felt such potent, wonderful magic as that radiating from the Sovereign Stone. Dagnarus was still weak and unable to defend himself. Nevertheless, he fought desperately and lost several more of his many lives in the clash. The bahk proved too strong for him. Seizing the Sovereign Stone, the bahk fled into the forest, leaving behind the Lord of the Void.

Now near death, overwhelmed with anguish and rage for having lost what he only just won, Dagnarus dragged himself to what he thought was a cave. In reality, he had found a new Portal, one of those created in the destruction of Old Vinnengael. He was astonished to discover its presence and could

only guess at what had caused it to be there. Dagnarus huddled inside the Portal and, through the power of the Void, nursed his wounds.

Dagnarus's elven paramour, Valura, was in Old Vinnengael when the city was destroyed. A Vrykyl, she survived the blast. She sought her lord but could not find him. She knew he lived, because she sensed him, even in his weakened state. After a long search, she found Dagnarus in the Portal. She summoned Shakur and the two of them set about finding new candidates to fill the depleted Vrykyl ranks. If the Void found a target suitable, the Dagger of the



Vrykyl would stab the victim in the back, steal the life essence from the person and, through the magic of the dagger, transform him into a Vrykyl.

The years passed. The people of Vinnengael began to rebuild their lives. They built a fabulous new capital far from the old one. They reestablished their trade routes, reformed old alliances and made new ones. They made new enemies, as well.

Meanwhile, Dagnarus grew ever stronger. He explored the Portal, traversed its immense length and eventually discovered the other end. Emerging, he found himself in a land very different from the one he had left. The Portal opened onto the face of a huge cliff overlooking a narrow river and a verdant stretch of land. Tall, broad-leafed trees thrust up out of sandy soil and long grasses grew in thick clumps all about.

Curious about the territory, Dagnarus sent Valura and Shakur from the Portal to investigate the new land. They found it inhabited, but not by humans or elves or dwarves or orks. As luck, or the gods, would have it, the land was teemed with a race of beings who worshiped the Void. These were the taan, a warrior race who had either driven off, killed off, or subjugated all other races in their land. Valura and Shakur returned and reported to Dagnarus that if he could tame these fearsome creatures and reign over them, he could return to Loerem with an army so formidable that none could stand against him.

Dagnarus came to the taan as a god. He fed them when they were hungry. He armed them with weapons and armor to defeat their enemies. He dazzled them with incredible magic and his fighting prowess. The taan revered Dagnarus and they worshiped him.

Dagnarus's burning desire to rule Vinnengael and its people and to regain

the Sovereign Stone never ceased to smolder in his heart. When he deemed the taan were ready, Dagnarus and his Vrykyl led their new army from the sandy wastes of their desert land through the Portal and into Loerem. Dagnarus promised his new followers a homeland where no one could stand against their might. Dagnarus revealed his plan to crush Vinnengael beneath his heel and to go on to conquer all of Loerem.

Dagnarus was cunning. He did not strike at once, for the barbaric taan were not yet prepared to fight the well-trained and equipped armies of Loerem. For a hundred years, Dagnarus kept his taan in a secret location in the wilds of western Loerem. He had discovered the taan could breed successfully with humans to create half-taan, neither human nor taan, but a monstrous crossing of the two. Dagnarus would use these half-taan as liaisons to the humans who would come under his standard once he declared war. In the meantime, the taan learned discipline, they learned how to fight in organized armies. They grew in ferocity and in disdain for the soft denizens of this new land. They are confident that they can defeat its people and subjugate them.

DULLIFED'S DEMISE

Lord Mayor Gilbreth was not a military man. Corpulent, easy-going, he enjoyed a sedentary lifestyle. So it took some time for the banging and the shouting to waken him. He was most distressed to find Marshall Falconnan thundering on the door in the dark of the night.

"What is this all about?" the Lord Mayor asked, clutching his robe around him. "Couldn't this have waited 'til morning?"

"No, I don't think so," replied the Marshall sternly. "Come with me!" He practically dragged the Mayor through the streets to the city wall.

"Look!" The Marshall pointed a black gloved hand out over the wall to the east.

Gilbreth saw that the gates to the city had been closed and barred from within. People running to see what was going on filled the streets. The cobblestones were cold and hard beneath his feet, and Gilbreth wished that he had thought to wear more than his slippers.

Gilbreth's inhale sounded like a death rattle. The full moon shone bright on the armor and weapons of a great army that was marching on Dullifed. The attackers were like nothing the Mayor had ever seen before. They appeared to be a cross between man and some sort of hideous beast.

Gilbreth stared blankly at the advancing army. His city was not at war with anyone, not so far as he knew.

"What are they? What do they want?" he gasped.

"I can only assume, Lord Mayor, that what they want is this city," Falconnan said dryly. "We sent out a messenger to demand to know why they are threatening us without cause. We expect him to return shortly with any news. Although," he added bitterly, "I would not expect that news to be good."

It was then that they saw a figure emerge from the encircling encampment. He was not so tall as the beastmen. He wore rich clothes and he had the air of a nobleman. He walked alone, unafraid, straight up to the gates, beneath where Falconnan and Gilbreth stood on the wall. Archers put their bowstrings to their cheeks and sighted down arrow shafts at the lone man. His hair was long and red, and shone bright in the moonlight. His features were handsome, composed. So regal was his mien that he might have been some king's son.

He spoke in a clear voice with a Vinnengaelean accent, using an antiquated dialect of Elder Speak. "You should be honored. Yours is the first city that will fall to the might of the god Dagnarus. But yours will not be the last."

The young man motioned. One of the beastmen came forward and dumped a sack in front of the city's gate.

"Your messenger," the young man called, giving a mocking bow, "or what remains of him." One of the archers loosed a shaft, aiming for the intruder. But as the arrow sped at the man's chest, energy flowed over him, covering him from head to foot in armor that was dark as the Void. The arrow shattered.


The man raised the visor of his helm that was fashioned in the form of a beast's head. "I was going to give you the night to prepare yourselves. You now have half an hour." The black-helmed knight turned on his heel and strode away.

The Lord Mayor leaned heavily against the battlement. His body quivered.


"What do we do?" he whimpered.

Falconnan stared out at the advancing troops.

"Make peace with the gods, Your Honor, for this will be our last night on Loerem."



CHAPTER I: TAAN CHARACTERS




A Half-Taan

Every day is a punishment to be who I am. Human blood taints my veins and my people despise me for it. My father has nothing to do with me. My human mother was murdered the day after she bore me.

I was denied my first scarring until I was eight years old, when I should have had it a week after my birth. I am weaker than my pure taan brethren. I am my god's consummate mistake.

I bear my people no grudge. I understand their disgust. I loathe myself as much as they loathe me. All I can do is to perform my duties as well as I may, and hope that I die in service to Dagnarus.



New to Loerem, the taan and half-taan are quickly becoming feared as some of the most vicious conquerors the world has ever known. They have already made their mark on the lands to the west and are slowly spreading across the continent.

While looked upon as little better than monsters by Loerem's frightened and embattled populace, the taan and half-taan are an interesting and intelligent race with customs and traditions, religious beliefs, and an extensive knowledge of Void magic.

TAAN

Taan are a race of fierce, savage tribal nomads from a continent foreign to the people of Loerem. In their homeland, said to be one vast desert, taan are forced to fight each other and such ferocious creatures as the bahk for the scarce resources available. That is, until Dagnarus arrived through a rogue Portal, united the disorganized beast-men, and led them to Loerem as their god, in his bid to conquer all the realms.

Ritual scarring is common among the taan. This scarring is used as body art and a means of expression for the taan. Many taan scar themselves to commemorate a battle or other important event. The most important scars are those with religious significance. These scars are created by taan Void mages, who embed stones imbued with Void magic into the designs. The stones help enhance the performance of the taan in battle.

Ritual scarring is a lifelong process that begins at birth. The appearance and shape of scars varies greatly from taan to taan. The techniques for creating the scars also vary. Some taan prefer the look of a well-salted incision. Others would rather burn patterns into their flesh. Piercing is another form of scarring that the taan employ. They use sharpened wood and bone spikes, metal shafts and even crystals and gemstones to cut open their tough hides.

Physical Description

All taan males, females, young and old, share roughly the same physical traits. Basically saurian, they look very different from the rest of Loerem's races. They are bipedal and bilaterally symmetrical, with the forward set eyes of a carnivore placed above a short muzzle. All adult taan are tall, muscular, with broad shoulders, narrow hips and thick chests. Coarse dark hair covers their heads. The hair is worn long, falling to between their shoulder blades. Their hide is leathery and tough and varies in color from shades of brown to near black.

A taan's eyes appear too small for its large face, although they are round and exceptionally bright. Eye color ranges from shades of cinnamon to black and is so uniform that it is difficult to discern the pupils. Their ears are small and the ear canals are protected by small flaps of hide. Taan noses are animal-like, consisting of two openings set a short distance above the mouth. A very small ridge runs from the tip of the nose up to the forehead. Their mouths are lipless and filled with sharp, pointed teeth. The taan have highly acute senses of sight, hearing and smell.

Taan usually stand between six and seven feet tall. They have extraordinary strength in their limbs and in their hands. Their wrists are dense and bony and their elbows protrude. Their arms are quite muscular. They have overlarge, callused feet that end in four long toes with dark brown to black claw-like nails. In their own desert world, few taan wear shoes, but in this world of rocky terrain, they have taken to protecting their feet. Their hands are long, with wide palms and sinewy fingers that end in thick, dark nails.

Females look much the same as males, except they are slightly smaller. They conceive and bear young in a manner similar to other humanoid races. They do not nurse their young and their breasts are

TAAN RACIAL TRAITS

+4 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Dexterity, -2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma: The taan are strong, powerful, and hale. They are heavily scarred from their battles and ritual scarring. They will always face a physical challenge head on and never run away from danger, for that would disgrace them in the eyes of their tribe.

Medium: As Medium creatures, htaan have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Normal Speed: Taan have a base speed of 30 feet.

Protection against Void: Taan are resistant to Void Magic. They gain spell resistance equal to 5 + character level as well as a +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saves against necromancy spells.

Thick Hide: Taan's tough hide provides extra resistance against extreme temperatures. Taan characters gain a +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saves made to resist nonlethal damage in extreme heat or cold environments.

Void Enchanted Stones: A taan character may begin with one of the following stone enchantments embedded in his body: *clenched teeth*, *hawkeyes*, *senses open*, or *will of stone*.

Void Sense: Taan are specially attuned to Void Magic and therefore can sense Void Magic on items, creatures, or in their proximity.

Daunting Presence: Taan may use Strength instead of Charisma as key ability for all Intimidate checks.

Racial Aptitude: Taan are belligerent but, surprisingly have always had an intuitive sense of math and geometry. Intimidate and Knowledge (engineering) are always class skills for taan characters.

Racial Expertise: Taan are physically strong and nomadic by nature. They have learned to use their strength to carry all their belongings over difficult terrain. They gain a +2 racial bonus to Climb and Survival checks.

Hydrophobia: Because the taan came originally from a desert clime, they have an inherent fear of water. This fear is enhanced by taan legends. The fact that the taan are heavy and big-boned and tend to sink like stones lends credence to their fears. Taan never venture into water more than knee-deep if they can help it. They incur a -4 racial penalty to all Swim checks.

Languages: Taan speak their own language, Taanic. It is a harsh, guttural language, comprised of whistles, clicks, pops, growls, and snorts. Taanic is extremely difficult for races other than taan and half-taan to understand, but not impossible. Understanding Taanic does not grant the ability to speak Taanic. It is physiologically impossible for humans and other creatures of Loerem to duplicate the sounds required for Taanic fluency.

Most taan consider learning the languages of Loerem's "soft" races beneath them and so never bother. Those taan who do learn other languages face the same problems that Loerem's natives face when learning Taanic — the taan cannot form the sounds needed to create the words. Conversations between Loerem natives and taan can be very confusing, because one is always replying in his native tongue while trying to listen to and understand a foreign one.

Taan begin play speaking Taanic. As an enemy of the bahk in their homeland, the taan typically learn Bahk so they can taunt the creature before combat begins.

Elemental Alignment: Taan are advantaged in Void Magic and disadvantaged in all other Elements.

Void Magic Affinity: Taan are strongly tied to the Void. Taan characters gain one additional Void magic spell per caster level, or receive a +1 racial bonus to spellcasting rolls when using Void Magic.

similar in appearance to a male's.

Almost no taan warrior lives to old age. Taan taskers, who usually do not engage in combat, have been known to live past one hundred years. An elder taan is considered to be in his fifties.

Alignment

Violence is virtually the way of life for the taan. The brutal culture of the taan leaves no room for the weak. Thus, they tend to be chaotic evil, ruling by sheer force and banding together only for survival.



Adventurers

Most taan serve in Dagnarus's army and will not betray or stray from their god. Player-character taan are likely from the minority of taan who rebelled against Dagnarus and sought to restore the race's "Old Ways" and old gods. Their fearsome appearance, violent nature, and the fact that their brethren are invading Loerem will unquestionably make them unwelcome in any part of Loerem.

Names

Taan and half-taan names are one or two syllables long. In the old world, the taan never used a surname to delineate a taan's ancestry. That custom has begun to change since the taan have come to Loerem. Taan now want to denote their lineage in hopes of gaining status and power.

Male Names: Azrak, Cr'eeekt, K'let, Kral, Lnsk, Qu-tok, R'lt, Tel, Zukmar.

Female Names: Dag-ruk, Dur-zor, Grengur, Keet, Nb'arsk, Nrk't, Quet-et, Stirkt, Tir, Xir-kit.

Surnames: Taan and half-taan who have a surname add their mother or father's name after their own; for example, Azrak Ki-Kral, or Nrk't Ke-Tir.

HALF-TAAN

Considered by many, including the taan, as abominations, half-taan are the results of unions between male taan and female humans — the only crossbreeding possible on Loerem.

Half-taan dress plainly, without a trace of the ostentatious details adorning full taan. They are segregated from the taan, having no station in the taan society. They lead solitary lives, usually grouping together in their own little encampments. Dagnarus and his officers dispatch them to relay messages between taan and non-taan war parties. Half-taan can be skilled in Void magic and some did become competent mages, learning spells from the human Void practitioners under Dagnarus.

Physical Description

Smaller than their taan brethren, half-taan stand between five and six feet tall. Half-taan hide more closely resembles skin and is lighter in hue and not as leathery as that of full-blooded taan. Half-taan snouts are shorter and their hair is not so coarse. Typically, half-taan hair is more colorful than that of full-blooded taan, and can be red or even blonde. Their eyes are large and their wrists and elbows are not as bony. Some half-taan appear almost human, with flatter faces and larger ears and fingernails instead of claws.

Most half-taan lack the raw, brute strength of a taan, although there are exceptions. Half-taan are normally more agile and dexterous, traits they inherit from their human mothers.

Society

Half-taan are shunned and brutalized by the taan, who consider them abominations. They live and serve outside of taan society. Having no place within the taan ranks, they lead solitary lives, usually grouping together in small encampments of their own. They are used by Dagnarus and his officers as couriers between taan war parties and war parties composed of members of other races.

Relations

A few half-taan have left Dagnarus' army because they could not abide the taan way of life. Ostracized by other races, these half-taan are persecuted wherever they go. However, they have been the first to provide the outside world with news that an armed host has been gathering in the west. They have supplied valuable information about the taan and Dagnarus to those who have been sympathetic. Half-taan are not evil, though they distrust strangers, taan or otherwise. If threatened, their first instinct is to flee.

HALF-TAAN RACIAL TRAITS

+2 to One Ability Score: Half-taan characters get a +2 bonus to one ability score of their choice at creation to represent their varied nature.

Medium: As Medium creatures, half-taan have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Normal Speed: Half-taan have a base speed of 30 feet.

Protection against Void: Half-taan are resistant to Void Magic. They gain spell resistance equal to 5 + character level as well as a +2 racial bonus to Fort saves against necromancy spells.

Void Sense: Half-taan are specially attuned to Void Magic and therefore can sense Void Magic on items, creatures, or in their proximity.

Daunting Presence: Half-taan may use Strength instead of Charisma as key ability for all Intimidate checks.

Racial Aptitude: Half-taan often have to adopt passive aggressiveness in order to fend off taan bullies. Escape Artist and Intimidate are always class skills for half-taan characters.

Racial Expertise: Half-taan possess an innate connection to the Void, and have usually observed the taan's Void Magic rituals firsthand. They gain a +2 racial bonus on Knowledge (arcane) and Spellcraft checks involving Void Magic when they have at least 1 skill rank in that skill.

Languages: Half-taan begin play speaking Taanic. The half-taan combine the traits of both parents and, although their lips and vocal chords are underdeveloped, they are able to speak Pharn'lan, Tomagai, Fringrese, Elder Speak and any of the other various humanoid languages. Their speech is still guttural, but sounds softer to non-taan. Half-taan are useful to both taan and non-taan as translators.

Elemental Alignment: Half-taan are advantaged in Void Magic and disadvantaged in all other Elements

Alignment

Half-taan are not inherently evil, although they are distrustful of strangers, taan or otherwise. If threatened, their first instinct is flight. Their second is to attack. As a relatively new breed that has abandoned the belief that Dagnarus is god, virtually all free half-taan are in search of a religion.

Adventurers

All half-taan free to adventure are presumed to have broken away from Dagnarus and his taan army. If the game campaign is set in the default time period of just prior to the taan's invasion, a half-taan character will surely draw public prejudice, distrust, and persecution everywhere he goes in Loerem. In any case, half-taan are expected to put forth a Herculean effort in order

to earn the respect and trust of native denizens.

Names

Same as full taan.

NEW SKILL

Below is a new skill unique to taan and half-taan characters.

Craft (Ritual Scarification)

With this skill, a taan is able to create scars that are both symbolic and imposing. This skill is often used to accentuate the appearance of the embedded stones, thus inspiring terror in an enemy. Shamans routinely take this skill, while warriors and taskers occasionally do so to craft their own scars or aid others in their ritual scarring.

Check: Creating ritual scars that inspire respect in other taan and fear and terror in an enemy is very important to a taan. A taan's scar must always fit his personality. The DC for creating a suitable scar is 10 + subject's Charisma modifier. Failure means the taan is ashamed of the scar, and it becomes a source of embarrassment and shame for him. Inadequate scars often prove to be a problem for their taan creators as well. Shamans who make scars that are ignominious in appearance or fade away lose the respect of the tribe, while a tasker who commits such a crime is seriously punished.

Action: Does not apply. Craft checks are made by the day or week.

Try Again: Yes, but not on any location with previous ritual scar.

Special: You must be a taan character to learn this skill.

NEW FEATS

The taan not only survived in the harsh and unforgiving climate of their own land, but they rose to become its masters. They brought these talents for survival and battle with them when Dagnarus brought them to Loerem.

Ancient Lineage

Yours is the blood of heroes, taan who have been renowned warriors and nizams.

Prerequisites: Taan or half-taan, 1st-level character.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to Will saving throws and +2 bonus to all Bluff

and Intimidate skill checks.

Bahk Fighter (Combat)

You have faced taan's mortal enemy, the bahk, before, or at least have had heard enough tales about what these savage beasts did to your race to make your blood boil! You tend to run toward the creature rather than from it.

Prerequisites: Taan or half-taan.

Benefit: You are immune to the bahk's frightful presence aura and attempts to intimidate you.

Blood Frenzy (Combat)

The smell of blood mixed with the excitement of battle rouses your warrior blood and you are nearly invincible.

Prerequisites:

Taan or half-taan, Power Attack, base attack bonus +4.

Benefit: You can make one Reflex save per round against one melee attack (DC = attack roll result). If successful, the damage dealt

by that attack is reduced by 5 points (to a minimum of 1 point of damage).

Special: This feat stacks with the defensive roll advanced talent of the rogue class.

Enchant Stone (Item Creation)

You have the ability to create enchanted stones that have amazing magical effects.

Prerequisites: Taan or half-taan, able to cast 3rd-level Void spells.



Benefit: You can create a enchanted stone infused with one Void magic spell so long as you meet the prerequisites for that stone's enchantment (see "Stone Enchantments" in Chapter 5: Taan Magic). Enchanting a stone takes 1 day per 1,000 argents in its base price. To prepare a stone for enchantment, you must have the appropriate stone and use up raw materials costing half of this base price. You also suffer 1d4 points of normal damage for every day spent enchanting a stone. You heal the damage back normally after the enchanting process has concluded.

Improved Alertness

Your senses are so well honed that you are able to react to events more quickly than others, making it very difficult to catch with your guard down.

Prerequisites: Alertness.

Benefit: At the beginning of combat, you are not considered flat-footed against enemies in your line of sight during the round in which you rolled initiative. You are still flat-footed if you are surprised or otherwise not entitled to an initiative roll, or unable to perceive the attack or attacker.

Improved Endurance

You are capable of going without food and water for longer than normal periods of time. Through sheer force of will, you can resist the ravages of exposure, dehydration and malnutrition.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to Constitution checks to resist nonlethal damage caused by a lack of food or water. You become fatigued due to starvation or dehydration after failing two Constitution checks, rather than one.

Improved Carrying Capacity

You are accustomed to carrying heavy loads and can shoulder a much heavier burden than someone of your strength is normally capable of handling.

Benefit: Your Strength is considered to be at 2 points higher when determining your carrying capacity.

Primal Shout

You can unleash a terrible shout that shakes opponents.

Prerequisites: Taan or half-taan.

Benefit: You must be able to speak to use this feat. Once per minute, you may shout as a standard action, forcing all creatures that are not taan or half-taan within 20 feet of you to make a Will save (DC = 10 + your Charisma modifier). Creatures that fail become shaken for 1d4 rounds, but cannot be affected again by this feat in the interim.

Taan Multiattack (Combat)

You are savage in battle, attacking not only with claws, but with your ferocious bite, too.

Prerequisites: Taan or half-taan, Improved Unarmed Strike, Taan Natural Weaponry.

Benefit: Your bite attack roll suffers only a -2 penalty.

Taan Natural Weaponry (Combat)

You know how to maximize the natural weapons with which you were born.

Prerequisites: Taan or half-taan, Improved Unarmed Strike.

Benefit: You can make 2 claw attacks at base attack bonus and 1 bite attack at -5 base attack bonus each round while fighting unarmed. Your claws and bite deal 1d4 points of damage each (plus Strength modifier).



CHAPTER 2: TAAN SOCIETY




A Human Slave

Learning their language is an impossible task. It all sounds the same. One might think they are asking for a cup when they want a bowl. Or that they want one cloth and not the other. I don't know how I've stayed alive as long as I have.

All of the people from my village are now dead, either killed in some senseless butchery or slaughtered for food. I would take my own life if the gods did not teach that this is wrong. Every day, I wake to the knowledge that I may die a horrible death.

I have learned not to dodge the cruel blows or to fight the lustful advances of my owner. I have learned to think of myself as a slave whose usefulness will not last long.

I hope my life ends soon, because I think I am with child. A child of my master's making...



Taan favor a mode of dress consisting of animal hides and bits of armor they have created or cobbled together from armor stolen from their enemies. The better the quality of the taan's clothing and armor, the more important and wealthy the taan. Females dress the same as the males. In many cases, the ritual scarring on the hide is the only way to tell which taan is more important than another. Advancement up the ladder of the taan social structure is dependent upon an individual's physical prowess, fighting skills, and intelligence, in that order. Ancestry formerly played no role in determining whether a taan would be a mighty nizam or would spend his life bent over a stew pot. That has changed with their arrival in Loerem.

In their own land, all taan children were born with an equal chance to pursue their own destinies, mainly because few taan children knew their fathers. Years after their arrival in Loerem, taan shamans, acting on orders from Dagnarus, began keeping track of those children sired by powerful and high-ranking warriors. These children are granted certain privileges due to their birth, although they are still expected to earn their place in society.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The taan developed their rigid social structure out of necessity. In their former world, the taan lived in tribes that roamed the arid wastes of their homeland. Life was hard, but so were the taan. Food was scarce and tribes often clashed over dwindling resources. The victorious tribe ate, the losing tribe perished. Thus warriors became highly revered among the taan. Not only were warriors the protectors of the tribe, the very survival of the tribe depended on them. Nizams — the Taanic word for "chief" — were almost always chosen from among the warriors.

A nizam represents the pinnacle of combat prowess and is presumed to be a master of strategy and tactics. Since this

means the taan possessing the greatest brute force generally becomes nizam, the taan were wise enough to realize that the most physically gifted might not be the most mentally gifted. Therefore nizams were expected to rely on the wisdom of the shamans. Nizams are placed in charge of the important task of training young warriors and leading the taan forces in times of war. The shamans planned raids on other tribes, uncovered new hunting grounds, and made any other decisions that affected the tribe, such as moving it from one location to another.

Shamans were taan who showed a capacity for Void magic early in their lives. They also had to exhibit intellectual skills, for they were required to make decisions regarding a tribe's welfare. Shamans could be excellent warriors in their own right, although they were not generally proficient in melee combat. They preferred to use their devastating magic against opponents. In many tribes, the shamans were the sensible guiding force behind an often-brutish nizam.

Nizams and shamans occupied the top rung of the taan social ladder. Warriors of exceptional prowess were revered too. Bravery was swiftly rewarded. A single battle could elevate a warrior's social status. The skilled hunters who never failed to bring in meat for the tribe were counted among the warriors. Any taan child showing skill in magic was made an apprentice to a shaman and this also elevated the status of that child. The need for shamans was one reason that taan did not kill weak children, for it had been observed that often a weak child possessed unusual skill in magic, perhaps by way of compensation.

On the bottom tier of taan society were the taskers. Taskers took care of the overall welfare of the tribe and looked after the children while warrior/hunter parents were away. Taskers of both sexes were responsible for cooking, cleaning, caring

for beasts of burden, as well as forging weapons and armor. The taskers were not honored as were their warrior brethren, but the taskers were a vital part of taan society, for the tribe could not exist without them. Their importance was recognized by the fact that when the tribe was attacked by another tribe, the children and the taskers were protected by many of the tribe's strongest warriors. Taskers were highly prized by other tribes and rarely slain in battles, but rather captured alive and taken to serve the winning tribe.

Taskers were not slaves. Captured taskers were given full status in their new tribe, provided with mates and dwellings. Captured taskers accepted their fate with equanimity. They didn't have much choice. The fact they were captured probably meant their own tribe had been wiped out.

Slaves had no place at all in the taan social structure. Slaves were considered irrelevant and were mistreated, beaten, starved or murdered with impunity. No taan was ever made a slave, not even by an enemy. Enemy taan warriors were given honorable deaths, while taskers and shamans were assimilated into the new tribe. Slaves in the taan's former land were most often human, a weak race that taan subjugated or, in some regions, exterminated entirely.

The structure of taan society in Loerem remains recognizably intact. Dagnarus and his Vrykyl taught the taan how to smelt iron and create steel, which has improved the quality of their weapons and armor. The taan have also become much more militaristic in their social organization, recognizing a definitive hierarchy and chain-of-command that begins with the Lord of the Void, continuing through the Vrykyl down to the lowliest of taskers.

In the old land, a taan's place in society had nothing to do with his birth parents. That has changed for some, although

not for the majority. While it is rare for a warrior to mate with a tasker, such unions do happen and the offspring of the union may choose his own path. He may grow up to be a shaman or a warrior, or decide to become a tasker. Once a taan has accepted the responsibilities of a certain caste, he is constrained to remain there for the rest of his life.

Warriors

Taan warriors are the most respected individuals in taan society. They always eat first at meals and are given the lion's share of both food and drink. When not in battle, a warrior's garb is not much different from that worn by other taan. In warm climates, the warriors favor a simple tunic or loincloth, giving them ample opportunities to show off the scars they have received in battle as well as those they have inflicted upon themselves.

From the earliest days, taan warriors have worn armor. Before the taan came to Loerem, types of armor varied from tribe to tribe. Many tribes preferred armor made of boiled hide and laced with bones for resiliency and to make it more difficult for swords or arrows to penetrate. Having lived for almost one-and-a-half centuries in Loerem, taan warriors have become enamored of metal armor. Such armor is highly prized and only the best taan warriors may wear it. Lower ranking warriors must make do with armor predating the taan's knowledge of iron ore.

The taan in Loerem have also begun to use the weapons of Loerem's races. They cherished the steel sword. Taan display amazing versatility with almost any type of sword, but especially the greatsword. As a matter of pride, most taan are also skilled with the traditional weapons of their homeland such as the an-kyx and molkra.

Taan warriors in Dagnarus's armies are trained for three specific purposes:

scouting, assault, and ranged attack.

Scouts: Taan scouts are loners living away from the tribe and the safety and security the tribe offers. They know how to live off the land. They are expert trackers and skilled in stealthy movement. A scout's senses are honed to perfection. These warriors can smell their enemies a long way off and are adept at ferreting out places where foes might lie in ambush. Taan scouts generally have very good eyesight that enables them to see small objects at great distances. Taan scouts do not usually wear armor since it impedes their movement and can be noisy. They rely on their agility and quickness to keep

them alive in combat situations.

Scouts are often sent ahead of a war party to gather field intelligence and other information. They are also used as hunters and trackers to help feed their war party.

A typical taan scout is a 1st- or 2nd-level ranger.

Assault Troops: Assault troops are made up of the strongest and largest taan warriors. Taan assault troops are ruthless and efficient killers who make up the majority of Dagnarus's taan forces in Loerem. As of old, nizams are usually chosen from this caste of warriors, although in some tribes that old custom is changing. Embedded beneath the hides of the oldest



of these warriors are the most powerful enchanted stones the shamans can find. These warriors may be so horrifically scarred and deformed that their facial features are covered by a mask of scar tissue.

More experienced assault taan are trained in two-weapon fighting. These taan are whirlwinds of death.

A typical taan assault trooper is a 2nd- or 3rd-level barbarian.

Archers: Warriors in the taan homeland were never trained in making ranged attacks. Using a ranged weapon in combat was deemed the act of a weakling or a coward. A true warrior fought foes face-to-face, toe-to-toe. Even when hunting, the taan huntsmen were powerful enough to kill almost any wild animal with their bare hands or a melee weapon.

Dagnarus changed this attitude toward ranged weapons. The taan have learned that a well-placed arrow barrage can substantially weaken an opponent. And although to die in battle is still the main aim of most taan warriors, to be victorious and live to fight again is now considered to be even better.

The taan archers have become quite proficient with the use of the bow and crossbow. Archers do not wear heavy metal armor, but something known as culb-thot. Similar to chainmail (though not as well made), this armor offered only moderate protection, but it is very flexible and does not hamper the wearer's movement.

Dagnarus has also taught the taan the art of siege warfare and how to conquer the great walled cities that are, to this day, considered a marvel to the taan, who had never seen anything like them in their homeland. Catapults and ballistae now complement taan armies, and their warriors are more than happy to capitalize on a siege weapon's devastating effects.

A typical taan archer is a 2nd-level archer (fighter archetype; see *Sovereign*

Stone Campaign Setting Core Rulebook).

Shamans

While some taan shamans have been raised to be shamans from childhood, often serving as apprentices to elder shamans, others are warriors who, over time, displayed an aptitude for Void magic and eventually channeled their energies in that direction. Whether they came to their craft early in life or late, taan shamans are respected and feared by other taan. Unlike the warrior caste, taan shamans are not universally admired or loved.

Nearly all taan shamans are distinguished by a circular scarring pattern that stretches across the forehead to their ears. The pattern designates the shaman's ties to the Void. Other scars on their bodies are symbolic of the spells they can cast, the battles they have won with their magic and other events in which they have played a significant role. As with other taan, the more powerful the shaman, the more scars he has and more stones lie embedded beneath his hide.

Some taan shamans are minimally scarred by their own choosing. Preferring to conceal their power beneath smooth hides, they embed gems in parts of the body that can be easily covered by clothing. These shamans believe that if they conceal their scars, they are much harder to recognize as spellcasters. The disguised shamans may pretend to be taskers or masquerade as warriors during a battle, unleashing their spells on unsuspecting opponents.

Shamans wear robes or don tunics or loincloths as other taan do. Taan shamans will wear armor into battle, but never metal armor. That honor is reserved for the warriors.

On coming to this land, taan shamans were astounded to discover that few of the races in Loerem understood how to use gemstones to boost the power of Void magic. The soft races used gemstones as frivolous

decorations, hanging them around their necks, wearing them on their fingers or in their hair. Shamans immediately began to search their dead enemies for jewelry, stealing it and removing the stones.

Shamans have discovered that gemstones cut by humans and elves are far more refined than gemstones cut by taan (although they take to enchantments just as readily). Taan shamans hoard these precious gemstones. They yearn for more and are eager for Dagnarus to launch his war against the people of Loerem so that they may enter the great walled cities and plunder more of these highly prized gems. Some shamans have even begged Dagnarus to permit them to secretly enter human cities and pilfer the gems they desire. Thus far, Dagnarus has refused such requests, but it is possible that some taan shamans may not heed his commands.

Most shamans believe they are the true power among the taan. The advent of Dagnarus, Lord of the Void, who has immense command of Void magic, has strengthened that belief. Dagnarus has always treated the shamans with great respect and has completely won their loyalty. Though the shamans might not always have the physical abilities of the warriors, they have magic that can more than compensate for brute strength.

Shamans choose the stones they use to augment the abilities of the warriors. Warriors friendly to or allied with the shaman are guaranteed powerfully enchanted stones that are nearly flawless. Warriors who have incited the rancor of a shaman may receive flawed or poorly enchanted stones. More than one warrior has met his end because of defective stones.

A typical taan shaman is a 2nd-level Void sorcerer or wizard with Silent Spell feat.

Taan Elite

The taan elite are the nizams of the tribe,

who are also high ranking officers in Dagnarus's army. The nizams are always covered in scars — the marks of valor. The armor of a nizam is far more ornate than that of lower ranking taan, for Dagnarus discovered that taan prize quality armor and he has been lavish in gifting nizams who are especially brave and tenacious in battle. A nizam's armor is created for him alone and bears symbols that honor his achievements in battle. The armor is always marked with Dagnarus's emblem: a rising phoenix.

Dagnarus also honors high-ranking taan shamans. They are presented with robes of a fiery orange color embroidered with a symbol of a phoenix rising from the ashes. Both shamans and warriors of elite status are so extensively scarred that they may appear malformed or diseased. The innumerable gemstones embedded beneath their hides make their limbs look mottled and blistered. Other races of Loerem find this repulsive, but to the taan, the more hideous a fellow taan appears, the more he is held in esteem.

The three taan Vrykyl generals are the most respected and revered of all taan. They are easily recognizable from other taan, for they wear the same obsidian armor that all Vrykyl wear. They differ from other Vrykyl in that their helms have taan features and their armored hands end in flesh-rendering talons. The power that radiates from these taan Vrykyl is so strong that many of the Vrykyl originated from the other races give them wide berth.

Taskers

There are some in taan society who do not function as warriors or shamans. These are known as taskers and they make it possible for the taan to survive. The role of the tasker in taan society has not changed since their move to Loerem.

Taskers may be male or female. They look after the taan young and shape the

gemstones that the shamans embed into the warriors. Taskers cook the meat brought in by the hunters, clean hides, make clothing, and take care of the ill. Some taskers have learned the art of metalworking and they now forge weapons and armor for the taan warriors. These latter taskers are highly valued by the taan.

Taskers also employ body scarring to commemorate important achievements or events. They are not permitted to use the ritual scarring traditional to the warriors or the shamans. Taskers are not allowed to place gemstones beneath their hides. Although taskers do not actively seek battle, they pride themselves on being able to defend themselves if attacked. They don armor only when their lives and the lives of their charges are threatened.

A special group of taskers are known as sages. The taan tribes had sages long before Dagnarus arrived. These sages kept the history of the taan as an oral tradition, passing their knowledge from generation to generation. No one except a sage may recount the history of the tribe, since the sages are the only members of the tribe deemed impartial. A warrior relating a tale of a past battle may tend to exaggerate his own heroism to the detriment of his fellow warriors. Since sages do not take part in battle, they are suitable judges. Thus the sages are a precious commodity to the taan and they are heavily guarded during battle, for an attacking tribe always tries to find the sages and kill them, thereby destroying a tribe's past.

To a nomadic tribe that lives by traveling to wherever they know from past experience that food is found, the loss of their history can be disastrous. Sages remind shamans whether a certain gemstone proved to be powerful a hundred years before or if a certain gemstone failed a warrior in the distant past and should be avoided. The sages remember such important information, and although it

is possible that others in the tribe might remember if the sages are captured or killed, it is a chance the tribe dare not take.

Sages are also crucial to the taan's collective psyche. Their tales of past glorious deeds done in battle by ancient tribal heroes spur taan warriors on to greater deeds of their own. Sages have now begun tracking individual family histories, memorizing who mated with whom and what children were produced from the union. This is important because Dagnarus has taught the taan that children born to mates who are closely related may be prone to serious birth defects.

Under Dagnarus and with the migration of many taan tribes to Loerem, the duty of the sages has taken yet another dimension. Some have learned to read and write the languages of Loerem. They act as couriers between taan armies, delivering messages and dispatches. They create maps and are among the most knowledgeable taan concerning the location of army camps and mineral mines. Some sages serve as attendants to the healing taskers, helping to concoct herbal remedies and setting broken bones.

Typical taan taskers are mere commoners. A few particularly capable members may be 1st- or 2nd-level rogues, while sages tend to be 1st- or 2nd-level bards.

Albinos

Albinos are rare among the taan. In ages past, they were considered bad luck and were shunned and exiled from the tribe immediately after birth. Through the years, more tribes accepted albinos, considering their birth a portent.

Now the few albino taan walking the face of Loerem are shamans, sages, and warriors, and one was even chosen by Dagnarus to become a Vrykyl. It is said this taan Vrykyl is the only one of the Vrykyl able to resist Dagnarus's commands and

act on his own accord. Such independence makes him even more dangerous, for he is erratic and unpredictable.

The hides of the albinos are as pale as parchment. The facial features of the albino appear more pronounced against their pale hides, their noses slightly darker, eyes an unsettling carnelian shade. The shock of hair sprouting from the top of their head lacks pigmentation and is bone white. The albino taan appear ghostlike with purple-blue veins visible beneath their scarred hides. The ritual scarring on an albino taan is highly visible due to the pale hue.

The scarred areas appear pale pink or crimson, as if the albino's body were crisscrossed by fresh cuts. Gems embedded beneath an albino's hide are easily detected, since the translucent hide cannot conceal the type or size of the gems. Lone albinos may be hunted for the wealth visible beneath their hides. For this reason, albino taan value the safety of numbers offered by a tribe.

The garb of an albino is no different

from any other taan, varying only with their station. Some albinos may choose to wear voluminous robes and cloaks to mask the color of their hides when traveling in new lands or in small numbers. Some even go so far as to stain their white hides with the juice of walnut husks or other dyes in attempts to disguise their appearance.

Half-Taan

The language and traditions of the taan are next to impossible for members of any other race to fathom. Thus Dagnarus realized he was going to need emissaries between the taan and the humans who would serve him. In the taan's native land, humans are used for pleasure, food and as slave labor. Because crossbreeding between other races in Loerem is not possible, Dagnarus was surprised to find that sexual unions between the taan and humans produced offspring.

Because the taan consider half-taan abominations who weaken a taan tribe and will eventually lead the taan to ruin if left



alive, the children from these unions were killed immediately after birth. Dagnarus realized these half-taan could be of value to him, acting as translators and emissaries. When he led the taan through the Portal to Loerem, Dagnarus told the taan they would no longer kill the half-breeds. Instead, the taan were encouraged to create them. The taan were reluctant to agree with this plan. Since all previous births were the by-product of violence perpetrated by the taan on human females, the children were considered unclean. The taan feared their god's wrath, however, and so the half-taan were permitted to live.

Taanic is a guttural, highly inflected language. Lacking lips to make softer sounds, the taan use clicks, pops, whistles, and throaty growls to communicate. Other races find the language impossible to speak. Dagnarus himself was forced to communicate with them through his mental powers, while his Vrykyl had to use sign language. The half-taan combine the traits of both parents and, although their lips and vocal chords are underdeveloped, they are able to utter Pharn'lan, Tomagai, Fringrese, Elder Speak, and any of the other various humanoid languages. Their speech is still guttural, but sounds softer to non-taan.

Half-taan dress plainly, without a trace of the ostentatious details adorning full taan. They are segregated from the taan, having no station in the taan society. They lead solitary lives, usually grouping together in their own little encampments. Dagnarus and his officers dispatch them to relay messages between taan and non-taan war parties. Half-taan can be skilled in Void magic and some did become competent mages, learning spells from the human Void practitioners under Dagnarus.

A few half-taan have left Dagnarus's army because they could not abide the taan way of life. Ostracized by other races, these half-taan are persecuted wherever

they go. However, they have been the first to provide the outside world with the news of an armed host amassing in the west. They have supplied valuable information about the taan and Dagnarus to those who have been sympathetic.

Outcasts

Outcast taan are rarely found in Loerem. According to tradition, a taan could be cast out of his tribe for many different reasons. A taan who challenged a nizam to battle and lost was exiled. Stealing from others in the tribe was punishable by banishment. It was rare for children to be banished, but outcasts could come from any level in taan society and be of any age. The ostracized taan were usually marked with a scar symbolizing a broken weapon. This would alert other tribes that the taan was an outcast. Another tribe would almost never allow an outcast into its ranks or reinstate one who was cast out.

The taan in Loerem do not practice ostracism anymore. Dagnarus cannot run the risk of exiled taan roaming over Loerem, alerting its inhabitants to the presence of his clandestine forces. By his command, shunned taan are still marked accordingly, but are then clapped in irons and given over to task masters, who put them to work in the mines alongside slaves. To be reduced to a status equal to humans is the worst fate that can befall a taan. Many beg for death as an alternative, but that is denied them as being too honorable. Such a terrible fate is a strong deterrent to those who would do wrong or run the risk of angering a superior.

When a taan is banished, tradition demands that all of his possessions and weapons be confiscated and redistributed among other taan in the tribe.

Renegades

Some taan roaming Loerem have committed crimes or deserted the armies

and have managed to elude capture and punishment. These taan are known as renegades. They are loners, living off the land, fashioning their own weapons and clad in the hides of the beasts they kill.

Renegades live lonely lives, renouncing all contact with members of the other races of Loerem, fearing that they will be attacked and slain, or captured and interrogated. Even though such taan are considered criminals and will be killed by their own tribes if they are captured, they will die a hundred deaths before revealing any information concerning the tribe.

Among their tribes, these renegades are branded traitors and their capture becomes of paramount importance. Taan warriors setting off to apprehend tribesmen-turned-renegades are greatly honored. If captured alive, the traitors are executed.

Executions of renegades are prolonged affairs that usually begin with a listing of all of the offender's crimes. Then, over the course of several days, he is given the long, torturous death of a sacrificial slave rather than the clean and honorable demise of a warrior.

Some renegades have tried to go back through the Portal to their homeland, but when they seek out the Portal, they find the valley teemed with armed taan and the Portal heavily guarded. The attempt usually ends in the renegade's capture and subsequent death.

Slaves

In the taan homeland, humans were a subjugated race. The few human villages remaining in the land paid yearly tribute to the taan, who demanded that the humans send them the strongest male and female youths to serve as slaves. Thus the human population was kept in check and the humans never produced strong warriors to challenge the taan.

Such human villages were permitted to survive only because they served a

purpose to the taan. Life for a taan slave is harsh, brutal, and extremely short. Animals receive more care and consideration than slaves do. The life of a slave has no worth. Slaves are forced to work in the mines to supply iron, coal, and gems for their masters. Slaves serve under the taskers in the camp, performing all duties that are vile, repugnant, or considered beneath the taan. In times of famine, slaves are killed and eaten. It is not unusual for slaves to be used as sport. The taan will set a slave free and then hunt him. There have been instances where very resourceful slaves have actually escaped recapture and death, but those are extremely rare.

Shocked at such waste, particularly of strong slaves, Dagnarus advocated the wisdom of keeping the slaves alive. The idea that subjugated people have any worth is completely alien to the taan. They try to please their dark god and do as he commands, but in this case, they often fall far short of the mark.

Dagnarus has finally found a solution to this problem. Every taan is permitted two slaves and no more. All excess prisoners are the property of Dagnarus, who pays the taan in armor and weapons for bringing in slaves. Any taan found keeping more than two slaves risks becoming a slave himself. Dagnarus's slaves are brought to his camp and are admitted there. In the old land, owning a great number of slaves proved a taan's status as a warrior. Now, a taan wealthy in armor and weapons is treated with respect. Because Dagnarus offers generous rewards for slaves, the taan are more than willing to go on raids to acquire them.

Humans are by far the most common slave stock. Dagnarus encourages the taan to breed with human female slaves and produce half-taan. A few orks have been abducted, as has the rare elf. Elves do not live long in the hands of the taan. The fierce warriors think the elves too delicate to be

worth anything and enjoy dismembering them, much as some humans relish pulling the legs off small insects.

Taan Children

Taan adults mate casually, with no thought of permanent pairing. Taan have no concept of such emotions as love and affection. Taan do not love their partners, nor do they feel any affection for offspring. Once a taan female gives birth, the baby is turned over to the taskers to rear. In the old land, taan rarely, if ever, remembered which child was theirs once a baby grew to adulthood. That has now begun to change with children of exceptional warriors being accorded greater prestige. Warrior males are encouraged to mate with warrior females, for it is believed that such a union will produce more strong warriors.

Unlike taan, half-taan experience emotions of love, often violently, perhaps because the human part of them is attempting to overcompensate for the taan part. Half-taan tend to be attracted to humans and will sometimes become passionately drawn to the object of affection, even to the point of obsession. Since most humans find half-taan repugnant, the half-taan's feelings are rarely reciprocated. Such unrequited love has led to tragedy in more than one instance. Half-taan are thought to be sterile.

Taan children are ritually scarred for the first time shortly after birth. This usually commemorates an important event that happened on the day they were born. Taan youngsters are expected to learn skills they will need in battle. As soon as they are old enough to hold a weapon, they are taught its use and begin to learn how to defend themselves from attack.

The exception to this is a taan child who shows skill in Void magic. The taskers watch all the children under their care, often giving them small tests to see if they deal with a situation with brute force or

by magic. Any child who uses magic in imitation of the shamans is immediately taken to the shamans to begin serving as an apprentice.

Of necessity, the training of children in war or magic is brutal. The tribe cannot afford to coddle a child, for a weakling endangers not only himself but the entire tribe. The tribe does not want bad traits passed down to the following generations. Thus if some children are accidentally killed during training, the tribe concludes that these children were weak and were not fit to survive. Dagnarus has insisted that some of the brutality used in the training of children be moderated. He needs taan for his armies and, although he wants strong warriors, he does not want to waste lives.

If a taan child manages to live to ten years old, his path in life is already apparent. That child has usually chosen an adult to emulate — either a great warrior or a skilled shaman, a blacksmith, tanner, or hunter. The children often become closer to this role model than to any other tribe member. They tend to mirror their mentors in dress, mannerisms, and the way they carry themselves. Many taan join the warrior caste, fewer become taskers, while only a small handful become shamans.

FEUDS AND DISPUTES

In their native land, the various taan tribes warred almost constantly with one another, mainly over food, which was difficult to find. A taan tribe that had discovered a good hunting ground would be forced to defend it against other tribes. Taan who lost one hunting ground had to go search for another, often occupied by another tribe. The taan grew to be fiercely loyal to those within the tribe and they just as fiercely hated those of another tribe. Battles between tribes comprised an immense part of the history recounted by taan sages. Such battles are remembered for generations.

Probably the greatest difficulty

Dagnarus faced was bringing these tribes together in a semblance of peaceful coexistence. After he and his Vrykyl had lived among the taan for many years and had come to know their ways, he saw a means by which he could accomplish this goal. He came to realize that the sages were the ones who were constantly stirring up trouble between the tribes.

The sages of two warring tribes would recount a mutual battle from over a hundred years ago. They would whip the warriors into frenzy so yet another battle would take place, adding more bloody tales to be told to future generations.

Whenever this occurred, Dagnarus ordered his Vrykyl to kill the sages of both tribes. This meant both tribes lost their histories. The hatred was still present, but since no one except a sage may recount a past incident, Dagnarus could bring the nizams of both tribes together and force them to cooperate, without fear that one of them would bring up a fight that had occurred between their great-great grandsires.

This solution has worked moderately well, although old hatreds still surface from time to time and battles do occasionally break out between tribes. However, Dagnarus doles out swift, severe punishments. All gifts of armor, weapons, and slaves are confiscated from the offending tribes and they are not permitted to take slaves for as long as they are in the Lord of Void's disfavor. This is a terrible blow to the taan, for the numbers of slaves are an important symbol of their prowess in battle. Thus the fights between tribes have lessened over the years, so that now not only are tribes able to join together in a cohesive alliance during battle, the taan have actually begun to permit inter-tribal mating.



POWER OVER ONE'S LESSERS

Trkss flicked the dripping blood away from his eye. He could feel that the cut on the top of his head had dislodged one of his favorite stones and ruined the ritual scar. No matter though. Once the wound healed, the new scar would look fearsome. Trkss wasn't going to get any more fun from this slave though.

The contest had started as mere sport. Trkss and two of his friends, Fssng and R'thua, were sitting around the fire joking and having a fine time when the mating spirit started affecting Trkss.

The female Fssng was looking quite fine this night. Hoping to mate with her, Trkss probed for a way to impress her. The sight of a human slave working in the camp gave Trkss an idea.

Trkss found a cast-off longsword freckled with rust and pitted with age. Trkss tossed it down at the feet of the male slave. Then Trkss drew his an-kyx and waved it in the air.

Trkss shouted for the human to attack him. The stupid human couldn't understand what the taan was saying, but he was quick to grasp the intention. With lightning speed, the slave grabbed the weapon and leaped forward to the attack. The slave beat through Trkss's defense to deliver a wicked slash across the taan's forehead.

A group of taan who had gathered to see the demise of the human began to laugh and jeer at Trkss. Another cut would be an insult to Trkss's honor and ruin any chances that he might have to mate with Fssng this night. Trkss would have to end this swiftly.

The human's eyes darted here and there. He knew he was doomed and for a moment Trkss saw defeat in the human's expression. Then the human's eyes hardened in determination. Good, thought Trkss, the human has more taan in him than most slaves. He will put on a good show.

The human let out a scream and charged forward. The human's rusty blade struck at Trkss's chest, its point seeking his heart.

Trkss side-stepped the thrust and the slave tumbled forward. Before the human could hit the dirt, Trkss clutched the slave's throat with his right hand and drove his an-kyx through the slave's back, severing the human's spine.

The slave did not cry out as he slid off the taan's blade and hit the ground. He only made a soft grunting sound as blood trickled from the corners of his mouth and from his nostrils.

The taan watching the combat were smiling and laughing, but this time they were laughing at the dead slave who had dared to fight a taan.

Fssng looked more attractive than ever. She winked at Trkss.

"Tonight," said Trkss, "we dine on human."






CHAPTER 3: TAAN CULTURE



Rrk, Taan Weaponsmith

The life of a taan is hard, but then so are the taan. We are born proud warriors, every one of us. Taskers are the backbone of any taan tribe. We are the ones who make the weapons that our warriors wield. We mine and facet the gems that the shamans embed in our honored taan warriors. We cook and take care of the children. Without us, there would be no mighty taan army.

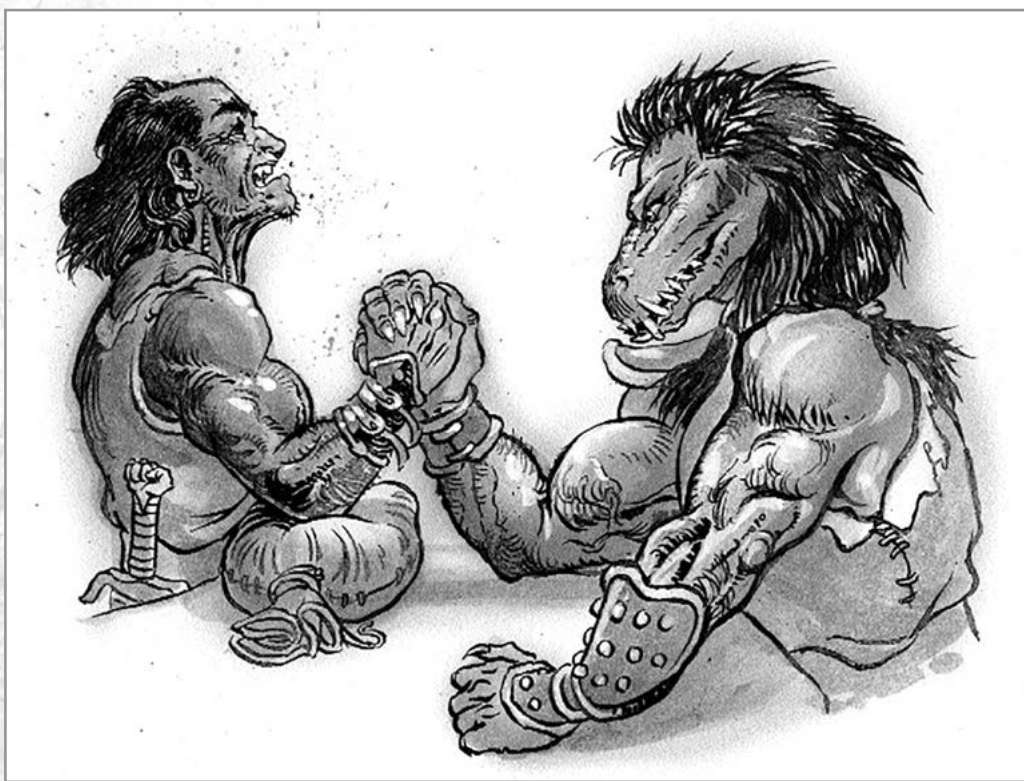
Some ignorant taan warriors mock us or make levity of us. That can be dangerous. The weapons we make for these taan might break in the midst of a raging battle. A shaman friendly to us might embed the taan with flawed stones. We taskers are a powerful collective in the armies, have no doubt. Just because we cannot swing a molkra as well as our nizam doesn't mean we are not true taan. We are warriors who do battle in our own way.



In their homeland, the taan were true nomads, rarely remaining in one location for more than a month. Exceptions were made for when the tribe found a particularly good hunting ground or earth pregnant with valuable gems. A taan had to be capable of lugging everything he owned by himself, whether it be on his back or on small litters. Even the shamans, with their polishing stones and magical trappings, hauled belongings themselves. Children old enough to walk carried their share. The nizam contributed his muscles

warriors. Once cast out, a taan would not survive long in the desert.

In Loerem, the taan have become less nomadic but no less practical. The taan live in semi-permanent tent dwellings that can be disassembled quickly and stowed easily for travel, but are sturdy enough for a long stay in one place. The taan have learned to appreciate social stability and a stable base of operations. Dagnarus's main encampment in the valley of Taan-Cridkx is the hub of social life for the taan. The taan like the fact that they can keep more



too, as did the bravest warriors and the lowliest taskers.

If a taan owned slaves, the slaves toted some of his possessions while he carried his requisite amount. To do otherwise was a sign of weakness. Economical, the taan kept only what they needed and only what they considered valuable.

A taan too weak to transport his possessions was cast out of the tribe. Any belonging of value he had was surrendered to the shaman to hand over to deserving

objects and amass what they consider to be personal wealth without the necessity of hauling that wealth about on their backs. They have come to enjoy having a village to which they can return in triumph after battle.

ART AND CRAFT

In the old world, the taan built no permanent structures such as temples or tombs. They saw no point in this, since they had no permanent home. After moving to

Loerem and living in one place for over one hundred years, taan have constructed several permanent structures. The most impressive of these are the Tombs of the Nizams, hidden inside the cliffs near Dagnarus's main encampment. The taan believe it is important to honor their dead nizams, for this fosters loyalty among the followers of the current nizam. Thus far, these tombs are the taan's only permanent structures.

Even after one hundred years of settled living, the taan still consider themselves an armed camp, ready to move at a moment's notice. However, the taan have recently erected a statue honoring Dagnarus. They took the idea from humans, having discovered statues of honored humans in the towns they have raided. The taan statue of Dagnarus appears crude, or even ludicrous to humans, for the body is taan-like, while the head is human. The sculptor paid great attention to Dagnarus's face, for the statue is very lifelike. The statue is made of black marble, to honor the Void.

Encouraged by Dagnarus, the taan have also raised tall, slender obelisks made of a single piece of stone commemorating events such as the migration to Loerem, the transformation of their nizams Lnskt, Nb'arsk, and K'let into Vrykyl.

Taan taskers are masters of stonework, woodworking and gemcutting. They have begun to explore the art of glassmaking. Humans who have come across taan-cut gems are amazed at the beauty and precision of the work, which would fetch high prices should it ever be seen in New Vinnengael.

The taan do not sing as humans know it. They chant their legends. Chanting makes it easier for the taan to memorize the words. The subjects of the legends have changed over the years. Once they told stories about the various gods, but those have all been banned since Dagnarus made himself the only taan god. Now the legends deal with

Dagnarus, with the taan's great battles, brave warriors or powerful shamans. The shamans use special chants to stir the blood of warriors before battle. The taskers have chants that aid them in their work and chants said to soothe fretful children.

The taan have always had an intuitive sense of math and geometry. Under the tutelage of Dagnarus, the taan have learned about engineering and have developed a passion for siege engines such as catapults, ballistae, and trebuchets.

The taan never kept track of time in the old world, having little need to do so. In Loerem, they have learned punctuality, since they must now arrive on a battlefield on a certain date, or they must all attack at a certain time of day. The taan have adopted the Vinnengaelean calendar as provided by Dagnarus. They do not divide the day into hours, but know it by Sun Up, Sun High, and Sun Down.

STONE LORE

Much of taan religious belief, both in the old world and in Loerem, revolves around stones. Shamans are given rigorous training by elder shamans regarding how to find and identify good quality gems. Taskers assigned to the cutting of gems are well trained for their work. The taan value the cut of a gem as much as the gem quality itself.

Machines called laps are used to cut the gems. The laps are operated by foot treadle and require drillheads made of diamonds or diamond slivers. The taan either make their own laps or they may inherit one from a mentor. The laps are small and can be rendered portable by the taan, who also carries his cutting tools and stone polishers. In the old days, taskers took these tools with them when the tribe moved on to a new location, hauling them in woven baskets slung on their backs or on litters. These days, taan taskers lug their tools with them when the taan go into

battle, perhaps to smoothen a chipped stone or attempt to salvage a flawed one.

Young cutter taskers hone their skills by studying stones under the guidance of their mentors. The young taan are taught how to discern which stones are valuable and which might be too flawed to trust. A stone with a spider-web of internal fractures can break during the stress of battle, thus betraying the warrior and leaving him without the extra protection or power promised by the shaman who embedded the stone.

The very first spells taught to a young taan shaman are those dealing with the seeking and discovery of stones. A young shaman is permitted to keep any stones he finds, no matter how valuable. He may give these to the warrior of his choice or use them himself. This means even novice shamans are accorded a great deal of respect by the warriors of the tribe, for there is no telling when a young shaman might come across a truly valuable gem.

Embedding Stones

Embedding of stones is a highly ritualized event for the taan. The portion of hide in which the stone is to be embedded must first be cleansed with a solution of salt and water. Specially blessed scarring knives are used to cut patterns into the taan's tough flesh. The procedure is extremely painful, but taan are conditioned to endure the pain without flinching or crying out. Stones are then embedded into the taan through Void magic spells. Although other races in Loerem consider the practice of scarring hideous, disfiguring, and barbaric, the taan take pride in it.

Rumors have it that some of Dagnarus's human Void mages attempted to embed stones beneath their skin in imitation of the taan, hoping to gain Void magic power in the same way the taan gain theirs. The humans discovered that the magic would not work for them. Almost all who

attempted the procedure contracted a terrible infection that started at the site of the stone and began eating away their flesh until they died in agony. No healing spell could save them. This practice claimed the lives of so many human Void mages that Dagnarus has since banned it.

TAANIC: LANGUAGE OF THE TAAN

Taan vocal cords differ from the vocal cords of other races of Loerem. Without the aid of magic, speaking the taan language is impossible for elves, dwarves, orks, pecwae, and humans. A half-taan can speak both taan and the other languages of Loerem because they inherit vocal traits from both their taan and human parents. Half-taan speech is highly inflected, sounding strange to both taan and non-taan.

Some taan words have layers of meaning, indicated by inflection. The taan language, known as Taanic, is not a pretty tongue to the ear, having many hard consonant combinations and guttural sounds. Their language reflects the harshness of taan life and their dedication to the warrior code.

Taanic has evolved since the taan's move to Loerem. Instead of making up completely new words to describe places and objects new to them, the taan simply add a new syllable onto the end of old words. This retains the word's original meaning and pronunciation, while the additional syllable lends a new dimension. This can be very confusing for slaves, who must learn to recognize the new word or risk being beaten or killed for not following orders.

The Enscribers

In the old world, taan could not write their language and thus kept no written history. Oral histories of the tribe were passed down from one generation to the next. In the old days, one tasker was designated the

Taan Pronunciation and Words

The following pronunciation guide and word list is useful for players who want to play taan and give a feel of realism to their roles. It can help Sovereign Stone GMs create phrases that players could come to decipher or recognize. The words may also be used for writings from taan shamans that characters might discover and for inscriptions on signs or holy sites.

F: formed in the front of the mouth with a mouthful of air behind it.

K: pronounced with a small explosion of air in the middle of the mouth.

L: pronounced at the rear of the throat and the top back of the mouth to produce a swallowing sound.

Rz: pronounced by closing the mouth on the tone.

Abrickt: better.

Actn: jump, dodge.

Anstick: treasure, coin.

Aterisx: a small sharp knife kept on the belt as a secondary weapon.

Basst: friend.

Bgrt: attack.

Bgrti: fall back.

Bicrt: trail, path, road.

Bi: you.

Bidrc: them.

Bufftt: darkness.

Bufftt-keed: to creep, to use stealth.

Bufftt-keed-nkt: steal, take without permission.

Bufftt-keed-nt: take by force.

Calah: battle, war.

Calah-dok: signal, trail maker.

Calahkth: war party.

Ciszkruz: an enemy.

Danhz-skuyarr: a shaman in training.

Derrhuth: derogatory term used for all other races.

Dessa: tradition, normal.

Dfttek: careful, carefully.

Fd: be, to be.

Gds: weak.

Gdsr: elf.

Gdst: children.

Godesssa: will of Dagnarus.

Intiki: stop, wait.

Kdah-klks: Leader fight.

Kkth: female.

Kkt: male.

Ko-darrz: fish.

Ko-tannz: god light; the glow shining from the Portal opening in the side of the cliff where Dagnarus appeared to the taan.

Kutryx: leader of a tribe.

Kyl-bufftt: taan honorarium for Vrykyl, meaning Warrior of Darkness.

Kyl-sarnz: a god-touched taan; taan Vrykyl.

Leskurr-tho: good stones.

Leskurr-tulz: bad stones.

Luklorz: a long spear with a nasty kriss-type blade.

Lumnar: the hunt.

Nenikrsst: carve, carving.

Nesskrt: they, them.

Niss: no (also used as a negative prefix).

Nisst: yes.

Sarnz: sword.

Shirrusk: wound.

Skelshifx: outcast taan.

Sked: to watch, to look.

Skedn: to listen.

Skedt: to touch.

Skedrt: to taste.

Sktil: go, run.

Skuyarr: a high-level or principal shaman.

Sskt: as.

Taan-helarr: taan warrior of high rank.

Taan-xkes-ter: a half-taan.

Tee-taa: maybe, so-so.

Tek: I, me.

Topax: recently killed quarry.

Topaxi: a strong drink (made from fermented honey, tree resin, and the fresh blood of enemies).

Tul: kill.

Tulz: death.

Thirr-sassk: prey.

Venskuk-tahrr: the ceremony in which the shaman embeds a warrior's stones.

Xardahl: Void magic.

Xkes: human.

Xkesr: ork.

Zzran-kuk: wisdom, knowledge.

tribe's sage. This tasker was responsible for maintaining the oral legends and history of the tribe. The sage was a highly valued member of the tribe, for if the sage was captured or died without passing on his knowledge, the tribe lost its history. Most tribes that lost their history quickly vanished.

New sages were chosen by older sages and put through rigorous training that spanned many years. This instruction was necessary in order to learn all the legends of the taan tribe, as well as magic spells, locations of good hunting grounds, gem mines, etc. On occasion, the sages would record their tribe's history by drawing pictures on the panels of their tents and on large tanned hides, stitched together to form enormous scrolls. These scrolls were then carried with the tribe and were handed down to other sages, who were taught to interpret the pictures. Every so often, during important religious days, the sages would recite the history of the taan to the tribe, thus keeping alive legends about brave warriors and important battles and the best way to track and kill the savage bahk.

After moving the taan to Loerem, Dagnarus saw that a lot of taan knowledge was vanishing due to this practice, knowledge that might be valuable to his armies. Some legends he wanted suppressed — those of the old gods, for example — but he wanted valuable information retained. He turned for help to a renegade member of the elven Wyred, Meryl of House Osconwyr, who had fled her homeland after she was discovered to have murdered several rival Wyred. Hunted by her disgraced House, Meryl found protection when she joined Dagnarus's army. Working with a half-taan, the elf created a written version of the taan language. Not wanting to entrust such knowledge with tasker sages, Dagnarus ordered certain shamans to learn to read

and write their language. These shaman became known as enscribers.

Even today, only a small percentage of taan can write (usually the shamans). Some taan enscribers have learned to write the human languages, namely Elder Speak. They cannot speak it, since their mouths are not equipped to handle the sounds. Thus half-taan are required to translate.

During the taan's early days in Loerem, one shaman was chosen as the enscriber for an entire tribe. The enscriber not only learned all the taan legends, but also learned to read and write. Thus the enscriber was the only person in the tribe receiving written missives and who then interpreted these to the nizam and his fellow shaman. As might be imagined, the position of enscriber became fraught with immense power. An enscriber might alter or interpret orders and messages for his own benefit.

Now, in addition to the tribal enscribers, Dagnarus has appointed three official enscribers for the taan, each keeping the history of one of Dagnarus's three taan armies. These three enscribers have taken it upon themselves to learn human written language and work to decipher human books they have acquired if they believe it in the taan's best interest to do so. These enscribers are learning a great deal about human culture. Other minor enscribers are being taught literacy by the three in both the human languages and the taan language. These minor enscribers handle orders and dispatches, with one enscriber always looking over the shoulder of his fellow. In some rare instances, the enscribers are half-taan.

Lost History

Taan lost much of their history because many sages were killed in battle or perished due to illness before a replacement was suitably trained. In the old world, the sage was one of the first taan a rival tribe

sought to kill. They believed a conquered tribe's history could be erased by killing this important individual. Picture scrolls belonging to a conquered tribe were confiscated and burned.

During the migration from the taan homeland to Loerem, more of the taan's history and legends were lost because Dagnarus discouraged the recitation of any legends or historical events that dealt with the old gods (which almost all did). He encouraged those that recounted the bravery of warriors during battle and new legends that spoke of Dagnarus's godhood. The God of the Rock knew that it would be best if each tribe's history began with his coming.

Those tribes that joined with Dagnarus were commanded to burn and destroy their pictorial histories. Some did, but others — most notably those who distrusted Dagnarus — hid their histories in safe places, believing a day would come when the taan would see Dagnarus as a fraud. The picture histories are enchanted with powerful Void magic spells that would deter any who might stumble across them from taking them.

An oral history of each tribe, kept by minor enscribers, is still favored by the taan. The oral history has become more and more closely tied to the taan religion, with fragments of a tribe's history revealed in ceremonial chants.

TAAN LEGENDS

In their former world, the nomadic taan roamed over a large semi-arid continent. Tribes rarely encountered other tribes and when they did, they almost always went to war over the disputed territory.

Occasionally a tribe would raid another tribe, especially if the latter was in a bountiful location with plentiful food and water, or if they had discovered a good source of valuable gemstones. These raids were usually carried out by young taan hunters, who were always

on the lookout for opportunities to increase their status, both individually and for their tribe. Such raids and battles contributed to the history of the taan tribe.

When the shamans declared the time propitious, the taan gathered to hear a legend. Such times occurred two or three times a year, usually on the solstices and an arbitrary day thought to be when the tribe was founded. Similar celebrations marked the defeat of another tribe. The winners of the battle would show off their grisly trophies and regale their fellow tribe members with tales of how they had won them. Such trophies could be anything from a finger bone to a severed head.

The telling of legends on special days is a part of taan culture that continues to thrive in Loerem, the difference being that now stories of former heroes must not deal with the old gods. Now the stories are of fierce warriors who performed heroic deeds in battle so that other warriors will strive to emulate their heroes.

On feast days, legends are told of these great taan warriors. Many legends are claimed to be centuries old. The names of these warriors are kept alive through these legends and are often used in common parlance. The half-taan have translated these stories into Elder Speak, naming the legendary warriors: Tukett, Kestred, Nularis, Wikous, and Zordak. Sayings such as "By Tukett's axe, I will get his head!" have passed into half-taan parlance.

Each of these great heroes is said to have carried a special weapon or had special magical stones embedded in his hide. Each legend provides a detailed list of these stones, most of which are extremely difficult to obtain in Loerem because of their rarity. The placement of the gems is revealed in the tales, since each warrior's stone patterns were unique. Present-day shamans often reference the legends when placing stones beneath the hides of the warriors of their tribes.

The Legend of Nularis and Dirgantrium

Chief among these legends is one about a warrior known as Nularis and the stone dirgantrium. The stone is so rare that Nularis is believed to be the only hero who ever had it embedded. Dirgantrium is harder than diamond but has the same clarity, and can be found in colors of black-red, deep blue, and off-white, with blue being the most common. Since the stone is so hard, dirgantrium is very difficult to split, shape, or facet. The cutting of a single stone is said to take years.

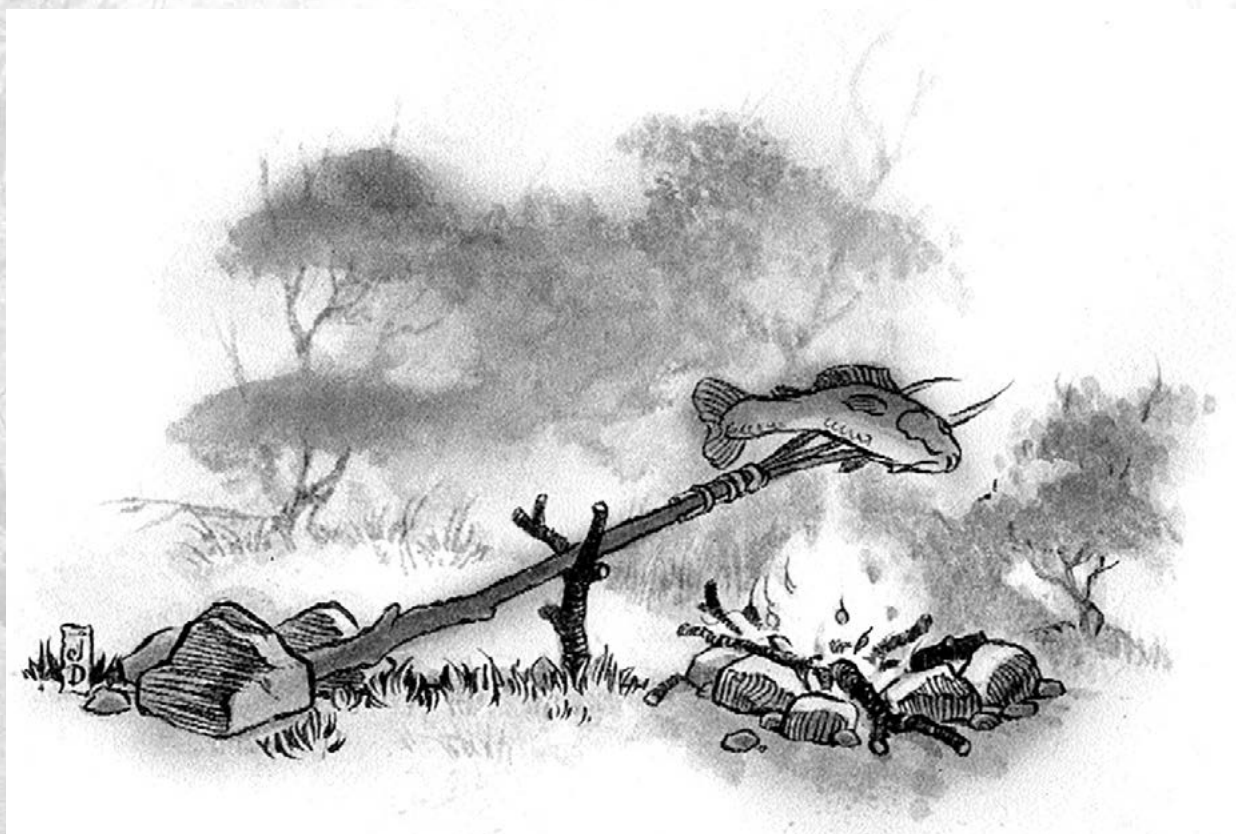
The tribe to which Nularis belonged was blessed by the gods with a particularly bountiful spot. They had all the water they could drink. Hunting was good. Many strong children were born to the tribe. Nularis's tribe constantly thanked the gods for their blessings and gave them many blood sacrifices.

Another tribe came along and wanted all these good things the gods had given Nularis's tribe. But the other tribe did not want to ask for them, nor did they want to

make blood sacrifices. They wanted to take these things from Nularis and his people. The enemy tribe was not honorable. They would not meet Nularis's tribe in battle, but were constantly raiding and harassing them, hoping to force them to leave. When Nularis and his tribe marched forth to battle, the other tribe would flee, only to return the next season and harass them again.

A shaman, who was also one of Nularis's mates, had discovered the dirgantrium. She spent many years cutting and polishing the dirgantrium, making it ready to give to Nularis. The shaman made two cabochons from the chunk the gods had given her. When struck by sunlight, the stones glowed with a radiance believed to have the power to blind enemies. It was said that this stone glowed even beneath Nularis's thick hide.

During a ceremony that lasted four days, the shaman embedded the stone in the palm of the warrior's hand and set a second dirgantrium in the hilt of Nularis's



an-kyx. Nularis added to the dirgantrium six diamonds, two sapphires, two emeralds, ten quartz spikes and a matched pair of opals. The combination of magic and Nularis's formidable fighting talents proved devastating to the taan's enemies. The rival tribe was exterminated and the winning tribe prospered.

No one knows what happened to the dirgantrium of Nularis, although taan have searched for it for hundreds of years. Some say the stones the shaman fashioned were too powerful to leave on the earth and were taken away by the old gods for safekeeping. One present-day shaman insists that the spirit of Nularis went into the stones when he died. The stones are now the repository of the spirit of Nularis and he will return to help the warrior who finds the stones. The shaman has said the stones are hidden in the old world and that one has only to find them to be able to summon Nularis to come to his aid.

Another shaman believes the stones were sent through the Portal and are in Loerem, awaiting discovery by a deserving shaman. Nularis is said to visit battles, analyzing taan warriors for strengths and deficiencies. He rewards those he sees fighting to their best ability, protecting them from harm and giving them renewed energy. Those who are incompetent or appear cowardly will not receive his attention and are often plagued by misfortune.

THE BAHK

In their former land, the taan had one terrible enemy: the bahk. These monsters are enormous. An elder bahk can grow up to twenty-five feet in height. Bahk walk upright on two huge legs. Their massive shoulders are hunched, their backs are rounded. Their horned heads jut forward. They have a protruding snout and their mouths are filled with razor-sharp teeth. They are immensely strong, although not

particularly intelligent.

Bahk are attuned to magic. Thus, taan embedded with powerful magic stones are sought out by the bahk, who can sense the magic as another smells the odor of smoke on the wind. The bahk that catches a taan will slay the taan, then rip the stones from his hide and carry the stones back to its lair. In addition, the bahk will steal any magical artifacts the taan might happen to be carrying. The bahk are not capable of using magic. They cherish the stones and the artifacts for the magic in them. Anyone who finds a bahk lair in the old taan homeland will almost certainly find a treasure trove of Void magic gems and artifacts.

Because the bahk are drawn by magic, they are drawn to the taan. Entire bahk families have been known to track a taan tribe patiently for weeks, just to gain the magic. The taan waged constant battle against the bahk in their former homeland. Alone taan warrior does not stand a chance against the ferocious bahk and thus, if a bahk was sighted on its own, the warriors in the tribe would all turn out to do battle. If a bahk family was discovered, the nizam could decide to move the tribe rather than fight the bahk. Taan did not consider running from bahk to be a cowardly act, merely good common sense.

The taan hoped they had left the bahk behind when they arrived in Loerem. Unfortunately, many bahk have somehow made their way to Loerem. The taan's hatred for their ancient enemy has not waned over time.

Dagnarus had thought he might be able to use some of these monsters in his taan battle forces, for it was found that bahk, if caught early, could be trained. However, he soon discovered that the taan would not accept their ancient enemy as an ally. Despite all their god's threats, the taan not only refused to have anything to do with a bahk, they would attempt to kill it

the moment Dagnarus was out of sight. Realizing he was damaging his image with the taan, Dagnarus no longer uses bahk in the ranks of the taan. He does use captured bahk in the ranks of his human allies, however, often placing a Vrykyl in charge of the ferocious beasts.

The taan who encounter a bahk go berserk at the sight of the monster, whether or not it is on their side, and will attack the bahk immediately, even if this means breaking off attack against any other enemy.

FOOD HIERARCHY

Taan believe what they eat becomes an integral part of them. Therefore, taan are very careful about the type of food they ingest, selecting only the food that will help them become strong. Taan classify foods by order of strength, and often speak of needing "strong food" as opposed to "weak food." Strong food comes from any creature with the intelligence or strength to fight or escape from a taan warrior. Weak food encompasses anything that can't or won't fight back, such as grass, roots, berries, and nuts.

A zarg nut from the zarg tree (see Chapter 9: Bestiary) is the exception to this rule. Zarg nuts are considered strong food because the taan think the trees hurl the nuts at warriors when they try to gather them. The zarg nuts weigh about three to four pounds each and are covered with a spiny shell that can pierce hide and crush bone, if the nut falls from a great height. A taan struck by one of these nuts can suffer a serious wound and many have been killed by just such an event. The trees appear to be uncannily accurate, managing to hurt at least one warrior per gathering session.

Too much weak food is believed to deprive a warrior his fighting abilities. A consistent diet of strong food, conversely, brings a taan to his full strength. It is not always possible to eat strong food,

especially while on the march or in the middle of Loerem's harsh winters. The taan believe it is wise to eat as much strong food while they can and save up the weak food for the hard times.

Strong Food

Strong food includes bahk (if the taan tribe is willing to sacrifice the warriors to kill one), trolls, ogres, vulcworms, klobbers, giants, chomp flies, and arbragers, to name a few. The human warriors of Loerem are considered strong food, since they can be deadly foes. Orks are considered strong food, too, since they are about the size of the taan and put up a good fight.

Because Dagnarus will not permit the taan to eat healthy prisoners, who make good slaves, and the taan will not eat a prisoner who has shown to be a coward by surrendering, the practice of eating the enemy is starting to die out among the taan.

In the old world, taan tribes would eat enemy taan they had captured and enslaved from other tribes. Dagnarus ended this tradition when the taan came to Loerem. To eat another taan is now considered heresy.

Fish are considered a strong food. The taan's fear of water makes fishing a dangerous sport to their minds. They believe fish are creatures of the evil water spirits and that by wresting the fish away from the water spirits, they have done battle with a bitter enemy. Thus Dagnarus's gift of fish to the taan proved to them that he could wield power over the water spirits.

Intermediate Food

Intermediate food refers to animals such as deer, cattle, sheep, goats, wolves, and horses. Elves and krikners also fall into this category, although some taan have begun to consider elves (particularly the Wyred) to be strong food. Elves make good sport, being extremely quick and agile, they are difficult to hunt.

Weak Food

Plants are considered weak food. Grains, roots, tubers, berries, and fruits are all unworthy to be eaten except in the most dire circumstances. The taan believe the other races are inferior in strength and stamina because they eat too much food that comes from plants. Herbal concoctions used by the shamans, however, are not considered food but medicine.

The taan dislike the fermented and brewed drinks of Loerem's races. Liquor makes a warrior stupid, deprives him of his faculties, and causes him to make careless errors in battle. Fermented drinks are considered worse than weak food and are avoided.

Taan will not eat some creatures under any circumstances. Hobgoblins, glyblin, zombies and the like are considered unclean, foul and unworthy of being eaten. Dagnarus has taught the taan that they must suffer these creatures as allies, occasionally fighting alongside them, but the taan do not honor them and will not come to their aid if they get into trouble. The taan refuse to eat rats, in even the worst of situations, since rats eat filth, and you are what you eat. The flesh of hyrachors is distasteful to them.

Ceremonial Food

During feast days and other important gatherings, the taan try to trap the strongest food possible and bring it back to camp alive. Trapping these creatures can be dangerous for the warriors, and also dangerous for those chosen to slay them. Shamans are always nearby, ready with enchantments to subdue the beast and protect the tasker cooks. Other warriors stand ready in the event the shamans are not able to handle the creature. Once slain, the creature is quickly consumed — oftentimes raw, while its blood is still warm.

The most sought-after ceremonial foods

are giants, trolls, and orks. They are very strong and can kill a taan if the warrior is not careful. Their hides are useful as well, for tents, clothing, and parchment.

Bahk are considered the epitome of strong food, but even a single bahk could decimate a tribe, so they are never brought back unless they are dead and, even then, the warriors will quarter the carcass first, just to be safe.

DUELS

Taan warriors are expected to prove their strength on a regular basis. Duels with each other are an important part of a warrior's life. Taan children are encouraged to fight each other, but these fights rarely result in serious injury. A taan's first true duels occur when he is older, during weapons training. These duels prepare the taan for fights he will encounter over the course of his life. Dueling is encouraged. It is considered a form of entertainment as well as necessary to survival.

Hardly a day passes without two taan quarrel and resort to a contest of warrior skill to settle the matter. These fights are often bloody and both winner and loser generally suffer some injury. Other taan will not interfere unless there is good reason. Taan are not supposed to duel before battles, but some forget the rule. In that case, an officer may intervene, prohibiting the taan from settling the dispute until the battle is over.

Shamans also duel for much the same reasons, unleashing spells of devastating effect upon each other. Shamans rarely resort to brute force. Shamans duel only each other. They do not duel a warrior, nor will a warrior duel a shaman. Taskers are not permitted to duel at all. If two taskers get into a violent argument, each is expected to take his grievance to a warrior who will duel on the tasker's behalf to settle the dispute.

Kdah-Klks

In the very early days in the taan homeland, every taan tribe was ruled by a nizam. He or she was generally the most physically powerful and cunning member of the taan tribe. The nizam was forced to earn his position through combat with challengers, thus ensuring that only the strongest would retain the position.

The losers of such duels were almost always killed or driven out of the tribe, unless a tribe needed to preserve its warriors because of numerous enemies. The fights often took place without ceremony and with little provocation. A warrior who disagreed with the dictates of the present nizam could challenge him to a battle on the spot, in an effort to usurp the title from him. A nizam might have to fight several battles a month to retain his leadership role. To maintain stability, some nizams would seek help from shamans to undermine potential rivals, even resorting to murder.

As the centuries passed, the taan tribes realized that constant challenges to a nizam's authority weakened both the nizam and the tribe. The continual duels fostered dissent and thinned the ranks of the warriors. Many taan tribes determined that the nizam could be challenged, but only at certain specific times of the year, either in annual or semiannual combats called kdah-klks.

In these duels, anyone believing he or she could lead the taan was permitted to fight the nizam. In the larger tribes, kdah-klks became great festivals. Hunts, feasts, and storytelling attended the combats. If a great number of warriors entered the contest, preliminary rounds were used to weed out the lesser challengers, ending with a final battle between the two greatest warriors. Combat was bloody but rarely ended in death. A defeated warrior was put to death only if he refused to yield. Tribal shamans and elder warriors judged

the contest and had the final say. Gracious losers were healed by shamans and were permitted to acknowledge their betters and follow the new nizam. If they could not, they were cast out of the tribe.

During a kdah-klk, the combatants may not call upon the magic in their stones to aid them. The intent is for the combatants to rely solely on their natural strength and abilities. If it is discovered that a warrior cheated and called upon his stones' magic, he is cast out from the tribe. Kdah-klks are still held by the taan in Loerem, but they are no longer used to choose nizams, who are now handpicked by Dagnarus or his Vrykyl. The kdah-klk may be used to determine the leader of a war party, who is known as the huntmaster, or of a battlegroup, led by a lesser nizam.

AILMENTS AND WEAKNESSES

The taan are rarely sick and appear to be immune to most diseases that affect the other races of Loerem. The taan have brought with them a few debilitating afflictions from the old world. These ailments have been passed from the taan to their human slaves and are now, either through escaped slaves or half-taan, beginning to spread to the human population of Loerem.

The taan fear disease because they are ignorant about what causes it. They term diseases "little demons" and think anyone who falls ill is possessed by evil spirits. Thus taan shamans often use various methods to frighten or drive the spirit from the body of the sick taan. Oftentimes the cure is worse than the disease and sometimes proves fatal, as the sick taan is roasted over a fire or tossed into a lake in an effort to compel the evil spirit to leave the body.

Some of the wiser taan shamans discovered years ago that certain herbs and tree barks have curative properties. Shamans who have used these techniques are beginning to think that perhaps evil

spirits are not a cause of illness. They have begun to study human methods of treating illness, learned mostly by the enscribers and the half-taan.

DARK FEVER

Type disease, contact or inhaled; **Save** Fortitude DC 12

Onset 1d4 days; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1d6 Int damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

This virulent fever runs its course in about three days, during which the taan's body temperature soars. Nothing can break the fever. The taan almost always recovers. The fever leaves the taan's body relatively healthy, but weakens his mind. Taan so affected behave like small children, unable to communicate or do anything for themselves. They will not recognize fellow taan, nor do they have any awareness of

danger.

The shamans who detect symptoms of dark fever in an afflicted first separate that individual from the tribe, as they have learned the fever will spread to others. The shamans must decide if the patient is to be slain and his body burned to prevent spreading the disease, or if he is left as a mindless outcast who will eventually fall prey to some beast or an enemy. This disease affects only taan and half-taan.

HEART-EATER

Type disease, injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 15

Onset 2d4 days; **Frequency** 1/week

Effect 1d4 permanent Con damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

A heartworm-type parasite found in the old world is called the heart-eater. The inch-long wormlike parasite can enter through a cut, make its way through the



circulatory system into the heart, where it feasts on the muscle, weakening it until it finally ceases to beat. The eggs are encapsulated and excreted by the worms throughout the infected taan's digestive system. Shamans use a combination of stones against these worms, as well as a nasty-smelling, reddish-brown concoction boiled from the bark of certain hardwood trees. The mixture is applied directly to open wounds to keep the worms away. It is successful about half the time.

Before the arrival of the taan through the Portal, there were no signs of the parasite in Loerem. Infected taan who passed through the Portal brought the heart-eater with them. The parasite has infested slaves and thieves stealing stones from dead taan and now has spread to some human communities.

TAINTED STONE

Type disease; **Save** Fortitude DC 15

Onset 1d6 days; **Frequency** 1/week

Effect 1d4 Dex damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

A taan with a multitude of stones embedded in his arms and legs can fall victim to this rare malady. It is believed that some unwholesome magical influence from the stones has seeped into his blood, poisoning him. The taan's hide takes on a gray pallor and his eyes become unfocused. His tongue thickens, making speech problematic. His hands shake and he has trouble keeping down food and water.

Over the years, the shamans have noticed this ailment is not contagious, so individuals in the early stages of the disease are permitted to stay with the tribe in the hope that the symptoms will disappear, which they sometimes do. If the illness progresses, the patient loses his coordination and cannot keep up the walking pace of a healthy taan. Shamans order such afflicted, who may endanger the other taan by slowing them down, to

leave the tribe.

These taan are not outcasts. They are sent away from the tribe and given a chance to heal on their own or die. If they return healthy, they are welcomed back into the tribe. Taan who return are marked with special scars to show others they have triumphed over the stone sickness and are stronger for it. Taan who fall victim to the disease, and whose bodies are discovered by other taan, are left to rot. Some afflicted taan have been known to cut the stones out of their bodies in the hopes of cutting out the illness. No taan will use these tainted stones, which are buried with haste.

There is a cumulative 1% chance to receive a tainted stone for every active Void stone embedded in the taan or half-taan's body. This percentage check should be made each time a new stone is embedded.

Fear of Water

It is physically challenging for a taan to swim, which perhaps contributes to the fact that most taan endeavor to avoid going near large bodies of water. Not only are taan taller than most of the other humanoid races, taan have a dense bone and muscle structure that makes it hard for a taan, unaided by something that floats, to keep his head above water.

The taan believe that bodies of water have unhappy spirits living within them. These restless spirits constantly strive to escape the water, thus creating currents, ripples, waves and even the rise and fall of the tides. The taan are convinced if they enter the water, the spirits will seize hold of them and drag them under. Taan never approach a large body of water without being armed to the teeth, ready to attack the spirits.

Because of this inability to swim, the taan have created a complex mythology about water that still survives with the taan in Loerem. Long ago — the taan sages tell the people — the taan homeland was

not a desert, but a place with plenty of water, trees, and food for the taking. The son of the taan god Dekthzar was resting beside a river one day and, while doing so, he looked at his reflection in the water. A flursckt, or water spirit, saw him and fell in love with him. She rose to the surface and drew him beneath the river so they could be together forever. He tried to fight her, but the spirit confused her prey with kisses and caresses while she entangled him in thick seaweed and drowned him.

Dekthzar was furious when he found his son had been slain and his soul made a captive of the spirits. He declared that no taan would enter water of any type, or they were sure to drown. In order to remove the temptation, he took most of the water from the surface of the world and diverted it underground. The land became an arid desert. The plants and animals died. The taan had to search for the food that had once been plentiful, forcing the taan into their nomadic existence.

Interestingly enough, one might think that with their intense dislike of water, the taan would have nothing to do with fish or fishing. That is not the case. The taan view fishing as a combat encounter. In the taan's mind, they are overcoming the water spirits by taking away their food — the fish. Plus, given their fear of water, it takes courage for a taan hunter to go near enough to the water to catch fish. The taan consider fish a "strong" food and will eat it as often as they can. The taan relish fish mostly because they have fought and defeated the water spirits in order to catch them.

One reason Dagnarus obtained such a hold over the taan was when he first appeared to them, he "rained" a large amounts of fish down on them. This proved to the taan that Dagnarus was strong enough to overcome the water spirits as well.

Taan are starting to lose belief in the

myth of the water spirits, since Dagnarus led them to Loerem. Their new god brought them to a world where the sun isn't cruel, plants and animals grow in abundance, and the land is covered with water. The taan still aren't able to swim, but they are no longer afraid to get their feet wet. They have even taken to traveling in boats.

MEDICINE

Taan shamans do not have the ability to use magic to heal, as do other races, due to the fact that Void magic is destructive in nature and taan are always considered to be tainted by Void. The Void does allow the transference of life essence from one creature to another, but taints it in the process. This weakens the shaman and, if he isn't careful, can kill him. Taan shamans have been forced to learn how to heal their people without the aid of magic, relying only on their skills in herbalism, their knowledge of taan anatomy, and prayers to the gods (that may or may not be answered).

Since the coming of Dagnarus, the taan know their prayers are going to be answered. That leaves healing up to the shaman. Taan shamans are skilled in the use of splints, sutures, plasters, disinfectants herbs, and fats to help burns. Internal injuries are much more difficult to cure, and when a warrior receives such a serious wound, a shaman will most likely resort to Void magic. Most shamans only expend themselves for a taan who is important to the tribe, such as a nizam, huntmaster, lesser nizam, or another shaman.

Taan do not fear death as do other races, and thus shamans formerly did not go out of their way to heal those wounded in battle and faced an honorable death. Dagnarus has changed their attitude, for he values warriors and insists that every effort be made to return a brave warrior to the battlefield.



DEATH: THEN AND NOW

In their original homeland, taan were nomads, living in tribes for survival. The tribes were independent, each having a complex internal structure based on survival of the strongest. The tribal leader kept his post by fighting individual battles held on special days. If the nizam lost in ritual combat, he might be forced to leave the tribe, made to live as an outcast. If the nizam won, his challenger would be permitted to remain within the tribe and could challenge the nizam again when the time was deemed propitious.

The taan's warlike natures made the formation of treaties and alliances with other tribes impossible. No taan (not even the eldest) can remember a time when two or more tribes came together in peace. A legend about three tribes coming together to fight the bahk stands out as an anomaly. It was never used to show that tribes could

work together, but was told in order to praise the skills of the shamans and the warriors who made and used the magical spears.

Dying in battle is the preferred way for all taan to die. All taan regard illness as a sign of weakness. Both in the old world and in Loerem, a taan who falls ill and cannot be cured by the shamans will "go away" to die. A hale member of the tribe usually follows, marking the place where the dying taan finally succumbs, so a shaman can return to bury the embedded stones after the body has rotted or dried. The shaman does this since it is possible that the stones themselves may have been the cause of death and he does not want them to infect the rest of the tribe. He will place a symbol on the location, warning others that the stones may be harmful.

Few taan die of old age. An elder warrior, who has outlived his contemporaries and



perhaps even his own children, will go into battle at the front of the ranks. The elder will challenge younger, stronger warriors and will fight them until he meets his death. Sometimes an elderly taan goes into battle without weapons, fighting only with his hands, teeth, and claws until he is brought down. The bodies of taan who die in battle are left on the battlefield. Shamans of the victorious tribe return to the battlefield after the battle and use powerful Void magic spells to disintegrate the bodies. This is important, for the victorious taan do not want their enemies to know how many they lost to the battle. After the winning

shamans have visited the battlefield, the losing shamans (if any have survived) may return to do the same for their own warriors. If no shamans remain, the bodies are left to rot. In this instance, it is believed the spirits of the defeated warriors continue to haunt their tribe until the tribe wins in battle, when they are free to depart.

The bodies of important taan, such as great nizams and warriors, are buried rather than left on the battlefield. Since the valuable stones the warriors have embedded in their hides are left with the bodies, the shamans cast spells on the corpses to protect them from grave robbers.

WHO SAYS HALF-TAAN DON'T LIKE WATER?

The ork captain knew he had made a deal with a devil when he first cast his eyes on the monstrous looking dragon-men standing on shore. Those of his crew in the longboat with him were more than a little nervous. His first mate muttered under her breath, and cast him a pleading look, begging him to turn back.

The captain stood at the bow of the longboat, foot resting on the side of the vessel. As they approached the shale beach, the winds picked up and the clouds overhead darkened. A thin drizzle began to fall, soaking into the orken sailors' already sea-wet clothes. Rain was not a good omen. The captain heard his men grumble. Before they could openly complain, he jumped out of the longboat and began hauling it up on shore.

Two of the ork sailors hesitated, but then leaped out to help their captain, keeping a wary eye on the strangely silent figures standing just out of the reach of the lapping waves. Once the boat was grounded, the orks disembarked, while the captain appraised their would-be trainees. The monsters were all powerfully built, many standing just a half-head shorter than his sailors. The rain began to come down harder, splashing off of the ork captain's thick nose and into his eyes.

The monsters were all armored, many in ornate tooled leather. Some had jacks covered with shards of bone and metal. Still others wore chainmail, in human fashion. Their weapons were large, crude, but appeared lethal. Thunder clashed with the pounding of the surf. Lightning outlined the stark cliffs beyond the beach.

By the gods, thought the captain, they are ugly. Their faces are something born of fear-babe talk. He rubbed his beardless chin. Time to talk to these brutes.

"Who here's in charge," the ork yelled over the howling of the wind and the deep throated moan of the sea.

"I am," came the reply.

An elf female stepped out from behind a pair of the dragon-men. Dark hair, lustrous and long, framed the woman's pale face. Her large, dark, slanted eyes were unblinking in the rain. An elf would have said she was beautiful. The ork thought her disgusting.

Two of his men had jumped back in the longboat and the others were edging their way in that direction. The first mate nudged the captain in the ribs, and he knew that panic was gripping his crew.

"Forget it!" the captain shouted, whipping his hands through the air, palms down. "Back to the ship, men."

"Captain," the woman called, her voice sensuous and soft, like the rare cloth made of spider's silk, "we need your ship. You cannot leave us."

The captain walked toward the bow of the boat. "I can and I will—"

The captain was cut off in mid-sentence. A dagger pierced his throat. He clutched at the hand that held it there and felt its dead flesh. He looked into the rotting face of a corpse, long dead, the last sight he would ever see.

As the first mate shrieked the order to move out to sea, arrows flew down from the cliff heights, piercing ork flesh. The first mate pitched forward as an arrow struck her in the back.

The form of the elf female melted away, replaced by a womanly figure encased in hideous black armor. Rain drops beaded on the armor plates, dripped from the horns of the demonic helm. She watched in silence as the last of the orks tried to escape into the sea and were shot through with arrows like fish during spawning.

All the half-taan had to do now was to row out and take over the ship. She looked down at the dead ork captain and captured his image in her mind. Using the illusion of the ork captain, she and the half-taan would board the ship. After that, it was only a matter of taking the orks prisoner and forcing them to sail the half-taan warriors to the required destination.

Valura turned what was now a massive ork head toward the lesser nizam and ordered him and his troops aboard the longboat.





CHAPTER 4: TAAN RELIGION




Taan Warrior to a Taan Unbeliever

Why do I follow Dagnarus? He is the God of the Rock. He is the God of Fish, feeding us when we were hungry. He is the God of Armor and Weapons, arming us when we were defenseless. He is the God of Light and Dark, ruling the very heavens themselves.

Dagnarus is God, the only God, the God of the Taan. He led us to a land with plenty to eat and many formidable adversaries to overcome. He has made the humans plentiful and ripe for the taking.

Why do I follow Dagnarus? Because he has given me a better life here than in the old world. He has done the same for you. And now, my brother, for questioning his divinity, you must die!





No one really knows how long Dagnarus watched the taan from his Portal before he revealed himself to them. The taan love to relate legends regarding the first meeting between the taan and their god. Although details vary from tribe to tribe, the gist remains the same.

The most popular version of the tale holds that a lone taan nizam, whose tribe was starving, took it upon himself to battle the water spirits for food. While fishing on the banks of a stream, he noticed a cave opening near the top of tall butte. The cave's mouth was cloaked in shadows. The opening was far above his head, but the taan managed to see into part of it. The cave appeared to delve deep into the side of the cliff. The taan was baffled. He was certain the cave had not been there the day before.

He remained by the river, battling the water spirits, but the spirits were winning this day. He caught no fish at all. He kept

an eye on the cave, wondering if perhaps some monster might issue forth, but he saw nothing, nor could he hear anything. He remained on the river even after darkness fell and it was then he saw an astonishing sight.

When night came to the rest of the land, light bright as the moon shone from the hole. Amazed, the taan peered upward and suddenly saw a shadowed figure standing in the glow. The taan knew this was a god and fell prostrate before the brilliant light. The taan prayed for food for his tribe because his fishing had gone poorly.

In truth, the cave was actually one end of the Portal. Dagnarus was the shadowed figure. Hearing the taan's prayer, Dagnarus used his powers of Void magic to catch fish from the stream and then he rained them down upon the taan. The nizam was awed and elated. He took this for a sign that the "God of the Rock" had defeated the evil water spirits. He praised the God, gathered

up the fish, and returned to camp with his tale.

A force of taan warriors came back to the God of the Rock to give thanks and to demand another miracle. No more fish were forthcoming and some of the warriors began to grumble that this god was a capricious god and not to be trusted. The taan nizam remained firm in his belief, however, and he was rewarded. That night, armor and weapons of shining sharp metal appeared outside the nizam's tent. The other warriors were impressed and envious. They went back to the God of the Rock, this time in humility, begging for armor and weapons. Dagnarus granted their prayers. Steel armor and weapons □ the first the taan had ever seen □ were given to every warrior in the camp. The shamans not only pronounced Dagnarus the God of the Rock, but also the God of Light and Darkness, in honor of the cave that was dark as night during the day and bright as day during the night.

When Dagnarus finally revealed himself, the taan were disappointed. No god worth worshipping would ever take on a form as puny and insignificant as that of a human. To prove himself, Dagnarus offered to fight their most skilled warrior. The nizam gladly agreed. He would win endless prestige among his people if he defeated a god. When the nizam attempted to stab Dagnarus, the black armor of the Void covered Dagnarus's entire body. The nizam's sword struck the magical armor and shattered. Drawing his own sword, Dagnarus beheaded the nizam for his insolence. The shamans proclaimed Dagnarus a true god.

Dagnarus announced that he would lead the taan to a fat land where they would be his chosen warriors and conquer those who had defied him. First, these taan had to spread the word among the other tribes that the God of the taan had come.

THE OLD WAYS

Before Dagnarus came among them to reveal himself as their god, the taan followed a different religion that revolved around nature. The old taan gods were stern and often cruel, demanding blood sacrifices and offerings before they would answer prayers. The taan believed in nine major gods and a pantheon of lesser gods and demigods. Each god had a special day, or god day. On these days, one particular god would be venerated exclusively.

Some shamans would choose one god and dedicate their lives to the furthering of that particular god's aims. Although the lesser gods and demigods had followers, they could generally be placated by prayers and small offerings. Shamans who could demonstrate through miracles that they were in good standing with one of the gods wielded great influence over their people.

The following are the major gods of the taan myth. Taan can still be found who worship the old gods. Some taan are rebelling against Dagnarus, claiming he is a false god. These rebel taan have returned to the old ways.

Iltsbuzz

Iltsbuzz created the other gods, the earth, and all the creatures on the earth. The taan view themselves as the favorite of all the creatures created by Iltsbuzz. They know this because they are among the strongest of his creatures. Taan believe that Iltsbuzz placed the weak humans upon the earth to serve the taan.

Iltsbuzz is the nizam, to whom all other deities pay homage. Iltsbuzz is viewed as a cold, uncaring god. He oversees the works of the other gods and only on rare occasions does he deign to listen to the prayers of the taan. Because of this, Iltsbuzz's worshippers were never numerous. The taan turn to Iltsbuzz only when all other gods have failed them and they are in desperate straits.

It is said that Iltsbuzz's attention may be

captured by an extraordinary act of heroism in battle. A warrior noticed by Ilthuzz is granted a vision of his own death and is given an innate sense of how long he has left to live.

Dekthzar and Lokmirr

Dekthzar and Lokmirr were the first gods created by Ilthuzz. He formed Dekthzar from the fire of the sun and made Lokmirr from the dark of the night.

Dekthzar is the god of battle. He is the god most revered by the taan. Every taan tribe used to have a shaman dedicated to the worship of Dekthzar. Before every battle, taan warriors make offerings to Dekthzar, praying that they be granted victory. Dekthzar is said to take an active interest in every battle being fought.

He chooses sides and awards victory to the side he favors. He bases his judgment on the bravery of the tribes' warriors in battle. Any cowardly act is deeply offensive to Dekthzar, who will deny the tribe victory on that account. Often the shaman of a tribe that has lost a battle will interrogate the warriors until he finds the one who committed the cowardly act. That warrior is sacrificed to Dekthzar in hopes of propitiating the god and achieving victory in the next battle.

Lokmirr is the goddess of death. Ilthuzz lusted after Lokmirr and chose her to bear his children. She detested the cold, overbearing god, preferring instead the fiery temper and raging passion of Dekthzar. The two gods rebelled against Ilthuzz. Braving his ire, the two mated and gave birth to children who have become lesser gods.

Lokmirr takes a keen interest in battle. She walks the battlefield, gathering the spirits of dead warriors to her, rewarding those who have been brave by granting them sexual favors. She curses those who have died a coward's death, forcing their spirits to serve her as slaves.

Ilthuzz continually schemes to win Lokmirr's favor. These schemes lead to battles between Ilthuzz and Dekthzar. Desert storms are said to be caused by these heavenly battles.

The taan believe that one day Dekthzar will challenge Ilthuzz for leadership of the gods. A terrible battle will wage in the heavens. When that day comes, all the taan, living or dead, will be called upon to take part in the ensuing battle. The victors are admitted into paradise. The defeated are destroyed and their names forgotten.

All taan are expected to choose which god they will serve in the last battle. Even those taan who worship Dagnarus have surreptitiously let it be known to their shamans which of the old gods they would follow. This is especially important since those who die unworthy deaths are permitted to redeem themselves in this final showdown.

K'shawa

The god of earth, K'shawa was created by Ilthuzz in an effort to impress Lokmirr. K'shawa is a cruel god. He delights in drying up rivers and takes pleasure in burying oases under huge piles of sand. Taan who do not honor K'shawa have been known to vanish in sandstorms or they have been sucked into the shifting sand and buried alive. On some occasions, he has caused the earth to open up and swallow entire taan tribes.

K'shawa demands slaves in tribute and if the taan warriors fail to take enough slaves to appease him, the god will dry up the waterholes or cause mountains to erupt in fire.

In the old world, most tribes had a shaman dedicated to the worship of K'shawa, for the taan feared this god above all others. However, since the coming of the taan to the lush green world of Loerem, K'shawa's power over the taan has waned. Water is plentiful. The rivers never run

dry. The taan tell the story that Dagnarus and K'shawa met in battle, and Dagnarus defeated the god and now keeps him chained beneath the earth. Earthquakes are said to be K'shawa, attempting to free himself. Rebel taan who have spurned Dagnarus often worship K'shawa and more than one taan rebel has gone searching through caves in an effort to locate the god and free him, expecting that he will return

and once again challenge Dagnarus. This time, K'shawa will defeat the upstart god.

L'K'kald

L'K'kald is K'shawa's younger brother. The taan believe that L'K'kald is the most benevolent of their gods. L'K'kald will waft the scent of an approaching enemy upon the wind, warning those in his favor of an impending attack. L'K'kald alerts the



taan to the presence of the bahk and helps them fight or escape the terrible predators.

L'K'kald controls the rain that is necessary for the taan's survival. When the god is angry, the rains do not come. Taan tribes make offerings to L'K'kald to avert his wrath. The taan believe that L'K'kald favors this land of Loerem, for the rain is plentiful. Consequently, since rain falls constantly in this new world, they no longer consider it necessary to work to secure L'K'kald's blessing.

Rivalt

Rivalt is the daughter of K'shawa, the goddess of gemstones. Shamans work to gain Rivalt's favor in order to find good quality gems. Tribes who used stones that turned out to be flawed or imperfect, or tribes that were unable to find stones, are said to have offended Rivalt. Her favor may be won back if the offending warriors sacrifice their most treasured weapons to her and, at the same time, remove from their bodies all of the "dead" stones — stones whose enchantments have worn off. The dead stones are then buried in the earth with great ceremony.

Rivalt may or may not honor the sacrifice. Like most of the taan gods, Rivalt is a capricious deity. She is said to enjoy watching the taan suffer. Such suffering makes the taan stronger, or so she believes. A taan who has had a run of bad luck is said to be "in the arms of Rivalt."

The worship of Rivalt is still prevalent in many taan tribes because they rely heavily on the magic of their embedded stones. A tribe that has difficulty finding gemstones or has defective gems may make secret sacrifices to Rivalt.

Hrl'Kenk

The younger brother of Lokmirr, Hrl'Kenk is the god of night. He covers the land with a blanket of darkness, permitting sleep. He will then remove the blanket, revealing

the light of day. Taan warriors who go on raiding parties pray to Hrl'Kenk to help them mask their movements until the time of attack. Hrl'Kenk is considered one of the lesser gods. Even in the old days, he had very few followers and these days, he is nearly forgotten. He pays little attention to the taan, being much too concerned with patching the holes in the blanket of night that allow the light of day to shine through. There are so many holes that Hrl'Kenk's work will never be finished.

Dakur

Goddess of water and sister of K'shawa, Dakur is a fickle goddess, who rules the water spirits and often sends them to attack and drown unwary taan. Fear of Dakur is why the taan in their old desert world refused to venture out on the wide seas, or even onto lakes or deep rivers. Her blessings come in the form of large catches of fish and the creation of streams that slake a tribe's thirst.

Dakur and her brother K'shawa are constantly at war with each other, both vying for supremacy over the world. The taan believe it is important to worship both of them and to offend neither. Thus every taan tribe that had a shaman to K'shawa also had a shaman of equal importance to represent Dakur.

When the taan came through the Portal, they saw at once that Dakur was the ruler of this lush land and they began to pray to her. Dagnarus was angered and told them he had conquered Dakur and she was now his slave, so she would no longer harm the taan who obeyed him.

Dagnarus realized he had to do this because he knew that eventually the taan would have to ford streams and travel across rivers by boats in order to carry war deep into Loerem. He overcame their fear by forcing several powerful nizams into a boat and then ferrying them across a river himself. When the nizams returned alive,

their tribes saw that Dagnarus had, indeed, conquered Dakur. Ever since, taan will travel by boat — although they still do not like it.

Ksretan

The mighty god of the desert sun, Ksretan is another of Iltshuzz's favored creations. The taan believe that it is Ksretan who gives the taan strength by burning away their impurities. Many taan offer themselves to Ksretan before battle, stretching out beneath his blessed rays, absorbing his fire which they believe will heat their blood and make them brave in battle.

One reason taan know humans are a slave race is that humans do not fare well under Ksretan's scrutiny, and are forced to shade themselves from his fiery glare lest their soft skin burn.

Ksretan is revered for bringing some of his own fire to the taan. Knowing the nights in the desert could get very cold, Ksretan taught the taan how to summon small portions of himself to use to keep warm and to cook their food. The taan always treat fire with respect, believing that fire is a small part of the god. When the fires are doused, the flames return to the sun-god, to be used again later. Taan children believe that a wish made on a rising ember is carried to Ksretan and, if it reaches him, the wish will be granted.

THE OLD WAYS FORSAKENED

Dagnarus worked very hard to make the taan believe that the gods they had been praying to were not gods at all, but merely the forces of nature. He did this by exhibiting his own power to the taan, proving that he could do everything their old gods could do. Through the power of the Void, he could summon the winds. He could dry up streams and defeat even the mightiest taan warrior in battle. Dagnarus wields power over death, for he cannot be killed and he can create the undead Vrykyl.

Four generations of taan have lived under the influence of Dagnarus, the God of the Rock. Three of those four generations have grown up with stories of Dagnarus's divinity. He is an impressive god, although the taan cannot understand why he favors the form of a human. Dagnarus has bestowed gifts of food, armor, and weapons on the taan. The most powerful sign of all is that Dagnarus is the only god to have ever revealed himself in the flesh to the taan people. None of the other gods cared enough about the taan to do so.

Dagnarus's Nine Rules

When Dagnarus first appeared to the taan, he established nine rules by which the taan were to live. All taan who followed Dagnarus through the Portal were forced to memorize these rules and the practice still continues.

1. There is only one god of the taan and all of Loerem. That god is Dagnarus.
2. No other gods exist. Those such as the humans who worship false gods are misled and doomed.
3. The divine forces the taan worshiped in the past are gone, just as the old world is gone. The taan have grown in wisdom and have cast off false gods.
4. The taan must obey Dagnarus, the God of the Rock, Armor, Light and Dark. A true taan reveres Dagnarus as the one God.
5. By following Dagnarus, the taan will continue to be blessed with food, weapons, battles, and hardships to make them strong, and lesser beings to subjugate and devour.
6. The taan will spread the worship of Dagnarus across Loerem. Those who oppose him will die.
7. Converts to Dagnarus among the races of Loerem will be spared.
8. The Vrykyl are the mouth and hands of Dagnarus. They are to be obeyed implicitly, unless Dagnarus says

otherwise.

9. To follow Dagnarus is to worship him.
To worship Dagnarus is to love him.
To love Dagnarus is to die for him.

The Priesthood

Like other positions in the taan armies of Dagnarus, the priesthood is strictly hierarchical. Dagnarus has forbidden any taan except a shaman to use shamanistic magic. (Shamanistic magic differs from warrior magic, which comes from enchanted stones embedded into a taan's flesh.)

Shamans are trained in disseminating the word of Dagnarus, in preaching obedience to one's superiors and to Dagnarus, in finding and eradicating secret cults to the old gods. Shamans serve as advisers to taan commanders and, in defiance of tradition, some have even become nizams.

Shamans are now being taught to read and write. Before coming to Loerem, taan had no written language. Sages memorized the history of the tribe, which was related through story and song. Dagnarus decided if he was to succeed in training the taan to be elite warriors, it would be necessary for certain taan to learn to read and write their own language as well as Dagnarus's native tongue, Elder Speak. He chose shamans as being most suitable for this task, since the taan have great respect for the shamans.

The shamans read orders from Dagnarus and the Vrykyl to the taan warriors. They decipher maps and pass information among themselves. They have learned to copy down Void magic spells, and now keep records of taan births, especially to notable parents. Some shamans have even learned to cast spells of other races by studying them in books looted from the enemy.

By making it clear that he controls the Void magic that gives the shamans power, Dagnarus ensures the shamans' loyalty

to him and him alone, placing his welfare above that of members of their own tribes. Thus he has turned the shamans into spies upon their people.

The shamans are Dagnarus's eyes and ears among the taan armies. The shamans pass on to Dagnarus all information, from the soldiers' morale to the conduct of the commanders. Shamans are even encouraged to spy on each other, reporting infractions and misdeeds to the taan Vrykyl. Thus, Dagnarus is continually apprised of everything going on in the army, as well as any dissension within its ranks.

The highest of all the taan shamans is known as the First One. He is often found in the company of Dagnarus or the Vrykyl. He is attended by twelve taan shamans, four from each of the three taan armies, called Second Ones. These taan shamans lead a secret cabal known as the Black Veil and serve as intermediaries between all lower ranking members and the First One. The meetings of the First One and Black Veil Shamans are shrouded in mystery. They wield immense control over the taan people and are greatly feared by all taan.

The God-Touched

Only three taan have been given the privilege of embracing the Void, dying by the Dagger of the Vrykyl and becoming Vrykyl. These honored taan are Nb'arsk, Lnskt, and K'let (see Chapter 9: Bestiary). K'let is their leader, the highest in rank and in status. All three are considered extensions of Dagnarus.

They are the eldest of the taan, having become Vrykyl during the time Dagnarus was just starting to assemble his army nearly two centuries ago. They received Void armor of shining obsidian that retracts from their head and bodies at will. The scars that covered their bodies before their ascendance are recreated in the armor. The gems embedded in their bodies appear in the metal as scars and lend

magical power to the Vrykyl since many of the old enchantments have been renewed, sometimes repeatedly (something taan shamans have been unable to duplicate with living taan). They have the ability to create illusions of themselves so that they appear to be living taan, concealing their undead nature.

These Vrykyl command the three taan armies in Loerem. The taan follow the Vrykyl implicitly, even into certain death. The taan Vrykyl act as intermediaries between the taan and Dagnarus. Taan Vrykyl are held in such dread, however, that few other than the First One, Second Ones, or members of the Black Veil dare to approach them.

Unlike their human counterparts, taan Vrykyl make no secret of the fact that they must feed off the souls of the living to sustain the power Dagnarus has infused in them. Taan have been known to sacrifice themselves if the Vrykyl require souls. This death is considered a great honor, as the taan believe the sacrificed taan then becomes part of the Vrykyl.

All Vrykyl share a bond with Dagnarus that enables them to sense his presence. All Vrykyl are bound through the Dagger of the Vrykyl to follow Dagnarus's orders without question.

Secret Cults

While all the taan worship Dagnarus, some taan still follow the old ways. Their thinking runs along the lines that if one god is good, two or more will be better still. Such worship is kept a closely guarded secret, for Dagnarus is a jealous god and takes swift retribution against taan caught worshipping the old gods. However, in some tribes, taan have dared create secret cults dedicated to the worship of the old gods. The most powerful of these are cults dedicated to worshipping Rivalt, who wields control over the magical gems embedded in a taan's hide. Try as he might,

Dagnarus has found it difficult to stamp out this cult.

Rebel taan often return to the worship of the old gods, revering them as the true gods and begging them for their help in proving to the taan that Dagnarus is a false deity and means to betray them. The fact that many rebels have been apprehended proves to loyal taan that Dagnarus is stronger than the old gods. Rebels who do manage to escape credit their good fortune to the old gods and vow to bring them back.

Half-taan believe in Dagnarus exclusively; mainly because they have known no other gods in their lifetime. Rebel taan have made it known that the first thing they will do if they come to power is to kill the half-taan, considered to be abominations and an affront to the old gods.

Heretic Taan

Dagnarus has done a very thorough job of ferreting out taan who still follow the old religion and either refuse to worship him, or revere him alongside their old gods. Taan discovered to be unbelievers are tortured and executed, then dismembered, their parts left to be devoured by wild animals. This means their spirit can never return to fight again — a terrible punishment that serves as a warning to fellow taan. Only a few heretics have managed to escape and they live as renegades and outcasts.

A few such rebellious taan have banded together and have taken up the conquest of Loerem on their own. They believe in the power of the old gods, who have told them it is their destiny to take control of all of the "lesser races." One day, they will have enough power to confront Dagnarus and his taan armies. Then the old gods will manifest themselves and the truth will become apparent. Dagnarus will be exposed as a false god.

These taan infidels have no use for the



lesser races — elves, dwarves, orks, and humans — but it is possible that should a strong and forceful commander of one of these “lesser” races come to the heretics and convince them that they are fighting on the same side, for the same goal, these taan might be persuaded to ally themselves. The rebel taan make dangerous allies, however, for they are desperate and extremely unpredictable.

Those taan within Dagnarus’s armies who have developed secret cults to worship the old gods must be very careful, lest they reveal their true feelings and allegiances. The extent of the old religion varies. Some believe Dagnarus is a new god who has taken his place among the old. Others think he is, perhaps, an aspect of Dekthzar, God of War. Still others deny his godhood altogether.

Such secret cults are diminishing as time passes and it becomes increasingly obvious to the taan that Dagnarus is truly a great and powerful god. As the numbers of cultists slowly dwindle, the taan who follow the old ways have begun to speak of the return of the old gods. They believe the old gods will send one of their own in the form of a taan to challenge Dagnarus and end his rule. Thus occasionally some dissatisfied taan nizam will decide that he is the chosen one and publicly challenge Dagnarus. Dagnarus has always won these battles with ease, but taan who cling to their belief in the old gods still hope that someday he will be defeated and the old gods will return.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND CEREMONIES

The taan have made ritual sacrifices to their gods throughout their history. The taan gods are violent and bloodthirsty. The taan knew of no better way to appease their gods than to offer up blood sacrifices of animals and slaves. They would always perform such sacrifices on the eve of battle.

When the taan came to Loerem, Dagnarus curtailed the sacrifice of slaves. The shamans tell the taan that they can best please Dagnarus by fighting ferociously and gloriously in battle. Dagnarus honors victory. He punishes defeat. Now before battle, instead of blood sacrifices, the shamans use rituals (often involving intoxicating herbal concoctions) to whip the warriors into a battle frenzy.

The taan do not erect temples to Dagnarus. Being nomads, the taan did not build temples to their old gods, who did not demand them. Dagnarus has no need for temples either. He considers that the labor required to build a temple is better spent building a siege engine. The taan in the old world honored sacred sites, perhaps commemorating an important victory or the discovery of a valuable gem.

Dagnarus encourages shamans to choose sites sacred to himself. Shamans hold regular ceremonies honoring Dagnarus at these locations. All such religious ceremonies take place on specified feast days designated by the First One.

Feast days include ritual scarring by shamans, the embedding of stones into warriors, gladiatorial duels, and sacrifices. The sacrifices are animals or slaves too weak to be of any use to anyone. The shamans performing the sacrifice remove the heart and liver of the victim and present them to the highest ranking warrior present. The warrior eats the organs immediately, uncooked. The carcass is then dressed and readied for the spit.

Taan warriors are expected to prove their prowess and skill on a regular basis. When they sit idle for too long, they grow restless and agitated and begin to fight among themselves. Feast days help alleviate this through gladiatorial combats. Taan warriors are pitted against one another, allowing them to take out their aggressive tendencies on each other.

By decree, these gladiatorial bouts are

not fought to the death. Dagnarus has no intention of wasting valuable soldiers. The melees are violent, however, and continue until one combatant gives up or is rendered unconscious. If a taan warrior is killed, the slayer must make amends by handing over all slaves to Dagnarus, thus, essentially impoverishing himself, a fate to be avoided.

Ritual scarring is an honor reserved for the shamans and warriors of the taan armies. The scars are often abstract in design, not of any specific shape or with any representation in mind. The shaman who performs a ritual scarring does so with the intent that the scar will complement the other scars already on the taan's body. The shaman also believes the scar must be well designed in order to make the embedded stones work properly.

The shamans use special knives to perform ritual scarring. The knives are small, the blades rarely being more than three-inches long, and delicate. The oldest and most prized sets are made of bahk bone. Since these are not readily available, most shamans prefer the cutting ability of steel. Each shaman has a special pouch that contains a sheath for each knife in the set. There are normally four knives to a set. The knives are kept very sharp and are never used in battle or for any other purpose except the ritual scarring. If a knife breaks, it is buried in a secret location known only to the shaman.

Religious Garments

Most taan shamans on the battlefield cannot be distinguished from taan warriors. They wear armor as do taan warriors and many carry weapons that are used in self-defense or if their magic goes awry. They do not want to stand out, for an enemy will often try to kill shamans, since their magical skills are extremely dangerous. The members of the Black Veil and the First One are the exceptions. Black

Veil shamans go into battle in voluminous black robes embroidered with the image of a rising phoenix. The phoenix's fiery tail surrounds the hem, its head is near the hood. The wings extend out along the wide sleeves of the robes. Rumor has it that the robes act as armor and may protect the shaman from harm.

Taan shamans don black robes for religious ceremonies, thus making them stand out among the rest of the tribe. The robes for tribal shamans are plain and lack the embroidery of those used for Black Veil shamans.

In the old days, taan shamans wore garments of varying hue, each god having his or her own special color. Thus a taan could tell immediately which god any given shaman worshiped. Those who secretly worship the old gods may continue this practice, although it is extremely dangerous.

Dagnarus's bodyguards, taan nizams, and certain warriors wear elaborate armor given to them by Dagnarus as gifts for bravery or to set them apart from other taan. The armor and accoutrements are ornate in design, quite different from anything the taan were accustomed to wearing. Although the taan felt uncomfortable in the finery at first, they have since grown used to wearing it and are now proud of the status it signifies.

SACRED RELICS OF DAGNARUS

The taan hold two objects sacred to Dagnarus. These relics were given to the taan by Dagnarus, who ordered that the taan worship and honor them in his name. The first of these is the skull of the taan nizam Kulak. Dagnarus slew Kulak when he first revealed himself to the taan. The second relic is the sword Dagnarus used to slay Kulak. The skull tops the flagpole at the center of Dagnarus's pavilion, and is a firm reminder of the punishment that Dagnarus will mete out to those who

oppose him or are unfaithful to him.

The sword is Dagnarus's own sword, brought to him by Valura when she found him weak and wounded in the Portal. The sword is of superb craftsmanship. Worn by the First One, the sword is a symbol of the shaman's high station. The sword has never been drawn in battle since the day Dagnarus invested a taan with the title of First One and bestowed the blade unto him. It is said that the day the First One draws his blade to fight alongside Dagnarus will be the day when Loerem will fall and all the lesser races come to kneel at Dagnarus's feet.

The Head of Kulak

A horrible trophy with tattered bits of dried flesh hanging from its exposed bones, this skull has been powerfully enchanted by Dagnarus's human Void mages. Those not immune to compulsion effects are compelled to look at the skull whenever within 100 feet of it. The skull has an enchantment to make it glow in the dark, so it is always visible, day or night.

Anyone in the vicinity of the skull must succeed in a Will saving throw (DC 25) to avoid looking at the skull. Otherwise, he at least peers at the skull and feels an overwhelming, irrational fear. Affected creatures notice their hearts race; they sweat profusely or fall prey to debilitating muscle spasms; they are considered to be *cowering*.

All Vrykyl are immune to the effects of the skull, as are members of the Black Veil and the First One. Dagnarus enjoys watching the skull victimizing all who approach his tent. The skull also serves as an excellent guard, for it effectively deters any who would attempt to sneak up on Dagnarus's tent.

The Sword of the First One

This blade is a normal sword brought to Dagnarus by Valura when she found him

huddled in the Portal. The sword gained religious significance for the taan when Dagnarus used it to fell the arrogant taan nizam, Kulak. Following the victory, a shaman of the tribe came to Dagnarus and begged Dagnarus to give him the sword to save as a holy relic.

Dagnarus handed the sword over. The shaman cared for the weapon reverently and it brought great fortune to the tribe.

The shamans of the tribe continued to revere the sword, handing it down from one shaman to another. Then came the day the taan were to enter the Portal. A shaman brought the sword to Dagnarus and asked him to bless it. Dagnarus was so impressed with the shaman's loyalty that he complied and named the shaman the First One. Dagnarus fastened the sword about the shaman's waist and proclaimed that every First One from then on would wear this sword as a mark of distinction.

The sword is a highly revered blade, though it lacks any magical properties. The taan would go berserk should they ever find the sword missing.

SACRED SITES

Because much of the taan life centered on battle, most of their sacred sites honor wars or raids. Since Dagnarus has kept the taan's presence in Loerem a secret, continuing their preparations until he deems they are ready, the taan's most sacred sites are in the homeland the taan left behind.

Trips back to the old taan homeland are rare. However, some shamans and the occasional warrior do feel compelled to return to visit sacred grounds. The site most often sought out is the bank of the river where Dagnarus first encountered the taan and rained fish down on them from the sky.

Over the centuries, taan have left gifts at the sacred sites. These may be trinkets or extremely valuable stones, armor or weapons. When the taan worshiped the

old gods, no taan would dare plunder one of these sacred sites. Realizing some of these powerful artifacts might be useful, Dagnarus told the taan that since he had replaced the old gods, they could loot these sites for what they wanted. Taan shamans dared to raid the sites gained many valuable artifacts and magical stones. The taan watched to see if curses fell on these shamans. Instead, they saw the shamans' power grew greatly. Since then, sacred sites dedicated to the old gods are free to plunder.

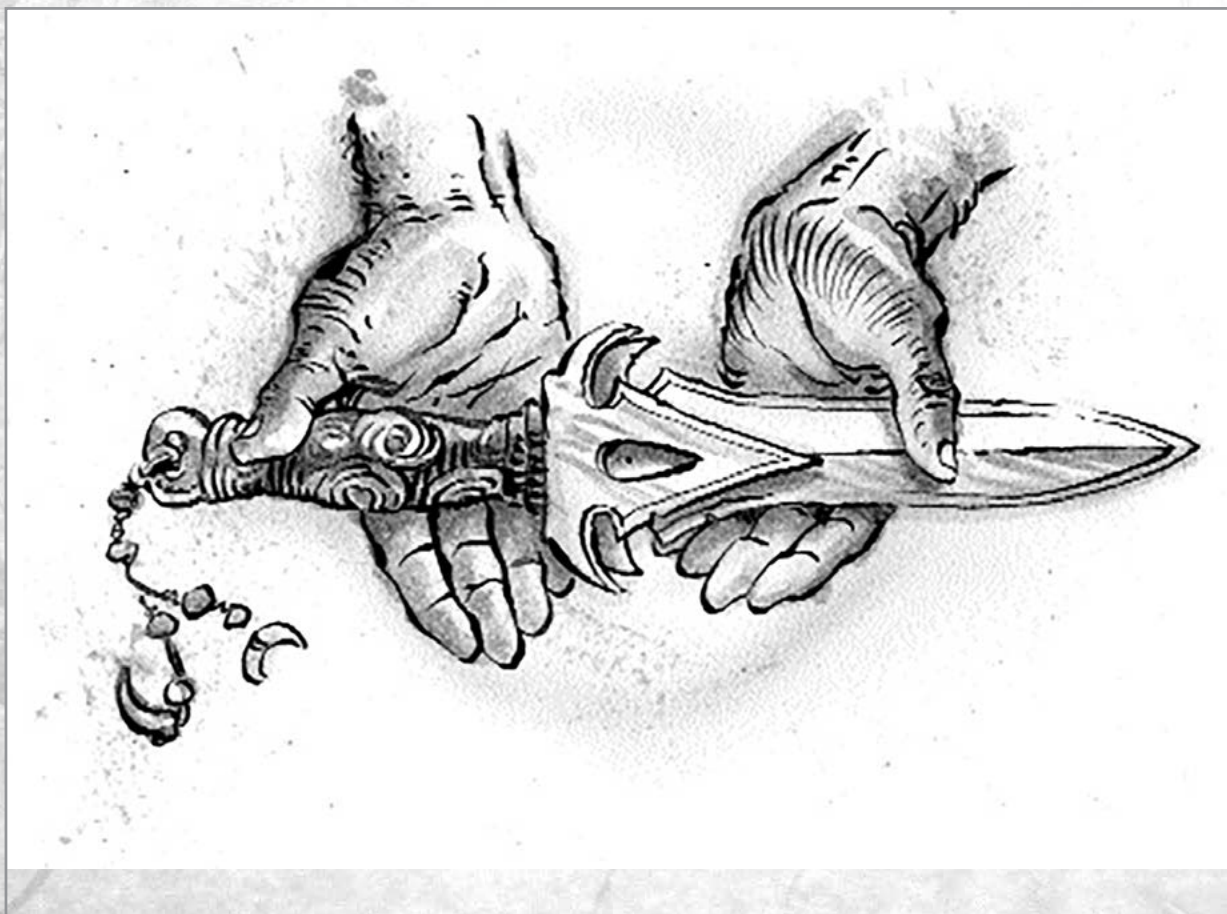
Rebel taan often attempt to reenter the Portal to find these sites and either pledge themselves to the old gods or steal any valuables that might have been left behind.

Some sites are deemed sacred because they are repositories for sacred stones the taan value as magic. A shaman who discovers a source for turquoise, lapis lazuli, or any of the other stones the taan value often declares the site sacred to

Dagnarus and therefore off-limits. By doing this, the shaman ensures that no one from his tribe or another tribe will steal the wealth. Defiling a sacred site of Dagnarus is believed to bring down the god's curse upon the offender. Such a curse might cause a warrior to lose in battle, slaves to escape, or bring about the death of their nizam.

No taan is permitted to kill or spill another taan's blood on a sacred site. Such acts defile the site and any taan breaking this law are executed once caught. This applies to sites in both the old and new world.

Non-taan found near a sacred site are immediately seized and bound. They are taken to a shaman, who then sacrifices the intruder to appease Dagnarus. This type of blood sacrifice is one of the few Dagnarus permits and occasionally comes to witness. Because of the lure of treasure said to be found at sites sacred to the taan,



non-taan have been caught attempting to raid them. Finding these sites can prove extremely difficult, since no maps exist of the taan homeland. Taan know how to find the sacred sites, but non-taan are forced to wander the desert in their search.

Dagnarus has seen to it that the taan have sacred sites dedicated to his worship in this world. These are easier for non-taan to find. Regardless, all sacred sites are heavily guarded by fierce taan warriors who view trespassing as the most heinous of crimes.

K'let's Transformation

The site where Dagnarus created the Vrykyl K'let has been deemed a sacred site. The site is near Dagnarus's Portal. It is a large clearing devoid of trees or any vegetation, for the powerful Void magic practiced here has destroyed every living thing. Although the taan do not know this, it is on this spot that Dagnarus fell after the destruction of the Temple of the Magi in Old Vinnengael. Many taan shamans believe that Void magic is more potent here than in any other place in Loerem. Taan warriors and shamans will attempt to visit the site at least once a season, if their duties permit. They believe that the site energizes the stones embedded in their hides.

The Grove of Dagnarus

This peculiar grove is one of the most unusual places in all of Loerem. At the bottom of a great valley, not far south of Dagnarus's Portal, enormous coniferous trees loom in concentric circles. Tall grasses carpet the hushed, silent valley's floor. All sounds are muted and even the loudest shout seems no more than a whisper. The deeper one journeys into the grove, the deeper the silence, until finally, at the center, there is no sound at all.

Dagnarus often walks in the grove when he seeks peace and quiet. During these occasions, the taan stay away from

the grove. Dagnarus's personal guard and companion Valura is always present.

When Dagnarus is not in the grove, taan shamans come here to study and meditate. There is an unspoken rule that no battles may take place within the confines of the valley. To disturb a peace that has been created for the God of the Rock would be blasphemous.

The grove is also held sacred by those who maintain their belief in the old gods. To them it is known as the Grove of Lokmirr and it is believed that her shamans will find their powers enhanced if they visit this grove. Many risk their lives to do so.

Taan-Cridkx

The site of the main encampment for Dagnarus's taan armies, it is also the most honored of the taan sacred sites in Loerem. Located near a small inland sea, Taan-Cridkx is the base of operations for Dagnarus. The Portal emerges out of a hillside that was once verdant and teemed with plants. Since then, the place has yielded to a bustling community of taan. Despite the taan are no longer nomads, they still prefer to live in tents, as did their ancestors. Permanent dwelling spots are for the "soft races" or the dead. Great stone mausoleums, carved high into the sides of the mountains, have been built to honor the great nizams, shamans, and warriors of the taan. Because the graves contained valuable gifts to honor the dead, they are protected by powerful spells to keep away robbers.

Taan-Tears

The walled city of Dullifed once stood on the eastern coast of Loerem, overlooking the great expanse of the Hedam Ocean. It was there that Dagnarus first tested his taan against the humans of Loerem. In a well-planned surprise attack, the taan invaded the city, killing, maiming, and enslaving those they captured alive. Dagnarus was

highly pleased at their success and praised the taan. The taan razed the city, burning it to the ground. Dagnarus then instructed the taan shamans to place a powerful Void magic curse upon the soil so nothing would ever grow there again. Dullifed stands as a warning to the rest of Loerem — to cross the God of the Rock is to invoke the terrible wrath of the taan.





CHAPTER 5: TAAN MAGIC



Summoning the Void


Rorng, my nizam, was dying. I had used all my knowledge of herbs and mashed root poultices, but it wasn't enough. His wounds were too grave.

The young warriors began to murmur among themselves about a kdah-klk, a contest to choose a new nizam.

Rorng was a good nizam and respected me. These young warriors were fiery-tempered and impertinent. They would not lead wisely and would not regard me so highly.

I prayed to the gods for a remedy, anything that would put Rorng on the path to wellness. That is not what I was granted. Instead, hate, like an icy spear, touched my heart and I thrust my fingers into Rorng's chest. I was driven by a force that I was not able to control. The blood from Rorng's body ran down my arms and my hide soaked it up like a soothing oil.

My nizam howled in pain and rage, but it was too late. I felt renewed, my old body invigorated. When I opened my eyes, and realized what I had done, Rorng was a dried husk. I turned to the tribe and told them that the gods had appointed me nizam and I was to bring the power of magic to the taan tribes.



Shamans are the only taan permitted to use magic spells. Casting spells differs from the type of magic warriors use, which is not considered spellcasting but comes from the enchanted stones embedded in their bodies. Anyone other than shamans attempting to cast Void magic invites the wrath of Dagnarus and his shamans. Few taan break this law, since any young taan showing talent in Void magic are sought out at an early age and apprenticed to a shaman. Although warriors respect the shamans, they disdain the use of magic spells, believing such magic to be unworthy of them.

The taan are advantaged in Void magic and disadvantaged in all other elements. The taan have given themselves over to the Void and consider themselves children of the Void. Taan may become elemental mages, but rarely do so. Shamans skilled in other forms of magic are very highly respected, since they have had to work harder and study longer to master such magic. Taan shamans are known to practice all elemental magic with the exception of Water magic. They distrust this form of magic intensely.

Some among the taan believe that since the God of the Rock is the Lord of the Void, all of his shamans should practice Void magic to the exclusion of all other elemental magic. Other taan scoff at this notion, pointing out that the taan should use all forms of magic if that makes them stronger against their enemies. Conflicts between these two opposite viewpoints have continued since Dagnarus first brought them to this continent. Arguments have deteriorated into magical duels, with shaman against shaman, releasing devastating spells upon one another in order to prove their points. Dagnarus fosters these competitions, believing they make his shamans stronger.

The taan are highly efficient spellcasters. Shamans enchant stones with Void magic

then embed the stones beneath their hides, so they can cast spells more quickly and with less chance of injury than they would normally incur for spellcasting. Void-enchanted stones are also embedded into the flesh of warriors to protect them from enemy attacks, or to significantly empower a warrior's attacks against the enemy. Warriors consider the use of Void magic in this way to be entirely proper, for the magic of the stones merely enhances their own physical prowess.

Semi-precious or precious stones are preferred for stone enchantments. The taan also use agates and rock salt, since they have found those more accepting of certain enchantments than even the most precious gems. Shamans search for perfect, flawless stones to use in ritual embeddings. If the stones are flawed, the shaman must decide whether they are worth using or if the stones will cause more harm than good. A flawed stone may fail at a critical moment, leaving the shaman or warrior in dire straits.

Magical healing is impossible for the taan (unless accomplished through Void magic), since they are all considered to be tainted by the Void (even those who are not shamans). This makes healing from both spellcasting and battle a long and painful process, but one that the taan relish.

In addition to the spells presented in this book, taan shamans have access to the Void spells in the *Sovereign Stone Campaign Setting Core Rulebook* and the *Codex Mystrium*. Taan spells are not written down in great tomes like those of human sorcerers. Instead, taan shamans prefer to record their spells on the tanned hides of animals or the preserved skins of their adversaries (usually orks or humans). The shamans carry these scrolls with them, in packs that hang from tethers tied to their belts. Upon coming to Loerem, the taan discovered the art of tattooing. They learned they could punch potent dyes

beneath their hides, leaving designs and markings behind. Some shamans have taken to keeping spells they have created in this way, as well as spells that they want to have close at hand for easy reference. The tattoos are placed on parts of the body unmarred by ritual scarification.

STONE ENCHANTMENTS

Magical enchantments are placed on stones by taan shamans prior to embedding the stone beneath a taan's hide. Once embedded, the stones are attuned to their owner. Taan and half-taan can activate the power of one stone per round. Activating a stone's enchantment is a move action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, and is controlled mentally, simply by concentrating.

An enchanted stone continues to function so long as it remains whole. If the stone breaks, the enchantments dissipate. Shamans normally take care of enchanting and embedding their own stones, trusting no one else to do it for them. They also always try to place the most perfect stones they can find in themselves and in warriors who have earned their favor. Thus it is important for a warrior to remain on good terms with his shaman, for certain vindictive shamans have been known to embed flawed stones in those who have crossed them. Every tribe has laws against this and taan shamans caught embedding poor-quality enchanted stones may be banished or executed.

Enchanted stones with active magic still remaining can be scavenged from the bodies of dead taan. However, the magic of the stones appears to work only for the taan. Dagnarus gave several enchanted stones to human Void mages in his armies, instructing them to use Void power through the stones as the taan do. The attempts so far have ended in failure. Some humans have even tried embedding the stones beneath their skin, but in all cases, they

developed a terrible necrosis infection and died in agony as their flesh rotted away.

No taan will ever take a deceased taan's stones. The stones are left with the body, for taan believe the dead will need their stones when they are called to the great battleground in the next life. Taan grow enraged at the sight of a defiled body with the stones removed, for now the dead taan cannot prove his worth in the next life and he will be deprived of his place in paradise.

The taan shamans have learned over the years that certain enchantments work best when cast upon particular stones. The reason for this is unknown. Many enchantments are linked to certain types of stones and will not work with any other type. Skilled shamans have many stone enchantments to choose from, most of their own devising.

Shamans have learned that embedding multiple stones with the same enchantment in one taan is ineffective. For example, a taan shaman who has two pieces of agate imbued with the *mighty stroke* enchantment will not place both stones in a same body. Through some vagary in Void magic, both enchantments cancel each other out and neither will work. Instead, a shaman embeds one of the agates beneath the warrior's hide and save the second piece as a replacement when the first agate wears off.

Taan do not remove still-functioning stones unless they intend to ritually sacrifice these stones to Rivalent, goddess of gemstones. Instead, they merely have new ones embedded. An elder taan may have dozens of "dead" gems beneath the hide, a mark of status as a powerful warrior or shaman.

Stone enchantments often act to boost a taan's physical toughness. This can be critical during battle, permitting a warrior to shrug off an apparent debilitating hit and keep on fighting. Other enchantments enhance abilities, either

to the taan or weapons in possession. Stone enchantments never let a taan affect another creature directly. They affect only the stone's wearer or possessions within his magical aura.

Taan shamans can also use enchanted stones to help them cast Void spells. They have found they can store Void energy in stones, embed them into their bodies and employ them as "power sources" while casting. Each embedded stone must be specially tuned to the spell the shaman intends to cast. Once attuned to a particular spell, the stone cannot be used to aid in the casting of another spell. The most powerful of shamans have almost their entire spell repertoires cast upon gems and embedded beneath their skin. These shamans are very dangerous. Even the youngest taan shaman has one or two stones — usually a gift from a mentor — embedded in his hide to facilitate spellcasting.

To empower a stone, the shaman must remain in constant contact with the stone throughout the enchanting process. Any interruption in the interim ruins the enchantment and the shaman must begin anew. Once the enchantment is cast and the stone embedded, the taan wearer may use the stone to its full effect.

Each stone has a "life expectancy" based on an unflawed stone's capacity to hold an enchantment and to remain active. This varies according to the stone's type and properties. Rock salt has a low life expectancy, for example, while diamonds have an extremely long duration.

Flawed Stones

Taan must be very particular about the stones they pick to enchant. A flaw in a stone can lead to catastrophes when the stone's power is activated. It might leave the taan helpless, or possibly injure or even kill the taan, depending on the severity of the defect. Flaws in this case are not necessarily the same ones that would

decrease a gem's value. These flaws are weaknesses in the stone itself, such as overall size as compared to the power of the intended enchantment, density, color, and the like.

There is a 20% base chance that a stone is flawed in a way detrimental to the intended enchantment. To notice a flaw requires a successful Appraise or Craft (gemcutting) skill check (DC 15). Failure means that the defect goes unnoticed.

The severity of a defect affects how a stone reacts and behaves once enchanted. A flawed stone is assumed to have only a minor imperfection. There is a 10% chance that the flaw is actually a moderate imperfection. A stone with moderate imperfection has a 5% chance that the flaw is actually a major imperfection.

Minor Imperfection: A minor imperfection in a stone usually means a weak crystalline structure or small blemish that could cause some problems once it is imbued with magic.

The life expectancy of a stone with a minor imperfection is halved. Also, there is a 10% chance that the stone will fail to activate when used.

Moderate Imperfection: Such a flaw generally occurs as a small fracture that could cause minor splits in a stone. Stones of moderate imperfection are used only in the direst of circumstances and can be quite dangerous to the user.

The life expectancy of a stone with a moderate imperfection is one-quarter of normal. Furthermore, the stone has a 25% chance of failure (non-cumulative) each time it is used.

Even successful activation of the stone's enchantment carries its own perils. Every time the stone's power is called upon, there is a 5% cumulative chance that the stone will shatter. The taan or half-taan embedded with the stone takes 1d6 points of damage as the stone's Void magic is suddenly released.



Major Imperfection: These stones are extremely dangerous once enchanted. Taan are careful to find such stones and cull them out from usable stones. Because these flaws are often internal and may be overlooked, a stone with a major imperfection can sometimes be enchanted and then embedded.

Every time a stone with a major imperfection is used, there is a 10% cumulative chance that the stone will explode, sending shards and splinters in all directions, usually shredding through the taan's body and rupturing his hide, dealing 1d10 + 10 points of damage.

STONE ENCHANTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Following is a list of gemstones and the various stone enchantments commonly used in conjunction. Enchantments are listed for each stone, including a description of the enchantment's effects, life expectancy of the stone, who would be most likely to use the stone enchantment, and the enchantment's spell level, or CT (Casting Threshold) for those using the alternate magic system. All enchanted stones have a negligible weight and are never for sale.

Not all taan shamans learn to enchant stones (although those who don't are

certainly less respectable). To be able to do so requires the Enchant Stone feat. They also learn stone enchantments separately according to the enchantment's spell level as per normal spell acquisition and level progression.

For a reason yet to be explained, Void practitioners native to Loerem are unable to duplicate any effects of Void-enchanted stones. Once tainted with Void magic, the stones react violently when embedded in elves, dwarves, orks, humans, or pecwae. The skin under which the stone is embedded becomes reddened and irritated after only the first day. By the third day, the flesh covering the stone is affected with an accelerated necrosis. Once the flesh begins to deteriorate, healing magic has no effect. The creature embedded with the stone dies within a week. If the stones are removed after the reddening begins, but before the necrosis sets in, the creature can survive intact only to carry the scars to the end of its days.

AGATE

Hawk Eyes: An agate imbued with this enchantment grants a +4 competence bonus to sight-based Perception checks. Life Expectancy: 6 months; Who: warrior or shaman; Spell Level (CT): 1st (50).

Mighty Stroke: Grants the wearer a +2 enhancement bonus to Strength when activated. The bonus lasts for 10 consecutive rounds and can be used only once per day. Life Expectancy: 6 months; Who: assault troops; Spell Level (CT): 1st (34).

AMBER

Hide of Air: The wearer gains DR 5/silver. Life Expectancy: 3 months; Who: warrior or shaman; Spell Level (CT): 4th (136).

AMETHYST

Wind: The wearer gains a +2 enhancement bonus to Dexterity when activated. The

bonus lasts for 10 consecutive rounds and can only be used once per day. Life Expectancy: 6 months; Who: archers and scouts; Spell Level (CT): 1st (34).

BLOODSTONE

Caress the Heart: See *caress the heart* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 5 years; Who: shaman only; Spell Level (CT): 3rd (58).

BRIGHTSTONE

Bludgeoning Fury: Grants a +4 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls when wielding a bludgeoning weapon. Life Expectancy: 8 months; Who: scouts and assault troops; Spell Level: 4th (146).

Flow: Grants a +4 competence bonus to Stealth skill checks. Life Expectancy: 8 months; Who: scouts and shamans; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (90).

DIAMOND

Hide of Stone: Grants DR 10/adamantine. Life Expectancy: 100 years; Who: Any warrior or shaman; Spell Level (CT): 6th (188).

Hand of Stone: Once embedded, this stone's enchantment is always active. It transforms a wearer's hand into a powerful weapon that deals 1d8 damage, and the taan is considered armed. Life Expectancy: 100 years; Who: assault troops and scouts; Spell Level (CT): 5th (132).

EMERALD

Will of Stone: Once embedded, this stone is always active, granting a +2 morale bonus to Will saves. Life Expectancy: 70 years; Who: warrior or shaman; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (62).

Blessed Will: Once embedded, this stone is always active, granting a +4 morale bonus to Will saves. Life Expectancy: 7 years; Who: warrior; Enchantment CT: 4th (118).

GARNET

Senses Open: Once embedded, this stone is always active, granting a +2 competence bonus to all Perception checks. Life Expectancy: 2 years; Who: archers and scouts; Enchantment CT: 2nd (62).

IOLITE

Weak Words: The wearer can understand the language of a lesser race (pecwae, elves, dwarves, orks, humans, etc.), specified at the enchantment process. Once embedded, this stone is always active. Life Expectancy: 2 years; Who: archers and shamans; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (95).

JADE, CARVED

Circle of Fear: See *circle of fear* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 15 years; Who: nizams and shamans; Spell Level (CT): 3rd (52).

JADE, SCULPTED

Convulsions: See *convulsions* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 20 years; Who: shaman only; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (50).

LAPIS LAZULI

Armor Hide: Once embedded, this stone is always active, granting a +4 natural armor bonus. Life Expectancy: 5 months; Who: assault troops and shamans; Spell Level (CT): 4th (202).

Shield Hide: Once embedded, this stone is always active, granting a +2 natural armor bonus. Life Expectancy: 5 months; Who: archers, scouts, and shamans; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (118).

MOONSTONE

Shadow Form: See *shadow form* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 3 months; Who: shaman only; Spell Level (CT): 4th (92).

OBSIDIAN, SNOWFLAKE

Shadow Net: See *shadow net* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 6 months; Who: shaman only; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (56).

ONYX

Void Talon: See *void talon* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 1 year; Who: warrior or shaman; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (31).

PYRITE SHARDS

Miscommunication: See *miscommunication* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 1 month; Who: shaman only; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (68).

QUARTZ

Well: Keeps the wearer from succumbing to illnesses, granting one reroll per saving throw against ailments and diseases, including magical, but you must accept the new result. Once embedded, this stone is always active. Life Expectancy: 6 months; Who: warrior or shaman; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (90).

QUARTZ, ROSE

Transfer Essence: See *transfer essence* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 1 month; Who: warrior; Spell Level (CT): 1st (42).

QUARTZ, SMOKY

Wisp of Smoke: See *wisp of smoke* in "New Void Magic Spells," below. Life Expectancy: 6 months; Who: shaman only; Spell Level (CT): 3rd (68).

ROCK SALT

Fear No Fire: Once embedded, this stone is always active, granting fire resistance 30. Life Expectancy: 1 month; Who: warrior or shaman; Spell Level (CT): 3rd (90).

RUBY

Clenched Teeth: Once embedded, this

stone is always active, granting a +2 resistance bonus to all Fortitude saves. Life Expectancy: 80 years; Who: warrior or shaman; Spell Level (CT): 3rd (62).

Great Arm: When activated, this enchantment grants a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength. The bonus lasts for 10 consecutive rounds and can be used only once per day. Life Expectancy: 80 years; Who: archers and assault troops; Spell Level (CT): 5th (90).

TOURMALINE

Desert Speed: This enchantment may be activated up to 3 times a day to grant an extra move action and a +1 dodge bonus to AC for one round. Life Expectancy: 8 months; Who: archers, scouts, shamans; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (104).

TUROUOISE

Silent Killer: Grants a +4 competence bonus to Stealth skill checks. Life Expectancy: 5 months; Who: scouts and shamans; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (90).

ANY GEMSTONE

Weakness: A malicious enchantment often secretly used by shaman against taan warriors who have crossed them, this enchantment bestows a -4 penalty to Strength and Constitution every time the wearer enters combat. The abilities return to normal after the combat ends. Life Expectancy: 2 years; Who: warrior; Spell Level (CT): 2nd (90).

NEW VOID MAGIC SPELLS

The following features Void spells brought by taan shamans from their homeland. It is possible that non-taan Void mages could learn to use taan spells. The biggest problem for non-taan spellcasters is acquiring the spell and then deciphering it. Learning

the incantations is the next difficult step. For those who are very dedicated, their endeavors are rewarded with some of the most powerful and deadly Void spells in existence.

CARESS THE HEART

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/ wizard 3; **CT** 58

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, M (heart of creature type)

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target one living creature

Duration 1 round + concentration

Saving Throw see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

You cause severe pains in the target's chest, as well as shortness of breath. You must be holding a still-warm heart from the type of creature you are trying to affect. For example, to affect a mountain lion, you must have the fresh heart of a mountain lion. To cast the spell on another taan, you need the still-warm heart of a taan.

You create a magical link between the heart you hold and the target creature's heart. By concentrating and squeezing the heart, the shaman can do 2d8 hit points of damage every round to the target for as long as you concentrate.

The target creature must make a successful Will saving throw (normal DC + most recent damage dealt by this spell) to perform or continue with any standard actions. Should the save fail, the target can perform only one move action. The target must remain within range and in your sight or the spell ends immediately. It also stops when the creature falls unconscious, or when you ever lose hold of the heart.

CIRCLE OF FEAR

School necromancy [fear, mind-affecting];

Level sorcerer/ wizard 3; **CT** 52

Element Void

Casting Time

Components V, S

Range touch

Area 20-ft. radius centered on touched creature

Duration 10 min./level

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You create an aura of terror that extends in a 20-foot radius around a touched creature. All non-taan entering that area must save or become frightened. Creatures with more HD than the caster are not affected. Taan shamans cast this spell upon their leaders and themselves.

CONVULSIONS

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 2; **CT** 50

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target one Large or smaller living creature

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw Fort negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You shut down a creature's nervous system and send its body into violent convulsions, dealing 2d6 points of damage each round until a successful save is made or the spell expires. Restraining the affected creature does not halt the seizures, nor does it lessen the damage. Attacking, movement, speech and defense are impossible for a creature in the painful grip of this spell.

DEFECT

School transmutation; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 1; **CT** 8

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect ray

Target one random embedded stone

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes

On a successful ranged touch attack with this spell, you corrupt an embedded stone (chosen randomly) in the target, altering its composition sufficiently to cause a moderate flaw. This spell is used during tribal warfare, or to punish a rebel taan.

DESICCATE

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 5; **CT** 96

Element Void

Casting Time 1 round

Components V, S

Range long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Target one object or living creature

Duration 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw Fort partial; **Spell Resistance** yes

You send a crackling disk of black energy spiraling toward a creature within range. The disk strikes it unerringly, wrapping it within ebony bands that saps energy.

The creature can still move about while the spell is in effect, but receives 2d8 points of damage every round (or 1d6 with a successful Fort save) until the duration expires.

Creatures killed by this spell are reduced to nothing more than dried husks. Inanimate objects can be affected and suffer the same damage, becoming dry and brittle. Survivors of the spell are fatigued and severely dehydrated. They will need an hour of complete rest and plenty of fluids to recover.

EMBED

School transmutation; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 1; **CT** 52

Element Void

Casting Time 1 minute

Components V, S

Range touch

Target one creature

Duration permanent

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

You can embed empowered stones into your own hides and enhancement gems into the bodies of taan warriors. The recipient takes no damage from the spell and suffers no side effects from the embedded material. An unwilling target must be unconscious for this spell to function. Once cast, the foreign material essentially becomes part of the body.

EMPOWER STONE

School enchantment and transmutation;
Level sorcerer/wizard 5; **CT** (25 + spell's CT)

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range touch

Target one stone

Duration permanent until discharge

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell lets you attune stones to different spells so you may use the stones as power sources for casting. The effect is identical to *spellstaff*, except the spell is stored in a stone, it must be the same spell every time per stone (specified when casting this spell), and the stone must be embedded in you for you to discharge it.

For the alternate magic system, *empower*



stone works as follow:

An empowered stone can be used to channel Void magic during casting. When a stone is empowered, it is imbued with a number of Void magic points equal to 1d8 per caster level in Void magic. For example, a 3rd-level taan Void mage empowers a stone for the *miscommunication* spell. He rolls 3d8 and gets an 11. The stone has 11 Void magic points, usable when the shaman casts *miscommunication*.

You must decide at the beginning of casting whether you are going to use the stone. If you decide to use the stone, make your casting rolls and Fortitude saves as normal. When you fail a save, however, the stone absorbs damage up to its Void magic points. When you voluntarily sacrifices life to the Void, you can reduce the damage by the number of points left in the stone, though you must have already been using the stone in your spellcasting to do so. You cannot begin casting and then decide to use the stone. It is possible for you to stop using the stone at any time during casting, but you cannot take advantage of the stone until casting begins anew.

Empowered stones recharge at a rate of 1 point/hour unless they are burned out, at which time the stones are useless and new ones need to be embedded. If a stone should burn out (Void magic points brought to 0), damage accumulate as normal on the caster. Any overflow damage from sacrificing life to the Void injures the caster.

As with other enchanted stones, if two or more stones empowered with the same spell are embedded in you, they cancel one another out, none of them will work. Only one empowered stone can be used at any time.

EXPLODING BONES

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 3; **CT** 109

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range touch

Target one humanoid corpse

Duration permanent

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes (object)

Taan shamans use this enchantment to protect the resting places of notable taan from grave robbers. Under this enchantment, the bones of the corpse explode should the skeleton ever be disturbed. When the corpse is moved, jostled, or handled in any way that disturbs its rest, the bones detonate to deal 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6) in 20-foot-radius spread. Creatures in the area of effect get a Reflex saving throw for half damage. The corpse is completely destroyed (as are most non-magical possessions on or surrounding the body).

MISCOMMUNICATION

School enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 2; **CT** 68

Element Void/Water

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Target one humanoid

Duration 1 min./level

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You can muddle the words of those creatures communicating via language. The spell garbles a humanoid creature's ability to comprehend what is being said to it unless the saving throw is successful. This can be very frustrating for all parties involved, since the affected creature does not realize that something is wrong, while those speaking to it believe they are being ignored. This spell is especially useful on the battlefield when used to distort commands and instigate chaos among soldiers. Use the following table for the

target creature's reaction for that round.

1d10	Reaction
1	Understands statement clearly, reacts normally.
2-4	Hears the exact opposite of what is said.
5-7	Disregards what is said as meaningless.
8-9	Believes what is said is a personal insult.
10	Understands statement clearly, reacts normally.

POISON SPIT

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 1; **CT** 12

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range 20 ft.

Effect stream of poison at a target creature

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw Reflex negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You spit a stream of black poison at a creature. Unless it succeeds on a Reflex save, the poison hits and blinds it for one round.

This spell is usually used by a taan shaman on the losing end of a fight to earn a quick reprieve for help to arrive.

SHADOW FORM

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 4; **CT** 92

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range personal

Target you

Duration 10 min./level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

This spell enables you to detach your shadow from yourself and transfer consciousness from your body to your

shadow. With a few exceptions, you can use the shadow form as you would your normal form: spellcasting, move, etc. You cannot carry anything, since your shadow body is incorporeal and gains the incorporeal trait. When confronted with a source of bright light (sunlight or equivalent), however, you must retreat into a dark or shaded area within one round or the spell ends, returning you instantly to your physical body. If your physical body is discovered and attacked, the spell ends immediately. If the your shadow form is not within 20 feet of your body when the spell ends, you are dazed for one round after re-joining your physical body.

SHADOW NET

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 2; **CT** 56

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect shadowy entangling net ensnaring up to 4 Large or smaller creatures

Duration 1 min./level (D)

Saving Throw Reflex negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You conjure a net composed of shadows and Void magic that can ensnare up to 4 Large or smaller creatures within a 20-foot-radius spread. Creatures trapped within the net are entangled. A creature can free itself with a DC 25 Escape Artist check or a successful combat maneuver check against CMD = 10 + key ability modifier + caster level. The net does no damage to trapped creatures. The strands can be cut (5 hit points) by trapped creatures with daggers or other small sharp implements already in hand. A creature can break the net a Strength check (DC 30) as a full-round action. The net will not burn and cannot be burned.

SINKING BOG

School transmutation; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 4; **CT** 174

Element Void

Casting Time 1 minute

Components V, S, M (embedded gold)

Range long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Area 100-ft.-radius spread

Duration 10 min./level (D)

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

You create a boggy area as a 100-foot-radius spread that is between 4 and 8 feet deep, centered on any point within range. The bog slows all charges. Those caught in it are reduced to half base speed. Melee attacks in the bog are made at –4 (as if prone), since it is impossible to get a good foothold or move about effectively.

The bog hardens after the spell expires, leaving behind blackened and misshapen earth. All vegetations within wilt immediately, including trees and brush, and all plant creatures of 1 HD or less die instantly. Any creatures still in the bog when it hardens are trapped in its earthen grip. They can extricate themselves by dealing 20 points of damage to the earth beneath them. Meanwhile, all attacks against trapped creatures gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

The spell is most useful when an enemy force is charging across open ground and the shamans have time enough to cast it. Since the spell is difficult to cast, shamans usually cooperate to withstand the massive amount of Void energy required for the



spell to work. All the shamans casting *sinking bog* in cooperation must have gold embedded into their flesh. This helps the taan focus and channel the energies necessary. This spell can never be cast into a stone for embedding, since it consumes the stone in a matter of minutes. The gold within bodies of the shamans who cast this spell will last three castings, at which point the gold loses its power and turns into lead.

STAND STILL

School enchantment; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 2; **CT** 50

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)

Target one Large or smaller living creature

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw Fort partial; **Spell Resistance**

You can paralyze a creature, freezing it where it stands unless it makes a successful Fortitude saving throw. Even then, its base speed is halved for the duration of the spell. The creature retains vocal functions and is able to call for help. The spell is particularly useful in battle, for it prevents a creature from fleeing, thus rendering it an easy target either for killing or capture.

STONE SPIRIT

School divination; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 2; **CT** 52

Element Earth/Void

Casting Time 1 round

Components V, S, M (stone of appropriate type)

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect one summoned stone spirit

Duration 1 min./level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no
You summon and bind a spirit of earth, forcing it to provide you with information regarding the presence and location of

raw precious gemstones within a 500-foot radius. You must have a sample of the type of stone that you seek for component. The sample is thrown into a fire in the process of casting the spell. If stones of that type are within the area, the spirit informs you and you are able to relay vague directions to the stones' location. For example, a shaman looking for agates casts this spell and is subsequently given to understand that agates are located within the waters of a nearby river. He will be able to guide other taan to the river and provide a rough search perimeter. The spell does not tell the shaman how deep stones are buried, nor does it reveal the quality of the stones.

TRANSFER ESSENCE

School necromancy; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 1; **CT** 42

Element Void

Casting Time 1 minute

Components V

Range touch

Target one creature

Duration see text

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

You are able to take a portion of your life essence and transfer it to another creature. Even with the spell empowered in an embedded stone, casting the spell is a long and painful process and cannot be done in the chaotic cut and thrust of combat.

You transfer a preselected amount of your essence to the wounded. This essence can heal even the most horrific damage. For every round you maintain contact with the target creature, you take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage, while the creature heals 1 hit point of damage and suffers 1 point of nonlethal damage. You and the stone used (if any) for this spell must remain in direct physical contact with the creature throughout the transfer. Before casting the spell, you must decide how much of your life essence to transfer and

how long you want to remain in contact with the recipient. Any miscalculation can incapacitate or even kill you!

A stone enchanted with this spell is normally embedded into the taan's hand. This way, you can touch the recipient of the spell with both your hand and the stone.

VOID TALONS

School evocation [Void]; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 2; **CT** 31

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range personal

Target you

Duration 1 round/level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

Your hands are coated with a black, oily substance that drips from the fingers and resembles talons, gaining additional 2d6 to damage dealt by your unarmed strikes. Taan shamans use this spell when they engage opponents in melee combat.

WISP OF SMOKE

School transmutation; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 3; **CT** 68

Element Void

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range personal

Target you

Duration 1 min./level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

You can transform his body into an insubstantial wisp of smoke. This spell is identical to *gaseous form*, except you cannot rise off the ground. You are very noticeable and easy to perceive until you move out of sight (at which point you become impossible to track).

MAGIC ITEMS AND RELICS

Although the taan prize magic, they keep relatively few magical artifacts compared to the other races of Loerem. Most of the taan's magical power comes from spells and the gems embedded beneath their hides. In their own homeland, the taan would seize the enchanted weapons and armor of their enemies and distribute the booty to the best warriors and shamans of the tribe. Any taan has a chance of detecting Void-enchanted magical artifacts, no matter how well they have been hidden. Most of the magic items in the possession of the taan in Loerem were taken after raids on human settlements or stolen from the occasional unfortunate adventurer. The only artifacts of interest to the taan are artifacts of Void magic.

The taan have discovered their own attunement to the Void causes objects enchanted with the natural elements to be unreliable for them as well as physically uncomfortable to use. The harm done is reflective of the particular element. A taan gripping a dwarven sword enchanted by Fire magic, for example, will feel it burning hot to the touch. A taan grabbing a bow enhanced by elven Air magic finds the bow blown out of his hands by unseen wind. The taan are particularly wary of Water magic and go out of their way to avoid touching anything that might have something to do — however remotely — with water.

Magic items brought by the taan from their homeland are the most powerful of taan relics. These are usually kept by nizams and shamans. All taan magic items were created for a specific reason or a specific person. They are highly prized and it is unlikely that one would be discovered just lying about. An artifact might be found in a taan tomb or at a sacred site, but, if so, it is almost certainly protected from thieves by powerful Void magic.

NECKLACE OF THE AGES

A crude looking necklace, this piece of jewelry is a collection of odd-sized gem fragments, bone, and teeth. It is believed to have been made by a shaman so devoted to his tribe that he refused to die, fearing he would leave his people with an inferior replacement.

He continued to live year after year, outliving his children, their children and even their children. He credited his long life to this necklace and never took it off. He was finally slain by the tribe's nizam, who tore the necklace from the shaman's neck. The shaman disintegrated to a pile of dust. The nizam put the necklace around his own neck.

The tribe was conquered in battle and the necklace was lost. Some believe that a tasker, not knowing its power, retrieved the necklace. No one knows whether the necklace has come to Loerem. If so, whoever owns it must be keeping it a secret, for it has not been seen, although there have been taan known for longevity way past the time when old age should

have claimed them.

The *necklace of ages* freezes its owner in time. The taan does not age until it is removed (although he can still die from wounds or disease).

SHAMANISTIC KNIVES

Taan shamans carry special knives for ritual scarring and they have also taken to using knives as a focus for casting Void magic spells. The tradition began after Dagnarus revealed himself as their god. He showed them the Dagger of the Vrykyl, which he uses to create the God-Touched. The taan were so impressed with this that now their shamans carry daggers in homage to the power that Dagnarus wields and as a symbol of their union with the Void. Dagnarus gave the first shamans their daggers. The daggers were buried with their owners, who created new daggers to give to their pupils. Now all shamans receive their daggers from their mentors. The daggers are sanctified during a long ritual wherein a shaman fashions a dagger for his pupil and bestows it upon him. The



dagger becomes the shaman's conduit to the Void and he is now deemed ready to cast spells.

The knives are small with blades no more than eight inches long. The handle is an elaborately carved piece of wood that is hardened, polished and decorated with intricate designs made from precious metals or gem fragments suspended in a hardened resin. The blade is made from either sharpened stone or steel and may hold some significance for the shaman. The blade might be taken from a weapon he captured in battle or it might be a stone found near a sacred site. Some shamans coat their knives with diamond dust to make them extraordinarily sharp.

Shamans often attach trinkets of significance to the handle or to the leather sheaths that hold the daggers. These may include jewelry from foes they have vanquished, gems from the site where they first used their magic, teeth from fearsome predators, or gifts from a nizam or Dagnarus.

Shamans consider these knives sacred. Only the shaman who owns the dagger and the shaman who made it are permitted to wield it. No other taan in the tribe would think of touching or stealing these sacred daggers. Even enemy taan would think twice about taking a shamanistic dagger, for many stories are told of how the Void curses those who do. Shamans guard these knives with their lives, since the knives help channel Void magic. The daggers are never used in combat unless the situation is desperate and a shaman has no other means of attack or defense available. The shamans have discovered that if they use their sacred daggers in melee combat, they release a backlash of Void power that may kill themselves as well as their opponent.

If a shaman has a particularly promising student, he might present that student with his own knife, fashioning a new one for himself. There is no higher honor than

to receive a dagger from one's mentor.

The daggers are not passed down through inheritance, but are always buried with the shaman. If a dagger is stolen from a shaman's grave, the dagger will curse thief, slowly draining him of all life essence until he dies. The stolen dagger causes the thief to become tainted by Void and each day that the dagger is away from the burial site, it drains 1d4 hit points. The only way to halt the curse is to return the dagger to the grave and rebury it. The thief may not cast Void magic spells while the dagger is in his possession from the fact that the Void is draining him.

The daggers have a +1 enhancement bonus. If a shaman stabs an opponent with his dagger, the opponent takes normal damage, but then both the shaman and the opponent take an additional 2d6 points of Void energy damage. As well, a magical link is made between the shaman and the opponent that cannot be broken. The two are locked together, taking 2d6 hit points of damage every round until one or the other (or both) are dead. As soon as one of the two dies, the dagger relinquishes the bond.

STONE EYES

At least three pairs of these ancient magical artifacts are known to have been brought with the taan through the Portal to Loerem. No one knows how many existed prior to the migration. The stone eyes are made from polished agates, usually brown in color, and they always come in pairs. If one of the two in a pair is lost, it always magically returns to its mate.

To activate the enchantment of the *stone eyes*, the user must remove one of his own eyes and replace it with an agate eye. This deals 1d4 permanent hit point loss. The user can see out of the new eye just as he saw out of his old eye.

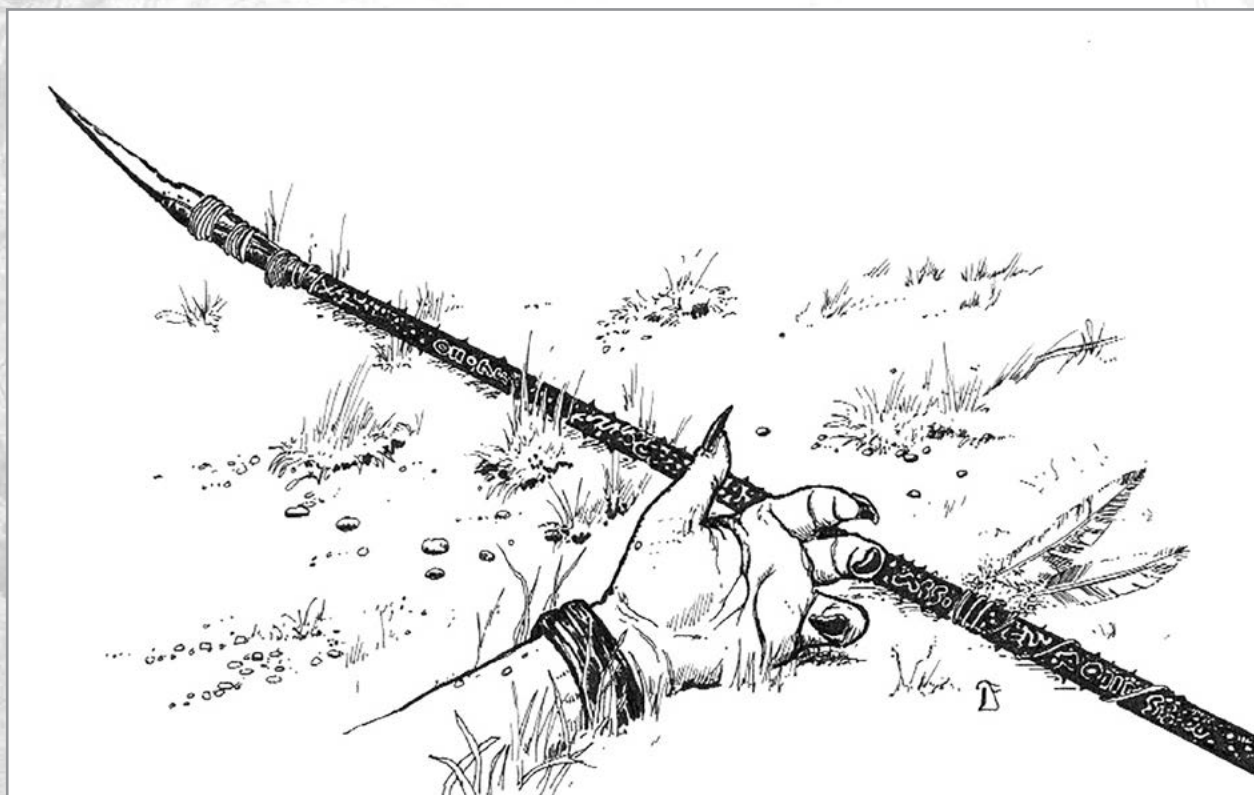
By concentrating, the user is able to see through the second agate eye, wherever it

might be placed. The agate replacement glows a bright crimson when it is used to see through the other stone. The user may look in any direction and for as long as he maintains concentration. This, however, precludes him from doing anything else. The magic ends if the concentration is broken.

ZUKTOK

Zuktok is an herbal poultice infused with a small amount of Void magic. The poultice is highly sought after by the taan in Loerem, but only shamans know how to make the concoction. Dagnarus is in the process of learning its secrets so that he can share its advantages with his allies.

The poultice is extremely pungent, but the smell is not unbearable. If the taan believe that they might face fire attack in a battle, those with access to zuktok smear it all over their bodies, and then don their armor over it. The zuktok grants the user fire resistance 15. The poultice works only on the hide of living creatures, not objects; it will not work when smeared over a wooden door, for example.





CHAPTER 6: TAAN EQUIPMENT




Curdoc, Vinnengaelean Sage

Who can say why the taan are so brutal and uncivilized? Perhaps their native land is so hostile that the only way for them to survive was through savage butchery.

Perhaps they were the prey in their land, continually hunted. In this instance, it makes perfect sense for them to subscribe to a warrior code. Survival of the fittest. Throw away the weak. I must say, in this I see a small similarity between the taan and the dwarves.

Then again, it could be that the taan are wholly given over to the Void. If so, this explains the reason for their murderous rampages — they worship a cult of death.



TAAN WEAPONS

The taan believe good weapons make good warriors. Taan are expert weapon manufacturers and take a great deal of care with the weapons they craft. Before Dagnarus appeared to them, the taan used weapons made from stone and wood. To this day, they still employ these ancient weapons, although they have also been quick to adopt the weapons of Loerem's other races.

Dagnarus showed taan the secrets of smelting iron ore and the creation of steel. The taan have found that weapons made from these materials are more effective than those made of stone.

The taan prize their weapons highly, often decorating them with valuable gems and trophies taken from those they have slain. Weapons are unique and it is easy for a taan to tell his weapon from another's.

All taan weapons are exotic weapons for non-taan characters.

Taan Weapon Descriptions

Taan weapons found on Table 6-1 (plus blowgun) are described below.

An-kyx: Resembling a shortsword, the ankyx's blade is as long as a taan's forearm. In the old world, an an-kyx was crafted by taan shamans using spells to sculpt the stone into the correct shape. Most shamans prefer granite, since it is strong and the variations in color make for a formidable-looking weapon. Once the spell changes the stone into a malleable form, the weapon is fashioned. The hilt is an extension of the blade, made to fit the hand of the warrior who is to wield it. When the stone hardens, the edges are sharpened either on a wheel or with magic. Sometimes shamans embed stones in the pommel to match the stones in the warrior's hand or arm. The creation process for these weapons has changed little with the migration to Loerem. Because they are made with magic, the taan sometimes favor them over steel weapons forged without the use of magic.

Blowgun: Dagnarus showed the taan how to use blowguns that shoot poison darts in order to take down an animal or render enemy unconscious without any noise. The blowguns are crafted from wood that is hollowed out by drilling and

TABLE 6-1: TAAN WEAPONS

Simple Weapon	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight	Type	Special
<i>Light Melee Weapons</i>								
An-kyx	10 argents	1d4	1d6	x3	—	4 lbs.	S	—
Rek	3 argents	1d4	1d4	18-20/x2	—	2 lbs.	B	—
<i>One-Handed Melee Weapons</i>								
Kul-olt	5 argents	1d6	1d6	x2	10 ft.	6 lbs.	B	—
Martial Weapon								
Simple Weapon	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight	Type	Special
<i>Light Melee Weapons</i>								
Sut-tum-olt	25 argents	1d6	1d6	18-20/x2	—	5 lbs.	S	—
<i>One-Handed Melee Weapons</i>								
Kep-ker	2 argents	1d6	1d8	19-20/x2	—	10 lbs.	B	reach
Krolthot	4 argents	1d6	1d6	19-20/x2	—	7 lbs.	S	double
Krul-ut	6 argents	1d6	2d4	x3	20 ft.	7 lbs.	P or S	—
Ky	20 argents	1d6	1d8	19-20/x2	—	12 lbs.	S	disarm
<i>Two-Handed Melee Weapons</i>								
Molkra	45 argents	1d8/1d8	1d10/1d10	x3	—	30 lbs.	S	double
Rrk-tum-olt	25 argents	1d8	1d10	x4	—	27 lbs.	B	—
Tum-olt	15 argents	1d10	2d6	x2	—	18 lbs.	S	—

then burned out by fire. The inside of the blowgun is then rasped smooth.

The darts were formerly made from sharpened obsidian and fletched with small feathers. Now the darts are made of slivers of steel and the fletching is normally bright string tied around a glass bead that is coated in resin and then glued to the steel.

Scouts find the blowgun useful, not only for knocking out guards, but for capturing the unwary or uncooperative. The poisons and knock-out potions are usually created by shamans, but some scouts have learned the skills for brewing these concoctions on their own.

Treat blowgun as exotic weapon for the taan and half-taan.

Kep-ker: This taan weapon resembles a quarterstaff. One tip of the kep-ker has a stone affixed to it, usually about the size of a taan's fist. The other end of the staff has a small ball carved from the wooden haft. A taan warrior using this weapon takes hold of the spherical end of the haft and whips the larger end around in great sweeping arcs. Kep-ker users prefer to select the wood for the haft personally. Most kep-kers appear dark red, almost black at the top. This is because kep-ker wielders like to soak the stone in the blood of their victims.

A kep-ker has reach and can strike opponents up to 10 feet away, but cannot be used against adjacent enemies.

Krolthrot: A most unusual-looking weapon, the krolthrot is a staff fire-hardened at both ends. Barbed hooks dangle from either end. The krolthrot is a double weapon and can be used as such, with all appropriate attack modifiers and penalties for using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. A creature wielding a double weapon in one hand, such as an ogre, cannot wield it as a double weapon.

Krul-ut: This weapon originated in Loerem when the taan began to study the weapons of their enemies. The krul-ut is

essentially a spear that is not topped by a single spearhead but three broad blades. The blades are razor sharp and made of steel. Long and ornate, the blades are about twice the length of a human dagger. The krul-ut can be hurled at opponents in the same manner as a halfspear or shortspear.

Kul-olt: This weapon consists of a stone ball roughly the size of a taan's fist. The ball is set inside a sturdy woven leather net attached to a thong. Taan brandish kul-olt like a mace. It is well balanced and can be hurled with precision, although the latter is rarely done, since taan dislike throwing away weapons.

Ky: Although an increasing number of younger taan are using this weapon, the older taan warriors disdain it, considering it greatly simplifies the slaying of an enemy and thus does not bring the wielder honor. A ky is a large sword with a curved blade that resembles a scimitar. The sword is sharpened along both edges and the tip of the sword is barbed to resemble an arrowhead.

Molkra: Before the taan knew of Dagnarus, thecmokzi was a weapon given to the taan by the god of battle. A molkra is grown, rather than fashioned, and the process takes several years. The taan would search until he found choice hardwood trees with limbs so straight they would make fine staves or spears. The taan cut notches into the limbs and then fit sharpened stone axe heads into the notches. After the axe heads were inserted, the taan would leave the tree to fashion the weapon itself. Every year the taan would return to the grove, checking to see if the tree had grown around the axe heads. When the axe head and branch had become one, the branch was cut off and used as a weapon.

Molkra are still used in Loerem. Some are still grown in the traditional manner, but many are now fashioned from wood and steel by weaponsmiths. Mokzis, a variant of the molkra, are a formidable

weapon with a long haft and a wide sweep favored by taan assault troops.

A **molkra** is a double weapon and can be used as such, with all appropriate attack modifiers and penalties for using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. A creature wielding a double weapon in one hand, such as an ogre, cannot wield it as a double weapon.

Rek: This weapon consists of a polished two-foot-long hardwood rod. The rek is carefully balanced by the finest of taan weaponmakers. Each end is covered with a heavy metal cap of sculpted stone. These caps are often spiked around the edges or embedded with sharp, jagged stones. The wielder holds the rek in the center, spinning it around to strike his opponent with either end. Taan often fight with a rek in each hand.

Rrk-tum-olt: This bludgeoning instrument consists of a wooden haft that is four or five feet long. Attached to the end of the stick is a two-foot long vine cord ending in a leather-clad stone ball. Taan can swing this ball with incredible speed and force, often crushing an opponent's limb or skull with a successful attack.

Sut-tum-olt: One of the most intimidating of taan bladed weapons is one of the smallest. Two blades protrude from a pommel, forming a V-shape. The pommel is fashioned to fit its wielder's hand. The weapon derives its name from

the tum-olt, as the first such weapons were made of petrified wood. Both edges of the blades are honed to razor sharpness. The sut-tum-olt is used as a slashing weapon with devastating effect. Taan warriors who prefer the sut-tumolt often learn to wield two at once, one in each hand.

Tum-olt: This weapon resembles a greatsword, except the blade is serrated. Initially, tum-olts were made of petrified wood, either carved or shaped magically. Several of the original weapons have been handed down through the years and are wielded with honor by a taan in Loerem. Since Dagnarus brought steel to the taan, the use of petrified wooden blades has fallen out of fashion. Weaponsmiths now make tum-olts from steel. The hilts are wrapped in leather and often trimmed with semiprecious stones.

TAAN ARMOR

For the most part, a taan wears armor that denotes his prestige within the tribe. A high-ranking warrior wears the very best steel armor, while a young warrior set on proving himself in his first battle may don armor cobbled together from several old sets discarded by his elders. Some taan use armor passed onto them by superiors. Such armor is carefully repaired and maintained and receiving such a gift confers a great honor upon the warrior.

Armor nearly always consists of

TABLE 6-2: TAAN ARMOR

ARMOR	ARMOR/SHIELD		MAX DEX	ARMOR CHECK	ARCANE SPELL	SPEED		
	COST	BONUS	BONUS	PENALTY	FAILURE	30 FT.	20 FT.	WEIGHT
<i>Light armor</i>								
Culb-thot	30 argents	+4	+5	-1	10%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lbs.
<i>Medium Armor</i>								
Alk-thot	140 argents	+5	+3	-4	20%	20 ft.	15 ft.	35 lbs.
Lek-thot	270 argents	+6	+2	-5	25%	20 ft.	15 ft.	40 lbs.
<i>Shields</i>								
Zuk	5 argents	+2	—	—	5%	—	—	4 lbs.
Zuk-tel	15 argents	+2	—	-1	5%	—	—	6 lbs.

greaves, bracers and a chest protector. The taan seldom wear helmets in battle, but may do so during ceremonies. Any stones adorning their faces raise the hide of their foreheads and pates enough to make wearing head gear uncomfortable.

Armor is usually made of layered bone, horn, or thick hide that is worked into pieces like scales, and held together with metal rings or leather straps. The shells of razor-mouthed turtles are especially prized, since the shells have spiny protrusions that can turn blades or used as additional weapons. Leather fasteners are most often used to hold the armor in place.

With the availability of steel, many of the taan have taken to wearing metal armor. Given as gifts by Dagnarus, metal armor was originally worn only by commanders and honored warriors, but is now being integrated into the rank and file. Taan will strip an enemy of his armor, incorporating it into his own.

A few taan refuse to wear metal armor, finding it too cumbersome and restrictive. An increasing number are seeing the benefits of its use, however, especially after fighting humans and elves.

Taan Armor Descriptions

Taan armor and shields found on Table 6-2 are described below.

Alk-thot: A culb-thot improved by adding bits of armor from vanquished foes. Since there are few foes as large as the taan, captured armor rarely fits. Taan taskers take sections of leather armor and affix it to culb-thot tunics, strengthening them. Pieces of metal armor can be used as well, although they must be held in place with leather straps since the resin is not strong enough to hold sections of steel and iron armor. Chain armor is often used as reinforcement. A growing number of warriors are fond of this armor, for they can use it to display battle trophies.

Culb-thot: The simplest of taan armor, a

culb-thot is a tunic that covers the wearer's torso and hangs down as far as his knees. The tunic is often made of leather, though in some cases thick cloth is used. The tunic is sewn with twine or leather strips and made to fit. Once the tunic has been completed, it is soaked in a heated resin comprised of various tree saps and the blood of slain enemies and slaves. As it is left to dry, bits of stone, scraps of metal, and other items are affixed to it. The resin holds them in place. A culb-thot is lightweight.

Lek-thot: The most impressive of taan-made armor, a lek-thot is forged to fit a taan much like plate mail is made to fit humans. Skilled taan metalsmiths fashion steel breastplates, gauntlets, grieves and shoulder protectors the proper size for taan warriors. The plates are held together by leather straps and buckles. If the warrior is a nizam or one of Dagnarus's favorites, the plates are embellished with designs and are sometimes set with gemstones.

Zuk: Used as a shield, though a shield of a different construction than those used by the races of Loerem. A zuk consists of two thick pieces of wood fastened together by leather thongs into an X-shape with a handhold on one side of the "X." A taan warrior employs the zuk in combat by holding it in front of him and turning it to deflect blows from an enemy.

Zuks last through 1d4 battles before they must be replaced. They are useless against ranged attacks.

Zuktel: An X-shaped zuk interlaced with leather strips. The leather is reinforced with resin and often decorated with colorful designs. So intricate is the weaving that a zuktel functions as well or better than any of the traditional shields employed by Loerem's races in protecting against ranged attacks, granting a +1 shield bonus against missiles such as arrows, bolts, bullets, and darts. Zuktels are cumbersome, however.



they can be moved in a pouch or hung from a belt. They are made of strong wood, with joints of bone or metal, and are extremely sturdy despite their small size.

Tent: Taan tents are exceptional. Each is large enough to house four taan. Each tent has a flap that can be lowered to keep out the wind, and a hole at the top to vent the smoke of a fire built inside the tent. The tent is raised by taking short, stout poles and fitting them together to form a frame that appears rickety until a layer of sturdy hides is added to the outside. The tent breaks down very quickly and each taan using the tent carries a portion of poles and hides in a stout backpack. When traveling, the taan usually split up the tent components so they would carry about seven pounds each.

TAAN GOODS

Taan are nomads in the old world. As such, they improved upon a couple of designs to fit their lifestyle.

TABLE 6-3: TAAN GOODS

Item	Cost	Weight
Tanning frame	7 argents	4 lbs.
Tent	10 argents	28 lbs.

Taan Goods Descriptions

Items found on Table 6-3 are described below.

Tanning Frame: Since the taan were required to constantly transport everything in their possession, they made all objects lightweight and easy to carry. This resulted in the invention of ingenious collapsible wooden frames used to tan and preserve animal hides. The frames fold down so that




CHAPTER 7: DAGNARUS'S ARMY



Lord Bavesh, Dunkargan Master-at-Arms

It is my job to teach you miserable sons of worms how to fight. And you will fight. You will fight and you will die. That is why your mothers squeezed you out. I don't care if you are hungry. I don't care if you are thirsty. I don't even care if your bellies are slit and your innards are hanging out. Such pain is nothing compared to the pain you will endure in the tender care of those ugly bastards. You want to save your daughters from bearing their twisted young? You want to save your wives the same? You want your sons to be eaten like cattle? Then learn to fight, damn you! Fighting is all that you have left!



TAAN FORCES

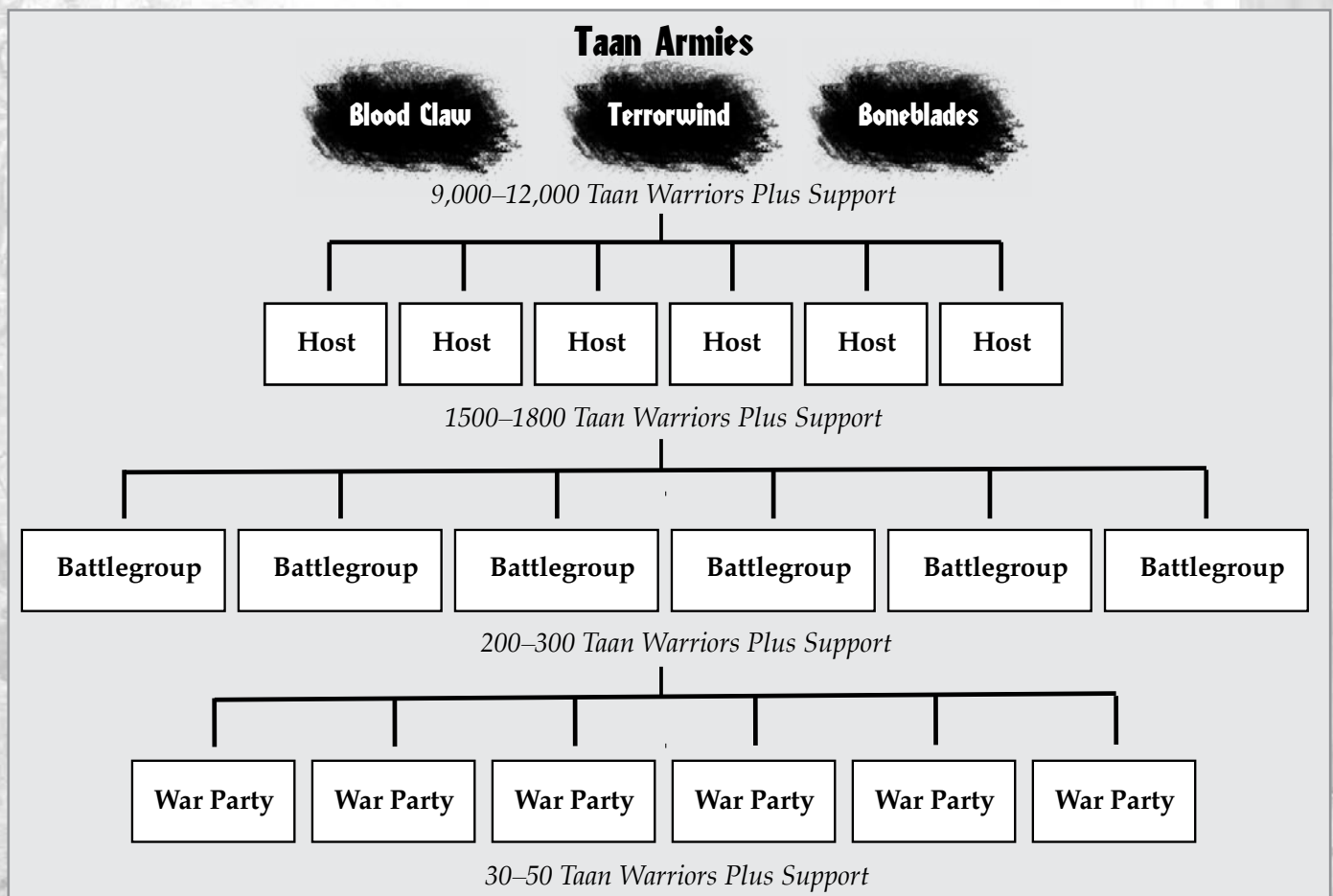
Taan society has changed with their migration to Loerem. While still in their old land, Dagnarus brought the strongest tribes together to form three separate armies: the Bloodclaw, Terrorwind, Boneblades. At first, the tribes which had warred against each other for centuries found the peaceful coexistence difficult, if not impossible. They were fiercely independent and constantly battling.

Dagnarus understood the taan's nature and, instead of attempting to prevent these fights, he leveraged them to his advantage. He encouraged the warring taan to turn their fury against the taan tribes that had refused to come under Dagnarus's banner. He chose several smaller, weaker tribes, brought them together under the leadership of a powerful nizam and pitted them against a large, powerful tribe. He showed the taan that by fighting together, they could defeat much larger, stronger tribes. Slowly, the

taan came to realize by forming alliances they could be an immensely powerful force, capable of conquering not just other taan, but an entire world. Soon a kinship developed among members of each of the three armies and now, after being together for over a century, everyone fights with a fierce loyalty. The term "army" and "tribe" have become synonymous.

Dagnarus encourages friendly rivalry between the armies and holds annual competitions, pitting the mightiest warriors of the three armies against each other in duels and challenges. He awards rich prizes of weapons and armor to the winners and often promotes them to higher ranks. Competitors are not permitted to seriously harm or injure one another. Those forgetting this and harm or kill their fellow taan are severely punished, stripped of their wealth and status.

The taan have always believed in loyalty to one's superior. The laws of



Dagnarus's taan armies are built upon this tenet. Gone are the days when the *kdah-klks* determined who would be the powerful leaders of the taan. For the most part, these have been replaced by a strict chain of command that discourages internal strife. Shamans, who used to be independent, have now been incorporated into the command structure, down to the smallest war party. If conflict breaks out among the taan, a high-ranking taan officer acts swiftly to settle the dispute.

War Party

The taan comprising Dagnarus's three armies in Loerem number around 75,000. The smallest unit of the taan army is a war party. A war party consists of thirty to fifty taan warriors led by a huntmaster. One or two shamans are assigned to each war party, advising the huntmaster and lending magical support. Fifty to seventy-five taskers also travel with a war party to cook, take care of children, manage the slaves, and perform the menial labor that is beneath the warriors or shamans.

The war party has become equivalent to the taan family. Members of a war party mate with each other, produce and raise children, form hunting parties, fight together, hold contests and challenges within the war party. Shamans select future shamans from within the war party. War parties are not permitted to fight each other, but are encouraged to work with each other in a battlegroup.

Battlegroup

Six war parties comprise a battlegroup. A battlegroup is usually 600-to-700 taan strong (with about 300 of them taskers and children.) Each battlegroup is under the command of a lesser nizam, who is accompanied by a bodyguard contingent of handpicked taan warriors. To serve as the lesser nizam's bodyguard is a great honor and can lead to advancement to huntmaster. The post is given to warriors

who have shown unparalleled courage or bravery in battle.

The bodyguard does not protect the lesser nizam from his fellow taan, who would never dream of harming a nizam, but they fight alongside him and protect him in battle. Once such protection might have been considered dishonorable, but Dagnarus taught the taan that the life of a nizam is valuable, for he provides stability for the tribe and directs strategies and troop movements in battle. The huntmasters commanding each of the war parties are chosen for their loyalty, competency, and bravery from among the lesser nizam's own bodyguards. A *kdah-klk* may be held among the bodyguards to select a huntmaster or the nizam may appoint one. These *kdah-klks* are mostly ceremonial in nature and provide an excuse for the taan to hold feasts and battle games.

A lesser nizam is normally attended by a cadre of shamans who are the most powerful spell casters in all the taan forces, and may include members of the Black Veil. Two of these shamans are enscribers, charged with coordination with other battlegroups, and read messages and dispatches from any non-taan allies or from other battlegroups.

Host

Six battlegroups equal one host. Hosts are led by tann-Vrykyl-appointed nizams. Normally, when the rank of nizam is vacated, one of the lesser nizam is promoted to fill it. Such a promotion is met with rejoicing throughout the host, since taan are constantly looking to move up the chain of command.

Army

All three taan armies are composed of six hosts each. The taan Vrykyl serve as the ultimate overlords of these armies. Each Vrykyl is attended by four of the Second Ones, all members of the feared Black Veil.

Human Allies

Dagnarus had built his taan army into a formidable fighting force, but he knew he couldn't conquer all of Loerem without something more to complement the taan. As he created more Vrykyl, Dagnarus sent many of them in disguise into the villages and the camps of the mercenaries and brigands. In some instances, the Vrykyl have murdered the mercenary captains or village leaders and taken their places. The Vrykyl have made allies of mercenaries and bandits near Taan-Cridkx and the Portal.

Dagnarus keeps his human and taan forces well apart from each other. He meets with taan and human leaders separately. When human soldiers must enter a taan camp on business, they are escorted by Vrykyl. Woe betides a taan daring to strike or even sneers at a human. Woe betides the human who mocks a taan. The Vrykyl act quickly to quell any trouble, for they are aware that once fighting starts between the two races, it would be hard to stop.

The taan understand that Dagnarus has human mercenary armies and most of the taan accept this fact, if they don't particularly like it. They do not understand why Dagnarus appears to treat his human soldiers with the same respect he showed the taan warriors. To the taan mindset, humans should be kept at the rear, guarding supply wagons and beasts of burden. Taan mistrust human soldiers and may refuse to fight if human armies are spearheading a battle. Dagnarus and his Vrykyl have learned to keep the two races separate whenever possible.

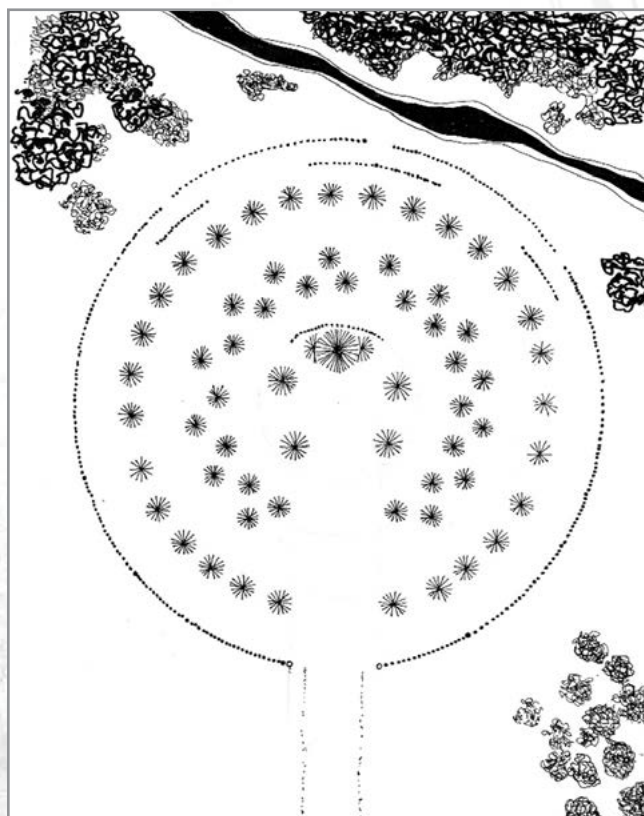
Human soldiers loathe their taan allies, considering them mere beasts. Few humans express their contempt aloud. Much as they hate the taan, the humans fear them even more. When human and taan "allies" have clashed, the confrontation usually ended badly for the humans. If a human is murdered or disappears, the humans are quick to blame the taan. The humans

do not make their feelings known, for they fear Dagnarus and his Vrykyl even more than they fear the taan. The humans collect their pay and their reward in slaves and keep their mouths shut.

Some of Dagnarus's human cohorts worry about what Dagnarus has in mind for the taan once his conquest of Loerem is complete. They do not want these monsters roaming their land and they trust that when he comes to rule Loerem, he will send the monsters back through the Portal to their own land, or perhaps even turn on them and destroy them once their usefulness has ended.

Taan Encampment

Taan encampments are always arranged in concentric circles. A huntmaster and his shaman pitch their tents in the center of the war party's camp. This provides a rally point if the camp is attacked, enabling orders to be carried swiftly through the camp, and provides protection to the leaders upon whom the rest of the war



party is dependent. The middle ring is comprised of taskers, children, and slaves. Warriors camp on the outside of the ring, to protect those within.

Each war party that comprises a battlegroup makes camp around the lesser nizam's war party. If a battlegroup is part of a larger contingent, these groups combine together to surround the commander of the whole. Should an entire host be present, the lesser nizams arrange their battlegroups to surround the nizam and his command unit.

IMPORTANT TAAN NIZAMS

Below are several prominent nizams in Dagnarus's taan army.

Gale'sk

Gale'sk is a giant among taan, standing more than seven-and-a-half-feet tall and weighing well over four hundred pounds. He was chosen by K'let and has led the Le'sk host for the past decade. Gale'sk rules Le'sk with an iron fist. He has been a successful commander and has served with great valor and distinction.

Gale'sk's body is a mass of ritual scars and his hide is lumpy from the number of stones embedded in his flesh. The embeddings are shallow, as various colors of the numerous gems shine through his hide to give Gale'sk a most impressive appearance among the taan (and a most hideous appearance to non-taan).

Gale'sk is smart and cunning. He learned many of his war skills from Dagnarus and the Vrykyl. The great taan nizam has an excellent memory and is a remarkable tactician and strategist. He knows how to delegate responsibilities, never taking all the tasks upon himself, thereby strengthening the skills of those under his command.

Unlike the other nizam, Gale'sk has a guarded respect for human and orken enemies. He conceals this respect because

his fellow taan believe that showing any respect for a lesser being is a sign of weakness. Because he respects their talent as warriors, he does not underestimate them, and thus has enjoyed many successes against opposing armies. He does not order his taan to charge in blindly, as do some taan nizams, but directs their attack as if they were fighting enemy taan. His favorite strategy is divide-and-conquer — slicing through the enemy ranks, separating them into smaller groups cut off from each other, then destroying them.

Gale'sk was one of the first taan to insist the shamans keep track of his offspring. He has seven sons in his host (six of them warriors, one a burgeoning shaman), and one daughter who is as fearsome as any of his sons. Named Urrtass, she shares Gale'sk's cunning and is the most intelligent of his children. He is quietly grooming her as his replacement, hoping to use his influence to gain her promotion.

Gale'sk has a "birth brother," a twin who is the nizam of another host. The two of them have fought since childhood and now the rivalry between them has only intensified. Gale'sk considers his brother a coward and a braggart who will lead his tribe to ruin. Gale'sk has often considered challenging Al'tuk to mortal combat, but knows that Dagnarus would show anger. Gale'sk would risk the god's anger if he thought he could rid the taan of a bad leader.

GALE'SK

CR 10

Male taan barbarian 4 / fighter 7

NE Medium humanoid (taan)

Init +0; **Senses** Void sense; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 8, flat-footed 17 (+5 armor, +4 natural *armor hide*, -2 rage)

hp 109 (11 HD; 4d12+7d10+44)

Fort +15; +2 vs. necromancy, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +2, trap sense

+1, uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/adamantine
(*hide of stone*); **SR** 16 vs. necromancy

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee molkra +21/+16/+11 (1d10+13/x3)

Special Attacks *bludgeoning fury*, rage (12 rounds/day), rage powers (intimidating glare, strength surge +4), weapon training (double +1)

TACTICS

Base Statistics When not raging, Gale'sk has **AC** 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19; **hp** 87; **Fort** +13; +2 vs. necromancy, **Will** +4; **Melee** molkra +19/+14/+9 (1d10+10/x3); **Str** 21, **Con** 15; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 26; **Skills**

Climb +16, Intimidate +19

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 10, **Con** 19, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 32

Feats Blood Frenzy, Cleave, Dazzling Display, Great Cleave, Leadership, Power Attack, Primal Shout, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (molkra), Weapon Specialization (molkra)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Climb +18, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (nature) +13, Perception +12, Survival +13; **Racial Modifiers** Intimidate uses Str instead of Cha for key ability, -4 Swim



Languages Bahk, Taanic

SQ armor training 2, fast movement, enchanted stones (*armor hide, bludgeoning fury, hide of stone*), tainted by Void

Gear alk-thot armor, molkra

Al'tuk Tig'ekel

Twin brother to Gale'sk, Al'tuk was once a lesser nizam in the Le'sk host. He was left for dead on a battlefield near Dullifed, amid the corpses of the humans who had been slaughtered there. He was severely wounded and waited for death, welcoming it, since he had fought well that day. He did not die, however, and he knows that is a disappointment to some, his own twin among them.

When the taan shamans went out searching for survivors, they ignored Al'tuk. The shamans pretended not to see him or to hear his cries. Al'tuk knew that Gale'sk hated him, but Al'tuk never thought his brother would leave him to rot on the battlefield. Anger boiled in Al'tuk. If he returned to his brother's command, he would appear cowardly and this would give Gale'sk the perfect opportunity to have him killed. Instead, Al'tuk dragged himself to a cave and there nursed his wounds.

A war party from host Terek sought shelter from a storm in this cave. At first, they believed Al'tuk to be a deserter, or renegade, and decided to kill him. When he presented his arms and scars, they recognized him as a lesser nizam. They took him into their war party and he became a lesser nizam for host Terek.

During his years with the Terek, Al'tuk has proven himself as a strong warrior and a wise leader. He has come to be highly respected by his battlegroup and the host. When host Terek's nizam died, Lnskt the Vrykyl promoted Al'tuk to the post. Al'tuk has led many successful raids against caravans and herdsmen in Dunkarga. He has also been noted for taking a small force

back through the Portal and converting two small taan tribes to the worship of Dagnarus, thus helping to replenish forces depleted from the siege of Dullifed.

Al'tuk has been visited by Gale'sk on several occasions. Each time the brothers have met on amicable terms, making a show of unity for the tribes and for Dagnarus, who would be angered if war broke out between the brothers. Both brothers feel the deep hatred each bears for the other. Al'tuk is honored by the Vrykyl and Dagnarus, and knows that Gale'sk dares not lift a hand against him. At least not yet.

AL'TUK TIG'EKEL

CR 8

Male taan barbarian 2/fighter 7

NE Medium humanoid (taan)

Init +4; **Senses** Void sense; Perception +12 (+16 with *hawkeye*)

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 8, flat-footed 13 (+5 armor, -2 rage)

hp 89 (9 HD; 2d12+7d10+36)

Fort +12; +2 vs. necromancy, **Ref** +2, **Will** +7; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +2, uncanny dodge, *well, will of the stone*; **SR** 14 vs. necromancy

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee longspear +19/+14 (1d8+13/19-20/x3) or dagger +16/+11 (1d4+7)

Range dagger +9/+4 (1d4+7)

Special Attacks rage (8 rounds/day), rage powers (strength surge +2), weapon training (spears +1)

TACTICS

Base Statistics When not raging, Al'tuk has **AC** 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; **hp** 71; **Fort** +10; +2 vs. necromancy, **Will** +5; **Melee** longspear +17/+12 (1d8+10/19-20/x3) or dagger +14/+9 (1d4+5); **Range** dagger +9/+4 (1d4+5) **Str** 21, **Con** 15; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 24; **Skills** Climb +13, Intimidate +17

STATISTICS

Str 25, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12

Base Atk +9; CMB +18; CMD 28

Feats Blood Frenzy, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (longspear), Improved Initiative, Leadership, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longspear), Weapon Specialization (longspear)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Climb +15, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (nature) +10, Perception +12 (+16 with *hawkeye* stone enchantment), Survival +10; **Racial Modifiers** Intimidate uses Str instead of Cha for key ability, -4 Swim

Languages

Bahk, Taanic

SQ armor training 2, enchanted stones

(*hawkeye*, *well, will of the stone*), fast movement, tainted by Void

Gear alk-thot armor, dagger, longspear

Hrtlok

A half-taan, Hrtlok stands barely six-feet tall. He is not immediately recognizable as a half-taan,

especially to non-taan. He strongly favors his taan father and does all he can to appear more taan than human.

Hrtlok distinguished himself in combat when two war parties from the Sketha host attacked what they thought was a small band of human “merchants.” This turned out to be an ambush. The “merchants” were in fact mercenary soldiers, bent on avenging the raid on Dullifed. They attacked with a force the size of an army.

The taan faced imminent defeat. Half-taan are barred from fighting alongside taan warriors, but, in this instance, the battle was so desperate that the half-taan did. Even though he was severely wounded, young Hrtlok took on the most powerful human warrior, refusing to surrender. Some say Hrtlok was trying to kill himself, since he was shunned by the taan members of the war party.

Hrtlok pushed through the enemy’s ranks, slew the mercenary captain and seized his weapon, a magnificent sword of Void magic. Hrtlok used the blade to kill

many of the remaining mercenaries. He finally succumbed to his wounds and fell as if dead upon the battlefield. His fellow taan warriors were so impressed by his actions (and also because a shaman announced Hrtlok had been blessed by the Void)



that they carried him in honor back to camp, where the shamans worked to heal him.

Treated with dignity, armed with a sword of the Void, Hrtlok grew in fighting prowess and was assigned to lead his war party into Dunkargan lands. The raids proved his might and valor. His *nizam*, under the guidance of Dagnarus, created a special battlegroup tasked to build siege engines and perfect their use on the field.

Hrtlok was promoted to lesser nizam and given command of the battlegroup.

Those under Hrtlok's command have come to respect the half-taan. He has a passion for killing humans that few taan can match, for his understanding of the attitude and psyche of humans is the key to defeating them. He has the ability to predict the actions of his human enemies and shows them no mercy.

Hrtlok is not as heavily scarred as are other taan warriors, nor does he carry many stones in his flesh. The few gems he has asked shamans to embed include rock salt, a small diamond, a moonstone, and an emerald. He prefers to rely on his own abilities and those of his sword, rather than gem-magic.

The sword Hrtlok carries is said to be a Void artifact from ancient times. To Hrtlok, the weapon is a valuable trophy from the day that marked his acceptance as a taan by those in his war party. As such, he would honor it even if it had no magic.

HRTLOK

CR 7

Male half-taan fighter 8

LE Medium humanoid (taan)

Init +0; **Senses** Void sense; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 61 (8 HD; 8d10+16)

Fort +8; +2 vs. necromancy, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities *blessed will*, bravery +2; **SR** 13 vs. necromancy

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *Void longsword* +18/+13 (1d8+10/19-20) or punch +13/+8 (1d8+5)

Special Attacks *hand of stone*, weapon training (heavy blades +1)

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 14, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 25

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes,

Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword), Whirlwind Attack

Skills Climb +13, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Perception +6, Survival +10, Swim +10; **Racial Modifiers** Intimidate uses Str instead of Cha for key ability

Languages Elder Speak, Taanic

SQ armor training 2, enchanted stones (*blessed will*, *hand of stone*), tainted by Void

Gear +2 *Void longsword*, alk-thot armor

S'las

S'las was once a warrior in a battlegroup camped some three hundred miles north of Taan-Cridkx. A lesser nizam took a liking to S'las and demanded she mate with him. S'las wanted to advance in rank through battlefield bravery, not taking time out to bear children. The lesser nizam wouldn't take no for an answer. Unable to tolerate his leering stares and crude advances, S'las challenged him to a duel. Although most combats do not end in death, the lesser nizam stepped into a hole as he was fighting and fell on his back. S'las couldn't halt her stabbing thrust and slew him as he lay on the ground.

Dagnarus happened to be watching this combat. He was impressed by S'las's skill and before the shamans could punish her for killing the lesser nizam, he came forward and announced that henceforth S'las would be lesser nizam of the battlegroup, provided that she proves herself in battle.

Pleased with this unexpected opportunity, S'las worked hard to impress the huntmasters under her command. She set off on a mission to push into northwestern Dunkarga, giving her troops victory and slaves. In three months time, they had marched up the coast and were within striking distance of Armrah 'Lin. Runners from taan-cridkx and the

Vrykyl Nb'arsk halted her advance. She had proven herself, and was officially promoted. S'las has earned the respect and admiration of her battlegroup with victory after victory.

Rumors have started that S'las has defied the traditional separation of shamans and warriors and has started to dabble in shamanistic Void magic. If this is true, it could mean that separation of duties among the taan could be changing. It would also make her an incredibly formidable adversary. Her battlegroup supports her completely. They have a faith in her that is rarely placed in one so young.

S'LAS

CR 8

Female taan barbarian 5/Void sorcerer 4
CE Medium humanoid (taan)

Init +3; **Senses** Void sense; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 7, flat-footed 11 (-1 Dex, +4 natural *armor hide*, -2 rage)

hp 72 (9 HD; 5d12+4d6+24)

Fort +10; +2 vs. necromancy, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1; **DR** 5/silver (*hide of air*) **SR** 14 vs. necromancy

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *kep-ker* +12/+7 (1d8+5/19-20) or *punch* +12/+7 (1d8+5) or *dagger* +12/+7 (1d4+5/19-20)

Range *dagger* +6 (1d4+5/19-20)

Special Attacks *hand of stone*, rage (13 rounds/day), rage powers (low-light vision, moment of clarity)

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +6) 1/day—metamagic adept, arcane bond

Sorcerer Spell Known (CL 4th; concentration +6)

2nd (3/day)—*inflict moderate wounds* (DC 14)

1st (6/day)—*cause fear* (DC 13), *identify*, *poison spit* (DC 13), *Void magic missile*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 12), *dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 12), *pierce soul*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 12)

Bloodline arcane

TACTICS

Base Statistics When not raging, S'las has **AC** 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13; **hp** 57; **Fort** +8; +2 vs. necromancy, **Will** +5; **Melee** *kep-ker* +10/+5 (1d8+3/19-20), or *punch* +10/+5 (1d8+3), or *dagger* +14/+9 (1d4+3/19-20); **Range** *dagger* +6 (1d4+5); **Str** 17, **Con** 12; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 19; **Skills** *Climb* +7, *Intimidate* +9

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 9, **Con** 16, **Int** 15, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 21

Feats *Eschew Materials*, *Great Fortitude*, *Improved Initiative*, *Improved Unarmed Strike*, *Second Wind*, *Silent Spell*

Skills *Acrobatics* +5, *Bluff* +11, *Climb* +9, *Intimidate* +11, *Knowledge (arcana)* +12, *Knowledge (nature)* +9, *Perception* +7, *Spellcraft* +12, *Survival* +7; **Racial Modifiers** *Intimidate* uses *Str* instead of *Cha* for key ability, -4 *Swim*

Languages Taanic

SQ *bloodline* *arcana*, *enchanted stones* (*armor hide*, *hand of stone*, *hide of air*), *fast movement*, *tainted by Void*

Gear *dagger*, *kep-ker*

CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

The western and southern portions of Dunkarga consist of wild, untamed, and, for the most part, undeveloped land. Small villages of Dunkargan humans may be found along the river banks. The place has become a haven for brigands of all races, who thrive off the hapless travelers who trade goods and services between these communities. The villagers hired mercenaries to bring troops to this part of Dunkarga to protect the travelers and the villages from the brigands. Unfortunately, sometimes the mercenaries also collect money from the brigands to protect them

from the villagers. Many of these captains have become self-styled lords, “protecting” the villages in return for a portion of their hard-earned trade revenues.

When Dullifed was attacked and captured, mercenaries secretly allied with Dagnarus seized control of the villages and the surrounding countryside. They let it be known the same fate could befall anyone who opposed them, and that everyone must now pay fealty in money or goods to Dagnarus, the Lord of the Void, who brought down destruction upon the heads of the Vinnengaeleans two hundred years prior. The villages have paid up and Dagnarus now has funds to hire more mercenaries and to provide his armies with supplies.

Dagnarus has started the next phase of his plan to rule all of Loerem — the conquest of Dunkarga. The civil war between Dunkarga and Karnu brought defeat to Dunkarga and left the kingdom in chaos. The Dunkargan ruler, King Moross, no longer holds authority, and the nobles are too busy fighting among themselves to care what happens to their country.

Dagnarus sent the taan to raid villages and towns on the outskirts of Dunkarga. Entire provinces were razed, castles burned, villages ransacked. Crops and animals were seized to provide food for his armies. The inhabitants of the villages were made slaves or killed. Rumors began to make their way back to the capital city of Dunkar that terror stalked the land in the distant provinces. Instead of banding together to fight the enemy laying waste to the land, many of the nobles started blaming each other for permitting such a disaster to occur.

Some of the more sensible nobles viewed the invasion with alarm and sent messengers to Karnu, Nimra, and Nimorea, pleading for them to send soldiers to Dunkarga’s aid. The Karnuans declared that whatever happened to the Dunkargans

was no concern of Karnu, who were intent on conquering the orks and threatening the stability of the Vinnengaelean Empire by their take-over of the Portal south of New Vinnengael. The Nimoreans could not help Dunkarga, because they were pondering a war against Karnu, which had been disrupting Nimorean shipping. The Nimrans wanted nothing to do with a war that appeared to be a local problem.

By this time, the Vrykyl Shakur had murdered the Head of the Temple of the Magi in Dunkarga. Using the Vrykyl’s ability to perfectly mimic those they have murdered, Shakur took the place of this key official. By this means, the Vrykyl infiltrated the Dunkargan court and won the ears of nobles and King Moross. Shakur, posing as the High Magus, has reduced the king to little more than a puppet figure, who dances at the behest of the Vrykyl.

Now, the stage is set for Dagnarus to return in his full glory to Loerem. Taan and human armies, cloaked by Void magic, are encamped along Dunkarga’s western border. Three great assaults are planned, all converging on the city of Dunkar. The Dunkargan military and political structure, decayed by years of infighting, cannot hope to stand against the mighty force Dagnarus plans to unleash against it.

VOID LORD RETURNED

Captain Wellkin reigned in his horse. The smells of battle were strong: blood, smoldering wood, charred flesh, freshly overturned soil. The jingle of tack and the creak of the leather harness of those who followed him were subdued in the whipping of the westerly wind. Wellkin's gauntleted hand rested lightly on the pommel of his sword. The sight before him — a man of many campaigns and battles — almost convinced him to put up his sword, scabbard and baldric.

"S-sir," stammered a new recruit, sitting astride his destrier, "what do we do?"

Captain Wellkin did not answer. He dug his spurs into his horse's flanks and rode into the town. The skeletal remains of buildings looked like the blackened ribs of a bull roasted at the Faire. Men, women and children lay butchered in the streets, flies buzzing about their bodies, their corpses bloated and green. All the animals were gone, taken by the enemy who had sacked the place.

There wasn't a person left alive, not one survivor. Pity was replaced by anger. Wellkin hadn't seen such savagery, such barbarism in all his life. He was more than familiar with the horrors of war, but the wholesale slaughter of innocent merchants and farmers was beyond comprehension.

Wellkin gave his orders in stern tones. "Lieutenant Caplan, deploy the men. I want every nook and cranny searched. I want a detail to gather the bodies. We'll burn them and give them a decent send off."

Caplan rode off, shouting orders to the men.

Wellkin dismounted, his boot heels clicking on the cobbles underfoot. The captain handed the reins to his attendant and walked down the street. A small temple to the gods was the only structure still standing, although it was scorched by the fires that had raged through the town. He walked up the stone steps, begrimed with soot, and passed through the broken doors into the shrine's interior.

He stared, riveted with shock at what he saw within. The altar venerating the element of Earth had been defiled. The beautiful fresco of the Earth Mother had been crossed out by an "X" made of dried blood. Letters were written beneath.

**Dagnarus,
Lord of the Void**



CHAPTER 8: PRESTIGE CLASSES




Ynkss, Taan Tasker

I hate elves. All small and delicate, their bones are so brittle they aren't even fit for picking teeth. Their language is soft, like their skulls. It is not the language of warriors, not like the language of the taan. They are barely worth eating.

Humans are better fare than elves. They fight harder and scream louder when they are cooked. There are so many of them that we shall never run out of humans, no matter how many we eat.

The taste of ork flesh is my favorite. They are as big as a taan, and fight with valor. They sail upon the great waters of this land without fear. They are obviously the strongest food that we can eat. They supply us with the energy and strength to conquer these lands in the name of the God of the Rock.



The life of a taan is harsh and, if one is lucky, short. Because of this, the taan struggle hard to attain honor and status during their lifetimes. Status often comes in specializing in particular skills, honing one's talents until they are razor sharp. Honor comes from according oneself well in battle, in slaying many of the enemy and in taking many slaves.

AVENGING HAND

Dagnarus's holy warriors, the Avenging Hands, are among the most feared of all taan. Handpicked from among the most gifted of taan combatants, Avenging Hands perform special assignments for Dagnarus. Often they are given the task of assassinating heads of state or the generals of those who stand against the Lord of the Void.

The taan of the Avenging Hand look like other taan, except each has a small obsidian gem embedded into the forehead. Usually, by the time a victim sees the gem and recognizes an Avenging Hand, it is already too late.

Role: Although the Avenging Hands are greatly admired by other taan for their courage and battle prowess, some of their tactics are frowned upon at the same time, especially the use of stealth to kill unsuspecting victims. Such disapproval is never voiced too openly, for fear that an Avenging Hand might call upon the power of Dagnarus and slay those who offend him.

Alignment: Avenging Hands show no remorse or compunction in achieving their missions, resorting to any underhanded tactics to eliminate a target. They are accountable solely to Dagnarus, and therefore tend to be lawful evil.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become an Avenging Hand, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Taan or half-taan.

Base Attack Bonus: +6.

Skills: Stealth 6 ranks.

Special: Sneak attack +2d6. To become an Avenging Hand, a taan or half-taan must be chosen by his nizam and presented to Dagnarus. If the candidate is suitable, he is presented with a mission to murder a target of Dagnarus's choosing. If the assignment is completed without aid and the taan returns with proof of success, he is accepted into the ranks of the Avenging Hands. Once accepted, a small black obsidian gem is embedded into the Avenging Hand's forehead.

Class Skills

The Avenging Hand's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Acrobatics (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Perception (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Stealth (Dex), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Ranks Per Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are features of the Avenging Hand prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: An Avenging Hand is proficient in all simple and martial weapons and is proficient in light and medium armor. He gains no proficiency in shields.

Sneak Attack: An Avenging Hand gains this ability at 1st level. This is the same as the rogue class' sneak attack ability, and the damage stack with sneak attack dice from any character class.

Zealous Fervor (Ex): As an agent of the God of the Taan, Dagnarus, an Avenging Hand possesses divinely inspired courage. Once per day, he receives a +2 morale bonus to attack, damage and Will saving throws for 1 minute per level in this prestige class.

Smite Enemy (Ex): At 2nd level, when an Avenging Hand takes a full round to

TABLE 8-1: AVENGING HAND

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+1	+0	Sneak attack +1d6, zealous fervor
2nd	+2	+1	+1	+1	Enhanced initiative +1, smite enemy
3rd	+3	+1	+2	+1	Sneak attack +2d6
4th	+4	+1	+2	+1	Divine fury, enhanced initiative +2
5th	+5	+2	+3	+2	Sneak attack +3d6

prepare, his first successful attack with a melee weapon in the following round has a chance of killing the opponent. In addition to damage dealt, the struck creature must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + Avenging Hand's class level) or drops to -1 hit point immediately. During the full round of preparation, the Avenging Hand is always flat-footed, regardless of abilities, feats, or class features (such as uncanny dodge).

Enhanced Initiative (Ex): At 2nd level, the Avenging Hand acts without hesitation in combat, gaining a +1 innate bonus to his Initiative. This bonus stacks with the Improved Initiative feat. At 4th level, the innate bonus increases to +2.

Divine Fury (Ex): At 4th level, an Avenging Hand can make one extra attack in a round at his highest base attack, but this attack and each other attack made that round, including attacks of opportunity, suffers a -2 penalty. The Avenging Hand must use a full-round action to strike with divine fury.

BLACK VEIL SHAMAN

The Black Veil shamans are the eyes and ears of the ruling Council of Second Ones among Dagnarus's taan troops, watching out for dissension in the taan ranks. They are also skilled interrogators, forcing their victims to reveal even their deepest secrets. They are not above eliminating those who present a threat to the unity of Dagnarus's armies, but only upon the orders of

superiors.

It is from the ranks of the Black Veil that vacancies in the Council of Second Ones are filled, chosen by the First One and Dagnarus.

Role: Black Veil shamans keep a low profile, for the best way to learn the secrets of your enemies is to earn their trust and be accepted as a fellow conspirator. Only the Second Ones know the identity of Black Veil operatives, where they are and how many they number.

Alignment: Any evil.

Hit Die: d6.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Black Veil shaman, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Taan or half-taan.

Skills: Bluff 4 ranks, Diplomacy 4 ranks, Perception 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.

Spells: Able to cast 3rd-level Void spells.

Special: Character must be chosen by the Council of the Second Ones and accepted as a member of the Black Veil.

Class Skills

The Black Veil shaman's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana), (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Perception (Wis) Sense Motive (Wis),

Spellcraft (Int), and Stealth (Dex).

Skill Ranks Per Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are features of the ahz'qua librarian prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Black Veil shaman does not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiency.

Locate Stone (Su): Beginning at 1st level, a Black Veil shaman develops the ability to determine the direction in which he may find any stone he has enchanted, regardless of distance or whether the stone is loose or still embedded. Once per day, the shaman can locate a stone by succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom check. This ability does not reveal the exact location of the stone to the shaman, only the direction. He may do this one additional time a day every three levels thereafter (4th, 7th, and 10th).

Poison Use (Ex): Black Veil shamans are not above using poison to dispatch the enemies of Dagnarus. Because they are skilled in the use of poisons, they never risk accidentally poisoning themselves when applying poison to a blade.

Spells per Day/Spells Known: Starting at 1st level and at every other level attained in this prestige class, the character also gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class in the Void element he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain other benefits a character of that class would have gained, except for additional spells per day, spells known (for a spontaneous spellcaster), and an increased effective level of spellcasting (plus Spellcasting Bonus, if applicable). If a character had more than one spellcasting class or magical element before becoming a death mage, he must decide to which class and/or magical element he adds the new level for purposes of determining spells per day.

Sneak Attack: This is the same as the rogue class' sneak attack ability, and the damage stack with sneak attack dice from any character class. The Black Veil shaman gains an additional damage die at 6th level, and another at 10th level.

Careful Listener (Ex): At 3rd level, a Black Veil shaman gains a +2 competence bonus to all Perception and Sense Motive checks.

Zone of Truth (Sp): A Black Veil shaman of 3rd level or higher can use *zone of truth* once per day as a spell-like ability, duplicating the effect of the *zone of truth* spell at caster level equal to level in this prestige class.

Informant: Black Veil shamans rarely always work alone. At 4th level, a character of this prestige class acquires a reliable informant or accomplice who may or (usually) may not be aware of the shaman's Black Veil affiliation. This informant is normally a taan or half-taan, can be of any caste and up to 5th level in experience. At 8th level, the shaman gains another informant (of up to 9th level).

Each time the shaman gains an informant, the DM should develop an NPC to represent the informant.

Coercion (Ex): At 5th level, a Black Veil Shaman is able to make threats and commit violence that can sway the actions of a target. Once a day, when the shaman succeeds in demoralizing an opponent with an Intimidate check, he can opt to force the target to do as he wishes. Treat this as a successful casting of *charm person* (with no saving throw and effect is not magical) at caster level equal to level in this prestige class.

Discern Lies (Sp): A Black Veil shaman of 5th level or higher can use *discern lies* once per day as a spell-like ability, duplicating the effect of the *discern lies* spell at caster level equal to level in this prestige class.

Master of Words (Sp): At 7th level, a Black Veil shaman is the consummate

TABLE 8-2: BLACK VEIL SHAMAN

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+0	+1	+1	Locate stone 1/day, poison use	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+1	+1	+1	Sneak attack +1d6	
3rd	+1	+1	+2	+2	Careful listener, zone of truth	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+1	+2	+2	Informant (5th level), locate stone 2/day	
5th	+2	+1	+3	+3	Coercion, discern lies	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+2	+3	+3	Sneak attack +2d6	
7th	+3	+2	+4	+4	Locate stone 3/day, master of words	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+3	+4	+4	Informant (9th level)	
9th	+4	+3	+5	+5	Bestow curse	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+3	+5	+5	Locate stone 4/day, sneak attack +3d6	

manipulator. Once a day, he can choose to use one of the following as a spell-like ability: *cause fear*, *detect thoughts*, or *glibness*.

Bestow Curse (Sp): A Black Veil shaman of 9th level or higher is as powerful as he is vindictive. He can now use *bestow curse* once per month as a spell-like ability, duplicating the effect of the *bestow curse* spell at caster level equal to level in this prestige class.

FERAL WARRIOR

In a race of savages, the feral warrior is the most savage. While other taan practice their skill at arms, the feral warrior needs no weapons other than those with which he was born. He leaps into battle with unbridled fury, slashing at his enemies with tooth and claw, while unnerving even fellow taan with his brutality.

Role: The feral warrior uses no technique but rage and has little use for possessions. He is both admired and feared by other taan, who commend his courage but are wary of his unpredictable, animalistic nature.

Alignment: Any chaotic.

Hit Die: d12.

Requirements

To qualify to become a feral warrior, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Taan or half-taan.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Skills: Survival 5 ranks.

Feats: Blood Frenzy, Improved Unarmed Combat

Special: Ability to rage. A feral warrior must leave his tribe for a period of six weeks, during which time he must survive without assistance, eating only his own kills. He must also kill a creature of 4 HD or greater with no weapons and no assistance. Once this rite of survival has been completed and he has proof of his kill, he may return to his tribe as a feral warrior.

Class Skills

The feral warrior's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Survival (Wis).

Skill Ranks Per Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are features of the feral warrior prestige class.

TABLE 8-3: FERAL WARRIOR

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+0	+0	Sharp senses, taan natural weaponry
2nd	+2	+1	+1	+1	Enhanced natural weaponry +1
3rd	+3	+2	+1	+1	Fast natural healing (Con modifier), improved natural armor +1
4th	+4	+2	+1	+1	Enhanced natural weaponry +2
5th	+5	+3	+2	+2	Improved natural armor +2, taan multiattack
6th	+6/+1	+3	+2	+2	Enhanced natural weaponry +3
7th	+7/+2	+4	+2	+2	Fast natural healing (2 x Con modifier), improved natural armor +3
8th	+8/+3	+4	+3	+3	Enhanced natural weaponry +4
9th	+9/+4	+5	+3	+3	Improved natural armor +4
10th	+10/+5	+5	+3	+3	Enhanced natural weaponry +5

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A feral warrior does not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiency.

Sharp Senses (Ex): At 1st level, a feral warrior develops excellent eyesight, hearing and sense of smell, gaining a +2 competence bonus to all Perception checks.

Taan Natural Weaponry: A 1st-level feral warrior gains the Taan Natural Weaponry feat. If he already possesses the feat, upgrade this to the Taan Multiattack feat instead.

Enhanced Natural Weaponry (Su): At 2nd level, the feral warrior gains a +1 enhancement bonus to attacks made with his claws and bite. At 4th level the bonus increases to +2, +3 at 6th level, +4 at 8th level, and +5 at 10th level.

Fast Natural Healing (Ex): At 3rd level, the feral warrior heals additional hit points per day equal to his Constitution modifier. At 7th level it increases to double the Con modifier.

Improved Natural Armor (Ex): Starting at 3rd level, a feral warrior gains a +1 enhancement natural armor bonus. The bonus increases to +2 at 5th level, +3 at 7th level, and +4 at 9th level.

Primal Howl (Ex): At 4th level, the feral warrior gains the Primal Howl feat. If he already possesses it, increase the range to 30 feet.

Taan Multiattack: A 5th-level feral warrior gains the Taan Multiattack feat. If he already possesses this feat, increase his unarmed strike damage to 1d8 instead.

WEAPONS MASTER

In taan tribal society, the best taan warriors are chosen by the nizam to be weapons masters. Weapons masters instruct young taan warriors in the art of war so that their experiences and skills are passed down to younger generations, while still fighting battles and defend the tribe against attacks. Because they are such a valuable resource,

they are afforded greater protection by the shamans through spells and powerfully enchanted stones.

Role: The tradition of weapons masters has been with the taan for centuries and continues among the taan who followed Dagnarus to Loerem with one important exception. The Weapons masters now drill and train all of the taan, young and adult alike. The weapons masters are usually the commanders of war parties and are responsible for the skill and conduct of the troops under their command.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify to become a weapons master, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Taan or half-taan.

Base Attack Bonus: +8.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Weapon Focus in two martial weapons.

Special: The character must be chosen and appointed by a nizam to become a weapons master.

Class Skills

The weapons master's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Ride (Dex), Survival (Wis).

Skill Ranks Per Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are features of the weapons master prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A weapons master is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light armor, medium armor, heavy armor, and shields.

Difficult to Disarm (Ex): Starting at 1st level, a weapons master adds his levels in this prestige class to his CMD against all disarm maneuvers.

Weapon Mastery (Ex): At 1st level and every two levels thereafter (3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th), a weapons master chooses one weapon for further mastery, gaining a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls when using the selected weapon. He must choose a new weapon each time, but the bonus stacks with those from the Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization feats.

Inspire Fury (Ex): At 2nd level, a weapons master can spur on those fighting near him to even greater feats of combat prowess. All allies within 50 feet of the weapons master who can see or hear him receive a +1 morale bonus to their attack rolls as well as all Fortitude and Will saves.

Weapon Defense (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, a weapons master adds half his levels in this prestige class as deflection bonus to AC when fighting defensively or in total

TABLE 8-4: WEAPONS MASTER

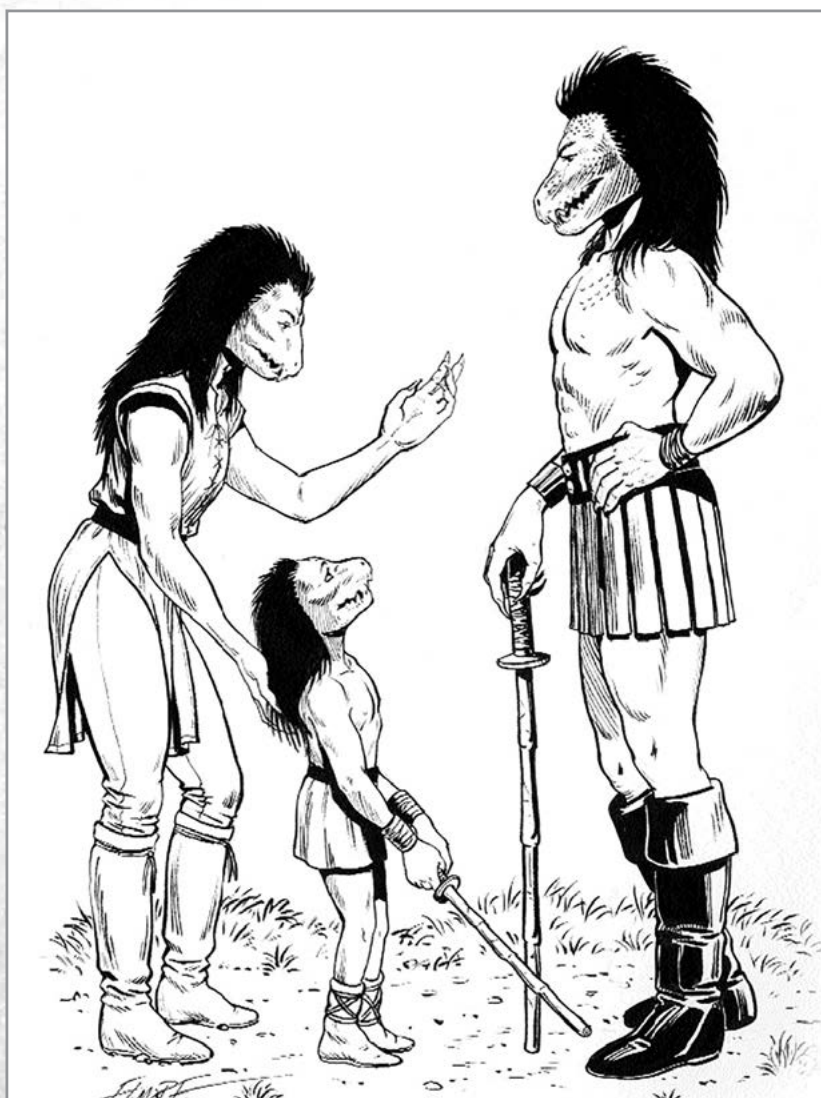
Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+1	+0	+0	Difficult to disarm, weapon mastery (1st)
2nd	+1	+1	+1	+1	Inspire fury, weapon defense
3rd	+2	+2	+1	+1	Weapon mastery (2nd)
4th	+3	+2	+1	+1	Improved weapon sunder
5th	+3	+3	+2	+2	Weapon mastery (3rd)
6th	+4	+3	+2	+2	Insight +1
7th	+5	+4	+2	+5	Weapon mastery (4th)
8th	+6/+1	+4	+3	+3	Insight +2
9th	+6/+1	+5	+3	+3	Weapon mastery (5th)
10th	+7/+2	+5	+3	+3	Whirlwind of Death

defense.

Improved Weapon Sunder (Ex): Starting at 4th level, a weapons master adds half his levels in this prestige class as damage bonus when sundering with a weapon selected for his Weapon Mastery.

Insight (Ex): At 6th level, a weapons master can, as a standard action, study the fighting style of one opponent within his line of sight to gain a +1 insight bonus on attack rolls and rolls to confirm critical threat made against that opponent in melee combat. This lasts until the end of the encounter, and a weapons master can use this ability in combat on a number of different opponents up to half his levels in this prestige class. The bonus is increased to +2 at 8th level.

Whirlwind of Death (Ex): A 10th-level weapons master is lethal for all opponents who come near him. As a full-round action, the weapons master is able to perform one attack on every opponent within 5 feet (this is identical to the Whirlwind Attack feat). In addition, any time after the weapons master has initiated this ability, he gains an immediate attack of opportunity against any other opponent moving to within 5 feet of him; these attacks of opportunity do not count toward the weapons master's normal limit. The weapons master can use this ability for a number of consecutive rounds equal to his Constitution modifier (minimum 1), but must wait at least one minute before he can activate this ability again.





CHAPTER 9: BESTIARY




The First Taan Vrykyl

K'let looked at his watery reflection. Even the ripples in the water couldn't hide what he had become. He damned that far-off day that Dagnarus came to his people. He damned himself for following the pretender-god, and he damned his people to subjugation with his compliance.

Knowing all this, why then, K'let wondered, do I follow Dagnarus? K'let was well aware that he was different from the other Vrykyl. He wasn't constrained by the Void to obey Dagnarus as were the others. K'let thought back to the day when the Dagger of the Vrykyl had accepted him as a worthy candidate and he had undergone the transformation from living taan to undead monster. Dagnarus had ordered K'let to kill his favorite mate, Drst. K'let, still weak and disoriented, had refused, instead slaying an important shaman. Dagnarus had been furious.

"I have no illusions now," K'let said, staring at the dead eyes looking back at him from the pool's waters. The other taan Vrykyl know that Dagnarus isn't a god, and that they all have forsaken their true religion for this false deity. Through the Void, they are bound to the Lord of the Void, inextricably linked, and under orders to destroy me should Dagnarus command it. And, too, they follow him because they believe he will bring the taan to victory and glory.

I think he will bring the taan to disaster. I fight for the taan, not for Dagnarus. And when the time is right, may the God of the Rock fear my retribution!



K'LET**CR 20/MR 4**

Male taan Vrykyl barbarian 10/fighter 6/
champion 5

N Medium undead (mythic)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., detect
magic 50-ft. radius; Perception +20

Aura frightful presence (sight, DC 27)

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 12, flat-footed 28 (+1 Dex, +1
dodge, +20 natural, -2 rage)

hp 137 (10d12+6d10+16); destruction at 0
hp

Fort +13; +2 vs. necromancy **Ref** +12, **Will**
+19

Defensive Abilities bravery +2, hard to kill
^{MA}, improved uncanny dodge, mythic
saving throw ^{MA}, rage power (guarded
stance +2, renewed vigor 2d8), trap
sense +3; **DR** 25/magic, 2/—; **Immune**
undead traits; **SR** 15, 21 vs. necromancy

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee tum-olt +27/+22/+17/+12
(2d8+11); blood knife +28 (1d4+12);
claw +26 (1d4+10)

Special Attacks blowback ^{MA}, champion's
strike (sudden attack) ^{MA}, feeding,
maneuver expert ^{MA}, mythic power
(13/day) ^{MA}, rage (23 round/day), rage
power (no escape, quick reflex, strength
surge +10), surge (+1d8) ^{MA}, weapon
training (heavy blades +1)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

At will—*disrupt undead*, *pierce soul*,
touch of fatigue (DC 12)

3/day—*cause fear* (DC 13), *poison spit*
(DC 13)

1/day—*Void talons*

TACTICS

Base Statistics When not raging, K'let
has **AC** 32, touch 12, flat-footed 30; **hp**
137; **Fort** +13; +2 vs. necromancy, **Will**
+17; **Melee** tum-olt +25/+20/+15/+10
(2d6+9); **Str** 26, **Con** —; **CMB** +24; **CMD**
35; **Skills** Climb +21, Intimidate +22

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +26; **CMD** 37

Feats Alertness, Blood Frenzy, Cleave,
Combat Expertise, Dodge, Endurance,
Great Cleave, Improved Alertness,
Improved Initiative, Improved
Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Leadership,
Lightning Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes
(Mythic) ^{MA}, Power Attack, Power
Attack (Mythic) ^{MA}

Skills Acrobatics +15, Climb +23,
Intimidate +24, Knowledge (nature)
+15, Perception +20, Sense Motive
+17, Stealth +11, Survival +17; **Racial**
Modifiers Intimidate uses Str instead
of Cha for key ability, -4 Swim

Languages Taanic; *weak words*: Elder Speak,
Karna, Tomagi

SQ armor training 1, amazing initiative ^{MA},
crusader ^{MA}, enchanted stones (*armor*
hide, *weak words*), fast movement,
feeding, impossible speed ^{MA}, pure
destiny ^{MA}, recuperation ^{MA}, tainted by
Void

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ability Increases (Ex) Vrykyl gain
the following ability increases: +10
Strength, +2 Intelligence, +2 Wisdom,
Charisma +2.

Exceptional Coordination and Tenacity
(Ex) All Vrykyl gain a +4 Void bonus
to Reflex saves and a +8 Void bonus to
Will saves.

Feeding (Su) A Vrykyl must feed to
maintain its existence and to heal
damage. This is accomplished through
use of the blood knife. The blood knife
is used to perform a coup de grace on
an opponent. If successful (indicating
the knife has stabbed into the victim's
heart), the Vrykyl has fed and gains
1d10 points of healing that may not
exceed its maximum hit points. Every
week a Vrykyl does not feed, it suffers
1d10 points of damage. A Vrykyl that
has not fed in one month is considered
fatigued, and exhausted if not fed in
six months. A Vrykyl whose hit points

drop to 0 due to starvation is destroyed, its body crumbling to dust.

Frightful Presence (Ex) This ability activates immediately when a Vrykyl not in shadow disguise or has its illusion disbelieved. The save DC is 10 + Vrykyl's HD + Vrykyl's Charisma modifier.

Shadow Disguise (Su) Vrykyl may cloak themselves in a semi-real illusion. They may appear in the form they once had while alive, or in the form of anyone they have killed with their blood knife. To disbelieve the disguise requires a successful Will save (DC 30). Only Dominion Lords may automatically save against a Vrykyl illusion — all other creatures must have a reason to suspect a trick.

SPECIAL POSSESSION

Blood Knife All Vrykyl possess a blood knife, which they construct from one of their own bones within a week of their creation. The blood knife is a dagger consecrated in Void magic and constructed from a Vrykyl's own body. It carries a +2 enhancement bonus. Anyone struck with the blood knife is considered tainted by Void and cannot be healed through magical means. The Vrykyl may use the blood knife to feed. The blood knife is also used to communicate telepathically with the wielder of the Dagger of the Vrykyl (currently owned by Dagnarus) with unlimited range. If a living person takes possession of a Vrykyl's blood knife, he immediately becomes tainted by Void. Other Vrykyl may be able to detect the presence of the knife, use its energy to track its general location, as can the wielder of the Dagger of the Vrykyl. A bone knife can bypass another Vrykyl's damage reduction.

K'let, one of the rare albino taan, is the only Vrykyl to ever rebel against Dagnarus.

When Dagnarus first appeared to the taan, he proved himself by battling their nizam. The nizam's sword could not penetrate the magical armor worn by Dagnarus. When Dagnarus killed the nizam, the nizam's tribe proclaimed Dagnarus a god and pledged to follow him. Dagnarus held contests among the warriors to determine a new nizam. He wanted one who would be loyal to him.

K'let, an albino taan who had been looked down upon by the rest of the tribe, came to Dagnarus in the night and begged for the god's favor. Dagnarus said he would grant K'let victory over his opponents if K'let would in turn give up his life when Dagnarus requested it. K'let made the promise and Dagnarus blessed K'let during the contests. K'let won and became the nizam of his tribe.

As Dagnarus ventured farther into the taan lands, seeking to convert other taan to his worship, K'let proved a great asset. Although Dagnarus could have used his powerful magic to subdue the taan, he knew the taan were far more impressed by bravery and skill in battle than by magic. Dagnarus and K'let would often challenge strong taan warriors to fight them. The two fought side-by-side in many duels. It is said that of all the Vrykyl he ever created, Dagnarus respects only one and that is K'let.

K'let was always independent. Many times the albino nizam dared to refuse to obey Dagnarus's orders, if K'let thought those orders were detrimental to his people. Although angered, Dagnarus overlooked K'let's defiance because of his value to him. When it came time to lead the taan through the Portal, Dagnarus decided that K'let's usefulness to him in this world had ended. Dagnarus told K'let it was time for the taan to repay his debt. Through the power of the Dagger of the Vrykyl, K'let would be transformed into a Vrykyl. K'let honored his promise and gave his life to

the Dagger.

Dagnarus assumed the powerful taan would obey his commands without question. Annoyed that some taan believed K'let to be more powerful than Dagnarus, he decided to show the rest of the taan that the nizam no longer had the power to defy his god. In a grand ceremony honoring the new Vrykyl, Dagnarus ordered K'let to prove his loyalty by killing his favorite mate and feasting upon her soul. For a moment, it seemed that K'let would obey. He approached his mate, knife in hand. But at the last moment, K'let plunged the knife into the throat of a shaman who was well known to be a favorite of Dagnarus. All could see that Dagnarus was furious and they expected him to destroy the Vrykyl. Dagnarus might have done so, had not K'let knelt before Dagnarus. Lifting his hand, K'let swore an oath of loyalty to Dagnarus. His words were recorded and are repeated on the day that is set aside every year to honor him.

"I swear this oath not because I am forced to do so," the Vrykyl K'let said proudly, "but because I truly believe in you and your cause. I do not follow you because I must but because I choose."

Dagnarus was impressed. He sensed through the Dagger of the Vrykyl that K'let was telling the truth and he knew the taan's loyalty would be of immense value to him, better than the coerced loyalty of some of the other Vrykyl. Dagnarus made K'let his right hand, giving him command of the largest of the taan armies and leadership over any future taan Vrykyl.

When it came time to create other taan Vrykyl, Dagnarus was careful to choose those who were strong, but not willful. He created these taan Vrykyl in private, where they could be disposed of if he found that they, too, defied him. Dagnarus discovered to his satisfaction that the other taan candidates were like other Vrykyl, obeying him through the Dagger of the Vrykyl. It

seems that K'let is the only aberration.

Dagnarus has never had reason to regret his choice of K'let as a Vrykyl. K'let is a ferocious and intelligent commander. Dagnarus expects K'let to lead the army of taan to victory. Nonetheless, Dagnarus keeps close watch on K'let.

The Vrykyl is well aware of his master's distrust and may even feel some pride in the fact. The two of them need each other, yet there is a tension between them that is like lightning before the storm.

LNSKT

CR 11/MR 1

Female taan Vrykyl barbarian 12/
champion 1

LE Medium undead (mythic)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., detect
magic 50-ft. radius; Perception +10

Aura frightful presence (sight, DC 22)

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 9, flat-footed 27 (+1 Dex, +20
natural, -2 rage)

hp 95 (12d12+12); destruction at 0 hp

Fort +9; +2 vs. necromancy **Ref** +9, **Will**
+14; +4 *blessed will*

Defensive Abilities hard to kill ^{MA},
improved uncanny dodge, trap sense
+4; **DR** 10/adamantine (*hide of stone*),
15/magic, 2/—; **Immune** undead
traits; **SR** 15, 17 vs. necromancy

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee molkra +23/+18/+13 (1d10+16/19-
20) or blood knife +25/+20/+15
(1d4+11)

Special Attacks champion's strike (fleet
charge) ^{MA}, feeding, mythic power (5/
day) ^{MA}, mythic rage ^{MA}, rage (27 round/
day), rage power (intimidating glare,
mighty swing, raging leaper, roused
anger, strength surge +12, terrifying
howl), stone enchantment (*mighty
stroke*), surge (+1d6) ^{MA}

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st)

At will—*disrupt undead*, *pierce soul*

TACTICS

Base Statistics When not raging, Lnskt has **AC** 31, touch 11, flat-footed 30; **hp** 95; **Fort** +9; +2 vs. necromancy, **Will** +11; **Melee** molkra +20/+15/+10 (1d10+12); **Str** 26, **Con** —; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 32; **Skills** Climb +21, Intimidate +23

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 34

Feats Blind-Fight, Cleave, Improved Critical (molkra), Improved Initiative, Leadership, Power Attack, Power Attack (Mythic)^{MA}

Skills Acrobatics +14 (jump +26), Climb +24, Escape Artist +6, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +10, Sense Motive +7, Survival +11;

Racial Modifiers Intimidate uses Str instead of Cha for key ability, -4 Swim

Languages Taanic

SQ enchanted stones (*blessed will, hide of stone, mighty stroke*), fast movement, feeding, tainted by Void

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ability Increases (Ex) Vrykyl gain the following ability increases: +10 Strength, +2 Intelligence, +2 Wisdom, Charisma +2.

Exceptional Coordination and Tenacity (Ex) All Vrykyl gain a +4 Void bonus to Reflex saves and a +8 Void bonus to Will saves.

Feeding (Su) A Vrykyl must feed to maintain its existence and to heal damage. This is accomplished through use of the blood knife. The blood knife is used to perform a coup de grace on an opponent. If successful (indicating the knife has stabbed into the victim's heart), the Vrykyl has fed and gains 1d10 points of healing that may not exceed its maximum hit points. Every week a Vrykyl does not feed, it suffers 1d10 points of damage. A Vrykyl that has not fed in one month is considered fatigued, and exhausted if not fed in

six months. A Vrykyl whose hit points drop to 0 due to starvation is destroyed, its body crumbling to dust.

Frightful Presence (Ex) This ability activates immediately when a Vrykyl not in shadow disguise or has its illusion disbelieved. The save DC is 10 + Vrykyl's HD + Vrykyl's Charisma modifier.

Shadow Disguise (Su) Vrykyl may cloak themselves in a semi-real illusion. They may appear in the form they once had while alive, or in the form of anyone they have killed with their blood knife. To disbelieve the disguise requires a successful Will save (DC 30). Only Dominion Lords may automatically save against a Vrykyl illusion — all other creatures must have a reason to suspect a trick.

SPECIAL POSSESSION

Blood Knife All Vrykyl possess a blood knife, which they construct from one of their own bones within a week of their creation. The blood knife is a dagger consecrated in Void magic and constructed from a Vrykyl's own body. It carries a +2 enhancement bonus. Anyone struck with the blood knife is considered tainted by Void and cannot be healed through magical means. The Vrykyl may use the blood knife to feed. The blood knife is also used to communicate telepathically with the wielder of the Dagger of the Vrykyl (currently owned by Dagnarus) with unlimited range. If a living person takes possession of a Vrykyl's blood knife, he immediately becomes tainted by Void. Other Vrykyl may be able to detect the presence of the knife, use its energy to track its general location, as can the wielder of the Dagger of the Vrykyl. A bone knife can bypass another Vrykyl's damage reduction.

Before becoming the third taan Vrykyl, Lnskt was a taan nizam noted for her strength and ferocity in battle. She was said to have almost singlehandedly defeated the human warriors of the doomed city of Dullifed. Dagnarus made certain that she had no foreknowledge of her fate. He tried the same trick he had used on Nb'arsk, but Lnskt was not fooled. Warned by instinct, she looked around and saw the Dagger of the Vrykyl about to strike her. Furious, she fought for her life. So ferociously and tenaciously did she fight that the Lord of the Void and his Vrykyl, Valura, were forced to call upon powerful Void magic to slay Lnskt. It is said that Dagnarus lost at least two of his many lives in this contest. But although she fought to remain alive, Lnskt did not prove disobedient once she became a Vrykyl. Now she is among the most loyal of Dagnarus's Vrykyl.

NB'ARSK CR 10/MR 1

Female taan Vrykyl fighter 7/ranger 4/marshal 1

LE Medium undead (mythic)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., detect magic 50-ft. radius; Perception +10

Aura frightful presence (sight, DC 23)

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 9, flat-footed 27 (+3 Dex, +20 natural)

hp 87 (11d10+22); destruction at 0 hp

Fort +11; +2 vs. necromancy **Ref** +13, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities bravery +2, hard to kill^{MA}; **DR** 20/magic; **Immune** undead traits; **SR** 15, 16 vs. necromancy

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *longsword* +21/+16/+11 (1d8+10/19-20) or *blood knife* +18/+13/+8 (1d4+11)

Special Attacks decisive strike +1^{MA}, favored enemy (human +2), feeding, mythic power (5/day)^{MA}, weapon training (heavy blades +1)

Ranger Spell-Like Abilities Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +1)

1st—*resist energy*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd)

At will—*bleed* (DC 12), *daze* (DC 12), *shadow'd visage*

3/day—*chill touch* (DC 13), *defect*

1/day—*convulsions* (DC 14)

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +18 (+20 disarm and trip); **CMD** 31 (33 vs. disarm and trip)

Feats Close-Order Fighting, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Leadership, Mobility, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Skills Bluff +7, Climb +22, Diplomacy +8, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (nature) +5, Perception +10, Stealth +9, Survival +8; **Racial Modifiers** Intimidate uses Str instead of Cha for key ability, -4 Swim

Languages Taanic

SQ armor training 2, favored terrain (urban +2), feeding, hunter's bond (companions), stand tall^{MA}, tainted by Void, track +2, wild empathy +4

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ability Increases (Ex) Vrykyl gain the following ability increases: +10 Strength, +2 Intelligence, +2 Wisdom, Charisma +2.

Exceptional Coordination and Tenacity (Ex) All Vrykyl gain a +4 Void bonus to Reflex saves and a +8 Void bonus to Will saves.

Feeding (Su) A Vrykyl must feed to maintain its existence and to heal damage. This is accomplished through use of the blood knife. The blood knife is used to perform a coup de grace on an opponent. If successful (indicating the knife has stabbed into the victim's heart), the Vrykyl has fed and gains

1d10 points of healing that may not exceed its maximum hit points. Every week a Vrykyl does not feed, it suffers 1d10 points of damage. A Vrykyl that has not fed in one month is considered fatigued, and exhausted if not fed in six months. A Vrykyl whose hit points drop to 0 due to starvation is destroyed, its body crumbling to dust.

Frightful Presence (Ex) This ability activates immediately when a Vrykyl not in shadow disguise or has its illusion disbelieved. The save DC is 10 + Vrykyl's HD + Vrykyl's Charisma modifier.

Shadow Disguise (Su) Vrykyl may cloak themselves in a semi-real illusion. They may appear in the form they once had while alive, or in the form of anyone they have killed with their blood knife. To disbelieve the disguise requires a successful Will save (DC 30). Only Dominion Lords may automatically save against a Vrykyl illusion — all other creatures must have a reason to suspect a trick.

SPECIAL POSSESSION

Blood Knife All Vrykyl possess a blood knife, which they construct from one of their own bones within a week of their creation. The blood knife is a dagger consecrated in Void magic and constructed from a Vrykyl's own body. It carries a +2 enhancement bonus. Anyone struck with the blood knife is considered tainted by Void and cannot be healed through magical means. The Vrykyl may use the blood knife to feed. The blood knife is also used to communicate telepathically with the wielder of the Dagger of the Vrykyl (currently owned by Dagnarus) with unlimited range. If a living person takes possession of a Vrykyl's blood knife, he immediately becomes tainted by Void. Other Vrykyl may be able to detect the presence of the knife, use its energy to

track its general location, as can the wielder of the Dagger of the Vrykyl. A bone knife can bypass another Vrykyl's damage reduction.

Kelkaw A +2 *longsword*, gift from Dagnarus after Nb'arsk became a Vrykyl.

Nb'arsk was the second taan chosen by Dagnarus to become a Vrykyl. After his failure to retain control of K'let, Dagnarus wondered if he could use taan as Vrykyl or if they would all defy him. Dagnarus decided that perhaps his mistake had been in making K'let aware of the fact that he was to become a Vrykyl.

Without telling her what he was doing, Dagnarus presented Nb'arsk as a candidate to the Dagger of the Vrykyl. The Dagger found the taan suitable and struck her in the back. The ceremony was conducted in private, with only Valura the Vrykyl in attendance, with orders to destroy the taan Vrykyl should she prove rebellious. Nb'arsk obeyed Dagnarus without question. Thus Dagnarus felt free to create another taan Vrykyl.

Nb'arsk has foregone having any of her stones re-enchanted. Dagnarus gifted her with an enchanted longsword not long after her transfiguration into a Vrykyl. Nb'arsk is highly respected by the taan under her command and has proven to be an effective commander. She is vicious in battle and always leads her troops into combat, never commanding from the rear.

ZARG TREE

This plant, some sixty, seventy feet in height, has broad leaves similar to the elm. Its limbs are large and round, with the first branches sprouting about two-thirds of the way up the tree trunk.

ZARG TREE

CR 1

XP 400

N Huge plant

Init -1; **Senses** tremorsense 30 ft.;

Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 8, flat-footed 10 (+2 natural, -2 size)

hp 36 (4d8+20)

Fort +9, **Ref** +1, **Will** —

Immune plant traits

OFFENSE

Speed 0 ft.

Range zarg tree nuts +3 (1d4+1/x3)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 10, **Con** 20, **Int** 1, **Wis** —, **Cha** —

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 18 (can't be tripped)

ECOLOGY

Environment forests and mountains

Organization solitary

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dormancy After releasing half of its available nuts, a zarg tree becomes dormant for 24 hours. A zarg tree typically starts with 4d6+6 nuts.

Zarg trees exist primarily in western Loerem, with a few exceptions found in the elven lands and on some orken isles. Zarg trees are valued by the taan, who are extraordinarily fond of the nuts. Zarg nuts weigh between three and four pounds each, with a thick hard shell covered with spines. The shell accounts for most of the nut's weight. When the shell is split open, the meat inside is a pale green in color and the consistency of bread dough. The meat is bitter to the taste if eaten raw, but when heated, the meat releases natural sugars that make it sweeter than honey.

Humans have learned to eat zarg nut meat from the taan and also find it delicious, although they are not as partial to the nutmeat as are the taan.

The nuts serve as the zarg tree's

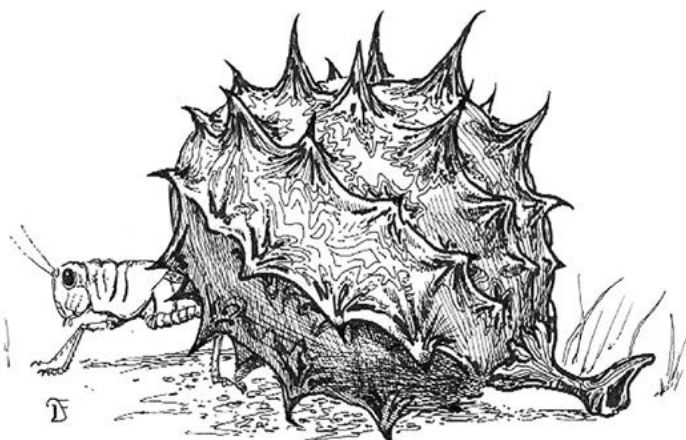
natural defense. Roots fan out from the base of the tree just a few inches beneath the surface of the ground. While the primary root digs deeply into the earth for stability and water gathering, secondary roots act as feelers that transmit vibrations back to the tree. The tree senses these vibrations and releases nuts closest to where the vibrations occur.

The falling nuts are intended to scare away the source of irritation and this is usually the case with arbragers. Taan have developed a strategy to defeat the zarg tree. One taan — usually a tasker — is chosen to run close to the tree, causing it to drop some of its nuts. As the nuts fall to the ground, taan warriors rush in to gather them before another barrage can be launched.

Young warriors often try to prove their prowess by running up to a zarg tree during the midst of a gathering session and slapping its trunk, risking a hail of zarg nuts in return. The real danger from a zarg tree comes from inadvertently walking under its boughs. Experienced travelers know to keep close watch for the spiny zarg nuts and to avoid the area in which they are found.

Zarg trees produce fruit all during the summer and autumn months, and remain dormant during the winter months.

Zarg nuts are considered a strong food by the taan, because they fight back.





CHAPTER 10: ADVENTURING




Fodr, Female Taan Warrior

Death could come at any time and I welcome it, so long as I die in battle and not in my tent, ailing from weak lungs and stiff joints. Give me pain and glory. Give me a fierce battle and enemies who are not afraid to bleed on my blade.

And when I have finished one campaign, I want a feast, a mate for my bed and then back to the fight. To stay in one place without battle for too long weakens a warrior.

To die a warrior is an honor. To die old and feeble is to live for naught.



In this chapter are several scenario suggestions a GM may develop for a Sovereign Stone campaign. Many of the adventure ideas provided are suitable for Loerem-based characters (orks, elves, Vinnengaeleans, etc.) who may be at war with the taan. Others are designed for taan and half-taan characters facing life in Loerem.

Only the GM should read this chapter. If you are playing a character in the campaign, you stand to lose a lot of the enjoyment if you peek at what is ahead.

GRAVE ROBBERS

After their latest adventure, the characters stumble upon a taan war party. The taan appear to have just done battle with human mercenaries, most of whom have been killed. Only a few humans — male and female — are still alive and they are wounded and chained together. One taan, the shaman, is using Void magic to dispose of the corpses of taan who have died. Their bodies are beginning to rapidly decompose. There are about one hundred taan in the war party.

Complications

The characters have no idea that taan are nearby. If the characters are laughing and talking in normal tones, the taan hear them. If the characters are moving (walking, running), the taan see them. Almost anything the characters do alerts the taan to their presence. Ten taan warriors attack the characters. These taan, who want to take more slaves, attempt to render the characters unconscious rather than killing them. Should the characters stand and fight, they are likely to lose. Their best hope is to run and evade pursuit.

Goal

The characters' goal should be to escape the clutches of the pursuing taan and find a city where they will be safe. The taan do

not advance within sight of a city's walls. There is the possibility of turning back on the taan and trying to defeat them with an ambush, but this is dangerous. The taan are deadly fighters and ten of them are easily be a match for double their number.

The characters might decide whether they will try to rescue the captives. This goal, while noble, will almost certainly result in death or capture.

Plot Developments

If the characters are able to defeat the warriors, they discover that word has spread among the taan that they are within taan territory and now other taan are searching for the characters. The nearest town should be at least a day away, and the area is becoming more and more dangerous.

If the characters have managed to capture a taan and have brought the taan with them, the taan will do all in his power to slow down the party's progress or try to escape. If he does escape, he tries to murder as many characters as he can before he himself is slain.

If the party reaches the town safely, the townspeople are horrified by the characters' description of the taan war party. Some people may blame the characters for leading the taan to them and may want to have the characters thrown out of town. Others (probably the militia) might intervene on the characters' behalf.

If the characters have a taan prisoner, the townspeople demand to burn the creature as a "demon." Because they cannot speak the taan's language, the party cannot interrogate the prisoner unless a half-taan is present.

If one of the local lords is already in league with Dagnarus, that leader will want to see the characters silenced before they can cause more trouble by stirring up the townspeople.

If the characters are captured by the

taan, they could have many adventures trying to stay alive as slaves of the savages. They could try to make a break for it, escaping with as many of the other slaves as possible. There is the possibility that a half-taan may fall in love with one of the characters and aid the escape.

RING OF TERROR

During their travels, the characters pass through a deserted village. Doors are battered down, gardens are ruined, weapons and farm implements are scattered everywhere. It appears the villagers put up quite a fight. If the characters are good-hearted souls or, at the very least, curious ones, they explore the village further. They find bodies of slain humans who obviously died fighting. Pools of blood are seen inside some of the homes. Livestock has been killed and partially eaten. Fences are broken and food storage has been ransacked. The characters do not find any wounded, either human or taan. They do not find any taan corpses.

The characters can find tracks of human footprints leading away from the village. Marks in the mud indicate a few bodies are being dragged. Looking closer, the characters discover other tracks, manlike, but larger. If the characters have had prior encounters with the taan, they recognize the tracks as taan. If not, they are impressed by the size of the tracks and the fact that none of them, not even those with knowledge or tracking skill, recognize the tracks.

Complications

If the characters follow the trail, they find that the taan have discarded the weakest villagers along the way, slaying them and leaving their bodies for scavengers. At one point, the characters come across a pack of jackals (or worse, monsters for characters of higher level) feasting on the carrion. Sighting the characters, the jackals move to

defend their food.

To make matters more difficult, the taan are using scouts to cover their trail. The scouts come upon the heroes and decide to capture them alive, attacking to kill only when it appears likely the taan will lose the fight.

Goal

The characters come to a mountainous ridge, where the taan have taken the villagers. The taan have discovered sapphires here and need slaves to mine them. The taan are whipping and beating the human slaves to make them work harder. Slaves refusing to work are killed and may be eaten as the characters watch. Should the characters decide to free the slaves, they see that there are too many taan for for an all-out attack to succeed, so they'll have to be sneaky.

The character could use spells and the darkness of night as cover to steal into the camp and release slaves a few at a time. This may not prove very successful, since the moment the taan discover slaves missing, they double the guards and be on the lookout for further infiltration.

The characters could travel to a nearby city and recruit other adventurers and sell-swords to come with them and help to free the slaves (though many will die in the battle). The characters might use spells to sabotage the mine, rescuing the slaves first, then bring part of the mountain down on the heads of the taan. Any good plan should be rewarded with some measure of success. It should be very difficult to free all of the slaves.

Plot Developments

It is possible for the characters to find a survivor in the village, perhaps hiding in a well or a root cellar. The villager is terrified and the characters must calm the person. When they do so, the survivor tells the characters that a human is working with

the taan. He looks like a pudgy merchant dressed in fine clothes, his fingers sparkling with rings. The man led a horse-pulled cart into their village and started to unload his wares to attract a crowd. The taan swarmed in to attack the people who were gaping at the wares. By the time the villagers were able to reach their weapons, it was too late. Just before the characters arrived, the supposed merchant and a dozen taan bodyguard headed east, no doubt toward another village. It's up to the characters if they want to pursue the man and the taan. The merchant is really a Vrykyl using his shadow image to fool the villagers.

Should the characters follow the Vrykyl and the marauding taan, they happen upon the village just as the merchant is unveiling his wares. The attackers number about thirty taan, all assault troops. Unless the characters are very powerful, they are going to need help on this one, especially with a Vrykyl ready to assist the taan should they need it.

DAGNARUS'S HIT SQUAD

One of Dagnarus's most closely kept secrets is the Avenging Hands. One highly respected taan nizam and twenty of the most honored taan warriors and shamans make up this unit of assassins. They have been deployed to kill royal emissaries, powerful magi, generals, and the heads of guilds throughout Loerem. Four taan warriors and a shaman have been chosen for this job. (The shaman might well be a member of the Black Veil.)

A wealthy merchant, Clause Witzvon, contacts the heroes and tells them he has been tipped off that the Head of the New Vinnengaelean Merchant's Guild, Starnhorst Rankorhost, has been singled out for assassination by some unknown paid killers. Currently, Rankorhost is traveling to Forden and knows nothing about the pending attack. The characters must find Rankorhost before the assassins do, protect his travels to Forden and his return to Vinnengael. Witzvon admits he isn't doing this for purely philanthropic reasons. He expects to be well rewarded by the Guild Master and in turn able to reward the characters for their service.



Complications

During their journey, the characters have the feeling they are being watched. If they investigate the matter, they discover a spy dogging their trail. The spy claims to be working for a rival Guildhouse. He saw them talking

with Witzvon and followed them to see what they were up to. If questioned, the spy denies all knowledge of any assassination attempt and swears that his employer did not arrange the assassination. The spy was hired to keep tabs on Witzvon. The spy does not even know Rankorhost. The characters sense that the spy is telling the truth.

En route, the characters are set upon by bandits following the merchant trade routes. The bandits should provide a good fight, but nothing that will seriously harm the characters.

About halfway to Forden, as the characters are making camp, they happen upon two riders, wounded and weary. The riders report that their employer, Starnhorst Rankorhost, has been killed in the night. The riders are heading back to New Vinnengael to deliver their news. The camp where Rankorhost was slain is less than a day's ride from Forden, where the survivors among the guard and caravan are continuing their trip, intending to find a ship to take them back to New Vinnengael.

Goal

With the Guild Master dead, there is little that the characters can expect to gain by way of reward, unless they can discover something that would be of interest to Witzvon. This will take a little thinking on the part of the characters, but if they travel on and find the campsite of the caravan that was attacked, a search of the surrounding area produces clues as to the perpetrators of the crime. The characters discover a trail that leads west. The trail is not easy to see. Those who have had experience with taan will recognize the tracks as taan. Otherwise, they know only the tracks are unlike those of any creature they have ever seen on Loerem. Someone who rolls exceptionally high may note one pair of booted feet that are either human or possibly a small ork.

Plot Developments

The taan move fast, but they are forced to travel mostly at night, to keep from being seen. They are headed straight toward Delak 'Vir and the Karnuan Portal. The characters may draw close, but they are never able to catch a glimpse of the mysterious assassins. Finally, one day out of Delak 'Vir, the characters see four taan, the creatures they have been chasing. They also see a human in their midst. The human and the taan part company at this point. There is little conversation, for the

human and the taan can't talk to each other. They may be using sign language, but it will be difficult for the characters to figure out what they are saying. They do see the human hand over a bag to one of the taan. The taan dump the contents of the bag on the ground. The characters are amazed to see the bag contains what appear to be several large, sparkling diamonds.

It is up to the characters to decide what they are going to do next. An attack will engage them in melee combat with three very powerful taan warriors and a taan shaman. They can tail the taan as they make their way into Delak 'Vir. This is a difficult proposition, for the taan are on their guard. If characters do manage to tail the taan, they follow them to the outskirts of the city, where the shaman uses Void magic to conceal the presence of the taan in order for the taan to slip undetected through the Portal. If this happens, the characters lose the taan.

If the characters decide to follow the human after he leaves the taan, they easily catches him. Questioning reveals him to be in the employ of Witzvon. It is Witzvon who has ordered the assassination of his rival. Witzon hired the characters in order to cover his tracks. What the characters do from here depends on what they hope to gain. If they are angry at being used, they may decide to bring Witzon to justice. Gaining proof of his complicity would mean tracking the taan and recovering the bag of diamonds they were given in payment, or convincing the messenger to implicate his boss. If the characters recover the diamonds and the bag, they find that both are easily recognizable, either in Forden or in New Vinnengael, as belonging to Witzon.

If the characters steal the diamonds and try to sell them in either city, they are arrested and held as accomplices to the murderer.

There is the potential for adventure

and intrigue as the characters try to bring down Witzvon and discover the nature of the mysterious assassins.

A TAAN BY ANY OTHER COLOR

An albino taan has become a “loose cannon.” He does not accept Dagnarus as a god. He distrusts Dagnarus’s true motives with regard to the taan. The albino has come to believe that once the taan are no longer an asset to Dagnarus, he will abandon them, possibly destroy them.

The albino’s name is Krixez. He is a rebel, a deserter from Dagnarus’s armies and is determined to make a life for himself in Loerem. He is a dangerous taan, having been a nizam at one point. His leaving caused great ripples of unrest in the ranks of the taan. Dagnarus wants the albino captured and killed at all costs.

Dagnarus has handpicked a team of taan to hunt down Krixez and eliminate him. The characters are these taan, who come from the host Krixez once commanded. The characters are given orders to either kill their former nizam or bring him back alive to be tortured and then slain.

Complications

Krixez is difficult to locate, since he knows how to cover his tracks and he keeps away from human communities. The taan characters can run into trouble with the local wildlife (bears, wildcats, wolves) that will attack them on sight. Once they finally find Krixez, he either fights for his life or attempts to negotiate, depending on their actions. If the characters think Krixez is really a traitor, there is little hope for a peaceful resolution to the adventure. If they have long admired him as their nizam and they trust his judgment, they may decide to join him.

Goal

The characters succeed if they kill the albino, although there might be a few

character fatalities in the process, since Krixez is a formidable opponent. The characters succeed on a higher level if they realize Krixez has reasons to worry about Dagnarus. Befriending the albino might gain them a powerful ally, who can help them survive in a strange land. This could lead to adventures where the characters act as double agents in Dagnarus’s army. If the characters or Krixez befriend a half-taan, the half-taan might be able to make contact with a human military leader or high-ranking politician to warn them of Dagnarus’s plans. There is always the possibility, of course, that the human they contact is a Vrykyl in disguise.

Plot Developments

If the characters kill Krixez, they must bring his body back to the host to prove they have done as they were commanded. Some of the taan in their host are sympathetic to the former nizam and they will be angered by his death and seek to harm those responsible. This can be anything from giving them cursed stones to assassination attempts. The characters’ reward for slaying Krixez is a private meeting with Dagnarus, who gives each a word of thanks that raises their status among the other taan. After the meeting, the threats and attempts on their lives cease.

If the heroes formed an alliance with Krixez, he can be a source for further adventures, as he asks them to thwart the plans of the God of the Rock. Unfortunately, word of their deeds will reach Dagnarus, and he will send taan forces against them.

MERCANTILE EXCHANGE

Caravans traveling to an inland city are being raided. The merchants in the city are in an uproar. Their businesses are in jeopardy. They have spent good coin for materials they have not received and their stock of sellable goods has dwindled to the point where they are losing customers

daily. Survivors of the attack who have reached the city describe taan as the attackers. Those characters familiar with the taan will recognize them for what they are. Otherwise, it seems the caravans are under attack by some particularly vicious and intelligent monsters.

The merchants are recruiting a band of hardy adventurers brave enough to fight the taan. The merchants are prepared to offer the characters a fair amount of coin if they can stop the raids. The merchants do not have enough funds to fully pay the heroes now for their endeavor. They offer half the payment up front and the other half a month after the caravans resume. If the characters balk at the pay, the city fathers offer to make up the difference (within reason).

The merchants provide the names of caravan masters who have not returned, a list of missing goods and a map marking the caravan route. If the characters make reasonable requests for basic supplies, the merchants provide them.

Complications

In truth, the taan are not responsible for instigating the caravan raids. The raids are the work of a shrewd businessman who intends to enter the town and buy-out the bankrupt merchants. Once his shops and his people are in place, the raids stop and the merchant caravans continue into the city, supplying his stores. His guilt will be difficult to prove, however. As the heroes backtrack along the caravan route, they find pieces of broken wagons, human and taan tracks, and dried blood. Bodies

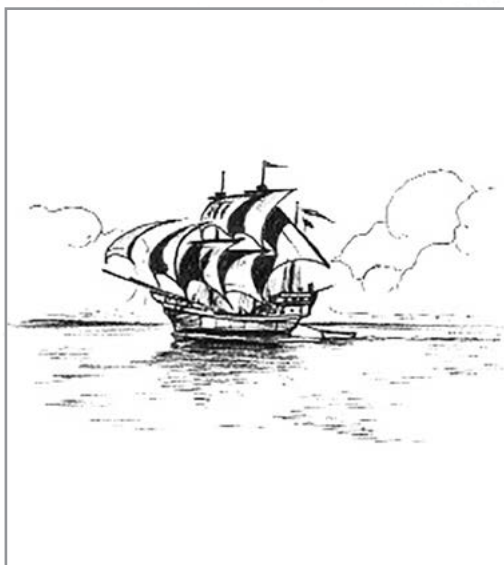
have either been buried or dragged off. Persistent tracking and investigating turn up further clues: a discarded taan weapon, a broken taan zuk.

The characters come across a woodsman who knows of a few strange creatures living in the area, though they have not caused him any trouble (of course, he can't speak with them). He points the heroes in the right direction. If they follow his directions, they come across a trio of renegade taan. These taan are not responsible for the raids, but they will fight the characters simply because they are not taan. If the characters defeat the taan and investigate their campsite, they discover that these taan had nothing to do with the raids. They cannot find any of the missing items from the caravan. The taan have little, if anything, on them.

If a half-taan is present, he may speak to any captured taan. The taan find the concept of caravans strange. They obviously have no idea what the half-taan is talking about. The taan do not say why they are here, but it becomes

apparent that they don't know anything about robbing caravans.

While the heroes investigate, a man comes staggering out of the forest. He is wounded and he reports that another caravan has been waylaid close by. He leads them to the caravan. Here they find a trail that takes them into a deeply forested area. They find one renegade taan, several humans, and a half-taan — the band of thugs the unscrupulous merchant has hired to attack the caravans. The thieves will do anything to avoid capture (they'd likely face death sentences for their assorted



crimes). Unless the characters are able to apprehend some of the humans without killing them, they will not learn about the plot by the merchant. The renegade taan and the half-taan know nothing about this plot. They are fighting for food in order to survive.

Goal

By defeating the band of thieves, the heroes bring a halt to the merchant caravan raids (at least for a while). They can recover most of the goods, which have been hidden in a cave, although they'll have trouble transporting the merchandise back to the city. They'll even discover some treasure in the thugs' possession — a couple of ornate weapons and some expensive jewelry.

Plot Developments

If the characters uncover the plot by the rival merchant, they'll be asked to perform another task: find the man and bring him to town for justice. If they agree, they'll have an adventure tracking him down. If the characters find him, he may attempt to bribe them. His bodyguards (perhaps a few half-taan) will put up a fight. Political maneuverings may be necessary to lure him out of his safe haven in another town. He's a wealthy man, and wealthy people are well-protected. If the characters have not uncovered the plot, they'll be dogged by another band of thugs hired by the angry merchant bent on revenge.

SPY FOR A DAY

The characters are passing through a town when they are confronted by the militia and pressed into service. The town's citizens have received information that Dagnarus is massing troops in the wilderness for a raid on the town. The town intends to use the characters for a spy mission.

If the characters refuse the assignment, they're thrown out of town and told to never return. Go to "Plot Development."

If they agree, they're told to map the area and try to discover where the taan forces are located. They are given paper, ink and quills to make maps. They are also provided with supplies, but nothing expensive.

Complications

A taan raiding party is gathering in the wilderness. The town is the source of several springs where there is plenty of fresh water. Local farms are prosperous and could feed a battlegroup for three months. The town's militia captain has a vague idea where the raiding party is located. The characters encounter a few taan scouts, which should provide a challenge for them, as well as clues to where the main force is located.

Goal

If the heroes defeat the scouts and use their skills to move cautiously through the wilderness, they are able to locate the taan raiders, determine how large their force is and draw a map of the area. On their way back to town, they should have one more encounter with taan scouts. Once in town, the militia captain is certain he has enough men to handle the threat. He announces that he is going to launch a surprise attack on the morrow. The characters are asked to help in the attack.

Plot Developments

If the heroes decide to leave the town, they come upon a taan war party camping less than six hours away. These taan are not part of the raiding party. The captain apparently has no notion they are out here, because he did not mention them. The characters realize that these taan could sweep into town once the militia leaves to fight the other taan.

If the characters decide to warn the captain, they must hurry to return with the information in time. If they dawdle, they find the town is in the process of being sacked by the taan and they will have a

hard time escaping with their lives.

If the characters do not warn the captain, the characters are attacked by the taan war party, which endeavors to capture them and keep them as slaves. The taan will probably succeed in this endeavor and the characters can continue their adventure trying to remain alive and escape the taan.

SEARCH FOR THE BLACK SWORD

This scenario pits a small group of taan warriors against the characters. Both are trying to retrieve an old sword of Void magic that was said to have been buried with an ancient king in the current Caliphate of Karnu. The characters may have been hired to recover the sword or they may have found the sword on a treasure map.

It is possible the characters are also taan warriors and shamans who have been sent by their nizam to find the sword before the rival taan can do so. If this is the case, the two taan groups are in a race to reach the sword first.

Complications

The tomb where the ancient king is buried is a dark, dangerous dungeon stocked with deadly traps and monsters. This should be a “dungeon crawl” in the classic sense. Don’t forget the other party is hunting for the sword, too.

Goal

The characters should eventually find the sword buried with the corpse of an ancient king found lying in an ornate sarcophagus. The sword glows with an eerie black radiance. It has the power to instill its wielder with a commanding charm. This, in effect, gives the wielder the Leadership feat and a +2 enhancement bonus to his leadership score.

Plot Developments

Escaping should not be easy, since some

monsters the characters missed on their journey into the catacombs will try to stop them from leaving. The characters also encounter some undead, which might offer cryptic warnings about disturbing this tomb and hint that they are all cursed by the Void. Unless the characters have already defeated the rival group, they continue to harass the characters in an attempt to take the sword from them. The sword is valuable, but tainted by Void. Characters on the side of good will have to figure out what to do with it if they succeed in recovering it.

THE WRONG SIDE

An individual in a port city is hiring adventurers to accompany him into the wilderness. He is in charge of transporting shipments of weapons to several small communities in need of protection. Though he appears to be a formidable fighter, he wants some extra muscle around just in case there’s trouble. He’ll pay the characters a fair amount of coin, though nothing too outstanding. He offers half now, half when he reaches the settlements in safety. The individual is a Vrykyl in disguise, and he’s actually taking weapons shipments to an encampment of human Void cultists who are loyal to Dagnarus. These humans are planning to raid the small communities he’s pretending to help. He wants the characters along because there are militias patrolling in the wilderness. He cannot deal with transporting the weapons and fighting militiamen all at the same time.

Complications

During the journey, the characters are attacked by a militia patrol. The Vrykyl convinces the characters that the patrol is really a raiding party in disguise and orders them to fight. Astute characters who are paying attention to their employer notice that he is a very formidable warrior, better than any one of them. This might make

some of the characters curious and cause them to question the Vrykyl, who sticks to his original story and angrily refuses to answer too many questions.

Characters paying attention to maps, or who are familiar with the area, realize that they are not taking the most direct route toward the small needy communities, though they are going roughly in the right direction. The Vrykyl, if pressed, explains they are stopping first at a very small community that is not on the map. If the heroes are not suspicious and do not provoke the Vrykyl into revealing himself before they reach the human encampment, they find themselves in trouble. The Vrykyl has no more need of them and intends to kill them. He is joined by the human followers of Dagnarus — Void cultists who are skilled in Void magic.

Goal

The heroes triumph if they discover the Vrykyl and face him before they reach the encampment. Defeating him will be difficult, even if they work together, but they should at least be able to drive him off. Uncovering the Vrykyl's plot in time to warn the settlements will be a noble accomplishment. The characters are hailed as heroes in the area, given some kind of reward, and honored with gifts.

Plot Developments

Thwarting Dagnarus's plans is unhealthy. The Lord of the Void will work to discover who has killed or foiled his Vrykyl and he will send a force to deal with them. The Void Cultists may come after them, as well.

SACRED SITE

The characters are rebel taan trying to enter Dagnarus's Portal to search for a sacred site located on the other side. They believe an artifact sacred to Void magic can be found there. The characters should have a tough time in this adventure. If they even

make it into the Portal, they should count themselves lucky.

The rebel taan believe Dagnarus is going to use the taan for his own ends and then destroy them. They hear about a sacred artifact that lies on the other side of the Portal that turn the taan race from their false god back to the true gods. A shaman should be a member of the party.

Complications

The rebel taan are meeting secretly when they are attacked by other taan loyal to Dagnarus. This is a warm-up battle, so the rebel taan should be able to defeat their foes. However, they realize they have been found out and had better move quickly. They must reach the Portal, perhaps passing through Dagnarus's encampment on the way, where they may have additional adventures.

Arriving at the Portal, the characters must now get past the guards. The taan who guard the Portal are high-ranking, very powerful taan warriors, ten in number. The guard changes every three hours, and for fifteen minutes there are twenty taan warriors on duty. The guards do admit taan into the Portal from time-to-time, mostly shamans traveling to the old world in search of gems or warriors who are acting on orders from Dagnarus. If a shaman is in the party, he may be able to convince the guards to allow him to pass. A warrior might be able to convince them that he is sent by Dagnarus to recruit other taan.

If the guards don't believe them, the party has to fight their way into the Portal. This fight should not be easy! If the characters abandon their mission, they must then convince their fellow taan that they are, in fact, loyal to Dagnarus. The shaman might say this was all a test, just to make certain the guards are alert. The taan guards might believe this, for such tests have been done before.

If the group makes it into the Portal, they have only a brief time inside before more guards are summoned and come after them. The characters might find aid within the Portal, perhaps a magical item that enables them to battle their way out, or another party of taan from the old world that has discovered the Portal and is exploring it.

Plot Developments

If the taan manage to reach the end of the Portal safely, they find themselves in a cave high above a stream. Roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, there has been a freak storm that flooded the stream. Any other result means the streambed is dry. If it is flooded, the taan must overcome their fear of water, jump into the stream and then make it to shore. If they succeed in reaching the shore, the characters find a shield fashioned from the

spine of a bahk buried in the sandy shore. Unfortunately, as the shield is magical, a bahk has also been drawn to it and will fight the characters for it.

Taan can sense Void magic radiating off the shield. The shield enables the bearer to charm those around him. All within 20 feet of the taan user must succeed on a DC 15 Will save or act friendly toward him, regardless of any past transgressions.

Returning through the Portal to Loerem should not be a problem for the characters, as long as they have the shield (even if they have killed the guards coming in). The entire incident is passed off as a terrible misunderstanding.

The taan may decide to stay and adventure in the taan homeland, a place they have only heard about, but never seen.



OPEN GAMING LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts, creatures, characters, stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the

Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc. System Reference Document. Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, based on material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook. Copyright 2009, Paizo Publishing, LLC; Author: Jason Bulmahn, based on material by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, and Skip Williams.

Sovereign Stone Core Rulebook. Copyright 2013, Timeout Diversions.



TAAN: SCIONS OF THE VOID

Adventurers on Loerem have been astonished and dismayed to encounter a new race of creatures never before seen on this continent. Subjects of the evil demigod, Dagnarus, the taan are a race of warriors whose focus in life is to die in battle and to take as many of their enemies with them as they can. Worshipers of the destructive Void magic, the taan are powerful humanoids who intend to conquer and enslave all races of Loerem.

In the pages of this sourcebook, the GM will find all information necessary to add the taan to a campaign, including a history of the taan, their religious beliefs, lore and legends, their unique Void magic practices, weapons, leadership, important societal details, and their reverence for Dagnarus, the man they consider a god. The book also features rules for taan player-characters.

This volume will provide excitement and challenges to players and GMs alike!

