

SARTAR RISING

GATHERING THUNDER

VOLUME 3



STEVE
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GAMES



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XX



HEROQUEST



Gathering Thunder

Sartar Rising, Volume 3

"The New Breathers" by Martin Hawley; "Sheep, Clouds, Thunder" by Jeff Kyer, with Bryan Thexton;
"The Other Side of the Dragon" by David Dunham; "Final Days at Skullpoint" by Ron Edwards;
"Orane's Spindle" by Ian Cooper; "The Sky Ship" by Greg Stafford, with Martin Laurie, Patrik Sandberg, and Jane Williams;
"In Starbrow's Camp" by Greg Stafford; "Narrator Resources" by Mark Galeotti, Stephen Martin, and Roderick Robertson.

Additional Contributions: Ian Cooper, Mark Galeotti, Martin Hawley, Stephen Martin, Roderick Robertson.

Playtesters and Error Checking: Benedict Adamson, Mark Adri-Soejko, Andrew Armstrong, Cayton Baisch, Tom Beeson, Maura Byrne, Dave Camoirano, Steve Canon, Mike Connolly, Tracey Connolly, Bryan Davis, David Dunham, Ron Edwards, Bryan Feir, Richard Fenner, Bruce Ferrie, James Hawkins, Jeff Kyer, Melanie Kyer, Martin Laurie, Brian Laxson, Jason MacIntyre, David Mitchell, Tod Olson, Wesley Quadros, Eliot Richman, Roderick Robertson, Paul Rocchi, Danny Sarasin, Jonas Schiött, Chris Siebenman, Julie Stauffer, Bryan Thexton, Greg Varga, Steven White.

Cover Painting: Manoel Magalhães and Diogo Viegas. § *Back Cover Painting:* Eric Vanel.

Interior Illustrations, Maps, and Diagrams: Heather Bruton, Dario Corallo, Tanner Critz, Sarah Evans, Stefano Gaudiano, Marian Gutowski, Ossi Hiekkala, Tomoyuki Hiroki, Manoel Magalhães, Duck Nicolson, Boris Sirbey, Tom Sullivan, Peter Town, Eric Vanel, Yoshihide Yano.

Content Editing: Mark Galeotti, Martin Hawley, and Stephen Martin. § *Copy Editing:* Stacy Forsythe.

Layout: Stephen Martin. § *Cover Titles:* Gevin Shaw. § *Runes:* Issaries, Inc.



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Seeing thieves from afar.***

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Cursing those who would misuse it.***

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CONTENTS

| | | | |
|---|----|---|----|
| The Thunder Gathers | 3 | Scene 3: Kith and Kin..... | 29 |
| The New Breathers | 4 | The Skullpoint Clan..... | 30 |
| Scene 1: A Question of Acceptance and Responsibilities..... | 4 | Scene 4: Blood Feud at Skullpoint..... | 36 |
| Scene 2: The Wind Storm Banner..... | 5 | Scene 5: Chaos!..... | 37 |
| Scene 3: A New Friend..... | 5 | Orane's Spindle | 38 |
| Ranulf Stand-Tall..... | 6 | Scene 1: The Walking Dead..... | 38 |
| Scene 4: Rescue..... | 7 | Map of Askiniham..... | 39 |
| Third Bridge Latifundia Slave Camp (map)..... | 7 | Scene 2: Of Draugr, Ravens, and Wolves..... | 42 |
| Getting a Guardian..... | 8 | Scene 3: Into the Marsh..... | 43 |
| Sheep, Clouds, Thunder | 10 | Humakt and the Raven Heroquest..... | 44 |
| Scene 1: Later That Night..... | 10 | Scene 4: The Undying..... | 46 |
| Scene 2: The Fine Art of Raiding..... | 11 | Scene 5: Spindle Day..... | 47 |
| Scene 3: Apple Lane..... | 12 | The Sky Ship | 48 |
| Apple Lane (map)..... | 12 | Scene 1: The Offer..... | 48 |
| Scene 4: Through the Forest..... | 13 | Scene 2: Assembly at Ash Anvari..... | 49 |
| Scene 5: Darstenstead..... | 15 | Scene 3: Going to the Temple..... | 50 |
| Scene 6: And Where Are You Going with Those?..... | 16 | Route of the Journey (map)..... | 51 |
| Darsten TurnStorm..... | 17 | Scene 4: The Temple of Penendros..... | 53 |
| The Other Side of the Dragon | 19 | The Star Striders..... | 54 |
| Scene 1: The Emissary..... | 19 | Scene 5: Penendros' Fort..... | 55 |
| Scene 2: Journey to the Grazelands..... | 19 | Scene 6: The Star Journey..... | 56 |
| Scene 3: Meet the Grazers..... | 20 | Scene 7: The Great Port of the Gate..... | 57 |
| Scene 4: The Sheep Raid..... | 21 | Scene 8: On the Sky Ship..... | 58 |
| Scene 5: The Shrine..... | 23 | Scene 9: Sailing the Sky River..... | 59 |
| Scene 6: Spotted..... | 23 | Scene 10: The Dragon Isles..... | 62 |
| Scene 7: The Cattle Raid..... | 23 | Kallyr Starbrow (1624)..... | 65 |
| Scene 8: The Luminous Stallion King..... | 24 | Adapting and Extending "The Sky Ship"..... | 66 |
| Scene 9: Raid for the Bull..... | 24 | In Starbrow's Camp | 67 |
| Jandetin..... | 25 | Narrator Resources | 68 |
| Final Days at Skullpoint | 27 | Friendly Rivals..... | 68 |
| Scene 1: Arrival at Skullpoint..... | 27 | Probably Hostiles..... | 73 |
| Scene 2: Fitting into the Community..... | 28 | Index | 76 |
| Skullpoint and Environs (map)..... | 28 | | |

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THE THUNDER GATHERS

Gathering *Thunder* is the third book in the *Sartar Rising* campaign series. An aid for the narrator, it provides several episodes that climax in the second great *Hero-Quest* event in the kingdom of Sartar—the raising of the Sky Ship, a new planet. This book assumes access to *Thunder Rebels* (ISS 1301), *Storm Tribe* (ISS 1310), and the previous books in the *Sartar Rising* campaign series, *Barbarian Adventures* (ISS 1401) and *Orlanth is Dead* (ISS 1402). *Dragon Pass*, *Land of Thunder* (ISS 1502) will also be of great use to the narrator, as it provides a full-color map of the region and a detailed guide to its places, myths, and stories.

Orlanth is Dead! brought the hill-dwelling Heortlings into the epic struggle to save their god and free their land from the oppressive Lunar occupation. After the Battle of Iceland, the scattered Heortling attempts at rebellion finally unite under Kallyr Starbrow, whom many claim will be the next High King of Sartar. *Gathering Thunder* continues the saga, as heroes become more deeply involved in the Rebellion, leading up to the Shipraising, one of the great events of the Age. It continues to challenge players with powerful characters and large-scale problems. They will soon find they are in a position to directly affect events in the Rebellion.

Make the heroes feel that they are part of something greater than themselves, but be careful not to let them feel powerless—generate a sense of collective storytelling and discovery. Help the players become excited by the bigger story. You may want to intersperse the episodes presented in *Gathering Thunder* with less grand events and more mundane activities, drawing from those events presented in *Barbarian Adventures*.

Gathering Thunder contains adventures that concern the growing rebellion in the lands of Dragon Pass and the great event of the Shipraising. In *The New Breathers*, the heroes are faced with the aftermath of the Great Winter, defending their clan and traveling to cement alliances gained at the Battle of Iceland. Of course, such a role and journey are likely to bring new responsibilities, challenges, and rewards.

Sheep, Clouds, Thunder gives the heroes an opportunity to help their clan in the wake of the thaw. In the aftermath of *Orlanth is Dead!*, the clan is hungry: infants never stop crying,

a grandmother makes a tearful appeal, their first love's family is starving. At the same time, some clans that aided the Lunars have suffered less. This is a chance for the heroes to strike a blow against a neighboring enemy clan and help their own. Success or failure alike earn them new enemies among the Colymar Tribe, whose leader aids the Lunars even as the people hope for a better way.

A recurring theme is the quest for allies, even where the heroes may not expect them. When the heroes travel to **The**

Other Side of the Dragon, they discover that even long-feared and hated enemies are potential friends.

Of course, gaining new allies often means making new enemies as well, so the heroes may need to leave the area for awhile, perhaps going south to Heortland. In **Final Days at Skullpoint**, they will learn that things are not always as they seem, and that simple views of the world become deadly in the wake of the Hero Wars. For the Rebellion to succeed, all Heortlings must learn from the failures of others. They must find a way to remain true to their beliefs

while still avoiding those aspects of their culture (such as feuds) that have so divided them in the past—and which the Empire has so skillfully exploited.

As the heroes prepare to help Kallyr once again, they must remember the ultimate goal of the Rebellion—the lives and livelihood of the people of Sartar. **Orane's Spindle** highlights this struggle, as the heroes try to save a Colymar clan from undead monsters from out of the Upland Marsh. Failure to do so could result in this clan being destroyed or, worse, turning to King Blackmor and the Lunars for help!

In **The Sky Ship**, the heroes are invited by Kallyr to participate in a great event, traveling to the Sky Realm and raising a new planet as prelude to the devastating rituals and adventures that will be detailed in *Dragonrise*, the fourth book in the *Sartar Rising* series!

Following the adventures is a **Narrator Resources** section. This chapter includes narrator characters, war bands, and other groups that can be used as allies, enemies, or neutral encounters during these adventures or as the basis for other adventures in between the events described in this book. These follow the same format as the similar sections in *Barbarian Adventures* and *Orlanth is Dead!*.

Gathering Thunder
continues the saga of Sartar Rising.
Bring the Breath of Orlanth to your
neighbors and raid your enemies.
Train warriors for future battles.
Try to save clans in danger of dying
from internal rot or external threats.
Ride a new planet into the Sky
to help the Starbrow prepare for the
great events to come.



THE NEW BREATHERS

In the aftermath of the Battle of Iceland, the heroes decided what to do. Those who returned home are faced with the destruction and losses that the Great Winter and the Lunars wrought. In the weeks following the great victory at the Aurochs Hills and Voria's Thaw, the Heortling clans struggle to recover. Any hero that fought in the Battle of Iceland is now considered a New Breather. When they return to their devastated families and clans, they show the signs of what they have achieved. These signs may not be visible to the eye; indeed, the heroes may not even realize they have outwardly changed, but they have. Their families (if they survived), clans, and leaders will treat them differently.

Scene 1: A Question of Acceptance and Responsibilities

As the Great Winter ends, the heroes' clan struggles to recover from the death of kin and loss of herds. The clan is hungry. Grandmothers weep at the sights that the thaw has revealed. The heroes are faced with regaining traditional benefits and fulfilling necessary responsibilities within their own clan. How they are treated on their return depends very much upon how the heroes treated their clan in the Great Winter.

Recognition

When the heroes return home, does their clan praise them? Or are the heroes forever severed from returning to normal life? How does the clan respond when they see that not all of the men have returned? How do you explain the terrible losses to wives and children? Do heroes offer to adopt orphans or take new wives in such difficult times? Perhaps a family of cottars grumbles that things would not be like this if they had embraced the Lunars. What is the heroes' response?

Participation

How do the heroes respond when they have to participate in the rebuilding of steads? When it comes time for plowing, do they help—is this the work of heroes, grubbing next to a lowly stickpicker? The heroes fought for their clan; what did these folk do? Virtuous friends are on the verge of growth; some have even begun to claim other pastures and fields, and build new steads. Do the heroes approach these neighbors to offer help or request assistance?

The heroes have an opportunity to spread Orlanth's Breath to those who have not regained his magic. Do the New Breathers attempt to find others of their ilk among their neighbors, to help spread the Rebellion? Do the heroes act as missionaries, bringing the words of Orlanth to them again? The Empire's agents will work hard to extinguish the New Breathers, so plenty of opportunity exists for adventure.

Justice, Feeding, and Defense

Some of the neighboring clans and friends have suffered greatly, while others seem a little better off. The heroes may respond differently to clan members who either feared battle or for some reason did not fight. Those that upheld the ways of Orlanth are generally in good shape, and the heroes will still be able to call these friends. Those that cowed or joined the Lunars will have either left the clan or suffered the justice of elders. Perhaps former friends turned out to be cowards (or worse, enemies), while those that once seemed hostile or distant are now more open and respectful of the heroes. Do the heroes confront those that were not at the battle?

When resources are scarce, who decides how to allocate them? Two carls argue over who should own an ox that wandered into lands held by their families. It is a very important asset, for it can be used to plow. How will the heroes decide who owns it? Will they take up the depleted clan ring's valuable time, or take matters into their own hands? The chieftain (presuming he even survived the winter) has too much to worry about as it is.

How do the heroes go about defending the clan? Do they build fortifications, or set about patrolling the boundaries of the clan's lands? Where are the boundary stones that used to be there before the winter?

Direction and Obedience

If the heroes' chieftain did not survive the battle or the winter, what do the survivors do now? Do they attempt to form a new clan with others that survived, or join another clan of the same or different tribe? If the clan chieftain did survive, perhaps he now wants the clan to leave their home and find new, safer lands. Perhaps he does not want to return to the ways of violence and insists that the people become a Peace Clan, giving up their best war magic? How do the heroes respond when lowly clan members say that the heroes themselves should become the new clan ring?

Hospitality and Protection

Some of the neighboring clans and people that converted to the Lunar Way were obviously not blessed by Voria's return. Their animals are weak and sickly, their freshly planted grain struggles to grow, and their newly repaired buildings are shoddy and lackluster. Many of their number have fled. Do the New Breathers forgive these neighbors and aid them in this time of need? Or is this the time to exact vengeance?

Perhaps some clan members return from a nearby Lunar-held town—they forsook Orlanth during the Great Winter. Does the clan accept them back? Surely they have forever lost their sacred ties to the Heortling peoples and to Orlanth! Or were they just desperate, and now need to be shown again that Orlanth will prevail?

Honor and the Support of Justice

A few clans, despite their Lunar sympathies (or perhaps because of them), have held their territory. Some enemies seem to be in better shape than those who upheld the laws of Orlanth; these foes will surely be more powerful and even more hated now. Do the New Breathers advocate punishment for these traitors?

Bandits using storm magic have raided nearby clans; surely they must be New Breathers, like the heroes. Can the heroes prove otherwise, before they themselves are blamed for these terrible acts? What will they do to convince their clan that their return has made the people safer? It certainly looks as though the heroes have brought more violence upon the clan instead.

Scene 2: The Wind Storm Banner

One day, bandits attack the clan. Nobody is sure where they came from, or how they got past the scouts; what matters is that they are here, in among the half-finished steads and the ramshackle ruins of the clan's once-fine chieftain's hall. The bandits burn the newly erected stead posts and seize young children and women. The heroes and desperate clansfolk are outnumbered by at least three to one. No matter how able the heroes, or what precautions they have taken to defend their clan, this soon becomes a desperate battle for survival. Worse, as the battle progresses it becomes clear that the bandits have storm magic! But they are surely not New Breathers...are they?

Typical Doburdun Bandit

Keywords: Doburdun Initiate 17 (Storm, Thunder Addi), Heortling Herder 17.

Significant Abilities: Sling 5W, Spear and Shield Fighting 20.

Equipment: Leather armor and shield +2, spear +3, sling +2.

The skirmish is likely to be a disaster for the heroes. But just as they are making their stand, a group of warriors rides up. The heroes may think this is their doom, for these are thanes riding fine horses, their banner swirling in the breeze. Soon, however, the heroes discover that among the thanes is the famous rebel Javern Spithorn. He and his warriors join the fight alongside the heroes and quickly drive off the bandits.

Aftermath

Only after the bandits are driven off or killed is there time to discover who the thanes are. Javern announces that his companions are thanes of the Culbrea king, Ranulf Stand-Tall. If any hero is foolish enough to speak Ranulf's old nickname of

"Turn-Tail," Javern chides them and reminds them of the Culbrea's critical assistance at the Battle of Iceland (see *Orlanth is Dead!*, page 60).

Javern tells the heroes that the thanes have accompanied him under their Wind Storm Banner to the heroes' village on a mission from Orngerin Thundercape. Kallyr Starbrow herself is pleased with their help in the Great Winter and in the End of the World battle. As a reward for their help in the Rebellion, she wishes to gift them with special magic that comes from Orlanth himself. Indeed, this special magic is already present, and just needs to be awakened in a special ceremony; see "Come the Hurricane!" below.

Once the gifting ceremony is over, Javern explains the secondary reason for his journey. The heroes are to travel with the Culbrea thanes to the tribal hall of King Ranulf, at Foxhollow. They are to thank him on behalf of Kallyr for his aid in the great battle and seek his further assistance in the growing rebellion. Javern will not travel with the heroes, as he has pressing business back at Starbrow's camp.

Scene 3: A New Friend

When the heroes arrive at Foxhollow, King Ranulf calls them to come to his hall, where they are given seats at the high table. Several members of his tribal ring are present. The Wind Storm Banner hangs above the king's head. King Ranulf may have appeared to many Heortlings as a coward or Lunar sympathizer for his stance so far in the Rebellion. Even his recent change, and the appearance of his thanes at the Battle of Iceland, may have done little to change his reputation among the heroes.

Ranulf listens to the story of how his thanes rescued the heroes. If the heroes thank him for his thanes' actions or offer to return the favor, he explains his problem. One of the reasons he was averse to raising his tribe in rebellion was that the Lunars still have his daughter, Orana, captive at Third Bridge Latifundia, a slave farm in Nymie Valley. He worries that someone will remember her soon, and kill her or take her away as a first step in punishing him.

This is an ideal opportunity for the heroes both to aid a potentially great ally and also to strike a blow for the Rebellion. The slave farm is within Colymar lands and that clan continues to suffer under King Blackmor. Perhaps this is a chance to spread the fire of the Rebellion into their hearts?

The journey to Nymie Valley is left to the narrator. Details of the geography of the surrounding areas is available in *Dragon Pass, Land of Thunder*.

Come the Hurricane!

With the victory against the Lunars at the Battle of Iceland, the New Breathers can now bring the hurricane of rebellion to their foes. The unity of those that fought at the end of the world has unleashed the Hurricane of Change. The forces let loose by the freedom of Orlanth now bestow magical power to those present at Iceland.

If the heroes have a guardian, it gains power for the whole band. Having sown the seeds of rebellion, they now reap the rewards of the hurricane. If the heroes do not have a guardian, they cannot directly benefit from this magical power. Instead, it is their clan (through the clan wyter) that receives the benefit. This power takes the form of an additional function for the guardian or wyter. Examples include *Sense Change in Wind*, *Spot Unexpected Opportunity* (Awareness); *Find Allies*, *Know Right Moment* (Blessing); *Blow Away Hostile Magic*, *Hold Fast* (Defense).

If the heroes have not already done so, encourage them to use this as an opportunity to establish a formal hero band. They should adopt a stance regarding the Hero Wars, work out goals and plans based on the stance, and establish a group of followers who are committed to the same. This step spiritually links the heroes into the Rebellion. Players should work out some signs and symbols that the heroes will use to identify themselves: a slogan, a war cry, an attitude, a costume, or the like.



Black Enstandoras*Exiled Torkani Warrior*

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 1W2, Initiate of Daylanus Thunderous 12W (Fight Elements, Storm, Wind), Initiate of Kargan the Warrior 10W (Combat, Death, Honor).

Significant Abilities: Javelin 15W, Mace and Shield Fighting 1W2.

Equipment: Bronze scale and shield +5, mace +3, 3 javelins +3.

**Orvic the Silent**

Keywords: Devotee of Hedkoranth 1W2 (Storm, Thunderstone, Wind), Heortling Warrior 20W.

Significant Abilities: Sling 5W2, Spear and Shield Fighting 20W.

Equipment: Leather armor +1, spear +3, magic sling and thunderstones +10.

**Ironfisted Erngular**

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 5W2, Initiate of Starkval 5W2 (Allfather, Combat, Making).

Significant Abilities: Play Swords and Shields 5W2, Sword and Shield Fighting 8W2.

Equipment: Iron mail and shield +7, sword +3, three javelins +3.

**Contest Synopsis**

Close Combat (Erngular): 3W3 (210 AP)

Close Combat (Ranulf): 17W (216 AP)

Applies if the Weed-Naming ritual is in force

Manage Tribe (Ingralda): 4W3 (111 AP)

Plan Campaign (Ranulf): 8W2 (48 AP)

Ranged Combat (Orvic): 3W3 (191 AP)

Steadfast Ingralda

Keywords: Heortling Tribal Queen 1W2, Initiate of Mahome Allmother 8W2 (Bless Hearth, Bless Family, Bless Mothers).

Significant Abilities: Good Advice 20W, Keen Insight 15W2, Loyal Wife of Ranulf 13W.

**Ranulf Stand-Tall**

King of the Culbrea Tribe 10W
(includes his four storms)

Other Significant Abilities: Fear Dragons 17, Hate Lunars 14W, Heortling Farmer 10W, Heortling Warrior 1W, Plan Campaign 15W, Sword and Shield Fighting 1W, Weed-Naming ritual 10W.

Special Items: Iron scale and shield +7, sword "The Plough" +3.

Marks: Often says "Errors are made and fixed" and uses farming metaphors.

Notes: Ranulf knows a special ritual that he can use on the eve of a battle to designate the anticipated battlefield as Barntar's Acre. For the next day, any Barntar initiate or devotee who participated in the ritual may use any magic relating to eliminating weeds against their enemies, as if they were weeds. For the magic to work, Ranulf must take the lead in combat, rather than allowing a companion or bodyguard to do so.

Personal Augments:

- * Initiate of Rigsdal (+4 to combat, vigilance, or defense)
- ⌵ Initiate of Barntar (+6 to farming or hard work—or combat if the Weed-Naming ritual is in force)
- * Initiate of Dar (+4 to leadership, including commanding troops)
- Plan Campaign (+4 to troop leadership or mass combat)



Family and Personal Time

Initiate of Orlanth Rigsdal 15W
Affinity:
⌵ Vigilance *



Initiate of Barntar 15W2

Affinities: ♀ Agriculture, ♀ Domestic Animals, ⌵ Honest Work

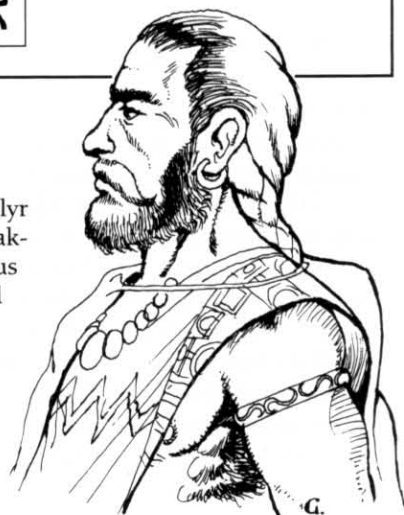
Initiate of Dar the King 15W

Affinities: * Allfather, ▲ Making, W Lead Tribe

**Ranulf Stand-Tall**

King of the Culbrea Tribe, formerly called "Turn-Tail"

Ranulf, a loyal thane of the Culbrea Tribe, fled the field when Fazzur Wideread defeated Kallyr in 1613, earning himself the appellation "Turn-Tail." Perversely, this cowardly act was the making of the man. The Lunars elevated him to the tribal kingship, believing him cowed and thus a fitting puppet ruler. However, Ranulf never forgot Orlanth's dictum: errors are made and fixed. In his own cautious way, he began preparing his redemption and the liberation of his tribe with all the meticulous care he once put into preparing the fields and repairing the steads. His efforts bore fruit in 1622, when he took advantage of the concentration of Lunar forces at Iceland to raise the Wind Storm Banner in rebellion, driving the Lunars from Culbrea lands. That day, Ranulf Turn-Tail became "Ranulf Stand-Tall." Already his feats on the battlefield have begun earning him a reputation for merciless thoroughness. As he says, "For the field to thrive, every weed must be torn out by the roots."



Scene 4: Rescue!

The Nymie Valley slave farm is beginning to re-establish its trade after the harsh deprivations of the last year. As was the case before the Great Winter, those unfortunate enough to be taken as thralls are brought here for transit to the Lunar Empire. Although Lunar infantry troops patrol the environs of the "farm" (which is known as the Third Bridge Latifundia, after the distant Imperial association that runs it), mercenaries form the majority of the small garrison. They are assisted in these tasks by some of King Blackmor's most loyal weaponthanes.

The Bovakite Foot are Provincial infantrymen raised from Talfort (in Tarsh) and mostly stationed in Wilmskirk; the ones stationed here see it as a cushy assignment, but they are tough skirmishers and not to be underestimated. Members are called Bovakites because Bovak is the patron deity of their regiment. The Colymar weaponthanes are likely to fight with more vigor, and in return receive more hatred from the Culbrea; although Heortlings do not usually fight from horseback, these weaponthanes have been trained to by Blackmor's allies. The guards inside the farm are mercenaries drawn from across the Empire, as brutal and tough as the Third Bridge Association can buy.

Bovakite Soldier

Keywords: Initiate of Bovak 19 (Skirmish), Initiate of Helamakt 17 (Clouds, Combat, Rain), Tarshite Foot Soldier/Skirmisher 5W.

Significant Abilities: Knife Fighting 5W, Throw Javelin 8W.

Equipment: Leather armor +2, large knife +2, several javelins +3.

Colymar Weaponthane

Keywords: Devotee of Rigsdal 5W (Combat 3W, Night Watchman 20, Vigilance 20), Heortling Warrior 10W.

Significant Abilities: Spear and Shield Fighting 12W, Sword and Shield Fighting 8W, Throw Javelin 4W.

Equipment: Bronze and leather armor and shield +4, heavy spear +4, sword +3, three javelins +3, sered horse (Battle Training 5W, gives the weaponthane +22 AP when he is fighting from horseback).

Mercenary

Keywords: Initiate of Yanafal Tarnils 17 (Combat 20, Military, Warlord), Warrior 10W.

Significant Abilities: Scimitar and Shield Fighting 10W, Tough 1W.

Equipment: Bronze armor and large shield +5, scimitar +3.

Most of the thralls are held within an enclosure surrounded by a high palisade. Only those who are considered especially valuable or dangerous are held separately. The troublesome ones are kept in chains within a half-buried old stone grain pit, while the most prized women and girls (including Orana) are inside the main villa.

A wooden watchtower manned by five Bovakites guards the palisade. Another twelve Bovakites saunter around the surrounding fields. The old grain pit is guarded by five Colymar weaponthanes, while four more lead small groups of mercenaries on patrols in the valley. Guarding the villa itself are twenty mercenaries, more if the heroes need a more formidable challenge.

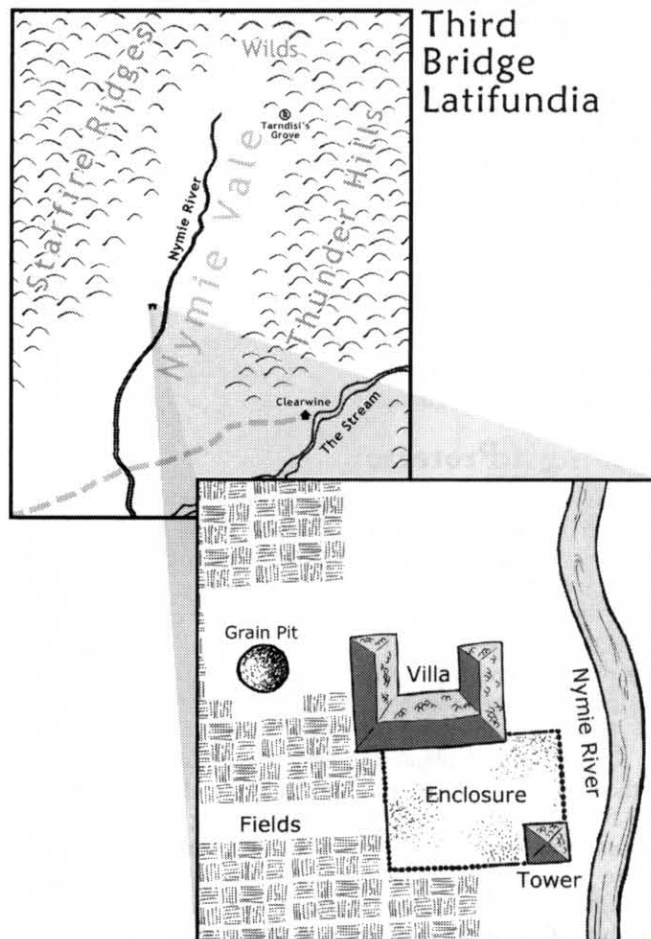
Will the heroes risk a full assault in an attempt to free all the slaves? After all, there are many slaves here, missed by their clans and needed by their families. Will the heroes try to rescue all the captives in the villa (which is likely to hold important hostages besides Orana)? Or will they concentrate on rescuing Orana only, perhaps using some unexpected magic? And perhaps the heroes will choose a stealthy approach, one less likely to risk alerting all the guards, some of whom might harm the captives? King Ranulf will not welcome news of the death of his daughter, of course, so the heroes need to think before they act.

Whichever way they choose and whatever action they take, the rescue is a blow for the Rebellion, and will demonstrate to Ranulf, the Culbrea, the Colymar, and perhaps other tribes still under Lunar oppression that the thunder is gathering and soon the hurricane will come!

Still, these are the Hero Wars, and trouble is likely to return sooner or later. Imperial forces from Tarsh and the Heartlands are once again seen in Lunar strongholds and on the roads. Imperial settlers arrive to occupy empty lands. Lunar soldiers begin erecting new watchtowers and palisades, seizing animals, and imposing new food "taxes," all at Sartarite expense. Those that are known to have fought at the Battle of Iceland, such as the Culbrea, are subject to retaliation of every sort, from increased taxes to raids.

Aftermath

Even if Orana is rescued and the heroes get her safely back to her father, it is probably unsafe for her to remain in Culbrea lands. King Ranulf decides to send her to distant kin in Heortland or Esrolia. Perhaps he asks the heroes to accompany her there?



Getting a Guardian

One of the most important things a group of heroes can do is to create a hero band and develop or discover their own guardian. The players may not realize this, but as narrator you can encourage them tacitly, by showing examples of guardians in action. Tantalize the players with exotic powers displayed by other bands. Taunt the heroes with enemies that have an impressive group power, like the Silverflames (see *Barbarian Adventures*, pages 28-29), whose weapons all burst into magical fire at the same moment.

At some point players will ask, "How do they do that?" and you can explain about the guardian. Tell the players they should consider having their heroes establish a relationship with one, either by joining an established band or by finding one of their own. We recommend that you populate your game with appropriate entities, so that when a new one is met the players will recognize that it might be available as a guardian.

Many adventures involve such encounters. In "Final Days at Skullpoint" (see page 27), for example, the dying wyter might "adopt" the heroes as its only way to remain embodied. Mention the "good gods and goddesses" who come in a faceless crowd to participate in worship ceremonies the heroes attend. Even a hero who dies might be able to aid his former companions. Keep note of these beings, so that when the heroes seek a guardian you can list the ones they have met who may be good candidates. Having an established relationship with a prospective guardian makes the process much easier. Otherwise, a ritual must be performed to find a suitable candidate (see "Finding a Protector," below).

You should work with the players to help them find a guardian. It is wasteful for heroes to develop a relationship with one that is going to be replaced later, so planning ahead is advised. Make it clear to the players that most people in their world have this sort of connection, and that it is normal to "find your god" as a guardian.

Finding a Protector

"Finding a Protector" is the name of a rite commonly conducted by Heortlings to locate a guardian for a new hero band. Any Heortling hero would have heard of the rite, and can talk to any priest or god-talker to get more information. The god-talker will also be needed to officiate at the rite. The critical decisions and actions are performed by the band, not the god-talker; they take two days and two nights, and all who will be members of the band must be there the whole time. The god-talker might tell the heroes something like the following:

"There are gods about who wish to help us. We know many of them, and you can offer to join with one, to strengthen it so that it will help you. Others are still waiting to be found and chosen. You might want to wait to find a new one yourself before calling on the ones we know. But be careful, because there are liars and evil agents among those gods awaiting you out there. Remember the Mishap House."

Preparations

When the heroes speak to the god-talker, he will tell them what it will cost for him to officiate; about a cow is right. Once this is agreed upon, he will instruct them to gather what he needs for the rite:

- Apple tree wood for the right kind of fire.
- Two cows, one mostly white and one mostly red.
- Three baskets each of barley, wheat and oats, and leaf vegetables.
- Three geese (any kind).
- One knife "to cut the way."
- Another knife to use for the sacrifices.
- "Ernalda's Table"—other foods given to the gods in sacrifice, some of which are eaten afterwards.
- *Optional*: "Minlister's Gift"—beer, ale, or wine given to the gods in ceremony, some of which is drunk afterwards (+5).

Why Do We Need a Guardian?

A hero band with a guardian has more magic than a group of heroes without one. And in a hostile world, sometimes that little bit extra can make the difference between life and death.

The Rite

At sunset the rites begin. The red cow is sacrificed and auguries are performed to see if the gods favor this bond. If the results are favorable, the god-talker invites the good gods and goddesses to gather and enjoy the prayers offered to them.

As the Sun rises, the god-talker invites them to remain and witness the people who seek them. During this day the members of the band tell what they want, why they want it, and what qualifications they bring to the band. They are under the scrutiny of the potential guardians; not only must the rites must be done correctly (and each member-to-be will have specific things that they must do), but the heroes must justify their actions and desires to the gathered immortals. Ask the heroes to consider the following points and prepare their answers:

- What moral stance will they take in the Hero Wars? "The Old World is Over"—what will they do about it?
- What specific actions will they take based on that moral stance?
- What assurances can they offer the guardian that they will survive and grow more powerful so that it can as well? What skills and magic do they have?
- Who will join them—who they have a community of followers and dependents who can help them? If not, do they plan to gather one?

The second night, the god-talker sacrifices the white cow and invites the good gods and goddesses to feast. For the first time the band members may eat, and mortals and immortals share a meal. Afterwards, and for the whole next day, the god-talker performs prayers and offerings that eventually sift through possible candidates until only one remains.

Shortly before dawn, the entity agrees to become the band's guardian, and tells the members its requirements—what to use for its body and how it expects them to act. If the entity proves

Clan Wyters



A similar rite is used to find the guardian for a new Heortling clan. The guardian (more properly called a wyter) needs to be an "ancestor" of blood or action whose lineage or actions tie the group together. A common blood ancestor is usual, and the rites then must be performed on Ancestor Day. If the rites are being performed by a clan branching off from an established group, they must ask the existing wyter to send a helper or descendant to extend the clan to another place.

If a common ancestor is not known to the members present, one can be sought. The ancestors are summoned, fed sumptuously, and entertained as if they were gods. By the end of the rite, if it is successful, an ancestor who is common to all the participants will emerge to be the clan wyter.

to be unsatisfactory to the members, or if they do not agree to its requirements, the entire rite can be broken off—mortals are not obliged to accept any particular immortal. However, repeated rejections always have adverse effects on the community of good gods and goddesses. If too many guardians are rejected, soon only strange, inferior, and weak entities are left for the band to choose from.

Preparing the Link

The heroes must now provide a physical object that will serve as the link between themselves and the guardian, and often as the guardian's physical body (depending on its method of interaction; see *HeroQuest*, page 93). The entity may give very specific instructions, or it might say nothing at all, relying on old traditions or general principles. It is possible to choose the object ahead of time, which will determine the sorts of immortals that will come forward as potential guardians. (This can save a lot of time, but may also limit the choices available.)

The object must be appropriate to the guardian and the band—fighters use weapons, for example. The narrator can decide how difficult it is to get the object (either beforehand or after the rite). The god-talker may simply say, "Give me two cows, and in eight days I will have your object."

Once the guardian approves the link, the god-talker conducts a final ceremony, called "Service for Two."

Service for Two

The final ceremony takes a night and a day, and requires additional ritual items, such as a single red and white bull, or perhaps two oxen, one red and one white. During the rite, each member of the band gives blood to the guardian's body to link to it. The guardian enters the link object (if appropriate to its method of interaction), or the object is sacrificed to summon the entity into the Inner World.

By dawn, the rites have established the relationship between the heroes and the guardian and have established its attributes. Each hero must spend a hero point to join the band.

The Guardian

Guardians have a number of characteristics, as described on pages 92-94 of *HeroQuest*. It is critical that players and narrator work together to determine the following attributes:

Method: How the guardian interacts with the world of humans, usually as an **archetype**, **emanation**, or **manifestation**. The method helps determine how the heroes can use the guardian's magic.

Communication: How the guardian communicates with members of the band, either with **group contact** or **leadership contact**.

Guardian Requirements: Specific actions that the guardian requires of or prohibits to all members. These can range from the silly to the profound, from minor quirks to major changes to the heroes' behavior.

Three Functions: Most beginning guardians provide an **awareness function**, **blessing function**, and **defense function** that aid the members of the band.

Three Functions

Determining the exact functions and their ratings can be the most interesting and difficult part of the whole process. If no one has any particular ideas, everyone can agree to have a bland, generic guardian with the following functions:

Awareness Function: Sense Enemy 18.

Blessing Function: Heal Members 18.

Defense Function: Defend Us 18.

Encourage the players to customize their guardian. Let them select three functions that fit their goals and needs, as they expressed them to the guardian. Let them "play the numbers game." The default is to have one each of the three functions, but as the sample guardians in *HeroQuest* (pages 257-263) and *Masters of Luck and Death* show, this is not a requirement. Generally, however, the heroes have a total of 54 points to divide among the functions their guardian does possess.





SHEEP, CLOUDS, THUNDER

There are clans who did not suffer during the Great Winter. Through perfidy and alliance with the Lunars, some have come through the harsh winter in far better condition than those who remained loyal to Orlanth. One such is the Black Oak Clan of the Colymar Tribe. King Blackmor the Rabid must learn that even a dirt-eater like he cannot hide from the True Storm.

This raid is against Darsten Turnstorm, a Heortling who has forsaken Orlanth to serve Doburdun, the servile Dara Hap-pan storm god. Darsten Turnstorm rules the Black Oak Clan. Grazing on his lands are a flock of magical Sleek Red Sheep, a foul perversion of the sacred cloud sheep. Humiliating Darsten will humiliate the traitorous Colymar king, Blackmor the Rabid. (If the narrator wishes to set the adventure somewhere else, any tribe with extensive wildlands could harbor a clan like the Black Oaks.)

Use any suitable narrator character or rebel contact the heroes already have as the source of this mission. If there is no such narrator character, Orstalar Spearlord or one of the other Rebel Leaders from *Orlanth is Dead!* can fill this role. (The adventure assumes that Orstalar is the heroes' contact, Orngerin Thundercape perhaps having recommended the heroes to him; if you use another contact, substitute the correct name.)

Even if the heroes are experienced or of unquestionable Orstalar accompanies them on the raid. He lets the heroes do most of the work, but will aid them when necessary with advice, and will take action if the heroes ever seem in danger of failure. His presence on such a minor mission may seem strange, given how busy the leaders of the Rebellion are, but this raid is more important than the heroes might imagine. Orstalar is along to observe the heroes, but also to ensure that they succeed no matter the cost to their pride.

Benchmark: 10W in best ability. It is important that the heroes have some experience in cattle raiding.

Scene 1: Later That Night...

Orstalar Spearlord sends words to the heroes to meet him on the edge of their tula that night. Clouds cover the sky (blocking the Moon from sight) when the heroes arrive at the meeting place the messenger specified. An old tree looms over a small camp. A crackling fire burns cheerfully under a bubbling cook-pot and a couple of spears lean against the tree. Orstalar has been waiting for the heroes to arrive. He graciously offers hospitality: an atrocious mutton stew. He is clearly no cook, but the beer is excellent and helps to wash away the stew's taste.

Over the meal, Orstalar explains the mission. When Blackmor and the Colymar Tribe betrayed the kingdom, their sacred herd of urothrorol (cloud sheep) fled to the Quivini Mountains. Now, Tatius has given a half-dozen magical red sheep as a gift to King Blackmor; his kinsfolk tend them at Darstenstead in the Black Oak Clan lands. The chieftain there, Darsten Turnstorm, worships Doburdun the Loyal Storm and runs the clan for the king. The rebellion wants those sheep stolen. A blow struck against the Black Oaks is another blow struck against their dirt-eating ruler.

After the explanations, Orstalar helps the heroes plan the raid. If asked likely questions, he provides the following answers.

How do we get there?

"There's a secret way through Tarndisi's Grove. Nobody goes there. Nobody comes out if Old Man Tarndisi doesn't want them to. We've got a man who knows the Grove's secrets. We're supposed to meet him in Apple Lane. When you gather your band, we'll go there first."

How do we get them?

"By Finovan's Beard, we raid them, of course! We need the raid done soon. The day after tomorrow is very auspicious for Finovani and raiding." (All Finovani rituals receive a +5 modifier on that day.)

Are you bringing anyone else?

"Just me. I want to see how well you can raid. My band is busy elsewhere. You needn't know how."

How do we sneak in?

"The Colymar and the Black Oaks got a deal with Old Man Tarndisi. They don't expect anyone to make it through his woods. We got a guy with the same deal. It'll be like flying in through the smoke hole."

How do we escape?

Orstalar pats a bag at his belt and says, "Orlanth will provide. I'll show you when the time comes."

Can't we just fly in?

"Are you daft? You ever seen a man after he's been grounded? Besides, when was the last time you tried to fly while holding a sheep? I'd rather walk in the same way I'll be running out."

What's in it for me?

The rebels have little to offer at the moment. If hurting their foes, earning the favor of the gods, and gaining the goodwill of the future Prince of Sartar are not enough for them, Orstalor offers the following:

"I need just one of the magical sheep. The rest are yours."

"Darsten Turnstorm is as wealthy as some tribal rulers. His wealth is yours, if you can take it."

"When the time is right, Kallyr will reward those who helped her achieve victory."

Orstalor will also sponsor worthy heroes who want to initiate to Finovan. Should these enticements fail to entice the heroes, perhaps they are not true sons and daughters of the Storm. Perhaps working as Gagarthi bandits or a Lunar hunt-and-kill team would be more to their liking.

Aftermath

After the heroes agree to help Orstalor, he will make them swear a vow to Finovan that they will "bring back the prize." Any experienced raider recognizes this as a requirement for the Girding of Finovan ritual (see *Barbarian Adventures*, page 42). The heroes should return to their kinfolk and gather help for a cattle raid, then meet him back here the next night.

Scene 2: The Fine Art of Raiding

Today is a good day to raid!

—Archetypal Finovan divination response

"Cattle Raiding" (see *Barbarian Adventures*, page 40) provides details about Heortling cattle raiding. Most of the traditional steps—preparation, permission, and rituals—do not differ this time, but for some people this raid has great significance. Many are interested in helping the heroes strike a blow against the Lunars. Others refuse to have anything to do with such reckless fools. Fearful or treacherous kinfolk might even betray the heroes to the enemy "for their own good."

While the heroes prepare, several steeds-full of granddads, fathers, uncles, older brothers, cousins, and in-laws bestow well-meant advice. Most "rode with Finovan" (i.e., went cattle raiding) in their youth. Many inflict terrifyingly endless "when I was your age" stories on the heroes.

Preparations and Plans

Orstalor says that taking more than a dozen raiders is foolish. He insists on bringing at least one shepherd if none of the heroes have good herding skills: "We'll need him, before it's over."

The key to the raid will be getting to the sheep undetected. The Black Oaks, like any clan, protect their herds well. The raiders will have to silence any guards or shepherds without raising an alarm and then make off with the sheep—right under the noses of the chieftain's household. Provided below are a few special options the heroes may take to bolster their chances. Older raiders may give advice but, in the end, the heroes must make their own decisions.

Rituals

Clan god-talkers sacrifice on behalf of the raiders before they depart. Performing the Girding of Finovan gives the leader a +11 bonus to his *Raiding* affinity (if he has one). If the heroes' clan is pro-rebellion, they should have little trouble getting support. Heroes hailing from more cautious clans will have to persuade their leaders to support the ritual. Note that support by

an entire clan for a "simple" cattle raid is almost unheard of—and spies report unusual behavior. Support by the hero's family and friends and the auspicious date allow the bonus to last "until the raiders get back." Orstalor conducts the ritual (a great honor) and provides the heroes with a fine black bull taken from the heroes' enemies as the sacrifice.

Heroic Options

Powerful people might offer the heroes assistance, seeking to help the Rebellion and advance their own ends. Some of them would like to see these promising newcomers in their debt, but the power of their gifts is undeniable. Naturally, every favor needs repayment and every bargain has repercussions. Additionally, making each of these contacts takes more of the heroes' precious time. The longer the heroes dally before raiding, the more likely that the Black Oaks will hear about the raid. Thus, the heroes need to budget their time and efforts.

Thunder Power

Gwyffir Bane-Redcloak, a powerful godi of Helamakt with many followers, has an offer:

"I know you're going to get some Sleek Sheep from those Black Oaks. [Spit] You're going to have trouble getting past the Black Oak itself, of course. But those accursed Black Oaks are all Moon worshippers. My storm powers will darken the skies and lash them with storm, wind, and rain. My clouds will block their foul magic and hide you from the Moon's sight. Their sentries would be blind. In return, I'll need one of those sheep for myself. I don't work for free."

Anyone thinking about it realizes that the storm might block or weaken Moon and Sun magic.

If possible (i.e., if he is victorious in the contest), Gwyffir will extort additional favors from the heroes during the negotiations. He may even require them to support him in rituals or quests (costing hero points, time, and cattle, and likely causing conflicts with other responsibilities). Should the heroes renege on the bargain, he will become a very powerful enemy. Naturally, the heroes can always refuse his help.

Significant Abilities: Bargain 6W.

Benefit: Gwyffir's magic will give the heroes a +10 bonus to all Stealth or Concealment contests while on the Black Oak lands (scenes 5 and 6). In addition, all *Storm*, *Wind*, and similar affinities increase by +10 as well. Unfortunately, this *does* include the *Storm* affinity of the Doburdun worshippers!



Dirty Deals Done for Sheep

This option works best if the heroes have done some shady things in the past. An acquaintance of the heroes mentions that he "has a friend who knows some pretty rough guys who'd like to help out—cheap." If the heroes show interest, he puts them in contact with a Gagarthi band led by Jenora Reaversdottir, a famous outlaw.

Jenora leads an outlaw warband of about 30 Gagarthi (see *HeroQuest*, page 237). She is powerful and ruthless, and the heroes should be cautious in dealing with her. "Me boys can lay waste to the Black Oak tula if you like, sure. Burn their grain. Set fire to a few steeds. Maybe do some serious pillaging. That ought to get the Black Oak's fyrd good and mad. Bet that! All we want is a couple barrels of beer, maybe some food, and a couple of cows to get through the winter—nothing too fancy."

If the heroes refuse Jenora's aid, the outlaws might simply devastate the heroes' tula out of spite! And, of course, if word of this bargain gets out, it will be very bad for the heroes' reputation.

If the heroes accept Jenora's offer, the outlaws' assault makes the trip into the Black Oak tula almost a walk in the meadow. But, despite the outlaws' efforts, Darsten will still manage a final confrontation with the heroes. (Afterwards, the Gagarthi might show up at the victory feast and cause trouble. The outlaws will boast about how a bunch of wimpy rebels came to them for help, causing the heroes considerable trouble. Really evil narrators might have them carry off sisters and cousins of the heroes.)

Benefit: The Black Oaks have a -20 to all attempts to detect the raiding band entering or crossing the Black Oak tula, even at the chieftain's field. The majority of the Black Oak warriors will be distracted trying to catch the Gagarthi, but Darsten and his warband, warned by the Black Oak, will manage a showdown with the heroes.

Disadvantage: Should it become known that the heroes received help from the outlaws, they suffer a -10 penalty to ALL clan or organization relationships (clan, tribe, temple, patrons, and guilds, but not necessarily friends and family) until they somehow clear their names.

Thunder Drummer

A powerful kolating shaman, Derkrova the Dancer who Never Stops; see *Barbarian Adventures*, page 32) comes. He never stops drumming or dancing, carrying on the conversation in a singsong voice as he whirls about the heroes. He offers them powerful fetishes—spirit magic. He wants something in return: the heroes have to help him with an important ritual or perhaps go to a Lunar-held city—a place that is taboo to him. Magical help of this kind can get a Heortling in trouble with his god. This offer of war and storm magic is take-it-or-leave-it. If the heroes take his aid, he tells them he will come to them when it is time to repay their debt.

Benefit: Kolati fetishes can give characters a needed boost in combat, but cannot be used by those who have concentrated their theistic magic (including devotees). Anyone else can use them, however. On the plus side, these are special spirit foes of Doburdun, and so his worshippers take a -10 penalty when they are opposed by any of these spirits. The one-use fetishes can be used even if the hero is not a practitioner. Each has a rating of at least 12W, and provides a spirit with a useful combat or stealth ability, like *Swift Pounce* and *Blend With Shadows*.

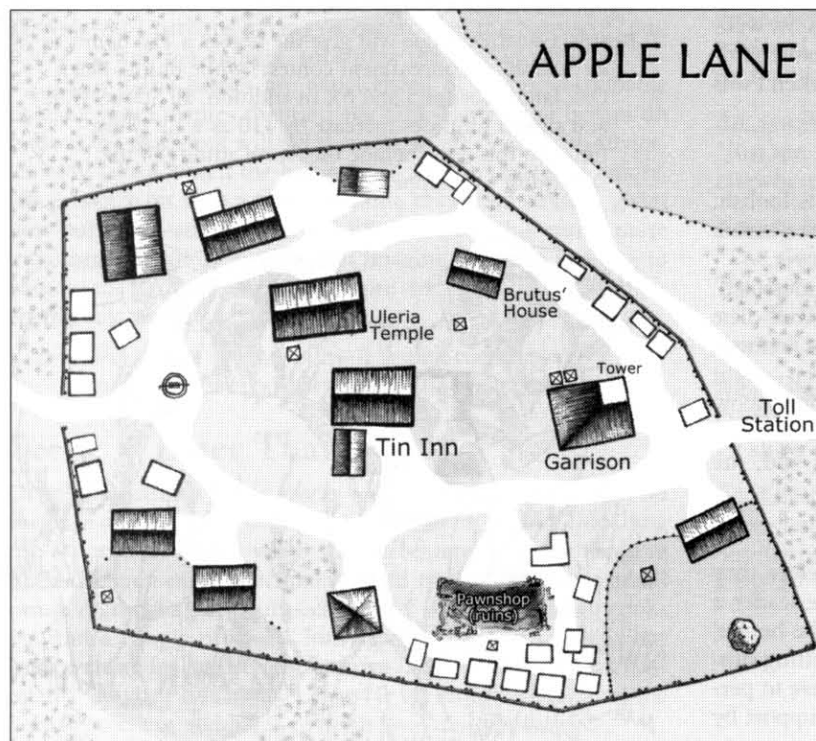
Aftermath

The heroes gather their small band of raiders, make plans, work their magic, and set out on their way to raid the Black Oaks. Travel to Apple Lane may take more than a day, depending on where the heroes' clan lies. The trip can be as simple as a quick march over the hills of Sartar or as difficult as the narrator likes; see *Barbarian Adventures* for additional options and complications.

Scene 3: Apple Lane

The heroes are to meet their guide, Asborn Thriceborn, in Apple Lane. Orstalar does not accompany the heroes into the village, which is a small hamlet lying between the Malani and Colymar tribal lands. Scattered around a crossroads (which connects Jons-town, Runegate, and Clearwine) are a few buildings and, farther out, several steeds. When the heroes come over the hills around Apple Lane, anyone who has been here in years past discovers a rude shock! Brutus, a retired Lunar soldier, has claimed the village and surrounded it with a palisade. He chopped down all the apple trees! Those that have not been burned lie around the stockade like rubbish. Worse, he has put up a toll station at the crossroads.

Apple Lane once provided several services not found in the average clan or tribe. It was the home of the famous Gringle's Pawnshop, a smith, a "priestess of all deities," weapon and horsemasters, and a temple to Uleria, Goddess of Love. Now, Gringle's is gone (burned down by the Lunars), the priestess is gone, and the weaponmasters are dead or gone. The temple to Uleria is still there, though, along the northern "road" in the stockade. The village looks peaceful, but simmering resentment bubbles in the huts and shacks that fill the new enclosure. What happened here is just one example of what has happened throughout Sartar—the hamlet is now but a shadow of itself.



Meeting Asborn

Asborn Thriceborn should be waiting for the heroes at the Tin Inn. He is a very cheerful Orlanthi originally from the Colymar Tribe. Any rebels know him as one of those Colymar still loyal to Queen Beti. Although Asborn has a price on his head, he enjoys taunting Blackmor by coming and going more or less as he pleases. He especially enjoys coming in disguise, riling up the locals, then leaving before too much force can be brought to bear against him. Despite his famous ability to escape, Orstalar prepares an ambush up in the hills “just in case.” The entire band will be ready to move when the heroes return with their guide.

The Tin Inn was once a thriving establishment with several brick buildings surrounding a central courtyard. Part of the main building seems to have burned down a few years ago. Portia, the new owner, has still not cleared the rubble. Inside, the public room is nearly empty. Only a few straggling farmers and threadbare travelers are present, enjoying the evening meal. One wall of the room collapsed in the fire, and now only a canvas sheet daubed with plaster keeps out the wind and damp. When the heroes look around, they find their contact sitting in a dark corner, hidden within his cloak, quietly eating a bowl of turnip stew. Anyone familiar with Asborn or his exploits should notice that he is uncharacteristically nervous. Once contact is made, Asborn quickly agrees to guide the heroes through Tarndisi's Grove but not onto Colymar lands—not even the Black Oak tula. To do so would be to break his agreement with “the Old Man.”

If the heroes state they are being alert for enemies, or post guards, give them a chance to discover the foes that are about to attack them. Otherwise, the first hint they have that they are being attacked is when the door to the inn is kicked in.

Contest: Notice the Hunt-and-Kill Team

Appropriate Abilities: Listen, Sense Ambush, Alert (–3), Scan (–5).

Typical Modifiers: Someone on watch outside (+10), scouting Apple Lane before going into the Inn (+5).

Resistance: 10W.

Complete Victory: A sleazy stickpicker watching the inn goes to Brutus' manor when the heroes go inside. The hero follows him and hears the hunt-and-kill team preparing in the manor. He can warn the others, and the group has plenty of time to prepare an ambush or leave without incident.

Major Victory: The foes are spotted on their way to the inn. The hero can warn the others and all of them have three free actions to prepare or flee. If they run for it, they can easily lead their pursuers into Orstalar's ambush.

Minor Victory: The hero hears something, or notices the foes walking past the hole in the side of the inn. He has two free actions, and still has time to warn the other heroes. They are not surprised.

Marginal Victory: The hero hears something just before the door opens. He has one free action or can warn the others. The hero is not surprised, but the other heroes may be.

Tie or Marginal Defeat: The hero does not notice the foes until it is too late. He does not have weapons ready, but takes no penalty for being surprised.

Minor Defeat: The hero is surprised. He takes a –3 penalty throughout the combat.

Major Defeat: The hero takes a –5 penalty throughout the combat; additionally, the foes get a free action the first round as the hero stands in shock.

Complete Defeat: As major defeat above, but the foes get free actions for the first three rounds.

Unexpected Enemies

BANG! A man kicks open the door, his glowing armor and scimitar so bright that they cast shadows. He bellows, “Throw down your weapons! All of you are under arrest in the name of Governor Tattius!” It's a Lunar hunt-and-kill team. Asborn must be their target! Worse, another group made up of enemies well known to the heroes (perhaps the Silverflames or Scorching Swords) charges into the public room through the back door. All of the assailants have the flicker and glow of magic and are ready for the kill.

The hunt-and-kill team has come for Asborn, but they will happily try to kill the heroes as well. The other, well-known enemies are along to even the score with the heroes. They intend to capture Asborn and the heroes for interrogation, torture, and eventual execution as an “*exemple pour les autres*.” Now the heroes know why Asborn was so nervous!

There are two attacking groups. Each should be as numerous as the heroes, and more foes can be heard outside. A mix of one hunt-and-killer and one or two “rank-and-file” opponents for each hero, plus a leader character or two, should provide the heroes with a challenge without overwhelming them. Use the statistics for the Lasadag Lions (*Barbarian Adventures*, page 26) for the hunt-and-kill team. The members of the other group should be determined by the narrator depending on her campaign—perhaps a clan the heroes feud with, their clan's traditional enemies, or a Lunar band faced in a previous adventure or at the Battle of Iceland.

Remember that the heroes are not here to fight Lunar distractions! A quick escape through the ruined wall seems the best option. When attacked, Asborn pulls out a huge iron sword and leads the fight for the exit. He acquits himself well in the battle, but the attackers would clearly have overwhelmed him had he been alone.

Once out of the Tin Inn, the heroes should head for the hills, towards Orstalar's ambush.

Aftermath

The heroes should have recruited their guide and defeated the enemies in combat or by leading them into Orstalar's ambush. The band should push on to Tarndisi's Grove before more foes arrive. With any luck, they could be camping under its eaves by nightfall.

Scene 4: Through the Forest

“The secret isn't getting into the Grove. Any fool can do that. It's getting back out that's tricky.”

—Asborn Thriceborn

As the Sun sets, the raiders set out for the Black Oak tula—much of the travel will be by night to avoid patrols. If all goes well, they will arrive at the chieftain's field just before dawn. Before that, they must navigate their way across Tarndisi's Grove at night. If the heroes accepted Gwyffir's offer in Scene 2, the skies cloud over and a storm begins to brew during the night.

South of Apple Lane, Asborn leads the raiders along faint trails that only a hunter might notice. Dusk falls early in the hills, but Elmal's rays still color the sky with rose and gold. At last, the trail reaches a massive old willow tree standing at the edge of a dark forest, just as darkness truly falls. Waving the raiders back, Asborn steps into the forest and gathers up a handful of pinecones and acorns. He murmurs something over them and then gives one to each raider. “Keep these about you. As long as you have it, you're part of the Grove. I wouldn't lose it.”

Tarndisi's Grove is a strange and terrible place, far different from what most Heortlings know. Once past the tree, heroes can feel a difference. There is a sense of openness, yet there is no breeze. There are small sounds, but not the ones they heard only moments before. There is a very strong smell of humus, and another smell that can only be described as "green." Asborn quietly warns them, "Don't call upon your gods while in the wood, especially those of wind and water. Be careful not to cut or stab the ground. If we are still here when day returns, try to avoid areas where the Sun shines through the trees. If you must cross one, always walk facing your shadow until you are back in the shade. Those are the rules. If you do all this, we should be able to pass through as friends. Break a rule and we'll have to leave you behind—good luck getting out. If the Old Man doesn't want you to leave, you never will."

Asborn has come to know the grove and its ways very well. He lives in a well-hidden stead deep in the shelter of the forest and makes sure that the heroes' path stays far from it.

Staging Hints and Sample Encounters

Tarndisi is a *grandmapa*, an ancient, powerful plant spirit (see *Anaxial's Roster*, page 216). The grove is one of the few old-growth forests left in Dragon Pass. It is a spirit place, and the god-ridden are seldom welcome here. Few Heortlings go here, and even fewer return. Tarndisi never permits trespassers to escape his confines once they are entrapped. Those who break his laws or enter without leave are never seen again. Even divination fails to reveal whether they made their way to the afterlife. They wander the forest, lost and confused, until they starve or worse.

Here are a few images and sample encounters you can work into the story to highlight the Grove's strangeness:

- A fallen ruin lies in a clearing. In it, the heroes can see odd-looking ghosts or spirits. They resemble Heortlings of centuries past, but have the faces of dragons. Some raiders may run in fear from these apparitions (and find themselves Lost).
- The heroes cross a ravine on the spine of a monstrous skeleton. White bones arch overhead far enough for a warrior to ride across the 100' long span. Far below them, an unknown river runs in a torrent against sharp rocks.
- While standing on a small hillock, the heroes discover it is actually a huge beetle made entirely of stone. Moss and a few small trees grow from the smooth mound but it seems to be alive and moving very, very slowly north. A sage might calculate that it probably came from the Stone Forest far to the south, over three centuries ago.
- A small band of ponies charges down the trail. Anyone diving out of the way has left the path. Dodging them is wiser (resistance 19). Asborn warns against bothering them, as they are Tarndisi's favorite "children."
- Small ghostly figures watch the raiders from branches and rocks. The size of children, they have dark eyes or mouths but no other features. Some appear on horseback, but they never approach any humans (alynxes and Yinkini are not "human" to them). They seem curious but harmless. Asborn dismisses them as "just some forest spirits."

Casting theist and wizardly magic is difficult in the Grove, as if a vast distance lay between the heroes and their Otherworld. Affinities, feats, blessings, curses, and spells take a -10 penalty in the Grove; magic already in effect on entry is unaffected. Even common magic feats and spells take this penalty, although innate magic, talents, and common magic charms do not.

Jonstown Compendium #24,119

In Colymar lands stands Tarndisi, a huge, ancient horse willow tree. It can give a blessing to cure horses or boars of disease, to stop infection, and to purify water to be drinkable. When the Colymar came to Starfire Ridge, they made a pact with the spirit of the Grove. Neither axe nor fire would be found under the eaves. Gods would not be called nor sacrifices made. In return, the Grove would warn the Colymar of strangers and provide his blessings to those who could gain them.

Too Clever Fox

As the raiders wind through the shadowy woods, they come across a red fox decorously perched on a rock by the path. Looking amused, the vixen watches the intruders with clever amber eyes. When the raiders come close, the pretty beast sniffs the air and then speaks!

"I smell [hero's clan]-lings. Taking in the night air in the Old Man's Grove? I think not. No, don't tell me. Let me guess—you're off to steal something that doesn't belong to you. Now, while I agree with theft, your big clumpy feet have woken me up. Maybe I should tell Grumpy Old Turnstorm that someone wants his precious sheep?" She pauses and then adds with a toothy smile, "Or perhaps I should go home? I have hungry kits to feed. Decisions, decisions...."

Any Heortling knows that killing a talking animal brings bad luck, bad hunting, and bad dreams. Worse, the offending clan will surely have trouble with the animal's kinfolk. On the other hand, befriending such a magical beast can bring good luck. See *Anaxial's Roster*, page 84, for information on red foxes.

Resobe, Red Fox Spirit

Significant Abilities: Acute Hearing 2W, Bite 13, Clever 10W, Dodge 13W, Leap 15, Run Fast 3W, Sniff out Food 18, Small 13, Sneak 6W, Trickster Magic 5W.

Weapons and Armor: Bite +1.

Contest: Bargain with Fox

Appropriate Abilities: Bargain, Know Animals (-3), Spirit Lore (-10).

Typical Modifiers: Kolating bargainer (+5), offering food (+5), Yinkin worshipper in group (-10).

Resistance: 6W.

Complete Victory: The fox escorts the raiders to Darstestead, giving a +20 bonus on "Evade Patrols" contests, in exchange for some sausage and the prospect of being vastly amused. But only if they promise to find her a lamb to call her own...

Any Other Victory: She will settle for some food from the heroes' packs and may consider giving "helpful" advice, depending on how well the heroes managed to win. Allow a +5 on "Evade Patrols" for each level of victory.

Tie or Marginal, Minor, or Major Defeat: The fox extracts a promise from the heroes for their entire clan not to hunt red foxes. The promise could bind the clan for up to a year, depending on how badly the heroes lost. This could change both the clan's *Wealth* and the heroes' standing with the clan's hunters (who may be very annoyed!).

Complete Defeat: Deeply annoyed, the vixen scoots into the undergrowth to warn Darsten of raiders. He will be prepared for them now. Certainly the chieftain's field will be better guarded, and his warriors will be waiting.

Lost Travelers

Through the trees, the heroes see a band of pathetic wanderers. Ragged and starving, they look to have been in the woods for a long time. If they see the raiders, they plead for rescue, begging for directions out of the forest. Tarndisi forbids their escape, dooming them to wander the Grove forever—they left a path or broke one of his taboos. If any hero tries to assist them, Asborn says, “Ignore them. They’re Lost.” You can just hear the capital letters. “If you talk to them, you’ll be Lost too.” If the hero persists, he becomes a part of this group of Lost ones. Asborn insists that anyone who talks to or helps them be abandoned. If he is ignored, Asborn leaves the group, abandoning them to Tarndisi’s whims. If anyone who talked to the Lost travelers or broke taboo is with the group, they and their friends will never leave the Grove either; see “Lost in the Woods,” below.

Yinkin’s Favor

The heroes see a massive gray alynx lounging on a branch overhanging the trail. With a lazy stretch-and-jump, he drops to the path and accompanies the raiders (whether they want him to or not). It is an alynx daimon (like Gavreninkin in *Anaxial’s Roster*, page 38). If he is not interfered with or attacked, when they reach Darsten’s pastures he will herd one of the Sleek Sheep to the most capable herdsman. If the raiding party is in particular need, the alynx might manifest itself in full cloud form, to help herd the sheep or interpose itself between a hero and a powerful foe.

If the heroes wonder why the daimon is helping them, remind them that as Tol, Yinkin had many cloud-get who herded the urothtrorol (cloud sheep). But, ultimately, it boils down to one thing: cats do things for their own reasons. Why should this one be different?



Lost in the Woods

Through foolishness or error, many poor souls wander the Grove. Without outside help, escape is unlikely. The victim is effectively in the Spirit World, drawn there by Tarndisi. Path-finding magic, area lore, or mapping abilities must overcome the Spirit World barrier of 10W3 before they can help the hero exit the forest. Those who have offended Tarndisi find the task even more difficult, as the grandmapa spirit actively opposes their efforts to escape. In these cases, only a heroquest or powerful shaman could rescue them from their fate.

Scene 5: Darstenstead

Sleek Sheep are precious, and Darsten guards his wealth well. A high palisade encloses his stead, barns, and outbuildings—for a stead, it is surprisingly well-defended. Darsten grazes his magic sheep along with the clan’s prize cattle and horses in a well-guarded pasture. At night, barns and pens inside the palisade provide shelter and protection for the animals. A huge black oak tree looms in the meadow like a monstrous sentinel, a stone’s throw from the gate. This tree is the clan’s wyter (its guardian) and serves as an altar to Doburdun; it also gives the Black Oaks their common name. Should any raiders get within bowshot of the stead, it will instantly alert Darsten Turnstorm.

The raiders must slip through forest and pasture to get into position. Getting close to the chieftain’s stead is difficult (compared to the usual raid). The stead lies in the heart of the Black Oak tula (no surprise, since the chieftain lives there) and several other steads surround it. Fortunately for the heroes, the Black Oak Clan is new, founded after Starbrow’s Rebellion, and has a relatively weak wyter.

Contest: Slipping onto the Black Oak Tula

Appropriate Abilities: Raiding affinity, Black Oak Clan Geography, any Stealth ability (–3), Colymar Geography (–5), Dragon Pass Geography (–20).

Typical Modifiers: Raiding at night (+5); Black Oaks warned (–10 or more); size of party gives a negative modifier; any help purchased earlier (variable).

Note—The wyter’s Awareness function is ignored, as the heroes have slipped through Tarndisi’s Grove.)

Resistance: 16W.

Any Victory: The raiders manage to get to the chieftain’s pasture undiscovered. Each level of victory gives a cumulative +5 bonus to all raiders when seizing the sheep.

Tie or Marginal Defeat: An unfortunate early rising farmer encounters the raiders.

Minor Defeat: A patrol of warriors catches the raiders.

Major Defeat: Darsten’s warband comes looking for the heroes.

Complete Defeat: Darsten and his men ambush the heroes.

Each morning, herdsman drive the prize sheep from their barn to the best pasture: a lush meadow near the stead. Guarding them are shepherds and boys accompanied by ... dogs! Is there no end to the Black Oaks’ perversity? The herd consists of a half-dozen Sleek Sheep (two rams and four ewes) and nearly three score ordinary sheep. All look supernaturally healthy and large. Guarding them are two shepherds (*Herder* 5W) and three boys (*Herder* 14) along with a few Corach sheep dogs (*Anaxial’s Roster*, page 44). Also keeping an eye on the pasture is an alert Black Oak weaponthane (see below).

The heroes must capture at least one of the Sleek Sheep before the Black Oaks’ warband arrives. With Darstenstead only

The Black Oak Clan

The Black Oaks are a small clan created by King Blackmor of the Colymar in 1618, for he feels that an entire clan should serve his wishes. Using lands traditionally belonging to the Colymar king and lands seized from the rebellious Black Spear Clan, he set up several large steads. Herds and goods plundered from his opponents have gone to enrich the clan, and the Black Oaks have become both wealthy and hated as a result. Many Colymar were added to the clan by force, or joined and converted to the Lunar Way rather than be outlawed or slain. Others were malcontents, turncoats, criminals, and opportunists who saw the new clan as their big chance. The Black Oaks are not a happy clan, but they are becoming very powerful. The clan consists of about 400 adults and half that many children. The forcible recruiting has left the population somewhat skewed, with numerous thralls and slaves who do not count as part of the clan.

Darstenstead is the clan's largest settlement. Nearly 100 clan members live here, and it houses the clan's shrines to Yanafal Tarnils, HonEel, and Doburdun. Other steads include Brass Boar, Forest Eaves, and Red Salvation. (For information on HonEel and Yanafal Tarnils, see *Under the Red Moon, Imperial Lunar Handbook Volume 2*; for more information on Doburdun, see *Barbarian Adventures*, page 23, or else go to www.HeroQuest-rpg.com/support/doburdun.html.)

The Black Oaks have turned to foreign gods for magic. Most men worship Doburdun or other Lunar-sanctioned gods like Yanafal Tarnils, although some farmers still pray to Barntar. The women embrace the HonEel rites in their Ernalda worship. The clan's rituals are strange and disturbing to Heortling eyes. Some of the steads raise corn, and others herd a great many pigs under the eaves of Tarn-disi's Grove. When raiding them, the heroes should be prepared for unexpected magic.

moments away, the raiders have little time to round up the sheep and escape before warriors arrive. All of the defenders must be silenced quickly. Those raiders tasked with rounding up the Sleek Sheep find that they are stubborn and willful (*Stubborn* 4W). Sleek Red Sheep are not creatures of Storm, and seem to have an uncanny, perverse intelligence of their own.

The chieftain's pasture also contains a score of prize milk cows (worth 3 cows each), some ordinary cattle taken by the Black Oaks in raids, a small herd of a dozen horses, and the chieftain's prize bull—Redeye (use the statistics for "Domestic Cattle" in *Anaxial's Roster*, page 44, with the additional trait of *Murderous* 5W2). Each of these scattered herds has its own guards. Should the heroes try to get *all* the animals, the narrator should invoke suitable difficulties for such ambitious (and greedy!) heroes.

If the heroes fail to surprise the shepherds and guard (facing a resistance of the weaponthane's *Alert* 15W), the other herdsmen and the warriors of Darstenstead attack before the heroes can gather the sheep. Proceed immediately to Scene 6, and give the Black Oak clanmembers a +10 bonus for fighting in the shadow of the Black Oak itself. Worse, the Black Oak fyrd (militia) will arrive soon. Each round of combat increases the difficulty of capturing the sheep by +2 as they scatter bleating to the winds. A raider might attempt to capture one of the sheep as an unrelated action. Any herdsmen or alynxes brought along by the heroes attempt to capture sheep rather than fight. Naturally, the enemy warriors have no compunctions against slaying the noncombatants, but under *no* circumstances will Darsten's men harm the Sleek Sheep!

Attacking Darstenstead

Truly daring (and powerful) heroes may decide to assault the heavily fortified stead, but should quickly find that they have a fight on their hands. A stout 14' palisade with a walkway surrounds the place. The front gate is made of bronze-bound oak studded with nails. Over a score of farmers and herders and their families live within its walls. Defenses like this are highly unusual, but the Governor-General of Dragon Pass allows Doburdun worshippers considerable freedom in his program of encouraging worship of the Loyal Storm. (See Scene 6 for statistics.)

Should the heroes somehow manage to sack Darstenstead, they find that Darsten Turnstorm's wealth *does* rival that of a tribal king. The furnishings are lavish; exquisite tapestries and silver plate adorn the great hall. Many rooms are bedecked with rugs and rich carvings. Each raider could easily carry away fine jewelry, exotic furs, and luxury goods worth a dozen cattle or more. Such raiders would also carry away the eternal hatred of Darsten Turnstorm, King Blackmor, and their allies.

Rakstant the Black Oak

The dark gleaming leaves of Rakstant the Black Oak rustle in winds that none can feel. Its magic resists any attempts to destroy it, and trying to burn it or chop it down makes it very angry. When personally threatened in the past, it has generated an incredible bolt of lightning from its leaves.

Awareness Functions: Navigate Tarn-disi's Grove 11W2, Sense Intruder 11W2.

Defense Functions: Storm Protection 11W2.

Blessing Functions: Breed Sleek Sheep 11W2, Fatten Pigs 11W2.

Aftermath

Darsten will never allow his sheep to be so vulnerable again. Many fanatical weaponthanes and warriors will guard them. Worse, he may petition his king for Lunar assistance or magic. If the raiders have somehow defeated Darsten's men already, then skip to the aftermath of Scene 6. Otherwise, an enraged Darsten Turnstorm and his warband pursue the raiders.

Scene 6: And Where Are You Going with Those?

Even if the heroes raid flawlessly, the Black Oak warns Darsten of the deception. Almost as soon as the heroes escape with the sheep, Darsten's men gather and pursue them. The warriors have taken the time to equip and augment themselves with whatever magic they have. The men of Darstenstead are apostate Heortlings. Yanafal Tarnils and Doburdun are the gods of choice. Darsten's retinue includes a score of well-equipped warriors and a half-dozen weaponthanes; unlike many Black Oaks, these men are willing converts.

Burdened by the uncooperative animals, the raiders can travel but slowly. The warband overtakes the heroes (perhaps catching stragglers one by one for dramatic effect) unless they choose to fight at Darstenstead or elect to ambush their pursuers somehow, although the Black Oaks are on their home ground and so have a terrain advantage as well as magical support from their wyter. If the raiders can defeat these warriors quickly, however, they can escape before the rest of the Black Oak fyrd and warband arrive and overwhelm them.

Khavri Kormothson

Keywords: Heortling Herdsman 20, Initiate of Doburdun 10 \mathbb{W} (Storm, Thunder Addi).

Significant Abilities: Sling 10 \mathbb{W} , Spear and Shield Fighting 17.

Equipment: Leather armor +1, spear +3, sling +3.



Tarnil Wolfslayer

Keywords: Heortling Hunter 17 \mathbb{W} , Initiate of Odayla 20 (Bear, Hide, Hunting).



Significant Abilities: Hunting 18 \mathbb{W} , Sling 20 \mathbb{W} , Spear and Shield Fighting 17.

Equipment: Leather armor and shield +2, spear +3, sling +3.

Contest Synopsis

Close Combat (Darsten riding Thunder Addi): 8 \mathbb{W} 3 (172 AP)

Close Combat (Gerrath, without Darsten): 13 \mathbb{W} 2 (100 AP)

Leadership (Darsten): 3 \mathbb{W} 2 (43 AP)

Ranged Combat (Darsten): 16 \mathbb{W} 2 (173 AP)

Gerrath Splitshield

Keywords: Heortling Weaponthane 15 \mathbb{W} , Initiate of Yanafal Tarnils 15 \mathbb{W} (Combat, Soldier, Warlord).

Significant Abilities: Cunning Battle Plan 10 \mathbb{W} , Scimitar and Shield Fighting 10 \mathbb{W} , Scouting 10 \mathbb{W} , Spear and Shield Fighting 20.

Equipment: Bronze and leather armor and shield +4, heavy spear +4, fine scimitar +4.



Ysra Almswoman

Keywords: Heortling Healer 15 \mathbb{W} , Initiate of Deezola 10 \mathbb{W} (Heal Body, Heal Mind, Heal Soul).

Significant Abilities: First Aid 15 \mathbb{W} , Give Alarm 20.



Chieftain of the Black Oak Clan 10 \mathbb{W}
(Includes his four storms)

Darsten TurnStorm

Other Significant Abilities: Addi Fighting 5 \mathbb{W} , Clever 3 \mathbb{W} , Disfigured 16, Fear Dragons 17, Greedy 4 \mathbb{W} , Heortling God-talker 10 \mathbb{W} , Leadership 16 \mathbb{W} , Spear and Shield Fighting 17 \mathbb{W} , Throw Addi 1 \mathbb{W} 2, Wealth 9 \mathbb{W} 3.

Special Items: Iron ringmail armor +6, addi (sacred thunderstick) +4, healing amulet ("Last Gasp") 9 \mathbb{W} .

Marks: He wears his grizzled hair long to cover the scars left by impests (agents of reprisal described in *Thunder Rebels*, page 82) when he abandoned Orlanth. He ostentatiously shows his wealth by wearing gold armbands and silver jewelry.

Typical Quote: "Fool, Orlanth is dead! There is only Doburdun."

Personal Augments:

- Clever (+2 to leadership or perception attempts)
- ☞ Command Thunderstorm feat (+5 to Storm affinity)
- ☞ Lashing Winds feat (+5 to combat)
- ☞ Thunder Addi feat (+5 to combat)

Notes: Darsten uses his *Deafening Blast* and *Lashing Winds* feats to hinder and delay foes until his warriors and carls can close with the foes. If they flee, he uses his *Ride Thunder Addi* secret to bring the battle after them; should he ever be overmastered, he will try to flee in the same way. Despite his better skill with spear and shield, Darsten is a Doburdun fanatic, and prefers to use his addi in melee.



Family and Personal Time

Loyal to King Blackmor 20 \mathbb{W}

Devotee of Doburdun 10 \mathbb{W} 2

Affinities: ☞ Storm 13 \mathbb{W} 2, ☞ Thunder Addi 6 \mathbb{W} 2

Secret: Ride Thunder Addi 3 \mathbb{W} .

Darsten TurnStorm

Chieftain of the Black Oak Clan, Lunar Collaborator

A powerful thane and warrior, Darsten is the acting chieftain of the new Black Oak Clan in the Colymar Tribe. He is an older man in his 40s; years of good living have made him stout, but he is still a formidable warrior and magician. His well-trained and well-equipped personal retinue numbers a dozen weaponthanes and nearly a score of warriors and slingers.

During Starbrow's Rebellion, Darsten marched to battle with his clan. He saw the fate of those who failed to bend the knee to Fazzur. His heart turned to ice—he knew the Storm Tribe was doomed, and he turned to the Lunar Way to survive. When his cousin Blackmor became King of the Colymar and founded the Black Oak Clan, Darsten was appointed to be its "stand-in" chieftain. He has profited greatly from Blackmor's purges of the Colymar, and his wealth rivals that of some tribal kings. He often emulates Tarshite customs and dress (like having a moustache) in an effort to appear more "Provincial," and thus more Lunarized.



Hot Pursuit!

The first sign of trouble is a terrible, thunderous wind that comes up behind the raiders as Darsten swoops in to attack. His hair whips behind him as he rides upon his Thunder Addi. His men are swept along with him like leaves in a hurricane. If the heroes do not turn and fight, the Black Oaks will run them down and slaughter them.

During the battle, Darsten (and any herdsman that are present) will hang back and pelt the raiders with slings and magic. They will concentrate on disabling any obvious magicians. The weaponthanes lead the warriors in a wild charge, screaming war cries to Yanafal Tarnils and Doburdun. It should take only one round for the fast-moving warriors to close with the raiders.

The pursuers should be as numerous as the raiding party, with roughly equal numbers of warriors and herdsman, plus two or three weaponthanes as well. For a tougher fight, add more herdsman and an extra weaponthane or two. Perhaps Torkal the Ram, clan champion and warrior of Yanafal Tarnils is present (*Clan Champion* 10W2, *Devotee of Yanafal Tarnils* 15W).

Runners have been sent to gather the clan for battle. Darsten wants to delay the raiders until the fyrd arrives. In order to ensure this, Darsten will single out Orstalar for a duel of magic. The powers of Storm Voice and Loyal Storm meet. In the struggle, blasts of lightning tangle with lashing winds.

This is the climactic fight—the raiders must escape before the fyrd arrives! If the battle continues for too long, the heroes can hear the sound of the approaching warband. Warriors, godi, and carls, along with the clan champion (if he is not already present) will arrive in overwhelming numbers. The heroes can escape only if they defeat Darsten's men before the warband shows up, and they must leave as soon as they see the first warrior rushing in on horseback if they are to escape with any sheep.

When the pursuers are defeated (or the battle seems hopeless), Orstalar orders a mad dash for the nearest open space. Once there, he opens the bag at his belt, a magical Bag of Wind. A fierce rushing wind carries the raiders home with unearthly swiftness, the magic of Finovan and Kolat thwarting pursuit. For dramatic effect, let this happen just as the fyrd charges.

If Darsten and his men overwhelm the raiders, the vile Turnstorm slays Orstalar out of hand, but can be convinced to spare others, perhaps for ransom. Flagrant rebels become prisoners, pending trial and crucifixion by the Lunars. If any remaining heroes cannot meet the outrageous ransom (twice what Heortling law calls for), they will be sold into slavery.

Typical Black Oak Weaponthane

Keywords: Heortling Weaponthane 10W, Initiate of Yanafal Tarnils 5W (Combat 10W, Warlord 17).

Significant Abilities: Alert 15W, Scimitar and Shield Fighting 15W.

Equipment: Bronze and leather armor and shield +4, heavy spear +4, scimitar +3.

Typical Black Oak Warband Warrior

Keywords: Heortling Weaponthane 17, Initiate of Yanafal Tarnils 17 (Combat).

Significant Abilities: Run Fast 2W, Scimitar and Shield Fighting 5W.

Equipment: Bronze and leather armor and shield +4, scimitar +3.

Typical Black Oak Herdsman

Keywords: Heortling Herdsman 17, Initiate of Doburdun 17 (Storm, Thunder Addi).

Significant Abilities: Sling 5W, Spear and Shield Fighting 17.

Equipment: Leather armor and shield +2, spear +3, sling +3.

Denouement

Barring narrator intervention, the journey home is swift and uneventful, due to Thundercape's magic. Once there, the heroes find they no longer have Sleek Red Sheep. Somehow, the red wool has turned to a cloudy blue. Perhaps being whirled through the air by the power of Storm has changed them. Should the heroes have failed, perhaps they may get another chance to try again later. But next time, Darsten will be *ready* for them.

It is customary for the heroes to tell the chieftain of their raid, and customary for him to hold a feast to celebrate. Orstalar takes one of the Sleek Sheep for himself, saying, "The gods require it." Only the most venal or foolish chieftain would deny him, and the heroes should be given a chance to convince him otherwise, for Orstalar will use force to take it, if necessary.

At the feast, Orstalar praises the brave deeds of the heroes and chides the foolish ones, so that everyone knows their worth. In private, he hints that he may have more work for them in the future. The heroes have reached a milestone—now the Rebellion takes them seriously. If Kallyr did not know of them before, she will now. When they make suggestions, the rebels listen. They have earned it. Tonight, though, the feast is boisterous and the heroes bask in the praise of their fellows.

Rewards

In addition to normal hero points, give each hero +1 hero point for each Sleek Sheep captured; if a blue Sleek Sheep is donated to their clan, they lose the hero points but each hero gains a +2 to their Clan relationship instead. Generosity is a virtue!

Each Sleek Sheep gives its owner +3 *Wealth*—their wool and milk are exotic and rich, and they bring prosperity and good luck. Each sheep requires a single hero point to cement this improvement; we recommend that the heroes share them, if possible, and so divide these points among themselves. If the heroes cannot or will not share them, the chieftain claims any extras "for the good of the clan," adding them to his herds. The semi-divine Sleek Sheep live for decades, and the benefits may last beyond that as their descendants improve the clan's herds; the Clan's *Wealth* rating increases by +1 (see *Orlanth is Dead!*, pages 18 and 68) for each Sleek Sheep it takes or is given. Any ordinary sheep brought back along with the Sleek Sheep are especially valuable, worth a cow each.

A successful raid may result in Orstalar becoming a patron or contact for the heroes at a rating of 13, if they wish it, with no hero point cost. Also, Finovan's cult will be open to them. If the heroes find themselves outlawed someday, Orstalar might even take them into his warband. On the flip side, if the heroes are recognized by Darsten or his men, they will likely gain a *Hated by Darsten* 17 relationship.



THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DRAGON

As news of the Rebellion spreads, those once cowed by the Lunars begin to take heart and plan for their own freedom. So it is with some of the Grazers, who seek training for their “slaves” so that they will have the forces they need to ensure their success when they are ready.

Benchmark: One or two heroes should be of leader quality (up to two abilities at 12W2 or three at 5W2, and with appropriate followers). Other heroes should have about 10W in their best ability.

Scene 1: The Emissary

The heroes are summoned to the chieftain’s hall (or perhaps are called to a meeting by Orngerin or another rebel leader). On the way they hear excited gossip: a beastman is here! (If the heroes have friends among the beastfolk, the emissary is one known to them. Otherwise, it is a centaur, Woodcutter. The clan elders know him, for he sometimes carries messages to human lands.)

The emissary explains that a high-born Grazer, Jandetin, needs to employ the services of some storm folk. Jandetin wants them to train some people for him in utter secrecy, and will pay well for results. This may take several seasons, and he does not expect that the heroes will have to do any *real* fighting.

Chances are good that this clan has had trouble with Grazers before, for the Horse-spawn periodically raid the Heortlings. Can they trust them now? Woodcutter will vouch for Jandetin, swearing by Humakt if need be. He also points out that not only will they be rewarded generously, but that this will put an important Grazer in their debt.

If the heroes do not inquire further, the [clan chieftain or rebel leader] will ask why a Grazer wants training from Heortlings—enemies of the Lunars. Woodcutter replies, “Jandetin is no friend of the Red Invaders. These are strange, troubling times, and a small ill may be needed to prevent a great catastrophe.” The questioner is visibly taken aback, and if the heroes do not volunteer he will commit them, for this chance to win Grazers over to the Rebellion is too good to miss.

If none of the heroes will make an effective leader for this type of mission, the narrator could have the Grazers hire Ar-grath Maniskisson to oversee the military training. Because the camp will have to be self-sufficient for multiple seasons, he will in turn ask the heroes to fill needed support roles—healer, god-talker, and the like.

The emissary will wait a day or two for the heroes to put their affairs in order, consult with their families, and get ready. They will need supplies only for the journey.

Woodcutter the Centaur

Woodcutter is a male centaur with grizzled hair that goes all the way down his back and joins his tail. Being inhuman, none can guess his true age, but he would look old if he were human.

Significant Abilities: Archery 14W, Jump 5W, Lance 3W, Track Animals 5W.

Scene 2: Journey to the Grazelands

Details of the journey to the Grazelands are left to the narrator. You might say, “You travel for five days to your destination.” It is useful to put a copy of the map from *Dragon Pass* on the table while talking, so that you have a visual focus as well as a verbal one. You may lay the map down and say, “You go here, past the ducks; cross the river here where some centaurs are watching from the distance, up a valley to here.” You may choose to relate more detail and give more chance to interact with the various peoples. You can even choose to just tell the players, “Don’t ask questions here, just take notes.” Thus, the journey might take anywhere from a few minutes to several play sessions.

Regardless of where the adventure is set, Woodcutter will lead the heroes first south, through Beast Valley, then across the Dragonspine and north into the Grazelands. He will skirt settled areas, but people cannot always be avoided, and there could be many chances for interaction with people: Sartarite tribesmen; the durulz of Duck Valley; the mercenaries and farmers of Sun County; the beastfolk of Beast Valley; and the Grazers themselves. Some possible encounters or incidents are provided below, to use or ignore as you wish.

Quackford

Quackford is a large town located where the Duck Road crosses The Stream, with many people coming and going. From here, Kero Fin lies to the northwest, but the group will head south.

Sun County

The heroes were warned by Orngerin to keep to the woods and stay in cover. Their cover story is that they are traveling to Beast Valley to work for Ironhoof; no one is to mention Kallyr or Orngerin, ever.

At one point, the travelers encounter a Yelmalion patrol. Woodcutter meets them at a distance, negotiates privately, and returns to the troop. The patrol commander deliberates with his warriors for a little while, then “offers” to escort the group to the western border. They stay until the heroes reach the far side of the tree-sprinkled Neutral Hills, then watch as the group continues on its way.

Beast Valley

Beast Valley is a wild land, broken by light forests. Normally, the heroes would probably be harassed by strange beastfolk, but because Woodcutter is with them they are safe. Perhaps a group of foxwomen (statistics and information are available at www.HeroQuest-rpg.com/support/vuskarasas.html) approach a handsome man with an exotic proposition?

The Creek-Stream River

Ducks (part of Ironhoof's Beastmen Alliance, like Woodcutter) are waiting to ferry the heroes across. After crossing, the group heads north along the riverbank, towards distant Kero Fin.

Wild Temple

The Wild Temple is a complex of standing stones (see *Masters of Luck and Death*, pages 62-63); it appears abandoned, overgrown, and wild, but Woodcutter says that only an hour's walk away there are new sacrifices and trampled bramble bushes.

The group rests near the main circle of stones. Ahead, to the north, is a line of hills, the Dragonspine. "We'll go by that bump there, Spirit Bone Mountain," Woodcutter says. "This is far out of the way of most any Imperial patrol or magic. Rest easily. The guards will do their jobs." Of course, the heroes may wonder who these "guards" are, but Woodcutter will not say more.

Scene 3: Meet the Grazers

After leaving the Wild Temple, Woodcutter leads the heroes into the Grazelands. The exact placement of the training camp is up to the narrator. One easy solution is to place it in Solthon Valley, near Penendros' Temple, then use the travel notes from "The Sky Ship" (pages 50-52) to narrate the journey. This will also ensure that the heroes are familiar with the route they take in that later adventure.

Eventually, the heroes arrive in a secluded valley along the Broken River, a stretch of Jaldon's Wrong River that descends through dozens of cascades to Long Lake before it continues to the Oslir. Shortly after they enter the valley, Woodcutter pulls out a wad of herbs and chews it. (Some of the heroes may realize that he is using spirit magic.) His eyes roll back in his head briefly; then he announces, "The Sun approaches." Within moments, a group of about 50 horsemen approaches. Woodcutter is not alarmed, and explains that this is the heroes' patron.

The leader is a handsome man in his mid-30's, with an engaging smile. He is arrayed in feathers and gold decorations; his horse is almost as lavishly decorated, and its yellow eyes glow gold with magic. "I, Jandetin, chief of the Friend-of-Stone, welcome you to the lands of the Pure Horse People." He ignores Woodcutter completely, and waits for someone to respond. Whoever does is subsequently treated by Jandetin as the leader and spokesperson. "I thank you for coming," he continues. "Before I tell you why I called for you, you must take an oath of secrecy." Jandetin springs from his horse to conduct the ritual, which involves drawing blood from all participants and calling on spirits. Heroes who are reluctant to take the oath will be reassured that it does not conflict with their religion. If they still refuse, they risk angering Jandetin, as well as Orngerin or their clan.

Jandetin wants the heroes to train his slaves to fight! The training must be conducted in secret, for many Grazers would not approve. He hopes that the heroes will be able to stay for a year, and expects them to commit to this. He will not stay, but will leave a trusted lieutenant, Yansandral, as his representative.

Jandetin will answer questions willingly, although about his need for Vendref warriors, he says only, "I intend to use them against the Red Invaders." At some point, he emphasizes that he does not want the Vendref learning magic of any kind from the heroes. As for payment, Jandetin offers each trainer a good native pony plus a horseshoe of silver. If pressed by a hero, he will add "another gelding for your packs," and again, "a third pony, for your servant." If pressed by a second hero, he might say "a strong pony," and then add "one trained for battle; no more." If pressed more he could add "one more silver shoe," then "two more," and finally "four in all; no more." Anyone with experience as a mercenary realizes that the pay is good. He will continue to bargain, but the longer the haggling continues, the more irritated he seems to get; the heroes could be losing his respect by seeming too greedy or presumptuous. If asked for a Grazer horse, he will say, "You may have one with a pure horse father, but not a full-blood."

When the negotiations are concluded, Jandetin and most of the riders leave. The Grazers set up a yurt for Yansandral; the Vendref arrive the next day and do the same for themselves and the heroes. This may be the first time the heroes have seen Grazer slaves. They look much like Heortling cottars, but many shave their faces, like Tarshites.



Training

The training goes slowly. Although the Vendref in most respects practice Heortling customs, they are killed if caught with weapons, so they lack the warlike tradition of the Sartarites. Furthermore, they are almost totally unfamiliar with the gods of war, and know no magic useful in combat. Still, all of them work hard, given any reasonable encouragement and instruction.

The Vendref are volunteers, and eventually fall into two factions. Estafi leads an uneasy group whose members are afraid they will be treated as an expendable human shield. Zarask and his men are eager, and talk about joining the cult of Hiia Swordsman and serving the Feathered Horse Queen when this is all over. Of course, they are only training with spears and axes, as Estafi points out, so this dream of becoming deadly swordsmen is long off, at best. Some of the Vendref have hunting skills, and can help the heroes provide food.

Grazers come and go as the weeks pass, reporting to Yansandral (and resupplying him with koumiss—fermented mare's milk) and ignoring everyone else. Many of the Vendref are more comfortable when they are gone, though a few seem more certain of themselves when they see the approval of their masters. Occasionally, larger bands of Grazers, perhaps 15-20 at a time, stop by to watch. All have the markings of the three clans that support Jandetin. A few glower at the Vendref and threaten them if they think a leader isn't watching. Members of these bands offer to engage the heroes in various competitions, such as wrestling matches, horse races, or archery contests.

Estafi, worried Vendref warrior

Descended from the Jontaning Clan, Estafi usually has a pensive expression, and can be counted on to come up with an objection to just about anything. His clan mates respect him because he is frequently right.

Significant Abilities: Make Objection 1W2, Worry 5W.

Zarask, excitable Vendref warrior

Zarask's infectious enthusiasm makes him a leader among his Hesgothi clanmates.

Significant Abilities: Enthusiastic 5W, Leader 1W2, Spear and Shield Fighting 14.

Complications

- After a day or two, the exhausted Vendref are ready to quit. Heroes can try to inspire them with *Oratory*, *Boast*, or similar abilities.
- Once the recruits are no longer tripping over their own spears, they begin hurting each other, and some end up with serious wounds. As the training continues, there will be fewer such accidents, but the need for healing will never entirely vanish.
- A Vendref named Endrios behaves suspiciously, and is caught sneaking around outside the heroes' yurts. He says he merely wants to learn more about the Heortlings, which is in fact true. If he is allowed to stay, Endrios will pester the heroes with questions about their gods. Give him a nickname, like "Yakky." He's a harmless pest.
- One of the recruits is actually a young woman who has disguised herself. She hates the backbreaking chores of a thrall woman, and would do anything to become a warrior.
- Two of the recruits keep getting into fights with each other. One solution might be to introduce more warrior customs, like boasting contests.

Scene 4: The Sheep Raid

After three weeks, Yansandral approaches the heroes. "We're short of food, and it's time your trainees saw some battle. You will take them and steal sheep." Yansandral proposes raiding into Tarsh. Do the heroes agree? They should realize that the trainees are not yet ready for real combat. Luckily, a sheep raid should be fairly easy, since sheep are generally not well guarded.

The heroes may protest that *sheep* raiding is beneath them. Yansandral replies that a colt's first steps are weak and wobbly, and it cannot run in a race. He thinks a cattle raid might be too much. The heroes may prefer another target, but anywhere in the Grazelands is out of the question, and Tarsh is closer than anywhere else. He pushes the idea, but doesn't order a raid. If the heroes refuse, he brings it up again after a few days of subsistence rations. When they heroes do decide to raid, ask the players how they prepare, and whether they will wait for favorable weather or phase of the Moon.

Yansandral envisions the raiders heading down the Broken River to where it joins the Solthon, then north into Tarsh. There are the lands of the Berelenos Clan of the Geroini Tribe, in an isolated valley that is usually full of sheep. Yansandral will listen to alternatives, but the location he proposes is the best one his scouts have found.

Yansandral leads the raiders down from the hills past a series of cascades, which continue in less dramatic fashion as they cross the mouth of Maregraze Vale. He and the other Grazers leave them at the Solthon River. None of the Vendref has been on a sheep raid, so the heroes will have to explain how to sneak up to the herd under cover of darkness, grab the sheep at daybreak, and leave before reinforcements arrive.

Of course, the raid does not go quite as planned. The Vendref are not used to sneaking around at night and get spooked at boulders, stumps, and night noises. One of them stops to relieve himself and forgets his spear. Another keeps tripping over rocks and roots. Still another manages to stray in the dark. When they actually raid they are not very stealthy, and are quickly spotted by the herd boys, who blow horns to summon help.

The Vendref trainees (*Spear and Shield Fighting* 9) are themselves sheep herders, and are effective at gathering sheep. (Even here, in their excitement, two Vendref end up chasing the same sheep around.) But they prove inept again when it comes to fleeing, and have no concept of how to ambush the pursuers. Treat the ambush results as one level worse than normal (*Barbarian Adventures*, page 37)—no matter what, there will be combat. When the Vendref are attacked, none of them pay attention to the sheep, which start to wander. It will fall to the heroes to defeat a pair of Tarshite warriors with curved throwing axes and several sling-wielding herders, all of whom have had time to prepare magical augmentation because of the failed ambush.

The likely outcome of the raid is a humiliated and wounded group of trainees driving a few sheep back up the Broken River to the camp. They will need encouragement from their trainers, or many of them may slip back to their homes in the night.

Tarshite Warriors

Significant Abilities: Axe and Shield Fighting 10W, Initiate of Rigsdal (Combat, Night Watchman, Vigilance) 5W, Throwing Axe 10W.

Equipment: Light mail and shield +3, axe +3, two throwing axes +3.

Sheep Herders

Significant Abilities: Run 1W, Shepherd's Crook 17, Sling 1W.

The Vendref

The Vendref are descendants of Orlanthi who entered Dragon Pass over 250 years ago from both the north and south. They were enslaved by the Grazers (who at that time ranged over most of the Pass) and put to work growing grain for the Grazer horses. They were forcibly kept on their farms and not permitted to bear weapons or ride horses, but they were allowed to keep their other customs as long as they submitted to Grazer rule. Over time, Orlanthi warrior and leadership gods were supplanted by more acceptable deities, such as Barntar the Farmer, Lodril (the plow god of Tarsh), and Kenkacho, the hardworking slave. Although they have no legal rights, Vendref are allowed to own wealth, and are free to organize their own clans as they see fit. The Vendref have no part in Grazer society other than as slaves, and the Grazers treat them like dirt.

Occasionally the Vendref rebel, sometimes calling on distant kinfolk for aid. These rebellions are always put down. When the Feathered Horse Queen rose to power, the Vendref joined her in her struggle against the Luminous Stallion King. After years of struggle, the Grazer leaders finally agreed that she would speak on behalf of the Vendref. Almost all Vendref would willingly serve her, for they see her as the only Grazer leader who understands those who work the earth. However, only one group has the chance to serve her directly—the Vendref who make up her bodyguard and worship Hiia Swordsman, a one-armed swordsman who befriended the Grazers when they first came to Dragon Pass.

Vendref Homeland Keyword

Occupations Available: Farmer, Healer, Merchant.

Native Abilities: Farming, Grovel, Speak Grazer, Know Vendref Myths, Vendref Customs.

Typical Personality: Fear Dragons, Fear Grazers, Hate Chaos, Humble, Stoic.

Typical Relationships: to Bloodline or Family; to Grazer overlords; to Temple.

Magic: Common magic, divine aid; specialized magic chosen from among the sample deities provided below.

Kenkacho, the Stander Hero

Kenkacho, the Stander Hero, is the ideal Vendref. He works hard and provides for his family. He was the first Vendref to be more than just an abused slave. He overcame many challenges, magical and mundane, to sow and harvest his crops, but he was vindicated when his overlord's clan fed more horses through the winter. His master had been impoverished, but with Kenkacho's winter feed they did not have to slaughter as many animals as their neighbors did. The clan grew rich and influential, and soon other Grazers were allowing their slaves to plow the fields, just like Kenkacho and his family did. That is when the ancestors of the Vendref stopped being mere slaves.

Feats: Bless Crops, Break Soil, Beat Bronze, Dig and Fill a Hole, Dodge Attack, Fire Pot, Stand Upright.

Talents: Cook Food Well, Endure Weariness, Faith in the Future, Heal Flesh, Light, Make Fire, Stay Warm.

Sample Vendref Deities

Most Vendref are happy with the common religion of Kenkacho, the Stander Hero. Only the rare Vendref initiates him- or herself to a specific deity, and devotion is almost unheard of. Many deities are forbidden by the Grazers.

Farmer (men): Lodril, god of farmers.

*Affinities—*Farming, Fertility.

Farmer (women): Esra, Mother of the Barley.

*Affinities—*Bless Domestic Animals, Wheat.

Healer: Ernalda the Healer.

*Affinities—*Heal People, Heal Relationships.

Merchant: Kanestal One-hand, called "The Counter," who is the loyal treasurer for his masters.

*Affinities—*Communication, Store Goods.

The Grazers

While the Vendref might be very distant cousins of the Heortlings, the Grazers are quite foreign. They are cleanshaven, and bow-legged from a life in the saddle. They are masters at riding and archery, and almost seem kin to their horses; on foot, they seem clumsy by comparison. Their society is rigid, with everyone in his place, which is largely determined by age and birth. Clan chiefs are elected, but not in the same way as Heortling chiefs, and few among the populace are eligible. Men are considered superior to women, and some men have still not come to terms with the powers granted the Feathered Horse Queen 150 years ago. Most Grazers consider themselves superior to all groundsmen (including the Heortlings), although Jandetin and Yansdral are much friendlier.

The Grazers worship spirits rather than deities, although a careless observer might think their great spirits such as Henird and Jardan are gods.

For more information on the Grazers, see "Homeland: Grazer" (pages 46-47) and "Majestic Horses Tradition" (pages 143-145) in *HeroQuest* and the Grazer narratives in *HeroQuest Voices*, a free electronic book available online at www.heroquest-rpg.com/products/hqvoices/hqv-grazer.pdf

Grazer Scout

Typical Abilities: Archery 4W, Grazer Rider 18, Knife

Fighting 14, Ride 4W, Spiritist of Dastal the Hunter 17.

Typical Charms: Blazing Arrow 17, Gallop Fast 20.

Equipment: Leather clothes and shield +2, knife +1, bow and arrows +3.

Grazer Warrior

Grazer warriors make up the majority of any war or raiding party. Many have gone on the Goldeneye Quest and bonded with their horses. Each warrior's horse counts as a follower in combat, and may augment his abilities with its *Rider Bond* while he is mounted.

Typical Abilities: Archery 9W, Grazer Warrior 3W, Lance 5W, Practitioner of Jardan the Warrior 20, Ride 10W.

Typical Fetishes: Eagle-flight Bow 17, Flaming Spear 20.

Equipment: Bone and leather armor and shield +4, sword +4, bow and arrows +3, Goldeneye warhorse (*Rider Bond* 5W).

Scene 5: The Shrine

After the poor performance in the sheep raid, some of the heroes may decide that the trainees need more magical support. If the heroes don't, then Estafi will raise the subject. An victory of *Persuasion* or the like against his *Conservative 5W* will convince Yansandral to allow the heroes to build a shrine. Failure means that they will have to wait for Jandetin to show up; he will agree, but only after long debate and consideration. This was a step that he had hoped to avoid, although it seems unavoidable if the Vendref are to be effective against foes that use magic.

The shrine should be to one of Orlanth's warlike subcults. If the players do not feel up to the task of establishing one (or do not include a god-talker or priest to initiate new members), Jandetin will send for Argrath Maniskisson. The heroes may be able to convince Jandetin to send for someone from their clan instead. The Vendref are all very excited about this step. Now they will be true Orlanthi! Even Estafi can be seen grinning.

Picking a suitable spot for the shrine may take awhile. It needs to be both auspicious and secluded, and must be away from any powerful spirit places. The site should be a place where the god did something, perhaps determined using *Mythology of Orlanth* or *Soul Vision*. Heroes could also search for the remains of an old holy place, perhaps a sacred tree or stone remaining that can form the basis of the new shrine. However, it will be a better roleplaying opportunity if the narrator allows the players to come up with a suitable local myth and work with that.

Once a suitable spot is found, the shrine is set up. It needs an altar, separate places to burn sacrifices and cook meat, and a place to put an image or summon the god. The ceremony requires the worshippers to gather or create sacred regalia, the exact nature of which depends on the deity. These might include: two drinking horns, a knife, a spear and shield, four spears, "ring and cup and block and lantern", and a flag or banner. Of course, this is only the minimal regalia. Finally, the god-talker or priest (aided by all of the Vendref, with the Grazers staying well out of sight) must call upon the god.

Contest: Consecrate a Shrine

Appropriate Abilities: Mythology of [Subcult Deity], Mythology of Orlanth (-5), Heortling Mythology (-10).

Typical Modifiers: As well as community support and ritual magic, allow from +1 to +5 for the regalia.

Resistance: 10W3 (standard Otherworld Barrier).

Complete Victory: The consecration has been a great success, and in future the shrine will provide a ritual bonus of +12 during worship.

Major, Minor, or Marginal Victory: The shrine has been successfully consecrated.

Tie or Marginal, Minor, or Major Defeat: The ritual has been unsuccessful, but the heroes can try again next holy day if they can find a new holy place. Perhaps a different myth, or persuading everyone to sacrifice their own blood, or simply a more auspicious day will work better.

Complete Defeat: Orlanth does not favor the enterprise, and no shrine can be established here.

As soon as the shrine is established, the Vendref seek to be initiated the very next holy day. Some make extra sacrifices to gain more than one affinity.

If Argrath consecrates the shrine, he will take public credit. However, the Vendref know that they would not have it if not for the heroes.

Complications

- As word of the shrine's existence spreads among the Vendref, more of them start showing up seeking to worship or receive training. So much activity, both magical and mundane, makes it increasingly difficult to keep the enterprise covert.

Scene 6: Spotted

The training has been going on for over a season when one of the guards spots a group of three unfamiliar Grazers, obviously scouts from another clan. Once those scouts realize they have been seen they turn and gallop off. (They have been sent by the Luminous Stallion King to discover what Jandetin is up to.)

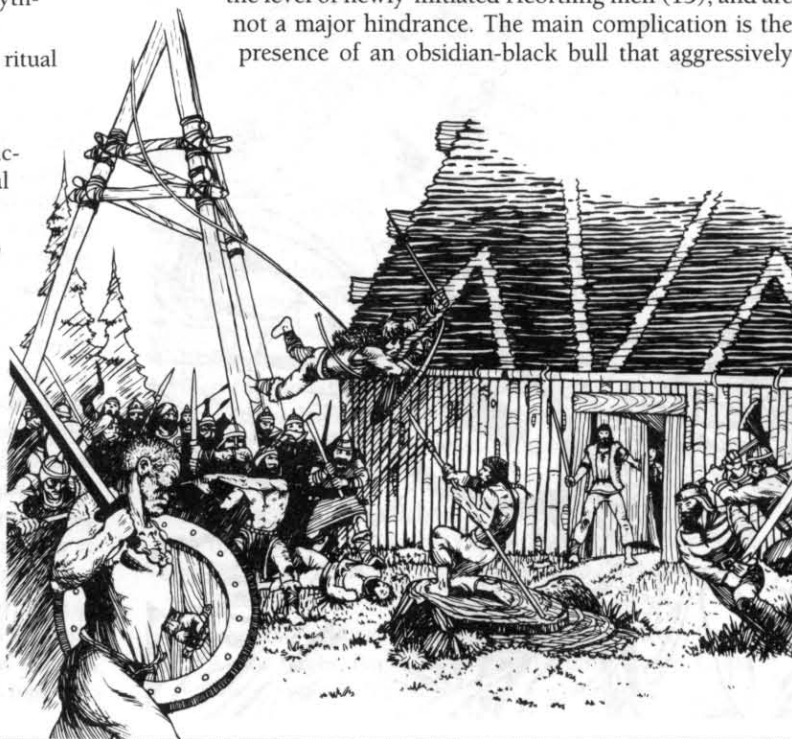
The heroes will probably want to catch the riders to preserve the secrecy of their mission. The scouts will be difficult to capture (they are on swift Grazer horses, *Fast 20W*), but it may be possible to kill them from a distance (see pages 22 and 73 for typical statistics). The heroes may be worried about attempting this, fearing Jandetin's anger, but in fact he would urge this course of action if he were present.

If the scouts are captured, they reveal that they were sent by Jarsandron Tenherds, the Luminous Stallion King. They haughtily state that the king will hold their captors accountable for their well-being. Yansandral returns shortly, and has them kept under guard, but treated honorably.

Scene 7: The Cattle Raid

The confidence of the trainees is much higher once they have a war shrine. They are even starting to look like a cohesive group of warriors, managing to hold a shield wall when a group of Grazers does a mock charge. Yansandral is a bit unhappy that the Vendref are apparently being trained to resist cavalry charges, but is pleased overall. After a few more weeks of training, he proposes that the trainees get another chance to prove themselves, this time in a cattle raid against the same Tarshite clan.

Run this raid according to the normal procedure (*Barbarian Adventures* page 40). This time the trainees are up to the level of newly-initiated Heortling men (13), and are not a major hindrance. The main complication is the presence of an obsidian-black bull that aggressively



defends the cows. By being clever (using *Know Herd Animals* or similar ability), the raiders can gather up a fair number of cows, but they will be unable to drive the bull. In fact, when warriors finally respond to the raid, the bull itself seems to lead them in defense of the herd. Appropriate abilities will allow heroes to discover that this bull is a magical creature, and it is not too big a stretch for them to realize that it could be the clan wyter.

After their initial celebrations, the Vendref talk of nothing but stealing the bull and sacrificing it at their shrine. Zarask and Estafi together come to the heroes and propose this. They realize there must be special bull-stealing rituals, and beg to be taught them. Finovan is probably the most appropriate god to provide such a ritual, but almost any of Orlanth's warlike subcults has some myth that could be adapted.

Complications

- In their enthusiasm, the Vendref overrun a small stead. They wound a farmer who tries to defend his farm, but they do little real damage.

Scene 8: The Luminous Stallion King

Even if the Grazer scouts were killed or captured, just a few days later a larger group of Grazers approaches and completely encircles the camp. None of them look familiar, though some of the horse markings look like those of the scouts. Everyone can see huge, translucent spirits filling the air above the riders.

Since the riders are always in motion they are difficult to count accurately, but the heroes and their trainees are clearly outnumbered. Many of the Vendref are willing to throw down their weapons and beg for mercy. It will take *Leadership* or similar abilities to keep them in a semblance of a fighting force. Yansandral is terrified, because the Luminous Stallion King is among

the group! Attacking these warriors would be suicide, as would trying to break through their ranks.

The circling horsemen begin to glow with magic, and the rotation speeds up. Suddenly, a horse comes flying through the air, trailing an arc of sparks. Jandetin's horse lands lightly near the heroes. He calls out in a loud, clear voice, "O Mighty Stallion! Hear me, your sworn follower, Jandetin of the Friend-of-Stone! Everyone here is my sworn follower, and they are obeying my commands. This is a matter of the magic of the tribe. If you have a quarrel with what I have done then we must go before 'Bearer of the Head' for her verdict."

The leader of the warriors (who glows almost as brightly as the Sun) spurs his horse forward so that he can talk more privately with Jandetin. It is indeed Jarsandron Tenherds, king of all the Grazers. He and his goldeneye horse wear a fortune in gold. As the two leaders confer, their horses circle each other warily, baring their teeth as if ready to bite each other. Jarsandron is clearly furious, waving his arms in short chopping motions, but Jandetin stands firm. Finally, Jarsandron turns and rides back to the circle, which breaks up and rides a way off.

Jandetin consults briefly with Yansandral, then rides off to his own much smaller band, which is waiting some distance away. Both groups then ride off to the southwest, towards Queen's Post.

Yansandral gathers the heroes quickly together. "I must ride with my chief to support him before the Queen. I do not think she will rule in our favor, so you must tell your warriors to hide their spears and return home." Chances are, the heroes will want to steal the bull. Yansandral reluctantly agrees to this if the heroes are insistent. "But you will not have much time. We will be back from Queen's Post in three days, with your pay."

Scene 9: Raid for the Bull

There is only minimal time to complete any ritual preparations, and no opportunity to wait for a specific phase of the Moon. Tomorrow night, the Red Moon will be full, so it is best to lead the final raid tonight. By this time, most of the trainees are now *Spear and Shield Fighting* 15; a few might be at 17 or higher. They will finally be able to contribute to a fight. If they do not think of it themselves, suggest to the heroes that each of them take a couple of the Vendref as combat followers for the battle.

After being raided twice, the Tarshites have moved their prize bull to a fenced-in field and increased the guard. Two Yanafal Tarnils huscarls keep an eye on the bull, with a number of warriors (as in Scene 4) close at hand. (Adjust the number of foes to make this a challenge for your heroes.) They do not treat this as a mere cattle raid, but the attempted theft of their clan's greatest treasure. Thus, clever options might work better than combat. Uralda magic might be used to lure the bull away. The heroes could discover a nearby stead and create a diversion, though one weaponthane will remain with the bull.

The bull itself is indeed the clan's wyter, Black Berelenos. It is effectively invulnerable: while its body can be broken, it will simply reform the next day. It also has powerful magic that helps it defend itself, and this might be what clues the heroes in, as its horns begin to glow when it charges. The bull's main concern is protecting the greatest number of cows; if the cows are divided, it will concentrate on defending the largest group.

Black Berelenos cannot be captured; no matter what magic is used to take it, its living body fades into the Otherworld as it crosses outside of the clan's lands. However, if it is killed, the heroes may take its horns or other parts of its body to sacrifice on their shrine or keep as impressive tokens of their victory.



Vardraskos

Keywords: Grazer Shaman 18^W (Starfire spir-
its), Majestic Horses Tradition 5^W2.

Significant Abilities: Second Star Fetch
1^W2, Goldeneye Horse 4^W.



Jolentir

Keywords: Grazer Warrior 7^W2, Practitioner of
Jardan the Warrior 8^W (Bowman, Brave-
man, Fightman, Fire, Stallion spirits).

Significant Abilities: Archery 4^W2, Goldeneye
Horse 7^W, Lance and Shield Fighting 7^W,
Sword and Shield Fighting 10^W4.

Equipment: Leather and bronze and shield +4,
lance +5, sword +3, bow and
arrows +3.



Contest Synopsis

Mounted Combat (Jandetin): 9^W3 (169 AP)

Politics (Jandetin): 4^W3 (64 AP)

Ranged Combat (Taranish): 1^W3 (215 AP)

Unmounted Combat (Jolentir): 16^W4 (143 AP)
-10 penalties for being unmounted
already included.

Taranish

Keywords: Grazer Hunter 4^W, Practi-
tioner of Dastal the Hunter 9^W (Fire, Hunting, Rider spirits).



Significant Abilities: Archery 14^W2, Lance
Fighting 5^W, Tracking 10^W.

Equipment: Leather and bone armor +2, lance
+5, bow and arrows +3, horse.

From the Center

Keywords: Goldeneye Horse 20^W.

Significant Abilities: Jump 2^W, Kick and Bite
17^W, Rider Bond talent 8^W, Run up Cliff
talent 5^W, Run Fast 20^W2.

Vengeance against
Lunars 13^W

Personal Time

Chief of the
Friend-of-Stone
Clan 18^W

Jandetin

Other Significant Abilities: Archery 17^W, Axe and Shield Fighting 1^W2,
Grazer Chief 14^W2, Grazer Warrior 20^W, Inspirational Leadership
12^W3, Lance Fighting 5^W2.

Special Items: Gold-washed bronze scale and shield +5, gold-tipped lance
+5, axe +3, spirit-bound bow "Dawnspeak Firethrowing" +6, extrava-
gant costume +2.

Marks: Extravagant in his appearance, and also in the decoration of From
the Center (his goldeneye horse).

Note: Jandetin and his companions will not fight
unmounted if they can avoid it in any other way.

Personal Augments:

^W Good Reign spirits (+3 to leadership)

† Bowman, Braveman, and Fightman spirits (+4 per spirit to combat)
Inspirational Leadership (+7 to leadership, oration, or seduction)
Vengeance (+3 when facing Lunars)



Practitioner of Henird the
Leader 15^W

Fetishes: † Bowman spirits
12^W, † Braveman spirits 12^W,
☆ Community spirits 15^W,
† Fightman spirits 12^W,
^W Good Reign spirits 15^W,
⊙ Fire spirits 4^W, ▽ Stallion
spirits 4^W.

Jandetin

Grazer Chief

Jandetin is a handsome, charismatic Grazer chief. His clan, the Friend-of-Stone, follows him without question, which allows him to take actions that on the surface seem unconventional. He is a hands-on leader, and makes quick decisions. Ever since the Lunars invaded the Grazelands in 1615 and killed his father, he has been their implacable foe. Jandetin commands a warband of about 200 men, mostly from his own clan and the Ghost Horse, Flame Juggler, and Sweetgrass clans.

Note that in a real challenge situation, Jandetin and his companions would release their practice spirits from fetishes, and thus gain a much higher bonus (+32 instead of +3, etc.). This eliminates the spirit (and the regular bonus) for hours to days, but gives a huge boost during a single round of the contest.

Yansandral

Although of the Leader age group and Jandetin's right-hand man in the Friend-of-Stone Clan, Yansandral is not of high enough birth to become a clan chief. He is absolutely loyal to Jandetin. He is more open-minded towards foreigners than most Grazers, but this tolerance does not extend to Vendref—he considers the

trainees a valuable but possibly dangerous tool. Yansandral occasionally gives orders to the heroes, but he has nothing to do with the Vendref—they are just slaves, and would soil him by mere proximity. When he does need to deal with the Vendref, he does so through the heroes or one of his followers.

Yansandral is occasionally away on business or hunting, but generally watches from a short distance. He is friendly with the heroes, pointing out various Heortling customs he finds amusing, explaining the superiority of Grazer culture, and offering koumiss, of which he is quite fond. He can provide more information about Jandetin, but does not volunteer anything. Thus, heroes may learn that Jandetin's plan was actually prohibited by the Grazer king. Yansandral will mention that Jandetin has the backing of three Grazer clans, and will describe their clan markings. He is reassuring about any difficulties the trainees have.

Significant Abilities: Affable 1^W2, Archery 15^W2, Conserva-
tive 5^W, Grazer Cavalry Tactics 10^W, Grazer War Captain
8^W, Lance 15^W, Practitioner of Henird the Leader 5^W,
Ride 10^W2.

Fetishes (all with ratings of about 5^W): Bear Heart, Curved
Arrow Flight, Eagle Flight Bow, Flaming Arrow, Great
Voice, Spirit Defender, Stallion Bravery.

Yanafal Tarnils Huscarl

Significant Abilities: Axe and Shield 10W2, Determined 20, Initiate of Yanafal Tarnils (Combat, Soldier, Warlord) 15W.
Equipment: Fine mail and shield +6, two red-glowing enchanted axes +6.

Black Berelenos

Mundane Abilities: Charge 10W2, Fierce 15W, Gore and Stomp 10W2, Large 15W.

Weapons and Armor: Enchanted hide +4, enchanted obsidian horns +8, hooves +2.

Defense Function: Shrug off Magic 10W3.

Denouement

Three days after leaving, Jandetin returns to the camp. He gives the heroes a saddlebag full of different spices from the Lunar Empire, as well as various gold items (such as a comb, a bow case, and a cloak clasp). He apologizes that he cannot give them all the silver and horses he originally promised, and hopes this offering (actually much more valuable) will keep up his end of the bargain. He also offers each hero a small pouch that he says holds a *Swiftess* spirit 3W that can be released once. Devotees and initiates know that using foreign magic can affect their theist magic use and possibly affect their relationship with their god for the worse.

If the heroes and Vendref succeeded in slaying the bull, Jandetin will give them extravagant praise and allow a sacrifice, if it is done that very day. But Jandetin concludes with sad news: the Feathered Horse Queen has ordered the Vendref back to their fields, and the Luminous Stallion King has commanded them to destroy the shrine. Jandetin tells the heroes that they had best leave the Grazelands before the King starts hunting them. He thanks them, saying, "You have made an egg here that will soon hatch into a hawk to prey on the Red Invaders. I will not forget what you have done."

The heroes leave before anything happens to the shrine, so its ultimate fate is ambiguous. In addition to the normal hero point reward, each hero who helped consecrate a shrine gets an automatic increase of +1 to their Initiate of Orlanth or Devotee of Orlanth (or any appropriate subcult) relationship.

Complications

The heroes will also find that they now have a price on their heads in Tarsh. The prospect of Grazers turning against Tarsh is one that worries the Imperial commanders and King Moirades alike, and the upstart Heortlings who seem to have been at the heart of the incident have become a threat worth eliminating. If the heroes managed to destroy the physical form of Black Berelenos, then in addition the Geroini Tribe as a whole will consider them blood-enemies and will seek to exact vengeance.

At this point, the heroes should will probably start facing serious threats, from a variety of different sources. Here are a few suggestions:

- Their descriptions have been posted, and the Empire offers any clan that hands them over a year's freedom from taxation, and any individual a sack of silver. At the same time, any village found sheltering them will suffer "enhanced corvee," a euphemism for the enslaving of one seventh of the adult population. Suddenly, villages at which they were welcome now timidly and apologetically ask the heroes to move on, and everyone becomes a potential informant.
- A hunt-and-kill team of strange Lunar warrior-mages is on the heroes' trail.
- There seems to be some strange curse on the heroes; every night as the Red Moon rises, all the food and water they have with them spoils, and they are forced to hunt or go hungry. No one can quite understand how this has happened, but a kolating may say that it is because one of them shed blood or left something behind in Tarsh, which the Geroini are using to curse them. Lifting the curse is difficult, expensive, and uncomfortable.
- Mercenaries and bounty hunters try to take them in. Individually, they may not be very formidable, but a steady stream of such attacks will eventually wear the heroes down.
- The heroes hear news that some new recruits to the Rebellion, youngsters who had yet to make a single raid but who were unlucky enough to resemble the heroes, were ambushed by Tarshites. Their heads were sent back to Tarsh.

It becomes clear that not only are the heroes eventually going to be caught, but that their very presence is a risk and threatens friends of the Rebellion. Orngerin catches up with them: "Aye, yes, it's a pretty scrape you're in now, a rat in Yinkin's stead, to be sure. Still, yez can take comfort that if they're this angry with yez, it be because you've burnt their breeks. And the more they look for yez, the less they notice what else be going on. Aye yes, Kallyr hersen's glad about that. But for the moment, it's best yez lie low awhile, perhaps head off somewhere they're not looking for yez, because *she's* got something planned that she reckons you might be handy for, and we don't want yez dancing on a silver gallows before then, do we? What's that? Aye, yes, I've got just the place in mind for yez. Fancy a trip down south, do ye?"





FINAL DAYS AT SKULLPOINT

Skullpoint is a community being torn apart by internal tensions. There is almost no way to resolve the conflicts peacefully, for the seeds of violence and retribution are sown too deeply. The disaster that befalls this community is rooted directly in the conflicting Orlanthi traditions of “No one can make you do anything” and “Kinship is sacred.”

The heroes may need to go far away until some of the heat being directed at them by the Tarshites and Lunars dies down. Always willing to take down two birds with one cast, Orngerin Thundercape decides that what they need is a nice trip to the south, where he hopes that the tough and traditional Skullpoint Clan can be brought into the Rebellion. Orngerin wants them to accompany a representative, Markald Koningson, to Skullpoint to make a favorable contact with the clan. What Orngerin and the players do not know is that the Skullpoint are on the verge of destruction.

If the heroes ask why a clan so far away concerns the Rebellion, Orngerin will explain. “Aye, yes, ben’t no one can scout in the hills like them Skullpointers. They could sneak the tail off’n a Telmori and hop up a mountain like it was your father’s stool. We hear the Lunars are building something big, something dangerous, off’n the north-east of the Stormwalks, and they’ve shut that up tighter than Harst’s safe-box. *She* says we need to know what’s in there, and for that we need the best.”

There are other ways the heroes can be drawn into this adventure. For example, a hero could have a relative who married into the Skullpoint community, or one who brought a Skullpoint wife into the heroes’ clan. Such a hero will have local contacts, a good expectation of hospitality, and a reason to visit.

One thing to remember: once out of Sartar, heroes are effectively cut off from their usual social connections. No one will come in to vouch for them, or save their skins, or resolve anything by showing up at the right time.

Markald Koningson

Markald of the Noldan Clan was born and raised in Whitewall, and he saw his city come under siege from the Lunars. He is an ardent patriot, hates the Lunars, and, overall, is a fine young man, generally mature beyond his mere 19 years.

Keywords: Heortling Weaponthane 19, Initiate of Vingkot the Victorious 17 (Fight Dara Happans, Storm, Wind).

Significant Abilities: Good-hearted 15, Good-looking 20, Hate Lunars 5W, Patriot 5W, Rouse Commitment to Cause 17, Sword and Shield 5W.

Scene One: Arrival at Skullpoint

The journey to Skullpoint leads past Whitewall, which is crawling with Lunar troops. The travelers will almost certainly encounter a Lunar scouting patrol. The patrol has one purpose: to gain information about potential local insurgents. If they meet armed Heortlings or any foreigners not obviously associated with Lunar interests, they demand evidence of their business. Unsatisfactory answers lead to delays for the heroes, as well as future Lunar interest in the area; open hostility may motivate the patrol to thrash the offenders. The patrol is not interested in fighting to the death, however, and will not be lured into the brush or forest. If clearly outmatched (a typical patrol has seven or so scouts), their priority is to escape.

Patrol Captain Aspos

Significant Abilities: Lead Patrol 1W, Ride 10W, Skirmish Tactics 18, Sword and Shield Fighting 1W2.

Equipment: Bronze and leather armor and shield +4, sword +3.

Lunar Scouts

Significant Abilities: Ride 17, Skirmish 1W, Sword and Shield Fighting 17.

Equipment: Leather armor and shield +2, sword +3.

Markald is disinclined to “negotiate” with the Lunars, and would rather avoid them entirely, or fight if it comes to a confrontation. He will use his *Patriot* ability augmented by *Hate Lunars* to resist attempts to change his mind. Depending on the outcome, such a dispute may result in the participating hero gaining Markald as a rival, an adversary, or a friend (but not as a follower).

After traversing some rough, heavily-forested country, the band comes to Skullpoint territory: steep switchbacks that lead to the heights of the Stormwalk Mountains, marked halfway up by a stake with a fanged humanoid skull stuck on it. Here they meet spear-bearing locals: Kalder Hahlgard (*Stern* 18) and Malti Starkad (*Proud* 20), typical Skullpoint warriors (see page 30). The two offer a proper greeting, continuing the ritual exchange up to the offering of meat but no further (see *Thunder Rebels*, pages 34-36). Once this level of hospitality is established, one of them will escort the newcomers to Low Steading, at the top of the switchbacks. In the unlikely event hostilities erupt (which would only occur if the heroes attack), the carls will fight savagely using their knowledge of the local terrain, and the entire Skullpoint community will be made aware of the attack by the clan wyter. Merely being rude or annoying has no immediate consequences, but may have repercussions later.

Scene Two: Fitting into the Community

The heroes are brought before the clan elders, who greet them and question them closely. They welcome the heroes as emissaries and guests, and seem happy for them to stay for the indefinite future. However, they make it clear that the heroes must contribute to the community—they have no spare resources for those who do not pull their own weight. Thus, the heroes are evaluated initially by the clan's preeminent practitioners of various occupations.

These interactions will set up the tone and circumstances of the heroes' relationships with the community. A Heortling with a hunting or farming background will be welcomed, whereas a devotee of Yinkin may well find himself sleeping in a barn! The narrator is encouraged to provide opportunities for socializing, games, and work experiences to show the heroes that they really are settling down to live in the area for awhile.

During the first week or so, the heroes are taken to each of the major steads, and meet the leaders of the bloodlines (see page 30 for full information).

While at Drakkarstead, a youth named Kestig challenges a hero who did well in the encounter with the Lunar patrol to "race you to the top of Heskin's Peak!" This forbidding-looking cliff face is actually easier to climb than it looks (resistance 18), but Kestig is a skilled climber (*Climb* 10W).

A Chance to Help

Four days after the heroes are well settled with the community, a group of scorpion-men raid the clan. This represents a threat both the locals and the heroes understand at the same level. Raiding Chaos monsters are easy to deal with—you simply kill

them. The steadhouse under attack belongs to Arnli Drakkar and his wife Nilde; it is fairly isolated off the Skyway Walks to the east. For complete information on scorpion-men, see *Anaxial's Roster*, page 172. The scorpion-men below have the basic statistics listed there, in addition to the below.

The first warning of the attack comes with the thrumming and humming of the axe, Kald's Truth, in its place in the High Steading longhouse. It contacts the community's shamans, who send their fetches about the territory, rousing the people. All this leads to a mustering of about fifteen men who have a chance of reaching the house in time. At least one hero should be in this category, and the locals stress the importance of approaching the battle scene in groups.

By the time they get there, Arnli's family and his nearby friends are in desperate straits. They know the folly of scattering and fleeing, but they are also outnumbered and may be slaughtered or captured where they stand.

Key Information: Creatures from the Print venture here every so often. This has not increased as much as one might expect in the last year, mainly because the creatures' attentions are being focused on the lowlands by the Lunar military.

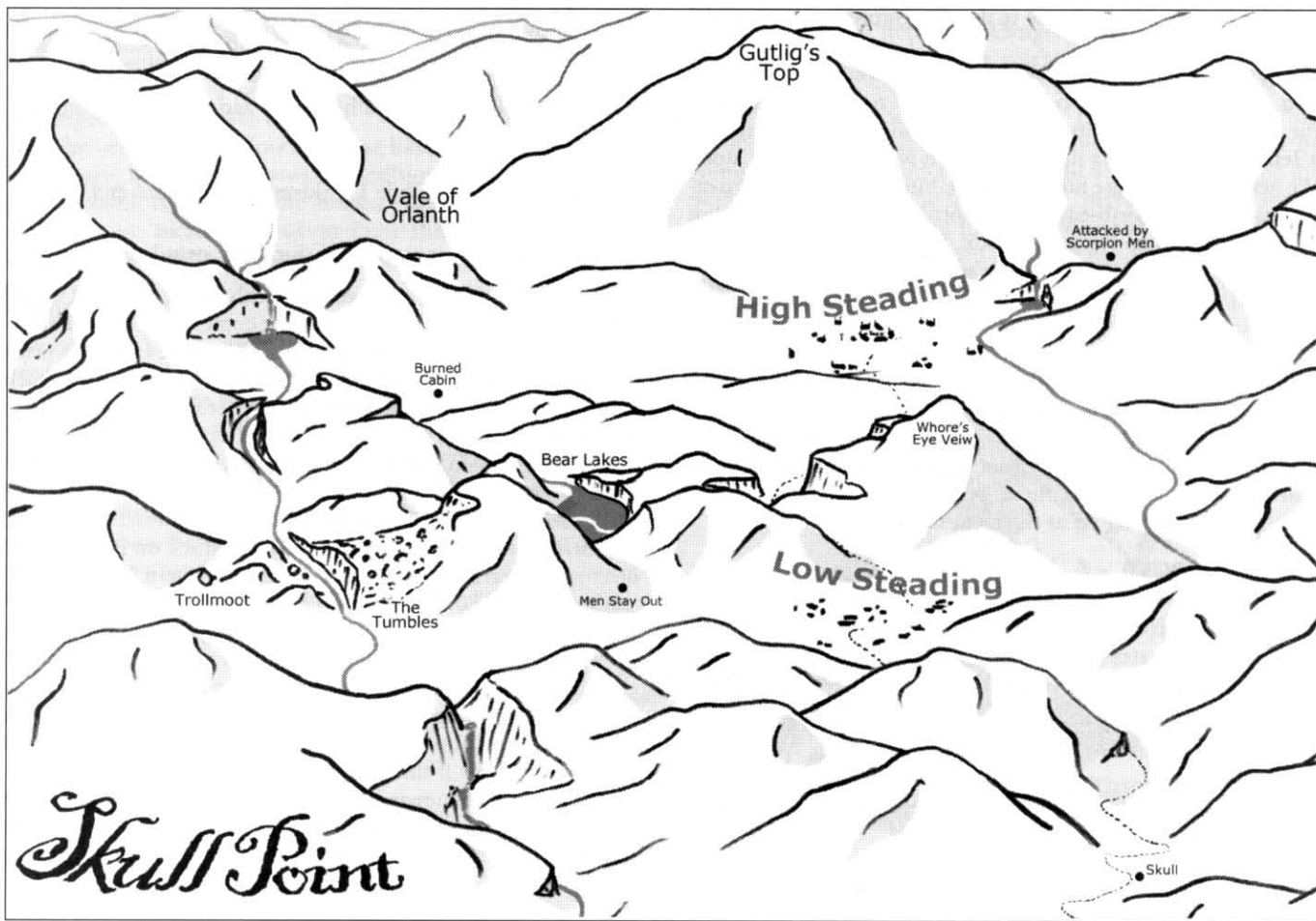
Zakki, Scorpion-man Leader

Zakki is a reborn-bagogi who was once a Lunar soldier.

Additional Abilities: Fast 5W, Lead Bagogi 5W, Scimitar 15W.

15 Scorpion-men Raiders

Additional Abilities: Entangle in Net 18.



Part of the Family

Following the shared experience of fighting to protect the community, heroes who participated at all in the defense find themselves welcomed more deeply by the clan. On the next holy day, such heroes are offered full hospitality; if they accept, they are treated as adopted members of the clan. This adoption may extend to the bloodline or specific family with whom a particular hero has had the most friendly contact. The narrator should encourage the players to spend hero points on relationships to reflect this new status. At this point, the heroes start to learn more about the local history and traditions.

Key Information: Casual conversation with younger locals reveals the existence of a stalking monster out in the woods that has it in for the community. It raids every Fire Season; some people say it's time to stop it for good.

Scene Three: Kith and Kin

Once the heroes are living more-or-less comfortably in the community, they will slowly become aware of the extreme tensions and conflicts that underly life in Skullpoint. Violence simmers extremely close to the surface. As time passes, three separate chains of events are occurring at once, each driving toward the outbreak of outright feud within the clan. The events of these chains are outlined in the "Conflicts within Skullpoint" table and detailed on the following pages.

The narrator may use one of two methods to carry out these event chains. The first is to run the three events of the first row of the table, then the three events of the second row, and so on. The three events of the final row would then occur simultaneously, such that the feud breaks out all through the community, in reaction to three separate events. The second method is to let the heroes' interest and commitments to the narrator characters play more of a driving role, so that one of the columns moves toward the outbreak of feud faster than the others. In most of the events described in the following sections, the narrator characters are named. However, sometimes they are left nameless (e.g. "A Tostig youth"), and the narrator may name and develop them as seems best for the needs of the story.

Bloodline Conflict

This sequence of events arises from the Skullpointers' willingness to let grudges take over in resolving day-to-day conflicts. The concept is escalation—if the "other side" is favored over yours by the community, then you are justified in retaliating with further levels of transgression against them. Family and bloodline are considered more important than the community; and judgment against one's bloodline is automatically considered to be unjust.

The Assault

Two local youths, Kergan Thorgir and Ostlan Starkad, get into a fistfight over an insulting comment Ostlan made about Kergan's sister, Innhild. During the fight, Kergan pulls out his knife and stabs Ostlan, non-fatally. The Skullpoint community elders and authorities meet to discuss the matter, and justice is served: Kergan's family is made to pay damages.

Key Information: There was a kinstrike disaster involving these bloodlines ten years ago. For the last decade, the Thorgir and Starkad have been openly hostile to one another, but have confined themselves to occasional bushwhacks and bitter verbal stonewalling during community meetings rather than open warfare.

Hethkin Starkad, elderly father of the two brothers killed in the feud, still lives, and is a noted shaman. The Thorgir are generally younger and more oriented toward interaction with other areas. They include Mornha, now in her early 20s. She was raised by Alfild, her recently-deceased grandmother, and is currently something of a target for abuse by young men of the Starkads.

The last two years have seen a drop-off in open hostilities, due to efforts from other clan members and especially from Njod (see "Politics," page 32).

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Encourage the fight as it happens, or try to prevent or stop it (resistance 1W)?
- Take sides openly in the overall conflict?
- Suggest non-local standards for dealing with the issue (resistance 5W)?
- Practice justice or conflict resolution on their own, independently of the usual channels? (resistance 14)?
- Seek out clan members as confidants and allies? Which ones?

The Hunting Challenge

A Thorgir hunter issues a challenge to a hero who spoke against Kergan, or one who has some hunting ability: "Can you bring down the buck Halfrack?" The stag in question is a wily local beast, legendary for its ability to evade pursuers.

Halfrack the Stag

Significant Abilities: Evade Hunter 1W2, Get Hunter Lost 20, Skullpoint Area Knowledge 1W2.

Conflicts within Skullpoint

| Bloodline Conflict | Political Controversy | Romance |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Kergan tried for knifing assault | Conversations regarding Lunars | Starkad youths harass Mornha; romance begins |
| Hunting wager | Markald influences the young men | Challenge: run with the bulls |
| Starkad elder tried for assault | Challenge: wrestling | Petrad and Ingalle foment rumors |
| Brawl at the alynx fight | Hethkin sends a Kolati spirit spy | Markald and Mornha begin their romance |
| Challenge to meet the trolls | Hethkin denounces Njod | Challenge: meet the monster; Investigate the cabin |
| Thorgir youths tried for assault; Starkad youths retaliate | The drinking contest | Ragni defies Markald to claim Mornha |
| Thorgirs bushwhack Starkads | Bushwhack on Njod | Markald and Mornha consummate their relationship |

The Skullpoint Clan

The Skullpointers live high in the Storm Mountains, overlooking the uplands. Members share common lands for grazing and farming, and there are many hunters and trappers. They have two major steads with longhouses and buildings, but many families live in small groups of isolated cabins, and the people only gather at the Steadings a few times during the year. The Skullpointers are very thoroughly native Heortling Orlanthi, with no Malkioni ethnic presence. They are tough and provincial, hardened by occasional Chaos forays from the Footprint and scuffles with cranky Kitori trolls, and they even refer to the folk of the high plateau of Heortland as "lowlanders."

The clan has a Hill Ring (see *Barbarian Adventures*, page 15). No chieftain is recognized; rather, there is a council of elders who make decisions together. Skelgerd of the Aesa is the most influential elder, filling the position of Orlanth on the council. He is a good example of breaking the bloodline stereotypes, being sensible, authoritative, and good at settling others down.

The Skullpoint Clan worships the Storm Pantheon, but has a very strong animist component. Most religious activities include bits of Kolati rituals and observances. Even many initiates have charms and fetishes (typically with ratings of 15 to 20); typical spirit abilities include *Breathless*, *Chill Loins*, *Crack Metal*, *Flurry*, *Frostbite*, and *Sharp Gust*. Owls and bobcats are sometimes used as spirit allies by practitioners, who make up a significant percentage of the population. Few people concentrate their magic; most practice mixed magic, using both their affinities and the charms and fetishes provided by practitioners and shamans.

Most men initiate to Durev, Orolman, Orlanthcarl, Finovan, or, rarely, Ohorlanth, Yavor, or Odayla. Most women are initiated to Orane, Vela, Uralda, or Esrola. Elderly women generally eschew Asrelia in favor of Ty Kora Tek, although most outsiders will not realize this until they have been in the community for several seasons. Healing feats are rare, and devotion to any deity almost unheard of. The Lightbringers are recognized and given respect, but are not usually objects of initiation or devotion. Followers of Yinkin, Niskis, and Issaries are especially unwelcome in the area, regarded as immoral or untrustworthy.

The clan has a population of 500, divided more or less evenly among its six bloodlines. The bloodlines treat each other much like separate clans, and have banded together more for protection in the harsh environment than because of common ancestry or origins. Family and bloodline are readily ascertained by tattoos and distinctive fetishes. The six bloodlines are:

Aesa: Trouble makers, rowdy, and always up to some new prank or irresponsible behavior.

Drakkar: Business-minded, overly acquisitive, and altogether too good at negotiating advantage.

Hahlgerd: Left to the narrator to develop and use as desired.

Starkad: The original Skullpoint bloodline is native to the Skullpoint territory and has no notable members outside it. Its members are humorless and cold; they are very bitter and insular, and proud of their long-held dominance over the area. They are noted for their powerful kolating shamans.

Thorgir: Passionate, scheming, and easily provoked, always ready to believe someone is up to something. They have an especially good herd of cattle that incurs envy from all others.

Tostig: Left to the narrator to develop and use as desired.

Typical Skullpointer

Most men are farmers or herders (see *HeroQuest*, page 32, and *Thunder Rebels*, page 164).

Typical Personality Traits: Independent 20, Proud 20.

Typical Relationship to Clan: 4W, up to 5W2 in older or especially strong-minded members. Most people have a higher *Relationship to [Bloodline]* than they do to the clan as a whole.

Typical Skullpoint Warrior

The clan's warriors are a combination of warrior and herder or farmer, and generally spend as much time working as they do patrolling.

Typical Abilities: Spear and Shield 10W, with two Warrior abilities at 5W and the rest at 17 to 20.

The Skullpoint Myth

The full myth about the ogre skull will be told at any kind of get-together.

Originally, many other clans besides our own dwelt here. But during the Lesser Darkness, these other clans were infiltrated by ogres, who mated with the unknowing humans and then ate them in secret. The ogres were clever and instigated strife among the clans and the bloodlines, setting brother against brother and skillfully twisting the words of the law to confuse matters further.

During the Greater Darkness, an ogre named Sheewog Potsticker made use of the terrifying magic of the Chaos god Kajabor, the Great Fear, to annihilate whole clans. That is why today we have no knowledge even of their names. Again and again, Sheewog maximized the strife within a clan through misinformation and manipulation, and then delivered the final blow with all-destroying Chaos magic.

The Skullpointers survived, however, when they learned to untangle the issues of kinstrike from those of fighting Chaos. Only that fraction of the people who dug in their feet were able to do this, due to the efforts of Kjelgaard the shaman; Asenath, who killed her ogre husband; and Kald, a hero who forged an axe from a shard of the Spike and slew Sheewog. It was at the site of that epic battle that the founders of today's community stood during I Fought We Won, and claimed this territory for all time.

Yes, that is Sheewog's skull at the mid-point of the Switchbacks, at the lowland entrance to our tula. Our clan magic is renewed each year by entering the Other Side during Sacred Time and using the axe called Kald's Truth, our clan wyter, to ritually slay Sheewog again. Since the Dawn, we have held this territory, and members of many other clans have married into and joined the community of Skullpoint. We hold our land through Kolati spirits, through fierce commitment to our independence and isolation, and through our understanding that fighting Chaos can require ruthlessness within one's own community.

Another Assault

Jald Thorgir, a not-especially-popular, incompetent but rather comic youth, offends Torvi, a Starkad elder. Torvi thrashes him in public, shaming the youth and his immediate family. The community elders must meet again, and this time a great deal of debate is raised, bringing in old grudges that have nothing to do with the incident. The outcome of the matter is settled with the Starkads reluctantly paying minimal damages.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Intervene when Jald is beaten? Torvi will resist with his *Hates Thorgirs* 5W augmented by his *Proud* 20.
- Take sides openly in the overall conflict?
- Suggest non-local standards for dealing with the issue (resistance 10W)?
- Practice justice or conflict resolution on their own, independently of the usual channels (resistance 17)?
- Seek out clan members as confidants or allies? Who?

A Brawl

Alynx fighting is a rather brutal sport common among some Heortlings, in which two alynxes are goaded to fight. Injuries are common, but deaths are not. However, in this instance, Herkald Thorgir's cat is beaten by an animal owned by Onald Starkad, and Herkald kicks the winning animal savagely, maiming it. A brawl erupts between the young men, each backed by several friends. Yet again, the community elders must meet to judge the matter. Herkald is ordered to pay compensation, but it is a tense situation. People show up to the negotiations armed to the teeth and backed up by their glowering kin.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Enter an animal in the alynx fight? Animals fight as followers of their masters, augmented with such abilities as *Proud*, *Reckless*, or *Stubborn* to reflect their training.
- Intervene or participate in any way during the hostilities? The brawl is limited to fists and axe handles, unless the heroes bring more formal weapons to bear.
- Take sides openly in the overall conflict?
- Suggest non-local standards for dealing with the issue (resistance 20W)?
- Practice justice or conflict resolution on their own, independently of the usual channels (resistance 1W)?
- Seek out clan members as confidants and allies? Who?

The Troll Challenge

A Tostig youth issues a challenge to a hero who spoke up during Herkald's trial: "Come and meet some trolls!" This involves camping out near Trollmoot and bringing gifts for them. The local Kitori are polite enough if the heroes conform to the usual ritualized greetings. They are, however, notably barbaric and think nothing of eating pets, children, or objects the Heortlings leave unattended for even a moment.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Eat what the trolls offer? If they do so, they must match an ability involving intestinal fortitude against a target of 3W, to avoid puking and generally feeling awful for the next day or two. Any Skullpointer will think this is pretty funny.
- Initiate a rivalry or hostile interaction? At worst, they may find themselves in a skirmish with two dark trolls and four trollkin (see *Anaxial's Roster*, pages 167-169).



A Third Assault

Thorgir youths (not including Herkald) set upon Onald Starkad in the night and beat him to within an inch of his life. A community trial is arranged, but the night before a retaliatory band of Starkad youths accosts some Thorgir elders and force them to pay "informal compensation"—that is, they rob them. The whole community is in an uproar the next day.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Take sides openly in the overall conflict?
- Suggest non-local standards for dealing with the issue (resistance 15W2)?
- Practice justice or conflict resolution on their own, independently of the usual channels (resistance 10W)?
- Seek out clan members as confidants and allies? Who?

The Final Blow

A band of Thorgir warriors attacks and kills Starkad men as they perform daily tasks (preparing charcoal, hunting, or what have you). They continue through the farmstead, beating people until a hastily-gathered group of Starkads arrive. After a few wounds are exchanged, most participants escape the field.

The clan council tries to meet, but the meeting has to be hastily ended before the two families spill blood at the moot.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Participate in the fight on one side or another?
- Try to keep the peace, even if that means fighting one side or the other?

Regardless of what the heroes try to do now, the community's fate is sealed—true feud begins between the bloodlines.

Political Controversy

This sequence arises from the Skullpointers' inability to separate different forms of violence from one another. By this time, most of them see little difference between inciting violence toward Lunars in the name of nationalism and inciting violence between bloodlines in their own community. Markald has entered a community he thinks he can inspire to march down to the lowlands and fight the Lunars; instead, he is providing them with an excuse to attack one another.

Markald Influences the Youths

Markald is an anti-Lunar nationalist, and influences the young men of Skullpoint accordingly. He speaks eloquently of the Lunars as the enemy, and of the deaths of his parents during the early days of the battle at Whitewall. He will find willing ears among the young men of the clan from all the bloodlines, as well as full support from all the Drakkars. It is quite likely that the heroes will support Markald in this effort, having fought in the Rebellion themselves; they may even be more dedicated to gaining the Skullpointers as allies than Markald is.

Everyone is interested in the newcomers' experiences regarding the Lunars, and any discussions or conversations may be used as the basis for forming relationships.

Key Information: Everyone in the community holds the Lunars in disdain, although a Shepelkirt worshipper named Kuraz did live among them for a time a few years ago. He was weird, but not too bad. (This is high praise for the Skullpoint Clan: they allowed the man to live freely among them, despite being a Lunar.)

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Support Markald's political effort, or remain noncommittal? (The latter might lead to conflict with Markald.)

A Wrestling Challenge

An Aesa youth challenges a hero who supports Markald in his politics to "wrestle" in the popular form of standing in fighting stance, right hands gripping one another's right wrists, with the other hand behind one's back. The goal is to see who can throw whom off balance, and this fellow is good at it (Wrist-wrestle 4W). Any relevant abilities a hero might have is likely to incur a -5 to -10 penalty in this sport.

A Kolati Spy

A Kolati spirit stalks one of the heroes who has spoken against the Lunars. Once perceived it will flee, but if it is drawn into combat using magic, it can chill the hero badly. The spirit has been sent by Hethkin to discern whether the heroes are really as militant as they seem against the Lunars. He is planning to denounce a fellow Skullpointer as a collaborator (see below) and wants to know whom he can count on.

Crackfrost (Kolati spirit)

Significant Abilities: Chill 5W.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Publicize the event, possibly calling for community help against the shaman? The Starkads will perceive this as a direct attack and concentrate on shaming or even harming the heroes.
- Keep it quiet? Hethkin will eventually send more spirits, perhaps more subtle ones, to keep tabs on the heroes' activities.

The Denouncement

Hethkin's target is Njod, who was a close friend of the Lunar, Kuraz. Hethkin eventually denounces Njod as a Lunar sympathizer and calls for his outlawry. (If one of the heroes is outspokenly anti-Lunar, Hethkin may choose to act through him or her, explaining his suspicions about Njod and letting the hero take action.) Either way, the clan council of elders must meet, and Njod must submit to a trial to determine the "truth" of Hethkin's accusations.

In truth, Njod's unpopularity stems from his personal crusade to convince the clan to reclaim a certain burned cabin and reconcile with the monster that stalks them once a year. Both the Starkad and the Thorgir resist Njod's efforts to have past and current events examined objectively; they refuse to discuss the being's origin, for instance, and insist it is a monster.

Key Information: Kuraz fought heroically against Chaos monsters, and the whole community more or less accepted him. In other words, Njod cannot possibly be considered personally responsible for collaboration with the Lunars in this matter.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Investigate the claims about Njod?
- Denounce him as a filthy Lunar collaborator?
- Support Njod? If so, he will ask for help in investigating the history of the events of ten years past, which will entail learning about Unwod's origin. [See "Romance," below, for more information about Unwod.]

Njod

Njod of the Aesa is an experienced Heortling warrior with his highest ability at 15W, two at 5W, and several at 1W. He also has *Broad-minded* 20 and *Sedenya Philosophy* 13.

The Drinking Challenge

Following Njod's trial, whatever its outcome, a number of the young men have a drinking contest at the Low Steading. All of the heroes should realize by now that such a contest in the current social atmosphere is an especially stupid idea. Furthermore, a Starkad youth challenges one of the heroes to the contest. He singles out a hero who might be perceived to be soft on Lunars, or alternatively a hero who questions the "obvious fact" that the first duty of a patriotic Sartarite is to teach a rival community member a lesson.



Key Information: The young men are using anti-Lunar militancy as an excuse to express intra-clan hostility; they do not distinguish between the two kinds of violence. Herkald and some friends plan to attack Njod (or another peacekeeper, if Njod is not available).

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Drink up? (Add +20 to all Flaws while intoxicated.)
- Drink only small amounts or not at all? This will draw the criticism of more than one participant. Heroes sensitive to insult may find themselves compelled to respond.
- Refuse the challenge, or leave the event once the idiocy of it becomes obvious? This may provoke a brawling attack from the challenger and his friends.

An Ambush

Herkald Thorgir and his tough friends stalk and attack Njod (or an equivalent target, such as one of the heroes), intending to kill him outright. Afterwards, the clan council tries to meet, but the Aesa and Thorgirs show up bearing weapons, and the meeting has to be hastily ended before they (and perhaps others) spill blood at the moot.

Njod and Kuraz

Some years ago, Njod and a few other young men travelled in Dragon Pass. Upon their return, almost home, they encountered some lowlanders who were so stupid as to have walked through a local troll shrine without noticing the marked warnings, and were now being eaten almost to a man. Njod and his friends intervened, saving one person, named Kuraz. Mainly to show the trolls that Skullpointers can't be pushed around, they extended hospitality to Kuraz (who turned out to be a missionary of the Red Goddess) and took him back home with them.

Kuraz was pretty smart for a devil-worshipper, at least enough not to push his point of view openly, though he was always willing to answer questions with colorful facts and questions of his own. He stayed with the clan for over a year, through one of Unwod's bloodiest raids, and confided to Njod that whatever the monster was, it was not of Chaos. Njod asked about the events of the old feud, but he quickly learned it was not a healthy topic for discussion.

Then something horrible crawled out of the Footprint, as such things do every couple of decades, to attack the clan. Kuraz proved himself then—he fought, and fought well, and saved many lives at the cost of his own. His memory is honored by the clan, and only Njod and a few others understand that their guest used Lunar magic in this struggle. They don't make this fact public.

Njod was Kuraz's friend, and he has developed many reservations both about the inter-bloodline feuding (its climax had occurred during his absence) and about the Lunar-Orlanth conflict. He has not made any religious commitment beyond his manhood initiation to Orlanth, and he is a borderline Lunar sympathizer because he does not agree that the Orlanthi have nothing to learn or no need to change. However, he also knows that when war comes to Skullpoint, he will have to choose sides. In the meantime, he acts as a solid peacekeeping presence within the clan itself, which has won him a lot of respect from some and impatience and contempt from others.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Participate in the attack?
- Warn the target?
- Organize a counter-ambush?

Regardless of what the heroes try to do now, the community's fate is sealed—true feud begins between the bloodlines.

Romance

This sequence of events is potentially the most explosive of all, because Markald and Mornha, unknown to them or the clan, are brother and sister. Markald is not the son of Koning or a member of the Noldan Clan at all—his mother and father were Skullpointers, and they were central to the feud that scarred the entire community twenty years ago. Incest—knowing or not—is taboo in most cultures, including all Orlanthi. Its spiritual consequences are horrific, and its impact on the Skullpoint community will resurrect the feud instantly.

Harassment

The women of Skullpoint are as uncompromising and stern-hearted as their men. They do not oppose the feud and its threat of kinstrife; instead, they facilitate it through gossip, disinformation, ostracism, and unspoken but ironclad alliances. Of course, no one wants any outbreak of violence, but no one is giving up on the opportunity to benefit from the ongoing hostility, either. A person who falls afoul of this power network is in a lot of trouble; he or she may find healers to be tardy, food to be of poor quality, clothing damaged while it is being washed, and so forth. Young women who do not meet the approval of their elders are especially vulnerable, as they are not protected from the attentions of the young men.

Mornha, as an embarrassing reminder of the feud twenty years before and the events leading up to it, falls into this vulnerable category. Some Starkad youths pressure her few friends to avoid her so that she is more often alone, and then the youths appear unexpectedly to harass her in private situations (such as when she is bathing). It does not take much for their behavior to develop into outright assault. When the inevitable finally happens, Markald and one or more of the heroes should happen to be on the scene. Markald acts to defend Mornha, and she gratefully accepts him as a protector. Of course, this is a small community, and rumors fly quite rapidly even if all that happens are a couple of hot looks between Markald and Mornha.

Key Information: The Thorgir and Starkad bloodlines do not like one another. With the recent death of her protective grandmother, Mornha is a special target for abuse; her clan members are not inclined to protect her very much.

The Bull-run Challenge

A Starkad youth challenges a male hero who has been friendly or supportive toward Mornha: "Come into the corral and run with the shaggy bulls!" This rather foolish act entails stripping naked and entering a corral filled with large, cranky, hooved, horned large mammals. The local youths, of course, have spent many a season herding and chivvying the creatures, so they are in little danger; outsiders are a different story. Any athletic or animal-oriented abilities must be matched against a resistance of 5W to avoid serious injury.

Rumors

Petrad, an older man of the Thorgir, warns Markald to stay away from Mornha, and his wife Ingalle starts false rumors about him and any of his friends. Rumors are dangerous weapons in this community: a statement that a man lied about anything, or that a woman has been flirtatious with someone she shouldn't, can penalize a person's social and communication abilities by up a penalty of up to -15. Combating rumors is notoriously difficult, and must be augmented by other actions that demonstrate the falsity of the rumor to have any chance of success. Merely denying the rumor usually just adds to its strength.

Key Information: Marriage customs are rather formal in this community, involving lots of haggling, consensus, carefully polite discussion, and scheduled delays. An observer or astute questioner can ascertain that the care taken always has two unspoken goals: (1) to establish that literally no one has a problem with a given engagement, and to mediate it if they do; and (2) to keep Thorgir and Starkad interests balanced in all aspects of dowry and land-use issues. Marriage between individuals of two Skullpoint bloodlines is allowed, but occurs only rarely for obvious reasons.

Two people are marrying this season: Innhild, daughter of Petrad and Ingalle, whose marriage brings a wealthy young man from another community to Skullpoint; and Herkald, who has waited a considerable time to consummate his engagement to a Drakkar girl, while the elders dithered about the details. Both of these individuals are completely opposed to any further negotiations about marriage or romance among the Thorgir at this time, and Innhild's parents in particular will stop at nothing to make life difficult for Markald and Mornha.



Romance Blossoms

Nothing fans the flames of romance like opposition, and Markald and Mornha soon begin a secret romance.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Encourage the two to legitimize the romance? This will require getting a god-talker on their side, as well as a number of the bloodline elders (resistance 5W).
- Aid them in a covert affair (resistance 10W to avoid detection)?
- Oppose the romance quietly?
- Expose the romance to the community without the pair's consent?

Mornha

Mornha is a young Thorgir woman with no immediate family. She is slim and quiet, enduring whatever slightly-humiliating task falls to her, and painfully reliant on her few friends.

Significant Abilities: Kick and Struggle 1W, Stubbornly Proud 5W, Waif-like Beauty 1W.

The Monster Challenge

A Thorgir youth challenges a hero who has been helpful or pleasant to Mornha to "spend a night out where the monster walks." That locale is an abandoned homestead some distance from High Steading. Its small pastures and gardens are not used; the cabin there was burned badly ten years before and has been partly reclaimed by forest. It is a spooky, ill-omened place. Heroes who take up the challenge will experience an entire adventure's worth of danger.

Key Information: The abandoned cabin in that area has an embarrassing and touchy history with the community. It was the home of Saeferth and Freawaru, both of whom died in a feud between their bloodlines.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Accept the challenge? This will seriously harm their reputation in the community, as most of the adults prefer to pretend that the cabin never existed.
- Decline to go? This will seriously harm their reputation in the community, as the youths of most bloodlines will consider them to be cowards.

Unwod

Unwod is a monstrous, dangerous being who roams near the cabin. He appears to be a hulking, seven foot tall humanoid, with long, gnarled, clawed hands and a shadowed and distorted face; a horrid, unhealed wound literally cleaves his torso in two between his neck and right shoulder, to the center of his chest. He will hide at first, but if anyone searches the cabin or spends time there, he will stalk and attack them. If they manage to establish some contact with him, they may learn that Unwod was once human—he has been transformed by some terrible shame, wounding, or curse. He will speak, brokenly and horribly, of a man "Ferth" who slew his own daughter in the cabin, and of the grief of the child's mother, Freawaru, the daughter of Unwod's sister Alfild.

Significant abilities: Axe Fighting 18W, Cursed 20, Grief 20, Hate Skullpoint 20W, In Agony 20, Rend 1W2, Stalk 1W2, Terrify 10W.

Actually spending the night in the cabin is even more dangerous. Heroes will be attacked by the spirits of Freawaru and her daughter Kea, both of whom failed to disperse to Ernalda at death. They are hungry, hating, almost-wholly malevolent ghosts. However, if Markald is present, tremendous insight could be gained (see box below; the ghosts will impart this information to Markald, if he is present and the heroes ask the right questions).

Two Ghosts

Significant Abilities: Hate Living 19W (can be used as a magical attack).

Investigating the Cabin

Any of the previous events of play may inspire the heroes to investigate the family history for the Thorgir and Starkad. Of course, the underlying backstory is that Markald and Mornha are siblings. However, it is very hard even to get pieces of the real story of Markald's origins, as there are no written records and no single person knows the whole story (described in the box below). The basic facts that may be gleaned from (very careful) questions put to separate members of the Skullpoint community include:

- The ruined cabin is the former home of Saeferth and Freawaru.
- Some of Freawaru's children were fathered by Holt.
- Freawaru had a male child, who died in infancy.
- The child's name was Markald.
- The male child was given away rather than dying.

The Denouncement

Ragni of the Aesa denounces Markald as an outsider horning in on Skullpoint women. He wants Mornha for himself, although he wasn't willing to take on the Starkad for her. His parents, however, pull a lot of clout with the whole clan, and they will sabotage the social and political efforts made by those whom Ragni perceives as romantic rivals or their allies.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Ally with Ragni's family and try to discontinue the romance (resistance 1W)?
- Try to settle them down, and get Ragni to turn his attentions elsewhere (resistance 10W)?

An Undeniable Passion

In romance, fire leads to more fire. No matter what has happened so far, Markald and Mornha cannot stay apart. The results of their actions depend on whether they fully legitimize their romance in the community or simply consummate their desires physically. The narrator should let the heroes' influence determine which occurs.

If the two become engaged, this will entail a lot of community participation—some will encourage the match, while others (who know or suspect parts of the secret history) will try to break the two apart. The two will not be separated or wait for each other, however, and the events will culminate in a ritual during the next holy day. However, that ritual will be an explosive failure: all participants receive a traumatic revelation of the principals' sibling relationship. Worse, the Other Side presence of an ogre priest, Havern, interferes in the ritual, manifesting the Lesser Darkness in the area and causing Alloc, the

The Secret History of Skullpoint

Acquiring any specific knowledge of the events is risky for an outsider. It should not even be possible unless a Relationship ability is established, with either the community or a knowledgeable individual. Furthermore, no one living knows all the events, and any single account will be missing at least one key piece of information. This history is the primary reason for the Thorgir–Starkad hostility, as well as for the community's exceptional care regarding marriages, going well beyond the usual care to avoid mating within bloodlines.

The whole grim saga began over 40 years ago among the Thorgir, when the beautiful Freawaru was born to Gelfulth and Alfild; and with the Starkad, when the twin brothers Saeferth and Holt were born to Hethkin and Endrede. 25 years ago, the "wrong" wedding took place—Freawaru loved Holt but was wed instead to Saeferth. Over the next few years, three children resulted from the unhappy union: the two daughters Kea and Mornha within a year of one another, and a son, Markald. Unbeknownst to most, only Kea, the oldest, was actually Saeferth's child; the others were Holt's.

After six years, Holt was found murdered and Freawaru's uncle Unwod, a man of ill-repute, was blamed and outlawed. Few people know, and none acknowledges, that Saeferth was in fact guilty of slaying his own brother, and that Unwod was framed. Freawaru knew the truth and feared her husband greatly, so she took steps to protect her children. The 3 year old daughter Mornha was given into her grandmother's care, and the infant Markald was given away to a merchant couple that had lost their child; Freawaru,

her mother, and Belveran (the Clan Healer) falsely claimed that he had died. Realizing her plans, Saeferth insisted that Kea remain in the household. He tormented his wife with subtle threats toward Kea, thinking her Holt's child. Unwod feuded against the Starkad, secretly aided by his family.

Ten years ago, Saeferth caught Unwod in the cabin, in violation of his outlawry, and the two met in epic combat in the family's home. Unwod killed Saeferth in that fight, but only after Saeferth killed his own daughter Kea. During the fight, the extensive cabin shared by Saeferth and Freawaru burned down. Maimed by Saeferth, Unwod fled to the hills and was presumed dead. Freawaru killed herself some months later.

Unwod still lives, twisted by his injuries and his blighted spirit, yet powerful, feared even by trolls. He roams the fringes of the community and visits every year on the eve of the wedding, sometimes just roaring and fussing, sometimes raiding and killing. (No one watches the dates closely enough to recognize the significance of the day, although the appropriate abilities could be used to figure it out.) Nearly everyone in the community considers him a Chaos thing from the Print, and in general they deal with the problem by avoiding the areas he frequents, especially the cabin. In the last few years, however, Njod has hinted that perhaps the community should take steps to fetch Unwod back—although he has no proof, Kuraz' assurances that it is not a Chaos monster got Njod to thinking, and he has garnered much of the secret history over the last few years. His efforts have not been successful, however.

Clan Lawspeaker, to be literally blasted apart by Chaos magic. Even more horribly, the broken ceremony curses the community, marking both Markald and Mornha with Chaos features. The worst thing about these poor monsters is that they do not understand what has happened to them. They will chase their former friends, begging for help—yet these efforts manifest as *Belch Fire* and *Spurt Acid*.

Markald

Chaos Features: Absorb Spirit Attack 15, Spurt Acid 15, Walk on Air 15.

Mornha

Chaos Features: Belch Fire 15, Resist Injury 15, Walk on Air 15.

If Markald and Mornha have a clandestine affair, the same effects occur at the moment they join in intercourse, although of course without the community becoming instantly aware of the problem. The effects on the couple are the same.

Regardless of what the heroes try to do now, the community's fate is sealed—true feud begins between the bloodlines.

Scene 4: Blood Feud at Skullpoint

Feud is horrible, no less than civil war. There is no neutral side. The heroes are simply considered to be on one side or the other, and are treated accordingly. The material below is intentionally left vague in terms of the heroes' alliances and priorities, as that will depend on the events of play up until this point. The narrator should exploit the heroes' friendships, romances, family and clan alliances, and enemies to the fullest. If she does so, then the climax of the scenario is not so much the story that is described below, as the story of what the heroes must do about it given their personal (and, it is hoped, heartfelt) involvement with other characters.

God-talkers and shamans split along clan and family lines to give their blessing to one bloodline or another, as each side considers the other to have brought Chaos into the community. At this stage of the story, if a hero is perceived to be friendly to one side of the feud (which could well happen inadvertently from the hero's point of view) and then is perceived to get cold feet, he will also become a special target for the "betrayed" side.

The actual living situation of the community is surprisingly peaceful on the surface. In fact, things are ominously quiet and deliberate in comparison with the usual lifestyle. Essentially, everyone is living in a tread-carefully war zone. The number of visible individuals drops sharply as people stick to well-defined, family-controlled areas, often making cunning use of geography. Lethal ambushes, rapes, and minor destruction of property occur every few days, all with a very thin veneer of "normal life" surrounding them.

Spirits Rising

The kolati and all winter-oriented spirits increase in power. They are uniformly more aggressive and dangerous than usual. Hethkin's premier shaman status gives his side of the violence a distinct advantage that increases as winter approaches.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Attempt peacemaking? Defend victims of assault? Such actions are matched against multiply-augmented abilities of opponents, such as *Hate Other Bloodline* and *Proud*.
- Enter the fight on one side or the other? Essentially, this means carrying out guerrilla warfare against fellow Heortlings and community members, and avoiding the same.

The Skull

Sheewog's skull vanishes from its place in the Switchbacks, a cause for great concern—not only is it the mythical focus of the clan's origin, but it could also be a powerful tool in the hands of a Chaos priest. The cause of this momentous event is the ogre Havern, who lives in the woods near Skullpoint territory.

What Do the Heroes Do?

- Try to locate the skull? If they can track Havern magically, they may be able to find him.
- Try to convince the community that it is their own divineness that has allowed this to happen?
- Ignore it, because more important events are happening?

Havern

Havern appears as a big, jovial, handsome Heortling trader from the coast, perhaps an Issaries worshipper. He is in fact an ogre devoted to Sheewog Potsticker, an ogre hero of the Lesser Darkness. Throughout this entire adventure, Havern has been heroquesting to redeem Sheewog's skull from its possession by the Skullpoint community. Despite what others may later think or claim, he has *not* caused or even influenced the internal feud, but its existence has provided exactly the right environment for his questing to be successful.

Havern has been aided over the last two years by agents of Tatus the Bright, the commander of Lunar forces in Sartar. Havern is not a Lunar, and in fact considers the Red Goddess to be something of a naïve upstart compared with the power and significance of beings like Kajabor, Wakboth, and Ragnaglar. However, he has collaborated with the Lunars for access to the Print, intending to use it as his base for a new and powerful temple to Sheewog. With the skull in his possession, he can now call forth a terrible, if small, army from the Other Side.

Interaction with Havern at this point, of course, is openly hostile. However, the ogre is the chatty sort of villain who will be happy to explain just how the Orlanthi ideals of "No one can make you do anything" and "Kinship is sacred" cannot co-exist, and how that contradiction permits Chaos to be created and exploited. Havern is especially informative while he is busy preparing dinner. Even if Havern is defeated now, it will not change later events (see Scene 5), because his Chaos allies are already on their way to the community. However, it will mean that fewer people die in the final battles.

If the narrator desires, Havern may be introduced into the scenario much earlier, while in his "just a Heortling trader" role. If so, he will of course have been fomenting as much mistrust and hatred among the Skullpointers as possible, always in subtle and overtly-harmless ways. However, the narrator should be careful not to lay the responsibility for the Skullpoint feud at the feet of Chaos—these people have created their own problem, and Chaos is merely exploiting the results.

Significant Abilities: Charming 5W, Feed from Misery 20, Lie like a Rug 18W, Put Human at Ease 5W, Send Woman Dizzy with Lust 20, Sword Fighting 8W, Tough 5W, Worship Sheewog 1W2.

Magical Abilities: Create Terrorizing Void 1W, Disrupt Other's Leadership 18, Lead Chaos Horde 18, Obliterate Relationship 1W, Sunder Relationship 10W2.

Eventually, minor attacks and insults cause tempers to flare into atrocity. A group of Thorgir men (possibly with allies from among the heroes) storm onto Starkad land one night. They trap Hethkin and his people in their homestead, then burn the building to the ground without even permitting women and children to escape.

- Participate in the burning?
- Plead for the sparing of non-combatants?
- Aid the victims against their attackers?

Everyone is shocked by the burning, including the perpetrators, and talk begins of resolving matters peaceably, mainly by deciding who has to be exiled. Briefly, it appears as if peace is possible. A big community justice meeting is held in the High Steading, during which Kald's Truth is brought forth.

Suddenly, just as the first blow is struck by one Skullpointer against another, Unwod returns. He stalks right into the meeting (or whatever is left of it) and fights his way forward to seize the clan wyter, Kald's Truth, and wield it horrifically against all and sundry.

Thanks to the growing feud, Kald's Truth has become a terrifying, corrupted magical item. Specifically, it bestows a +30 bonus in combat against bloodline kin, until the user kills a kinsman with it. Thereafter it confers a -21 penalty instead in combat against bloodline kin until someone from a different bloodline takes it, at which time it again confers a bonus. The effect, of course, is for it to pass to one side, then be claimed by the other, and then get passed back. (These bonuses apply to Unwod as well, giving him a horrific *Axe Fighting* 8w3 against fellow Skullpointers until he kills one of them.)

The feud flares up into open warfare, with burnings, killings, and no-holds-barred atrocities at every hand. Peacemakers are targeted by both sides; Belveran, still Clan Healer after all these years, is one of the first to die. These events are not going to stop until a lot of people are dead. The narrator should spare the heroes nothing, as each side responds to a given event by escalating its retaliation.

Encourage the heroes to deal with all of the elements currently in play. Give them a chance to formulate a personal response to the entire feuding situation if they haven't done so already, and perhaps search the Other Side to try to resolve the Markald/Mornha crisis.

A few days after the death of Kald's Truth, everything turns upside-down yet again when an army of Chaos nasties swarms to attack what little is left of the community. The attack is a three-cornered affair between the ogre Havern and his scorpion-man allies; any Skullpointers who continue to fight their fellows; and Markald and Mornha, if they still survive.

The local trolls might take part in aiding the 'Hoomanz' against the Chaos incursion, if asked, but otherwise they batten down to weather out the storm, defending only their caves. What they choose to do depends entirely on their previous interactions with the heroes.

These spirits attack their targets *Clan Relationship*. If the spirit attains any level of victory it possesses the victim's body. Any relationships the victim had to kinsmen transform into Hate [Kin] instead for as long as the possession continues.

Denouement

Whatever the heroes do will have an impact. If they help defeat the forces of Chaos, not only have they proven themselves to be doughty champions of all that Orlanthi hold good, but they will also have won the remaining Skullpointers to their cause. Support for the Rebellion will be easily secured, especially if Havern's link with the Lunars is revealed. Of course, just how useful the Skullpointers will be to the Rebellion will depend on how seriously they have been damaged by these recent events. This does not just mean how many of their number are dead or wounded, or steeds burned, but also how low is their morale and cohesion. Charismatic heroes might be able to help rebuild the community, and perhaps they can help the shattered clan forge a new existence by seeking out a new wyter. If the Skullpointers do join the Rebellion, they let the heroes know very clearly that they are doing it for them, in return for their help, rather than for Kallyr. This may startle the heroes, and let them begin to understand how they are becoming significant figures in their own right. This is also a good opportunity to gain followers or even spouses.

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ORANE'S SPINDLE

As the heroes show their worth to the Rebellion, they can expect to be called on more often to deal with situations at their discretion. Furthermore, they will find that their actions will have long-term consequences, winning friends and enemies, opportunities and problems. In this adventure, they should come to realize that it is not only necessary to fight hard and gain new allies; sometimes old ones need to be protected.

A clan friendly to the Rebellion is in trouble. As written it is the Orlmarth Clan of the Colymar Tribe, but it could be any clan that lives near the Upland Marsh. If the chosen clan is *not* close to the Upland Marsh, the narrator will need to change the nature of the final scene at the least. If the heroes are members of the clan where these events take place, it is likely that they know the story of Heoden and Dorasa, putting them at an advantage over heroes from other clans. However, such heroes will also be affected by the penalty to cooperative efforts caused by the loss of Orane's Spindle.

While the king of the Colymar is a Lunar ally, there are still clans within the tribe who resent his treachery and yearn for the return of Queen Beti. Blackmor is aware of their discontent, but cannot afford openly to divide his tribe, not least because it would weaken him in the eyes of his Imperial allies. Instead, he contents himself with openly punishing those who openly challenge his authority; those whose discontent is quiet suffer merely quiet discrimination and neglect.

One such clan is the Orlmarth. Long respected for its tight-lipped hunters and its doughty resistance against undead encroachments from the Upland Marsh, it is also known for its honor and its unity. In part, this is because of Orane's Spindle, one of the clan's great treasures. Everyone knows how fine the yarn it spins is, but it also exerts a powerful magic that binds the families of the clan together and keeps the hearths happy.

But Orane's Spindle has been taken. Without it, strife among kin grows, and the clan fears the failure of their Fire Day rites. The theft of the Spindle was just the latest in a series of raids on the clan. The attackers have been striking at steeds for over a week, striking terror into the clan folk. They started attacking the outlying steeds, but now the raids have struck at the clan's capital, Askiniham, itself. The reports are all the same: doors and walls smashed in by immense force; members of the short-call who grabbed their spears and strong hats and tried to resist, torn limb from limb; giant humanoids with swollen bodies and flesh blue-black with bruises, who drank the blood from their victims before swallowing every last goblet of flesh or bone. The chieftain and his ring look for answers. Chieftain Kalf Garstallson has summoned the heroes to his hall for a private meeting tonight. It is the festival of Mahomravand, but everyone is acutely aware that time is running out to stop the raids and recover the Spindle. The clan's wyter, a sacred gold torc that Kalf wears, does not

warn of the intruders until the steeds are already under attack. Whatever attacks the steeds is concealed by magic thicker than Iphara's fog. The Orlmarth priests sacrificed a young calf to Orlanth, burnt the entrails, and watched the smoke for signs from the gods, but Orlanth knew nothing of the attacks. Morganeth White-eyed, a Kev priestess, talks of Ernalda's Loom weaving a pattern of doom for the clan within a generation if the Spindle cannot be recovered.

Benchmark: 10W in best ability.

Secret: Undead creatures called draugr are behind the attacks on the stead and the theft of the clan's treasure. Driven by a hatred for the living, the draugr are bent on the destruction of the Orlmarth, former home to one of them. The draugr have magic that allows them to move without detection. They can shroud themselves in mist, an evil fog whose tendrils flow over an area to conceal their passage. Draugr prefer darkness to do their work, but need not rely on Elmal's watch ending, for they have the power to darken the day around them. Finally, draugr can move through the earth without being detected.

Orngerin looks at the heroes keenly. "Aye, yes, you've shown your mettle, and your wits. Kallyr hersen' asked after you. Now there's something I want you do—she wants you to do—that might mean a scrap but also calls for a ready tongue and quick wits. We need you to make friends, or at least keep them.

"You know the Orlmarth? Aye yes, I know, they're a clan of the damn Colymar, but they're friends of ours, even if they don't make too much of it lest that bastard Blackmor use the excuse to seize their lands, too. Anyway, they've got a problem. And you're the solution."

Scene 1: The Walking Dead

The heroes attend the chieftain in his mead hall in the early evening. Kalf, the chieftain, sits in his high seat, with his four storms gathered protectively around him. The fire is banked high, but even so, Kalf huddles in a bearskin to keep the chill out of his old bones. Erryn Longshanks, the Lawspeaker, sits beside him. He looks worried, and nods to the heroes as they arrive. A drizzle falls outside, and the wind is picking up, moaning as it ducks in and out of the buildings of the stead. Kalf looks his years. There are dark circles under his eyes, and his white hair and beard look unkempt. He speaks softly, saying, "Orlanth and Ernalda have not smiled on the Orlmarth in these past days. Death stalks us. Nightmares walk among us. No one seems able to rid us of this curse."

Regardless of whether the heroes take this opportunity to volunteer their aid, the hall comes abruptly under attack. The mead-hall door bangs, swells, and bursts—its bronze bindings cannot contain that which waits without. Foot long splinters fly

Askiniham

Askiniham surmounts a low rise on the northeastern edge of the Starfire Ridges, giving it a clear view of the surrounding area and across the few miles of largely abandoned lands (claimed by the Lismelder Tribe) that separate the Orlmarth from the Upland Marsh. Children and pigs scurry about the muddy streets, where paths of split logs keep everyone's feet dry, just about. A defensive ditch and palisade surrounding Askiniham deter all but the most determined raiders from attacking the village. A tall drum tower provides early warning of approaching raiders and carries word to and from the village. Archers regularly patrol the palisade walkway, and a weaponthane is always on duty at the gatehouse. Askiniham boasts potters; leather workers; antler, soapstone, and amber carvers; and—as befits the clan chieftain's village—a brewer, cooper, and redsmith.

Askiniham was built by the Askinings Bloodline, which holds odal rights to it to this day. The Orlmarth Clan is descended from Colymar himself, and while it has a bitter enmity with the Greydog Clan of the Lismelder Tribe that lives on the other side of the ridges, it also remembers the stories of King Varsmar of the Colymar, an Orlmarth clan member, who fought alongside the Lismelder in the Zombie Wars over two hundred years ago. When others joined Askini's descendants, Askiniham became the center of the newly formed Orlmarth Clan.

Houses are single storied but with high roofs, giving plenty of storage space and sleeping room for the alynxes amidst the rafters. They vary in size, but most are 18' to 25' wide and 30' to 50' long, with timber frames, log walls, and thatched roofs. The floors are beaten earth, with a stone-lined hearth for cooking and warmth.

Most houses are divided between space for the humans and space for the cattle. It is a noisy and smelly way to live, but warm in the winter. All the houses are decorated in gaudy colors. Furniture is limited to some stools, barrels and chests for storage, and beds on a raised earth bench along the wall. Along another wall stands one of the household's most important possessions—its loom. With grandparents, parents, and children all cooking, eating, sleeping, and entertaining in the one room, life is cramped! Craftsmen tend to work outside, where the light is better, whenever possible. Homes are set in blocks of four with a central courtyard in between them, concealed from the street, that contains a well, chicken run, pigsty, and thunder box.

Population: The population of Askiniham is about 300 adults. Most are herders, huntsmen, craftsmen, and warriors, but thralls make up a quarter of the population. Male thralls work as unskilled laborers or herders (pigs and sheep); female thralls are domestic servants or concubines. Thaners on clan business, traders, and supplicants from other clans and tribes can always be found here, swelling this number.

Temples: Askiniham once boasted a fine temple to Orlanth, a 100' long timber frame hall with peaked gables. It was closed and all its openings sealed, but people sense that it merely awaits a new wind. Nearby is a shrine to Uralda, an unvalled timber frame building. A small stone temple to Humakt stands atop a small hill, by virtue of which it seems to have become the informal place for private devotions to Orlanth.

Chieftain's Hall: 70' long and 30' wide, the clan chieftain's hall has elaborate carvings on its roof gables and a shingle roof. The current chieftain Kalf Garstalsen lives here

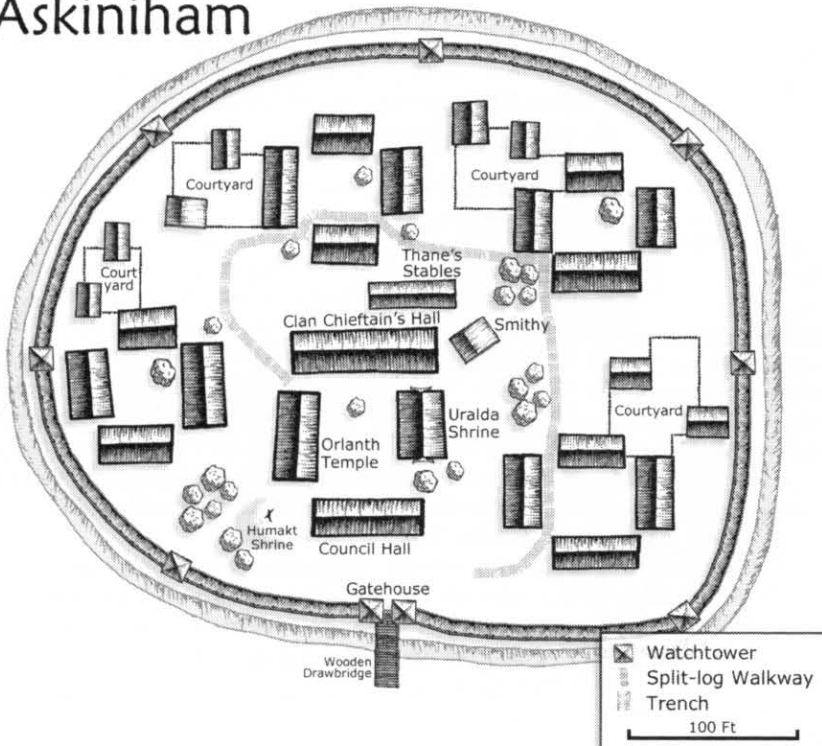
along with the bachelor weaponthanes. It is the village ring, however, not the chieftain, that governs day-to-day affairs of the clan and the village, including hunting rights on the tula, the raising of the fyrd, and the general administration of the local community.

Merchant's Camp: Askiniham has only seasonal markets. There is no area set aside for merchants to camp within the walls, so merchants must camp outside the walls. This is also where cattle and thrall markets are held.

Where will I stay?

Visitors to Askiniham are either visiting kin, who are automatically provided full hospitality, or are taken to see the chieftain, and are his guests instead. There is no inn; hospitality is a custom, and everyone is anxious to display his or her generosity.

Askiniham



Draugr

Ages: Darkness, Historical (rare in all).

Distribution: Anywhere intelligent beings are found.

Habitat: Any.

A draugr appears as a corpse swollen to two or three times its original size. Its flesh is cyanotic, the blue-black color of deeply bruised flesh. Draugr are also immensely heavy and undecaying, even many years after death, and their eyes burn with an unholy fire.

Draugr have immense strength; those that had powerful magic in life may also have one or more additional magical abilities, such as the power to control the weather, swim through earth or stone, call up mist to hide their activities, or change their shape. (These typically have ratings somewhere between those of the draugr's *Hate Living* and *Insatiable Hunger* abilities.) All draugr are immune to impaling weapons, which pass through their bodies harmlessly, for a draugr's dead organs no longer give it life. Some draugr are immune to all non-magical weapons, or are harmed only by weapons made of a certain metal or blessed by the magic of a death god (like Humakt). A draugr's own weapons from life are often effective against it.

Like other undead, draugr must be hacked into many pieces, or otherwise completely destroyed, to stop them. For this reason treat the draugr as zombies (see *HeroQuest*, page 221) and allow them to continue to act even at negative AP totals. Like zombies, they do not eat or drink, never tire, and are immune to poison, disease, drowning, and the like. Even if "slain" (i.e., reduced to dying in a contest), a draugr soon reforms in its tomb or gravesite, typically within a week, unless it is killed in a manner specific to that draugr: some must be decapitated with a weapon that was buried with them, others incinerated, and still others cut into pieces that are put into leather bags and cast into a large body of water.

Draugr are undead monsters created by emotions of hunger, envy, or hatred at the time of death. They long for the things of life, and are tormented with an insatiable hunger that drives them to wreak vengeance on those that yet live. They eat human flesh, tearing their victims limb from limb, draining their blood, and consuming every last goblet of flesh. Draugr are rare in Heortling lands, for the Heortlings normally burn their dead or entomb them with Ty Kora Tek's rites, either of which prevents the corpse from rising in this manner. The Heortlings associate draugr with Urain, the Bad Wind whose clouds bring not rain but monsters.

Typical Abilities: Claw Attack or Mighty Slap 10W to 10W2, Hate Living 18, Insatiable Hunger 10W, Large 5W, Strong 10W, Wrestling 5W to 5W2.

Special Abilities: Immune to Impaling Weapons (see *HeroQuest*, page 206, for guidelines on weapon immunity).

Armor and Weapons: Tough skin +5, claws +3.

Sample Magical Abilities (usually only two or three): Blight Crops, Blunt Blades, Call Vermin, Cloak of Mist, Control Weather, Darkness in Day, Enrage Animals, Immune to Metal Weapons, Immune to Non-magical Weapons, Shapechange to [Animal or Thing], Soul-Freezing Howl, Spoil Food, Stench of Death, Swim Through Earth or Stone.

Tactics: A draugr attacks with its *Claw Attack* or a *Mighty Slap* (10W +3), augmented by *Tough Skin* (+5), *Large* (+3), and *Strong* (+3). If it is attacking a living being, its *Hate Living* (+2) and *Insatiable Hunger* (+3) also help (= 9W2), as will any appropriate magical abilities it possesses (at +3 each). Draugr attack at night or under the concealment of mist or heavy black clouds, drawn to the hearth fires where the living gather. Sometimes a draugr rides a house, sitting astride its roof and beating its heels against the shingles, trying to break the building apart.

through the air, the fire gutters in the wind, and rain lashes in through the tattered doorway. A lightning flash illuminates the dark bulk that fills the door. Perhaps it was once human, but its limbs and body are swollen to twice their former size, the flesh is the dark blue color of a livid bruise, and its eyes burn with an unholy fire. A terrible smell wafts into the room—the stench of the long-dead—and rotting corpses totter into view around the monster, along with two other giants of swollen flesh.

The sudden attack is likely to surprise the heroes. The undead attack initially with Dorasa's *Soul-Freezing Howl* augmented by Kirnan's *Loathsome Smell*, before closing with their victims. The draugr charge into combat and attack heroes; use up to all three of them, supported by enough zombies to give the heroes a real challenge (see *HeroQuest*, page 221). Throw a mass of clawing and rending zombies against other heroes. The undead retreat once they have taken one human life—even a hero's retainer or sidekick—or if one of their number is defeated. If the heroes get in desperate trouble, reinforce them with clan-folk pouring through the doors to their rescue.

Contest: Spot Surprise Attack

Appropriate Abilities: Scent Intruder, Sense Danger (–3), Alert (–3), Acute Hearing (–5), Sense Ambush (–5).

Typical Modifiers: At night –5; allow augments for *Domestic Animal Care*, as the alynxes' behavior may warn knowledgeable heroes of the approach of intruders.

Resistance: 2W2.

Complete or Major Victory: The hero senses the ambush and can warn the others, who can grab weapons and cast first magic before the contest begins.

Minor or Marginal Victory: The hero senses the ambush, but cannot warn others. He can cast his first magic.

Tie: The hero is taken unawares but suffers no penalty.

Any Defeat: The undead surprise the hero. The appropriate penalty for defeat is applied to any action the hero takes in the first round of the contest.

The Draugr

There are three draugr seeking revenge on the clan.

Heoden Lifebane

Cursed Orlmarth Warrior

Heoden is the strongest of the draugr. If hacked apart, he turns into a cloud of greasy smoke, gives an unearthly cry, and dissipates. If the smoke can be trapped, his reanimation can be interrupted until the smoke is released. His reanimation can be permanently stopped by decapitating him with his own sword, which lies deep within the mud of the original battle site in the Upland Marsh.

Significant Abilities: Dodge 5W, Hate Living 4W, Insatiable Hunger 9W, Large 5W, Mighty Slap 18W, Strong 18W.

Magical Abilities: Shapechange to Eel 4W, Swim through Earth or Stone 9W. Heoden is immune to impaling weapons and all non-magical weapons.

Armor and Weapons: Tough skin +5, claws +3.

Tactics: Heoden attacks with his *Mighty Slap* (18W +15 = 13W2, with *Hate Living* and *Insatiable Hunger*, 18W2 against living foes).

Kirnan the Vengeful

Cursed Hiording Chieftain

If hacked apart, Kirnan's remains sink through the earth or stone into the ground. A giant face some three feet across forms in the ground, lets out a silent scream, then deanimates, leaving the earth or stone shaped into the form of a screaming mouth. If Kirnan's remains can be prevented from returning through the earth, perhaps by an earth or water daimon, he cannot reanimate until his remains are released from their prison. His reanimation can be permanently stopped by staking him through the heart with his own spear. (Like Heoden's sword, Kirnan's spear lies deep within the Upland Marsh.)

Significant Abilities: Claw Attack 10W, Hate Living 18, Insatiable Hunger 10W, Large 5W, Strong 10W, Wrestling 15W.

Armor and Weapons: Tough skin +5, claws +3.

Magical Abilities: Blunt Blades 3W2, Stench of Death 7W.

Kirnan is immune to impaling weapons.

Tactics: Kirnan attacks with his claws (10W +14 = 4W2; augmenting with *Hate Living*, *Insatiable Hunger*, and *Stench of Death* gives a rating of 12W2 against living opponents).

Dorasa

Black Swan Maiden

Since the destruction of her feather cloak, Dorasa can no longer shapechange, but her heritage shows in the black swan's feathers that cover her body and her wing-like arms. When she dies, her body transforms into a swan-shaped cloud of mist and flies

off. If Dorasa is defeated, all the draugr find it harder to enter the Orlmarch tula unnoticed by the wyter.

Dorasa wears a fine gold and silver necklace set with amber, Heoden's wedding gift to her. Removing the necklace from around her neck after hacking her body apart will stop Dorasa's reanimation. Seizing the necklace is a contest against Dorasa's *Cloak of Mist* ability; when she is slain, give the heroes a chance to seize the necklace before she escapes.

Significant Abilities: Dodge 8W, Hate Living 11W2, Insatiable Hunger 3W, Large 2W, Strong 4W, Wing Buffet 6W.

Armor and Weapons: Tough skin +5.

Magical Abilities: Cloak of Mist 11W2, Control Weather 3W, Enrage Birds 10W2, Raise Swamp 3W2, Soul-Freezing Howl 12W. Dorasa is immune to impaling weapons.

Tactics: Dorasa is the weakest in combat, but has powerful magic. She attacks with her wing-like arms (6W +12 = 18W, with *Hate Living*, *Insatiable Hunger*, *Cloak of Mist*, and *Soul-Freezing Howl* giving her a rating of 13W2 against living foes), as she once did in swan form.

In the aftermath, an examination of the corpses reveals that tattoos on some of the bodies of the undead mark them as being from the Orlmarch Clan. Others can be identified as Hiordings (a neighboring Colymar clan). Then someone notices that one of the zombies resembles a kinsman. The face is distorted, the flesh puffy and corrupted like a drowned corpse so that it is hard to be sure, but it looks like Great Uncle Annstad who went missing twenty years ago! The clan reacts in horror at the thought that their assailants are undead kinfolk.

Heoden and Dorasa

I am Morganeth Desidottir, thane of the Orlmarch Clan of the Colymar Tribe, and I am a woman of the chieftain of this camp. I call upon the Guardians of the Six Directions to awaken, to hold the space between them for my tale. I call upon the Talking God to fill me with his power.

A generation ago, Heoden Sweet Smile was the warband leader. Strong of arm and keen of mind, Heoden was the best warrior of the Orlmarch. He was handsome, too, and made a vow to his companions that he would only ever marry the most beautiful woman in the Pass.

When hard times came upon the clan, Heoden gathered his hearth companions around him and entered service with a Quivini chieftain to help earn enough food to feed his kin. Kirnan Bell-laugh was the chieftain of the Hiordings, with whom Heoden took service, and a noted ring-giver. Kirnan's daughter, Dorasa, was an astounding beauty, and like her mother, she was a swan maiden. Kirnan had followed in the steps of the clan's founder and wed a swan maiden. After seven years Kirnan's marriage ended, but his daughter was bound to remain while yet a maiden. Kirnan was terrified of losing his daughter's companionship, and quickly put off any suitors.

But Heoden had vowed to have the most beautiful woman in Dragon Pass. He and his companions agreed that Dorasa was that woman, and Heoden vowed to his hearth companions that he would have her. Dorasa was taken with the handsome stranger and vowed to Heoden that she would marry and remain with him for seven years, if he would release her from her bondage to her father. Heoden felt certain that Kirnan could not refuse him.

Kirnan had no son of his own and quickly warmed to Heo-

den. At the end of Earth Season when Heoden asked to take leave of Kirnan and return home to the Orlmarch, Kirnan told Heoden he could name his price if he would return after Sacred Time. Heoden named Dorasa as his price. But Kirnan had no desire to let his daughter go, and refused. Offended, Heoden and his hearth companions left, but first Heoden stole Dorasa and her swan cloak.

When he discovered their deceit, Kirnan flew into a rage, called his warband to arms, and headed off in pursuit. Heoden had no wish to bring the Hiordings' wrath upon his kin and clan, so he sought instead to find a new life among the Exiles, who live in Wintertop's Shadow. But Kirnan caught Heoden on the edges of the Upland Marsh, between Two Sisters and River Inn. At first, Kirnan remembered his love for the young man and sought to negotiate for the return of his daughter. But the chieftain flew into a rage when she came to the negotiations wearing a necklace that was her morning gift from her husband. Kirnan knew then that she was no longer a maiden, and was lost to him.

The battle was merciless. Neither side gave quarter. Soon all but one lay dead, a young warrior whom Heoden had vowed to return safely to his mother, and had forbidden to take any part in the battle. Heoden was run through by Kirnan's spear, but he cut the Hiording chieftain's head off before he died. Dorasa threw herself on Heoden's sword rather than outlive the bloody scene.

The young survivor wandered lost in the Upland Marsh for days. When he returned, he told his story to the clan and then left to join the Humakt temple, saying that he had already outlived the thread of his life.

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THE WALKING DEAD

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Scene 2: Of Draugr, Ravens, and Wolves

Kalf gathers the ring. Erryn Longshanks, the lawspeaker, is here too, as is the Humakti god-talker, Thorveld Grinningblade. After long hours of debate, the ring tells the heroes that the draugr are most likely the corpses of Heoden Sweet-smile, Kirnan Bell-laugh, and Dorasa Swandottir, animated by some dreadful magic and sent to wreak vengeance on the Orlmarth. Morganeth White-eyed, the blind crone (and a Kev visionary), tells the story of Heoden and Dorasa (see the box on the previous page).

Note: By placing greater emphasis on the Mahomravand festival, narrators can extend this episode. The heroes might compete for the right to wear the crown of the King and Queen of Mahomravand, against a background of increasing attacks against the clan. The meeting with the chieftain might follow tense nights of attacks and player attempts to uncover the source themselves. If the heroes do facilitate an early encounter with the draugr, do not run the attack in the mead hall but move straight to the meeting with the ring.

Thorveld Grinningblade says that he expects the attacks to continue until the draugr have been destroyed. That usually means finding a weapon from among their grave goods, or in this case the weapons used in the final battle. If anyone suggests heading off into the Upland Marsh to eliminate the threat, Thorveld applauds their courage but then outlines the difficulties of their plan. Foremost among these is the problem of finding the battle site within the Marsh. Thorveld tells the heroes that Indrodar Greydog sought for seven years in the Upland Marsh for the corpse of Queen Lismelder.

However, Indrodar learned magic that helped him locate Lismelder's corpse. Thorveld knows the story that Indrodar used, and believes that the quest will help find the means to permanently end the draugr. Thorveld offers to instruct the clan in the details of the quest, if any of the clan's warriors are brave enough to try it. Hopefully one of the heroes volunteers!

Kalf beams and says, "Thank you for your courage. Defense of the clan is one of Heort's virtues." He motions to one of his companions, who reaches into a nearby chest and brings Kalf a fine gold armband. "Take this," Kalf tells the hero, "as a mark of my gratitude."

At this, Eranina CopperAxe stands up. She is a Vingan warrior of advanced years but undimmed pride. Half her head is shaved, and the shoulder-length hair on the other side is dyed blood-red. Her body is adorned with tattoos and she carries a copper-bladed axe. Heroes who have spent even a short time among the Orlmarth will already have heard tales of her indomitable valor in defense of her clan and her equally ferocious mistrust of outsiders. "It is not right," she says, "that you are rewarding these people over your trusted thanes who have stood by you. We too are ready to fulfill the boasts made in the mead hall. You should be entrusting us with this task."

If the heroes want to perform the quest, they must argue their case to the chieftain. They may back down because they want to protect the honor of the Orlmarth warriors. If the heroes fared badly in the fight in the hall, then the Orlmarth dissenters taunt them about their failure and ask them how they hope to save the clan when they have already been "bested in battle."

The heroes face opposition from many sides, more than they normally might (because of the loss of Orane's Spindle; see "Dissenters in the Hall," below, for full details). If the heroes *do* win the argument, Kalf asks them to go on the heroquest (see pages 44-45). Thorveld relates the myth of "Humakt, Wolf, and Raven," and tries to answer any questions.

A Failed Quest

If the heroes lose, or do not volunteer, Eranina CopperAxe attempts the quest. Four days later, she returns missing an eye—only a bloody socket remains—and with no knowledge of where the bodies lie. Now the clan agrees to let the heroes try—but they have lost four days.

If the heroes did not defeat the draugr in the first scene, there is bad news—they attacked Laughter Rocks Stead last

Dissenters in the Hall

The dissenters augment their abilities with *Fraying Threads of Kinship* 10W, a flaw caused by the loss of Orane's Spindle. Use it as an automatic augment to give a +3 to all abilities used to further conflict or opposition to leaders within the clan, or as a resistance to attempts to restore clan unity. Let the players know of this flaw to help them perceive how the clan is unraveling without Orane's Spindle. Should the heroes fail to recover the Spindle before Fire Day, the value of this flaw increases by 1 to 5 points per season. Without a future heroquest to avert disaster, the clan will disintegrate in kinstrike.

Ovartien Stoneheart: This Orlmarth warband leader soon emerges as the spokesman for the dissenting thanes. He thanks the heroes for their efforts but argues that the clan does not need help from a hero band to resolve this problem. He argues with his *Leadership* 8W.

Eranina CopperAxe: Eranina is jealous of Kalf's affection for the heroes and his gifts to them. She feels betrayed, and is determined to confront Kalf over his "new favorites." Debate is not her strength; she relies on *Intimidation*, *Fearsome Reputation*, and *Bluster* (all 3W) to get her way.

Kocho Flintfist: This weaponthane says, "The clan warband has proved the battle-boasts made in the mead hall many times. Talk is cheap. Let us hear how your deeds are

greater than those of the Orlmarth warband." *Intimidate* 17, *Boast* 3W.

Hedgar Sharpword: This weaponthane is a Starkval initiate. He has served Kalf for seven years, without glory or fame, to ensure that Askiniham is secure. He feels undermined when Kalf does not trust him with this problem. Hedgar uses his *Relationship to Clan* 18 to call for his due.

Ragnar Shaggybrecks: This aging carl speaks for the farmers. He is lacking much in the way of magic or wealth but is immensely respected throughout the clan. If the heroes have made an effort to reach out to the ordinary folk or frame their appeal in common-sense terms, then he will use his *Relationship to Clan* 10W in their support. If they are aloof or arrogant, appear to be glory-hounds, or else talk just about the Rebellion without any thought for the plight of the ordinary Orlmarth, he will either abstain or actively oppose them.

Marusa Goodweaver: Kalf's wife (hearthmistress of the hall) argues that the clan thanes must be seen as strong enough to protect the clan. This will ensure that their enemies (her language makes it obvious that she means Blackmor and his Black Oak Clan) do not think them weak and raid them. Her *Appeal to Husband's Pride* is 18.

night. A young child was eaten. Everyone is distraught. Either way, that evening, the clan makes its first attempt to send the heroquesters to the Other Side.

Do you know anyone who has done this quest?

Only the Indrodar Greydog followers near the Upland Marsh seem to know this myth, and Thorveld has heard different tales from other clans concerning Humakt and his association with Wolf and Raven. Thorveld does not personally know anyone who has attempted it. Of course, it is famous because Indrodar performed it and succeeded. Most people who go to the Upland Marsh hope never to meet kin.

What "part of himself" did Humakt wager?

Thorveld is not sure; he thinks that it might have been a hand to be eaten by the wolf (he is wrong). He knows that Indrodar did not lose, though.

What are the benefits?

Thorveld knows that Indrodar traveled with a divine companion in the shape of a raven after the quest. The raven helped him seek out Queen Lismelder.

Scene 3: Into the Marsh

The direct route to the Marsh is short, but crosses the tula of the Marshedge Clan of the Lismelder Tribe. Travel on these lands will alert the clan's wyter, and might lead to the heroes being intercepted. The narrator may simply decide that the heroes cross safely to the draugrs' lair without incident. Alternatively, this could be resolved as a simple contest, or it could be played

out in more detail, as an extended contest pitting the heroes' speed or stealth against the defenders' vigilance.

Even if the narrator opts to skip over this contest entirely on the way to the Marsh, she may choose to have Marshedge warriors waiting to intercept the heroes on their return. The prospect of being able to steal the treasure of a rival clan would be a tempting one.

Contest: Reach the Marsh Safely

Appropriate Abilities: Move Unseen, Ride Fast (sneaking); any Combat skill (-5) (fighting); Heortling Customs, Negotiate Settlement (-5) (talking).

Typical Modifiers: At night +5; Swamp Lore or similar abilities provide double the normal automatic augment.

Resistance: 20W.

Any Victory: The Marshedge Clan either fails to notice the heroes or is unable or unwilling to try to stop them. They will also allow them to return to home afterwards.

Tie or Marginal Defeat: The heroes get to the Marsh unhindered, but may be intercepted on their return.

Minor or Major Defeat: The heroes manage to get to the Marsh, but they suffer because of the struggle, applying the usual penalties to appropriate abilities as the story dictates. They also take too much time, and their chances of returning before the ceremonies is slim.

Complete Defeat: The heroes are driven from the Marshedge lands and must find an alternative way to the Marsh. This will take more time than they have left, and they will not return before Spindle Day (Mahomravand) ends at dusk.

Humakt, Wolf, and Raven

Theft between the Storm kin was forbidden. When Orlanth stole Death, Humakt severed his relationship with his kin. Then he set out across the world alone to recover it. Death had spread everywhere, and the world was full of those poor creatures that had no place to go. There were so many victims that Humakt was unsure of finding them all. Then he noticed Raven and Wolf. In the Chaos Age, while everyone else grew hungry, Raven and Wolf grew fat, for they discovered that the dead could be food for the living.

With his keen sight, Raven often spotted the corpses of the dead before death even took them. Raven loved to pick out their eyes. Wolf knew this, and followed Raven so that he could feast on their entrails. So Humakt set out to follow Wolf and Raven.

These were dangerous times, and Humakt had to face many dire foes, but eventually he caught Raven by the gallows tree. Raven perched on a corpse that swung on the tree, watching. He croaked hoarsely, sensing the approach of Death. Raven's black, beady eyes peered closer; then he croaked in disappointment. The living approached, not the dead. There were no eyes or entrails to be had without a fight. "Raven," said Humakt, "you have a keen eye for Death, and are often first upon the place of slaughter. Guide me to the slain, harbinger of death."

"What's in it for me, what's in it for me?" croaked Raven. "Give me a morsel of flesh. A tasty treat."

"You will not have part of me without a fight, Raven," cried Humakt. "Name a champion to fight me. If I win, you must be my eyes, and if your champion wins, then you may take your morsel of flesh."

"Wolf, Wolf," called Raven. Wolf slunk into the clearing.

"Will you fight by my rules, brother Wolf?" asked Humakt. Wolf grunted in agreement, so they fought as Humakti do. Wolf was cunning, dangerous, and cruel, but Humakt was steadfast, deadly, and true. So Raven had to serve Humakt after that, offering him his sight to guide Humakt to the dead.



Humakt and the Raven Heroquest

Be glad! Do you not know that Makla Mann prepares the ale-benches for a feast? Soon we will be drinking mead from aurochs' horns.

The warrior who enters Humakt's Hall is not sad. I shall not enter with fear in my breath. I am eager to depart. Efrogdar Blackhands calls me to the muster at the Sword Hall. Soon I will drink ale on the benches before Humakt in his high seat.

Lo, I see the ranks of my sword brothers, stretching to the beginning. They call to me to take my place among warriors in the Sword Hall, where the brave may live forever.

The days of my life are ended. I laugh as I die.

Station 1: Crossing Over

Theft between the Storm kin was forbidden. When Orlanth stole Death, Humakt severed his relationship with his kin. Then he set out across the world alone to recover it. Death had spread everywhere, and the world was full of those poor creatures that had no place to go. There were so many victims that Humakt was unsure of finding them all. Then he noticed Raven and Wolf. In the Chaos Age, while everyone else grew hungry, Raven and Wolf grew fat, for they discovered that the dead could be food for the living.

Thorveld performs a short ritual beforehand to boost the heroquesters' chances. Humakti might choose The Sharpening of Humakt's Sword, while Orlanthi might prefer The Arming of Orlanth. The bonus gained from this ritual is used to help the heroes cross the Otherworld Barrier between worlds.

Once this preparatory ritual is completed, the ring offers to pray for the heroes during the encounter with Raven or the duel with Wolf. This gives a +20 bonus to the station chosen (see *HeroQuest*, page 196). If the heroes won a complete or major victory in the debate within the mead hall, the clan provides total support for the quest (see *HeroQuest*, page 90) for a bonus of +16. Such a level of commitment would normally be unheard of, but the clan is desperate. (If Eranina CopperAxe performed the ritual first, this bonus is *not* available, since it was given to, and lost with, her.)

After several more hours of preparatory rituals, Thorveld conducts the ceremony that allows the heroes to cross over. As Thorveld speaks, the celebrants are transported to Sword Hall, at the bottom of the measureless Cliffs of Shadow.

The Sharpening of Humakt's Sword

This ritual is used by Humakti to honor their swords before great undertakings, and takes about three hours to perform. It involves both physically sharpening the blade and recounting the "lineage" of the sword, the battles and duels in which it has taken part, followed by a period of meditation on the sword and its symbolism of separation and death.

Ritual Elements

- A Sword (+1)
- A whetstone, oil, and cloth
- A prayer
- Meditation on death, separation, and loss
- One black bullock sacrificed to Humakt (+3)
- A Humakt shrine (+4)



Station 2: Finding Raven

With his keen sight, Raven often spotted the corpses of the dead before death even took them. Raven loved to pick out their eyes. Wolf knew this, and followed Raven so that he could feast on their entrails. Humakt set out to follow Wolf and Raven.

It is the Darkness. There is no Sun in the sky. The last lights, gods and heroes, shine with a faint radiance that keeps off some of the night. Elmal shines from atop Mount Kero Fin, a beacon among the Heortlings. The winds seem empty; the heroes sometimes feel as if they are choking as they gasp for breath in pockets of "dead" air. It is cold, bitterly so; the ground is permafrost and as hard as iron. Everyone feels a sense of despair, of depression, as though all the joy had been sucked out of the world.

If the leader has a sword, it shines brightly enough for him and his companions to see (like a Humakti Sword; see *Storm Tribe*, page 93, but all the questers can see by its light). Without it, they are hampered by in their search by the magical Twilight they find themselves in. But, of course, such a light might attract attention....

The questers must track Raven. While they are not aware of how quickly time passes here compared to the Inner World, they should be aware that if they return leaving insufficient time to recover the Spindle, they have failed the clan.

Contest: Track Down Raven

Appropriate Abilities: Track, Find Hidden Way (-5), Mythology of Humakt (-5).

Typical Modifiers: Quest is led by a Humakt initiate or devotee (+5); questers include any initiate or devotee of a Life or Fertility cult (such as Ernalda or Chalana Arroy) -5; Twilight -5 (see above).

Resistance: 5W.

Complete or Major Victory: The heroes pick up Raven's trail immediately. They return only moments (complete victory) or hours (major victory) after leaving, giving them plenty of time to track down the draugr and save the clan, even if Eranina CopperAxe performed the quest first.

Minor or Marginal Victory: The heroes doggedly pursue Raven's trail despite difficulty. If they are the first to perform the quest, they should have plenty of time to return to the clan before it is too late; if Eranina performed it first, they have very little time left.

Tie or Any Defeat: The heroes find Raven, but return too late to save the clan. Fire Day has passed, and while the heroes may defeat the draugr, kinstrife still looms for the Orlmarth.

Station 3: Dire Foes

These were dangerous times, and Humakt had to face many dire foes, but eventually he caught Raven by the gallows tree.

As the heroes head through Monster Land they are attacked by brood, dripping with disease and hate. The heroes must fight to survive. Defeated heroes are out of the quest. They return to the Inner World but are diseased, the severity determined by their level of defeat. If all the questers are defeated, the quest ends immediately, a failure.

Broo Warchief

Keywords: Four-armed Broo 15W.

Significant Abilities: Infect with Blood Lung 15W, Smell Disgusting 15W, Spear Fighting 16W, Tough 10W.

Armor and Weapons: Scavenged armor +4, spear +3.

Personal Augments:

Smell Disgusting (+4 to Spear Fighting)

Tough (+3 to Spear Fighting)

Maggot-ridden Broo Raider

Keywords: Broo 5W.

Significant Abilities: Dodge Attack 10W, Infect with Creeping Chills 7W, Smell Disgusting 5W, Spear Fighting 9W, Tough 6W.

Armor and Weapons: Scavenged armor +3, spear +3.

Personal Augments:

Dodge Attack (+3 to Spear Fighting)

Smell Disgusting (+3 to Spear Fighting)

Tough (+3 to Spear Fighting)

Deer-headed Broo Raider

Keywords: Broo 5W.

Significant Abilities: Antler Horns 8W, Dodge Attack 3W, Infect with Brain Fever 5W, Smell Disgusting 16W, Spear Fighting 2W.

Armor and Weapons: Antlers +4, spear +3.

Personal Augments:

Dodge Attack (+3 to Spear Fighting)

Smell Disgusting (+4 to Spear Fighting)

6 Boil-encrusted Broo Raiders

Keywords: Broo 20.

Significant Abilities: Dodge Attack 3W, Infect with Black Boils 19, Smell Disgusting 1W, Spear Fighting 4W.

Armor and Weapons: Spear +3.

Personal Augments:

Dodge Attack (+2 to Spear Fighting)

Smell Disgusting (+2 to Spear Fighting)

Station 4: The Gallows Tree

Raven perched on a corpse that swung on the gallows tree, watching Humakt. He croaked hoarsely, sensing the approach of Death. Raven's black, beady eyes peered closer; then he croaked in disappointment. The living approached, not the dead. There were no eyes or entrails to be had without a fight. "Raven," said Humakt, "you have a keen eye for Death, and are often first upon the place of slaughter. Guide me to the slain, harbinger of death."

"What's in it for me, what's in it for me?" croaked Raven. "Give me a morsel of flesh. A tasty treat."

"You will not have part of me without a fight, Raven. Name a champion to fight me. If I win, you must be my eyes, and if you win you may take your morsel of flesh."

"Wolf, Wolf," croaked Raven. Wolf slunk into the clearing.

"Will you fight by my rules, brother Wolf?" asked Humakt. Wolf assented and fought with Humakt. Wolf was cunning, dangerous, and cruel, but Humakt was steadfast, deadly, and true.

A lone yew tree stands on the path, a noose hanging from one of its branches. A body twists and turns in the breeze, its eye sockets bloody and empty. Raven perches on the body, watching the approach of the heroes. Occasionally, Raven stops to eat one of the deadly red berries.

Raven offers to guide the quester in return for an eye. The hero can simply agree to the trade; if he does not like this deal, Raven offers a Humakti duel to first blood (see *Storm Tribe*, page 91) against his "friend" Wolf. As usual, there must be a wager. The quester must wager his eye, and Raven puts up his loyalty in return. "Wolf" is the Telmori spirit Vargfreki.

Vargfreki, Telmori Spirit Wolf

Vargfreki is one of the pups of Telmor and a brother to Hrog-nar (see *Anaxial's Roster*, page 98). He is a lone wolf, a bachelor who could not accept the dominance of the leader of the pack. Vargfreki wanders, following Raven to find meals while looking for a great she-wolf with whom to start his own pack. Those Telmori who have been exiled or have simply left the pack sometimes worship Vargfreki, for he shows them how to survive without the pack.

Significant Abilities: Bite 5W3, Corner Prey 12W2, Dodge Attack 10W2, Great Leap 5W2, Large 10W, Move in Shadows 17W, Paralyze Prey with Fear 3W, Run Fast 18W2, Scent Prey 2W4, Strong 2W2, Terrifying Howl 9W2.

Armor and Weapons: Fur +4, teeth and claws +4.

Tactics: Vargfreki attacks with his *Bite* (5W3 +4), augmented by his fur (+4), *Dodge* (+5), *Large* (+3), *Paralyze Prey with Fear* (+2), *Strong* (+4), and *Terrifying Howl* (+6 = 13W4).

Results

If the hero agrees to Raven's offer or loses to Vargfreki, he finds himself hanging from the gallows tree. As he gasps for breath, the rope burning his neck, Raven jumps onto the hero's head in a flutter of wings. The hero feels Raven's claws grip his scalp. Raven's eye fixes the choking hero in his beady black stare. He stabs out the hero's eye, and flies off with it in his beak, cawing. He lands nearby, lifts his head, and swallows it in a big gulp. The rope is released and the hero slumps to the ground, blood welling from the empty socket. When the hero returns from the Other Side, has the flaw *Missing Eye* 10W2.

A quester who succeeds (whether by making the deal or defeating Vargfreki) gains the services of a raven daimon. The raven is a divine companion as per *HeroQuest* (page 121); treat it as a sidekick with the abilities *Sense Doom* 18W, *Spot the Dead* 10W2, and a *Death* affinity 12W. Remember, the player should pay hero points to cement this sidekick if the hero is to keep it after this episode. The quester, Humakti or not, also gains a Humakti geas (see *Storm Tribe* pages 98-99 for examples; the divine companion counts as the gift). If the quester ever breaks the geas, the raven leaves and does not return.

Station 5: The Return Home

So Raven had to serve Humakt after that, offering his sight to guide Humakt to the dead.

If the heroes succeed, the Raven daimon can track the draugr to their lair in the Upland March. If the heroes fail, then the Fire Day rites take place without Orane's Spindle. The draugr attacks continue. Many bloodlines speak of replacing Kalf with their own favored candidates for chieftain (most of whom advocate turning to Blackmor for help). Disputes turn into quarrels, and quarrels into fights. Many whisper the word "kinstrife" around the hearths at night. Resolving this mess is left to the heroes and the narrator, but overcoming the Orlmarth's doom will be difficult—it may very well be that the heroes either lose the clan to Blackmor, or die a tragic, epic death with them during some final attack by draugr and zombies.

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HUMAKTI AND THE RAVEN

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Scene 5: Spindle Day

The character of Spindle Day depends on the heroes' success or failure. Success brings rejoicing as the community celebrates its continued survival. Failure brings despair as the community feels its doom and turns upon itself.

The Festival of Mahomravand

With summer starting and the weather turning warmer, everyone strips off their winter furs and a happy mood prevails. Young people spend the entire night in the woods and dance around standing stones. The agricultural cycle briefly frees people from its burdens. Mahomravand is an agricultural festival accompanying the first turning of the herds out to wild pasture. The rituals promote fertility. The cattle are driven through the Aralnala fires to protect them from illness.

Mahomravand celebrates the fertile union of Elmal and Esrola. The clan crowns a Mahomravand King and Queen, and clan folk take part in competitions to show their skill at the tasks of daily life: baking, brewing, herding sheep, post-driving, spinning, and weaving. Steadwives make rope out of their cattle's tail hair and drag it in the dew, chanting "milk of this one down, milk of that one up, into my own big pail" to ensure a good milk supply. Bannock the cook bakes oatmeal cakes. Everyone decorates the steads with rowan branches for luck.

The ceremony takes place near Askiniham. As is usual with Orlanthi holy days, it begins the night before Spindle Day proper. See page 61 of *Thunder Rebels* for information Orlanthi rituals, and pages 184 and 190 for details about Spindle Day (also called Hearth Day or Fire Day).

If the heroes succeeded, they have earned the clan's lasting gratitude and admiration. They have saved the community in its time of crisis, and shown that the Orlmarth can count on the Rebellion. They may be joined by a few star-struck young men and women as followers, or gain a relationship with the clan. The Spindle Day celebrations are joyful and optimistic, more so than they have been in years. Some elements to include:

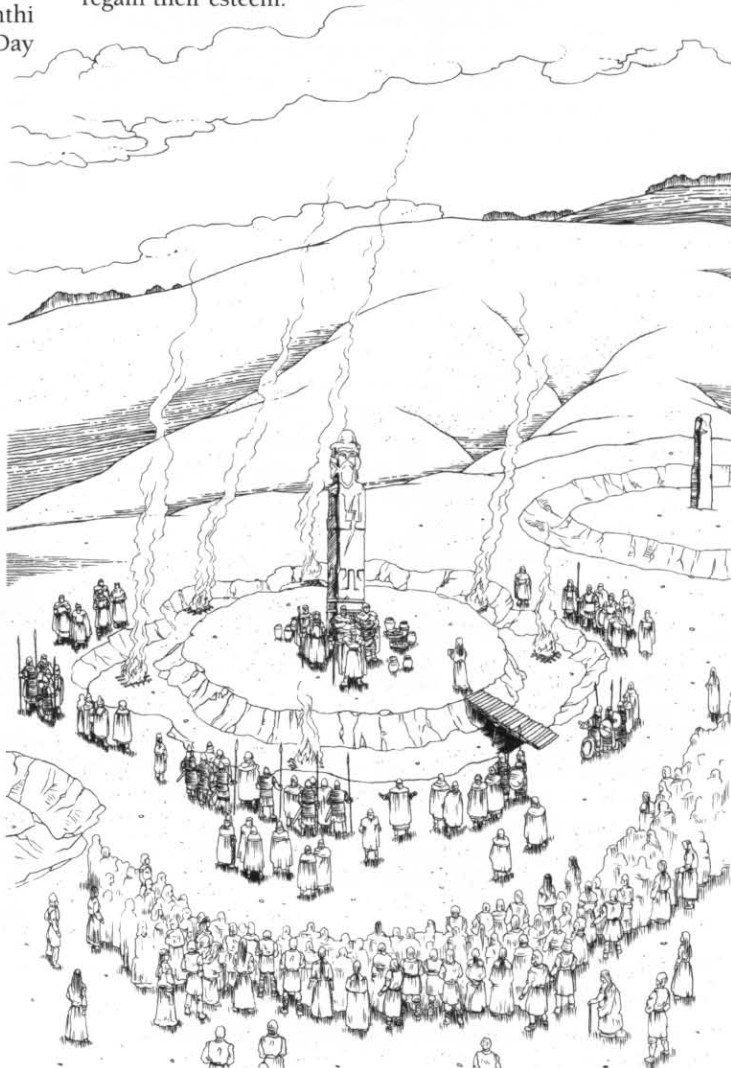
- Every fire in the village is extinguished, beginning with the outlying hearths and finishing with the first hearth at midnight. The hearth is cleaned, to make a fitting bed for Mahome to lie in.
- The woman in the community who has been married longest relights the village hearths at the dawn. Among the Orlmarth, this is Kolla the Elder. Coals from the First Hearth (in Uralda's Temple) are carried to the other hearths, and everyone gathers for the public portions of the ceremony.
- During the day, Mahome's brothers are welcomed in smaller ceremonies. The cattle are driven between bonfires so that Aralnala can drive out any disease. Those who want to prove their oaths grasp a heated bronze rod so Tylandenar may test their words. Cattle are slaughtered and burnt so that Faladan may bear the sacrifice to the gods. The kilns and forge are fired so that Pananala and Gustbran can do their work.
- The Mahomravand King and Queen marry and consummate their union, so that fertility and blessings may come to the whole clan.
- The women retire to the Loom House to spin and determine the community's priorities in the coming year. This is where Orane's Spindle is vital. Without it, the women are unable to agree on a course of

action, and the meeting ends in disharmony, with harsh words and insults. This is bad, but everyone knows that they must continue with the ceremony. Later recriminations for the argument lead to further exchanges of blame. On the other hand, if the Spindle was recovered the atmosphere is positive—whenever there is a dispute, the women find "another way" to tackle the problem.

A Dark Spindle Day

If the heroes fail, the celebrations are subdued—the cattle cannot be driven through the bonfires, and everyone who grasps Tylandenar's Rod is burnt before he can state his oath. The heroes find that the mood of the clan quickly sours towards them, as the threads that bind the community together begin to fray and snap. If the heroes stay they are shunned, and eventually are blamed by the community for their failure.

Soon, there will be an open challenge to Kalf from some hothead, his pockets full of Blackmor's silver. The result will be a brawl, which becomes a fight, which escalates into a full-blown feud (see "Final Days at Skullpoint" for an example of such a feud). Imperial "peacekeeping forces" arrive with a distant cousin of Kalf's, handpicked by Blackmor, and install him as the new chieftain of the Orlmarth. The dispirited clan does little to resist, and the Empire and its allies win one more victory. Orngerin (and by extension Kallyr) are disappointed, and the heroes will need to do extremely well in their next endeavors to regain their esteem.



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SPINDLE DAY

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THE SKY SHIP

Five hundred years ago, people across the world looked up and saw a planet die. Few knew what it portended at the time, but everyone knew that a great evil had occurred. Over the course of decades, those living near the coasts or who sailed the seas felt the greatest effect of this doom—the great Curse of the Closing, which swept all ships from the waters, flooded many lands, and instituted a fear of the waters not felt since the Storm Age. But for many people, the loss of sea trade paled beside the destruction of the blue star that sailed the Sky River.

Now the time has come to right this ancient wrong, to bring back that which was taken from the world by a few. Now is the time for the Sky Ship to sail again.

This is a great event, and its success is important to the Rebellion. Kallyr is along, overseeing everything and giving orders that the players, and others, can execute for her. At the climax, Kallyr and Orlaront Dragonfriend hold center stage. Narrators who wish the players to be the center of the action can improvise from what is there.

Scene 1: The Offer

One of the rebel leaders approaches the heroes. This may be Orngerin Thundercape, Asborn Thriceborn, or someone else who knows the heroes and their deeds.

From this point, we assume it is Orngerin. “Aye, yes, we’re looking for raiders to ride the Sky River with us. The plans of the Hidden Ring are at a crucial stage. Now’s the time when to strike, or else we may not never have the chance to use this power again. She is going to the Sky World. I need some bodyguards, some scouts, and some people who have particular powers. Will you come with me?”

What particular powers?

“I think it’s water, movement, and darkness,” he says, “but they haven’t announced anything.”

This sounds dangerous. Why should we go?

If the players seem hesitant, you may need to offer them reasons or incentives to go. Orngerin will not lie about the dangers, but he also knows the heroes well enough by now that he knows what they want, and will offer them what he can. This should help the players feel more like willing participants, and less like they are being “railroaded” or forced onto a specific path. Here are some of the primary inducements to offer:

- This is good for their clan.
- This is good for the Rebellion.
- This is a chance to explore the Hero Planes.
- There will be a good chance of plunder, probably even Sky magic.

- This is a heroic event. “People are always saying that the gods bless their cause, and they all sound the same to me. But this one is different. Anyone who passes up this opportunity should have their courage looked at.”
- A rival hero band is definitely going, and they will seize all the glory if the heroes do not go.

Asborn Thriceborn, who guided the players through Colymar lands, is also present, and he takes the heroes to one side and says he personally vouched for them to Orngerin when he was looking for shieldmen, and hopes they will agree. “Will you come with me? For those that do, a place is assured in the hearts and minds of our people as well as a seat on any ring or council after the Empire is defeated. Some of these places have already been offered to the *[fill in a hero band that the players have built up a dislike or rivalry with, such as Ernathora’s Destiny]* band, and *[he/she]* has accepted this honor most enthusiastically. In fact, *[he/she]* gifted me in return with an oath of loyalty in any future revival of the Kingdom!”

The God-talker’s Story

If the heroes accept, a god-talker comes forward and relates a sacred story. He says it is “the story told by Penendros.”

The Golden Ship

There was a great ship in the Golden Age that bore gold, peace, and many incredible artifacts upon the rivers and oceans of Glorantha. It was so wonderful that no one could go aboard it without knowing peace and pleasure. It could even sail to the Sky. Back and forth the Golden Ship went, stopping at mythic ports: Arandar, whose fruits make men stop in awe; Verndalar, where no one can linger a short time, but must stay forever; and even Turvutan, the Golden City.

Orlanth’s minions sank the Golden Ship in the Gods War. Now is the time to correct that old wrong, because if the Ship sails again then justice will return, and it will flood over the world like a river overflows its banks.

The god-talker then adds, in the sacred voice, “When the Grain blossoms, the ship can rise again.”

“That means now,” says Orngerin. “Now is the time to raise the ship up again. It isn’t going to be easy, and it will require special efforts by many people.” He gives the usual precautionary words, makes the sign of power, names Ash Anvari as the assembly point, and then recites the series of passwords, landmarks, and prayers. There is little time for questions; the group will need to leave soon and hurry to get there on time. Still, Orngerin answers what questions he can, quickly.

What the heck is "When the Grain blossoms"?

"When the Grain blossoms, the ship can rise again," is a prophecy. The fact that it is spoken in the "sacred voice" means that it was gotten from the Other Side, not made up. Its meaning is open to interpretation, but if pressed Orngerin will say, "Kallyr thinks she knows what it means. I'n that good'na for ya?"

Who is Penendros?

Penendros is unknown. No one present has heard of him or it, not even the god-talker.

What else can I learn here?

Little else can be discovered in a short time. However, heroes with previous knowledge, or who roll a complete victory or a complete defeat against *Heortling Myths* or another appropriate skill, will recognize the similarities between the Golden Ship and the story of Vendeni and Luku.

Heroes who obtain a complete victory will understand that the ship in the story is actually the ship of Vendeni, a great Vingkotling hero during the Storm Age. Vendeni led ships that sailed upon water or air, driven by huge billowing sails. The Thunder Brothers were sometimes his crew, and they raided from a great ship, bringing terrible destruction upon all foes. Although they were not of the Water Tribe, they were successful upon the sea because of Vendeni.

Those who get a complete failure recognize that the ship in the story is the ship of Luku the Burner, a raider who sank many ships and burned many ports during the Gods War. Luku and Vendeni were famous foes. They met in battle for the last time at the city where lived Princess Starry Eyes. Vendeni was killed and his warriors burnt themselves in the ship rather than let it be taken by Luku.

Scene 2: Assembly at Ash Anvari

The heroes are told that they must assemble at Ash Anvari in two days. Ash Anvari is a ruin in northern Beast Valley. It rests amid wide fields, dotted with trees, at the edge of a thicker forest near the Ghost Hills.

Visitors must stop at one of the guard outposts to identify themselves as trusted members of the Rebellion. The camp itself consists of several clusters of tents and makeshift shelters. Groups of warriors sit at fires; other individuals pass from fire to fire. After taking some time to check around, a hero might estimate that there are a couple hundred people here. Not all are Heortlings—there is even a group of the High Llama People from Prax.

Kallyr is not visible, but her agents are—prominent rebel leaders all, including Minaryth Purple, the Lhankor Mhy sage; Orlastor Spearlord; Gernu and Dernu; Orlaront Dragonfriend; Orngerin Thundercape; and Argrath Maniskisson. The heroes probably know one or more of them already. If so, the known leaders will acknowledge them briefly, but they are busy now and do not want to be interrupted. Instead, they ask the heroes a couple of quick questions.

Are you a hero band?

This organizing question means, "Do you have a guardian?" If not, the leader sends the heroes to the main army. If the answer is yes, the band's leader can go among the various rebel leaders and choose whose group they wish to follow. They must formally ask to join, but anyone who has gotten this far is not likely to be refused. However, before the heroes can leave, they are asked another question.

"What can you do?"

With this question, the leader is looking for individuals or bands with specific powers. If anyone has particularly good or interesting movement, water, or anti-light powers, they (and their companions) are sent to another interviewer, depending upon which of those it is.

- Movement specialists meet Javern Spithorn (see *Orlanth is Dead!*, pages 10 and 41). He chats a bit and asks to hear what they have done. If the tale is sincere and impressive, he offers a place in his band. Otherwise, he sends the applicant back to the main force or to petition another leader.
- Water specialists meet Orstalar the Spearlord (see *Orlanth is Dead!*, page 42). He welcomes anyone with special powers over water.
- Anti-light specialists meet Gernu and Dernu (see *Orlanth is Dead!*, page 36, and *Masters of Luck and Death*, pages 54-55). They are looking for special powers of darkness, dampening, extinguishing, and so on. They especially welcome anyone with spirit magic, but will accept any hero or band with appropriate magic.

The main army lets people sort themselves out from the crowd into their natural groups. Eventually, the rebel leaders organize their parts of the force, appoint commanders, and gather everyone together. All of this is accomplished in a remarkably short time, considering how many different groups are present.

Within a few hours, the leaders gather everyone to where the god-talkers have prepared a sacred ground. There, they conduct a ceremony, and those present are required to swear a loyalty oath witnessed by Orlanth and Ernalda. Everyone who takes the oath is considered part of the main force. The magic provided by this association is negligible, but all sworn individuals will remain part of the group on the God World and Hero Planes.



Javern Spithorn

Javern Spithorn is a famous companion of Orngerin Thundercape. He has a bull's horn on top of his helmet with the curve arching backward. If asked about it he says, "It's my ancestors' custom," and then spits upon the ground. Javern scrutinizes people who might serve under him openly, perhaps even indiscreetly, without shame or embarrassment.

Minaryth's Speech

The heroes may have more questions about the mission, or may be worried about going somewhere as dangerous as the Sky World. After all, what does the Ship have to do with them, or with defeating the Red Moon? If the heroes ask such questions, word eventually gets to Minaryth Purple. If the heroes were involved in "The Rising of the Culbrea Tribe" (*Orlanth is Dead!*, pages 52 and 60), he will even know their names.

Minaryth explains that there is far more at stake than just raising this former planet. Kallyr plans to sail on the ship into the Sky and enlist draconic aid against the Lunars.

"From scholarly brethren, I've learnt that the Lunars will gather many dignitaries in two years' time to sanctify a new Temple of the Reaching Moon here in Sartar. [*Those who have not heard this already react in shock—such an act could seal the doom of Sartar forever!*] They hope to suppress Orlanth for always by extending their vile Glowline across our good lands. They plan to alter the Sky itself with the ceremony. Their Godseed will rise higher and Orlanth's Ring will be bound.

"But there are powers they fear. They fear our good lord's constellation in the sky—Orlanth's Ring, which they call "vile" and "Disruptor." And they fear the Dragon Constellation, which we know was conquered by Orlanth. The Moon folk say that the Dragon (which they name Burburstus) came from under the

earth and beyond the shadow to attack and destroy the perfection of Yelm. But Yelm was prepared and defeated the foul, loathsome thing, and cut it up into different pieces.

"We know that our god-talkers are right, of course. But on the Other Side there is always a struggle between heroquesters. The myths can be changed. Maybe this time the Dragon will devour the Emperor. The dragons were always enemies of Orlanth. That, your Storm Voices tell you every Dark Season. But we have learned that maybe Orlanth has a secret, a mystic connection with the dragons. [*Someone behind the heroes says something they cannot quite make out.*] Yes, I know—this is what the *Youf* thought, and they are dead and cursed. But we can learn from them. Our enemies say the Liver, or the Chest, of Burburstus is a shadow and a snake whose sign looks like Orlanth's sacred Air Rune. Orlanth carries the Dragon's Head through the sky every fortnight. These cannot be mere coincidence. The solution may be in the Sky. It is there we must go.

"I have heard there may be a fourth true dragon in our land. [*More cries of shock and fear.*] My associate Garstal claims to have seen this "Jarn-thing." But no one can talk to a dragon the normal way. They don't understand the rules of hospitality, and they don't acknowledge Orlanth. A true dragon doesn't even talk! That is not the way to go. We must instead brave the Other Side.

"The Star Striders have secret ways of going into the Sky World and reaching the Star Dragon. If you go there, remember the myths. How Orlanth rose into the Sky World and conquered it, so that it danced for him. How Orlanth, before he placed the dragon in the stars, took from the monster its head and its liver. How Ingolf told us that Orlanth was inhabited by the Inner Dragon after he learned from Drolgard the secret of speaking to dragons.

"Remember that Orlanth is never afraid to venture into the shadow. And remember how the Inner Dragon and Orlanth reflected each other in a dance of harmony and conflict. I can clearly see that these forgotten secrets can bring danger. But we must take the risk. We must do something new."

How Orlanth Organized the Stars

When Orlanth wished to pass through the sky into the Inner Heavens, he encountered much resistance. First, the Queen of Heaven tested his resolve by sending Pur to seduce him. Orlanth was not stupid, and he knew her task, but he dallied with her anyway, for he knew what he would need from her for the future. When he was finished, he spurned her and continued his spiral.

Next, the General of Heaven tested Orlanth's strength by sending Dergi against him, but Orlanth defeated him easily. While Orlanth was fighting, the Bat tried to cover him, but Orlanth knew the Nightdaughter of old and could not be blinded as Yelm was.

After the first three failed, Jagrekriand himself came forward, released at last to fight the Rebel God. He fought with fire and mace, with spear and lightning, and even broke the wheels from Mastakos' chariot. But he could not defeat Orlanth, who sent him screaming from the Sky in payment for what he had done to Umath, Orlanth's father.

With the Red God cast down, the stars knew fear. In desperation they released the Sky Dragon against Orlanth. It wrapped itself around Orlanth from his left foot to his chin, encircling his body seven times, and lifted its great head to stare Orlanth in the face. But the god was not paralyzed like prey. He expanded his great strength and freed himself from the thing, then with a single blow of his sword chopped off its head. He left the corpse as a symbol of his victory, and its blood flowed across the sky like a blue flood.

Bearing the head of the dragon as his trophy, Orlanth encountered no further resistance from the stars. At last, he reached the Upper Sky, and demanded that he be allowed to enter the sacred lands. The Mistress of Dance spoke for her lord and answered that Orlanth could pass, but that he must join her lord's dance first. "Is it this one?" asked Orlanth, and did his war dance. So violent and vulgar were his movements that Silonia retreated in shock, and Orlanth approached the Pole Star Gate.

"No," said the Pole Star, "we would never do that." But when the stars showed Orlanth the dance Pole Star wanted, they could only do Orlanth's war dance. Humbled and afraid, the dancers bowed to Orlanth. Rigsdal swore allegiance to Orlanth, and revealed all of his powers to the great god. He said, "Great Sir, command what you will, but leave my people to themselves."

Orlanth did so command. "Dance on," he said, "to my tune and lilt." Then he played his tune that rocked the skies, and the stars and their protectors all danced with him. Thus did Orlanth gain his entryway into Heaven.

Scene 3: Going to the Temple

The heroes are told that the journey into the Sky World will begin at Penendros' Tower, which is in the southern Grazelands, just north of the Solthon River. The main route is indicated on the map on the facing page, and is described in more detail below and in Scene 4. One major encounter is provided; the rest of the journey overland is left to the narrator. (If the heroes previously took this route in "The Other Side of the Dragon," they may be asked to help guide one or more groups to the temple.)

Eastern Beast Valley

Signs abound of creatures, the details of which are strange even to the trackers and hunters, unless they took this route heading for the Grazelands in "The Other Side of the Dragon."

"I've never seen that track," they say, "but I've been told about it, and I think it is a..." The beastmen who dwell in the valley—centaurs, manticores, satyrs, ducks, and stranger beings—rarely leave, for here they are protected by both ancient pacts and modern treaties. Many ruins, some buried and some half-standing, can be seen. "Those were the Dragonfriends," say people who know.

Cross The River

Duck boats have been alerted to help cross The River just north of Centaur Ford, because the Empire maintains a distant magical watch on that crossing, preventing any passage there. The heroes (or one of the rebel leaders) know the code words, and the boats get everyone across and disappear upriver. Note to the heroes that they see many more new Lunar settlements along The River now; the duck boats and rebels skirt them.

After crossing The River, the groups travel up the gully whose name no one knows. Attentive heroes sometimes see path markers hidden among the foliage.

Wild Temple

The Wild Temple is described in "The Other Side of the Dragon" (page 20), *Dragon Pass* (page 61), and *Masters of Luck and Death* (page 63). The rebels have arranged a safe place for a rendezvous, a half-mile from the Temple. The group is out of the way of almost any Imperial patrol or magic, and some of the beast-folk, though never seen by the heroes, are watching.

It is a time to rest. Those with knowledge of local geography will realize that the plan is to travel through the Dragon Pass itself. "We'll pass under the great skull that Alakoring put there," someone says.

Feyghost River

The travelers break camp in the morning and travel up another narrow valley. The terrain is steep, but an old trail shows where to go. At the end of the day, camp is made again. "Tomorrow we'll go under that skull," says someone else, "the one Orvanshagor put there."

Grazers

That evening, the scouts come dashing in to see Kallyr. A large band of mounted warriors is close by and approaching fast; it has to be Grazers. The camp is still scrambling into order when they arrive and begin circling the perimeter. Suddenly, Kallyr is there. "Stand and shield, no attack," she commands. The riders form a complete circle around the camp. To heroes in the camp, the Sun seems hotter, and they feel terribly exposed.

One small band of six Grazers separates and comes thundering towards the camp. They are magnificent, arrayed in feathers and magic that would transfix the attention of most people. One of them glows almost like the Sun itself. They stop right in front of Kallyr and perform a bit of magic that makes Kallyr look white for a moment. Everyone sees that. It must be the Grazers checking her. She is approved, apparently, for the Grazers do not attack.

Kallyr and Argrath Maniskisson step forth out of the crowd. She speaks. "Hands of Horse! Lord of the Men! Vow Bearer! Welcome here, in our camp."

"I accept," the glowing one says in reply.

"Jandetin," says Argrath, "welcome to our camp." The Grazer leader's horse rears and seems to throw its rider, but Jandetin practically flies from his saddle to stand before Kallyr. The leaders turn and retire towards Kallyr's tent, and the assembly dissolves with people trying to find out what is going on. Most have to wait for scuttlebutt and rumor.

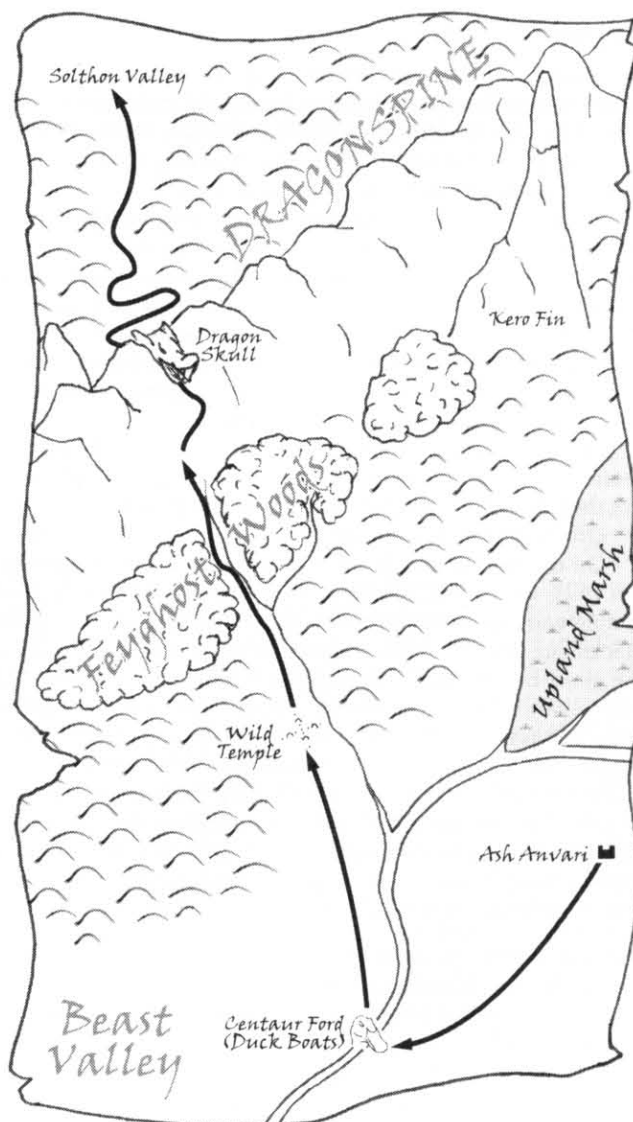
Here is what everyone agrees on: Jandetin and his personal warband of over 200 warriors is here, and has three clans close by for magical support. He wants a part of this mission. Jandetin is known to hate the Empire, and even now is in a quarrel with his own king over the issue.

Do You Know These Men?

Most of the warriors here have only ever met the Grazers as foes. Thus, to most, this truce will seem a little strange. As the two groups eye each other, some men see those on the other side who once wounded them, or burned a house, or slew a friend. Still, the formal peace of the leaders holds everyone in check.

How did the heroes interact with the Grazers in "The Other Side of the Dragon"? Did they make friends with any of them? What a fortuitous chance! Those friends are here, too, and they are looking for familiar faces on the Heortling side. Let the players initiate action if they wish. Otherwise, the Grazers come to the heroes. In any case, men from both camps gather to stare at and then share in this unusually warm interaction, and the silence between allies is broken. When Kallyr and Jandetin tour the camps later, men from both forces are sharing fires and food.

Here is what the campfire talk reveals. Jandetin and several other leaders are refusing to help the Luminous Stallion King or to answer his summons. Several times, the King has sent assassins against Jandetin, which obviously all failed. Some of the Grazers around the fire helped ward off those attempts, and they will tell about it. "I saw them coming first, and struck one with an arrow," says one. Another chimes in with, "I was with the Fiery Lord when the stallion's teeth chomped through the ranks, but we broke them." And so it continues.



What happened to the Vendref?

Did the heroes help to establish a temple for the Vendref? Do they ask about the fate of those people? "Oh, nothing important happened," say the Grazers. "The Stallion burned up the statue and killed the goat, is that the name? A Goatee? But only him, and mostly the people just went back to their way of life. They were lucky that the Stallion didn't destroy them all."

The heroes cannot know this, but the Grazer warriors are incorrect about the Vendref. The only way to learn this is for the heroes who established the shrine to go back. The Vendref will show them (and only them!) their secret shrine—the one destroyed by the Grazers was a hastily-erected decoy. They will explain that they were ordered, by Jandetin, to hide and reveal themselves only at his command. The Vendref will also show to the heroes the crude set of clan ring artifacts they are collecting.

What do the Grazers know about this expedition?

"The Fiery Lord says we will go to the Sky World. He said that while we are there we will be in the army of Great Jordan, and that the journey will qualify us to be in the Golden Bows. He said his friend, your leader Kallyr, had a secret power to let us see when we are in that enemy world."

"We were told," says one, "that it is your enemy world, too. Is that so?" This is a new perspective for the heroes, that they and the Grazers will both be in an enemy place. Let them discuss it.

Feyghost Woods

The army breaks camp in the morning and travels up another narrow valley. The terrain is steep, but an old trail shows where to go. The hills are steep, the climb is steeper, and looking up shows only the hill ahead. Kero Fin, looming majestically, is hardly ten miles away to the north-northeast.

At the end of the day, the army makes camp at the edge of Feyghost Woods. These are haunted by the army of Jodun Bloodface, who was cursed, slaughtered, cursed again, freed as a guardian, and finally cursed and sent back here a final time. The ghosts have been here for centuries, dating from the time of the Empire of the Wyrms Friends. They appear as a ghost army and fall upon travelers in the woods. They almost never bother a large army like Kallyr's, though.

Divide the group into three watches. Guards take posts a distance from the sleepers. Everyone else is far enough away that they do not know of the actions of the guards.

On the first watch, nothing happens.

On the second watch, ask the heroes to make any perception rolls, with a +10 modifier. If successful, they see a ghost coming and may have defensive magic ready. If not, the ghost attacks one of them. Well, "attacks" is not quite the right word. The ghost has an ability of *Fearsome* 4. It has no weapons, and looks like an Issaries merchant. "Peace!" it says. "I come in peace!" It wants to be defeated, because it is so lonely. Once defeated, the ghost engages in conversation, and appears friendly as it tells briefly about its life following the warlord Jodun in his glory. Like the rest of Jodun's forces, the ghost was cursed into this form by dragon-worshippers. It proposes a story contest: a wager, pitting a hero's most relevant ability against its *Cursed* 10W. If the wager is refused, the ghost goes away.

- The hero must stake either his ability to laugh one day each week (the day of the week on which this contest occurs), or his favorite story so that he can never remember it.

- The ghost wagers the knowledge of its lifetime. If the hero is victorious, he will gain the ability of *Dragon Age History* at a rating of 13 (or gain +5 to a similar ability already possessed). This also gives the hero a +5 permanent addition to his *Fear Dragons* or *Hate Dragons* ability, if he has one.

On the third watch, ask the heroes to make perception rolls. If successful, they see a band of ghosts coming and may have defensive magic ready. If not, then a ghost attacks each guard and sleeper. If the band has a guardian, it will warn the sleepers so that they, too, can be prepared with magic. Otherwise, they are attacked in their sleep.

Feyghosts

Significant Abilities: Dominant Possession 15, Ghostly Attack 10W.

The Journey Continues

The Dragonspine

The hills are steep, and the climb is steeper. Suddenly, at the top of the crest a dragon skull comes into view. It is huge, probably 200 yards across. As the heroes get closer, they can see that the trail goes beneath the looming teeth, entering a cave-like passage dug into the cliffs on either side. The skull completely covers the trail, and there is no way around it for miles. To the left is a high and steep peak that the Grazers call Bad Spirit Mountain. Kolatings recognize it as a Kolati peak. Several of them peel away from the main band and go into the woods to do their own magic.

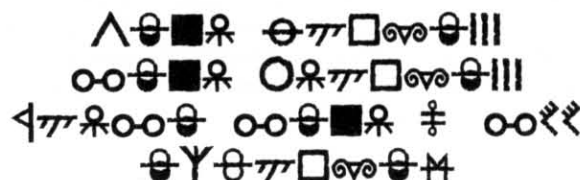
The Dragon Pass

It is impossible to cross the Dragonspine here except by going underneath the gigantic skull. No light penetrates very deeply into it (even magical light faces a resistance of 10W2); the other end is 300 yards distant and looks farther away yet, appearing is a tiny speck of light. Strange, haunting sounds can be heard in the darkness. While inside it, everyone feels a little bit afraid. Although nothing untoward befalls the travelers as they make their way beneath the skull, the journey seems to take much longer than it actually does, and the light at the end of the tunnel is welcome to all. (For a complete description of the Dragon Pass and the Dragon Skull, see *Dragon Pass, Land of Thunder*, pages 21-22.)

Solthon Vale

While descending from the Dragonspine the army travels up and down ridges before making a final descent to the Upper Solthon Valley. A couple of Vendref steeds are passed along the way. They look much like Heortling steeds, with one big change: they have no fortifications of any sort. The people are disinterested in the strangers and thoroughly deferential to the Grazers. The army simply passes them by, under strict orders to ignore them and their steeds completely.

After only a few miles, the army turns up a hidden side valley going westward, and then arrives at the temple. The group makes camp outside.



Scene 4: The Temple of Penendros

The sacred enclosure is scrawny, marked by some rudely made plank fences and a simple raised center all built haphazardly into one corner of a much larger ruin. The resident priest's tent is nearby. The Grazer warriors camp in one place, the Orlanthi warriors in another. In a third group are some warriors with feathered helms. Some of them wear feathered capes that resemble wings. If any hero asks, they will discover that they are known as the Star Striders. Grazer guards are set around all three camps and the temple.

A Look Around

This land is familiar in many ways, but alien and dangerous, the no-man's land between the Tarshite slaves of Shepelkirt and the Horse-spawn who have for generations raided Sartarite clans.

Due east, only 25 miles away, is divine Mount Kero Fin. This is the side Sartarites generally don't see—Little Mountain and Lion Peak are more prominent on this side. Neither is snow-topped, though. It is clear that in the morning, the shadow of the mountain falls across this valley and does not recede until nearly noon, when Elmal finally tops the peak.

Every other direction shows a vista similar to those at home in Sartar. The hills seem the same, the woods seem the same. One thing is very different, though. Only 30 miles to the north lies the Lunar Empire—a single day's hard march. The heroes can almost see the red glow in the distance—or is it only their imaginations?

The Ceremony

The high priest of the temple emerges soon after the group arrives. He appears to be a very young man, but one with the touch of the divine about him—the star in his forehead makes that obvious, and implies a link to Kallyr. He spends his time with Kallyr, and is too busy to talk to anyone else. Observation shows that he is confident and handsome, with blond hair and pale eyes. His pointed cap and black cloak with celestial runes upon it show that he belongs to some sky cult.

Danar's history is known only to himself, Kallyr, and her closest aides. Heroes who have an opportunity to learn more may hear some or all of the story told in the box below.

After some rest and preparation, everyone gathers in the ruins. A large, yellow pole in the center of the ruins holds up the roof of a tent, which is blue overhead. A round stone slab in the floor is topped by a large stone altar, its rocks black from old burnings. Some furniture is present, all of it practical rather than ornate, with runes carved in wood and painted rather than formed of gold set into living fire wood. The ruined circular walls are crudely painted, sometimes with only charcoal sketches tracing peoples' shadows. No wind or sound is heard.

Outsiders watch the ceremony. To them, it appears that the participants simply perform prayers, songs, and mythical dialogues while shuffling about on the wide floor. Brass horns, not unpleasant or blaring despite the atmosphere and size of the place, hum and occasionally sound at full volume.

The rite is similar to normal Orlanthi ceremonies. It begins shortly after nightfall, with a summons to the good gods and goddesses. Danar sacrifices a yearling bull, whose entrails are read and then offered to the fire. Toward midnight, only two voices sing: Danar and Kallyr, the only initiates present. All the Heortlings can see the Orlanthi entities that are present at every ceremony, but they can only wonder what else Danar and Kallyr are seeing; it is clear that the two are addressing entities no one else can see. This is usual in ceremonies, of course, but no one here knows anything about this ritual.

Unusually, at one point Kallyr stops and speaks to everyone present. "Sisters and brothers," she says, "you are present before us. This is the place to *See*. *See*, now." Something like a beam of light radiates from the jewel in her forehead. For a moment, everyone in the sacred precinct sees into the God World. It is not like Orlanth's boisterous hall, but is instead a place of serenity and immaculate calm. Everyone is reminded, though they may not realize it, of the best moment of wonder and happiness in their childhood. They look, it seems, upon their own innocence.

"This is the world of Creation. This is the seeing of True Sight. This is the blessing of Rigsdal, the vision from his hidden eye. This is the chance for you to *See*."

In the center of the temple, where Kallyr stands and the fire burns, everyone now sees a vision. Kallyr kneels, and there is no star jewel in her forehead. Her arms are wide open in prayer before her god, Rigsdal, who appears as a blinding, luminous form.

continued on page 55

Danar Orelos

Danar was raised in Dara Happa as part of a minor noble family, and was initiated into the cult of Buserian. While studying obscure star lore, he became star-struck and began to worship a minor star god named Penendros. The Buseri discouraged this, and then sent him to count cows in the provinces when he would not renounce his god. He joined the cult of Irippi Ontor travelers, who brought him to Dragon Pass, but even in the Provinces his superiors urged him to abandon his personal cult and work within the larger Lunar system.

Eventually, Danar's intransigence resulted in his posting to troubled tribal lands as part of the larger Imperial census effort in Sartar. During one of these forays, he was nearly slain by rebellious tribesmen. Only the intervention of a passing Knowing Man of great fame saved his life, though he was sorely injured. That knowing man was Minaryth Purple, who brought the wounded sage to the hall of Kallyr, at the time a hidden king's ring. She and her healers helped him recover.

During his stay, Danar told Kallyr much about the star god Penendros, encouraged by her obvious star magic and

her increasing interest. Kallyr grew fascinated by the possibilities of an alliance, and worked to understand the strange priest's lore, for she sensed a strange kinship with this foreign priest. For his part, Danar was simply grateful to be treated with respect for his views. Over the course of his convalescence, he began to truly appreciate the value of the open-minded Orlanthi.

With Kallyr's backing, Danar quested for and finally discovered a lost temple of his god from the Dawn Age. Armed with recovered knowledge, he refounded Penendros' Temple in the Grazelands, which had first been established by Palangio the Iron Vrok's armies more than a thousand years ago. Since his alliance with Kallyr, Danar has become even more determined to revive the worship of his god. However, until now, his cult has remained obscure and minor. The other Sky World peoples are disturbed by the presence of Orlanthi worshippers in their realm. They have set up watch parties to defend against excursions from Penendros' star, which has been under siege in the Sky World since time immemorial.

The Star Striders

"The old world is over, and the new stars will guide us."

The Star Striders are a small, informal group of heroes led by Danar Orelos. About five years ago, a man came to Dragon Pass from distant parts with news of a star god, Penendros. The description of the daimon fascinated Kallyr and some of her companions, for though he was known in Dara Happa as a Star Captain, they saw in him a relationship with their own Rigsdal. In the Darkness, it is said, the Star Captains took people into the Sky to teach them of fire, magic, and worship. Now that Sartar is facing its own Darkness, Kallyr believes that another such journey into the Sky is needed.

The Star Striders are a hero band formed by Kallyr to aid her in her Sky raid. Danar hopes that the quest will be the proving ground for his cult. Both he and Kallyr hope that during the raid Danar can re-establish contact with Penendros so that he can be worshipped again. They believe that he will be revealed to be a subcult of Rigsdal, but they cannot be sure until Danar returns from the sky to complete the rituals and sanctify the altar.

Actual Name: Bright Servants of Penendros.

Form: Star cult.

Cultural Context: Adventurous group of star worshippers who seek to create a new religion in a land dominated by storm-loving Heortlings.

Ideology: "Let us walk and learn the Sky together."

Look and Feel: Mystical alliance of dreamers and hard-nosed rebels.

Purpose: To travel in the sky and learn of its immortal secrets. To serve the Secrets of Heaven and assist in the seeding of the world that is yet to come.

Headquarters: Starlight Tower (more commonly known as Penendros' Tower), in the southern Grazelands.

Reactions: In Dara Happa, Penendros was once worshipped as a Star Captain, one of the subordinates of Polaris, but now its worship is formally proscribed, for reasons not clear to the Heortling rebels. The Lunar authorities at present seem to neither favor nor suppress the cult.

Resources

Leader: Danar "Skystrider" Orelos, a man who appears to have come from nowhere. He speaks neither of his past nor of his personal future. His allies know only that he seems entirely committed to uncovering the true nature of Penendros and establishing his worship. Despite his connections with the Rebellion, he seems to have no interest in its cause or objectives, though his affinity with Kallyr is obvious to all who see them together.

Renowned Members: Galar Skywatcher is a devotee of Rigsdal and a scholar of the Bright Empire of the Dawn Age. It is he who located the ruins of Penendros' original temple.

Although Kallyr Starbrow is closely associated with the band, she is not actually a member.

Membership: There are only eight inner members of the cult, and thus of the hero band. However, followers of these cult members respect and aid the band out of loyalty to their leaders.

Other Contacts: The Star Striders are inextricably linked with the Rebellion because of Kallyr's patronage of the group.

Organization

The Star Striders have no formal organization. At the band's current small size, the members see no need for a structure beyond their shared cause. In practice, Danar is the main voice within the band, but most members instinctively obey Kallyr.

Membership Keyword

Membership Requirements: None special.

Mundane Abilities taught: Mythology of Penendros, Star Lore.

Typical Personality Traits: Adventurous, Protective, Thoughtful, Wanderlust.

Magic: None taught.

Penendros the Star Captain (Guardian)

Penendros was a Star Captain who, for some reason unknown even to his followers, was cast out of Heaven. His followers kept his fortress intact, despite the Siege of Heaven, in hopes of his return someday.

Entry Requirements: None special.

Method: Emanation.

Form: A brightly glowing star gem embedded in Danar's forehead.

Communication: Danar and Penendros are in constant communication through the star gem.

Guardian Requirements: Never damage or destroy items made of or containing gold. Always worship Penendros on Skybirth Day (Wildday/Illusion Week/Dark Season) with sacrifices of birds.

Functions:

Awareness—Light the Way 5W2.

Blessing—Star Striding 2W2, Speak to Star Entity 19W.

Defense—Move Freely in the Sky World 17W.





The god stretches forth a hand, then reaches up to his own face and, without hesitation, plucks out his eye and holds it forth to Kallyr. The socket where the eye had been is now less luminous, almost murky instead of bright. Kallyr reaches forth, receives the eye as a gift, and places it upon her forehead. It glows in that place, just as the god glows, and at the same moment the murky gap in Rigsdal's countenance returns to radiance. The vision begins to fade, but Kallyr says, "Danar, now," and smiles at him sweetly. The young man nods, and concentrates intently upon the vision before him. Rather than dimming, it seems to stay, holding itself in an unnatural stillness. Kallyr speaks again.

"Sisters and Brothers, listen!" If the heroes look at her, they see she is struggling. But she keeps speaking, "Now is the time to strike! You have before you a great power, and if you have love of Sartar in your heart then look and take it." She is shaking now, and so is Daran, but she keeps speaking. "Place your hands there, in the radiance of God! Put your hands there and you will be able to see! Quickly!" The rebel leaders all do it; the heroes may or may not, let them decide, but quickly. Anyone who reaches into the vision comes out holding a ball of glowing light. The other rebel leaders place their own orbs into their foreheads, as Kallyr did. If the heroes do likewise, they receive another sense of perception beyond the normal human ken.

Kallyr and Daran soon stop struggling, and the moment they do the vision disappears completely. Both look a little weak, but they smile at each other and then continue the ceremony. The people who can See realize that many voices are singing alongside Kallyr and Danar. The sound of horns can be heard as well. As the songs and horns reach a crescendo, the familiar feeling of the Divine Realms fills the temple, the air, the sound, and everything everywhere.

The temple interior is not shabby now. Indeed, the chairs are of living firewood, their bright grain visible as flames to those who look. The runes are living gold. The shadow images on the walls are now shimmering beings, and it is they who sing. "Welcome to the House of Penendros," says Danar, "Welcome to the land of the Sky. Kallyr will take you to the Assembly Hall for refreshment while we prepare the next stage."

The visitors, all of whom are unused to being in a star or sky temple, are in something of a state of shock, though this will fade quickly. Remember that animist and wizardly heroes will take an alien world penalty while in the God World. Kallyr has been here before, and she leads the way out a door. Everyone follows, to find themselves inside Penendros' Fort. The situation is familiar, because everyone has a similar experience on Orlanth's holy days. This time, however, they are in a different god's house, and a different part of the God World.

What does this mean?

The heroes will very likely have little understanding of what has happened to them. Normally, people in the God World have limited perceptions. They see masses of people, but never individuals. The only individuals that are visible are gods and demigods powerful enough to project their identities. People are usually not powerful enough alone to be seen as individuals.

The vision that has been granted bypasses this limitation. The heroes with this gift can See. You do not need to tell them this. They ought to learn it on their own as you describe subsequent events. However, they will get their first clue from Ornerin, who comes to lead them to the Assembly. "You can see in the God World now," he says. "You can see in the God World, and will be able to for some time." No one knows just how long. No one knows exactly what it means. "We'll see!" he says, laughing. "We all look forward to it! Eye, eye!"

Scene 5: Penendros' Fort

Crossing from the temple interior to the Assembly takes the people through Penendros' celestial abode. It is a fortress city, made almost entirely of white stone that brightly reflects the light from overhead. The walls and pillars are decorated with various celestial motifs, but mostly with representations of grain. People go about their business as if in a normal city, but they are radiant, clad in white, immaculately clean, and seemingly serene.

The heroes have a brief chance to look around, if they wish to depart from the group. Here is a list of some interesting things that they might see.

- A hole in the ground. It is small, but when looked at closely it becomes large enough to enter. Peering into it, the heroes see a distant island, far below. [*This is the Green Age.*]
- A stone well, very old. It holds no water, but peering into it, the heroes can see a little world that is perfectly square, with a point rising up directly beneath the well. [*This is the Golden Age.*]
- An open trap door with a ladder leading down from it. Looking down the opening, the heroes can see the world, with many clouds and oceans washing and scudding back and forth. [*This is the Storm Age.*]
- A big gray stone slab. It is cold to touch, makes anyone who touches it feel sad, and has stained the ground nearby with gray grains. It cannot be moved. [*This is the blocked entry to the Darkness Age.*]
- A grain bin. It is full, overflowing. People are, in fact, continually taking grain out and loading it into large sacks that they put into carts. No one seems to be putting grain into the bin.
- The light overhead. The heroes may wonder, "What's that up there?" After all, everyone knows the Sky World is above the daily path of the Sun's chariot, so what makes the light here? There is no Sun, just a diffuse brightness. If viewed magically it can be seen to be Dayzatar, far above this world, the Sky of the Sky.
- The Faceless Mobs. Most of the time, the city is full of people who have little visible identity, even when looked at closely. It is the nature of this world to have such crowds as denizens. The Sky World is idealized, even unto the identities of its inhabitants. Those who received special vision during the ceremony, however, will be able to See individuals.
- The guardians. Several groups of guards are visible on the distant walls or on patrol of the streets. Most are human; others are winged humanoids of great height and beauty. These sons of the star god are his closest defenders, and they radiate power and confidence.
- The buildings. They are towering and lofty, regulated and pristine. There are, however, no signs, marks, or indications of what the buildings are. On close inspection, they seem to be made of fused white stone, with no visible seams. They are in fact made of the very star-stuff of the god; they are his bones and sinews.

The View from the Wall

From the wall of the fort, the land all around is visible for many miles. For as far as can be seen, the land is wide and flat, covered with incredibly thick fields of golden grain. Some roads, generally running in straight lines, extend into the vague distance.

Groups of enemy soldiers seem to be stationed at various points around the fort; vigilant guards watch them from the walls. The soldiers seem to be spear-wielding horsemen. If the heroes get a closer look (such as with magic), they will see that the soldiers do not ever dismount.

The Assembly Hall

Soon, messengers run through the streets shouting, "Assemble! Assemble!" It is obvious to the heroes where they need to go. The assembly hall is a wide, circular structure in the center of the city. It has no walls, but many pillars on the circumference hold up the ceiling. The hall is filled with the soothing sounds of harps. (This music heals any wounds anyone has, removes any sorrows of their earthly life for as long as they are in the Sky World, and creates a sense of comfort and well-being.)

Many other groups are waiting to meet the heroes in the assembly room, so that the force swells, seeming more than a thousand warriors strong. The allied groups are of many lands and peoples. There are Grazers, Tarshites, Heortlings, Esrolians, Praxians, and more, from all over the world. All have come together to aid in this great quest, each for their own reasons.

At last, Danar comes and addresses the assembled throng. "Prepare yourselves, gather your weapons. We are going to break the siege of the holy city of Penendros, so that we may travel the Sky World freely. Beware the strength of your foes, for they are celestial warriors and are not lightly overcome. Best prepare yourselves for a mighty struggle."

Kallyr gives last instructions to her leaders, who pass them on to the men. "Break out of the gates in groups of about 50 or so, and head for the ridge to the north of the city. We will assemble there and then progress past it as fast as possible. Any stragglers will be left behind, as there is no time to linger. We must stick together to have the strength to succeed."

Scene 6: The Star Journey

The party departs from Penendros' Fort. The thick fields of grain ripple from the tiny wind made by the opening of the gate. Immediately outside, a band of horsemen moves quickly to intercept the emerging warriors. Each group of the heroes' allies emerges from a different gate, and engages the forces nearby. As the parties close, the heroes see that their attackers do not look much tougher than regular humans, and are outnumbered.

The heroes will presumably follow orders and rush these fighters. At first, they will lead the attack on their chosen targets (everyone else is busy with their own opponents), but if they begin to lose the commanders will rush reinforcements to aid them and ensure victory. If the heroes have too easy a time in this battle, have them face the High Sky Leader as well.

The besiegers are an army of Sky folk levied from the surrounding cities and forts in this sparsely populated region of the Sky Realm. As such, the majority of the troops are lesser sky beings, but they are commanded by certami warriors (see *Anaxial's Roster*, page 192). They will fight fiercely and fanatically. If they are killed, their corpses remain mounted and horses bolt from the field nearly at the speed of light. Their escape is visible as narrow tracks through the fields of grain. Although the heroes might have local problems, the sally from the fort is successful, and the guards everywhere have fled.

A loud and defiant moaning sounds as Danar blows on an oversized bull-horn made of gold. He sounds the prearranged signal (which the heroes will recognize from the briefing at Ash Anvari), and all the attackers assemble quickly near him. "Take your places and march," he says.

Kallyr adds, "They will be after us. They will fight when they have sufficient force. No turning back." Then she and her household take off at an amazing speed, and soon they are off in the distance, far ahead of the rest of the army. (Javern Spit-horn and the movement specialists go her.)

The heroes' band sets off with the rest of the army across the terrain of the Sky World. It is clear to the heroes that the guardians were surprised.

Sky Spearmen

Significant Abilities: Flamespear feat 17**W**, Spear Fighting 2**W**2 (+5 against unmounted foes).

Sky Leader

Significant Abilities: Flamespear feat 5**W**2, Spear Fighting 10**W**2 (+5 against unmounted foes).

High Sky Leader Arrazalandu (Certamus)

Significant Abilities: Determined 10**W**2, Flaming Sword feat 12**W**2, Sword Fighting 10**W**3 (+5 against unmounted foes), Tactics 12**W**3.

Route Across the Sky

The Sky World is roughly mapped out by the stars and constellations of the sky. The journey of the raiders is across that map, though of course on the side of the sky above the Sky Dome.

Penendros' Star is in the Erkonus Cluster. The land is flat, and visibility extends many miles in every direction. Erkonus is the ancient home of all grains—all grasses, in fact. The army cuts a swath through the lush fields. Other forts are visible in the distance; the heroes are too far away to spot individuals, but activity is visible. Signal fires flare, flags of brightly burning colors are raised, and mirrors flash signals back and forth.

Note that this event is actually a fulfillment of the prophecy, "When the Grain blossoms." Kallyr and her army (including the heroes) are the new seeds, spreading from the Heart of Seeds.

A powerful Sky army is gathering, but the assault was unexpected. The scene is thus not a set battle, but a running fight, with celestial forces following along overhead and on the flanks, with one small band or another occasionally dashing close to loose fiery arrows or hurl blazing spears. Outriders will attempt to slow the group down; there should be at least two or three major battles with pickets and screens of the main Sky Host.

The first elements of this force will assault the raiders from above. A while after setting off across the Sky, the heroes see some lights, roughly human- and horse-sized, floating in the near distance. Several bands of warriors are visible closing in, each like a pod of hostile intent. Anyone can see that they are scorching with magic; their forms crackle and rain sparks all about. Farther away, for those who can see so far, are larger forces of warriors and an array of variously bright and shining creatures. They do not look to be as insubstantial as the previous attackers, and some are much closer.

The warriors draw close enough for the heroes to see them clearly. Do the heroes recognize them? [If the heroes have their own special celestial nemesis, use it here. Otherwise, it is a group similar to the ones they fought outside Penendros' Fort.] Finally, individual groups of Sky warriors peel off and rush in to attack.

Kallyr's forces cannot hope to defeat the entire Sky Host, it is not necessary. Their destination is actually near at hand. This will be a running battle to get there before the Sky forces can surround the group. Let the players choose the actions of the groups their heroes are in, using the resources and powers available to fend off attacks without slowing down or falling behind.

Celestial Magic

Other events occur that are too big for the heroes to fully understand. These should be scattered throughout the journey, interspersed between the attacks by celestial forces.

- A pulsating golden cloud in the distance closes quickly. Within it, many figures rush forward like a windstorm of light. Before it can come too near the group, however, mysterious bursts of light and sound assail and annihilate the cloud. *[Any heroes that were assigned to the anti-light forces may in fact participate in extinguishing this foe.]*
- The sky overhead (yes, the Sky of the Sky) begins to ripple the colors of the rainbow, each passing overhead like a wide swath that rises from the north and arches toward the south. The waves of color go from red to purple and back again; the second red lingers for a time and then fades slowly.
- The fields ahead blaze with golden flame, stopping the army in its tracks. To the heroes it is fiercely hot, but the grain seems unharmed. The only way through is to somehow blast a path in the earth with their magics or some other inventive stratagem—if it seems sensible enough, and the players roll well enough, they should succeed. Alternately, this is where Kallyr's water specialists come to the fore. Their commander shouts some orders, and each member pits his water powers against a resistance of 10W. Those who succeed form one big magical wave that surges forward and clears a pathway through the flames. Kallyr orders everyone forward, and the army again gets into motion.

The Great Gates

The chase goes on for some time, but at last the floating lights far ahead coalesce and get closer. The group's goal, the Great Port, is now visible and growing more so as each moment passes. With suitable drama, the raiders make it to the gates, and thundering upon their steeds, winds, and feet, they enter ahead of their pursuers. "Keep going," says Elusu, Kallyr's trickster.

"This way," says Kallyr, and off she goes. The heroes are in a large, busy city market square. Their abrupt appearance startles the residents, who are frightened at first. Then a huge woolly mammoth abruptly appears, sowing further panic among the mob. In the confusion, the raiders split up and mingle with the populace, heading for the great light visible in the east.

The heroes may learn later that Elusu made an illusion of a mammoth, but it was enough to shake immediate pursuit.

Scene 7: The Great Port of the Gate

The Great Port is a large city built of bright yellowish stone, mostly of flat-roofed one-story buildings. It has several huge courts, and wide roads that all lead to the harbor.

The usual inhabitants of the Great Port are Sky People, the mariners of the Celestial River. They ply their heavenly trade upon the river, visiting stars all along its length. Today, the population seems to have swelled, and great masses of people from all over Glorantha are streaming as one toward the harbor. The city folk gather, and the numbers in the docks grow to the tens of thousands who have come to participate in the ritual to bring back the Sky Ship.

This multitude is beyond the heroes' comprehension. There seem to be more people here than in all of Sartar, perhaps even more than in Nochet. The crowd appears faceless, though again heroes who can See can pick out individuals.

Where Are We?

As the heroes travel towards the harbor, they may well wonder where in the Otherworld they are. If any of the heroes can See, one of the citizens near them hears their question, and answers it in a friendly, lilting voice.

"This is the city of Princess Starry Eyes. If you tied rocks to your feet and jumped into the bay, you would sink until you reached the Styx.

"In the ancient days, Princess Starry Eyes lived on a small island. She was clever enough to settle an argument between two oceanic serpents, directing one into the Sky World and the other to hold up the Sky Dome. The two serpents were Sramak, the Outer Ocean, and Lorion, the Celestial River. Every year the three of them met at her island and sacrificed together. Princess Starry Eyes is so famous for her peacemaking that many other deities have come here to find comfort and relaxation."

The Old Harbor

The Old Harbor is a great bay that opens on one side to the ocean. Around it on three sides are the vast numbers of buildings of the Great Port. Two huge towers, both of red stone, rise spectacularly into the sky near the opening to the sea. A number of brightly colored sailing ships, and many more vessels without sails, are docked along the harbor or anchored in it.

The entire massive, pulsing crowd is bent toward one goal. Facing the dark waters of the bay, the assembled throng begins to sing as one. The energy of the song is palpable, and manifests as a series of ropes of golden energy pushing into the water. They seem to stretch and pull at something a mile into the bay. Eventually, as the numbers swell, the water stirs, almost as if it is boiling. Something like the back of a gigantic creature rises to the surface. The water cascades off it, creating massive waves that rock the ships in the bay and crash onto the shore. Some people are washed away, but the rest ignore them and sing on, tugging at their magical ropes. The broad back rolls over slowly and sinks. Sailors will recognize that upon the back was a keel, as if the thing was a ship, not a sea monster. More people join the ceremony. More power is added.

The myriad of voices swells, and the great hulk rises again from the waters. At first it looks like a small town, but it gradually becomes clear that it is the shattered superstructure of a ship. The hulk rises and seems to writhe, turning over and groaning horribly. It sinks once again, to the dismay of the crowd.

The heroes are now urged to join in the worship. "Sing," say the people. "Join with us or all is lost again!" The heroes know from previous spiritual experience that the song is a way of directing worship toward the strange thing. If they look around, they see that their leaders have already joined in the song, and are gesturing for the heroes to do the same. When they do, singing words and notes that they have never known before, the ship rises higher in the water and settles, wallowing. It stabilizes, and smaller ships rush out to help it. The golden ropes of worship pull it towards the docks. It moves swiftly and sleekly, cutting through the water towards where the heroes wait.

"Get ready," shouts Kallyr, and her lieutenants pass the words on. Elsewhere along the bay, similar commands are shouted in other languages, and many people tumble into boats or even swim toward the ship.

The ship touches the dock lightly, delicately, and the mob surges. Everyone who wishes to do so rushes on board. Some clamber over gangplanks, others ascend ropes hung over the gunwale, and still others thump onto the deck by jumping or flying. As each person comes aboard, the crewmembers shake a cloth over his or her head. Once that is done, the officers of

the ship become visible to the newcomers, who turn eagerly to them, awaiting orders. "Take an oar," command the officers. "You there, over here. Prepare to pull." Everyone obeys.

At the stern, where the rowers can all see, stands the deck officer, a giantess wearing the shirt and trousers of a sailor, her hair bound behind her head. "Lords and ladies of the universe," she shouts out, "we have stormed destiny. We stand upon the deck of a new world. For success, we must all stick together. The journey depends on us. Together, as one, we will change the world." She turns to her crew, who are bustling about upon the deck, making ready to cast off. "Set sails," she shouts. "Crew to the oars, prepare to pull to the beat." A drumbeat starts. "Now pull! Pull!"

The Great Ship trembles a moment as the oars seize the water, then slowly inches forward. With each stroke it pulls out farther. Along the encircling shore, the faceless crowd cheers madly. A flock of birds and winged beings of all kinds circles; when they flap their wings, wind fills the sails. The ship moves out, past the mouth of the harbor and into the current beyond.

Scene 8: On the Great Ship

Every so often, an officer comes along and orders certain oar crews to take a break. When their turn comes, the heroes may take the chance to wander about, looking around and trying to speak to the crew. No one will hinder them almost anywhere they go.

The ship seems to be over a mile long and more than 200 yards wide, but its size and shape vary depending on where one is standing on it. Its structure is amorphous; sometimes it seems to have three masts, at other times only one. Often it seems to have a single steering oar; at other times, two. Sometimes the thousands of oars are set in three banks, sometimes in two, and sometimes the ship has no oars at all.

The God World "blindness" affects almost everyone on the ship. The rowers are indistinguishable, and only the crewmembers appear to have any identity or personality. If the heroes can See, thanks to Kallyr's blessing, then they see first that the rowers are all very different from each other. Groups of people from



hundreds of places seem to be here, most of which the Sartarites have never seen or even heard about. Black men and women are here, and so are blue and orange ones, all in clothing beyond imagination. Some are not even human. Besides the elves and even trolls (!) that the heroes might expect to see, over here is a band of scaled things with rabbit-like heads, over there a person with a bee for a head, and so on. None of those people respond, being intent upon pulling their oars or performing other tasks (such as those dwarfs, who seem to be at work repairing parts of the ship). Each time the heroes look around the ship, even if they try to go to the same place, they see different people.

The ship's crew consists of two dozen efficient and brisk sailors who rush about lashing down cargo, running up rigging, and performing other tasks. None of the heroes can identify where they come from, and most people assume they are gods.

The officers are confident and set to their tasks, and are more individual. To the average observer, their identities seem wrapped up in their tasks, which they perform efficiently. They are colorful individuals, obviously of some personal power and sacred prestige, though perhaps archetypal and dull. However, they will not generally converse while working, and they do not seem to take breaks. (See page 60 for descriptions.)

It is possible for worshippers of certain deities to see past the officers' divine duties, which conceal their individuality, to learn more about their identities. The narrator should remember that any such revelations are obvious only to the individuals so empowered. Others generally will not be convinced of the certainty of the observation at all even if told about it.

The Forbidden Door

One interior section of the ship is utterly isolated. Only one door is visible into it, and several burly warriors always guard it attentively. If they are tricked or otherwise caused to desert their post, Commander Gold appears. Although he and the guards seem to go through the entry easily, it is obviously heavily defended with magic, and the heroes cannot pass through it. In fact, people live beyond the Forbidden Door. This adventure does not deal with them, though. At various times, sounds of happiness, sorrow, or boredom come from the far side of the wall.

The Hold

The Hold is below decks—the *only* part of the ship below decks that the heroes can reach. It is huge, and full of animals. They are not caged, and are actually in a stasis-like state, sort of like museum pieces. The menagerie here includes many animals that are not known in modern Glorantha, at least not to the heroes' culture. In fact, the cargo includes creatures that do not exist outside of this ship. They are a curiosity, and narrators are left to use these unusual resources as they see fit.

Scene 9: Sailing the Sky River

Once the ship clears the Old Harbor, it sails out onto what seems to be the ocean. Before long, however, the heroes should realize that somehow it has actually started sailing across the Sky, along the Celestial River. Over the course of two "days," it passes what would be seen from the Inner World as significant constellations and planets, but which here are places and powerful beings.

Near Flowers

A huge field of giant flowers, each 100 yards high, covers one side of the river. They are even bigger than the ones in the Vale of Flowers near Dragon Pass. Their odor is delicious; it makes some people giddy. As the ship draws close, a group gathers near

Did You See the Colossal Man?

So ask many people. This phenomenon is sometimes sighted upon departure from the Eastern Gates. They refer to a shadow or outline of a colossal person, whose feet are in the city and whose head stretches to the arch of the sky. It is a momentary glimpse at best. Most do not see it. Did you? [Have the players write down their answer, whatever it is, on their character sheet.] The vision is actually of the Young God, a deity who is said by some to be a planet, by others to be the first constellation the Ship will pass as it sails the Sky River.

the railing to watch. Without warning, one band leaps almost as one over the side. They strike out swimming, some pulling others, towards the flowers. Those who can See know they are elves.

"No!" shouts the Deck Officer. "Come back! Our success depends on everyone helping!" But the swimmers don't even pause, and are soon left behind as the ship goes on. No one senses any change in the ship's motion, but those who can See can now see that some of the oars are no longer manned. If too many people leave, what will happen to the ship?

Attack by Starry Horde

From the riverside come the hosts of heaven who oppose the sailing of the great ship. They attack from boats, and seek to slow the ship down with arrows of huge proportion fired into the sides of the ship and held fast with ropes of gold. Angelic warriors attack, as do a horde of flaming horse riders who gallop up the immense ropes to attack the defenders.

Despite the vast number of people on the ship, most are needed to continue manning the oars, so only a small number of defenders are available. Despite their power, the defense is sorely pressed when another army arrives; happily, this time they are the Angels of Antirius, who have come to aid the ship. They quickly rout the attackers, who are extinguished in the river or return to the bank and flee.

Angelic Warriors

Significant Abilities: Close Combat 18W3.

Armor and Weapons: Enchanted celestial armor +8, enchanted celestial sword +8.

Magic: Flaming Spear feat 12W2, Flaming Sword feat 15W2.

Flaming Horse Riders

Significant Abilities: Close Combat 18W3 (3W4 when fighting mounted against footmen), Flamespear 10W2.

Armor and Weapons: Enchanted celestial armor +8, enchanted celestial sword +8.

Magic: Flaming Spear feat 12W2, Flaming Sword feat 15W2.

Orlanth Overhead

A huge storm passes overhead. It looks like an Ohorlanth storm cloud rumbling in, with rams at its fore and lightning all around it. Every initiate knows it: this is Orlanth. It grows as dark as night, and even heroes who can See can barely see around them. Rain begins to fall, and the heroes hear thunder loud overhead.

Suddenly, lightning flashes upward from the ship, and the heroes who can See see the faces of the other beings around them. For just a moment they can see those they know to be their foes. Heroes who have encountered Andrega Silverflame recognize her. Most of the rank and file members do not seem to be here, just the officers and magicians. They are certainly tough, probably tougher than the heroes. More lightning crashes down

upon the ship from the clouds. The heroes look up, and when they look back to the deck the foes are gone. Were they really there at all, the heroes wonder?

Commander Gold stands in the foredeck and shoots an arrow at the cloud. Where it strikes a wound opens, and from it silver lightning begins to run as if it were blood. Another blast knocks Commander Gold off his feet, but he fires again from the ground. Lighting scorches the arrow.

Then loud, thunderous drumming roars from the opposite direction, off to the left. Those who look toward the source of the noise see a fiery red spot, hurtling closer. The storm departs from the ship, and as it rises towards the planet initiates see it coalesce into Orlanth in the great Mastakos chariot drawn by Crisis and Rage, Orlanth's divine steeds.

In the distance, the two gods strike as their chariots pass by, each hurling their bolts without effect. Orlanth continues on, but the red chariot comes closer. Even the Heortlings recognize that it is Shargash, the Dara Happan god of death and destruction, whom the heroes know in their own myths as Jagrekriand.

Shargash Approaches

Shargash appears as a great god in a huge chariot, with spiky red flames and thunder emanating from it. He too attacks the ship. From the sides of his chariot leap the Lords of Destruction, who plummet down like meteors to attack the defenders of the ship. Commander Gold fires his planet-breaking bow at the god.

The Lords of Destruction are demigods of the Red Planet. They land as individual meteors, smash right through the deck, and a moment later spring out of the burnt hole to kill and destroy everything in their paths. It would seem to be suicide to attack them, and so it is. Thus, narrators should have heroes that do so thrown aside by glancing blows or otherwise prevented from taking serious harm.

The melee continues for several rounds, then Commander Gold looses an arrow that breaks a wheel of the chariot. Shargash roars in anger, but he lashes his horses and they drag him from the scene. A new drumbeat sounds, and his Lords of Destruction break off their combat and follow him.

The Officers of the Great Boat

The Deck Officer

This 15' tall young giantess is stocky and strong, and not unattractive. She wears her hair in a pair of big braids coiled atop her head. She carries a club and a knife at her sides, strapped to her legs. She is restless, always going back and forth to check ropes, encourage rowers, and oversee the crewmen on their jobs.

Significant Abilities: Defend Her Ship 10W2, Large 10W, Throw Foe Overboard 5W4.

Sounder, the Bowline Woman

At the bow of the ship stands Sounder, the Bowline Woman. She is humanlike, but with very big, blank eyes and an extremely thin build. Her skin is gold, like glossy metal, and shines from within. She appears ageless and extremely delicate, but she has incredible balance. Over her shoulder hangs a length of golden cord. One end, sporting a heart-shaped plumb bob, always dangles from her hand; if the heroes look closely, they see that the other end of the rope merges into her body, as if it is a part of her.

Sounder tends to stay at the bow, where she does her only work. Every so often, the Deck Officer orders her to check the depth. When working the bowline, Sounder skips out to the tip of the bow with her delicate gold cord looped in her left hand. She tosses her twirling plumb out, where it splashes into the water and sinks incredibly fast. She plays the rope out expertly, and seems to know exactly when it touches bottom, whereupon she shouts out the depth beneath the keel. She is incredibly adroit, and can do this task even in a storm.

Significant Abilities: Restrain Target with Cord 2W2.

Lady Pig

Lady Pig is the caretaker of the animals. She has a human body but a pig's head. She wears a large peasant dress and is modest, so the row of teats along her abdomen will appear only if looked for. Lady Pig is friendly, and well meaning, but a bit slow. She will not allow anything to happen to her charges in the Hold; if her animals are threatened she will squeal, bringing forth a variety of guards, such as Commander Gold and his warriors, or a force of exotic animals, awake and eager to defend their mistress.

Commander Gold

Commander Gold is a man of supernatural proportions. He wears a gold breastplate and helmet, and bears a gold short sword, shield, and bow. He is really big, and obviously of tremendous fighting power. He appears only if people persist in trying to get past the guards at the Forbidden Door, or if the ship is attacked by major foes. He states simply, "You may not go past this door, so please go where you will enjoy yourself. Try that exit." 'That exit' leads to the Hold, and is one way. Once through, the door disappears and cannot be found, trapping the offenders below deck.

Significant Abilities: Fiery Bow 10W4, Repel Boarders 13W3, Solar Magic 20W5, Strong 10W2.

Armor and Weapons: Gold breastplate, helmet, and shield +8, gold short sword +8, gold bow +8.

The Exalted Guest

A green-skinned man (recognizeable to some as a Waertagi) dressed entirely in green seems to do nothing at all but watch. Like most others on the ship, he is not interested in speaking about himself. He is concentrating to make sure that the ship continues on its journey, and cannot risk being distracted from the success of this great voyage. If he is ever convinced to say anything, it is just this: "Oh, I designed these things, and they invited me along to watch." The deck officers call him "the Admiral."

Significant Abilities: Repel Enemy's Spell 20W3.

The Steersman

A grim, tight-jawed, utterly silent figure wrestles constantly with a huge steering oar, acting as if there is a tremendous storm even when the river is calm. He has no time to speak to anyone, being utterly intent upon steering the ship. This is actually Dormal, easily recognized by any of his worshippers (which includes almost all sailors in Glorantha).

The Captain

The captain stays in the cabin and does not show himself at all during this entire voyage. No one will ever see him in this story, and so they cannot discover that this is neither Luku (Lukarius) nor Vendeni, but the Dara Happan flood hero named Anaxial.

A Hippo Appears

The Great Celestial River Hippo contests the ship's passage. A gray-skinned creature with very long whiskers and a huge mouth full of crooked teeth rises out of the water. It is almost as large as the ship, and has an army of fat, hippo-headed warriors on its back. It makes a great noise, a roaring sound with consonants. Most people stare at it expectantly; many get their weapons ready. The hippo does not do anything, though, except continue to bellow. At length, one of the jewel-browed Star Strider warriors, resplendent in his glistening blue armor, draws a sword and leaps atop the gunwale. He shouts something back that incenses the creature. It roars as the hippo-headed warriors swarm to attack the boat.

Meanwhile, the Star Strider finishes his speech, jumps over the side, and lands atop the water. The creature bellows and charges, its feet churning the water up in to a white froth. The man gets up and charges across the water at the monster. His magic makes three imitations of himself leap ahead onto the creature, which swallows two and wrestles the water into more froth. Finally, the real warrior leaps into the fray. The froth turns red and green, and the fight disappears below the surface. No one sees the Star Strider or the hippo rise again.

Hippo-headed Warriors

Significant Abilities: Bellow and Smash feat 10W2, Spear Fighting 10W2.

Armor and Weapons: Thick hide +4, gaping maw +4, spear +4.

The Great Celestial River Hippo

Significant Abilities: Bellow and Smash 15W4, Gore 17W3, Large 17W5, Strong 18W3, Tough 15W3.

Armor and Weapons: Thick hide +10, gaping maw +12.

Flying Frogs

A watchman shouts out a warning: "Flying frogs approaching fast!" In the marsh of the Celestial River live some parts of the Sky Terror (a powerful Chaos monster defeated by Orlanth in the Great Darkness). Pieces of that invader rained down on Glorantha or were left in the Sky when it was dismembered, and these frogs are just one of many such monsters.

Sky Terror Frogs

These big-headed, mottled brown-and-tan frogs have large flaps between their limbs. If anyone starts shooting arrows or magic at them, they will dive down into the water. They attack by leaping in and out of the water.

Significant Abilities: Glide 8W, Leap Long Distance 5W3, Strong 10W2, Swim 10W, Tongue and Bite 8W2.

Armor and Weapons: Tough skin +6, bite +6, tongue +6.

Islands Ahead

Ahead, a cluster of islands becomes visible. They look like a range of hills. As the ship draws closer, everyone sees that they are actually the carcass of a vast dragon, lying in scattered pieces in the river.



Rat Hunting

A figure cloaked entirely in purple stands by the heroes for a long moment. It waits for the heroes to speak first. Have the heroes make perception rolls to notice the figure. If they all fail, the figure will draw their attention by speaking the name of the lead hero.

Those who have met him before know it is Minaryth Purple. He says, "This place is crawling with our enemies. You saw them too, I know. Kallyr wants to kill them before they find us. This place is too large, we can't find everyone. Come with us. We have a sword job here. We'll move in and kill them or throw them overboard."

Minaryth leads the heroes then to another figure who, as anticipated, proves to be Kallyr. She looks at the group, perhaps dubiously, but says, "In ambush, mice kill lions. Now is the time to prove yourselves good Orlanthi. Come with me, and when I give the word, attack ruthlessly and with maximum effort. You will have one chance to kill them. Do you understand?" She waits a moment to be sure the heroes will do as she says.

She and Danar then lead the party toward a batch of rowers. If they can See, the heroes should be looking for the foes they saw before. Before long, Kallyr and Danar stop with the heroes. The two join hands, and the stars in their foreheads begin to glow, sweeping a light across the rowers that lets even those who could not See before See now. The light briefly reveals each shadow figure as an identifiable man or woman. Those the light touches do not seem to notice it, or to See the heroes or Kallyr.

After just a moment, Kallyr will quietly point out Andrega Silverflame and her companions, whom the heroes may have noticed earlier. Danar says, "Get ready. These are the ones you must kill. Kallyr and I will take care of Hathdaran."

The heroes have enough time to prepare two actions. Then Kallyr looks at the men again, and keeps the light shining on them while the heroes strike. Everyone gets one unopposed strike against their chosen target. If the heroes do not kill or disable their opponents with one action, they are in big trouble. Now the defenders can See the heroes and fight back.

It gets worse. After only a few blows, the crew of the ship converges quickly on the fight, led by Commander Gold. They do not waste any time, but fall upon the heroes with tremendous force (and large AP bids). Their objective is to get everyone who is fighting off the ship and into the water, whether alive or dead.

Attack the heroes with a few crewmen first, and let them go man to man in an extended contest. They will probably win this fight. Then the heroes are each attacked by a whole group of crewmen, backed up by one of the leaders. It should quickly become apparent that the heroes cannot win this fight—they will die if they cannot escape.

Kallyr and her companions join in on the heroes' side, and foremost in the fight is Danar. In the end, though, the best efforts are in vain, because the crew is simply too tough. Heroes will fall and be dragged along by companions or strangers. Kallyr and her defenders are driven to the gunwale, and then attackers begin to throw everyone over the side, both living and dead. At one point, Kallyr is held tightly in the grip of two crewmen, struggling so fiercely that Commander Gold himself starts moving towards her. Danar sees this and launches himself at the two holding her, knocking one of them down. The other tosses Kallyr overboard and grabs Danar. Then two or three others drive spears through him, one chops off his head, and another chops off his legs.

If any heroes did not go along on the surprise murdering expedition, they still hear the fight and see their companions

in trouble. If they rush to help, they are treated as above. If they do not rush to help, they remain on the ship, and the narrator is on her own to describe what happens to people who abandon their friends, relatives, and companions. The ship goes on, out of the story now. It sails upon Underworld rivers back to the Dawn Gates, and repeats its journey every eight days—despite the people who left or were thrown off, the ship had enough rowers and defenders to ensure its place in the heavens once more.

Crewmen

Significant Abilities: Drive Enemy to the Gunwale 10W2.

Scene 10: The Dragon Isles

If the heroes cannot swim and help others, then they will be helped by those who can. As they draw close to the islands, the fact that these are parts of a dragon carcass—huge chunks of flesh and bone—is even more apparent than it was from the deck of the ship. A torso is visible, chopped off from head and gut, its wing stubs still bloody. The gore is stark. It stinks, as if it has been rotting for eternity. It is huge, as if its body was as large as a mountain.

The party swims towards the closest island. Waves throw everyone onto the beach, which looks and feels as though it is made of cinders, though it is actually coagulated blood. A sound like a slow, rolling drum beat is audible. People are scattered up and down the grinding beach.

Dragon Attitudes

Ask the players, "How do you feel about dragons?" Three categories are possible: hostile, afraid, or friendly. Let people discuss things a bit, then ask them to look at their character sheets, homeland, and clan history. Ask them, "Does anyone have *Hate Dragons*, *Fear Dragons*, or *Avoid Dragons*? If so, you are feeling very bad right now. This IS dragons. You have instincts and powers, and they are at work right now. The emotions are almost overpowering."

"You all washed up near to each other at the beach. You are standing around discussing this. Other knots of people are nearby doing the same thing."

Let people discuss things a bit more and ask questions.

"What's that noise?"

That noise is coming from inside the islands. Let the heroes try some perception rolls. If successful, they recognize the "drum-beat" to be a heartbeat on what must be a huge scale. The heart is alive. The dragon is alive. [Anyone who is successful gets a +5 to *Hate Dragons* or *Fear Dragons*.]

"What are other people doing?"

The other groups seem to be discussing among themselves, much like you are. As you watch, a group approaches you. They have the same problems about this being a dragon place. They are disturbed, angry, perhaps even fearful. Discussion follows, and the crowd sorts itself into those who want to fight, those who want to go away, and those who are uncommitted.

"Let's ask Orngerin," says someone, eventually. Can someone locate him? The now larger knot of people moves his way.

Orngerin welcomes those he knows, but treats this like it is a battle. He takes a quick poll among the whole party, weighing each vote. Finally, he says, "We're getting out of here. I will tell Kallyr. Come." The group follows Orngerin to where Kallyr stands at the center of another crowd.

Kallyr Listens

The whole force of survivors is now gathered on the dark beach around Kallyr. She and two of her companions are there, with Minaryth and Orlaront behind them, almost out of sight inside the cavernous trachea of the dragon. Other members of the Iron Ring are there, too. Orngerin and other faction leaders are present. *[If any hero specifically asks about Danar, he cannot be seen anywhere.]*

Kallyr asks for dispositions, also using battlefield language. Orngerin says he wants to retreat. Minaryth makes a motion at that. Another rebel faction leader says the same, and Minaryth makes another motion. Another leader says he wants to fight. "I would hear the voice of every one of us," Kallyr says. Every individual now gets to voice his opinion on this issue.

It is likely that the player band will want to stay and support Kallyr. This is their chance to resist fate. Each person rolls against his or her own *Hate Dragons*, *Fear Dragons*, or *Avoid Dragons* rating, and the collective results add to their leader's success or failure. Most people offer no resistance of their own, and so will fail the contest (and thus opt to depart). The heroes can roll individually, or can select a leader and support him, one way or the other. Regardless, whatever they do affects those people around them, including Orngerin. If they fail and leave, then Orngerin gets the blame for going away. If they stay, Orngerin stays as well, and again gets the credit.

Contest: Hate Dragons

Appropriate Abilities: Hate Dragons, Fear Dragons (–10), Avoid Dragons (–10).

Typical Modifiers: Brave (+5), Foolhardy (+5), Lack of Leaders (–10).

Resistance: 10W3.

Complete Victory: You need to go and kill this thing.

Major Victory: You want to go and kill this thing.

Minor or Marginal Victory: You hate it, but you will wait and see.

Tie or any Defeat: You are so scared; you must get out of here!

We recommend that everyone exit this story at this stage. Kallyr goes on to speak with the dragon, but her actions most likely occur offstage. After all, the heroes have no guarantee that Kallyr or those who follow her will survive. The heroes have already done a great job and will be honored for it. The story they were asked to help with, raising the Sky Ship, is over, and they succeeded. Why should they risk a frightening, terrible death for something they probably would not even understand? After all, this is dragon magic, which means it is nonsensical. Besides, there is nothing for them to do here—they do not speak draconic, and they are not in a position to make any decisions. All they can do is watch.

Still, it is possible that the heroes accompany Kallyr into the corpse, instead of fleeing with the main body of the raiders. Even if they do not, the survivors later speak of what happens (as told in the box to the right), and this eventually becomes common knowledge.

Fly Away Home

The vote is overwhelming, and the mass of the army decides to return home. They assemble quickly into a square on the beach. The surf pounds on one side, the heart of the dragon on the other. Kallyr thanks them, gives them her blessing to go safely, and then Minaryth makes the motion again. As one, the people leap into the air and fly like Orlanth, whirling off up into the sky.

Speaking to the Dragon

After the others are gone, Kallyr turns to one of her party named Orlaront Dragonfriend. "You take the lead," she says. He turns and begins to move down into the open throat of the dragon, moving in a strange, dance-like fashion that he continues the entire time they are inside the dragon, never stopping even when he must fight or speak. Kallyr and the others follow.



Serpents drop from overhead as the last person enters the throat. They are easy to kill, but then turn into blood that soaks their foe's armor and clothing and then attacks with an ability of *Burning* 10W3. If the blood wins, the affected character dies in the Sky World and finds himself falling to earth, where he will find himself in Penendros' Temple. The survivors go on. As the party goes deeper, the beating gets louder. It is slow and deeply resonant.

At one point, the travelers sink into a quagmire of blood and viscera. At another, a landslide of rocks tries to crush them, but Javern Spithorn manages to whisk everyone ahead of it, and it only cuts off their way back. Dragonewts appear, and the Grazers fight them while the leaders (including Jandetin) take another route. Many of the Grazers are exterminated in the first attack, and the remainder are hard-pressed.

At last, the party stands in the immense cavern of a dried-out gullet. An entire wall moves ever so slightly in time with the drumbeat. This is the heart wall, and the drum is beating.

Orlaront knows the correct way to contact the dragon, whose vital powers still live in its heart. He performs the proper ceremony, and communicates with the dragon. He speaks the inhuman language, making strange gyrations and movements as he does, sometimes seeming to do nothing as he communicates. This is the ancient dragon speech that was known within the EWF and never since. Only Orlaront, of all beings alive, knows what this tongue is.

After a time he halts, makes obeisance, and begins to back out. "Come on," he says. Outside he turns to Kallyr and says, "It is done." Anyone who looks closely at Orlaront notices that he is very pale. He glances once at Minaryth and then down at the ground. He stumbles as he walks, as if very tired, and Kallyr and one of her companions help him stand as the party departs from the innards.

The return is uneventful, as if all opposition has stopped. The party quickly reaches the islands again, and leaves.

If the Heroes Go

If the heroes do accompany Kallyr, you will need to give them more detail of the journey. Describe the inside of the dragon just as if the heroes were walking inside the corpse of a giant monster—flesh, blood, organs, and bone make up the "caves" that they are moving through.

While inside the dragon, the heroes will be assaulted not just by the serpents and dragonewts mentioned above, but also by the searing hatred of all the dragons slain by Orlanth and his kin. The heroes can feel this hatred grow stronger the longer they are inside the dragon, and they may even see dream images that assault them and their beliefs. The first time this occurs, the heroes will probably move to strike at these images, but Orlaront shouts out a quick, "No!" and Kallyr warns the heroes not to defend themselves, or the entire quest will be in jeopardy. If the heroes do not strike, these images cannot harm them.

Once the dragon has made its deal with Kallyr (through Orlaront), the hatred and images cease to plague the group.

If the heroes are part of this group, they fly higher and higher until the ground disappears. Then Elmalandti Bluespruce, the best flyer there, leads the group in a turn, and now everyone dives, hurtling down toward the distant ground that grows suddenly visible.

It is a green square afloat in blue.
It is a continent surrounded by water.
It is the whole of Dragon Pass.
It is the Dragonspine Hills.
It is the Temple of Penendros.

Denouement

Finally, the flyers land and can look about at the temple. It is in utter ruin. The walls have been burnt down. The altar stone is smashed. Maggots infest the libation bowl and blessing twigs. A corpse lies atop the toppled statue of the god; both corpse and statue are shattered, head and legs broken off. Clouds of flies blacken the gaping wounds. Even the ground all around the temple is burnt and blackened, and a few corpses of defenders and attackers are quickly found.

The corpse atop the broken statue is that of the high priest, Danar. He is dead and his temple destroyed. Whatever power he hoped to gain for his cult is gone, never to return.

Orngerin says he will wait here until Kallyr returns. Others decide they cannot—they are worried about their families, for they think they have failed on a heroquest and their clan may have suffered for it. Some think they have betrayed Kallyr by succumbing to their fear of dragons. Some are hurt and want to find better healing. Many people depart.

Grazeers are scarce among the returned heroquesters. Two days after the return of the Orlanthi, many of the Grazer warriors come back. They appear out of nowhere, riding on a

golden road that descends from midair to the ground, and then they begin circling the camp.

They rein in and dismount, tired and bloody.



"Fighting in the gullet wasn't the right thing," they say. They are proud of having tried to fight, but also a bit ashamed at having lost. No one kids or teases them, for everyone here has some of that same shame.

Five days later, Kallyr, Jandetin, and the other leaders return, swooping down upon a gale that blows in from the north. They tell their tale briefly, as given in "Speaking to the Dragon" (page 63), and are generally very pleased. However, they will not give details of the adventure.

Despite her pleasure at the success of the mission, Kallyr notes that Orngerin is still a bit hesitant. She asks him what is wrong. "Some people," he says, "are afraid that they have failed on this quest, and that they or their kin will suffer for it."

"Failed? Not on my journey," she says. "What failure?"

"When we abandoned the beach," he says.

"That was no failure," says Kallyr. "You were asked to raise the ship. Once that was done, everything you did was a bonus. The ship sailed, haven't you seen it?" She points to the Celestial River that winds across the sky. Amidst it, low in the eastern sky, moves a pale blue body. "A new planet," she says, "that you helped to raise. That, my friends, is a great success for you!"

"Thank you for reminding me," says Orngerin. If anyone watching has met Orngerin before, they see he already knew those things, but was asking aloud for the benefit of everyone else. "And we see that you, too, on your journey succeeded?"

"Yes, old friend. The dragon spoke to us. The old world is over." She is clearly pleased. "Now, where is Danar?" she asks.

Everyone is silent, and for a moment Kallyr's normally stern demeanor fails. She is surprised—it is clear to everyone. She was there, but she didn't know. For just the smallest moment a twitch of sorrow crosses her face, but she looks away, at Minaryth, who returns her gaze impassionately. "Show me," she says.

If the heroes follow to watch they will see her actually weep, then pick up the body and go off with it. Minaryth watches a moment, then follows. Orngerin keeps anyone else from going. "Go gather firewood," he says, "if you want to be useful now."

A god-talker, or someone else versed in the relationships of gods and men, may be able to determine what has occurred. Danar is dead and the temple is burnt. This was a new cult and, it appears, this quest was to be Danar's creation story. But it clearly failed. "It's not easy to become immortal."

Danar is burned with Orlanthi rites; Kallyr tries to add a starry element through her prayers to Rigsdal. No one knows the real words to the Penendros funeral rites. The body burns well, and not even the tiniest piece of bone is left among the ashes when Kallyr calls the Defender Wind to take them away.

Results

Afterwards, everyone returns to their business. Orngerin organizes his followers to return to Sartar. The heroes may go along, remain in the Grazelands (perhaps to seek the Vendref that they trained earlier), or strike out on adventures of their own. The heroes gain normal hero points for the adventure.

Some heroes may have taken weapons or armor from foes they defeated in the Sky World, and they find that these work just as well in the Inner world as they did in the Sky.

Each hero who was able to "See" in the Sky World can spend a hero point to gain a *Star Eye* ability. The hero may choose to take this ability as a feat, charm, spell, or talent. Devotees of Rigsdal (or any other celestial deity) may take the feat as part of an appropriate affinity. Other heroes gain the magic as part of their common magic keyword. (Remember that heroes who have concentrated their magic may use all of their remaining common magic abilities actively.)

Insterid Fire Eyes

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 6 \mathbb{W} 2, Initiate of Vinga the Avenger 16 \mathbb{W} (Combat, Inspire Non-Combatants, Movement).

Significant Abilities: Close Combat 10 \mathbb{W} 2, Star Eye feat 5 \mathbb{W} .

Equipment: Bronze scale and shield +5, spear +3, sword +3, javelins +3.



Elusu Sit Here

Keywords: Bonded Eumal Trickster 4 \mathbb{W} , Heortling Stickpicker 5 \mathbb{W} .

Significant Abilities: Don't Sit Here feat 17, Escape Pursuit 12 \mathbb{W} , Trickster Magic 4 \mathbb{W} .

Notes: Elusu is noisy and clinging, and is always underfoot, causing a -14 penalty to any attempt by Kallyr to use stealth or combat abilities.



Contest Synopsis

Ambush (Kallyr): 2 \mathbb{W} 2 (42 AP)

Close Combat (Offir): 14 \mathbb{W} 3 (228 AP)

Ranged Combat (Offir): 4 \mathbb{W} 3 (182 AP)



Offir Swiftsword

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 7 \mathbb{W} 2, Initiate of Destor Adventurous 17 \mathbb{W} (Combat, Movement, Wind).

Significant Abilities: Close Combat 10 \mathbb{W} 2, Ranged Combat 10 \mathbb{W} 2, Star Eye feat 15.

Equipment: Enchanted leather armor and shield +6, spear +3, iron sword +6, 3 iron javelins +6.



Ernaldesta the Vigorous

Keywords: Heortling Steadwife 10 \mathbb{W} 2, Initiate of Enferalda 8 \mathbb{W} 2 (Endurance, Heal People, Heal Relationships).

Significant Abilities: Bow and Arrows 17, Cleaver 15, Make Camp 15 \mathbb{W} 2, Star Eye feat 13.

Equipment: Kitchen cleaver +1, bow and arrows +2.



Kallyr Starbrow

Initiate of Dar the Queen 15 \mathbb{W}

Affinities: \mathbb{W} Lead Tribe



Other Significant Abilities: Brilliant Inspiration 7 \mathbb{W} 3, Guerrilla Warfare 7 \mathbb{W} 2, Heortling Warrior 9 \mathbb{W} , Loyal to Followers 15 \mathbb{W} 2, Loyal to Kingdom of Sartar 10 \mathbb{W} 2, Spear and Shield Fighting 14 \mathbb{W} 2, Star Eye feat 7 \mathbb{W} 2, Starry Love 1 \mathbb{W} , Stern 15 \mathbb{W} , Sword and Shield Fighting 3 \mathbb{W} 2.

Special Items: Iron scale armor and shield +7, spear +3, sword +3, javelins +3, Starbrow 7 \mathbb{W} 2.

Marks: Kallyr's red hair and stern demeanor would make her noticeable, but the bright star-like gem that blazes in her forehead immediately captures the attention of all who see her. She seems distant to most people, and always speaks in the definite: not "I hope..." or "try to..." but "this will happen..." and "you will...."

Personal Augments:

- † Combat affinity (+4 to any fighting or combat skill)
- Elusu Sit Here (-14 to all ambush, fighting, and combat skills)
- \mathbb{W} Lead Tribe affinity (+4 to Inspire Followers)
- Starbrow (+5 to Inspire Followers or any Rigsdal magic)
- ☞ Vigilance affinity (+5 to Guerrilla Warfare)



Personal Time

The Rebellion

Member of the Iron Ring of Sartar 17 \mathbb{W} 2



Initiate of Vinga Rigsdal 7 \mathbb{W} 2

Affinities: † Combat 20 \mathbb{W} ,
☞ Movement 15 \mathbb{W} ,
* Vigilance

Queen of the Kheldon Tribe 12 \mathbb{W}
(exiled by Lunars)

Kallyr Starbrow (1624)

Kallyr, Queen of the Kheldon Tribe, is the acknowledged leader of the Rebellion in Sartar. She has continued to gain power since the victory at the Battle of Iceland. She still inspires fanatical loyalty, and now that she has brought hope to the people of Sartar she is even more revered, seeming almost divine to many people.

Statistics for Kallyr Starbrow were published in *Orlanth is Dead!*, page 39. They represent her abilities in the year 1622, at the time of the Battle of Iceland. Her statistics here reflect the two years that have passed since that event. Although some of her abilities have increased, more significant are her religious changes. In 1622, her primary commitment was to Dar the Queen, as befit her role as the Queen of the Kheldon Tribe. Since then, her primary initiation has shifted to Rigsdal, whom she worships as a subcult of Vinga (rather than of Orlanth Allfather).

Adapting and Extending “The Sky Ship”

“The Sky Ship” details one of the **great events** of history—the raising of the great Sky Ship back into the sky. A great event is an event that will occur in Glorantha (and *HeroQuest*) with a pre-determined outcome. The results outlined in the adventure—regardless of the heroes’ victories or defeats—are ordained. They are a critical part of the greater “Hero Wars Campaign,” and future books will assume that it played out exactly as written.

Such cosmic events typically occur only when many different peoples and entities are working towards a similar purpose, though often they do not know that they are working on similar projects until they occur. Sometimes they occur when peoples are working with different but cosmically complementary goals. The Sunstop is the best known example of this—none of the participants necessarily intended for the Sun to stop in the sky, but all of their great acts of magic combined together to produce that amazing event. As the Hero Wars occur, a number of events similar in scope to the Sunstop will occur.

It is the nature of legends to name the greatest heroes and best known warriors. However, it is a fact that many ordinary people have always helped, hindered, or otherwise participated in these great events. Certainly millions helped to cause the Sunstop with their prayers, and perhaps hundreds were key participants who “happened” to be in just the right place at the just right time to have a significant effect. *HeroQuest*’s great events are chances for player heroes to be among those hundred or so key players in one or more of the cosmic incidents.

The raising of the Sky Ship, like many such events, includes participants from many lands. Although this adventure has been written with Heortling members of the Rebellion as the focus, it is clear that heroes from other homelands could easily participate in this great quest. Narrators running campaigns focusing on other homelands will need to adapt the adventure.

The initial scenes of the adventure—the gathering at Ash Anvari and the ritual at the Temple of Penendros—are quite specific, and only heroes with some link to the Rebellion are likely to participate. Once the heroes are in the Sky, however, they sally forth from a Star Fort; the dash across the Sky; the raising of the Ship; and the travel along the Celestial River to the Dragon Isles all occur as written.

Heroes who remain on the Ship past the Dragon Isles next find themselves sailing past the Golden City. It is a marvelous and truly beautiful place, where the buildings are made of pure light, and every star is a god or goddess. The divine beings do not leave their places to gawk at the Ship like commoners, but all can sense the love and approval at its return to the sky.

More Research Later

The heroes might discover more about what happened during their quest by speaking to a Lhankor Mhy scholar. “We saw that there was a new star in the Erkonus Cluster. This isn’t new, since stars appear and disappear all the time there. But this one was different in how it disappeared. On the night before the Ship rose again, it spat forth a little star that plunged as fast as a meteor to the ground in the farthest east. We called it ‘raiding star.’ And then, shortly after, five other stars that were in that same cluster, where everything is bread and seed we thought, sent out an arm of light that reached to the new star. When they touched it, it burst into a bright point, then disappeared. It left me with an afterimage for days. We called it ‘starflare.’ It’s gone now, though.”

In the rice paddies beyond the City, thousands of stars stop briefly in their work to stare at the Ship in wonder. The same thing happens further on, as the inhabitants of the Sky on both sides of the river welcome the Great Ship back. As the river completes its grand turn, thousands of fish begin to rise around it, slowing its progress, while a monstrous Crocodile lumbers towards the river. Before it can reach the water, however, it is opposed and stopped by many stars gathering from the nearby shore, including a giant Goat that gores it with her horns.

At last, Lorion the Serpent herself rises against it. Whether she is fought off by the defenders so that the Ship can return to the Great Port and thence set sail on the Underworld River, or swallows the Ship whole (thus sending it on its way to the Underworld) is up to the narrator to decide.

In the Underworld, the Ship faces innumerable foes and horrors, but its passage across the Sky has gained it great power and defenders, and the success of its voyage is no longer in any doubt—the Ship will return to the Sky after another four days.

The Sky Ship

As described earlier, the Dara Happans recognize the Sky Ship as Anaxial’s Ark. Anaxial was a great hero who saved his family and all that was good from perishing in the Great Flood (see *Anaxial’s Roster*, pages 5-7, for the story). In this he was aided by his son Lukarius, famous as a great archer.

Anaxial is unknown to the Heortlings, but they recognize the captain of the Great Ship as Vendeni, the Searing Raider. Although the ship that the heroes helped raise is not Vendeni’s, after its first passage across the Sky, Heortlings will once again be able to sail with Vendeni along the Celestial River, for his ship has been repaired by this great quest.

Most Gloranthan cultures have their own myth about the Ship, about what it is and who the Great Navigator is who captains it. To Malkioni (like the Seshnelans), it is either Bon Jalos the Pirate King, who plundered the coasts of ancient Danmalastan; or Waertag the Reaver, who at last sank the fleet of Bon Jalos. To easterners, such as the Teshnans, it is En Ken, “Fallen Planet,” one of several such entities that for various reasons fell into weakness and were trapped in the Underworld.

Resistance to Raising the Sky Ship

Some heroes may wonder at the many celestial forces arrayed against them. The answer to this is somewhat complicated. On the one hand, the Empire has been preparing to resurrect Anaxial’s Ark for centuries, for its return will bring prosperity and wealth to Dara Happa. Millions of people are praying for this, and their efforts support the quest.

On the other hand, some Lunars are concerned with any Orlanthi heroquesting in the Sky. Additionally, a major effort is underway to build a Temple of the Reaching Moon in southern Sartar. Among other requirements, the rituals must recreate the entire Sky in the Inner World. Preparations began several years ago, and the rising of a new planet into the Sky, even one that existed before, will require that these plans be adjusted. And, of course, this will cause delays, as well as additional expenses.

Thus, some Lunars do not see this as the best time for the Ship to rise. They oppose the effort now, knowing that once the Temple is completed the time will be better. Narrators running a campaign that includes Lunar, Dara Happa, or other Pelorian heroes should discuss this event with the players, and decide whether the heroes will aid or oppose the Ship.



IN STARBROW'S CAMP

On their return to Sartar, the heroes are invited to the camp of the Starbrow. It is night—the sky is nearly cloudless, and the stars are very bright. But the Red Moon still burns in the sky. Overhead, the evidence of the great deed they helped perform is visible. The new blue planet slowly traverses the night sky, yet for Kallyr this achievement is marred by the loss of Danar.

As the heroes approach the camp, they see that it is much larger than before the Battle of Iceland. Horses are tethered outside, under guard. Sentries are on patrol. Inside the camp are squalid barracks-style tents, while near the edge of camp a kitchen tent belching smoke into the night sky. Some officers have private tents, reached through a spiral corridor of tents in the center. Heroes recognize some of those present; some may be those that they fought alongside at the Battle of Iceland, while others they recognize from their raid into the Sky. There are others here, too, newcomers who have finally answered the call of the Rebellion, like the Culbrea Tribe, whose Wind Storm Banner gently flapping in the night breeze.

When Kallyr finally appears, heroes see that she has gained a new, more startling demeanor. She still seems set upon things that are greater than ordinary people, but where she was once aloof now she is almost divine—her eyes are living celestial flames, and radiance shines from her increasingly dazzling brow.

Events Elsewhere

Later that winter, news comes from Boldhome that a group of Humakti delved deep into the ruined Temple of the Household of Death, where they recovered a sword bearing the name of the Pretender. They then penetrated Temertain's household and killed him with the sword that bore his name and doom. Most died in the attempt, and Temertain did not return.



To the east, on the plains of Prax, Argrath White Bull assembles his loyal White Bull Brothers and other nomads to conquer Corflu, a sleepy, mosquito-plagued seaport in the delta of the Zola Fel. The army of nomads easily overcomes the small, demoralized Lunar garrison. The murderous ambition of the Praxian nomads incites them to hunt down and slaughter each and every Lunar soldier.

The Storm Season of 1624 leading into 1625 comes as a great contrast to the terrible winter of 1622. Great ram clouds build over Kero Fin, and soon the skies are full with Heler's rains. This year, they are warm rains, and soon the Victorious Storm blows strong. Ohorlanth comes early, together with the Thunder Brothers, to join the Rebellion. Surely the next year will see ever more winds joining the hurricane, for this is the time of Gathering Thunder—this is the Hero Wars!

Heroes will notice, however, that her gaze does focus upon them all deeply for a lingering moment, before returning to gaze overhead at the risen planet. In addition to her usual companions, the remains of the Star Striders stand with her.

Once more, go through the deeds of the heroes and recollect times when they were victorious. Kallyr wishes to see if they have helped her in the Rebellion.

Did you help her during the Great Winter?

Did you fight at the End of the World?

Did you attack the enemies of the Rebellion?

Did you establish a temple among the Vendref?

Did you reach out to those who needed strength?

Did you return what was lost?

Did you...

If the heroes performed all of these deeds and did them well, Kallyr invites them to sit with her, seating them in the places normally reserved for her companions and officers of the camp. She addresses each hero by name, an act that may come as a shock to some: she does know who they are after all! Kallyr gives each hero a chance to tell her what he or she wants as reward, and she will try to grant whatever is in her power, as long as it is not too outlandish. If anyone offers to personally serve her she gracefully refuses, replying, "I'll keep my eye on you. If you qualify later, then I'll invite you."

If the heroes performed only some of the listed deeds, they get to sit among the distinguished visitors to her camp. Kallyr addresses them as a group, offering gifts such as fine horses, better armor, or time with her god-talkers.

If the heroes performed few of these tasks, or if they failed often, they are seated among the esteemed warriors, and Kallyr addresses them as part of this throng. She offers only praise, toasting them with Minlister's finest, and after the feast her skald recites the band's deeds.

The greatest effect of Kallyr's and the heroes' accomplishments is discovered only later. Whether it was something specific that they did, or merely their many accomplishments, but Orlanth is once more free. As Storm Season approaches, more and more Orlanthi discover that their magic works again! Orlanth has returned and Ernalda has awakened at last. The New Breathers have done their work well, and once more all Heortlings can stand against the Lunars with courage and the power of their gods.



NARRATOR RESOURCES

Friendly Rivals

*"From three things may Orlanth deliver us:
a selfish chieftain, a greedy guest, and a jealous friend."*

It is a strength of Orlanthi society that every individual is just that, an individual—self-motivated, responsible, and free. However, this is also one of its weaknesses, for the people of Sartar are all too prone to descend into unseemly, destructive, and counterproductive feuds and squabbles. This is true even in the face of Imperial domination. The Empire has made the most of this tendency towards division, playing clan against clan, leader against followers. However, there are also times when it becomes a problem even without the intrigues of the Lunars, and at times it is one of the scourges of the Rebellion. How, after all, can Kallyr (or any other leader) bring discipline to the Rebellion while retaining the spirit of freedom that is her greatest asset?

The heroes may well be forced to consider this dilemma. A useful narrator's ploy is to introduce a friendly rival—an equivalent band of Orlanthi heroes out to prove their mettle and win Kallyr's favor. Whenever the heroes take advantage of an opportunity or shine before Kallyr, the rival should be there, watching. And whenever the heroes pass up a chance to help Kallyr, or fail at an important mission, again the rival will be there. Indeed, the rival will often be the one who succeeded where the heroes failed!

If the heroes are doing badly, the rival can be used as a *deus ex machina*, an unexpected ally who frees them from captivity or otherwise saves the day. However, this is definitely a mixed blessing, since the rival will make a point of letting everyone know of their assistance, and the heroes will face their good-humoured mockery at every turn. Many players would rather they had been left shackled in an Imperial slave farm than be considered second-raters in need of help from the "real heroes."

Friendly rivals are perhaps most helpful to the narrator if the heroes are having too easy a time of a task, perhaps because of skill, perhaps due to luck. In this context, the rivals can be motivated by a more mean-spirited desire to snatch victory from the heroes or, failing that, to humble them. It is, after all, often only a short step from wanting to succeed more magnificently

than your rivals, to wanting them to fail without considering the consequences failure may have on others and on the Rebellion itself. Their running presence can therefore help inject a greater sense of urgency and personal stake in adventures. In "Orane's Spindle," for example, the rivals may first appear as competitors in the contests at Mahomravand, then become more significant by presenting an alternative plan at the debate in the hall. Once the heroes realize that they need to go to the Upland Marsh, maybe someone will mention that their rivals set off in that

direction half an hour ago. If the heroes get the jump on their rivals, they are likely to be following close behind, hoping to snatch victory (and the Spindle) from under the heroes' very noses.

A sample "friendly rival" is given here: Ernathora the Second and her band, self-gratifyingly named Ernathora's Destiny. Ernathora is unquestionably dedicated to the Rebellion, but nonetheless is dangerously desperate to succeed (and be seen to do so). The other warbands in this section, the Treeleapers and Gambar's Scouts, can also be used as such rivals.

*Relationships are important
in Glorantha and HeroQuest.*

*As important as followers and allies,
however, are the adversaries—detestable
villains and bitter rivals—that heroes gain
as they move through life.*

*Friends and family give heroes support;
enemies give them an interesting story
and a reason to adventure.*

Ernathora the Second

Ernathora the Second has spent her life trying to shed her "destiny." Born second daughter of the famous Vingan warrior Black-foot Urenstanda, she is a high achiever but has nonetheless always found herself eclipsed by another. She climbed Kero Fin by the lost Hungry Stones Scarp, only to discover that another had accomplished this a week before. She drove away the Vicious Fishes that took up residence at Red Bird Ford and slew all who tried to cross, only to find that they had been summoned by an Orlanthi wise-woman to keep a Lunar tax collector at bay. Then, she was on the verge of finally stealing back the Gambari Sack when the summons to the Battle of Iceland came, and it was lost once again.

The recent death of her elder sister Sorane Step-Light means that she no longer even has a chance to surpass her first and greatest rival. As her mother dies slowly from the unhealable wound left by a Lunar assassin's moon-silver blade, Ernathora's desire to achieve some great and glorious success has become desperation, a desperation that may lead her to take foolish risks and even sacrifice her honor for her ambitions.

Torgol of the Burnt Stead

Keywords: Devotee of Destor 10W (Combat, Movement, Wind), Heortling Warrior 8W.

Significant Abilities: Fear Fire 20, Shield Bash 10W, Spear and Shield Fighting 12W, Strong 20.

Equipment: Bronze armor and shield +3, spear +3, javelins +3.



Contest Synopsis

Close Combat (Ernathora): 2W3 (217 AP)

Ranged Combat (Treetop Avenger): 7W2 (118 AP)

Orgenrast the Morbid

Keywords: Devotee of Humakt and Makla Mann 10W (Death, Honor, Loyalty), Heortling Weaponthane 10W.

Significant Abilities: Depressing 20, Sword and Shield Fighting 12W.

Equipment: Heavy bronze armor and shield +4, sword +3.

Notes: Orgenrast has a geas to never use thrown or missile weapons of any kind.



'The Treetop Avenger'

Keywords: Devotee of Vinga the Avenger 20 (Combat, Inspire Non-Combatants, Movement), Heortling Hunter 17W.

Significant Abilities: Exaggerated Idea of Own Competence 8W, Javelin 20W, Spear and Shield Fighting 17.

Equipment: Leather armor and shield +2, spear +3, javelins +3, tacky green mask.



Old Brandorlanth

Keywords: Heortling Farmer 10W, Initiate of Drogarsi 5W.

(Combat, High Entertainment, Movement).

Significant Abilities: Brawling 20, Cheery Song 10W, First Aid 20, Rationalize Defeat 20.

Equipment: Spear +3, healing herbs +3.



Ernathora the Second

Driven Rebel

Significant Abilities: Competitive 10W, Desperate to Succeed 15W, Heortling Warrior 18W, Inspiring Leadership 5W, Javelin 20, Passionate 8W, Take Foolish Chances 10W, Twin-Sword Fighting 20W.

Special Items: Fine Tarshite mail +4, twin shortswords +4, javelins +3, amulet of blinding light ("Hope's Gaze") 10W.

Personal Augments:

† Combat affinity (+4 in combat)

Competitive (+3 in competitions)

Desperate to Succeed (+4 in competitions or dire straits)



One Desperate Scheme after Another

Family and Personal Time

Leader of Ernathora's Destiny hero band 20W
(includes her four storms)

Typical Member

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 8W, Initiate of Destor or Vinga Adventurous 10W.

Significant Abilities: Loyal to Ernathora 5W, Persistent 20, Spear and Shield Fighting 8W.

Equipment: Light leather armor and shield +2, spear +3, javelins +3.

Personal Augments: Persistent and Loyal to Ernathora (+5 combined in desperate situations)

Devotee of Vinga 17W

Affinities: † Combat 20W, ♯ Movement 17W, ☐ Protection 5W

The Rebellion 10W



Ernathora is a wiry woman in her late 20s, always in motion, with the passion and ambition driving her visible in her fiery gaze and the way she snaps more than speaks. She wears fine mail looted from a dead Tarshite royal huscarl, and wields two shortswords at once. She has a way of turning everything into a competition, whether gifting more than she can afford or drinking faster or deeper than anyone else at the table. Her desperation may well be her undoing, but she is also devoted to her followers and passionate in all things.

Ernathora's Destiny

Ernathora is a charismatic and effective leader, and indeed many have been drawn to her banner precisely because of her indomitable drive to excel, despite her bad luck. Her followers are therefore drawn from across Sartar, and tend to be misfits and second-chancers. They are fiercely protective of their leader, hoping through her to achieve their own redemption. The band has no guardian as yet. Ernathora has decided this must wait until they have achieved the major success she is convinced is just over the next hill, so it can shape their protector.

Taros Treekiller

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 7 \mathbb{W} , Initiate of Destor Adventurous 11 \mathbb{W} (Combat, Movement, Wind).

Significant Abilities: Javelin 9 \mathbb{W} , Two-handed Axe Fighting 10 \mathbb{W} .

Equipment: Heavy bronze chain armor +5, two-handed axe +5, 3 javelins +3.



Garnath Bugeater

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 13 \mathbb{W} , Initiate of Tatouth Adventurous 7 \mathbb{W} (Combat, Movement, Scouting).

Significant Abilities: Brave 14 \mathbb{W} , Javelin 3 \mathbb{W} 2, Spear and Sword Fighting 18 \mathbb{W} , Two Javelin Throw feat 14 \mathbb{W} , Two-sword Fighting 2 \mathbb{W} .

Equipment: Bronze chain armor +3, sword +3, spear +3, 5 javelins +3, the Helm of Eyes +3 (See Hidden Objects or People 15 \mathbb{W}).



Contest Synopsis

Close Combat (Yend): 2 \mathbb{W} 4 (304 AP)

Ranged Combat (Yend): 20 \mathbb{W} 2 (229 AP)

Scouting (Garnath): 8 \mathbb{W} 2 (180 AP)

Badger Brandig

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 2 \mathbb{W} 2, Initiate of Destor Adventurous 17 \mathbb{W} (Combat, Movement, Wind).

Significant Abilities: Two-sword Fighting 13 \mathbb{W} , Thrown Axe 8 \mathbb{W} .

Equipment: Tin-plated scale armor +4, two swords +6, throwing axe +3.



Minar Harelip

Keywords: Devotee of Destor Adventurous 15 \mathbb{W} (Combat, Movement, Wind), Heortling Warrior 5 \mathbb{W} .

Significant Abilities: Great Leap 12 \mathbb{W} 2, Thrown Rock 7 \mathbb{W} , Two-handed Spear Fighting 2 \mathbb{W} 2.

Equipment: Bronze chain armor +3, two-handed spear +5, large rock +2.



Yend Two-Kill

Significant Abilities: Farkiller Throw feat 1 \mathbb{W} 2, Heortling Warrior 5 \mathbb{W} 2, Javelin 18 \mathbb{W} , Javelin Leap feat 7 \mathbb{W} , Two-sword Fighting 7 \mathbb{W} 2, Two Splitting Blow feat 14 \mathbb{W} 2.

Equipment: Iron scale armor and helmet +6, twin iron swords (Farkiller and Near-killer) +6 (+16 if he is in the air), javelins +3.

Personal Augments:

- \mathbb{R} Farkiller Throw feat (+4 Javelin)
- \mathbb{R} Javelin Leap feat (+3 Javelin)
- \mathbb{R} Two Splitting Blow feat (+5 Two-Sword Combat)



Member of the Hendart Clan 17 \mathbb{W}

Family and Personal Time

The Rebellion 5 \mathbb{W}



Leader of the Treeleapers 16 \mathbb{W} 2 (includes his four storms)

Typical Treeleaper

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 5 \mathbb{W} , Initiate of Destor Adventurous 7 \mathbb{W} (Combat, Movement, Wind).

Significant Abilities: Distrust Aldryami 5 \mathbb{W} , Dodge 1 \mathbb{W} , Javelin 7 \mathbb{W} , Two-handed Spear Fighting or Two-Sword Fighting 12 \mathbb{W} , Treeleaping 4 \mathbb{W} .

Equipment: Bronze scale armor and helmet +4, two-handed spear +4 or two swords +6, javelins +3.

Personal Augments:

- \mathbb{f} Combat affinity (+3 to Combat)
- \mathbb{z} Movement affinity (+3 to Leaping)
- \mathbb{G} Wind affinity (+3 to Combat)

Devotee of Destor Adventurous 18 \mathbb{W} 2
Affinities: \mathbb{f} Combat, \mathbb{z} Movement, \mathbb{G} Wind.

The Treeleapers

Yend Two-kill of the Hendart Clan leads the Treeleapers, whose 75 members make great leaps over trees. They prefer to skirmish, bounding in and out of combat until they catch their enemies unprepared. Their specialty is attacking troops in woods, obviously, but even in open terrain they are formidable warriors, wielding two-handed spears or a sword in either hand. The Treeleapers disdain the use of shields, and look down on warriors who use them. Their guardian is an obscure hero of Destor Adventurous whose worship was lost during the Inhuman Occupation of Dragon Pass. Yend found him during a heroquest and allied him as a guardian, and is seeking to re-establish his worship once more among the Heortlings.

Alor Oakhurdler (Guardian)

Alor Oakhurdler lived during the Gbaji Wars. He fought a long campaign against the elves who supported Gbaji, and left behind his Treeleaping magic.

Method: Archetype.

Communication: Alor communicates only with Yend. When he speaks, all members of the band hear the sound of wood splintering and cracking, no matter where they are.

Guardian Requirements: Leap over a tree at least once a day; eat no cheese on Windsday, nor bread on Earthday.

Functions:

- \mathbb{A} Awareness—See Through Forest 2 \mathbb{W} 2.
- \mathbb{S} Blessing—Treeleaping 12 \mathbb{W} .
- \mathbb{D} Defense—Resist Earth Magic 2 \mathbb{W} 2.

Roganvarth Five Arrows

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 13W, Initiate of Ulanin the Rider 18W (Combat, Horses, Movement 14W).

Significant Abilities: Archery 5W, Five Arrows feat 17W, Ride 4W2, Scouting 4W, Strong 7W, Sword and Shield Fighting 17W.

Equipment: Gold-embossed leather armor and shield +4, Sun Bow +5, sword +3; horse (Run Fast 20W).



Blue Angtry

Keywords: Devotee of Ulanin the Rider 7W (Combat, Horses, Movement 16W), Heortling God-talker 15W.

Significant Abilities: Archery 5W, Ride 7W, Scouting 17W, Spear and Shield Fighting 4W.

Equipment: Leather armor and shield +3, Sun Bow +5, spear +3; horse (Run Fast 20W).



Enothea Horseleech

Keywords: Devotee of Redalda 15W (Bless Family, Bless Horses 19W, Bless Mothers), Heortling Healer 4W.

Significant Abilities: Archery 18, Brawling 12, Ride 12W3.

Equipment: Hoof pick +1, Sun Bow +5, saddlebags full of ointments, bandages, etc.; horse (Sure-Footed 3W).



Swifthoof (Guardian)

Method: Manifestation.

Communication: Members can understand Swifthoof's neighs as speech. Swifthoof never communicates while it is using its magic to aid any member of the band.

Form: A beautiful palomino horse of obvious divine descent. Its hooves burst into flame whenever it uses any of its magic. It cannot use its magic directly on itself, only on members of the warband or their horses.

Mundane Abilities—Battle Training 17W, Kick 7W, Run Fast 12W2, Thick Skin +3.

Membership Requirements: Never harm a horse. Always heal any horse you have ridden. Always wear blue trousers.

Functions:

- ⊕ Awareness—Sense Invisible Forces 10W.
- ⚡ Blessing—Blazing Volley 8W, Hooves of Flame 15W.
- ☐ Defense—Turn Missile 7W.

Athletic games
and contests
on horseback

Gambar Greatspear

Other Significant Abilities: Archery 13W2, Heortling Warrior 8W2, Mounted Skirmish Tactics 6W2, Scouting 8W2, Spear Fighting 16W2.

Equipment: Enchanted leather armor +4, shield +1, Sun Bow +5, "Long Touch" (spear) +5.

Personal Augments:

- ⚡ Burst of Speed feat (+4 Spear Fighting)
- † Flickering Blade feat (+4 Close Combat) or Aid Throw with Wind feat (+4 Archery)
- ▽ Stay Mounted feat (+4 to Close Combat) or Steady Horse feat (+4 Archery)



Personal Time

Leader of Gambar's Scouts 15W
(includes his four storms)

Typical Scout

Keywords: Heortling Warrior 3W, Initiate of Ulanin the Rider 2W (Combat, Horseman, Movement).

Significant Abilities: Archery 10W, Ride 18W, Scouting 10W, Spear Fighting 3W.

Equipment: Leather armor and shield +2, Sun Bow +5, spear +3, fast horse.

Personal Augments:

- † Combat affinity (+2 to Spear Fighting)
- ▽ Horseman affinity (+2 to Ride)
- ⚡ Movement affinity (+2 to Spear Fighting)

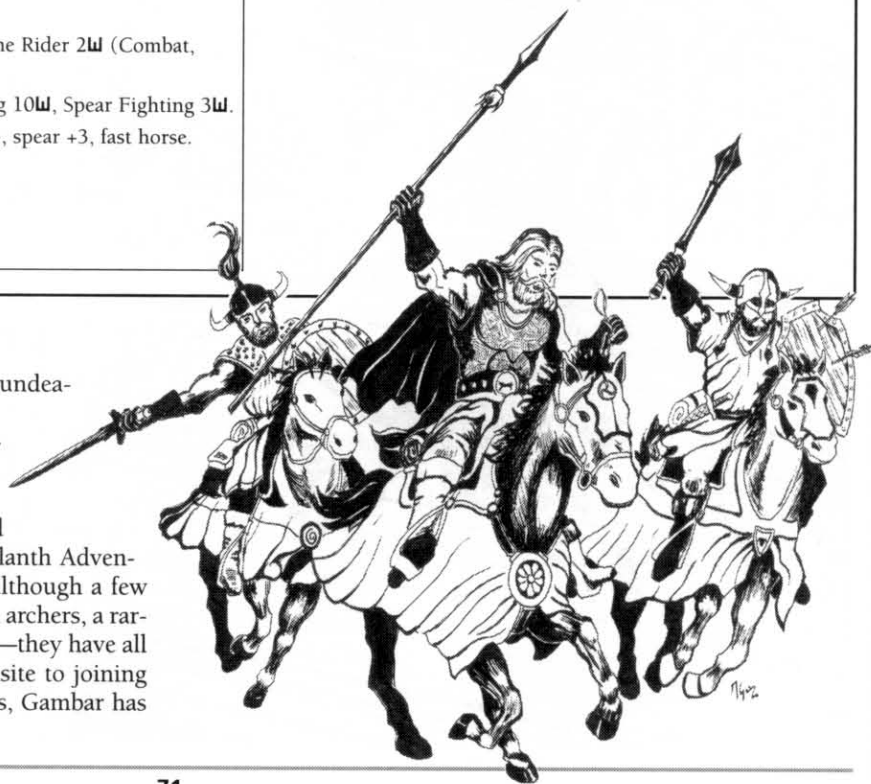
Devotee of Ulanin the Rider 16W

Affinities: † Combat, ▽ Horseman, ⚡ Movement.

Gambar's Scouts

Gambar Greatspear is a former member of the Dundea-los Tribe, outlawed with his followers after Star-brow's Rebellion in 1613. He is now a man without a home, since his clan was among those destroyed by the Lunars.

Gambar's warband consists of 150 mounted warriors who all worship various subculs of Orlanth Adventurous (mostly Ulanin the Rider, see page 72), although a few worship Redalda instead. The scouts are mounted archers, a rarity among the Heortlings, and bear magical bows—they have all completed the Sun Bow heroquest as a pre-requisite to joining the band. In addition to his personal companions, Gambar has two horsethanes who each lead 1/2 of the band.



NARRATOR RESOURCES

NARRATOR RESOURCES

2

Virtues: Brave, Love Horses.

† **Combat** (Aid Throw with Wind, Armor of Woad, Enchant Silver ritual, Face Trolls, Flickering Blade, Leaping Shield, Overbear Foe, Spearhelp).

♂ **Movement** (Burst of Speed, Leap Over Obstacles, Out-run Darkness, Run on Mud, Run up Cliffs).

Secret: Ulanin's Bond (Allows the devotee to bind a single horse's life to his own. This requires an hour-long ritual, during which he vows to defend the steed to the death. He must overcome a resistance of 10W3 using the secret's rating, and can gain the normal ritual magic modifiers. If he is victorious, neither he nor the horse can die as long as the other is alive, although it is possible to

While riding this bonded horse, the rider gets a bonus equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ the secret's rating to any ability used for survival or to sustain or defend the horse. The effects of the secret last until the devotee performs the ritual upon another horse.)

Other Side: Ulanin spends little time in Thunder Barracks with the other Thunder Brothers, for he is happiest patrolling the Storm Realm with his beloved horse. After death, worshippers join him in this duty; horses that die bonded to their riders are blessed to accompany them and join Ulanin and Orgorvale's herd.

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Probably Hostiles

Grazer Warband

Grazers are mounted on superior horses that give them a great advantage. They ride as if they were part of the horse, and have difficulty fighting from on foot.

Young Grazer Rider

A few members of any hunting or raiding band are young boys being taught the skills of a warrior. A boy will be allowed to watch the spare horses of the raiding party at first. As he gains experience, he will gradually be allowed to participate as a skirmisher and finally as a member of the raiding party itself, responsible for driving off enemy guards and livestock. The statistics below are for a boy in the middle of the training process—he has been taught the rudiments of melee fighting, but is not yet allowed to engage the enemy directly. He does not ride a goldeneye horse, but his horse is superior, and counts as a follower (see *HeroQuest*, page 47).

Keywords: Grazer Nomad 17, Spiritist of Dastal the Hunter 18 (Yu-Kargzant Practice).

Significant Abilities: Archery 4W, [Clan Fighting Style] 14, Ride 4W.

Equipment: Leather clothes and shield +2, bow and arrows +3, spear, axe, or mace +3; Fast Horse follower; 5 charms from the Yu-Kargzant Tradition or Dastal Practice.

Personal Augments:

- ☉ Blazing Arrow charm (+2 Archery)
- ☼ Star Horse charm (+2 Run Fast)
- ☿ Sure-seat charm (+2 Ride)

Grazer Warrior

The Grazer warrior is taught to fight, but also continues to improve the skills from his Rider days. Some have gone on the Goldeneye Quest and bonded with their horses, but many ride the normal (but superior) Grazer horses.

Keywords: Grazer Warrior 3W, Practitioner of Jordan the Warrior 18 (Yu-Kargzant Practice).

Significant Abilities: Archery 9W, [Clan Fighting Style] 5W, Ride 10W.

Equipment: Bone and leather armor and shield +3, bow and arrows +3, lance +5, sword, spear, axe, or mace +3; a Fast Horse follower or bonded goldeneye warhorse [*Rider Bond* 19, 1 talent]; 3 Yu-Kargzant or Jordan fetishes, 5 Yu-Kargzant or Dastal charms.

☞ **To combat them:** Use the terrain. Rough ground, brush, and so on can negate all of their mounted advantages such as speed and cohesion; if thick enough, it may even force them to flee rather than dismount and fight on foot, which they hate to do.

Horses will not charge a shieldwall, but these riders can stay back and rain arrows down on it—negate this advantage with wind magic. War parties (not raiders) will accept a Hero's Battle, but do not try to fight the Warrior's Battle, even with movement magic—most men cannot outrun a horse, and the Grazers often have their own magic to speed their steeds. Flying heroes need to beware Grazer arrows; again, use wind magic to blow them off course.

Personal Augments:

- † Fightman's Lance fetish (Flaming Spear 4W, Guide My Hand 18, Hit Hard 2W) (+2 [Clan Fighting Style])
- Goldeneye Rider Bond (+19 AP)
- ☉ Sun Cat fetish (Blinding Glare 15, Tremendous Leap 19) (+2 Clan Fighting Style)

Raiding Party Leader

A raiding party is always commanded by an experienced leader, who has learned many tricks. He has an experienced goldeneye horse, and has hunted in the Spirit World many times. He knows the ways his enemies fight, and the ways to beat them. He is accompanied by two warriors who serve as his followers, as does his horse.

Keywords: Grazer Cavalry Soldier 5W, Practitioner of Henird the Leader 3W (Yu-Kargzant Practice).

Significant Abilities: Archery 10W2, [Clan Fighting Style] 3W2, Grazer Cavalry Tactics 5W, Leader to Followers 5W, Ride 6W2.

Equipment: Leather and bronze armor and magical shield +7, superior clan weapons +4, 4 superior horses, bonded goldeneye horse (*Rider Bond* 16W, 3 talents at 7W); 12 Jordan, Henird, or Yu-Kargzant fetishes 5W; 2 warrior followers (*Archery* 7W, [Clan Fighting Style] 5W, *Flaming Bow* fetish 7W, *Warrior* 1W).

Personal Augments:

- Goldeneye Rider Bond (+36 AP)
- ☉ Flaming Bow fetish (Burst of Flame 14W, Far-flying Arrow 12W) (+3 Archery)
- W Warleader's Wisdom fetish (Bold Hearts Know No Fear 14W, Cavalry Tactics 9W, Commanding Presence 13W) (+3 to Grazer Cavalry Tactics)

Goldeneye Horse

Armor and Weapons: Thick skin +1, kick +1.

Significant Abilities: Acute Hearing 12, Jump 18W, Kick 15, Large 5W, Run Fast 8W, Strong 5W, Understand Commands 14.

Innate Magical Abilities: Rider Bond 18, Spirit Face 16.

Typical Talents: Great Leap, Never Lose Rider, Run Extremely Fast, Run up Cliffs, Spirit World Travel, Unseen in Sunlight.

Raiding Party Totem (Guardian)

Method: Emanation

Form: A medicine bundle made of horsetails, animal skulls, scalp, etc.

Functions:

- ☞ **Blessing**—Fast as the Wind 14W, Sure-flight Arrow 18W.
- ☐ **Defense**—Ride from Danger 12W.

The Black-and-Ivory Hunt

The Rinliddi of the Satrapy of First Blessed are a Solar culture, yet in many ways they are unlike the more dour and conservative Yelmics of Dara Happa. Birds are central to their faith and way of life, and while they have infantry units able to match the gleaming phalanxes of Dara Happa in unyielding discipline, their exposure to the horse nomads of Pent has also left them with a strong awareness of the value of cavalry (and bird-mounted troops known as avilry) in war.

As well as regular regiments serving within the Imperial Army, First Blessed is home to many other cavalry forces, from the hand-picked elite house guards to the irregular auxiliaries who patrol the wild fringes of the Satrapy. Most hold to the ancient traditions of the Rinliddi, but some have turned to the Lunar Way. One such is the Black-and-Ivory Hunt. Once, it was little more than the personal retinue of a middle-ranking aristocrat of Ganbarri: Radiant Warbler Riselun of the Six-Speckle

Nest. The Radiant Riselun was a huntsman first, last, and always, and his cronies and lackeys would thunder out in the chase of prey every other day, until a thoroughly disgruntled Velthil stallion had the good sense to throw him into an opportune ditch and break his neck.

His successor and younger brother, the Radiant Vankaru, was of a very different stamp. A convert to the Lunar Way and devotee of Yanafal Tarnils, he had openly disapproved of Riselun's wastrel ways. Instead, he turned his energies into using his office to create a weapon with which to wage war in the name of the Goddess. A third of the old hunt left in disgrace or dismay and a third were summarily dismissed, but by diligence, commitment, and the application of his considerable wealth and influence, the Radiant Vankaru managed to turn what was once merely the pastime of a bloodthirsty idler into just that weapon.

Despite its name, the Black-and-Ivory Hunt is no simple nobleman's hunting band. It is a superbly drilled and equipped company of cavalry soldiers. It draws recruits primarily from

Using the Hunt

Other books in the *Sartar Rising* series have provided foes for the heroes, from ordinary grunts to powerful figures with their own private armies. As the heroes become more personally powerful and gather allies and followers, the nature of the challenges they face must also change if they are to remain meaningful and exciting. There must be real danger for the players to feel that tension in a conflict. One approach is obviously simply to 'upgrade' the opposition. The common Tarshite shieldwall soldiers become elite huscarls, the petty bandits are instead Gagarthi devotees. An even more boring tactic is to simply increase the number of foes—where once there would have been a dozen enemies, now there are a score or a hundred. This can work up to a point, but it is also worth developing different kinds and styles of enemy.

The heroes may have already earned the enmity of Andrega and her Silverflames (see *Barbarian Adventures*, pages 28-29), Buthur Dog-nose (*Orlanth is Dead!*, pages 32-33), Vatheria's Scorching Swords (*Orlanth is Dead!*, pages 30-31), and Polemarch Diotasus or Legate Legillus (*Orlanth is Dead!*, page 29) and the regular forces at their disposal. It may seem pointless to add yet another Lunar warband, but the Black-and-Ivory Hunt represent a rather different kind of threat, one that can create new challenges and difficulties for the heroes:

Shock and Awe: Orlanthi are used to having an advantage in mobility over their Imperial foes, who often lack movement magic and are frequently on foot. The Hunt is very different: not only are all of the members mounted on fine horses, but their skill and magic allow them to ride quickly through the kind of broken terrain in which other cavalry would often not risk anything faster than a walk. As if that were not enough, the strong representation of Rinliddi among them means that they have many bird daimones and allies, which can scout, attack, and block attempts to fly away.

The heroes will often have been the active figures springing traps on and out-maneuvering the Imperial forces: now they may find themselves trapped in the open, seeing the Hunt array itself in four broad lines, lance points swinging down as one, crackling with magical energy before their horses begin the walk, which becomes a canter and then a full-blown charge....

Mobility: The mobility and relative independence of the Hunt means that they can crop up almost anywhere. They could be mounting long-range patrols in northern Heortland when the heroes set off for Skullpoint, for example, or might be crossing Lismelder tribal lands while the heroes seek to travel into the Upland Marsh in search of Orane's Spindle.

Smaller and Tougher: The Hunt is rather less numerous than most vexillae the heroes have encountered to date. However, each member is generally more powerful, typically a devotee. This raises more chances of individual duels and similar conflicts. This in turn can lead to new personal relationships, with heroes treating individual warriors as personal foes rather than part of a faceless horde, and perhaps even gaining an individual member of the Hunt as a long-term adversary. If nothing else, heroes who fight them more than once are likely to acquire a grudging respect for their skill!

Honor: Despite their new form and motivations, the Huntsmen have the attitudes of their aristocratic roots, as well as Vankaru's sometimes naive but undoubted idealism. Units such as the Silverflames will not hesitate to use underhanded tactics, from ambushes to traps. The Hunt on the other hand, while committed to their goal, regard themselves as men and women of honor. Indeed, under some circumstances they may even become reluctant allies of the heroes, whether in fighting Chaos or refusing to go along with some of the more despicable gambits of other Imperial forces. Again, heroes who face them more than once should learn to trust in their honor. And, of course, such honor is easy enough for less scrupulous heroes to take advantage of, at least once anyways.

In short, the Hunt gives the narrator an additional and hopefully unexpected weapon. When the heroes feel that they have the measure of their usual enemies, just when they consider themselves safe, it may be time to introduce them to the approaching thunder of hooves in the morning mist that signals the arrival of the Hunt. And when the heroes are certain that all Lunars are nothing less than Imperial oppressors or evil Chaos fiends, that is the time for them to find themselves indebted to fresh-faced Vankaru and forced to accept that not all Lunars are the same.

First Blessed Satrapy but also from many other homelands of the Empire. The members are bound by Lunar magic into a vexilla in which their powers and abilities can all complement each other. They are essentially lancers: lightly armored but terrible in the charge—a thundering wall of razor-sharp points. Their charge is enough to shatter or rout most foes, and fleeing or disorganized enemies can be skewered with almost insolent ease, but if not, they will wheel, reform, and charge again. For personal defense they also bear scimitars, but members consider it a matter of pride to remain within their unit and win through use of the lance. They wear black uniforms faced with ivory and with numerous silver adornments, such as buttons in the shape of grinning skulls and cloak clasps.

Command

At full strength, the Hunt numbers 198 soldiers. It is organized along distinctive lines, a blend of the traditional hunt and the modern Lunar unit the Radiant Vankaru would like it to be. It is made up of four 'liveries,' each containing seven 'lances' of seven soldiers. Each livery is commanded by one of the senior figures within the vexilla.

- The Radiant Vankaru himself commands the first livery. He is an inspiring and driven commander, and while his back-slapping bonhomie and unthinking commitment to the Lunar Way may be tiring, his soldiers feel tremendous loyalty and affection for him.

Significant Abilities: Cavalry Commander 15W2, Devotee of Yanafal Tarnils 5W2 (Combat, Soldier, Warlord), Inspiring Leadership 20W.

- High-Top Trovithu, Vankaru's devoted cousin, commands the second livery.

Significant Abilities: Charming 10W, Cavalry Commander 20W, Devotee of Kastok 10W (Commander, Horseman, Mounted Combat).

- Olgird the Black, a Tarshite renegade who has sworn to build a temple to Sedenya with his trophy-money, commands the third livery.

Significant Abilities: Cavalry Commander 15W, Devotee of Yarandros 15W (Cavalry Combat, Horsemanship), Pious 10W.

- Kamascar Bullman, a Carmanian hazar who only smiles when he kills, commands the third.

Significant Abilities: Carmanian Warrior 20W, Devotee of Hum'akt 15W (Battle, Combat, Death), Grim 10W.

The Lance-billed Hawk (Guardian)

The Lance-billed Hawk is the vexilla's standard, a fluttering banner hanging from a red and gold hawk, mounted on a tall haft. If it were lost or destroyed, the Hunt would be disgraced.

Method: Emanation.

Communication: The hawk communicates to the vexilla through the small movements and sounds of their horses.

Guardian Requirements: Never falter in the charge, never ride an avian into battle.

Functions:

- ☞ Awareness—Know Point of Vulnerability 20.
- ☞ Blessing—Irresistible Lance-point 20, Reinforce Honor 2W.
- ☞ Defense—Stay Horsed 5W.

Typical Black-and-Ivory Hunt Lancer

The soldiers of the Hunt are drawn from across the Empire, although over half hail from Rinliddi. They are all accomplished horsemen, most (but by no means all) drawn from the nobility or gentry. All are members of the Lunar Way, with Yanafal Tarnils being strongly represented, but many also retain some magics of their home cultures.

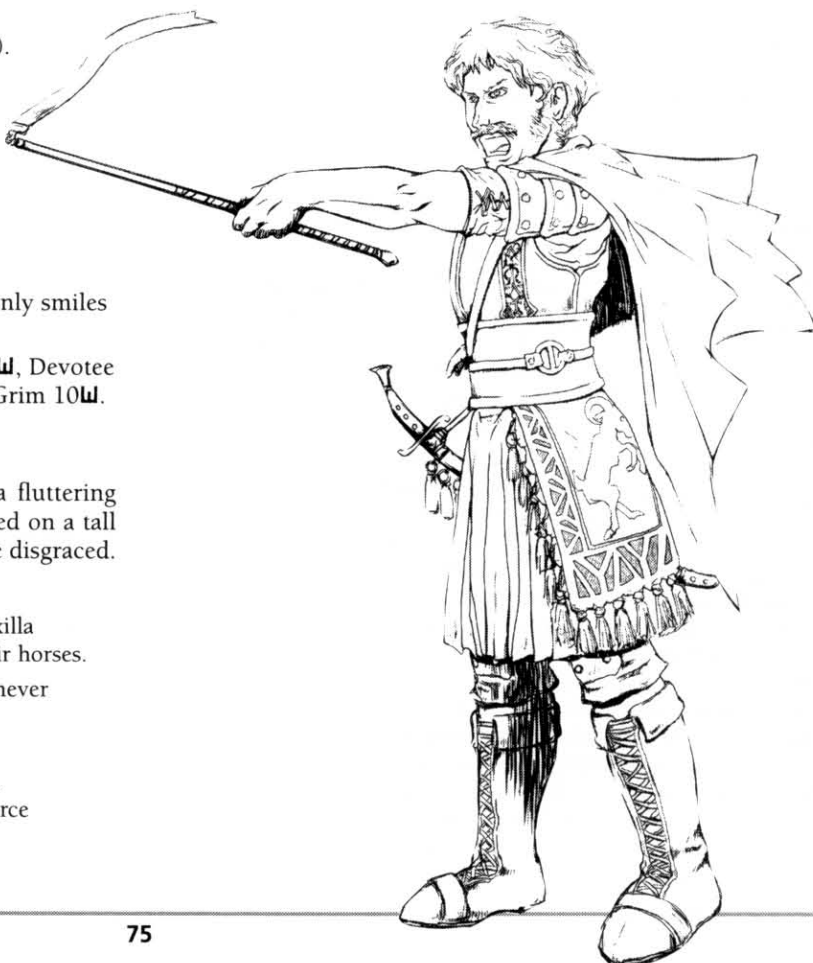
Keywords: Devotee of Yanafal Tarnils 10W, Rinliddi Cavalry Soldier (Lancer) 10W.

Significant Abilities: Gung-Ho 20, Honorable 1W, Look Good on Horseback 5W, Ride Horse 10W, Scimitar Fighting 17.

Equipment: Light leather and ivory armor +1, lance +5, scimitar +3.

Personal Augments:

- * Charge of the Ram feat (+3 to combat skills)
- Gung-Ho (+2 to combat or morale skills)
- Riding skills combined (+6 in charge)
- * Sturdy Spear feat (+3 to combat skills)





INDEX

Illustrations, Maps, and Tables

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Apple Lane | 12 | Gambar's Scouts | 71 | Maps | 7,12,28,39,51 | Sheep | 11 |
| Askiniham | 39 | Grazers | 20,24 | Minaryth Purple | 64 | Shipraising, the | 58 |
| Black Berelenos | 26 | Great Celestial River Hippo | 61 | Mornha | 34 | Skullpoint and Environs | 28 |
| Black-and-Ivory Hunt | 75 | Great Port, the | 58 | Narrator Character Leader | | Skullpointers | 31-32,34 |
| Brawl | 31 | Heroes, Typical | 18,20,24,34,49,54,69,71,75 | diagrams | 6,17,25,65,69-71 | Sky Ship, the | 58 |
| Bull | 9,26 | Hethkin | 32 | Radiant Vankaru | 75 | Slave Farm | 7 |
| Conflicts within Skullpoint | 29 | Hippo, Divine | 61 | Raid | 23 | Star Strider | 54 |
| Danar Orelas | 54 | Jandetin | 24 | Ranulf Stand-Tall | 6 | Third Bridge Latifundia | 7 |
| Darsten TurnStorm | 17 | Javern Spithorn | 49 | Raven | 43 | Ulanin the Rider | 72 |
| Ernathora | 69 | Journey to Solthon | 51 | Ritual | 9,47 | Vankaru | 75 |
| Fox | 14 | Kallyr Starbrow | 64-65 | River Hippo, Divine | 61 | Vendref | 20,23 |
| Gambar Greatspear | 71 | | | shaman | 32 | Wolf | 43 |

Keywords and Common Magic

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----|----------------------|----|------------------|----|------------------|----|
| Kenkacho (common magic) | 22 | Star Striders Member | 54 | Ulanin the Rider | 72 | Vendref Homeland | 22 |
|-------------------------|----|----------------------|----|------------------|----|------------------|----|

Contests

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----|--------------------------|----|-----------------------------|----|------------------|----|
| Bargain with Fox | 14 | Hate Dragons | 63 | Slipping onto the Black Oak | | Track Down Raven | 44 |
| Consecrate a Shrine | 23 | Notice the Hunt-and-Kill | | Tula | 15 | | |
| Find Grave Goods | 46 | Team | 13 | Reach the Marsh Safely | 43 | | |

HeroQuest Statistics

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Alor OakHurdler | 70 | Dorasa | 41 | Hippo-headed Warriors | 61 | Sky Daimones | 56,59,61 |
| Angelic Warriors | 59 | Draugr | 40 | Insterid Fire Eyes | 65 | Sky Leader | 56 |
| Arrazalandu | 56 | Dryad, Twisted | 46 | Jandetin | 25 | Sky Spearmen | 56 |
| Bagogi | see Scorpion-men | Elissa | 46 | Kallyr Starbrow (1624) | 65 | Sky Terror Frogs | 61 |
| Bandit | 5 | Elusu Sit Here | 65 | Kirnan the Vengeful | 41 | Soldier, Bovakite | 7 |
| Black Berelenos | 26 | Ernaldesta the Vigorous | 65 | Lance-billed Hawk, the | 75 | Sounder, the Bowline Woman | 60 |
| Black Oak Clan | | Ernathora the Second | 69 | Lunar Patrol Captain | 27 | Spirits | 14,37,45,73 |
| Members | 17-18,21 | Ernathora's Destiny, Typical | 69 | Lunar Scouts | 27 | Fox (Resobe) | 14 |
| Black Oak, the | 16 | Member | 69 | Lunar Soldiers | 7,27 | Wolf (Vargfreki) | 45 |
| Black-and-Ivory Huntsman, | | Estafi | 21 | Markald Koningson | 27 | Swifthoof | 71 |
| Typical | 75 | Exalted Guest, the | 60 | chaotic | 36 | Telmori Spirit Wolf | 45 |
| Bovakite Soldier | 7 | Feyghosts | 52 | Mercenary, Typical | 7 | Totem, Grazer | 73 |
| Broo | 45 | Flaming Horse Riders | 59 | Mornha | 34 | Treeleapers, Typical Member | 70 |
| Certamus (Sky Leader) | 56 | Fox Spirit | 14 | chaotic | 36 | Unwod | 34 |
| Chaos | see Broo, Destroy Clan | Frogs, chaotic | 61 | Offir Swiftsword | 65 | Vargfreki | 45 |
| spirits, Dorasa, Draugr, Havern, | | Gambar Greatspear | 71 | Penendros | 54 | Vendref | 21 |
| Heoden Lifebane, Kirnan the | | Gambar's Scouts, Typical | 71 | Raiding Party Leader, Grazer | 73 | Warrior, Grazer | 22,73 |
| Vengeful, Markald (chaotic), | | Member | 71 | Raiding Party Totem | 73 | Warrior, Typical Black Oak | 18 |
| Mornha (chaotic), Scorpion-men, | | Ghosts | 35,52 | Rakstant, the Black Oak | 16 | Warriors, Tarshite | 21 |
| Sky Terror Frogs. | | see also Feyghosts, Spirits | | Ranulf Stand-Tall | 6 | Weaponthane, Colymar | 7 |
| Clansman, Typical Black Oak | 18 | Giantess | see Deck Officer | Resobe, Red Fox Spirit | 14 | Weaponthane, Typical | |
| Colymar Weaponthane | 7 | goldeneye (horse) | 73 | Rider, Grazer | 73 | Black Oak | 18 |
| Commander Gold | 60 | Grazers | 22,25,73 | Scorpion-men | 28 | Wolf, Spirit | 45 |
| Crewmen (of Sky Ship) | 62 | Guardians | 16,26,54,70-71,73,75 | Scout, Grazer | 22 | Woodcutter the Centaur | 19 |
| Darsten Turnstorm | 17 | Halfrack the Stag | 29 | Sheep Herders, Black Oak | 21 | Yanafal Tarnils Huscarl | 27 |
| Deck Officer, the | 60 | Havern | 36 | Skullpoint Warrior, Typical | 30 | Yansandral | 25 |
| Destroy Clan spirits | 37 | Heoden Lifebane | 40 | Skullpointer, Typical | 30 | Yend Two-Kill | 70 |
| Doburdun Bandits | 5 | | | | | Zarask | 21 |

Listing

- Admiral, the . . . see *Exalted Guest*
Aesa Bloodline30,32-33
Air Rune50
Alakoring51
Alfhild29,34-35
Alfloc35
Alor Oakhurdler70
alynx daimon15
Anaxial60,66
Anaxial's Ark66
Ancestor Day9
Andrega Silverflame60,62,74
angelic warriors59
Angels of Antirius59
Antirius, Angels of59
Apple Lane12
Aralnala47
Arandar48
Argrath Maniskisson19,23,49,51
Argrath White Bull67
The Arming of Orlanth44
Arnli Drakkar28
Arrazalandu56
Asborn Thriceborn12-14,48
Asenath30
Ash Anvari48-49,51,66
Askini39
Askiniham38-39,42,47
Askinings Bloodline39
Asrelia30
Assembly Hall, the55-56
aurochs72
Aurochs Hills4
Bad Spirit Mountain
. see *Spirit Bone Mountain*
Badger Brandig70
Bag of Wind18
Bannock the cook47
Barntar22
Barntar's Acre6
Bat, the50
Bear Lakes28
"Bearer of the Head"24
. see also *Feathered Horse Queen*
Beast Valley19-20,49-51
beast-folk51
Beastmen Alliance, the20
Belveran (clan healer)35,37
Berenelos Clan21
. see also *Black Berelenos*
Beren the Rider72
Bergilmar the Giant72
Betí, Queen13,38
Black Berelenos24,26
Black Enstandoras6
Black Oak Clan10-12,15-18,42
Black Oak, the12,16
Black Spear Clan16
Black-and-Ivory Hunt75
Blackfoot Urenstanda68
Blackmor the Rabid5,7,10,13,
16-17,38,42,45,47
blackthorn tree46
Blue Angtyr71
Boldhome67
Bon Jalos66
Bovak7
Bovakite Foot7
Brass Boar stead16
Bright Empire, the54
Bright Servants of Penendros
. see *Star Striders*
Broken River20-21
broo44-45
Brutus12
Burburstus see *Sky Dragon*
Buserian53
Buthur Dog-nose74
Captain, the see *Anaxial*
Celestial River see *Sky River*
centaur(s)19,50
Centaur Ford51
certami/certamus56
Chalana Arroy44
Chaos30,32-33,35-37,74,80
. Chaos features36
. Chaos magic30,36
Chaos Age43-44
. see also *Darkness Age*
Clearwine7,12
Cliffs of Shadow44
Closing, the48
cloud sheep see *urothtrorol*
Colossal Man see *Young God*
Colymar, King39
Colymar Tribe5,7,10,12,16-17,
38,41,72
. see also *Black Oak Clan, Black*
Spear Clan, Hiording Clan, Orl-
marth Clan
Colymar Wilds7
Come the Hurricane!5
Commander Gold59-60,62
. see also *Lukarius*
Corflu67
The Creek-Stream River20
Crisis60
Crocodile, Celestial66
Culbrea Tribe5-7,50,67
Curse of the Closing48
daimones see *alynx daimon,*
angelic warriors, Flaming Horse
Riders, landscape daimon, raven
daimon, Rihalya, Sky Spearsmen,
urothtrorol
Danar Orelas53-56,62,64,67
Danmalastan66
Dar the Queen65
Dara Happa66,74
Darkness Age55
. see also *Chaos Age, Greater*
Darkness
Darkness, the44,54
. see also *Darkness Age, Lesser*
Darkness, Greater Darkness
Darsten Turnstorm10-12,14,16-18
Darstenstead10,16
Dawn Age53
Dawn Gates59
Dayzatar55
Death43-44
Deck Officer, the59-60
Defender Wind66
Dergi50
Derkrova12
Dernu49
Destroy Clan spirits37
divination14
divine companion45
Doburdun10-12,15
. spirit foes of12
Dorasa Swandottir38,41-42
Dormal60
Dragon Age52
Dragon Constellation
. see *Sky Dragon*
Dragon Isles62,66
. see also *Sky Dragon*
Dragon Pass59,64,70
Dragon Pass, the51-52
Dragon Skull51-52
Dragon's Head, the50
. see also *Orlanth's Ring, Sky Dragon*
Dragon, the see *Sky Dragon*
dragonewts63
Dragonfriends, the see *EWf*
dragons50,62-64
. dragon magic63
. faces of14
. speaking to50,63
. true dragon50
Dragonspine51-52,64
Drakkar Bloodline30,32,34
Drakkarstead28
draugr38,40-46
Drolgard50
dryad, twisted see *Elissa*
Duck Road19
Duck Valley19
ducks19-20,46,50-51
Dundealos Tribe71-72
durulz see *ducks*
dwarfs59
Eastern Gates see *Dawn Gates*
Efrodar Blackhands44
Elissa46
Elmal44,47
. the Sun53
Elmalandti Bluespruce64
Elusu Sit Here57,65
elves59,70
Emperor, the see *Yelm*
Empire of Dara Happa66
Empire of the Wyrms Friends
. see *EWf*
En Ken66
End of the World battle5,67
Endrede35
Endrios21
Enothea Horseleech71
Eranina CopperAxe42,44
Erkonus Cluster56,66
Ernalda35,44,67
. the Healer22
Ernalda's Loom38
"Ernalda's Table"8
Ernaldesta the Vigorous65
Ernathora the Second68-69
Ernathora's Destiny48,68-69
Erryn Longshanks38,42
Esra22
Esrola47
Esrolia7
Esrolians56
Estafi21,23-24
Events Elsewhere67
EWf50,52,63
Exalted Guest, the60
Exiles, the see *Tarsh Exiles*
Faceless Mobs, the55
Faladan47
Fazzur Wideread6,17
Feathered Horse Queen21-22,26
Feyghost River (unlabeled)51
Feyghost Woods51-52
Feyghosts52
Finovan10-11,18,24
. Finovani rituals10
"Finding a Protector"8
Fire Day see *Mahomravand*
fire wood (living)53,55
First Blessed Satrapy74-75
First Hearth, the47
Flame Juggler Clan25
Flaming Horse Riders59
Flowers (constellation)59
Footprint, the see *Print*
Forbidden Door, the59-60
Forest Eaves stead16
forest spirits14
Foxhollow5
foxwomen20
Freawaru34-35
Friend-of-Stone Clan20,24-25
From the Center25
Gagarthi11-12,74
Galar Skywatcher54
Gambar Greatspear71
Gambar's Scouts68,71
Ganbarri74
Garnath Bugeater70
Gbaji70
Gbaji Wars70
Gelfulth35
General of Heaven50
Gernu and Dernu see *Dernu*
Geroini Tribe21,26
Gerrath Splitshield17
Ghost Hills49
Ghost Horse Clan25
ghosts14,35,52
. ghost army52
Girding of Finovan, the11
Glowline50
Goat, Celestial66
Gochbadun Redcow72
God World49,53,55,58
. God World "blindness"58
Goddess, the see *Red Goddess*
Gods War48-49
Golden Age48,55
Golden Bows52

- Golden City, the48,66
golden cloud57
Golden Ship48-49
 see also *Sky Ship*
goldeneye22,24-25,73
 Goldeneye Quest22,73
good gods and goddesses, the
 8-9,53
Governor-General of
 Dragon Pass16
Grain, the48-49,56
Grazelands19-21,50,53,66
Grazers19-23,25,51-53,56,63,73
Great Celestial River Hippo . . .61
Great Darkness61
 see also *Darkness Age*
great events66
Great Flood, the66
Great Navigator, the66
Great Port of the Gate . . .57,59,66
Great Shipsee *Sky Ship*
Great Winter4,7,10,67
Greater Darkness30
 see also *Darkness Age*
Green Age55
Greydog Clan39
Gringle's Pawnshop12
guardian5,8-9,52,70-71,73
 see also *Alor Oakhurdler, Black Berelenos, Black Oak, hero band, Jodun Bloodface, Kald's Truth, Lance-billed Hawk, Penendros, Swifthoof, Totem, wyter*
Guardians of the Six Directions .41
Gustbran47
Gutlig's Top28
Gwyffir Bane-Redcloak11
Hahlgerd Bloodline30
Halfrack the Stag29
Hathdaran62
Havern35-36
Heart of Seeds, the56
Heaven50,54
 General of50
 Queen of50
 Secrets of54
Hedgar Sharpsword42
Hendart Clan70
Henird the Leader22,25
Heoden Lifebane/Sweetsmile
 38,40-42,46
Heortland7,30
Heortlings . . .8,21,44,53,56,66,71
Herkald Thorgir31,33-34
hero band5,8,48
Hero Planes48-49
Hero Wars, the7-8,66
Hero's Battle73
Hesgothi Clan21
Heskin's Peak28
Hethkin Starkad . . .29,32,35-37
Hidden Ring, the48
High Llama People49
High Steading28,34,37
High-Top Trovithu75
Hiia Swordsman21-22
Hill Ring30
Hiording Clan41
Hippo, Celestialsee *Great Celestial River Hippo*
Hippo-headed Warriors61
Hold, the59-60
Holt35
Horse-spawnsee *Grazers*
Household of Death67
How Orlanth Organized
 the Stars50
Hragnar45
Humakt19,40,43-44,46
 Humakti43-44,67
 Humakti duel45
 Humakti geas45
 Humakti Sword44
Humakt and the Raven
 heroquest44
Humakt's Hall44
Hungry Stones Scarp68
Hurricane of Change5
I Fought We Won30
Iceland, Battle of . . .4-6,13,65,67-68
Imperial Army74
impests17
incest33
Indrodar Greydog42-43
Ingalle34
Ingolf50
Inhuman Occupation, the . . .70
Inner Dragon50
 see also *Orlanth, Sky Dragon*
Innhild29,34
Insterid Fire Eyes65
Iphara's fog38
Irippi Ontor53
Iron Ring of Sartar63,65
Ironfisted Erngular6
Ironhoof19
Issaries30,41
Jagrekriand50,60
 see also *Shargash*
Jald Thorgir31
Jaldon's Wrong River20
Jandetin . . .19-20,22-26,51-52,66
Jardan the Warrior22,52
"Jarn-thing"50
Jarsandron Tenherds
 see *Luminous Stallion King*
Javern Spithorn5,49,63
Jenora Reaversdottir12
Jodun Bloodface52
Jolentir25
Jonstown12
Jonstown Compendium14
Jontaning Clan21
Kajabor30,36
Kald30
Kald's Truth28,30,37
Kalder Hahlgerd27
Kalf Garstalsson . . .38,42,45,47
Kallyr Starbrow . . .5-6,11,18-19,
 26,37-38,47-57,59,62-63,65-68
Kanestal One-hand22
Kea35
Kenkacho22
Kergan Thorgir29
Kero Fin20,44,51-53,67-68
 see also *Lion Peak, Little Mountain*
Kestig28
Khavri Kormothson17
Kheldon Tribe65
"Kinship is sacred"27,36-37
kinstrife29,45
Kirnan Bell-laugh/
 the Vengeful41-42,46
Kitori30-31
Kjelgaard30
Kocho Flintfist42
Kolati32,36
 Kolati peak52
 Kolati rituals30
kolating12,26,30,32,52
Kolla the Elder47
Koning33
Kuraz32-33,35
Lady Pig60
landscape daimon46
Lasadag Lions13
Laughter Rocks Stead42
Lesser Darkness30,35-36
 see also *Darkness Age, Storm Age*
Lightbringers, the30
Lion Peak53
Lismelder Tribe39,43,74
 see also *Greydog Clan, Marshedge Clan*
Lismelder, Queen42-43
Little Mountain53
Locaem Tribe72
Lodril22
Long Lake20
Loom House47
Lords of Destruction, the60
Lorion57,66
Low Steading27-28,32
Lukarius60,66
 see also *Commander Gold, Luku*
Luku49,60
Luminous Stallion King22-
 24,26,51-52
Lunar Empire7,47-48,53,68
Lunars4-5,10,19-20,26-
 27,32,37,50,66,67
 Lunar magic33
 Lunar patrol27
 Lunar Way4,16-17,75
Mahome47
Mahomravand . . .38,42-45,47,68
 King and Queen42,47
Makla Mann44
Malani Tribe12
Malti Starkad27
manticores50
Maregraze Vale21
Markald Koningson . . .27,32-37
Marshedge Clan43
Marusa Goodweaver42
Mastakos50
Men Stay Out28
Minar Harelip70
Minaryth Purple49-50,53,
 62-63,66
 Minaryth's Speech50
"Minlister's Gift"8
Mishap House, the8
Mistress of Dancesee *Silonia*
Monster Land44
monsters3,29,32,34,36,40,50,
 61,63
Moon, the11,21,24,26,50,67
 moon-silver68
Morganeth Desidottir/
 White-eyed38,41-42
Mornha29,33,35,36-37
Neutral Hills19
New Breathers4-5,67
Nightdaughtersee *Bat*
Nilde28
Niskis30
Njod Aesa29,32-33,37
"No one can make you do
 anything"27,36
Nochet57
Noldan Clan33
Note to Narrators . . .60,63,67,74
Note to Players9
Nymie River7
Nymie Valley5,7
Offir Swiftsword65
ogres30
Ohorlanth67
 Ohorlanth storm59
Old Harbor57,59
"Old Man" Tarndisisee *Tarndisi*
 see also *Tarndisi's Grove*
"The Old World is Over"8
Onald Starkad31
Orana5,7
Orane's Spindle . . .38,42,44-47,74
Orgorvale72
Orgorvaltes Tribe72
Orlanth . . .3-5,10,23,43-44,49-50,
 59-61,67-68
 see also *Inner Dragon*
 Adventurous71-72
 Allfather65
 Breath of3,4
 laws of5
 Orlanth Rigsdal6,65
 Orlanth's minions48
Orlanth's Ring50
 see also *Dragon's Head*
Orlanthi22,67
Orlaront Dragonfriend . . .48-49,63
Orlmarth Clan . . .38-39,41-42,44-47
Orngerin Thundercape . . .5,10,
 19-20,26-27,47-49,62-64
Orstalar Spearlord . . .10-12,18,49
Orvanshagor51
Orvic the Silent6
Oslir River20
Ostlan Starkad29
Other Side, the44-45,49-50
Otherworld Barrier23,44
Outer Oceansee *Sramak*
Ovartien Stoneheart42
Palangio the Iron Vrok53
Pananala47
Pawnshopsee *Gringle's Pawnshop*
Peace Clan4
Penendros48-49,53-56,66
 see also *Star Striders*
 House of55
 sons of55
Penendros' Fort55-56

- Penendros' Star53,56
 Penendros' Temple/Tower20,50,
 53-54,63-64,66
 Petrad Thorgir34
 Polaris54
 Pole Star50
 see also *Polaris, Rigsdal*
 Pole Star Gate50
 Portia13
 Prax49,67
 Praxians56,67
 Pretender, thesee *Temertain*
 Princess Starry Eyes49
 Print, the28,30,33,36
 Pur50
 Pure Horse Peoplesee *Grazers*
 Quackford19
 Queen of Heaven50
 Queen's Post24
 Quivini Mountains10
 Radiant Vankaru75
 Radiant Warbler Riselun of the
 Six-Speckle Nest74
 Rage60
 Ragnaglar36
 Ragnar Shaggybreeks42
 Ragni Aesa35
 Rakstantsee *Black Oak*
 Ranulf Stand-Tall/Turn-Tail5-7
 Raven (god)43-46
 raven daimon45-46
 Reaching Moon, Temple of50,66
 Rebel God50
 see also *Orlanth*
 Rebellion, the3-5,7,10-11,
 18-19,26-27,32,37-38,48-49,54,
 65-70,73
 Red Bird Ford68
 Red Fox Spiritsee *Resobe*
 Red God, thesee *Jagrekriland*
 Red Goddess33,36,74
 see also *Moon, Shepelkirt*
 Red Invaderssee *Lunars*
 Red Moonsee *Moon*
 Red Planet, the60
 Red Salvation stead16
 Redeye the Bull16
 Resobe14
 Rigsdal1,50,53-55,66
 Rihalya46
 Rinliddi74-75
 Rinliddi, the74
 Riselunsee *Radiant Warbler*
 The River51
 River Inn41
 Roganvarth Five Arrows71
 Runegate12
 Sacred Order, the37
 sacred voice48-49
 Saferth34-35
 Sambari Sack, the68
 Sartar48,50,53-54,57,65,67
 Prince of11
 Sartarites21
 satyrs50
 Scorching Swords13,74
 scorpion-men28,37
 serpents, blood63
 "Service for Two"9
 Seshnelans66
 Shargash60
 see also *Jagrekriland*
 The Sharpening of Humakt's
 Sword44
 Sheewog Potsticker30,36
 see also *Skull*
 Shepelkirt32,53
 see also *Red Goddess*
 Ship, thesee *Sky Ship*
 Siege of Heaven54
 Silonia50
 Silverflames13,74
 Skelgerd Aesa30
 Skull, the28,30,36
 Skullpoint27-29,30,32-37,74
 Bloodline Conflict29
 Political Controversy29,32
 Romance29,33
 Secret History of35
 Skullpoint Myth, the30
 Skullpoint Clan27,30,32,37
 see also *Aesa Bloodline, Drakkar*
 Bloodline, Hahlgerd Bloodline,
 Starkad Bloodline, Thorgir Blood-
 line, Tostig Bloodline
 Sky/Sky Realm/Sky World
 48,50,52-57,59,61,63,66-67
 people(s) of53,57,66
 Sky magic48
 Sky Host56
 Sky Spearsmen56
 Upper Sky50
 Sky Dome, the56
 Sky Dragon50,63
 see also *Dragon Isles, Dragon's*
 Head, Inner Dragon
 Chest50
 Liver50
 Sky of the Sky, the55,57
 Sky River48,57,59,61,66
 Sky Ship48,50,57-59,63,66
 see also *Golden Ship*
 officers of60
 Sky Terror61
 Sky Terror Frogs61
 Skybirth Day54
 Skyway Walks28
 Sleek Sheep11,15,18
 blue18
 red10,16,18
 Solthon River21,50
 Solthon Valley20,51-52
 Sorane Step-Light68
 Sounder, the Bowline Woman60
 Spike, the30
 Spindle Daysee *Mahomravand*
 Spirit Bone Mountain20,52
 spirit magic12
 Spirit World15,73
 spirits12,14,20,32,35-36
 see also *Destroy Clan spirits,*
 forest spirits, ghosts, Kolati,
 Resobe, Vargfreki
 Sramak57
 Star Captain(s)54
 Star Dragonsee *Sky Dragon*
 Star Eye (ability)65-66
 Star Striders50,53-54,61,67
 see also *Danar Orelas, Kallyr*
 Starbrow, Penendros
 Starbrow, the53,55,65
 see also *Kallyr Starbrow*
 Starbrow's Rebellion15,17,71
 Starfire Ridge(s)7,14,39
 Starkad Bloodline29-35,37
 Starlight Tower
 see *Penendros' Temple*
 Starry Horde, the59
 Steadfast Ingralda6
 Steersman, thesee *Dormal*
 Stone Forest14
 Storm Age48-49,55
 see also *Lesser Darkness*
 Storm(walk) Mountains27,30
 Storm Pantheon/Tribe17,30
 Storm Realm72
 The Stream7,19
 Styxsee *Underworld River(s)*
 Sun Bow heroquest71
 Sun County19
 Sun, the44,51,66
 Sun's chariot55
 Sunstop, the66
 swan maiden41
 Sweetgrass Clan25
 Swifthoof71
 Switchbacks, the36
 Sword Hall44
 Talfort7
 Talking Godsee *Issaries*
 Taranish25
 Tarndisi10,14-15
 Tarndisi's Grove7,10,13-16
 Tarnil Wolfslayer17
 Taros Treekiller70
 Tarsh21
 Tarsh Exiles41
 Tarshites56
 Tatiush the Bright10,36
 Telmor45
 Temori45
 Temertain67
 Temple of the Reaching
 Moon50,66
 The Black-and-Ivory Hunt74
 Third Bridge Association7
 Third Bridge Latifundia5,7
 Thorgir Bloodline29-31-35,37
 Thorveld Grinningblade42-44
 Thunder Barracks72
 Thunder Brothers49,67,72
 Thunder Hills7
 Tin Inn12,13
 see *Yinkin*
 Torkal the Ram18
 Torvi31
 Tostig Bloodline29-31
 Totem (Grazer)73
 Treeleapers, the68,70
 Trollmoot28,31
 trolls30-31,33,35,37,59
 dark trolls31
 trollkin31
 True Sight53
 Tumbles, the28
 Turvutansee *Golden City*
 Twilight44
 Two Sisters41
 Ty Kora Tek30,40
 Tylendenar47
 Tylendenar's Rod47
 Ulanin the Rider71-72
 Uleria12
 Umath50
 undead38,40-41
 see also *draugr, zombies*
 Underworld, the62,66
 Underworld River(s)57,62,66
 Unwod32-35,37
 Upland Marsh38-39,41-43,
 45-46,51,74
 Urain40
 urothtrorol10,15
 Vale of Flowers59
 Vale of Orlanth28
 Vankarusee *Radiant Vankaru*
 Vardraskos25
 Vargfreki45
 Varsmar, King39
 Vatheria Scorchsword74
 Vendeni49,60,66
 Vendref20-26,52,66-67
 Sample Vendref Deities22
 Verndalar48
 Vicious Fishes68
 Victorious Storm67
 Vingkot72
 Vingkotlings49,72
 Voria4
 Voria's Thaw4
 Waertag the Reaver66
 Waertagi60
 Wakboth36
 Warrior's Battle73
 Water Tribe49
 Weed-Naming ritual6
 White Bull Brothers67
 Whitewall27,32
 Whore's Eye View28
 Wild Temple20,51
 Wilmskirk7
 Wind Storm Banner5-6,67
 Wolf43-44
 wolf spiritsee *Vargfreki*
 Woodcutter19-20
 wyter5,8-9,37,41,43
 see also *guardian*
 clan wyter9
 Yansandral20-25
 Yellowflower Isle46
 Yelm50
 Yelmations19
 Yend Two-Kill70
 Yinkin15,26,28,30
 Youf50
 Young God, the59
 Ysra Almswoman17
 Zarask21,24
 Zola Fel River67
 Zombie Wars39
 zombies40,45-46



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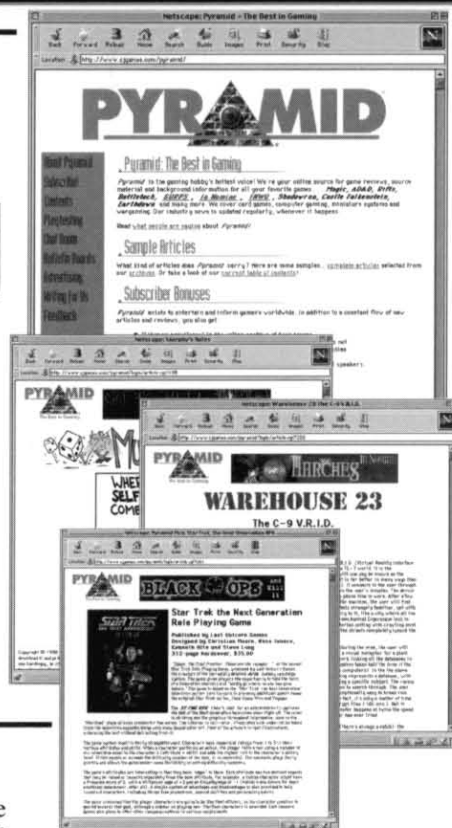
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