

TO KILL A MONSTER

A RuneQuest/Glorantha scenario for 3 - 6 players

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*A brave heart, a strong arm, and a keen mind
can make the difference between life and death when
a chance-met stranger leads heroes into danger...*



This is a complete one-session scenario. Depending on player activity and GM style, run time should range from three to six hours. Seven pre-generated characters have been included, but original characters may be used to replace any or all pre-generates.

"To Kill A Monster" is an introduction to RuneQuest and Glorantha, with a focus on roleplaying, PC cleverness, and intuition. Simplified RQIII rules are recommended—the players should not have to struggle with the system. The GM is urged to use only as many rules as s/he is comfortable inflicting on the players. Of course, the scenario can also be run for experienced RuneQuest players. This is not an exercise in Gloranthan scholarship; it is an introduction to some Gloranthan elements only. The intention is to avoid frightening off players with a world that can be dauntingly complicated for the uninitiated.

I. Materials

This package includes:

7 pre-generated characters

1 scenario booklet

1 1-page scenario digest

6 major NPCs (3 pages)

1 3-D color map of the village

1 flat black & white map of the village

1 map of Sirene's Barn

II. Player Characters

There are seven pre-generated characters available: a *Healer*, a *Helpful Duck* (Trickster thief), a *Warrior*, a *Troll Hunter*, a *Sage*, a *Thane* (warrior and diplomat), and a *Trader*. They begin as an established adventuring group, having been together for some time; this is indicated in the individual PC descriptions which are given to the players. Intra-party conflict should be avoided.

Each PC sheet is designed to be printed out double-sided and then folded into a booklet, with detailed character information on the inside.

Players determine the order for choosing PCs by rolling dice. They should not be allowed to read the full character descriptions before choosing, but rather make their choice based on the short character descriptions on the front of the character booklets.

III. Plot Synopsis

A young Storm Bull worshipper who has mistaken a horribly burned woman for a Chaos monster has been laying a one-man siege to an isolated village. He attempts to enlist the adventurers to aid him in Chaos-killing.

In the meantime a cunning ogre disguised as a human trader makes a regular stop at the village to check on his Chaos-impregnated girlfriend (and victim), and a troop of Storm Bull berserkers is heading to town to destroy what they've been told is a den of Chaos—by slaughtering every man, woman, child, and animal if necessary. The PCs must find a way to resolve the misunderstandings peacefully if they can.

IV. Plot Detail

1. A Chance Encounter

While travelling on the borders of the plains of Prax among the mild foothills to the northwest, the players are hailed by a ragged, horned figure. A successful *Scan* reveals that this is not some strange horned monster, but rather an Uroxi—a worshipper of the Storm Bull. This clearly desperate young Initiate sports the customary horned helmet and axe, plus a fine collection of old and new bruises. His clothes are ripped and torn. Close inspection and a successful *Evaluate* or *Human Lore* reveal that the young man is suffering from exposure, thirst, hunger, and general damage. Like most followers of the Bull, this young Uroxi is not a model of sanity. Special or critical success gives the further insight that his clothes were once of a fine cut, better than the average Storm Bull worshipper could afford—though culturally correct.

His name is *Berek Gondsson*, and he demands help in the face of Chaos—a demand that anyone in Glorantha must take seriously, since Chaos is the greatest danger the world knows. The village ahead is under the thrall of a chaos fiend, and he must have help to destroy the evil! At this dramatic moment, he collapses into unconsciousness.

His injuries are not immediately life-threatening, however. He has clearly been beaten several times, and as noted earlier is suffering from exposure and hunger. He requires some care and recuperation time, but given these he is likely to recover. A successful *Scan* reveals Berek's simple camp, which is fifteen meters west of the trail. This is the logical first place to take Berek for treatment. A successful *First Aid* roll or *Heal 2* spell restores him to consciousness, at least temporarily.

2. Berek's Story

The story he tells is not a pretty one. While passing through the village several weeks ago he sensed the presence of Chaos. By spying and sneaking he discovered the nature of the taint: a hideous Chaos demon that hid by day but by night enchanted the townspeople, forcing them to carry it on their backs and make hideous sacrifices.

When he tried to locate and destroy the demon during the day, however, he found that the townspeople remained under the monster's spell: they actually fought to defend their enslaver. Mind-enslaving Chaos is not unknown to the Bull, but to his shame Berek lacked the strength to defeat the townspeople.

He tried several times to reach the monster, both by day and by night, but time and again was caught and attacked by the townsfolk, barely escaping with his

life. He asked a passerby to bring word of his plight to other Sons of the Bull, but the message must have gone astray—no one has come. He *must* have help!

3. Berek's Truth

Berek is telling the truth, as far as he knows—but he is a young and inexperienced Uroxi, driven by fear of Chaos and doubt in his own worth. The weight of being third son of a Storm Khan of the Bison Riders is difficult for Berek to bear.

When he first passed through the village he *did* sense Chaos, but did not sense the specific location. Later, while spying, he saw something that seemed horrific, but failed to realize that he did not sense Chaos coming from the "demon"—in fact, the demon is not a demon at all! It is a sad young woman named *Sirene*.

4. Sirene's Story

Sirene has lived in the village all her life. Though not a great beauty, her nature was so sweet and gentle that she was widely loved. Thus everyone in the village was particularly sorrowed when Sirene's family hut caught fire and burned to the ground on a winter's night three years ago. Her parents died, but Sirene was not as fortunate; a mad wandering beggar dragged her from the fire and tended her wounds before vanishing. Though horribly burned, she lived. Lived with hair burned away and skin of scar tissue, hands and feet burned away to little more than flippers.

Since that time the villagers have cared for Sirene. Light pains her eyes, so she spends the day in a darkened barn in town. Her hideously scarred skin dries quickly and painfully, so she lives in a large water-filled tub in a barn. At night, villagers carry her to the nearby duck pond so that she may swim in the cool water.

The villagers believe that Sirene has been given one blessing to compensate for her terrible losses: she can breathe underwater. This sign of Divine favor has fostered a general belief that Sirene is good luck for the village. In fact, no one—not even Sirene herself—is aware that she had a long-duration *Skin of Life* spell cast on her by the wandering mad beggar, who was in fact an insane sorcerer from the far West. It's just as well that they don't know this, since sorcery is regarded with fear and suspicion throughout the area.

Sirene's appearance is monstrous (see pictures of any serious burn victim for examples), so Berek's misunderstanding is understandable. She cannot really talk, but can make noises. She can subvocalize, however, and so can be communicated with via the

spirit magic *Mindspeech* spell, as well as the Divine *Mindlink* spell of course. She can also communicate via a "one grunt for yes, two grunts for no" system. She can hum music well, and does so often. She is capable of motion, though walking would be impossible for her—at best she can painfully and clumsily "swim" on the ground.

Despite constant pain and her terrible losses Sirene continues to be remarkably sweet-tempered and patient.

5. Sirene's Barn

Sirene sleeps most of the day in her tub in the barn. A map of the barn is included as BARNMAP.GIF, and the location of the barn is marked by a star on the 3-D map and a **1** on the flat map.

On the barn map of the first floor, **1** indicates the North-South path which runs in front of the barn doors. Her fiancé lives in the house on the opposite side of the path. **2** represents stables and pens, which are normally no longer used. **3** is the raised platform at the back of the barn, opposite the front doors. **4** are the screens which surround Sirene. Her tub itself is indicated by **5**. On the second-floor map **6** is the small window in the back of the barn, **7** is the hayloft, which is against the back wall and sides and comes out half-way over Sirene's tub. Exit from the hayloft to the ground floor is gained through ladders on the sides of the barn, near the front doors, marked by **8**.

The screens which surround Sirene are beautifully painted pastoral and underwater scenes. These were made for her by *Arlan Longsong*, her fiancé.

6. Arlan's Story

Arlan is an initiate of Donandar, a minstrel and a skilled painter. However he is trapped in the village by love and loyalty. Sirene will not marry him as she is, and he cannot bear to leave her. At times he sings to her in the early morning and evening. He lives in the house across the street from the entrance to her barn, watching over her and protecting her.

His temperament is marked by deep sorrow, but he is at heart a cheerful and friendly man (he could be portrayed as a young Judge Reinhold). When Sirene's safety is in question, however, he can be very fierce.

7. History

Berek first encountered the village and Sirene three weeks ago. Since that time, he has made several attempts to slay the "monster"; each time he has been stopped by Arlan and other villagers, who have driven him from the village over and over. Like any good Storm Bull worshipper, however, Berek did not allow himself to be stopped. Realizing that he was

not having much success, he asked a passing traveler to send a message to his father, Gond, about the Chaos horror. Meanwhile, he has maintained his "siege" of the village.

The message was delayed, but recently reached Gond. He arrives at the village leading a horde of kill-crazed Uroxi bison riders late in the adventure.

8. Jak

What Berek actually sensed was the Chaos spawn which is gestating within Leera, a barmaid in town. This is the son of *Trader Jak*, an ogre who typifies his kind by disguising himself and spreading his chaotic seed among human women. Leera is not aware of his true nature, of course.

Jak has two other children on the way in other local villages, and is trying for several more. For the last two seasons has been maintaining a six-week circuit of the area which includes his female victims. Jak is cunning, tricky, handsome, and clever. He has been able to control his racial inclination to eat human flesh to a large degree, snacking only on the occasional isolated traveler far between villages.

Jak comes to town early in the adventure, shortly after the PCs find (and presumably begin tending) Berek, but possibly after they have scouted the village. He drives a large wagon pulled by two mules. The wagon is filled with trade goods.

When the wagon comes by, Berek (if he is in the general area) is unconscious. This is necessary to avoid short-circuiting the adventure by having Berek sense the Chaos in Jak. If someone is caring closely for Berek at that moment, it is *possible* that they might notice some signs of heightened agitation in the unconscious Uroxi. But this should not be a major display.

Jak has heard rumors in other villages about a crazed young Storm Bull follower, and is definitely on guard. If he becomes aware of Berek, he stays away from him if at all possible—he knows about Uroxi, even young ones. He's not terribly afraid, but won't take the situation lightly either.

The PCs may attempt to warn Jak about the danger ahead. If so, he listens to them politely but decides that he must go into town, while promising to be careful.

The PCs may decide to ask Jak if they may hide in his wagon to enter and spy on the village. He is willing to be persuaded to allow this.

9. The Village

The village is a medium-sized farming community with one inn and two taverns. A calm stream lies just

north of the village, draining into a pond. Outflow from the pond forms a small waterfall on the east side, and the stream flows onward toward the plains of Prax.

The inhabitants of the village are all human. Most worship Ernalda, though there are a sprinkling of worshippers of other gods of the Orlanthi pantheon. The local Ernalda temple has a shrine which can be used for associated gods. The village is hospitable to strangers, since it is on a moderately popular trade route.

The village is governed by a council, which rarely convenes. Once every ten years the council meets at Festival time, and elects new members from among the responsible men and women of the village. Council duties are extremely light; for the most part the village governs itself.

No one name has yet settled on the village, which is known variously as Calmwater, Duck's Crossing, Bridgeside, and Quiet Hole.

The inn in the village (2 on the flat map) is the Bridge Inn. It has four rooms, and the common room is available for sleeping. The common room also serves as a bar. Accommodations are reasonable. The proprietor is Olek Openhand, a semi-retired farmer and member of the council.

The other two taverns in town are the Broken Wheel (3) and Darrig's Place (4).

The village maps have been modified from online maps by Irony Games <http://www.irony.com>. My deep thanks to Irony Games for great material.

10. The Next Step

The PCs must settle the question of Sirene. This they may do in any number of ways. If they are extremely diplomatic and make their concern clear, it is possible that they may persuade one or more villagers to tell them Sirene's story. Alternatively, they may try any one of various approaches to see Sirene: sneaking up to the pond at night while she bathes, breaking into her barn, or sneaking into town at dusk or dawn to watch her being carried to or from her swim. In these latter cases, part of their challenge is to understand that despite her horrible appearance, she is not a monster. A Healer knows this on sight, of course.

If they do not reach that realization, it is possible that the PCs may actually kill Sirene. If this happens, they have failed a major element of the scenario. The villagers are extremely upset, and Arlan Longsong is heartbroken. The council may insist on a trial of the PCs, but they are not bloodthirsty; if the party explains the circumstances of their honest misunderstanding they will not be punished. At the

absolute worst, the PCs will be held until higher authorities can be contacted. Of course, if the PCs can resurrect Sirene all charges will be dropped.

If Sirene is not killed, and the party examines her, they see that she is beyond their power to heal (even the Healer can do little). However, it is possible that a group of Healers at a major hospital could help her. The trip would certainly be worth her while.

11. Attack!

Once the party has reconciled with Sirene, Berek may attack at any opportune time. Stopping him and convincing him that Sirene is not a demon is difficult, but not impossible. He is extremely reluctant to kill those who he sees as victims of Chaos; in this regard he does not live up to the Uroxi ideal. Berek is somewhat ashamed that he does not *Sense Chaos* from Sirene, but if the PCs can get him to understand that this is not due to a failure of faith on his part, but rather because she is not Chaotic, he will be much relieved.

Some time thereafter, though, he realizes something: he is confused. He *did* sense Chaos when he first came to the village. But if it wasn't Sirene, who—or what—was it?

12. Gond With The Wind

Massive forms are seen coming up from the southern trail—figures on bison-back, fifty at least. At their heads is a massive and heroic figure: *Gond, the Wrath of God*, Storm Khan of the Bison Riders and father of Berek. Berek's message for help has finally borne fruit.

The horde masses a short distance from the edge of town, and then moves to encircle it. There are sixty seasoned warriors, Uroxi and bison-riders all; they are not presently berserk (nor *Fanaticized*), but they can be on very short notice.

The bison riders stay in groups of five, surrounding the town. Gond stays with five of his top men at the trail south of town.

13. Panic!

It isn't long before the villagers realize that they are in great danger. As word of the horde sweeps through town, the people mill about in the taverns and then converge on the center of town. There is frenzied debate, shouted arguments; should they escape. Fight, surrender, or what? Chaos (with a small "c") is clearly about to erupt.

It's time for a strong voice to calm the crowd. If the PCs try, they must make three successful *Orate* rolls in a row, or one special or critical. Other dramatic

actions (a *Thunderbolt* or *Sunspear*, for example) may also silence the crowd.

If the PCs do not succeed in calming the crowd (or don't try at all), some of the villagers try to escape the cordon. They do not succeed, and are soon driven back into town howling with fear.

14. Jak Makes His Move

Optional: If an extension to the scenario is desired, Jak chooses this time to complicate matters. He may try to escape; if so, his escape route takes him near the PCs. If he gets by them he find he cannot escape the siege, and returns to the village without approaching the Uroxi.

Option 2: Jak gives in to his ogreish nature under the pressure of the situation, and kills and eats a villager at some out-of-the-way corner. The discovery of a partially eaten body does not soothe the villagers.

Option 3 (default): Jak hides; possibly in the hayloft of Sirene's barn, if circumstances allow. His Chaotic *Silent Movement* ability allows him to move about the village (particularly at night) with great stealth.

15. Father And Son Reunion

Unless Berek is incapacitated, he meets his father outside of town as soon as he is able. If the PCs attempt to restrain him, he will do his best to get away from them. If he does reach Gond, the PCs may be there as well if they choose. Gond is willing to listen to anyone who is not chaotic or an obvious fool.

In person, Gond does not seem to be a typical Storm Khan; physically he is massive, very tall but with a frame so broad that he almost seems short until he is near. He has black hair and a grizzled gray beard. His bison *Skyhammer* is built on a similar scale, and looks at strangers with disconcertingly intelligent eyes. *Skyhammer* is Gond's allied spirit, and is formidable in his own right.

Gond speaks more softly and thoughtfully than might be expected, with a *very* deep hoarse voice and tired-looking eyes. His diction is not educated, but very sparse; he doesn't talk much.

What happens next depends on prior events. Berek (if he is there), Gond, and the PCs (if they are there) discuss what has happened in the village and what to do about it. There are three possible results.

16. Showdown

I. If Gond believes that the village is contaminated with powerful Chaos, the Uroxi go berserk, attack and destroy the village. All the villagers are butchered without hesitation. The PCs die, or escape,

with the exception of any Chalana Arroy healers (who are ignored). The scenario is over.

II. If Gond believes that Berek's message was a false alarm, the Uroxi leave. Berek is left behind, and although no words are exchanged between Gond and Berek it is likely that they will never see each other again. Berek is a broken man, without spirit. The villagers are grateful to the PCs if they have taken some part in saving the village. Some villagers may be angry at Berek for bringing such fear and danger to their town. He does not attempt to defend himself from anything they choose to do to him. The PCs may protect him or not, as they choose. The villagers may hurt Berek, but won't kill him. However, if Sirene died during the adventure Berek may be severely beaten. PCs may choose to continue their investigation of events at the village, take Sirene (if she is still alive) to a Hospital for treatment (see section 18), or go on their way. The scenario is over.

III. (**Most likely result**) If Gond believes that there is some confusion, or that Sirene is not chaotic but something else in the village may be, he and his men descend on the village—but they search it, rather than destroying it. This is also the result if neither Berek nor the PCs meet Gond outside of town.

17. The Search

Gond's men are not gentle, but do not hurt or kill anything if at all possible. If Jak has not been previously killed, he is found and his Chaotic nature revealed. If an additional combat is desired, the PCs are closest to Jak when he is discovered; they may chose to battle him themselves, or allow Gond and his men to slaughter him.

If for some reason the PCs attempt to defend Jak, they must fight Gond and at least five of his men. More Uroxi will come to the attack as the noise of battle is heard. The PCs probably all die in this case.

If the PCs chose not to fight Jak, or an additional combat is not desired, Gond and his men chop Jak into small pieces and burn them. If anyone bothers to search the ashes after the fire goes out, a successful *Scan* or *Search* reveals a small but valuable *Griffin's Eye* gem which is worth approximately 3,000L.

17. After Jak

Once Jak is dead the search continues. Gond and his men eventually find Leera, the barmaid who is bearing Jak's Chaos-tainted son. Gond does not care to kill women, but if the PCs cannot persuade him that they can take the girl to be treated by the healers at a Hospital he does the necessary thing. It is quick and merciful, in his eyes.

18. Resolution

If the PCs succeed in persuading Gond that the girl can be healed in a non-fatal way (the Healer would be very helpful in persuading him; he respects healers), he assigns five of his men to guard the group on the way to the Hospital. The PCs may, at their option, also take Sirene with them for treatment; she needs to travel in a tub, but that can be carried on a wagon (Jak's may be available). As the PCs leave the village with Sirene Arlan joins them, and sings to Sirene all the way to the Hospital.

— end —

V. Continuing Adventures

There are several plot elements which can be used for follow-up adventures:

- **The Old Hermit**—in time the alien *Skin of Life* spell on Sirene may be detected. This sign of Western sorcerous intrusion into the region is likely to cause concern. Since the PCs are closely associated with the discovery of this magic, they are likely to be made part of any investigation that is made—if they are not commissioned outright to discover the sorcerer. The connection to the old mad hermit is difficult to make, but by no means impossible. But who was he? Where is he now? Was he simply an insane escapee from the West (albeit with extremely powerful magic), a spy, or something else? What is he doing now?
- **Sirene and Arlan**—have the potential for a number of scenario hooks. Sirene may require a rare herb or unusual magic item to complete her cure; the PCs would be the obvious group for the Healers to turn to. Once healed, Sirene and Arlan may take to the road as wandering troubadours, running into the PCs almost anywhere. If Sirene and Arlan have a child, the child may become lost or get in trouble. Again, the PCs would naturally be the ones to come to (though Arlan would insist on recompensing them generously). As a tie-in to the old hermit above, Western agents on the trail of their lost sorcerer may track down (and even kidnap) Sirene as part of their investigation.
- **Gond and Berek**—Depending on developments in the scenario, Berek may leave the Uroxi and seek out the PCs as the source of his confusion. If the PCs were helpful to the bison riders, Gond will not forget them; should he need some business taken care of in a civilized setting, he could contact the PCs. If at some time Gond decides that Berek needs to improve himself, he may send him to the PCs. And if the PCs ever travel on the plains of Prax, encounters with Bison Riders are likely.

VI. Physical Preparation

The seven player character files are each designed to be printed as double-sided sheets. Fold them in half as booklets, with the title page on the front:



All other materials can be printed out single-sided. Dice and pencils will also be required to play.

VII. Contact

This scenario has been playtested twice. The author welcomes comments and feedback from players and GMs who have enjoyed it. Please write to peter@maranci.net, or check <http://www.maranci.net/rq.htm> for up-to-date contact information. Future scenarios will also be published on that site.

Thanks, and have fun!

—>Peter

